

# Greater Greater Washington

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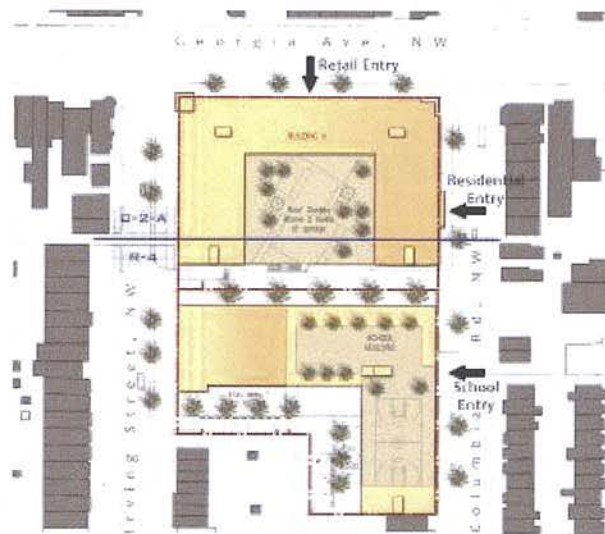
## PUBLIC SPACES

### Bruce-Monroe won't stay a park, might not be a school

by [Kent Boese](#) • July 30, 2010

As the [Washington City Paper](#) reported, DC released [an RFP](#) to redevelop the former Bruce-Monroe school site on July 26th. The RFP could lead to a new school on the site, but also opens up the possibility of other uses that fund school improvements off site.

The stated long-term goal of the property has been to build a new Bruce-Monroe school, yet significant obstacles—most notably money and the economic climate—have prevented this to date. The option of modernizing the historic Park View school, where Bruce-Monroe students currently attend, has met with significant resistance from some of the parents and teachers at the school.



Proposed site plan for Bruce-Monroe. Image from DMPED.

Recognizing that it could be five years before shovel hits dirt, city officials decided to develop an interim use for the property. Their initial approach was to spend \$500,000 on an area parking lot. This idea also met with fierce community opposition, ultimately resulting in a commitment of \$2M to create a community park.

The interim park is scheduled to open on July 29th, and already includes sod, some trees, two basketball courts, a tennis court, two tot-lots with playground equipment and a small parking lot. A building is to be built in the second phase of the project to support educational programs.



Figure 1: Site Plan of Interim Use Park  
Interim park site plan. Image from DMPED.

The high price tag for the park led some to speculate that DC might keep it as a park permanently, but this RFP makes it clear the park isn't permanent. On the other hand, it's possible it won't become a school again, either.

Though the RFP clearly has the educational needs of the community as a priority, developers have the option to submit proposals that don't include a new school as well as ones that do. In the event that a winning proposal is focus primarily on the commercial aspect of the property, the RFP states that funds generated from the conveyance of the property to the developer would be used to "fund school improvement at the off-site Bruce Monroe Elementary School at Parkview."

This clearly brings the modernization of the Park View school back into the mix. This is significant since a renovated Park View has been rejected by approximately 30 to 40 of the parents of the 414 students who attended the school this year.

Its impossible to see which way this issue will go until proposals start to roll in. Its certainly possible that a new school will arise on the site of the old. Yet, each twist and turn seems to include an additional challenge for that vision.

Those interested in reading the full RFP, as well as the contents of the four appendices, can do so by going to the [Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development's Web site](#).

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- [Bruce-Monroe to get "temporary urbanism" over parking lot](#) (Mar 11, 2010)
- [DMPED unveils new Bruce-Monroe interim use plan](#) (Jun 24, 2010)
- [Then and Now: Monroe School auditorium](#) (Sep 29, 2009)
- [5th and I residents get eyesore, DC only gets \\$60,000/year](#) (Mar 18, 2010)
- [Downtown needs a school more than a boutique hotel](#) (Nov 22, 2010)

Kent Boese posts items of historic interest primarily within the District. He's worked in libraries since 1994, both federal and law, and currently works on K Street. He's been an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner serving the northern Columbia Heights and Park View neighborhoods since 2011 (ANC 1A), and is the force behind the blog [Park View, D.C.](#)



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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development



December 7, 2016

Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia  
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200-S  
Washington, DC 20001

**Re: ZC Case no. 16-11; 3012 Georgia Avenue, NW (Lot 0849 Square 2890)  
(the "Bruce Monroe Site")**

Dear Members of the Commission:

I am pleased to offer this letter to reiterate my support of the above-referenced zoning application filed by Park View Community Partners ("PVCP") on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development ("DMPED") and address the District's future development of a park on the Bruce Monroe Site.

The Bruce Monroe Site is located at 3012 Georgia Avenue, NW (Lot 849 in Square 2890). The Bruce Monroe Site is approximately 122,000 square feet, 77,000 square feet of which is being disposed of by DMPED to PVCP and is the subject of this PUD application (the "Property"). As a part of this PUD application, PVCP proposes to develop the Property with two residential buildings and 8 townhomes, generating approximately 273 residential units. Approximately 90 of the residential units will be set aside as replacement public housing units, and approximately 111 units will be reserved for households not exceeding 60% percent of the area medium income.

The District will retain ownership of the remaining portion of the Bruce Monroe Site (approximately 44,000 square feet) to be developed as a public park. The Mayor expressed the District's commitment to develop a portion of the Bruce Monroe Site as a park in the disposition resolution for the Property she submitted to the Council of the District of Columbia (PR21-0909). I have also expressed publically in my November 23, 2015 Open Letter to Park Morton and Bruce Monroe Community Residents and Stakeholders the District's plan to keep a park and recreation uses on the Bruce Monroe Site.

DMPED is currently working with our agency partners to determine the process for designing, building and operating the proposed park. We plan to engage the community in early 2017 to receive feedback on proposed plans for the park. We look forward to delivering a quality park that we believe will be more widely utilized than what is currently on site.

In light of the foregoing, DMPED strongly encourages the Zoning Commission's expeditious approval of the application.

Sincerely,

Brian Kenner  
Deputy Mayor  
Planning and Economic Development

Brian T. Kenner  
Deputy Mayor





November 23, 2015

***An Open Letter to Park Morton and Bruce Monroe Community Residents and Stakeholders***

Dear District Residents,

As the District moves forward on the redevelopment of Park Morton, a 174-unit public housing community in the Georgia Avenue corridor, our goal is to create a community where every Park Morton resident has an opportunity to live and thrive. Park Morton will be redeveloped through the New Communities Initiative, a District effort launched in 2005 to redevelop aging public housing properties into vibrant mixed-income communities.

**BACKGROUND**

When Park Morton was included in the New Communities Initiative by Council action in 2008, the District made a promise to residents to invest in and strengthen their community. The project was awarded in 2010 but little progress was made, and it was resolicited and reawarded in 2014 to the current development team of The Community Builders/Dantes Partners. A primary reason for the City's decision to resolicit was to jumpstart the project as current conditions for Park Morton residents – aging structures with plumbing and other systemic issues, as well as a poor physical layout and design that supports criminal and drug activity - continue to deteriorate.

**BRUCE MONROE SITE SELECTION**

The development plan includes the Bruce Monroe site as a key component of the redevelopment of Park Morton in order to achieve a founding principle of New Communities - "Build First". Build First requires a substantial off-site parcel within the neighborhood to begin the redevelopment, allowing for the on-site housing portion to be redeveloped in phases, and minimizing the displacement of residents outside their neighborhood. The Bruce Monroe site was home to the old Bruce Monroe School, which DCPS closed in 2008 due to under-enrollment. The city worked with the community in 2009 to devise an interim use for the site, and committed funding for improvements and amenities. The improvements, however, were always intended to be temporary while the city developed a plan for the site, and DCPS never contemplated returning a school to the site.

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development ("DMPED") looked at many possibilities for Build First options, including reviewing all of the sites proposed by each developer who responded to the District of Columbia Housing Authority's ("DCHA") original 2014 solicitation, reviewing sites proposed by landowners themselves, and sites proposed by community groups. In addition, a review of the corridor was performed to determine if we missed any viable parcels. These potential sites included government owned parcels in Wards 1 and 4, and ten privately owned parcels, most of which were along the Georgia Avenue corridor. We looked for sites that were in the neighborhood and would yield enough replacement public housing units (60+ family-sized units) to allow us to implement "Build First." The Bruce Monroe site was viewed as the best option to facilitate the Build First concept and move the Park Morton project forward for the following reasons:

- **No Displacement.** Allows for replacement of all public housing units without having to move Park Morton residents out of the neighborhood.
- **Accelerates Redevelopment.** Facilitates Park Morton redevelopment on the fastest timeline, as it is a single site versus multiple sites that would need to be purchased and developed over time.
- **Site Ownership Already.** DC government owned site, therefore no need to acquire other sites.
- **Cost Effective.** Government owned site where the value can be used to subsidize affordability, a District priority for use of public parcels.

BRIAN T. KENNER  
DEPUTY MAYOR

In addition to evaluating the Bruce Monroe site as the best option for Build First, we also know continued park and recreation use on the Bruce Monroe site is a priority for the community. As such, we are supportive of a plan only if it includes park and recreational space returning to the site. The current proposal preserves half of the site as a park, which would allow all of the site's current uses including courts, playground, garden, to be brought back to the site. In addition, the proposal provides for some amount of park space to be open and operational for most of the construction period and for the permanent park space to be brought back to the site first. This plan will maximize the public and community value of the site by creating significant affordable housing capacity and improving on existing park space at the same time.

#### **FUTURE FOR PARK MORTON REDEVELOPMENT**

Another key tenet of the New Communities Initiative is to develop formerly public housing into mixed-income communities. At full development, the Park Morton site and Bruce Monroe site will be valuable additions to the Georgia Avenue corridor, containing some 500 units of mixed-income housing across both sites. The developments also offer us an opportunity to meet other neighborhood needs for park and green space at both sites, and provide new opportunities for community amenities and much needed neighborhood-serving retail.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/NEXT STEPS**

Mayor Bowser and I had the opportunity to meet with several residents at community meetings on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 where we discussed the Bruce Monroe site and Park Morton. As we move forward with future community meetings (posted at <http://www.dcnnewcommunities.org>), we want to make sure that the community is part of the planning conversation and that we are communicating our progress in an open and transparent manner.

The Park Morton project is at the beginning of a robust community planning process which includes regular public meetings as well as planning and design workshops in December and January. Furthermore, the project will include review by the local ANCs, a Planned Unit Development process through the Zoning Commission, and land disposition process through the DC Council likely in 2016.

Park Morton will be the first full-scale public housing redevelopment *in the country* that is completed without displacing low-income residents from their home neighborhood. We are excited to have this opportunity for the this neighborhood, and the District, to lead the nation in the fair and equitable treatment of our underserved and overlooked communities. We encourage you to join us in discussing how we can all succeed in making it happen together. Together, we can achieve a successful outcome for the residents of Park Morton, continue the revitalization of Georgia Avenue, and create more pathways to the middle class.

Sincerely,



Brian T. Kenner  
Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development

Cc: Brianne Nadeau, Ward 1 Councilmember  
Angie Rodgers, Director of New Communities Initiative, DMPED