

## Chevy Chase Civic Core – One Idea

There has been a lot of concern that the Civic Core site needs to be totally built-out to fill the zoning envelope that the Office of Planning provided as illustrative of the proposed NC-19 zone if it is to accommodate the full program of public uses as well as a significant amount of affordable housing as the community has supported. A lot of that concern has focused on whether open space might be eliminated or public uses compromised. That is totally understandable. It is a challenging 'program' for the site, especially considering the need to maintain open space and work within the height constraints.

Ward3Vision took a quick look at the site, taking into consideration what many people are concerned about in terms of urban design, and incorporating what we know about the programs for the library, the work the ANC already did on Community Center programming, the clear desire to not diminish but enhance outdoor public space, the guidance from the Small Area Plan, and the goal of a significant affordable housing component consistent with the W3V joint statement with Washington Interfaith Network and Coalition for Smarter Growth.

The attached sketchy site plan is but one approach - there are undoubtedly many others - but it demonstrates clearly that there is plenty of room on this site for creative solutions that do not sacrifice open space but enhance it and provide opportunities for a kick-ass Civic Core that serves the needs and meets the aspirations of this community.

*Note that this is a quick study/sketch of how these programmatic elements might fit on the site, and does not address who builds it, who pays for it, what mix of income lives in it, or any of those non-design questions.*

So here it is.

- The first page overlays the new Cleveland Park library on the site, so you can get an idea of scale and how the library in particular fits.

The second page is the site plan sketch.

- The site layout provides the same amount of usable outdoor recreation space as currently exists, but improves it by moving parking underground and creating a new urban plaza complete with restaurant/cafe at the Library entrance. (Food, open space and entrances to public buildings are a great combination for public space vitality.) The plaza could be more hard surface to accommodate gatherings like markets or Chevy Chase Day, or more soft and green depending on community preferences. There are shaded green areas for passive use, similar to the existing, a new monumental stair feature for hanging out on, a tot lot, and a basketball court. All exactly the same size as exists now. Additional rooftop recreation space such as tennis courts, pickle ball, outdoor yoga, whatever, at the adjacent 2-3 story Community Center would also be possible. The open space is all there at ground level - to activate and design as we want.

- The lower structures, the 2 - 3-ish story public uses - the library and community center - are all located on Northampton, along with the ball court to minimize the potential negative impact of the taller structures.

- The new ChChDC library (same size as the Cleveland Park library) is more or less freestanding at 3 stories on the Avenue so it can proudly announce its civic role in the community. The freestanding structure, across the Avenue from the Avalon, provides a great opportunity for a

signature architectural expression 'celebrating' the Connecticut Ave gateway to ChChDC and the District.

- The new ChChDC Community Center, also 2-3 stories, is located adjacent to the library to facilitate sharing spaces like meeting rooms. It is shown as approx 40,000 sf, consistent with earlier ANC programming work. It is also adjacent to the active recreation spaces like the bball courts and playground as well as the passive green space.
- The apartment building is located on McKinley St where it will face commercial uses in the short term and other multi-family mixed-use development in the future. It is shown as 6 floors, which is definitely do-able under the proposed 80 ft height, and might be do-able at less, but that would require more detailed study and incorporation of all the setbacks, etc which this sketch doesn't do.
- The apartment building could support about 117 - 130 units but once this sketch becomes an actual plan with the various setbacks applied and some units are merged to make family-sized units, etc that number is likely to come down.
- An option we believe should be considered is to add another public use - child care - in the ground floor of the apartment building. A day care center or nursery school for 50 - 75 kids could be located near the tot lot and ball courts, making the entire ground floor of the campus, public-serving uses, which seems appropriate for a Civic place. That would leave 5 stories of residential above, or about 100 units of affordable housing.
- This configuration for the new Civic Core campus is easier and more cost effective to build than any stacking solution. (We might even be able to proceed with the uses separately, altho that might be a stretch.)

So what does this tell us? We think it says that there are very good ways to look at the site that can accommodate the full program of uses including open space, and within the proposed zoning. There is still a lot of work to be done with the District but we believe this exercise shows that there are solutions that can easily be found if encouraged by clear statements of community input in the RFP.

This sketch represents just one quick look at the site. There are probably lots of other approaches that might also work, so it is important that we are clear about what is important and leave flexibility in the zoning and in the RFP for creative solutions. There will be give-and-take, but there is lots to be look forward to when we see the ideas that 4 or 6 or more development teams of affordable housing providers share their proposals in response to a well crafted RFP.



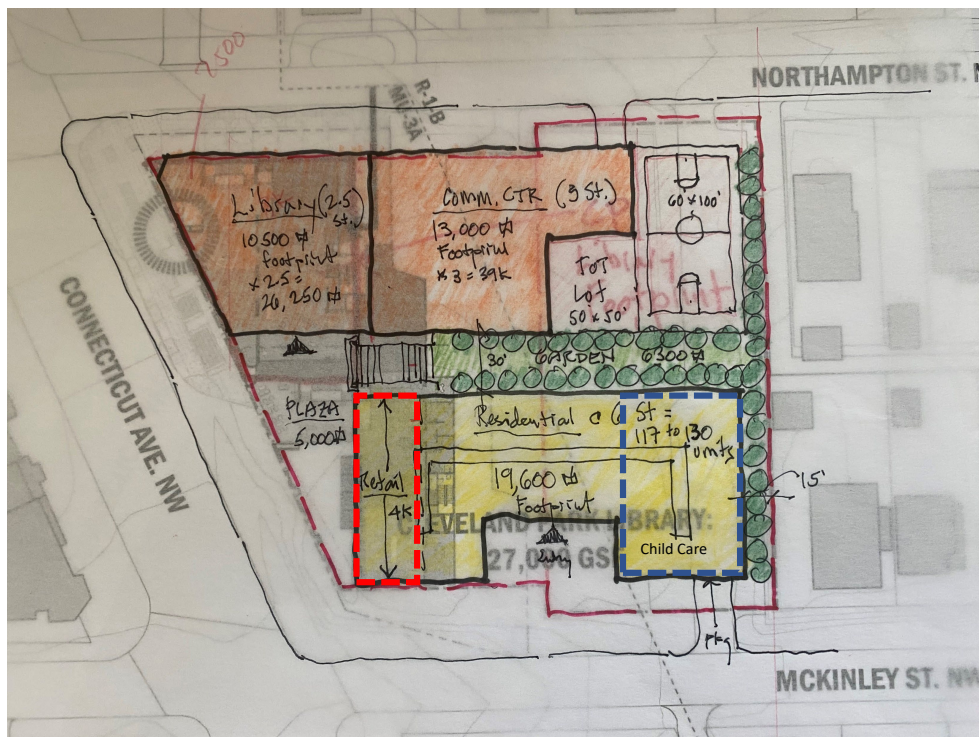
**Cleveland Park Library**  
Scale overlay



11,000 sf footprint

2.5 levels, about 26,000gsf

07-05-2023



Does not account for any heritage trees, probably the library and CC would be three levels, but given the grade, one level below grade would be pretty straightforward.

Footprint of the library is the same area as CP, slightly different geometry.

The stairs would lead to a garden that could have the tot lot and basketball court which are shown the same size as what exists today.

Set back is 15' from the houses on McKinley. No accounting for the 45 degree angle slope as yet.

Retail facing west on the plaza of the residential building, 4k sf. Child care at 7,000sf, possibly 50 to 75 children.

Best not to make the plaza too big, this seems like plenty given the very wide sidewalk.

07-05-2023