



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

# NEWS

www.chrs.org

October 2015

## How Will RFK Be Redeveloped?

By Monte Edwards, Chair of the CHRS City Planning Committee

On September 16, a community meeting was held at St. Coletta of Greater Washington to seek input about the future of the RFK Stadium site. The meeting was convened by Events DC, which is responsible for the operations and management of RFK and the surrounding property, as well as the Washington Convention Center, Nationals Park, Carnegie Library and the non-military portions of the Armory. Events DC is funded in part with over \$100 million from DC taxpayers. Earlier this year, Events DC told the DC Council they were conducting a redevelopment study for the stadium area examining two scenarios: 1) programming the RFK campus under the assumption that the stadium will be demolished and 2) programming the campus assuming that the stadium will be retained with the same footprint. Since 2014 they have spent over \$300,000 in a contract with the consulting firm Brailsford & Dunlavy to develop a redevelopment plan.

But no redevelopment plan was presented at the community meeting. Rather, Events DC told the over 150 residents who attended that the meeting was for them to listen to the ideas from the audience about how to redevelop the 180 acres that comprise the RFK complex.

Events DC provided no discussions about existing plans that affect the complex, such as the *Anacostia Riverwalk* (a 20-mile trail on both sides of the Anacostia River that is a recreational amenity and represents a key component of the Anacostia Waterfront, connecting residents, visitors and communities to the river, to each other and to recreational and commercial destinations) and the *Anacostia Waterfront Initiative* (a plan for a network of distinctive green parks and varied maritime activities, connecting neighborhoods to the river and also integrating sustainable low-impact development near the river).

### Football or No Football

Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen made it clear at the meeting that he believes there are better uses for the site than a stadium and explained: "Oceans of asphalt aren't necessarily serving the neighborhood in the way we wish they were." Attendees at the meeting voiced overwhelming opposition to a new NFL stadium on the site (it was noteworthy that the comments all avoided mentioning the "Redskins"). Not one of the many focus groups that the attendees formed recommended a new football stadium at the site. The proposals from the attendees at the meeting focused on publicly-accessible green

space such as sports fields, restoration of and accessibility to the riverbank, an outdoor amphitheater (similar to the one at Yards Park), bringing back to DC the Capitol Polo Club (that used to play on the polo field near the FDR memorial) and even removal of the stadium entirely in favor of the creation of a dramatic gateway into the City (similar to what the National Capital Planning Commission [NCPC] proposed in its 2006 Stadium Site Redevelopment Study).

Despite appearing to listen to the views of the attendees, it is likely that Events DC will advocate building or renovating a stadium at the site, claiming that the site is large enough to accommodate other uses,

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# President's Column: Your Turn!

By Lisa Dale Jones

**T**his is the season for citizen input... As you read in our cover story this month, Events DC claims to want your input into future plans for the area that currently includes RFK Stadium and its acres of surface parking lots. Although the participants at the meeting overwhelmingly voiced support for green space and playing fields—and have no interest in a new NFL stadium—it's not clear if the public's wishes will really be taken into account.

This column is being written prior to the September 28 DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) open house to get feedback on the District's first-ever state rail plan. The future of transportation in the greater Washington DC area is at stake: right now, CSX's plans to run more trains in the future doesn't mesh with a desire to increase commuter rail coming in from Virginia. This is due to the fact that CSX owns the only rail bridge across the Potomac leading to Union Station and isn't obligated to provide more access for commuter rail. The region clearly won't function well in years to come if even more cars are clogging the roads during increasingly lengthy rush hours. DDOT needs to hear from you!

All over the District, there are ANC meetings, community policing meetings, zoning hearings and more. We have the opportunity to make our voices heard, so let's use it!

CHRS wants to hear from its members—what issues affecting Capitol Hill are important to you?

Here's our current mission statement. Based on this statement, what would you like to see us doing? Feel free to send us an email at [CapHRS@aol.com](mailto:CapHRS@aol.com). ★

## CHRS Mission Statement

*Capitol Hill is a special place. We promote, preserve, and enhance the character of our historic neighborhoods.*

*Since its founding in 1955, CHRS has worked continuously to make Capitol Hill the desirable location it has now become. Due to CHRS's efforts, Capitol Hill won designation as a historic district in 1976. Today, that legacy of standing up for the community continues with our work in planning, zoning, historic preservation, and public safety. Our annual House and Garden Tour shares the best of Capitol Hill with thousands of visitors. Our Preservation Cafés introduce homeowners to craftspeople who have intimate knowledge of caring for historic homes. Our popular walking tours highlight Capitol Hill history and show how residents lived on the Hill many years ago.*

*CHRS is a volunteer organization, made up of Hill residents who love their historic neighborhoods and want to ensure that the unique character of the Hill is around for future generations. Come join us!*

## Q & A on Home Maintenance and Repair

CHRS encourages members and nonmembers to email questions about historic district guidelines. We try to answer questions as best we can. If you have a question, please e-mail CHRS at [caphrs@aol.com](mailto:caphrs@aol.com).

### Replacing a front door

- Q. We are planning to re-paint the front of our home the same color. However, we want to replace the front door with a different design. Specifically, what do we need to share with you with regard to design and color?**
- A.** There are no rules on paint colors in the Capitol Hill Historic District, but a building permit is needed to change a front door, which should be an expedited process at the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). The DC Historic Preservation Office (HPO) is in charge of design changes in historic districts. The staff person for Capitol Hill is Sarah VanLandingham, who can be reached at: [sarah.vanlandingham@dc.gov](mailto:sarah.vanlandingham@dc.gov). You should email her about your plans. Photographs of the existing door as well as the door that you would like to install would be helpful to her. Please see also the CHRS publication on doors, "Entrance—When a Door is More Than a Door," [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org) > Historic Preservation > CHRS Historic District Guidelines.

# Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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## ABOUT CHRS

Capitol Hill is a special place. We promote, preserve, and enhance the character of our historic neighborhoods.

Since its founding in 1955, CHRS has worked continuously to make Capitol Hill the desirable location it has now become. Due to CHRS's efforts, Capitol Hill won designation as a historic district in 1976. Today, that legacy of standing up for the community continues with our work in planning, zoning, historic preservation, and public safety.

CHRS is a volunteer organization, made up of Hill residents who love their historic neighborhoods and want to ensure that the unique character of the Hill is around for future generations. Come join us!

To learn more or join, please visit:  
[www.CHRS.org](http://www.CHRS.org)

# Zoning Briefs

By Gary Petersen

**O**n September 10, 2015 the CHRS Zoning Committee considered the following cases:

**ZC 15-07.** The site of this Planned Unit Development (PUD) application involves property that consists of approximately 14,485 square feet of land area and requires relief from the minimum PUD lot area requirements. The property is located on the south side of H Street, NE between 3rd and 4th Streets, NE. The property is located in the C-2-B Zone District of the H Street Overlay and in a housing sub-area. The applicant proposes to develop the property into a 90-foot residential building with ground-floor retail. The building will include approximately 80,500 square feet of residential development and 6,160 square feet of ground floor retail. The project will include approximately 125 residential units, including over 6,500 square feet of affordable housing. The project will have a floor area ratio of 6.0 and include approximately 29 parking spaces. At the meeting the applicant's representative was unable to answer all of the questions from the committee and the committee voted to defer action.

**BZA 18979.** This case involves the application for a variance from the nonconforming structure requirements to allow an illegally constructed two-story carriage house to be converted to an artist studio in the R-4 zone at 400 K Street, NE. This case was filed in February and has been continued three times at the request of the applicant. The applicant has been invited to attend the committee meetings but has failed to appear. The committee voted unanimously to oppose the application and to oppose any further continuances.

**BZA 19064.** In this case the applicant seeks to build a deck on the rear of his home at 1007 F Street, NE. The applicant needs an area variance and the committee voted unanimously to support the application. The committee believed that the facts that the property is enclosed on the east and south by walls and fences that are 12 to 21 feet high and is covered by an access easement supported the granting of the variance.

**BZA 19063.** The applicant wishes to add a third floor and to fill in a dog leg on a property located at 215 A Street, NE. The property is already non-conforming in lot area, lot width and lot occupancy and the addition of a third floor does not increase any of these. The applicant also produced letters of support from neighbors. The committee voted to support the application.

**BZA 19087.** This case is similar the one immediately above. The only difference is that the applicant wants to add a second floor over an existing one-story addition. The applicant presented letters of support from neighbors and the committee voted to support the application. ★

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# Historic Preservation Briefs

by Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on July 30, 2015. 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 (HPO), which serves as the staff of the HPRB. HPRB does not meet in August.

**1220 D Street, SE, HPA 15-482**, permit/alterations to entrance. This flat-front building is one of three identical brick apartment buildings designed in 1917/1918 by W.S. Plager. The applicants propose to remedy inappropriate changes made to the house in the past, including replicating the original double-door configuration with a new painted steel door with full lights and a transom. Although steel doors are not ordinarily appropriate in the Capitol Hill Historic District, the painted steel door would replicate the profile and configuration of the original wood door and was therefore determined to be compatible. The applicants also proposed removing the existing non-historic metal canopy over the front door and replacing it with a barrel-shaped lighted metal canopy suspended by metal wires. The existing canopy is an inappropriate later addition to an historic building that never had one. The HPRB stated that although historic preservation rules allow the existing canopy to remain, they do not allow adding a new canopy to a historic building that never had one. CHRS supported

the replacement doors, but opposed the new canopy, consistent with our position in other cases: new structures should not be added to the front of historic buildings where that structure had never existed.

**1010 and 1012 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, HPA 15-425**, subdivision, concept/rear additions. These are a pair of 19th century three-story brick buildings, with ells in the rear. The applicant proposes to combine the two lots into one (subdivision, allowing a shared egress stair in the rear), to construct additions at the rear, retaining much of the fabric of 1010 and adding a fourth story 20 feet back from the front of the buildings. In the past, a store-front had been added to 1012, eliminating the stair to the original front entrance and blocking the first story windows. The applicant offered several alternatives to modify the entrance to 1010. The HPRB approved the subdivision and the concept, directing the applicant to work with staff on the design of the front and rear elevations and to return the front of 1012 to the original condition if possible. CHRS supported returning 1012 to its original condition but believed that the plans lacked specifics on key points: demolition plans, doors, windows and materials in the rear and visibility of the fourth story addition from public space. For these reasons it was not possible to evaluate whether the project was compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

The following cases, which CHRS also reviewed, appeared on the HPRB consent calendar on July 23, 2015:

- **433 6th Street, NE, HPA 15-363**, concept/attic addition.
- **123 6th Street, SE, HPA 13-262**, concept renewal/side and rear addition.
- **1015 E Street, SE, HPA 15-499**, concept/rear carriage house. This was the third round for this HPRB case. See CHRS News February and April, 2015 for prior coverage.
- **1209 Independence Avenue, SE, HPA 15-488**, concept/rear addition, roof deck
- **215 A Street, NE, HPA 15-389**, concept/enclose dogleg and roof addition.
- **416 G Street, SE, HPA 15-419**, concept/front addition. ★

**Interested in learning more about historic district designation?**

Contact CHRS at [caphrs@aol.com](mailto:caphrs@aol.com).

# North Lincoln Park Walking Tours

By Elizabeth Nelson

On Sunday, September 13, 2015, Beth Purcell led a walking tour of the North Lincoln Park area. The weather was perfect and fifty people (plus dogs) turned out, most of them residents of the immediate area.

The first stop on the tour was the 200 block of Tennessee Avenue, NE where Beth paused to explain the basics of brick coursing. Examples of headers and stretchers, soldier and sailor courses, iron spot brick, Flemish bond and common bond brickwork could all be seen just on this one block. There were also examples of dormers and a “snowflake” window.

A block farther northeast on Tennessee Avenue is home to examples of Harry Kite’s work and a suitable venue for an explanation of the economics of porch-front houses.

An alternating cornice design with a raking eyebrow parapet scallop with oval medallion and a rectangular stepped arch with a 3-pane rectangular window in center were the highlights of homes on the 300 block of 14th Street, NE, designed by well-known architect Albert H. Beers.

The tour continued on to the 1300 block of C Street, NE with its original “small houses”—single-story structures by Charles Gessford built as workforce housing—then on to Warren Street with a prime example of rowhouse flats. The last stop was the spectacular row of B. Stanley Simmons houses on the 1300 block of Constitution Avenue, NE, just barely within the Capitol Hill Historic District. These feature classic design elements including acanthus leaf detail and ornate brickwork.

Tour attendees received handouts with the names of the architects and builders, the original development cost of the homes on the tour, the

years in which they were constructed plus illustrations of brick styles. Of particular interest was a drawing of the front elevation for a Beers house, making it possible to compare the original concept with the appearance of the home today.

As we go to press, a second tour for another part of North Lincoln Park is scheduled for September 27.

Both tours were co-sponsored by the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association. Photographs and handouts are posted on the CHRS website under CHRS Activities>Walking Tours. Please continue to check the Calendar page for information about these and other outreach events. ★



The North Lincoln Park Walking Tour stops at the B. Stanley Simmons homes on Constitution Avenue NE (top), as well as rowhouse flats on Warren Street, NE (bottom).



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

but without addressing the point that NFL football involves tail-gating which requires a huge amount of surface parking, for 10 home games a year or less.

### **The Need for Caution**

Events DC is primarily focused on benefiting the restaurant and hotel industries by attracting non-DC residents to events in DC. The interests of DC residents, as well as local cultural and preservation values, have historically been given little weight or have been completely ignored by Events DC (and its predecessors the Convention Authority, the Armory Board or the Sports and Entertainment Commission). The past precedent includes the following:

### **The Late 1980s: Whether or Not to Build a New Football Stadium to Keep the Redskins from Moving to Maryland**

Kingman Park residents protested that they had not been consulted about the various stadium design proposals and complained that their concerns over existing parking and traffic problems at the stadium had not been addressed. In part because of the opposition of Kingman Park residents (who flooded Congress with visits and lobbying efforts), the Redskins organization was unable to obtain federal approval for the plan and moved to Maryland.

### **The Early 1990s: Kingman Island Theme Park for Children**

The federal government transferred Kingman Island and nearby Heritage Island to the city in 1995 and plans for a theme park development began to move forward. Once again, Kingman Park residents were worried about traffic and parking issues, as well as the possible environmental degradation

that construction might wreak on Anacostia Park and the Anacostia River. They began lobbying against the theme park and participated in lawsuits to force the developers to assess any environmental damage the park might cause. Children's Island was cancelled in 1999.

### **2002 and 2003: American Le Mans Series Racing Event**

Kingman Park residents were again concerned about traffic and parking, but also about the excessive noise levels the lengthy event would create. Citizens were outraged when they learned that District officials had ignored laws and regulations requiring an environmental impact assessment prior to the race and that Le Mans officials had lied to the city about noise levels. When the American Le Mans organization tried to hold a second race at RFK in 2003, outraged Kingman Park residents successfully forced DC officials to cancel the city's 10-year lease with the company (and no more races were ever held).

### **2013–2014: Carnegie Library Into the Spy Museum**

Events DC and owners of the International Spy Museum announced grand plans to expand the historic Carnegie Library in Mount Vernon Square and move the Spy Museum there from Gallery Place. But the library is far too small to accommodate all the Spy Museum attractions. So Events DC proposed more than doubling the size of the 63,000-square-foot building. On the ground level, the additions would include two expansive, glass-encased wings, a café, a visitor center and the museum gift shop. The Historic Preservation Review Board rejected the proposal, relying in large measure on a statement by the DC Preservation League, which called

the proposal "an offensive request" and one that "highlights Event DC's lack of respect for this building, the community, and this public process."

### **What Have We Learned?**

The four examples of the insensitivity of Events DC to the interests of DC residents and lack of respect for the local cultural and preservation considerations or the public process indicate that perhaps it is time to consider placing the entire 180-acre RFK complex under a new authority that would respect those values. ★

# Painting Historic Brick: A Complex Question

By Elizabeth Nelson

The September Preservation Café featured local architectural conservator and Capitol Hill resident, Justine Posluszny Bello, speaking on the issues associated with painting historic brick rowhouses. Ms. Bello premised the talk on the idea that the questions surrounding the painting of historic brick (or not) are not straightforward and rely greatly on context; a simple “yes” or “no”, or “pro” or “con” position may be too simplistic. You might have thought a talk on paint would be as dull as “watching paint dry”—not so in this case. Ms. Bello is an engaging speaker and included slides, both whimsical and informative, in her presentation.

Ms. Bello explained some of the reasons why people have historically used paints (both on brick and elsewhere): to functionally protect, to inspire and delight, to visually unify or visually differentiate, to show off one’s class or wealth, to “upgrade” humble materials, even to communicate information in the form of signage. She also described the past precedent for painting brick and historically what types of paints have performed well on brick

surfaces: paints that are “breathable” and allow moisture and salts to readily pass through both the brick and the coating, such as limewashes. Ms. Bello then described how many modern paints create an impervious barrier on the brick surface, meaning moisture and salts end up trapped within the brick; with no place to go, the sensitive brick building material ends up becoming damaged.

Ms. Bello discussed that it might be too simple to characterize all painted brick as “bad” or “destructive” and instead to consider the question of appropriateness: finding an appropriate paint that is compatible with a specific type of brick (and yes, there are many different types of bricks with different qualities out there) from both a historical and a physical/technical perspective. Ms. Bello listed some of the resources available to homeowners to help them make informed decisions concerning their specific property: Technical Preservation Briefs published by the National Park Service, knowledgeable and reputable contractors, technical representatives at paint companies

themselves, third-party consultants and experts and of course CHRS. While housepaint is something that is mostly unregulated in the Capitol Hill Historic District, this is not the case in all historic districts outside of DC; it’s important to familiarize yourself with the local laws in your community to understand what is regulated and what is not and in turn, to use all the information you’ve collected to make informed decisions that are good for the longevity your historic treasure. ★

## October Preservation Café: Energy Code Fundamentals

David M. Epley, Green Building Program Manager at the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), will speak about Energy Code Fundamentals for Residential Construction at our next Preservation Café on Wednesday, October 21, 2015. Epley will address new residential energy code requirements, common mistakes, best practices and the permitting and inspections process, followed by a Q&A session at the end.

The presentation will begin at 7 pm at the Kaiser Permanente building, at 700 2nd Street, NE. Enter on the street level and turn immediately to your left after you pass through the front doors.

The event is free and handicapped accessible and the public is encouraged to attend. No reservations required.

## Thank You, CHRS Supporters

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

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## Capitol Hill Restoration Society

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### OCTOBER

**5** Monday, 6:30 pm

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

**8** Thursday, 7:30 pm

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

**20** Tuesday, 6:30 pm

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

**21** Wednesday, 7–8 pm

Preservation Café: Energy Code Fundamentals for Residential Construction. Kaiser Permanente Building, 700 2nd Street, NE. Details on the CHRS website at [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org), or call the office at (202) 543-0425.

### NOVEMBER

**2** Monday, 6:30 pm

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

**12** Thursday, 7:30 pm

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

**17** Tuesday, 6:30 pm

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

**18** Wednesday, 7–8 pm

Preservation Café: Home Maintenance Tips. Kaiser Permanente Building, 700 2nd Street, NE. Details on the CHRS website at [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org), or call the office at (202) 543-0425.