

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Elisa Vitale, Project Manager
JLS
Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director, Development Review and Historic Preservation

DATE: November 26, 2018

SUBJECT: Public Hearing Report for Zoning Commission Case No. 18-17, Design Review for RFK Pavilion at RFK Stadium, Parcel 149, Lot 66.

I. BACKGROUND

This application filed by Events DC is for Design Review of an unenclosed pavilion on the unzoned property comprising and abutting the Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Memorial Stadium per Subtitle A § 209.2(c)(ii). Evaluation of the subject application is against the criteria contained in Subtitle X, Chapter 6 other than § 604.8.

II. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of this design review application subject to the Applicant providing the following:

- Lighting plan; and
- Wayfinding signage plan.

III. SUMMARY OF OP COMMENTS

Consider changing the color of the pavilion support structure to make it lighter in appearance.

Provide a lighting plan for the pavilion.

Complete the following pedestrian infrastructure improvements:

- Resurface and widen the shared-use path along Oklahoma Avenue between the site driveway and Benning Road.
- Create a walkway interior to the site using paint and flexiposts to connect the fields to Oklahoma Avenue along the path of the vehicular driveway.
- Provide wayfinding between the Stadium-Armory Metro Station and the fields.

IV. SITE AND CONTEXT

Address:	2400 East Capitol Street, SE
Legal Description:	Parcel 149, Lot 66
Property Size:	3,156,731 square feet of land area
Zoning:	Unzoned
Ward, ANC:	Ward 7; ANC 7D
General Context:	To the east is the Anacostia River, Riverwalk Trail and Kingman and Heritage Islands. To the north, across Benning Road, NE is the Langston Golf Course. To the west is the Kingman Park neighborhood. To the south is the RFK stadium and other associated parking lots serving the stadium.
Site Characteristics:	The Property is currently used as surface parking to serve RFK stadium. The flat paved lot is accessible via a curb cut from Oklahoma Avenue, NE.

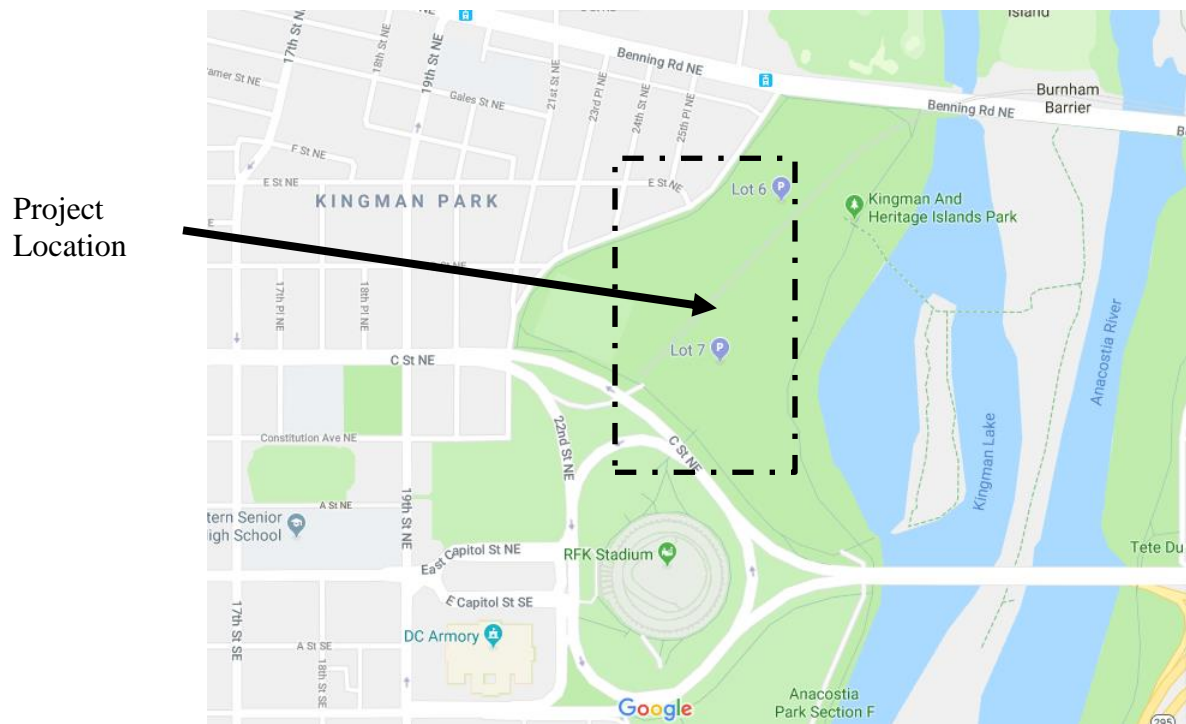


Figure 1: Location Map

V. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Applicant proposed to develop the property with an unenclosed, open-air pavilion that would measure 30 feet in height and would cover approximately 6,000 square feet of area.

VI. ZONING ANALYSIS

The subject site is unzoned. Pursuant to Subtitle A § 209.2(c)(ii), this project requires Zoning Commission review against specific criteria found in Subtitle X § 604.

VII. REVIEW CRITERIA

The zoning for this site, provides specific criteria for the Zoning Commission review of proposed developments in Subtitle X, Chapter other than § 604.8. The following is OP's analysis of the applicable standards to this application.

604 DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS

604.1 *The Zoning Commission will evaluate and approve or disapprove a design review application according to the standards of this section and, if applicable to the zone, standards set forth in Subtitle K.*

604.2 *For non-voluntary design review, the application must also meet the requirements of the provisions that mandated Zoning Commission approval.*

This project requires Zoning Commission review against the specific criteria found in Subtitle X § 604. No other requirements apply.

604.3 *The applicant shall have the burden of proof to justify the granting of the application according to these standards.*

The Applicant submitted a Statement in Support (Exhibit 2 and 2A-2F) and Pre-Hearing Statement (Exhibit 15 and 15A-15D).

604.4 *The applicant shall not be relieved of the responsibility of proving the case by a preponderance of the evidence, even if no evidence or arguments are presented in opposition to the case.*

604.5 *The Zoning Commission shall find that the proposed design review development is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and with other adopted public policies and active programs related to the subject site.*

The proposed project is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, including the Future Land Use Map designation for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space use and the Policy Map designation as a Land Use change Area.

The proposal would further Capitol Hill and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space objectives by converting obsolete surface parking lots to recreational playing facilities serving Capitol Hill and District residents

Capitol Hill Area Element

Policy CH-1.1.12: RFK Stadium Area Provide improved buffering and landscaping screening along 19th Street and elsewhere in the vicinity of RFK Stadium in order to reduce the effects of noise, dust, vibration, and air pollution on the adjacent Hill East community. Work collaboratively with the National Park Service and National Capital Planning Commission on long-range plans for the stadium and adjacent parkland and parking lots. Waterfront open space in this area should be retained and improved for the benefit of Hill East, Kingman Park, and Rosedale residents. 1508.13

Policy CH-1.2.5: Riverfront Parks Ensure that the proposed Anacostia waterfront parks are designed and planned to benefit Capitol Hill residents, with efforts taken to create safe pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections to the shoreline and to provide park facilities and services that respond to the needs of Hill East neighborhoods. 1509.5

Policy CH-1.2.6: Improved Park and Recreation Services Improve parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities throughout Capitol Hill, with a priority on the Near Northeast neighborhood (between H Street and Florida Avenue). The 2006 Parks Master Plan determined that this area was particularly deficient in recreational facilities. Continue efforts to improve safety, security, and maintenance levels at all parks in the Capitol Hill Planning Area. 1509.6

Policy CH-1.2.7: National Park Service Coordination Recognize that most of the parkland in and around the Capitol Hill Planning Area is owned and operated by the National Park Service (NPS), and consequently that a high level of coordination is required between the District and federal governments to ensure that this land is managed in the best interest of Capitol Hill residents. NPS parks include Lincoln Park, Stanton Park, Folger Park, Garfield Park, Seward Square, Marion Park, and the Virginia Avenue playground, as well as the RFK stadium area. These spaces should be conserved and improved as aesthetic, recreational, and natural resources. 1509.7

Policy CH-2.4.6: RFK Stadium Area Encourage better use of the National Park Service lands around RFK Stadium, including park and trail improvements that connect Hill East to the Langston Golf Course and National Arboretum areas to the north. 1514.11

The Applicant is developing a community recreation facility at RFK. The proposed playing fields and Pavilion comprise the first project in the phased development of the RFK campus.

Land Use Element

Policy LU-1.2.5: Public Benefit Uses on Large Sites Given the significant leverage the District has in redeveloping properties which it owns, include appropriate public benefit uses on such sites if and when they are reused. Examples of such uses are affordable housing, new parks and open spaces, health care and civic facilities, public educational facilities, and other public facilities. 305.10

Policy LU-1.2.8: Large Sites and the Waterfront Use the redevelopment of large sites to achieve related urban design, open space, environmental, and economic development objectives along the Anacostia Waterfront. Large waterfront sites should be used for water-focused recreation, housing, commercial, and cultural development, with activities that are accessible to both sides of the river. Large sites should further be used to enhance the physical and environmental quality of the river. 305.13

Policy LU-3.5.1: District/Federal Joint Planning Coordinate with the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the Architect of the Capitol, and other federal agencies to address planning issues involving federal lands, including the monumental core, the waterfront, and the park and open space network. Encourage the use of master plans, created through participatory planning processes, to guide the use of large federal sites. 318.6

Public Law 99-581 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to convey ownership of the RFK stadium building to the District and to lease the stadium grounds and parking lots to the District for a period of fifty years. The lease agreement states that the land shall be used only for stadium purposes; providing recreational facilities, open space, or public outdoor recreation opportunities; or other similar public

purposes. The community playing fields and pavilion would serve the recreation and other public purposes specified in the lease terms.

The Applicant coordinated with and has received approval from the National Park Service (October 3, 2018), Commission of Fine Arts (September 20, 2018), and National Capital Planning Commission (September 20, 2018).

Transportation Element

Policy T-1.1.4: Transit-Oriented Development Support transit-oriented development by investing in pedestrian-oriented transportation improvements at or around transit stations, major bus corridors, and transfer points. 403.10

Policy T-2.3.1: Better Integration of Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Integrate bicycle and pedestrian planning and safety considerations more fully into the planning and design of District roads, transit facilities, public buildings, and parks. 409.8

Policy T-2.3.2: Bicycle Network Provide and maintain a safe, direct, and comprehensive bicycle network connecting neighborhoods, employment locations, public facilities, transit stations, parks and other key destinations. Eliminate system gaps to provide continuous bicycle facilities. Increase dedicated bike-use infrastructure, such as bike-sharing programs like Capital Bikeshare, and identify bike boulevards or bike-only rights of way. 409.9

Policy T-2.4.1: Pedestrian Network Develop, maintain, and improve pedestrian facilities. Improve the city's sidewalk system to form a network that links residents across the city. 410.5

The property is located approximately one half mile from the Stadium-Armory Metro Station and one third of a mile from the Streetcar Line on Benning Road, NE. The site is well-served by Metrobus routes 96, 97, D6, X1, X2, X3, and B2.

The site is surrounded by a well-connected pedestrian and bicycle network, including the nearby Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. The Applicant's Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) (Exhibit 12, 12A, and 12B) outlines the proposed short-term pedestrian and bicycle network that is proposed.

The Applicant should provide a wayfinding sign plan to direct visitors to the Pavilion and playing fields from the Metro, Streetcar, and Anacostia Riverwalk Trail.

Environmental Protection Element

Policy E-1.1.3: Landscaping Encourage the use of landscaping to beautify the city, enhance streets and public spaces, reduce stormwater runoff, and create a stronger sense of character and identity. 603.6

Policy E-1.2.5: Wetland Buffers Maintain open space buffers around existing and restored wetlands in order to reduce the likelihood of environmental degradation from urban runoff and human activities. 604.8

Policy E-3.1.1: Maximizing Permeable Surfaces Encourage the use of permeable materials for parking lots, driveways, walkways, and other paved surfaces as a way to absorb stormwater and reduce urban runoff. 613.2

Policy E-4.2.3: Control of Urban Runoff Continue to implement water pollution control and "best management practice" measures aimed at slowing urban runoff and reducing pollution, including the flow of sediment and nutrients into streams, rivers, and wetlands. 619.8

The proposal would result in the removal of nearly 450,000 square feet of asphalt and impervious surface and the replacement with three playing fields, paths, lighting, and grassed and other landscaped areas. The Applicant is proposing to repave a portion of the site and stripe it for 285 parking spaces.

The property is located within the 100-year floodplain and in close proximity to the Anacostia River; therefore, the Applicant should employ careful construction practices with particular attention paid to stormwater management. The National Park Service maintains a 200-foot buffer along the Anacostia. The Applicant is proposing the use of permeable pavement and micro-bioretenment BMPs, the use of which should be maximized, where possible.

The Applicant has not provided a lighting plan but should provide such a plan before the hearing. The plan should include high-efficiency LED lighting with full cutoff fixtures to limit or eliminate up light and light trespass in support of light pollution reduction.

Urban Design Element

Policy UD-1.2.1: Respecting Natural Features in Development Respect and perpetuate the natural features of Washington's landscape. In low-density, wooded or hilly areas, new construction should preserve natural features rather than altering them to accommodate development. Density in such areas should be limited and setbacks should be provided as needed to protect natural features such as streams and wetlands. Where appropriate, clustering of development should be considered as a way to protect natural resources. 904.3

Policy UD-1.2.4: View Protection Recognize and protect major views in the city, particularly characteristic views of city landmarks, and views from important vantage points. Recognize the importance of views to the quality of life in the city and the identity of Washington and its neighborhoods. 904.6

The proposed Pavilion design strives to minimize impacts to the surrounding natural features and to preserve open views through the site. The Applicant has minimized the support system that holds the tensile canopy and could further reduce the visual impact by using a lighter color for the canopy support structure.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Citywide Element

Policy PROS-1.1.3: Park Diversity Provide a diverse range of recreational experiences in parks within the District of Columbia, including a balance between passive and active recreational uses, and a mix of local-serving, region-serving, and national recreational uses. 804.10

Policy PROS-1.2.1: Closing the Gaps Achieve a better distribution of parks in all neighborhoods of the city. This will require a priority on improving or expanding parks in: (a) more densely populated neighborhoods with limited open space; (b) areas that are more than ½ mile from a neighborhood or community park (or a federal park that serves an equivalent function); (c) areas where substantial new housing growth is expected, based on the forecasts of the Comprehensive Plan; and (d) areas where the existing recreation centers and parks are in poor condition. 805.5

Policy PROS-1.4.5: Park Amenities on NPS Land Where consistent with other policies in the Comprehensive Plan and NPS plans, and where supported by nearby neighborhoods and needs assessments, encourage federal government projects that would provide new recreational amenities such as soccer fields, picnic areas, and trails serving District residents on national parkland. 807.8

Policy PROS-2.1.1: Recreational Facility Development Improve the physical and psychological health of District residents by providing a variety of recreational and athletic facilities, including playing fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, basketball courts, trails and paths, and open areas for other sports activities.

809.5

The proposed Pavilion would support community recreational facilities located on the RFK stadium campus. The three full-sized multipurpose fields could be converted to six half size soccer fields or four half size soccer fields and two baseball fields. The Pavilion would serve as a shade structure and support space for events taking place on the fields. The Pavilion also could be used as support space for music, culinary, cultural, community, or other special events taking place on the RFK stadium campus.

604.6 *The Zoning Commission shall find that the proposed design review development will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property and meets the general special exception criteria of Subtitle X, Chapter 9.*

The proposed Pavilion should not adversely affect the use of neighboring property. The Pavilion is located at the northeast portion of the RFK campus and is well buffered from the adjoining residential community to the west.

604.7 *The Zoning Commission shall review the urban design of the site and the building for the following criteria:*

- (a) *Street frontages are designed to be safe, comfortable, and encourage pedestrian activity, including:*
 - (1) *Multiple pedestrian entrances for large developments;*
 - (2) *Direct driveway or garage access to the street is discouraged;*
 - (3) *Commercial ground floors contain active uses with clear, inviting windows;*
 - (4) *Blank facades are prevented or minimized; and*
 - (5) *Wide sidewalks are provided;*

The property does not include any public street frontages. Access to the site would be from an existing curb cut on Oklahoma Avenue, NE, which must be upgraded to meet DDOT standards. The property is surrounded by an existing bicycle and pedestrian network that the Applicant is proposing to improve based on discussion with DDOT.

- (b) *Public gathering spaces and open spaces are encouraged, especially in the following situations:*
 - (1) *Where neighborhood open space is lacking;*
 - (2) *Near transit stations or hubs; and*
 - (3) *When they can enhance existing parks and the waterfront;*

The Pavilion is a proposed public gathering space. The Pavilion could accommodate 1,200 people standing or 857 people seated. The property is located one half mile from the Stadium-Armory Metro and one third of a mile from the Benning Road streetcar line.

- (c) *New development respects the historic character of Washington's neighborhoods, including:*

- (1) *Developments near the District's major boulevards and public spaces should reinforce the existing urban form;*
- (2) *Infill development should respect, though need not imitate, the continuity of neighborhood architectural character; and*
- (3) *Development should respect and protect key landscape vistas and axial views of landmarks and important places;*

The proposed pavilion would respect the historic character of the surrounding neighborhood. The open-sided structure would not exceed 30 feet in height and would not obstruct views through the site to the Anacostia River.

- (d) *Buildings strive for attractive and inspired façade design, including:*
 - (1) *Reinforce the pedestrian realm with elevated detailing and design of first (1st) and second (2nd) stories; and*
 - (2) *Incorporate contextual and quality building materials and fenestration;*

The proposed Pavilion is a simple, tensile canopy structure support by a steel frame. The Applicant should consider matching the color of the steel frame to canopy to make the structure lighter in appearance.

- (e) *Sites are designed with sustainable landscaping; and*

The Applicant is proposing bio-retention facilities, landscaping, and two groupings of willow oaks to frame the Pavilion¹.

- (f) *Sites are developed to promote connectivity both internally and with surrounding neighborhoods, including:*
 - (1) *Pedestrian pathways through developments increase mobility and link neighborhoods to transit;*
 - (2) *The development incorporates transit and bicycle facilities and amenities;*
 - (3) *Streets, easements, and open spaces are designed to be safe and pedestrian friendly;*
 - (4) *Large sites are integrated into the surrounding community through street and pedestrian connections; and*
 - (5) *Waterfront development contains high quality trail and shoreline design as well as ensuring access and view corridors to the waterfront.*

The Applicant is proposing to facilitate connectivity through the site, including connections to the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and the surrounding community. The Applicant should provide wayfinding signage to facilitate connections from the Metro, Streetcar, and Anacostia Riverwalk Trail.

VIII. AGENCY COMMENTS

OP circulated project information to District agencies and has had discussions with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE).

¹ Exhibit 15D, Sheet 8, November 16, 2018.

DDOT provided comments, including conditions, during the Environmental Impact Screening Form (EISF) process.

DOEE is supportive of the provision of public space and amenities on the RFK campus site, including this open pavilion. Other DOEE comments have been incorporated in the body of the report.

IX. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Community comments had not been filed in the record at the time this report was written.

JLS/emv