



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog
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Reeves Center Swap: The Rush to Build The Stadium Could Leave Us with Regret

By Wes Rivers

Mayor Gray's plan to sell the Reeves Center to help pay for a soccer stadium raises a number of concerns. Rather than seeking input from the community and setting requirements on the redevelopment in ways that meet the neighborhood's needs, the mayor's plan would allow the developer, Akridge, to do whatever it wants with the site. Beyond that, Akridge would get the Reeves Center at a price below at least one appraisal. Finally, the plan calls for creating a new Reeves Center east of the Anacostia River, yet it offers no details and no financing, meaning that it is little more than a dream at this point.

This suggests that the Reeves Center redevelopment is secondary to a rush to get cash to pay for a soccer stadium. That is unfortunate.

A new stadium for DC United is an important endeavor for the District of Columbia because it will add to the cultural fabric of the region and the civic pride of its residents. As mentioned before in the [District's Dime](#), most soccer stadiums in the U.S. are built with at least some public contribution.

So then the question is not whether the District should support a new stadium – it should – but whether the deal proposed by Mayor Gray is the best approach. At today's hearing before the Committee on Economic Development, we will focus on how the District can benefit most from the planned redevelopment of the Reeves Center.

Here are some of our concerns:

- **Redevelopment of the Reeves Center should be taken more seriously.** Normally, redevelopment of a property as important as the Reeves Center would include detailed planning and a series of community meetings. Control of this site gives the District the opportunity to shape the continued development of the U Street area. Yet the mayor proposes to transfer the Reeves Center to Akridge and allow the company to redevelop the site any way it wants.



- **Land swaps limit the District’s ability to get the best deal possible.** The legislation would charge Akridge \$56 million, despite one recent appraisal of almost \$70 million. In the District’s current real estate market, it is not unusual for properties to sell above their appraised value. This suggests that putting the site up for sale would be a better deal for the city.
- **Plans for a new “Reeves Center” should be more concrete.** The plan calls for a new Reeves Center east of the Anacostia River, yet offers no financing plans. With the city very close to its borrowing limit, it is not clear how or when a new municipal center will be completed.

Under the agreement, Akridge would benefit from the booming development of the U and 14th Street corridors and from their landholdings adjacent to the proposed stadium site at Buzzard Point. In considering the agreement, the DC Council and its consultants must ensure that we are gaining just as much as we are giving up when trading away this valuable asset.

To read DCFPI’s testimony, click [here](#).