Testimony of Robert James, Chairman of the Ward 8 Business Council
Wednesday, December 12, 2007
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management Hearing
On
"The New DHS Headquarters at St. Elizabeth's: Local Business Opportunities"

Good morning Committee Chair and members of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management. My name is Robert James. I am the Chairman of the Ward 8 Business Council. I am here today to testify about ***"The New DHS Headquarters at St. Elizabeth's: Local Business Opportunities."***

First, let me start off by saying it is indeed a pleasure and an honor to come before you today as a resident of the District of Columbia. The Ward 8 community is very pleased to be a part of the process of planning and implementation of General Services Administration's (GSA) new site on the west campus of St. Elizabeth Hospital. However, there are some issues we would like to express to you. There are 8 of them in particular:

1. ***Engaging CBEs (certified business enterprises) and getting them on your schedule.***
2. ***Identifying prospective job opportunities for Ward 8 residents.***
3. ***Ensuring historical preservation.***
4. ***Ensuring public access to the Point.***
5. ***Conducting an impact statement on transportation and jobs.***
6. ***Encouraging your employees to patronize businesses on the MLK Jr. corridor.***
7. ***Absorbing additional costs for infrastructure.***
8. ***Encouraging the use of public transportation to protect the air quality in Ward 8.***

We understand that the Coast Guard headquarters as well as Homeland Security will occupy some of the space on the west campus of St. Elizabeth's. We have some concerns with the accessibility of how this project will be incorporated into our community. As you know, we already have Bolling Air Force base and the community has very little access. Clearly, with the structure of the Coast Guard and Homeland Security access will be limited. Hence, we need to find some means of cooperation with the 14,000 employees to be an asset to the rest of the Ward and the Ward will benefit from the facilities being there. Also, there is a greater likelihood for more retail, sit down restaurants, etc. We are also interested in exploring the needs of the employees to get a better picture of their shopping and housing needs. The Ward 8 Business Council envisions a downtown Anacostia that is likened to the 7th Street Corridor on Capital Hill. We

3119 MLK Jr. Avenue, SE • Washington, DC 20032 Suite 300
Office (240) 417-6320 • Fax (202) 562-0114

hope that GSA will encourage the employees to use the amenities on MLK Jr. Avenue, S.E.

Another issue is changing traffic patterns. We assume that the flow of traffic will increase tremendously on MLK Jr. Avenue, Malcolm X and Good Hope Road, S.E. We have two subway stops that will be used as well. (Alabama Avenue and Anacostia Metro stations) You can see how important it is for GSA, the Ward 8 Business Council and Councilmember Marion Barry to work together to meet the needs of the additional employees who will be traveling those corridors. As you look around the new Ward 8, there is plenty of affordable and upscale housing. We would hope that some of those 14,000 employees would become residents of our community.

The Ward 8 Business Council has been mandated by Councilmember Marion Barry to make sure that whatever is built in the new Ward 8 ensures that employment or contractual opportunities are available to residents or Certified Business Enterprises (CBEs). We also work very closely with Erik Moses who heads the DC Office of Small and Disadvantage Business. The Ward 8 Business Council has a list of all the CBEs in Ward 8 that are qualified to participate on the building of the project from beginning to end.

Additionally, we are concerned about the historic buildings on the west side. We attend Councilmember Barry's monthly Ward 8 History/Heritage Council meetings to discuss historical sites in the community. We encourage GSA to be mindful of the historical significance of St. Elizabeth in the community. As Chairman of the Ward 8 Business Council, I would extend an invitation to GSA to work with us very closely so that we all come to a mutual agreement about the project being built on the west campus. We are very excited about having new neighbors. We will do anything in our power to ensure that the transition between the community and GSA is as smooth as possible.

Let me close by saying there are many other concerns that I have, but I am certain that between the planning and community meetings we will be able to work out any differences we have. Again, I am delighted that GSA will be our new neighbor. Please feel free to call on the Ward 8 Business Council for any assistance we can provide. Thank you.

3119 MLK Jr. Avenue, SE • Washington, DC 20032 Suite 300
Office (240) 417-6320 • Fax (202) 562-0114