

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society
before the DC Historic Preservation Review Board on July 27, 2017
501 C Street, NE HPA 17-427**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. We reviewed the plans for the project dated June 5, and July 5, 2017 and plans dated July 27, 2017, received July 18, 2017. Thank you for letting us share our comments on this project.

The three-story brick masonry building was built in 1875-1876 as a residence in the Italianate style. Since then, the building has undergone several changes to the exterior, additions to the rear dating to the 1920s, and various uses. This building is prominently located across the street from Stanton Park on the corner of 5th and C Streets, NE – it is highly visible due to its architectural style and location.

This applicant plans to restore the windows and doors to more compatible Italianate details and proportions based on photographic evidence from 1959. The applicant also plans to rework interior walls to better suit the programmatic needs, add an elevator, redesign the existing one-story rear additions with a new façade. The restoration of the 1876 structure is commendable and will help ensure the architectural significance of the building for years to come. The June 5 plans show a dark contrasting color for the trim of the exterior, imitating the colors in the 1959 photo, and we suggested a lighter color to better showcase the ornate trim especially in the eaves and door surround. The revised plans shown at the hearing on June 22 adopted this suggestion. The June 5 plans showed the first-floor northwest corner with two brick-paneled blank windows; we suggested that the applicant rework these prominent windows as windows, to complete the symmetry of the corner at 5th and C Streets, NE, and the applicant also accepted this suggestion.

In June 2017, we had two primary concerns with the plans: the elevator addition and the roof-deck. We testified at the hearing on June 22, 2017 that these features were not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board directed that the elevator be placed inside the existing building and be reduced from three stories to two if possible, that the accessible area of the roof-deck should be reduced in size, and that the deck and pergola be pulled back from 5th Street. The Board directed the applicant to work with the community to refine the design, taking these concerns into account, and return to the Board, possibly on the consent calendar.

After the hearing, the applicant produced its studies of all possible ways to locate the elevator in the interior of the building, under the hip roof. At that time the applicant believed that each of these possibilities would result in destruction of some of the largely intact interior historic fabric (the applicant reports that all joists and rafters are original), including the ornamental stair in some cases, or necessitate building a second fire stair. The applicant states that project then architects re-measured the building, and now propose to locate the elevator inside and add a glass-enclosed exterior staircase. These design changes are very positive, and minimize the effects on the historic building. However, we agree with the staff report that the historic windows behind the exterior staircase be retained if possible, or if not, that the lintels be retained and a recessed infill be constructed.

The applicant has withdrawn the plans for a roof-deck or for any occupiable space over the additions.

We support the applicant's subdivision request.

We believe that this project is compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our comments.