



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

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By Electronic Delivery

May 24, 2023

Keith Anderson
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 317
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Deputy Mayor Anderson:

On May 8, 2023, ANC 3/4G passed a resolution¹ calling for improved public engagement relating to the Chevy Chase Civic Core. The recommendations in the resolution reflect the ANC's frustration navigating the District's approach to implementing the Mayor's goals of redeveloping the Chevy Chase Community Center/Library site and delivering affordable housing in Rock Creek West.

The Commission has played an integral role in partnering with both the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the Office of Planning (OP). Throughout our partnership, the Commission has encouraged both agencies to recognize the value and need for robust community input at the earliest stages of implementation. In fact, it was our Commission's resolution and testimony in 2020 that sought to initiate the process that ultimately

¹ ANC 3/4G [Resolution](#) on Calling for Improved Public Engagement Concerning the Civic Core Project, May 8, 2022

culminated in the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan (CCSAP)². The Commission remained actively involved in OP’s nearly year-and-a-half long process during which the Commission submitted testimony on numerous budget and oversight issues³ and adopted six resolutions⁴ related to the CCSAP, many of them calling for increased public engagement. The Commission also developed and implemented nine “Information Exchange” sessions⁵ to complement OP’s CCSAP process. The Commission collaborated with community partners, thought leaders, planners, development professionals, and residents to address questions that helped the community better understand complex issues related to the civic core redevelopment process.

In addition to the above-mentioned actions, on January 23, 2023, the ANC adopted a resolution⁶ calling for DMPED to work with the Commission to develop and execute a substantial community engagement process regarding surplus of the civic core site that, “[g]ives residents the opportunity to offer suggestions and site priorities prior to a surplus decision and issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP).” The ANC also called on DMPED to:

“...extend its timeline for the Community Center-Library project and work jointly and closely with the Commission to develop and execute a comprehensive planning process. The process must include a series of public charrettes using Arc/GIS software to provide visual material and factual details residents need in order to usefully participate.”

We are re-emphasizing our numerous calls and our continued belief that reaching the civic core redevelopment goals requires extended engagement to fully identify community redevelopment preferences and additional strategies to navigate complex issues impacting redevelopment as we move forward in reimagining our civic core.

² ANC 3/4G [Resolution](#) Requesting Changes to the Office of Planning’s Proposed Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, February 10, 2020. 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 (ANC 3/4G 2020 Testimony), available [here](#).

³ ANC 3/4G [Testimony](#) Before the Committee of the Whole Performance Oversight Hearing for the Office of Planning, February 24, 2022. ANC 3/4G [Testimony](#) Before the Committee of the Whole on PR 24-789, the “Chevy Chase Small Area Plan Approval Resolution of 2022,” July 5, 2022.

⁴ See resolutions adopted [February 22, 2021](#), [April 12, 2021](#), [April 26, 2021](#), [April 26, 2021](#), [November 8, 2021](#), and [May 9, 2021](#).

⁵ The topics covered in the nine information exchanges and links to all of the videos are available [here](#).

⁶ ANC 3/4G [Resolution](#) on ANC 3/4G Resolution On Proposal to Surplus a Portion of the Community Center-Library Site, January 23, 2023,

The Commission is aware that the District plans to use the “Our RFP” process to inform requests for proposals (RFP); a process that provides residents an opportunity to weigh in on community preferences for the site. The Commission is also aware that DMPED is planning an extensive interview process of community stakeholders who hold divergent views on how the civic core redevelopment should proceed. The Commission applauds DMPED for taking these critical engagement steps. However, beyond that, the Commission is unsure of how DMPED and its contractor will proceed with the Our RFP process. To ensure broad-based engagement and the Commission’s full understanding of DMPED’s next steps, we ask that DMPED:

1. Provide the ANC with a full implementation schedule for the Our RFP process as soon as possible. Specifically, we recommend that DMPED closely coordinate and time its Our RFP community engagement process with the Office of Planning’s draft civic core zoning changes. OP’s final recommendation will certainly impact community feedback.
2. Along with its contractor, work jointly with the ANC to develop the appropriate number and style of community meetings/discussions needed for the Civic Core project. Previous use of the Our RFP process in the District has typically involved an initial community meeting where residents learn about the Our RFP process and engage in small group discussions, a follow-up session to discuss feedback from the initial meeting, and an Online Engagement Forum. Presentations for the initial community meeting’s small group discussions indicate these sessions lasted between 35 - 48 minutes. For example, in the Fletcher Johnson Our RFP small group discussion, the agenda⁷ indicates 20 minutes was allocated to discuss five questions related to “Potential Uses,” 10 minutes to discuss two questions related to “Public Space and Sustainability,” and 5 minutes to discuss one question related to “Cultural Value.” The beauty of the Our RFP process is that it can be specifically tailored to each community’s needs. We believe we are in the best position, as elected officials and members of this community fully engaged in this process for nearly three years, to help guide DMPED in developing meetings and discussions that are meaningful to the community, DMPED, and the ANC. For example, we have previously suggested meetings:
 - Be held at various times to accommodate the schedules of seniors and families;
 - Include walking tours of the site to help participants visualize changes;
 - Be conducted in multiple sessions, if requested by the Commission or community members, so that residents may fully analyze and debate proposals and ideas;
 - Provide residents with timely visual representations of the civic corridor under various scenarios so that residents can see how the community’s built environment might look in the future; and
 - Be flexible to address issues that arise during conversation or develop throughout the process.

⁷ See Fletcher Johnson Public Workshop Presentation, March 5, 2019. <https://dmped.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dmped/publication/attachments/Our%20RFP%20Workshop%20Presentation%20-%20FJ%20%28002%29.pptx%20Fletcher-Johnson%20%282%29%20%28002%29%20%281%29%20%283%29.pptx%20NEW.pdf>

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3. Work with OP to provide illustrative material of what various massing of redeveloped Civic Core under reasonable assumptions would look like. This could include employing OP's ArcGIS tools to show how a redeveloped Civic Core would fit in its immediate upper Connecticut Avenue environment. In the process, it would address fears among some residents that new development would be "like Bethesda."
4. Along with its contractor, work jointly with the ANC and its survey group in developing a broad-based community survey to determine current understanding on the proposed project and what priorities community members have for the Civic Core site, especially the preservation of green space and a potential housing component. For example, when the District announced the RFP for the Crummell School site, community organizers had six weeks to respond and immediately developed a community survey to determine the needs and priorities of residents⁸. Such a survey could easily complement the community meeting design process and reach a broader, more representative base of residents than one or more community meetings could provide.
5. Budget for a community and survey and other materials to be distributed to the community, including mailings to residents and businesses within the CCSAP planning area and ideally all residents in the ANC. Mailings should be sent for each phase of engagement, and posters and yard signs should be used to direct the community to upcoming events and the dedicated web page for more information.

The Commission's call for improved public engagement reflects our belief that the ANC and Chevy Chase residents need to be involved at each stage of the redevelopment process. We believe that such engagement as outlined above, is the most effective way to generate the kind of broad-based support necessary to produce a more positive outcome and offers the best hope for fostering a strong community consensus.

We look forward to continuing this conversation.

Sincerely,



Lisa R. Gore,
Chair, ANC 3/4G

⁸ *Youth lead ivy city civic engagement, call for Crummell Rec Center* (2019) *Street Sense Media*. Available at: <https://streetsensemedia.org/article/youth-lead-ivy-city-civic-engagement-call-for-crummell-rec-center/> (Accessed: 19 May 2023).

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