

**TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY  
BEFORE THE DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
On the Proposed Alterations and New Construction at 541 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SE  
March 28, 2013**

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. We're delighted to see this unique rowhouse renovated and commend the applicant for his commitment to restore the existing historic windows and front door and to take appropriate measures to repair and/or replace existing wood siding.

Given the existing pitched roof and large front gable, we think a rear 3<sup>rd</sup>-story addition is acceptable for this house, since it should not be visible from 7<sup>th</sup> Street. As for possible visibility from G Street, this can be studied and addressed with staff – very quickly, before the trees leaf out. Using synthetic slate shingles on the addition's sides to echo the lovely decorative slate roofing on the front gable is a nice way to tie the house's materials together.

However, a couple of issues regarding the addition should be restudied and addressed. One, the roof of the addition slopes up toward the rear, which is quite unusual in the Capitol Hill Historic District, where most "flat" roofs slope down toward the back, including on rear additions. This makes the addition inconsistent with prevailing rear roof forms in the historic district and maximizes the visual mass and impact of what should be a secondary and subordinate elevation. Since this addition would be quite visible from the public alley and unlike anything else in the row, we suggest that the roof instead slope down toward the back to reduce its profile and make it more compatible with rear additions and forms on the Hill. As the staff report points out, this kind of modification was done successfully with a similar proposed rear roof form last month at 820 C Street SE.

Second, the Committee feels there is way too much glass on the back of the house, which again is inconsistent with historic patterns on the Hill, where fenestration is typically punched into an exterior wall rather than comprising virtually all of the façade. The back elevation is overwhelmingly glass, with the glass-to-wood-siding ratio probably in the vicinity of 2:1. A better and more compatible balance between glass and wall would make this addition fit in more comfortably. We're less concerned about the amount of glass on the ground floor, since it won't be visible from the alley, but the top two floors will be. Lowering the height of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at the rear would help reduce the amount of glass, as well as the addition's profile. Also, bringing some wood siding up into the 3<sup>rd</sup> level could reduce the huge expanse of glass and give the windows a framework of some kind.