

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Energy and Environment



MEMORANDUM

TO: Anthony J. Hood, Chairman, DC Zoning Commission

FROM: Jay Wilson, DOEE

DATE: March 9, 2017

SUBJECT: Limited Scope Public Hearing - **Z.C. CASE NO. 13-14**
Vision McMillan Partners LLC and the District of Columbia – First Stage and Consolidated PUDs and Related Map Amendment @ 2501 First Street, N.W. (Square 3128, Lot 800)

This memorandum is in response to the Zoning Commission’s notice of the Limited Scope Public Hearing for the Vision McMillan Partners LLC application for the first stage PUD approval of the McMillan Sand Filtration site.

The Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) reviews planned unit development applications to raise awareness of potential environmental issues during early stages of planning, as well as to identify opportunities for increasing environmental and urban sustainability benefits during development. The following report summarizes DOEE’s comments specific to the questions posed in the public notice as they relate to the work and mission of the agency. In addition, we highlight a few key areas where the Zoning Commission may recommend actions to advance environmental performance of the project beyond its current design.

In review of the McMillan Development, DOEE finds that the project is designed to meet or exceed the minimum requirements of the District’s regulations, and is consistent with the policies and actions within the city’s Comprehensive Plan. As suggested in the Comprehensive Plan, the project incorporates mixed-use and mixed density development, a community center and gathering space, community serving retail, and affordable housing. Although additional strategies could be explored, the applicant’s commitment to LEED ND Gold certification for the overall development and minimum certification of LEED Silver for each of the buildings, along with significant improvements to the urban fabric and tree canopy, provide an opportunity to move the District closer to meeting some of the sustainability goals included in the Sustainable DC Plan.

As mentioned above, this project plans to meet or exceed all regulatory requirements of the District of Columbia. Although not specifically related to the Zoning Commission's approval, the first step in the regulatory process is the submission of an Environmental Impact Screening Form with subsequent agency review. This process evaluates the site across a multitude of different environmental issues including water, sewer and stormwater implications, natural environment, including impacts to wetlands and other sensitive habitat areas, air quality, and noise. The review was processed on May 26, 2016, and concluded that "we find, in general, no apparent significant adverse impact or likelihood of substantial negative impact on the environment as a result of the proposed project."

In terms of stormwater management, the whole of the site and all individual building sites are designed in accordance with the District's 2013 Stormwater Regulations, which retain stormwater from the 90th percentile or 1.2" rain event. Specific strategies include the use of native plant species, intensive and extensive green roofs, an increased tree canopy, and cisterns for rainwater harvesting and re-use. As the project continues forward through the technical and permit review, they will also be encouraged to maximize the use of bioretention technology/strategies to capture street runoff. DOEE agency staff discussed with the applicant and recommends the utilization of portions of the preserved greenspace as a meadow restoration project that would provide much needed wildlife habitat and a community amenity.

A critical goal of the District's Sustainable DC Plan is to increase the use of renewable energy to make up 50% of the District's electricity use. This is also a major priority of the administration. The Mayor signed legislation this summer to increase the District's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to 50% with a local solar carve out of 5% by 2032. For the business and development community, this legislation results in the District having some of the best financial incentives for solar energy in the country. In terms of design, solar panels may be mounted horizontally over mechanical penthouses, integrated into building facades, and installed as shading. A power purchase agreement may be executed for leased solar panels with zero up front cost. Alternately for owner financed solar panels or those using financing through the DC PACE program, the typical return on investment is often less than three years. Through the District's community solar program, the energy generated can be "virtually" net-metered so that residents or commercial tenants can "subscribe" into the system, providing benefits for both the property owner and residents. To create a more resilient and economically progressive project, DOEE recommends that the project include solar energy for the benefit of its residents, businesses, and the city as a whole.

Designs that increase energy efficiency, integrate on-site renewable energy, and capture street runoff help the District meet our sustainability goals and ensure that the project is economically competitive into the future. DOEE is glad to be a technical resource as the project continues forward.