



## Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture: Connection to Place Is Key to Future of Cities Like DC

By Libby Quaid

**W**hat do you love about your city? What do you hope it becomes? Personal connections are the key to successful urban planning in cities like DC, said James Darius Ball, director of the National Building Museum’s Future Cities initiative.

Ball delivered the Capitol Hill Restoration Society’s annual Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture on February 11 at the Hill Center.

The goal of Future Cities is to make urban design and development about people’s ties to place, Ball said: “We want to increase a sense of belonging

in the process, so that we can increase the sense of belonging in the outcome.”

Ball mentioned DC’s Comprehensive Plan, the city’s 20-year vision of future land use, growth and development. The District’s Office of Planning began a full rewrite of the plan in 2025.

“When I approach you and I say, ‘Hey, do you want to talk about the Comprehensive Plan?’ It’s like, ‘No, I don’t,” Ball said. “But if we can approach them with, ‘What do you hope the future of your community becomes? What do you hope that your places that you care about have?’ That’s a starting point to a conversation.”

Rather than deciding in advance what cities should become, Ball said the initiative decided to pursue five “plotlines” or themes to help people find common ground: Affordable living, thriving communities, resilient infrastructure, health and innovative systems.

The hope is to bring people together on issues that often divide them along political and cultural lines.

Ball showed the audience a mapping tool called “I Hope This

Becomes.” Users respond, in person or online, by pinning locations on the map and adding written reflections. The platform has generated more than 2,000 entries, Ball said.

In entries about the future, the most commonly used word is “more,” he said—more walkable, more bikeable, more accessible, more affordable.

The online platform is part of Coming Together, an exhibition that opened in September about how US cities are responding to post-

CONTINUED PAGE 2



IMAGE COURTESY CHRS

James Darius Ball, director of Future Cities at the National Building Museum, delivered the 2026 Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture at the Hill Center.

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

#### ARTICLES

CHRS Board Nominations .....	2
Poetry Spring Invitational .....	2
Women’s History on the Hill .....	4
House Tour: Docents Needed .....	6

#### COLUMNS

Zoning Briefs .....	3
Historic Preservation Briefs.....	6
Thank You, CHRS Supporters.....	7

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Mark Your Calendar.....	8
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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 2026–2027 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 2026–2027 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](mailto: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 27, 2026. ★

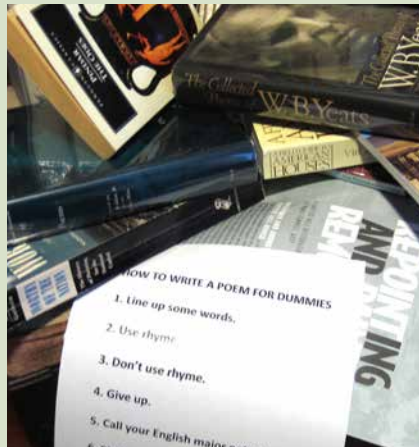
## CHRS Poetry Spring Invitational

By Euterpe Tuckpoint

The snow is gone. The Muse has descended and actually found a parking space. So, for April, which is National Poetry Month, she is inviting local Baudelaires and Emily Dickinsons to submit brief poems to the CHRS celebrating our lives and houses on Capitol Hill.

The Muse, of course, has Guidelines:

1. The joys and foibles of Capitol Hill life must be your theme.
2. Spring-oriented—we don't want to hear about winter anymore.
3. Length from a minimum of three lines—a haiku—to a maximum of 14 lines—a sonnet.
4. Deadline for submission of your poem is **Wednesday, March 18** at Midnight, à la Poe. Submit it to [caphrs420@gmail.com](mailto:caphrs420@gmail.com) with "Poem" or "Poetry Submission" in the subject line. If you miss our deadline, you'll just have to wait for the Pulitzers.
5. Any format is allowable: free verse to rigid meter, blank verse to rhyme. But if you label your poem a haiku, it must be a haiku; if a limerick, a limerick; if a sonnet, a sonnet; etc.
6. A special prize—yet to be determined—for the wittiest use of the word "mortar." ★



### Dick Wolf Lecture, *continued from cover*

pandemic shifts in downtown areas, housing and culture.

"This idea of community is so essential, arguably something we've lost post-pandemic," Ball said.

Programming extends beyond the exhibit. Last fall, the museum launched an online series, Future Fridays, that highlights personal narratives and community perspectives from across the country.

The March 6 Future Friday discussion is about DC, focusing on belonging and representation. You can register for the noon event through the Building Museum's website.

The initiative will build toward larger efforts through 2027, including more exhibits and a fall event that will combine arts and culture with opportunities to engage in DC planning.

The Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture is named for former CHRS president Dick Wolf, a city planner and activist who championed historic preservation. The lecture series features themes of historic preservation and urban planning in Washington. ★

# Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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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](http://chrs.org)

# Zoning Briefs

By Nick Alberti

On February 4, 2026, five members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met via Zoom to discuss five cases.

Representatives from two cases participated to present their proposal. The Committee voted to support four cases and to oppose one case.

**BZA #21368**, 507 and 509 L Streets NE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's requests for two area variances, for the front setback requirements of Subtitle E §206.2 and for the rules of measurement for front setbacks for residential houses and residential flats of Subtitle B § 315.1.

The applicant has constructed two two-family flats, after applying for the required building permits and receiving approval from the D.C. Office of Zoning. Post-construction, they were refused a Certificate of Occupancy, with the stated reason being that the new construction doesn't line up with adjacent buildings on the block due to the presence of a heritage tree. The new construction is set back 8' from the property line, because of the existence of a heritage tree located in the public space immediately in front of the properties; the neighboring buildings are set back 0' from its property line.

The Committee believes the test for the area variances have been met for the following reasons: 1) the applicant had requested and received pre-construction permits; 2) it would not be possible to meet the 0' set back requirement without the unlawful removal of the heritage tree; and 3) the existing set back of 8' does not have a substantial or negative effect on the neighboring properties.

To date, no letters of support have been filed from neighbors. ANC6C supports the applicant's request. The

BZA hearing is currently scheduled for February 25, 2026.

**BZA #21411**, 511 3rd Street NE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's request for a special exception for the lot occupancy requirements of Subtitle E § 210 to construct a two-story rear addition to an existing, semi-detached two-story plus cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1/CAP zone.

Lot occupancy will increase from 57.3% to 69.9%, which is consistent with the 70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone.

To date, three letters of support from neighbors have been filed, including from the one adjacent neighbor (there is an alley on the other side of the property) and the home immediately behind the property. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for February 25, 2026.

**BZA #21413**, 654 L Street NE. The Committee voted to oppose (4-0-1) the applicant's requests for special exceptions for the rear addition requirements of Subtitle E § 207.5 and for the lot occupancy requirements of Subtitle E § 210.1. The applicant is proposing to construct a three-story plus roof deck, rear addition to an existing, attached two-story plus cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The proposed rear addition will extend 18' beyond the adjacent neighbor to the south, and 8'10" beyond the adjacent neighbor to the north. The 18' extension is beyond the 10' maximum allowed under current zoning regulations. It would extend further to rear than all other residences on the block.

CONTINUED PAGE 7

# Women Drove Reform, Built Community on Capitol Hill

By Libby Quaid

We're highlighting a few places and people in honor of Women's History Month, beginning with a house that the Capitol Hill Restoration Society helped save when our organization began 70 years ago.

## Alice Paul and the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument

Suffragist Alice Paul played a crucial role in giving women the right to vote—a right that is only 105 years old. She helped lead the suffrage movement from Capitol Hill, where the house at 2nd and Constitution became the headquarters of Paul's National Women's Party.

Paul was raised in New Jersey and educated in Pennsylvania, then joined the suffrage movement in England, where she participated in militant protests and hunger strikes in the campaign for the right to vote.

In the US, Paul founded the National Women's Party and shifted the focus from a state-by-state effort to a federal crusade for women's rights based here on Capitol Hill.

Paul led the "Silent Sentinels" picket at the White House and in 1917 was arrested, imprisoned and force-fed at the Occoquan Workhouse.

The National Women's Party had been located in the Old Brick Capitol, which was used by Congress while the US Capitol was rebuilt after the War of 1812, then became a Civil War prison. But the party needed to find a new home in 1929: The entire block was being demolished to make way for the new Supreme Court building.

The house at 2nd and Constitution, one of the neighborhood's oldest, was built in 1820 by Maryland planter Robert Sewall on the site of his circa-1800 house that the British burned when it sacked Washington in 1814. The National Women's Party purchased the house in 1929 with funds donated by Alva Belmont, a National Women's Party president and its main benefactor.

A quarter century later, the house played an important part in the history of our group. Neighbors near Stanton Park formed Capitol Hill

Restoration Society in early 1955 to emulate restoration work done by property owners in Georgetown.

That spring, the group worked to save what was then called the Alva Belmont House. It was set to be razed as part of new Senate office building construction. CHRS president Richard H. Stringfellow testified during congressional hearings that it was imperative to "preserve a tangible place of history for the benefit of the country."

## The Maples and Journalist Emily Edson Briggs

Emily Edson Briggs was one of the first woman journalists, covering the Civil War in a series of letters from "Olivia," her pen name.

She lived for 40 years in the oldest house on Capitol Hill, The Maples, along South Carolina Avenue SE. In 1871, she bought the entire square, or block, including the Maples, which was built in 1795 for real estate speculator William Mayne Duncanson.

Briggs was one of the first women to cover the White House and was the first woman admitted to the congressional press galleries. In 1882, she was elected the first president of the Woman's National Press Association. She wrote for the Washington Chronicle and the Philadelphia Press for more than twenty years, and her stories included dramatic scenes from the floor of Congress, inaugurations, and the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. She used her pen to advocate for civil rights and women's suffrage.

Francis Scott Key purchased the Maples in 1815 following Duncanson's bankruptcy, and Constantino Brumidi decorated a ballroom addition. For

LEFT: Alice Paul toasting (with grape juice) the passage of the 19th Amendment.

RIGHT: The Maples on South Carolina Avenue SE.



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LEFT: Haines building on Barracks Row. RIGHT: Mary McLeod Bethune statue in Lincoln Park.

more than 70 years until 2008 it was the Friendship House Association community center, and today the Maples is a condo development.

### Elizabeth Haines and Her Department Store on Barracks Row

Have you heard of Elizabeth Haines? She had this building on Barracks Row built for her department store, advertised at the time as the biggest store in the world owned and operated by a woman.

Born in 1849 in Ohio, Elizabeth Haines had been married to a department store owner, Mahlon Haines, who died suddenly a few weeks after their third child was born. Elizabeth opened her own shop a couple of years later in Anacostia, then moved to a larger building on Capitol Hill on 11th Street SE. In 1891, she bought the plot at the corner of 8th and Pennsylvania, where builder William Yost & Brother constructed a three-story building designed by Julius Germueller.

Her store had 15,000 square feet of trading space and 50 different departments, according to historian Robert Pohl's *Lost Capitol Hill* column in *The Hill is Home*. A story about her was also part of the *Hill Rag's* Women of Ward 6 initiative.

Elizabeth Haines' store survived a depression in the 1890s, and her

charitable giving included posting bail for leaders of Coxey's Army, a protest march of unemployed workers that ended on the Capitol grounds. She also instituted a profit-sharing plan within her store, distributing profits among the heads of departments.

She sold the store in 1910 to Milton Ney and Joseph Goldenberg, and they ran it for several more years.

### Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial in Lincoln Park

The Mary McLeod Bethune statue was the first memorial on public land in DC to honor an African American, according to the National Park Service. It was also the first portrait statue of an American woman on public land in DC, the park service says.

The statue was erected in 1974 by the National Council of Negro Women. Bethune founded the group, a powerful organization that brought together many African American women's groups to advocate for Civil Rights, in 1935.

Bethune was a widely respected educator, civil rights leader, women's rights activist, presidential advisor, and public servant. She was from the South but her advocacy work brought her to the nation's capital—FDR named her to the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal program. As Director of the NYA's

Office of Minority Affairs, Bethune was the first African American woman to lead a federal agency in 1935.

At the time, according to the Smithsonian Institution, racial discrimination barred Black Americans from the Cabinet. But Bethune organized agency heads into a council of presidential advisors referred to as FDR's "Black Cabinet."

### Ruth Ann Overbeck and the Capitol Hill History Project

Ruth Ann Overbeck was an historian by profession and Capitol Hill



enthusiast whose work led to creation of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project.

It is a permanent, accessible repository of oral histories about the people and events that have shaped this community.

A Texas native, Overbeck went on her first CHRS House tour in 1968, between college and graduate school, and bought a house near Lincoln Park where she moved after graduate school in May 1970.

Overbeck wrote articles and reports about Eastern Market, the Marine Barracks, Washington Navy Yard and other landmarks. She published two guides to Capitol Hill and gave walking tours on the Hill.

More broadly, she did research for the US Naval Academy, the Department of Justice and architectural and engineering firms and also did research for homeowners about the histories of their homes. And she founded the Preservation Trust to protect historic facades; today the easements donated to the trust are held by the L'Enfant Trust. She was also an adjunct public history professor at West Virginia University.

Overbeck was a longtime member of CHRS as well as the Committee

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 January 22, 2026. 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.

**Rumsey Aquatic Center, 635 North Carolina Avenue SE, HPA 26-81.** New aquatic and community center. The Board did not take a vote but encouraged the applicant to simplify the massing, fenestration, parti, and to consider how the building could be made more of a civic companion to Eastern Market rather than simply deferential to it.

## Consent Calendar

The Board approved the following case on its consent calendar:

- **447 New Jersey Avenue SE, HPA 26-80,** concept/new construction of garage. ★

**Interested in learning more about historic district designation?**

Contact CHRS at [info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org).

IMAGES COURTESY DC DPR



Two views of the proposed design for the new Rumsey Aquatic Center: A bird’s eye view (LEFT) and the view from North Carolina Avenue SE (RIGHT).

## Looking for Docents for the 2026 House and Garden Tour

Please mark your calendar for May 9–10 for the House and Garden Tour! We are pleased to announce that the Tour this year is going to focus on the southeast part of the Hill, in an area stretching from A Street SE to Virginia Avenue SE, bordered by 1st and 9th Streets.

We will need lots of docents and house captains for the Tour to make sure everything runs smoothly. No experience is required and training will be provided. All docents will receive a complimentary pass for the Tour. Reach out to us at [caphillhousetour@gmail.com](mailto:caphillhousetour@gmail.com).

## Women’s History, continued from page 5

of 100 on the Federal City and other civic groups.

For decades, she collected oral histories, photographs and maps intending to write a definitive history of the founding and development of Capitol Hill, but the effort was cut short when she died at the age of 64 in 2000.

She gave a series of interviews in the final weeks of her life, and the conversations inspired the Capitol Hill Community Foundation to start the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project; visit at: [capitolhillhistory.org](http://capitolhillhistory.org). ★

The Committee concludes that the proposed dimensions of the three-story addition would adversely affect the use of neighboring property to the south.

Lot occupancy will increase from 64.0% to 70.0%, which is consistent with the 70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone.

The Committee notes that the two-story dog leg will be filled in. The applicant has filed a sun and shade study which shows little impact on light and air on the neighboring properties.

To date, three letters of support from neighbors have been filed, including from one adjacent neighbor. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for February 25, 2026.

**BZA #21414**, 218 F Street NE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's requests for 1) a special exception for the rear addition requirements of Subtitle E § 207.5 and 2) a special exception for the lot occupancy requirements of Subtitle E § 210. The applicant is proposing to construct a two-story plus cellar rear addition to an existing, attached two-story plus cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The Committee believes the configuration and sizes of the subject property and its neighbors presents an unusual and rare situation. The proposed rear addition would extend 28' beyond the adjacent neighbor to the east, and 12' beyond the adjacent neighbor to the west. The dwelling unit currently extends 16 ft beyond the dwelling unit to the east and reaches as far as the rear property line of that dwelling unit. Accordingly, the additional 12 ft of the proposed addition would border a parking pad that sits behind and is separate from the property to the east. As such, it

would have no impact on the light and air of its neighbor to the east.

The Committee notes that the two-story dog leg will be filled in, to construct the rear addition, and a new dog leg will be created. The newly created dogleg would separate the proposed addition from its western neighbor by 5 ft. Lot occupancy will increase from 57.4% to 63.6%, which is consistent with the 70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone.

The applicant has filed a sun study which shows minor impact of the proposed addition on the adjacent neighbors. To date, two letters of support from neighbors have been filed, from both adjacent neighbors. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for February 25, 2026

**BZA #21418**, 1427 D Street SE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's requests for special exceptions for the rear addition requirements of Subtitle E § 207.5 and for the lot occupancy requirements of Subtitle E § 210.1. The applicant is proposing to construct a rear addition with roof deck and a one-story accessory structure to an existing, attached two-story principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The proposed rear addition would extend over 16' beyond the adjacent neighbor to the east exceeding the permitted 10 foot maximum. However, the Committee notes that there is a one-story rear portion of the subject property that extends 16 ft beyond the neighbor to the east, and that the addition would be constructed over the existing one-story portion of the subject property.

The applicant has provided a sun and shade study showing no substantial impact on the light and air on the neighboring properties. Lot occupancy will increase from 50.5% to 70.0%, which is consistent with the

## Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

### CONTRIBUTORS

Annual Appeal  
Roberta Gutman

### MEMBERSHIPS

Individual  
Shauna Andersen  
Roberta Gutman  
Rachel Riley  
Michelle West

Household  
Don & Jean Denton  
Tim McDonald  
James & Susan Ramsey

Bronze  
Kitty Kaupp

Silver  
Denny Lane & Naoko Aoki  
Susan van den Toorn

Gold  
Brian O'Grady

70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone.

To date, eight letters of support from neighbors have been filed, including from the adjacent neighbor to the east. The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for March 4, 2026. ★

# CHRS

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 10th Street SE  
Washington, DC 20003

[chrs.org](http://chrs.org)

## Mark Your Calendar!

*Please check [chrs.org](http://chrs.org) for current information—cancellations or postponements will be posted as they are known.*

# CHRS

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

### MARCH

**1** Sunday

CHRS 2026 Photo Contest deadline.  
See [chrs.org/photo-contest-2](http://chrs.org/photo-contest-2) for  
information and entry form.

**2** Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**4** Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**10** Tuesday, 10 am

Communications Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**18** Wednesday, 6 pm

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

### APRIL

**1** Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**6** Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**14** Tuesday, 10 am

Communications Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**15** Wednesday, 6 pm

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

### Follow us on social media!



CapitolHillRestorationDC



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### MAY

**4** Monday, 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**6** Wednesday, 7 pm

Zoning Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**9** Saturday, 4–7 pm

**10** Sunday, 1–5 pm  
69th Annual CHRS House & Garden Tour,  
Mother's Day Weekend. Details:  
[chrs.org/house-tour](http://chrs.org/house-tour).

**12** Tuesday, 10 am

Communications Committee Meeting,  
420 10th Street SE.

**20** Wednesday, 6 pm

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