



*Catherine E. Pugh*  
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR  
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION**

*Tom Liebel, Chairman*

**STAFF REPORT**



*Thomas J. Stosur*  
Director

**July 10, 2018**

**REQUEST:** Final Review: Rehabilitation and Additions – 701 Rappolla St., Dr. John Ruhrah Elementary Middle School (School #228) (Baltimore City Landmark)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval.

**STAFF:** Lauren Schiszik

**PETITIONER(S):** Grimm & Parker

**OWNER:** Mayor and City Council

**SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The school is located on a city block in the Greektown neighborhood. The property is bound by Foster Avenue to the north, Tolna Street to the east, Fait Avenue to the south, and Rapolla Street to the west. This portion of Greektown is somewhat physically isolated as it is only accessible to the western portion of Greektown via bridges that run across below-grade I-895. Located to the south of this community is I-95, to the east is an industrial complex, and the northern boundary is Eastern Ave. The school building and its ancillary portable classrooms are surrounded by playfields. The streets surrounding the school are comprised of simple two-story brick rowhouses.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: The building is comprised of a three-story brick “I” building and two brick additions. The main block of the building features a central projecting bay that features a stone loggia entrance with arches, classical columns, and balustrade, and many other decorative Classical features such as a stone watertable, dentilled and arched belt courses, and decorative brickwork consisting of banding, latticework, and window surrounds comprised of darker brick. The southern portion of the main building has the 1936 addition, which is a sensitive two-story brick addition that is smaller in scale and is architecturally similar to the main block, but is less ornate in its design. There is a 1974 two-story brick addition on the rear of the 1936 addition that has no fenestration pattern. There are four temporary buildings in the rear of the school that provide classroom space for the school, which serves more students than it was designed to serve. The large school parcel features a highly altered topography, which results in very steep concrete-capped hills along Fait Avenue and Tolna Street, on which the homes are a full two stories lower than the school grounds.

**BACKGROUND**

- The property was designated a Baltimore City Landmark in 2016.

- This comprehensive program follows best practices in 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and the design of the schools serves not just students, but the community as a whole.
- The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Plan is being implemented by Baltimore City Public School System (BCPS), and the Maryland Stadium Authority, a State entity, which is the responsible agency for construction and permitting. The City of Baltimore, BCPS, the State of Maryland, and Stadium Authority have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that includes, among other things, a design review process. All school projects are being reviewed by the Department of Planning’s Urban Design and Architectural Review Panel (UDARP). Additionally, due to state funding and permitting, all projects will be reviewed by the Maryland Historical Trust for impact to historic resources in the State’s Section 106 process.
- On December 12, 2017, the Commission reviewed and approved the demolition of the non-contributing temporary classroom buildings, and concept approval of the rehabilitation and new construction, with final details of the rehabilitation and new construction to be reviewed by the full Commission.

**PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES**

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the existing structure, demolish the temporary classroom structures, add two additions to the building, and improve the landscape of the parcel.

**Rehabilitation**

The rehabilitation includes the following work: Remove brick infill from historic window openings and install aluminum storefront systems into the five-bay wide, infilled window openings.

- **Conformity to Guidelines:** The proposed rehabilitation is being considered under *Chapter 1: Design Guidelines for Building Exteriors*.
  - The proposal to remove the brick infill and non-historic metal windows and install new windows meets *Guideline 1.7.3 Window Replacement*. The proposed storefront system has a simple fenestration pattern that completely fills window openings, the thick mullions between each window is evocative of the historic limestone mullions, and the centered bars are evocative of a meeting rail on a double-hung window.
    - Staff recommends that the storefront system have a finish that is an off-white to look similar to the stone details on the building.
  - While the guidelines state that “in most cases do not install light fixtures on historic buildings where fixtures were not historically present”, the proposed lighting for the building will be installed for public safety and the proposed lighting is discreet and appropriately scaled.

**Additions**

The two large additions and one small elevator shaft rooftop addition that will be added to the school are necessitated by the fact that the current building is too small to serve the current and projected number of students attending this school from Pre-Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The Commission granted approval of the height, scale, and massing of these additions at the December hearing.

The additions will be clad with bricks of two different colors that are complementary to the existing school. A darker brick will be located at the base of the building, and a lighter red brick will clad the majority of the additions. Glass entries delicately separate the new construction from the existing building. The windows will be an aluminum storefront system, but with fenestration details that are compatible with the historic building. To evoke the decorative recessed brickwork on the first floor of the historic building, the addition will feature decorative pronounced brickwork between the windows on the first and second floors. The HVAC systems will be located on the rooftops of the additions, and are discretely sited so that they will not be highly visible.

- **Conformity to Guidelines:** The proposed new construction is being considered under *Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*. The new construction meets the following guidelines:
  - The new construction meets *Guideline 2.5 Materials* which directs applicants to “design doors and windows to be compatible with the placement, scale, type, and operation of doors and windows and their openings in surrounding buildings” and to “choose building materials that are compatible with the color, size, texture, scale, and quality of building materials used in surrounding buildings.”

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS**

John Ruhrah Elementary/Middle School is not located within a CHAP district; therefore, comments from an Architectural Review Committee are not applicable.

#### **ANALYSIS**

CHAP staff has reviewed the final submission and finds that the materials fully meet CHAP guidelines.

**Staff recommends approval, with the recommendation that the window colors better match the stone detailing on the historic portion of the building.**



**Eric Holcomb**  
**Director**

## MAP AND IMAGES



Image 1 – Locator map.



Image 2 – Aerial View from south.



*Image 3 – View of original building.*



*Image 4 – 1936 Addition.*