

**Chevy Chase DC rezoning proposal supports
a more inclusive and vibrant community
Groups say the status quo of exclusion is no longer acceptable**

A statement by
Ward3Vision, WIN Ward 3 Congregations Affordable Housing Work Group, and
Coalition for Smarter Growth
on the proposed Chevy Chase DC rezoning
Zoning Case No. 23-25
May 15, 2024

Ward3Vision, WIN Ward 3 Congregations Affordable Housing Work Group, and Coalition for Smarter Growth urge adoption of the proposed zoning changes to Chevy Chase's main street as the critical next step toward achieving a more inclusive and vibrant community.

In October 2022, our three organizations co-signed a statement of goals entitled [Making the Most of the Chevy Chase DC Civic Core](#). After review of the Comprehensive Plan, the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan, the Mayor's Roadmap for Rock Creek West, and our own analysis, we proposed four main goals for the Chevy Chase DC Civic Core, the site of the library and community center:

1. **Create at least 100 new homes at the Civic Core site**, in addition to rebuilding a new library and community center facilities.
2. **Build mixed income housing that ranges between 30% median family income (MFI) and 80% MFI.**
3. **The library and community center space program, planning and construction budgets must be developed and finalized expeditiously.**
4. **The RFP for the Civic Core site should be informed by and contribute to the Office of Planning's [Small Area Plan](#)** and related efforts to create zoning elements to guide the building forms and public spaces for the Connecticut Avenue corridor.

The Office of Planning's proposed zoning changes to Chevy Chase's main street are a critical next step toward achieving these goals, and to building a more inclusive and vibrant community.

Ward3Vision, WIN Ward 3 Congregations Affordable Housing Work Group, and Coalition for Smarter Growth support the proposed zoning changes as necessary to living up to the aspirations of the Chevy Chase DC community not only for affordable housing, but also to accomplish the District-wide goals to create new affordable housing opportunities in Ward 3 where they are remarkably rare. To scale back these proposals for any reason at this late date would reduce opportunities for affordable housing and maintain the status quo of exclusion. This would be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan, the Housing Equity Report, many ANC 3/4G resolutions, and the ANC 3/4G racial and social equity committee (RASE) recommendations.

We hear some of our neighbors say that they support affordable housing too -- but not here, or not this height, or not this way. Several years of debate, planning, and community engagement have brought us to this moment. Many compromises later, we have a nuanced and innovative rezoning proposal that will enable more than 100 affordable homes, along with a new library, community center, and improved outdoor public space at the Civic Core site. The proposed zoning would also enhance the vitality of the upper Connecticut Avenue corridor; it not only provides for the possibility of getting residences above the ground floor retail, where there are currently *no* residents in the five block stretch covered by the zoning, but it also promotes a more attractive and vibrant pedestrian experience, regulating how a building connects with the public spaces of the sidewalk and Connecticut Avenue. At the same time, the zoning also guides how new mixed-use buildings would respectfully relate to existing adjacent residential neighbors. The Office of Planning rezoning proposals are a carefully crafted response to community input, insightful design ideas, and racial and social equity goals.

Consultation with the public has been extensive and broad, but some have not been satisfied with the results. The effectiveness of the public engagement process is illustrated in the changes that the Office of Planning made, for example, in how the open space requirements on the Civic Core site were determined. While typical mixed-use zones allow ground floors to cover the entire lot, the Office of Planning recognized the importance of open space to the community and proposed rules that would leave 20% of the site open. Community input reiterated the importance of the open space, noting that the existing usable open space equals closer to 40% of the lot. So, the Office of Planning increased the requirement to 40% of the site. Similar compromises were made on building height. We believe any further compromise would seriously reduce opportunities for affordable housing.

The good news is that multiple teams – both experienced non-profit affordable housing providers and market-rate developers working with skilled and innovative architects – are preparing responses to the recent Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Civic Core that are likely to meet or exceed everyone’s goals for the site. The range in creativity of responses is made possible by the flexibility and design guidance provided by the proposed zoning.

The rezoning proposal balances community and Districtwide goals and offers a vision of an enriched and walkable Chevy Chase main street -- one that is both better for existing residents and local businesses, while also opening the possibility for new residents who otherwise would not have the opportunity to live here. **We urge the Zoning Commission to not miss this opportunity to do its part to make Chevy Chase DC a more inclusive and vibrant community. In an era seeking inclusion, the status quo of exclusion is no longer acceptable.**



Illustration of Connecticut Ave. from DC Office of Planning [Chevy Chase Small Area Plan](#).