



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING, HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT
Neighborhood Services Division

Courthouse Plaza One 2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700 Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703.228.3830 FAX 703.228.3834 www.arlingtonva.us

MEMORANDUM

TO: HALRB

Rebecca Ballo,

FROM: Historic Preservation Planner

DATE: December 16, 2016

SUBJECT: HP Staff Comments on Stratford School CoA

These Historic Preservation Program (HPP) staff comments are based on the review of the second submission of the CoA application for the Stratford School (CoA 16-24) by Quinn Evans Architects on behalf of Arlington Public Schools (APS). The comments below are based on the updated architectural and landscape sheets sent for the CoA review. Some issues and comments cannot be addressed at this time because the required information will be submitted later this month for the Use Permit.

Background: The Stratford School was designated as an Arlington County Local Historic District in June 2016. Section 15.7 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, specifically section 15.7.13, created a new process whereby the authority for approving CoAs for newly designated schools would rest solely with the County Board. However, the HALRB retains a review and comment role with this new process, as part of its duties as an advisory body to the County Board on all matters pertaining to historic preservation within Arlington. Section 15.7.13.A states the following:

The County Board shall render its decision after considering comments forwarded by the Review Board, if any, regarding the architectural and historical appropriateness of the proposed alterations.

The Certificate of Appropriateness application for the construction of a new addition and renovations at the Stratford School was submitted to the HPP staff for review in September 2016. A revised (second) submission was sent December 8, 2016. These comments are based on this second submission. The HPP staff's first round of comments, dated October 24, 2016, is included as an Appendix for reference.

Architectural Comments

The revised palette of pre-patinated copper panels, brick, precast, and cementitious panels is more compatible with the historic building than the previous submission (see Appendix to this staff report for prior comments). The pre-patinated copper panels are of a more muted green than the previous submission. This choice will provide for variation and differentiation on the façade of the new addition, but it will not be visually intrusive. The proposed Ironspot brick, with both an artisan finish and the newly submitted smooth finish, will successfully reference the rusticated stone foundation and chimney walls of the historic school. The use of the smooth brick as the new façade material for the connecting hyphen (essentially recladding the 1994 addition) will provide a good visual transition between the historic school and the new addition.

One area of concern on the new addition is the treatment on the north side of the proposed building where the copper panels will be located close to grade. From a purely design standpoint this is an appropriate architectural treatment, staff has concerns about long term maintenance of this material close to grade, in particular where it may interact with snow, ice, shovels, and melting chemicals. Masonry tends to hold up better in these types of locations, though even granite and limestone and the associated caulk and joint sealants in these areas will stain and wear more quickly over time when exposed to salts and the elements. HPP staff would still recommend a brick base in this area. See Sheet A-017-H for the proposed detail.

Outstanding items for the addition include further details on the rooftop mechanical screening, stormwater infrastructure design, and details for the new custom glass frit.

Landscape Comments

Historic photographs do show foundation plantings (small shrubs) adjacent to the rear elevation of the building. There is no evidence of small trees adjacent to the building as have been proposed in the Landscape Plan. HPP staff continues to recommend the removal of the understory trees adjacent to the Auxiliary gym elevation and would recommend other locations along the road or adjacent to the field be explored (L1-H1).

Sheet L1-3H shows the new fire egress lane adjacent to the traffic circle at the front of the school. Please provide details on the materials for this area as well as any alterations to the curb that will be required. If these details are shown on Use Permit sheets as part of the Civil drawings, they should also be included in the CoA set.

More details have been provided regarding the interpretive areas on sheets L1-1H and L2-1H. Final details regarding text, photographs, manufacturing specifications and placement should be reviewed and approved prior to approval of the final landscape plan.

Appendix A

Previous HPP Comments on CoA Submission #1, September 2016

Explore a different palette for the metal panels, the brick, and the window surrounds/accents. The metal panels and the brick are appropriate choices; however, the color palette is too starkly differentiated from this historic building to be considered a compatible choice. The pre-patinated copper will continue to weather over time, creating adverse issues with staining of the building and concrete, and potential run off issues with the water. The historic building, clad in blonde brick with rusticated stone, is not an organic building in the way the new addition would be with the copper panels—meaning it does not change over time the way the copper would. HP staff thinks the material choice is appropriate, as metal cladding and brick have been used as building materials for centuries. HP staff recommends a metal cladding that is a lighter color; one that would complement and be compatible with the historic building. Consider looking at a warmer palette for the cladding materials. The wood grain paneling is likewise not an appropriate choice for the addition. HP staff has concerns as to how this material with weather over time. In addition, particularly on the south elevation, this material will be exposed to a great deal of sunlight. Over time, these panels have a tendency to warp or fade. The materials on the new addition should be honest, as they are on the historic building. If the desire is for an ‘effect’ similar to wood, then wood should be used. If that is not feasible, then a different material, potentially precast, metal, or terra cotta should be considered.

No comments on the volume and mass of the proposed addition. These were accepted by HP staff and the HALRB in the context of previous reviews. The volume successfully replicates the features of the International style as demonstrated in the historic building and the mass and scale enable the building to be clearly read as an addition.

For the reclad portion of the existing building, as shown on sheet A-011-H, the design should consider a number of options:

- Flip the windows so that the larger pane is on top, and the smaller on the bottom.
- Reconsider the cladding material. It currently matches the base of the new addition. The original building successfully uses the rusticated stone base on the stair tower and the chimneys (vertical elements), but the dark brick does not successfully work with this portion of the building. It still reads as an odd outlier. Even if the brick were carried more vertically, creating almost a false chimney similar to the historic building, it may still not be compatible. It either needs to incorporate more elements around the windows (banding, differentiated materials) to stand out, or it should not attempt to be an architectural element in and of itself, and should perhaps remain in the background, clad in precast. The additional windows make it into a functional part of the building, but without a differentiated base, or other elements, it still reads as an outlier.

Sheet A-012-H: Shows two different brick types on the base. Is this a different treatment or a software glitch?

A-014-H: Why is the canopy so small? It should span the entire width of the doors.

A-014-H: Provide specifications on the opaque doors.

Custom frit: Provide explanation for the frit being “inspired by the building and its history”. Is this something figurative?

A-014-H: Explain why the metal carries to grade on the north elevation and portions of the west. There will likely be a small base or other banding at the bottom; please show this.

Overall: Show details for screening on mechanical penthouse and other rooftop mechanicals.

Elevator: Show height of the elevator from the roof deck. Drawings show extension 1’ above parapet, but what is the overall height once it pierces the roof?

A-012-H & A-017-H: Is there one (1) new column being shown? Is it being sheathed in the same brick as is being used for the base? What is the shape—squared, tapered column, etc.? Please provide more details of its purpose and design.

Stormwater infrastructure: If any planters are required, please provide details. Clarify if all SWM BMPs are located underground.

C-400& L1.01: Historic Trail details. The trail is shown going to the wrong door; it needs to carry over to the original school. It will overlap with existing paths at that point, but will still need to be called out, perhaps inset into the concrete. Additionally, the spacing between the stones on the pathway, and the intersection of the pathway with the ADA path need further work. The path intersects with a number of retaining walls, and the stones are placed very far apart. We need to design it so that people can comfortably choose either path. Also need to determine the correct spot to locate interpretive signs. This may be as part of the final landscape plan, but a spot should be chosen as part of the use permit & CoA submission. Need to submit and review stones that will be used for the path. Realizing the plans are illustrative at this point, staff recommends a smooth cut or similar stone for the path, and not a rubble stone or field stone treatment.

C-401 & C-402: Show relocated flagpole as shown on the landscape plans. What are the plans to store and restore the flagpole so it can be used again? (This is a use permit comment, replicated in the CoA comments for clarity purposes only.)

L1.01: Remove understory trees adjacent to south elevation foundation and along the ADA path and historic trail.

L1.02: Are there plans to fix the wall and slate caps on the north side of the property?

L1.03: Provide more details on the fire pull-off, including materials and curb details so staff can determine potential impacts to the traffic circle.

L2.00: Provide details on plaza seating, field seating, and retaining walls so staff can determine viewshed impacts.

L1.03: Will the gazebo in the circle be removed?

General: provide more details on the existing library renovation. Assess any impacts to the original glass block clerestory windows, the existing replacement windows, ceiling, and any venting that may be associated with the new cooking stations, HVAC, etc.

Provide any information as it becomes available about restoration of glass block on the historic glass block.

Provide information about new lettering (style, size, material, method of installation) for the name of the school.