

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society  
before the DC Historic Preservation Review Board on August 3, 2017  
418-42- 7th Street, SE HPA 17-487**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. The committee reviewed the plans for the project dated, June 29, July 14, and July 17, 2017. (Another set of revised plans were submitted at the hearing; there was no opportunity to review these plans.) Weller and Repetti built these two contributing bayfront rowhouses, 17 x 35 feet, with doglegs, as part of a row at 414 to 426 7th Street, SE, on a single permit in 1889. They are contributing buildings. One house has a pyramidal bay cap. The houses at 400-426 7th Street and around the corner at 703-713 D Street, are nineteenth century brick rowhouses with doglegs largely intact.

Facade-ectomy

According to revised plans submitted at the hearing, the applicant proposes to retain party wall between the two houses, demolish the rear walls, and demolish all of the interior walls, and all staircases. According to the July 17 plans, the floor joists would remain. The plans submitted at the hearing may have changed the demolition plans. The plans call for reworking the interior spaces with new staircases, and new interior walls to create seven new units. These plans violate the prohibition against demolition in 10 DCMR 305.1(b): "The destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of a building, such as structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs." If these plans are approved, there will be virtually nothing left of the houses' original historic fabric, and this case would set a very dangerous precedent - that it is permissible to acquire two or more adjacent historic rowhouses and remove all the historic fabric except the front walls and the floor joists.

Preserving intact doglegs.

The plans call for infilling the doglegs. In 316 G Street, NE (HPA 17-227), the Board held that a dogleg on a block of nineteenth century rowhouses where the doglegs remained intact, should be preserved and not enclosed. The houses and their doglegs on this block are similarly intact, and should be preserved.

Non-traditional over-large carriage house (unit 8) and non-traditional circulation pattern

While there are some traditional elements to the "carriage house" (unit 8), its height (28 feet) and large footprint overwhelm the historic houses.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the elaborate ornament is out of step with traditional rear-of-lot buildings. Although the rear of 418 and 420 7th Street do not open onto an alley, unit 8 is sited behind these historic houses and for this reason we believe that HPO's *The DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey* provides useful guidance. Commercial garages, warehouses, and studios are simple utilitarian buildings, primarily one- and two-story stories; of the 42 warehouses identified, one is pictured at three stories, and one at four stories.

The warehouses found in D.C.'s alleys do not follow any prescribed building form, though some have similar features to stables, such as large first-story openings and loft doors. In general, all of the warehouses share brick as the common building material

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<sup>1</sup> As far as we know, the tallest structure on the rear of a lot that the Board has approved was 21.5 feet (231 10th Street, SE, HPA 16-209), and many approved projects were only 20 feet tall.

and offer an astylar, vernacular quality.  
*The DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey*, p. 33.

Sight-lines

As far as we can tell, the plans are still missing a sightline study for the house without the pyramidal bay cap (420 7th Street). There is a large gap (driveway) between 706 and 704 E Street, SE, which lines up with the backs of that row. We believe that the additions will likely be visible from this view point, which must be considered. It was not possible to evaluate any changes or additions in the plans shown at the hearing.

We believe that the project and subdivision is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our comments.