

## Public Space Considerations for Takoma Junction Redevelopment June 4, 2021

### Successful Public Space

In its most simple form, public spaces are publicly-owned, “[accessible, shared physical spaces](#)” where people can gather, interact, or go about their daily activities. These places may take a range of forms, functions, and sizes including parks, sidewalks, plazas, alleys, roadways, and more. Public spaces act as the cultural, social, and environmental connective tissue between businesses, homes, and institutions. Within public spaces, different design elements and amenities may guide or incentivize the way people interact with the space. [The more ways a public space can be comfortably used, the more active and welcoming a space may feel.](#)

Thoughtfully designed public spaces create a sense of community and place-based character, and they can have tangible impacts on public health, social inclusion, and economic vibrancy. Successful public spaces have a few key qualities, as laid out by the [Project for Public Spaces](#):

- They are easily **accessible**, from both the perspectives of physical design/layout and sociocultural signifiers about who is welcome.
- They are **comfortable** to spend time in, including aesthetic design, cleanliness, and perceptions of safety for all users.
- They invite users to engage in **activities**, whether organized or organic.
- They facilitate **connections** between users of different levels of formality and lengths of time.

### Public Space in the Takoma Junction Redevelopment project in the Development Agreement and Resolution 2018-41.

[Resolution 2018-41](#) addressed the issue of public space:

“To provide at least 2,700 sq. ft. of public gathering space not focused on outdoor dining but as a shared space for residents, visitors and anyone else in the public realm. In the event that the location or length of the layby is modified during the Montgomery County Development Review process and encroaches into the planned public space, NDC will make modifications to ensure that at least 2,700 square feet of public space is maintained and that it is equivalent in type and quality.” [Resolution 2018-41: line 453]

Due to the County and SHA's requirements, the lay-by lane and sidewalk location were reconfigured, opening up space between the new sidewalk and the storefronts. The usable public space, not including the 6' wide sidewalk or the bus shelter area, is 3,850 square feet with the larger layby, and 4,500 square feet with the smaller layby. The large commercial space on the west end of the building that is expected to have a restaurant will not have dedicated outdoor seating in front. The smaller space on the east end of the building, which may house a café, could have some outdoor tables, but that determination has not yet been made.

Resolution 2018-41 named public space “not focused on outdoor dining but as a shared space.” The 2018 design included trees, benches and landscaping/hardscape in the 2,700 square feet of public space. The 2021 design likewise includes these amenities as part of the usable public space.

The Development Agreement also references public space:

“Create an accessible outdoor space devoted to year-round public use; must fulfill the design requirements outlined in Section 6.3.6 of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance after community input facilitated through the Community Consultation Process Advisory Committee as more fully outlined in Section 3 above.”[ page 6]

Montgomery County zoning codes for public space include the following requirements for NR zones (Section 6.3.7):

**B. Design Requirements**

1. Standard Method Development

Under standard method development, public open space must:

- a. abut a public sidewalk or other public pedestrian route;
- b. be a minimum of 15 feet wide;
- c. include seating and shade; and
- d. be in a contiguous space.

A contiguous space is defined as: “4) touching or connected throughout in an unbroken sequence” (Webster’s). The project provides public space that meets the County's requirements and exceeds the City’s 2,700 square foot requirement. B.Y. Morrison, located across the street, continues to provide space for public activities and gatherings.