

THE ST. PAUL'S SENTINEL

Honoring and preserving our community's heritage

A publication of the Committee to Save St. Paul's, October 4, 2006



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND SUPPORT .

IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE THAT OUR SUPPORTERS KNOW WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THE PROPOSAL, WHICH WAS SUBMITTED TO THE VILLAGE BY THE COMMITTEE TO SAVE ST. PAUL'S ON OCTOBER 5. BELOW IS A SYNOPSIS OF THAT PROPOSAL:

Committee to Save St. Paul's Submits RFP Response

SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SPACE INCLUDED IN REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

After many years of listening to and speaking with residents about the present and future needs in the Village of Garden City, the Committee to Save St. Paul's has responded to the Village RFP with a practical and achievable solution for development of the Historic St. Paul's Main Building as a combination of Community Center, Senior Center and residential apartments targeted to seniors. This compromise solution preserves the historic integrity of St. Paul's and provides community space for all Village residents at an extremely reasonable cost to taxpayers.

While ensuring continued public use of a significant portion of the building and accommodating the growing senior population, the Committee's mixed-use proposal calls for the establishment of a "partnership" consisting of the private sector, the nonprofit community and the Village. The Committee, under its St. Paul's Conservancy nonprofit standing, would operate as an essential member/partner, allowing the entity to take advantage of federal and New York State rehabilitation tax credits. It's the Committee's belief that a number of public and private funding and grant programs for historic properties give higher priority and preference to nonprofit sponsors. This organizational structure allows the Village to maintain its ownership of the entire property, control the use of the building and preserve a priceless legacy for future generations of Garden City residents.

By blending the municipal and nonprofit sectors with private commercial development, under the Committee's proposal, the "average home" in Garden City would be responsible for an additional \$100 in Village taxes per year, while receiving the genuine benefit of public use of a Village icon, built in memory of founder Alexander Turney Stewart, some 125 years ago.

Most important, the Committee believes that our proposal is the only one that has a chance of gaining the support of a large majority of Village residents and their state legislators to secure the necessary special Home Rule legislation and relief from Parkland designation, which now restrict the disposition of the property to public use only. This solution represents the only real hope of protecting this historic monument from the wrecker's ball.

The Proposal

The Committee to Save St. Paul's proposal meets the Village RFP criteria, which calls for development within the footprint of the historic Main Building, and contains no new construction for housing on the site. The demolition of Ellis Hall provides for comparable square footage in the rear of the building to accommodate parking.

The Committee's development proposal includes approximately 62 upscale, one-, two- and three-bedroom units, ranging in size from 500 to 1,600 square feet. The rental units will reflect the unique character and charm of a special historic building like St. Paul's, and will be marketed to Garden City seniors. This focus addresses a major demographic shift within our community, the growing need among the Village's own population of empty-nesters.

By selecting rental housing over condominiums, the development can avail itself of rehabilitation tax credits, which provide an important source of financing. The other clear benefit of rental housing is the "ground lease" arrangement, which allows the Village and its resident to retain ownership and control over the property in perpetuity.

The Committee's proposal includes approximately 19,000 square feet for community use in the West Wing and the Southwest section of the first floor, the corresponding space below on the ground level, the area under the chapel and the chapel. A new Senior Center sketched out in the proposal provides considerably more space for senior activities than the Village's two existing facilities. Located in the West Wing of the first floor, this Center can bring opportunities for residents to enjoy activities in one of the more beautiful areas of the building.

Remaining space, dedicated for public use, also includes the original dining room located under the chapel, and the chapel, which has great appeal to residents and incorporates such grand detail and wonderful potential for use, such as a site for banquets, concerts, receptions, recitals and other events.

As a result of conversations with developers in recent weeks, the Committee believes that its proposal provides what might be the largest devotion of space in prime areas of the historic building for resident use, including access through the main entranceway. The overall “community area” can be used to meet the demand for meeting and gathering space that has been detailed at length in previous community surveys.

Committee’s professional team

The Committee’s project architect and development consultant were recommended by the Preservation League of New York State, a statewide nonprofit organization that promotes historic preservation. Stephen Tilly, Architect, located in Dobbs Ferry, specializes in well designed, finely crafted public, institutional, commercial and residential projects. The firm’s expertise covers a wide range of property types — libraries, mixed use development and housing. They have conducted historic structure and landscape studies and prepared drawings and specifications for historic properties working with local, state and federal agencies.

Development consultant Murray Gould, founder of Port City Preservation LLC, provides services on a wide range of adaptive reuse and rehabilitation initiatives, and has a proven track record in utilizing creative and innovative financing opportunities.

The Committee to Save St. Paul’s is also tapping the resources of Richard Chirls, Esq., one of the country’s foremost authorities on the tax aspects of public finance transactions.

Conclusion

The Committee to Save St. Paul’s proposal represents the best opportunity for the Village and its residents to preserve the historic Main Building at St. Paul’s, maintain public ownership and control, and continue a legacy to current and future residents that protects our property values and maintains the unique residential quality of our Village. Moreover, it has the best chance of successfully galvanizing the community support needed to obtain crucial state legislative approval.

Peter Negri, former Trustee and President of the Committee to Save St. Paul’s, comments: “The Committee feels it has been responsive to the community in its proposal to redevelop St. Paul’s. We hope residents agree. And if so, we urge you to write or call your trustees and Senator Kemp Hannon to offer your support for the Committee’s proposal. For those who want to know more, please keep your eyes out for community presentations of the Committee’s proposal. Over the next several weeks, we hope to reach out to as many of you as we can.”

If you feel as strongly about the St. Paul’s issue as the Committee to Save St. Paul’s, consider writing a Letter to the Editor of the *Garden City News* to express your views.

To read previous issues of *The St. Paul’s Sentinel*, log on to our website “News” page.

***The Committee to Save St. Paul’s*, P.O. Box 7642, Garden City, NY 11530, www.savestpauls.org
Donations accepted to “St. Paul’s Conservancy Corp.” All donations are tax deductible.**