



Commission Action

March 7, 2019

PROJECT Rehabilitation of the Franklin School as a Home for Planet Word 925 13th Street, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7932
SUBMITTED BY District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 21.00(38.00)44867
REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (e)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans
	ACTION TAKEN Approved preliminary and final site and building plans as requested

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the rehabilitation and modernization of the Franklin School.

Notes the Commission is the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Building Restoration

Finds the rehabilitation and modernization of the Franklin School into a new museum, Planet Word, will provide much needed improvements for the long-term maintenance of the building, and also provide visitors a top-quality experiential museum facility meeting modern day standards.

Finds that the primary exterior alterations are relatively minor and respect the significance and character of this historic building, with the façade and side elevations appropriately rehabbed and restored, with any missing design details and ornamentation replaced in-kind.

Notes that during August 2018, prior to the conclusion of the Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultation process and without proper building permits, the applicant removed significant amounts of interior historic fabric from the Franklin School. As a result, the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) issued a stop-work order on August 31, 2018.

Notes that in consultation with the DC SHPO and consulting parties, NCPC determined that the removal of historic fabric and other aspects of the project constituted adverse effects on the Franklin School, as documented in the Notification of Adverse Effect Determination Letter, dated September 20, 2018.

Notes the stop-work order permit issues were satisfied after obtaining the building permits. The District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs allowed construction site activities to resume on December 27, 2018. Notice of Infraction fines associated with the cited violations totaled \$8,136 naming Franklin School Development as the respondent.

Notes to address the extensive removal of interior historic fabric and character-defining materials and floorplan spaces prior to the completion of the Section 106 process, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was prepared in consultation with the consulting parties to mitigate the adverse effects resulting from the removal of interior historic fabric and floorplan elements.

Notes the MOA was executed on December 10, 2018 amongst the DC SHPO, ACHP, NPS, Franklin School Development, and NCPC, which allows NCPC to continue its review of the project. The MOA includes the process and steps necessary for further consultation regarding ongoing design review, including the new entrance plaza, signage, and exterior lighting, to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse effects to the historic Franklin School.

Entrance Plaza

Finds that the proposed new entrance plaza off K Street over the existing rear courtyard and the new entrance vestibule on the rear of the building are appropriate, as they allow universal access while avoiding significant alterations to the historic façade.

Notes that existing site constraints related to a change in grade and limited space impacted the design of the plaza which includes two primary terraces, two sets of stairs, and a universal access path that starts parallel to K Street before ascending along the rear of the plaza.

Finds the new frameless glass system of the entrance vestibule allows for the focus of the detailed plaza to remain with the new artwork and on the paving surface rather than highlighting the enclosure as a strong design element, and requires only removal of minimal historic brick on the elevation.

Finds that the new sculpture, Speaking Willow, will provide an interactive focal point for visitors to the building in the entrance plaza, and will be viewable from K Street by pedestrians.

Finds that the new entrance gate off K Street is contemporary in its design expression but relates to the new function of the Franklin School as a museum of the language arts, as it evokes the pages of a book opening, and will allow views into the entrance plaza even when secured during non-operating hours.

Exterior Signs

Finds that the strategy for free standing exterior signage with one banner-on-pole sign at the new entrance gate at K Street, and two monument signs at the corner of 13th Street and K Street, and

on the existing stair landing on 13th Street, provide needed identification for the building's new use as Planet Word.

Notes that additional banner on pole signs along 13th Street would not be visible due to existing trees, the historic landmark sign in the sidewalk, and the traffic control lights at the intersection.

Notes as the museum's needs in the future evolve, additional signage or exhibit banners may be desired, and should be designed to avoid or minimize structural and visual impacts on the Franklin School, and submitted for review and approval by the Commission.

Notes that any improvements in public space will require a public space permit and coordination with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation Office of Public Space.

Exterior Lighting

Notes the applicant will submit all exterior lighting for Commission review, including any for the new entrance plaza, once it is developed.

Julia A. Koster
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission



