

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Zoning Commission:

My name is Todd Crosby and I currently live in Dakar Senegal, but I own a house at 20 W street, about 3 blocks south of the McMillan sand filtration site. I fully intend to return to that house and raise my children in Bloomingdale. I was present during the last session, but unfortunately I have had to return to Senegal. Therefore, I am having a fellow MAG member read my testimony on my behalf.

Even though I live in Africa, I remain keenly interested in McMillan's development and active on the McMillan Advisory Group's Park Committee.

While we respect the various positions presented by our neighbors and friends, it has been our role at the MAG to chart a "third path"-- a sort of compromise between the primary opposing viewpoints, by taking VMP's present design and making proposals that would make it more useful for the community and a more special place in general. We have done this through the mechanism of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). Our CBA proposal was put forward by the MAG and ratified by the Bloomingdale Civic Association and finally taken up by the ANC5E last week with some key points being integrated into VMP's latest CBA proposal, I am glad to say.

However, key issues remain unaddressed and I will call your attention to 4 key changes that we at the MAG park committee feel would greatly enhance the park's recreational utility, it's historical significance, and the overall quality of the McMillan park design.

The first proposed change is to move the traffic lanes out of the south service court. Presently, the key historic elements retained in the current park design, the silos and the regulator houses are placed in the traffic median, limiting the access that park visitors will have to these historic elements and reducing their usefulness. We strongly suggest that that the traffic lanes on the south service court be removed completely and that space be incorporated into the park. Once moved, the space between the silos/regulator houses can eventually be used for farmers markets, art installations, and the historic structures can be repurposed as fountains or as open air cafés anchored in the regulator houses. VMP insisted that there needs to be an access road to the community center. However, this can be accomplished by using hydraulic bollards at the entrance to limit access uniquely to service vehicles or special needs vehicles that truly need access to the park or community center. VMP has now agreed in principle in the latest CBA, but the language remains vague and the proposal is to accomplish this over 10 years. We feel that this space must be explicitly reserved for pedestrian use from the outset. ***At a minimum, we want the zoning commission to ensure that the space between the primary historical elements of the south service court and the park is set aside as a pedestrian thoroughway and not regularly open to everyday traffic.***

The second change put forward by the MAG park committee is to expose more of the park's underground archeological elements and to feature them in space modeled on the Paddington Reservoir Park in downtown Sydney, Australia. VMP claims that Paddington was a major inspiration for their current design, but the VMP design is so dissimilar as to bear virtually no resemblance at all to Paddington. Paddington is characterized by intimate spaces and exposed archeological elements surrounded by hanging gardens; McMillan is characterized by wide open spaces with no visible archeological backbone and no hanging gardens. As you know, DC WASA has razed the holding cells in the southwest corner of the park and the city presently plans to spend significant sums of money to rebuild the plinth in order to ensure the continuity of VMP's current design. And yet the present design --basically a 5 acre field--- has limited utility for the community. Instead of spending so much to rebuild an open field, using the city's money creatively to develop a portion of the southwest corner into a Paddington reservoir type space will create a diversity of space, will allow visitors to fully appreciate the function and magnitude of McMillan's underground infrastructure (all of which is being lost in this current design) and will further activate the site's substantial underground archeological heritage to create a truly unique sense of place. ***We have an extraordinary opportunity to redeploy city funds to create something truly special like Paddington Reservoir Park on this site.*** HPRB needs to reconsider this proposal because it clearly advances their primary aims to more fully utilize the historic patrimony of the site.

A third change, would be to integrate larger, broader shade trees and more of them throughout the park's interior. In the present design, the primary shade trees are limited to the outer periphery of the park and most of the interior space is characterized by open fields. Even when fully mature, the Red Hawthorn trees being deployed along the Olmstead walk will not provide extensive shade for park visitors and, thus, the majority of the site will remain open to the full sun. As we all know, DC in the summertime is hot, sunny and humid and limiting the shade space in this park ultimately means limiting its utility during the summer months. ***Green space must be shaded in order to be useful for visitors; additional stands of trees to provide broad shade over the park's INTERIOR green space need to be integrated into the current design to make this***

park a pleasant respite in future summers.

The fourth and final issue we on MAG park committee want to underline is that that careful attention needs be given to ensure that this park remains publically controlled in the future and that this is explicitly laid out in clear legal terms. It is, after all, public land-- purchased and maintained over many decades with taxpayer money. McMillan park needs to be held and operated by the citizens of Washington DC and not by private interests that could restrict access or modify its use in the future. ***To fail in this regard is to do a major disservice to the future generations of Washingtonians who will come after us.***

By making these 4 essential changes to the current VMP proposal, McMillan park will become more useful to the community, the site's historical significance will be activated and accessible, and McMillan Park's unique sense of place will be enhanced so that it will become a major destination for people across the city.

Thank you for ensuring that this is an extraordinary park that we are developing for Washington DC.

Submitted on 5/27/2014 by:
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