



MEMORANDUM

TO: Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director for Development Review & Historic Preservation

DATE: September 17, 2010

SUBJECT: **Zoning Commission Case 10-__ - Setdown Report** - Proposed zoning map amendment to locate previously unzoned property within the R-5-B zone and related zoning text amendment to allow the expansion of an ice rink and construction of a youth baseball academy in Fort Dupont Park.

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends that the Zoning Commission **set down** for public hearing a proposed map amendment from unzoned to R-5-A for a 15-acre portion of Fort Dupont Park and related text amendments to Section 350. The requested text and map amendments would accommodate the development of an ice rink and baseball academy on the currently unplatted site as a matter-of-right within the R-5-A district. Because “unzoned” is the more restrictive zoning designation (in that nothing can be built until zoning is designated) the operation of the “set down” rule will not allow the proposed improvements to be built unless and until the Commission approves this case.

This report also serves as the prehearing report required by § 3013.

II. BACKGROUND

The petitioner, the District of Columbia, has proposed the development of a 15-acre parcel within Fort Dupont Park (U.S. Reservation 405) in Southeast Washington which includes the expansion of an existing ice rink and construction of a youth baseball academy. The site was approved for jurisdictional transfer from the National Park Service (NPS) to the District of Columbia Government in May 2010. The area approved for transfer is within the northern portion of Fort Dupont Park, roughly bounded Ely Place (N), Minnesota Avenue SE (W), and Ridge Road (E). The property to the immediate south, which contains several National Park Service maintenance facilities, will remain under NPS control.

The site is currently used for recreational purposes and is improved with the Fort Dupont Ice Arena, an open parking lot, baseball and multi-purpose fields, and tennis and basketball courts. The District will control the use of the site, likely via leases with non-profit organizations which will develop and manage recreational programs on site.

The jurisdictional transfer is subject to several conditions that control the future use of and access to the site. These conditions require the retention of a publicly accessible recreational use, public access to parking areas on site, and preservation of the areas’ natural and scenic characteristics. Another condition of the transfer is that the District must take measures to implement development of the proposed uses within five years of its approval or the property will revert back to the control of NPS.



III. PROPOSAL

The requested amendments would facilitate the improvement of recreational facilities for residents of Ward 7 and the District overall. The request would significantly expand the existing Fort Dupont Ice Arena (FDIA) which is currently being operated by the Friends of Fort Dupont Ice Arena. FDIA offers a variety of programs and activities including figure skating, ice hockey, and speed skating lessons, summer and after school programs, and an open public skating schedule. Many of their services and programs are offered free or at a reduced cost to District residents. The proposed project would double the size of the existing ice arena in order to meet increased demand. Additional facilities would include a second ice pad, new multi-purpose and locker rooms, and expanded office, concessions, and maintenance space.



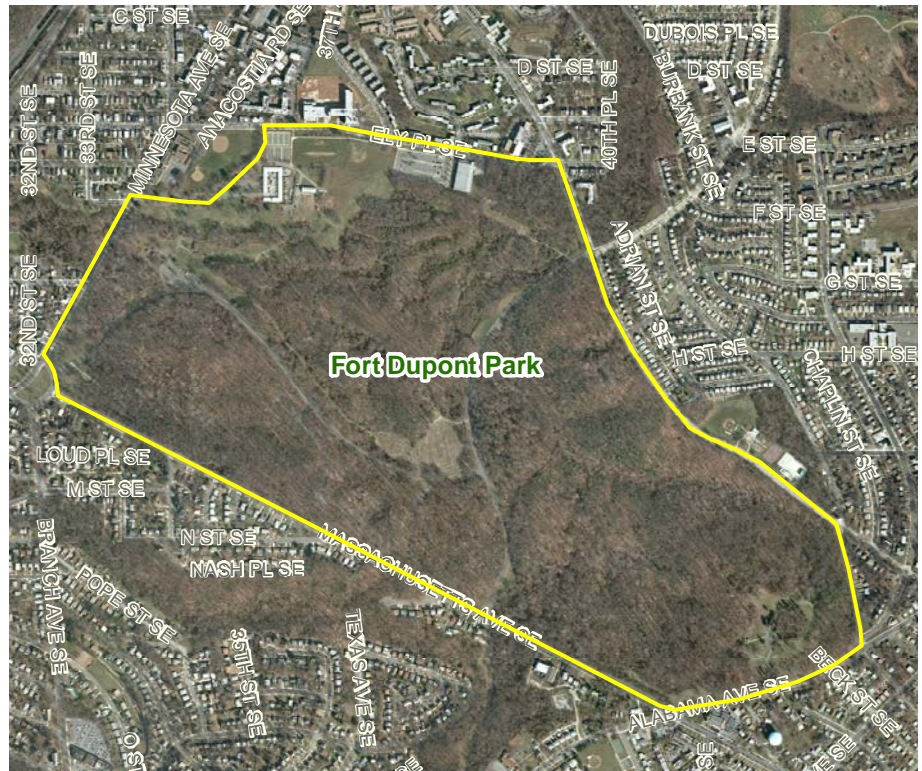
*Views of the exterior and interior of
the ice arena*

The request would also allow for the construction of the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy. The youth baseball academy is a community benefit the Nationals offered to provide as a condition of a lease agreement with the District in 2006. The goal of the academy is to teach DC youth about the fundamentals of baseball as well as provide after-school programs and other enrichment activities. The project site was chosen due to the availability of land and its location. The site is accessible to major roads and public transportation networks, is in close proximity to two public schools, and is adjacent to a residential area east of the River that is currently underserved by recreational programs and facilities.

It is envisioned that the academy will operate year round and serve District youth aged 7-18. The proposed academy would utilize the team sports of baseball and softball to teach kids athletic and life skills. The academy would also offer youth mentoring, counseling, and academic tutoring. A final site plan has not been finalized but the new structure would be in the same location as the existing baseball and multi-purpose fields, two stories in height, and 12-16,000 square feet in size. New facilities proposed to support the academy would include an administration building, regulation sized hardball field, and two softball fields. The existing tennis courts and basketball courts on site would be retained.

IV. AREA DESCRIPTION

The project site is located along the northern boundary of Fort Dupont Park, which is part of the Fort Circle Parks system, owned and managed by the National Park Service. Fort Dupont Park is approximately 376 acres in size and bounded by Ely Place and Ridge Roads to the north, Alabama Avenue to the East, Massachusetts Avenue to the south, and Minnesota Avenue to the west. Park features and activities include picnic tables, community gardens, nature walks, Civil War programs, environmental education, music festivals, and youth programs. Existing park structures include the ice arena, activity center, and a maintenance facility adjacent to the project site.



Two DC public schools are located within close proximity to the site. Souza Middle School is across the street on from the site north of Ely Place. Kimball Elementary School is located to the west of the project site, at the southeast corner of Minnesota and Ely Streets SE. Their ball playing fields are located adjacent to the west boundary of the site, which is improved with tennis and basketball courts.

Nearby residential uses include low-rise multi-family apartment buildings to the north and single-family structures further east and west of the site. The closest metro rail stops are Minnesota Avenue on the orange line, and Benning Road on the blue line. The site is also served by several Metrobus routes.



Multi-family residential uses located on the north side of Ely Street SE

V. ZONING

The subject property is located on unzoned federal lands. Adjacent property to the north of the site and corner properties at Minnesota Avenue SE and Ridge Road are zoned R-5-A. R-3 zones are located west and north of the site across Minnesota Avenue. Lower density residential zones are located to the east and south, including an R-2 zone located across Ridge Road SE and R-1-B districts to the south of Massachusetts Ave SE. The remainder of Fort Dupont Park will remain unzoned, as is typical of federal park lands.

The R-5-A is a general residence district which allows a wide range of residential and institutional uses and semi-public buildings to be constructed at a low-density. Nonresidential uses permitted as-of-right include child development centers, nurseries, museums, hospitals, schools, and public recreation and community centers.

The proposed map and text amendments would further support the development of the proposed recreational facilities. The proposed zone for the site, R-5-A, is consistent with the designation found on adjacent sites. In addition, the proposed text amendment would permit the facilities envisioned for the site as a matter of right, albeit subject to some operational requirements.

VI. PROPOSED TEXT

The following changes are proposed with new text shown in **BOLD** and **UNDERLINED**:
The amendments would add new text to Section 350.4 as follows:

350.4 The following uses shall be permitted as a matter of right in an R-5 District:

(j) Recreation building, park, playground, swimming pool, athletic field, ice rink, or other similar athletic facility, public or private, operated on and using local or federal land and approved by a joint federal-local jurisdictional transfer agreement; subject to the following:

- (1) No part of any use is nearer than seventy feet (70 ft.) to the nearest residential structure;**
- (2) The uses shall not be organized for profit;**
- (3) All parking areas shall be shared by all uses on a lot;**
- (4) All exterior signage, except scoreboards, shall be limited to site identification only;**
- (5) No commercial advertising signs shall be permitted outside a building;**
- (6) Scoreboards shall be installed such that the highest point is no taller than twenty-five feet (25 ft.) above grade; and**
- (7) Any lighting used to illuminate a park, playground, athletic field, trail or other outdoor space, shall be so arranged that all direct rays of lighting are confined to the boundaries of the lot.**

The proposed text would allow the desired uses for the site as a matter of right, while providing specific parameters for the location of signage and lighting. The suggested text would also help limit potential adverse impacts of the use on adjacent residential property. The requested map amendment would also establish zoning for the subject property that is consistent with that of nearby properties and District policy.

VII. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The proposed amendment would not be inconsistent with the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. Both the 2006 Generalized Policy Map and Future Land Use Map designate the area as “Parks, Recreation and Open Space”. Dominant uses for these areas are “parks and recreation centers, cemeteries, and the National Capital Open Space System.” In addition, this land use designation applies to properties within the federal park systems as well as District operated recreation centers. While federal parklands are generally unzoned, District parklands are often zoned the same as the surrounding land uses. Adjacent land uses to the immediate north, east, and west are zoned R-5-A, the zone proposed for the subject property.

The proposed change is limited in its impact and would generally support the following 2006 Comprehensive Plan policy objectives:

Policy PROS-1.1.2: Consideration of Federal Parkland

Work with federal agencies to evaluate the role that federal lands play in meeting the recreational needs of District residents, particularly for regional parks and sports complexes. Because these properties are used by city residents, they should be considered when identifying underserved areas and assessing the need for local park improvements. 804.9

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

Policy PROS-2.2.4: Youth Recreational Services

Provide recreational services that are particularly responsive to the special needs of the District's youth, using recreation and athletics to promote self esteem, responsibility, and leadership skills among DC teens. 810.8

Policy PROS-3.1.5: Fort Circle Parks

Protect and enhance the Fort Circle Parks as an integrated network of permanent open spaces that connect neighborhoods, provide scenic beauty and historic interest, and offer a variety of recreational activities. Recognize these parks as an important city and national resource. Prevent District and federal actions that would harm historic and ecological resources in the Fort Circle Parks, and strongly support actions that would improve their maintenance, connectivity, visibility, accessibility, and safety. 812.13

Far Northeast and Southeast Element Planning Priorities

Additional facilities and services for children and youth are needed in the Far Northeast/Southeast Area. More than one in four residents of the Planning Area are under 18. Further increases in the number of children are likely as additional family housing is completed. New and expanded recreation centers, playgrounds, child care facilities, and similar facilities are urgently needed today and will continue to be needed in the future. The District must place a high priority on investment in these facilities to create a healthy environment for children as well as adults. 1707.2

Policy FNS-1.2.3: Fort Dupont Park

Improve access to Fort Dupont Park by providing additional parking, bicycle and pedestrian access, and public transit service. Expand outdoor recreational activities at the park to better meet community needs. 1709.3

Policy FNS-1.2.8: Facilities for Children and Youth

Develop additional parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, and other facilities which meet the needs of children and youth in the Far Northeast/Southeast community. The District must recognize that children are the future of Far Northeast/Southeast, and should have a positive and healthy environment in which to live, play, and grow. 1709.8

As such, the proposed map and text amendments would not be inconsistent with the Policy Map, the Future Land Use Map, or the 2006 Comprehensive Plan.

VIII. CONCLUSION

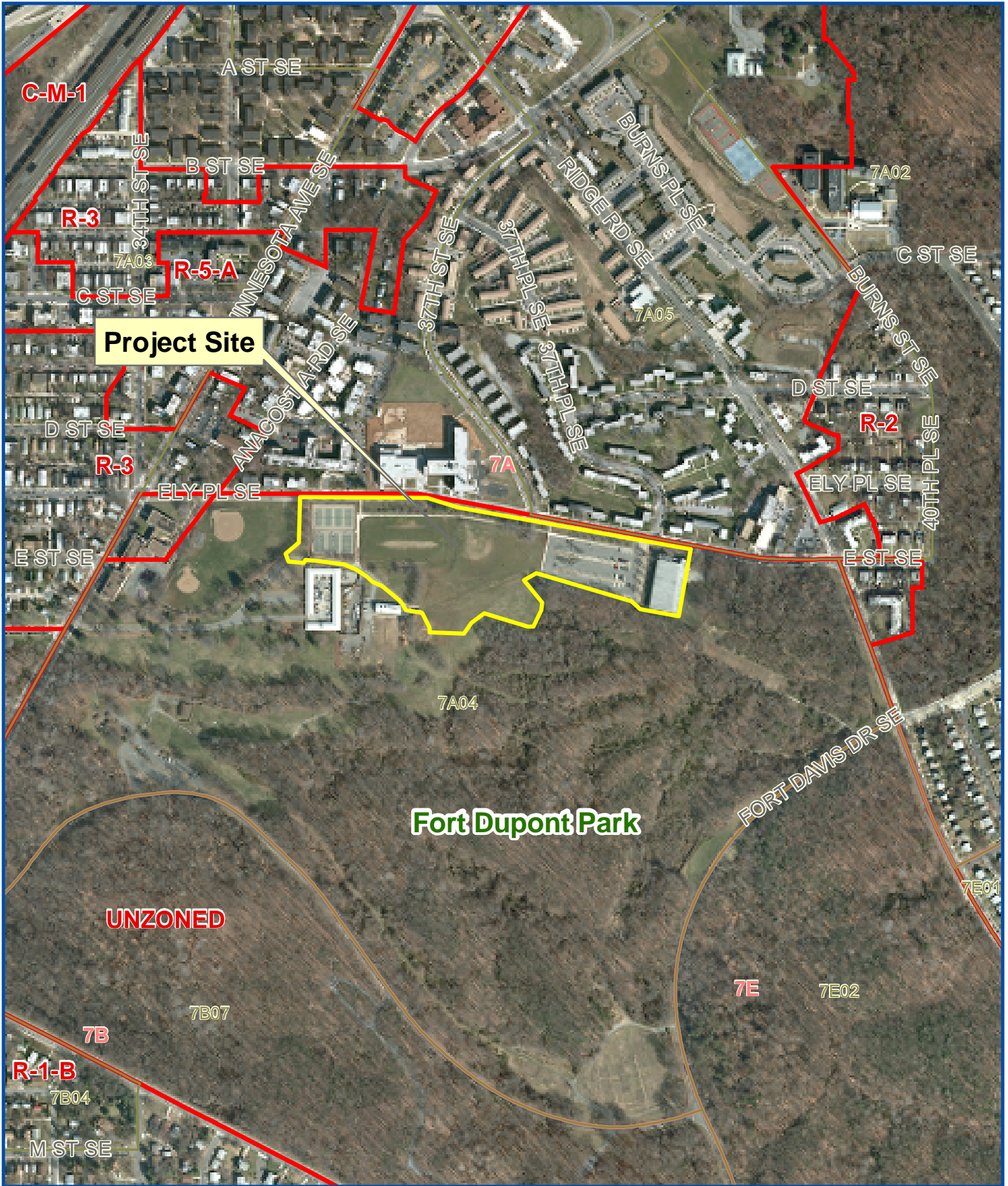
Based on the above discussion and the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, the Office of Planning recommends that the proposed amendments be set down for public hearing.

JS/ayj

Attachments:

Exhibit 1 – Location Map

Exhibit 2 – Aerial Photograph (2008)




Project Site

Fort Dupont Park

UNZONED

ZC 10 - ++

**Fort Dupont Park Map and Text Amendments
Exhibit 2 - Aerial Photograph (2008)**

Legend
 Zoning Districts

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

DC Office of Planning

