

TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
On the Proposed New Construction at 820 C Street SE (HPA#12-615)
February 28, 2013

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. This has the potential to be a good infill project, and we commend the applicant for proposing to build a 2-story-with-basement rowhouse that respects the prevailing height and rowhouse forms on this block. We appreciate that all facades will be brick, which is an appropriate material in the historic district and compatible with many of the historic houses on the block. Likewise, the precast concrete coursing and lintels echo nearby decorative elements, as do the front metal steps, landing, and railings. We note, however that the railings shown may not meet present code, so their design can be determined in consultation with staff.

We also find the cornice and brick corbelling shown in the most recent renderings to be compatible with the historic district and appropriate for the style the new rowhouse references. We defer to the Board and HPO staff for any additional detailing recommendations.

We're not clear what material is being proposed for the basement level of the new rowhouse. The Committee reviewed plans showing brick, while the most recent plans we've seen show stucco in the drawings but brick in the renderings. The Committee prefers brick as being more compatible with the adjacent houses and others on the block. If the Board feels stucco is a more appropriate choice, the installation should be handled very carefully according to staff recommendations so the stucco doesn't start deteriorating in a few years.

Similarly, we aren't clear what material is being proposed for the recesses beneath the windows in the dogleg and on the rear. Plans the Committee considered at its meeting specified brick. However, the most recent drawings and renderings we've seen appear to be precast concrete, though the material is not specified, and the staff report also mentions concrete. The Committee prefers brick recesses because they will call less attention to themselves while still providing some decorative relief to the east and rear facades.

We were happy to see the meters located under the front steps and understand that the location of mechanical equipment is still under discussion. Needless to say, we would not want it to be visible from either C or 9th Streets and rely on staff to work out with the applicant and neighbors the most unobtrusive location possible.

Because so much information was missing when the Committee met, we asked in our initial comments for another opportunity to review this project. However, later drawings and renderings have provided much of the information we requested. Therefore, we're comfortable with the staff recommendation and its conditions.