



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3E

TENLEYTOWN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PARK FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

CHEVY CHASE WAKEFIELD FORT GAINES

c/o Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home 5425 Western Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20015

www.anc3e.org

Mayor Muriel Bowser
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

I am writing on behalf of ANC 3E regarding the proposed Mystics and Wizards basketball facility at St. Elizabeth's East Campus. This is a proposed public-private partnership to build a 118,000 square foot facility with more than \$23 million of the \$55 million cost coming directly from the District of Columbia capital accounts. The ANC is not taking a position on whether such a proposal should move forward. However, given the significant capital investment sought by District taxpayers to finance this project, we believe that *if* the proposal does move forward, it should be modified to provide additional community benefits to District residents.

- **Incorporating a large-scale recreation center into the proposed facility is essential to satisfy the need for tournament/recreation space in DC today and to accommodate the projected increase in DC's population.**

Projections are that DC population will continue to grow, adding approximately 110,000 residents for a total of nearly three-quarters of a million residents by 2020[1]. As part of that growth, we need to ensure our recreation space meets the needs of a burgeoning population.

Unlike neighboring jurisdictions such as Fairfax and Montgomery Counties, D.C. has no large-scale recreation or specialty center for youth sports leagues and tournaments. The Maryland Soccerplex and Discovery Sports Center, for example, is a public-private partnership between Montgomery County and the Maryland Soccer Foundation that contains 66,000 square feet of indoor space and more than 19 soccer fields, bringing 650,000 visitors a year to the site.[2] Facilities such as the Soccerplex host tournaments, recreational leagues, and practices for teams across the region. Washington D.C., which has only slightly fewer residents than Montgomery County, has no such facility. A large-scale recreation facility with multiple courts (that can be converted from basketball to volleyball to gym space) fills a unique niche, which is currently unavailable in the District of Columbia.

- **Incorporating a large-scale recreation center into the proposed practice facility is consistent with and supports the goals of the Play DC Master Plan.**

The Play DC Master Plan identifies the area near St. Elizabeth's in Southeast DC as a "prime candidate for additional recreation center square footage." We suggest that the design of the Wizards/Mystics facility at St. Elizabeth's be structured such that when not in use for professional sports, it can be used for tournaments and leagues, such as Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball or volleyball district, regional, or national competitions.

The Play DC master plan likewise notes that the District seeks, "...proposals from private and non-profit organizations to manage select DPR recreation centers." This site would be a prime candidate for partnership between DPR, Events DC, and Monumental Sports to structure the space to maximize community benefits for the District. There is no large-scale space in the District for a basketball/volleyball tournament and there is a shortage of large-scale recreation space for the District overall. This space could become a large-scale "District-wide specialty center" that would accommodate specific activities on a city-wide basis. Such an approach ties in nicely with the Play DC master plan.

- **Blending the proposed practice facility with a large-scale recreation center will close gaps in athletic opportunities for District youth and support Fit DC.**

Incorporating facilities for youth sports and leagues into the proposed practice facility in Ward 8 will address the shortage of sports opportunities for girls, especially those in single-family households. Currently, 59 percent of girls in single parent households are on the sidelines.[3] Ward 8 has the highest rate of single parent families in D.C.[4]; this project could locate a youth sports center where it is, arguably, needed most. To ensure that no DC resident is denied access, the city's private sector partners should help fund and manage a league at the facility that provides opportunities for athletes in low income families. This proposed facility could also help fill a void that occurs as children pass into high school. In Washington D.C., high schools have positions for only 22 percent of girls and 33 percent of boys who want to play a sport, ranking among the bottom nationally.[5] Providing the venue for solid competitive youth leagues will benefit those children who otherwise might stop playing as they get older. Making youth sports opportunities more available also supports the Mayor's Fit DC initiative to get residents to move more and adopt a healthier, more physically fit lifestyle.[6] Three-in-four (77%) of adults aged 30+ who play sports today played sports as school-aged children.[7]

- **Blending the proposed practice facility with a large-scale recreation center that can host regional youth athletic events will greatly increase the positive economic impact of the project on Ward 8.**

We believe that designing the practice facility at St. Elizabeth's so that it can be used for youth tournaments and leagues and encouraging such use will multiply the community benefit to Ward 8. For example, hosting the Potomac Valley AAU District Qualifiers would bring in four consecutive weekends of round the clock games, with dozens of teams (and accompanying parents), who would eat, stay, and

shop in the area all weekend long generating significant economic stimulus for the Congress Heights area. A large-scale recreation facility will also provide excellent youth job opportunities for residents in Ward 8.

In conclusion, if the District moves forward with the proposal to build a Wizards/Mystics practice facility at the St. Elizabeth's site, we strongly urge you to include in the design a large-scale recreation center that will bring critical opportunities and badly needed recreation space to the District of Columbia.

This letter passed by a vote of 5-0-0 at a properly noticed meeting held on February 11, 2016, at which a quorum was present, with Commissioners Bender, Hall, McHugh, Quinn, and Wallace in attendance.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Bender
Chair

CC: Chairman Phil Mendelson, DC Council
Council Member Mary Cheh, Ward 3
Council Member Elissa Silverman, at-large
Mr. Brian Kenner, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Mr. Keith Anderson, Director DC Department of Parks and Recreation

[1] District of Columbia Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Play DC, March 2014.

[2] <http://www.mdsoccerplex.org/aboutus/mdsoccerplex/857704.html>

[3] Bruce Kelly and Carl Carchia, "Hey, data data, swing!"

http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/id/9469252/hidden-demographics-youth-sports-espn-magazine

[4] http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr_prof_wrd8.html#sec_1_families

[5] Bruce Kelly and Carl Carchia, "Hey, data data, swing!"

http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/id/9469252/hidden-demographics-youth-sports-espn-magazine

[6] <https://fitdc.com/>

[7] <http://www.aspenprojectplay.org/the-facts>