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Testimony to D.C. City Council Committee on Libraries, Parks, and Recreation
District of Columbia Public Library FY2011 Performance Oversight Hearing
February 15, 2012

Councilmember Wells and members of the Committee,

I greet you on behalf of Bellevue Library Friends, of which I am the President, and as Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for SMD 8D07 where the branch is located. Words cannot express the excitement over the impending opening of the \$15M David Adjaye-designed edifice replacing the building that housed Washington Highlands Library in Ward 8 for over 50 years. Even those who fought tooth-and-nail to prevent its development or sat by idly waiting the outcome are now taking credit and laying claim. Yes, success has many parents, but failure is an orphan.

Speaking of which, I would like to commend the leadership of DC Public Library for adhering to the established policies, processes, and standards for naming library buildings. Mind you, they learned about the proposal to name it for the late State School Board member William Lockridge not from the mayor, Council Chair, or Lockridge family. I volunteered the information as they were considering the Friends' and Bellevue Civic Association's proposal to name it after the actual neighborhood where it is located as opposed to retaining the 50-plus-year misnomer. The Board of Library Trustees vetted the Lockridge proposal by asking two standard questions.

1. Was this person an advocate for libraries?
2. Is this individual's legacy sufficient around which to build a collection or programming?

The proposal was found not to meet these criteria. This is notwithstanding the Board's policy no longer to name branches after individuals, but rather geographically after the neighborhoods where they are located or areas they serve.

It was quite regrettable that the Council chose not only to defy the Board's position, but also ignore overwhelming community opposition. Fortunately, the Council's General Counsel set the record straight during the first reading of the bill by affirming that the Board could restore the

Bellevue name. The Board has gone on record twice as stating its intention to do just that once the approved resolution clears the legislative review process. I have been actively engaged in the library community for over three years now and can attest that they always exercise the highest of professionalism, transparency, and due diligence in their deliberations. Please ensure their hard work and position gets respected in the future.

Bellevue Library Friends, the branch staff, and neighborhood residents look forward to the increased capacity provided by the new building whereby we can expand the range of programming and services. Thank you for the significant capital investments you have made in the library system throughout the city. Approximately \$150M in mixed use development along Atlantic and South Capitol Streets SW was triggered by DCPL's \$15M investment.

The Bellevue Library will serve a community with the highest illiteracy rate in the city. Bellevue Library Friends have been working very hard with the branch manager and professional staff throughout the system, who provide exceptional leadership in finding innovative ways to keep the library's services relevant to its customer base. Among them are:

- Lap time reading program for babies and toddlers
- Two book clubs
- Health Literacy and Empowerment training to help participants become more active in obtaining credible medical information and favorable health outcomes.
- Career building seminars, resume preparation, technology training, and college application assistance.

The local Friends organization and staff are striving to make the library a thriving hub of educational and recreational activity. Upcoming offerings include civic engagement, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and creative writing workshops. We are also planning the formation of a Toastmasters Club. However, our ability to underwrite programming and purchase supplies are constrained by public funding and our modest fundraising efforts. Unlike Friends organizations in more affluent areas of the city, our residents do not have the economic resources to support programming beyond what is budgeted, while also needing to be more things to more people. There is always a line outside the door when the library opens its doors to reach beyond the digital divide.

I am proud of our staff and the staff system-wide for continuing to do more with less, even if it is too much to ask. Being furloughed unnecessarily and having no opportunity for employee-sponsored training would be cause to look elsewhere in most places. Fortunately, the DCPL team is grounded in ideals beyond their paycheck. Do not continue to shortchange them so that grace may abound. I demand that funding not be cut as it has been over the past three years. Please move to restore it to full-operational levels so we can make these beautiful buildings more available to the public and staff can be trained to serve them with the best available tools and practices.

On the upside, we are grateful that the Council has provided the funding to staff the new building adequately. Its three stories and separate programming areas for children, teens and adults will present a new set of challenges in the form of effective monitoring and constructive engagement, as well as security. Ms. Maria Perry, Bellevue Branch manager, is a life-long Ward 8 resident and leads with strong ties to the community that extends beyond the library and commands respect. There are several other branch managers throughout the city with similar rootedness in the communities they serve. She and her staff perform outreach to local schools, including Ballou Stay adult education program. She is also no stranger at Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings, working collaboratively with us to ensure library services add value to residents. We count ourselves blessed and look forward to the future possibilities for learning, partnership, and making our branches all over the city “good great places.” I don’t know of any other city agency that has such strong leadership and collaboration as exemplified by DCPL, the Board of Library Trustees, and Federation of Friends.



Bellevue Means Business



City Interests' Bellevue Project (phased development beginning Spring 2012)

Bellevue is in the fortunate position of having multiple privately-funded development projects in the pipeline. Most significant is City Interests' mixed-use development in the 4000 block of South Capitol Street SW. It will include residential, retail, and commercial office space. A parking garage will span the length of the center in the rear.

The Far SW-SE Community Development Corporation will begin construction on Trinity Plaza, which extends down the 3900 block of South Capitol and unit block of Atlantic Streets SW this spring.

It will house 6,000 sq. ft. of retail on the ground level, 12,000 sq. ft. of commercial office space on the second level, and residential units on the third and fourth levels. MVM Technologies has signed a letter of intent to locate its administrative offices at Trin-

ity Plaza. A full-service pharmacy will also be on the premises to complement the health services provided across the street at the forthcoming Community of Hope Health Resource Center.

One of the greatest challenges facing both projects has been attracting tenants. Please contact me if you are looking to establish a small business in the community or know someone interested in locating a business in the Bellevue neighborhood.

All of our development partners have agreed to enter into Community Benefits agreements with ANC 8D. These arrangements will ensure current residents receive priority for affordable housing and employment opportunities, in addition to providing financial support to beautification initiatives and charitable causes.



Trinity Plaza coming Spring 2013

Join the neighborhood listserv:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Bellevue_DC

Medical Options in Bellevue



Community of Hope
Health and Resource Center
Opening Spring 2013

COH Health & Resource Center

Community of Hope will be breaking ground this spring for the development of a four-story, world-class Health and Resource Center at 4 Atlantic Street SW. The 50,000 sq. ft. LEED Silver certified building will house services ranging from primary care, dental, behavioral healthcare, chronic disease management, prenatal, pediatric, prevention and education, social services, and wellness education. COH will also relocate its administra-

tive offices from Dupont Circle to the Bellevue location. Adult primary care services will be provided at an interim facility in Covenant Baptist UCC beginning in mid-January. For more information, contact (202)407-7747.

At full capacity, the Health and Resource Center is expected to provide 22,000 medical visits, 15,000 dental visits, and 3,500 behavioral health visits each year. COH accepts all patients regardless of ability to pay.

SHW-Hadley Outpatient Surgery Center Opening

Specialty Hospital of Washington -Hadley will also be opening its Outpatient Surgery Center this coming spring. Services include diagnostic imaging and procedures not requiring overnight stay. This will be the first full-service, multi-specialty surgery center established east of the river in over a decade. Call (202) 373-5902 for more information.

These additions make quality healthcare more accessible and convenient for Bellevue and Ward 8 residents. Please inform your providers!