



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

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**Minority Report of James Nash**  
**Commissioner for ANC 3/4G SMD 03**  
**Re: ANC 3/4G Resolution on**  
**Proposed Rezoning of**  
**Upper Connecticut Avenue NW Commercial Core**  
**April 25, 2024**

The majority resolution asks the Zoning Commission to alter its proposed rezoning of the NMU-4/CC2 zone to a maximum allowable height of 60 feet. This zone encompasses the Chevy Chase civic core where the Chevy Chase Library and Community Center are situated.

This maximum allowable height is too low, representing a mere five-foot increase over the existing height limit. It would excessively limit the number of affordable housing units which can be constructed on the civic core site. In addition, the majority resolution fails to support sufficiently the preservation of all existing green space on the civic core site. Finally, the majority report fails to represent the views of the many

residents of ANC 3/4G who support more affordable housing in our community while preserving all existing green space on the civic core.

Therefore, I urge the Zoning Commission to disregard the majority's resolution and to proceed with the Zoning Commission proposal for the maximum allowable height in NMU-4/CC2 zone, while preserving existing green space on the site, for the following reasons:

- 1) Of the ten DC Planning Areas, Rock Creek West is farthest from meeting DMPED's 2025 new affordable housing goals. (See <https://open.dc.gov/36000by2025/>) Only 200 such units have been produced since 2019, amounting to just 10 percent of the target. A maximum building height of 60 feet would result in the construction of fewer affordable housing units on the Chevy Chase civic core. The consequence is that Rock Creek West will continue to be by far the worst performing Planning Area in the city with respect to the construction of new affordable housing units. Given the critical shortage of affordable housing in the District of Columbia, this is an unacceptable outcome. Moreover, this Planning Area is the wealthiest in the city, and further restricting new affordable units compounds DC's existing housing inequity.
- 2) As Commissioner Ferguson's minority report indicated, homelessness is now rising in the District of Columbia for the first time in three years: an 11 percent increase in 2023 from 2022. A rise of five feet in building height does not meet the moral challenge posed by this rise in homelessness. <https://dcist.com/story/23/05/05/dc-homelessness-increase-2023-pit-count/>
- 3) The sixty-inch height increase of the majority position is inconsistent with the Small Area Plan (SAP) and the Comprehensive Plan. In a table entitled "Reimagined Civic Core Recommendations, on page 31 of the SAP, recommendation 3.4 directed to OP and DMPED states: "Submit proposal to 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.”

[https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/page\\_content/attachments/2022.07.12\\_Final%20Chevy%20Chase%20SAP\\_web.pdf](https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/page_content/attachments/2022.07.12_Final%20Chevy%20Chase%20SAP_web.pdf)

- 4) The majority position is inconsistent with many previous ANC 3/4G resolutions which promoted an expansion of affordable housing in Chevy Chase. For example, “ANC 3/4G Resolution Requesting Changes to the Office of Planning’s Proposed Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (approved Feb. 20, 2020) states in paragraph 4: “Our community needs more affordable housing that will promote income diversity and enrich our civic life.” <https://anc3g.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Comp-Plan-Res-Final.pdf>
- 5) More affordable housing will not only enrich civic life and increase the diversity of this largely Caucasian neighborhood, the addition of new residents will also help many of the small local businesses. Housing prices in Chevy Chase have risen to levels that are unaffordable for the vast majority of people. I have spoken with constituents in my district who support affordable housing because they themselves could no longer afford to purchase a house in this neighborhood. Others lament their children could no longer afford to live here.
- 6) The majority position relies excessively on the amateurish ANC “do it yourself” survey conducted in the summer of 2023. I served on the survey committee along with several other commissioners. The survey was unscientific, viz. it made no effort to correct for sampling errors, to ensure that those surveyed were representative of the entire community. **The vast majority of Chevy Chase residents did not take the unscientific ANC survey.** Only 2297 survey respondents self-identified as living in the ANC. This means that roughly seven out of eight ANC residents did not take the survey. Minorities, apartment dwellers and younger people were underrepresented in this survey (85 percent of survey takers were White; fewer than five percent African American). Moreover, although some survey professionals were consulted, the survey

questions were written by non-professionals, resulting in some questions that were biased against housing.

- 7) Housing opponents also misinterpreted the survey results. Nearly 40 percent of survey respondents supported redevelopment of the civic core with affordable housing. While a plurality (47 percent) of survey takers opposed housing in the redevelopment of the civic core, housing opponents incorrectly added their numbers to those who opposed all redevelopment on the civic core (9 percent) in order to assert that a majority of survey takers oppose housing. However, it is possible some who might oppose the loss of the library and community center for the years required for redevelopment, would favor housing once told that redevelopment is going to happen. All we know for certain of the nine percent opposed to redevelopment is they oppose redevelopment: we cannot conclude anything about housing from these respondents.
- 8) Scientific surveys come with a margin of error, generally around three percent. The ANC survey has no stated margin of error, as it is not a scientific survey. But the fact that no margin of error is given does not mean no margin of error exists. Because the survey makes no allowance for sampling errors nor for biased questions, a conservative estimate of its margin of error would be no less than twice that of scientific surveys. Assuming this estimated margin of error the difference between opponents and supporters of housing is essentially eliminated. Given the unknown margin of error for this unscientific survey, I believe the safest conclusion to be drawn from it is that the neighborhood is divided on the question of housing on the civic core site.
- 9) The fact that the *quantitative* results of the survey must be handled with caution does not mean the survey results are without value. As stated above, it is safe to conclude from it the neighborhood is divided about housing on the civic core. Another conclusion this Commissioner reached emerges from reading all of the narrative responses to survey question 24. The overwhelming majority of responses to this question from my district stated support for housing *provided there was no loss of "green space" on the civic*

*core site*. “Green space” is defined here as the space on the site not currently occupied by buildings and it also excludes the paved parking lot.

- 10) The majority resolution does not adequately protect existing green space on the civic core site. The Zoning Commission proposal should not allow new buildings on the civic core to occupy more land than the existing library, community center and the paved parking lot. Placing parking underground could allow for an expansion of green space with no loss of space for buildings on the site.
- 11) The majority resolution fails to appreciate that there is a trade-off among the following three resources: building height, open green space and housing. By excessively prioritizing a low building height, the majority sacrifices green space and housing. My reading of the survey results contradicts prioritizing building height over housing and green space. Preserving, and if possible, expanding green space will more effectively protect new development from being incompatible with the existing built environment of upper Connecticut. Preserving the existing “neighborhood feel,” was a theme often repeated in survey question 24. Green space will also be an important resource to connect those who now live in Chevy Chase with the families, children and senior citizens who we hope will soon come to live on the site.