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

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Landmark/District: **Logan Elementary/Capitol Hill Montessori School Modernization**  
**Capitol Hill Historic District** ( ) Agenda  
Address: **215 G Street, NE** (X) Consent Calendar  
Meeting Date: **May 23, 2019** (X) New Construction  
H.P.A. Numbers: **19-271** (X) Alteration  
( ) Demolition

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District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), along with R. McGhee & Associates and Studio MB Architects seek final concept review for modernization of the historic Logan Elementary School to facilitate its continued use as the Capitol Hill Montessori School. On May 23, 2019, the Board approved the massing concept for the modernization project. The current proposal addresses all remaining design details such as materials, cladding, interior alterations and landscape modifications.

**Logan Elementary School / Capitol Hill Montessori School**

Logan School was designed by the Office of the Municipal Architect under the direction of Nathan C. Wyeth. The first wing was constructed on the western half of the site in 1936 while the matching wing on the east, the central block and the two connecting hyphens were constructed in 1949. All the school buildings are located within and contribute to the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Proposal**

The approved massing concept for new construction consists of one large rectangular addition on the west side of the site; two smaller, two-story rectangular additions on the south of each historic wing; and glazed infill around the rear of the historic central block. Although the largest new building will primarily be two stories in height, a screened-in rooftop playing field, mechanical equipment area, projecting bay, and the upper volume of the gymnasium will effectively read as a third level. Glazed hyphens on the west and south will provide physical/visual separation between the old and the new.

The proposed concept has been designed with the intention for all three new additions to read as part of single new composition that is distinct from but compatible with the historic school. Much of the distinction is driven by Montessori pedagogical requirements. For example, many of the new openings that may read as windows will actually be screened balconies that provide direct outdoor access to the classrooms on the second floor.

Overall compatibility is to be achieved through a brick base that refers back to the brick cladding of the historic school. Synthetic panel siding similar in color and appearance to Logan’s stone quoins will create another visual connection. And while the proposed synthetic wood screens/panels have no historical precedent, their warm tones are meant to relate to the color of the historic brick.

On the north (front) elevation, compatibility is to be reinforced by aligning the second floor with the adjacent historic cornice, and by incorporating a large bay that projects forward and above the roofline in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the historic pedimented bays facing G Street, NE.

Aside from similar fenestration, the western elevation does not incorporate many other features that relate directly to the historic school, but this is perhaps less of a concern since Logan will not be visible from the west. Like the other elevations, however, the western façade will be lower than its predecessor. Its northern edge will also be set slightly back.

The southern elevation will also maintain a lower height and defer to the historic school by utilizing glazed enclosures which will allow the historic central block to remain visible.

On the east, the lower brick base and upper siding panels will be stacked to reflect the horizontal bands of Logan's windows. The fenestration on the lower level will also echo the historic window pattern to the north.

Landscape improvements include a more formal entry plaza with seating areas and symmetrically arranged ADA ramps in between the two historic wings. A new play area will also be constructed behind the new western addition and outdoor classrooms will be established adjacent to the new buildings as well.

Demolition, interior modifications and archaeology are addressed in the evaluation section below.

### **Evaluation**

The proposed buildings are highly differentiated from the historic school through contemporary design, comparatively complex massing, irregular fenestration/voids, and the manner in which the varied materials palette is applied (i.e. curtain walls, solid wood panels, picketed wood screens, synthetic panel siding, panel siding overlaid with picketed wood screens). As a result, visual connections between old and new hinge almost entirely upon the color of the materials.

However, what one might expect to form the most direct visual relationship – the use of brick – is limited to recessed lower levels which do not align with the base of the historic building and a dark gray color which differentiates more than it unites. The reddish hue of synthetic wood and the siding panels which resemble quoins help to establish some visual connections, but wood is used sparingly adjacent to the historic elevations and the secondary color of the quoins is proposed as the primary color for the siding, thus creating an inverse relationship and relatively weak visual ties. A rhythm study of the historic building was conducted, but the only places where the identified patterns are echoed are in the inconspicuous lower levels of dark gray brick that are recessed beneath overhangs.

The Historic Preservation Office believes that stronger visual connections will be required to establish compatibility between the old and new and to avoid having the new construction visually overwhelm the historic school. This is particularly important since new construction will surround the historic buildings on two sides. At a minimum, it is recommended that brick with a redder hue be selected for the base. This does not necessarily mean that red brick which precisely matches the historic brick should be selected.

Even though the large bay on G Street establishes a visual connection with the historic pedimented bays, the prominence of the new element reads strongly as an entrance, which it is not. It is recommended this element be refined to minimize its visual importance and to clarify that it is not an entrance. Such refinements should consider the finer grain detail of the nearby pedimented bays.

The proposed landscape refinements appear appropriate and compatible but demolition plans included in the Board submission do not reflect the most recent consultation between the project team and HPO. The demolition plans suggest that the second floor of the historic lobby will be removed to create a double height space and that the double-loaded corridors and historic floors will be replaced. Through consultation, HPO understands that the historic lobby, inner walls of the double-loaded corridors and the majority of historic flooring will be preserved. HPO considers their preservation necessary to avoid “adverse effects” pursuant to Section 9b of the DC Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act. HPO is awaiting results from the Phase IB archaeological survey before making a determination of effect with regard to archaeology.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board:*

- 1. Find the design details such as materials, cladding, interior alterations and landscape modifications compatible with the historic school and the surrounding historic district subject to a redder brick being selected for the base of the new buildings and other refinements being made to strengthen the visual connections between the new and old; and*
- 2. Delegate review of such refinements to HPO.*

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