



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – November 14, 2018 Agenda Item 8

Work Session

Review of Scope of Work for Public Land Management Plan

Recommended Council Action

None, discussion only

Context with Key Issues

Public land in Takoma Park includes publicly owned parks, plazas, and open greenspace as well as public right of way. As Takoma Park is a dense, largely built-out municipality, there are limited opportunities to acquire additional land, thus highlighting the need for a plan to guide future decision-making and effectively manage existing public land. In the past two decades the City has endorsed or adapted multiple transportation, land-use, and environmental sustainability plans. These plans generally include recommendations for public parks, public right of way, and other facilities which may conflict with one another. These conditions necessitate a broader, coordinated planning effort which addresses public land in the City holistically and provides coordinated goals and priorities.

Staff proposes that the City develop a Public Land Management Plan to provide a vision, goals, and guidance on how public land will be used, maintained, and acquired in Takoma Park. The aim of a public land management plan is to be adopted by Council and used in future decision making processes. The plan will provide a framework for developing policies and programs to achieve defined objectives and set expectations for priorities and public improvements within the City of Takoma Park.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All; Environmentally Sustainable Community; Community Development for an Improved, Equitable Quality of Life

Environmental Considerations

Effective maintenance of public and open space provides tree cover, stormwater management, groundwater recharge, benefits to ecosystems and habitats, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and improved air quality.

Fiscal Considerations

The development of a Public Land Management Plan will involve City Staff time. Consultant services for design and public engagement may be necessary and will be addressed as the plan moves forward.

Racial Equity Considerations

The Public Land Management Plan will evaluate the way that public land and space is distributed in the City of Takoma Park, including the demographic and racial make-up of locations around the City. The plan will aim to address these concerns and ensure that access to usable public space is equitably distributed throughout the City moving forward.

Attachments and Links

- [Public Land Management Plan: Project Page](#)
- Draft Scope of Work

Scope of Work: Public Land Management Plan

Introduction and Definitions

In Takoma Park, a robust assortment of land and properties is owned and maintained by the City, Montgomery County agencies, and the Maryland State Highway Administration. Within the city's incorporated limits, 7% of the land area consists of publicly owned parks and 25% of land area consists of public rights-of-way, which may provide space for social, environmental, and economic uses. Additional open space amenities under public and institutional ownership offer varying degrees of public access, such as the Takoma Park Community Center, Montgomery County Public Schools, Washington Adventist University campus, Takoma Park Recreation Center, etc.

Cross-jurisdictional complexities, limited staff and funding resources, varying levels of public open space quality, and the evolving needs of city residents require a comprehensive city-wide Public Land Management Plan. In the absence of such a plan, strategic decision-making is constrained, and expectations are difficult to set for existing City-owned property and future property acquisition.

This Scope of Work defines the context, purpose and major issues to resolve for the City's Public Land Management Plan and highlights the process and time line proposed by City staff to develop the Plan.

Public land is broadly defined as an area or place that is open, publicly owned, and accessible to the public at large. This includes parks (operated by both the City of Takoma Park and M-NCPPC), plazas, and open green space. Public right-of-way within the City also comprises an important aspect of public space. This includes City streets, sidewalks, some gardens, medians, neighborhood paths, and paper streets. The plan will also examine programming and activation of these spaces including farmer's markets, potential for street closure, public art, and other activities to occur in City right-of-way.

Background/Context

The purpose of a Public Land Management Plan is to be adopted by the Council to be used in future decision making processes regarding public land in the City of Takoma Park. The Plan will provide a framework for developing policies and programs to achieve defined objectives while setting expectations for prioritization and timing of public space improvements in Takoma Park.

Between 2000 and 2016, multiple land use, transportation, and environmental sustainability plans were adopted or endorsed by the City with recommendations on public parks, facilities and rights-of-way. The 1994 Open Space Plan (amended in 1999) provided recommendations to acquire undeveloped private properties as open space. A second part of the plan intended to address broader open space, recreation, and environmental goals was not developed. The City implements recommendations of these plans, and pursues additional social, environmental, recreational and mobility improvements to public spaces. Yet these improvements are not in the service of a broader and coordinated planning effort with established goals or performance measures and may conflict with each other. The current Public Land Management Plan will build upon and update these previous plans based on current research, best practices, and changing attitudes toward public space.

Since the 1994 Open Space Plan was adopted, the City has acquired new properties, such as Dorothy Woods; implemented a variety of environmental and transportation improvements to public lands and rights-of-way; established a new dog park; made major improvements to the Community Center (including plans for Library expansion) and pursued the potential acquisition of the Recreation Center on New Hampshire Avenue. New innovations, regulations, and an ever-expanding set of needs identified by the residential and business communities in Takoma Park require the City to develop a proactive and coordinated plan for managing and

improving its public spaces. The intensifying impacts of climate change necessitate a holistic look at the way that public streets, curb space, and City right-of-way are utilized.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to establish a vision, with goals and performance measures on how public land will be effectively used, maintained, and expanded in Takoma Park. It will be an update to the City's 1994 Open Space Plan (amended in 1999), addressing components of management and maintenance. An emphasis will be placed on creative use of existing parks, properties, and rights-of-way that meet the existing and expected needs of the community. The plan will also address the creative reuse of parking and excess pavement and curb space, anticipating the movement away from single occupancy vehicles to autonomous vehicles, shared vehicles, and forms of more sustainable transportation.

The plan will be developed drawing on best practices in data analysis and performance measures as well as targeted public engagement. It will reflect existing and anticipated changes to the City's population and demographics, especially with respect to redevelopment around activity centers and transit facilities, such as Old Takoma, the New Ave corridor, and planned Purple Line.

Issues for Evaluation

- How should public land projects be prioritized, developed, designed, maintained, and funded?
- How should space with the potential for multiple purposes be managed and how should these uses be prioritized?
- What are the specific objectives for the City's network of parks and open spaces, and right-of-way network (including "paper streets"), as well as County-owned and maintained parks?
- What are the opportunities for partnerships with public agencies (e.g. M-NCPPC), the private sector, and community groups?
- What criteria should be used in the acquisition of future public land and proposals for activities in public space?
- Is public and open space equitably distributed throughout the City of Takoma Park?
- What are the metrics to evaluate the success and utility of public space in the City?
- How should public vs private benefit of public space be evaluated?

Goals

What goals should be set for the following criteria projects and programs to improve public spaces and activities in public right of way?

- social equity, accessibility, and ADA considerations
- racial equity considerations
- safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity
- understanding needs of autonomous vehicles
- creative use of parking and curb space
- incorporation of art, culture, and education
- advertising on public land (use of private funds in public space)
- sponsorships, grant opportunities, and donations
- stormwater management
- environmental health (stream restoration, invasive species removal, etc.)
- urban tree canopy
- other sustainability considerations

Community Outreach

- Online Survey to be open 3-6 months
 - Pop Up with City Staff in Parks in each ward to administer survey
- [Project Page](#) on City Website
- Interactive Online Map for Targeted Engagement
- Identify Under-represented Groups for Engagement
 - Charrette for children and teenagers
 - Individuals with disabilities for accessibility concerns
 - Presence in Wards 4, 5, 6 with Councilmembers
 - New Americans, individuals who speak English as a second language
- Online Community Engagement Forum
- Working Group Meetings with Community Stakeholders (4-5)
- Community Meetings (2)
- Newsletter Articles
- Social Media Outreach
- Draft Goals/Recommendations Meeting(s) (1-2)

Project Tasks/Deliverables and Draft Timeline:

1. Scope of Work-**November 2018**
 - Prepare a Scope of Work with project goals and necessary deliverables
2. Methodology Report-**Fall/Winter 2018**
 - Prepare a report on best practices and performance metrics for public land and urban parks management/planning that will inform the needs assessment and development of the plan (**In progress**)
3. Needs Assessment – **Fall 2018-Spring 2019**
 - Conduct [City Parks Amenities Inventory](#) (**completed**)
 - Administer survey of residents on public land (online questionnaire)-**Survey open 3-6 months**
 - “Pop-up” events with City staff in park in each ward to administer survey
 - Signs at City public space to direct residents to survey with URLs and QR codes
 - Perform demographic and spatial analysis (**In progress Fall 2018**)
 - Distance analysis of proximity to parks
 - Public input through online engagement tool, Survey Monkey, Seamless link for comment (**add to City Website**)
4. Draft Goals-**Spring 2019**
 - Develop goals based on existing policy framework, needs assessment and, methodology report
 - Refine draft goals with Stakeholder Working Group
 - Host public meeting to gather input on draft goals
 - General public meeting
 - Targeted meeting/charrette to children and teen users
 - Online engagement to gather input on draft goals
5. Draft Recommendations-**Spring 2019-Summer 2019**
 - Develop recommendations based on existing policy framework, needs assessment, methodology report, and public input on draft goals
 - Refine draft recommendations with Stakeholder Focus Group

November 7, 2018

- Host public meeting to gather input on draft recommendations
6. **Plan-Fall 2019**
- Specific recommendations will include goals/objectives/performance metrics for each of the “Issues” identified in the scope of work and outlined in the draft table of contents, with list of priorities for short, medium and long term horizons, categorized as capital projects, maintenance activities, and development of new programs/policies.
 - Present at City Council Work Session
7. **Approval-Winter 2019**
- City Council Approval and Adoption of Public Land Management Plan