



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Chuck Burger

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

NADGRODKIEWICZ: This is Anna Nadgrodkiewicz. I'm interviewing Chuck Burger for the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project. Today is November 7, 2009 and we are meeting at Coldwell Banker at 605 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Mr. Burger, thank you very much for meeting with me. Let's start by maybe a fairly general introduction. I know you are a Vice Chair of EMCAC, which is Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee. Could you talk a little more about that role?

BURGER: Well, I've been, initially I began serving at the origination of EMCAC when Council member Sharon Ambrose enacted the legislation. At that time, I was Council member Ambrose's representative, which is one of the designated appointees to EMCAC. Several years after that—I've been on the board since the inception and several years after that I became an officer, the Vice Chair. And at that time rather than I actually became a representative from CHAMPS, Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals, and have served in that capacity and as Vice Chair for the last several years.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: You said you have been involved with EMCAC since the moment it originated. When did it originate and do you know what was the reason behind it, what was the rationale for this organization?

BURGER: Well, it's been so long [laughing] and I probably don't know the exact ... I think we're looking at approximately 10-12 years ago, which is frightening, too. Maybe that's why you remember. One of the—when I originally came up to Capitol Hill in 1983, Eastern Market was well into the debate of what it could become and what people wanted with it. At the time in '83 I opened a store across from Eastern Market called Provisions. And Capitol Hill was much different than it is today, but one constant that had gone on since the 70s was the discussion of Eastern Market. And at that time organization formed which was called EMPDC [Eastern Market Preservation Development Corporation], which was a citizen, ad-hoc citizen group, which I think it exists today, though I've heard it has about three members. They are very good people but they are about three members. But they had elections to provide some community input into what could happen with the Market, and through the 80s there was a great deal of discussion, great deal of fear of what it could become, everybody was worried for it being, of going bankrupt or going empty again, or close to complaining that a Dean & DeLuca would be coming in and destroying the character of the Market. And really it was a historic place and a historic structure. And that was very vehement, actually, people had been involved in it so long they began to develop—certain parties would develop it as proxy crusades against each other.

What brought it to a point was the time that Council member Sharon Ambrose was in office. The city was beginning to take and look at a lot of these city-owned properties and given the fact that the city could not

maintain or subsidize, they began looking to the private sector to privatize by either initially selling off some properties or doing extended leaseholds to private concerns. I think that brought some clarity to the argument, that then the major issue became how can we assure that this is a facility that will always respond to the needs of the community, and then the larger view it was a city asset and how could this be best preserved as a city treasure and resource. So as a result of that Council member Ambrose crafted EMCAC. This was a pretty radical procedure because it was involving—even though EMCAC has an oversight role—it involved the community in a partnership with the city facility. So it pretty radically changed things. And from that EMCAC through the legislation and through subsequent setting some standards of operation, EMCAC has been a very positive influence in bringing community input and community activism to bear in helping getting the Market established. And it's still a process but at the time of the legislation it did kind of pull Eastern Market off the table for possible more private influences that could have negatively impacted the historic nature and purpose of the Market.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: So if I understand correctly, EMCAC consists of representatives of different stakeholders in Eastern Market, so: indoor vendors, outside vendors, community and so on. You mentioned when you joined you actually as proprietor you had a business there. What were you selling in your store, I'm curious?

BURGER: I think by the time EMCAC formed I was doing real estate, but I initially in '83 opened the store called Provisions which actually did quite well. We were probably ... as far as measuring gross per square foot, we did extremely well as far as sales. Profit per square foot was less attractive [laughing]. But that had a succession of owners after the 80s after I sold it in '85. But the creation of, that's one thing I want to mention, the purpose as I mentioned for EMCAC is an oversight role and initially when the legislation was proposed it consisted of purely civic and business organizations, which included of course CHAMPS. The Council member, the mayor had an appointee who I think at that time did not have a vote on EMCAC, it was not a voting member. And additionally also the vendors themselves, the Market, the vendors in the inside and outside and farmers line were not given votes. In fact, the fact that they were on EMCAC was just added on at the end through some amendments at the very end of legislation, because it was thought that these parties, when voting on oversight issues, they would have vested interests. After we—and again as EMCAC developed EMCAC worked hard. Initially, we, through a loophole, we were able to get the farmers line and the indoor vendors a half a vote each and [chuckling] it eventually worked and we were able to change the legislation and give them full vote, because as we proceeded we saw that it was better in this oversight role to have everybody at the same table. So in that aspect of a composition of the board itself there was a matriculation and I think through operations we saw that was the best way everyone would be ensured an equal voice in the operation, operational oversight.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: So obviously as a Vice Chair you have kind of a vision role and the role of empowering various actors, as you said, trying to give a voice to everybody and be fair about it. What are your other day-to-day duties at EMCAC?

BURGER: Myself?

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Uh-huh.

BURGER: I don't think we're involved in any international ambassador relationships [chuckle] but primarily as Vice—our Chair Donna Scheeder as with prior chairs—carry the weight of bringing together a lot of the elements. We're a very strong committee-oriented board. I served probably, I served probably, I don't know, on four to six boards of Capitol Hill organizations and have worked since initially the founding of a couple of them. Each committee, each board works a little bit differently. The way EMCAC has progressed I think it's been very effective, we're very strong. Our committee chairs control and are responsible for bringing a lot of the information and a lot of the recommendations to the board as a whole. The Chair primarily manages that input from these chairs which have their own committees. As Vice Chair, I, probably myself, and it's just personally, but the Vice Chair legally works with the Chair and our Executive Committee where again it is one of several committees that are on, that are involved with EMCAC, working with more policy direction, or trying to discuss the work of the different committees to see how we can effectively move forward, so ... Most of my work is done through the Executive Committee and as Vice Chair I try at least myself work personally, working with the Chair to accomplish what she and the Executive Committee have decided.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Alright. Let's move on then to talking more specifically about the Eastern Market and kind of what has been happening to it in the last two years since the fire. Let's start on a personal note: where were you and what was going through your head on that night that the Market burned?

BURGER: I've been up here working on community activities for 25 years and I think my first impression was, wow! You have to realize that prior two or three years we'd been working on a renovation plan that was to begin several months from that date of the fire. So in essence, actually, I saw that quite frankly [chuckling] I saw that as accelerated renovation plan. I think I was shocked and I was actually, and frankly I was more concerned about other structures. I do have suspicions that I did know for several weeks that there was a known arsonist working in the area and several fires had been started by different people in different commercial areas. And that was actually, quite frankly that was my biggest concern, because if that same thing had happened to the Market, we were very fragile. I think you can remember, I don't know if you remember, Ellicott City [MD] had a fire which to their small

commercial, a lot of wood frame. So there had been fires in the 200 block of Pennsylvania, there had been attempts to set a fire at Eastern Market on the other side, so I was more concerned about this as some sort of pattern that was developing. I knew the Market intimately with the old electric. There were a lot of problems and a lot of basic code violations within the Market, and that's why we had been working strong and we were quite excited about the renovation plan. One thing that did work in our favor was the fact that since we got basically what amounted to a large stimulus money to get the Market back up, we for the most part had already designed out a lot of the things that would then save tremendous amount of time and we were able to ensure that everything done. We already had a good running start because we had gone through the plans for the renovation.

So I think it was in a sense a jelling time, too. I think the community of course, which that's one of the reasons I live here, rallied to the Market. And I think it did give focus for the people who had been up here shorter time. I mean people who'd lived up here six months or 60 years and I tend to see they still have the same kind of loyalty to the Market, the number of people I've known over 20 years, 30 years, 20 years up here has been a lot of these people I see at the Market are people that maybe lived up here 15 years ago. Eastern Market is the number one destination, non-government destination in the city.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Oh, really?

BURGER: We've received recognition in the neighborhood Eastern Market from APA [American Planning Association] as one of the top neighborhoods in the country and it is a rallying point. I think how we can take that to the area's advantage and to the Eastern Market itself's advantage I think is the challenge now to CHAMPS which is the chamber of commerce up here, EMCAC, Barracks Row merchants, the BID [Business Improvement District]—these are entities now that are focusing on establishing the Market as not only a weekend attraction, where we get several hundred thousand people a year specifically come of even the Metro—we started doing the studies now—to come up into the area, to come to the Market. We do have to establish it as a weekday venue also and ... which is important, because one of the goals of the legislation was to create a Market that would be self sustainable and also the surrounding businesses to be healthy, need to be stronger.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Which legislation are you referring to?

BURGER: The regular EMCAC legislation.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: The initial founding legislation?

BURGER: Yeah, it's not stated for fact but one of the goals and what sits in the background of the legislation is the fact that the Market is not designed to be subsidized and there are challenges in business.

And so this is one of the things we are constantly working on, not only as EMCAC but as we work with all these other business organizations. Because it's important we develop weekday business and also we have a number of small retail stores in an area that's not as dense as Dupont Circle or Columbia Heights and we have unique challenges. It's the neighborhood—people love the charm and walkability of the neighborhood due to the lower density and the location of the commercial strips, but it's ... those in a sense are challenges. It's nice to have, but they're things that we're going to have to fight for, especially with the rising costs of retail and we just want to ensure that we have a good healthy mix of businesses up here and they're businesses that complement our daily quality of life, not just a ... we want to be a quality neighborhood destination, not a tourist destination so I think that's what we're fighting for.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: If I may go back for a moment to what you said about having had plans for renovation of the Market and then the fire sort of sped it up a little, [chuckle] let just say, but also created new opportunities. Here you had a chance to actually go more in depth, if you will, with restoring the Market. How involved were you in those decisions, kind of, were you involved with for instance procuring vendors who would work on the roof, or I don't know, paint inside of the building, or ...

BURGER: No, any of the—I can tell you probably (not directly) myself, which I was on the perimeter of it, but myself had probably spent 15 to 20 hours discussing the glass. Three different types of glass is in three different areas and I was on the committee that worked on that [chuckle] so that's how much time they had spent. And again, we didn't make any decisions, but I think in the end result we seem to carry a lot of weight and I think that's due to some of our committee chairs, Monte Edwards who is respected, I think. When he is talking to a contractor, he's talking to him on a professional level, or with the architect. But we primarily worked with the architect. And a lot of the time they just looked at us and said, "No, we're not doing that." We're an oversight committee so we [inaudible]. You know, it was a very good give and take but I think every physical aspect of the ...

One thing the [inaudible] did I guess allow us were a lot of the structural elements, the joist work in the ... these joists had to be specially crafted, and the steel, they had to be molded and brought in. And so a lot of that type of detail had to be developed and ensured that they had the roofline, which is an incredible architectural element. We had a tremendous amount of input and we had a great deal of debate because no one really knew what [Adolf] Cluss originally designed. And so we came up I think with a fair representation of [inaudible], something that would assist the current operation energy-wise with the Market and trying to remain true to the original design of the architect and respect it, so historical integrity. So there was some probably let's say not as exciting elements but very important elements as far as the windows, roofline, and there was more extensive work done on the plumbing and electric obviously, which allowed us to do a lot more expensive things as far as the air conditioning and cooling,

which we couldn't have done before, and also the North Hall. The North Hall was I think re-energized and we went back and revisited that to make that something which is something we always needed to develop more as a resource, as an events space, which it served as one before but not even having bathrooms it never had a certificate of occupancy, and having the electrical wire that was probably from the 1940s. So the totality of it, it came out good, but there was again, we had to go with much deeper elements that had to be, that evolved from total renovation.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: And how did the cooperation look with the city, with other organizations here in Capitol Hill like CHAMPS or like Capitol Hill Community Foundation who were also raising money to help the vendors get through that tough time?

BURGER: Yeah, we all work pretty well together and I think in a true sense of it. And again, this is one of the reasons I lived in this area when I moved up here in the 80s. People, they may not get along all the time, but people up here work well together. I think what the Cymrots did with the Foundation was just an excellent, their timing, and their energy, and they had the resources to focus on. I don't think a lot of people saw themselves: "Oh, gee, I should be doing that" or "Who are they." I think they just stepped up. They stepped up and they did a superb job and I think other communities, especially something with such high profile, but I think everyone supported it and everyone had a different role and I think that's well been served. I think as now with the Market up now this is where CHAMPS needs to step up and work with EMCAC as they work with Eastern Market merchants who have association. We have to do everything we can in Barracks Row also to develop a coordinated plan of economic development, but a number of us have already served or represented this.

We have a lot of cooperative programs which were developed from Eastern Market's assistance. I have a group that I have which is called the Sign Tigers, which we work on signage and we've been helping develop signage for Market and for branding of Capitol Hill through signage, so we're working on a number of pedestrian-friendly initiatives. Another group, we just had an economic roundtable, which has major representatives from each of those organizations, so they're all on CHAMPS, so they're all on Eastern Market, all on EMCAC and we meet primarily—it's basically an ad-hoc committee to discuss the vitality of our business corridors and how it matches and enhances the quality of life issues in the neighborhood, which is the big question up here and this is something that impacts any of our corridors, and especially the Market. We have a history of continued, continue getting bigger cooperating on these issues and I think naturally we've been able to find out who can take the lead on those and that's been done without any duplication of effort or done without any, how shall I say, competition. It's a healthy competitive feeling and supportive feeling rather than something that wastes people's energy as far as

feeling left out. Everybody always joins in, just differently each time around, so that's the Hill and that's kind of what's cool about it.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Alright, I wanted to talk a little bit more about what you mentioned, trying to market let's just say this neighborhood to outsiders but also make it a great place to live for people who are here. You mentioned studies of Metro ridership. Could you tell me a little more about that? I'm curious.

BURGER: Well, what we're doing now is collecting numbers. We found that in the Capitol Hill area, that the figures that we get, people coming into the Eastern Market Metro during a Saturday or Sunday, that's not part of the transportation network of bus pickup here—they're coming to the Market, they heard about it, and we've worked with that ridership, we ran kind of a beta test on an information tent with the BID. This is with CHAMPS and the BID, our little Sign Tiger group. And it's manned by personnel from the BID and everybody that comes out of the Metro walks over to that table and asks a question. They've heard about the Market, they don't know that there are restaurants down this street or there is options up there. But we want to make sure, what we're trying to develop strategies of, people do come on Metro, that we keep them up here for a period of time. They can go to the Market, we want them to use restaurants, we want them to visit the other squares, we'd love to have them take a historic tour of the neighborhood, this is one of the largest residential historic districts in the country. We want them to go down to Barracks Row, which has been named the number one of the 1,500 Main Street project in the United States, Barracks Row has been named number one in the country. These are things that a lot of people have put a lot of energy into as with the Market, we need to promote those. In addition, the Navy Museum, which nobody up here even knows is there, they get I think close to 350,000 visitors a year. And these people come during the weekdays, and this is traffic we have to bring, or the type of traffic we have to see on weekdays because a true restaurant's health, or a retailer's health, can't just rely on Saturday and Sunday.

And we found that our retail here is primarily visited by our population, about 80% of the businesses—about 80% of business of any of our retail or restaurant's comes from local residents. Now, we have to grow that, we have to actually lower that 80% and bring in additional people coming from the outside. They might be office workers, we're discussing now developing a regional area around the hub here, around what we're calling the Capitol Plaza, which is the Metro stop itself, it's looking to be that ten years from now that what's been started now and under discussion for the last two years may be a complete redevelopment of that into a plaza, a central meeting spot for everyone, you know, tie together Pennsylvania Avenue, Seventh and Eighth Street. But that's our core area, so we are talking you know with the jitney service now, which they're faring people up with up electric cars and we're trying to

expand that, we want to expand that for our area here, this type of electric car service. Bicycles were very important. These are all active projects but the major goal is to make this healthier economically, because the healthier we are economically, the more we can control what happens here.

So I think that's always been the fear and the mantra but Capitol Hill, this area has become of age. When I was here in the 80s actually I enjoyed—I think I might have enjoyed it more [chuckles] than right now because it was a little throwback. We had live music everywhere, the rents were cheap and it was fine but we're in a new era right now and it's pretty exciting. Capitol Hill is recognized nationally now, and internationally as a neighborhood and that's only occurred in the last 20 years. Not that the world 20 years ago hasn't helped that happen today, which it has, and it's the reason we are here today but this was always perceived as a sleepy little neighborhood. If you lived up on Capitol Hill, you were probably in another—you know, call me when you move to Washington. And we were truly a village and it's maintained that village feel because of the great work of the restoration and our historic lots and I think of the controlled and the intelligent, the smart growth we've had by everyone's efforts.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1
TAPE 1/SIDE 2

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Alright, you talked about the work and plans for re-development of the Capitol, of the plaza around the Eastern Market Metro. Do you, can you tell me more, do you have knowledge of what will be happening with the Hine School site? I believe the decision has recently been made as to what will happen. Do you know more about that?

BURGER: Yeah, the initial RFP [request for proposals], which they had three or four parties competing for was won by a local firm, Stanton Development in partnership with EastBanc, which is also a District-based business in Georgetown and has done some very phenomenal developments. Stanton Development is probably, as being one of our local developers, probably has some of the benchmark properties that you see at the, you know, the old five and dime store was developed at Seventh and Pennsylvania there, they've done on Stanton Park itself they've developed several structures, and on Mass Avenue. So they've done some really quality. Amy Weinstein who is now probably one of the premier architects in our city, she's began with them and she was integral not only in these ... they've developed two of the large properties at the Eastern Market site that have been very successful developments. She's been the architect and the nationally award winning for these designs and she is the architect on the project and the proposal that they won on the first RFP.

What that RPF does it gives them now a probably a 12 to 18 month opportunity to negotiate with the city to finalize the ground lease terms and questions of zoning and regulation. This is currently, it's a school

site but it's zoned residential, so there will be a number of hurdles that they got through, but it's really exciting because I think they know, they knew what to listen to as they have in the past and they are Capitol Hill residents and I think the level of trust on any type of project this size, which is a lot of approximately over 100,000 square feet, and this is going to be probably a 350,000 square foot development. It's especially the way that our neighborhood is as far as activism, it's good to have that trust. That's something where trust is out of the way, it's on the table, it exists, we can work with them and they embrace that participation in making this a very successful project. For the lack of a better word, this is the hole in the middle of our doughnut that we have with the arms that go out with Eastern Market, Eighth Street down to the Navy Yard and both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue. So the incorporation of a properly scaled development with the proper elements brings density, brings offices, possibly a hotel, short-term hotel space for tourists, providing hopefully a permanent home for the Shakespeare Theater and in addition probably providing some excellent retail and kind of completing the entire Seventh Street corridor which, again, with vendor activity on weekends and nightlife activities it's just a tremendous opportunity and all done within the scale that is going to fit in the community.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Sounds like a great plan but was that choice controversial nonetheless? You mentioned this is a fairly activist community so were there some people who were concerned about the elements of this new plan?

BURGER: Yeah, and rightfully so. I mean, there were neighbors who had different concerns, I mean it's going up right next to them. Different neighbors had different feelings on the school. You know, I was always very active in the school, Hine Junior High School, and I'm sorry to see them go, I did not want to see them close but [inaudible] it was determined to be closed. But we had everybody recommending that we should just plant a lot of grass and make it a dog park and these were [chuckle] suggestions we had [inaudible]. And actually, one of these elements that came up, to a degree, some of them were incorporated in the final plans. So I think at the end of the day the vast, the outreach was to hear, to really reach out and bring in as many people as possible, which I think was very successful. There were couple hundred people at each of these [inaudible], a lot of different ideas on the table and if anyone's their ears you'd hear just things that you'd think [inaudible] they'd be things that you embrace and there were just things that you said "I didn't really look at it this way before." So I think the whole process worked very well. I don't think there is any ... Once the decision was made, everybody's gotten behind it. So the process in this particular case worked and now people view this not as I'd lost and somebody else won, they view it as, hey look, this is an opportunity and we have a whole another round over the next couple years getting involved now specifically with the developer to pan out details. So this is seen I think by everyone as an opportunity and I think everyone trusts this development group no matter who they were

they knew these were people who're going to be living with this, they're going to be on the street every day [chuckles], so probably for their own safety it's good that they do a good job. But they're good people and it will work out really well.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: When is construction scheduled to begin, or that hasn't been determined yet?

BURGER: Hopefully I'll be around to see it but [laughter] I think it will be before we bury the Southeast freeway, which is another proposal out there. But I think they definitely have this negotiating time with the city and then it's a matter of the zoning changes involved, there is ... I think we're probably looking for at least a good two years before they even have a ground breaking. So it's complicated when you take a city property like this as an asset and they're trying to craft it a little bit differently as a leasehold so the size of the project, it's best we just ... which is hard for sometime but it's best ... something sometimes with the market it's best just taking our time and doing it right. This thing should be there a hundred years from now, that's what we have to make sure happens and it's successful a hundred years from now as it is now.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Now, what will happen with the East Hall as a part of that, and also what will happen to the flea market vendors? Will they stay in the same area?

BURGER: With the East Hall, I don't know, the city has been kind of conflicting on what they're doing with that. One day it's sold, the next day it's not. That's going to be part of a new project so within two years it's probably coming down. I think they're trying to sell the structure. The vendors, again, as we saw with the street renovation, which that street renovation actually that we saw of Eastern Market, that had nothing to do with the fire. That is a four-year project EMCAC in the area's been working on. Again, it just happened because of the fire it looks like everything was done at once, but that's been a four year process to get done. But what we did, we worked very closely with the vendors and a lot of this came with the street closing. There is still a tremendous amount of debate on ... but we've been working, trying to work out the best situation that construction or disruptive changes like this would cause the least amount of damage to our in-line stores, which are brick-and-mortar stores, and the vendors. Those are two about equally important elements as with the merchants in the Market.

The flea market, you know, one thing we've done with EMCAC we've got them open up an auditorium area, there are some options there now. What goes on in the flea market, while EMCAC has kind of an oversight responsibility to comment on other activities on the street that impact the Market, that's a separate lease, that's not under the control of the Market manager, while a lot of the stuff in the front may be. So when construction does start on that project, they're going to lose their home and this is more or less the antique flea market on Sundays. Of course we'll still have the activities on the street itself of the

outdoor vendors, but the vendors that use that lot, we may have to look to find another home. It might be that parking lot on the back side, which is somewhat underutilized behind Pennsylvania Avenue. Who knows? We might be able to use the Metro square. That should be under city control, it's been slow in coming but city control of the Metro plaza should be finalized some time this year. Now that's still federally controlled property but they're doing a land swap, so with some land out of Reservation 13 and other thing they're giving us the right to control what happens in the middle of our neighborhood by allowing the city to have control of that space. So we'll find out, I mean that's a very important to the Market and we don't want to lose that.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: Alright, if I may move away from the Market slightly, I wanted to take advantage of your deep knowledge of the neighborhood and kind of the residential and commercial trends if you will. So obviously another hot construction site in the area is H Street [NE], with tram tracks being installed currently. Is EMCAC also involved in planning that renovation?

BURGER: No EMCAC, well CHAMPS is. You know, everybody has an opinion, historicals getting concerned because of the questions of overhead wire. I'm from Pittsburgh and I grew up with trolleys and rode one growing up. I'm not a big overhead wire person. I think that trolley is a good thing to work on, again, I don't think it's something that everybody will live or die for that if it happens in a year or two, but the track's been laid so the opportunity is there. H Street has its own challenges. H Street you have to realize that the reason it's basically they developed malls to replace places like H Street and they still have malls that replaces that [chuckles]. H Street developed because of the trolley and they had absolutely no retail downtown. The figures I've seen even from the early 1900s they even had 1,100 to 1,500 people traveling, commuting on that route, which in terms that was a huge amount. So anyone that didn't shop downtown, that's why they needed 15 blocks. It wasn't the residences around there, that was very poorly, sparsely populated at the time, but the traffic that moved out there on the streetcar or any type of transportation was huge at the time. So I think they have the initial framework they have with the overall development plan is interesting, I think we've seen just because our economic conditions, we've seen more exploitation of smaller spaces, some of the bigger stuff have been pushed off line, you know, the development of Third and H Street project.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: What project is that, I'm sorry?

BURGER: That's the at Third and H Street, the name escapes me, the old oil company owns that. But that was a project we thought would be off the ground by now. It's pretty exciting, there is a new project which is just going through final plans now to apply for a [inaudible] at Eighth and H Street, which is going to be a very successful strip mall which includes everything from a video store that I go to and a

bank, that's very successful, but the national owners of that have seen an opportunity to do a six story mixed use project there, which is pretty exciting, I've been at a couple of the meetings there. But H Street has its own character, its own neighborhood.

Frankly, the organizations up here outside of historic has an interest because they're moving, discussion on moving the residential Historic District to the southern side of H Street, not to cross over H Street. You know, H Street has its own character. I know a lot about it only because I stick my nose in a lot of ... I do a lot of ward-wide or city-wide things and I've been ... but it even started with redistricting we did ten years ago. There's been a lot of fundamental, basic change, and this is, they've laid the streetcar tracks and put in a proper wiring and plumbing and sewer up there. It's in a way that's what's been going on the last ten years up there also is primarily grassroots or political point of view. There are people now they are getting up there, getting organized, they are getting a vested interest and I think that organization will continue, but it's a lot of retail stores, it's a lot of different owners with a lot of different interests, so I think we'll slowly see growth there but I think it's going to be a section, I don't think we can judge the success of the entire street based on how many new stores are there. I think what we'll have to see is the quality of the stores that come in and you know we've seen some very successful restaurants come in but then again I think one of the restaurants which was actually Napa [Napa 1015], which was I think one of the best restaurants on the Hill, you know, they just had to be closed because of a car accident, a car went through their front window.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: When did that happen?

BURGER: Last year. They were closed, then the building was condemned after that [chuckles]

NADGRODKIEWICZ: But Napa is still in existence or is it renamed?

BURGER: It's closed. Oh wait, they're closed right now.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: I was dining there two weeks ago so that's why [chuckling]...

BURGER: No, no, that might have been. This is during the last week but I heard they were closing. But in any regard, it showed the people—you know, it will be a process, I mean, you know, Eighth Street, which was ... when I moved up here on Seventh, if you lived on Eighth Street or Ninth Street, it was like: well, call me when you come to Capitol Hill. And that was in the 80s. And Eighth Street [SE] consisted of having every Friday night there would be a riot down there at 2, but they had some great bands down there and there would be the Marines and different social demographics that hang out on Eighth Street. You can go out there and watch the Terminator, that was the kind of street it was. You know, it took 15 years to get that to develop and H Street is a lot bigger, so I think we're going to have to I think the

expectations there, I think it's going to just develop nicely, it's just going to take patience and plan. And I think that's how everybody has been approaching it that way up there. So it will be pretty exciting.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: I'm curious then your views about the other area that has a potential to become another hot spot that kind of attracts people to the neighborhood. I guess what you'd call Hill East, the whole area on the Potomac where I believe there were plans for tearing down RFK, building a whole commercial promenade-like area there, possibly extending Massachusetts Avenue, I believe, beyond 19th Street.

BURGER: Right, putting a bridge across the river.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: I haven't heard anything about those developments recently [both laughing] so have you?

BURGER: No, you know, I mean economically everything slowed down and I think Reservation 13 it's you know, it's a large piece of land so there are large ideas but things are happening. There is a land swap that's going to occur with some of the acreage might go back to the Architect at [of] the Capitol who is planning basically on building a maintenance building so it's not exactly I think that you're going to see Beverly Hills built there. It's going to be a lot of government facilities going there. I think it will be a well thought-out mixed use project and I think it will be a scale which people find attractive but does need to provide some needed things with just as far as the land mass. One thing I think is more important with that even as far as from the greening point of view that it's going to provide a key link or key park area for you know the riverfront trails. But I don't expect that there's going to be million dollar homes there. I think it might look like a more intelligently designed little Crystal City. You don't know but right now the city was to announce three months ago who won the RFP for that, they've kind of gone AWOL. Nobody has heard anything.

I think that's going to ... and I think the people who live there, they're concerned about getting overwhelmed. I'm working, I'm heading a task force on the old Boys and Girls Club, which is smack in the middle, and it's 45,000 square feet facility built in the 30s. It has this massive swimming pool, basketball court. Now, what we're doing with the task force there is not to develop something, a regional center. The challenge there, it's going to be a neighborhood community center and you can get a lot of activities on 45,000 [chuckles] square feet. So we're coming up with a lot of, we're basically coming up with a plan on what to do with the building to take options for the community. So I think that community is going to do very well. I think it's primarily always going to be residential, they're not going to be opening extensive retail or shopping on anything I've heard on Reservation 13. I think it's more to provide either an educational center, intelligent use of the waterfront. I think to one degree there is a lot of

commercial services that a lot of people are missing out there. Where we live they're 50 feet from here, some 50 feet from my office, and we walk to everything. My dry cleaner, I just go in and throw the clothes there. We've been doing it for 12 years, but that's what they're missing, they're missing that basic service stuff, but that's also the hardest to get. Any time you have a commercial space like that it's easy to put in a little liquor store or 7-Eleven but they need a dry cleaner, they'd like have a couple local restaurants that they can call their own. And I think you'll see some of that but I think most of it rather it's going to be office-driven and primarily with Mass Avenue cutting across people have a very nice—everything dead ends out there now so people like the residential quiet nature. I don't know if what they need to complete a major new access or egress route in and out of the city, I know my friends on Massachusetts Avenue the last thing they want to see is that bridge being built. So I think it's going to be a little bit challenging out there but I don't see any big change.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: One underappreciated gem in that area is definitely the Congressional Cemetery. Unfortunately few people you meet here even in Washington know that it exists. I'm sure in more than 20 years that you've been here you've seen tremendous change there.

BURGER: That's funny, I've just made inquires about the land there [both laugh]. In fact, I got the guy's card. That's owned by Christ Church, which I'm a member of Christ Church, and you're right, that is a ... But it has a much bigger profile. But actually most of this profile comes from the fact of the dog park they have here. But it is probably underappreciated asset but that's kind of what we're talking about with ... we see this when people come up on a Saturday that these people are just coming blind, and we haven't even really worked it nearly as much as we can. But they may come up to the information booth there which includes everything about specials from local businesses that day to restoration using that as center where they run their docent tours. We're getting another Heritage Trail up here so they have two or three walking tours.

But we also want to see, there might be an electric little bus that holds six people and somebody to give them a tour of Capitol Hill that would take them down to Congressional Cemetery. But all that can emanate from, but that's all part of the total experience up here and you're right, that's something that is underutilized ... It's a great dog park and it's probably where my wife and I are going to end up. So it's convenient [chuckles] for some thing, but that is something that's totally underutilized. And that's been a lot of community work. I mean, the Church doesn't have a lot of money. The Church has gone through its own capital needs. But actually the work out there and the promotion a lot of that stuff has just been the sheer energy of neighbors, not necessarily dedicated Episcopalians, but you know neighbors that see that as something to treasure and the fact that they're around it. Because I frankly I like cemeteries, I think it's a great element for that and it's always been respected even when they were talking Barney Circle or any

of the development out of it, you can be sure that restoration and the historic preservation of this area ensures that nothing negative happens. So I think that's a very quiet area over there, actually, it's next to a jail [chuckling] and they don't seem to be making much noise either. But I think that area is going to develop, I just worry about it sometimes because with Reservation 13 I do think we have to be ... The political people and people downtown, that's just a regular neighborhood to them, and they don't really ... I think they try to pay lip-service and they're all together on this.

Just because the Historic District starts at 13th doesn't mean that the things that go out there don't affect us. Basically, they're doing, one example is that they've developed a complete new plaza plan for Potomac [Avenue Metro], which is only one exit down from Eastern Market plaza. Now, when all is said and done the community through earmarks that they've got and everything has raised over a 1.5 million to 2 million [dollars] to just do planning on the concept to make sure it blends in with the community and meets the community needs. The one down at Potomac they did in six-seven months and all they did was get the contract to a traffic planner who set down at the computer and designed some traffic patterns. The inconsistency we have in the areas that should, as we know, they're part of our neighborhoods. How we deal with one area compared with an area three blocks away which is still Capitol Hill. And that can really negatively impact each other depending on ...

So there is some disjoint there but again when I was here in the 80s, I wouldn't care if you lived on Eighth, if you lived on Ninth you might as well fall off the face of the earth. And as we've gone through these different expanses, I think all the groups are trying to embrace each other and I think it's great because I have a lot of friends out here who have been working on the identity for that community out there. But even though we had Near Northeast, which was a part of Lincoln Park, and they've had and still maintain a very active ... But again, that's all part of Capitol Hill now, that's blended in. And I think we're very close but I think a lot more integration has to go on with the Hill East, because again I do everything I can to make people ... And it's so funny, we live in the city. I could tell you, I could take anybody in the city, take them a few blocks in one direction and they'd think they're in France. They would not know how to get home if you took all the street signs off. And I think that's kind of what we have to get over up here. I think we find all the Hill pulling together and especially over there in the Hill East. I think H Street, it will be interesting. I think they are going to develop their own identity up there, they don't call themselves North Capitol Hill, just because of the geography and because of the nature of what's going on up there. I mean, it's a very different area so ... I'll call it Capitol Hill, maybe not call it Old City from real estate terms but it'd be interesting to see how that develops, how all that integration occurs.

NADGRODKIEWICZ: OK, on that note my last question would be about the two areas that are close together and yet look pretty different, those two areas being separated by 395 freeway. There has been a lot of residential development, you know, high rise apartments and so on on the other side of the freeway. Do you have hopes, concerns, indifference towards what's happening south of Capitol Hill?

BURGER: Well, I've been in a lot of meetings about that. We're very actively on that. It went from ... There's a couple things going on. One of the bigger impact things is 11th Street bridge, which is at one end. The city and the feds came up with this undisclosed plan, too. Restoration [Capitol Hill Restoration Society] even has a lawsuit now trying to slow that down because they'd done that without any consultation. So we're worrying about the parking impact. Are we just growing larger down there or are we going to do it intelligently?

The expressway, which again people have mentioned that the expressway should be buried, but we assume that's not going to happen again in our lifetimes, but we do have portals there. And it's important I think that there'd be coordinated activities to go on and we get people an opportunity for interaction to occur. On a couple of our committees now we do a lot of work with the Navy Yard. Why? Because Navy Yard wants to have places to eat lunch so when the tourists come they want to be able to keep them around the area, so Barracks Row is very active on it. They just got a major grant to decorate, to kind of make the expressway portal between the two on Eighth. They've been in discussions with the BID down there, which the BID there is on every board that we've talked today, with the exception of EMCAC.

But we're looking at ways that we can tie the two together, or how do you tie together the bridge over from New Jersey [Avenue SE]? Those rentals down there, these are high rises. They were targeted for people that needed high-end rentals or needed condominiums that worked on the Hill that could walk to work. Now, with portals there on [New] Jersey, Third Street, and what we have to do is make those attractive that people kind of forget that the expressway is there. It's hard because it's not a small expressway, but everything from that electric jitney service we were talking about where you can call. Idea that we're trying to work now is if you live in one of the buildings down there and you want to go up to the Market and you don't want to drive, it's too inconvenient, you could call and have a jitney there in five minutes, the electric car will take you up there. These are the same things that run back and forth for the ballpark. So we're looking for as much interaction as possible. The development down there is going to be impacted a little bit differently. I may want to get a jitney to go to a movie theater because they're closing the movie theater at Union Station. It will be just as easy in probably three to five years that they'd have a full selection of movie theaters to check out down there, which we just don't have the real estate to build them.

END OF INTERVIEW