

COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF THE CHEVY CHASE LIBRARY
CCLIBRARYFUTURE@GMAIL.COM

July 28, 2020

Anita Vassallo, Director
Montgomery County Public Libraries
21 Maryland Ave., Suite 310
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Greg Ossont, Deputy Director
Montgomery County Department of General Services
101 Monroe Street, 9th floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. Vassallo and Mr. Ossont:

RE: Chevy Chase Library

Reference is made to the Notice issued by the Department of General Services in connection with the redevelopment of the Chevy Chase Library ("CCL") facility and to Ms. Vassallo's letters dated March 17 and March 24, 2020 addressed to Chevy Chase residents.

The March 24 letter states that the process of formulating plans for the library and the site on which it sits will be "transparent and inclusive." To facilitate that objective, residents and patrons of the Library have formed a committee to transmit the community views on the future of the Library, called the Committee on the Future of the Chevy Chase Library. The committee consists of residents from many of the communities and HOAs that are patrons of the CCL, including two which abut and surround the Library site. These communities include The Hamlet, 8101 Connecticut Avenue, Five Star Premiere Residences, Sections 3 and 5 of Chevy Chase, Martin's Additions, Hamlet Place Owners, Chevy Chase Hills, North Chevy Chase, the Town of Chevy Chase, Gavin Manor Court, Rosemary Hills, Silver Spring, Rollingwood, and Rock Creek Forest.

The Committee on the Future of the Chevy Chase Library believes that it is of the utmost importance that the Library facility remain available to the community and that any development of the site have a design consistent with the well-established community character of Chevy Chase and the residences that surround the site. We feel strongly that the views of the communities affected be considered in the determination of how to provide library services at the site and in the scope and aesthetics of any development that is undertaken there.

In the interests of a transparent process, and in order to fairly consider the issues involved, we request that copies of the responses to the "Request for Developers Expressions of Interest" be made available to the Committee. We further request that no further solicitations to developers be issued without the full and complete participation and consideration of the views of the communities affected.

We look forward to receiving the developer indications of interest and to a cooperative working relationship in pursuit of our joint objectives.

continued

Roy Bowman and Aletta Schaap are co-Chairs of the new Committee on the Future of the Chevy Chase Library which is comprised of residents of the many communities using the current Library. They may be reached at <cclibraryfuture@gmail.com>.

Very truly yours,

Roy Bowman and Aletta Schaap
Co-Chairs, Committee on the Future of the Chevy Chase Library

cc: David Dise, Director Department of General Services
Gary Colton, Project Manager, Department of General Services
Marc Elrich, County Executive
Andrew Friedson, Councilmember

Development of the Chevy Chase Library Site Violates the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan

Executive Summary

The Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan, adopted in October 2013, comes to the following conclusions. The plan (which includes the CC Library site):

- does not recommend any development of the CC Library;
- recommends that new multi-family housing be built solely in the “Town Center” (the area around the Purple Line Station); and
- recommends no change to current zoning outside the “Town Center.”

Conclusion

The Sector Plan expressly determined that the library site should not be developed and that additional housing should not be built in the Library area. Those findings should be controlling

The Chevy Chase Lake Sector plan includes the Chevy Chase Library site

There seems to be a common misunderstanding that the Chevy Chase Lake Sector plan applies only to the area surrounding the Purple Line Station or as it is described in the sector plan “the Town Center”. This understanding is incorrect. In fact, the sector plan includes not only the Library site but the surrounding single family houses bounded by East West Highway on the south (p12 map2). The Plan encompasses the entire area bounded by Jones Bridge Road on the North, East West Highway on the south, The Columbia Country Club property line on the West and Rock Creek on the East. The Abstract of the Sector plan states:

This Plan focuses on land use, appropriate density, mobility, and public facilities for the 380 acres surrounding the proposed Purple Line station at Connecticut Avenue. It makes recommendations for zoning, urban design, the transportation network, and the environment.

Indeed on the map on p12 of the Sector Plan the Plan specifically identifies the library as “item 1.” As reproduced here, the dashed red line outlines the Sector Plan and the area shaded in pink is the “Town Center”.

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The Sector Plan retains zoning for the Library site consistent with the existing character of the community

The sector plan does much more than develop the Purple Line site. It establishes zoning and architectural criteria for the entire area encompassed within the Plan.

“This Plan builds on the recommendations of the 1990 B-CC Plan and the community’s vision to **maintain the community’s residential character** while encouraging moderate levels of development compatible with community character. Chevy Chase Lake will retain its character as a green residential community and realize a livable and compact Town Center. (P19 emphasis added)

The term “Chevy Chase Lake” refers to the entire area encompassed by the Plan which includes the Library site.

The plan provides that:

Chevy Chase Lake will retain its character **as a green residential community** and realize a livable and compact Town Center” p19 (emphasis added)

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In order to achieve the preservation of the “community’s residential Character” the plan seeks to concentrate development in the “Town Center” which is the area adjacent to the Purple Line station.

Community Character

Preserving the established neighborhood character of this community while allowing it to grow is the umbrella idea that covers all Plan recommendations.

...

Land Use

Focus redevelopment in existing commercial areas to make a better Center.

- **Reconfirm all residential zoning outside the Center.** P21 (emphasis added)

The plan specifically addressed the Library site and emphasized that no change and no development is contemplated for this site

Development under the proposed zoning would not require new sites for schools, the library, or the fire station. P21

All remaining properties in the Plan Area

The Sector Plan reconfirms current residential zoning categories for all areas located outside the Chevy Chase Lake Center. P31

Map 9 p 35 indicates library site is R-90 single family residential!

1. Library Facilities

The Plan Area is currently served by the Chevy Chase Library, located within a five-minute walk from the Center. Based on recommended library standards, a branch library should be able to support a population of 40,000 users per branch.

Montgomery County Public Libraries did not request, nor does the Plan recommend, new or expanded library facilities in the Plan Area.

New Housing is to be developed within the Town Center

The Sector Plan states that:

Future development in Chevy Chase Lake should be limited to the commercial area...preserving residential areas.

The table below (p. 21) shows that after the Purple Line is completed, there will be more than 1,300 new multifamily dwelling units, and 70 new single-family dwelling units.

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Table 1 Development Potential in Chevy Chase			
Land Use	Existing + Approved	Enhance (Pre-Purple Line) Cumulative	Create (Post-Purple Line) Cumulative
Commercial (sf)	470,859	342,487	589,000
Residential, Single-Family (du)	603	673	673
Residential, Multifamily (du)	716	1,556	2,039
Civic and institutional (sf)	336,537	851,537	851,537
Totals (sf)	2,126,396	3,423,024	4,152,537

Note: The proposed commercial and residential development levels are based on the proposed zoning, estimates of the maximum potential area of each property, and assumptions about the distribution of density between commercial and residential uses.

As of September 2020, 200 new residential units have been created, that contain 40 MPDUs and 40 workforce units. Another 10 townhouses were converted to MPDUs. An additional 536 units are currently under development, of which 12.9% [69] will be MPDUs.

Beyond the additional housing being developed now and in the future within the Town Center, it is difficult to understand why more housing would be needed outside the Town Center. Plus this development runs counter to the recommendations of the Sector Plan.

Conclusion

The Sector Plan expressly determined that the library site should not be developed and that additional housing should not be built in the Library area. Those findings should be controlling.

Refurbishment of the Chevy Chase Library Should be Funded From County Allocated funds

The most cost effective way to assure continuing library services to the community is to directly fund the recommended refurbishment

The Sheladia assessment of the cost of refurbishing the Library published on the Department of General Services web site projects a present value cost of approximately \$3.7 million to refurbish the Library. In the Chevy Chase Sector plan which recommends against development of the library site the statement is made that a library branch is capable of supporting 40,000 users and therefore no development or expansion of the library is required. Thus the cost of refurbishment per the Sheladia assessment is less than \$100 per notional user. If we assume that the refurbishment has a useful life of ten years, the cost is \$10 per notional user per year. Surely a county that prides itself on the services and amenities it offers its residents can afford the modest cost of \$10 per year per user.

Given the Uncertainty Created by the Corona Virus and the Apparent Collapse of the Purple line Private Public Partnership, Direct Funding is the Quickest way to Assure Continuity of Library Services

It is no exaggeration to say that the county is facing levels of uncertainty rarely seen. Whether the demand for multi family housing will remain at levels existing prior to the appearance of the Corona virus and the discovery of the work-at-home experience is unanswerable at this time. Surely the uncertainty will cast a pall on the risks private developers are willing to take. Indeed the whole issue of urban centralization is challenged.

Then there is the Purple line delay. Development planned in the Chevy chase Lake Sector plan was predicated on the existence of the Purple line. A rush to add new development in the area is imprudent, to say the least. The Washington Post indicates that the opening of the Line may not occur until 2026. The ridership difficulties experienced by the Metro System is constantly in the headlines. This is the Metro System that was to be a feeder of riders to the Purple Line

Add to this the delay necessitated by the painstaking work required to develop a private public partnership, the rezoning of the site and the related hearings and findings necessitated thereby and it is apparent that immediate implementation of the Sheladia plan is by far the quickest path to producing a functioning library.

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Assuming the refurbishment would extend the life of the library facility by ten years, proceeding quickly with direct funding provides ample time in the later half of the life extension to revisit the merits of further development. Five years would, one hopes, see the Purple line completed or at least a better estimate of when such completion could occur. The demographic changes brought about by the pandemic and its effect on mass transit would become clearer. At that time an intelligent assessment of the development opportunities can be made and the issue revisited.