

**Testimony of Eugene Puryear
Candidate for D.C. Council At-Large
Statehood Green Party**

**Zoning Commission Hearing Z.C. 13-14
in Opposition to McMillan Park PUD
May 13, 2014**

Good Evening,

For the better part of a decade I lived at 142 Michigan Ave NE, literally right around the corner from the McMillan-Olmstead site. As such, I feel, viscerally, that the current proposed plan by VMP misses a major opportunity to maximize the use of our public spaces. It is important we view this development in the full context of its near surroundings.

With the potential for a large-scale development on the grounds of the Old Soldiers Home immediately to the north and the large Monroe Street project at the Brookland Metro to the east, and the new developments at Howard University to the southwest on 4th St and Georgia Ave, the preservation of public space, more specifically public green space, is vital to maintaining a diverse and dynamic quality of life for District residents.

Residents of the District have indeed recognized this, and in 2002, the results of a city-led effort showed that the desire of residents was not to have large-scale residential and office buildings but have at least 50 percent of the space devoted to open public space, and the rest to be developed in a low-to-moderate-impact way. The current VMP proposal completely disregards this.

Development, of course, requires hard choices. To make the case for developing a large-scale, high-intensity project that would significantly limit open public space would be warranted if the project added significant value in other areas.

This is not the case. Concerning affordable housing, the proposed number of units and range of affordability sticks very closely with the pattern of development that has led to the affordable housing crisis we are currently experiencing. As Friends of McMillian Park noted in their Motion to Dismiss, between Parcels 4 and 5 the VMP plan projects affordable housing percentages just above what is required by the inclusionary zoning statutes, and as the Commission itself noted was targeted at the higher end of the so-called "affordable" range.

I do not regard the issue of the massive affordable housing shortage as one simply of supply-and-demand, and don't find the argument that building any appreciable number of housing units as in-and-of-itself helping to bring down costs to be persuasive. Thus, even if the proposed

affordable housing units were all targeted at 30 percent of AMI as the Commission itself suggested, I do not believe this to be a significant enough impact to abrogate the concerns regarding public space usage outlined in the beginning of this testimony, particularly given the significant destruction of historical structures required to complete the plan.

Similar things can be said about other aspects of the project. For instance, the rightly popular grocery store component is not assured, and the proposed medical office space seems to not fully account for other developments possibly being able to satisfy the same need. The most compelling potential benefit is the employment aspect, but again it seems not to rise to a truly exceptional level.

The key issue revolves around choices. VMP has put together a set of potential benefits that are not all assured. The question is not whether or not each potential piece could be beneficial in a vacuum, but do the costs outweigh the benefits overall?

To reiterate my opening remarks, I believe that the VMP proposal does not provide enough benefit, given the context of surrounding developments and scale of destruction of historic places, to outweigh the benefits of keeping the maximum amount of public open-space in play, and allowing our city to maintain a diverse and dynamic range of urban spaces.

Eugene Puryear

Candidate for D.C. Council At-Large

Statehood Green Party

Campaign HQ: 202-556-1651

Website: EugenePuryear.com

Email: info@EugenePuryear.com

Twitter: [@Eugene4DC](https://twitter.com/Eugene4DC) / [@EugenePuryear](https://twitter.com/EugenePuryear)

Facebook: [/Eugene4DC](https://www.facebook.com/Eugene4DC)