

In Shaw

BY RALPH BRABHAM

Cherishing the Unconventional

One of the major, defining anchors of the Shaw neighborhood is, of course, the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. While Shaw caters extensively to the convention center's clientele, the area is anything but conventional. And that is a very good thing: Shaw is a quirky, fun, authentic and special place.

Certainly, the area will be better off when the convention center hotel is built and when major property owners, like Douglas Development and Marriott, redevelop their vacant properties on Seventh and Ninth streets. But Shaw's rebirth is abundantly in motion due to devoted and inspired people who have made it a destination unlike any other in the city.

The Passenger

Directly across from the convention center in the 1100 block of Seventh St. NW, brothers Tom and Derek Brown recently opened one of the DC area's most unique watering holes, The Passenger. The Passenger is far from being a typical neighborhood bar. A contender for a James Beard Award, Derek Brown constructs cocktails that are so perfectly blended, balanced, original and well thought-out that it is often easy to forget they even contain

a l c o h o l .
One need only be able to express approxi-



CLOCKWISE: Wagtime owners Ofer Khal and Lisa Schreiber with a few of their satisfied customers.

Frank Asher, owner of Shaw's garden center, Old City Green.

Brothers Tom (left) and Derek Brown own The Passenger, a popular bar in Shaw.

mate desires in a drink, and in return Brown issues a perfect cocktail quenching that desire and then some. (202-393-0220, www.passengerdc.com)

Old City Green

Frank Asher opened a one-of-a-kind garden center at a long-empty lot at the corner of Ninth and N streets in 2008. Old City Green has since become so much more than just a purveyor of plants, Christmas trees and pumpkins: it's a neighborhood gathering spot (having hosted pig roasts and countless other events); a provider of holiday cheer (jazz Christmas carols, warm fires and cider on cold days, sunflowers planted along the fence in the summer and spider webs adorning it at Halloween); a community partner (having sponsored countless events); and a landscaping business. Old City Green has transformed what was once an eyesore into a flourishing green heart of the community. (202-412-2489, www.oldcitygreen.com)

Wagtime Pet Spa

Wagtime Pet Boutique, in the 1200 block of Ninth St., boasts what is likely the nicest boarding facility and pet store in Washington. Owners Lisa Schreiber and Ofer Khal paid meticulous attention to detail in overhauling the historic building last year, which now features a rooftop for pooches and allows for a variety of services (including cage-free doggie daycare and boarding, professional pet grooming, home dog walking, feline care, and a pet pickup and delivery service). The boutique carries organic, nutritional foods and treats, great toys, stylish and functional carriers and chic pet fashions. (202-789-0870, www.wagtimedc.com)



Maruka Gallery & Yoga

The 1300 block of Ninth Street has become a yogi haven. Maruka Gallery and Boutique and Maruka Yoga & Healing were founded in 2007 by Debra Agostini and Keith Kaye. Maruka provides a carefully tailored yoga and healing arts program,

an interesting art collection and a store filled with unique artisan jewelry and natural body products. It is a one-stop shop in holistic wellness to renew, revitalize and rediscover one's self. (202-745-1881, www.marukadc.com).

Shaku Mindbody Studio

Next to Maruka is the popular Shaku Mind-Body Studio. Ieshia Ali and Faith Hunter recently relocated and expanded the popular yoga lifestyle and healing center to 1302 Ninth St. NW from their former, smaller digs on Seventh Street, and now offer even more services, classes and workshops. 202-783-6463, www.shaktimindbodystudio.com.

Shaw's Community Spirit

A discussion of Shaw's distinctive destinations could go on for pages (it is hard not to discuss in great detail places like Corduroy, Long View Gallery, 1905 Restaurant, Azi's Café, Modern Liquors, Chatman's D'vine Bakery, Etete, Nellies, and so forth). Further, a handful of new establishments open each year, so the discussion is ever-evolving.

Shaw is extraordinary because so many individuals are invested in its trajectory. Despite a convergence of backgrounds and sometimes competing interests, the sense of community is strong. For example, last October, about 15 volunteers – including business owners, residents and church parishioners – planted roughly 800 tulips, supplemented the soil with nutrients, and mulched in 32 tree boxes on Ninth Street between N and Rhode Island Avenue. It was part of a larger, ongoing project by Shaw Main Streets to enhance the streetscapes of the main commercial corridors of Shaw, Seventh and Ninth streets NW.

As this winter's historic snows recede, the tulips have begun to peek through the moist ground, and, in no time, red, purple and burgundy flowers will line the three blocks. With another tulip planting planned for this October, the streetscape will flourish even more buds this time next year.

Much like the tree boxes, the Shaw community blooms more with each passing year, with blossoms that are reflective of the diverse and passionate people invested in the neighborhood.

Ralph Brabham is the author of the blog www.renew-shaw.com. ★