



12/02/16

Mr. Keith Anderson  
Director  
Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)  
1250 U Street NW, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Director Anderson:

I am writing to you as the Executive Director of DC Stoddert Soccer to share my concerns about the proposed renovation of Hearst Recreation Center. DC Stoddert Soccer is the largest youth sports organization in the District of Columbia, serving approximately 7,000 youth players each season. DC Stoddert is also by far the largest sports program of any kind for girls in the city, with 2,800 players who are girls. While DC Stoddert has members in all eight wards of the city, the Hearst project is of particular interest to our members because it is located in Ward 3. Almost half of our members live in Ward 3; at any given time over one quarter of the under-18 population of the ward is enrolled in a DC Stoddert program, and one in ten residents of the ward is either a DC Stoddert player or the parent of a DC Stoddert player.

As I am sure you are aware, sports of all kinds are extremely popular among DC families, and there is a city-wide shortage of recreational space, so it is laudable that DPR is committed to investing in new recreational facilities. However, it was disappointing to see that the plans for Hearst call for a significantly reduced playing field there. The PowerPoint that was posted to the DGS website presents three design proposals; in all three options, the soccer field is shrunk considerably. The drawings don't show specific field dimensions, but the field in Options 1 and 3 appears to be about 40 yards by 80 yards, and in Option 2 it's even smaller at about 40 by 70 yards.

By comparison, for the fall 2016 season a field is lined at Hearst that is 60 yards wide and 100 yards long, and high school age games are being played there. Fields of the size drawn in the three proposals would be suitable for games for players no older than fourth grade. In addition, the shape of the proposed fields – twice as long as they are wide – is not appropriate for soccer; soccer is best played on a field about one and half times as long as it is wide. None of the proposed fields would meet the requirements of any of the leagues of the Virginia Youth Soccer Association, which is the sanctioning body for club soccer for players living in the District of Columbia.

Hearst is the only field of this size in Ward 3 – where over 3,000 kids who play organized soccer live. Large fields are particularly valuable and rare because the essential logic of youth sports is that large fields can be split into smaller fields—in past seasons Hearst has been laid out as three third-grade fields, for instance, but small individual fields cannot be combined to make a large field. While DPR has over 100 fields in its inventory, many of them are small; fields this large are rare.

So I am writing to you today to request that you explore options for the renovation of Hearst that maintain the functionality of the current playing field. In particular, it appears that Option One could be modified to allow a field of the current size to be maintained. The field space at Hearst is an asset for everyone who plays sports that should be preserved.

If you have any questions I would be happy to continue the conversation, I can be reached by phone at 202-552-3791 or via email at [jgootman@stoddert.com](mailto:jgootman@stoddert.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Gootman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer Gootman  
Executive Director  
DC Stoddert Soccer

cc: Councilmember Mary Cheh