



Takoma Park, Maryland

# Public Space Management Plan

## 2023

City Council Draft (with Mark-up)

11.15.2023



[This page left intentionally blank]



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	10
Vision, Goals & Methodology	11
Existing Conditions	16
Community Engagement	57
Case Studies	61
Recommendations	65
Project Evaluation Scorecard	89
Conclusion	95
Appendices	98
Appendix A - 2023-2024 Takoma Park City Council Priorities	99
Appendix B - Sample Policies	109
Appendix C - Full SWOT Analysis Results	113
Appendix D - Community Engagement Summaries	116



*Credit: City of Takoma Park*





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **City of Takoma Park Staff**

Alex Freedman, *Planner - Project Manager*

Daryl Braithwaite, *Public Works Director*

Ian Chamberlain, *Public Works Deputy Director*

Greg Clark, *Recreation Director*

David Eubanks, *Acting City Manager*

Marty Frye, *Urban Forest Manager*

Rosalind Grigsby, *Planning & Community Development Manager*

Deborah Huffman, *Deputy Recreation Director*

Ira Kowler, *Acting Housing & Community Development Director*

Anna Mische-John, *Vegetation Manager*

## **CHPlanning Staff**

Jordan Exantus, *Project Manager*

Karen Armendariz

Ben Carlson

Laura Connelly

Charnelle Hicks, *Executive Director*

Hung Truong

## **Takoma Park City Council**

Talisha Searcy, *Mayor*

Shana Fulcher, *Ward 1*

Cindy Dyballa, *Ward 2*

Randall Gibson, *Ward 3*

Terry Seamens, *Ward 4*

Cara Honzak, *Ward 5*

Jason Small, *Ward 6*

A note of gratitude to all the community members and stakeholders that shared their experiences, perspectives, and expertise to help shape this planning effort.





[This page left intentionally blank]



## KEY TERMS

<b>Public space</b>	Public space is any real property or structures thereon that are owned, leased, or controlled by a governmental entity (including public use easements across private property). Public spaces are meant to be accessible to all people who live, work, play, and pray in the city. These spaces include city- and county-owned parks, roadways, sidewalks, bus stops, shade trees, benches, community centers, plazas, parking lots, and more.
<b>Desire Line Trails</b>	Desire line trails are naturally occurring pathways created by consistent use by walkers and pedestrians. Desire line trails are dirt paths that are created by frequent foot traffic and can most often be associated with a desired shortcut to a popular destination. These dirt paths are also known as cow paths, social trails, goat tracks and pedestrian use trails.
<b>Equity</b>	Equity, as it relates to racial and social justice, pursues the elimination of disparities between groups of people and requires the allocation of resources and opportunities as needed to create equal outcomes for all community members. Equitable policies and practices recognize that recognizes each person has different circumstances and needs, meaning different groups of people need different resources and opportunities allocated to them in order to thrive. Equity seeks to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable.
<b>Paper Street</b>	A paper street is defined as the dedicated street right of way that is shown on an official government document or map but is not constructed or built.
<b>Public Right-of-Way</b>	A public right-of-way is any street, avenue, boulevard, road, highway, sidewalk, alley or easement that is owned, leased, or controlled by a governmental entity. In Maryland, this ownership can be the responsibility of the Maryland State Highway Administration, the county, and/or the local jurisdiction.
<b>Resiliency</b>	Resiliency is the capability of a (property, building, facility, etc.) to withstand or recover quickly from weather events or changes in (environmental, social, economic, etc.) conditions, that have the potential to adversely affect the (property, building, facility, etc.) or any transportation, logistical, or other resources that are necessary to maintain or rapidly reestablish functionality.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Sustainability refers to the ability to maintain at a certain rate or standard over time. In the environmental capacity, sustainability is the ability to protect and maintain natural resources to avoid depletion and protect ecological balance. Relating to asset management, sustainability refers to the ability to provide goods and services at a rate that is fiscally responsible and relatively congruent with local demand and the capacity of city budgets.



The **blue circles with check marks** throughout the report represent existing or ongoing polices, practices and initiatives identified through the plan development process. They are included in this way, because they were determined to be useful or important policies and practices, but were not new actions, frameworks, or trajectories for the City compared with those identified in the Recommendations section.



## ACRONYMS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BMP	Best Management Practice (for stormwater)
DC	District of Columbia
DDOT	District Department of Transportation
HCD	Housing and Community Development Department (City of Takoma Park)
MDSHA	Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration
MCDOT	Montgomery County Department of Transportation
M-NCPPC	Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission
PSMP	Public Space Management Plan
ROW	Right-of-Way
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority



*Credit: Sam Kittner*





## LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Historic Takoma Park Plat (1906) .....	17
Figure 2. Boundary of Present-Day Takoma Park .....	18
Figure 3. City of Takoma Park Council Ward Boundaries .....	21
Figure 4. Estimated Household Income .....	22
Figure 5. Parks and City Owned Property .....	24
Figure 6. Minimum Average Walking Times from Census Block Groups to Active Parks ..	28
Figure 7. Active park area per person and Nonwhite and Hispanic population share, by ward .....	29
Figure 8. Example of Right-of-Way Cross Section .....	32
Figure 9. City of Takoma Park Transportation Hierarchy .....	33
Figure 10. Takoma Park Bikeways .....	36
Figure 11. Sidewalk Network Map .....	40
Figure 12. Bus Stop Improvement Plan .....	41
Figure 13. Takoma Park Paper Streets .....	43
Figure 14. City of Takoma Park Best Management Practices (BMP) Location Map .....	48
Figure 15. Residential Permit Parking Zones .....	51
Figure 16. Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Boundary .....	54
Figure 17. Engagement Events Schedule .....	59
Figure 18. "Heat Map" of Youth Engagement Activity Comments .....	119
Figure 19. "Heat Map" of Community Meeting Comments .....	121
Figure 20. Main Street Takoma Commercial District Map .....	122
Figure 21. Pedestrian Level of Comfort Map .....	127

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Population Density per Jurisdiction .....	19
Table 2. Total Percent of Population by Race/Ethnicity per Ward .....	20
Table 3. Income and Poverty Rate per Jurisdiction .....	22
Table 4. M-NCPPC-owned Parks Properties .....	25
Table 5. City of Takoma Park-owned or -maintained Parks Properties .....	26
Table 6. Total Park Area In and Directly Adjoining Wards .....	27
Table 7. Case Studies of Projects and Programs Across the Nation .....	62





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

★ The Public Space Management Plan (PSMP) was developed to support the city in its efforts to be proactive in the planning, development, and management of its public space inventory. **The Plan provides a long-term framework to manage the City's public spaces and amenities over the next twenty years or more.** Public spaces, including, but not limited to, park land and the public streets network (including elements like sidewalks, trails, bus shelters, street trees, and benches) are important to the community and for the overall quality of life. This project considers different approaches, including identifying and using data-driven and equity-focused tools to help guide Takoma Park in its future prioritization and decision making related to public space planning, programming, and funding that support the broader goals of **safety, sustainability, and racial equity.**

In 2022, CHPlanning Ltd., was hired to assist the City of Takoma in the development of a Public Space Management Plan (PSMP). This effort includes a review of the locally available public space assets, an evaluation of the existing plans that impact these resources, and policy analysis. This baseline research was used to help conduct robust community engagement to help us establish anecdotal evidence to understand what gaps may exist in the public space network and what should be done to help achieve better outcomes for the community regarding the distribution, programming, and use of public space. Through this process, we learned that the citizens of Takoma Park love their community and its public spaces. We found an active, engaged, and well-informed population who lent us rich insights into how the community could be strengthened and improved by addressing the form, function, and connectivity of public spaces.

This plan recognizes that many of the public spaces in the city are owned by outside agencies (such as Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Maryland Department of Transportation-State Highway Administration, and Montgomery County DOT\*) and puts forth recommendations on how to work with these groups to help achieve locally desired outcomes which meet the strategic goals of both agencies. Building and strengthening these relationships will help support Takoma Park's goals of modernizing, expanding, and improving access to public space for its residents. This can also lead to improved transparency, meaningful use of taxpayer dollars and more accuracy in data sharing.

Lastly, this document explores various ways to improve the public space inventory by doing things like completing the sidewalk network, increasing the level of service in existing parks, making pedestrian safety improvements, managing stormwater better, promoting native plants, adding or updating recreational and educational programming, and working with the community. Importantly, this report presents a new tool to help city leaders and staff make decisions about public space that are rooted in data, racial equity, and environmental sustainability.

The following chapters provide more information on the vision, goals, methodology and the recommendations put forth in this Public Space Management Plan.

\*MCDOT manages maintenance on Sligo Creek Parkway





# VISION, GOALS & METHODOLOGY



## VISION, GOALS & METHODOLOGY

### VISION

In Takoma Park, public space is essential to the community fabric. It is in public spaces, small and large, that people find moments of joy, rest, solace, compromise, and connection. These spaces allow the City of Takoma Park to express and uplift the values we hold as individuals and as a community.

Today, the City of Takoma Park faces a range of our society's most complex and necessary challenges: confronting centuries of racist policies and practices; tackling the growing threats posed by a changing climate; and creating a community that is both welcoming and accessible. How the city prioritizes public space is deeply intertwined with each of these issues.

As a community, the City of Takoma Park and its residents envision a network of thoughtfully and purposefully designed public spaces that are distributed, programmed, and maintained equitably across all wards of Takoma Park. These Public Spaces will serve to enhance economic vibrancy, social cohesion, and personal well-being.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the development of this planning document, discussions with Takoma Park residents and key stakeholders repeatedly emphasized a number of values that should guide the work. The planning team distilled these into three guiding principle. These principles served as the guideposts for the Public Space Management Plan process. They work alongside in compliment with the Takoma Park City Council 2023-2024 Priorities and should be used to support the implementation of this plan and its recommendations.



### RACIAL EQUITY

The legacy of racism continues to play out across Takoma Park and the country through disparities in education, wealth, job attainment, health outcomes, and many other quality of life indicators. Racial inequity today is not just overtly racist talk or action. It has become ingrained and institutionalized in policies and practices, even those we believe to be race-neutral. To address these issues, we must disrupt and unpack seemingly neutral policies and practices to see if they are contributing to inequity.

Related City Policy: [Race Equity Framework](#)



### SUSTAINABILITY

Protecting and enhancing the public space in Takoma Park is an essential component to the sustainable growth of the city. As the city prepares for and tries to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate, public spaces offer some of the greatest opportunities to employ new strategies in support of climate and biological resiliency. Future efforts to create, improve, and manage public space should recognize the numerous ways that these spaces play a vital role in the environmental health and quality of life in Takoma Park.

Related City Policy: [Climate Emergency Response Framework](#)



### SAFETY

The fear of harm, both actual and perceived, creates powerful disincentives to use and engage with public spaces. Alternatively, spaces designed to convey a sense of physical and psychological safety offer an invitation for users to engage with the space and each other. All reasonable efforts should be made to make the city's public space network safer to use and occupy.

Related City Policy: [City Council Resolution 2022-41](#)





## METHODOLOGY

The City of Takoma Park including staff and the residents, desires a comprehensive strategy for managing its public spaces. The current approach to public space management is a patchwork of policies and practices that developed over the last two decades. The city has grown and changed since the original plan for the City of Takoma Park was adopted in 1906. Yet, greenery and public space, both in terms of physical resources and importance to the community have consistently been prominent.

In the absence of a methodical, consistent process, the City Council and staff are required to recreate data and decision-making systems every time a new project is proposed. These circumstances are liable to create outcomes in conflict with the city's goals of enhanced racial equity and climate resilience, as represented in the adopted Racial Equity Framework and Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (2019). There are several decision-making tools that have been developed or recommended as a part of this Plan that aim to address that need for a comprehensive decision-making framework.

The city began laying the foundation for this work by adopting the City of Takoma Park Open Space Plan in 1994. This joint effort completed by the city, the Takoma Park Open Space Committee and The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) provided a basis for public policy decisions regarding the acquisition and development of public spaces.

Over the years, Takoma Park initiated various studies and efforts to further support evolving public space management goals. A focused effort to create a comprehensive policy to manage public space began in earnest in 2015 with a discussion by the City Council. From there, draft plan scopes and internal staff analyses led to the current process, started in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted and slowed the process in 2020. It wasn't until Fall 2021 when a new round of community engagement resumed in the form of community workshops located in public spaces around the city.

In the Spring of 2022, the City of Takoma Park hired CHPlanning Ltd, to continue the PSMP process building on the momentum established by the city staff-led effort. Together, the city and CHPlanning executed a planning process that engaged with multiple stakeholder groups to inform development of the plan. The development of the Takoma Park PSMP includes a multi-year community engagement effort, input from city departments, interviews with key staff members, evaluation of existing conditions, gap analysis, case study research, policy analysis, evaluation of the city's strength and weakness, opportunities and threats, and the development of new evaluation tools and frameworks to inform future decision-making and action.

The CHPlanning team conducted site visits and community and stakeholder engagement activities, including two community meetings, targeted focus group conversations, and interviews with state (MDSHA), county (M-NCPPC, MCDOT, etc.), and local agencies, including the Departments of Public Works, Recreation, Housing and Community Development, Economic Development, Library, Police, Arts & Humanities, and others who all helped inform the priorities and opportunities for coordination throughout this plan. The insights received from the community and internal stakeholder groups was central to developing the plan recommendations and decision-making framework.

In addition to gathering and analyzing community input, the project team compiled an existing conditions report, consolidated the inventory of public spaces, and completed a review of standing policies and practices to understand the current public space management dynamics in the city. Understanding the context of what works well for the city helped uncover where there may be gaps, and how to maximize current efforts. The inventory and analysis of existing policies also identified opportunities to improve existing practices with an emphasis on racial equity and environmental sustainability.



## WHAT IS COVERED IN THIS PUBLIC SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN?

The Public Space Management Plan is a desired tool to update and codify the city's approach for how to make decisions about public spaces. **The long-term plan creates a road map for public space management over the next twenty years or more.** It recognizes that the wide reach and overlap of different issues of public space cannot, and should not, be prescriptively laid out, because the needs and dynamics of public spaces change over time. Instead, the Plan proposes an adaptive strategy for decision-making rooted in data analysis, the pursuit of racial equity, the imperative for environmental sustainability, and a high standard for the safety of Takoma Park residents and visitors. A set of policy and programming strategies creates affirmative paths to address some of the most pressing public space issues. Altogether, the Public Space Management Plan serves as a guiding document that gives direction and mandate to city staff, City Council, and residents who seek to improve the way public space is used in Takoma Park. ★

This plan includes an updated inventory of the parks, roads, and recreational facilities owned and managed by the City of Takoma Park and other government agencies with property in the city's jurisdiction. This effort builds on the community engagement work that the city had started before the pandemic, summarizes findings, provides recommendations, and brings the project to completion. The result is an action-oriented plan with implementable tools and strategies that build upon the comprehensive set of resources and plans that the city already has in place.



Credit: CHPlanning







# EXISTING CONDITIONS

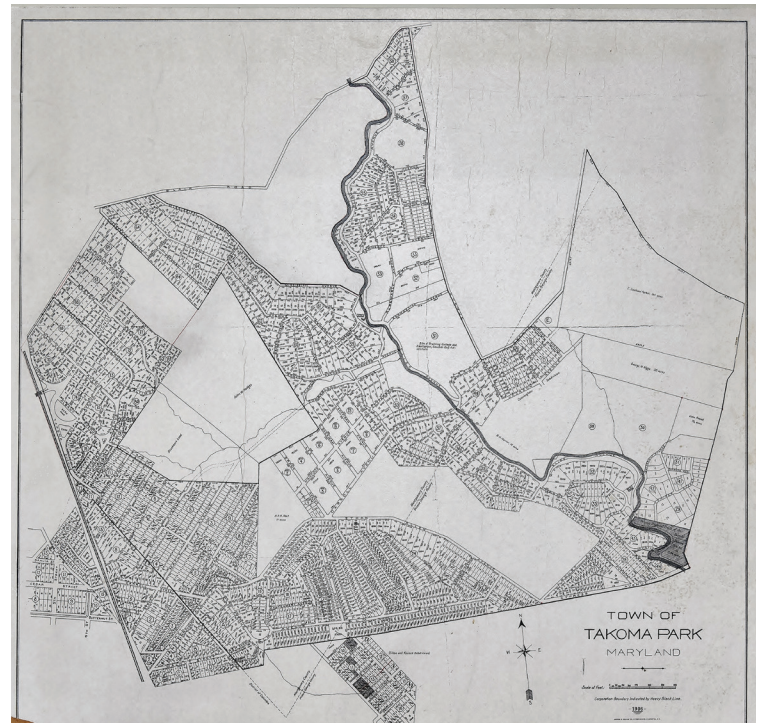
## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### HISTORIC CONTEXT OF TAKOMA PARK

In 1883, New York venture capitalist B. F. Gilbert founded Takoma Park as one of the first three railroad-accessible suburbs to downtown Washington, DC. Takoma Park's development followed a prototypical pattern for similar real estate ventures throughout the United States in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The little community was promoted as offering healthy living (it sits at higher elevation than the lowlands of downtown Washington), fresh air, and uncrowded living conditions. While park lands were part of this vision and several of the original designated parks remain today, only a limited amount of undeveloped open space is available. This poses challenges on many levels. Still the city enjoys an overall parklike setting despite the tremendous changes and continuing pressure to redevelop the surrounding environment. As such, large individual parcels of land are not readily available within the city outline and parks tend to be smaller, walkable and sized for the neighborhood. Many of these valuable open spaces are the result of more modern-day acquisitions that occurred after the land was subdivided and after the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) acquired its first piece of land along Sligo Creek in 1927.

Takoma Park offered easy access to many desirable attributes of semi-rural living: potable freshwater springs, clean air, and a landscape that seemed truly a bit of country. Unlike other early commuter rail suburbs, Takoma Park, by reason of its dual advantages of being located on a major rail line, as well as a commuter rail stop, developed a healthy commercial district that, while it has waxed and waned over the years, substantially survives to the present day.

Of special interest to its present residents, and to historians, is the distinctive character of Takoma Park's political and social structure. From its inception, B.F. Gilbert promoted political activism and civic involvement in solving the community's problems. It has also become one of the most racially and culturally integrated towns in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. Yet, as with other communities, racial and multicultural acceptance came slowly to its schools and businesses, clubs and parks. Takoma Park was also a community divided between two jurisdictions: Maryland and the District of Columbia, and, until recent years, between two Maryland counties: Prince George's and Montgomery.



**Figure 1. Historic Takoma Park Plat (1906)**

The City created its first Open Space Plan in 1994. It identified priorities for the maintenance and acquisition of green spaces, but it did not attempt to create a broader, unified vision for the larger range of public spaces such as the public rights-of-way. This document known as the Open Space Plan received a brief amendment in 2000 that focused efforts on specific projects and properties. The city's approach to managing public space remained the same until the City Council revived the topic in 2015.

The City of Takoma Park is perhaps best known to the general public for its small town atmosphere and pleasant, tree shaded neighborhoods of stately Victorian mansions and Sears bungalows of the 1920's. Behind this quiet façade lies an activism on the part of its residents to preserve the best attributes of a small community of some 17,600 residents.

Today, the City of Takoma Park continues to be a small, primarily residential community. With around 17,600 residents living within its 2.4 square mile boundary, Takoma Park remains a sought-after suburb of Washington D.C. with visible similarities to the original footprint and subdivision plan. The city's vocal progressivism, historic charm, and welcoming attitude dominate the city's place in the broader public imagination. However, a deeper examination also reveals a rich demographic diversity, wide distributions of household wealth, and parts of the community segmented by race and culture. An evolution of the self-described progressive values of the city anchor the need to develop this plan, as residents, city staff, and elected officials confront the challenges posed by limited new spaces to develop or conserve, rising costs of living, and historically uneven distributions of resources.

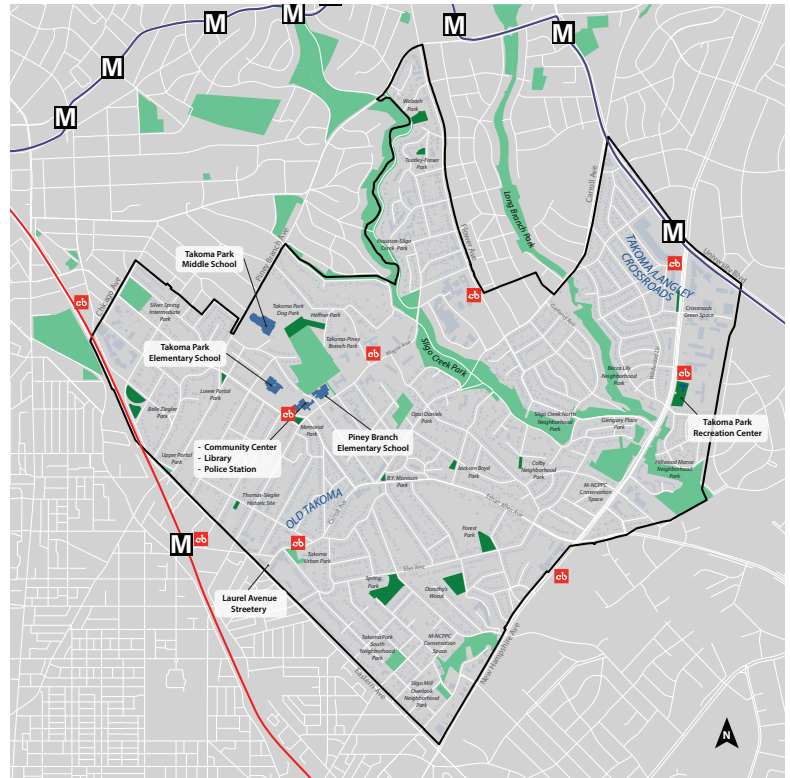


Figure 2 - Boundary of the City of Takoma Park.





## POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In the 2020 Census, the City of Takoma Park has a reported population of 17,672. This number represents a growth rate of about 5%, or about 900 people, since 2010. According to the US Census Bureau, the growth rate is expected to trend upwards over the next ten years with modest growth or similar growth projected. The City of Takoma Park has a population density comparable to that of Washington, DC, and about four times greater than Montgomery County at large. Exact population densities for all three of these jurisdictions can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Population Density per Jurisdiction

JURISDICTION	POPULATION DENSITY (PER SQUARE MILE)
Takoma Park	8,498
Washington, DC	9,800
Montgomery County, MD	2,153

Takoma Park is a diverse city with a majority of residents identifying as a race other than white. Black/African American residents make up 32.9% of the population, and those identifying as Hispanic/Latino make up approximately 11.6% of the population. Takoma Park also has significant numbers of Asian and mixed-race residents. White residents make up 46.3% of the population. About 7% of the population has at least one type of disability, and a majority of those with a disability are older than 75. The City is 51.39% female and 48.6% male, and 23% of the population is under the age of 19. A little over half (53%) of households are owner-occupants. Notably, three-quarters of the owner-occupant population is white. The majority (89%) of residents have Internet access in their home. The following section explores these demographics spatially and serves as a key consideration for the public space management recommendations that are made later in this document.



Credit: CHPlanning



## WARD-SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2.4 square miles that make up Takoma Park are divided into six wards, each represented by a single council member. Ward boundaries are determined every decade as part of the city’s redistricting process.

There are approximately 3,000 people per ward, as of the 2020 US Census. Wards 4, 5 and 6 are the most diverse with almost 80% of the population being recorded as a race other than white. Wards 1, 2, and 3 are less diverse with approximately 35% of the population in these areas identifying as a race other than white.

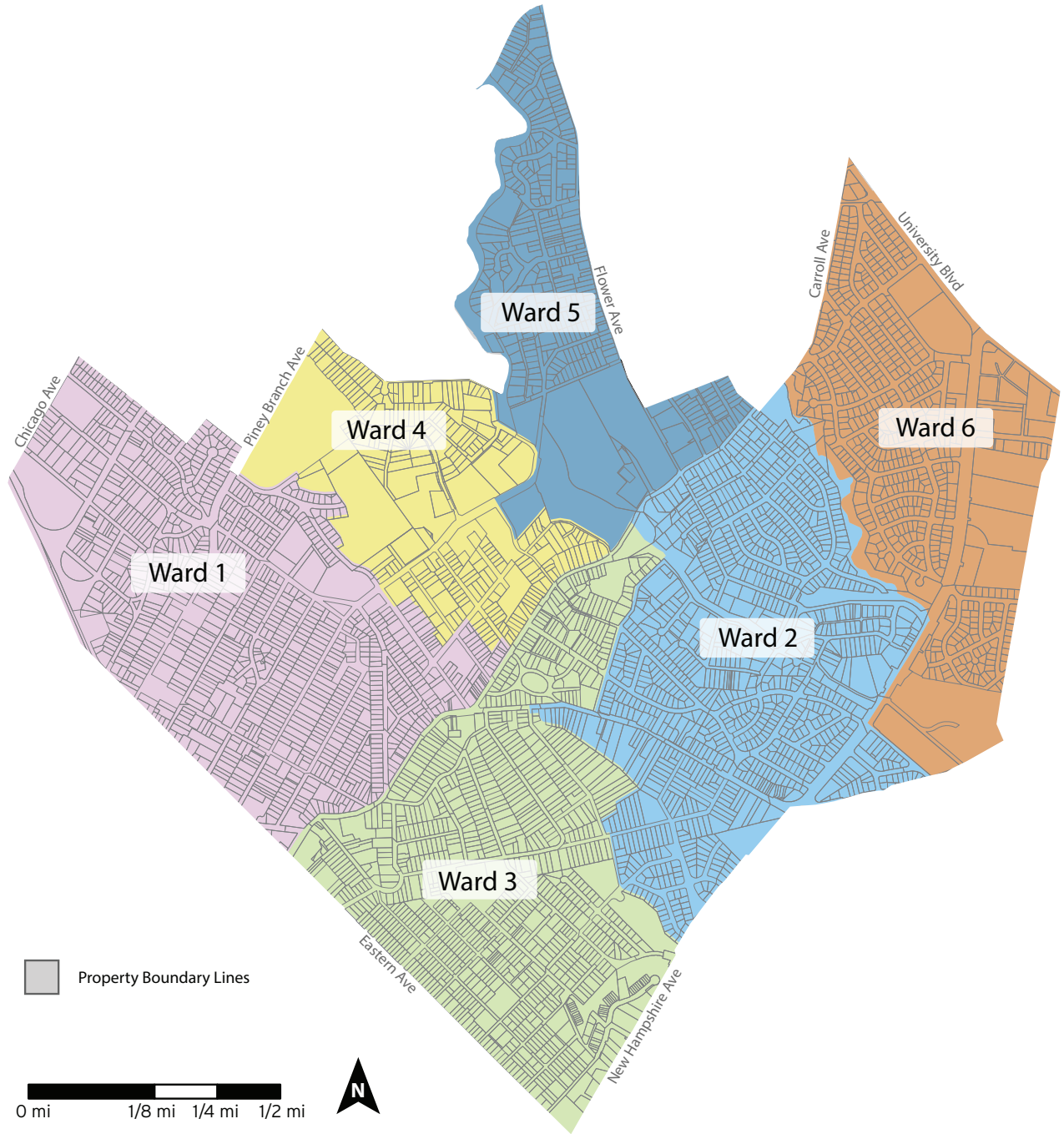
Ward 2 has the highest concentration of young people, followed by Wards 3 and 6. Wards 4 and 5 generally have a lower rate of car access than other wards, despite being some of the most geographically distant from major public transportation hubs.

Table 2. Percent of Population by Race/Ethnicity per Ward

WARD	WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	AMERICAN INDIAN / NATIVE ALASKAN	ASIAN	NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	SOME OTHER RACE	TWO OR MORE RACES	HISPANIC OR LATINO
1	66.6%	11.1%	0.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.4%	8.3%	10%
2	55.1%	20.5%	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	0.5%	6.8%	14%
3	61.7%	17.4%	0.1%	3.4%	0.0%	0.4%	6.9%	10%
4	21.4%	59.1%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.9%	2.5%	11.3%
5	23.4%	42.4%	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%	0.9%	5.3%	23.8%
6	21.4%	38.3%	0.0%	8.9%	0.1%	0.5%	5.2%	25.7%



Figure 3. City of Takoma Park Council Ward Boundaries





## INCOME

According to the U.S. Census, Takoma Park has a median income of \$83,919. The per capita income in the past 12 months (in 2020 dollars) is \$46,450 and the poverty rate is 8.7%. Takoma Park has a lower median income than neighboring Washington, D.C. and Montgomery County but is similar to the rest of the State of Maryland.

Table 3. Income and Poverty Rate per Jurisdiction

JURISDICTION	MEDIAN INCOME	PER CAPITA INCOME	POVERTY RATE
City of Takoma Park	\$83,919	\$46,450	8.70%
Montgomery County, Md	\$111,812	55,643	6.70%
State of Maryland	\$86,738	\$43,352	9%
Washington, D.C.	\$92,266	\$58,659	15%

Source: Census Bureau Quick Book Fact sheets

Wards 4 and 5 have the lowest median incomes along with the portion of Ward 6 East of New Hampshire Avenue. These areas are also the communities with the highest concentration of multifamily housing.

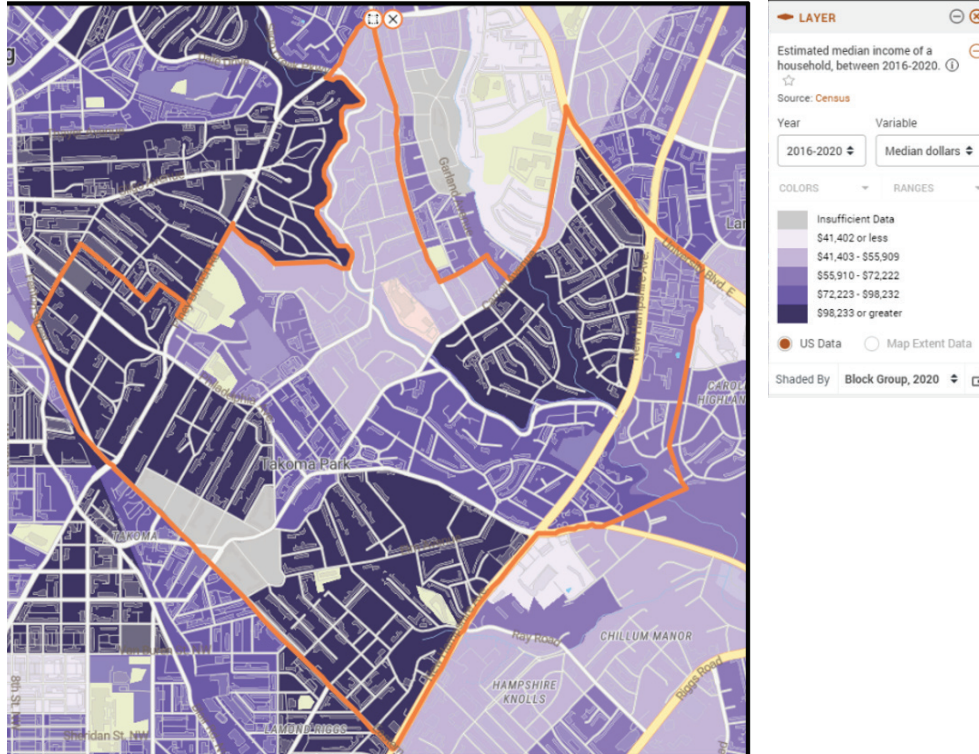


Figure 4. Estimated Household Income



## PARKS

Takoma Park contains approximately 45 distinct public park facilities operated by the city, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), or through partnership between both entities. M-NCPPC owns and manages fourteen of these, accounting for about 80% of total park area, including the portions of the Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park that pass through the city. The City of Takoma Park manages some maintenance and permitting at selected M-NCPPC park facilities, such as Ed Wilhelm Field. The City owns and manages over thirty additional park or recreation facilities including the Takoma Park Recreation Center, accounting for about 20% of total park area. The city also manages maintenance and permitting for Lee Jordan Field, owned by Montgomery County Public Schools.

These park facilities vary significantly in size, form, and use. Some are “passive parks” composed of preserved natural woodlands or small gardens along roadways, with little or no infrastructure. Others are “active parks” featuring facilities like picnic areas, playgrounds, and fields serving people of all ages. Parks are present in all six of Takoma Park’s wards, but their relative size, facilities and distribution varies from ward to ward. Tables on the following pages detail the ownership, size, location, and amenities of M-NCPPC and Takoma Park park facilities. A comparison of park facilities by ward follows the tables.

All told, Takoma Park has about 7.7 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. According to the National Recreation and Parks Administration, (NRPA) the typical park and recreation agency offers 9.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Takoma Park’s figure is below this average but does not necessarily indicate a deficiency, as park area alone is not a complete indicator of how well a community’s parks serve its needs. Park amenities, accessibility, programming and other factors also play key roles.



*Credit: CHPlanning*





Figure 5. Parks and City-Owned Property

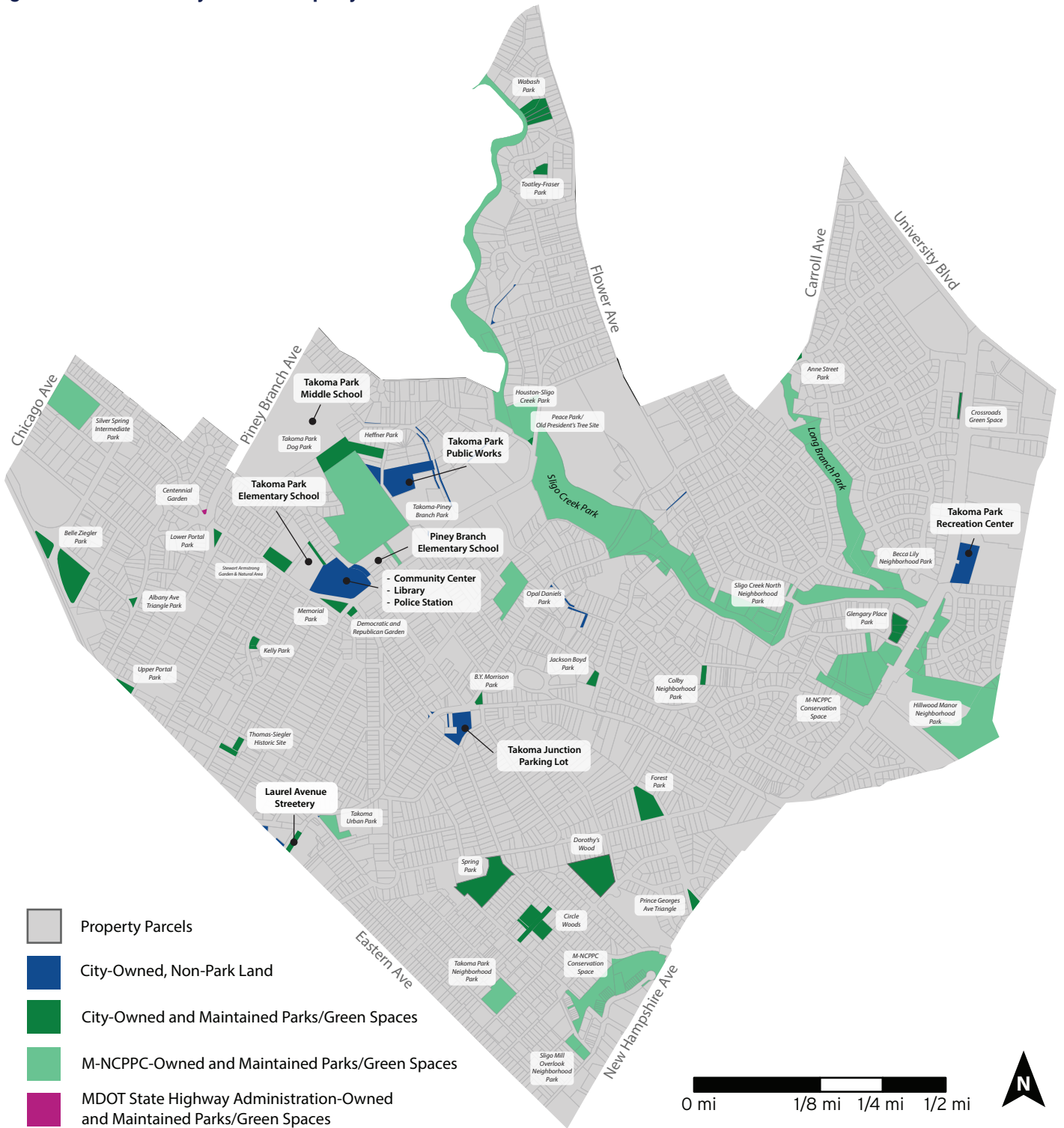


Table 4. M-NCPPC-Owned Parks Properties

Park Name	Address or Location	Ward(s)	Adjoining Ward	Size in Acres	Amenities
Becca Lilly Neighborhood Park	7330 Glenside Dr	6	2	2	Playground, Picnic Tables
Centennial Garden <i>[SHA Owned]</i>	Piney Branch Rd at Philadelphia Ave	1		0.14	Garden
Hillwood Manor Neighborhood Park	1301 Elson St	2		2	Playground, Picnic Tables
Long Branch Stream Valley Park	Linear Stream Valley Park	2, 6		8.8	Long Branch Trail
Opal A. Daniels Neighborhood Park	7515 Hancock Ave	4		2.2	Picnic Tables, Grills, Gazebo, Playground, Water Fountain, Fitness Course
Silver Spring Intermediate Neighborhood Park	7801 Chicago Ave	1		4	Playground, Tennis, Pickleball, Basketball, Futsol, Multi-Use Fields, Picnic Tables
Sligo Creek North Neighborhood Park	7000 Sligo Creek Pkwy	5		1.5	Playground, Picnic Tables, Basketball
Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park Unit 1/Houston-Sligo Park	Linear Stream Valley Park	5	4	29.5	Sligo Creek Trail, Playground
Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park Unit 1A	Linear Stream Valley Park	2, 6		21.1	Sligo Creek Trail
Sligo Mill Neighborhood Conservation Area	Bordered by Orchard Ave, 4th Ave, and Poplar Ave	3		6.5	Undeveloped
Sligo Mill Overlook Neighborhood Park	6400 Orchard Ave	3		0.7	Playground, Picnic Tables, Community Garden
Takoma Park Neighborhood Park	New Hampshire Ave	2		6.4	Undeveloped
Takoma Park South Neighborhood Park	6500 Allegheny Ave	3		1.6	Undeveloped
Takoma Urban Park	7035 Carroll Ave	3	1	0.8	Playground, Gazebo, Picnic Tables
Takoma Piney-Branch Local Park	2 Darwin Ave	4	1	17.4	Picnic Pavilion, Basketball, Beach Volleyball, Baseball Cage, Soccer Fields, Playgrounds (two), Skateboard Park, Restroom
<b>Total Area</b>				<b>104.6</b>	





Table 5. City of Takoma Park-owned or -maintained Parks Properties (continues on next page)

Park Name	Address or Location	Ward(s)	Adjoining Ward	Size in Acres	Amenities
Albany Avenue Triangle	Albany Ave at Baltimore Ave	1		0.14	Undeveloped
Undeveloped	Glenside Ave at Anne St	6		0.1	Undeveloped
B.Y. Morrison Park	Carroll Ave at Ethan Allen Ave	3		0.17	Picnic Table, Pavilion, Garden
Belle Ziegler Park	7350 Takoma Ave	1		2.64	Water Fountain, Picnic Tables, Playground, Pavilion, Basketball, Soccer, Port-a-Potty
Community Center/ Library Grounds	7500 Maple Ave	1		0.43	Seating, Gardens, Basketball
Democratic and Republican Garden	Maple Ave at Philadelphia Ave	1		0.14	Garden
★ Circle Woods	Cockerille Ave at Circle Ave	3		1.75	Undeveloped
Colby Avenue Park	0 Colby Ave	2		0.23	Water Fountain, Picnic Tables, Playground, Grill
Dorothy's Woods	Woodland Ave at Circle Ave	3	2	2.68	Undeveloped
Ed Wilhelm Field*	2 Darwin Ave	4			Baseball, Soccer (size included in M-NCPPC Piney Branch Local Park)
Forest Park	518 Elm Ave	2	3	1.43	Water Fountain, Picnic Tables, Playground, Pavilion, Basketball, Baseball
Glengary Place Park	Heather Ave	2	6	0.83	Undeveloped
Heffner Park	42 Oswego Ave	4		0.74	Community Center, Playground, Pavilion, Grill, Basketball, Undeveloped
Stewart Armstrong Garden & Natural Area	Holly Ave at Philadelphia Ave	1		1.2	Garden/ Naturalized Open Space
Holton Lane Natural Garden Site/Crossroads Green space	New Hampshire Ave at Holton Ln	6		0.07	Garden
Jackson-Boyd Park	7398 Jackson Ave	3	2	0.27	Water Fountain, Picnic Tables, Playground
Kelly Park	Birch Ave at Dogwood Ave	1		0.16	Garden
Lee Jordan Field*	7611 Piney Branch Rd	4		4.6	Baseball, Soccer (owned by Montgomery County Public Schools)
Lower Portal Park (Frank White Azalea	0 Piney Branch Road	1		0.2	Garden

\* Not owned but maintained by the City of Takoma Park.



Park Name	Address or Location	Ward(s)	Adjoining Ward	Size in Acres	Amenities
Memorial Park	0 Philadelphia Ave	1		0.39	Garden, Seating Area, Monument
Metropolitan Branch Trail	Takoma Ave& Fenton Ave	1		0.76	Naturalized Open Space
Old Town Garden Beds	7007 Carroll Ave	1	3	0.01	Garden
Peace Park/Old President's Tree Site	Sligo Creek Pkwy at Maple Ave	5		0.01	Garden
Prince George's Ave Triangle	Prince George's Ave at New Hampshire Ave	2		0.59	Undeveloped
Spring Park	6999 Poplar Ave	3		3.08	Water Fountain, Picnic Tables, Playground, Pavilion, Grill, Basketball, Baseball
Takoma Junction Parking Lot Grounds	0 Columbia Ave	3		0.58	Undeveloped
Takoma Park Dog Park	2 Darwin Ave	4		1.54	Dog Park
Takoma Park Recreation Center Grounds	7315 New Hampshire Ave	6		0.53	Recreation Center Building
Thomas Siegler Historic House and Garden	205 Tulip Ave	1		0.44	Historic Carriage House, Garden
Toatley-Fraser Park	8300 Eastridge Ave	5		0.3	Water Fountain, Picnic Tables, Playground, Pavilion
Upper Portal Park	0 Takoma Avenue	1		0.36	Garden
Wabash Park	0 Sligo Creek Pkwy	5		0.94	Undeveloped
<b>Total Area</b>				<b>27.3</b>	<i>22.7 acres excluding Lee Jordan Field</i>



Table 6. Total Park Area In and Directly Adjoining Wards (in Acres)  
(Combines City and M-NCPPC park areas)

		Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Ward 6	TOTALS
Park Area in Ward	Active Parks	7.1	3.7	5.0	26.5	1.8	2.0	46.0
	Passive Parks	3.9	22.8	12.6	0.0	30.5	15.7	85.5
	Total	11.0	26.4	17.6	26.5	32.3	17.7	131.5
Park Area Directly Adjacent to Ward	Active Parks	20.5	2.3	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	
	Passive Parks	0.0	2.7	0.4	14.8	0.0	7.2	
	Total	20.5	5.0	1.8	14.8	0.0	7.2	
Park Area in and Directly Adjacent to Ward	Active Parks	27.6	5.9	6.4	26.5	1.8	2.0	
	Passive Parks	3.9	25.5	13.0	14.8	30.5	22.9	
	Total	31.5	31.4	19.4	41.2	32.3	24.9	

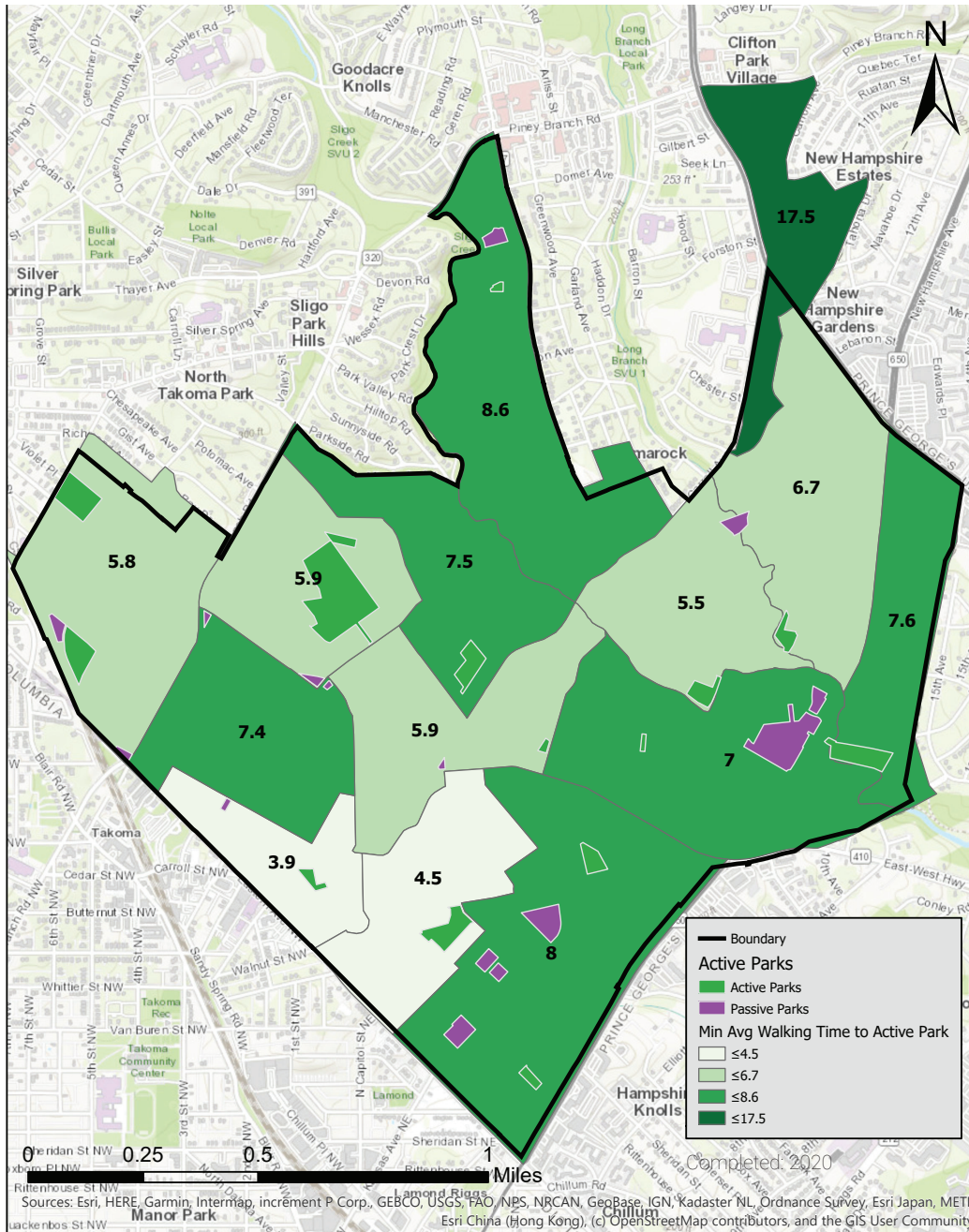


Some totals may not exactly match sum of components due to rounding.



## EQUITY ANALYSIS

While Takoma Park as a whole is served by a variety of park facilities that are appreciated by the community, distribution of the park facilities across the city's six wards varies in number, size, type and amenity. Combined with sidewalk network consistency and demographics that also vary significantly from ward to ward, this results in a condition where not all residents enjoy the same ease of access to Takoma Park's full range of park facilities, especially its active parks. While most residents do live within a ten-minute walk of an active park, some parts of the city benefit from significantly shorter walks to active parks.



**Figure 6. Minimum Average Walking Times from Census Block Groups to Active Parks (minutes)**





Figures 6 and 7 detail these differences further. Figure 6 shows the minimum average walking time for residents of each of the city’s census block groups to the nearest active park. These walking times vary from a low of 3.9 minutes (straddling Wards 1 and 3 near Takoma Urban Park) to a high of 8.6 throughout nearly all of Ward 5 (the block group with minimum walking time of 17.5 minutes is discounted since most of its residents live outside of Takoma Park). Most wards include portions of at least two census block groups with different walking times, so walk time varies within each ward. Analysis shown in Figure 6 comes from An Assessment of Park Quality, Proximity, and Race in the City of Takoma Park, MD, conducted for Takoma Park in 2019-20.



**Figure 7. Active park area per person and Nonwhite and Hispanic population share, by ward**



The upper portion of Figure 7 compares the area of active park space per resident within and directly adjoining each ward. Dark green columns indicate acreage of active parks per 1,000 residents in each ward. Light green columns add to this the acreage per 1,000 residents of active parks that directly adjoin the ward and thus are close to some ward residents. Black dots indicate percentages of ward residents who are in nonwhite and white Hispanic demographic categories. Ward 4 stands out as having much more active park space per resident than the other wards – over 3.5 times as much as Ward 1 and over 14 times as much as Ward 5. Ward 4 also has a relatively high nonwhite & Hispanic population share of nearly 80% similar to Wards 5 and 6. Ward 1 benefits from the large amount of active park area that directly adjoins it in Ward 4. Wards 5 and 6 stand out for their low levels of park space per person combined with high nonwhite and Hispanic population shares. Wards 2 and 3 all fall in intermediate ranges but do follow a pattern of park space per person decreasing as the nonwhite and Hispanic population share increases.

The lower portion of Figure 7 compares the wards by several other demographic and mobility characteristics, described below. For each characteristic, each ward is rated in one of three tiers – the highest tier among wards (darker blue), the lowest tier (lighter blue), or in an intermediate range (medium blue).

- » **Youth share of population** show a correlation between higher youth populations and less active park area per person (see Figure 7). This may be a concern as youth are primary beneficiaries of active park spaces. Ward 4, with the most active park area per person, has the lowest share of youth. Among the others, Wards 1 and 3 have more active park area per their level of youth population than do Wards 2, 5 and 6.
- » **Age 65+ share of population** is highest in Ward 1, followed by Ward 3. Ward 5 showed the lowest senior population of any other wards.
- » **Median Income** is lowest in Ward 5 which also has the lowest active park area per resident. It is highest in Wards 1 and 3 which have more active park area per person than Wards 2, 5 or 6.
- » Rates of **households with cars** are highest in Wards 1 and 6. Households with cars have relatively easy access to a variety of additional park resources within a 15-minute drive of Takoma Park that are much less accessible for residents lacking cars.
- » **Average walk time to an active park** is shortest in Ward 1 and longest in Ward 5. (see Figure 6)
- » **Sidewalk network quality** tends to be better in Wards 1-4 than Wards 5-6. (see Figure 11 and Figure 21).

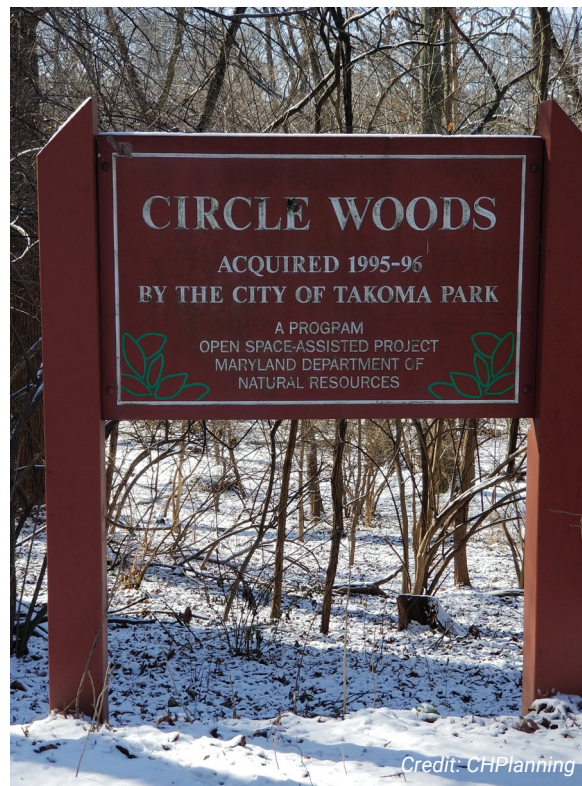
Comparing wards, Ward 5 stands out as having not only the least active park area per person, but the lowest levels of median income, car ownership, and sidewalk quality, longer walks to active parks, and a high nonwhite/Hispanic population share. In other words, the ward with the least active park space faces the greatest challenges traveling to parks. Ward 1 comes in at the high end of every category where Ward 5 is low. Ward 1 has four times as much active park area per person as Ward 5 (not counting the significant additional active parkland in Ward 4 that is directly adjacent to Ward 1). Contrasts among other wards are not so stark, but excluding Ward 4's large regional parks, Wards 1 and 3 have more active park, mobility, and income resources than the other wards, along with the highest white population shares.

Passive park area provides some balance to these disparities. Thanks to the Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park, Ward 5 has three times the total park area of Ward 1. Wards 2 and 6 also have significant passive park areas in the Sligo Creek and Long Branch Stream Valley Parks. These park areas offer good trail infrastructure as well as the aesthetic and microclimatic benefits of larger wooded areas. Still, they do not offer the range of active park activities present in other parks, causing residents of Wards 2, 5 and 6 to generally travel further to park options.

The results of this analysis suggest ways Takoma Park could improve equity of park access as it contemplates adding and improving park facilities. Additional active park programming – whether in new park space, creatively repurposed right of way, or other places – might be prioritized in areas furthest from active parks. Pedestrian and bike network improvements might be focused where their appeal and safety can best benefit residents who depend on them to access a variety of park options. By referring to this analysis, these or other improvements can be conceived and located where they will substantially improve equity of park access for Takoma Park's diverse residents.









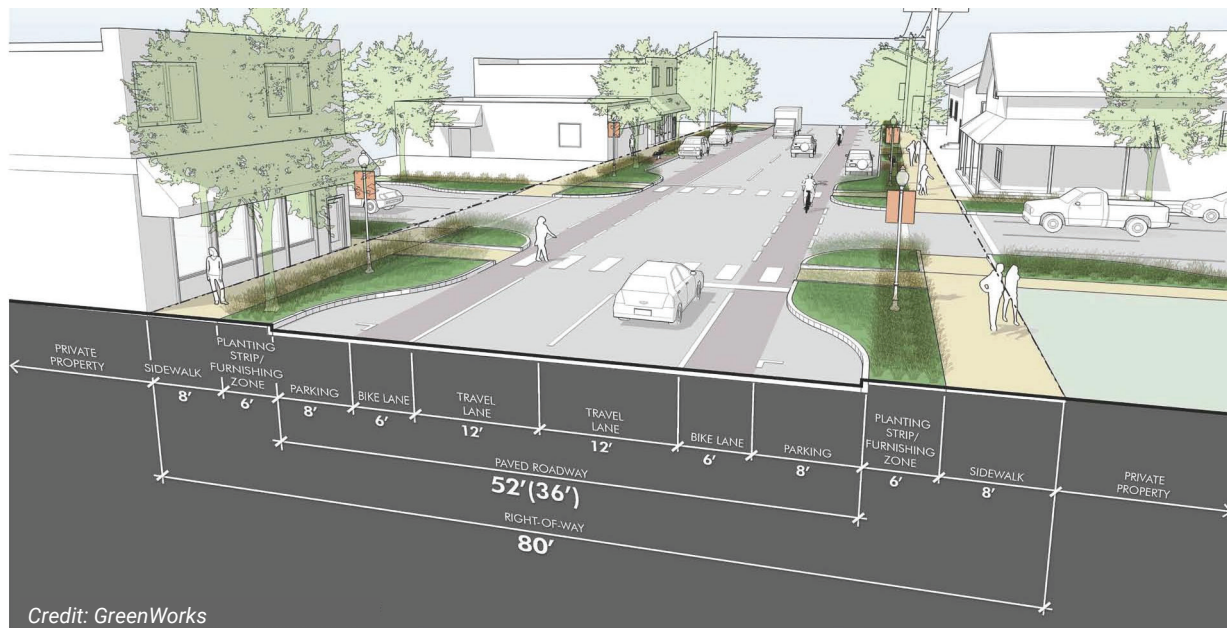
## PUBLIC STREETS AND ROADWAYS

The network of roadways in Takoma Park can be divided into two primary categories: those owned and managed by the city and those owned and managed by other governmental agencies. The ownership status both reflects the historic intention for those roads and creates practical challenges for the management of an interconnected road system.

The largest roads that run through the City are designated state highways. There are six (formerly seven) major state highways that were designed as throughways to carry high volumes of traffic through the area. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) operates and maintains these major roads, which include MD 650 - New Hampshire Avenue, MD 193 - University Boulevard, MD 195 - Carroll Avenue, MD 320 - Piney Branch Road, and MD410—Philadelphia Avenue/Ethan Allen Avenue/ East-West Highway (see Figure 9). MSHA formally transferred ownership of Flower Avenue, from Piney Branch Road to Sligo Creek Parkway to the city in advance of a major pedestrian-focused redesign that finished in 2020. Changes to MSHA roadways require agency approval, which can be challenging to acquire.

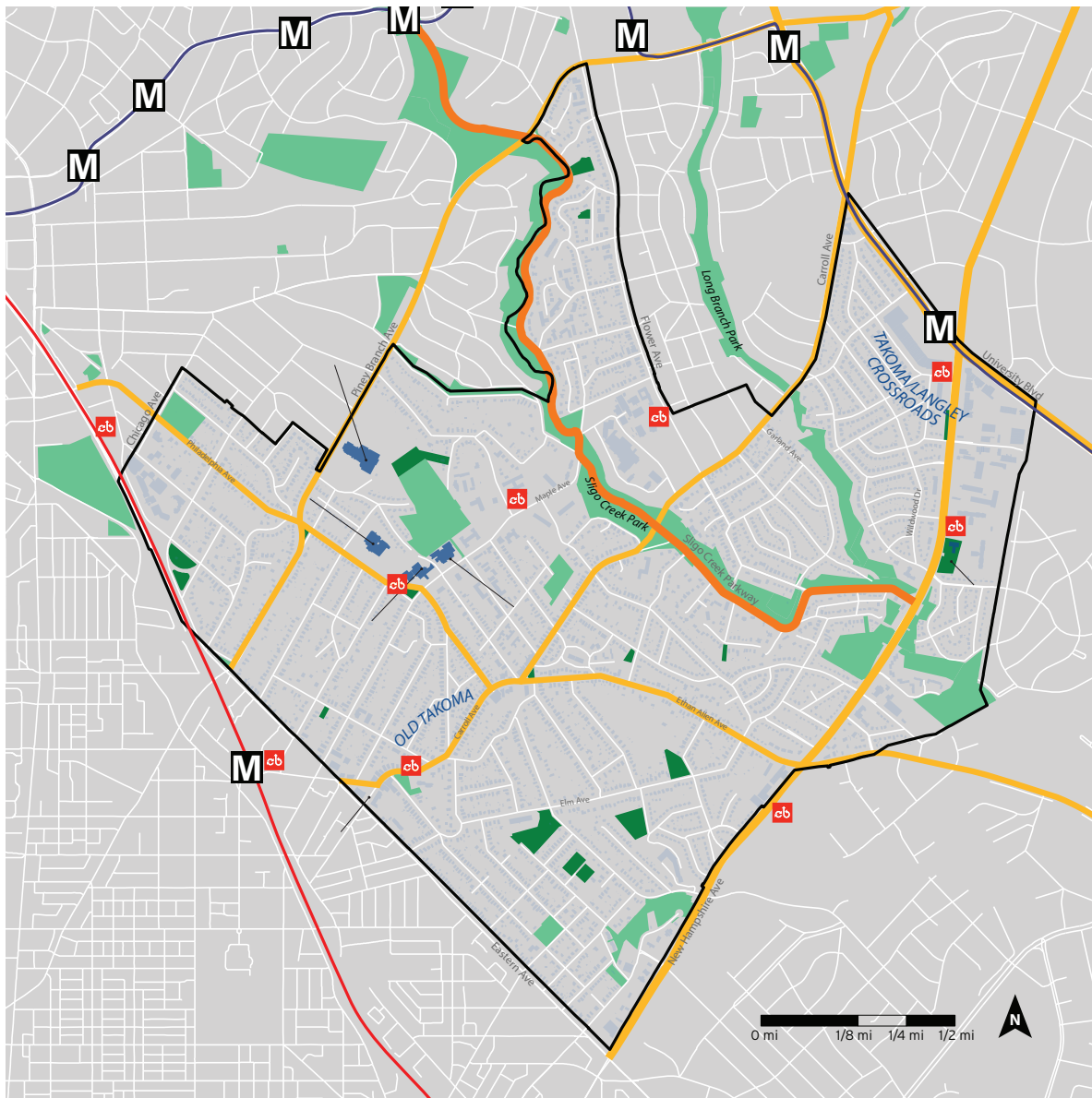
This network of state highways also supports a majority of the bus network served by WMATA MetroBus, Montgomery County Ride On, and the University of Maryland’s Shuttle-UM service. There are no roads that are owned by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation within the city boundary, but the agency maintains the M-NCPPC-owned Sligo Creek Parkway and manages the traffic signals in the city. Also, the District Department of Transportation manages most of the public right of way on Eastern Avenue.

The residential street network occupies the most land area in the city. The City of Takoma Park owns and maintains 34.6 miles of centerline roadways. These residential streets serve as the main access to most residences, local businesses, schools, and civic facilities. These smaller sized streets provide not only vehicle access, but also street parking, sidewalks, and bike routes. Across the city, residential street speed limits are set to 25mph, with select School Zones lowering the speed to 15mph.



**Figure 8. Example of Right-of-Way Cross Section**

A jurisdiction controls the full width of the public right-of-way, from the private property on one side of a street to the other. This includes the roadway surface, sidewalks, curbs, and any street trees, green space, or street furniture within.













- |   |                                    |   |                                 |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | City-Owned Street                  |  | Takoma Park Building Footprints |
|  | State Highways (MDOT SHA)          |  | Public Building Facilities      |
|  | Montgomery County DOT-Owned Street |  | City-Managed Parks              |
|  | Metro Red Line Station             |  | County-Managed Parks            |
|  | Proposed MTA Purple Line Stations  |   |                                 |
|  | Capital Bikeshare Stations         |   |                                 |

Figure 9. City of Takoma Park Transportation Hierarchy





Between 2015 and 2022, there were twenty-six serious-injury crashes and four fatal crashes on Takoma Park roadways, as reported by the Montgomery County Interactive Crash Map. Of those, twelve involved pedestrians and three involved bicycle riders. All fatal crashes and all but five of the serious-injury crashes occurred on SHA-maintained highways. This highlights the challenge that the City faces when it comes to improving traffic safety.

In 2018, Montgomery County adopted a countywide Vision Zero initiative, which aims to “eliminate serious-injury and fatal collisions on County roads for vehicle occupants (drivers and passengers), pedestrians, and bicyclists by the end of 2030.” By this measure, all City-maintained roads achieved Vision Zero from 2020 through 2022 (when the data was made publicly available). However, City staff still regularly receive concerned reports from residents about roadway locations around the city that feel unsafe.

The City has a few existing and ongoing policies and initiatives to tackle traffic safety concerns. Administrative Regulation No. 96-1 (detailed more on p. 53) outlines a resident-initiated petition process for traffic calming measures on City-managed roadways. This has led to an extensive network of 206 speed bumps and raised crosswalks on over 59 streets around the city, many of which are no longer compatible with modern traffic safety standards. Other traffic calming measures are permitted with the policy, although they have rarely been selected by petitioners as the preferred intervention.

The City has the discretion to install signage, beacons, and road markings on City-owned roadways. Staff may also pursue processes to set reduced speed limits down to 15 miles per hour, either through the designation of a School Zone or through the process laid out in Maryland House Bill 526 (2021).





## BIKEWAYS / TRAILS

The Washington region's active transportation system includes hundreds of miles of shared-use paths, separated bicycle lanes, and designated bicycle lanes. These numbers increase annually as all jurisdictions are working to design and construct planned bicycle and shared-use facilities.

The city a network of bikeways and trails throughout the city. The most notable are the two long-range trails that provide off-road opportunities for safer biking. These two paved, multi-use paths are the Sligo Creek Trail and the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The Sligo Creek Trail travels through Takoma Park through the Sligo Creek Stream Valley and is part of the larger Anacostia Trail system network, owned and maintained by M-NCPPC. The Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) is a larger regional trail with a 0.45 mile stretch managed by the City. The MBT currently exists in disconnected sections, but once plans to fill in the gaps over the next decade are complete, the trail will run from Silver Spring to Union Station, loosely following the WMATA Red Line right-of-way. These popular venues serve recreation enthusiasts and commuter cyclists.

Two additional, significant bikeways are currently in the design process. The New Ave Bikeway, when completed, will create a separated, two-directional bike route along New Hampshire Avenue that connects the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area with bike networks in DC. The other, known as the Maple Avenue Connectivity Project, will redesign Maple Avenue from the DC border to Sligo Creek and create a critical connection between Sligo Creek, civic facilities, schools, and the Takoma Metro station. Both projects were identified in the 2018 Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan as routes that would benefit from added bicycle infrastructure.

Striped bike lanes currently exist on limited sections of Carroll Avenue and Ethan Allen Avenue, each managed by MDSHA. Takoma Park also has designated some streets with shared bike/vehicle lanes as bike routes, indicated by signage and "sharrow" pavement markings. These routes include, Garland Avenue, Cedar Avenue, Carroll Avenue, Elm Avenue, Sycamore Avenue and Poplar Avenue.

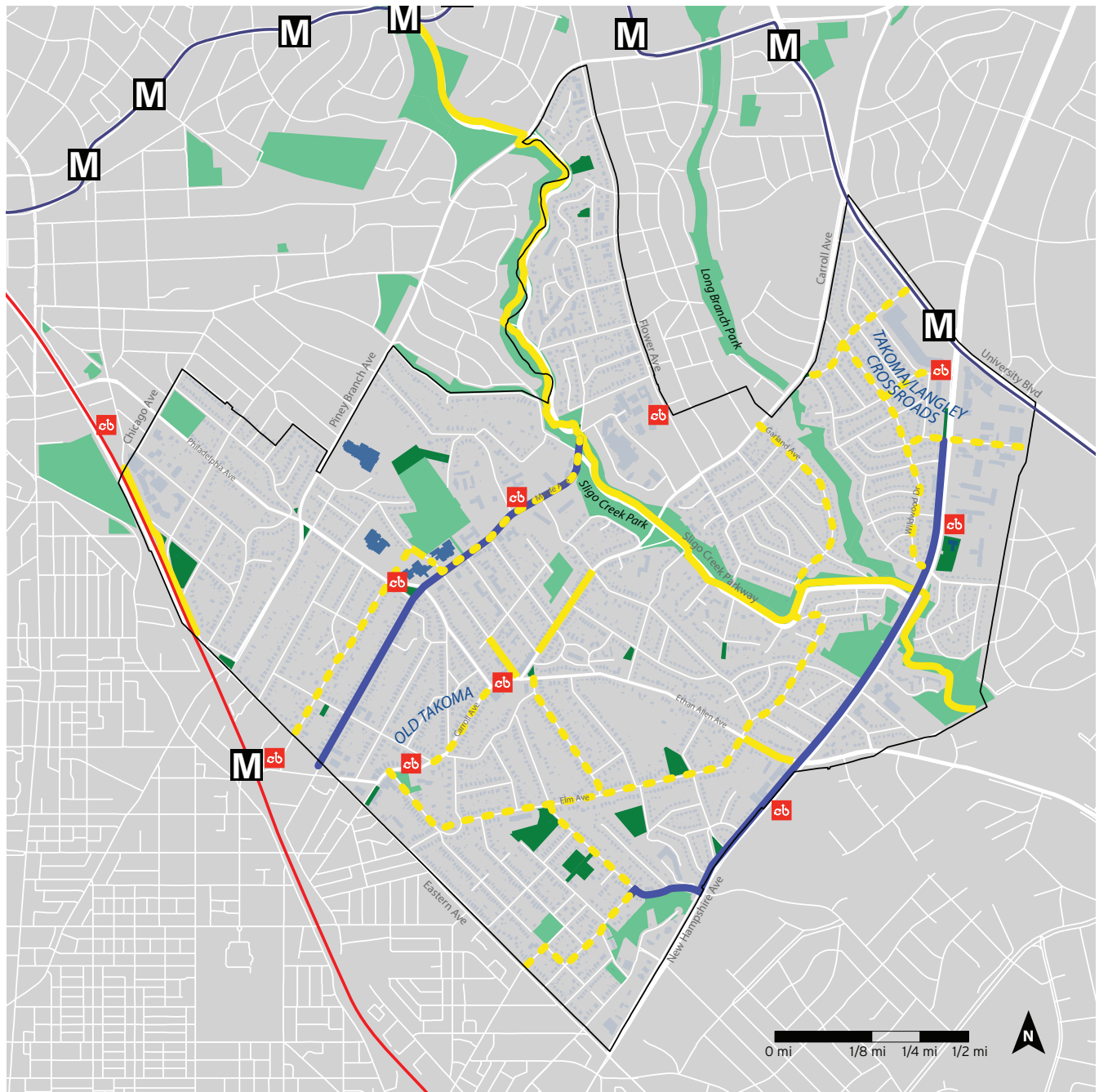
Many of the city's residential streets have low traffic volumes and speeds, and thus provide relatively comfortable settings for bicyclists to share space with vehicles. Still, many residents may not feel comfortable bicycling in this setting. In 2018, Montgomery County adopted a Bicycle Master Plan, which includes recommendations for improved roadway infrastructure, especially on many of the state highways in the city.














Credit: CHPlanning



Figure 10. Takoma Park Existing and Planned Bikeways



- |   |                                      |   |                                 |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | City-Owned Street                    |  | Takoma Park Building Footprints |
|  | Protected/Striped Bike Route/Trail   |  | Public Building Facilities      |
|  | Signed/Shared Bike Route/Trail       |  | City-Managed Parks              |
|  | Planned Protected/Striped Bike Route |  | County-Managed Parks            |
|  | Metro Red Line Station               |  | Capital Bikeshare Stations      |
|  | Proposed MTA Purple Line Stations    |   |                                 |







Credit: CHPlanning

Currently there are seven Capital Bikeshare stations available in Takoma Park. These stations are a part of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's bikeshare program, which is a partnership between Motivate (Lyft) and the county. There is no cost to the city for operating these stations. However, in 2015, the city purchased two bikeshare stations, in coordination with the county, to expand service to locations not included in the county's original network plan. These two stations, located in Ward 6 as an effort to reduce disparities in bike infrastructure in the city, were conveyed to the county and continue to be maintained as a part of their program.

- » Carroll Ave & Westmoreland Ave – 15 Docks
- » Carroll Ave & Ethan Allen Ave – 15 Docks
- » Philadelphia Ave & Maple Ave – 15 Docks  
(temporarily removed during library construction)
- » Maple Ave & Ritchie Ave – 18 Docks
- » Flower Avenue & Division Street - 15 Docks  
(at Washington Adventist University)
- » Takoma Park Recreation Center – 15 Docks  
(7315 New Hampshire Ave)
- » New Hampshire Ave & Kirklynn Ave – 14 Docks





## SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks represent an important and sometimes overlooked component of a city's public space. They provide a network of transportation, a place to wait for incoming public transit, a canvas for public artwork, a location for recreation, and an opportunity for spontaneous interactions with other people. Despite a largely residential character, up until a decade ago, the city had a constrained sidewalk network. A 2009 study found that of the sidewalks that the city maintained, only 10% met standards for accessibility laid out in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the national standard.

The compact geography of Takoma Park places most residents in close proximity to high quality public transit hubs, retail districts, schools, and civic buildings. The presence of these destinations within convenient walking distance, coupled with city's well documented sustainability goals, support the creation of a more complete sidewalk network. Discussions with stakeholders revealed this to be a common priority. Safe, accessible, and connected sidewalk networks create incentives for people to choose walking or wheeling over personal vehicle use. Conversely, incomplete or poorly maintained sidewalk networks raise barriers for those who might choose to walk or wheel, and those who don't have other mobility options. The latter category of pedestrians are often more vulnerable populations, such school children, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income people.



*Credit: City of Takoma Park*



*Credit: City of Takoma Park*





Today, the city has invested substantial resources into the provision of ADA compliant sidewalks using their annual capital improvement budget and external grant funding. As of January 2023, 86% of city-owned streets have an ADA-compliant sidewalk on at least one side of the street. The resources to continue closing that gap continue to be included in the city's annual budget. **Upgraded or new sidewalks also offered important opportunities for the City to install improved stormwater infrastructure.**

However, the city faces obstacles to completing the sidewalk network. A majority of residential properties include a right-of-way that would allow for a sidewalk. This is more often true for the part of town that has historically always been in Montgomery County, and less true for the part that used to be in Prince George's County. Where sidewalk does not currently exist, available right-of-way may be on steep or difficult terrain that requires expensive engineering solutions. In other situations, the public right-of-way has been integrated into the front yards of the adjacent properties, making sidewalk installation politically unpopular. The policy establishing the existing New Sidewalk Installation petition process requires community support in the design and construction phase. The structure by which residents convey input and approval can result in a small number of residents blocking a project, even in high-priority locations.

The sidewalk network also supports a range of street furniture, including public benches, bus shelters, waste and recycling bins. **In 2016, the City published the Takoma Park Streetscape Manual, which serves two purposes: the first is to determine design standards for street furniture and wayfinding in the public right of way. A standardized set of design choices aids in the creation of a consistent, aesthetic sense of place if different parts of the city. It also helps with ongoing maintenance and replacement. When a bench is damaged or a lamp post malfunctions, the Streetscape Manual is used to quickly identify a compatible replacement, and the Public Works Department can reduce the number of different kinds of spare parts and specialty tools on-hand to help**

**Second, the Streetscape Manual includes maps and visualizations of the different streetscape elements. The availability of these maps help City staff track the locations and distribution of different kinds of street furniture, and they add transparency for the public as to where different amenity investments are happening. The Streetscape Manual was updated once, in 2021, although when the manual was first conceived, the intention was to update the data and mapping on an annual basis and the design standards on a less frequent schedule. The infrequent update schedule has left the mapping in the manual out of date and some of the design specifications for different pieces of street furniture or amenities are no longer considered best practice or the companies that provide them are no longer available.**



Credit: City of Takoma Park



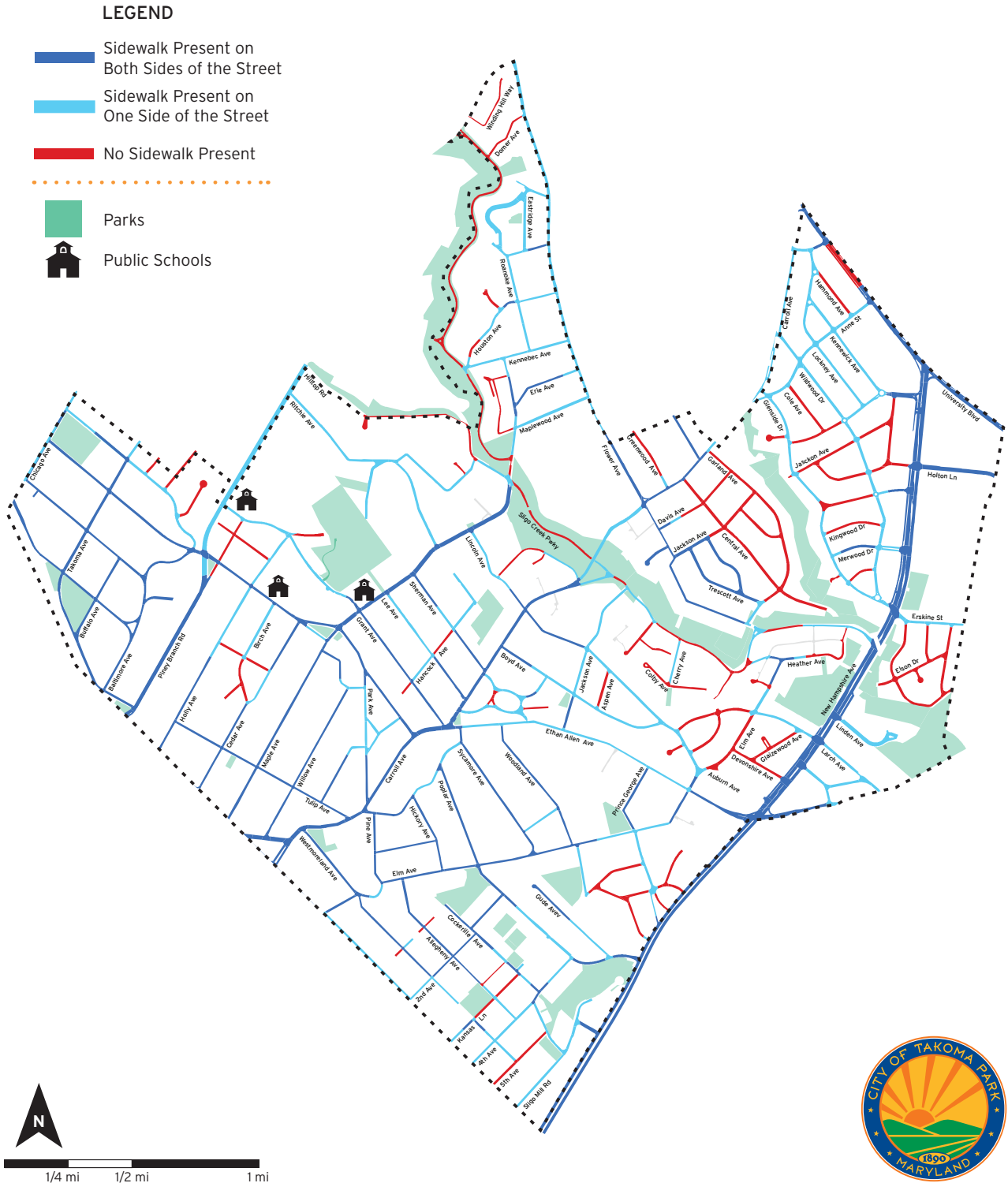


Figure 11. Sidewalk Network Map (2022)





## BUS STOPS

Three transit agencies provide services to Takoma Park, including Montgomery County Department of Transportation's (MCDOT) Ride On, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) MetroBus, and the University of Maryland's Shuttle (Shuttle-UM). Combined, these providers support 138 bus stops across the city. Ride On and MetroBus routes link to the critical nearby public transit hubs: the Takoma Metro Station, Takoma Langley Crossroads Transit Center, and Silver Spring Transit Center. These transit opportunities are integral to the city's mobility and sustainability goals. Safe, accessible, and comfortable bus stops, with shelters, seating, and sufficient lighting make riding the bus a more pleasant experience and lower the barriers for people to use public transit. The creation of a robust bus stop network helps the city deliver on its sustainability and racial equity goals.

Of the 138 bus stops in the city, 32 have shelters to protect riders from the elements. The City of Takoma Park contracts out the installation and maintenance of most bus shelters in the city to a third-party vendor, the advertising firm InSite Street Media. This agreement was renewed via a 10-year agreement in 2015. Bus shelter management contracts with outside firms can reduce the financial and staffing burden for small jurisdictions, like Takoma Park; the current Public Works budget and work plan does not account for the cost of regular maintenance to the city's shelter network.



Continue to proactively improve the accessibility, quality, and comfort of bus stops based on a holistic prioritization strategy.

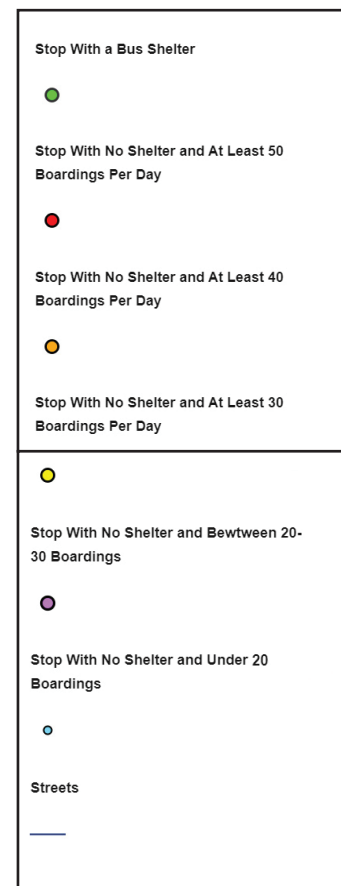
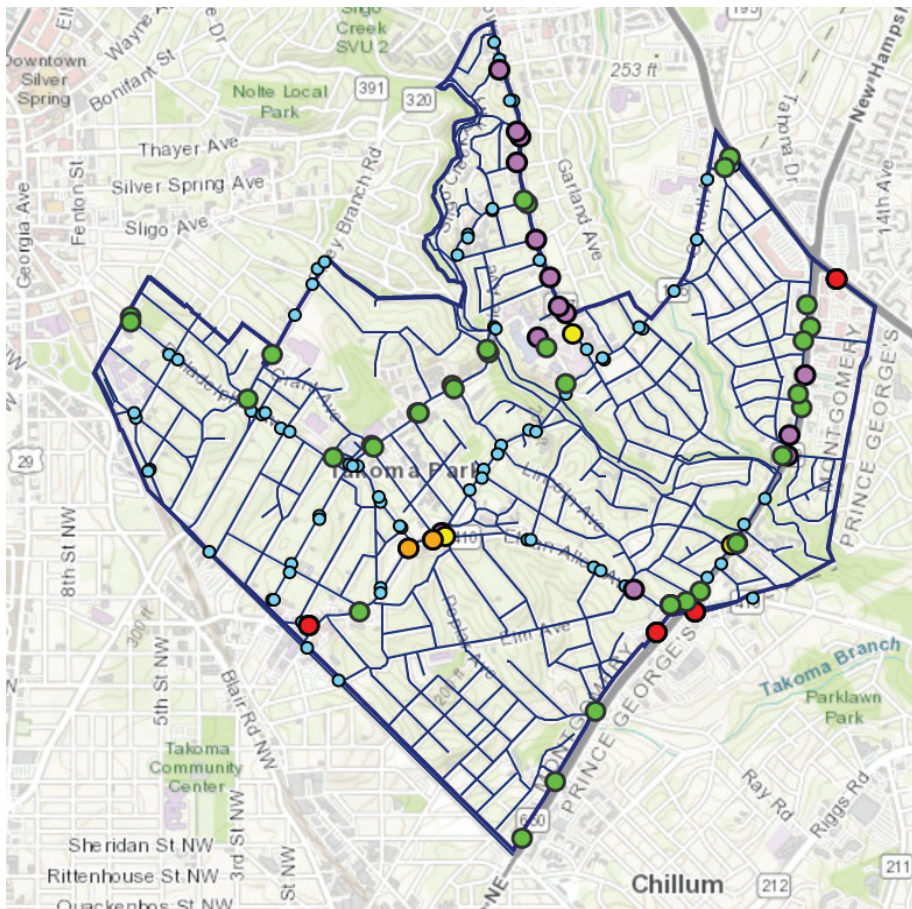


Figure 12. City of Takoma Park Bus Shelter Inventory Map





In 2020, the City Council adopted the City of Takoma Park's Bus Stop Improvement Plan. The plan, generated by a private firm through a technical assistance grant program, inventoried all 138 bus stops and generated a prioritization strategy for improvements to the accessibility, safety, and comfort of each. The City Council's Resolution 2020-2 also included an annual funding commitment to enact the plan's recommendations. In 2022, the city purchased five new bus shelters without advertising panels, at cost to the city. New bus shelters purchased after the 2015 InSite contract renewal are maintained by the Department of Public Works. Maintenance costs for the shelters may pose challenges into the future for the city. Since their installation, the shelters have suffered from vandalism including graffiti, damage to artistic vinyl decals, and two shattered glass wall panels.



*Credit: Takoma Park Planning Division*

Most of Takoma Park's bus routes follow state roadways. The funding and work being done to accomplish the improvements to landing pads, ADA accessibility, crosswalks, clearance zones, lighting and other improvements that have been identified in this report should be done through collaboration between The Maryland State Highway Administration and the City of Takoma Park. Likewise, the upgrades, routine maintenance and improvements to the shelters provided by the city should also be accomplished through collaboration between the city, MDSHA and the transit providers. While coordinating among these entities takes effort, it delivers value by using maintenance budgets efficiently and ensuring operations and improvements support city goals. Facilitating these discussions, making stakeholders aware of the city's sustainability goals, the popularity of the transit ridership and sharing the findings of this report is important to the continued successful implementation strategy.



*Credit: CHPlanning*



*Credit: Takoma Park Arts Division*



## PAPER STREETS

Takoma Park has several paper streets--streets that were planned but never fully constructed. Paper streets are concentrated along the southern tip, southeastern boundary and northwestern edges of the city. The conditions of the city's paper streets varies. Some are used as informal walking paths by residents; some are overgrown or integrated in undeveloped park lands; and some are informally used by abutting neighbors as additional driveway or yard space.

The Department of Public Works includes maintenance for these spaces in their vegetation maintenance program where access and passage through the site is feasible. Some paper streets remain unbuilt due to steep slopes or other logistical challenges and are now barely discernible from adjacent park lands or private properties. Most paper streets remain in a space between a formally maintained park or trail and an undeveloped green space. The City retains liability for the safety and use of the spaces when used by the public, but they remain without lighting, programming, or ADA accessible amenities. ★



Analysis created by  
University of Maryland  
ARCH460 students (2015)

Figure 13. Takoma Park Paper Streets





## STREETLIGHTS

The street light inventory in Takoma Park is owned and maintained by the utility company Pepco. In 2018, the City Council initiated a streetlight conversion project to upgrade existing fixtures to energy efficient LEDs creating considerable cost savings for the city. The partnership between the city and Pepco converted 1,531 streetlights. The conversion project concluded in July, 2019. No formal policies exist for residents to identify opportunities for additional new lighting, although residents may request improvements to street lighting via a written request to the Department of Public Works. Funding is allocated annually in the Capital Improvement Projects budget to support evaluation and installation of new or improved lighting. New large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the Metropolitan Branch Trail Upgrade project, under design at publishing of this plan, create easy opportunities for improved lighting to be implemented where needed.



Continue efforts to maintain and expand pedestrian-scale lighting to support safety and visibility, while protecting homes and ecosystems from light pollution.



*Credit: CHPlanning*





## SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

Signs are a ubiquitous part of the public realm. The signage that guides people from place to place and identifies public spaces or significant sites is known as wayfinding signage. Wayfinding and interpretive signage, when employed strategically, can provide direction, add a defined sense of place or character to a location, or spark curiosity with illustrative or educational content.

The City maintains over 140 different wayfinding, place identification, and interpretive signs in public spaces across all six wards. In 2016, the City Council adopted the City's first Streetscape Manual. The Manual inventoried the city-managed amenities, including wayfinding and interpretive signage, in the public right-of-way and created a standardized visual aesthetic to create a consistent sense of place. The most recent update to the Manual occurred in 2021 and included updates to defined style guidance for different pieces of street furniture and updates to the inventories and maps of each type of amenities. ★

Repairs and updates to most wayfinding signage is conducted on an as-needed basis or by requests made through the City's 311-style issue reporting portal, MyTkPk. In addition to the publicly maintained wayfinding and place identification signage, public posting boards have been erected in a handful of public parks by members of the community over time, with the approval of the City. No formal policy is in place to request new installation or maintenance for such posting boards.





## PUBLIC ART

Public art transforms neighborhoods and communities by expressing our collective creativity, establishing a sense of place, and spurring economic development. The City of Takoma Park's Arts and Humanities Division annually organizes a wide range of public art projects and a Takoma Park Arts event series. The Division is supported by a small General Fund budget and two part-time employees. The Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Committee, which includes volunteers appointed by the City Council, collaborates with city staff to devise new public art projects, review artist submissions, and implement projects with community input.

City budget cuts have reduced public art funding in recent years, which limits the size and scope of some future public art projects. City staff have relied upon several grants from the Maryland State Arts Council to offset the loss in funding, although the bulk of funding to support the city's public art program remain in annual budgeted funding. The installations and events run by the Division have garnered positive media coverage and broad community support over the past years.

In 2018, the City Council adopted a Cultural Plan entitled "Empowering a Creative Community: A Vision for 2018-2023" that was developed by city staff and the Arts and Humanities Committee. The plan, which replaced a 2006 Cultural Plan, encompasses a broad vision for the city's arts programming and various means of implementing those goals.

There are no other city policies that specifically address public art, whether city- or resident-initiated. The city does have an anti-graffiti ordinance modeled on the county's ordinance, which is enforced on a complaint-based system. The lack of formal policies and processes to define what is considered allowable, resident-led public art and what is graffiti, and where and by whom it is allowed, has created ambiguity for residents and city staff alike.





## GREENING PUBLIC SPACE

In the dense, suburban setting of Takoma Park, publicly maintained plantings, street trees, and green stormwater infrastructure become integral parts of the available public space, outside of traditional maintained parks. In addition to well-researched **public health and public safety benefits**, the greenery in both formal gardens and the marginal spaces along roadways, medians, and sidewalks provide stormwater management and biodiversity benefits by slowing and absorbing rainfall and creating habitat and food sources for native fauna.

The Public Works Department manages the bulk of green infrastructure in the public right-of-way, especially relating to the local tree canopy, citywide landscaping, and stormwater infrastructure.

The City's tree canopy is overseen by a full-time Urban Forestry Manager tasked with the preservation and improvement of Takoma Park's urban forest canopy, on both public and private property. The Urban Forest Master Plan (2023), augmented by regular tree canopy assessments, identifies goals and strategies for expanding the city's tree canopy. In addition to a robust public tree planting initiative that uses native and climate-adapted species, the city enforces strict rules around tree protection and removal on private property, which has spillover effects into the public realm. These include Tree Removal Permits, Tree Impact Assessments, or Tree Protection Plan Permits. A free,

private property tree planting program—Tree Takoma—was established in 2022 and remains in place, contingent upon ongoing funding. The impacts of a healthy tree extend beyond the distinction between public versus private property boundaries.

The Vegetation Maintenance Division maintains the city's public gardens and parks, planted streetscapes, and seventy-three (73) stormwater bioretention facilities. **Stormwater run-off poses a unique challenge for the City, because run-off from public spaces can impact private properties, and vice versa.** In 2023, the Public Works Department initiated a Stormwater Resiliency Study to advance their existing stormwater management efforts. The study identifies high-priority locations on both public and private property, as well as recommended mitigation strategies. Changing climate patterns and the high cost of significant stormwater management efforts create special challenges for a city like Takoma Park, which is spread across a number of stream valleys.



Credit: City of Takoma Park



Continue to enhance & expand the City's street tree planting and tree canopy initiatives.



Continue to enforce & expand the City's stormwater management infrastructure and initiatives.







**Figure 14. City of Takoma Park Best Management Practices (BMP)\* Location Map**

\* "BMP" in stormwater management vocabulary stands for Best Management Practices and comes from the US EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program created by the Clean Water Act. BMPs are structural, vegetative or managerial practices used to treat, prevent or reduce water pollution by utilizing collection, filtering, or treatment in the form of filtration basins, bio retention ponds, green roofs, bioswales, and modular wetlands.



The Code Enforcement Division of the Housing and Community Development Department manages enforcement of City Codes Sections 12.08.025 and 12.08.030 that prohibit vegetation from private properties to impede public sidewalks and roadways. The Section 12.08.040 also puts some restrictions on the growth of invasive and noxious plant species on private property, which impacts the spread of such species into publicly maintained spaces.

The city currently does not maintain any formal urban food production on municipal public property. Limited available space and constrained staffing resources create challenges for the implementation of public urban food infrastructure like community gardens or food forests. Additionally, The largest community garden is located within Sligo Mill Overlook Park, maintained by M-NCPPC. There is one resident-run community garden currently on land in Memorial Park. The garden was first informally installed alongside the Takoma Park Maryland Public Library, but moved across the street when the library began a major renovation. A City Council resolution guaranteed it a new home in the park without staff consultation or public review. The space is fenced in, locked to the public, and not maintained by city staff. Its creation outside of any formal, broader public processes reflects the gaps in existing public space management policy in the city.



Continue to address encroachments in the sidewalks from trees and shrubs in order to keep sidewalks walkable, passable and safe.





## PUBLIC SPACE PERMITS AND PROCESSES IN THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

Like most jurisdictions, the city carefully regulates specific activities that occur in municipal public space. Specific permits provide an opportunity for the City of Takoma Park to ensure that their goals are realized for both private and public use and development within and around public space and that specific standards are upheld. In the city, these permits are managed and approved by multiple different city departments.

The following is an inventory of the permits and permitted processes that the city currently reviews for public use of public space. The inventory process revealed that information about these permits, and their relevant process, are dispersed across dozens of different city web pages and without any standard style or format. The resulting constellation of policies and procedures are difficult to navigate and understand without familiarity of the systems.

### CITY CLERK PERMITS

#### *Closing and Abandoning Public Right-of-Way*

If a person has an interest in the closing or abandoning of a public right-of-way within the city, the person may request that the city consider the closing or abandoning of a public right-of-way. The request must be in writing. The City Council may also initiate consideration of whether to close or abandon a right-of-way.

#### *Door-to-Door Vendor*

Must fill out an application to ensure that the business is properly registered and insured.

#### *Farmers Market Agreements*

Farmers markets require an agreement with the City outlining the City's support, location of the market, dates, hours of operation, and any closure of public space.

#### *Film Permits*

Any commercial film production must apply for a permit at least 14 days before filming begins.

#### *Noise Waiver*

Applicants must apply and inform neighbors of the date and time the noise waiver will take place.

#### *Sidewalk Sales Permit*

Vendors that want to display and sell merchandise on the sidewalk must submit a permit application and \$25 fee.

#### *Shared City Streets Program*

The City of Takoma Park allows street closures to provide space for neighbors to come together and strengthen the community. Residential street closures for recreational activities or events require a permit. Applicants may apply online for the free permit, but they must go to the Public Works Department to pick up barricades. Impacted neighbors must be notified one week in advance.



Credit: CHPlanning



## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PERMITS

### *“Adopt-a-Spot” Program*

Individuals or groups may apply to the City’s Code Enforcement Division to “adopt” an area located within Takoma Park’s public ROW and agree to make regular litter pick-ups at the site. The City recognize the group’s efforts with a sign with the group’s name on it.

### *Fixed Vendor Permit*

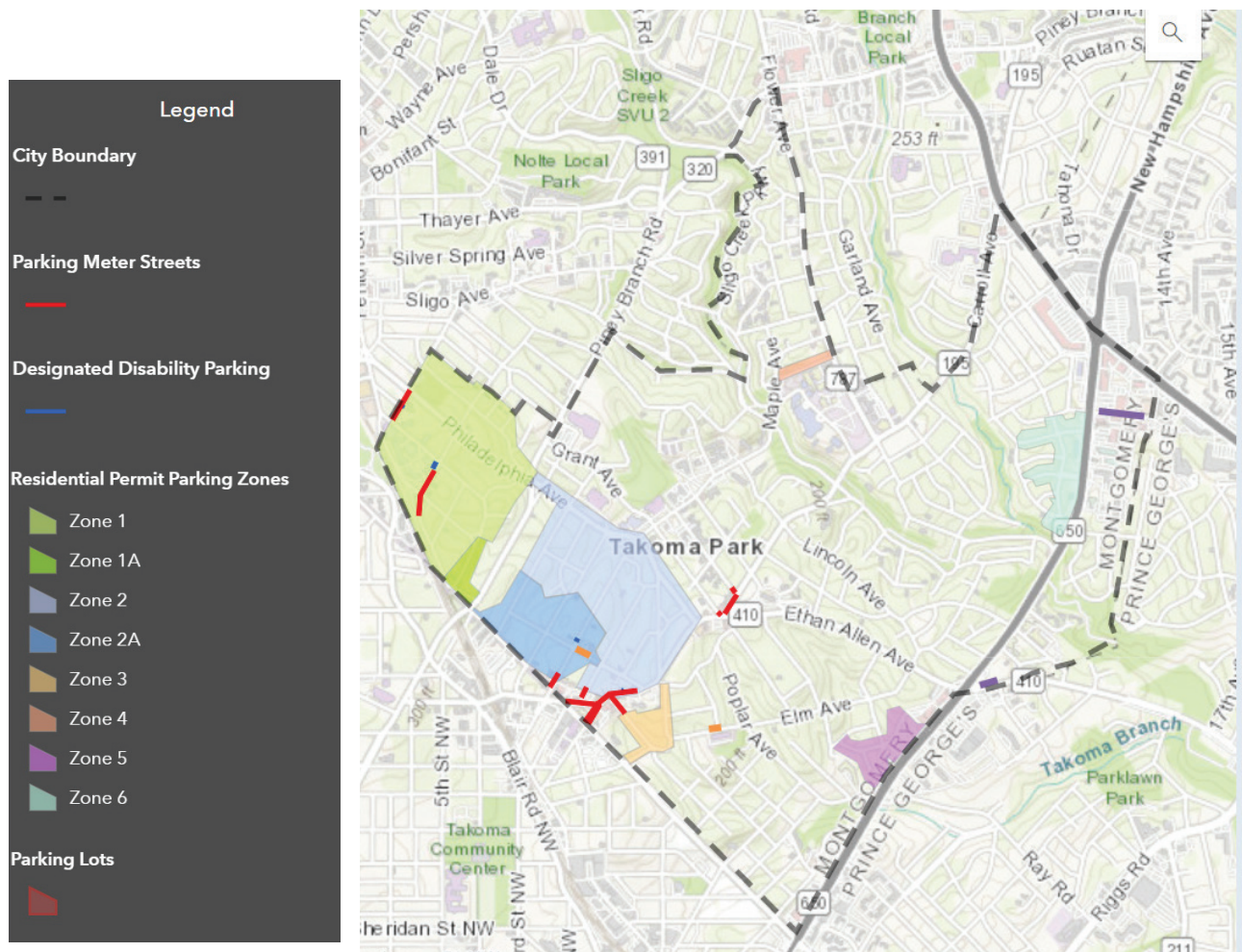
Any vendor that stays in the same location for more than 15 minutes must apply for this permit. Presumably, this means that food trucks that stay in one place for an hour or a day also qualify as Fixed Vendors, rather than Roaming Vendors.

### *Outdoor Café*

Licensed food service facilities must obtain an Outdoor Cafe Permit from the city prior to establishing an outdoor dining area located within the public right of way for purposes of serving food and alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages to patrons. During the Covid-19 emergency, all fees were waived.

### *Roaming Vendor Permit*

Any vendor that stays in the same location for less than 15 minutes would qualify for this permit.



**Figure 15. Residential Permit Parking Zones**





## POLICE DEPARTMENT PERMITS

### *Residential Parking Permits and Fees*

A petition with signatures from 66% of residents of an area can be submitted to the City Manager to establish a parking permit area. Following a petition, a public hearing must be conducted, and the request must be approved by the City Council. Residential permits cost \$20 for 2 years, and businesses pay \$15 per year. This requirement only applies to certain areas of the city, shown on the Map below.

## PUBLIC WORKS PERMITS AND PROCESSES

### *Curbside Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger Permit*

City regulations for EV chargers are modeled on county regulations. Residents without off street parking may file an application to install an in-street charger in the city right-of-way. EV chargers also require an electrical permit from Montgomery County. Any potential impact to street trees will also be assessed and may require additional permitting. A post-construction work inspection is required. In some cases, a historic area work permit, administered by the county may be required.

### *Driveway Apron Permit*

Any modifications to a driveway apron require permitted approval from the city. A permit requires an application with a \$50 fee, an in-person inspection from the Public Works Department, possibly a Historic Area Work permit if located in historic district, and approval from city arborist if a tree is within 50 feet of the driveway apron.

### *Fence Agreement*

The construction of private property fences require a fence permit issued by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services. Part of that application requires a Municipality Letter from the city's Planning Division that notified owners of local rules. Any fences that cross into the city's public right-of-way require the Public Works Department to approve of a Fence Agreement to establish terms and expectations for the public property.

### *Right of Entry and Access Agreement*

Agreement permitting access to city-owned properties, especially those with conservation easements, for the purpose of removing invasive vines or weeds located on the property. This agreement is most often used for volunteer service days by approval of the Department.

### *Stormwater Management Permit*

Building projects or structural additions that disturb at least 5,000 sq ft of ground for single family properties, or any new multi-family residential, commercial, institutional, or industrial construction, are required to submit to stormwater management review process and request a permit for the project to advance. An applicable project must submit a stormwater plan at the concept and final construction phases and adhere to its regulations.

### *Tree Impact Assessments & Protection Plan Permits*

Tree removal requires a permit for any tree, living or dead, that is greater than 7 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. in diameter. Tree impact assessments may be required for projects that have the potential to disturb nearby trees. If the tree impact assessment shows that trees would be disturbed, the city requires a Tree Protection Plan to minimize damage.



### Sidewalk Design and Construction Request Process

Council Resolution 2015-32 lays out a process by which residents can request a new sidewalk. A petition process begins with a formal written request from any number of residents, a recognized neighborhood association, or a City Councilmember. In response to the request, an informational community meeting is coordinated by the Public Works Department, and afterward all abutting neighbors are mailed a notice to vote for approval. Requested projects that meet the fifty percent (50%) approval threshold (by those who respond to the ballot) are placed in a queue for preliminary design work with a third-party firm.

After preliminary designs are developed, the city facilitates additional community meetings and neighbors must approve designs prior to construction with another approval ballot that meets or exceeds approval by fifty percent (50%) of the residents who respond. Only the City Council can override the majority vote of neighbors on the street. Approved projects are constructed on timelines based on available capital funds. The council sets the funding level for sidewalk construction annually.

The petition process does not incorporate any prioritization based on safety or equity concerns, nor does it practically account for how multi-family buildings would engage in the process. The policy is designed in a way that could allow a small numbers of residents to obstruct proposed projects, even in locations identified as a high priority to the city, although this has only happened once in the last decade. The policy also does not clarify whether the city staff may initiate projects independent of this process, and it creates bureaucratic frustration due to its similar subject matter (traffic safety), but substantially different process from the Traffic Calming Request Process.



Credit: City of Takoma Park

### Traffic Calming Request Process

City Administrative Regulation 96-1 prescribes the process for residents to request new traffic calming installations. A request for installation of one or more traffic calming devices can be made by petition of two-thirds (66%) of affected residents to the City Manager. Traffic calming devices include signs, pavement markings, speed humps, raised walkways, flattop speed humps or speed tables, and other physical devices placed or installed on a roadway which limit access, restrict traffic flow, or channel or slow vehicle movement for the purpose of reducing traffic hazards and improving pedestrian safety.

Once the petition's signatories have been verified, the petitioner is obliged to coordinate a public meeting on the issue and the City Clerk sets a public hearing on the City Council agenda. After the hearing, the City Council has fifteen (15) days to approve, amend, or deny the petition. The City Council may initiate the installation of traffic control devices specifically on streets around neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and schools without adhering to this process. City staff may install, replace, or remove traffic calming devices without adhering to this process, regardless of location, although impacted resident notification is required. This process is laid out in an administrative regulation that informs Chapter 13 of the City Code.

This petition process does not allow for any form of prioritization based on safety or equity concerns, and the high threshold for petition creates a greater burden for projects on streets with multi-family residences. This policy creates similar frustration to the New Sidewalk Request Process.





## EXISTING POLICIES, PLANS, AND STUDIES

Public space management in Takoma Park is influenced by city and state managed budgets, programs, plans, and studies. There is an opportunity for existing programs and policies to be fully utilized and built upon in order to bolster the vision for the Takoma Park Public Space Management Plan.

## CITY OF TAKOMA PARK RELEVANT POLICIES, PLANS AND STUDIES

### *Stormwater Resiliency Study [IN PROGRESS]*

The study will identify approximately 20 flood prone locations for further analysis and provide the City with a list of proposed incentive and Code changes for consideration to enhance stormwater management requirements. The project will also provide a dashboard that will enable residents to estimate the amount of run-off on their property generated by various storm events.

### *Urban Forest Master Plan, 2022*

The City of Takoma Public Works Department developed an Urban Forest Master Plan that sets goals for urban tree canopy levels and provides guidance on tree planting, tree management, and urban forest monitoring and evaluation. The plan is updated annually.

### *Takoma Park Municipal Code, 2021*

The Takoma Park Municipal Code covers local laws and legislation governing Takoma Park. Some sections that will provide relevant guidance to the Public Space Management Plan include Streets, Trees and Vegetation, Vehicles and Traffic, Health and Safety, and Stormwater Management.

### *Takoma Park Streetscape Manual, 2021*

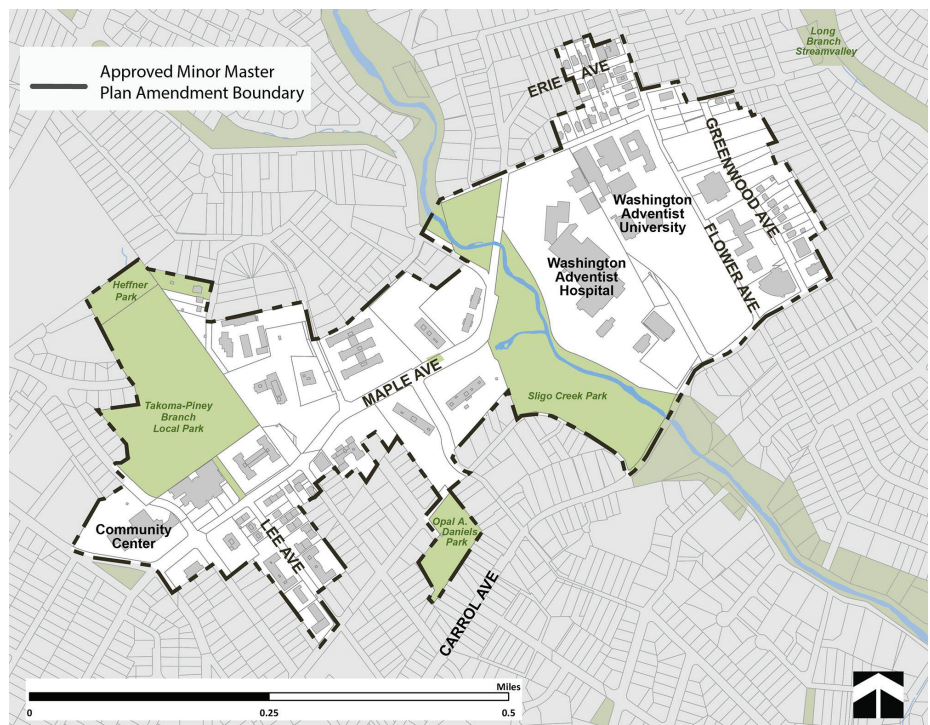
City staff developed the Streetscape Manual to provide guidance on consistent standards for the design and location of certain types of infrastructure, including street furniture, like benches and trash cans, wayfinding signage, lighting, and bicycle and transit amenities.

### *Bus Stop Improvement Plan, 2020*

This report provides a bus stop accessibility inventory and recommendations to the City of Takoma Park for future bus stop improvements. This work contributes to the city's sustainability goals and specifically aims to strengthen the transit network, provide more passenger amenities, and develop a holistic approach to improving bus stops within the City of Takoma Park.

### *Overarching Goals and Principles for Tree Canopy and Urban Forest Policies, 2020*

Takoma Park City Council has conducted a comprehensive review of the tree ordinance and discussed overarching forest canopy principles and goals. These goals include improving water quality, reducing stormwater runoff, reducing energy use in buildings, and addressing the urban heat island effect.



**Figure 16. - Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Boundary**



### *Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan, 2019*

Designed to cover the period of 2019-2030, the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan provides a coordinated approach to move Takoma Park towards a “Livable Community for All”. Objectives outlined in this report include preserving existing businesses and affordable housing, producing more housing across the income spectrum, and protecting from discrimination and displacement.

### *Sustainability & Climate Action Plan, 2019*

The purpose of this report is to meet county and state emissions reduction goals, with an emphasis on social equity. Efforts are oriented around three tasks: 1) a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, 2) developing and prioritizing emission reduction strategies, and 3) climate emergency preparedness and resilience. Available documents include the Recommendations Report, Next Steps and Funding Memo, and Resilience and Adaptation Memo. Relevance to Public Space Management Plan: expanding tree canopy, Parks need a plan for responses to extreme heat/flooding/storms.

### *Racial Equity Initiative Framework, 2017*

City Council has created an ongoing initiative to consider racial equity in policy decisions. This resulted in the interactive Demographic Map that maps out census data by ward, the Covid-19 data dashboard, and various reports focusing on racial equity in transportation and park space, and a task force to recommend ways to reform public safety policies. Tools and recommendations produced through the Public Space Management Plan should be in alignment with existing city policies on racial equity.

### *New Hampshire Avenue Corridor Concept Plan, 2008*

The City of Takoma Park initiated this plan in recognition of the need and potential for redeveloping the New Hampshire Avenue Corridor. Some of the recommendations in this plan include introducing new streets in conjunction with redevelopment, implement enhanced transit service in the corridor, development of new pedestrian-oriented buildings, a variety of building sizes and architectures, and adoption of corridor-wide environmental initiatives.

### *Takoma Park Master Plan, 2000*

This Master Plan envisions Takoma Park as a vibrant mix of interesting neighborhoods, viable commercial centers, appropriate community facilities, and a circulation system that provides easy access to shops, services, parks, and transportation.

### *Open Space Plan Amendment, 2000*

In 2000, the City of Takoma Park amended the 1994 Open Space Plan to include neighborhoods annexed after 1994, ensure that future development complements and enhances existing community networks.

### *Takoma Park Open Space Plan, 1994*

The purpose of the Open Space Master Plan is to provide a basis for public policy decisions regarding the acquisition and development of public space within the City of Takoma Park. This plan follows the policies and vision of the county’s Planning Act of 1992 .





## COUNTY, STATE, AND FEDERAL LONG-RANGE PLANS

### *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment [IN PROGRESS]*

The Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment will re-envision the Washington Adventist Hospital and University campuses, the Erie Center, and the area along Maple Avenue. The planning team will work with community members throughout the planning process to create a guiding roadmap for the development and community resources this area will be able to provide over the coming years.

### *Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan, 2023*

The plan sets a comprehensive course to make walking and rolling safer, more comfortable, more convenient and more accessible for pedestrians of all ages and abilities in all parts of the county. In addition to prioritizing needed infrastructure, it recommends new and amended policies and operational practices, design standards and programming.

### *Montgomery County Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, 2022*

The newest update to the PROS Plan for Montgomery County provides a county-wide strategy for development, preservation, and maintenance of recreational and open space resources across the county.

### *THRIVE Montgomery 2050, 2022*

Montgomery County's General Plan. Approved in November 2022, the General Plan guides the growth of Montgomery County through the year 2050.

### *Takoma Junction Vision Study, 2020*

In Fall 2018, the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) initiated a vision study to collaboratively develop and document a range of potential future transportation improvements in an area of Takoma Park. In March 2019, MDOT SHA commenced the public engagement that is the foundation of this vision study. The improvements were identified to address pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular mobility at the intersections of MD 195 (Carroll Avenue) and MD 410 (Ethan Allen and Philadelphia Avenues)—an area known as “Takoma Junction.”

### *Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan, 2018*

The Bicycle Master Plan sets forth a vision for Montgomery County as a world-class bicycling community, where people in all areas of the county have access to a comfortable, safe and connected bicycle network, and where bicycling is a viable transportation option that improves our quality of life. The plan is a key element in Montgomery County's Vision Zero plan to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. The plan includes recommendations for a low-stress network of biking paths, classification system to evaluate current cycling routes.

### *Long Branch Sector Plan, 2013*

Recommendations for the community of older, neighborhood-oriented commercial areas and a mix of single-family and multifamily housing, will become one in a series of land use plans that set design and development patterns in Purple Line station areas. Reflecting input from members of the community collected over three years, the draft recommends new mixed-use zoning, varied housing options to serve residents at different life stages, and a safe, connected pedestrian and bicycle network.

### *Takoma/Langley Sector Plan, 2012*

Montgomery County planners have drafted a sector plan for the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area that will reinforce the community's best features, such as its vibrant mix of small businesses and affordable housing opportunities. The plan incorporates pedestrian safety, transit improvements, community facilities, parks and open space. The community's multi-cultural population makes the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area an ideal place to support outdoor gathering places, recreational opportunities, mixed residential and retail, and new jobs.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To develop a Public Space Management Plan that is achievable, inclusive, and well-coordinated, the project team conducted a robust community engagement process to supplement the outreach previously done by city staff. A list of community and organizational stakeholders who were engaged throughout the most recent process are listed below. The outreach process engaged the public through hybrid in-person/virtual community meetings and focus groups. All residents were encouraged to participate and provide feedback, and additional outreach efforts were made to reach community members who are less frequently heard in public engagement. Methods of communication included city radio, website, social media promotion, and print publications (the Takoma Park Newsletter and The Insider). The consultant team also publicized engagement opportunities with on-the-ground strategies like flyering in multi-family buildings, direct email outreach to tenant associations and community service organizations, and posting printed notices in community spaces. Translation services were available for all marketing materials.

## PARTICIPATING PUBLIC SPACE STAKEHOLDERS

### *NONGOVERNMENTAL:*

- » Local Residents
- » Main Street Takoma/Old Takoma Business Association
- » Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority
- » CHEER
- » Climate Action Coffee/Takoma Park Mobilization
- » Takoma Park Historical Society

### *CITY STAKEHOLDERS:*

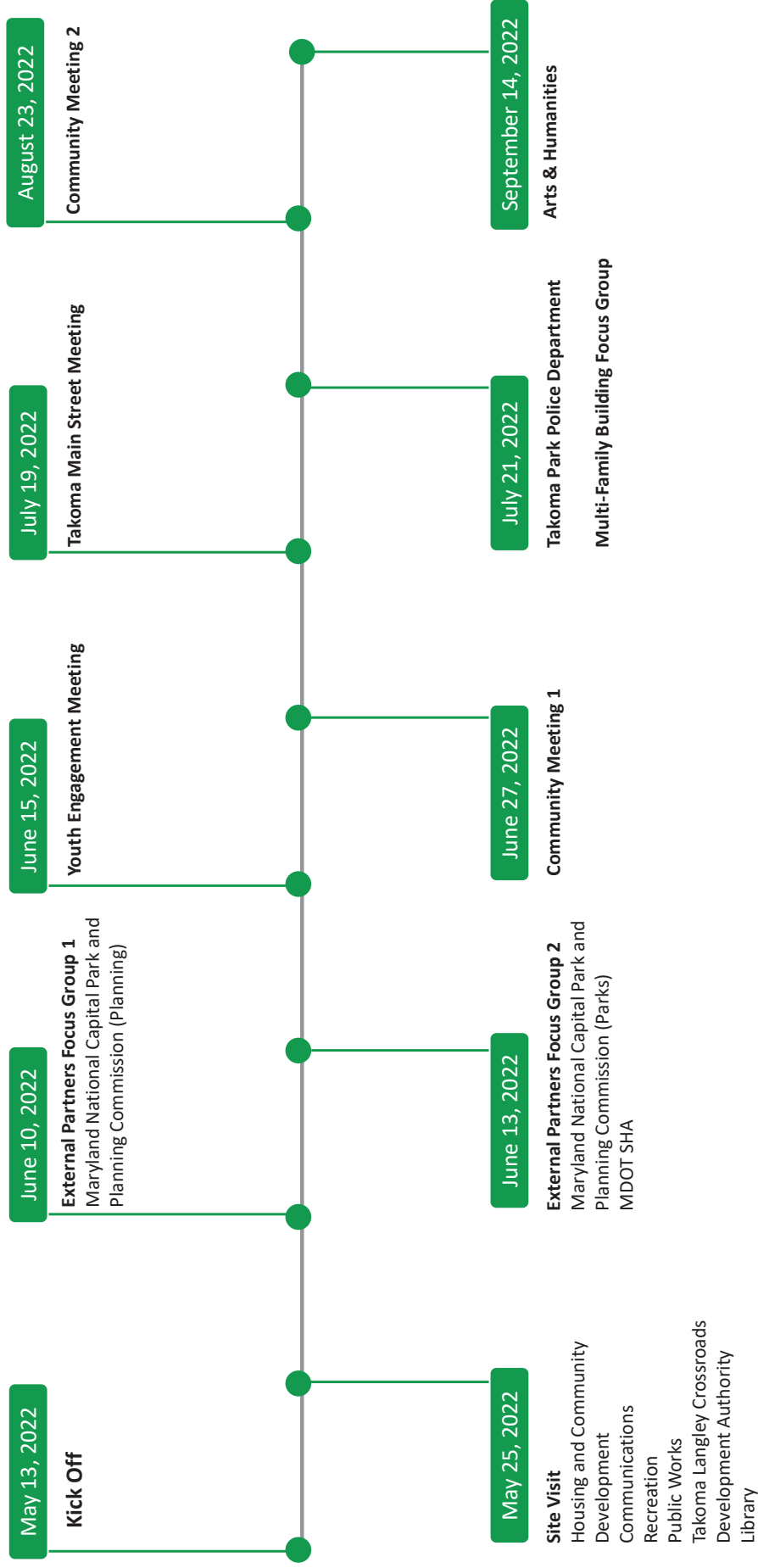
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Office of the Mayor and the City of Takoma Park Council</li> <li>» Housing and Community Development Department               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and Humanities Division</li> <li>• Economic Development Division</li> <li>• Planning &amp; Community Development Division</li> </ul> </li> <li>» Department of Recreation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Department of Public Works</li> <li>» Department of Police               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative Services Division</li> <li>• Communications Division</li> <li>• Neighborhood Services Division</li> <li>• Parking Enforcement</li> </ul> </li> <li>» Public Library</li> <li>» Communications</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

### *EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:*

- » Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)
- » Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR)
- » MD State Highway Administration (MD SHA)
- » National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)
- » Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)



Figure 17. Consultant Team Engagement Events Schedule





## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Engagement activities across multiple stakeholder groups informed the development of this report and the resulting recommendations. During the second community meeting, a group of fifty community members participated in a SWOT analysis. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and this exercise helps to identify resident perspectives of the strengths and vulnerabilities in the current Public Space Management strategy. The use of a SWOT analysis process takes account of both the internal and external factors that are present.

Strengths and weaknesses are often related to internal factors of an organization and more physical features. Opportunities and threats generally relate to external factors that are not readily in an organization’s control (climate change for example). What makes SWOT particularly powerful is that, with a little thought, it can help to uncover opportunities that are attainable. By understanding the identified weaknesses, the city can begin to implement improvements. A summary of the SWOT analysis is below while the full SWOT data can be found in Appendix C.

Recommendations presented later in this plan build upon Takoma Park’s strong foundation of public space Strengths to achieve the priority Opportunities listed. Many recommendations specifically focus on overcoming or eliminating the indicated Weaknesses. Attaining priority Opportunities will help make Takoma Park more resilient against key Threats.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Pre-existing well liked parks and public spaces Strong sense of civic pride and community Walkable community Diversity Engaged Residents	Gaps in the sidewalk network Socioeconomic disparities that correlate to public space access Permit process for use of public space unclear
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Racial Equity Resolution Native plantings, pollinator gardens, and food forests Underutilized public spaces (Right-of-Ways, parking lots, and vacant schools/playgrounds) Community Engagement	Stronger storms, extreme heat, and other effects of climate change putting pressure on existing infrastructure and public spaces Escalating cost of living Loss of biodiversity and increase in invasive species Budget shortfalls







# CASE STUDIES




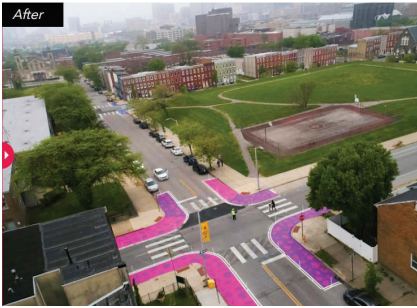

## CASE STUDIES

The following section provides case studies of projects and programs across the nation that address similar gaps. The examples identify solutions across several themes that arose during stakeholder engagement with both the community and city staff as a priority and intersect with public space management. These themes include sidewalks, stormwater management infrastructure, bus shelters, resident engagement and education, and food security.

Table 7. Case Studies of Projects and Programs Across the Nation

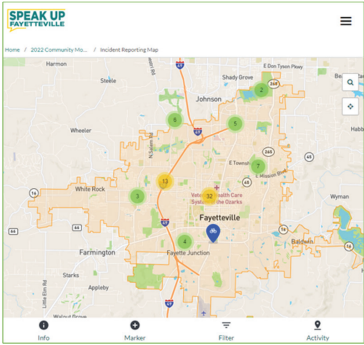
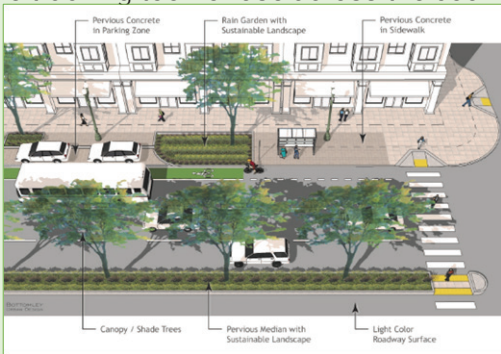

	PROJECT NAME	CITY	DESCRIPTION
Invest in Equity	The High Line Network: Embedding Equity in Public Space: Community First Toolkit	Multiple Cities	<p>15 network organizations have developed a report on “Embedding Equity in Public Space”. The <a href="#">Community First Toolkit</a> provides tools for park organizations to address inequities caused by infrastructural racism and bring social, environmental, and economic benefits to our communities. The recommended first steps include creating a timeline to place the project in the historical context, developing a theory of change that includes advancing equity, sharing power with community members, and reviewing your community network.</p> 
Convenient Access Options	Town Branch Commons	Lexington, KY	<p>Town Branch Commons is a hybrid park network, multi-modal trail system, and water filtration landscape designed to connect Lexington’s rural and urban communities and reinvigorate the downtown. The project follows a 2.5-mile path along Town Branch Commons.</p> 



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Inclusive Activities, Public Space Teamwork</p>	<p>Bee Safe Art Crosswalks: Asphalt Art Initiative</p>	<p>Baltimore, MD</p>	<p>This initiative transformed three intersections around the school with artistic safety redesigns. Prior to the artwork being installed, only 37% of drivers yielded to pedestrians with the right of way; after the project was completed in April 2022, 78% now yield to pedestrians.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Easy Participation</p>	<p>Instantly Issue Sidewalk Dining Permits</p>	<p>Los Angeles, CA</p>	<p>The city of Los Angeles has developed and rolled out an automated permitting workflow that allows restaurants to receive quick certification for outdoor dining. The process now takes 20 minutes. This LA permitting system is available as a template to copy and customize through <a href="https://www.citygrows.com">City Grows.com</a></p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Convenient Access Options</p>	<p><a href="#">Bus Signage that supports local businesses</a></p>	<p>Las Vegas, NV</p>	<p>The city of Las Vegas incorporated digital signage into their bus stop infrastructure, providing an opportunity to advertise local businesses while also providing real-time transit updates.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Public Space Teamwork</p>	<p><a href="#">Diversion of Stormwater Runoff using Second Generation Permeable Pavement in Neighborhoods</a></p>	<p>Shore View, MN</p>	<p>The city of Shore View, MN uses a system of permeable articulating concrete blocks (P-ACB) that capture water and filter out pollutants from stormwater. These PaveDrain blocks use open joints to allow for faster drainage and less accumulation of snow and ice during the winter. This infrastructure improvement both protects the water quality of Lake Owasso and reduces flooding on city streets.</p> 





<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Invest in Equity, Inclusive Activities, Easy Participation</p>	<p><a href="#">Speak up Fayetteville</a></p>	<p>Fayetteville, AR</p>	<p>The city of Fayetteville has a dedicated public engagement site that acts as a one-stop hub for an array of projects and involvement opportunities. The website has been used to inform multiple infrastructure projects including parks, transportation, stormwater management, and public safety.</p> 
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Public Space Teamwork</p>	<p><a href="#">Integrating Complete and Green Streets for Climate-Resilient Sustainable Streets</a></p>	<p>San Mateo County, CA</p>	<p>In order to manage more extreme rainfall events and maintain water quality through runoff mitigation, San Mateo County has integrated Complete/Green Streets principles into their Master Plan. The Plan includes Sustainable Streets typologies, model policy documents, and a web-based Green Stormwater Infrastructure tracking tool for use across the county.</p> 
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Inclusive Activities</p>	<p><a href="#">Freedom Gardens</a></p>	<p>Buffalo, NY</p>	<p>The Freedom Gardens Initiative is a project to bring community gardens to both public and private spaces across Buffalo, NY. The program has created over 70 community gardens across Buffalo and Niagara Falls and gardens are managed by block clubs, partner organizations, or neighborhood associations.</p> 



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Responding to the existing conditions, policy inventory, SWOT analysis, and community conversations described in other sections, this section outlines a series of specific actions that Takoma Park City Council and staff can take to progress the city towards its public space goals. The actions are informed also by insights from local and national precedents and the expertise of the consultant team. The actions are organized as thirty recommendations in seven topic categories and include fourteen designated as top priority for their potential to address pressing needs. **Throughout the Existing Conditions section, policies or actions that continue or expand on established successful practices and programs are called out in boxes. The following recommendations introduce new initiatives or actions that respond to unaddressed needs or opportunities. The principles of Equity, Sustainability, and Safety guide the recommendations.**

Recommendations fall under seven topic categories:

- » **Budget & Funding** – budgeting and funding procedures for public spaces
- » **Community Engagement & Planning** – initiatives to engage community member input and/or conduct technical analysis to inform public space improvements and operations
- » **Facilities Development** – capital improvements to public spaces
- » **Maintenance & Operations** – routine procedures for public space maintenance and operations
- » **Programs & Permits** – program and permit considerations related to routine daily use of parks and other public spaces
- » **Property Acquisition** – selection and acquisition of additional property for public space use
- » **Sustainability & Resilience** – public space management and improvement strategies to advance social, environmental and economic sustainability and resilience

This chapter shares the recommendations generated by this planning process. A summary list of the recommendations appears first, followed by expanded descriptions for each recommendation that include the responsible departments for implementation, relevant 2023-2024 City Council Priorities (available in Appendix A), and estimated cost ranges. Within each topic category, recommendations are grouped in up to two tiers of implementation that reflect a mix of estimated timing, logistical difficulty, and cost:

- » **'Lighter Lift' Recommendations** – generally can be advanced utilizing existing resources and processes
- » **'Heavier Lift' Recommendations** – likely require additional funding and/or dedication of staff resources toward new initiatives and may require additional effort to define and overcome other challenges.

In addition, the estimated cost for each recommendation is based on an approximate scale:

- » **\$** – Estimated cost to implement of \$0 - \$49,999
- » **\$\$** – Estimated cost to implement of \$50,000 - \$249,999
- » **\$\$\$** – Estimated cost to implement of \$250,000+



## RECOMMENDATIONS - SUMMARY

### 1. BUDGET & FUNDING

#### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

- 1.1 Utilize the Project Evaluation Scorecard to inform priorities for project review and approval.
- 1.2 Monitor the allocation of public space investments and existing assets across the **spatial distribution of the city** to help ensure that resources are directed to promote equity of access to quality public realm for all residents.
- 1.3 Ensure ongoing meetings between the Maryland State Highway Administration, the District Department of Transportation and Takoma Park staff.



#### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 1.4 Ensure sufficient staffing and program funding to support acquisition and management of grant funding.
- 1.5 Identify processes, strategies and budgetary requirements for public events that requires staff time and resources, including potential cost recovery.
- 1.6 Pursue possibilities for a municipal participatory budget process that controls resources for some public space capital and operational projects.

### 2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PLANNING

#### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

- 2.1 Expand strategies to engage residents that have faced barriers to inclusion in community outreach efforts, with special focus on **historically marginalized communities, including by race and income.**
- 2.2 Reimagine the public engagement process for priority roadway safety infrastructure projects to ensure that valuable community member perspectives shape the design process while pedestrian safety and connectivity improvements are not delayed.
- 2.3 Create a process to clarify and formalize opportunities for requests for art in the public right of way.



#### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 2.4 Coordinate and standardize baseline outreach strategies across all city departments.
- 2.5 Explore urban food growing opportunities in public spaces.
- 2.6 Investigate opportunities to formally activate paper streets.

### 3. FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

#### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

- 3.1 Continue to utilize the city's Capital Improvement Program to close public space gaps and address priority safety and accessibility concerns.
- 3.2 Review existing resident infrastructure request processes through an equity lens, and consolidate them for clarity, ease of use, and equitable allocation of resources.
- 3.3 Expand and update wayfinding and interpretive signage at trails, parks, connections and community destinations.
- 3.4 Create regular schedule to update the data and design standards within the Takoma Park Streetscape Manual.
- 3.5 Seek opportunities for universal design principles that go beyond the minimum ADA requirements to try to achieve broader access to public amenities.



*HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 3.6 Complete the sidewalk network to ensure that at least one side of the street has ADA compliant sidewalks within 1/2 mile of sensitive community uses.
- 3.7 Inventory existing desire line paths and trails **on public land**.
- 3.8 Add or enhance facilities where needed to expand the variety of recreation opportunities that are available within the park system.

**4. MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS***LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

- 4.1 Enhance inter-departmental collaboration and working strategies for public space-related decision-making.
- 4.2 Establish and fund a need-based playground and park equipment **evaluation process and** replacement schedule based on existing conditions and equity.

*HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 4.3 Dedicate funding to improve and expand the city's working GIS databank for public space infrastructure and amenities.
- 4.4 Create an improved maintenance strategy and identify a revenue source for removing invasive plant species.

**5. PROGRAMS & PERMITS***LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

- 5.1 Update and publicize the inventory of available city and county parks and recreation facilities, and their available amenities.
- 5.2 Update the Right of Entry process to allow city staff-approved volunteer opportunities for community members, including the possibility for same-day registration when applicable.
- 5.3 Evaluate the impacts of existing permit parking zones on the city's racial equity goals.
- 5.4 Re-evaluate parking meter and parking permit fee rates to more closely align with the rates and policies of neighboring jurisdictions.

*HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 5.6 Improve the user experience for public space programs, permits, and service requests to be more accessible, clear, and expedient.
- 5.7 Continue to promote the activation of public space across all six wards.





## 6. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 6.1 Identify funds annually to support acquisition of new and/or replacement public space.
- 6.2 Conduct a citywide inventory of natural resources in public space.

## 7. SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

- 7.1 Continue city policy to primarily plant native or climate adapted species in public spaces.
- 7.2 Opt for sustainable design elements where appropriate

### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

- 7.3 Implement more green stormwater practices in public spaces.
- 7.4 Prioritize pervious materials in new and updated public spaces where hard surfaces are required and when comparable in function to alternative, impervious surfaces



Credit: City of Takoma Park

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. BUDGET & FUNDING

### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

#### 1.1 Utilize the Project Evaluation Scorecard to inform priorities for project review and approval.

The City Council and city staff do not currently have a systematic approach for evaluating how to prioritize funding and staffing for public space-related projects. The Project Evaluation Scorecard (on p. 89) creates a rubric to assess new projects. **It centers the use of data and gives weight to three priority categories: racial equity, environmental sustainability, and safety considerations. This decision-making tool allows decision-makers to present firm, transparent rationale for their actions.**

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD, Recreation, Police
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2, #3)
- » **Cost:** \$

#### 1.2 Monitor the allocation of public space investments and existing assets **across the spatial distribution of the city** to help ensure that resources are directed to promote equity of access to quality public realm for all residents.

Every year, the city invests in new public space infrastructure and maintenance, but there isn't any systemic monitoring or review of which parts of the city receive more and less investment. By beginning to monitor where public space dollars are spent, city staff can create benchmarks to measure the equitable allocation of resources in the future. Where feasible, any formalized tracking using mapping or data analysis, should be applied retroactively due to efforts made by the city in recent years to more equitably locate public space investments. Without an understanding of historic investment, current and future data analysis may not illustrate the full picture of investment disparities.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$



### 1.3 Ensure ongoing meetings between the Maryland State Highway Administration, the District Department of Transportation and Takoma Park staff.

HCD and PW staff have a long and ongoing relationship with MDSHA, which manages the five major state highways that traverse the city, and DDOT, which manages the entirety of Eastern Ave. The frequency with which regular coordinating meetings occur has fluctuated over time, however the city should continue meeting with these neighbor agency partners on a regular basis. The frequency and content may adjust over time due to changing projects and coordination needs; however, city staff should commit to regularly scheduled, periodic meetings to ensure that the needs of Takoma Park are adequately represented to MDSHA and DDOT and that staff from both entities are familiar with ongoing projects and initiatives.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$

#### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

### 1.4 Ensure sufficient staffing and program funding to support acquisition and management of grant funding.

As a small jurisdiction, county, regional, state, and federal grant funding programs are essential to pursue larger-scale infrastructure projects. Such program asks for a small amount of cost share from the city in exchange for funds scaled to allow substantial roadway, park, and placemaking efforts. However, each granting authority also requires different application, procurement, reporting, and evaluation commitments, which create a burden on city. Interviews with staff in multiple departments suggested that existing staff resources are spread too thin to pursue some of the larger, more intensive federal grant funds. By ensuring that the departments with grant management needs are appropriately staffed and funded to support those effort, the city could optimize the acquisition of available external grant dollars.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD, Recreation, Police, Library
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Fiscally Sustainable Government (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$\$





## 1.5 Identify processes, strategies and budgetary requirements for public events that requires staff time and resources, including potential cost recovery.

City departments, including Public Works, Police, Recreation, and Housing and Community Development currently provide a range of no-cost services to residents upon request, including temporary road closures, staffing for public events in the public ROW, and other services. A small number of legacy events, mostly located in Wards 1 and 3, receive direct financial and in-kind services from the City, which benefits pre-established organizations. Currently there are no processes or boundaries on these requests, which creates challenges for departments to plan their annual budgets and allocations of staff resources and an opaque and inequitable distributions of city resources. The city should explore options for ways to recover partial or full costs for such services to create predictability in operating budgets and staffing. Considerations of equity should be built into any new strategies.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD, Recreation, Police
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Fiscally Sustainable Government (#4)
- » **Cost:** \$

## 1.6 Pursue possibilities for a municipal participatory budget process that controls resources for some public space capital and operational projects.

Public outreach during this planning process revealed interest in transparent and participatory budgeting practices. Public space investments are well-suited to participatory budgeting processes. The city could explore options for participatory budgeting by starting with a smaller focus on public space infrastructure..

- » **Departments:** City Clerk, Finance, City Manager's Office, HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Fiscally Sustainable Government (#4)
- » **Cost:** \$\$\$
- » **Precedent:**
  - ▶ Somerville, MA (<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/finance/participatory-budgeting>)
  - ▶ Evanston, IL (<https://www.pbevanston.org/>)



## 2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PLANNING

### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

#### 2.1 Expand strategies to engage residents that have faced barriers to inclusion in community outreach efforts, with special focus on **historically marginalized communities, including by race and income.** ★

The city continues to face challenges engaging much of the city's diverse population in public outreach efforts. With almost a third of residents born outside the US and speaking a language other than English at home, the city should continue and expand efforts to increase creative outreach strategies that overcome some of the racial, social, cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers to engaging as a resident.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD, Recreation, Police, Library
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2, #3, #4)
- » **Cost:** \$\$

#### 2.2 Reimagine the public engagement process for priority roadway safety infrastructure projects to ensure that valuable community member perspectives shape the design process while pedestrian safety and connectivity improvements are not delayed.

Each new roadway safety project requires consideration for the unique context of that street, and the perspectives and experiences of residents are essential to understanding the context. Engagement processes around critical infrastructure—particularly those that increase safety and accessibility for vulnerable populations—should be reframed to focus on how the project in question should be constructed, instead of whether it should be constructed. This re-structured approach to engagement will use staff time and resources more effectively, and work to deliver important projects on shorter timelines.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$



### 2.3 Create a process to clarify and formalize opportunities for requests for art in the public right of way.

Opportunities for resident-initiated art can build neighborhood character and identity. However, the city lacks a formal process to apply for, review, approve, and maintain such projects. In the absence of a process, the city's graffiti policy has been used as the sole regulation for public art not initiated by the city. A new policy should be created that balances the organic, context-specific character of resident-initiated art and the need for an approval process that ensures standards of quality, safety, appropriateness, and ongoing care for the art piece. A new policy or strategy should include considerations for requests to use space and donation of public artwork. It should also consider the equitable distribution of public art and resources geographically across the city.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Arts and Humanities Commission
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$

#### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

### 2.4 Coordinate and standardize baseline outreach strategies across all city departments.

Each city department is in charge of their own community outreach efforts, and because of that the practices vary widely. Internally that may feel appropriate, but to the public, who do not differentiate as neatly between departmental jurisdictions, the mix of styles creates an inconsistent patchwork of practices, including different styles, frequency, and linguistic offerings. The city should create a set of outreach standards and best practices that are coordinated with and used across all departments as a baseline for community engagement. Better coordination and consistency have the potential to increase trust, expand the public understanding of how to interact with city staff and initiatives, and increase the efficiency of departmental staff resource use.

- » **Departments:** All Departments
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2, #3, #4)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government(#2)
- » **Cost:** \$





## 2.5 Explore urban food growing opportunities in public spaces.

Publicly-owned open spaces to support urban food growing in Takoma Park are limited; however, there has been no systemic effort to identify if there are suitable options for urban agriculture space in the city. Depending on the form of urban food production, practices can intersect with other public space uses, or act as an exclusive use that prevents other activities and users from accessing the space. The two existing community gardens on public property (one City-owned, one County-owned) exist as spaces exclusively accessible to participating gardeners. The city should explore what options may exist to expand local food production as a tool to improve local food security or cultural resilience and whether public properties are the most suitable outlets.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ None
- » **Cost:** \$\$



## 2.6 Investigate opportunities to formally activate paper streets.

The City's scattered network of paper streets ranges in condition and use. Some are barely discernible in their overgrowth, some are used as informal trails or walkways, and some of them are used by neighbors as informal extensions of personal property. An investigation into opportunities for activation should explore both options for how the City might want to reprogram or redesign those spaces for better or higher public uses or whether the City might be better served finding ways to dispose of the properties.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ None
- » **Cost:** \$\$



### 3. FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

#### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

#### 3.1 Continue to utilize the city's Capital Improvement Plan to close public space gaps and address priority safety and accessibility concerns.

The Capital Improvement Plan budget serves as the primary funding source for public space-related, long-term infrastructure projects. The city should continue to direct these funds toward the goals of enhancing and adding to the city's public space infrastructure, particularly as relates to safety and accessibility.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$-\$\$\$

#### 3.2 Review existing resident infrastructure request processes through an equity lens, and consolidate them for clarity, ease of use, and equitable allocation of resources.

The current resident petition processes for new sidewalks and traffic calming devices are different processes, one codified in a city resolution and one the other in a city regulation. The processes are similar, but different, and disadvantage residents on streets with multi-family buildings. Additionally, there are limited ways for the Public Works Department to modify, delay, or redirect requests in efforts to address traffic calming on a neighborhood scale effort. The City should review the two policies and look into ways to consolidate them into a single, user-friendly process. The new, single process should clarify and include the ability for city staff to initiate, advance, adjust, or defer new projects when concerns for equity, safety, cost, or sustainability arise.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$



### 3.3 Expand and update wayfinding and interpretive signage at trails, parks, connections and community destinations.

The compact size of Takoma Park lends itself to getting around easily on foot and by bike. However, the changes in topography and winding streets can make navigation confusing. The existing network of wayfinding signage is limited to some designated bike routes, some signage in the business districts, and a mix of standalone signs in other parts of the city. The city should expand the existing network of wayfinding and interpretive signage to increase the density of connections for walkers and bike riders, enhance and celebrate additional local features, history, and culture, and update existing signage that may be out of date or in declining condition.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$-\$\$

### 3.4 Create regular schedule to update the data and design standards within the Takoma Park Streetscape Manual.

The Takoma Park Streetscape Manual serves as a tool to coordinate and consolidate the style and design of public space furniture, amenities, and street designs into a single, publicly-available location. It also features maps and visualizations of those public space features. **The city should commit to a regular update of the data, visualizations, and maps, and review the design standards periodically.** The regular updates allow the public to stay current on changes to the physical landscape of the city and invites city staff to revisit and revise standards based on the latest best practices in public space planning.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$





### 3.5 Seek opportunities for universal design principles that go beyond the minimum ADA requirements to try to achieve broader access to public amenities.

The ADA design principles are an important and legally required framework for creating accessible and inclusive infrastructure. However, increasingly the parameters required under that law are viewed by advocates as the baseline for accessibility, rather than the aspirational end goal. The principle of universal design holds that regardless of ability, size, age, sex, gender or gender expression, public spaces and facilities should be accessible to the greatest extent possible. The idea is rooted in the assertion that a space or object designed with these considerations will ultimately be more accessible for all users. While considering factors such as available budget and site constraints, the city should explore possibilities to incorporate design principals that go beyond the ADA and strive for universal design and inclusive play principles. This consideration should be taken for both built infrastructure and the street furniture, wayfinding signage, and amenities placed in the public right-of-way.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#3)
  - ▶ Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$-\$\$

#### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

### 3.6 Complete the sidewalk network to ensure that at least one side of the street has ADA compliant sidewalks within 1/2 mile of sensitive community uses.

A connected, accessible sidewalk network is a critical piece of public transportation infrastructure. The city should continue its plans to ensure that every street has ADA-compliant sidewalk facilities with safe crossings on at least one side of every street. However, the city should also pursue new sidewalks on both sides of the street, where feasible, within a half-mile from sensitive community uses, including schools, places of worship, civic buildings, and senior living facilities.

- » **Departments:** Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life (#2)
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#1)
- » **Cost:** \$\$-\$\$\$





### 3.7 Inventory existing desire line paths and trails on public land.

Also known as cow paths, deer trails, and use paths, the city has a handful of informal paths that are unpaved and unmaintained by city resources, but have become used enough to be visible as walking trails. These trails may represent opportunities for enhanced connectivity, accessibility, or recreation, but there is not consolidated understanding of where they all are. The city should inventory the major desire line paths, including those along paper streets, in order to better plan for opportunities or needs to formalize these routes. Where feasible, the city should consider upgrades to make the paths accessible, visible and well-maintained.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ None
- » **Cost:** \$\$

### 3.8 Investigate opportunities to formally activate paper streets.

The city hosts a network of paper streets in varying levels of public use and maintenance. Many paper streets pass over terrains that are too steep or ecologically delicate to ever be developed. Some have become well-worn foot paths and others have been informally used by neighbors as additional driveway space. The city should look into options to activate these unique public spaces where logistically feasible and alternatives to re-purpose paper streets where activation is logistically infeasible.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ None
- » **Cost:** \$\$-\$\$\$

### 3.9 Add or enhance facilities where needed to expand the variety of recreation opportunities that are available within the park system.

Feedback from community engagement through this planning process revealed a wide range of desires for different kinds of spaces, amenities, and activities within the city's public spaces. As park and public space facilities are updated or expanded, the city should take a comprehensive approach to identify how needs and desires may differ across neighborhoods and over time. Robust engagement strategies and public design best practices should ensure that facilities support use across the spectrum of ages, experience levels, and cultural values.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD, Recreation
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$-\$\$\$



## 4. MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

#### 4.1 Enhance inter-departmental collaboration and working strategies for public space-related decision-making.

Due to the city's small administrative size, most public space-related projects require collaboration between multiple different departments and divisions. However, discussions with city stakeholders during the planning process also revealed opportunities to deepen collaborative partnership and create greater efficiency. City departments should explore opportunities to streamline information and data-sharing, enhance communication between departments on projects and issues with overlapping purview, and better coordinate annual budgeting practices.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works, Police, Recreation
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** N/A

#### ★ 4.2 Establish and fund a need-based playground and park equipment evaluation process and replacement schedule based on existing conditions and equity.

The existing strategy for playground and park equipment upgrades is to focus on the oldest playground to receive a previous upgrade. However, with different sun exposure, moisture, levels of use, and nearby resident populations for each park, the playgrounds with the most need for improvement are not necessarily the oldest. The city should establish a new system to evaluate and prioritize the condition of city playgrounds and park spaces. The city should also commit funds to park renovations that would be able to leverage external funds received through Project Open Space and other park improvement grants.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2, #3)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$
- » **Precedent:** Montgomery Parks (Sample evaluation tool in Appendix B.1, based on the Montgomery Parks Playground Quality Checklist)





*HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations***4.3 Improve and expand the city's working GIS databank for public space infrastructure and amenities.**

Geospatial data can be an important tool for mapping and analyzing public space uses and projects, especially in pursuit of the city's racial justice goals. Thorough analysis requires complete and up-to-date datasets and mapping layers. Currently, the city's GIS data is split between the Housing and Community Development and Public Works departments. The in-house mapping skillset varies over time based on staff placements and turnover. Much of the infrastructure that the city installs in the public ROW is tracked, but not in formats that contribute easily to the city's GIS database. As a result, there is no singular database with the most current data layers, and there is limited staff capacity for more advanced geocoding and mapping of new projects and features. The city should dedicate funds to update and expand the internal geodatabase and commit to periodic updates to maintain the quality of the geodatabase into the future.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life (#2)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#5)
- » **Cost:** \$\$

**4.4 Create an improved maintenance strategy and identify a revenue source for removing invasive plant species.**

Noxious, non-native, invasive species pose a challenge to the green spaces around the city, and the challenge they pose will grow as the changing climate expands the range and vigor of some species. The city's Vegetation Maintenance team targets non-native invasive species, but on top of the other daily maintenance tasks required by the many city green spaces, staff resources are spread thin. The city should identify new revenue sources to support an expanded non-native, invasive plant species mitigation program that would accommodate an improved ongoing maintenance strategy.

- » **Departments:** Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$\$



## 5. PROGRAMS & PERMITS

### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

#### 5.1 Update and publicize the inventory of available city and county parks and recreation facilities, and their available amenities.

The city currently publishes information on local parks, recreational facilities, and their amenities, but it's an incomplete list. In addition, M-NCPPC separately publishes their own information on the parks, green spaces, and programs that they maintain. The city should update and more clearly publicize an easily navigated, comprehensive inventory of city and county park and recreation facilities within the city. Such a resource would be useful for residents and visitors to better understand the available offerings and plan visits.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, Recreation, HCD, Communications
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$

#### 5.2 Update the Right of Entry process to allow city staff-approved volunteer opportunities for community members, including the possibility for same-day registration when applicable.

The Public Works Department manages a Right of Entry process that allows community members to sign up as volunteers for vegetation management on city property with conservation easements. *The current policy seeks to minimize all liability to the city, but in the process, it creates complicated and burdensome administration to participation. A more dynamic policy allows city staff better flexibility when coordinating a vegetation management event that would benefit from volunteer work. At present, the process requires that volunteers sign up at least two days in advance.* Although the policy pertains to Public Works-related projects and staffing, the policy as shown online appears to be managed by the City Clerk's office. The city should review the Right of Entry policy to extend to all city-owned properties, especially those with conservation easements, and consider same-day completion of the required forms and waivers by volunteers. The city should also add language that ensures tasks are approved and overseen by a relevant Public Works staff member or delegate of that staff. The process should be more clearly presented on the city's website, including relevant contact information for residents with questions about the policy.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, City Clerk
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$



### 5.3 Evaluate the impacts of existing permit parking zones on the city's racial equity goals.

Permitted residential parking can be a useful tool for managing transportation and parking demand, especially in areas with constrained street parking or zones outside commercial districts that would allow drivers to avoid nearby paid parking. It can also be used as a tool of exclusion that allows a limited number of residents access to an ample supply of subsidized, on-street parking, regardless of available private, on-site parking. Six areas of the city are restricted to local resident parking. Most of these permit parking zones are in the most affluent and least racially diverse ward, Ward 1. Residents are able to petition to City Manager to create or remove such designations. The city should evaluate this petition process, the impact of the parking zones on equitable access to on-street parking, and alternative parking management structures that could solve for an identified inefficiencies or inequities.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Police
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$\$

### 5.4 Re-evaluate parking meter and parking permit fee rates to more closely align with the rates and policies of neighboring jurisdictions.

The fees collected for parking meters and permitted parking areas of the city are lower than many of Takoma Park's neighboring jurisdictions. Residential parking permits cost \$12.50 for one year or \$20.00 for two years, and parking meters cost \$0.75 per hour. By contrast, in DC, permit parking costs \$50.00 per year (with some exceptions) and on-street parking costs \$2.30 per hour. In Silver Spring, permit parking costs \$20.00 per year (with some exceptions) and on-street parking costs \$2.00 per hour. The lost cost of Takoma Park's parking may have unintended negative consequences. When rates are lower than nearby on-street or off-street parking, drivers are incited to drive further or circle longer to get a cheaper spot, creating extra competition for on-street parking spaces and air pollution from idling vehicles. Additionally, an improperly low price may not reflect the costs of administering the programs, and in the case of permit parking, subsidizes on-street parking for drivers that almost exclusively feature homes with their own private driveways at the exclusion of others. The city should re-evaluate their parking pricing strategies to make sure that they accomplish parking demand management goals, financially sustain themselves, and minimize inequity.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Police
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$





## 5.5 Investigate options to allow select commercial vehicles to park on residential streets.

Commercial vehicles, both heavy and light, are not allowed to park on city streets, with the exception of during active loading and unloading. During community information gathering for this plan, concern arose that some residents rely on their commercial vehicle as a primary mode of transportation and that residents without private parking, especially those in multi-unit buildings with limited parking per unit, are disproportionately disadvantaged by this policy. In the absence of ample data, the city should investigate the extent of this issue and explore options to allow select commercial vehicles to park on residential streets.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Police, City Clerk
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$\$

## 5.6 Improve the user experience for public space programs, permits, and service requests to be more accessible, clear, and expedient.

The city posts a lot of useful information for residents on its municipal website, including details about permits, licenses, service requests, and petition processes. The challenge is that there is not a clear, central clearinghouse on the website for all of the ways that residents can access services and processes that require permits or approvals. For someone unfamiliar with the website structure, it can be challenging to sift through the available information to find what is needed. The city should look into ways, particularly with a new website structure scheduled to go live in 2024, to make this kind of information more accessible, navigable, and concise. For residents with low digital access or literacy, printed materials should be made easily available in a single location at the Community Center.

- » **Departments:** Communications, Public Works, City Clerk, HCD, Recreation
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$

### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*



## 5.7 Continue to promote the activation of public space across all six wards.

As a primarily residential community, Takoma Park only has a handful of conventional, large-format public spaces where events and gatherings can take place. The existing Shared City Streets Program creates expanded temporary gathering spaces. However, the majority of large-scale events and programs, both city-run and community-run, take place in either Old Takoma, the Takoma/Langley Crossroads, or around the Community Center. The city should continue to promote the activation and use of public spaces across all six wards. To make community engagement and recreation activities more accessible and available to all community members, employ a broader range of public places (such as the library, schools, and streets) as venues, not just park and recreation building facilities. This may include better publicization of the Shared City Streets Program and an expansion of more Recreation Department and Arts Division programs in parks or street closures.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, City Clerk, HCD, Recreation, Communications
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Advancing a Community of Belonging (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$

## 6. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

### 6.1 Identify funds annually to support acquisition of new and/or replacement public space.

The analysis from this report identifies that access to diverse parks and green spaces varies across the city, with the lower-income and more racially diverse wards five and six featuring the lowest access to parks. Any new land acquisition would require a substantial up-front capital expense. Sometimes the opportunities to expand, replace, or acquire new parks and public spaces arise on short notice or require years-long processes. Both situations require available funds and, ideally, a pre-existing strategy that directs their use. The city should identify funds, from both the Capital Improvements Budget and the county, state, and federal grant programs, in support of the acquisition of new and/or replacement parks and public spaces, especially in prioritized areas of the city.

- » **Departments:** HCD, Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$\$\$



## 6.2 Conduct a citywide inventory of natural resources in public space.

Takoma Park is notable for its mature tree canopy, steep stream valleys, and numerous parks and green spaces. The Public Works Department manages many components of the city's natural resources and M-NCPPC manages many others, including the extent of the Sligo Creek and Long Branch Stream Valleys. However, the city has never conducted a comprehensive review of the natural resources under its jurisdiction, including sensitive ecological and hydrological areas. In order to more strategically approach resource management, the city should conduct an inventory of all the city-owned parks and green spaces with the goal to identify high priority areas for expanded maintenance and/or conservation.

- » **Departments:** Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$\$
- » **Precedent:** New York Department of Environmental Conservation/Cornell University ([https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation\\_hudson\\_pdf/nriall.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation_hudson_pdf/nriall.pdf))

## 7. SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

### *LIGHTER LIFT Recommendations*

### 7.1 Continue city policy to primarily plant native or climate adapted species in public spaces.

City staff follow a practice of using native and climate adapted species for tree and vegetation plantings when possible. The city should continue to primarily use native and climate adaptive species in their new plantings and ongoing maintenance of existing plantings. The city should also encourage property owners to do the same by providing informational resources on locally-appropriate species, since private property vegetation management can have spillover impacts onto public property.

- » **Departments:** Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Service-Oriented Government (#3)
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#3)
- » **Cost:** \$





## 7.2 Opt for sustainable design elements where appropriate.

The city should invest in public space amenities that reduce the environmental impact from their lifecycle, when cost, availability, and context are feasible. Sustainable design elements may include procurement of items made with recycled, salvaged or locally produced materials, those that consume few resources, those that produce or are powered by renewable resources (e.g., solar panels) or those that reduce maintenance and life cycle costs. Designs should reflect the elements included in the Takoma Park Streetscape Manual.

- » **Departments:** Public Works, HCD, Recreation
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#1)
- » **Cost:** \$-\$\$\$

### *HEAVIER LIFT Recommendations*

## 7.3 Implement more green stormwater practices in public spaces.

The city currently maintains a network of bioretention ponds, bioswales, permeable pavement pilots, and green roof infrastructure. With the recognition that heavy precipitation events are projected to increase due to climate change, the city should continue to add new green stormwater management infrastructure where able. The city should continue to track and utilize state of the art solutions and identify available grant funding to support expanded projects.

- » **Departments:** Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$\$\$

## 7.4 Prioritize pervious materials in new and updated public spaces where hard surfaces are required and when comparable in function to alternative, impervious surfaces.

Pervious materials, such as pervious concrete, porous asphalt, interlocking concrete pavers, and grid pavers offer a range of options to reduce stormwater impacts in hardscaped public spaces. The city should prioritize pervious alternatives for new projects, with consideration for the functionality, durability, and cost in the project-specific context.

- » **Departments:** Public Works
- » **City Council Priorities:**
  - ▶ Environmentally Sustainable Community (#2)
- » **Cost:** \$\$\$







# PROJECT EVALUATION SCORECARD





## PROJECT EVALUATION SCORECARD

The City of Takoma Park desires a tool to help with decisions regarding which potential public space improvement projects best meet community goals and deserve priority resources or timing. The tool creates a resources to help prioritize projects for implementation by scoring them across eight categories of community benefit:

- » Safety
- » Equity
- » Sustainability
- » Implementation Feasibility
- » Placemaking (Social & Aesthetic)
- » Connectivity
- » Identified Needs
- » Economic Impact

★ Priority criteria of project benefit are listed for each benefit category. Other category criteria may be added if relevant and with justification. A benefit category earns a raw score based on the combined values of one (1), zero (0), or negative one (-1) assigned to each category criterion. Category criteria with disproportionate benefit or negative impact may receive an amplified raw score, with justification by reviewers. A category criterion may not receive a raw score of more than a three (3), even if the sum of the category criteria exceeds three (3). Weighted scores in the categories of Safety, Equity, and Sustainability are increased by a multiplier and so deliver extra value toward a project's overall score.

★ The tool may be used to compare two or more projects under consideration at a given time. It may also be used over the longer term to test potential projects against a baseline level of benefit. It is recommended that project scoring be conducted by a group of **at least three** representatives from relevant city departments to ensure a range of perspectives are considered. The reviewers would compare their scores and generate a single consensus score for the project. **Each completed Project Evaluation Scorecard is accompanied by a Justification Narrative that provides data and reasoning for each point gained or lost in each category criteria. The completed Scorecard and Justification Narrative would be shared in City Council materials when relevant.** Over time, certain scores may emerge as minimum thresholds for project consideration.



## HOW TO USE THIS SCORECARD

1. Save a separate **scorecard** file for each project being compared. ★
2. For each of the eight **benefit** categories, identify **category criteria** that would be addressed by the project. Consider the list provided, and use the "other" category to list other distinct benefit(s) relevant to public space goals if needed. ★
3. Determine an overall raw score between 0-3 for each benefit category by adding the cumulative score for each category criterion. A project may not receive a raw score of more than a three (3), even if the sum of its category criteria exceeds three (3). Scores for each category criteria are defined as follows: ★
  - » 1 = Project affirms the category criteria. A category criteria with disproportionately positive impact may receive two (2) points with justification.
  - » 0 = Project provides benefit for two category criteria or provides exceptional benefit for 1 criterion.
  - » -1 = Project negatively affects the category criteria. A category criteria with a disproportionately negative impact may receive negative two (-2) points with justification.
4. Enter the raw score into the category's white box on the spreadsheet. Calculate the weighted score in the third, gray box by multiplying the raw score with the indicated multiplier. ★
5. Progress through each of the eight benefit categories to determine an overall score (up to 33 points). ★
6. For the reviewers' final combined, consensus scorecard, complete a Justification Narrative using the attached template that includes the data and reasoning for each point gained or lost. The template includes a space for reviewers to note any special considerations that may fall outside the parameters of the scorecard, but would be important to consider in the decision-making process. ★



11/29/23 City Council Final Draft (Markup)

**Project Evaluation Scorecard**

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reviewer(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Scoring Method**

Priority category criteria are listed under each benefit category. Other category criteria may be added if relevant and with justification. A benefit category earns a raw score based on the combined values of one (1), zero (0), or negative one (-1) assigned to each category criterion. Category criteria with disproportionate benefit or negative impact may receive an amplified raw score, with justification by reviewers. A benefit category may not receive a raw score of more than three (3), even if the sum of its category criteria exceeds three (3). Weighted scores in the categories of Safety, Equity, and Sustainability are increased by a multiplier and so deliver extra value toward a project’s overall score. Each completed Project Evaluation Scorecard is accompanied by a Justification Narrative that provides data and reasoning for each point gained or lost in each benefit category.

- 1** = Project affirms the benefit area. A benefit area with disproportionately positive impact may receive two (2) points with justification.
- 0** = Project provides benefit for two areas or provides exceptional benefit for 1 area
- 1** = Project negatively affects the benefit area. A benefit area with a disproportionately negative impact may receive negative two (-2) points with justification.

**Benefits Categories**

Score up to 3    Multiplier    Weighted Score

**Safety** Improves physical conditions and integrity of public spaces to promote safety [ ] x **2** = [ ]

- 1 0 -1 Provides significant reduction to risk of physical injury (current hazard)
- 1 0 -1 Improves ADA accessibility
- 1 0 -1 Applies specific strategies to reduce crime
- 1 0 -1 Improves visibility for pedestrians and bicyclists
- 1 0 -1 Improves City owned property, and addresses code compliance or hazardous condition
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Equity** Prioritizes needs of underserved and vulnerable populations [ ] x **2** = [ ]

- 1 0 -1 Located in area where sizable proportion of benefit goes to historically marginalized residents and/or users, including by race and income
- 1 0 -1 Provides resources/programs at low/no cost to residents, or else has mechanism to support use amongst vulnerable populations
- 1 0 -1 Addresses needs initiated or supported by underserved or vulnerable community members
- 1 0 -1 Promotes goals of housing affordability, neighborhood conservation, environmental justice, food security, and/or community development for historically marginalized residents, including by race and income
- 1 0 -1 Generates economic opportunities for historically marginalized residents, including by race and income, and/or minority-owned businesses
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Sustainability** Improves environmental quality [ ] x **2** = [ ]

- 1 0 -1 Improves local water quality
- 1 0 -1 Improves stormwater management
- 1 0 -1 Prevents or reduces soil erosion
- 1 0 -1 Improves habitat (such as through attention to stream buffers, steep slopes, or wetlands)
- 1 0 -1 Improves air quality
- 1 0 -1 Reduces energy use or impacts
- 1 0 -1 Increases and/or preserves native tree inventory and/or tree canopy area
- 1 0 -1 Addresses urban heat impacts
- 1 0 -1 Other:





11/29/23 City Council Final Draft (Markup)

**Benefits Categories (continued..)**

Score up to 3 Multiplier Weighted Score

**Implementation Feasibility** Avoids obstacles related to site control, management, liability etc.

x  =

- 1 0 -1 Utilize City-owned land
- 1 0 -1 Poses no legal or liability concerns beyond usual for City property
- 1 0 -1 No zoning variances, special permits, or plan changes needed
- 1 0 -1 No environmental mitigation required (such as chemical contamination, serious erosion issues, rampant invasive plant species, etc.)
- 1 0 -1 Maintenance/operations responsibility is determined
- 1 0 -1 Implementable within existing City staffing capacity
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Placemaking (Social & Aesthetic)** Provides high quality spaces improving community wellness and quality of life

x  =

- 1 0 -1 Expected to enhance use of space or extend hours of operation
- 1 0 -1 Increases use/program opportunities appealing to a range of ages and interests
- 1 0 -1 Includes green space, public art, landscape amenities, seating and/or other facilities enhancing function and appearance
- 1 0 -1 Creates opportunities for more social interaction
- 1 0 -1 Provides public health benefit
- 1 0 -1 Creates opportunities for physical recreation/fitness
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Connectivity** Improves multi-modal access, fills network gaps

x  =

- 1 0 -1 Fills gap in existing infrastructure
- 1 0 -1 Improves access to key community assets (such as school, library, community center)
- 1 0 -1 Improves or expands multi-modal transportation choices
- 1 0 -1 Improves safe routes to school(s), with emphasis on routes serving communities of color and/or lower income
- 1 0 -1 Expands existing green space adjacent to right-of-way
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Identified Needs** Addresses significant issues and serves a purpose

x  =

- 1 0 -1 Addresses one or more adopted City Council Priorities
- 1 0 -1 Addresses one or more priority strategies identified in the 2023 Takoma Park Public Space Management Plan
- 1 0 -1 Addresses strategies identified in the approved local, county, regional, or state plans
- 1 0 -1 Adds new use/program based on community needs assessment
- 1 0 -1 Creates/utilizes partnership opportunities with community-based organizations (CBOs)
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Economic/Fiscal Impact** Delivers equitable economic benefits for Takoma Park

x  =

- 1 0 -1 Sources of funding are identified (municipal budget and/or external funds)
- 1 0 -1 Ongoing maintenance/operations costs accounted for
- 1 0 -1 Supports nearby local businesses or community-based organizations (CBOs)
- 1 0 -1 Supports property values
- 1 0 -1 Other:

**Total Score** (Up to 33 Points)

(For additional issues & considerations, see Justification Narrative)



## Project Evaluation Scorecard Justification Narrative

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Initiator: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Project Timeline: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Reviewer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

SAFETY (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

EQUITY (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

SUSTAINABILITY (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

PLACEMAKING (SOCIAL & AESTHETIC) (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

CONNECTIVITY (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

IDENTIFIED NEEDS (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

ECONOMIC IMPACT (Score: \_\_\_\_ )

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*

---

### ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- *[Insert justification for each benefit area here]*





# CONCLUSION



## CONCLUSION

The City of Takoma Park is connected by a beautiful network of public spaces and public-rights of way that residents and visitors use and enjoy as key components of their community. This plan was designed to help coordinate a public space management approach to address the challenges posed by developing and maintaining public spaces in a consistent and equitable way. This Public Space Management Plan highlights that much of the data and many of the ideas and structures needed to improve Takoma Park's public spaces already exist. The dedication from city staff and energy from community stakeholders create a pathway to enhancing the way the city manages public space. Stakeholders and the community members who contributed to the development of this plan stressed the importance of the plan's three guiding principles **Sustainability**, **Equity**, and **Safety** in the planning, maintenance, and operations of the city's public spaces. The findings and recommendations reflect a few common opportunities for the city's evolution and improvement:

- » Re-evaluate existing policies and procedures to make sure that they meet the goals and priorities for racial equity and sustainability;
- » Improve coordination of resources and policies between city departments;
- » Expand the collection, use, and ongoing maintenance of data to drive public space decision-making;
- » Redouble efforts to improve, standardize, and expand community engagement strategies within all departments that influence public space with the goal of consistently inviting new voices into the conversation and improving trust among under-engaged sections of the community;
- » Ensure that public-facing systems and policies are user-friendly, easy to access, and increase the efficiency of delivery for public space resources and amenities.

## ACTION STEPS FORWARD

This report reframes the way that Takoma Park can approach decisions about public spaces. The definition of public space used is an expansive one and strives to encompass the complexity of managing the places that people walk, drive, play, gather, ride, and relax.

The adoption of the Public Space Management Plan is the start of a new process. It charts a course and gives a mandate to city staff to pursue the recommendations and utilize the new tools generated in this report. City Council initiative, budgetary funding, and staff capacity will determine the pace of implementation. The stewardship and development of the city's public spaces fundamentally reflect the values and goals for the city and the community of people that inhabit it. **Using this report as the foundation, city staff will develop an action plan.**





Credit: Sam Kittner



# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A – 2023-2024 CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

## ADVANCING A COMMUNITY OF BELONGING

### I. Build on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase residents' and small businesses' resilience to the impact of emergency situations, so that they can recover and thrive in the future.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Continue to implement programs funded by COVID-19 Relief Funds to ensure residents and businesses can recover from the pandemic and increase their future stability.
- ▶ Identify lessons learned from implementation of COVID-19 programs to determine how the City can plan and prepare residents and businesses to ensure that they are able to stay in the community during future events.
- ▶ Coordinate with State, County, and local nonprofits and community groups to ensure that there are resources available to provide support to residents during future emergencies.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Residents and businesses have access to the services and programs they need to recover quickly from emergency situations.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ American Rescue Act Plan Act (ARPA) Funded Projects
  - Affordable Housing Programs: Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance
  - Small Business Recovery Programs: Small Business Support Grant
  - Social Services Partnerships Programs: Direct Cash Assistance, Community Connectors, Grants to Non-profits
  - Family Resiliency Programs: Food Insecurity Reduction Grants, Workforce
  - Development for Unemployed/Under Employed Residents; Quality of Life Grants

### II. 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 and racial equity considerations; 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. Build organizational capacity including considering racial equity work experience when evaluating new hires.

Increase use of metrics to examine racial and intersectional socioeconomic equity issues in our programming, with respect to our City's demographics and using this information to address inequities.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Continued progress toward a more racially equitable community and government, where all residents of our City experience a sense of belonging.



*Strategies Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Public Space Management Plan
- ▶ ARPA Program City Operations: Public Space Management
- ▶ Update Race Equity Framework Resolution 2017-28
- ▶ Update Cultural Plant

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

*Strategies*

- ▶ Utilize resident surveys, staff and committee reports, program attendance, racial equity assessment tools, and other evaluative or outreach approaches to determine existing gaps in program offerings and develop programs to close identified gaps.
- ▶ Improve equitable access to programming, and services, and government decision-making using innovative strategies and technology, such as exploring ways to fill gaps in access to technology and library services, to reach residents, including residents of color, immigrants (especially those with limited English), and renters, who rarely engage with the City.
- ▶ Establish a Community Connectors or Navigator system to help assess residents' needs and to help develop updated and improved systems to connect residents to services.

*Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Expanded and/or improved programming or partnerships tailored to residents who need them the most or who currently face barriers to access.

*Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ ARPA Social Services Partnerships Program: Community Connectors
- ▶ ARPA Family Resiliency Programs: Municipal Broadband, WiFi Hotspots, Laptop Lending; Recreation Scholarship & Tutoring

**IV. Defend our status as a Sanctuary City and maintain our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community where all residents experience a sense of belonging.**

*Strategies*

- ▶ Continue advocacy efforts focused on immigrant rights and needs, including connecting those in need of assistance to appropriate area organizations.
- ▶ Explore new ways to share information with and provide services to immigrant and refugee communities through improved community outreach and engagement processes, including through translation and Community Connectors or Navigator systems.
- ▶ Continue efforts to lobby at state level for legislation supporting and protecting immigrants and refugees..

*Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Remain a welcoming and strong Sanctuary City and strengthen access to programming and information to meet the needs of immigrants and refugees.

*Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ ARPA Social Services Partnerships Program: Community Connectors



## FISCALLY SUSTAINABLE GOVERNMENT

### I. Establish the City's long-term fiscal sustainability strategy.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Establish policies for the appropriate level of reserves including Equipment Replacement Reserve, Facilities Maintenance Reserve, and other reserves, as well as consider establishing new reserves where needed for new programming and long-term financial planning.
- ▶ Manage the City's ARPA funds to ensure responsible fiscal management and that spending complies with federal requirements.
- ▶ Take the next steps recommended by a resident task force to adopt sustainable investment and banking policies and practices, considering concerns raised about the challenges of implementation, status of automated financial systems, and cost to implement.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Fiscal sustainability for key services.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Financial system implementation
- ▶ Task Force on Sustainable Banking and Investments
- ▶ Ordinance Approving and Adopting the Budget for ARPA/SLFRF Funded Projects (Ordinance No 2022-3)
- ▶ City of Takoma Park Reserve Policy
- ▶ Organizational Assessment Final Report

### II. Explore expanding City revenue options to identify long-term solutions necessary to diversify the City's revenue streams.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Increase advocacy and lobbying activities at state and county levels to advocate for additional revenue sources for municipalities.
- ▶ Identify and analyze potential alternative revenue sources for the City, within current authorities.
- ▶ Actively pursue external federal, state, and county grant funding opportunities to meet short-term City goals.
- ▶ Explore revenue sources consistent with the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- ▶ Review recommendations from City Organizational Assessment and explore cost-saving alternatives to programs and City service delivery.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ A more diverse set of revenue sources for the City.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Financial Forecast
- ▶ Housing and Economic Strategic Plan Recommendations (i.e., vacant property tax)
- ▶ Organizational Assessment Final Report
- ▶ ARPA City Operations: Revenue Replacement





### III. Explore ways to provide a more equitable property tax assessment system including providing property tax adjustments to residents in need.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Advocate at county and state levels for changes in property taxes to assist residents in need.
- ▶ Explore and promote City property tax credits, deferrals, and other options for residents in need and advocate for such options at the county level.
- ▶ Continue to examine and advocate for changes to the State's property assessment process to ensure an equitable approach.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ A sustainable and equitable property tax process and system minimizing the tax burden on vulnerable residents.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Financial Forecast

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

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Develop innovative budget processes to identify ways to present a budget development framework, summary, as well as detailed budget information in a way that is easy to understand.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for resident education and feedback on the budget with an emphasis on equitable access and outreach.
- ▶ Identify baseline performance measures under key departmental line items to highlight the link between budget decisions and anticipated strategic outcomes.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Continued work toward greater clarity and transparency in the budget process and increased resident understanding of the City budget.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Balancing Act
- ▶ Financial system implementation
- ▶ ARPA City Operations: Interactive Online Budget Platform, Community Engagement, Document Management Platform

## ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

### I. Climate Change Mitigation: Work towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions goal 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 and on engaging all types of city residents in terms relevant to them.
- ▶ Coordinate and advocate for climate change mitigation resiliency and sustainability funds and programs with non-profits organizations, County, State, region and federal governments.



- ▶ Integrate City climate goals and strategies with other City policies and programs, such as urban forest, housing, economic development, and Vision Zero transportation goals.

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Progress toward the City's climate mitigation and resiliency goals; more sustainable City operations.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ 2020 Climate Emergency Response Framework

## **II. Climate Change Resilience: Improve our ability to adapt and be resilient to local impacts of climate change.**

### *Strategies*

- ▶ Build on the results of the Stormwater Resilience Study to consider actions and planning that address increased stormwater in the City and its impacts on both private properties and public areas, including incentives and code changes, stormwater permitting changes, education, collaboration with the county and other jurisdictions on flooding issues, and a more holistic resilience and adaptation strategy.
- ▶ Strengthen City emergency preparedness plans and activities for extreme weather, with an emphasis on exploring ways to plan for high probability events with disproportionate and grave risks to the City's most vulnerable residents.
- ▶ Review and prioritize the 2019 resiliency recommendations and take initial steps forward on measures that produce co-benefits to heat island mitigation and equity-based resilience.

### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Improved stormwater management for both the public space and stormwater flows on and between private properties. Improved City readiness for extreme weather events, with an emphasis on reduced risks to vulnerable residents.

### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Stormwater Resilience Study

## **III. 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.**

### *Strategies*

- ▶ Adopt the multi-year urban forest management plan, with a focus on no net loss, increased biodiversity, and equity in tree cover and tree maintenance support.
- ▶ Expand 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.
- ▶ Adopt and implement the Public Space Management Plan and consider alternative ways to focus on educational outreach, protection and management of the health of our natural resources.
- ▶ Consider ways to encourage native plantings and invasive removal on public and private property.

### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ No net loss of urban forest canopy citywide, more equitably distributed tree canopy over time, increased biodiversity, and 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



- ▶ 2020 Climate Emergency Response Framework
- ▶ 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
- ▶ Public Space Management Plan
- ▶ Stormwater Resilience Study

## ENGAGED, RESPONSIVE, SERVICE-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

### I. Hire and onboard a new City Manager.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Conduct a successful search with community input and the assistance of a consultant.
- ▶ Establish Council and community priorities for the new City Manager; including identifying ways to engage the community in the selection process.
- ▶ Successfully onboard the new City Manager and work together to develop further plans and priorities working toward community-identified visions of the future.

#### *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.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Search firm selection
- ▶ Community engagement process development

### II. Advance City communications with residents 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.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Improve the City's current communications tools – including the City's website, and social media tools, low-tech solutions that recognize our community's technological divide, and support for Councilmember communications – to increase public engagement and more easily and effectively share information.
- ▶ Review lessons learned from recent more targeted community engagement efforts and apply them to improve public input, engagement, and collaboration.
- ▶ Adopt 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 the City government.
- ▶ Conduct innovative, culturally appropriate outreach and education with residents in ways that connect with issues relevant to them.
- ▶ Continue efforts for more effective and engaged city committees that more closely reflect the diversity of our community.
- ▶ Consider ways to effectively leverage and partner with volunteers, tenant and neighborhood associations, and other community groups to implement City programs.





*Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Facilitate and enhance involvement, representation, trust, and collaboration among residents and City government.

*Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ City website update
- ▶ ARPA Social Services Partnerships Program: Community Connectors

### **III. Improve policies and processes to enhance resident interaction with the City government and the Council, including requests for government services, complaint systems, and code enforcement.**

*Strategies*

- ▶ Review City processes and identify methods to improve them including, traffic-calming and sidewalk requests as recommended by the Complete Safe Streets Committee, as well as code enforcement citations.
- ▶ Review and strengthen the process of new Council Member on-boarding, technical assistance, and ongoing support.
- ▶ Identify improved approaches to tracking resident inquiries to ensure that staff are responsive within established timeframes.

*Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Improved and more equitable policies and processes related to City services, such as traffic calming, sidewalk requests, maintenance and repair, and other City services.

*Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Complete Safe Streets Recommendations
- ▶ My TKPK

### **IV. Review and reform the City's approach to public safety to ensure racial justice and work toward a safer, more livable community for all residents.**

*Strategies*

- ▶ Update Council resolution 2017-45 establishing goals and priorities for the Takoma Park Police Department.
- ▶ Continue to establish appropriate changes recommended by the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force.

*Desired Outcome*

- ▶ A more equitable and just approach to public safety that meets the needs of residents.

*Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ ARPA Family Resilience Program: Mental Health Crisis Counselors
- ▶ Resolution Establishing the City Council's Goals and Priorities for the Takoma Park Police Department
- ▶ Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report and Recent Actions



## V. Improve service delivery and reduce administrative burden by updating internal policies, IT infrastructure and software to support staff in doing their jobs.

### *Strategies*

- ▶ Allocate and identify resources required to update the City's systems. Support the purchase of tools to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration.
- ▶ Update and implement human resources policies and procedures that address matters such as evaluations, telework policies, and staffing levels.
- ▶ Explore follow-up actions based on recommendations found in the City's recent wage study and organizational assessment.

### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Reduction in time spent on manual, inefficient processes to improve service delivery and allow staff to find greater bandwidth to innovate towards and advance Council priorities.

### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Organizational Assessment Final Report
- ▶ Wage Study (2022)

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR AN IMPROVED & EQUITABLE QUALITY OF LIFE

### I. Ensure that a range of safe, high quality, affordable, green and energy efficient housing options are equitably available in neighborhoods throughout the community.

#### *Strategies*

- ▶ Continue to build partnerships with nonprofits, foundations, financial institutions, County, State, and other outside entities to expand affordable housing options in the City.
- ▶ Explore the needs of and create programs to assist common ownership communities.
- ▶ Revise sections of the Housing Code, including sections on rent stabilization.
- ▶ Review and make changes to the HomeStretch Down Payment Assistance Program aimed at expanding eligibility.
- ▶ Develop a formal policy and criteria regarding the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program (PILOTs).

#### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Meet the current and future housing needs of the community while ensuring affordable housing options for residents of all races, ethnicities, and varying income levels.

#### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Housing and Economic Strategic Plan Recommendations (i.e., recommendations on rent stabilization, PILOT, etc.)
- ▶ Washington Adventist Hospital Campus
- ▶ New Hampshire Ave Redevelopment
- ▶ Affordable Housing Partnerships
- ▶ HomeStretch Down Payment Assistance Program
- ▶ Review selected County policies that support City housing, equity and sustainability goals



## II. Improve transportation planning, design, and implementation to create a safer, more environmentally sustainable and more racially and economically equitable community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle occupants.

### *Strategies*

- ▶ Adopt a Vision Zero initiative; examine potential components such as education/outreach, policy changes, and infrastructure improvements.
- ▶ Work with State Highway Administration (SHA) to address safety at dangerous intersections as identified by Montgomery County Predictive Safety Analysis and Takoma Park Police data.
- ▶ Advocate for transportation improvements that impact access and safety of Takoma Park residents through regional collaboration and coordinated efforts, including Purple Line construction, Metro, bike lanes, etc.

### *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, including environmental ones, throughout the City; and racially equitable transportation system and outcomes.

### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Complete Safe Streets Recommendations
- ▶ New Ave Bikeway
- ▶ Purple Line
- ▶ Maple Ave Connectivity Project
- ▶ Metropolitan Branch Trail Upgrade
- ▶ Resolution on Transportation Safety

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

### *Strategies*

- ▶ Continue to provide support for small businesses especially those impacted by Purple Line construction.
- ▶ Explore options for providing support services, including through direct assistance and partnerships, for businesses located outside the areas covered by existing business associations.
- ▶ Attract new businesses to Takoma Park and facilitate the growth of existing businesses, particularly those that help meet workforce development and local ownership goals.
- ▶ Leverage both public and private stakeholders to accomplish the goal of developing the Recreation Center, Community Center, and Library that meets the City's needs. Work with the County to complete the minor master plan process, which includes the Washington Adventist area of the city, in partnership with local residents and stakeholders across and around the plan area.
- ▶ Coordinate with the County on planning, zoning and development issues affecting the city.

### *Desired Outcome*

- ▶ Implementation of the Strategic Plan, prepare and plan for development activity, and support local businesses and workers.

### *Major Projects, Initiatives, and Ongoing Activities.*

- ▶ Housing and Economic Strategic Plan Recommendations (i.e., recommendations on economic development)





- ▶ Minor Master Plan
- ▶ Recreation Center Development
- ▶ Library and Community Center Renovation
- ▶ ARPA Small Business Recovery Programs: Façade Improvement Grants, Small Business Incubator, Neighborhood Commercial Center Improvement, TKPK Business Investment Grant
- ▶ Takoma Junction Development
- ▶ Purple Line Construction
- ▶ ARPA Community Anchors Funding: Library Expansion, Community Center Redevelopment, Recreation Center Redevelopment
- ▶ Montgomery College Math Science Building construction
- ▶ Continue to advocate for renovations at Piney Branch Elementary School and increased public school facilities in the City or nearby.



## APPENDIX B – SAMPLE POLICIES

The following appendices offer text for sample policies and/or policies from other jurisdictions that could act as templates or inspiration for new City of Takoma Park policies. The sample policies include:

- **Appendix B.1:** Playground Condition Prioritization Tool
- **Appendix B.2:** Sample Municipal Policies on Art in the Public Right-of-Way



## APPENDIX B.1 – Playground Condition Prioritization Tool (based on the Montgomery Parks Playground Condition Checklist)

Playground Condition Checklist			
Park Name		Maintenance Area	
Park Code		Playground #	
Date of Inspection		Inspector's Name	
Installation Date			
Comments			
<b>Overall Playground Score</b>			<b>0/0</b>
<b>1. Code Requirements</b>			
1 = Yes, 0 = No		ASTM Guidelines	
		CSPC Guidelines	0
		ADA Guidelines	0
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>0</b>
		<b>Code Score</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>2. Design Intent Met/User Satisfaction</b>			
<p>“The design of the playground provides an environment that is safe, fun and challenging and addresses each child’s play needs (both physical and social). Each age group, stage of development and physical ability have been included in the design.”</p>			
1 = Yes, 0 = No	All components are present? No features are removed/missing?		0
	State of the Art Design/Equipment?		0
	Equipment for ages 2-5		0
	Equipment for ages 5-12		0
	*Is Equipment being used? (3=heavy, 2=moderate, 1=light)		0
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>0</b>
		<b>Design Score</b>	<b>0%</b>
<i>Continued on next page...</i>			





3. Playground/Equipment is in Good Repair		
1 = Yes, 0 = No (only score those items relevant to the playground, i.e. pressure treated lumber may not be present)	Equipment is in good repair (nothing broken or vandalized)?	0
	Playground free of trash?	0
	Surfacing free of weeds/vegetation?	0
	Equipment free of rust?	0
	Equipment is clean?	0
	Pressure Treated Lumber is sealed?	0
	Playground appropriately located?	0
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b># of Relevant Items</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Repair Score</b>	<b>0%</b>

4. Safety		
-----------	--	--

Scores should be based upon inspector's ability/inability to make component safe before end of workday.	Surfacing Depth/Condition (meets code)	0
	Tripping Hazards	0
	Environmental (trees, drainage, etc.)	0
	Independent Pieces (i.e. spring toys, merry-go-round)	0
	Playground Edging/Border	0
1=Safe, 0-Not Safe (Only score those items relevant to playground)	Playground Access	0
	Bridges	0
	Climbers/Steps	0
	Panels/Barriers	0
	Posts	0
	Decks	0
	Slides	0
	Other Amenities	0
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b># of Relevant Items</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Safety Score</b>	<b>0%</b>	



## APPENDIX B.2 – Sample Municipal Policies on Art in the Public Right-of-Way

- **City of Charlotte, SC**

- >> **Placemaking Hub website**
- >> **Paint the Pavement Manual**

*Website:* <https://www.charlottenc.gov/Growth-and-Development/Planning-and-Development/Planning/Urban-Design/Placemaking-Program/Placemaking-Hub>

- **City of Milwaukee, MI**

- >> **Paint the Pavement Guide**
- >> **Paint the Pavement Permit Application**

*Website:* <https://city.milwaukee.gov/dpw/infrastructure/multimodal/Multi-Modal-Projects/Paint-the-Pavement>

- **City of Minneapolis, MN**

- >> **Public Art Permits: Instructions and Guidelines**
- >> **Public Art Policies and Procedures (2007)**

*Website:* <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/business-services/planning-zoning/city-plans/public-art-long-range-planning/resources-permits/permits-for-art/>

- **City of North Adams, MA, Public Art Application**

*Website:* [https://www.northadams-ma.gov/government/boards\\_and\\_commissions/public\\_arts\\_commission/index.php](https://www.northadams-ma.gov/government/boards_and_commissions/public_arts_commission/index.php)

- **City of Portland, ME**

- >> **Guidelines for Public Art Ordinance (2009)**
- >> **Guidelines for Temporary Public Art (Revised October, 2022)**
- >> **Application for Temporary Public Art (Revised October, 2022)**

*Website:* <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/470/Public-Art-Program>

- **City of Salem, MA, Public Art Master Plan (2013)**

*Website:* <https://www.salemma.gov/planning-and-community-development/pages/salem-public-art-master-plan>



## APPENDIX C – FULL SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS

The following responses were generated by community participants at an in-person community workshop held at the Takoma Park Community Center on June 27, 2022.

### *Strengths*

Narrower Streets slow drivers  
 Tree Canopy  
 Small city: Should not be difficult to exchange information quickly across departments  
 Civic organizations such as Friends of Native trees in Takoma  
 Lots of green spaces  
 Abundant trees, vibrant urban forest  
 Community groups centered around particular causes can be mobilized  
 Walkability  
 The new money from federal legislations creates opportunities to re-configure out green infrastructure and maybe fix ugly utilities and improve bike/sidewalks  
 Involved and knowledgeable residents  
 Parks and play areas / open space woods  
 Openness to narrowing street footprint  
 Walkability  
 Downtown pockets  
 Safety  
 Diversity – Racial and Economic  
 Parks and community events  
 Sligo Creek Parkway closures increased number of bike lanes  
 Parking lot at Co-op is being utilized for many different events that are enjoyed and valued by the community  
 Sligo Creek / Trail / Parkway closure  
 Small local playgrounds  
 All our trees  
 Diverse community  
 Streatery  
 Existing Park systems serve residents  
 New Hampshire Ave rec center and Takoma Park Rec Center child care  
 Tree purchasing opportunity through the city  
 Clean Parks  
 Cooler under tree cover  
 Valuable parks  
 Safe sidewalks (mostly)  
 Highly educated/engaged public

### *Weaknesses*

Bridges over Sligo Creek / Narrow sidewalk  
 Intersections that only have one marked crosswalk  
 No protected bike lanes  
 Fragmented city policy making based organizational chart  
 Drainage issues on Spruce  
 Uncoordinated thinking between city and adjacent governments means we may miss opportunities  
 Lack of focus and follow through  
 Not enough neighborhood-based identification of areas for EV charging  
 Lack of nice swimming pools  
 Need for an outdoor dance pavilion possibly a deck over the floodplain at Takoma Junction Parking Lot  
 Lack of bike lanes  
 Takoma Junction area is underused  
 Crossings can be dangerous  
 Need more bike lanes  
 City has not been able to be more reflective and responsive to residents  
 City has chosen developers who do not have the best interests of the community at hand  
 City needs to consider equity issues when designating, designing, and implementing public space  
 TKPK section of MBT is almost unusable (so many tree roots)  
 Vast patchwork of property owners  
 Rich white homeowners tend to dominate “engagement” process  
 Inequity across the city (green space / amenities)  
 Ongoing maintenance of public spaces  
 Heat islands around Ward 6 not enough tree shade  
 Trees get planted for shade but are too short and do not provide good cooling, and encroach on the sidewalk  
 Maintenance of existing parks  
 Tree regulations are too restrictive for many due to costs  
 Intersection at TPSS coop and the parking lot are missed opportunities  
 Street grid pattern that does not recognize underlying landscape, and is therefore not long-term resilient  
 Need improvement in process for community groups to do invasive removal on City controlled property, ex. allow for community members to participate day of event by signing on site waivers (process on Montgomery County and Parks & Planning controlled areas is much easier); New Hampshire Ave is dangerous for pedestrians and bicycle





## Opportunities

Public restrooms 24/7

Outdoor water fountains

New Hampshire Ave is an insult to lungs, ears, and policy priorities. Horrible to walk along or bike

Could there be more trees along the streets and work with apartment buildings

Ask MCPS to remove invasive species that are killing trees

Organize stakeholders' participation through existing civic groups

Underutilized ROWs

Solar panels on parking lots

Planting native trees and plants

Empty, under-utilized ROWs that could have native plants

Pollinator gardens

Pepco's building green space could be a food forest and contributing resource, even if only visually

There are old and vacant schools/playground with open space the city can repurpose

The junction is available to rethink for public space and food forest

Food forests

Pollinator gardens

Native plants

Removal of Invasives

Sligo Mill Road provides an excellent and beautiful possible route for walkers and cyclists if it is considered for phase 3 of the NH Ave Bikeway

Teens have built informal mountain biking circuits in Takoma Woods and between Jefferson Avenue and Sligo Creek parkway.

More bike lanes

Somehow make use of parking lot next to co-op

Possibility for public space coupled with opportunity for affordable housing at Washington Adventist Hospital Medical Center

Replace asphalt in Takoma Junction with permeable pavers that allow grass and moss to grow

Require city to only use native plants when choosing new plantings.

Create protected bike infrastructure

So much public space could be gained by limiting/removing street parking and repurposing

WAH redevelopment: please housing / businesses and a little park

Leverage city-owned property to promote development

Potential for new housing

Beautiful grassy area on Adventist Hospital campus should have more use

A water or spray park for little somewhere in TP

Fixing up New Hampshire Ave rec center

More housing

Increase the tree canopy

Improve and streamline permitting

Improve pool access

Lighting in the parks are a safety concern

Pollinator gardens, get rid of invasive species, food insecurity

Cooling park- splash pad for kids, more shade trees

Improve bike lanes and infrastructure

The space next to the Junction needs to be addressed

Reduce heat island effect

Increase bike lanes, reduce the need for driving

Outdoor water fountains for drinking and public restrooms

Dorothy's Woods!

Ward 5 needs a playground

Opportunity to collaborate with Montgomery County's established Weed Warrior Program



## Threats

Concerned about too much improper lighting  
 Climate change (Stronger storms and heat)  
 Deer herbivory (No deer management)  
 Invasive species, loss of biodiversity  
 Stormwater run-off  
 Lack of diversity in engagement  
 Loss of biodiversity  
 Pollution in Sligo  
 Rising rents – gentrifications – loss of residents  
 Climate changes  
 Food insecurity  
 Storm water  
 Dying trees  
 Wooded slope between Columbia Ave and Carroll Ave is threatened by development agreement with NDC  
 City-owned parking lot at the Junction provides space for activities that bridge community divides  
 Fencing and infill eliminating wildlife migration corridors  
 Loss/lack of canopy or shade structure  
 Those who don't want development  
 City has not been transparent about the city-owned wooded slope between the TPSS Co-Op  
 Electric bikes used on narrow paths  
 Invasive plants block public space paths and walkways  
 Drivers / Cars  
 Stormwater management  
 Design of NH Ave / University / Piney Branch is hostile to all except commuters. I'd like to spend time/money over these but it's loud, hot, and dangerous  
 Too much community input. At a certain point, the City needs to make clear that disagreement does not equal being unheard.  
 Adequate sidewalks by the hospital  
 Stormwater Management  
 Stormwater issues  
 Invasive plants covering many parks  
 Stop sign at Richie and Piney Branch  
 Police monitoring of the parks

Climate change, erosion and loss of biodiversity  
 Threat: Climate Change will contribute to the failure of existing green and gray infrastructure -- Jim Schulman, Climate Action Coffee participant  
 significant development in Takoma DC will bring more people into the community. There are close to 1000 condo units being built within a mile of Laurel Ave and Eastern Ave. How does the plan incorporate the reality of more people, including better sidewalks on cut through streets, parking, more public open space. Etc.  
 Lack of public spaces in Wards 5 & 6  
 Invasive species; Traffic on New Hampshire Ave



## APPENDIX D – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARIES

### *May 13th, 2022: Kick Off Meeting*

The project kick-off meeting included representatives from Housing and Community Development, Economic Development, Communications, Public Works, and Department of Recreation and served to create a common understanding of the project and client priorities. The Public Space Management Plan will be developed to provide guidance on how public space will be used and maintained in Takoma Park. The plan will include a decision-making process for how, when, and where the city devotes funding and resources to public spaces (outdoor, publicly accessible spaces).

#### **Key Insights:**

- » Engagement of Takoma Park residents varies, and special outreach may be required between communities' meetings 1 & 2 to ensure representative participation
- » Large non-English speaking population: mostly Amharic, Spanish, and French
- » Lack of system to permit uses and events in sidewalk spaces
- » Issues with commercial businesses using spaces like dog parks
- » Streatery is great for the community and this activity creates nuisance trash in the surrounding area

### *May 25th, 2022: Site Visit*

During a full day site visit, the project team met with Housing and Community Development, Department of Recreation, Public Works, Communications, the Takoma Langley Crossroads Development Authority, and the Public Library.

Takoma Park Department of Recreation (DR) is mainly responsible for facility management and programs. The Department of Recreation manages two fields, one recreation center, and a separate event space. Programming is advertised to the public three times a year and includes youth programs, adult fitness, holiday events, and more. Sports leagues provide a source of profit for the department but not to the degree that they are self-sustaining. A scholarship program provides 20-100% discounts on fees but would benefit from direct outreach and streamlining of paperwork. Attendees emphasized that maintenance and operation responsibilities for recreation are separated from parks which are run by the Department of Public Works.

The day also included a ride-along with Alexander Freedman of Housing and Community Development. The project team was not only able to see more of the public space in person, but also hear more insights from Alexander during the ride. Discussions on acquisition currently focus on housing, not the need for a larger regional park. Some parks lack visibility from the street and would benefit from a more comprehensive wayfinding system. Maple Avenue is a busy corridor and requires safety redesign, complete streets principles, bike facilities, and possibly on-street parking. With the current Minor Master Plan process, there's an opportunity for a deeper partnership with Washington Adventist University who has not been fully engaged in the past. Establishing safe and complete routes to schools has been a challenge with the key barriers being front yards challenging new sidewalk development.



Takoma Park Public Library





The Public Works Department expressed a need for increased funding and staff, with current gaps in engineering, tech support, and GIS. A pavement condition analysis helps to determine the resurfacing schedule but its budget is limited on an annual basis due to competing priorities and tight city budgets.

Representatives from the Takoma Langley Crossroads Development Authority spoke of opportunities to improve community infrastructure including green space, sidewalks, impervious surface reduction, and trail and transit connections to Prince George's County. There is a desire for more recreation facilities like a basketball and skate park in Ward 6 as well as a community dance space.

### Key Insights:

- » Some parks are not visible from the street and would benefit from a clear wayfinding system
- » Maintenance and operations responsibilities for recreation are separated from parks which is run by Department of Public Works
- » Park access is good across the city but needs improved connectivity
- » The city's permitting and other processes are siloed and sometimes unclear
- » There is a need for consolidation of functions across departments
- » There is a need for improved code enforcement
- » Not all communities are served by a recreation center
- » Communications mediums available include TV, Radio, city web page, social media, Monthly Newsletter, Quarterly City Guide, E-newsletter, Bus shelter ads, and coordination with the M-NCPPC Minor Master Plan door knocking effort
- » This PSMP must include feedback from youth groups and seniors



*June 10th, 2022: Meeting with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)*

Conversations with the M-NCPPC Montgomery County Planning Department centered around the Minor Master Plan for Washington Adventist Hospital and surrounding areas. The property owner would potentially like to expand the University which includes upgrading and modernizing facilities in addition to expanding housing and public spaces. The Washington Adventist Campus is located adjacent to Sligo Creek and the Minor Master Plan will cover 42 acres. The proximity to the creek and the fact that the main parking lot is within a floodplain will require the implementation of stormwater management practices. If housing is developed, it will trigger a requirement to include at least 4 acres of open space. This presents a great opportunity for Takoma Park.

Students (on the campus) feel disconnected from the community and lack active rec spaces, transit, and connections to Silver Spring. There is a desire to open up the campus and better integrate with community. The triangular area on the University campus near Maple Avenue and Sligo Creek provides a gathering space opportunity for the community.

**Key Insights:**

- » Expansion of the University includes upgrading and modernizing facilities in addition to expanding housing and public spaces (open space and community gardens)
- » The need for stormwater management and the open space requirement creates a prime opportunity for this work to contribute to improving public space in the City of Takoma Park.
- » Desire to open the campus to the community and increase connectivity
- » Lack of gathering spaces and concerns about safety

*June 13th, 2022: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)*

This stakeholder meeting included representatives from M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks and the State Highway Administration. There are several ongoing projects that Parks is conducting that may complement the PSMP: Park Operations + Maintenance Framework, Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (PROS), Park Permitting, Pedestrian Master Plan, and a new park in Silver Spring. There is brainstorming happening around multi-use parks in urban areas and the possibility of locating those fields along school routes. Park staff were happy to work through park improvement requests and were receptive to improvements to the park permitting system. Methods of analysis and data sources discussed include a strength-weakness-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis, an experience score analysis, and equity focus areas.

Discussion with the State Highway Administration covered safety and road resurfacing. Resurfacing of Carroll Avenue is underway. A context design effort informed by community engagement to improve multi-modal transportation was also discussed.

**Key Insights:**

- » Identifying multi-use opportunities within new parks in urban areas
- » Park staff were happy to work through park improvement request
- » Park staff were receptive to improvements to the park permitting system
- » Safety and resurfacing effort underway for the Carroll Avenue Corridor from Route 193 to the Takoma Park city limits
- » Context design effort will be driven by community engagement and will involve a multi-modal design
- » Visioning study for Takoma Park
- » Temporary stop signs posted
- » Intersection improvements made to Carrol Avenue and Flower Avenue



*June 15th, 2022: Youth Engagement Event*

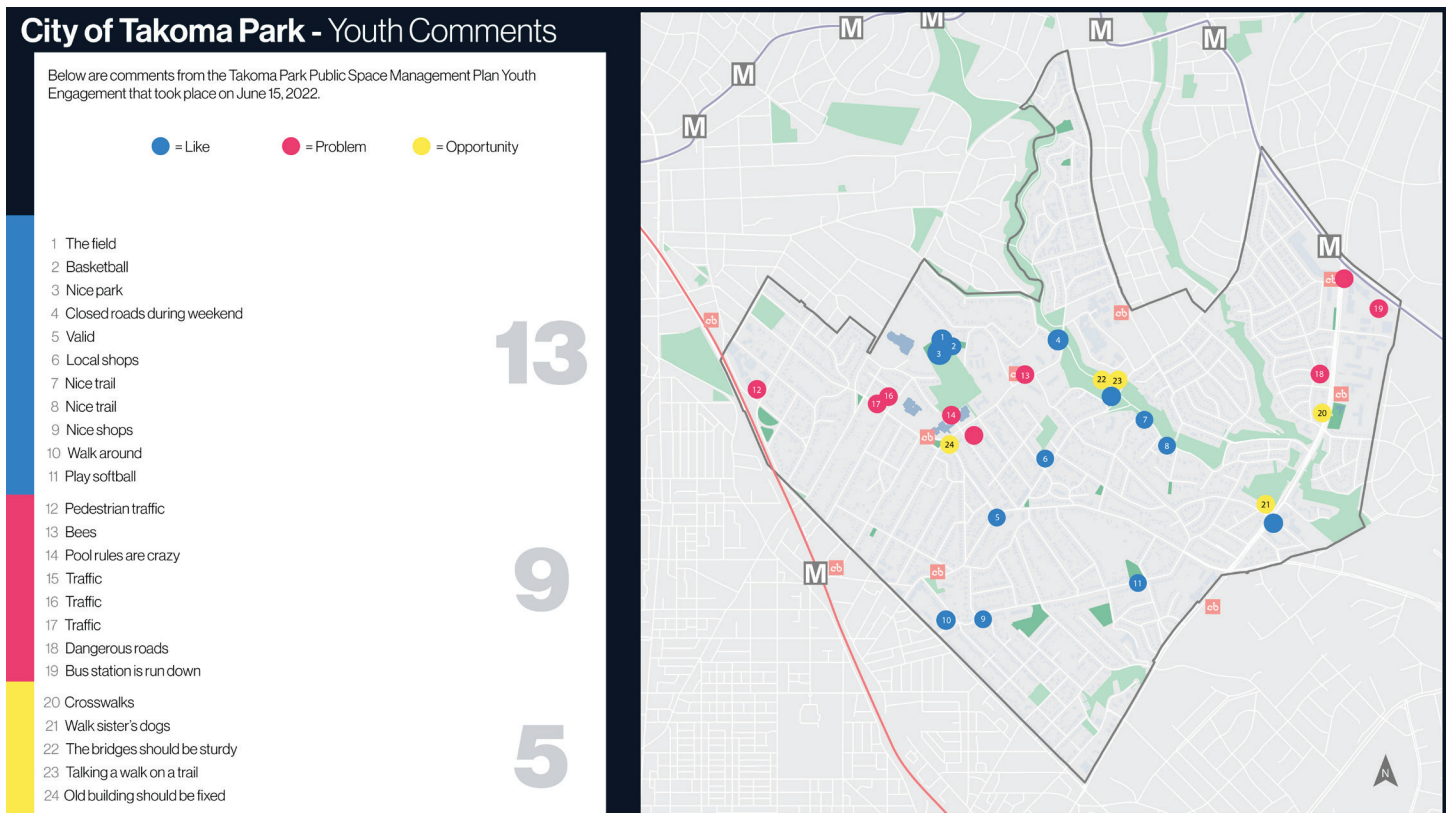
The project team hosted a youth engagement event to understand youth perspectives and experiences of public space in the city. Many of the participants expressed that the city is easy to navigate but the high levels of traffic and reckless driving makes it feel unsafe. The lack of sidewalks and wayfinding signage causes pedestrians to have to walk into the street. The youth enjoy going out to the Piney Park and using Sligo Creek Trail, yet they don't use the recreation center on New Hampshire, are detached from Washington Adventist Campus, and are disappointed by the prohibitive rules preventing them from accessing Piney Branch pool.

**Key Insights:**

- » Area, while easy to navigate, is busy with lots of car traffic
- » Like to walk dogs, particularly along Sligo Creek
- » Like food trucks and places in the park to eat
- » Restricted access to the public pool is a big hurdle
- » Streets lack sidewalks or have sidewalks that are in disrepair particularly along New Hampshire Ave
- » Desire for additional nature trails that connect to existing sidewalk network



The map below represents comments from youth community meetings where residents were asked to identify locations that present Problems (red), Opportunities (yellow), and things they currently enjoy (blue).



**Figure 18. "Heat Map" of Youth Engagement Activity Comments**





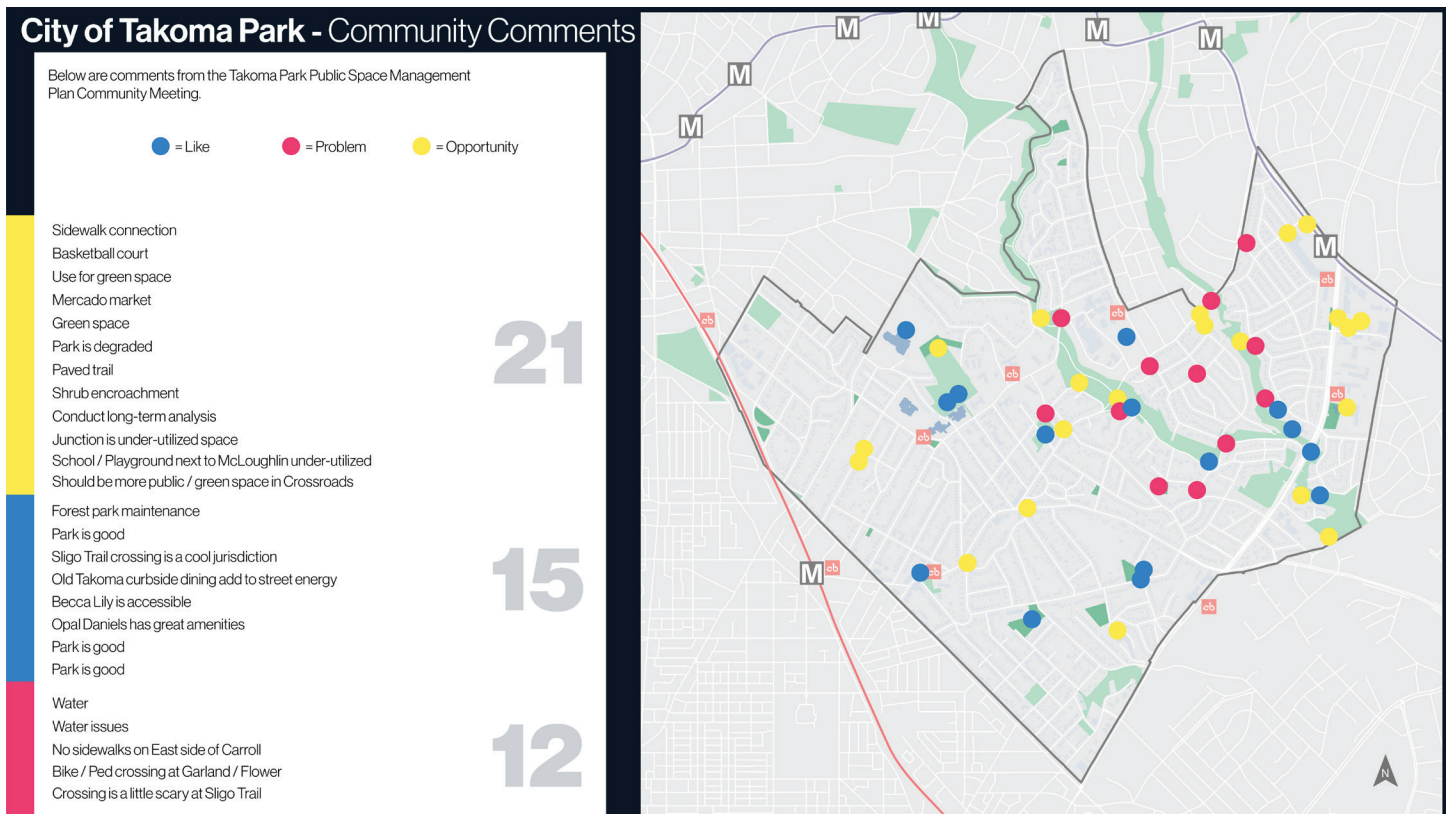
*June 27th, 2022: Community Meeting #1*

The community meeting on June 27th brought together residents from across Takoma Park to complete a mapping exercise to understand their experiences of using public space in the city. Residents identified locations that they enjoyed, places where there are opportunities to improve and areas where there are issues or problems.

**Key Insights:**

- » Sligo Creek trail is a hot spot of opportunity and positive experiences for both the youth and broader community
- » The community identified gaps in green space and sidewalks specifically in the south west wards
- » Flooding issues and impervious surfaces have created a need for stormwater management around Takoma Langley
- » Opportunities for naturalization of passive open spaces
- » There are trails around Sligo Creek that are not formalized and could be upgraded
- » Streets are not currently safe for biking because of narrow streets and dangerous driver behavior
- » Need for more public outreach and education
- » Desire for renewable energy
- » Safer street crossings are needed, especially along MD SHA roadways

This map is representing comments from the community meetings where residents were asked to identify locations that present Problems (red), Opportunities (yellow), and things they currently enjoy (blue).



**Figure 19. "Heat Map" of Community Meeting Comments**





*July 19th 2022: Main Street Takoma (Old Takoma Business Association)*

The meeting with the Old Takoma Business Association focused on Main Street Takoma, its management, programming, and the future Takoma Metro Station development. There are 100 businesses who are members of the Old Takoma Business Association which provides grant writing, loan fund events, and social media marketing. Some of the businesses on the D.C. side are Black owned with the majority being privately owned. The pandemic caused several shifts in the programming of Main Street including an expedited closure of Laurel Ave to accommodate a streatery, moving the farmer’s market to a parking lot, and providing grants to support small businesses.

The commercial district of Takoma Park is a magnet for economic activity, attracting young families to the restaurants, grocery co-op, and small retailers. There may be a need to expand the number of small retailers and the grocery co-op. The opportunity for those expansions comes with the Takoma Metro 2022 Plan which is proposed to include 350 housing units, 10-20,000 GSF of retail, and a 1.5-2 acre park.

**Key Insights:**

- » Support small businesses near Metro stations
- » Opportunity to increase retail offerings and the grocery co-op through Takoma Metro Plan
- » Find ways to draw people to commercial districts
- » Young families are the main clientele
- » Retail market analysis driven by input from the public
- » Work with farmers market and co-op
- » There’s interest in removing bollards



**Figure 20. Main Street Takoma Commercial District Map**



### *July 21st, 2022: Multi-Family Residents*

The project team's conversations with Takoma Park multi-family dwelling residents marked a turning point in the project. The team heard from residents of Victory Tower, Takoma Overlook Condominium, Franklin Apartments, Essex House, Hilltop Condos, and Paragon.

The Victory Tower is near downtown Takoma Park and includes a green space behind the building. One participant noted that they're "very fortunate because of all the green space around the building". Accessibility of sidewalks is difficult for people with mobility issues because of how narrow and rough the surfaces are. With the recent push for electric car chargers, there's concern that they may make the sidewalks even narrower. Residents expressed their love for the town, especially the trees and parks but are not able to afford to buy a home.

Essex House residents shared that although there is a lot of greenery in Takoma Park, the differences in income gaps and quality of life between residents is stark. Homes are unaffordable in the area and the quality of life in ward 5 specifically differs between single family vs. multi-family residents. The lack of consideration for racial and economic impact of this work was also raised by this group. The community spaces in Hefner Park currently require a fee and residents feel that meetings that serve the community should not be required to pay.

This engagement effort also included voices from Hilltop Condos, Paragon residents, and community service providers. Residents asked for affordable and accessible public spaces with indoor programming for the winter months. There is a concern about composting infrastructure being located near apartments and attracting vermin. Gaps in the sidewalk network were brought up across all these conversations. The residents shared a collective desire for a neighborhood watch to get more eyes-on-the-street for added security. Residents have also pointed out that there is currently heavy traffic along Maple Avenue that causes those who walk and bike in the community to feel unsafe. A Bike Master Plan analyzing the safety and connectivity of bicycling infrastructure in the community has recently been completed with a Pedestrian Master Plan well underway. The regular communication that used to occur between service providers and the deputy city manager has been halted but there's a desire from community service providers to continue that regular dialogue.

#### **Key Insights:**

- » ADA accessibility issues on narrow sidewalks
- » Any removal of parking would impact many families especially those who live in apartments
- » Concerns about electric chargers, signage, and utility poles taking up sidewalk space
- » People like public spaces but concerned with affordability and condition of the rec center
- » The City Council needs to invest more funds and policy focus on getting landlords to provide timely outreach and communications to tenants
- » Current information sources (e.g., monthly newsletter and rec guide) is inadequate and does not make tenants feel welcome in the city
- » Lots of greenery but growing income gaps and quality of life disparities between homeowners and renters
- » Feels like Takoma Park does not pay attention to multi-family residents
- » Desire to change Maple Avenue by folks who do not live in the area
- » Dog walkers and pedestrians feel like they must dodge speeding cars
- » Not enough street lighting
- » Not enough seating spaces at parks and at bus shelters
- » Traffic and pedestrian lights stop working after 5PM, leading to unsafe behavior
- » Currently limited communication and engagement with Ethiopian and Spanish speakers



### July 21st, 2022: Police Department

The project team's conversation with the Takoma Park Police Department covered a range of topics from street closures for summer events, noise complaints and security concerns. Currently, different properties have different procedures when applying for noise waivers, street closure permits, and security for outdoor summer events which causes confusion for those applying. Staffing throughout the course of the event is also a point of concern as events sometimes unexpectedly run overtime. Events serving or permitting alcohol often heightens the need for security staff who may not always be available.

The transportation safety discussion revolved around unsafe intersections like that of New Hampshire Ave and University Boulevard as well as complaints about drivers not stopping at stop signs. To reduce collisions, police officers are often posted at busy, high-collision intersections and work with public works on traffic calming strategies. On the topic of parking enforcement, it was stated there are currently a lot of restrictions leading to complaints over parking availability. Currently, tickets are mostly given for metered parking and meters are operated by an outside vendor. People are generally given 72 hours to move their vehicles; if no action is taken, then the authorities will tow the vehicle.

There is a concern about the rising crime rates this year, including the rise of violent crime. Shoplifting and burglaries have been increasing throughout the city, most notably around Takoma Langley Crossroads, and has found its way into parks such as the Sligo Creek Trail. Folks who live in adjacent communities in Ward 6 often do not know who to call in the event of experiencing a crime. Efforts to address the rise in crimes includes proactive planning work to focus on problem areas, house checks for people who are out of town, and wellness checks for the elderly. More frequent presence by police officers including on social media via a public information campaign could do a lot to earn the public trust and improve law enforcement responsiveness in these historically underserved communities. Folks who are experiencing homelessness and living with a mental health condition should be taken to hospitals, clinics, or shelters. Code enforcement has historically been a contentious form of action as it can be very restrictive. There may be opportunities to revise the codes to be less punitive by imposing a three-step process: warning first, fine second, then court third, in enforcing the codes.

### Key Insights:

- » Different properties have different procedures when applying for noise waivers, street closure permits, and security for outdoor summer events
- » Unsafe intersections like that of New Hampshire Ave and University Boulevard
- » Complaints about drivers not stopping at stop signs
- » Rising crime rates this year, including the rise of violent crime
- » Proactive planning work to focus on problem areas, house checks for people who are out of town, and wellness checks for the elderly are needed



### August 23rd, 2022: Community Meeting #2

The second community meeting had options for both virtual and in-person attendance. 52 people registered to attend. The meeting included a presentation, SWOT analysis exercise, discussion to generate feedback on public space policies, and presentation and reaction to the draft plan recommendations.

The SWOT analysis provided an opportunity for attendees to share the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats toward Takoma Park's public space. The SWOT Analysis summary can be found on page 66 and the full SWOT input is in Appendix C. The analysis identified opportunities such as completing the sidewalk network and taking advantage of underutilized spaces to address the socioeconomic disparities that exist in the city.

Attendees were asked two questions regarding the public space policies:

- » Do you have any challenges or concerns with existing city policies regarding Public Space Management?
- » What improvements to the existing policies are needed?

Residents expressed concern about the clarity of current policies and whether they are operationalized in the way they are written. Some gaps and opportunities for clarification in the policies include a deer management strategy, the definition of public space, and bicycling regulations. Residents have a desire to be more engaged and informed across policy topics through volunteer opportunities and a transparent project prioritization process.

The last part of this meeting was centered on getting feedback on the current draft recommendations for the Public Space Management Plan. Two questions guided this conversation:

- » Do you have any concerns or ideas of how to improve the draft recommendations?
- » What additional recommendations do you think could help improve the physical and social dynamics in the city?

The suggestion that was raised the most was coordination across city agencies to achieve a coherent strategy. Besides that need for coordination, a wide range of topics were discussed including incorporating more consideration of paved surfaces and streets, resident education, acquisition strategies, and thoughtful consideration of bicyclists and bike infrastructure. Residents are encouraged by the emphasis on ADA considerations in the recommendations, the equity lens, and nature-based education and recreation

#### Key Insights:

- » There's a need for coordination across city departments and a coherent public space strategy
- » Bicyclist safety and bicycle infrastructure need to be considered
- » The city needs an official maintenance strategy for the invasive species, especially those encroaching onto sidewalks
- » Sidewalks should be prioritized in school walksheds

The comprehensive feedback from this meeting has been incorporated into the policy analysis, recommendations and other sections of the report.





### *September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – Arts and Humanities*

The September 14 discussion with Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith highlighted the vital role of the arts and humanities in Takoma Park's cultural life, current public art projects and processes, and the involvement of various stakeholders.

The Arts and Humanities Division has implemented a new Public Art Works initiative that is addressing racial equity issues by locating public art across Takoma Park instead of focusing projects in the downtown or historic district. Recent projects have included a Free Little Art Gallery celebrating the local Ethiopian community, colorful vinyl wraps at five new bus shelters, a bus shelter art poster series, and a custom-designed cargo bike for pop-up arts events across the city.

The Arts and Humanities Committee is comprised of local residents with an interest or background in the arts. The committee meets bi-monthly and advises the City Council and city staff on arts projects. City staff organize the Takoma Park Arts series, which features free concerts, theater, dance, film screenings, poetry readings, and art exhibitions at the Takoma Park Community Center. The events support the creative economy across the D.C. area and heighten Takoma Park's reputation as an arts-friendly city.

The Arts and Humanities Division operates on a very small budget with two part-time employees. Limited funding and staff time make some projects unrealistic. City staff have secured some additional funds through grants from the Maryland State Arts Council.

#### **Key Insights:**

- » Local residents love public art and associate it with their reasons for living in Takoma Park.
- » Public art and creative placemaking can transform public spaces by making them more welcoming and amenable.
- » Public art boosts economic development by supporting the creative economy and small business owners.
- » Additional city funding and staff time are needed to expand arts programs or undertake new planning efforts.
- » Long-range planning for large public art projects should include multi-year budgets and community input.

## **PRIOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK**

### *Public Space Management Plan Survey, Sept 2020 – Mar 2021*

During September of 2020, the City of Takoma Park released a public survey soliciting input on public space management and priorities for public space in the city. A majority of the 225 unique participants reported that they currently have easy access to public parks and green space, adequate tree cover on their street, and nearly half use the park closest to their home at least daily. The respondents identified two key priorities for public space in Takoma Park: improved maintenance and equal access to public space for all residents.

### *Public Space Values Workshop, Fall 2021*

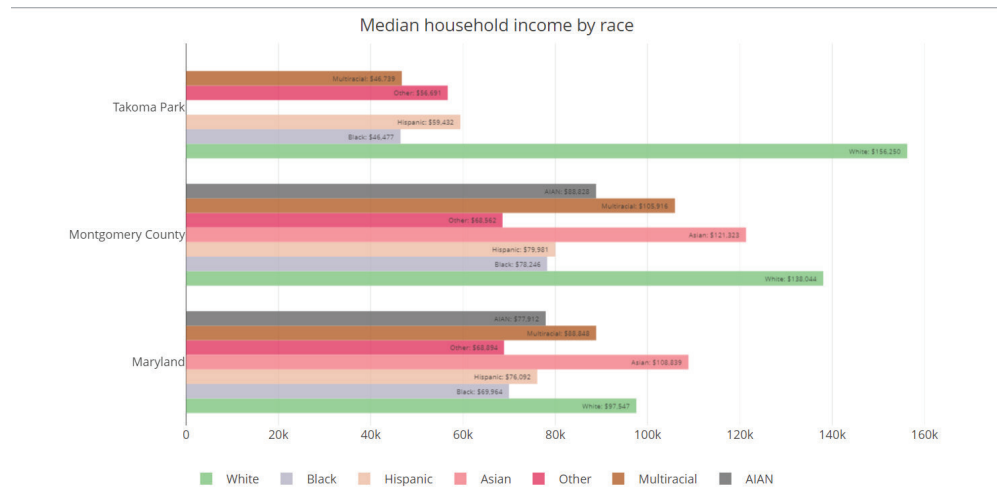
During the Fall of 2021, 5 Public Outreach workshops were held to gather public input on the key decision-making factors for the Public Space Management Plan (PSMP). The plurality of the 43 participants (who all but one was Takoma Park residents) reference Equity as one of the primary factors. The next highly valued factor was Environmental Sustainability.



## APPENDIX C – DATA SOURCES, TOOLS, MAPPING

### Takoma Park Data Explorer

This webpage allows Takoma Park residents and staff to learn more about their city through data. Data comes from the Census’s 2016-2020 American Community Survey. This data explorer includes information on demographics; race and ethnicity; housing; poverty, unemployment, and income; education, health insurance, and computer access. This tool provides centralized data access that can serve as a tool for planning, prioritization, and implementation of a wide range of projects across the City.



### Park Inventory Map

This interactive map displays detailed information on all park amenities within the City of Takoma Park. Parks were graded differently based on whether their intended use was active or passive. Active parks have amenities that engage people such as playgrounds, basketball hoops, or picnic pavilions. Passive parks primarily serve as green space without amenities. Active parks were evaluated based on their landscape features, structural features, and cleanliness, while passive parks were graded only on landscape features and cleanliness.

### Park Quality and Proximity Analysis

This interactive map displays detailed information on park quality, proximity to parks, and racial demographics within the City of Takoma Park.

### Demographic Map

Using American Community Survey (ACS) data, this map displays demographic data for the City of Takoma Park. At a census block group level, the map includes percentage of people of color, youth, elderly, disable, households below the poverty line, and households with no vehicle.

### CDC Social Vulnerability Maps (Montgomery County & Takoma Park)

This series of maps from the CDC provides data on indices and factors contributing to social vulnerability in Takoma Park. This resource includes data on social vulnerability index, formal education attainment, single parent households, households with more people than rooms, percent of people in poverty, and more.

### MCAAtlas (Montgomery County – M-NCPPC)

This interactive map tool provides a wealth of information for each user by providing access to a variety of layers.

### Maryland DNR Park Equity Map

This interactive map is a decision-support tool that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, partner agencies, and other stakeholders can use to determine which areas in the State are in need of new park space and which communities may be currently underserved or underutilized by existing park space. This tool allows Takoma Park stakeholders to put their needs and opportunities into a state level context.



### Montgomery County Pedestrian Level of Comfort Map

Pedestrian Level of Comfort (PLOC) was developed by the Montgomery County Planning Department together with Toole Design Group to quantify how comfortable people feel when they walk in certain traffic conditions. The PLOC analysis assigns a comfort level to pathways and crossings based on factors such as traffic speed, number of lanes, and whether there is a buffer between a pathway and the street.

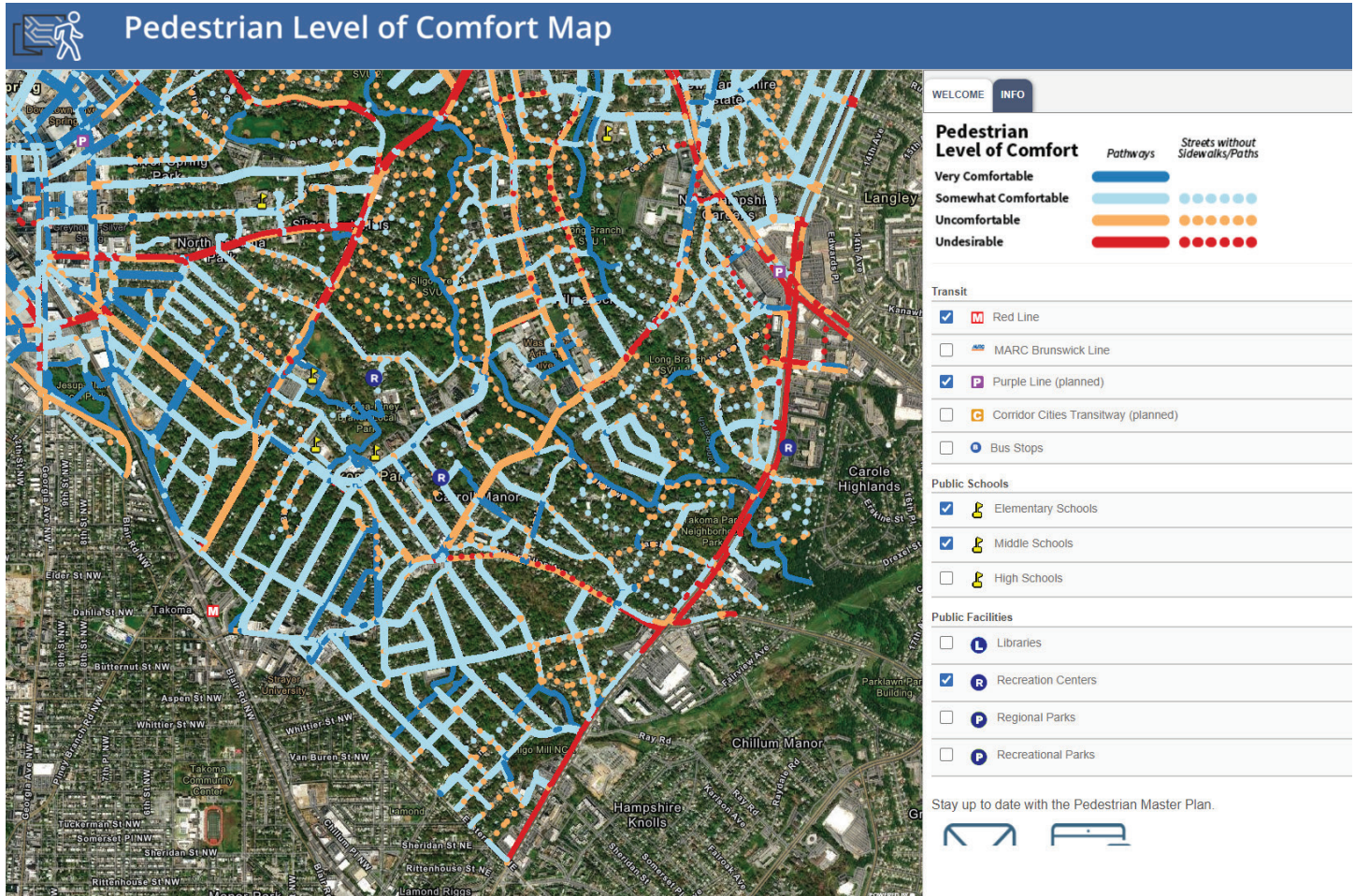


Figure 21. Montgomery County Pedestrian Level of Comfort Map

### Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Survey on Parks, Trails, Open Space, and Recreation Priorities in Prince George’s County

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George’s County completed a Needs Assessment survey in January of 2022 to help establish priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services within Prince George’s County. Over 1,500 respondents provided feedback ranging from how they use our facilities to what types of programs and services are important. Key findings included that the county has high park usage compared to other communities, high participation in recreational activities, and overall satisfaction with M-NCPPC value.

