HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	**2801 Upton Street, NW**	**X**	Agenda
Landmark/District:	**Carnegie Geophysical Institute/ Levine School of Music**		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	**May 3, 2012**	**X**	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	**12-302**		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	**Steve Callcott**		Demolition

Architect Colden Florance, representing the Levine School of Music, seeks conceptual review for replacing windows on the sides and rear of the landmark Carnegie Geophysical Institute building. The windows on the façade were replaced several years ago replicating the original design; the applicants are seeking some flexibility from the window standards for the side and rear elevations.

Property History and Description

The building was constructed in 1906 as a geophysical laboratory for the research activities of the Carnegie Institution of Washington; it was one of five scientific research centers in the country run by the institute founded with funding from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1902. Designed by the prominent Washington firm of Wood, Donn and Deming, the building is significant both for its Italian Renaissance Revival architecture and its specialized engineering which isolated the building from vibrations and magnetic and electrical disturbances that might interfere with the lab's experiments.

The original window assembly contributed to the building's architectural and engineering significance. It included a one-over-one double hung sash window set deep within the masonry walls with a second window -- a pair of multi-light casement windows capped by a semi-round-arched transom – at the outside of the masonry opening.[1] When open, the windows provided cross ventilation; when closed, the double windows provided sound insulation while still providing ample natural light.

The property was purchased by the Levine School of Music in the early 1990s. While receiving HPRB concept approval for a large rear addition in 1994, the school scaled back that ambitious plan, renovating and moving into the existing building in the mid-1990s. The original multi-light casement windows had been removed by the time of the school's purchase of the property, and the windows were not addressed in the 1990s renovation. Several years ago, the school replaced the windows on the front façade using historic photographs and the architect's original elevation plans to replicate the

[1] The tall first floor windows had paired eight-light casements, the smaller second floor windows had paired four-light casements.

appearance of the missing casements. The approved casements are a commercial grade composite wood unit that convincingly replicates the profiles, dimensions and painted finish of a wood window.

The existing conditions on the side and rear elevations include the original interior one-over-one double hung sash windows. Only a few of the original transom windows remain on these three elevations; the majority have been removed and the openings boarded up. No exterior casement windows remain.

Proposal

The school seeks to replace the windows on the side and rear elevations to improve the building's energy efficiency, both by providing thermal glazing and to have operable windows that allow the building to have fresh air during temperate weather. On the side elevations, the proposal calls for wood composite double hung sash windows that replicate the multi-light configuration, which would be capped by semi-circular transoms that would also replicate the original configuration with a simulated divided light muntin with an exterior profile. The basement windows would replicate the original three-over-three double hungs. In an effort to reduce the cost of the project, the windows and transoms on the rear are proposed without muntins.

Evaluation

The historic preservation regulations (District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Title 10-C, chapter 2300) establish a general schedule of requirements for window replacement that is based on the relative significance and stature of the building, the prominence and public visibility of the elevation, and the quality and character of the windows. For principle facades of landmark buildings, the standards specify:

> If historic windows cannot reasonably be restored, replacement windows shall be approved if they match the historic windows in all respects – configuration, method of operation, profile, dimensions, material, finish, and any other salient character-defining features. (DCMR 10-C, 2306.1(a))

For secondary elevations on landmarks, the standards provide some greater flexibility depending on the extent that they are visible from a street or public open space:

> If existing windows are visible from a street or public open space, a permit shall be issued if replacement windows match the historic windows in terms of configuration, method of operation, profile, dimensions and finish, and provided that they do not replace special windows. Matching the material is encouraged but not required.
>
> For existing windows not visible from a street or public open space, a permit shall be issued if replacement windows reasonably match the historic windows in terms of configuration, method of operation and dimensions, and provided that they do not replace special windows. (DCMR 10-C, 2306.2(a) and (b))

The applicant's proposal is generally consistent with the regulations, with the exception that the proposed double hung windows will not replicate the operability of the original

casements. However, as the building is set back significantly from the street and the side elevations are not prominently visible, the proposal is consistent with the intent of the standards in replicating the general character of the windows and replicating the (now missing) transoms while providing flexibility for such elevations that have limited impact on the public's perception of the property. The replication of the multi-light configuration of the original casements in a double hung will provide a sense of scale and proportion to the openings that is compatible with their original appearance. As the rear is not at all visible from a street or public open space, flexibility for both the method of operation and light configuration is reasonable.

<u>The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the concept for proposed window replacements as submitted and delegate final construction approval to HPO.</u>