



St. Augustine's to Remain after Wharf Development

ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY WILLIAM RICH

Often when large scale redevelopment occurs, existing structures and institutions are eradicated with promises (in the form of project renderings) of shiny new buildings and bucolic surroundings that do not quite live up to the drawings. In the case of the Southwest Waterfront, while some businesses and institutions will not return once The Wharf is built out, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church will get a new home and endowment, but remain at the prominent corner of 6th Street, SW and Maine Avenue, SW across from Arena Stage. Next to the church will be between 90 and 100 condo units built by PN Hoffman (Bethesda-based SK&I Architectural Design Group will design the condo building) to complement the design of the townhouse residences across 6th Street, SW at Tiber Island.

Prior to the current church building's construction around 1965, parishioners would meet in each other's homes to worship. They may need to do that again while the new church is being built, but according to Kwasi Holman, Junior Warden at St. Augustine's, they are still figuring out an interim location. According to Holman, the physical plant of the current building could not hold up for much longer, so the church has been working for the past five years to find a way to build a new home. While St. Augustine's has come to an agreement with PN Hoffman that insures the church will be able to build a new church on its land, it is still a long way from cutting the ribbon on their new home.

St. Augustine's is looking to build a new sanctuary for about 120 parishioners, as well as continue their



St. Augustine's will remain at the prominent corner of 6th Street, SW and Maine Avenue, SW, but will be housed in a new building on the site.



Tiber Island Cooperative and Condominiums is vying for historic designation by the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board.

community outreach, including Bread for Life -- a program that feeds the homeless every Sunday, youth outreach programs, Grounds for Discussion Forum, and other events. They have chosen Arlington, VA-based MTFA

Architecture, Inc. to design the new church, which has also designed the proposed Museum of the American People nearby at Banneker Park.

Construction of the new St Augustine's is scheduled to start dur-

ing phase one of development of The Wharf, which is supposed to get underway by the end of 2012. However, the church portion of phase one probably will not start until 2013-14. Detailed drawings of the new church will be available when the Second Stage PUD is filed for The Wharf in the second half of 2012.

A Historic District for Southwest?

In a city filled with historic districts and countless individual historic sites, Southwest does not come to mind for most when trying to identify areas of the city with a large concentration of older structures. Typically, buildings need to be at least 50 years old to be considered historic, but there are a few older properties in Southwest that are on the National Register of Historical Places. Those located south of the Southwest Freeway include Friendship Baptist Church, Wheat Row, Thomas Law House, National War College, Randall Jr. High School, Syphax School, James C. Dent House, and the Titanic Memorial (several government buildings to the north of the freeway are also designated). A couple of structures in the residential portion of Southwest (Wheat Row and Thomas Law House) date back to the 18th century; however, the majority of buildings in the neighborhood are just now turning 50.

Capitol Park Apartments at 800 4th Street, SW (now known as Potomac Place Tower Condominiums), designed by Chloethiel Woodard Smith and built in 1959, was the first residential tower completed as a result of urban renewal and was des-

ignated by the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) as historic in 2003 in an attempt by residents to block development of its parking lots and garden into apartments (eventually condos). The Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters at 7th Street, SW & E Street, SW just north of the Southwest Freeway was more recently designated by the HPRB as well as the James C. Dent House in Buzzard Point (built in 1906). Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D supported the designation of Tiber Island Coops and Condos on the south side of 4th Street, SW and M Street, SW as historic at their July 2011 meeting (the Thomas Law House, which is a part of Tiber Island, has already been deemed historic by the District Board and National Register). Besides the collection of mid-century modern architecture that dominates Southwest, there are other pockets of buildings pre-dating urban renewal that have not been designated, such as the row houses along the 1200-block of Half Street, SW and Carrollsburg Place, SW.

Kael Anderson, a member of the Tiber Island Cooperative Board, describes how the community process was undertaken to make the decision to apply for historic designation at Tiber Island. "It was quite remarkable to see hundreds of residents split between towers and townhouses--not to mention two community associations--engaged in a process of community discovery" said Anderson. "Ultimately there was widespread recognition of the value tied to the mid-century design."

With the increased attention the neighborhood has received from developers who think Southwest is the next emerging hotspot in the city, there has been talk within the community about creating a historic district to help preserve (for better or worse) one of the largest urban renewal experiments in the country. However, the idea is still in its infancy. Borders have not been determined, although it would be logical that a historic district would generally follow the boundaries of urban re-

newal. Whether the district would include the federal office buildings north of the Southwest Freeway has also not been decided.

A historic district designation would bring more scrutiny to building additions or new construction within the proposed district. New buildings would most likely need to conform to the standards of structures within the district and it would be more difficult to demolish existing buildings. However, it may spur the restoration of buildings in the neighborhood that are starting to show their age, and increase property values. A Southwest historic district, unlike in areas such as Georgetown or Capitol Hill, would be less burdensome since mid-century modern design is consistent with contemporary building practices. For instance, if windows need to be replaced at a home in the Capitol Hill historic district, the new windows need to conform to the Victorian nature of the neighborhood, whereas plate glass windows in Southwest architecture are similar to what is now in use in contemporary construction.

Design adaptation is already happening, to an extent, with newer projects in the neighborhood. For example, the office buildings at Waterfront Station, designed by Shalom Baranes, use terra cotta on their façades, a material that has been used for the shade screens at Capitol Park apartments. In addition, the design of the new St. Matthew's apartment building on M Street, SW & Delaware Avenue, SW, also designed by Baranes, uses building and landscape design elements from nearby residential buildings. These two project designs borrow from mid-century modern, but buildings have been brought closer to the street and in the case of Waterfront Station, incorporate a mix of uses.

Without a doubt, a historic district in Southwest would look a lot different than other historic districts in the city.

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