TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY BEFORE THE DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD On the Proposed Beer Garden at 720 L Street SE (HPA #13-258) May 2, 2013

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. Thank you for letting us share our concerns about this project, which we don't consider compatible with the historic district even on a temporary basis. The featureless structure, open bar, food truck, and large open area with an array of umbrellas, lamps, and strings of lights hanging from a central metal pole do not seem well suited to the Capitol Hill Historic District. Although the drawings don't convey the combined effect of all these elements, the image they summon would not be compatible with the historic district. We're also concerned that the proposal does not seem to be within the spirit of Barracks Row Main Street as we understand it. Barracks Row is a major, recently revitalized commercial corridor in the Capitol Hill Historic District that extends from Pennsylvania Avenue to M Street SE. This site is prominently situated on Barracks Row, directly across the street from the Blue Castle, a major landmark.

Only two aspects of the proposal appear compatible with Capitol Hill: One, the structure's known materials – stucco exterior, ogee cornice, and standing-seam metal roof; and two, the open picket metal fence on two sides.

We have a number of concerns about the proposal.

- Regarding the structure, various parts of the plans do not comport with each other and left us unsure of what would be enclosed, or if so, how, or even what would have a roof over it. With no south elevation for the structure, we have no idea how the open bar would look. Commercial buildings on Barracks Row have windows on facades that face streets, but this building has none. Because of the inconsistencies and inadequacies of the drawings, and the nondescript, featureless appearance of the proposed structure, the Committee cannot support a building here at this time.
- The open metal fence with vertical pickets is an appropriate style for the historic district. To make the project a little more compatible, we suggest that it extend around all three open sides of the property. This would not only make the site more attractive, but would also help enhance the commercial corridor, which would be in keeping with the goals of Barracks Row Main Street.
- We're glad the driveway on the site would be crushed, compacted stone, since all of this is supposed to be temporary. The applicant has said the beer garden's flagstone terrace would be laid on crushed, compacted stone. Since that's not indicated in the drawings, it needs to be committed to.
- Regarding lighting, the height of the central pole from which the lights would be strung is not shown, and the light fixtures hanging from the arms of the perimeter light poles are not shown in the elevation drawings. The strings of lights are not like anything else in the historic district and are quite inappropriate as outdoor lighting.
- As for signage, there's no indication what kind is planned for the beer garden or where would it be located. We note that any and all signs need to comport with

- the city's sign regulations for historic districts, as well as the Barracks Row Main Street Sign Guidelines.
- Then there is what we think of as this project's inside-out model. Businesses in the historic district are self-contained within historic or compatible buildings. Some restaurants, including on Barracks Row, have a modest amount of additional sidewalk seating during warmer months. The beer garden as proposed turns this historic structure-and-setting pattern inside out, with the business primarily operating outside a windowless, featureless service structure. This is not compatible with any business corridors in the historic district in which the building on the property is on or very close to a public sidewalk. The only exceptions are on Massachusetts Avenue NE, where some restaurants are housed in historic buildings with fairly deep front yards that can accommodate some front patio seating.

We have many concerns about this project, which raises a number of compatibility issues. Structures and operations that start out as "temporary" often have a way of becoming permanent. The staff report indicates that this project could be in place for ten years or more, which does not meet our definition of temporary. We're seriously concerned that this outdoor operation would be a long-term fixture on this important corner. Little about this proposal fits with the historic district or Barracks Row in terms of design, structuring, or organization. The Committee does not consider the proposal compatible with the historic district and asks that it not be approved.