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To: [Scanlon, Amy](#)
Cc: [Stu Levitan](#); [Erica Gehrig](#); [Rummel, Marsha](#); [David Mclean](#); [Christina Slattery](#); [Bidar-Sielaff, Shiva](#); [michael rosenblum](#)
Subject: Landmarks Commission - Longfellow School, proposed rehab and addition
Date: Monday, July 15, 2013 8:32:40 PM

Hi Amy- (I've cc'd the Commissioners for whom I have addresses. This is for the record. I'll also send a copy to Iconica ATTN John Seamon)

Following the Landmarks Commission's discussion of compatibility of the proposed addition to the Longfellow School building at the Commission's meeting on July 15, 2013, I'd recommend a review of the National Park Service's [Preservation Brief #14](#) on this very topic. The Brief makes these points about additions to historic buildings:

- Additions should be "Compatible, but differentiated" from the historic building
- "the treatment of the addition should not be so different that it becomes the primary focus."
- "the new work should be harmonious with the old in scale, proportion, materials, and color. "

The discussion at Monday's meeting focused heavily on materials and colors. I generally agree with the comments of the Commissioners, and of Alder Bidar-Sielaff, in particular with the comments that the color palette should be warmer and refer more distinctly to that of the School building.

But in my mind another issue needs just as much attention - that of the articulation of the facades. The facade of the historic school building is divided vertically into sections that are consistent - in materials and fenestration - from bottom to top, with the bottom being defined by a heavy stringcourse (water table), and the top being capped by a decorative parapet. This gives a strong sense of verticality to a building that is otherwise a very horizontal presence. Iconica's renderings show a proposed addition that echoes the strong overall horizontal presence, but falls short in achieving a harmonious vertical massing within that. Instead it shows masses (whether defined by a projecting interior space or by a change in color or material) that are stepped, or stop short of the top or bottom of the building.

Another way to say this is that the school building, with its vertical elements and heavy water table give it a strong connection to the ground. You don't get that sense of grounding in the design of the new building. I suspect that this, along with the cool color palette, is part of what gives the addition a dissonance that the Commission is having a hard time mitigating.

I would add that because this is not a typical addition - it's not simply conjoined to the historic building and serving as an extension of its facade - it can take more liberties in its "compatibility." It can present itself more like a separate building, and therefore can be less "compatible" in terms of materials and color. See Figure 11 of the Brief.

Hope this is helpful to the discussion.

-Jason

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