



Review and Appeals Committee
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August 15, 2017

Joanne Sproule
222 3rd Avenue North
SASKATOON SK S7K 0J5

Dear Ms. Sproule:

I am writing to provide you a copy of the recommendation by the Review and Appeals Committee for the Third Avenue United Church in the City of Saskatoon as per Section 15 of *The Heritage Property Act*.

If the City requires further clarification on the report, please contact myself at the coordinates above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gareth Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline under the name.

Gareth Evans
Secretary, Review and Appeals Committee

Attachment

Third Avenue United Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Municipal Heritage Property Review



Report prepared by the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation Review and Appeals Committee

August 2017

Background

On December 9, 2016 the City of Saskatoon issued a Notice of Intention (NOI) to Designate Third Avenue United Church, located at 304-3rd Avenue North in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, as a Municipal Heritage Property. On January 20, 2017, John Orr formally served the City of Saskatoon with an objection to the NOI in accordance with s.13 of the *Heritage Property Act*. City Council referred the matter to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation Review and Appeals Committee for their recommendation.

A public hearing was held on July 18, 2017 at 103-308 4th Avenue in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The Review and Appeals Committee received five written submissions and heard verbal testimony from the proponent, the objector and several additional presenters.

Authority and Scope of Decision Making

The Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation Review and Appeals Committee has authority under Section 5.1(f) of the *Heritage Property Act* to “review public objections to proposed heritage designations...by convening public hearings and reporting on its findings and recommendations,” following the process outlined in Sections 14 and 15. When making a recommendation for or against heritage designation the Review and Appeals Committee considers the property’s architectural, historical, cultural, environmental, archaeological, paleontological, aesthetic and scientific value. The Review and Appeals Committee recommendations are non-binding.

Proponent

The proponent’s written submission and oral testimony presented support for designating Third Avenue United Church as a municipal heritage property. The case for designation drew from the Statement of Significance written by the City of Saskatoon, which identified the building’s architectural, cultural and historical significance.

Architecturally, Third Avenue United Church is unique in its construction both externally and internally. Built in 1911, the church is English Gothic style with pointed arches, lancet windows and doorways, two tall towers, hammer-beam rafters and stained glass windows. The stonework and trimmings on the exterior are made of Tyndall stone from Winnipeg. The base and foundation are also made of native limestone originally processed within 8km of the city. Third Avenue United Church was considered to be an engineering triumph at the time. The building has been and remains relatively unaltered.

Historically, the church reflects Saskatoon’s pre-WWII time period. The early 20th century was a boom time for Saskatoon and the city was slated to become a “hub city” in the prairies. Third Avenue United Church is a symbol of the aspirations of the city’s early settlers.

The historical and cultural significance of the church lies in its range of use through time. In addition to functioning as a place of worship since 1911, Third Avenue United Church was and is also a venue for concerts, political events, public lectures and recitals. Notable historical events held at the church include speeches by T.A. Crerar, leader of the National Progressive Party in 1921, and American Pool Expert, Aaron Sapiro in 1923 who inspired the Saskatchewan

Grain Growers Association and the Farmer's Union to form the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. More contemporary events include concerts by the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra and Children's Choir. Weddings, convocations and lunch-hour downtown activities are also held at the church.

According to the Statement of Significance and the proponents, the character defining elements of the property include:

- Its English Gothic style of architecture, evident in its lancet doorways and windows, towers, rafters, pillars, pointed arches and stained glass windows;
- Its overall massing and symmetry and the emphasis on verticality and light;
- Those elements that speak to its prairie history, including its use of local and prairie materials such as the limestone and Tyndall stone façade; and
- Those elements that speak to its status as a cultural landmark, including its location and orientation on its original lot.

Although not included in the property's character defining elements, some of the additional presentations in support of designation spoke about the acoustics of the property. According to members of the church's congregation, the acoustics of Third Avenue United Church are considered to be some of the best in the world. Indeed, the acoustics help facilitate its use as an auditorium and concert venue today. Additionally, the Casavant organ is a remarkable feature of the church. The organ has over 2,000 pipes located both aboveground and underground, which carries the music throughout the entire church when played.

According to members of the congregation, the church is currently being used and cared for by a group of individuals, who do not own the property.

Objection

An objection to the heritage designation of Third Avenue United Church by John Orr was based on his inability to obtain financing for redevelopment of the property. When John Orr purchased the property in 2013, he agreed to seek heritage designation for Third Avenue United Church, but only after the property had been developed by him. At the hearing, Mr. Orr expressed his desire to turn Third Avenue United Church into a high rise building and displayed some of his plans. Mr. Orr explained that he was told by banks and other lenders that they would not lend him money for construction if the church had heritage designation. More recently, the legal ownership of Third Avenue United Church has been in dispute. At the time of the hearing, John Orr was not the legal owner of the property, but according to him the matter is still in dispute.

A lawyer representing one of the current owners, Dale Anderson, told the Review and Appeals Committee that the owners plan to sell the property immediately. The current owners would prefer that the property not be heritage listed as it may make it harder for them to sell it.

Despite ownership disputes and construction plans, both John Orr and the current owners agree that Third Avenue United Church should not be demolished. There is no dispute among any objectors that the church's character defining elements should be preserved.

Recommendation and Reason

The Review and Appeals Committee strongly recommends that the City of Saskatoon designate Third Avenue United Church a municipal heritage property.

Third Avenue United Church is quite a significant property architecturally, historically and culturally. However, the Review and Appeals Committee also find the property aesthetically significant. It is an example of exceptional craftsmanship and skill and, although subjective, is beautifully designed. Additionally, the significance of Third Avenue United Church is not temporally bound and continues to serve the community today in many ways, which contributes to the community's identity and social cohesion. Moreover, according to the Saskatchewan heritage building conservation officer, the property is of high quality and in good condition. There are few major structural issues that would deem the property unsafe or unusable.

There is no disagreement between the proponents and the objectors about the church's significance and both agree that the character defining elements of the property need to be preserved. Therefore the site's significance is not an issue. The actual issue is whether designation will hinder the owner's ability to receive financing. Given the uncertain future and ownership of the property, the Review and Appeals Committee believe that in order to assure that the character defining elements are preserved it must be designated. Designation should be put on the property prior to any redevelopment or sale in order to provide clear direction through any changes in ownership.

Considerations for Designation

If Saskatoon City Council proceeds with designation, the Review and Appeals Committee recommends that:

1. The City of Saskatoon revisit and further define the character defining elements, particularly as they relate to the massing, symmetry and orientation and whether the acoustics of the building need to be included.
2. Once the elements are further defined, the City of Saskatoon should discuss the character defining elements with the owner and agree on what elements should be retained particularly whether there is a need to include massing, symmetry and orientation.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Mushynsky

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Review and Appeals Committee consisting of Julie Mushynsky,
Laurie Burrows and Brent Lutz
August 11, 2017