

Testimony before the D.C. Zoning Commission

In support of ZC No. 13-14 – Vision McMillan Partners & District of Columbia
Health Care Facility (Parcel 1)

By Jonathan Tomer, 2126 Flagler Pl NW, Washington, DC
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As a DC resident, living in Bloomingdale about half a mile from the site of the former McMillan Sand Filtration Plant, I would like to express my strong support for the VMP plan for redevelopment of Parcel 1 of the site as a health-care facility.

Given DC's status as a first-class city, one would expect it to be easy for District residents to get access to high-quality medical care within reasonable distance from their homes; surprisingly, this is far from true. In my ten years in DC, I have several times had to spend days trying to find a general practitioner's or specialist's office that was accepting new patients and had an office in DC at all. I have been told by doctors that one reason for this is the limited availability -- and consequently high price -- of appropriate space for a medical office in the city. By adding enough space for several hundred medical offices, this development should make it much easier for me and my neighbors to find a doctor with a conveniently located office.

In addition, the addition of the medical offices directly across Michigan Av from the existing WHC complex will help tie the latter into the urban fabric. I have high hopes for the potential of this change to inspire additional evolution of the WHC complex, which is a great example of urban planning and design at its worst. With almost a third of its space covered with wasteful surface parking lots, and the buildings scattered across the remainder without regard for accessibility to pedestrians or cyclists or connections to the surrounding city, that complex could use a lot of changes. Perhaps the addition of the medical offices at McMillan will help provide enough extra capacity that WHC could begin incrementally redesigning and rebuilding its space to bring it more in line with what is expected of urban areas.

Beyond technical architectural details with which this Commission is more capable than any lay witness of understanding and addressing, there is in my opinion no legitimate reason to oppose this part of the VMP plan. While the buildings themselves are tall, their position directly across Michigan Av from the existing hospital complex means they are not out of scale with their immediate surroundings. I therefore urge the Commission to support VMP's plan for Parcel 1.