

June 9, 2017

City of Rochester Planning Commission
David L. Watson, Chair
30 Church St.
City Hall - Room 125B
Rochester, NY14614

RE: Application for Landmark Designation – Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School Campus

Dear Mr. Watson:

I submit for consideration to the Planning Commission an application for landmark designation of the historic campus at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, 1100-1120 South Goodman Street and 117-125 Highland Parkway. Specifically, I seek designation of the exterior of the property and grounds comprising the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School campus before its subdivision in 2014, and designation of the interior of the Colgate Memorial Chapel (one of the component buildings of the campus).

Enclosed you will find application materials documenting the history, physical appearance, and the architectural and cultural significance of the campus, which should amply justify the worthiness of the campus for designation. I understand, in reviewing applications for landmark designation, that the Planning Commission must consider three standards (outlined in Section 120-193 of the City's Zoning Code). I wish to address each of those standards below:

[1] The proposed designation will be in harmony with the City's Comprehensive Plan and overall planning program of the City.

Although the City is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, it is my understanding that it continues to operate under the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, Renaissance 2010. On page 67, the Plan articulates a vision for a renaissance of community:

Rochester's neighborhoods will be vital, identifiable, inter-dependent and will provide affordable, attractive and economically viable housing and commercial goods and services for people of all ages, races and income levels and for families of all sizes. Our neighborhoods will incorporate the best elements of 'urban' as well as 'village' lifestyles...Our residential areas will honor historic preservation and proudly display the many unique and beautiful historic homes and buildings that are part of our city.

In articulating its vision for a renaissance of responsibility, on page 35:

...Mindful of our rich legacy of human achievements and our unique diversity of natural resources, our citizens will strive to balance growth with stability and progress with preservation...Recognizing that today's actions, as well as inactions, affect tomorrow's well-being, our citizens will honor their obligation to act as stewards of our air, land and water and our cultural and historic resources.

The City has placed a clear priority on historic preservation and quality of life in our historic neighborhoods, or “urban villages.” Designation will allow the campus to remain an important historic and cultural asset and will allow for new development that is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood and that balances growth with preservation. Preservation is not anathema to progress; preservation is progress. It allows our citizens to enhance some of the most appealing and valuable elements of our city while complementing those elements with modern development and additions.

[2] The proposed designation will not adversely impact the growth and development of the City.

Designation of the campus will not adversely impact the growth and development of the City or the property itself. On the contrary; landmark designation will enhance the future economic viability of this property and will enhance property values and quality of life in the neighborhoods surrounding the campus. Protection of historic properties through local landmark designation has repeatedly been demonstrated to stabilize and enhance property values. This is because landmark designation protects properties from insensitive alterations that would diminish their value.

It is important to note that the Colgate Rochester campus derives its economic value from its character—its historic architecture, historic landscape design, as well as its adjacency to a Frederick Law Olmsted-designed park and an intact historic residential neighborhood. Without these historic elements, the campus loses its character and appeal and therefore its economic value.

Further, landmark designation in no way prevents growth and development. It simply provides for an extra step in the zoning review process. This extra step ultimately will result in new development/infill that is sensitive to the historic character of the property and the surrounding neighborhood. This will help ensure that future changes to the property preserve its economic value. Throughout the City’s Preservation Districts, there are numerous examples of successful, sensitive development in preservation districts. The East Avenue Preservation District has seen two recent substantial projects: apartments by Morgan Management at 933 University; 4-story apartment and office building at 600 East Avenue (corner of East Avenue and South Goodman Street).

[3] The proposed designation will not adversely impact any scheduled public improvement or renewal project.

To my knowledge, no public improvement projects are planned for this property.

In summary, landmark designation of the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School campus will benefit the property owner, the city and its residents by protecting the historic character of a campus that is unique in the greater Upstate New York region. With its historic designed landscape, architecture, and park-like setting across from Olmsted’s Highland Park, Colgate Rochester represents one of the most important campus settings in the city. For the benefit of current and future generations, its future should be secure.

Thank you for your consideration.