HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	**Walter Reed Army Medical Center**	(**x**) Agenda
Address:	**6825 16th Street NW**	
Meeting Date:	**February 25, 2016**	(**x**) Additions
Case Number:	**16-158**	(**x**) Alterations
Staff Reviewer:	**Tim Dennée**	(**x**) Concept

The applicant, the District of Columbia International Charter School, agent for the property owner (the U.S. Army) and a future tenant of the building, requests the Board's review of a concept to add to and alter the historic Delano Hall in order to make it suitable to the school's program. The architects are Perkins Eastman. This is the first private project at Walter Reed to come before the Board.

Permitting for and construction of the project would not take place until the Army transfers this portion of the campus to the District of Columbia, so the concept is being reviewed under the local preservation statute, with the permission of the Army, rather than under the National Historic Preservation Act.

Because the property will remain government-owned, albeit by the District of Columbia, the concept was reviewed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in June. The Commission approved the concept, but will also review the permit application when it is ready.

Historical background
Erected in stages from 1929 to 1933, Delano Hall (also known as Building 11) was constructed as a residence for the Army Nursing Corps. It may be said that the building was never completed, as an intended rear wing at the west end was not constructed.

From 1964 to 1978, Delano Hall housed the Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing. It was subsequently a base administration building, until the Army closed the installation in 2011.

West wing
The current concept proposes, in a sense, to complete the originally intended E-shaped building, by erecting a wing at the rear of its west end. The wing would mostly be faced with brick to match as closely as possible that of the rest of the building, but it would otherwise be distinguished by being slightly longer than the east wing, having a flat roof, and having fiber-cement spandrel panels in the openings.

The wing's largest volume would be the gymnasium, located within the courtyard bounded by the wings. It would be set somewhat forward of the south end of the wing and clad in a contrasting material, which separates it enough visually from the brick wing to allow the latter to

read similar to the building's narrow historic wings. The gym will have a monitor roof. While fiber-cement panels have generally not been encouraged by the Board, they work pretty well within the rhythm of narrow bays divided by the slot windows and the metal cladding of the jagged roof. The applicant might consider a panel color that is a more of an earth tone, compatible with the brick.

It is recommended that the material be changed entirely on the pavilion on the west side of the new wing. It is proposed to be clad in fiber-cement panels, like the gym, but there doesn't seem to be an underlying programmatic logic to having this piece stand out (such as containing and entrance or cross-corridor connecting to the gym beyond). Delano Hall's projecting pavilions modulate, punctuate and terminate the wings. Creating this one here is absolutely the right move, and differentiating it with a flat roof is certainly reasonable in new construction. Yet, it should otherwise be blended in with the building's predominant material, as are the other pavilions, with only the gym standing out.

And although the fiber-cement spandrels are used throughout, they perhaps should not be on the south elevation. Meant to be analogous to the filled-in porticoes on the other wings, the squatter flat-roofed end of this one makes it not really the same, nor is copying the not entirely successful Army infill of the porticoes the best approach. The end of the wing unnecessarily looks like an infilled porch, which is also indicated by the location of the side window openings near the corner. Instead, the design might emphasize the two-story height, like the original porticoes, or use perhaps patterned-brick spandrels to create more straightforward punched masonry openings. Indeed, although it is probably a luxury the school cannot afford, restoring the original rear porticoes would be wonderful.

As the CFA reportedly did, the Board should review material samples at the hearing, especially as the ground-face concrete block at the gym's base could be perfectly compatible or could convey an unfortunate economy, depending on the particular product.

Entrances
The efforts to signal—through signage and a covered walk—the entrance that is located in the inside corner north of the gym are not incompatible in this context. But it is worth considering how people will use this rather hidden entrance and whether some provision should be made for a convenient approach to the school or the gym from Aspen Street.

There is an entrance vestibule, canopies and a ramp proposed on the south end of the historic east wing of the building (see page 22) and an entry door near the north end of the same wing, the latter as access to a play area. These seem sufficiently compatible and not out of scale with the building, as well as a necessary accommodation for arrivals to this end of the building, relieving the front from alteration. The designs also reflect the collaboration of the architects with the CFA staff.

Solar panels
The presentation (at page 19) shows potential locations for rooftop solar panels. We should acknowledge that these would be, at once, on the rear of the building *and* plainly visible from Aspen Street. Therefore, while carefully installed flush panels may be a reasonable alteration and balancing of interests, we would not recommend that they be installed on the highest and most prominent roof, that of the central block surmounted by the cupola.

Site work
The best aspects of the site plan are the retention of the front yards and the reuse of much of the courtyard for recreation, meaning that half of the parking lot would be removed.

As part of the solar project, also proposed are trellises or carports within the parking lot to support additional panels, probably something similar to what the Board is considering at Saint Elizabeths Hospital. The drawings offer no details on these structures, however.

There would be a small play area near the building's northeast corner. The equipment and exact layout have not yet been specified, but it is a sufficiently appropriate location for such a use.

Recommendation
The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept and delegate to staff further review, with the understanding that the Commission of Fine Arts will continue its review and with the conditions that:

1. *the fiber-cement-clad pavilion on the west side of the new wing be clad instead in matching brick;*
2. *the applicant consider some revision to the new wing's south end;*
3. *the applicant present samples of the proposed materials at the hearing; and*
4. *the staff bring back before the Board any proposed solar-panel support structures if it questions their compatibility.*