

Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society HPA 22-245

Before the DC Historic Preservation Review Board on March 3, 2022

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee.

This two-story semi-detached frame house (528 4th St. SE) was built in 1874 or earlier. It is a contributing building.

The applicant proposes removal of the existing aluminum siding and replacement with 7" smooth, pre-painted hardi-plank siding. We agree that while the use of hardi-plank siding might be problematic, a typical smooth lapped cedar siding with a nominal dimension of 1/2" by six inches has an actual dimension of about 3/8" by 5 1/2," nearly identical to hardi-plank. We do not oppose the use of modern, durable materials that closely replicate original materials. It is important to recognize that old growth building materials are no longer available and that in many instances modern materials should be employed, as the Board has permitted with windows.

The HPO guidelines recommend removal of non-original wall coverings to determine the condition and design of the original wall. The owner represents that the original siding was previously removed and that there is no record describing the prior, original siding. We urged the applicant to conduct additional research including selective removal of a portion of the front facade covering to verify that representation and discover the original siding.

At a minimum, the exposure dimension of the lapped siding should replicate the original or those typical of Italianate cottages. The proposed 7" hardi-plank will leave a 5 - 5.5" exposure of the lapped siding - perhaps a bit too much for an Italianate cottage. We agree with the staff report on this point.

While we believe that the proposal is generally compatible, we also believe that additional information should be provided.

We believe that this project may be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. We recommend additional research and analysis of the dimensions of the lapped siding, corner trim, and window trim.

Thank you for considering our comments.