



HILL CENTER

# The Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital

Presented to the District of Columbia Office of Property Management  
in reponse to requests for proposals for the lease of  
The Old Naval Hospital, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C.  
March 26, 2007

## Executive Summary

With the enthusiastic support of individuals and organizations from across the Capitol Hill community, and with a sound and sustainable financial plan, the Old Naval Hospital Foundation proposes to restore the Old Naval Hospital building, carriage house and grounds for reuse as the Hill Center.

A vibrant new facility for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment and community life, the Hill Center will offer a wide range of educational opportunities for people of all ages – from after-school programs for neighborhood children to adult classes in computer literacy, languages, music, drawing and painting, parenting, creative writing, cooking, nutrition and much more. Some of these courses and programs will be offered in partnership with established neighborhood nonprofit organizations, such as the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop and the Capitol Hill Computer Corner, who need more and better space to expand their services. Other new programs will be offered by the Center itself, or by qualified instructors engaged by the Center.

The overwhelming majority of these envisioned programs and uses will have a community focus. In addition, the Hill Center will provide much needed meeting and performance space for community groups and office space for neighborhood nonprofits, while the carriage house will become a family friendly café with indoor and outdoor seating, surrounded by lovely gardens. Our proposal assumes a lease from the District for the buildings and grounds at no annual rent.

The Hill Center plan is the work of the Old Naval Hospital Foundation, a broad coalition of Capitol Hill neighbors who are committed to seeing this landmark site appropriately restored and kept in community use. This plan is not just an expression of our own desires and ideas for the property's future but a response to clearly expressed and documented community needs.

Since 2002 our Board has met and talked with hundreds of fellow Hill residents, soliciting their ideas for what the Old Naval Hospital should become. We established a website ([www.OldNavalFoundation.org](http://www.OldNavalFoundation.org)) to reach out to the community with our vision and invite citizen feedback. We also conducted an online survey of community interest (publicized with full-page ads in our two community newspapers), convened informal focus groups, and engaged in consultation with existing program providers in the neighborhood to validate, shape and refine the Hill Center plan. The community survey produced a flood of responses, both from relative newcomers to the neighborhood and from longer term residents, and fully half of the respondents were families with children. Through this process it became very clear that community demand for adult and children's education programs, meeting and lecture space, office space, and the related uses we envision for the Hill Center will easily fill the building and keep it bustling.

We have also been careful to survey other community centers in Washington and beyond to learn from their experience in providing the kinds of programs and services we envision for the Hill Center and to verify the financial viability of what we are proposing. Likewise, we have surveyed the current rental rates for office space and restaurant space in the Capitol Hill area. The findings of these due diligence efforts are presented in detail herein.

Through all of this community input and information gathering, the Foundation has determined with a very high level of confidence that:

- A lifelong learning center at the Old Naval Hospital meets broad-based community needs and interests.
- The on-site activities and uses we envision can be accommodated in a manner that respects and protects the Old Naval Hospital's historic fabric.
- The Hill Center plan is financially feasible and sustainable over the long term.
- The Old Naval Hospital Foundation and its Programming Partners have the capacity, commitment and experience to manage and support the Hill Center's successful operation.

**Historic Restoration.** The Old Naval Hospital Foundation strongly agrees with the Urban Land Institute's 2002 description of the Old Naval Hospital as a "hero building" that stands in serious need of physical rescue. Our proposal includes restoration of the building's landmarked exterior and its monumental fence to the best standards of historic preservation, and our interior space plan preserves the basic original layout of the first and second floors, to the extent that this is allowed by the District's access, health and fire safety requirements.

To carry out this effort, we have assembled an architectural and project management team (described herein) that boasts a great depth of professional expertise in historic building restoration. We have also held preliminary discussions with the District's Historic Preservation Review Board staff to establish that the site can be restored in ways that are historically sensitive while also serving the various uses we envision and meeting building code requirements.

The slow, steady deterioration of the Old Naval Hospital has long been an embarrassment to our community, and we thank the Office of Property Management for taking this groundbreaking step to make the place once again an asset to our neighborhood and a source of community pride.

**Historical Commemoration.** Most Capitol Hill residents today have little knowledge of the important history of the Old Naval Hospital as a medical and training facility and as headquarters for the effort that established the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday. The Hill Center will provide that background with appropriate historical displays and signage. We plan to work closely with the Navy Yard Museum and with the Friends of the Old Naval Hospital organization in providing both permanent and changing historical exhibits, including a docent program.

**Management.** The Old Naval Hospital Foundation Board will be responsible for the overall direction, programming and policies of the Hill Center. Day to day operations will be managed by a professional staff hired by and answerable to the Board. As noted

above, the Board will establish relationships with Programming Partners to provide many of the program offerings, and additional programming will be generated and organized by the Center itself. The Center will offer its Programming Partners centralized publicity and communication services and will manage the overall direction and goals of the Center. Advisory groups and other avenues of community input will be employed to ensure that the facility's direction and offerings remain responsive to community needs and interests over the long run.

Letters and expressions of support from Programming Partners and community organizations who are interested in using the Hill Center are included in Exhibit 6.

**Educational Opportunities.** Taking inspiration from the phenomenally successful 92nd Street Y in New York and the Cambridge Center for Adult Education in Massachusetts, we plan to offer a wide range of educational opportunities at the Hill Center for people of all ages. These will include classes in foreign languages, ESL, computer literacy, drawing and painting, music, dance, creative writing, history, current events, parenting, cooking and so on. As noted above, some of the courses will be offered in partnership with neighborhood organizations such as the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop and the Capitol Hill Computer Corner, while others will be offered by the Center itself or by qualified instructors whom we engage.

**Meeting and Performance Space.** Again and again, Capitol Hill community groups today are disappointed when they look for a place to hold a lecture, performance or membership meeting. Our church basements and meeting halls tend to be booked up far in advance, and many other venues are out of the price range of neighborhood organizations. Nowhere do we have a true community center available for gatherings with our neighbors. The Hill Center's rooms will be available for meetings, workshops, lectures, recitals, after-school tutoring, art exhibits, receptions and the many other functions and events that make a neighborhood a community. In addition, the separate carriage house will become a family friendly café surrounded by beautiful gardens.

Conservatively projected room rental rates and income, along with comparison rates at other facilities in the District, are provided herein.

**Office Space for Community Organizations.** There is no one structure on Capitol Hill today specifically designed to accommodate the office needs of multiple community groups, many of whom would benefit greatly from daily proximity with each other. Under our plan the Old Naval Hospital's top floor will provide needed office space for community-based organizations at modest rents and will also provide space for Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6 B. Again, projected rental rates, with comparison rates for current office rentals in the neighborhood, are provided herein.

**Leadership and Development Team.** We have assembled a very strong team of community leaders and development professionals to make the Hill Center a reality. Our Foundation's diverse and committed Board of Directors includes individuals with expertise in historic preservation, fund raising, public education, government, law, media

relations, non-profit organization management, and political and community action. In addition, to supervise the renovation effort we have retained the services of one of the Washington area's most skilled and experienced managers of projects of this kind. All of these key participants are listed within, with descriptions of their relevant talents and backgrounds.

**Meeting the RFP Criteria.** We believe our proposal for the Hill Center not only meets all of the requirements of the District's Request for Proposals, but also meets and exceeds all of the Preferential Selection Criteria identified as priorities for the District. These factors include:

- 1. Community Access.** As described above and in more detail in the accompanying pages, the whole purpose of the proposed Hill Center is community use, including space for community meetings and events; historical displays, presentations and programs; and office space for community organizations, including our Advisory Neighborhood Commission. Routine access will be provided to the building and grounds for educational and research purposes by community groups and organizations. Please note that the list herein of Programming Partners and organizations using office, classroom, meeting or performance space is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. The Hill Center will also be open to the community's many other organizations and interests and to new groups as they develop.
- 2. Signature Use of the Building.** The Old Naval Hospital Foundation, operating as the Hill Center, will be the signature user of the building and will be the sole entity leasing from and responsible to the District for management and use. Our intent is to have the building known and branded as the Hill Center both as a program provider and as a location. Community organizations and Programming Partners will use the Center under contractual relationship with the Foundation.
- 3. Low Impact on the Site.** The Hill Center is planned and designed to have low impact on the Old Naval Hospital building's historic interior, exterior and grounds. We fully agree with the 2002 recommendation of the Urban Land Institute that the goal in restoring the building should not be to create a shell for future reuse. Our architectural vision preserves the historic character of the property and fully incorporates the history of the building and its significance to Washington and the country. Full details are provided in Section 8.
- 4. Minimal Neighborhood Impact.** The Hill Center plan is designed to have minimal negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood. In line with the Ward 6 goal of a maintaining a walkable, livable community, the Center is intended for use primarily by local residents, most of whom will walk to the facility, and we also expect that most staff members will come from the area as walkers. For other users, the Eastern Market Metro stop, served by the Blue and Orange lines, is only one and a half blocks from the site. In addition, Pennsylvania Avenue S.E. and 8th Street S.E. are major corridors for Metrobus service from all parts of the District.

We will require all Programming Partners and other Hill Center users to fully publicize Metro rail and bus access in their materials. To further encourage non-

automobile use, our plan includes generous space for bicycle racks and a secure stroller parking area. Space will also be provided for delivery and service vehicles to keep them off neighboring streets and eliminate the need for an on-street loading zone.

To further minimize neighborhood impacts, the Center will be designed with the main user entrance on the west side, facing the gas station and church on 9th Street. The original main entrance on E Street, which faces a row of residences, will not be used for passenger drop off. The Center will also require any special event user that anticipates non-walkers and non-public transportation users to provide valet parking, on the non-residential side, and to take the valet-parked vehicles to an off-street site such as a nearby school parking lot. In addition, the Center will require all users to comply with the District's noise regulations.

The Hill Center will be staffed at all times when programs and events are taking place to protect the facility and provide security for staff and visitors. In addition, the restoration design includes a plan for nighttime security lighting which is compatible with the historic character of the site and respectful of the neighborhood, while providing for adequate safety for visitors and program participants. Lighting for the walks and parking area will be ground-mounted and low-scale, and the step lights and other landscape lighting will have dark-sky light controls. The staffing plan also includes full time maintenance personnel who will keep the building and grounds clean and litter free.

## **The Old Naval Hospital Foundation**

The Old Naval Hospital Foundation was launched as a 501(c)(3) in 2002 to restore the Old Naval Hospital building and grounds as a center for community life and learning, to be known as the Hill Center. Working with a highly experienced development team, we propose to supervise the site's design and construction and to manage and maintain the facility once the project is completed. Our board of directors will hire a professional director and staff to ensure proper care of the facility and to plan and manage the Center's programs in accordance with the goals set forth by the board. Regan Associates will serve as Principal's Representative for the building's design, renovation and commissioning.

As the brief biographies below demonstrate, the members of our board are primarily longtime Capitol Hill residents who have been involved in the creation, support and management of many successful community organizations. They are suited to the task ahead by training, experience and personal commitment, with expertise in historic preservation, property management, fund raising, public education, government, law, media relations, and political and community action.

### **Board of Directors**

**Rev. Paul R. Abernathy** has been rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill since 1998. St. Mark's is one of the neighborhood congregations most actively involved in community programs and outreach. Before coming to St. Mark's, Rev. Abernathy held a variety of positions in the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and in the National Episcopal Church. He lives on Capitol Hill.

**Sharon Ambrose** served as Ward 6 Councilmember from 1997 to her retirement in 2006. She chaired the Committee on Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and is a board member of the Capital Children's Museum, Anacostia Coordinating Council, and National Maritime Heritage Foundation. She has lived on Capitol Hill since 1969, served as president of the Brent Elementary School PTA, founded the Capitol East Children's Center, and was elected Ward 6 representative to the D.C. Democratic State Committee.

**Nicky Cymrot**, president of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, has been engaged with her husband Steve in residential and commercial real estate investment, construction and management on Capitol Hill and in Fredericksburg, Virginia, for more than 35 years. She serves on the steering committee of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project, is a past president of the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, and was founding chairman of the Capitol Hill Art League. She has been a Capitol Hill resident since 1966.

**Steve Cymrot** was the founding president of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, where he continues to serve as an a board member. He was also the founding president of the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals (CHAMPS), and has served as president of the Audubon Naturalist Society and as a board member for the

Capitol Hill Chorale and the Capitol Hill Day School. He and his son Paul own Riverby Books, with stores on Capitol Hill and in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

**John Franzén** is president of Franzén & Company, an award-winning producer of political and public affairs campaigns. A resident of our neighborhood since 1973, he serves on the board of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation. He is also the founding chairman of the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project and manages the organization's lecture series.

**Isaac Fulwood, Jr.** is the former D.C. Chief of Police and a Capitol Hill native. He served 29 years as a member of the Metropolitan Police Department and as Executive Director of the Mayor's Youth Initiative Office. He is the recipient of more than 200 awards from community, government and professional organizations and teaches law enforcement subjects at the University of the District of Columbia.

**Mark Gitenstein** is a partner in the Washington law firm of Mayer, Brown, Rowe and Maw. A longtime resident and active member of the Capitol Hill community, he served as chief counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and counsel to the Senate Intelligence Committee. He is the author of "Matters of Principle: An Insider's Account of America's Rejection of Robert Bork's Nomination to the Supreme Court" for which he won the American Bar Association's 1993 Silver Gavel Award.

**Betty Ann Kane** is a member of the D.C. Public Service Commission and former executive director of the D.C. Retirement Board. She served for twelve years as an at-large member of the D.C. City Council and for four years as a member of the D.C. Board of Education. She was head of public programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library and has served on the boards of the Historical Society of Washington and Friends of the National Zoo.

**William Malley** is a very active member of the Capitol Hill community and a partner in the Project and Infrastructure Development department of the Washington law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld. His practice focuses primarily on the representation of sponsors in the development of large infrastructure projects, including highways and airports. He has experience in historic preservation, environmental, transportation and land use law.

**Guy Martin** is a partner with the law firm of Perkins Coie, serving as Managing Partner of the D.C. office. He is a former Commissioner of Natural Resources for the state of Alaska and was Assistant Secretary for Land and Water Resources at the U.S. Interior Department during the Carter administration. A thirty-year Hill resident he has served on the boards of the Capitol Hill Day School, St. Timothy's School, the Shakespeare Theatre Guild and Mt. Holyoke College.

**John Pfeiffer** is a Program Examiner with the federal Office of Management and Budget. He served as co-chairman of Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools and has been active in Scouting, and parent activities at Gonzaga High School and Georgetown Visitation Prep School.

**David B. Ray** is Director of Community Outreach Programs for the United Negro College Fund, and has a long history working with community-based organizations and educational institutions. He served as an education specialist in the Mayor's Office of



Education Affairs and is a longtime board member for the Capitol Hill Community Foundation.

**Donna Scheeder** is currently the director of law library services at the Library of Congress and has been an active member and past president of the Special Libraries Association for more than 20 years. She serves as chair of the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee and is a former ANC commissioner, former chair of the D.C. Democratic Party, Vice President of the Association of State Democratic Chairs and former chair of the D.C. Civilian Complaint Review Board.

**Jennifer Smith** is the director of the Equity Audit for Senior High Schools at the Education Trust. Formerly, she was director of the D.C. Public Schools New Principals Leadership Institute, serving as mentor to newly appointed principals. She was previously principal of the Capitol Hill Cluster School and an instructor at George Mason University. She is a member of the Aspen Institute's Commission on No Child Left Behind

**Bonny Wolf** is a writer and editor who has lived on Capitol Hill for more than 20 years. A food commentator on National Public Radio and a former journalism teacher at Texas A & M University, she is the author of the recently published *Talking With My Mouth Full: Crab Cakes, Bundt Cakes and Other Kitchen Stories*, and a columnist for The Washington Post food section. She was chief speechwriter for Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman during the Clinton administration, co-founder of the Capitol Hill Chorale, and a member of the board of the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop.