

NEWS

www.chrs.org June 2008

Traffic, Parking, Streetcars, Streetscape, Bridges: Impact on Our Neighborhood



DDOT to Address These Issues and More on June 18th

CHRS invites the public to participate in an open forum featuring DC Department of Transportation Director Emeka Moneme and some of his senior staff on June 18th at St. Peter's Parish Hall at Second and C Streets, SE. The evening begins with a social at 7:15 pm, followed by a brief business meeting at 7:30, and program at 7:45.

We have asked DDOT to be prepared to present information and discuss all the transportation initiatives that are being implemented, planned, and considered for our "extended" Capitol Hill community. This includes the area along the Anacostia River, Reservation 13, NOMA, and Hill East, as well as the Capitol Hill Historic District. We've identified particular projects, from the proposed routes for light rail to the funding for new, expensive initiatives like the \$500 million Eleventh Street Bridge expansion, the cost of which will be borne primarily by DC taxpayers. However, discussion is not limited to these issues, and we urge attendees to bring their questions and concerns whether they are new streets and bridges, commuter traffic, dirty and poorly maintained streets, or ineffective snow removal (it may be June, but winter will come).

DDOT not only manages and maintains the transportation infrastructure, but also plans, designs, maintains, and constructs streets, alleys, sidewalks, bridges, traffic signals and street lights. It is also responsible for street-side trees; improvements to the street system to facilitate traffic flow, including parking restrictions; the removal of snow and ice from the public roadways; and coordination of mass transit services with WMATA.

Mark your calendar and tell your friends and neighbors. Check out the CHRS website www.chrs.org, or contact eckbarbara@yahoo.com for additional information. *

Successful Beyond the Boundaries House and Garden Tour

The 2008 CHRS Mother's Day House and Garden Tour was a success, featuring a part of the neighborhood visitors might not have seen before. Tourgoers bought 1200+ tickets despite an ominous weekend weather forecast, and CHRS raised a very respectable net income to support its "Beyond the Boundaries" initiative.

The selection of homes on the tour showed the range of historic features, interesting house histories, great gardens, and remarkable interior design and decoration that ticket buyers have come to expect, and demonstrated that the houses of the Historic District, Hill East, Old City, and Rosedale share a rich fabric of history and an amazing amount of architectural diversity. The Pierce School, in particular, was a hot topic as people went from house to house. Indeed, the stunning views from the roof of Pierce

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The rooftop view from Senate Square was one of the highlights of the tour.

President's Column

What Does the Tour Mean for Capitol Hill?

by Dick Wolf

nother successful tour—the 51st in a row. Not only was it a success in terms of net proceeds, but it demonstrated the great effort of many orchestrated under the leadership of Ann Richards, to reach an area not generally part of our tours or even thought of by many as "Capitol Hill". All of the houses and venues were in Northeast, many outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District. What it showed is that much of that portion of the Hill is very much like the rest of our neighborhood: a mixture of houses, small apartment houses, very old structures, and some new; most at the same livable scale as

the rest of the Hill and struggling with the same problem of trying to maintain the neighborhood character while confronted with large development projects.

In showing off this area, we also hoped that tour patrons would appreciate how our neighborhoods, both within and beyond the historic district, are connected. And, with the proceeds of this tour, we hope to help underwrite the professional surveys and other efforts needed by residents to understand the historic resources in areas outside the historic district. Those residents have asked for our help, and the tour and our financial support are our response.

We have come to know that with historic preservation comes

an obligation on our part to help lower-income residents deal with the requirements of preservation: compatible fences, windows, doors, and other aspects of owning a contributing building in a historic district. We started to recognize that obligation through our 2003 Park Street assistance program; advocating for a city fund to assist lower-income residents in meeting historic district requirements; and accepting responsibility for administering a grant program for near Northeast neighborhoods that was established by the Dreyfus PUD.

If preservation is going to work on a broad scale, it has to accommodate all income levels in both its obligations and benefits. CHRS is making that effort. *

CHRS and Its Role in Elections

by Dick Wolf

With election season come some reminders of what roles CHRS can play and what it cannot. As a 501 C (3) tax exempt organization, CHRS cannot support candidates in a partisan election. Persons acting on behalf of CHRS cannot advocate and participate in partisan campaigns. That does not preclude members and employees from contributing to campaigns, attending fund raisers, or even taking an active role in a campaign—but not as a CHRS representative.

As an organization, CHRS has sponsored candidate forums, either on its own or with other organizations. All candidates are invited, and it's a level playing field. A CHRS forum does not endorse anyone, but rather allows candidates to educate members and the public. CHRS does not put out candidate questionnaires and does not engage with others in such activities.

In short, CHRS is strictly non-partisan in its activities. We do appear before elected bodies and officials to advocate for our issues. We have members from all parties and from every corner of the Capitol Hill community. But, as an organization, we are not in the business of partisan politics.

Those are the rules. We abide by them, as we must, in order to retain our integrity in the community and to maintain our tax-exempt status. ¥

House & Garden Tour

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School and the Landmark Lofts at Senate Square were among the high points of the tour.

The rain held off for seven of the eight hours of the tour, but then tried to make up for it with a deluge in the last hour. Many tourgoers sought refuge at the traditional Mother's Day Tea in the H Street Playhouse, which featured silver balloons and a lavish assortment of goodies. On Saturday evening, visitors got better acquainted with H Street's burgeoning array of restaurants, pubs, and coffeehouses during the tour's H Street Pub Crawl, enjoying special beverage offers from participating establishments and often staying for a posttour dinner.

Close to 300 volunteers, sponsors, and advertisers provided their time and/or financial support. Without them, without the home- and property-owners, without you, the 2008 tour would not have been possible, so thanks to everyone who contributed. *

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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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.

www.chrs.org

Celebrating more than 50 years 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
- * Call 202-543-0425 and choose option 2
- * Pick up a form at one of our meetings Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

Proposed School at 138 12th Street, NE, Is Still at Issue: A Complicated Case

The charter school proposed to be sited in a residential rowhouse block just north of Lincoln Park is still before the courts and DC regulatory agencies. A permit was issued to AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation (AppleTree) by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) in late October of 2007.

The permit was under a hold by the Director of DCRA for both zoning concerns and for review by the District Department of the Environment (DDoE) when it was suddenly issued by a low-level staffer.

DCRA promptly moved to revoke the permit, and AppleTree filed with the District's Office of Administrative Hearings to contest the revocation. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A, where the proposed site is located, filed successfully for intervenor status to seek to sustain the revocation and to investigate the circumstances of the permit's issuance.

In 2006 and 2007, the city's Zoning Commission and Office of Planning developed language to prohibit the location of public schools in R-4 (basically rowhouse) neighborhoods unless they meet minimum standards for streetfront footage, lot size, and parking. These new regulations were adopted and became effective in September of 2007. After the new regulation was adopted, the Board of Zoning Adjustment found the new language insufficient to avoid the "grandfathering" clause that protects structures built before 1958 from needing to comply with current regulations, and overturned the decision of the then-Zoning Administrator to deny AppleTree a permit. In reply, the Zoning Commission adopted new language to make clear that a change of use of a property in



the R-4 districts would remove the grandfathering protection.

Currently DCRA and AppleTree, after subsequent DDoE agreement that there is no environmental risk on the site and DCRA completion of final zoning review, reached a mutual accommodation that would have declared the administrative proceeding moot, overturned the revocation, and conditionally promise a certificate of occupancy. AppleTree in return agreed not to sue the city or its officials. ANC 6A sought to invalidate the agreement since it had not been consulted despite its intervenor status and for other reasons. On May 29, the Administrative Hearing Judge dismissed AppleTree's appeal as moot as a result of AppleTree and DCRA agreement.

In December 2007, following AppleTree's appeal of the permit revocation, ANC 6A filed an appeal of the permit. A hearing will be held in early June, with the ANC continuing to assert that the permit was erroneously issued. *

June 11 Preservation Café Features the Market Master's Office at Eastern Market

If you've ever wondered what was upstairs at Eastern Market, you will have a chance to learn about the Market Master's Office at CHRS's June 11 Preservation Café.

In designing Eastern Market, architect Adolf Cluss provided a second-story space for the Market Master's Office in the central entrance pavilion on the Market's east side. This space is one area of Eastern Market that was untouched in previous renovations, so it still has very early historic fabric, and it also survived the April 2007 fire.

Following the fire, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the DC Preservation League (DCPL), and the DC State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) joined forces to commission and fund a conservation report on the Market Master's Office. The results of this recent report will be the subject of the June Preservation Café presentation, which CHRS is hosting in partnership with the Trust, DCPL, HPO, and the DC Office of Property Management. Speakers will be Tanya Beauchamp, an architectural histo-

rian and preservation consultant, and Gretchen Pfaehler, director of historic preservation at EwingCole, both of whom participated in preparing the conservation report.

Conserving the Market Master's Office at Eastern Market will be held on Wednesday, June 11, from 6:30-7:15 pm in the downstairs Community Room at Ebenezer's Coffeehouse at Second and F Streets, NE. The Preservation Café is free, wheel-chair accessible, and open to all members of the Capitol Hill community. *

To Dig or Not To Dig? That Is the Question

by Shauna Holmes

Who knew so many Capitol Hill homeowners were thinking about digging out their basements? Fifty people attended CHRS's May 21 Preservation Café to hear architect and Capitol Hill resident Judith Capen talk about the process and perils of Digging Out Your Basement.

She minced no words right from the outset—digging out is a huge, messy, expensive undertaking, and advised that if you can avoid out as much as possible about the house's foundation conditions. The homeowner can probably do this by using a spade to dig several test holes beside the exterior walls of each section of the house to see how deep the walls go and what type of footings were used. Also try to find out where the waste lines are, as well as other utility lines, and whether they could be affected by any digging.

If it will be necessary to dig below the bottoms of existing footings, underpinning will be needed the structural engineer determine whether, for instance, a steel beam may be needed above a new opening in a loadbearing wall.

Excavating and underpinning will require permits (other related work may need permits too), and neighbors need to be notified because digging and underpinning can impact their walls and their homes' structural integrity as well. Adjoining homes on the Hill may have been built at different times and have two different foundation conditions on each side of a party wall. Depending on the work being planned, one or both neighbors may need to be informed of the plans, so homeowners should be prepared to discuss their plans with their neighbors and seek to address and allay any concerns they may have.

With almost any kind of basement work, homeowners need to think about moisture control and options like extending the vapor barrier in a new slab up the sides of the new lower walls. And, as digging proceeds, be prepared for concealed conditions, such as previously unidentified waste lines and other potential surprises. *

Capen minced no words right from the outset—digging out is a huge, messy, expensive undertaking, and advised that if you can avoid it, don't dig.

it, don't dig. The benchmark she suggested for deciding is whether or not your basement's floor-to-ceiling height is at least eight feet: if it is, don't dig, unless you want to expand your basement; if not, dig down to create the necessary height for a comfortable room.

Before calling a contractor about digging out, it's important to find

to provide support for walls during the dig. In that case, a structural engineer will need to develop an underpinning plan and a schedule for the work, which will have to be done in segments to protect the structural integrity of the house. Owners should not assume that loadbearing features in their houses are overbuilt, but should also have

Looking Back on Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

Chool's out! For many children On Capitol Hill, summer is a time of relaxed schedules, day camps, and playing with their friends. The same was true for past generations of Capitol Hill children. Some Capitol Hill families had places in the country where the family retreated when school was out (except for the father who stayed on Capitol Hill and came out for the weekend). The Clarence and Clara (Hurtt) Donohoe family was one such family that packed up kids, clothes, and pony for a summer away from Capitol Hill. In a 2003 interview with Beth Eck for the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project, Mary Donohoe Murray tells about the family home at 629 East Capitol Street and summers in the country during the 1920s:

"[The house at 629 East Capitol Street] had a front porch. It was tan brick. We had a front porch, living room, paneled library, dining room, kitchen, and each floor had an enclosed glass porch. The first floor was a pantry; the second floor was a sleeping porch for the boys [Ed. note: Mary had six brothers]; and the third floor was a wonderful playroom. We had a full-sized slide, as big as a playground, and a wing that held four people. ... And rainy days you would just play

up there the whole time. And we had a big back yard, had a stable, had a pony in the stable, Beauty, a Shetland pony, brown and white. And we would ride her constantly."

Eck: "Where did you ride her?"

Murray: "Southeast, on the streets. And the alley was cobblestone and the streetcars were in the front of the house. So it wasn't easy but you just went all over Southeast and you took turns... from the time you go home from school until dinnertime every day. ... And in the summertime we would take the pony to the country with us. And one of the boys would ride the pony to Maine Avenue, put the pony on the Norfolk boat and the pony would come down to Rock Point, Maryland, and we would go there the next morning to church, and down to the wharf, pick up the pony and someone would ride her back to Banks O'Dee, eight miles away. And then in September we would reverse that procedure. ... Banks O'Dee is the name of our summer place. And there are three Donohoe families on the 49 acres, all cousins....

"We'd go all summer, from June. We'd leave the day after school closed and we'd come back the day school opened. ... [My father] came down on weekends, and he did all the marketing and brought that with him. And they would come back on Monday morn-



Donohoe brothers and friends* in 1910, 300 block of East Capitol Street (as posted on www.CapitolHillHistory.org)

ing, drive back. And one person down there would have breakfast on Monday morning – Aunt Kitty, Mother, or Aunt Mary, so you'd just go to one house – [one] had to get up early, give the men the breakfast. And my father would give us a list, and he kept a carbon copy of things he wanted done while he was away that week. And when he got back he would check the list. And one list we had was to get so many soft shell crabs, and so many hard shell crabs. So we had to crab every day to get this, fill this list for his friends. ... [H]e would save all these and take them back to his friends. ... So half of the ice box he had crabs with all the seaweed on them. ... He had all these trays and he'd put the crabs, and he had ice and seaweed all packed. ...

"My father did all the marketing in Washington too. At the Fifth and Florida Avenue Market, [h]e would buy, you know, a stalk of bananas, a bushel of cantaloupes, everything wholesale, big quantities of cookies, stick candy that you put in an orange. That was delicious."

The complete transcript of the interview, as well as other family photos, can be found on the website of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project, www. capitolhillhistory.org. *

* The Overbeck Project is currently in touch with Mary Zurhorst Gray, granddaughter and daughter, respectively, of the men in the back seat; she is writing a memoir that includes her years growing up over the family funeral parlor at 301 East Capitol Street, shown in the background of the photo.

Welcome CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, patrons, and sponsors.

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Doug & Jane Alspach
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Historic Preservation Briefs

Historic Preservation Review Board Meetings Now Available in Webcast

DC residents can now watch live hearings of Historic Preservation Review Board hearings, usually held on the fourth Thursday of the month. The Historic Preservation Review Board, whose members are appointed by the Mayor, designates historic properties and districts and reviews exterior alterations and new construction affecting historic properties. The city currently has approximately 500 landmarks and 43 historic districts encompassing over 26,000 buildings.

Residents who would like to follow HPRB activities online can visit the "HPRB Live Video Broadcast" section of the Office of Planning website, www.planning.dc.gov/hp. A list of meeting dates, agendas, and past HPRB actions is also accessible on the website. Internet broadcasts will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month (January through July, September, and October) and on the third Thursday in November and December.

Hearings begin at 10 am and normally run until 5:30 pm. Meetings are held in the Office of Zoning Hearing Room, #220 South, 441 Fourth Street, NW (One Judiciary Square). For more information, please call Bruce Yarnall, Historic Preservation Office, at 442-8835 or email Bruce.Yarnall@dc.gov.

HPO Designates Two Staff Members as Capitol Hill Contacts

As part of the reorganization of the Historic Preservation Office due to the new staff members (as announced last month in the CHRS Newsletter), Amanda Molson will be serving as the primary contact person for Capitol Hill cases (442-8827; amanda.molson@dc.gov). Jonathan Mellon is the secondary contact person (442-8843; jonathan. mellon@dc.gov). Under the new organization, each historic district has a primary and a secondary contact person. David Maloney is the State Historic Preservation Officer (442-8850; david.maloney@dc.gov) and Steve Callcott is the deputy (741-5247; steve.callcott@dc.gov).

Staff members prepare reports for the Historic Preservation Review Board for cases that are reviewed by the Board, and also work with applicants on smaller projects so that the projects meet Board standards and can be approved without a full-scale Board review. As a first step in contemplating any project, owners of Historic District buildings should review information on Board standards and procedures found on the Historic Preservation Office website (www.planning. dc.gov/hp). Staff members will be able to answer additional questions and provide guidance.

CHRS also provides basic information about historic preservation procedures and answers general historic preservation questions. However, CHRS does not have authority to grant permits or deny particular projects, but rather gives advice and information only. Contact CHRS through the office (543-0425; CapHRS@aol.com) or Nancy Metzger, chair of the Historic Preservation Committee, directly (nancymetzger@verizon.net). *

The Hill on Film

by Mike Canning

(Continuing our occasional series about how Hollywood has treated elements of Capitol Hill. CHRS Treasurer Canning writes movie reviews for the Hill Rag.)

Imade the point in earlier columns that when Hollywood filmmakers use Washington, DC, as a backdrop or context, they don't always strive for accuracy. Corners are cut, compromises are made, and the easy way is often taken—not surprisingly for such expensive enterprises. Still, there are the extremely egregious cases, usually in cheesy or crass comedies, where anything approaching verisimilitude is thrown out the window. Some of

these cases touch Capitol Hill.

Take the very silly Naked Gun 2 ½ (1991), where Lt. Frank Drebin is chasing the bad guys to a dock in what is supposed to be Southeast Washington. In the background we see a major body of water and a large suspension bridge above it, looking awfully like a view of San Francisco. Or there is the Gene Hackman/Dan Aykroyd comedy Loose Cannons (1990), where the two leads are again in a chase sequence heading into the Southeast industrial area next to South Capitol Street, yet they end up at a major port (possibly Baltimore?) with a large ship at anchor and goodsized container hoists in view. Hardly our placid Anacostia.

The ludicrous *National Lampoon's* Senior Trip (1995) also takes massive liberties with our part of the city. The witless high school kids in the film, for example, defile the grave of J. Edgar Hoover, but his grave is located, according to the film, at Arlington Cemetery, when all informed Washingtonians known that Hill-born and -bred Hoover is buried at our own Congressional Cemetery. That same film has a corrupt senator (is there any other kind of senator in the movies?) rushing to his own committee hearing on Capitol Hill in what looks like a routine, high-rise building that is nowhere to be found in our neighborhood.

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Zoning Report: Hine Junior High Site Meeting Results

by Gary Peterson



The existing Hine site is shown above. Right is a draft plan prepared to facilitate discussion of options for the site.

T he community meeting on the future use of Hine Junior High School, hosted by Councilmember Tommy Wells, took place on April 30, 2008. Although no official count was made, there were over 100 people present. Neil Albert, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, attended the meeting. Wells made a brief statement about the closing of Hine and asked for ideas for what to do with the site. The audience was then divided into small working groups to propose ideas for the use of the site. Each group was then asked to report on its recommendations.

Several points of consensus were clear from the reports:



- Hine should be demolished.
- Any use must include a community use.
- New buildings must be compatible with the historic character of Capitol Hill.
- Restore C Street, SE, between 7th and 8th Streets
- Provide underground parking for residential, office, and Eastern Market use.
- Provide new access to the Metro Station from the site.
- Ensure that plans are consistent with the Eastern Market and the Eastern Market Plaza plans.
- Provide space for the weekend flea market.
- New housing should have affordable workforce housing.
- New retail space should be provided on 7th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, but not on 8th Street.

Accompanying this story is a draft plan that achieves some of the ideas. This does not reflect all of the ideas, nor is it a final decision or recommendation. There will soon be another community meeting to discuss the next actions regarding the site. *

The Hill on Film continued from page 6

Just as unlikely a hearing site occurs in the Tom Hanks comedy *The Man With One Red Shoe* (1985). In rushing to a crucial hearing on the Hill, Hanks and his girlfriend emerge from the subway on the Mall only to run up the steps of the West Wing of the National Gallery, standing in for a Congressional office building—while one can see a clear shot of the Capitol dome five blocks away.

As a final capper on truly bad sequences, I note the opening credit

sequence of a turkey that nobody has seen but me: *Three for the Road* (1987). It begins with Senate staffer Charlie Sheen gunning his motorcycle directly towards the Capitol. But wait, this Capitol looks strange: the dome is too elongated, and there is a black high-rise building on its left. Sheen is actually heading for the State Capitol of Little Rock, Arkansas, where the film was shot. Maybe this was some kind of bizarre premonition of the Clinton Administration. *

Mark Your Calendar!

2 Monday, 6:30 pm CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

11 Wednesday, 6:30 pm CHRS Preservation Café: Eastern Market Status Report on Historic Market Master's Office, offered in partnership with DC's Historic Preservation Office and Office of Property Management, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the DC Preservation League. Ebenezer's Coffee House, 201 F Street, NE. Free and open to the public, no reservations required. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211. See page 4.

12 Thursday, 7:30 pm CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969.

17 Tuesday, 6:30 pm CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 543-4353.

21 Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm Ward 6 Family Day, sponsored by Councilmember Tommy Wells, featuring 18 Wednesday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Community Forum on DDOT Initiatives Affecting Capitol Hill

DDOT Director Emeka Moneme and other DDOT staff will discuss light rail, bus route realignment, 11th and South Capitol Street Bridge studies and work, Anacostia River projects, and other Hill traffic issues. St. Peter's Church basement hall, 2nd & C Streets, SE. Meeting is free and open to the public, no reservations required. Refreshments at 7:15 pm, CHRS business meeting at 7:30 pm, presentations at 7:45 pm. Details: Barbara Eck, eckbarbara@yahoo.com. See page 1.

a family picnic with free food and drink, celebrity softball tournament, basketball, tennis workshop, and swimming pool opening. Rosedale Recreation Center, 17th & Gales Streets, NE.

26 Thursday, 10:00 am Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 4th Street NW (One Judiciary Square), Room 220 south. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

JULY

4 Friday, 10:00 am Annual Capitol Hill 4th of July parade from Navy Yard to Eastern Market, featuring CHRS participants. 7 Monday, 6:30 pm CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

15 Tuesday, 6:30 pm CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 543-4353.

24 Thursday, 10:00 am Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 4th Street, NW, Room 220 South. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

