



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – January 22, 2020 Agenda Item 4

Work Session

Review of Scope of Work, Draft Goals, and Timeline for Public Space Management Plan

Recommended Council Action

None, discussion only

Context with Key Issues

Public space 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 space in the City holistically and provides coordinated goals and priorities.

A Public Space Management Plan would be adopted by Council and used in future decision-making processes surrounding current and future public space in the City. Staff previously presented a scope of work to Council which outlined the background, context, purpose, issues for evaluation, and goals of a Public Space Management Plan. This session will provide Council with additional materials for consideration along with a draft of goals for the plan and updated timeline to move the plan forward.

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

- Scope of Work
- Draft Goals and Timeline
- Draft Table of Contents
- [Public Land Management Plan: Project Page](#)
- [Map of Public Space](#)
- [Map of Public Space with Demographic Distribution](#)

Scope of Work: Public Space 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 space 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 Council-adopted Public Space Management Plan is to guide 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's 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 acquired 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 with particular attention to the introduction of autonomous and shared vehicles and movement away from single occupancy vehicles.

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, bicycles and other 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 Purple Line light rail system.

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
- incorporation 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
- [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
- 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 2019 to Winter**
 - 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 -**Winter 2020 to be completed by intern**
 - Conduct [City Parks Amenities Inventory](#) (**completed-to be reviewed by intern**)
 - Perform demographic and spatial analysis (**in progress**)
 - Distance analysis of proximity to parks (**in progress**)
 - Public input through online engagement tool, Survey Monkey, Seamless link for comment (**add to City Website**)
4. Draft Goals-**Fall 2019 completed, need Council approval and outreach**
 - Develop goals based on existing policy framework, needs assessment and methodology report
 - Online engagement to gather input on draft goals
5. Draft Recommendations-**To be completed post draft goals approval**
 - Develop recommendations based on existing policy framework, needs assessment, methodology report, and public input on draft goals
 - Host public meeting to gather input on draft recommendations
6. Plan-**To be completed post draft recommendation approval**
 - 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-**To be completed post final plan draft**
 - City Council Approval and Adoption of Public Space Management Plan

Public Space Management Plan Draft Goals

The Public Space Management Plan establishes a framework to evaluate, manage, utilize, and acquire public space in the City of Takoma Park to be used in future decision-making processes. The Plan establishes a vision with goals and performance measures to envision public space holistically. The broad goals the plan seeks to accomplish are outlined below and organized into four broad categories. Specific recommendations and action steps will be identified later in the planning process.

Maintenance and Enhancement of Existing Resources

1. Ensure that current spaces are effectively maintained and utilized.
 - Public space within the City should be maintained on a regular schedule to defined standards by City departments. Maintenance agreements should be developed for properties owned by other jurisdictions. This includes physical site maintenance as well as adding or reconfiguring existing park amenities.
2. Foster a mix of types of public space for active and passive recreation opportunities as well as social gatherings.
 - Public spaces should allow for informal gatherings and create opportunities for spontaneous social interaction as well as actively programmed recreation activities. Enhance and program existing public space in a way that can respond to changing user needs as a multi-use destination.
3. Foster and maintain an environmentally sustainable public space network.
 - Ensure effective maintenance of city owned public spaces in terms of protecting tree cover and stormwater management in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preserve air quality and opt for sustainable design measures when appropriate.

Connectivity and Accessibility to Public Space for All

1. Ensure access and improve multi-modal connectivity to public space.
 - Public space should be accessible to the greatest extent possible by walking, biking, and public transportation to reduce the reliance on single occupancy vehicles. Current transportation networks should be expanded and enhanced to facilitate connections to public space and recreational opportunities and follow standards for ADA accessibility to the greatest extent possible.
2. Facilitate equitable access to public space for all members of the community.
 - Ensure social and racial equity as well as those with diverse abilities when considering access to existing public spaces and the current distribution of public space.

Establish Criteria for Acquisition

1. Prioritize multi-modal access and connectivity in the acquisition of future public space.
 - Potential new sites for public space should be evaluated based on their accessibility to a variety of transportation options including walking, bicycling, and public transportation and connect to the City's existing transportation network.
2. Consider social and racial equity in the distribution of public space and recreational opportunities in the acquisition of new space.
 - Usable public space should be equitably distributed around the City considering geographic location as well as socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the surrounding area. Priority should be given to underserved areas the City.
3. Ensure a fiscally sustainable public space network.

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- Consider improvements to current City owned spaces and explore collaborative funding opportunities in the acquisition of new spaces including grant funding, donations, and public-private partnerships.
- 4. Consider the potential for climate change resiliency in the acquisition of new spaces.
 - Explore opportunities for public spaces that can be intentionally flooded during storm events.

Creative Reuse of Right-of-Way as Public Space

1. Incorporate and program City owned Right-of-Way into a holistic vision of public space.
 - City Right-of-Way, including public streets, sidewalks, paper streets, and parking spaces, should be viewed as a public space resource and creatively used, re-used and activated to create a more equitable streetscape. Create opportunities for individuals to engage with the streetscape outside of single occupancy vehicles.
2. Improve City streets as places for community building and increased utilization.
 - Use City streets in a manner that is not wholly autocentric and provides safe public spaces which promote social cohesion and interaction. Vehicular use of streets should be balanced alongside the mobility needs of pedestrians, cyclists and transit users.

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Timeline

1. **Scope of Work-November 2018**

- Prepare a Scope of Work with project goals and necessary deliverables
- Council presentation to approve goals

2. **Draft Goals-Fall 2019**

- Develop goals based on existing policy framework, needs assessment and, methodology report
- Online engagement to gather input on draft goals
- Council input on draft goals.

3. **Methodology Report-In Progress Winter 2020**

- Prepare a report on best practices and performance metrics for public space and urban parks management/planning that will inform the needs assessment and development of the plan.

4. **Needs Assessment –In Progress Winter 2020**

- Conduct [City Parks Amenities Inventory](#) (completed-intern will verify)
- Administer survey of residents on public space (online questionnaire)-**Survey open 3 months**
- Perform demographic and spatial analysis (**In progress**)
- Distance analysis of proximity to parks
- Public input through online engagement tool, Survey Monkey, Seamless link for comment (**add to City Website**)

5. **Draft Recommendations-Post Goals Approval**

- Develop specific recommendations and action items for each goal based on existing policy framework, needs assessment, methodology report, and public input on draft goals
- Host public meeting to gather input on draft recommendations

6. **Plan-Post Recommendations Approval**

- Specific recommendations for each goal will be finalized, with a list of priorities for short, medium and long term horizons, categorized as capital projects, maintenance activities, programming, and development of new programs/policies.
- Present at City Council Work Session

7. **Plan Approval-Post Goals and Recommendations Approval**

- City Council Approval and Adoption of Public Space Plan

Public Space Management Plan

Introduction

Background and Framework

- **History of Public and Open Space in Takoma Park**
- **Previous Public and Open Space Planning Efforts**
 - **Review of Associated Plans and Documents**
- **Park and Public Space Inventory**
 - **Definition of Types of Public Space in Takoma Park**
- **Purpose of the Plan**

Community Outreach Process

- **Strategy for Community Involvement**
 - **Focus Groups and Open House Contribution**
 - **Interactive Map Overview and Online Survey**

Issues

- **Public Space Needs and Issues in Takoma Park**
 - **Demographic Composition**
 - **Distribution of Community Resources**
 - **Environmental Issues**

Goals and Associated Recommendations

Implementation Steps

- **Maintenance and Enhancement of Existing Resources**
- **Connectivity and Accessibility**
- **Criteria for Acquisition**
- **Creative Reuse of Right-of-Way**

Plan Priorities and Funding

- **Funding Sources and Strategies**

Conclusion

Appendix and Figures