

written by **CARRIE FOSTER**
photos by **LINDSEY LABELLA**

Capitol Hill, bastion of the political junkie no longer... Need proof? Five years ago the scene was a ten block expanse that included **Eastern Market**, \$1 beers at **Red River Grill** and 10 cent wings at **Capitol Lounge**. While the popularity of these neighborhood mainstays hasn't diminished, the options have exploded. In October the four block stretch of 8th Street SE called **Barracks Row** (www.barracksrow.org) hosted its first street festival, welcoming more than 15,000 neighbors to gawk at the renovated block.

Perhaps people are tired of commuting. Perhaps they realize that if you came to DC to be "where its at" there is nowhere closer to the heart of the action than the Hill. Whatever the reason, housing is being renovated faster than you can say bipartisan, and the Hill is one of the area's hottest neighborhoods. Whether you are new to DC or just ready to explore new turf, here is a handy guide to some of the neighborhood's newer destinations.

Your average Hill staffer may be required to appear in pinstripes, but there are plenty

of places where relaxing takes priority. With all due respect to the "Mount Rushmore" of Capitol Hill casual: **Tune-Inn**, **Hawk n' Dove**, **Pete's Diner** and **Market Lunch** (at Eastern Market), there are a few new kids on the block worth checking out.

Start your day at **Murky Coffee** (660 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; 202-546-5228; www.murkycoffee.com). Neighborhood caffeine addicts flock to Eastern Market's wi-fi friendly coffee shop for an anti-establishment welcome. The menu spans espresso-based selections, a rich Northern Italian house drip, chai lattes, soy variations and their delicious "No questions, no joke" \$5 hot chocolate. Baked goods including cranberry-oatmeal and bran muffins have an all-natural taste.

While the hours of a Hill staffer are legendary, let's just say the pay is not. Enter **Meyhane's Café** (633 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; 202-544-4753). Meyhane (said may-ha-nay) offers a lengthy menu of Turkish tapas and wines that allows even the budget conscious a tasty

indulgence. Half-priced wine (daily from 5pm to 7pm and weekends from 12pm to 7pm) washes down Meyhane's superb small plates including Lamb shish with buttery supple rice and Turkish desserts.

No matter where you originally call home, a little comfort food can go a long way. **Marty's Café** (527 8th St. SE; 202-546-4952) is Capitol Hill's only non-smoking restaurant and bar, and their everyman menu is surprisingly unique to the Hill. The prices are competitive, the staff is friendly and the atmosphere is collegial. Favorites include the hearty 9 oz. Marty Burger, 6 oz. Marty's Baby Burger and the tender Babyback Ribs. The bartenders always have fresh popcorn on hand, and the kitchen is open until 1am on weekdays and 2am on weekends. Can't beat that!

Finn MacCool's Irish Publick House (713 8th St. SE; 202-547-7100; www.finnmaccoolsdc.com) is the Row's hot spot for live music and a pint. With an energetic Irish beat and a dedication to authenticity, Boston fans are welcomed for Red Sox, Patriots, and Celtic games on two giant plasma screens. During the week, Finn's is a collegial eatery for young and old, families, marines, Hill staffers and music lovers. Sit comfortably with



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ROW HOUSES ABOUND ON THE HILL

a pint of Ireland's finest brews and delve into pub food delights like Monday 2-for-1 burgers (bacon bleu and chili cheese are popular), Tuesday 2-for-1 traditional beer battered Fish & Chips or ½ price appetizers on Wednesdays and Thursdays, including a pound of tasty jumbo steamed spiced shrimp for less than \$5.00! Fridays and Saturdays, the pub is packed with young singles enjoying the slightly rowdy atmosphere and the area's best Celtic Rock bands. Scythian, 40 Thieves, and Johnny JumpUp appear regularly. Regulars also come for the hard-to-find Beamish Stout, a smooth dark beer akin to Guinness but without the heavy aftertaste, and the largest selection of Irish Whiskeys in the area.

THE POUR HOUSE IS A FAVORITE



Not new, but under new ownership, **The Pour House** (319 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; 202-546-1001; www.pourhouse-dc.com) is a Hill tradition. Since 2003, the new owners have transformed this three-story bar and grill into a one stop entertainment destination. The upper level, **Top of the Hill**, is perfect for the dressier set, and popular for private parties or after work cocktails. The main floor, Pour House, has a "Northeast blue collar" atmosphere that attracts Red Sox, Steelers and Michigan fans - but Alabama, Texas Tech, Washington or South Carolina fans will feel at home on a Saturday game day too. Just blocks from RFK, DC United fans stop by for home and away games. Overall, thirty five TVs including LCD and HDTV projection screens with multiple packages will satiate any fan. For those looking for something different, journey to the **Scheisse Haus** in the lower level and enter a German style beer hall complete with steins, European artwork and a beer club. Billiards and a kicking Internet jukebox keep you busy between rounds.

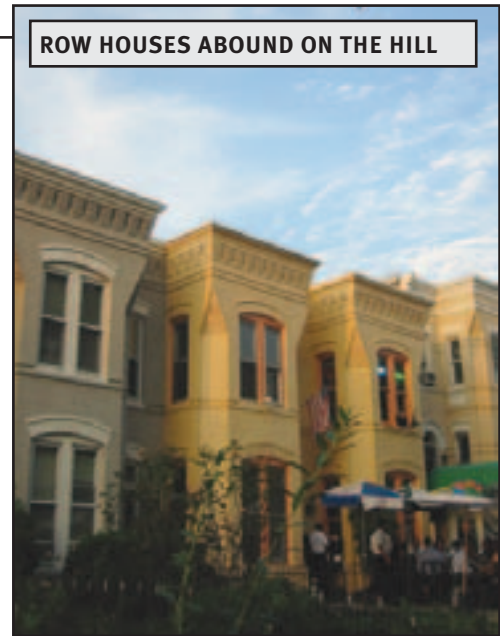
The Pour House owners have been busy too. They recently teamed up with a former Capitol Lounge owner to open a new location, **Trusty's Tavern**, right near 14th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. SE. Where is that? Ask the hundreds of young professionals

gobbling up homes and condos by the Potomac Ave. Metro station! Stay tuned for details!

No longer is fine dining on the Hill limited to expense accounts and lobbyists. While **Bistro Bis**, **The Caucus Room** and **Barolo** have served admirably for years, new entries into upscale cuisine are following in the footsteps of these divine eateries, with a cozier neighborhood feel.

Former chef to the Dutch Embassy turned independent restaurateur, **Bart Vandaele** recently unveiled the highly anticipated **Belga Café**, (514 8th St. SE; 202-297-0849). The Café features a selection of 40 Belgian beers, mussels served with fries and mayonnaise and Belgian influenced "euro-fusion" entrees that include an upscale waffle and lots of chocolate. An exposed kitchen flaunts the chef's culinary techniques to a communal table. The cozy bar area, exposed brick dining room and soft lighting all complement the contemporary menu.

Montmartre (327 7th St. SE; 202-544-1244) may be the Hill's most romantic and sought-after dining destination. Montmartre's delicate French offerings are simply sublime. Whether brunching with



chardonnay, tomato bisque and rich pate, or seducing your palate with Chef **Stephane Lezla's** succulent duck or braised rabbit, you can live like royalty at Montmartre – without a princely budget.

All dressed up with nowhere to go? In 2002, **Red River Grill** proprietor **Matt Weiss** jazzed up the neighborhood with his martini bar and lounge concept, **Lounge 201** (201 Massachusetts Ave. NE; 202-544-2021; www.lounge201.com). A popular place for private cocktail parties and fundraisers – some celeb-studded -- Lounge 201 has a

continued on 34

Planning a Party?

Located in the heart of Capitol Hill, *Top of the Hill* is the perfect holiday event location. Available for events of all sizes. Billiards, internet jukebox, 10-foot HDTV screen, A/V capabilities.



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neighborhood focus

lengthy martini selection and high-end wine list that complements the light menu of flatbreads, salads, sandwiches and desserts. Tuesday nights draw a hopping scene of movers and shakers (not stirred) with a half price martini special.

Despite its power profile, there is more to the Hill than bars and restaurants. With parks and gyms aplenty, recreation and relaxation options abound too.

Capitol Hill Yoga (221 5th St. NE; 202-544-0011; www.capitolhill yoga.com) is a luxurious retreat that promotes health and well-being through ohms, ahs and careful breathing. They provide a la carte (with reservations) healing methods through Pilates, yin/yang yogini and mindfulness meditation. With first sessions free, you can breathe easy at this Zen garden.

FRIENDLY DEBATE AT BULLFEATHERS



St. Marks Yoga Center (3rd and A Sts. SE; 202-546-4964; www.stmarks.net) in historic St. Marks' Episcopal church welcomes all members of the community to enjoy the art of yoga in their upstairs studio with \$10 classes and packages for all levels.

Since 2000, **Capitol Hill Bikes** (709 8th St. SE, 202-544-4234; www.capitolhillbikes.com) has been providing full service bicycles, parts, accessories and advice. The Hill's only independent bike shop, owners **Laurie Morin** and **Denise D'Amour** sponsor many rides, including a weekly women's ride (Thursdays at 6pm) and a monthly Second Saturday fun ride.

The Hill's affinity for culture and diverse population has also provided a fertile breeding ground for new, creative retail outlets. Try some of these on for size!

Alvear Studio & Design (705 8th St. SE; 202-546-8434; www.alvearstudio.com) offers leather goods from Italy, home crafts from

South Africa, locally and internationally crafted jewelry and a keen eye for design. Alvear has created a dreamlike studio for top quality interior pieces and exquisite gifts and the Hill's only personal shopper services. Look for wine tastings and other community gatherings this winter.

Pulp on the Hill (303 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; 202-462-PULP) is a hip choice for clever greeting cards, magnets, pins, candles and wrapping. A second-floor DJ spins Tribe Called Quest and other soulful tunes while customers giggle and point at hilarious Jackie O collectibles, cookbooks, items with political motifs and more.

Pawticulars Gourmet Pet Boutique (407 8th St. SE; 202-546-7387) spoils man's best friend with a vibrant selection of pet supplies, shampoos, gourmet biscuits, bones and dog beds. Pawticulars reaches the Hill's vast "first dog owner"

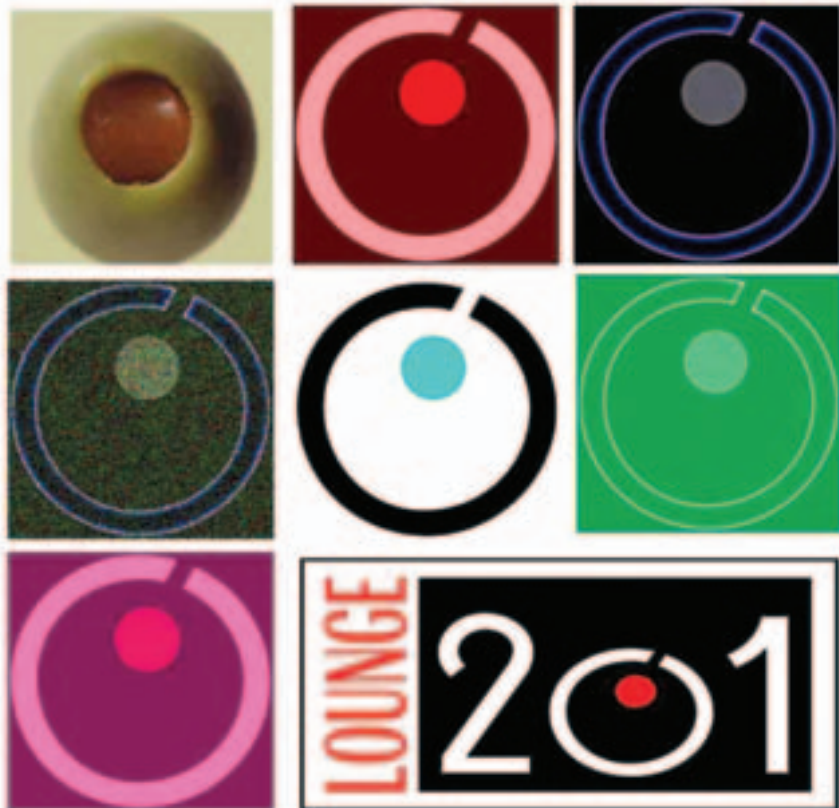
demographic with zany products, costume displays and an enthusiastic staff. Congratulations to owner **Jennifer Zatkowski** on a new baby!

Tammy Nails (309 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; 202-543-2015) is stuffed between **Greek Taverna** and **Il Radicchio**, and is the Hill's hidden gem for pampering. The unbeatable

\$85 package includes a manicure, pedicure and one-hour body massage. A favorite among Senators and Representatives, men and women are flocking to Tammy's for a bargain shape and shine for their nails. Tammy's staff makes house calls, too - perfect for a girls' night, shower or party.

With the **Supreme Court, U.S. Capitol** and **Library of Congress** in the backyard, the Hill is a solid presence in the City. With continuing interest from first time homeowners, star chefs, bar owners and retail mavericks, the area is also well on its way to being the District's next mainstream social destination.

PULP IS COLORFUL INSIDE & OUT



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