

January 18, 2023

Bill 32-22

TO: Montgomery County Council
FROM: Jane Lyons-Raeder
BILL: Bill 33-22, Capital Improvements Program – Affordable Housing Feasibility Study
– Required
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jane Lyons-Raeder and I'm a renter in downtown Silver Spring. I am writing in support of Bill 33-22, Capital Improvements Program – Affordable Housing Feasibility Study – Required. I strongly support this legislation which would strengthen existing requirements around colocation of affordable housing with public projects.

Putting affordable housing on top of a newly renovated Chevy Chase Library, or any new public facility near transit, should not be a fight. It's common sense. Nevertheless, the County Executive has slow-rolled the process of finding a partner to work with on the Chevy Chase Library and has repeatedly tried to decrease the scope of the project, thus decreasing the number of possible subsidized housing units. Further, the only way that the Executive's decision not to pursue affordable housing at the Chevy Chase Library came to light was through myself as a community advocate reaching out to DPS via email to ask whether a decision had been made. From this experience, it is clear that the affordable housing assessment requirement for capital projects is not effective or transparent, and does not hold the County Executive accountable for his commitments to affordable housing.

Bill 33-22 seeks to address these structural inefficiencies by requiring the evaluation for affordable housing colocation earlier in the capital project development process and allowing the Council to approve or disapprove of the analysis.

As stated, I strongly support Bill 33-22 – however, I'd like to draw attention to the fact that in the current language, refresh projects are not required to submit an affordable housing assessment. The Chevy Chase Library project was originally included in the County Executive's recommended FY23 Library Refurbishment Level of Effort CIP, rather than as a standalone PDF. This is despite the Director of MCPL saying [in a letter](#) that the library has "structural deficits beyond what could be remedied on a refresh/refurbishment project" and [in yet another letter](#) that "a refresh of this building would not be wise economically." Despite this, in his [April 2022 letter](#), the County Executive was still trying to make the argument that the Chevy Chase Library might be a refresh project.

This loophole has been remedied for the Chevy Chase Library project, due to action by the County Council, but could be used for other projects worthy of affordable housing colocation. I do not think every refresh project warrants an affordable housing assessment, but would encourage stricter guidelines for what is considered a refresh.

In this testimony, I use the Chevy Chase Library as an example, but it is far from a unique case. Montgomery County has missed too many opportunities to colocate public facilities with affordable housing. I look forward to seeing this redressed via Bill 33-22 and this Council's strong commitment to furthering affordable housing, especially in high-opportunity, transit accessible neighborhoods.

Thank you.