

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Carlton Hart

NCPC File No. 6772



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## RESTORATION OF MARVIN GAYE PARK Northeast Washington, DC

Submitted by the District of Columbia Office  
of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development

September 27, 2007

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### Abstract

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development has submitted concept plans for the restoration of Marvin Gaye Park. This 52 acre linear park is nearly two miles long and is located in Ward 7, just east of Kenilworth Avenue. The restoration of this park is concentrated on four activity nodes: Capital Gateway, Heritage Green, King Nature Sanctuary/Lederer Center and Lady Bird Johnson Meadows. This restoration includes constructing a new recreation center and a greenhouse, creating a trail system, siting sculptures, creating wetlands and a boardwalk, improving existing bridges and connecting the community to the park.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of concept site and building plans for Marvin Gaye Park pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1).

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Comments favorably** on the concept plans for restoring Marvin Gaye Park in Northeast Washington, DC as shown on Map File Number 8.60(05.00)42370

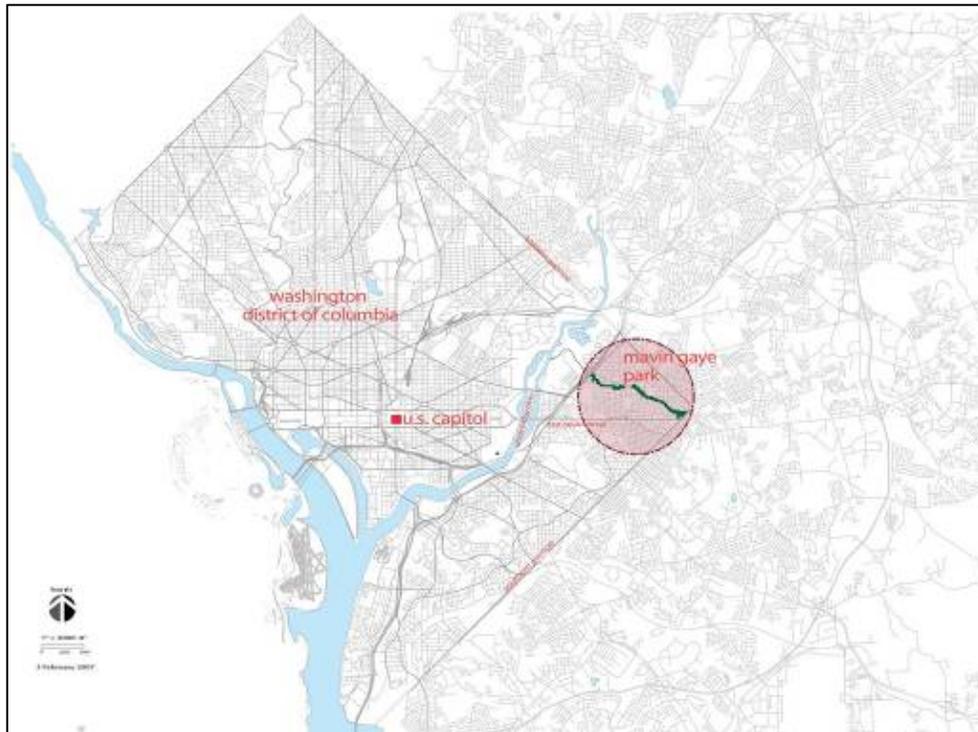
**Requests** that the District of Columbia and the National Park Service work cooperatively to strengthen the connection between the Marvin Gaye Park trail and the Fort Circle Park trail system, in particular at Fort Mahan.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The proposed restoration is for Marvin Gaye Park which is located in Northeast Washington, DC. This park is east of Kenilworth Avenue, south of Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue and north of East Capitol Street. This 52 acre linear park is nearly 2 miles long and surrounds Watts Branch from the District border to Kenilworth Park.



### Background

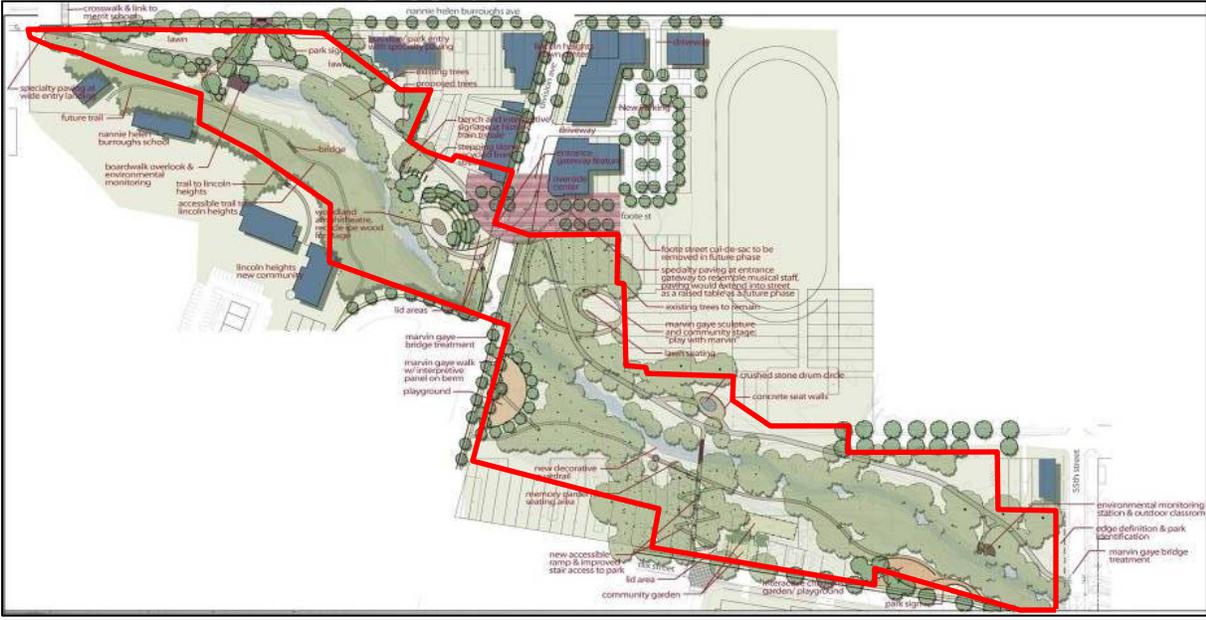
Marvin Gaye Park, formerly known as Watts Branch park, was once a National Park Service property, but it was transferred to the District in the 1970's. The name of the park was officially changed in April 2006 as part of the effort to revitalize the park and Ward 7. The famous singer, who grew up in the neighborhood near the park, is the inspiration for the design and restoration work.

Much of the parkland consists of wooded, steep slopes and the nodes were chosen because they were the areas where the land was relatively flat and expanded out into the neighborhood.

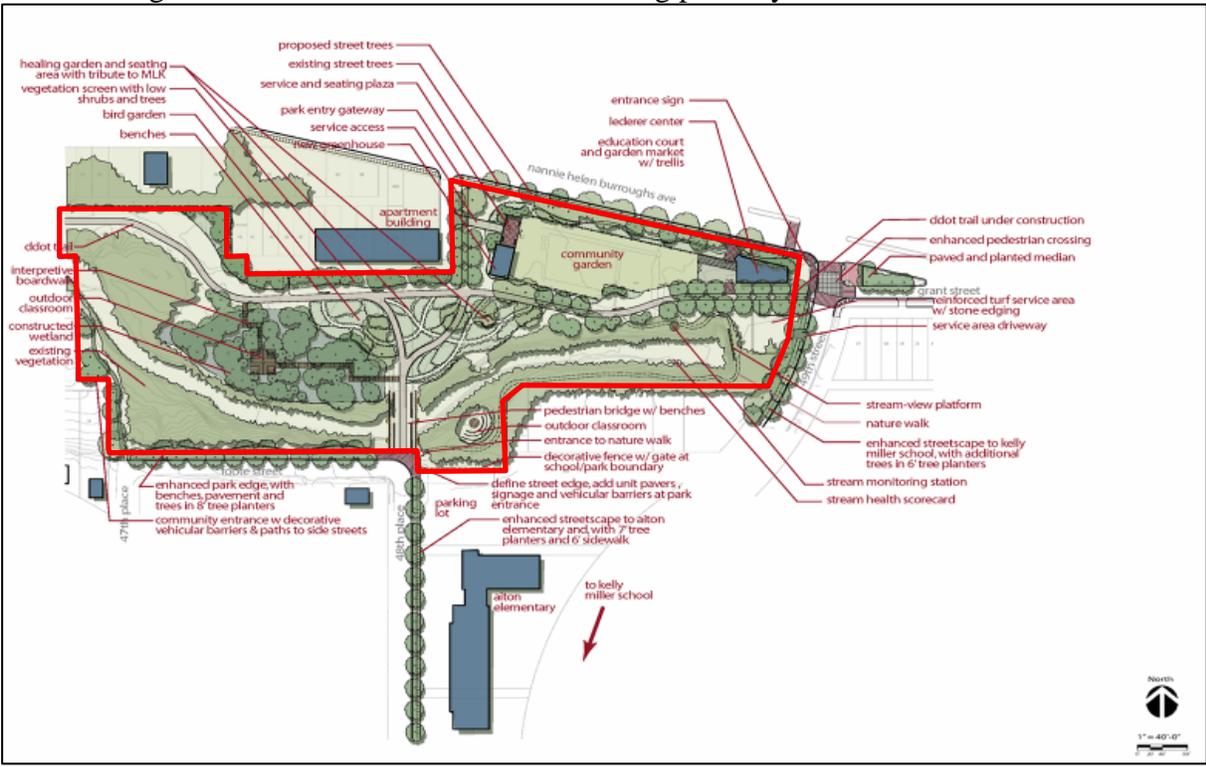
Washington Park and People, a local non-profit, has been one of the main proponents responsible for restoring and cleaning up Marvin Gaye Park and has been instrumental in organizing the public for clean-up events along Watts Branch and raising awareness of the unique history of this area.



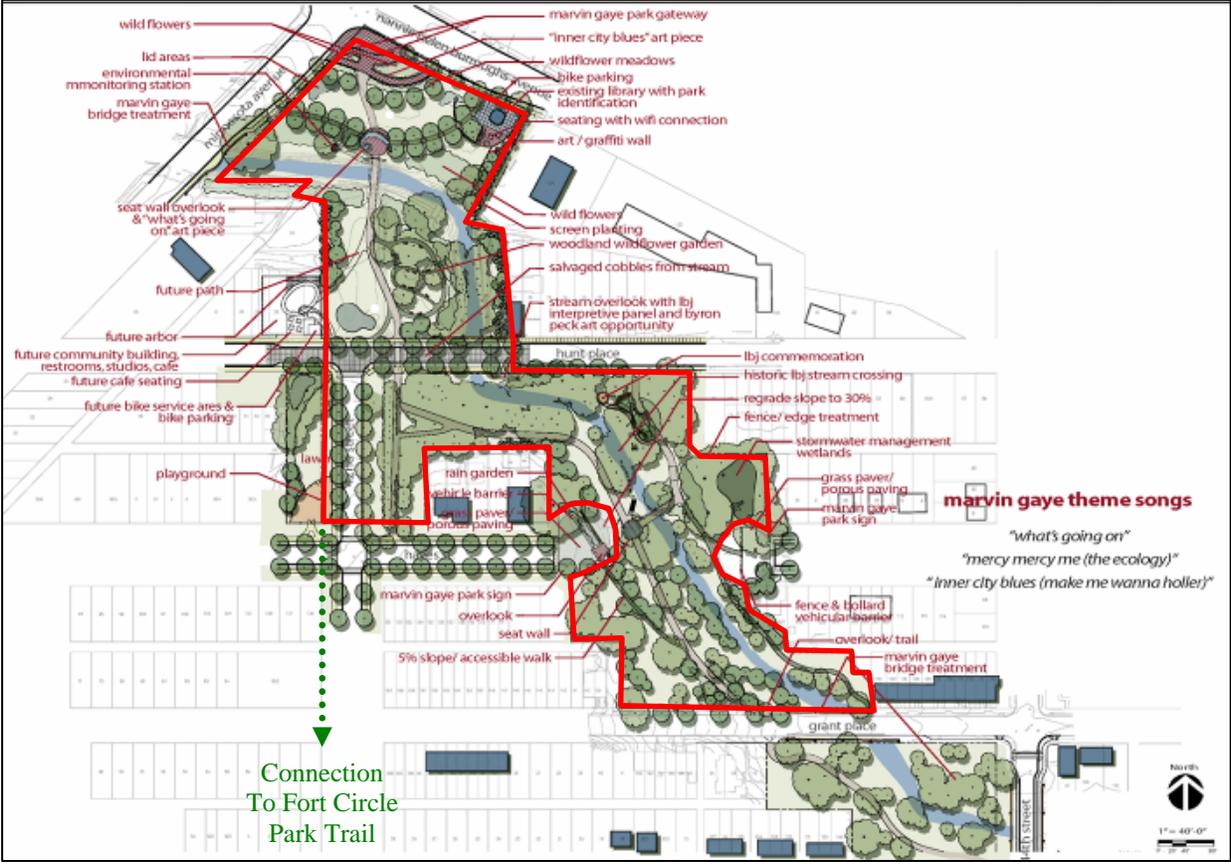
**NODE #2, Heritage Green:** this restoration includes creating an amphitheater, siting sculptures, connecting trails, and developing playgrounds.



**NODE #3, King Nature Conservancy and Lederer Center:** Lederer Center is an existing temporary greenhouse. A permanent building is planned to be sited at the same location. King Nature Sanctuary is a garden with a small area encompassed with two small, curved seating walls. The garden would include several connecting pathways.



NODE #4, Lady Bird Johnson Meadows: This is the gateway into the park from Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue. Several gardens, trails, meadows, and a Lady Bird Johnson commemoration are planned for this node. Also included here is a library kiosk which is part of the public library system. Finally several sculptures are being planned themed around Marvin Gaye songs.



Development Program

- Applicant: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
- Architect: EDAW/AECOM
- Land Area: 52.5 acres of existing parkland
- Estimated Cost: \$36 million

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff is pleased with the overall plan for the restoration of Marvin Gaye Park as proposed in the conceptual design plans. The restoration of this important stream valley, a tributary of the

Anacostia River, will help to bring greater attention to challenges faced in improving the environment in economically depressed areas. The partnership that has been identified between, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Transportation, Washington Park and People and DC Washington and Sewer Authority and others has helped to realize the opportunity here at this park.

Staff recommends that the Commission **comment favorably on the conceptual design plans** for Marvin Gaye Park.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposal to restore Marvin Gaye Park is consistent with the policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan. The Parks and Open Space Element designates river and waterfront settings of the Nation's Capital. The Comprehensive Plan policies state:

The federal government should:

2. Protect the scenic and ecological values of waterways and stream valleys.
3. Restore forested buffers along waterways and stream valleys
4. Ensure that Anacostia Park functions as a regional recreation resource, emphasizing the park's special riverside, ecological and scenic qualities and character.

(Rivers and Waterways Policies; Waterfront Parks p. 121)

### CapitalSpace

The CapitalSpace initiative is a multi-jurisdictional effort to improve access, quality, use and management coordination for federal and local park systems located in the District of Columbia. Key partners include the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service, and the District of Columbia government. Local and national parks and open space not-for profits, local ANCs and neighborhood organizations, local and national hiking/recreational associations, preservation and cultural resource experts have all collaborated on this effort. The initiative has two phases: a needs and asset assessment, completed in FY 2006 and a framework and implementation plan to be completed in FY 2008. Staff encourages the District of Columbia government to continue working with the other CapitalSpace partners to enhance and connect park trails like the Fort Circle Park Trail with the Marvin Gaye Park trail.

### National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

Environmental review requirements for the District of Columbia government, not the federal government, apply to this District owned site. The Commission would recommend that an environmental assessment be conducted and request that once the environmental assessment is complete that a copy of the final report be submitted with the final design plans.

Since NCPC is advisory for District of Columbia projects outside of the Central Area, it has no independent NEPA obligation for this project.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The National Historic Preservation Act does not apply to review of this project. The Commission's role is advisory, since the park is District of Columbia public land outside the Central Area.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on September 12, 2007. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; and the General Services Administration.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts approved the plans for this restoration project at their meeting on September 20, 2007.