



## Press Release

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**Contact: Lucy Neher**

**Special Projects Coordinator, City of Takoma Park**

**lucyn@takomaparkmd.gov**

**301-891-7235**

### **City of Takoma Park Receives Community Change Grant from America Walks**

Takoma Park, MD – City of Takoma Park is honored to receive one of the 19 Community Change Grants awarded by America Walks for use in 2020. The program, now in its fifth year and supported by organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control, Lyft, the National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability (NCHPAD), Oregon Walks, and WalkBoston, provides funds that support grassroots efforts aimed at creating safe, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and move.

The City of Takoma Park was selected from over 400 applications for projects that demonstrate the passion, creativity, and commitment of local walking champions. Awardees will work with America Walks and other partners to complete their projects and share their lessons with other community change agents. While the projects and programs work to improve walkability, the results of each grant will have a positive change in many areas of that community.

“At a time when pedestrian fatalities are at an all-time high and communities continue to try and find ways to be healthy, these grants provide support to those doing the hard, inspiring work at the local level,” said Executive Director Kate Kraft. “We are excited to work with these communities and use their efforts and stories to encourage other walking champions.”

Takoma Park Safe Routes to School envisions one mile themed sensory/fitness route titled “Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes.” The route intersects with two elementary schools and one middle school, Takoma Park Community Center and Library and Takoma-Piney Branch Local Park. Students, teachers, and parents can begin the route at any point to enjoy a 15-30 minute walk enhanced with fitness activities and themed exercises. The proposed messaging will relate to inclusion, mindfulness, and kindness while the fitness prompts to engage the walkers in bursts of activity. For example, users may be prompted to do five jumping jacks and with each one say something kind about someone. Pavement markings will be stenciled with paint or pre-made decals. Students today, especially in Takoma Park, have the advantage of growing up in an era marked with increased tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of differences in race, gender, or ability. However, we still struggle as a nation to address equity. The themed-route, “Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes,” provides a safe space for dialogue and exploration of these issues. Using the route together as a class, family, or group of friends gives walkers a break from the routine and a time to move forward, both physically and emotionally. The planned route is ADA compliant.

*About America Walks:* America Walks is a national non-profit organization dedicated to providing communities and advocates the resources to advance safe, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and be physically active for all. The organization provides its diverse network of over 30,000 advocates and hundreds of local, state, and national organizations with the tools, resources, and experts needed to build capacity, gain experiences, and successfully promote walking and walkability. Learn more at [www.americawalks.org](http://www.americawalks.org)