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CHEVY CHASE, BARNABY WOODS, HAWTHORNE

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**ANC 3/4G Testimony Before the  
Committee on Recreation and Youth Affairs,  
Committee on Education,  
Committee on Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, and  
Committee of the Whole  
Budget Hearing on the  
Department of Parks and Recreation, DC Public Library,  
Office of Planning, and Housing Production Trust Fund  
May 27, May 29, June 4, and June 8, 2020**

Chairpersons Mendelson, White, Grosso, and Bonds and members of the Committee on Recreation and Youth Affairs, the Committee on Education, the Committee on Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, and the Committee of the Whole, I am Randy Speck, Chair of ANC 3/4G (Chevy Chase), and I am testifying on behalf of our Commission, which authorized this testimony at its May 19, 2020 meeting by a vote of 6 to 0 (a quorum being 4).

Planning for the future of the Chevy Chase Community Center, the Chevy Chase Library, and the Chevy Chase commercial district from Chevy Chase Circle to Livingston Street (the “Chevy Chase Gateway”) transcends the scope of any one Council committee or District agency. While the Council oversees the Department of Parks and

Recreation (DPR), the DC Public Library (DCPL), the Office of Planning (OP), and the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) through four committees, our community's vision for the Chevy Chase Gateway is based on a holistic approach that transcends those boundaries.

The Commission asks the Council to unify components of the proposed FY 2021 budget to address the broader issue of how to achieve our community's recently expressed<sup>1</sup> goals effectively and efficiently:

- We need more affordable housing that will promote income diversity and enrich our civic life;
- We can and should accommodate population growth while also preserving our neighborhood's hallmark livability and assuring that new development has a compatible scale, function, and character with the surrounding structures;
- We should enhance the space around the Chevy Chase Public Library and the Chevy Chase Community Center to create an active public space;
- Modernization of the Chevy Chase Public Library should include mixed-use/co-location with affordable housing development; and
- A Small Area Plan is necessary to guide long-range development, improve our neighborhood, achieve citywide goals, and attain economic and community benefits.

The Mayor's proposed budget includes four elements that affect our ability to achieve these objectives.

1. The DPR capital budget includes a full funding cost of \$19.506 million to modernize the Chevy Chase Community Center with expenditures

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<sup>1</sup> ANC 3/4G identified these goals in its February 10, 2020 resolution on the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments, available at <https://bit.ly/2Ir1Gzb> (Comp Plan Resolution). The community had extensive input in developing these goals, including five public meetings between November 2019, and January 2020, and on-line survey in December 2019, with 682 respondents.

scheduled through FY 2021.<sup>2</sup> DPR has begun design work but advised the ANC that because of cost increases since the budget was developed, this funding level is no longer considered sufficient to meet the needs that the community has identified.

2. The DCPL capital budget includes a full funding cost of \$20.753 million to modernize the Chevy Chase Community Library, with all expenditures scheduled in FY 2024.<sup>3</sup>
3. OP's proposed operating budget for FY 2021 includes a 23% reduction from FY 2020, which is achieved primarily by cutting back contracting for Design and Neighborhood Planning.<sup>4</sup> OP typically uses these contracting funds to develop Small Area Plans, but the proposed budget has no funds for that activity.
4. The proposed budget "maintains \$100 million in the Housing Production Trust Fund in FY 2020 and FY 2021 to create 1,000 new units of affordable housing and continue investments in affordable housing production and preservation."<sup>5</sup> The Mayor's goal of 1990 affordable housing units in Rock Creek West<sup>6</sup> — which includes our ANC — has not changed.

ANC 3/4G urges the Council to consider these distinct parts of the budget as an integrated whole that can further the District's and the community's objectives. Rather than addressing each budget item through four committee silos, the Council should modify the proposed budget in four ways.

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<sup>2</sup> FY 2021 to FY 2026 Capital Improvements Plan (Capital Plan), Volume 5, page 202, <https://bit.ly/3g5wSni>.

<sup>3</sup> Capital Plan, Volume 5, page 43.

<sup>4</sup> FY 2021 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan, Agency Budget Chapters, Part 1, Volume 2, page B-69, <https://bit.ly/3g5wSni>.

<sup>5</sup> FY 2021 Budget May 18, 2020 Slide Presentation at page 25, available at <https://mayor.dc.gov/page/fy2021-budget-dchope--mayor-bowser's-commitment-give-every-washingtonian-fair-shot>.

<sup>6</sup> Mayor's October 15, 2019 Housing Equity Report, page 5, available at <http://bit.ly/2phiFxW>.

First, the Community Center and the Library should be treated as a single project. The two buildings are on one campus and share a common space between them. They have some similar functions that use similar facilities — e.g., both the Community Center and the Library have public meeting rooms and require parking space for patrons. The buildings currently face each other, and the new design should reflect a single project that maximizes all aspects of the buildings — e.g., design, construction, and timing. If developed separately, construction of one building will inevitably affect what goes on in the other building, and sequential construction will disrupt that small area for three years or more. Coordinating the design and construction of both buildings in one project should create efficiencies and lower overall costs. The Community Center project has barely begun, so little will be lost by combining the projects at this stage. Despite separate “ownership” by DPR and DCPL, it is in the District’s overwhelming interest to consolidate these projects, to merge their budgets, and to develop a showcase for the District.

Second, the capital expenditure for the Library should be moved up from FY 2024 to FY 2023 to accommodate this unified approach so that the consolidated project can proceed on a unified schedule. The Community Center modernization is urgently needed, but the benefits of a coordinated project with the Library justify a delay until 2023. Designing and building this new facility will permit both projects to move forward more expeditiously and efficiently.

Third, neither the Community Center nor the Library should be designed without a Small Area Plan that will guide the future of the Chevy Chase Gateway. The Community

Center/Library complex will provide an anchor for developing mixed use low-density commercial and mixed-use residential in this area. OP’s proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan contemplates just such a planning effort before there is any new development.<sup>7</sup> OP’s substantially reduced budget should not be permitted to preclude the essential neighborhood planning that must precede design and construction of the Community Center and Library. By using its existing staff — augmented by contributions from university graduate programs and the expertise of residents in our community — OP may need as little as \$100,000 in its FY 2021 budget to produce a high-quality Small Area Plan. This small investment can produce abundant dividends.

Finally, the Community Center/Library should be a model for incorporating mixed-use residential that can help to address the District’s acute housing needs. Our Commission’s Comprehensive Plan resolution advocated for “a policy that the District will use its publicly-owned property at the Chevy Chase Public Library for future development of a new library that also includes mixed-income housing, with emphasis on affordable and workforce housing and on housing for public employees (e.g., first

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<sup>7</sup> OP’s proposed Generalized Policy Map (<https://bit.ly/2TvxCZ6>) identifies the Chevy Chase Gateway as part of a Future Planning Analysis Area defined as

areas of large tracks or corridors where future analysis is anticipated to ensure adequate planning for equitable growth. . . . Planning analyses usually include, but are not limited to, Small Area Plans, Development Frameworks, Technical Studies, Retail Strategies, or Design Guidelines. Such analysis should precede any significant zoning change in this area. The planning process should evaluate current infrastructure and utility capacity against the full build out and projected population growth. Planning should focus on issues most relevant to the community that can be effectively addressed through a neighborhood planning process.

responders, librarians, and teachers).” By combining the Community Center and Library projects, the District can maximize its owned property to encourage this housing. To the greatest extent possible, the HPTF should assist non-profit and for-profit affordable housing developers to participate in this project.

This is an opportunity that the Council should not miss. By combining the Community Center and Library modernization into a unified project on a consolidated schedule, by facilitating creation of a Small Area Plan, and by promoting affordable and workforce housing, the Council can kick-start a community-led effort to address the needs of a growing, diverse population while maintaining the vibrant, livable neighborhoods that exemplify our City and provide a visual beacon for the Chevy Chase Gateway as it welcomes visitors into the District.