

NEWS

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March 2009

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society Files Suit to Prevent the Proposed 11th Street Bridges Project from Destroying Parts of the Hill Community

In order to preserve community rights to seek mitigation of the adverse effects of the proposed 11th Street Bridges project, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) has been forced by a narrow statute of limitations to file suit under the National Environmental Policy Act and other legal authorities against the Federal agencies funding the new bridges.

Despite years of testimony and public comments, as well as submission of independent studies regarding detrimental environmental effects and subversion of local planning policy, CHRS has been unable to convince the agencies to focus on lower-impact alternatives to the design of the new bridges.

The adverse effects of the alternative chosen by the Federal Highway Administration and DC's Department of Transportation would increase bridge capacity by 50%, and the replacement bridges, which would be built to new interstate standards, would include wider lanes, additional breakdown lanes, and massive new flyovers. In brief, the agencies propose to replace the current 11th Street

Bridges, which have 8 traffic lanes, with multiple bridges carrying 12 traffic lanes. This new capacity would feed additional traffic through and into the Hill and the already burdened I-395, risking adverse effects on adjacent historic rowhouses and other historic structures and causing an increase in noise, air pollution, vibrations, and detrimental health effects on nearby rowhouse and housing project residents and children in several schools close by. Moreover, the new bridges would take Federal parkland, intrude on historic Boat House Row, and adversely affect the Capitol Hill, Anacostia, and Navy Yard Historic Districts.

CHRS has a long history of opposing freeways in inner city Washington and advocating mitigation of the effects of commuter traffic through residential neighborhoods. As a participant in the development of the Comprehensive Plan for the city, CHRS welcomes the policies calling for liveable, walkable neighborhoods, especially as they are spelled out in both the Transportation and Capitol Hill elements of the Plan.

We regret having to take this action, but we believe there is still room for the parties to come together to mitigate these impacts and at the same time find solutions to the traffic problems the new bridges are supposed to solve. ✧

Editor's Note: The above press release was issued by CHRS on February 25, 2009. For more on CHRS's position on this subject, visit our website at www.chrs.org, and see the article on the 11th Street Bridges Project elsewhere in this issue.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

ARTICLES

- Tribute to Eric Snellings
- NE Building Survey
- 11th Street Bridges
- Smart Mobility Analysis Update
- Preservation Cafes
- New Buildings Symposium
- Anacostia Trash Survey

COLUMNS

- President's Column
- Zoning Briefs
- Looking Back
- Hill on Film

President's Column

by Dick Wolf

I have been laid up for the last month and a half both at home and in the hospital with a variety of problems related to my chronic and rare disease. I will be fine soon. But these events have given me a new insight into the Hill community and CHRS.

To begin with, my friends and

colleagues have been enormously supportive and caring in many ways. I have had phone calls, emails and cards, and friends have provided home care assistance. I think this is a Hill thing. I could see the same atmosphere enveloping the family of Eric Snellings.

Beyond the support and warm feelings, CHRS has been running itself. Our committees and indivi-

dual board members have been carrying out their responsibilities without much direction and with considerable initiative. Complex issues have been sorted through. Intelligent testimony, letters to public officials and newsletters have continued to be written and presented. We are doing what we have always done and we are doing it well. Thanks to all. ★

An Appreciation: Eric Snellings (1960 – 2009)

by Nancy Metzger

When I heard Eric Snellings had died on February 14, it seemed to me the most fitting thing to do was to walk through Capitol Hill, passing the buildings that I knew he loved: St. Peter's Church, where he worshipped with his family on Sundays; the Watterston House at 224 Second Street, SE, the subject of one of the cases we discussed at the last Historic Preservation Committee meeting he attended; Doctor's Row on Maryland Avenue, where he lived with his wife Monica and their children, Maria and Fernando; and on past the icons of Capitol Hill, the Old Naval Hospital and Eastern Market. Eric was an architect, an observer and a delighter in buildings. He had been a Capitol Hill homeowner since 1988, a member of CHRS since 1989, serving on the Historic Preservation Committee for over five years. He was first elected to the CHRS Board as secretary in 2007.

Eric was a doer and a thinker. While he was probably the CHRS Board member with the greatest expertise in building and design, he was not above doing whatever needed doing. Eric was a cheerful,

show-up, pitch-in volunteer, no matter what the task. For the Historic Preservation Committee, he was there every month – the self-appointed and greatly appreciated time keeper, in charge of the little coffee pot kitchen timer that would remind the committee it was time to wrap up comments on one case and move on to the next one. He regularly (and cheerfully) set up and put away chairs for the CHRS Preservation Cafes; and he manned tables to sell tickets for the CHRS House Tour. It might not sound like much but that's the point – Eric assumed responsibility for the little things that could make a big difference to a committee meeting, a house tour, a Preservation Café and a neighborhood. If there was something that needed to be done, he was there as a part of it.

Of course, he also put his well-honed architectural skills to the task of analyzing the historic preservation cases involving additions and alterations within the historic district.

In addition to providing review and suggestions on projects that came before the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Eric provided very valuable technical assistance in the review of design

and construction drawings and documents, both for the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee and the EMCAC's (Eastern Market Citizens Advisory Committee) Capital Improvements Subcommittee. When the thick sets of plans for the Eastern Market restoration became available for community review, Eric was one of those who spent hours studying those plans in an effort to catch any mistakes. Many of us felt much better knowing he had been a part of the community review team.

Eric's assistance in building and design for his neighborhood went beyond CHRS. He assisted board members of the fledgling Penn East, Inc. (a preservation-based commercial revitalization effort east of the Capitol Hill Historic District) in developing a zoning overlay concept, which included an assessment of the integrity of several buildings, along a portion of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. He explained which buildings had reversible alterations and pointed out where there could be



Continued on page 6

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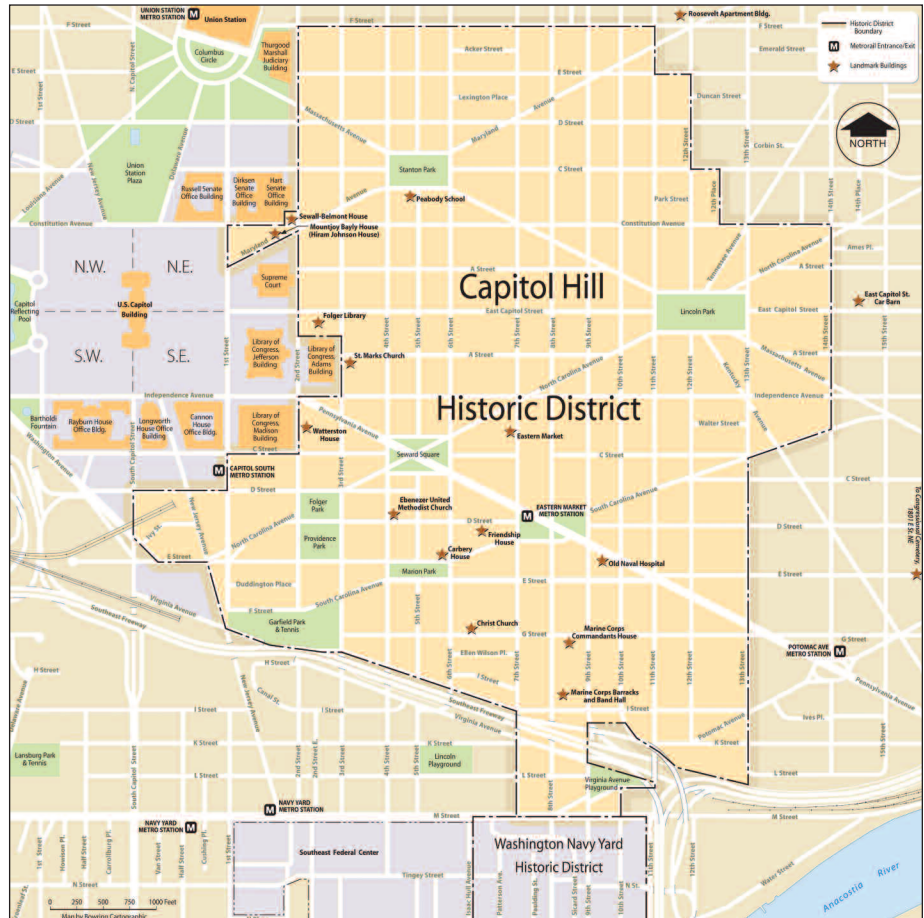
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to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's
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CHRS Contracts for Survey of Buildings in Northeast outside Capitol Hill Historic District

by Donna Hanousek



CHRS signed a contract with *EHT Tracerics* to begin a large survey effort in northeast Washington, DC. The company is a research and consulting firm specializing in architectural history and historic preservation. The survey area will be from Second to Fifteenth Streets, between F and H Streets (excluding properties that front on H Street) and the “notch” (the irregularly shaped area just east of the historic district, north of East Capitol Street and south of H Street).

The \$84,000 contract is almost entirely financed (\$83,500) by Louis Dreyfuss Property Group, as part of their mitigation for demolishing several properties along Second and G Streets, NE. The ANCs 6C and 6A, as well as the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, led the

Continued on page 8

The editors welcome suggestions from CHRS Members and thank Jill Lawrence of Jill-of-all-Trades for suggestions on improving the design of the News.

The Eleventh Street Bridges Capacity Expansion Proposal: What CHRS is *FOR*

by Thomas Grahame

With decisions expected in mid-April about the Eleventh Street Bridges design/build team, a review of the negative consequences of the proposal as well as an examination of the alternative supported by CHRS is necessary.

CHRS's role in Ward 6 goes beyond historic preservation and zoning to include basic livability issues such as parking and local and freeway traffic. For years, CHRS has been in the forefront of developing solutions to parking problems, including permit parking, as well as fighting freeways in the city.

We have consistently maintained that the construction of massively expanded freeway bridges in the heart of the city permanently and adversely affects rowhouse neighborhoods.

One of the adverse effects includes health issues, such as increased asthma attacks and respiratory illnesses for children in schools near major freeways. California recently passed a law requiring that any new school must be at least 500 feet from a freeway or major highway.* Anacostia High in Ward 7 and Tyler and Capitol Hill Day Schools in Ward 6, are all within this zone. If the Bridges Capacity Expansion Proposal is built, there will be a daily increase of tens of thousands of vehicles past each school.

In addition, new studies indicate a shorter life expectancy for those who live close to major highways and roads. One such study found that a person's lifespan is reduced 2.5 years if they live near highly trafficked roads.**

In addition, recent research indicates an increase in cardiovascular disease among those living near major roads.

When many US cities are "going green" to reduce greenhouse gases and pollution, the DC government seems to be reverting to city planning ideas of the 1950s, when planners favored increasing freeway traffic through cities. Other communities are reducing or resisting freeway development: after the 1989 earthquake, San Francisco took down the Embarcadero Freeway rather than rebuild it, and saw a renaissance in nearby property values.*** Arlington County is currently resisting the widening of I-66.

Another adverse effect is increased noise, such as truck noise day and night. Noise disturbs neighborhoods. With the greater height of the structures anticipated in the Expansion Proposal, noise will carry farther. In addition the visual blight of larger and wider structures will increase the adverse impact on neighborhoods and historic districts on both sides of the river.

CHRS has for several years asked for DDOT to analyze a smaller alternative to the proposed expansion to 12 lanes and to project the comparative traffic and other impacts of a smaller design. That has not happened. Instead FOIA

Continued on page 5

Update on Smart Mobility December 2008 Audit of Eleventh Street Bridges FEIS Data

CHRS submitted the Smart Mobility December 2008 audit of DDOT's data file to Chairman Jim Graham of the City Council's Public Works and Environment Committee several weeks ago. Chairman Graham asked DDOT to respond to several of Smart Mobility's critiques, and in turn, Smart Mobility assessed DDOT's responses. All of these will be found at www.CHRS.org.

Smart Mobility found that DDOT's responses were still deficient in at least two regards. DDOT still denies that there is an expansion in freeway capacity and still maintains that the Eleventh Street Bridges Capacity Expansion Proposal won't divert traffic from the Woodrow Wilson Bridge through the District, despite the graphic from their own data showing this to be the case (Smart Mobility, December 2008).

Smart Mobility agrees with DDOT on a third point, that DDOT did model induced traffic following the MCOG guidelines. This last point mutes CHRS concerns that there might be larger increases in local traffic than shown in projections because of failure to follow proper modeling procedures. Nevertheless, DDOT has not shown projected traffic volumes on most Capitol Hill streets, including those likely to see increases even with proper modeling – such as Fourth, Sixth, and Eighth Streets. The concern remains that the failure to project traffic volumes masks officially unacknowledged increases.

continued from page 4

requests have not been answered and meetings scheduled for DDOT to respond to CHRS concerns have been cancelled.

Given the events that have, or have not occurred, here is what CHRS is currently FOR. We support a smaller Eleventh Street Bridges proposal with one new lane in each direction instead of two in each direction. We support use of federal stimulus money for this smaller proposal. Being less

When many US cities are "going green" to reduce greenhouse gases and pollution, the DC government seems to be reverting to... increasing freeway traffic through cities.

costly, this smaller bridge would not create the projected large increases in traffic – up to 50,000 more vehicles per day – over the proposed Eleventh Street Bridges. CHRS has been trying, in vain, to get DDOT to analyze this smaller alternative.

Since the amount of stimulus money available is the same for either alternative, the savings from the smaller project will accrue to the District's over-stretched budget.

We strongly support methods to reduce traffic in various parts of Capitol Hill and on the Sousa Bridge. DDOT has stated that the downsizing of the I-395 spur to

Barney Circle will result in traffic reductions for the Sousa Bridge by 2030. We very much hope that this downsizing occurs, as it seems likely that it will also inhibit cut-through traffic in Hill East which currently uses the I-395 spur. People in Hill East shouldn't have to endure racing commuter traffic, just as others in Wards 6 and 7 shouldn't have to endure increased freeway traffic, pollution, and noise.

We support making Seventeenth and Nineteenth Streets in Hill East two-way streets, with lower speed limits, to slow commuter traffic and reduce the number of commuters using this route. We support more use of speed tables on routes where drivers travel too fast.

We support methods to reduce truck noise. CHRS asked DDOT to analyze truck noise, but again, to our knowledge, that did not happen.

We support community and Council input into the decision on the design/build competition in order to minimize adverse effects on neighborhoods and historic districts.

In summary, it is still possible to go forward with a smaller and less costly project which will protect the health of school children and others affected by traffic, and which will minimize the adverse impact of noise, congestion, traffic hazards, and visual blight on our neighborhoods. CHRS will continue to press for the best possible outcome for the Capitol Hill community on this issue. ★

*See: <http://uscnews2.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11335>

**This and other health impacts for those living near major roads are mentioned in the Nov. 2007 Smart Mobility analysis done for CHRS (see www.CHRS.org).

***<http://www.preservenet.com/freeways/FreewaysEmbarcadero.html>

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

52nd Annual House and Garden Tour



**HISTORIC HOMES
contemporary lives**

**Mother's Day Weekend
May 9–10, 2009**

52nd Annual House & Garden Tour

CHRS is working with Barracks Row / Main Street and the Capitol Hill Garden Club to develop a Tour that will focus on the neighborhoods south of Pennsylvania Avenue. A number of gardens will be included this year.

The Tour also will offer expanded hours with openings on Saturday, May 9 from 4 to 8 pm and on Sunday, May 10, from 11 to 5 pm.

Suggestions for and questions concerning the Tour may be sent to either of the co-chairs: Aileen Moffatt (acmoffatt@hotmail.com) and Paul Cromwell (paulcromwell@verizon.net). Please check the website for updates: www.CHRS.org ★

Looking Back

by Nancy Metzger

Siblings Mariana and Elias Souri still live in the house facing Lincoln Park that their Syrian immigrant grandparents bought in 1928. In a 2002 oral history interview with their neighbor Hilary Russell, they recount memories of growing up in the Lincoln Park neighborhood during the 1940s and 1950s – much like other children at the time but with a special twist. The Souris were part of an extended Orthodox Christian family that immigrated in the early 1900s from Merzine, Turkey (now part of Syria) because of persecution.

Their maternal grandfather, Job Salloom, was a priest and as the Souris recount “he had a very demanding congregation. And everybody involved themselves in everybody else’s lives, so he was forever a peacemaker with disputes among families. ... Since he could read and write, he did all of the correspondence and everything for everybody. He

settled disputes between the government and personal and whatever....If someone came over from, at the time, Syria, then he’d try to find them a place to live, make sure they got a job, all kinds of things ...”

The Souri family lived with their paternal grandparents and the rhythms of their grandmother set the patterns of the week:

“Tita (which means ‘grandmother’) Souri was the matriarch. Everything had to be done in her fashion as she was from the old country. Monday was laundry day. We still have the boiling tub down there in the basement. The clothes had to be boiled, and we had two galvanized tubs – one with blue water and one with clear water That was every Monday....We did laundry all day on Monday.

When Mom finally got a washing machine, my grandmother didn’t trust it – it wouldn’t get your clothes clean. She still boiled the clothes. She still put them in the blue water, the

clear, but she used the wringer on the washing machine to get the water out. It was an ordeal. We actually had this tub which sat on ... a gas burner...to boil water to put your sheets in. We still have the stick that she used to...stir the laundry. We still have that stick downstairs in the basement.

“Thursday was cleaning day on the first floor and, I mean, clean. Oh glory, I think everything was removed. It had to be cleaned. Friday was the second-floor cleaning. Spring cleaning was basically everything on the third floor would get moved down to the basement and the fall everything in the basement would get moved to the third floor. It was just an ordeal. ... We had clothes lines outside. There were pulleys. They went from the garage to the porch. All clothes were hung out there.” ☆

The complete transcript of the oral history interviews with Mariana and Elias Souri can be found on the website for the Capitol Hill History project (www.capitolhillhistory.org).

An Appreciation: Eric Snellings (1960 – 2009)

continued from page 2

negative impacts to the surrounding buildings if the zoning envelopes could be enlarged. (The Overlay project was scrapped, but not before it was shared with the Ward Planner to help inform future planning efforts for the area.)

Not that it was a little thing but his wit, his quips, and his ready grin put homeowners and fellow architects alike at ease during committee meetings. Conversation flowed when Eric was at the table.

He didn’t hesitate to question or to raise difficult issues but he did expect that neighborhood discourse should be civil.

Last May when he was running for a two-year seat on the CHRS Board, after a year as Secretary, Eric said he wanted to put his focus on quality-of-life issues for families raising children in the city and particularly on the Hill. He didn’t have a chance to work on those issues – but they still remain a challenge for someone

else in the Capitol Hill community to take on.

Last, but certainly not least, Eric contributed more than his considerable knowledge and willingness to work; he brought an unrivaled sense of humor and a gentle spirit with him wherever he went that made him a pleasure to know and work with. CHRS and the Capitol Hill community will sorely miss him. ☆

(Donna Hanosek contributed to this article)

March Symposium: New Buildings, Old Neighborhoods What Makes for a Good Match?

By Nancy Metzger

Lots of people have an opinion about that headline question and several well-known architects and architectural historians will share their insights during a special symposium on Sunday afternoon, March 15. You can be a part of the discussion by reserving a seat at “Contemporary and Compatible: A Symposium on Contextual Modern Design” that will be held at the auditorium of The Historical Society of Washington, DC (Old Carnegie Library) at 801 K Street, NW from 12:30 pm – 4:30 pm (with doors opening at noon for registration and a nibble – but have brunch before you come).

Architect Amy Weinstein, FAIA, will start the program with a look at the styles we know today as Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Classical Revival, as these styles often form the context in which Twenty-first Century contemporary designs will be considered. Ms. Weinstein will also be introducing the architectural concepts of scale, massing, materials and rhythm that help define a neighborhood’s context.

Robert Sponseller, AIA, of Shalom Baranes Architects will be presenting the “Language of Modernism” – the hallmarks of modern architecture – and how those precepts are expressed in contemporary buildings. Martin Moeller, senior vice president and curator of the National Building Museum, will follow with a presentation of contemporary buildings along with his evaluation of them and how they fit with their context. There will be opportunity for questions and discussion.

The latter part of the symposium will be three case studies of projects reviewed by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) so that participants can see how the architect/owner approached the site and the program; how communities, the historic preservation office staff, and review board responded to the concept; and how those comments shaped the final project.

Architect Anne Lewis, AIA, who has served on both the HPRB and the Old Georgetown Board, will be part of this segment and of the final short session that will

The symposium was developed by the Historic Districts Coalition, a network of organizations concerned with preserving and enhancing the historic resources within their neighborhoods...

feature pointers for more effective presentations for residents who give testimony before boards and commissions.

Although the program was developed specifically to help representatives of neighborhood organizations and Advisory Neighborhood Commissions as they consider proposals for construction projects, either inside or outside of historic districts, it



should be of great interest to any resident who is interested in architecture, urban design, or historic preservation.

The symposium was developed by the Historic Districts Coalition, a network of organizations concerned with preserving and enhancing the historic resources within their neighborhoods, with grants from the DC Historic Preservation Office and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

There is a \$10 registration fee to reserve a space at the symposium (space is limited) and to cover the costs of some snacks as well as background information and articles. To reserve your place at the symposium, send your name, address, phone and e-mail contact along with a \$10 check, payable to the Dupont Circle Conservancy, to Rick Busch, 1520 Caroline Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009. For more information, contact the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CapHRS@aol.com, 202-543-0425). ★

The Hill on Film

by Mike Canning

(Continuing an occasional series about how Hollywood has treated – or mistreated – elements of Capitol Hill. CHRS Treasurer Canning writes movie reviews for the Hill Rag.)

An earlier column in this series highlighted some distorted views of the US Capitol's legislative chambers in the movies. Yet it isn't only those chambers that are violated in the movies; for reasons of haste, obtuseness, or ignorance, other elements of Congressional life and practice are often mangled by filmmakers.

Take, for example, counterfeit committees. Screenwriters, especially with comedies, can be awfully loose with Hill committee assignments, inventing their own to serve the script. In *The Distinguished Gentleman* (1992), for example, accidental congressman Eddie Murphy hustles to get the most desirable assignment on the Hill – on the non-existent "Power and Industry" Committee.

Then there is the raunchy Florida representative, played by Burt Reynolds in the Demi Moore comedy-drama *Striptease* (1996), who chairs the sham House

"Subcommittee on Sugar." In another Demi Moore picture, *G.I. Jane* (1997), there is the ambitious senator (played by Anne Bancroft) who serves on the "Senate Arms Committee." That would make lobbying that crowd far more straightforward.

Surely – for DC insiders – the most egregious committee mistake in all Washington films places the smarmy **senator** in the Charlie Sheen comedy *Three for the Road* (1987) on the **House** Ways and Means Committee.

Locals who know their way around the Hill will notice other goofs. In the 1964 thriller *Seven Days in May*, for example, rogue general Burt Lancaster testifies in a (way too tiny) Senate committee room where a photo of the sitting president (Frederic March) adorns the wall – a no-no in Senate practice. By contrast, in *Contact* (1997), heroine Jodie Foster testifies in a committee room which is way too large (it is, in fact, a large executive branch departmental auditorium), then, compounding the implausibility, she leaves the Capitol to step – directly onto the Mall!

One final example of congressional goofs: in *Random Hearts* (1999), a recently defeated congresswoman, Kristin Scott

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Thomas, is shown leaving her congressional office for good, but rather than exiting one of the three House buildings, she walks – in long shot – down the East Front of the Capitol. A more telling visual, perhaps, but just plan wrong. ★

CHRS Contracts for Survey of Buildings in Northeast outside Capitol Hill Historic District

continued from page 3

neighborhood in negotiations with the developer. CHRS assisted them and agreed to serve as the conduit for the funds.

The survey will consist of both on-site and archival research that will be used to create a record of individual buildings. Traceries will compile the research results into a building database that can be used

by the community to develop educational materials, such as walking tours and brochures or to assist building owners in their building renovations.

Traceries' work will also include an analysis and recommendation of potential historic district boundaries, should the community wish to pursue

historic district designation.

For more information on this survey, or other survey efforts underway in the greater Capitol Hill area, please contact Donna Hanousek, Program Chair, "*Beyond the Boundaries*," at hanousek@earthlink.net. ★

Zoning Briefs

by Gary Peterson

The CHRS Zoning Committee heard five cases at the February 12 meeting. The Committee was one member short of a quorum and, therefore, the decisions require ratification by the Zoning Board. On February 14 the Board ratified the decisions in four cases and changed the decision in one case.

In the following case the Board changed the Committee's recommendation of "no position" to "oppose." The application requests a special exception from the lot occupancy provisions to construct a second story addition to an existing garage, a variance from the accessory structure height requirements, and a use variance to allow living quarters in the accessory structure in an R-4 zone at 223 Tenth Street, SE.

The special exception for the lot occupancy is pro-forma here because the existing lot coverage is 66.8%. One can increase the lot occupancy from 60% to 70% with a special exception and a special exception is required for this

existing condition. Insofar as the variances are concerned the applicant proposes to raise the roof of the garage from 15.5 feet to 19.5 feet (15 feet is allowed as a matter of right) and to add a full bathroom to the second floor (only one structure on the property may be used for human habitation). The Board found that the applicant did not meet the burden of proof of the two variances and voted to oppose the application.

In the following four cases the Zoning Board concurred in the Committee's vote to support:

1381 F Street, NE. In this case the applicant proposes adding a partial third floor to a row house that occupies 67% of the lot, and is on a lot that is less than 1,800 square feet and is less than 18 feet wide.

660 E Street, SE. The applicant plans to demolish a shed and remove an older rear addition. A new rear addition will be added and the lot occupancy will be reduced from 71.5% to 70%

516 Ninth Street, SE. The applicant plans on a building a garage and needs a special exception to go from 58% lot occupancy to 70%.

645 Maryland Avenue, NE. The applicant proposes converting an old industrial building into a residence (the new address will be 318 Seventh Street, NE, because the access is by an alley off of Seventh Street, NE). The applicant needs a variance because this alley lot is not on a 30 foot wide alley. It is bordered by an alley that varies from 10 to 12 feet. Without this variance the property would be virtually valueless in a R-4 zone.

The next meeting of the CHRS Zoning Committee will be held on March 12. Meeting starts a 7:30 pm and is open to the public. The Committee will consider the following cases: 317 Constitution Avenue (rear), NE; 1452 D Street, NE; 1179 Third Street, NE; and 1234 Fourth Street, NE. Persons having an interest in these cases should contact Gary Peterson at 202-547-7969 or pgarylaw@aol.com. ★

ESSENTIAL READING: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Jane Jacobs, (May 4, 1916 – April 25, 2006) was an American-born Canadian urbanist, writer and activist. She was best known for "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1961), a powerful critique of the US urban renewal policies of the 1950s. The book has been credited with reaching beyond planning issues to influence the spirit of the times. Jacobs opposed Robert Moses, master builder of mid-20th Century New York City. One of his sayings was "cities are for traffic."

Along with her writings, Jacobs is equally well known for organizing grass-roots efforts to block urban-renewal projects that would have destroyed local neighborhoods. She was instrumental in the eventual cancellation of the Lower Manhattan Expressway. Opposing expressways and supporting neighborhoods were common themes in her life. (From Wikipedia)

Feeling Cold? Storm Windows Preservation Café Offered Solutions

by Shauna Holmes

Around thirty Capitol Hill homeowners who are tired of shivering even in their houses enjoyed CHRS's February 18 Preservation Café about storm windows.

Featuring long-time Capitol Hill resident John Sandor, the presentation covered what makes heated houses feel cold, how to fight drafts, the effectiveness of storm windows, and what kinds of storm windows are most appropriate for our historic homes.

According to Mr. Sandor, a preservation project reviewer for the National Park Service, heat loss and comfort factors are the main issues with old windows. Some heat transfer occurs when cold air infiltrates around window sashes and through small openings in outside walls, and sometimes it can happen when a double-hung window's weight box doesn't fit well.

Heat transfer also occurs when heated indoor air circulates across window panes, causing heat to be conducted from inside to the outside. Similarly, cold outside air chills the panes, conducting the cold inside, lowering the overall indoor temperature, and making us less comfortable, especially near our windows. A window's exposure also has a lot to do with how much infiltration and heat loss take place, with those facing north and/or the prevailing winter winds likely to be the coldest and draftiest.

Weather-stripping windows and caulking chinks in external walls are two ways to reduce cold air infiltration. To lessen

infiltration and heat transfer even more, however, storm windows can be the answer. Some studies show they can reduce infiltration by up to 46%, which can contribute significantly to comfort levels, and an additional layer of panes and the space created between the inner and outer panes can

Bare aluminum, for instance, would be a really poor choice for our historic houses; we don't want our windows to jump out as us, but rather to blend in with the exterior colors, forms, and appearance.

considerably reduce heat loss through convection and conduction.

A University of Vermont study found some measurable savings with storm windows on old houses, though depending on fuel prices and the cost of the storm windows, appreciable savings might take a while.

An immediate and discernible benefit will be comfort, which matters a lot but is hard to put a price on; another benefit is that storm windows will protect the historic wood windows from weathering, adding to their usable life and effectiveness.

While storm windows can be installed on the inside, they don't

look very nice, so exterior ones are recommended. In evaluating potential choices, the key things to consider are cost, appearance, and the level of additional comfort they offer. Some companies specialize in tight, well-fitting metal and others in wood.

Costs per window, not including installation, can run from a building supply basic aluminum model at around \$72-76, a building-supply better aluminum at around \$77-\$87, through high-grade aluminum models at around \$200-\$413, to wood with changeable panels at around \$215-\$290. Plan to add about \$40 more per window for low-E.

When choosing among varieties of storm windows, consider the strength of the frames; their functional convenience (can you raise and lower them? clean them easily?); the range of color choices; their tightness (they need to breathe at least somewhat, so indoor moisture can evaporate); and their appearance. Bare aluminum, for instance, would be a really poor choice for our historic houses; we don't want our windows to jump out as us, but rather to blend in with the exterior colors, forms, and appearance.

As a general rule, the higher the cost, the more choices there are: more shapes, low-E, lots of colors, etc. Pay attention to how your window works and how you want to use it – is your top pane fixed in place? Will you want to open your window fairly often for fresh air?

Storm windows can be shipped, and Mr. Sandor

Continued on page 11

continued from page 10

suggested several companies: Mon-Ray, Inc. in Minneapolis (www.monray.com); Allied Window in Cincinnati (www.alliedwindow.com); Dubuque Sash and Door Mfg. (www.dubuquesashdoor.com); and SpencerWorks (www.spencerworks.com), a single-option company.

If you choose the shipping option, of course, you will need a local installer; most building supply places will handle it. Be sure, though, to choose a contractor who is very experienced in measuring, fitting, and installing storm windows in old houses like ours, since most of our windows are uneven in some way due to settling.

The city does not require a permit for installing storm windows. The DC Historic Preservation Office suggests that storm windows be as flush as possible with the frame and that the meeting rail of the storm match up with that of the window itself to avoid distraction.

The next Preservation Café will be on March 18; please see the story in this issue for details. ★

Anacostia River Trash: Survey and Solutions

by Beth Purcell

The DC Department of Environment and the Anacostia Watershed Society recently released a comprehensive survey of trash in the Anacostia River. On average, there are 58 pieces of trash per 100 feet of river bank. Plastic bags, food wrappers, and drink bottles and cans together account for approximately 70% of all trash.

Over 14,000 plastic bags were counted in streams leading to the river. Plastic bags are hard to remove, do not biodegrade in water, and even a few can clog storm sewer grates. On the other hand, paper bags dissolve in water after an hour; paper generally is not found in streams. (One of the streams studied is next to a McDonald's that sells food in paper bags – there were very few paper bags in that stream.) Opting for paper bags instead of plastic would reduce trash in the river.

Food wrappers and drink bottles/cans each account for 25% of trash; 85% of all trash is related to eating and drinking. Although

many bottles and cans are beer/alcohol, in some areas water bottles are also a big trash component.

The survey suggests legislative actions that could reduce trash by 57%. A ban or tax on plastic bags and on Styrofoam and plastic clamshells, plates and cups (especially for carryout food) would encourage the use of paper products. Other possibilities include legislative incentives to require snack wrappers to be biodegradable and setting a deposit on beverage bottles and cans. Eleven states currently have some form of “bottle bill” providing for redemption of bottles and cans for cash. A “bottle bill” failed in DC in the 1980s.

In accordance with this, a recent bill introduced by Councilmember Tommy Wells (the Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Act) would generally require a 5-cent fee on plastic bags. See the survey: <http://ddoe.dc.gov/ddoe/cwp/viaw,a,1209,q,499180.asp>. ★

March 18 Preservation Café Will Feature Gardening Green

by Shauna Holmes

As you're longing for spring and planning this year's garden, add CHRS's March 18 Preservation Café on *Gardening Green* to your calendar. The speakers will be Marisa Scalera and Thomas Rainer, landscape architects at Oehme, van

Sweden and Associates on Barracks Row. They will focus their presentation on plants especially well adapted to our local climate that are both drought resistant and appropriate for Capitol Hill's small urban gardens. Native and invasive species and how to have a “greener” garden will also be on

the agenda. The Preservation Café will run from 6:30-7:15 pm in the downstairs community room at Ebenezers Coffeehouse at Second & F Streets, NE. The event is free, accessible, and open to all in the Capitol Hill community. ★

Mark Your Calendar!

MARCH

2 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034

10 Tuesday, Time TBA
Capitol Hill Energy Coop Meets to discuss green roofs and DC government programs to encourage energy savings. Place TBA. Contact: jeeuwondc@gmail.com

12 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 202-547-7969.

15 Sunday, Noon – 4:30 pm
Contemporary and Compatible: A Symposium on Contextual Modern Design in Historic Districts. Auditorium of The Historical Society of Washington, DC (Old Carnegie Library) at 801 K Street, NW.

17 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 Sixth Street, SE, second floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 202-543-4353.

18 Wednesday, 6:30-7:15 pm
The March 18 Preservation Café on “Gardening Green” will feature speakers Marisa Scalera and Thomas Rainer, landscape architects at Oehme, van Sweden and Associates on Barracks Row. The Preservation Café will be in the downstairs community room at Ebenzers Coffeehouse at Second and F Streets, NE. The event is free, accessible, and open to all in the Capitol Hill community. No reservation is required. Details: Shauna Holmes, 202-546-5211.

26 Thursday, 10:00 am
Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 Fourth Street, NW, Room 220 South. Details: Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034.

APRIL

6 Monday 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE, first floor. Nancy Metzger, 202-546-1034.

9 Thursday, 7:30 pm (tentative)
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE, first floor. Details Gary Peterson 202-547-7969

15 Wednesday, 6:30-7:15 pm.
The March 15 Preservation Café will feature Architect David Bell, who will talk about restoring a rowhouse while pursuing LEED designation. Preservation Café will be at Ebenzers Coffeehouse at Second and F Streets, NE. The event is free, accessible, and open to all in the Capitol Hill community. No reservation is required. Details: Shauna Holmes, 202-546-5211.

21 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 Sixth Street, SE, second floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 202-543-4353



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