



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Thank you for contacting me regarding the future of the Chevy Chase library and your support for increasing affordable housing near transit. As you may know, I have been working on efforts to both preserve existing affordable housing and produce new affordable housing. I appreciate hearing from you and would like to share some of the background and my thoughts on how to proceed regarding the Chevy Chase library.

More than two years ago, my staff was reviewing with me the status of the county's libraries and the schedule for the planned "refreshes" at various branches, including the Chevy Chase Library. At the time, there was some question as to whether the library could be renovated ("refreshed") or would need to be replaced. I asked staff to look into the cost of both alternatives and, with regard to the possibility that the library might need to be replaced, I asked that they solicit "expressions of interest" (known as REOIs) to get a sense of whether it might be feasible to co-locate housing on the site. This request was and is consistent with my goal of leveraging county-owned land for affordable housing, including home ownership, if the land is either no longer needed for public purposes or houses facilities in need of renovation/rebuilding. The responses to the REOI varied widely - some included no affordable housing - and raised additional questions about how best to proceed.

More recent assessments of the Chevy Chase Library indicate that the extensive renovations it requires might point to the need to replace the building rather than renovate it. If a new facility is needed - not only to replace aging infrastructure but to offer expanded services to meet the needs of a growing population - I have questions that fall into two main buckets: (1) what are the comparative costs to renovate or redevelop, and what is the best use of public dollars; and (2) what kind and amount of affordable housing can reasonably be located on a site that must accommodate the parking needs of both library users and residents, and whose ingress and egress are on already traffic-burdened Connecticut Avenue. The proximity of the site to the Purple Line does not obviate the fact that even transit users have cars that must be parked somewhere and occasionally travel somewhere. Both current and future residents deserve answers to these questions.

It simply doesn't make sense to allow more market-rate housing in this area when the need for more affordable rental and ownership opportunities is so clear. With that in mind, staff continues to review this site - next steps will be to solicit more detailed proposals based on the parameters I have used in recent agreements leveraging county-owned land for affordable housing in Bethesda, Twinbrook, and Emory Grove. I would also note that we're actively pursuing other opportunities to produce affordable housing on 18 county owned properties.

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DGS/OPD/AffordableHousing.html>

We will be carefully reviewing the options and trade-offs and will engage both housing advocates and the community once we have more information. In the meantime, I am not going to be pushed into taking a position that does not make sense, is not financially prudent, and does not advance the public interest. I hope that this information has helped explain the situation and again, I appreciate your interest in this – please continue to stay in touch on issues of concern to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Elrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marc" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Elrich".

Marc Elrich
County Executive