



916 G STREET, NW

WASHINGTON, DC 20001

202.315.1305 FAX: 202.315.1303

WWW.CULTURALDC.ORG

October 5, 2009

Zoning Commission
District of Columbia
441 4th Street NW, Suite 220 South
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Abdo Development & Catholic University PUD and Map Amendment

Good evening, my name is Anne Corbett and I am the Executive Director of Cultural Development Corporation, a local, non-profit that creates opportunities for artists and arts organizations that stimulate the economy and improve quality of life in the DC area. We make space for art.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) of the Catholic University of America South Campus Redevelopment. This project will benefit the Brookland community, nurture area artists, and fill a space need in the District. We encourage the approval of the PUD by Abdo Development that will create affordable space for artists to *create and present* work in the District.

The Brookland neighborhood is ripe for additional arts-related development — specifically, space to support individual artists and their entrepreneurship that fits well with the physical character of Brookland. With the approval of the Brookland/CUA Metro Station Small Area Plan earlier this year, the DC Council approved the Office of Planning recommendation for further incorporation of the arts. The guiding principles of the plan include providing additional cultural amenities and developing an active pedestrian neighborhood. The plan also recommends designating Brookland as an Arts/Cultural District within the next 2-5 years.¹ The community is already home to Dance Place and Catholic University, which provide a variety of arts-related services, and this Commission has provided preliminary approval for the Brookland Artspace Lofts. However, there is still a lack of workspace for local artists in the Brookland community. The proposed PUD by Abdo incorporates the philosophical approach of the Small Area Plan and furthers the goal of creating additional, highly demanded artist studio space.

Abdo's plan includes an arts walk, featuring artist studios, programmable outdoor space and an arts flex building. This pedestrian walkway will create a bridge to connect the artistic offerings of Dance Place, Catholic University and Brookland Artspace Lofts — establishing an arts corridor along 8th Street NE. This PUD will provide artists with **permanent** space to create, present and sell their art — an amenity

¹ Brookland/CUA Metro Station Small Area Plan. Available at <http://www.planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,A,1285,Q,640097.asp>

currently lacking in DC. At the same time neighborhood residents will have the opportunity to discover a broad assortment of artistic goods and services.

Cultural Development Corporation is honored to partner with Abdo Development to create a plan to program and likely operate these spaces to effectively serve the DC arts community. We intend to work closely with Abdo to ensure the arts components are designed and constructed to meet the needs of artist. We strongly support this initiative and believe it could serve as a model for the strategic inclusion of arts space in future developments.

This PUD will also help mitigate the loss of *creative capital* from the District. By creative capital, I mean the artists and creative entrepreneurs that continue to be priced out of the city, even in these economically challenging times. As of 2009, the Creative DC Action Agenda noted that 10% of the District's employment base is through the creative sector, or more than 75,000 direct jobs. Another 15,000 creative individuals are working outside the creative sector.² Many of these artists are employees of the local job force, providing cultural offering throughout the District to other residents. However, finding appropriate studio and presentation space within the District remains a constant challenge for these creative residents. To highlight two examples – after opening rentals for our two black box theatre spaces in April of this year by July these spaces were booked through July 2010. Also, this past year our gallery received over 70 applications to exhibit work for only nine slots.

The Commission's approval of the Abdo Development and Catholic University PUD will create an artist hub in Brookland, supporting the Small Area Plan and goals for the community. This project will help retain our city's creative capital by providing affordable, permanent space for area artists to work. We encourage the Commission to approve this plan to serve the local community of Brookland and the DC artist community at large.

For any questions or follow-up please contact Ilana Branda, Program Manager Housing and Community Development at 202.315.1324 or ilana@culturaldc.org.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Anne L. Corbett
Executive Director

Testimony by:
Anne Corbett, Executive Director
Cultural Development Corporation
916 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001
t 202.315.1308 f 202.315.1303 e anne@culturaldc.org

² Presentation at the Creative Economy Forum, April 2, 2009. The full presentation can be downloaded at <http://www.planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1354,q,646824.asp>. For further information contact Sakina Khan at sakina.khan@dc.gov.