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CCCA January 2023 Newsletter

Announcing Name Change and Website Address Change

As reported, CCCA's new name is Chevy Chase Community Association. It is in harmony with a core belief: social justice. We have recently revised our logo (see above) thanks to Mike Heffner of 202Design.com and obtained a new website address to reflect our new name. It's www.chevychasedc.org. The change over will take place over the next couple of weeks. In the meantime, please use the old address, www.chevychasecitizens.org.

**Meeting with Councilmember Matt Frumin -
Wednesday, February 8, 6:30 PM in the Chevy Chase
Community Center Lounge**



The Chevy Chase Community Association will be hosting an in-person meeting with newly elected Councilmember Matt Frumin on February 8. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce Mr. Frumin to the CCCA community. The sit-down will be moderated by Robert Gordon, CCCA president. Our goal is to discuss key Chevy Chase issues and to answer the CCCA membership's questions. We expect a spirited give and take, and as always, handled with grace, respect, and good humor. If you would like to attend, please complete the registration form on our website <https://www.chevychasecitizens.org/>. To register, click on the meeting under EVENTS.

Attendance is limited to CCCA members, and because of the room size, we will be limiting the number of attendees to 50, on a first come first serve basis. Please note that the meeting will be recorded and displayed on our website so that it may be viewed later by the broader CC community.

Chevy Chase Community Center (CCCC) Classes

Planning for the redevelopment of the CCCC and Library has been getting a lot of attention lately in our neighborhood. Did you know that the CCCC continues to offer a variety of classes and activities for residents of all ages? CCCC offers Ballet, Cooperative Play, Pickleball, Tai-chi, Wood Working, and Game Night. Sign up on the Department of Parks and Recreation Website.

Here are some tips to get you started.

- Check out www.dpr.dc.gov. (Select Events & Programs/Register for programs).
- Go to DPRPROGRAMS.com and click on the activity you are interested in or just scroll to the bottom of the screen to pick your location (Chevy Chase).
- To register for a class, you will have to set up an account, even if you are only interested in free activities.

These classes are also available.

- Taekwondo and Self-Defense is a free class for the community. The classes are held Mondays and Thursdays from 6 - 7 p.m. Classes are ongoing rather than by season or session. If interested, stop by the Game Room before the class begins. Young people over age 12 and adults are welcome.
- Tai Chi classes (55 and over) are available for drop-in (or register online) on Thursdays from 1:30 - 2:30 pm.
- Virtual Qi Gong classes are available by contacting Ann Mascolino, volunteer DPR instructor. Email her at: annemascolino@gmail.com for information.

Please contact Jory.barone@gmail.com if you have updates or new information on CCCC classes.

Northwest Neighbors Village

Northwest Neighbors Village has several planned events that are open to the community. NNV also holds book clubs, chat groups, bingo, support groups and yoga for members and volunteers. Information on all activities can be found on our website at mnvdc.org. Have a little extra time and energy? Become a [Volunteer!](#) Virtual Speaker Series:

- Thursday, February 2, 2023, 2:00 p.m. - [The 2023 Political Landscape: What is Possible?](#) With Eleanor Clift, columnist for the Daily Beast and long-time analyst on The McLaughlin Group
- Thursday, February 9, 2023, 1:00 p.m. - [Drawing the Map of Your Life](#), with David Oldfield, founder and director of [Farther On](#), a movement dedicated to reframing the later years of life as an adventure to be lived rather than a problem to be solved.

- Tuesday, February 14, 2023, 11:00 a.m. - [To Tell the Truth: The Life of a Foreign Correspondent](#), with Lewis M. Simons, Pulitzer Prize winning foreign correspondent and author of *To Tell the Truth, My Life as a Foreign Correspondent*.
- Thursday, February 23, 2023, 1 p.m. - [Photos from Beirut to the White House: A Father-Daughter Legacy](#), with Joyce Boghosian, photographer of six presidents, official White House Press photographer, and daughter of Harry Naltchayan, 35-year Washington Post photographer.

Environmental Film Festival

The 31st annual D.C. Environmental Film Festival returns to theaters March 16-26, with both in-person and virtual film screenings and discussions. To purchase passes and learn more, please visit dceff.org!

Ensuring a Bright Future for the Civic Center Property

Over 100 Years of Stewardship of the Civic Center, Chevy Chase Community Association, Founded in 1909

A Look Back at the Civic Center and CCCA

The Chevy Chase Library/Community Center (Civic Center) property is a historic site with over 125 years of public ownership. CCCA has been involved in its stewardship and protection for much of that time. The original Chevy Chase School was built on land donated to the District by the Chevy Chase Land Company. It opened its doors in March 1898 with 25 students ranging in age from six to sixteen years in a single classroom.

The school became overcrowded when the Chevy Chase, D.C. residential section opened in 1909. In response, parents and teachers met to organize the first Home and School Association in Washington, D. C. The school was expanded to eight rooms in 1910 and was renamed for Elizabeth V. Brown in 1915. By 1929 portable buildings covered the entire playground serving 300 children. The main building of 16 rooms had a capacity of 640, about forty to a classroom.



The Elizabeth V. Brown School circa 1915

The Chevy Chase Citizens Association asked Congress to build more schools. Portable buildings were also constructed in 1928 at Connecticut Avenue and Grant Road, now the site of the Murch School. In the same year, two portable buildings were built at Northampton Street and Broad Branch Road, now the site of the Lafayette Elementary School.

Enrollment at the Elizabeth V. Brown school decreased rapidly after the new schools opened. The school was closed in 1942, and the building was used by the Office of Price Administration during World War II. After the war, the citizens succeeded in obtaining the building for a community center and the Chevy Chase Branch Library. In 1968 the building was torn down and replaced by the present library building and adjoining community center (information provided by the Chevy Chase Historical Society).

CCCA's Hope for the Redeveloped Civic Center

The future of the Civic Center property is now under intense discussion. The Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) has proposed a process to surplus much of the property and dispose it for private development. In 2022 the Office of Planning published the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan that offered aspirational guidance for the use of the Civic Center including a modern library and community center. It also called for the construction of market rate, affordable, and workforce housing. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan.

DMPED held a well-attended public hearing on January 12, 2023. The public statements generally opposed the surplus/disposal plan, by one count a ratio of 80

percent against. Written testimony to DMPED is due on February 9 and we urge residents to respond at:

**The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 317
Washington, DC 20004
Attention: Gilles Stucker, Director of Strategic Initiatives**

Questions? Concerns? Contact: Gilles Stucker, Director of Strategic Initiatives at (202) 285-2148 or gilles.stucker@dc.gov

CCCA wants to ensure that the public interest is best served by the updated Civic Center. The Small Area Plan, prepared by the Office of Planning, contested during the preparation stage, has articulated a vision for the Center. Executing that vision requires surplus/disposal now under review by DMPED. CCCA has a different vision that is in harmony with the community and the Chevy Chase ANC 3/4G (see the complete resolution on the ANC website):

- CCCA supports the SAP recommendation to renovate or rebuild the community center, a building that has reached its useful life and no longer suits the needs of the community. The functionality and aesthetics of an updated community center was studied by ANC3/4G about five years ago. The planned design was informed by extensive community engagement. A budget was allocated by the Mayor. We would like this ANC plan revisited, updated, and executed.
- CCCA supports renovating or rebuilding the library so that it is modern and reflects the advances in technology that have occurred over the past 40 years. We want it to serve better the needs of those who use the facility. We urge the D.C. Public Library System to conduct a thorough review of the library, prepare a plan for upgrading it, and ensure that an adequate budget is available for its construction.
- CCCA supports continued surface parking, playgrounds for kids, a basketball court for kids and adults, and gardens that feature a maximum amount of green space for the community.
- CCCA does not endorse the “surplus/disposal” route of this valuable DC-owned asset until substantial details are provided by DMPED and approved by

the community. We agree with the Chevy Chase ANC in their January 23, 2023 unanimously-approved resolution:

- - “ANC 3/4G believes that surplussing of any sort at this time is not appropriate, in part, because the Commission and the community lack the details necessary to make an informed choice.
 - Whether the ANC would ever be in a position to support surplussing remains to be seen, but support of surplussing cannot even be considered unless and until DMPED works with the Commission to develop and execute a substantial community engagement process that gives residents the opportunity to offer suggestions and site priorities *prior to* a surplussing decision and issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP).”

Otherwise, surplus makes no sense. To surplus and dispose D.C. government real estate, the property “must no longer be needed for public use” (see D.C. Official Code 10-801. We question whether any square foot of the property is unneeded. The picture below illustrates just one function that uses the entire property. There are many others. The parking lot is used by the community to visit the library and community center, to drop children off for summer camp, for clubs and meetings. The basketball court is used for sports and three-wheel bicycling by children. The playground and garden are used every nice day.



Chevy Chase DC Day 2022

One ANC Commissioner asked a good question, “why give away valuable public property to developers when there are so many good uses for the public.” There are

other development models that may be employed that would be more suitable and ensure that the property meets the needs of the community.

For the record, CCCA supports social justice everywhere and racial and economic diversity in Chevy Chase, including affordable and workforce housing. One question that an ANC commissioner asked the Mayor in a public meeting is how many affordable housing units are appropriate for this neighborhood. He received no answer. The notion that there is no affordable housing today in Chevy Chase is misleading. 5333 Connecticut Avenue provides for 19 affordable units. Most of the apartment buildings along upper Connecticut Avenue accept Section 8 vouchers including the 374-unit Kenmore. Many buildings provide for affordable housing by way of rent control. ADUs can provide additional affordable housing.

We request that the ANC stand firm on its resolution of January 23. We further request that the ANC conduct a thorough inventory of the affordable housing opportunities in the area before more housing is approved on the Civic Center site. There are other ways to create new affordable housing in Chevy Chase that need to be explored. Consider alternatives to keep the property in the public domain. Engage a city planner, architect, and an economist to examine alternatives to redeveloping the Civic Center.

Robert Gordon, President, CCCA

Making the Most of the Chevy Chase DC Civic Core

Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) leaders from Ward 3 WIN congregations and WIN leaders District-wide, along with the Coalition for Smarter Growth and Ward3Vision (all have members who live in Chevy Chase DC and nearby neighborhoods) have posted a statement of goals, [Making the Most of the Chevy Chase DC Civic Core](#). The fundamental idea is that the Chevy Chase DC “Civic Core” is a unique publicly owned site where affordable housing could be introduced into a community that has no dedicated affordable housing and that we shouldn’t miss the opportunity to maximize inclusivity at this gateway location. We urge you to read the Statement, but in short, the goals are:

- **Create at least 100 new homes at the Civic Core site**
- **Build mixed income housing that ranges between 30% median family income (MFI) and 80% MFI**

- **The library and community center space program, planning and construction budgets must be developed and finalized expeditiously**
- **The RFP for the Civic Core site should be informed by and contribute to the Office of Planning's [Small Area Plan](#)**

It is worth noting that our Small Area Plan, approved by the ANC and the DC City Council, calls for the District to:

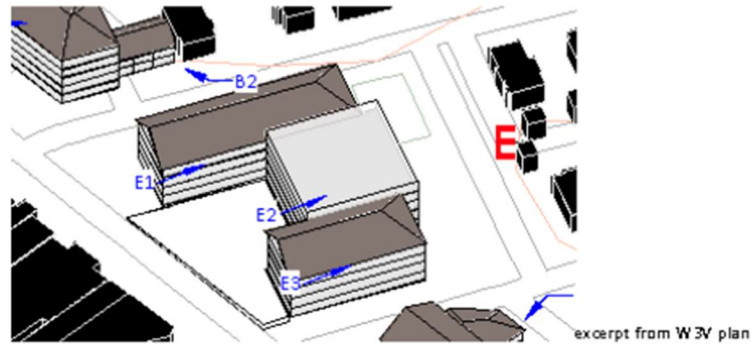
- *Redevelop the community center and library into a multi-purpose civic core with state-of-the-art public facilities and mixed-income housing*
- *Prioritize dedicated affordable units that serve a range of incomes and household sizes.*
- *Incorporate both indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces that provide passive and active recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities*
- *Rezone the site to leverage full Comprehensive Plan height and density to maximize the flexibility to co-locate civic uses with a significant amount of mixed-income housing*
- *Incorporate the CCSAP's design guidelines and policy recommendations related to the civic core site into a future request for proposal*

So...this raises two good questions: first, will all this stuff fit on this location? And second, what will it all look like?

The Coalition for Smarter Growth/Washington Interfaith Network/Ward3Vision group looked at the potential of the site, and we believe it is achievable. To determine this, we started with what planners and urban designers call massing studies. Using what we know – how much space the library needs (from talking to DCPL,) how much space the Community Center needs (from looking at the programming work the ANC did in 2018,) how big residential buildings need to be (from our own experience); and what the Small Area Plan talks about, decent amount of open space, modest increases in height to about 5 stories - we analyzed the site potential.

That analysis is detailed below. It is a lot of technical jargon and barely comprehensible numbers because that is how the capacity of a site is determined, but what it shows is that even with a super simple arrangement of 5 story buildings it is possible to get over 80,000 square feet of useable residential space plus maintain about the same amount of open space as currently exists on the site. At a 900 sf average apartment size – which is fairly high – that means 93 new homes in a mix of 1 – 3 bedroom sizes. Of course, trade-offs are possible, if more family sized units are

required, the unit count would go down. Similarly, if building heights are increased, more homes or more open space is possible.



		# Floors	Building Footprint (SF)	Gross Floor Area (SF)
E	E1	5	13000	65000
	E2	5	12537	62685
	E3	5	8793	43965

Site area of the Civic Core site = 73,390 sf

Building footprint, the amount of the site covered by buildings = 34,330 sf

This means the buildings cover 47% of the lot - much less than the 80% allowed by zoning
This leaves 39,060 sf of open space which is comparable to what is existing

Density

Zoning would allow = 308,238 sf (4.2 FAR)

Shown in massing study = 171,650 sf (2.34 FAR)

Public Program estimated requirements

Community Center = 50,000 sf (per ANC report)

Library = 25,000 sf (DCPL typical = 22,000 sf)

Total = 75,000 sf

Shown in massing study = 62,685 sf above grade, 12,537 sf one level below grade = 75,222 sf

Residential

Assuming 50% of Ground Floor for retail or public uses, and 50% for residential.

Building E1 would have = 58,500 sf of residential

Building E2 would have = 39,568 sf of residential

Total = 98,068 sf of Residential

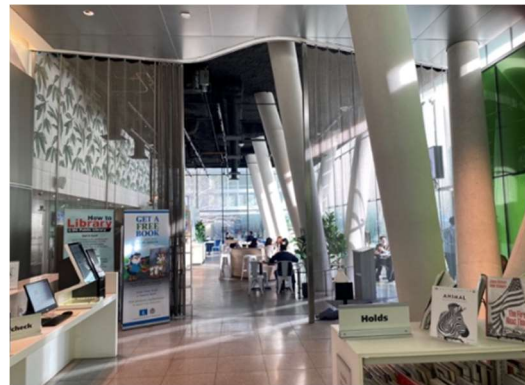
To adjust for hallways, stairs, etc, assume 85% efficiency = 83,357 sf left for apartments

@ 900 sf average unit size = 93 units

Is this the only solution? Is this what it is going to look like? *Definitely not.* This is merely a massing diagram to test what a site will yield. Even in this rudimentary diagram, you can see that you could move buildings closer or further away from the Avenue, changing the configuration of the open space. That's the architecture part that comes later. I have seen other studies for this site that treat it very differently. In one, higher buildings were placed on McKinley St across from the Safeway, allowing lower structures along Northampton St. In another study, buildings were located across the entire Connecticut Avenue frontage and the entire rear area where the parking lots are now, with the open space in the middle connecting the two side streets. Very different approaches, but they all accommodated the public amenity program and provided about the same amount of housing.

One of the exciting things about the RFP process is that we will see multiple alternative approaches to fitting this complex mixed-use program on this site. Those of us who have been through it before, know that these competitive processes often surprise everyone with design solutions that even those of us who are so close to it never anticipated.

For example, take a look at these two new libraries. Same basic program, different design approaches. The West End Library, part of an RFP like our Civic Core, includes an upscale café, owned by the developer, but integrated with the library. The Cleveland Park Library intentionally creates social spaces that provide an important connection to the neighborhood.



But how do we make sure the community needs and desires are accommodated in the responses to the RFP? The key is the RFP itself. The RFP will go out with language specifying what we want, and then we will get a chance to review, perhaps even

advising DMPED as to which features we like on each proposal, and the ANC can choose to vote on which proposal they favor. It is obviously in the interest of potential developers to pay close attention to what the community says it wants to see, because they want to be chosen, after investing considerable time and money responding to the RFP.

We can:

First, recognize that many of the most important things are already covered in the Small Area Plan or the related zoning that is in progress now, including heights, density, setbacks, transitions, parking and the like, and the RFP will require consistency with it.

Second, ensure there is more robust community engagement prior to finalizing the RFP to ensure that the library and community center programming reflect our community needs, and that the nuances of how we envision the site are communicated to the competitors. Even when community priorities conflict – pickleball vs lawns, or open space vs height, or retail vs residential, etc. – a good open community discussion reported to the competitors will inform their designs. We’ll see how they resolve the conflicts in a real-world design solution. We would like to see DMPED or the Office of Planning do a workshop like this soon.

Third, include in the RFP the Statement of Goals that the Washington Interfaith Network, Coalition for Smarter Growth and Ward3Vision have outlined and require 100 units of mixed-income affordable housing to the RFP. This would likely narrow the universe of competitors to affordable housing providers. It would also be consistent with the ANC’s vision for the site as expressed in its request for the co-development project in 2020.



From Small Area Plan, an interpretation of one idea for the Civic Core. The RFP responses will present others.

Ron Eichner

Bike Lanes on Connecticut Avenue, NW

Mayor Bowser is proposing to build a 2.7-mile bike lane on Connecticut Avenue, NW from Calvert Street NW to Legation Street NW. The goal is to increase safety for cyclists, encourage bike travel, and promote DC's goals for the environment. Studies show that 32,000 cars and 100 cyclists travel this corridor daily. Many residents question if bike lanes on Connecticut Avenue would achieve these goals. Others fear that bike lanes will increase traffic congestion and add to the area's parking shortage.



The D.C. government project, which is budgeted for \$4.6 million, includes building northbound and southbound bike lanes by removing street parking and loading zones on one side of Connecticut Avenue and reducing travel lanes. In addition, new left and right turn lanes would be added at key intersections, pedestrian refuge islands would be built, and drivers would no longer be able to make right-turns on red.

DDOT estimates that more than 300 parking spots would be removed to complete the project. During rush hour, only two lanes would be available for vehicular travel. DDOT predicts that the decrease in travel capacity would divert 7,000 cars to Broad

Branch Road NW on the east (need link to study ABOVE), and Reno Road NW, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts Avenues on the west.

Protecting the safety of cyclists and improving the environment should be goals of our community and government but the question is, at what cost? Connecticut Avenue is a major thoroughfare. Is this the route of choice for cyclists? Businesses have made it clear that a loss of parking and loading zones will significantly impact their viability. Does the city want to further strain businesses that are still recovering from the pandemic? Residents are concerned that side streets will be flooded with traffic and limit much-needed resident parking. This project will impact the commute of tens of thousands of drivers, hundreds of merchants, and thousands of residents, for the benefit of, now, one hundred cyclists.

Planning for this project will begin in the Spring, and construction is slated for next year. If you would like to learn more, or express your concerns or support, please reserve your spot for the in-person meeting with newly elected Councilmember Matt Frumin on February 8. Opponents to the site have a website that is worth checking out [here](#).

Kristine Desmarais

If you have any comments or suggestions about the articles in this newsletter, please send them to president@chevychasecitizens.org. We welcome your feedback.