



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Parks and Recreation



Office of the Director

Friendship (Turtle Park) SIT Members:

Elisabeth Leamy, Board Member, Friends of Friendship Park
Jonathan Bender, ANC 3E Commissioner and ANC Chair
Jonathan McHugh, Board Member, Friends of Friendship Park, ANC3E05 Commissioner
Joy Wallis, Board Member, Friends of Friendship Park
Laura Stefani, Board Member, Friends of Friendship Park
Lucy Cummings, President, Friends of Friendship Park
Maria Creighton, Board Member, Friends of Friendship Park
Sam Serebin, Former ANC3E05 Commissioner
Warren Weinstein, Board Member, Friends of Friendship Park

August 3, 2015

Re: SIT letter to Mayor Bowser, July 12, 2015

Dear Friendship SIT and Community Stakeholders –

Thank you for your letter dated July 12, 2015, regarding concerns about the ongoing design and construction project at Friendship (Turtle) Park. While we have not been able to incorporate all of the SIT recommendations, the Department of General Services and the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DGS/DPR) design team values the Friendship SIT's engagement with us as an advisory board. We are committed to continuing our work with the SIT and the community as we move the project forward to the next stage of refining the design and layout for the playgrounds and exterior enhancements for the Friendship project.

DGS and DPR reviewed the SIT's letter regarding the design of the park's upcoming Recreation Center renovation/new construction. The agencies have worked closely with the SIT and the community over the last year to create a design that was supported by the community at the last Community Meeting on June 24, 2015.

Regarding the concerns expressed in the letter, DGS/DPR offers the following:

1. ***"Now we have a project with sunk costs ranging from \$500,000 to ONE MILLION DOLLARS."***

The project funding obligated to date includes necessary fees spent in this phase of every construction process in which we procure architects, develop concept plans and incur pre-construction costs necessitated by the planning phase. The funds to date are:

- Total Funds Allocated to date for the project is: **\$1,165,841**

Move • • Be Green with DPR

1250 U Street, NW | Washington, D.C. 20009 | P: (202) 673-7647 | F: (202) 673-2087

www.DPR.DC.gov



@DCDPR

This includes administration costs, concept designs, site investigations, preconstruction cost, sewer line relocation design, etc..

- Total project expenditure to date - **\$665,228**

2. ***“Fortunately, the CFA found the plans shown to them by DPR/DGS/Architectural firm thoroughly inadequate and in need of a rework.”***

The project has been submitted at three (3) Commission on Fine Arts (CFA) hearings, one with the original concept building that the SIT approved and two with the new re-designed building. Neither plan was approved by the CFA. The project team is meeting with CFA Staff Members to advance the design and to address their concerns for approval.

3. ***“At this point, the community members of the SIT and many members of the community disapprove of the new building.”***

The DGS/DPR project team disagrees with this statement based on the community meeting held on June 24, 2015. At this meeting, the community was shown the existing concept plans with detailed explanations for the revision. During the meeting, with the exception of one resident who expressed concerns about the location of the Co-op and community room, attendees expressed satisfaction with the direction of the design. The “disapproval of the building” expressed by the Friendship SIT was neither vocalized at the community meeting nor have non-SIT community members shared such concerns. The community concerns that *were* expressed at the June meeting centered on correcting operational issues, revising the design of the spray park, and addressing concerns regarding restroom availability for field participants during construction. Representatives from Councilmember Cheh’s office and the Ward 3 MOCR were present at the community meeting as well.

4. ***“The Co-op Room space has been positioned so far from the bathrooms.”***

The Co-op room has always been positioned far away from the bathrooms, dating back to the concept documents presented on May 14, 2014. The restrooms were thusly positioned based on comments the project team received from the SIT and community requesting that the restrooms be closer to the small children’s play area. Further, DGS/DPR altered the design at the request of the SIT in June 2015 to provide dedicated restrooms in the Co-op space.

5. ***“The Co-op Room design with high ceilings and large windows seem ill-suited for creating a cozy space for small children, especially at the expense of what will be the most utilized room and the original focal point of the project, the Community Room.”***

The Co-op has always been designed with high ceilings; however, the height of the

ceilings has decreased as the design developed. The concept documents dated May 14, 2014, had the Co-op ceilings at about 20 feet. The current design has the ceiling heights between 15-16 feet. The ceiling height in the community room is approximately 12 feet.

- Additionally to address the SIT's concerns regarding the height, the project team discussed with the SIT adding design elements to make the room bright and playful with elements such as birds, clouds or butterflies placed within the tall space.
- The Co-op room in the conceptual documents dated May 14, 2014, would have been a dark space with Concrete Masonry Units (CMU) block, with small portal windows. The design idea of the glass at the Co-op room is to make the kids feel like they're part of the park and not isolated inside a building. The higher ceiling was part of that design to take advantage of high vertical space and to add additional learning space above the kids, and to avoid the typical "shoe box" classroom space.

6. *"The Community Room space that will see the most use has lower ceilings, less window space, and it has been set back in the building with little connection with the park."*

The Community room in the May 14, 2014, design documents was also positioned in the back of the building with no opening to the gallery other than through two (2) doors. In the schematic set of documents dated November 26, 2014, a glass movable partition was added to the area that would give 16 foot opening into the gallery and open it up to the park. In the most recent building configuration, the community room was shifted behind the Co-op space, but the design was able to keep about 15 feet of the opening onto the gallery as well as add windows on the South side. The community room now has more windows than previous versions.

7. *"The Bathrooms define the corner closest to the main entry to the park. In doing so, park users will be greeted by a large windowless mass, when it seems clear they could be set back toward the more utilitarian side of the building."*

The bathrooms were moved to this location (closer to the tot lot) based on feedback and agreement during our October 22, 2014, SIT meeting.

DGS/DPR disagree that the bathrooms are greeting the park visitor. The long dynamic façade of the building is the direct view and the bathrooms are convenient and necessarily visible, but certainly not the center of attention. The rendering from the sidewalk further illustrates this point.

8. *"Furthermore, over the past six months DGS and DPR have consistently and forcefully denied the community any chance to change the design even slightly despite many entreaties to do so both from the SIT and the ANC Commissioner."*

Over the past six (6) months, the DGS/DPR project team and the design build team has met with the SIT team and the community on six (6) different occasions and has incorporated the majority of the SIT requests and suggestions into the interior layout and exterior design. Examples of some the changes made at the request of the SIT were:

- Requested \$1.8M in additional funding for the project to address SIT members program and design requests;
- Enlarged the playground square footage. The Friendship playground will be one of the largest in DPR's inventory;
- Relocated the restrooms from their original location to their existing location;
- Added an external shade structure; and
- The SIT worked with the project team to select finishes for the building.

Additionally, at the request of the SIT Chair and the Friendship ANC, the DGS/DPR project and design team met with them to resolve design concerns raised by the SIT. The meeting was held on June 8, 2015, which resulted in a verbal agreement between the DGS/DPR project team and the SIT. The agreement included the following modifications to the existing plans:

- Adding the restroom back into the Co-op area;
- Redesigning the roof lines to be more appealing;
- Adding an external shade structure; and
- "Soften" the southwest corner of the building by adding a "Green Wall" with plantings.

After the meeting on June 8, 2015, an additional request was made of DGS by the ANC and Councilmember Cheh's Office to switch the Co-op room and the community room. The team again re-evaluated the plans to see if the recommended changes could be incorporated into the building with little impact on the budget or schedule. It was found that the interior redesign would not only impact the interior and exterior architecture but also the building structure, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems. After careful consideration it was decided by both DGS and DPR that the building design should not change.

As noted above, the DGS/DPR design team has worked at length with the Friendship SIT and community on designs for the Recreation Center building and surrounding park upgrades. Due to budget and site constraints, the team has been unable to incorporate all of the SIT recommendations, but considering the value of the Friendship SIT's engagement as an advisory board, the team has strived to address as many concerns as possible within the budget and site. We remain committed to continuing our work with the SIT and broader community as we refine the design and layout for the playgrounds and exterior enhancements for the Friendship project.

Community Submitted Designs

The July 12, 2015, letter notes designs submitted by the community. These draft design present many design issues and have negative cost and timing impacts, as they do not take into

consideration Federal and District mandates such as ADA requirements and DPR standards. More specifically:

SIT Sample Floor Plan A

- This configuration adds approximately 350sf to the building and increases the exterior wall ratio, resulting in an increased construction cost.
- This configuration does not address how the rooflines would be handled with the change in height at various parts of the layout. Most likely, there would be added roof costs to cover the large community room.
- The restrooms were decreased in size by approximately 60sf, which will not allow for the required ADA turnaround requirements and appropriate ADA access.
- Additional, unnecessary space was added for non- programmatic requirements (Huddle space).

SIT Sample Floor Plan B

- This configuration adds approximately 350sf to the building and increases the exterior wall ratio, resulting in an increased construction cost.
- The office is placed in the corner, away from the entrance. A DPR program requirement is that the office is centrally located for monitoring of the facility and welcoming of guests.
- The restrooms were decreased in size by approximately 60sf, which will not allow for the required ADA turnaround requirements and appropriate ADA access.
- Additional, unnecessary space was added for non-programmatic requirements (Huddle space).
- This configuration does not address how the rooflines would be handled with the change in height at various parts of the layout. Most likely, there would be added roof costs to cover the large community room.

Both sample floor plans add “wasted” space to the building, which will require many design hours to work through. In the latest DGS/DPR design, “wasted” or “non-programmable” space was minimized to create a very efficient building.

The Friendship Recreation Center as designed has been approved by DPR, as it meets all programmatic requirements and is within budget. Any further redesign of the building will be at the expense of the project budget and schedule.

- **Anticipated design impact of Plan ‘A’ or ‘B’**
 - Redesign Cost: Approximately **\$200,000**
 - Redesign Schedule: 4 – 6 months (to develop a full set of biddable documents / including meetings with the SIT and rebidding the project)

Note: The changes presented by the SIT in the July 12, 2015, letter will not only impact the interior layout, but also the building structure (including roof), mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and security systems.

- **Anticipated construction impact Plan 'A' or 'B'**
 - Extended General Condition's (GC) **\$75,000**
 - Additional Construction Cost: **\$500,000 – \$900,000**
 - Note: Additional construction cost is based upon the design impacts identified above; permit impacts, as well as the building expansion reflected in the SIT options.
 - Construction Schedule: The start would be delayed, which ultimately affects the completion date. Estimated delay: 4 – 6 months

Note: The target Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) was submitted on July 1, 2015, and was passively approved by Council on July 12, 2015. Permits have been submitted for the sewer line relocation, razing the building, site demolition and storm water management, as well as building foundations. All utilities to the building (water, gas and electricity) have also been disconnected.

Conclusion

DGS and DPR have worked diligently to create the best design and construction outcome, which incorporates both the DPR program requirements, and community needs to elevate the quality of life in the neighborhood. We are confident that the community has been heard and that the existing designs are the most suitable plan for action. We look forward to continued collaboration with the SIT, ANC, Community Groups and residents in concert with the realities of design, construction and budget constraints; while not every single resident will always be happy with every detail of the project, we strive to create the best solution for the community as a whole.

Regards,

Keith A. Anderson, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation

for Jonathan Kayne, Interim Director
Department of General Services

CC: Mayor Muriel Bowser
Councilmember Mary Cheh, Ward 3
Thomas Luebke, Commission on Fine Arts
Frederick Lindstrom, Commission on Fine Arts
Ian Maggard, Ward 3 Liaison, Executive Office of the Mayor
Michael Hall, Director, Fanning/Howey