

## **Testimony November 14, 2016 before the Comprehensive Community Revision Plan**

### **Introduction:**

Good evening Chairman, Commissioners, Guest, ANC representatives, Resident Council Officers and Indigenous Residents of The Great Southwest Washington, DC. My name is Michael K. Johnson, CEO/Executive Director of Ironsn7sfire, Inc. (501 c 3), a native resident of the District of Columbia, born at 707 Half Street, SW, and raised in Southwest DC throughout my life. I am here today to testify on behalf of the indigenous Southwest community resident's concerning the Community Engagement Initiative of the DC United Soccer Stadium Construction Projects. We will discuss four longtime community concerns prior, during and after to the planned Soccer Stadium Proposal: (1) Environmental, Public Health; (2) Displacement of Current Residents; (3) Public Safety; and (4) Workforce Development.

Real, true and successful Community Engagement Initiatives in development projects of this nature involves the actual community residents in all aspects of the project. The indigenous community is involved in all scheduled meetings; including, engagement, assessment, planning, design, decision making, implementation, management, and evaluation of all, I repeat all, phases and aspects of the development process from the beginning to the end. We have the greatest and sincerest interest, investment and need for the successful development of the project because the project in being created on our homelands where we have lived for years and/or for all of lives.

### **(1) Environmental/Public Health:**

When we look at the concerns about the soil and environmental contaminants that are, can or will be unearthed from the construction of this project. These contaminants affect our residents in many capacities, including the quality of the air which is breathed under normal conditions. The water that is used on daily normal basis for bathing, cooking and just simple physical exposure or touch. These are the conditions and circumstances that may have infected some of the indigenous populations as a result of poor environmental and public health oversight regarding this development project. We have two studies, which resonate lack of indigenous community engagement and public health illegality of construction on the current construction site. (See Brownfields Study, 1998 & Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Study, 1947)

### **(2) Displacement of Current Residents:**

Gentrification . . . The lack of personal and social resources that has been denied the residents of low income and public housing property residents for almost a century. Residents of SW have been under resourced and deprived public housing properties and other residents have been transferred from other housing properties. We deserve every opportunity to receive the benefits which this development project brings to our community. We have developed social support service programs to identify and

recommend residency placement for these concerned residents to be able to live and retain their family culture, history, legacy and contributions for the remaining of their lives.

### **(3) Public Safety/Mental Health:**

There is the public safety and mental health aspects associated with social and genetic conditions that has increased the likelihood that an individual will be exposed to the presence of the aforementioned contaminant releases, exposure and the abuse of illegal drugs, to the extent that the substance abuse will be escalated. These risk factors include the availability of drugs, poverty, educational levels, criminal involvement, social changes, peer influences, under employment and unemployment, type of occupation and cultural attitudes. Individual risk factors include; being a victim of child abuse, personality disorders, the extreme changes in family situations, inter family dependence problems, academic stress, poor academic performance, social deprivation, depression, and suicidal behavior. With gentrification, individuals are separated from family and friends transferring from other housing properties to accommodate public housing reductions.

### **(4) Workforce Development:**

There are substantial opportunities that need and should be contributed to the residents of this community. There are training certification's and skill development licenses that need to be made available in the social fabric development of the community. Too often we rebuild the physical and structural development of a community and neglect the social fabric development of the community. The development of the indigenous population of the community which already occupies the area, has contributed to maintaining the neighborhoods and desire/intend to remain as residents of the community.

We deserve to receive the benefits which this development brings to our community. We have developed social support service programs to recruit, train and recommend placement of these certified and licensed resident to fill these positions from environmental and health assessment questionnaire design and content, surveyors, data collectors, and other human service technical delivery operators to basic street workers.

With training certification and licensing creates the availability to employ the abundant of unemployed/underemployed resident of the community that are seeking an opportunity to be constructive involved in this initiative. This development project will bring hundreds of jobs directly in the community that our residents deserve the opportunity to apply, train and qualify to fulfill these jobs positions.

### **Conclusion:**

These are the myriad contributions, opportunities and outcomes of a true resident involved and implemented community engagement initiative. We have developed a social support service delivery program to identify, recommend, address and provide those needed services to the indigenous population of ANC Single Member District of 6D.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I remain at your disposal for further discussions and would be happy to answer any questions, now or at a later time.

Respectfully submitted . . . in the consciousness and spirit of community.

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