



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3C
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS • CLEVELAND PARK
MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE HEIGHTS
MCLEAN GARDENS • WOODLEY PARK

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01-Lee Brian Reba; 02- Gwendolyn Bole; 03-David Valdez
04- Arthur Barkmann; 05- Margaret Siegel; 06-Carl Roller
07- Victor Silveira; 08-Catherine May; 09-Nancy MacWood

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ANC 3C Resolution No. 2016-025
Resolution Regarding Washington International School's HPRB
Application for Concept Approval of New Construction and
Landscaping Changes at Tregaron, a National Register Property,
3100 Macomb Street NW

Whereas, the Washington International School, which owns 6 acres on the 20 acres Tregaron estate site, an historic landmark that is also within the Cleveland Park Historic District, has filed for concept review of a proposal to build a 34,250gsf building on the ridge above Macomb Street; and

Whereas, in 1912 the Tregaron country estate was designed by Charles Adam Platt, the premier architect of the American Country House Movement, in collaboration with Ellen Biddle Shipman, a renowned landscape architect, with an emphasis on axial relationships between buildings and formal gardens, and the shaping of grand views and vistas framed by woodlands and "wild" or naturalistic gardens; and

Whereas, Platt intentionally placed the mansion on Tregaron's largest hill to afford views of the surrounding landscape and also to allow views to the mansion from the grounds, and similarly Platt located roadways to capture memorable views and to reveal the mansion gradually¹; and

Whereas, one of Platt's goals was to minimally clear the land for the mansion, outbuildings, and formal gardens in order to maintain a sense of seclusion and privacy through tree preservation; and

Whereas, a U.S. Geological Survey map dated 1893 shows the Tregaron site with a prominent east-west ridgeline and 150 feet of grade change that terminates into two branches of Rock Creek near the north and south boundaries, and that site condition exists today (Attachment A); and

Whereas, the 20 acre Tregaron estate and its entire landscape became a DC historic landmark in 1979 and is registered in the National Registry of Historic Places; and

¹ Tregaron Landscape Documentation and Evaluation, Robinson &

Whereas, the Washington International School (WIS) leased Tregaron prior to its designation as a historic landmark and during this period an application to construct a single building was approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) with the condition that the causeway (driveway) entrance be relocated to Macomb Street and the roadway be one-way only²; and

Whereas, the change in the circulation pattern transformed the original service driveway into the main entrance to the estate; and

Whereas, the Washington International School bought 6 acres of Tregaron in 1980 and entered into an agreement with Friends of Tregaron, the preservation group that became the Tregaron Conservancy, the private land owner, and WIS to protect Tregaron from inappropriate development and to provide the conservancy and the school with resources to facilitate the maintenance and rehabilitation of the landmark; and

Whereas, that agreement was based on guidelines established by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) and was approved by HPRB in 2006; and

Whereas, that agreement included support for WIS to increase its enrollment, to build a regulation soccer field on the southwest border of its portion of the landmark, to build a theatre/classroom/library building, and to use specific parts of the estate property for program needs; and

Whereas, in approving limited development on the landmark estate in exchange for the agreement, the Mayor's Agent cited the HPRB's comments on the record that the Landscape Plan was the key component of the special merit application; and

Whereas, the current proposal includes a 34,250 gsf science and technology classroom building; 17,800 gsf underground parking structure for 45 cars, which would leave 57 surface parking spaces; replacement of some walkways with brick; rehabilitation of original landscapes, some of which have been planned for some time as part of WIS' obligation per the agreement; and replanting of the north slope below the ridge after construction; and

Whereas, after preliminary reactions to the proposal, WIS revised the proposal by lowering the height of the proposed new classroom building by 13 feet so that the proposal's north elevation dimensions are 27 feet high by 215 feet long, and the parking structure's north elevation dimensions are 6-13 feet high by 110 feet long with an external staircase separating the two structures; and

Whereas, the proposed parking structure would extend 6 feet into the north slope and the proposed classroom building would extend 61 feet into the north slope at the point where it meets the existing gym building, and the construction disturbance to the ridge and north slope, including regrading, would extend from the west lot line almost to the driveway; and

² BZA Order No. 12576, 1978

Whereas, the proposed underground parking structure would require the creation of a garage entrance/exit opening in the driveway and thereby effectively reduce the expanse of the north slope and would either result in car headlights shining across the east meadow or mitigating dense landscaping that would mask views in this valley; and

Whereas, the estate's historic carriage house, which is currently surrounded on two sides by surface parking would have bus parking on its north facing side, an open courtyard on its west side, and the new classroom building, separated by the exterior staircase, to its northwest corner; and

Whereas, great effort was taken to arrange and design the gym and the most recently built school buildings on the estate so that they would minimally impact significant views into or out of the estate, including relocating the gym farther away from the Macomb ridge and north slope, and breaking up massing so that the middle school and AAA building would appear more in scale with the original historic estate structures; and

Whereas, the Tregaron Conservancy Board of Directors found that the proposal was not compatible with the landmark and submitted a report outlining their evaluation of the proposal; and

Whereas, the ANC has received many letters of support for the proposal and many letters of opposition to the proposal:

Therefore, Be It Resolved that Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C (ANC) opposes the current WIS application based on our finding that it would negatively affect key features of the landmark and is thus, incompatible with the preservation and protection of the landmark;

Be It Resolved that the ANC specifically finds that

1. the location of the proposed classroom building on the ridge would destroy this character-defining feature and replace it with a long wall-like structure that terminates into another wall-like structure housing the garage (Attachment C);

2. the location of the proposed building would also significantly alter the north slope by reducing its depth with building and regrading to allow for construction;

3. the plan to re-landscape the north slope to restore the construction-related removal of the tree canopy and to mitigate the mass of the building does not compensate for altering this important feature of the landmark;

4. the length and height of the proposed classroom building would dominate the views into the estate from the north and would substantially change the experience of entering a private, secluded country estate; and

5. the proposal to build an underground garage and remove some surface parking is laudable, but the necessary intrusion into the carefully planned driveway and the elimination of part of the north slope is incompatible with maintaining the original intent to gradually reveal the mansion by entering the estate through a forested landscape with

occasional clearings to reveal views - we find that the original intent has not been lost with the change of the entrance to Macomb Street;

Be It Resolved that the ANC finds that in general the WIS proposal would establish an institutional aesthetic with this imposing new building on a landscape that was designed to have structures minimally intrude on the existing landscape, which is as prominent a feature of the landmark as are the Platt-designed estate structures;

Be It Resolved that the ANC also finds that the length of the proposed classroom building and its scale and massing reads as a wall, which is a design element that Cleveland Park has sought to avoid in the historic district that is characterized by openness and very low walls and fences where they exist; and

Be It Resolved that the ANC appreciates that WIS has listed many historic features of the landmark on their portion of the property that could be restored or rehabilitated and we hope this could serve as a blueprint for continuing the extraordinary work of the Conservancy and WIS to steward the rebirth of this extremely important landmark;

Be It Resolved that the ANC authorizes the chair and the 3C09 commissioner to represent the ANC on this matter.

Attested by



Carl Roller

Chair, on May 16, 2016

This resolution was approved by a roll-call vote of 8-0 (one commissioner was absent) on May 16, 2016 at a scheduled and noticed public meeting of ANC 3C at which a quorum (a minimum of 5 of 9 commissioners) was present.

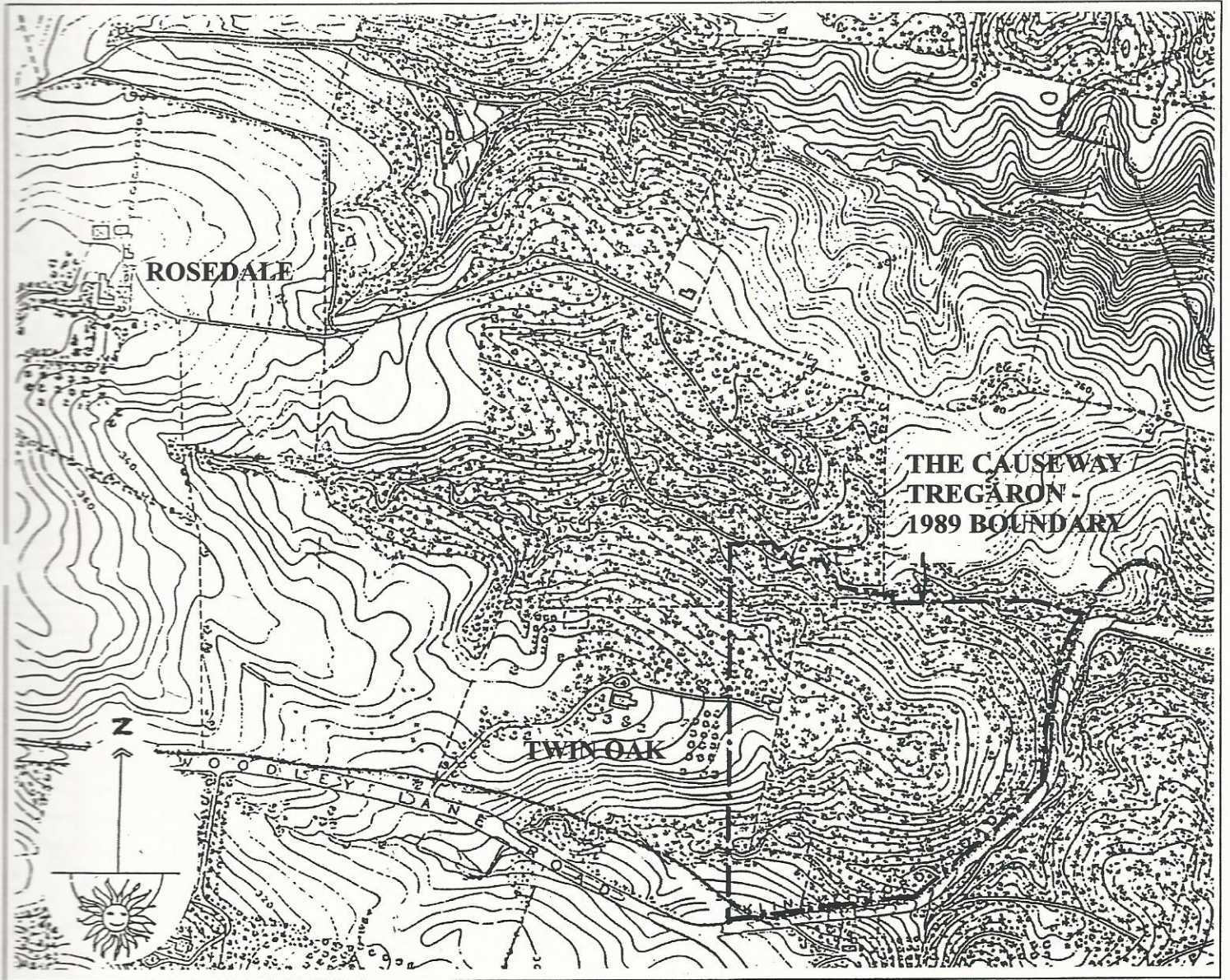


Fig. 2 U. S. Geological Survey (detail)
Date: 1893
Source: Phase I report



Overlay of Current Building Proposal Over Google Earth, March 2016