



Kalorama Park Rehabilitation

Statement Expert/Community Input Recommendations

“...I’m not clear why you need to change the [plaza] design.”

Gretchen Pfaehler, HPRB, Chair

Statement

Improving the Kalorama Park playground is welcomed by the community at large.

However, many community stakeholders are not in agreement with DGS/DPR proposals to address storm water management/erosion issues by undertaking a complete redesign of the plaza and installation of a permeable pavement system. These plans are unlikely to be effective (e.g., given soil conditions and maintenance requirements) and will also cause irreversible harm to the park’s historic landscape design, archeological and arboricultural elements.

The most effective and least intrusive way to remediate soil erosion and storm water issues, which were aggravated by a poorly executed project (2009-2011), is to repair the trench drain system for the plaza and address soil and landscape conditions. This approach will protect the integrity of the 1947 plaza design and historic landscape features.

- **Storm Water & Erosion:** The proposed plan fails to address and mitigate storm water and soil erosion problems with the least negative impact.
- **Proposed New Design:** Necessity for a redesign has not been convincingly established by the design team for the purposes of public use, storm water management, or improved aesthetics.
- **Archaeology:** Implementation of the project threatens the archaeological integrity of Kalorama Park.
- **Cultural Landscape Preservation:** Implementation of the project threatens integrity of the park’s historic landscape design.
- **Arboriculture:** Implementation of the project threatens arboriculture elements with unsubstantiated need to remove 9-10 trees.

Expert/Community Input

- **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA):** At the February 19 hearing, CFA recommended further analysis and design review as the proposed DPR/DGS solutions did not satisfactorily address technical (hydrological) or aesthetic (plaza design) issues. CFA Member Elizabeth Meyer, Dean of UVA’s Department of Landscape Architecture (a practitioner with 30+ years of professional experience), commented that she saw a need for further development of the hydrological (storm water management) and aesthetic components of the proposed design. Ms. Meyer considered the historic design of the plaza to be preferable to the proposed redesign. While storm water and erosion are

principal concerns, she recommended a new approach to the design and hydrological issues. No member of the CFA spoke in favor or support of the proposed design and four of the five members in attendance offered strong criticism of the DPR/DGS plans.

- **Historic Preservation Review Board (DC HPRB):** At the January 22 HPRB meeting, the HPRB endorsed the HPO report (described below). However, 3 of 5 HPRB members expressed concerns about the design. Chair Gretchen Pfaehler commented: “ I understand storm water needs, but I’m not clear why you need to change the [plaza] design.” HPRB, after reviewing testimony, recommended a redesign of currently proposed plans.
- **Historic Preservation Office (HPO):** The HPO Staff Report & Recommendation found the proposed changes “compatible” because it did not find the 1947 park and its landscape architecture to be a contributing element of the Kalorama Triangle Historic District because the district’s “period of significance” was 1893 to 1939 and did not include the 1947 date for the construction of Kalorama Park.
- **Kalorama Citizens Association:** KCA approved a resolution January 2015 supporting playground improvements but rejecting the proposed redesign of the plaza and other changes that would have a negative impact on the existing landscape and archaeological resources.
- **Advisory Neighborhood Commission:** The ANC1C vote regarding the proposed DGS plan was 3 (ayes), 2 (nays), 1 abstention and 2 members not present.

Recommendations

- Proceed with playground improvements, maintaining the existing playground perimeter footprint, and uncouple this work from the proposed plaza redesign and storm water management improvements.
- Implement immediate measures to repair the trench drain system for the plaza, replace damaged or dead trees and shrubbery, and remediate the soil, protecting existing trees in soil remediation areas.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for Kalorama Park that preserves Kalorama Park, which includes storm water/erosion solutions that do not adversely impact the 1947 plaza design and the cultural landscape value of the site. Erosion control and storm water management solutions should focus on the repair of existing systems to protect the existing historic landscape, archaeology, and landscape design.
- Develop the new plan with more transparency and broader community involvement.

Kalorama Park: History-At-A-Glance

Kalorama Park is a cultural landscape, reflecting significant trends in urban planning and landscape architecture following the Second World War. The NPS’s recent publication “Parks of the National Capital, 1933-1951,” explains that the National Capital Parks was established in the 1930s to design and develop parks and playgrounds for the growing DC metropolitan area. The report states, “One of the early important achievements in park development was a large-scale rehabilitation of smaller parks.”