

**TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
BEFORE THE DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
On the Proposed West Addition at Stuart Hobson Middle School
March 7, 2013**

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. We appreciate this opportunity to respond to revised plans for Stuart Hobson's new west addition. In testimony here last December, I reported that the Committee supports the addition's size, height, massing, scale, and footprint but opposed its design because it was incompatible with and not adequately deferential to the historic portion of the school.

It would be difficult to overemphasize how much the Committee hoped to see a revised design in January that better reflected the historic school's character-defining elements, materials, lines, and motifs and would look more at home on the building and in the historic district. And it would be difficult to overemphasize how disappointed we were to see only a couple of changes that improved the design to some extent but did not go far enough to adequately address our concerns.

For instance, the pane arrangements in the addition's punched window openings now match each other, providing a regularity of pane configuration somewhat evocative of that in the historic school's fenestration. Positioning of the frosted glass within these windows has also been made more congruent, which further helped to make the fenestration seem less random. Too, the patterns of the panes are now more consistent with the large vertical windows which turn the northwest corner.

Also, changing the material below the watertable to polished stone similar in color to the exterior material above may give the addition the appearance of having a stronger base element. However, it does not address concerns about the addition's dominant light color that were expressed in December by both HPRB and CHRS. Also, deleting the horizontal gray watertable band to provide for this new base removed a material in the addition that reflected a material and color in the west façade of the historic school, which reduced compatibility.

While we appreciate the design team's efforts so far to address some of the issues we raised, we still have not seen enough responsiveness to our concerns regarding compatibility with the original school and historic district to win our support for the design. Also, the addition still calls too much attention to itself to be sufficiently deferential and subordinate to the historic school, with which it has little in common.

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society wholeheartedly supports the school's renovation and the new Arts Integration and Museum Program for which this addition is being built. The CHRS Historic Preservation Committee has worked with the school's design team since last fall to try to achieve a design that's compatible with the historic school and historic district. While each set of revisions has improved the design, the Committee still cannot support it, and after three rounds of consultation, we didn't know quite what to do. Therefore, we've chosen to defer to the judgment of HPRB as to whether the design before it today is consistent with the purposes of the city's historic preservation law.