

**Open Letter to Community from Councilmember Kate Kennedy, District One**  
**Regarding Community Center in North College Park**  
*August 2018*

As discussion of a possible community center continues, I want to express, again, my excitement for the idea. Community Centers provide a space to gather and foster relationships with neighbors as well as a space to provide programming. As a former Girl Scout volunteer and staff member, I know how difficult it is to find community spaces open to groups such as youth and seniors. These activities are important for people of all ages, and I believe the City of College Park could play a role in providing such space.

As an elected official of the City of College Park, I also have a responsibility to ensure proper planning and budgeting. Having a community center in North College Park that provides space and programming is a tremendous goal and should not be rushed or forced into the budget. To ensure proper due diligence is reached, we will need a fully researched and implementable plan, and on that, there is still work to be done.

Some questions that need to be discussed and answered:

- **Residents' taxes currently go to a county-level entity called Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning (M-NCPPC); does the city want to invest additional tax dollars to supplement what the county is already doing?** Currently there are multiple types of taxes College Park residents pay to Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) to support county-level work with parks and recreation. Do we, as a city, want to take on this additional responsibility with additional costs to our tax payers? This is a larger conversation that needs to include the entire city. There are good arguments to be made on either side, and we must not rush into a proposal without understanding how it relates to the larger picture.
- **Are other county resources being used to capacity and could we provide services that bridge any gaps?** M-NCPPC currently runs a community center in College Park that is about 2 miles south of the Hollywood Commercial District. If it is not meeting our community's needs, could we find a way to advocate so it does? If transportation is a problem, could the city provide buses? Are there other ways we can partner with this center to fulfill our needs before investing in an additional center?
- **What does a full budget for a project like this look like?** We need a full examination of expenses for a project like this including operating expenses like rent, utilities, insurance, staff, supplies, etc. In addition, we need to know about one-time capital expenses such as furniture and other set-up fees. A complete budget will give us a clearer picture of the financial impact this will have on the tax payers in College Park.
- **Does the level of demand justify a community center?** A community center in North College Park will be a significant investment of tax payer money, and we need to ensure there is a demand to sustain the space and program. This year, we expanded our seniors program, which currently serves around 20 people on a regular basis. There are other programs in the city that would like to use a space like yoga classes, Girl and Boy Scout troops, and arts programming. The city should work with these groups to assess the needs they have and if our proposed space would fill them.
- **How would prioritizing this project affect other projects?** We have many great projects underway in North College Park, including renovating Duvall Field, building Gateway Park, and redesigning the Hollywood Commercial District Streetscape. These are all ideas that are already underway and in the budget. It is important that we understand how all projects fit together, because when we insist on one project taking a priority, there are consequences to other projects. As a community, we may decide a community center should move up in priority. This would mean we need to remove something else from the list of projects.

A community center in North College Park is a fantastic idea and renting space in an empty storefront in the Hollywood Commercial District has multiple benefits. I support gathering information and building momentum in the community to support this project.

I look forward to talking with neighbors about this idea and potentially presenting a fully formed proposal to the full City Council in the future. If you have any thoughts or questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [kkennedy@collegeparkmd.gov](mailto:kkennedy@collegeparkmd.gov) or via cell at 202-400-1501.

-Kate