

Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

Arlington County, Virginia

HALRB Case 14-09 (HP1400014)



A request by Faron Cater on behalf of Arlington County Public Schools, the owner of 5800 North Washington Boulevard in the Swanson Middle School Historic District, to remove and replace six round arched windows (approximately 5'x12').

HALRB/Design Review Committee Report Meeting Date:

For DRC (circle those present): Robert Dudka, Charles Craig, Charles Matta, Darren Hannabass,

For Arlington County (circle those present): Cynthia Liccese-Torres, Rebecca Ballo, John Liebertz

Case # Agenda Item #

Application Complete

Application Incomplete

Applicant(s):

For Applicant(s):

(See attached application for applicant, address, name of property and property description, drawings, photographs, and proposed scope of work.)

Design Recommendations:

Findings:

_____ Return to next DRC meeting

_____ Send to HALRB (see below for recommended actions)

If sent to HALRB, recommended action is:

_____ Place on consent agenda

_____ Place on discussion agenda:

_____ Recommend approval of CoA, with DRC design recommendations and/or additional information provided

_____ Recommend deferral of ruling on CoA (explanation):

_____ Recommend denial of CoA (explanation):

_____ No recommendation.

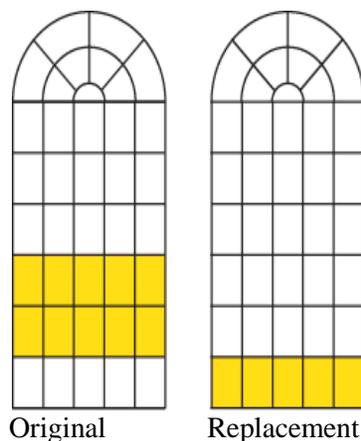
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: HALRB
FROM: John Liebertz, Historic Preservation Planner
DATE: May 20, 2014
SUBJECT: 5800 Washington Boulevard, Case 14-09, Swanson Middle School Historic District

Built in 1939, Swanson Middle School is architecturally distinctive as an excellent example of the Colonial Revival (Georgian Classical Revival) style. The building is the only stylistic example of Colonial Revival school architecture that remains in Arlington and is the oldest extant middle school. The local historic district nomination describes the evolution of the building:

The original building, constructed in 1939, consisted of 2½-story main block with prominent two-story perpendicular wings flanking each side. The ends of the flanking wings mirror the front fenestration, each containing two pairs of identical windows on both floors. The original building contained 12 classrooms, a library, an auditorium, a small cafeteria, an office, and a gymnasium.

This application is a request to replace six original round arched steel windows on the gymnasium with aluminum windows. The aluminum replacement windows match the design of the existing steel windows, but differ in operability as the proposed hopper window is in a different location and height. The operable portions of the window are colored yellow on the drawing below.



The Historic Preservation staff requested the applicant consider rehabilitating the existing steel windows as they are character-defining features of the original school. Corrosion is the controlling factor when considering the repair or replacement of steel windows. Light corrosion is typically indicated by flaking or

the presence of rust with no underlying structural issues. Such windows can be repaired by means of chemical treatments or sandblasting. Heavy corrosion of the steel can result in structural damage, through delamination, to the metal section which then must be patched or spliced. Corrosion on the six windows at Swanson Middle School is evident; however, the degree has yet to be determined.

While the applicant's documentation regarding the physical condition of each steel window is ongoing, Arlington Public Schools (APS) has condemned the windows due to the presence of lead and asbestos. In addition, APS submitted a potential cost estimate for in-situ lead and asbestos abatement. If undertaken, the abatement would cause the project to significantly exceed the allocated budget. Therefore, the degree of corrosion to the existing windows is less of a factor in the replacement of the windows than the presence of lead and asbestos.

It is the opinion of the Historic Preservation staff that the repair of historic windows is always preferred in a rehabilitation project and replacement should be considered only as a last possible option. If the extent of deterioration, unavailability of replacement sections, use of hazardous materials, or economic constraints renders repair impossible, replacement of the entire window would be justified. In selecting compatible replacement windows, the material, configuration, operability, number and size of panes, and profile and proportion of metal sections should be duplicated as closely as possible.

Prior to the establishment of the historic district zoning overlay, APS successfully replaced several other original steel windows with the proposed aluminum windows on the northeast side of the main building block. In general, aluminum windows fail to reflect the thin historic profiles of most steel windows. The existing replacement aluminum windows at Swanson Middle School, however, adequately evoke the design, profile, and appearance of the historic windows. While the proposed hopper sash is in a different location, the inclusion of an operable sash still recalls the original design. Staff supports the replacement of the six round arched windows as proposed in the application, but as with any applicants staff will require further clarification from APS regarding the prohibitive cost of replacing the windows with similar steel windows and additional information regarding glazing of the new windows.

The DRC heard this application at its May meeting and requested the applicant to: 1) submit a condition assessment of the existing windows to be replaced; 2) examine glazing options; 3) consider the use of steel windows instead of aluminum windows; and 4) submit photographs of the existing replacement windows. The DRC asked that this case be placed on the discussion agenda for the May 21, 2014 HALRB meeting. Staff finds that the request (if supported by documentation showing the prohibitive cost of replacing the windows in-kind) meets the intent of the *Swanson Middle School Design Guidelines* and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* (number six).