



# NEWS

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October 2005

## CHRS Announces 2005 Community Grants

by Larry Pearl

For the sixth consecutive year, CHRS is continuing its tradition of devoting part of the proceeds of the annual House and Garden Tour to the Capitol Hill community.

The CHRS Board has approved the following grants totaling \$9,925:

### 1. Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery (APHCC).

A grant of \$1,200 to purchase a utility trailer, water tank and pumping device to assist in the restoration of the tree canopy at Congressional Cemetery. APHCC planted 164 trees last year in the cemetery; 30 to 40 more are to be planted this October and an additional 100 by 2007. A grounds utility vehicle is being purchased this fall. The requested grant will pay for accessories to that vehicle to bring water to tree bags to assure the survival of this enhanced tree canopy.

### 2. Barracks Row Main Street (BRMS).

A grant of \$2,500 for a portion of flower basket hardware, plant materials, installation and maintenance costs. BRMS has installed twenty flower baskets on the north and south sides of the Southwest Freeway. This serves the goal of re-uniting Eighth Street by encouraging shoppers and diners to explore the 1000 and 1100 blocks of

the street and encouraging Navy Yard employees to patronize the many businesses on the street's full length.

### 3. Brent Neighbors (BN).

A grant of \$500 for perennial plants for tree boxes that surround the school and for shrubs, watering cans, gloves, etc., to maintain the plantings. BN is a new

group founded earlier this year that is working to improve Brent Elementary School at Third Street and North Carolina Avenue, SE. Beautification of the exterior surroundings should decrease vandalism and loitering and encourage neighborhood families to use the playground.

*Community Grants continued on page 3*

## The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative: How Does It Relate to Capitol Hill?

### October Forum Will Feature Andy Altman, Waterfront Corporation Leader

Capitol Hill residents will have an opportunity later this month to learn about how plans for the Anacostia waterfront might affect them from Andy Altman, President of the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation. The presentation and forum, sponsored by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society as part of its regular series of membership meetings, will take place on October 25, 2005, in the basement of St. Peter's Church at Second and C Streets, SE.

Refreshments will be served at 7:00 pm and the Anacostia

waterfront presentation will begin at 7:45 pm. The meeting is open to the public.

The focus of the presentation will be on those portions of the Anacostia waterfront redevelopment proposal that most immediately affect the Capitol Hill community—from the South Capitol Street initiative to the new stadium site, along the riverfront through the Navy Yard and up past the Hill East waterfront (Reservation 13) and RFK Stadium. The redevelopment initiative is expected to produce millions of square feet of office space and thousands of residential units in the area, as well as parks and trails that also are part of the plan. ✧

# President's Column: Gotham Meets Mayberry— The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative and Capitol Hill

by Dick Wolf

Cranes move up and down; lines of trucks carry endless loads of dirt; jackhammers yammer all day; enormous holes appear, soon to be filled with steel and concrete.

Within the next 10 to 20 years or sooner Capitol Hill—the area roughly from the Capitol to the Anacostia River and from the Freeway to H Street, NE, will be bounded on the west, south and north by many millions of square feet of new office buildings, hotels, and condominiums. The opening salvos in this series of mega-developments are the SEC building in back of Union Station along Second Street, NE—1.5 million square feet of office space—and the many more million scheduled for the air rights space over the rail yards in back of Union Station stretching up to and beyond New York Avenue. But the major impact on the Hill will come from the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI). And that is the subject of the membership meeting at St. Peter's Church on October 25.

Although the entirety of AWI stretches from the Southwest Waterfront all the way up to the Arboretum and calls for development along both sides of the Anacostia River, our forum will focus on the area from South Capitol Street to RFK Stadium. It should be noted that the whole of the AWI represents more acreage than the Southwest Urban renewal of the 1950's and 1960's. The part we are concerned with encompasses a number of distinct areas and developments—mostly offices, with some residential and some park. There will be amenities such as the Anacostia trail walk and Canal Park. All of it will be immediately adjacent to Capitol Hill, separated mostly only by the freeway. The physical characteristics of these developments are tall, bulky, dense, and without design controls except in

a few cases where there is a planned unit development or historic preservation considerations. There are a number of buildings either already built or in the process of being built which set the tone for the build-out. These are along M Street, SE, from the Lincoln development at Eleventh Street, SE, to First Street, SE. Just follow the cranes.

What started out five years ago with a four-day community-based workshop that called for dovetailing of development with existing Capitol Hill evolved into "a new community" as Mr. Altman, the Executive Director of the Anacostia Waterfront Development Corporation, likes to call it. It will bear little relationship to Capitol Hill in terms of uses, look and feel, except, perhaps, at Reservation 13. In this regard it is more like the development below M Street in Georgetown except much, much larger. This is not the kinder, gentler community we originally envisioned.

The development scope is outlined in the Anacostia Waterfront Framework Plan as enacted by the Council. It is a generalized plan to be filled in by specific development proposals from the private sector. It is not the detailed, heavily controlled development characterized by the Southwest Urban Renewal Plan and the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation's renewal efforts. Nor is it even the small area plan for Reservation 13. Developers drive this development effort with some limits imposed by requirements for assisted housing, historic preservation considerations in the Navy Yard, and the statutory height limit. Moreover, the "plan" is subject to abrupt changes driven by such deals as the new baseball stadium at South Capitol Street and the proposal for a new National Capital Medical Center complex at Reservation 13.

The various areas of development are distinguished by different

## Forum: The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

7:00 pm – Reception

7:45 pm – Andy Altman, *President Anacostia Waterfront Corporation*

St. Peter's Church basement  
Second and C Streets, SE

uses: South Capitol Street and New Jersey Avenue corridors are supposed to be grand boulevards; the new stadium area is for sports and entertainment; the GSA/Navy Yard for mixed uses; the site of the old Capper/Carrollburg public housing, 1,500 mixed income units; and Reservation 13. We hope to have numerous displays of drawings and information sheets that will convey some idea of the size and scope of these various projects.

Residents and business owners should ask the project director and his staff such questions as:

- What kind and numbers of residents are expected: families, singles, DINKs?
- How much additional traffic can we expect and where will it go?
- Will office workers and residents of the area use the Hill for business or will they find some other business areas within the new community to do their shopping and eating?
- How much in the way of taxes will be generated by these developments?

In short, what are the benefits and detriments to the Hill community of this "new community" and what difference does it make what we think about any of this?

Come and find out. ✧

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To contact any of the above, please contact the Society offices by calling 202-543-0425 or sending email to CapHRS@aol.com.

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

Celebrating our fiftieth year helping to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is now the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the entire District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood. With your participation we will continue to do so for many years to come.

### Start or Renew a CHRS Membership

- \* On the Web at [www.CHRS.org](http://www.CHRS.org)
  - \* Call 202-543-0425 and choose option 2
  - \* Get a form at one of our meetings
- Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

## Community Grants *continued from page 1*

### 4. Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (CHAW).

A grant of \$3,000 to provide a screened area for trash and recycling dumpsters. Trash and recycling bins will be relocated from the south side of the building facing G Street to a new area dedicated to trash toward the west end of the lot on G Street. It will be screened with fencing consistent with the Historic District and surfaced with fieldstone. Gingko Gardens has assisted in the development of this plan.

### 5. Public Markets Collaborative of the Project for Public Spaces.

A grant of \$1,500 to assist in underwriting a reception to be held at Eastern Market during an international conference on public markets to be held this fall. The conference

will provide the Eastern Market Citizens' Advisory Committee, the Eastern market manager and merchants an opportunity to share ideas and learn from public market staff, board members and merchants from all over the world. Local guest chefs will cook the food, much of which will be purchased at the Market.

### 6. Trees for Capitol Hill.

A grant of \$1,225 to prune eight mature trees on the grounds of the Northeast Library. All of these trees have been neglected and have dead, dying or broken limbs. Pruning will enhance tree health and improve the attractiveness of the library grounds. In addition, two of the trees need to be cabled for additional stability. \*

## DC Court Invalidates 2002 DC Property Assessments in Some Neighborhoods

On September 26, 2005, Judge Eugene Hamilton of the DC Superior Court determined that some of the assessments made by the City for residential properties for Tax Year 2003 were "arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, and otherwise not in conformity with the Constitution of the United States or the law of the District of Columbia."

In a class action suit that may be applicable to Capitol Hill, Judge Hamilton, DC Superior Court Senior Judge, ruled for Peter S. Craig and other Cleveland Park plaintiffs. The suit claimed the City based assessments on a formula based on recent home sales rather than individual appraisals.

The Court found that the City willfully, knowingly, intentionally, and deliberately established

across-the-board multipliers to be applied to previous assessments, such multipliers varying by neighborhoods and/or uses as unilaterally defined by the City, and that this willful, knowingly deliberate, and intentional conduct violates the Petitioners' right to equal protection guaranteed by the Constitution.

The application of across-the-board multipliers to determine property assessments, rather than using individual assessments for each specific property, established new rules governing assessments which had not been the product of rule-making proceedings.

The Court will hear arguments about the form of equitable relief, refunds or damages at a hearing in late November, 2005.

Mr. Craig can be reached at 202-362-7192. \*

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# Katrina, New Orleans, and Capitol Hill

## From Brian and Charlotte Furness in exile in Houston

Shooing the last guests from our French Quarter bed and breakfast as Hurricane Katrina loomed over New Orleans, we locked shutters, nailed up plywood, collected important papers, stuffed computers and dogs in the car, and left the Big Easy late on Sunday afternoon. Driving through Katrina's outer rain bands on country roads, we reached Houston at 4:30 am—twelve unpleasant hours to make a 6-hour trip. There, we were reunited with daughter and son-in-law at Charlotte's mother's house in the Houston suburbs.

From there, we could only watch television accounts of Hurricane Katrina's devastation: the loss of power, water, and civility; the rupture of the levees that provoked flooding in much of the city; the horrors of the Superdome and the desperate efforts of so many to leave; and the confusion and agonizing delays in the arrival of assistance.

Our neighbors, who had spent the night in one of our second floor

rooms rather than evacuate, reported it was the scariest experience of their lives: the wind whistled and the building creaked, groaned and shook, but the 1820's buildings suffered only mild damage and no flooding.

Indeed, New Orleans' most historic areas survived pretty much intact: the French, no fools they, built originally on the natural levee, the highest ground available, and houses that could survive pretty extreme weather.

We were fortunate: we were all safe, we had a home to go to and loved ones to welcome us; and our property survived. So many others were not. Returning briefly to start cleaning up, the main highway into New Orleans took me past miles of downed trees, drowned cars, smashed houses, and debris, including that left by survivors on the side of the interstate as they waited for evacuation.

Cleaning up took place in unmercifully hot weather (emptying a refrigerator of rotting food in 95 degree heat is a real experience) but the biggest impact was the silence, emptiness, lack of neighbors, and absence of the vibrancy,

activity, and *joie d'vivre* that so characterizes our adopted city.

The response to catastrophe, once mobilized, was impressive and extends even to historic preservation. On September 20, I attended a meeting of federal, state, and local officials; representatives of universities and national institutions; the media; and a few of us community types; hosted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Baton Rouge. We heard pledges of support for rehabilitation—not demolition—concern for historic buildings; and need to preserve architectural integrity and cultural heritage. But it took a community of citizens and organization representatives to remind the 150 attendees that the views and participation of residents and ordinary citizens should be the touchstone of rebuilding the Crescent City. For my part, I was proud to identify myself as a member of the Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents, and Associates (VCPORA) and the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. ✧

*Brian Furness is a former President of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society.*

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## HPRB Considers Capitol Hill Projects

### Changes Sought in Eastern Market and Barracks Row Neighborhood Buildings

*by Shauna Holmes*

Several large-scale Capitol Hill projects were among those undergoing conceptual review on September 22 by DC's Historic Preservation Review Board, which must approve construction in the city's historic districts. As is customary, a member of CHRS's Historic Preservation Committee

was at the hearing to present CHRS's comments.

**801 Virginia Avenue, SE:** Old City Development, LLC, proposes to construct a 4-story, mixed-use retail/office/residential building immediately south of the Southeast-Southwest Freeway. The new structure, near a number of significant historic buildings, will visually link the northern and southern portions of Barracks Row. While the committee welcomed the new construction and is pleased with the way the project captures the relationship between its contemporary design and its historic

context, the committee also expressed concerns regarding the tower, the Virginia Avenue entrance, and roof materials. The Board liked the overall project and approved its height, mass, overall design, and demolition of existing (non-contributing) structures. Stressing the importance of making the building compatible with the historic district, the Board expressed concerns regarding its materials, scale, proposed passenger drop-off area, and tower and recommended further work on overall design. The applicant will return to the Board for further review.

*HPRB continued on next page*

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# September Café Focused on Storage Solutions

## October Preservation Café to Feature Presentation on Public Spaces

by Shauna Holmes

This season's series of Preservation Cafés opened September 21 with a presentation on "Smart Storage Solutions for Small Historic Homes" by Jill Lawrence, Certified Professional Organizer in Chronic Disorganization (CPO-CD) and president of Jill-of-all-Trades. As a Capitol Hill resident familiar with the storage challenges we all face, Ms. Lawrence took the audience on a room-by-room tour of a typical Capitol Hill row house with no attic or garage.

Starting in an entry hall cluttered with incoming and outgoing items, and then moving through each room in turn, Ms. Lawrence analyzed common problems and offered numerous solutions. "Breathing room is what this is all about," she said, urging listeners to assess the function, use, and location of each piece of furniture and the importance and use of every

possession. Thinking through residents' movements and activities is key to categorizing items and organizing them conveniently, with rarely used items assigned to the most awkward, hard-to-reach spots and frequently used items in the most accessible spaces.

Rather than starting by getting a lot of containers and putting stuff into them, Ms. Lawrence emphasized the importance of first sorting and categorizing items, deciding where they need to be, and then designating and creating places for them. Using the walls is important in small houses, since installing shelves and cupboards can provide space for many possessions. Long and tall furnishings, such as buffets, armoires, and bookcases, can also hold many items, as can furniture like ottomans with lids and coffee tables with doors or drawers. Rather than devoting scarce space to a guest room for infrequent visitors, she suggested instead using the room for the family's activities, for instance as a den, office, library, TV room, or hobby room, with a futon or other seating that can double as a guest bed.

Handouts for the audience

provided basic advice for smart storage solutions—dozens of tips on storage zones, shelving, containers, organization, utilizing air space, adapting to and compensating for odd spaces, and grouping items according to use. The session ended with a drawing for a one-hour free consultation, won by a couple in the audience.

On Wednesday, October 19, at 6:30 pm, the Preservation Café will return to Trattoria Alberto, 506 Eighth Street, SE, for a Public Space Primer. Although public space includes everything from sidewalk cafes, bus shelters and the occasional drive, most Capitol Hill homeowners are the beneficiaries of a unique law that provides a front garden, tax-and-mortgage-free from the city. There are some "strings" attached, though, and Emily Paulus from the city's Historic Preservation Office will be on hand to explain the whys and wherefores. If you have questions about sidewalks, fences, porches, retaining walls, and permits for any of these, this Preservation Café will shed some light on this unique Washington institution. ✧

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**Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street, SE:** Stanton Development Corp. proposes to consolidate three lots into one and add new infill construction at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street. The proposal calls for a 1-story addition above Yes! at 656 Pennsylvania Avenue, three stories atop Ben & Jerry's and Montmartre at 325/327 Seventh Street, and a 4-story infill structure within the private alley between 660 Pennsylvania Avenue and 327 Seventh Street. While the committee supported the general mass of the additions, it expressed reservations about extending 4-story buildings further north on Seventh Street, the large amount of glass in relation to other building

materials, treatment of rooflines, and placement of skylights. (CHRS's zoning committee will review the project for any zoning issues.) The Board approved the lot subdivision and recommended setting back the fourth story along Seventh Street, redesigning the additions to address concerns regarding mass, window treatments, and other issues, and returning to the Board for further review.

**610 Maryland Avenue, NE:** Maryland Avenue Venture, LLC, proposes to demolish the 1948 church it purchased at this site and build three 3-story row houses. CHRS's Historic Preservation Committee recommended some design changes

to rooflines, front façade entrances, and other elements to make them more compatible with nearby historic residences. In addition, CHRS did not oppose a new curb cut in the rear of the lots on D Street because the single cut will take 3 to 6 cars off the street, and proposed landscaping should mitigate the appearance of the drive; however, CHRS acceptance of the curb cut is contingent on the developer undertaking legal measures to ensure that no cars will be parked in the turnaround space or drive.

Stanton Park Neighborhood Association and a concerned Capitol Hill resident also testified regarding design, mass, roof decks, and the curb cut. ✧

# Commercial Revitalization Hopes for Eastern Pennsylvania Avenue

by Beth Purcell

On September 23, 2005, Penn East, Inc., a new commercial revitalization organization, held a briefing on the eastern Pennsylvania Avenue, SE corridor (Penn Ave East). The organization's focus area is the 1100–1600 blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, and the 500 block of Eleventh Street, SE. The organization's goal is to make Penn Ave East a place where people will come to dine, shop, and do business.

Matt Doherty, a Penn East director, presented the results of volunteers' survey of Penn Ave East businesses on the state of the neighborhood. The merchants like their location, their Capitol Hill customers, and opportunities in the neighborhood. They dislike inadequate parking, fast-moving

traffic, high land costs, undesirable appearance (litter in streets and alleys), and other negative perceptions of the area, including crime (theft, loitering), panhandling, and police response to these problems. Business owners are, however, generally positive about Penn Ave East. They want more customers, more restaurants, better lighting, and promotional activities. Steven Stichter, with reSTORE DC/DC Main Streets Programs, outlined the significant changes coming to Penn Ave East, from DC government actions and new development, including the Jenkins Row condominiums at Fourteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Beth Purcell, a Penn East director, (also Secretary of CHRS) served as moderator.

During the discussion of the findings, merchants, and representatives from CHRS, CHAMPS and

the Capitol Hill BID offered their own input on the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of Penn Ave East. Dick Wolf, President of CHRS, spoke in support of the importance of historic preservation in commercial revitalization. He offered CHRS's assistance in engaging the landscape architects, Oehme Van Sweden & Associates, to advise on a streetscape design for Penn Ave East. The responses from the meeting will be organized into a follow-up report and sent to all participants. Penn East, Inc. plans to review these suggestions and select commercial revitalization activities to pursue with both business owners and the community.

For further information, contact Matt Doherty or Beth Purcell. [mattdoherty@verizon.net](mailto:mattdoherty@verizon.net) (or) [Eap1@mindspring.com](mailto:Eap1@mindspring.com). ✧

## Neighborhood Stabilization Program At Work

### Long-time Neighborhood Eyesore Cleaned Up

1525 E Street, SE, has long been a neighborhood eyesore. A few years ago the property burned so badly that it had to be stabilized by putting concrete block in the windows. Over the years trees, brush and trash have accumulated on the site to the point that the property was almost invisible from the street. In



January of this year CHRS complained to DCRA about the situation and finally in early September the property was



1525 E Street, SE, before (left) and after (above). Photos: Gary Peterson

cleaned up. If you know of properties like this, please report them to the Neighborhood Stabilization Program at 202-645-8285. Once

you have reported a property please let Gary Peterson know at [pgarylaw@aol.com](mailto:pgarylaw@aol.com). ✧

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# Looking Back on Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

For 142 years, the Boswell family lived near the corner of First and D Streets, SE. Members of St. Peter's Parish, the clan included highly skilled workers at the Navy Yard, firemen, and some of the Hill's early restorers—C. T. "Brother" Boswell and H. Curley Boswell. The last of the family to live in the house was William H. Boswell, who grew up on Capitol Hill, attended the neighborhood schools before going on to the US Coast Guard Academy and rising to become Captain. Bill and Myra Boswell sold the family home in 2002 to move to Plano, Texas, to be near one of their sons. Bill died this summer.

Bill loved the Hill and especially his childhood here. Shortly before his move to Texas, Bill spent several hours with me, telling the stories of his family and the people and places of Capitol Hill that he

knew as a child. The following remembrance about his father and the fire department stations on Capitol Hill in the 1920's and 1930's is excerpted from one of his tapes:

*"The pumpers, hose wagons and the chief were at Number 8 (on North Carolina Avenue, SE, where the Natatorium now stands). Behind it was the fire department training school and they had a four-story tower. ... It was fun to watch because they (would leap from the) tower—they had a big net—jumping down into the big net and then scaling the wall. ...*

*Back in the old days, one of the biggest events was the Labor Day parade. Every firehouse would spend months decorating a float or doing something for the Fireman's Parade. They would go down Pennsylvania Avenue. It was one of the biggest events—parades—in Washington. ... They would also bring up, every year, Barney, Gene and Tom—the last three fire horses. I can*

*remember, every year, my father would drive (Mr.) Gately and the other man, Brick Owens—two of the original horse drivers. He would drive them down to Blue Plains, which was where the horses were kept. They would get on their backs and ride them, up through Anacostia and the old Eleventh Street Bridge. They used to keep them at Number 18 (at Ninth and Virginia Avenue, SE) because they still had racks for the hay. They still had stalls in the rear and could house them for a few days. ...*

*The fire engine for years was kept in the lower part of Eastern Market. That's where it was stored. The machine shop (repair shop) was next to Number 8. It's down in Southwest now. My father used to be in charge of that until he retired. He was the chief in charge of repair, equipment, location (where each piece of equipment was located around the city)." \**

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## CHRS Efforts Lauded

### Society's Work Continues to Receive National Recognition

by Rob Nevitt

The September/October 2005 issue of *Preservation*, the journal of The National Trust for Historic Preservation, has a meditation on Capitol Hill that we wanted to share with you here.

It is warming to hear an outsider comment on what we know to be a great neighborhood. As the article makes clear, a "neighborhood," however protective of its history, is not a static museum piece, but something that requires

the vigilance of organizations and residents.

The author became acquainted with us by going on what he calls the "annual Capitol Hill house-and-garden tour." That is, of course, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society Tour. He mentions Eighth Street development, which CHRS has supported through Barracks Row Main Street. In fact, we supported a change in the permitted floor area ratio for the upper floors of these historic buildings to further commercial development, an expansion of the historic district to include Eighth Street south of the freeway, and are funding flower basket hardware from 2005 House Tour proceeds. We were active in support of those who saw the problems of creating a restaurant/night club in the former church on Eighth Street. The author admired the "microcosm of

preservation," which is, of course, our bread and butter. The Ellen Wilson Project was a centerpiece of activity by the CHRS board from design, layout, and monitoring, all the way to completion.

Ironically, the author notes "Preservationists don't always give themselves credit for what they have accomplished...they deserve kudos." We would have been happy to receive them for each of you, the faithful and supportive members of CHRS. This is what you do through your dues and volunteer support.

The *Preservation* article is reprinted on page 8 of this newsletter. PLEASE share the article with neighbors and friends and urge them to join you in taking the pride the author says we deserve. \*

# What It's All About

## Preservation in Washington, D.C., takes a neighborhood to the next level

by Dwight Young

On a recent Sunday afternoon I joined throngs of other pilgrims for the annual Capitol Hill house-and-garden tour. As always, I enjoyed trooping through some interesting living spaces—the condos in a former school were especially nice—while offering my unsolicited appraisal of other people's taste (Macramé!? I thought the last one of those died 30 years ago!) and family photos (Hmmm, he'd better lay off the tiramisu if he wants to wear that bathing suit again). But this year's tour offered me something unexpected: At one point I found myself in the middle of a life-size diorama of What Preservation Is All About.

It happened on Eighth Street, SE, the spine of the neighborhood's historic commercial district. For the past few years, this strip (now known as Barracks Row) has been the focus of a highly successful revitalization initiative, and as a result it now displays all the signs of

vigorous rebirth: spiffed-up façades, new street lights and sidewalks, people carrying shopping bags or chatting over drinks at outdoor tables. It looked so attractive and prosperous—like a poster for a “preservation is good for the pocketbook” campaign—that it was easy to see why the effort recently won a Great American Main Street Award.

The streets around Barracks Row offered reminders of preservation's bedrock. Important individual landmarks—including the nation's oldest continuously manned US Marines post and the city's oldest Episcopal church building—were surrounded by blocks of houses where people were tending their flowerbeds or touching up the paint on their porches. It was a theater-in-the-round presentation on what makes a livable neighborhood. I could almost hear Mister Rogers singing—or was it the Marine Band rehearsing, or the music of property values rising?

There was even a hint of controversy. In the middle of Barracks Row stood a vacant building that formerly housed a storefront church. Recently a local businessman wanted to open a restaurant there, but he ran into opposition from some residents, who feared his restaurant would really be a nightclub, would be too big for the neighborhood, would cause traffic and parking problems, etc. He withdrew his proposal. While I was trying to decide which side had been right, I studied some of the new kids on the block—a martini bar here, an art gallery there—and wondered what reception they had received.

Treasured landmarks, fixed-up houses, adaptive use, commercial revitalization, a bit of conflict—all in a few blocks of a single neighborhood. “This is preservation in microcosm,” I said to myself, and I looked upon it, and it was good.

Something else good was around the corner.

The blocks to the west of Barracks Row used to be the site of a public housing project called the Ellen Wilson Houses. When it was new, in the 1940's and '50's, the complex was a nice place to live, but it eventually deteriorated into a crime-ridden enclave of shabby buildings adrift in a sea of weeds and trash. By the mid-1990's, conditions had gotten so bad that the city tore the whole thing down.

What went up in its place is a mixed-income development (more than half of the residents earn no more than 50 percent of the area's median income) that has all the earmarks of a real neighborhood. The buildings were designed to look like traditional Washington row houses. That sort of thing can wind up looking like a stage set, but architect Amy Weinstein pulled it off well here. Because the houses sit on real streets instead of in vast super-blocks, and because those streets tie into the surrounding grid, you enter the project without crossing the usual abandon-all-hope-who-enter-here boundary. The place looks as if people actually live in it instead of being confined there.

Preservationists don't always give themselves credit for what they have accomplished. If they bring new economic vigor and livability to older commercial and residential areas and in the process help architects, planners, and housing officials understand how a real neighborhood looks and feels and works—they deserve kudos.

Judging by what I saw on Eighth Street, SE, preservationists have a lot to be proud of. ✧

*Reprinted with permission of Preservation, the bimonthly magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, September/October 2005. The article is also available online at [www.nationaltrust.org/Magazine/current/backpage](http://www.nationaltrust.org/Magazine/current/backpage).*

## No Room for the New Blue Recycling or Green Trash Carts?

*The DC Government Will Remove Unwanted Carts!*

Simply Call 202-727-1000  
Give the Location  
Turn Carts UPSIDE DOWN  
Tape Note to Bottom—  
“PLEASE RETURN” ✧



# Third Call Box Highlights ‘Home Theatre’ History

by Nancy Metzger

No doubt people walking in the 1200 block of C Street, NE, often ponder the unusual church structure at 1230 C Street (since 1952, home of The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith congregation). Few passersby would guess that the Art Deco structure began as an exuberant Moorish Revival movie theatre, designed in 1916 by the noted DC theatre architect, William S. Plager. In 1941, the façade was re-designed for new owners by Mihran Mesrobian in the popular Art Deco style. Located away from the usual commercial corridors, the Home Theatre is a reminder of how important the movie industry was to the life of the Capitol Hill neighborhood in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

Capitol Hill resident and artist, Betsy Damos, became intrigued by the work of Plager several years ago when she was taking an architectural history class. When the call box project was announced she quickly decided this would be a great opportunity to highlight his work at both the Home Theatre and the Carolina Theatre (subject of the now-completed call box at Lincoln Park and Eleventh Street, SE).

For the Home Theatre box, Betsy used a photograph of the façade and a metalphoto process instead of the line drawings and the cast bronze process used for the Carolina Theatre box. In the metalphoto process, photographs, other graphic material and text are etched onto a metal plate so images with more detail can be used. The call box pedestal, painted in blue, gray, and black, features geometric design motifs from the theatre buildings.

Betsy works in both sculptural and two-dimensional media. (Her work can be seen at [www.robert-browngallery.com](http://www.robert-browngallery.com) and at [www.enoughforall.com/ostreetstudios.html](http://www.enoughforall.com/ostreetstudios.html).)

Her love of architectural history shaped this call box and led her to establish her business, House History Hunting, to research house histories for Hill residents and others. Although her talent as a sculptor is not displayed in this call

box, her experience in that media was essential in figuring out exactly how to mount the plaque—and that experience will make it easier and quicker for artists and designers of other boxes to accomplish the technical aspects of the job. ✧



Above: The Home Theatre Call Box, 1200 Block of C Street, NE  
Left: Artist Betsy Damos and her Home Theatre Call Box

Photos: Norm Metzger

## Opportunities for Call Box Sponsorship

Both the Home Theatre call box and the Party Animals call box (at First and D Streets, SE) need sponsors. For \$550 your name (or perhaps your firm's name or a group of neighbors) will be included on a credit plaque to be affixed to the call box—a permanent reminder of your contribution to the neighborhood and this project. This tax-deductible donation is used to cover the costs of materials and fabrication. For more information about the possibilities of full or partial sponsorship, please contact the CHRS office—202-543-0425.

The call boxes are part of the citywide Art on Call project, which is jointly sponsored by Cultural Tourism DC, DC Council for Arts and Humanities, the Mayor's Office and the DC Department of Transportation. Both of these call boxes have received the city's \$250 grant, which is given to the artists as a very modest honorarium for the work involved. ✧

## Mark Your Calendar!

### OCTOBER

**13 Thursday, 7:30 pm**

CHRS Zoning Committee Meeting.

The committee will consider the following cases:

1008 South Carolina Avenue, SE  
510 H Street, NE  
325 A Street, SE  
318 Sixteenth Street, SE  
221, 223 and 225 Eleventh Street, SE  
318 I Street, NE (PUD application)

Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE  
Details: Gary Peterson, 202-547-7969

**18 Tuesday, 6:30 pm**

**Ward 6 Issues Forum on National Capital Medical Center/Reservation 13.** Hine Jr. High Auditorium, Eighth and Pennsylvania, SE.

**19 Wednesday, 6:30 pm**

**Preservation Café.** Emily Paulus from DC's Historic Preservation Office will present a primer on public space. Trattoria Alberto, 506 Eighth Street, SE

**20 Thursday, 6:30 pm**

CHRS Board Meeting. Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE

**25 Tuesday, 7:00 pm**

**Forum: The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative**

7:00 pm – Reception

7:45 pm – Andy Altman, President Anacostia Waterfront Corporation

St. Peter's Church basement, Second and C Streets, SE.

### NOVEMBER

**7 Monday, 6:30 pm**

CHRS Historic District Committee Meeting. Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE

## Ward 6 Forum on the National Capital Medical Center/Reservation 13 Scheduled

A proposed National Capital Medical Center (NCMC) will be held at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, October 18, at the Hine Jr. High School auditorium (Eighth and Pennsylvania SE). The forum will be cosponsored by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association, the ANC6B, Ward 6 Democrats, the League of Women Voters, DC for Democracy-Ward 6, and the Hill East Waterfront Action Network. Ward 6 Councilmember Sharon Ambrose will host the Forum and will make the opening remarks.

Colbert I. King, deputy editor of The Washington Post editorial page, will moderate a panel discussion of the proposal for construction of a new \$400+ million NCMC hospital complex at the DC General

Hospital site in Ward 6. NCMC would be owned by Howard University. Howard and the DC Government would share construction costs equally.

DC Mayor Anthony Williams and Howard University President H. Patrick Swygert, JD, have been invited to participate on the panel. They have not yet responded, but it is hoped that they will be able to share their vision with Ward 6 residents on October 18 as they did in a similar panel discussion in Ward 7.

Confirmed panelists are the executive director of the DC Hospital Association, Robert Malson, and the executive director of the DC Primary Care Health Association, Sharon Baskerville.

The panel discussion will be followed by a question and answer session. For further information, contact Jan Eichhorn at 202-547-8855 or JanEichhorn@aol.com. ✧



### Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 Tenth Street, SE  
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