

Kalorama Park & Playground Comments

(via Survey Monkey & DCGov Email Account of Kenneth Diggs)

COMMENT #1 (Survey Monkey)

I think this is a great project, and my family of 5 is really excited to see it completed.

11/6/2014 1:12 PM

COMMENT #2 (Survey Monkey)

Would love any of the designs as long as it means updating and beautifying the park (and dealing with the erosion problem). I appreciate some people's desire for symmetry, so that's why I chose #3. Really want to see these things happen: -- removal of toothchipper picnic table from playground -- removal of hedges surrounding playgrounds -- new fences (not chain link) surrounding playgrounds Not wedded to boulders idea. Not wedded to curved sidewalk with marked pavers. Really hoping that the playgrounds can be renovated at the same time. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR WORK ON THIS!

11/4/2014 10:03 PM

COMMENT #3 (Survey Monkey)

My main interest is not so much about the design options but in improvements to our playgrounds. They are in deplorable shape and in constant use.

11/4/2014 1:46 PM

COMMENT #4 (Survey Monkey)

I hope the boulders on the Plaza will be included in part of the design. I think they would become a favorite feature of the park with the children. - Hedges. Please remove the hedges from the periphery of the playgrounds. I have a 7 year old and an 18 month old and, due to safety concerns, I do not feel comfortable permitting them to play in the different play areas right now since I cannot see both of them at the same time. Removing the hedges would make life so much easier. - Seating in playground. The concrete table is an eyesore and a sorry excuse for a place to sit, eat or gather. It should either be removed or replaced with a more modern table in a more appropriate location in the play area. - Fencing. Please remove the chain link fencing (another eyesore) with more attractive fencing appropriate for a child's play area. - Playground. Please find the resources to renovate the playground. My 7 year old son is very reluctant to come to Kalorama Park these days because "it's boring" and "not fun." So we drive to other, renovated neighborhood parks a lot. The city has found the resources to renovate playgrounds in the city that were much newer and safer than ours. It would mean a lot to have a new, modern playground in our neighborhood. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the park!

11/4/2014 1:37 PM

COMMENT #5 (Survey Monkey)

I think the play boulders should go in the playground (there's space), and there should be benches on that side, facing west.

11/4/2014 9:19 AM

COMMENT #6 (Survey Monkey)

I would also like to see a few additional picnic tables under shade. Please keep picnic bench in playground. Remove rocks and add extra benches. Please make sure benches have dividers to deter sleeping.

11/2/2014 3:51 PM

COMMENT #7 (Survey Monkey)

Kids are the largest users of the plaza. The wider area of the original footprint allows them to use scotters & rollerskates. I'm in favor of anything with the wider footprint. Face it -- there are no staff to water anything. Things like planters are dependent on watering. Is it wise to put what looks like planters outside the rec center? The benches on the left hand side of the plan are used by people watching the sunset. What is the height of the bushes in front of them? Also, face it, kids will likely try to get from any walkway to any grassy slope and will tread on any plantings. Try to anticipate this.

11/1/2014 6:42 AM

COMMENT #8 (Survey Monkey)

I like the additional green space provided by option 2. Also, for trash containment purposes, it is preferable to have the picnic tables closer together as provided by option 2. Can a trash receptacle be added closer to the picnic tables in Option 2 (or Option 3)?

10/31/2014 11:09 AM

COMMENT #9 (Survey Monkey)

I found it well-nigh impossible to use the slides of the meeting presentation and am thus leaving the options blank. I am, however, absolutely opposed to the proposals for turning around the three, double seat benches that presently sit on separate concrete slaps off the back of the plaza and face the park's graceful, grassy slope with its trees, picnic tables, recreational facilities, and, in the distance, Rock Creek Park & the National Cathedral, and placing these benches directly on the small plaza facing passer-bys and those sitting directly across. The quiet, sylvan view presently enjoyed makes reading, resting, and meditating an unusual joy -- this in the middle of a densely developed residential/commercial neighborhood.

10/30/2014 11:27 AM

COMMENT #10 (Survey Monkey)

I'm not sure I'm noticing all the differences, but it looks like there would be more shade for the picnic tables in Options 2 or 3, which I prefer. It also looks like Option 3 has smaller gates, which might be easier for a parent with a stroller or young child to manage. Mostly, I am thrilled that the play areas of the park will be improved!

10/30/2014 9:36 AM

COMMENT #11 (Survey Monkey)

I don't feel all that strongly - they all look great! Keep up the good work! And please renovate our playgrounds now, too! Thanks, [REDACTED]

10/29/2014 10:57 PM

COMMENT #12 (Survey Monkey)

I actually prefer the current design, since it allows different groups to sit separately from each other, but looking in. This creates a sense of community and allows for casual people-watching. Putting these benches in a line, as the current drafts suggest, destroy that and turn a plaza into a pathway.

10/29/2014 1:27 PM

COMMENT #13 (Survey Monkey)

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10/29/2014 1:27 PM

COMMENT #14 (Survey Monkey)

I like option which offers more privacy of the two picnic tables. Thank you for all your work on this project!

10/28/2014 1:14 PM

COMMENT #15 (Survey Monkey)

Option three seems to use the space the best way and presents the picnic table in a way that more people are likely to use. Option 1 places one of the tables between two pathways, which is not an appealing place to rest. Option 3 also loses the extra path to the playground, which I viewed as unnecessary. All of these options lack a water feature, which I think would be a great feature to add to this small park.

10/27/2014 11:23 AM

COMMENT #16 (Survey Monkey)

Please consider having curved path from rec center end at the walkway to the right, instead of ending at the flag pole. Also, please use existing model of benches, so that they will match the rest of the ones in the park. The neighborhood paid for those benches, so they should be kept in the park. If additional ones are needed, they should be the same Victor Stanley models. Please use pine needle mulch under the pine trees, not regular mulch.

10/26/2014 11:36 PM

COMMENT #17 (Survey Monkey)

The 3 options appear virtually the same. I hope redoing the playgrounds become part of the plan. I also hope the paving can be designed to accommodate a tiny pocket garden like the existing one.

10/24/2014 4:19 PM

COMMENT #18 (Survey Monkey)

The differences between these three options seems minor to me, as far as I know. In my opinion, though, the path on the west side of the plaza should remain straight and not change to a curve as seen in your drawing. A great many DC public spaces that also serve as a memorial, have curves added, and such a curve is not suitable for the overall layout of Kalorama Park in my opinion, and this curve will look dated in a few years. ps: Please disregard my vote for option 3 I selected it only so I could vote in the first place.

10/24/2014 3:47 PM

COMMENT #19 (Email)

Hello Kenneth,

I hope you're doing well today.

I'm just writing to lend my support to the other parents asking for renovations to the two playgrounds at Kalorama Park in Adams Morgan. However, unlike other parents, I don't have any specific requests nor agenda except that the play structures themselves need to be replaced due to their poor condition. I have no objections to hedges, picnic tables, fences, invasive tree species, or any other items that seem to be of great concern to a handful of other people with nothing better to do with their time. The one thing I will mention that doesn't appear on anyone's list is the homeless man who's been sleeping on the big playground structure and leaving his cardboard and other trash there every day. I've spoken to the volunteer at the rec center and the police, and no one seems interested nor knows what to do. I know this isn't part of the project, but I was wondering if there's someone else to call.

In any event, I hope the factions stop fighting before DCPR and GS decide to walk away. Please don't—the park really needs work.

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at 10:05 AM

COMMENT #20 (Email)

We are homeowners and parents who live at [REDACTED]. We are 100%, fully supportive of the proposed plaza redesign and playground renovation project for Kalorama Park. We have two children and frequent the parks on an almost daily basis; however, we are really disappointed in and concerned about the quality and safety of the parks. And it's just gotten worse and worse since we moved to Adams Morgan in 2005. In addition to new playground equipment and safe surfaces, we suggest for the plaza:

*Lower growth foliage surrounding the bigger kids' playground to improve visibility and safety, and expand the playground space.

*The concert table lodged in the corner of the playground is a major hazard to children. I have seen more than one, including a friend of my daughter's, injure themselves.

*The chain link fences surrounding the playground are not only ugly, they are not kid-friendly or safe. See the attractive, nicer fencing in Mitchell Park. We would love to have that type in our park.

If you have any questions or need anything further, please let us know.

Thursday, October 23, 2014 at 11:03 PM

COMMENT #21 (Email)

Dear Mr. Diggs,

As a resident of the Kalorama area, I wanted to reach out and express my opinion on three issues affecting the playground and my suggestions for how these issues can be addressed.

My husband and I believe that the park deserves nice fencing. As demonstrated in other parks, nice fencing keep the children safe, parents happy and contribute to the beauty and charm of the neighborhood.

My husband and I believe that the concrete tables in the park should be removed as they are hazardous to its users in the current conditions.

And lastly, we believe removing the hedges and extending the playground borders will be the right move to make this park a safe and useful spot for the neighborhood and its community.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Friday, October 24, 2014 at 10:02 AM

COMMENT #22 (Email)

On July 8th, 2013 the community was told by Jennifer Battle (DPR), Jackie Stanley (DGS) and Brent Sisco (DPR) that funding for the entire erosion project had been allocated.

In the report that DPR and DGS presented to the community, a copy of which I have before me, DPR and DGS set out the following schedule:

August 2013-- Request for Proposal Design Services
October 2013--Community Presentation--50% Drawings
December 2013--Community Presentation--100% Drawings
Early 2014--RFP for Contractors
Spring 2014--Commence Work.

Weeks before our July 8th meeting, DPR and DGS released a thorough report, the Volkert report, that provides the basis for the work that should be starting "in Spring." An "architect" was never mentioned.

Thousands of people in our community are concerned about this project. We deserve answers--not further delays. Specifically, please tell us

- 1) How the information you're presenting now differs from what the Department(s) told us in July and
- 2) The reason the Department is now 8 months behind the schedule the Department proposed
- 3) The date for the new meeting.

Wednesday, April 2, 2014 at 6:54 PM

COMMENT #23 (Email)

Mr Diggs:

Re: "until we have a design team (Architect) on board to address the erosion and other site concerns at the park"

The "other site concerns" at the park must include the fact that the 1st contractor of the Anti-Erosion Project illegally cut the root systems of two native scarlet oaks in the project area, contributing to the death of one of the oaks and grave damage to the other oak, which happens to be the largest tree presently alive in the park. Any further delay in meeting affects two matters:

(1) Since July, 2009, DPR has promised to re-mediate a variety of damages to the project trees by contracting professional arborists to perform gentle deep soil aeration and root fertilization for all trees in the project area. Despite all promises, this has never been done. Any further delay in remediation of the tree root systems, which can happen entirely independently of the other aspects of the plan, puts at risk the very survival of the largest tree in the park. This is completely unacceptable. Please show cause as to why the soil aeration and root fertilization cannot proceed immediately, or prepare to face the legal consequences attendant on further injury to, or death of, the largest tree in Kalorama Park. Any further delay in remediating the trees, which has been promised now for four years and five months, constitutes malfeasance and negligence.

(2) The canopy of the dead scarlet oak was removed, leaving the intact trunk, which has great value as wildlife habitat if it is preserved. Only a single mile away, across Rock Creek in Georgetown, Tudor Place, which is a historic site and historic garden, has a 200 year old native tulip poplar whose canopy was broken in a wind storm last summer. Rather than chainsawing down the tree trunk to make "art", which is what is proposed for the scarlet oak in Kalorama Park, Tudor Place carefully removed the canopy, and is managing the trunk as a wildlife snag. Attached are photographs of both tree trunks. The tree trunks are not that different, and are literally only a mile away from each other, but the difference between them is the level and sophistication of ecological management they receive. I have requested that DPR/DGS/etc. preserve the trunk of the Kalorama scarlet oak as a wildlife snag. Any further delay in meeting puts the tree at risk of being cut down, which will not counter any damage from the Anti-Erosion Project, and will in fact just constitute further damage from the Anti-Erosion Project. I therefore request, in the strongest terms, that the scarlet oak trunk NOT BE CUT DOWN before the re-scheduled meeting, nor afterward.

The fate of the Kalorama scarlet oak wildlife snag, compared to its counterpart in Tudor Place, brings up another issue to be addressed at the meeting and planned as part of mitigation and remediation for the profound damage the park has suffered from the Anti-Erosion Project. After the canopy of the native tulip poplar was removed, arborists then re-attached a grounded copper lightening cable to the trunk. All large trees in Tudor Place--alive, or dead-- are equipped with lightening cables to protect them. No trees in Kalorama Park have any lightening protection. Equipping all large trees in Kalorama Park with lightening cables, as part of mitigation for the Anti-Erosion Project, will cost a very small fraction of the money the District has already wasted on the failed Anti-Erosion Project.

Thursday, April 3, 2014 at 11:28 AM

COMMENT #24 (Email)

Excuse me, but is this discussion thread about Kalorama Park, or the Bermuda Triangle, where ships disappear forever? If you look at the DPR scenario in summer, 2013 for going from ideas to plans to contracts, bidding of same, doing the work, etc. which [REDACTED] put in (it's down there somewhere in this message thread) you will see that, even once "the community" and the District have a plan, it's about 6 months later until contracts are finalized, before the actual dirt work begins.

What is going on here is a plan, intentional or not, that will run out the clock on the 2014 summer construction season, without any corrective work done. Meaning restoration of the damage will be punted to 2015, which will then be SIX YEARS since this sordid kabuki theater play began. By which time, everybody in DGS and DPR responsible will have moved on, again, and it will be, once again, Somebody Else's Problem.

Unless we make it DGS/DPR's problem right now.

Mr. Diggs: You have not yet responded to my email request asking that, minimally, all the project-affected trees be given the remedial treatment of gentle deep soil aeration and root fertilization that DPR has promised since July, 2009. Two major native scarlet oaks suffered illegal cutting of their roots in 2009, one of them is dead, the other is ailing, the largest tree in Kalorama Park-- at least right now. Every day, from this day forward, I will be sending you and the rest an email, asking for the root treatment, until you respond and make it happen.

Councilman Graham! ANC-1C! Please engage your balls or ovaries as the case may be! Show some leadership!

Friday, April 4, 2014 at 4:22 PM

COMMENT #25 (Email)

I agree. But like the concept of a plantation with enslaved people, the oversight of the park has gone into realms of absurdity, and by no means is that due to the hard work of community volunteers and local DPR staff providing their life energy wanting to assist our neighborhood.

It is clear that the higher-up City officials have not been trained to employ good planning methods, evaluation techniques, or mitigation efforts for any given project, let alone making sure healthy Kalorama grass grows and doesn't slide away into the Potomac. When and if there is a glimmer of hope for good planning, delays to implementation inevitably follow, and perhaps not purposely, dry up the community energy to see the good plans through.

Simultaneously, the depths of neighbor didactics is stunning in the face of three nuclear plants right now in the state of real-time full-core meltdowns (<http://youtu.be/gJVWmpnUU14>), yet concerns about a snag trump neighbourly compassion. Still yet, I have to say, emails are a poor way to communicate because of their flat emotional levels.

But clearly, there is rain water and erosion destroying some of the work that actually provided ok results from the poorly planned 2009 project, and then there's the rest of the poorly planned 2009 project which continues to be a sore subject for our 'hood, and not speciously so.

Who won't forget how DPR and DOE officials were pushing the hyperbolic concept of putting plasticized upside-down ice cube trays under the grass to save it, grass which is now thinning and pooling with mud

as predicted by neighbors. And the construction spoils trudge excitingly on underneath the now muddy new kids area, illegally.

The City's institutional memory seems to have livably and walkably disappeared into the etherverse, and serious ethical challenges have provided the backdrop of mischaracterization and misinformation around important civic planning projects like this, or even things as big as the DC Zoning Rewrite >> <http://www.dczoningchanges.com>

It is a mystery and as thus, I appreciate the hard work of those in the community wanting to see that the park gets the attention it deserves despite the cacophony of discontent and confusion in the air.

We deserve better planning, City planning that matches AICP standards >>

<https://www.planning.org/ethics/>

Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 1:33 AM

COMMENT #26 (Email)

Hello Kenny,

According to your timeline, DPR/DGS are reporting back to the community in mid-July. We are five days away from mid-July. Please provide the date of this meeting. I'll assist you in distributing that information to various Park constituencies.

The community expects that the promises made previously by DPR and DGS will be honored. Quoting from the original DPR/DGS documents:

- Fix the existing trench drain
- Park wide arborist services (pruning, insect and disease mgt, soil management, growth injections, etc.)
- Widespread soil percolation tests
- Landscaping where needed*
- Permeable pavers at plaza and potentially walkways
- Long term solution for capturing roof runoff
- New crowned walkway, perhaps permeable

*In documented discussions with DPR, we discussed 3 areas in clear and obvious need of remediation. The first and most critical is the bank at the top of the hill where the Park benches sit, a roughly 25' x 70' area:



Also, please be prepared to tell us what measures the City will undertake immediately. After 6 years of false starts, the community needs to see that DPR and DGS are able to move the ball.

Thursday, July 10, 2014 at 11:54 AM

COMMENT #27 (Email)

Director Shanklin, Director Hanlon, John Stokes, Kenneth Diggs:

I'm writing you on behalf of parents whose children use the Kalorama Park playgrounds.

As you know, the Kalorama Park playgrounds are among the most heavily used playgrounds in the City. On any given day, children of all races, ethnicities and economic backgrounds play side by side. Our playgrounds mirror the larger population surrounding Kalorama Park. We're proud of this diversity. We believe it's worth celebrating.

The condition of Kalorama Park's playgrounds does not reflect the vital role it serves in our community nor the heavy use it receives. The playground equipment is degraded and downright dangerous.

As you'll see in the attached document, our equipment is covered with graffiti. Paint is peeling. Raw metal edges are exposed. We're told the steepness of the stairs on one piece of equipment is no longer code. Metal slides have been largely phased out decades ago because metal can reach skin-searing temperatures yet ours remains. A 40-year old swing set was taken down last month when parents noticed cracks in the metal frame. There's no word on a replacement. That area of the playground sits empty and abandoned. Another section of the playground is overrun with weeds. The sandboxes are nearly empty. Cardboard boxes litter the ground. Simply put, this playground is falling apart.

A growing group of parents is pressing for change. No one understands how such a prominent city park has been so consistently overlooked. These parents have met throughout the summer. They've researched other City playgrounds. They know that much of the Kalorama Park playground equipment is nearly twenty years old. They've also noted that some nearby City parks have had their playground equipment replaced once and sometimes twice during the same time span. These parents are committed to seeing a full, professional renovation of the Kalorama Park playgrounds. They stand ready to work with the City to make that happen or to advocate by whatever means necessary.

The need is clear. The timing, given the ongoing remediation projects occurring in Kalorama Park, is fortuitous. The people and the processes are in place. The conditions for success are present.

Working together we can restore Kalorama Park's playgrounds to the safe and fully functioning spaces they were intended to be, improving the lives of hundreds of children in one of our City's most diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.

Wednesday, September 17, 2014 at 2:47 PM

COMMENT #28 (Email)

Thank you, Director Shanklin. We appreciate the time and attention of your team and the teams at DGS.

I have an update from my end:

This past weekend the Parents of Kalorama Park conducted a "Usage Survey" of the Kalorama Park playgrounds. They monitored the playgrounds eleven hours a day, both Saturday and Sunday, keeping detailed notes. The results are below, which the parents are willing to share with you and your team in person:

The Kalorama Park playgrounds received 467 visits from children and parents over the course of the weekend. (Those numbers reflect only those who walked into the playground areas. The numbers do not include the dozens of children and parents who used other areas of the Park.)

167 residents signed our petition asking for renovated playgrounds in Kalorama Park.

93 parents expressed a desire to be part of the Parent's group and help advocate for fully renovated playgrounds.

We hope your team and the teams at DGS agree that the time is right to put a plan into place for a full renovation of the Kalorama Park playgrounds. The Parents of Kalorama Park stand ready to work constructively with the City toward this end.

Tuesday, September 23, 2014 at 9:19 AM

COMMENT #29 (Email)

Councilman Graham:

The annual ritual meeting about Kalorama Park could have benefited from your presence and leadership. Will we ever benefit from it again?

Amongst the matters you missed, from your message, are that there are:

(1) long term issues, which means actually removing the construction debris from the park, promised now annually by DGS, supplanting DPR, with the seasonal regularity of pulling Pawtuzataney Phil the groundhog out of his burrow to foretell the coming spring, which DPR/DGS has now been doing since 2009. Now the promise is a heavy construction project moving dirt in the park between October, 2014 and March 2015, which all of us recognize as an optimum season for heavy equipment working in a park;

(2) but more immediately, short term issues of the health of the trees damaged by the anti-erosion project, not to mention actual real erosion in the park, not phantom erosion as projected by the stupid bioswales. Neither Mr. Diggs nor Dr. Shanklin made any promises whatsoever about any remedial actions that can be taken, at small expense, RIGHT NOW to aid the damaged trees and deal with the situation on the ground as it is.

I guess I will have to make it explicit, every time. Of the trees damaged or killed by the Anti-Erosion Project, right now is at risk the presently largest living tree in Kalorama Park, a scarlet oak. It's roots were cut illegally by the original contractor, as I have documented since 2009. It was also hit by lightning in 2012. DPR and now DGS has promised since 2009 to remediate the root systems of all trees in the project area-- nothing has been done! Grounded lightning cables are standard and not expensive, installed in many parks and reserves. Not one tree in Kalorama Park has any lightning

protection! These aids can be done RIGHT NOW, for a small fraction of the money the District always seems to find available to distribute tens of thousands of garbage cans right before an election, or fund a new soccer stadium at public expense, while selling off the Reeves Building to developers.

Ward One Councilman! ANC-1C! DGS! DPR! The presently largest living tree in Kalorama Park is at risk of death because of YOUR failures of management. What are you going to do about it RIGHT NOW?

Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at 7:21 PM

COMMENT #30 (Email)

Acting Director Shanklin:

Speaking of communications, we have still not received any written notes or minutes of the Kalorama Park meeting of May 22, nor answers to questions that were asked, such as [REDACTED] questions about the monies spent on the Anti-Erosion project thus far, who was responsible, etc. I would like to request, for the benefit of the people at the meeting and also for the benefit of the staff of the Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment, the following:

(1) A written summary of the meeting, which can easily begin with sharing the powerpoint slides that Mr. Diggs presented, along with the major questions raised and the answers given at the time or not given because more information was required, etc. These notes should include the most accurate timetable possible for proposed remediation work, for when the different stages of analysis, community comment, and work will be scheduled, although I realize time tables change. But as it is now, none of us have anything written down about all this. It is particularly important that these notes include the fact that DGS/DPR received comments both orally and written, as in my powerpoint, about remediation actions in the project area that can be done right now, and do not require waiting through the entire summer growing and lightening season of 2014 before action can be taken. It is important to bring this to the attention of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment.

(2) As to the new engineering study that is being made, I would like to request that the study be released to the public in its entirety as soon as it is completed, and that no further plans or work begin until after the study's release and public comments and questions related to it are dealt with. The previous engineering study, by Volkert and Associates, was finished in July, 2012 but DPR refused to release it until a year later. This must not be allowed to happen again.

Tuesday, June 3, 2014 at 2:46 PM

COMMENT #31 (Email)

Here's what went on Facebook:

Updates from the DPR meeting on Thursday, October 9th:

LOTS O' NEWS. Read on for all 5 (!) headlines...

Headline #1: The long stalled remediation project—replacing bad soil above the basketball courts and by the garden on 19th --will likely begin in the next month. (!) DPR hopes to complete this by the end of the year. In addition DPR will finish with new sod, replace the long stretch of patched sidewalk from the Rec Center to 19th, soften the berms, reduce the profile of the sewer grates, and remove the stray lamppost.

Headline #2: Renovating the area in front of the Rec Center, starting in winter 2015. The primary goal is to make this area more environmentally sustainable by replacing concrete with a more pervious surface. At a prior meeting the community asked DPR for a new design. DPR unveiled the design. Reactions were split; the design is slightly more modern and some prefer the symmetry of what currently exists. DPR is making modifications and will report back.

Headline #3: It's not a definite but...a new playground for Kalorama Park is looking increasingly likely. You read right. In time for summer 2015 no less. The city would also replace the "urban jungle" chainlink fence around the Playground with a metal fence like in Mitchell Park. Wow. Once we have confirmation of the new playground, we'll post it here. (And the Parents of Kalorama Park will hold a spontaneous party in the Playgrounds. Stay tuned.)

Headline #4: The entire stretch along Columbia Rd. The city has recognized that something needs to be done about the "gap toothed" hedges, never mind the soil that washes onto the sidewalk with every rainstorm...they're thinking of creating uniformity here with a new and different hedge or some other kind of planting. To our neighbors who face the Park on Columbia Road, this one's for you...

Headline #5: The corner of Kalorama and Columbia: You've probably noticed how compacted the ground there has become—not good for trees and other living things. The City will attempt to restore the ground there and re-order foot traffic by installing a new walkway.

Wow. If all comes through as planned, our Park will have received more concentrated care and design than it has in the last 30 years. This is big. Updates when we get 'em.

Friday, October 10, 2014 at 7:29 PM

COMMENT #32 (Email)

Thanks for the update on everything that is supposed to happen in Kalorama Park. Here's one big thing that is missing:

There is no plan of any kind to plant another cohort (a group of trees planted as a unit) of native Kalorama oak trees, *Quercus coccinea*, or any other native oak species, in Kalorama Park. Since the District acquired responsibility for the park after WW II, and since the Fund for Kalorama Park formed, whenever that was, neither the District nor the Fund have ever planted a single scarlet oak, even though they are the largest, dominant trees in the park, although that is changing fast as they are dying and being cut down. Since this summer two more trees have been cut, one on the corner of Kalorama and 19th, the other by the Community Garden.

In retrospect, the failure of DPR/DGS and the Fund to possess even a rudimentary understanding of forest ecology, or to see the need for a long-term vegetation management plan for the park will become apparent to all; it is presently apparent to some.

Monday, October 13, 2014 at 12:58 PM

COMMENT #33 (Email)

██████████,

Thanks for writing. I share your appreciation for native trees, especially oaks.

There's no tree planting in the phases of the project that are being discussed but that doesn't mean we can't create a plan. You'll see the steps we're taking to prepare for such a plan below.

A quick recap first: We've made big environmental strides in the last six months; the pruning and vertical fertilization of our oldest trees and the installation of the lightning rod on the grand oak, for example. The remediation project--removing the bad soil and replacing it with good soil above the basketball courts--is about to begin. The next phase is making the Plaza area environmentally sustainable with permeable paving. These are huge gains for our Park, perhaps the most that's been done in 30+ years.

In addition, the City is discussing the possibility of installing a new playground in Kalorama Park, which is a decades-overdue development of major importance to thousands of parents and children who live around the Park. (And I do mean thousands. The Parents of Kalorama Park chronicled 467 visits to our playgrounds in just two days.)

So we've got lots going on. It's important that we achieve excellence with each of these projects. These plans are being staged very carefully so that we don't bite off more than we can chew.

But to your point about trees: One of our neighbors is working with the Fund for Kalorama Park to complete a tree audit--documenting the condition of every tree in the Park--that will give us a baseline upon which to make future plans. (It will also be the basis for a class for children, so that our Park can be used as an open air classroom.) Our plan is to know and take care of what we've got first then develop a deliberate plan to supplement the native trees we lost.

Monday, October 13, 2014 at 1:42 PM

COMMENT #34 (Email)

This morning WAMU premiered a major investigation about DC officials, District contract awards, and political contributions.

[The Cost Of D.C. Council's Power Over Contracts](#)

The Cost Of D.C. Council's Power Over Contracts

Patrick Madden investigates: Does campaign cash have undue influence over how the D.C. Council approves contracts? WAMU 88.5 analyzed donations to Council...

[View on wamu.org](#)

[Preview by Yahoo](#)

The disastrous work that C & E Services of DC, Inc. did on the original Anti-Erosion Project, it turns out, was just part of the \$20 million in District contracts that the firm received during the years of the investigation. Attached here is a graph of the timing 'coincidence' between C & E's major contribution to Marion Berry and the contract award, in 2008, the work beginning in 2009, plus a pdf. of the original contract document. As to the graph: I have no idea why one of the council receivers listed is called "Carolyn Graham".

Recall that DPR and DGS both say that C & E Services, Inc. was "fired" from the contract because they screwed up so badly-- they use quotation marks around "fired"-- although somehow DPR and DGS never answer Eddie Becker's questions about what efforts the District has made to recover funds wasted on the work, or what monies were secured, etc.

I would suggest that the matter of the original contracts, far from being over and in the past, is now blown wide open by the WAMU investigations and where they lead.

So: DPR and DGS: what are your answers to [REDACTED] questions? When you say you "fired" C & E Services of DC, Inc., just exactly what do you mean?

Tuesday, October 14, 2014 at 3:34 PM

COMMENT #35 (Email)

Directors Shanklin and Hanlon, Mr, Diggs, Councilmember Graham,

In the last two weeks, there have been two poorly noticed, lightly attended public meetings held on the subject of major design changes for Kalorama Park. I have no opinion on the plans, as I have not seen them yet. The Kalorama Citizens Association yesterday published in our newsletter an article, written by Katherine Kross, President of the Fund For Kalorama Park, as a first attempt to start spreading the word about the plans throughout the neighborhood.

The purpose of this message is to start the discussion on how to create a well-noticed series of public meetings about what changes to make to Historic Kalorama Park.

It seems to me that the logical way for this to proceed is through the ANC Committee structure, with input welcomed from all comers. Anything less will ensure resentment from various quarters.

With ANC 1C about to enter a lame duck period with four of the eight commissioners leaving and 3 new ones coming in January 1st with one seat vacant, a good use of the period between now and January 2015 could be to make the plans available on the ANC website, at the Kalorama Park Recreation Center in paper copy, and for an outreach campaign to begin on the part of DPR/DGS.

Friday, October 17, 2014 at 2:45 PM

COMMENT #36 (Email)

We all appreciate the effort required to get the remediation ready to finish now. We had been expecting a more permeable surface to replace the hard concrete, had been lobbying for better playground equipment, finishing the remediation, and so forth. And it is welcome to learn that a major expenditure can be made for next Spring, but some of the redesign merits discussion, whether its the reorientation of the plaza area, the removal and/ or replacing of hedges and fencing, and the addition of boulders. I reserve judgment on the schematic concept put on line on Oct. 15, and may defer to others. But having been told it was to be "final" on Oct 21 -- seems not sufficient lead time for decisions of a magnitude not seen before. [REDACTED] is correct that it is short notice w/ many prior conflicts. It's understandable not to bog things down when \$\$\$ are available, but a well noticed public mtg. would be good. Thank You so much for committing these dollars to Kalorama Park.

Friday, October 17, 2014 at 3:52 PM

COMMENT #37 (Email)

I too agree with [REDACTED]...it would be in everyone's interest to seek a longer lead-time.

Friday, October 17, 2014 at 5:28 PM

COMMENT #38 (Email)

██████████,

For the record, I'd like to address a few inaccurate assumptions in your letter, explain why many people are enthusiastic about what DPR is doing and how they're doing it, and be clear about your call for a different "process."

First, inaccurate assumptions. Notice of the meeting you referred to was posted to the Adams Morgan listserv twice (the first time with approximately 2 weeks notice), the Mintwood listserv, the Fund for Kalorama Park Facebook page, and the Kalorama Park playground group. Results of the meeting were also posted to these same sources. You asked me to write a summary for your monthly KCA newsletter, which I was happy to do, likely after reading one of these many notices.

Since I often post my name, email and phone number to the listserv notices, I've received dozens of enthusiastic and unsolicited emails from neighbors, many of whom I don't know. Another result of these notices: the Parents of Kalorama Park, a group keenly interested in Park developments, have received at least a dozen more signatures on their petition for a new playground with every posting, a petition that already includes 167 park users. Both of these facts suggest a much wider awareness than you realize.

About DPR. The group of people tasked to manage the projects in Kalorama Park are operating with a professionalism and efficiency our community hasn't seen in decades, if ever. This group has been responsive, fair, organized and thorough. At our first meeting in July, residents expressed concern for the care of our oldest trees. Our oldest trees were pruned and vertically fertilized within two months. (And the great oak was outfitted with a lightening rod.) At that same meeting, the community discussed fixing our long standing water runoff issues by using permeable pavement in the Plaza. The Department coordinated with another government agency and found the funds to make that happen. The Department then asked those assembled if we, the community, wanted a new design for the Plaza area. We, the community, answered unanimously: Yes! The Department then delivered a plan that addressed the current uses and incorporated a long list of current best practices.

I think you'll agree that DPR's level of responsiveness deserves an equal level of courtesy from us, the community...rather than the suggestion that they're unfit to proceed on their own.

As I reported in the newsletter piece you requested, about half of those present were enthusiastic about the plan the Department presented. The other half disliked the plan. That's perfectly normal in any group effort. Opponents of the plan were articulate and specific. The Department heard their comments. The Dept. will make some changes no doubt and will try to present alternate perspectives to address the concerns they heard, I suspect. This much is true: No one will get everything they want. That's the nature of accommodating different voices.

About "process." I disagree with you that a different "process" is the answer...the best course is to challenge each other to come to the table prepared to listen and compromise. That's the most critical ingredient for success. Let's accept that there are new voices within our midst--specifically the Parents of Kalorama Park--and that their voices are every bit as important as anyone else's.

If we work together, the benefits are massive:

- An environmentally sustainable Plaza;
- Fixing the runoff and erosion problem that have plagued our park for decades;
- Restoring the severely eroded ground around the Plaza;
- Increasing the use of an area that is often barren;
- Possibly even adding a new playground, which is long overdue.

Let's urge one another to find common ground for the common good.

Friday, October 17, 2014 at 7:02 PM

COMMENT #39 (Email)

Every neighborhood resident/taxpayer who wants to see what is being contemplated for their park, and to learn how their money will be spent, should be afforded the opportunity to do so. I don't believe that your notices for the October 9 meeting stated that here is the one time you will have any say on this project, and that DPR will come back to the community 2 weeks later with final plans. And the follow-up "Fund" meeting received no public notice. I'm also not suggesting that you knew what DPR/DGS had in mind.. I have no idea. But DPR's and DGS's approach is not acceptable and should not be tolerated by any of us.

We need a thoughtful approach – the more eyes on the plans the better.

I suggested an option, one that is the customary way that projects get built in the District of Columbia. It included a role for our elected local representatives on ANC 1C. I firmly believe that is the correct path. There is more involved here than any one group's use of the Park. The Park is for everyone. Please don't suggest that I'm against the plans. I haven't seen the plans, despite searching DGS and DPR websites, the Fund for Kal Park website and the Kal Park facebook page for any link to the plans. I'm told they are available somewhere on the DPR website, but if you go to the DPR Kal Park erosion control project you see postings from 2011. There is more at stake here than just the improvements. Located in the Kalorama Triangle Historic District, plans for significant proposed changes to the major elements of the Park layout should be presented to the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. There are also social history concerns as the Park is an Underground Railroad site.

A better process is needed. At this point, about 10 people in a neighborhood of over 16,000 have seen the plans.

How can it hurt to have the normal type of review any project would have?

Friday, October 17, 2014 at 9:55 PM

COMMENT #40 (Email)

██████████,

Again, let me correct some inaccuracies in your note, add some facts, and extend a challenge to you personally:

Many taxpayers and area residents--178 now and the list grows daily--are demanding that the City address the failed conditions in Kalorama Park playgrounds immediately. Let's be clear: This is not a reference to vague, notional "taxpayers." These are 178 flesh-and-blood taxpayers who have given their names, addresses, signatures and often their emails and phone numbers to support a very specific cause in a very specific timeframe.

These taxpayers have made it clear that neither they nor their children are willing to see this process stalled for three months, six months or longer as you suggest. Our playgrounds haven't been fully renovated in nearly 20 years. They feel they've waited long enough. The parents are prepared to work collaboratively and productively among themselves and with the City. DPR officials, to their credit, appear to be taking the pleas of our neighbors seriously.

Here's the part of the story you're missing: The restoration of the Plaza and the restoration of the Playgrounds are linked. One of the reasons a strong financial case can be made to restore the playgrounds in early 2015 is precisely because the Plaza is being renovated. As you likely know from your business, the taxpayer savings of combining the two construction projects are significant enough to make the formerly impossible possible. What's more, this holistic approach allows for a more thoughtful and integrated design.

So you see the challenge before us: Our neighbors and friends are demanding action on the Playground. Rightfully so. If we believe their cause is fair--I certainly do--then we owe it to them to do everything in our power to reach consensus on the Plaza. Our success means their success. We're interconnected. It's called the greater good.

It's easy to write an email and call for delay. That takes a few minutes. It's really hard to bridge different points of view and get something done. It's grueling, actually. Time consuming too. That's where real leadership comes in.

Will you help our community reconcile their differences so that we can move forward?

Saturday, October 18, 2014 at 9:12 AM

COMMENT #41 (Email)

Dear Directors Shanklin and Hanlon, Mr. Diggs, and Councilmember Graham:

I am writing to follow up on, and join in, [REDACTED]' request for a more structured process to consider the proposed plans for a redesign and rebuild of the plaza area of Kalorama Park. I am one of the small group of individuals who attended all three DPR/DGS meetings with regard to Kalorama Park improvements, which focused on the anti-erosion project at the first two meetings (on May 22 and July 17) and then shifted to a redesign and rebuild of the plaza area at the most recent meeting (October 9). I am also one of the few community members who has actually seen the plans but that does not assuage my concerns about the compressed and limited planning process for an ambitious project that would fundamentally change the original design of Kalorama Park's plaza area. I would urge DPR and DGS to implement a deliberate and inclusive design process that ensures the development of consensus-based plans that respond to a broad range of community needs and interests.

Given that the redesign and reconstruction of the plaza area (and the area along Columbia Road) is phase II of the Kalorama Park improvement project, compressing and truncating the design process does not seem warranted, especially when the consequence is to limit community participation or the ability to establish broad-based consensus. Phase I of the project involves completion of the anti-erosion project and is scheduled for November of 2014 through March of 2015. Phase II is not scheduled to begin until after phase I is done (March of 2015) so there would appear to be enough time to do a more careful and deliberate planning process for phase II either within DPR/DGS's contemplated time frame or by adding a few weeks to that time frame.

Also noteworthy is that it was stated at the October 9 meeting that one or both of the playgrounds that are adjacent to the plaza area may also be redesigned and rebuilt. Whether this will happen has not yet been determined by the powers-that-be but it does not make sense to push for immediate resolution of the design issues for the plaza and the Columbia Road side of the Park if there is also to be playground construction of an unknown sort between these two components (the plaza and Columbia Road) of the phase II project.

To place things in context, phase I of this project is the completion and remediation of the anti-erosion project that occurred in the 2009-10 time frame and was not done properly, in part due to poorly conceived plans and in part due to poor implementation of those plans by contractors. At the time, there was much dissension in the community and unhappiness with the construction work for many reasons, with some faulting DPR's planning process as not having been sufficiently open or deliberate. With that as history, it is important to put in place procedures that ensure that we do not have a repeat of the 2009-10 anti-erosion project mess and that phase II does in fact reflect broad based community consensus and that it is implemented in coordination with any rebuild of either of the two playgrounds.

It was only at the third meeting (the one on Oct. 9) that those of us who have been attending the planning meetings first learned of the extensive plans for a complete redesign and rebuild of the plaza area of the Park. These plans emerged in response to suggestions that were made at the May 22 and July 17 meeting that perhaps permeable pavement could be installed in the plaza area and other substrata improvements made to better absorb and contain water and to ensure the full effectiveness of the anti-erosion project. However, as one of the people who proposed and supported installation of permeable pavement, I did not envision that installing permeable pavement would also involve a radical redesign and a reconfiguration of the plaza area. Much to my surprise, those plans for a radical redesign of the plaza area were first disclosed to us at the October 9 meeting via a slide presentation. They were

later posted on the DGS website on October 15 or so. Only the small group of us who attended the meeting would have known enough to go to the DGS website to track down the plans as links have not been posted on the Fund for Kalorama Park website or Facebook page or included in the various email communications to the community about the project.

I was one of several in the room on October 9 who raised concerns about the plans in part because, in my opinion, they departed from the original design for the Park in too many ways and in part because they repurposed the plaza area by shrinking it and reorienting it toward the larger playground, thereby reducing its utility as a public space for community meetings and events. The design also included a couple of curving sidewalks and did away with the existing symmetrical design in favor of a more flowing design. Perhaps that design will grow on me in time or perhaps the promised tweaks will make it more palatable but it was a bit shocking to go suddenly to a complete redesign of the plaza area and to have the sense that that decision was close to cast in stone even though we were seeing it for the first time and there were many strong objections expressed at the October 9 meeting to the scope and direction of the plans.

With that as background, I would urge DPR and DGS to step back a bit and establish a somewhat more structured process along the lines that [REDACTED] has proposed. Such a process would ensure that the plans are fully vetted in the community, that there will be coordinated planning for the redesign/rebuild of the plaza and the Columbia Road side of the Park and any redesign/rebuild of the playground(s), and that, if the plaza area is to be significantly restructured and reconfigured, it will be because there is broad-based consensus that such a change is desired and needed.

Saturday, October 18, 2014 at 12:53 PM

COMMENT #42 (Email)

With respect to substance, I have generally deferred to the more closely involved neighbors concerning Kalorama Park. However, with respect to process, I would have thought that DGS and DPR would be obligated to bring a redesign of significant portions of the park to the Advisory Neighborhood Commission.

Saturday, October 18, 2014 at 1:30 PM

COMMENT #43 (Email)

I would like to add my voice that the evening of the 21st (Tuesday) is the date--based on the mayoral candidates' schedules--that the neighborhood has a chance to ask questions of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It's very important to many of us to be able to attend this debate, which is sponsored by our Kalorama Citizens Association.

Although I was able to attend the first of the Kalorama Park meetings, at that time it seemed that this project was essentially a remediation project--unspoiling the truly bad work that had been done by the previous contractor.

I'm all for a safe fun playground, and I appreciate very much that our neighborhood families advocating for this important improvement. What catches me by surprise is that a desire to put permeable paving on the plaza--which I seem to recall was raised as an issue at the first meeting--has somehow morphed into a substantial redesign of the upper park, with no details suggesting playground improvements.

Is there a reason that we can't have a better playground and permeable paving on the plaza without introducing lots of other stuff--which, based on past contractor work at Kalorama Park, has the potential for more destruction?

Please consider rescheduling the October 21st meeting because of the debate. Thanks,
Monday, October 20, 2014 at 3:06 PM

COMMENT #44 (Email)

Mr Diggs — If there is to be a vote by the community on Nov 6, shouldn't there be design options for the plaza for us to choose from (instead of just one redesign based on the aesthetic judgments of a single landscape architect), with one of those options being restoration of the plaza as it was originally laid out??

Monday, October 20, 2014 at 7:37 PM

COMMENT #45 (Email)

Ms. Shanklin of DPR and Mr. Diggs of DGS, plus others:

We understand that a number of long-promised projects to correct the errors of the Kalorama Park Anti-Erosion Project, and address other erosion and run-off issues, will be beginning very soon. In which case: would you please make publicly available, at your earliest convenience, but before any construction starts, the following sets of documents and plans:

(1) The report of the second geo-engineering firm referenced in the May, 2014 public meeting at the Rec Cen, which was going to do more extensive soil sampling and other investigations, related to the so-called "playing field" and other damaged areas of the Park;

(2) All contract document descriptions, plats and engineering and landscape diagrams, etc. for all the planned construction projects in the park beginning in the next month or two, from what we have heard. It is important that the documents be released and publicly available before the work begins, to preclude the kinds of problems that the Anti-erosion project was mired in for years.

As a sample of the kind of information I am requesting to be released, I append her the pdf. of the Permitted Plans of the original Anti-Erosion Project contract, which your predecessor Dr. Ximena Hartsock, Acting Director of DPR, willingly released on June 18, 2009, only a day or two after it was requested, without any need of a FOIA request or other formality. The greatest chance for success of the new projects designed to repair the damage from the old projects is to have prompt public disclosure of what is planned, and what the contract criteria are, to allow all to see if the criteria are being met and paid for.

Thursday, October 16, 2014 at 1:31 PM

COMMENT #46 (Email)

I'd like to thank [REDACTED] of Kalorama Citizens Association for supplying the powerpoint of the Kalorama Park Retrofit Concepts, which I attach here for your convenience. However, this is just a powerpoint.

What I have requested to be released are the actual contract documents and associated specs and landscape plats, etc. for the proposed work, along with the report of the 2nd geoengineering analysis of the illegal construction spoils, etc in the park. The power point, for example, shows a color-coded image of the major areas of illegal spoils and buried rock and compacted fill (the so-called "playing field" and environs), but there are no specs whatsoever about the differentiation of the colored areas and why, nor any specs on what depths of illegal construction spoils will be removed, nor any specs on what matrix of subsoil and soil, etc. will be brought in to replace the illegal spoils.

Further, many of 'improvements' presented in the power point are merely photographs or sketches of other features in other places, and hence by definition are not what is actually planned for Kalorama park.

Therefore, I reiterate my request that DGS/DPR and whomever please release the actual dontract documents and specs for what is to be done in Kalorama Park.

Saturday, October 18, 2014 at 4:37 PM

COMMENT #47 (Email)

Mr.Diggs:

Re: your email: "We will provide through our foia process. Have a good weekend".

Excuse me, sir. Does that mean we start the Kibuki theater where, in order to obtain the clearly public documents I requested, I have to log in to some esoteric web-site , in order to produce a message, not to you, but to some specific FOIA officer in some DC office, and Heaven help me if I don't address the right one, which then allows the District 15 working days to then send me a response that: "we have your request, we're working on it", which then gives the District additional time before they even begin to actually respond to my request? When in fact the District could make public all the documents requested immediately?

Well, I tried your damn DC FOIA request site, with all it required, and did it all, which yielded the message: "Your registration was submitted. Please check the email account provided for log-in instructions to the DC-Government FOIA Submission Site."

My email account has received NO "log-in instructions to the DC-Government FOIA Submission Site".

Nevertheless; this is a FOIA request! For timely public release of public documents! To hell with your "on-line instructions to to some DC-Government FOIA Submission Site" which doesn't work.

This is a FOIA request, asking for release of the following public documents:

All contract documents, design specifications. landscape plats, and related materials, related to the proposed remediation and construction projects in Kalorama Park.

Saturday, October 18, 2014 at 9:58 PM

COMMENT #48 (Email)

Mr. Diggs:

(1) Thanks for the clarification that my Kalorama Park FOIA request is proceeding. That may be correct legalese, but a FOIA request is not obligatory for DC departments to release documents like awarded contracts, with design specs, and if the delay of the FOIA process means work will begin on "remediation" of all the criminal disasters of the Kalorama Park Anti-Erosion Project, without any public disclosure of the contract specs, then how will constituents have any idea if the work is proceeding correctly?

(2) To that end, since work on removing the illegal construction spoils in the so-called 'playing field " area is to begin in November, which is 11 days from now, I would like to bring up an immediate issue which must be addressed. This issue was first raised by "A", a Kalorama constituent. (washington20009@gmail.com). "A" and I don't always agree on matters, but in this case I think he is correct. Here is from his Oct. 20 email to the Mintwood list, a local list:

"I see in the plans circulated by [REDACTED] that they are planning to remove the nice Norway Maple tree in the northern part of the park, just above the basketball courts and adjacent the sidewalk and picnic table. I was unfortunately not able to attend the meeting. Can someone explain to me the thinking behind removing this mature and apparently healthy tree? The plans refer to it as "invasive," but even if

that is the case, the "invasion" in question happened decades ago and it doesn't appear to be hurting anything.

I'm confused why we would remove a good tree from our park"

Back to me: Attached is a photograph taken Sept. 14, 2009--over five years ago-- showing the Norway Maple on the right side in this photograph as the criminal abuse of the Anti-Erosion Project was well underway. All of that orange-red stuff with big rocks in it is "top soil" that the sleazy contractor C&E Services of DC, Inc. removed from a construction project in Mitchell Park to put down on the so-called "playing field" in Kalorama Park, all approved and paid for by DPR, which is now finally to be removed over five years later.

I have often wondered, over these five years, at the resilience of that tree in the face of what it has been subjected to. Now what is it's reward for resilience? To be cut down as "non-native". In which case, logic dictates that DPR/DDOT/DGS might as well chainsaw down at least 95% of all the trees that the Fund for Kalorama Park has planted in the park, as they are all "non-natives", like ornamental crepe myrtles, zelkovas, ornamental elms, etc. The Fund for Kalorama park seems to have no problem at all with chainsawing down the Norway maple. Here is from an Oct. 20 email response to "A" from [REDACTED]:

"Our understanding is that the Department is executing on its goal to remove the degraded soil in that area, as called for in the remediation plans. Since the tree is in the middle of the area, the remediation process would likely damage the roots. ...

That said, we can certainly discuss options, like replacement with a native tree or attempting to reduce the extent of the soil removal to extend to the drip line of the tree. (I don't know if that's feasible but the question can be asked.) "

Back to me: The so-called "management" of Kalorama Park by the Fund for Kalorama Park and District agencies is entirely bankrupt. Somehow, both players find it far easier to cut down large tees in the park than to plant any. And as to native trees, if the Norway maple was replaced with a "native tree", that would be a first for both the Fund and District government. The District has controlled the park site since 1939. The Fund has been in existence since 1995. In all that time, neither the Fund nor the District agencies have planted a single native scarlet oak tree, *Quercus coccinea*, on a park dominated by scarlet oaks, although they are dying fast. In the 10 years or so I have known Kalorama Park, DDOT contractors have cut down SIX mature scarlet oaks, including the largest tree in the park, and the oldest LIVING tree in the park, and never once has a single replacement scarlet oak been planted.

So now the Fund and the District agencies propose to finally plant ONE NATIVE TREE in the park-- but only after cutting down a mature healthy tree that has survived the Anti-Erosion Project? For shame! This action is just as stupid as was piling illegal construction debris in the playing field in the first place. Two wrongs don't make a right, nor three, nor four, etc.

This issue, and the rest of the Anti-Erosion mitigation contracting, must be revisited. I request that NO WORK on the project proceed until there is public disclosure of all the contracts and their specs, followed by public discussion and changes as indicated. This whole matter should be investigated by the DC Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment.

Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at 11:03 AM

COMMENT #49 (Email)

Thanks to all involved for the release of the FOIA-ed documents. For some reason, the 2012 Volkert and Associates report was included twice, once in black and white, the other in color.

Wednesday, October 22, 2014 at 11:38 AM

COMMENT #50 (Email)

Mr Diggs

Please remove one tree on the final design for Kalorama Park. It is the southern most tree represented in all drawings, (Eastern side of the park.) Currently a well maintained flower garden exists where the sun shines. My emphasis is not necessarily to "save" the current flower bed during construction, but to save the sun in one spot. Once there were many sunny beds for volunteers to grow and maintain flowers, but short sighted tree plantings have killed off most of the beds, and 2 suffer from lack of sun. Volunteers want to grow things as their contribution. We should steer volunteers towards flower and vegetable gardening instead of the guerrilla tree planting that is now occurring.

Wednesday, October 22, 2014 at 1:09 PM

COMMENT #51 (Email)

Dear Kenny,

I live on Lanier Place, and wanted to write regarding the last Kalorama Park meeting. First, I appreciated your presentation and found it effective and professional in the face of vocal opposition from a passionate few. I do agree with the view that the design schedule is overly compressed, but I also understand there may be other constraints.

My specific point is that I strongly support the landscape architect's plan to move the 2 concrete tables to the Plaza area so that they look over "the Oval". I think it solves a few problems at once:

- **The proposed placement matches current usage patterns.** Increasingly the Park is being used by small groups of people, especially families with children for small birthday parties or celebrations. You could see that last weekend when Jubilee Jumpstart, a non-profit that serves middle and low income families, had their anniversary celebration in the Park. They placed their folding tables exactly where your architect placed them. Dozens of parents and kids milled in the area. It worked very well for them.
- **The current placement of the tables is poor and should be fixed.** One concrete table has led to compaction of the surrounding ground that threatens a nearby oak while killing the grass in all directions. It should have never been placed there 5 years ago. The other table sits awkwardly in the playground area and will interfere with a new playground design unless it's moved.
- **The placement of the concrete tables on the Plaza creates a whole new use for the Plaza,** which as your Landscape Architect accurately noted, is a space that's now chronically underused.
- **Restoring the tables respects the feelings of those who like the tables. Although I'm not a fan of the tables, I recognize that others feel differently.** Leaving them in their current condition, however, (with splintered, homemade wooden seats) doesn't respect the feelings of those who like the tables. It also diminishes the efforts of the Department to upgrade the surrounding areas.

I urge you to follow through on the Landscape Architect's instincts and move the concrete tables to the Plaza area.

Thursday, October 23, 2014 at 2:52 PM

COMMENT #52 (Email)

Mr. Diggs:

Thank you for speaking with us this week. As per your instructions, here are my thoughts on three issues we believe are important in any effort to revamp Kalorama Park:

- My family of five people, including a five year old and a two year old, reside adjacent to Kalorama Park on Mintwood Place. We use the playground at Kalorama Park on an almost daily basis, and at least 300 times annually.
- Hedges/Additional playground space: My family believes removing the hedges and extending the playground border is the right choice. As the parent of small children who frequently play in both sections at the same time, we want to be able to see them for safety's sake. Moreover, the amount of space for children to play safely is a paramount consideration for us.
- The concrete table: My family believes moving both tables to the Plaza area makes sense. These are not toys for playing on, yet children climb on them regularly because they are in the play area. As an attorney I believe that they are a source of civil liability for the city because this attractive nuisance, and accordingly we ask that they be moved.
- Fencing: My family believes that the playground should have fencing that is as attractive as fencing found in other neighborhood parks, such as Mitchell Park. The current fence is a decrepit eyesore.

Friday, October 24, 2014 at 11:14 AM

COMMENT #53 (Email)

Ms. Shanklin, DPR Director:

On September 25, 2014, I emailed to you and everybody else on this email, noting some positive progress in Kalorama Park, but also noting there seemed to be no recent public information--for months now-- on the status of DPR and DGS plans and contracts to remove the vast quantities of illegal construction spoils, compacted rocks, and other harmful debris which were deposited in Kalorama Park as part of the supposed Anti-Erosion project.

It is now October 3, 2014, and thus far I haven't received any response from you, nor from any other official of DPR and DGS.

To refresh your memory of what is at stake and what the park continues to suffer from, attached here is my evidentiary photograph of the so-called "playing field" in the midst of the crimes of the contractor, abetted by DPR, which I took on September 27, 2009, which works out to be FIVE YEARS and FOUR DAYS AGO. Much of this crap is still under the "playing field" upon which nobody ever seems to play.

How much longer must we wait to get these illegal construction spoils removed from Kalorama Park?

Friday, October 3, 2014 at 2:05 PM

COMMENT #54 (Email)

Dear Director Shanklin and Jeffrey McInnis,

- 1) I'd be interested in know DPR progress with working with the Kalorama Park Parents Committee in the coming renovating the two childrens playgrounds in Kalorama Park. Does DPR have the funds to carry the two playground renovation with parent participation?
- 2) Could you tell us the progress in clawing back remediation funds from the contractor(s) who were documented by DPR, to have failed to complete the job according to DPR design and specification? The recovered remediation costs for the studies and planned work could go to renovating at least three city playgrounds!
- 3) Could you describe what measures DPR has undertaken to fix the dysfunction that prevented DPR from affecting responsible oversight over these contractors.

And speaking of accountability, there was a chain of command that signed off on those contractors that bilked the city of its funds, and likely another DPR command chain that protects the first - have these structural deficiencies been fixed?

So in summary, I'd be interested in know the progress of work with the parents committee in coming renovating the two childrens playgrounds in Kalorama Park and in clawing back funds from the contractor and in what steps have taken place to fix the dysfunctions that has prevented DPR from affecting responsible contractor oversight and perpetuating cover-up. Thanks for your attention to this. I expect a reply within 10 working days.

Friday, October 3, 2014 at 7:53 PM

COMMENT #55 (Email)

Hi Mr. Diggs,

Thank you for leading an efficient and informative meeting on the Kalorama Park renovation this week. Per your request, here are my comments on the park redesign.

- I prefer design number one, particularly the way that the paved walkway leads directly to the entrance of the playground.
- I hope the boulders on the Plaza will be included in part of the design. I think they would become a favorite feature of the park with the children.
- Hedges. Please remove the hedges from the periphery of the playgrounds. I have a 7 year old and an 18 month old and, due to safety concerns, I do not feel comfortable permitting them to play in the different play areas right now since I cannot see both of them at the same time. Removing the hedges would make life so much easier.
- Seating in playground. The concrete table is an eyesore and a sorry excuse for a place to sit, eat or gather. It should either be removed or replaced with a more modern table in a more appropriate location in the play area.
- Fencing. Please remove the chain link fencing (another eyesore) with more attractive fencing appropriate for a child's play area.
- Playground. Please find the resources to renovate the playground. My 7 year old son is very reluctant to come to Kalorama Park these days because "it's boring" and "not fun." So we drive to other, renovated neighborhood parks a lot. The city has found the resources to renovate playgrounds in the city that were much newer and safer than ours. It would mean a lot to have a new, modern playground in our neighborhood.

Friday, October 24, 2014 at 1:52 PM

COMMENT #56 (Email)

Dear Mr. Diggs,

I am writing to express my support for the renovation of the Kalorama Park playgrounds and to provide specific feedback on three issues that I understand DPR is currently considering:

- I support the removal of the hedges and extending the playground border.
- I support removing both concrete tables from the playground area and relocating them to the plaza area.
- I believe the fencing should be attractive and of similar design and quality to what is found at Mitchell Park and other nearby playgrounds.

As a home owner and parent in the immediate neighborhood to Kalorama Park, I deeply hope the city will undertake updating the playgrounds as soon as possible and take my feedback and others into consideration.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Monday, October 27, 2014 at 12:47 PM

COMMENT #57 (Email)

Dear Kenny:

For the redesign of the plaza, I hope you will consider re-using the existing benches. I believe the Fund for Kalorama Park paid for all or almost all of the benches throughout the park, funded by neighborhood. It would be a waste to dispose of them, and I think all the benches in the park should match each other. To the extent that new benches are needed, they can be easily ordered from [REDACTED], whom the city already orders from for trash cans and other items.

Monday, October 27, 2014 at 8:53 PM

COMMENT #58 (Email)

Kenny,

Thanks for organizing the meeting at the Kalorama rec center last week. I thought you did a very good job in a difficult situation. Here are a few bullets with our views on the redesign, which we share with other parents whose kids use Kalorama Park:

- We support option 1 in the redesign (DPR's original proposal with the two arcs)
- We support removing the hedges around the playgrounds and taking advantage of that additional space
- We support moving the concrete picnic table out of the big kids playground and into the oval
- We support the request for new fencing around the playgrounds like those found at Mitchell Park

Monday, October 27, 2014 at 9:40 PM

COMMENT #59 (Email)

Hello Kenneth,

I hope you're doing well today.

I'm just writing to lend my support to the other parents asking for renovations to the two playgrounds at Kalorama Park in Adams Morgan. However, unlike other parents, I don't have any specific requests nor agenda except that the play structures themselves need to be replaced due to their poor condition. I have no objections to hedges, picnic tables, fences, invasive tree species, or any other items that seem to be of great concern to a handful of other people with nothing better to do with their time. The one thing I will mention that doesn't appear on anyone's list is the homeless man who's been sleeping on the big playground structure and leaving his cardboard and other trash there every day. I've spoken to the volunteer at the rec center and the police, and no one seems interested nor knows what to do. I know this isn't part of the project, but I was wondering if there's someone else to call.

In any event, I hope the factions stop fighting before DCPR and GS decide to walk away. Please don't—the park really needs work.

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at 10:05 AM

COMMENT #60 (Email)

Dear Director Shanklin:

I am adding my voice to the many who have already expressed objections about the process that has taken this community "stunned" (as ██████████ put it) by the massive redesign drawings for Kalorama Park's plaza. You have received many emails from many long-time park users, most of whom have lived in the neighborhood for decades, pruned shrubs and dirtied their hands, researched the park's history, studied its design, even protected it from previous bad DPR and, on several occasions, community decisions. Amazingly, several members of the Fund for Kalorama Park also have expressed their dismay and say they did not know about the scale of proposed changes, that they were under the impression this was primarily a remediation project. I attended a meeting on the remediation plans on July 17 and heard nothing about a redesign; in any case, with only 10 in attendance, it was hardly a "community meeting" (ditto, number-wise, the October 9th meeting, the grand unveiling of this \$750,000+ project). Now, ANC Commissioners have expressed concerns and on November 5 will take up the issue. Finally, complicating "process" matters, the completed design has been ramrodded through by Mr. Diggs, who, while allowing all to speak, has stated there would only be "soft" (read: minimal) changes. He has now presented several alternative designs for community members to select from, all of which contain the same elements so destructive to the National Park Service design. As such, they are also a huge backward step for the very special kinds of recreation this distinct space was designed for. A full-throated critique will have to wait for a later writing.

Clearly, there have been process problems (short notice, no notice at all) but the most important process has been completely ignored in these discussions, and that is: what took place between the initial July 17 meeting and the presentation of completed redesign plans on October 9th? During the July meeting, permeable pavement was presented as a possibility, but only if money could be acquired. Somehow, during the seven week period between the two meetings, permeable pavement was approved; a redesign of the plaza was developed; and a complete redesign of the plaza and adjacent areas put in final form. (Say what?) Whopping big decisions, no community input. To pretend, as some

have, that all voices have been heard, when at the very critical stage NONE were at the private table, is to be completely ignorant, or willingly manipulative.

So... how did the largest project in the Park's history since the National Park Service's construction in the 1950s/60s--encompassing the only major redesign--proceed in this seven week period?

Here's a five-point description (labeled the "order of events") by Fund President Kathryn Kross in an email circulated to neighbors after the October 9, 2014 meeting:

- DPR hires MHG late spring/early summer, strictly for the remediation project.
- We tell DPR about the DOE grant for permeable paving in parks.
- They contact DOE and get the money.
- DPR has their meeting with us and asks the community if we want a new design for the Plaza. The community says yes.
- DPR uses MHG to design the plaza, which wasn't in the original scope at all. That's why I believe them when they say they have limited design dollars.

A careful reading reveals there are several large misstatements of fact: in item 2, WE did not tell DPR about the DOE grant for permeable paving in parks. In item 4, DPR DID NOT ASK THE COMMUNITY if we want a new design for the Plaza, and the community DID NOT say yes. These are more than misstatements of fact; they cover what have been behind-closed-doors negotiations on the very tough intellectual and artistic matters involved here, by one community person and officials at one (or more) agencies of city government.

Unfortunately, DPR has been complicit in facilitating this process, since DPR's landscape architect Mr. Brent Sisco would have been in on all the discussions/decisions. Apparently he has also approved of the process that insured no one would know the plans until they were a fait accompli. Whether others were involved, whether private discussions occurred with DOE personnel or not, will probably remain hidden, but I would urge you to find out just how this occurred, and to see that the following, most crucial, beginning question be asked: does the plaza need a redesign? This question must be discussed without linkage to any other aspect of the project. I am asking you to find a forum for these discussions. Further, I am asking you to cancel the "vote" on plaza design options scheduled for November 5. Allowing this sham vote to go forward will only add another black mark to the list DPR has already stacked up during these last few months.

Thank you for your attention. I'll await an answer, we will all await answers.

Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 12:44 PM

COMMENT #61 (Email)

The writer of this email does not reflect my views, nor the views of many long-time residents and Kalorama Park users, especially those of us who wish to see improvements in the current playground areas. The entire park is a mess, despite the so-called efforts of those "dirtied hands."

I attended the October meeting where Mr. Diggs and his experts handled themselves very professionally. He certainly allowed questions and comment; in fact he went around the room TWICE. What he did not allow was a forum for some people who literally tried to hijack the discussion with questions which had been asked and answered.

My husband and I have striven to understand why a few residents are so opposed to the current plan(s) proposed by DPR. Unfortunately, I am forced to conclude that their opposition stems from dissatisfaction and distrust of DPR, such that they might oppose any plan proposed. Therefore, although their opposition is both virulent and passionate, it ultimately does not reflect the opinions of so many other users of the park.

We want the improvements to the park, sooner rather than later. We want a vote on November 5th.
Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 3:21 PM

COMMENT #62 (Email)

We wish to echo our appreciation for Mr. Diggs and his team for the professionalism and courtesy with which they have solicited and considered community views on the proposed work on Kalorama Park. While it would appear that some might not like to see work performed under any circumstances, many, many others believe that the numerous problems with the park should not be ignored and should be addressed now. We commend DPR for taking those problems seriously and for trying to address them, and for its willingness to work with the community. We have seen your work throughout the city on other parks, and you have done an excellent job. We look forward to seeing the results for Kalorama Park.

Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 5:57 PM

COMMENT #63 (Email)

Dear Director Shanklin,

I also wish to point out that I do not share [REDACTED] objections and frankly am delighted by the park renovation plans. While I cannot prove this, I am confident that the vast majority of fellow Kalorama Park users and neighbors will applaud DPR's work.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 6:56 AM

COMMENT #64 (Email)

Since you're quoting me by name, I'll respond to your letter. I'll address "the many" who have expressed objections to the Park renovation plans, the history of the project (which you and I have discussed many times over the past few years) and close by pointing out the many ways DPR and DGS have addressed your concerns.

Regarding "the many" opponents:

Nearly 100% of the opposition to the Plaza plan has been generated by 5 people, as measured by email. (Two additional people on the Fund for Kalorama Park are not in favor of the Plan although I doubt they'd go so far as [REDACTED] suggested, to "pull the plug" on the entire project.)

I believe your voice is important, whether you speak for 5 people or 10 people. What's disturbing however is the consistent disregard you and the other opponents have shown for other voices and other park users. The 467 visits to the Playground over the course of one weekend don't seem to matter. The nearly 200 residents who signed a petition asking for renovations to their Park don't seem to matter. Those who care about the degraded areas of the Park to stop the runoff and the erosion don't seem to matter.

Why don't the views of these people matter?

The Process and its history

[REDACTED], respectfully, your facts about "short notification/no notification" are wrong and your facts about the July 17th meeting are wrong. Check the public paper trail available on the Adams Morgan listserv.

As for the Department of the Environment grant, you'll remember that in the spring of 2013 I introduced you to Leah Limoine, the DOE official who told us about the grants available to replace concrete with a permeable surfaces; an environmental initiative recognized as a "Best Practice" in urban spaces across the country. Leah helped quantify the amount of rainwater runoff generated by the Rec Center roof and the impervious concrete surface in front of the Plaza. At the very first public meeting in May of 2014, we reminded the new team at DPR/DGS about Leah's recommendation in 2013.

About the "Stunning" change to the Plaza

When I compare what exists currently with what's being proposed I notice 3 things:

Green space: the same or greater.
Bench space: the same or greater.
Open space: the same or greater.

There is no change in usage. The two principal changes involve hedges and symmetry.

You'll remember the landscape architect saying that removing the wall of hedges along the interior lines of the playground makes for better site lines into the playground space, which is important to parents.

That makes perfect sense. I've since noticed this custom with most playgrounds in DC. This move also frees up additional space for our playgrounds, which receive extraordinary use despite their degraded condition. (It might even prevent the homeless population from using the Playground space as their private bedroom, as they've done all summer.)

Nonetheless for hedge lovers like yourself, I can appreciate why removing interior hedges might register as a loss. What I don't understand is why the plan to establish an entirely new row of non-deciduous hedges along the entire length of Columbia Road is not perceived as a gain. Surely this is a big bonus for those whose homes face the ragged hedges along Columbia Road or those forced to navigate the mud from those eroded banks during a rainstorm.

Shouldn't those views matter?

As for symmetry, I understand the significance to you and others. I agree with those who've noted that the "bird's eye view" of plans is vastly different than one's experience in the space.

However, no one--not you or any opponent of the plan--can claim that the current Plaza is "overused." Most often the space sits barren. That's why others--those who've written here and the steady parade of voices on the Adams Morgan listserv--welcome the idea of a slightly modified Plaza.

What you're missing about DPR/DGS's Plan

Here are a list of the concerns you've shared with me over the years and how DPR/DGS have addressed them:

Trees. You've often impressed on me the importance of taking care of our oldest trees. For the first time in decades, DPR/DGS have taken care of our oldest trees.

Soil Remediation. How many talks have we had about the quality of the ground in and around the Oval--a dozen? As you saw at the last meeting, DPR/DGS have suggested remediating the soil in the Oval--your biggest concern--on the eroded banks by the benches, on the stretch along Columbia Road...in addition to the recommendations in the Volkert plan.

Fences. You noted at the first October meeting that the interior hedges were meant to hide the fences. DPR/DGS agreed to replace the fences.

Concrete Tables: You, [REDACTED] advocated effectively for the concrete tables years ago. DPR/DGS has advocated restoring those tables (for the first time since being installed in 1967) and placing them in the Plaza, where their use does not impinge on playground space OR threaten the nearby oak.

Your garden: For those who don't recognize your handiwork, you tend a small flower garden in the "elbow" of the Park close to the Playground. Look closely at DPR's designs and you'll notice two equivalent spaces close to the Rec Center. I asked the Landscape Architect about those spaces. DPR/DGS told me that if the installation of permeable paving or a new fenceline disrupts your garden, they wanted to offer you (although they didn't know you by name) the equivalent space with equivalent light in a different location.

There's no grand conspiracy here, [REDACTED]. Without fanfare, DPR/DGS has shown consideration for you and your point of view all along. Please consider extending the same courtesy to them and those who disagree with you.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 1:21 PM

COMMENT #65 (Email)

Dear Director Shanklin,

I also have been very pleased with the DPR process, which has been transparent and welcoming to all who wished to make comments. Mr. Diggs conducted the most recent community meeting with efficiency, patience, and humor. As another writer mentioned, it seems that a certain contingent do not want to see any improvements or work done to the park, but the Parents of Kalorama Park do not share that sentiment. We welcome the proposed renovations and look forward to working with DPR going forward.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 2:25 PM

COMMENT #66 (Email)

Thank you for this email. Since I come late to this process, I appreciate this thumb-nail summary of the issues raised, and proposed solutions. There seems little doubt that no amount of talking will be effective with the people opposing change to the park.

My question is, do we need to continue the dialog? Is there really a credible threat to the proposals? Do they really have the power to "shut down" the project? If the answers to these three questions are no, then perhaps we need to concentrate our energies on what we can do to expedite DPR. What would convince DPR to ignore the naysayers?

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 4:26 PM

COMMENT #67 (Email)

Mr. Diggs-

I've had disagreements with both the process and the product of the continuing meetings about Kalorama Park rehabilitation. Throughout the process, I've been calm and respectful. It's becoming increasingly difficult to maintain my indoor voice in the face of the latest rescheduling.

ANC 1C has its regular monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 pm. Your rescheduled DGS/DPR meeting on Kalorama Park, at which you will be taking a "poll" to determine the final plans for the plaza, directly conflicts with that regularly scheduled meeting.

Whether or not the rescheduling from Nov. 6 to Nov. 5 was the result of inadvertence, the meeting should be returned to its original date: Nov. 6.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 4:19 PM

COMMENT #68 (Email)

██████████

What rescheduling????? As has been the case with many of these meetings, only a few folks get notified, and only through email. List serves ARE NOT sufficient for informing the community. There's the digital divide, and then, what percentage of people online are on list serves, and then, what percentage of people on them even read them?

Meetings on such major projects need widespread notice, beyond the computer.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 7:29 PM

COMMENT #69 (Email)

Kenny Diggs originally set the next meeting for Nov 6. He then changed it to Nov 5 without explanation. Nov 5 is, of course, the regular ANC meeting where discussion of this project is expected.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 7:44 PM

COMMENT #70 (Email)

The plug should be pulled on these proposed changes to the Park. There has not been a coherent process, nor a lawful one.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 7:45 PM

COMMENT #71 (Email)

Dear Mr. Diggs:

I am in total agreement with ██████████. The process for reconstruction of the Kalorama Park plaza was flawed from start to finish and for reasons too numerous to enumerate.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 8:13 PM

COMMENT #72 (Email)

██████████,

Again, I must remind you that you don't speak for everyone. Three additional inconsistencies:

- 1) As you've been told by the members of the parents group, publicly and at least twice, and echoed by at least a dozen or more people as best I can tell, the parents group in general are very pleased with the process and the leadership DPR and DGS have shown.
- 2) What's more, if the notice was as bad as you've continuously and erroneously claimed, how is it that the last meeting was packed--standing room only? It's worth noting that those who are making similar claims about a "lack of notice" attended the meetings. You'll understand why others in the community find this leap in logic puzzling.
- 3) Finally, it's worth pointing out that attendance at this last meeting was far more robust than the average KCA meeting, where you lead discussions on many important things.

Again, I urge you and anyone who opposes the plan to come to the table and speak honestly about their differences. There are new voices in our community now. They've spoken loud and clear--and directly to you. It's time to stop ignoring them.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 8:28 PM

COMMENT #73 (Email)

██████ — There is no table for us to come to speak honestly about our differences, as all the decisions were predetermined before both the Oct 9 and 21 meetings. That the room at the most recent meeting was filled with parents who simply want an improved playground hardly changes that reality.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 8:38 PM

COMMENT #74 (Email)

██████,

The playground may be a motivating factor for many, but I'm sure you'll agree that the parents in our midst have every bit as much say in the Plaza as you or me. Their view should not be discounted or diminished simply because they're parents. The continued refusal to take the parent's point of view seriously or respectfully has been disturbing to many.

What I hope to see from opponents of the plan is an acknowledgement that the new voices in our midst are worthy of being included in the discussion. Such an acknowledgement from you or ████████ or any of the opponents of the plan would demonstrate I believe, a commitment to bridging differences. I haven't heard that yet but I remain optimistic.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 9:08 PM

COMMENT #75 (Email)

██████ — Even more disturbing is the strong signals that have been sent to the parents that the improved playground is tied to signing off on radical changes in the design of the playground. The advocacy for the radical change in design comes solely from MHG's landscape architect as no one in the community proposed or called for those changes until DGS made clear that it was my way or the highway. There was no survey or study done before those plans were presented to the community at the Oct 9 meeting to any way validate them as based on community sentiment or feedback.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 9:17 PM

COMMENT #76 (Email)

I have no personal view on the merits or demerits of the proposed plaza design. But I hate to see neighbors pitted against each other because of a poorly structured process. This is one of the fundamental reasons why we have the ANC law. It establishes a permanent venue where all neighbors can be given an equal opportunity to advocate their views. Some views will prevail, others will not. But everyone will have had an opportunity to speak. That wasn't done in this case, and now we're all suffering the consequences. The neighbors who support the proposed renovations are hurt because they have clearly invested time and effort in trying to improve the park. The neighbors who are skeptical of the proposed renovations are hurt because they don't feel they've been given a fair opportunity to influence the outcome.

Mr. Diggs, please fix this situation and get this matter before the ANC promptly in accordance with the law.

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 9:37 PM

COMMENT #77 (Email)

██████████

Again, please do not diminish the parents here. It sounds as if you're suggesting their opinions are invalid, that they are incapable of expressing an opinion on anything other than playgrounds. Their opinions are as valid as yours.

A point of clarification: DGS asked the community at their July meeting if the community wanted a "new design" for the Plaza. The response was unanimous: Yes. Not a single voice of dissent. You attended that meeting.

What's at stake here really, is a difference of opinion. Can you come to the table in the spirit of bridging those differences?

Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 9:39 PM

COMMENT #78 (Email)

██████████

I saw the names included on this email chain and was disturbed to discover that the list is comprised almost entirely of opponents of the Kalorama Park plans (city officials withstanding) despite the fact that proponents are known to many. That would suggest that something other than a concern for "process" is at work here.

In the interests of an accurate assessment, it would be helpful to hear from those whose views have been otherwise discounted by our community leaders. I've included ██████████ on this email. ██████████ is part of a group of approximately 200 parents who have expressed strong feelings on the Plaza as well as the possibility of new Playgrounds in Kalorama Park.

As for the ANC meeting process, it would be helpful for all of us to hear from you how the process works. As I recall, one or two members of the PZT are resigning. Do you know who will take those positions and when? Does the PZT Committee vote or a larger subset of the ANC? And what exactly

does the ANC plan to vote on? Most importantly, how do you plan to handle the fact that a number of your ANC commissioners have already taken a public positions against the renovation of Kalorama Park?

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:25 AM

COMMENT #79 (Email)

██████████

Please do not misrepresent or distort what I said with regard to the perspective of the parents of children on the future of Kalorama Park.. My words speak for themselves and do not require your spin or interpretation.

I did indeed attend the July 17 planning meeting for the park but my recollection of that meeting differs significantly from yours. That meeting focused primarily on the anti-erosion project. It included a discussion of the possibility of replacing the existing pavement in the plaza area with permeable pavers but this discussion was tentative and inconclusive as permeable pavement could be installed only if funding could be secured from the Department of the Environment (DPR's funding for the project was limited).

Meeting participants expressed strong objection to the one modest design change with respect to the plaza that was discussed -- a reversing of the orientation of the benches on the west edge of the plaza that now look in the direction of the Cathedral so that they would face inward and onto the plaza. No other design proposals were made or discussed at the July 17 meeting as the funding question for permeable pavement was completely unresolved. Nor did meeting participants ask or vote for a plaza redesign. I left the meeting thinking only that permeable pavement was a possibility (but hardly a sure thing) and assuming that, if funding were found to install it, any installation would be consistent with the plaza's existing design. Only at the Oct. 9 meeting did I learn that the landscape architect hired by DPR/DGS had developed entirely new plans for the plaza and that she had done so without seeking feedback from the community as to current and historical uses of the plaza or the history of the plaza and its plantings.

Regardless of our differing recollections of the July 17 meeting, what matters is that many of us believe that the process to date has been flawed and should be restarted and restructured to ensure openness, transparency, and a respect for history.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 1:13 AM

COMMENT #80 (Email)

██████████,

I didn't launch this email chain, and with the exception of the people who have specifically commented, I have no idea who among the list of recipients supports the plans and who opposes them. My own impression is that the list of recipients is comprised primarily of city officials. But you should feel free to add anyone else you would like.

With respect to the ANC process, District of Columbia law requires government agencies such as the Department of General Services and the Department of Parks and Recreation to formally notify the Advisory Neighborhood Commission at least 30 business days prior to making significant decisions that affect the Commission area. The agencies are then required by law to give "great weight" to any feedback that the Advisory Neighborhood Commission might provide. See D.C. Official Code 1-309.10.

None of this has happened yet. And if you are frustrated, I share your frustration. DGS and DPR are well aware of the requirements of this law. If DGS and DPR had followed the law, no one in the community would be able to claim that they hadn't had a fair opportunity to try to influence the outcome.

The situation can be corrected without too much difficult or delay if DGS and DPR would be willing to take action and actually start coordinating with the ANC. Here are some concrete steps that could be taken:

-Instead of holding a separate DGS meeting on November 5th at the same time as the regular monthly meeting of the ANC, have DGS and/or DPR instead come to the ANC's meeting, and present the plans. We would not vote on the substance of the plans that night, but we could use it as a forum for Commissioners to learn about what is being proposed, and the main reasons the plans are supported by some and opposed by others.

-We could then use the month of November to ensure that the plans are broadly circulated within the community, and that Commissioners solicit feedback from their constituents.

-The ANC could then take the matter up for broad public comment, and for deliberation and voting, at our meeting on Wednesday, December 3rd.

-DGR and DPR could then proceed in making their final decisions, taking care to give the legally required "great weight" to the feedback that the ANC has provided.

If DGS and DPR are prepared to move forward in this manner, I'll do what I can to make this work on the ANC-side.

Sincerely,

██████████

P.S. ██████████, with respect to your more particular questions about the ANC's process, a park-related matter would typically be handled by our Public Services and the Environment Committee, not our Planning, Zoning, and Transportation Committee. Our Public Services and the Environment Committee has all three of its members in place (██████████). However, they don't plan on meeting this month because their meeting would fall the day before Thanksgiving. However, if we follow the

process I've suggested above, we wouldn't need to have a Committee meeting first. When it comes time to vote, the ANC can vote on any aspect of the plans that any Commissioner wishes to bring forward. One could imagine a vote entirely supporting the proposed changes, or a vote entirely opposing the proposed changes, or a vote supporting some of the proposed changes, but opposing others. With respect to the statement that a number of Commissioners have already taken public positions against the renovations, two points. First, I'm not aware of any Commissioners that have done so. I may simply be unaware. But I've only heard Commissioners who are very unhappy that the proper process has so far not been followed. Second, even if Commissioners have taken public positions for or against the renovation, I don't view that as a problem in any respect. To the contrary, taking positions for or against the matters that arise in the community is the very purpose for which we are elected. In some ways, the earlier a Commissioner is willing to disclose their inclinations, the easier your job becomes, because it gives you a clearer view of who most needs to be contacted by the people who share your views.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 9:55 AM

COMMENT #81 (Email)

Dear Mr. Diggs,

I am in favor of the remediation and the permeable paving in the plaza, but am trying to understand the desires of the opposition. No one opposed seems to be specifically stating what it is that they want. It seems as though some want the central plaza design to remain as it currently is with the existing planters and the benches facing as they are. Would it be possible to have a design similar to what currently exists? I understand that you have put out three plans and the survey to vote already, but someone opposed should have at the last meeting expressed the desire to keep the plaza design as is which no one seems to have done.

Some are also opposed to the picnic benches in the plaza. Option 1 seems to put the benches outside of the main area of the plaza so this could solve the picnic table placement issue.

I do like the seating the way it is currently as it is more sociable than the formation in the proposed plans which are side by side encouraging us to look away from one another.

I think the parents might be biased and choosing a plan, any plan, just so they can get their playground upgraded which is not fair to those that care more about the plaza (the central focus of the park) than the playground.

Could you please consider another plan possibly incorporating the perimeter of the 3 new plans your provided and the existing central plaza design? I think this might aid in a design that the community can peacefully agree upon.

Since the final design decision will affect the park and community relations for many many more years to come it is extremely important to get this right.

Thank you very much for all your hard work,

Friday, November 4, 2014 at 8:55 AM

COMMENT #82 (Email)

Dear Mr. Diggs:

The survey question on the design options for Kalorama Park's plaza area does not fully assess community opinion. As you know, many of us prefer the existing design for the plaza yet the survey does not offer that as a choice (or even a variation on the existing design as a choice). Instead, the survey offers only three variations on the same proposed design (all three design options included in the survey would replace the existing sidewalk on the west side of the plaza with a curving sidewalk, include many large, new boulders on the east side of the plaza, and make the plaza (now a multifunctional space that can be used for meetings and public events as well as sitting) into an extension of the playground).

I would greatly appreciate it if you would modify the survey on the design options to add two other options that would more accurately and completely gauge community opinion: option 4 (keep the current design) and option 5 (prefer another design). Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Friday, October 24, 2014 at 2:58 PM

COMMENT #83 (Email)

██████████

I tried to do the Kalorama Park Design Options Survey, but was unable to do so. The Survey had a total of one question: which of the three design options did I prefer? Then I was to select a button for Option 1, 2, or 3. Below that was a box in which I could type additional comments. I checked no buttons, then explained below, in the text box, that I did not prefer any of the three options, I clicked "Done" but the survey said that wasn't an option. I could only complete the survey by selecting an option

- (1) The three options do not include any option to keep the plaza substantially the same, nor do they include any other possibilities for the plaza and kids lots
- (2) Further, all three options include multiple elements in common, meaning that, whatever option one prefers, the common elements become selected without any questioning. This applies to many critical elements, for example, the utterly stupid decorative boulder dog-pissing rocks.
- (3) Finally, this very "survey" is a prime example of the very strange, hurried, process in which, after literally years of DGS and DPR sitting on the problems of Kalorama Park without taking any actions, all at once major design changes will be made right now, and contracts awarded right now, which is the real object at play here.

If you sincerely want to encourage public participation in the design of Kalorama Park, then join me in urging the Committee on Transportation and the Environment to hold hearings on the past history of Kalorama Park contracting scandals and associated DPR/DGS malfeasance, which has caused serious damage to the park, which can and should be remediated right now, without waiting for some hurried "redesign" of the plaza.

The best way forward for Kalorama Park is to contact Councilwoman Mary Cheh and ask her to schedule long-overdue investigations of the Kalorama Park scandals that district agencies have been sitting on since 2009.

Tuesday, November 4, 2014 at 9:38 AM

COMMENT #84 (Email)

██████████

We've learned that KCA is now looking at the issue of the park/playground renovation. We are writing to let you know that there has been considerable unhappiness for a long period of time among the many parents whose children use the park and the playgrounds at Kalorama Park. The playground equipment is not only antiquated, it is in many cases unsafe. Our swing sets are currently missing, because when one swing broke, the City realized that the entire structure was cracking and had to be taken down. Likewise, the 20-year old metal slide is so hot in the summer you have to try to re-direct your kids away from it. The stairs leading up to the jungle gym are steep and difficult to navigate. The paint is not only peeling on the jungle gym, but there is rust in places and it's bulging in others. A corner of the jungle gym in the tot lot broke earlier this year creating a serious hazard (it had been sagging for awhile), and while the City was great in doing an immediate repair given the safety issue, newer equipment would give parents of our youngest children more peace of mind. There have been a number of other issues, but suffice it to say, parents have been very unhappy and at times even worried about the condition of the playground.

The extent of unhappiness was made clear when we spent a weekend surveying playground use and prepared a petition to ask the City to renovate the playground immediately. The floodgates opened, and our parents group now has over 175 signatures. Some parents came by the park that weekend and sought out the petition to sign specifically because word spread about our efforts. Our usage survey that weekend documented 467 playground visits (children and adults) in 2 days. That doesn't count all of the parents and kids who would have used the Kalorama playground if it were updated. We know that some parents leave the neighborhood to take their kids to other playgrounds in the city that are modern and don't have the outdated feel and safety concerns of our park. We'd like to address this and give families a neighborhood alternative that is in line with other playgrounds in the city.

We are really gratified that DPR has been taking our concerns seriously. The parents group has been thrilled by the prospect of this playground work being done in the spring in connection with the larger park renovation. We do not want to see that work delayed.

Our playgrounds serve a diverse community, and they get heavy use year-round. But as you can imagine, with kids out of school, summer is a very heavy use time for playgrounds. Keeping the renovation on track is a real priority for the parents group. I was at the last community meeting where the designs were presented. Some liked the designs and some didn't, and the City committed to making some changes based on the concerns raised at the meeting. We think the community should work together to get our community park/playground renovations now.

We are looking forward to working together to get this done quickly.

Sunday, October 19, 2014 at 12:44 PM

COMMENT #85 (Email)

██████████, and others I see on this list that I already know, ██████████,

As a 44 year neighborhood resident who helped raise 2 daughters here, I am delighted to see the intense use of the children's play areas, and agree with you that they should be second to none in the city. I have volunteered in Kalorama Park numerous times over the years, and have used it consistently for decades. I have been intensely involved in some of the issues, and observed others with a watchful eye.

The current "plans" under discussion

[http://dgs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dgs/publication/attachments/Com_.%20Mtg%20Pres_2014-10-09.pdf] have only been publicly available since Friday. I posted them on our 2 neighborhood listserves; the Adams Morgan Yahoo Group, and the Mintwood List. I have now had time to carefully review the plans and see nothing about improvements to the children's play areas. The only thing shown on the plans that remotely affects these play areas are new plantings, and there is no specificity as to what these include.

My concern is that there is not a good process in place for community engagement over the plans and what they will mean for the entire community. My understanding from some of the attendees of the October 9th meeting, and the October 14th Fund meeting, is that Mr. Diggs of DGS indicated that the next scheduled meeting on Tuesday, Oct 21 would be the final chance to have input into the plans. This seems to me to be such a highly accelerated schedule that practically no one in the neighborhood even knows about it. The proof of that is that the plans were not available to the general public until Friday, October 17.

But to the plans. There is a general lack of specificity to the drawings. They are closer to being concept drawings than actual working plans. In case some of you are new arrivals to the neighborhood, or don't remember, or weren't using the park then, this whole project came about because of what everyone now calls the "failed erosion control project" which added berms in 3 places around the sidewalk leading to 19th Street and was meant to create a small, multi-use playing field just above the basketball courts. The resulting work put this section of the park out of commission for a very long time, far longer than projected, and the contractor dumped "spoils" from another project into the proposed playing field, making it useless, as it doesn't perc, and nothing will grow on it. Another element of that plan was to bury Geo-Block, a hard plastic shaped like egg cartons, under that playing field to hold the soil and sod in place. But it was a product used to build parking lots on soil, not for kids to play on. The community rallied and fought off that threat to kid's safety. Imagine your child falling on hard plastic that the soil has eroded away from.

So now the plans have grown to include a "green screen" (where?), a slot drain (again, where?), boulders scatter around the former plaza, lots of location-unspecified street/park furniture, and many, many plantings (historically, it's been a problem to maintain them).

But no kid playground equipment or general improvement of the kid's play-spaces is shown. My first take on it, without the DPR/DGS presentation, is that I'll trade the investment to be spent on the plaza for renovating the kid's play areas, and filling them with safe, up-to-date, play equipment.

The park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is an Underground Railroad site. There are archaeological features near the basketball courts that need to be protected. The work of neighborhood historian Mary Belcher, with the support of the Kalorama Citizens Association, is

responsible for this. KCA also petitioned for the creation of the Kalorama Triangle Historic District, which was approved by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board in 1987, and contains Kalorama Park. So, changes as basic as the ones contemplated by these plans would need the approval of the HPRB, and as such should go through the ANC 1C review process. Community groups such as KCA and individuals could also be heard at an HPRB hearing.

There is no intention to un-necessarily prolong improvements to the park. But there are laws and regulations in place, and a built-in process.

Sunday, October 19, 2014 at 9:16 PM

COMMENT #86 (Email)

Dear Denis,

Thank you for your email. The Parents of Kalorama Park have been in a dialogue with the city, and we understand from those conversations that the plans for the park renovation and the opportunity to have the playground redone this spring are closely linked. It will save taxpayer money and minimize disruption to the park by working on both the plaza and the playground renovation at the same time. As heavy users of the park, we appreciate the effort to minimize disruption in the park. At the meeting I attended on October 9, the DGS/DPR representatives present expressed optimism that they will be in a position to redo the playground at the same time as a spring plaza renovation. From our perspective, DGS/DPR are doing things right and making a real effort to remedy the poor state of the Kalorama Park playgrounds, and the Parents of Kalorama Park greatly appreciate it.

Many, many families in the neighborhood are aware that DGS/DPR are considering new playground equipment for Kalorama Park as part of the plaza renovations. We understand there is not an absolute guarantee that the playground will be built. We trust that the logic of doing these two projects together will prevail. Slowing down or derailing DGS/DPR efforts this fall will certainly accomplish one thing -- we will not get a new park this spring. Erecting roadblocks to the park redesign is very much the same as erecting roadblocks to the playground. The playground needs to be redone now, and delay is not acceptable to us.

Rather than arguing for delay, we would hope those with concerns about the park redesign would work constructively to improve the design. As I mentioned in my last email, those concerns were heard at the last meeting, and I understand there will be another opportunity to discuss them at the meeting Tuesday. Given that those in attendance at the presentation given by the landscape architects/engineers were roughly 50% in favor of what was presented and 50% interested in changes, and DGS/DPR agreed to make responsive changes, I see no reason to delay further discussions until 2015. We have momentum now, an engaged DGS/DPR now, and 170+ parents who want new playgrounds now.

I hope that all parties involved in this discussion take a responsible approach in favor of dialogue, rather than of killing chances of a playground next year by arguing for delay. There are other problems with the park, which, as you flag, have taken years to remedy. DGS/DPR is finally getting things right. Let's work together to build consensus and help DGS/DPR deliver renovations, rather than delay things even more.

And to DGS/DPR - thank you. I thought the process you ran on October 9 was open, professional, and courteous. The Parents of Kalorama Park look forward to continuing the dialogue.

Monday, October 20, 2014 at 2:41 AM

COMMENT #87 (Email)

██████████:

The fact that there is no commitment yet on the part of the DPR/DGS for a playground rebuild argues for a go-slow approach as the plaza part of the project should not proceed until questions with regard to whether the playgrounds are to be reconstructed are resolved. If there is to be a playground part of the project, the playground part should be engineered and planned at the same time as any reconstruction/remediation of the adjacent plaza area and work on the Columbia Road side of KP. And of course there are erosion issues associated with the playground for the bigger kids so even more reason for the planning to be done on a coordinated and coherent basis instead of pushing through a part of the project without proper community participation in the hope that that will somehow encourage DPR to agree to fund another part of the project.

Also, a quick look at the DGS website shows some 14 playgrounds around the District in various stages of planning or construction, with some quite ambitious (I see funding of \$1.5M for Lafayette (which is more than just a playground rebuild) and \$1M for the Mitchell Park reconstruction, which was completed only about 2 months ago). There are already two commitments for playgrounds in Ward 1 (the Columbia Heights rec center and a new playground at the Garrison ES). Only one ward has more than three playground projects (Ward 8 with three) and three wards have only one project (Wards 4, 5, and 7). Based on the scale and ambition of many of the projects underway, we should feel comfortable in expecting a similar project for Kalorama but it will be tough to persuade the powers-that-be to fund a third playground project in Ward 1 while there are other wards with only one playground project.

In addition to the persuading District officials to add KP to that list immediately, there is also the fact that time will be required to do proper planning for a playground rebuild as well as for the work in the plaza area and along Columbia Road. In the case of the Mitchell Park playground, it looks as though planning began some time in late 2013, with construction not beginning until June of 2014.

Having examined both the KP playgrounds and the Mitchell Park playground this weekend and getting a full sense of the shortcomings of the KP playgrounds, I agree that the KP playgrounds should be renovated and modernized. But I do not believe that it should come at the price of proper planning for KP's plaza area and community participation in that planning process or sort circuiting community review through the ANC process.

Monday, October 20, 2014 at 9:32 AM

COMMENT #88 (Email)

As the ANC commissioner for the SMD that includes Kalorama Park, I am deeply troubled by the process on the redesign of the upper park.

At the meeting on October 9, the plans were shown to a group of about 10 members of the public, many of whom had been involved for several years in discussions about remediation of the failed erosion project. One of the items on the punch list for the park was making the hard surface of the square in front of the Rec Center permeable, to reduce runoff from the upper park.

With the click of a mouse, we learned that DGS/DPR was proposing a major redesign of that area. "Stunned" would be the appropriate word to describe our reaction. Although we gamely tried to point out specific concerns about the proposal on the fly, many of us felt blind-sided by the expectation that we articulate our concerns immediately and without having the time to process them or compare the

plans with what we have now. We were also told that only those who were present at that October 9 meeting would be allowed input and that DGS/DPR would provide a "tweaked" version of the plans on October 21, which would be the operative plans for the project.

I heartily agree that Kalorama Park has significant problems that need to be addressed. I have spent considerable time discussing and strategizing about potential solutions. In none of those discussions or meetings were the 'solutions' proposed by these plans addressed because these plans seem to be addressing problems that have not previously been articulated. The drastic changes to the upper portion of the park reflected by these plans--which would be with us for decades-- should not be imposed on the community that uses the park with such limited public input. It's simply not good process.

My colleagues on the ANC wonder why DGS/DPR believes that it is proper to ignore the process required by DC Code 1-309.10. The Public Services and the Environment Committee for ANC 1C has added the proposal to its agenda for its regular monthly meeting October 22. It may recommend action by the full ANC at its next meeting November 5.

I noticed this morning that DGS personnel were in the process of installing a new swing set in the larger play area. It appears that improvements to the play area can be made without being tied to the proposed redesign of the square. I'm wondering why DGS/DPR thinks it's a good strategy to pretend that the only way the woefully dilapidated playground equipment will be replaced is if the community shuts up/sits down and lets them create whatever they choose.

Monday, October 20, 2014 at 11:50 AM

COMMENT #89 (Email)

Thank you for your cogent summary of plans for this park this week.
My husband and I support any one of the proposed plans.

We also strongly support plans to redo the children's two playgrounds as soon as possible. Specifically

relocate the concrete table from the larger playground;
Remove the hedges surrounding both playgrounds to allow parents greater visual supervision of their children.

In addition, we have two other concerns:

Please find a way to save the pocket garden now located at the corner of the large playground. It should be simple to design the paving so as to allow this (or a replacement) garden. The garden is beautiful, and educational for our children.

Please remove the hedges around the community garden to,allow more Sun and a greater variety of plants. Right now, this garden is a mess.

Friday, October 24, 2014 at 5:41 AM

COMMENT #90 (Email)

I've heard recently that the DC Dept. of Parks and Recreation is planning a substantial alteration to Kalorama Park. As a nearby resident, I'd prefer that the park simply be left as is. Please take a close look at plans for the park and the potential impact the changes will have on the character of the park and the neighborhood.

Tuesday, November 4, 2014 at 2:10 PM

COMMENT #91 (Email)

Dear Denis,

Yesterday you sent a letter to KCA's membership and others about Kalorama Park. Your letter, copied below, is incorrect on 10 different points.

I've listed each point here so you can correct the record for KCA members, ANC commissioners and City officials.

You've stated previously that DPR/DGS has not properly notified the ANC. Please note that the kickoff meeting regarding Kalorama Park improvements with DPR/DGS was initiated and organized through the leadership of ANC Commissioner Wilson Reynolds. (You and two ANC commissioners are included on the emails.) A review of records shows that ANC reps have either been invited or have attended every meeting since.

Thank you in advance for correcting this inaccuracy and those listed below.

Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 7:59 AM

COMMENT #92 (Email)

I only got notice of the Kalorama Park meetings yesterday (Nov. 4 – see notice below) and need more information than I can see in the attached presentation before I could begin to decide between the options so Survey Monkey is useless. Unfortunately I have a previously scheduled meeting tonight.

Please try to squeeze in one or two more meetings before finalizing plans. Planning has to start earlier; notice of meetings has to be earlier and coordinated with other community meetings. It's not that people are not interested; it is that folks have busy schedules. Note that there is an important ANC meeting already set for Nov.18th, the date of the final presentation on the Kalorama plans.

It would be great to have some improvements at Kalorama Park and it would be great to manage storm water better in the neighborhood - - and I realize the need to move forward to get the work scheduled this winter. But a successful project needs real community backing, which takes more planning time upfront. Otherwise folks just get frustrated and angry. What should be a celebration of the great work DGS is doing and tax dollars well spent instead becomes an irksome conflict - - and a project that works for nobody but the contractors.

Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 11:45 AM

COMMENT #93 (Email)

██████, as a concerned parent and daily user of Kalorama Park, I have to say that what we don't need is all this fuss and noise that you are coming up with. You are hindering the process and creating unnecessary obstacles to something that could be wonderful for everyone. We need new playground equipment, we need it now - not in a few years. And we need erosion control and all the other good things that have been planned. So many other parks in the area have completed their renovations with much less acrimony and dissenting voices, with excellent results. Why can't we do the same? By throwing up all these obstacles, you are ensuring that DC will just throw up their hands and move on to another project.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 11:47 AM

COMMENT #94 (Email)

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That's not a better question, although it is a valid one. As far as I know, the answer is that for whatever reason the playground never gets on the list and there appears to be no clear mechanism for making that happen. Second, the park renovations were/are happening, and since getting the playground fixed appeared to be a non-starter, taking it onto the larger project makes sense. For us, it's a choice between taking the playground renovation on to the larger project and getting the playground fixed soon...or getting the playground fixed sometime in the distant future but most likely not in time for use in the summer of 2015. Call the renovation project a target of opportunity.

Of course, the bad news is that now the playground renovation is being held hostage by opponents of the park renovation; opposition that appears to be motivated out of sensitivity to not having been properly consulted (hurt feelings?), and something about preserving historical park aesthetics (whatever). So, from my point of view, a few of you are going to prevent the playground from being renovated. Lots and lots of us use the park and the playground...I bet if we took a poll of all those park users, few if any would give a damn about your process concerns or respect for historical whatever. So, thank you very much.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 11:57 AM

COMMENT #95 (Email)

In regards to this latest activity of tying a playground renovation to the plaza destruction and redesign, expressing views and having a chance to really be heard have been two completely and utterly distinct and separate things. My comments at the last meeting were characterized by Mr Diggs as "heckling." His instructions to those in attendance on providing him feedback left us with about as much room as a straitjacket. Seeing the opportunities for feedback as narrow, I therefore wondered if the process maybe had also been carefully orchestrated.

That playground is an excellent example of abysmally-used space: it is fairly large, but about half of the space is currently unused. It's not maintained at all - sand was added in the small lot by a family who undertook it at their own expense, and have since moved out of the neighborhood. Sand in the bigger lot was added by ANC members I believe, after a lot (A LOT) of effort. In regards to the process it has been not just flawed, but fatally so from the start: tying the playground renovation to the destruction and redesign of the current plaza, without spending the necessary time understanding the causes from start to finish of erosion in Kalorama Park. As usual, it's all quite ad hoc and poorly understood. How many times have we in the the community sat in on meetings as a DPR or DGS leader breezily professed

their ignorance of design/horticulture/this community/history/soil/erosion as if it doesn't matter? Many. Those things believe it or not do matter. I am all for improving the playground and a playground redesign, but far from "holding it hostage," I do not want to see integrity of design sacrificed to short-term thinking.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:13 PM

COMMENT #96 (Email)

I expect we will hear a lot more from the well-led parents in this exchange. There were a few others at the last meeting who bristled at the way Mr Diggs communicated and felt silenced - I was not the only one. I met someone whom I had not seen at previous meetings but who has been in the community a long time who also felt like there were obstacles to expressing their opinions.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:13 PM

COMMENT #97 (Email)

Thank you for responding to My email. As I understand it, the playground project grew out of the larger project, and cannot be independently undertaken. Is this incorrect? Also, to what "dramatic" changes do you refer? The plans I saw keep the park pretty much as it is, but better. What am I missing here. I really want to know.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:22 PM

COMMENT #98 (Email)

██████ — I don't know how long you have lived in the neighborhood but we have been burned badly by DPR with regard to big projects in the Park over the past seven or so years. Hence the reluctance on the part of many of us to see another project jammed thorough with unseemly haste and more poor planning as seems to be the case with this project just as with the last one. The last anti-erosion project (conceived in 2007-08 and implemented in 2009-10) was an unmitigated disaster, with the scars visible today throughout the Park (the storm fences along 19th street, the dead Viburnums in the terraced area adjacent to the bball court, the weed-filled "children's play area" just above the bball court, the grassless berms, etc). Why invite such activity one again, especially when we have an outgoing administration and no assurance of continuity of management of the project?

The mechanism for getting on the playground list is generally by working with our councilmember to get on the list as funding seems to be distributed in the District on a ward basis. As I have said in the past, I believe that improving the playgrounds is the least controversial item on the agenda for the Park and that it should stand on its own merits and not be used as the driving force to implement a larger and more controversial project.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:24 PM

COMMENT #99 (Email)

I think we can all agree that DPR/DGS has not been particularly impressive, and the meeting I attended left a bad taste in my mouth for a number of reasons. Ultimately, though, what I saw was a good renovation plan coupled with what might be our best shot at getting the playgrounds fixed--facing what appeared to me to be the irrational resistance of a few who mainly did not like how DPR/DGS was going about its business.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:26 PM

COMMENT #100 (Email)

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I've been in the neighborhood since 2008 and have been a steady user of the playgrounds ever since. You can find me there every Saturday afternoon, for hours, and I'm often there in the evening. I'm either in the playgrounds or watching over my kids as they play soccer on the plaza, zoom around the oval on their scooters, and play baseball on the grass. I taught the eldest to ride a bicycle there.

Your argument so far is that DPS/DPR did a crap job in the past (that's undeniable) so we shouldn't have them do anything now. I don't really get that: you're holding up renovation because of concern for past failures. Perhaps we can point to the fact that DPS/DPR has done good jobs elsewhere? Or take a chance on them rather than just keep delaying renovation? How many more meetings need to be held before everyone's satisfied and resistance ends? And what would the timetable look like then? Do we aim for summer, 2016?

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:32 PM

COMMENT #101 (Email)

I thought the last meeting was very well run, and all the people involved seemed to be represented. Also, it allowed ample feedback, as it appeared that at least some of the objections stated had been stated many times before. Given the apparently minor changes to the park that all 3 plans show, all this discussion seems like personal pique.

The important thing for me is to improve the playground sooner, rather than later, using the process currently being offered us.

If there are serious problems with the plans, I have yet to hear them. As a reasonable person, I would like to hear them in order to have an informed opinion. Distrust is simply not sufficient for me, especially considering that the phase of the park project already completed appears to have gone smoothly and on schedule.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:40 PM

COMMENT #102 (Email)

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What you're missing is that many of us do not see the reconstruction of the plaza area as keeping the park as is and making it better. The plaza designed was conceived of by the National Park Service as it currently is in 1947 — it took some time and money before the plans were implemented but the plaza part adheres almost exactly to those original plans. Given that history, a much lighter touch would have been warranted vis-a-vis the plaza area.

In larger terms, many of us are concerned that DPR/DGS still does not have it right in terms of the anti-erosion side of things. Those concerns flow from the fact that the anti-erosion components of the project appear to have evolved on the fly and that we know very little about the plantings that will be done or the maintenance of the new trees and bushes. We have a dismal history of keeping new plantings alive in our Park — the new Viburnums were re-planted as many as four times in the 2009-10 time frame but still did not take in two places. There have been problems with regard to some of the new trees that were along 19th Street side of the Park. So we are planning for the destruction of all the existing vegetation in the plaza area — that was made unambiguously clear at the last meeting — yet

we are supposed to ignore the fact that such plans will have real world consequences. Based on history of park (mis)management, the extensive work planned for the plaza area is more than a risky venture in terms of its viability and of returning that area of the Park to use once the work is done.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 12:46 PM

COMMENT #103 (Email)

I hope I have understood you correctly. You object to the new plans because:

1. They do not respect the 1947 plan. What about the plaza plan is so different? I don't see it.
2. The landscaping will be disturbed. Right now the park is a mess. There are bare spots in the grass, some of the trees are dead, etc. The only beautiful part of the park now is the tiny pocket garden at the corner of the big playground. THAT I will miss, but a new garden can be planted. Space in the new plans could be requested.
3. You are not persuaded that the erosion issue has been solved. I understood from the engineering expert at the last meeting that it has indeed been solved, and the plans clearly incorporate ways to handle rain and unwanted water.

Past is not always prologue. I really wish you could revisit your objections with the object of addressing your concerns in the context of what is possible now. If there are any specific recommendations you have that could be incorporated into the plans presented, I am sure that those of us advocating for new playgrounds would gladly hear them, and support them as appropriate.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 1:06 PM

COMMENT #104 (Email)



Here is my short list of concerns, some of which relate to the lack of precision in the disclosures that have been made to us and others of which and more fundamental and relate to the reconfiguration/redesign of the plaza) :

- loss of functionality of the plaza area (for public meetings and events) due to presence of boulders in the space and reconfiguration of the space
- loss of the original NPS design for the plaza area (symmetrical and linear as opposed to curving)
- unknown information as the identity and size of the bushes and trees to be planted in the plaza area (many of us would like to see the return of the beautiful flowering Hawthorns that used to sit in each corner of the plaza)
- doubts with regard to whether the new vegetation will be properly maintained by DR (based on bad history in this area)
- the loss of healthy privet hedges in the plaza area
- unknown design for new benches
- strange green wall on the rec center (that looks like it could die quickly)
- lack of consideration of the erosion issues with regard to the playground areas (its currently at a higher level than the plaza area) (it is unknown what the new surface for the playground would be; this matter should be a part of the planning process)
- lack of consideration of the erosion issues that originate in the oval area

- loss of privacy for people using the new benches that now sit on the edge of the plaza and overlook the park but will be moved back and situated adjacent to a new sidewalk
- lack of understanding on the part of the DPR/DGS team that the 2 aggregate concrete tables are designed to sink into the ground and not to sit on a concrete pad (current plans are to place them on concrete)
- lack of shade for most of the planned new benches
- elimination of the Norway maple because it is "invasive"
- unclear where new fences will be placed in the Park (they have been shown in the DPR/DGS slides as examples but their actual placement has not been clear)
- lack of certainty or clarity with regard to playground improvements
- failure to address the weird discordance between the flagpole and the lamppost

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 1:17 PM

COMMENT #105 (Email)

Thank you for this very substantive response. My husband and I have been truly mystified by the apparent acrimony among the interested parties. At least now I see your specific concerns. I have a few questions/comments. I am genuinely interested in exploring a way that everyone's concerns can be resolved, not merely argued and discussed.

Is the plaza the concrete area adjacent to the sidewalk along the big playground? Is anything beside the proposed sidewalk(s) curving instead linear? Could someone sketch something reflecting what would be more pleasing to you, and pass it around to us. Perhaps some of us can be persuaded to your point of view. Frankly, it appears that many of your concerns could be incorporated into the proposed plan(s).

Are you referring to the benches along the sidewalk near 19th street or the ones in front of building or the ones near the Columbia Road steps (where homeless people now rest)?

The landscaping people were at the last meeting, have they heard your concerns about the vegetation? Do you not accept their explanation about the "invasive" tree? Parents have real concerns that the current hedges block their view of the children playing, but do you think compromise is possible, perhaps a lower hedge. For sure, the hedges around the community garden are way too high and do not allow adequate sun for vegetables. By the way, the community garden is a shambles. Something should be done about that. In any case, there will no doubt be a future opportunity to influence the vegetation choices.

What would convince you to believe the engineer that the erosion issue has been resolved?

It is uncomfortable to have some issues not definitively resolved, like the type and location of fences, but I should not like to reject the good in favor of an unattainable "best".

I think it is a shame that this issue has become so divisive, since I believe we all want the best for the park, our neighborhood, and our children.

Again, thank you for taking the time to enumerate concerns about the proposed plans. I hope you will consider my comments in the spirit given.

I look forward to meeting you.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 2:16 PM

COMMENT #106 (Email)

Thanks, [REDACTED], for your good thoughts and totally agree on the divisiveness. There has to be a better way . . . Again, I'll try to keep my response simple:

--The acrimony derives from the disaster that was the 2009-10 anti-erosion project. That is the source of the collective memory that many of us have when it comes to KP. So we greet the latest iteration of that project with a good deal of well-earned skepticism

- The plaza is the aggregate concrete area that sits in front of the rec center
- My desire is that the plaza area adhere more closely to the original design (I've attached a copy of those 1947 plans so you can see what I am talking about when I talk about symmetry and linearity; you'll probably get a kick out of some of the items that were planned for the playgrounds). That is a matter of historic preservation (which is one of the defining characteristics of our neighborhood). This is a matter (for me) of aesthetics, history, and fictionality
- The benches I referred to are the three that sit on the west edge of the plaza and look over the Park in the direction of the Cathedral. They are much favored for sitting in the early evening — moving them back and to a location on the sidewalk diminishes privacy
- I understand that DPR actually requires that parents be inside the playground while their children play. Such a requirement is posted on the official DPR sign at Mitchell Park. So I am not sure that the privets should be removed to accommodate parents not being close to their children (I think that this PDR policy stems from a horrible (and fatal) accident on a DC playground some time ago)
- I did accept the argument that Norway maples are invasive but they have not replicated in KP and it does provide great shade (in the balance of things, I would err in favor of keeping it)
- A lot of what I describe as concerns could be alleviated with more complete and detailed plans as DPR/DGS will ultimately be required to develop for the contracting process. many of us would like to know the types of new trees that are planned (for example, we would love to see a restoration of the lovely flowering Hawthorns that used to sit in each corner of the plaza area)
- With regard to whether the plans solve erosion, I claim very limited expertise in this area but want to be certain that the plan is truly comprehensive and treats the Park as an ecosystem (again, this an issue that is informed by the past — DC tore the Park apart in 2009-10 in the name of stopping erosion but did not actually do so); the erosion part of the discussion seemed better informed at the last meeting but the plans could be more precise and firmer
- Given bad history, I expect more disclosure from DPR/DGS as the details of the plans as there is no turning back once the RFP for the contract is issued (in the past, the specs in the contract have listed each plant species, number to be planted, and planned location in micro detail)

Hope to meet you soon on friendlier ground than the Internet (it's easy to lapse into pontificating)!!

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 3:05 PM

COMMENT #107 (Email)

How about both! Seriously, I meant to say "functionality," meaning a place where public events and organized events for children can take place. In the past, there have been more activist rec center directors, who planned child-oriented activities for the plaza. That seems not to be happening these days but worth remembering as something that could be revived.

Agreed on the shuffleboard and horse shoes. I've wondered whether those were built and then converted to the community garden or were never built.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 3:43 PM

COMMENT #108 (Email)

Speaking as a resident of the immediate neighborhood for 16 years and living directly across the street from the upper part of the park overlooking the Plaza and playgrounds here are my two cents to your points:

—loss of functionality of the plaza area (for public meetings and events) due to presence of boulders in the space and reconfiguration of the space

+ Functionality of the plaza remains in place as shown in each of the 3 DGS/SPR plans. The scattering of any suggested boulders residing where the public garden current is situated do not intrude upon the existing footprint of the open Plaza.

—loss of the original NPS design for the plaza area (symmetrical and linear as opposed to curving)

+ I too enjoy the symmetrical and linear design of the current Plaza, but its frankly one small corner of a 3 acre park and whether its linear or curved will not impact whether people will continue to actually visit and enjoy it. We all know art and design are subjective. Is change to an NPS design ~70 years old the make or break issue?

—unknown information as the identity and size of the bushes and trees to be planted in the plaza area (many of us would like to see the return of the beautiful flowering Hawthorns that used to sit in each corner of the plaza)

+ Is it standard practice for the city to apprise the public ahead of time of the nature of the identity of the shrubs in such projects? Size has been laid out in each of the 3 designs.

—doubts with regard to whether the new vegetation will be properly maintained by DR (based on bad history in this area)

+ Agreed! But construction budgets and maintenance budgets in my experience dealing with government over many years often reside in different line items. That point strikes me as something to rally around at a later date. Horse before the cart et al.

—the loss of healthy privet hedges in the plaza area

+Again, I too enjoy a good privet hedge as the next person. The designed as present to the community show hedges delineating the space where the benches are / projected to be placed. As far as hedges on the side toward the playgrounds, it was said that those will be reduced in height so parents can more easily see their children in both playgrounds.

—unknown design for new benches

+ Standard benches in place similar to the ones in other parts of the park - center bar to discourage lying down - as noted in recent meeting.

—strange green wall on the rec center (that looks like it could die quickly)
+Green living walls are actually fairly common in landscaping design. I too have some concern about whether it will be properly maintained but if you look at the current wall now, there is graffiti on it. A living green wall eliminates that possibility.

--lack of consideration of the erosion issues with regard to the playground areas (its currently at a higher level than the plaza area) (it is unknown what the new surface for the playground would be; this matter should be a part of the planning process)
+ Current playground areas have wood chip covering, any erosion issues that may occur there tend to go toward Columbia Road if anywhere, which was also addressed in the meeting to include new hedge plantings along the Columbia Road side.

--lack of consideration of the erosion issues that originate in the oval area
+This point was addressed in the last community meeting with vertical aeration / mulching.

—loss of privacy for people using the new benches that now sit on the edge of the plaza and over look the park but will be moved back and situated adjacent to a new sidewalk
+ Again, plans as presented show a green divide between benches facing toward Columbia Road and those facing Cathedral view.

—lack of understanding on the part of the DPR/DGS team that the 2 aggregate concrete table are designed to sink into the ground and not to sit on a concrete pad (current plans are to place them on concrete)
+ Please elaborate. At present there are no concrete tables on the Plaza.

—lack of shade for most of the planned new benches
+ Agreed! This is an issue that was raised at the last meeting and was suggested that this be a point raised in our comments directly to DGS/DPR regarding the plans. The community should with one voice demand there be adequate shading (as it can get hot in summer on the Plaza).

—elimination of the Norway maple because it is “invasive”
+ By using quotes I take your point to mean that you don't believe the tree to be a threat to other trees/plants? We can request that another tree be planted to replace it. But to your dubiousness about its invasive quality a quick 2 second Google search brought me to a USDA Forestry Service site which clearly spells it out that it is in fact invasive: <http://tinyurl.com/p5oyzsl>

—unclear where new fences will be placed in the Park (they have been shown in the DPR/DGS slides as examples but their actual placement has not been clear)
+ How clear do you require them to be? Down to the square foot? The plans as presented appeared to ably illustrate where the fences will be placed. But that is a matter of pure opinion. Again, art and design being subjective and all.

—lack of certainty or clarity with regard to playground improvements
+ Agreed. But again, this project started as a redo of the Plaza. It is my understanding that DGS/DPR have only recently become fully aware of the immediate need to renovate the playgrounds.
—failure to address the weird discordance between the flagpole and the lamppost
+ Define "weird" please.

Friday, October 31, 2014 at 4:19 PM

COMMENT #109 (Email)

The disagreement we are having is not whether the playgrounds should be updated. With all their increased use over the past few years and their condition, it is obvious to all, I believe, that they should be.

The disagreement we are having, I believe, is about the proposed changes to the design of the plaza and the landscaping there and at the playgrounds. This design is an original feature of this historic park. It contributes to the significance of the Park, which in turn contributes to the significance of the historic district of Kalorama Triangle. It therefore should not, and, I believe, cannot, be destroyed without due process. This is the issue. DGS/DPR cannot destroy contributing features of the Park with the approval of even a whole neighborhood even after a course of several meetings. This requires review and approval by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board at the least, and maybe even the Fine Arts Commission as the owner of the Park is still the National Park Service, as I recall.

I agree with Cynthia that the solution lies in a different and likely smaller project. Refurbish the playground equipment and general playground facilities. Also refurbish the original landscape of the plaza and playgrounds, with new shade trees and benches at the plaza corners (you could have seating for 4 at each corner with plenty of open space in the center for play and other events. Remove the pin oak tree that was lately planted in the trench drain at the plaza and replace the trench drains at the plaza and adjacent areas with maybe larger ones (size and extent needs to be engineered). Plant shade trees in each playground corner at the end of the Belmont Street entrance where they had been. (Invert the corners of the playground fence here to keep them 'out' of the playgrounds.) Curve the path on the west edge outside of the plaza for circulation in front of new benches there that will face the sunset and 19th Street.

Install permeable pavers in the plaza courtyard only and articulate the original plaza space with them. That way service trucks can continue to access the trash and the rec center as necessary without worry of settlement of pavers over time. Size area of permeable pavers to be the amount needed to drain the roof and the plaza. Other hard surfaces around rec center and surrounding pathways could be redone in exposed aggregate concrete as they were originally, and could drain to trench drains of the plaza and or to the plaza itself.

The drainage problems of the plaza can be solved without completely changing the plaza and destroying historic fabric in the process. A smaller project such as described above would allow more of the current budget to be spent on the playground equipment and general facility, spending the money where there is really a problem.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 5:21 PM

COMMENT #110 (Email)

Wow! It appears that we are now at the point where threats are being issued; i.e., "since we are losing in terms of popular support, we will kill the project by involving the Preservation Board." As a self-described architect, you must know, such involvement is a death knell to this project. I find this email particularly shocking because the group opposed to park changes have up to now, invoked notice, participation -- democracy.

An untenable solution is no solution. As I understand the playgrounds issue, there is NO budget for playground repairs unless it is tied to plaza improvements. So your so-called suggestions are merely another way of saying "kill the project." If you know how to fund proposed playground renovations by 2015, apart from these proposals, I will have nothing more to say. You can fight with DPR to your heart's content.

In fact, the disagreement IS whether our children will have the playgrounds they deserve, or whether a small group of people will subordinate the children's needs and the expressed wishes of the community to their perception of what constitutes historical significance.

By the way, I cannot see that DPR' s proposals represent any radical design, let alone any that would threaten the historical nature of the park.

Really, people, changes to the National Mall have been implemented with less drama and chaos.

This does not speak well of our community.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 5:59 PM

COMMENT #111 (Email)

█, historic preservation review is a required part of most construction projects in this neighborhood. It's the law, pure and simple. Those of us who live on the Park side of Columbia Road have been living in a neighborhood that was designated as an historic preservation district in 1987, requiring HP review of most anything. Historic preservation review is hardly news and hardly a "threat." It has always been in the cards.

And why is there no budget for the playground work unless there are plaza improvements?? Why if playground repairs are so important (and they are) are they dependent on something else happening in the Park?? That's kind of an outrage and really should not be tolerated...

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 6:18 PM

COMMENT #112 (Email)

The fact that there is no independent budget for playground improvements is not an outrage, it is a political/budgetary fact. The fact that DPR found a way to help was providential, a gift, which some residents are refusing, for, in my opinion, insubstantial and negligible reasons.

I have lived In this neighborhood nearly 30 years, well before we became a historic district. Until last month, I have never realized what a stranglehold some residents could exert over what happens here. From emails from you and others, it is clear that many changes in the park have been undertaken, presumably without the kind if historical board oversight being threatened here. In fact, you yourself have been very vocal about DPR' s past performance on some of these projects.

I consider myself a very reasonable person, who signed a petition for playground improvements for neighborhood children. I had no notion of the wasp's nest I was entering. I only wanted to help our children.

Our neighborhood is changing, with many bright young parents moving here. I expect that if they are thwarted in this, their legitimate effort to provide for their children, they will take a closer look at the elected officials that did not aid them. I, for one, want to be on the right side of this issue.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 6:56 PM

COMMENT #113 (Email)

Other work done in the Park has indeed been subject to review through the HP process. None of this is new or news — signing a petition or showing up at a meeting or making preposterous claims of majority or democratic rule (because people get counted at a playground) does not trump DC law...

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 7:15 PM

COMMENT #114 (Email)

Now you are being abusive. My question to you is this: if neglect of historic oversight, failure to obey DC law, is a driving force in this issue, why did you not say so when first I asked what issues were at stake. You did mention lack of historic sensibility, which is not the same thing. It still appears to me to be a last-ditch effort to derail this project.

I entered this discussion not knowing any of the parties, having no particular position (aside from improving the playgrounds), and willing to listen to all sides and form opinions based upon facts. I was persuadable. Your side failed to set forth arguments that I found to be reasonable or sensible. Instead, I am increasingly persuaded that your side is completely intransigent; and in my opinion, wrong.

Do you see any way out of this, satisfactory to all sides? Is there a compromise possible? Is there a way to preserve your plaza and repair our playgrounds in 2015? Is there a proposal we could jointly present to DPR?

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 7:48 PM

COMMENT #115 (Email)

██████████ is a wonderful woman, an African American, a former kindergarten teacher, and a 30-year resident who recently reached out to the parents in the neighborhood asking how she could help the cause. She does not have children.

The reason, as she stated again below, is because she's appalled by the stranglehold that 5 people have had on the process. She's referring to ██████████, and ██████████ and their attempts to coerce the ANC into halting the project.

The 5 have added one new name to their ranks: ██████████, who wrote in for the first time today.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 7:53 PM

COMMENT #116 (Email)

I have mentioned the lack of respect for the original design repeatedly. I and others mentioned it again and again at the Oct 9 meeting. DGS chose to dismiss our concerns. [REDACTED] has mentioned the HP review process repeatedly. This is not new information -- indeed the lack of respect for history is at the core of most of the objections.

Look at some of the ideas [REDACTED] laid out earlier today. Of course there is room for compromise but not if people think that this a numbers game or a game of who can scream the loudest on the Internet.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 8:00 PM

COMMENT #117 (Email)

When you refer to my ideas as "your so-called suggestions" or call [REDACTED] a "self-described architect," you are on very weak ground when you characterize responses to you as "abusive."

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 8:13 PM

COMMENT #118 (Email)

Perhaps we are all being too sensitive. I said "self-described architect" because I do not know her, or her credentials, and she chose to identify herself that way when we have generally identified ourselves as neighbors and residents and parents.

I do think that the "suggestions" about getting the playgrounds repaired outside the current proposals are at best red herrings. A suggestion that is impossible is no suggestion. I would like us all to be clear that there is no other option to getting the playgrounds repaired by 2015 than by approving DPR's proposal. I have asked if there is as any other option; none has been suggested. Therefore, I propose that we stop pretending that this is not a zero sum situation. Let's just be honest: if you are against the plans, you are against the playgrounds.

If there is any hope of emerging from this abyss as neighbors and friends, then the least we owe each other is honesty and clarity. I am trying to be as transparent as I know how, and I am not yet convinced that opponents of DPR's plans are equally transparent and honest. In fact, and to your credit, you are the only one who has sustained a dialogue with me. So while I do not agree with you, I do appreciate your willingness to engage.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 9:07 PM

COMMENT #119 (Email)

Lack of respect for the original design does not automatically equate to unlawful acts under the preservation laws. I assume DPR understands these laws and it's proposals have taken them into account. In fact emails sent to this group detail how DPR has addressed all of the preservation concerns raised by opponents. Also, I keep saying to you that I do not see the "drastic" changes to the plaza you describe. It looks pretty much the same to me, only better. It is like we are living in parallel universes.

I do not know [REDACTED], but he did promptly respond to an email I sent him. I appreciate that. But he seemed concerned about the process to where we are now, and like you, suggested alternate ways to repair the playgrounds, which I now know are out of reach in the foreseeable future.

I speak for myself only; I have a limited goal (good playgrounds by 2015); I would prefer making friends than adversaries; and remain genuinely puzzled why everyone is not trying to make DPR's proposals work for us all.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 9:28 PM

COMMENT #120 (Email)

I don't view it as in an abyss but it is too simple to assume that approving the pending DGS proposal is the only way forward. It is not correct to say that if a person is against the pending plans then he or she is against improving the playgrounds. An argument can just as easily be made that if a person takes an inflexible position in support of the pending plans, then he or she is happy to sacrifice playground improvements for the psychological satisfaction of winning an imaginary game. I hope that this process is not headed in that direction but it certainly seems that way based on the emphasis on artificial choices and artificial deadlines and the treatment of our concerns as not legitimate.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 9:39 PM

COMMENT #121 (Email)

I don't claim to be an expert in the historic preservation laws so don't know how the review process will play out. I just know that the law requires a review by a couple of different government agencies and that sometimes plans go back and forth between the HP authorities and the developer, with suggestions being made for modifications and the plans being modified until a meeting of the minds is reached. That's how things played out with the plans to convert the Christian Scientist Church into a hotel. Those plans went through a dizzying number of revisions. I saw it on a smaller scale with a couple of townhouses on my block that were converted into condos.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 9:54 PM

COMMENT #122 (Email)

Neither you nor I is an actual decision maker. It has always been (and still is) up to DGS to figure out the proper balance between the old design and the new systems that will improve water absorption and limit water run-off. [REDACTED] made some good suggestions in that area that should merit consideration. There are likely other ways to do it but in the end it is up to DGS to better address the concerns of those of us who think that too much of the plaza's original design has been sacrificed.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 10:07 PM

COMMENT #123 (Email)

I think DGS has already done so. I believe every suggestion [REDACTED] made has been addressed. This response, like too many others, reflects an arms folded, intransigent position. I am now convinced that nothing DPR or DGS could do would be satisfactory. It is as though you are saying "bring me your plans and I will exert veto power over them." But perhaps you could present this list at Wednesday's meeting as a checklist so as to assure yourself that the concerns have been addressed.

I assume you will be at Wednesday's meeting. I look forward to seeing you.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 10:32 PM

COMMENT #124 (Email)

No -- DGS has not done so. How can you make such a claim when you were not present at most of the DGS planning meetings? And characterizing people's motives and behavior as you do again and again in an ugly and negative way indicates no interest in problem solving.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 10:47 PM

COMMENT #125 (Email)

[REDACTED]

With regard to your question, is there a way out of this: yes, uncouple the playground renovations (which I support) and the plaza redesign. It is a failure of city agencies to have linked them, particularly since DOE concerns are unrelated to playground concerns. Don't just assume they are linked, a statement I have heard repeatedly in these emails. Parents should push for this and pursue DPR for the monies. The money saved on constructing new sidewalks, moving benches and tables around a new redesign could be used productively to enhance the playgrounds.

As to your earlier point about changes made to Kalorama Park without historic preservation review, there have never been fundamental changes to the National Park Service design of the park; this radical change differs from the past completely. Further, many of us have fought to stop smaller elements of change that would have been disastrous.

Monday, November 3, 2014 at 1:02 PM

COMMENT #126 (Email)

Is it your view that DPR should leave the plaza area completely alone? Am I correct that the plaza is comprised of the concrete area in front of the building? Do you want them to leave alone the sidewalks, benches, and vegetation around the plaza, including those surrounding the two playgrounds? Or is there some change there acceptable? Is saving the maple non-negotiable?

Based on your prior experience with DPR, do think there is a reasonable chance of decoupling the playgrounds from the plaza proposal? I ask this in all sincerity, having no experience with them.

Anyway, thank you for reaching out to me. I fear that [REDACTED] and I have frustrated one another. I hope that is temporary, as I do recognize and appreciate her/your passion for the park.

Monday, November 3, 2014 at 5:41 PM

COMMENT #127 (Email)

The barbed discussions going on via email about the redesigned plaza/playgrounds are, unfortunately, the result of decisions made by a few people behind closed doors during a seven week period between July 17 (a meeting on the "Remediation Project) and the October 9th design unveiling, as I detailed in my long email earlier. Others would have handled such a sweeping project differently; had they, we might be in a different place. This is the true failure here.

But since "what is so wrong" should have been (but wasn't) discussed several months ago, perhaps now is the time to begin.

Yes, I believe the plaza and surrounding areas should be kept as is. It's been stated they needed a redesign based on the fact they're "barren." Well, why are they "barren?" My observations about this are two--first, that the hawthorn trees that provided both the architecture and shade have died. This is huge, and the effect has been that the area looks dismal, the people cleared out; I've been watching people move from bench to bench to follow the shade for years, and the effect since the trees died has been especially disheartening. Of course, folks who haven't been in the park more than four years wouldn't know this, wouldn't have seen the beauty of the flowers in spring and the red berries in fall.

██████████ has just dug up some pictures of the hawthorns in bloom. They really need to be widely circulated. Virginia???)

The second reason for the barrenness is that recreation has gone completely dead, by that I mean recreation initiated by DPR. In looking at the plaza space, I have often wondered what NPS had in mind. With no written notes, it's only speculation from observing how it has been used (I've watched for 20 years, others go back further, one ANC commissioner, Martis Davis, has described music concerts several nights a week all summer in the late 60s, early 70s). So with respect to designing the plaza, I'm guessing that NPS looked around and, having created two playgrounds and a community garden, realized they needed a different kind of space, one that would be for all ages and accommodate lots of easy sitting, pushing baby buggies, bouncing balls, creating oversize chalk drawings, setting a sprinkler in the middle for kids to run through on hot summer days. Just a few random memories, to indicate how lively it has been, and often filled with people doing different things. But I think they also had in mind larger events--why else leave so much open space? And indeed, there have been such events, of many different kinds. Movies, with the screen set up in front of the rec center, families bringing their lawn chairs, the plaza serving as the seating area. A festival of crafts and kids activities, with a dozen or so tents (I was under a tent doing face-painting for five-year-olds, winging it as best I could). This past Halloween was a sad reminder of the grand Halloween occasions, when a hundred or more people crammed the plaza and rec center for a parade of costumes in the plaza, a haunted house constructed of cardboard by several mothers, and, inside the rec center, kids blindfolded while they dipped their hands into a ghoulish bowl of brains--spaghetti cooked up by one of the mothers. And the past three years? The site manager sitting in a largely empty space with a bag of candy. Many of the activities were initiated by community members, but most were by energetic, creative recreation directors, with the help of volunteers. We do not have that now. As I said, it's gone dead. Three of us (two emails, one phone call) contacted DPR about this; we never even received an acknowledgment of receipt. A great loss for kids and the young at heart. And once again, all invisible to those who have been park users only in the last 7 or so years.

I've written extensively, but I feel it's important that, at least from my perspective, preserving the plaza's design isn't just a matter of some antiquated arrangement for evaluation on Antiques Roadshow but an

absolutely critical consideration in design. With its limited open space, the redesign suggests those doing the planning gave virtually no attention to past park usage.

I could talk at length about bench and picnic table placement in the new design (all 10 in FULL sun), DPR performance, the failures of the two playgrounds--designed just ten short years ago, at a cost of several hundred thousand \$\$\$ over a 6 month period. Or the death of 225+ shrubs put in just 5 years ago--cost: \$35 a pop, plus double for labor.

There are so many issues that could/should be discussed, many of them complex. We can meet in the park if you like, if you have questions or want more information.

Tuesday, November 4, 2014 at 3:15 PM

COMMENT #128 (Email)

Sandra, I think the conversations pro and con have been more frustrated than barbed, at least I hope so. But I do appreciate your description of how the plaza used to be. It strengthens my perception of how much you and others love the park.

Still, I came through the park today around 1PM, and this is what I observed: the two playgrounds were full of Kids and their parents/caretakers. There were strollers all over the park. One person was sitting in the plaza: a woman rocking a stroller, talking on her cell.

The most unfortunate thing of all, to me, is that I now seem to be in conflict with neighbors I do not know, and whom I would have liked to know on friendlier terms. I hope our future conversations shed more light than heat.

Tuesday, November 4, 2014 at 4:06 PM

COMMENT #129 (Email)

I find it interesting that you have mentioned that the plaza was without people.

As I clearly stated in my email, I too see it as barren and that leads me to conclude it needs restoration. The whole point of my email was to attempt to explain WHY I think it is barren. And why I think it needs to be restored, including getting competent staff to lead recreation in the park.

Unfortunately, the lead "mover and shaker" in all these enormous changes to the park never considered how the plaza looked or was used, just jumped to a quick decision that the plaza needed to be redesigned. It has been a continuing problem in the park: people with little knowledge of the park (or design or horticulture or park usage) making rapidfire, unilateral changes. The results of those decisions--some within the last ten years--are now being considered for demolition.

Put stuff in, based on one individual's input, pull out 10 years later. Guess I should compile a list of what has gone on, including the hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer waste. Those of us who've been around a while have seen this, over and over. And on the amounts of money, I am not making this up.

Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 10:37 AM

COMMENT #130 (Email)

Pat, I fully agree with you. We need to move ahead with DCs proposal. And there is a real risk that if we don't, our park renovation will be bypassed in favor of parks that don't have this level of contention.

Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 3:22 PM

COMMENT #131 (Survey Monkey)

I fully support the renovation of both playgrounds. I would like to see a better use of the space in the larger playground, but please - keep the sandboxes! We use the little playground every week and my son loves the sandbox. I don't support the use of pavers, while they look very nice, they are difficult to navigate with strollers and wheelchairs.

11/7/2014 11:50 AM

COMMENT #132 (Survey Monkey)

Hello everyone, Strongly suggest keeping the first arc that "delivers" (the arc that continues the oval design and delivers to the playground gates) and "losing" the PART of the arc that doesn't--which is the bottom piece of the second arc that "delivers" onto the flagpole. By losing that "part" of the second arc, you can then open up the lower space in the plaza for the picnic tables to be placed symmetrically (which ought to please opponents) while retaining the graceful curve for the benches at the top of the hill. Also--remember that if the fence line is moved slightly for the "big kid's" playground, you should do the same for the small playground. No controversy there as best I know.

11/7/2014 8:49 AM

COMMENT #133 (Survey Monkey)

I like the pathway that leads directly to the playground. The playground is most important to me.

11/7/2014 12:42 AM

COMMENT #134 (Survey Monkey)

I would really like to see the bushes removed so there is more room for the playground, and the boulders remaining in the design.

11/6/2014 9:15 PM

COMMENT #135 (Survey Monkey)

All look good. Biggest concern is safe, new playground equipment. Thank you!

11/6/2014 9:04 PM