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February 2012

CHRS Sends Comments on Virginia Avenue Tunnel Concepts and Accepts Consulting Party Status

By Beth Purcell and Shauna Holmes

The CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel (VAT) runs under Virginia Avenue, SE, from 2nd Street to 11th Street, a distance of 4,000 feet, crossing the Capitol Hill Historic District. The tunnel has only one track. CSX wants to expand the tunnel to accommodate two tracks and heighten it so it can handle double-stacked intermodal container freight trains. The proposed project raises many environmental and historic preservation issues.

The project is in the early stages of federal review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and Section 4(f) of

the Department of Transportation Act. (For more information about these reviews, see the November and December 2011 issues of the *News*.) CSX and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) presented eleven concepts for carrying out the project at a November 30 public meeting at Nationals Park. The community will soon learn (at a public meeting not yet scheduled at press time) which of the eleven concepts will survive and receive more study. You can find information about the project at www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com, including images of the eleven concepts, FAQs, comments that have

already been submitted, scheduled meetings, and a page for sending in your own comments, which you can do at any time.

CHRS Preliminary Comments

On January 18, 2012, CHRS sent preliminary comments on the concepts to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DDOT, and CSX, which you can find by clicking on the CSX Tunnel link at www.chrs.org. CHRS incorporated its October 2011 Scoping Comments by reference and reserved the right

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CHRS Seeks Nominations for Board

CHRS will hold elections for the 2012–2013 Board of Directors in Spring 2012. The Nominating Committee (Beth Purcell, Elizabeth Nelson, Gary Peterson, and Paul Cromwell) is seeking recommendations for individuals who wish to be considered for positions on next year’s CHRS Board of Directors. These positions include President, First Vice President; Second Vice President; Treasurer and Secretary for one-year terms and three At Large Members for two-year terms. Nominations for the 2012–2013 CHRS Board will be announced in late Spring.

If you wish to be considered, to recommend someone or to learn more about the duties please contact the CHRS office at caphrs@aol.com or write to CHRS, P.O. Box 15264, Washington, DC 20003. Recommendations and qualifications must be submitted by COB **March 16, 2012**.

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President's Column: Architect's Row at Congressional Cemetery

By Beth Purcell

Congressional Cemetery, at 1801 E Street, SE, is a must-see national landmark in our neighborhood. Several well-known architects are interred there: George Hadfield, an early architect of the Capitol; William Thornton (whose design was selected for the Capitol); Robert Mills (who designed the Washington Monument); and George White (Architect of the Capitol beginning in 1971). The cemetery's Fall/Winter 2011 newsletter provides more information about their lives and where the graves are located. For more details, see www.congressionalcemetery.org, "About Us," "Newsletter."

Another architect interred at Congressional Cemetery is Charles Gessford (1831–1894). Gessford, who lived at 661 South Carolina Avenue, SE, is one of the best-known builder/architects on Capitol Hill. His work includes Queen Anne-style brick rowhouses (e.g., 824–832 D Street, SE (1892); 638–642 East Capitol Street (1890)). He also built alley dwellings (Gessford Court). He borrowed to build his houses, and when the Depression of 1893 hit, (the stock market crashed when U.S. gold reserves fell), he was left with houses that no one would buy. He died a year later. His grave is at R90/116.

The Cemetery is well worth a visit. If you want to stay longer, gravesites are available, and you can "reserve your place in American history." ★

Reserve Now for February 7 Overbeck Lecture: The Past and Future of Congressional Cemetery

On Tuesday, February 7, **Cindy Hays** will deliver an illustrated Overbeck History Lecture on Congressional Cemetery, its significance to the Capitol Hill community, and its impressive restoration by concerned neighbors and friends. The 30-acre site, which contains the remains of Matthew Brady, John Philip Sousa, J. Edgar Hoover and many other historical figures, has served the Hill for more than two centuries.

Hays is executive director of the Association for the Preservation of The Historic Congressional Cemetery, the local citizens organization that has brought the storied resting place back from decades of decline and neglect and made it a source of pride for the neighborhood.

The lecture is set for **Tuesday, February 7, at 8 p.m. at the Naval Lodge Hall at 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE**. As always, admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited seating. Please contact OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org with your name and the number of seats you will need.

55th Annual House and Garden Tour

Saturday, May 12, 5–8 p.m. and Sunday, May 13, 1–5 p.m.

This year's House & Garden Tour will concentrate on the area bounded by Massachusetts Avenue and East Capitol Street between Second Street and Eleventh Street, NE. If you would like to nominate your home or another within the footprint, please contact Ann Richards (543-2350, arichardsdc@yahoo.com) or Steve Hagedorn (841-1380, shagedorn@cbmove.com).

Tour tickets are \$25 in advance (\$20 for CHRS members until April 18) and \$30 the weekend of the tour. They may be purchased online at www.chrs.org and at select venues around the Hill (locations available at the CHRS website). CHRS also will have a booth at Eastern Market during the weekends of April 21 and 22, April 28 and 29, May 5 and 6, as well as Tour weekend.

If you would like to volunteer to serve as a docent on Tour weekend, please contact Paul Cromwell (543-7530, paulcromwell@verizon.net).

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Celebrating more than 50 years helping to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood. With your participation, we will continue to do so for many years to come.

To start or renew a CHRS membership:

- ★ On the web at www.CHRS.org
- ★ Call (202) 543-0425; choose option 2
- ★ Pick up a form at one of our meetings

Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

Zoning Briefs

By Gary Peterson

The CHRS Zoning Committee met on January 12 and considered four cases. The committee voted unanimously to support all four. The cases considered were:

BZA 18316, 658 E Street, NE.

The owners requested a special exception to build a one-story covered porch addition on the rear of their existing non-conforming row house. They need a special exception to increase the lot occupancy from 65% to 70%. They also need special exceptions because of a non-conforming open court.

BZA 18322, 425 8th Street, SE.

This is the application of Ima Pizza to have a fast food establishment at 415 8th Street, SE. Section 733 of the Zoning Regulations details nine requirements to receive a special exception for a fast food establishment. The committee was satisfied that the applicant complied with the requirements.

BZA 18331, 541 14th Street, SE.

The owner wishes to add a two-story addition to his house. He needs a special exception to go from 57% lot occupancy to 70% lot occupancy and a special exception for non-conforming lot width and closed court.

BZA 18332, 1439 East Capitol Street, SE. The owners wish to remove a two-story porch and replace it with an enclosed addition. They need a special exception to go from 69% lot occupancy to 70% lot occupancy and a special exception for a non-conforming open court.

The next meeting will be held on March 9, 2012. ★

Does Zoning Excite You?

The CHRS Zoning Committee is looking for a few members. The Committee, consisting of eight members, meets the second Thursday of nearly every month (except July) to consider Capitol Hill cases before the Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Adjustment. Approximately three to five cases are considered at each meeting.

The Committee can take three different positions on a case:

1. To oppose in whole or in part,
2. To support in whole or in part, or
3. To take no position.

While prior knowledge of planning and zoning is a plus, applicants with no prior experience but with a strong desire to learn about zoning are welcome. Upcoming issues include the Hine PUD application and the rewrite of the District zoning regulations.

For more information, contact the chair, Gary Peterson, pgarylaw@aol.com.

Stanton Eastbanc Files PUD Application for Hine Site

By Gary Peterson

Stanton Eastbanc filed its Planned Unit Development (PUD) application for the Hine site with the Zoning Commission (ZC) on November 23, the day before Thanksgiving. The application was filed with the ZC rather than the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) because the PUD often includes a request for rezoning in addition to substantial bonus density. In effect, the ZC creates unique, site-specific zoning for the property. Stanton expects a final decision from the ZC by September of this year.

The application is in two parts: the map amendment application (rezoning the property from R-4 to C-2-B), and the PUD application. The application currently addresses two options: a hotel as part of the project or residential in lieu of the hotel. In both options the proposal is for a large undertaking.

The map amendment from R-4 to C-2-B would be a substantial increase in density, and the PUD bonus density is even greater. Below is a comparison of the various zoning categories with what Stanton proposes. Many of these figures are abstracted from Stanton's filing and a community briefing sponsored by CHRS on December 12.

Requirement	R-4 matter of right	C-2-B matter of right	C-2-B PUD	Hine Project
Floor Area Ratio	none	3.5	6.0	3.4
Height	40 feet	65 feet	90 feet	47-88 feet
Lot occupancy	60%	80%	80%	48.5%

In addition to the change in zoning and the additional PUD bonuses, the applicant requests relief from six zoning requirements. These include loading berths, building

lot control, parking, minimum widths and areas of courts, rooftop structures, and inclusionary zoning. This relief is somewhat technical and will not be reviewed here. Anyone interested in these requests can go to www.hineschool.com and review the PUD application.

Stanton proposes to develop the 3.6-acre site with two buildings. The North building will be on a small plot of land north of newly rebuilt C Street and south of the present east/west alley. The much larger South building will be on the balance of the property. The four-story North building will be predominately residential with retail on the first floor on the west side of the building. The South building will have four stories of residential on the 8th Street building line and a 5th floor that is set back 30+ feet from the building line. As the residential building turns the corner onto Pennsylvania Avenue (technically D Street at this point) there is a 6th floor. Fronting on the west half of Pennsylvania Avenue and on 7th Street to about mid-block is a seven-story office building. The balance of the South building fronting on 7th Street and new C Street will be either residential or a hotel of five stories.

The wall of this building is angled back to create a plaza diagonally across the street from the Eastern Market. Access to the parking garage will be on C Street near the 8th Street

corner. An interior loading dock is mid-block on 7th Street. The street level on Pennsylvania Avenue, 7th Street, and C Street will be retail.

The proposal calls for approximately 158 residential units, 260 parking spaces and 108 bike spaces. There will be 46 affordable units out of the 158 residential units and there will be 200,000+ square feet of commercial space. Around 20% of the first floor retail space will be set aside for small and locally owned retail, and 1,000 square feet will be for below market rate retailers. Construction will start in 2013.

The purpose of a PUD is spelled out in the zoning regulations as a process "...to encourage high quality developments and provide public benefits." This means that we should expect a world class building on this prominent site. In order to advance this goal, Stanton has hired respected architect Amy Weinstein, who is known on Capitol Hill for a number of award winning buildings. For the past year her plans have been discussed at a large number of community meetings and at the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB). Based on the many comments, the plans have changed from the initial offering. The HPRB has not given final approval to the draft design and will probably await ZC approval to further conduct review. However the PUD regulations require the ZC to also review and comment on the design and they can make changes to the appearance of the building. In other words, the community gets two avenues to affect the design.

On the public benefits side of the PUD requirements, Stanton claims the design has a number of public benefits and amenities. At CHRS's December meeting they listed these as:

1. Urban Design and Architecture
 - Use of materials, proportions and building types and variety compatible with the Hill
 - Use of the best principles of New Urbanism and Transit-oriented development
 - Enlivening Pennsylvania Avenue and 7th Street
 - Concentration of the mass and height across from the Eastern Market metro plaza
 - Putting all of the loading and truck activities inside the building
 - Putting the residential on 8th Street
 - Providing the maximum amount of landscaping
2. Site Planning—the project effectively uses DC surplus property and replaces a vacant school building, an abandoned temporary building, and a surface parking lot
3. Effective and Safe Vehicular and Pedestrian Access
 - Opening and construction of closed C Street
 - Underground parking and enclosed loading docks
 - Implement a Transportation Management Plan that includes such things as car sharing, bike sharing, WMATA Smart cards, showers for office bicycle commuters, and shared parking between weekday office users and evening and weekend users
4. Historic Preservation—restores the L'Enfant street grid and designs buildings that are compatible with Capitol Hill
5. Employment and Training Opportunities—will give preference in employing DC residents

Thoughts on Hine PUD

There are still difficulties with the design of the building. Among the major snags is that the facades at 8th and Pennsylvania and 7th and C Street still need major revision to meet the high quality required for this site and the proposed commercial buildings need a distinct bottom, middle and top that is typical of commercial buildings on the Hill. There are many other lesser items that will have to be addressed later on in the process. These include such things as the rhythm of the openings to the building and depth of view into the windows (no blocking the windows on the first floor).

The public benefits and amenities Stanton is proposing are commendable and welcome. However, when compared to what has been lost to the community, they leave much to be desired. Before the project there was a public school and playground and in excess of 50% of the space was open. The playground included two tennis courts and at least four basketball backboards. On the 8th Street side of the playground there is an enclosed dog run. None of the proposed benefits addresses this loss. Stanton should seriously consider building two children's play areas similar to the ones in Stanton and Lincoln Parks. The most logical places are Seward Square and the northeast portion of the Metro plaza on the 9th Street side. A fenced dog recreation area like the one at 17th and S Street, NW should also be constructed on the Metro plaza on the D Street side. Tennis and basketball courts can be provided on one of the nearby school playgrounds.

— Gary Peterson

6. Housing and Affordable Housing
 - Provides 158 dwelling units
 - Between 29% and 36% of the units will be affordable units
7. Environmental Benefits
 - Will meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards in either the Gold or Silver category
 - Providing green roofs
8. Uses of Special Value to the Neighborhood and DC—158 households and 200,000+ square feet of commercial uses generate new tax revenues
9. Eastern Market and Flea Market
 - Provides 68 vendor spaces on C Street
 - Provides 50 parking spaces for vendor vehicles and 8 box truck parking spaces in the loading dock

The Stanton application also did not include a number of essential items. These include such things as a shadow study, a traffic report, and a noise and vibration report. Prior to the final order there will also have to be a community agreed-to construction management report.

As the next step, the Office of Planning (OP) will file what is called a Setdown Report with the ZC recommending that the PUD be set down for a public hearing. At a public meeting the ZC will hear a presentation by OP on the Setdown Report and decide whether the application is ready for a hearing date. No testimony by the applicant or the public is allowed at this Setdown hearing.

At the January 2012 board meeting the CHRS board decided to apply for party status in the

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H Street/Benning Road Streetcar Update

By Dru Tallant

At a meeting on December 6, 2011 that filled the Atlas Theatre, Mayor Vincent Gray, Council Member Tommy Wells, Terry Bellamy, Director of DDOT, DDOT engineers, and outside consultants described progress to date and next phases of the streetcar project. The most important issue for many residents at the western (Union Station) end of the corridor was a proposal then under consideration to route the streetcar through residential streets to Second and F Streets, NE. Mayor Gray stated at the beginning of the meeting that he had removed this idea from consideration and that the streetcar would remain entirely within the H Street right of way. With that lightning rod issue off the table, many attendees breathed a sigh of relief and could focus their attention on the presentation.

The meeting presented a broad overview of the project with a follow-up meeting on December 20 that allowed participants to engage DDOT in smaller work groups. The December 20 meeting, also very well attended, was divided into breakout sessions addressing particular issues. These included the design of the maintenance facility at the Spingarn Campus, the interim Western Terminus, and the Eastern Terminus.

Some questions and concerns remain unresolved following the December 20th meeting. For example, the placement of the maintenance facility at Spingarn will likely diminish the attractiveness of the campus, yet DDOT seems set on that location. Public input was limited to the architectural style (i.e., modern or traditional) rather than the location itself.

The Western Terminus is deemed an “interim solution” until the H



Streetcars in front of Union Station, 1925.

Street Bridge behind Union Station is rebuilt and the streetcar continues west into downtown. Until then, DDOT proposes to eliminate two center lanes of the H Street Bridge and eastern approach ramp in order to place a streetcar stop at the top of the H Street Bridge. Pedestrian access to Union Station will be via the path adjacent to the bus transportation hub at the lowest level of the Union Station parking garage. However, as proposed on December 20, the design would preclude a left hand turn by east-bound traffic desiring to turn north on Third Street. Residents focused DDOT’s attention to the large number of apartments and condominiums in this area as well as the Giant Food Store currently under construction at 3rd and H Streets, NE. Neighbors pressed DDOT to design the streetcar route in such a way that would preserve the badly needed left turn lane.

The design of the next phase is underway with service expected to begin in mid-2013. Further information and details can be found on the DDOT website and at www.ddstreetcar.com. No additional public meetings on the H Street/Benning project are scheduled at this time, but further meetings will likely be held in the Spring of 2012. ★

IMAGE COURTESY WWW.SHORPY.COM

Mary Z. Gray Book about Capitol Hill History

By Rosemary Freeman

To most of the world, “Capitol Hill” means the U.S. Congress. To Washington writer Mary Z. Gray, it was home.

In her new book, *301 East Capitol: Tales From the Heart of the Hill*, Gray looks back nine decades to recreate the quirky, bustling neighborhood of her childhood, where her family of music makers and undertakers, homemakers and home breakers, had lived for five generations.

Gray will share her memories at two book signings, the first on Sunday, February 12, at 2 p.m, at the Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE (register at www.hillcenterdc.org/home/programs/113). The second signing is Monday, February 13, at 1 p.m, at the author’s former family home (and funeral parlor), now the Folger Shakespeare Library’s Haskell Center at 301 East Capitol Street.

Born Mary Zurhorst in 1919, Gray grew up above her family’s inherited funeral home at 301 East Capitol Street, two blocks from the U.S. Capitol. A writer all of her adult life, Gray got her first byline in *The Washington Post* in 1940 and eventually served as a speech writer in the Kennedy–Johnson White House. She wrote frequently as a freelancer for *The Post*, *The New York Times* and many other publications while raising a family in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she lives today.

At 93, Gray has never used a computer. She composed this book on her manual typewriter, urged on by old friends and by volunteers in the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project. The organization launched the Overbeck History Press for the specific purpose of publishing this book.

301 East Capitol abounds with scenes from Gray’s early childhood—being tugged away from Sherrill’s Bakery by her family’s maid (who would not have been allowed to eat there), frightening a nun at St. Cecilia’s Elementary with stories about the family business, and being taken to meet Charles Lindbergh, just back from his solo flight to Paris.

Gray also presents vivid portraits of her Capitol Hill forebears, including the musicians on her

mother’s side who provided turn-of-the-century Washington with first-class ballroom, theater, marching and every other kind of music.

Gray’s previous book, *Ah Bewilderness! Muddling Through Life With Mary Z. Gray* (Atheneum), was published in 1984.

To purchase a copy locally, visit Riverby Books, Capitol Hill Books, or the Hill Center. ★



IMAGE COURTESY MARY Z. GRAY

Mary on a pony in front of 301 East Capitol, circa 1923.

to change or expand its comments as additional information becomes available and/or as additional concerns are raised. We flagged some key concerns:

Our primary concern remains the effects of the project on the well-being of the residents, structures, and businesses in the project area, as well as the potential effects on the Capitol Hill Historic District and other nearby historic properties.

At this stage, there are no comparative costs for any of the concepts and only out-of-date costs for certain concepts. For these reasons, it is not yet possible to take costs into consideration.

Finally, key studies are not yet available: no engineering studies on noise and vibration during construction and post-construction, no other studies mentioned in the FAQs, and no estimates of construction times for the various concepts. We understand that these studies will be conducted after some of the concepts are de-selected in February or March 2012. We also understand that as the Environmental Assessment focuses on a smaller number of alternatives, more information will be made public.

Overview of the Eleven Concepts

The first of the eleven concepts is “no action” (i.e., leave the tunnel as is), which is the basis for comparing project alternatives in the environmental and historic preservation reviews. While no one wants construction-related upheaval, we understand the need to move freight more effectively and efficiently. We have been told that the project could be successfully undertaken with minimal adverse effects and look forward to more information about how this could take place. Meanwhile, CHRS is not calling for “no action” at this time.

Concepts 2 through 7B call for rebuilding the VAT, using different alternatives. Most involve a temporary run-around track beside the tunnel for freight trains to use during construction, but others would involve running freight trains through Union Station or outside DC instead of using Virginia Avenue. In one, CSX would reconstruct the tunnel while concurrently using the tunnel for freight traffic. Concepts 2 through 7B all would require at least one open trench on Virginia Avenue. Some intersections would need to be closed during certain periods (for days, if not weeks, according to CSX representatives). Temporary crossings would be installed at the numbered street intersections. Though DDOT and FHWA want the ramps to the SE Freeway to remain open, they also may need to be closed for short time periods. Concepts 2 through 7B are all less preferable for these reasons. Regarding all the above rebuilding concepts, we understand that there are types of rail bed and track designed to minimize noise and vibration. If one of the above alternatives is approved, CHRS requested additional information and an evaluation of these technologies.

Concept 8 calls for building a new freight rail tunnel approximately 80 feet underneath the existing VAT that would run from Reagan National Airport to the Deanwood Metro Station. Concepts 9 through 11 would permanently reroute freight traffic outside DC.

Other Concerns

Work on the VAT may begin before all the work on the new 11th Street Bridges is completed. CHRS has encouraged CSX, DDOT, and the other involved agencies to work together to ensure that the two projects are coordinated. We also encouraged ongoing coordination

with DC WASA on its tunnel project, as well as with the South Capitol Street project and other projects mentioned in CHRS’s Scoping Comments filed October 18, 2011, including the Maryland Avenue, SW, Small Area Plan, the draft of which was released on December 16 by the city’s Office of Planning.

CHRS also called attention to the VAT itself, which is a historic structure. It will be important when weighing options that would alter, damage, or demolish the existing VAT to take into account its historic nature. While it may be premature to raise mitigation issues, it is not premature to consider options that would avoid or minimize alteration, damage, or destruction. Whatever decision is ultimately made regarding the VAT, CSX should consider the importance of fully documenting this historic structure to HABS/HAER* standards (if it has not already done so) so there will be a record of its construction, engineering, and history. If such documentation already exists, we urged CSX to share it with the community as soon as possible so we can better evaluate options and their possible effects on the VAT.

Consulting Party Status

On December 27, CHRS received a letter from FHWA inviting our organization to be a Consulting Party in the project’s Section 106 historic preservation review and asking CHRS to recommend other parties that should also be Consulting Parties. In its January 13 letter to FHWA accepting its invitation, CHRS recommended other parties known to CHRS that should be Consulting Parties. These included the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; ANCs 6B and 6D; the Committee of 100

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CHRS December Community Forum with CSX

By Lisa Dale Jones

At its December 9 Community Forum, CHRS hosted a public presentation at the Hill Center by CSX's Virginia Avenue Tunnel (VAT) project team. More intimate than Nationals Park, the site of a large public VAT meeting on November 30, the December forum gave attendees a chance to ask questions and get up-close looks at various maps and diagrams of the eleven project concepts under consideration. Stephen Flippin, Director of Federal Affairs for CSX, and Chip Dobson, Director of Strategic Infrastructure Initiatives for CSX, ran the meeting. As they explained, the 107-year-old Virginia Avenue Tunnel would need some sort of rebuilding and repair even if CSX didn't want to expand it to two tracks and heighten it for double-stack trains.

Steve Plano, a consultant with Parsons Brinckerhoff, updated the audience about the project's status and showed slides of the concepts under consideration. In December CSX was working on the project's Purpose and Need Statement, which is required for the Environmental Assessment that is underway. Comments from the public about the eleven project concepts were due January 30, and CSX expects to have another public meeting in February after having narrowed down the number of alternatives. After that, additional engineering studies on selected alternatives will be conducted in Spring 2012.

Meanwhile, the Section 106 historic preservation review process has been initiated, and invitations to Consulting Parties were to go out in December and January. CSX hopes Section 106 review and the Environmental Assessment will be completed in Summer 2012.

To see diagrams of each of the eleven project concepts, visit www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com and click on "project resources" and look for a link to the November 30 meeting boards.

The project concepts themselves fall into several categories: reroute freight traffic completely during construction; widen the existing tunnel to two tracks while using a temporary open-trench track beside the tunnel for freight trains to use during construction; dig a second permanent tunnel parallel to or beneath the existing tunnel; or run freight trains through the existing tunnel while expanding it.

Below is a sample of the Q&As at the meeting:

Q: Instead of making the existing tunnel larger, why not send future freight traffic on the same route that's currently used for hazardous materials that need to avoid the District?

A: We don't really discuss the route hazardous materials take. There would still need to be a freight train route into the District to serve local freight customers.

Q: Do options 5 through 7 mean the tunnel and the run-around route will be open?

A: Concepts 2 through 7 all involve opening the top of the tunnel along Virginia Avenue. Numbered cross streets will be kept open, except for a few days when temporary bridges are being built.

Q: Among the concepts that keep the trains running along the Virginia Avenue route, would some concepts have more or less surface disruption?

A: They all would have the main tunnel opened up to the sky. They all use open trench construction.

Q: Will Virginia Avenue be closed to vehicles no matter what?

A: DDOT and FHWA do not want to see the exit and entrance ramps to I-295 closed. There would be a robust plan to maintain traffic on numbered cross streets. Sections of Virginia Avenue would be construction areas, but until detailed engineering studies are done, we don't want to speculate how much would be closed or for how long.

Q: What if you find surprises, when you open up the old tunnel, which could affect the work?

A: We understand the old tunnel pretty well and don't expect to find surprises.

Q: Tell us more about double-stack trains, please.

A: Double-stack trains are very common in the South, Midwest, and West. But 2/3 of the consumers in the US are east of the Mississippi, so they're starting to become more common here in the East. The double-stack trains aren't too heavy—they don't carry coal or rocks.

Q: What about Garfield Park?

A: We don't plan to use Garfield Park for staging.

Q: Are you planning to deck over the tracks just west of the existing tunnel to connect to other projects that are decking over portions of tracks in SW?

A: No, Maryland Avenue SW is a separate project.

Q: I lived in Boston during the Big Dig, and it took a lot longer and cost a lot more than expected. Have you done something like this before?

A: We have done a number of projects like this around the US. This project will use established processes, and we're bringing in companies that have done tunnel projects and can produce a constructible design. ★

Hospital Site Eyed for Apartment Conversion

By Janet Quigley and Shauna Holmes

Along-neglected portion of a Capitol Hill hospital may receive a new lease on life as an apartment building. The north building of Specialty Hospital of Washington (SHW), located at 700 Constitution Avenue, NE is known as a vital nursing facility; neighbors know its basement as Precinct 85's polling site; and some homeless people know the unused east and south entrances as a quiet place to bed down. With appropriate planning and scaling, a repurposing of the site for residential use could be a welcome improvement to the neighborhood.

Developer IBG Partners submitted a concept plan to the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) in late December 2011 to lease the south and west wings of the hospital for 75 years and build within them 140 units and a new, underground, 80-space garage. The proposed design would retain the current 4-story height of the 1928 and 1956 wings; extend the north terrace walls 12-16 feet; consolidate the rooftop penthouses into a single one; and restore the east, south, southwest, and west exteriors in the Colonial/Georgian Revival style of the 1920s portion of the structure. The design of the north terrace's exterior façades, however, would be contemporary.

History of the Site

The hospital began in 1888 as the Eastern Dispensary and was located at 3rd and B Streets, SE. It moved to 708 Massachusetts Avenue NE in 1904 and added a 100-bed Casualty wing at 8th and Constitution Avenue, NE in 1928. A new wing was built on the 7th and Massachusetts Avenue, NE corner in 1956, and two years later the facility was renamed Rogers Memorial Hospital after the man responsible for



IMAGE COURTESY IBG PARTNERS

Developers' rendering of project from 8th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, NE, as of January 4, 2012.

the expansion drive. In 1971 a 6-story tower filled out the north half of the block. The site changed to Capitol Hill Hospital in 1976, MedLink Hospital in 1992, and Specialty Hospital of Washington in 2005.

The 1928 Casualty Hospital wing is the oldest remaining portion of the property and is considered a contributing structure in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The SHW property surrounds the picturesque St. Monica/St. James Episcopal Church at 222 8th Street NE, built in 1880, and the oldest structure on the block.

IBG's Proposal

The proposed design would add 3-story bays to the non-contributing portions on 7th, 8th, and Massachusetts; return the plate glass window style to 6-over-6 panes; and remove the deteriorating white aluminum banding from the cornice line. Extraneous modern additions on the Constitution Avenue façade

and in the south courtyard would be removed. A 2-level, underground garage would be entered from 8th Street and exited through the SHW property onto C Street, with a raised patio built over the new garage entrance. Somewhat surprisingly, the signature 4-story entry at 8th and Constitution would be sealed, and a new entrance would be created in the adjacent 1956 building facing Massachusetts Avenue.

Community Response

At well-attended ANC 6A and 6C meetings in January, the general impression was that IBG's proposal is more palatable than previous plans put forth in 2000 and 2005, and that a residential use of the property would be appropriate. But neighbors have voiced major concerns over issues outside HPRB's purview such as parking, deliveries, density, pedestrian safety, and impacts of 80 additional cars on traffic and the

adjacent parish. The property is zoned R-5-B, with a height limit of 50 feet and a parking requirement of one space for every two units. IBG believes the project is within R-5-B standards and can proceed as a "matter of right," meaning no Board of Zoning Adjustment or Zoning reviews would be required once HPRB approval is secured.

In 2006 the community successfully petitioned the Zoning Commission to rezone the site from R-5-D (a designation specifically for the hospital purpose) to R-5-B in anticipation of a change to residential use. A supporting petition signed by 500 neighbors underlined community sentiment, which was driven by concerns about parking, massing, and safety among others.

CHRS's Historic Preservation Committee, which looked at IBG's concept proposal in early January, felt the developers are to be commended for their restoration approach and for their willingness to work within the existing structural envelope. It supported the addition of bays to the façades of the 1956 wings and did not

object to the modest rear extension of the building's footprint. The committee's major concern was the proposed conversion of the historic entrances to private residences and placement of the new entrance within the deep exterior recess between the Constitution and Massachusetts Avenue portions of the building. While the committee was not opposed to a contemporary design for exterior walls around the north terrace, it felt that the early January proposal had a more institutional feel than was appropriate for a Capitol Hill residential building. The committee suggested that IBG revisit that design, along with the design and landscaping of the south courtyard and other design elements.

Next Steps

ANCs 6A and 6C will consider whether to support the project at their February meetings. IBG will present an updated design to the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee in early February, and HPRB will review the project, HPA #12-150, on February 23, 2012. ★

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Tunnel, continued from page 8

on the Federal City; Barracks Row Main Street; the Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District; St. Paul's AUMP Church; Friends of Garfield Park; the Virginia Avenue Community Garden; and the Capitol Quarter Home Owners' Association. We understand that some of these entities have been invited to be Consulting Parties and hope that others have been as well.

As CHRS urged in the December 2011 *News*, anyone who lives or has a business on or near Virginia Avenue should consider requesting Consulting Party status in the project's Section 106 review IF they have a demonstrated interest in

the project due to the nature of their legal or economic relation to the project or affected properties, or their concern with the project's effects on historic properties. Also, members of the public can submit comments about the project at any time and are encouraged to do so. Check the CHRS *News* for November and December 2011 for information on how to participate in the public Environmental Assessment and/or Section 106 review processes. ★

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- * Historic American Buildings Survey / Historic American Engineering Record

Hine PUD, continued from page 5

proceeding. If this is granted, CHRS will have the opportunity to present witnesses and to cross-examine Stanton's witnesses. Anyone can submit written comments and can testify at the hearing. Individuals get three minutes for their testimony and organizations are granted five minutes. The ANC automatically has party status.

Many of you will have questions and comments on the PUD. CHRS will be hosting more meetings on the PUD to hear your comments. In the meantime, please contact Gary Peterson, pgarylaw@aol.com. He is very interested in your comments and in answering your questions. ★



Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

FEBRUARY

6 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211

7 Tuesday, 8:00 pm.

Overbeck History Lecture on Congressional Cemetery and its comeback from decline and neglect, by the cemetery association's director Cindy Hays. Location is the Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Free admission but reservation required. Contact OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org.

9 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969.

21 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.

MARCH

5 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

8 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969.

20 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.

27 Tuesday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Community Forum, Maury Elementary School, 1250 Constitution Avenue, NE. The speaker will be Catherine Buell, Chair of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. Details: CapHRS@aol.com.