

The comment below was received Wednesday morning from the addressee (after the distribution of the Agenda to Board members) and is presented for your information.

From: FrWWIII@aol.com
To: [Jack Butler](#); [Constance Morgan](#)
Cc: mrobertson2@me.com
Subject: Christ Church Anglican
Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2013 5:16:42 PM

Dear Mr. Butler,

I attended the neighborhood presentation at the Main Library in Thomas Square given by Christian Sottile on March 25th. The Meeting raised a number of questions, most of which should be addressed at the , upcoming meeting scheduled before the zoning board of appeals. The primary question to my mind is the sheer mass of the building which is being proposed. After the meeting I went back to my Church Building, designed by John Sutcliffe in 1907, and ascertained the following: 1) where the walls end and the roof begins is only 17 feet- Christ Church is proposing a distance more than 2.3 times this, 40 feet 2) the top of St. Paul's highest parapet is 35 feet, well within the current ordinance's limit, where as Christ Church is asking to top out at 50 feet. I believe that the comparison is relevant because we have been part of the historic architectural landscape and the lot we occupy is similar in size to that which Christ Church is proposing to build on. Our configuration includes a House of Worship and a Parish House which includes a Parish Hall, Church Offices and a Sunday School. It also presents to 34th and Abercorn Streets with a good bit of green space from our set back. As currently envisioned this monumental building is far to massive and potentially monolithic for the general environment of 37th Street at Draughton.

Additionally I am concerned that the use of the lane between 37th and 36th Streets. By using it to access the limited on site parking and Parish House drop off point it will get a lot of use - I daresay more than lanes are intended to support. Furthermore, while I like the configuration of the public plaza at 37th and Draughton as part of the concept I saw no indication of handicap access to the buildings made in the presentation.

Finally, while an interesting solution has been proposed for handling the parking issues of this new addition to the neighborhood by the use of Georgia Infirmary's lot, I continue to point out that human nature and peoples desire to walk as short a distance as possible will complicate the lives of those living nearby, especially on 36th Street. I can tell you from living in the neighborhood for a good while that when SCAD is in session the parking from 34th to 37th gets very tight, if not impossible at times

Unlike some at the meeting I do not wish Christ Church ill or wish they would go elsewhere I want them to seriously consider the implications of their stated desire to be a good neighbor. As a member of Thomas Square for 26 years I want them to make a proposal that needs little or no relief from the requirements which many people worked very hard to craft for the Thomas Square Neighborhood.

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The comment below was received from the petitioner's architect (Christian Sottile) on Tuesday afternoon (after distribution of the Agendas to Board members) and is presented separately for your information.

Comments addressing the second published MPC Staff report related to the Christ Church Anglican Project dated April 25, 2013. These comments also consider the MPC's published staff report for the same project dated April 3, 2013.

The following notes refer to the report and highlight areas where additional evidence is relevant as well as identifying areas with contradictions and informational corrections.

Findings:

2. It should additionally be noted in the report that the proposed design represents only 60% lot coverage. Applying the ordinance to the average lot size in Thomas Square in a TC-1 district, abutting a TC-1 district, would allow a maximum lot coverage of over 80%.
3. (a) It should be acknowledged that the petitioner has done a detailed study of historic precedents and demonstrated that the proposed design is within the dimensional range of historic churches within the neighborhood both in terms of lot coverage and height.
 - (d) No evidence is presented for substantial detriment in the staff's comments.
 - Term "scope" is unclear in meaning with regard to the standards of the ordinance, historic precedent and the overall *substantial detriment* claim.
 - The claim of "overshadowing" adjacent properties is unsubstantiated.
 - Evidence, in fact, shows that the area requested for increased height for the sloped roof will cause no additional shadows on adjacent parcels at any time of day or year.
4. (a) There are, in fact, exceptional conditions associated with this property with regard to setbacks:
 - The site has multiple frontages on three streets: 37th, Drayton and Dekalb Streets.
 - The site fronts a peculiar street condition that has by use been functioning as a service lane.
 - Dekalb Street is peculiar within the district and exists only in this one block.
 - All parcels on both sides of the Dekalb Street right-of-way have built up to (or over) the right-of-way line, and are not set back. 5 structures currently exist in this condition.
 - The location of the proposed variance mirrors the location of original structures that were previously on this particular site.
 - (c) All of the conditions listed above are, in fact, peculiar to this particular piece of property.
 - (d) The staff's statement in the April 25th report is a matter of opinion as no evidence is presented for substantial detriment. This statement also directly contradicts the published MPC Staff Report dated April 3rd, which states:

"In consideration of the maximum building footprint and side yard setback variance requests, staff finds that these variances are unlikely to cause detriment to surrounding uses and can be in keeping with the overall character of the area."

5. (a) There are in fact extraordinary conditions with regard to *size* and *frontages*:
- The average lot in Thomas Square is 5,550 square feet. The subject property is 23,086, making this interpretation of the dimensional standard irreconcilable with the size of the parcel.
 - The site additionally has street frontages on three streets, requiring the 70% standard for building frontages and making the footprint standard as interpreted unachievable.

(b) There is in fact a hardship in applying this interpretation of the standard to this piece of property:

- The interpretation results in allowing only 5,500 S.F. of ground floor development on a site that is over 400% larger than the average lot in Thomas Square.
- In the proposal, the combined square footage of all buildings on the site will result in a ground floor coverage of only 60%, which is below what is allowed on an average lot.

(d) The staff's statement is a matter of opinion as no evidence is presented for *substantial detriment*. This statement also directly contradicts the published MPC Staff Report Dated April 3rd, which stated:

"In consideration of the maximum building footprint and side yard setback variance requests, staff finds that these variances are unlikely to cause detriment to surrounding uses and can be in keeping with the overall character of the area."

Staff Recommendation:

- Terminology "monumental" should not be used as it is leading in its connotation. "Civic or Institutional" is the terminology of the Mid-City Ordinance.
- The report states that the structure has "*not been submitted for review or even designed yet.*" The structure has, in fact, been designed to an appropriate level for this stage of approval.
- The design of the structure, including elevations with height and mass information, have been submitted to the MPC.
- The project's site plan has been reviewed twice by City of Savannah SPR.
- A full General Development Plan has been submitted to the MPC.
- The applicant has met with the Historic Preservation Officer to discuss the project and the appropriate submittal sequence and procedures for final COA review.
- Acknowledgement of the extensive public process, community outreach and engagement with MPC staff is not included in the current report as it was in the previous report.
- Variances are necessary for a project that will be appropriate to the historic context and the unique conditions pertaining to this site.