



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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DC United and New Mayor Need to Play Fair with Community Benefits

By Wes Rivers

It is common for large developments like a soccer stadium to include amenities that protect surrounding neighborhoods and provide benefits to area residents. Yet despite almost \$200 million in proposed subsidies for a new stadium, the mayor and DC United recently dismissed nearly all of the requests made by community members for community benefits. The team committed to supporting 25 spots at a summer camp, but that was about it.

It is likely that any stadium deal will be completed under a new mayor, and the Council will have to approve the deal, too. The Southwest community will need to look to them ensure that *everyone* wins with the new development.

The residential neighborhoods adjacent to Buzzard Point have a lot of needs, which did not improve with the development of Nationals Park and the Navy Yard. Residents experience high rates of unemployment, rising rents, game-day transportation issues, and under-resourced parks and recreational facilities. A new soccer stadium for DC United would add strain to the transportation system and put affordable housing at risk.



That's why a coalition of community leaders sent a [proposal](#) to the city and the team for a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) – a legally binding contract to address specified community needs. CBAs across the country have helped low- and moderate-income neighborhoods benefit from big development projects. For example, a CBA tied to the development of [Staples Center](#) in Los Angeles led to new parks and recreational space, job readiness programs, and affordable housing.

Among other things, the proposal calls for:

- A commitment to preserve affordable housing in the area.
- A \$5 million community fund to support recreational and educational programming.
- Increased access to public transportation and parking/traffic alleviation
- Mitigation of environmental hazards that have had effects on residents' health in the past.

- A set aside for some of stadium's construction and operation jobs (ticketing, concessions, guest services) and job-training slots to go to residents living in the immediate neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the mayor and DC United [dismissed](#) these requests, making empty reassurances that existing programs could alleviate potential issues. Despite a substantial proposed commitment of city resources to benefit the team, neither the District nor DC United has offered much to the community.

A stadium deal is unlikely to be completed this year, which means that a new mayor and DC Council will review and approve any deal. This will offers another chance to pursue a meaningful CBA that mitigates the risks to the Buzzard Point residents and ensures that existing residents can live and thrive with the new development.