

To: Commissioners, ANC 3/4G

From: Members, Racial and Social Equity Standing Committee (RASE)

Date: April 27, 2023

Re: 1909 deed restriction that prohibits multi-family housing on the rear 125 feet of the property

Racial and Social Equity Standing Committee (RASE) would like to state its position and grave concern about the 1909 deed barring apartments on the rear 125 feet of the civic core site. Chevy Chase was initially founded as an exclusive neighborhood for well-to-do whites only and it is perceived that this deed restriction, targeted at lower income families, was also intended for Chevy Chase to stay that way. Due to restrictive covenants and other discriminatory practices of the time, non-whites were not allowed to own homes in Chevy Chase. This deed precluding apartments, therefore, fully prevented any possibility for people of color from residing on the site. Just as it is disingenuous to claim that the restriction was not racist in its intent and use in 1909, it is disingenuous to try to resurrect and leverage the deed today.

The predecessor to RASE, the 2020 ANC Task Force on Racism, had many recommendations to the ANC, but also presented a history of exclusionary practices in Chevy Chase, that included measures like these deed restrictions. Among the Task Force on Racism recommendations, the most relevant to the civic core was:

Recommendation 1: The Commission advises the District to build significant dedicated affordable housing and work force housing with a focus on households earning 50% or less of median family income (MFI) above the Chevy Chase Community Center and the Chevy Chase Library.

This recommendation was approved unanimously by the ANC on March 22, 2021.

RASE believes that Chevy Chase has a rare opportunity to become a more inclusive community by incorporating affordable housing units into the civic core site. In order to facilitate achieving that goal, RASE would like for the Commission to take two actions.

1. Join RASE in recognizing that this deed restriction is an unfortunate artifact of our history of exclusion that has no place in the present moment when we as a community aspire to be more inclusive.
2. Explore all options that could remove this restriction to allow affordable housing without limiting building to the front portion of the civic core. We believe that removing the deed restriction would demonstrate the Chevy Chase community's commitment to become more inclusive and remove impediments to creating affordable housing on the civic core site that could provide opportunities for minority homeownership, development participation, and rental opportunities.