



## Takoma Park City Council Meeting – June 27, 2018 Agenda Item 5

### Work Session

Continued Discussion of Takoma Junction Project and Proposed Site Plan Adjustments

### Recommended Council Action

Continue to discuss findings from traffic studies and proposed adjustments to the draft site plan.

### Context with Key Issues

In order to confirm particular elements that should be included in the draft Resolution concerning the draft site plan for the redevelopment of the City's property at Takoma Junction, the Council is asked to consider the letter from Adrian Washington of Neighborhood Development Company (NDC) on changes that have been made and are proposed to be made to the draft site plan in response to Council comments, and the information from the two traffic studies presented at the June 20 Work Session.

### Draft Site Plan Information

As the Council has been considering first a concept plan and now a draft site plan for the City's redevelopment project, there have been a number of changes made to the plans and there have been commitments made on changes that will be made to the draft site plan before it is submitted to Montgomery County to begin the County's development review process. Many of the changes and commitments are identified in the attached letter from Adrian Washington of NDC. This letter and the draft site plan drawings presented to Council earlier in the spring would be referred to in the Council's Resolution on the draft site plan to be considered in July.

### Traffic Study Information

There are several traffic-related items underway on separate tracks. One track is the traffic study performed by The Traffic Group, hired by NDC, which is required for the Montgomery County development review process for the Takoma Junction redevelopment project. A separate study is the one done by the A. Morton Thomas Company (AMT) for the City to also look at elements being considered by The Traffic Group, review impacts to nearby intersections and streets, and look at bike, pedestrian and transit routes and safety. As part of their studies, both The Traffic Group and AMT looked at reconfiguration options for the Takoma Junction intersection of Ethan Allen and Carroll Avenues (MD 410 and MD 195) to address traffic congestion and safety issues at that location.

Some of the main take-aways of the two traffic studies are the following:

- With the recent changes to the timing of the traffic signals in the Junction area intersections, the traffic level is just barely acceptable by County traffic standards (just under an 80 second delay)
- Projects that are approved or in the review pipeline but not yet active would add just enough vehicles to push the level of service at the Takoma Junction intersection into the "failing" category before consideration of the additional vehicles expected from the City's project
- Reconfiguration of the intersection to align Carroll Avenue with Sycamore Avenue (as both traffic study firms recommend) would significantly improve the level of service and safety. For example, rather than a delay of over 80 seconds, the configuration recommended by The Traffic Group would reduce the vehicular delay to approximately 30 seconds. The reconfiguration also allows for the placement of bus stops out of the main travel lanes and provides for safer pedestrian crossings.

While these studies were underway, the Maryland State Highway Administrator acknowledged that there were design and safety problems with the Takoma Junction intersection that have existed for many years. He stated that those issues are not related to the proposed development project and correcting the problems should be the responsibility of the State Highway Administration. He alerted his staff to the issue and has committed to working to address the situation.

In addition to all of these, there are other transportation-related matters to address in the Takoma Junction area as well as across the City. For example, there is interest in improving safety when entering or exiting side streets that intersect with MD 410 or MD 195 and there are concerns about parking and loading now and during future periods of construction for all of the businesses in the Junction area. How cut-through traffic affects neighborhoods and how passage to and through the City takes place are also areas of interest. Some of these matters can be addressed in the near future and some may need to be addressed in future years as resources allow.

### **Council Priority**

Community Development for an Improved and Equitable Quality of Life

### **Environmental Impact of Action**

The Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments confirm that the site was formerly a dump which was paved over for the parking lot. The redevelopment project will do the required remediation to clean up the property while preserving almost half the site as green space and much of the roof as a green roof. Projects of infill development in neighborhoods that are already served by good public transportation, roads and other public services provide environmental and economic benefits. The project will be designed and constructed in a manner that satisfies the requirements for LEED Gold or higher certification from the U.S. Green Building Council or an equivalent certification.

An anticipated benefit of the proposed traffic study and the implementation of identified mitigation measures is a reduction in carbon emissions from idling vehicles as well as improved conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling through the area.

### **Fiscal Impact of Action**

The transformation of the parking lot to an active commercial property will add to the City tax base. The cost of the development will be borne by the developer. The property, currently exempt from real and personal property taxes, will no longer be exempt when NDC takes control of the property in September. In addition, NDC will begin paying annual ground lease rent at that time.

The cost of the City's traffic study, conducted by A. Morton Thomas and Associates, is \$42,500.

### **Racial Equity Impact Statement**

At this time, we are unable to determine whether any group could be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively by potential changes in traffic patterns and/or infrastructure.

### **Attachments and Links**

Letter from Adrian Washington (June 20, 2018)

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/takoma-junction-redevelopment/>