

THE FUTURE OF FORT DUPONT ICE ARENA (FDIA):
What we know; how we got here; and where we go from here

A week ago, FDIA board members received surprising and devastating news from the District of Columbia: the City's plan for constructing our new ice rink would ***double the budget for half the original project*** and possibly take ***twice as long to build***.

- ➔ The original budget for our **2-ice sheet rink** in 2013 was **\$15M**. The District's new plan for a **1-ice sheet rink** is **\$37,500,000** ... *that's the per-square-foot cost of a New York City skyscraper!*
- ➔ The **construction period jumped** from 12–18 months to a “best guess” of 27 months.
- ➔ In 2017, the District increased the budget to \$25M, while narrowing the project scope to one ice sheet. City officials refused to share information with FDIA or consult our experts in rink management and operations, even though no one on their team had experience in building community ice rinks.
- ➔ The longer construction timeline far exceeds all industry standards for a typical community rink.

In 2019, after years of being shut out of the planning process, Fort Dupont signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the District that gave us — on paper, at least — a seat at the project table and important input into the construction process.

- ➔ Under key terms of the MOU, the District pledged (1) to find ways to reduce the cost of the project; and (2) to engage FDIA and seek our input in the design review, to ensure the new facility meets the current and future needs of the community.
- ➔ In early 2020, FDIA met its obligation to raise \$1.3M to trigger the start of construction. Nevertheless, the City continued to ignore our advice and failed to provide promised cost information to FDIA's team. Shovels never went in the ground.

After learning this month that costs continued to explode, without explanation or budget details, *Fort Dupont's board decided it could not allow the District to demolish our well-loved, if well-worn, facility next month.*

- ➔ Budget transparency would help our experts identify ways the new rink could be built more cost-effectively and quickly, getting DC kids back on the ice as soon as possible.
- ➔ Fort Dupont cannot support or justify this proposed use of taxpayers' money, when our experts know there is a more cost-effective, appropriate path forward.

We simply don't have confidence that the District will build the new rink at all — *and we cannot allow the thousands of kids we serve every year to lose the incredible opportunity our Kids On Ice® programs provide to learn ice sports, build confidence, and pursue their dreams, all in a safe haven.*

- ➔ FDIA is the only DC recreation facility that children from all eight wards together in a common experience: everyone falls down, gets up, and keeps going.
- ➔ FDIA has a successful 26-year track record of lifting up kids throughout the city, especially those who live in Wards 7 & 8.

- ➔ *We will never abandon our commitment to affording opportunity and access to ice sports for all kids, regardless of their economic circumstances.*

That is why, instead of closing after today, **we will return to our regular seasonal schedule, with skating programs continuing through March 2022 and restarting this summer.**

- ➔ In April, we will close for a few months for annual ice maintenance and to spruce up our building and grounds with help from treasured volunteers.
- ➔ Kids On Ice® programs will resume this summer with fun camps, weekend classes, public skating, and our contract ice schedule.

It's possible the District will take our pleas to heart and meet to see if there's a reasonable path forward for the new rink. We are always ready to talk. And we will always put our "kids on ice," their families, and our "east of the river" communities first.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- ➔ **Send a hockey puck to Mayor Bowser and/or Ward 7 Councilmember Vincent Gray, with a note to build our new community-focused rink for a reasonable cost. Address: 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20004 (add Suite 406 for CM Gray)**

Calls and emails to the mayor (Muriel.Bowser@dc.gov), Councilmember Gray (vgray@dccouncil.us), and City Council members are good, too. Let them know what Fort Dupont Ice Arena means to your family. Tell the City to work with FDIA's board to build a new rink cost-effectively and quickly. (We will post City Council email addresses on our website at fdia.org/newrink.)

- ➔ Share our story with friends and neighbors through your social media and community networks, and ask them to voice their support for the new rink that spends taxpayer dollars prudently.
- ➔ Write a Letter to the Editor to local news publications, calling attention to the wonderful work we do at FDIA and urging District leaders to be responsive to community and taxpayer needs.
- ➔ Continue to enroll your kids in our Kids On Ice® classes, sign up for summer camps, and join us on weekends for public skating — and urge your neighbors to do the same!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Visit fdia.org/newrink for more information to help us build support:

- Letter to Mayor Muriel Bowser, advising that the District of Columbia is in breach of the MOU for a collaborative, cost-effective approach to building a new rink
- Our letter to our families, skaters, employees, and supporters
- Overview of timeline for building a new, updated rink that meets community needs

For more information, please contact Brittany Greene at bgreene@fdia.org or 202-584-5007.