

Archdiocese of Chicago to Stage Design Competition as Part of a Unique Disposition Process for the Former St. Boniface Church Property in Chicago.

CHICAGO – The Archdiocese of Chicago has formed a team of experts to stage the “St. Boniface Design Competition” as part of a unique disposition process for the former St. Boniface Church campus property at the northeast corner of North Noble Street and West Chestnut Street in Chicago, announced Martin F. Jablonski, Principal of Tower Advisory Real Estate Services, the Archdiocese’ advisor and program manager for the disposition process.

The parish property is a 32,980 SF land site housing the former church, convent and school structures. It is located at 1358 West Chestnut Street, just east of North Ashland Boulevard with 218 feet of frontage along the east side of North Noble Street and 200 feet of frontage along West Chestnut Street on Chicago’s west side.

Part of Community Real Estate Strategy

“Our properties have all served as community anchors for the better part of the 20th Century. As populations shift and we meet the needs of Catholics through other means, these former parishes have become surplus properties. We hope to sell these buildings as part of our long-term real estate strategy. Our goal is to identify others who will re-invest in these properties while providing us with financial resources to expand our mission,” said Tom Brennan, Director of Finance for the Archdiocese of Chicago.

According to Brennan, the buildings on the St. Boniface campus, designed in Romanesque style by noted ecclesiastic architect, Henry J. Schlacks, have been vacant since the Archdiocese closed them in 1989. The Archdiocese hopes to save the former St. Boniface church; however, engineers have determined that the convent and school buildings are structurally unsound.

Invitational Competition

In an attempt to preserve the church and school-building façade, the Archdiocese is staging the invitational design competition to offer creative and feasible ideas for the redevelopment of the site. “Historically churches have represented the finest work of America’s architects. The purpose of this competition is to focus some of our most creative technical minds on how the most significant building features and details can be preserved and still be economically feasible,” said Jablonski who mentioned the four soaring bell towers, steeply pitched clay-tile rooflines, intricately carved stone columns and rosette window frames.

“The Archdiocese has photographed and cataloged the building facades, architectural details and recognizable symbols of the buildings for historical reference and for use during the competition. In addition, when the convent building is demolished and the school façades dismantled, the Archdiocese will warehouse the facades for use in future development,” said Jablonski.

“We plan to announce the participating architecture firms and judges in June and the competition winner in September,” said Jablonski. Each architecture firm will receive a participation stipend, and the winner will receive a cash award. According to Jablonski the successful bidder for the St. Boniface property will be encouraged to consider the designs resulting from the competition in a redevelopment plan. “We want to demonstrate in a dramatic way how incorporating elements of the significant achievements of generations past can enhance the value of future development and, at the same time, recognize St. Boniface’s civic contribution to the community’s vitality,” said Jablonski.

Redevelopment & Competition Have Community Support

According to 27th Ward Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr., “We straddle a fine line between assuring the safety of our citizens and retaining the best architecture from our past. The Archdiocese has been very sensitive to the desires of the community, but the school structure is dangerous and must come down. The community and I appreciate being able to work with the Archdiocese and are thrilled with the decision to preserve the façade of the school, which is significant for the neighborhood.”

The idea to incorporate the design competition into the disposition/redevelopment plan resulted from discussions with Alderman Burnett, the City of Chicago’s Department of Planning, and various neighborhood organizations. “A church is a highly visible building that touches the lives and hearts of citizens and has a positive influence on the quality of life by its very physical presence. When the needs of that community change, it is only natural to try to preserve some of the identity, dignity and beauty of the past as a link to a more functional use in the future,” said Jablonski.

“Because of the high level of community interest in preserving the church and the school’s architectural details, the Archdiocese is taking a highly unusual and non-traditional path toward its goal of creating a functional new development that will meet the current needs of the community. Any proceeds from the sale of the property will be reinvested into the community,” emphasized Jablonski who noted the extensive renovation program underway at churches in the immediate vicinity.

Proceeds To Be Reinvested in Neighborhood

Within a four-block radius of the St. Boniface property, the Archdiocese is in the fourth year of a five-year \$11,000,000 reinvestment program, designed to preserve the architecturally significant churches in the neighborhood including \$3,900,000 at Holy Innocents Church, 734 North Armour Street; \$1,900,000 at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, 1351 West Evergreen Avenue; \$2,000,000 at Holy Trinity Polish Mission, 1118 North Noble Street; and \$3,000,000 at St. John Cantius, 825 North Carpenter Street.

“St. Boniface Design Competition” Team

The Chicago Architecture Foundation will host the design-presentation judging, an exhibit of entries and a lecture on the project at its ArchiCenter in the Santa Fe Building at 224 South Michigan Avenue.

The invitational design competition is being organized by Washington, D.C.-based competition advisor, Reed Kroloff, with the assistance of Thomas Gourguechon, Senior Associate with the Chicago-based national urban planning firm of Camiros, Ltd.; and Thomas B. Brady, Project Manager for engineers, architects and materials scientists, Northbrook, IL-based Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

Responsible Disposition Process

According to Jablonski, the desire of the Archdiocese for the responsible disposition of various properties has generated the need for a non-traditional process that openly involves the community. “This process allows the Archdiocese to influence the ultimate use of their properties after disposition. The successful developers of these properties will be encouraged to meet selection criteria such as demonstrating how the new development will fulfill the needs of the neighborhood and offering creative architectural solutions that incorporate, to whatever economic extent possible, the buildings into the new development plan,” said Jablonski.

In addition to Jablonski, the St. Boniface disposition team includes J. Leonard Caldeira, SIOR, a Managing Principal of the Midwest Corporate Services Division, and Hugh Murphy, Regional Manager, both with The Staubach Company, which will facilitate the disposition transaction portion of the process. According to Jablonski, the St. Boniface property is being sold through a sealed-bid offering that will be open to all qualified bidders. The deadline for proposals is **Thursday, September 1, 2003**.

Disposition Update

Jablonski and The Staubach Company team are also handling the disposition of three other former church properties on Chicago’s south side for the Archdiocese including the St. Laurence Church property at 7140 South Dorchester Avenue, the Assumption/St. Catherine of Genoa Church property at 640 West 118th Street, and St. Leo the Great Church property at 7747 South Emerald Avenue.

“The deadline for offers on these three properties was January 13, and we are extremely pleased with the response we received. We conducted more than 50 tours of the buildings and received four to six proposals on each property. Redevelopment ideas ranged from residential and senior-housing development to community centers to church-related uses. Some offers are for individual properties, and some are for multiple buildings. We have letters of intent for Assumption/St. Catherine and St. Leo the Great. We are currently in negotiations with three interested parties for the St. Lawrence property. We hope to announce the successful bidders by the end of this summer,” said Jablonski.

For more information about the Archdiocese disposition process, the sealed-bid offering or the “St. Boniface Design Competition,” call Martin Jablonski at (847) 507-0700 or visit www.landorbuildings.com.

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