

ST. PAUL'S SITE VISIT REPORT

February 4, 2022

William Alisse, AIA Design and Engineering Sub Committee Chair



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A. INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the key findings resulting from our initial site inspection to St. Paul's on February 4, 2022. The visit was meticulously organized and I would like to thank all involved in allowing and organizing this critical visit to take place. The hazmat filtration masks and heavy duty flashlights were extremely helpful and much appreciated.

Participants on the site tour included the following:

- Cosmo Veneziale, Architect and current Mayor of Garden City**
- Giuseppe Giovaniello, Building Dept., Garden City Village Hall**
- Assistant Chief Matthew Pearn, member of the Garden City Fire Department**
- William Sollin, member of the St. Paul's Design and Engineering Subcommittee**
- William Alisse AIA, myself, registered Architect and chairman of the St. Paul's Design and Engineering Subcommittee**

Finally, photographs of the site tour are now in a Dropbox organized by Mayor Cosmo Veneziale. It would be advantageous to view these images in tandem with this report to substantiate the findings of this assessment.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/e31attw2gn7d7vc/AAB-97D-lj6sTcfwXkq1P6pza?dl=0>

B. REVIEW OF THE EXTERIOR OF ST. PAUL'S

- 1. This is the good news portion of the site inspection. As the photos taken will indicate, the brick facades of St. Paul's are basically intact and structurally sound.**
- 2. The facades are graced by various neo-Gothic styled entries and windows which may require some cosmetic restoration, but on the whole are undamaged and could readily be brought to an acceptable benchmark with standard restoration techniques, like sandblasting and power wash cleaning. There will be a need to replace some broken glass and repair and restore the clock. There was also some evidence of access penetration on the east side of the building. A more detailed façade inspection is recommended, encompassing all four facades and cross walls, to capture the level of repair work involved, but in principle, I believe the facades are holding up.**
- 3. The roof of St. Paul's is another matter. Although, our site inspection excluded any type of roof inspection, it is evident major repair work must be necessary to counter the extensive water leakage taking place. This will be discussed in greater detail under the REVIEW OF INTERIOR OF ST. PAUL'S section of this report.**

C. REVIEW OF INTERIOR OF ST. PAUL'S

- 1. The state of the interior of St. Paul's is shocking and requires immediate attention. The level of water penetration damage is extensive and a once basically sound building has been allowed to deteriorate over the years.**
- 2. We must never forget this is no ordinary building- this is a historical edifice of architectural worth and a testimony to the rich history of the Village of Garden City. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the A.T. Stewart Era Buildings, built in 1871. I strongly urge everyone to view the interior images from the site inspection to gauge the current extent of the water damage. It must be stated that the level of maintenance of this building is inadequate based on current observations. Based on my observations, the previous remedial works commissioned were never adequately inspected for handover nor properly overseen. At best, they have proved to be clearly insufficient. However, the purpose of this assessment is to report fairly on what was actually seen today and not judge the whys or wherefores of the past. That is for a different report.**
- 3. Upon entering, we immediately see evidence of the beautiful hand crafted architectural detailing once prevalent in this building- particularly noteworthy are the terra cotta wall tiling, the ornate iron balustrades, and the decorative floor tiling below all the dust and debris. In the event we choose to restore the building, these elements must be restored. If a decision is made not to do so, I recommend they be donated to the Garden City Historical Society for ultimate display and preservation.**
- 4. A Grand Staircase leads up to the famed Main Chapel space, but directly below it is the former Dining Hall of the building and we shall venture there first. The Dining Hall is characterized by 4 free-standing Corinthian columns that appear to be cast-iron. They support beams which in turn support the ceiling above. There are two chandeliers and some wall murals in the rear. The murals and the chandeliers appear to be in reasonable condition. The remnants of drapery grace the windows.**
- 5. All these architectural and decorative elements are in a state of deterioration and decay, as the musty, humid atmosphere prevalent in the Dining Hall is causing dangerous disrepair. While the walls are clearly beginning to fall apart, the ceiling is of particular grave concern. It is now basically free of any cosmetic finish treatment and its structural elements are completely exposed. The columns are holding for now, although surface deterioration is present. It is important to note the ceiling structure and columns support the Chapel above. If they were to start falling apart, the Chapel would go with it.**
- 6. The Chapel of St. Paul's is in surprisingly reasonably good condition. This room is a wide, column free vaulted space characterized by large, handsome stained glass windows. There is an ornate wooden entry, but otherwise all previous finish treatments to the walls and ceiling have disappeared, and only plain, undecorated plaster surfaces remain. The wooden pews, and the two pipe organs, appear to be in good shape, and we should have the organs tested to confirm their functionality and worth.**

- 7. It is a miracle the Chapel is still standing in its current state given the immediately surrounding areas are characterized by extensive dilapidation and decay. This is the only relatively dry space in the entire building. Notwithstanding, time is working against us and it will require immediate intervention. I would term the restoration work involved here to be reasonable as long as it is actioned quickly.**

- 8. The Grand Staircase that leads to the Chapel itself will probably require structural reinforcement, but otherwise is also salvageable. While the surrounding walls are starting to fall apart, the beautiful skylight above will soon be in danger of crashing down. Some additional 2 by 4 wooden structural reinforcement has already been added to alleviate this, but clearly more is required.**

- 9. The remaining spaces at St. Paul's are generally cases of grave deterioration due to water damage, most particularly on the second floor. It is frankly unbelievable the extent of water penetration that has been allowed to enter the building over time and the resulting negative effect it has caused over the years. Among the characteristics:**
 - Most wall surfaces are now peeling and some have completely opened and are exposed. Window frames are rotting.**
 - Most flooring has already been seriously damaged. Several rooms even had the flooring buckling, which will soon mean they will cave in.**
 - One room just east of the Grand Staircase has already completely caved in and is now totally open with debris everywhere. It is dangerous to simply approach it.**
 - Finished ceilings, such as those with acoustical tiles, are falling apart due to water infiltration from above. Extensive new ceiling work will be required.**
 - Some more elegantly furnished meeting rooms have a few chandeliers that may be salvaged, but the rooms themselves have deteriorated significantly. Remnants of fireplaces and mantles are still standing.**
 - Toilet spaces are filled with graffiti and dated fixtures and are not expected to be salvageable. The graffiti, which extends well beyond the bathrooms, is modern and reflects forced entry.**
 - Side stairs, while potentially attractive features, would not be considered a legal means of egress by today's stricter safety codes. They are generally open or semi-open, too narrow, and the balustrades, while handsome, do not meet the right height requirements. Extensive updating could resolve all these issues.**
 - Some spaces were only accessible by way of ladders. Obviously, this is something that would also have to be updated.**
 - Some of the window glass was broken and would have to be repaired.**
 - A large dead rat was discovered during the tour- surprisingly no more were in evidence, but a thorough vermin inspection is strongly recommended.**
 - The water damage first affects surface finishes as is widely in evidence. However, structural integrity then follows. We have already seen one room completely collapse. More will follow if something is not done immediately.**

D. Recommendations & Conclusions

- 1. The shocking state of deterioration that characterizes the bulk of St. Paul's interior demands urgent attention. The cost of restoration work will increase significantly as a result, and we need to price out potential solutions as a matter of urgency to confirm what may or may not be acceptable to the Village of Garden City.**
- 2. Whatever remedial work was done to St. Paul's has proven insufficient, even shoddy. I am under the impression some roof repairs took place in the past, but these have clearly failed to stop the water damage that has resulted. The structural reinforcement work that was ordered as an interim measure, is also clearly insufficient- consisting of some minor woodwork at the Grand Staircase, when it should have extended throughout the building.**
- 3. In the interim, the water damage needs to be curtailed as a matter of urgency. It is only a matter of time before the serious roof leaks will extend to general structural decay and probably cause further collapse. It is strongly recommended a team of roofing experts be brought in to do this work immediately. Every day counts.**
- 4. A vermin inspection will need to take place at some point. This is not urgent, but must not be forgotten. One dead rat was found.**
- 5. Once a potential use for St. Paul's is determined and we have clarity on what will be reused and what will not, we need to involve the Village Historical Society to ascertain what existing architectural elements will be salvaged for preservation. These may include: iron balustrades, terra cotta tilework, chandeliers, and stained glass.**

END OF REPORT