

**Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Government Operations
Hearing at 49 L Street SE GSA Warehouse Building
Washington, DC**

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April 25, 2013

Chairman Mica, Ranking Member Connolly, and Members of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, my name is Ed Kaminski. I serve as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in the 6D02 neighborhood. I represent residents living in the Southwest/Near Southeast communities of Washington, D.C. on issues including public safety, economic development, infrastructure improvements, and more. I also serve as President of the Velocity Condominium Association (across L street) and I am on the Board of the Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District. Today, I would like to discuss this building, 49 L street SE, and a community-led initiative that has gained great support among the residents I represent.

The 49 L Street site is served by the expanded Navy Yard/Ballpark Metro station, several bus lines, bikeshare infrastructure, and in the future will be served by a planned streetcar line. Half Street borders 49 L Street to the West and leads to Nationals Ballpark; the Half Street area is planned as an emerging pedestrian-oriented retail and cultural corridor. 49 L Street is a highly accessible location to public transit and a growing community.

Move 49 L Street SE to Excess Federal Real Estate

The Southwest and Capitol Riverfront communities of Washington, DC are strongly interested in redeveloping the 49 L Street warehouse into an innovative educational-commercial partnership creating a new institute for food business education. The *Federal Property and Administrative Services Act* of 1949 as amended, provides the Secretary of Education with the authority through the GSA to sell surplus federal real property to eligible applicants for educational purposes. I urge the GSA to nominate 49 L Street SE to the GSA Record of Excess and make the property available to the city of Washington, D.C. Multiple community nonprofit organizations will respond to this GSA action and make exciting proposals to the US Department of Education.

In a recent Internet survey I hosted for feedback, over 80% of the 400 community participants recognized public culinary education as an economic opportunity for new business formation, a means to promote better food choices, a catalyst for neighborhood development and an urban link to local rural economies.

Campus Vision

As an educational amenity, 49 L Street can serve as an urban work-study campus dedicated to healthy food education and sustainable development. Educational partners can offer employee training and professional degree programs. Established restaurants and food institutions will find the next generation of managers and workers in these programs. This fusion of public educational services with private entrepreneurial business formation is a key to the larger public benefit to our community.

Educational and Building Development Concepts for 49 L Street SE

The public benefit to the community would be implemented at street level as an educational site. The building would offer adaptive spaces and resources providing students with shared cooking areas including kitchens, refrigeration and storage spaces. A large hall with flexible open space can be configured to hold community and/or educational food events.

Students would invite the community into 49 L Street kitchens and dining areas for cooking demonstrations, food concept feedback, community dinners and food purchases. The prepared foods would provide residents and visitors with creative food options in the Half Street retail area. Community gardens could partner to provide and support locally grown, sustainable, organic foods. This work-study concept could offer ways for small business employees and entrepreneurs to test business concepts without the many fixed costs and risks in the commercial retail market.

Community groups have explored concepts with developers to improve the building and exploit air rights in exchange for a non-profit managed street level space. One compatible upper level use could be a boutique hotel as an anchor tenant serving the ballpark area and complementing the educational programs with hospitality employment. With a generous discounted transfer from the GSA to the District, the property could be held in a district agency. That agency would put out a competitive RFP and manage development. The arrangement would be at zero development costs to the District and would offer a residual tax base on the upper commercial space.

Comprehensive Student Education Services

At the ground level, an educational anchor tenant would bring the science of food and an understanding of diet and nutrition to the art and business of cooking. Branded demonstrations could be captured, digitally stored and available as food preparation and demonstration content. Available to students, area lease and stall rental agreements will resource experiments with small-scale cooking, operations and customer interface experience. This will provide students

with concrete vocational skills, trade and operational experience plus cooking food, preparing food and selling food to market scale.

With the knowledge of how a food business must function, students will be armed with food market literacy. Some **student graduates** will work in restaurants, delicatessens, hospitals and other institutions. Others will start new businesses and expand the ambitions and opportunities for others.

The Time is now for Washington DC

Our many Washington, D.C. based embassy workers; international students and knowledge workers have generated very sophisticated food and related hospitality markets. Many famous top-name chefs and an impressive array of restaurants have established businesses in Washington, D.C. The 49 L street development could harness the aspirations of our community and serve as an engine for food business formation. Steps to move forward:

- Designate 49 L Street to the GSA Report of Excess.
- Invite public benefit proposals with a focus on education.
- Transfer to the city with a generous public benefit discount including commercial air rights development.
- Structure the contract with no bridge costs to the city
- Commercial value flows to GSA, conveyance allowance flows to an educational amenity and residual commercial taxes flow to the city

There is no existing Washington DC public or private institution modeled on this concept of education and food business formation. Other cities have taken this path. Projects of note in the regional area include the Baltimore Food Hub supported by the American Communities Trust and Cross Street Partners, Philadelphia Food Enterprise Center and the New York City Food Incubator.

Mr. Chairman, Committee members and other panel members thank you for your time and consideration regarding the future and potential of this important site in our community.