

# CATHEDRAL

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renovations. They also asserted that the church's interior should remain unchanged so the cathedral could become a pilgrimage destination and historical site if the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, who was Bishop of Rochester from 1966-69, is canonized. A case for his canonization has been filed with the Vatican.

Diocesan and Sacred Heart representatives opposed the designation, noting that a recent survey showed neighborhood leaders as well as 85 percent of Sacred Heart parishioners supported the renovations as planned. They added that landmark proponents were using the landmark process to achieve their actual objective — stopping the renovations. In fact, several renovation opponents have noted, for example, that they particularly oppose the plan to move Sacred Heart's tabernacle from behind the main altar to a eucharistic chapel.

"We don't want them to move our tabernacle," one renovation opponent shouted outside City Hall after the vote.

## THE SUIT

The June 24 re-vote had been necessitated by New York State Supreme Court Justice Robert J. Lunn's May 1 ruling in response to a lawsuit brought against the planning commission by the Sacred Heart Preservation Committee — a group opposed to renovation. Justice Lunn instructed the planning commission to re-examine its October vote and criticized the commission for failing to vote separately on designating the exterior and interior of the church as landmarks.

The effect of his ruling was evident in the June 23-24 proceeding, which involved commission members' painstaking examination of the city's landmark code and whether the cathedral met the cri-



Plans for cathedral renovation envision moving the altar forward.

teria for designation. After the public hearing was closed, the commission's members extensively debated the criteria and took separate informal votes on each.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, who spoke at the hearing against landmark designation, expressed gratitude for the vote.

"I'm very pleased, very pleased that our position was sustained, and I am quite certain that we can do the work we want to do unencumbered, without extra expense," he said.

Father Hart, who is also moderator of the Pastoral Center in Gates, likewise expressed satisfaction in the vote.

"We appreciate the very thoughtful, careful deliberations of the planning commission, and we most certainly appreciate the positive vote they have given us endorsing the care that we will take in preserving and restoring our cathedral," he said.

During the public hearing, Father Hart dismissed the argument of landmark proponents that Sacred Heart might become a tourist site because of its connection to Archbishop Sheen. The late archbishop never lived in Sacred Heart's rec-

tory and didn't celebrate Mass at either of the cathedral's altars in their current configuration, Father Hart noted.

As he did during his presentation to the commission last October, Father Hart added that he believes Archbishop Sheen's cause for canonization is hampered by evidence that he may have lied about a graduate degree. Alluding to a recent biography, Father Hart said the late archbishop also was known to have several faults that would impede his case for canonization. The vicar general's comments drew an angry response from many audience members who were opposed to the renovation.

Also speaking at the hearing were neighbors of the cathedral. Dave Ahl, who lives on the same block of Flower City Park as the cathedral, said he was not a Catholic but supported landmark status simply so the neighborhood could have more input into the renovation process.

"Landmark status doesn't mean you can't (renovate)," he said. "It just means it's going to be looked at more carefully."

On the other hand, Greg Mason, leader of a neighborhood committee and a Sacred Heart parishioner,

said the cathedral's neighbors welcome the planned renovations. Mason said the diocese and its contractors had cooperated with neighborhood leaders and kept them abreast of its plans.

"Landmark status is not necessary for Sacred Heart Cathedral to continue working with the neighborhood to promote an active and involved partnership that is mutually beneficial," he said.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Renovation opponents expressed disappointment in the vote, and at least one raised the possibility of a second lawsuit against the planning commission.

"We're spending tens of thousands of dollars defending our church," said Theresa West, a parishioner at St. Lawrence Parish in Greece who said she attends daily Mass at Sacred Heart. She added that she didn't believe landmark status would have affected the planned renovations as negatively as the diocese contended it would.

"It would have been a win-win situation," she said, adding that landmark status would have compelled a careful public examination of the renovations.

Sacred Heart parishioner Mary Giorgi, who brought the landmark status application in October, said she was angry with the diocese's stance. When asked about another lawsuit, she said: "We would do whatever we can to stop the bishop from destroying our church."

Edward Hourihan, an attorney who has represented the diocese throughout the landmark proceedings, said he would not be surprised if renovation opponents did file another lawsuit.

"I'm sure it will be challenged by the same individuals who continue to ask secular bodies to involve themselves in religious controversies," Hourihan said, adding that he thought the planning commission "did everything that (Justice Lunn) requested in his decision."

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