

Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society
before the DC Historic Preservation Review Board on September 26, 2019
142 D Street, SE HPA 19-329

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. Thank you for considering our views. We reviewed the plans for the project dated April 2019.

This two-story two-bay brick rowhouse (one of four) was designed and built in 1885 by Samuel Norment.¹ The house is 12 feet wide and 30 feet deep, and has a dogleg. It is a contributing building. The applicant plans no changes to the front elevation, and proposes to build a third story addition with a mansard roof and dormer, to match 140 D Street, SE; the addition would extend 20 feet beyond the rear wall of one of the adjacent houses. This project raises three issues:

- 1) An addition should be subordinate to the historic fabric. According to the applicants' information, the footprint of the historic house is 521 square feet, and two stories. (1,042 square feet). The new proposed footprint is 716 square feet, and three stories (2,148 square feet) minus 1,042 square feet of historic fabric, for an increase of 1,106 square feet, and exceeding 1,042 square feet. Therefore, the addition is not subordinate.
- 2) The third story addition should not be visible from public space. HPO, *Additions to Historic Buildings*, 13. The applicants plan to match the design and setback of the third story addition at 140 D Street, SE, which we believe is visible from public space; the applicants understand that this addition was built, and approved by HPRB in approximately 2000. Because HPRB's website shows no HPA for 140 D Street, S, we could not research the history of that addition.
- 3) Doglegs are character-defining features of Capitol Hill rowhouses, and doglegs in an intact row, such as this one, should be preserved. See map of Square 733, attached. Infilling the dogleg, especially for 20 feet, eliminates this important landscape feature and would also significantly reduce the natural light entering the adjacent building.

The fenestration on the rear elevation could be improved by enlarging the windows. Additional information would be helpful in order to further evaluate the project:

- Photograph of the front and rear elevations
- Drawings showing the context of the project
- A sightline drawing

Although not a historic preservation issue, we urge that the mature trees be protected. Views of neighbors are important and we would like to see information on this topic. We understand

¹ DC Building permit # 392 (23 Aug. 1885).

that this project will be reviewed by the Fine Arts Commission, and will also require zoning relief.

We believe that at this time, this project is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Beth Purcell

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Chair, Historic Preservation Committee
Capitol Hill Restoration Society