

## Let's Go Forward with the Fort Dupont Park Land Transfer for our Youth

Last month the D.C. Council unanimously adopted legislation submitted by the Mayor to transfer several acres of underutilized land at Fort Dupont Park from the National Park Service to the District government for the purpose of expanding recreational opportunities for underserved youth in the city. The proposed enhancements include the construction of a Youth Baseball Academy, and the expansion of the Fort Dupont Ice Arena. I want to thank then U.S. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne for working with the District to facilitate a project that both governments believe will provide great benefit to our youth. We are, however, at this writing, meeting resistance and roadblocks, driven by what are believed to be unreasonable conditions the National Park Service has placed on the land transfer.

The Youth Baseball Academy is an outgrowth of one of the community benefits resulting from the District's agreement to build and lease a Major League Baseball stadium for the Washington Nationals. The Baseball Academy will expose children and youth in the District not only to the benefits of the sport itself, but to all the important life skills that are learned from being part of a team. Young people also will receive academic instruction and valuable experience which cannot be accommodated at the existing facility. Ten thousand kids a year are currently served by the Fort Dupont Ice Arena, but the demand is so much greater that a second indoor rink is needed.

This past December, the District government and the National Park Service concluded a nearly year-long public environmental assessment process that involved extensive community outreach. The result was a "finding of no significant impact" on the environment as a result of the land transfer proposal. We are awaiting final approval of the land transfer from both the National Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission in order for these projects to move forward for the benefit of underserved youth in the city, particularly those living east of the Anacostia River. We hope these federal agencies will take the actions necessary to make this happen.

- Vincent C. Gray, Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia



"This new, exciting initiative will enable many more children to experience the joy of tennis," says Millicent D. Williams, president and CEO of CYITC. Some kids were engaged in a team-based QuickStart format of tennis while others learned tennis training techniques through fitness obstacle course activities.

## Game, Set, Match US Tennis Association Funds DCPS After-School Programs

BY KHADIJAH ALI-COLEMAN

The United States Tennis Association (USTA), the governing body of the sport of tennis in the

United States, is funding after-school programming in selected DC public schools, including Hart and Sousa middle schools. USTA will give \$180,000 in financial support to the Child and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (CYITC) after-school component Project My Time. USTA national manager Dan Limbago is proud of the partnership with Project My Time and believes that the new initiative is a wonderful opportunity for children in underserved areas.

"Latin American Youth Center, the Washington Tennis and Education Foundation and the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center provide the tennis instruction to the students. We are very happy about this new relationship," Limbago said.

Project My Time coordinates after-school programming in ten schools in the District to provide academic support activities, as well as sports, music and art. The USTA partnership ensures that students will participate in tennis activity at least two times a week. The Southeast Tennis and Learning Center provides the staff to oversee instruction to participating students at these schools. Participating students will compete in a tournament at the end of the school year to display their new skills.

"Although there are tennis courts all over our city, the sad reality is that many children in struggling neighborhoods typically would not have exposure or access to tennis," said Millicent D. Williams, president and CEO of the Trust. "This new, exciting initiative will enable many more children to experience the joy of tennis. We are grateful to the U.S. Tennis Association for making this possible."

On Friday, January 30, Project MyTime and USTA hosted a kick-off event which was held at the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center on Mississippi Ave. Students were engaged in a team-based QuickStart format of tennis while some learned tennis training

techniques through fitness obstacle course activities.

"I don't know anything about tennis," said one Sousa Middle School student in attendance. "But, with this new program, I'll probably be pretty good by the summer."

To get the full listing of schools where this program is offered, contact Project My Time director Meeta Sharma-Holt at 202.347.4441 or msharma-holt@cy-itc.org. ★

## Moving Earth and Deeds Land Transfers, Sales and Ground Breakings

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

### Work begins on Deanwood Community Center

Deanwood resident Herman Hicks saw the old Rec Center at 49th and Quarles streets, NE being built and watched his children participate in activities there. But Hicks – who now has ten grandchildren and two great-grans – expects the Deanwood Community Center and Library (DCCL) to "be something great" for the new generations.

Scheduled for 2010 completion, DCCL is to be the largest community center in the city and the first combined with a library. Mayor Adrian Fenty, Council Chair Vincent Gray, Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander, Chief Library Ginnie Cooper, Parks and Rec Director Clark Ray and then ANC Commissioner Muriel Weathington all spoke of their excitement about the project at the Dec. 17 groundbreaking. Most

Ron Brown Middle School students help neighbors and dignitaries break ground for Deanwood Community Center and Library, Dec. 17.



also addressed the community's skepticism, after years of hearing that the new project was "coming soon."

Fenty joked that he'd initially suspected an error in the project description, "because the District doesn't spend this kind of money east of the river." Alexander called the project "landmark," adding, "Ward 7, we're getting a lot and we deserve it."

Gray, who pushed for the project during his tenure as Ward 7 Councilmember, explained that DCCL would join a "family-friendly campus" with nearby Ron Brown Middle School. He called the project "a prototype for Deanwood, for the East Coast, and for America."

Several speakers recognized the efforts of Beverly Goode, long-time advocate and political force. In her absence, Ray set aside a shovel for her.

Deanwood Civic Association President Sylvia Brown began her remarks with "an `amen" to all of the above but added that credit must go to all in Deanwood who "kept up the fight, the spirit of advocacy." She also stressed that neighbors would be looking beyond the groundbreaking, "to bulldozers and fences."

Although additional digging had not begun a press time, fencing of the property was complete.

### Deanwood Properties Changing Hands

Land transfers for the Strand Theater and for an apartment building at 4427 Hayes St., NE, are progressing, and the DC Council is seeking public comment before finalizing them. The Strand, 5131 Nannie Helen Burroughs Rd., NE, is slated for transfer to Washington Metropolitan Community Development Corp for mixed use; the apartment building, to Blue Skye for affordable housing.

These and other transfers will be considered at a Feb. 25 roundtable jointly sponsored by the Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Government Operations and the Environment. (Contact John Adams at the Committee on Economic Development -- jadams@dccouncil.us, 202-727-6683.)

Three more long-vacant Deanwood properties -- a single-family home on Foote, an apartment building on 46th St. and another on Nash -- were recently auctioned by the District. Properties across the city acquired through tax foreclosures, eminent domain and "friendly acquisition" were sold in an effort to eliminate "neighborhood eyesores."

"It is critical that we get these properties back into productive use as fast as possible," Mayor Adrian Fenty said in a statement preceding the sale. ★

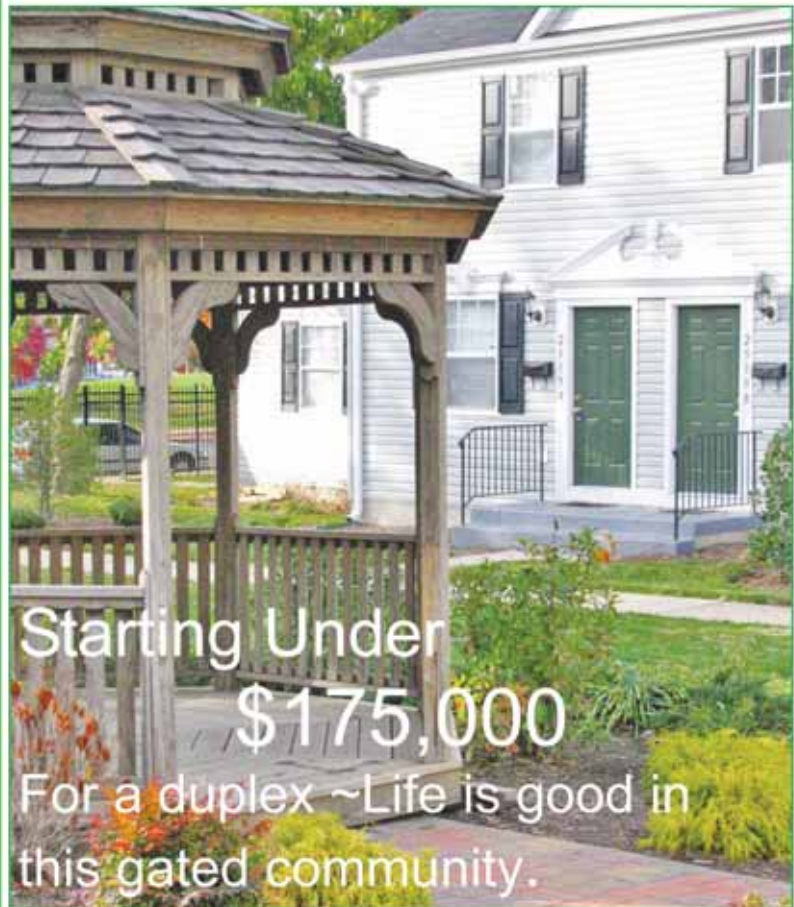
## New Assignments, New Hopes: Alexander Chairs Aging and Community Affairs

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

With the dawn of the Obama administration, Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander believes the Committee on Aging and Community Affairs,

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which she now chairs, is particularly “set up to have an impact.” Voting rights would be a first step, with Statehood an ultimate goal, she says. In addition, Alexander says the Committee “can have a major impact on quality of life” in the District.

The Committee’s first order of business legislation introduced by Mary Cheh (Ward 3) to close a loophole in the District’s sexual harassment legislation, so that it protects unpaid interns. A hearing is scheduled for Feb. 25, and Alexander expects action from the full Council in March.

Alexander plans to ensure that Ward 7 is represented equally on commissions – Aging, GLBT Affairs and Veteran Affairs -- under her new Committee’s purview. In addition, she is launching quarterly meetings for area ministers, hosting a gathering for Ward 7 ANCs and continuing monthly leadership councils. Civic leaders should contact the Councilmember’s office for location of the Feb. 28 Leadership Council. ★

## Developers Pull Out of Multi-Billion Dollar Revitalization Project

BY KHADIJAH ALI-COLEMAN

Clark Realty Capital disappointed many residents in the DC area on Jan. 30 as it pulled out of the Poplar Point development project—one of the biggest development projects to come east of the Anacostia river in years.

“Clark is a great local company that will continue to do excellent work in this city,” Neil Albert, DC’s deputy mayor for planning and economic development said in a public statement. “But, in this extremely challenging economic environment, it is no longer practical for Clark to pursue the deal structure we currently have in place.”

With a budget that almost dwarfs the development of the St. Elizabeth campus on MLK Ave. to accommodate the new Homeland Security headquarters, the Poplar Point Project was to feature prime waterfront housing, restaurants, a new KIPP Academy Charter School and the new DC United soccer stadium. It would surround 70 acres of park land. Plans included the division of the land into five distinct neighborhoods, each with their own unique attributes, including: The Point, a Center for the Environment, a park, the Metro Soccer district, and the Village at Poplar Point. The plan also features “The Deck,” a walk-way running over I-295 that would allow Anacostia residents to walk to Poplar Point.

It is uncertain when or if a new development com-



Mural (in progress) at Smothers Elementary traces the history of African American Dance.

pany will be selected to begin the project. Clark Realty Capital had proposed a \$236 million public subsidy for infrastructure for the \$2.5 billion project.

Clark Realty Capital, a Bethesda-based company, could not be reached for comment. ★

## History in the Painting African American Dance Mural Takes Shape

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

African American Dance has long held a special place inside Smothers Elementary School, where teacher Julia Jones has led the Smothers Dance Ensemble for 24 years. With a new 20’ x 30’ mural by artist Roderick Turner, the history of African American Dance also takes a prominent place outside the school.

A few of the mural’s figures stand out as individuals. Even without facial features, the Nicholas Brothers’ spat-covered tap shoes and airborne splits are unmistakable. Anacostia’s Melvin Deal, who performed at the initial unveiling, is incorporated as what Turner calls “an example of life imitating art imitating life.” Each figure is meant to represent a style of dance and its many practitioners, however. For example, the male in leotards was inspired by Dance Theatre of Harlem’s Arthur Mitchell, Turner explains, but reflects many other contributors to ballet and related styles. The umbrella-wielding dancer calls to mind nearly 50 years of “Revelations.” Turner also links dancers and styles through American Sign Language and finger-spelling.

Turner now lives in Ward 8 and has completed other murals across the District. He was born in Providence, RI, and studied at the Rhode Island School of Design. His honors include the Lila Wallace Readers Digest International Grant, which allowed him to study at Monet’s house in Giverny, France. The mural-

in-progress is located at 44th and Clay streets, NE, and work continues as weather permits. ★

## Ft. Dupont Land Transfer Postponed Language Snags Baseball Academy, Ice Arena Expansion

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

The District’s plan to build a youth baseball academy at Fort Dupont and expand the existing ice arena hit a snag early this year. The plan depends on transfer of federal lands to the District, and a disagreement has emerged over legal language in the transfer.

Both the DC Council and the National Park Service (NPS) expressed disappointment in the current situation – which follows a year of both agencies’ efforts -- and agreed to work toward mutually agreeable language.

At issue are “reversionary clauses,” which, in essence, would return the land to NPS should the District fail to meet any one of several agreed conditions. Conditions include public access to the land, facilities and parking; construction in accordance with Green Building standards; no naming rights, no commemorative works, and similar matters.

DC Council Chair Vincent Gray says that the District agrees with these provisions. He argues, however, that “such a broad reversionary provision is unnecessary, because the transfer document itself provides” for these conditions. Gray believes the reversionary language could put “public and private investments and improvements...at substantial risk” and hinder financing for the project.

“The District has requested the Park Service to

remove the unusual, unnecessary and unacceptable broad reversionary provision from the transfer document so that the baseball academy and ice arena expansion projects can proceed forward for the benefit of underserved youth in the District," Gray said in a late January statement.

Gayle Hazelwood, Superintendent of National Capital Parks East, says that the provisions involved are "not small things" and are "consistent with what NPS has done" in similar agreements. NPS must "ensure that the land always remains available to the public," she explains, and the additional provisions are meant to codify agreements based on public concerns about use of Park land.

"We want to make it clear that it wasn't until [the Council was] ready to go to the Planning Commission that they said these clauses would affect their ability to get funding," Hazelwood notes. Still, NPS wants the baseball academy and arena expansion to be successful and does not want to jeopardize funding for it. "So," Hazelwood concludes, "we are looking for language that would satisfy [Council] concerns and.. all the conditions agreed as part of the transfer."

NPS is asking the Council to provide examples "of language that would work" and hopes the two parties can go forward in open dialogue. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) – which must approve the transfer – agreed on Jan. 8 to postpone consideration of the matter until March, at which time a newly-worded agreement is expected. ★

## DC WRAP gives Grants to Reduce Energy Costs

BY KHADIJAH ALI-COLEMAN

As winter heating bills mount, the District of Columbia Weatherization, Rehabilitation, and Asset Preservation Program (DC WRAP) is providing grants for energy services in the homes of eligible home owners. The grants will support improvements in energy efficiency and housing affordability. DC WRAP is a program of the DC Department of the Environment/Energy.

Eligible home owners could re-

ceive up to \$2,300 in weatherization grants for a variety of energy efficiency improvements including lighting, insulation, furnace and air conditioning maintenance and repair and refrigerator and appliance replacement. Though home owners will not receive money in hand, they will receive a comprehensive energy audit at no cost to determine what energy efficient measures would likely benefit the home. Once the audit is done, repairs and replacement of appliances will begin based on the audit's recommendations.

According to Esther Siegel, program coordinator or the Energy Programs Consortium, heating a home this winter could cost twice as much as last year if fuel oil is used and more than 30 percent more if natural gas is used. In some cases, the cost to provide energy in your home for lights, hot water, cooking, and heating/cooling could be more than your grocery bill during peak months.

"We are trying to make this as seamless a process as is possible and are trying to reach as many eligible families as possible," says Siegel. "Since this is a demonstration program, we have the opportunity to learn from the process and hopefully bring to the city a strong case for making this a permanent program. Residents have to act fast, though. This program can only accommodate 181 owner-occupied units and there are eligibility requirements."

Families will have to provide proof the home is their principle place of residence and the home cannot be in receivership or threatened by foreclosure. The total income of all income producing residents of the home must fall within the range below per family size:

Household size Minimum - Maximum Annual Income

1. \$33,100 - \$42,000
2. \$37,800 - \$48,000
3. \$42,550 - \$54,000
4. \$47,250 - \$60,000
5. \$51,050 - \$64,800
6. \$54,800 - \$69,600
7. \$58,600 - \$74,000
8. \$62,350 - \$79,200

Siegel says that one of the goals of the program is to assess its success in order to provide substantive recommendation for a national model. Therefore, she encourages residents to sign up and participate.

*To sign up or for additional information regarding eligibility, contact 202-624-5867. Visit [www.energyprograms.org](http://www.energyprograms.org) for details.* ★

# Black History MONTH

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*Family & Kids*

Sat., Feb. 7, 2 p.m.

Sharon Katz & The Peace Train  
South African music and dance

Sat., Feb. 28, 1 p.m.

*Kirikou and the Sorceress*

Ages: 7 and up • Animated film based on West African folktale

*Adults*

Thurs. evenings, 7 p.m.

Africa in Reel Time: Diaspora Film Festival

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Fri., Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m.

Conversation with the Artists: António Ole and Aimé Mpane

Fri., Feb. 27, 12 p.m.

Reconstructing the History of Ethiopia's Famed Site of Lalibela  
Lecturer: Marilyn Heldman

For a complete listing of African Art programs, visit  
[africa.si.edu/calendar.html](http://africa.si.edu/calendar.html)



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