

# BARD

*A College of the Liberal Arts and Sciences*

*Division of the Arts*

Fisher Studio Arts 156  
Bard College  
Annandale-on-Hudson

December 12, 2022

Ms. Mary O'Neil  
Office of Permitting & Inspections  
City of Burlington  
PO Box 849  
Burlington, VT 05402-0849

Re: ZP-22-576 / Demolition Permit Application for Burlington Cathedral

Dear Ms. O'Neil:

I write in support of the adaptive re-use of the former Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, along with its landscape and bell tower in Burlington, VT. Since 2021, I have been evaluating and preparing the papers and drawings of Alistair Bevington, who was in charge of the project. In my position as an historian of architecture, I can attest to the value that the Cathedral and the grounds bear not only for Burlington Vermont, but US architecture at large.

Designed to replace the older church, the Cathedral is the result of a very productive collaboration between two major figures in American modernist architecture: Edward Larrabee Barnes and pioneering landscape architect Daniel Urban Kiley. Barnes conceived of the Cathedral as a roof in the middle of an open landscape that Kiley structured with a grid of locust trees. The result of the collaboration delivered to Burlington a public space and a dynamic environment, intended to foster community and to create connections between the Church and the city. The Cathedral also features significant stained glass installations by artists Robert Sowers and David Wilson, .

Most importantly, however, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception constitutes an important and rare surviving example of a historical moment in the reformation of the Catholic Church. After the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (also known as Vatican II, 1962-65), architects revisited ecclesiastical architecture in response to the proposed liturgical reforms. The idea was to bring the congregation closer to the altar, with little visual or other obstruction. The reform challenged architects of the period to reconsider the architectural form of spirituality, resulting in new ecclesiastical types. The

architecture of the Cathedral reflects those attempts to democratize the liturgical space and to encourage the active participation of the parishioners during Mass.

The proposed demolition threatens with extinction an important part of our cultural heritage, significant for both Vermont and the US. Following other examples of adaptive-reuse, the Cathedral offers an opportunity to rethink and redefine what this space could mean and provide for the community of Burlington and beyond. The Estate of Alistair Bevington holds the full series of construction documents and would be happy to share for consultation regarding its adaptive reuse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olga Touloumi', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Olga Touloumi  
Assistant Professor of Architectural History, Bard College  
Archivist of the Estate of Alistair Bevington  
PhD, Harvard University  
MSc, MIT

cc: The Estate of Alistair Bevington