



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW  
ROOM 107  
WASHINGTON, DC 20004**



HARRY THOMAS, JR.  
COUNCILMEMBER  
WARD 5

TEL: 202-724-8028  
FAX: 202-724-8076  
HTHOMAS@DCCOUNCIL.US

**For Immediate Release**  
April 7, 2009

**Contact:** Grace Lewis  
Phone: 202.724.8067  
Email: glewis@dccouncil.us

**Thomas Introduces Legislation to Aid to Commercial Property Owners and  
12<sup>th</sup> Street Businesses Impacted by Streetscape Construction**

**Washington DC**—At the City Council’s April 7, 2009 legislative session, Ward 5 Councilmember Harry “Tommy” Thomas, Jr. introduced two measures to assist local commercial property owners, many of whom are suffering financially as a result of the economic downturn.

Councilmember Thomas introduced a “Sense of the Council on the Need to Review Dramatically Increased Property Tax Assessments Resolution of 2009.” The resolution requests that Office of Tax and Revenue reevaluate property tax assessments that have increased more than 25 percent between 2008 and 2009. “Many property owners in prime commercial locations, such as the Bladensburg Road, NE corridor, are greatly concerned that the drastic, unprecedented, and unexplained increase in their property taxes, particularly in a down real-estate market, is indicative of a constructive attempted taking of their property for future development plans,” said Councilmember Thomas.

Councilmember Thomas noted that he met with a group of Bladensburg Road, NE commercial property owners on March 31, 2009. Despite having made no improvements to their properties, the property owners reported that their property taxes had more than doubled between 2008 and 2009. A bakery owner’s property taxes, for example, jumped from \$1.2 million in 2008 to \$2.1 million in 2009.

Councilmember Thomas also introduced a friendly amendment to expand coverage of the “Small Business Streetscape Construction Real Property Tax Deferral Emergency Act of 2009” to include 12<sup>th</sup> Street, NE, which also underwent streetscape construction during the past six months. The original bill, introduced by Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells, permits small commercial businesses located within Ward 6’s active streetscape construction corridors to defer without penalty of their first-half 2009 property taxes until September 1, 2009. “Oftentimes our businesses suffer financially during the construction of streetscape improvements,” said Councilmember Thomas. “Enabling small business owners impacted by streetscape construction to defer their property taxes without paying a penalty is a win-win for everyone, especially during harsh economic times.”

###