



News

March 2025

CHRS on Future RFK Stadium Campus Use

There have been multiple community meetings regarding the development of the RFK campus, yet no actual design for this development, and we feel the need to state our public position on the matter and highlight previous promises made to the community.

CHRS supports progressive development of the RFK Stadium Campus in alignment with the important District goals foregrounded in the 2021 Comprehensive Plan and earlier studies and long championed by Mayor Muriel Bowser and other civic leaders.

We support land for athletic and recreational use; the inclusion of affordable housing; commercial and residential projects; continued public access to the Anacostia River Trail; and no development within 60 feet of the shoreline and wetlands next to the Anacostia River. In addition, we recommend a comprehensive study be made about parking and the need for expanded public transportation.

For the entire report, please visit chrs.org. ★

Enter the CHRS Photo Contest

By Matt Handverger and Marci Hilt

We are still accepting 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**.

The winning photographs will be displayed at the Coldwell Banker Realty office at 350 7th Street SE and all young person/student entries will be displayed. CHRS will hold an opening reception in April.

In addition to having their photo displayed at Coldwell Banker, the first place winner will receive tickets to the May 2025 House and Garden Tour. Honorable mentions will receive free year’s memberships to CHRS. More information is available at: chrs.org/photo-contest-2025.

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CHRS to Celebrate 70th Anniversary in April

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society will celebrate its 70th anniversary at a special spring meeting on Thursday, April 10, in the North Hall of Eastern Market, from 6–8 pm. The celebration is free and open to the public and will feature honors, thanks, memories, gossip, nibbles, and drinks.

“We have a lot of people to thank, a lot of successes to remember, and a lot of energy to move forward with the evolving challenges that lie before us,” CHRS President Angie Schmidt said. “We’re glad to invite the entire community to join our members

in raising a glass to the start of our eighth decade.”

The program is not only an anniversary celebration, she said, but is also a chance for newer residents and non-members to learn more about the group’s seven decades of activity to preserve and restore the unique character of Capitol Hill.

The celebration will happen under the roof of the Eastern Market—which CHRS, teaming with other community and civic organizations, worked for decades to preserve, and, after the 2007 fire, to rebuild and revitalize.

Founded in 1955, the CHRS works on behalf of Hill residents to offer protective-yet-progressive support on everything from door frames to freeway ramps, Queen Anne cornices to zoning kerfuffles, curb cuts to funding cuts—in the service of the beauty, safety, livability, and value of the neighborhood and its structures.

For more information about the event, visit chrs.org. ★

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. ★

The 2025 House & Garden Tour

By Fynnette Eaton, Jackie Krieger and Angie Schmidt

What are YOU doing May 10-11? We know the three of us will be responsible for the House and Garden Tour! And we are looking for volunteers to make this a successful event. No experience is required and all training will be provided.

The best part is that all docents will receive a complimentary pass for the Tour—just work a minimum of one docent shift (4–7pm on Saturday; 1–3pm or 3–5pm Sunday) or some other type of support work and you can enjoy the tour, too. All volunteers will also be invited to celebrate at the President’s Party, to be held on one of the following weekends.

Please consider helping out—it’s a great way to meet your neighbors and support your community. For more information, email us at caphillhousetour@gmail.com.

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Angie Schmidt
First Vice President Fynnette Eaton
Second Vice President Tina May
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At Large Beth Hague
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At Large Jackie Krieger
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Budget & Administration* Nick Alberti
City Planning* Monte Edwards
Communications* Marci Hilt
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* Vacant
Public Safety* Vacant
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 5, 2025, six members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss three cases. Representatives from three cases participated to present their proposals. The Committee voted to support all three cases.

BZA #21209, Rear 304/306/308 K Street NE. The Committee voted to support (6-0) the applicant's request for: 1) a special exception for the residential use of alley lot requirements; 2) an area variance for the new alley record lot requirements; and 3) an area variance for the lot dimension requirements.

The applicant is proposing to subdivide an alley lot in a RF-1 zone and construct two new one-family semi-detached buildings. The alley lot is currently vacant and will be divided into two equal size lots. The proposed construction will include two parking spaces for one of the units, and one parking space for the other.

Each proposed lot will each be 2,857 sq. ft., which is below the 3000 sq. ft. minimum lot area required for semi-detached alley dwellings. Zoning regulations require that new alley lots border an alley that is not less than 24 ft. wide and access to a public street through a public alley that is not less than 24 ft. wide. However, both proposed lots border on alleys that are less than 24 ft. wide.

Due to these deficiencies, the proposed subdivision and residential use require relief for two area variances and a special exception from zoning requirements. The committee concluded that given the location and size of the original lot, it would be difficult to conceive of many viable uses other than what the applicant proposes. Additionally,

the strict application of a zoning regulation would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to the owner of property.

The Committee's support is contingent upon the receipt of letters of support from neighboring properties. To date, no letters of support or opposition have been filed by neighbors. The Committee notes that the property directly adjacent has the same owner as the proposed project.

The ANC will vote on the proposal at its next meeting. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for March 19, 2025.

BZA #21227, 321 D Street SE. The Committee voted to support, with one abstention (5-1-0), the applicant's request for special exceptions for the rear addition requirements and the lot occupancy requirements to construct a two-story rear addition to an existing, attached two-story principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone. The home will remain a single-family dwelling.

The proposed addition will extend 21 ft. beyond the rear wall of the principal dwelling unit of the adjacent neighbor to the west, which is greater than the allowed 10' ft. However, the addition does not extend further than a second structure (a pergola) in that neighbor's rear yard. The proposed construction is 6' shorter than the adjacent dwelling unit to the east. The Committee notes that the existing home is extremely narrow, less than 14 ft. wide, necessitating a long rear addition to create usable interior space.

Lot occupancy will increase from 42.0 % to 61.0 %, which is consistent with the 70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone. A

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February Preservation Café Highlighted the Role of Trolleys on the Hill

At our February 6 Preservation Café, Eric Madison, executive director of the National Capital Trolley Museum, gave a fascinating presentation on the role streetcars played on Capitol Hill from the mid-19th century to their eventual decline in the mid-20th century. Almost 50 people attended this online event and a fun question-and-answer session followed the presentation. A recording of this Preservation Café is available at: chrs.org/streetcars-pc.

The Trolley Museum, located in Montgomery County, Maryland, preserves and interprets the history of Washington's electric street railways, and its collection includes 17 streetcars. For more information, please visit: dctrolley.org. ★



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TROLLEY MUSEUM

CHRS Testimony Before DC Council on Sidewalks

By *Angie Schmidt*

On February 5th, CHRS President Angie Schmidt testified before the DC Council Performance Oversight Hearing for the Committee on Transportation & the Environment. CHRS has been involved and supportive of the Ward 6 Sidewalk Safety Taskforce.

The testimony was a way to educate the Council on the history of sidewalks on Capitol Hill and to also encourage that DC's Department of Transportation

(DDOT) conduct the pilot project proposed by the Taskforce.

This pilot project sidewalk would be poured concrete colored throughout to the color of brick, and then stamped into a brick pattern. The Taskforce recommended that this be conducted in a DC-owned area with no adjacent houses or businesses. Schmidt noted that there are many wedge-shaped areas, or pocket parks, located on Capitol Hill which would accommodate this project.

For more information about the testimony and the pilot project, see chrs.org. A recording of the hearing is available at https://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=9275 ★

March Preservation Café with Architect Judith Capen

By David Pelizzari

The March Preservation Café, surveying the past 50 years of Capitol Hill architectural preservation and historical restoration, will be held on Tuesday, March 4, at 6:30 p.m.

The presentation will feature architect Judith Capen, founder and principal (with husband Robert Weinstein) of the firm Architrave PC, one of the DC's leading architectural firms. Since 1976, Capen's firm has specialized in historic preservation and sustainable design for many of

the city's postcard-worthy structures, including the Capitol itself, the House and Senate buildings, the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, the Holocaust Museum, and more. A map can be found at: <https://architravepc.com/map>.

Here on Capitol Hill, she and the Architrave team have provided constant expertise for owners dealing with vintage homes. Judith led the team that wrote the series of Capitol Hill Historic District Guidelines, in

use across the city and the nation (and available free at CHRS.org) for which Architrave won the 1998 Pro Bono Publico award from the Washington Architectural Foundation. That expertise will go live at the café, as attendees are invited to bring their questions to the virtual event.

CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to both CHRS members and non-members. You can sign up to receive the link to this Preservation Café at chrs.org. ★

Zoning, continued from page 3

sun shadow study has been provided, showing that the proposed addition will not adversely affect the light, air and privacy to neighboring properties, and will not visually intrude on the character, scale, and pattern of the neighborhood.

Eight letters of support have been filed by adjacent neighbors. ANC 6B has voted to support the proposal. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for February 26, 2025.

ZC #24-21, 1900 Massachusetts Avenue SE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the design of the applicant's proposal to construct a new correctional facility Central Detention Facility located at 1900 Massachusetts Ave, SE. The new facility will replace the existing correctional facility, which will be demolished during a future development phase.

The Department of Correction is requesting:

- Special Exception for large-scale government use in this zone

- Area Variance relief from the requirement that entrances on a primary street must be no less than 50 ft. apart
- Zoning Commission waivers from HE zones design requirements

The property is divided between the HE-3 and HE-4 zones. The proposed development includes two new structures, Building One and Building Two with public entrances facing Massachusetts Avenue SE. The design incorporates an outdoor pedestrian walkway and green space. The exterior of the buildings will feature a heavy metal scrim in a uniform color shade.

Building One and Building Two will be set from the property line and will be physically connected with a walkway. However, due to differences in elevation, the connection must be recessed. The committee supports zoning relief to allow the set back of the buildings and the recess of the connection between buildings, as strict

adherence to the zoning code would require the entire frontage of the structures be built to the property line.

Additionally, the committee supports zoning relief for the lack of multiple entrances along building facades, as it is not practical to have multiple entrances less than 50 ft. apart on this correctional facility.

The project is currently in the design approval phase. The planned schedule projects Building One to be constructed from 2027–2031, Building Two from 2029–2031, with a projected completion by 2035.

The Committee has concerns about the large, uniform mass of two adjacent and connected structures. We recommend the visual appearance of the façade be broken up, potentially by using more than one color shade or material or facade design to add variation to the building's exterior.

A Zoning Commission hearing date is currently scheduled for March 17, 2025. The project developers are currently in discussions with ANCs 7E, 7D, and 6B. ★

Staying Warm in Old Houses, Part 2

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!

In my column last month I discussed some of the thermal liabilities and assets of our old houses which will help to determine how thermally comfortable we are this winter. I also reviewed some of the ways the Victorians stayed comfortable in these houses. This month I will go into some detail about what we can do at several levels to be more comfortable in our houses this winter.

Looking again at a house's "envelope," and remembering that a major thermal liability of our houses is often little or no insulation, our first response is to improve its thermal performance through insulation. Insulation includes not only the addition of extra layers of glass at windows (through storm windows or double-glazed replacement windows), but also insulation at the walls and roof. Alas, if only adding insulation were as easily done as said. Storm windows as replacement windows have their preservation/aesthetic pitfalls. Building insulation not only has its preservation drawbacks but also its practical and economic ones.

The typical triple or double-track exterior metal storm windows are endemic to our neighborhood. If you have them already and aren't planning major window work soon, probably the best that can be managed is to paint them to disappear. If, however, your windows are in such poor

condition that they really cannot be refurbished, you can replace "in kind" with new, double glazed windows, sized to the original opening. Some people have fallen into the trap of thinking it too expensive to repair their windows but end up spending much more on windows custom made to fit existing openings. So, investigate costs carefully before committing to new windows. Naturally, reducing opening sizes to fit stock window sizes is inappropriate in a Historic District. The benefit of either exterior storm windows or new windows is the reduction of infiltration at leaky double-hung sash.

If you are fortunate enough to have original windows in good condition, you can still improve their thermal efficiency and your comfort by weather stripping. Actually, recent research in old building supply catalogues suggests that the Victorian were weatherstripping enthusiasts who often used elaborate systems of interlocking brass strips. The preservationist can feel that he or she is being true to the preservation spirit by installing or repairing weatherstripping. In addition to weather stripping, interior storm window systems are now available. They involve double glazing the existing sash from the interior using unobtrusive tape and magnet systems.

Insulating walls and roofs is difficult. Here again, we can be grateful for our limited exterior exposure. The problem breaks itself down into categories of greater and lesser difficulty to remedy. The major categories are: brick or frame construction, front façades or back of house, house in good condition or poor shape. According to my arithmetic, this gives us eight permutations. Of those, we take one category—brick house, good condition, front façade—and not worry about it. The cost/benefit of how hard it would be to achieve marginal improvement suggests that you hang heavy curtains for insulation. The frame—poor condition front and rear—categories suggest that you are likely to do major interior and/or exterior work which means you should be able to insulate stud cavities with fiberglass batt insulation easily. And, if you are replacing exterior siding, (depending on the direction the wind is blowing on the issue of aluminum vs. wood siding at the building permit department), you can use an insulated siding or sheathing.

Today, we try to achieve a thermal resistance factor (called the R factor) of 20 for walls. (The higher the R value, the better insulated the building is.) Your typical uninsulated wood frame wall of siding, plaster and lath is about R=4. A typical 8 to 10 inch solid brick wall with plaster on the inside is about R=3. You can see that adding 3 1/2 inches of batt insulation to a frame wall and perhaps 1" of insulating sheathing underneath wood siding to result in a R value of 17.5 is an extraordinary improvement. Unfortunately, we can count the Capitol Hill frame houses in poor enough condition to warrant

such extensive work on one hand. There are a few frame houses in good condition on the Hill whose owners might want to consider the various blow-in foam or insulation systems. Be warned, however, that there have been problems with some of the fiber systems. Do your homework and find a reputable contractor.

This leaves us with three categories into which the majority of our houses fall. That is: brick, in good or poor condition for the front and rear, or brick in good condition on the rear. In either of the good- or poor-condition rear cases, one option is to insulate on the exterior of the brick. This has several advantages. One is that the exterior insulation system provides a moisture barrier that your walls may not have. You also do not lose interior space to furring and insulation. And, if your house is in good condition with plaster moldings and window casings, it is not destructive to that interior work. The new exterior finish would look like plaster, and if on the rear of your house it is both less likely

to be visible from public space (and so protected as part of the Historic District), and the house is less likely to have significant architectural detail. The exterior insulation is not a viable option, however, for the front or principal façade of brick houses. In that instance, the only real option for a brick house in poor condition is to furr and insulate.

A disproportionate amount of a building's heat loss is through its roof (just like much of your body heat loss is through your head). But, putting a hat on your house is harder than putting one on your head. Here again, unless you are going to be doing work in replacing a roof or tearing down ceilings, you will probably need to consider a blow-in insulation system. For relative comparison, today's standard for residential roof insulation is $R=30$. An uninsulated roof is closer to $R=3.0$. This can have a terrible impact on your heating and cooling bills and on your comfort level whenever you are in the rooms at the roof level.

Good reasons to insulate, weatherstrip, install storm windows and the like include payoffs in comfort as well as savings on energy bills. Even so, when faced with the significant expense of much of this work, you may discover that it will take well into the 21st century to save as much on fuel bills as the work costs. At that point it is worth looking into the energy tax credits which allow you varying tax credits for energy conservation measures. Check with the IRS or your accountant for

credits that might apply to work you do, and do the work soon before all such "special interest" deductions are legislated away!

Over the past oil embargo years we have all been reading those utility company inserts in our bills about conserving energy. The challenge, of course, is to know which are appropriate to old houses in a Historic District. My focus here is not energy conservation, *per se*, but is more on enhancing thermal comfort. Glass doors on fireplaces help, but are probably not a good idea with wonderful marble Italianate mantle pieces.

There are, however, a number of relatively minor architectural and lifestyle changes which can improve your comfort in the winter.

Fans owe much of their current popularity to their effectiveness. They are a very good way to push heated air back down to where we are from our ten foot ceilings. (They are technically known as anti-stratification systems. Stratification is the term for the tendency of hot air to be at the top of the step ladder and cold air to be around your ankles).

If you are renovating and have a south-facing rear, (i.e. not street or principal façade), any additional double pane glass you add will be a net heat gainer and will help warm the colder rear of your house. It is important in those cases, though, to be sure the glass is well shaded for the summer condition. Likewise, a glass front door, if the front door of the house faces south, is a small solar panel.

Finally, we can take some behavioral hints from the Victorians who lived in these same houses before us. Dress warmly, use our interior rooms in the winter, hang drapes, and build fires. ★

In Memoriam: Ruth Ellen Wennersten

Longtime Capitol Hill resident and CHRS member, Ruth Ellen Wennersten passed away February 2, 2025. She is survived by her husband, Jack.

The Wennerstens moved to Washington, DC, in 2001, after academic careers. Ruth Ellen taught history at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, and accompanied her husband on extended teaching assignments across the world. She was a docent at the National Building Museum, a volunteer at Friends of the SE Library, an usher at the Shakespeare Theater, and an avid supporter of the Anacostia Watershed Society.

Capitol Hill Corner has a more complete obituary here: capitolhillcorner.org/2025/02/12/obituary-ruth-ellen-wennersten.



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

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.

4 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café (virtual). Architect Judith Capen will present. Register for Zoom link at: chrs.org.

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.

29 Saturday, 2–4 pm
Volunteer Capitol Hill 2025. More than 20 nonprofit organizations will meet with the public to share mission statements and solicit volunteers to assist in their work. Prospective volunteers have an opportunity to network with like-minded individuals and enjoy fun activities. CHRS will be participating—we hope to see you there! Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

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, 6–8 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!

 [CapitolHillRestorationDC](https://www.instagram.com/CapitolHillRestorationDC)
 [@CapHRS](https://www.facebook.com/CapHRS)