



District of Columbia Government
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A
Box 75115
Washington, DC 20013



October 23, 2020

Mr. Delano Hunter, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation
1275 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Re: ANC6A Statement – Reopening public spaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Director Hunter,

At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting¹ on October 8, 2020, our Commission voted 6-0-0 (with 5 Commissioners required for a quorum) to request that specified District of Columbia parks and recreational facilities reopen, in accordance with DC Health Phase 2 reopening guidelines.

This letter strongly recommends that the city allocate investments to ensure these facilities stay open to support community health and well-being. Our Commission area includes Rosedale Recreation Facility and Sherwood Recreation Center. The dangers of Covid-19 are well known; however, it is equally important that communities maintain their social fabric during tough times.

This Halloween will mark the 5th Anniversary of the Halloween celebration sponsored by Commissioner Sondra Phillips-Gilbert at the Rosedale Recreation Center. We request that DPR make sufficient investments, centered on existing guidance concerning sanitation, spacing, crowd limitations (no more than 50 people), safeguards for employees, facility considerations (i.e., improving ventilation), etc., to ensure this event can be held safely on October 31, 2020. The steps required to reopen these facilities will require work, but this is very possible to do safely with the necessary planning and resources to support our community in ANC 6A.

As other nearby communities have already proven, we encourage DPR to look for more innovative solutions to keep these facilities open throughout Phase 2. Currently, the lack of access to recreational facilities acutely affects kids in vulnerable communities who are experiencing a disproportionate number of stressors. We believe that having strict health protocols in place at these facilities - as mentioned in existing guidance - could safely mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus while allowing much needed social relief and positive health benefits to our community. Furthermore, ANC 6A is a diverse community where these services are acutely needed - many of our residents cannot afford private and individual solutions. This disparity has already been felt when we have private facilities, such as pools at the YMCA (<https://www.ymcadc.org/reserve-your-y-time/>) and nearby public pools, such as Prince George's County (<http://www.pgparcs.com/1006/Aquatics>) open while District facilities

¹ ANC 6A meetings are advertised electronically on the anc6a-announce@yahoogroups.com, anc-6a@yahoogroups.com, and newhilleast@groups.io, at www.anc6a.org, and through print advertisements in the Hill Rag.



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have been closed. Outdoor activities are some of the safest options for children during COVID with direct benefits both physically and mentally.²

These facilities and the enrichment programs they offer are not just nice to have but are necessary to help those most directly impacted by these difficult times to ensure safe and healthy places to play and get essential services to support wellbeing in DC. It is urgent that DPR reopen and expand the offerings at Deanwood & Sherwood facilities to support the ANC 6A community, just the same as other private operations. District decisions must incorporate ALL residents in our community who depend on the social safety services provided by the city. Shutting down the public spaces that provide critical services to our community has a negative long-term effect.

We call upon DPR to reimagine and prioritize investments in public space, with an eye to use these spaces - in a safe manner - for all manner of social and educational needs. Specifically, we recommend expanding DPR learning hubs (<https://dpr.dc.gov/page/dpr-learning-hubs>) and other programs for kids beyond the traditional spring/summer/winter break timelines currently offered through DPR. While we must address the serious health threat that Covid-19 poses for our community, we must also allocate the proper investments now needed to adapt our way of living and keep our communities strong and vibrant over the long term.

Thank you for giving consideration to our ANC's feedback on this issue. Should you wish to discuss this letter with the Commission, please feel free to reach out to me at AmberANC6A@gmail.com.

On behalf of the Commission,

Amber Gove
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

² See CDC guidelines for visiting parks and recreational facilities,
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-lifecoping/visitors.html>