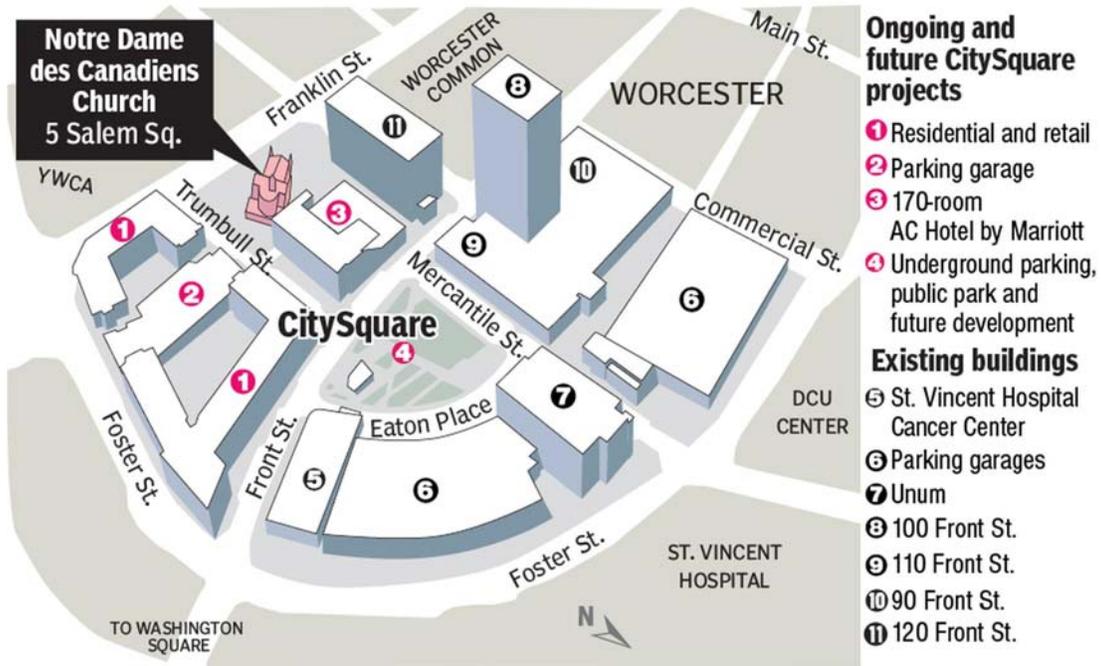


Preservation Worcester petition aims to save Notre Dame Church



Source: Leggat McCall Properties LLC

DON LANDGREN JR./T&G STAFF



Notre Dames des Canadiens Church in Worcester is seen in May, 2016. T&G File Photo/Christine Hochkeppel

By [Nick Kotsopoulos](#)
Telegram & Gazette Staff

WORCESTER - With a one-year demolition delay for the former Notre Dame des Canadiens Church set to expire in April, a local preservation organization is putting on a full-court press to rally support to save the downtown landmark.

Preservation Worcester has launched an online petition drive that calls on CitySquare II Development Co., the owner of the church, not to raze the historic structure and instead engage in a dialogue with interested parties to find a productive reuse for the structure.

The petition is also directed to Mayor Joseph M. Petty, the City Council and Leggat McCall Properties, development manager for CitySquare.

Deborah Packard, executive director of Preservation Worcester, said Tuesday that the [petition was posted at change.org](#) late last week and has already collected about 700 signatures.

She said Preservation Worcester has notified the Historical Commission of its petition and will ask the panel Thursday night to sign on to the petition.

"The response has really been tremendous," Ms. Packard said. "It's obvious that many people have an affinity for this church. It's an iconic structure that has been a landmark in the downtown for many years. People don't want to see it simply disappear."

In June, the Historical Commission unanimously rejected a request for a waiver to the city's demolition delay ordinance for Notre Dame Church, located within the CitySquare project area, saying that razing it would be detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city.

While the church is not listed on the state or national registers of historic places, it is listed on the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System. That made the church, which was built in 1929, subject to the city's demolition delay ordinance, which automatically puts a one-year hold on the razing of historic structures.

The one-year hold began with submission of the waiver application, which was filed April 15. That means demolition of the church, now located next to a 168-room, high-end hotel being built at CitySquare, can begin after April 15 this year, without the need for any kind of approval from the city.

Since the vote taken by the Historical Commission, Ms. Packard said, Preservation Worcester has made attempts to reach out to representatives of CitySquare II Development and Leggat McCall to engage in a dialogue, but there has been little communication with them.

She said many people want to see Notre Dame Church saved because of its historical and cultural significance and the "irreplaceable beauty it offers to the heart of the city." She said the church served for three-quarters of a century as the epicenter of Worcester's once large French-Canadian community.