



916 G STREET, NW

WASHINGTON, DC 20001

202.315.1305 FAX: 202.315.1301

WWW.CULTURALDC.ORG

July 23, 2009

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

Re: Brookland Artspace Lofts Consolidated PUD and Map Amendment

Good evening, my name is Anne Corbett and I am the Executive Director of Cultural Development Corporation. Cultural Development Corporation is 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. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) of the Brookland Artspace Lofts. This project will benefit the Brookland community, nurture area artists, and fill a space need in the District. We encourage the approval of the planned artist housing development by Artspace Projects that will create affordable space for artists to *live and work* in DC.

In general, the Brookland neighborhood is ripe for additional arts-related development. 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 and continued residential development. The guiding principles of the plan include providing additional cultural amenities, opportunities for cultural events and artist housing for various income levels. 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. However, there is still room to build and further establish the Brookland community as an arts destination for the District. The proposed PUD by Artspace incorporates the philosophical approach of the Small Area Plan and furthers the goal of creating additional arts space.

Brookland Artspace Lofts 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. The DC area has a significant market demand for affordable living and working space for artists – over 600 area artists subscribe to CuDC's e-newsletter about affordable housing opportunities within the District. Additionally, 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

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

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EXHIBIT No. 36

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 affordable housing within the District remains a constant challenge for these creative residents.

In that regard, Brookland Artspace Lofts will help fill the void of available artist housing in the District. Currently, there are only 12 legal artist housing units in the District – the Mather Studios. An additional 30 rental units are planned for NoMa. However, these units are affordable to artists earning 80% of the area median income (AMI). Brookland Artspace Lofts is the only project in the pipeline affordable to artists earning between 50-60% of AMI. It is critical that affordable artist housing be developed in the District at various price points. Brookland Artspace Lofts will fulfill the need of additional artist housing units at an affordability level that is currently unserved in the market.

The Commission's approval of the Brookland Artspace Lofts PUD will create a destination 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 housing for area artists. There is a gap in artist space priced at or below 60% AMI and Brookland Artspace Lofts is critical to filling that gap. 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.