

Anthony Hood, Chairman
DC Zoning Commission

May 1, 2014

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to proposed McMillan Park PUD (Case # 13-14)

Dear Chairman Hood:

I am writing to express my opposition to the Vision McMillan Partners (VMP) first-stage consolidated PUD and the related map amendment (Case # 13-14) and to express my concern about the unacceptable negative impacts on the local community that would result from the proposed development.

As a resident of the community surrounding McMillan Park, I am deeply concerned about the negative and unacceptable impacts of the proposed development on the local community.

The proposed development is incompatible with the historic Character of the McMillan Park reservoir site. The height, scale, density, massing, and design of the proposed new construction is inappropriate for the historic McMillan Park Reservoir site and inconsistent with the overall character, landscape, and historic vistas of the site. McMillan Park is listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. This proposed plan fails to take into account the Summary of Recommendations for Site Revitalization of McMillan Park (DC Office of Planning, February 2002), a city-led effort to identify community priorities for the site. This study identified many of the applicant's proposed uses for McMillan Park as unacceptable including hospital/medical facilities and high-rise office and residential buildings. The current VMP plan completely disregards key recommendations of the study:

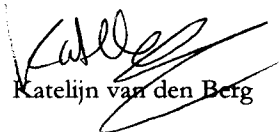
- "A minimum of 50% (approximately 12.5 Acres) of the McMillan site should be revitalized as publicly accessible open space."
- "The remainder of the site should be developed with low and moderate intensity uses."
- "Vistas from the site are significant and should be preserved in conjunction with development of public open space."

These results were confirmed during the door-to-door McMillan Community Survey which was undertaken by ANC 5C and the McMillan Advisory Group supported a group of community volunteers in 2012 and the survey team collected data from approximately 1,000 individual respondents. This survey was and still is the first ever and only data-collection effort undertaken during the past twenty-plus years of McMillan Park development proposals, despite the developers' claim of the significant amount of "meetings" they had to discuss community "concerns". The Community Survey form evaluated a broad range of concerns related to the proposed development plans and approximately 87% of residents living in neighborhoods directly surrounding McMillan Park want for at least 50% of McMillan Sand Filtration Site to remain as a contiguous public park. Rather than focusing on community outreach and undertake surveys that would show community preferences based on evidence, the developer chose instead to hire an outside firm from Baltimore to develop a fake grassroots Astroturf campaign with the explicit goal to "shift the general perception to that of majority local support for VMP plans". But what could be expected from a developer that was not chosen on the basis of a transparent, competitive process based on a Request for Proposals, but

on the basis of an exclusive agreement which includes both the master planning as well as the vertical development.

The current VMP plan is not in line with the Comprehensive Plan which also says that the city should not give away public land and does not follow the Secretary of the Interior's Preservation Standards, which states that the existing conditions of the historic features should be evaluated and try to be used at it was before or to be given a new use that maximizes the retention of the distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships. There are many examples around the world in and in the US that show how historic preservation, adaptive reuse and open park space can generate significant amount of financial revenue to the cities, like the high line who generated an estimated US\$ 2 billion for the city in new development, since the old industrial railway track was saved from demolition by a group of neighborhood volunteers who started a non-profit for adaptive re-use. (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/03/realestate/commercial/cities-see-another-side-to-old-tracks.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&pagewanted=1&adxnnlx=1398969786-oBB2s2ihbPfh9y/X6ktmkw)

Cities recognize parks are good for their economies. They're no longer a nice thing to have, but a must, specifically in a city like Washington that does not plan for green areas, as the failed incorporation of park space in the densely developed NOMA neighborhood shows. The 1901 McMillan Plan was part of a comprehensive plan to preserve and create park space and foster creation as part of the "Emerald Necklace" of parks along the high points of the city. Washingtonians used the area as park until it was fenced off by the city at the beginning of WWII. This loss of park space, so dearly needed in Ward 5 which is deprived of park resources compared to other areas in the city is really an unacceptable impact in addition to the unacceptable impact that the 6,000 additional vehicles per day would cause in an areas which is already jam-packed with traffic and failed intersections.



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