

**TESTIMONY OF DEBBY HANRAHAN BEFORE THE D.C.
ZONING COMMISSION, MAY 13, 2014**

My name is Debby Hanrahan. I am a member of the Friends of McMillan Park, but am testifying as an individual. I'm a resident of Dupont Circle in Ward 2.

I want to state at the outset that the future of McMillan Park is not just a neighborhood issue, or a Ward 5 issue, but is also a city-wide issue. McMillan Park is an urban treasure; it is on the District of Columbia Registry for Historic Sites. Instead of a wonderful space for the park-starved neighbors of McMillan and for residents from throughout the city seeking a beautiful, vibrant, green destination, the government of the District of Columbia and its co-developers are proposing -- of all things -- a sterile, enclosed community.

Not only is our historic park legacy at stake, but also millions of D.C. taxpayers' dollars in what the city government and the developers plan to be a giveaway of ridiculous proportions of land that is potentially worth close to a billion dollars to the developers. All D.C. residents contributed to the \$9-million-plus purchase price of the McMillan property in the late 1980s, and under this deal all D.C. taxpayers are being forced to contribute \$51.5 million more to the developers for God-knows-what under what we laughingly call the free-market system.

Hundreds of my own Dupont Circle neighbors have signed the Friends of McMillan Park petition opposing this VMD project. Having gathered many of those signatures myself, I can tell you that people from my neighborhood, as well as all over the city, are concerned or appalled by the prospect of this project going through.

You have heard testimony about the concerns of nearby residents and businesses that the horrible traffic volume in the vicinity of McMillan Park will be made even more dire by the additional thousands of

vehicles generated by this project. Let me give you one personal observation of the danger such additional traffic poses to the safe emergency transportation of children and adults to the seven nearby hospitals.

As I and others were holding “Save McMillan Park” signs at the intersection of North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue this morning, I witnessed two separate dangerous incidents of ambulances being mired in morning rush-hour traffic. Both vehicles, with sirens blaring and lights flashing, were bogged down in the northbound lane of North Capitol. In order to speed up their journey to the hospital, the drivers of each ambulance had to cross the median strip into the oncoming traffic-loaded southbound lane and continue to proceed north to turn left onto Michigan Avenue to one of the hospitals. I think you’ll agree this is not a situation we want to make worse.

One final point: Despite the false history presented by the developers and their consultants, McMillan -- as you have heard from other witnesses -- was declared a park more than a century ago. It was used by local residents as a park up until the time it was closed off due to World War II. As the 2014 National Climate Assessment released by the White House last week should remind us, we need more green space -- not less -- to help combat climate change and pollution.

As the D.C.-based City Parks Alliance currently notes in citing climate experts: “By absorbing carbon dioxide and pollutants fueling climate change, parks and green infrastructure offset the warming effects on cities, making them cooler.” The Alliance cites as “measurable benefits” of parks such things as “Trees, shrubs and vegetation [that] purify the air of gases, ozone, and pollutants that cause respiratory problems and corrode and damage buildings.” And so on.

Members of the Commission, it is inappropriate to take existing, scarce urban green space and turn it into a densely-populated, cut-off, concrete bunker. Thank you.