

18 Years and Still No Park

The District's plan for redevelopment of the city's Southwest waterfront may make Georgetown residents think that they backed the wrong horse in 1984, when they urged the city to transfer ownership of the Georgetown waterfront to the National Park Service.

At that time residents were eager for the District to transfer the 10-acre Georgetown site on the Potomac River between Key Bridge and Washington Harbor to the park service because they believed the federal agency would be a better custodian of the land that they hoped would become a public park. The land, once an industrial site, is now partially occupied by a parking lot.

Under the terms of the transfer agreement, all that the District received from the park service in exchange for this valuable waterfront land was a promise to fund planning, development and maintenance of a public park there.

Nearly 20 years later, Georgetown residents still are waiting for the Georgetown Waterfront Park. The park service's associate regional director, John Parsons, has said that his agency doesn't have the funds to develop a park, and he now is asking Georgetown residents to raise \$10 million or more in a "public-private partnership" to build one.

Meanwhile, the D.C. Office of Planning has developed a plan for the 50-acre Southwest Anacostia River waterfront [Metro, March 4] that calls for the creation of a riverside park and the widening of the promenade along Washington Channel. It also includes plans for a new museum, new facilities for boaters and residential and commercial development. Because the city-chartered D.C. National Capital Revitalization Corp. owns or controls much of the Southwest waterfront land, the District has the means to make the plan a reality.

If the park service won't keep its promise to fund a waterfront park in Georgetown, perhaps the District should ask it to give the land back. Maybe that way the District would be able to accomplish what the park service has for nearly 20 years failed to do.

—Grace Bateman

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