

CHEVY CHASE FORWARD

Building Community and Bridging Divides

Fact vs. Fiction: Community Engagement at the Civic Core Site

From the 2019 Comprehensive Plan to current zoning, extensive public input has guided every step of the Civic Core redevelopment. Let's look at the facts.

The central myth regarding the Civic Core redevelopment is the claim that "there has not been enough public participation". The facts show that the project has been guided by almost ten years of intense, active community dialogue. At every major milestone of the process—including the 2019 Comprehensive Plan, the Small Area Plan (SAP), and the final neighborhood-tailored zoning—the District has directly responded to and incorporated resident input.

From Planning to Action: A Summary of How Ten Years of Community Voices Shaped the Chevy Chase Civic Core

- **Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 3/4G:** The ANC initiated the engagement process in 2016 through extensive data gathering, special meetings, and surveys. They subsequently created a Comprehensive Plan Task Force in 2019 that hosted multiple public meetings and an online survey resulting in 682 responses. The ANC also held numerous "information exchanges" and web forums to keep residents informed throughout the Small Area Plan process.
- **The Office of Planning (OP):** During the development of the Small Area Plan (2021–2022), OP led massive community outreach by holding or attending over 45 community events, including workshops, community walks, and an open house. Through these efforts, OP collected more than 4,000 written comments and received hundreds of survey responses from residents.
- **The Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED):** DMPED drove public participation during the Request for Proposals (RFP) phase from 2023 to 2026. They held a public surplus hearing, collected 1,692 responses in a community survey assessing facility needs, and hosted multiple public workshops to review developer proposals and share visions for the site.
- **Community Advocacy Groups:** Organizations partnered to sponsor highly publicized webinars and forums. These events provided residents with expert perspectives on essential topics like exclusionary zoning, affordable housing tools, and community land trusts.

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Here is a detailed look at how that multi-year process unfolded.

Initial Community Discussions of Civic Site Development (2016-2018)

The ANC first raised the need for a significant upgrade of the Civic Site in a meeting with Mayor Bowser on April 25, 2016, and several ANC 3/4G

Commissioners and representatives from the Chevy Chase Community Association (CCCA) met with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) about its plans for the Community Center. The ANC sought to develop a process that would ensure that decisions would be made based on the best information available and that they would reflect a full and complete vetting with the affected community¹.

The ANC **unanimously adopted a resolution** on September 12, 2016, that began a lengthy data-gathering and analysis process with a series of special meetings, all of which were widely publicized and open to everyone. **The first meeting on November 9, 2016, included presentations by representatives from the DPR, the DC Public Library (DCPL), and the Office on Aging each made presentations on about their current efforts to assess the community's needs, whether the existing facilities met those needs, and whether there are any current plans for improvements to the facilities.** DCPL said it had looked at options — including a possible public/private partnership — for the Community Center and the Library as part of a larger community campus, but at that time, there was no funding for this effort. Everyone agreed on the need for better information about what the community needs and wants from the Community Center/Library/playground complex.²

A second special meeting on December 13, 2016, reviewed a proposed survey plan focusing on the information that the ANC needs to formulate a proposal for the Community Center's future. The ANC arranged with DPR for visits by commissioners and residents to three other community/recreation centers in the District, and in the fall of 2017, the ANC conducted a survey with almost 1000 respondents. The ANC held a special meeting on November 28, 2017, to report preliminary survey results and to discuss DPR's plans and possible replacement of the existing building with an entirely new building. The ANC led another special community meeting on December

¹ [ANC 3/4G's Report & Recommendations for the Future of the Chevy Chase Community Center](#), January 22, 2018, page 9.

² [ANC 3/4G's Report & Recommendations for the Future of the Chevy Chase Community Center](#), January 22, 2018, page 9.



14, 2017, and continued the discussion at its regular meeting on January 8, 2018, where it considered further community input. On January 15, 2018, the ANC posted its draft resolution, along with its proposed report on and recommendations for the Community Center, on the Chevy Chase Community listserv, NextDoor, and on ANC 3/4G's website. The Commission invited questions and comments from the community. On January 22, 2018, the ANC discussed the final report and modifications based on issues raised by Commissioners and residents. The Commission unanimously adopted the report and its recommendations.³

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force (2019-2020)

On October 15, 2019, the Office of Planning (OP) released its proposed amendments to the District's Comprehensive Plan. It set a deadline for individual comments by January 10, 2020, and for ANC resolutions by February 14, 2020. ***To prepare its resolution, ANC 3/4G created a Comprehensive Plan Task Force on October 28, 2019, that it charged to gather information from the community and to make recommendations to the Commission.***⁴

The 12-person Task Force consisted of commissioners, residents, and business owners⁵, but all interested parties were invited to participate in the process. The Task Force developed and conducted a survey to solicit input from the broader community and held five public meetings so that it could provide a report with recommendations to the full Commission. The Commission then considered resolution proposals at its January 27, 2020 meeting for final adoption at its February 10, 2020 meeting.

The ANC and the Task Force conducted a robust public engagement with residents. Seventy-five people attended the ANC's initial October 28, 2019 meeting discussing the Comprehensive Plan amendments; another 94 viewed all or part of that meeting on the ANC's YouTube channel. The ANC also invited OP Director Trueblood to its December 9, 2019 regular meeting⁶, where he provided additional information

³ ["ANC 3/4G Resolution Regarding Capital Budget to Modernize Chevy Chase Community Center,"](#) April 9, 2018.

⁴ See the ["Comprehensive Plan Task Force Report and Recommendations,"](#) January 23, 2020.

⁵ The members of the Task Force were: (1) Commissioners Randy Speck (chair of the Task Force), Dan Bradfield, Jerry Malitz, and Chris Fromboluti; (2) residents Jonathan Guy, Linda Komes, Ron Eichner, Andrea Rosen, and Allen Seeber; (3) business representatives David Kim (Circle Wine & Spirits) and Tim Walsh (Capital Crab & Seafood and The Avenue). Marelise Voss also contributed to the report.

⁶ In addition, Task Force members took advantage of other opportunities to engage with OP at its community meetings for Ward 4 on November 21, 2019, and for Ward 3 on December 7, 2019.



about the Comprehensive Plan and answered questions from commissioners and residents. Thirty-five people attended that meeting, and 85 viewed it on YouTube. The Task Force held public meetings on November 12, November 21, December 2, December 16, 2019, and January 23, 2020.

Multiple notices for each meeting were posted on the ANC's website, on all neighborhood listservs, and in Facebook groups. In addition to Task Force members, between 25 and 70 residents attended each of these meetings. OP staff attended the November 12, 2019 Task Force meeting as well and subsequently were available to answer questions by email. The December 16, 2019 (61 YouTube views) and January 23, 2020 meetings were recorded and posted on the ANC's YouTube channel. In order to give the community an opportunity to comment on its analysis and conclusions, the Task Force posted its draft report on the ANC 3/4G website and posted links on neighborhood listservs and in Facebook groups prior to the ANC's January 23, 2020 meeting. Finally, the Task Force monitored numerous posts on listservs and in Facebook groups expressing views about the Comprehensive Plan. These varied venues gave ANC 3/4G residents multiple opportunities to give the Task Force their views. The ANC also contacted and met with other Ward 3 and Ward 4 ANCs to share information and approaches.

On December 2, 2019, the Task Force initiated a short online survey to solicit the community's views on various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. The survey was developed by the Task Force and included both demographic and substantive questions. The survey closed on December 20, 2019, with ***682 complete responses.***

Based on this community engagement, the Task Force Report recommended that the ANC's Comprehensive Plan comments urge creation of a Small Area Plan for upper Connecticut Avenue as part of the Comprehensive Plan, including the following "essential characteristics":

- ***Enhancement of the Chevy Chase Library and the Community Center campus to create an active public space with such features as a community garden, mini-urban farm, rain gardens, community compost drop-off point, docking stations for scooters and rental bikes, etc.; [and]***
- ***Modernization of the Chevy Chase Library to include mixed-use/co-location with affordable housing development.***⁷

⁷ [Comprehensive Plan Task Force Report and Recommendations](#), page 8, Figure 1.



The unanimous ANC resolution approved the key elements of the Task Force Report, including the recommendation for a Small Area Plan with the same essential characteristics.⁸

Housing Work Group of the ANC 3/4G Task Force on Racism (2020)

On June 8, 2020, ANC 3/4G adopted a Statement on Racism and created a Task Force to identify equity and justice issues within our community and to propose concrete solutions.⁹ On July 13, 2020, the Commission discussed a framework for the Task Force to guide its work, including its mission, organization, and timetable. The Task Force held an organizational meeting on July 15, 2020. The Commission invited any interested residents to participate in this virtual meeting, and 27 people from the community attended. The Task Force was divided into three working groups, including one on housing.

The Housing Work Group met for at least an hour and a half each week from August 4, 2020, through October 30, 2020.¹⁰ The Group kept notes of meetings (available on the ANC's [website](#)) or recorded them. The Group presented its draft report and recommendations on October 26, 2020, and subsequently revised its draft. The Commission held a "town hall" meeting on November 16, 2020, to get community comments and questions attended by about 40 residents.

On December 14, 2020, the Commission passed a resolution commending the Task Force working groups but noting the need for additional community engagement. Noting that the new Commission must assume responsibility for helping to implement any final approved reports and recommendations, the Commission asked the Task Force to continue its work assisting the Commission, at the Commission's direction, in its ongoing community engagement and development of implementation strategies. Any additional action on the working group reports for consideration should be deferred to 2021. The Task Force was asked to develop realistic steps that the

⁸ [ANC 3/4G Resolution Requesting Changes to the Office of Planning's Proposed Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan](#), February 10, 2020, page 5.

⁹ [ANC 3/4G Statement on Racism](#), June 8, 2020.

¹⁰ Members included the following active members: Connie Chang, Ron Eichner, Libby Martin, Judy Mays, Sarah Remes, Cal Simone, and Randy Speck.



Commission could take and prepare a comprehensive report with its findings and recommendations for the Commission’s consideration.¹¹

The Commission adopted the Housing Work Group recommendations at the properly noticed public meeting on December 12, 2022, including the recommendation that **“the Commission advise 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.”**

Small Area Plan (2021 - 2022)

The Office of Planning was primarily responsible for community engagement during the extended Small Area Planning process, but ANC 3/4G took an active role in communicating with the community throughout. OP held both virtual and in-person meetings throughout the year-long development period. It conducted workshops and surveys, developed draft visions and goals, held a series of community walks, and hosted an in-person community open house to discuss concepts.

OP received more than 4000 written comments and held or attended more than 45 community events, including 12 in-person, despite the Covid-19 pandemic. In total, there were more than 200 participants in the virtual kick-off, more than 150 community members engaged at various neighborhood events, 568 respondents to OP’s survey, more than 100 participants in three community walks, more than 200 participants in workshops, 25 businesses engaged in walks with Chevy Chase Main Street, 215 respondents to an online urban design survey, and more than 90 participants in the community open house.¹²

ANC 3/4G was actively involved in OP’s year-and-a-half long development of the Small Area Plan, including discussing it at almost every Commission meeting in 2021 and 2022,¹³ adopting six SAP-related resolutions,¹⁴ and conducting nine “information exchanges” on various topics related to the Plan.¹⁵

¹¹ [ANC 3/4G Resolution Regarding the Task Force on Racism](#), December 14, 2020.

¹² [Chevy Chase Small Area Plan](#), June 12, 2022, page 11.

¹³ In addition to discussions at regularly scheduled meetings, the Commission held a special meeting on [April 21, 2021](#), to hear from OP’s director and to permit the community to ask questions.

¹⁴ See resolutions adopted [February 22, 2021](#), [April 12, 2021](#), [April 26, 2021](#), [April 26, 2021](#), [November 8, 2021](#), and [May 9, 2021](#).

¹⁵ The topics covered in the nine information exchanges and links to all of the videos are available [here](#).



ANC 3/4G supported the Small Area Plan with a unanimous vote,¹⁶ and the Council approved it unanimously on June 12, 2022.¹⁷ With respect to the “reimagined” Civic Core, the Small Area Plan anticipated a request for proposals to include a “full-service library and community center with a housing component on the site.”¹⁸

DMPED's Request for Proposal Process (2023 - 2026)

Based on the framework created by the Comprehensive Plan and the Small Area Plan, the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) notified ANC 3/4G and the community on December 9, 2022, that it would hold a public surplus hearing **“to obtain community input on the potential public uses of the [Civic Core] Property to inform the Mayor’s determination whether a portion of the real property is no longer required for public purposes.¹⁹ Future redevelopment proposals for the Property must incorporate a new Chevy Chase Neighborhood Library and a new Chevy Chase Community Center.”** Any community member could testify at the January 12, 2023 hearing, and the hearing video has been viewed 235 times.²⁰

In the spring of 2023, DMPED had **1692 responses to its community survey** to assess how the Civic Site was used and what new facilities were needed.²¹ DMPED held two well-attended community meetings in October 2023, to review the Request for Proposals process that would be followed and to answer residents’ questions,²² and videos and transcripts of those meetings were publicly available. DMPED employed its “OurRFP” public engagement process and held two public workshops in October 2024, and an all-day Disposition Hearing on March 29, 2025 where it encouraged community members “to attend [or participate virtually] to meet the teams that responded to DMPED’s Request for Proposals for the property and to learn about different visions for the property.”²³ Finally, on February 28, 2026, DMPED held a well-attended public meeting to “learn about the vision of the future of the Chevy Chase Civic Site” and to review DMPED’s selection of the redevelopment team.²⁴

¹⁶ [ANC 3/4G Testimony before the Committee of the Whole on PR 24-0789, the “Chevy Chase Small Area Plan Approval Resolution of 2022,”](#) July 5, 2022.

¹⁷ [Chevy Chase Small Area Plan Approval Resolution of 2022](#), PR 24-0789.

¹⁸ [Chevy Chase Small Area Plan](#), page 30.

¹⁹ [Memorandum from DMPED to ANC 3/4G Commissioners re Chevy Chase Civic Site — Public Surplus Hearing](#), December 9, 2022.

²⁰ [Chevy Chase Civic Site — Public Surplus Hearing video](#), January 12, 2023.

²¹ [Chevy Chase Civic Site Survey](#), March 15, 2023.

²² [Chevy Chase Civic Site Our RFP Community Meeting](#), October 14, 2023.

²³ [Flyer for Public Hearing, Chevy Chase Civic Site](#).

²⁴ [Flyer for Community Meeting, Chevy Chase Civic Site](#).



Council Hearings on Surplus and Disposition (2026)

The community will have a further opportunity to comment on the redevelopment of the Civic Site before the District Council. By statute, the Mayor must submit resolutions to the Council declaring a portion of the Civic Site property unnecessary for public use and detail its disposition ([D.C. Code § 10-801](#)). The Council must hold a public hearing with at least 30 days' notice, within a 90-day review period for disposal ([D.C. Code § 6-1005](#)). The proposed resolution from the Mayor requires an economic analysis, including methods to maximize competition, public use impacts, and community feedback. Residents can testify at Council hearings in person, via Zoom, or they may submit written testimony for up to two weeks following the hearing.

In addition to the formal reviews and resolutions, the ANC and other groups sponsored multiple public and highly publicized forums and webinars with professionals, experts, and impacted residents to discuss the ongoing planning efforts and related topics. For example:

- **September 29, 2020 webinar sponsored by Coalition for Smarter Growth and Ward3Vision:** “Help Take Down the Invisible Walls – Exclusionary Zoning in Ward3”
- **April 29, 2021 CSG and W3V webinar:** “Building Inclusivity in Ward 3 – What’s in the Affordable Housing Toolbox”
- **May 19, 2021 webinar:** “Segregation Yesterday and Today, It Doesn’t Happen By Itself”
- **June 9, 2021 webinar:** “Affordable Housing in Chevy Chase DC and Ward 3”
- **June 24, 2021 CSG and W3V webinar:** “Placemaking on Ward 3 Avenues – What’s in the Placemaking Toolbox”
- **September 22., 2021 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “Small Area Plans: An Outside Expert Talks About What to Look for, Ask about, and What to Avoid”
- **September 30, 2021 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “Perspectives of High-Rise Residents in Chevy Chase DC”
- **October 7, 2021 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “Creative Use of Space in Ch Ch DC: Leveraging Underutilized Space, Supporting Creatives and ensuring Economic Vitality”

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- **October 14, 2021 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “Community Land Trusts: How Can They Bring Affordability to a Neighborhood like Ch Ch DC”
- **October 21, 2021 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “Non-Profit Developers & Architects: How Do They Finance and Build Affordable Housing in the District? What Will It Take to Bring Significant Affordable Housing to Ch Ch DC?”
- **October 28, 2021 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “Vibrant Public Spaces: How Can We Create a Great Central Meeting Spot in Ch Ch DC? Can the Redevelopment of the Civic Core into a Campus with Affordable Housing Provide Such an Opportunity?”
- **November 17, 2021 CSG and W3V webinar:** “Presenting Ward3Vision’s 30 Year Vision for Ch Ch DC”
- **January 20, 2022 ANC Information Exchange web forum:** “So You Have a Small Area Plan – Now What? Putting Small Area Plans into Action”
- **March 2, 2022 webinar:** “Small Area Plans and Historic Districts: are They Compatible or at Cross Purposes in Service of Neighborhood Goals? How So? Are There Other Tools Available?”

The Bottom Line: It Is Time to Move Forward

While the extensive timeline above covers years of extensive public engagement, it doesn't capture the countless zoning hearings, public comment periods, and localized ANC surveys. The reality is the conversation has been had: every perspective—whether in support or opposition—has been thoroughly voiced, debated, and documented across multiple venues for nearly a decade. **It is time to move to implementation.**

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