

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Sustainability projects win seed funding

By **KATIE PEARCE**
Current Staff Writer

Seven cutting-edge sustainability projects, including urban agriculture programs at the University of the District of Columbia and an outdoor classroom at Hardy Middle School, are splitting \$2.35 million through a city-run grant competition.

The "Sustainable DC Innovation Challenge" is an internal competition among D.C. government agencies, doling out funds to test forward-thinking environmental initiatives on city property. Twelve such projects were funded last year, and they're now in various phases of implementation, according to Brendan Shane, chief of policy and sustainability for the D.C. Department of the Environment.

Mayor Vincent Gray recently announced the 2014 winners, which will increase access to healthy locally grown foods, reduce stormwater runoff, and promote educational and job-skills programs, among other goals.

This year the University of the District of Columbia won more than
See **Grants**/Page 16

EAGLES FLY HIGH



Brian Kapur/The Current

Gonzaga College High School knocked off Calvert Hall 3-1 Friday to retain its conference title. See story, page 11.

Council panel reviews recent EMS problems

■ **Public safety:** Testimony focuses on two January deaths

By **KATIE PEARCE**
Current Staff Writer

As controversy and finger-pointing continues over the recent death of Medric Cecil Mills Jr., a D.C. Council hearing this week scrutinized the protocols and culture of the District's emergency response system.

The oversight comes at a fraught time for the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, with the future of Fire Chief

Kenneth Ellerbe emerging as a key issue for the mayoral election — and while an investigation looks into another death last month.

A day after chairing the oversight hearing, Ward 6 Council member and mayoral candidate Tommy Wells called for the resignation of both Ellerbe and Paul Quander, the deputy mayor for public safety.

In a letter to Mayor Vincent Gray, Wells said he was "stunned to learn" from Monday's hearing that no plans exist to address "systemic mismanagement" in the District's emergency response system.

The public safety hearing exam-
See **EMS**/Page 7

District eyes reconfiguring streets near Tenley Metro

■ **Transportation:** Designs target safety, aesthetic issues

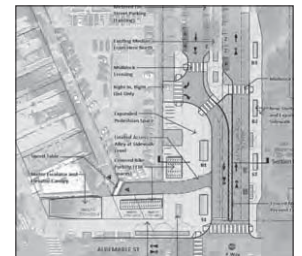
By **KAT LUCERO**
Current Staff Writer

Surrounded by retail, restaurants and bus stops, the area around the Tenleytown-American University Metro station is bustling during rush hour. But local officials believe the tired streetscape and complicated bus patterns near the eastern station entrance need some work.

A new project is looking at ways to improve the design and aesthetics around 40th Street and Fort Drive, between the Whole Foods Market and the Wilson Aquatic Center.

"There's too much asphalt ... and the bus transfer facilities are inadequate," said Steve Strauss of the D.C. Department of Transportation. "The goal is to improve the bus transfer facilities for the customers. Also, to improve the environment of the area."

Strauss — a Ward 3 resident who frequents this location to shop at Whole Foods and swim at the Wilson Aquatic Center — reached out to the Washington Metropolitan



Courtesy of AECOM

"Concept B" includes bike lanes, bus shelters and other features.

Area Transit Authority to come up with redevelopment schemes. If the project moves forward, both Metro and the city Transportation Department are expected to foot the bill, he said.

Planners unveiled early concepts last Thursday to the Tenleytown/Friendship Heights advisory neighborhood commission, presenting three options that vary in design, cost and duration of construction.

The project focuses primarily on the parallel one-block roadways of 40th Street and Fort Drive between Albemarle and Brandwine streets.
See **Tenley**/Page 16

Council hopeful Settles seeks jobs trust fund

By **GRAHAM VYSE**
Current Staff Writer

When John Settles explains his vision for job creation in D.C., he ends up talking quite a bit about laundry.

That's because helping to create a commercial laundry facility in the District is one of several goals the at-large D.C. Council candidate has for the "Jobs Trust Fund" he's pitching to reduce unemployment in the city's poorest wards.

Settles, a candidate in the Democratic primary on April 1, envisions this new fund as an independent entity providing financial support for remedial education programs, job training and direct investment in



Courtesy of Settles Campaign
Democrat John Settles is running for an at-large D.C. Council seat.

start-up businesses that hire D.C. residents — especially from wards 5, 6, 7 and 8. He thinks a laundry start-up could be a strong early prior-

ity due to high demand from hospitals and restaurants for cleaning services. But he also wants to invest in solar panel providers, fresh produce merchants and a company that recycles ink and toner cartridges.

"By establishing businesses that employ our residents who need jobs to provide goods and services to local consumers and businesses, we are not only helping families and individuals achieve self-sufficiency, we are also laying out a plan for the future economic success of the entire District," Settles said in a Feb. 18 news release.

The candidate also said his fund would indirectly address homelessness, housing affordability and pub-
See **Settles**/Page 5

NEWS

School system will offer grants to help student satisfaction

— Page 2

SPORTS

Senior trio leaves championship legacy at Maret

— Page 11



NEWS

Mayoral candidates square off at forum in Dupont Circle

— Page 3

INDEX

Calendar/18	Police Report/6
Classifieds/29	Real Estate/15
District Digest/4	School Dispatches/13
Exhibits/19	Service Directory/26
In Your Neighborhood/10	Sports/11
Opinion/8	Theater/21

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NORTHWEST REAL ESTATE

GRANTS: Funding supports sustainable initiatives

From Page 1

\$900,000 for three separate but related programs that “move from the beginning to the end of the urban agriculture process, and help develop skills and training for people along the way,” said Shane.

One of the programs will create neighborhood-scale “aquaponics” systems, which allow for the combination of raising fish and growing plants. When paired with a small greenhouse, each facility is expected to create 500 pounds of fish and 5,000 pounds of produce annually, according to a news release from the city. Dwane Jones, director of the school’s Center for Sustainable Development, said the effort will likely raise tilapia and grow edible native plants.

In this type of ecosystem, fish provide nutrients to fertilize the plants, while the plants filter water from the fish waste. The process requires no pesticides, antibiotics or hormones.

While aquaponics itself is not new, implementing it on a community scale is — and that’s where an invention of University of the District of Columbia science professor Thomas Kakovitch comes in. Kakovitch patented the “Flo-Vex,” an aeration device that injects oxygen into water without high pressure, heat or moving parts. The first urban aquaponics project testing Kakovitch’s device was installed last year in Southeast D.C., at the ReGeneration House of Praise Church.

The new grant will go toward building at least three more aqua-

ponics demonstration projects in wards 3, 5 and 7, ideally on University of the District of Columbia campuses — including the main one in Van Ness. In addition to helping communities grow their own food, the facilities are also meant to serve as a base for job training for under-skilled D.C. residents.

The aquaponics initiative received \$519,000 through this year’s innovation challenge.

The university also won \$280,000 to launch a “business-incubator kitchen” in Ward 8, to promote education on food and nutrition as well as job training. The program will include a traveling food truck serving healthy fare across the city. Both the kitchen and truck might be combined with the aquaponics systems, Shane said.

Another \$121,500 will go toward a project to build a native plant nursery in Ward 5. All of the above initiatives are connected to the university’s College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environment Sciences, known as “CAUSES.”

At Hardy Middle School and the Fillmore Arts Center in upper Georgetown, the grant program gives \$330,000 toward building an 11,100-square-foot outdoor classroom to offer “hands-on examples of renewable energy, stormwater management, native-species planting, nutrition and urban agriculture,” according to the mayor’s office.

Built from sustainable materials, the facility should offer a replicable model “that can be integrated into school design citywide,” Shane said, and also help advance the city’s

environmental literacy curriculum. Although informal community gardens and other sustainable spaces already exist at various schools across the District, he said the Hardy site will be the largest and most formal effort to date.

Rounding out the grants this year are:

- \$200,000 to rebuild two neglected D.C. Department of Recreation greenhouses, including the one at Twin Oaks Community Garden at 14th and Taylor streets NW in Ward 4. Nonprofits will get involved to help provide community growing spaces and training opportunities, particularly for youth, according to the mayor’s office.

- \$492,000 toward a “splash park” in Ward 7 that will reuse rainwater for the water feature as well as for irrigation of nearby playing fields.

- \$400,000 for features like rain gardens to reduce stormwater runoff in Oxon Run Park in Ward 8. Currently, polluted runoff flows untreated into the Oxon Run stream.

The grant program is part of the broader “Sustainable DC” initiative, a 20-year action plan to make D.C. “the greenest, healthiest, and most livable city in the nation.” Last year’s inaugural challenge awarded \$4.35 million, including \$600,000 for a feasibility study on green or solar roofs for government buildings.

Shane said D.C. Council decisions led to a tighter budget for this year’s program. From here, each agency must move forward with contracts, construction and implementation, usually pitching in additional money.

TENLEY: Three options floated

From Page 1

During peak hours, a total of 34 transit services pass through these adjacent one-way streets (Fort Drive heading northbound and 40th heading south). These include public buses as well as shuttles operated by American University and Sibley Memorial Hospital.

The adjacent areas now accommodate 60 spaces for bikes and 73 on-street parking spaces, according to planners at AECOM and Toole Design, working with Metro.

“This is a very challenging area,” R.J. Eldridge, director of Toole Design, said at Thursday’s meeting.

The team’s study found a need for improvements in pedestrian safety, public space, bus layovers and walkways. The intersections also require some updates, particularly on Albemarle Street.

“We felt we could re-program [the area] to make it more appealing,” said Tim Brulle of AECOM. Improvements are also needed to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, he noted.

“Concept A” would be an estimated \$2.4 million project with short-term, low-disturbance construction. It would add bike lanes and 44 more bike parking spaces, while reducing street parking by five spots. The Albemarle Street sidewalk would also be maximized and made compliant to the American With Disabilities Act.

The second option is a longer-term plan with medium disturbance, estimated at \$4.6 million. It would incorporate many features of Concept A but also bring in others, like mid-block crossings, bus shelters

and layovers, and landscaping.

Under this alternative, bike parking spaces would almost double to 116, while on-street parking spots would decrease by a third. Some automobile parking would also be reserved for disabled drivers and car-sharing vehicles.

At \$7.6 million, the third scheme would come with the longest construction duration and the most disturbance. “It’s a complete redesign of the block,” said Emily Leckvarcik of Toole Design.

The proposal would reconfigure the northeast curb at Brandywine Street and Wisconsin Avenue in order to reroute the buses that currently use Fort Drive. Under this plan, Fort Drive would only accommodate cars; the buses would access 40th Street via Wisconsin Avenue and Brandywine Street, which would become one-way eastbound.

In this option, “all the buses are headed southbound [on 40th Street] so it reduces the amount of crossing by pedestrians,” said Leckvarcik.

This more aggressive plan would also add more landscaping and crosswalks than the two other drafts, while the number of car-parking spaces would decrease by 24 spots. Bike parking would rise by 48 spaces.

Neighborhood commission chair Matt Frumin described the complex list of owners affected by this project “incredible,” including Metro, city agencies and private owners.

The next steps in the process will be more meetings with neighborhood groups.

“This is the first step of a multi-phase project,” said Brulle. “We want to hear back from you.”