

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society before the DC Historic Preservation  
Review Board December 17, 2015  
HPA 13-566 1220 Potomac Avenue, SE**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. Thank you for letting us share our views on this project. We reviewed the plans for this project dated December 8, 2015 and offer the following comments:

The applicant has revised the plans that HPRB reviewed in June 2014. The project will create eight units on a frying pan-shaped lot incorporating the existing house on the property, and continuing the building line on the block. There will be no on-site parking (per variance received from Board of Zoning Adjustment), and no roof deck. We believe that this project will make a positive contribution to the 1200 block of Potomac Avenue, S.E. We have several suggestions that we believe would improve the project.

The project requires eight condensers, which, in earlier plans, appear in the panhandle and next to the building. At the request of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B, the applicant studied relocating all condensers to the roof of the building, to be accessed through a roof hatch. However, a sight-line study in the October 13 plans showed that the condensers on the roof would be visible from public space. We explored with the applicant the possibility of raising the parapet, which would have beneficial effects: (1) eliminating the visibility of the condensers on the roof, (2) accentuating the cornice, and (3) enhancing green space on the site. The applicant incorporated this suggestion (Option B) in the revised plans dated December 8, raising the parapet by three feet. The revised sightline study indicates that the condensers will not be visible from public space. The most recent plans show the higher cornice but with elongated windows on the third story, which appear out of scale with the other windows on the house, and the fenestration of other houses on the block. CHRS supports the higher cornice with uniform windows, or the applicant's suggestion of a 42-inch screen around the condensers. The applicant has changed the glass entrance door from a height of 7 feet to 8 feet, which better complements the windows.

HPO's guidelines on New Construction In Historic Districts describes the design principles to be followed for a new building to be compatible with neighboring buildings, including materials and color. The new building will have wood windows, and brick, compatible with other buildings on the block. The recessed soldier courses should create a pleasing shadow effect. However, the white brick may prove too glaring to be compatible, so we suggest that the applicant consider cream yellow, beige, or light brown brick.

We suggest that if HPRB approves this project, that the order require the applicant to eliminate the concrete driveway (excavating and removing all concrete) and to eliminate the existing curb cut on Potomac Avenue, SE. As HPRB pointed out in the hearing on this case in 2014, curb cuts are not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. In the current plans the curb cut remains and the driveway location appears as grass, and the existing fence across the front of the property would remain. However, this fence has an opening for access to the

driveway. In the future, if the curb cut remains in place, it would still be possible (and certainly tempting) for people to drive through the curb cut and park in the front yard on the grass.

We understand that neighbors favor having no openings on the west elevation in order to preserve their privacy. We agree that omitting openings on the west elevation is appropriate.

We believe that the project will be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our comments.