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

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

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), along with R. McGhee & Associates and Studio MB Architects are proposing to modernize the historic Logan Elementary School to better accommodate its current function as the Capitol Hill Montessori School. The proposal involves rehabilitation of the historic buildings and construction of three new additions with associated in-fill. At this time, DCPS is seeking approval for the proposed massing only. Future reviews will address all remaining design details such as materials, cladding, interior alterations and landscape modifications.

Logan Elementary School / Capitol Hill Montessori School

The original Logan School, which still stands at the southeast corner of Third and G Streets, NE, was constructed in 1891 and named for John A. Logan, the same Civil War General and U.S. Senator from Illinois for whom Logan Circle was named. By the early-1930s, the growing school population made expansion necessary and in 1936, the first wing of the current Logan Elementary School was constructed on the western half of the site. In 1949, the matching wing, central block and two connecting hyphens were constructed. All of the new buildings were designed by the Office of the Municipal Architect under the direction of Nathan C. Wyeth and in keeping with the classic “extensible school” design created by earlier Municipal Architect Albert L. Harris in 1928. The most notable departure from Harris’ earlier plans was that Logan featured a central hipped roof, rather than a pitched roof with a tower and cupola. The school has undergone a variety of limited improvements over the years, including replacement of original windows but, otherwise retains a high degree of integrity.

The Montessori school program was developed by Maria Montessori in the early 20th Century. It has specific requirements for classroom design such as large areas for social interaction and direct access to outdoor learning spaces. These requirements must be factored into the modernization plans, but since the Montessori program focuses primarily upon preschool and elementary students, the majority of the requirements will be met in the new additions which will be designed to accommodate the youngest children. More traditional education programs for middle school students will be housed in the historic buildings where alterations necessary to meet Montessori standards will be kept to a minimum.

Proposal

The massing concept for new construction proposes one large, two-story rectangular addition on the west side of the site; two smaller, two-story rectangular additions on the south side of each historic wing; and some glazed infill construction around the central block of the historic school.

Like the historic school, the largest new building will be oriented along a north-south axis. It will also be situated as far west as program requirements and lot lines allow in order to maximize the space available for outdoor learning between the old and new wings. Rather than align with the historic northern façades, the new addition will be set slightly back (i.e. south) and its height will fall just short of the existing school's ridge line. Both of these characteristics show deference to the older buildings. The new addition will be longer than the historic school wings by approximately half their length and it will extend almost to the alley that once bisected the block. Curb cuts and a remnant of this alley still exist on the site.

Other notable features of the largest new addition include a roof garden that will be obscured by some kind of screening; a new elementary school entrance housed in a glazed connector linked to the smaller new additions to the east; and an additional glazed connector on the second level that will align with the primary east-west corridor of the historic school precisely where a single window that will be converted to a doorway exists.

The two smaller additions will be constructed immediately south of the historic school wings but separated from them by small glazed hyphens that will frame views of the rear elevations and help to clearly distinguish old from new. These small additions will also be two-stories tall but will not feature any rooftop screening, thus appearing much smaller than the historic wings.

The proposed in-fill construction will enclose the historic central library to create additional interior program space and provide circulation. Although interior connection and program details have not yet been finalized, the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) agrees with the proposal to enclose the central block because the in-fill construction will be glazed on all sides, including the roof. This is critically important to allow natural light to continue to penetrate through the historic library's large windows and other spaces that have windows which face onto the area that will be enclosed.

In terms of archaeology, the Logan School site has prehistoric and historical archaeological potential. DGS contracted with Stantec to conduct a Phase IA Archaeological Assessment with geoarchaeological testing. Based on the results, Stantec will be conducting a Phase IB Archaeological Survey to identify the nature and extent of resources identified by geoarchaeological cores. The Phase IB work plan was approved on April 22, 2019.

Evaluation

The proposed massing concept is compatible with Logan Elementary School and the surrounding Capitol Hill Historic District because the new additions are appropriately scaled; separated by hyphens; set back in deference to the historic school buildings; and do not exceed the height of the historic school buildings or any adjacent historic buildings.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board:

- 1. Find the massing concept compatible with the historic school and the surrounding historic district; and*
- 2. Require further review of all other details of the modernization concept.*

Staff Contact: Andrew Lewis