



NEWS

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December 2004

City's Newest Heritage Trail Highlights Barracks Row Neighborhood

by Nancy Metzger

Question: What church on Capitol Hill was designed by Calvin T.S. Brent, the first African-American architect to practice in Washington?

Question: What was the name of the first housing development on the site now occupied by Townhomes of Capitol Hill (aka Ellen Wilson)?

Question: Who was the slave who wrote a graphic description of the British Army entering Washington in 1814?

The answers to these questions can be found by walking the Barracks Row Heritage Trail (or if you just can't wait to find out, check the end of this article). Just in time for your holiday visitors, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, Barracks Row Main Street and Cultural Tourism DC have unveiled 'Tour of Duty,' the city's third self-guided neighborhood heritage trail. The trail consists of 16 poster-size illustrated signs, which combine story-telling with historic images.

The first sign is located at the Eastern Market Metro Plaza and the last is at Eastern Market. In between, the signs direct the visitors to proceed south down Eighth



Street, detour over to Ninth Street to catch the Old Naval Hospital and the Marine Corps Commandant's House, and then return to Eighth Street and proceed down to the Navy Yard gate. On the way back, the trail will loop by Seventh and I Streets, on to G Street, through F Street Terrace alley, on to Marion Park, Friendship House, and to the Market.

The 90-minute self-guided tour allows residents and visitors to proceed at their own pace, stopping in shops and restaurants along the way. A booklet provid-

Shannon Baum Signs employee finishes installation of Heritage Trail sign opposite Christ Church. Photo: Norm Metzger

ing additional information will also be available at local merchants. In addition to maps, photographs and documents culled from collections at the National Archives, Library of Congress, Washington Historical Society, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library and similar institutions, many residents and former residents opened their family photo

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President's Column

by Rob Nevitt

This is the season for reflection. The year is coming to an end, Thanksgiving behind us and Christmas ahead. It is a time to count blessings and Capitol Hill is a pretty good place to do that. It is easy to find words to celebrate our unique urban village and the special spirit that animates it. This week, a visiting California family stopped me on the street because I have a dog that reminded them of the one they left at home. They were full of marvel at what they found in their temporary home here, a feast for the eyes and friendly people (and dogs). Flip the pages of our community newspapers and there is a wonderful menu of activities and diversions right here or nearby.

The year has seen initiatives that wield an influence on our urban village, for good or ill. That last is not a toss-away cliché. The “good” or the “ill” is a profound question, because short-term decisions have long-lasting effects.

The year has also seen initiatives that wield an influence on our urban village, for good or ill. That last is not a toss-away cliché. The “good” or the “ill” is a profound question, because short-term decisions have long-lasting effects.

There has been a lot of infill building in our neighborhoods. Schools, parking lots and empty spaces have sprouted townhouses and condominiums, testimony to the huge drawing power of living in the city. CHRS has found developers willing to accommodate neighborhood concerns. Most have exceeded the requirements for providing parking spaces and have been willing to spend more to harmonize their facades with the existing properties. We also have been meeting monthly with Department of Consumer and

Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) managers to try to remediate offensive abandoned and neglected properties and bring them to useful life. This has been maddeningly slow, because the system is slanted to favor the rights of the owners, even irresponsible ones.

These projects are important, but not what I think of when I think of the impact of external events. Larger pressures come from the visions of the denizens of the Wilson Building and the aspirations of business developers. If the California family is reading the local news, they would be excused if they thought that the Council and the Mayor spent all their time planning for the return of baseball to DC and the building of a stadium to accommodate it. The macroeconomics of investment in sports aside, there is an obvious question

of the diversion of time, energy and money from other municipal needs and the impact of attracting fans onto our city streets.

Streets and our neighborhood also could be much impacted by the Anacostia River Crossings plans, about which you can read more in this issue. There is evidence of some good planning in these studies, but it is being sacrificed for short-term, cheap illusory solutions to commuter choke points. CHRS is calling for moving to real, long-term, rational solutions that show more concern for keeping cars off residential streets.

Security is another banner under which authority finds it easy to advance the march into our streets. Widening a secure “green zone” around the Capitol immediately includes the residential streets in



the blocks to the east. Whatever you think of the effectiveness of checkpoints and barricaded streets as security measures, the impact on the fragile fabric of our historic streets is huge. Station Place, the building going up next to Union Station, is living up to the problems we predicted when we were lobbying for changes to that design. It looms over the nearby homes and is drawing still more traffic into F and parallel streets. Real and imaginative efforts are required to dam the flow of commuter and truck traffic before it reaches our neighborhoods.

M Street, SE, Reservation 13 and other large-scale developments seem to be proceeding in response to short-term needs rather than long-term planning. There ARE plans, including ward plans and the Ward 6 Plan is a pretty good blueprint. CHRS is committed to defending Capitol Hill from the pressure on our perimeters and on our streets. Central to our arguments, central to our reason for being, is respect for planning, respect for neighborhoods and respect for residents' views.

Another feature of this time of year is making resolutions. Ours is to keep up this work we do in your name. I hope yours is to increase your support of the Society with your participation and encouragement of new members.

Best wishes for the Season! ✨

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Founded almost 50 years ago to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is now the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the entire District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood.

Zoning News

by Gary Petersen

The CHRS Zoning Committee did not meet in November because there were no cases scheduled by either the Zoning Commission or the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) in December that were of interest to CHRS. However, there are two cases that are scheduled in January and the Zoning Committee will meet at 7:30 PM on December 9 in the first floor conference room at 420 Tenth Street, SE, to consider the cases.

The first case is the application of Jay and Patricia Adelstein to add a two-story addition to the rear of 315 Seventh Street, NE. The Adelsteins need a special exemption from the BZA to increase the lot occupancy to 70 percent. The second case is before the Zoning Commission and is an application from the Abdo Development for a planned unit development (PUD) and a zoning map amendment for the property at 220 H Street, NE, formerly the Capital Children's Museum

site. Abdo wants the site's zoning increased to C-3-C from C-3-B and C-3-A and wants to build approximately 500 new residential units.

In other news, Toye Bello has been named as Zoning Administrator. The post has been vacant for a number of years and the acting Zoning Administrators have not done a very good job of applying the zoning regulations. Bello has a degree in Urban Planning and comes to the job after two years with the BZA as Zoning Compliance Manager and twelve years in the Zoning Administrator's office. He has served as Acting Zoning Administrator and in that capacity decided that Boys Town should get a building permit without going through the BZA. This ruling was subsequently reversed by the BZA. The CHRS Zoning Committee looks forward to working with Bello and we hope that the problems at the Zoning Administrator's office are now resolved. ✧

Newest Heritage Trail *continued from page 1*

albums to contribute images never published before.

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society, through its Historic Preservation Committee, has participated in the program since the beginning, seeking to highlight the richness of the neighborhood's history to the residents, thus promoting the importance of the Capitol Hill Historic District. A Historic Advisory Committee was formed to suggest themes and stories and to review the signs for accuracy at several points during the process.

The DC Neighborhood Heritage Trails program was initiated by Cultural Tourism DC with two goals in mind: to help visitors find their way around Washington's historic neighbor-

hoods and to promote community pride. Funding for the trail was provided by the Department of Housing and Community Development, District Department of Transportation, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Additional cooperation was provided by the National Park Service. ✧

Answers to the questions at the beginning of the article: 1. Mount Jezreel Baptist Church (now Pleasant Lane Baptist Church) at Fifth & E Streets, SE; 2. Navy Place (below G Street, SE, between Sixth and Seventh Streets); and 3. Michael Shiner, who worked for 52 years at the Navy Yard as both slave and free man.

Summary of Planning Activities Affecting Capitol Hill

by Dick Wolf

As we end the year 2004 and enter the year 2005, there is, again, a series of activities on the planning front that affected the development of Capitol Hill. Among those activities are the Comprehensive Plan Revision Task Force; the Eastern Market Plaza Revitalization Plan; the planning efforts of the Architect of the Capitol; and the on-going problems of making security for the Capitol effective, attractive, and as un-intrusive on the city, and particularly, Capitol Hill, as possible.

The Comprehensive Plan Revision Task Force

This group has held several meetings and will meet at least once a month for the next fifteen months to revise the format of the comprehensive plan; develop procedures for creating the substance of the plan; create structures for on-going plan changes, and create a process for plan implementation. Ward 6, and especially Capitol Hill, have been the beneficiaries of a clear, detailed Ward Plan that, with modifications, has served us well. With the assistance of historic preservation protections, the Ward Plan has been used in our zoning cases and in dealing with Government agencies of all stripes in "holding the line," so that over a long period of time we have gotten much of what was called for in Plan policies and directives. Those things we have not gotten have been because of Governmental failures to implement the Plan now six years old.

The Office of Planning has been the foremost critic of the existing Comprehensive Plan, but many of the problems can be attributed to OP's failings, such as its failure to implement zoning changes to assist business development; ignoring the required buffering in support

of the enormous SEC development, failure to carry out zoning plans for the revitalization of H Street NE and Reservation 13, failure to link other plans—particularly in the transportation area—with the directions in the Ward Plan, and failure to link capital spending plans with planning policy and goals. Whether or not a new planning format, processes, and procedures will remediate these issues is problematic.

In the meantime, CHRS will remain committed to those principles in planning that have served us well. These are community-based planning, area plans that are specific to our needs (and we believe those of the city), thorough and timely implementation of plans, and the creation of a local planning commission. Mostly through our own efforts, planning has created the framework for revitalization of this neighborhood. This includes enormous private investment in old housing stock, the creation of new housing integrated into the existing community, and substantial commercial redevelopment—including new small businesses, the most difficult and risky kind of investment. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is a whole new generation of families committed to the Hill—its schools, libraries, the arts, and the other institutions that make up this community. Perhaps we have lessons for the rest of the city.

Eastern Market Metro Plaza Project

CHRS and its partner CHAMPS have completed the first phase of our efforts to rebuild the Eastern Market Metro Plaza as a gateway to the Capitol Hill Central Business district—Market Row and Barracks Row Main Street—Navy Yard and the Anacostia River. Our landscape architects, Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, with Lisa Delplace

as Partner-in-Charge, completed their concept plan after it had been subjected to numerous community meetings where it gained approvals and support from virtually all affected community organizations and governmental entities. The next phase will entail detailed planning, subject to funding (which may be in the offing), and the conclusion of an arrangement with the Park Service—the reservation owner, as to a process for planning, construction, and maintenance. We believe this will pave the way for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan direction to enhance Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, as one of the primary, ceremonial entrances to the United States Capitol.

Capitol Grounds Planning

Following our June meeting with the Architect of the Capitol and his staff and further such meetings with several other Capitol Hill community groups, it has become evident that it is time to bring the various Hill organizations together to form a community consultative group with respect to the Architect's master planning effort. A similar group was formed 20 years ago during the first master plan effort by then Architect of the Capitol, George White. Out of that consultation came recognition of the importance of a healthy Capitol Hill community adjacent to the Capitol grounds; the principle of Capitol grounds development on a north/south axis, rather than going east into the Hill; a "soft" interface between the Capitol grounds and the Hill community; and the enactment of the Capitol Interest Overlay in the zoning code. The overlay extends from the Capitol grounds east to Sixth Street, running from the freeway on the south to F Street, NE, on the north. The overlay is more limited as to height and uses in the commercial areas covered and gives policy

Dead Men Do Tell Tales—

At the November Preservation Café

by Donna Hanousek

Did you ever wonder about the people who have lived in your house? At the November Preservation Café, Patrick Crowley, vice chair of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery, illustrated how the cemetery records led to a long-forgotten view of some Capitol Hill residents. According to Crowley, there were two unrelated persons listed in the 1905 Daily Log as having died of gunshot wounds at 750 Ninth Street, SE. Some investigation led to a newspaper article that revealed the story. Mr. Bottomly regularly visited Mary Scheitlin at her home on Ninth Street. Mrs. Scheitlin's husband found them together and shot them.

Crowley explained the house genealogy resources that are available at the Cemetery:

- ✧ Interment List—Lists all persons interred at the cemetery in alphabetical order with date of death and Range/Site location. An Interments Book is scheduled to be published in 2005.
- ✧ Range Book—Lists all persons interred at the cemetery by location, with family plot delineated and the proprietor identified, and interments by site and date. The Range Book has been photographed and may be published.

✧ Daily Interment Log—Lists all persons interred at the cemetery by date, with the last known address, age of deceased, cause of death, date of death and interment, location of burial and undertaker. Daily Logs are available from 1820-1973. (Volunteers are needed to transcribe the Logs.)

✧ Death Certificates, Obituaries, Newspaper Articles.

All the resources above are available at the gatehouse office. Call 202-543-0539 or email congressionalcemetery@att.net to make an appointment or ask questions. Some but not all of the death certificates, obituaries and newspaper articles are on line at www.congressionalcemetery.org.

The Preservation Café, held on Wednesday, November 17, at Trattoria Alberto, began with a very brief overview of the map and building permit basics by Donna Hanousek, historic preservation researcher and a member of CHRS's Historic Preservation Committee. In a nutshell, it starts with knowing your lot and square and then doing some map research. Historic maps can show you when a building with a footprint like that of your building first appears on your lot. They also give you the original and other earlier lot numbers for your lot (lot numbers did change), which is necessary for either permit research (permits are indexed by lot and square) or tax record research (necessary for

structures built before 1877).

Café attendees received a copy of a "How To Research" document produced by the DC Office of Historic Preservation that explains what the different maps and atlas are and how to tackle permit and tax record research. Crowley also mentioned other tools useful to the historic house researcher: title searches, property tax assessments, mechanic liens, building permits, fire insurance maps, city plats, county or city histories, and historic association site files.

The Preservation Office hand-out is pretty thorough but this stuff can get tricky, and a 45-minute Preservation Café can only skim the surface of house history research. If you are serious about doing house history research, you could take the 3-hour House Historic Research workshop given a few times each year. To keep informed of the workshops and other lectures and seminars that might be of interest, you can join the H-DC (DC History) listserve through www.h-net.org or contact the library of the Historic Society of Washington, DC (contact Gail Redmann at gredmann@citymuseum.org).

Further, DC Preservation League has been offering the workshop each year during its Row House Month in September (info@dcpl.org).

At the end of the Café, there were also questions about conservation easements and their related tax deductions. The process is complex, so we have asked Carol Goldman, President of the L'Enfant Trust (the organization in DC most experienced with conservation easements), to walk us through the process and answer your questions at the February Preservation Café. More information about this and other Preservation Cafés will be available in the February *News*. ✧

Continued from previous page

protection to the residential areas. We would hope to at least maintain these gains in this phase of master planning. However, this time around we are faced with the ugly and pervasive problems of physical security for the Capitol, which we hope can be dealt with in ways

which preserve some of the historic open access to the Capitol and restore some of the physical attractiveness of our streets adjacent to the Capitol grounds. This will be a problem which will probably dominate our discussions with the Architect over the next few years. ✧

Give CHRS Membership to Someone Special!

by Charles McMillion

What better time than the holidays to share your good fortune of living on Capitol Hill and being a CHRS member? Just think of all your friends and family (even neighbors!) who are not CHRS members and how much they would love to receive a gift membership for the holidays.

They too can read the NEWS each month and be “in the know” about the truly important happenings on Capitol Hill. They will thrill at the constant vigilance and heroic battles of CHRS volunteers to preserve the family-friendly character and unique urban heritage of our community. They will be among the first to learn details of our Mother’s Day House and Garden Tour, Preservation Cafés

and so much more during this our 50th Anniversary Year.

Your gift of CHRS membership might spur family or friends to use their talents and volunteer for one of CHRS’ committees or many other vital community projects. Membership forms can be printed directly from the CHRS Website, www.chrs.org. Simply mail the completed form with your check back to CHRS at P.O. Box 15264, WDC 2003-0264. Your gift membership will start within days.

For those on your holiday gift list who are already CHRS members, we have several colorful new items to help them show the world the real Capitol Hill. Our great new logo—and top national preservation award notice—is now available on high quality tote bags, coffee mugs, tee



Photo credit: Charles McMillion

shirts and decals. The tee shirts come in gray or brick-red, short sleeves or sleeveless.

For the holidays, we are offering a CHRS New Member Gift Package that includes: an Annual Household Patron Membership; 2 CHRS Coffee Mugs; 2 CHRS Tee Shirts; 2 CHRS decals; 1 CHRS Tote Bag for a mere \$100.

For those wise CHRS members on your list, our CHRS Household Member Gift Package will be just what they are hoping to receive. This includes two tickets to the 2005 CHRS House and Garden Tour; 2 CHRS Coffee Mugs; 2 CHRS Tee Shirts; 2 CHRS decals; 1 CHRS Tote Bag for the low price of just \$80.

You can also buy the new CHRS items and memberships separately. The great new CHRS mugs are \$6 each, tee shirts are \$12, tote bags are \$20 and decals are 50 cents each. Annual memberships are \$25 for a single resident, and household memberships are \$30 (Basic), \$60 (Patron) or \$120 (Sponsor). And, of course, there is no other gift that says “forever” like a lifetime household membership to CHRS for \$1000.

So make your shopping list and bring it and your checkbook to the CHRS office (420 Tenth Street, SE/basement) any Saturday morning between 10:00 and noon through December 18. Happy holidays! ✧

Call Box Update

by Nancy Metzger

Keep your eye on the old police call box at Eleventh & C Streets, SE. Artist Betsy Damos will be working during stretches of good weather to finish painting the box and to insert a plaque about the nearby Home Theatre building. We’re still looking for a financial sponsor for this box—which could be you (or a group of film buffs or residents near the box) for a contribution of \$500. Contributions to the call box project are tax deductible. For more information, contact Nancy Metzger through the CHRS office (202-543-0425; CapHRS@aol.com).

Solving technical problems (such as keeping the doors shut on the boxes and working with new techniques) continues to keep the artists moving slowly in finishing the installations but expect that a number of boxes will be finished in early Spring 2005.

There will be another Design Review meeting in late February or early March for those who would like to get started on a box. For details on how to get involved with the Call Box Project, check the CHRS Website / Call Box Revitalization Project at www.chrs.org. ✧



The second call box awaits its plaque. Photo: Norm Metzger

CHRS Asks for Meeting to Discuss Traffic Issues

Truck Traffic, Station Place, and Barney Circle on Agenda

by Brian Furness

CHRS has asked for a meeting with DC Department of Transportation Chief Dan Tangherlini to discuss a number of traffic issues facing Capitol Hill. Those of particular concern include a soon-to-be-released study on truck issues that recommends Third Street be designated a truck route, traffic pattern changes in the area around the Station Place development to minimize the traffic impact on the surrounding neighborhood, and the recommendations of the Middle Anacostia River Crossings (MAC) Study.

On the truck traffic study, CHRS is responding to a DDOT study of how better to manage truck traffic through the District. Most recommendations (Website is <http://www.ddot.dc.gov/ddot/cwp/view,a,1249,q,609850.asp>) seem common-sensical, but the draft recommendation that Third Street between Massachusetts Avenue NE and the SE/SW Freeway be a designated truck route is simply daft. Does a truck route along narrow residential streets past two elementary schools sound sensible? And Third Street, like most Capitol Hill residential streets, is not physically capable of handling heavyweight traffic, which damages walls and foundations of older buildings and provokes noise and safety concerns. Many—but not enough—Capitol Hill streets are designated to prohibit truck and bus traffic and posted to warn through trucks and buses to stay off.

Recent street closures by the Capitol Police, citing security reasons, complicate truck and bus routing issues but this must not



Third Street NE and SE would be designated a truck route under DDOT study. Photos: Brian Furness

be addressed at the expense of the safety of residents. Particularly important is prohibiting or limiting traffic on portions of First and Second Streets NE south of Union Station, and rerouting bus routes to Capitol Hill residential streets.

CHRS will argue that Third Street, NE, be designated for no trucks and no buses and be well posted to diminish through truck and bus traffic seeking to avoid security barriers. The truck study should be amended to clearly indicate that residential streets are not appropriate for truck and bus routes. The meeting with DDOT will discuss ways that we can work together to press for reopening the affected sections of First and Second Streets so that commuter, bus and other commercial traffic can avoid residential streets.

On the Station Place issue, CHRS will urge action to protect residents from major changes imminent in traffic patterns on the streets adjacent to the soon-to-be-occupied Station Place development (Second Street, NE, between F and H Streets, NE). We seek



DDOT cooperation to make the 200 blocks of F and E Streets, NE, one-way westbound between 3:30 PM and 6:30 PM to minimize use of neighborhood residential streets by workers exiting Station Place's parking entrance in the 100 block of F Street, NE. A dedicated traffic ramp directly from H Street, NE, can—and should—handle most Station Place traffic.

The accompanying article on the MAC study discusses the CHRS position, including its opposition to opening the now-illegal Barney Circle ramp to Seventeenth Street, SE. No date has been set for the meeting. ✧

DOT Readies Proposals to Deal with Traffic Problems Affecting Capitol Hill

by Tom Grahame and Brian Furness

On December 2 at Watkins Elementary School (as this article goes to press), DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) officials will present their recommendations from the Middle Anacostia River Crossings (MAC) Transportation study. This will culminate over a year of study and community meetings on traffic problems and patterns in an area roughly centered on Barney Circle, SE, including both sides of the Anacostia River.

The study and its recommendations are the latest in a 40-year push to better link downtown with Anacostia and the eastern suburbs, and to improve traffic flow on the SE/SW Freeway, Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, and the Anacostia Freeway. City efforts included the Barney Circle Connector, a 1990s proposal for a new bridge linking the SE/SW Freeway with the Anacostia Freeway that was rejected because of community opposition. DDOT's latest efforts also attempt to deal with traffic congestion on Pennsylvania Avenue east of the Anacostia, especially to connect with the Anacostia Freeway northbound, and traffic congestion in the Capitol East neighborhood, particularly on Potomac Avenue.

Longer term traffic pressures include increased traffic to and from the M Street, SE, corridor as a result of as much as 15 million square feet of new office space.

How these issues are resolved is important to Capitol Hill—and to communities across the river. DDOT—and most Capitol Hill community organizations—seem on board with a likely recommendation for the long-term (15–20 years out): rebuild the Eleventh Street bridges to create the long-desired better link between the SE/SW Freeway and the northbound Anacostia Freeway. Besides smoothing traffic flows, this would let DDOT convert that stretch of the SE/SW Freeway between Eleventh Street and Barney Circle into a light-duty boulevard and parkland.

The problem for Capitol Hill lies in the short- and medium-term. Highly controversial is the likely “recommendation” to legalize use of the SE/SW Freeway ramp that connects the eastbound freeway with a (blocked) access road to RFK parking, Seventeenth Street, SE, and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Currently, only emergency and authorized vehicles (and RFK traffic on game days) are permitted to use the exit; however, DDOT studies show that as many

as 5,600 cars illegally use the ramp daily. Making the turn legal would, according to DDOT, require a study, and then funding for engineering work to make the ramp safer—and changes are a couple of years away.

Residents are outraged by a proposal that would lead to significantly increased use of the ramp, and more commuter traffic filtering through Capitol Hill on Seventeenth and Nineteenth Streets, SE, as (mostly) Maryland commuters seek to connect with East Capitol Street and the Whitney Young Bridge. This same traffic, according to other results of the study, regularly causes significant rush hour congestion on Potomac Avenue and I Street, SE (leading to the SE/SW Freeway entrance at Third Street, SE), and leads to excess speed and other reckless driving behavior in residential neighborhoods.

Some Hillcrest, and other east of the river neighborhood groups, argue that Capitol Hill should “share the burden” of traffic and congestion by going along with solutions they state would ease congestion on Pennsylvania Avenue east of the river. This approach was condemned by CHRS representatives and nominally rejected by DDOT. Moreover, the studies suggest that opening the ramp would not ease congestion east of the river—it would simply burden neighborhoods on the west side of the river.

Community members at a recent meeting told DDOT staff that they would strongly oppose legalizing use of the currently illegal ramp, and would seek to delay its opening. But they were supportive of proposals to increase connectivity via the Eleventh Street bridge, and suggested that the schedule be shortened.

CHRS is adding its weight to neighborhood opposition to opening the ramp, based in part on its long-time opposition to the use of residential streets for commuter

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What's Brewing in the Near Northeast?

by Charles W. McMillion

Neighborhood residents cheered wildly at the November 21 groundbreaking ceremony for a new, church-run coffeehouse at the corner of Second and F Streets, NE. We were joined by 200 equally boisterous members of the National Community Church, many of whom also live in the neighborhood.

The excitement was around the preservation and restoration of a long-abandoned and neglected building that marks the northwest corner of the Capitol Hill Historic District. It was built in 1925 as a small breakfast and lunch counter for local residents, railroad men and passengers from nearby Union Station. But the building was sold at tax auction in 1982 and the new owner, living in Northern Virginia, refused either to use it, restore it or to sell it, allowing it instead to become a worsening danger and eyesore for the neighborhood.

Several of us in the neighborhood and many others had for many years offered double-digit multiples of the tax auction price for the land. We had also pleaded constantly with the owner and the city to encourage or force the maintenance and restoration of the building. Nothing worked until quite unexpectedly—despite a year of discussion—the owner sold the property to NCC in February, 2002.



You might know the NCC as the "Theater Church" or the "Popcorn Church" because they hold their services in the movie theater at Union Station and now at Ballston Commons, too. Pastor Mark Batterson, along with his wife and family, moved to the neighborhood in 1995 and started his church from scratch.

The NCC has proven to be an energetic supporter of the community sponsoring many needed, civic activities such as painting the home of a single mother on Mother's Day. The new building, preserving the original facade and footprint, will be used as

Pastor Mark Batterson—middle hardhat—at November 21 groundbreaking ceremony. Photo: Charles McMillion

a community coffeehouse with additional space for church administrative offices.

Historic Preservation Chair, Nancy Metzger, and other CHRS members have worked closely with the NCC to maximize both the historical integrity and the utility of their beautiful building. The NCC has named the new building "Ebenezer," which in Hebrew is "the stone reminder of help." Completion is expected by September 1, 2005. ✧

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traffic—also an objective of the Ward 6 Comprehensive Plan. Legalizing use of the Barney Circle exit ramp would not only exacerbate commuter traffic on Capitol Hill residential streets but also have a minimal effect east of the river. Instead, CHRS strongly endorses moving ahead quickly with plans to use rebuilt Eleventh Street bridges to connect the SE/SW Freeway with the Anacostia Freeway and to replace the stretch of the SE/SW Freeway between Eleventh Street and Barney Circle with parkland and a light-use boulevard.

CHRS is seeking a meeting with DDOT Director Dan Tangherlini to explain its position on this and other issues (see accompanying article).

Less controversial recommendations likely to emerge from the study include conversion of the Potomac Avenue-Pennsylvania Avenue intersection into a traffic circle, improving vehicle and pedestrian connections between the two streets and movement along them. This must also take into account the federal interest and ceremonial nature of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, as set out in the

Comprehensive Plan. Another recommendation may well be to move ahead with a low-capacity parkway connecting Barney Circle with Independence Avenue. This latter initiative is also part of the community-vetted Reservation 13 plan.

The DDOT study will apparently not mention a vehicle bridge across the Anacostia at Massachusetts Avenue, which was vigorously opposed by Capitol Hill residents and community groups, including CHRS. The Website for the MAC study is <http://macstudy.com/>. ✧

Make Your New Year's Resolution to Volunteer

by Charles McMillion

First a confession, then an appeal. Many of you have checked boxes on your CHRS membership forms in recent years indicating your interest in working on various important matters facing Capitol Hill. Most of you have never been contacted.

I know it's hard to imagine but this has just come to the attention of the CHRS Board. It is inexcusable but not intentional. Remember, we are an all-volunteer organization and somehow—SOMEHOW—in recent years no one ever took on the vital job of recording all these interests and following-up. It is much more fun to spend your volunteer time in substantive rather than in procedural matters and paperwork. This has changed and will not happen again.

Now for the appeal: Capitol Hill's soaring popularity in recent

years, bringing more development and traffic, has widened the gap between community needs and available services. So our community desperately needs your civic participation. CHRS provides an outstanding and knowledgeable way to maximize your civic effectiveness.

Please consider joining one or more CHRS committees or let us know if you are available to volunteer some set number of hours. We urgently need new talent to help with the annual House Tour, Communications (Web design and maintenance), City Planning (traffic, baseball, etc.), Community Development (liquor sales, other commercial and neighborhood matters), Environment and Clean Streets and Membership services. We also need many volunteers to help with the massive new CHRS project to photograph every structure in the

Mark Your Calendar!

DECEMBER

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no CHRS Board Meeting In December

9 Thursday, 7:30 PM

CHRS Zoning Committee Meeting, to consider: 315 Seventh Street, NE and 220 H Street NE.
Kirby House, 420 Tenth Street, SE

JANUARY

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no January issue of the *News*

Historic District and to have them properly recorded.

If you are willing to give back a little time to your community through CHRS, call 202-543-0425 or send an e-mail to caphrs@aol.com. You and your neighbors will be glad you did. ✧



Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003
