



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

April 5, 2015

Ms. Gretchen Pfaehler, AIA
Chairperson
District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board
1100 4th Street, S.W.
Suite E650
Washington, DC 20024
historic.preservation@dc.gov

RE: Conceptual review of proposed renovation/construction at the Stevens School building (1050 21st Street NW, **HPA 15-219**)

Dear Chair Pfaehler,

At its regular meeting on March 18, 2015, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A (“**ANC 2A**” or “**Commission**”) considered the above-referenced matter. With seven of eight commissioners present, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission voted 7-0-0 to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS ANC 2A, serving Foggy Bottom and the West End, are and have always been convinced of the historical importance of the school on this site, viewing Stevens’ heritage as unique, given its establishment in 1868 and original purpose as the first school for children of freed slaves in Washington, D.C.;

WHEREAS Stevens School, a National Historic Landmark, is a jewel in the community and has served as a vibrant school supporting the needs of District of Columbia students with excellent programs, and which has served generations of African Americans and community members in Washington, D.C. and includes among its notable graduates Charles Drew, Petey Greene, Jr., Roberta Flack, Amy Carter, Colby King, Rayford Logan, Robert Hooks, and Jonathan Ogden;

WHEREAS, on November 29, 2011, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), in conjunction with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), solicited two requests for expressions of interest (RFEI) from private developers and educational users to (1) redevelop the land adjacent to the historic Stevens School and (2) rehabilitate the existing historic Stevens School building for an educational user;

WHEREAS, DMPED selected Akridge-Argos the development finalist and with the input of the DME, DMPED selected IvyMount School as the educational finalist, and on December 2, 2014, the DC Council passed the “Stevens School Disposition Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2014” (R20-0722) and the “Stevens School Surplus Declaration and Approval Resolution of 2014”(R20-0708)” and the Mayor signed this legislation that provided for disposition of the Stevens School and adjoining development parcel to Akridge and Ivymount;

WHEREAS, the RFEI for the development parcel states that at closing under the disposition agreement, the District and the selected combined team will enter into two separate ground leases; one for the development parcel and one for the school parcel; that each ground lease will reference the contemplated subdivision of the Stevens School building and development parcel into separate tax lots based on the final selected combined team plan; that the selected



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development team respondent shall eventually have the option to purchase fee simple title to the development parcel but that this option may be exercised at any time after substantial completion of the entire project (which will include the rehabilitation of the school parcel); and the legislation passed by the D.C. Council and signed by the Mayor, incorporated these RFEI “rehabilitation” requirements for the Stevens School on the developer team for disposition of the development parcel to Akridge;

WHEREAS, the RFEI for the educational use of Stevens School states that the District and selected educational-use team respondent will enter into a ground lease for the school parcel; and the legislation passed by the D.C. Council and signed by the Mayor, effecting this ground lease of the Stevens School building and any space related to its use provided for a ground lease for a 25 year term and will have no purchase option;

WHEREAS, the RFEIs stated that the selected development team will share the costs of rehabilitating the historic Stevens School building with the selected educational-use team;

WHEREAS, the RFEIs and also stated that the Stevens School exterior renovation would be of the “highest quality” and that the District of Columbia would “leverage this development to benefit the citizens of the District of Columbia” and that the development team would be required to renovate the Stevens School so it would be a “long term investment” for the District of Columbia;

WHEREAS the RFEI for the development team requires developing the entire parcel adjoining the Stevens School to be in compliance with applicable zoning laws and regulations and notes that the Zoning Commission may approve a maximum height of 110 feet (height, in this case, is limited under the Height Act of 1910 to 20 feet higher than the width of the adjacent street with both L and 21st Streets, NW at 90 feet in width). In addition, the Development Parcel is located within the New Downtown Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Receiving Zone; with the purchase of TDR density, a density of 9.0 FAR can be achieved by-right in a building permitted to be 110 foot tall under the Height Act.

WHEREAS the RFEIs noted the importance of community & stakeholder benefits and outreach and that the District is committed to maximizing community benefits for its residents and expects respondents to consider and incorporate stakeholder and community preferences into their projects, to the extent practical. In view of this commitment, respondents have presented: a detailed description of the activities and strategies completed to date that demonstrate the respondent’s efforts to work with the local community and stakeholders to ensure their meaningful involvement in the submitted response; and a detailed description of the post-award approach and strategies to working with the local community and stakeholders to ensure their meaningful involvement in the development process.

WHEREAS the almost 150 year old Stevens School is in need of substantial rehabilitation and the RFEI obligates the selected team to preserve the structural soundness and historic integrity of the Stevens School, ANC 2A believes the needed rehabilitation should include but not necessarily be limited to the following rehabilitation elements:

- Replacement of all exterior windows;
- Replacement of the Stevens School roof; and



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- Repointing of the brick exterior of the Stevens School;
- Other exterior repairs noted by HPRB staff to maintain the historic integrity and structural soundness of the Stevens School.

WHEREAS the exterior renovation of the Stevens School would benefit from the analysis of a “condition assessment” by an expert on historic construction with an expertise about the time period appropriate to the school’s construction;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, ANC 2A votes to require that HPRB require that the selected team to secure the services of a qualified expert on historic construction, approved by HPRB staff, to make a condition assessment of needed repairs to this historic structure, and then make those repairs recommended by such expert and the HPRB staff, and in any event, replace all windows, roof areas and repoint all brick exteriors of the Stevens School, as a condition of its obligations in award of this RFEI and legislation disposing of the adjoining playground property and school to Akridge-Argos and Ivymount.

BE IT RESOLVED, ANC 2A urges HPRB not to schedule this matter on its calendar until such assessment is made and repairs are agreed to by Akridge-Argos and the Ivymount teams.

Commissioners Florence Harmon (floencedc@comcast.net) Patrick Kennedy (Patrick.Kennedy@anc.dc.gov) are the Commission’s representative in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kennedy
Chairperson