

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

Property Address:	1875 Columbia Road NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Kalorama Triangle Historic District Kalorama Playground Archaeological Site (51NW061)		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 22, 2015	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	15-132	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett		New Construction

The DC Department of Parks, working with the Department of General Services (DGS), proposes renovations to Kalorama Park, located on a triangular lot bounded by Columbia Road, Kalorama Road, 19th Street and the rear yards of houses facing Mintwood Place, NW.

The park is located within the Kalorama Triangle Historic District and also contains an archaeological site which is individually listed in the National Register. The archaeological site is also listed in the National Park Service’s National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

History and Significance

The 3-acre Kalorama Park contains the Kalorama Playground Archaeological Site, also known as the John Little House. The site represents the remains of John Little’s home and farm and is the place from which slave Hortense Prout attempted escape during the Civil War. The site’s period of significance extends through the Little family tenure of the property – from 1836 until 1903. The Little house, constructed in the 1830s, was demolished in the 20th century prior to the establishment of the park.

Kalorama Park was created from two parcels acquired for park use in 1942 and 1946, respectively. The current layout of the upper portion of the park and the design of the recreation building (east side) were designed and built by the National Park Service (NPS) and D.C. Recreation Board in 1947. The design remains fairly intact today, although the current plaza area was originally slated as a spray park and shuffleboard courts were proposed at the southeast corner. It is not known if either of these amenities was ever realized. In 1971, NPS transferred jurisdiction of the park to the city, at which time improvements were made to the lower portion, primarily in the area of the basketball and tennis court.

The Kalorama Triangle Historic District, which encompasses the park, was designated in 1987. The period of significance of 1893-1939 was selected to illustrate the transition of the city of Washington from a rural to an urban environment. Its buildings were designed in nationally popular styles which together form an important architectural ensemble. The park is not mentioned in the National Register nomination, although it has traditionally served as a buffer between the small-scale residential community and Columbia Road, which hosts large-scale apartments and commercial enterprises. The map that accompanies the National Register form identifies non-contributing buildings only and does not call out the park as either contributing or

non-contributing. However, based on its date of construction of 1947, it falls outside the periods of significance for both the district and the archaeological site.

The Department of Recreation's 1984 survey *Recreation's Heritage: A Preliminary Historic Resources Inventory* states that the Kalorama recreation building "does not contribute to the historic and/or architectural character of the area." Although nothing is said of the plaza, it can be surmised that, if the plaza had been identified as significant, it would have received mention.

The most recent study pertaining to the park's historic significance is the 2014 *District of Columbia Parks & Recreation Master Plan Historic Preservation Review*, commissioned by the HPO. This report calls out the archaeological site within the park, but identifies the separate, above-grade park grounds and recreation building as non-contributing to the Kalorama Triangle Historic District.

Because the park was designed and built in 1947, it is outside the period of significance for the Kalorama Triangle Historic District and is therefore, non-contributing. The significance of the archaeological site does not relate to any significance or lack of significance for the park, nor does its period of significance extend to 1947.

Project Description

The project was initiated to correct erosion problems in the park and includes the following:

- Redesigning the plaza and incorporating permeable pavers
- Replacing/installing a drainage system under the plaza to work in concert with the permeable pavers
- Resurfacing concrete walkways in-kind
- Installing a green screen on the recreation building
- Widening the secondary entrance along Columbia Road and installing a single bollard to prevent vehicular access
- Replacing substandard soil to the east and south of the tennis court
- Widening and smoothing existing berms

The two playgrounds will be addressed as well, but the plans have not progressed to a concept level of design. It is anticipated that the changes will be to replace playground equipment and fencing, and future designs will be brought before the HPRB as appropriate.

Park design – The overall concept of the park's built environment, including the recreation building, plaza, and two playgrounds, remains intact. With some modifications, the plaza will retain its axial relationship with the recreation building and will continue to read as a central area flanked by corner tree boxes/planters, each surrounded by low fencing. The square plaza plan has its design roots in a historic decorative brick square located at the main entrance to the park on Columbia Road.

The path along the west side of the plaza has become curved, its arc reflecting the curved pathways that run throughout the park. Benches along this path afford views over the informal

landscape and address the current problem of having to walk into the planted area for bench access. This pathway ends at a blank corner of the recreation building, where a green screen is proposed to be attached above an existing planter box. The eastern pathway along the plaza has been eliminated and to allow for a slight expansion of the south playground. The existing planting beds around the playground will shift westward and the tall hedges will be replaced with low plantings to provide a visual connection to the play area from the plaza.

The entrance from Columbia Road that leads to the recreation building will also be slightly redesigned to be more welcoming, with a curved design in the paving materials. The entrance will be blocked with a single bollard to prevent vehicles from accessing the park. Finally, the existing ADA ramps in front of the building will be replaced in-kind and fronted with planting beds.

Archaeology – DGS is working closely with the City Archaeologist to develop plans to manage anticipated effects of ground disturbing activities on the National Register-listed archaeological site. Professional archaeological consultants who meet the Secretary of Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards (36 CFR Part 61) will be retained by DGS, and a work plan for all investigations will be prepared in consultation with the City Archaeologist. Other than the approved soil boring permit, which was reviewed by the City Archaeologist, the HPO will not review any further permit applications until the archaeology work plan has been approved by HPO.

Two types of archaeological investigations are anticipated – monitoring and a Phase I identification survey. Monitoring is needed in the areas where soil replacement will occur to ensure that previously identified archaeological features are protected and to record any additional features or unanticipated archaeological discoveries that may be encountered. Archaeologists will also monitor the removal of hardscaping to ensure that the demolition does not affect potential undisturbed deposits below the paving. Once the impermeable surfaces are sufficiently removed, archaeological testing will ensue.

In addition, a GIS cut-and-fill analysis will be prepared by the consulting archaeologists. This study will help distinguish locations where severe grading has compromised archaeological potential from those where added soils may have protected former living surfaces.

The archaeological investigations will result in the preparation of a technical report and, depending on the results, an updated archaeological site form. It is anticipated that the archaeological work will also result in a public education component.

Evaluation and Recommendation

Because the 1947 park structures and amenities are non-contributing to the Kalorama Triangle Historic District, changes to the design do not affect an individual historic resource. In reviewing how the redesign might impact the historic character of the surrounding district, the HPO finds the changes compatible. The design team has incorporated elements of the existing design into its proposal, including maintaining a paved plaza in its current location, referencing the park’s

existing curved walkways and brick-paved decorative square at the main entrance, and the semi-enclosed feeling within the plaza, demarcated with corner planting beds/tree boxes.

In addition, laws and regulations are in place to fully manage site work in a manner that takes into account the National Register-listed archaeological site located within the park grounds.

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept compatible with historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate further review to staff.