



# Coalition for Smarter Growth

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Testimony before the D.C. Zoning Commission

**Support for Case No. 13-14 – Vision McMillan Partners & District of Columbia, Stage 1 and Consolidated PUD and Related Map Amendment Healthcare (Parcels 1), Hearing #3**

Cheryl Cort, Policy Director  
May 8, 2014

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization in the Washington, D.C. region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We wish to express our support for the healthcare building on Parcel 1 as part of the adaptive reuse of the McMillan Sand Filtration site. The scale of the medical buildings responds to the scale of the hospitals on the other side of Michigan Avenue, with the highest point closest to the similar height at Children's Hospital. The healthcare building uses Cell 14 as an acre of open space next to North Capitol Street to buffer its massing from nearby rowhouse neighborhoods.

The proposed healthcare uses strengthen the Washington Hospital Center complex, which is one of the largest private employment areas in the city. We should support efforts to make the Hospital Center more successful because of its importance as an employer and its accessibility to central and eastern parts of the city as a healthcare services provider. We are eager to see the construction of the McMillan healthcare building inspire additional investment and better design on poorly used sites north of Michigan Avenue.

**Historic Features:** The most interesting historic feature for the healthcare building is its relationship to the restored sand bins and North Service Court walls. The framing of the sand bins and North Service Court is different from the South Service Court where a large open space park is the defining feature. Here, the sand bins and service court are integrated into a larger context of ground floor retail which encourages interaction with these historic structures and surrounding uses. The taller buildings flanking the service court are stepped back to give the sand bins enough room to stand out as distinctive features.

The Olmstead Walk along Michigan Avenue appears to achieve its restoration purpose while also running adjacent to a traditional sidewalk for transportation, and support the Healing Gardens. The Healing Gardens, along with Filtration Cell 14 combine to provide a significant amount of open space for Parcel 1.

**Streets:** Half street and signalized intersection through Parcel 1 links the entire site to the South Service Court and south park. We commend the approach of using the North Service Court for a low speed, shared use street that fosters safe and inviting walk, bike and drive access between the buildings and

across the site. The street grid proposed throughout the site is the right way to bring this large blocked-off site back into the fabric of the larger context. The street grid acts to disperse driving trips, and support greater access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

We are concerned about the driveways for the circular drive on Michigan Ave. which will create many conflict points with pedestrians and bicyclists. These driveways should be designed with very tight turning radii or eliminated altogether.

In general, we want to reiterate the concerns DDOT raised about minimal accommodations for bicycles, and ask that the changes proposed by DDOT be made by the applicant to provide better bicycling accommodations.

**Parking:** The relatively high parking ratio for the healthcare uses is deemed acceptable by the Office of Planning because these are higher demand medical-related uses. We recognize this, along with the applicants' justification for the parking supply based on the many surface and satellite parking facilities served by shuttles currently used by the Washington Hospital Center complex. The TDM plan and traffic mitigation plans, and the applicant's expression to work with DDOT to agree on the right set of measures are all positive. However, we suggest that a more detailed assessment of parking demand and parking pricing be done for the healthcare building, and the Washington Hospital Center complex in order to assess how parking supply and traffic generation can be reduced.

**Transit:** While the area is planned for more transit, the increased demand from the medical uses, and the whole site call for the city to expedite investments in key transit improvements, including the 80x bus priority corridor on North Capitol Street, enhanced H buses, a new Circulator route, and eventual streetcar on Michigan Avenue. These services address existing and future transit needs for the area. While the applicant has committed to providing sufficient levels of shuttle bus service to meet demand, we urge the city to make the needed transit capacity improvements using public transit rather than private shuttles so that they better connect, and improve the entire transit network.

**Conclusion:** We enthusiastically support the proposed healthcare building and retail for the McMillan Sand Filtration redevelopment and restoration proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.