



Mary Giorgi distributes information to Rochester Preservation Board members at City Hall Oct. 2. Giorgi sought to designate Sacred Heart Cathedral's interior, exterior, landscaping and attached buildings as a landmark.

LANDMARK

Continued from page 1

the diocese's ability to renovate the church in order to make it compatible with post-Vatican II liturgical changes.

The commission's majority also was concerned that if the diocese did not want landmark status, it would abandon its plans to renovate the cathedral, possibly signaling the eventual demise of the building. James Ely, a commission member, summed up the feelings of the majority when he noted that an older building's "economic viability" can sometimes be threatened when it is designated a landmark.

"You really end up losing a landmark by trying to save it," he said.

A LANDMARK MOMENT

Giorgi submitted an application to the city's preservation board in August in an attempt to forestall renovations slated to begin next spring.

"This is the final effort to keep the church as it is," she said in a September interview. "I feel this is worth a try."

Giorgi was supported in her attempt by opponents of the renovation process, many of whom joined her to speak at the Oct. 2 and Oct. 7 meetings. Their arguments boiled down to two key points — that the cathedral is a Gothic-style church that would be "fundamentally destroyed" by interior renovations; and that it was the cathedral of the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, bishop of Rochester from 1966-69. Because Archbishop Sheen's case for canonization has been opened in Rome (see related story, page 5), landmark status proponents asserted that the cathedral's interior design should remain as it is so the edifice could become a popular pil-

grimage destination and historic site.

In laying out her case before the preservation board, Giorgi cited a paper written on the cathedral by Paul Malo, retired professor of architecture from Syracuse University and author of a book on landmarks in Monroe County and Rochester. Malo wrote that the proposed renovations would conflict with the original design of Sacred Heart. For example, Malo contended that plans to move the church's altar to a more central location in the church contradicted the purpose of a Gothic church's linear design, which "entailed a linear procession towards (the altar)."

"Modernization of historic interiors to comply with contemporary trends, when contemporary trends change once again in the future, may leave the community impoverished after compromising the authentic integrity of its historic landmarks," Malo wrote.

The diocese contended, however, that it plans to renovate the cathedral in keeping with the spirit of Gothic design. Father Hart maintained that the landmark proponents were arguing on behalf of a design that was not Gothic in its original sense, but that was actually a 20th century version of the Gothic style.

"(The renovation) is not to restore the cathedral to a 1920s or '30s style, but, relying on a classic English Gothic church style with an altar at the crossing, the diocese is attempting to update the cathedral according to current liturgical norms," he said.

ST. SHEEN?

As for Archbishop Sheen, proponents of landmark status maintained that if he were to be canonized a saint, the cathedral could represent a potential tourist site,



Placement of the cathedral's altar in possible renovations has been a source of disagreement between renovation proponents and opponents.

and that renovating it in the manner planned by the diocese would make it unattractive to pilgrims.

"The sainthood of Archbishop Sheen and the preservation of Sacred Heart Cathedral will encourage and help create appropriate private, market-driven investments in the local tourism industry that result in additional revenue for businesses and the creation of new jobs for local residents," Audrey Parkman stated at the Oct. 7 meeting. Parkman attends Sacred Heart.

Indeed, the potential of Archbishop Sheen's sainthood was one factor that caused the preservation board to recommend landmark status, because its members believed this signified the cathedral's historical importance.

But Father Hart pointed out that while the late archbishop was "a good man," a recent biographer of him questioned whether the famed TV evangelist would actually be canonized, considering his self-admitted vanity and the possibility that he lied about obtaining a graduate degree. He added that Archbishop Sheen rarely visited the cathedral, a point buttressed by Tom Riley, a former chair of the city planning commission and husband of Barbara Kelley, co-chair of the cathedral renovation committee. Riley said he served as an usher at the cathedral in the late '60s and rarely saw Archbishop Sheen celebrating Mass there.

On that note, Father Joseph W.

Marcoux, parochial vicar of Sacred Heart, said he gives tours of the church and never mentions Archbishop Sheen, nor any of Rochester's other bishops.

In the end, however, the commission seemed most impressed not by arguments about Gothic styles or Archbishop Sheen, but by the diocese's opposition to landmark status. For example, Father John M. Mulligan, diocesan vicar general and pastor at Sacred Heart, noted that if the landmark designation were approved, the diocese would most likely turn Sacred Heart back into a parish church, rather than attempt to renovate it in compliance with preservation guidelines. Instead of enhancing the surrounding neighborhood as a newly renovated cathedral, he noted, the church could eventually become an "eyesore."

"By their very nature, cathedrals cannot be frozen in time," Father Mulligan said, adding that the church needs flexibility to renovate the cathedral to accommodate liturgical changes. "It is not a museum. It is not a tourist center. It is not a status symbol."

On this note, commission member Kara Hartway seemed to agree with diocesan officials, voting against the landmark-status application.

"To preserve (the cathedral) may be signifying its death, and I think the best thing for the church may be to move forward," she said.