



**Playback Your Story asks the community around Gallaudet University to reflect on and unite through their connections to community, narrative, and place. Sponsored by Van Alen Institute and the DC Office of Planning, John Johnson conducted interviews throughout the community. The interviews culminated in a final performance by John Johnson's theater troop, Playback Theatre on the Gallaudet Campus in 2016. The initiative weaves together the stories of locals, inspiring us to cross the street, interact with one another, and understand the roots of our community.**

Karen Schierhold: My name is Karin Schierhold and currently I'm working for an architecture firm building a portion of the Hecht Warehouse. It's going to be a restaurant, three restaurants in fact. It got me really curious about the neighborhood. I used to drive through back when I was sort of a DC novice, coming down 50 and seeing that building, just wow. And here, ten-plus years later, I'm working on a job there.

I feel like it's this neighborhood that has always been there, and that this other entity has kind of been implanted in it. The Hecht Warehouse has been vacant for I'm not sure exactly how many years, but a long time. Now the Hecht Warehouse is in a huge spotlight, developing all at once, and the ground-floor retail is more or less aimed at the inhabitants of the building. Sometimes I feel like there's this disconnect between the surrounding neighborhood and this new showcase. As someone who's working on one side of things, I'm really curious more about the dialogue within the greater space.

When I catch the bus on time, it gets me there half an hour early and I've talked to some people who hang out across the street from where we are. They're pretty friendly. They seem to be sort of mesmerized by what's going on. I'm not sure anyone has been giving me their judgment on it. I think a lot of them feel like they don't have a space there anymore and a question of where do they go when this happens. It's a weird state of things that haven't really settled yet. There's still a significant portion of the parcel that's under development and in construction. It's like waiting for that ball to drop.

The guys that I talked to, they're really curious about the construction. They're like "What's it going to be like?" or, "You should know about this." "Cars parked here all the time, are ticketed" and just random anecdotes about their experience ...I don't know what the story is going to be in another year once these places start firming up. It's hard to imagine even six months out, but I don't know really. I think about my experience about the site, this awe from the road ten years ago, or 2003 when I

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moved here, and now being in the middle of this flux. I hope that there is some kind of mediation that happens.

\*This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity