

**Testimony before the DC Zoning Commission
Re: McMillan Park Reservoir, Zoning Case # 13-14**

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Dear Chairman Hood and Zoning Commission Members. My name is Jim Schulman. I am a registered architect and the founder of Community Forklift, a surplus & salvaged building material outlet. I also currently serve as the Treasurer of the Building Materials Reuse Association.

I strongly urge the Zoning Commission to send Vision McMillan Partners (VMP) to go back to the drawing board with respect to the proposed PUD zoning request for the McMillan Park Reservoir Historic District. Just as it did when it was a filtration site, this effort concerns the whole city, not just Ward 5. My interest in this project was stimulated as a clear opportunity for adaptive reuse. At a national conference on reclamation in 2012 I saw ongoing work of Catholic University of America design students focused on the re-use of the site. The sensitivity with which they approached the design problem impressed me, especially in contrast with the official development plans proposed at the time (which have not improved the design over time to the degree that they should). I do recognize that financial considerations are of the essence to a development team and less so in a collegiate design exercise, nevertheless, I feel that as a District resident, the CUA design was much more responsive to community and aesthetic considerations.

My largest concern is that the District should embrace the opportunity to celebrate & adapt as many of the underground reservoir caverns for both civic and commercial purposes as possible – and thereby benefit in a big way from the work of the past has been missed in the current design. With respect to zoning the proposal fails to meet the basic terms of the VMP's own Master Plan which calls for "the preservation of a majority of the structures both underground and above ground and/or adapted for incorporation and reuse in the proposed development." This is especially true with respect to the landscape features. **The public opinion surveys that have been done as part of this process indicate that no more than 14% of area residents want less than 50% of the site to remain as a park!** I urge the Zoning Commission to direct the District Government and VMP to include a greater sensitivity to the scale and public amenity needs of the neighborhoods to the south and east in addition to the city as a whole, as well as reconsider repairing and utilizing far more of the existing cavern vaults. If nothing else, I suspect that with some reinforcement they would make excellent parking garages. I am reminded of the case of the Cathedral in Los Angeles that was seriously damaged in an earthquake the 1990's. The local diocese wanted to tear down the structure and gave as evidence an assessment by a structural engineer that repairs would cost in the range of \$25 million. Area residents rallied to the defense of their landmark, and found through some sophisticated engineering that the cathedral would become useful again through the expense of only \$2 million. And now it is once again open for business as a church and community center, as should a robust McMillan Park!

I find it interesting that the DC Zoning map shows the existing site zoned R-5-B, even though the Office of Zoning claims that the property is currently un-zoned. It would not hurt the project in my view if a good portion of the site remained R-5-B. I thank you for this opportunity to share my views.

