

# The West End Flyer

Serving the West End Neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

August 2020

## GWU Campus Staying Closed for Fall *Another Blow to Neighborhood's Economy*

In a reversal of plans, George Washington University (GWU) announced on July 27 that the Foggy Bottom campus will remain closed to most students



The Ritz-Carlton at 22nd and M, with its black plywood windows.

and, it seems, to all neighbors, during the fall semester. Almost all undergraduate classes will be held on-line.

Not only will this affect the university, but it deals another blow to local businesses, where our high-end

hospitality industry has already been staggered.

The Ritz-Carlton on 22nd Street, once the flagship of our fleet of hotels, is still partially boarded up. In a new version of West End chic, the plywood has been painted flat black. It is not likely to re-open soon, perhaps not until October or later, but it is “monitoring trends in the market,” according to Rosa Romero, its sales and marketing manager.

The Park Hyatt, which has remained open, is now serving food at its Blue Duck restaurant, but the hotel’s general manager, Terry Dunbar, told the *Flyer* “it’s not the business we had hoped for.” He says he’s had to furlough 75 per cent of the usual hotel staff.

GWU is the District’s largest private employer. It cannot yet estimate the staff cuts due to the closing, but local businesses from Trader Joe’s to coffee shops will be hurt by a reduction of students and staff.

The West End and Foggy Bottom have a combined population of about 16,000 in a normal year. GWU has

*Continued on Reverse*

## Election for West End ANC Seats So Far Uncontested

Running for election to our Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC-2A) is now more like volunteering than campaigning. Both West End seats on the nonpartisan, eight-member commission will be uncontested on the November 3 ballot.

Jeri Epstein, who represents the eastern half of the West End in the 2A06 district, has no opponent that filed by the August 5 deadline for ballot inclusion. While write-in candidates could emerge, she is expected to be easily re-elected to a second term.

Nicole Goldin, who represents 2A02, the West End’s western half, is not seeking re-election. For that seat, Joel Causey, a project manager in the construction industry, was the only candidate to file.

Both Epstein and Causey are homeowners, and will provide some maturity and experience on the

commission. Three of its outgoing members were elected while students at George Washington University.

The only contested race on the ballot will be in 2A03, the Foggy Bottom historic district, where one-term incumbent Trupti Patel has drawn a challenger in John George, a long-time 26th Street resident.

In the five other Foggy Bottom seats, including 2A04, where the Watergate complex is located, no one appears to have turned in the required ten signatures.

Thus, it is likely that write-in candidates will step forward in this year’s largely vote-by-mail election.

The *Flyer* does not endorse candidates. It will report further on the ANC-2A election in future issues.



# “Rebecca Coder Park” Improvements Underway

The first of several planned changes to the park area of Francis Field on 25th Street NW between M and N Streets took place on July 31.

This was the installation of the first rodent-resistant lid for one of the two existing trash receptacles there. Not a huge project, but the convex lids with self-closing doors had to be special-ordered for the steel receptacles that were installed in 2009.

Under a partnership agreement with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), the Friends of Francis Field will be making several other improvements to the section of the park that lies outside of the athletic field area.

Plans are also underway to remove an obsolete



water valve, replace dead trees, fill holes, level some sections, and make other changes. Most, if not all of the work, will be done with private funding.

While professional landscape contractors will be hired, volunteers will be able to participate in some of the cleanup, gardening, tree-watering, and other improvement activities.

The landscape architecture plans have been fully approved by DPR and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Plantings are scheduled for the fall.

This small park area of the larger Francis Field was designed in 2007. A plan is also underway to name this small sub-section of the field for Rebecca Coder, the ANC commissioner who fostered the idea of setting this area aside for passive, non-athletic activity. She died in May 2018, at the age of 49.

The park is used daily by nearby residents who walk dogs on-leash there, or relax on the four benches. See the complete story and plans for Rebecca Coder Park on the FFF website (see address below).

## Closed Campus Will Affect Small Businesses and Large

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7,073 undergraduate beds in its 27 residence halls. Another 2,000 students, or more, live “off campus” which means they rent apartments from local landlords and apartment buildings. Many of them will choose to stay away, in their parents’ homes or other places where housing costs are lower.

This fall, about 700 students—only those who can demonstrate that they have no other safe place to reside—will live on campus, according to Kevin Days, GWU community relations director.

It is the small businesses nearest the campus that will be most affected by the virtually empty GWU campus. Several small hotels in Foggy Bottom cater largely to parents and campus visitors.

The West End, with more than 1,500 hotel rooms, is hurt mostly by the lack of business travelers. Already, 35 major meetings have been cancelled in the District due to the pandemic, according to Destination DC, the local tourism and convention bureau.

The Fairmont, for example, which has remained open, is now operating without a doorman or a bellman, and currently has no bar service in its lobby. It says its has laid off “100-some colleagues.” Knowing

when to hire back the large staffs required for full service is difficult at best.

You don’t want to bring them back and have to close again,” said Susan Mabry, general manager of the Westin, at 24th and M. Her hotel was closed in April and just reopened on July 30.

The week-long World Bank and IMF meetings, scheduled for October 12-18 in Washington, D.C., will now be held “in primarily virtual format,” another big setback for our hospitality industry. Many employees of those institutions, which have U.S. headquarters in our neighborhood, are among the many office workers who have also been away, working remotely.

### Friends of Francis Field

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This PDF edition is condensed from the FFF website,  
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