

Testimony of Kirby Vining before the Zoning Commission, May 5, 2014, concerning Parcels 4 and 5 of Case #13-14

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I'm Kirby Vining, my home is on the unit block of Franklin St. NE, just a couple hundred feet away from the fence to McMillan Park.

I've been active in most aspects of community involvement in McMillan issues since about 1988, including the door-to-door survey of about 1,000 households in the Stronghold and Bloomingdale neighborhoods two summers ago, and the current Friends of McMillan Park petition campaign

I have met people with a variety of interests in the park, from those who want it maintained exactly as it is, to those who want total development of it. But as our door-to-door survey revealed, about 85% of the adjacent neighborhood residents would like to see significant surface park (50-75%), some locally-focused retail with a grocery store at the top of the list, and some creative re-use of the underground caverns now that they're no longer needed for water purification. Among the top things that we found neighbors did not want was high rise buildings, meaning taller than the 5 stories recommended by the Comprehensive Plan, and this has been consistent over the years along with worries that overly-dense development would not fit well into these neighborhoods. In fact I cannot recall any single individual who was big on the idea of high rises on that site

In about 1989 Mr. Rick Sowell, a now-deceased Bloomingdale resident and activist strongly committed to sports and education programs for children, suggested that a combination of services be provided using the cells that are roughly at grade level on the southern end of the park at Channing Street Mr Sowell suggested that we needed a library with a community meeting room, a police substation, and perhaps a couple of appropriately-sized stores, the rent from which would support the library and police substation. That idea resonated strongly among people who heard him describe it.

But all the various plans that have been proposed for McMillan have been developer driven, not community or even city driven The 2002 OP-organized Summary of Recommendations for (McMillan) Site Revitalization (exhibit 72) captures well the interests of the community In fact even the very first few proposals by the Applicant seemed to be moving in that direction Then the high rises were added, not because of a need to build up rather than out to get more park space, but because, according to exhibit 87, the project apparently would not be financially viable without the high rise buildings

I find the current proposal unacceptable primarily because of the high rise buildings and what they would do to both eliminate our majestic views of the city, demolish all or almost all of the underground caverns, eliminating entirely the possibility of reusing them, and the horrific traffic problems I have not heard effective mitigation efforts to relieve.