



November 16, 2022

Monsignor Peter A. Routhier  
Cathedral of St. Joseph  
113 Elmwood Avenue  
Burlington, VT 05401

Re: 20 Pine Street, Burlington

Dear Monsignor Routhier:

I am writing on behalf of the board members of Preservation Burlington to whom you sent letters last month. Thank you for reaching out and sharing your thoughts on the former cathedral property. It is heartening to hear you say that this property has served the Catholic community well. There are many within the Catholic community for whom the property continues to hold great significance. They have attended and participated in weddings, baptisms, and funerals in this building, and their memories and personal connections to the building itself should not be taken lightly.

From our perspective this property has also served the Burlington community well, regardless of religious affiliation. What happens to this property will have an impact on all citizens of Burlington, not just Catholic parishioners. That is why we are interested in seeing this property adapted for continued use and not demolished: it is part of the urban fabric of downtown Burlington, it is architecturally significant, and its landscape provides a distinctive counterpoint to the surrounding density of urban development. The significance of this property extends far beyond the Catholic community.

Your letter states that one of the methods of “completing the deconsecration of a sacred space, recognized by canon law is the demolition of a Church.” But Can. 1212 also provides an alternative to demolition: “Sacred places lose their dedication or blessing if they have been ...turned over permanently to profane use by decree of the competent ordinary or in fact.” This is further supported by Can. 1222 §1: “If a church cannot be used in any way for divine worship and there is no possibility of repairing it, the diocesan bishop can relegate it to profane but not sordid use.”

What is the bishop’s position on the proposed demolition of the building? Have you explored the option of converting the property from sacred to profane, but not sordid, use? What efforts

have been made to that effect? Such conversions are common, as evidenced by these recent examples in Vermont, all within the past few years:

- St. Margaret Mary Church in Arlington, now The Arlington Common, a community-based arts and wellness center
- St. John the Apostle Church in Johnson, now Jenna's House, a community and recovery center
- Our Lady of Lourdes in Pownal, sold to a private owner for use as a workshop and residence
- St. Sylvester Church in Graniteville, sold to a private owner for use as a martial arts workshop and residence

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to continue this discussion. Instead of meeting at St. Joseph's Cathedral, however, our preference is to meet at 20 Pine Street as that is the subject of our interest and concern. Please suggest some dates and times for a meeting and we will see what works best for our board members.

Sincerely,

Ron Wanamaker  
Vice President  
Preservation Burlington