

Definite Need for Sports Center Armory Cited by Nolen

Planning Director Says There Should Be No Conflict Between Projects

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This is the seventh of a series of articles dealing with the auditorium-stadium problem now pending in Congress. Further discussion will follow, and the opinions of readers are invited.

There should be no conflict between the proposed national auditorium in the Municipal Center area and the projected National Guard armory and sports center at the east end of East Capitol street, in the opinion of John Nolen, jr., director of planning of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

There is a definite need for both projects, perhaps the most urgent need being for the armory-sports center building, for which a site on the south side of East Capitol street adjoining the Anacostia Parkway has been selected.

"The attitude of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission toward the auditorium-armory-stadium problem has remained unchanged for a long time," Mr. Nolen explained. "I do not believe the auditorium and armory-sports center plans are in conflict. Whatever confusion may exist is, perhaps, due only to a confusion of nomenclature."

Sports Building in Mind.

"Even before the auditorium question came up the commission had in mind a sports building as part of its major plan for the development of the area at the end of East Capitol street. This building was conceived as a structure inclosing a large, open space in which sporting events of various kinds could be held. It would not be a costly type of construction and would by no means answer the diverse requirements of a modern auditorium, with air conditioning, special acoustical treatment, stage, smaller meeting rooms, exhibit space, etc."

The National Capital Park and Planning Commission, it was explained, is not "promoting" either the auditorium or the armory-sports center. It is merely providing in its plans for the long-range development of the National Capital for two buildings of separate types for functions which it was felt can not properly be combined.

"The commission, however, is never through with its studies," Mr. Nolen explained, indicating that no hard and fast decision yet has been reached. "We are always ready to make necessary changes of plans to meet new conditions and new requirements. It is the duty of the commission to keep the development plan for Washington up to date at all times and this necessarily requires continual adjustments to meet changing conditions."

Favor Armory-Sports Plan.

It is the opinion of officials of the Park and Planning Commission that the East Capitol street armory-sports project would meet a more urgent current need than does the auditorium project, and it certainly would involve a smaller expenditure.

Construction of the proposed central public library building in the Municipal Center area, between John Marshall place and Sixth street N.W., may result in razing of the old National Hotel, which now serves,

inadequately, as a National Guard armory, it was pointed out.

This would precipitate a serious problem, since it would leave the Guard once more without a home. The armory problem should be solved at once, without regard to the auditorium proposal, Park and Planning officials feel. General opinion, they said, is against combining an armory and auditorium. There is no objection on the part of National Guard officers, however, to the combining of the armory with a sports center, they said.

The commission believes that the combined armory and sports center not only would be a very useful building, but that it could be made to pay its own way.

Separate Buildings Planned.

The original plan for the East Capitol street development, Mr. Nolen said, called for separate buildings for an armory and sports center, north and south of a great plaza at the east end of East Capitol street. This plan called for a stadium with a seating capacity of up to 100,000 persons on a site south of Benning road and east of Nineteenth street on land partially in Anacostia Park and partially in private ownership but not then developed.

Since preparation of the original plans about five years ago, however, these private lands have been extensively developed for residential purposes and the cost tremendously increased. Accordingly, new plans have been drawn to fit the realities of the situation. The armory and sports center now have been combined into one building, to be located south of the plaza at the east end of East Capitol street and the stadium has been allocated the site north of the plaza, necessitating a reduction in the size of the stadium to perhaps 70,000 seats, which could be increased by double-decking, however. Most of the land at this site already is publicly owned and the expense would be relatively much less.

The scaling down of the original plan, however, represents no change in the opinion of the Park and Planning Commission as regards the desirability of separate buildings for the auditorium and the armory-sports center, it was explained.

Other major features of the East Capitol street project remain unchanged. The plans call for a 30-acre sports field and parade ground overlooking the Anacostia River east of the great plaza on which would also front the armory-sports center building and the stadium. Seats for about 40,000 spectators would be constructed along the west side of the field. Thus the plan would provide facilities for the largest indoor and outdoor sports, pageants and ceremonies in the same area.

South of the sports field, railroad terminal facilities are planned for both freight and passenger service. Ample automobile parking space and traffic approaches to the area exist to meet all foreseeable needs, it was explained.

The views of officials of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission will be presented in tomorrow's article.