



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

November 2023

The Return of the Dick Wolf Lecture

On September 27, Professor John Rennie Short gave the Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture at the Hill Center. The focus of the presentation was the changing urban core and it was very well attended. While the event used to be held in the spring before the pandemic, CHRS decided to move it to mid-late September going forward.

A champagne reception followed the lecture and the community members had a chance to visit and catch up and also ask questions of Professor Short. Thank you to Delancey Gustin and Monte Edwards for organizing, Michelle Carroll for the refreshments and Muriel Wolf for her continued support of the program. ✧



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

The Future of the RFK Campus

By Joanna Kendig

Discussions continue regarding the development of the 174-acre area known as RFK Campus on the eastern edge of Capitol Hill. On October 18, 2023, a meeting organized by the Friends of Kingman Park Civic Association (FOKP) was held at St. Benedict the Moor Church at 320 21st Street NE.

The FOKP invited Mayor Bowser to discuss the issue of a football

stadium at RFK. Around 250 neighbors and representatives of various community organizations attended.

Prior to the meeting, FOKP conducted a survey of community members asking their preference on the use of the land. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents (approximately 2,000 people) voted against a football stadium.

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2023 CHRS House Expo

By Angie Schmidt

The 2023 CHRS House Expo on October 28 was a bustling event, with the addition of vaccinations sponsored by the Capitol Hill Village (administered by Safeway) and guided historic tours of Eastern Market.

Thank you to the tour volunteers, who know volumes about Eastern Market and spent a lot of time perfecting their tours:

Barbara Carlsson, Fynnette Eaton, Robyn Hinson-Jones, Joanna Kendig, James McMahon, Molly Mullin, Sam Pastore, Robert Pohl, Sarah Robertson, Jerry Sroufe and Elaine Wine.

And thank you to our exhibitors: Abay Ironworks, American Professional Chimney, Chemstrip Refinishing, Coldwell Banker Realty, Cole Roof Systems, First

Savings Mortgage, Image Painting, Joel Truitt Builders, Masterworks Window Fashions & Design, Merlino Construction, N&M House Detectives, Parick Design, State Farm Insurance, Studio Lyew, Taylor Power Washing, Truitt Management and Woodland Estate & Title.



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Future of RFK, *continued from cover*

The hosts presented the preliminary survey results (paper votes were still being counted) and shared the community's view that mixed use development including green space, a sports recreation complex and new housing was a better use of the land than a football stadium used eight to ten times a year. The community also expressed concerns about taxpayers footing the bill.

In response, Mayor Bowser said she listened to the community about their needs and agreed with them. "And I know that on 174 acres, they are all possible," she said. The Mayor made clear that she wants to transform the RFK campus into a

new stadium for the Commanders as well as a mixed-use development, but she also emphasized several times that the city's core focus was on getting control of the land from the federal government. A bill that would extend DC's lease of the site for 99 years and allow for a multitude of uses beyond sports, including the construction of housing, advanced out of a House Oversight Committee in September.

The Mayor also spoke passionately about DC being home to all major sports teams.

While the city waits for a vote from Congress, the Bowser administration commissioned a "sports study" to evaluate funding for a potential NFL

stadium and the financial needs of existing sports franchises.

It will take time and more community discussions for the future use of the RFK campus to be decided. The Committee of 100 on the Federal City will soon be publishing a white paper on this issue. There will likely be more opportunities for community engagement. See the CHRS website chrs.org for a list of articles and resources about this important community issue. ★

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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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 Nick Alberti

On October 4, 2023, five members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss five cases. Representatives from four cases participated to present their proposals. The Committee voted to support one case, to oppose one case, and to postpone decisions on three cases pending receipt of further information.

BZA #20955, 744 13th Street SE. The Committee voted to **support** (4-0-1) the applicant's request for a special exception to construct a rear addition to an existing attached two-story with cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant is proposing to build a one-story screened porch in the rear yard, building on, but not going beyond, the footprint of an existing deck. While the existing footprint would not change, the applicants require a special exception as the proposed porch will go 14'8" beyond their most restrictive neighbor, or 4'8" past the 10' matter-of-right. The committee notes that the more restrictive adjacent neighbor has a two-story deck and the other adjacent neighbor has no windows on the impacted side of their house.

The applicant has provided shadow studies and has received 7 letters of support and no letters of objection from neighbors. Their proposal has been unanimously approved by ANC 6B. The BZA hearing is scheduled for October 18, 2023.

BZA #20956, 1216 Constitution Avenue NE. The committee voted to **oppose** (4-0-1) the applicant's request for a special exception from the lot occupancy requirements to construct a rear addition to an existing, attached, two-story principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant is proposing to fill in the dogleg, on the first floor only, to enlarge their kitchen, thereby increasing lot occupancy from 62.8% to 67.1%. They are proposing to add a window at the end of the addition and to set back the addition 2' from the impacted adjacent neighbor.

We note that the original pattern of doglegs for houses on this block face still exists undisturbed. The proposed addition will substantially intrude, visually, on the pattern and character of houses on this block face as viewed from the alley.

Notes on the three cases the committee did not decide on:

BZA #20960, 1244 and 1246 H Street NE. The applicant, Slutty Vegan Restaurant, did not attend the committee meeting. They will be invited to present at our next CHRS Board meeting.

The applicant is requesting a special exception for the matter-of-right uses to construct a side- and rear-addition and permit a fast-food establishment use to an existing attached two-story commercial building in the NC-14 zone. The restaurant will be all carry-out, with some outdoor tables and there is concern about trash since there is no table service. The BZA hearing is scheduled for October 18, 2023.

BZA #20967, 1371-1375 H Street NE. The applicant, Salvation Arts, did not attend the committee meeting. They presented at our October CHRS Board meeting.

The applicant is requesting a special exception for the minimum vehicle parking requirements to construct a new attached six-story with roof deck, 30-unit, mixed use

Continued page 6

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board), considered the following case at its virtual hearing on September 28, 2023. 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.

621 Maryland Avenue NE, HPA 23-500, concept/roof deck. This three-story brick bayfront house with basement is one of six built by Diller B. Groff in 1891. It is a contributing building.

The aspects of the project in issue were:

- Replacement and enlargement of a roofdeck,
- A rooftop structure with awning, which appears to have been altered recently, based on the color of the wood (hereafter “pergola”), and
- A line of planters along the parapet.

The pergola and planters are visible from public space and, based on HPRB precedents, would not be approved in their current locations. The roofdeck has been enlarged, not just replaced, which would have required a new building permit.

The applicants argue that the roofdeck and pergola were approved in a 2007 building permit and that a building inspector approved locating the planters along the parapet. We believed that new building permits were required for these three aspects of the project, and that HPRB would not approve them, based on its current standards.

At public hearings, HPRB members have stated that because street trees are inherently temporary, street trees do not solve visibility problems. The Board found the visible portions of the roof deck and covered structure were incompatible with the character of the Capitol Hill Historic District and delegated authority to HPO to approve a non-visible roof deck and appurtenances.

Consent calendar. The Board approved the following case on consent:

116 5th Street SE, HPA 23-439, concept/ third-story addition, enclose second floor deck. The Board expressed concerns about whether the sloped stair override might trigger a code issue and might need to be revised into something that would be visible. They also requested a preservation plan for the front elevation, specifically noting that the existing windows appear historic and should be restored, not replaced. If there are issues with the stair override, the case will need to come back before the HPRB. ✪

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.



621 Maryland Avenue NE.

Installing Clean Solar Power to Electrify Your Home

By Christine Mullins

On September 26, Sukrit Mishra, DC program director at Solar Neighbors United (SUN), provided CHRS members with an overview of solar technology, solar economics and how to “go solar.” He discussed the technical and financial aspects of installing solar panels on your Capitol Hill roof to save and make money and support the national effort to increase renewable energy and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

In any Washington, DC historic district, installers must ensure the solar panels are not visible from the public sidewalk. The ideal roof faces south or southwest to get the most direct rays from the sun due to the tilt of the earth.

For the typical flat roof in the District, installers use racks to position the solar panels to face the most ideal direction. North-facing roofs are not recommended and are often rejected because they are so much less efficient. Peak sun hours are from 9 am to 4 pm.

The ideal roof has full sun with little to no shade, such as from trees or neighboring buildings that block the direct sun.

The roof also must be large enough to support the requisite number of solar racks. Slate roofs are often rejected because they are too fragile to support the racks and get damaged during installation, but some vendors will charge you an extra fee to accommodate slate.

Mishra said most DC solar panel vendors offer a free 25-year product warranty, a 10- to 25-year warranty on solar inverters and a 10-25 year workmanship warranty. They also usually commit to fix damaged panels within 5–7 days free of cost (although some local co-op solutions respond more quickly). Homeowner insurance

rates should not increase since most insurance companies consider solar panels an asset to the property.

The majority of installers pay to maintain the panels and clear away leaves as needed. The systems generally last 25 to 30 years, but Mishra says this number continues to improve as the technology has evolved and the panels become more efficient. Since DC has so many competing solar vendors, local homeowners enjoy more benefits than those who live in states that must accept whatever their sole local solar provider offers them.

Mishra explained that homeowners can purchase three different amounts of energy or kilowatts (kW) per kilowatt hour (kWh) for a typical 12-panel solar array depending on their energy needs and the price point or upfront costs of the system they choose. An inverter converts solar energy, which is DC or direct current, to electricity we can use to charge our appliances (AC or alternating current) via our electric panel. A Bi-directional utility meter measures the energy used.

Homeowners can sell the excess energy credits they do not use to Pepco by exporting it to the city-wide electric grid. The district has one of the best SREC (Solar Renewable Energy Credits) markets in the country which rewards homeowners about \$400 for each SREC.

Most DC solar systems have three tiers of energy production: four kilowatts (average cost of \$12,000), eight kilowatts (average cost of \$24,000), and 12 kilowatts (average cost of \$36,000). The four-kilowatt systems usually break even or create enough revenue to cover their purchase price and installation costs in seven to eight years. A six kW

system usually only takes six years to break even, and a 12 kW system only takes four years. Mishra discussed various federal tax credits you can take advantage of for the next ten years for installing solar panels.

Those who are unable to install solar panels can often subscribe to a local community solar farm or project as if they are renting a panel. The electric company sends a credit to subscribers for the energy the community solar panel generates. SUN has a database of these organizations on its website. And in 2019, the DC Department of Energy created Solar for All, a free program that aims to help 100,000 low- to moderate-level-income residents go solar by 2023.

Solar United Neighbors DC is a vendor-neutral coalition of neighborhood solar cooperatives and advocacy organizations. Anya Schoolman, a Mount Pleasant resident, founded SUN in 2007 as a co-op to obtain a bulk rate for 50 neighboring homes that wanted to go solar. The nonprofit cooperative network currently represents the needs and interests of solar owners and clean energy supporters in the District, 12 other states, and Puerto Rico.

Mishra encouraged participants to contact the Solar United Neighbor website for more information about the services they provide their members and upcoming opportunities to join their solar cooperative. You can also reach him at dcteam@solarunitedneighbors.org.

The recorded presentation link can be found at chrs.org/solar-power-pc0923. ★

Halloween: What a Hoot!

By Elizabeth Nelson

This year's Hilloween celebration was quite the party with swarms of children of all ages and beautiful warm weather. We were so busy at the CHRS table that we hardly saw what other organizations had on offer, but there was definitely music in the air and a lot of lollipops.

Per usual, we had productive conversations with the adults while the children strung beads to make their bracelets. We met many people not previously familiar with our organization. It was a great opportunity to promote the House Expo scheduled for the following day. And the kids enjoyed the CHRS swag, including bags to use for collecting their treats on Halloween.

Many thanks to Joanna Kendig, Beth Purcell and Bobbi Kregel for helping staff the CHRS table. ★



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON



Zoning Report, *continued from page 3*

building in the NC-15 zone. Parking is a concern—it is only required to have 4-5 spaces for 30 units. There is no vehicular or pedestrian access to the building in the rear—the building is landlocked. There would be no vehicle access, making it difficult for trash and delivery vehicles, as no curb cut access is possible. The BZA hearing is scheduled for November 1, 2023.

BZA#20975, 1602 D Street NE.

The applicant did not attend the committee meeting. Committee decided to postpone consideration of this application until next month.

The committee had some questions about the appropriate zoning relief needed for the applicant's request. We expect to have clarifications from the Zoning Administrator by our next meeting.

The applicant is requesting special exceptions for lot occupancy requirements and for the rear yard requirements to construct a rear yard addition to an existing attached two-story principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone. The applicant is proposing to increase lot occupancy from 53% to 68%. The applicant has one letter of support from

the neighbor on the west side; they are trying to get a letter from the neighbor on the east side. The BZA hearing is scheduled for November 29, 2023. ★

Redistributing Usable Materials to the Community with Community Forklift

By Christine Mullins

On October 24, Scott Buga, director of communication at Community Forklift, treated CHRS members to an overview and tour of a special treasure trove in nearby Edmonston, MD. Since it opened its doors in 2005, Community Forklift has sold donated gently used, old, and new appliances, bathroom vanities, building materials, cabinets, chandeliers, doors, furniture, hardware, light fixtures, mantels, paint, rugs, tile, tools, windows, and countless other gems.

Buga said that since 2005, the nonprofit reuse warehouse has redistributed and saved more than

\$45 million of usable materials from the landfill, donated almost \$1 million in free materials to households with limited incomes and community groups, partnered with more than 900 non-profits, schools, small businesses, and state and local governments, and supplied more than 30 good green jobs with competitive pay and excellent benefits.

Community Forklift has several programs that have helped the community over the years. For example, its Home Essentials Program helped the Children’s Law Center furnish a new home for a mother of three who had just escaped domestic violence with a sofa, dining table, chairs, and a TV stand. In addition to furniture, this program also gives low-income families a lot of appliances, such as washing machines, refrigerators, space heaters, and air conditioners (they typically have a wait list every summer).

The Community Building Blocks program gives out free building materials to community groups, such as to a school that built a laundry room with donated materials to provide their students with a way to clean their uniforms. Other examples of reuse by community groups include a Hyattsville Girl Scout troop that repurposed a donated kitchen cabinet to build a little food pantry, a DC school that relocated a used kitchen sink outdoors for their educational garden, and the Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area outfitting homes for refugee families with used home furnishings.

Community Forklift’s nonprofit 40,000-square-foot reuse warehouse offers everyone in the community—homeowners, small businesses, and

community groups—the opportunity to make repairs more affordable as they reuse and repurpose donated items sold at below-market prices. The reuse warehouse is open daily: Monday–Friday from noon to 5 pm and Saturday–Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm. You can also shop from a selection of goods through the online Community Forklift Marketplace.

Buga shared additional examples of the ingenuity and creativity of those who shop at Community Forklift. He also gave an online tour of some of the unique items and materials that were currently on sale in the reuse warehouse.

He finished his presentation with four ideas of ways to help Community Forklift continue in its mission: practice reusing your own materials to rescue materials from the landfill, spread the word to family and friends, shop for materials at the reuse warehouse, and donate materials you no longer need or make a monetary donation (both are tax deductible). You can find more information and donation guidelines at communityforklift.org.

You can access the recorded presentation link at chrs.org/community-forklift-pc1023. ★

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 or postponements will be posted as they are known.



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NOVEMBER

1 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE.

6 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

15 Wednesday, 6 pm
Board meeting, Northeast Library,
330 7th Street NE.

28 Tuesday 6:30 pm
Preservation Cafe: "Designing and
Creating a Private Garden." Virtual event,
more details: chrs.org/designing-garden-pc.

DECEMBER

4 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

6 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE.

20 Wednesday, 6 pm
Board meeting, Northeast Library
Mezzanine, 330 7th Street NE.



Please consider joining CHRS! Annual membership is only \$35 and includes the newsletter, a set of historic guidelines, and early access to events, including our annual House and Garden Tour. Scan this QR code or visit chrs.org for more information.