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December 12, 2022

Ms. Mary O'Neil
Principal Planner for Development Review
City of Burlington
mconeil@burlingtonvt.gov

Re: Application to Demolish former Burlington Cathedral / ZP-22-576

Dear Ms. O'Neil,

The following comments are submitted for consideration by the Burlington Design Advisory and Development Review Boards at their upcoming hearings on the request for a demolition permit to remove the former Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception building in downtown Burlington. Founded in 1998, the Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (VTASLA) is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 50 members and licensed landscape architects within Vermont. VTASLA promotes the landscape architecture profession and advances the practice through advocacy, education, communication, and fellowship.

We are aware of the permit application to demolish the former Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Pine Street in Burlington. The cathedral was designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes and completed in 1977 as a geometric mid-century Modernist design. The potential demolition of the cathedral is of concern to VTASLA because the building constitutes one half of the comprehensive plan for this property, the other half including the landscape site plan designed by the Charlotte-based firm Kiley-Tyndall-Walker. Landscape architect and Partner Dan Kiley was a frequent collaborator with Barnes and was described by the *New York Times* as "a seminal landscape architect who combined modernist functionalism with classical design principles," and he ranks among the most influential landscape architects of the 20th century. Works by the Kiley office can be found at landmark sites around the world, including the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the Ford Foundation Headquarters in Manhattan, and La Défense in Paris. Kiley is of such importance that in 2019 VTASLA sponsored an exhibition and lecture series in Middlebury about Kiley's life and work. The cathedral landscape is one of the few designed landscape projects undertaken by the Kiley office in Vermont and it warrants very careful consideration before any changes are made.

What makes this property unique is the manner in which the landscape and the building support each other aesthetically and physically. The grove of honey locusts embraces the building to provide a simple buffer from the surrounding city, while the angles of the building are reflected in the axial walkways and provide the grid upon which the grove is based. These simple yet powerful moves with the landscape are representative of Kiley's modernist style. The loss of either half of this intentional composition would irreversibly alter the integrity of the site and lose an important combined architectural and



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landscape precedent in Vermont and New England. The Cultural Landscape Foundation credits the grounds at the cathedral as one of Kiley's only built public works in Vermont.

Additionally, the honey locust grove recently underwent a substantial care and revitalization initiative following the completion of the bus terminal on St. Paul Street. Recommendations for revitalizing the bosque came from Kiley's former partner Peter Ker Walker who recommended tree pruning, soil aeration and root pruning, and replacing trees that were missing from the grid. This effort has resulted in a mature grove of honey locust trees that provide respite and shade in the heart of Burlington.

On behalf of the entire Executive Committee, VTASLA encourages the preservation of the former cathedral and its associated landscape. We ask that the Burlington DAB and DRB give serious consideration to the importance of this site within Burlington and the potential for adaptive reuse. Redevelopment proposals that do not require the removal of the building or the landscape and instead incorporate these existing resources into a development plan that celebrates the building and landscape should be considered. The urban greenspace like the one that presently exists on this property is an asset that most cities would strive to protect and promote as an example of the community's commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change, promoting clean and healthy cities for residents, and encouraging thoughtful redevelopment practices. Adaptive reuse is a tried-and-true means of sustainable and environmentally sensitive urban redevelopment, and we hope it can be applied to this important historic site in downtown Burlington.

Sincerely,

Tom Hand, ASLA, PLA
VTASLA Chapter President