

Voices

The Newsletter of the Cleveland Park Historical Society

Update on the Uptown Theater

by Bonnie LePard, CPHS Board Member



The future of the Uptown Theater remains uncertain. AMC Theaters, the lessee of the Uptown, closed the theater's doors in March 2020, shortly before the pandemic forced closures. The reaction was a substantial outcry in the community, with more than 15,000 signing a petition, and the CPHS Board has formed a Save the Uptown Committee.

The committee of six volunteers, led by former CPHS Board member Roslyn Beitler, developed a list of creative alternative uses of the Uptown's space, as well as the preferred option to keep it as a movie theater with a different lessee or owner.

After discussions with owner Ted Pedas and his team, along with leaders from the DC Preservation League (DCPL), it remains unclear what the Pedas family (under their business Circle Management) has in mind for the Uptown. With the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be some time before the Uptown could reopen as a theater or an arts center or another public use.

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Our View on the Comprehensive Plan

On November 12, 2020, Rick Nash, President of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, testified before the DC Council of the Whole on the proposed amendments to the DC Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Maps (FLUM). His testimony is included below.

The Cleveland Park Historical Society worked to establish the neighborhood historic district almost 35 years ago, to preserve the largest and most intact assemblage of Art Deco buildings in Washington, including the Uptown Theater and a commercial area which the Office of Planning (OP) has called unique in scale among all of DC's historic districts. Shortly afterward, the Zoning Commission conformed zoning to protect and backstop Cleveland Park's scale and historic character.

However, the Comprehensive Plan and FLUM (Future Land Use Maps) amendments would fundamentally alter that balance, resulting in matter-of-right, downtown height and density that would overwhelm, hollow out and diminish the historic district and which would be inappropriate for a residential neighborhood.

Others have claimed that historic preservation review somehow will protect against out of scale development, but that's just not so. First, if that's correct, then why increase height and density so substantially at all? The Zoning Commission recognized that historic review was necessary but not sufficient without also having compatible zoning. Second, developers routinely cite zoning before the HPRB to assert that projects even slightly below matter of right limits are therefore compatible with historic preservation. Increase those limits as proposed and the result will be a fundamentally changed streetscape.

The amendments also disparately impact Cleveland Park. Other neighborhoods near Metro stations, including those with historic districts, are not proposed for significant increases in height and density. Indeed, there appears to be no low-density DC neighborhood other than Cleveland Park where such dramatic change is proposed. No other Metro stop area outside downtown and certainly no other historic district, is proposed to jump as many density levels.

Moreover, the amendments weaken existing provisions that provide protection to historic resources and take account of neighborhood scale and character in Cleveland Park, while actually strengthening such protection in other Washington neighborhoods.

The targeting of the historic district is unnecessary, particularly because the amendments prioritize market rate housing and there are opportunities to add more infill without impacting historic resources. Currently there are three infill projects along Connecticut Avenue, going forward under existing zoning. There are over 1500 residential units under construction or ready to break ground, in or adjacent to the historic district. This total is 120% of the mayor's net new 2025 housing target for Rock Creek West, just in the Cleveland Park neighborhood alone. And steps from the Metro, just outside the historic district itself, are vacant sites capable of substantial additional density, without impacting a single contributing historic structure. Others have testified today that the proposed amendments prioritize market rate housing and do not address true affordable housing, and I will not repeat their testimony.

(continued on next page)

Comprehensive Plan, cont'd from page 2



2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., a derided example of “facadism”, which is not historic preservation. Under the proposed FLUM amendments and with PUD (Planned Unit Development) and penthouse allowances, new buildings on Connecticut Avenue in the Cleveland Park Historic District could go as high as 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Source: <https://dmsasparchment.com/2013/06/13/ten-buildings-that-changed-dc/>

However, it is important to note that Cleveland Park has an array of housing options not present in most other Ward 3 neighborhoods, which include iconic apartment buildings, townhouses, garden apartments, attached houses, single family homes, rent-controlled housing, voucher housing, IZ units, and The Brooks. Unlike some other neighborhoods today, there is no “missing middle.”

In closing, consider the Uptown, the iconic movie palace, symbol and crown jewel of the historic district, which starkly illustrates what’s at stake. The Uptown shut down as COVID started to spread. So far, over 15,000 people from around the District have petitioned to protect the Uptown, and the historical society is working to do that. But nothing would destroy the opportunity to preserve the theater more ... than approving the Comp Plan and FLUM amendments targeted at Cleveland Park, including the Uptown site. At today’s height limit, our challenge, while considerable, stands a chance of success. Yet increasing height from 40 to 90 or 120 feet will create an irresistible economic incentive to redevelop the site as yet another dense, upper market-rate, mixed-use project looming above and behind the empty façade. To protect the Uptown...and the integrity of the Cleveland Park Historic District... the Council should reject these amendments.

We intend to supplement with record with more detailed comments before the record closes on December 3, 2020. Thank you for your consideration.

On October 27, CPHS hosted a meeting to discuss the Comprehensive Plan with over 65 members, featuring DC Council Member Mary Cheh, ANC Commissioner Nancy MacWood, and Tersh Boasberg, former chair of both HPRB and Zoning, and a longtime resident of Cleveland Park. A video of the event can be viewed [here](#) (Part 1) and [here](#) (Part 2).

My Cleveland Park: Q&A

with Polly Ghazi

Four new members joined the Cleveland Park Historical Society Board of Directors this summer. To introduce them to our membership, we publish a short bio of each below, along with their answers to the following questions:

1. *What is your favorite spot in Cleveland Park, and why?*
2. *What one thing would you most like to change about the neighborhood?*

John Buchanan

John Buchanan, Senior Counsel at the law firm of Covington & Burling, has lived in Cleveland Park since 1987 with his wife Denise. Their house in the 3300 block of Newark Street, where they raised their four sons, was built in 1904 and has been shown on the CPHS House Tour.

1. *Although the Bishop's Garden and the whole Cathedral Close rank a close second, the winner is Newark Street, bottom to top. Even after walking past them for three-plus decades, the eclecticism and quirkiness of these historic houses still pique my curiosity and spark joy.*
2. *The Connecticut Avenue corridor clearly needs help to bring back the restaurants and small businesses. Massive new Brutalist-style apartment blocks lining Connecticut aren't the solution. The long-awaited streetscape improvements between Macomb and Ordway will be a good start.*

Judith Kennedy

Judy and her husband are only the third owners of their 1903 home on Newark Street, where they have lived for 35 years. She is past president of the National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders, representing private capital lending and investing in low- and moderate-income communities.

1. *My favorite spot is my kitchen on Newark Street, where I have a panoramic view of the Cleveland Park woodlands.*
2. *The one thing I would like to change about the neighborhood is the lack of parking and traffic enforcement. Over the past twenty years that problem has increasingly hurt our neighborhood businesses and increased pedestrian risk on our narrow, winding streets designed by the historic Olmsted landscape developer.*

Bonnie LePard

Bonnie is an environmental and historic preservation lawyer, and the former President of Friends of Tregaron. Since 1992, she and her husband Bruce Reed have lived on Macomb Street, where they raised a daughter and a son.

1. *My favorite place in Cleveland Park is Tregaron Estate – a beautiful oasis and historic gem that I have visited nearly every day with my dogs and family since moving to Macomb Street in 1992. With the help of this wonderful community, we fought off massive housing developments and managed to save Tregaron and restore its trails, lily pond, woodland gardens, and original stonework.*
2. *When I polled my family about what they would change in Cleveland Park, my husband said a better water drainage system so all our basements stop flooding. My son said “no scooters” while my daughter replied “more diversity.” I agree with all of them.*

Karen Lightfoot

Karen has lived in Cleveland Park for nearly three decades, and in 2003 moved into a 1919 bungalow on Ordway Street with her family. She previously served on the Cleveland Park Citizens Association board and is a long-time member of CPHS.

1. *I love the green space throughout Cleveland Park and especially Tregaron. The wild gardens and trails are a lovely escape from the noise and congestion of the city – and a place to enjoy the changing seasons.*
2. *I would love to see more small shops like Transcendence-Perfection-Bliss of the Beyond that carry items that bring joy and happiness to Cleveland Park residents. The store is a lovely spot with outstanding, warm, and personal service.*

Construction Projects of Note



Source: WIS/Shalom Baranes

Tregaron (Washington International School, 3100 Macomb Street NW):

After much back and forth with neighbors, HPRB, ANC, and the ARC, the Washington International School's plans for expansion are nearing finalization.

WIS expects to return to HPRB in December to present its latest plans, which can be viewed [here](#).

John Eaton Elementary School, 3301 Lowell Street NW:

Construction continues at John Eaton. It is currently in Year 2 on the Construction phase. Completion remains targeted for Summer 2021.

Current schedule:

Winter 2021 (December/January/February) –Exterior framing, exterior skin, roofing, MEP infrastructure, addition (new building) water-tight, site utilities, complete exterior brick repair-scaffolding

Spring 2021 (March/April/May) - Exterior skin, interior finishes, elevators, site hardscape & finishes

Summer 2020 (June/July) - Interior finishes, elevators, site hardscape & finishes, landscaping, substantial completion (July 2021)

For more details on construction at John Eaton, click [here](#), or take the [virtual tour](#).



Source: DOPS

Events

Holiday 2020 Gingerbread House “Take-Out” Festival



Re-imagined this year to maximize health and safety, the annual Gingerbread House Party will be a “take-out” Gingerbread House Festival!

Registered participants will pick up, at a designated outdoor location in Cleveland Park, all the necessary materials, including fully built home-baked gingerbread house, meringue frosting and an assortment of candies and other decorative treats.

Our gingerbread houses are hand-baked by Cleveland Park resident Robert Jenkins (shown), who donates his time and talents over many weeks for this annual tradition, as well as hosting and distributing on the day. Thank you, Robert, for making this event possible!

This event is one of our biggest fundraisers, and as of this writing, we are sold out.

Garden Tour - Coming in 2021!

Cleveland Park Historical Society members are already planning the 2021 Garden Tour. It will be a wonderful way to visit and enjoy some of the loveliest gardens in Cleveland Park. Volunteers are needed - please email [Kelly Wilder](#) if you are interested in helping out.



Uptown Theater, continued from page 1

Meanwhile, DCPL and CPHS jointly filed an application to designate the Uptown Theater as an historic landmark. The application includes a 40-page nomination to the US Department of Interior so the Uptown Theater would also be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Read the nomination [here](#). When asked for their thoughts on the nomination, the owners indicated they might request an extension from HPRB.

Individually landmarking the Uptown Theater adds another layer of historic protection beyond being a contributing property to the Historic District. Such protections could make it more difficult to alter the façade and other exteriors. The interior of the Uptown has been altered many times over the years and is not part of the landmark application. The Save the Uptown committee hopes to continue its communications with Circle Management.

From the Archives:

Bungalows

by Kathy Wood



Drawing by Eleanor Oliver

Bungalows, as we know them today, derived from India's Bengali huts. During their long involvement in India, the English visited notable temples in remote areas. Western accommodations were unavailable, so an adaptation of the Bengali hut evolved. The Oak Bungalow, or house for travelers, consisted of a large central room covered by a thatched roof that extended beyond the house walls to create an encircling veranda or porch that provided essential coolness. Subsequently, the bungalow developed into a British colonial housing type used in hot climate countries.

As the technological revolution transformed English cities into polluted, congested industrial centers, individuals began longing for the simple pleasures of rural life. Seaside resorts burgeoned in response to the increasing wealth and leisure of the middle class, thereby linking their aspirations with the pursuits of the wealthy. Bungalows were first introduced to England in 1869.

Although rustic in appearance and association, bungalows incorporated the latest technology. They were built of mass-produced, readily available, inexpensive materials, and designed to be maintained without servants. The floor plan was laid out for convenience and the kitchen included the latest advancements to make life easy and carefree.

The first American bungalows were summer cottages. An ideology was closely associated with the American bungalow and popularized through journals and magazines. The Craftsman, a journal published by Gustav Stickley from 1901 to 1916, popularized the bungalow and the English Arts and Crafts movement. Early American bungalows exemplified three tenets of this movement: simplicity, communion with nature, and craftsmanship.

Books and magazines spread bungalow designs across the country in the first quarter of the 20th century. The bungalow became identified with newly developing suburbs like Cleveland Park and Takoma Park. Owners and builders had easy access to numerous plans and elevations from which to select designs. Working drawings or pre-cut, ready-to-assemble bungalows could be purchased inexpensively by mail. Sears, Roebuck and Co. featured bungalows in their catalogs, two of which can be seen at 3035 Rodman (1921) and 3424 Québec (1922).

Bungalows come in many different styles, but their primary identifying characteristics are the single-story appearance (although they may in fact have two or even three stories) and the front porch.

Cleveland Park bungalows can be seen at 3615 Macomb (1911) and 3425 Porter (Craftsman-style, 1915). Two of the earliest are 3409 34th Place (1906) and 3501 Lowell (1907).

With her unique expertise in Cleveland Park history, architectural historian and former Cleveland Park resident Kathy Wood played a key role in Cleveland Park's designation as an historic district and the successful drive to protect its commercial areas. She is author of the chapter on Cleveland Park in the book "Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital."

Annual Meeting and Elected Officers

The 2020-2021 Board of Directors

At the June Annual Meeting (conducted via Zoom), new board members were proposed by the nominating committee of the board. The slate of nominees was approved and elected by the membership. Board members serve a three-year term, after which they may be reelected for one additional consecutive three-year term. Former board members are eligible to be reelected to the board after an absence of three years.

The 2020-2021 Board members are:

Rick Nash, Pres.	Christine Hobbs
Leila Afzal, Vice Pres.	Shaun Jones
Shannon Penberthy, Treas.	Judith Kennedy
Karen Lightfoot, Sec.	Bonnie LePard
John Buchanan	Vicky Marchand
John Chelen	Ron Ngaim
Karen Davis	Lois Orr
Saveria Emblad	Raina Regan
Polly Ghazi	Julia Rogers
Mike Goldstein	Frank Swain

Read biographies of the Board [here](#)

The Architectural Review Committee (ARC)

Win Brown	David Kay
Ana Evans	Tina Mead
Phil Eagleburger, Co-Chair	Ron Ngiam
Christine Hobbs, Co-Chair	Lois Orr
Stefan Hurray	Anne Weir
Danny Ince	

Contact: For ARC-related business, email us at staff@clevelandparkhistoricalsociety.org

The ARC consists of eleven CPHS members, including several current and former board members, who have interests and professional expertise in architecture, preservation, and allied fields. The ARC meets on the second Monday of every month except August to review Cleveland Park projects that are slated to come before the Historic Preservation Review Board. If you would be interested in serving on the ARC next time an opening occurs, contact ARC Co-Chair Christine Hobbs or any of the ARC members.

Order a Historic Marker for Your Cleveland Park Home



CPHS offers historic house markers for contributing buildings in the Cleveland Park Historic District — those built before 1941 — and those individually landmarked. To order a marker, [download this form](#), add your name and address and mail it to us with your payment. We will confirm the date of your house and get your order started.

Our high-quality plaques are forged to order by the family-owned Erie Landmark Company. We provide these to members at cost (\$175) as well as to non-members (\$225, the difference is the price of a one-year household membership).

Email: staff@ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org

2021 MEMBERSHIP - RENEW TODAY!

It's time to RENEW your Cleveland Park Historical Society membership. You may either renew online at ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org/Membership, or fill out the form below.

WHY RENEW?

- **WE WORK TO PRESERVE CLEVELAND PARK'S HISTORY:** CPHS honors Cleveland Park's unique legacy of architectural and landscape design. We work with DC agencies and nonprofits on architectural and historic preservation issues that affect Cleveland Park and its historic district, which is designated on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **WE ADVOCATE FOR THOUGHTFUL GROWTH:** Thoughtful growth prioritizes good design and respect for Cleveland Park's historic architecture and streetscape while being mindful of the city's obligation to meet its future economic and housing needs.
- **WE SHARE OUR EXPERTISE:** CPHS is here to answer any questions you have about house history, neighborhood history and architecture.
- **WE PROVIDE USEFUL INFORMATION:** CPHS will help guide you through DC's historic preservation review process for properties in the Cleveland Park Historic District.
- **WE ARE A COMMUNITY:** CPHS offers talks, tours, field trips, educational programs and other activities that bring neighbors together to explore and celebrate our neighborhood and local history. We keep you informed about neighborhood issues via email, our website and our newsletter, Voices.

CPHS is wholly supported by your membership dues and donations. Thank you for your continued support!

Join or renew online at ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org/Membership or complete the following form

and send it with a check payable to C.P.H.S. to:

CLEVELAND PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 4862, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

Name(s):

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Note! Please be sure we have your current email address so that you do not miss important announcements. We will not spam you with too many emails, but we are now conducting most of our routine communication electronically.

Membership level:

☐ \$35 Apartment Resident

☐ \$50 Single-family Household

☐ \$100 Sponsor

☐ \$250 Patron

☐ \$500 Angel

Total enclosed: \$ _____

All levels give membership benefits to everyone in the household. CPHS is a member-supported, 501c3 not-for-profit organization.

Membership dues are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Members receive discounts and priority registration for public events, invitations to member-only tours, and discounts on event fees, house markers, and CPHS publications. Thank you for your support!

Online Resources

Here are just a few online resources about DC history, historic preservation and architectural history - there are many more!

- [HistoryQuestDC](#) - interactive map of DC buildings, including date, architect, and other info
- [DC Historic Preservation Office](#)
- [Washingtoniana Collection](#) at the DC Public Library
- [Historical Society of Washington](#) - search the Collection
- [Archipedia \(Society Of Architectural Historians\)](#) with a section about [Cleveland Park](#)
- [Free online courses about architecture from top universities](#)
- [Additional resources](#) on our website

Virtual Tours

- [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) tours
- [John Eaton Elementary School Modernization](#)
- [DC Preservation League Tours of DC](#)
- [Mount Vernon](#) tour

Podcasts

- [Podcasts for fans of historic preservation](#) (National Trust for Historic Preservation)

CPHS LINKS

CPHS Website: clevelandparkhistoricalsociety.org

Staff Email: staff@clevelandparkhistoricalsociety.org

Membership: <https://www.clevelandparkhistoricalsociety.org/membership/>

Voices Archive: <https://www.clevelandparkhistoricalsociety.org/about-cphs/voices/>

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