

**Testimony of the Historic Preservation Committee of the  
Capitol Hill Restoration Society  
647 G Street, SE HPA 23-096  
March 23, 2023**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. We reviewed the plans posted November 21, 2022, February 3, 2023, and March 2023. This two-story angled bay brick rowhouse with basement and areaway was designed by C.E. Webb and built by Hutchinson & Harbin for owner Faust A. Ambrosi in 1908. This is a contributing building.

The applicant originally planned to expand the building by excavating a new level below existing basement, renovating the interior, and adding a small rear extension. The single-family house would be converted into five units: Basement/cellar: unit 1, wheelchair accessible; First floor: units 2 and 3; Second floor: unit 4; Third floor: unit 5. (November 2022 plans). The March 2023 plans show four units.

At the hearing on December 15, 2022, the Board concluded:

The Board found the extent of demolition to be inconsistent with its regulations and the proposed areaway to be incompatible with its guidelines and the Capitol Hill Historic District. Vote: 5-0.

The applicant's February 2023 plans eliminated the expanded areaway but the demolition plans appeared unchanged from the November 2022 plans. We argued that the applicant had failed to comply with the Board's December 15 order. At the February 23, 2023 hearing the Board stated:

The Board did not vote on the project but expressed concern over the extent of interior structural framing demolition and the lack of clear information on that subject. The applicant was encouraged to develop clear plans showing the extent of structural removal and areas of joists proposed to be retained versus replaced, and return for further review when ready.

The new floor plans would allow them to retain the existing stair and floor joists up to the start of the dogleg. Although the applicant's March 2023 plans include demolition, issues remain. The regulations at 10 DCMR 305 set out the

permit requirements for demolition. We believe that the plans call for extensive demolition. The following definition applies to this project:

10 DCMR 305.1 (b)

- **The removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of the building, such as structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs**

There is no practical way to remove the dogleg walls and retain the existing floor joists or roof framing. The statement on H014 directing the contractor to provide temporary support is not practical - it is downright dangerous to provide that kind of support and excavate a new cellar level. H014. The applicant should admit that the dogleg area will be demolished in its entirety, but the redesigned the floor plans to allow retention of the other floor plates.

10 DCMR 305.2 provides:

In general, the determination whether a proposal involves destruction of a building "in significant part" shall depend on the extent to which character-defining historic features, historic or structural integrity, historic materials, or ability to convey historic significance would be lost. This decision shall depend on all the facts and circumstances of the case.

The dimensions of the historic house are approximately 54 feet long by 18 feet wide. On the first, second and third floors the plans call for demolishing 26 feet of the side wall, 12 feet of the rear wall, and the dogleg wall on the second and third floor. H006. We believe that the current plans call for “destruction of a building in significant part’.” 10 DCMR 305.2.

If the Board does grant concept approval, we request that the Board also direct the applicant to submit detailed plans for underpinning, particularly protecting the adjoining structures during demolition and construction.

The March 2023 plans somewhat improve the cellar-level unit: Instead of three bathrooms, one bedroom, and three windowless dens, the new proposal is for one bedroom, one windowless den, two bathrooms and a kitchen.

We believe that at this time, based on substantial demolition planned, this project is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our comments.