

# The West End Flyer

Serving the West End Neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

March 2021

## Facelift at 2440 M To Alter Public Space

The medical office building at 2440 M Street was not an architectural gem to begin with, and it has been through a lot, including having the Atlas Condominium at 1111 25th Street built over the top of its four-story south-side wing in 2005. (See photo below.)

It is now undergoing a cosmetic façade and lobby change, replacing the previous red-brick arches with plate glass and enclosing its outdoor space to create a modern three-story lobby. No rentable square footage is being added the *Flyer* is told.

An architect's rendering of the building as it will look when completed has been attached to the construction fence surrounding the demolition area. (See illustration at right.) Removal of the brick façade has been going on for several weeks.

Exactly how the existing public sidewalk space in front will be modified is still a bit uncertain, but there will be less of it. The new lobby is apparently going to be raised, with stairs surrounding it, and requiring the installation of a handicap ramp, stairway handrails, and "bollards" which seem to be needed to install controls for the automatic doors near the "ADA ramp."

It will also have a revolving door if built as planned. That appears to be intended be built on a few feet of public space in front. The new lobby will



Façade of 2440 M Street façade before demolition.

remain accessible to people in wheelchairs and those who have walking disabilities, as it has been for years. But instead of rolling from the sidewalk through the door and into the elevator, they will have an uphill trip first, on a ramp.

The public space plans have not yet been reviewed

by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC-2A) or shown in any other public setting. Unlike two of the other buildings at this intersection—2445 M and 2501 M—2440 M cannot be seen from Rock Creek



Architectural rendering posted on construction fence at 2440 M.

Park, and thus does not require architectural review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

Public space applicants are required, however, to make plans public. The drawings were expected to be shown at the February 17 meeting of ANC-2A before approval by the District's Public Space Committee,

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## Dogs and Francis Field

Several complaints were made to District officials in February about the number of dogs on Francis Field and the lack of enforcement at the public park and playing field on 25th Street NW, between M and N.

The subject will be on the agenda of ANC-2A at its March 17th meeting. Commissioner Joel Causey reported complaints at both its January and February meetings. Jeri Epstein, the ANC-2A chair, agreed that it was a matter that the commission should address.

The issue will become timely soon. The *Flyer* has learned that the two public schools in the neighborhood want to resume sports practice on the field three days a week, in April or sooner, for "lacrosse, soccer, and track and field practices."

If that is to happen, the field is also going to need some work, particularly the filling of holes. Francis

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# Francis Field Getting a Post-Covid Plan?

*Continued from Page 1*

Field was closed by order of the mayor on April 2, 2020, due to the Covid-19 health emergency. It was reopened for individual use on June 22, but no group or team permits were issued. Dogs and dog owners have occupied the otherwise unused field since then, sometimes in large numbers, as shown in the photo at right.

The use of the multi-purpose field, and its various sections—including an official dog park at its north end—have been debated and disputed over the years.

In 2016, ANC-2A supported a multi-year plan for the improvement of the field, and defined six objectives that the field and park should provide for the Foggy Bottom and West End community. These were:

- A green, pleasant, and safe recreation area,
- Athletic field space for school, youth and community sports,
- Passive space for non-athletic rest and relaxation,
- Provision for the daily needs of community pet owners,
- An environment appropriate for its residential proximity, and
- A natural buffer area between Rock Creek Park and urbanization.

These multiple objectives often conflict. Also, the field is partially owned by the National Park Service, which has goals that differ in some ways from those of

## Public Space at 2440 M

*Continued from Page 1*

but no one representing the applicant brought plans or showed up to answer questions.

Joel Causey, who represents the 2A02 district in which the public space is located, confirmed at the February meeting that the applicant had been invited. He stated that the agenda item would be moved to the March meeting and the matter taken up then.

The owner of the medical building at 2440 M is Harrison Street Real Estate Capital, located in Chicago, which acquired the building in 2013 from Washington REIT in a multi-property purchase of medical office buildings. Its local matters are handled by Avison Young, a real estate service firm.

Andrea Martinez, property manager for the 2440 M building, declined to provide information to the *Flyer* about the plans or the ongoing construction, stating that “the owner does not want any publicity.”

the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation.

Friends of Francis Field (FFF), which publishes the *Flyer*, does not make the rules for the field or enforce them. It has asked to be heard at the March 17th ANC meeting and is expected to suggest that the commission’s newly formed committee on Strategic Planning and Coordination take up Francis Field as its first project, reexamining the purposes of the field and the



Dogs and their companions on Francis Field, October 5, 2020.

delivery of the benefits it is expected to provide in the post-Covid period ahead.

The maintenance of the field by private contractors who never seem to be able to grow grass is also an issue that FFF would like to see the ANC and the Ward 2 councilmember’s office examine. The architecture of the small, official Francis Dog Park, with its unpopular crushed-stone surface, is another.

For the March 17 ANC-2A agenda via Zoom, see website: [anc2a.org](http://anc2a.org).

### — A Note to Our Readers —

We revived the *Flyer* in May 2020 for the Covid-19 emergency, and will be phasing it out as life returns to normal this spring. With this issue we are dropping the listings pages, and reverting to the two-page format.

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