

Zoning Commission  
441 4th St., NW,  
Suite 220 South  
Washington, DC

I do not support the proposed development at McMillan Park. McMillan Park is situated on one of the highest pieces of land in the city. It was designed as part of the emerald necklace of parks surrounding Washington, DC and commands impressive views of the National Mall, the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and Howard University. Constructing tall buildings on this land will forever change the views and the character of the residential neighborhood where these buildings are planned. These buildings will dominate the entire neighborhood and will be visible for miles around.

The traffic in this area is already problematic. Development of a scale that has been proposed will only serve to make the traffic worse, not only for the residents in the area, but also for the patients traveling to any of the hospitals in the area. DC recently conducted a study and determined that speed bumps could not be placed on First St. due to the ambulance traffic that must pass through. The traffic caused by this massive development will certainly slow traffic in the area and become problematic for patients and residents alike. Additionally, none of the studies that I am aware of take into account the development that is planned for the Old Solder's Home site, which will also increase the traffic in the area. A project of this scale should be placed adjacent to a metro site, not in a residential neighborhood that is already experiencing traffic problems.

Right now, McMillan Park is one of the largest green roofs in the world. It absorbs all of the rain water that lands on the property. The proposed new development will not only destroy the green roof and add that rain water to our overburdened sewers, but it will also add more water into our sewer system from all of the new residents, shoppers and workers who will be on that site. The same will be true for the proposed development at the Old Soldier's home. As a resident of Bloomingdale who has seen the flooding in my neighborhood first hand, I strongly object to the development of this site which will only increase the likelihood of flooding in my neighborhood.

Our mayor has released a plan called the Sustainable DC Plan to ensure that the District is the healthiest, greenest, and most livable city in the nation. This massive development will make it more difficult for the mayor to achieve these goals. Here are some of the goals in his plan that will be made harder to achieve by this development - improving the health and wellness of residents, control pollution caused by storm water runoff by building green roofs (2,000,000 more square feet of green roofs) and increasing the tree canopy, making parks available to all residents within a 10 minute walk, adding 20 acres of land to grow food, use 75 % of our landscape to capture rain water for filtration or reuse, and improve the climate and the environment. In fact, this development will make the mayor's goals significantly more difficult to achieve, despite the fact that if developed properly it could go a long way towards helping the mayor achieve these goals.

McMillan Park is a unique place. It was designed in the industrial age and is a unique marriage of both industry and parkland. It was designated a National Park in 1911 and is on the DC and National Lists of Historic Places. It was used as a park by the residents of the city until sometime in the 1940's. Newspaper articles clearly identify the Sand Filtration site as the location of a summer concert series, photographs show the park was used for sports and walking trails crisscrossed the park. Additionally, there is plenty of verbal testimony detailing that the Sand Filtration site was routinely used by all residents to escape the summer heat. The proposed development will destroy most of the underground caverns. This underground space could be developed into some of the most unique and beneficial retail spaces in the city. Imagine it filled with shops and restaurants, such as a grocery store, gym, farmers market, museum, night clubs, the list is endless. The idea that this city would consider replacing a historic park with 14-story office buildings is baffling to me and makes no sense, especially after the residents of NoMa had to petition the city for additional park land because the city failed to include any parks in their plans. Ward 5 has probably the least amount of park land in the city and to destroy this park does not make sense. The population of this city is increasing dramatically. Young families are moving into the city in record numbers. As more residents move in and these families have children and pets, we will need more parks not less.

These development plans do not meet the historic preservation covenants that the city agreed to when it acquired the land from the federal government. The D.C. Historic Preservation Officer must review and agree to all plans for this site. And the covenants specifically require that all rehabilitation and renovation work will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. The proposed development does not conform to the Secretary's Standards. The preservation covenants were to ensure that the transfer of the property to DC would have "no adverse effect" on the historic McMillan Reservoir site. The destruction of the underground caverns completely destroys the historic nature of this site and is a very adverse effect to the historic nature of the park.

Please do not change the zoning for this site to allow these building to be built in my neighborhood. They are too tall and too dense for this neighborhood and will forever alter the character of the community. I attended the surplus meeting for McMillan Park. The crowd was standing room only in opposition to this development. The residents spoke out in opposition to this development - until the city shut down the meeting. This development will be a mistake that the city will never be able to undo.

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