

STAFF REPORT: 11/08/2023 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: #HDC2023-00086

VIOLATION NUMBERS: 469, 719

ADDRESS: 4440 E. CANFIELD

HISTORIC DISTRICT: SWEETEST HEART OF MARY ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

APPLICANT: DAVID SCHOTT

PROPERTY OWNER: CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE

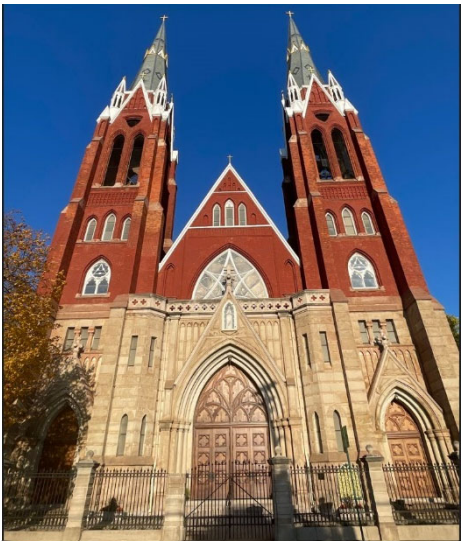
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 10/16/2023

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 9/21/2021, 9/30/2021, 8/1/2022, 4/12/2023, 10/3/2023, 10/24/23

SCOPE: INSTALL TELECOMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT AT BELL TOWER (WORK DONE WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1893, the property at 4440 E. Canfield is a Victorian cruciform plan church built of red brick with stone trim and a patterned slate roof. The main entrance faces west and is distinguished by a stone base topped by a quatrefoil frieze over the main portal and twin buttressed towers mounted by octagonal spires. The spires house three large bells, and at designation, were considered the largest double spires in Michigan. A smaller spire intersects the nave with the transept. Ornamented, pointed gables, pinnacled buttresses, and angled side entrances provide the nave façades with complexity of line and form. Lancet windows fenestrate the church with circled tracery of the tower and smaller windows of the north and south facades. Previously, HDC approved telecommunications equipment and a new exhaust louver within the south tower's bell tower openings. In 2021, installations replaced this original equipment without approval, and new, larger equipment is proposed, which is the subject of this application. A mock-up was installed in 2023 on the west side of the tower to showcase the potential effect of the work.



Site Photo 1, by Staff October 24, 2023: (West) front side



Site Photo 2, by Staff October 24, 2023: Southwest side of south tower showing currently installed telecommunications equipment outside the tower windows. The west face (left) is the proposed installation, the south face (right) is the equipment under violation.

This property includes the following previous approvals:

- February 2005, COA: Install cell phone antenna equipment inside tower
- April 2016, COA: Replacement of existing TMA units within bell tower with new radio units
- October 2017, COA: Replace slate with new synthetic roof shingles
- October 2019, COA: Install vents in one window opening

- August 2022, Withdrawn: Install telecommunication equipment at bell tower
- April 2023, Denial: Alter front porch of rectory building

This property has the following outstanding violation for work done without approval:

- June 2021, Work Done Without Approval: Telecom equipment attached to tower exterior.
- April 2023, Work Done Without Approval: Windows replaced with vinyl at rectory building.



Site Photo 3, by Google Street 2019: South view of tower before equipment change.



Aerial of Parcel #07001241

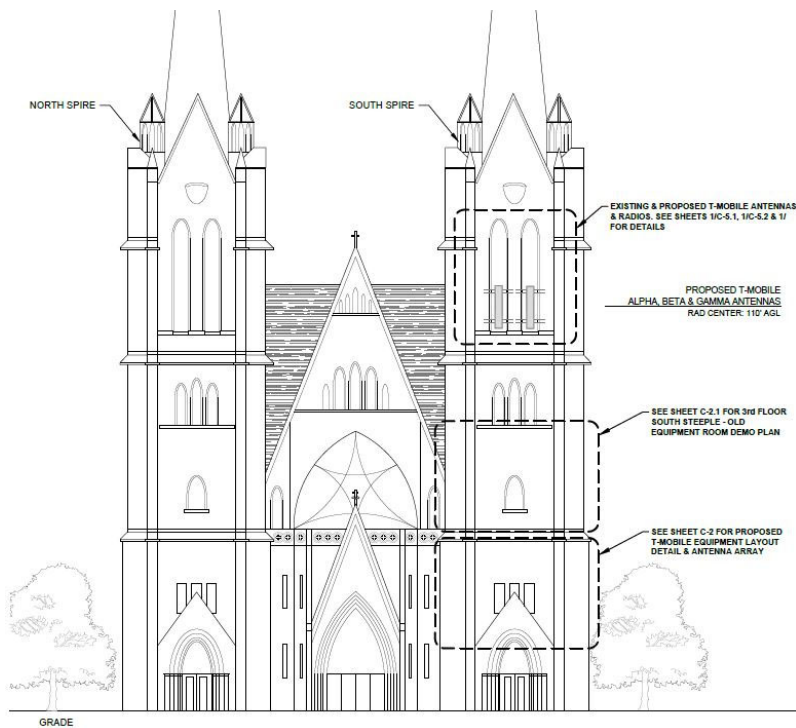


Fig. 1, by Applicant: West elevation depicting locations of antennas and interior equipment, C-5

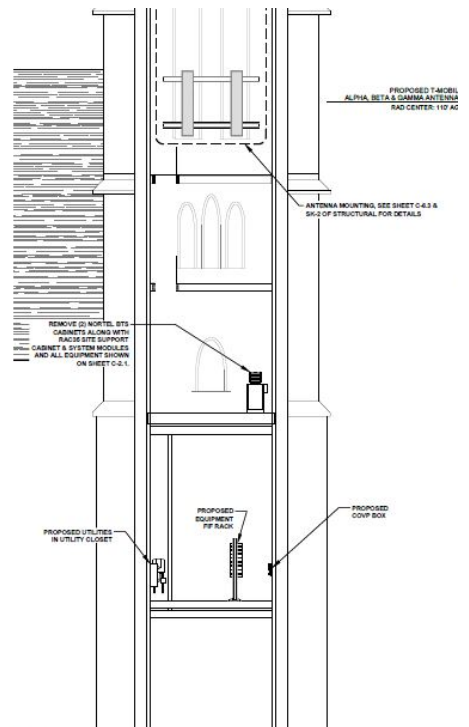


Fig. 2, by Applicant, C-5: Detail of west elevation depicting locations of antennas and interior equipment to be relocated from 3rd floor to 2nd floor (previously approved COA in 2019), C-5

PROPOSAL

The proposed work consists of the relocation and upgrade of telecommunications (T-Mobile) equipment at the existing telecommunication site. Although this work has been previously approved, the equipment located in the upper south tower was installed in a manner that was not initially in compliance with the 2016 COA. This proposal attempts to correct this by recessing the position of the antennas, replacing existing antennas with new antennas, and adding a screen and black paint to further diminish the visible impact. The applicant brought an application to the Commission on October 10, 2022, but prior to withdrawing the application at the meeting, the Commission and the applicant discussed mounting proposed changes to one side of the tower as an example. The west-facing side of the south tower show the example of the installation and screening proposed, as below. (*See photos 1&2 and applicant photos and attachments.*)

South Tower, Upper Steeple (Exterior)

- Removal of one (1) Commscope RRVV-33B-R3 antenna (72"l x 25.2"w x 9.3"d) and three (3) Commscope RV4PX306R antennas (63"l x 13.9"w x 8.2"d)
- Removal of several radios, amplifiers and cables as listed in attached drawings.
- Installation of three (3) Commscope FFHH-65C-R3 antennas (95"l x 25.2"w x 9.3d) and three (3) Nokia AAHF (Massive MIMO) antennas (35.4" x 21"w x 8.3"d)
- Installation of six (6) radios, six (6) diplexers, and support equipment installed interior to the tower as listed and shown in the attached drawings.
- All equipment mounted to masonry shall be in mortar joints, avoiding drilling in any brick, as shown in the drawings.
- All installation window locations will have Stealthnet, ultra-violet stabilized strands of polyethylene plastic netting, black in color, to be placed over and in front of each window opening. Cable and fasteners applied to the window opening to secure the netting.
- All antennas, cabling and hardware visible outside shall be black.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Sweetest Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Parish Historic District was established in October 23, 1981.
- Staff observed that antennae were installed as far back as 2012. (*See site photo 4.*) No COA was found during this earlier period. The applicant confirmed that they have no prior HDC documents prior to 2016.
- Staff received confirmation from the applicant that the following timeline of activities is correct:
 - April 2016: HDC staff approved the replacement of existing and installation of new antenna equipment in the bell tower, with attached drawings.
 - October 2019: HDC approved the installation of a new louver on the 2nd floor of the south tower to allow for the ventilation of the new location of equipment which was moved from the 3rd floor. (*See drawings C-2, C-5*)
 - September 2020: Applicant received BSEED permit to relocate equipment from 3rd floor to 2nd floor of south tower and replace antenna equipment in steeple.
 - October 2020- May 2021: Applicant relocated all equipment from 3rd to 2nd floor, but the louver and exhaust system has not yet been installed. This is why base station equipment changes remained in the 2022 construction drawings.
 - June 2021: HDC staff responded to complaints from the church community regarding the antenna equipment locations by issuing the applicant a Notice of Work Observed letter. In



Site Photo 4, by Staff January 24, 2012: (West) front side, showing older antennae installation.

response to the letter, and in working with the Church, the applicant submitted an application in July 2022.

- August 2022: After a lengthy discussion during the HDC hearing, Mr. Haley on behalf of T-Mobile proposed to the HDC that the configuration on one side of the tower be altered as proposed so that the HDC members could see the visual effect of the potential changes. Those changes included the addition of a mesh covering of the window opening and a relocation of the antennas further inside the tower envelope.
- July 2023: The applicant completed a mock-up installation at the west tower and then went through a review process with the Church.
- August 2023: HDC staff issued another Notice of Work observed to address the open violation. The applicant responded with a letter in September 2023.
- The original permitted location of the antennas (COA 2016) was set back and nearly flush to the tower's openings. (See figure 3.)
- Staff observed that the current location of the antennas, except for the west elevation proposed installation, protrudes outside the openings of the south tower steeple, which is in violation of the 2016 HDC Certificate of Appropriateness that permitted the location of the equipment within the tower's interior walls. (See also attached 2016 COA)
- The proposed antenna equipment is larger (increasing in height or width), more numerous (increasing from 4 antennae to 6) and are positioned in a manner that does not extrude far beyond the tower's window openings. The west elevation holds a mock-up per the recommendation made at the Commission's Regular Meeting on August 10, 2022. (See site photos 1&2)
- The south church tower is a distinctive character-defining feature of this property. Staff observed from both morning and afternoon perspectives with the changing shadow lines and lighting on the bell tower, the location of the proposed antenna equipment does not obscure and negatively altering these character-defining features because of the proposed restrained location back towards the window opening and the use of black coloring and black netting over the equipment. These proposed changes to the equipment do reduce and recess the impact of this equipment and is, in staff's opinion, not demonstrably inappropriate as it makes the equipment less visible.

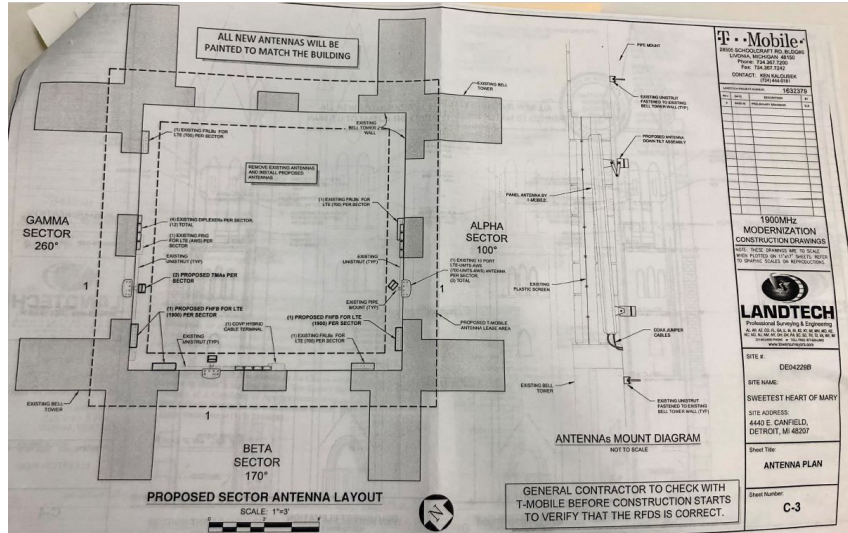
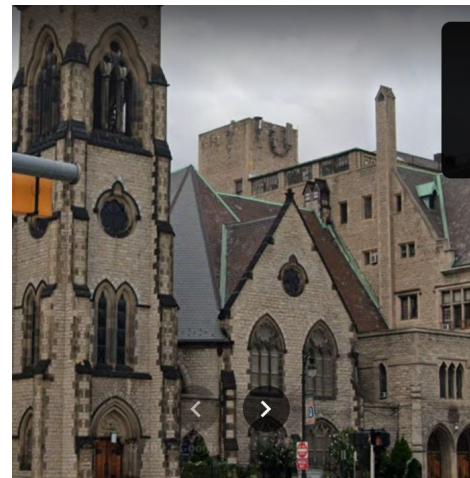


Fig. 3, by Applicant: Detail of South tower antenna plan, (2016, C-4) showing proposed antennas within the exterior plane of the tower wall and the “T-Mobile antenna lease area” in dashed lines.



Site Photo 5, by Google Street View 2022: (Southwest) front side of Central United Methodist Church (23 E. Adams), showing antennae installation exposed on rear tower.

- The applicant provided a combined letter of support for this proposal from both a representative from The Sweetest Heart of Mary Parish and T-Mobile. A copy of the statement has been posted on the property page.
- Staff confirmed that the 2nd Floor interior change of equipment has no effect on the exterior of the building since the HDC approval of the 2nd floor louver.
- Staff studied other antennae installations at or near church towers in Detroit and determined that this proposed installation is less visible and less impactful than those of other installations. (See site photos 5&6)
- The applicant’s drawings show replacement of other equipment in the lower portions of the tower. Staff requested a copy of page “C-2”, which is mentioned in the “C-5” drawing. Staff has not received a copy of this document at the time of this report. Although there are areas inside the church that are designated, this non-public area of the church is not listed in the Elements of Design, and therefore this portion of the work is not included in this application:

“The interior spaces of Sweetest Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church, which are hereby made subject to the Historic District Commission’s consideration, are those spaces normally open to or seen by the public, including the narthex, nave, choir loft, chancel and side altars. Areas not open to and not ordinarily seen by the public, including sacristies, vesting rooms, basement and attic areas, closets, service areas, and the entire interior of the rectory, schoolhouse, and sisters’ house, are not hereby made subject to the Historic District Commission’s consideration.” (Sec. 21-2-125, (e)1)
- Staff received confirmation from the applicant that the windows violation on the rectory is not part of this application and will be addressed in a future application by the owner.



Site Photo 6, by Google Street View 2022: (Northeast) front side of Faith Church (897 Philip St.), showing antennae installation inside new enclosure on tower.

ISSUES

- The applicant installed equipment that was not in compliance with the 2016 HDC Certificate of Appropriateness without first seeking approval from the Commission.
- It is staff’s opinion that the south church tower is a distinctive, character-defining feature of this property. While the current location of the antenna equipment that was installed without approval (i.e., projecting through the tower opening, breaking the plane of the exterior wall surface) detracts from the historic character of the building, the proposed location of the new equipment, despite the larger scale and added number of antennas, appears to be positioned, colored black, and screened in a manner that does not have a larger negative impact than the current conditions, and therefore, would not further detract from the historic character of the building and therefore is appropriate, in staff’s opinion.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Recommendation: Install Telecommunication Equipment At Bell Tower (Work Completed Without Approval)

It is staff’s opinion that more recessed position of the antenna, fabric covering the equipment and the equipment painted black is an appropriate solution that was previously identified as a viable potential solution and demonstrated by the example installation on the west face of the south tower is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets

the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Sweetest Heart Of Mary Roman Catholic Parish
Historic District's Elements of Design.