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

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ANC 3/4G Resolution on the
Chevy Chase Community Center and Library Survey
December 06, 2023

Summary

This resolution conveys to the Office of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the Office of Planning (OP), results of ANC 3/4G’s survey of residents about the future of the Chevy Chase Community Center and Library site together with the Commission’s intended actions and related requests.

Background & Rationale

ANC Authorities and Responsibilities

By [law](#), “Each Advisory Neighborhood Commission ... may advise the Council of the District of Columbia, the Mayor and each executive agency ... with respect to all proposed matters of District government policy ... which affect that Commission area.” As ANC remits are restricted to their respective jurisdictions, ANCs’ first responsibility is to their residents.

As stipulated by the Office of the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (OANC), “The ANCs’ [main job](#) is to be their neighborhood’s official voice in advising the District government (and Federal agencies) on matters that affect their neighborhoods.”

As clarified by the OANC, in reference to the Commissioner’s Oath, the language “I will exercise my best judgement and will consider each matter before me from the viewpoint of the best interest of the District of Columbia, as a whole” is only a “ceremonial necessity” to seat new Commissioners; “does not convey any authority;” and is “not an actionable document.”

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Therefore, by law and OANC direction, insofar as ANCs do not represent the views of their residents, they effectively deny their residents the voice in local governance they rightly deserve.

DC Government Proposals

DC government proposals regarding the Community Center and Library site are varied. The core components for the purpose of this resolution are as follows:

- The District is proposing to redevelop the site to build new or renovate existing facilities at the site and to incorporate housing, including affordable housing.
- In order to develop affordable housing at the site, by law DC must declare at least a portion of the property no longer needed for public use through a process known as “surplussing.”
- Consistent with and in support of its redevelopment objectives at the site, the District has recommended new zoning to permit structures as tall as 80 feet (whereas current zoning caps building heights at 55 feet).

ANC 3/4G Resolutions and Survey Results

ANC 3/4G has reiterated in a series of resolutions in 2023 the importance of District agencies paying deference to community views and preferences regarding the proposed redevelopment, including the need for a community survey:

- The [first](#), at the January 23 meeting, stated, “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 ... prior to a surplussing decision ...”
- The [second](#), at the May 8 meeting, affirmed “the community and the ANC must be full partners with the District in development of the request for proposal for the Civic Core and in changing the zoning of the upper Connecticut Avenue corridor.”
- The [third](#), at the July 24 meeting, urged District agencies (notably, OP and DMPED) “to receive the ANC’s community survey, due to be completed in the Fall of 2023, before advancing in the zoning process.”

Pursuant to its mission and these resolutions, ANC 3/4G conducted an online community survey from October 13 to November 12, 2023 to ascertain community views on the District’s proposals. Access to the survey was open to all residents. All were notified in writing with hardcopy mailers delivered to home addresses by the US Postal Service and repeated social media and other announcements. Paper copies were available for those unable to manage online access.

A total of 2836 people took the survey, including 2297 in ANC 3/4G, the largest in ANC 3/4G’s history and larger even than DC’s District-wide survey in 2019 in support of the Housing Equity Report. The response rate among ANC adults (18+) was approximately 17%. The completion rate among all respondents was 90%. Both were exceptionally high.

The results show survey respondents are opposed to the District’s redevelopment proposal by 57% to 40% overall and 60% to 37% in the ANC; are opposed to surplussing by 59% to 32% overall and 62% to 29% in the ANC; and are opposed to building heights exceeding 60 feet by 67% overall and 70% in the ANC.

The current survey was far more robust in its questions regarding affordable housing, the results have echoes in the findings of the ANC [2019 “Comp Plan” survey](#), which similarly ranked housing lower in priority relative to other community development preferences and scant support (7-9%) for mixed-use

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neighborhood buildings six stories or higher. The 2019 results are relevant, if ironic, in that the ANC report the survey informed initiated the call for affordable housing in Chevy Chase.

Further Factors and Findings

ANC 3/4G honors all community voices and recognizes both majority and minority resident views expressed through the survey. The Commission seeks whenever possible to reconcile competing views towards yielding outcomes that benefit the community as a whole.

The survey focused on the proposed redevelopment of the Community Center and Library site. It did not solicit residents' views regarding housing generally in Chevy Chase. Anecdotally, the Commission has heard from numerous residents opposed to housing at the site but not opposed to housing elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Ward Three Councilmember Matt Frumin has urged consideration of alternative sites. In a February 9, 2023 letter to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, CM Frumin called for "an affirmative willingness to entertain proposals that incorporate adjacent properties on Connecticut Avenue – Wells Fargo to the north and Safeway to the south." He went on to note, "One concern the community has conveyed repeatedly is whether the Civic Core, on its limited site, can reasonably support important civic uses and sufficient housing, while still retaining the qualities that have made it an important hub of community life."

The Commission believes the survey results create a new context for understanding such community concerns and for considering alternative approaches.

The Commission thus sees an opportunity to explore new options for housing in Chevy Chase that will meet with approval of a majority of ANC 3/4G residents. It believes securing such approval will serve to diminish the divisions and discord in the community occasioned by the proposed redevelopment of the Community Center and Library site. The Commission further believes seeking reconciliation of community views and preferences will aid in mitigating protracted legal challenges that would only exacerbate existing rancor.

Therefore, Be It Resolved:

ANC 3/4G shall convey herewith the results of the ANC Community Center and Library Survey to the Mayor's Office with the endorsement that the results are a credible barometer of current community sentiment – "the neighborhood voice" – and shall refrain from imposing on the community Commission views that would override or negate this voice.

ANC 3/4G requests, in consideration of the survey results, that the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development suspend its preparation of a Request for Proposals to solicit developer bids for redevelopment of the Community Center and Library site.

ANC 3/4G requests, in further consideration of the survey results, that the Office of Planning withdraw its application to the DC Zoning Commission for amendments to current zoning for the upper Connecticut Avenue corridor in Chevy Chase.

ANC 3/4G shall convene a task force of Commissioners and select community members to assess viable options for creating additional housing, including dedicated affordable housing, in Chevy Chase. These options will include, but not be limited to, housing on Connecticut Avenue between Livingston Street and Chevy Chase Circle such as the Wells Fargo and Safeway properties.

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ANC 3/4G shall seek the support and advice of Councilmember Frumin as well as Ward Four Councilmember Janeese Lewis George for the Commission's new efforts to bring about a unified community position on housing in Chevy Chase.

APPROVED at a special public meeting, notice of which was properly given and at which a quorum of four (4) or seven (7) members was present on December 6, 2023 by a vote of .. yes, .. no, .. abstentions.

Lisa R Gore, Chair

James L. Nash, Secretary
