

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6769



H.D. COOKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MODERNIZATION AND EXPANSION

2525 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the District of Columbia Public Schools

November 29, 2007

Abstract

The District of Columbia Public Schools have submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the modernization and expansion of the H.D. Cooke Elementary School, located at 2525 17th Street, NW in Washington, DC. The project will include system upgrades and exterior envelope repairs of existing facilities, increased building and site accessibility, construction of a new building addition, a new parking area, and related site development.

Commission Actions Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b)(1).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the modernization and expansion of the H.D. Cooke Elementary School, Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 33.10(38.00)42321.

Recommends that additional landscaping be incorporated into the area along Mozart Place between the sidewalk and the new parking area.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

Consistent with the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Master Facilities Plan of 2007 and the DCPS Design Guidelines, several schools are to be modernized by the Office of Facilities Management. The H.D. Cooke Elementary School modernization project is the first one planned for this year. The applicant has been working with several other District of Columbia agencies as well as the neighborhood ANCs as the project moves forward.

H.D. Cooke Elementary School is currently comprised of three components: an original three-story building constructed in 1909, a south wing that was added in 1921, and an east wing dating to 1960. Although the buildings are not currently included in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites or the National Register of Historic Places, the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC-SHPO) has stated the school is eligible for both; Section 106 consultation has been undertaken by the applicant.

Site

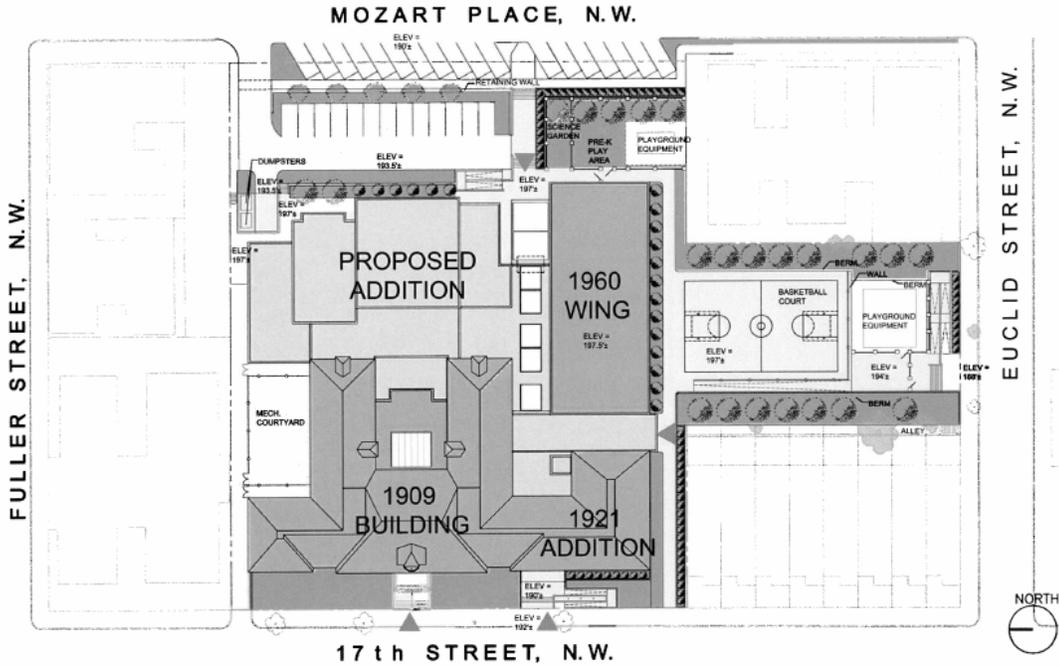
The school is located in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of northwest Washington, DC, on a 90,000 square foot site that fronts 17th Street to the west and Mozart Place to the east; the nearest north and south cross streets are Fuller and Euclid Streets, respectively. The main building is located approximately eight feet above the sidewalk level, with a central entrance up steps along 17th Street. The existing grade change poses a challenge for accessibility.

The east side of the site, the location of the planned building addition, currently houses parking for the school.

Proposal

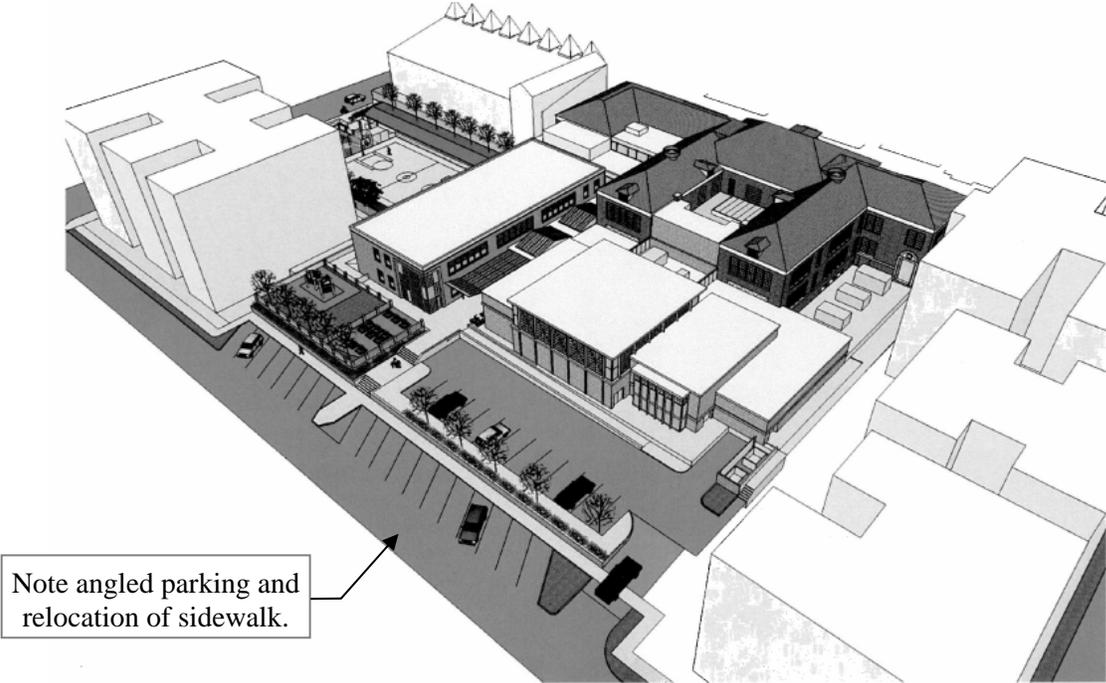
The District of Columbia Public Schools has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for modernization and expansion of the H.D. Cooke Elementary School in Northwest Washington, DC. The proposal includes modernization of the existing school buildings and construction of a new east addition, as follows:

- Modernization of mechanical, electrical, and life-safety systems for the existing 1909/21 school buildings and 1960 wing addition.
- Exterior repairs, including limited window replacement, masonry restoration, gutter/downspout replacement, trim repair, and chimney removal.
- Construction of a 15,700-gross-square-foot, two-story brick addition to house a gymnasium, dining hall, resource rooms, and an occupational therapy room.
- Construction of a new accessible entrance on 17th Street and an interior “Main Street” that will unify all building components.
- South playground area, including a full basketball court and play equipment.
- East play area for younger children, with landscaping.
- Parking areas for approximately 31 vehicles along Mozart Place. (NOTE: As a result of consultation during the review period, the parking area design has been modified. Refer to “Project Analysis” Section, below, for additional information.)



SITE PLAN

A number of sustainable design features and energy efficient systems will be incorporated into all new construction, with the goal of achieving a Silver rating based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Schools criteria (adopted April 2007).



PERSPECTIVE

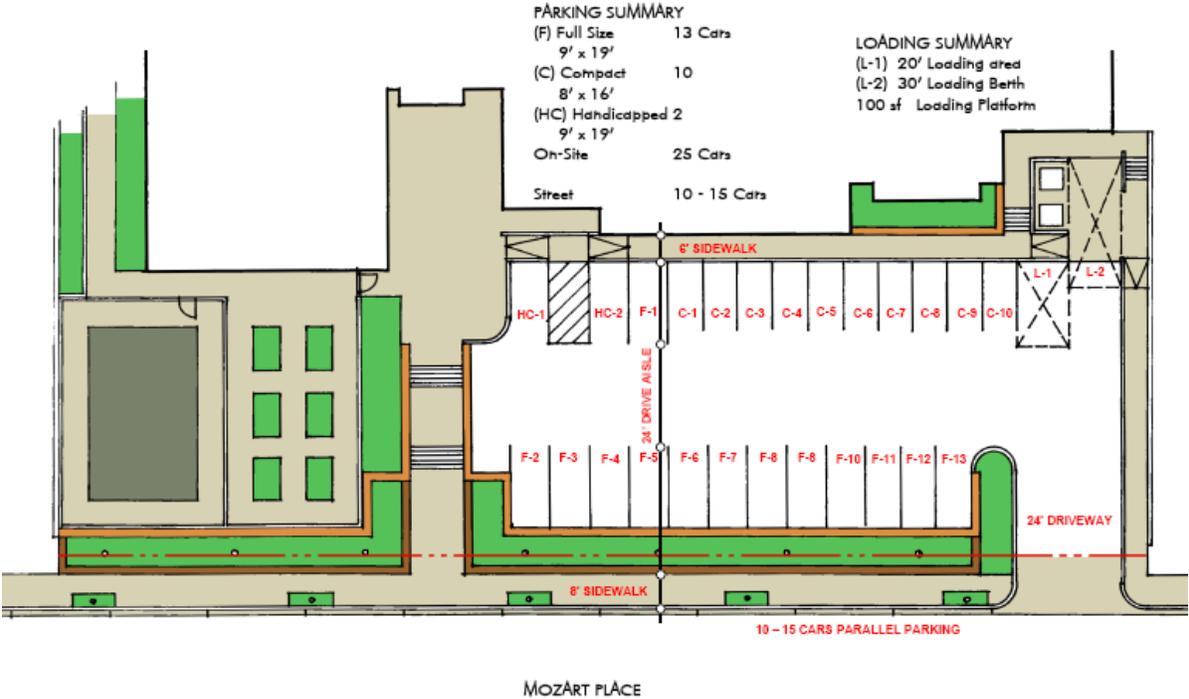
PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the proposed building modernization and addition to be well developed and architecturally compatible with the existing facility with regard to scale, massing, materials, and details. Additionally, the accessibility improvements and integration of all building components is to be commended.

However, Staff concurred with the DC-SHPO's analysis that the proposed relocation of the sidewalk and angled parking area along Mozart Place were inconsistent with the urban character of the neighborhood and should be modified. Staff recommended that the applicant revise the final streetscape and parking area design along Mozart that maintains the urban characteristics of the site by retaining the existing sidewalk location and providing landscaping/screening between the sidewalk and the new parking area. Final plans should also comply with DDOT streetscape design and material standards.

Revisions to Parking Area

As a result of consultation during the project review period with NCPC, DDOT, and other District agencies, the applicant revised the parking area design to remove parking areas from public space along Mozart Place. Staff finds that the revised design, which accommodates parking for 25 vehicles, to be a more compatible solution that relates better to the urban streetscape. Staff recommends that additional landscaping be incorporated into the area along Mozart Place, adjacent to the sidewalk, to visually screen the parking area.



SITE PLAN - REVISED

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the proposed project is not inconsistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC does not have independent NEPA responsibility for District of Columbia projects outside the Central Area. However, the applicant is required to comply with the District of Columbia Environmental Policy Act, DC Code 8-109.01 et seq., enforced through the District of Columbia Department of the Environment (DDOE). The DCPS has submitted an EISF to the DDOE, and is awaiting formal determination by that office of what environmental review is required. NCPC will evaluate any information provided by that review.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The project documents have been reviewed by the DC-SHPO (SHPO), who identified the property as eligible for listing in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. The SHPO determined that the proposed modernization and addition to the school is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standard and will not have adverse impacts on any historic resources.

The SHPO did note concerns regarding the relocation of the sidewalk and the creation of angled parking between the public space and the school property, in effect "eroding the street wall" taking a suburban approach that is inconsistent with the surrounding urban neighborhood. NCPC staff concurs with the DC-SHPO determination as well as their concerns regarding urban streetscape development.

CONSULTATION

Coordination Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on November 14, 2007, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented, except the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). The representatives for DCOP and DDOT requested additional time to review the proposal. The coordinating agencies were: NCPC; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

On November 16, 2007, DCPS met with the following agencies to discuss public space matters that included parking configurations along Mozart Street: DCOP, DDOT, TTPA, ADA and UFA. Upon conclusion of that meeting, it was agreed that DCPS and their contracted Design/Build team would submit revised concept sketches to return the angled parking to parallel parking along Mozart Street. DDOT has agreed to serve as the lead agency in coordinating District agency review; based on a revised site plan that limits development to DCPS-owned land, DDOT has coordinated the project. Ongoing consultation with District agencies is planned to ensure that work does not include changes to the public space.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved the concept for the project at its meeting on July 19, 2007. The Commission members commented favorably on the relationship of the proposed addition, but requested further study to simplify the playground areas as well as modification of the scale and design of the school name on the new east façade. Revised plans and signage were submitted to CFA on November 15th, and the Commission approved the final design at their November 19th meeting.