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

Property Address:	3100 Macomb Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark:	Tregaron (the Causeway)		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	October 1, 2020	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	20-095	X	New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

The Washington International School (WIS) seeks on-going conceptual design review for construction of a multi-use building on its Tregaron campus in Cleveland Park. The project would also include relocation of the dacha cottage and landscape work. Architectural plans have been prepared by Shalom Baranes Architects and landscape plans by Michael Vergason Landscape Architects.

When reviewed in February, the Board found the general location, the massing of the above-grade portions of the building organized into two wings around a recreated four-square garden, the relocation of the dacha, and the general landscape plans to be an appropriate direction for the project. However, the Board cited a number of revisions that were necessary in order for the project to be found compatible with the Tregaron landmark. Specifically, the Board asked for the following revisions:

- (1) The size and height of the above-grade portion of the building, particularly on the north side as seen from the front of the mansion, should be reduced;
- (2) The north end of the building should be redesigned to provide a more compatible frontage on the Academic Walk, including pulling the building back to provide visibility of the greenhouse from the east and retention of the existing stand of trees;
- (3) The scale, materials, and colors of the building should be developed to improve their compatibility;
- (4) The existing elevation of the four-square garden should be retained to preserve its relationship with the greenhouse, and a landscape plan developed that achieves a better balance between its historic character and new role as an academic courtyard;
- (5) The landscape in the area south of the building should be improved and supplemented to mitigate the building's visual impact as seen from the causeway bridge and pond valley, with plans guided by the cultural landscape plan and historic photos that document this area as a layered, evergreen, visually dense garden;
- (6) A planting and hardscape improve plan should be developed for the Academic Walk that incorporates and is compatible with the original paving materials;
- (7) A field test should be conducted for the new location of the dacha to ensure that it doesn't impact views of the mansion from the entrance drive or intrude on the surrounding woodland.

Revised Proposal

The concept has been revised in response to the Board's recommendations. The building has been reduced in height by about six feet by lowering the floor elevations and reducing the floor-to-floor heights. The change will allow the four-square garden to be reestablished at its original elevation

and eliminated the need for new exterior ramps and stairs. The building's east elevation has been pulled further away from the mansion and the north elevation has been redesigned with more masonry and pulled back to retain an open view of the greenhouse.

The size, height and scale of the fenestration and the curvilinear wall have been reduced. The primary wall cladding material has been changed from tan brick to as stacked red slate, and the curvilinear wall has been changed from a silvery zinc to a red copper color.

The location for the dacha has been modified slightly – realigned and moved to the north –to avoid heritage trees and reduce its visibility from the entrance drive. As requested, a field test mock-up has been conducted (the stakes remain in place, demarking the four corners of the dacha). While specific plans have not yet been developed, the commitment to landscape rehabilitation has been extended to the woodland around the relocated dacha.

A plan for enhancing the entrance garden on Macomb Street has been developed and a small guard house proposed for the base of the north hillside stairs that lead up to the school. The four-square garden would be reconstructed with the original garden gate and center fountain, with low perimeter walls replicating the distinctive brickwork of the existing walls and a simple planting plan of grass panels enframed by low boxwood hedges. The landscape plan for the Academic Walk would include patterned brick paving and new and enhanced planting beds at the bases of the buildings. As before, the driveway would be rebuilt to provide a pedestrian path on one side and reconstruction of the cobble gutter on the other.

Evaluation

The proposed changes are substantive and significantly improve the compatibility of the concept. The building's reduced height and the changes in the scale of its elements make it more consistent with the domestic scale of the landmark's buildings. The existing trees and views of the greenhouse are maintained by the reduction in the building's size on the north side. The revised design for the four-square garden – a feature already significantly compromised in both its design and setting – maintains its original elevation and architectural features while providing a planting scheme that is influenced by Shipman's plan.

The slightly shifted location for the dacha takes advantage of thick plantings to the north that will provide greater screening than the previous site. The new location also has the benefit of taking it further off axis from the mansion, as is appropriate for a picturesque folly. As outlined in the previous report, the proposed landscape improvements to the Macomb Street entrance, the north hillside, the woodland around the relocated dacha, the south grove in front of the new building, and the Academic Walk would provide substantial enhancements to the landmark, many of which are called for in the cultural landscape plan that has guided the site's rehabilitation.

The proposed guard booth is diminutive in size relative to the landscape and its placement inside the property at the junction of the driveway and walking path up to the school is logical. Appropriately detailed and finished, stone cladding and trim in a natural material (it is unclear whether it is copper or wood) would be compatible with the rustic character of the north woodland hillside.

As the design continues to be refined, attention to the following is recommended:

- 1) While the color of the building's proposed slate cladding has the potential to result in a harmonious relationship with the property's red brick buildings, the ultimate success of this will

depend on the precise material selection, sizing, coursing and detailing. It is recommended that the color range and mottling be minimized (unlike the precedent image on the left on page A-18), and that a material panel mock-up be prepared for on-site review and approval;

- 2) Relocating the four-square garden's gate to the west side, rather than the north side, would reinforce the original axis of the garden and maintain the original view of the greenhouse from within the garden;
- 3) Retaining a Y-shaped path at the Macomb entrance garden rather than funneling all visitors into a single path that leads to the guard house may help alleviate community concerns that the guard house will be intimidating for Conservancy visitors. A Y-shaped path with enhanced signage could make it clear that visitors to the Conservancy could proceed without having to check in at the school's guard booth;
- 4) The landscape plan for enhancing the south groves should be developed, as outlined in the Board's actions in February, to provide further screening for the building.

Recommendations

HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the concept design as compatible with and resulting in significant enhancements to the landmark, subject to further refinements as outlined above, and to delegate final construction approval to staff. As the proposed landscape improvements are a significant and integral component of the project's compatibility and preservation benefits, it is recommended that issuance of the final certificate of occupancy for the new building be contingent on substantial completion of the landscape and site rehabilitation work.

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