

The Future of the RFK Stadium Campus

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society supports progressive development of the RFK Stadium Campus in alignment with the important District goals foregrounded in the 2021 *Comprehensive Plan* and earlier studies, and long championed by Mayor Muriel Bowser and other civic leaders.

Basically, we support land for athletic and recreational use; the inclusion of affordable housing; commercial and residential projects; continued public access to the Anacostia River Trail; and no development within 60 feet of the shoreline and wetlands next to the Anacostia River. In addition, we recommend a comprehensive study be made about parking and the need for expanded public transportation.

Background

As background, we note that the new legislation builds on substantial past work. The goals of the 2021 *Comprehensive Plan* themselves are in harmony with the earlier roadmap first laid out in the 2006 *RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study*, in which a 4 to 1 ratio of recreation to mixed-use development was proposed for the available acreage. This plan, in our view, closely responded then and closely responds now to the current and future needs of the adjacent neighborhood and greater city. Following its guidance would extend the major success the area has seen with the development of the Fields at RFK Campus (formerly Parking Lot 7), which opened in 2019.

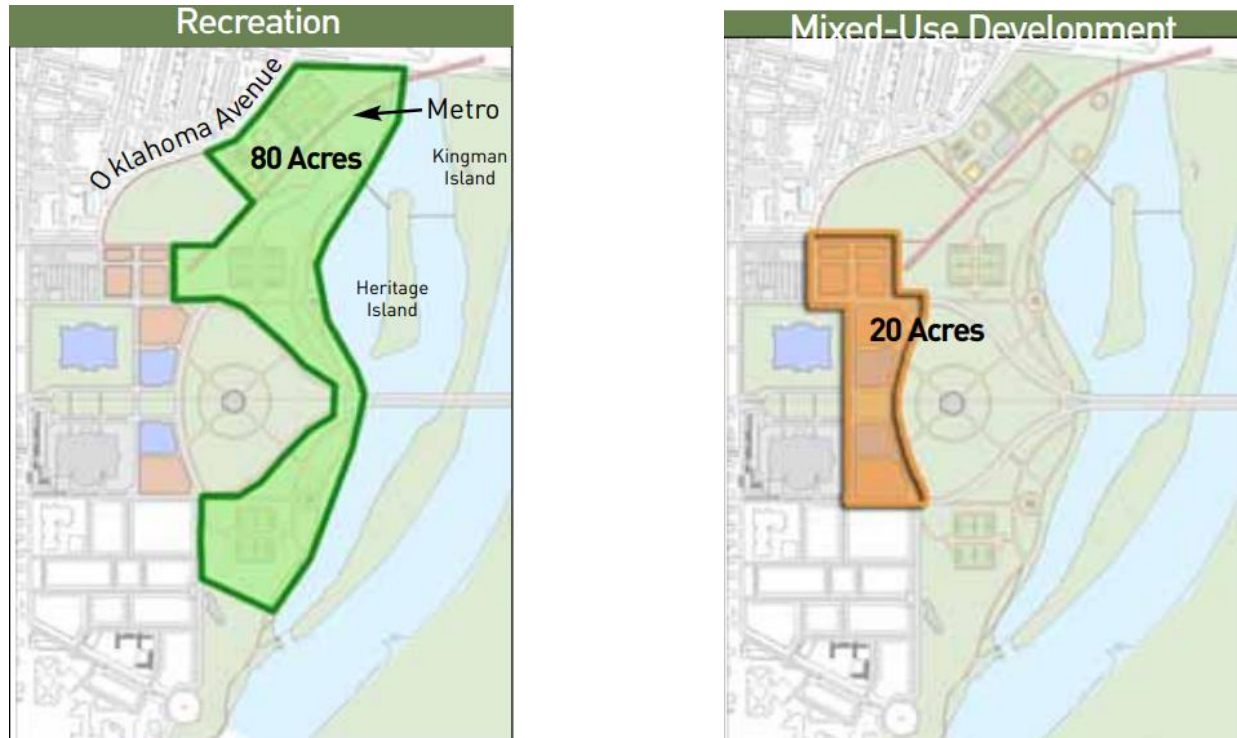


Image source: *National Capital Planning Commission RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study, 2006*

We also note that these forward-looking goals formulated in 2006 and 2021 have long been supported by the District government and the Mayor herself. In response to the passage of HR 4984 in December 2024, she said: “The potential is great—for housing and jobs; for sports, recreation, and an entertainment district; for green space, better connections to the river, and monumental views of our Nation’s Capital. The future of the RFK campus will benefit residents and visitors alike, and our vision for the renaissance and development of more than 170 acres of waterfront space will benefit the entire region.”

Statement source: <https://mayor.dc.gov/release/statement-mayor-bowser-future-rfk-campus>

The Legislation Itself

The new legislation – the ***D.C. RFK Stadium Campus Revitalization Act, HR 4984*** of December 2024 – acknowledges these 2021, 2016, and 2014 goals. In fact, it reaches as far back as an earlier 1985 attempt to future-proof the area, with the following provisions in Section 2 (b):

- (b) DEVELOPMENT AND USES OF CAMPUS.—After transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Campus under this section, the District may develop and use, and permit the development and use of, the Campus for any of the following purposes:
- (1) Stadium purposes [. . .]
 - (2) Commercial and residential development.
 - (3) Facilities, open space, and public outdoor opportunities, which may include supporting cultural activities, educational activities, and recreational activities [. . .]
 - (4) Such other public purposes for which the Campus was used or approved for use prior to June 1, 1985.
 - (5) Demolition purposes to facilitate development and use of the Campus [. . .]

Additionally, Section 2 (c) of the legislation stipulates:

(c) SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF CAMPUS.—The Declaration of Covenants entered into under subsection (a)(1) shall include provisions to require the District to meet the following requirements as a condition of the development and use of the Campus as set forth under subsection (b) after transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Campus under this section:

- (1) The District shall ensure that the development and use does not materially degrade or adversely impact any lands under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, including the restoration of the wetlands south of Kingman Island.
- (2) The District shall designate, develop, operate, and maintain at least 30 percent of the Campus (excluding the riparian area of the Campus as defined in subsection (g)(2)) as the “Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Park” as parks and open space to provide land for passive and active outdoor recreation and shall require that portion to be reserved for such purposes for the duration of the transfer.
- (3) The District shall ensure that the development and use provides for improved public access to the Anacostia River and shall not interrupt the Anacostia River Trail.
- (4) The District shall, to the extent necessary, ensure that parking facilities are provided to accommodate the development.
- (5) The District shall provide for adequate public safety and security measures and resources in the planning and ongoing management of the development.
- (6) The District shall carry out measures that, to the greatest extent practicable, will reduce the impact of noise and traffic of the development on surrounding residential areas in the District.
- (7) The District shall operate and maintain the riparian area of the Campus in accordance with subsection (g).

Athletic and Recreational Fields

The 2021 *Comprehensive Plan* cites a need for additional recreational facilities, PROS-1.4

... finding land for ... parks will be difficult and expensive. **The District must seize opportunities for parkland dedication on its largest redevelopment sites and take steps now to promote park provision elsewhere as Washington, DC grows.** A 2014 DPR study estimated that 180 new acres of parkland will be needed to meet demands associated with increased population over the next 15-20 years. The Department of Recreation and Parks Master Plan (2014) states that an additional 140 acres of parkland is already needed ... [emphasis added]

The Fields at RFK Campus, which transformed the former Parking Lot 7 in 2019, offer three synthetic-turf multi-use playing fields on 27 acres for soccer, baseball, softball, lacrosse, kickball, and other team sports. In spring 2023 more than 100,000 people visited the Fields, during 5,000 hours of booked playing time, and 1,000 hours of community open play. This overview schematic from Events DC exemplifies the kind of exemplary re-purposing that has been so advantageous to individuals, schools, sports collectives, and other organizations from Anacostia, Kingman Park, Capitol Hill, from across the city, and indeed from the entire region.

Clearly, there is an intense and growing demand for playing fields, recreational areas, and open space.



Image Source: Events DC
<https://eventsdc.com/venue/fields-rfk-campus/fields-layout/fields-rfk-campus>

Affordable Housing

District government recognizes an urgent need for more affordable housing, and also recognizes that the cost of land is the primary barrier for new housing construction. The RFK Campus offers acres of land for housing that could (and should) include significant amounts of housing that is *affordable* because of the extremely low cost of the land.

Moreover, the RFK Stadium Campus is a desirable locale for such housing: Metrorail and Metrobus access come right to it; it is adjacent to the Kingman Park Historic District and to the river; and it is close to the retail centers already in existence and developing in Hill East (Reservation 13) and Benning Road.

The goal of more housing, and affordable housing, was clearly stated by the Mayor at the moment of the housing summit she led in July of 2024:

“In 2019, we set out to meet a bold goal—build 36,000 new homes in five years. To get it done, we made historic investments in affordable housing, we worked strategically with our housing partners, and we made DC the first city in the nation to set affordable housing goals by neighborhood,” said Mayor Bowser. “I’m proud that DC has been leading the region in this work, and looking ahead, we know that we must sustain and maintain these investments so that we can continue building on our progress.”

Source: [https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-and-community-members-mark-significant-milestone-36000-new-homes-2025-0#:~:text=\(Washington%2C%20DC\)%20%E2%80%93%20Today,produced%2036%2C216%20total%20housing%20units](https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-and-community-members-mark-significant-milestone-36000-new-homes-2025-0#:~:text=(Washington%2C%20DC)%20%E2%80%93%20Today,produced%2036%2C216%20total%20housing%20units).

Appendix I: References

DC Planning Documents

2024

D.C. RFK Stadium Campus Revitalization Act, HR 4984

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/4984/text>

2021

District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan

<https://planning.dc.gov/comprehensiveplan>

2014-15

District of Columbia Parks + Recreation Master Plan

https://dpr.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dpr/publication/attachments/DCPRMP_Vision%2BImplementation%20Final%20Document_123014_sm.pdf

2006

National Capital Planning Commission RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study

https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/RFK_Stadium_Site_Redevelopment_Study_Dec2006.pdf

2003

Anacostia Waterfront Framework Plan

<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/The%20Anacostia%20Waterfront%20Framework%20Plan%202003.pdf>

2002-03

Master Plan for Reservation 13 Hill East Waterfront

<https://planning.dc.gov/publication/master-plan-reservation-13-hill-east-waterfront>

RFK-Adjacent Historic Districts

Anacostia Historic District, designated 1978, expanded 2021

<https://planning.dc.gov/node/593312>

Kingman Park Historic District, designated 2018

<https://planning.dc.gov/node/1342641>

Capitol Hill Historic District, designated 1973, expanded 2015

<https://planning.dc.gov/node/593312>

Appendix II: Useful Stadium Comparables

NFL stadiums require a vast footprint including the structure itself and its surrounding surface parking, which is conventionally presumed to include adequate space for traditional tailgating. FedEx Field's (now Northwest Stadium) football capacity is 82,000 in 2021, compared to RFK's football capacity of 56,000. Northwest Stadium has over 20,000 designated parking spaces spread across 5.6 million square feet in eight lots. A new stadium at the RFK Campus would likely require comparable seating capacity and parking acreage.

NFL Stadium Comparables					
Seating	Stadium Name	City	NFL Team	Parking Spaces	Tailgating
82,500	MetLife	E. Rutherford, NJ	NY Jets / NY Giants	27,500	yes
81,441	Lambeau Field	Green Bay, WI	Green Bay Packers	?	yes
80,000	AT&T	Arlington, TX	Dallas Cowboys	12,000	yes
76,416	Arrowhead/GEHA	Kansas City, MO	Kansas City Chiefs	?	yes
76,125	Empower Field	Denver, CO	Denver Broncos	7,000	yes
73,208	Caesar's Superdome	New Orleans, LA	New Orleans Saints	5443 in 2 surface lots and 5 garages	yes
72,220	NRG	Houston, TX	Houston Texans	26,000	yes
71,608	Highmark	Orchard Park, NY	Buffalo Bills	14,000	yes
71,000	Mercedes Benz	Atlanta, GA	Atlanta Falcons	?	yes
70,745	M&T Bank	Baltimore, MD	Baltimore Ravens	?	yes
70,240	SoFi	Inglewood, CA	LA Rams / Chargers	?	yes
69,796	Lincoln Financial	Philadelphia, PA	Philadelphia Eagles	?	yes
69,218	Raymond James	Tampa, FL	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	?	yes
69,143	Nissan	Nashville, TN	Tennessee Titans	?	yes
68,740	Lumen Field	Seattle, WA	Seattle Seahawks	3100	yes
68,500	Levi's	San Francisco, CA	San Francisco 49ers	?	yes
68,400	Acrisure	Pittsburgh, PA	Pittsburgh Steelers	?	yes
67,814	TIAA Bank	Jacksonville, FL	Jacksonville Jaguars	?	yes

67,717	Northwest Stadium	Landover, MD	Washington Commanders	129 acres	yes
67,431	FirstEnergy	Cleveland, OH	Cleveland Browns	?	yes
67,000	Lucas Oil	Indianapolis, IN	Indianapolis Colts	?	yes
66,860	U.S. Bank	Minneapolis, MN	Minneapolis Vikings	?	yes
65,878	Gillette	Foxborough, MA	New England Patriots	?	yes
65,515	Paycor	Cincinnati, OH	Cincinnati Bengals	?	yes
65,000	Allegiant	Paradise, NV	Las Vegas Raiders	6000 +	yes
65,000	Ford Field	Detroit, MI	Detroit Lions	?	yes
64,767	Hard Rock	Miami, FL	Miami Dolphins	?	yes
63,400	State Farm	Glendale, AZ	Arizona Cardinals	20,685	yes
61,500	Soldier Field	Chicago, IL	Chicago Bears	?	yes

Sources for this table: Individual stadium sites and
<https://www.stadiumsofprofootball.com/comparisons/>
<https://www.pro-football-reference.com/stadiums/index.htm>