



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

VINCENT C. GRAY
Ward 7 Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Health
Co-chair, Special Committee on COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery

Committee Member:
Business and Economic Development
Judiciary and Public Safety

Memorandum

To: Nyasha Smith, Secretary to the Council of the District of Columbia
From: Councilmember Vincent C. Gray
Date: Thursday, April 1, 2021
Subject: Request to Place Emergency Measures on the Agenda for the Tuesday, April 6, 2021 Legislative Meeting

This is a request to agendize the following emergency measures for the Tuesday, April 6, 2021 Legislative Meeting:

- Downtown Ward 7 Urban Park Eminent Domain Authority Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2021
- Downtown Ward 7 Urban Park Eminent Domain Authority Emergency Act of 2021
- Downtown Ward 7 Urban Park Eminent Domain Authority Temporary Act of 2021

The purpose of these measures is to authorize, on an emergency basis, the Mayor to exercise eminent domain to acquire Lot 0807, Square 5044 in Ward 7 for the purposes of creating an urban park.

Residents of Ward 7 suffer from some of the most significant health disparities and accompanying social and economic impacts, and studies have revealed the harmful impacts of discriminatory environmental policies on communities of color, including those in the District of Columbia. Urban green spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, can promote mental and physical health, and reduce morbidity and mortality in urban residents by providing psychological respite and stress alleviation, stimulating social cohesion, supporting physical activity, and reducing exposure to air pollutants, noise and excessive heat, especially for historically underserved communities.

While much of the District of Columbia has enjoyed revitalization, Downtown Ward 7 has experienced limited development, placemaking and beautification. Downtown Ward 7 is home to the mixed-use, 376-unit Park 7 apartment building, the D.C. Department of Employment services headquarters, the Senator Theater, East River Park Shopping Center, the Benning/Dorothy I. Height Library, traditional storefronts, and adjacent residential neighborhoods, all within short walking distance of Lot 0807 in Square 5044. However, that development includes no urban green space.

Lot 087 in Square 5044 is centrally located in Downtown Ward 7 and as such will be easily accessible to all Ward 7 residents. It enjoys 14,157 square feet of land area, so is of sufficient size to provide significant greenspace, activity space and space for community gatherings and other amenities.

Downtown Ward 7 is now starting to enjoy significant redevelopment and the immediate adjacent area will soon undergo major mixed-use redevelopment that will increase the residential density, dining and retail in the area, but is not anticipated to create significant new community-accessible green space. The window of opportunity to create a public park is a narrow one; if the District Government does not act now to create a public park, further development will likely preclude any future public park or open space between Fort Mahan Park and the Anacostia River.

Additionally, the date for the Mayor to submit her budget to the Council was moved to April 22, 2021 to allow for additional budget planning, particularly considering anticipated additional funding coming to the District of Columbia from the federal government. In order to budget for acquisition of Lot 0807 in Square 5044, eminent domain legislation must be passed on April 6, 2021, which is the first and only legislative day before the Mayor submits her Fiscal Year 2022 proposed budget.

Copies of the draft measures are attached. I would appreciate your support of this legislation. If you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Terrance Norflis, Legislative Director, at tnorflis@dccouncil.us or 202-724-8068.