



# NEWS

www.chrs.org

September 2013

## Detailed Height Studies Available

By Janet Quigley

Contrary to popular belief, taller buildings are not cheaper to build and will not result in lower housing costs. This is one finding of an economic feasibility study prepared by the city’s consultants. The DC Office of Planning (OP) and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) presented the findings of the economic feasibility and modeling studies in support of the Height Master Plan in a series of public meetings in August. The studies, while meticulously conducted and assembled, appear to provide no compelling reasons to relax or eliminate the Height of Buildings Act of 1910, or even to identify any negative effects caused by the current limits.

The economic study tested the feasibility of new construction and expansion of office and residential heights, and analyzed 15 areas of the District. It found a cost per square foot of \$199 for a 130-foot apartment building, \$207 for a 200-foot building, and \$201 for a 250-foot building. It found relatively lower costs for adding two to four stories to existing buildings (\$150 and \$159, respectively). The study is still being finalized; an overview presentation is available on the NCPC website.

Surprisingly, historic districts were not exempted from consideration with the exception of low-density districts. Thus, the Capitol Hill Historic District could see taller buildings, but several conditions would have to change first. OP Chief of Staff Tonya Stern consistently reminded audiences that formal procedures would apply: “The Height Act



IMAGES COURTESY DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

The modeling study visualizes 48 scenarios for increased height.

| Height Master Plan<br>For Washington, DC |              |              |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| New Office Construction Costs            |              |              |              |              |
|  | 130 Feet     | 160 Feet     | 200 Feet     | 250 Feet     |
| Stewart's (based on building sq. ft.)    | \$10         | \$11         | \$6          | \$5          |
| Three-Level Below-Grade Garage           | \$32         | \$30         | \$24         | \$20         |
| Office Building                          | \$140        | \$120        | \$160        | \$170        |
| <b>Total Cost</b>                        | <b>\$182</b> | <b>\$188</b> | <b>\$190</b> | <b>\$185</b> |
| Note: Costs exclude tenant improvements. |              |              |              |              |
| New Apartment Construction Costs         |              |              |              |              |
|  | 130 Feet     | 160 Feet     | 200 Feet     | 250 Feet     |
| Stewart's (based on building sq. ft.)    | \$12         | \$9          | \$8          | \$6          |
| Three-Level Below-Grade Garage           | \$32         | \$30         | \$24         | \$20         |
| Residential Building                     | \$140        | \$160        | \$170        | \$170        |
| <b>Total Cost</b>                        | <b>\$199</b> | <b>\$205</b> | <b>\$207</b> | <b>\$201</b> |

Economic analysis found that taller apartment buildings will be less affordable, not more.

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# President's Column: Lucky '13—A Good Year for CHRS

By Janet Quigley

Every September, CHRS members gather at the fall business meeting to review the organization's activities and approve the annual budget. This year there is much to celebrate:

- Three preservation victories: historic landmark designation for Spingarn High School; saving a 105-year-old carriage house behind 1310 East Capitol Street from demolition by neglect; and saving the 1892 Epworth Church's stained glass windows;
- A new walking tour featuring the Swampoodle neighborhood at 2nd & H Streets, NE;
- A successful house and garden tour run by 230 Capitol Hill volunteers for 1,200 visitors;
- DDoT's completion, after much community input, of 11th Street Bridges Phase 1 (direct route into town from 295, 11th Street westbound entrance ramp, local bridge etc.) without choking the surrounding neighborhoods with traffic;
- Preservation Cafés on window restoration, home maintenance tips, care of historic ironwork, garden designs for small spaces, and solar panels;
- Members' Forums on the Zoning Regulation Rewrite, the DC permit process and Sustainability, with subject matter experts from the Office of Planning, Historic Preservation Review Board, DCRA and the Committee of 100;
- Co-sponsorship of the Capitol Hill Village's successful symposium on Capitol Hill housing options
- Partnership with the Anacostia Watershed Society to host an ecological river tour;

- Participation in annual community events including the Barracks Row and H Street festivals, 4th of July parade, Walk to School Day and Ward 6 Safety Day;
- Participation in the Capitol Hill Community Foundation's inaugural volunteer fair;
- An update of the CHRS.org web site and increased resources including a list of preservation easements, house construction permits to 1877, house histories (send us yours!) and a link to Debbie Bell's "Bytes of History" stories.

CHRS members helped realize these events and accomplishments through their guidance, participation and support, and are key to the continued success of our community initiatives. Nor would these things happen without the thousands of hours of volunteer assistance that Capitol Hill residents so generously and famously offer. CHRS is fortunate to have so many dedicated supporters.

There were also a few disappointments: the city's selection of the Spingarn grounds for the streetcar barn, DCRA's resistance to our proposal to allow postcard permits in the Capitol Hill Historic District, Congress' questioning of the Height Act, the Zoning Regulation Rewrite's parking cutbacks, and the devastation of Frager's Hardware. CHRS will keep working to make improvements where possible.

Looking ahead, it will be a busy season as we strive to preserve residential, local and historic values in the greater scheme of city planning and development. Agencies will be considering the Zoning Regulation

Rewrite, the Height of Buildings Master Plan, the Virginia Avenue Tunnel expansion and several other initiatives. DDoT is proposing expensive and questionable solutions for the South Capitol Street bridge (two new traffic circles and several extra stoplights), a new Southeast Boulevard (opening the nearby neighborhood to a major thoroughfare), and a convoluted Pennsylvania Avenue pedestrian crossing at Potomac Avenue.

We look forward to starting the Swampoodle Grants program and the Dick Wolf Lectures, sharing our Beyond the Boundaries research, and to the much anticipated Frager's rebuilding. And of course, we are already beginning preparations for another enjoyable Mother's Day House Tour. ★

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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 more than 55 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](http://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.

# Fall Member Forum September 19: Preservation Supports Sustainability

Do owners of historic houses have to choose between going "green" or following historic preservation guidelines? The good news is that historic preservation can accomplish both. At the CHRS Fall Members' Forum, Historic Preservation Review Board Chair, architect and recognized sustainability expert Gretchen Pfaehler, with a team of HPRB experts, will explain how you can make home improvement decisions that help preserve the environment.

Urban historic districts are inherently environmentally friendly, encouraging pedestrian travel and mass transit, with a building density that efficiently uses land and resources. Many older buildings were

green before it was "cool," having been constructed of locally-available materials and employing passive heating, cooling and siting. Come hear what HPRB's Sustainability Subcommittee has discovered about appropriate materials, reuse, conservation and renewable energy, and learn how you can make a difference.

The Fall CHRS members' business meeting will precede the forum. Agenda items include a review of the year's accomplishments and presentation of the 2014 operating budget for membership approval.

CHRS Members Forum:  
September 19, 7-9 pm at the Hill Center. Business meeting 6:45-7 pm. ★

## July 4th Parade and Street Festivals

As part of our "Beyond the Boundaries" program, Society volunteers are engaging in a variety of outreach activities, most recently fielding a contingent in the Capitol Hill 4th of July Parade. This has become an annual tradition for us, and this year might have been the best yet! We had a large turnout with many children, new members and Board members, family and friends. The weather was fantastic—dry and not too hot. Monte Edwards drove his classic Jaguar and we had a grand time, tossing Mardi Gras beads into the crowd.

In September, we plan to staff booths at both the H Street Festival (the 21st) and Barracks Row Fall Festival (the 28th). Our participation at these events is part of an on-going effort to introduce ourselves to newcomers to The Hill and to those living outside the boundaries of the Historic District. We'll offer children's activities to amuse our younger neighbors while we share information about our accomplishments and future plans with their parents. Leftover House Tour catalogs are particularly well-received. *Volunteers are always more than welcome—they are truly needed.* Plus, it's a lot of fun to meet friends, old and new.

If you haven't attended these events in the past, you don't know what you're missing! Barracks Row Day is a delightful celebration of Capitol Hill traditions. And the H Street Festival is evolving into a "scene" that's impossible to describe—you just gotta be there.

If you can volunteer on either of these dates, please contact Elizabeth Nelson, [Elizabeth\\_knits@yahoo.com](mailto:Elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com) or 543-3512.

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# Historic Preservation Briefs

By Shauna Holmes

**T**he DC Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) July 25 and August 1 Cases:

## Banana Café

Storefront alterations for the Banana Café on Barracks Row were on HPRB's July 25 Consent Calendar. The owner plans to remove the shingle roof from the exterior façades and replace it on the 8th Street side with a retractable awning, replace the first floor windows, update the front vestibule and door, repair and paint the exterior, and install new signage.

HPRB also gave a green light to two proposed rear additions and delegated final approval to staff, with conditions such as modifying the roof design so it would not exceed the height of the historic building, pulling a roof deck back from the edge of the house to preclude visibility, refining windows on the rear elevation, and working with HPO staff to determine appropriate locations of mechanical units and utility meters.

## Not Approved

Two proposals were not approved. In one case, a third floor addition was found to be incompatible with both the historic two-story rowhouse and the historic district, because it would be visible from multiple streets. In the other case, HPRB voted to deny the applicant's request to demolish a seven-bay garage in a residential square and replace it with a parking pad for eleven vehicles. The Board took a second vote that determined the existing early-1920s garage to be a contributing building in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

## Fragers' Update

On July 24, Frager's owner John Weintraub requested a permit from

the city to demolish the remains of his buildings in the 1100 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, which were badly damaged by a June 5 fire. Because the Frager's structures are contributing buildings in the Capitol Hill Historic District, the raze request was expected to go before the DC HPRB in September. However, Mr. Weintraub announced on August 8 that due to concerns about instability and safety, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) would be giving emergency consideration to his raze request.

Because the structures are contributing buildings in the Capitol Hill Historic District, city law requires that review of the demolition application include consultation by the owner with the DC State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In such cases, consultation with SHPO includes discussing the preservation issues involved and determining whether the unsafe condition can or cannot be abated by shoring, stabilizing, or securing the buildings. Accordingly, SHPO met with the Frager's team in mid-August to discuss the buildings' condition, the engineer's report, and alternatives for addressing safety issues and other concerns. Since the meeting, the Frager's team has been considering the feasibility of various options and working to identify the best course of action moving forward. They will be consulting further with SHPO and DCRA as necessary.

## CHRS Comments on Proposed Demolition by Neglect Regulations

In early August CHRS submitted preliminary comments on the city's proposed regulations, "Prevention of Demolition by Neglect." Because

demolition by neglect is a serious problem in historic districts citywide, including ours, CHRS's comments opened by commending the DC Historic Preservation Office (HPO) for developing the badly needed proposed regulations to implement provisions in the DC preservation law. CHRS offered a number of suggestions, including the following:

While the provision requiring the owner of a neglected property to either make repairs or be billed by the city for repairs made by the Director of the Office of Planning is welcome, fines would further extend the Director's enforcement toolkit. Fines have the advantage of immediacy and have a way of getting people's attention, especially if they escalate as time passes. The regulations should include specific fine schedules and timeframes, as well as a clearly established framework for the Director to proactively find, cite, penalize, and publicize violations.

Enforcement of demolition by neglect laws and regulations should be robust and timely. It needs to be based on clear criteria for Determining Threatened Demolition by Neglect (a determination made by the Director), as well as criteria for how "failure to cure any of the following defects" would be judged.

The regulations should set forth what must be included in the written notice served on the owner regarding the conditions that must be repaired.

After HPO has considered preliminary comments from the public and incorporated revisions, the proposed regulations will be submitted to the DC Register for official comments. ★

# Preservation Café: Hollywood on the Potomac

September's Preservation Café will feature Mike Canning, whose book *Hollywood on the Potomac* is the first publication to offer a comprehensive look at the intersection of the capital city and the movies—how DC has been portrayed in American feature films.

In examining closely almost 60 motion pictures of the Sound Era (from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* to *J. Edgar*), he reveals how Washington has been treated as subject, setting, or background. This survey is intended for fans and students of both movies and politics, and especially those who, like Mike, combine the two interests. It is also specifically addressed to Washingtonians curious about how their town has been depicted by Tinseltown.

The book's coverage of movies made on or about Capitol Hill (especially films treating the U.S. Congress) is given special emphasis. Long-time Hill resident Canning has written on movies for the *Hill Rag* since 1993 and is a member of the Washington Area Film Critics Association. His reviews and



Mike Canning outside the Library of Congress, which figures prominently in his book "Hollywood on the Potomac."

writings on film can be found online at [www.mikesflix.com](http://www.mikesflix.com). A member of CHRS for decades, Canning has served as a board member for the Society.

The Café will be held September 18, 6:30–7:15 p.m. at Ebenzers Coffee House (downstairs), 2nd and F Streets, NE. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. The event is free and handicapped accessible, and the public is encouraged to attend. ★

## DC Preservation Office Offers Funds to Repair Historic Homes

The DC Historic Preservation Office (HPO) is accepting Part I applications for its Historic Homeowner Grant Program. The program offers grants of up to \$25,000 each to low- and moderate-income households living in the Capitol Hill Historic District for exterior repairs, rehabilitation and structural work on homes.

In Part I of the grant process, homeowners provide photos of their house and a description of the proposed repairs and restorations. Financial information from the homeowners and bids from contractors are not due until later in the process. The application deadline for Part I is October 1, 2013.

If you are not interested in applying, perhaps one of your neighbors might be. To apply or for additional information, visit: <http://1.usa.gov/1cAb507>.

## Thank You CHRS Supporters

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

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# Proposed 2014 Budget for CHRS

By Paul Cromwell

The accompanying spreadsheet presents the proposed budget for 2014, which will be voted upon at the quarterly meeting in September. The basic income items (Membership, House Tour and Contributions) are expected to remain about the same for 2014 as they have for the past few years. We do not anticipate any large-scale expenditures along the lines of legal fees or additional costs for the Beyond the Boundaries (BtB) surveys that have been part of recent annual budgets. However, a proposed final BtB expenditure of \$29,000 that was included in the 2013 budget will not occur by the end of the fiscal year and therefore has been included in the 2014 budget proposal. The web development has occurred, so the

request has been dropped from \$4,000 to \$1,000, which will cover corrections and updates to the web format. City Planning has \$2,000 to use, if needed, to develop presentations concerning the Height Act and commuter rail.

There are some slight changes in presentation from years prior. Most noticeably, a number of line items have been rolled into sub-totals. This provides the Board of Directors with an increased ability to move budgeted amounts from one line item to another without seeking permission from the membership. The House Tour detail is not included in the overall budget, but presented in its normal format toward the bottom of the actual budget. There also are three restricted income /

expense items that have been added: funds for historic preservation activities in Swampoodle (NE of Union Station), originally negotiated with Dreyfus as the developer but now in the hands of Fisher Brothers and referred to as "Capitol Place" in the PUD; a fund to provide a living memorial to Past President Dick Wolf; and an allocation from ANC 6A. CHRS has received \$20,000 in order to administer the Dreyfus grant.

Please note that the accompanying budget reports expenditures for the current fiscal year through the end of July. A revised document with end of August expenditures will be available at the September membership meeting. ★

## Reserve Now for September 17 Overbeck Lecture: A City Transformed by War

On Tuesday evening, September 17, Lucinda Prout Janke will kick off a new season of the Overbeck History Lectures with an illustrated look at Washington during the Civil War.

A small, essentially Southern city when the conflict's first shots were fired in 1861, Washington underwent explosive growth and profound cultural change as tens of thousands of Union soldiers poured in to defend the vulnerable capital, and dozens of makeshift hospitals sprang up to care for the wounded and dying.

The transformation is graphically described in Janke's new book, *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.*, published by The History Press.

Now an independent historian, Janke has served as curator of the Kiplinger Washington Collection and collections manager of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. She has authored a number of books and articles on aspects of the city's history and delivered many lectures, including three highly praised Overbeck Lectures.

The event is scheduled for Tuesday, September 17, 7:30 pm, at the Naval Lodge Hall at 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE and will conclude with a book signing. Admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited seating. Please e-mail [OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org](mailto:OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org) and indicate how many seats you will need.

The Overbeck History Lectures are a project of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation.

# Proposed 2014

## CHRS Operating Budget

October 1–September 30

|  | Budget<br>Final<br>2011 | Budget<br>Final<br>2012 | Budget<br>Adopted<br>2013 | Dollars<br>thru 6/30/13<br>2013 | Dollars<br>remaining<br>year end | Budget<br>DRAFT<br>2014 | Breakout<br>2014 |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| <b>I. TOTAL INCOME</b>                           | <b>157992</b>           | <b>106934</b>           | <b>108500</b>             | <b>68399</b>                    | <b>11101</b>                     | <b>109500</b>           |                  |
| Membership                                       | 26380                   | 25211                   | 25000                     | 14986                           | 10014                            | 25000                   |                  |
| House Tour (see below)                           | 58328                   | 49647                   | 47000                     | 42778                           | 4222                             | 47000                   |                  |
| Contributions                                    | 5580                    | 15725                   | 5000                      | 9773                            | -4773                            | 6000                    |                  |
| Transfer in from Savings                         | 67704                   | -16869                  | 29000                     |                                 |                                  | 29000                   |                  |
| Miscellaneous                                    | 0                       | 20                      | 2500                      | 862                             | 1638                             | 2500                    |                  |
| Beyond the Boundaries                            |                         | 33200                   | 0                         |                                 |                                  | 0                       |                  |
| <b>II. TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                        | <b>157992</b>           | <b>73745</b>            | <b>108600</b>             | <b>44075</b>                    |                                  | <b>109500</b>           |                  |
| <b>A. ADMINISTRATIVE</b>                         | <b>35545</b>            | <b>37870</b>            | <b>42924</b>              | <b>23727</b>                    | <b>19197</b>                     | <b>41800</b>            |                  |
| Administrative Expenses                          | 2168                    | 2483                    | 2500                      | 1897                            | 603                              |                         | 2500             |
| Accounting Service Expenses                      | 7500                    | 8000                    | 9000                      | 17                              | 8983                             |                         | 4000             |
| Computer support/purchase                        | 387                     | 53                      | 400                       | 0                               | 400                              |                         | 1500             |
| Insurance  | 1191                    | 1123                    | 1100                      | 708                             | 392                              |                         | 1100             |
| Meetings   | 452                     | 695                     | 824                       | 350                             | 474                              |                         | 400              |
| Personal Services Contract–Admin                 | 10634                   | 11180                   | 14500                     | 8853                            | 5647                             |                         | 15000            |
| Printing/Postage                                 | 684                     | 893                     | 1100                      | 2126                            | -1026                            |                         | 3000             |
| Miscellaneous                                    | 1822                    | 2599                    | 2500                      | 1490                            | 1010                             |                         | 3000             |
| Rent (office and storage)                        | 10708                   | 10844                   | 11000                     | 8286                            | 2714                             |                         | 11300            |
| <b>B. PROGRAM</b>                                | <b>98971</b>            | <b>20499</b>            | <b>39476</b>              | <b>1513</b>                     | <b>37963</b>                     | <b>38350</b>            |                  |
| Grants paid                                      | 0                       | 5400                    | 1666                      |                                 | 1666                             | 2000                    |                  |
| Historic Preservation Committee                  | 16898                   | 14815                   | 4000                      | 300                             | 3700                             | 4000                    |                  |
| Beyond the Boundaries                            | 79405                   | 284                     | 29000                     |                                 | 29000                            | 29000                   |                  |
| Other Committees                                 | 0                       | 0                       | 0                         |                                 | 0                                | 3350                    |                  |
| City Planning Committee                          | 500                     | 0                       | 50                        |                                 | 50                               |                         | 2000             |
| Community Development Comm.                      | 47                      | 0                       | 50                        |                                 | 50                               |                         | 250              |
| Community Relations                              | 733                     | 603                     | 4610                      | 1213                            | 3397                             |                         | 1000             |
| Environment Committee                            | 0                       | 0                       | 50                        |                                 | 50                               |                         | 50               |
| Zoning Committee                                 | 0                       | 250                     | 0                         |                                 | 0                                |                         | 0                |
| Transportation Committee                         | 1388                    | 65                      | 50                        |                                 | 50                               |                         | 50               |
| <b>C. COMMUNICATIONS</b>                         | <b>14037</b>            | <b>15326</b>            | <b>20850</b>              | <b>15939</b>                    | <b>4911</b>                      | <b>24000</b>            |                  |
| Newsletter Expenses                              | 13713                   | 15164                   | 16600                     | 12777                           | 3823                             | 17000                   |                  |
| Communications Committee                         | 162                     | 0                       | 50                        |                                 | 50                               | 6000                    |                  |
| Web Site (DC Access)                             | 162                     | 162                     | 4200                      | 3162                            | 1038                             | 1000                    |                  |
| <b>D. MEMBERSHIP</b>                             | <b>9439</b>             | <b>50</b>               | <b>5350</b>               | <b>2896</b>                     | <b>2454</b>                      | <b>5350</b>             |                  |
| Membership Committee                             | 9069                    |                         | 5000                      | 2028                            | 2972                             | 4750                    |                  |
| President's Party                                | 100                     | 50                      | 100                       | 316                             | -216                             | 100                     |                  |
| CHRS Elections                                   | 270                     | 0                       | 250                       | 552                             | -302                             | 500                     |                  |
| <b>III. CHRS Operating Net Gain &lt;Loss&gt;</b> |                         | <b>0</b>                | <b>33189</b>              | <b>-100</b>                     | <b>24324</b>                     | <b>11101</b>            | <b>0</b>         |
| <b>HOUSE TOUR OVERVIEW</b>                       |                         |                         |                           |                                 |                                  |                         |                  |
| <b>A. Tour Income (total)</b>                    | <b>75578</b>            | <b>64911</b>            | <b>62000</b>              | <b>58760</b>                    |                                  | <b>62000</b>            |                  |
| Prior Year (2012)                                | 75578                   |                         |                           |                                 |                                  |                         |                  |
| Current Year (2013)                              |                         | 64911                   | 62000                     | 58760                           |                                  |                         |                  |
| Budget Year (2013)                               |                         |                         |                           |                                 |                                  | 62000                   |                  |
| <b>B. Tour Expenses (Current and Prior)</b>      | <b>17250</b>            | <b>15264</b>            | <b>15000</b>              | <b>15982</b>                    |                                  | <b>15000</b>            |                  |
| <b>C. Net Gain &lt;Loss&gt; from House Tours</b> | <b>58328</b>            | <b>49647</b>            | <b>47000</b>              | <b>42778</b>                    |                                  | <b>47000</b>            |                  |
| <b>OTHER NON-ADD OR LIMITED PURPOSE</b>          |                         |                         |                           |                                 |                                  |                         |                  |
| Swampoodle Grant                                 |                         |                         |                           |                                 |                                  | 250,000                 |                  |
| Dick Wolf Memorial                               |                         |                         |                           |                                 |                                  |                         |                  |
| ANC 6A   |                         |                         |                           |                                 |                                  |                         |                  |

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# Swampoodle's Gordon Avenue Alley Dwellings

By Beth Purcell

Capitol Hill has alley dwellings, and in the past it had many more. In the 19th century, investors built alley dwellings to rent to tenants, primarily African-Americans. Alley dwellings built in the city between 1870 and 1892 were usually brick or frame, two stories tall. The typical floor plan for a Washington alley house was a kitchen and another room on the first floor, two bedrooms on the second floor, and in the back yard, a water hydrant and an outhouse. The Gordon Avenue alley dwellings in Square 753 (on the western edge of Swampoodle) were typical alley dwellings, in their origin, tenant occupancy, and eventual disappearance.

Gordon Avenue in Square 753 had 39 two-story brick dwellings, constructed by several different owners between 1885 and 1892. Gordon Avenue ran north-south in Square 753, and east-west intersecting 2nd Street on the west, and 3rd Street on the east. On the west side of Gordon Avenue were eight dwellings, Nos. 620–634, (12.42 x 25 feet), and 10 dwellings, Nos. 1–10 (10.25 x 26 feet). On the east side were 16 dwellings, Nos. 601–615 and 619–633 (12.82 x 28 feet). South of these dwellings were five more brick alley dwellings on lot 97, 201–209 Gordon Avenue. (See 1903 Baist map.) We have been unable to determine the source of the name “Gordon Avenue.”

The 1900 Census shows that most residents of Gordon Avenue were working-class African-American tenants. Of 31 dwellings on Gordon Avenue enumerated, 29 were occupied by African-Americans. Men worked at unskilled or semi-skilled occupations such as day laborer, hostler, wagon driver, express man, ice salesman, elevator operator,

barber, grocer, and confectionary helper, and many women worked as laundresses. Most residents came from DC, Maryland, or Virginia. There were two immigrant families, one from Germany (the husband sold cigars), and another, from Austria, living at 619 Gordon Avenue, (the husband was a grocer). Most families were comprised of a married couple with children, and often, boarders. All 31 houses were rented.<sup>1</sup> A notable resident was Lucy Fendich, an African-American born as a slave in Charles County, Md., who had worked as a house girl until she was freed. She and her husband lived in Charles County, and at some point they moved to Washington. She lived at 611 Gordon Avenue with her grandson, and remained active until her death in 1903 at age 102.<sup>2</sup>

As in other alleys on Capitol Hill, there was a corner grocery 619 Gordon Avenue. It operated between 1902 and 1915, and possibly before or after those dates. As of 1914–1915, Max Weisfeld's grocery at 619 Gordon Avenue sold products including canned pork and beans, cigarettes, chewing and smoking tobacco.

Reformers argued that alleys were hotbeds of crime. The most tragic case was the murder of Leizer Gosman in his grocery at 619 Gordon Avenue on December 30, 1902. Gosman, a Russian Jew, age 36, rented the house at 619 Gordon Avenue. He lived there with his nephew, Frank Frager (or Fritz Frager), age 19, who had come from Russia to DC earlier in 1902.<sup>3</sup> Gosman sent money to his wife and four children living in Volensky, Russia.

Gosman's grocery occupied the front of the building; he allowed people into the room behind the store where they smoked cigarettes

and sometimes slept. Police initially believed that while Gosman was away, one of these men, James Henson, waited in the store for Gosman to return, then struggled with Gosman, killed him with a hatchet, and ransacked the store. Frank Frager came home from work, found his uncle dead, and reported the murder. Gosman's money drawer was empty and other items were missing, leading the police to believe that robbery was the motive. Two Russian fruit-sellers, who sometimes brought their pushcarts near Gosman's store, identified Henson as the murderer. Henson was indicted for murder, but the prosecutor agreed to a plea of robbery because the murder case was circumstantial. The murder remained unsolved as of 1910. Leizer Gosman was buried in Ohev Shalom Cemetery, 3237 Congress Place, SE, Washington.<sup>4</sup> Frank Frager (c. 1883–1975) founded Frager's Hardware in 1920.

Other Gordon Avenue residents were victims of crime. In 1907, a thief stole cash from two residents at 619 Gordon Avenue (they were apparently just living there, and not running a business). In 1914 and 1915 there were thefts from Max Weisfeld's grocery at 619 Gordon Avenue. There were assaults over the years, and a man shot at a woman and killed a child instead.<sup>5</sup>

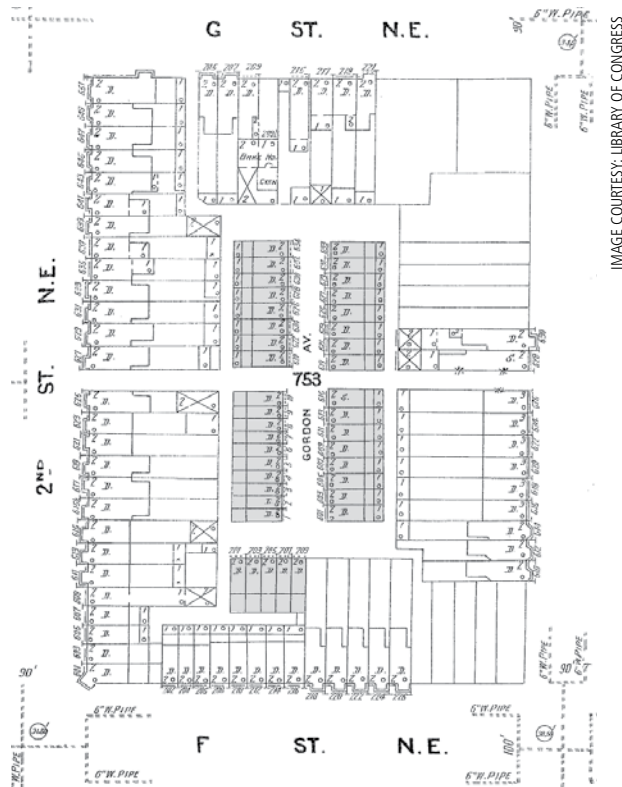
Reformers also argued that alleys fostered prostitution, drunkenness, and disease. There is some evidence to support these contentions. There was allegedly a “disorderly house” somewhere on Gordon Avenue in 1895. In 1908, police raided a “blind tiger” (illegal bar) on Gordon Avenue. Prohibition agents raided 615 Gordon Avenue in 1921 and 627 Gordon Avenue in 1929.<sup>6</sup>



As of 1912, there were 258 inhabited alleys in the city with 3,148 houses. There were 30 inhabited alleys in Northeast with 336 houses.<sup>7</sup> A series of reform movements, starting in the late nineteenth century, worked toward improving or eliminating alley dwellings altogether. Alley dwellings and alley life had come to be viewed as unsafe, unsanitary, and for these reasons, undesirable.

As of 1928, all 39 Gordon Avenue dwellings were extant. The disappearance of 34 of the Gordon Avenue dwellings (all but the five on lot 97) resulted from the expansion of Logan School to meet the needs of a growing number of students in the area. The first Logan School, for African-American students, was built at 301 G Street, NE in 1891.<sup>8</sup> As of 1928, the Logan School playground was across 3rd Street, NE from the school, occupying the northeast corner of Square 753 (the corner of 3rd and G Streets, NE). These lots appear as vacant on the 1903 Baist map. By the 1930s, additional classrooms were needed. In 1934 a new Logan School building was constructed at 215 G Street, NE, and in 1948, an auditorium was added. In 1933, the DC Board of Education instituted condemnation proceedings to acquire 620–634 and 619–633 Gordon Avenue, as well as ten other lots in Square 753. By 1938, the 16 dwellings on the northern half of Gordon Avenue (Nos. 620–634 and 619–633) had been demolished to make way for the Logan School playground. Between 1938 and 1956 the remaining 18 alley dwellings at 1–10 and 601–615 Gordon Avenue were demolished for the Logan School playground.

For additional reading, see James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850–1970* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1982.) ★



A 1903 Baist Map of Square 753, showing Gordon Avenue.

- <sup>1</sup> The real property tax assessments for 1902–1903 and 1925 show several individuals owning the 39 alley dwellings, also suggesting that the dwellings were rental properties.
- <sup>2</sup> “Century-Old ‘Aunty’ Dies,” *Washington Post*, 22 January 1903, 8.
- <sup>3</sup> “Frank Frager,” *Washington Post*, 11 August 1958, sec. B, 2.
- <sup>4</sup> “Grocer Dead in Store,” *Washington Post*, 31 Dec. 1902, 2; “End of Guzman Murder Case,” *Washington Post*, 18 Nov. 1903, 9; “Washington’s Unsolved Murder Mysteries,” *Washington Post*, 27 November 1910, 14.
- <sup>5</sup> “Savings for Year Stolen: Thief Invades Aged Colored Man’s Home and Robs Chest of \$110,” *Washington Post*, 14 Oct. 1907, 12; “Police News Notes,” *Washington Post*, 16 Dec. 1914, 10; “Police News Notes of a Day,” *Washington Post*, 25 Sept. 1915, 14; “Sadie Locked Up by a Cabman,” *Washington Post*, 19 Sept. 1894, 2; “Man Accused in Child Slaying Surrenders,” *Washington Post*, 22 Sept. 1929, sec. M, p. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Saves a Gill of Evidence: Private Gee in Brilliant Exploit at Alleged ‘Blind Tiger’ Raid,” *Washington Post*, 6 Apr. 1908, 12; “Drink Costs Him \$200,” *Washington Post*, 5 Oct. 1921, 12; “William Mackey Pleads Guilty in Whiskey Case,” *Washington Post*, 14 July 1929, sec. M, p. 24.
- <sup>7</sup> Monday Evening Club, *Directory of Alleys*, Washington, D.C. (1912).
- <sup>8</sup> DC public schools were segregated until the Supreme Court decision in *Bolling v. Sharpe*, 347 U.S. 497 (1954).

## Height Act, *continued from cover*

is a federal law that can be modified only through Congressional action. Any changes to the law proposed by Congress will not pre-empt local decisions by the District government about whether and when any changes to building heights would occur. The District would undertake amendments to its Comprehensive Plan and then initiate any zoning changes deemed appropriate through its normal processes, including substantial public input, to respond to any Congressional modifications to the Height Act.”

For the modeling study, the consultants prepared a variety of scenarios to help people visualize what streets and viewsheds would look like if buildings were 130 to 225 feet tall, either citywide or in selected areas. At present, most residential buildings have a limit of 90 feet; commercial structures are limited to 130 feet. Predictably, visibility of monuments and landmarks decreased as the building heights increased, and the airy quality of neighborhood streets was diminished. The

### Question: What is the Height of Buildings Act height limit?

- 1) The height of the US Capitol
- 2) The height of the Washington Monument
- 3) 130 feet
- 4) Determined by the width of the street

### Answer: #4.

Residential streets: Width of the street = building height; maximum 90 feet.

Commercial streets: Width of the street + 20' = building height; maximum 130 feet.

Note: DC zoning regulations require lower heights in most areas of the city.

renderings of 48 views of fifteen locations can be seen at: [www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy](http://www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy).

NCPC and OP have conducted rigorous, but necessarily fast-tracked, public outreach in order to meet a fall deadline for delivering a report to Congress. In addition to five public meetings, they facilitated two in-depth discussions on historic preservation considerations with national and local preservation organizations, including CHRS. Those observations, as well as the public

comments, will be incorporated into draft recommendations to be presented to the NCPC Commissioners, currently scheduled for the September 12, 2013 meeting. Approval for release will trigger a 30-day public comment period. NCPC will hold a Special Commission meeting October 2 to receive public comments on the height study findings. Ultimately, the Commission will vote on final recommendations, which the District and NCPC will submit to Congress later this fall. ★

## New Editor Needed

Do you have a solid background in journalism and editing? Do you love the work that CHRS does on Capitol Hill? If so, and if you're looking for a way to get more involved with CHRS, then editing this monthly newsletter may be just what you're looking for!

The responsibilities include assigning and editing articles for ten issues per year. You should be able to attend monthly Board meetings (the third Tuesday evening of the month, except August and December) and other CHRS events as necessary in order to either write about them or edit what someone else writes. Once a month, you'll need to devote the better part of two weekdays to preparing the next edition on a tight deadline. You will have a backup editor to help with final copyediting. The new editor will work alongside the current editor for several months to learn the job.

To find out more about this rewarding volunteer position, please contact Lisa Dale Jones at: [lisdalejones@gmail.com](mailto:lisdalejones@gmail.com).

# Historic Walking Tour of Rosedale on October 26

The Rosedale Citizens' Alliance and CHRS are co-sponsoring a historic walking tour of Rosedale, in northeast Washington, DC, (near the H Street, NE, commercial corridor). Rosedale is roughly bounded by 15th and 19th Streets, between Benning Road and C Street. The tour will focus on the oldest parts of the neighborhood, including Gales and Rosedale Streets. The buildings in Rosedale represent a wide range of architectural styles, including both 19th century frame

Victorian duplexes and 1920s brick rowhouses built by well-known local builder H.R. Howenstein. This is an opportunity to experience the charm of a small village in the greater Capitol Hill area. ★

Saturday, October 26

10 am–noon

Rosedale Public Library  
1701 Gales Place, NE

For more information:  
caphrs@aol.com, 543-0425

## Second Historic Walking Tour of Swampoodle on October 5

If you missed the first (very popular!) tour, you're invited to a walking tour of "Swampoodle" in Northeast Capitol Hill, the neighborhood between 2nd and 4th Streets between F and G Streets. Learn about the fascinating history, people, and architecture of Swampoodle, and the origin of the Swampoodle name. Free and open to the public.

Saturday, October 5

10 am–noon, rain or shine  
Ebenezers

2nd and F Streets, NE

For more information:  
caphrs@aol.com, 543-0425

### Capitol Hill Village Symposium . October 4

## Successful Aging: You Can Get There From Here

The years after retirement are the perfect time to discover passions, connect with the community and prepare for a successful aging process. Join Capitol Hill Village members and others to discuss how the Baby Boomers are redefining the aging experience and how you can become a part of the movement. Take control of your aging experience! This free, day-long symposium will feature:

- Discussions on successful and positive aging in the modern era
- The latest research on the factors of a positive aging experience
- Information on the local resources available to us as we age
- Practical tools for advocating for ourselves and our loved ones while navigating the healthcare system
- Plans that the District and other cities across the country are setting in motion to become age-friendly

Bring your own bag lunch or dine with fellow attendees at one of the fine Barrack's Row establishments.

October 4, 2013

8:30 am–4:00 pm

The Hill Center

921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20003

Admission is free, but space is limited. RSVP by 3pm on October 2nd by e-mailing [info@capitolhillvillage.org](mailto:info@capitolhillvillage.org) or by calling the CHV office at 543-1778. More information is available on the Capitol Hill Village website at [www.CapitolHillVillage.org](http://www.CapitolHillVillage.org).

Co-sponsored by Capitol Hill Community Foundation, DC AARP, and the Center for the Study of Aging at the Washington School of Psychiatry.



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

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### SEPTEMBER

**7** Saturday, 9–11 am

Anacostia River Tour open to CHRS members and guests. Anacostia Watershed Society. Details: 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

**12** Thursday, 7:30 pm

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

**12** Thursday

NCPC Monthly Meeting: Approval to release draft Height Act Study Findings for public comment. 401 Ninth Street, NW. Details: Julia Koster, 482-7200.

**17** Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

**18** Wednesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Preservation Café, Hollywood on the Potomac." Ebenezers Coffee House, 2nd and F Streets, NE, downstairs. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512.

**19** Thursday, 7:00 pm

CHRS Quarterly Members' Forum, Hill Center. Doors open at 6:30 pm. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

**21** Saturday, 12–6 pm

H Street Festival, 8th to 14th Street along the H Street NE corridor. Volunteers needed to staff CHRS booth. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512.

**28** Saturday, 11 am–5 pm

Barracks Row Fall Festival, 500–700 blocks of 8th Street, SE. Volunteers needed to staff CHRS booth. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512.

### OCTOBER

**2** Wednesday

NCPC Special Commission Meeting: Public comments on the Height Act Study Findings. 401 Ninth Street, NW, Suite 500. Details: Julia Koster, 482-7200.

**5** Saturday, 10 am

Swampoodle Walking Tour. Meet at Ebenezers Coffee House, 2nd and F Streets, NE. Free, open to the public. Rain or shine. Details: 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

**7** Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th St., SE, first floor. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

**10** Thursday, 7:30 pm

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

**15** Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

**16** Wednesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Preservation Café, Ebenezers Coffee House, 2nd and F Streets, NE, downstairs. Couldn't make it to the Swampoodle Walking Tour? No problem! Take a virtual tour with event organizers. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512.