

Docket Item # 5
BAR CASE # 2011-0055

BAR Meeting
April 6, 2011

ISSUE: Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate

APPLICANT: The Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia

LOCATION: 3737 Seminary Road (campus), 3591 Aspinwall Lane (Immanuel Chapel)

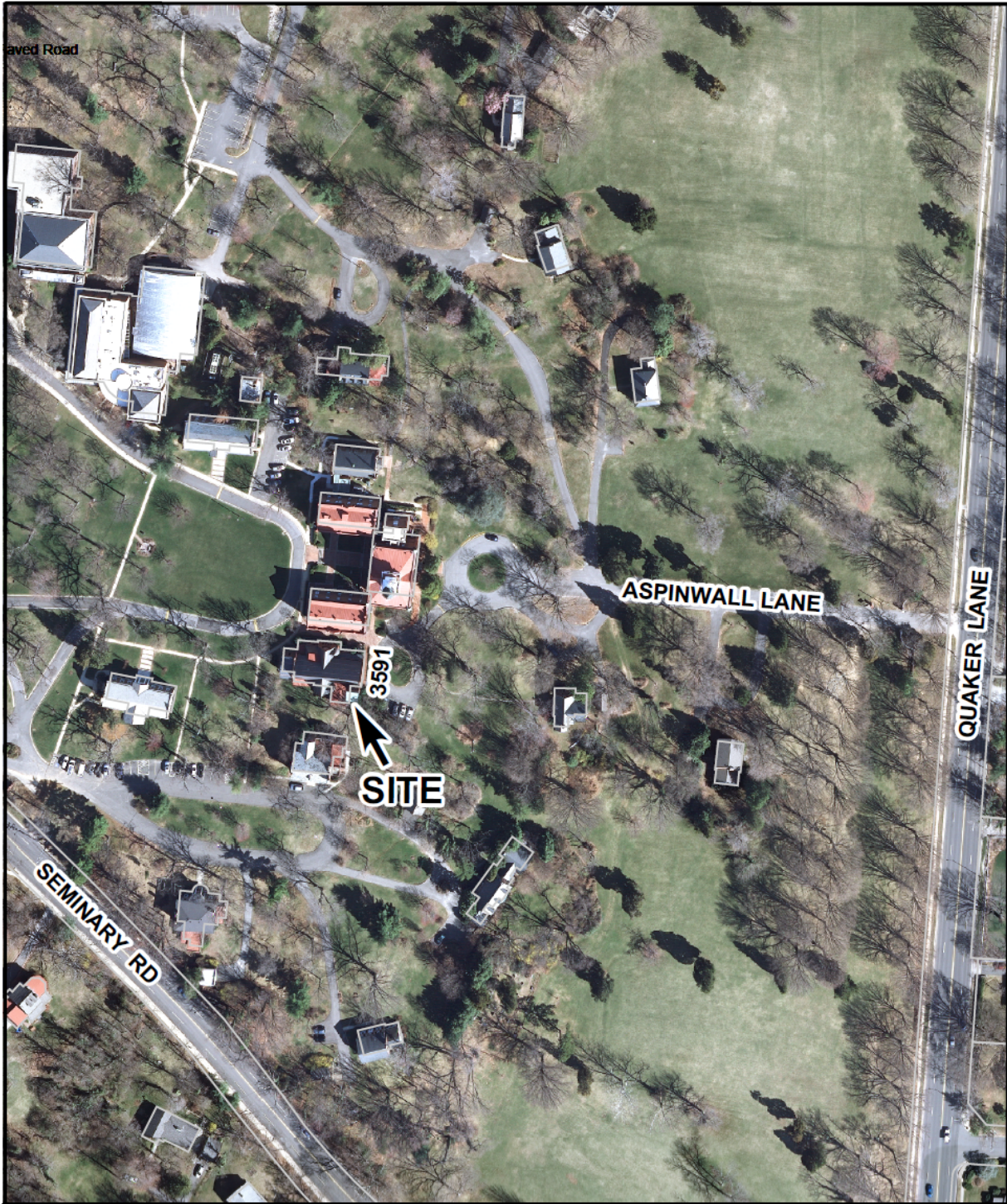
ZONE: R20/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the Prayer Garden concept with deferral to restudy the specific wall areas to be demolished and with the following additional conditions:

1. That the applicant document the building in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 4: *Demolition of Existing Structures* application requirements for Significance Buildings. This documentation will include History of the Structure, Photographs and Measured Drawings, as outlined in Chapter 4 of the *Design Guidelines*.
2. That the following archaeology conditions shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
 - A. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that a monitoring and inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
 - B. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
 - C. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology

*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE: In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of BAR approval if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

**BUILDING PERMIT NOTE: Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.



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Note: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE

The applicant is requesting a Permit to Demolish for portions of the remaining walls of the fire damaged shell of the Immanuel Chapel at the Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia and for concept approval of the adaptive reuse of the Chapel's walls as a Prayer Garden. A fire on Friday, October 22, 2010 destroyed the entire wooden roof structure of this building but left the majority of the solid masonry walls and tower intact. The applicant requests demolition of approximately 70% of the remaining wall area and proposes to create a Prayer Garden for meditation and outdoor services at grade within the remains of the masonry walls.



Figure 1. Existing conditions: east elevation.



Figure 2 & 3: Existing north and west elevations.

The Chapel and seven adjacent buildings are individually listed on the City's 100 Year Old Building list. There is no local historic district at the Seminary campus. Based on the criteria in Zoning Ordinance Sec. 10-305, no more than 25 square feet of additional wall material may be demolished without approval of a Permit to Demolish from the BAR. It should be noted that the Board has no authority to require restoration of the building. In addition, should the entire remains of the chapel be demolished, the Board would have limited authority to review any new structure on this site, because it is not within a historic district, and the Board's purview would be limited to the protection of the landscapes and settings of the adjacent buildings listed on the 100 Year Old Building list.



Figure 4. Conceptual scheme of Chapel as Prayer Garden.

II. HISTORY

The Seminary was established in 1823, and constructed on a site purchased in 1827. **Construction for Immanuel Chapel was begun in 1879 and it was consecrated in 1881.** Immanuel Chapel represents an important component of the mid 19th-century building campaign that forms the architectural and liturgical core of the campus. The academic complex dating from this period includes Aspinwall Hall, Bohlen and Meade Halls, Francis Scott Key Hall and Immanuel Chapel, according to the National Register nomination. The National Register nomination also notes that “The seminary’s core of early buildings stands as a tribute to the talents of their architects and as a document of the taste of the Episcopal Church at the time of their erection in the 19th century.”¹ The Chapel was designed by “the Baltimore church architect Charles E. Cassell...[and] contained such exoticisms as a chancel rail of rosewood ‘brought by Bishop Penick from Africa.’ The chapel stands as an excellent example of Ruskinian Gothic architecture as built on the collegiate scale.”²

The Chapel represents a textbook example of the Gothic Revival style with its steeply pitched roof, large lancet (or “pointed”) windows, two-story entry tower, cruciform plan, dark red brick and polychrome slate roof. The Gothic Revival style arose in 18th-century England as a reaction against the Neoclassical style and the effects of industrialization. By the 19th-century, the Gothic Revival style was embedded with a deep sense of Christianity and medievalism. The Anglican Church in England pursued a building campaign in the 18th- and 19th-centuries that resulted in the construction of many Gothic Revival churches and chapels and was concurrent with several academic and religious movements, including the Oxford Movement. The use of the Gothic Revival style at the Seminary represented not just the application of a popular architectural style but the intentional selection of a style imbued with a deep sense of religiosity, most appropriate for a recently-founded theological seminary.

The Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1978 and on the National Register for Historic Places in 1980. Immanuel Chapel is one of eight buildings at the Seminary listed on the City’s 100 Year Old Building list, subject to individual review by the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review. These buildings were approved for listing by City Council in 1984 (Ordinance No. 2957). Section 10-301 of the Zoning Ordinance states the purpose of “the creation of the 100 year old building lists, to protect community health and safety and to promote the education, prosperity, and general welfare of the public through the identification, preservation, protection and enhancement of buildings, structures, places or features, together with their landscapes and settings...”

The BAR has reviewed several applications for alterations to these buildings over the years.

III. ANALYSIS

The Zoning Staff advises that the proposed demolition and adaptive reuse per the submitted plans complies with zoning.

¹ Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, State of Significance, 1978.

² Ibid.

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

Staff finds that criteria 1, 3, 5 and 6 are met. Immanuel Chapel is significant for what it represents individually as an example of Gothic Revival architecture as well as collectively in its position in the historic core of the Seminary. The Chapel, even in its current fire-damaged state, clearly articulates its significance and retains a high level of integrity with respect to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.³ The Chapel was previously identified as, and continues to be, an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style. In addition, the Chapel is an integral component to the academic and spiritual center of the Seminary. This grouping of hilltop buildings, including the Chapel, Aspinwall Hall and others, expresses the 19th-century origins of the Seminary as both an academic and religious institution, a view which is readily apparent from North Quaker Lane.

The applicant has requested partial demolition of the remaining building fabric which includes two entire walls (south and west elevations), the two-story tower and portions of two walls (north and east elevations). Staff estimates that the proposal for partial demolition would result in the demolition of approximately 70% of what remains from the fire. While the Chapel was undoubtedly damaged by the fire of October 2010, enough of the building seems to remain in form and structure to preclude the need for such extensive demolition.

From a pure preservationist's perspective, Staff preference is that the building be restored as closely as possible to what had existed previously, including the installation of a new roof. Under such a scheme, the Chapel would be returned to a fully functioning Chapel, as it had been prior to the fire, or adapted to another use serving the Seminary. City Staff from several departments met with the representatives of the Seminary several times shortly after the fire. In

³ The National Register traditionally recognizes a property's integrity through seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A property conveys its significance through its integrity.

those meetings, the Seminary noted that they had identified a need over 30 years ago for a significantly larger chapel with a floor plan that met their modern liturgical needs for training priests. They noted that they needed to dedicate as much of the fire settlement proceeds as possible toward the new, larger chapel. Nevertheless, Dean Markham has shown a remarkable good faith effort to reach out to the stakeholders of this building and the school to identify a way to commemorate the previous chapel while addressing the 21st century needs of the school.

Recognizing the potential constraints of a full restoration, as well as the Seminary's programmatic desire to construct an entirely new chapel, Staff is cognizant of the importance of finding a scheme that balances the appropriate preservation of the Chapel's remains and meets the Seminary's long-range needs. While no specific designs for a new chapel have been proposed and no architect has been selected, the Seminary wishes to construct a chapel twice as large as Immanuel Chapel. Representatives from the Seminary have noted that they are considering four potential sites for the construction of a new chapel, including one on or adjacent to the existing site of Immanuel Chapel.

The proposal before the Board, therefore, includes concept approval of a Prayer Garden within the confines of the stabilized ruins of Immanuel Chapel. As this is such a unique application, there are no *Design Guidelines* to reference for analysis. Staff supports such a scheme conceptually, noting that the reuse of religious buildings has created very interesting spaces in examples around the world. Such a space references the original structure through the retention of walls, columns, towers and the like, while creating a new, and often spiritual place, open to the elements, for contemplation, prayer and ceremonies. Staff researched this type of adaptive reuse and found examples including the Old Sheldon Church in South Carolina (Figure #5), Church Ruins in Port Arthur, Tasmania, Australia (Figure #6), and St. Catherine's Church in Nuremberg, Germany. A very successful local example of an outdoor chapel in a garden ruin is the St. Thomas Parish Episcopal Church garden near Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. The walls of other historic buildings destroyed by fire were intentionally stabilized as a ruin rather than restored, such as Thomas Jefferson's design for Governor Barbour's house in Barboursville, Virginia which is now used as a backdrop for plays and special events at the winery.

Staff finds that the reuse of the Chapel in this manner is conceptually appropriate but recommends that the amount of demolition be reduced to preserve more of the Chapel's remains so that its form, plan and spatial relationship among the buildings of the historic core may be retained. At a minimum, Staff recommends that the entire gable-end east elevation with its iconic tower and that most of the north elevation be retained to maintain the rhythm and spacing of the row of historic buildings, as seen from Quaker Lane. The applicant has currently proposed to leave only the foundations of the south and west elevations. Staff recommends that more than the foundation be retained on these elevations to better articulate the sense of space and enclosure at the Chapel. Should this portion of the Chapel site be used for the new expanded chapel, the need for demolition of additional wall material can be reviewed in context at that time.



Figure 5. Old Sheldon Church, South Carolina



Figure 6. Port Arthur Church, Tasmania, Australia

A primary concern of both the Seminary and the City has been related to the safety and structural integrity of the Chapel. A challenge when working with historic buildings is whether a structural deficiency is long-standing, such as settling or displacement over many years, or whether it is the result of a specific event. The Seminary's insurance adjustor feared imminent collapse and advised razing the structure. WJE, Inc. performed a structural analysis of the Chapel days after the fire in which it was noted that the Chapel had "sustained extensive damage." Furthermore, the report advised that "all of the roofs, gutters, windows and interior finishes should be removed and replaced." Regarding the condition of the walls, the report noted "isolated brick and stone damage...spalls as well as mortar joint deterioration." In addition, two of the walls showed signs of displacement that the report attributed to the fire.

City engineers in the office of Code Administration performed a fire damage inspection on October 23, 2010, where it was noted that there was "no fire damage at the exterior brick wall. Neither horizontal nor vertical cracks were observed...the existing brick walls are sound." Regarding the stair tower, the City's report stated that "the tower wall is neither cracked nor bowed, except there are some loose bricks hanging on the infill wall. Inside the stairwell, the structural integrity of the stairs and landing framing has been compromised." Staff notes that numerous buildings in Alexandria have burned and been rebuilt using the exterior walls, including much of the 100 block of Prince Street. Based on site observation, the majority of the heat of the fire was up in the wood vaulted ceiling and the masonry walls below appear to be remarkably intact, though they would clearly need additional reinforcing to be reused.

IV. SUMMARY

Staff regrets the tragic fire at the school and what that loss represents to the Seminary and the community at large. Staff believes that stabilization of some portions of the remaining walls for the proposed Prayer Garden is an internationally accepted preservation practice and recommends approval of this concept to preserve at least a portion of the cultural and material fabric of the building. However, Staff believes that there is not yet enough information about the potential use of a portion of this site for the new chapel, to evaluate how much of which walls should be demolished or stabilized and that this request should be deferred. The new architect may want to incorporate more of the existing walls and combine the structures in a creative way which would be far more interesting than either structure individually. Furthermore, restudy will permit the Seminary to consider aspects beyond the BAR's purview, such as the economic considerations of

certain aspects of demolition, as Staff believes that the cost of demolition of the tower may exceed the cost to stabilize and retain this character defining feature.

Although BAR Staff cannot make a professional engineering determination, the structural reports prepared for this building indicate that there is little, if any, structural or safety justification for immediate or extensive demolition of the existing remains. Therefore, Staff recommends that the Board defer a decision on the specific wall areas to be demolished in order that further study may be conducted. Specifically, Staff recommends that the applicant reconsider retaining, at a minimum, the entire gable-end east elevation and its iconic tower, as well as a significant portion of the north elevation. The restudy period will allow both the City and the Seminary to consider the specific structural implications of this proposal to ensure that safety concerns are appropriately addressed.

In the interim, Staff recommends selective demolition of the roof trusses and temporary protection of the tops of the exposed walls to limit exposure during the study period. In addition, the applicant has already submitted copies of high quality black and white photographs taken immediately after the fire and has made measured drawings to document the historic building. Staff recommends that originals of these materials be submitted in the format described in Chapter 4 of the *Design Guidelines for Demolition of Existing Structures* and that they be further supplemented by a history of the structure, to be deposited in the History Collection at the Alexandria Library.

STAFF

Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

R1 Deny or Table pending review of other preservation strategies that either fully restore the building, or retain additional original building fabric and features.

CODE ADMINISTRATION

F1 The following comments are for BAR case review only and are not intended to grant approval for demolition

C1 A demolition permit will be required to be issued prior to the start of this work.

C2 BAR approval and five sets of plans are required to be submitted for review prior to the issuance of the permit.

C3 At a minimum the plans shall be sealed by a PE licensed in the Commonwealth of VA and shall include;

- Extent, method (hand, machine, combination) and sequence of demolition,
- Any shoring required prior to removal of structural elements,
- Utility disconnect letter
- Termination of all water and sewer lines
- Rodent baiting and abatement plan
- Final plan of all remaining building elements, bracing, etc.

TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Recommendations

R1. The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 5-6-224 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)

R2. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)

R3. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)

R4. No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (T&ES)

- R5. An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. (T&ES)
- R6. Compliance with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control is required for any land disturbing activity greater than 2,500 square feet. Any changes shall be shown within a revision to DSP2002-00047; The Stormwater Master Plan. (T&ES)

Findings

- F1. An approved grading plan may be required at the time of building permit application. Insufficient information has been provided to make that determination at this time. In summary, City Code Section 5-6-224 requires that a grading plan be submitted to and approved by T&ES prior to the issuance of building permits for improvements involving: (T&ES)
Questions regarding the processing of grading plans should be directed to the T&ES Site Plan Coordinator at (703) 746-4064. Memorandum to Industry No. 02-08 was issued on April 28, 2008 and can be viewed online via the following link.
<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/tes/info/gradingPlanRequirements.pdf>

City Code Requirements

- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99). (T&ES)
- C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line. (T&ES)
- C-3 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (T&ES)
- C-4 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61) (T&ES)

V. IMAGES



Figure 7. Existing conditions, east and north elevations.



Figure 8. Existing conditions, north and west elevations.



Figure 9. Existing conditions, south elevation.



Figure 10. Site plan of existing buildings with Chapel Prayer Garden.

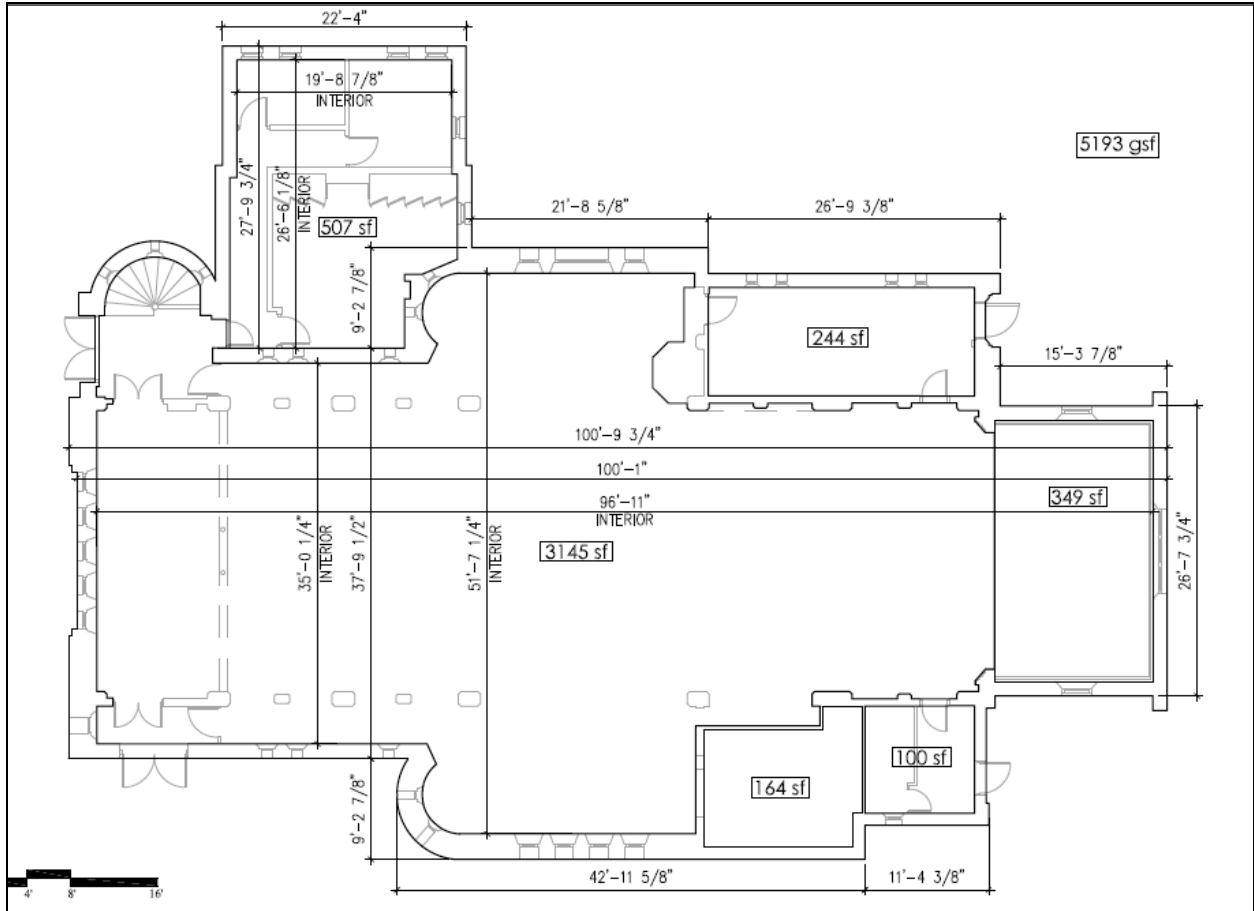


Figure 11. Floor of Chapel, prior to fire.



Figure 12. Proposed scheme, looking west, from North Quaker Lane showing the visual gap left by the Chapel.



Figure 13. Bird's Eye view of Prayer Garden with portions of Chapel demolished.



Figure 14. Perspective of proposed scheme, looking at east and north elevations.



Figure 15. Perspective of proposed scheme, looking east.