

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society  
before the DC Preservation Review Board on April 27, 2017  
602 E St SE (HPA 17-295)**

My name is Alison Ross and I am a member of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. I am testifying on their behalf. Thank you for letting us share our views on this project at 602 E St SE.

We met with the applicant, the project architect and two neighbors, and reviewed the plans for the project dated February 9, April 4, and April 12, 2017. The April 12 plans greatly improve on the earlier plans.

The house on E Street is a contributing brick bay front, with two stories and a raised basement and basement entrance. It was built in 1882 for owner George E. Emmons, by Robert Barr and designed by an architect named Dutton. The building currently has three residential units, which would be retained. The lot's configuration is unusual: it faces E Street and South Carolina Avenue, SE, a major street. Three contributing brick buildings, 603, 605, and 607 South Carolina, are adjacent to the lot on the northeast side, and on the west side, the garage for 600 South Carolina. The lot's South Carolina side is currently vacant.

We commend the applicant on many aspects of this design. The applicant plans to restore the windows in the front elevation in kind. Several inappropriate alterations were previously made to the front exterior, which will be corrected: including removing the inappropriate deteriorating federal-style pediment and door. The applicant plans to restore the transom, and replace the door with an appropriate two-leaf door. The house originally had cast iron steps with a tulip pattern on the riser, a pattern found on many 19th century Capitol Hill houses. Inappropriate repairs were made to the lower half of the staircase and the applicant plans to restore the non-original elements with tulip risers and repair the stairs. The electric meters will be installed under the front stairs, and will be largely hidden, a positive feature.

The most recent plan revision – dated 4/12 – now shows a 42” iron fence instead of a seven-foot high wood fence facing South Carolina Avenue on the rear property line next to the façade of 603 South Carolina. CHRS appreciates that the applicant made this change on our request, however our request was based on a misunderstanding of the original plans. We had been under the impression that the seven-foot high privacy fence was to abut the sidewalk, not sit on the same plane as the adjacent house some thirty feet back as we now understand had been intended. CHRS has no objection to a privacy fence separating the ‘parked’ back yard and the property’s private back yard. We would, however, like to maintain the standard 42” iron-fence detail at the sidewalk. The current plans do not have any details of landscaping or fencing for the ‘parked’ back yard.

One of our concerns about the proposed project is that extensive interior demolition is planned, including removal of supporting walls and a staircase, which appears to violate 10 DCMR 305.1(b).

We also do not know if the applicant has succeeded in contacting the adjacent owner of 600 E Street, SE. Neighbors on the other side pointed out that between 600 and 602 E Street there is a now a view through to 6th Street and Marion Park. The applicant's rear addition would destroy this view shed. To preserve the view shed, we suggested an alternative – that the applicant consider reconfiguring the 602 E Street from three units to two, omit the rear addition, and build a new house fronting on South Carolina Avenue to complete the row. Our subsequent comments however, relate to the current plans.

As proposed, the applicant's plans show the rear addition would be built along the 604 E Street side only. A section of the addition's east elevation, roughly 4 feet, is visible from nearby rear yards. It was planned to be CMU and has been changed to brick, an improvement. The rear elevation of the new addition, visible from South Carolina Avenue, has one-over-one windows. The windows on the rear elevation are spaced around mechanical vents, awkwardly pushing them to the edges of the wall.

The current plans show hardi-plank siding for the rear addition. CHRS believes it should be brick. While siding would clearly denote the new addition from the historic building, and may be appropriate for an addition facing a rear yard, it is inappropriate for this elevation facing South Carolina Avenue. This is an unusually configured lot fronting a street and an avenue where the proposed rear addition will also be quite visible from across Marion Park and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. CHRS views the current building to have equally visible front, rear, and side elevations. According to the DC Historic Preservation Guidelines for Additions to Historic Buildings, new side and rear additions when visible from the public street should be, "Compatible with the design of the rear elevation of the existing building...without duplicating it." From Marion Park, the large volume of the proposed painted siding would call more attention to itself than a brick volume that fades into the brick expanse of the adjacent 603 South Carolina. Brick can be used for the exterior of the rear addition and still read as new through brick bond detail or if left unpainted through contrast with the painted historic brick building.

In sum, the exterior on the north and west elevations should be reworked in brick and the window spacing should be reconsidered, to create an elevation compatible with the nearby 19th century rowhouses. We believe that with these improvements to the highly visible rear addition the project would be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. Thank you for letting us share our views on this project.