

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

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Property Address:	<b>Stead Park Recreation Building 1625 P Street NW</b>	<b>X</b>	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	<b>Dupont Circle Historic District</b>		
Meeting Date:	<b>October 22, 2020</b>	<b>X</b>	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>20-468</b>	<b>X</b>	Alteration

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In 2018, the Board review approved a concept to add to the historic Stead Park Recreation Building, Working with architects at VMDO, the Department of Parks and Recreation returns to the Board with a different concept design to add to the building and rework the landscape and playgrounds of the park on P Street. The athletic field behind the central building and the basketball court at the southwest corner of the site will remain as is.

The rec center building was constructed in phases as two carriage houses connected over a passageway with a center pediment sometime around 1915 for property owner Henry Hurt. The building was deeded to the District and became a park in 1953, at which point institutional glazing was added at the second floor's south elevation. In the 1990s, a frame addition was constructed at the rear. The building is a contributing resource to the Dupont Circle Historic District and appears to meet the criteria for individual listing.

**Proposal**

The new proposal pushes much of the programing underground with a two story above-grade addition positioned directly behind the recreation building. The lower level is lit though sunken courtyards to either side and behind the historic building. Two narrow brick structures, located along the side lot lines, contain stairwells and mechanical equipment. The dominating feature of the proposal is a metal canopy superstructure that holds solar panels above portions of the site in order to reach a goal of net zero energy consumption.

The addition is set off from the historic building by a glass hyphen that is both inset from the sides and lower than the existing roofline. The addition steps back up in height and out in width and would be largely glazed over its two-story height within a bronze colored panel system. The simple form, massing, and coloration would continue onto the canopy system, which is expressed primarily by horizontal beams at the front and rear of the addition that run the full width of the property, connecting the main recreation building with the two stairwell enclosures under one roof-like structure.

In addition to the landscaping provided in the sunken courts, the site plan calls for an entry plaza with broad steps leading up to a plinth on which the building sits, a sensory garden, splash pad, and variety of play areas. The grade will be lowered at P Street with retaining/seat walls along the sides of the plaza.

Work on the historic building itself would replace the incompatible windows throughout, including multi-pane sash windows in the punched openings and a storefront system at the main entrance in the center, inset slightly on the first floor.

### **Evaluation**

The treatment of the historic building is sensitive. No structural demolition is proposed and the addition will connect through existing openings. The red paint will be removed and the building repointed. Incompatible windows will be replaced with compatible sashes. The storefront system inserted into the center portion of the building has been revised in response to HPO's comments to bring symmetry, hierarchical divisions, more compatible proportions, and bulked up framing on its edges and represents a significant improvement to the building's current appearance. The inset on the lower floor helps retain the sense of the former passthrough between the historic brick buildings. Existing door openings on the facade relating the building's history will be retained and infilled with recessed door-like panels.

The addition to the diminutive stable building has the benefit of being largely below grade, keeping the needed program space out of view. The above grade portion is centered behind the historic building and connected by a hyphen, which successfully sets off its mass from the historic building. The staff finds that lowering its height would help increase the prominence of the front building and requests exploration of this possibility.

Lowering the berm at the P Street entrance will create a more welcoming, accessible and appropriate entry for a park. However, HPO requests reconsideration of the wide steps and paved platform in front of the recreation building, which introduce a formality (and a great deal of paving) not necessarily appropriate to the historic stature of the building.

The manner in which the design incorporates the solar panels overwhelms the site and the historic building. The large, continuous beams to either side dramatically change the perception of the building as a vertically oriented freestanding structure. HPO recommends that the beam be either removed or set back in plane in the two hyphens to reduce the scale of the addition and visually detach it from the historic building. Reducing the dimensions and perceived heaviness of the beam and lowering the overall height of the structure so that it sits below the historic cornice line would also improve its compatibility.

As plans progress, the HPO requests further consideration of the following:

- Lowering the height of the addition;
- Eliminating or setting back the horizontal beams running across the site and refining the solar support system;
- Reducing the amount of paving and the grand steps leading up to the recreation building.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board support the design direction, with the refinements outlined above, and direct the applicants to return to the Board for further review.*

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