

**TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
BEFORE THE DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
On the Proposed Car Barn at Spingarn High School (HPA # 13-004)
May 2, 2013**

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. Very little additional information was provided in advance of this hearing, so we had little new to respond to. The PowerPoint images showed poles, but not the full range of wires and connections, again leaving the overhead catenary system entirely to the imagination. We remain very concerned that once the car barn, power substation, tracks, and yard complex with poles and overhead wires are all in place, they will dominate the view, which is now all green campus, while leaving very little green in place and obscuring much of what remains. This would adversely impact not only the educational campus, but also the historic Langston Golf Course and the eastern viewshed of the historic Langston Terrace Dwellings. We appreciate the planned use of turf block in the yard area north of the car barn. To further help mitigate the loss of open green space, especially from Benning Road, we ask that turf block also be used in the yard area west of the car barn where streetcars will enter and exit the facility, so that it will look similar to the photos shown on the left side of page 13 in the February 2013 submission.

We understand it's a huge challenge to design what's basically an industrial-type complex that needs to be compatible with and maintain significant characteristics of a Colonial Revival scholastic building and its grounds. However, in choosing to locate the car barn on an academic campus, DDOT took on this challenge and needs to rise to it. As the design team continues to develop the design of the structure in response to the Board's comments, we recommend taking a fresh look at Spingarn for architectural clues, motifs, rhythms, and elements and then finding creative ways to integrate more of them into the design so the car barn will look like it belongs there. When the Committee looked at the February plans, we thought the two proposed north facades came closest to being compatible. We suggest they might provide another point of reference for bringing the other facades more into harmony with Spingarn. We also recommend that the brick box housing the power substation be given some design attention and softening.

DDOT said in its presentation that the goal for the car barn is "to minimize roof area in order to maintain campus views and sense of open space." We appreciate that goal and look forward to seeing how it will be implemented.

Meanwhile, we understand that this facility needs to accommodate the imminent needs of the H Street/Benning Road streetcar line, which we're told would need six cars. However, we're not convinced that this facility has to accommodate streetcar storage for additional lines that will be built later to the east. Such additional storage should be provided for up front when planning these new lines and then be constructed along with the new lines. It's bad enough to inflict this facility on Spingarn for the first streetcar line because of earlier planning failures, and it should be no bigger than necessary to serve this initial line. We've been given no compelling reason why storage for new lines cannot be located in areas served by those new lines. Accordingly, we do not yet consider site development-related aspects of the car barn design sufficiently consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.