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

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| Landmark/District: <b>Coolidge High School</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Agenda                      |
| Address: <b>6315 5<sup>th</sup> Street, NW</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar |
| Meeting Date: <b>October 26, 2023</b>          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction |
| H.P.A. Numbers: <b>23-570</b>                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition                  |

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The District of Columbia Department of General Services (DGS) and Department of Public Schools (DCPS), in coordination with IStudios Architects, propose to construct a new music room addition to Coolidge High School and adapt its former gymnasium for use as a dining hall.

**Coolidge High School**

Coolidge High School was designed by noted municipal architect Nathan C. Wyeth in the late 1930s, constructed between 1937 and 1940, features a notable tower/cupola and remains an excellent example of early twentieth century Georgian Revival school architecture. In 1984, a large addition known as the Frank Williams Activity Center was constructed to the north. In 2018-19, DGS and DCPS undertook an extensive school modernization project that included construction of another large addition, the Ida Wells Middle School, to the south. Both large additions were designed in ways that allow the historic school’s original form to remain fully visible and recognizable. The latter addition even incorporates the school’s original greenhouse as a “connector” between the old and new. To help mitigate the loss of historic fabric and extensive interior alterations that were made during the modernization project, the school was designated a DC Landmark and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2022. Neither of the large additions contribute to the school’s historic significance.

**Proposal**

The proposed project is needed to create a separate kitchen and dining hall for the high school which currently shares these facilities with the aforementioned middle school. The concept envisions the new cafeteria facilities being accommodated in the former gymnasium which was adapted to serve as a music room during the recent modernization. A new addition is to be constructed to house the displaced music room.

**Evaluation**

The proposed music room is to be constructed on the east side of the non-historic Williams Activity Center rather than being attached directly to the historic school. Therefore, no direct alteration of historic fabric will be required. Moreover, the new building will be built into an existing berm located to the north of the school’s rear elevation so the partially below-grade construction will appear to be one level from several vantage points. Since the new music room will also be similar in appearance and materials to the activity center, it will read more

like an addition to that building than the historic school. The end result will be very little visual change to the historic school's setting.

Although the interiors of the school are not designated, it is also worth noting that conversion of the school's former gymnasium into a dining hall will also require alteration of little to no historic fabric since that space was significantly altered when it was converted to the music room as part of the larger modernization project.

**Recommendations**

*For the reasons outlined above, HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed concept for additions and alterations for the Coolidge High School Dining Hall and New Music Room Project compatible with the historic landmark, and to delegate any remaining design review to HPO.*

*Staff Contact: Andrew Lewis*

