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STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Quentin L. Messer, Jr.
PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

March 15, 2022

TO: Garrick Landsberg, Director, Historic Preservation, City of Detroit

FROM: Martha MacFarlane-Faes, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

RE: Historic King Solomon Baptist Church, 6125 14th Street, Roof Repair Historic District Commission Application

In 2018 the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) applied for and received a \$500,000 African American Civil Rights Grant from the National Park Service to replace the roofs on the Historic King Solomon Baptist Church at 6125 14th Street in Detroit. The original request in the grant application was to:

Replace the steep slope roof on the central core of the building, the roof of the bell tower, and the low slope roof of a 1940 addition to the church building. The purpose is to stop further deterioration of the building, preserve existing interior features, and prepare the building for reuse.

The grant application provided an assessment of the existing threats to the building noting:

King Solomon Baptist Church is at a tipping point. There is a dire need to replace the roof on the church building, which sits empty and unused. Neglect is taking its toll. . . The bell tower roof has rotted out and water leaks have resulted in the loss of ceiling plaster, tin ceiling panels, and the buckling of wood floors on portions of the main sanctuary, though the original seating and main stage are still intact. A recent site visit by SHPO staff occurred during a heavy rain storm enabling them to experience the poor condition of the roof--some equated it to standing outdoors. In the four years since the building was listed in the National Register, there has been substantial deterioration of the roof and increased interior damage.

This building is suffering from demolition by neglect, though it is still at an early enough stage of deterioration where much of the interior detailing still remains and can be saved. However if left unchecked in Michigan's climate, interior features will soon be lost.

The SHPO had a local roofing contractor do a walk-through of the building and they provided an estimate of \$500,000 to complete the proposed roofing work.



Unfortunately, after the grant was awarded the project ran into many delays that were beyond the SHPO's control. In addition, the onset of the Covid pandemic in 2020 greatly infringed on the timely implementation of the project.

In July 2021, the SHPO was finally able to release an RFP for the project. It was broken into two parts: 1) Construction Drawings and 2) Roof Construction Work. In September 2021, Quinn Evans Architects (QEA) was hired to complete part one, to conduct a roof assessment and complete the construction drawings. QEA's roof assessment revealed that there was much more structural damage than previously known including the need for extensive masonry repair work. The full project cost came in at over \$2 million--well over the \$500,000 grant award. The SHPO requested QEA recommend a reduction in the work that would best address the immediate need of the building and still be within the project budget limit. At that time, it was decided that any work to the flat roof of the 1940 addition would be omitted. In part because, since the SHPO's original site visit, the church had undertaken some temporary work that had stopped water from entering the addition. QEA, in consultation with the SHPO and the Church, recommended focusing the work on the bell tower where there is still excessive water infiltration. With **the** completion of the roof assessment and construction drawings, it was determined that the repair of the bell tower and patching the holes in the heptagonal and gable roofs of the original church building would be the best use of the remaining **grant** funds. This work is essential to stopping further interior deterioration.

The change in the scope of work for the grant was presented to the National Park Service and approved by phone per our NPS grant manager Seth Tinkham. The contract was extended to September 30, 2023.

In the comments on the 50% construction drawings, the NPS reviewer stated:

- It is understood that this roof repair/replacement is critical and falls under a stabilization treatment to preserve the entire structure. Therefore, the sacrifice of some architectural details, with documentation, is warranted to achieve the desired results toward an ultimate treatment of rehabilitation. Consider providing additional information/detail regarding the removal of the exposed rafter tails and other character defining features of the architectural style and why they are not being replaced as part of this project. Visually the areas slated for repairs will not have the appearance of the historic architectural details.

Unfortunately, the remaining grant funds will not cover the replacement of the historic features at this time. Brackets will be stored in the church building once they are removed with the intent of replacing them when further funding is secured. The intent is to complete the full extension of the roof overhangs when funding is available.

The SHPO realizes that rehabilitation of the King Solomon Baptist Church building is a major undertaking that will require a phased approach. However, stopping further damage to the building is of utmost importance and completing this portion of the project will alleviate the immediate threat to the building and will buy time to fundraise to enable further work.

In the original grant application, the SHPO noted:

The long-term goal for the church is to return it to an active community center. Step one is the creation of an advisory committee made up of diverse local leaders including representatives from the city, Detroit-based foundations, community development organizations, developers, etc. to discuss funding and program opportunities that will put the church building back in use.

The SHPO is committed to assisting the church in establishing a planning committee, identifying funding sources for further rehabilitation, and creating a phased rehabilitation plan for the buildings. The church is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was designated a Local Historic District by the City of Detroit in 2011. Any work to the exterior of the building must be reviewed by the city's Historic District Commission and meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The SHPO made initial attempts to establish an advisory committee in February 2020--a number of City of Detroit staff members had agreed to participate--but plans were put on hold due to the Covid pandemic. The SHPO is committed to working with the church to restart the planning aspect of the grant and help them identify and apply for further funding opportunities.