

March 2024

The 2024 House and Garden Tour

By Fynnette Eaton, Jackie Krieger and Angie Schmidt

We are so pleased to be able to feature the photography of Rindy O'Brien for the 2024 Tour poster and catalogue! We think this lovely photo is a beautiful expression of the elements of the Tour. If anyone is interested in displaying the poster on their fence or in their window, please contact caphrs420@gmail.com and we can arrange to have one delivered to you after March 25.

The Tour is coming along well. As of the end of February, we have almost finalized the list of homes and neighborhood institutions and will be updating our website as we head towards April. We can let you know that two of the homes are owned by

interior decorators, two others have had a complete top-to-bottom refresh, and many of them have never been on the Tour before.

Tickets will go live on eventbrite on April 1. All CHRS members will be sent a code to use for discounted tickets. Member tickets will be \$30 apiece. Non-member advance tickets are \$40 and day-of-sales will be \$50.

In 2023 we sold out the Tour, so please mark your calendar and buy tickets in advance. It helps us with planning. Like last year, there will be refreshments available to all tour-goers at the Hill Center, as well as architectural tours of the Hill Center given by the architect himself, David Bell. ★

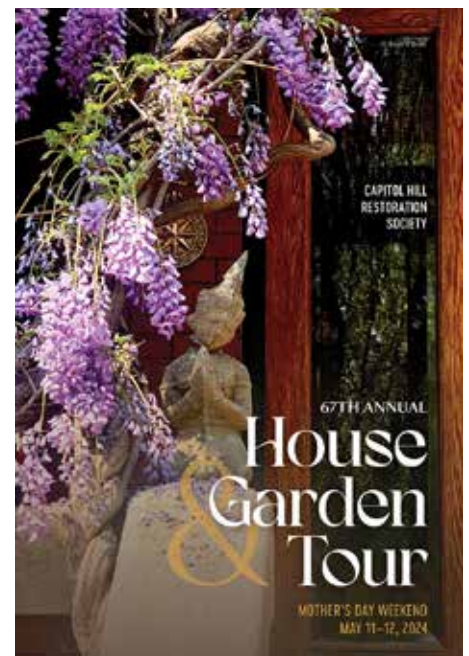


IMAGE COURTESY RINDY O'BRIEN

Spring Membership Meeting

We would like to invite all members to our spring membership meeting, to be held April 3 at 6:30 pm in the Lincoln Room at the Hill Center. A brief membership meeting will be followed by a presentation and question and answer period with the Director of the Department of General Services (DGS), Delano Hunter.

DGS builds, maintains, and sustains the District of Columbia's real estate portfolio, which includes more than 42 million square feet of District-owned and leased property and roughly \$19.8 billion in assessed District owned property in Washington, DC. DGS does a variety of things that improve resident's quality of life, such as maintaining parks, increasing sustainability through renewables and recycling, and the very local issue of managing Eastern Market.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

ARTICLES

CHRS Board Nominations	2
Photo Contest Extended	5

COLUMNS

Sidewalk Talk	2
Zoning Report	3
Historic Preservation Briefs.....	4
Thank You, CHRS Supporters.....	6

LOOKING AHEAD

March Preservation Café.....	6
Overbeck Lecture	7
Spring Sidewalk Tours.....	7
Mark Your Calendar.....	8

CHRS Seeks Nominations for the Board of Directors

By Beth Purcell

The CHRS Elections Committee (Chair, Beth Purcell; Gary Peterson, Chuck Burger, and Delancey Gustin) is seeking nominations of individuals who wish to be considered for positions for the 2024–2025 CHRS Board of Directors. These positions include President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer

and Secretary, each for one-year terms; and four At-Large Members for two-year terms. Nominations for the 2024–2025 CHRS Board will be announced at the end of April and postcard ballots will be mailed to CHRS members in May.

If you wish to be considered, recommend someone, or find out more about the duties of each

position, please contact the CHRS office at (202) 543-0425 or email caphrs420@gmail.com. A member of the Elections Committee will respond. Each nomination must include the position for which the person wants to be considered and their resume. Nominations must be submitted by the end of the day on March 25, 2024. ★

Sidewalk Talk

By Libby Quaid

It's been 40 years since city officials made it policy to use bricks when Capitol Hill sidewalks need repair. Welcome to a new edition of *Sidewalk Talk*, an occasional look at the history of pedestrian paths on Capitol Hill.

Brick sidewalks became more prevalent in DC's historic districts in 1983 after city officials made it policy, first informally and then formally, with a published regulation. The regulation says the city will replace concrete and asphalt with brick whenever more than 20 feet of walkway in a historic area needs repair.

According to a *Washington Post* story in 1983, a DC Department of Transportation official said residents



IMAGE COURTESY LIBBY QU Aid

in Georgetown and Capitol Hill had pushed for brick as a replacement to enhance the charm of their neighborhoods. “But we thought it was basically the fair thing to do, more even-handed,” to apply the policy to the approximately 500 miles

of sidewalk in 14 historic districts throughout DC, said the official, Lynn Robinson.

A city sidewalk contractor said in the story that it takes longer to install brick but that skilled workers aren't needed for brick paving as they are for concrete paving. A city official said brick is cheaper to maintain because only some bricks need replacing when tree roots push up, as opposed to a whole slab of concrete.

We're still scratching the surface of the history of sidewalks in DC and will be back with more *Sidewalk Talk* soon. ★

Know a Sidewalk In Need of Repair?

CHRS is partnering with the Capitol Hill Village to address unsafe sidewalk conditions. You can help the CHV Sidewalk Safety Team! Take a picture of dangerous brick(s) conditions, label it with the closest house address (number, street, quadrant), and send it to CHVpedestriansafety@gmail.com. A team member will respond. Capitol Hill Village will file complaints in the DC 311 system and track the repairs through completion.

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Angie Schmidt
First Vice President Christine Mullins
Second Vice President Tina May
Treasurer Nick Alberti
Secretary Libby Quaid
At Large Fynnette Eaton
At Large Delancey Gustin
At Large Beth Hague
At Large Jackie Krieger
At Large Gary Peterson
At Large Jim Thackaberry
Immediate Past President Beth Purcell

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Budget & Administration* Nick Alberti
City Planning* Monte Edwards
Communications* Vacant
Community Development* Chuck Burger
Community Relations Elizabeth Nelson
Environment* Joanna Kendig
Grants Larry Pearl
Historic Preservation* Beth Purcell
House Tour Eaton, Krieger & Schmidt
Investments John Shages
Membership* Maygene Daniels
Public Safety* Undine Nash
Public Space Steve Kehoe
Zoning* Nick Alberti
* Chair is an appointed Board Member

NEWSLETTER

Angie Schmidt and Kelly Vielmo, Editors

WEBMASTER

Elizabeth Nelson

OFFICE MANAGER

Jill Uvena Cullinane

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

ABOUT CHRS

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society is a nonprofit, volunteer organization devoted to protecting, preserving, and celebrating our historic Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Founded in 1955, CHRS is a pioneer in the urban preservation movement. CHRS was instrumental in securing Capitol Hill's designation in 1976 as a national historic district. Since then, CHRS has worked continuously to protect historic spaces and to enhance life on the Hill.

CHRS is driven by members who love their neighborhood and want to preserve and share the dynamic story of Capitol Hill for future generations. Come join us!

Learn more and join at chrs.org

Zoning Report

By Nick Alberti

On February 7, 2024, 5 members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss 3 cases. Representatives from 2 cases participated to present their proposals. One representative chose not to attend the meeting. The Committee voted to support 2 cases and chose not to address the case for which the representative did not attend.

BZA #21046, 17 15th Street NE. The Committee voted to support (3-0-2) the applicant's requests for special exceptions for the rear addition requirements and the lot occupancy requirements to construct a rear addition to an existing, attached, three-story with penthouse principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant is proposing to construct a one-story rear addition, which would extend an additional 7', for a total of 27', beyond the adjacent neighbor on the north. The Committee notes that adjacent dwelling on the south extends 10' beyond the applicant's rear wall.

In addition, the applicant is proposing to increase occupancy from 54.2% to 62%. There are three letters of support from neighbors. The BZA hearing was scheduled for February 14, 2024.

BZA #21052, 1635 C Street SE.

The committee voted to support (5-0-0) the applicant's request for special exceptions to the rear yard requirements and the lot occupancy requirements to construct a two-story rear addition to an existing, semi-detached, two-story principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The existing dwelling is located on an alley. The applicant's addition will increase lot occupancy from 60.4% to 69.8% and extend an additional 3' into the rear yard. The applicant is proposing to fill in the dog leg, noting that the high walls of the adjacent three-story structure limit the amount of sunlight able to reach the applicant's home anyway. Five letters of support from neighbors have been filed and ANC7D has voted to support the project. The BZA hearing was scheduled for February 14, 2024.

We did not discuss the following:

BZA #21074, 1362 K Street SE. This case is a request for special exceptions for the building area requirements and the rear yard requirements to construct a two-story addition to an existing accessory building of an existing, semi-detached, two-story principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant is proposing to convert an existing attic storage area into an in-law suite, increasing the height of the space 3'10" from 16' to 19'10". The Committee notes that the addition is currently a non-conforming structure, and would stay under the 20' limit for an accessory building. The BZA hearing is scheduled for March 6, 2024. ★

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board), considered the following case at its virtual hearing on January 25, 2024. 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.

425 4th Street NE, HPA 24-046, concept/three-story addition at rear. This brick bayfront house, two stories plus basement, is one of two designed by F.B. Pyle, built by Farnham & Cappell for owner Zeno B. Babbitz in 1891. It is a contributing building. The proposed renovations and additions expand the existing house to accommodate a multi-generational household (three generations) in seven bedrooms and multiple family spaces. The design and materials of the additions are appropriate and read as 21st century structures.¹

The applicants proposed a cellar addition at the rear of the townhouse; a first-floor addition that fills in

the existing dogleg and extends the dogleg further back; a second-floor addition at the back of the existing second-floor extending the dogleg further back; and a third-floor addition on the main body of the rowhouse that turns and extends back on top of the existing second-floor. The second-floor dogleg addition and the new third-floor addition contribute to the visible massing of the additions. The footprint and rear projection of the additions in the January 14, 2024 plans are unchanged from the December 13, 2023 plans.

“An addition should be compatible with the massing of the existing building and that of its neighbors.” HPO, Additions to Historic Buildings, 9. Do the additions disrupt the rhythm and massing of the nearby buildings? This test should be applied by comparing the neighboring buildings on this blockface, i.e., the rowhouses adjacent to 425 4th Street NE, which



IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL

The brick bayfront house at 425 4th Street NE.

is the key visual context.² They considered the entire square, which introduced irrelevant comparisons.

Rhythm and massing: The row of houses to the south of 425 4th Street NE house as seen from the alley present a strong rhythm of two-story doglegs behind three-story volumes on the street side. The two-story doglegs continue to the north on the row. The proposed addition extending the third floor all the way over the dogleg dramatically disrupts the rhythm and massing on this block face.

The proposed additions should and could be improved by reducing the size of the third floor. The staff recommended approving the project. Multiple neighbors testified in opposition to the project, arguing that the additions are massive and disrupt

¹ Responses to comments from neighbors:

Standard 9: It appears that the applicant satisfies the requirement to differentiate the old and new sections of the house.

Standard 10: An addition can be quickly removed without damage to the original structure. HPRB has not been applying this standard with respect to rear additions.

Carbery Place is a public alley, not a street. See DC Law Library, 9-204.01. December 20, 2018, Designation of Carbery Place, naming a public alley “Carbery Place.” Carbery Place also has the configuration of a typical Capitol Hill alley. The staff report correctly notes that HPRB has approved additions visible from alleys.

² A typical square has four blockfaces.

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.

“The Capitol Hill Home” Photo Contest Extended to March 15

Show us what you think makes a home a *Capitol Hill* home! The submission deadline has been extended to March 15. Winning images will receive two passes to the 2024 House and Garden Tour and will be displayed on the CHRS website.

Send your high resolution images (>1MB)—exterior shots only—to HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com, or text to (202) 329-7864. Be sure to include your name and address, email address, and the address of the property in the photo.

View details and past contest winners at chrs.org/photo-contest-2024. ★



IMAGE COURTESY ROBERT WEINSTEIN

Pond by Robert Weinstein took first place in the 2021 Photo Contest.

the rhythm of the neighboring two-story houses. We believed that the project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

The Board focused on the third-story addition, and after discussion of the third story's effect on the viewscape, voted 3:1 to support the staff report and approve the project. Neighbors opposing the project requested the Board to reconsider its decision. See April issue of CHRS News for additional reporting.

The Board approved the following case on consent:

229–233 Pennsylvania Avenue and 203 3rd Street SE, HPA 24-054 concept/subdivision, alterations and additions. Also approved by the Commission of Fine Arts. ★

Enjoying this newsletter? 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.

March Preservation Café on *Power and Light: The Story of Electricity in Washington, DC*

Electricity powers our modern world, but we only recently “discovered” how to harness it in the service of humanity during the 19th century. At the upcoming Preservation Café on March 26, presenter Joanna Kendig will provide a general overview of electric systems development and the evolution of services most of us now take for granted.

Multiple private enterprises emerged during the late 1800s, using electricity to serve our growing city. Electricity was used for newly-built trolley lines and powered street lights.

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

CONTRIBUTORS

Annual Appeal

Benita Cooper
Kevin Creighan &
Cathy Hampton
Rachael & Robert Loper

MEMBERSHIPS

Individual

Natalie Benson
Molly Mullin
William Silagi
James Thackaberry

Silver

Laurence Pearl
Robert Weinstein &
Judith Capen



IMAGE COURTESY ANGIE SCHMIDT

Combination gas and electric fixture in the Eastern Market manager's office.

Companies expanded and merged. The White House got electrified. Our historic row houses traded gas lights for electric light bulbs and, sometimes, coal stoves for electric ranges.

Kendig will explore the physical changes to power stations and substation buildings, touch on the expansion of underground distribution lines, and bring us into the 21st century. Our electric grid is still evolving—as our laws and

consequent practices lead us toward a more electrically sustainable future.

We hope you can join us! ★

Join us for this virtual presentation on Tuesday, March 26 at 6:30 pm. CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to members and non-members. Details: chrs.org/powerlight-pc.

Overbeck Lecture on March 11: 200 Years of Botanic Garden's Contributions

By Nancy Metzger

The eye-catching conservatory and variety of plant displays of the U.S. Botanic Garden at the base of Capitol Hill has long been a treasured destination for residents and tourists. Dr. Susan Pell will look back at the

more than 200 years of the USBG and its many contributions to national life.

Through historic photos, media coverage, and stories from the USBG archives, Dr. Pell, executive director of the Botanic Garden, will share how the institution began with its establishment by Congress in 1820. It then grew with a collection of living plants brought back from a naval expedition in 1842 to the institution it now is.

The Botanic Garden serves more than one million visitors each year as well as many thousands of online learners, inspiring people to appreciate, study, and conserve plants. Dr. Pell has spent her career at public gardens as a botanist, educator, and leader and has conducted fieldwork internationally in support of her research.

The March 11 will be held at The Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, and will begin at 7:30 pm. Admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited capacity. Reserve your seat at: hillcenterdc.org/event/overbeck-lecture-200-years-of-botanic-gardens-contributions or by calling (202) 549-4172. ★



Conservatory Garden Court at the U.S. Botanic Garden.

Spring Walking Tours

By Angie Schmidt

Now that it looks like the ice and snow are behind us, it's time for our spring series of weekend walking tours of the neighborhood. On March 23, we are offering "The Civil War and Before" at 1 pm, which focuses on some of the oldest homes in our neighborhood.

On March 24, both at 1 pm, we will offer "Notable People", which is good if you like a ramble across the Hill and "A History of Capitol Hill in One

Block", which is rich in information, but not as much exercise. All tickets are \$15, and will go on sale March 1 through Eventbrite.

The next walking tour dates will be April 20 and 21 and then June 1 and 2, with the tour subjects to be determined, though there will be different offerings than the ones in March. Hope to see you out there! ★

CHRS

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 10th Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

chrs.org

Mark Your Calendar!

Please check chrs.org for current information—cancellations or postponements will be posted as they are known.

MARCH

15 Friday (Deadline)

Capitol Hill Home Photo Contest 2024.
Details: chrs.org/photo-contest-2024.

20 Wednesday, 6 pm

Board meeting, Northeast Library
Mezzanine Room, 330 7th Street NE.

23 Saturday & **24** Sunday, 1 pm

Walking Tours of Capitol Hill with CHRS.
Visit chrs.org for details and tickets.

26 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café, “Power and Light:
The Story of Electricity on Capitol Hill.”
Virtual presentation. Details: [chrs.org/
powerlight-pc](http://chrs.org/powerlight-pc).

APRIL

1 Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

3 Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

3 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Spring Membership Meeting, with featured
guest, Director of Department of General
Services, Delano Hunter. Hill Center,
921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

17 Wednesday, 6 pm

Board meeting, Northeast Library
Mezzanine Room, 330 7th Street NE.

CHRS

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

23 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café, “Hidden Alleyways of
Capitol Hill.” Virtual presentation. Details:
chrs.org/hiddenalleyways-pc.

MAY

1 Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

6 Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

15 Wednesday, 6 pm

Board meeting, Northeast Library
Mezzanine Room, 330 7th Street NE.

28 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café: “100 Years of Eastern
High School.” Virtual presentation.
Details: chrs.org/easternhs100-pc.

67th Annual CHRS House & Garden Tour

Mother’s Day Weekend • Saturday, May 11, 4–7 pm & Sunday, May 12, 1–5 pm

Tickets on sale April 1! More information at: chrs.org/mothers-day-house-garden-tour.