



NEWS

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December 2005

January 18 Forum on New Comprehensive Plan

Focuses on Where and How Development Will Occur on Capitol Hill

by Dick Wolf

On January 18, Barry Miller and other Office of Planning staff involved with developing a new Comprehensive Plan for DC will give an overview of what this new plan will do and how it will do it. (See Mark Your Calendar on page 10 for time and place.) The enactment of the Home Rule Act in 1974 required the DC Government to have such a plan as the “local element” of an over-all plan which also includes a “federal element.” Together they make up the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

CHRS and other citizen groups have been the primary advocates for planning in the city. It has been only with great difficulty that anything has been reduced to paper and enacted into law—the legal requirement regarding the plan has been ignored by the city government as an inconvenient restriction on the “deal.” Only where neighborhood pressure and historic preservation designation has forced a more studied approach does the city talk planning. From the most planned city in the United States at its inception, Home Rule brought DC into an era of unplanned exploitation of its most precious com-

modity: land—only 39 square miles for local governance purposes.

This new attempt to create a more coherent and integrated comprehensive plan has been in the hands of the long-range planning staff at the Office of Planning. There has been a “citizen” advisory group created to assist OP in this effort, comprised of members representing the many stakeholders in the plan. Appointees include zoning lawyers; representatives of social service providers, business groups, and the universities; and a few neighborhood types such as me—the appointee of Councilmember Ambrose. Some of the appointees don’t even live in DC. But we soldier on with some surprisingly good results and some very big gaps in the both process and substance.

Mr. Miller, who is very professional and extremely knowledgeable, will be the principal presenter

at the forum. He will focus on two major themes. One is the structure of the proposed plan: how it will be organized and how it will be implemented. This has been a neglected element in the current plan. The other is the substantive content—elements such as housing, historic preservation, economic development, parks, open space, etc. Unfortunately, some of the elements are either missing, only partially developed (only assisted housing is considered), or incomplete, such as public facilities. He will also show the preliminary maps that are an essential part of any plan.

After Mr. Miller’s presentation we will leave ample time for questions. This is the opening act of a drama that will play itself out in the Council during the election year and will become an essential part of the politics of the District of Columbia. Your involvement is important. See you there. ✧

SEC East? Giant Condo/Retail Complex Planned for NE Capitol Hill

by Gary Peterson

On November 8, 2005, the Louis Dreyfus Property Group, the developer of the SEC Station Place building, filed notice of intent with the Zoning Commission to develop a parcel across the street from

Station Place. The property covered by the notice of intent is an “L” shaped piece of property fronting on H Street NE, on the north, G Street to a mid-block alley on the south, Second Street on the west, the mid-block alley on the east, and

SEC East? continued on page 3

President's Column

Can the Planning Process Be Made to Work? Because It Isn't Working Now

by Dick Wolf

As we struggle with the overwhelming force for development all over the District of Columbia, the up-coming year could be a time when a confluence of politics, a new Comprehensive Plan, and possibly a local planning commission for DC will enable citizens to tame the beast, making it more compatible with the neighborhoods. As it now stands neighborhoods all over the city are in an uproar as larger, denser

built, looms over the residential area like a giant iceberg. When fully built out to its full 1.7 million square feet it will be the largest private office building ever built in the District of Columbia. Just down from there, between Second and Third Streets and G and H Streets, NE, the developer of the SEC building, Dreyfus Property Group, proposes to build a 300-unit condominium which would place 100 foot high walls next to R-4 row houses and, in the process, tear down as many as 20 existing houses and other structures. This deal is in violation of existing zoning and both the letter and spirit of the Ward 6 Ward Plan. Of course this is being aided and abetted by the Office of Planning, as was the SEC building. None of this would have happened had the Government followed the direction of the Ward

NoMa Vision Plan and Redevelopment, Strategy Meeting.

Tuesday, December 13, from 6:00–8:00 pm at McKinley Tech High School, 151 T Street, NE, Room 150. (Details: Kevin Brady, 202-741-5241)

For those inclined to hear about this next chapter in the "I'm from the Government and I'm here to help you" soap, the meeting is Tuesday, December 13, from 6:00–8:00 pm at McKinley Tech High School, 151 T Street, NE, Room 150. If nothing else, you will have a chance to see McKinley Tech, which has been rebuilt into one of the finest school facilities on the East coast with a magnificent overview of the entire city of Washington.

If we have any hope at all to stop this onslaught of planning by the deal, it may be through a revised Comprehensive Plan with teeth. Barry Miller, the principal OP staffer responsible for putting together all the factual data and policy papers for the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, will give CHRS members and residents an overview of what is happening with this effort. Barry is very smart, organized and direct. He will answer your questions. That presentation will be at St. Peter's Church on January 18 in the New Year. If you come to this meeting you will learn an enormous amount about your city and how OP, or at least some staff, is trying to make planning mean something in DC.

Until next year I wish everyone a happy holiday season, especially here on the Hill; a unique and distinctive place in this great city, which would not exist except for the efforts of its residents. ✧

If we have any hope at all to stop this onslaught of planning by the deal, it may be through a revised Comprehensive Plan with teeth.

developments—well beyond existing zoning—crowd and tower over their residential neighbors. We are not immune.

Despite a recently enacted small area plan and approved zoning for Reservation 13, that site is proposed for a variety of uses including the National Medical Center (NMC) for Howard, which would destroy the finely wrought plan that citizens and government spent many nights and days devising. CHRS recently endorsed ANC 6B's resolution opposing the NMC idea. On the northeast side of the Hill there are a series of built and proposed Planned Unit Developments that adversely affect those neighborhoods and would, in fact, destroy part of the residential area. The notorious SEC building along Second Street, NE, only half

Plan to enlarge the Capitol Hill Historic District to include those areas now threatened. It appears that the Office of Planning (OP) and its director, Ellen McCarthy, have declared war on Capitol Hill.

There is further mischief afoot with more Planned Unit Developments up at Second and K Streets, NE, plus a planning effort called the "NoMa Vision Plan and Development Strategy." The map for this exercise shows something called "Redevelopment Area" and "Revitalization Area" which sweep down much of northeast Capitol Hill from Florida Avenue to Union Station. I talked with the director of this activity who didn't even know there was a Ward Plan which already covered these areas. To her credit, she said she would read it before their next meeting.

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To contact any of the above, please contact the Society offices by calling 202-543-0425 or sending email to CapHRS@aol.com.

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Celebrating our fiftieth year helping to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is now the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the entire District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood. With your participation we will continue to do so for many years to come.

Start or Renew a CHRS Membership

* On the Web at www.CHRS.org
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 Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

SEC East? *continued from page 1*

around 40 feet of frontage on Third Street immediately south of H Street.

The property consists of approximately 74,800 square feet of land and is zoned C-1 on the south and C-2-A on the north. Dreyfus proposes to change the zoning to C-2-B, which provides an increase in density. After changing the zoning to C-2-B, Dreyfus proposes to use a planned unit development (PUD) that will further increase the allowed density.

After all of these zoning changes, Dreyfus proposes to build a 90-foot high building. The building will have 306 apartment units and 380 parking spaces below grade and accessed from Second Street. The first floor of the building will have neighborhood retail. The building will be 90 feet on the Second Street side and will step down to the east side of the site. The chart below shows the maximum floor area ratio (FAR), maximum lot coverage and maximum height for each zoning class and the proposed PUD.

From the above chart it is clear that this is a very aggressive usage or abuse of the zoning regulations. Further evidence of aggressiveness is the height. The developer can choose

Existing Zoning Classes Compared to Proposed PUD

Zone	FAR	Lot	
		Coverage	Height
C-1	1.0	60%	40 ft.
C-2-A	2.5	60%	50 ft.
C-2-B	3.5	80%	65 ft.
PUD	6.0	negotiable	90 ft.

the point on the property to measure height. In this case, Dreyfus can pick Third and H to measure the 90 feet. Since the property drops from east to west, this means that the building can be between 100 and 110 feet high on Second Street. This means that Second Street would become a canyon just like L Street downtown.

As part of the PUD process, the developer is supposed to offer the community amenities to offset the increases to FAR, lot coverage, and height. The amenities have not been offered yet, but it is hard to imagine any amenities that would offset the increases in this case. More information will be reported here as this application progresses. *

Welcome CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, sponsors and patrons.

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Kudos to DDOT for Alley Project

About five years ago, CHRS initiated talks with the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) about the need to maintain historic paving in alleys after the brick-paved Walter Houp Court, NE, was treated with a coat of asphalt. Since that time, DDOT has established a Historic Alleys Section and has undertaken in-kind repairs of several alleys (notably Gessford Court, SE, and Terrace Court, NE). The following letter comments on the most recent Capitol Hill Project. ✱



Above: Before (top) and after photos of the alley. The original cobbles were saved and relaid.

Right: The deteriorated surface of the historic alley in the 300 block of A Street SE is removed by a Capitol Paving Co. crew.

Photos: Constance Burr

November 5, 2005

Mr. Dan Tangherlini
Director, DC Department of Transportation
2000 14th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Tangherlini:

On behalf of the residents of the 300 block of A Street and East Capitol Street, SE, I would like to thank you, Mr. Said Cherifi, and the DC Department of Transportation for restoring our alley. From their arrival on October 24, a skillful, hardworking crew removed the asphalt, leveled the ground, and rebuilt the alley with cobblestones and bricks. Capitol Paving Company was a pleasure to work with.

While building materials and equipment were on-site, neighbors requested that cracked concrete infills near East Capitol Street and a garage be replaced. The Department assessed their requests and had these areas repaired as well, forestalling future deterioration and expense.

We are heartened by the Department of Transportation's action in response to my letters (Service Request Numbers 102948 and 104397), Capitol Paving's quality work in an arcane craft, and this beautifully restored alley, the very foundation of Washington's preservation legacy.

Thank you for a job well done. I will forward photos of the work in an e-mail.

Sincerely,
Constance Burr



Herrema Awards Honor Contributions to Hill's Landscape

by Nancy Metzger

The 2005 Robert L. Herrema Awards, given by the Capitol Hill Community Foundation in recognition of distinctive and enduring contributions to Capitol Hill's urban landscape, were presented to five recipients on November 16. After remarks by Councilmember Sharon Ambrose, awards were presented to Barracks Row Main Street for the revitalization of the historic Eighth Street commercial corridor and to Stanton Development's Ken Golding, Kitty Kaupp and Frank Reed for the restoration of the commercial buildings at 300 Independence Avenue, SE. They were also cited for "decades of inspired development" on Capitol Hill, including buildings at 518 C Street, NE, on Stanton Park; 317 Massachusetts Avenue, NE; the

Home Health Care Building opposite Eastern Market and 660 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

Amy Weinstein, AIA, was presented an award for her architectural design work, preserving the integrity of Capitol Hill while using exemplary contemporary design. In addition to the buildings she designed for Stanton Development (some of which are listed above) she was also the architect for the Townhomes of Capitol Hill, the former Ellen Wilson Dwellings at Seventh and I streets, SE. Her work as a member of the Historic Preservation Review Board was also noted.

Holladay Corporation was presented an award for its 'last-minute' stabilization and restoration of The Louise, a former apartment building at 214 Seventh Street, NE. At the time it was on the verge of collapse, but it

is now a single-family dwelling in the Union Square development. The final recipient was Andrew Scallan, who took on the conversion of the Lenox School at Fifth and I Streets, SE, to 14 condominiums, creating interesting living spaces that blend the historic with the contemporary while retaining the feeling of the 1897 school.

The Robert L. Herrema Awards honor the legacy of Bob Herrema, a Capitol Hill resident and builder who died in 2003. In addition to restoring many private homes, commercial properties, and apartment buildings on Capitol Hill during the 1970s and 1980s, Bob helped pioneer the emerging concept of "adaptive reuse," turning old school buildings and the vacated Grace Baptist Church at Ninth Street and South Carolina Avenue, SE into new residences. ✧

Application to Downzone Medlink Site Filed with Zoning Commission

by Gary Peterson

ANC6C has filed an application with the Zoning Commission to downzone the property located at 700 Constitution Avenue, NE, from R5D to R4. CHRS, Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, and the Union Square Townhome Homeowners support the ANC's application. The next steps in the process will be the Zoning Commission setting the case for hearing, notice of the hearing will be given to Medlink and neighboring properties, the hearing will be held, and then a Zoning Commission ruling on the application. If successful, the downzoning will change the property from 75% lot occupancy with a height of 90 feet to a lot occupancy of 60% and a height of 40 feet. This downzoning represents a substantial reduction of density on the site and is more in keeping with the density of the neighborhood.

It is anticipated that Medlink will proceed with its plans to create condos on the site. The plans are currently before the Historic Preservation Review Board and will be heard at the December 15 meeting. It is unknown at this time what impact the application for downzoning will have on the Board.

In a further development, Medlink has sold the business, but not the property, to Specialty Hospitals of America (SHA). SHA will lease the northerly portion of the site and intends to stay for an unspecified time. This sale and lease will make for a severe parking problem, if SHA continues to operate on this site and Medlink builds the condos on the southerly portion of the property. There will be new traffic generated by the condos. This is one of the many reasons why downzoning is essential. ✧

CHRS Board and Committee Chair Update

Diane Scott has resigned from the CHRS Board leaving the position of Member At Large vacant. President Dick Wolf has appointed Beth Purcell to chair the Environmental Committee and Joan Joshi to chair the Membership Committee. These updates are reflected in the list on page 3 of this newsletter. The Communications Committee chair position remains vacant. Members interested in applying should contact CHRS (202-543-0425). ✧

Holiday Break

There will be no January issue of the *News*. Production will resume with the February 2006 issue. Happy Holidays!

CHRS Opposes National Capital Medical Center (NCMC)

At its November 15 meeting, the CHRS Board unanimously approved a motion to endorse the resolution of ANC 6B opposing the National Capital Medical Center proposed for Reservation 13. The text of the ANC 6B Resolution follows:

ANC 6B Resolution National Capitol Medical Center

November 8, 2005

Whereas: the City Administration has proposed in conjunction with Howard University to build a \$400 million, 250-bed hospital with Level 1 trauma capabilities, a medical office building and a research complex to be known as the National Capitol Medical Center (NCMC);

Whereas: the original justification given for the NCMC is to serve currently medically underserved residents, especially those east of the Anacostia River;

Whereas: the NCMC would be located west of the Anacostia River on lots B and C of Reservation 13, within the boundaries of ANC 6B;

Whereas: the serious unmet medical needs of Washington residents are primarily for chronic care for conditions such as asthma, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, HIV-AIDS, conditions which are bet-

ter treated by family doctors and in outpatient specialty clinics and offices than in a hospital, emergency room or trauma center;

Whereas: construction and operation of the NCMC is likely to result in the closure or dramatic downsizing of the current Howard University hospital and Greater SE Hospital and result in a negative impact on the viability of Prince Georges Community Hospital;

Whereas: the loss of these medical facilities due to the construction of the NCMC will decrease the access to health care facilities in the currently underserved areas;

Whereas: a more appropriate health care facility on Reservation 13 could both strengthen the existing health care facilities and provide a spur to expanded health care in underserved areas;

Whereas: the cost of the NCMC would preclude the expansion of ambulatory care in underserved areas;

Whereas: the cost of the NCMC will put heavy burdens on the District's ability to borrow funds for other needs, such as school modernization;

Whereas: the proposed agreement between Howard University and the District may put the District at risk for

ongoing and continued annual outlays of expenditures for the operation of the NCMC;

Whereas: the proposed location of the NCMC has spread beyond the limits of lots B and C of Reservation 13 to include the use of the RFK parking lots for hospital parking and to include the consolidation of certain city medical facilities currently on Reservation 13 to a site on lot L located along the proposed extension of Massachusetts Avenue;

Whereas: the NCMC proposal is incompatible with the Master Development Plan for Reservation 13 in that it eliminates underground parking and reconfigures roads including those in what were to be residential areas;

Whereas: the City Administration has proposed to legislatively circumvent the established Certificate of Need process specifically for this project;

Whereas: legislation proposed by the City Administration concerning the Certificate of Need process does not seek to reform or eliminate the process but solely to exempt the NCMC project.

Be it therefore resolved that ANC 6B:

1. opposes the proposed National Capitol Medical Center;
2. urges the City Administration and the Council to develop alternative proposals that will better address the health care needs of the citizens of the District of Columbia, including more appropriate health care facilities on the HillEast Waterfront; and,
3. a) strongly opposes any attempt to circumvent existing decision making processes, specifically the proposal to circumvent the Certificate of Need process;
b) admonishes the Administration for proposing such actions to undercut the process; and,
c) strongly opposes any other attempts to exempt this project from existing rules and regulations.

Adopted November 8, 2005 by a vote of 10-0-0.
Attested: Scott Cernich, Chair ANC 6B

Staff Changes at Historic Preservation Office

by Nancy Metzger

Emily Paulus, preservation planner for Capitol Hill in the DC Office of Historic Preservation, has announced that December 16 will be her last day on the job. She and her fiancé will be moving to New Hampshire so that he can accept a position there. Emily, who has been the main contact person for Capitol Hill cases for three years, will be joining the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources as a historian/preservation planner. In addition to reviewing cases from Capitol Hill that would be heard by the Historic

Preservation Review Board, Emily also prepared Preservation Café presentations on Windows, Doors, and Public Space and worked with residents concerning various projects.

Anne Brockett, also a staff member of the Historic Preservation Office, will be taking over Emily's responsibilities for Capitol Hill and several other historic districts. She has been handling the over-the-counter approvals for the past two years and so, many Capitol Hill residents already know Anne. She can be reached at (202-442-8842) or Anne.Brockett@dc.gov. ✱

November Preservation Café Spotlights the Artful Use of Paint

by Shauna Holmes

With over 25 years of experience painting houses, including many on Capitol Hill, David Mahoney—owner of The David Mahoney Painting Company—is an excellent source of expertise for homeowners. Speaking at the November 16 Preservation Café, sponsored by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and hosted by Trattoria Alberto, he provided a wealth of painting information and advice to his audience.

First and foremost is planning. Selecting the right color for the space, the right paint type for the job, and the best contractor for the work are critical choices. To make the best color choice, Mr. Mahoney recommends testing a paint color by applying it to a large sample board and placing it on different walls in the room at various times to observe the color in a variety of light conditions.

To choose the best contractor, Mr. Mahoney provided a Contractor's Checklist that can be used to determine the quality of the workers and whether the contractor is appropriately licensed and bonded, as well as to ensure that the contractor has the right kind of experience and supplies a sufficiently detailed proposal. Because communication between the customer and the painter is very important, he advised homeowners to always protect themselves by getting everything in writing and signing off on a color sheet before painting begins.

According to Mr. Mahoney, the more care and energy that goes into preparation, the better the finished product. He provided dozens of tips on how to prepare surfaces for painting, from choosing the best caulking materials and sandpaper to protecting people from lead and using appropriate cleaners and primers when preparing surfaces. Just a few of his recommendations included:

- To avoid shiny patches, don't "touch up" with a brush after paint has been rolled onto a surface.

- Latex paint is best for exterior brick, because oil paint doesn't let water vapor from the interior evaporate through to the outside.
- Clean windows before painting, since it takes latex paint 7-30 days to fully cure.
- When cutting in walls along the ceiling, roller the wall first and then have someone follow immediately with brushwork before the rolled paint dries. Pull the brush sideways, not flat, to cut in the ceiling line.

To illustrate his talk, Mr. Mahoney brought with him a wide variety of tools, preparation materials like backing rods and caulking, paint and primer samples, color samples for historic homes, and protective gear. As he discussed each stage in planning, preparing for, and carrying out a paint job, he held up the appropriate tool or kind of paint or material to demonstrate its type and use. After his presentation, he invited members of the audience to take home the demonstration materials, tools, and paints.

In addition to the speaker's handouts, CHRS provided its guidelines on exterior painting, "Capitol Hill's Unpainted Ladies." The most authentic—and cost effective—treatment of Capitol Hill's brick and stone homes and exterior stone trim is to leave them unpainted. For houses that have already been painted, the guidelines provide information and recommendations about colors, trim, and paint removal. No permits are needed to paint the outsides or interiors of homes in the historic district, although certain methods of stripping exterior paint may require permits. While there are no required colors or controls on color selection, CHRS recommends consulting its guidelines for recommendations regarding the most appropriate and authentic painting choices. To receive a free copy of the paint guidelines, contact the CHRS office at CapHRS@aol.com or 202-543-0425.

The 2006 spring Preservation Café series will begin in February. Please check the next CHRS *News* and community newspapers for information on the February Preservation Café. ✧

New Bus Shelter Proposals Are a Poor Fit for Historic Districts

by Barbara Eck

The DC Department of Transportation invited CHRS to serve on a task force reviewing designs for bus shelters to be installed throughout the city. Clear Channel, the firm that has been awarded the bus shelter contract, presented, what they termed a modern design and a traditional design. Unfortunately, neither design is suitable for our Capitol Hill neighborhood and it is likely they are equally unsuited to other historic neighborhoods.

Nir Buras, CHRS representative on the task force, reported that the modern design would definitely not fit into our neighborhood and that the "traditional" design needs to be improved. Mr. Buras, as president of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Institute of Classical Architecture, has indicated that the ICA would be happy to create a charrette/competition for the Restoration Society. We have sent a letter to Mr. Lars Etzkorn the DDOT director who is overseeing the bus shelter contract, requesting a further pre-design session. ✧

Is Your Fireplace Ready For the Season?

by David Holmes

Few things are more pleasant than enjoying the flames in your fireplace on a cold evening. All of the historic homes of Capitol Hill were built with fireplaces. Many retain the external chutes used to dump coke or coal into basement storage rooms or underground bins. But we're no longer burning coke or coal in heating stoves because almost all room heating stoves have been converted to woodburning fireplaces.

Current prices for firewood run \$175 to \$400 per cord (a tightly stacked pile measuring eight feet wide by four feet deep by four feet tall), depending on the type of wood and whether you, or the delivery service, stacks the wood. To keep the wood dry and free of termites be sure to store it out of contact with the soil. Don't make rodent access to the woodpile easy.

Firewood should be seasoned—dried at least six months—and cut to an appropriate length to fit your fireplace. Split dry wood makes a high-pitched “tink” sound when struck together; wet wood produces a lower “thunk” or “thud” sound. Hardwood, such as oak or elm, provides more heat per volume than softwoods like pine and cedar. For example, white oak and locust have about twice as many BTUS per cord as pine and spruce. Other desirable tree species are maple, beech, walnut, hickory, and dogwood. Fruit trees and hickory provide the best scent. Wet or green wood does not burn well, leaving flammable deposits lining your flue and generating a heavy acrid smoke for the neighbors. Wood that's wet only on its surface because of a recent rain won't cause creosote problems.

Firewood is sold by the cord. Be sure to order a quarter, half, or full cord. A “face cord,” a standard of measure favored by the door-to-door pickup-driving salesperson, can be of any size. A dry cord of,

say, white oak will weigh over two tons. The same wood, wet or green, will weigh close to three tons. So be suspicious of a salesperson claiming to have a cord stacked in the back of his half-ton pickup. A tightly packed large pickup can hold as much as 64 cubic feet—half of a cord—when loaded to the top of the bed. Small pickups with loosely packed loads obviously hold much less. If the wood has fungal growths on the cut ends it may be rotten.

Manufactured firelogs (pressed sawdust and wax, usually) can provide a safe fire but be sure not to throw them into an already burning fire. They need to be started in a room-temperature fireplace and placed on a grate, burning only one log at a time. Be sure not to poke at a firelog, the flaming wax could stick to the end of the poker and drop onto your carpet or other flammable materials.

Before you start that first winter fire have a professional check your fireplace and chimney to ensure that the mortar joints are intact, that there are no obstructions like nests and overhanging tree branches to block the exhaust gasses, and that there is no build-up of creosote on the lining of the flue (the path smoke follows up and out of your chimney). Missing or cracked mortar can easily lead to inaccessible fires in the wood beams and joists adjacent to the flue. Creosote fires sound and look like a jet engine on afterburner. The intense heat of such a fire will probably destroy the chimney and can ignite nearby homes as chunks of burning charcoal and tar are flung into the air. Chimneysweeps advertise in the Hill newspapers. A web search for a sweep can be made at www.csia.org.

When you're ready to start your fire, open the damper (a lever at the top of the firebox) and build your fire on a grate at the back of the fireplace. Use small, split pieces, of very dry wood and crumpled or

twisted newspapers, adding larger pieces of wood as the fire takes hold. Never use charcoal starter fluid, gasoline, or naphtha to start the fire. Long matches and firelighters are safest.

The chimney is designed to draw air up the flue, pulling smoke and dangerous gasses out of the house. The problem for the fire-builder is that the chimney is cold and filled with cold air. Opening the damper allows air to flow in either direction. Since your house is warm and the chimney cold, the initial draft of air may be down into your house. Lighting tightly rolled newspapers placed vertically at the back of the firebox will usually be enough to start the flow of air going in the right direction.

Be sure to protect against sparks with a wire screen or glass doors. All types of wood throw sparks, especially pines, cedar and juniper, so don't place your woven seagrass mats, jute rugs, or any flammable rug anywhere near your fireplace. The tinder and paper you use to start the fire should be kept well away. Remove holiday decorations near the firebox before you start. Remember it's unwise as well as illegal to burn trash and garbage in your fireplace. Burning paper fragments can stay lit long enough to land on your membrane roof. Never burn your Christmas tree in your fireplace.

If a chimney fire does start, call 911, then use a poker with a hook (or a fireglove) to close the damper. Dry-type extinguishers sprayed up the flue can work, but call 911 first. Don't throw a bucket of water at the fireplace to extinguish a chimney fire. The hot firebox and embers will convert the water to superheated steam, most of which will explode back at the person holding the bucket. Instead, pour water first on the base of the fire, then over the burning logs.

Keep handy a pair of firegloves to handle fire tools and rearrange

AppleTree Charter School Offers Compromise

by Gary Peterson

ANC6A, at its November 10 meeting to consider the AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation's proposed use of 138 Twelfth Street, NE, as an early learning public charter school, heard for the first time a compromise proposal from the Institute (see previous story in the November 2005 *News*, p. 7). AppleTree's representative, Ellen Oppen-Weiner, presented the compromise.

AppleTree's proposal is as follows:

1. Reduce lot coverage from 80% to 60%,
2. Eliminate the rooftop play area,
3. Reduce the number of students from 72 to 54 and, accordingly, reduce the number of teachers,
4. Eliminate the Institute's offices at the school,
5. Provide staff parking at a nearby church, and
6. Reduce traffic congestion by instituting staggered drop-off and pick-up times in the morning and evening and having "greeters" so parents do not have to leave their cars.



So that negotiations could continue, AppleTree also agreed to ask for a continuance of the Historic Preservation Review Board review of the proposal. AppleTree also agreed to provide new plans showing the compromise.

In the meantime, the parties are waiting for the Zoning Administrator, Bill Crews, to decide the zoning issues. ANC6A, Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, and CHRS have all made their views known to Crews. The neighborhood has formed a group in

Site of the proposed AppleTree charter school, 138 Twelfth Street, NE

Photos: David Holmes

opposition and is exploring hiring a lawyer. Letters of opposition to the project should be addressed to Dr. Patrick J. Canavan, Director DCRA, 941 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002, and to Councilmember Sharon Ambrose, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 119, Washington, DC, 20004. ✧

Is Your Fireplace Ready For the Season *continued*

wood. It's best to have a lidded metal ashbox next to the fireplace. At the end of the evening, ashes and cinders can be shoveled out of the firebox so that the damper and glass fireplace doors can be closed. The ashbox should be placed outside on stone or concrete, safely away from flammable materials. While the damper must be left open until the ashes have been removed or are cold, it's important to close the damper as soon as it's safe so the chimney will not continue to suck expensively heated air out of the house.

Is your house ready for that first fire of the season? Have you checked your smoke detectors recently? Is one placed at every level of the house, and are the batteries fresh? Is there a fully charged dry-type fire extinguisher nearby?

Though a fireplace is cozy and atmospheric, it is not an efficient source of heat for your home. It typically removes more heat from your home than it can provide. Fireplace inserts and woodstoves can be cost-effective but are difficult for Capitol Hill homeowners for a number of reasons: you have to pay a wood

purveyor rather than logging and cutting it yourself; storage of one to three cords (one winter's supply) would be a problem for most rowhouse owners; and the noise of running a chain saw to trim logs to length would be intolerable for the neighbors.

But, despite all the necessary caution, there's something about a hearth fire that touches us at an elemental level. Radiant heat, the fragrance of burning wood, and the sight of flames and embers are treasured elements of the season. Enjoy your fire. ✧

Mark Your Calendar!

DECEMBER

8 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE.
(Details: Gary Peterson, 202-547-7969)

13 Tuesday, 6:00 pm

NoMa Vision Plan and Redevelopment, Strategy Meeting. Developers and city reps discuss plans. McKinley Tech High School, 151 T Street, NE, Room 151.
(Details: Kevin Brady, 202-741-5241)

20 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board Meeting, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE

JANUARY

2 Monday 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE. (Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034)

12 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE.
(Details: Gary Peterson, 202-547-7969)

12 Thursday, 6:30 pm

Symposium: Ballparks, Eminent Domain and the Need for a DC Planning Commission. National Building Museum, 401 F Street, NW

17 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board Meeting, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE

18 Wednesday, 7:00 pm

CHRS Forum/Members' Meeting. Barry Miller, Associate Director for Comprehensive Planning will provide overview of the Comprehensive Plan. St. Peter's Church, Second and C Streets, SE, Lower level

For Your Reading (or Gifting) Pleasure, Two Books Feature Capitol Hill Houses

by Nancy Metzger

For last minute gifts, don't forget that the Capitol Hill Restoration Society has copies of *The Majesty of Capitol Hill*, available for sale. With 144 pages filled with full-color photographs of the exterior and interiors of 24 houses plus historical information on both the houses and other historic Capitol Hill buildings, it is like a permanent house tour. It might be just the item to introduce out-of-town relatives and friends to your neighborhood. Written by CHRS member Thomas B. Grooms (and dedicated to CHRS), the book, published this year, highlights what makes Capitol Hill such a special place. Contact the CHRS office (202-543-0425; CapHRS@aol.com) for information about purchasing.

Two Capitol Hill houses are also included in a newly published

book, *The American Townhouse*, by Kevin D. Murphy with photographs by Radek Kurzaj. Following a look at the townhouse as a cultural phenomenon in America with information on building styles and techniques, full-color photographs capture 25 town houses from across the nation and built in different eras (1750–1926) and architectural styles. Three houses from Washington, DC were included in the photographic tour—the 1803 Robert Alexander house (known to Capitol Hill residents as the Carbery House at 423 Sixth Street, SE); the 1875 Mary McLeod Bethune House in the Logan Circle neighborhood; and the 1910 George A. Didden House at 139 Twelfth Street, SE. For those interested in architectural history, it's a fascinating read. (Check with your local bookstore for this book.) ✧



Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003