

# The Corner Forum

for the 1200 and 1300 blocks of E, the 400 and 500 blocks of 13th,  
Duncan Place and Emerald Street NE

Issue #31  
Sunday, May 11, 2003  
37¢ + 2¢ D.C. sales tax  
<http://www.thecornerforum.org>

## Goin' Postal... The Same Old Problems With Mail Delivery

BY JOHN OLINGER, 1244 DUNCAN PL. NE

I appreciate your interest in the postal situation. Unfortunately, the Post Office is giving us all a runaround and also being a little stingy with the truth.

To start, the station manager is inaccurate (I am being charitable here) when he says he's had no complaints. In fact, I have called TWICE since January, when our deliveries took another turn for the worse. So there were at least TWO complaints lodged. I got the same old tired story about the route being rearranged. I was told that they would put a watch on the mail, and that they would assign only one carrier to the route.

I don't really care when I get the mail; I don't get home from work before 6, and what mail I get is generally there.

My issue is this: The mail simply disappears for long periods. I subscribe to a weekly, The National Catholic Reporter. It arrives at least a week late. It arrives out of order. It arrives two weeks at a time. The reason, I am told, is anthrax. Only problem is, this has been happening since long before anthrax.

I subscribe to The New York Review of Books. So does my boss. His arrives at our downtown DC office four days before mine does at Duncan Place (anthrax again??).

I tend to get all my first class mail in one delivery. And, not only do I get mine, but I sometimes get my neighbors'. I even got some mail once for the principal of the Miner School (not even close to my address).

I have lived on Duncan Place since

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## City Zoning Plan Aims to Make H Street 'Attractive Destination'

BY CODY RICE, 310 9TH ST. NE  
Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner  
(6A03) and Chair of the ANC 6A  
Economic Development & Zoning  
Committee

Over the past year or so, the D.C. Office of Planning has been holding meetings in the community to develop a plan for the revitalization of the H Street NE corridor. The intent is "to help reestablish H Street as a safe, attractive destination offering a unique combination of neighborhood goods and services; places to live, work, shop, and eat; and settings for cultural enrichment and entertainment." At the beginning of this year, the Office of Planning released a draft plan that reflects the efforts of over 500 stakeholders—including residents, business owners, property owners, District agencies and investors—who participated in the planning process. The draft plan is available at [http://planning.dc.gov/project/NE\\_Corridor/index.shtml](http://planning.dc.gov/project/NE_Corridor/index.shtml).

The draft plan calls for several distinct, but interrelated, districts along H Street NE. Closer to Union Station, the plan calls for apartments and condos that would be convenient to public transportation and would bring more potential shoppers to support businesses on H Street. The area from 7th Street to 12th Street along H Street NE would be a shopping district under the plan. The shopping district would focus on neighborhood retail businesses like bakeries, dry cleaners, florists, tailors, beauty salons, barbers, small family restaurants, coffee shops, and other shops that could be supported by the surrounding neighborhoods.

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## City Proposes Shifting Corner Forum Area Into First Police District

BY MARC BORBELY, 536 13TH ST. NE

Under a proposal announced yesterday by Mayor Anthony Williams and D.C. Police Chief Charles Ramsey, the Corner Forum area, which is currently part of the Fifth Police District, would become part of the First District.

We would belong to Police Service Area (PSA) 102, instead of 511. Maps of the new boundaries are available online, at <http://mpdc.dc.gov>.

Citywide, the proposal calls for reducing the number of Police Service Areas to 39, from the current 83.

On average, therefore, the PSAs would be more than twice as large.

Currently, PSA 511 encompasses the area south of Maryland Avenue, north of Constitution Avenue, east of 7th Street and west of 14th Street, as well as the blocks between 13th and 14th streets and between Massachusetts and Constitution avenues.

Under the proposed plan, PSA 102 would encompass the area east of North Capitol Street, south of Florida Avenue, west of 15th Street and north of Constitution Avenue.

According to the police department, at least 21 officers will be assigned to each PSA. The department says that larger PSAs will allow it to keep officers within their PSAs more and assign stronger leaders to each PSA.

"The original PSA structure tried a 'one size fits all' approach to community policing, which we have discovered is not as effective as it could be," Chief Ramsey said in a police department press release posted on its Web site. "By contrast, the proposed new structure honors

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1985. When I first moved here, we had an older gentleman who delivered our mail. He retired. Then the problems began.

I have been calling the Post Office since before I left my previous job (that was in 1992). Along the way I have had interesting explanations and empty promises. All seem to center around the fact that this is not a real or a full route or that no one wants our route. One particularly honest station manager told me once that the only people he could get to deliver the mail on this route were the new hires, and he said half of them can't read and the other half are on drugs. Explains a lot.

There was once a golden age, though — just a few years ago. There was an experimental program that provided certain areas with an ombudsman and we had a wonderful one. Her name was Linda Reed.

When I told her what was happening she did several things. She sent me postal envelopes for me to send back any mail that was delivered to me but not addressed to me. She monitored the route. She checked in on how things were going. Once I sent back the misdirected mail, it didn't take long for that problem to clear up, because she had the proof (I noted the day it was received so she could track down the delivery). Weeklies showed up on time. It was a great program, and I wrote a letter of commendation for Ms. Reed and the program to the postmaster. So what happened? They ended the program! And the mail went back to its same tired old problems.

So you see, I've heard Ms. Larson's story (or variations thereof) before, so you will have to excuse me if I don't get too excited by her and Mr. Payne (to whom I have complained as recently as two months ago). Perhaps they will find our mail buried alongside the weapons of mass destruction.

P.S. The key to Excello is N-A Minit. Get rid of that and you will have solved the problem. §

## Atlas Hopes to Subdivide Theater

BY MARC BORBELY, 536 13TH ST. NE

The Atlas Theater has applied for permission to subdivide the theater at 1313-1333 H St. NE. There will be a hearing on May 22 at 2 p.m. at 801 North Capitol St. NE, in the hearing room on the third floor. It's case number HPA 03-200. Info, Lisa Burcham, Associate Director of the Historic Preservation Office, 442-8850. (—D.C. Register, April 25, p.3171) §

## Laise Joins ANC Committee

BY MARC BORBELY, 536 13TH ST. NE

Jim Laise, 1248 E St. NE, was unanimously voted on to the ANC 6A Outreach Committee at Thursday evening's meeting. ANC Commissioner (6A05) Michael Musante had nominated Mr. Laise. §

# Updates

**CORNER FORUM ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** The following people helped produce or distribute the May 4 issue of the Corner Forum: Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE (editing, folding, distributing); Tammi Cioffi, 536 13th St. NE (proofreading, editing, distributing); Sharon Cochran, 1300 block of Emerald Street NE (distributing); and Stephan Smith, 1311 E St. NE (distributing). There are 68 households in the area that have subscribed to the Corner Forum (24 on Emerald Street, 23 on E Street, 15 on 13th Street, and six on Duncan Place).§

**POLICE ACTION AT 220 14TH ST. NE:** Asked about the incident that occurred last Friday and Saturday at 220 14th St. NE, and whether tear gas was, in fact, used, as a neighbor reported in last week's issue, PSA 511 Lt. Renato Caldwell reported: "It was a domestic situation between a husband and wife. The husband took the wife hostage. The Emergency Response Team made an emergency entrance into the house and rescued the wife. The husband was arrested. There were no injuries or use of force. ... They threw a stun ball inside of the apartment. The ball causes everyone to become disoriented. This is probably what was referred to as tear gas. The ball causes high-intensity lighting, which temporarily blinds anyone in the area."

**NEXT CORNER FORUM MEETING:** The next Corner Forum meeting, to assemble the current issue and plan future ones, will again be at the home of Marc Borbely and Tammi Cioffi on Saturday, at 536 13th St. NE. Pancakes and juice will be on the table.

**HOUSES FOR SALE:** According to the Long & Foster Web site, <http://www.longandfoster.com>, viewed yesterday, the real estate listings for the Corner Forum area has not changed from last week. The two houses on sale in the area are still 408 13th St. NE (\$412,000); and 1368 Emerald St. NE (\$315,000). (—Marc Borbely) §

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## An Artistic Imagination

BY KIM JACKSON, 1309 EMERALD ST. NE

The Corner Forum will recant the story about Brandon Jackson stealing 40 Easter eggs. Whoever reads this story will think my son steals, and he doesn't. Put the Easter picture of him and this letter back in your paper.

For the record, I have three good children. None of my children steal, and if I thought they would do something like that, they would be in big trouble.

Brandon does have a very artistic imagination, but what child doesn't, at 8? His thoughts are very broad for a kid his age.



Brandon is very playful, and he is a well-rounded child.

If anyone ever sees him doing something he's not supposed to, by all means inform me.

I spoil and love my children with discipline, and the thought of my son doing something like that, once again, upsets me. §

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From 12th Street to Bladensburg Avenue, the revitalization plan calls for an “Arts & Entertainment” district. This area would be anchored by the H Street Playhouse, the R.L. Christian Library, and the Atlas Performing Arts Center, and would host a variety of cafes, restaurants, art galleries, small shops, and studio spaces.

To maintain momentum in improving H Street, the two Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (6A and 6C) that cover H Street have scheduled joint meetings to hear from the public and to discuss possible zoning changes for H Street. The idea is to remove obstacles and create incentives in the zoning code for the revitalization of H Street. If there is agreement between the two ANCs, a proposal will be sent forward to the D.C. Zoning Commission.

To help the readers of the Corner Forum understand what the meetings are about and encourage their involvement, I have written up some questions and answers about zoning and the H Street NE corridor:

### **What is zoning anyway?**

Zoning is a set of regulations that establish zones where different land uses and building forms are allowed. In addition to the uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) allowed in each district, the zoning code controls how tall buildings can be, how much of a lot a building can cover, how much parking must be provided for various uses, and other aspects of building form. Zoning is supposed to promote “the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity, and general welfare.”

If a development meets all the requirements of the zoning code, then it is allowed as a “matter-of-right,” meaning that there is no public forum for review. If a development falls outside the allowed uses or otherwise varies from the zoning code, then the developer has to get a “special exception” or a “variance” from the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Getting one of these waivers to the zoning code involves public hearings, and provides an opportunity for affected neighbors to speak out directly or through the ANC about whether the waiver will have a negative impact on light, air, noise, traffic or other factors.

The zoning code can be a little hard to understand, but it is important because it controls the uses and types of buildings in our city. It also determines the level of involvement that neighbors have in the development of specific sites. You can learn more about zoning at the Web site of the D.C. Office of Zoning at <http://dcoz.dc.gov>.

### **Why does zoning matter on H Street NE?**

According to the Office of Planning, there are about 230 commercial and retail buildings on H Street and an additional 54 vacant lots. About one-third of the storefronts and almost half of the upper floors are vacant. Because zoning controls how sites can be used and how big buildings can be, the existing zoning may discourage some of the uses envisioned in the revitalization plan, or the existing zoning may not create enough incentives to bring new businesses to the corridor.

### **What zoning changes might happen on H Street NE?**

First, parts of the corridor could be up-zoned to allow taller buildings and more coverage of each lot. This is more likely in the area closer to Union Station to allow multistory apartment buildings and condos with ground floor retail. For the areas closer to us, the Office of Planning is not recommending any changes to the existing zoning districts, which currently allow buildings up to four stories that cover up to 60 percent of their lots.

Second, an overlay zone might be applied. An overlay zone builds off the rules of the underlying zoning, but provides additional incentives or restrictions to meet the goals of the neighborhood. In the shopping district, an overlay could be used to require ground floor retail and to create additional incentives for retail and commercial businesses to locate on the corridor. These incentives could be a little extra density for certain uses or some extra lot coverage. In the Arts & Entertainment district, an overlay could be used to provide density bonuses to arts-related uses, or for re-use of existing buildings. (Density bonuses allow for more building on a site for commercial or residential purposes.)

An overlay can also be used to create design standards that ensure that new development is pedestrian- and neighborhood-friendly. For example, the overlay could require parking to be located behind buildings, that service areas be screened, and that buildings face and have entrances from the sidewalk. An overlay zone can also create opportunities to review projects that may have an adverse impact on the community.

### **Who decides what zoning changes get made?**

The D.C. Zoning Commission makes the final decisions, but the proposals can come from the ANCs, the Office of Planning, civic associations, or even private citizens. The Zoning Commission is a five-member commission with appointees by the Mayor, the Architect of the Capitol, and the National Park Service. The Zoning Commission holds public meetings and hearings to decide if changes to the zoning map or regulations should be adopted.

### **How does the Zoning Commission decide to accept zoning changes?**

First, zoning changes have to be *consistent* with the Generalized Land Use Plan for the whole District and should advance planning objectives of the District or community. Second, the zoning changes have to be *reasonable*. Third, the zoning cannot be so *confiscatory* that it takes away all the economic value of private property. Fourth, the zoning must be *uniform* in that it applies equally to all properties within a zone.

### **What are some of the issues and uncertainties involved with H Street zoning?**

One issue is what level of public involvement is appropriate for decisions about individual sites along H Street. In general, the idea is to be clear enough in the zoning code and overlay so that matter-of-right projects end up being consistent with the community’s vision for development on H Street. It would be impractical to have a public review process for development of every site, but there are going to be some instances where the public needs to be involved because of an adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The challenge will

be to find a balance so that the community has an opportunity to comment on projects of concern, but developers are not afraid that every project will be bogged down with a long review.

A second issue is rehabilitation of existing properties versus demolition and new construction. Part of the charm and appeal of H Street is related to the older buildings along the corridor. There will be new construction along the corridor on vacant lots, but also on lots that currently have older buildings. How do we decide which buildings are worth keeping and which can be replaced? Also, how do we make sure that the new buildings respect the surrounding neighborhoods and are friendly and inviting to pedestrians?

A third issue is related to which types of businesses should get incentives, which should require waivers, and which should be prohibited. In a commercial zone, many commercial uses are permitted. These include uses such as stores, banks, barbers, newsstands, and many others. In the Arts & Entertainment district, for example, we need to decide which related uses should get a bonus (art galleries? cafes? bookstores?). We also need to decide which uses should require special exceptions (gas stations? pool halls? auto rental? fast food?). Finally, we need to decide if any uses should be prohibited (car washes? outdoor storage?). This process is a way for the community to list what kinds of neighborhood businesses it wants to encourage or discourage. (Note that existing businesses are grandfathered, and do not have to leave just because the zoning changes.)

A fourth issue is that zoning changes may be necessary, but not sufficient, to create a pedestrian and neighborhood-friendly commercial corridor. There are many issues and concerns that fall outside of zoning such as public safety, liquor licenses, marketing of businesses, street parking, and investment to bring existing buildings up to code. At best, zoning changes create a set of rules and procedures that make it more likely that future development will be consistent with the revitalization plan. However, there will still be a lot of work on other issues that needs to happen for the plan to be realized.

#### **How can I get involved?**

There are two more joint meetings of the ANCs on this topic:

- Thursday, May 22, 2003 from 7-9:30 p.m. Miner ES (Enter 600 block of 16th Street NE). This is a joint zoning committee meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be to forward zoning recommendations to a joint ANC meeting based on deliberations of the zoning committees and informed by community input.
- Wednesday, June 25, 2003 from 6:30-9 p.m. Capital Children's Museum (800 3rd St. NE). The purpose of this meeting will be for the ANCs to make joint recommendations on any necessary changes to the zoning on H Street NE based on community input.

You can also contact your ANC Commissioner directly. §

There  
Is  
Lots  
Of  
Space  
Left!

We hope to hear from each reader  
at least once a month!

Call, write or visit...

Phone: 544-2447

Voicemail: 517-9128

E-mail: [news@thecornerforum.org](mailto:news@thecornerforum.org)

Mail or visit: 536 13th St. NE

Contact the Corner Forum: ph. (544-2447); voicemail (517-9128); e-mail ([news@thecornerforum.org](mailto:news@thecornerforum.org)); mail (536 13th St. NE). Help assemble and plan the Corner Forum every Saturday at 10 a.m. (See calendar for details!)

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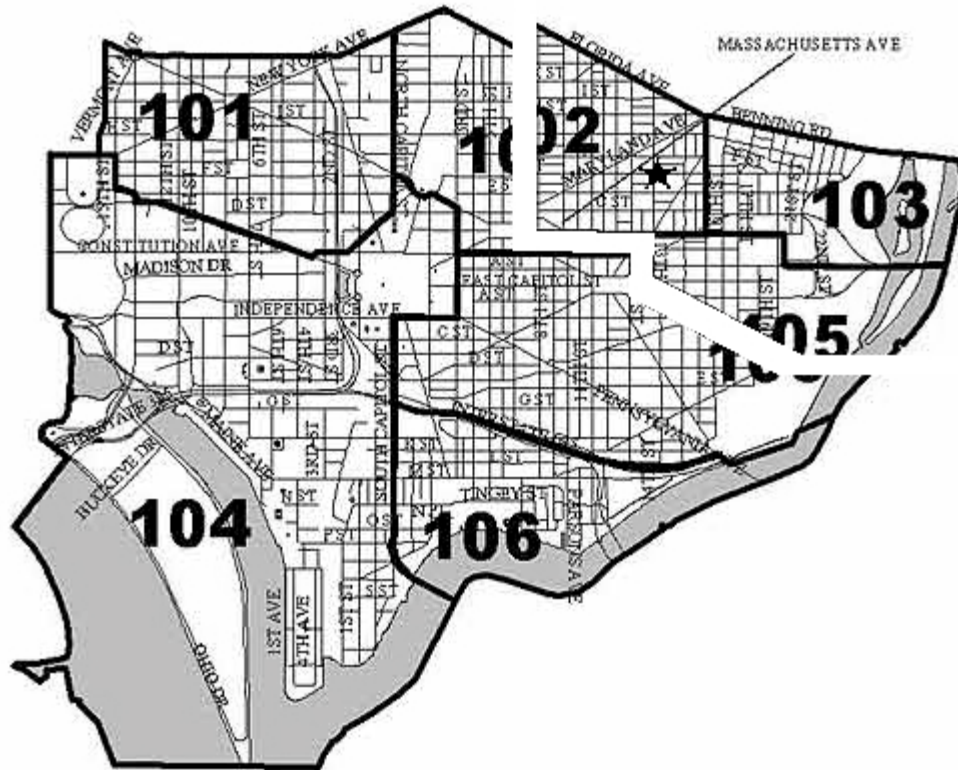
natural neighborhood boundaries, creating different sized PSAs with different needs and different resource demands. Aligning PSAs with neighborhoods should help to energize more residents to get involved in community policing. It will also provide PSAs with the flexibility they need in the area of staffing, so that we can do a better job of answering calls for service and working with the community on solving crime and disorder problems.”

The plan was unveiled at Crime Forum II, a public event held yesterday at Scripture Cathedral, at 810 O St. NW.

The police department said additional meetings will be held throughout the District to gather public comment on the plan.

The department also invited citizens to submit comments through its Web site, at <http://mpdc.dc.gov>, or by writing to Metropolitan Police Department, Office of Organizational Development, 300 Indiana Ave. NW, Room 5140, Washington, DC 20001.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A voted on Thursday not to take a stand on the proposal until after the ANC’s public safety committee, chaired by Jessica Ward (6A06), has a chance to consider the issue on Wednesday (see Calendar). Ms. Ward had proposed urging the city to align the PSAs along ANC boundaries, but Jennifer Flather, an active member of PSA 511, spoke out in opposition, saying the boundaries of the ANC and the PSAs should not be aligned, partly to keep the ANC from having too much power over the police. §



Under the plan proposed by Police Chief Charles Ramsey and Mayor Anthony Williams, the Corner Forum area, marked by a star above, would be part of Police Service Area 102, in the First Police District. The northeast section of the map, currently part of the Fifth District, would be reassigned to the First. Source: <http://mpdc.dc.gov>.

Contact the Corner Forum: ph. (544-2447); voicemail (517-9128); e-mail ([news@thecornerforum.org](mailto:news@thecornerforum.org)); mail (536 13th St. NE). Help assemble and plan the Corner Forum every Saturday at 10 a.m. (See Calendar for details!)

# History

12th and F streets NE, looking southwest along Maryland Avenue...



Sometime between 1909 and 1932. Source: National Photo Company Collection (Library of Congress).



Today. Note the mailbox on the southeast corner!

# Calendar of Upcoming Events

*If you attend any of these events, please send in anything from a few lines to a long article about what happened.*

*And if you know of any upcoming events that other readers might be interested in, send them in!*

*Events are free, unless otherwise noted, and open to all.*

— COMPILED BY MARC BORBELY  
536 13th St. NE

## **Monday, May 12**

4 p.m. Dr. Doolittle (85 minutes). Film. At Northeast Branch Library, Children's Room, 330 7th St. NE. Info, Michelle Jackson, 698-3299, <http://dclibrary.org/branches/noe>.

6:00 p.m. Public Hearing on FY 2003 and FY 2004 School Budget Reduction Measures. By Board of Education. "On April 15, 2003, the Council of the District of Columbia approved Mayor William's recommended budget of \$743 for DCPS' FY 2004 Local Funds Operating Budget — approximately \$100 million less than was requested by the Board. ... The Board seeks input from current and past DCPS teachers, principals, parents and other community members about shaping the system for making these unfortunately necessary cuts." At Fifth Floor Board Room, 825 North Capitol St. NE. Contact Elena Temple, 442-5190 or [Elena.Temple@k12.dc.us](mailto:Elena.Temple@k12.dc.us) to sign up to testify. <http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/boe/boeannounce.html>.

6:30 - 8:30 p.m. D.C. Water and Sewer Authority Public Hearing. "Discuss capital and service improvements, and proposed rate increases." At Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 777 North Capitol St. NE. For information or to testify, call 787-2330. [http://www.dcwasa.com/news/listings/press\\_release78.cfm](http://www.dcwasa.com/news/listings/press_release78.cfm).

7 p.m. Excello (419 13th St. NE) and N-A Minit (421 13th St. NE) Liquor Licenses. Community Meeting by ANC Commissioner 6A05 Michael Musante. At Washington Community Fellowship, 907 Maryland Ave. NE. Info, Musante, 548-2542 or [mfm81472@yahoo.com](mailto:mfm81472@yahoo.com).

## **Tuesday, May 13**

3:45 p.m. Board Games for Children: Checkers, Bingo, Scrabble. At Northeast Branch Library, Children's Room, 330 7th St. NE. Info, Michelle Jackson, 698-3299, <http://dclibrary.org/branches/noe>.

Mayor's Town Hall Meeting with Asian & Pacific Islander Community. "The API community will have a chance to have a direct dialog with the Mayor and his cabinet members to voice their needs and concerns. The Town Hall meeting will include the API community celebration through cultural performances and ethnic food from 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. and the dialogue with the mayor from 6 - 8 p.m." At Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, 901 G St. NW. Info, Mayor's Office of Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs, 727-3120. <http://dc.gov/events/index.shtm>.

## **Wednesday, May 14**

10 a.m. The District's Election Process. Public hearing by D.C.

Board of Elections and Ethics. "This is an opportunity for the Board to collect comments from District of Columbia residents about voting procedures, voter registration, voter education, accessibility of polling places and voting equipment, poll-worker training and recruitment, and other matters." In Room 280-North, One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth St. NW. To testify, call Bill O'Field by Monday evening, 727-2525. <http://dcboee.org/htmldocs/News%20Release.htm>.

3:30 p.m. DCIAA Senior High School Running East Championships, at H.D. Woodson, 5500 Eads St. NE, 724-4500.

7 - 9 p.m. ANC 6A Alcoholic Beverage Licensing & Public Safety Committee Meeting. On the agenda: license renewal petition by Excello Liquors (419 13th St. NE) and PSA 511 meeting with Lt. Renato Caldwell; presentation of police department's Partnership for Problem Solving. At Miner Elementary School, 600 16th St. NE. Info, Jessica Ward, 396-3193, [jward.anc@verizon.net](mailto:jward.anc@verizon.net).

7:30 p.m. Capital Losses: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings. James M. Goode discusses his book. At Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washingtoniana Division, Room 307, 901 G St. NW. 727-0321

## **Thursday, May 15**

4 - 8:30 p.m. Grassroots, Media, and Advocacy Training. At the American Cancer Society, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite #730. By the Tobacco-Free Partnership of the District of Columbia. Info, Mary Parham Wolfe, [mpwolfe@aladc.org](mailto:mpwolfe@aladc.org) or 682-5864 ext. 223. <http://www.dcpca.org/index.php?template=calendar.php>.

10 a.m. and Noon. Discovering Hidden Washington: The Alley Communities of Washington, D.C. This event "brings to life the alley communities of post-Civil War Washington, where a diverse population lived, worked, played and worshipped. ... The program presents this period through song, dance and games and is particularly appropriate for students in fourth and fifth grades." By the Library of Congress and the Washington Revels. In the Jefferson Building's Coolidge Auditorium, 101 Independence Ave. SE. Info, 707-5330. <http://www.loc.gov/loc/events>.

10 a.m. Ribbon Cutting, Dedication and Opening Ceremonies for the City Museum. At 801 K St. NW. (Metro: Gallery Place.) Info, 785-2068, <http://www.hswdc.org>.

## **Saturday, May 17**

10 a.m. Corner Forum meeting. "Help assemble the current issue and plan future ones." At the home of Marc Borbely and Tammi Cioffi, 536 13th St. NE, 544-2447.

10 a.m. The North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association Yard Sale. "All proceeds benefit programs of the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association, including children's activities and The Buzz." In the Triangle Park, 1300 block of North Carolina Avenue and A Street NE (between 13th and 14th streets). To volunteer or donate goods, call 543-3512. §