

CASE NO. 09-03 (Skyland Holdings, LLC – Consolidated PUD & Related Map Amendment @ Square 5632, 5633, 5641, 5641N, & Various Parcels)

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To: MEMBERS OF THE DC ZONING BOARD

From: VINCENT M. SPAULDING, R. A.

Date: December 7, 2009

Subject: WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CASE NO. 09-03 (Skyland Holdings, LLC – Consolidated PUD & Related Map Amendment @ Square 5632, 5633, 5641, 5641N, & Various Parcels)

My name is Vincent Spaulding and I am the immediate past President of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association (HCCA). I have been actively involved in community driven efforts to improve the Skyland Shopping Center for over 18 years. My involvement includes serving as the ANC Commissioner for the section of the Skyland Commercial area that includes the Skyland Shopping Center from 1988 to 1998 and was responsible for the establishment of the Skyland Area Revitalization Task Force (SARTF). I also served as the Chairman of the SARTF from 1994 to 1998 and was succeeded by Willard Poteat, after I was appointed as the Clean City Coordinator for the District of Columbia government in 1999. I served as the President of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association from October 2003 until January 2007 and one of the major initiatives during my tenure as president was to serve as a proponent for the development of the Skyland Shopping Center.

The residents of the communities near the shopping center have been working for over 17 years to have the shopping center redeveloped so that it is an asset to the community and better serves our needs. This redevelopment effort has been slow to come to fruition largely because the shopping center's ownership includes 44 parcels and is scattered over 16 owners

The Skyland Shopping does not currently serve the community well because it does not have the retail that we desire. Many community members avoid the shopping center for this reason, but also because they believe it is unsafe due to its haphazard layout, the lack of central management that could control loitering and quality of life crime. Contrast Skyland with the Goodhope Marketplace, which is a well managed attractive, safe, and inviting place to shop and visit.

The Skyland Shopping Center property owners have shown disrespect for the community by allowing their properties to decay to the state they are in, and by not maintaining the space in front or behind. They have allowed the property to become an eyesore and blight on our community that is a continuous burden to the community. We find it very unsettling that the current owners are happy with the status quo being maintained in our community and we are sure that they would not tolerate such a shopping center in their own communities. We are convinced, after 17 years of trying to involve current owners in the Skyland Revitalization Taskforce, that the approval of the consolidated PUD and related May Amendment proposed by Case No. 09-03 is the only path to a new shopping center.

Skyland is on a downward spiral which began in the late 70's and continues today. The Skyland Shopping Center mix of stores and layout attracts crime, public drinking, public urination, illegal vending, littering, dumping, etc. If Skyland Shopping Center owners were interested in making improvements, they would have worked with the Skyland Taskforce over the years to improve the shopping center.

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In addition to enhancing retail offerings for communities east of the Anacostia River, a redeveloped retail center located at the Skyland site promises to create jobs, improve quality of life, and contribute significantly to sales and property taxes in the District. Further, the location of the new Skyland Shopping Center represents an important development opportunity in an area of the District that is just beginning, after a long delay, to attract new capital investment in retail housing. Such investment is essential to reversing the decline in the District's population and reinforcing long-term stability of the areas east of the river. A new, contemporary retail center will serve to improve public perception of communities in this area, making them more attractive for new residents and creating a competitive retail environment, ultimately opening the door for additional private sector investment.

In closing, East Washington, DC residents have waited a long time to see this project done and it has lingered enough. With the support of the approval of subject case by the DC Zoning Board, this project can come to fruition. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of redevelopment of the Skyland Shopping Center.

Very respectfully,

Vincent M. Spaulding

Vincent M. Spaulding, R.A.

Past President, HCCA