

REMARKS OF COUNCILWOMAN KIM GRAY TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION
MONROE PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN OF RENOVATION

Good afternoon. I am Councilwoman Kim Gray, and I represent the 2nd District, which includes Monroe Park. I stand in support of the proposed changes to the conceptual plan of renovation for Monroe Park envisioned by the Laurel Street Event Venue design. I join many of my constituents in lauding the process that has been undertaken by the Monroe Park Conservancy to notify and inform neighborhood associations and community groups of these changes. The Conservancy has made significant efforts to honor the history of the site and respect the natural environment in and around the park.

In particular the proposal for a gazebo and new event space seems to be a harmonious addition to the park. It will allow for thoughtful and well considered programming that will enrich the park's patrons and surrounding neighborhoods. This space will be an asset to the park and to the public, providing additional handicapped-accessible areas, seating, and shade. It will allow for informal gatherings as well as open events like Yoga in the Park. The traffic flow around West Franklin and West Main Streets will be improved.

The Conservancy is acting to facilitate the partnerships with the City and other entities that will ensure that the park's improvements become a reality. The City of Richmond needs to protect its sizeable investment in these renovations by making certain that the park will be financially viable.

It is important to realize that the Conservancy's conceptual plan is addressing the 30-year future of Richmond's oldest public park. This park has been neglected for too many years. These renovations are critically needed. The park's future must be thoughtful and balanced, with a respect for history and a commitment to being sustainably green.

The Laurel Street Event Venue will furnish a family friendly location and help to make Monroe Park a safer, cleaner and more attractive green space for all City residents. The proposed changes to the conceptual design will ultimately encourage many new visitors to enjoy Richmond's oldest park. I encourage you to support these changes. Thank you for your consideration.

From: Penelope Fletcher
To: Son, Joshua L. - PDR; Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council; Bieber, Craig K. - City Council Office
Subject: Conceptual Location, Character and Extent review of the Laurel St. Event Venue, 719 W. Franklin St. Planning Commission, April 17, 2017
Date: Thursday, April 13, 2017 11:23:36 PM

Mr. Son, Councilwoman Gray and Mr. Bieber,

I am writing on behalf of the 100 residents at The Prestwoud at 612 West Franklin Street, directly across the street from Monroe Park. We sincerely hope that the Planning Commission will make it possible for the work to start immediately at their scheduled meeting on Monday, April 17th.

Residents at The Prestwoud have been very pleased with the process leading up to work commencing on the Monroe Park renovation. As President of The Prestwoud Condominium Association, I have represented The Prestwoud with Alice Massie, Councilwoman Kim Gray and her office, and in a February meeting of the Department of Public Works. Great consideration has been given to explaining to our owners the proposed changes to the plan and detailing what has been done to date and what remains to be done. The Park is very much a part of our lives at The Prestwoud, and that has been well recognized in this process.

Early in March, Alice Massie, Conservancy President, came to a meeting about Monroe Park here at the Prestwoud where over 30 of our 56 units were represented and given ample opportunity to ask questions and give feedback. Later in March, she led a Saturday morning walking tour for another 30 participants from The Prestwoud, many of them representing those who could not come to the first gathering. (Councilwoman Gray also came to this park walk-through to be certain that any resident concerns could be addressed). As you can see, interest runs high at The Prestwoud, and we were most pleased with the plans detailed by Ms. Massie.

We understand that some trees will be sacrificed by the execution of the Plan, but we can see that careful thought and consideration has been given to their removal and replacement, and we happily anticipate the arrival of the many new trees that will soon grace what we think of as our front yard.

One change in particular was given particular attention during my meeting with the DPW and in Ms. Massie's time with Prestwoud residents — the event space and gazebo. What an improvement those changes will represent! We truly appreciate the planning and thought that went into those spaces. Rather than random special usage throughout the park, this busy aspect of park usage will be moved to Laurel Street, accommodating the traffic flow around this downtown park on Franklin, Belvidere and Main Streets and avoiding the congestion on those streets that would come at other locations. We at The Prestwoud feel this is a great improvement to the original plan, and it anticipates and encourages extensive usage of Monroe Park while it recognizes the needs of nearby residents and others. As consistent users of the park, we look forward to having the park well used in that area, and we look forward to using the gazebo and the park's many other features.

We anticipate that Monroe Park will soon be an active and vibrant hub for the City of Richmond, and we look forward to celebrating that day. We hope that the Planning Commission will vote on Monday to make the beautiful renovation of this historic park possible by voting in favor of the proposed changes.

Penny Fletcher

Penelope C. Fletcher, President
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From: Frank and Elinor
To: Son, Joshua L. - PDR; Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council; Bieber, Craig K. - City Council Office
Cc: Penny Fletcher
Subject: conceptual location, character and extent review of the Laurel St. event venue
Date: Monday, April 17, 2017 8:37:41 AM

I am sorry we will be out of town today.

AS 15 year residents of the Prestwoud and I a member of the former Monroe Park Advisory Council, I/we encourage you to support the Monroe Park Conservancy's plan for the Laurel St. event venue.

IT is more than important to think of the Park's future with plans that protect the park, including safety, sustainability, its history.

IT is time to move ahead toward the grand re-opening of our oldest and most historic park.

Thank you for your consideration,

Elinor Kuhn/Frank Kuhn

Sent from my

From: P Cole Millen
To: Son, Joshua L. - PDR
Cc: Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council; Bleber, Craig K. - City Council Office
Subject: Conceptual Location, Character and Event review of the Laurel St. Event Venue
Date: Monday, April 17, 2017 10:12:07 AM

As a resident of the Prestwoud on Franklin Street, directly across from Monroe Park, I am very much looking forward to an improved Monroe Public Park. I emphasize "Public"...not every resident here at the Prestwoud is 100% behind the Conservancy's approach. From the most recent communication printed in our newsletter from Alice Massey, it might be construed that we are solely focused on how the park affects the Prestwoud. It was stressed that we contact you all, which I do think is important. However, *what* we should say was also "suggested".

I worry this "Conservancy" has not adequately taken into account the demographics, shall we say, surrounding the park. Two comments recently made by Alice Massey are of concern to me- that certain structures will be "revenue producing", and that without them the park will be its own entity. This is a Public Park. Why should it not stand as its own entity and are these renovations the reason for the emphasis on "revenue producing"?

From what I have seen presented here at the Prestwoud, I worry that they have overdone this and bitten off more than they can chew. This is not Central Park nor Paris (two examples shown at the presentation by Alice Masse).

Thank you
Pat Millen