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The Washington, D.C. Waterfront: A Revitalization

Arena Stage has called D.C.'s Southwest waterfront home for more than 40 years. In many ways a microcosm for the region, Southwest's population is diverse in every sense of the word. In the past, however, non-residents have had few reasons to visit Southwest D.C., with Arena Stage serving as one of its few attractions.

In 1999, despite the allure of a downtown location, Arena Stage's Board of Trustees elected to remain at its Southwest D.C. site, believing that it could play an integral role in the revitalization of Washington's "forgotten quadrant."

The city's Anacostia Waterfront Initiative aims to make the Southwest D.C. Waterfront a leading Washington attraction, joining other D.C. tourist attractions and must-see places. Arena Stage is uniquely positioned to help bring this vision to life. Poised to be the first major redevelopment in this dynamic area, which will include a new ballpark for D.C.'s Major League Baseball team, the Nationals, the new complex will serve as a magnet for other arts, entertainment and retail endeavors.

The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative

Washington's Southwest Waterfront is currently the city's number one economic development priority. City planners strive to make it an economic and cultural center similar to other major waterfront attractions, such as Baltimore's Inner Harbor, yet also uniquely D.C. in nature. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the District's outline for this redevelopment, "envisions a new, energized waterfront for this millennium, one that will unify the diverse waterfront areas into a cohesive and attractive mixture of commercial, residential, recreational and open-space uses. The Initiative will coordinate waterfront development and conservation, develop enhanced park areas, and provide greater access to the waterfront from neighborhoods on both sides of the river, as well as from the Mall, Capitol Hill and Downtown," according to the program's official Web site, www.AnacostiaWaterfront.net.

This plan encompasses a nearly nine-mile area that could potentially serve as a major economic draw for the city. Revitalization results from other cities show that a dynamic waterfront community can draw in local, national and international visitors and thus greatly enhance the city's

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economy and national prominence. For example, neighboring Baltimore's Inner Harbor helped attract 12 million visitors to the city in 2005, a seven-year high and the result of the \$2.9 billion the city spent on revitalizing its waterfront.

Arena Stage's Leadership

Arena's expansion will bring tangible benefits to area residents. Not only will it feature an expansion of its current theater offerings for patrons, it will also be able to provide enhanced educational programs and community outreach activities. Classroom and meeting spaces will enable artists and staff to work directly with the community through workshops, lectures, tours, demonstrations, discussions and classes. In addition, with a variety of conference and public spaces, Arena will be able to offer meeting spaces for community groups as well as gathering spaces for visitors to the newly renovated waterfront.

Arena Stage, which focuses on supporting and promoting the canon of American theater, currently serves as a leading member of Washington's arts community—an industry that directly contributes more than \$1.24 billion to the city each year and supports more than 26,000 full-time jobs.

In its new facility, Arena will be a significant employer of a large and diverse workforce, including administrators, technicians, artists, craftspeople and service providers throughout the D.C. Metropolitan region. Additionally, Arena Stage's growing audience will supply a built-in visitor demographic for the Anacostia Waterfront that will help support the new retail and service outlets in the redeveloped area surrounding the theater.

With deep roots in the community, Arena Stage will make the waterfront neighborhood and the Southwest community a more desirable place not only to visit, but also to live. Perhaps most importantly, Arena Stage will continue to attract workers, tourists and residents to the area by making a major contribution to the region's high quality of life.

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