

A HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION ON FASHION ARTS AND EVENTS

In 2006, Mariessa Terrell and Christine Brooks Cropper (Founders) began to work collaboratively to create a government entity to support the growth of a Washington, DC fashion economy.

From 2006 to 2008, the Founders galvanized support for an initiative to create a Commission on Fashion Arts and Events by meeting with DC political leaders, retailers, designers and fashion students. The Fashion Commission legislation was signed into law in April 2008.

2006

The Founders discussed the initiative with many leaders in the DC economic development community including Council Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, Kwame Brown; Council Member Carol Schwartz; Council Member Marion Barry; Council Member Jim Graham; Council Member Harry Thomas, Jr., Council Member Vincent Orange; Michelle Molotsky, Chief of staff for Council Member Jack Evans; Therman Baker National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC); Sandra Fowler, National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC); John Hill Federal City Council; Bill Hanbury, DC Convention and Tourism Corporation (WCTC); David Wilmot, Partner, Harmon Wilmott Brown and Bagwell LLP; Daniel Florez, Ibero, American Chamber of Commerce; Gerry Widdicombe, Downtown DC Bid; Kristen Wright, The Art Institute of DC; Rae Sinanan, Cultural Tourism DC; Lionel Thomas, Arts and Humanities Commission; Juanita Crabb, Georgetown Bid; Clark Ray, DC Sports and Entertainment Commission; Melissa Turner, the Director of the Office of Fashion Arts and Events in Chicago; and many others.

After researching best practices for the creation of similar entities in Chicago, Detroit and Toronto; and co-hosting focus groups and roundtable discussions to gauge support for the legislation throughout Washington, DC, the Founders drafted a business plan for the creation of a Washington DC Fashion Council (WDC Fashion Council). This proposal was submitted to the DC Office of Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP).

The Proposal detailed the development of a fashion entity in four phases: creating a fashion experience (citywide fashion event); establishing DC as a fashion destination, creating innovative fashion programming for school aged children; and developing a retail corridor. The intent was to create a WDC Fashion Council to spur economic development in the District's retail sector. The WDC Fashion Council would be structured similarly to the Fashion Advisory Council created by Mayor Daley in Chicago in 2005.

Dec. 12, 2006

In an effort to introduce the WDC Fashion Council concept to Mayor Elect Adrian Fenty, the Founders joined the Fenty Economic Transition Team. In this capacity, the Founders succeeded in meeting with Deputy Mayor Designee Neil Albert and key members of Mayor Fenty's administration.

2007

February 17, 2007

A few months later, the Founders formally requested that the Mayor issue an Executive Order to establish a DC Office on Fashion. Mayor Fenty declined to create such an office at that time.

March 2007

In an effort to demonstrate the need for the WDC Fashion Council, the Founders partnered with the High Tea Society, a 501c3 mentoring program for girls. At the time, Mariessa served as Executive Director of the High Tea Society and regularly hosted the Capital Catwalk, an annual citywide fashion show held every June. The Founders worked together to expand the June 2007 Capital Catwalk event in an effort to demonstrate the positive impact that a national fashion event could have on the District.

A March 7, 2007 letter was circulated by Harry Thomas, Jr. requesting support from Council Members for a Capital Catwalk citywide Fashion Event. The following members signed the letter pledging their support: Vincent Gray, Marian Barry, Harry Thomas, Jr., Kwame Brown, David Cantania, Jim Graham, Carol Schwartz, Jack Evans and Tommy Wells. The Council also issued a Resolution – The High Tea Society Capital Catwalk Recognition Resolution of 2007.

To fund the WDC Fashion Council initiative, the Founders applied to the Neighborhood Investment Fund (NIF) Target Area Project Grant – a \$250,000 grant for the creation of a fashion incubator. The grant proposal detailed the steps needed to create a Fashion Incubator in Washington, DC. The grant was not funded.

April 2007

Mariessa Terrell drafted legislation to create a Commission on Fashion Arts and Events and presented the legislation to the Economic Development Legislative Committee. The draft became the basis for the legislation introduced in the Council.

On April 6, 2007, Councilmembers Kwame Brown, Harry Thomas, Jr. and Marian Barry introduced the legislation (Bill 17-173) before the City Council. The Bill was co-sponsored by Council Chair Vincent Gray and Council Members Tommy Wells and Carol Schwartz.

June 2007

On June 15, 2007, a Public Hearing was held on Bill 17-173 *Commission on Fashion Arts and Events Establishment Act of 2007*. The hearing was held at 10:00 am in the Council Chamber. The Founders along with over 20 members of the DC Fashion community testified before the DC City Council Committee on Economic Development in support of the legislation.

On June 22, 2007, as part of the HTS Capital Catwalk Event, a round table discussion was held at Washington Gas Rotunda. The symposium featured a panel of DC fashion leaders including Louis Everard, owner of the Everard Boutique located in Georgetown; Toddre Monier, owner Wild Women Wear Red shoe boutique located on U St. Northwest; Ward 5 Council Member Harry Thomas; Lisa Amans, Director of the Advertising in Fashion Retail Merchandising Department at the Art Institute of Washington; and Phyllis Love, Program Manager of the Restore DC programs.

On June 23, 2007, the HTS Capital Catwalk Event was held at the Andrew Mellon Auditorium. It included a fashion reception, fashion award ceremony, fashion runway presentation and gala.

June 2007-August 2007

Since 2004, The High Tea Society regularly hosted the *Charming By Design* Fashion Camp at Second Baptist Church of Washington (816 Third Street, NW) where Rev. Dr. James E. Terrell served as Pastor. The camp, a Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) site was created by Mariessa Terrell in 2004 to teach sewing, modeling, makeup and nail skills to 50 Washington, DC Middle and High School students. In June 2007, the Founders worked to expand the Charming By Design fashion camp to serve 100 students in an effort to demonstrate the importance of incorporating fashion and beauty technical skills into the DC economic landscape.

September 24, 2007

The Founders led by Christine Brooks Cropper hosted a Rally for Fashion Freedom at Freedom Plaza (in front of the DC City Council building) from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm in support of the Bill to establish a Commission on Fashion Arts and Events.

November 26, 2007

The Bill – *Commission on Fashion Arts and Events Establishment Act of 2007* to establish a Commission on Fashion Arts (Bill 17-0173) was forwarded to the Committee on Economic Development for markup. The second reading was scheduled for February 5, 2008.

December 18, 2007

The Bill was listed on the agenda of the Council Committee Meeting of the Whole for consideration under the Committee on Economic Development led by Chairperson Kwame Brown.

January 8, 2008

The 19th Legislative Meeting Final Reading and Final Vote on Bill 17-173 (COMMISSION ON FASHION ARTS AND EVENTS ESTABLISHMENT ACT OF 2007) was held on January 8, 2008. The Final Reading was conducted by the Committee on Economic Development Chairperson Kwame Brown.

February 5, 2008

The 20th Legislative Meeting: Final Reading and Final Vote on Proposed Bill 17-173 with amendments (COMMISSION ON FASHION ARTS AND EVENTS ESTABLISHMENT ACT OF 2007) was held on February 5, 2008. The Final Reading and Final Vote was conducted by the Committee on Economic Development, Chairperson Kwame Brown.

April 15, 2008

The Fashion Commission legislation was signed into law on April 15, 2008 (**Law No L-17-0248) THE COMMISSION ON FASHION ARTS AND EVENTS ESTABLISHMENT ACT OF 2007**

MAYORAL APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSONS

Christine Brooks Cropper

Kristopher Johnson Hoyle, 2017-19
Lanaysha “L.” Jackson, 2019-23