

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society
before the DC Preservation Review Board on May 31, 2018
732 4th Street, NE HPA 18-248**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. Thank you for letting us share our views on this project. In January 2017, HPA 17-129, the Board reviewed a proposal to construct a popup at this address, and unanimously ruled that the project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District because the proposed third story addition was very visible from public space.

732 4th Street, NE is a brick bayfront rowhouse, one of eight (718 - 732 4th Street, NE) developed by the well-known Capitol Hill builder, Diller B. Groff (1841-1910). The house at 732 4th Street was built in 1889, within the period of significance for Capitol Hill and is a contributing building. Although not well maintained, 732 4th Street retains its architectural and structural integrity. This house is within the Capitol Hill Historic District, part of the "Swampoodle" extension to the historic district approved by HPRB on May 28, 2015 (Case 15-01). The staff report for the Swampoodle extension to the historic district states:

Architecturally, the rowhouses in the expanded area provide an illustration of the building typology from the earliest, two-story flat-fronted examples of the 1880s whose ornamentation is limited to corbelled cornices and molded window hoods, to more exuberant Queen Anne examples from the 1890s, replete with double-height polygonal bays and towers capped by projecting gables, pediments and conical roofs, and featuring integrated brickwork, decorative panels, brick belt-coursing, rusticated sills and lintels, and other ornamental features such as finials and iron cresting. ... The major builders and architects of the nineteenth and twentieth-century rowhouses are the same as those found elsewhere in Capitol Hill and throughout the city, including developers John H. Sherman, John Davidson, Diller B. Groff, and Herman Howenstein, and architects, T.F. Schneider, B. Stanley Simmons, George S. Cooper, Frederick G. Atkinson and others.

732 4th Street is an example of the double-height polygonal bay/Queen Anne houses that distinguish the Swampoodle extension, a portion of Square 777, including 732 4th Street and the other rowhouses on the west side of 4th Street. In 2014, before the effective date of the historic district extension, the owners of 726 and 728 received building permits for popups.¹ Figures 1 and 2 show current street views.

Other key points

1. Enclosing the character-defining dogleg

According to the site plan, the dogleg will be enclosed. Doglegs are a character-defining feature of Capitol Hill houses, and after a change in zoning rules, doglegs no longer need to be filled in. This dogleg should be preserved. The two row houses with popups built before the

¹ 726 and 728 4th Street, NE have mansard popups, built before the effective date of the historic district extension in 2015. See alteration permits issued for 726 4th Street, NE on 7 July 2014 (B1409663); 728 4th Street, NE, on 21 Oct. 2014 (B1500753).

effective date of the historic district extension in 2015 (728 and 726 4th Street, NE) , also enclosed the dogleg. 730 and 732 4th Street retain the original footprint and dogleg. (The dogleg at 720 4th Street has been enclosed, and this also appears to have occurred before the effective date of the historic district.) The Board has acted to protect doglegs, particularly in situations where there is an intact row of doglegs.² Here, the doglegs were interrupted by pre-historic district additions, but only three of the doglegs in this row have been enclosed, so the row of doglegs is primarily intact. Applicants should not be allowed to bootstrap on the destruction of character-defining features predating historic district protection.

2. Visibility of third-story addition from public space

Earlier we questioned whether, on A0300, the roof balcony area with human figure accurately reflects the dimensions shown in the other plan, including A0201. The building section is helpful in addressing this question, but the dimensions look very tight. If HPRB grants concept approval, we suggest HPO staff conduct a visual test of the third story and roof deck if/when the height dimensions change as the project progresses from concept proposal to permit documents. We support the staff's recommendations.

We believe that with the exception of enclosing the dogleg, the project is compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our views.

² See another Swampoodle case, 316 G Street, NE, HPA 17-227.