

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE.

The McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration Site (“The Sand Filtration Site”) is a 25-acre area bounded by North Capitol Street, NW; Michigan Avenue, NW; First Street, NW and Channing Street, NW. Structures on the site consist of twenty underground sand filtration chambers and two east-west service access courts on which stand rows of sand storage bins, sand washing equipment and regulator houses. The site is divided into three approximately equal-sized areas by the service courts. The site is part of the larger historic McMillan Park Reservoir, a significant contributing element in the McMillan Plan for Washington DC. McMillan Park Reservoir is listed on the National Register and the DC Register of Historic Places. It has been recommended by the D.C. Historic Preservation Board to be placed on the National Registry of Historic Sites. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) has designated the McMillan Sand Filtration Site as a site for a National Monument or Museum. The site has been listed four times on the D.C. Preservation League list of most endangered historic sites.

1. THE HISTORIC, CULTURAL, DESIGN, AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE.

Historic Significance:

The Sand Filtration Site was the first water treatment plant in the city and an important element in the city’s aqueduct and water supply system. It was operated by the Army Corps of Engineers from 1905 until well into the 1980s. A sand bed filtration system ensured the quality and purity of the drinking water and reduced the spread of typhoid and other water-borne diseases. Although the creation of the largest, slow sand filtration plant in the United States is historically noteworthy in and of itself, the Sand Filtration Site is more than just an engineering wonder.

Part of the significance of the McMillan sand filtration site lies within the historical context of Washington DC. . . . Washington has a rich tradition of open space that together with its urban fabric, shape its unique urban form. This tradition comes from two significant plans in the city’s history, the emblematic L’Enfant’s Plan of 1791 and the more recent McMillan plan of 1901.¹

L’Enfant laid down the template for the boulevards, squares, and circles that make the District of Columbia unique among American cities. But it was the McMillan Plan that brought L’Enfant’s vision to fruition.

¹ Adrienne Michelle Jones, *Filter as Metaphor: The McMillan Sand Filtration Site 3* (2010) (unpublished Master of Architecture thesis, University of Maryland) (on file with applicant),

That Plan was a result of the work of the United States Senate Park Commission, which had been created in 1901 by the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia on the Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia and chaired by Senator James McMillan (R-Michigan). Not only did the Commission have the usual array of Senators and Congressman, but it also included many prominent people who had become associated with the City Beautiful movement, including, among others, planner/architect Daniel Burnham, architect Charles McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead Jr., and sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens. Through the Commission, these giants set out to

. . . develop a comprehensive plan for preserving park space in the portions of the District beyond the limits of the city of Washington and provide for the recreation and health of a constantly growing population. The spaces that were chosen worthy of preserving as parks were primarily hilltops from which extensive views could be obtained. The idea was to create a park system where people could move from one park to the next without leaving the park system.²

This “Emerald Necklace” of parks would attend to the needs of residents for recreation and places to escape the rigors of urban life while simultaneously making Washington a showplace among American cities. Part of serving those mutual needs was the Commission’s desire to increase the number of water features in the District:

The original plans of Washington show the high appreciation L’Enfant had for all forms of water decoration; and when the heats of Washington summer are taken into consideration, further argument is unnecessary to prove that the first and greatest step in the matter of beautifying the District of Columbia is such an increase in the water supply as will make possible the copious and even lavish use of water fountains.³

Thus, not only was the Sand Filtration Site created as part of a system that ensured clean and clear drinking water for District residents, but also it was part of a system meant to be supply the water needed for the Commission’s many planned water features (pools, fountains, etc.). But as noted above, the Commission’s vision for the Sand Filtration Site also included having the Site itself be part of the Necklace parks that the Commission was planning for the entire city.⁴ The Commission’s report depicts the Sand Filtration Site as part of this larger park system with parkland around three sides of the Site as exists today.⁵

² *Id.* at 6.

³ Charles Moore, *The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902) 28.

⁴ Jones, *supra* note 1, at 6.

⁵ *Id.* at 7, Figure 6.

In 1906, Secretary of War William Howard Taft designated the Sand Filtration Site part of the McMillan Reservoir Park, a memorial to Senator McMillan for his work as Commission chairman and his efforts in shaping the development of the city at the turn of the 20th century. The Park included the filtration beds and plant, the reservoir, and all the vehicular and pedestrian approaches. In addition to being a memorial to Senator McMillan, the Sand Filtration Site also takes its place in the history of Washington as one of its first racially integrated public parks. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Washington was a segregated city (often instigated at the hands of the Federal government) where black and white residents recreated in segregated parks.⁶ Despite that citywide practice, to this day, many elderly African-American residents of the Bloomingdale and Stronghold neighborhoods still recount tales of their youth in the 1930s playing at and sleeping on the Sand Filtration Site for respite during hot summer nights. The fact that the Sand Filtration Site was the rare integrated park in Washington makes the Site a historic place of the first rank.

Cultural Significance:

Conceived of in the McMillan Plan as a large permanent reserve of open green space for the benefit of the citizens, the Sand Filtration Site was designed and built through the collaboration of pre-eminent civil engineers, urban planners, artists, and architects, including engineer Allen Hazen, planner and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., sculptor Herbert Adams, and architect Charles Platt.

Adams and Platt designed and sited an outstanding example of beaux arts statuary and design in the form of the McMillan Memorial Fountain and Plaza (“the Fountain”). Named in honor of Senator McMillan, it served as a focal point in the park to take advantage of views to the city and making it readily visible to residents and visitors. To address security concerns regarding the city’s drinking water during World War II, the Fountain was dismantled and removed from its location at the head of 1st and Channing Streets NW, and both the Reservoir and the Sand Filtration Site were fenced off and closed to the public. But as of the summer of 2012, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the McMillan Reservoir Water Treatment Plant and which owns the Fountain, is actively working with the National Park Service to find a way to re-erect the Fountain just across 1st Street from the Sand Filtration Site.⁷ The hope is to restore the artistic gem in time for the centennial of the Fountain’s dedication in 2013.

⁶ <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/anacostia/recon.html>

⁷ E-mail from Patricia Gamby, Deputy Director of the Washington Aqueduct, to John Salatti, July 17, 2012.

Urban Design and Landscape Significance:

The building of the Sand Filtration Site heralded the triumphant emergence of City Beautiful planning principles in Washington. To embellish the civic infrastructure and provide it a landscape that invited comment and encouraged passive recreation, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. designed a landscape with four principles elements. First, and most prominent, he planted allées of pleached hawthorn trees and hedges at the perimeter, rows of cork trees in the service courts, and mulberry trees and shrubs at the entrances. Second, he created a great lawn on top of the sand filtration chambers by spreading two to two and half feet of topsoil above the chambers, creating one of the first and, at 20-plus acres, likely the largest green roof in the world. Third, he also planted ivy at the bases of the sand bins, which more than a century later still softens the industrial face of these concrete cylinders. Fourth, in addition to the plantings at the Site, he designed a cohesive ensemble of picturesque plantings at the Reservoir and its encircling drive as well as other utilitarian structures on the site.

Engineering and Architectural Significance:

In siting, architectural detailing, and construction, the filter beds, sand storage bins, sand washing equipment, regulator houses, and other ancillary structures are a testament to the bold conception of civil engineering infrastructure and the humane architecture of public buildings in the early years of the 20th century. The regulator houses are made of brick laid in Flemish bond. Details include large arched windows providing ample interior light, moulded brick arches and watertables, corbelled brick work, and tiled hip roofs. Some of the sand bins have porthole windows and bathroom facilities.

The combined significance of the history, culture, design, and architecture of McMillan Park and the Sand Filtration Site as a part of the Park make the Site an important piece of the fabric of the District of Columbia and the United States. Both from a local and a national perspective, the Park and the Site represent a significant advance in the implementation of the McMillan Plan and the acceptance of the McMillan Plan as a far-reaching planning document.

2. A DESCRIPTION OF THE THREAT FACING THE SITE AND THE IMMEDIACY OF THAT THREAT.

Although many would have thought that the Federal government's closing of the Sand Filtration Site to the public in 1942 would have ended the Site's hybrid use for both industry and recreation, others held out hope. Four decades after the Site ended its time as park, the Army Corps of Engineers stopped utilizing it. In 1985, the Corps opened a new chemical-based water treatment facility on the

west side of 1st Street NW. The Federal government then deemed the Site surplus property and ordered the Corps to dispose of it. But rather than simply selling the land to the highest bidder, the Corps with its long institutional memory tried to invoke the McMillan Plan.

Thus, the Corps's first effort to dispose of the Site was to offer it to the District for \$1 . . . with one caveat: the District would need to return the Site to its original intended use as one of the string of parks envisioned in the McMillan Plan. The Corps understood the value of the Plan and the even greater need by the 1980s for the center of the city to have ample, contiguous, public park spaces. Although creating a Rock Creek Park on the east side of town as laid out in the McMillan Plan was no longer possible, the Corps recognized that the Sand Filtration Site could contribute significantly to the quality of life for District residents, which was a central pillar of the McMillan Plan. That point of view, however, was not shared by the District government.

The District rejected that offer and instead said it would pay the fair market value for the Site so that the government could develop it. Having no other option, the Corps sold the Site to the District of Columbia for \$9.3 million. Since coming into possession of the Sand Filtration Site, the District has damaged the Site considerably by acts of omission and commission. Its omissions include little to no maintenance of the Site. Although the District has mowed grass and picked up litter, it has done nothing to maintain both the above- and below-ground infrastructure on the Site. These actions of demolition by neglect have damaged the regulator houses, the portals to the sand filtration chambers, and the chambers themselves. In the case of the latter, some chambers have experienced subsidence because of the lack of maintenance, which has resulted in the collapse of part of green roof over a couple of chambers. The District's acts of commission have proven an even greater tragedy. The District has intentionally and systematically destroyed the landscaping designed by Olmsted, Jr.

If that was the extent of the damage to this landmark, that would be enough. However, the threat of catastrophic destruction is immediate. The District has attempted to develop the Sand Filtration Site several times. The first two attempts were roundly rebuffed by the community as two intensive and not serving the needs of the community surrounding the Site. We are now in the midst of the third and most aggressive effort on the part of the District government to develop the Site.

This latest effort began in 2006 property when the Site was in the portfolio of National Capital Revitalization Corporation ("NCRC"), a semi-private real estate development corporation. NCRC selected a private development team to prepare the Site for development and create a basic design plan. Soon thereafter, NCRC was dissolved by order of the District Council, and ownership of the

McMillan site reverted back to the city under the aegis of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.

Since 2008, the District and its development partners have presented to the community a variety of plans for developing the Sand Filtration Site. Although the developers have held many meetings ostensibly to reap input from the community, the latest plans are not much different in size and massing than the original April 2008 proposal. True, the strong voices of the community have helped improve the quality of the current proposal. But what has also been very clear is that the changes that have been made to development plan are not much more than cosmetic.

The current plan still calls for 700 to 900 units of housing, 8- to 10-story medical office buildings, and other retail amounting to over 2.1 million square feet of construction on the Site. The community has insisted that the plan increase the size of the contiguous public park space and it has moved from 2.5 to about 4.0 acres, but the park includes a roadway and the southern set of sand bins and regulator houses. Thus, the park, while bigger, is not much more functional for the purpose of public recreation than the 2.5-acre park.

Not only does the park not function in any way near Olmsted's original vision, the current plan does not restore much of Olmsted's design. The planting patterns will not return. The Olmsted walk around the whole site will be just a fragment of its original self.

Beyond that destruction of the historic elements of the Sand Filtration Site, the current proposal demolishes over 65% of the historic site and built fabric. Although it does preserve the aboveground structures, it only preserves two intact underground cells and rips out the other 18. Moreover, the proposal offers very little detail regarding adaptive reuse of anything that is preserved. But getting those two cells preserved is a major coup for the neighborhoods. Residents have pushed hard for great preservation and adaptive reuse. Whatever aspects of the historic fabric of McMillan are in the proposal, they are there because active, concerned community members have advocated relentlessly for a much better marriage of preservation and development, and they have done so in the face of major opposition from the developers and the District. But in an effort to maximize their financial gain from the project, the developers and the District have been categorically unwilling throughout this six-year process to consider ways to adaptively reuse more of the underground chambers with their rows and rows of arcades. Not surprisingly, the structural engineer paid by the developers has lent support to this drive to destroy the sand filtration chambers. But even though he has emphasized that part of the Sand Filtration Site are unstable (as noted above, due to neglect by the District), his

professional reputation required him to say that much of the underground substructure could be preserved. He said that such preservation would require more than the typical fix for updating a structure.⁸ But almost everyone agrees that the Sand Filtration Site is not a typical place. Its historic connections and contributions merit an effort that is much more than “typical.”

All these indignities to this significant piece of local and national history have led to considerable opposition to the current one. Every local organization that has taken a stand about the development of the Sand Filtration Site has opposed it: ANC 1B, the Bloomingdale Civic Association, and the Stronghold Civic Association.⁹ And each of those rejections came with a list of the proposal’s inadequacies. Topping the list are the inadequate size of the proposal’s park, the paucity of historic preservation, and concerns about stormwater runoff.

This last point has particular resonance to downstream neighbors in Bloomingdale. Bloomingdale has suffered from a series of floods over the last decade with a number of houses being damaged each time. Indeed, an unprecedented three floods occurred this summer. The basic problem is the inadequacy of the DC Water combined sewer and stormwater overflow infrastructure. Although fine in most instances, during intense rains, the outflow builds so quickly that the pipes fill beyond capacity, resulting in water and sewage backing up into the neighborhood, particularly entering homes through the basement plumbing system in houses with basement toilets and showers. DC Water is in the process of rebuilding the infrastructure with the goal of eliminating this backup problem, but the system will not be operational before 2025. Bloomingdale residents are rightfully worried about the next dozen or more years; the development of the Sand Filtration Site only heightens those fears. With thousands of new sewer hookups coming from the Site and with much of the Site being paved over, residents rightfully fear that a place that has absorbed water for over a century could help create their worst nightmare with additional runoff. Preserving much more of the Site would not add to the downstream flooding problems and would continue to absorb millions of gallons of rainwater every year. The Sand Filtration Site’s huge green roof will see to that.

In conclusion, the indignities to the Sand Filtration Site cannot be exaggerated. Here are just five of the ways the District’s proposal would gut the Site’s historicity. First, the size and amount of proposed building will destroy 90% of the underground arcades that remain a testament to early 20th

⁸ See Historic Preservation Review Board hearing of July 12, 2012 (<http://view.liveindexer.com/ViewIndexSessionSL.aspx?ecm=634807554283878750&indexSessionSKU=ERhep6oa2Rqp6M5JVrzQYQ%3D%3D&siteSKU=f6xCazh2CRSq6dywHLuElw%3D%3D>).

⁹ Copies included with this application.

century designers and craftspeople. Second, the remaining surface structures will be little more than marketing props to the new buildings, which overwhelm and trivialize the historic fabric. Third, the scale and type of project ignores the existing neighborhood and will serve to make what was intended to be the most public of sites in terms of passive recreation and service provision into an enclave of those who can afford to live and shop there. Fourth, the District's plan does little to restore one of the key historic elements of the Site: the Olmsted landscaping. Fifth, the increased traffic that commercial uses would generate will further compromise the Site and neighborhood. The District and its development partners have drawn their plans either without providing or without heeding traffic, engineering, environmental impact, or historic studies.

Clearly, the threats to the Sand Filtration Site are numerous and critical, but are they immediate? Without question, yes! The current proposal has moved from being something in the midst of discussion and revision to a Planned Unit Development document with the District of Columbia taking the very unusual and perhaps untenable role of primary developer. The District has submitted the PUD to all appropriate District agencies, boards, and commissions that have to weigh in a project like this and the hearings¹⁰ have begun. The developers project breaking ground by late next year. The threats to the Sand Filtration Site are dire and near at hand.

3. ACTIONS NEEDED TO ALLEVIATE THE THREAT.

Here are four actions that can alleviate the threat to the Sand Filtration Site or are working to reduce that threat.

First, before doing anything else, the District should be required to describe in very concrete terms how it justifies destroying even a portion of this registered historic site. Although economic development is an important component of any city's long-term stability and strength, the last decade and the current one have seen and are seeing a boom in construction and development. In total over fifty million square feet of development and new economic activity have been built, are currently being built, or will be built with a mile and a half of the Sand Filtration Site:

¹⁰ During its first hearing on July 12, 2012, members of the Historic Preservation Review Board raised some real concerns about this project. *See* HPRB hearing *supra* note 8.

- the Catholic University South Campus project
- Chancellors' Row rowhouse development,
- NOMA (34 million square feet)
- a large development with housing and retail at the intersection of Eckington Place and Harry Thomas Way NE
- City Vista and the resurging Mt. Vernon Square area
- The new City Center off New York Avenue
- the continuing boom in Shaw and historic U Street (including the Progression Place development, the refurbished Howard Theater, and the O Street Market, which will include D.C.'s largest Giant supermarket)
- the thriving Bloomingdale business district along First Street NW
- the Howard Town Center
- planned building over the I-395 tunnel and the railroad tracks north of Union Station
- *just one block north of McMillan*, the 4.3 million square feet of development at the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

With all this economic development, job creation, and tax-base building going on all around the Sand Filtration Site, the District should by rights have to offer clear and persuasive explanations what the need is to destroy a D.C. landmark in favor of a typical suburban development.

Second, because such a justification is not likely to be convincing, the District should simply move forward and recognize the highest and best use of the land, and the use that will return the most to the District in the long term: a development plan that will yield moderate commercial and retail use, an enlarged tax base, and a meaningful restoration of a substantial portion of the Sand Filtration Site to one of its original uses, as a park for the local residents, and the citizens of the District. That is, the District should actually follow its own the Comprehensive Plan.¹¹ It is bad enough when private developers ignore or undermine the goals of the Comprehensive Plan; it is even worse when the District government itself, the entity that promulgates and should uphold the Comprehensive Plan, perpetrates such a violation.

The Comprehensive Plan's guidelines strongly call for two of the points made in this application. First, any future use of the Sand Filtration Site should include significant park space as part of a network of park, open space, and greenway spaces in north central D.C., collectively known as Washington Central Parks, which the current development plan does not recognize. Second, any future use should thoroughly explore creatively reusing the sand filtration chambers.

Third, by realizing the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the District would be able—in the 21st century—to rededicate the Park as the memorial to Senator McMillan, whose public service and vision were so crucial to the humane growth of the city in the 20th century. The new park should also acknowledge Allen Hazen, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., Herbert Adams, and Charles Platt,

¹¹ See Appendix A *infra*.

among others who designed the site and created the Emerald Necklace of Washington, D.C. parks as well as the hundreds or thousands of workers who made safe potable water a reality for the District of Columbia.

Fourth, the community must continue to advocate for the best interest of the Sand Filtration Site and the neighborhoods that surround it.

To that end, a committee has been formed of concerned residents and citizens. These people have come together as the McMillan Park Committee several times in the past 20 years to stop ill-conceived development on the Sand Filtration Site. The McMillan Park Committee wants to save the Site for an open green space and envision public uses such as a formal garden park and museum and exposition on water works consistent with the McMillan Plan. Recently, the McMillan Park Committee in conjunction with a number of neighborhood associations has posted the Our McMillan blog site, as a community forum for dialogue about the preservation and reuse of the Sand Filtration Site: <http://www.ourmcmillan.com/>. Likewise, a group called Friends of McMillan has set up a Facebook page informing people of what is going on at the Site.

Another part of the community's efforts have been educating the public about the Sand Filtration Site. Until the District barred residents from the Site in June, these neighborhood groups also offered free, public tours of the Site. People are so interested in this landmark that within the last twelve months alone over 1,000 people toured the Site's above- and below-ground wonders. And some of those visitors have made art while touring. Photography exhibitions in the District have included shots taken at the Sand Filtration Site. A sound engineer has had an exhibit of the music he made just from recording the sound of rain from inside one of the sand filtration chambers. Finally, a full blown band has recorded music at the Site and included those songs on a recent release.

A final community effort has been to create a viable alternative to the current proposal. Working with an architect and architecture students, a full-blown, fully rendered alternative design was unveiled at the July HPRB hearing. This design recreates much of the original Olmsted landscaping. It preserves quite a number of the sand filtration chambers and offers concrete options for reusing them for the 21st century. It creates a great central park that covers about 50% of the Site, which is in keeping the long-time wishes of the community. This park includes a large community center much of which is incorporated underground in some of the sand filtration chambers. Some of the alternative's architecture pays homage to the historic elements on the Sand Filtration Site by utilizing materials and design elements (Flemish bond, tile roofs, cylindrical structures, etc.) similar

to those in the existing structures, creating a modern feel and a cohesive design. The alternative also daylight a long-buried stream and creates an urban beach that would offer recreation and assist with on-site stormwater management.

The community's goals with the alternative plan is to show residents and civic leaders

- that the current proposal, despite the protestations of the developers, is not the only option for taking the Sand Filtration Site into this century, and
- that with creativity and a passion for utilizing the Site in a way that recognizes and revitalizes some of its historic function any development at the Site would be truly world class.

Having shown the alternative to the HPRB, the team will be presenting it to elected officials and community associations throughout the fall. This effort will gain much more public support than already exists to pressure the District and the developers to rethink their still-flawed design.

4. HOW LISTING ON DCPL'S MOST ENDANGERED PLACES LIST WOULD HELP THE SITE.

The McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration Site was listed in DCPL's Most Endangered Places for 2000, 2001, 2005, and 2006. The developers' plan to put commercial development on the property with little regard to the site's historic and cultural significance; with virtually no government oversight; and with little regard for the oft-expressed wishes of the surrounding community to make the site an accessible park to ease the lack of informal recreation facilities in this part of the city. This site, set aside by the creators of the National Mall and other parks, placed this facility on the escarpment surrounding the city to provide those most necessary resources to any community—safe water and recreation opportunities. It is tragic that both have been compromised by interests with shortsighted motives to attract new development delivered at any cost and without regard to the best interest of the residents of the District and surrounding community, and the historic significance of the site.

NOW is the time to recognize the farsightedness of those designers and civil engineers by preserving their work and making it available to future generations of Washingtonians. This was the vision of the City Beautiful Movement and in this 107th year of this historic site, it would be a tragedy to forsake those ideals for ill-conceived development on an irreplaceable site. It would literally desecrate this site, which has national and international historical significance, as well as a daily connection to the many residents whose homes and memories surround the site. The irony is that the District owns this historic place; all too often such places fall into private hands and are lost.

Our hope is that by the awareness brought by being placed on DCPL's most endangered places list, the Sand Filtration Site will escape the fate of many Washington historic sites where little remains today except for a bronze plaque, noting that something important was once here.

Perhaps the developer's own historic preservation expert, Emily Eig said it best at the July HPRB hearing. She said that the Sand Filtration Site is "very special." The community's efforts represented in part by this nomination are to prevent this very special place from becoming very ordinary.

DCPL'S CONTINUED SUPPORT AND THE PUBLICITY AND INTEREST GENERATED BY THE MOST ENDANGERED PLACES LIST ARE CRUCIAL TO THE COMMUNITY'S ON-GOING AND LONG-STANDING WORK TO PRESERVE THE McMILLAN RESERVOIR SAND FILTRATION SITE. THUS, DCPL IS A PARTNER WITH LOCAL ACTORS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE CURRENT THREAT TO THE SITE. THIS AWARENESS WILL ENABLE STAKEHOLDERS TO IDENTIFY CREATIVE AND VIABLE DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES THAT SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE DISTRICT AS A WHOLE AND THAT FITTINGLY PRESERVE THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS HISTORIC SITE.

APPENDIX A

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Chapter 20 Mid-City Area Element

pages 20-29 through 20-31

MC-2.6 McMillan Sand Filtration Site 2016

The McMillan Sand Filtration site occupies 25 acres at the corner of North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue NW. Once used to filter drinking water from the Potomac River, the plant was closed and sold by the federal government to the District of Columbia for “community development purposes” in 1987. The site currently appears as an open area of grass and trees with two rows of enigmatic concrete towers covered with ivy. Beneath the surface are 20 unreinforced concrete filter cells, each one acre in size and in various states of disrepair. The entire site is considered historically significant. When the filtration system was created in 1905, it was considered an engineering marvel and a model for other plants nationwide. 2016.1

The McMillan site has been the subject of community forums for nearly 20 years. Many residents have advocated for a park on the site, noting its historic significance. In fact, the filtration site and the adjacent McMillan reservoir were part of the Emerald Necklace of parks conceived in the 1901

McMillan Plan, and the site itself was originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Past proposals for the site have been the subject of lawsuits, and the former Comprehensive Plan designation of the site for mixed use development was itself the subject of a lawsuit in 1989-92. ^{2016.2}

The District conducted planning workshops for the site in 2000 to explore potential new uses. Several options were considered, including a community park, a retail-hotel complex, and a mixed use residential-retail scenario. Each of the options dedicated a substantial portion of the site as parkland. In 2004, an unsolicited proposal to build 1,200 units of housing on the site was made by a private developer. In 2005, the site was transferred from the District to the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC). NCRC is currently developing plans for the property. ^{2016.3}

Whatever the outcome, several basic objectives should be pursued in the re-use of the McMillan Sand Filtration site. These are outlined in the policies below. ^{2016.4}

Policy MC-2.6.1: Open Space on McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration Site Require that reuse plans for the McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration site dedicate a substantial contiguous portion of the site for recreation and open space. The open space should provide for both active and passive recreational uses, and should adhere to high standards of landscape design, accessibility, and security. Consistent with the 1901 McMillan Plan, connectivity to nearby open spaces such as the Armed Forces Retirement Home, should be achieved through site design. ^{2016.5}

Policy MC-2.6.2: Historic Preservation at McMillan Reservoir Restore key above-ground elements of the site in a manner that is compatible with the original plan, and explore the adaptive reuse of some of the underground “cells” as part of the historic record of the site. The cultural significance of this site, and its importance to the history of the District of Columbia must be recognized as it is reused. Consideration should be given to monuments, memorials, and museums as part of the site design. ^{2016.6}

Policy MC-2.6.3: Mitigating Reuse Impacts Ensure that any development on the site is designed to reduce parking, traffic, and noise impacts on the community; be architecturally compatible with the surrounding community; and improve transportation options to the site and surrounding neighborhood. Any change in use on the site should increase connectivity between Northwest and Northeast neighborhoods as well as the hospital complex to the north. ^{2016.7}

Policy MC-2.6.4: Community Involvement in Reuse Planning Be responsive to community needs and concerns in reuse planning for the site. Amenities which are accessible to the community and which respond to neighborhood needs should be included. ^{2016.8}

Policy MC-2.6.5: Scale and Mix of New Uses Recognize that development on portions of the McMillan Sand Filtration site may be necessary to stabilize the site and provide the desired open space and amenities. Where development takes place, it should consist of moderate- to medium-density housing, retail, and other compatible uses. Any development on the site should maintain viewsheds and vistas and be situated in a way that minimizes impacts on historic resources and adjacent development. ^{2016.9}

Action MC-2.6.A: McMillan Reservoir Development Continue working with the National Capital Revitalization Corporation and adjacent communities in the development and implementation of reuse plans for the McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration site. ^{2016.10}