

Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA)  
Monday, July 31, 2017

# City Hall Notebook: Save-the-church crowd expected at Planning Board review on Notre Dame property

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Posted Jul 31, 2017 at 6:20 PM Updated Jul 31, 2017 at 10:52 PM

Those wanting to save Notre Dame des Canadiens Church from a date with the wrecking ball are encouraging people to show up at Wednesday night's Planning Board meeting and offer their two cents' worth on a proposal to build a residential-retail development on the 1.34-acre site of the church property at Salem Square.

The Planning Board will review the definitive site plan for the project, which calls for razing the historic downtown church and constructing in its place a four-story building with 84 apartments. It also calls for 2,025 square feet of retail space at Franklin and Church streets.

The definitive site plan application was filed by Roseland A Mack-Cali Co., which is the same company that is constructing 370 units of market-rate housing within CitySquare.

The Notre Dame property is owned by CitySquare II Development Co. LLC, the developer of CitySquare, but it gave Roseland authorization to file the definitive site plan application for the property.

Such an action often signals that the applicant has an option to purchase the property if the plans are approved by the Planning Board.

A group that wants to save Notre Dame Church is appealing through social media for people to show up at the Planning Board hearing and make their feelings known.

"We need real answers!" it said. "Will they help preserve part of Notre Dame? What is the traffic impact of another big project? Do they care about the historical character of downtown? What will be the impact on our community of more cars? How will more apartments downtown impact our schools?"

"Come tell the Worcester Planning Board and the new company that's taking over Notre Dame Church it's better to renovate than demolish our history," it went on to say. "Downtown Worcester will never be the same if we let them destroy this building."

Last year, the Historical Commission refused to waive the one-year demolition delay ordinance for the church. That delay expired April 15, meaning the building can now be taken down at any time.

Katie A. Cruz, project manager with Hancock Associates, said the project involves no changes to surrounding streets other than proposed curb openings for driveway entrances and relocation of street parking along Trumbull Street.

She said the vehicle trips per day for the proposed development will not exceed volumes projected as part of the overall CitySquare development. As a result, she said, the new development will not exceed the projected impact on the surrounding streets.

Ms. Cruz added that while no accessory parking is required for such a project in a Business-General zone, 86 surface parking spaces are proposed for the project, including four handicap spaces.