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

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Landmark/District: <b>Spingarn High School</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address: <b>2550 Benning Road, NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date: <b>January 26, 2023</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
H.P.A. Numbers: <b>23-097</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition

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The District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) is proposing to construct an addition to the c. 2017 streetcar Car Barn Training Center (CBTC) at 2550 Benning Road, NE and to carry out related renovations to the building and its site. The CBTC is located on the site of the Joel Elias Spingarn High School Landmark and within the boundaries of the Young, Brown, Phelps, and Spingarn Educational Campus and Kingman Park Historic Districts.

### **Spingarn High School**

Spingarn High School was constructed in 1951-1952 to relieve overcrowding and was the first new senior high school built for African American students in the school district in thirty-six years. Based upon a design developed by municipal architect Nathan C. Wyeth, Spingarn is the last post-war school in the District of Columbia to be constructed in the Colonial Revival Style. This style was selected so that Spingarn would relate to the three 1930's schools located immediately to the north along 26<sup>th</sup> Street, namely, Charles Young Elementary School, Seth L. Phelps Vocational School, and Hugh M. Browne Junior High School. Spingarn was designated a landmark in 2012. In 2015, the significance of Spingarn and its neighboring schools was jointly recognized by designation of the Young, Brown, Phelps, and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District. The broader African American heritage of the surrounding neighborhoods was subsequently recognized by designation of the Kingman Park Historic District in 2017. The historic Langston Golf Course Historic District is also located immediately across 26<sup>th</sup> Street from the project site.

### **Proposal**

The existing CBTC lacks space to store the rolling stock necessary to maintain current and anticipated levels of service once the Benning Road Extension is completed. As a result, the currently available storage for six cars must be expanded to accommodate eleven vehicles. The project is also needed to provide additional administrative office space and an enclosed car wash and vehicle maintenance facility that can provide year-round service.

### **Evaluation**

HPRB reviewed the design of the existing CBTC on four occasions between November 2012 and October 2013. As a result, the original concept was refined to provide more "civic character" through appropriate massing, a prominent, street-facing, corner location and bold architectural features such as the substantial structural frame that defines the edges of the

building. Although the new facility is contemporary in style, direct visual connections with the historic context were established by incorporating predominant features of the academic buildings such their red and white, limestone and brick materials palette and their prominent limestone bases. The character-defining open landscape of the Young, Brown, Phelps, and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District was also preserved and respected as much as possible by minimizing the CBTC's impact on the site and by incorporating compatible landscape treatments.

The proposed addition to the CBTC has been designed with the same goals in mind. The addition will not diminish the civic character of the existing facility because it will be lower than and set back from the CBTC's substantial structural frame. The new wing will maintain a contemporary aesthetic while being sufficiently differentiated to be recognizable as a later addition. It will also establish visual connections with Spingarn and the other historic schools by utilizing red brick and a limestone base. The site work required to provide additional streetcar storage will minimize changes to the naturally sloping landscape by raising the driveway slightly to make the necessary retaining walls appear less prominent. Green features such as permeable pavers and relocated foliage will also be incorporated to better integrate the new work into the existing site.

Although the new addition will increase the size of the existing facility, it will do so to a relatively minor degree, thus minimizing its impact on the overall historic context. The existing CBTC is approximately 30,000 square feet while the proposed addition is less than half its size at roughly 11,500 square feet. Since most of the proposed new construction will be situated directly north of the existing car barn and set back slightly from 26<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, it will be largely concealed from view along Benning Road. From the east, the mostly glazed, brick-framed elevation will read as a simple addition to the CBTC that complements the small historic greenhouse addition on Spingarn's southern side. Large glazed walls on the northern elevations will further break down the scale of the new addition when viewed from Spingarn and points north.

### **Recommendation**

*For the reasons outlined above, HPO recommends that the Board:*

- 1. Find the proposed concept for the streetcar car barn compatible with the historic contexts of the Spingarn Landmark and the Young, Brown, Phelps, and Spingarn Educational Campus and Kingman Park Historic Districts; and*
- 2. Delegate all remaining review to HPO.*

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