

**Testimony of  
Myla Moss  
Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner  
ANC1B01 LeDroit Park  
Testimony Before the  
Committee on Parks and Recreation  
Chairman Harry Thomas, Jr.  
Washington, D.C.  
October 30, 2009**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Myla Moss, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for Historic LeDroit Park. I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony that will assist the Committee in its deliberations regarding the renovation and construction of parks and recreation facilities within the District. Today, I represent not only my ANC district but also the LeDroit Park Civic Association.

A dedicated volunteer group of community organizers acted proactively to convert an acrimonious situation stemming from the school-closing proposal into a model government/community partnership. For two years residents of LeDroit Park and Bloomingdale have been actively working to develop viable and fiscally responsible solutions for the reuse of the building and site of the former Gage-Eckington Elementary School.

- We have conducted over one hundred (100) meetings in the community on this issue over a period of 2 years.
- We have had plans, counter-plans and alternative plans over the last 2 years and finally got consensus with our diverse community, elected officials and the District Government on ONE PLAN that was affordable and had the support of all involved. You can imagine the work that it took to get there!
- That works out to more than one thousand (1000) person hours on this issue - from community members alone.
- We have worked with and discussed this project with Councilmembers Graham and Thomas, have met with at least 3 Mayoral Cabinet members in our community on the issue (DDOE-Hawkins, Office of Planning-Tregoning, OPM-Robin Eve Jasper and others—DDOT?).

We have at appropriate intervals during this process, we have worked with and reviewed our progress with key members of the administration, various city agencies and members of the DC Council and have, on some issues, altered our direction accordingly because we realized that some compromises would need to be made to find an appropriate reuse of the building.

Our diverse population made it clear that they hoped the existing school grounds would be preserved as an urban “green” space that would be open for all to enjoy. It should also be noted that this large open area has the added benefit of providing a vital community link between the historic LeDroit Park boundaries and the extended neighborhoods to our north and east.

As it stands, the school is demolished and a dirt field / pit remain. Concept drawings are complete, and the design plans are to begin in November with construction beginning as soon as weather permits such that the park would be ready in June 2010. We are very dismayed at the prospects of a delay. We have understood that this project was brought before the Council as it was held up earlier this summer before the demolition of the school could begin.

The extended LeDroit Park Community has a proud, rich history as we have stated during these past twenty-four months, the mission of the LeDroit Park community is to work with the city on a plan to ensure safety, security, and a re-use that is a positive contribution to the community.

For all of the wonderful things that we have in LeDroit Park, we also have serious issues related to crime, drugs and gangs in our neighborhood. There have been more than 8 shootings with at least 4 homicides -within ONE block of this school site since the school closed last June. None of us can afford to have it remain a vacant mud pit

We do agree with the position that all contracts should be properly vetted. While a bidding process was absent this project was not only transparent, it involved inter agency and intergovernmental collaborations. But most importantly, this was and is a community/resident driven initiative. We in LeDroit Park were being proactive in ensuring that we would not be saddled with a huge empty building with no purpose or use. There has been a commitment to Residents that our tax dollars will be utilized to build a park. We have struggled for over 2 years to get to this point. While we understand that you must review your governmental processes and respect the rule of law, we ask that you PLEASE work with the community to immediately find a way to assure that this vital neighborhood project stays on track and that we do not have a vacant mud-pit - a hole that remains in the middle of our community.

The new park in LeDroit Park is planned as a simple yet thriving public space that includes the following elements:

- Safe, secured, well lit and vibrant public space
- Playground and tot-lot for neighborhood children
- Common Good City Farm teaching local residents to grow and use fresh vegetables and fruits
- Many, many trees (donated) with a demonstration/learning focus for children and Howard University students
- Landscaped green space with benches and period lighting
- Walking path and sitting areas for seniors' and residents' health and well-being
- Central gathering spaces in pavilions and gazebos
- Fenced dog park for large and small dogs
- An eco-friendly and environmentally-sustainable designed park, a model for teaching and learning

We believe that moving forward with the park plan provides the following benefits:

- Immediately demonstrates a positive government/community collaboration coming out of a school closure initiative
- Shows the city governments responsiveness to community concerns
- Reduces the city's financial burden to maintain an aging, vacant building
- Reduces crime and nuisance related to a sprawling, unoccupied campus
- Provides a major community asset that unites us at all income and age levels
- Provides a fresh starting point for the community and its partners to determine the best long-term use of the space, unencumbered by the existing structure.

We are hopeful the Council will be expeditious in its deliberations and work with the community to immediately find a way to approve and fully fund this project and maintain its current construction schedule. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Commissioner Myla Moss, *ANC 1B101*

LeDroit Park Community Organizers:

Mr. Jeff Herron, *President – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Mr. Kenan Dunson, *Vice President – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Ms. Kathy Haines, *Secretary – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Ms. Donna Morris, *Treasurer – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Mr. Richard Myers, *Parliamentarian - LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Ms. Dana Bryson, *Committee Chair for Gage-Eckington Reuse – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Ms. Dina Lewis, *Former Committee Chair for Public Safety – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Commissioner John Salatti, *ANC5C04*  
Ms. Liz Falk, *Director – Common Good City Farm*  
Mr. Robert Sullivan, *Former President – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Ms. Marilyn Jenkins, *Former Vice President – LeDroit Park Civic Association*  
Ms. Andrea Feniak, *Former Secretary – LeDroit Park Civic Association*