



NEWS

www.chrs.org

November 2006

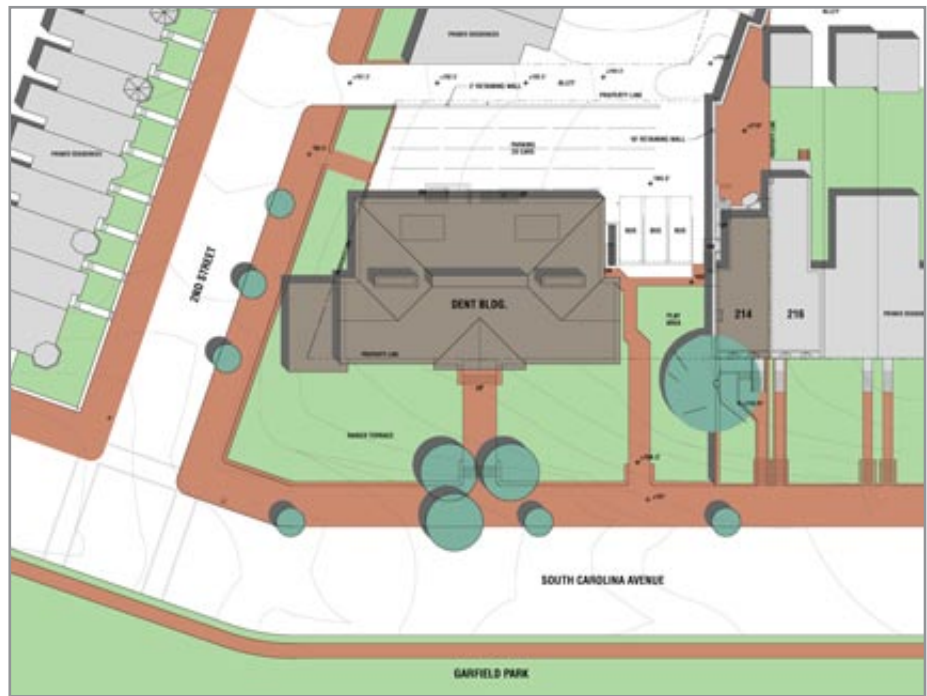
Capitol Hill Day School Expansion

by Gary Peterson

The Capitol Hill Day School (CHDS) has filed two zoning applications involving 210 and 214 South Carolina Avenue, SE. These cases ask for a variety of relief from the zoning regulations. One case is the former Dent School building at 210 South Carolina Avenue, SE, and the second involves the rowhouse immediately to the east of the school at 214 South Carolina Avenue, SE.

In the case involving the school, CHDS plans an addition to the school on the east side that will fill in the property to the property line with 214. To build this addition, CHDS needs 1.) a variance from lot occupancy requirements, 2.) a variance from rear yard requirements, 3.) a variance from parking requirements, and 4.) a special exception to allow construction of an addition to a private school.

- **Lot Occupancy.** A private school in a R-4 zone may occupy 40% of the lot. The current building occupies 42%. The new addition would bring the lot occupancy up to 67% — a 59.5% increase in the footprint of the building.
- **Rear Yard.** The zoning regulations require a rear yard of 20 feet. The rear yard of the new addition will be 10 feet at the first floor level. The building steps back another 10 feet at the second floor level. The rear yard of the Dent School is 37 feet 7 inches.



The site plan above shows the existing school footprint with space between the school building and the rowhouse immediately to the east (right).

- **Parking.** The Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) order #14780 (1988) requires 20 regular spaces and 3 bus spaces. CHDS will keep the 20 regular spaces, but will provide the 3 bus spaces only at night and in the area of the 20 spaces. This will require the BZA order to be amended.
- To have a private school in a R-4 zone requires a special exception that requires consideration of noise, traffic, number of students, parking, and other objectionable conditions.

The BZA may grant an area variance to relieve “peculiar and exceptional difficulties” if it finds that three conditions exist: 1.) the property is unique because of its size, shape, topography, or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of the property; 2.) the owner would encounter practical difficulties if the zoning regulations were strictly applied; and 3.) the variance would not cause substantial detriment to the public good and would not substantially impair

Day School continued on page 9

President's Column: Planning in DC Is a Free-fire Zone

by Dick Wolf

At the risk of seeming to be a Johnny One Note, I have to continue talking about where we stand on planning. We have to address it because we are surrounded by new development and plans for additional development on all four sides of the Hill. For better or worse, they will affect us for many years.

The NoMA (short for North of Massachusetts Avenue) small area plan has been sent to the Council. The area included is Florida Avenue to G Street, NE, and east to the Anacostia River. The plan calls for \$500,000 to survey this area plus a few others to obtain the information that would be the basis for requesting historic district designation. All of that area is included in what is called the Capitol Hill area element in the draft comprehensive plan, an element with a population of 44,000 people.

The good part of the NoMA plan is that all the rowhouse neighborhoods that are not protected by historic district designation will have a degree of protection from tear-downs and replacement by planned unit developments (PUDs). The NoMA plan also specifies buffering criteria and building setbacks to separate large-scale development from rowhouses.

What's not to like? NoMA is simply ideas and language that lack prescriptive and legal force. If our current Ward 6 plan, which is pre-

scriptive and enacted into law, is not followed, what will be the fate of a far less directive plan?

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is working on an Anacostia River waterfront plan that covers the stadium site to Benning Road. (It was the subject of our last forum in September.) It has much promise, offering reasonable development with open space and active playing fields. It must be coordinated with development at Reservation 13. Will this happen? We do know that much of that property is in play, with the Congress playing a role. The SEED School, to be funded by local school funds, will be located on 15 prime acres designated by Congress across from Kingman Park. This will be a walled facility with six hundred students plus staff. Also, by way of Congressional action, no Federal property will be transferred to DC without a Congressional mail-sorting facility located in the park area. This kind of Congressional interference will make a mockery of the planning effort by NCPC. Capitol Hill is used to such "help" from its big neighbor. Maybe more thoughtful Hill staffers and members will turn around these ill-advised actions.

The master plans of the Architect of the Capitol for the Capitol grounds remain a mystery. So far we have been unable to get him and his staff to make a presentation to CHRS on what is going

on. Maybe someone with the "right connections" can make this happen; any volunteers?

The Anacostia Waterfront Corporation has responsibility for the development of Reservation 13. If the property is transferred to District ownership, the small area plan will have to be revisited. The St. Coletta's School development plus proposals for new medical facilities, a DNA lab for police work, and a new morgue cast doubt on the validity of what has been planned.

We have transportation plans of all sorts that will determine much of the planning for the Hill: the 11th Street Bridge plan; the Capitol Hill Transportation Plan; the Great Streets Plan for Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the Maryland border; the South Capitol Street project; and the 14th Street Bridge planning effort. We are drowning in transportation plans. Hey, DDOT, any way to put all these together? We are huffing and puffing from one meeting to another.

Underneath all this specific planning activity is the pending Comprehensive Plan bill that will set policies for the city and drive all the other plans. Unfortunately, as the plan now sits, it would re-zone vast portions of the city, including Capitol Hill, under such over-arching policies as "transit-oriented development", "smart growth", and inclusionary zoning. Even worse, we have no local planning commission or other means of controlling and integrating all planning. What we have is the Office of Planning, currently part of the Office of Economic Development, with no rules for engaging these issues. Planning and development is a free-fire zone in DC, and Capitol Hill is right in the middle.

As you can tell, your Board and its committees are busy these days. Give us your memberships and help; we need it. ✧

Be a Part of History in the Making Volunteer for the CHRS 50th Annual House & Garden Tour, May 12-13, 2007

A stellar list of homes is being put together for next year's House Tour, but the tour takes the work of dozens of people to make it run smoothly. Whether you can spare two hours or twenty for this historically significant event, we have a volunteer job for you. If you can be a part of this effort, before or during Tour Weekend, please contact CHRS at CapHRS@aol.com or leave a message at 202-543-0425. ✧

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

President Dick Wolf
1st Vice President Barbara Eck
2nd Vice President Gary Peterson
Treasurer Mike Canning
Secretary Mary Withum
Past President Rob Nevitt
At Large Tom Grahame
At Large Donna Hanousek
At Large Elizabeth Nelson
At Large Monte Edwards

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Paul Cromwell, Budget
Dick Wolf, City Planning
Amanda Molson, Communications
Barbara Eck, Community Development
Beth Purcell, Environment
Larry Pearl, Grants
Nancy Metzger, Historic Preservation
Ann Richards, House and Garden Tour
Elizabeth Nelson, Membership
Tom Grahame, Transportation
Gary Peterson, Zoning

NEWS:

Larry Janezich, David Holmes,
Jane Ruyle, Editors
Roxanne Walker, design and layout

WEBSITE:

Martha Huizenga, DC Access,
Webmaster

OFFICE MANAGER:

Jeff Fletcher

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

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

* Call 202-543-0425 and 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.

Looking Back On Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

In case you haven't been by the southwest corner of Seventh and Pennsylvania recently, you should stop by and study the enlargements of historic photos that CVS has installed in its store windows. This photo display is a wonderful gift to the community.

One of the most fascinating photos is one taken from the Capitol dome, ca. 1880, that shows a view down Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. In the foreground is a monument maker's workshop (not a cemetery) and a row of large white federal-style houses (Carroll Row) where Abraham Lincoln was a boarder while he was a Congressman (now the site of the Library of Congress). In the middle ground one can see Eastern Market and a large amount of empty space west of the market.

These empty lots were quite common throughout Capitol Hill at that time, and they were mentioned in an interview conducted in 1974 with Milton Sladen by Suzanne Ganschinetz and Hazel Kreinheder as part of the application process to create the Capitol Hill Historic District. Mr. Sladen was born in 1900 at 203 C Street, SE; the family moved to 120 Eleventh Street, SE, in 1907. Mr. Sladen returned to that house in 1962 after a career in publishing in New York City. In talking about the

Lincoln Park area during his childhood, Mr. Sladen said:

"Kentucky Avenue was a dirt road when I moved into this house, and the area below D Street was known as 'cowtown'. East of 13th Street, the area was known as 'The Commons' and was open country with few buildings. We would wander through the paths of weeds much like cutting trails through a jungle. Between 13th Street and the D.C. Jail, there was practically nothing there. It was mostly relatively cheap farm land. On the north side was a big dairy farm where we used to watch the cows and buy milk in a bucket. Out North Carolina Avenue at 16th Street was a big lumber yard owned by a man named Taplett. North of Constitution was pretty much unsettled. There was the big car barn at 13th & D Streets, NE, and south of it was a baseball field. The East Washington Sunday School League played there, and a feat of left-handed batters was to knock the ball across the block into the car barn door. Another baseball field at 14th and A Streets, NE, was used by another Sunday School league. There was a baseball field at 17th and D Streets, NE."

The complete interview is on the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project website, www.capitolhillhistory.org. The History Project welcomes volunteers, either to interview long-term residents or to transcribe the tapes. Contact Bernadette McMahon, bcmahon@his.com. *



Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning Program and the Capitol Hill Historic District

Stage I of mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) was approved by the Zoning Commission (ZC) on May 18, 2006. IZ requires that certain types of new and rehabilitated residential developments set aside a portion of their gross floor area for units to be sold or rented to low- and moderate-income households. Now, in stage II, the ZC is determining where the program will be applied. Public hearings were held on October 5 and October 19 on the application of the program to non-historic and historic areas in the District. In addition, since the rents and prices of the units are to be determined by the City, there is a bill containing the administrative elements of the program awaiting City Council passage.

As compensation for setting aside the units, the developer gets a bonus of a 20% increase in density. In the R-4 zone, the zoning category for rowhouses on Capitol Hill, the developer must set aside 50% of the bonus density for the IZ program. Under IZ in the R-4 zone, no height increases are permitted beyond that already allowed, but minimum lot areas are reduced from 1,800 square feet to 1,500

square feet, and minimum lot width is reduced from 18 feet to 15 feet. This will allow six rowhouses to replace five. In the C-2-A zone, the zoning category for the commercial buildings on Capitol Hill, the lot occupancy will increase from 60% to 75%.

These standards were developed specifically for the R-4 and C-2-A zones because the Office of Planning (OP) believed that "increases in height are usually perceived as more objectionable than increases in lot occupancy." However, CHRS noted that it is not just reduced lot size that impacts the historic district, since the increase in lot coverage in the C-2-A can reduce the rear yard and our light and privacy dramatically. In some cases, the existing buildings might be able to accommodate an increase in density without adverse impacts on the neighbors, but not so in other cases. Each historic district was established for different reasons, and therefore each has a different mix of housing stock. A block-by-block, historic district by historic district approach rather than a one-size-fits-all approach is needed. Actual conditions should

be evaluated instead of basing a plan on a textbook approach.

At the hearing, CHRS pointed out that the study conducted by OP was superficial and should be sent back for more work. In the study, OP argued that IZ should be allowed in the Capitol Hill Historic District because the impact would be minimal. By OP's count, there were only three or four sites that would qualify for IZ development. CHRS' survey showed that there were 33 potential IZ development sites. OP did not consider school sites or gas stations, among others. Given the discrepancy, CHRS demanded that OP re-evaluate its findings.

Finally, CHRS noted that there are already issues with the incompatibility of large new apartment buildings and commercial projects with their smaller 19th-century neighbors. The bonus density would likely exacerbate this problem, with developers combining the height additions from their PUDs (Planned Unit Developments) with the lot coverage increases from their IZ bonuses. Unless and until there is more study of the historic districts, IZ must not be allowed in them. ✧

Environmental Committee Briefs

Counting Canada Geese on the Anacostia River

Wetlands restoration on the Anacostia River is reviving the habitat for many fish and bird species by re-introducing native marsh plants. The new plants grow well, but Canada geese eat the plants as fast as they grow. These hungry geese are an extra-large subspecies (*Branta canadensis maxima*) from the Midwest. They live (and eat) in DC all year and never migrate. (The Canada geese

flying over in fall and spring do not stop in DC.) A first step in learning the impact of the geese is to count them. CHRS members are invited to help.

Activity: Counting Canada geese near the Anacostia River — involves walking on trails and the golf course.

Date/time: Thursday, December 7, 2006, between 9:00-10:30 am.

Meeting place: Langston Golf Course parking lot, north end, 26th & Benning Road, NE.

Contact: Steve McKindley-Ward, 301-699-6204; Email: steve@anacostiaws.org

Change a Light, Change the World Campaign

The film *An Inconvenient Truth* urges us to reduce greenhouse gases by switching to energy-efficient light bulbs. The DC Energy Office is encouraging 1,000 DC residents to begin conserving energy by changing at least one incandescent light bulb to an energy-efficient

Continued next page

Award Winners Announced

2006 Mayor's Awards for Excellence in Historic Preservation

The 2006 Mayor's Award for Excellence in Stewardship was presented at a ceremony on October 24 to long-time Capitol Hill volunteer **C. Dudley Brown** for his 30 years of volunteer commitment to the preservation and restoration of historic Congressional Cemetery. Mr. Brown came to live on Capitol Hill in 1957 and was active in the Capitol Hill Restoration Society for many years. He is a nationally recognized interior design and restoration specialist who frequently lectures on interior historic preservation topics. Named as one of the original trustees of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery, Mr. Brown has served as a trustee and an officer ever since and has taken on projects ranging from the cemetery grounds to the gothic lettering of the Chapel inscription to inspecting the chapel's roof. As the presenter at the Awards ceremony said, "C. Dudley Brown's favorite Congressional Cemetery inscription reads, 'He was useful in his day and generation'—he is all that and more." CHRS was pleased to write a supporting letter for Mr. Brown's nomination for this award.

Another award of interest to the Capitol Hill community was

the Mayor's Award for Excellence in Public Education given to the exhibit, "Adolf Cluss, Architect: From Germany to America—Shaping a Capitol City Worthy of a Republic", that was developed by a consortium of organizations here and in Heilbronn, Germany, Cluss's birthplace. The project focused on the life and work of this influential architect, best known on Capitol Hill as the architect of Eastern Market and the now-razed Wallach School. A strong focus of the project was to raise awareness to save and preserve the remaining Cluss-designed treasures, with particular emphasis on the sadly neglected Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building. The project consisted of exhibits on both sides of the Atlantic, an expansive bilingual website, an illustrated book, symposia, and public programs.

2006 Robert L. Herrema Awards

The 2006 Robert L. Herrema Awards, given in recognition of distinctive and enduring contributions to the Capitol Hill urban landscape, will be presented on Friday, November 17, at the Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE. These awards were established by the Capitol Hill Community Foundation to honor the legacy of Bob Herrema, a Capitol Hill resident who restored

many private homes, commercial properties, and apartment buildings on Capitol Hill during the 1970s and 1980s and helped pioneer the emerging concept of "adaptive reuse". **Terry Eakin** and **Bob Youngentob** of EYA will receive an award for the new construction of homes at the Bryan Square near 14th and Independence Avenue, SE, while **Jim Abdo** of Abdo Development will receive an award for the Bryan School Lofts at 1315 Independence. Both of these projects are on the same site. **Tip** and **Connie Tipton** will receive an award for the recreation of the two-story side porch that had been removed in the 1930s from their home on East Capitol Street, while **Dennis Bourgault** and **Michael Suddeth** will be recognized for the development and rehabilitation of 524 Eighth Street, SE, Chateau Animaux, bringing more retail traffic to Barracks Row.

Rounding out the list of this year's award winners is the **DC Department of Transportation**, which will receive an award for the establishment of a Historic Streets and Alleys Program, an effort that has led to repaving historic alleys with appropriate materials. (Check out the just-finished Browns Court, tucked in behind Independence Avenue between Fifth and Sixth streets and see page 11 of this issue for a related story). ✧

Continued from previous page
bulb (e.g., fluorescent light or a government-rated "Energy Star" light). These bulbs use 1/3 the energy of incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. For more information, go to dceo.dc.gov/ or www.energystar.gov/.

The DC Energy Office is also offering \$150, \$100 and \$50 rebates on Energy Star-rated clothes washers, refrigerators and window air con-

ditioners to all DC electric customers. The offer is good on appliances purchased by May 31, 2007. For a rebate form and more information, go to dceo.dc.gov/.

Adopt-A-Block for a Clean City

Many members already help with community cleanups. DC's Clean City initiative encourages neighborhood groups to "adopt"

an area to keep clean. The area adopted must be a minimum of two square blocks; the group agrees to hold quarterly cleanups and pick up litter weekly for two years. Clean City provides an Adopt-a-Block sign with the group's name. For more information, see www.cleancity.dc.gov or contact Merrit Drucker, DC Office of the Clean City, 202-727-5746; merrit.drucker@dc.gov. ✧

CHRS Testimony on the Draft Comprehensive Plan

This is a condensed version of the testimony given by Richard Wolf, President of CHRS, before the DC City Council on September 26, 2006, regarding the Mayor's Draft of the Comprehensive Plan:

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard. In three minutes I will try to give the views of CHRS as informed by over 50 years of planning, zoning, and historic preservation activities on Capitol Hill, plus my own experiences as a low-income housing developer and as a member for nearly three years of two task forces that have been considering the development of this comprehensive plan. With due regard for the excellent work done by staff, this draft plan contains fundamental flaws that will lead to failure and enormous friction among contending forces in the land use wars of the District of Columbia.

This plan has no clear structure that leads one quickly and logically through the plan, following a hierarchy of policies and actions. The policies and plans do not mesh together, but often lead to conflict. There is no roadmap for developers, citizens, and government officials. The language is ambiguous where it should be prescriptive: it should be "shall", not "ought" and "wouldn't it be nice if". There is no implementation system that is open and regulatory in nature that would take the plan through the changes necessary in a dynamic planning environment. For this purpose CHRS, along with other groups throughout the city, has supported the development of a local planning commission.

The plan, in other words, is back to the future with even less prescription than in the existing one. Capitol Hill has suffered from the policy grab bag available even in the current plan. For example, using policies such as "smart growth" and "transit oriented development", the Office of Planning (OP) has overridden direction in the Ward 6 Ward Plan to buffer the rowhouse neighborhoods from large scale development. The two Dreyfus projects in near NorthEast, just outside the historic district, overwhelm the rowhouses. The SEC building along Second Street, NE, is the largest private office building ever built in the District of Columbia, 1.9 million square feet. Keying off that, Dreyfus has bought and will tear down 19 old houses, and is proposing to build a 400,000-square-foot condominium that backs onto rowhouses with a 100-foot tower next to a rowhouse on 3rd Street, NE. OP should have told the developer "no". Have they? Of course not. This is development run amok.

I could go on further about the enormous development encircling Capitol Hill on all sides, aided and abetted by OP. The result of these kinds of actions, both on-going and in the proposed plan, is to discourage families from settling in the Hill and elsewhere in the District of Columbia. I have to ask you why the Council has approved nearly two billion dollars for school and library improvements and at the same time discouraged families from living in the District. It is not too much to say that this proposed plan perpetuates

the anti-family policies of the DC government.

President's Note: The current plan calls itself only guidance—a very soft term. I suggest we can cure these problems with the following new version of the plan statement.

The guiding policy of the Comprehensive Plan should have the following three themes:

1. It will be a statement of the existing physical conditions of the city, including all built structures and natural portions, including campuses, streets, roads, parks, rivers, buildings, and institutions of all types.
2. The plan will state through themes and policies how and where new development, including the establishment of institutions and parks, should take place over the next ten years.
3. The plan will give residents, businesses, and government a clear picture of existing conditions, where change of all types is anticipated, and an implementation system for the plan through a local planning commission.

The plan must incorporate in an integrated manner all the other plans created by the local government in such areas as education, health, welfare, and transportation.

Under the Comprehensive Plan, capital budget planning for the District of Columbia will be guided by the policies and plans contained therein.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan should be carried out by a DC planning commission. The planning commission would evaluate all plans requiring zoning changes for conformance with this plan and advise the Mayor, the Council, and the Zoning Commission. If proposed changes require amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the planning commission would so advise the Mayor and the Council. ✧

Eastern Market Metro Canopy

Eastern Market Metro canopy installation work will start approximately November 1. The Metro station will be open as usual and much of the work will be done at night. Work is expected to last about 2–3 months. If residents have concerns or complaints, please contact Joann Ferreraia, 202-962-1325. ✧

Home Improvement Contracts

by David Holmes

Beware of contractors who ask you to pay for the entire job up front. Your down payment should not be more than a third of the total price. Only licensed contractors and salespeople can require and accept any payments before the job is completed. Pay only by check or credit card, not cash.

City law requires contractors to be licensed by the DCRA. Licensed contractors are required to post a \$5,000 bond with the city and must be insured. If a contractor says he has a license but can't give you the number, check with DCRA's Business Service Center at 442-4514.

Unlicensed contractors cannot demand payment by the homeowner prior to completion of the work. If partial payment has been made during construction, the contractor can be required to leave the job as it is or to return it to its original condition. In addition, an unlicensed contractor can be compelled to return all funds to the homeowner.

(Title 16 800.1—"No person shall require or accept any payment for a home improvement contract in advance of the full completion of all work required to be performed under the contract, unless that person is licensed as a home improvement contractor or as a licensed salesperson employed by a licensed contractor.") As Timothy Hughes of Hughes and Associates, PLLC says: "Ultimately, the owner can receive the full benefit of contract performance done properly and still not pay a dime if this rule applies."

If a contractor fails to obtain the required permits, DC law allows a homeowner to bring an action in Superior Court for the violation of a trade practice law of the District of Columbia, whereby the homeowner may recover or obtain the following remedies:

- treble damages, or \$1,500 per violation, whichever is greater, payable to the consumer;
- reasonable attorney's fees;
- punitive damages;

- an injunction against the use of the unlawful trade practice;
- additional relief as may be necessary to restore to the consumer money or property, real or personal, which may have been acquired by means of the unlawful trade practice;
- or any other relief which the court deems proper.

By law, DC can also levy a \$2,000 fine (per infraction) for:

- work without a permit,
- work outside the scope of a permit, or
- work before 7 am or after 7 pm Monday – Saturday or any time on Sunday.

If a contractor breaks these laws again, he can be fined up to \$4,000 per infraction. In either case, work must stop until the permits are obtained and the fines paid.

Be sure to consult your own attorney before taking irrevocable action. ✧

November Overbeck Lecture: Growing Up on 8th Street Southeast in the 1920s and 30s

To honor the five-year anniversary of this oral history project, the Overbeck History Lecture for November will take the form of a staged interview with one of the more remarkable interviewees,



Mrs. Wadsworth

Margaret Wadsworth, as she describes growing up in the 8th Street, SE, neighborhood in the 1920s and 30s. The dialogue will be conducted

by Beth Eck, who interviewed Mrs. Wadsworth for our project last year, and will be accompanied by projected scenes of the 8th Street corridor as it appeared in Mrs. Wadsworth's childhood and as it appears today.

She was born Margaret Fleming in 1920 in her family's home in the 500 block of 8th Street, SE. She grew up in the neighborhood, graduated from Eastern High School, and made an early attempt at a singing career, auditioning for band leader Bob Crosby and singing briefly on Arthur Godfrey's radio show.

She and her late husband raised their family on Capitol Hill, moving to Arlington after the 1968 riots, and she worked for many years at

the Naval Historical Center at the Washington Navy Yard. Well into her eighties now, Mrs. Wadsworth lives in Arlington, where she volunteers her time reading to school children.

The event will be held at 8 pm on Tuesday November 14 at the Naval Lodge Hall at 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. As usual, admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited seating.

Please email OverbeckLecture@aol.com, or phone 544-1845, leaving your name, address and phone number so you can receive a confirmation and any updates. ✧

DDOT Releases Hill Transportation Study Recommendations

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) held a public meeting on September 27 to release its recommendations based on the Capitol Hill Transportation Study, which has been presented to the community for comment during a series of meetings conducted over the last year. Suggestions, recommendations, and critiques were provided by a variety of community organizations, ANCs, and interested citizens.

The study has two major components:

- One involves the conversion of Constitution and Independence Avenues to two-way traffic, with a sub-option of changing 17th and 19th Streets to two-way traffic.
- The second component consists of five specific neighborhood studies: Stanton Park; Seward Square and Eastern Market; Northeast of Lincoln Park; Southeast of Lincoln Park; Potomac Avenue, Barney Circle; and Lincoln Park.

The potential impacts of converting Constitution and Independence Avenues to two-way traffic are: a moderate decrease in daily trips on Constitution in the morning and no significant change

in the PM peak. Independence would have a decrease in the afternoon and an increase in overall daily trips, particularly westbound in the morning peak.

If 17th and 19th (south of H Street) are converted to two-way traffic, in addition to Constitution and Independence, overall daily traffic on 17th Street would decrease somewhat, with the decrease in the southbound traffic being offset by an increase in the new northbound direction. Primarily as a result of introducing a new southbound lane, morning peak volume would increase all along 19th Street and would likely constitute the majority of the total volume increase on this street.

The neighborhood studies addressed specific concerns, such as particular intersections or speed in certain blocks, and pedestrian safety as identified by the residents and DDOT field work. Recommended improvements were identified for the following neighborhood areas:

- Stanton Park—pedestrian and cyclist improvements (signage, crosswalks re-painted, countdown timers). Reconfigure the NE intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, D Street and 3rd Street with clearly designated lanes to eliminate vehicular conflicts and

enhance pedestrian safety.

- Seward Square and Eastern Market—pedestrian improvements (signage, crosswalks, signal lights). A new signal configuration has already been installed at 7th and 8th Streets and North Carolina and Independence Avenues. Left turns would be routed to 4th and 6th Streets to improve traffic flow on Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Northeast of Lincoln Park—create four-way stops at several intersections; improve signage and lane markings at North Carolina, Constitution, and 14th Street. Improve pedestrian facilities areawide.
- Southeast of Lincoln Park: Potomac Avenue, Barney Circle—improve pedestrian access to Potomac Avenue Metro and to Congressional Cemetery. Improve pedestrian facilities areawide.
- Lincoln Park—install speed tables on East Capitol Street, NE and SE; add traffic and pedestrian signage, make cross-walk improvements, and add bike lanes.

Several of the improvements presented have already been made. ✧

Parking Enforcement Moratorium

by David Holmes

To ease DC residents' difficulty finding overnight parking, the City Council in 2002 declared a parking enforcement moratorium between 10 pm and 7:30 am. The moratorium primarily refers to end-of-the-block and loading zone restrictions. Parking under the 2002 Council moratorium is still prohibited within 25 feet of an intersection and wherever it could interfere with the ability of an emergency vehicle

to turn into a cross street. Parking that blocks driveways, hydrants, and crosswalks is, of course, still prohibited at all times, as is parking in hotel loading zones and hospital entrances.

Many Hill residents have nevertheless found that tickets are still issued in spite of the moratorium. After receiving my fourth ticket since 2002 for late-night parking at the end of the block (between 12:15 am to 6:25 am), I sent an email to Commander Diane Groomes of

MPDC's First District. In return, I received a memo from Sergeant Mack of the First District's midnight shift, stating that the 2002 Council Moratorium "...does not authorize the parking of any vehicles in violation of any posted sign."

Unhappy at repeated failure to heed the DC Council's enforcement moratorium, I contacted Councilmembers Cropp and Mendelson about this issue. Mr. Mendelson was particularly helpful,

Continued next page

Capitol Hill Day School Expansion *from page 1*



The proposed plan is shown above, with a new structure filling the space between the school building and the rowhouse immediately to the east.

the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zoning plan.

CHDS argues that the building is over 100 years old, that the site is small in size when compared to modern standards for a school site and that the building lacks sufficient space for classroom instruction required by a modern curriculum. CHDS is arguing that the property is unique because of the "other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of the property"—the old historic school. The immediate neighbor and other neighbors

object to the expansion; they feel the request does not meet the legal test for a variance. They are content with the school the way it is.

In the case involving the rowhouse at 214, CHDS needs to renew a special exception to allow the continued operation of a private school for thirty students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade and five faculty and staff members in the basement through the second floor. This use was first granted in 1991 for five years and was renewed for 10 years in 1996. The applicant

is seeking a 10-year renewal and no other changes. A neighbor believes this special exception should be for a shorter period of time because the basis for the special exception is the status quo, which will be changed with the addition. He suggested 2 or 3 years.

The BZA can grant a special exception where two general tests are met and the special conditions for the particular exception are demonstrated. The general tests:

- The special exception must be in harmony with the general purpose and the intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps.
- The special exception must not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property.

The special conditions:

- The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students or otherwise objectionable conditions; and
- The BZA can grant a special exception where two general tests are met and the special conditions for the particular exception are demonstrated.

The CHRS Board is considering its recommendation to the BZA. ✧ ✧

Continued from previous page

providing a memorandum issued by the DC City Council's General Counsel and a letter sent to him (Mendelson) by Commander Andy Solberg of the Second District. Both the memo and the letter affirm the moratorium. Solberg, a former First District Commander, in describing his solution to a similar problem, stated that he arranged "...in service training for the entire section of officers who work the midnight shift." I sent this material to Commander

Groomes. Mr. Mendelson also wrote directly to Commander Groomes about the problem.

I recently met with Commander Groomes, who agreed that there is a moratorium on enforcement of certain no parking/no standing prohibitions between 10 pm and 7:30 am and that Sergeant Mack's interpretation is incorrect. She was very understanding of residents' concerns, and stated that officers on the midnight shift would be briefed on the moratorium.

I also urged Commander Groomes to make parking closer than 25 feet to an intersection a low enforcement priority. She agreed that officers should focus on patrolling, but did not commit to a diminished level of enforcement of this prohibition.

The General Counsel's opinion on late night parking enforcement and a related memo from the DMV's Counsel can be obtained by emailing CapHRS@aol.com. ✧ ✧

NoMA Vision Plan and Development Strategy Project

Condensed Testimony of Richard N. Wolf, President, CHRS, Mayor's Hearing, September 28, 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard concerning this ambitious and potentially useful plan. The CHRS area of interest runs from the Capitol to the Anacostia, from H Street, NE, on the north to the Navy Yard on the south. Under the proposed Comprehensive Plan bill, the Capitol Hill Element would include much of the NoMA area from Florida Avenue, NE, coming down 4th Street, NE, to the edge of the Capitol Hill Historic District. Much of the element speaks to the importance of retaining and protecting the Capitol Hill rowhouse neighborhoods.

In reviewing NoMA, it appears that substantial efforts will be given to protecting these rowhouse areas through designation as "conser-

vation areas", taking the policy position that PUDs (Planned Unit Developments) based on tear-downs in the conservation area outside the historic district will not be entertained by Office of Planning (OP). Moreover, there is much discussion of the necessity of "stepping down" from larger buildings to the smaller scale rowhouses. Another version of that policy is contained in the existing Ward 6 Plan, which calls for buffering. Has all that past and recently proposed language worked to protect rowhouse neighborhoods?

The answer is no. OP, while having the existing Ward Plan in front of it and while proposing this NoMA and the Capitol Hill element, is still fostering tear-downs and giant PUDs adjacent to rowhouses. OP has not said "no" to such gross over-development as the Dreyfus SEC building at Second and F Streets, NE. Apparently encouraged by OP's enthusiasm for



Station Place on 2nd Street NE is across the street from modest rowhouses, without adequate buffering.

big buildings adjacent to rowhouses, Dreyfus is now threatening to tear down 19 rowhouses at Second and G Streets, NE, and build a 400,000-square-foot condominium on half a city square with a 100-foot tower next to a 35-foot occupied town house and a rear yard that is within 20 feet of rowhouse rear yards. This is not the only example in the NoMA area of such lack of buffering.

There are substantial financial incentives proposed in the plan in order to encourage the "right" kind of development, including good design. There is also a very substantial infrastructure investment being proposed to encourage the "right" kind of development. There are no similar incentives to save rowhouses or to build family housing. This plan needs to alter the imbalance between commercial development and lower scale family housing — new or existing. The first investment would be modest by plan standards, to invest several hundred thousand dollars in surveying the rowhouse areas for potential designation as historic districts. That would take care of a lot of conservation and buffering problems. ✧

November's Preservation Café

Underground Capitol Hill will be the subject of the next Preservation Café, to be held on Wednesday, November 15, from 6:30 – 7:15 pm at Christ Church Parish Hall, 620 G Street, SE. Robert Sonderman, an archaeologist with the National Park Service and a member of the Historic Preservation Review Board, will be leading a PowerPoint "armchair tour" of archaeological sites on the Hill and nearby locations. Not only artifacts from the early days of Washington, but also of Native Americans, will be featured in the presentation.

At the end of the presentation, there will be time for an identification session when residents can bring their bottles, pot-

tery, and other objects found in Capitol Hill gardens (or perhaps walls, cellars, and attics) to have an expert tell us what's been hiding, perhaps for generations. So bring those artifacts and come to the November Preservation Café. The Christ Church Parish Hall is handicapped-accessible through the parking lot behind the church.

Preservation Cafes are popular, free forums of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society that explore historic preservation topics of interest to all residents of the Hill. For more information, contact the CHRS office at 202-543-0425, the website, www.chrs.org or email to CapHRS@aol.com. ✧

October Preservation Café Highlights Historic Alleys

by Shauna Holmes

Over 50 people turned out October 10 for the Preservation Café on Historic Alleys, which are defined as any alley within a historic district. John Deatruck, a Capitol Hill resident who serves as Deputy Director and Chief Engineer for DC's Department of Transportation (DDOT), explained how DDOT prioritizes alleys for maintenance and repair, described materials used in historic alleys, and showed before-and-after slides of historic alleys throughout the city that have been carefully reconstructed by DDOT.

For DDOT, alleys are as important as streets, sidewalks, and bridges. A recently completed computerized inventory lists all alleys in the city, along with photos, scaled drawings, and information about each alley's size, material, location, ownership, status, and condition. To set repair priorities, DDOT uses the inventory system's ratings of each alley's condition (poor, fair, good, excellent), with "poor" alleys usually given top priority. Last year DDOT sent letters to all Advisory Neighborhood Commissions asking what their priorities were, and the ANCs' responses, along with letters from civic associations requesting maintenance for specific alleys, also influenced decision-making. High



priority is also given to alleys that are the only approach for residences.

With slides of Grease Alley, Blues Alley, Snows Court, and Browns Court, Mr. Deatruck showed how DDOT plans and carries out reconstruction of DC's historic alleys. Materials used are brick, asphalt block, or concrete, depending on what is most historically appropriate in each case. The 24" scored, tinted concrete that the Commission of Fine Arts liked for Grease Alley repair in Adams Morgan was also used successfully for Georgetown's Blues Alley. The dramatic improvement to Blues Alley inspired a number of owners to paint their buildings and otherwise clean up the alley.

Snows Court in Foggy Bottom and Browns Court in SE Capitol Hill—both very complex historic alley systems—were beautifully

John Deatruck speaking about the award-winning DDOT historic alley program.

redone in brick over a concrete base, a 100-year replacement for both alleys. In Browns Court, WASA replaced the water main, and street light work was done as well. A pleased Browns Court resident in the audience enthusiastically thanked Mr. Deatruck for DDOT's repair.

Drainage is a big challenge when rebuilding alleys, especially on the Hill, where most alleys have no drainage. One solution is to put in a trench drain that connects to a catch basin. DDOT is also looking at other methods and a variety of materials to get water to soak in.

Developers who make cuts in alleys are obliged to repair what they have cut up, replacing like with like. Citizens can report cuts and other alley-related problems by calling the Mayor's Hotline at 727-1000 (be sure to provide a phone number or e-mail address so someone can get back to you). An inspector will come out to try to determine a solution. DDOT is also interested in advising and consulting with property owners considering repair or replacement of paving on private property that abuts alleys.

DDOT faces a \$30 million backlog of repair to the city's alleys. Alley work is funded only with local money, mostly out of right-of-way funds paid by utilities, plus some bond money. This year, only \$5 million is available for the entire alley program. ✧

Welcome CHRS Supporters

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

NEW MEMBERS

Jim Abely
Sandra Bruce
Susan & Eric Carlson
Martin Carmody & Acee Agoyo
Joanne Gillis
Steve Holtzman
Mary Lenz
Dick & Carol Loewecke
Bruce Lott & Jim Rowland
Kevin & Linda O'Brien
Inez Sletta

Eric & Helen Solsten
Nancy Weiss

PATRONS

Chuck Burger & Nancy Broers
Lauren Hale
Brad & Conner Herman
Frank & Joan Keenan
Steven Lott & John Cofer
Shelley Svoboda & Neil Rhodes
Patricia Thomson

Greg Vass
Amy Weinstein

SPONSORS

Brian Biles & Diane Rowland
Martin Carmody & Acee Agoyo
Jeff Fletcher & Tara Hamilton
Norman & Nancy Metzger

Mark Your Calendar!

NOVEMBER

4 Saturday, 9:30 am

Kenilworth Avenue Corridor Study Meeting. River Terrace Elementary School, 420 34th Street, NE. Draft report will be presented to the public. Details: 610-0005 or rsvp@jsallc.com.

6 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

7 Tuesday, 7:00 am – 8:00 pm

Election Day at 142 precincts throughout the city. Details: www.dcboee.org

9 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969. There are three cases: 430-434 1st Street, SE, and 100 North Carolina Avenue, SE; 122 15th Street, NE; and 138 12th Street, NE, AppleTree Institute.

14 Tuesday, 8:00 pm

Overbeck Lecture: Growing Up On the Hill in the 1920s and 30s. Speakers: Margaret Wadsworth will be interviewed

by Beth Eck. Old Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Event is free, but reservations are required. Send email to OverbeckLecture@aol.com or call 544-1845 and leave your name, phone number, and email address to receive a confirmation and updates. See page 7.

15 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Preservation Café: Underground Capitol Hill. Christ Church Parish Hall, 620 G Street, SE. Hill resident and National Park Service archeologist Robert Sonderman will highlight archeological discoveries on Capitol Hill, with special emphasis on Native American artifacts collected near Barney Circle. Bring that mysterious lump or shard from your garden for identification. Parish Hall is wheelchair accessible through church parking lot in rear. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034. See page 10.

15 Wednesday, 6:00 pm

Public Meeting: Status Report on the Hill East Waterfront Master Plan, sponsored by the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation. Eastern High School, 1700 East Capitol Street NE. Details: Debra Rainey, 406-4050.

16 Thursday, 10:00 am

Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 4th Street, NW (1 Judiciary Square),

Room 220 South. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

20 Monday, 6:30 pm

Public Meeting: Proposed Tax Increment Financing District for H Street NE. Atlas Performing Arts Center, 1333 H Street, NE, Lab Theatre II. Details: Derrick Woody, derrick.woody@dc.gov or 727-2981.

21 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors. Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 543-4353.

DECEMBER

4 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

19 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 543-4353.

21 Thursday, 10:00 am

Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 4th Street, NW (1 Judiciary Square), Room 220 South. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.



Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003
