

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

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IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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1 To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to authorize the Mayor to  
2 exercise eminent domain to acquire Lot 0807, Square 5044 in Ward 7 for the purposes of  
3 creating an urban park.  
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5 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this  
6 resolution may be cited as the “Downtown Ward 7 Urban Park Eminent Domain Authority  
7 Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2021”.

8 Sec. 2. (a) Residents of Ward 7 suffer from some of the most significant health disparities  
9 and accompanying social and economic impacts.

10 (b) Studies have revealed the harmful impacts of discriminatory environmental policies on  
11 communities of color, including those in the District of Columbia.

12 (c) Urban green spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, can promote mental and physical  
13 health, and reduce morbidity and mortality in urban residents by providing psychological respite  
14 and stress alleviation, stimulating social cohesion, supporting physical activity, and reducing  
15 exposure to air pollutants, noise and excessive heat, especially for historically underserved  
16 communities.

17 (d) Urban parks have provided welcomed and beneficial greenspaces elsewhere in the  
18 District of Columbia where development has brought increased housing density.

19 (e) Lot 0807 in Square 5044 enjoys 14,157 square feet of land area, so is of sufficient size  
20 to provide significant greenspace, activity space and space for community gatherings and other  
21 amenities.

22 (f) Lot 087 in Square 5044 is centrally located in Downtown Ward 7 near the intersection  
23 of Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue, one of the largest historic commercial districts located  
24 east of the Anacostia River and a main corridor commonly referred to as Downtown Ward 7, and  
25 as such will be easily accessible to all Ward 7 residents.

26 (g) While much of the District of Columbia has enjoyed revitalization, Downtown Ward 7  
27 has experienced limited development, placemaking and beautification.

28 (h) Downtown Ward 7 and the surrounding area have an established Main Streets  
29 organization and have been designated a Great Streets corridor; it has been the focus of long-  
30 term visioning, planning and District Government support for transformative economic  
31 development to address the food, retail and amenity needs of Ward 7 residents.

32 (i) Downtown Ward 7 includes the mixed-use, 376-unit Park 7 apartment building, but  
33 that development includes no urban green space.

34 (j) The D.C. Department of Employment services headquarters is now in Downtown Ward  
35 7, but the project provides no community-accessible green space.

36 (k) Downtown Ward 7 is home to the Senator Theater, East River Park Shopping Center,  
37 the Benning/Dorothy I. Height Library, traditional storefronts, and adjacent residential  
38 neighborhoods, all within short walking distance of Lot 0807 in Square 5044.

39 (l) The immediate adjacent area will soon undergo major mixed-use redevelopment that  
40 will increase the residential density, dining and retail in the area, but is not anticipated to create  
41 significant new community-accessible green space.

42 (m) As Downtown Ward 7 is now starting to enjoy significant redevelopment, the window  
43 of opportunity to create a public park is a narrow one; if the District Government does not act  
44 now to create a public park, further development will likely preclude any future public park or  
45 open space between Fort Mahan Park and the Anacostia River.

46 (n) The Mayor was initially scheduled to submit the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022  
47 by March 31, 2021.

48 (o) The date for the Mayor to submit her budget to the Council was moved to April 22,  
49 2021 to allow for additional budget planning, particularly considering anticipated additional  
50 funding coming to the District of Columbia from the federal government.

51 (p) The accompanying emergency act would authorize the mayor to exercise eminent  
52 domain to acquire Lot 0807 in Square 5044 for the public purpose of creating an urban park.

53 (q) In order to budget for acquisition of Lot 0807 in Square 5044, eminent domain  
54 legislation must be passed on April 6, 2021, which is the first and only legislative day before the  
55 Mayor submits her Fiscal Year 2022 proposed budget.

56 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances  
57 enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the  
58 Downtown Ward 7 Urban Park Eminent Domain Authority Emergency Act of 2021 be adopted  
59 after a single reading.

60 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.