



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

MATTHEW FRUMIN
Councilmember, Ward 3

COMMITTEE MEMBER
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February 9, 2023

Deputy Mayor John Falcicchio
The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 317
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Deputy Mayor Falcicchio,

Thank you for hosting the Public Surplus Hearing regarding the Chevy Chase Civic Site (“Civic Core”) on January 12, 2023, as part of the process for determining whether a portion of the real property is no longer required for public purposes.

The site is at the heart of Chevy Chase’s community identity and interaction. Its redevelopment could represent an exciting opportunity to secure a state-of-the-art library and recreation center with ample outdoor green and play space and expand access to affordable housing. The project has the potential to strengthen the fabric of the neighborhood and make it more accessible to new residents of varying backgrounds, incomes, and households.

However, as expressed by the dozens of residents who spoke during the hearing and with whom I’ve met outside this process, there are very real and important concerns. There is a compelling need for the community to play an important role in shaping the eventual project which, by definition, will be its “Civic Core.” There is deep apprehension about the idea of declaring any part of the site, whether land or air rights, no longer required for public purpose until there is more clarity on the future use of that “surplus” portion and the “direct public benefit(s)” it will provide, consistent with DC Code § 10–801(a-2). Neighbors worry that the process will move precipitously and the city will enter into an agreement with a private developer before they have an opportunity to have meaningful input. I share these concerns.

To respond to these concerns, as your office proceeds with planning for the Civic Core, I urge that it:

- 1) Commit to an inclusive process to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) that provides avenues for meaningful community input, as well as maximum transparency and public education about the surplus and disposition processes;

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- 2) Refrain from submitting a surplus resolution to the Council at least until there has been meaningful input into and issuance of the RFP; and
- 3) Create a formal structure for regular meetings between representatives of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G, Ward 3 and Ward 4 Council offices, the Department of Recreation, the DC Public Libraries, and DMPED to track and contribute to the planning for the Civic Core. My office would be happy to host such meetings.

Issuance of an RFP will likely be the next critical step in the DMPED process. It is essential that all stakeholders have meaningful input into the RFP that is issued. In my view, at a minimum, the RFP should include the following evaluation criteria:

- The quality of the exterior design and degree to which that design incorporates appropriate transitions to the residential neighborhood to the east and commercial district to the west;
- The amount of green, play, and public gathering space provided to ensure that the site will continue to deliver on the important functions it serves today;
- The quality of the interior design of the library and recreation center;
- The degree to which the design of public spaces facilitates and accommodates excellent programming for seniors and families;
- The total number and percentage of affordable units, as well as the mix of levels of affordability and unit size; and
- The amount of underground parking and bike storage to support the public and residential uses of the site, as well as parking that can be made available to serve the commercial district.

Additionally, I will look for the RFP to include an affirmative willingness to entertain proposals that incorporate adjacent properties on Connecticut Avenue – Wells Fargo to the north and Safeway to the south. 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. Engaging adjacent commercial properties could meaningfully contribute toward realizing a project that provides significant affordable housing where none has existed before, modernizes key civic institutions, and does so in a scale and design that enhances the commercial corridor.

This will be a complex process requiring teams with expertise in residential as well as library and recreation center design. We should not rush the process but rather give teams ample time to put forward their most creative and considered proposals. Often RFPs allow for 60 or 90 days to respond. In this instance, teams should be given more time and should be encouraged to solicit input from the community as they formulate their proposals.

It is my intention for this project to succeed and for Chevy Chase to have a new library, recreation center, and affordable housing. Getting there is not a foregone conclusion. To do so, it will be imperative that we work together and with the community to ensure we get to a project that all can be proud of and that



can win broad public support. I believe we can only achieve that goal through a public, transparent development process that maximizes community input. I look forward to working together with you and the community to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Frumin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "F".

Matthew Frumin
Ward 3 Councilmember

