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

Landmark/District: **Young, Browne, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus
Historic District** (X) Agenda
Address: **820 26th Street, NE** () Consent Calendar
Meeting Date: **September 26, 2019** (X) New Construction
H.P.A. Numbers: **19-547** () Alteration
() Demolition

Two Rivers Public Charter School and Studio 27 Architecture propose to construct a new middle school and make other improvements adjacent to, and within the historic Charles Young School, a contributing element of the Young, Browne, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District. Two Rivers Charter School leases the historic school and the site from the DC Department of General Services and is seeking concept approval for the project.

Young, Brown, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District

Designed by the Office of the Municipal Architect and constructed primarily between 1931 and 1937, Charles Young is the earliest of the four schools constructed for African-American students along the west side of 26th Street, NW. It's central location and prominent tower/cupola make it one of the most striking features of the Young, Browne, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District. Like the majority of buildings within the historic district, Charles Young is designed in the Classical/Colonial Revival Styles.

As the name implies, the other schools within the historic district include Browne Junior High (1932), Phelps Vocational (1934) and Spingarn High (1952). The latter, which was the last DC Public School constructed in the Classical/Colonial Revival Styles, was designated a DC landmark in 2012. Although several of the schools have later additions, all new construction has utilized a common materials palette and appropriately-scaled massing which have maintained the historic district's integrity over time.

Proposal

The proposed program includes constructing one free-standing building with a small elevated bridge to connect to the existing school; limited renovation within the historic school; and the development of new recreational courts, playing fields, and other site improvements such as terraced seating cut into the hillside and a new drop-off area for students.

The massing concept for new construction consists of one, 28,000 sf, two-story building that is mostly rectangular in shape, but also incorporates rounded corners, gently rising parapets, a large monitor skylight, and a first-level entry that is covered by the projecting second floor. These design features will add interest and clearly distinguish the middle school as contemporary architecture.

In deference to Charles Young School, the new construction will be situated behind the historic building, but slightly southward so that the entrance of the new middle school will be visible as one approaches the complex from the east.

To achieve compatibility with the historic district's ubiquitous red & white color palette, the upper level of the new school will be clad in metal panels similar in color to the red brick buildings while the lower level will be clad in white glazed bricks that echo the light-colored bases of the historic buildings. The use of white window frames and a fenestration module derived from Charles Young School's windows will establish additional visual connections with the surrounding historic context.

Interior renovations will be limited to later additions that are unlikely to contain any significant historic fabric and the exterior playing fields and courts will be located behind the historic and new schools so they will not be visible from any prominent location.

Archaeological identification and evaluation investigations have been initiated at the site. Additional work will be carried out in the pre-construction stage and a determination will then be made regarding the need for evaluating the National Register eligibility of any identified resources.

Evaluation

The proposed massing concept, materials palette and other design details are compatible with the Charles Young School and the surrounding Young, Brown, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District because the new building is appropriately scaled; free-standing; connected solely by a small bridge; set back in deference to the historic school; and clad in materials that maintain the characteristic red & white color palette of the historic district. Similarly, interior renovations in later additions and locating site improvements in inconspicuous locations raise no historic preservation-related concerns.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board:

- 1. Find the massing concept and other design details compatible with the historic school and the surrounding historic district; and*
- 2. Delegate final review to HPO.*

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