

Agreement between St. James's Church and the Cambridge Historical Commission

The Free Church of St. James (Episcopal) aka St. James's Church, 1991 Massachusetts Avenue, and the Cambridge Historical Commission, hereby agree as follows:

That St. James's Church, by a vote of its Rector, Wardens and Vestry taken on December 21, 2004, be placed on the city's Designated Property List as a property restricted by the terms of a Preservation Restriction Agreement between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by and through the Massachusetts Historical Commission and St. James's Episcopal Church, which Preservation Restriction Agreement was executed on February 19, 1987 and recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 17887, page 444; the premises so restricted are defined as parcels 49, 50 and 62 of map 181 of the Cambridge assessor's records and recorded in book 9979, page 569 of the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds; and

That the Cambridge Historical Commission, by a vote taken on January 6, 2005, agrees to place St. James's Church on the City of Cambridge's Designated Property Street Listing and to notify the Massachusetts Historical Commission whenever application is made to the City of Cambridge for construction activity on the restricted premises that would affect the appearance of the restricted premises at 1991 Massachusetts Avenue or for any alteration of those premises other than as specified in section 3 of the Preservation Restriction Agreement; and

That placement of St. James's Church on the Designated Property Street Listing recognizes the significant associations of these premises with persons and events significant to the cultural and social history of the City and that these premises are architecturally significant in terms of their period and style of architecture and their associations with a famous architect; and

That, historically, St. James's Church is located on the site of an important 18th-century tavern in Cambridge and at the intersection of two roads prominent in the settlement and transportation patterns of 17th and 18th century Cambridge and is also associated, through its founding, with individuals, including Samuel Batchelder and Mary Longfellow Greenleaf, prominent in 19th-century Cambridge society; and that architecturally, it is significant as the first Richardsonian Romanesque church in Cambridge, as the only building designed by nationally-noted church architect Henry Congdon in Massachusetts, and as a fully-developed expression of the integration of art and architecture that characterized late 19th-century church architecture, with construction, fittings, and finishes by renowned studios and craftsmen, and

That, by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission taken on January 6, 2005, the Cambridge Historical Commission determines that St. James's Church meets criteria (1) and (2) of Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, which relates to landmark designation procedures in the City, but in consideration of the existing Preservation Restriction Agreement, the Cambridge Historical Commission declines at this time to forward a recommendation for landmark designation to the Cambridge City Council. The Cambridge Historical Commission has enunciated the following Statement of Standards, with which St. James's Church agrees, that should inform future alterations to the premises:

The St. James's premises include four main historic components: the church, the parish house, the Knight's Garden, and the interior. The publicly-visible exterior architectural features are the aspects of the premises that can be regulated under Article III of Chapter 2.78, of the Code of the City of Cambridge.

The church represents the most significant resource on the site. The primary intent of this designation is to protect all publicly-visible exterior architectural features of the church structure from inappropriate alteration. All construction on the site should preserve open views of the church structure, should be compatible with the church, and should retain the largely free-standing character of the church on its site.

The parish house, while the oldest structure on the property, has had numerous alterations and is of lesser architectural and historical significance than the church. A wood frame structure, two-and-a-half stories in height, the parish house is residential in scale. Set back approximately 100' from Massachusetts Avenue, the parish house has been enveloped in later construction, including a one-story masonry extension of the church structure to create a rector's study in 1912 and the construction of a one-story concrete block wing along the Beech Street elevation in 1958. The main component of the original structure still open to public view is the roof of the parish house.

Consideration should be given to allowing the removal of the parish house structure if at some point the church desires to construct a new parish house or other parish-related structure on the site. Alternatively, consideration could be given to removing the 1958 wing and recapturing a sense of the original parish house either through renovation or new construction on the parish house site. Given the extent of prior alterations to the parish house, consideration should be given to renovating rather than restoring materials and features of the structure.

Given the historical and landscape architecture significance and public benefit of the Knight's Garden (see below), designs for any new structures on the premises should encroach to the least extent possible on that component of the site.

The Knight's Garden represents a significant open space along Massachusetts Avenue and is one of very few privately-owned historic landscapes on this major thoroughfare. The garden was designed in 1915 by John Nolen (1869-1937), a pioneering city planner and landscape architect, to be an oasis amidst the commercial district of Massachusetts Avenue and to provide a setting for the church. Insofar as is practicable, the Garden should be maintained as a historic landscaped open space. Consideration should be given to maintaining and/or restoring plant and hardscape features of the garden. Encroachment on the garden should be avoided or minimized.

THE FREE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES'S (EPISCOPAL) aka ST. JAMES'S CHURCH

Signed by:

George Van Houten

Date:

March 7, 2005

Printed Name/Title:

George Van Houten
Senior Warden

CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Signed by:

William B. King

Date:

March 2, 2005

Printed Name/Title:

William B. King, Chair