

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

Department of Housing, Economic Development & Commerce
Division of City Planning



Interdepartmental Memorandum

DATE: 07/17/2023
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Margaret A. O'Neill, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist *mon*
CC: Jonathan Reksted, Esq., HPC Counsel
Division of City Planning Staff
Jersey City Planning Board
Jennifer Porter, Esq., on behalf of the Applicant and owner, 15th and Grove JC LLC
RE: Case #H22-535
619 Grove Street
Block: 7102, Lot 7
Zone: Jersey Ave Light Rail Redevelopment Plan / St. Lucy Overlay Bonus Area

I. PLANS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Historic Preservation Application, received 12/7/2022
2. Certificate of Appropriateness H19-486
3. Architectural Plans prepared by Michael Graves Architecture & Design entitled *619 Grove Street Jersey City, New Jersey 07302 Block 7102 Lot 7 Proposal for a 23 Story Mixed Use Building with 444 Residential Units & 222 Parking Spaces*; dated March 17, 2023
4. 619 Grove Street Shadow Analysis and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Michael Graves Architecture & Design dated March 17, 2023
5. St. Lucy's Redevelopment 613 Grove St Jersey City, NJ Historical Overview and Narrative Description of Work, prepared by Heritage Consulting Group, revised May 8, 2020
6. Amended Site Plan prepared by Dresdner Robin entitled *Saint Lucy Parcel (Block 7102, Lot 7) City of Jersey City, County of Hudson, New Jersey* dated December 5, 2022

II. PROJECT & PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

The property is currently owned by the 15th and Grove JC LLC (herein referred to as "The Owner"). The previous owner, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, had owned the building since the founding of Saint Lucy's Parish in 1884. The complex at the site consists of three buildings: the former church, built in 1894-5, the rectory, built in 1904, and the school built and opened in 1890. The church building has been vacant since 1985, when the parish was canonically suppressed; the rectory is currently used for office purposes. The school building is currently functioning as a shelter.

A previous application for this work was approved by the HPC in July of 2020.

The application and the submitted report as well as the submitted plans were deemed

complete by HPC Staff on July 7, 2023.

III. PROPERTY LOCATION & JURISDICTION

619 Grove Street (herein referred to as “The Property”) is located in what was formerly referred to as *the Horseshoe* section of Jersey City. The property is located on an oversized (200x175 ft) fronting Grove Street between 15th Street and 16th Street, just north of the Holland Tunnel. The property falls within the Jersey Ave Light Rail Redevelopment Plan.

As this property falls within above redevelopment plan, this application comes to the HPC as directed by Section X subset C.5.D.XI of the redevelopment plan. The Complex has been designated as eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places as *St. Lucy's Roman Catholic Complex, Perpetual Novena of St. Jude Thadeus (ID#44) 611,615,621 Grove Street; 206 15th Street* in an opinion rendered by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office dated 1/11/2000

Additionally, this application is heard as a referral from the Planning Board per 40:55D-110 of the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law and as per this provision, the Historic Preservation Commission “... may provide its advice, which shall be conveyed through its delegation of one of its members or staff to testify orally at the hearing of the application and to explain any written report which may have been submitted.”

IV. SITE HISTORY FOR CONTEXT

(from Preservation NJ's 10 Most Endangered Historic Properties, 2018)

First established as a mission of Saint Michael's Church on Hamilton Square, Saint Lucy's Parish was established with the construction of its first church edifice on June 22, 1884 in Jersey City's Horseshoe section. The Parish was formed to serve the burgeoning, but poor Irish immigrants who flocked to the area in around the turn of the 20th century.

After the purchase of sufficient land on the west side of Grove Street, the parish began the construction of the present school. The school, a massively proportioned vernacular Italianate building with strong Romanesque revival elements; and the church, a mottled iron-spot brick and brownstone masonry Romanesque revival building with a 145-foot tower at its north corner, were built in rapid succession to replace the original small wood-frame church that the congregation had quickly outgrown. The delicate Romanesque Revival rectory was completed twenty years later in 1904. The architect of record, Jeremiah O'Rourke of Newark, was responsible for the construction of other churches throughout the state and served as the first architect of Sacred Heart Cathedral (now Cathedral Basilica) in Newark.

The Church's role in the community changed when the construction of the Holland Tunnel in the 1920s claimed the homes of numerous parishioners, and more industry was attracted to the area. The Church realized a rebirth when a devotion to Saint Jude, the patron saint of impossible causes, was erected in 1932 and made it a local pilgrimage site in times of extreme need drawing devotees

from surrounding towns and New York City. The Church was closed in 1985, but even today Saint Jude's shrine at the corner of Grove and 16th Streets is decorated, especially around his feast day on October 28th.

Apart from deteriorated exterior finishes, the removal of the stained-glass windows, and the replacement of the slate roofing materials with a new asphalt roof, the church and rectory are little altered... The church complex is eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and was once docketed for Municipal landmark status in the 1980s; however, no further historic preservation action has been taken.

V. REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR CONSIDERATION

Staff notes regarding the Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission:

Per § 345-9, entitled Historic Preservation Commission, Section (B) entitled Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission has the following relevant powers and duties:

(4) To advise and assist City officers, employees, boards and other bodies, including those at County, regional, State and Federal levels, on all matters which have potential impact on the landmark buildings, sites, structures, object or landscape features in the City or on the ambience of a historic district.

The property is subject to following standards during the Board's consideration regarding the application seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness:

1. *Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*
2. *City of Jersey City Jersey Ave Light Rail Redevelopment Plan; St Lucy Overlay Bonus*

Per the redevelopment plan above, the role of the HPC in this review is the following:

Viii: Redevelopment of the Saint Lucy Parcel must retain and incorporate portions of the character defining exterior features of the facades, such as, but not limited to, the bell tower, entryways, pinnacles and other significant historic fabric of the Saint Lucy's Roman Catholic Complex into any new building constructed on the site.

Ix: All development applications for the Saint Lucy Parcel shall be referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for review.

x. The redeveloper of the Saint Lucy Parcel shall retain a historic preservation professional who meets the Professional Standards Qualifications under the category of Historic Architecture or Architectural History in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines, Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61. to review any proposed development.

xi. The means and methods as well as the extent of the Saint Lucy's Roman Catholic Complex to be retained and incorporated into a new building on the Saint Lucy Parcel shall be determined in consultation with the Historic Preservation Commission as part of a Certificate of Appropriateness. Upon review a recommendation shall be made to the Planning Board for consideration.

VI. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

After reviewing the proposed project, Staff finds that the proposal is mostly consistent with the objectives in the *Jersey Ave Light Rail Redevelopment Plan, St Lucy Overlay Bonus* as well as what was previously approved under H19-535. While Staff recognizes the demolition of the majority of each building, demolition of interior spaces, and the visual diminishment of the historic features by the larger new construction, shall have an adverse effect on the complex, Staff recognizes that the applicant has made a good faith effort to preserve, restore and rehabilitate the remaining portion of the character defining, visible, historic fabric.

Similarly to the previous application, there is no dispute that this proposal will have an adverse impact on the historic fabric and architectural integrity of the neighborhood, but the St. Lucy's Roman Catholic Complex is not a designated municipal landmark and the jurisdiction of the HPC is limited by the requirements of the redevelopment plan. It is Staff's understanding that the HPC is well within its jurisdiction to review and comment on the relation of the historic site and the new construction building and how the applicant has chosen to retain and incorporate remaining parts of the buildings and the site (per XI of the Redevelopment Plan), but that it is **not** within the HPC's jurisdiction to review and comment on the massing, bulk, density, or design of the proposed new construction behind the remaining, historic facades. Staff strongly encourages this conversation between the Commission and the applicant.

HPC Staff recommends that the HPC recommend approval of the project to the Jersey City Planning Board with the following conditions:

1. All conditions approved under H19-535 shall be carried to this approval as well.
2. The owner's historic preservation professional, Heritage Consulting Group, who they are required to retain per the redevelopment plan, shall review all samples, details, shop drawings, mock ups and other necessary submissions before submission to the architect of record before construction document approval is granted by the HPO.
3. The architect, Michael Graves Architecture & Design, shall be retained during construction and shall submit all samples, details, shop drawings, mock ups and other necessary submissions to the Historic Preservation Office before the purchase, manufacture and installation of any material or service at the historic facades of the Former Saint Lucy's Parochial Complex.
4. All material samples shall be submitted for review to HPC Staff either at the time of or before the submission of construction documents.

5. Details, Specifications, and Material Submissions not currently submitted to and approved by the HPC under this recommendation, or changed during the course of construction are remanded back to the HPC at the discretion of the HPO.
6. Construction drawings, noting materials and finishes, cross-referenced with the material sample board, are to be reviewed by, approved by and signed by the Historic Preservation Officer or HPC Staff for compliance with the issued approval before construction permits are applied for and issued.
7. Any changes or deviations from the approved drawings are to be clearly bubbled on the construction drawings and noted in an accompanying signed and sealed letter from the architect addressed to Staff. Requests for deviations from this recommendation for approval are to be submitted through written request of the architect directly to the attention of the City's HPO. Any additional work, or changes in scope that require additional work, shall be applied for and reviewed under a separate application.
8. Upon final review and recommendation of this project by the HPC, any deviations from the granted approval must be approved by the HPC before implementation, except in cases of emergency affecting the public safety, health and welfare. Requests for deviations from this recommendation for approval are to be submitted through written request of the architect directly to the attention of the City's HPO.