

MARCH 24, 2025



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GREATER CAPITOL HEIGHTS IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

NEWS UPDATE



Repurposing the Historic Fairmont Heights High School Will Both Honor and Expand Its Rich Legacy

Several months ago, the Prince George's County government decided it did not have any use for the historic Fairmont Heights High School property at 1401 Nye Street, which it inherited—for free—from Prince George's County Public Schools in 2023.

It wants to sell off the 15-acre property to the highest bidder. While that might seem reasonable at first blush, it's ultimately a "penny wise and pound foolish" idea.

Instead, the county should keep title to the land and allow GCHIC—a nonprofit public charity working to revitalize inner-Beltway communities in central Prince George's County—to ground lease and redevelop the site into a vibrant new mixed-use transit-oriented center that reflects the will and the spirit of the community.

This would allow the county not only to preserve a critical piece of African

American educational and social history but also meet the modern needs of an urban area that has experienced decades of disinvestment. In addition, the site's proximity to two Metrorail stations makes it perfectly positioned to become a truly sustainable community that integrates educational, residential, and community services.

Transforming a Historic Icon Into a Modern, Multi-Dimensional Community Center

Established in 1950 as one of only two segregated high schools serving Black Prince Georgians, the historic Fairmont Heights High School stands as a landmark of educational excellence and social progress. That rich history offers a unique learning resource that can be integrated into community programs and spaces in a new development that transforms the site into a living laboratory for urban planning, social equity, and innovative educational practices.

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GCHIC's redevelopment concept envisions a dynamic, transit-oriented neighborhood center that goes beyond traditional educational functions to address pressing community challenges:

- **Housing Diversity:** Incorporate both affordable and market-rate multifamily residential units alongside dedicated housing for active seniors. Townhouses and other “missing middle” housing at the edges of the development will provide a logical transition to the higher densities in the interior. This diverse housing mix ensures that the community remains inclusive and that residents from various economic backgrounds benefit from the redevelopment.
- **Healthy Food Choices:** The inclusion of a full-service grocery store is crucial for addressing local food desert conditions, ensuring that residents inside and outside of the new development have access to fresh and nutritious food. This not only improves quality of life but also supports public health—an essential component of a thriving educational ecosystem.
- **Community-Centered:** The redevelopment will include an adaptive reuse of a portion of the historic school building, such as a museum or history center, that preserves the legacy of the school and its alumni. There will also be additional spaces, such as a recreation center or community theater, where today's students (and their adult lifelong learners) can socialize and enjoy each other's creativity. Finally, there will be sufficient neighborhood-scaled office and retail space to create an 18- to 24-hour live-work-play community.
- **Transit Connectivity:** To better leverage the site's proximity to transit, a new neighborhood street will be constructed across Beaverdam Creek to provide a direct connection to Cheverly Metro Station. This will bring the station within a half mile, or 10-minute walk, of the new development.

Community Reinvestment is Sound Fiscal and Social Policy

Prince George's County's taxpayers have already invested a significant portion of their local property taxes into the historic Fairmont Heights High School. The county should not be so quick to sell off this valuable surplus school property. Instead, it should hold on to it and let it continue to benefit the community. By allowing GCHIC to ground lease and redevelop the site, the county can stimulate local economic growth while reinvesting in the community. This path would yield much better long-term returns than a short sale of the property to a private bidder could accomplish.

GCHIC's proposed redevelopment concept will generate thousands of temporary construction jobs and ongoing operational jobs, thereby stimulating the local economy and likely catalyzing new private sector investments. This community-centered project, with its many vibrant gathering places, will nurture lifelong learning and social cohesion and foster a sense of ownership and pride among residents.

GCHIC Needs Your Help to Keep Historic Fairmont Heights in the Community

The redevelopment of the old Fairmont Heights High School site is more than a preservation project: it's a transformative investment in our community's future. By retaining public ownership and partnering with GCHIC to ground lease and redevelop this historic asset, Prince George's County can honor its rich legacy while creating a vibrant, transit-oriented neighborhood center.



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Here's How You Can Help Keep the Historic Fairmont Heights High School in the Community

*Scan the QR code below
to sign GCHIC's petition
and show your support!*



Elections Have Consequences—Even If You Don't Vote in Them

Earlier this month, Prince George's County held a special primary election for County Executive and the District 5 County Council member. The election presented a prime opportunity for residents to shape the leadership of their local government in the wake of the return of Donald Trump to the White House.

Yet, after weeks of candidate forums, stacks of campaign mailers, and endless opportunities to research and engage, **only five percent of eligible voters cast a ballot.** That number isn't just disappointing; it's alarming.

Low voter turnout is not a new issue, but it is a persistent and deeply troubling one. Elections are the foundation of our democracy—so the question we all should be asking is this: **how can we expect a responsive, effective, and accountable government when so few people participate in selecting our leaders?**

Local elections matter. County officials make decisions on education, public safety, transportation, economic development, and countless other issues that shape our daily lives. When voter turnout is this low, we end up with leadership that may not reflect the true will of the people. Worse, it sends a message that the electorate is disengaged, making it easier for elected officials to avoid accountability.



A democracy is only as strong as the participation of its citizens. If we want better schools, safer communities, and smarter development in Prince George's County, we need voters who are informed, engaged, and active. Otherwise, we'll continue to see leadership that doesn't truly represent the interests and needs of the people.

We must treat every election—special or otherwise—with the importance it deserves. We must hold ourselves accountable. If we're frustrated with local government, we can't just complain—we need to show up and vote! **The future of our county depends on our participation.**

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LET US HEAR
FROM YOU!



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SCAN ME



Help Us Plan for Greater Walkability and Connectivity In the CHARM Center

Greater Capitol Heights Improvement Corporation (GCHIC) has received a Technical Assistance Grant from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to help jumpstart a groundbreaking **Transportation Infrastructure and Economic Development (TIED) Plan for the Capitol Heights-Addison Road Metro (CHARM) regional activity center**.

The CHARM Center is a transit hub that sits at the spine of the Greater Capitol Heights area. With two WMATA Metrorail stations just a short walk apart from each other, it is arguably one of the most transit-connected locations in Prince George's County. Unfortunately, the area suffers from poor street connectivity, lack of walkable design, and decades of disinvestment, which have stunted CHARM's overall growth potential.

The TIED Plan is envisioned as a clear roadmap for targeted infrastructure upgrades and catalytic mixed-use projects. Its goal is to boost walkability, enhance transit access, and ignite economic growth in this vital, yet underserved, region.

Pending receipt of the necessary additional funds, GCHIC will team up with expert planners, engineers, and economic consultants to craft a detailed plan. Building on work from the developing [Central Avenue-Blue/Silver Line Corridor Sector Plan](#), the TIED Plan will offer sharper and more focused recommendations to improve the transportation network specifically throughout the CHARM Center.

Community input is key to the success of the TIED Plan. GCHIC is committed to ensuring that revitalization in the CHARM Center benefits existing residents as it creates new opportunities for the broader region. We have already begun preliminary planning for the project, but the final TIED Plan will depend heavily on your ideas and input.

Join us to shape a more walkable, connected, and economically vibrant CHARM Center. Sign up with GCHIC today to receive updates and invitations to future TIED Plan events. Scan the QR code below:

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