

**Testimony of the
Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society
before the DC Historic Preservation Review Board
639 A Street, SE HPA 23-319
June 1, 2022**

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

HPA 22-277, May 2022

This two-story two-bay porch-front frame house, apparently one of a pair, was built in 1874 or earlier. It is a contributing building. In May 2022, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee reviewed the plans for the project dated April 20, 2022. The plans called a rear and side addition, and for infilling the dogleg. In our comments we noted that the tests for retaining doglegs in 1108 Constitution Avenue, NE (HPA 22-173) were not met. CHRS supported the project.

The staff report recommended approval, stating:

Proposal Both a rear and side addition are proposed. The side infill is set back twelve feet from the front of the house. The rear addition would be full-width and extend back about ten feet. The side and rear addition will be clad in Hardi plank siding and trim. The new two-story garage would be about twenty feet wide, thirty-five feet deep, and twenty feet tall. The garage would be clad in brick on all elevations. At the alley-facing elevation, the first story would be dominated by a garage door paired with a pedestrian door under a brick rowlock header. The second story would have asymmetrical fenestration with two ganged windows and one standalone two-over-two window under brick rowlock headers with brick sills. The cornice would be made of Azek.

Evaluation There will be some visibility of the side addition, but the deep setback ensures that it will feel secondary to the main block of the building. The scale, materials, and design of the two-story garage are compatible with this historic district and in line with many previous approvals.

In May 2022 the Board approved 639 A Street SE, HPA 22-277, on consent: concept/two story rear addition, replace garage with two-story carriage house.

On March 17, 2023 a stop work order was issued for work exceeding the scope of the permit. As of April 12, 2023, DOB/SCOUT shows:
“4-12-23 Applicant Is Making Permit Application To Reconstruct Of The Building, After ESP Demo. SWO Re: Demolishing Entire House (Only Facade Remains), Garage, And Excavation Work.”

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The applicant proposes to remove and rebuild the dogleg wall, and to remove and replace the existing second floor and roof framing. The plans are essentially the same as the plans that the Board approved in 2022. We agree with the staff that demolition has occurred, and that the project is compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our comments.