

A woman asked the candidates what they planned to do for residents like her, who had seen her assessed property value increase from \$120,000 to over \$600,000 over the past years. Mendelson pointed to his efforts to reduce property taxes, cap tax increases and increase tax deductions meant to benefit low income homeowners; while Bolden strongly criticized his opponent's actions, saying only his proposal of a property tax freeze would help the situation.

Ward 1 Democrats Chair, Katherine Boettrich, said that over 100 ballots were cast to endorse a candidate in each race. Vincent Gray will be supported by the group (which is part of the DC Democratic State Committee) for City Council chair, but no clear endorsement would be made in the At-Large race - meaning neither Bolden nor Mendelson had received more than 60 percent of the votes cast. Ward 1 Democrats plan to also make an endorsement in the Ward 1 race, while they will hold non-endorsing forums in the other races of the year.

2 Ward Two News

BY SUSAN RUETHER

Local Artists Fringe Ward 2 in 24 Hours of Color

Perched on a ladder fixing the face of Jesus, Dana Ellyn avoided the blazing sun in the late afternoon as shade fell on the bright orange wall she detailed. It made sense, after all, that she and fellow artist Matt Sesow begin their round-the-clock mural painting session at 3 p.m. so as to avoid having their sweat drip into the bottles and boxes of paint below.

Not that such a thing would have been frowned upon; it was a 24-hour act of painting associated with the Capital Fringe Festival. This year, the first-annual festival brought together hundreds of artists for over 400 shows in eleven days: a mind boggling range of performances, some experimental and others on the verge of wacky. Unlike the theatre performances

however, the mural will become a permanent part of the 7th Street landscape, though Ellyn and Sesow expected their mural to be a work in progress even after they finished. "We expect that people will write on it - that's fine," Sesow commented. "We know it will change."

After coming to terms with the scale of the project and the texture of hundreds of staples jammed into the wooden storefront, the artists began their work with house-paint and acrylics. Describing the painting as "free and looser" than the studio work they are used to, each of the painters filled the space with large figures. "Picasso and Diego Rivera rip-offs," Sesow commented of his half of the mural. The painting, after just three hours, depicted large scale artists and laborers, a figure of Jesus looking down on the current state of affairs and a lady voyeur sipping a drink in the corner.

Before the artists got there, you might say the wall Ellyn and Sesow covered (a long-abandoned storefront adjacent to the Warehouse Theatre) had their names on it. When Fringe festival director, Julianne Brienza, thought of the idea of the mural, she and Warehouse co-director, Molly Rupert, immediately chose the duo - local painters and a couple - who had showed work at the Warehouse.

The Warehouse served as home base for the festival this year, hosting a majority of productions and events.

"We're not used to being watched as we paint," Sesow commented in regards to on-lookers. "People always think the painting is done, no matter the stage," he said. Not soon after, a man stopped to ask if they would paint around the corner of the building. Sesow also admitted that the painting might be "influenced by working at 2 a.m. after a few beers." Yet at the beginning stages, the figures are clear and deliberate, and the colors are bold.

The history of the Fringe Festival dates back to 1947, when eight uninvited performance groups arrived at the exclusive Edinburgh International Festival and staged a series of guerilla performances. Cities across the US have adopted the tradition, with DC as the 76th location to make space for the peculiar and particular in local art.

"Besides art-o-matic, the Fringe Festival is really the only grass-roots venue for support of the visual arts [in DC]," com-



mented Sesow, who now supports himself entirely through the sale of his paintings. He describes DC as a "gallery-centric city, where you have to sign an uber-contract and give up your soul to sell a painting for 50 percent [of the profit]." Both artists say that venues like the Fringe allow artists to show and sell directly to patrons which ultimately benefits artistic production in the city. Ellyn and Sesow painted well into the wee morning hours for free this time, however, to "enjoy the process of making art . . . it's fun to support the Fringe," Sesow commented.

Matt Sesow will hold an open studio on Aug. 5 from Noon-6 p.m., www.sesow.com, 202-319-1459. Dana Ellyn will hold her open studio on Aug. 12 from Noon-6 p.m., www.danaellyn.com, 202-737-6161. For more Capital Fringe Festival details, visit www.capfringe.org

Judge Allows Suit to go Forward in Latest Battle for Kelsey Gardens Apartments

In the latest installment of a protracted legal battle that has lasted over two years, on July 14, superior court judge Maurice Ross denied the motion brought

by the property owner and developer of Kelsey Gardens to have the tenants' case dismissed.

The ruling, a victory for the tenants association, means that residents of the 54-unit Section 8 apartment complex at 7th and P Streets, NW, can continue to fight for the right to buy the building; a right the owners of the complex contest. The owner of the building and the developer, keen to tear down Kelsey Gardens, are being sued by the tenants for the right to purchase the building.

The building is owned by the Deliverance Church of God in Christ Housing Corp., the business arm of a local house of worship. In 2004, the church partnered with Vienna-based Metropolitan Development with the goal of creating a 220-unit, high rise building in the quickly gentrifying neighborhood. In the hearing last month, the church and Metropolitan challenged the suit on a legal technicality, claiming that the Church of God will retain 10 percent interest in the property invalidating the transaction as a sale (and if it's not a sale, it does not trigger the right-to-purchase law for tenants). Judge Ross struck down that argument, ruling that the ultimate test of ownership is not a matter of the interest