

**Regarding:** 144 W Johnson Street – Mansion Hill Historic District – Adaptive reuse of Holy Redeemer School (designated landmark) to include restoration of the existing building and the construction of an addition to the west and the subdivision of the landmark site. 4th Ald. District  
**Contact:** Stephen Mar-Pohl  
**Legistar #29258**

**Date:** March 11, 2013  
**Prepared By:** Amy Scanlon, Preservation Planner

**General Information:**

The Applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the exterior alterations to the designated landmark located at 144 West Johnson Street in the Mansion Hill Historic District. The property is also located within the Mansion Hill National Register Historic District. The Applicant has met with Staff numerous times about the proposal to adaptively reuse the Holy Redeemer School Building as student housing. The Applicant is proposing to restore the exterior of the building and construct an addition on the west elevation. In addition, the portion of the existing landmark site directly adjacent to the Holy Redeemer School building is proposed for subdivision. The Landmarks Commission is charged with reviewing the proposal to grant or deny a Certificate of Appropriateness and to recommend approval or denial of the subdivision to the Plan Commission.

**Relevant Landmarks Ordinance sections:**

33.19(8) Maintenance of Landmarks, Landmark Sites and Historic Districts.

- (a) Every person in charge of an improvement on a landmark site or in an Historic District shall keep in good repair all of the exterior portions of such improvement and all interior portions thereof which, if not so maintained, may cause or tend to cause the exterior portions of such improvement to fall into a state of disrepair. This provision shall be in addition to all other provisions of law requiring such improvement to be kept in good repair.

33.19(10)(d) Regulation of Construction, Reconstruction, Exterior Alteration and Demolition.

The Commission shall act in these matters specifically as they regard the Mansion Hill Historic District in the manner specified by Madison General Ordinance, Sections 33.19(5)(b) and (c).

33.19(5)(b) Regulation of Construction, Reconstruction and Exterior Alteration.

- 1. [Not applicable for Landmarks Commission review.]
- 2. [Not applicable for Landmarks Commission review.]
- 3. [Not applicable for Landmarks Commission review.]
- 4. Upon filing of any application with the Landmarks Commission, the Landmarks Commission shall determine:
  - a. Whether, in the case of a designated landmark or landmark site, the proposed work would detrimentally change, destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement upon which said work is to be done; and
  - b. Whether, in the case of the construction of a new improvement upon a landmark site, the exterior of such improvement would adversely affect or

not harmonize with the external appearance of other neighboring improvements on such site; and

- c. Whether, in the case of any property located in an Historic District designated pursuant to the terms of Subsection (6)(d) hereunder, the proposed construction, reconstruction or exterior alteration does not conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district as duly adopted by the Common Council.

5. [Not applicable for Landmarks Commission review.]

6. [Not applicable for Landmarks Commission review.]

33.19(5)(c) Regulation of Demolition.  
[Not applicable for Landmarks Commission review.]

33.19(10)(e) Guideline Criteria for new Development in the Mansion Hill Historic District.

1. The gross volume of any new structure shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).
2. In the street elevation(s) of a new building, the proportion between the width and the height in the facade(s) shall be visually compatible with the buildings and the environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).
3. The proportions and relationships between width and height of the doors and windows in new street facade(s) shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).
4. The rhythm of solids to voids created by openings in the facade of the new structure should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).
5. All new street facades should blend with other buildings via directional expression. When adjacent buildings have a dominant vertical or horizontal expression, this expression should be carried over and reflected.

33.19(5)(i)1. Review proposed land divisions and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in Historic Districts to determine whether the proposed lot sizes negatively impact the historic character or significance of a landmark or landmark site and whether the proposed lot sizes are compatible with adjacent lot sizes and maintain the general lot size pattern of the Historic District. The Landmarks Commission review shall be advisory to the Plan Commission.

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#### **Staff Evaluation and Recommendations:**

In response to 33.19(8)(a), Staff believes the proposal to adaptively reuse this building will require cyclical maintenance to ensure the viability of the rental units and the health of the landmark building. In addition, this proposal seeks to restore the exterior of the building which will correct years of deferred maintenance and historically inappropriate repairs.

In response to 33.19(10)(d) which references 33.19(5)(b) and (c), the proposed work will obviously alter the exterior appearance of the building. Because the proposed addition touches the existing building in a narrow area of the rear elevation, Staff believes the addition will not detrimentally change, destroy or adversely affect the overall character of the landmark. The proposed exterior restoration will highlight the architectural features and enhance the overall character of the landmark. Staff believes that the exterior appearance of the proposed addition will harmonize with other improvements on the current landmark site and that the proposed project conforms to the objectives and design criteria of the Mansion Hill Historic District as discussed below.

In response to 33.19(10)(e), Staff believes that "development" means any new structure or exterior alteration to an existing structure and that "structure" means any structure, place, landscape, work of art or other object constituting a physical betterment of real property. For the purposes of discussion and evaluation, Staff believes the proposed addition is a new structure that is being constructed as an addition to an existing structure and therefore, this section applies to the review of the proposal.

- (10)(e)1. Staff believes that the gross volume of the proposed addition is visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related. Please review the visually related area (VRA) map that is attached to this report.
- (10)(e)2. The proposed addition does not affect the appearance of the street façade (West Johnson Street) as the addition is located on the rear; however, the rear elevation is visible from West Gorham Street so Staff believes this criterion should be evaluated. Staff finds that the proportion between the width and the height in the facades is visually compatible with the buildings and the environment with which it is visually related.
- (10)(e)3. For the same reason discussed above, Staff believes this criterion should be evaluated. Staff finds that the proportions and relationships between width and height of the doors and windows in new street facades are visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related. The proposed window and door sizes match the existing windows and doors or are of a similar proportion or size factor.
- (10)(e)4. Staff believes the rhythm of solids to voids created by openings in the facade of the new structure is visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related. The placement of windows and doors on the proposed addition reflects the architecture of the existing building. The proposed windows are grouped similarly to those of the existing building and wall space is adequate to provide visual rest while also providing some architectural feature/relief to large areas.
- (10)(e)5. For the same reason discussed above, Staff believes this criterion should be evaluated. Staff believes the new street facades blend with the existing building and other adjacent buildings via directional expression.

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the exterior alterations and the construction of the addition (new development) are met and recommends approval by the Landmarks Commission with the following conditions of approval:

1. The Applicant shall provide more detail for the appearance of the abandoned doors on the North elevation.
2. The Applicant shall provide more detail for the treatment of the blind panels as shown in the submission materials.
3. The Applicant shall consider the possibility of removing one window of the lobby at the first floor and basement on the west elevation and aligning the first floor and basement windows with the windows above.
4. The Applicant shall clarify the number of windows on the north side of the lobby. The elevation shows two, but the plans show four narrower windows.
5. The Applicant shall consider the possibility of aligning the east wall of the addition on the north elevation at the first and second floors. Staff would prefer that the east wall of the second and third floors be pushed to the east to align with the east wall of the first floor. This will also allow the windows to be more appropriately centered on each wall portion on the north elevation.
6. The Applicant shall provide more information about the site plan and site materials directly adjacent to the Holy Redeemer School building.
7. While not technically a condition of approval, it is prudent to request that a portion of the revenue generated by the adaptive reuse of the Holy Redeemer School Building be set aside specifically

for the cyclical maintenance and restoration of Holy Redeemer Church which will aid the Cathedral Parish in conformance with MGO 33.19(8)(a).

In response to 33.19(5)(i)1, Staff believes that the proposed lot size is of sufficient size to relate to the landmark that sits upon it and to the other adjacent lots in the historic district. Further, staff believes that the proposed lot size does not negatively impact the historic character or significance of the landmark or landmark site. The Landmarks Commission might discuss the possible future land use situations that might arise from this subdivision request.

Staff believes that the Landmarks Commission should recommend to the Plan Commission that the Landmarks Commission approves the subdivision as shown in the Certified Survey Map (undated).

**AGENDA # 1**

City of Madison, Wisconsin

**REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION**

**PRESENTED:** March 11, 2013

**TITLE:** 144 West Johnson Street – Mansion Hill Historic District – Adaptive Reuse of Holy Redeemer School (designated landmark) to Include Restoration of the Existing Building and the Construction of a New Addition to the West and the Subdivision of the Landmark Site. 4<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (29258)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Amy Scanlon, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** March 11, 2013

**ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Stu Levitan, Chair; Erica Gehrig, Vice Chair; David McLean, Marsha Rummel, Jason Fowler and Michael Rosenblum.

**SUMMARY:**

Registered in support and wishing to speak were Dennis Ganser, Stephen Mar-Pohl, Attorney Michael Christopher and Ald. Mike Verveer, representing District 4. Registered in support and available to answer questions were John Kothe, Mark Landgraf and Kevin Page, all representing Cathedral Parish.

Registered and speaking in opposition were Jeff Ripp, Eugene Devitt, representing the Mansion Hill Neighborhood; Gail Geib, Rosemary Lee, Manuel Fuentes, Franny Ingebritson, Pedro Rosales, Heidi Figueroa-Vilez, Norma Morreno, Norman Fuentes, Terri Hix, Micaela Mendez and Nilda Rivera Colón.

Attorney Michael Christopher stated that the staff report covers all the key elements the Commission needs to consider. He noted that the restoration is in keeping with the historic character of the landmark and that the addition is compatible with the historic nature. Att. Christopher explained that the proposal is consistent with the guidelines of the Mansion Hill Historic District and the Preservation Plan. He sees the Landmarks Commission and his client as being in a partnership to restore this building while maintaining its character and compatibility.

Rummel stated she is interested in some recent emails she received about the interior of the third floor auditorium and while not the Commission’s jurisdiction, the space is a cultural asset that could benefit the community. She asked if the development team considered trying to incorporate the third floor auditorium and space in their plans?

Stephen Mar-Pohl replied that the project is seeking historic tax credits through the National Park Service and that the project is bound by those standards in addition to the Landmarks Ordinance. He distributed additional documentation with elevation information showing a total of 14 skylights for daylighting inside the fourth floor. He explained that while planning the addition they have been very mindful of respecting the historic nature of the building in terms of scale, mass, materials, rhythm and the relationship between solids and voids. He explained that sheet metal was removed from the cornices at the tower of the main building that was covering

some beautiful wood detailing. The paint scheme, windows, cornices and other wood trim will match historical photos to the best of their abilities. He explained that the intent is to restore the masonry to the greatest extent possible knowing there are great challenges to find a good match and that they are very conscious of the need for maintaining as much of the original building fabric as possible since the material is just not available. The windows will be restored.

He explained that the addition is diminutive to the main structure; it is shorter, less broad, less massive with the main entrance on the north elevation. The original side entrance to the building is currently blank; they are still studying what the original conditions were at that location but it will be restored in a complementary style to what was originally there. The roofs will be replaced. The south elevation shows the stair tower and blind panels with a possible change in wall plane maybe by ½” or ¼” to give them a bit of a shadow line to help break up the mass.

He further explained that current schematics do not show any retention of the auditorium. It is their intent to alter the stage slightly to bring in some units to this area that will go up rather high. The gymnasium has a large common space in the center that will have apartments on either side, and two-story apartments within the gym. As you walk through the doors to what was the gym you will see that space open up; the ceilings, the volumes, and the rest of the gymnasium behind will be redeveloped for apartments as well. The balcony will see significant alterations. Levitan asked if elements of the stage and auditorium could be removed and put to another use. Mar-Pohl replied that it could be a possibility, but not one that they have considered. Levitan inquired about clear titles and the ownership of the property. Landgraf replied that Cathedral Parish owns the property and is the applicant. Gehrig inquired about the gymnasium, asking if the State Historic Preservation Office has determined the gymnasium to be a character-defining space in the building. Mar-Pohl responded not officially but they all agree that that is the case. The Commission can feel comfortable that if they do indeed pursue the tax credits, there will be a body overseeing the restoration. He has no reason to believe the applicant would abandon the pursuit of these tax credits.

Mr. Mar-Pohl explained that in response to the staff report, the idea for the abandoned doors to the north will be modified significantly; they will remove the later awning over the top; he is looking for documentation about the alcove on the north facing Johnson Street; the property as it is currently delineated is rather limited and they have a requirement to have public walk space in front of the building; approximately 15-feet of concrete will be provided with some greenspace up front; included in the budget for this project there is a reserve fund for maintenance and proper treatment of the Holy Redeemer Church as mentioned in the staff report.

Rosemary Lee spoke in opposition to the conversion of this landmark historic site and provided the following comments. It appears from the Monsignor's comments at the March 6 meeting that the Diocese has woefully neglected the necessary upkeep and repairs to this 1892 building. Mr. Landgraf gave a tour of the school with that tour confirming the fact the school is in awful shape. To the best of her knowledge the congregation has not been shown any interior plans of how the building will function. The major issue is how will students visiting in their apartments affect the functions of the church, particularly for weddings and funerals which often occur on weekends. Other issues include what affect the new use and function will have on the neighborhood, added density, traffic, noise, parking of bicycles and cars and mopeds, etc. This school has been the heart of the Holy Redeemer gathering space and the parishioners sacrificed their hard-earned money to contribute to and support their church. It does not seem honest or fair that the Diocese has not taken the very valid and serious concerns of those who support Holy Redeemer with their volunteering and financial contributions into consideration. For example, at the March 6<sup>th</sup> meeting the Monsignor did not want a group from the church with an alternate plan to be allowed to speak because, as the Monsignor stated, only the student housing is under formal City consideration. That is shutting out parishioners who work hard to support that church. If the landmark ordinances are to be upheld and enforced, this request should be denied. This is the destruction of a historic

landmark disguised as renovation and reconstruction. Woeful avoidance of upkeep and repair of a 121 year old landmark building should not be rewarded by this Commission with approval to substantially alter forever the remarkable, venerable and much beloved historic site. Don't make a mockery of our landmarks ordinance by approving this. This changes the character and size of the building. You don't just add on so many square feet to a historic building and tell us it's going to maintain its historic integrity. Be consistent. If you're so worried about windows in an old house you should be worried about the integrity of an old building that is sacred to the hearts of many people in this town.

Gail Geib addressed her comments specifically to Ordinance 33.19, Maintenance of Landmark Sites and Buildings in Historic Districts. Her comments follow. When evaluating historic public buildings, the exterior can't be separated from significant interior spaces that were originally intended to be meaningful to the community in some way; people identify with interior spaces or establish a personal connection that leads to preservation; another run of the mill downtown apartment building is unlikely to foster those personal connections on the part of student tenants; if the plan being considered today is approved without amendment, the gorgeous third floor auditorium of the building will be completely destroyed; this was created as a permanent gathering space that would solidify their sense of community; it could be argued that the auditorium is a big part of why the school exists; it's always been a nexus for the immigrant community and adds to the vitality of the neighborhood; the importance to the German community is evident in the superb quality of construction methods and building materials, it's like a perfect little jewel box and is the only intact 19<sup>th</sup> Century meeting space in the City of Madison. It is truly a character defining interior space and this is what makes the school a contributing building to the Mansion Hill Historic District. Please do not issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for this project as submitted. The auditorium has to be preserved in tact so it would continue to be used regularly by the church and downtown community for generations to come. "Architecture is social responsibility beyond the client, the builder and the architect."

Levitan inquired of Ms. Geib how the fate of the auditorium determines what happens in the rest of the building. Ms. Geib explained that ultimately a compromise for the auditorium's use as a community asset would be best and that it's in the best interest of this body and the downtown neighborhoods to preserve community access to the building long-term. Gehrig asked what the auditorium is being used for currently; Ms. Geib explained that up until December it was used several times a year for social activities such as faith programs, youth programs, catechism classes, single mothers with financial woes. It was not used as much as they would like because there isn't an elevator or heat. Geib stated she was representing the parishioners who would like to see the building restored at least in part for community and church use. Ultimately they would like to see the auditorium restored to be rented out for parish functions.

Dennis Ganser spoke in support. He was involved in restoring the 100-year old chapel and remodel the hallway in support of their Hispanic parishioners and approached the chapel to raise money, with two families financing that remodel. There is care for Holy Redeemer and care for the historic relevance of the building. The church was recently repainted exactly as it was in the 1800s.

Gene Devitt (President of the Mansion Hill Neighborhood Association) spoke in opposition to the project and his comments follow. The Diocese came to them one month ago for their initial presentation. They then held a meeting at the church to go over questions on the proposal. As a general rule Capitol Neighborhoods allows every person speaking time. The developers were allowed to present, but the Monsignor did not want Gail's group to speak. The neighborhood is always supportive of the restoration of the outside of the building. They were not aware of the 14 skylights. There are questions about the back of the building because there are hardly any windows on the western side. The addition of the back begs the question as to what the function of the inside will be. The Mansion Hill Steering Committee does not support this project because they deal with how it affects the neighborhood and they feel that turning it into student housing is not beneficial to the neighborhood.

There were over 80 people who attended that meeting. Mr. Devitt provided a letter of incorporation stating the Archdiocese and the congregation own the building, which is why it was so important for the congregation to be able to speak at the meeting. When you ask what will be left of the stage, the plans show there is nothing left of the stage, gym or balcony. There would be more people in this building than Kennedy Manor has. The stone is available across the lake, all of it was shipped over on barges. Are they going to use matching brick? Without a meeting place all they have is the basement of the church. Why can't there be a compromise in saving the church while also making some apartments? A lot of this needs to go back to the drawing board. Levitan asked if Devitt thought the Commission has jurisdiction to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness on the basis of the internal program? He replied yes, what the function of the building is going to be and how it affects the neighborhood. Levitan asked for a clearer explanation of how the ordinance states this; Devitt replied that in his 16 years of coming to meetings and dealing with the Orpheum and other historic buildings he feels the ordinance is not met. Staff stated that she had previous conversations with the architect on this project and the skylights were originally part of those conversations.

Jeff Ripp spoke in opposition as a 20-year downtown resident and his comments follow. He cited the Mustard Museum in Middleton as an example of developers claiming they will restore/rehabilitate a landmark building only to destroy what was historic. He is also concerned about the "human element." The ones who are most affected are the last ones to know about it. Communication and compromise are lacking. Worrying about windows in one building and then considering a 30-foot addition to this building, that's hypocrisy. He encouraged the Commission to refer this item to give the developer the opportunity to tweak the plans and allow parishioners and neighbors to be in on the process.

Nilda Rivera Colón spoke in opposition as a parishioner of the congregation and her comments follow. She stressed the importance of this building to the congregation and to the future children of the church. This is where children learn values to guide them through any adversity. The process to this point has been disrespectful to the parishioners and to God. This place has been used to feed people in need. She and her children grew up going here, which is one reason this building is so important to her. Please consider our faith and our community. Levitan inquired if she still attended classes in the building; she replied that the building was closed to them last December. Up until then she attended every Sunday and sometimes during the week. She was unaware of the possibility of these activities being moved to St. Patrick's and her children are waiting for Sunday school classes to be held in an alternate location.

Terri Hix drove 500 miles to voice her opposition and her comments follow. Her descendants built Holy Redeemer Church. Her great-grandparents and father attended school there. Once you tear something apart you'll never be able to rebuild it. She has a vested interest because she has a son who lives in downtown Madison. She understands the need for downtown housing but something this historical and unique is not a place to build an apartment building. She feels the Commission has the right and the obligation to say no to this project.

Norman Fuentes spoke in opposition as a member of the congregation and his comments follow. He is involved in creating a youth program that would use the facilities every day. He wants to help kids who would otherwise perhaps go "party" rather than attend youth programs. He sees the need for renovation but not to the extent they are proposing. He is part of a group that is willing to help with the renovations, however the church denied their offer. Now it is closed and they have to meet in the cafeteria in a very crowded room. They used all three floors for the different ages involved in classes.

Franny Ingebritson spoke in opposition and her comments follow. She is opposed to destroying the last 19<sup>th</sup> Century meeting space in Madison. She wondered why they weren't developing the convent instead. These decisions were made in a vacuum, leaving the Latinos adrift in their community.



Pedro Rosales spoke in opposition as a member of the parish since 2000 and his comments follow. His children started attending classes here and it is very important to their faith. He wishes the developer and the Commission could come on a Sunday to see his community and how much room they need; how valuable and important this space is to them. Without this space they have nowhere to go. He worries that children will choose drugs and alcohol over their faith if they lose this space.

Heidi Figueroa-Vilez spoke in opposition as a long-time member of Holy Redeemer and her comments follow. She sees the importance of preserving the historic nature of this building. She is very bothered by what she sees as the church just wanting to make money. There is a whole community that offered to help fix this building to be able to continue practicing their faith as well as feeding the homeless. She and her family were very near homeless and went a week without electricity or visiting the grocery store. She sympathizes with the homeless people that use their services and knows the importance of this space. She believes a very healthy food pantry could be created for the homeless in this building. Many of these people do not have family or other support systems, this is their support system.

Norma Moreno spoke in opposition as a 10-year member of the parish and her comments follow. She loves the building and sees that it is in bad shape but it could be beautiful. They closed the building for her use several months ago which affected many people. Services were held here in Spanish on Saturdays, Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. Many of the parishioners who attended these services don't really understand what is happening because they were left out of the process. They were told services would be moved to another location but that did not happen. And now the homeless that we used to serve are roaming around downtown or spending their time in parks in the downtown area. We used to feed them a complete hot meal and now there is nothing we can do for them. There has to be a way to preserve the historic character of the building without disrupting the interior or the programming we do.

Ald. Mike Verveer, District 4 spoke. His comments follow. He noted the value of the work the Commission does and the importance of the landmark ordinance. Unfortunately the ordinance only speaks to the exterior of the building and not the interior. In that sense he did not see how the Commission had any choice in spite of the testimony given. He explained that the neighborhood meeting was long and painful; the parishioners were shut out of the process. It's a truism and quite apparent that the parishioners were not included. He encouraged the Commission to greatly encourage the applicant to do what they can to preserve the auditorium. He stated that he could not thank the public enough for the many people who came and gave testimony in support of saving this 19<sup>th</sup> Century meeting space. He mentioned a plaque that has been sitting in staff's office that will hopefully now be attached to the building. He asked that the Commission condition their approval on the plaque erected in an appropriate place in front of the building. It is his hope that the applicant does follow through on their words and plans to seek historic tax credits for this project. Levitan posed the question if it is found that this is bad for the City at large to do away with the programming currently there is there no place in City government to evaluate that and use that as a basis for not approving this project? Verveer replied that as he read 33.19 and talking to staff about this application, he doesn't see where the opportunity is. There may be an opportunity for some at the next stage of the CSM at the Plan Commission level. He is open to interpretation to the opportunities they may have but he doesn't see how they can legally be responsive to the concerns of his constituents in the Mansion Hill Neighborhood.

Gehrig inquired: how did we get to this point? She stated that the Commission's task is to deal with the building and the neighborhood of buildings. She thanked the public for their testimony but wondered how this group of people became so under-represented on this project, and have nowhere to go and no one to talk to. Normally preservationists are excited to be presented with plans to restore a building. Ald. Verveer stated that he is in strong support of the exterior changes and that the requirements of Ordinance 33.19 are clearly met; we should

be cheering for this long-neglected, beautiful historic landmark. Gehrig asked if there was reason to believe this project would give up its tax credits in order to move forward in any way. She feels there has been some deception throughout the process and doesn't feel she can necessarily trust the answers she receives from the development team.

The development team responded to questions posed during testimony. John Kothe stated that the third floor and the tax credits are related. The parish would like to move forward and if they do receive tax credits it will be a successful project for them. If the Historical Society tells the parish they have to leave all the stage and all the balcony it becomes not economically feasible to do the project, at which point they may look into economically moving forward as a not-for-profit. They have not determined exactly which direction they will go but are working with the State Historical Society to seek the best path. The range of options for the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> floors include being maintained, the sides of the stage walls are maintained and for the most part the rest of that space become two-story apartment units with the existing balcony deconstructed. The other option is the balcony remains and the apartments are built around the balcony and incorporated into the unit, as well as the stage with a large area through the Johnson Street entrance that becomes a large open space where you would see the entire stage; the seats would be reused, possibly in the common area of the restored building. Specific interior plans are still a work in progress. Current focus has been with the State Historical Society and there have been changes but not specifically addressing testimony at the neighborhood meeting. The variables affecting the tax credits would be the National Park Service and their review; the third floor does not work so keeping it as is does not work economically. Staff inquired if the park service does not sign off on the tax credits will the team walk away, leaving Holy Redeemer to sit there as it does today, unused. Yes. Gehrig asked for a description of who the players are going forward and how to reach the tax credits. An LLC will be set up with an investor to buy the tax credits and make sure it conforms with the guidelines. The money will go back to the parish after five years; whether it goes on the tax rolls at that time depends on the law. The parish benefits from the rent in the building after the credits expire.

Further discussion centered on the proposed skylights that staff had not analyzed as they were not part of the current submittal packet. Mar-Pohl explained they would be spaced out according to the existing roof structure with a shaft constructed down through the ceiling to capture the daylight. On the north elevation the skylight is more flat and a different proportion and seems to cut through the roof rafter spacing. Staff suggested removing the front skylights to keep that elevation as pure as possible. Keeping them free from snow would be a possible necessity and would be possible just like any other roofing repairs that may be needed. It seems likely that the skylights will not be visible from the street because of the height of the building. In terms of the brick the team stated they have extensive experience in matching brick but it is not always the same size as it was in its historic day. There was mention of brick that was saved from the cathedral that perhaps could be incorporated into this restoration.

The Chair reiterated the development team's response to staff comments, noting they will comply with points 1 and 2; agrees with point 3; clarifies that it is two windows on the north side of the lobby; agrees with staff's recommendation on point 5; will comply with 6 and has a reserve account in the overall project budget. Staff added the conditions that the plaque be installed on the exterior of the building, and match the flat arches at the personnel and overhead doors. The historic roof had wood shingles but asphalt shingles will be used as a replacement for durability and practicality.

Rosenblum further stated that a lot of the pieces make sense to him architecturally and he's thrilled to see this building saved. He is disappointed that Cathedral Parish has not listened to their parish and constituents; he would like to see reexamination in light of tonight's testimony. The project falls under the guidelines for the statutes that the Commission works with. Gehrig agreed. Fowler added that while they are sympathetic to the testimony given tonight, they cannot reject the project based solely on that testimony. Levitan went on to

explain that the Landmarks Commission only has very limited jurisdiction to examine a proposal under the terms of the landmarks specific ordinance. They do not have the power to tell an individual property owner what they can do inside their property; their jurisdiction goes to the exterior, whether or not an addition is too big or is not designed right, or the rhythm of the windows and building is wrong. They all wish they could do something to tell the church "No, this is a bad idea, you should listen to your parishioners and respect their wishes and continue this programming." They cannot do that, they can only evaluate the project based on the exterior, and based on those criteria this is a really good project. Staff inquired about the windows on the third floor north elevation that are shown differently than what exists currently on the building; it is shown incorrectly on the drawings. McClean noted that the Commission has seen compromise in other projects and he would very much like to see something like that happen here, where a plan would be laid out with input given from those affected, especially with a faith-based community. Staff reminded the Commission that approving a CSM is a new section of the Landmarks Ordinance and asked that they review the language. The Chair asked Ald. Verveer if it would be helpful for the Landmarks Commission to add conditions to the approval of the CSM before it goes to the Plan Commission. Ald. Verveer responded that Assistant City Attorney O'Brien strongly recommended that they do not do that; it must address 33.19 only. Levitan asked what would happen if the CSM is approved but the project doesn't move forward because of the tax credits. Staff inquired about putting a condition on the CSM approval that it not be recorded until they have more information about this project moving forward. Att. Christopher noted that to the best of his understanding the approval of a CSM has to relate to the subdivision standards and what staff is asking has no relationship with subdivision standards. Staff responded that the new landmarks section is part of the subdivision standards now, and while it doesn't relate to the degree she wished it did, the new language deals with the lot size negatively impacting the historic character.

**ACTION:**

A motion was made by Rosenblum, seconded by Fowler, to **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness with staff comments in the report and further comments made during deliberations. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

A motion was made by Rosenblum, seconded by Fowler, to recommended to the Plan Commission that the Landmarks Commission **APPROVES** the subdivision of the landmark site. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the City Plan Commission

FROM: The Holy Redeemer School Restoration Committee (Represented by Richard Bonomo, Gail Geib, Dr. Milton Pozo)

RE: Proposed Holy Redeemer Subdivision (Parcel #070914422062)

DATE: April 17, 2013

We are a group of parishioners from Holy Redeemer Church who are extremely concerned about the proposal to completely gut the former Holy Redeemer School building (our "parish house") and convert it to student apartments. We believe this is a bad idea on all fronts: legally and ethically, in terms of the City planning process, historic preservation/structural damage, community social services and the life of the parish. We have summarized our concerns below and linked them to other documents in the attached packet. Our team of supporters will be happy to answer any questions you may have at the April 22<sup>nd</sup> public hearing. Feel free to contact Gail Geib ([geib\\_g@yahoo.com](mailto:geib_g@yahoo.com)) for more information.

### Legal/Ethical Issues

The majority of Holy Redeemer parishioners are Hispanic; many of these people have limited ability to speak or read English. No effort was made to translate into Spanish any actions or documents connected with the proposed subdivision (project plans, parishioner comments/concerns, website, notices from the pastor, Monsignor Kevin Holmes, or public meeting announcements). Hispanic parishioners were also not given the opportunity to vote for parish trustees, which almost certainly would have resulted in a different outcome. (By contrast, "Anglo" parishioners were encouraged to cast their ballots.) Several signature petitions from Hispanic parishioners requesting that the School building be saved for parish use were submitted to Monsignor Holmes. These petitions were similarly dismissed by church authorities. **In effect, Hispanic congregants—the population most affected by the apartment conversion project—have been completely ignored.** This is a significant breach of ethics, to say nothing of public trust. It behooves the City Plan Commission and members of the Common Council to ask the development team to explain the reasoning behind this serious oversight, and to request that the situation be ameliorated before taking further action.

### Subdivision Issues

The Holy Redeemer School building rests on a tiny plot of land, just a few yards from a very active, well-used church. Activities are conducted in the church literally 24 hours a day, seven days a week: it's home to a Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel that's visited by people from all over southern Wisconsin. For this reason the property is extremely prone to adverse noise impacts. The church and school are separated by a small parking lot, originally intended for horse carriages. Ingress and egress to the lot are accomplished by a couple of narrow "lanes" (not much wider than alleys) off Johnson and Gorham Streets. Even now, these lanes are not adequate for general traffic circulation. On busy weekends more than **1,000 people** attend seven Masses from Saturday morning to Sunday evening. The church has had to hire security guards to monitor traffic and parking. Given the age of the property and its small (by contemporary standards) footprint, it's not possible to widen the entrances to the lot; hence, access will always be

constricted. Increasing property density by adding a large student residential complex only serves to exacerbate congestion in a lot that's already inadequate to meet needs. The increased volume of service and delivery vehicles, bicycles and mopeds will pose an added hardship to the church community. The majority of people who worship at Holy Redeemer travel from outlying areas not well served by public transportation, especially on Sundays. Ready access to the church and parking availability are vital to the parish's survival. Increased traffic volume and decreased on-site parking will serve as a disincentive to drive Downtown, forcing Holy Redeemer parishioners to transfer to other churches closer to home. Declining membership will eventually force Holy Redeemer to close its doors. This is not speculation: the church has already experienced a drop in numbers since the school building closed last December and some parish services were eliminated. We are **gravely** concerned the added noise, traffic, litter, vandalism, threats to public safety and general disruption in a neighborhood that already has an undue concentration of students will pose a serious threat to parish life. Other Madison ecclesial communities have learned the hard way, it's a BAD idea to have student apartments on church property. *[Item # 2-A, Testimonial from Douglas Swiggum, Luther Memorial Church Maintenance Supervisor, describing damaging effects of Grand Central student apartment complex on church property; Item #2-B, photo of West Johnson Street entrance to Holy Redeemer Church parking lot; Item #2-C, photo of West Gorham Street entrance to Holy Redeemer Church parking lot]*

#### Historic Preservation/Structural Damage Concerns

The proposed subdivision is incompatible with the general land development pattern of the church property: the church, school and central "piazza" were all designed to be interrelated, and not separated from one another. The 1892 Holy Redeemer School building is a Registered City Landmark and is also a "contributing building" in the Mansion Hill Historic District. It's the notable work of a master building contractor, John Vetter, and is attributed to well-respected Midwestern architects Alan Darst Conover and Lew Porter. It is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style. In-filling the school with student apartments runs contrary to the original intent of the first German immigrants to the City who made tremendous personal sacrifices to establish a center for the education of their children and cultural activities of public interest. This is also true of today's Hispanic immigrants, who comprise the majority of Holy Redeemer's congregants, and for whom the Holy Redeemer School building is a vibrant center of community activity. *[Item #s 3-A and B, Photos of third floor auditorium stage + balcony, which would be destroyed by the proposed apartment conversion project.]* Structural damage to the school and surrounding Landmark buildings is another serious concern. The original design for the School was just three stories. The proposed apartment conversion project would involve adding a fourth story to the building. It's not clear the walls and foundations of the 121-year-old building can withstand the added "load." Project developers have yet to produce any kind of professional engineering report that would guarantee this unique, historic building will not sustain significant structural damage. Another concern: the adjacent 1869 church building, just a few yards from the School, is the oldest extant Catholic church in Downtown Madison. Built of native sandstone, it is structurally fragile. It's liable to sustain irreparable harm by vandalism from student apartment residents. It may also be damaged by heavy construction equipment used for the apartment conversion project. Because of the unusual nature of the Holy Redeemer School building and related structures on the property, and their ongoing contribution to Downtown Madison religious, cultural and immigrant history, **unrestricted development should not be permitted and the financial interests of private real estate operatives should not be allowed to prevail.**

#### The Life of the Parish and Surrounding Neighborhood

Until December 2012 the Holy Redeemer School building was the site of a large religious formation program (approximately 300 children and adults attended catechetical activities there), a twice-weekly meal program for the homeless, and a crisis pregnancy clothing distribution center. The

proposed apartment conversion project will displace all of these activities, which contributed significantly to the social and economic health of the surrounding neighborhood. According to the attached essay by Andy Lewis, of The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, **“Church [communities] provide direct economic and social benefits, promote education and civic engagement, help decrease crime and deviance, promote mental and physical health, [and generally] promote outcomes that improve government stability and economic growth.”**  
*[Item #4, Article by Andy Lewis, “Some Positive Benefits Churches Bring to Communities”]*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*The Holy Redeemer School Restoration Committee*

Item #2A: Testimonial from  
Luther Memorial Staff Re:  
Grand Central Apartments

Forwarded Message: Attached Message

Legislative File ID: 22443, 1001 Univ. Ave. -- Balconies, Windows, Common Sense

Friday, July 8, 2011 7:18 AM

From: "Douglas Swiggum" <DSwiggum@TDS.Net>

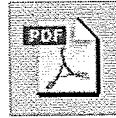
To: "Steve King" <district7@cityofmadison.com>, "Marsha Rummel" <district6@cityofmadison.com>, "Chris Schmidt" <district11@cityofmadison.com>, "Eric Sundquist" <erics@cow.s.org>, "Judy Olson" <jolson@operationfreshstart.org>, "Michael Helfetz" <michael.helfetz@deancare.com>, "Michael Basford" <mabasford@charter.net>, "Anna Andrzejewski" <AVAndrzejews@Wisc.Edu>

Cc: "Brad Murphy" <bmurphy@cityofmadison.com>

2 Files (335KB) | [Download All](#)



FioreRepo...



PoliceCall...

To the members of Madison's Plan Commission:

My name is Douglas Swiggum. I write to you in opposition of the proposed development of 1001 University Avenue for a 12-story student high-rise apartment building.

I am a member of Luther Memorial Church, the neighbor next door.

I have raised my family in this parish, and was first exposed to the congregation and the building when I was a student at the UW 30 years ago. I now serve as the chair of the Facilities Committee of LMC, and am intimately aware of the condition of our building and the maintenance that it requires.

Beyond concerns for stone, mortar, roofs, gutters and recent vandalism of these things, I write to you out of concern for the survival of our congregation--a group of people that voluntarily support the maintenance of our building, out of their own pockets; but more importantly are committed to the mission of this church and what it offers to our community. If they find it unsafe to participate at LMC, or find that the building becomes too much of a burden to the ministries that they care about, they will fall away. These are my concerns: SAFETY, ADDED BURDEN of maintenance, and the VIABILITY of a MADISON COMMUNITY.

As a Facilities Committee member, one of my volunteer duties is to make regular inspections of the building. One of the important tasks is to keep track of our roofs, gutters and drainage systems. If these fail, water damage is an expensive thing in an old building, so it is something that needs to

be watched closely. As a result, I do a lot of climbing up to our flat roofs, or access points where I can view conditions.

One day, about a month after Grand Central had opened, I climbed out onto the roof of our church tower to discover that it had been pelted with eggs. My initial reaction was visceral: "Who would do such a thing?" "Who would assault a Church?" "What were they THINKING?" Later, I realized that they weren't thinking, they were drinking. I still cannot believe that they intended harm, but rather that they were acting stupid, under the influence of alcohol.

The splatter of the eggs clearly indicated the trajectory of their flight. Since this was about 100 feet above the alley behind the church, the eggs could only have come from 2 or 3 balconies on the North side of Grand Central.

We initiated conversations with Grand Central management to deal with the problem. Nothing was done.

Subsequent climbs of the tower for inspections revealed beer cans, beer cans, beer cans. Initially, they were relatively unaltered, landing on the nearest flat roof section. Later trips up the tower found them partially crushed, creating greater density, allowing them to be thrown to further sections of our roofs. Many of these cans were clogging the downspouts of the flat roofs. Without drainage, these structures become wading pools in a heavy rain. When the water overtops the flashing on these roofs, it finds its way into our building or will saturate the wall and destroy the mortar joints between the stones. We tasked our roofing contractor to clear the debris before such damage occurred--at our expense.

We reported these problems to Grand Central Management, and they said they were having problems with their cameras. Still no action.

Down at ground level, I remember one Sunday morning when I arrived to find that the alley was completely littered with beer cans, broken beer bottles, a broken lamp, smashed furniture, what appeared to be about a gallon of vomit and other trash. My wife had duties in the church at 8:00AM. I did not need to be at choir until 10:00AM. Sunday school families had not yet arrived. So, I spent about an hour sweeping

Conklin Place free of beer cans and trash and loading 2 JUMBO trash bags full of the debris, with a SNOW SHOVEL. The beer cans being swept by my push broom made a lot of noise. One of the residents called down from probably the 8th floor: "SHUT THE F\*\*\* UP!" I have to admit, at the time, I didn't care a bit that I had disturbed his sleep.

We reported this problem, and later noticed some custodial staff policing the grounds on Sunday mornings. This was



progress.

Subsequent climbs of the tower revealed rotted vegetables, apples, lemons, limes, sports-drink bottles, squash, more beer cans, a tequila bottle, vodka bottles, whiskey bottles. Things were escalating. Two of these liquor bottles caused significant damage to our roofs, one to a section of French terra-cotta tile roof over the West transept; and the other to a flat roof membrane above a balcony stairwell. Both caused water damage inside our sanctuary, swelling and crumbling 90-year old plaster detailing done by craftsmen not easily found today. We incorporated this repair with a larger maintenance project in our sanctuary, and Grand Central Management picked up the bill for this one item.

What is never counted is all the volunteer time, and church staff time that it takes to manage all these incidents. It takes an entire Saturday afternoon, for example, for two volunteers to climb a 130' tower with two buckets, a rope, a broom, a scrub brush, a garbage bag, a gallon of water, and assorted hand tools; clean up a mess; and descend with all of the same; several hours on either end for staff and volunteers to process the incident; and several hours setting up and meeting with Grand Central Management. It has taken me another couple hours to tell you about it just now.

MUCH more importantly, we were worried about safety. Liquor bottles or even beer bottles dropped from 12 stories can kill a person. Our members use the alley. Residents of Grand Central use the alley. Citizens of Madison use the alley. One day, a liquor bottle is going to kill a pedestrian. We brought this concern to Grand Central Management. Our question was: We want to know what rules and policies you have in your leases concerning throwing things from balconies; and we want to know what the consequences are for violations. Our position was "First offense and you face eviction", or at least "second offense...". We discovered in this conversation that the balconies are not actually part of the resident's lease; that access to them is solely at the permission of the owner. No access to the balcony still requires full rent.

Simple, we said: "First offense of throwing something off a balcony results in loss of balcony privileges for the rest of your lease."

Management should dead-bolt the balcony door with a management-only key. That might be a consequence they would care about.

They seemed to deflect this with replies like "Well if we have restrictive policies about our balconies, how will we compete with 'Lucky' or 'La Ciel' who don't?" We raised the question "How will your insurance company deal with the liability question if you don't enforce stricter policies when you already know about the problem?" After this meeting, it seemed that there was some improvement in the situation.

One of the documents provided for the 6/20 Plan Commission meeting was an e-mail from Tony Fiore, MPD to Jim Stopple of Madison Property Management, that is, Grand Central Management. It discussed progress in "chronic nuisance behavior we brought to your attention in April 2009". This is before Grand Central opened. So these problems have been going on downtown prior to Grand Central. I have attached this e-mail.

There was testimony from Jim Stopple, Madison Property Management's man at the 6/20 Plan Commission meeting regarding vandalism and nuisance behavior. I have attached that as well.

This prompted one of our church members to visit the police station and get a report of the nuisance calls for service. Also attached. It shows 150 police calls at 1022 West Johnson Street since Grand Central opened.

With this new information, it appears that it wasn't \*our\* insistence that they do something about policies and consequences that made the difference between 2009 and 2010. Rather, it was the MPD putting pressure on them to reduce "nuisance CFS".

Also, I note that in Stopple's testimony, he frames the balcony issue totally in the context of cigarette butts, which could harm or injure no one. When we were meeting with him, our concern was \*first\* for items that could be

thrown or dropped from high balconies that could \*kill\* someone--like liquor bottles, beer bottles or frozen pumpkins. Secondly, we were concerned with the vandalism.

We have seen improvement in the situation with our neighbors at Grand Central and the management, MPM, who has been responsive, but always seeming to be catching up to the reality. Every fall, we will have to deal with a new batch of students that have yet to learn the rules.

Our church faces Grand Central with two-foot-thick masonry walls. We can deal with vandalism as a nuisance. Our church faces the proposed St. Francis site with beautiful stained glass windows. Beneath one of those windows is a 19th Century organ, relocated from Chicago, and restored to new condition. It is used every week in worship services. In and of itself, it could be considered a landmark. One vodka bottle tossed from the new development could easily cause \$200,000.00 of damage, and engender a feeling of violation, desecration of sacred space; well beyond mere vandalism.

I write this letter to you, the Plan Commission, with a heavy charge. Really, it is up to you to decide what we want to do with downtown Madison. Do we want these high-rent high-rise student apartment buildings? Do they contribute to the quality of life in Madison? You already have several incidents of public concern with these student occupied buildings with balconies. There has been a suicide attempt. There have been fights spilling over railings. There have been hundreds, perhaps thousands of nuisance calls for service with the Madison Police Department.

These buildings are marketed to young people who are probably living without supervision for the first time in their lives; who have parents co-signing their leases; who have no jobs and responsibilities of their own; who have kitchens that resemble wet bars; who have ready access to alcohol; who have ready access to balconies; who are ready to party rather than study.

Of course, I overstate this. But is this the downtown and campus environment that you wish to plan?

A responsible plan would eliminate balconies from these types

of apartment buildings.  
Or, at a minimum, \*all\* downtown balconies (leased or owned) should have certain rules in Madison ordinance about their use, and certain consequence of violation (for throwing things). And special requirements for monitoring for buildings marketed to students.  
Lucky, La Ciel, Grand Central, or St. Francis should not have to compete based on party-friendly standards. They should all have to comply to the same standard, one that you set.

When I lived in a UW dorm, 30 years ago, we had a set of rules that carried serious consequences. It was called "The Big Five". Five rules which if violated would get you evicted. Some of the rules carried \*expulsion\* from the UW as a consequence.  
All of them had to do with safety. When researching this for our conversations with Grand Central Management, I discovered that the list has now become "The Big Eighteen". Then and now, the rule at the top of the list was never throwing something out of a window. I was on the third floor of Witte Hall in the South East dorms.  
It didn't matter if it was a water balloon or a paper airplane, it would lead to eviction. Period. It seems overstated, but nobody challenged it.

Today, the UW Housing policy is here:

[http://www.housing.wisc.edu/expectations/pdf/2011-12\\_expectations.pdf](http://www.housing.wisc.edu/expectations/pdf/2011-12_expectations.pdf)

It might serve as a guide for planning these housing arrangements (for students) in the downtown area.

Sincerely,  
Douglas Swiggum  
Chair, Luther Memorial Church Facilities Committee

Item #2B: Photo of  
W. Johnson St.  
Entrance to HR Church Lot

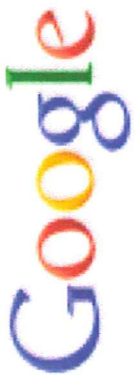
Address 144 W Johnson St  
Madison, WI 53703





Item #2C: Photo of  
W. Gorham St.  
Entrance to HR Church Lot

Address 144 W Gorham St  
Madison, WI 53703





Item #3A: Photo of  
HR School  
Auditorium + Stage





Item #3B: Photo of  
HR School  
Auditorium + Balcony





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- [Issues](#)
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The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

## Some Positive Benefits Churches Bring to Communities

By *Andy Lewis*

Mar 13, 2008

The American founders viewed churches as a central institution within American life, because religion provided the moral foundation of self-restraint and community awareness necessary for the success of republican self-government. Many believed that the American experiment would not succeed without the moral training churches provided to citizens. Churches, surely, have contributed to the success of America by encouraging virtue, but social science research has also shown that churches provide direct and indirect economic and social benefits to communities. Churches provide valuable contributions to communities in the areas of direct economic contributions, social services and community volunteering, education and civic skills training, and reduced levels of deviance.

These benefits positively improve communities in direct and indirect manners, and they enhance political stability and the long-term health of communities. This paper will outline some examples of each cited by prominent social science researchers, developing the argument that churches bring benefits to communities that outweigh the loss of revenue from their tax exempt status. In fact, if it were not for churches, government would have to expend public funds to replace the community benefits that churches provide. Overall it is clear that churches bring positive benefits to communities, and their role in the community as a beneficial, nonprofit institution should be maintained.

### Churches Provide Direct Economic Benefits

The presence of churches in the community brings direct economic benefits to the local area. Church organizations provide jobs for the community, and churches support a variety of local businesses. Churches bring individuals from surrounding areas to the community where the church is located, and these individuals provide economic support to local establishments. Thus, churches aid in bringing additional revenue communities.

Churches are also an attractive component to local communities. Much like strong school systems, many families and individuals consider the presence of local religious organizations when making decisions about

moving to communities and purchasing property. The presence of churches aids in families choosing to establish residence in a local community. This, in turn, helps support local businesses and contributes to property tax payments. Therefore, churches provide direct economic benefits to the community. Churches encourage community growth, job creation, and overall economic vitality.

## Churches Provide Social Benefits

Beyond direct economic benefits, churches also provide social benefits that have economic value. Several researchers have identified the social benefits that churches bring to communities, including: providing help to poor and vulnerable individuals in the community, improving marriage relationships, decreasing violence among women, increasing moral community obligations, and promoting charitable contributions and volunteering. Social scientists consider it irrational to participate in moral and volunteer projects, because they have such a low personal benefit. However, being a member of a religious community increases one's duty to serve others in the community, countering the "free rider" problem. Churches help communities complete vitally important social projects, for which the government would need to fund if churches did not provide such support.

A comprehensive study of religious congregations in six metropolitan communities found that 91 percent of religious congregations provided at least one social service (Cnaan et al. 1999), and, similarly, 87 percent of the congregations in a Philadelphia survey provided at least one social service to the community (Boddie et al. 2001). While some argue that this percentage of churches is overestimated because it overlooks smaller churches, even conservative estimates claim that larger congregations, representing approximately 75 percent of the religious population in America, provide at least one social service to the community (Chaves 1999).

In a recent, detailed study of churches in Philadelphia, researchers found that churches do much more community aiding work, including helping the poor and making positive social inroads in the community, than previously realized by scholars. The authors declare, "If it were not for the impressive collective effort of some 2,120 local religious congregations, life in Philadelphia would have become extremely harsh" (Cnaan et al. 2006; p. 291). In a similar study in Philadelphia, congregations, on average, provided 2.33 different social programs (Boddie et al 2001). Another study shows that a typical church provides financial support, volunteers, space, and in-kind donations to six community programs each year (Ammerman 2001). In categorizing these community programs, Ammerman finds that congregations, on average, aid two direct service programs, two educational, health, or cultural programs, and one community development or political/social advocacy program (Ammerman 2001).

The presence of churches in the community will also increase the religiosity of locals, and increased religiosity results in positive social contributions for the community. For example, religiosity influences individuals' obligations to perform non-religious moral acts. Individuals who are religious have been shown to have increased propensity to participate in community-building, moral projects, such as giving blood (Ortberg, Goruch, and Kim 2001). Additionally, church affiliation and religiosity increase community volunteering as well as intra-church volunteering (Park and Smith 2000). One scholar finds that churches contribute volunteers to three organizations on average, though some churches provide dozens of volunteers to different projects (Ammerman 2001). A 1990 national study finds that church members volunteer 56

million hours each year to organizations outside their local congregations, aiding with human service projects, educational attainment, cultural awareness and training, and environmental improvement (Hodgkinson 1990).

Because it can be difficult to quantify the exact value of the volunteering and community building benefits churches provide to local areas, many scholars have sought to quantify the “replacement value” of the social and volunteering benefits that churches provide to communities. The replacement value calculates monetary donations and in-kind support, staff and congregant volunteer hours, utilities, and the value of space (Tirrito and Cascio 2003). Cnaan valued that churches in large metropolitan communities provide support equal to one full-time social service employee (Cnaan 1999), and in a comprehensive study of Philadelphia scholars valued community services at \$115,009 per congregation and \$230,018,400 for all the religious congregations in the city (Boddie, et al. 2001). The accuracy of this figure can be debated, but it is clear that by building up and sending out volunteers to the community, churches provide significant economic and social benefits, helping improve communities.

## **Churches Promote Education and Civic Engagement**

Along with creating social programs and serving as a foundation for community volunteers, churches also improve the educational success of students and provide training and skills that promote civic engagement. For students, religious involvement is positively correlated with higher math and reading scores and greater educational aspirations (Regnerus 2000; Regnerus 2001). Students who frequently attend church have improved ability to allocate time and achieve goals (Freeman 1985), and religiously connected students are five times less likely than their peers to skip school (Sloane and Potvin 1986). Parents’ involvement in churches also improves their children’s educational capacities and achievements. Parents with higher levels of religiosity raise children who more consistently complete homework, attend class, and complete degree programs (Muller and Ellison 2001). Churches provide educational, psychological, and moral training and resources, which result in positive present and future educational outcomes for students.

Several cross-national and community based studies also show that churches help members obtain civic skills, such as public speaking, networking, organizing, and participating in politics (Schwadel 2002). The church environment provides a training ground for individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, affording individuals the skills to succeed in industry, business, education, and politics. In sum, the education and civic engagement training and motivation that church institutions foster has great social and economic benefits to societies. As education and civic engagement increase, deviance and crime decrease and economic growth and political stability increase. Churches are important institutions in the development of educational, life, and social skills necessary to succeed in society.

## **Churches Help Decrease Crime and Deviance**

In addition to providing social programs and community volunteers, churches decrease the occurrence of crime and deviance in communities and among local youth. Reduced levels of crime and deviance make communities more safe, stable, and productive, and safe and stable communities encourage economic growth, through business expansion and attracting new residents. Several studies find that churches decrease

crime and deviance, helping promote these economic benefits of a safer community.

Being involved in a church consistently decreases levels of deviance and crime. Religious involvement decreases domestic violence among both men and women, according to a national study (Ellison and Anderson 2001). Church attendance has also been associated with decreased levels of assault, burglary, and larceny (Bainbridge 1989), and religiosity promotes decreased levels of violent crime both at the individual and the state level (Hummer, et al. 1999; Lester 1987). Increased levels of religiosity also directly decrease deviant behavior, such as drug use, violence, and delinquency among at risk youth (Fagan 2006). Decreased levels of deviance aid in bringing about social order, increase the likelihood that businesses will expand into local areas and bring economic opportunities, and decrease government expenditures into programs and institutions that reduce, punish, and compensate for deviance.

## **Churches Promote Mental and Physical Health**

Churches also promote a variety of health benefits for the community, improving the vitality of the community and decreasing government expenditures. Studies have consistently shown that religiosity is related to increased longevity (Johnson, et al. 2002; Fagan 2006). The average religious individual lives seven years longer than the average nonreligious individual, and this increases to fourteen years for African American individuals (Hummer, et al 1999; Fagan 2006). Research by Johns Hopkins scholars shows that nonreligious individuals have increased risks of dying from cirrhosis of the liver, emphysema, arteriosclerosis, cardiovascular diseases, and suicide (Comstock and Patridge 1972; Fagan 2006). Religious attendance has also been shown to decrease alcohol abuse and drug use (Fagan 2006; Gartner, et al. 1991; Hasin, et al. 1985). A study in San Diego, California also shows that nearly two-thirds of all churches provide health promotion programs and participate in community health programs (Elder, et al. 1989). Church programs and religious practices promote physical health, and a healthy community is more productive and less of a strain on local resources. By helping improve physical health, churches provide a significant benefit to the community.

In addition to physical health, church attendance also promotes mental health. In a comprehensive survey of mental health studies, 81 percent of 91 studies showed that religion is positively associated with mental well-being (Johnson, et al. 2002; Fagan 2006). Religious attendance has been shown to decrease stress, increase self esteem, and give individuals hope and a greater sense of life purpose (Fagan 2006; Johnson, et al. 2002). Increased religious practice also is associated with decreased levels of depression and suicide (Johnson, et al. 2002; Ellison 1995). In sum, church involvement has been shown to improve mental health, and having strong mental health makes individuals more productive and less at risk for committing crimes. Churches provide mental health benefits to individuals, and improved mental health directly aids communities.

## **Conclusion: Churches Promote Outcomes that Improve Government Stability and Economic Growth**

Community contributions such as volunteerism, mental and physical health, reduced deviance, increased education and civic awareness, and social networks are all components of social capital—a concept

numerous social science researchers have identified as having a significant impact on successful communities and societies (Putnam 2000). Social capital is the outcome of trust, social networks, and social health, and it encourages economic and social opportunities for communities. Scholars have frequently referenced the role of religion in creating social capital and developing the positive societal impacts of social capital (Fukuyama 2001). Social capital, which churches promote, has been shown to increase economic growth (Zak and Knack 2001), and it also improves government performance, according to an evaluation of the fifty states (Knack 2002).

In total, Churches have diverse positive impacts on communities, ranging from increased trust, improved mental and physical health, decreased crime, and enhanced levels of volunteering and community outreach. These attributes build norms and values that encourage political stability and economic performance. Churches contribute to vitally important components of successful societies, and their presence in communities provides many benefits that cannot be measured solely by direct revenue.

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**Andrew R. Lewis** is a researcher for [The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission \(http://erlc.com/about\)](http://erlc.com/about) of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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## Further Learning