Kalorama Citizens Group Objects to Suddenly Disclosed Sports and Recreation Facilities Reduction in Marie Reed Modernization Plan

By Anthony L. Harvey

A September 9, 2015 addendum to the initial August 26th design-build Request for Proposal (RFP) for the modernization of the Marie H. Reed Community Learning Center was issued by the District’s Department of General Services (DGS), accompanied by a cover sheet describing four items attached to such addendum and its underlying RFP. According to the Kalorama Citizens Association (KCA), the RFP that was dated August 26 was posted only on the DGS website on September 9th along with the above-cited addendum. This addendum’s concluding statements in its item No. 4 — underlined and in bold letters — states that “the bid date remains unchanged” and that “proposals are due by September 17, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. EDT.” The KCA has also learned and reported in a September 24th resolution that DGS is “in the process of reviewing the design-build bids that it received on November 13 and planning to award a contract to a design-build firm by October 17.”

Office of Planning Soon to Publish Adams Morgan “Vision” Final Report

By Anthony L. Harvey

D.C.’s Office of Planning (OP), held a community open house on September 30th in the family gathering open space at the Marie H. Reed Learning Center as the culminating public event of its series of forums, “community listening” sessions, neighborhood gatherings and tours, surveys and committee meetings in collaboration with the community and OP working toward the construction of an Adams Morgan Vision Framework. (For our initial report on this initiative, see “Adams Morgan Residents Participating in Initiative to Plan for the Future,” InTowner, September 2014 issue pdf, page 1.)

Led by Joshua Silver, OP’s project manager for neighborhood planning, the session was conducted in two parts: first a lively and informative summary of the Vision Framework by Silver, who also serves as OP’s Ward One city planner, and secondly, reporting on the over six months activities of the OP staff, its consultant team from Beyer Blinder Belle and Street Sense, along with the Adams Morgan Vision Framework Advisory Committee — a 19-member committee including representatives from the Advisory Neighborhood Commission

Annual Dupont Circle House Tour to Feature Variety of Houses & Condos; Tea Event to be at Heurich House

By Robin Diener*

Aftemoon Tea has always been a highlight of the annual Dupont Circle House Tour, as much for the imposing edifices where it has been served as for the sumptuous snacks — included in the price of admission. Anderson House, Belmont House, Patterson House, and Whittmore House are just a few of the grand manses that have graciously provided their premises to the Tour for tea over the last 47 years. On Sunday, October 18, yet another magnificent building, the Heurich House Museum at 1307 New Hampshire Avenue, will host the tea starting at 2:30 p.m. At the 10 houses and condos being featured on this year’s 48th annual Dupont Circle house tour will be open between 12 noon and 5 p.m. Architect John Granville Meyers designed and built the technologically advanced for its day mansion in 1894 for brewer Christian Heurich and his family. Today it is considered one of the best preserved houses in the city, with most of the first and second floor lavish furnishings and decorations intact. Heurich House Museum docents will be on hand during the tea to answer questions about the building.

*By Robin Diener

Carriage houses are another architectural delight of the Dupont Circle area. They tend to lurk in alleys, and need to be ferretted out. Being tucked-away in one of these alleys is definitely part of charm of the Robert Cole Studio. One may catch a glimpse of the large outdoor sculptures that adorn the alley from the streets beyond, but it takes a treasure map (provided to House Tour ticket holders) to find the way in. The bounty therein will provide much for the observant appreciator — in a variety of art forms — from the hand-hammered metal handrail that hold the curtain rod in the artist’s shower, to the brilliant fixtures that light the way to the upstairs bower. Robert Cole died in 2013, but his wife Susan Cole maintains the studio. Susan is herself a great asset to the art community, and a force for its philanthropy. This site is sure to be a tour-goer favorite.

Nearby rose rather larger presences, including the Scottish Rite Temple and several stately apartment houses of yore. While many rose and fell from elegant to down-at-the-heels over the course of the 20th century (the Cairo is a notable example), it was those community’s premises graciously provided their premises to the Tour for tea over the last 47 years. On Sunday, October 18, yet another magnificent building, the Heurich House Museum at 1307 New Hampshire Avenue, will host the tea starting at 2:30 p.m. At the 10 houses and condos being featured on this year’s 48th annual Dupont Circle house tour will be open between 12 noon and 5 p.m. Architect John Granville Meyers designed and built the technologically advanced for its day mansion in 1894 for brewer Christian Heurich and his family. Today it is considered one of the best preserved houses in the city, with most of the first and second floor lavish furnishings and decorations intact. Heurich House Museum docents will be on hand during the tea to answer questions about the building.

Historic Heurich House Museum located at 1307 New Hampshire Ave., NW, will host the tour’s annual Afternoon Tea starting at 2:30 p.m., Sunday, October 18. Call in advance for tea reservations and tour tickets.

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Closing of the Downtown YMCA Not Welcomed

O n the very morning that we were getting ready to set down our thoughts about the impending closure of the large YMCA building at 17th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, the news was being reported by the Washington Post, although Y members had been hearing rumors about this for some time before now. The building, assessed by the city for a little over $22 million has already been sold to DC-based commercial real estate developer Akridge.

In her lengthy message to members and patrons of the downtown Y, Angie L. Reese-Hawkins, President and CEO of the Metropolitan Washington YMCA, noted while the facility which opened 37 years ago has seen its membership decline in the past several years by 7,600 — from 11,000 to 3,400. She attributes this decline to such factors as "shift- ing demographics and needs" and that "there are now more than 30 like-service providers within walking distance" of the building.

In her attempt to assuage the current users, she points to the Anthony Bowen branch located just off 14th and W Streets which opened, as we reported, in its completely new facility just two years ago. Unfortunately, even though she states that it is only a mile away, for the large cadre of office and professional workers in the immediate area who use the facility frequently during the week before and after work or during lunch break time, traipsing up to the lower end of South Columbia Heights is hardly an option.

In attempting to stress the positive, she further states that "the Y plans to utilize the proceeds from the sale of the YMCA National Capital facility to serve more region-wide residents and provide more volunteer and employment opportunities, thus increasing our impact in the region." This is all well and good, but it seems to us that, notwithstanding planned beefing up of existing programs in other parts of the city, the focus will be shifting noticeably outside the city. That will be unfortunate indeed, YMCA.

Reaction by long-time loyal users and members has begun to surface, and it is not of the happy kind. An example can be seen in a letter Jim Bedore of Adams Morgan, who uses the facility several times a week, sent to Mayor Bowser; he appears to raise valid concerns.

Following are some excerpts well worth sharing with our readers:

"I urge . . . you to have whatever DC office keeps track of non-profits to look closely into this closing. Seeming incompetence, and perhaps financial malfeasance, by the Board of Directors is obvious to me. Several statements by the Board in its announcement are simply untrue. The new Bowen YMCA is NOT, regrettably, a 'state of the art' facility. Its swimming pool is in no way comparable to the one at National Capital [at a maximum 5'9" depth for example, it is not adequate for senior water aerobics] [or, we might add, for diving!]. The size and design of its locker rooms is extremely poor . . . Also, the Board notes '50-like' facilities in the neighbor-hood. If true, this testifies to the Y Board's monumental management incompetence in marketing."

"We might also note that while there may be 50 'like-service providers' in near proximity, she neatly avoids defining what she means by 'like.' Fact is, downtown these are mostly of the health club variety, very expensive and without swimming pools or serious recreational offerings but rather mostly designed to cater to Millennials who want nothing more than to polish toned bodies in time for the next date."

"And we echo Jim Bedore's complaint and comment "Only three months notice of closing was given. No consultation was made with staff or the existing membership. It is no way to run a non-profit in this city."

From the Publisher’s Desk...
By P.L. Wolff
Item No. 1 of the September 9th addendum further announced that “a copy of the concept design is attached”; and in item No. 2 that “drawings of the existing building are available for download” with a lengthy live link given. Revealingly, this addendum is headlined “Design-Build Services Marie Reed Elementary School.”

Undaunted by such an impossible schedule for any analysis and response, the tightly-knit KCA executive committee, led by its indomitable President Denis James, immediately set to work on a close analysis of the new and “final” concept design and its relationship to previous designs and that of the underlying “drawings of the existing building” for subsequent presentation of the study and analysis results in the form of a lengthy resolution for adoption at the KCA’s September 24, 2015 membership meeting. The KCA’s study and analysis would be based on its intensive involvement in the community’s long-standing concerns for the modernization, improvement, and expansion of the educational, recreational, and community health services conducted on the Marie Reed campus — and the activation and re-activation of community activities that have occurred or were planned when Marie Reed was conceived and subsequently constructed in the 1960s and 1970s; that long-standing involvement is well known.

The KCA’s community involvement, in fact, is exceeded only by that of the Adams Morgan Advisory Neighborhood Commission’s (ANC 1C); its engagement on this matter has been equally long — and extraordinarily intensive in 2014 and 2015 throughout Adams Morgan — resulting, as cited by the KCA, in “a comprehensive set of recommendations for improving Marie Reed, including the possible addition of a branch library” on the spacious Marie Reed campus.

Parallel efforts entailing extensive series of meetings and surveys conducted by additional community groups prior to these surprise issuances of the project’s RFP and “final design concepts” — with their immediate, fast-track schedule of deadlines — include those of the School Improvement Team (SIT) established by the District’s Public School System (DCPS) and that of the ANC’s own “Envision Adams Morgan” meetings and surveys.

What the KCA, ANC, and the SIT all share, however, is their startling and total exclusion from the final planning, scheduling, and specifications preparation — rough and ready though their resultant products may be — by DGS at this vital stage in the Marie Reed modernization project. This can only be described as inexplicable, and to the community organizations involved, inexcusable.

Further, according to many in the community, even more inexcusable has been the total absence and seemingly willful non-involvement of the District’s Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) in this modernization process. Only the Mayor, on behalf of the District’s Public School System, and the City Council, on behalf of the agencies sponsoring the healthcare facilities at Marie Reed, have contributed to the funding of this project — with budgeted amounts of $58.86 million for Marie Reed Elementary School and $3.5 million for the community health center. Nothing has been budgeted for the (DPR) recreational facilities.

This seemingly willful exclusion means that no consideration has been given to modernization and expansion of any DPR facility. As noted in the introductory KCA “whereas” clause, Marie Reed “contains an elementary school, a community health clinic, an indoor community swimming pool, and many other recreation facilities operated by DPR, including a gym, a recreation center, two outdoor basketball courts, two tennis courts, a soccer field, and the Happy Hollow outdoor swimming pool for children.”

Thus, in the concept specifications, the community indoor swimming pool — used by school children during the school day — is downsized and double-decked, with the second level being specified for a school cafeteria. Happy Hollow disappears, apparently being replaced by a surface parking lot. The community gymnasium with its...
MARIE REED
From p. 3
presently shared use with the elementary school becomes a multi-purpose school auditorium, gymnasium, stage, and green room. One of two heavily used outdoor basketball courts is eliminated and a hopelessly inadequate small recreation center remains the same inadequate size. The modernist style amphitheater — used by both the school and the community — vanishes to be replaced by two new floor levels, one level perhaps for a music program, the other for an additional educational program. Also missing is an adjacent upper space used in the past for adult education, especially ESL courses.

Earlier architectural design themes of more light and more windows in the renovation of this 1970s modernist building seem compromised in these new specifications, and the KCA concludes its over 20 “where-as” clauses with the observation that “the Marie Reed modernization project represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address unmet community needs for better community facilities and major improvements in local education opportunities.” Its "resolve" clause offers eight recommendations to the Mayor, the DC Council, the ANC, DCPS, DPR, and DGS, as follows:

1. The space, services, and facilities currently available to the community be preserved and enhanced as part of a modernized Marie Reed and not diminished as is proposed in the September 9 and 17 DGS plans;
2. The existing Happy Hollow and indoor lap pools be fully preserved and enhanced and the school's cafeteria not be located in the existing pool's air space;
3. The existing recreational facilities, including the soccer field, the two outdoor basketball courts, and the two tennis courts be fully preserved and enhanced;
4. The plans for the modernization of Marie Reed provide for the eventual addition of a public library;
5. The DC government provide the necessary funds to upgrade and expand the community facilities at Marie Reed to ensure that they are fully responsive to community needs;
6. The project architects and other planners take proactive steps to engage with the community to ensure that the exterior of the modernized Marie Reed is compatible with the neighborhood;
7. The SIT team be reconstituted and expanded to provide for full representation of a cross-section of community interests in the planning process as to both the design and function of the modernized Marie Reed; and
8. Notice be provided to the public with regard to all future SIT meetings and all such SIT meetings be fully open to the public.

The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Editor’s Note: We first reported on this modernization project in the summer. See, "Marie Reed School Modernization Progress Hits Major Snag; Community Taken Shack to Learn One of Two Options Now Scrapped Due to Funding Cuts," July 2015 issue pdf, page 1.

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ADAMS MORGAN
From p. 4
(ANC 1B), the Adams Morgan Business Improvement District, and the neighborhood’s civic associations. The session’s second part was for attendees to view large subject boards covering five core areas and personally interact with individual OP staff members who have worked on the project. These five areas address the vital issues of “Creating and Strengthening Great Places,” “Bolstering and Strengthening Community,” “Embracing Sustainability,” “Redefining Retail,” and “Connectivity and Access.” An invaluable, recently created English and Spanish language OP pamphlet of current statistical data and pertinent programmatic information, “IAM: Ideas for Adams Morgan; Neighborhood

Pet Costume Contest
The Dupont Circle Pet Costume Contest will be held on Saturday, October 31st at 10:00 a.m. to promote Halloween fun. Prizes will be awarded in three categories:

- Best Costume,
- Fashion Pioneer, and
- Pet-Owner Look Alike

This fun event will be held in the Dog Park located at 17th and S Street, NW. Pets and their owners should gather in the Dog Park at 10:00 a.m. for check-in with the judging at 10:30.

This event is free and open to the public, and will go on rain or shine. All pets are welcome to enter! This event is organized by Historic Dupont Circle Main Streets.

www.DupontCircleMainStreets.org

The mission of Historic Dupont Circle Main Streets is to expand its coalition of neighborhood stakeholders; retain, expand, and attract a mix of neighborhood businesses; manage and improve our public spaces; assist independent business owners; preserve the diverse and historic character of our neighborhood; and promote Dupont Circle as a shopping and dining destination.
HOUSE TOUR
From p. 1

While many rose and fell from elegant to down-at-the-heels over the course of the 20th century (the Cairo is a notable example), most are gradually being rehabilitated as condos. The Somerset House, built by Harry Wardman in 1917, is the most recent to be redone. Light fills its high-ceiled apartments which retain much of their original layout, although now differently purposed to great effect with large closets, social kitchens and beautiful baths. Period details have been carefully recreated. This study brick building is a true alternative to the modern glass box. Its deep setback, a welcome respite from busy 16th Street, is something for developers and city officials to consider as they push the limits of density right up to the sidewalk. Even small amounts of green space provide shade and capture carbon-dioxide, and also lend privacy and serenity to the city abode.

ADAMS MORGAN
From p. 4

Profile 2015,” was distributed to participants. The pamphlet, a gold mine of both historical and contemporary information, is based on the recent work of the ANC’s Envision Adams Morgan community engagement meetings and an online survey that garnered over 500 responses. The ANC’s work included the strategic contributions of urban planning students from the Catholic University of America. Survey and meeting results from its work, which focused on four major areas — sustainability, transportation, business & retail, and housing — are succinctly summarized in the OP pamphlet. The informal interactions between participants and OP staff at the September 30th community open house provided the opportunity for post-it comments and recommendations from participants to be added to the illustrated boards for review by OP before issuing the Adams Morgan Vision Framework final report in mid-October. A 30-day community comment period will then be provided, the results of which will be used by OP in preparing the document for final publication.
From an efflorescence of glorious photographs emanating from the hands and eyes of noted Mexican photographer and sculptor Monica Guerrero Mouret—a flowering resulting from her participation and profound empathy with recent pilgrims trekking on foot and sometimes on their knees or being carried in carts or by pick-up trucks from cities and hamlets throughout Mexico on their way to pay homage to the patron saint of Mexico, the Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe, on Tepeyac Hill, received an apparition from the Virgin Mary, Juan Diego related this miraculous apparition to the diocesan Bishop, who disbelieved him. A second apparition occurred three days later and the Virgin Mary instructed Juan Diego to go to a place where roses never grew and gather some for presentation to the Bishop. This he did and, wrapped them in his simple cloak; when he presented them to the Bishop, the two men were dumb-struck by the appearance of an image of the Virgin Mary imprinted on Juan Diego’s cloak. The cloak was subsequently displayed in a shrine for holy relics in chapels, churches, and now basilicas at the foot of Tepeyac Hill, reportedly on the grounds of an earlier site where once stood an elaborate altar to the Aztec mother goddess Tonantzin which had been razed to the ground by the conquering Spaniards. Our Lady of Guadalupe’s Mexican antecedent is the famous Marian shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Monastery Church in Extremadura, Spain.

The Virgin Mary’s Mexican antecedent is the famous Marian shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Monastery Church in Extremadura, Spain. The Virgin Mary’s Mexican antecedent is the famous Marian shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Monastery Church in Extremadura, Spain.

The weathered faces of the pilgrims, their elaborate peasant dress, and the patience of bodily expression — whether captured standing or walking — in these poignant photographs defies the cynicism of this materialistic and consumer driven urban society of ours — and that of sophisticated and sophisticated of their belief and the steadfastness of their commitment to undertake such an arduous task.

It is my understanding that pilgrimages, like those from all over Europe to Santiago de Compostella in Galicia, Spain, occur year round even through early December each year, culminating in Our Lady of Guadalupe’s saint’s day on December 12th with its elaborate masses and festivities, is far and away the busiest time. I was there in mid-January the year before last and the plaza in front of the basilicas was animated and crowded with pilgrims on their knees, musical groups accompanying walkers, 15-year-old girls in beautiful, elaborate quinceañera dresses celebrating with their families, friends, and bejeweled beaux, cripples on wheeled boards, hawkers with religious souvenirs, seminarians and students, the young and the old abounding with the enormous modern basilica filling seats for a mass.

We walked behind the altar and took one of two moving sidewalks to view Juan Diego’s peasant cloak with its imprint of the Virgin Mary, hung behind and high above the altar, looking down on us; it was a spectacular sight. Moving around from behind the altar we viewed the interior of this innovative circular basilica, which can accommodate 22,000 of the faithful. It was brilliantly illuminated, focusing its light- ing over a large, projected stage elevating its altar and background choir stalls and clergy chairs and rostrum, and allowing one to view Juan Diego’s cloak from any angle. The basilica’s magnificent interior is in stunning contrast to its Brutalist-style exterior — a rough concrete shell. The old Basilica that it replaced, which is sliding into the subsidence of the ground across the plaza, is in the classic Spanish Colonial Baroque style and is filled with beautiful religious and history paintings, precious religious furnishings, and a solid silver altar. The adjacent sagrario (sanctuary) is also richly endowed. Additional churches and chapels are on this same site, including the exquisite the Capilla del Pocito (Chapel of the Little Well), said to be built on the exact location where a spring burst forth to revel to Juan Diego where the Virgin would last appear to him in the heavens above. According to James Oles in his magisterial Art and Architecture in Mexico (2013), the oval shaped Capilla del Pocito was donated as an act of charity by the architect and by the masons, stonecutters, and paint- ers involved. "The [structure’s] star-like windows," Oles writes, "and the gaggling tiles on the upper stories and three domes, as well as the playful movement of the roofline (as at the Sagrario) makes this one of the most precious and fully realized Baroque monuments in Mexico."

In 2013 Monica Guerrero Mouret published a large format book documenting her and others experiences with photographs and text presenting the experiences of the pilgrims on their pilgrimage to the basilica shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Although an English language edition of the text has not yet been published, the pictures alone in the Spanish language edition are a treasure, beginning with that on the cover of a devout pilgrim at an altar beneath a replica image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as imprinted on Juan Diego’s cloak, and concluding with such spectacular images as a double-page spread dramatically depicting the two basilicas and the plaza connecting them.

"de Peregrina a Peregrina" continues on view through November 7, 2015.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
ART & CULTURE
From p. 6

1850s, the Portrait Gallery's Senior Historian David Ward has assembled a striking array of poignant mid-19th century photographs that record and document the persons and battles of those tragic and violent Civil War years — both in the war to preserve the Union and in the efforts toward the further satisfaction of the country's insatiable hunger for land and an ever expanding North American empire.

As noted in the handsome, free pamphlet introducing these photographs, this exhibition is the first retrospective by the Gallery of "one of the most important yet neglected photographers in American history. No one shaped the image of mid-19th America, its people, and the dramatic events of the modern nation more than Alexander Gardner in his photographs of the Civil War and the American West."

This exhibition opens with magical, early 1850s portrait daguerreotypes of Matthew Brady and his wife and sister, and of the leading federal architect of the period Robert Mills and his wife Eliza Barnwell scholar and curator Ward for this exhibition is that of the Civil War and the U.S. wars with its own native Indian Nations serving to fundamentally alter the nature of the American Republic — this as it subsequently became even more aggressively expansionist than it was in the earlier 19th century "manifest destiny" wars with its incursions into Canada, which was unsuccessful in the War of 1812-1815, and extraordinarily successful conquering of Mexico in the war of 1846-1848 which saw Mexico losing almost half of its land mass with the U.S. extending its Western border with the addition of territory from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean — from Texas to California. Further adding to this theme is an extraordinary 1860 albumen silver print of "Five Japanese Visitors," which depicts a diplomatic delegation to the U.S. sent by Japan in an attempt to negotiate a lessening of the onerous conditions on Japan of an 1855 trade treaty dictated by the U.S. and signed by Japan on the deck of the warship USS Powhatan in Edo (now Tokyo) Bay following Admiral Matthew Perry's successful gunboat diplomacy of 1854. All this brings us to the catastrophe of the American Civil War — the first war of modernity, one that cost the lives of more Americans than all other American wars and national emergencies put together. And the photographs documenting that war, many of which are well known, never fail to both fascinate and frighten the viewer. The horrors of viewing battlefields covered in bloated corpses of mature men and college-age boys brought home to the entire world the insanity of the conflict and war's horrific costs.

These albumen silver prints, costly and difficult to produce, especially under live, wartime conditions, convey both more and less — more in the finality of these "memento mori" of lost lives captured in all the gross and seemingly anonymous indignity of death on the field of battle, and less in the sense that for one's encounter of these Civil War deaths, the viewer is a comfortable voyeur in condition, place and time. The image of the Field Where General Reynolds Fell also demonstrates the difficulties of distinguishing actual fact from suspected fiction in documentary records — photographic or otherwise. This photograph was taken on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg. General Reynolds, a highly regarded Union General, was killed leading the left flank of the Union forces on the first day of the Battle at a different site than that depicted in this horrific, documentary image. Another dramatic image, The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter, is a different case, one where Gardner staged a scene by moving a body and standing a rifle above the body to create (perhaps) a more marketable photograph. The star portraits, which exist throughout the exhibition, are those of President Lincoln. Gardner was the President's favorite photographer — and one of Gardner's first clients when Gardner broke away from Brady and established his own photography studio. These portraits track the physical and emotional toll of the war years on Lincoln and are capped by the elegiac mounting in the exhibition of the famous cracked plate photograph of the President taken by Gardner on February 5, 1865 — one of the last portraits taken of Lincoln before he was assassinated two months later. It is, in the words of the exhibition curators, "one of the most important and evocative photographs in American History."

Among the concluding 65 photographs displayed is that of the Indian Peace Commissioners in Council with the Northern Cheyenne and Northern Arapaho at Laramie, Wyoming. Peaceful in appearance, this meeting occurred as the Commissioners had formally "resolved that the Federal Government should cease to recognize the Indian tribes as 'domestic dependent nations.'" This decision effectively shut down diplomacy and negotiation between the government and the Indian Nations. Henceforth, military force would be the dominant tactic in Federal-Indian relations.

Warfare increasingly defined America's 19th century, concluding, as the century ended, with the U.S. becoming one of the dominant world imperial powers with its destruction of the Spanish fleet in Manila harbor and the addition of the Philippines.