

TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
On the Proposed Rooftop Addition at 426 11th Street SE (HPA#12-560)
February 28, 2013

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. We appreciate the efforts made by the applicants and their architect to design a 3rd-floor addition to their historic 2-story, frame house that is sensitive to the character of the Capitol Hill Historic District. The slope of the forward-most front roof over the staircase, for instance, reflects an intention to reduce visibility from the street. However, having viewed the house with a sketchy and non-definitive mock-up in place, we've ascertained that the addition as designed and placed will be visible from public space on both sides of 11th Street and from the wide public alley behind the house. We recognize that the side court is a major reason the addition can be seen from 11th Street, but visibility is inherently something that must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis because of variables such as an individual structure's location, configuration, relationship to its neighbors, and placement in a block. This 3rd-floor addition would be near the middle of a row of six 2-story rowhouses, making it a visual anomaly on the streetscape.

The Committee does not rule out the possibility that a 3rd-floor addition on this rowhouse could be acceptable if it were to be thoughtfully designed and placed out of sight from 11th Street. However, we have very serious concerns about this addition as proposed because it would be visible from public space. Accordingly, we recommend that if the Board decides a rooftop addition would be appropriate on this house *and* the applicants pursue such an addition, they revisit the size, scale, materials, design, and positioning to find ways to minimize the addition as much as possible so it's imperceptible from public space. It would also need to relate better in the rear to both the house it would sit on as well as to its neighbors. Further, an addition should be more compatible with the very charming rowhouse. As designed, it doesn't appear to quite "belong" on this lovely 1883 structure.

The excellent staff report articulates the numerous preservation concerns and design challenges presented by this proposal and details some measures that might make a rooftop addition work here. The CHRS Preservation Committee fully supports the staff recommendations.