

NORTHWEST REAL ESTATE

For fate of 'Real World' house, stay tuned

By JESSICA GOULD
Current Staff Writer

What happens when 2000 S St. stops getting filmed and starts getting ... real estate offers?

For the past few months, the Dupont Circle mansion has been home to the 23rd season of MTV's "The Real World." And already, the steamy show has caused a stir in the neighborhood. Pro- and anti-Real World blogs are battling it out in cyberspace, and crowds have converged on the corner of 20th and S streets.

But, according to city officials, the cast and crew will be out of the house by the end of November — leaving some locals to wonder what will become of the sprawling house when the cameras stop rolling.

Paul K. Williams, an architectural historian and the executive director of Historic Dupont Circle Main Streets, said the show has already had a positive effect on the neighborhood.

"When a twitter or Facebook update is posted that a cast member is present at a restaurant, bar or store, people come out of the woodwork to catch a glimpse, and

tend to stick around for their 15 minutes of fame," he wrote in an e-mail.

Williams said the house — and by extension, the neighborhood — will only get more popular after the show airs. "TRW has tons of fans, and they will venture to D.C. to see the house, shop and drink where their favorite cast members did," he wrote.

In fact, exploring the impact of "The Real World" on local real estate has become a cottage industry of its own.

Matt Shope runs a blog at real-worldhouses.com that promises to divulge "The Real Truth behind MTV's The Real World Houses."

His site, replete with photos and interviews, offers a glimpse at what has become of the buildings once occupied by the toned and testy tenants.

Seattle's Pier 70, for instance, was once the site of a showdown that left a housemate's stuffed animal bobbing in the bay. According to Shope, it is now home to a seafood restaurant.

In Hawaii, Shope writes, trespassers repeatedly scaled the fence of the former "Real World" house to swim in the volcano-adorned pool. The house was ultimately demolished.

Meanwhile, the San Francisco house that saw fireworks between Puck and Pedro in 1994 has sparked a slew of other problems. According to the NBC affiliate in San Francisco, a 2000 fire caused \$2 million in damages to the house, and it is now facing foreclosure.

Incidentally, the station reports that more than 10,000 people have visited the house since filming began 15 years ago.

But some D.C. residents say they doubt the show will have a lasting effect on Dupont Circle.

"I guess any press that's positive is good for Dupont," said Lindsay Reishman, of the Lindsay Reishman Group at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage. "I don't think it would have that much of an impact."

"This whole Read World saga has been much ado about nothing," Dupont Circle advisory neighborhood chair Mike Silverstein wrote in an e-mail. "The kids are fine. ... And when it's over, it'll all be fine. 2000 S Street will probably house a law office, a non-profit, or a small business, like so many other similar structures. And that's fine."

Developer Douglas Jemal, who bought the \$5.69 million house in 1998, did not respond to requests



Bill Petros/The Current

The director of Historic Dupont Circle Main Streets says the presence of "The Real World" at 2000 S St., above, has benefited the area.

about his plans for the property.

And yet, according to Williams, the house at 2000 S St. has already played a big role in making Dupont Circle what it is.

The house has a rich gay history, Williams wrote in June in the Washington Blade. It briefly served as a lesbian bar/restaurant called the Hear & Now, which opened in March 1979, he said, and early gay-pride events often took place right out front.

Silverstein said he simply hopes the house will be put to a commercial or residential use that's in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. And he thinks some kind of commemoration would be

appropriate.

"Maybe we can put a plaque out front, not for the kids, but to commemorate the Unknown Gawkers; those who travel from their suburban homes to gawk at the big red house and try to get a peek at young people who will actually appear on the television some day," he wrote.

Mike Feldstein has another idea. Asked about the best future use for the 2000 S St. property, he suggested that it become home to the City Collegiate Public Charter School, which is located across the street, or "the residence/office for the ANC commissioner of 2B01 — that would be me."

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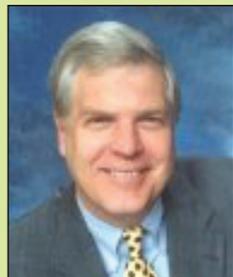


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