

Manayunk Neighborhood Council, PO Box 4667, Philadelphia, PA 19127

www.ManayunkCouncil.org 215-487-2125



Kevin Smith, President
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The Honorable Councilman Curtis Jones Jr.
Via email to Joshua M. Cohen
Special Assistant to the Majority Leader

September 1, 2015

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Via email to Matt Wysong, AICP
North / Northwest Senior Planner

Dear Councilman Jones and Planning Commission,

We understand that the properties that together encompass St Mary's Church, owned by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia between the 200 block of Conarroe Street and Carson Street in Manayunk - including the church, the rectory, the convent, the school, the parking lot and associated garage - have been offered for sale as one lot.

The sale of these properties which include several significant buildings and a large area of land located in the center of Manayunk will, when released together, have a significant impact on the neighborhood, its character, the quality of life and its future development.

Besides the future proposals for the various existing buildings offered for sale, the pressure to develop the existing parking lot will have a significant impact, both in the inevitable development of this site, if left to normal commercial forces, and the displacement of over 100 parking spaces presently located on this surface lot. The lot currently serves a desperate need for parking in the immediate neighborhood.

The history of the expansion of the Church's development in the 19th and 20th Centuries, not only on this block but also similar size developments on adjoining blocks, including St. Lucy's, St. Mary's, St. Josephat's and St. John's has to be acknowledged. As the Archdiocese chooses to dispose of such properties, the size and disposition of these buildings in the neighborhood needs to be evaluated and factored into the conditions of sale.

The St. Lucy's School and the St. Josephat's School are examples of large-scale buildings, which probably would not otherwise have been allowed to be developed in a residential neighborhood. These buildings were then sold and became multi-family units through the the ZBA Appeal process. They are indicative of the inevitable conflict between the drive a for a commercially-viable development and one that addresses the immediate and future concerns of the neighborhood. We believe that **this conflict needs to be addressed before an 'agreement of sale' is negotiated with future purchaser(s) rather than left solely to a reaction by the community to a series of variance applications.**

In the case of St. Mary's, where all of the properties are being sold together, we consider that the church buildings and, and in particular, the existing parking lot cannot be left to market forces to drive development. **We believe, before the properties are sold, that there needs to be a study of the properties and a discussion with interested parties including the Archdiocese, to arrive at an agreement which guides the future development.** We therefore ask that the Councilman and the Planning Commission join us in persuading the Archdiocese that such a study needs to be undertaken and constraints resulting from such a study are attached to any agreement of sale.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Smith', written over a faint, circular stamp or watermark.

Kevin Smith, President