



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

February 9, 2016

REQUEST: Designate as a Baltimore City Landmark

ADDRESS: 655 N. Bentalou St., St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Lauren Schiszik

PETITIONER: St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

General Area: The property is located a block north of Edmondson Ave, at the intersection of N. Bentalou St. and Lanvale St. It is located one block west of a railroad. The surrounding block is comprised of two-story two bay wide porch-front brick rowhouses constructed in the 1920s. While the neighborhood is not designated as a historic district locally or nationally, it shares architectural characteristics with other designated neighborhoods.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description:

The property consists of a two story tall stone Gothic Revival church. The three bay wide façade faces west towards N. Bentalou St., and features a prominent buttressed belltower on the north bay, an ornate loggia entrance surmounted by a large central rose window in the central bay, and a smaller tower with a lancet window on the south bay. The steep front gabled roof is clad with slate. The side elevations are five bays deep, and feature buttressing between each bay, paired arched stained glass windows on the main floor in each bay, and paired double hung windows on the exposed basement level. There are also small dormer windows in the roof over each bay. There is a one-story rear addition. The church sits on 0.56 acres, with ample lawn on the rear and south side of the building.

BACKGROUND

- CHAP has no previous actions regarding this property.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The proposal is to designate St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church as a Baltimore City Landmark. This designation was requested by the church.

Conformity to Guidelines: The proposed designation meets Guideline 5.1 *Criteria for Designating Districts and Landmarks* as the structure meets Criteria 1 for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history; and Criteria 3 for its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

- The building today known as St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church was constructed in 1922 for the German Reformed Immanuel Church congregation, which was founded in 1866. The building was designed by John Freund, an early 20th century Baltimore architect who designed a number of Gothic Revival churches. In 1956, the church was sold to the trustees of the St. Mark's Institutional Baptist Church. Spencer G. Dobson was the founding pastor, and following his death, his son Harold L. Dobson served as the pastor. The church has a history of activism in civil rights, alleviating poverty, and founding one of the city's first African American church-based nursery schools. It has also served as a leader in local and national Baptist conferences. Church leaders participated in demonstrations to desegregate Gwynn Oak amusement park in the 1960s, and leading the Black Protestant Coalition Against United Way in the 1980s to gain more African American input in the dispersal of funds from that charity.

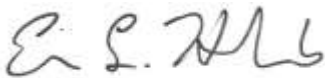
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

N/A

ANALYSIS

CHAP staff finds that this landmark designation meets CHAP designation requirements.

CHAP staff recommends approval.



Eric Holcomb
Director