

**Comments sent to Friends of the Library, Chevy Chase Chapter, May-June 2020  
Concerning the future of the Chevy Chase Library**

**Lorraine Davis**, Silver Spring. “Its hard to believe that every library in Montgomery County has to be rebuilt. I've often wondered whether all this constant rebuilding of everything (not just libraries) is just to keep the bureaucracy busy must be the underlying reason. It certainly contributes to the county's ceaseless craving for money and may be the reason why the county sends out bogus notices of traffic infractions to get more and more money. Perhaps the bldg. does have problems. I'm aware that the Wheaton Library only lasted 40 years before having to be rebuilt. Now I'm thinking of the traffic hub in Silver Spring. There must be some way these structures can be built in a sound manner, and built to last. I just don't know what to say.

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wheaton library “

**Julia Bail** (unknown location): “This can’t happen. We have lived here since 1983. Our daughter and our grandchildren have walked to the Library. Is there anyway to stop it. Is the Fire House next?”

**Barbara Boggs** (Chevy Chase): “I sincerely hope that the library will reopen ASAP. If it is torn down, there is no guarantee that it will emerge in a residential building and, should that eventually happen, several years will have passed. We only have to look to the Purple Line construction for an example of unanticipated delay and conflict. Moreover, funds for the library would be the first to be cut in any monetary shortfall – and we can always count on a monetary shortfall.

I really enjoy the Chevy Chase library and have used it for maybe 50 years! I have absolutely no interest in it being torn down and “relocated”.

I would be happy to participate in any way that might be helpful – assuming there is any hope in the library simply re-opening – how hard is that?!”

**Laura Gehl**, Chevy Chase: “Thank you so much for this information, Judy! I have really been missing the library during the pandemic.

My biggest initial concern with the new plan would be parking. I myself tend to lug huge bags of heavy books to/from my car. I almost always avoid the new Silver Spring library, beautiful as it is, due to the fact that I need to lug my books across the street and up stairs or elevator in order to reach my car. When I am at the Chevy Chase Library, I usually see both parents and nannies with young children in tow, as well as elderly patrons. In order to continue making it easy for these patrons to use the library, having enough parking is important.”

“I am writing to express my belief that any plans for a new Chevy Chase library should include plenty of parking spaces. The Silver Spring Library, while beautiful and great in many ways, is not ideal for parents with young children, or for elderly or disabled patrons, because patrons must cross the street from the parking garage. For those with young children in tow, or for patrons with physical handicaps, navigating from the parking garage to the library can be difficult and intimidating. In addition, for patrons carrying large bags of books, a convenient (and free) parking lot, such as exists at the current Chevy Chase Library, is an important feature. I hope that you will make sure a new library has at least as much designated parking as the current library has. If the library becomes part of a mixed-use facility, there would of course need to be more total parking spots.

Thank you so much for taking my thoughts into account. I have always been a huge lover of libraries, and of the MCPL, and the pandemic has made it even more clear to me how much we need our libraries!”

**Judith Horowitz**, Chevy Chase: “We have been shocked by what’s happened in the Wisconsin Avenue corridor in Bethesda and would be very upset to see that kind of building along Conn. Ave. between East-West Highway and the Beltway, where there are numerous sites available for medium- and high-rise buildings. In addition, we want to see the existing library facility preserved and, if anything, improved, not blended into some larger facility.” “I have just again looked at the message and documents you sent recently about plans for the library. The amount of funding necessary for the upgrade of the current structure is far less than that allocated to all other libraries with the exception of Kensington. It seems pretty clear to me that the reason for the suggestion of putting a new library on a floor of a new residential building is to get funds from the new residential structure with more tax money. There is already too much new building on that part of Connecticut Avenue, and this would significantly add to the traffic and congestion. That is in addition to ruining the local community library concept and disrupting its use while a new, large building is being constructed. I think that if informed, the Chevy Chase community and beyond (many people outside the local area use the library) would be aroused and dismayed about the proposal. Will there be a general meeting about the proposal?

I hope that something can be done to dissuade the proposed treatment of our community library.”

**Susan Merewitz**, Chevy Chase: “Unfortunately, the private Partners are going to looking to maximize their profits and they can cite all the new taller construction that is the current neighborhood standard.” ” I actually think that SS building is pretty exciting architecturally and In some ways appropriate for downtown Silver Spring but totally uninviting as a place to read, no tranquility, a lot of wasted barren space, and no quiet Grassy place away from

traffic where kids can play and parents or babysitters can chat. Nor is there a decent amount of parking. It was fun to visit but not anywhere I would like to return to.

I am also hostile to underground parking. I happen upon a lot of folk who also hate it. No one cares. The developers and county powers that be have decided to urbanize us ..whether we like it or not. The size of lot which would allow senior housing is interesting but am I right that means every bit of land must be used so no above ground parking?

If the grounds disappear, I would suggest some kind of atrium with plants and seating might provide what our garden area now offers plus offering lots of light in surrounding rooms.

Seniors who no longer drive and have difficulty walking would find it a wonderful resource to have a library with meeting rooms an elevator ride away.

So too, resident families of modest means, e.g., single parent households , with school age children especially latch key kids, could very well be beneficiaries of the library as an after school safe haven. The desired meeting rooms might be accessible from library and separately from the residence for multipurpose rooms when library did not need them.They could also be rented for supervised after school programs, religious services, civic gatherings etc.

If we have to lose what we have, it would be nice if occupancy did not simply go to highest bidders but instead addressed other community/societal needs.”

**Sally Griffin**, Chevy Chase: “This is the worst thing I have heard since the start of this Covid 19 epidemic. I read the letter and was amazed to see some of the items listed that supposedly need to be replaced. The letter did say something about "adding a replacement library" in addition to who knows what size building, probably large and big. The building is the right size right now. I guess they have no idea how many people use the CC Library both from Mont Co and DC. Surely the HVAC system, and the roof (including the gutter system and rotten wood under that which is visible for sure) and some other things could be fixed without MANY of the other items mentioned. The building does NOT need to be torn down and rebuilt.”

**Sheila Lieber**, Chevy Chase: “ I think multi-use development of the lot detracts the neighborhood environment and, depending on its size and what's proposed, will increase congestion in the area. There is already a ridiculous amount of development in downtown Bethesda along Wisconsin Avenue and heading north on Wisconsin. There is also ongoing development between East West Hwy. and the Beltway. I agree that any needed repairs to the library itself should be undertaken but with all the development, the area is, unfortunately, starting to look like urban sprawl.”

**Maureen Delaney**, Chevy Chase: “The Chevy Chase library is the best around for all the reasons you mentioned. I would not be in favor of the library like the one in downtown Silver Spring. We all pay very high taxes here and it is not clear to me why they can't renovate/refresh the current library building.“

**Aletta Schaap**, Chevy Chase: “Through a neighborhood listserv I was made aware of the letter below concerning the exploration of a P3 redevelopment of the Chevy Chase Library. Although the letter is addressed to “Chevy Chase Residents,” I am not aware of any neighbors who have received this letter. The proposal concerns our neighborhood library and is within the boundaries of the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan, as are our residences. (Perhaps the letter was postponed due to COVID-19 in which case that would be the reason that we did not receive it yet.)

Please see that our residents receive a copy of this letter prior to the date that an exploratory solicitation is posted (March 23 according to the letter). And please see that we receive notices of all meetings and plans.

In any case, there should be open discussion within the Chevy Chase Sector Plan community and its residents prior to any solicitations or proposals, as has been the norm with the many construction projects within the sector plan. If not, this shows a lack of transparency or consideration.“

**Mary Margaret Patterson**, N. Chevy Chase: “Wouldn’t the residents of the development form their own interest group, since their needs and interests might be more urban than suburban? And the library? It means so much to the community, but wouldn’t the huge increase in usership require a bigger premises? How does one learn about the County’s intentions and plans? They must surely already have a plan in mind.”

**Tucker Farman**, Chevy Chase: “We (and our kids) love coming to the library and are concerned about losing it for a period of time, and also what a development would mean to the neighborhood!”

**Sandie Deighton**, Chevy Chase: “I think the land the Library sits on is too valuable to just have a stand-alone library and combining it with development is inevitable. I am leery of Private-Public partnerships if they are written like the one with the Purple Line, where the TOTAL risk is on the taxpayers. The “private” gets their money regardless of ridership and profit for 30 years. Housing/commercial development may be less risky for the “private” to get their money. My second thought is — at this point we don’t know the impact of the pandemic on physical gathering places. I for one see using the library less and less. My reading needs are being met totally by the digital audio and visual and now the addition of digital movies and TV do not necessitate me physically going to a library. Also, many meetings/lectures have moved to the Zoom platform and I would hope that continues and increases. Realistically, the county needs to stop and reassess exactly who and what the uses will be for the library of the future. “

**Hugh Gibson**, Silver Spring: “I hope you are not going along with the county's obscene plans. The current library is one of our county's most inviting small-scale meeting places. I have made friends of some of the front desk staff. Everything is quiet and charming and there is a beautiful wooded backdrop. We are going to lose this for yet another insufferable smart growth development? Please do your best to stop this from happening.”

**Virginia Ceaser**, Chevy Chase: “I had heard about the planned library renovation and possible PPP partnership prior to receiving your letter of March 18th. Along with many of the library patrons, it made me very angry and the only word that comes to mind is "sneaky." Before I write to the various contacts in your letter, it would be useful to have some statistics. Chevy Chase is a very small library but it is heavily used. I know the numbers of children who come to activities, the numbers of patrons who reserve books, etc. are impressive. I believe for a library its size, the numbers might be significant enough for the powers-to-be to take notice. I know, for example, our Conversation Club attendees over the last two and plus years, have come from fifty countries ( for more information, you can contact Cathy Wolf who founded the group) and each class, especially our Tuesday sessions, have been very well attended. This is one of many services our library provides for residents and visitors alike. I also believe the abundance of above-ground parking spaces which provide easy access to the building is a plus, especially for seniors who make up a large percentage of our neighborhood population. There is no doubt that the substantial problems with the building will have to be fixed and the building will have to be renovated. I also know that the library stands on a large, valuable parcel of land which is a draw for developers who have already taken ownership of most of the Chevy Chase Lake area. It's hard to be heard when faced with such powerful voices.”

**Ann Joseph**, Chevy Chase: “The Library is a wonderful resource. I don't think there will be need for any more high density housing in this area in the future. The traffic will already be vastly increased because of the development at Chevy Chase Lake. However, there is an opportunity for greater use of the library, and an ability to raise revenue. If there is a senior center, and a pre -school center both bringing in revenue. If there is a good meeting place, and a good auditorium.-theatre If there are computer classrooms. If there is a cafe to sell refreshments, and a small store to sell library books, supplies, etc.and if there is an art gallery, that also sells supplies.

All of these options provide opportunities to partner with other institutions and bring revenue. This is a time to explore possibilities and think creatively. More dense housing is unnecessary. There are many seniors living in this area, who would welcome an opportunity to belong to such an interesting place. There is also an opportunity to attract young people with children, where there are interesting events.”

**Barbara Coleman**, Chevy Chase: “I have been living in my house (which I bought 42 years ago) for many years, and have been using the Chevy Chase Library for at least that long. As you can understand, I take a keen interest in developments about the library. You can't imagine the surprise I received when I received your May 18 letter. I had no idea that a new residential development was being proposed, which would house the library. I see by the dates incorporated in that newsletter that no delay is being proposed. However, my comments relative to the proposal probably would be less useful given the length of time that probably would elapse before the project was even be completed. Since I will be 85 years old next week, I hardly think my comments would be helpful. I have no objections to the private-public partnerships, however, if I wind up living long enough to take advantage of it!”

**Bruce Reed**, : “My wife and I enjoy the library as is and never saw the need for drastic, expensive repairs. Old building are old, but just because they are not "perfect" and don't meet every aspect current code doesn't mean tear it down and build an apartment building. We also

question the need for additional apartments in this area given the tremendous number of high rises going up in Bethesda and the large development already underway nearby on the site of the old supermarket. The solicitation of proposals gives as examples developments in other cities. In my estimation, none of those fit the "character of the surrounding community" here and it worries me that they would include them. Let us know how we can help."

**Richard Ashford**, Chevy Chase: "I am a retired children's school library media specialist who worked for MC. I believe that public-private partnership is the only way the county is going to be able to afford the many expenditures it faces in coming years. This is true of the Purple Line and Beltway improvement plans. Hopefully those two are not leaving a bad taste in your mouth. In my opinion, construction contracting is always messy.

Post Covid-19 economic prospects have only increased the need for such financing mechanisms.

The Friends can best assist this library community by reviewing contract proposals to insure the best multiuse project."

**Edwin Coover**, Chevy Chase: "You really know how to depress a person. Instead of augmenting books and media and staff we are now into bricks and mortar and (invariably) pretentious Architecture."

**Donald Horowitz**, Chevy Chase: "We live on Leland Court, just south of East-West Highway, a short walk to the library. Your email was rather alarming to us, because we have viewed all the new construction just north of the library as the beginning of a movement to create high-rise development along the Chevy Chase portion of the Connecticut Avenue corridor, which could ultimately create congestion equivalent to that along Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda. The County Council seems eager to expand the commercial tax base in this vicinity, and the library repairs appear to provide a good excuse to continue on a desirable site.

We are keen to keep the library as it is and also to discourage—indeed, prevent—the Besthesdification of Connecticut Avenue here. We would happily join any effort toward these ends, and we will gladly spread the word on the Section 5 community newsletter. It's a bit hard to believe that a building the size of the library needs repairs in excess of \$3 million. It seems much more likely that this figure is the opening wedge for a different agenda."