



LANDMARK DESIGNATION PETITION

CULTURAL RESOURCES OFFICE
ST. LOUIS PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN AGENCY

PROPERTY NAME

1. Present Name of Site **Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church**
2. Other Name(s)

LOCATION

1. Street Name and Number **3141 LaSalle Street**
2. City Block Number **1272**
3. Ward **6**
4. Structure is on original site: YES NO

If structure has been moved, please indicate the date of the move and the location of the original site

OWNERSHIP

1. Owner (s) of Record (Owner(s) of Fee-Simple Interest)

Name **Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church Board of Trustees**
Address **3141 LaSalle Street**
City & State **St. Louis, MO 63104**
Telephone **314 771-7971**

2. Owner (s) of Ground Lease (if any – Lease-Hold Interest)

Name

Address

City & State



Telephone

3. Has owner (s) been contacted concerning proposal to nominate property for landmark designation? YES NO
4. If so, please indicate method, date and name of owner (s) contacted.

A member of the congregation contacted the Cultural Resources Office to propose Landmark designation during September 2013.

A. PLEASE ATTACH THE FOLLOWING:

1. A general location map (i.e., a USGS Quadrangle map is suitable).
2. Legal Description of Property (by metes and bounds or other legal description that readily identifies the site)
Millikens Addition, Block 1, Lots 27 through 32 and SE portion of 33
3. If there is more than one structure on the site, please describe specifically which structure(s) are under nomination.

The church and its additions are included in the nomination.

B. SIGNIFICANCE

A Landmark is a natural site or improvement (including any park, cemetery, street or right-of-way) that has a significant historical interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, state or nation.

1. Please check the criteria of significance that are relevant and explain further in #2 below:
 - A) Has significant character or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, state or nation;
 - B) Is the site of a significant historic event;
 - C) Is the work of a master whose individual work has significantly influenced the development of the City, state or nation;
 - D) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation;



- E) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City;
- F) Has yielded, or is likely to yield, according to the best available scholarship, archaeological artifacts important in prehistory or history;
2. Statement of significance, documenting the historic, architectural, cultural, archeological or aesthetic significance of proposed nomination (please footnote to bibliographic references). Please include an architectural survey map that evaluates the significance of each Improvement and/or topographic feature within the proposed site.

The Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church property meets Criterion A for designation as a St. Louis City Landmark. The church at 3141 LaSalle Street has been the home of the congregation since circa 1892. It represents the heritage of the black community of Compton Hill, one of the several distinct black neighborhood of the City established during the 19th century. With its new front, designed by black architect John R. Steele in 1944, the church building and the congregation's history convey significant aspects of the city's heritage and cultural legacy.

The Compton Hill congregation was founded in 1860 and first met in a home in the 3200 block of LaSalle Street. Under the leadership of Elder George Miller, the congregation was incorporated in 1892 with 69 men and women signing the incorporation papers. William Anderson was President of the Church; Jerryemiah Ray, Spencer Payne and Sampson Parker were the additional officers. Fire insurance maps indicate that the congregation built or acquired a brick church building around this same time; the building appears on 1897 and 1908 fire insurance maps. The congregation furnished the church with a pump organ.

The congregation hosted the Missouri State Missionary Baptist Convention in its brick building in 1906, an event in its long history of being active in the Berean District Missionary Baptist Association and has supported its mission projects.

Many pastors have led the church, including Reverend J. W. Mahomes, who served from 1939 to 1966) and oversaw the 1944 construction project and Pastor Nathaniel Bland (1966-2013), under whose long leadership of forty-two years additional improvements were made to the church. Many members served in leadership roles for decades,



providing guidance and stability. Mrs. Romeo Woods served not only the Compton Hill congregation, but also at state and national offices in Christian Education roles.

The Church Building

In 1927 the congregation planned changes to the church building, including an addition and new façade. A photograph from this period shows a low gable-roofed structure with an incomplete façade below it, as the congregation had removed the front of the church in anticipation of its new façade. It is not clear the extent of the changes that were completed at that time.

The building project of 1944 is better documented. The appearance of the main portion of the church building dates from this time. Architect John R. Steele drew plans for a new façade, an addition to the front of the church, and a new truss-supported roof. The addition includes the rear portion of the sanctuary, the vestibule and flanking rooms, as well as the balcony area. Rev. Mahomes was identified in city records as the builder, and may have assumed the role of general contractor for the project.

John R. Steele was one of the few black architects working in St. Louis during the first half of the twentieth century. Steele (c.1862-1951) spent his working life in St. Louis, after relocating from South Carolina. He worked as a supervisor of construction for the Quartermaster Division of the U.S. Government by 1910, at Fort Sheridan in Illinois. By 1920 he had a similar position at the Jefferson Barracks. The 1940 census identifies him as working as an architectural engineer for the city and residing on Garfield Avenue, a street he had lived on since at least 1920. Steele, A.T. Betha, and Frank Robinson, all members of the city's black community, planned and supervised the construction of homes, churches and public buildings in St. Louis and were considered pioneers that opened the way for other blacks to become architects.¹

The next project was an addition in circa 1955 that provided space for an office and dressing rooms on the west side of the church. Two more additions, Memorial Hall and a kitchen and dining area, were completed during the 1990s. Adjacent parcels have been acquired for parking lots.

¹ Federal census returns, John R. Steele death certificate, and Employee's Loan Company, *Negroes, Their Gift to St. Louis* (1964), p. 16.



The Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church facility represents how, like other new congregations, first met in members' homes, and then built and subsequently improved its church. Building and improving the church was the physical demonstration of the devotion of its members, as well as its importance and permanence. The two building improvement projects undertaken by the Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church, in 1927 and in 1944, as well as subsequent projects, have been important undertakings in the congregation's history.

The Compton Hill Community and its Churches

An African American community was established in Compton Hill during the second half of the nineteenth century. The area bounded by Jefferson, Park, Chouteau and Grand avenues was a self contained neighborhood with its own school, churches, and stores. The Colored School, renamed L'Ouverture in 1890, was on Papin Street; after it was damaged by fire in 1945, a new L'Ouverture school opened in 1950.²

As many of the residences were rented flats many have deteriorated to the point that they have been demolished. Historically, the area has been mixed in use with industrial operations including the Seven-Up Bottling Plant at Hickory and Montrose, and several iron and sheet-metal works on LaSalle, some of which remain. The Watson Funeral Home at 3441 Park Avenue opened in 1919. The Buder recreational and bath-house facility was integrated incrementally. Black neighborhood residents could use the gymnasium prior to the late 1940s, when the pool and bath house were integrated.

The black community supported a number of church congregations in the Compton Hill neighborhood. The Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church, organized in 1860, was one of the early ones. Mount Zion Baptist Church, founded the year before, has occupied several buildings it owned before building a modern facility during the 1990s. The Rock Church AME building stands at the intersection of Cardinal and Caroline: a chapel and a church built in 1930. LaSalle United Methodist Church, is located on Park Avenue between Caroline and Michigan. The LaSalle Methodist Episcopal Church, which stood on the corner of LaSalle and Montrose; a church built on the site in 1952 is now occupied by the Prayer Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. The Carter Institutional AME Church at the corner of Virginia and Hickory and the

² This section is based on John A. Wright, Sr., *St. Louis Disappearing Black Communities*, pp. 38-43, which includes photographs of the Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church.



church at Virginia and Chouteau have been demolished. The historic churches in the Compton Hill neighborhood are tangible evidence of the once dense and vibrant black community.

3. Major Bibliographical References:

Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church. 137th Anniversary Book. "Historical Review, 1960-1997."

Employee's Loan Company. *Negroes, Their Gift to St. Louis*. 1964.

Plans, City of St. Louis Building Division. Building Permit J-11640, March 22, 1944.

Wright, John A. Sr. *St. Louis Disappearing Black Communities*. Arcadia Publishing, 2004.

4. Statement of current economic conditions and environs of the site; and description of advantages for adjacent property owners and to the City which may be anticipated as a consequence of designations:

The Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church stands a half-block south of Chouteau on the east side of Compton Avenue. St. Louis University is a large neighbor on the west side of Compton. Land use east and south of the church property is mixed. The church is one of the older buildings in the vicinity, and together with businesses and churches further south on the east side of Compton, establishes the west edge of the residential neighborhood.

C. SITE PLAN

Please attach a site plan of existing conditions at an appropriate scale but not less than 1" = 50'.

D. LANDMARK PLAN

Please indicate below the general plan of development for the subject property, indicating (1) uses, (2) planned or proposed public or private restoration, additions or alterations and/or (3) any planned demolition. (Attach exhibits as desirable).

(1) Continued use as a church.

(2) Maintenance as needed.



E. LANDMARK STANDARDS

Proposed Applicable Landmark Standards pertaining to the site, but not limited to design and construction standards for building facades, setbacks, height, scale, material, color, texture, trim, roof details, landscaping, fencing, street, street furniture, signs, and/or demolition of exterior architectural features.

See Attachment 4.



F. ZONING AMENDMENTS

1. Present Zoning Classification Zone: **"J," Industrial**
 2. Recommended amendment (if any) to the existing zoning classification(s): **None**
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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

1. Original Use **Church**
Present Use **Church**
2. Percent Occupied and list of Tenant(s) names (if applicable)
100 percent
3. Architect(s) for original structure; and additions or major alterations (as applicable).
John R. Steele
4. Builder/Contractor for original structure; and additions or major alterations (as applicable).
Reverend J. W. Mahomes
5. Date(s) of original erection, additions or major alterations (as applicable).
c. 1892, 1927, 1944, 1990s

Please indicate if architectural plans for any of the above cited work are available, type of plans (i.e. structural, mechanical, etc.) and the name and address of persons having possession of plans.

The Building Division has microfilm of the plans and elevation of the church façade that accompanied the 1944 Building Permit application.

6. Condition of structure(s) nominated and as evaluated by (check):
 Applicant Architect Engineer Other
Exterior: Sound Deteriorating Derelict
Interior: Sound Deteriorating Derelict

(Please attach any reports in this regard).



7. Please describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance:

The Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church is located on LaSalle Street, east of Compton, set back from the intersection. The building is flanked by parking areas and another parking lot owned by the church is south across LaSalle Street.

The tall, south-facing façade of the church dominates the building, which is set back from the public sidewalk and stands on a stone foundation. Steps cut through the concrete retaining wall that edges the terrace lawn and a second set approaches the front door. Pipe-rail handrails edge the steps and sidewalk. A sign placed in front of the western portion of the façade is held by two iron posts.

The three-bay brick façade is articulated by brick buttresses with stone caps, a form that appears at the corners of the building and on the side walls. It is terminated by a shaped and stepped short parapet wall with an ocular window centered in the gable face. The center entrance bay, with doubleleaf entry doors, flanked by windows set below semi-circular arched transoms; the sash is double-hung. Light fixtures are mounted on the buttresses flanking the door; iron grilles cover the ground-story windows. Above, window openings with fixed sash light the balcony room: a larger semi-circular arched opening flanked by two smaller ones to create a tri-partite grouping.

The side bays each have a pair of window openings; double-hung sash is set below a semi-circular-arched transom window. All of the arched openings have rowlock headers in a contrasting lighter colored brick; this brick is used as flat label molds and to enframe the oculus window and line the parapet.

The identical east and west walls of the church are exposed south of the additions that extend from the main block at the rear. A red brick is laid with pilasters dividing the walls into three bays. Windows have segmental arches of triple rowlocks; the openings are filled with double-hung sash. A deep corbel table runs just below the shallow soffit of the gable roof.. An exterior door is located in the center bay of both walls.

Alterations to the historic building are minor and include the replacement of the original front entry doors; painting of the limestone foundation; and the addition of an aluminum awning at the entry.



Additions extend from the north end wall of the church, as well as from the north halves of the east and west walls, both considerably recessed from the church's primary facade. The one-story brick addition on the east side of the church comprises the Memorial Hall. A two-part construction program is evident. In the portion of the Hall closest to the church, a single-slope roof of low pitch slopes to the east. A ramp leads to a set of double doors at grade, sheltered by a canopy;; the entrance is flanked by windows with single rowlock arches of contrasting brick, mirroring similar details on the church. In the eastern section of the Hall addition, which has a flat roof, a similar window is centered in the south façade. The addition's poured concrete foundation is exposed on this section.

The addition to the west side of the church is a flat-roofed brick building on a raised painted concrete foundation. The corbelling of the brick walls of the church is replicated on this addition. Concrete steps rise to an exterior door in the west wall. The narrow rectangular window openings have flat soldier arches, rowlock sills and are enframed by stacked brick, are outlined with the same color of brick as the walls. This is the administration area of the church and the Pastor's office.

A one-room-deep addition extends from the rear of the church building; industrial steel sash is set into the brick walls. The area has a flat roof.

- 8.** Does the subject nomination have any existing City Historic District or Federal (i.e., National Register) preservation status? If so, please give date and description.

No, it does not.



G. PETITIONER AND AUTHOR

Name of Petitioner **Board of Trustees**
Organization **Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church**
Author of Petition **Betsy H. Bradley, Director, Cultural Resources Office**
Address **3141 LaSalle Street**
City/State **St. Louis, MO 63104**
Telephone **314 771-7971**

_____ Date _____
Ernestine Pettie, Member, Board of Trustees

_____ Date _____
Mary Ford, Member, Board of Trustees

_____ Date _____
Miesha Wallace, Member Board of Trustees

_____ Date _____
Robyn Austin, Member, Board of Trustees

_____ Date _____
Elmus Miller, Member, Board of Trustees

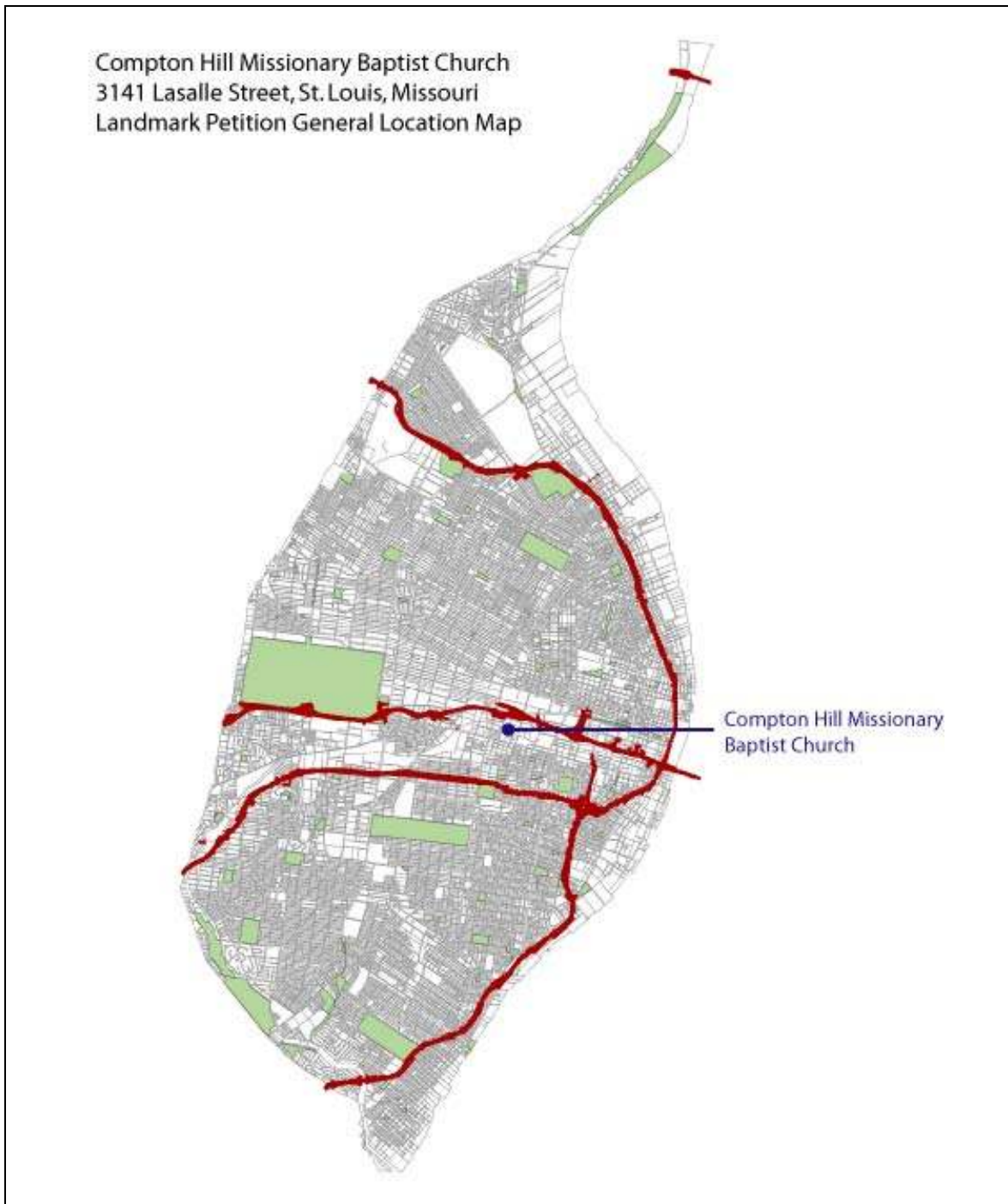


TYPICAL ORDER OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map (required)
2. Site plan of existing boundaries and improvements with adjacent uses
3. Landmark Standards
4. Photographs of all sides of site or elevations (as the case might be)
5. Legal Description (if not previously cited)
6. Structural Reports (if any)
7. Miscellaneous Documentation



Attachment 1: Landmark Location Map **Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church**





Attachment 2: Landmark Site Plan Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church





**Attachment 3: Photographs of the Landmark
Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church**



West Addition



Memorial Hall Addition





Attachment 4: Landmark Standards

Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church

These standards are the National Park Service's Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation supplemented with guidance that reflects the conditions found at this City Landmark.

This City Landmark consists of the two parcels on which the church building and its additions stand. Other parcels owned by the Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church are not included in the extent of the Landmark.

Character-defining features and aspects of the property addressed by these standards are those that strongly convey its architectural style and history. When these components of an historic property are altered, the building or structure can no longer convey its association with the past. Character-defining features vary from property to property, but generally include original building materials, decorative architectural elements, and features such as doors and windows. Character-defining features are likely to be located on the façade and other portions of the property visible from the street.

Standard #1. The property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Standard #2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Façade and building exterior:

All character-defining aspects of the exterior of the church shall be maintained in place and not be altered through removal, paint, covering with other materials, or other physical changes.

Features and materials that must be replaced periodically, such as roofing, shall be the same as the historic or existing, or an appropriate replacement.

Windows and their glazing are important character-defining features of the church and shall not be blocked. Window sash replacement shall replicate the original sash or be an appropriate alternative, such as a memorial window.



Interior:

While some changes have likely been made to the sanctuary, such as the size of the altar platform, its character is established by it being a single, open space with two aisles between rows of pews that face the altar platform. This arrangement shall not be altered significantly. The congregation has renewed features as needed to maintain the sanctuary to a high-standard. One element that appears to date from the first church located on the site is the set of wood window frames on the interior; these frames shall be retained and repaired as needed.

Landscaping:

The general extent and type of landscaping of the church property, that includes a retaining wall, steps to the main entrance, and a ramp to Memorial Hall shall be maintained. Parking lots on the property shall be paved but need not be maintained as parking lots.

Signs:

Two monument signs are located on the landmark site. Any signs applied to the building or installed on the grounds shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the property. The following types of signs are not compatible:

Roof-top signs, billboards, flashing or animated signs, signs with changing text, back-lighted signs, wall signs above the side wall window sills, large projecting signs that block windows, and loudspeaker music or speed for advertising purposes.

Standard #3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

The Compton Hill Missionary Baptist Church and subsequent congregations, if any, may add discreet features that relate to its identification, worship practices, and religious iconography. Such new elements shall appear appropriate in material, scale, and overall feeling for the existing building.

Standard #4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.



The historic configuration of the church at the time of Landmark designation are the original portion of the church and the 1944 addition and main façade. At the time of designation, there are no other components of the property that have acquired significance. The additions to the main church building document the growth and permanency of the church congregation, yet do not have any historical or architectural significance in their own right. They may be altered or replaced.

Standard #5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

The masonry exterior materials or brick and stone shall be maintained in good condition. The masonry above the foundation will not be painted or changed in any way that alters its visual character. Removal of existing paint, using an appropriate method that safeguards the historic material is encouraged.

Standard #6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

The windows and doors of the church are important historic character-defining features. If they deteriorate to the point of needing replacement, replacement units shall be carefully selected and shall replicate the shape and appearance of the existing windows.

Standard #7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

The masonry materials of the exterior shall not be sandblasted or cleaned with harsh chemicals. Any cleaning project shall be approved by the Cultural Resources Office.

Standard #8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

The property owners shall consult with the Cultural Resources Office before undertaking a project that would include below-grade disturbance.



Standard #9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Any new construction shall be compatible with the church and residence on the property in terms of materials and shall be secondary to the church in terms of size, scale, height, and architectural prominence. The location of the existing additions at the rear of the church has established a pattern that shall be altered only after careful consideration of the effect of an addition on the main portion of the church. All plans for new construction shall be reviewed by the Cultural Resources Office.

Standard #10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.