

## H Street Life

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To ride the length of the H St. NE streetcar line is to witness change and construction happening at a rapid rate all around. Among the more striking sights this summer is the demolition of the two-block-long suburban-style shopping center called the H Street Connection. Its obliteration and replacement with a mixed-use development represents not only a farewell to an early and unsuccessful attempt at revitalizing the business corridor, but also an opportunity to reconnect the commercial strip that has seen renewed investment and growth creep in and accelerate at either end. Will it tie together the east and west by removing a relic that sometimes made a trip from the Starburst to the Hopscotch Bridge feel disjointed? We'll have to see.

Mason Dixie Biscuit Company's Biscuit Jam Aug. 6

Mason Dixie Biscuit Company ([www.masondixiebiscuits.com](http://www.masondixiebiscuits.com), Union Market, 1309 Fifth St. NE), which serves up awesome Southern food, including fried chicken biscuit, traditional country-style sausage gravy, and low-country sides, will celebrate its anniversary with a music, food, and arts bash dubbed Biscuit Jam (<http://biscuitjamdc.com>, noon to 10:30 p.m., Aug. 6). The festival's live music lineup includes Johnny Grave and the Tombstones, The Bumper Jacksons, and Justin Trawick and the Common Good. General admission tickets are \$20 (\$10 for the early bird special), or you can opt for the VIP package (private entrance and concert section, access to a VIP tent with open bar of beer and wine, and private bathrooms) for \$125.

The event will be held in an Ivy City warehouse located at 1900 Kendall St. NE, and numerous other local food and drink vendors will take part. On that list you'll find popular favorites like Ivy City Smokehouse (<http://ivycitysmokehouse.com>), Milk Cult ([www.milkcultdc.com](http://www.milkcultdc.com)), Arepa Zone ([www.arepazone.com](http://www.arepazone.com)), DC Brau ([www.dcbrau.com](http://www.dcbrau.com)), and Southern Efficiency ([www.whiskeyhome.com](http://www.whiskeyhome.com)). One Love Massive (<http://onelovemassive.com>) is also involved, so you can count on a heavy presence from local artists. Persons under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.

End of the Line for the H Street Connection

Those who have looked upon the H Street Connection (south side of the 800 and 900 blocks of H Street NE) recently have likely seen a dated, suburban-style shopping center, now emptied of all retail occupants, standing forlorn behind a chain link fence. But it wasn't always so. When the strip mall held its grand opening on May 9, 1987, local merchants marked the occasion with a family friendly celebration complete with clowns and jugglers. According to a Washington Post story ("Northeast Redevelopment Is Hailed As H Street Shopping Center Opens") from the day after the event, two junior high marching bands entertained a crowd of hundreds to welcome the shopping center that was heralded as "the centerpiece of redevelopment efforts for H Street NE." Referencing Catherine Fuller, whose 1984 high-profile murder along the corridor cast a morbid shadow that would linger for years, then Mayor Marion Barry said, "Out of her death, out of her crucifixion, came resurrection ... H Street is rising again." The Washington Afro-American newspaper quoted Nadine Winter, who at the time represented that section of H Street on the DC Council, as saying, "The grand opening marks the rehabilitation of a once thriving community-supported business district."

The complex actually got its name through a public contest. It was a \$2.4 million project that opened with a tenant list including a Baskin Robbins Ice Cream parlor, a Dart Drug store, a Stride Rite Bootery, and a police substation. Many held high hopes for the new development, but it would not face an easy road. A few weeks before the ceremony an unarmed security guard was fatally stabbed after he detained a man suspected of attempting to shoplift underwear from the Dart Drug.

These days the atmosphere surrounding the H Street NE Corridor is far different. The revitalization dreamed of for decades is a reality. Thriving restaurants, music venues, shops, and bars line the street. Demolition of the strip mall is under way, with plans to construct an eight-story, mixed-use project boasting 419 apartments, 47,000 square feet of retail space, and buried parking. Developers Rappaport and WC Smith have set up a live-stream construction camera that the curious can view on the website for 901 H St. NE (<http://901hstreet.com/view-our-live-stream-construction-camera>).

Chick-fil-A to Replace Checkers on Maryland Ave.

Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen recently confirmed that the Checkers at 1401 Maryland Ave. will be replaced by a Chick-fil-A. Resident reaction ranged from excitement on behalf of aficionados of the chicken sandwiches to disappointment that another fast-food chain restaurant would take up residence at the site (it was long rumored to be slated for a condo development) and potentially exacerbate current traffic woes. Allen characterized the Chick-fil-A as a matter-of-right development, meaning that the use is allowed under current zoning laws "with no additional special permission or approval required."

Date Set for Trinidad's Art in the Alley

Organizers of the Trinidad neighborhood's eclectic Art in the Alley (<https://artinthealleydc.com>) have set Sept. 24 as the date for this year's festivities. Art in the Alley celebrates local art in local places. Amateurs and professionals are invited to submit works and even to create art during the one-night festival. The event typically features live musical performances as well as the exhibition, creation, and performance of a variety of works including paintings, crafts, photography, drawings, dance, and spoken word.

Thirsty Thursdays at Dangerously Delicious Pies

H Street NE favorite Dangerously Delicious Pies ([www.dangerouspiesdc.com](http://www.dangerouspiesdc.com), 1339 H St. NE) has introduced a new reason to get out of the house on Thursday nights. Every Thursday the pie shop will host a live musical performance starting at 8 p.m., with drink specials from 7 to 11 p.m.

