



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

May 2019

Special Attractions on the 62nd CHRS House and Garden Tour

By Nina Tristani

This year's House and Garden Tour held May 11th and 12th offers more than just beautiful, historic homes. Five gardens are on view. Each garden offers its own individual take on Capitol Hill foliage. They are located at: 1000 South Carolina Avenue SE, 224 12th Street SE, 1100 Constitution Avenue NE, 1023 East Capitol SE and 154 11th Street SE.

There is also a walking tour of Gessford Court. Hosted by historian and expert Beth Purcell the tours take place on May 11th at 5 pm and on the 12th at 2 pm and 4 pm. The Gessford Court houses are typical of 19th century working class houses. They have a dining room and living room on the first floor, and upstairs, two bedrooms. In the early days the houses had no interior plumbing; residents carried water into their houses from a hydrant in the courtyard and used privies in the back yards. They relied on kerosene lamps for lighting and a stove for cooking and heating. Over the years owners modified the houses.

Along the tour route you will find Philadelphia Row. Between 1865 and 1867 Charles Gessford partnered with Stephen Flanagan to build the sixteen matching row houses at 122-154 11th Street known as Philadelphia Row. It was one of the first large scale developments built in the Lincoln Park area. Gessford built the row for his Philadelphia native wife to help her with her homesickness.

Corner Store Arts serving as the headquarters and refreshment break for tour goers also has an interesting history. It was originally built in 1870

as a grocery store with rooms behind and upstairs to house the grocer.

Whether you are interested in the lovely houses or luscious gardens or in learning a bit of history the House and Garden Tour has something special for every taste. ★

We are still looking for volunteers to serve as house docents! It's easy, fun—and a very important job. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Nelson at elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com.

IMAGE COURTESY BILL KOHUTANYCZ



This garden at 1023 East Capitol Street SE is a stop on this year's House & Garden Tour.

Also in this issue

ARTICLES

- CHRS Board Elections 2
- Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture 3

COLUMNS

- Zoning Report 3
- Historic Preservation Briefs 4
- Thank You CHRS Supporters 6

LOOKING AHEAD

- Eastern Market Celebration 7
- Mark Your Calendar 8

CHRS to Hold Elections for Officers and Directors

The Election Committee recommendations for the 2019–2020 Board of Directors have been approved by the current Board of Directors. Ballots will be mailed to all CHRS members who are on the rolls as of May 1, 2019. Once distributed, ballots must be completed and returned within two weeks. The results of the election will be announced at the June Membership Meeting.

Beth Purcell has been nominated to serve as the President of the Society. Maygene Daniels has been nominated to serve as First Vice-President. Tina May has been re-nominated to serve as Second Vice-President. Jim Thackaberry has been re-nominated as Secretary and Susan Oursler has been re-nominated for Treasurer. Three At-Large Directors have also been nominated: Angie Schmidt, Christine Mullins, and Alison Ross.



Beth Purcell (President) is currently serving as Chair of the Historic Preservation Committee, a

position in which she will continue. She moved to Capitol Hill in 1987, and later joined the CHRS board, serving as President from 2009 to 2012. After a career at the Treasury Department, she earned an MS in historic preservation from George Washington University and chairs the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee. She is also the President of Trees for Capitol Hill and a member of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. In her spare time she enjoys walking her dogs.



Maygene Daniels (First Vice-President) is currently serving in an At-Large position. She and her husband

Steve have lived on Capitol Hill for more than 45 years and raised their children here. She began her career as an archivist at the National Archives, where she advocated for preservation of historic DC Building Permits, which remain a key resource for house history on Capitol Hill. After leaving the National Archives, she founded the archives at the National Gallery of Art, where she worked for more than 30 years. In her decades of archival work, she explored subjects relating to the history, urban development and architecture of the city of Washington, the Mall and Capitol Hill. She selected images and wrote text for the historic signs in the Hill center, and is currently co-organizer of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Lecture Series.



Tina May (Second Vice-President) is completing her first term in this position. She moved to Capitol Hill in 1982 for

an affordably-priced rental house with college friends and has lived here ever since. Soon thereafter, she and her husband Peter bought their first house in need of restoration. Working with little more than a subscription to the *Old House Journal* and a lot of patience, they completed that house, and then a second, and are now working on their third (the “gut job”). They have been members of CHRS since at least 2002—back in the days when a membership included a subscription to the OHJ.

The Mays raised three sons in the middle of these renovations who not only survived the occasional lack of plumbing and more than a few splinters, but they actually became (sometimes) willing renovation workers before leaving to become engineers. May has been active in many local issues, especially neighborhood public schools and the Boy Scouts. She cares deeply about public institutions and the public realm. May works in the music business doing concert production.



Susan Oursler (Treasurer) is completing her first term as Treasurer, and has served as Chair of the

Board’s Budget and Administration Committee since 2017. Prior to serving as the CHRS Treasurer, Susan was the organization’s Secretary. She has been the CHRS representative to EMCAC (the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee) since 2015. Susan moved to Capitol Hill in 1979, and together with her husband, Richard Kasting, has restored a 1912 home that they share with their two daughters. Susan retired in 2014 from the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations where she was responsible for the Committee’s budget, procedures, rules and precedents. Most recently, Susan retired from the Washington DC office of Indiana University. She currently teaches classes on U.S. Congressional Committee procedures to visiting foreign government officials.

Continued on page 6

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Elizabeth Nelson
 First Vice President Janet Quigley
 Second Vice President Tina May
 Treasurer Susan Oursler
 Secretary Jim Thackaberry
 At Large Patrick Lally
 At Large Michelle Carroll
 At Large Steve Kehoe
 At Large Joanna Kendig
 At Large Angie Schmidt
 At Large Maygene Daniels
 Immediate Past President Lisa Dale Jones

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Beyond the Boundaries Beth Purcell
*Budget & Administration** Susan Oursler
*City Planning** Monte Edwards
*Communications** Nina Tristani
*Community Development** Chuck Burger
Community Relations Elizabeth Nelson
*Environment** vacant
Grants Larry Pearl
*Historic Preservation** Beth Purcell
House & Garden Tour Michelle Carroll
Investments John Shages
*Membership** Susan Burgerman
*Public Safety** Undine Nash
Public Space Steve Kehoe
*Zoning** Gary Peterson

* Chair is an appointed Board Member

NEWSLETTER

Angie Schmidt and Kelly Vielmo, Editors

WEBMASTERS

Donna Breslin, Elizabeth Nelson

OFFICE MANAGER

Jill Uvena Cullinane

To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: CapHRS@aol.com.

ABOUT CHRS

Capitol Hill is a special place. We promote, preserve, and enhance the character of our historic neighborhoods.

Since its founding in 1955, CHRS has worked continuously to make Capitol Hill the desirable location it has now become. Due to CHRS's efforts, Capitol Hill won designation as a historic district in 1976. Today, that legacy of standing up for the community continues with our work in planning, zoning, historic preservation, and public safety.

CHRS is a volunteer organization, made up of Hill residents who love their historic neighborhoods and want to ensure that the unique character of the Hill is around for future generations. Come join us!

To learn more or join, please visit:
www.CHRS.org

Zoning Report

By Gary Peterson

During a meeting held on March 21, 2019, the CHRS Zoning Committee considered the following cases:

BZA #19957, 1225–27 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. The property is a single-story commercial building built in 1925. The applicant proposes adding a second story that will be set back 6 feet from the front of the parapet. The applicant needs a special exception for the depth of the rear yard because the building covers 100% of the lot. The committee unanimously voted to support the application.

BZA #19976, 124 11th Street SE. This property is the northernmost section of “Philadelphia Row.” This house is three stories in the front and two stories in the rear. The applicant intends on bumping out the rear of the house by 5.5 feet and then adding a third story to make the house three stories both front and rear. The applicant also proposes to build a two-story accessory building that will consist of a garage and a second-floor study. The applicant has several letters of support including from the abutting neighbors. The applicant is

increasing the lot occupancy from 46% to 68%. The committee unanimously voted to support the application.

BZA #19979, 414 Constitution Avenue NE. The applicant wants to add a three story rear addition to this three story row house. The lot occupancy will change from 60% to 70%. The committee voted to support the application subject to letters of support being provided.

BZA #19995, 639 Lexington Place NE. This case involves a special exception for lot occupancy and for an addition that extends more than 10 feet beyond the rear wall of either abutting property. The addition is in two parts: a ten-foot-deep, one story extension to the house with a porch above and a 9-foot-deep, one story porch added onto the new extension. The lot occupancy only changes from 50% to 62%, but, with the porch the addition, extends nearly 19 feet beyond the rear wall of 637 Lexington Place. The absentee owner of 637 has not responded to requests for support. The committee voted to take no position in this matter. ★

2019 Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture

By Monte Edwards

The Fifth Annual Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture was held on March 29 at the Hill Center to an overflow crowd that filled the Lincoln room with standing room only, and also required setting up a second room with video and audio of the lecture.

John Hillegass is the winner of the 2019 Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture competition. His lecture focused on the planning and historic context behind dismantling the Washington DC streetcar system in favor of buses, between 1956 and 1962. Hillegass examined indicators of reliability,

Continued on page 7

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on March 28, 2019. HPRB is responsible for determining if proposed changes to a building are consistent with the DC Preservation Act. A “concept review” is a preliminary determination of a building owner’s plan to alter the building, and if the concept is approved, the owner will return to the HPRB for a final review.

209 C Street SE, HPA 19-218, concept/site and building alterations. This house was built in 1887 or earlier as a freestanding two-story brick bay front house. Between 1916 and 1928 a side addition (or hyphen) was built, filling in the space between 207 and 209 C Street.¹ It is a contributing building. In HPA 15-503, the Board approved a three-story rear addition, to extend as far back as a one-story rear addition, filling the space from lot line to lot line. The Board’s order reads:

CAPITOL HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
Sept. 24, 2015 consent calendar

209 C Street SE, HPA 15-503,
concept/roof addition.

The Board wanted to ensure that the original entry stairs are retained.

In HPA 19-218, the applicant sought to modify the concept in HPA 15-503 to include additional proposed features: a basement, a basement entrance in front. Before the HPRB hearing, the applicant had already begun the work proposed in HPA 19-218. A stop work order was issued on March 5, 2019, and was still in effect as of March 25, 2019.

Our primary concern in this case was the applicant’s proposal to provide an accessible entrance in the

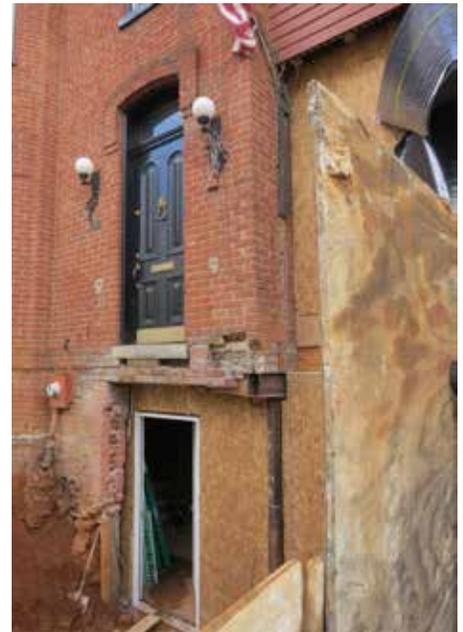
front by making an at-grade cut in the retaining wall. Retaining walls are character-defining features. The staff report views this property as having “unique circumstances” and suggests two reasons for approving cutting through the retaining wall:

- 1) the side addition is distinct and had its own smaller entrance and smaller stairs;
- 2) to shield utility meters and trash storage.

We believed that this property was not unique; there are Capitol Hill houses with historic side additions or basement entrances. In the past, this side addition had its own entrance inside the intact retaining wall. These facts, in our view, did not justify damaging the character-defining retaining wall. Nor does hiding trash cans and meters justify approving a cut in retaining wall. This would set a bad precedent because future applicants could argue that they are also hiding meters and trash cans, and will argue that hiding meters and trash cans is *alone*, a sufficient justification.

This cut through the retaining wall is not compatible with the historic district and the Board should apply the historic preservation law and reject this proposal. The applicant has other avenues to achieve his objectives, by appealing to DCRA under the DC Fair Housing Act (which is not in HPRB’s purview). If the applicant can make a successful case to DCRA, DCRA may approve the cut to the retaining wall. In 325 D Street SE, HPA 14-536, another case involving cutting through a retaining wall:

[T]he Board found the concept of the basement entrance to be incompatible with the Capitol Hill historic district and inconsistent with



IMAGES COURTESY BETH PURCELL

209 C Street SE, March 4, 2019.

the preservation act. If a basement entrance is deemed acceptable, the slope of the ramp should be minimized, and removal of the left retaining wall should be studied.

Thus, the Board could apply the preservation act and suggest how, if approved by DCRA, the entrance should be designed.

The current plans for basement entrance and window wells satisfy HPRB’s *Preservation and Design Guidelines for Basement Entrances and Windows*. We agreed with the staff’s recommendation that the primary entrance stairs be restored and reinstalled, that the roof deck approved in HPA 15-503 not be expanded, and a flag test for the visibility of the mechanical units and solar panels.

We believed that this project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board approved the project because the cut in the wall would be in front of the unique hyphen, which was already designed to be separate from the main entrance and originally had its own smaller set of stairs.

620 C Street SE, HPA 19-222, concept / façade alterations and third story addition. This two-story three-bay flat front brick building is a contributing building. It was constructed in 1882 as a one-story blacksmith shop for Richard Rothwell, 20 feet wide and 36 feet deep. In 1905 Charles Speiden built a one-story rear addition, 15 x 20 feet, to be used as a blacksmith shop.² Sometime between 1916 and 1928, a brick second story addition was built during the period of significance, which ended in 1945.

HPRB's publication *Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Buildings* states:

A commercial area's identity is defined in large part by its physical design—the overall layout of the streets, and the physical placement of buildings and public spaces and the design of individual buildings. Washington's commercial areas are defined not by rigid consistency by variations in height, architecture, and material that reflect the style, era of construction, and flavor of the surrounding neighborhood (p. 1).

Small commercial buildings in the Capitol Hill Historic District, like 620 C Street, are valued and form part of the iconic Capitol Hill sawtooth skyline.



620 C Street SE.

Our primary concern in this case was the plan to construct a pop-up on the front of the building. Additions to commercial buildings must not be visible from public space (HPRB, *Additions to Historic Buildings*, p. 13). The Board has applied this important principle in recent cases involving commercial buildings. For example, the Board rejected a new visible third and fourth story on the commercial building at 507 8th Street SE (HPA 16-518), and at 523 8th Street SE (HPA-17-246) a rooftop addition was approved provided that the HVAC units would be minimally visible. The applicant mentioned Union Garage, 645 Maryland Avenue, NE (HPA 15-065), a condominium project. But that is a very deep building and the new second and third stories are set back.

The proposed third story addition would be visible from public space, alter the skyline, making this building taller than the adjacent buildings. For this reason we urged the Board to reject the project's implicit and erroneous theory that because other nearby buildings are taller, it is acceptable to visibly increase the height of 620 C Street.

This case would set a very bad precedent: Future popup applicants will argue that if any "substantive alterat[ion]" or expansion to a building occurred before 1945, then it would be permissible to make a new major change today that would normally violate a key principle in the preservation act. Four neighbors testified against the project, and produced a letter with 24 signatures, arguing that this building, the widest on the block, would, at three stories high, overwhelm the surrounding rowhouses and become the block's dominant feature.

The applicant argued that the project needed to be approved as-is because of zoning rules. Zoning rules do not excuse violating the preservation act. The applicant can

pursue zoning relief and comply with the preservation act.

The project also proposed to alter all the openings on the first story, a primary elevation, which is discouraged for historic buildings. The applicant has provided photographs of the window openings. Prior, modest window alterations should not justify significant changes in fenestration. We believed that this project is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

The Board approved the changes in the openings on the first story, but ruled that a third story must be set back, be only minimally visible, be compatible with the block, rejected the proposed mansard roof on the third story as incompatible, and required that the rear line of the building not exceed the rear line of the houses to the west. This case will return to the Board.

Update on 326 A Street SE, HPA 17-591. This pre-Civil War frame house was to be preserved, but during restoration, three walls fell, a stop work order was issued, and the owner and contractor were fined. HPO later met with the project team, and HPO signed off on the reconstruction permit and the stop work order was lifted. For prior coverage, see the March 2019 issue of *CHRS News*. ★

¹ Hopkins map (1887); staff report in 209 C Street, SE, HPA 15-503.

² DC Building permit # 1091 (24 Apr. 1882), #2100 (14 Apr. 1905), #3347 (7 Feb. 1916). Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (1904, 1928).

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at caphrs@aol.com.



Jim Thackaberry (Secretary) is completing his first term as Secretary. A registered architect, he

moved to Washington in 1974 to work for Harry Weese Associates, the Metro architect. He has been both in private practice and government employment having concluded his career five years ago, after working many years as a project manager and staff architect for the District Department of Housing and Community Development. Upon arriving in the city, he settled on Capitol Hill and immediately loved living here. He then bought the townhouse that he's been slowly renovating and restoring. He joined the Restoration Society shortly after moving here. He is currently serving as Secretary and is also a member of the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee.



Angie Schmidt (At-Large) is completing her first term in this position. She moved with her family to

the circa-1881 house on Capitol Hill in 2002. She edited and published non-profit newsletters, magazines and scholarly journals before taking a break from her career to focus on her family. During that time, she volunteered in neighborhood schools (SWS, Peabody and Watkins) and was a Girl Scout troop leader for 8 years. She started volunteering with CHRS in 2016, serving as an editor for the CHRS News, which she continues to edit. Angie has always loved cities (her degree at GWU focused on the urban environment) and thinks that Capitol Hill encapsulates all the

best parts of what Washington has to offer, both in the very old and historic, and the new and improved.



Christine Mullins (At-Large) and her husband Daniel have lived on Capitol Hill since 2003 when they

moved here from Adams Morgan. They came to love the Capitol Hill community through their involvement in Maury Elementary School with their two children. Since 1984 Chris has been happy to call Washington, D.C. her home, where everyone and everything seems to have an intriguing and thought-provoking story! She led a higher education nonprofit that advocates for community colleges that teach online for nearly 25 years, and now works with faculty to create free online courses for college students across the globe. Chris brings her love of historic buildings, tin ceilings, old fixtures, finished wood, and walled gardens to CHRS. She has lobbied on behalf of our trees, helped with the CHRS House & Garden Tour, and is looking forward to organizing the CHRS Preservation Cafés.



Alison Ross (At-Large) has degrees in historic preservation and architectural history from

the University of Mary Washington and the University of Virginia. Her love of preservation and architecture was kindled at a young age during her visits to Thousand Island Park, a community of Victorian summer cottages on the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York. She is currently an advisor to the Board of the Thousand

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

CONTRIBUTOR

Patrick Crowley
Mervin J. & Ruby A. Shello
Patricia Molumby

Island Park Landmark Society. Prior to moving to Capitol Hill with her family in 2014, Alison lived in Hanover County, Virginia, where she worked for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, renovated a 1930's farmhouse, and served on both the County Architectural Review Board and Historical Commission. Alison loves the sense of community on Capitol Hill and is committed to preserving the architectural heritage that strengthens the bonds between neighbors here. She has served on the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee since 2015. ★

10th Anniversary Celebration of the Reopening of Eastern Market

By Susan Oursler

Come help celebrate the 10th anniversary of the reopening of Eastern Market following the devastating fire of 2007. Sponsored by Eastern Market and the DC Department of Government Services (DGS), this three day community celebration, “Rediscover Eastern Market,” will take place on June 7, 8, and 9, 2019. The event will feature fresh food, music and special tours.

Most long-time residents of Capitol Hill will recall the morning of April 30, 2007. The Hill woke up to the sound of fire alarms and the smell of smoke. Our beloved Eastern Market had suffered a catastrophic fire. Some residents were concerned that the 19th century structure was damaged beyond repair. However, before the end of the day, Mayor Adrian Fenty promised that the historic building would be repaired.

A public-private partnership was formed by the District, Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee (EMCAC) and the Capitol Hill Foundation to restore the fresh food public market. Within months a temporary structure known as the East Hall was constructed to house South Hall merchants. After two years of extensive and innovative renovations, the building reopened on June 26, 2009.

More details about all of the planned events will be posted on the CHRS website as they become available. ★

“Rediscover Eastern Market” Celebration Call for Docents

On Sunday, June 9, there will be guided walking tours of the Market. The tours will provide comprehensive information about the history, community significance and architecture of the entire building and outdoor Farmers Line. Each tour will accommodate 12 people and take about 45 minutes.

Volunteer docents are needed. Training sessions will be provided so that the docents can lead the tours and provide interesting and insightful information about the Market. Training will occur in mid-late May.

If you are interested in volunteering as a docent, please contact Barry Margeson, the Market Manager (barry.margeson@dc.gov) or Monte Edwards (monte.edwards@verizon.net).

Dick Wolf Lecture, *continued from page 3*

IMAGE COURTESY NICK ALBERTI



LEFT–RIGHT: John Hillegass, winner of the 2019 Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture competition, with panelists Andrew Trueblood and John DeFerrari.

speed and affordability and concluded that today’s replacement transit system is equal to or worse than the transit system of 1946 and today’s planners should proceed with caution.

Hillegass is pursuing his Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning at Georgetown University after receiving a degree in International Studies from Boston College.

After the presentation, a panel of three special guests from

the fields of Transportation and Planning discussed the major points of his lecture: Andrew Trueblood, the new Director of DC’s Office of Planning; John DeFerrari, the author of the blog Streets Of Washington; and Uwe Brandes, an Associate Professor and Faculty Director of the Masters program in Urban and Regional Planning at Georgetown University.

Following the lecture program, the audience enjoyed a champagne reception where they discussed the program with Hillegass and the panelists while a film showing the 1960-era Washington DC streetcar system in operation on Capitol Hill routes was shown in another room. This same video will be on view at The Corner Store refreshment break during the House and Garden Tour.

Slides and the text of the narrative presentation as well as additional photos from the event are posted online at chrs.org/2019-dick-wolf-memorial-lecture. ★



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 10th Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

MAY

6 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee.
Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

11 Saturday, 4–7 pm

12 Sunday, 1–5 pm
CHRS 62nd Annual House & Garden Tour. The Tour footprint lies between 10th and 13th Streets from Constitution Avenue NE to E Street SE. Ticket Sales: chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour.

11 Saturday, 5 pm

12 Sunday, 2 pm and 4 pm
Gessford Court Walking Tour. Guided, outdoor, mini-tours of Gessford Court SE, free and open to everyone. Details: info@chrs.org.

16 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details: info@chrs.org.

21 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor board room. Details: info@chrs.org.

JUNE

3 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

18 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor board room. Details: info@chrs.org.

20 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details: info@chrs.org.

25 Tuesday, 7 pm
Community Forum: Andrew Trueblood, the new director of DC's Office of Planning. Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Preceded by a Membership Meeting at 6:45 pm to announce Board election results. Details: chrs.org/andrew-trueblood-community-forum.

If you received a complimentary copy of this newsletter, please consider joining CHRS!
www.chrs.org

62nd Annual Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

Mother's Day Weekend • May 11–12, 2019

More information at (202) 543-0425 or chrs.org