



DC Cooperative Housing Coalition News

Representing the interests of the cooperative community in the District of Columbia since 1984

May – August | 2015

Serving the District's cooperative housing community for 31 years

Save the Date: October 20

Annual Meeting

Hosted by Broadmoor Co-op

Invited Speaker:

Mary M. Cheh,
Councilmember, Ward 3

Details will be mailed to members



“We wanted to do something different”

2015 marks the 50th anniversary of a landmark in urban planning: Washington, DC's town within a city known as the Watergate.

*By Gary Parker**

Too big. Too tall. Too modern. Too different.

Everything about the Watergate – the town within a city on the banks of the Potomac -- was revolutionary. Hard to imagine now, when the brass ring of urban building is the grand mixed-use project (like the dazzling CityCenterDC – a 21st-century version of the Watergate).

Conceived five decades ago, the Watergate was the largest privately funded renewal project in Washington, DC – *and* the city's first mixed-use project. The scope was unprecedented too for the nation's capital: a planned urban development of three apartment buildings, two office buildings, a hotel, and a retail plaza for several dozen tenants (along with three levels of underground parking for 1,250 vehicles). A place so self-contained, you could live, work, shop, and dine without ever leaving. High living for city life.

The site covers 10 acres on the edge of Georgetown, at the end of the old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. The canal's last lock -- the "water gate" – gave its name to the project. Its creator was Luigi Moretti – designer of Rome's Olympic Village for the 1960 Games, and the most important Italian architect of the 20th century. (Italy's Frank Lloyd Wright, some say.) The Watergate would become Moretti's first and only U.S. project.

In a city that revered brick and stone rectangles, the Watergate was a heretic: curved buildings made of reinforced concrete, each with its own shape. Said Mario Valmarana, a Moretti colleague, "We wanted to do something startlingly different."

"Startled" describes the reaction. Building the Watergate in DC, fumed *Washington Post* critic Wolf Von Eckardt, was like "a strip dancer performing at your grandmother's funeral." Others condemned its height and scale. But far-eyed observers could see the future: "It is true that the so-called 'curvilinear' design is at

variance with most commercial architecture in Washington," noted the *Washington Star*. "But in our opinion the result, which places a premium on public open space and garden-like surroundings, and which proposes a quality of housing that would rank with the finest in the city, would be a distinct asset."

In February 1964, the dust settled and ground was broken on the first building: Watergate East. And building it, like designing it, was revolutionary. "There are no continuous straight lines anywhere -- horizontally on the floors or vertically on the façade," said Jim Roberts of Magazine Brothers Construction. "No two floors had a facade exactly alike." Because of the complexity of the curved structure, Watergate East was one of the first projects in America built with a precursor of computer-aided drafting (CAD).

Ringling the façade are rows of long balconies with saw-tooth railings -- an homage, says Valmarana, to the old balconies of Venice, and now the Watergate's instantly recognizable trademark.

Completed in October 1965, Watergate East welcomed its first tenants that month. *Life* and *Newsweek* covered the building's debut. Overnight it became one of Washington's most prestigious addresses. It still is.

Residents have included Congressmen and Supreme Court

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Watergate 50th (Continued from p. 1)

justices, Cabinet secretaries and business titans, diplomats and generals.

Apartments range from 800-square-foot studios to 5,000-square-foot penthouses with fireplaces and rooftop terraces. Duplexes fill two of the floors. The typical apartment contains two bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths, living room, dining room, and kitchen – often with twice as much square footage as comparable units built today.

Landscape architect Boris Timchenko carried Moretti's vision outdoors with more than 150 modernist planters; fountains tiered like waterfalls; a seven-acre park with three swimming pools; and landscaped roof gardens that offer some of Washington's most breathtaking views.

Function complements style in the split-level mall and open-air concourse another Italian echo. Today, the mall's tenants – drug store, liquor store, dry cleaners, travel office, post office, gallery, bakery, delicatessen, barber,

salon, and florist – carry on Moretti's vision of serving a town within a city.

Watergate West opened in 1969 and Watergate South – the final building -- in 1971. (That same year, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened next door. It's now the busiest such venue in America, and one of the leading arts centers in the world.) Protecting the high-end tenants

was the latest electronic security system, backed by round-the-clock staff. At two a.m. on June 17, 1972, one of those watchmen changed history when he spotted a lock held open with masking tape in a Watergate office building. Police arrested five intruders in the sixth-floor headquarters of the Democratic National Committee. What Richard Nixon's press secretary dubbed "a third-rate burglary" ended with the



president's resignation. The suffix "-gate" would become shorthand for political scandal.

But the Watergate remains famous in its own right. Now on the National Register of Historic Places, it's a premier example of modern architecture, as well as one of the best-known residential complexes in the world. And with the *Mad Men*-spawned revival of Mid-century Modernism and the rebirth of the American city, what's old is new again.

The Watergate turned the sleepy neighborhood of Foggy Bottom into one of Washington's most desirable neighborhoods. At this writing, an \$85 million renovation is turning the Watergate Hotel into one of the most luxurious in the city.

After two decades of reinvention, Washington itself now ranks among the world's great cities. A model of urban living. The Watergate – the town within the city -- remains a model of urban design.

Watergate principals:

- Luigi Moretti (Italy) & Milton Fischer (USA), architects

- Aldo Samaritani (CEO) & Nicolas M. Salgo (President) Watergate Improvements Associates
- Giuseppe Cecchi, project manager
- William Graff, project architect
- Boris Timchenko, landscape architect
- John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company, financing
- Magazine Brothers Construction Corp., general contractor

- Gerald Ewing, lighting consultant
- Hal Lewis, Riverview Realty Corporation (sales/leasing/management)
- Royce Franklin Ward of Hageman-Harris, chief engineer HVAC system, electrical system, and balconies.

* Gary Parker is a documentary filmmaker who lives in Watergate East. He's now writing screenplays for film and television – though none about his neighbors

Congratulations to the Watergate on reaching it's 50th anniversary! Coalition members: Are you celebrating a special anniversary or event? Share your story with other cooperatives. Send your story to *CHC News* at CooperativesDC@aol.com

New Service Provider**Kastle Systems**

The Coalition is pleased to welcome a new service provide, Kastle Systems. Kastle provides services to properly, efficiently and effectively implement security-related needs. Consider

including Kastle Systems among any others you may contact. Their listing can be found on our web site at: <http://coopsdc.org/service-providers/>.

Remember: If you contact a Coalition web sponsor, please let them know that you learned about them from the Coalition web site!

Welcome **Kastle Systems**. Thank you for supporting the District's cooperative housing community!

Rental Policies Seminar

By Steve McKevitt, *Beverly Court Co-op*

On May 16, the Cooperative Housing Coalition held another one of its popular seminars, this time on the much-discussed topic of co-op rental policies in our changing world. It was hosted by the Harbour Square Cooperative. The session was well-attended, with fifty-one people representing twenty-eight co-ops.

The seminar itself, **Rental Policies in the Age of Airbnb**, consisted of three speakers, with a question-and-answer period that followed after the presentations. The seminar looked into the broad issue of how co-ops establish and enforce their rental policies; and how these policies continue to be challenged by our modern world.

Individual co-ops in the District, as in most other areas, have a wide variety of policies and rules governing how members may rent their apartments. These rules range from no restrictions, up to tightly-controlled regulations or outright bans; the subject is one that always seems to be under discussion. After looking at these rental rules, the session then moved onto the topic of how well members, in general, are following their various rules, and how co-op are endeavoring to enforce their regulations. In fact, some co-ops are now attempting to seek out occurrences where unapproved, and sometimes hidden, renting may be taking place. This unauthorized activity can be happening with both

short-term rentals, such as with Airbnb, and with longer-term renting.



Joe Douglass, Rick Rybeck, Bill Schechter

The seminar speakers were:

- Bill Schechter, now president of the Board of Directors of Potomac Plaza Apartments in Foggy Bottom, where he has lived since 1997. He is a retired non-profit executive and consultant, who has worked in areas of the civic arena. Bill was also previously the mayor of a small town, and has worked as a real estate broker.
- Rick Rybeck is an attorney with a master's degree in real estate and urban development. He is currently the director of *Just Economics*, and has served on the Board of the Plaza West cooperative in Adams Morgan, most recently as President.
- Joe Douglass is a senior partner in the law firm of Whiteford, Taylor, and Preston, LLP. For more than 30 years his practice has focused on representing DC and Maryland cooperatives, condominiums and homeowner associations. Joe is a charter member of the national College of Community Association Lawyers, and serves as counsel to the DC CHC.

The Airbnb business is a subject much discussed in many communities, for its positive cost-saving benefits, and for its less-than-ideal unregulated uncertainties. Airbnb is a website that allows people to list, find, and

rent lodging (much like a hotel), from short overnight stays to longer-term. Individuals will offer their homes, or a part of the homes, for rent through the internet listings. Their homes can be either single-family houses, or apartments. Most co-ops – and condos, too – now have restrictions, and rules for regulating or banning this practice. The problem of unknown strangers, with keys, entering buildings has been a much-considered cause for concern voiced by many co-op owners. Some of the larger building are now even patrolling the Airbnb websites, searching for unapproved rentals done from their co-op's members. During the seminar, the issues of liability and individual member insurance were also brought up and discussed. Additionally it was noted that anyone renting (through Airbnb or otherwise) must be properly licensed by the District; that is, members must personally obtain the appropriate licenses.

In addition to the Airbnb issue, the seminar also discussed the broader topic of renting in cooperatives, in general, and how this is managed. The more difficult subject of identifying and handling informal and unapproved renting in co-op buildings was also reviewed, and in a rather refreshingly frank manner. It sometimes happens that co-op members will allow friends and strangers, both paying and non-paying, to rent their units, or to share their units, often describing them as long-term guests. How individual co-ops manage this can vary, since the specifics of each case can also vary.

After the presentations, there was a lively question and answer period, with some excellent comments and queries from the audience.

These free seminars are created for the benefit of the members of the Cooperative Housing Coalition; and information on a number of past sessions is now archived on the CHC website. If you should have an idea for a possible future session, please feel free to forward your thoughts on to the CHC.

Board of Directors

President

Russ Rader
The Westmoreland, 60 units

Vice President

Janet Sten
3020 Tilden Street, 20 units

Secretary

Art Leabman
1870 Wyoming Avenue, 28 units

Treasurer

Dottie Moskowitz
Tiber Island, 389 units

Directors

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Winchester-Underwood, 81 units

Fred Dyda
Tilden Gardens, 170 units

Jessee Lyons
Potomac Plaza Apartments, 249 units

Stephen McKeivitt
Beverly Court, 39 units

Lynn Ohman
Shoreham West, 60 units

Michael O'Dell
Harbour Square, 447 units

Ray Olson
River Park Mutual Homes, 518 units

Nancy Skinkle
The Broadmoor, 194 units

John Thornburg
The Cathedral Avenue Cooperative, 145 units

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About DC/CHC, the Coalition

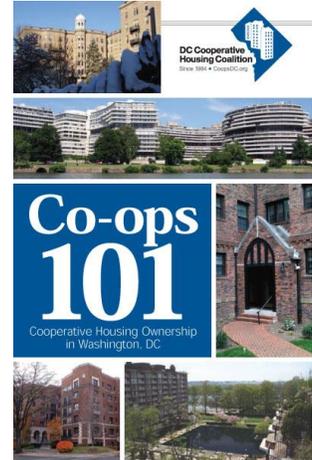
Established in 1984, the DC Cooperative Housing Coalition exists to advance the common interests of cooperative housing associations in the District of Columbia and to promote cooperative housing as a desirable form of home ownership. It is therefore both an advocacy organization that articulates the interests of members before government officials and regulatory agencies and a service organization that provides information and education to members.

Membership is open to all District housing cooperatives, regardless of size. A volunteer board of directors, elected by member co-ops, governs the Coalition. Activities are financed through annual dues, \$1.50 per unit per year (12.5 cents per month)

The Coalition grew out of an ad-hoc group of District cooperatives that formed in response to a judicial ruling that had cast a cloud over many cooperatives by banning proportionate voting. By marshaling the forces of more than 3,000 housing cooperative units, the ad-hoc group persuaded the District's City Council to resolve the matter.

Recognizing the importance to the cooperative housing community of speaking in a single voice and maintaining the ability to respond quickly and knowledgeably to matters affecting cooperative housing, the ad-hoc group decided to form a permanent organization.

The Coalition was established in 1984 and was incorporated as DC/CHC, Inc., a nonprofit, IRS Code Section 501(c)(6) organization in the District of Columbia, May 24, 1993.



Co-ops 101 Free download:
<http://www.coopscdc.org/Co-ops101%20PDF.pdf>

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Member Profile Page

Does your cooperative have its own dedicated page on the Coalition's web site? It's free and it is one of the Coalition membership benefits. See what your co-op is missing at www.CoopsDC.org/Membership.htm and click on members with a photo to the left of their names. **Don't let your co-op miss out on this members-only benefit**

www.CoopsDC.org

The first place to look for a service provider