



Office of the Director

June 17, 2016

Dear Neighbors for Hearst Park:

Thank you for your June 13 open letter to Mayor Muriel Bowser, Councilmember Mary Cheh and other District Government Representatives regarding the Hearst Park and Pool Improvement Project and community participation process. As the lead agencies for this project, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Department of General Services (DGS) appreciate your feedback expressing concerns about community engagement. Your support, and the support of community members like you, is vital to the success of this project.

As you may be aware, the design phase for this project began last month. We regret that you feel insufficient notice was given to members of the community for the May 10 and June 18 meetings. We are committed to enhancing our communication efforts to ensure timely notice to resident of future meetings. Moving forward, we commit to providing a minimum 14 day notice for meetings related to this project.

Please be assured that we are at the very beginning of the design phase, and there is ample time for members of the community to provide input. As indicated at the May 10 introductory meeting and in the email advising residents of the Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, DPR and DGS have not developed final plans for the park or proposed pool. As a standard preliminary step in all of our park and field projects, DPR and DGS are working with an architecture and engineering firm to conduct preliminary research and site surveys that will provide information on existing conditions at the park.

During the May 10 introductory meeting held at Hearst Elementary School, the DPR/ DGS project team and architecture and engineering team (Cox Graae + Spack) were introduced. Basic information was provided about the project scope and park's boundaries. This meeting provided us the opportunity to listen to, and record, questions and concerns. Please visit the following link to view the meeting PowerPoint presentation and minutes: <http://dgs.dc.gov/node/1135096>.

Please see below, answers to the specific questions raised in your letter:

1. **Please clarify the project area. Is it the open field or does it include the tennis courts, rec center, parkland and other areas surrounding the field?**

The project area includes the geographic boundaries for Hearst Park which include the tennis courts and fields. The aforementioned website link to the DPR/ DGS PowerPoint presentation includes a map on slide 10 with the boundaries of Hearst Park.

In response to community requests, DPR and DGS have agreed to work with the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) to prepare a design for the existing pedestrian path located within the Idaho Avenue Right-of-Way located east of Hearst Park. This will be a component of the overall design work for the project. Plans will also be developed for improving the pedestrian path that leads to the Hearst Recreation Center.

**2. Is the project about preserving and renovating Hearst Park, or is it about siting an outdoor pool in Ward 3?**

The project will include plans necessary for the preservation and renovation of Hearst Park and for the establishment of an outdoor pool and pool house.

**3. If it's about siting a pool, what other sites were considered beyond the two referenced at Friendship Recreational Center and Palisades Park and deemed unsuitable? Since Hearst Park was deemed the only viable option, shouldn't alternative sites be considered? Please post the full report, including methodology, findings, and conclusions of whatever study or process assessed potential sites.**

Ward 3 encompasses three DPR recreation sites with a land area sufficient to support an outdoor pool and pool house. To provide a visual companion to the information noted below, please visit the following website link to view a map illustrating the Ward 3 recreation centers and parkland under DPR's jurisdiction: <http://arcg.is/22CLSMf>.

The following sites meeting the prerequisite need for sufficient land area for an outdoor pool and pool house are:

1. Friendship Recreation Center, located at 45th and Van Ness Street, NW;
2. Palisades Recreation Center, located at 5200 Sherier Place, NW; and
3. Hearst Park, located at 3701 37th Street, NW.

After considering the prerequisite land area need, the following factors were considered during the site selection process:

1. Land area available for construction of an outdoor pool and pool house;
2. A location which will provide an outdoor pool amenity to areas without access to an outdoor pool within a 1.5 mile service area;
3. Demographics, including age, population and density information;
4. Access to transportation alternatives;
5. Current and future capital improvement plans; and
6. Potential environmental impacts.

Following an analysis of these factions, Hearst Park has been identified as the best location for a new outdoor pool and pool house. It is centrally located in Ward 3, and does not include an outdoor pool within 1.5 miles of nearby communities. Nearby residents can walk to the pool or to gain access to the pool via public transportation.

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Friendship Recreation Center was determined to be less than an ideal location for a new outdoor pool because it was slated for demolition and construction of a new recreation center in fiscal year 2015. Construction began in Fall 2015, and is scheduled to be complete in Fall 2016.

Palisades Recreation Center was determined to be less than ideal because it has a limited area available for new development, and is slated for construction of a new recreation center. Additionally, the site and the recreation center were landmark candidates for the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites. Ultimately, in April 2016, the D.C. Historic Preservation Board designated the Palisades Recreation Center and site as a D.C. historic landmark, and forwarded the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for listing as of local significance. The design process for Palisades was initiated in Spring 2016, and construction is expected to begin in Winter 2017. The historic designation and construction plans for Palisades rendered this site unavailable for the construction of a new outdoor pool.

4. **What environmental impact assessments have or will be conducted, including but not limited to ground water, trees and wildlife? Will hydrology studies be performed given the underground springs beneath the park?**

Cox Graae + Spack architects will conduct all site and environmental surveys required by state and local regulations, as well as, all studies required to support the park preservation and design developed. Cox Graae + Spack will include survey work sufficient for the identification of underground springs, and will follow-up with any necessary studies required to address the springs within the context of the new park design.

5. **The park is not maintained adequately. What assurances can you give that an appropriate maintenance plan will be developed in conjunction with this project?**

If you are able to provide us with specific maintenance requests, we will work to address as many concerns as is feasible in concert with the design process for the Park. We anticipate that long term or major maintenance concerns will be addressed through the design process for the Park. DGS will ensure appropriate maintenance for the Park after all construction work has been completed.

Regarding surveys to determine the neighborhood's views, if a survey is created for the project, DPR and DGS will ensure that all community stakeholders are informed of the process for developing and distributing it. The existing survey on the DGS website was developed and distributed by the Friends of Hearst Park in 2014 and is posted on the website at the request of residents at the May 10 Hearst introductory meeting.

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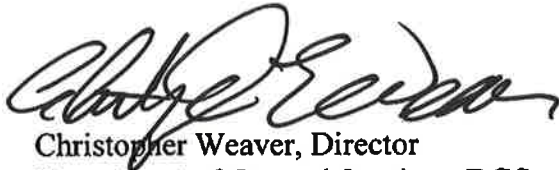
As the process continues, we look forward to hearing from members of the community like you on your vision for Hearst Park and the proposed pool. Again, thank you very much for your support of Hearst Park.

Please contact Ms. Jackie Stanley, DGS Community Outreach Coordinator, at [jackie.stanley@dc.gov](mailto:jackie.stanley@dc.gov) or Ms. Marshella Wallace, DPR Community Planner, at [marshella.wallace@dc.gov](mailto:marshella.wallace@dc.gov) to further discuss questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Keith A. Anderson, Director  
Department of Parks and Recreation, DPR



Christopher Weaver, Director  
Department of General Services, DGS