

case 13-14

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DC Office of Zoning (DCOZ)  
441 4th St NW #200  
Washington, DC 20001

DC Zoning Officials,

We in DC are faced with a Renaissance of redevelopment in our city. McMillan can be a national greenspace destination, but not with the current plans. As a DC resident and neighbor to McMillan Reservoir, I demand a better plan for this property. I'd like to turn to three other cities I've lived in for better examples of smart, beneficial, and cherished community development.

San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; and New York City all had dangerous, dilapidated spaces that were also truly unique, like McMillan. San Antonio could have paved over the river that flooded frequently. Seattle could have ripped down the market buildings in downtown and developed over the industrial gasification plant on Lake Union. New York was planning to dismantle the elevated rail tracks. Luckily all three of these cities decided to work with public and private interests to think visionary, to **develop a strong public space and surround it with smart private development**. The results?



**The Riverwalk** - San Antonio almost paved over the local riverbed but luckily decided to keep this public space. They started with control of the waters and create a pedestrian walkway along the river. Restaurants, businesses, hotels, a convention center, and more were developed nearby. Now it is the largest tourist revenue producer in the State of Texas. The economic impact of this smart public-private development was over \$10.7 billion in 2011.<sup>1</sup>

**Gasworks Park and Pike Place Market** - A gasification plant is now Gasworks Park. Dilapidated buildings in downtown is now the world-class destination Pike Place Market. Property values and tax revenues are 5% greater when within 500 feet of Seattle parks.<sup>2</sup> But the gem of public space working with private businesses to properly develop a unique and highly valued community asset is the Pike Place Market area. Preserving historic buildings and improving public access resulted in a local, vibrant



<sup>1</sup> SABER Research Institute, Economic Impact Study of Downtown San Antonio: 2011, November 15, 2012; accessed online May 4, 2014 <https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/files/CCDO/EconomicImpactDowntownSanAntonio2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Trust for Public Land: Center for City Park Excellence, The Economic Benefits of Seattle's Park and Recreation System, March 2011, accessed online May 4, 2014 [http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/TPL\\_EconomicBenefits.pdf](http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/TPL_EconomicBenefits.pdf)



neighborhood and an international destination attraction. This development generated business revenues of \$86.8 million, close to \$4 million in sale tax revenues, and created over 5000 direct and indirect jobs in 2002. Most importantly, this model of community and business development in partnership has grown and lasted over decades, serving as a cultural icon to be cherished for years to come.<sup>3</sup>



**High-Line** - What started out as a rusting eyesore hovering about several neighborhoods in the Manhattan Burroughs of New York City is now working on the third expansion of this unique public-private park on an abandoned elevator railroad track. City planners first balked at the idea of the development of this park. Now, with over \$2 billion in private investment surrounding the park, everybody is now praising the vision and economic value of restoring, keeping, and expanding the development of this greenspace potential.<sup>4</sup>

What resulted in my hometown, San Antonio, and my two previous cities, Seattle and New York, are nationally recognized destinations that benefit their communities, city, and economies. The VMP plan does none of these things, primarily serving a small, moneyed, private interest group. This development concept will quickly deteriorate into just another mixed use disaster, ruining the community and neighborhood potential. The VMP plan placed a wedge of park on the edge of boring, traditional, dated development as an afterthought. The unique filtration tower and caverns are so unique that they should be the PRIMARY focus for design and perseverance, placing them first and development complimenting those features, not destroying the majority of them like current VMP plans. Most importantly, this short-term development plan will destroy a diamond-in-the-rough public-private park development opportunity FOREVER.

McMillan, just like the examples provided, should be developed with a visionary plan placing the public greenspace front and center. And just like the collaborations above, McMillan plans can be developed in stages, each section developing on the success of previous public-private plans. Keep the green, develop smartly in brownfields and infill areas, think about generations to come, and create a strong, long-term asset for all of DC and the nation, even the world. Reject this VMP plan. It does nothing but destroy a truly valuable asset in our community and city. Let's developed smart, not stupid.

Respectfully,  
Mel Peffers

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<sup>3</sup> Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority, A Business, Economic and Public Policy Assessment of the PDA's Properties, June 2004, accessed online May 4, 2014 [http://www.pps.org/pdf/pike\\_place\\_economic\\_impact\\_study.pdf](http://www.pps.org/pdf/pike_place_economic_impact_study.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Patrick McGeehan, The High Line Isn't Just a Sight to See; It's Also an Economic Dynamo, New York Times, June 5, 2011, accessed online May 4, 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/06/nyregion/with-next-phase-ready-area-around-high-line-is-flourishing.html>