



MEMORANDUM

To: Richard Harris
Town Planner, Town of South Hadley

From: Derek Noble
Steffian Bradley Architects

Project: New Performance Building
Berkshire Hills Music Academy

Regarding: Site Plan Review
Project Summary

Date: 22 January 2016

Architecture

Urban Design

Planning

Interiors

Lighting

General Overview

Located in the hills of South Hadley, Massachusetts, Berkshire Hills Music Academy (BHMA) is dedicated to facilitate the education and support of young adults with Williams syndrome and other special needs to develop life skills through the use of music activities and training. SBA has developed a design for the new state of the art performance center that knits the building into the fabric of the historic property and sits harmoniously adjacent to the old Skinner House used as the school's main building.

The 7,400 SF new building includes a multi-use space for music and dance supported by a series of smaller ensemble rooms and practice rooms. A lounge for the students doubles as the main lobby for events. Views into and out of the building, highlighting an age-old and visually striking copper beech tree, will aim to integrate the surrounding natural landscape with the acoustically attenuated interior experience. Additional program spaces include a vocational teaching kitchen where students learn life skills to enable them to be more independent and a small classroom. Fulltime and adjunct teacher's offices support the other spaces within the building.

Site Plan Review Comments

The following points are presented as supplementary information to what is provided on the drawings submitted to the Planning Board for review and follows the Site Plan Review Criteria Section E.

1. We feel the design of the new performance center is in compliance with the Site Plan Review bylaw, and other regulations and bylaws, as required by South Hadley.
2. We have taken great care to integrate the building into the existing BHMA site and minimize disruptions to the existing natural processes, land forms, architectural character, and significant vistas. We undertook a series of site plan investigations to find a location for the building that worked programmatically, financially, and fit in with the stunning property. In the end, the new performance center was located behind the existing building, just north of the back lawn, to frame the views from the porch of the Skinner House. The building was positioned on a level area to minimize the amount and costs of extensive site work. An existing gravel access road is being repurposed as a paved driveway and fire lane that will serve the building.

One Corporate Road
Suite 102
Enfield, CT
06082.6036

T +1 860.627.1920

Corporate Headquarters:
88 Black Falcon Avenue
East Lobby - Suite 353
Boston, MA
02210

www.steffian.com

MEMORANDUM

PAGE 2 OF 4



3. The site design works with both the design of the new performance center and the aspirations of BHMA.
 - a. There are no nearby wetlands or steep slopes near the building site.
 - b. As noted above, the building doesn't affect the existing westerly views from the Skinner House. The design has also tried to frame views from inside the building and accentuate the existing beauty of the property.
 - c. The building is sited between two areas of large, significant trees that exist on the property. There is an enormous copper beech adjacent to the building that has been examined by an arborist and will get some much need pruning and attention as part of the project.
 - d. As noted above, the level site allows the building to be constructed with minimal disruption to the existing landscape. Site work does include a new driveway, additional parking, and the widening of an existing access drive to Woodbridge Street. There will be removal of some existing pine and hemlock trees to facilitate the installation of new underground utilities and the widened driveway.
 - e. The new building creates more of a campus feel on the property. It becomes a defining edge of the existing lawn and sets up the opportunity for outdoor activity.
 - f. Because of the location of the new building, it will not be seen from the nearby roadways. There is extensive, existing vegetation between the building and the neighboring residences on Meadow Lane. New plantings are provided to screen the small mechanical units required for the building from the Skinner House.
4. The project does not require a special permit.
5. The design elements of new performance building relate directly to the adjacent Skinner House in order to create a balanced relationship between the two buildings.
 - a. The major gambrel roof forms of the new building have been incorporated in order to relate to the character of the Skinner House. The design is intended to communicate with the existing building without copying it directly. Elements such as the clapboard and shingle siding and divide light windows have been chosen to complement the style and scale of the existing building's façade.
 - b. Because of the nature of the student body, the new performance center has been located as close as possible to the existing building to minimize the difficulties students may encounter moving between buildings for classes.
 - c. As noted above, the building has been located on the north edge of the existing lawn.
 - d. The entrance is on the north side of the new building. A pair of double doors is used to create a simple, expressive entrance. A small roof covers the sidewalk at the entrance to provide a pedestrian scaled covered drop-off.
 - e. The exterior design uses a combination of clapboard and shingle siding to create visual interest and break up the scale of the performance space form. Dormers on both the north and south facades break up the linear expanse of the roof lines. The building footprint also steps back at the east and west ends to reduce the perceived length of the building.
 - f. The fenestration design in the new performance center is both compatible with the existing Skinner House and expressive of the activities within. The double hung windows are the predominate type of window used. The north side of the building has rounded top windows in conjunction with peaked dormers to activate the main façade. The performance space has a series of larger windows to provide both a connection to the existing landscape and allow light to fill the large room. Dormers in the gambrel roof are reminiscent of the dormers on the back façade of the Skinner house.

MEMORANDUM

PAGE 4 OF 4



- times. The intent to utilize lawn parking was to avoid creating large expanses of asphalt across the property.
- b. There are no designated bicycle parking areas at this time. There are, however, plenty of places for students and staff on the property.
 - c. There are no new curb cuts include in the project scope. The two existing entrances into the property from Woodbridge Street remain unchanged. As mentioned above, part of the existing driveway will be widened.
 - d. As mentioned above, access to Woodbridge Street remains unchanged.
8. Site drainage and storm water infiltration has been designed into the landscape to prevent increased run off and potential for flooding.
 9. The site design has been designed to minimize any adverse impacts to the town's services and infrastructure.
 10. The site lighting has been designed to minimize the intrusion of light into adjacent properties and minimize night-sky lighting. The layout provides three new 12'-0" post lights along the new driveway marking the intersection near the existing garage, the entrance to fire lane, and the accessible parking. Illuminated bollards provide pedestrian level lighting along the pathways between the accessible parking and the new building and between the new and existing building. Each exit from the new building has a wall mounted sconce. The main entrance to the new performance center has a small covered exterior space that will have recessed downlights focused on the walking surface. The bollard lighting and post lighting proposed for the project both direct their light to the ground. All lights are LED fixtures.
 11. All site utilities are located underground.
 12. The drainage of the site does not adversely affect adjacent properties or roadways.
 13. The project does not have any street frontage.

Additional Information

The following additional information has been included to assist in understanding the design intent of the new performance center.

1. We've attached a series of photos of the property showing the existing landscape with the new driveway and parking approximated. The intent is to show the current condition of the landscape. A key plan shows the rough location of where each photo was taken.
2. We've attached the three major exterior light fixtures for your review:
 - a. The post light
 - b. The bollard light
 - c. The wall mounted sconce
 - d. The recessed down light
3. We've also attached an example of the proposed building signage. The building is tentatively named the "Bernon Performance Center". The concept is to locate cut metal pin letters on the vestibule fascia. The letters are not intended to be illuminated.