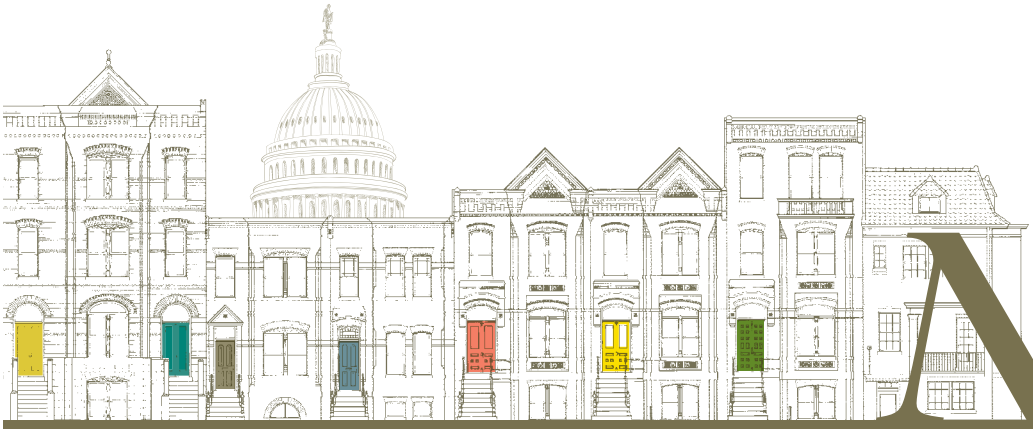


CHRS
Capitol Hill Restoration Society
News
November 2026

Preservation Laws Now Under Threat in Congress; Hill Rally Planned for November 9

By Rosemary Harold

The Trump Administration's effort to effectively gut the federal historic preservation rules at the agency level has now been joined by legislation being pushed through Congress during the lame-duck session. The proposed "Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act" (S. 5653) is a 400+ page behemoth of a bill that tackles comprehensive energy and federal permitting reform, with significant changes to the key preservation statute—the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)—tacked on at the very end of 71 sections.

S. 5653 was filed on the last day of the Senate session before its midterms election recess. Senators won't have much time to review the 400+ pages; the bill is scheduled to start moving on the floor with a "cloture" vote on Monday, November 9—just six days after the midterms.

The proposal arose out of two Senate Committees, the Committee on the Environment and Public Works and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The Chairs and Ranking Members of those committees are the bill sponsors: Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Mike Lee (R-UT), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM).

If passed, the legislation would amend Section 106 of NHPA by narrowing the scope of historic and cultural resource reviews, shortening timelines for consulting with outside parties (like local preservationists), and limiting a court's review power in cases involving energy and infrastructure projects. The bill also proposes extensive amendments to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and Federal Power Act.

S. 5653 is unlikely to stop the Trump Administration's efforts to undercut the existing federal preservation regulations, but it may

CONTINUED PAGE 2

Into the Gutters at the House Expo

On Saturday, October 31, CHRS held our annual free House Expo at Eastern Market—we got into the gutter, the crawlspace, and up against the brick walls of historic house joys and challenges. Nearly 30 organizations and businesses were on hand to provide advice and assistance for homeowners contemplating issues in paint, electricity, chimneys, roofing, windows and stained glass, woodwork, mortar, and even the kitchen sink. Thank you to our exhibitors and those who attended—we'll have a full report to share in next month's CHRS *News*.

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CHRS Voices Opposition to Natural Gas at Redeveloped RFK Site

Together with the Friends of Kingman Park, CHRS has sent a letter to DC Council voicing the organizations' opposition to the potential use of natural gas at the redeveloped RFK stadium site:

Dear Chair Mendelson and Councilmember Allen,

We write to express our opposition to any proposal incorporating natural gas infrastructure into the Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Stadium site redevelopment. Proceeding with a fossil-fuel-dependent design directly violates multiple District of Columbia laws and compromises the District's commitment to a world-class, sustainable development. We urge all of our elected representatives to uphold all parts of all of the DC laws regarding development and sustainability.

The regulatory framework governing this project leaves no room for natural gas infrastructure.

Key legal mandates regarding development on the RFK campus include the RFK Campus Redevelopment Amendment Act of 2025 (D.C. Law 26-54) requiring LEED Platinum specs, the Greener Government Buildings Amendment Act of 2022 (D.C. Law 24-306) banning fossil fuel consumption, the Clean Energy DC Building Code Amendment Act of 2022 (D.C. Law 24-177) enforcing net-zero standards, and Appendix Z of the DC Energy Conservation Code (Section Z3.1), which explicitly prohibits on-site fossil fuel combustion for thermal energy.

We appreciate your letter to the Green Building Advisory Council (GBAC) asking to "pause consideration of any exemptions to District green building requirements at least until the Energy Master Plan is completed and short and long-term costs and benefits of energy sources for the site have been fully evaluated." However, the law must be upheld in perpetuity.

The Commanders have claimed that the climate laws were made for office buildings and schools, but not stadium-scale construction. This notion is completely fictional. The law was made for public buildings, regardless of their purpose. If the Team and the Project Management Office (PMO) are concerned with a gap in power, there are sustainable alternatives. There is no need to burn fossil fuels at RFK, regardless of the reason or timeline. It is bad for our climate, for our air quality, and for public health.

At the first community meeting at Eastern High School on February 13, 2025, we listened as Mayor Muriel Bowser said, "Promises made, promises kept," and that "we can do it all." We expect the District and the developer to fully honor all DC laws and implement the readily available, LEED-approved renewable alternatives required to make this site a true model of modern sustainability.

Sincerely,

Alexis Pazmiño, President, Friends of Kingman Park

Angie Schmidt, President, Capitol Hill Restoration Society

S. 5653, *continued from cover*

affect timing. The new legislation and the proposed rules are largely consistent, although the Trump rule proposals go further. For example, both would narrow the type of development projects subject to the rule by limiting the law's scope to only projects that the federal government owns and controls—thereby allowing much private development to escape review, even if it receives government funding.

Opposition to the legislation in its current guise is building. More than 1,000 preservation entities, large and small, are trying to fight back. The new "106 Strong" Coalition already has ramped up lobbying efforts against the rulemaking and now is trying to organize a show of force against the bill on short notice. ★

What Can You Do?

The Section 106 Strong Coalition has scheduled a rally at the Capitol for November 9, the day of the cloture vote. Several CHRS Board Members plan to attend, and we encourage other CHRS members and supporters to join us. As of this writing, the rally's exact start time and meeting place have not been announced, but we expect that information to be available very soon. Visit **chrs.org** for updates, and check **106strong.com** for details about the rally, the legislation, the parallel rulemaking, and the Coalition's call for Members to reject S. 5653 and instead "reconvene in a new Congress to tackle permitting reform with transparency and integrity."

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

Zoning Report

By Nick Alberti

On October 7, 2026, five members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met to discuss three cases. Representatives from none of the cases participated to present their proposals. The Committee voted to support two cases and to oppose one case.

BZA #21491, 400 Seward Square SE. The Committee voted to oppose (5-0) the applicant's request for an area variance for the residential use requirements of Subtitle U § 301.5(b). The applicant is proposing to add three dwelling units to an existing semi-detached, four story plus in the RF-1/CAP zone. The property currently has 14 units which have a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O). The applicant seeks to obtain a C of O for a 15th existing unit in the cellar and to create two additional units in the cellar for a total of 17 units.

The Committee notes that the applicant had previously submitted an identical request approximately 5 years ago. At that time, the CHRS zoning committee opposed the request because the applicant did not meet the requirements for an area variance. The Committee agrees with the previous recommendation because the applicant's plans and conditions on the ground have not changed. The Committee suggests that the applicant investigate whether a map amendment would be a more appropriate way to accomplish their goals.

One letter of support has been filed from neighbors, and ANC 6B has unanimously approved the project.

The BZA hearing is scheduled for October 21, 2026.

BZA #21511, 311 F 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 § 210.1. The applicant proposes to construct a two-story accessory building in the rear of an existing, attached three-story flat in the RF-1/CAP zone. The property will remain a two-family flat.

Lot occupancy will increase from 52.5% to 69.9%, which is consistent with the 70% maximum allowed by a special exception in the RF-1 zone.

To date, no letters of support from neighbors have been filed.

The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for November 4, 2026.

BZA #21514, 1225 F Street NE. The Committee voted to support (5-0) the applicant's request for a special exception for the maximum building area requirements for an accessory building of Subtitle E § 5003.1. The applicant proposes to construct a second story to an existing accessory garage in the rear of an existing, attached two-story with cellar principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 zone.

The size of the existing garage is 580 sq ft. Zoning relief is required to add a second story because the size of existing garage exceeds the 550 sq. ft. area allowed by matter-of-right The Committee concludes that the proposed second story addition is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and would not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property.

To date, three letters of support from neighbors have been filed, including from the only adjacent neighbor.

The BZA hearing is currently scheduled for November 4, 2026. ★

CHRS Out in the Neighborhood

















TOP, MIDDLE ROWS (THIS PAGE): CHRS members receive a tour of the newly-renovated Southeast Library at the September Membership Meeting.

BOTTOM ROW (THIS PAGE): Participants at Congressional Cemetery's Dead Man's Run 5K on October 10. CHRS was a race sponsor.











IMAGES COURTESY NICK ALBERTI, CHRS, MARIANNE KLEIN, ELIZABETH NELSON

TOP ROW, MIDDLE AND BOTTOM RIGHT (THIS PAGE):
The CHRS Fall Walking Tours were a huge success! Participants attended tours on Architecture, the Civil War and Before, One-Block Streets in NE, SE and NE Alleys, and Fifth Street NE.

MIDDLE LEFT (THIS PAGE): CHRS members enjoyed a members-only Ghostly Capitol Hill tour by author and historian Robert Pohl (in black hat).



A Homeowner's View of the House & Garden Tour

By Angie Schmidt

As you know, our House & Garden Tour is held every year on Mother's Day weekend and it cannot happen unless generous neighbors volunteer to let us show their homes. CHRS has been doing this for 72 years without incident, but it's still the kind of public display of your home that not everyone feels like doing, even for a good cause!

I sat down with three homeowners whose homes were on the tour recently, to see how the experience went for them. Fynnette Eaton's (FE) home was on the 2019 tour, Rosemary Harold's (RH) was on the 2025 tour, and Clare Mamerow's (CM) home was on the 2026 tour. What follows is a lightly edited transcript of our conversation.

Angie Schmidt (AS): How were you first contacted about the tour by CHRS?

FE: I had been a docent for a number of years, so I was very familiar with the tour. I was approached by a CHRS member who had been to a professional event I had held at my house. She remembered the house, and she said that CHRS would love to show your house. So I didn't volunteer per se, but I didn't think twice when I was asked.

RH: I contacted YOU. So I have been a member of CHRS ever since we moved to the Hill in 1999. I've always been interested in historic neighbourhoods and grew up in a very non-historic neighbourhood, aka modern suburbia, which I fled. Before moving to Washington to go to law school, I was down in Key West, Florida, so I had a lot of exposure to Victorian era neighbourhoods. So I joined CHRS and donated money. That was it, other than being a docent a couple of times. Once I finally retired, I warned my husband that I was going to put our house on the tour. We'd done a lot of stuff to our house, actually. And it all finally had gotten done to the point where we could show it off. So I volunteered in part to support the neighborhood and the organization and in part to show off the work we'd done.

CM: Angie, herself, put the note in my mailbox.

AS: Yes, I wanted your house. We looked along your block because we knew we were going to be using the 507 event space on 8th Street as our tour headquarters. I've always been fascinated by the shotgun houses because I had attended GWU and my professor was John Vlach, who was the definitive writer of everything vernacular architecture and had taught me about them. And so I saw your house and knew it was important and somewhat rare.

CM: It actually took me a while to decide. It's funny. I got the note from CHRS in my mailbox in late fall. I had been a docent numerous times, so I knew what the tour was like, but I didn't think my house was special and the idea of having people in my house was hard for me. I talked to lots of people about whether or not to be on the tour. And people were either like, "Absolutely, yes! It'll be fun! Your house is so great!" And other people would be like, "Oh no! I would never let anyone in my house! How could you even consider it?" So I was flipping back and forth. Over Christmas, I bought a new mattress. These big, burly, delivery men came in to take my old mattress away, and one of them literally stopped and said, "This house is really cool." And I thought, "Oh, my house WILL be well received!" So then that was when I emailed you and said I would be interested in learning more.

AS: And next month your house will be featured in *Preservation* magazine!

CM: Yes, the author saw it on the 2026 House & Garden Tour and sent me a previous issue of *Preservation*. They always have an article where they interview someone to talk about what they've done to preserve the house. And I said, I haven't done anything except not ruin what they've done before! But the author said that they were trying to make people understand there is an array of things that fall into preservation. There are people who meticulously go back and they find the exact doorknob, etc. And she said, we love those people, but we want people to understand that preservation is about making places liveable, and if that means you just try to find something that's reasonable, you're a perfect example.

AS: We try to show exactly this on the House & Garden Tour! I think it's also, you know, figuring out solutions of how to live in smaller spaces when some modern furniture is enormous now and it's hard to find the thing that fits into your space. It's also storage solutions and those are all the things that people look at when they go on house tours and open houses anyway—"what are the sneaky solutions that you wouldn't think about?"

CM: The author also asked me a lot about the fact that there has been a long line of female owners of the house—I'm the fourth of a line of them.

AS: Rosemary (CHRS) did a very good write up of the history of your house.

CM: Between being on the CHRS Tour and being interviewed for *Preservation*, it made me appreciate how you can live in beautiful historic places and it's really great. ★

Unbottle the Bottle Bill

By David Pelizzari and Joanna Kendig

The DC "Bottle Bill" has been aging like a not-so-fine wine since January 2025, and that's long enough for even the most discriminating palate. The bill aims to reduce trash and improve the District's environmental responsibility by bringing us up to par with other jurisdictions around the country that have long had such good practices in place.

What can we do as individual citizens to help get the bill moving again? Two easy things.

First, sign the online petition to get it passed. You can find the online sign-up here: 3rcfordc.org. The link to add your name is at the very top of the page. Easy peasy.

Second, call or send an email to the DC Council telling them to get a move on. The more they hear from individual residents, the likelier they are to understand the bill's importance. Here's who to contact:

Ward 5 Councilmember
Zachary Parker
(202) 724-8028
zparker@dccouncil.gov

Ward 6 Councilmember
Charles Allen
(202) 724-8072
callen@dccouncil.gov

Ward 7 Councilmember
Wendell Felder
(202) 724-8068
wfelder@dccouncil.gov

If you live in some other Ward, then contact your specific Councilmember or one of these two at-large members:

At-Large Councilmember
Christina Henderson
(202) 724-8105
chenderson@dccouncil.gov

At-Large Councilmember
Elissa Silverman
(202) 724-7772
esilverman@dccouncil.gov

And here's some generic language to use. Fix it up with your own words for your phone call or email:

Dear Councilmember [So and So]:

My name is [So and So] and I live at [such and such an address]. I'm asking that you support passage of the Bottle Bill, #B26-0058, in upcoming hearings and in every other way you can. Bottle bills have worked for decades all around the country to reduce trash and improve the quality of community life—environmental as well as visual—and they can work here, too. The District should set the standard for the nation, not trail behind.

As a voting constituent, I am asking you to support the Bottle Bill, for our community's sake today, and for the future sake of the next generation of District residents. Thank you!

With enough voices sharing a message like this one, we can get that Bottle Bill passed. ★

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

CONTRIBUTORS

General Donations

Anne Womeldorf & Laurence Pearl

MEMBERSHIPS

Individual

Laura Canfield
Steven Crowley
Kristen Oldenburg
Elizabeth Purcell

Household

Ella Sullins & Josh Duncan
Nina Tristani

Silver

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Gold

Jeffrey A. Menzer & Eric Rosenthal

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Mark Your Calendar!

CHRS
Capitol Hill Restoration Society

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

NOVEMBER

2 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee Meeting, 420 10th Street SE.

4 Wednesday, 6 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

10 Tuesday, 10 am
Communications Committee Meeting, location TBD.

18 Wednesday, 6 pm
Board Meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

DECEMBER

2 Wednesday, 6 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

7 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee Meeting, 420 10th Street SE.

8 Tuesday, 10 am
Communications Committee Meeting, location TBD.

16 Wednesday, 6 pm
Board Meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

JANUARY

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

6 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

12 Tuesday, 10 am
Communications Committee Meeting, location TBD.

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

Are you following CHRS on social media? We're always active—keep up to speed while you wait for the next newsletter!

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