

Subject: Application to alter the former St. Brigid's Church at 310 St. Patrick Street, a property designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*

File Number: ACS2024-PDB-RHU-0077

Report to Built Heritage Committee on 12 November 2024

and Council 27 November 2024

Submitted on October 31, 2024 by Court Curry, Manager, Right of Way, Heritage, and Urban Design Services, Planning, Development and Building Services

Contact Person: Ashley Kotarba, Heritage Planner II, Heritage Planning Branch

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Ward: Rideau-Vanier (12)

Objet: Demande visant à modifier l'ancienne église St. Brigid, située au 310, rue St-Patrick, une propriété désignée en vertu de la partie IV de la *Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario*.

Dossier : ACS2024-PDB-RHU-0077

Rapport au Comité du patrimoine bâti

le 12 novembre 2024

et au Conseil le 27 novembre 2024

Soumis le 31 octobre 2024 par Court Curry, Gestionnaire, Services des emprises, du patrimoine, et du design urbain, Direction générale des services de la planification, de l'aménagement et du bâtiment

Personne ressource : Ashley Kotarba, Urbaniste II, Planification du Patrimoine

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Quartier : Rideau-Vanier (12)

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Built Heritage Committee recommend that Council:

1. Approve the application for alteration at 310 St. Patrick Street according to plans by Barry Padolsky Associates Inc dated September 15, 2024.
2. Delegate authority for minor design changes to the Program Manager, Heritage Planning Branch, Planning, Development and Building Services.
3. Approve the issuance of the heritage permit with a two-year expiry date from the issuance unless otherwise extended by Council.
4. Direct staff to bring forward a report according to Section 34.3 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* once the removal is complete.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité du patrimoine bâti recommande au Conseil :

1. D'approuver la demande de modification pour le 310, rue St-Patrick, conformément aux plans de Barry Padolsky Associates Inc. qui datent du 15 septembre 2024;
2. De déléguer au gestionnaire de programme, Planification du patrimoine, Direction générale des services de la planification, de l'aménagement et du bâtiment, le pouvoir d'apporter de légères modifications à la conception;
3. D'approuver la délivrance d'un permis patrimonial d'une durée de deux ans à compter de la date de délivrance, sauf si le permis est prolongé par le Conseil;
4. De demander au personnel de présenter un rapport une fois les bancs enlevés, conformément au paragraphe 34.3 de la *Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario*.

BACKGROUND

The property at 310 St. Patrick Street, previously known as 314 St. Patrick Street, is located on the southwest corner of St. Patrick and Cumberland Streets. The site contains the former St. Brigid's Church, now used as an event space known as Saint Brigid's Centre for the Arts. The property is located in the Lowertown neighbourhood of Ottawa (Documents 1-2) and is within the boundaries of the Lowertown West Heritage

Conservation District. The property was designated in 1981 under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. By-law 180-89 was passed by City Council in 1989 to amend the 1981 designation to include the interior of the building. Several easements are also in place with the Ontario Heritage Trust to protect both the interior and exterior of the building.

The former St. Brigid's Church is an eclectic Victorian style building with Gothic Revival form and Renaissance Baroque Revival details. Constructed in 1889-1890 to the designs of J.K. Bowes, the building features limestone construction with a pitched roof and two towers of differing height. Historically, the church was constructed in response to overcrowding at Lowertown's Notre Dame Basilica. St. Brigid's became the parish for the Irish Catholic working class of Lowertown while Notre Dame Basilica served the French-Canadian population. The building is a significant landmark in Lowertown with its towers visible from a wide distance. The designation of this building also includes its elaborate interior which includes vaulted ceilings, polychromed walls, carved woodwork, pews, organ, altar and stained-glass windows. See Document 3 for full Statement of Cultural Heritage Value.

In 2007, the church was deconsecrated and was sold to members of Ottawa's Irish community to establish St. Brigid's Centre for the Arts and the National Irish Canadian Cultural Centre. The space is now used for various art, cultural and social events including concerns, art exhibitions, concerts and private events as well as a variety of Irish cultural programming. As the building is no longer used as a place of worship, the adaptive re-use of the building has been limited by the specific language used for the interior designation, which essentially restricts to the space to being used for worship-like purposes. The main issue is related to the pews which are fixed in place and not universally accessible. This places a significant constraint on the flexibility of the space. In 2007, a series of pews were removed near the altar to make space for a temporary stage. This provided some options in terms of programming the space, however the remaining pews which occupy most of the nave of the church continue to be a challenge.

Over the past several years, Heritage Planning staff have been working with the owners, ward councillor and community on finding uses and discussing suitable alterations to the building that may garner more interest for rental income in order to support the ongoing conservation of the building. In support of these initiatives, the City of Ottawa commissioned an assessment report of the structural stability of the building and also the heritage attributes. This report assisted all in understanding the immediate concerns from both a structural perspective but also a restoration perspective. The findings of the report confirmed that significant investment is required to maintain the

building, and some leniency is required to make better use of the space and create a financially viable adaptive reuse. The removal of the pews was seen as a relatively minor intervention that could reap large benefits for the long-term viability of the space.

As a result of these discussions and assessments, the property owners have applied to remove the pews from the nave of the church. These pews are included as an attribute in the designation.

This report has been prepared because removal of a heritage attribute of a property designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* requires the approval of City Council. The proposal will also require a permit from the Ontario Heritage Trust.

DISCUSSION

The heritage permit application is for the removal of all the remaining pews on the ground floor, and the installation of new hardwood flooring in its place. After removal, each pew will be labelled and stored off site while plans are made to repurpose them. The new hardwood flooring will be installed in a diagonal pattern to create barrier-free flooring and to indicate the new intervention.

The pews are anchored into platforms that sit two inches above the main flooring of the building. These pews are not accessible, nor movable. Options for making them moveable were discussed however given the way they are installed; this is not possible.

A salvage plan has been developed to find uses for the removed pews. A limited number of pews will be relocated into the basement to be used in the pub and the multipurpose room. The remaining pews will be offered to other congregations, museums or the public. See Document 4 for the proposed intervention.

Recommendation 1 – Alteration

Heritage Planning staff have reviewed the application to alter 310 St. Patrick Street and find that the proposal is generally compliant and consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, and recommend approval of the proposed alteration for the following reasons:

- The removal of the pews provides for more flexibility for the space. This will allow the building to be used for a wider variety of events and bring in more rental income. This money will in turn support the preservation and rehabilitation of the building.

- Some of the pews from the ground floor will remain in the building. A select number will be relocated to the basement for use in the pub and multipurpose room. Further, the existing pews in the organ loft will remain.
- The language of the bylaw is restrictive and does not consider alternate uses for the building. As an older designation bylaw created at a time when the building was being used as a church, there was likely little consideration given to an adaptive re-use of the building. Today, heritage staff write bylaws to be flexible enough to both conserve the heritage value of the building, but also provide some flexibility for alternate situations for adaptive reuse.

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

City Council adopted Parks Canada's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada ("Standards and Guidelines") in 2008. This document establishes a consistent set of conservation principles and guidelines for projects involving heritage resources.

The proposal conserves the historic place by retaining the designated building while providing flexibility for new uses in the space. The Standards & Guidelines recommends finding a new use that requires minimal or no change to a heritage property's character-defining elements. While the removal of the pews from the nave will affect a heritage attribute, they will not all be lost. Many pews will remain in the building in either the organ loft, or the basement. Further, the remainder of interior attributes will continue to be protected.

As a result of the pew removal, the flooring underneath will need to be repaired and new flooring installed where the pews were attached to their bases. Installing new diagonal hardwood flooring will create a barrier-free floor in the nave, assisting to address some of the accessibility challenges faced by the building.

Finding a suitable use for the building outweighs the loss of the pews in the nave. The pew removal will provide a wider range of rental options which will in turn assist in the long-term preservation of the building.

As part of this alteration, the owners will need to obtain a permit from the Ontario Heritage Trust as directed by the easements on the property. The owners, with the assistance of the City have already engaged with the Ontario Heritage Trust about this proposal and do not anticipate any issues.

Provincial Policy Statement

Staff have reviewed this proposal and have determined that it is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2024.

Conclusion

Staff have reviewed the application for alteration at 310 St. Patrick Street in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines and have no objections to its approval. The removal of the pews will ensure the long-term viability of the building, helping to allow for new uses for the space.

Recommendation 2 - Minor Design Changes

Delegate authority for minor design changes to the Program Manager, Heritage Planning, Planning, Development and Building Services Department.

Minor design changes may emerge during the working drawing phase of a project. This recommendation is included to allow the Heritage Planning Branch to approve these changes should they arise.

Recommendation 3 - Permit Expiry

Issue the heritage permit with a two-year expiry date from the date of issuance.

The *Ontario Heritage Act* does not provide any timelines for the expiry of heritage permits. A two-year expiry date is recommended to ensure that the project is completed in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 4 – Re-consideration of heritage value

The *Ontario Heritage Act* requires that when the demolition or removal of a building or attribute designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* is complete, City Council must determine if the property continues to hold heritage value.

Following the removal of the pews, heritage staff will bring forward a report to make a recommendation on cultural heritage value and attributes. As per the *Ontario Heritage Act*, there are three options to choose from: maintain the existing Statement of Cultural Heritage Value, amend the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value, or repeal the designation bylaw. Staff do not anticipate significant changes to the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value as a result of this removal and anticipate recommending that Council maintain the designation on this property.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with implementing the report recommendation.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

The councillor is aware of this application.

CONSULTATION

Heritage Ottawa was notified of this application and offered the opportunity to provide comments.

The Lowertown Community Association participated in a meeting with the applicant on October 17, 2024.

Neighbours within 30 metres of the property were notified of this application and offered an opportunity to comment at the Built Heritage Committee meeting.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk implications.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

APPLICATION PROCESS TIMELINE STATUS

The statutory 90-day timeline for consideration of this application under the Ontario Heritage Act will expire on December 17, 2024

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 Location Map

Document 2 Site Photos

Document 3 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value




Document 4 Adaptive Re-Use Proposal

DISPOSITION

Office of the City Clerk, Council and Committee Services, to notify the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust, 10 Adelaide Street East, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 1J3) of Council's decision.

Document 1 Location Map



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|---|-----------|--|--------------------------------|
|  | | LOCATION MAP / PLAN DE LOCALISATION SITE PLAN / PLAN D'EMPLACEMENT | |
| D09-01-STPA310 | 24-1077-E |  | 310 rue St. Patrick St. |
| I:\COI\2024\Heritage\StPatrick_310 | | | |
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| REVISION / RÉVISION - 2024 / 09 / 26 | |  <small>NOT TO SCALE</small> | |

Document 2 Site Photos



Interior of the former St. Brigid's Church, looking towards the apse. 2023.



Side aisle of the former St. Brigid's Church showing pews. Credit: Barry Padolsky



Pew side profile in the former St. Brigid's Church. Credit: RMA+SH. 2023.



Pews in the former St. Brigid's Church. Credit: RMA+SH. 2023

Document 3 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

BY-LAW 129-81

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

St. Brigid's Church at 314 St. Patrick Street is recommended for designation as being of architectural interest. Erected in 1889-1890, this massive limestone structure with pitched roof and two towers of different heights was designed by J.K. Bowes in eclectic Victorian style, with basic Gothic Revival form and extensive Renaissance Baroque Revival detail.

It has historically served as a parish church for the Irish Catholic working-class residents of Lowertown. In its overall exterior appearance, the church is a significant reminder of their contribution to the growth of Bytown and Ottawa.

The interior of St. Brigid's Church is significant for its vaulted ceiling, polychromed interiors, carved woodwork, and stained glass. This designation includes floors, walls, ceiling, windows, and attached fixtures of all interior spaces including the nave and alter area with reredos, side aisle and transepts, the entrance area and organ gallery above. Of particular note are the polychromed interior painting schemes found beneath the existing layer of white paint. Physical investigation of historical photographs have discovered a wide variety of trompe-l'oeil painting techniques including marbelizing, stencil work and figurative murals employed on walls, iron columns, canvas panels, and vaulted ceilings. All decorative wood carving, including but not exclusive to, wainscoting, pews, confessionals, altar and organ are also to be preserved. This designation does not make reference to the basement or areas in the upper floors and towers.