GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Councilmember Mary Cheh, Ward 3
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Councilmember Kwame R. Brown, At Large
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

January 12, 2009

Dear Councilmember Cheh and Councilmember Brown,

In October you raised a number of concerns related to our development plans for the Tenley-Janney site. As we start the new year, I wanted to provide you with an update on the progress we have made in addressing those concerns and devising some very practical solutions to the challenges you presented.

As I am sure you are aware, the original rationale for this project is two-fold. First, it is part of a District-wide effort to capitalize on transit-oriented development. This site offers the District the rare opportunity to leverage a parcel across the street from a Metrorail station, bringing additional residents and workforce housing units to an underserved Wisconsin Avenue corridor. Second, the money the District will receive in the form of a prepaid ground lease will be used to move the Janney School modernization up in the queue from Fiscal Year 2014 as stated in the Master Facilities Plan to Fiscal Years 2009, 2010, and 2011.

In addition to the benefits of transit-oriented development, new housing and hastening the modernization of the Janney School, we believe that the District could realize additional benefits from this project. For example, preliminary estimates show that DC Public Library will save approximately half of its construction budget under this mixed-use scenario for their new 20,000 square-foot library. This amounts to approximately $5 million in cost savings.

You suggested in your earlier letter that you would like to see the library move ahead with its plans independently of a combined project and that with the appropriate additional structural support future development could be contemplated at a later date.

During the past several months we have looked at a number of scenarios to determine whether that approach could work. But unfortunately, after considerable analysis by our office and development team we have determined a stand-alone library would eliminate any potential cost savings for the library, would likely make any future development on the site cost prohibitive, and would require much more of the Janney Elementary greenspace than current plans making no net loss of greenspace improbable if not impossible.

LCOR continues to revise its proposal based on community feedback that has been received to date. The proposal they are currently working on would involve a 165-unit building (down from the original 174) and would use approximately 10,700 square-feet of the Janney field while returning 11,000 square-feet of Janney land currently used for parking to useable green and/or play space -- a net gain of 300 square feet of green space at the school. We heard the community loud and clear that it would support no net-loss of green space and this plan should satisfy that demand.

It is our sincere hope that members of the community will engage constructively and provide feedback on the current LCOR plan so that we can continue to refine the plan in January so that a fully formed proposal could be presented to the community by February 10th. In that spirit, we have urged -- and DCPS has recently completed -- an Education Specification for Janney and will begin working with the Janney SIT to develop a concept plan for a Janney modernization shortly.

Since the selection of the development partner in July we have met numerous times with ANC3E, St. Ann's Academy and Ward 3 Vision. We have also held meetings with the Janney SIT Facilities Subcommittee as well as the entire Janney SIT. We stand ready to further engage with the Janney community on this important project.

Sincerely,

Neil O. Albert
Deputy Mayor