



NEWS

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July/August 2014

Office of Planning's Ellen McCarthy Greeted a Standing-Room Only Crowd

By Gary Peterson

CHRS was pleased to welcome Ellen McCarthy, Acting Director of the Office of Planning (OP), as the speaker at CHRS's June 4 membership meeting. The Hill Center event was overflowing with people wanting to ask questions and showed McCarthy the great interest that Capitol Hill residents have in city planning.

McCarthy previously served as Director of Planning from 2004 to 2007 during the Williams Administration and was replaced by Harriet Tregoning when Mayor Fenty was elected. Mayor Gray recently named McCarthy to replace Tregoning after she left in February to become Director of HUD's Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities. McCarthy's confirmation as a lame duck appointment is not assured.

During the meeting, McCarthy discussed the update of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. She noted that in her previous tenure at OP she had been in charge of preparing the current plan. The update will be a multi-year operation that will require hours of community input. During the question-and-answer session, one comment from the audience suggested that the Zoning

Commission had failed to pass many of the zoning recommendations in the Plan, leading to unnecessary red tape and expense. McCarthy pledged to prevent this from happening again.

The topic of popups—extra stories added to rowhouses outside the Historic District—was raised and conservation districts ("historic district lite") were suggested as a solution.

Previously the Historic Preservation staff has opposed the creation of these districts because of a lack of staff. McCarthy says that they are rethinking this and will soon announce a pilot program to assess the feasibility of these districts.

McCarthy was asked to address the lack of progress in the development of Reservation 13, located east of 19th Street SE. She reported it will be up to the new mayor to decide what will happen there.

It was gratifying to see many attendees welcome McCarthy back. There is much work to do and it will be interesting to see what priorities a new administration will focus on. ✧



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

DC Office of Planning Acting Director Ellen McCarthy discusses her vision for Capitol Hill with CHRS's Gary Peterson at the June Membership Forum.

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President's Column: Volunteers Keep Capitol Hill Vibrant

By Lisa Dale Jones

Hello! I'm honored to be the new President of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and want to express deep appreciation for Janet Quigley, who so ably led the organization the last two years.

When my husband and I relocated here four and a half years ago from Boston we knew we were moving into an area of beautiful older homes close to the Capitol, but not much beyond that. We were quickly blown away by countless community resources and treasures: the amazing neighborhood feel, the activism, the families, the wonderful long-time residents, the restaurants, the parks and Eastern Market.

A year later, when I became editor of this newsletter and got to know the Board members, I was awed by these dedicated volunteers who keep the organization going—not for themselves, but to keep Capitol Hill a beautiful, vibrant neighborhood for all its residents. CHRS relies on skilled, knowledgeable volunteers, some of whom donate nearly full-time hours, days and evenings, to their positions so you can live in a great, historic, urban neighborhood. In our September issue you'll see our proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. Where you see extremely low figures for major activities, it's because the largest part—the labor—is freely donated.

Our volunteers will be hard at work this coming year. CHRS will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in January 2015, which will coincide with the launch of our Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture series. Additionally, we'll be keeping an eye on various activities with the potential for huge ramifications on Capitol Hill—the CSX tunnel project,

the Hine project, the relocation of the Marine barracks, regulations concerning pocket parks, emissions from the Capitol Power Plant and more. And, of course, we'll have another successful House and Garden Tour on Mother's Day weekend.

In order for Capitol Hill to remain the great neighborhood that we all love, it takes far-seeing vision and the desire to strengthen its historic underpinnings. On a recent trip to Italy, my husband and I marveled at the many buildings from the 14th and 15th centuries that are still occupied. Our hotel in Florence was itself a palazzo originally built in the 1400s. For over 600 years its occupants felt compelled to keep it viable, restored, strengthened and preserved. Anyone along the way could have decided to knock it down but instead, a 600-year chain of owners valued the building enough to preserve it. That spirit still pervades the entire central city, ensuring that it's a major destination for tourists (and their dollars) today.

Looking out our hotel window, we could see the Ponte Vecchio, built in 1345. The story goes that during World War II, as the Allies approached Florence, the retreating Germans were ordered to blow up the bridges over the Arno River to slow them down. A particular German officer, who loved art and history, couldn't bring himself to



IMAGE COURTESY GARY JONES

The Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy was built in 1345.

destroy the historic Ponte Vecchio, so he blew up the street at both ends of the bridge, blocking anyone from crossing, but saving the bridge itself. You never know who's going to end up saving an historic structure!

I look forward to working with you over the coming year and together, protecting the future of Capitol Hill. ★

CHRS Tweets!

We now have a Twitter handle, @chrsDC, and are tweeting information on events of interest and new postings to the website. We hope this will allow us to communicate in a more timely fashion. If you tweet, please consider following CHRS and retweeting us to your friends. If you don't, not to worry, we are still sending e-mail blasts and mailing the monthly newsletter.

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: CapHRS@aol.com.

www.CHRS.org

Celebrating nearly 60 years helping to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the 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.

To start or renew a CHRS membership:

- ★ On the web at www.CHRS.org
- ★ Call (202) 543-0425; 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.

DDOT Addresses Triangle Park

By Elizabeth Nelson

Many of our readers are by now familiar with the ongoing controversy surrounding the so-called "triangle park" on Reservation 266. As reported in the *CHRS News* in 2013, the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) granted a permit to install plantings in a public triangle park (Reservation 266) at 13th Street and Tennessee Avenue, NE without prior notice to the appropriate Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) or to the community. This immediately raised CHRS' concerns as greenspace is an essential public amenity and the pocket parks are a contributing feature of both the landmarked L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington and the Capitol Hill Historic District. In addition, in a letter to ANC 6A dated October 25, 2013, DDOT stated that the triangle park was not a public park, but instead was "parking," commonly understood to mean the land between the sidewalk and the building line (not as a place to leave vehicles). Subsequently, the owners of the home adjacent to the park filed an application with the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to install a fence around the park that would eliminate public access.

In the June *News*, we reported that DDOT issued Departmental Order No. 1-2014 on April 30, 2014, revising its official position on parking and public parks in general. Order No. 1-2014 draws a distinction between parking and public parks, stating that DDOT shall preserve triangle parks and public parks as "publicly accessible neighborhood amenities." However, this did not address Reservation 266 specifically, leaving its status ambiguous.

Now, the happy update: In letters dated June 11 to the Chairs of both ANC 6A and ANC 6B, DDOT's Acting

Director Matthew T. Brown states that the agency's prior characterization of Reservation 266 as public parking was never intended to give exclusive use of the park to the adjacent property owners. Instead, he gave assurances that the "various triangle parks under DDOT's jurisdiction are integral elements of the L'Enfant Plan that should be maintained as parks and preserved as publicly accessible neighborhood amenities for the use and enjoyment of all." Brown also referenced the Departmental Order, emphasizing that "all permit applications for improvements to triangle parks must not "change the real or implied function of the park as public open space." Indeed, DDOT is "committed to working with the community and the adjacent property owners to modify the current landscaping to improve public access to Reservation 266."

Brown also promised to pursue a change to Title 24 of the definition of public parking in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) that would exclude all federal reservations from the District's power to designate land as public parking. This is important, as amendment of the DCMR will safeguard not only this particular pocket park but all the others that are equally essential to the quality of life on Capitol Hill.

It now seems unlikely that DDOT would approve a public space permit for the fence even if it were approved by HPRB. This success story would not have been possible without the commitment and persistence of our friends at ANC 6A, ANC 6B and the Committee of 100.

To view the DDOT documents in their entirety, visit: www.chrs.org/category/issues/public-space. ★

Historic Preservation Briefs

by Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) considered the following cases on May 29, 2014. HPRB is responsible for determining if proposed changes to a building are consistent with the DC Preservation Act. A “concept review” is a preliminary determination of a building owner’s plan to alter the building and if the concept is approved, the owner will return to the HPRB for a final review. In these reports, “staff” refers to the staff of the Historic Preservation Office, which serves as the staff of the HPRB.

819 D Street, NE, HPA 14-180, Way of the Cross Church (adaptive use of church for condominiums), revised concept/exterior alterations, rooftop addition. The HPRB found the concept to be consistent with the intent of the preservation act with the following conditions: A) The areaway

on 9th Street. should be expanded to the minimum dimension required to provide light to the lower level; B) the replacement clear glass should have a finish texture similar to the historic glazing; C) for new rooftop structures, only the parapet wall may be visible from public space; D) Option 2 from the April submission is selected for windows; and E) the applicant should work with staff on the selection of the brick for the annex parapet.

531 8th Street, SE, HPA 14-209, concept/storefront alterations/rooftop addition. The HPRB found the concept to be consistent with the intent of the preservation act with the following conditions: A) the plans should clarify the placement and sizing of any mechanical equipment to ensure that it will not be visible from 8th Street; B) the design of

the infill element to the left of the building should be revised to provide a change in plane from the façade of the subject building and study of a lowered roofline; C) the original south elevation should be largely retained; D) the specifications and detailing for the replacement windows and doors should be provided and the transom over the rear door should be sized to match the door opening.

719 12th Street, SE, HPA 13-630, revised concept/rear addition. The HPRB found the concept to be consistent with the intent of the preservation act with the condition that the applicant work with staff on the location of new meters and HVAC equipment and that the Board delegate further review to staff.

600 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, HPA 14-190, concept/landscape alterations (paving yard in public space without a permit). The HPRB found the concept to be consistent with the intent of the preservation act with the condition that the applicant further reduce paving and work with HPO to finalize the design with attention paid not only to the percentage of permeable surface, but also to the design and material details of the approach so that it is consistent with other properties in the historic district. ★

Researching Your House’s History Through the *Washington Post* Online

Thanks to the DC Public Library website, you can research the history of your house and its previous occupants through archival issues of *The Washington Post*, 1877–1997 and 1997–present.

Here's how! Visit www.dclibrary.org. From the top menu, choose Research ▶ Databases ▶ Local Newspapers ▶ The Washington Post, Current and Historic. Next, when you reach the Proquest page where it says “Barcode Required,” type in your DC Library card number to log in; then search *The Washington Post*. If you find an interesting article, you can e-mail it to yourself, again using your library card number. It will be waiting for you in your inbox!

For example, type in an address with quotes around it, e.g.: “1606 G Street.” *The Washington Post* articles show that a named individual at that address completed military training in 1944. Earlier, a named individual at that address was involved in an unpleasant divorce. You can then search for names of individuals connected with your house. What will YOUR search reveal? If you find something interesting, please feel free to share it with us on Twitter and Facebook!

Meeting Welcomes New Board, Honors Gloria Junge

The CHRS summer membership meeting was held June 4, 2014 at the Hill Center, prior to the Members' Forum (see related article).

Election Results: In accordance with the bylaws, election results for the Board of Directors were announced and members welcomed the 2014–15 Board: President: Lisa Dale Jones; First Vice President: Monte Edwards; Second Vice President: Drury Tallant; Secretary: Susan Burgerman; Treasurer: Patrick Crowley; At-Large: Chuck Burger, Ben Klay, Undine Nash, Jeff Fletcher, Jim Taylor and Mary Wadleigh.

Committee Reports: Monte Edwards, City Planning Chair, provided an update on the Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture competition. It will be open to students in Washington, DC historic preservation and urban planning programs. Participating institutions are being finalized and

the first entries are anticipated this winter. Paul Cromwell, House Tour Chair, reported that the 2014 house tour had more than 1,600 visitors—a 12% increase over last year—and raised more than \$50,000 for CHRS's preservation and educational efforts. Historic Preservation Chair Beth Purcell reported on the high volume of projects her committee is reviewing as a result of the improving economy.

Finally, we took the opportunity to recognize CHRS Office Manager Gloria Junge, who is moving on after five years of dedicated service. Outgoing Board President Janet Quigley presented her with a bouquet of flowers and Ms. Junge addressed



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

The summer membership meeting also featured a recognition of former CHRS Office Manager, Gloria Junge.

the group. Her favorite part of the job was talking and e-mailing with members, whom she feels are impressive, intelligent and loyal. Gloria will remain in the area and we look forward to seeing her around the neighborhood. ★

Update on New Zoning Regulations

On June 20, 2014, the DC Office of Planning posted the following update on its zoning blog (the text has been edited slightly for this newsletter):

Thank you for your time, attention, and valuable comments. Since setting down the draft proposed text of the revised Zoning Regulations for public review and comment on September 9, 2013, the Zoning Commission and Office of Planning have heard a number of suggestions and ideas through the public hearing and community outreach process. In fact, the Zoning Commission has so far received more than 1,100 public comments since setting down the draft proposed text on September 9, 2013. A

summary of comments received can be viewed in the case record (Z.C. Case No. 08-06A).

Having heard the extensive public comment and testimony, the Zoning Commission asked the Office of Planning to evaluate alternatives to specific proposals and to draft text that could refine the proposed Zoning Regulations—an interim measure to try to address some issues raised to date. The Office of Planning report, which was delivered to the Zoning Commission on June 16th, contains detailed information about the alternative proposals, including draft text.

The alternatives proposed by OP respond to comments received to date; however, the Zoning Commission

stressed that the record in the case remains open through September 15, 2014, and that additional comments are welcome. While the alternatives presented address many of the key issues identified, the proposed text does not respond to all comments raised during the public input process. The Office of Planning will continue to post additional information about these proposals and any other proposed changes.

CHRS encourages all of its members to continue to offer your comments and feedback to the Zoning Commission and OP through September 15 and beyond. Please see the original text on OP's blog at: <http://zoningdc.org>. ★

CHRS Seeks Quick Action on Shotgun House

By Beth Purcell

Capitol Hill is fortunate to have an example of a building type created by Africans and African Americans, the shotgun house at 1229 E Street, SE.

Shotgun houses are a vernacular building tradition with a long history beginning in Africa, then moving to Haiti, New Orleans and the south. Many of the over 25,000 slaves that French planters brought to Haiti from west Africa (present-day Nigeria) during 1780–1790 were members of the Yoruba tribe. The Yoruba built one-story, two-room houses, typically 10 x 20 feet, with wall heights of six to eight feet. Sometimes additional rooms were added, continuing the pattern. The building had one door under a front gable facing the road. Walls were solid mud, one foot thick, with a thatched roof. In Haiti, the Yoruba shotgun house tradition melded with a similar house form (a bohio) built by the Arawak Indians, a rectangular room with a front-facing gable and a front porch. French settlers built similar houses for themselves and for slaves. However, Haitian shotguns were built with wood framing, sometimes half-timbered. In 1791, Haiti became independent. In 1809, many free blacks left Haiti and settled in New Orleans, where many of these immigrants (as well as slaves) already lived. Free blacks from Haiti, able to own land and skilled in the building trades, built shotgun houses in response to a need for housing. Documents from the early to mid-nineteenth century show that shotgun houses were common in New Orleans. The shotgun form spread outward from New Orleans through Louisiana and ultimately, much of the south (John Michael Vlach, “The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy, 1976).

As many of our members know, the shotgun house on Capitol Hill has been deteriorating for years. CHRS believes that the owner of the shotgun house has engaged in demolition by neglect by failing to maintain the building and as a result, has blighted the surrounding neighborhood for a number of years. Neighbors on E Street have contacted CHRS expressing concern about the condition of the building. CHRS urges the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to solve this problem one of three ways:

- 1) The HPRB should recommend denying the permit to demolish the building and require the owner to promptly stabilize and restore the building.
- 2) If the HPRB determines that the building has lost its structural integrity, any raze permit should be conditioned on the owner promptly reconstructing the building in-kind at his own cost.
- 3) The final, and least desirable, option is that any demolition permit should be conditioned on a project of special merit.

To read the CHRS letter to HPRB, visit: www.chrs.org, click on history-and-preservation, then click on testimony. ★

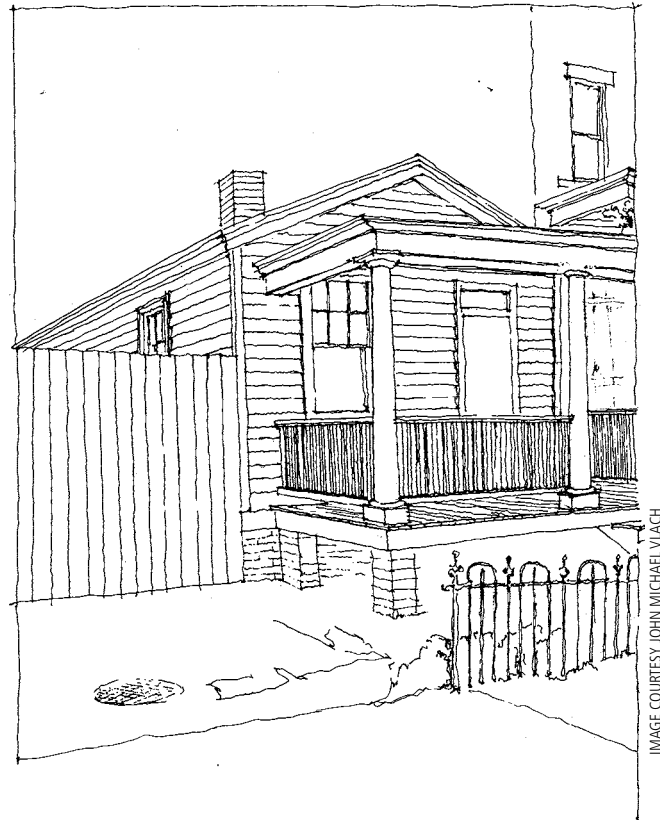


Illustration of the shotgun house at 1229 E Street, SE.

Thank You, CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, patrons and sponsors.

NEW MEMBERS

Andrea Weinberg

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Patrick Crowley

Zoning Briefs

By Gary Peterson

The CHRS Zoning Committee met on June 17 and considered Zoning Commission Planned Unit Development (PUD) application 13-12. This case involves an application for a PUD for 1333 M Street, SE. This property is located to the east of the 11th Street Bridge and the applicant proposes four buildings on the site. Only one of these buildings is currently being evaluated but the other three will still have to be reviewed before they are built. The proposed buildings are nine to 11 stories in height, but the governing Comprehensive Plan only allows buildings to be up to eight stories. The case has not been set for hearing and the committee provided comments that will be given to the Board and the applicant at a later date.

The zoning committee also approved the following BZA cases:

18798. Application for a special exception for a rear deck addition to an existing one-family row dwelling not meeting the lot occupancy, rear yard and nonconforming structure requirements in the R-4 District at 1425 North Carolina Avenue, NE. The proposed deck will change the lot occupancy to 70%. There will be a much larger deck constructed on the property that is connected by stairs to the proposed deck but it is not

included in the application because it is not above 4 feet in height. Letters in opposition and in support have been filed. The committee determined that the deck in this case did not have a substantial impact on neighbors.

18797. Application for a variance from the lot occupancy requirements and a variance from the nonconforming structure provisions to allow an addition to an existing one-family row dwelling in the R-4 District at 626 A Street, SE. This involves construction in a nonconforming dogleg that is only 4 feet wide and already counts against the lot occupancy. There will be no impact on the neighbors.

18806. Application for a special exception for addition to one-family row dwelling in the CAP/R-4 zone at 425 New Jersey Avenue, SE. This involves construction of a second story on top of an existing one-story space at the rear of the house. There will be no impact on neighboring properties.

18803. Application for a special exception for a three-story rear addition to an existing one-family row dwelling under section 223, not meeting the lot occupancy requirements in the R-4 District at 625 South Carolina Avenue, SE.

This construction will change the lot occupancy from 60% to 70%. The third story may be challenged by the Historic Preservation Committee.

18807. Application for a special exception and variances from to allow the continued use of an accessory parking lot in the CAP/R-4 District at 415 3rd Street, NE, 416 4th Street, NE and 424 4th Street, NE. The parking lot is in the center of a large square. The committee has approved this application twice in the past 20 years.

18804. The committee unanimously opposed the application for a variance from the lot area requirements to allow the conversion of a former grocery store into a four-unit apartment house in the CAP/R-4 District at 538 3rd Street, NE. The lot the store is on has less than 1500 square feet although is allowed two units as a matter of right. The minimum requirement is typically 900 square feet per unit. ★

11th Street Bridge Update: Ramps Opening and Closing

- New exit ramp from SE Freeway eastbound opened at 11th Street on June 20!
- Entrance ramp from 11th Street to SE Freeway westbound CLOSED for construction beginning June 21 and scheduled to reopen on August 23.



Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

JULY

7 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first
floor. Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

10 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House,
420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details:
Gary Peterson, (202) 547-7969.

15 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill
Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second
floor. Details: Lisa Dale Jones,
(202) 543-0425.

SEPTEMBER

1 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first
floor. Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

11 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House,
420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details:
Gary Peterson, (202) 547-7969.

16 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill
Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second
floor. Details: Lisa Dale Jones,
(202) 543-0425.

17 Wednesday, 6:30–7:15 pm
CHRS Preservation Café: “Breweries of
Capitol Hill,” presented by Garrett
Peck. Ebenezers Coffee House, 2nd and
F Streets, NE. Details: Elizabeth Nelson,
(202) 543-3512.