



City of Takoma Park

## City Manager Comments

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### Report of July 8, 2020

#### *Information to Share*

#### COVID-19 Related Information

##### Healthy Business Initiative

The newly launched [Takoma Park Healthy Business Initiative](#) was created in response to the ongoing needs of our local businesses who are working to make changes to their operations to address COVID-19 challenges. The initiative includes four distinct support programs:

- 1) Outdoor Seating & Hand Sanitizing Stations placed at the Takoma Streetery on Laurel and throughout the commercial areas in Old Town, the Crossroads, and Flower Ave. Delivery of hand sanitizing stations are expected in 3-4 weeks.
- 2) Public Health Signage packages provided to all storefronts that receive clients and customers. Delivery of signage is expected in 3-4 weeks.
- 3) Business Recovery Cleaning for businesses that have owners or employees test positive for COVID-19
- 4) Healthy Business Grant program to support additional needs and changes to business operations.

##### Next COVID-19 Testing Being Planned

City staff have been working with Montgomery County Health and Human Services staff on planning the next pop-up COVID-19 testing event. It will likely be on Thursday, July 16 at the Takoma Park Recreation Center. Advanced registration will be required. Information will be shared in the next couple of days. The County was thrilled at the turn-out from the last testing event and so are happy to repeat the process, with some modifications based on comments received.

##### Report on Laurel Avenue Closure and Survey

In support of Takoma Park's small businesses and in order to advance public health requirements, the City Council authorized the closure of the northbound side of Laurel Avenue for outdoor seating, sales, and customer pick-up, beginning June 12. The southbound lane of Laurel and the median remain unchanged. The handicap parking space is relocated across Laurel, on the southbound side. Additional handicap spaces are located across Eastern in DC and in the parking lot behind the Laurel Avenue storefronts. The operation of the US Post Office on Laurel is unchanged.

To date, staff has received 54 responses on the City website feedback form provided for resident input, with approximately 80 percent of the respondents residing in Takoma Park. Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated they had visited Laurel Avenue since the closure, and 87% walked there at least one time.

When asked “have you observed issues as a result of Laurel Avenue's closure?”, many respondents observed no issues (55.6%) with some residents stating that they observed driver confusion and people not following physical distancing guidelines. Early on, some respondents mentioned the need for additional outdoor seating, which has been addressed.

When asked “Have you observed any impacts of the Laurel Avenue closure on adjacent streets?” a majority of respondents (66.7%) observed no issues, with a few stating they observed driver confusion and speeding cars.

When asked for additional comments, approximately 15% of respondents added that they would like to see both sides of Laurel Ave closed and 11% stated that they'd like to see the change made permanently.

Here are averages for following questions:

On a scale of 1 to 5 how well were people observing social distancing when using Laurel Avenue? AVG = 3.685

On a scale of 1 to 5 how safe do you feel on Laurel Avenue during the closure? AVG = 3.851

On a scale of 1 to 5 how supportive are you of the closure? AVG = 3.814

Staff will continue to evaluate the closure of Laurel and review the community feedback.