



HillcrestDC Bike Brigade: Kathy Jasper, Kenny Jasper, Aubrey (Stoney) Jasper, David Kirkpatrick, Off. LaFrance, Kathy Chamberlain, Off. Smith, Bob Bush



Hillcrest Community Civic Association

"Working together for a better community"

www.HillcrestDC.com

P.O. Box 30895, Washington, D.C. 20030-0895, phone 202-584-2703



2010

What Makes A Strong D.C. Neighborhood

13th Annual
Hillcrest Garden Tour



Saturday, June 17th 2006

Guided tours start at 1:00 - Refreshments to follow
Tickets purchased by June 14th are \$10; \$15 day of event

To purchase tickets, for the most information contact Phyllis Hammond at 202-584-2020 or Kathy Chamberlain at 202-584-8222 or long hours at 202-575-1762. Or to reserve your seat for \$10 email GardenTour@HillcrestDC.com by June 14th and get your name into the drawing of a grand prize.

Meet at the East Washington Heights Baptist Church
2200 Branch Ave. SE, on the corner of Alabama and Branch Avenue, NE

Photo Disclaimer: From the Upper East River View take the 2010 Friendship Heights bus. With both about 1/2 mile. One off at the corner of Alabama and Branch Avenue and take Alabama to go on to the South parking lot.

Selected as one of DC's "Best Places To Live" Washington Post/News April 2004



The Hillcrest Community Civic Association presents the core elements for a strong D.C. neighborhood through oral history and storytelling.

Twenty residents discuss on video what they believe to be a strong neighborhood, and how to get there.



Michelle Phipps-Evans
Journalism Scholar
November 2010



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November Newsletter, Transcripts, Permission Forms



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Introduction

The Hillcrest community in Ward 7 has a built solid reputation in the District of Columbia as one that has civic minded and neighborly residents, who are actively engaged in the community to effect positive change. To be such a successful, strong community, certain core elements need to exist. This report attempts to capture these core elements through the use of oral history interviews of 20 longtime residents of the Hillcrest community.

To build on its successful 20th anniversary celebration in 2009, the Hillcrest Community Civic Association (HCCA), through the Washington East Foundation, applied for, and received a DC Community Heritage Project grant to use oral history to explore these core elements that make for a strong D.C. neighborhood. The project was conducted by Michelle Phipps-Evans, a Hillcrest neighbor and journalism scholar, who was tasked with visiting various homes of several longtime Hillcrest residents who have been involved in, or were involved in, the work of the HCCA.

Field Notes: In doing this oral history, project, the journalism scholar used a digital video camera with mini DVs, mounted on a small tripod. She videotaped four couples; and the rest as individuals in their homes, except for the two Councilmembers. She videotaped them at different angles; working to make them as comfortable as possible, allowing them to do all the talking. Generally, all but one resident had a copy of the questions beforehand, so they could think through their responses. Several of the residents referred to their answers on the paper.

The youngest resident interviewed is 17 years old, and is a recent Hillcrest resident. The two oldest residents interviewed are in their late 80s, and have lived in the community for more than 50 years each. The journalism scholar anticipates that a lot of materials and scholarship will emerge from this project. The first deliverable is the November issue of the HCCA newsletter, which addresses the materials found here.

An interesting discovery that emerged from the project was that many of the same ideas intersected, regardless of age—that a strong neighborhood is about the people, civic involvement and engagement, respect, opportunities for interaction, holding elected officials accountable, expecting more for the community, and more.

It should be noted that three interviewees had offered copies of their interviews. For the others, the video tapes were transcribed by the journalism scholar, and the responses may not

be exact, word for word. It is the hope of the scholar that residents would be given the opportunity to look over their responses before the end of the project. Each resident signed permission forms allowing the journalism scholar to conduct the videotaping. It should be noted that the scholar is also the current communications chair of the HCCA.

About the Hillcrest Community Civic Association

The Hillcrest Community Civic Association (HCCA) is a 21-year-old civic organization that works to enhance the quality of life and prosperity of residents, families, community organizations and institutions located within its geographic boundaries. HCCA fulfills its mission by engaging members in a variety of educational, social, beautification, public safety and economic activities, advancing the interests of its members before the government and private sector and leveraging its collective influence to achieve community improvements.

The boundaries of HCCA are Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, from 31st Street to Southern Avenue; Southern Avenue to Naylor Road; Naylor Road to 27th Street; 27th Street & Naylor Road to Pennsylvania Avenue & 31st Street, SE. HCCA wants its neighborhood to be known as a model of neighborliness, civic mindedness, caring and respectfulness to the rich beauty of the environment; openness to maintaining old traditions and yet open to new ideas and ways of doing business; respect, civility, collegiality, collaboration and teamwork are the rules of law.

Established late 1989, HCCA is for all Hillcrest residents to promote the welfare of the neighborhood. Its purpose is to voice its concerns to government officials, businesses, and residents to ensure the best possible living environment in Hillcrest. HCCA addresses D.C. services of police and fire protection; leaf and refuse collection, snow removal; and safety and traffic lights, as well as promote issues of education, health, housing and beautification.

It started after a letter was circulated in 1989 by former commissioner of ANC 7B05, Belva T. Simmons, asking residents to join her in forming “an organization to speak with a concerted voice about our problems and needs.” She said that neighborhood organizations have proven to be of great value to the city; and that Hillcrest was the only geographically designated community in Ward 7 without a viable one.

Residents heeded her call, and on Aug. 2, 1989, about 60 residents met on the front lawn of Dennis and Gloria Logan for the Neighborhood Watch Night Out, where they discussed reviving the neighborhood organization. The idea was greeted with enthusiasm, and as such, HCCA held its first meeting at 10 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 30, 1989, at the Church of the Holy Comforter, Branch and Alabama avenues, SE. About 30 people attended, where they discussed issues such as ensuring that the District government provided services to the area based on need. They wanted to provide a positive image of Hillcrest. They sought to help neighbors keep up the standards projected by the image of the community, as well as to create a congenial neighborhood atmosphere, which could be a crime prevention measure for neighbors to look out for each other. And, they supported the educational and social development of Hillcrest

children and youth, among other concerns.

Later, Simmons was elected first president of the association and served 1989 to 1992. Paul Savage was voted the second president and served 1993 to 1995, Pastor Franklin Senger III was voted the third president and served from 1996 to 2001, and then Vincent M. Spaulding was elected the fourth president and served from 2002 to 2006. Karen Lee Williams was elected the fifth president in 2007 and serves to the present. She was recently re-elected in 2010 to serve another two-year term. To read the entire history, visit Hillcrest's website at www.hillcrestdc.com.

This collection of oral history interviews is a compilation of the thoughts, words, and ideas from several of these Hillcrest residents and HCCA members who have been involved from the very beginning. This is what they think is a strong D.C. neighborhood; and what are the core elements that make this neighborhood a strong one.

Funding

*Funds for the DC Community Heritage Project are provided by a partnership of **the Humanities Council of Washington, DC**, and the **DC Historic Preservation Office**, which supports people who want to tell stories of their neighborhoods and communities by providing information, training, and financial resources. This DC Community Heritage Project has been also funded in part by the **US Department of the Interior**, the **National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund** grant funds, administered by the DC Historic Preservation Office and by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. This program has received **federal financial assistance** for the identification, protection, and/or rehabilitation of historic properties and cultural resources in the **District of Columbia**. Under Title VI of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** and **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** of 1973, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its federally assisted programs. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.*

List of Residents Interviewed

Resident	Date	Time	Meeting Place
Kathy Chamberlain HCCA Board, former ANC	Sept. 15	7 p.m.	2922 W St., SE. (202) 581-8272
Philip and Mary Hammond former HCCA Board Current ANC	Sept. 20	9:30 a.m.	2132 Branch Ave., SE (202) 582-3059
Doris A.M. Thomas Serenity Players, HCCA Member	Sept. 20	12:30 pm	2010 38 th St., SE, # 201, (202) 575-4248
Miles Steele III Friends of Francis Gregory, Neighbors Through Art, former HCCA Board	Sept. 20	2 p.m.	2625 36 th St., SE (202) 582-7832
Paul Savage , former HCCA President	Sept. 20	4 p.m.	2614 32 nd St., SE. (202) 582-4957
Carrie Thornhill HCCA Board, former Schoolboard	Sept. 26	3 p.m.	2059 36 th St., SE. (202) 583-5164
Karen Williams Current HCCA President	Sept. 26	5:30 p.m.	2914 W St., SE (202) 584-2703
Dennis and Gloria Logan , HCCA Historian, HCCA Co- founders, former Board, Neighborhood Watch	Sept. 28	7 p.m.	3624 Austin St., SE (202) 582-4724

Pastor Franklin Senger III HCCA Board HCCA Co-founder	Oct. 9	7 p.m.	3365 Denver St., SE (202) 582-1760
Linda Jackson former HCCA Board	Oct. 10	5 p.m.	2201 31st Place, SE (202) 584-3612
Rev. Burke and Yvonne Burke HCCA Board	Oct. 11	6:30 p.m.	2101 32nd St., SE (202) 584-3018
Nicholas Phipps-Evans HCCA Member	Oct. 11	9 p.m.	3031 W St., SE, (202) 582-1207
Vincent C. Gray Council Chairman- Mayor Elect, HCCA Member	Oct. 17	2:30 p.m.	2619 Branch Ave., SE (202) 584-3237 Met at the Boys and Girls Club on Benning Road, NE
Marvin Bowser HCCA Board	Oct. 17	5 p.m.	2501 33rd St., SE (202) 256-9629
Yvette Alexander Current Ward 7 Councilmember, HCCA Member	Oct. 22	Noon	3442 Highwood Dr., SE, (202) 583-7305 Met at the Council of the District of Columbia on Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Don and Lucy Murray Former HCCA Board, HCCA Member	Oct. 26	7 p.m.	2525 32nd St., SE (202) 583-0738

Questions for the HCCA Oral History Project

Creating a Strong D.C. Neighborhood

Editor's Note: These questions are only to serve as a guide in doing the HCCA oral history project. My experience has been that the best questions often emerge during the interview based on the responses by the interviewee, and cannot always be anticipated.

—Michelle Phipps-Evans

- 1) Tell me your name and spell it.
- 2) For a little background, could you tell me briefly about yourself, and how long have you lived or been involved in the Hillcrest community? (You could include any involvement you may have had in the Hillcrest Community Civic Association.)
- 3) As you may know, this oral history project is a continuation of the 20th anniversary celebration of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association. In thinking about your neighborhood, Hillcrest, will you define it as a “strong D.C. neighborhood?” Tell me why, and also explain what is your definition or idea of a “strong D.C. neighborhood.”
- 4) What is your opinion of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association, and its role in creating a “strong D.C. neighborhood?” How do you think it has engaged the residents of this community to encourage active involvement and participation? To what extent, do you think the HCCA has sufficiently engaged the residents in the other parts of this city? (I want you to think about our internal and external interactions. Think long-term in the past 20 years or from how long you’ve been a member of the HCCA.)
- 5) How effectively has the HCCA worked with the Hillcrest community—and by extension the rest of Ward 7—to garner good will, promote neighborliness and maintain a wholesome community? How effective has the various forms of communication and outreach proponents been effective, or is there room for improvement?
- 6) To what degree do you see HCCA and the Hillcrest neighborhood as extensions of each other? In other words, how effective would have one been without the other in creating a “strong D.C. neighborhood?” Do you view them—Hillcrest and HCCA—as separate entities? Or are they one and the same to you? When one does well, does it naturally bring along the next? Or does success occur individually? Why do you see it this way?
- 7) The Hillcrest neighborhood has been known for its civic-mindedness, neighborliness, caring and respect of the beauty of the environment. Is this something you agree with? If so, why? Are there any other adjectives you’ll use to describe Hillcrest and HCCA?

8) Could you offer any specific examples that will underscore this civic mindedness and neighborliness of Hillcrest's residents? Feel free to be as descriptive as you can be.

9) Since the first time you moved to this community, do you see a continuation of that civic mindedness and neighborliness? Has it changed overtime? Is it better or worse? Do you have an opinion on the HCCA in its helping with this continuation?

10) Based on the length of time you've lived in Hillcrest, and based on your observations and interactions, what do you see as the three core elements that make for a strong neighborhood in the District of Columbia? Examples may include the respect one resident may have for another just by keeping his or her yard clean. Being able to say hello to each other, etc.

11) Is there anything else you can think of, which highlights Hillcrest as a strong D.C. neighborhood, and anything that shows the HCCA as helping to facilitate that strength, please feel free to let me know.

What Is A Strong Neighborhood?

What Makes Hillcrest a Strong Neighborhood?

A strong neighborhood is one that is stable, friendly, open, clean, safe and connected with the rest of the city. In Washington, D.C., a strong neighborhood is one that is able to make requests, and receive city services in a reasonable amount of time, that help make the neighborhood a desirable place to live and raise a family. A strong neighborhood is a community that has influence. Residents in a strong neighborhood are able to keep abreast of local, citywide and national issues, especially those that will ultimately affect them and their lifestyles.

A strong D.C. neighborhood is composed of neighbors knowing neighbors; about neighbors showing concern for each other and their wellbeing. Neighbors make it a point to be aware of what is going on, especially on their streets; and they are on the alert for scenarios that are out the ordinary. They will alert others as well as authorities, of conditions that may become detrimental. Residents need to be honest, and be willing to get involved and resolve problems, to help one another. A strong neighborhood is one where neighbors look out both for you, as well as your home. It is where people care about each other and the wellbeing of their neighborhood. An ideal strong neighborhood is one where there is constant communion among neighbors, where people know each other and can connect with each other.

Hillcrest is certainly a strong neighborhood because of the people who are dedicated to its stability.

Hillcrest is a strong and effective neighborhood, because the civic association is a strong and effective organization. The civic association and the community have a symbiotic relationship and they are intricately tied, and the HCCA is used as a tool for the people living there to have a better quality life. There is active involvement, active committees and active commitment to building the association.

It's a place where people want to come, to learn and live. A strong neighborhood will stand no matter where it is; it doesn't have to only be in D.C. A strong neighborhood is a happy place, which lifts your mood whenever you get there. Hillcrest is certainly a strong neighborhood because of the people, who are dedicated to its stability. The people here have a sense of who they are, and how they want the community to be. The people are what make the neighborhood strong. People pull together on the issues, and Hillcrest does that effectively. At

the HCCA meetings, the issues of Hillcrest are brought to the front, and the close knit community is able to work together and stick together to solve problems and issues. A strong neighborhood is one where you have a large number of people presenting different elements of the community, carrying out ideas that will enhance the entire group. It is one that has active citizens who are committed to ensuring that the neighborhood is safe through various groups such as Neighborhood Watch, which keeps people involved.

A strong neighborhood fathers many city leaders—people who have gone on to give many contributions beyond the neighborhood, to the city as a whole. To date, Hillcrest has fathered two mayors and two chairmen of the Council of the District of Columbia. The mayors are current Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry who lived in the Hillcrest in the past, and current Mayor Vincent C. Gray, who also served as chairman. The new chairman is At Large Councilmember Kwame Brown, also from Hillcrest. Also living in Hillcrest are former Ward 7 Councilmembers including H.R. Crawford and Kevin Chavous. Current Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander lives in Penn Branch, which is marketed as part of Hillcrest. Willie Hardy was the only Ward 7 councilmember who did not come from the Hillcrest or Penn Branch neighborhoods.

A strong neighborhood is one where neighbors are active, engaged and serve as catalysts for change. They believe in the betterment of the community, that residents need to get the same treatment all over the city. It takes steps to ensure that the police as well as District government heads know what is occurring in the community. A strong neighborhood is one where residents do good things for others without seeking reward or recognition.

A strong neighborhood needs to constantly seek to make itself relevant by working to find a way to mesh longtime residents with younger residents moving in. As HCCA encourages extended involvement, most of the residents who were involved in the organization 20 years ago are still actively involved. But since many of them are aging, there needs to be succession building. Hillcrest will continue to be a strong neighborhood because of this active involvement by both groups in the civic association, which meets every single month—12 months a year without a break.

A strong D.C. neighborhood sustains its value overtime—where the homes are beautiful and where the streets are clean. The neighborhood is able to sustain itself with its friendly and family-oriented focus. The neighborhood and the civic association become a model for others across the city to emulate. Part of the strength is to bridge gaps and build coalitions across the city, to find similarities and a bond.

A strong neighborhood is one that has a voice, and the HCCA serves as that voice for the community. What makes it effective is that the HCCA could speak for Hillcrest in an apolitical voice. The HCCA is one which offers a place for residents to vent, to find solutions, to offer a social outlet to be with like people with like problems, where they can work out their frustrations. A strong neighborhood is one where neighbors are able to do these and more.

The HCCA's success is directly tied to the neighborhood's mix—the people in the community with various backgrounds, educational experiences, ages, orientations, political persuasions, from different countries—with a desire to be part of the community. The civic association does not exist unless you have a neighborhood of people who care to get involved in the community.

For a strong neighborhood to continue from strength to strength, its mouthpiece needs to be flexible, and to take a moment to reflect what it has. Instruments such as surveys may be useful to determine who lives in the community with what strengths or weaknesses. It should be noted that even when a small group of residents get together to plan something, they do get the wider support from the civic association. For instance, the Anthony Williams draft for mayor, at first comprised only a small core group; but later, it pulled in the wider association.

The Core Elements for a Strong Neighborhood to Exist

- Respect and friendliness toward other neighbors. This includes keeping noise levels reasonable, keeping pets contained, keeping yards clean, keeping sidewalks clear, saying hello, having block parties, walking the neighborhood together, socializing, and walking across the street to talk to a neighbor when you're on your way home after work and the neighbor is sitting outside. Respect extends to their properties.
- Becoming civically active. This includes getting involved in improving schools, recreation centers, libraries, grocery stores; requesting improved transportation; becoming involved in neighborhood watch, civic association, community organizations; etc.
- Having a well-organized, highly operational civic association that is the voice of the neighborhood. It needs to solicit the attention of city leaders and government agency heads. It anticipates, expects and demands a high level of responsiveness from these leaders, and the powers that be.
- Residents have an interest in their personal well-being, as well as for any concerns affecting them directly, which may ultimately affect other residents.
- Being able to keep a watchful eye through the spirit of outreach—first by knowing your neighbors; interacting with your neighbors and interacting with the police for a safer community.
- Giving many opportunities for neighbors to get together to improve their neighborhood; giving opportunities to socialize; and opportunities for neighbors to help others. This includes young people, schools and the environment.

- Being given the opportunity to assist yourself and others. Respect is a basic characteristic of human beings and a strong neighborhood gives the opportunity for people to practice that. Respect builds a foundation.
- Having people who are vested in the neighborhood as homeowners who take care of their homes, their properties and their surroundings. They value the neighborhood and each other, and work together to keep the neighborhood clean and safe, and to look out for each other. They constantly work with the government heads to get simple things done, like getting potholes filled and trees cut.
- Having strong commitment to the neighborhood and being willing to volunteer to work hard on the issues for the good of the neighborhood.
- Having an open community by giving others the opportunity to volunteer, to offer their services to help; going so far to even offer a training program for willing volunteers without the necessary skills.
- Making room for individualism, and allowing these individuals to thrive within a group dynamic.
- Stability of the neighborhood. Finding ways to adapt well to change; involving new people and new ideas without losing or forgetting the core group of people who've been involved long term.
- Be willing to be part of the neighborhood or the civic association for the overall benefit. Be responsible for its safety and cleanliness.
- Effective involvement and working relations between persons of all persuasions, ethnic groups, newcomers and old timers as evidenced by the diversity of leaders in HCCA.
- Being honest with your neighbors. If you see something, you need to be able to let them know.

- Providing regular and consistent opportunities for residents to get together in a social setting, or in a business setting to discuss and develop plans to solve problems. HCCA provides these opportunities: it meets 12 months of the year, same time, same place; it celebrates the beauty of homes and gardens annually; produces a monthly newsletter; maintains a website and hosts a holiday party at year's end; 50-75 members show up every month, taking no vacation from the business of the well being of the neighborhood in the areas of schools, recreation and libraries; public safety and emergency preparedness; the environment; streets, traffic and transportation; communications; and memberships.
- It develops flag ship events as its own. In Hillcrest, these include the Home and Garden Tour, Blessing of the Trees, the HCCA newsletter, the directory of HCCA members, the new-members welcome brochure, the website, the Hillcrest Listserv, the Facebook page, as well as the Neighborhood Block Zone system created by Dennis Logan and continued by public safety officials.
- Active and sustained interest beyond the borders of the neighborhood as exemplified by the more than 10-year partnership with Palisades Civic Association and neighborhood, as well as the well known and successful draft of Anthony Williams for Mayor.
- One of the most effective Neighborhood Watch programs in the city with zone leaders and block leaders across the community affirming ongoing relations between police and residents.
- Monthly interactions with two to three governmental leaders every month, as exemplified in the HCCA's Councilmember Roundtable, for the past two years. Additionally, both the new mayor and new chairman of the District of Columbia live in one neighborhood—Hillcrest. This is unprecedented.
- A good recreational facility that can be used for the young and the old.

- Having a diverse group of people living in the community—beyond race—but in terms of age, interests, occupation, orientation and more. It was an integrated coming together of people of all races, thus encouraging open civic engagement.
- Having strong knowledge of government and civic life in the city, and have a very strong sense of pride in community to facilitate it. This includes holding your elected officials accountable, and getting to know your elected official.
- Extended civic engagement. Some of the people involved in the city association 20 years ago are still involved.
- One that's protective of rights and responsibilities of its residents.

NB: These are in no particular order of importance.

Final Thoughts

If there was even a lingering question about the commitment of the residents to the Hillcrest neighborhood in Washington, D.C.'s southeast neighborhood, this should erase any doubts. This is a strong, proud neighborhood, which ensures that its voice is heard. According to some estimates, the 7,000 residents who live here care about their neighborhood; they want it safe, and won't stand for anything less.

For any community to be considered strong, it must take active, engaged and caring neighbors for problems to be solved. Of course, this is not the only thing as city action is generally needed. However, the truth is, problems will not be solved without the active participation and voice of the neighbors. Government leaders generally rely upon its residents to insist on their needs. For the past 20 years, the residents belonging to the Hillcrest Community Civic Association realized that, and through organizing and coalitions, they have been able to get certain things they need to make the neighborhood more livable.

There is reason to believe this can be a model for responding to the challenges in the District of Columbia, in a positive way. And the biggest reason is the neighborhood itself.

Addendum

- The HCCA Newsletter for November 2010
- Transcripts
- Permission Forms