



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – May 22, 2019 Agenda Item 3

Work Session

Laurel Avenue Street Closure

Recommended Council Action

Discuss and provide direction to staff

Context with Key Issues

The Planning Department is exploring the possibility of closing the northbound side of Laurel Avenue to vehicular traffic to create a bike and pedestrian boulevard. Closing the northbound lane would allow for:

- Increased public space for events and informal gatherings
- Improved accessibility to businesses for pedestrians, bicyclists and handicapped patrons
- Better sight lines and increased visual attractiveness of the area

City staff has coordinated with the Old Takoma Business Association which is supportive of the idea of a street closure and will assist with programming and business outreach. It is necessary to have some degree of formal programming in the space in the form of art installations or music to ensure that the space is utilized to the greatest extent possible.

The two main considerations of the design for the temporary or permanent closure are: 1) ensuring clear access to the local businesses and 2) ensuring adequate and accessible handicapped parking.

There could be potential conflict with some businesses due to the loss of approximately nine parking spaces. The Post Office may be most affected due to its faster turnover than adjacent businesses. It is anticipated that handicapped parking spaces will be located on both ends of the block on the southbound lane near the crosswalks, so that accessibility is convenient and safe. Parking on the southbound side of the street will be preserved. The private lot behind the businesses will not be affected.

Currently, Takoma Beverage Company and Kin Da are each leasing a space for outdoor seating and the street is fully closed weekly for the Takoma Park Farmer's Market which has established a successful precedent. If the closure of the Laurel Avenue northbound lane is made permanent, tree fencing and some other structural impediments can be removed or redesigned.

A pilot program for a set number of days could be implemented to test the success of the closure prior to a move to permanent or seasonal closure of the street.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All; Environmentally Sustainable Community

Environmental Considerations

The increase in public space as well as dedicated space for bikes and pedestrians helps to create a more livable community for all and supports more sustainable forms of transportation.

Fiscal Considerations

The conversion of Laurel Avenue into a pedestrian plaza can help to provide more street level access to local businesses and foster greater neighborhood interaction. Initially, the street may require more targeted enforcement by City police to ensure lack of vehicular access.

Racial Equity Considerations

The increased public space provided by a partial closure of Laurel Avenue could provide for meeting and event space for a variety of community groups. We do not believe this action will disproportionately impact any particular group.

Attachments and Links

- Traffic Pattern Graphic

