



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

November 2021

November Walking Tours Are Almost Here!

By Elizabeth Nelson, Tour Committee Chair

The last round of guided walking tours in 2021 is just around the corner—Saturday and Sunday, November 13 & 14. The cut-off for ticket sales through Eventbrite is Thursday, November 11 at noon.

Two of the tours are sold out—Architecture and Alleys—but there is still availability in the Resistance and Parks tours. See descriptions below. We hope to offer additional tours in March but we hope you will take advantage of this current opportunity to learn more about what makes Capitol Hill so special.

Available tours

- **The Resistance** featuring sites significant to civil rights for women, minorities and the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Parks—Treasures of Capitol Hill**, highlighting the history of Marion and Garfield Parks and their surrounding neighborhood.

If you want to attend, but Eventbrite has you stumped, email HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com for assistance. Visit chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-november-2021 for more information and the link to the reservation system. ✧



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON



TOP: Home of Hiram Johnson, Teddy Roosevelt's running mate on the Bull Moose ticket.
BOTTOM: Dinosaurs near Garfield Park.

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November Preservation Café: The New Deal in Washington, DC

FDR's New Deal transformed the nation's capital in one short decade, 1933–42. It added a host of major federal buildings; renovated the National Mall and its monuments; developed the capital parks system; and added recreation facilities in small parks.

The New Deal upgraded the sewage system to clean up the Potomac and redeveloped the waterfront. It added major bridges

and improved miles of city streets. It paid for public schools and hospitals while building Washington's first public housing. On top of all this, New Deal art programs enhanced the city with magnificent murals and sculptures.

At our November Preservation Café, Richard Walker, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley and Director, Living New Deal, and Brent McKee, Project Historian, Living New Deal will discuss the Living New Deal, a project that has published a large colorful map of the work of the New Deal in Washington, DC.

Dr. Gray Brechin, the founder of the Living New Deal (LND), has

said, "The New Deal's work is largely unmarked and unrecognized. It's like finding a lost civilization that has been buried and forgotten." In response, the Living New Deal has published a large colorful map of the work of the New Deal in Washington, DC.

This map folds to a pocket size and locates more than 500 New Deal sites around the city and describes 35 notable sites. The LND encourages visitors to use an inset of the National Mall area for walking tours. ★

Our CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to CHRS members and non members. We hope to see you online on November 17 at 6:30 pm. You can access the presentation link at chrs.org.

The Sport & Health Gym in the old Giddings School building.



IMAGE COURTESY MICHELLE CARROLL

The Return of Hilloween!

The beloved community institution went off without a hitch the Friday evening before Halloween. Even the weather cooperated; heavy rains earlier in the day gave way to clear skies by the evening. Organizers Kristyl Vickers and April Nelson of Kiddie University pulled together a wonderful family experience.

It was a pleasure to be there at the CHRS table where we passed out pencils and bright-orange, CHRS-logo Trick-or-Treat bags, which kids used to scoop up treats from the other tables. Fingers-crossed they see a lot of follow-up use; they were certainly a coveted item during the event! A special thanks to W.S. Jenks & Son Hardware who provided the tables and chairs. ★



A return to Hilloween fun at Eastern Market.

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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 Committee

By Beth Hague

The CHRS Zoning Committee met virtually to hear seven cases on October 21, 2021. Of these, we supported two and opposed two, reserving support in three additional cases until we received additional information. The cases and the zoning committee's position on them are summarized below.

BZA #20534, 152 11th Street SE (hearing on 10/27/21; case was approved). The zoning committee supports this request for two special exceptions for accessory building restrictions and lot occupancy restrictions to construct a two-story garage with accessory apartment to an existing, attached three-story building with cellar occupying 66% of the lot.

There are letters of support from the ANC, the Office of Planning, District Department of Transportation (DDOT), and neighbors, including both adjacent neighbors, in the case file. We note that the size of the garage is larger than the neighbors' and that we would prefer that it were consistent in size, though it does line up with the others in the alley.

BZA #20574, 237 8th Street SE (hearing on 12/08/21). The zoning committee opposes the application. The applicants are requesting an area variance from lot occupancy requirements to construct a new detached one-story accessory garage in the RF-1 zone. The applicants do not demonstrate sufficient evidence that they qualify for a variance. The zoning committee would reconsider as a special exception (as opposed to area variance) if the applicants reduced lot coverage or installed a roll-up door/wall instead of a garage.

BZA #20581, 1241 Independence Avenue SE (hearing on 11/10/21). The zoning committee supports, noting that the project be used as a green roof only. CHRS supports the project as represented for this purpose and on the condition that the applicants have letters of support from neighbors.

BZA #20560, 1713 D Street SE (hearing on 11/10/21). The zoning committee opposes this case on two grounds: first, the cornice line is not in line with neighbors; and second, the project goes 4.5' beyond the 10' by right.

The applicant seeks special exceptions from rear addition requirements, rooftop and upper floor requirements, and lot occupancy requirements to construct a third story addition and three-story addition to an existing attached two-story dwelling unit in RF-1. We note that a better alternative regarding the cornice line could be to keep the small mansard roof in front and then start the addition, as a neighbor did at 1728 D Street SE, or, even better, to set back the building 10 feet from the front. ✨

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases at its virtual hearing on September 30, 2021. 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.

810 C Street NE, HPA 21-416. In 1950, Irvin Robinson built this two-unit non-contributing brick building.

The applicant planned to demolish the building except for a party wall, and replace it with a single-family brick house that will extend an additional 10 feet in the rear. The new house would be two stories with basement, a square bay, brick veneer on the front elevation, with corbelled cornices, metal stairs, precast concrete lintels, sills/belt courses, and a double-leaf front door, and one-over-one wood Marvin windows on the front elevation. We supported the staff's suggestions that the basement be lowered 24 inches and that the stair be centered on the front door. The Board accepted the applicant's suggestion to lower the basement by 12 inches and approved the off-center stairs, to possibly be widened. We agreed that the project was compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board approved the project.

114 12th Street NE, HPA 21-442. The applicant proposed to add a second story to an existing one-story garage. To preserve the at-risk window on the adjacent neighbor's side, the applicant had received approval



The building at 810 C Street NE will be demolished and replaced.

from BZA for a cut-out on the second story alley elevation, (i.e., the second story would not extend across the full width of the garage). However, a false wall would extend the full width on the garden elevation.

Typically, garages extend across the entire width of the lot, creating a uniform edge on the alley and uniform massing of the alley buildings. We argued that this application, if approved, would set a bad precedent: allowing unsightly gaps in uniform alley rows, and supported the staff's recommendation that the second story alley elevation span the full width of the garage.

The Board noted the significance of Capitol Hill's alley landscapes, and ruled that a false wall on the second story on the alley side should extend the full width of the garage (instead of on the garden side), preserving the uniform alleyscape and also the neighbor's at-risk window, that a door or window be added to the

recessed wall facing the adjacent carriage house to create access to the addition roof. Final approval was delegated to staff. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

Contributors

GENERAL DONATIONS
Hogan and Beth Love,
in memory of Tim Burr

October Preservation Café: Meet Our Capitol Hill Arborists

By Christine Mullins

On October 20, Steve McKindlely-Ward and Alex Grieve from DDoT's Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) answered questions, provided helpful tips, and discussed how you can help preserve and maintain a diverse tree canopy on Capitol Hill.

Steve McKindlely-Ward is responsible for planting, pruning, removing, and maintaining the trees in our public spaces south of East Capitol Street, while Alex Grieve manages the area to the north. These public spaces include the grassy areas between the sidewalk and curb, in the triangle parks, outside the recreation centers, and within DC public school grounds.

Call 311 or visit 311.dc.gov or the UFA website to submit a work order request to ask UFA to:

- Plant a tree in an empty public space (they favor planting trees 30 feet apart),
- Prune large branches that are blocking a public sign or threatening to fall on the sidewalk,
- Inspect a street that may be diseased (such as if you see any weird-looking fungi growing) or otherwise in danger, or
- Remove a dead or diseased tree from a public space.

UFA typically plants 8,000 trees each winter (from October–April), while 2,500 are removed each year. The arborists favor large stature trees that blend into each neighborhood and will help the city meet its goal to establish a 40% tree canopy by 2032.

When requesting a tree planting, UFA will do its best to accommodate any requests for a favorite species,

but the tree must be suitable for the location and grow large enough to help us meet our canopy goals. There are 60–70 native species to choose from! UFA typically plants young trees that are 1-2 inches in diameter— younger trees establish themselves more quickly and grow faster in the long run than older, larger trees.

Young trees need lots and lots of water. UFA contracts with a company to water the trees each week, but the watering schedule often falls short. Please fill any empty water bags or containers you see. Trees need at least five to ten gallons of water each week during the spring, summer, and fall: it is nearly impossible to give them too much.

Some Capitol Hill blocks are graced by stately oaks, ginkgos, and elms down the entire street. UFA is careful to avoid diseases and bug infestation that affect certain species, such as Dutch elm disease, Ash borer beetles and the spotted lanternfly. They are also conscious of the hazards of monoculture. Visit: ddot-urban-forestry-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/pages/forest-health.

Note that UFA only plants, prunes, and maintains the trees in our public spaces at no cost to you, but Casey Trees has a program where they will plant a tree in your private yard at no cost to you.

The arborists also spoke about tree boxes. The DC Municipal Regulations prohibit the short little retaining walls we see in so many Capitol Hill tree spaces—made of brick, metal and wood—because they actually damage our trees.

They prevent much needed water from flowing from the sidewalks to the tree and often accumulate too much soil which can smother the tree roots. Mulch should not be higher than two to three inches. Beware of the dreaded mulch volcano piled in a cone shape against the trunk which can damage the tree! Visit chrs.org/tree-space-beautification for more information.

Plants in the tree spaces are fine, but they should be no higher than 18 inches at maturity since they compete with the trees for precious water and nutrients (no vegetables please). Also please avoid plants with

Continued on page 6



Historic Preservation vs. Zoning, Part II

By Gary Peterson

In the last issue I covered the jurisdiction and composition of the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), the Zoning Commission (ZC), and the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA). I used as an example a proposed three-story rear addition with a third-floor addition over the existing house and discussed possible HPRB and BZA issues. In this issue, the Residential Flat (RF) zone will be described.

Almost all the residential property on Capitol Hill is zoned either RF-1 or RF-3. There are slight differences between the two categories, but for this discussion those differences can be ignored. According to Zoning, the perfect Capitol Hill row house is on a lot that is at least 18 ft. wide, contains a minimum 1800 sq. ft., and has a rear yard that is at least 20 ft. deep measured from the back wall of the house. The house and garage, if any, cover not more than 60% of the lot and are no more than 35 ft. and 22 ft. high, respectively. There is also a requirement for one parking space (more about parking later).

Don't be alarmed if you don't live in the perfect house on

the perfect lot, most of us don't. These "imperfect" houses and lots are grandfathered in. This, less than perfect compliance with the regulations, means that zoning issues arise when additions are contemplated. Special exceptions, requiring BZA approval, were created to help homeowners expand their footprint and to also protect surrounding neighbors. We'll deal more extensively with special exceptions in the next issue.

Special exceptions from the rules are specified in the regulations. Here are a few of the important regulations that require a special exception:

- **Lot occupancy.** Increasing lot coverage from 60% to 70%. A shed that is less than 50 sq. ft. and less than 10 ft. high does not count against lot occupancy.
- **Height.** Increasing the height from 35 ft. to 40 ft.
- **Rear yard.** Reducing the rear yard to less than 20 ft.
- **Rear wall extension.** Extending the rear wall of the addition 10 feet beyond the rear walls of either neighbor.

- **Alley centerline setback.** Building closer than 7.5 feet from the centerline of an alley.
- **Cornice line.** Shifting the cornice line or other rooftop elements.
- **Penthouse.** Adding a penthouse. Screening mechanical equipment and safety railing for a deck are permitted.

Special exceptions involving height, rear wall extension, cornice line, and penthouse are also of concern to the HPRB. All of these change the exterior appearance and may not be compatible with the Historic District.

For those of you determined to learn more, we will cover special exceptions and variances in the next issue. If you have specific questions, please email caphrs420@gmail.com and I will answer your questions personally. Please make a note that your email is for Gary Peterson and is in regards to this article. ★

Preservation Café, *continued from page 5*

thorns. Report or remove any vines that climb up the tree trunk since they can severely damage the tree. Likewise, remove any wires or strings wound around the trunk and take care not to cut into the bark when mowing or edging. These seemingly small wounds to the bark can kill an otherwise healthy tree.

A permit from DDoT is required to remove a tree between 44 and 99.9 inches in circumference. Any tree

with a circumference greater than 100 inches is a Heritage Tree and cannot be removed, unless it is diseased.

DDoT has hired an arborist to help enforce our rules and regulations in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. UFA can issue tickets to those who violate the law. Call 311 if you see a utility company, developer, or anyone else removing more than five percent of a tree's branches. Also call 311 to report a tree root that is uplifting the sidewalk. DDoT can repair the damage and protect the tree.

Find more information from UFA (ddot-urban-forestry-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com). Thanks also to our friends at Trees for Capitol Hill (treesforcapitolhill.org) and Casey Trees (caseytrees.org)! ★

Swampoodle Grant Program: An Update

By Patrick Lally and Joanna Kendig

In 2010, developers bought up the entire western half of Square 752 adjacent to the H Street Bridge, and razed 26 rowhouses, many from the 19th century, to make way for a 378-unit apartment building, Station House. Most of the demolished properties would have been protected as contributing structures had they been in the Capitol Hill Historic District (CHHD) at that time.

This demolition galvanized the community to demand meaningful mitigation for the extensive loss of the area's historic fabric. CHRS and the local advisory neighborhood

commission negotiated with the developer to pay for a building-by-building survey of all the blocks north of the existing historic district up to H Street, setting the stage for the subsequent boundary extension. The Swampoodle section in the four-square area – bounded by Second to Fourth streets and F to H Streets NE has been included in the CHHD in 2015.

The developer also provided funding for the grant program now administered by CHRS. Homeowners may apply for two grant programs that provide up to \$5,000 each for

improvements. These are (1) the Home Improvement Grant for preserving the historic features of the neighborhood and, wherever possible, correcting historically inappropriate exterior alterations, and (2) the Energy Efficiency Upgrade Grant for reducing energy consumption and creating greater efficiency through improved heating systems, insulation and energy-smart lighting.

Applicants must own property in the Swampoodle section of the CHHD and may apply for only one grant in each category. Grant funding must be matched by the applicant and approved prior to the commencement of work.

Home Improvement Grants generally apply to the façade and part of the exterior visible from public space. These have been used for historic-district-approved repair, restoration and replacement of features, including non-historic windows, doors, cornices, prominent roof components, porches and stoops.

Energy Grants have also helped retrofit old lighting systems to accommodate LED fixtures and supported upgrades of outdated, low-performing heating systems, installation of insulation, retrofit of non-historic, energy inefficient windows, and other similar upgrades.

These grants have made an enormous difference to homeowners in the designated area. As of July 2021, 44 grants have been approved. While the majority of the funds have been distributed by now, some funds still remain, available to qualified applicants. If you would like an application or additional information, consult the CHRS website: chrs.org/swampdoodle-grants. or contact Patrick Lally at Patrick_j_lally@yahoo.com. ★



Thank you to all of the sponsors and exhibitors who made the CHRS 2021 House Expo a success!

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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.

NOVEMBER

13–14 Saturday–Sunday

Guided Walking Tours. We are pleased to offer two fan-favorites from the Mother’s Day Tour of Tours—plus two tours, as requested by attendees. Reservations are available through Eventbrite. For more information: chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-november-2021.

17 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café: The New Deal in Washington DC. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/the-new-deal-in-washington-pc.

FEBRUARY

16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café: Uncovering the History of the District’s Buried Streams. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/buried-streams-pc.

MARCH

16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café: Arming a Navy—The Naval Gun Factory and Its Local Workforce. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/naval-gun-factory-pc.