

TESTIMONY before the DC Office of Zoning Commission Hearings
Tuesday, May 13, 2014

My name is Carole Lewis Anderson

I have been a resident of Washington for 26 years. I live in Georgetown — a long walk from McMillan Park. But, I am testifying because it would be a travesty to destroy this high land replete with our history of social integration, civil engineering and natural design. It is unimaginable that this, most important Capital city would sneer at the history of this site in favor of uninspired uncomfortably dense building. The last time something iconic was built in this city was during the civil war — the Washington Monument. We have an opportunity here to change that. My hope is that this board will not let McMillan Park be destroyed and fall prey to what the City government seems to be better known for.

Beyond the disconnect related to the aesthetic and the need for open green space, there are real inconsistencies in the applicant's plan.

To quote the Current, reporting on the March 24th DC Council hearing on sustainable food policy, "the importance of increasing the City's food supply was a consistent topic. One of the first steps would be to identify arable land. . . Expanding access to healthy food was another issue that many of the speakers said should be a priority for the new food policy director." As you have heard in previous opposing testimony, the cavernous cells underlying McMillan could provide close to 20 acres of suitable space to grow and market food, and community gardens could pepper the 25-acre surface. Both local and visiting school children could tour and learn how food can be grown sustainably.

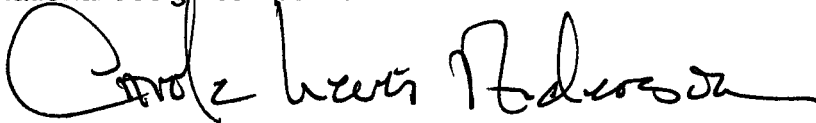
Brendan Shane, DC Chief of Policy and Sustainability said that 300,000 square feet of green roofs were installed in DC during 2013. In one fell swoop, the applicant's plan would replace 25 acres of a perfectly absorbent and well drained green roof with 20 +/- acres of concrete. And, I will note, again, the plan is to aim for silver LEEDS. I wonder if Mr. Shane is aware of that low goal. And, still just aiming! This plan, in effect, makes fun of DC's plan to become the most sustainable city in the nation.

The applicant is proposing one million square feet of multi-tenant office space. I have not seen the market studies that purport to support this. But, I do know what the Downtown Business Improvement District's recently-released annual report stated about office space. ". . . businesses are using less office space per employee and thus requiring less room. . . as new office buildings come online, they draw from older ones, leaving the departed buildings with empty space. This trend will undoubtedly result in lower rents and eventually less tax revenue." The report urges, " a public/private partnership to accelerate the transformation of older office buildings into hotels, apartments and retail uses." Why does the applicant think that there will be tenants for these buildings? We know that Childrens' Medical Center has not been part of the dialogue.

I live in a private community with a DC-legal HOA. Our roads are private. We can make any decisions about their use that we like. We can close them off — We can gate them. And, further, how the rights of homeowners covered by an HOA could be maintained under a Master Owners Association with single-owner retail and rental properties is anathema to me. I doubt that there is any such organization in existence. That probably makes this claim simply another “maybe we could . . .”

Based on everything that I have heard, I find the plan unacceptable: it is an illegal taking of a public asset for private gain; it is replete with offers and expectations formulated on questionable data, and it is without merit on aesthetic, sustainability and community grounds.

i suggest that the City carve out ten or so acres for use as parkland immediately, while the Mayor's office goes back to the drawing board. the first next step should be an international design competition.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carole Lewis Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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