

Gotta love 60 degrees
in February, right?



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stanton park neighborhood association news

CALENDAR

FEB 28 **Stanton Park Neighborhood Association Meeting**
Monday, 7:30 PM

Northeast Branch Library, at 7th Street and Maryland Avenue NE.

MAR 5 **Spring Book Sale!**
Saturday, 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM
Northeast Branch Library, at 7th Street and Maryland Avenue NE.

Thousands of books will be on sale at great prices. Fiction, nonfiction, history, political and current events, children's, classics and hundreds of paperbacks. Sponsored by Friends of Northeast Library (FONEL). Proceeds from the sale will be used to support the Northeast Library by purchasing equipment and supplies, buying books, and supporting children's programs.

MAR 9 **ANC 6C Meeting**
Wednesday, 7:00 PM
National Public Radio boardroom, 635 Massachusetts Avenue NW

MAR 10 **ANC 6A Meeting**
Thursday, 7:00 PM
Miner Elementary School, at 16th and F Streets NE

Want to know more about SPNA?

Want to know what happened at the last meeting? Find out more about how you can get involved?

All this and more available on the SPNA Web site:
www.stantonpark.org

Tips on Appealing Your Property Taxes

New property tax assessments will be mailed out in March. Capitol Hill assessments are expected to increase 18% compared to last year. Here are some tips from SPNA's January meeting on appealing your assessment.

Decide if you need to appeal. The current residential tax rate is 96 cents per \$100 of assessed value. No matter how much your assessment increases, there is a 12% cap on annual increases in actual taxes paid (this cap applies only to owner-occupied properties). It may not be worth your time and effort to appeal if your assessment isn't off by much.

Check the records. Contact your assessor (the phone number is on your assessment letter) and ask for a copy of the property record card for your house. This will have more detail than is available elsewhere. Make sure that the worksheet accurately describes your property, including the rating for the condition of various features.

Talk to the assessor. You can ask the assessor about the features of your house that particularly influenced its assessment, the prices for nearby houses that sold recently, and what the assessor considers to be comparable properties (although you may not agree that these are comparable).

Do your homework. Assessment information about your property and other properties can be found by going to the DC Office of Tax and Revenue web site at: www.cfo.dc.gov/otr, clicking on "Real Property Service Center" and choosing "Real Property Tax Database Search". (You can also find information about the sales price of properties there.) After you selected an individual property you are interested in, click on "View Features" at the bottom of the page. The details available include the building area, number of floors, the number of bedrooms, bathrooms, and total rooms, the types of floors and heating, and whether it has air conditioning or a fireplace.

Information is available in hard copy in the Washingtonia Division of the Martin Luther King Library. Limited information may be available in other public libraries. Gluttons for detail may want to choose the "Real Property Assessment Process" on the Real Property web site and look at the 2005 Assessor's Reference Materials.

Get the appeal form. Call 727-4829, or choose "Assessment Appeals" on the Real Property Service Center web site.

Choose the basis of your appeal.

You can make your appeal on the basis of 1) Market Value (based on a recent written appraisal, settlement statement, or property insurance documents); 2) Equalization (if you consider comparable or better properties to be assessed for less); 3) Classification (based on the use of the property); and 4) Property Damage or Condition (based on cost estimates, damage claims, etc.). You can appeal on more than one basis.

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Hill Real Estate Market: How Long Can it Keep Going?

Wondering what's happening in the real estate market on Capitol Hill? We've got an expert to help us sort out the issue. Don Denton of Pardoe ERA will offer his view of the current market, trends, and hot new developments at the next SPNA meeting, Monday, February 28. Don has managed the Capitol Hill office of Pardoe ERA since 1979, and has served as the president of the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals, the Capitol Hill Brokers Council, and the Washington DC Association of Realtors. Put down that appeal, and join us for a lively discussion with a Hill expert!

Property Taxes (continued)

To make a Market Value claim you have to show that your house wouldn't sell for what the assessment is, which can be difficult to prove. Many people may be able to make an appeal based on Equalization. For example, if your house is assessed at \$450K and comparable houses nearby are assessed at \$400K, you are entitled to a reduction in your assessment (even if the going market price for such houses is \$500K). You may succeed with an Equalization claim even if your property is assessed at less than you paid for it. The best evidence is to find neighboring properties that are larger or nicer, but with lower assessments. The more such comparable properties you can find, the better.

Document your appeal. A successful appeal requires meaningful and accurate supporting information. Simply offering an opinion with no factual basis will probably not result in a reduced assessment. Provide evidence that supports your claim, such as the details of comparable properties, photographs, maps, written documents, etc. Don't lie; be honest about the features of your house and its condition.

Appeal in person. The first level appeal is made directly with your assessor. You can choose a written appeal, a telephone appeal, or an in-person appeal with your assessor. Request an in-person appeal, because it gives you the best chance to make your case with the assessor. If you wish, you can request the assessor to make an in-person visit to your house to see the condition.

Be polite. The assessors are trying to do their job as well as they can.

If at first you don't succeed...

If you are not satisfied with the results of the first level appeal, you have 30 days to request a second level appeal with the Board of Real Property Assessments & Appeals (BRPAA), an independent review board. BRPAA hearings are conducted in person. DC law requires that if you ask for it, you must be provided with the assessor's report responding to your appeal, and the list of comparable properties they used, 5 days before the BRPAA hearing. Ask for this. You can introduce new evidence to BRPAA to rebut the assessor.

Don't miss the deadlines. You have 30 days to file each appeal. You may want to personally walk your appeal paperwork to the city, or to send it through registered mail.

SPNA Testimony on Abdo Children's Museum Condos

In January, SPNA testified before the Zoning Commission in support of the Abdo Development proposal for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) to build approximately 470 residential condominium units on the site of the former Capitol Children's Museum at 3rd and H Streets NE. SPNA did have some concerns about the project, and asked for more public benefits (such as potential public use of the old chapel) as part of the PUD. SPNA also commented on construction and traffic management both during construction and after the project is fully developed. SPNA requested that the construction of foundations for the new buildings avoid techniques that are likely to induce vibration and subsequent damage to fragile rowhouses nearby. If vibration proves to be a problem a system of monitoring, abatement, and remediation needs to be specified as part of the PUD approval. SPNA proposed that prior to the start of construction, Abdo Development hold a community meeting to describe the construction schedule, the measures taken to minimize disruption, and provide methods of contact to bring construction-related problems to their attention.

SPNA looks forward to welcoming the Abdo Development project into the neighborhood. This project has the potential to lead to dramatic changes for the long-neglected H Street commercial corridor. SPNA is working with Abdo Development on an agreement to apply for Historic Landmark designation as a mechanism to preserve the restored exterior of the building.



Save the Date!



SPNA Scholarship Fundraiser May 1

Every year, SPNA holds a special event to raise money for its scholarship program, featuring food, entertainment, gifts donated by local merchants, and lots of good company. This year, the fundraiser will be held at a performance of *Seussical* by the St. Mark's Players. Characters from the beloved stories of Dr. Seuss bounce from page to stage in this colorful and imaginative musical cleverly sprinkled with bits of gentle wisdom. *Seussical* will delight audiences of all ages, especially families with children. The SPNA scholarship fundraiser will be on the afternoon of Sunday, May 1. There will be more details in next month's SPNA newsletter, but for the time being, hold that date!

Tell Us About a Great Neighbor!

SPNA is accepting nominations for the annual Neighbor of the Year award. This is your chance to make sure a neighbor who has made a notable contribution to the community gets the recognition he or she deserves. Send a nomination explaining why this person should be selected to the SPNA P.O. Box (see address on front), or to wsilagi@hotmail.com. **Deadline for nominations has been extended to April 1.**