

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society
before the DC Historic Preservation Review Board on December 5, 2019
1355 A Street, NE HPA 19-608**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. Thank you for considering our views. The Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee reviewed the plans for the project dated September 27, and November 12, 2019. This brick porch-front rowhouse, a contributing building, is one of 10 built in 1916 by H.R. Howenstein, a prolific Capitol Hill builder.¹

The addition will not be visible from the street.

Infilling dogleg

The plan to infill the dogleg is the primary issue in this case. A perennial problem for rowhouse builders is maximizing natural light inside a rowhouse. Doglegs are character-defining features of Capitol Hill rowhouses because they allow additional natural light to enter the rowhouse, not just from the front and rear, but from the side. Mirror-image doglegs facing each other in adjoining rowhouses, such as this one, add even more natural light to both rowhouses. The rhythm of doglegs, viewed from the rear, is a pleasant pattern. Because these are two-story houses, sometimes the pattern is easily seen from the alley, at other times, it appears from oblique angles.

The applicant plans to infill the dogleg, which would be the first infill in this intact row of doglegs. In 316 G Street, NE (HPA 17-22) the applicant sought to infill a mirror-image dogleg, one of 14 intact doglegs on that street. The Board asked that "the applicant better maintain the existing dog-leg." In contrast, in 732 4th Street, NE (HPA 18-248), three doglegs had already been infilled, and infilling a fourth was allowed. Based on these precedents, this dogleg should be retained.

Other issues

The plans call for a new basement entry to a one-bedroom apartment, which appear to comply with HPRB's *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*.

The existing garage would be demolished and replaced by a larger two-story garage spanning the property lines. The fenestration and doors on both elevations are appropriate, as is the cement board siding for the alley and rear yard elevations. The garage would be 20-feet tall, as allowed by HPRB guidelines. We believe that with change to the alley elevation, the new garage could become compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

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

Thank you for considering our comments.

¹ DC Building permit # 5506 (14 June 1916).

