

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society before the DC
Historic Preservation Review Board
HPA 14-435 1229 E Street, SE**
September 18, 2014

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. Thank you for letting us share our views on this project.

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) opposes this application for a permit to raze the building at 1229 E Street, SE. This building, an example of a shotgun house (a vernacular building tracing its origins to many areas including New Orleans, Haiti, and Africa), is one of only two shotgun houses in the Capitol Hill Historic District. Our letter to the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) dated June 18, 2014 describes the architectural significance of this building, and the applicant's demolition by neglect and repeated disregard, over a period of years, of directions from HPRB and Board of Condemnation of Insanitary Buildings to stabilize the building. Some of the regulatory history of this building includes:

In 2002 the applicant sought a permit from HPRB to raze the building. After staff, the HPO inspector and DCRA's chief building inspector inspected the building, the staff report concluded based on its inspection and multiple photographs entered into the record that 1229 E Street, SE was in a deteriorated but salvageable condition. HPRB recommended that no raze permit be issued for 1229 E Street, SE.

In 2003, the HPRB heard a case on potential demolition by neglect concerning this building. The staff report noted "continuing deterioration of roof, wall, and floor framing members, structural failure of the rear porch which is pulling away from the building, holes and leaks in the roof, bowing ceilings, rotted floor joists, broken window glass, and loose board trim on the front facade." The staff stated that the condition of the building violated at a minimum DC Code § 6-1104.01(a)(2), (3), (4), (5), and (6). HPRB recommended that:

- (1) the Mayor's Agent officially determine that, based on the record and advice of the HPRB, that this building is threatened by demolition by neglect,
- (2) that the Mayor's Agent notify the owner of this action, and
- (3) that the Mayor's Agent proceed with all appropriate action under the Act, including, if necessary, seeking an order from the DC Superior Court to prevent demolition by neglect.

In March 2004 the Board of Condemnation of Insanitary Buildings (BCIB) found that "the continuing damage and decay to the ... property must be halted." Accordingly, on March 24, 2004, the BCIB ordered that 1229 E Street, SE be rendered sanitary, and in particular, that the following checklist was to be completed and verified by inspectors: major structural components (roof, floors, walls) to substantially comply with the DC Building Code; removing trash and debris from the interior of the building; rat bait the first floor and basement and treat for vermin as needed; cap the main sewer line below all

fixtures; repair and/or replace roof; install and/or repair gutters and downspouts, including as needed, waterproof treatment of fascia boards; correct as needed, the drainage pattern of the cited lot and clean and remove all trash, debris and unlawful weeds; barricade all doors, windows and other openings with 1/2 inch exterior grade plywood; raze and remove rear porch; repaint and foundation walls. All items were to be performed by the owner. (BCIB Case 00-125). To the best of our knowledge, this work was not completed.

In 2009, applicants sought to retain the two-room front section of the building, and incorporate the shotgun house into a new construction project. The staff believed that the original block of the building was salvageable. The staff report stated that "[d]ecades of vacancy, poor maintenance and unrealized improvements to the property have been frustrating for the neighbors on the block and for the community as a whole and the house has likewise suffered due to neglect." The staff recommended that HPRB approve the amount of demolition proposed, and the basic height, massing and visual connection between the new construction and the remaining portion of the historic house, and that the applicants continue development of the plans, and consider reducing the size of the new addition. The project was not built. (HPA 09-934, Feb. 25, 2009).

Applicant has failed to keep the building in good repair and has shown a pattern of delay in complying with the recommendations of the HPRB and the order of BCIB. Applicant has engaged in demolition by neglect, contrary to the Act.

In 2014, HPO staff and DCRA officials inspected the building and concluded that although the building is deteriorated, it is salvageable. We agree with the recommendations in the staff report.

- (1) We urge the HPRB to find that applicant has engaged in demolition by neglect with respect to the building at 1229 E Street, SE.
- (2) We urge the HPRB to affirm that the building at 1229 E Street, SE contributes to the character of the Capitol Hill Historic District, that the building retains its historic integrity, and that the HPRB recommend to the Mayor's Agent that the application for a raze permit be denied because it is inconsistent with the purposes of the Act.

Thank you for considering our views.