CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
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BZA No. 16709
301 3rd Street, SE
Square 763, Lot 834
Zone: R-4
Hearing Date: 06/12/01

D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
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June 8, 2001

Board of Zoning Adjustment,
Room 210
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society SUPPORTS the above referenced application.

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society is a civic association representing 1,000 members. . The subject premises are located within the Society's interest district as defined in its bylaws, and in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

The Zoning Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society considered the application on June 6, 2001. A quorum was present. The applicants were present, as was their architect, Mr. Jerald Clark.

The application.

This application involves the property at the southwest corner of 3rd and C Streets, SE. It has the appearance of two 2-story houses extending for 50 feet along C Street. In fact, the houses have been combined into one dwelling and occupied as a flat, with one unit on each floor. Combining what were previously two houses and reconfiguring them as a flat required internal arrangements that do not use the space well. An additional complication arises because the portion of the structure nearest to 3rd Street was used as a store, has no plumbing, and is not accessible from below, making installation of plumbing very difficult. Applicants have developed plans for a proposed addition that will use the plumbing lines available in the portion that is further from 3rd Street. Although we refer to the property as 301 3rd Street, it eventually will carry a C Street address because the principal entrance will be located there. (We will refer to the property as 301 3rd Street while keeping in mind that the rear yard is behind the C Street frontage.)

The property has a 15-foot rear yard that abuts a dwelling at 305 3rd Street. The property at 305 3rd Street is described in the tax rolls as "semi-detached," and it presents that appearance, with windows on three sides, including a number facing the rear yard of 301 3rd Street. However, 305 3rd Street does not seem to have a side yard, which is the distinguishing characteristic of semi-detached dwellings.

Applicants propose a two-story addition set back from 3rd Street that will fill about half of the rear yard. Four variances are required:

Side yard (§ 405): The existing 4-foot side yard will be eliminated by the proposed addition.
Rear Yard (§ 404): The rear yard will no longer extend the width of the lot because the addition will cover about half of it. What remains will be an open court, not a rear yard.
Lot Occupancy (§ 403): Lot occupancy will increase to 73 percent; only 60 percent is allowed.
Addition to a nonconforming building (§ 2001.3).

BZA
Case No. 16709
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16709
EXHIBIT NO.31

Discussion.

We believe that the applicants meet the three-pronged test for the variances sought.

(1) The premises are unique: The unusual size and shape of the premises, a long, narrow corner building on a long, narrow lot is inherited from its original use as a store with living quarters attached.
(2) Practical difficulty: This building is not especially small, but is poorly arranged. It would be difficult to remodel the building for single-family use without some kind of addition.
(3) Zone plan will not be substantially impaired. The applicants propose an addition that is set back from 3rd Street. The addition will have some adverse effect on the rear yard of 305 3rd Street. Because the addition will be north of the yard for 305, it will have little effect on light, but will have a visual impact and will reduce air circulation. The applicants could have elected to place an addition at the 3rd Street building line and blocked some or all of the windows of 305 that face the rear yard of 301. Since 305 is built to the lot line (even though classed as semidetached), applicants would, it seems to us, have the right to attach to 305. They have elected not to do so, in deference to the utility of the windows in 305.

We are pleased to submit these views for your consideration.

Lyle R. Schauer
Zoning Committee Chair