

Request to Demolish the Existing front Porch Roof and Columns and Construct a New Front Porch Roof and Support Structures for the Mother of Divine Mercy Rectory / Parish Office Located Adjacent to Sweetest Heart of Mary Church

Located in the Sweetest Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Parish Local Historic District:

4440 Russell St.
Detroit, MI 48207

Project Contact Information:

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Description of Existing Conditions:

The two story brick rectory / parish Office at 4440 Russell was constructed by John Kaczmarek, a mason and bricklayer in 1900. It is designed in an eclectic style that has elements of Colonial Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival Architectural styles which were popular at the time. The rectory roof is hipped with a side gable. Important features of the front façade include decorative masonry quoins and architrave, dentil moulding, limestone masonry sills and keystones and a central covered porch supported by pilasters and columns.

Close examination of an available historic photo revealed that the flat roof of the porch was originally adorned with a low balustrade and that the original columns were round Tuscan type. The balustrade no longer exists. According to on parish member, the original columns degraded and were replaced with “temporary” square craftsman-type columns many years ago. The existing rectangular pilasters appear to be original and

are Tuscan type. The centerlines of pilasters that support the porch adjacent to the building do not align with the centerlines of columns that support the porch distally.

The existing flat roof slopes downward slightly away from the rectory building and contains a shallow integral gutter that is supposed to drain to a downspout mounted on the rectory front façade adjacent to the south pilaster. The existing downspout is a 3" diameter painted pvc sewer pipe. It is unclear whether the roof slope was an original design feature or if it was created by decay of the original support columns and replacement of those columns with temporary columns that were too short. The current counteracting roof slope prevents water flow toward the downspout drain resulting in it spilling over roof edges. The poor condition of the integral gutter inverts allows water in the gutter to soak into the roof structure. The seepage of water into the roof structure and edge spillover has contributed to decay of the wood soffits, fascia and roof joist ends and it likely contributed to decay of the original columns that ultimately necessitated their removal.

Professional roofing contractors have indicated that redesign of the roof drainage strategy is necessary for successful installation of a new roof on the porch.

The existing porch light consists of a bare floodlamp in a lampholder. It is unknown if a porch light was installed when the rectory was built. A pendant fixture is not possible due to the lack of clearance between the top of the outswinging security door and the ceiling. The existing security door is to remain in place.

Description of Project:

In this project, we propose to remove and reconstruct the decayed wood porch roof and support pilasters / columns. All masonry portions of the existing porch will remain. Existing brick and limestone will be cleaned of spalling paint. The wood portion of the porch will be reconstructed with a new level curb at all exposed roof edges. The curb will conceal a new sloped roof surface that drains to two scuppers that divide the roof runoff and eliminate the need for a gutter and downspout. The relatively small amount of water that will drain into each scupper will be absorbed by the existing landscape adjacent to the porch. Scuppers are strategically located to avoid saturating the ground immediately adjacent to the rectory basement while avoiding direct discharge onto concrete paths where winter icing could occur. The detachment of stormwater discharge systems from the existing combined sewer is in keeping with current Detroit Water and Sewerage Department recommendations.

Secure attachment to the existing building via through-wall bolting avoids the problem of unpredictable holding power of masonry anchors in historic common brick. The bolts prevent lateral porch movement while columns concealed inside the new pilasters and the use of load-bearing decorative columns distally will carry all gravity loads. The use of a column inside the pilaster is necessary since, unlike the proposed round Tuscan columns, matching decorative pilasters are not rated for gravity loads.

The sizes and style of pilasters and columns were chosen to match, as closely as possible, those in the referenced historic photo.

The community that worships at Sweetest Heart of Mary Church takes pride in the upkeep of their historic buildings. In part because of its historic buildings, the parish attracts members who are skilled in woodworking and the building trades. It is planned that the balustrade components and other millwork will be produced by a parishioner having the skills and tools necessary to shape dimensional lumber into the components as specified in the construction documents.

Detailed Scope of Work:

- Demolish existing wood components of front porch. Masonry portion of porch to remain along with existing steel handrails.
- Clean and remove spalling paint from porch brick and limestone masonry per HDC masonry cleaning guidelines.
- Construct new porch roof framing system to support gravity and lateral loads
- Install roof decking and tapered insulation to provide sloped surface
- Install finish trim and millwork.
- Install EPDM roof membrane, copper counterflashing, coping and scuppers
- Install new decorative balustrade
- Prime and paint all wood components
- Install new porch light. Connect to existing switched branch circuit.
- Repair any damage to the adjacent landscape areas that might arise from construction activities.