CERTIFICATION OF PUBLICATION:

Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Wednesday, December 28, 2011, notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting, January 11, 2012.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Douglas Bisson, Chair  
Albert Macchietto, Vice Chair  
Eduardo Santamaria  
Gregory Mahloch  
Nancy Novak  
Jose Garcia  
Peggy Jones

MEMBER(S) NOT PRESENT: Nicholas Hogan  
Wanda Ewing

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Leonard, LHPC Administrator  
RoseMarie Lee, Law Department  
Debbie Hightower, Recording Secretary

Douglas Bisson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm, introduced the Commission members, as well as the staff. Mr. Bisson explained the procedures for hearing the cases. Roll was taken with seven members present.

CASES:

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION:

Case #H5-11-24  
Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture  
Attn: Chris Jansen  
1516 Cuming Street  
Omaha, NE 68102

REQUEST: Request for approval of National Register Nomination for St. Richard’s Catholic School and Rectory

LOCATION: 4318 Fort Street, 4320 Fort Street, 5315 St. Richards Plaza and 5435 St. Richards Plaza

Chris Jansen of Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture appeared before the Commission to request approval of a National Register Nomination for St. Richard’s Catholic School and Rectory. Ms. Jansen began by stating that St. Richard’s Catholic School and Rectory is eligible at the local level for its architectural and historic significance. She explained that architecturally the building reflects the Catholic Church’s expansive growth during the 1960’s and the changing philosophies in educational architecture. She further explained that historically under Criterion A the history of the parish, school and rectory construction also reflects the changing demographics of an Omaha neighborhood during its early years.
Ms. Jansen presented photos of the property and maps showing the location of the property and other existing Catholic parishes throughout the Omaha Archdiocese. She explained that in 1949 there were 36 parishes throughout the City with 14 more being constructed in the 20 years following, 71% being constructed in suburban areas. Ms. Jansen further explained that Catholic education was responsible for the stability of tradition and to spread the faith. She stated that there was a big jump in the growth in the Church during the 1960’s, including the Omaha area, with the construction of St. Richard’s Catholic School and Rectory falling in that time period. Prior to WWII, she explained that schools were often ornate, multi-storied, multi-pitched roof buildings with dramatic changes in design occurring after WWII, which are reflected in the design of St. Richard’s. She presented several images that showed the church from various angles.

Ms. Jansen explained that St. Richards reflects five important educational design strategies, which occurred after WWII: expansive building site, space for specialized uses, optimum flexible space, the use of natural bi-lateral and multi-lateral light, and the changing materials and technologies. Ms. Jansen shared several images that showed that all five design strategies were used in the construction of St. Richard’s.

Ms. Jansen referred to letters that discussed the intent of the Church to purchase the land with the purpose of constructing a parish in the area. The land was officially purchased in 1951 and Stanley J. How & Associates were the designers of the property. The school opened in 1963 with 385 students. The rectory was completed soon after. Ms. Jansen explained that there was much diversity in the population of the school since many of the students who attended were not of the Catholic faith. By the time of the closing of the school in 2009, 85% of the students were not of the Catholic faith.

Ms. Jansen spoke about the structural integrity of the building, explaining that much of the school remains exactly as it was when it was constructed in 1962. She presented several images of the interior and exterior of the building that were taken shortly after the building’s construction and up to the present time that supports this claim.

In conclusion, Ms. Jansen stated that architecturally, the building represents the Catholic Church’s reaction to suburban development during the 1960’s, the changing philosophies in educational architecture, and the changing demographics of the area at that time.

Mr. Santamaria asked if the gymnasium was used as a chapel. Ms. Jansen responded that in the beginning it was used for that purpose on the weekends. She explained that as time progressed the cafeteria was used as a gymnasium, and that the gymnasium had some changes made to it so that it could be used as the chapel.

In response to Mr. Mahloch questioned as to what is being done on the property now. Ms. Jansen stated that Holy Name Housing plans to renovate the building and use it for multi-generational programs for children in the area. There will be senior housing on the north side of the site and the rectory will be used as office space.

Mr. Mahloch asked why the property should be placed on the registry. Ms. Jansen explained that they would like to take advantage of the tax credit program and also because it would be a good reuse of the building which is currently vacant.

Mr. Bisson asked if Stanley How designed other churches or church related projects. Ms. Jansen responded that St. Richard’s School and Rectory were the only buildings Mr. How designed for the Omaha Archdiocese.

Ms. Jones asked for clarification of the Cultural Affiliation section that was left blank on page 6 of the packet and also for a glossary that would list references as to the cultural background of the neighborhood. Ms. Jansen responded that the Archdiocese would have documentation of the population
regarding the statistical and demographical information about parish and non-parish members but not necessarily about the cultural diversity of the children in the area from that time.

Mr. Macchietto asked about Ms. Jansen’s interview with Mr. How in December of 2010 that was referred to in the packet. He informed the Board that Mr. How had recently passed away and wanted Ms. Jansen to speak about her impression of the interview and how he reacted to the possibility of St. Richard’s School and Rectory being put on the National Registry. Ms. Jansen shared some of what was discussed in the interview with Mr. How.

Mr. Garcia asked if the buildings were the same integrally and if they were owned by the same entity. Ms. Jansen responded that Holy Name Housing owns everything. She also stated that the only thing that has changed over time is the gymnasium, which was made to be more of a church upon the realization that an actual church would not be built there.

Mr. Bisson asked if the church would be changed back into a gymnasium or if it would remain a church. Ms. Jansen responded that she believed that the plan was to change it back to a gymnasium. Ms. Jansen also confirmed that the site would be used for secular purposes.

Motion by Mr. Mahloch to approve the National Register Nomination for St. Richard’s Catholic School and Rectory. Seconded by Ms. Novak.

AYES: Santamaria, Mahloch, Novak, Garcia, Jones, Bisson

ABSTAIN: Macchietto

Motion Approved: 6-0-1

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Santamaria moved to APPROVE the December 14, 2011 meeting minutes as written. Mr. Bisson seconded the motion.

AYES: Santamaria, Mahloch, Novak, Garcia, Macchietto, Bisson

ABSTAIN: Jones

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0-1

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Mr. Macchietto moved to nominate Mr. Bisson as Chairman. Mr. Mahloch seconded the motion.

AYES: Garcia, Jones, Macchietto, Santamaria, Mahloch, Novak

ABSTAIN: Bisson

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Mr. Santamaria moved to nominate Mr. Macchietto as Vice Chair. Ms. Novak seconded the motion.

AYES: Mahloch, Novak, Garcia, Jones, Santamaria, Bisson
ABSTAIN: Macchietto

MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

It was the consensus of the Commission to ADJOURN the meeting at 2:15 p.m.