

2021-2022 City Council Priorities

1. A Livable Community for All

- COVID-19 Response and Recovery: Work to ensure residents have access to the assistance they need in terms of food, housing, childcare, workforce opportunities, health care and other needs; and provide aid and support to our small businesses in weathering the economic downturn and positioning them to recover and thrive in the future.
- Ensure that a range of safe, high quality, affordable and stable housing options are equitably available in neighborhoods throughout the community.
- Identify need and develop programs to address food insecurity in the Community.
- Identify programming needs in the community and develop approaches to meet those needs, emphasizing youth, families, seniors, and more vulnerable residents who tend to face barriers to opportunities such as Black, Indigenous, and people of color, those with unsustainable lower-paying jobs incomes, immigrants, and people with developmental disabilities.
- Defend our status as a Sanctuary City and continue to be a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents.
- Improve transportation planning and outreach to create a safer and more racially equitable community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle occupants.
- Further the City's racial equity work.

2. Fiscally Sustainable Government

- ~~Increase funding from County and State to address tax duplication and other city needs.~~
- Explore and advocate at county and state levels for expanded funding flexibility for municipalities beyond property taxes and continue to advocate for long-term solutions to tax duplication.
- Explore changes in the property tax structure, and advocate at county and state levels for changes in property taxes to assist residents in need and work for a more equitable assessment property tax system.
- ~~Minimize adverse impacts of changes to the federal tax system.~~
- Continue to build on improvements in the budget process, presentation of budget information, and communication to residents.
- Adopt sustainable investment and banking policy and practices.

3. Environmentally Sustainable Community

- Climate Change Mitigation: Work towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

- Climate Change Resilience: Improve our ability to adapt and be resilient to climate change.
- Manage Our Community's Natural Resources Sustainably: Protect, maintain and improve the health of our urban forest, natural resources, and water quality, with an emphasis on equity.

4. Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government

- Hire and onboard new City Manager
- Improve City communications with resident and adopt innovative, culturally appropriate initiatives to improve public engagement and collaboration with residents, particularly with residents who may face barriers to participating in municipal government activities and community affairs.
- Improve policies and processes related to resident interaction with the City government relating to requests for government services, complaint systems, and code enforcement.
- ~~Improve policies and processes related to the tree ordinance; traffic calming; sidewalk requests, repair and maintenance; and residential/commercial boundary conflicts.~~
- ~~Improve and formalize systems for Council-appointed committees and external committees on which Councilmembers serve (eg MWCOG).~~
- ~~Identify policing priorities and explore options for enhanced police/community relations.~~
- ~~Explore alternative approaches to enhance public engagement and two-way communication.~~
- Put in place improvements and review overall structure and purpose of existing Council-appointed committees.
- Improve and formalize systems for communication regarding the work of external committees on which Councilmembers serve (e.g. MWCOG).
- Review and reform City's approach to public safety to increase racial justice and work toward a safer, more livable community for all residents.

5. Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life

- Plan and prepare for development in the City and region while maintaining the special character and economic and racial diversity of Takoma Park.
- Redevelopment of the Takoma Park Recreation Center.

1. A Livable Community for All

Goal: COVID-19 Response and Recovery: Work to ensure residents have access to the assistance they need in terms of food, housing, childcare, workforce opportunities, health care and other needs; and provide aid and support to our small businesses in weathering the economic downturn and positioning them to recover and thrive in the future.

Strategies:

- Allocate the COVID-10 Relief Fund and put in place programs such as mini-grant program and rental assistance to support residents and businesses in the community.
- Explore establishing a pilot Community Ambassador or Navigator system to enable the assessment of residents' needs; create an updated and improved system to connect residents to services; and inform potential new programs. Areas to include in assessing and addressing the need, but not limited to: food insecurity, health, housing, child care, recreation, workforce development, and other areas to assist people facing the impacts of COVID-19 and enable them to recover and thrive in the future.

Desired Outcome: Residents and businesses have access to the services and programs they need to stay healthy, in their homes, working, and keep businesses running during the pandemic and able to recover and thrive in the future.

Goal: Ensure that a range of safe, high quality, affordable and stable housing options are equitably available in neighborhoods throughout the community.

Strategies:

- Implement Affordable Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- In 2021, focus on:
 - Exploring how best to address housing needs due to the impact of COVID-19, with a focus on eviction and residents and landlords facing challenges relating to mortgage payments and property taxes.
 - Continuing work to build partnerships with non-profits, foundations, financial institutions and other outside entities to expand affordable housing options in the City.
 - Exploring needs and programs to assist Condo owners who face unique challenges due to the pandemic.
 - Revising sections of the Housing Code, including section on rent stabilization.

- Reviewing and making changes to the HomeStretch Downpayment assistance program aimed at expanding eligibility.
- Developing a formal policy regarding PILOTS.
- Continuing collaboration and coordination of the City's housing and sustainability staff on key projects to meet Council goals.

Desired Outcome: Meet the current and future housing needs of the community to ensure affordable housing options for residents of varying income levels and of all races and ethnicities. Improved living conditions for renters.

Goal: Identify need and develop programs to address food insecurity in the Community.

Strategies:

- Document the advocates and non-profits providing food to residents and then convene partners around this issue to explore the ways forward to address food insecurity in the City, working with the iSchool team at the University of MD.

Desired Outcome: Identify and put in place programs and systems to address food insecurity in the community.

Goal: Identify programming needs in the community and develop approaches to meet those needs, emphasizing youth, families, seniors, and more vulnerable residents who tend to face barriers to opportunities such as Black, Indigenous, and people of color, those with unsustainable lower-paying jobs/incomes, immigrants, and people with developmental disabilities.

Strategies:

- Utilize resident survey, staff and committee reports, program attendance, enhanced and innovative community engagement efforts, racial equity framework, and other sources to determine where there may be existing gaps in program offerings; develop programs to close gaps.
- Investigate the feasibility of implementing new programs and services to increase access to technology including but not limited to increasing access to WiFi, tablets, and computers, and Wi-Fi Hot Spots.
- Evaluate ways to expand access to library services across the City.
- Based on experience with pilot Ambassador program for COVID-19 relief expand and put in place more permanent Ambassador or Navigator program.

Desired Outcome: Expanded and/or improved programming tailored to residents who need them the most or who currently face barriers to access.

Goal: Defend our status as a Sanctuary City and continue to be a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents.

Strategies:

- Continue advocacy efforts on behalf of immigrants, including connecting those in need of assistance to appropriate area organizations.

Desired Outcome: Remain a welcoming and strong Sanctuary City

Goal: Improve transportation planning and outreach to create a safer and more racially equitable community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle occupants.

Strategy:

- Explore adopting a Vision Zero initiative; begin to examine potential components such as education/outreach, policy changes, and infrastructure improvements; and continue to revise processes for traffic calming and sidewalk requests.
- Advocate for transportation improvements that impact Takoma Park residents through regional collaboration and coordinated efforts, including on Purple Line, safety, and transit access.

Desired Outcome: Improved traffic safety resulting in eliminating serious vehicle, pedestrian, and bike collisions; improved comprehensive transportation planning throughout the City with a data-driven approach that takes into consideration impacts throughout the City; racially equitable transportation system and outcomes.

Goal: Further the City's racial equity work.

Strategies:

- Build on the work underway to address racial equity issues, including how we organize, institutionalize, and operationalize the racial equity framework; explore possible task force on racial equity.
- Evaluate how the City is processing and responding to requests and complaints so that they are done in an equitable way across the City.
- Continue to provide racial equity training to members of the City Council, staff, and Council-appointed Committees and other residents.
- Conduct a racial equity survey among City staff members. (check with staff)

Desired Outcome: Continued progress toward a more racially equitable community and government.

Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities

- Public-Land and Open Space Management Plan – finalization and implementation of the plan
- Cultural Plan – continued implementation of 2018 Plan

2. Fiscally Sustainable Government

Goal: Explore and advocate at county and state levels for expanded funding flexibility for municipalities beyond property taxes and continue to advocate for long-term solutions to tax duplication.

Strategies:

- Continue efforts to more fully address county tax duplication issues.
- Increase advocacy and lobbying activities.
- ~~Consider other approaches, such as local businesses support.~~

Desired Outcome: A more diverse set of revenue sources for the City.

Goal: Explore changes in the property tax structure, and advocate at county and state levels for changes in property taxes to assist residents in need and work for a more equitable assessment property tax system.

Strategies:

- Explore potential changes to city property taxes.
- Continue to examine and advocate for changes to the property assessment process to ensure and equitable approach

Desired Outcome: A sustainable and equitable property tax process and system.

Goal: Continue to build on improvements in the budget process, presentation of budget information, and communication to residents.

Strategies: Consider innovative budget processes to identify ways to present summary, as well as detailed budget information; and continue opportunities for resident feedback with an emphasis on equitable access and outreach.

Desired Outcomes: Continued work in a clear and transparent budget process and increased resident understanding of City budget.

Goal: Adopt sustainable investment and banking policy and practices.

Strategy: Identify and work with consultant to determine potential next steps in adopting sustainable investment and banking policies and practices, taking into account the concerns raised by the Nuclear Free Committee about SunTrust Bank.

Desired Outcomes: Work to align City's banking and investments with values of social responsibility.

3. Environmentally Sustainable Community

Goal: Climate Change Mitigation - Work towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

Strategies:

- Prioritize and accelerate policies and programs that implement the 2020 Climate Emergency Response Framework strategies for buildings, transportation, renewable energy, and a fossil fuel-free community.
- Continue and expand city sustainability programs with emphasis on equity issues.
- Coordinate and advocate for climate change mitigation resiliency and sustainability with county, state, region and federal governments.
- Integrate city climate goals and strategies with other city policies and programs, such as urban forest and housing and economic development.

Desired Outcome: Progress toward city's climate mitigation and resiliency goals; more sustainable City operations

Goal: Climate Change Resilience - Improve our ability to adapt and be resilient to climate change.

Strategies:

- Consider ways to address increased stormwater in the City and its impacts, including financial incentives, stormwater permitting, and green infrastructure.
- Explore ways to address and mitigate stormwater impacts on private properties.
- Implement new stormwater management fee structure.

Desired Outcome: Improved stormwater management for both the public space and stormwater flows on and between private properties.

Goal: Manage our community's natural resources sustainably - Protect and maintain and improve the health of our urban forest, natural resources, and water quality, with an emphasis on equity.

Strategies:

- Incorporate the overarching goals and priorities of no net loss, increased biodiversity and equity adopted in 2020 into the city's urban forest management program.
- Adopt the multi-year urban forest management plan.
- Begin a pilot project for collaborative planting of trees in select neighborhoods, with the aim of helping to address inequities in tree distribution within the City.

Outcome: no net loss of urban forest canopy citywide, more equitably distributed tree canopy over time, improved maintenance of mature trees citywide

Major projects, initiatives and ongoing activities:

- Enforcement, education, and outreach related to City codes in such areas as recycling; plastic bag ban; snow clearing.
- Climate Action Framework strategy development and implementation
- City sustainability programs and initiatives
- Implement additional Sustainable Maryland Certified goals
- Implement urban forest program and revised tree ordinance provisions
- Green stormwater management projects to meet State and Federal mandates for 2025

4. Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government

Goal: Hire and onboard of new City Manager

Strategy: Conduct a successful search with community input and the assistance of a consultant.

Desired Outcome: The hiring of an excellent City Manager who can effectively manage the day to day operations of the City government and implement the policy directions of the City Council.

Goal: Improve City communications with resident and adopt innovative, culturally appropriate initiatives to improve public engagement and collaboration with residents, particularly with residents who may face barriers to participating in municipal government activities and community affairs.

Strategy:

- Put in place updates to City website; and review and provide recommendations on how to improve communications through the City newsletter, emails, and other forms of communications.
- Review lessons learned from recent community engagement efforts and investigate new ways to enhance and put in place new initiatives to improve public input, engagement, and collaboration.
- Investigate ways to improve accessibility of community meetings especially for residents whose dominant language is not English, those who are deaf, and others who may face barriers to engagement with City government.

Desired Outcome: Facilitate and enhance involvement, trust, and collaboration among residents and City government.

Goal: Improve policies and processes related to resident interaction with the City government, relating to requests for government services, complaint systems, and code enforcement.

Strategy:

- Review process for traffic calming; sidewalk request, repair and maintenance; residential/commercial boundary conflicts over noise, lights, etc.; the impact of utility work on neighborhoods; and review of Neighborhood Services citation procedures..
- Review recommendations from the Complete Streets Committee and implement appropriate improvements.
- Update of the sign ordinance and other ordinances as needed.

Desired Outcome: Improved and equitable processes.

Goal: Put in place improvements and restructure existing Council-appointed committees.

Strategy: Building on the work completed already, continue to evaluate and put in place ways to improve appointment processes and establish a common committee structure to increase efficiency and effectiveness; attract new members so that committees more closely reflect the diversity of the community; and to explore innovative methods to engage and collaborate with residents who may face barriers to participating.

Desired Outcome: Enabling diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding resident involvement and collaboration with City government.

Goal: Improve and formalize systems for communication regarding the work of external committees on which Councilmembers serve (e.g. MWCOG).

Strategy: Developing and putting in place process for sharing of information.

Desired Outcome: A better understanding and sharing of information by Council.

Goal: Review and reform City's approach to public safety to increase racial justice and work toward a safer, more livable community for all residents.

Strategy: Review, explore, and put in place appropriate changes recommended changes by Reimaging Public Safety TaskForce.

Desired Outcome: A more equitable and justice approach to public safety that meets the needs of residents.

Major projects, initiatives and ongoing activities:

- Redistricting
- Elections
- Council Compensation

5. Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life

Goal: Plan and prepare for development in the City and region while maintaining the special character and economic and racial diversity of Takoma Park.

Strategies:

- Implement Affordable Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- In 2021, focus on:
 - Providing support for small businesses especially those impacted by COVID-19 and Purple Line construction.
 - Increase workforce development programs and assistance.

Desired Outcome: Implementation of Strategic Plan; prepare and plan for development activity; and support local businesses and workers.

Goal: Redevelopment of the Takoma Park Recreation Center

Strategy: Develop a shared vision for the Recreation Center using an evidence-based approach and improve community engagement around the City's recreational needs and the future Recreation Center.

Desired Outcome: Leverage both public and private stakeholders to accomplish the goal of developing the Recreation Center that meets the City's need for recreation services and affordable housing.

Major projects, initiatives and ongoing activities:

- Library Renovation
- Takoma Junction Development
- Purple Line Construction
- Economic development along New Hampshire Ave
- Washington Adventist Hospital Campus
- Montgomery College Math Science Building construction
- Continue to advocate for renovations at PBES and increased public school facilities in the City or nearby