

**TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
BEFORE THE DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
On the Proposed Renovations and New Construction
at 3rd Street & Massachusetts Avenue NE (HPA #13-107)
May 2, 2013**

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. We appreciate this opportunity to share with you our thoughts and concerns about design details for the rowhouses and garage entrance, and new options for outside cafe seating on 3rd Street beside 236 Massachusetts. Overall, we're very happy with the direction the design is moving and believe the rowhouses will be real enhancements to the area. Simplification of the connecting garage entrance between the rowhouses and apartment building in response to your direction in March appears successful. The lattice screening gives the structure a bit more substance for the street elevation than the trellises did, but still maintains a garden-wall appearance and provides more privacy for people who will use the terrace behind it.

We initially had some concerns about mixing straight and curved lintels on individual rowhouses because that's fairly unusual in the historic district. However, the combination is seen, especially on some three-story rowhouses like these, so we're comfortable with them on these new rowhouses to whatever extent the Board deems appropriate.

Regarding the new concepts for outdoor cafe seating on 3rd Street, the Committee prefers Options B and D, i.e., those with the tables nearest to the sidewalk. They would enliven the streetscape more and are more in keeping with patterns of sidewalk café seating most prevalent in the historic district. These are seen, for instance, on Pennsylvania Avenue, 7th Street SE, and Barracks Row, where the seating is at sidewalk level, right along the sidewalk. A and C not only isolate diners from the sidewalk, but also appear to require more digging out beside the building to put the tables below grade. That seems contrary to the direction of the Board in March.

Of Options B and D, we view B as preferable because it leaves more of the berm in place, at least as perceived by passers-by, and maintains the length of the at-grade planter beside the diners. This strikes us as keeping more of the sense of the green berm's surface and retains the feel of its topography – though admittedly at the expense of the retaining wall. Option D, on the other hand, breaks up the line of the planter and would require removing more of the berm for the steps down from the sidewalk.

We recognize the challenges in weighing the pros and cons of these options, both vis a vis each other and in terms of how they measure up to the Board's guidelines. The Committee feels some flexibility may perhaps be possible here in order to enliven the intersection with visible café seating without sacrificing an unacceptable amount of berm.