

The Bloomingdale Civic Association

-serving the Bloomingdale neighborhood for over 90 years

RESOLUTION

Rejecting the current Vision McMillan Partners (VMP) plan and requesting that a plan more in keeping with the unique location and history of the McMillan Sand Filtration site and more reflective of the long-expressed needs and desires of the local residents.

PREAMBLE

The McMillan Sand Filtration Site (the Site) located within the square bounded by 1st Street NW, Michigan Avenue NW, North Capitol Street NW, and Channing Street NW has always been an integral part of Bloomingdale. The Bloomingdale neighborhood began to develop in the late 1880s, just as the decisions surrounding the development of a new safe water source for the District of Columbia were coming to a head. Those decisions created McMillan Park encompassing what today are the McMillan Reservoir property and the McMillan Sand Filtration Site. The hybrid uses of the Site were important assets to the Bloomingdale community, providing not only clean drinking water to the community (and much of the District) but also a racially integrated recreation space for residents. The end of the Site's recreational function after it was closed during WWII was a blow to Bloomingdale and one that the community has been trying to rectify for 70 years.

WHEREAS, the Site is a Registered Historic Site of the District of Columbia—the only one in Bloomingdale, and

WHEREAS, the Site is the largest slow sand filtration site in the United States and was developed to secure clean water for the growing Nation's Capital at the turn of the 20th century, and

WHEREAS, the Site is considered a water engineering marvel as well as a landscaping gem, whose landscape plan was designed and installed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and the Olmsted firm, and

WHEREAS, these characteristics make the Site unique to Bloomingdale, unique to the District, and unique to the nation, and

WHEREAS, that uniqueness should be considered as a critical factor in the type of development and preservation that occurs at McMillan, and

WHEREAS, the residents of this and surrounding neighborhoods have roundly rejected plans to develop the Site twice over the past 20 years because those plans did not reflect the needs and desires of local residents and would have done more damage to the surrounding neighborhoods than would have benefitted them, and

WHEREAS, we believe that several broad principles should govern any development at McMillan and that these principles include the following:

- the public spaces and park should in fact be public and open and available for active use to all residents of the area both in fact and perception,

- a development plan for the Site should reflect much more creative thinking than the VMP plan reflects and result in development that is also worthy of historic preservation reflecting what is possible in our day
- the final development plan should include a broader and more creative team (although we respect the VMP's efforts, we firmly believe that a design and development befitting the Site, which overlooks the Capitol and which contains architectural and historical features not found anywhere else in the District, can be achieved), and

WHEREAS, our respect for the VMP's efforts extends to the following aspects of the current plan:

- the size of the grocery store,
- the traffic signals on North Capitol Street,
- the housing geared to senior citizens,
- the larger park in the current plan,
- the underground parking for major buildings, and

WHEREAS, our concerns about or recommendations for a good plan are as follows:

- Historic Preservation:
 - the VMP plan contains no clear plan, time line, or implementation team for refurbishing and making the retained filtration cells available and open to the public,
 - although the VMP plan retains two cells as museum pieces, the VMP plan offers no creative, adaptive reuse of any other underground cells,
 - the plan contains no museum or museum program about the history of public water systems generally and the Washington Aqueduct system (of which the Site was a part) in particular;
 - although the VMP plan preserves above ground structures, to preserve the sense of place for those structures that Olmsted envisioned and that our community has always enjoyed, the park needs to be extended south, removing in the process the row of structures immediately south of the park in the VMP plan,.
- Transportation/Traffic:
 - the area around the Site does not include a grid pattern of streets to move cars and busses to and from the Site,
 - today the intersections around the Site receive very poor or failing grades from DDOT, and the Site does not generate a single car trip to or from the Site on any given day,
 - the Site is not served by Metro,
 - in response to these realities, the transportation study commissioned by VMP is based on unrealistically rosy assumptions,

- that study's few mitigation strategies (*e.g.*, cross streets through and traffic signals around the Site) would negligibly ameliorate the increased traffic problems on North Capitol Street, First & Second Streets NW, Channing Street NW, and Michigan Avenue NE & NW coming from the thousands of new daily vehicle trips going to and from the Site,
- neither the VMP nor District government has seriously discussed ways to improve the transportation infrastructure around the Site, such as light rail from Union Station coming up North Capitol Street to the soon-to-be-developed Armed Force Retirement Home;
- Housing: the plan (1) does not clearly define what affordable housing is, (2) does not make clear how significant amounts of the housing are supposed to be affordable, and (3) does not state how many of the proposed units would fall into a definition of affordable housing;
- Park:
 - the contiguous public park space, while improved over earlier iterations of this same plan, is still inadequate in size (the community has for over a dozen years asked for about 50% of the Site becoming contiguous public park space (see the Design Guidelines developed in 2001 and agreed upon between residents and the Office of Planning on OP's Web site and the 2012 community survey),
 - the contiguous public park space is still inadequate in size because the park in the VMP plan encompasses the historic structure of the South Court limiting the functional use of the space as a recreational space,
 - the public park is more than big enough to be able to include some active use areas (tennis courts, putting greens, picnic areas with shelters, even basketball courts, jogging trail, etc.),
 - no fencing should be put around the public park spaces,
 - the new streets that would run through the park area would undermine its function as a safe, quiet people-focused green space and interfere with the southern historic structures, which the plan surrounds with a road;
- Community facility: because the Site is public land—paid for with taxpayer dollars—and because the Site requires more than \$60 million of public money to simply prepare the Site for construction, the plan needs to include a recreational center, which should be something akin to the center in Deanwood and not some 8,000 sq. ft. mini-center;
- Job diversity: the medical building next to the grocery store should be geared to some other type of economic activity (high tech, etc.) to diversify the jobs and functions going on at the Site;
- Storm water: because the bulk of Bloomingdale is downstream of the Site, the storm water protection standards for the Site should be higher than the VMP plan currently includes;
- Environment: any plan for the Site should achieve Leed Platinum certification.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That the Bloomingdale Civic Association opposes the current iteration of the VMP plan; and

That the District of Columbia should craft a plan that respects and incorporates the concerns and recommendations in this Resolution.

This Resolution was approved on May 21, 2012 after proper notice and by a vote of
yays, nays, and abstentions.

Teri Janine Quinn, President

Regina Anderson, Recording Secretary