



The Thomas Connection

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Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

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THOMAS TO CHAIR COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. is the new chair of the Council's Committee on Economic Development. Chairman Kwame Brown announced the assignment on December 22, 2010, and it became official after a full Council vote at the January 3, 2011 organizational meeting.

"It is an honor to be selected to chair a committee that has such tremendous impact on the economic engine of this city and the direction of its growth, especially when the selection comes from the committee's outgoing chair," said Councilmember Thomas. The Committee on Economic Development is responsible for matters related to economic, industrial, and commercial development policy; the disposition of property for economic development purposes; tourism and cultural affairs; international business affairs; and local business development policy and programs. During Chairman Brown's tenure on the Council serving at-large, he chaired the committee.

Currently, six District government agencies fall under the purview of the Committee on Economic Development. They are the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, the Department of Small and Local Business Development, the DC Boxing and Wrestling Commission, Destination DC, the Commission of Arts and Humanities, and the Office of Motion Picture and Television Development.

As chair of the Committee on Economic Development, Councilmember Thomas will focus on strengthening small, local businesses and promoting their participation in the District's large economic development projects. He will also concentrate on bringing more and diverse retail to the city, building on what he has accomplished in this area for Ward 5. And most importantly, Thomas will work to connect District residents to the employment opportunities that the city's large economic development projects will create.

COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS' COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS FOR COUNCIL PERIOD 19

Chairmanships

- Committee on Economic Development
- Special Committee on Investigation of Capital Projects of the Department of Parks and Recreation

Memberships

- Committee on Government Operations and the Environment
- Committee on Housing and Workforce Development
- Committee on Libraries, Parks, and Recreation
- Committee on Public Works and Transportation

"BAN THE BOX" BILL PASSES

On December 21, 2010, the Council passed the Returning Citizen Public Employment Inclusion Act of 2010. Introduced by Councilmember Thomas on June 1, 2010, the "Ban the Box" bill prohibits the District government from inquiring about the criminal history of any public employment applicant unless the applicant has been chosen for an interview. District government positions with statutorily required background checks are excluded from the legislation. "More than 2,000 men and women return to the District from correctional facilities each year," said Councilmember Thomas. "This legislation strengthens their opportunities to find employment."



Councilmember Thomas introduced the "Ban the Box" bill, which passed on December 21, 2010.

PLANS FOR NEW DUNBAR FACILITY ON TRACK

Plans for the construction of a new facility for Dunbar Senior High School are on track. On December 14, 2010, Ward 5 Councilmember Harry Thomas, Jr. participated in the announcement that District-based Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects-Engineers (EEK) and Moody-Nolan Architects had won a year-long design competition for the new Dunbar. Also present at the announcement were, and their positions at the time, Mayor Adrian Fenty, Mayor-elect Vincent Gray, OPEFM Executive Director Allen Lew, other political leaders, alumni, students and community members.

EEK has considerable expertise in urban school design and has been considered a leader in the field since 1960 when its school construction processes were adopted as the national standard. EEK's school design portfolio includes the District's School Without Walls Senior High School, Brightwood Elementary School, and Stoddert Elementary School.

Founded in 1982, Moody-Nolan is the largest African American-owned architectural practice in the United States and specializes in higher education, sports/recreation, student-focused, healthcare, and public service facilities. The firm has done work in more than 40 states.

Both EEK and Moody-Nolan have received numerous architectural design awards. EEK has garnered several awards for their work on DC school



Thomas participated in the December 14, 2010 announcement of the winners of the design competition for the new Dunbar Senior High School.



The new Dunbar design connects the school to the surrounding neighborhood.

modernization projects. Moody-Nolan has been awarded more than 155 design citations, including the Gold Medal Firm of the Year Award from AIA and the inaugural 2000-2001 NOMA Firm of the Year Award.

Dunbar, whose notable graduates include the famous musician Duke Ellington, Congressional Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Mayor Vincent Gray, is an important component of the city's history. The original school, built on the site in 1917, was the first municipally-funded public high school for African-American students. The new Dunbar, which will replace the current fortress-style structure, will honor the school's historic past and offer first-class academic amenities.

"The current Dunbar facility is not conducive to learning, and I am appreciative that we are moving forward with replacing it," said Thomas. "EEK and Moody-Nolan have created an innovative design that will provide a nurturing environment for our students and improve the linkage between the Dunbar campus and the surrounding neighborhood. I look forward to the groundbreaking!"

THOMAS' WARD 5 HOLIDAY EVENTS DRAW HUNDREDS

Following traditions he established since first sworn into office, Councilmember Thomas hosted a Ward 5 Holiday Open House on December 15, 2010, and a Breakfast With Santa on December 18, 2010.

The Ward 5 Holiday Open House was held on the main level of the historic Wilson Building and included a range of entertainment, food, and music. Councilmember Thomas arranged transportation so that more than 150 seniors were able to participate in the festivities, along with other residents from across Ward 5. Breakfast With Santa was held at the Turkey Thicket Recreation Center and provided toys and books to more than 300 Ward 5 children, as well as a catered, hot breakfast for the kids and their parents. Other activities included face painting and magical tricks.

"It is a pleasure to bring the residents of the Ward together to celebrate at this time of year," said Councilmember Thomas. "Nothing is more satisfying than spreading joy during the holiday season."

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