



**JERSEY CITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

130 Summit Avenue H20-315

(The former) Saint John's Episcopal Church

Individual Municipal Landmark

Key Contributing Resource; State & National Register Eligible

Bergen Hill Historic District

Adaptive Re-use, New Construction of Residential Addition

Applicant:
BLDGup Management LLC c/o Ben Lo Piccolo
Development Group LLC
337 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07302

Owner:
Garden State Episcopal Development Corporation
118 Summit Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07304

A Certificate of Appropriateness is granted for the adaptive re-use and rehabilitation of the former *Saint John's Church*, an individual municipal landmark, certified for individual inclusion on the State and National Registers, a key, contributing resource in the *Bergen Hill Historic District*, and the proposed, associated new construction as shown on the drawings entitled Architectural Plans entitled *Hilltop View @ St John's* dated 10/21/20, signed by Alex Merlucci RA as well as the attached presentation package of renderings, materials, details, elevations and plans, entitled *Hilltop View at Saint John's Zoning Board + Historic Preservation Presentation dated 01.11.2021*.

The Commission, noting the church's architectural importance as well as its important religious, cultural and social contributions to the City notes that conversion to residential units, as well as the construction of a new residential addition to the East and North of the building, will help to preserve the church and will allow for future generations to appreciate this important, character defining resource in the State and National Register Eligible *Bergen Hill Historic District*.

The church was constructed in the Gothic Revival Style in 1870, with later alterations and additions, including the three westernmost bays, narthex and porch of 1894 and is an important example of the principles of the Ecclesiological or High Church Movement in Episcopalian architecture and worship. The Church is noted both for its local architectural significance and for its important community based role in the civil rights and anti-war movements during the rectorship of the Reverend Robert Castle from 1960-1968.

The parish was suppressed in 1994 and worship in the Episcopal Tradition ceased at that time. For a brief period the church was used for services of other congregations, but successive owners the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, the Trustees of the Episcopal Church Pension Fund and the Garden State Episcopal CDC were unable to find a tenant or a purchaser interested in continuing the use of the building as a house of worship. It was Staff's considered opinion and recommendation that, given the current state of the building, and the lack of interest demonstrated over the past quarter century in using the church as a place of worship, that a residential conversion is an appropriate alternative to continued demolition by neglect and the possible loss of this important character defining building in the Bergen Hill (SR NR Eligible) Historic District. The proposed residential conversion will support the exterior rehabilitation of the church and the stabilization, repair, restoration, and reconstruction of deteriorated, damaged, missing, original and historic fabric at the exterior of the building as is appropriate and in conformance with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

At the completion of the project, the exterior of the building will appropriately reflect the church's historic character after 1894, when the church was extended westward to include the narthex and porch.

The connected, proposed, new five story construction on the site, to the North and to the East, will reflect the materials and recall design elements of the church while being an obvious although compatible modern building. The building respects the proportions of the adjacent church and recalls the former parish house which once existed adjacent to the church. The associated, new, five story, stylized collegiate gothic revival construction will also serve as a buffer between the new, modern vernacular, nine story building under construction at 136 Summit Avenue and the Church, as well as the surrounding State and National Register Eligible *Bergen Hill Historic District*.

It was noted that the new construction at Summit Avenue does not replicate historic buildings, but uses a modern Collegiate Gothic Revival style in order to reinforce its compatibility with the adjacent church while being a clearly modern building. It is Staff's opinion that the building's height, width, mass and proportions at the Summit Avenue elevation are compatible with the adjacent church, do not overwhelm the building or prevent the appreciation of the unique architecture of the Key, Contributing resource. Furthermore it was opinion of staff that the proposed five story building shall serve as a significant buffer between the adjacent new construction, the Church, and the adjoining State, National, and Municipal Register (Eligible) Bergen Hill Historic District.

The more modern design at the Clifton Place elevation is appropriately incorporated into the site and uses the same materials and similar window and door arrangements as the proposed Summit Avenue façade. The simplified treatment at Clifton Place is not detailed as a secondary or minor façade, but stands on its own merits as an appropriate building for the site since it does not face directly into the eligible historic district but is harmoniously tied to the new construction at Summit Avenue.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation and the Guidelines and Standards for Restoration as applicable shall guide the appropriate work at the Church. The Standards for New Construction shall guide work at the additions.

Based on the testimony of Ms. Ulana Zakalak, the applicant's historic preservation professional consultant, and the presentation by Alex Merlucci, the project architect, staff strongly recommended that the proposed rehabilitation of the former Saint John's Episcopal Church and the associated new construction on the lot which will front both Summit Avenue and Clifton Place be granted all necessary variances due to the particular nature of the rehabilitation of the former church for use as a residential building and the related adjacent new construction on the site. HPC Staff recommended approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness and recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment with conditions. The motion to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness and a positive recommendation to the Zoning Board was made by Commissioner Blazak and seconded by Commissioner Lewis. The Commission, voting 8-0-0 in favor of the motion to approve this Certificate of Appropriateness, issues its positive recommendation to the Jersey City Zoning Board, provided that:

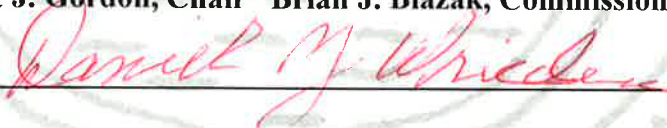
1. The architect, Alex Merlucci, of Inglese Architecture + Engineering, shall be retained during construction and shall submit a signed and sealed letter representing and noting that site construction was consistent with work approved under this recommendation before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
2. The applicant's historic preservation professional, Ulana Zakalak, of Zakalak Associates, shall be retained during the course of the project in order to consult with the architect on the proper rehabilitation of the Church in regards to materials, means, and methods of preservation, repair, restoration, replacement, and/or reconstruction as necessary and appropriate.
3. All color and material samples are subject to final approval by Staff after a comprehensive onsite examination before purchase and installation. The color of painted architectural elements at the church shall be based on site evidence and the analysis of existing historic and original fabric.
4. All window and exterior door shop drawings shall be submitted to the Architect and Historic Preservation Consultant for approval and then submitted to Staff for approval before purchase and installation
5. All brick, mortar, and cast stone samples, as well as any cast stone shop drawings shall be submitted to the Architect and Historic Preservation Consultant for approval and then submitted to Staff for approval before purchase and installation
6. Details, specifications, and material submissions not currently submitted to and approved by the HPC under this recommendation, or changed during the course of construction are remanded back to the HPO and, at their discretion, may be remanded back to the HPC.



7. Construction drawings, noting materials and finishes, cross referenced with the material sample board, are to be reviewed by, approved by, and signed by the Historic Preservation Officer or HPC Staff for compliance with the issued approval before construction permits are applied for and issued.
8. Any changes or deviations from the approved drawings are to be clearly bubbled on the construction drawings and noted in an accompanying signed and sealed letter from the architect addressed to Staff.
9. Upon final approval of this Certificate by the HPC, any deviations from the granted approval must be approved by the HPC, except in cases of emergency affecting the public safety, health and welfare. Requests for deviations from this recommendation for approval are to be submitted through written request of the architect.
10. That a new slate roof, matching the original slate roof, be installed at the church in compliance with the HISTORIC MATERIALS INSTALLATION DEED RESTRICTION in the matter of 130 Summit Avenue as prepared by Charles J. Harrington, III Esq. which allows for the new slate roof to be installed within five (5) years of the issuance of a permanent Certificate of Occupancy.
11. The installation of appropriate window glazing at the primary, front, facade which recalls the original stained glass in a traditional pattern, is subject to a further application and approval by the Jersey City Historic Preservation officer at a later date.
12. The spacing of the hyphen between the buttresses is to be examined; and if possible, is to be pulled back from the buttresses to the east and west in order to reveal more of the original church building and to underscore the buttresses at the wall.
13. A window film to be approved by the, Jersey City Historic Preservation Officer, will be installed at the parking level in order to obscure the interior lighting at the garage.
14. Church lighting shall be discreetly placed under the porch and site lighting shall be placed as inconspicuously as is possible. All exterior lighting is remanded to the Historic Preservation Officer for review and approval.
15. The applicant will commit to continuing to work with the community so that the community may visit the art and artifact installation at the front lobby in the new construction at 130 Summit Avenue, highlighting the history of the Church and that requests from local community leaders and members of the general public for access will be honored by the owner, consent shall not unreasonably be withheld.

Certificate of Appropriateness Number H20-315 Approved 8-0-0 Issued 2/23/2021

Robert J. Gordon, Chair Brian J. Blazak, Commissioner



Attest: Daniel M. Wrieden, Historic Preservation Officer

