



July 26, 2012

Mr. Marvin Maye  
683 Gillett Road  
Spencerport, NY 14559

**Re: Preliminary Site Plan Findings  
SP-038-11-12  
660-668 W. Main Street**

Dear Mr. Maye:

A preliminary review has been completed toward your application for site plan approval to demolish a 9000SF church and an adjacent two-family dwelling and replace them with a one-story, 9100SF retail building and parking for 52 vehicles, with space reserved for a 4880SF addition to the retail building.

The City of Rochester is protecting of its historic resources and closely examines any proposal to demolish buildings deemed to have historic importance. In 1986, the church building was determined by the State Historic Preservation Office to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Although the building has been poorly maintained and has lost some of its historic integrity, we believe it retains much of its character and importance. Additional information will be required to determine whether alternatives to the demolition have been explored such as, but not limited to, converting the building for a mix of uses, retaining portions of the building while removing others, and reoccupying the building for religious use.

Please review the following findings and recommendations, and please ask for clarification where needed.

**Property Conditions**

1. The 1982 historic survey rated the conditions of the church building as high and conditions of the overall site as poor. Three photographs of the exterior taken at the time support these ratings. The house was not included in the survey.
2. The house was first cited by city enforcement staff in 1982 for deteriorating conditions, and then cited regularly for unkempt site conditions. City records show that it has been vacant since at least November, 2007. The application for site plan review states that the building has been vacant for over 12 years.
3. Louie Carini, an engineer registered in New York State, wrote in a letter to the developer that the church has been vacant for about two years and the house since 2003. Mr. Carini wrote that holes have formed in the roof of the church, allowing rainwater to weaken floor joists and cause plaster to fail. Vandals have stolen piping, asbestos has been disturbed, and the boiler system is beyond repair. He states that "the lack of insulation, deteriorated plaster, asbestos and crumbling bricks make this structure no longer feasible for any use". His estimate of the cost of restoration is approximately \$600,000.



About the house, Mr. Carini states that major damage has occurred, with a leaking roof, rotting structure, deteriorated floors. Windows, doors, plumbing fixtures and electrical equipment have been broken or stolen, and gutters have fallen off. He did not provide an estimate for repairs. Mr. Carini states that he believes the buildings are unsafe, dangerous, public nuisances.

4. Photographs of the house provided by the owner, and a site visit by City staff planner Peter Siegrist, support the assertion that the house is in very poor condition. Rainwater and vandalism have severely damaged the structure, and much of the interior is impassable due to fallen plaster and framing.
5. The condition of the church is far better than the house. The foundation stone, the brick of the exterior walls and the stone window sills are in good condition, with most mortar intact. Deterioration is visible in limited areas, and was clearly caused by broken gutters and missing downspouts. Some joints need repointing, as do joints improperly pointed with cement mortar, and spalled bricks need replacement, but the walls appear strong. All exterior surfaces of the building except the roof are painted. It is unknown whether the paint contains lead.

Holes in the sanctuary roof near the main entrance and at the chimney have allowed rainwater to penetrate, and water damage is evident in various areas of the roof and floor. As noted, tarps that had covered the holes are gone. As a temporary measure to halt further deterioration, new tarps could be installed. But permanent repairs could be done at limited expense by replacing shingles in perhaps a half-dozen areas and by flashing or removing the chimney.

Few, if any, of the windows appear original, and several openings on the rear were infilled with wood panels and smaller windows. Six window openings in the sanctuary were partially infilled with ill-fitting, low-quality units, with surrounding gaps filled with spray insulation. Knowing that the original congregation outgrew this building and built a new one, and seeing that windows at the 'new' building have shapes and sizes similar to those here, it is possible that the original windows were removed to the new location.

The 1948 addition was constructed of concrete block with exterior parging. Large patches of the parging have fallen away but could be replaced. Some mortar joints are open, but it is unclear whether rainwater has entered the building through them. Ductwork running over the roof has deteriorated, as presumably has the duct supports, which may lead to water infiltration. The addition provides the only grade-level entrance to the building. However, the addition is not sympathetic to the character of the church and intersects the church awkwardly. Its removal would uncover one side of the historic building and give more open land around the building.

The interior of the former sanctuary is nearly devoid of detail, and is open, column-free space, about 30' wide. There is no decorative wood or plaster, no ornamented structure, and all surfaces are flat and painted white. There are no religious artifacts such as pews, altar, pulpit, choir loft, chandeliers or imagery, and only one stained glass window. Other than the form of the space and location of windows, there is little to suggest a previous religious use.

The sanctuary extends into the wider, two-story portion of the building through an undecorated proscenium arch. Tall, arched window openings beyond the arch were filled in, depriving the interior of daylight. The sanctuary floor is about 3' above grade at the front and sides entrances. Beyond the former altar area, the building is two floors high and divided into small rooms.

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The basement directly beneath the sanctuary is about 8' high and quartered with rows of columns. The space presumably held the bowling alleys noted above. There is evidence of moisture, rot and mold, probably caused by rainwater flowing uncollected from broken or

missing gutters and downspouts and from the undrained asphalt parking lots. There is no evidence that the basement is ventilated, and all basement windows are boarded or bricked in.

Under the wider, two-story portion, the basement is divided into smaller rooms and mechanical spaces. In this area, substantial damage was done by someone hacking into walls and ceilings to remove piping and wiring. Debris from this and from water infiltration litters the floors. Clothing, mattresses, and trash are strewn in side rooms.

6. The site is mostly paved with asphalt, which is cracked and rough. Pavement abuts the foundation wall on three sides, including at the main entry. The entire west and north portions of the site are paved from the building to the property lines. The only lawn is a narrow patch on the southeast side facing Main Street. It is unclear where rainwater goes. The site is surrounded by chain link fences either 6' or 8' tall.

### **Code Compliance Review**

1. The property is in a C-2 Community Center Commercial District. Areas with this designation provide diverse commercial development along gateway transportation corridors and neighborhood centers with a dense mixture of uses such as housing and retail that serve the neighborhood and the larger community. The C-2 district is preserved through appropriate design elements, amenities or treatments that create, enhance and reinforce the design relationships between the buildings, sites and streets and still establish an ambience that is uniquely urban and pedestrian-oriented.
2. The church was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places during the 1986 city-wide historic resource inventory, and is therefore a Designated Building of Historic Value per Section 120-65B(1) of the City Zoning Code. The proposal to demolish the building requires an area variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.
3. Retail sales, as proposed, are permitted as of right in the district, with hours limited to 6:00AM to 2:00PM.
4. Site Plan Review is required because the design does not meet the City-wide design guidelines and standards set forth in the zoning code and because the project involves the demolition of a designated building of historic value.

### **Findings**

City-wide design guidelines and standards are established in the zoning code to preserve and promote the unique urban character of Rochester and to encourage lively, pedestrian-friendly and attractive streetscapes. Focusing on the immediate neighborhood, the guidelines and standards maximize visibility for pedestrians, ensure appropriate building design, require attractive signage and ensure its compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. Buildings and sites should be designed to:

- a. Retain, reflect and enhance the dominant aesthetic or visual qualities of the neighborhood as much as possible.
- b. Encourage and promote a sense of design continuity that appropriately relates the historic past of the neighborhood to ongoing revitalization and redevelopment efforts.
- c. Appropriately relate proposed development to existing designs, styles, building forms and land uses.

- d. Encourage and promote the sensitive and contextual design of buildings, signs and sites through the use of design elements, details, styles and architectural features as well as other amenities, materials or treatments that may be appropriate to further the design standards. Blank end walls should incorporate building components or design features. Blank rear walls should be screened with landscaping.
- e. Encourage a pedestrian-oriented and human-scaled right-of-way, public realm and streetscape and promote safe pedestrian movement, access and circulation. Access from streets, sidewalks and public rights-of-way should be clearly defined.
- f. Encourage and promote the use of predominant existing building materials within the neighborhood and the predominant existing building materials, architectural features and fenestration on specific structures as a guide in determining appropriate replacement and new construction materials.
- g. Protect, respect and expand the design of green space, landscaping and open space within the neighborhood and encourage public and private development that enhances this character with landscape design details such as trees, lawns and plantings.
- h. Promote preservation of designated buildings of historic value to enhance and promote the history, culture and architecture of the City.

#### Analysis

The dominant aesthetic quality of West Main Street between Jefferson Avenue and the campus of the former Sts. Peter and Paul Parish is a mix of two-story residential and commercial buildings. The former are almost all of the Neocolonial style that was prevalent in Rochester at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rendered in white clapboard siding. The latter are almost all of brick, originally with first floor stores and apartments or offices above. A new building for DePaul, at the western end of the street, was designed to intentionally replicate this mixed use style. For its respect of historic context, it received the 2012 Mayor's Award from the City and the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Across from 680 W. Main Street, the headquarters of the Rochester Housing Authority was constructed about 12 years ago and, like the DePaul building, was intended to reflect the character of the commercial buildings on the street. It is a two-story, brick building with individual window openings (rather than bands), built tight to the sidewalk.

At 644 W. Main Street, immediately adjacent to the project site, is a two-story brick residence that exhibits classic massing of the Italianate style combined with Eastlake detailing. Built circa 1870, the house was considerably renovated in the 1990s, and is an historic resource deserving of protection.

In the two blocks west of Sts. Peter and Paul (now the Coptic Monastery of St. Shenouda) and across from the DePaul complex, buildings are less urban than those to the east. Most are single-story boxes set behind parking lots and have little of the character of the historic corridor.

The only low-rise building near the project site is a plaza owned by the project developer. This had been constructed as an automobile showroom with service bays, facing a large parking lot running between Main Street and New York Street. Built with details of Moorish Revival style and eventually occupied by Ralph Pontiac, the large showroom windows were covered years ago. It was extensively remodeled in 1997 into four commercial spaces.

A short two blocks east toward downtown is the Susan B. Anthony Preservation District, a locally- and nationally-recognized historic neighborhood surrounding the home of its namesake. Long term efforts of neighbors, developers, city leaders, the Landmark Society and the Rochester Preservation Board have returned life to the neighborhood while retaining its historic character. Ongoing renovations along Main Street, along with a newly-constructed multi-family housing building, will complete the district's renaissance.

In the neighborhoods surrounding the project site, more than three dozen units of housing were built in the past two years through a joint effort of the City and a private developer. Four of these units are diagonally across New York Street from the project site.

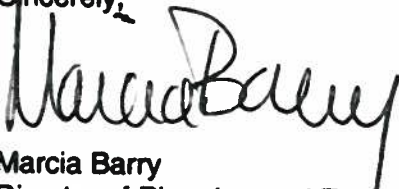
Along Jefferson Avenue, which crosses Main Street just east of the project site, the City is investing over \$3 million in streetscape improvements, including a new street surface and curbs, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, bump outs and crosswalks.

#### **Determination**

The proposed replacement of these buildings with an undistinguished box building and an expansive parking lot poses significant impacts to neighborhood character. The proposed plan fails to address most of the design guidelines and standards of the zoning codes stated above, and fails to recognize the significant enhancements of the area over the past several years. The new construction in no way mitigates the loss of these structures or attempts to enhance the character of the neighborhood. Therefore, in accordance with the requirements of the State Environmental Review Act (SEQR), the Director of Planning and Zoning issued a Positive Declaration on July 18, 2012 (attached). The issuance of this declaration requires the applicant to prepare an environmental impact statement. No decisions can be rendered for the proposed project until all the requirements of SEQR are fulfilled.

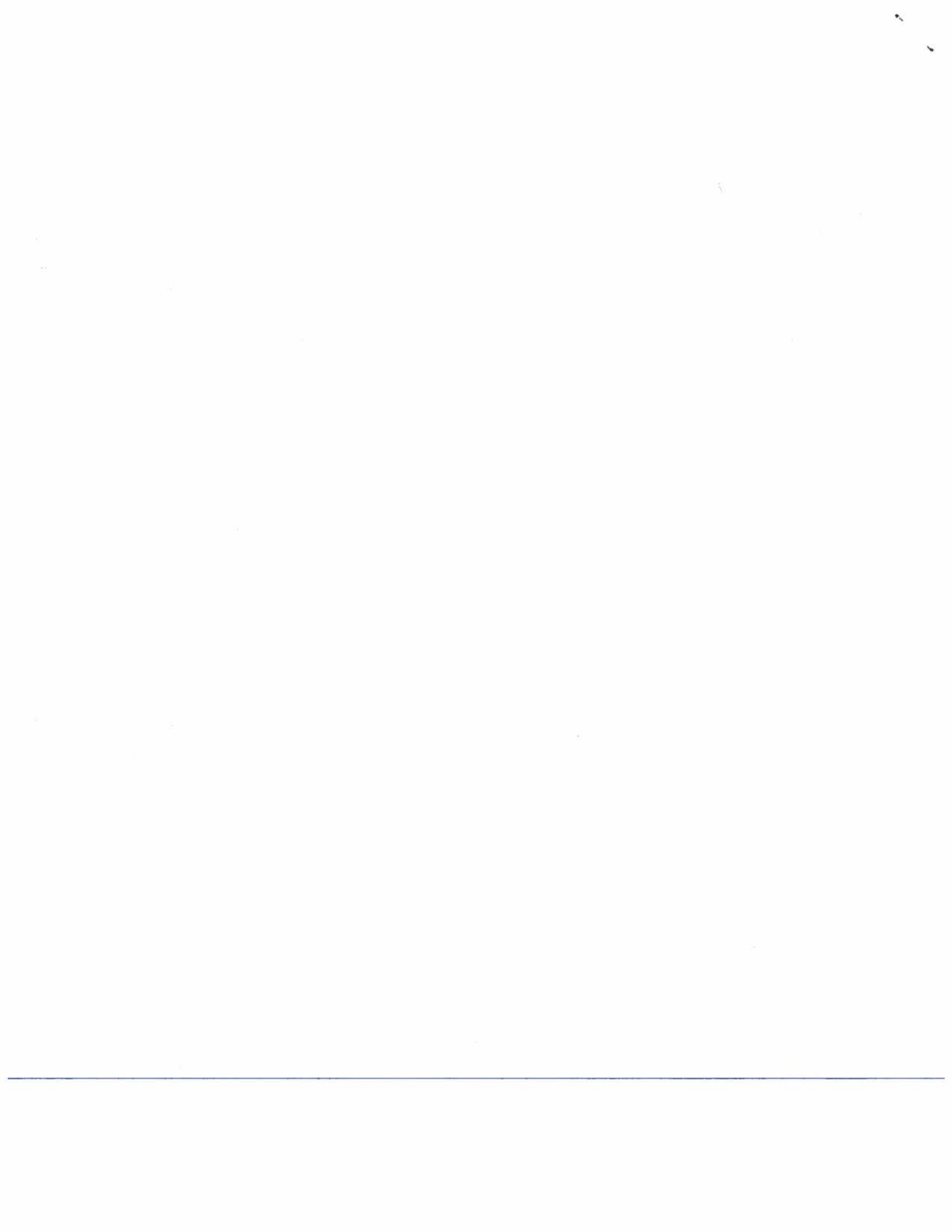
If you have any questions regarding these findings or the SEQR process, please contact Peter Siegrist at 428-7238 or [peter.siegrist@cityofrochester.gov](mailto:peter.siegrist@cityofrochester.gov).

Sincerely,



Marcia Barry  
Director of Planning and Zoning

Cc: George DesMarteau  
Zina Lagonegro, Sr. City Planner  
Thaddeus Schofield, Economic Development



**CITY OF ROCHESTER  
NOTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

Issued in accordance with Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law and Chapter 48 of the Rochester Municipal Code

**POSITIVE DECLARATION:** The proposed action is one which will have a significant effect on the environment.

**ACTION:** Classification: Unlisted  
Description: Site Plan Review

**PROJECT:** Location: 660-668 W. Main Street, Rochester, NY  
Applicant: Marvin Maye, Maye Development  
Description: To demolish a 9000SF church and an adjacent two-family dwelling and replace them with a one-story, 9100SF retail building and parking for 52 vehicles, with space reserved for a 4880SF addition to the retail building.

**REASON(S) FOR DETERMINATION:**

The project site contains a building determined by the NY State Historic Preservation Office to be eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Loss of this building and its replacement with a retail plaza will negatively impact the character of the historic neighborhood.

**LEAD AGENCY:** Director of Planning & Zoning

**AGENCY CONTACT PERSON:** Peter Slegrist, Preservation Planner, (585) 428-7238

**DATE ISSUED:** July 18, 2012

This declaration and supporting information is on file and available for public inspection with the Bureau of Buildings & Zoning, Room 125-B, City Hall.

**FILE REFERENCE NUMBER:** SP# 038-11-12

**DISTRIBUTION:** Case File

