



The Thomas Connection

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Brookland Small Area Plan Moves Forward

Councilmember Thomas recently announced that the City Council approved PR 18-46, the "Brookland/CUA Metro Station Small Area Plan Approval Resolution of 2009, at its March 3, 2009 legislative session. Thomas thanked Chairman Vincent Gray for his extraordinary leadership in shepherding the resolution forward. Thomas also praised the DC Office of Planning for its efforts to create a plan that promoted transit-oriented development as well as preservation of green space.

Thomas requested removal of the resolution from the Council's Consent Agenda so that comments and concerns about the plan could be raised and discussed. In particular, Thomas wanted to ensure that the voice of ANC 5A was heard, and that its three areas of concern were addressed: 1) completion of a comprehensive transportation study, 2) reassessment of the "decking" and "fill" alternatives, and 3) incorporation into the plan community viewpoints regarding the preservation of the Brookland Green, excessive density, and preservation of the neighborhood's character.

In response to community concerns, Thomas requested that the Council's approval resolution for the plan instruct the Office of Planning to:

- Add a notation in the plan that the District Department of Transportation

intends to update the District's transportation model and apply that new model to the Northeast quadrant; and that OP and DDOT report back to the community on the results of the model's application to the Northeast quadrant.

- Emphasize the option of open space along 10th Street at the Metro station by including it as an example under the Small Area Plan Urban Design Concepts Summary.
- Emphasize its intent to work with community residents and ANCs to address design and scale issues of proposed developments through the planned unit development process.
- Clarify how neighborhood character is protected through the vision and framework of the plan.

"The Brookland/CUA Metro Station Small Area Plan is the result of tremendous citizen input and collaboration with Office of Planning staff," said Thomas. "The plan's approval will enable development in this important Ward 5 neighborhood to proceed with a guiding framework in place."



Statehood Front and Center at Council's March 3 Legislative Session

Statehood was the subject of two measures introduced at the City Council's March 3, 2009 legislative session. Councilmember Thomas and his colleague, At-Large Councilmember Michael A. Brown, introduced a bill to establish a 51st State Commission. The Commission would study the legislation and administrative actions necessary to establish the District as a state with all Constitutional rights, or obtain full voting representation in both Houses of Congress without designation as a state. The Commission would also expand educational and promotional efforts regarding the District's lack of full Congressional representation.

Councilmember Chairman Vincent Gray introduced a resolution to establish a Special Committee on Statehood and Self-Determination. Chairman Gray selected Councilmember Thomas to serve on the Special Committee, along with Councilmembers Michael A. Brown, Yvette Alexander, Kwame Brown, and Mary Cheh. The mission of the Special Committee complements the goals of the 51st State Commission. The Special Committee would prepare a cost-benefit analysis of statehood, propose draft legislation to enact its initiatives, study and track current and proposed Congressional District voting-rights legislation, and establish the statehood database relating to the ongoing endeavor to attain statehood. The Special Committee would also provide analysis of Congressional legislation and its potential impact on proposed Council legislation.



Thomas Holds Meeting on UDC Proposal for Community College at Backus

More than 75 residents attended a February 18, 2009 meeting at the Lamond Riggs Library called by Councilmember Thomas to discuss the University of the District of Columbia's interest in establishing a community college at Backus Middle School. Backus was closed in 2008 due to under enrollment and is currently vacant. Backus is one of 11 schools for which the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development is seeking development proposals, which are due March 27, 2009.

Dr. Eurmon Hervey of UDC apprised residents who attended the meeting that he and his staff had reviewed more than 30 potential sites for the community college, and that the Backus campus best met UDC's needs. He noted that as part of the site review process the university had drafted preliminary space requirements and had met with the Office of Property Management and DCPS to identify potential buildings.

Councilmember Thomas stated that residents needed to be active in the decisionmaking process regarding the future use of the Backus campus. He informed residents that a number of developers had approached his office to discuss building mixed use projects at the site. Thomas noted that locating a community college component of UDC at Backus followed the Comprehensive Plan's guidance for the site, and stayed within the guidelines of the federal land transfer that ceded the property to the District. Thomas also sponsored a follow-up discussion regarding the UDC proposal at the Ward 5 Community Development Expo on February 28, 2009.



More than 200 Residents Attend Ward 5 Community Development Expo

Councilmember Thomas held his third Ward 5 Community Development Expo on February 28, 2009. The event, held in Catholic University's Pryzbyla Center, drew more than 200 Ward 5 residents.

The Expo began with a presentation of financial fitness tips from Linda Stroman, Financial Education Coordinator with Capital Area Asset Builders (CAAB). CAAB is a nonprofit organization with the mission to assist people of all incomes in improving their financial management skills, increasing their savings, and building wealth. CAAB believes that a prosperous community is one in which everyone has incentives and opportunities to save for the future.

A panel discussion on balancing development and neighborhood considerations followed. Michigan Park resident Tom Lavash, a Principal with ERA-Real Estate Advisors, moderated the panel. Four of the six panelists were Ward 5 residents: Mary Pat Rowan, Landscape Architect; Ryan Avent, Economic Consultant; Carla Merritt, Principal, Ledroit Park Development Company; and Eric Jenkins, Development Manager, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. Bob Youngentaub, President of the development firm EYA and

Harriet Tregoning, Director of the DC Office of Planning, also participated on the panel.

In addition, Ms. Tregoning presented Expo attendees with a first glimpse at the results of the findings of the Retail Action Strategy, which included three Ward 5 neighborhood business submarkets: North Capitol Street, Bladensburg Rd./New York Ave., and 12th Street. With regard to the North Capitol Street submarket, the study suggests: 1) higher-density development where surface parking lots currently exist; 2) transforming Florida & P into a prime retail corner with pedestrian activity, plazas, or open space; 3) improving pedestrian safety at intersections, including installation of consistent signage and street furniture to link up the street; 4) developing storefront retail in clusters, with residential and small office uses filling in between; and 5) improving the quality of rowhouse retail through façade redevelopment. Study recommendations for the other two Ward 5 submarkets can be found at www.harrythomas5.com.



Thomas Participates in 2009 JuMMP Rally Finale

On February 27, 2009, Councilmember Thomas, Chair of the Council's Committee on Libraries, Parks and Recreation, participated in the 2009 JuMMP Rally Finale at the King Greenleaf Recreation Center in Ward 6. Councilmember Thomas was joined by his colleague Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells; Mayor Adrian M. Fenty; Clark E. Ray, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation; Bob Sweeney, President, Greater Washington Sports Alliance (GWSA); and US Olympic Gold Medalist and 2009 JuMMP Chair, Dominique Dawes.

The Junior Monumental Milers Program (JuMMP) is a physical education program youth challenge that promotes the daily habit of running and/or walking for fitness, long life, and good health. The program encourages youth to run/walk 26 miles over the course of 23 weeks. JuMMP is sponsored by the Greater Washington Sports Alliance and the SunTrust National Marathon.

"DC has the highest childhood obesity rate in the country," said Councilmember Thomas. "Encouraging fitness will help our kids make healthier decisions and understand the benefits of physical exercise."

The Sports Alliance, formed in 2003, is the regional sports commission for the Greater Washington area. It is a comprehensive resource for promoting sporting events, delivering sports information and developing regional collaboration. Its four major goals are to attract marquee sporting events to the region; connect the business community to the professional franchises, universities and local amateur teams; brand Greater Washington as a sports destination; and support youth investment organizations that use sports to build character and values, encourage fitness and enhance education.

Thomas Calls for Use of Stimulus Funds for Neighborhood-Based Development Economic and Workforce Development

Councilmember Thomas has called for the use of federal stimulus funds to jumpstart neighborhood-based economic and stimulate workforce development initiatives, such as projects in the Ward 5 communities of Carver Terrace, Ivy City, Trinidad, Bloomingdale, Lamond-Riggs, Brookland, Fort Lincoln, and Brentwood.

"The District's budget gap and tight credit markets have bruised the momentum of a number of projects planned for Ward 5," said Councilmember Thomas. "Stimulus funds can help us get back on track." Stimulus funds, for example, can be used to:

- Add Carver Terrace to the New Communities initiative;
- Provide the McMillan Reservoir project in Bloomingdale, the New Town project in Trinidad, and the Shops at Dakota Crossing project in Fort Lincoln with government-sponsored TIF financing;
- Issue property tax abatements to facilitate redevelopment of the old Hecht's Warehouse in Ivy City and EC 12 in Bloomingdale;
- Expand programs at the PhelpsArchitecture, Construction, and Engineering (PACE) High School in Trinidad to include adult workforce training;
- Budget much-needed streetscape improvements to major Ward 5 transportation corridors like North Capitol Street and New York, Florida, Bladensburg, and Rhode Island Avenues; and
- Transform the now-closed Bertie Backus Middle School, located in Ward 5, into a community college and workforce training institute.

"Investing stimulus funds in neighborhood-based economic and workforce initiatives will aid us in stabilizing underserved communities, stimulating employment, and providing job skills to those seeking to improve their economic circumstances," said Thomas.