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Our view: SJC action a victory for Salem's Point neighborhood Salem News June 23, 2010

The Supreme Judicial Court's rejection of a nuisance suit that sought to block development of the former St. Joseph's Church property in Salem, represents a victory for the city and its Point neighborhood.

The church, rectory and parish school have been vacant for years now, but efforts by the archdiocesan Planning Office for Urban Affairs to find a new useful purpose for the Lafayette Street site had been thwarted by a small group of landlords and neighbors represented, pro bono, by local attorney John Carr.

Their protest of local Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and City Council decisions allowing development of the site for housing and other uses, had previously been shot down at the Superior and Appeals court levels. Last week's refusal by the SJC to hear their case hopefully marks the end of the line for the plaintiffs and the start of a long-awaited revival for the critical parcel linking the Point with downtown Salem.

It will be sad to see the church, built in the modern style and a longtime place of worship for Salem's Franco-American community, come down. But the archdiocese announced some time ago that it could no longer afford its upkeep and the replacement building will provide much-needed affordable housing along with some also-much-needed tax revenue.

With the nearby walkway along the South River canal nearing completion, it appears the days of the Point being Salem's forgotten neighborhood are coming to an end.