



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

March 10, 2016

REQUEST: Landmark Designation: St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church, 655 N. Bentalou St.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Lauren E. Schiszik

PETITIONER: St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church

OWNER: St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

Site Conditions/Architectural Description:

The property consists of a two story tall stone Gothic Revival church. The three bay wide façade faces west towards N. Bentalou St., and features a prominent buttressed belltower on the north bay, an ornate loggia entrance surmounted by a large central rose window in the central bay, and a smaller tower with a lancet window on the south bay. There is a one-story rear addition. The church sits on 0.56 acres, with ample lawn on the rear and south side of the building.

General Area: The property is located a block north of Edmondson Ave, at the intersection of N. Bentalou St. and Lanvale St. It is located one block west of a railroad. The surrounding block is comprised of two-story two bay wide porch-front brick rowhouses constructed in the 1920s. While the neighborhood is not designated as a historic district locally or nationally, it shares architectural characteristics with other designated neighborhoods.

HISTORY

There are no previous Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The proposal is consistent with the City of Baltimore's Comprehensive Master Plan, specifically: PLAY Goal 1: Strengthen Stewardship of Historical and Cultural Resources; LIVE Objective 4: Protect and Enhance the Preservation of Baltimore's Historic Buildings and Neighborhoods.

ANALYSIS

This is the second public hearing for this structure as part of the Baltimore City Landmark designation process. The first hearing occurred when the CHAP Commission reviewed and recommended approval of Landmark designation on February 9, 2016. CHAP's landmark report is attached to this staff report.

This Landmark Designation has been reviewed by the CHAP Commission and is consistent with planning initiatives.

The CHAP Commission found the following: The building today known as St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church was constructed in 1922 for the German Reformed Immanuel Church congregation, which was founded in 1866. The building was designed by John Freund, an early 20th century Baltimore architect who designed a number of Gothic Revival churches. In 1956, the church was sold to the trustees of the St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church. Spencer G. Dobson was the founding pastor, and following his death, his son Harold L. Dobson served as the pastor. The church has a history of activism in civil rights, alleviating poverty, and founding one of the city's first African American church-based nursery schools. It has also served as a leader in local and national Baptist conferences. Church leaders participated in demonstrations to desegregate Gwynn Oak amusement park in the 1960s, and leading the Black Protestant Coalition Against United Way in the 1980s to gain more African American input in the dispersal of funds from that charity.

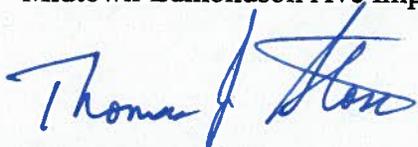
Based upon the historical context and architectural design of St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church, the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation found that it meets CHAP Landmark designation criteria for the following standards:

B. A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

Notification of this hearing has been provided to the church and posted on the property. The following entities were notified about the consideration of this item at the February CHAP hearing: Alliance of Rosemont Community Associations, AIA Baltimore, Baltimore Heritage Inc., Baltimore National Heritage Area, Councilman Welch, Evergreen Protective Association, Midtown-Edmondson Ave Improvement Association, Preservation Maryland.



Thomas J. Stosur
Director