

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Phil Mendelson

Council Chair

John A. Wilson Building

1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

Suite 504

Washington, DC 20004

Dear Council Chair Mendelson:

As board members of the District of Columbia nonprofit 11th & Bark, we write to urge you to include funding in the FY2019 budget for the acquisition of the property at the corner of 11th and Park Rd, NW. This land is currently owned by Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), but has been used—with WMATA’s permission—as a community dog park since 2009. WMATA is now looking to sell the property and we ask the District to purchase the land and preserve this green space for the community. The park is not just a needed space for our dogs to run and play, but also an important place for Columbia Heights residents to build relationships with their neighbors and forge a community.

11th and Bark formed in 2015, under the guidance of Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, to work to gain an agreement with WMATA that would enable us to make improvements to the park, such as installing new surface material, double-gated entries, a water source, and lights. Unfortunately, after significant efforts over nearly three years, we have been unable to obtain an agreement with WMATA. We have, however, sponsored several cleanups in the park, as well as other community building events for the neighborhood.

In late 2017, we were informed that WMATA would likely sell the property instead of leasing the property to us. This is now a great opportunity for the District to exercise its right of first refusal, purchase the property, and establish an official District dog park. We hope to serve as a partner in this endeavor and, once the property is purchased, will work to raise funds to assist in the park’s renovation and upkeep.

We have strong support from the community to save this park. More than 1,400 District residents have signed our petition in support of the park, and 216 residents have offered statements in support of keeping the park. Many of our neighbors explain that the park offers them a great sense of community: Some note that they moved to the neighborhood because of the park; others talk about how they met many good friends through the park; and still others mention that having green space in their neighborhood adds to their quality of life. (Please see the attached petition and statements.)

We also have strong support from the surrounding businesses and restaurants on 11th Street (The Coupe, El Chucho, The Good Silver, Maple, Red Rocks, Odd Provisions, Meridian Pint, and the Wonderland Ballroom); neighborhood nonprofits (Community Wellness Alliance, District Bridges, and Green Spaces for DC), and, of course, our Ward 1 Councilmember, Brianne Nadeau, who has requested that these funds be added to the budget. In addition, our ANC Commissioner, Angelica Castanon, strongly supports the park, and the ANC 1A unanimously passed a resolution urging the District to invest in not just this park, but parkland throughout the neighborhood. (Please see the attached letters of support.)

Saving the park is about more than just ensuring we have a space for our dogs. It is about maintaining a valued meeting place where Columbia Heights residents are able to interact with their neighbors, make new friends, and feel a sense of community. And it is also about preserving the green space in our neighborhood, which is already greatly lacking. As explained by Green Spaces for DC, “this open space is precious in such a dense, diverse, and underserved neighborhood.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Accordingly, we urge you to support our community by providing funding in the FY2019 budget to acquire this property. And we hope to have the opportunity, once the land is purchased, to work with you to improve and maintain the park for the residents of Columbia Heights and the District of Columbia in the future.

Sincerely,

11th and Bark board members:   
Lori Robertson, Mona Kishore, Eric Gronning, Maggie Garrett, William Brown, Eva Guenther, and Penelope Poole

1. See Letter from Green Spaces for DC to Mayor Muriel Bower, March 15, 2018, attached. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)