

Mayor Adrian Fenty
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

August 23, 2007

Dear Mayor,

As the dilapidated house in front of our new Palisades Park still stands, the competing lobbies for “tearing the house down” and “preserving it for a family residence” seem to have little grounds for compromise. However, both have suggested support for the establishment of a local museum in the old Sears house. The city should step into the acrimony and promote this idea of a convergent solution. The DC government needs to provide the legal context for establishing a local museum.

For practical reasons, the Sears house would be moved off to the adjacent lot. Modeled after the nature centers directly across the river in Virginia (Potomac Overlook and Gulf Branch Nature Centers), the new museum/nature center could serve as an access point down the stream valley located beside the park. A restoration project for the small stream valley is badly needed as it appears to have been used as a dump for the last 50 years. A nature path leading down a restored stream valley that connects to Battery Kemble’s stream, eventually crossing Canal Road via a pedestrian bridge at Fletcher’s Boathouse would safely connect many Palisadians to the Potomac River.

As director of the Palisades Museum of Prehistory, I would be willing to offer our museum’s collection of prehistoric and historic artifacts to a new Palisades Museum located in the old Sears house at the park. During the construction of the park, volunteers recovered significant and interesting artifacts of our neighborhood’s history that should be exhibited at the park. The city’s negligence in bulldozing this archaeological site (a map compiled in 1890 shows the location as an “aboriginal village site”) would be remedied by the city’s assistance in establishing a museum. I should think that the enormous tax revenues generated by the new Phillips Park development would appropriately go towards protecting and promoting the little bit of greenspace left in the Palisades.

Sincerely,

Doug Dupin
Palisades Museum of Prehistory

Cc: Ward3 Council Woman, Mary Cheh
Office of Planning Director, Harriet Tregoning