

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Site Plan Review
BZZ-3040

Date: June 26, 2006

Applicant: Plymouth Congregational Church

Address of Property: 1900 Nicollet Ave S, 1926 Nicollet Ave S, 1934 Nicollet Ave S, 1929 LaSalle Ave S

Project Name: Plymouth Congregational Church Education Wing Addition

Contact Person and Phone: Tom Lockhart, Plymouth Congregational Church, 1900 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55403, 612-871-7400

Planning Staff and Phone: Tara Beard, (612) 673-2351

Date Application Deemed Complete: May 25, 2006

End of 60-Day Decision Period: July 24, 2006

End of 120-Day Decision Period: Not applicable

Ward: 6 **Neighborhood Organization:** Stevens Square Community Organization, adjacent to Whittier Alliance

Existing Zoning: OR2 High Density Office Residence District, C1 Neighborhood Commercial District

Proposed Zoning: Not applicable for this application

Zoning Plate Number: 20

Legal Description: Not applicable for this application

Lot area: 154,372

Proposed Use: A religious place of assembly

Concurrent Review:

- Site Plan Review

Applicable zoning code provisions: Chapter 530: Site Plan Review

Background: Plymouth Congregational Church is proposing an addition to their existing church at 1900 Nicollet Ave for educational purposes, including classrooms for Sunday School. Currently Sunday

School classrooms are scattered throughout the building and the addition would serve as a single location for all classrooms. The two-story addition would be at the south end of the building, with an increase of 10,804 square feet and would be designed to match the adjacent 1950 addition. Because a portion of the addition faces public right of way (specifically, Nicollet Ave), this project is not eligible for administrative site plan review.

The church's parking needs would not be increased by the addition, and those needs are currently met by surface parking both on-site (the church owns the entire block) and nearby (within 300 feet). Some parking layout changes will be made to accommodate the addition and new landscaping, including a small decrease in parking spaces, but the overall parking requirement will still be met.

Staff received a letter from Stevens Square Community Organization on June 5, 2006 expressing support from their Housing & Development Committee for the project.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Findings as Required By the Minneapolis Zoning for Site Plan Review

Required Findings for Site Plan Review

- a. The site plan conforms to all applicable standards of Chapter 530, Site Plan Review. (See Section A Below for Evaluation.)**
- b. The site plan conforms to all applicable regulations of the zoning ordinance and is consistent with applicable policies of the comprehensive plan and applicable small area plans adopted by the city council. (See Section B Below for Evaluation.)**

Section A: Conformance with Chapter 530 of Zoning Code

BUILDING PLACEMENT AND FAÇADE:

- Placement of the building shall reinforce the street wall, maximize natural surveillance and visibility, and facilitate pedestrian access and circulation.
- First floor of the building shall be located not more than eight (8) feet from the front lot line (except in C3S District or where a greater yard is required by the zoning ordinance). If located on corner lot, the building wall abutting each street shall be subject to this requirement.
- The area between the building and the lot line shall include amenities.
- The building shall be oriented so that at least one (1) principal entrance faces the public street. In the case of a corner lot, the principal entrance shall face the front lot line.
- Except in the C3S District, on-site accessory parking facilities shall be located to the rear or interior of the site, within the principal building served, or entirely below grade.
- For new construction, the building walls shall provide architectural detail and shall contain windows as required by Chapter 530 in order to create visual interest and to increase security of adjacent outdoor spaces by maximizing natural surveillance and visibility.
- In larger buildings, architectural elements, including recesses or projections, windows and entries, shall be emphasized to divide the building into smaller identifiable sections.
- Blank, uninterrupted walls that do not include windows, entries, recesses or projections, or other architectural elements, shall not exceed twenty five (25) feet in length.
- Exterior materials shall be durable, including but not limited to masonry, brick, stone, stucco, wood, metal, and glass.
- The exterior materials and appearance of the rear and side walls of any building shall be similar to and compatible with the front of the building.
- The use of plain face concrete block as an exterior material shall be prohibited fronting along a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or adjacent to a residence or office residence district.
- Entrances and windows:
 - Residential uses:

Principal entrances shall be clearly defined and emphasized through the use of architectural features such as porches and roofs or other details that express the importance of the entrance. Multiple entrances shall be encouraged. Twenty (20) percent of the walls on the first floor and ten (10) percent of the walls on each floor above the first that face a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot, shall be windows as follows:

 - a. Windows shall be vertical in proportion.
 - b. Windows shall be distributed in a more or less even manner.
 - Nonresidential uses:

Principal entrances shall be clearly defined and emphasized through the use of architectural features such as roofs or other details that express the importance of the entrance. Multiple entrances shall be encouraged. Thirty (30) percent of the walls on the first floor and ten (10) percent of the walls on each floor above the first that face a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot, shall be windows as follows:

 - a. Windows shall be vertical in proportion.
 - b. Windows shall be distributed in a more or less even manner.
 - c. The bottom of any window used to satisfy the ground floor window requirement may not be more than four (4) feet above the adjacent grade.
 - d. First floor or ground floor windows shall have clear or lightly tinted glass with a visible light transmittance ratio of 0.6 or higher.
 - e. First floor or ground floor windows shall allow views into and out of the building at eye level. Shelving, mechanical equipment or other similar fixtures shall not block views into and out of the building in the area between four (4) and seven (7) feet above the adjacent grade. However, window area in excess of the minimum required area shall not be required to allow views into and out of the building.
 - f. Industrial uses in Table 550-1, Principal Industrial Uses in the Industrial Districts, may provide less than thirty (30) percent windows on the walls that face an on-site parking lot,

provided the parking lot is not located between the building and a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway.

Minimum window area shall be measured as indicated in section 530.120 of the zoning code.

- **The form and pitch of roof lines shall be similar to surrounding buildings.**
- **Parking Garages: The exterior design shall ensure that sloped floors do not dominate the appearance of the walls and that vehicles are screened from view. At least thirty (30) percent of the first floor building wall that faces a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway shall be occupied by active uses, or shall be designed with architectural detail or windows, including display windows, that create visual interest.**

Conformance:

- The placement of the building is such that the street wall will remain essentially the same. An existing stone wall along Nicollet will remain and the addition will occur behind that wall.
- The OR2 District requires a 15 foot front yard setback. Since the church incorporates the entire block, each side is subject to this requirement. The vast majority of the building is greater than 15 feet from the property line. The existing building frontages will not be changed by the proposed addition as it occurs behind an existing wall. Staff is recommending alternative compliance for the setback of the addition being greater than 15 feet from the street frontages of Nicollet Ave, Franklin Ave, and LaSalle Ave.
- The areas between the building and the property line include landscaping, a raingarden, and surface parking.
- There are multiple entrances to the building, including one facing Nicollet Ave which is the principal frontage.
- On-site parking is located between the building and the southern property line. The existing building's location and the fact that the building occupies an entire block inhibits rear or interior parking. There will be a small reduction in parking (11 stalls) but the majority is proposed to remain the same. Landscaping and ornamental fencing along Nicollet and most of the Franklin Ave frontage was done as a part of a Nicollet Ave "Eat Street" streetscaping project. The south end of the parking lot encroaches on the right of way, but an encroachment permit was granted in 1994, presumably when the streetscaping work was completed.
- Windows are required on 30% of the first floor and 10% of each floor above the first floor for three sides of the addition because they face a public street or on-site parking lot. The proposed windows provided are as follows:
 - Nicollet Ave elevation
 - 1st floor: 30% required, 0% provided
 - 2nd floor: 10% required, 30% provided
 - Franklin Ave elevation (faces parking lot)
 - 1st floor: 30% required, 21% provided
 - 2nd floor: 10% required, 33% provided
 - LaSalle Ave elevation (faces parking lot)
 - 1st floor: 30% required, more than 30% provided
 - 2nd floor: 10% required, 47% provided

Staff recommends granting alternative compliance for elevations not meeting the window requirement. For the first floor elevation facing Nicollet Ave, the addition is occurring behind an existing stone wall that blocks it entirely. Windows provided here would not be seen from

Nicollet Ave, and the 2nd floor is providing more than double the required amount of windows. For the first floor elevation facing Franklin Ave, a significant portion of the elevation is an existing first floor that will be clad in stone to match the rest of the addition. The use of that area is for mechanical storage and a dressing room, neither of which are amenable to windows. The applicant is providing 30% windows for the portion of the elevation that is *new construction*.

- Windows are distributed in a more or less even manner and are generally vertical in nature.
- The building is separated into smaller sections with architectural features and materials.
- The addition encompasses a small portion of the existing church building. Because of this, two walls of the addition have sections greater than 25 feet without windows or architectural details. Because of the scale of the building, the high quality of the materials used in the addition, and the circumstances created by adding on to an existing building, staff is recommending alternative compliance in these cases. The first floor of the LaSalle addition is also showing more than 25 feet of blank wall. Grade changes are such that windows would not be feasible lower than 5 feet from the floor of the classroom at that location and a portion of the elevation is covered by a retaining wall. Staff is recommending alternative compliance in this case as well.
- Exterior materials include stone to match a portion of the existing building, cast stone panels, and cast stone columns.
- Plain-face concrete block is not proposed as an exterior material for any part of the building.
- The proposed roof is flat with a gable at the southeast end that will match other gables on the existing building.

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION:

- **Clear and well-lighted walkways of at least four (4) feet in width shall connect building entrances to the adjacent public sidewalk and to any parking facilities located on the site.**
- **Transit shelters shall be well lighted, weather protected and shall be placed in locations that promote security.**
- **Vehicular access and circulation shall be designed to minimize conflicts with pedestrian traffic and surrounding residential uses.**
- **Traffic shall be directed to minimize impact upon residential properties and shall be subject to section 530.150 (b) related to alley access.**
- **Site plans shall minimize the use of impervious surfaces.**

Conformance:

- All new walkways to building entrances are more than 4 feet in width.
- There is one transit shelter in the right of way on the southeast end of the site. No changes to the bus shelter are proposed.
- There are four existing curb cuts into the on-site parking lot. No changes to the existing curb cuts are proposed.
- No curb cuts are adjacent to or across from residential uses and there is no vehicular access to a public alley to and from the site.
- All areas not needed for buildings, access, loading, or trash and recycling, will be landscaped.

LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING:

- **The composition and location of landscaped areas shall complement the scale of the development and its surroundings.**
- **Not less than twenty (20) percent of the site not occupied by buildings, including all required landscaped yards, shall be landscaped as specified in section 530.160 (a).**
- **Required screening shall be six (6) feet in height, unless otherwise specified, except in required front yards where such screening shall be three (3) feet in height.**
- **Except as otherwise provided, required screening shall be at least ninety-five (95) percent opaque throughout the year. Screening shall be satisfied by one or a combination of the following:**
 - **A decorative fence.**
 - **A masonry wall.**
 - **A hedge.**
- **Parking and loading facilities located along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway shall comply with section 530.170 (b), including providing landscape yards along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway and abutting or across an alley from a residence or office residence district, or any permitted or conditional residential use.**
- **The corners of parking lots where rows of parking spaces leave areas unavailable for parking or vehicular circulation shall be landscaped as specified for a required landscaped yard. Such spaces may include architectural features such as benches, kiosks or bicycle parking.**
- **In parking lots of ten (10) spaces or more, no parking space shall be located more than fifty (50) feet from the center of an on-site deciduous tree. Tree islands located within the interior of a parking lot shall have a minimum width of seven (7) feet in any direction.**
- **All other areas not governed by sections 530.160 and 530.170 and not occupied by buildings, parking and loading facilities or driveways, shall be covered with turf grass, native grasses or other perennial flowering plants, vines, mulch, shrubs or trees.**
- **Installation and maintenance of all landscape materials shall comply with the standards outlined in section 530.210.**
- **The city planning commission may approve the substitution or reduction of landscaped plant materials, landscaped area or other landscaping or screening standards, subject to section 530.80, as provided in section 530.220.**

Conformance:

- The lot area (154,372 sq. ft.) less the building footprint (48,716 sq. ft.) yields a net site of 105,656 sq. ft. The Code requires a minimum of 21,131 sq. ft. of landscaping, 42 trees and 211 shrubs. The total landscaping proposed by the applicant is 42,860 sq. ft. This equals 41% of the net site. The applicant is proposing 45 trees and 213 shrubs on site, although not all are currently shown on the site plan. The applicant is required to show the minimum 42 trees and 211 shrubs on their final plan.

- Screening is required where the surface parking lot borders Nicollet Ave, Franklin Ave, and LaSalle Ave. Some screening is provided in the public right of way as a part of the Nicollet Ave streetscaping project. Additional screening is needed in the public right of way in the form of hedges or fencing for 69 feet west of where the fence ends along Franklin, and on the project's property in front of the 5 northernmost parking stalls on LaSalle Ave. Staff recommends alternative compliance where the screening is absent, as some landscaping and shrubs are provided and the majority of screening would be in the public right of way.
- The existing screening provided consists of a metal fence with brick columns consistent with the Nicollet Ave streetscaping project along Nicollet Ave and most of the Franklin Ave frontage, and shrubs that are 3 feet in height for the LaSalle Ave frontage.
- Seven feet of landscaping is required between the surface parking lot and the property line along Nicollet Ave, Franklin Ave, and LaSalle Ave. Actual screening provided is anywhere from 0 to 25 feet, with an approximately 6 foot average. Staff is recommending alternative compliance for the landscaping requirement because of the project's consistency with the Nicollet Ave streetscaping project. Some screening is provided for the entire parking lot, however along Franklin Ave it is located in the right of way along with a portion of the parking stalls. This is an existing condition and encroachment permits are in place.
- Some corners of the parking lot are landscaped and three tree islands exist. However, due to the size of the parking lot and the number of stalls that are not within 50 feet of an on-site tree, staff is recommending that the applicant provide one additional tree island in the southwest corner of the parking lot (and where the most parking stalls are not within 50 feet of a tree). Such a tree island should not result in the loss of more than two parking stalls, but must be large enough to accommodate at least one canopy tree (at least 7 feet by 7 feet).
- All areas not occupied by buildings, parking and loading facilities or driveways will be covered with turf grass, native grasses, or other perennial flowering plants, vines, mulch, shrubs or trees.

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS:

- **All parking lots and driveways shall be designed with wheel stops or discontinuous curbing to provide on-site retention and filtration of stormwater. Where on-site retention and filtration is not practical, the parking lot shall be defined by six (6) inch by six (6) inch continuous concrete curb.**
- **Lighting shall comply with the requirements of Chapter 535 and Chapter 541. A lighting diagram may be required.**
- **Parking and loading facilities and all other areas upon which vehicles may be located shall be screened to avoid headlights shining onto residential properties.**
- **To the extent practical, site plans shall minimize the blocking of views of important elements of the city.**
- **To the extent practical, buildings shall be located and arranged to minimize shadowing on public spaces and adjacent properties.**
- **To the extent practical, buildings shall be located and arranged to minimize the generation of wind currents at ground level.**
- **Site plans shall include crime prevention design elements as specified in section 530.260 related to:**
 - **Natural surveillance and visibility**
 - **Lighting levels**
 - **Territorial reinforcement and space delineation**
 - **Natural access control**
- **To the extent practical, site plans shall include the rehabilitation and integration of locally designated historic structures or structures that have been determined to be eligible to be locally designated. Where rehabilitation is not feasible, the development shall include the reuse of significant features of historic buildings.**

Conformance:

- The parking lot is defined by a continuous concrete curb.
- Lighting must comply with Chapter 535 and Chapter 541 of the zoning code.
- Headlights should not cause a problem with any nearby residential uses mainly because of the distance of the church from the nearest residential buildings and the shrubs provided that would block the majority of any headlight glare.
- The project will not block views of important elements of the city nor create any substantive shadows on adjacent buildings and open spaces.
- The project would not be expected to contribute significantly to ground-level winds.
- The site design and landscape plan allows views from the public sidewalk into the site.

Alternative Compliance: The Planning Commission or zoning administrator may approve alternatives to any site plan review requirement upon finding any of the following:

- **The alternative meets the intent of the site plan chapter and the site plan includes amenities or improvements that address any adverse effects of the alternative. Site amenities may include but are not limited to additional open space, additional landscaping and screening, green roof, decorative pavers, ornamental metal fencing, architectural enhancements, transit facilities, bicycle facilities, preservation of natural resources, restoration of previously damaged natural environment, rehabilitation of existing structures that have been locally designated or have been determined to be eligible to be locally designated as historic structures, and design which is similar in form, scale and materials to existing structures on the site and to surrounding development.**
- **Strict adherence to the requirements is impractical because of site location or conditions and the proposed alternative meets the intent of this chapter.**
- **The proposed alternative is consistent with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council and meets the intent of this chapter.**

Conformance: Staff is recommending alternative compliance for the following items:

- Three walls of the new addition will not be located within the 15 foot required setback. Along Nicollet, this is impossible without removing an existing wall, and along Franklin and LaSalle meeting this requirement would create a much larger addition than is desired and would overtake the vast majority of the surface parking on the site.
- Two of the addition's elevations do not provide 30% windows as is required by Chapter 530.120 (b) (2). Staff is recommending alternative compliance in these cases because they are due to the existing portions of the building that the addition will encase. Other portions of both elevations exceed the requirement, and windows in these particular locations would be unseen or inappropriate for the uses of which they would provide views. The locations where staff is recommending alternative compliance is the first floor of the Nicollet Ave addition elevation and the first floor of the Franklin Ave addition elevation.
- The same locations listed above, and the first floor of the LaSalle Ave elevation, do not meet the requirement of Chapter 530.120 that blank, uninterrupted walls shall not exceed 25 feet in length. Windows are not appropriate in these locations and a high quality stone is being used for aesthetic affect. The overall scale of the addition is broken down into understandable sections and these instances of blank walls do not have a negative affect on the presence of the building or views into the parking lot, as these are provided in excess of the requirement on other portions of both elevations in question. Staff recommends alternative compliance to allow for these three areas of blank walls.

- Staff is recommending alternative compliance for the screening requirement in Chapter 530.170 of the code where such screening, or lack thereof, is located in the public right of way and where shrubs and landscaping are provided.
- Staff is recommending alternative compliance where less than 7 feet of landscaping is provided between public right of way and surface parking because of the site's consistency with the Nicollet Ave streetscaping design.

Section B: Conformance with All Applicable Zoning Code Provisions and Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Applicable Small Area Plans Adopted by the City Council

Zoning Code: The proposed use is permitted in the OR2 District. A parcel on the site used only for surface parking is zoned C1, and parking for a use in the OR2 district is not permitted on a C1 zoning lot. However, the C1 parcel was classified as B3S-2 prior to 1999, and parking lots were permitted in B3S-2 zoning at that time. Since this parking was established prior to the 1999 code revision the parking can remain as is.

Off-Street Parking and Loading: The parking requirement for a religious place of assembly is equal to 30% of the capacity of persons in the main auditorium. Off-site parking up to 300 feet away may be allowed. The capacity of the main auditorium is 768, which results in a parking requirement of 231 stalls.

The applicant is proposing to provide 145 parking stalls on site, with bicycle parking, and 92 spaces within 300 feet, for a total of 237 spaces.

Maximum Floor Area: The maximum floor area ratio for this use in the OR2 district is 2.5. The applicant proposal results in a floor area ratio of 0.55.

Building Height: Building height in the OR2 District is limited to 4 stories or 56 feet, whichever is less. The proposed building addition will be two stories and 26.5 feet high at the flat roof and 41.5 feet at the peak of the gabled roof.

Minimum Lot Area: The minimum lot area for this use in the OR-2 district is 20,000 square feet. The lot size for this project is 154,372 square feet.

Yard Requirements: Because the building encompasses an entire block, each street frontage is subject to a 15 foot setback. Three sides of the addition are applicable to this setback; all three sides are further than 15 feet from the streets that they front.

Specific Development Standards: There are no applicable specific development standards.

Hours of Operation: The proposed uses will only be open to the public between the permitted hours of 7 am to 10 pm Sunday through Thursday and 7 am to 11 pm Friday and Saturday, and as otherwise allowed for religious holidays.

Signs: There are no new signs proposed.

Refuse storage: All storage of refuse and recyclable materials will be located in an existing enclosure between the western elevation of the addition and Nicollet Ave, screened by an existing stone wall.

Minneapolis Plan: *The Minneapolis Plan* land use map shows that Nicollet Ave S is a commercial corridor and Franklin Ave S is a community corridor. This reflects the level of activity and intensity that this site is located within. As the required parking for the site will still be met and the required FAR and building height limits will not be exceeded, it seems clear that the addition is not inappropriate for the site. According to other principles and policies outlined in *The Minneapolis Plan*, the following apply to this proposal:

The Minneapolis Plan Chapter 1.6 states that “Minneapolis will promote community-based initiatives in youth programming.” One of the implementation plans of this chapter is to “Emphasize leisure, recreational and educational programming that offers positive, community-based experiences to youth.” This proposal will allow for Plymouth Church’s Sunday School classes to be located together and provide an ongoing community experience for its youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the Site Plan Review:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the application for a site plan review at 1900 Nicollet Ave S, 1926 Nicollet Ave S, 1934 Nicollet Ave S, 1929 LaSalle Ave S, subject to the following conditions:

1. Not less than 42 trees and 211 shrubs will be clearly shown on the final site plan.
2. One additional tree island will be located in the southwestern portion of the surface parking lot. The island will be no smaller than 7 feet by 7 feet and will take up no more than two existing parking stalls.
3. CPED Planning staff review and approval of the final site and landscaping plans.
4. All site improvements shall be completed by June 26, 2007, unless extended by the Zoning Administrator, or the permit may be revoked for noncompliance.

Attachments:

1. Statement of use
2. Correspondence
3. Site Plan, Floor Plans, Elevations, & Zoning map
4. Photos