

Introduced by: Councilmember

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

Resolution No. 2018-

Resolution Regarding Montgomery College Math and Science Building

WHEREAS, Montgomery College (the “College”), founded in 1946, is Maryland’s oldest community college, the first of its three campuses was established in 1950, and it lies in part within the 1976 Takoma Park National Register Historic District; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus is distinct due to its residential neighborhood setting, compact site, and proximity and adjacency to residences both within the Takoma Park National Register Historic District as well as the local Montgomery County Takoma Park Historic District; and

WHEREAS, the College, on November 28, 2018, presented to the City and community members the plans for the Catherine and Isiah Leggett Math and Science Building on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus; and

WHEREAS, following a two-year process, including Community Conversations co-hosted by the Takoma Park City Council and Montgomery College, Montgomery College President DeRionne Pollard announced her decision regarding the location of the College’s new Math-Science Building on September 29, 2017; and

WHEREAS, concerns have been raised about the proposed square footage of the building given the size of the site; and

WHEREAS, while President Pollard selected a site different from the one recommended by the City Council, a number of County Council members, and many residents, the College committed to a number of design directives in a letter to the Mayor, October 9, 2017, as follows:

- Keep the current setback of Falcon Hall—no closer to Takoma Avenue than the existing Falcon Hall.
- Ensure the height is no more than two stories along Takoma Avenue—similar to Falcon Hall.
- Minimize windows along Takoma Avenue to reduce lighting impacts.
- Protect the park-like green space along Takoma Avenue.
- Locate height and rooftop air units away from Takoma Avenue nearer the campus interior.
- Maximize the building’s width to lower height.
- Take advantage of topography to minimize perceived height.

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- Hire an architect experienced with designing facilities in historic districts and residential neighborhoods to ensure the exterior respects the campus location; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery College held a series of design charrettes with community engagement in Summer and Fall of 2018, an intensive planning activity where neighbors, community members, students, and other stakeholders collaborated with the designers on a vision for design of the building. This process sought to balance the needs of students, neighbors, the community, and fiscal prudence; and

WHEREAS, while significant design improvements were made during the course of the charrette process, there are still some questions and concerns among nearby residents regarding massing and height; parking and traffic; the visibility of and potential noise from rooftop mechanical equipment; and the building’s exterior appearance; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park Master Plan, adopted in December 2000 recommends “maintaining compatibility with adjacent residential communities” as the College expands; and

WHEREAS, the 2002 Agreement Between the City of Takoma Park, Historic Takoma, Inc., and Montgomery County requires the College to consult with the City and the community regarding “any alteration, construction, or revitalization of the exterior of the existing buildings.” This Agreement is incorporated into The Takoma Park City Code, Appendix A; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has found that the College’s proposal to enhance the science and math programming available to its diverse student body, many of whom reside in Takoma Park, through the development of a new Math and Science facility will help advance the City’s interest in encouraging investment in the community to reverse racial disparity trends as evidenced by the lack of significant representation of people of color in the fields of math and science.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Takoma Park recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral application as proposed with the following provisions:

Section 1. The Council recognizes the important value the College has for the community and is committed to working constructively and cooperatively with the College regarding its redevelopment plans.

Section 2. The Council supports redevelopment of the Takoma Park campus with the use of design guidelines and massing standards which reflect and preserve the architectural integrity and residential character and scale of the adjoining neighborhood and are compatible with the historic districts.

Section 3. The Council appreciates the College’s commitment to a public engagement process in the development of the design of the building and expects the College to continue that process through the refinement of the design, .

The Council expects the College to consult with the community on construction activities that affect residents and users of Belle Ziegler Park, and to develop a process for resolving complaints or concerns about such activities.

Section 4. The Council expects the College to continue to work with City staff on topics of stormwater management, tree protection and replanting, and other issues of design, construction and community impact as they arise.

Section 5. The Council looks forward to working in partnership with the College in the future to meet the needs of the community and the diverse population of students.

Section 6. The City asks that, as the building design is considered in the Mandatory Referral process:

a) the current proposed setbacks on Takoma Avenue and Fenton Street not be decreased;

b) the height and massing of the building not be increased from the plans presented to Council on November 28, 2018, and to the extent possible, the College continues to explore design elements to soften the height impact of the building.

c) the potential impact of parking changes; traffic plans; the size, appearance and noise of rooftop mechanical equipment; lighting and glare; and changes to sunlight patterns on the residential neighborhood be carefully assessed through appropriate studies and the impacts of these factors on the neighborhood be mitigated to the extent possible;

d) the proposed location and configuration of the building’s science laboratories and the plans for handling of hazardous materials and atmospheric venting are compatible, taking into account relevant scientific standards and guidelines, with its close proximity to the residential neighborhood and Belle Ziegler Park from a health and safety standpoint;

e) exterior design features are to the extent possible compatible with the historic neighborhood architecture; and

f) the design and any precedent it may set be considered within the larger context of the campus and neighborhood, including potential future College construction plans.