

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Carlton Hart

NCPC File No. 6772

---



## MARVIN GAYE PARK RESTORATION PHASE I

Northeast  
Washington, DC

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

August 28, 2008

---

### Abstract

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for Phase I of the Marvin Gaye Park restoration project. 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 phased and is concentrated on four activity nodes: Capital Gateway, Heritage Green, King Nature Sanctuary/Lederer Center and Lady Bird Johnson Meadows. Phase I of the restoration work will focus on two of the four nodes - Lady Bird Johnson Meadows and Heritage Green. Restoration includes constructing trails, creating demonstration wetlands and a boardwalk, improving existing bridges and connecting the community to the park.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1).

---

### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site development plans for Phase I of the Marvin Gaye Park restoration project in Northeast Washington, DC as shown on NCPC Map File No. 8.60(05.00)42370 .

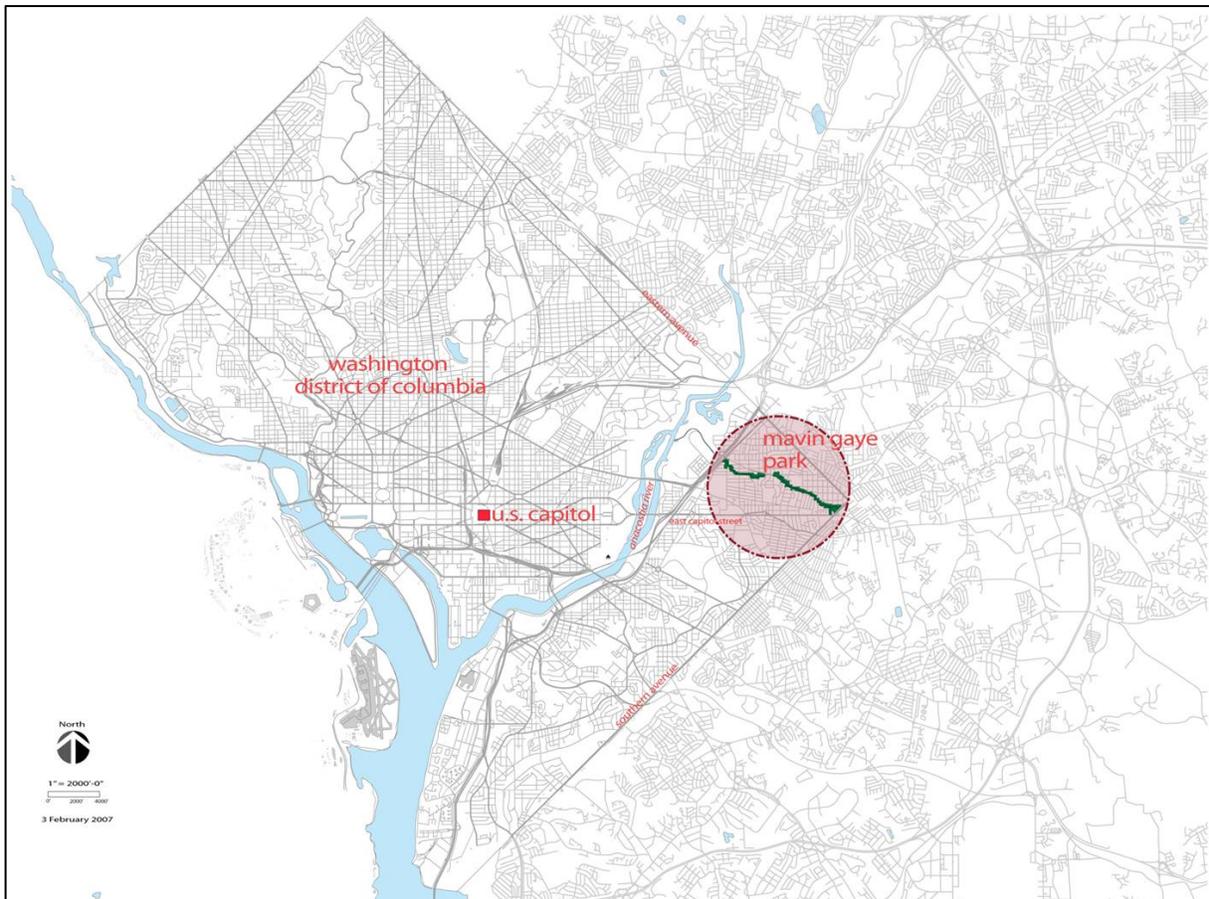
**Requests** that the District of Columbia work cooperatively with the National Park Service to strengthen the connection between the Marvin Gaye Park trail and the Fort Circle Park trail system, in particular at Fort Mahan and that the District of Columbia provide a stronger connection between Woodson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

\* \* \*

**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 two miles long and surrounds Watts Branch, a tributary of the Anacostia River, from the District border to Kenilworth Park.



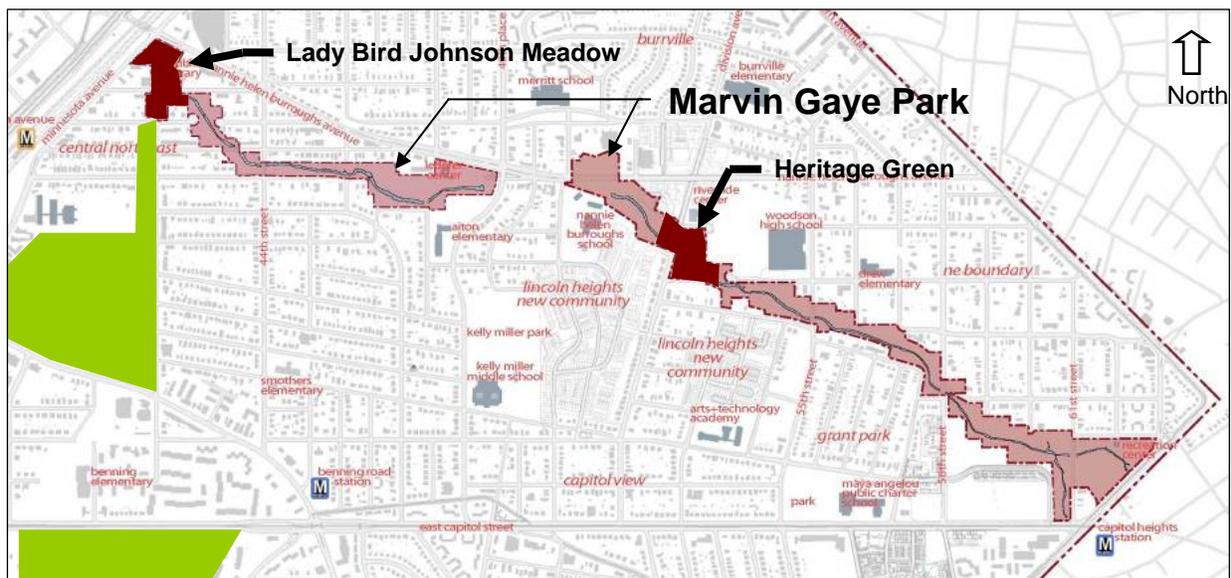
## Background

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 areas in the park 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.

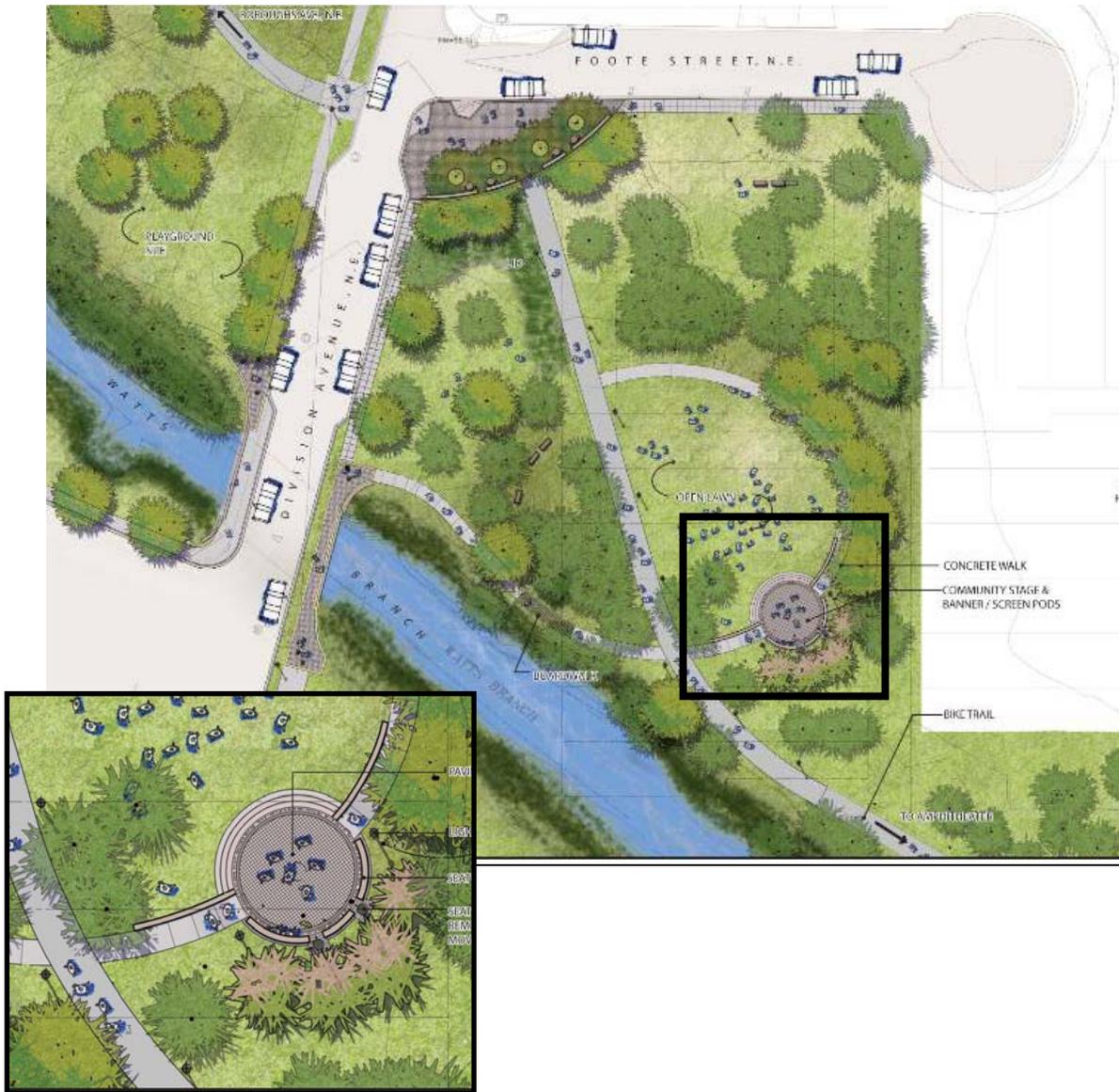
In October 2007, the Commission approved the conceptual plan for this park. The only request that the Commission made at the time was that the District of Columbia create a connection to the Fort Circle Parks Trail, which is on the western end of the park.





*Heritage Green*

This section of the park restoration is adjacent to Woodson Senior High School, which will soon be replaced as part of the District's current school renovation project. This node includes an entry plaza with game tables, a community stage, trails, a low impact development (LID) demonstration area, an open lawn area, and a site for a future playground.



### Development Program

Applicant: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development

Architect: EDAW/AECOM

Land Area: 52.5 acres of existing parkland – Marvin Gaye Park  
4.1 acres –Phase I

Estimated Cost: \$36 million - Marvin Gaye Park  
\$4.4 million – Phase I

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff is pleased with Phase I of the restoration of Marvin Gaye Park as proposed in the preliminary and final site development 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 **approve the preliminary and final site development plans** for Phase I of the Marvin Gaye Park restoration project.

## 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 2009. 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. Staff also encourages the District of Columbia to ensure proper maintenance of the park into the future after the park is developed.

### National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

Environmental review requirements for the District of Columbia government, not the federal government, apply to this District owned site. 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 August 12, 2008. 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, the Department of Housing and Community Development; the National Park Service and the General Services Administration.

### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts approved conceptual plans for this restoration project at their meeting on September 20, 2007. This project has not been submitted for final approval.