



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

# NEWS

www.chrs.org

May 2016

## The House Tour is Here! Tickets Still Available at Eastern Market

By Patrick Crowley

It's one of the stand-out events that defines the character of our community here on Capitol Hill and Mother's Day weekend wouldn't be the same without this annual celebration. But it comes early this year: May 7 and 8! If you don't yet have your tickets to the CHRS House & Garden Tour, you can still buy them at Eastern Market both mornings of the tour weekend.

For 59 years CHRS members and neighbors have opened their doors

to welcome friends and neighbors from across the city to come see the wonderful variety of Capitol Hill homes. The homes reflect both our passion for preserving the heritage of the historic built environment balanced by the realities of 21st-century living. This year will showcase great variety; and while these houses are so very different, they also remain faithful to the character of Capitol Hill.

*Continued on page 7*



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Visit 1001 C Street, SE on this year's tour.

### House Tour Docents Needed

Docents are an essential component of the annual House & Garden Tour. We help check people in at each house, keep the traffic flowing and add a layer of protection and security for the homeowners. As important as the task is, it's also very fun to sit in a lovely home and greet visitors--you just might find that many of them will be old friends you haven't seen in ages. It's also a grand opportunity to make new friends. Additionally, you and your fellow docents will be invited to the President's Party after the event as a "thank you."

We'll be recruiting up to the day of the Tour in order to ensure we have complete coverage and to fill in any last-minute cancellations, so it's never too late to offer. There are three shifts: one on Saturday and two on Sunday. The Saturday shift runs from 4-7 pm; on Sunday, the shifts run from 12:00-2:30 pm and 2:30-5 pm. Volunteers should arrive at least 15 minutes early in order to become familiarized with the house.

Please contact Elizabeth Nelson at elizabeth\_knits@yahoo.com or (202) 329-7864 to sign up—we'll be happy to have you!

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# May 9 Overbeck Lecture: Frederick Douglass in Washington

By John Franzen

On Monday, May 9, the Overbeck History Lecture Series welcomes National Park Service museum curators Bob Sonderman and Ka'mal McClarin for an illustrated presentation on Frederick Douglass's years in Washington, including a display of some of the great abolitionist's personal possessions. Douglass, who escaped from slavery on Maryland's Eastern Shore, spent a significant part of his life in the District of Columbia, including seven years in the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Sonderman is regional curator for the National Park Service—National Capital Region, with responsibility for the long-term care and preservation of museum property for over forty parks in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. He also directs the National Park Service Museum Resource Center, a vast storage facility for museum collections

providing curatorial support to the parks of the National Capital Region.

McClarin is curator of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site here in Washington and served as the editor of *Frederick Douglass: A Voice for Freedom and Justice*. He also serves as curator-at-large for other National Capital Parks East historic sites, including the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House and the Carter G. Woodson National Historic Site.

The lecture will be held at Hill Center at 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE at 7:30 pm. As always, admission is free, but a reservation is required due to limited seating. Go to [hillcenterdc.org/home/programs/2511](http://hillcenterdc.org/home/programs/2511) or simply call (202) 547-4172. ★

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*The Overbeck Lectures are sponsored by the Capitol Hill Community Foundation.*

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## Zoning Briefs

By Gary Peterson

The CHRS Zoning Committee considered only one case at its meeting on April 7, 2016 and voted to approve the application.

**BZA #19252.** This case involves an application for special exceptions to allow a rear addition to a single family house located in a R-4 zone

at 605 G Street, SE. The property is nonconforming in lot size, width, open court width and lot occupancy. The applicant proposes to remove an old, one story, lean-to addition and replace it with a modern, one story addition. The addition will increase the lot occupancy from 62% to 64% and will extend a 3.3-foot dogleg. ★

## Thank You, CHRS Supporters

*We thank these new CHRS supporters at the following membership levels.*

### NEW MEMBER

Kim & Joseph Hemley Butz

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## Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Public Safety\** . . . . . Undine Nash  
*Zoning\** . . . . . Gary Peterson

*\* Chair is an appointed Board Member*

### NEWSLETTER

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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.

### 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)

# April Preservation Café: Mortar Matters

By Elizabeth Nelson

The April Preservation Café featured local architectural conservator and Capitol Hill resident, Justine Posluszny Bello, speaking on the issues associated with pointing historic brick rowhouses. Ms. Bello premised the talk on the idea that the questions surrounding how, why or why not to re-point historic brick are not straightforward and rely greatly on context.

People often use the phrase “brick and mortar” to describe a structure of substance, heft, value and importance. Although “mortar” represents one-half of this phrase, most people give far more attention to the “brick.” Ms. Bello stressed that although a humble building material in some ways, a properly designed, mixed and installed mortar is critical to the structural integrity of any building. Ms. Bello provided some brief historical context of mortar and how it has—and has not—changed over the years.

Ms. Bello then described how many modern mortars can interact negatively with the brick, meaning that moisture and salts end up trapped within the brick; with no place to go, the brick building material ends up becoming damaged. She elaborated on the relationship between brick and mortar: mortar should, usually, be “sacrificial” to the brick. This means that if you have to choose, you’d rather your pointing mortar fail first, before your brick. This is because it’s a lot easier to replace some failed mortar by repointing than to replace failed brick. She explained that many modern mortars rely heavily on the use of Portland cement, a component that can end up being too hard,

dense and not “breathable” to be used with the historic bricks in many historic Capitol Hill homes. A more traditional mortar would be based on the use of a lime putty or “quick lime,” which is softer and yields a more porous mortar.

That said, Ms. Bello discussed that it might be too simple to characterize all modern mortar as “bad” or “destructive” and instead to consider the question of appropriateness: finding an appropriate mortar 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 masonry and mortar mix companies themselves, third-party consultants and experts and of course CHRS.

While mortar type, color or texture is something that is 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. ✪

# Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on March 24, 2016. 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.

At the hearing HPRB provided guidance on garage roof decks:

**1120 Park Street, NE, HPA 16-104,** concept/garage roof deck. The applicants propose building a new garage that includes a roof deck with a simple vertical wood railing. CHRS agreed with the staff that the garage’s materials are appropriate and that the new garage would help to define the edge of the alley. Although HPRB had approved a garage and roof deck at 134 11th Street, NE (HPA 15-633, November 2015), CHRS contended that a garage roof deck visible from inside the alley, as this garage roof deck would be, is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. Alleys are some of the best-preserved spaces on Capitol Hill; while long neglected in some cases, this has allowed the original elevations, windows and doors to remain intact. A recent HPO publication notes that Capitol Hill has a significant number of private garages and describes them as such:

*The private garage tends to be a modest, one story brick structure with single-bay openings for a single car and located at the rear of*

*residential lots and facing the alley. Garage buildings are either freestanding or attached and built independently or together in rows. ...*

*Building Style and Characteristics: The standard garage form—a small, one-story, single-bay structure—was fully developed and widely built by the 1910s.*

*Typically, the garage is purely utilitarian with a garage door opening on the front, sometimes a window on one side wall, flat roof, and little or no ornamentation.*

*Garages were built as freestanding structures and as attached structures, both independently and together.<sup>1</sup>*

CHRS contended that garages are a historic building form worthy of respect. Key characteristics of historic garages are that they are one-story and utilitarian. The proposed roof deck conflicted with both traits:

- It would add a roof deck, which effectively acts as a second story; and
- It would compromise the utilitarian character of the alley by introducing a recreation space.

CHRS also argued that adding a roof deck to an existing garage or building a new garage with a roof deck raised the same issues of preserving the alley scape as well as views within alleys. We urged that the HPRB apply the same rules to garages as to street-facing buildings: any garage roof deck should not be visible from inside the alley. In a prior case considering 1102 Park Street, NE, HPA 15-198 (March 3, 2015), concerns about the roof deck on the garage were satisfied because the roof deck

would not be visible from the alley and the one-story utilitarian character of the alley would be preserved.

In addition, we noted that DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey (p. 38) contains a recommendation to “re-examine the functional vs. cultural landscape of alleys” and to develop an Alley Master Plan and Preservation Guidelines. If garage roof decks are allowed to proliferate in the interim, complete with umbrellas, grills, and lighting, any master plan will fail to regulate and protect alleyscapes.

The Board stated that in general, roof decks on garages are not appropriate. Several Board members saw a need to balance the need for increased density with preserving the scale, proportion, and consistency of historic alleys and that the key to analysis is the context of the accessory building. To preserve the alley view shed in this case, the Board voted to require that the applicants move the railing (and thus the deck area) back three feet from the edge of the garage roof, thus significantly reducing the visibility of the roof deck from inside the alley. A garage should be constructed of more permanent material (e.g., brick) than the roof deck (generally wood) and it should be possible to remove the roof deck in the future without damaging the garage. Several Board members stated garages should not be excessively tall (e.g., not more than 10.5 feet); they also added that overhead doors on garages were more in keeping with alleys compared to roll up garage doors (a commercial feature), but the Board approved a rollup door in this case. The Board directed the applicants to work with

<sup>1</sup> HPO, DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey, 21, 22.

staff on the color and finish of the railing and the size and color of the light fixtures.

**649 Constitution Avenue, NE**, HPA 16-242, concept/new deck on existing brick garage. This house and lot are unusual because the garage is attached to the house and there is no rear yard. The garage roof deck railing would be constructed of solid horizontal wood to the edge of the garage roof. CHRS testified that HPO's DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey (p. 22) shows a one-story brick garage at the rear of 622 A Street, NE (circa 1902) as an example of a historic garage, a garage that would be compromised by adding a roof deck. The garage at 622 A Street, NE is within blocks of this proposed garage with roof deck. Several Board members asked

about the reason for the vinyl siding above the brick coursing, which the applicants are still investigating. The Board approved the concept with the following stipulations:

- The vinyl siding should be modified or removed.
- The deck railing must be examined for finish, color and transparency.
- The railing could be moved back, but this was not required.
- The Board approved only the garage height shown in the plans.

The Board, in approving the roof deck, cautioned that 649 Constitution Avenue, NE—one of a only a few houses with an attached garage—is a unique condition and is not a precedent.

The following cases, in which CHRS participated, were on the consent calendar. The first two cases are the first HRPB cases in the Swampoodle addition to the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**734 3rd Street, NE**, HPA 16-261, concept/rear addition, raze garage, and façade repairs.

**222 G Street, NE**, HPA 16-260, concept/infill dogleg and replace windows.

**328 D Street, SE**, HPA 16-246, concept/rear addition. ★

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

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

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## Bees, Please!

*By Toni Burnham*

**W**ith spring in full swing, we're here to check back in on an historic resource that is seriously threatened on Capitol Hill: the honeybee population. Now that it is finally warm, DC beekeepers believe that survivor bees in the wild are likely to build up quickly and swarm. This is exactly what the beekeepers want to see!

Because of losses nationwide, many beekeepers are having difficulty finding bees, and these hardy survivors are probably the best possible bees to cultivate. This is where we would like to enlist the help of our neighbors.

If you see a swarm of bees, or even think you might, please call (202) 255-4318 or send an email to [dcbees@dcbeekeepers.org](mailto:dcbees@dcbeekeepers.org) and we

will send an experienced beekeeper over there as quickly as possible to assist you. Insecticides truly will not take care of your situation, but we can. The trained beekeepers will catch the bees and give them a place to live and thrive.

The news on bee health has really not changed since last year. Beekeepers nationwide are fighting climate, pesticides, pests, habitat loss, pollution and a variety of the same environmental issues that also challenge human health. DC is a place where many people make pro-pollinator, pro-environment choices, which has the potential to change the trajectory of this epidemic.

Please remember: honeybees are under extreme survival pressure, and those swarms represent the few that

have not only figured out how to survive pests, pesticides, and climate change, but THRIVE. We can grab those bees, give them safe homes somewhere else, and help ensure a healthier future where honey bees can continue to make our food supply and green spaces grow.

It is a salute to DC that we have a place where honeybees and people can cohabitate so well. ★

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# Nominees for the 2016–17 CHRS Board of Directors

The Election Committee's recommendations for nominees for the 2016-17 Board of Directors were approved by the current Board of Directors. Ballots will be mailed to all CHRS members who are on the rolls as of May 1, 2016. Once distributed, ballots must be completed and returned within two weeks.

Elizabeth Nelson has been nominated to serve as the President of the Society. Patrick Crowley and Patrick Lally have been nominated to serve as First and Second Vice-President, respectively. Gloria Junge has been nominated for a second term as Secretary and Adam Apton for a second term as Treasurer. Three At-large Members have also been nominated: Susan Burgerman, Steve Kehoe and Joanna Kendig.

**Elizabeth Nelson (President)** and her husband, Nick Alberti, have lived on Capitol Hill since 1985. She joined the Board in 2005 serving three terms as an At-large member before becoming Community Relations Chair in 2010. She assists with the Preservation Café series and staffing the House & Garden Tour. She became webmaster in 2014. Elizabeth is a prolific knitter with an interest in arts education. She volunteers at Maury ES and Eliot-Hine MS and organizes exhibits for the Hill Center's Young Artists Gallery. She is also the Treasurer of Trees for Capitol Hill and served as Chair of the ANC 6A Community Outreach Committee from 2004-2013. She's committed to preserving Capitol Hill's charm and neighborhood feel and to maintaining public space as a community asset.

**Patrick Crowley (First Vice-President)**, a Hill resident since 1979, brings over 20 years' experience in historic preservation to the Society from his leadership in the rescue of Historic Congressional Cemetery

(HCC). His instrumental role in re-establishing Congressional Cemetery to a place of honor on the Hill earned him the Capitol Hill Community Foundation (CHCF) Community Achievement Award in 2012 and a write-up in the National Trust's Preservation Magazine. Patrick is an energy economist specializing in federal and state natural gas pipeline litigation and actuarial depreciation accounting. He is currently serving his first term as First Vice-President and Chair of the House & Garden Tour Committee. He also serves on the boards of the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop and the Smith-Evans Foundation.

**Patrick Lally (Second Vice-President)** is a native Washingtonian and has lived in Stanton Park with his wife and children for 32 years. He just completed a Presidential appointment as Special Assistant, Office of Communications at the National Transportation Safety Board. Prior to that, he served as Director of Congressional Affairs at the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Director of the American Institute of Architects' Committee on the Environment. An ardent preservationist, Lally has served on the boards of the CHRS, DC Preservation League and Congressional Cemetery and as a trustee on the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. Most recently, he worked on the successful campaign to designate the "Swampoodle Addition" part of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Gloria Junge (Secretary)** bought her house on Capitol Hill in 1990 where it served as her home base during her overseas deployments working for the State Department. Her Foreign Service career included postings to Iran, Brazil, Swaziland, Central African

Republic, Cameroon, Botswana and Uganda. Each assignment had its own challenges with very rewarding and fun experiences. Gloria returned to the District, permanently, in 2001 and became the CHRS Office Manager in 2008 until retiring from that position in 2014. Gloria has extensive House & Garden Tour experience, an encyclopedic knowledge of CHRS procedures and ably completed a first term as Secretary.

**Adam Apton (Treasurer)** moved to Washington with his wife in 2013. After a number of years living in and around the Brooklyn Heights Historic District in Brooklyn, New York, the Hill felt like home in almost no time at all. Adam is an attorney by profession. While living in New York, he focused his practice on construction-related matters representing both property owners and developers. He now spends the majority of his time representing private investors in corporate investigations and securities fraud actions. Adam and his family look forward to setting down roots in the community, and helping preserve the charming tree-lined streets that made their transition from the Heights to the Hill so wonderful. Adam is completing his first term as Treasurer.

**Susan Burgerman (At-large)** arrived on Capitol Hill in July of 2005. She discovered CHRS when in the process of restoring her dilapidated 1890 home and has been a member ever since. Susan joined the Board in 2013, served two terms as Secretary and is now completing a term as Second Vice-President; she has agreed to continue on the Board as a member at-large. Susan was born and raised in Washington and the DC metro area. She lived for many years in Los Angeles and New York before returning to the District in 2003. She holds a PhD in Political Science,

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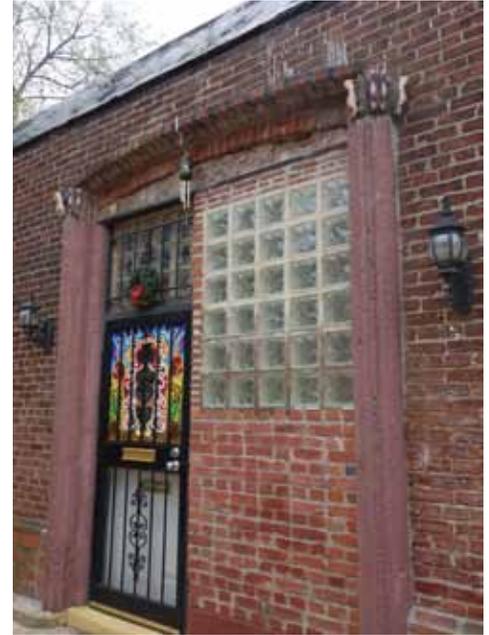
## House Tour, *continued from cover*

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Capitol Hill has its share of *grande dames* old homes—you know, the in-town manor house with the broad frontage, expansive windows, twenty-foot ceilings and articulated brickwork. But what about the charming little toy houses that dot the Hill? Who hasn't wished for the comforting life of a cozy den with everything near at hand?

Archibald Walk is an almost secret society hiding in plain sight. Even some of its addresses are secret: F Street Terrace? (Just off F Street you might assume. But where is F Street, SE? Now there's the rub, to quote The Bard.) It's a community of tiny homes tucked in an alley off of another alley behind Christ Church. Archibald Walk harkens back to the earliest days of DC when the alley house was a common feature of many Hill blocks. Now almost all gone, our chance to get a peek inside these five special places is a rare treat.

Rest assured, we haven't left behind the staples of Capitol Hill: the wood-sided homes that are among the oldest surviving buildings in the District, and the complete yet tasteful and respectful modern renovations.



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

The tour visits several houses on Archibald Walk, including 518 (left) and 647 (right).

Capitol Hill gardens are well represented this year: we have four stellar back yards, two secret gardens, a roof-top deck and a few good old-fashioned yards in which the kids can run wild. Two of our yards open from wall-to-wall French doors that fill the homes with light and an openness you wouldn't expect on the Hill. The roof deck hosts a field of grasses while at another home a secret garden harbors a tableau of falling water and hungry sea monsters.

We know you will enjoy this year's Tour. So much of what we all hold dear about Capitol Hill is embedded in the physical structures all around us and without vigilance it could all vanish in the blink of an eye. So whether it's your first time attending or your 40th, be sure to buy House Tour tickets now and enjoy the celebration—it's a great way to support CHRS and all the critical work it does. ★

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working for the last decade as a research consultant in the areas of peacebuilding, public security, and human rights; her work has primarily taken her to Central America and Colombia. Now semi-retired, she has been chipping away at an historical novel based in her Barracks Row neighborhood, where she lives with her husband and three cats.

**Joanna Kendig (At-large)** fell in love with Capitol Hill while house hunting in 2008. While organizing neighborhood tours for the 2012 National AIA Convention she benefited from CHRS support and learned of benefits of CHRS advocacy

on Capitol Hill. Growing up in post-war Europe where much of the historic fabric endured horrific destruction she saw both cities preserved and cities reconstructed. In her architectural career she worked for many years in an office that successfully mixed new architecture and historic preservation projects. Joanna is a firm believer in balancing preserving the past while supporting the new. She has served on the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee since 2014.

**Steve Kehoe (At-large)** and his husband, Bill Crews, have lived on Capitol Hill since late 1998. He recently retired from the District

Department of Transportation (DDOT) where he worked on various public space policy and regulatory initiatives. His regulatory expertise has already proven invaluable to the Society since he joined the board as Communications Chair earlier this year. He also serves on the CHRS Zoning Committee. Steve has a passion for preserving the unique character of the District's public space and maintaining public access to Capitol Hill's numerous small parks. His other talents include gardening and wood-working. ★



**CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION**

**Capitol Hill Restoration Society**

420 10th Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### MAY

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

**9** Monday, 7:30 pm  
Overbeck Lecture: "Frederick Douglass in Washington." Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Details: Hill Center (202) 547-7969.

**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: CHRS office (202) 543-0425.

**19** Thursday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Preservation Café. Ebenezers Coffee House (downstairs), 2nd and F Streets, NE. Wheelchair accessible; no reservations required.

### JUNE

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

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

**21** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: CHRS office, (202) 543-0425.

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## 59th Annual Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

Saturday, May 7 • 4–7 pm | Sunday, May 8 • 12–5 pm

More information available at (202) 543-0425 or [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org).

If you received a complimentary copy of this newsletter, please consider joining CHRS!

[www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org)