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

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|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Property Address: | 440 R Street, NW | Agenda |
| Landmark/District: | Samuel F.B. Morse School | X Consent Calendar |
| | | X Concept Review |
| Meeting Date: | September 24, 2020 | X Alteration |
| H.P.A. Number: | 20-482 | New Construction |
| Staff Reviewer: | Steve Callcott | Demolition |
| | | Subdivision |

The applicants, 440 R Street LLC, seeks conceptual review for rehabilitation of the Samuel Morse School for residential use. A landmark application has been submitted by the owners and is pending before the Board. Architectural plans have been prepared by Teass/Warrant Architects and a preservation plan prepared by EHT Tracerics.

Property Description and History

The Morse School is a three-story plus basement brick building that was constructed in 1883 under the direction of the Office of the Building Inspector/Architect of the Capital to serve as a public elementary school for White children. Its use as an elementary school continued through 1911, when it was converted to a “special school” to accommodate non-traditional students enrolled in specialized classes. It was partially reverted to use as school for Black students in 1930, but also had specialized uses, such as providing evening, veterans’ and vocational classes for adults through the mid-twentieth century.

The school was declared surplus property by the District in 1976 and, in 1981, sold to the non-profit organization Africare. In order to accommodate office use, the building underwent extensive alterations between 1985 and 1987, including the addition of a contextual, Post-Modern brick tower on the west elevation. In January 2020, the property was sold to 440 R Street Partners, who plans to convert the building into condominiums.

Proposal

The project calls for rehabilitating the historic building for conversion to residential use. On the exterior, the roof would be replaced with synthetic slate on the tower and a membrane roof on the non-visible portions. Existing original transoms would be repaired, and non-original windows replaced with aluminum clad units to replicate the original condition. Small terraces would be cut into the roof on the east and south elevations but would not be visible from street view. Site work would include new areaways on the east and south elevations to allow light into basement units, brick walkways, creation of five parking spaces along the two alleys, and construction of a trash enclosure. On the interior, the one remaining original stair would be retained and the interior plan, already somewhat altered from the 1980s renovation, would be retained. A detailed preservation plan has been developed to the rehabilitation efforts.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed alterations and treatments to be compatible with the building, to approve the concept as consistent with the preservation act, and to delegate final approval to HPO.