

CHRS Photo Contest: Show Us Capitol Hill

By Matt Handverger and Marci Hilt

Do you have an outstanding photo of our neighborhood? We are looking for your best shots of Capitol Hill—from its historic homes to great parks and everything in between. All photos will be considered for this juried contest. This year, there is also a young person/student category, so please encourage anyone you know under 18 to participate. Here are the rules:

1. Photos must have been taken on Capitol Hill;
2. Each submission must include a title, the photographer's name, and a note if they are over 18 or under 18; and
3. Photos must be emailed to caphillhousetour@gmail.com, in the highest resolution possible, by 11:59 pm on March 1, 2025.

This year, we are pleased to announce that we have four judges who will be considering the photo

entries: Frank Thorp, NBC News photographer; Amy Moore, executive director of the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop; Austin Graff, digital marketer/photography enthusiast; and Jenny Nordstrom, owner of Jenny Nordstrom Photography and the cover artist for the 2025 House and Garden Tour catalog.

The winning photographs will be displayed at the Coldwell Banker Realty office at 350 7th Street SE—just down the street from Eastern Market. All young person/student entries will be displayed. CHRS will hold an opening reception at a date to be determined in April.

In addition to having their photo displayed, the first place winner will receive tickets to the May 2025 House and Garden Tour. Honorable mentions will receive a free annual membership to CHRS. ★



IMAGE (DETAIL) COURTESY MATT JEX

A snowy scene on East Capitol Street by Matt Jex tied for 2nd Place in last year's contest.

Help Revitalize Stanton Park!

The Stanton Park Neighborhood Association attended the January 15 CHRS Board meeting to present their initiative to revitalize the park. If you are interested in learning more or would like to assist with this initiative, contact 6C03@anc.dc.gov.

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CHRS Seeks Nominations for the Board of Directors

By Beth Purcell

The CHRS Elections Committee (Chair Beth Purcell, Gary Peterson and Chuck Burger) is seeking nominations of individuals who wish to be considered for positions for the 2025–2026 CHRS Board of Directors. These positions include President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary, each for one-year terms; and two At-Large Members for two-year terms. Nominations for the 2025–2026 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 28, 2025. ★



IMAGE COURTESY LIBBY QUAD

Help CHRS Build Inventory of Historic District Signs

Do you have one of these signs in the neighborhood? Tell us where! CHRS wants to take an inventory of these historic district signs and start replacing any that are faded/worn, but we need to know where they all are. Send details to caphrs420@gmail.com, including cross streets and condition. Thank you!

Sidewalk Safety Update

By Fynnette Eaton

The “2025 DC Residents’ Report to Improve Sidewalk Safety: A Neighborhood Based Program Review” will be submitted to the DC Department of Transportation Oversight hearing on February 5. The report was created by a coalition of community groups and encourages the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) to update its 2009 Pedestrian Master Plan and develop better policies to deal with the problems posed by sidewalk hazards.

At the top of the list of recommendations is that the DC Council and DDOT change the Service Level Agreement for 311 sidewalk hazard reports from 270 business days to 60 calendar days. The report also urges the Council to provide sufficient funding in order for DDOT to meet the 60-day calendar day target 90% of the time.

Both CHRS and the Capitol Hill Village support this report. ★

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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 Public Safety* Vacant
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* Chair is an appointed Board Member

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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 January 8, 2025, five members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss one case. Representatives from that case were not able to participate to present their proposal. The Committee voted to support the case.

BZA #21219, 717 5th Street NE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's request for special exceptions for the lot occupancy requirements to construct a third story and a three-story with cellar rear addition, to an existing attached two-story with cellar flat in the RF-1 zone.

The proposed construction will include removing an existing covered rear porch (with landing and steps) and replacing it with a new enclosed addition and landing and steps. Lot occupancy will increase from 67.0% to 70.0 %, which is consistent with the 70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone.

Letters of support have been filed by adjacent neighbors. The Committee would be interested in any additional letters of support. ANC 6C has voted to support the proposal.

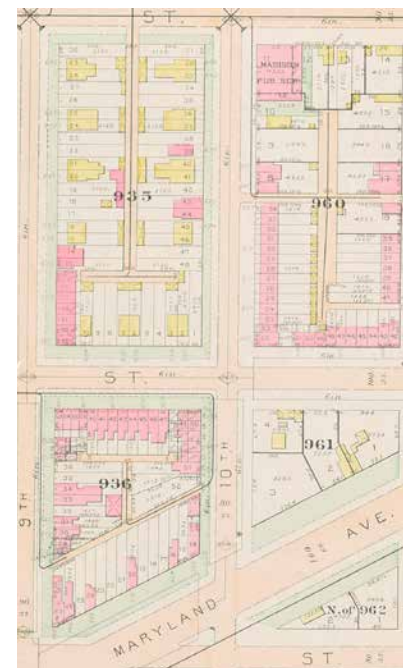
The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for January 25, 2025. ★

January House History Workshop

By Angie Schmidt

CHRS held a training session on January 11 at the Northeast Library with eight people gathering to learn how to look up historical information about Capitol Hill homes. Beth Purcell, our Historic Preservation Committee Chair, led the workshop, with help from Sandy Harrelson and Libby Quaid.

Participants were able to look up information about the houses on the 2025 House & Garden Tour and share tips and tricks for working in old databases. Our website has many of these resources. Visit chrs.org and or contact caphrs420@gmail.com if you need additional guidance. ★



This image is from an 1893 Washington, D.C., real estate plat book published by Griffith M. Hopkins.

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board), considered the following case at its virtual hearing on Thursday, December 19, 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.

16 3rd Street NE, HPA 24-472, concept/three story rear addition. For prior coverage see *CHRS News* December 2024–January 2025. The Board did not take a vote but asked the applicant to revise the plans to include less demolition and to retain the rear mansard roof and return for further review.

The applicant’s new proposal called for creating an access hallway to a new third story addition by eliminating one of the two dormer windows on the rear mansard roof. CHRS argued that this proposal would damage the house’s integrity. While the Board approved the concept, they found that the third story of the rear addition was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District because it obscured the original rear mansard roof.

Consent calendar

The Board had no Capitol Hill cases on its consent calendar. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.



IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL

The house at 16 3rd Street NE.

The 2025 House & Garden Tour

By Fynnette Eaton, Jackie Krieger and Angie Schmidt

We are looking forward to spring and the House and Garden Tour! We are pleased to announce that the Tour this year is going to focus on the NE part of the Hill—the tour is going to be in an area stretching from East Capitol to G Streets NE, bordered by 2nd and 10th Streets. We could use a few more houses and/or gardens. If you are interested in having your home (or think one of your neighbor’s homes should) be part of the Tour, you can reach out to us at caphillhousetour@gmail.com.

As always, we will be looking for docents and house captains for the Tour. No experience is required and all training will be provided. All docents will receive a complimentary pass for the Tour. Please mark your calendar for May 10–11!

Inclusionary Zoning: Is It Failing?

By Gary Peterson

A November 2024 report by the Office of the DC Auditor reveals that the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is failing to implement the inclusionary zoning (IZ) program. In DC, IZ is used as a planning and zoning tool for developing mixed-income housing by requiring each new residential development to make 8 to 10 percent of the new units affordable to targeted incomes. To offset the extra costs of development, it lets developers build more units by receiving a zoning density bonus.

IZ was enacted by the Zoning Commission in 2006. It took the mayor until 2008 to designate DHCD as the responsible agency and in 2011 the first units started to trickle in. In 2006, there were over 8,000 pending

requests for affordable housing. At that time, a single person making not more than 80% of the medium family income (MIF) of \$32,000 qualified for affordable housing. For a family of four, the MIF was \$72,000.

The goal of affordable housing is that not more than 38% of household income goes to rent and utilities; this limits the rent paid for the apartment. Of note: the downtown conversion of office space to residential has been exempted from IZ.

According to the report, there have been 2,380 IZ units produced as of the end of FY 2023. This is certainly better than no units, but much has changed since 2006. There are now 18,000 pending requests for affordable housing and the MIF for a family of four has changed to \$142,300.

Not all the reported units produced are either available or filled. It takes, on average, 13 months to fill a unit and the Auditor found eight units that have never been rented and many that took over 1,000 days to fill. DHCD has a target of 102 days to fill a unit, but there seems to be no urgency on the part of the administration to meet this target.

In 2005, CHRS testified against IZ, not in opposition to affordable housing, but to the fact that IZ was being oversold as a major solution to the affordable housing shortage that was not going to cost the city for the units. Despite the promise, IZ is not doing the job and any idea that it is a solution to the affordable housing crisis in the city is illusory. ★

February Preservation Café: Streetcars

By Marci Hilt

Preservation Cafés are back! On February 6, Eric Madison, executive director of the National Capital Trolley Museum, will discuss the role streetcars played on Capitol Hill from the mid-19th century to their eventual decline in the mid-20th century.

Madison will use a combination of historical photographs, maps and firsthand accounts. He will take you through the streets of Capitol Hill as they were—bustling with the iconic streetcars that connected our neighborhood to the rest of the city. The streetcar system influenced

the urban landscape, the daily lives of residents and the evolution of transportation in D.C.

The Trolley Museum, located in Montgomery County, Maryland, preserves and interprets the history of Washington's electric street railways; its collections include 17 streetcars. Visit their website at: dctrolley.org. ★

*Join us for this virtual presentation on **Thursday, February 6 at 6:30 pm**. CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to members and non-members. To receive a Zoom link, register at: chrs.org.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TROLLEY MUSEUM

Staying Warm in Old Houses, Part 1

By Judith M. Capen

We're reprinting articles from the November and December 1985 issues of the *CHRS News* by Judith M. Capen—admired architect and longstanding friend of CHRS. The article reflects the energy context of 1985—and then-current trends in efficiency and construction—but the cold air of 1985 is just like the cold air of 2025, so it's worth reminding ourselves that CHRS has been sharing guidance on how to stay warm for well over 40 years!

The glorious autumn days have a poignancy for dwellers in old houses beyond the usual pathos of fall. We dwellers in old houses have winter shivers to look forward to, unless we close up our old houses altogether and go south, or pay and pay to heat and heat them... Some of the chilliness is attributable to reduced thermostat settings, but much of it comes with the territory. While old houses have a number of comfort-enhancing features, they also have some features which inevitably detract from winter thermal comfort. And time and changing tastes have deprived them of some of the features which originally mediated their thermal liabilities.

To understand why we may have chilliness to look forward to this winter, first, let's look at the inherent thermal liabilities and assets of our Victorian era houses, and then we'll look at what the Victorians did to live with those liabilities. Next month I'll discuss what options are available to us to enhance our winter comfort.

Topping our list of thermal liabilities (and assets, oddly enough) is what professionals call the building "envelope." The envelope is simply the walls, roof, and bottom-most floor of the building. Capitol Hill townhouses have a fundamental envelope advantage in being townhouses: our exterior exposure is reduced by the extent that we have party walls instead

of exterior walls. We are participating in an involuntary form of socialism: through our party walls our neighbors are sharing their heat with us, as anyone whose neighbor has turned off his heat in the middle of winter knows.

However, because our exterior exposure is limited, reducing window area, we have open courts, or "doglegs," to increase light. Then some of our envelope/configuration advantage is lost since these doglegs create more exterior exposure. Thus, our front parlors are bounded by party walls and are toasty in the winter, while our kitchens and back rooms are chilly. Not only do the back parts of our houses have greater surface area and therefore lose more heat in the winter, but they also suffer a thermal comfort double jeopardy. Because the houses narrow to make way for the dogleg light shaft, the exterior walls are closer together. This means those colder exterior walls are closer to us, wherever we are in the rooms.

Since our bodies are operating at 98.6° F and the interior surfaces of our brick walls are much colder than that in the winter, our bodies engage in a totally involuntary and fruitless effort to warm those same walls up to body temperature. This is the second law of thermodynamics at work. In practical terms, the tendency of our bodies to radiate heat to cooler surfaces is why we are uncomfortable in uninsulated

brick houses, sitting near glass, or in any other situation when surrounding surfaces are cooler than we are, even if the air temperature is fairly high.

While we have relatively little exterior exposure if our houses are attached, the exposure we do have is a considerable thermal liability if the walls are the typical 8" to 12" solid brick with interior plaster found on most Capitol Hill houses. The resistance of that kind of wall to the transfer of heat is about one-seventh that of a wall we would design today. That means you and I are losing seven times as much expensive heat to the great outdoors through each square foot of exterior wall as is one of my clients who is living in a newly designed and built house.

Another set of interrelated thermal liabilities relates to the windows in our houses. If we are good preservationists, and lucky enough to have original windows in reasonably good shape, we probably have single pane glass in double hung windows with lots of crack area for errant winter breezes. The single pane glass means more cold surface area to tempt our body heating systems; the breezes are drafts.

Winters weren't any warmer in 1890 and heating systems were less efficient than today, so how did the original occupants of our houses manage to stay comfortable? While there is reason to believe there were physical culture nuts who revelled in cold baths in rooms where the temperature was just above freezing, I'm sure the majority of the Victorians sought, just as we do, to be as comfortable as possible.

So they did a number of things to alleviate winter shivers. They tried to reduce breezes and the impact of cold glass with interior shutters and

heavy drapes. They isolated drafts by cordoning off rooms with curtains at the doors. Ever notice those hollow cylinders near the tops of the door frames in a lot of our houses? Those were the end support for the curtain rods at those doors. The curtains were probably easier to move through than the pocket doors and formed a seasonal response: curtains in winter for drafts, no curtains in the summer to enhance ventilation. The interior shutters found at the windows of some of our houses were another attempt to control the

infiltration of colder air into the house at the window cracks.

In addition to the heavy fabric for door and window curtains, the Victorians also used textiles summer and winter to enhance the psychological sensation of thermal comfort. In the winter they brought out their wool rugs, heavy table cloths and runners all in warm-looking reds, roses, and maroons. They used quilts and comforters, also in warm colors, for actual night-time warmth and the daytime appearance of warmth. In the spring they transformed their houses

by trading wools in warm colors for cottons and silks in light colors and floral patterns. This seasonal change to accommodate climate has been referred to as a “summer dress” and “winter dress” for buildings.

A few final Victorian strategies for winter comfort included dressing appropriately (they were aided by fashion: long skirts are certainly warmer in the winter than short); bedwarmers for local and short-lived comfort; and fireplaces to supplement the somewhat rudimentary heating systems of the day and to provide radiant heating and psychological warmth.

Today we have removed many of the original shutters inside and out; have a set of year-round furnishings and window coverings; may have removed interior walls, giving the winter will-o-wisp breezes more of a run; and may have blocked up or abandoned fireplaces.

We have now catalogued some of our Victorian era houses’ thermal liabilities (and assets), and reflected on how the original occupants of our houses stayed comfortable through the winter. In our search for comfort, knowing what our houses’ thermal liabilities and assets are can be a help in suggesting responses. And we want to take some cues from the Victorians before we reach for the thermostat.

Next month, I will go into some detail about what we can do at several levels to be more comfortable in our houses this winter. ★

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

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Madison Burmeister
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Gary Martin



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.



Capitol Hill Restoration Society

FEBRUARY

1 Saturday

Submissions open for the CHRS Photo Contest; deadline March 1, 2025. Send to caphillhousetour@gmail.com; details on cover or at: chrs.org.

3 Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee meeting, 420 10th Street SE.

5 Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting, 420 10th Street SE.

6 Thursday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café (virtual). Eric Madison, Capitol Trolley Museum, will present. Register for Zoom link at: chrs.org.

12 Wednesday, 6 pm

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

MARCH

1 Saturday, 11:59 pm

Deadline for submissions for the CHRS Photo Contest. Send to: caphillhousetour@gmail.com.

3 Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee meeting, 420 10th Street SE.

5 Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE.

19 Wednesday, 6 pm

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

APRIL

2 Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE.

7 Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee meeting, 420 10th Street SE.

10 Thursday, 6 pm

70th Anniversary of CHRS and Membership Meeting in the North Hall of Eastern Market. Details to be announced!

Are you following CHRS on social media?

We're always posting—keep up to speed while you wait for the next newsletter!



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