



# NEWS

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## CHRS Forum Initiates Society's Debate on DC Comprehensive Plan

### Present Status, What's Next, and How to Learn More

by Amanda Molson

On January 18, members and residents heard from Barry Miller of the DC Office of Planning at a CHRS forum on the DC Comprehensive Plan. The plan, currently in the drafting phase, attempts to update the archaic 1984 version and its spotty revisions, the last of which was issued in 1998. Overarching goals include creating successful neighborhoods, increasing access to education and jobs, and connecting the city from within.

Although the new proposal will retain many of the initial principles, it also aims to improve usability by eliminating irrelevant policies such as snow shoveling responsibilities and by removing redundant—and sometimes conflicting—language. With the arrival of today's sweeping development and restoration craze, the "future" referred to 20 years ago has passed us by and also differs drastically from the vision of its authors. These present-day movements will be tackled as the strategy reflects modern data and adjusts for the long-term road ahead.

Mr. Miller addressed several major structural modifications in the way that the plan depicts the city. The revised format would add sections



Barry Miller and CHRS President Dick Wolf.  
Photo: Norm Metzger

on parks and recreation, educational facilities, infrastructure, and the arts to the preexisting elements that range from preservation to transportation. Additionally, ten "Area Elements" that address the more natural bound-

aries of our neighborhoods would replace the eight Ward Plans.

Still in need of attention, however, are both the accuracy of the

*CHRS Forum continued on page 3*

## Hundreds Attend Meeting on Planning Commission

by Tom Grahame

A crowd estimated at several hundred people listened intently to discussants address what would seem like an abstruse subject: Should DC have a Planning Commission? The Committee of 100 hosted the January 12 open meeting at the National Building Museum. One might not think that this subject would necessarily be a

big draw, but on this occasion, one would be wrong.

Perhaps it is the perception that while Mayor Williams has successfully overhauled formerly neglected city Departments, especially the Office of Planning, there may not be adequate coordination of the efforts of different reenergized city agencies. Perhaps DC citizens see new construction all

*Meeting continued on page 4*

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# President's Column

## After the Drought Comes the Planning Flood

by Dick Wolf

There are so many planning initiatives coming from the Government and private non-profits, that citizens have a very hard time keeping up. But keep up we must because these initiatives and ideas will determine the look, feel, and demographics of the District of Columbia for many years to come.

The month of January has kicked off a year of the most planning, zoning and historic preservation activity since home rule. For starters, we had the Committee of 100 on the Federal City put on a free symposium at the National Building Museum on January 12,

to be charitable, offered kind words both for the status quo and support for considering the initiative. Ellen McCarthy, representing the Mayor, took a strong stand against changing the status quo, that is, no planning commission and no movement of OP from under the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development. The planners also found this current form of planning structure to be filled with conflict—a position that CHRS has taken many times in testimony before the Council.

CHRS strongly supports a local planning commission for the following reasons. Our position over the last several years has been that a local planning commission is the only way for citizens to have 1) a formal structure for voicing their views on the Comprehensive Plan and 2) a mechanism for implementing a hard won plan. Moreover, a planning commission would continuously consider the

down and arbitrary—would not happen with a planning commission (see article on page 1).

Additional necessity for planning commission came from the January 18 CHRS forum on the Comprehensive Plan. With an attentive audience of close to a hundred Capitol Hill residents, Barry Miller, the deputy for long range planning in OP, described with great precision and clear organization the vast scope of the effort to create a new comprehensive plan for DC. What may be the most important information conveyed was the vast body of facts developed about the city: its demographics, trends, size, density, and all the other facts upon which planning must be based. What has struck me, as the Ward 6 representative to the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, is the diminishing number of families in the city—only Northwest Washington and Capitol Hill are gaining families. Families are an increasingly endangered species in this city without substantial changes in public policy with respect to schools, crime, planning and zoning. I make this point regularly.

Also, Barry Miller, as good as he is, cannot say at this time how the plan will be used in hypothetical cases or what implementation mechanisms will be used to assure a continuing focus on making sure the plan controls actions of the government. That is why we need a planning commission for DC. Barry has said to me, that in his work in various cities, he has never encountered a situation where a comprehensive plan was developed and administered without a planning commission. Such matters are not for Barry to decide but are for a Mayor and Council. As I said at the meeting, if you think this is important then you should raise the issue with the many candidates that are vying to become council members and mayor this year. Land use is a political issue in every state and city in the country. It is here. ✱

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**If you think a planning commission is important then you should raise the issue with the many candidates that are vying to become council members and mayor this year.**

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which considered whether or not DC should have its own local planning commission. The speakers included three prominent planners with experience running planning commissions in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, and Cleveland. Local speakers included Linda Cropp, Chairman of the DC City Council—a mayoral candidate who has oversight on planning, zoning, and historic preservation at the Council—and Ellen McCarthy, the director of the Office of Planning (OP).

The three planners were very clear on the utility and even necessity for a DC planning commission; the Committee of 100 (I sit as an elected trustee) strongly advocates this initiative; and four DC council members in attendance—Fenty, Cantania, Graham, and Mendelson all supported this initiative. Mrs. Cropp,

updating of the plan upon recommendation of OP or citizens and business groups. With a zoning code dating to 1958 and ready for a complete overhaul after the passage of a new comprehensive plan, a planning commission would inform the commission of whether proposals are consistent with the plan.

Finally, the planning commission would assist the Mayor and Council in assessing capital spending plans for conformance with the plan. This is a responsibility suggested by the Home Rule Act and a regular procedure in many cities that have a planning commission. Unsaid by Ellen McCarthy in opposing a planning commission is that it would strip OP of its unfettered power to decide when and where planning and zoning changes will take place in the city. The situation with respect to NOMA planning—top

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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.

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# CHRS Forum *continued from page 1*

plan's maps and specific guidelines for implementation. Because the city's zoning laws will be affected by these latest policies, it is critical that all maps properly reflect density, boundaries, and the various subcategories under residential, commercial, and industrial usage.

A course of action must also be carefully charted. Without a system to enforce the provisions, residents are left with mere suggestions and a city full of agencies with other priorities to tend to. The need for responsibility was raised frequently in audience questions, and Mr. Miller echoed that his office shares these concerns. Audience members also requested the separation of planning and economic development, a division that CHRS strongly supports, along with the necessary formation of a local planning commission to administer the plan and to give it "teeth."

What's next? The citizen task force, of which CHRS President Dick Wolf is a member, will continue to meet through the end of March. Community meetings hosting staff members from the DC Office of Planning will also be ongoing. A working draft is due in April, with further deliberations through the remainder of the spring. After the draft is submitted to the DC Council in June, hearings and final approval will be followed by a 60-day review

by the National Capital Planning Commission and Congress before implementation can begin.

The plan's content and potential for success affect every DC resident on an individual level. Capital improvement guidelines will dictate where city money is invested and whether it would create a library or community center near you. It could bring additional playgrounds and parks to your neighborhood or it could burden you with unwanted businesses and overdevelopment. It will influence a myriad of daily issues including parking, distribution of city services, and our continued joint efforts to preserve the architectural character of Capitol Hill.

There are several ways for you to be heard. Task force meetings are open to the public, with a schedule and notes from past meetings posted on the city's website for the plan, [www.inclusivitycity.org](http://www.inclusivitycity.org). You may also visit the site to register for email updates, review all relevant documentation, and post public comments. Remarks can be shared by phone with Jill Diskan of the DC Office of Planning at 202-442-7600.

CHRS will, of course, continue to discuss this key topic at upcoming meetings and in the *News*. The next few months are pivotal to ensure that the future of the city respects the unique history of its past. We hope you will remain involved. \*

## Welcome CHRS Supporters

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

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# Meeting on Planning Commission *continued from page 1*

around them and are aware of bigger new plans on the horizon—such as NOMA, Reservation 13, the National Capital Medical Center (NCMC) and the possibility of using RFK stadium parking for the NCMC, the new baseball stadium, the Eleventh Street bridge upgrade, the Capitol Hill Transportation Study, and so on. Yet residents now find it harder to park near their homes, and may wonder if things will get worse, and whether there is a better way to do things.

Possibly some attendees were even attracted by what can be thought of as star power in the city planning profession: panelists included Gary Hack, Dean of the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania and Past Chair of the Philadelphia Planning Commission; Chris Ronayne, former Planning Director for Cleveland; and Paul Farmer, Executive Director and CEO of the American Planning Association and formerly Planning Director of several US cities, including Minneapolis. DC Council Chair Linda Cropp and Ellen McCarthy, Director of the DC Office of Planning rounded out the panel of five discussants.

Whatever the reason, the lively audience was interested to know

what a Planning Commission could do for DC.

The three non-DC discussants all supported a Planning Commission, which they said could serve many useful purposes. A Planning Commission should be the instrument which ties together all the disparate plans of different city agencies, including transportation, planning, housing, and economic development, in a publicly reviewed, carefully established long range plan. Such a body would usually have members appointed for staggered terms of about six years, to ensure continuity and some protection from short-run political pressure. Conversely, a Planning Commission can help insulate a Mayor from pressure from contributors—for example, a newly elected Mayor can tell a developer who contributed to his campaign that the Planning Commission would be happy to consider whether the developer's proposal makes sense in the context of the long-range plan—this suggestion from Chris Ronayne, apparently from experience.

With so many people turning out on a mid-winter evening, four DC council members not on the panel were able to squeeze in appear-

ances, and all four—Council members Catania, Graham, Mendelson, and Fenty—were supportive of a Planning Commission.

DC Council Chair Cropp seemed supportive: she said that the Comprehensive Plan process hasn't worked that well for DC, and perhaps a Planning Commission could help it work better. Cropp also pointed out that currently, the Office of Planning reports to the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, but that economic development isn't the only goal of planning. With a Planning Commission to work on tying everything together in a long-range Comprehensive Plan, the Office of Planning wouldn't have the built-in conflicts of planning not only for economic development, but also in attempting to fully integrate how different functions would all relate, which might require less development at some locations (but more at others).

The only opposition to the Planning Commission, although it was muted, came from the Office of Planning's Director, Ellen McCarthy. She quoted H.L. Mencken's famous aphorism that there are easy solutions, which are "neat, plausible—and wrong." If she hadn't been preceded by several highly experienced members of the planning profession who spoke to the benefits of a Planning Commission, perhaps her observations might have seemed more convincing to the audience. McCarthy said that she has never been told by the Mayor to support a particular project, and when one considers just how non-political Mayor Williams has been, one can believe this statement. But how many future mayors are likely to leave all such decisions to the professionals?

Before the audience had its opportunity to comment, Council member Fenty, arriving late, had the last word. DC has to follow "best practices," Fenty said, and it needs more community involvement in planning. ✧

## CHRS Board Approves New Board Members

On January 17, the CHRS Board approved the appointment of Monte Edwards to complete Diane Scott's at-large seat on the Board. Ms. Scott's resignation was reported in the last issue of the *News*.

Mr. Edwards is active in the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association as a Steering Committee member and Co-chair of the Land Use Committee. He has been a representative to the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee (EMCAC) since it was first established, and served as Chair, Nominations, Credentials and Membership Committee (1999-

2000); Vice Chair, EMCAC (1999-2004); Chair, Capital Improvements Committee (2000-Present); Secretary, EMCAC (2004-Present).

In other action, the Board approved the appointment of long-time Capitol Hill resident and Congressional staffer Amanda Molson as Chair of the CHRS Communications Committee. She has seen community service as a volunteer for the Barracks Row Fest, the Historical Society of Washington's Kiplinger Research Library. She is a frequent contributor to the *Hill Rag*. ✧

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# Lisa Burcham Leaves City's Historic Preservation Post

by Nancy Metzger

For almost three years Lisa Burcham, as State Historic Preservation Officer and director of the DC Historic Preservation Office, brought new energy and ideas to that post. In late November she announced that she would be leaving the office for personal and professional reasons. Many members will recall that Ms. Burcham addressed the September 2003 CHRS members' meeting and outlined a number of initiatives that she and the staff were working on. (The points in italics are taken from the October 2003 CHRS News; the sentences in brackets give the status.):

- *Updating the regulations pertaining to the Historic Preservation Act.* [The regulations were updated and a revision of the Act itself is now before the Council.]
- *Establishing the Mayor's Awards for Excellence in Historic Preservation to recognize the importance of historic preservation in the city.* [These awards were presented in 2003, 2004, and 2005. CHRS received the 2003 Award in Preservation Leadership as well as an award in 2004 for the Park Street project.]
- *Commissioning an economic study on the economics of historic preservation within the city—both benefits and costs.* [This was written by Donovan Rypkema and can be read by going to [www.inclusivitycity.org](http://www.inclusivitycity.org); then click on "Library" folder, then "Vision Policy Papers."]
- *Developing a historic district sign program.* [The first of these signs were installed last year in the Mount Vernon Square Historic District using Convention Center mitigation funds; other historic districts will be signed as funding becomes available.]
- *Pushing for funding for a rehabilitation tax credit program targeted to residents of certain income levels within ten historic districts, including Capitol Hill.* [The council included funding, and a technical corrections bill is now before the council that will address implementation problems identified by the Historic Preservation Office and the Office of Tax and Revenue.]
- *Developing a fund for the rehabilitation of row house stock.*
- *Establishing a program of notification and communication for historic district owners.* [The seller's disclosure form program has been implemented and the Historic Preservation Office and the Office of Tax and Revenue have developed a plan to notify owners of historic properties in their real estate bills.]
- *Redrafting and illustrating the city's design guidelines.* [This is still a work in progress.]

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## Looking Back on Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

In the exhibit "Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community" now at the National Building Museum at 401 F Street, NW, there is a photo of a young Sidney Hais in 1943, shown with his neighbor Bernard "Dutch" Herman in front of the Hais Market at 301 Seventh Street, NE, when both were home on leave during World War II. Mr. Hais was born in 1914 and was raised above the family grocery store.

In October 2004 he was interviewed by Sharon House for the Ruth Ann Overbeck Oral History Project and talked about the Capitol Hill of his youth.

*"From the time I was five or six years old, [my father] had me delivering milk and bread early in the morning, because bread and milk was left off at the store. The milk was left with ice on*

*it, and the bread man left it in what was called breadboxes. [Editor's note: These were large metal boxes, about three feet high.] And they were left in front of the store, sometimes before the store opened. And as soon as the store opened [at seven] my father would have me deliver to the various customers who wanted fresh milk and bread... I had a little wagon I pulled...."*

*"And my first experience playing baseball was on this vacant lot on Seventh Street in the middle of the block, three doors from Hais Market off the corner of Seventh and C... but in later years, the recreation department established Plaza Playground which became an attraction for youngsters to play baseball... which was located at Massachusetts Avenue and D Street on one side and diagonally across from Union Station. And it was quite a large field. It was large enough to have two baseball diamonds—and also during the season we played soccer ball there too." \**

In addition to these and other special events and initiatives, the DC Historic Preservation Office also reviews permit applications in the city's historic districts. Last fiscal year 4,312 applications were reviewed, of which 921 were in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Ms. Burcham is now Senior Consultant with Lord Cultural Resources Planning and Management Inc., a global firm with offices in Washington, DC. She will also be volunteering with several historic preservation organizations, including the DC Preservation League and the Historic Districts Coalition. David Maloney will be serving as Acting Director of the Historic Preservation Office, Office of Planning (202-442-8841; [david.maloney@dc.gov](mailto:david.maloney@dc.gov)). \*

# Urban Planning: NOMA vs. PUD

## Planned Unit Development (PUD) Threatens NE Neighborhoods

by Monte Edwards and Drury Tallent

The “North of Massachusetts Avenue” (NOMA) plan area covers nearly 500 acres and includes large parcels of undeveloped property on the eastern edge of DC’s downtown and north of Union Station. According to the Office of Planning’s consultants, this area could rapidly develop into an urban center with real estate square footages roughly the size of downtown Boston. The heart of the NOMA redevelopment area lies immediately west of the rail corridor and north of H Street to New York/Florida Avenues.

The creation of a vibrant urban living/office/retail district in this former industrial/warehouse district can mend the urban fabric, bring thousands of new residents to the District, and bring new retail, office, and entertainment opportunities. The Office of Planning is to be commended for taking up this effort to bring life to a long-neglected area.

On December 13, 2005 “Public Meeting No.1” of the NOMA Plan was held with an overflow crowd at McKinley Technology High School in Eckington. The response and interest from area residents was so overwhelming that the presentation had to be moved from a large classroom space into the McKinley auditorium. From the perspective of residents in a neighborhood slated for “redevelopment,” the presentation did little to allay fears that our century-old row houses would not soon be overshadowed by large condo and office buildings, if not slated for demolition. Many came away from the meeting impressed—and somewhat alarmed—about the scale of what was being planned. But conspicuously absent from the presentation was information on how this new urban center would be knit into the existing fabric; historic preservation was never mentioned, nor was there any indication of how the large-scale developments were going to affect the adjacent row house neighborhoods.

It wasn’t very many years ago that this same area (the heart of NOMA) was targeted for tech

hotels—buildings with few occupants, and no activating street uses. At one time there were so many permit applications for tech hotels pending that the Office of Planning called a halt so that it could evaluate the merits of those proposals. In the few months that were required to study the issues, the tech bubble burst and the projects were quickly abandoned. Today, portions of NOMA are in a similar situation. With so many PUDs for one and two bedroom condos in a concentrated area, it is easy to lose count of how many thousands of new housing units are planned. The area immediately east of the rail corridor has been especially hard hit with “planning by PUD” proposals. Area residents, the ANC, and CHRS have called upon the Office of Planning to take action and recognize that the development climate in Washington currently fosters the proliferation of PUDs in certain parts of the city like NOMA.

In this regard—especially since we are currently in the process of planning for this area’s future—there should be no approvals of large-scale PUDs before developing a plan for NOMA. Good urban planning must look beyond the immediate market economics with a goal of creating resilient, sustainable communities. Attractive urban environments with high quality urban design and high quality architecture will endure and thrive for decades, if not generations. It leaves a legacy of economic benefits far into the future.

These developments have the potential of complimenting the District’s signature architectural element—the row house. We should concentrate development on currently vacant land with designs that enhance Washington’s rich and historic built environment with a critical eye toward what should be preserved. ✧

## Reader Alert:

### Protect Your Electronics and Computer Files

A lightning strike on an ungrounded Verizon telephone pole in the 300 block of Fourth Street, SE, recently resulted in fried computers, telephones, security alarms, answering machines, etc., in four neighborhood homes. Readers of the *News* should take precautions to make sure they are not at risk for similar mishaps.

You could be at risk if Verizon has not grounded your telephone installation. Make sure that yours is. From the telephone pole that

serves your home there is usually a “drop line” leading to your house. This usually enters a sturdy plastic box (approximately 5 X 7 inches) called a “Network Interface Device” attached to your house. In order to be grounded, there must be a heavy copper wire going from the box to a secure ground—often to an exterior water faucet or to a steel stake driven into the ground. If not, call Verizon immediately. The next lightning strike could fry your electronic equipment and computer files. ✧



# NOMA: A Good Idea Gone Bad

by Dick Wolf

NOMA is shorthand for a planning effort called North of Massachusetts Avenue that originally focused on such areas as Mt. Vernon Square and Shaw. It was extended to cover all the area from Florida Avenue, NE, down to Union Station, running down a strip that includes First, Second, Third and Fourth Streets, NE. A study regarding this project began in the summer of 2005 with the first public meeting December 13, 2005. Its purpose is to deal with the extensive development proposals for office and condo development up and down those close-in streets.

CHRS is interested because the study involves parts of the Capitol Hill Historic District and areas that the Ward 6 Ward Plan calls to be included within an expansion of the Historic District. The latter areas were originally included in the Historic District but were drawn back to G Street, NE, in order to accommodate the concerns of the H Street Community Development Corporation (CDC).

Importantly, the development proposals include a number of Planned Unit Developments (PUD) that would include very large commercial buildings and condos immediately adjacent to row houses. These include the massive already-built SEC building, the proposed Dreyfus condo development at Second and G Streets, NE, (which would result in 100-foot walls flanking the row houses on the west side of Third Street, NE), the Cohen condo development at First and K Streets, NE, and others in the pipeline.

Planning for the area to deal with these potentially disruptive developments which could destroy or retard the active renovation of existing row houses seems like a good idea, but the implementation of the planning effort has been faulty, perhaps increasing the pressure and uncertainty on the residential areas.

What has been faulty? For start-

ers the most important community organizations such as CHRS and the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association were not notified of the planning activity until the notice of the public meeting. The planning committee has excluded these organizations from participation, except as "observers," despite requests to be included. There has been no basic fact gathering, including the inclusion of the Ward 6 Ward Plan; the DC Preservation Office was not notified about the planning until community groups asked why preservation was not part of the planning considerations.

The public meeting to demonstrate progress in the planning effort was a fiasco. A very large crowd showed up—many were homeowners and community groups who were faced with the prospect of the unknown. Their apprehensions were not relieved by the presentations by a group of out of town "experts" and consultants who clearly had no concept of the areas under study. The audience was treated to illustrations of the proper way to do things in Vancouver and Toronto. The unique character and planning history of Washington, DC, were completely absent from the presentations. The principle planner for NOMA, Patricia Zingsheim, admitted later that they had gotten off on the wrong foot.

Despite these admissions, the same rush to judgment and lack of inclusion of knowledgeable persons in the process continues to this day. Who is responsible for this bull-headed approach to our neighborhoods that have endured years of struggle to make a viable community? Let's name

names. We have to start with the OP director, Ellen McCarthy, who has lived and worked in Washington for over 30 years. She has carried out the administration's policy of development, no matter what the cost to other values. She knows the area through her direction of the SEC development project—the buck stops with Ms. McCarthy.

Her deputy in this project is Drew Brecker who arrived from Chicago last year. Mr. Brecker has been Ms. McCarthy's deputy and Patricia Zingsheim's boss for about six months. Ms. Zingsheim seems to have the right instincts from my discussions with her, but she works for others.

Finally, there is our Ward 6 planner, Cindy Petkac, who at the very least should have informed CHRS of NOMA and the pending development proposals—even those efforts at simply passing on information have been absent from the ward planner's agenda. We question, as we have in Council testimony over the last several years, the validity of the ward planner concept.

There you have it; a good idea gone bad. And, this issue shows how badly DC needs a local planning commission, and why OP resists it. Ms. McCarthy and her staff want to call all the shots on planning without interference from the likes of us. If this finger-in-your-eye way of conducting business is the way OP wants to go, then we know what we have to do, as we have many times over the last 40 years: fight hard for those ideas and values which have made Capitol Hill such a wonderful place to live and do business in. ✧

## Preservation Courses Offered in Dupont Circle

Goucher College offers historic preservation courses on weekday evenings at the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Dupont Circle. Students may take a single course of interest for \$550 or may obtain a Certificate in Historic

Preservation by completing ten courses. Topics include preservation law, documenting historic properties, and managing preservation organizations. Learn more at [www.goucher.edu/hpcert](http://www.goucher.edu/hpcert) or by calling 410-337-6200. ✧

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# MedLINK Zoning Issue Stays Condo Redevelopment Project

by Monte Edwards

On January 10, the Zoning Commission unanimously decided to hold a hearing on ANC 6C's petition to bring Square 895, the MedLINK Hospital and Nursing Center, into conformity with the District's Comprehensive Plan by lowering its zoning designation. By scheduling the matter for a hearing, the Zoning Commission halted high-density development on the lot until a full hearing can be held to determine the appropriate zoning designation.

Nearly the entire Capitol Hill Historic District is zoned for moderate density uses. Square 895, which carries a high-density R-5D designation (height limit of 90 feet), is an anomaly. Over 30 years ago, the Capitol Hill Hospital secured the high-density designation to expand its facility to meet the medical needs of the community, but that kind of

operation has not existed for the last 15 years. The current owner of the site has sought to use the high-density designation created for the hospital to build a large-scale condominium development in the heart of the Historic District.

Such a development would add to the neighborhood's growing traffic and parking problems. The effort to bring Square 895 into conformity with the Comprehensive Plan was supported by the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, the Capitol Hill Coalition for Sensible Development, the Union Square Townhome Owners Association, and St. James Episcopal Church as well as hundreds of Hill residents who expressed their opinion to the ANC in the year-long discussions leading up to the Zoning Commission's hearing decision. ANC 6A filed its support for down zoning the parcel and the District's Office of

Planning recommended down zoning the parcel as well.

The Zoning Commission's decision to consider the ANC 6C's petition for re-zoning at the R-4 (residential row house) level is an important first step to achieving the goals of adding to the vitality of Capitol Hill in a manner consistent with the District's Comprehensive Plan that does not add to the significant traffic and parking problems that we already face as a community. The Zoning Commission will also consider re-zoning at the R-5B designation (moderate density residential, height limit of 50 feet) pursuant to the recommendation of the Office of Planning and a 2004 recommendation from ANC 6A. As a result, until the Zoning Commission holds a full hearing on the matter, Capitol Hill Group is barred from redeveloping the parcel in a manner inconsistent with the R-4 zoning designation. ✧

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## HPRB Considers MedLINK and AppleTree Cases

### Design Modifications Recommended

by Shauna Holmes

At its December 15 meeting, ADC's Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) considered concept proposals for two projects of great interest to Capitol Hill residents: MedLINK, and the site of the AppleTree Institute's proposed charter school at 138 Twelfth Street, NE. Nancy Metzger, chair of the CHRS Historic District testified on CHRS views regarding both projects.

The MedLINK project would redevelop the southern portion of the property into condominiums, while the northern building at Eighth and C Streets, NE, would continue to serve medical purposes. While parties still

differ on numerous matters, progress has been made on moving the design in a more appropriate direction.

The most problematic design issues were visual and physical scale (particularly along Massachusetts Avenue and in relation to St. James Church and Rectory), the V-shaped knife-edge corner projection at Seventh Street and Massachusetts Avenue, the materials and appearance of the facades, the "hyphen" structure joining the new building to the existing hospital wing, a new curb cut on Seventh Street, and landscaping issues.

The HPRB endorsed the general direction of the revised design and asked the applicant to return to the Board after making further modifications. The applicant and its architect were asked to revisit the vehicular entry and the setback and height of the bridging hyphen structure, pull

back the projections along Seventh Street and Constitution Avenue to the property line, redesign the landscaping, tone down the knife edge at Seventh and Massachusetts, and ensure that new construction is no higher than the peak of St. James. The Board agreed with CHRS regarding its concerns about design, layering, richness of detail, materials, and landscaping and invited CHRS to pass along its suggestions to the applicant. A curb cut decision was deferred until after DDOT's traffic study and report are completed. Meanwhile, a pending request for re-zoning of the site awaits resolution by city zoning authorities (see article above).

The HPRB also approved in concept the proposal presented by the AppleTree Institute to build a substantial rear addition to the existing modest historic building at 138 Twelfth

*HPRB continued on page 9*



# Confused about Victorian House Styles?

## Straighten Them Out at February's Preservation Café

by Nancy Metzger

Capitol Hill is known as a "Victorian" neighborhood, but are all our houses "Victorian style?" Indeed not, and Judith Capen, AIA, will be giving a PowerPoint presentation at the February Preservation Café on February 15 to help straighten out Capitol Hill's stylistic lexicon.

"What Style Is It?" will look not only at buildings of different styles but also at various elements of those buildings—the mansard roofs, Italianate cornices, and Craftsman

porches that help define those styles. Capitol Hill's buildings start in the late 1790s with the Federal and Georgian styles (or at least the row house equivalents of those styles). We've got some buildings influenced by the Greek Revival movement and others by the Italianate period. Towards the end of the Nineteenth century, buildings become even more diverse with elements from Richardsonian Romanesque, Moorish Revival, Gothic Revival, Egyptian Revival, Renaissance Revival and Queen Anne styles. All these and even more were added into the mix—Stick Style, Chateausque, Beaux Arts Classicism, Georgian Revival, Tudor Revival and finally Modernistic. (The one thing we don't have is "farm-

house," no matter how many times you see it in a real estate ad.)

Judith Capen is the perfect guide as she is a long-time Capitol Hill resident, a restoration architect, teacher of architectural history classes, and author of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Guideline, *Building Styles in the Capitol Hill Historic District*. Join the armchair tour on Wednesday, February 15 from 6:30 pm to 7:15 pm at Trattoria Alberto, 506 Eighth Street, SE, on the top floor (just one block from Eastern Market Metro). After the Café you can stop downstairs for your favorite Italian meal.

For more information on this popular free forum sponsored by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, call 202-543-0425. ✧

*HPRB continued from page 8*

Street, NE, to accommodate a charter school. However, the Board expressed concern about many aspects of the design and proposed interior demolition, and directed AppleTree to take steps to make the addition more compatible with the surrounding historic residential area and more acceptable to the neighbors.

In particular, AppleTree was asked to reduce the height of the three-story addition and ensure that it and rooftop mechanical equipment are not visible from Twelfth Street. In addition, AppleTree was asked to take measures to reduce the massiveness, monolithic appearance, and flat planes of the rear. The Board felt strongly that the proposed below ground play area is not compatible with the historic area and directed AppleTree to redesign it. The Historic Preservation Office staff will look again at the extent of the interior demolition to decide whether it is appropriate, and AppleTree is to revisit the proposed canopies and landscaping and work out these issues with HPO staff. Finally, the Board directed AppleTree to consult with the community as it modifies its design. ✧

## CHRS Requests DC Police to Adhere to Flexible Parking Enforcement Rules

*The letter below on parking, suggested by Hill resident and CHRS board member Larry Pearl, was endorsed by the CHRS board at its December meeting and sent to Chief Ramsey last month.*

Dear Chief Ramsey:

On behalf of the nearly 1,000 members of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, I am writing you concerning the enforcement of the parking regulations.

As you know, several years ago the city council enacted legislation that provides drivers with some leeway on being ticketed for parking violations between 10:00 pm and 7:30 am. Specifically, it allows parking within 25 feet of an intersection rather than the 40 feet permitted at other times.

Given the scarcity of parking on Capitol Hill, our members frequently are forced to park less than 25 feet from an intersection when they arrive home after 10:00 pm from meetings or social engagements. Still, contrary to what the current law states, they occasionally are ticketed by MPD personnel. This ticketing places a financial burden on Hill residents, and has public safety ramifications as well.

Given these circumstances, I hope that you can instruct MPD personnel to follow current law and give a low priority to ticketing vehicles parked less than 25 feet from an intersection during nighttime hours unless the vehicle presents a public safety hazard.

I appreciate any steps you can take that will help alleviate this problem.

Sincerely,

Richard N. Wolf, *President, CHRS*

## Mark Your Calendar!

### FEBRUARY

#### 6 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee Meeting. Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE (Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034)

#### 7 Tuesday, 8:00 pm

Presentation by Hill historian Lucinda Janke on *The Breweries of Capitol Hill*. Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE (Admission free, reservation required 202-544-1845)

#### 15 Wednesday, 12 noon

Lecture by National Park Service historian Frank Faragasso on *The Statues of Lincoln Park*. Woodrow Wilson International Center auditorium, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW (Call 202-543-8919, ext. 28)

#### 15 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café: PowerPoint presentation on *What Style is Your House?* by Hill architect and resident Judith Capen. Trattoria Alberto, 506 Eighth Street, SE (Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034) See page 9.

#### 16 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee Meeting. Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street SE (Details: Gary Peterson, 202-547-7969)

#### 21 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board Meeting. Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE (Details: Dick Wolf, 202-543-4353)

#### 23 Thursday, 10:00 am

Historic Preservation Review Board Meeting. 441 Fourth Street, NW (#1 Judiciary Square), Room 220 South. (Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034)

### MARCH

#### 6 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee Meeting. Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE (Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034)

## New DC Department of the Environment

by Beth Purcell

In December 2005, by an act of the Council, a new DC Department of the Environment (DDOE) was created. DDOE's purpose is to consolidate several environmental responsibilities in a single DC executive agency. DDOE will assume the funding and staff for existing agencies and programs with environmental responsibilities. It will also assume the policy functions for air and water quality, watershed protection, fisheries, wildlife, tree management (for street trees), vector control, hazardous waste, lead-paint abatement and underground storage tanks. The new agency is also responsible for recycling policy (including research on technology

for solid waste utilization, identifying markets for recycled materials, assessing potential impact of alternative solid waste management methods, and conducting public forums). It will be the lead agency responsible for preparing environmental impact statements.

Later in 2006, the Mayor is to submit a proposed organization plan to the Council. By that date, DDOE is required to promulgate regulations implementing the DDOE Act, including enforcement procedures.

There are many environmental issues facing Capitol Hill, including air quality, safe drinking water, and cleaning up the Anacostia River. CHRS will be monitoring DDOE's progress and will participate in DDOE rule making. \*

## Annual CHRS House & Garden Tour Scheduled

Think spring and flowers, warm weather and the 49th Annual CHRS Mother's Day House & Garden Tour. This year's event will be on Saturday, May 13 and Sunday, May 14.

A beautiful group of homes is being lined up, the publicity effort is getting started and the mailing for advanced-ticket sales will soon be in our mailboxes. Members in

good standing on March 1, 2006 will be offered a limited number of tickets at \$20 each, which will be available only by mail.

Tickets go on sale in mid-April at Eastern Market and selected retail establishments around the city. Members wishing to volunteer for the event should send contact info to CapHRS@aol.com. Go to [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org) for further details. \*



### Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 Tenth Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003