

Testimony by

**LORETTA TATE, PRESIDENT AND CEO
MARSHALL HEIGHTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION, INC.**

Submitted to:

**The Committee on Economic Development
Council of the District of Columbia**

PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE

**PR 15-267, “Sense of the Council in Favor of Mixed-Use Redevelopment of the
District of Columbia Public Libraries Resolution of 2003”**

Monday, June 30, 2003

Chairman Brazil and other members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of PR 15-267, “Sense of the Council in Favor of Mixed-Use Redevelopment of the District of Columbia Public Libraries Resolution of 2003.”

For nearly 25 years, the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization (MHCDO) has worked to bring much-needed investment and revitalization to the Ward 7 area of Washington, DC. We accomplish this goal by strengthening and mobilizing “people resources” and by promoting and building on key physical assets in the community, including Metrorail stations, commercial corridors, healthcare facilities, schools, parks, recreation centers, and libraries.

Redevelopment of the District’s public libraries presents an important opportunity for neighborhoods in Ward 7 and throughout the city. Given the limited public resources available for community revitalization, it is crucial that the District leverages each capital improvement dollar to maximize benefits to the community. Requiring the District of

Columbia Public Library (DCPL) to explore mixed-use redevelopment of libraries is one way to achieve this objective.

As the DCPL plans libraries, it should also examine opportunities to integrate with nearby government centers and to sell existing library sites to generate revenue and create additional neighborhood amenities. In Ward 7, for example, the District should consider relocating the Benning Road Library down the street to the proposed government center site adjacent to the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail station. This move would increase library access via public transit, support a lively government center and Metrorail station environment on weekends, provide ample free parking on weekends, and reduce development costs.

The existing library site, which is probably too small to support mixed-use development, could in turn be sold to generate income to offset DCPL's capital expenses and operating costs, and to create additional retail and commercial space in the East River Park Shopping Center.

Maximizing public library investment through mixed-used redevelopment and other strategies will require creativity, openness to new ideas, and sound financial analysis. It will also require DCPL to communicate and coordinate with the Office of Planning and other District agencies, and to seek input from the community. This approach to redeveloping libraries will undoubtedly result in public dollars better spent.

Thank you for your time and consideration.