

July 10, 2015

The Honorable Mary Cheh, Chair
Committee on Transpiration and the Environment
1250 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20004

Re: Comments in Support of the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation Keith Anderson Confirmation Resolution, PR21-0166

Dear Mary Cheh:

With over 8,000 acres of park space, the District has one of the nation's highest ratios of parkland per resident. Many District neighborhoods are defined by their parks, and these spaces that people identify with and congregate in are filled with trees and greenery.

A growing body of research shows that the green spaces we encounter in our daily routines have a greater influence on our health and well-being than those requiring special trips. So while regional parks like Rock Creek are tremendous assets for the city, the parks and public spaces around our homes, workplaces and schools have the greatest impact on our mental and physical health.

A number of park spaces across the District, however, are either in need of repair or under-utilized. For example, Loomis Park is an underdeveloped green space in Ward 5. With plenty of available open space on site, the city create world class neighborhood parks with more trees for the benefit of neighbors and the adjacent charter school. Design upgrades, improved greenscaping and regular maintenance would transform parks like this into neighborhood treasures.

Additionally, with increasing numbers of residents in what were once mostly commercial or industrial neighborhoods, demand for parks in areas like the Brookland and NoMa calls for creative design to take advantage of DPR parks. These smaller spaces can also be designed to provide essential services for the city and residents, such as stormwater management and cooling shade on hot summer days.



DPR-managed parks don't just offer a place for residents to play and relax, but serve as an opportunity to help the city achieve its canopy goal. These parks should be viewed as our city's greatest untapped resource when it comes to increasing canopy.

The potential for increasing our city's canopy coverage on these properties is impressive. According to our recent analysis of District-owned parks, these green spaces currently have 35 percent canopy coverage. However, there exists the potential to boost tree canopy in these spaces to at least 65 percent, without interfering with the city's recreation centers, playgrounds and athletic fields on these properties. We want to work with the city to implement a 50 percent canopy goal for all DPR-managed park spaces. It's a big opportunity the city should seize.

That is why it is essential that the city select a leader for its Department of Parks and Recreation that has a vision to transform our city's parks. We believe Mr. Anderson is an experienced manager who, as the former head of the District Department of Environment, is a tested and proven public servant. He knows that it will take a coordinated effort from all stakeholders, both public and private, to transform our city's parks into vibrant green hubs for generations to come.

I hope the Council moves swiftly to confirm him and we look forward to working with him to enhance the District's green spaces for the benefit of all residents.

Sincerely,

/s/ Suraj K. Sazawal

Suraj K. Sazawal
Advocacy Associate