

Attachment E Applicant Letter



PIONEERING ENVIRONMENTS

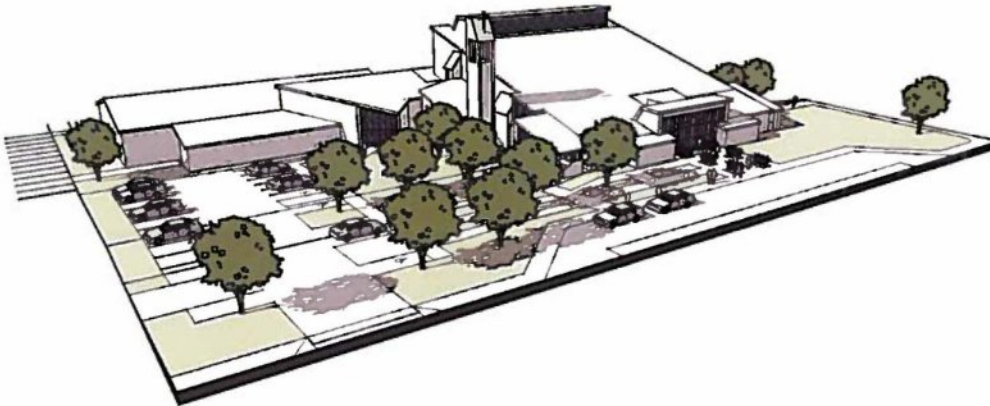
December 7, 2015

Planning and Community Services Department
2825 3rd Ave. North, 4th Floor
Billings, Montana 59101

RE: St. Thomas Apostle Church Renovation
2055 Woody Drive
Special Review Application

Zoning Coordinator:

Project Scope: The project is proposing additions and renovations to existing uses and functions at the Church Facility. There is 9,170 SF of additional floor area being constructed to improve access, circulation and services for the existing spaces. These include larger and more accessible Public Entrance Lobbies and circulation spaces and new larger restrooms. A replacement Kitchen is also being added to the south side of the gym to better serve Fellowship events in the Gym space. A Basement Classroom is also proposed under the new Main Sanctuary Entrance. The renovation impacts 12,450 SF of existing space and addresses needed functional improvements. The spaces impacted are the Administrative offices expanding into the existing fellowship space and the Gymnasium being converted into a larger and multiuse Fellowship space. Some spaces are also being converted for needed storage and other related support functions. Site improvements include some expansion of the Parking and a new main landscaped entrance plaza to provide better and more accessible access to all the Main entrances.



Caption: Proposed improvements as seen from Colton Ave.

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A special review is required because of the Zoning being R-9600 where Churches and Other Places of Worship, including Sunday School Buildings are allowed but require Special Review. With the proposed additions to the existing facility the project is being submitted for consideration and approval under this process. The following is intended to address the "Primary Goals and Objectives of the 2008 Growth Policy".

Growth Policy: *(In what ways is your proposal consistent with the goals and policies of the adopted Growth Policy?)*

Land Use Element; as an expansion of an existing use on an already developed property the proposal matches the current and predictable use for the property and addresses growth by not impacting or spreading to other sites with the potential for needed housing.

Economic Development; the renovation would provide short term construction jobs for existing Billings businesses and provides more opportunities for the church to host more and larger social and celebration events that also will have a small long term impact. Improvements to the main entrance to the building and the landscape plaza also bring an up-dated and improved appearance to an existing facility. The growth of the community has triggered the need for the proposed renovation and expansion. A strong and growing faith community attracts the families and exhibits the quality and strength of a healthy community that is attractive to visitors and existing residents.

Aesthetics Element, the development does not have an impact on the Downtown or the interstate corridor. It does include new and more visible main entrances that maintain the architectural style and materials of the existing building and should improve the access and function of the facility. Therefore improve the community's first impressions and way finding.

Natural Resources Element, the proposed project improvements are part of an existing fully developed site that does not impact the Yellowstone River or associated waterway and riparian or wildlife habitat. All improvements will include water saving plumbing fixtures and landscape elements that enhance the existing features at the site.

Open Space and Recreation Element; the project is not proposing any impacts to Parks, or recreation facilities and would not be impacting access to public lands, trails or the Yellowstone River or Rimrocks.

Transportation Element, the existing Colton street frontage is proposed to be modified to reduce the number of approaches from (5) to (1) plus a shared access for the proposed school improvements (a different project). Also proposed is a corner bulb, at Woody and Colton, to help clarify the street side parking/loading in front of the Church Building. Also the existing curb drop-off element is being removed and sidewalk straitened. With these improvements the street frontage and sidewalks will make vehicle, pedestrian and other traffic circulation past the site safer. Repair of public sidewalks would be included with the proposed improvements. Nothing in the proposed project should impact the City's public transportation elements.

Public Facilities and Services Element, with this project being subject to the special review process it becomes more visible to the Public at large and provided for the local and impacted neighbors information on the potential impacts. The proposed improvements to the existing private Church should not impact the neighboring resale value or the level of public services or distribution of public funding in the community.

Cultural and Historic Resources Element, the proposed expansion and renovation does not impact any Historical or Culturally significant landmarks or archeological resources. The enhancement to the Catholic Churches facilities does continue to promote the long established cultural Community of the Catholic Church in the Billings area. Considering Artwork there is an existing large piece of art, the existing tall Stained Glass windows, that are being refurbished and made more visible as part of the new Main Sanctuary Entrance.

Community Health Element, the proposed project should not impact emergency preparedness or access to nutritious foods, or affordable housing. But it does offer a safe place for residence to meet and recover from negative social and or impacts of local or national emergencies. Improvements to street frontage promote safety and maintain existing public sidewalks where exercise can be promoted. The continued presence and the renovation of the Church supports the objective and perception of a "Safe Place to live and raise children."

Need: *(Why is there a need for the intended use of the property at this location?)*

The existing use of this Church facility has grown since its original completion in 1970. The current size and needs of the congregation as well as accessibility requirements have triggered the need for the proposed improvements. These include the larger gathering and fellowship spaces to allow for better socialization and a better community connections. Entrances and circulation pathways that are accessible to the disabled are now a requirement and the proposed projects improves this at entrances and with additional restrooms in spaces that had awkward access solutions.

Public Interest: *(How will the public interest be served if this application is approved?)*

St. Thomas Church has provided spiritual, fellowship and community services from this site for 50 years as the community has grown up around it, and has always endeavored to be a good neighbor and productive member of the community. The Church membership has grown dramatically over the past 6- 8 years, and even more accelerated growth is anticipated with the construction of the new Billings Catholic Schools Colton K-8 School on adjacent property since St. Thomas Church will play an active role in supporting the mission of the school.

The proposed additions and renovations will improve handicapped accessibility, expand seating for church services and fellowship activities, expand community support efforts such as holiday food baskets and children's Christmas gifts for the needy, expand parking, and provide a higher degree of safety and security for parishioners, staff and public visitors. The project will further enhance the site with increased and improved landscaping, outdoor plazas, and expanded drop off area. Energy efficiency will be improved with upgraded or new mechanical and electrical systems, upgraded building shell, and better temperature control systems.

Coupled with the new Colton School, the St. Thomas improvements will add to the development of currently undeveloped land into first class facilities serving the community and neighborhood.

Sincerely,

CTA ARCHITECTS ENGINEERS

Robert E. LaPerle

cc: CTA File

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