

Testimony Opposing the VMP/District Plan to Densely Develop McMillan Sand
Filtration Site
May 5th, 2014

I am a citizen and have read everything that I could to try to understand how the VMP plan came into existence, and how it could have arrived at this point, before this Zoning Board. Rather than giving testimony, I have chosen to ask a number of questions that I would like you to focus on as you deliberate: these incorporate issues of legality, due process, civil rights, finance and best practices.

I understand that the GSA on behalf of the US Corps of Engineers offered the park site to the District gratis with the understanding that it would be restored and maintained as a public space. So, the cost to the District for a very needed open green space in this neighborhood would have been just the restoration and annual maintenance expense. Instead, the District chose to pay over \$9 million -- and to deny public access. What is the market value of the land today, including the value of the subterranean caverns, and excluding the caverns? When was the latest appraisal done? And, was it done by a truly objective third party, or are there interest-conflicted individuals involved? Is there a copy for the public to see? If not, why are we at the Zoning Board?

I have been comforted for years that there is a standard bidding process which must be used by the government. But, it seems that a RFQ for design of a master plan (won by developers, not designers) was bid, but there has not been any RFQ for construction or partnership or high-rise construction. How can that be legal?

Does this public/private partnership reflect the best interest of the people when it is, in effect, a taking of the peoples' land and a giving to private owners for private profit?

What will it cost the District to deliver the pads, and what will the developers pay the District for the pads, and what is the estimated total purchase price going into the District account? How much net profit are the owners of VMP estimating at the completion of the project? Is this a real public/private partnership? Which side derives the greater benefit? Where are the detailed budgets?

Exactly — and just — one year ago a retroactive payment was made to VMP (of \$1.34 mm for the period of 12/12 -11/13) based on a plan that proposed: a four-

acre central park, 300 affordable and workforce housing units, 7,400 jobs and to generate close to \$1.2 billion in incremental revenue for the District. As of today, all of those proposals have been changed, except the proposal to generate close to \$1.2b. Where is the detail behind that number? What are the specific line items? What is the time frame? And, when does it begin?

The proposed jobs number has been reduced to 6,000, and anyone in the business knows that that number still is grossly overstated. Where are the detailed numbers to support this claim? What are the specific jobs and skills required to support this claim? Where have you seen a project of this size with 3,000 construction workers?

We were told last week that the VMP plan would create 3,000 permanent jobs, and earlier agreement stated that 50% would be Districts residents. What are the demographics of the unemployed in the District, and particularly in Ward 5? How old are they? How educated are they? I think the high unemployment number in Ward 5 exists because of the high drop-out rate at local high schools. These mostly are unskilled youth.

What specific jobs has VMP associated with the various cohorts of the unemployment data? Is there a slide that shows that research? If so, we would like to review it. Or, is the real plan to attract skilled workers from neighboring states who will be able to afford the planned townhouses? Or, even worse, new commuters to the already saturated surrounding intersections? Either of those scenarios is unacceptable.

What are the specifics of the housing, and is the housing planned the result of research on Ward 5 housing needs? If so, may we see it? Here we are at the Zoning Board hearings, with gross square footages, but do we know how many units are planned? How many buildings: single family and multi family? What specific types of units? Studios, one-, two-, and three-bedroom? How many truly affordable (forget government calculators and the law -- this should be about strengthening neighborhoods) so that the young families currently in the neighborhood could stay and expand? How many new residents will be matriculating at the local schools? Where are the figures on that? How many units designated for seniors? Are there answers to these questions, or will the zoning decision be based on a presentation peppered with words such as "expect", "propose", "anticipate", "are planning", "targeting", "hope to", etc.

How is the open park space measured exactly? What is the contiguous, flat square footage available for ball fields, playing fields, picnicking, promenading,

etc. Where is that information?

Where is the input of the neighbors? Which, to digress, raises the issue of the District hiring a lobbying firm (really!), and then quickly re-contracting under the VMP name. I am confused about who is doing what to whom and for whom.

And, I am the one directly impacted. I am the one whose assets are being transferred without transparency. I am the one paying the bills -- thus far \$9.3 plus \$5 + million. I am the neighborhood. I am the taxpayer. Not the private Texas Corporation or the private Baltimore lobbying firm. This vision for ~~the site~~ is unacceptable.

I have read the working draft of a Community Benefits Agreement. VMP boasts of having had hundreds of meetings with the community, but there is no Community Benefits Agreement — thus, there is no COMMITMENT. And, yet, the development is seeking Zoning approval. That is unacceptable.

As the largest neighborhood enterprise, why was Children's Hospital Center not invited to the table?

The Historic Preservation Board members are appointed by the Mayor's Office. They were asked to review the VMP development plan, which essentially is the Mayor's plan. Is that not inherently a conflict of interest?

When I attended the final hearing of the HPB, the only discussion was about granularity of concrete and the color pallet. . . . Nothing on preservation of what is historically significant — the caverns. Further, there is a historic preservation covenant in the sale document, which has not been addressed. Finally, the report determined, and I quote, "that the proposal will result in substantial demolition, as defined in the preservation regulations, and therefore inconsistent with the purposes of the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act." This demolition is unacceptable, and it makes me question, again, why are we at the Zoning Board?

This property is listed in The National Register of Historic Sites and designated as a DC Historic Landmark. What do those designations mean and require? Until this issue is dealt with, why is your time and our implicit taxpayer dollars going into Zoning hearings? Aren't these hearings dramatically premature?

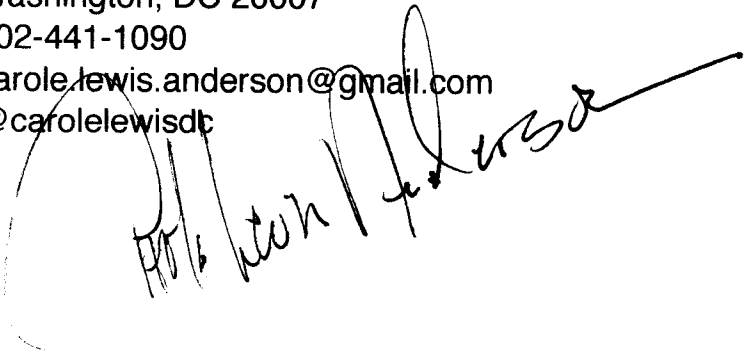
The City's development plan includes some LEEDS Silver construction. If this is a true public/private partnership, and if the City is truly committed to an environmentally-improved and sustainable future, why is there not a commitment

for LEEDs Gold or Platinum? Why are all of the roofs not paneled for solar? Is the project consistent with best practices for the environment? VMP, themselves, did not know that the 30-inch green roof/park is thick enough for excellent permeability — in addition to having been engineered to capture excess water into a sophisticated system of collection and drainage. The lack of standing water is a good clue. Has adequate engineering and homework been done by the parties?

Why would any intelligent planner suggest locating BikeShares where emergency vehicles arrive at Children's and Washington Medical Center? DDOT will not take action until the permitting stage of the development, so no cycle track or shared-use paths are planned, even though they would be required according to AASHTO study data. How can that issue not be a required part of the up-front design presentation?

So, I conclude with the fact that this is an exhausting process for those of us — neighbors, residents, citizens, forward-thinkers (and more than 7,000 petitioners) — who reject the public/private partnership of the District and VMP on the unacceptable grounds of: traffic congestion; increasing danger on roads; uninspired aesthetics; the taking of public assets and giving them for private profit; the taking of public view sheds for private enjoyment; the destruction of historically-designated caverns for private gain; the lack of transparency and detailed information; the intrusion of inconsistent commercial buildings into a residential neighborhood; and for not having undertaken a true design competition to determine the best use of the parkland for the City — which means for its citizens, for whom the Mayor works. The VMP plan is unacceptable.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carole Lewis Anderson', is written over the typed name and contact information.