

Anthony Hood, Chairman  
DC Zoning Commission

May 7, 2014

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to proposed McMillan Park PUD (Case # 13-14)

Dear Chairman Hood:

My name is Sam Shipley and I am a resident of the Stronghold neighborhood across from the McMillan site. I am writing to express my strong opposition to this proposed development at the nationally recognized historic McMillan Sand Filtration Site (Case # 13-14).

I have many issues with this development; the overarching theme seems to be that it was designed on behalf of the oil companies for America's 1%, and **not** more importantly, for the residents of the District or our surrounding neighborhoods.

The residents from here, whether Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park or Stronghold and Park Place, have already spoken and are in agreement with the Summary of Recommendations for "Site Revitalization of McMillan Park" (DC Office of Planning, February 2002), a city-led effort to identify community priorities for the site. Further, in 2012, a survey was conducted of the surrounding areas and the results mirrored the findings from 2002. In both cases, all neighbors were united that:

- "A minimum of 50% (approximately 12.5 Acres) of the McMillan site should be revitalized as publicly accessible open space;"
- "The remainder of the site should be developed with **low and moderate intensity** uses;" and
- "Vistas from the site are significant and should be preserved in conjunction with development of public open space."

What this Frankenstein development has evolved into is completely unacceptable to the neighborhoods and the Zoning Commission must reject the applicant's request.

The more we learn about this development, the less we like. It was sold to us over the past few months in "Music Man" fashion by having a PR firm in Baltimore show us glitzy images of a park and community center and a grocery store, but never the high rise medical buildings or the waves upon waves of cars clogging and congesting our streets. And now, in a classic bait and switch move, we learn that there's no funding attached to the park or community center, both would be privately run where private citizens would lose any Constitutional Rights and there's a very strong likelihood we will not get a grocery store. Further, both the developer and the current Ward 5 councilmember have touted this as bringing over 3,000 jobs to Ward 5. But we now also know from the initial hearings, there are no such guarantees in place, and as you alluded to earlier, Chairman Hood, most workers will have 'West Virginia and Pennsylvania tags.'

Moving on, the low-income housing is structured in such a way that it's truly not for the low-income of our immediate area. For example, if there are any Ward 5 construction workers who work on this site, they most likely will not be able to afford to live there. Mayor Gray has recently chastised various neighborhoods around the city as "NIMBY's" in rejecting places where the District could move our low-income brethren. And yet at the same time, as our ANC 5E neighborhoods are fighting to get more low-income housing included in this project, he perplexingly continues to support this development team.

But while all of those are awful, it's the next piece of the development that is the most troubling: the high-rise medical facilities. Aside from the fact that they neighbors have rejected them time and time again, they do not have identified tenants, and as such, will be built on speculation. Further, the architecture of the buildings do not conform in any conceivable or imagined way to the direct neighborhoods, but fit-in more with the facilities across Michigan Avenue. These buildings belong there and should be built on the surface parking lots of the Washington Hospital Center. In fact the architecture is so bad that people on Twitter have begun referring to the building in the northeast corner as DC's "new Hoover" building (in reference to the J. Edgar Hoover Building that's about to be knocked down). It's a building that from the moment it's erected, people will begin to demand its demolition. So save everyone a step – don't allow them to build it. If these developers cannot make this development work with all of the perks and benefits given to them by the city, I think it's time we find a new development team.

Lastly, and for the cherry on top, this is a car oriented development and to call it anything else would be an outright lie. As such, it will soon make places like Rosslyn and Rockville look like a calm, scenic pasture. Flying in the face of Mayor Gray's sustainability plan, the vast - vast - majority of people coming to this site will travel by car. Period. The developers already acknowledge this fact and estimate that there will be over 6,000 new cars to the area each day – a number that does not take into account any of the current development in Brookland or the future development at the Cloverleaf or Old Soldier's Home (just north of Michigan). This alone should be unacceptable because North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue have already received failing grades from the District Department of Transportation and cannot sustain any more traffic.

However, the developers include in their Traffic Impact Study a number of steps that need to be taken or else "carmeggedon" will truly come to fruition. But you see, these recommendations are not tied to the development nor to the developer; each recommendation must be executed by DC or WMATA. And even if the city or WMATA fail to follow-through on any of the recommendations, the development still gets to move forward. And what's most concerning to me is that the city seems to have zero interest in any of this mitigation. For example, the developer held a Traffic Mitigation Meeting after they released their Impact Study. Invitations were sent to Mayor Gray; Councilmembers McDuffie, Graham, Bonds, Grosso, Orange, Bowser and Cheh; and DDOT's Sam Zimbabwe. Zero attended, and only one sent a person from their staff (CM McDuffie).

That said, even some of their major recommendations seem almost impossible at this time. For example, the East/West Streetcar line that the VMP traffic engineers identify as imperative to the project currently sits in Phase III of the DC Streetcar plan and most likely will never see the light of day. To add insult to injury, at the last Stronghold Civic Association McMillan meeting, Ward 5 Councilman McDuffie expressed that he doesn't even support this line, and if he could, would rather swap it for one on the New York Avenue, NE corridor.

As I stated from the beginning, I have a lot of issues with this development. What once was a noble effort has turned into a Frankenstein of terrible proportions. But there's hope! Many of these terrible issues can be alleviated by you rejecting the C-R & C-3C designations of the land and specifically, by rejecting the massive high-rise medical-monstrosities. This is a piece of land that's on the National Register of Historic Places and deserves a better future than the "demolition and density" that are being offered. This site many years ago saved lives and gave people futures. Please don't let it become a suburban office-space wasteland surrounded by seas of cars that choke the very residents it once helped.

Please make the right call.

Sincerely,

Sam Shipley  
Stronghold