



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

# NEWS

www.chrs.org

February 2021

## Community Forum on DDOT Planning on the Hill

By Beth Hague

On Wednesday, December 16, 2020, two District Department of Transportation (DDOT) planning officials discussed the planning and environmental process on Capitol Hill, with a focus on the DDOT’s planning and implementation of its transportation corridor revitalization projects on Pennsylvania Avenue SE and Maryland Avenue NE.

George Branyan, Active Transportation Branch Manager in DDOT’s Planning and Sustainability Division, spoke about the planning process for both the Pennsylvania and the Maryland Avenue projects. Abdullahi Mohamed, Supervisor Civil Engineer in DDOT’s Infrastructure Project Management Division, provided an update on construction on the Maryland Avenue NE project.

George Branyan began by providing some background on the planning and objectives of the Maryland Avenue NE project. According to Branyan, as of 2012, crash rates on the Maryland Avenue NE corridor were high, and planners aimed to improve pedestrian safety and access; create a bike corridor; and reduce the high number of crashes due to speeding, turning, and “multiple threats” of more than one lanes. Pedestrians faced long crossings on Maryland Avenue, and sight lanes



The starburst intersection at Maryland Avenue, H Street, and Benning Road NE in 1947.

were substandard due to parked cars at corners.

The planning process included the Planning stage from 2011–2015, which included community members and the Historic Planning Office, amongst others; design stage was from 2016–2019; and the construction phase, which we are in now, is expected to last from 2019 to 2021.

As part of the planning process, George Branyan’s team researched some old photos for historical perspectives of the corridor. On the

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# 2021 Mother's Day "Tour of Tours"

By Elizabeth Nelson

**A**gain this year, we can't safely present an in-person house tour due to the pandemic. But we've never skipped a year since the tradition began 64 years ago and we're not going to start now. We're planning a veritable smorgasbord of outdoor walking tours for Mother's Day weekend (May 8-9). We hope to have something of interest for every member of the Capitol Hill community.

Themes are under development as we go to press, but we anticipate that they will include Hollywood on the Hill (filming locations and early movie projection sites), Activism & Resistance on the Hill (sites significant to civil rights for women, minorities and the LGBTQ+ community), and Our Industrial Past (industrial and commercial sites, many of which have been repurposed). The history of local parks will be presented to adults while their children play nearby. Guided photo scavenger hunts (similar to the one posted on our

website last year) may be offered. And we hope to have a porch front "art gallery" where local artists can show their work.

The Tour Committee (Beth Purcell, Betsy Rutkowski, Carey Paquette, Elizabeth Nelson, Fynnette Eaton, Heather Schoell, Jackie Krieger, Joanna Kendig, Nancy Metzger) is off to a good start with the planning but the execution will require many more volunteers.

To make the experience safe and enjoyable, we'll be limiting the number of people on each of the tours, which means we will need to offer many different tours, and run each tour multiple times. This will require a lot of docents on tour weekend. We'll also need volunteers to assist with advance publicity, preparing materials, and other tasks "to be determined."



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Look for additional details at [chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour](https://chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour) and expect an update in the March newsletter. Plan now to join the fun of producing this "Tour of Tours"—send a note to [HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com](mailto:HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com). ★

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## CHRS Seeks Nominations for Board

By Elizabeth Nelson

**C**HRS will hold elections for the 2021-2022 Board of Directors by postcard ballot in May. The Elections Committee, chaired by Elizabeth Nelson, includes Susan Oursler, Beth Hague and Alison Ross. The committee is seeking recommendations of individuals who wish to be considered for positions on next year's CHRS Board of Directors. These positions include President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary,

each for one-year terms, and three At-Large Members for two-year terms.

Nominations for the 2021-2022 CHRS Board of Directors will be announced at the end of April and ballots will be mailed to CHRS members in May. If you wish to be considered, to recommend someone, or to find out more about the duties of each position, please contact the CHRS office at (202) 543-0425 or email [info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org), and a member of the Elections Committee will respond.

Each recommendation must cite the position for which the person wants to be considered and must include his or her resume. Recommendations must be submitted by the end of the day on Friday, March 26, 2021. ★

# Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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## NEWSLETTER

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To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: caphrs420@gmail.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

The CHRS Zoning Committee has considered the following cases:

**BZA 19847A** (also **20418**), 329 16th Street SE. This case involves a request to extend the time of expiration of BZA Order 19847 by 12 months. The original order is dated 12/14/2018 and is good for 2 years. CHRS opposed the original case. The Committee voted to take no position.

**BZA 20363**, 514 Archibald Walk SE. In this case of an alley lot, the applicant is proposing to construct a second story addition on top of an existing garage, to maintain the existing parking space, and to convert a portion of the first floor and all of the second floor to a residential dwelling unit. The subject property is on Archibald Walk SE, next to the notorious treehouse. The property also has alley access at the rear of the property and the garage opens on this alley. The lot contains only 632 square feet and the building covers nearly all of the lot.

Recent changes for the alley lot regulations have changed the relief required. Now the applicant needs a special exception from the alley setback requirements because Archibald Walk is only 10 feet wide; a 7.5 foot setback from the alley centerline is required. He also needs a special exception from the 5 foot side yard requirements when abutting a non-alley lot. Abutting neighbors have submitted letters of support. The Committee voted to support the application.

**BZA 20365**, 903 11th Street NE. The applicant in this case needs special exceptions from the lot occupancy requirements to go from 59% lot occupancy to 70% lot occupancy and from the 10 foot rule controlling

depth of rear additions from the rear wall of neighbors to go to 12 feet. There are letters of support from neighbors and the Committee voted to support the application.

Upcoming cases to be considered by the CHRS Zoning Committee by hearing date:

February 10

- **BZA 20333**, 1165 3rd Street NE
- **BZA 20379**, 514 9th Street SE
- **BZA 20381**, 314 10th Street SE

February 24

- **BZA 20280**, 622 I Street NE
- **BZA 20382**, 308 11th Street NE

March 3

- **BZA 20393**, 1608 East Capitol Street NE (alley)
- **BZA 20414**, 1637 D Street NE

March 10

- **BZA 20403**, 1381 Potomac Avenue SE
- **BZA 20409**, 102 9th Street SE

March 17

- **BZA 20407**, 307 A Street NE
- **BZA 20415**, 515 10th Street SE

March 24

- **BZA 20422**, 610 South Carolina Avenue SE

March 31

- **BZA 20492**, 411 New Jersey Avenue SE
- **18238A**, 413 8th Street SE

April 7

- **BZA 20436**, 1300 I Street NE

April 14

- **BZA 20437**, 1819 A Street SE ★

# Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board), considered the following cases at its virtual hearing on December 3 and 17, 2020. 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.

## 514 Archibald Walk SE, HPA 20-478.

The applicant proposes to add a second story to an existing brick garage. We believed that there were two important issues in this case:

- 1) Projection of the second story balcony on the Archibald Walk elevation. The plans show two options for a balcony. One is a six-inch Juliette balcony, but the other shows a three-foot projection into public space (the alley), lining up with the tree house in the adjacent lot. The project architect noted that a public space permit would be needed for the three-foot balcony. There has been significant controversy, even litigation, as to whether the tree house on the adjacent property improperly projects into public space. The Washington Post reported that the tree house extends 20 inches into public space and that the DDOT Public Space Committee ruled against authorizing the tree house’s projection into public



IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL

space.<sup>1</sup> We urged the Board to approve only the six-inch Juliette balcony, and they did.

- 2) The height of the proposed garage. The height of the proposed garage at 23 feet, 4 inches exceeds HPRB’s 20-foot height limit for garages. The staff report recommended approval because this height continues the roofline of the adjacent alley dwellings. We believed that approving this too-tall garage would set a bad precedent: The height limit for garages should be the same for inhabited and uninhabited alleys. A garage is a garage, and all garages should be held to HPRB’s uniform height limit of 20 feet. We believed that the project is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District, and the Board agreed, limiting

the garage’s height to 20 feet (within which it was possible to accommodate all of the applicant’s needs). After the hearing, the applicant submitted revised plans consistent with the Board’s order.

**646 E Street NE, HPA 21-014, concept/** two story rear addition. The Board concurred with the resolution of ANC 6C, finding the addition to be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District with the conditions that the roof hatch and rooftop railings be removed, and with final approval delegated to staff. Vote: 7-0 (Greene absent).

**Consent calendar.** CHRS participated in these cases:

- **240 11th Street NE, HPA 21-055,** concept/ third story roof addition and three-story rear addition.
- **240 11th Street NE, HPA 21-055,** concept/ third story roof addition and three-story rear addition. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?  
Contact CHRS at [info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org).

<sup>1</sup> [https://washingtonpost.com/local/the-treehouse-that-divided-a-capitol-hill-neighborhood-has-to-be-moved/2016/01/28/b7d8b34c-c5b8-11e5-8965-0607e0e265ce\\_story.html](https://washingtonpost.com/local/the-treehouse-that-divided-a-capitol-hill-neighborhood-has-to-be-moved/2016/01/28/b7d8b34c-c5b8-11e5-8965-0607e0e265ce_story.html)

[https://washingtonpost.com/local/this-treehouse-extends-20-inches-into-an-alley-and-its-dividing-the-neighborhood/2016/01/14/cfa5338c-bb0f-11e5-829c-26ffb874a18d\\_story.html](https://washingtonpost.com/local/this-treehouse-extends-20-inches-into-an-alley-and-its-dividing-the-neighborhood/2016/01/14/cfa5338c-bb0f-11e5-829c-26ffb874a18d_story.html)

# February Preservation Café: Exploring House History in the Time of COVID

By Chris Mullins

The essence of our historic Capitol Hill neighborhood lies in the combined stories of its contributing buildings—homes, stores, churches, schools and more. Even though COVID has closed archives, libraries and government offices, essential, rich web resources are still readily available for study of these structures.

Join Maygene Daniels at on Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30 pm for the next CHRS virtual Preservation Café to learn how to use these free online sources to explore the history of your own house and our Capitol Hill neighborhood. Even during COVID, you will discover

that a wealth of resources is readily available to study and understand the history of your house and your block and its development over time. You also will be introduced to the importance of the L'Enfant street grid and early building regulations as these have shaped our neighborhood.

Maygene Daniels is an architectural archivist who has worked with DC historical materials throughout her career. A link to the WebEx session will be posted at [chrs.org/exploring-house-history-preservation-cafe](https://chrs.org/exploring-house-history-preservation-cafe) a few days in advance. ★

## Upcoming Preservation Cafés

Mark your calendar for the upcoming Preservation Cafés:

- March 17, 2021
- April 21, 2021
- May 19, 2021

## CHRS Promotes Electrical Sub-Meters

By Drury Tallant

One of the frequent problems we encounter in the Capitol Hill Historic District is the installation of large electrical meter boxes. The problem is typically in conjunction with the renovation of former single family row houses into two-unit row houses. Although DC has very comprehensive guidelines for the installation of multiple electrical and gas meters, these guidelines are routinely ignored.

Two recent non-compliant installations have been brought to the attention of HPO staff at 414 Constitution Avenue NE and 102 9th Street SE. I believe that the properties are both currently working on better solutions for their meter boxes.

In order to mitigate this problem, I encourage the use of electrical sub-meters on properties where

large electrical utility boxes cannot be discreetly located. These are simple, inexpensive devices that measure the amount of electrical usage at an interior electrical panel. See, for example, <https://www.powermeterstore.com/category/permanent-sub-meters>.

These devices would permit retention of a single exterior electrical meter and allow building occupants to apportion utility costs, much as they already do with a single DC Water meter. Unfortunately the “Design Guidelines for Utility Meters” (Published 2012 by the DC Historic Preservation Office) do not mention this available technology. I recommend amendment of the Design Guidelines to include the possible use of sub-meters. ★



IMAGES COURTESY DRURY TALLANT



Non-compliant electrical meter boxes.

virtual meeting, he shared findings that he also had shared six years before at a Historic Preservation Stakeholders meeting. The 1791 L'Enfant Plan, which included Maryland Avenue, was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. In addition, two thirds of the Maryland Avenue corridor—as far east as 11th Street NE—is within the Capitol Hill Historic District. An old photo probably from the 1920s at 12th and Maryland showed a wider median. In 1954, the National Park Service transferred the median to District control. By 1964, the median had been narrowed from eleven feet to four feet to accommodate traffic of two lanes each way.

For the 2011–2021 project, Maryland Avenue planners decided to return the street to the way it looked before 1954, adding turn pockets and one travel lane in each direction to give the street a “road diet.” Trimming traffic to one lane would slow the 5% of cars that traffic analysis showed drove at high speeds on Maryland Avenue because those cars would no longer be able to dodge around slower cars. Mr. Branyan said that “collector streets” that were considered major routes had speeds of 25 or 30 mph in the District, while minor, local side streets were limited to 20 mph.

Under this plan, Maryland Avenue will remain four lanes until 6th Street NE. For ideas, the planners obtained from the Historic Preservation Office a rendering of 7th and D at Maryland looking toward the Capitol to try to duplicate the look while closing E Street “stubs” for safety. Their plans were somewhat controversial with HPO, which insisted that the sight lines of E Street had to be kept and that the closed “stubs” had to resemble a street rather than a grassy park. The final design will not allow motor

vehicles but can be for pedestrians. In addition, G Street NE will have a crosswalk.

Mr. Mohamed followed by giving the online audience a current status update on the progress of Maryland Avenue construction and implementation of the project plan as outlined by Mr. Branyan. The project plan covers Maryland Avenue from 2nd to 14th Streets NE. It is mostly federally funded, with the District responsible for 16% of the cost. As construction began, Washington Gas at the last minute notified the project manager that they would need to do some work at the time of construction, creating conflicts and an adjusted schedule.

From 2019–2020, the outbound section of Washington Gas’s portion of the project was completed; the inbound gas main will be fixed in 2021. DDOT has completed the utility phasing inbound; the utility outbound roadway is still in progress but should be completed in 2021.

Residents on the call asked questions about the noise levels and how long the steel plates would remain in place. Mr. Mohamed commented that Washington Gas had put temporary asphalt down to reduce the noise of steel plates and was trying to use smaller hammers and limit work hours to within 9 am and 1 pm in order to accommodate people having to work from home during the pandemic. According to Mr. Mohamed, the steel plates had stayed in place longer than planned because Washington Gas had encountered a problem with pressure on the lines and had to wait until that problem had been resolved before they could continue work.

One resident asked whether there was evidence of programs such as Waze sending people into neighborhood side streets when there was congestion on Maryland Avenue

and whether there were plans for mitigation for people using side streets. Mr. Mohamed responded that, during the construction phase, the construction crew took away travel lanes during work hours but opened those lanes back up during rush hour.

Mr. Branyan added that over the longer term, traffic and diversion analysis before the project began showed no sign that Maryland Avenue would increase throughput or that traffic would bleed over into the neighborhood. Countermeasures like speed bumps could address resident concerns about increased traffic or speeds in the side streets.

Mr. Mohammed said he does a walk through of the project every other week to track progress and that principals on the project meet every Friday at 11 am. ANC representative Jay Adelstein remarked that Mr. Mohamed had been responsive when contacted and encouraged residents with questions to contact Mr. Mohamed before the Friday 11 am weekly principals meeting when they had questions about progress on or concerns about the Maryland Avenue project. Residents with questions about the project should visit the website [marylandavesafety.org](http://marylandavesafety.org), which has contact information for project managers.

Following the forum’s discussion of Maryland Avenue, Mr. Branyan spoke about the Safety Corridor Study Project on Pennsylvania Avenue SE project, which runs from 2nd Street to 13th Street. Pennsylvania Avenue has a 44-foot wide median, which is owned by the National Park Service. The Pennsylvania Avenue safety project has been coordinated with offices reviewing Environmental Assessments. The Pennsylvania Avenue transportation safety project coincides with other concurrent

# "The Capitol Hill Home" Photo Contest Returns

By Elizabeth Nelson

Once again, the Society is sponsoring a photo contest: "The Capitol Hill Home." Entries are due Sunday, March 14, 2021.

We're privileged to live in an environment that is a delight to the eye, with tree shaded streets, lush gardens, yard ornaments, and houses with a wealth of architectural detail. Iron stoops, arched windows, stained glass transoms, ornate brickwork, welcoming porches...all hallmarks of the quintessential Capitol Hill home.

We'd like to hear how you define "The Capitol Hill Home." Even better, show us! Take a high resolution (1MB+) exterior shot of what you think makes a home a *Capitol Hill home* and email it to [HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com](mailto:HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com). Cell phone photos can be texted to (202) 329-7864. Be sure to include your name and address, email address, and the address of the property in the photo.

The winning images will be awarded two complimentary passes

to the next in-person House & Garden Tour and displayed on the CHRS website.

In submitting your photo to the CHRS Capitol Hill Home photo contest, you agree that it will become the property of CHRS, which may reproduce, modify, and digitize and adapt the photograph. You retain the right to continued use of the image.

For more details (and photos of past winners) visit: [chrs.org/photo-contest-2021](http://chrs.org/photo-contest-2021). ★

projects underway on Pennsylvania Avenue: a street light and signal project; Eastern Market Park Project; Pennsylvania and Potomac intersection; and Barney Circle.

Planners hope to install two-way protected bike lanes to help fulfill the District's plans for 20 miles of protected bike lanes by 2022. Pennsylvania Avenue is uncomfortable for most bike riders, according to a District-wide study of the level of cyclist comfort on District streets. Many crashes occur on the corridor, including side swipes, rear, angles, and left turns. The 200 block of Pennsylvania Ave SE has a particularly high number of accidents; the 600 block also has many accidents.

On July 8, 2020, DDOT held a virtual meeting and received over 250 comments. DDOT offered two possible plans, Alternative A and Alternative B. Almost all comments were in favor of Alternative A, which will feature two travel lanes in each direction (down from three); protected bike lanes with a three foot wide buffer; and a lane dedicated to buses at inbound and outbound peak hours and parking during off

hours. DDOT hopes to finish design by the end of the year and then begin construction.

The design and planning stage requires deconflicting different interests. Parking is generally an issue of concern for residents. "Storage" of one's personal vehicle on the street, or parking, generally is viewed as DDOT's lowest priority. Parking will be somewhat reduced after the project's completion to make room for bike lanes and remove a few spaces at ends of blocks for increased safety. The project will reduce some throughput on Pennsylvania Avenue, reducing from three to two lanes to make room for the bike and bus lanes. By reducing the number of lanes from three to two, and by adding a few spots designated for commercial loading and pickup, DDOT hopes to reduce the problem of double parking in the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue. The website for the project is [Pennavese.com](http://Pennavese.com).

More information, including the full presentations and contact information of the planning officers, may be found on the CHRS website at [chrs.org/ddot-planning-on-the-hill/#more-9902](http://chrs.org/ddot-planning-on-the-hill/#more-9902). ★

## Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

CHRS wishes to thank the following donors for their invaluable support:

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**CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION**

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

## Mark Your Calendar!

*Please check website for current information—cancellations and postponements are expected and will be posted as they are known.*

### FEBRUARY

**17** Wednesday, 6:30pm  
Preservation Café: “Exploring House History in the Time of COVID.” A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. More: [chrs.org/exploring-house-history-preservation-cafe](https://chrs.org/exploring-house-history-preservation-cafe)

#### Historic Sites Tour 2020

To celebrate Capitol Hill’s rich and diverse history, we’ve arranged a self-guided walking tour of 46 sites, a small sampling of the hundreds of other cultural treasures available to enjoy: [chrs.org/historic-sites-tour-2020](https://chrs.org/historic-sites-tour-2020)

### MARCH

**14** Sunday  
“The Capitol Hill Home” photo contest entries due. More: [chrs.org/photo-contest-2021](https://chrs.org/photo-contest-2021)

**17** Wednesday, 6:30 pm  
Preservation Café (topic TBD). The presentation will be preceded by a brief membership meeting. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting.

### MAY

**8–9** Saturday & Sunday  
Mother’s Day “Tour of Tours.” Read the article on page 2 of this newsletter or visit: [chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour](https://chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour).

### OCTOBER

**30** Saturday, 10 am–4 pm  
The CHRS House Expo has been rescheduled to at the Eastern Market North Hall, featuring a wide variety of home service exhibitors. More: [chrs.org/house-expo-2021](https://chrs.org/house-expo-2021).

### 63rd Annual Capitol Hill (Virtual) House Tour

Our free, 3-D, #StayAtHome House Tour has gone virtual!  
Visit: [chrs.org/house-garden-tour-2020](https://chrs.org/house-garden-tour-2020)

**#StayAtHome  
House Tour**