



## Takoma Park City Council Meeting – October 18, 2023 Agenda Item 3

### **Work Session**

Review of the Public Review Draft of the Public Space Management Plan

### **Recommended Council Action**

Provide feedback to be incorporated into the Final Draft.

### **Context with Key Issues**

The Public Review Draft of the Public Space Management Plan has been available for review by the public since it was presented to the City Council on July 18, 2023. The draft represents the culmination of nearly five years of community engagement, staff and consultant analysis, and policy review in order to create a comprehensive approach to the management of the City's public space resources.

The purpose of the Public Space Management Plan is to develop a data-driven and equity-infused framework for managing public spaces around the City of Takoma Park. The need for a new plan to more comprehensively approach the management of public spaces first arose in a City Council discussion in 2015. After an update to the City's Streetscape Manual and some internal staff analysis, in Fall 2018 the City Council reviewed the draft scope of what has become known as the Public Space Management Plan. This kick-started an inventory of public parks around the city, and a more defined scope of work came before the Council in January 2020. Despite forward movement by City staff on internal analyses, including a community-wide online survey and a park proximity study, the plan development process stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staff turnover.

In Fall 2021, after a round of public outreach, Planning Division staff determined that a request for proposals for support to complete the Plan would yield the highest quality product. CHPlanning continued the plan development process, including additional rounds of community engagement that included hybrid in-person/virtual workshops, focus groups, and staff interviews. The final draft of the plan is currently in development. The contract for work with CHPlanning concluded in June 2023.

A Public Review Draft of the Plan was shared with the City Council in July 2023. Since then, the Plan has been re-publicized around the community utilizing flyers at community events, yard signs in public spaces in all six wards, and City print and digital communications.

The plan incorporates the feedback of hundreds of community stakeholders, collected in the following formats over the course of the plan's development:

- 6 small-format community workshops
- 2 large-format community meetings
- 4 focus groups
- 2 online surveys
- 4 city council presentations/meetings
- 1 yard sign campaign

During that public comment period, City staff received comment from city councilmembers, 17 community members, and one community organization. Feedback that was relevant to the scope of the Plan was considered by staff. The attached Proposed Public Comment Edits spreadsheet includes

the compiled list of suggested changes to the existing conditions and recommendations, excluding corrections, typos, and formatting errors.

Upon receiving the presentation, the City staff seek the direction of the full council about additional changes to the final draft of the Plan, to be presented at the voting session currently scheduled for October 25<sup>th</sup>. Upon adoption of the plan, City staff will immediately begin implementation of the Project Evaluation Scorecard and use the Plan as a direction for setting new work plan priorities. Any other policy, regulatory, or budgetary issues recommended by the Plan would necessarily come back before the City Council at a future date.

### **Council Priority**

Advancing a Community of Belonging; Fiscally Sustainable Government; Environmentally Sustainable Community; Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government; Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life

### **Environmental Considerations**

Adoption of the plan itself does not have a direct environmental impact. The Public Space Management Plan, and its policy recommendations, will have tangible impacts on how the city manages and prioritizes its public spaces, most of which are directly connected to environmental quality and community resilience. Any improvements or initiative that may occur as a result of the Public Space Management Plan will be evaluated on their environmental impacts and opportunities to address climate change. The impacts of the plan are limited to which recommendations are implemented and when. Considerations for climate resilience, stormwater, urban heat island issues, local biodiversity, equitable access to green space, and other environmental concerns were included in the development of the recommendations.

### **Fiscal Considerations**

There are no immediate costs associated with the adoption of this plan. Although many of the plan's recommendations require additional funds, the budget implications of the Public Space Management Plan are not yet known. The FY24 budget does not include dedicated funds to support the implementation of many of the recommendations within the report, which would require additional funds, staff time, and/or technical assistance from external consultants. As City Council initiatives and the budget priorities change over time, different components of this plan would be able to be implemented.

### **Racial Equity Considerations**

A core purpose of the Public Space Management Plan is to create a process that centers racial equity, as supported by analysis and data, in municipal decision-making processes regarding public space. The firm, CHPlanning, proposed a project that recognizes importance of these values and centered them in their process and product. City staff have continued to test and adapt the firm's draft plan into the format being reviewed today. When adopted, the Public Space Management Plan will influence how the City of Takoma Park operationalizes its racial justice priorities when presented with decisions about public space. These decisions will have yet-to-be-known racial justice impacts.

### **Attachments and Links**

- Public Space Management Plan – Public Review Draft (7/7/2023) [[PDF](#)]
- Amended Project Evaluation Scorecard
- Proposed Public Comment Edits Spreadsheet
- Draft Public Space Management Plan Resolution
- July 18, 2023 City Council Presentation
  - Meeting Agenda & Recording [[link](#)]
  - Presentation [[PDF](#)]

- Public Space Management Plan web page: <https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/housing-and-community-development/planning-and-community-development/public-space-management-plan/>

# Project Evaluation Scorecard

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

## Scoring Method

This tool helps to prioritize new public space projects by scoring them across eight categories of community benefit. Priority areas of project benefit are listed for each benefit category. Other benefit areas may be added if relevant. A project earns a score based on the combined scores of one (1), zero (0), or negative one (-1) assigned to each benefit area. Benefit areas with disproportionate benefit or negative impact may receive an amplified score, with justification by reviewers. 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. A project may not receive more than a three (3) for its raw score.

- 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

$$x \boxed{2} =$$

- 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

$$x \boxed{2} =$$

- 1 0 -1 Located in area where sizable proportion of benefit goes to low-income or minority residents and/or users
- 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 low-income and minority populations
- 1 0 -1 Generates economic opportunities for low-income/minority populations and/or minority-owned businesses
- 1 0 -1 Other:

### Sustainability Improves environmental quality

$$x \boxed{2} =$$

- 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:

**Benefits Categories (continued..)**

Score up to 3      Multiplier      Weighted Score

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

x 1 =

- 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 =

- 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 =

- 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 =

- 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 =

- 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)

## Project Evaluation Scorecard Justification Narrative

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

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]*

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ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

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

The following suggestions were received in response to the Public Review Draft of the Public Space Management Plan after it was publicly shared at the City Council presentation on July 19, 2023.

#	Suggested Addition/Change	Staff Response	Section
1	Add an existing context conditions section relating to stormwater systems	Staff <b>recommends adding additional clarifying language</b> to the "Greening Public Space" section on p. 45 that expands on current stormwater management practices, including the new Stormwater Resiliency Study from the Public Works Department.	Existing Conditions
2	Add an existing context conditions section relating to tree canopy	Staff <b>recommends adding additional clarifying language</b> to the "Greening Public Space" section on p. 45 that expands on current urban forest management practices, including the new Urban Forest Master Plan from the Public Works Department.	Existing Conditions
3	Add an existing context conditions section relating to traffic patterns	Staff <b>recommends adding additional clarifying language</b> to the "Public Streets and Roadways" section on p. 33 that expands on the County and State analyses of crash patterns in the City.	Existing Conditions
4	Add an existing context conditions section relating to education/signage (history, environment)	Staff <b>recommends adding an additional section</b> to the Existing Conditions titled "Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage" to provide background context on the existing signage policies and practices in public space, in support of Recommendation 3.3.	Existing Conditions
5	Create clearer connections to the three guiding principles within the following sections: Paper Streets, Streetlights, Public Art, Greening Public Space, and Permits/Processes.	Staff <b>recommends adding additional clarifying language</b> to the "Paper Streets", "Streetlights", "Public Art", and "Greening Public Space" section on p. 45 that expands on current stormwater management practices, including the new Stormwater Resiliency Study from the Public Works Department.	Existing Conditions
6	"The Community Engagement, SWOT Analysis, Strategies and Case Studies sections are...are confusing, often duplicative, and simply add little value. They should be eliminated."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend removing the listed sections, with the exception of the "Strategies" section.</b> These sections summarize the work conducted by the consulting team. They exist in the plan document body and appendices as supplemental resources for readers who are interested to learn more about those processes and ideas. However, the Strategies section represents examples from previous drafts of the Plan, which decreases the utility of the section.	Existing Conditions
7	"Rec 3.7: Any "Inventory existing desire line paths and trails" should be limited to public property. Areas with paths and trails on private property should be loosely identified by area, and then, in areas where those paths overlap with the City's natural resources, more discussion about existing paths and trails can take place."	Staff <b>recommend adjusting the text</b> of Recommendation 3.7 to the following: "Inventory existing desire line paths and trails on public land."	Recommendations
8	In response to the collective comments received about the Project Evaluation Scorecard, an amended version of the scorecard has been included in the materials for the City Council work session. Adjustments primarily reflect a wish to be able to account for circumstances that might work against a project's weighted score, adjustments to some of the sub-criteria for different categories, and the needs for a justification document.		Project Evaluation Scorecard

The following suggestions were received in response to the Public Review Draft of the Public Space Management Plan after it was publicly shared at the City Council presentation on July 19, 2023.

#	Suggested Addition/Change	Staff Response	Section
9	Add an existing context conditions section relating to watershed and drainage areas	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding a separate section</b> about watershed dynamics and conservation. Although the City's watershed is both a part of and impacts public spaces, the addition of background information does not enhance the analysis of any of the existing recommendations in the plan. Additional analysis of the watershed and drainage areas is already a component of the Stormwater Resiliency Study underway by the Department of Public Works.	Existing Conditions
10	existing context conditions section relating to CBO infrastructure (social resilience)	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding a separate section</b> about civic infrastructure, civil society, or community-based organization infrastructure. The scale of the task to quantify and describe the wide range of community groups, organizations, and initiatives that intersect with public space expands beyond the staffing and funding capacity of this study. The proposed addition of such a section does not provide direct support to any recommendations that is not covered in other parts of the Plan documents.	Existing Conditions
11	Include mapping and analysis that includes nearby Non-Takoma Park Public Space.	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding a new mapping analysis</b> of public spaces outside fo the City's boundary. Staff agree that this would be an interesting set of data to see; however, this was not included in the analysis conducted by the City in the past or by the consulting firm during the course of this project. Its inclusion would require funding for external GIS technical assistance. Staff feel that the cost and time delay associated with the addition would outweigh the benefit of having that analysis as a reference point.	Existing Conditions
12	Add recommendaion: "Increase native plants through incentivizing homeowners to plant native gardens in ROW strips"	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . Native and/or climate-adapted plants are already prioritized in the City's planting practices. The green buffers/tree lawn space is defined as being a utility space (e.g. people getting in and out of cars, clear sight lines, and sidewalk clearance etc.) It is also a more challenging space to grow in because of road salt/sediment, compacted soil, dog urination, and reflected heat. It is not clear to staff that new emphasis placed on these areas would have any additional ecological benefit from growing natives on the house side of the sidewalk. The City Council may choose to set up a program and allocate funding to provide incentives to homeowners for native plantings if they choose.	Recommendations
13	Add recommendaion: "Call for native plant gardens to be featured in as many public spaces as is feasible for the reasons given above. These kinds of gardens would show residents how small spaces can be used for maximum impact on improving quality of life and increasing biodiversity."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . Native and/or climate-adapted plants are already prioritized in the City's planting practices. This includes new plantings in city parks and greenspaces.	Recommendations
14	Add recommendaion: "Set a reasonable and measurable goal for acquisition, such as "X acres by 20XX", with an equity focus such as "...with at least X% in areas with lower access to public space"	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The Plan already proposes to identify funds to expand public spaces through the lens of equitable distribution of public park and green spaces (6.1). In the absence of substantial amounts of vacant or undeveloped land, setting goals for the acquisition of specific amounts of land by a certain date is unfeasible.	Recommendations



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#	Suggested Addition/Change	Staff Response	Section
15	Add recommendation: "Identify areas in the City pavement can be replaced with native trees and other native plants."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . An analysis of impervious surfaces around the City that would be well-suited to de-paving is outside the scope of the plan. The City Council may choose to set up a allocate funding and direct staff to conduct a study of eligible locations to replace pervious surfaces with plantings if they choose.	Recommendations
16	Add recommendation: "Organize its own volunteer staffed "weed warrior" program mirroring Montgomery County's program."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The administrative and staffing burden for a local version of the County's Weed Warrior Program would create redundancy with the Plan's recommendation to update the City's Right of Entry process for staff-directed community volunteers (5.2).	Recommendations
17	Add recommendation: "Consider implementing volunteer programs based on the "adopt a park" program of Clark County, WA."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The City already runs an "Adopt-a-Spot" program through the City's Code Enforcement Division.	Recommendations
18	Add recommendation: "Collect equity data on access to green spaces. While the PSMP emphasizes equitable access to public green spaces, the City lacks quantifiable data to establish a green space equity index in order to prioritize specific areas of the City for this intervention."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . Staff already have access to data that covers local demographic information and disparities in access to park spaces. Additional data collection and processes are already covered in Recommendations 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, and 4.3.	Recommendations
19	Add recommendation: "Create indices for how "success," based on the recommendations in the PSMP, can be measured by the City. See the suggestion under acquisition."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . See the Staff Response to #14.	Recommendations
20	Add recommendation: "mention a specific goal in the percentage of Maryland natives that need to be achieved in public greenspaces and then develop a system for collecting these data on a regular basis."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The logistics of this kind of inventory and reporting are extremely burdensome on staff time and resources, especially because it is unclear what such a recommendation would be studying.	Recommendations
21	Add recommendation: Repair the Gazebo at Takoma Urban Park	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . It is outside the jurisdiction of the City of Takoma Park. The Gazebo is the responsibility of the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).	Recommendations
22	Add recommendation: Prioritize the speed limit reduction to 20mph on identified high-need streets.	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The City already has the ability to lower to speed limits where need is identified, and speed limits reductions would be included as a tool that could be used as part of an updated traffic calming request process (3.2).	Recommendations
23	Add recommendation: Improve staff GIS analysis capabilities.	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . This point of feedback is already covered by Recommendation 4.3.	Recommendations
24	"Rec 1.2: The phrase "Monitor the allocation of public space investments and existing assets across the geographic distribution of the six city wards to help ensure that resources are directed to promote equity of access to quality public realm for all residents" is meaningless. Please recraft this."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The descriptive text that elaborates on this recommendation clarifies the intent and scope of it.	Recommendations

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#	Suggested Addition/Change	Staff Response	Section
25	"Rec 1.4: We all recognize that it takes money to make money in this business. Suggest that the city try and tap into the substantive amount of grants-making and writing expertise in this city by creating a City Support Corps of volunteers for large grant projects."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The city already maintains a volunteer Grants Committee to manage a number of the City's grantmaking and grant writing needs. The Housing & Community Development Department has a new full-time grants coordinator position, which will aid in fulfilling this recommendation. The obligations for most grant administration and management rely on staff time, resources, expertise and tenure in ways that make outsourcing to community volunteers unfeasible.	Recommendations
26	"Rec 5.1: The city should look beyond just funds generation and explore the creative use of other tools to help set aside and preserve land that might have natural resource or future recreational value. Specifically, the city should develop a strategy to handle and accept conservation easements in areas of potential future conservation/land acquisition interest. Right now, aside from getting into a fight with Montgomery County over a development, there's no way for homeowners to set aside portions of their property for conservation—let alone any incentive."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . This request falls outside of the jurisdiction of the City.	Recommendations
27	"Rec 5.2: I agree that a city-wide assessment is needed; a deep-dive into the natural resources encompassing all city-owned property is appropriate, but the city should also assess the city's natural resources as a whole, using existing data to identify, at a high-level, high-value assets—like, say, areas of high/low tree canopy coverage, broken/unbroken woodland areas, and existing streambed easements. That said, the precedent cited here as an example is WAY too ambitious. A lighter-lift, lower-resolution estimate—which can be done quickly, using data I know the city and county has on hand—can suffice to generate a high-level city-wide screen for areas of potential higher importance with regards to natural resources."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . The scope of the recommendation is not prescribed in the text of the recommendation. The City Council may choose to set up a program and allocate funding to for a natural resource inventory of any scale, if they choose.	Recommendations
28	"Rec 6.1: This PR effort should include a listing and descriptions of local parks and recreational opportunities in other municipalities that are within easy walking distance of city residents. Consider it as a PR courtesy for neighboring public space managers."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . All three neighboring jurisdictions to Takoma Park publicize their own public space amenities and programs on websites of their own. The administrative burden for Takoma Park staff to monitor and publicize all of the neighboring park and recreational updates, events, and announcements is infeasible.	Recommendations
29	"Rec 6.5: This recommendation should be rejected. This was presented without discussion anywhere in the document. It's full of holes and needs a lot more justification in a thoughtful analytical section."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation</b> . It is not clear to which recommendation this comment refers; the writer is possibly drawing upon an outdated draft of the plan.	Recommendations

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#	Suggested Addition/Change	Staff Response	Section
30	"Rec 7.4: A focus on stormwater makes sense, but the city should also commit—potentially in conjunction with the natural resource assessment in Rec 5.2—to aligning with the county stream restoration efforts/funds to help restore streambeds. The highly-eroded creekbed between Ethan Allen and Woodland, for example, is an area that might be a good target for restoration and, via the restoration, it might resolve stormwater problems for residents on Elm Avenue who periodically face flooding challenges."	Staff <b>does NOT recommend adding this request as a recommendation.</b> The Department of Public Works's ongoing Stormwater Resiliency Study addresses the concerns raised in this comment, including on private properties.	Recommendations