

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society before the DC Historic Preservation
Review Board
HPA 15-065, 645 Maryland Avenue, NE**

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. The Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society met with the applicant and reviewed the revised plans for this project dated December 4, 2014. We offer the following comments:

In our prior comments and testimony, we questioned adding additional visible stories to a historic one-story commercial building. At the December 4, 2014 hearing, the HPRB indicated that an addition could be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, that the project can be a modern design, that the project as of that date was not compatible in terms of dimension or proportions, that the facade detail needed to be developed, and that more of the interior structure needed to be retained. Suggestions from individual HPRB members included possibly setting back the third story, (although setting back the entire addition another five feet (as in HPA 03-472) might not be the answer) and better relation to other buildings on Maryland Avenue.

The revised plans continue the 12.5-foot setback for the two-story addition. We would suggest setting back the addition another one to two feet, which would pull the addition back from the front wall of the adjacent rowhouses, and express deference toward them. The rear of the addition has been pulled back 17 feet, which reduces the massing, but not significantly. The articulation of the rear is more compatible.

In many respects, the revised plans are an improvement. In the front, the dark weathered zinc will look more like brick, which will help the addition to better relate to the brick houses on Maryland Avenue. The proposed changes in the proportions of the metal casement windows in front (quiet, simple punched windows) and the simplified metal cornice better complement the adjacent buildings. The third story windows in front will have a barrier (obscure glass guard) preventing occupants from exiting through a window. However, the windows on the second story, immediately above the roof of the original building, have no such barrier, enabling second story occupants to exit through those windows and use the garage roof as a roof deck. (These same obscure glass guards are used on similar windows on the rear.) Several members of the committee believe that this use (a new visible roof deck) is inappropriate. We also note that in a recent case involving a commercial building on 8th Street, SE, the Board required the applicant to significantly reduce the size and setback of a roof deck, in order to minimize visibility. Eighth Street is a commercial strip. Any roof deck equivalent on a residential block, such as Maryland Avenue, should be eliminated. See 530 8th Street, SE, HPA 14-707 (October 2014).

The applicant provided additional documentation of the interior and its condition, and plans to save some of the elements, including retaining the brick walls where feasible, repositioning the skylights and re-using salvaged materials.

Applicant states that the rooftop access cannot be seen from Maryland Avenue, and has re-measured, using the required six-foot height.

At the December 4, 2014 hearing, several neighbors testified in opposition to the project. We understand that the applicant has contacted neighbors concerning the revised plans, and that neighbors still have concerns about the project. Because their concerns are very important to CHRS, we urge the HPRB to continue to take into account neighbors' views on this project.

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

Thank you for considering our views.