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Anthony Hood  
Chairman  
DC Zoning Commission

April 29, 2014

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to the DMPED/VMP McMillan PUD, Case #13-14

Dear Chairman Hood:

As I compose this letter, it's raining hard in Stronghold, my home since 1986 and the place I hope to continue to call home for the remainder of my days, having retired a few years ago.

Unknown to most of the neighborhood, DC Water is using McMillan sand filtration cell # 14, under the corner of Michigan Avenue and North Capitol Street, Northwest, to divert storm water overflow during major storms in a clever attempt to avoid the catastrophic flooding experienced in the downstream Bloomingdale neighborhood periodically, including in last summer's disastrous storm flooding. This is an appropriate use of one of these historic cells, and this use was proposed by the Friends of McMillan Park to DC Water's George Hawkins for precisely this purpose last year. The DC Council enthusiastically and immediately approved DC Water's proposed use of that cell for this purpose, and it may be helping to keep Bloomingdale homes dry on this very wet day.

I am a director of the Friends of McMillan Park, a founding member of the McMillan Park Committee, and I am also active in my neighborhood's Stronghold Civic Association and the predecessor Stronghold Concerned Citizens group, as well as the McMillan Advisory Group or MAG that has worked for years with the community and the city to try to craft the appropriate revitalization of McMillan Park that we crave. And in that context, I present this personal testimony to you in opposition to the DMPED/VMP proposed zoning application before you because it is a monster that has deviated entirely from both what I want to see happen at the site and even from the earlier plans proposed by the National Capitol Revitalization Corporation for the site.

McMillan Park is 25 acres of what used to be a slow sand filtration facility, covered by a park landscaped by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.. The park was closed in 1941 to prevent sabotage of Washington's water supply during WWII. Though the Army Corps of Engineers has always owned and operated the park and the water filtration facility, and sold 25 acres of it to the District government in 1987, and

promised to reopen the park to the public after the war, that was never done. I have neighbors who recall playing in that park as children and they dream of seeing their own grandchildren play there. So do I. Why not, now that we own it?

McMillan Park is a DC Historic Landmark, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is an American Water Works Landmark, all of which designations describe the historic park and water filtration functions and design of the site. Historic designation does not preclude development, but it does require including the historic elements in development designs. The PUD you have before you makes a mockery of all that, preserving very little of the historic elements of the site, which is a matter to be taken up in a demolition permit the Applicant will seek from the Mayor's Agent following instructions and rejection of this demolition by the Historic Preservation Review Board on October 31, 2013. So why is the Zoning Commission hearing this case before that decision? Further, if the Mayor's Agent grants the demolition permit, the matter will be referred to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to determine whether the Historic Preservation Act has been violated in doing so, yet another decision which should precede, not follow, Zoning Commission consideration.

Deep within the structural study of the McMillan site commissioned by the Applicant of Robert Silman Associates, on page 41 precisely, begins a description of how certain cells and portions of the surface of the site could be reused. This is consistent with a study done by Johnson and Malhotra for the city government in 2000. That latter report was the document consulted by DC Water to choose a cell in which to store storm water, the current project I spoke of at the beginning of my paper. So it is possible to look at the feasibility of reusing many, perhaps most of the surface area and underground cells for the benefit of the community. Yet the city has never seriously considered this. This proposal and possibility should be a key element in a realistic RFP sent out for real competitive bidding, along with notation of the historic character of the site and the Comprehensive Plan recommendations. I would very much look forward to the bids submitted, but such a thing is diametrically opposed to the request for CR and C-3-C zoning before you and is part of the basis for my request that you deny that specific request.

Other speakers at the hearing will discuss the many years of participation in by residents of the Stronghold and Bloomingdale neighborhoods, adjacent to the site, in plans to revitalize the McMillan site. Indeed, the very first VMP plan to develop the site was largely in accord with neighborhood wishes for a grocery store, library, some creative reuse of the underground caverns, suitable set-back from the street to preserve historic and iconic views of our majestic skyline, and none of the high rise construction so opposed by the community. But the VMP plan evolved and now includes just about everything that we tried to keep out of the plan. This is District-owned land, not Ward 5 land, paid for by the taxes of all District taxpayers. The historic designations are also not specific to Ward 5. With our increasingly healthy financial status, and tremendous building throughout the city, I think that it is more urgent than ever that we consider the central park that McMillan was before

granting permission through CR and C-3-C zoning that would permit demolishing this park forever.

The high rise buildings the Applicant has proposed for the site, beyond the monstrosity this would be in a neighborhood zoned R3 and R4 and blocking forever the historic views of the Washington skyline, would bring with it catastrophic traffic problems that are not mitigated by the Applicant. The Applicant's Traffic Impact Study indicates that perhaps 6,000 vehicles per day would be added to the intersection of North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue NW. This intersection is already failed, DDOT having given that intersection an F rating as already well over 100% capacity with no plans to mitigate even existing traffic problems. The Armed Forces Retirement Center development plan for the corner of Irving Street and North Capitol Street, in its Environmental Impact Statement, says that that development would bring approximately 3,700 vehicles per day to the same intersection, and that plan has already been approved. And what about the other developments planned, including the hotel/conference center for the nearby Irving Street cloverleaf, the planned Catholic University new master plan, the Catholic University South Campus development about to open? The nearest Metro station is one mile away: Brookland, Columbia Heights, Petworth, or Shaw, and though there are plans for a Brown Line station, that will not be a reality until perhaps 2050. So how is this traffic for the McMillan site to be mitigated? Bikeshare, a couple extra traffic lights, and some shuttle buses. This is unacceptable, unrealistic, and most importantly fails to address an already bad situation.

Something has gone very wrong in the Applicant's process for redevelopment of the McMillan site. A 2006 Solicitation for Land Development Partner, which was to elicit feasibility studies concerning what can and cannot feasibly be done at the site, was skipped, as were the Phase II and Phase III components to find a Master Developer based on those studies, and ultimately a third proposal to identify designers and vertical developers based on the whole process. What we have is a consultant to DMPED with an exclusive rights agreement we have seen that assures there will be no competition for the development roles or the purchase of the land from the city. This is an affront to the RFP process in specific, which is how this process should be handled, and to notions of openness and transparency that the site and the people of this city deserve and expect. The Applicant has further hired Fontaine & Company in Baltimore, Maryland, to "discredit and neutralize" the Friends of McMillan Park's efforts to see what the community wants and advocate it, claiming that the Friends of McMillan Park is an outside group with a non-local agenda, and using tax dollars to fund that campaign. We deserve better of our city than to characterize neighbors and constituents seeking a proud revitalization of this treasure than to characterize them, in a mercenary campaign, as outsiders.

Please reject the zoning application before you today as completely out of character with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, realistic traffic management possibilities, and the community's wish for some development and

revitalization of this resource but not overdevelopment. CR and C-3-C are not an appropriate zoning for the McMillan site and should not be granted. Grant something more consistent with the Comprehensive Plan recommendations and consistent with the historic status of the site.