



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/>

June 20, 2018

Mayor Kate Stewart
City Council of Takoma Park
Takoma Park, MD 20912

via email

Dear Mayor Stewart and City Councilmembers,

Thank you for all the hard work you have put in over past four years. In the past two months, as we have always, we have heard and taken to heart the feedback we have received from you and the Takoma Park community. We want to take this opportunity to revisit our vision for Takoma Junction, explain the changes we have made to our plan based on your feedback, and assure you that we will continue to work to respond to the issues that have been raised by you and the community as the project develops and our operational plans are finalized.

Our Project:

Takoma Junction is designed to be a community oriented mixed-use commercial development that will serve to bring more vibrancy and sustainability to the urban fabric at Takoma Junction in a context-sensitive building that will contribute to the memorable character of Takoma Park. Approximately 22,822 square feet of new ground-level retail space, 25,070 square feet of second-story office and neighborhood-serving amenities will be introduced to the neighborhood. A sub-grade parking structure will provide parking for up to 72 cars for the public. The building will be generously pulled back from its neighbors on both sides, and will preserve the existing wooded area to the rear.

What We Have Heard:

We have heard your comments regarding the concept plan presented this past fall and, in response to the concerns detailed in your October 25, 2017 Resolution, we have made a series of modifications to the design of the building and to the preliminary site plan.

We have heard and understood your concerns about the overall design of the building. In response:

- We eliminated the third story in favor of a two-story structure, with a series of volumes and different material expression that help break down the scale to reflect permanence, sobriety, and vibrancy.
- We will work with the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and its staff to ensure that the height of the building and the proposed parapet are contextually appropriate.

- We extended the set back of the building an additional 10', creating an opportunity for art to engage with the public space at the west end of the property and providing room for an 8' clear pedestrian path and, 2'-8' seating zone along the remainder of the facade for café seating, benches, etc., and a separated loading path along the lay-by at 7' width.
- We added an elevator stair tower on the west side of the building that signals the beginning of the project, providing a gateway element and allowing for an opportunity to reflect a more modern element within the composition.
- We are committed to working cooperatively and in partnership with TPSS during mediation to locating and installing an additional elevator at the east end of the building that operates between the lower level garage and street level to accommodate TPSS customers.
- We refined the depth of high-quality retail space to drive the ground plane building envelope – minimizing corridor spaces and vertical circulation – in order to optimize visibility, public realm connectivity and retail engagement with the sidewalk.
- We added operable windows on the second-floor to offer natural ventilation and more participation in the activity on the street.
- We redesigned the rear of the building to include multiple window openings on both the first and second floors of the building, as well as opportunities for light and air at the garage level, creating a more visually attractive facade.

We have heard and share your interest in developing a project that is environmentally sustainable. In response:

- We explored opportunities to meet and exceed sustainability goals beyond our LEED Gold commitment. In addition to the building-oriented sustainability techniques we had planned, we incorporated into our site plan numerous opportunities to capitalize on multi-modal access, pedestrian-first design methodology, a bio-retention storm water facility, a vegetative roof, and environmental mitigation.
- We incorporated trees and other plantings in the public realm with soil depth appropriate to the needs of a thriving living edge.
- We have committed to creating a Forest Conservation Easement on the rear of the lot – focusing on passivity and health of the sloped portion of the site.
- We confirmed that the rear of the site will be disturbed minimally in order to construct the building, recognizing that other clean-up may be warranted in order to eradicate invasive species, provide a healthier slope stabilization strategy and promote a naturalistic feel.

We have heard and understood your desire to create a welcoming and accessible public space for residents to engage with one another. In response:

- We increased the size of the public space to approximately 2,700 SF with 40' distance of public gathering space that is not focused on outdoor dining but shared space for residents, visitors and anyone else in the public realm.
- We will, in the event the location or length of the lay-by is modified during the Montgomery County Development Review process and encroaches into the planned public space, explore design options to ensure that the amount of space that has been designated for public use is preserved.
- We added colorful and flexible benches and seating opportunities along the length of the site that are shielded from the lay-by via bollards at the edge.
- We refined the project to include design elements that will encourage people of all ages and abilities to linger, socialize and shop and dine at the Junction.
- We are open to providing expanded access to the roof top area and will, as our operational plans are solidified, provide controlled opportunities for members of the community to enjoy the planned patio area.
- We welcome the opportunity to partner with the City to program the public realm and the public space providing opportunities such as musical performances or the scheduling of food trucks in the lay-by area.

We have heard and understood your concerns about the handling of refuse generated by building tenants. In response:

- We have added facilities for 4-yard dumpsters that would be accommodated in a corral, locked and outfitted with tamper-proof hose bib, a floor drain and an exhaust system for smells.
- We have confirmed that the project can accommodate all of the trash generated by ground floor uses in three dumpsters (three pickups per week). The dumpsters would be located on site and ported to curbside at the appropriate pickup times.
- We have identified opportunities at the rear of the building which would allow for the expansion of the space for additional dumpster storage if more trash will be produced by changing the tenant use type.
- We are committed to ensuring that none of the trash generated by building tenants would be left outside and that the dumpsters would not be stored in the public realm.

We have heard and share your interest in minimizing the impact of the project on the ability of the

Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op (TPSS) to receive deliveries. In response:

- We have increased the lay-by lane to 12' in width to accommodate the largest vehicles expected to make deliveries by TSPP Co-op to the site and to move safely out of the existing eastbound lanes. To clarify any misperceptions, the lay-by lane is being built completely outside of the existing four-lane roadbed of Carroll Avenue and is designed to be used for delivery, trash and recycling collection. The Lay-by lane will be deeded to the public (presumably State Highway) and will not be controlled by us.
- We will increase the paved width of the service corridor up to a 10 feet to ensure that deliveries can be safely and easily conveyed by hand truck and to facilitate the removal of trash and recyclables. The site plan includes an additional buffer located between the paved service corridor and the wall of the TPSS Co-op building of approximately 2 feet.

Our vision for the Takoma Junction project has always and continues to be to develop a project which contributes to and enhances this unique, vibrant and thriving commercial neighborhood. We are committed to the development of a truly memorable, useful and beautiful public realm and a project which demonstrates our commitment to sustainability in design.

Reasonable Accommodation for the Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op (TPSS)

We have agreed to participate in mediation with TPSS Board Members - facilitated by a mediator of their choosing - to define and address what additional actions are needed to provide reasonable parking and delivery accommodations during construction and upon completion of the project. We look forward to this opportunity and are hopeful that we will be able to reach agreement on the following:

- Parking for Customers and Employees – We are committed to working cooperatively and in partnership with TPSS to address their parking needs. We have offered, in writing, to provide dedicated parking spaces in the garage at fair market rates. Parking options for use during construction have been identified and provided to the TPSS Board.
- Elevator Access to Garage - We are committed to working cooperatively and in partnership with TPSS to install an additional elevator for their customers at the opposite end of the building that goes between the lower level garage and street level, perhaps directly into their store.
- Access to Lay-by Lane – We are committed to working cooperatively and in partnership with TPSS to coordinate delivery schedules and, to the extent possible, facilitate the use of the existing loading dock on the east side of their building for smaller truck deliveries.
- Trash Storage and Pick-up – We are committed to working cooperatively and in partnership with TPSS to provide dedicated trash storage and coordinated refuse and recycling pick-up at fair market rates.
- Expansion Options - We have offered, in writing, potential space within the building for the expansion of TPSS at fair market rates.



We look forward to continuing our work with Council and the community to move the Takoma Junction project forward, and we are also happy to work with Co-op through mediation to address potential operating issues.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adrian G Washington", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Adrian G Washington
CEO and Founder