



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

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE

Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair of the Committee on
Facilities and Family Services

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Committee on Public Works and Operations

February 9, 2023

Deputy Mayor John Falcicchio
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
The John A. Wilson Building
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Deputy Mayor Falcicchio,

Thank you for hosting a Public Surplus Hearing regarding the Chevy Chase Civic Site (“Civic Core”) on January 12 to solicit feedback on potential public uses for a redeveloped site and determine if “a portion of the real property is no longer required for public purposes.” ANC 3/4G and the Chevy Chase Citizens Association also hosted an educational forum on this issue earlier that week. My team listened intently to both meetings and I continue to receive messages daily regarding potential surplus action. Based on the community feedback I have received I am pleased to submit comments regarding the use and future prospects of the Civic Core.

It is clear Ward 4 constituents living in eastern Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, and Hawthorne have a strong connection to this site’s facilities, as well as serious concerns about the Civic Core redevelopment process. They similarly have high hopes for the site to become an innovative model of a mixed-use site that still provides for multiple direct public benefits, of which affordable housing is one. Procedurally and conceptually, neighbors are wary of declaring the site “no longer required for public purposes” when it is in fact currently occupied by the community center, library, and playground, all of which are regularly used. Neighbors also fear the city is pursuing private-sector development plans behind closed doors and without true community partnership. I share these concerns while supporting the basic proposal to create affordable housing when the library and community center are redeveloped. I offer the following recommendations to remedy these concerns:

- 1) **Continue to engage and inform the larger Chevy Chase community on the mechanics of the surplus and disposition processes.** This includes intentional outreach to Ward 4 residents west of the park especially during any forthcoming community survey processes, hosting information sessions and creating resources on important development topics like air rights and ground leases, clarifying the intended role of private sector development for public facilities, and providing additional explanation of how DMPED interprets disposing of land *for* “a direct public benefit” pursuant to D.C. Official Code§ 10-801(a-2). As the new chair of the Facilities and Family

Services Committee, I look forward to partnering with you to demystify and improve the surplus and disposition processes.

- 2) **Commit to publishing a community-input-driven Request for Proposal (RFP) prior to filing a surplus resolution with the Council.** The community needs a more concrete understanding of the public benefits that could come from surplus portions of the Civic Core. The community must also be at the table in developing the parameters of the RFP. This means creating meaningful opportunities for the community to offer input (e.g. RFP public comment process, community surveys, in-person and virtual forums). **Representatives of ANC 3/4G and the Wards 3 and 4 Council offices must also play a formal role in providing input to DMPED on an RFP;** as elected community leaders we request monthly briefings, at a minimum, on the Civic Core.

I also agree with neighbors who assert it is time to reimagine how public space is *retained* in service of our city's affordable housing goals. My Green New Deal for Housing legislation ([B24-802](#), which I intend to re-introduce early this spring) would create a vehicle for the city to develop housing on public land, or require the city to demonstrate how a private development model would yield more than 2/3 of housing units as affordable. Though the timeline for passing my social housing bill will not line up with Civic Core redevelopment, the principles of the legislation must still be achieved – or surpassed.

I am grateful that I have heard overwhelming support throughout the community for the Chevy Chase Civic Site to maximize the creation of affordable housing while improving upon ground-floor community-oriented spaces. My preference would be for this site to feature 100% affordable housing (workforce and deeply affordable) with units for extremely low-income families as the project's top priority. And at a minimum, at least 66% of the units must be affordable regardless of whether housing is developed by the city, a private for- or non-profit developer, or a land trust. A bold commitment to affordable housing from DMPED sets the tone for future Connecticut Avenue development and ensures Chevy Chase charts a course toward a more economically and racially inclusive future.

I also want to echo the support I have heard from neighbors for any housing at the Civic Core to feature ample green space that is accessible to the public, bike storage, underground parking, appropriate design aesthetics to match the community's character, and, again, to prioritize family-sized 2- and 3-bedroom units as well as senior residences. Finally, the District must remain committed to swift modernization of the library, community center, and recreational facilities, including new outdoor courts, a ballet-friendly dance studio, and a playground.

In the spirit of setting clear expectations for community involvement in this project as it moves forward, I am considering introducing legislation that may address the process and the project parameters. I welcome your thoughts on promoting the community's priorities through this project.

The possibilities are endless at this site, and they will be best achieved when the community is a full and equal partner in the revitalization process. I look forward to partnering with your office toward a transparent, community-driven, and affordable housing-oriented surplus process.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janeese Lewis George". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Facilities and Family Services

cc: Gilles Stucker, Director of Strategic Initiatives, DMPED