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Historic Preservation Committee Greenlights Christiansted Church Murals, Requests Rework on Tennis Pavilion Plan

Approval of new murals meets cautious revision for proposed pavilion amidst St. Croix's historic backdrop.

Board Meetings / **Published On February 23, 2024 06:49 AM /**

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Proposed murals for two Christiansted Churches were approved by the St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee during a meeting on Thursday.

According to the proposal put forward by the Catholic Heart Workcamp, Holy Cross Catholic Church would be the site of a mural which would depict a religious scene on its exterior wall at the intersection of Prince and Company Streets. Measuring approximately 13 feet wide and 4.5 feet tall, it would include a 4 foot diameter image and 10-12 inch tall lettering identifying the

church. During the discussion, HPC members requested that the artwork be centered between two end pillars so as to better frame the mural.

A second mural for St. Mary's Catholic School was also discussed. This one would be placed on the exterior auditorium wall and measure around 5 feet in diameter. Due to an overhang, the applicant considered sizing it to fit above a lower lip or centered in the space. Committee members advised the centered option, and also requested that the artists ensure shuttered window openings were not obstructed.

Both murals will be painted with exterior latex house paint to provide for easy touchups and restoration. The Catholic youth group visits St. Croix regularly, and thus needed repairs can be made promptly, the HPC heard.

At the same meeting, the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts received approval to install a plaque on the exterior of their building in Frederiksted. The plaque, a move to honor founder Candia Atwater, who established the museum some 30 years ago to address violence among youth through alternative artistic expression, will match the existing historic marker on the south side of the building. The proposal is to place the new plaque on the north side in the corresponding location to maintain the symmetry of the exterior.

Several homeowners presented restoration plans to repair and refurbish historic homes damaged by past hurricanes. Materials, roofing, windows, and flooring repairs were considered, while committee members made inquiries and received assurances that repairs would match original designs.

Meanwhile, a proposal by Catholic Charities to add two new structures to their facility on St. Croix needs fine tuning, HPC members decided. The organization is seeking to construct a wooden frame tennis pavilion around existing historical ruins. Roughly 13 feet wide, the pavilion would provide covered seating with an outdoor kitchen and sink area.

A second building is being planned to house shared utility and generator functions. Both buildings are being designed to match existing materials with construction elements such as corrugated metal roofing in silver or terracotta colors. However, the proposal to build the tennis pavilion around the ruins of a historical structure sparked lengthy discussion, with members ultimately deciding that the design needed better symmetry and proportionality in relation to a formal welcoming staircase.

The representative for Catholic Charities agreed to rework the drawings to incorporate feedback from the committee, whose members said they looked forward to reviewing an updated application at a future meeting.