
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	27 O Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	M.M. Washington School	Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	July 28, 2011	X Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	11-406	X Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	New Construction
		Demolition
		Subdivision

The applicant, Cunningham Quill Architects, representing the District of Columbia and the M.M. Washington Redevelopment Partners LLC, seeks conceptual review for an adaptive reuse of the Margaret Murray Washington School. The school would be converted to provide 82 units of affordable housing, as well as recreation and community meeting spaces.

Property Description

A thorough history and description is provided in the landmark nomination being sponsored by the District of Columbia's Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development. For purposes of describing the project, the building consists of four basic components: the original 1912 building at the center of the complex, a rear wing constructed in 1928, a wing constructed to the east of the 1912 building in 1938, and a gymnasium/classroom addition constructed in 1971 immediately to the west of the 1912 building. With the exception of the 1971 addition, the older sections of the building form a harmonious ensemble, unified by their common use of red brick, stone trim, ganged windows, and simple block forms organized around a central courtyard. The term "incompatible" doesn't sufficiently convey how brutal and out-of-scale the 1971 addition is to the school and to the block.

Proposal

The project calls for much needed repairs and renovation to the 1912, 1928 and 1938 portions of the building, with repairs to the original windows and masonry and appropriate new doors. The paved courtyard between the wings would be reconfigured as a residential courtyard entrance with landscaping, which would provide an accessible entrance to the building through a small exterior vestibule in the south wall of the rear wing. While the specifics of the interior plans are still being refined, the project would retain the school's basic floor plan and many of its interior features and trim.

Most dramatically, the 1971 gym would be extensively reconfigured. Its eastern portion would be carved away, exposing the extant side wall of the 1912 building and creating an E-shaped complex with a second courtyard. A tripartite façade organization would be created to relate to the older portions of the building, albeit in a more contemporary vocabulary and materials. The base would be largely glass (flanking concrete piers) to

provide views into the multi-purpose community room, a brick-colored cementitious panel system with punched windows would be used on the second and third floors, and the fourth floor would be slightly recessed and clad in metal panel and glass. Sunscreens, an implied metal cornice, and other detailing would be provided at the windows and first floor. The new second courtyard would also have landscaping, and would provide direct public entrance into the community space.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The proposed project is exemplary. A vacant, deteriorated, surplus school – once an important civic building to this neighborhood -- will be sensitively rehabilitated to provide attractive, affordable housing. As the project has been designed to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation in order to be eligible for the federal rehabilitation tax credits, it will be done to the highest preservation standards. The architects' skillful reinvention of the 1971 gym will provide a dramatically improved neighbor for the landmark and for the community.

The HPO recommends the proposal be approved in concept as compatible with the landmark and final approval be delegated to the staff.