

Zoning Case 13-14

Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission -

VMP is appearing before you, presenting their PUD application, which was not fully vetted by the communities it will directly impact. No one in the community ever heard that there might not be a full service grocery store. No one, or at least very few, ever heard that the streets would be private. No one ever heard how little would be done to mitigate traffic concerns - we only heard promises to advocate for improved public transportation which they are not promising to you, mitigation our ANC is only hoping will be achieved. No one ever heard that there would be over 3,000 parking spaces on the site. And very few have had a voice in forming the ANC's plan for a Community Benefits Agreement.

Despite the information presented in various meetings, the PUD application, only available to the community via internet, exacerbated many of my concerns, and leads one to question, that after all this time, why the plan still leaves so many questions unanswered.

Please give serious consideration to the following list of just some of my concerns:

Traffic

The proposed plan will turn First Street, NW, into a parking lot of honking horns and aggressive drivers. First Street, together with the small connecting side streets, is home to turn of the century Victorian row homes, was home to Samuel Gompers, was home to the Hurd v Hodge Supreme Court ruling overturning racial covenants, was home to the first African-American owned art gallery in the United States which was visited by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, was home to government employees, Howard University faculty, and to people lured by the access to open space, cleaner air and city views.

There will be a huge increase in vehicle trips per day to a site with more than 3,000 parking spaces. (Even one of their own exhibits does not indicate the number will be over 3,000 spaces and Adam Weers testified that the 1900 parking spaces for the Healthcare building are not enough.) In every appearance before the HPRB, VMP was requested to redesign the "healing garden"/"transit hub." The Board did not want the transit hub on Michigan Avenue. VMP's insistence on maintaining this hub on Michigan is illustrative of the emphasis this development places on private vehicle based transit.

Medical buildings probably generate more traffic than the average office building, and the site is not on a typical street grid. It is surrounded by the Reservoir, Howard University, the

Soldiers' Home, cemeteries, with only two streets - Michigan and North Capitol, to access the site. First Street, which is a residential street, is already clogged with commuter traffic and additional traffic in the future, with basically no remediation items in the plan, will adversely affect the quality of life in Bloomingdale and Stronghold. The NCRC solicitation for McMillan (Exhibit #73) cites a 2005 report that ranks the level of service at the North Capitol and Michigan Avenue intersection as POOR during peak AM and PM hours. Please do not burden Bloomingdale with the congestion, the pollution, the angry, frustrated drivers endangering our neighbors as they try to enjoy a safe community while walking to friends' homes and businesses.

Grocery store

Almost everyone who supports the VMP project envisions a full service grocery store within walking distance. VMP has asked the Commission for flexibility to **not** include a grocery store because they haven't found a tenant yet.

At one community meeting, VMP was giddy with excitement to announce that they were close to having a grocery tenant, close enough that they actually shared the name of the chain. There has been no followup with the community to share the news that this tenant has backed out and that they have yet to find another tenant.

Underground cells

VMP claims to be preserving two of the cells. But Cell 14, the one DC Water is currently using, won't be available for years, and now they say it will be repurposed **if** it is in a condition to be rehabbed after use. The second cell also comes with a caveat that they will use remnants of it in conjunction with the recreation center, **if** feasible.

Please require the preservation and repurposing of more cells.

Private streets

Having never heard of private streets in DC, in general, and the streets planned for McMillan, in particular, until the zoning hearings, it is difficult to develop an informed opinion. Unfortunately, VMP has provided the community with little information.

Views

A NCPD memo (Exhibit 541) calls to protect the views from McMillan, as well as the Soldiers' Home, and recommends that no buildings taller than four stories be constructed on the site. In June, 2013, Anne Corbett tweeted that there are "no existing views of the Capitol from McMillan." This is not true. (Please see the attached photo from a random spot on the filtration site.)

There are views of the Capitol, the Washington Monument and so much more from the site, as well as from Michigan Avenue that will be taken from the community, as well as visitors to the Hospital Center, to build massive offices that to date, have no tenants.

Imagine - it will be difficult to even see the sky from the North Sevice Court with a 130 foot building towering over the historic structures. The court will be closer to a downtown canyon than a corridor that purports to highlight the historic nature of the site. Is it no wonder that VMP has not presented a scale model of the proposed buildings to the community? Has the Zoning Commission ever reviewed such a large project where scale is such an important issue, and not been presented a model, or more informative drawings?

Parks, Recreation and Green Space

The 2014 Play DC Master Plan highlights the lack of parkland and recreation space in Bloomingdale and surrounds. Exhibit 540 contains some relevant maps and the full report can be found here - <http://dpr.dc.gov/node/807532>

Imagine the discrepancy in green space in this city when you see that DC ranks high on lists in the total amount of green space. With so little green space in Ward 5, particularly the area of the site, imagine how much is “west of the park” to make up for “east of the park.” to achieve a high ranking.

Community Benefits Agreement

Please act as a guardian for those who will feel the greatest impact during construction and the life of the development and consider all of the requests presented by the civic associations and the MAG, in addition to the ANC.

Park vs Not a Park

Please don't let the developer convince you that this site was not a park. McMillan Park Reservoir Historic District was named a park in 1906, listed on the DC Register in 1991, and belatedly added to the National Register in 2013 The Traceries Report (Exhibit 538) refers to the entire site as a park. It is true that the playground was west of First Street, below the Reservoir, but the entire McMillan site was landscaped to be enjoyed by the people of the District of Columbia. If the filtration plant was dangerous, or not to be enjoyed by the people, wouldn't they have done something to discourage visitors, and not build steps at all four corners of the filtration site and design a perimeter walk? Our National Zoological Park has cages for some animals that visitors cannot enter, but the entire area was designed to be a park to be enjoyed by all.

The VMP fact sheet touts the number of acres of “green space” that includes all of the space that is not covered by a building, not places that can be enjoyed by the community. These are the same acres that VMP insists was never a park, but now they can call these acres green space.

Thank you for the time and effort you have expended reviewing this application. Please do not feel that this effort must return an approved application to be of value. Demanding a plan that respects the history of thousands of workers in 1903, and preserves the quality of life of thousands in 2014, is the highest goal that you can achieve.

Philippe Briandet, Homeowner
1727 First Street, NW

May 27, 2014

Attachments:

McMillan - A Few Numbers

Timeline

Photographs and plans

McMillan - A Few Numbers

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776 exhibits submitted to date
Over 100 letters of support
Over 500 letters of opposition

Hopefully as you review all of the exhibits, you will note that many of the letters of support are form letters (as are many of those of the opposition), but also note how they state that they support the current plan IF this change or that change is made.

Friends of McMillan Petition in opposition

over 6,000 signatures

McMillan by the Twitter numbers

1,019 Friends of McMillan Park - opponents

166 Vision McMillan Partners -developers

143 Neighbors for McMillan- a support group organized and funded by VMP Plan (and their sub-contractor Fontaine)

Please note that many of the Twitter followers of the developer, and also the pro-development group Neighbors (which was organized and funded by the the developer) are opponents of the plan who are followers just to keep up with their announcements.

Community Survey

983 completed surveys, over half from immediate neighbors

It is very disheartening that our elected representatives have dismissed a grassroots, well-intentioned and time consuming survey (Exhibits 112 and 113), conducted by volunteers to determine the concerns of the community. While these same representatives tout the hundreds of community meetings held by VMP, why couldn't DMPED or VMP spend a small portion of the millions spent so far by conducting a survey? Instead, they have spent money hiring a firm to discredit the volunteer work and sincere concerns of neighbors by creating a "grassroots" organization of their own. (See Exhibit 115.)

Timeline for ANC5C and ANC5E indifference to community input

November 2012

Bloomington Civic Association voted to send a letter of "No Confidence" in ANC5C.

November 19, 2013

Exhibit 40

ANC voted to send letter of support (letter was not presented at the meeting) to the Mayor's Agent, but they wrote the letter to Zoning. Note that the PUD had not even been submitted to Zoning, and the Civic Associations had not weighed in - which is required by the Bylaws (Exhibit 82) the ANC created themselves

November 22, 2013

PUD submitted.

December 2, 2013

Zoning notifies ANC and requests their input

February 18, 2014

ANC rejected requests from abutting Civic Associations -
Bloomington Civic Association resolution (Exhibit 69) and Stronghold CA resolution (Councilmember McDuffie's neighborhood) - to rescind their letter of support

Spring 2014

Bloomington residents, as individuals, and the Bloomington Civic Association, were not given adequate consideration in the preparation of the ANC Community Benefits Agreement proposal

