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## CCCA February/March 2023 Newsletter

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Since last November, a community issue that has been drawing a lot of attention has been the plan put forth by the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) to surplus and dispose part of the library/community center sit and turn it over to developers. This newsletter will focus on that. We have included the testimony presented by CCCA's president to DMPED opposing wholesale Center giveaway. Additionally, we have included the following link for a differing point of view offered by the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Washington Interfaith Network, and Ward3Vision at <https://anc3g.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Chevy-Chase-Civic-Core-Goals.pdf>

**First, a few announcements about local events:**

### **March Events in the Neighborhood**

CCCA and NNV Program - Tuesday, March 21, 7pm

## Developing a (Non-Financial) Plan for a Successful Retirement

Speakers: Stephanie Chong, Northwest Neighbors Village: Deb Rubenstein, Iona Senior Services.

Register in advance for this

webinar: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_qJ4mxoZeR4SvPn9-xgEmdg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qJ4mxoZeR4SvPn9-xgEmdg)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

## NNV Programs

Northwest Neighbors Village has several planned events that are open to the community. NNV also organizes lunches, museum outings, special "interest" groups, bingo, support groups and yoga for members and volunteers. Information on all activities can be found on our website at [mnvdc.org](http://mnvdc.org).

Upcoming virtual speakers:

- **March 14th, 11 am** – [The Aftermath: The End of the Baby Boom's Effect on Politics and the Economy](#) with speaker Philip Bump
- **March 21st, 11 am** - [The Carter Barron Amphitheater: History, Present, and Future](#) with speaker Tony Richardson
- **March 21, 7 pm** - Developing a (Non-Financial) Plan for a Successful Retirement with speakers Deb Rubenstein and Stephanie Chong
- **March 30th, 1 pm** - [The Glory of Medieval Stained Glass](#) with speaker Mary B. Shepard, PhD
- **April 13th, 2 pm** - [Maryland Freedom Seekers on the Underground Railroad](#) with speaker Jenny Masur
- **April 27th, 1 pm** - [Gilded Age Mansions of Dupont Circle](#) with speaker Ralph Buglass

Have a little extra time and energy? Become a [Volunteer](#)! NNV is about neighbors giving neighbors the practical help to thrive while staying healthy, engaged and connected to the community.

March 25, 8:30 – 9:30 PM. The International Dark Sky Association (IDA), together with other environmental organizations, are asking for cooperation in Lights-Out Hour DC. See the article below.

## **District Bridges – Chevy Chase Main Street Announces March First Fridays**



## **How Will D.C. Get Accurate Public Opinion on Community Center, Library Plans? – Ted Gest**

The D.C. government is moving ahead with plans to redevelop the site at Connecticut Ave. and McKinley St., N.W., that is home to the Chevy Chase Community Center and Neighborhood Library buildings, but it is not clear how public views on the project are being determined with any precision.

As approved by the D.C. Council based on a Small Area Plan for Chevy Chase, D.C., the new tract would include housing, including affordable units, as well as a new community center and library.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and public library system have offered the public a survey at <https://dpr.dc.gov/CCSiteSurvey>. Responses are due by March 10.

While opinion surveys are welcomed, this one is incomplete.

For one thing, many in the community may not know about it. It has been mentioned on the Chevy Chase Community Listserv, but that service is seen by only a minority of residents. The survey has not been mailed to everyone affected.

Many listserv members commented that they had difficulty completing the survey, apparently because of questions relating to how many children were in their families.

More significantly, the survey had significant omissions. One of them was the failure to ask what hours the new facilities should be open. Several years ago, DPR moved back the center's closing hour from the longstanding 10 p.m. to 9 p.m., a decision that was reversed after a community outcry.

The closing hour was then set at 8 p.m. during the pandemic. Ward Four Councilmember Janeese Lewis George says community center closing hours will be restored to 9 p.m. sometime this spring, but many Chevy Chase residents favor the 10 p.m. hour to allow for evening activities, including meetings of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G.

The survey asks respondents to say how often they used the center and library recently, but the buildings were closed in the early months of the pandemic and are not used now to their full potential.

Based on the survey, there would be little way for D.C. officials to gauge how much the facilities could be used in the future based on their recent use, especially lacking answers from the many organizations that used them in the past.

The two government agencies said the survey “will be one of many opportunities residents will have to provide feedback.” CCCA hopes that a much better effort can be made to assess the best use of this valuable property, including its housing components.

## **Ensuring a Bright Future for the Civic Center**

## **Over 100 Years of Stewardship of the Civic Center, Chevy Chase Community Association, Founded in 1909**

CCCA has been involved in the stewardship of the Civic Center for over 100 years. We agree that the Library and the Community Center need to be rebuilt and modernized. We also agree with the ANC 3/4G's position that DMPED's proposal to surplus and dispose part of the property is premature. There are too many outstanding questions that need clarification before surplus/disposal can take place. Most importantly and most urgently is the question: Aren't there other mechanisms available to develop the property without going the surplus route? Do we protect the taxpayer by giving the land to a developer for practically nothing? What is the rush? The Small Area Plan says nothing about surplus/disposal.

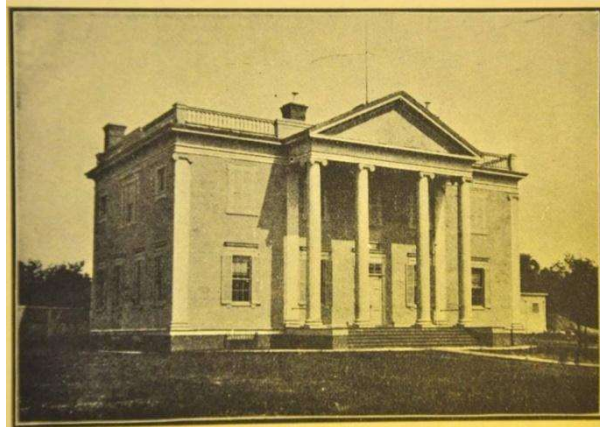
We believe that the surplus process as outlined by DMPED is putting the cart before the horse. Why surplus the property before we know the answers to the questions posed below? How can we be sure that the District will be getting the best deal possible for the neighborhood and the taxpayers if we commit to surplus/disposal before we have a vision of what will be built, who will benefit, and what it will cost.

A better approach is to issue a Request for Information (RFI) in advance of surplus that asks potential developers to provide a vision for the future Community Center and what are the "ballpark" costs and who will pay them. This should be ahead of the RFP.

### **A Look Back at the Civic Center and CCCA**

The Chevy Chase Library/Community Center (Civic Center) property is a historic site with over 125 years of public ownership. CCCA has been involved in its stewardship and protection for much of that time. The original Chevy Chase School was built on land donated to the District by the Chevy Chase Land Company. It opened its doors in March 1898 with 25 students ranging in age from six to sixteen years in a single classroom.

The school became overcrowded when the Chevy Chase, D.C. residential section opened in 1909. In response, parents and teachers met to organize the first Home and School Association in Washington, D.C. The school was expanded to eight rooms in 1910 and was renamed for Elizabeth V. Brown in 1915. By 1929 portable buildings covered the entire playground serving 300 children. The main building of 16 rooms had a capacity of 640, about forty to a classroom.



**Figure 1. The Elizabeth V. Brown School circa 1915**

The Chevy Chase Citizens Association asked Congress to build more schools. Portable buildings were also constructed in 1928 at Connecticut Avenue and Grant Road, now the site of the Murch School. In the same year, two portable buildings were built at Northampton Street and Broad Branch Road, now the site of the Lafayette Elementary School.

Enrollment at the Elizabeth V. Brown school decreased rapidly after the new schools opened. The school was closed in 1942, and the building was used by the Office of Price Administration during World War II. After the war, the citizens succeeded in obtaining the building for a community center and the Chevy Chase Branch Library. In 1968 the building was torn down and replaced by the present library building and adjoining community center.

### **CCCA's Hope for the Redeveloped Civic Center**

The future of the Civic Center property is now under intense discussion. To recap, the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) has proposed a process to surplus much of the property and dispose it for private development. In 2022 the Office of Planning published the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan that offered aspirational guidance for the use of the Civic Center including a modern library and community center. It also called for the construction of market rate, affordable, and workforce housing. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan.

DMPED held a well-attended public hearing on January 12, 2023. The public statements generally opposed the surplus/disposal plan, by one count, a ratio of 4 to 1 against.

CCCA wants to ensure that the public interest is best served by the updated Civic Center. The Small Area Plan, prepared by the Office of Planning, contested during the preparation stage, has articulated a vision for the Center. Executing that vision requires surplus/disposal now under review by DMPED. CCCA has a different vision that is in

harmony with the community and the Chevy Chase ANC 3/4G (see the complete resolution on the ANC website [here](#)):

- CCCA supports the SAP recommendation to renovate or rebuild the community center, a building that has reached its useful life and no longer suits the needs of the community. The functionality and aesthetics of an updated community center was studied by ANC3/4G about five years ago. The planned design was informed by extensive community engagement. A budget was allocated by the Mayor. We would like this ANC plan revisited, updated, and executed.
- CCCA supports renovating or rebuilding the library so that it is modern and reflects the advances in technology that have occurred over the past 40 years. We want it to serve better the needs of those who use the facility. We urge the D.C. Public Library System to conduct a thorough review of the library, prepare a plan for upgrading it, and ensure that an adequate budget is available for its construction.
- CCCA supports continued surface parking, playgrounds for kids, a basketball court for kids and adults, and gardens that feature a maximum amount of green space for the community. We want to continue to be able to use the Center as the focal point of Chevy Chase DC Day, a forty-year tradition in the neighborhood.
- CCCA supports ensuring that the 1.7-acre site remain as publicly owned and controlled property, rather than deliver it into private hands forever (or for a 99-year lease). Once the property is surplussed and disposed, it is out of public hands forever. What we foresee is that private-sector developers will build an apartment building with mostly high-end luxury apartments and a small number of affordable housing units. This appears to be a wholesale giveaway of valuable property for the sake of a few affordable housing units.
- CCCA does not endorse the “surplus/disposal” route of this valuable DC-owned asset until substantial details are provided by DMPED and approved by the community. We agree with the Chevy Chase ANC in their January 23, 2023, unanimously-approved resolution:
  - - “ANC 3/4G believes that surplussing of any sort currently is not appropriate, in part, because the Commission and the community lack the details necessary to make an informed choice.
    - Whether the ANC would ever be able to support surplussing remains to be seen, but support of surplussing cannot even be considered unless and until DMPED works with the Commission to develop and execute a substantial community engagement process that gives residents the opportunity to offer suggestions and site priorities *prior to* a surplussing decision and issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP).”

Otherwise, surplus makes no sense. To surplus and dispose D.C. government real estate, the property “must no longer be needed for public use” (see D.C. Official Code 10-801). We question whether any square foot of the property is unneeded. The picture below illustrates just one function that uses the entire property. There are many others. The parking lot is used by the community to visit the library and community center, to drop children off for summer camp, for clubs and meetings. The basketball court is used for sports and three-wheel bicycling by children. The playground and garden are used every nice day.



**Figure 2. Chevy Chase DC Day 2022**

One ANC Commissioner asked a good question, “why give away valuable public property to developers when there are so many good uses for the public.” There are other development models that may be employed that would be more suitable and ensure that the property meets the needs of the community.

For the record, CCCA supports social justice everywhere and racial and economic diversity in Chevy Chase, including affordable and workforce housing. One question that an ANC commissioner asked the mayor in a public meeting is how many affordable housing units are appropriate for this neighborhood. He received no answer. The notion that there is no affordable housing today in Chevy Chase is misleading. 5333 Connecticut Avenue provides for 19 affordable units. Most of the apartment buildings along upper Connecticut Avenue accept Section 8 vouchers including the 374-unit Kenmore. Many



buildings provide for affordable housing by way of rent control. ADUs can provide additional affordable housing.

Figure 3 was prepared to examine a plan put forth by Ward 3 Vision for 94 new housing units, including a provision of 100% affordable units. It shows that the cost of the project will be \$60 million with a subsidy of \$18.6 million from the D.C. taxpayers. Additionally, the taxpayers will be on the hook for the cost of the library and community center costing at least \$60 million. Thus, the D.C. government will be responsible for \$78.6 million in costs and subsidies while the developer pockets a \$4 - 6 million profit.

**Figure 3. The Cost of a 94-Unit Building at the Civic Center**

PERMANENT SOURCES AND USES								
Source	Amount	\$/Unit	\$/SF	%	Use	Amount	\$/Unit	\$/NSF
First Mortgage	\$ 8,497,209	\$ 90,396	\$ 87.69	14.26%	Total Acquisition Costs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Deferred Developer Fee	\$ 1,986,254	\$ 21,130	\$ 20.50	3.33%	Total Construction Costs	\$ 38,268,493	\$ 407,112	\$ 394.93
Other Residential Debt Grants	\$ 1,757,000	\$ 18,691	\$ 18.13	2.95%	Total Soft Costs	\$ 4,432,486	\$ 47,154	\$ 45.74
Federal LIHTC Equity	\$ 23,593,104	\$ 250,990	\$ 243.48	39.61%	Total Financing Costs	\$ 9,748,557	\$ 103,708	\$ 100.60
DC LIHTC Equity	\$ 4,732,614	\$ 50,347	\$ 48.84	7.94%	Total Developer's Fee	\$ 6,026,572	\$ 64,112	\$ 62.19
Other Equity Sources	\$ 349,785	\$ 3,721	\$ 3.61	0.59%	Total Reserves and Escrows	\$ 1,093,720	\$ 11,635	\$ 11.29
Maximum DHCD Loan	\$ 18,653,862	\$ 198,445	\$ 192.51	31.31%				
<b>Total Permanent Sources</b>	<b>\$ 59,569,828</b>	<b>\$ 633,721.58</b>	<b>\$ 614.76</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>Total Permanent Uses</b>	<b>\$ 59,569,828</b>	<b>\$ 633,722</b>	<b>\$ 614.76</b>
							Studio	3 BR
Studios	20	Residential Sq. Ft.	96,900	30% AMI	21	747	1,110	
1 BR	41	Community Space	48,450	50% AMI	61	1,246	1,850	
2 BR	18	Parking	47,000	80% AMI	12	1,944	2,960	
3 BR	15	Total	192,350	Total	94			
Total Units	94							

We request that the DMPED respect the ANC resolution of January 23 and halt surplus/disposal until a robust debate is held on the issue. We ask that the DMPED issue a Request for Information to potential developers to answer the many questions that have no answers as of today. “An RFI is a formal process for gathering information from potential suppliers. An RFI is typically the first and most broad series of requests intended to narrow down a list of potential vendor candidates” and answer broad questions. These questions include:

- Aren't there other mechanisms available to develop the property without going the surplus route? Why the rush? The SAP says nothing about surplus/disposal.
- Will the developer pay the D.C. government for the site? Or will it be given away to the developer for free?
- Who will pay for the new library and community center? Will taxpayers pay? Does the DC budget have \$60+ million to cover these costs?
- How many units will be built on the site? How many affordable; how many market-rate? Will the ratio of affordable units be 30% or higher?

- Will the Zoning Commission be called on to raise the zoning to MU4? Will this require a PUD?
- How many and how tall will the buildings be? Will they conform to the neighborhood scale and look?
- Who will pay for parking? Will it be underground or surface? How many spaces?

We further request that the ANC conduct a thorough inventory of the affordable housing opportunities in the area before more housing is approved on the Civic Center site. There are other ways to create new affordable housing in Chevy Chase that need to be explored. Consider alternatives to keep the property in the public domain. Engage a city planner, architect, and an economist to examine alternatives to redeveloping the Civic Center.

## New Developments on the Civic Center

On February 8, Councilmember Frumin participated in a CCCA hybrid Zoom and in-person meeting at the Community Center (the video is available at [www.chevychasecitizens.org](http://www.chevychasecitizens.org)), where he talked about his thoughts on the Civic Center, Bike lanes, and many other topics. On February 9, 2023, Councilmember Frumin, wrote a thoughtful letter to DMPED regarding the Chevy Chase Library/Community Center property. CM Frumin recognizes that the Center property is “at the heart of Chevy Chase’s community identity and interaction” and that it deserves much more public conversation and deliberation before the DMPED’s surplus/disposal process moves forward. DMPED’s process is backwards. The government should not surplus property until the community speaks to what it envisions for the site. Proponents of quick development point to the Small Area Plan as the roadmap to develop the Center. The SAP is not a plan; it is a vague aspiration that needs much more thought and discussion by the public.

But what I find the most visionary and bold in CM Frumin’s letter is the idea to include the Wells Fargo Bank and the Safeway sites into the mix. By expanding the thinking to include these two locations, pressure is taken off the Center site for mixed income housing. It recognizes the community’s concern that the limited site can accommodate a new library, community center, and sufficient housing too, “while still retaining the qualities that have made it an important hub of community life.” We hope that CM Frumin continues to champion a broader vision of the community’s future and we look forward to the next phase that includes neighborly participation. Most recently CM Frumin requested a new DC budget initiative that requests \$100 million to buy private property for affordable housing in Ward 3. We look forward to see the progress on this excellent idea.

By way of contrast, Ward3Vision and others propose “at least 100 new homes at the Civic Core Site” in addition to a new library and community center. Is that feasible? For reference, 5333 Connecticut Avenue is 263 apartments. Imagine an apartment

building that is more than a third the size of 5333 Connecticut Avenue on the Center site, plus a library and community center.

Let's envision a modern Chevy Chase commercial core that preserves our village-like character while embracing solutions that provide for racial and economic diversity in our neighborhood.

## Savings for Homeowners

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provides federal tax credits and deductions to make homes more energy-efficient and help reduce energy costs.

**Home Efficiency:** New federal income tax credits are available through 2032 providing up to \$3,200 annually to lower the cost of energy efficient home upgrades by up to 30 percent. Improvements such as installing heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, insulation, doors and windows, as well as electrical panel upgrades, home energy audits and more, are covered by the tax credits and can help families save money on their monthly energy bills for years to come.

**Clean Energy for your Home:** Homeowners can also take advantage of the Residential Clean Energy credit, which provides a 30 percent income tax credit for clean energy equipment, such as rooftop solar, wind energy, geothermal heat pumps and battery storage through 2032, stepping down to 22 percent for 2033 and 2034. Combined with DC Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECS), which are paid to the owner of the system, the payback is quick and may even generate a continued revenue stream.

For more information, visit:

[https://www.energystar.gov/about/federal\\_tax\\_credits/non\\_business\\_energy\\_property\\_tax\\_credits](https://www.energystar.gov/about/federal_tax_credits/non_business_energy_property_tax_credits)

Lastly, if you made any qualifying home improvements to your primary residence after December 31, 2021, you may be eligible to claim them on your taxes when you file for 2022. Remember to look (or ask a tax accountant) to see if you qualify!

## Lights-Out!

The International Dark Sky Association (IDA), together with other environmental organizations, are asking for cooperation in Lights-Out Hour DC on March 25 between 8:30 and 9:30PM. Matt Frumin, our Ward 3 DC City Council Member, has signed a statement of support for this event.

Lights-Out Hour DC will draw public attention to climate change and the impact of light pollution on human health and the environment. Coinciding with international Earth Hour, Lights-Out Hour DC is a voluntary event in which individual residents, building managers, and custodians of public monuments dim or extinguish non-essential lights for one hour beginning at 8:30 p.m. on March 25.

Dozens of cities across the globe have observed Earth Hour since 2007. Iconic structures such as the Golden Gate Bridge, the Empire State Building, and the Eiffel Tower have gone dark during Earth Hour. (See the pictures of the Acropolis at the end of this article.) **Wouldn't it be a great show of community solidarity for Chevy Chase shops and restaurants to shut off signs for an hour to draw attention to the event?**

There are many reasons to support Lights-Out Hour DC:

- Building energy use, which includes lighting, accounts for nearly 75 percent of the District's greenhouse gas emissions, according to the D.C. Department of Energy and Environment.
- The District of Columbia has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Reducing light pollution helps establish the District as a national leader in the vanguard of climate action.
- The D.C. Comprehensive Plan identifies light pollution as an environmental hazard.
- The American Medical Association has warned that pervasive use of nighttime lighting disrupts our circadian sleep-wake cycle and "creates potentially harmful health effects."
- Exposure to high levels of outdoor light at night is associated with obesity; mood and anxiety disorders in adolescents; and, in women, diffuse large B-cell lymphoma.

The local chapter of IDA has worked for several years to improve the quality of DC's outdoor light at night. This means lighting only where it serves a purpose, not, for example, shining in people's bedrooms to interfere with sleep. IDA advocated for lower color temperature streetlights because extensive research shows that the bluer lights originally proposed would have disrupted circadian rhythms and created more sky glow. IDA and other groups also worked with city officials to create new

guidelines for lighting the city's parks. Lights-Out Hour DC supports other IDA efforts at community outreach and education.

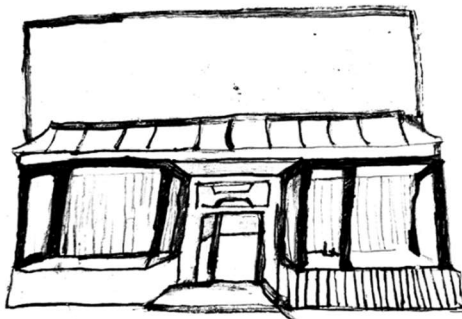
For further information, contact Wayne Savage [waysav@gmail.com](mailto:waysav@gmail.com) . Follow our Facebook page: International-Dark-Sky-Association-DC-Chapter. Go to [Darksky.org](http://Darksky.org) for much more information on light pollution.

As the nation's capital, Washington D.C. should be a leader in Earth Hour, an important international event, by observing Lights-Out Hour DC on March 25.



## CCCA Welcomes New Neighbors on Connecticut Avenue

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If you have any comments or suggestions about the articles in this newsletter, please send them to [president@chevyhasecitizens.org](mailto:president@chevyhasecitizens.org). We welcome your feedback.

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