

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

Property Address:	Stead Park Recreation Building 1625 P Street NW	X	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District		
Meeting Date:	October 28, 2021	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	20-468	X	Alteration

The Board has previously approved two concepts for an addition to the historic Stead Park Recreation Center, comprised of former carriage houses connected by an ornamental pediment. In February 2018, the Board approved an addition behind and to the west (left) of the historic building. In December 2020, it approved a rear addition and two steel superstructures supporting solar panels that flanked the historic building, with much of the programming located below grade.

After a value engineering process, VMDO Architects and the Department of Parks and Recreation return to the Board with a third concept which presents a hybrid of the two previous designs.

Proposal

The two-story addition would be similar to the 2018 proposal in its height, massing, and location to the west of the existing Rec Center. It is set back from the historic building and features a tripartite design to match the solar structure proposed on the east side, and approved in the 2020 proposal. The addition is clad in vertically oriented cementitious panels and floor-to-ceiling windows. The addition focusses on the steel framing to tie the two sides of the design together.

The site plan has also been reworked to retain the existing grade along the sidewalk. Rather than excavate a wide plaza at sidewalk level and push the steps back to the building base, the new plan calls for steps and a ramp at the street and retaining the existing berm.

Evaluation

The new design is a successful marriage of the previous iterations. The addition, although now more visible, is muted in its form, color, and detailing. It connects to the historic building sympathetically through a glassy hyphen that has increased in depth for additional setback from the historic façade.

While the HPO does not object to the cladding pattern, the design team has responded to a request for more proportional windows and panel sizes with several options. These are all variations on a theme that emphasizes the vertical members of the frame. Staff would suggest a more horizontally oriented approach with smaller window sizes that relate to the existing building and historic district. One suggestion is to look to the fenestration already present in the non-historic portion of the Rec Center in the middle of the second floor. The design there offers a traditional pattern of fenestration, placing windows – which could be banked or punched in the

new addition – above a solid panel. In any design, HPO supports the symmetry of both the west addition’s façade and of the east and west additions as they relate to the historic building.

The changes to the site plan have the advantage of retaining the berm in front of the Rec Center and also not setting the formerly modest carriage houses upon a formal plinth with grand stair. The current design, however, calls for an overly wide staircase at the sidewalk. It is wider than the previously proposed plaza and imposes an excess of concrete on the city’s Public Parking, which is intended to be parklike and green. Some reduction in its scale would bring the landscape and site treatment into better compatibility with the historic district.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the addition compatible with the historic district in consideration of the comments above, and delegate final review to staff.

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