

Introduced by:

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND**

**RESOLUTION 2023-x**

**ADOPTING THE COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park City Council is charged with setting policy, approving the budget and pursuing legislative changes in the best interests of the Takoma Park community; and

WHEREAS, the Council holds an annual “Council Retreat” in advance of the budget preparation process to discuss its policy and budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year and beyond; and

WHEREAS, this year’s retreat took place on January 30; and

WHEREAS, the Council further discussed its priorities at Council meetings on March 8, 15, and 22;

WHEREAS, the Council priorities which are established inform the development of the City Manager’s recommended budget and, more generally, indicate the strategic direction the Council intends to move the City during its term; and

WHEREAS, the Council reviewed and made changes to its 2021-2022 priorities document to reflect updated goals, strategies, and outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Council has indicated which of these priorities should be focused on in the upcoming fiscal year (Fiscal Year 2024); and

WHEREAS, these prioritized areas include:

- 1) 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;
- 2) Establish the City’s long-term fiscal sustainability strategy;
- 3) Hire and onboard a new City Manager;
- 4) Ensure that a range of safe, high quality, affordable and stable housing options are equitably available in neighborhoods throughout the community;
- 5) 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;

- 6) Climate Change Mitigation: Work towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035; and
- 7) Plan and prepare for development in the City and region while maintaining the special character and economic and racial diversity of Takoma Park including the Library and Community Center renovation, Recreation Center development, and Minor Master Plan finalization.

WHEREAS, the Council can revisit the priorities document as it deems necessary to make changes or adjustments; and

WHEREAS, the Council acknowledges that there are a number of major projects, initiatives, and ongoing activities which will take Council and staff time to complete, in addition to the above priorities, and which are identified in the priorities document; and

WHEREAS, many of the priorities and goals described in the Council priorities document will endure beyond calendar year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024, though strategies described in this resolution may change more quickly based on opportunities that may arise to achieve those goals, and

WHEREAS, the Council may take action on issues not listed in the priorities document based on urgent or exigent circumstances.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the City of Takoma Park formally adopts the Council Priorities attached hereto and incorporated by reference.

**ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND,  
THIS 22ND DAY OF MARCH, 2023.**

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter, CMC  
City Clerk

## **2021-2022 City Council Priorities**

### **Adopted by Resolution 2021-6**

#### **1. Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19 on the Community and City Operations**

- Reopen City functions using a phased approach to ensure a safe, deliberate return to normal operations; prepare a reopening plan that supports long-term financial resiliency and employee well-being, and incorporates lessons learned from the health crisis response.
- Ensure residents have access to the emergency assistance they need to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support our small businesses in weathering the economic downturn due to the pandemic so that they recover and thrive in the future.

#### **2. A Livable Community for All**

- Ensure that a range of safe, high quality, affordable, and stable housing options are equitably available in neighborhoods throughout the community.
- Identify the need for and explore the development of programs to address food insecurity in the community.
- Identify programming needs in the community and develop approaches to meet those needs, emphasizing youth, families, seniors, and residents who tend to face barriers to opportunities such as Black, Indigenous, and people of color, those with unsustainable lower-paying jobs, immigrants, and people with developmental disabilities.
- Defend our status as a Sanctuary City and maintain our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents.
- Improve transportation planning and outreach to create a safer and more racially equitable community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle occupants.
- Further the City's racial equity work.

#### **3. Fiscally Sustainable Government**

- Explore and advocate at county and state levels for expanded funding flexibility for municipalities beyond property taxes and continue to advocate for long-term solutions to tax duplication.
- Explore ways to provide property tax adjustments to residents in need, advocate at county and state levels for changes in property taxes to assist residents in need, and work for a more equitable property tax assessment system.
- Continue to build on improvements in the budget process, presentation of budget information, and communication to residents.
- Adopt sustainable investment and banking policy and practices.
- Maintain adequate reserves in the various City reserve funds for long-term fiscal sustainability.

#### **4. Environmentally Sustainable Community**

- Climate Change Mitigation: Work towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.
- Climate Change Resilience: Improve our ability to adapt and be resilient to climate change.
- Manage Our Community's Natural Resources Sustainably: Protect, maintain, and improve the health of our urban forest, natural resources, and water quality, with an emphasis on equity.

#### **5. Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government**

- Hire and onboard a new City Manager.
- Improve 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.
- Improve policies and processes to enhance resident interaction with the City government, including requests for government services, complaint systems, and code enforcement.
- Put in place improvements and review the overall structure and purpose of existing Council-appointed committees.
- 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.
- Improve service delivery and reduce administrative burden by updating internal policies, IT infrastructure, and software.

#### **6. Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life**

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

## **Priorities, Goals and Strategies**

### **1. Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19 on the Community and City Operations**

**Goal:** Reopen City functions using a phased approach to ensure a safe, deliberate return to normal operations; prepare a reopening plan that supports long-term financial resiliency and employee well-being, and incorporates lessons learned from the health crisis response.

**Strategies:**

- Analyze and plan for potential budgetary impacts of COVID-19 on City finances now and in the future.
- Encourage permanent changes in City functions, such as hybrid Zoom and in-person meetings that are practical beyond the crisis period.

**Desired Outcome:**

- Continuity of operations through all crisis phases, improved operations in compliance with safety protocols, and workforce resiliency.

**Goal:** Ensure residents have access to emergency assistance they need to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Strategies:**

- Allocate COVID- 19 Relief Funds to programs that ensure residents have access to emergency assistance they need in terms of food, housing, health care, childcare and other needs.
- Explore how best to address housing needs due to the impact of COVID-19, with a focus on residents who may face evictions or foreclosures, landlords, and condo communities.
- Support residents unemployed due to the pandemic to obtain new employment through emergency workforce development programs and technical assistance.
- Coordinate with state, county, and nonprofit stakeholders to encourage the availability of COVID-19 testing and vaccination locations in the City for residents to access.
- Coordinate with local nonprofits and community groups providing emergency food distributions to residents in the City.

**Desired Outcome:** Residents have access to the services and programs they need to stay healthy, in their homes, and working during the pandemic.

**Goal:** Support our small businesses in weathering the economic downturn due to the pandemic so that they recover and thrive in the future

**Strategies:**

- Provide financial assistance through the COVID-19 Relief Fund to support small businesses experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic.
- Offer technical assistance to businesses to ensure that they are able to maintain the health and safety of their employees and patrons during the pandemic.
- Coordinate with state, county, and nonprofit stakeholders to encourage the availability of COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for frontline and essential workers in the City.

**Desired Outcome:** Businesses have access to the services and programs they need to stay in business to ensure the health and safety of their employees and patrons.

## **2. A Livable Community for All**

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

**Strategies:**

- Implement the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan. Specifically:
  - Continue to build partnerships with nonprofits, foundations, financial institutions, Montgomery County, the State of Maryland, 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 Downpayment Assistance Program aimed at expanding eligibility.
  - Develop a formal policy and criteria regarding the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program (PILOTS).
  - Continue collaboration and coordination of the City's housing and sustainability staff on key projects to meet Council goals.
- Review staffing levels necessary to implement the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan, and examine ways to leverage cross-departmental collaboration among housing and sustainability staff to meet Council housing and sustainability goals.

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

**Goal:** Identify the need for and explore the development of programs to address food insecurity in the community.

**Strategy:** Identify advocates, nonprofits, and community groups that provide food to residents and convene partners, such as the iSchool/iConsultancy team at the University of MD, to explore ways to address food insecurity in the City.

**Desired Outcome:** Identify and explore the feasibility of programs and systems to address ongoing food insecurity in the community.

**Goal:** Identify 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, those with unsustainable lower-paying jobs, immigrants, and people with developmental disabilities.

**Strategies:**

- Utilize resident survey, staff and committee reports, program attendance, racial equity assessment tools, and other evaluative resources to determine where there may be existing gaps in program offerings and develop programs to close identified gaps.
- Improve equitable access to programming and services 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 and renters, who rarely engage with the City.
- Explore establishing a pilot Community Ambassador 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.

**Goal:** Defend our status as a Sanctuary City and maintain our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents.

**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 Ambassadors structures.
- 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 grow access to programming and information to meet the needs of immigrants and refugees.

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

**Strategies:**

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

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

**Goal:** Further the City's racial equity work.

**Strategies:**

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

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

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

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

### **3. Fiscally Sustainable Government**

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

**Strategies:**

- Continue efforts to more fully address county tax duplication issues.

- Increase advocacy and lobbying activities.

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

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

**Strategies:**

- Explore 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 property assessment process to ensure an equitable approach.
- Promote economic development to increase the tax base, consistent with the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan.

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

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

**Strategy:** Consider, in the current budget cycle and in future years, innovative budget processes to identify ways to present summary as well as detailed budget information and continue to provide opportunities for resident feedback with an emphasis on equitable access and outreach.

**Desired Outcomes:** Continued work toward greater clarity and transparency in the budget process and increased resident understanding of the City budget.

**Goal:** Adopt sustainable investment and banking policy and practices.

**Strategy:** Identify and work with consultant to determine potential next steps in adopting sustainable investment and banking policies and practices, taking into account the concerns raised by the Nuclear Free Committee about Truist Bank and considering required City staff resources and financial cost to implement.

**Desired Outcome:** Work to align the City's banking and investments with the community's social responsibility values.

**Goal:** Maintain adequate reserves in the various City reserve funds for long-term fiscal sustainability.

**Strategy:** Similar to having a City policy on the appropriate level of unassigned reserves that should be maintained, establish policies for the appropriate level of reserves in the

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.

**Desired Outcome:** Fiscal sustainability for key services.

## 4. Environmentally Sustainable Community

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

**Strategies:**

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

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

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

**Strategies:**

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

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

**Goal:** Manage our Community's Natural Resources Sustainably: Protect, maintain, and improve the health of our urban forest, natural resources, and water quality, with an emphasis on equity.

**Strategies:**

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

**Outcome:** No net loss of urban forest canopy citywide, more equitably distributed tree canopy over time, 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. Cooperation with county and state where applicable.
- Climate Action Framework strategy development and implementation
- City sustainability programs and initiatives
- Implement additional Sustainable Maryland Certified goals
- Implement urban forest program and revised tree ordinance provisions
- Green stormwater management projects to meet State and Federal mandates for 2025

## **5. Engaged, Responsive, Service-Oriented Government**

**Goal:** Hire and onboard a new City Manager.

**Strategies:**

- Conduct a successful search with community input and the assistance of a consultant.
- Successfully onboard the new City Manager and work together to develop further plans and priorities, including adjusting to post-COVID near-term realities and 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.

**Goal:** Improve 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 website and social media tools to increase public engagement and more easily and effectively share information.
- Review lessons learned from recent community engagement efforts and investigate new ways to enhance and put in place new initiatives to improve public input, engagement, and collaboration.
- Investigate ways to improve accessibility of community meetings especially for residents whose dominant language is not English, those who are deaf, and others who may face barriers to engagement with the City government.

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

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

**Strategies:**

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

**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.

**Goal:** Put in place improvements and review overall structure and purpose of existing Council-appointed committees.

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

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

**Goal:** 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.

**Strategy:** Review, explore, and put in place 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.

**Goal:** Improve service delivery and reduce administrative burden by updating internal policies, IT infrastructure and software.

**Strategy:** Assess resources required to update the City's systems. Support the purchase of tools to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration.

**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:**

- Redistricting
- Elections
- Council Compensation

## **6. Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life**

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

**Strategies:**

- Implement the Housing and Economic Development Strategic Plan. Specifically:
  - Provide support for small businesses especially those impacted by Purple Line construction.
  - Increase workforce development programs and assistance.
  - 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.

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

**Goal:** Redevelop the Takoma Park Recreation Center.

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

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

**Major projects, initiatives and ongoing activities:**

- Library Renovation
- Takoma Junction Development
- Purple Line Construction
- Economic development along New Hampshire Ave
- Washington Adventist Hospital Campus
- Montgomery College Math Science Building construction
- Continue to advocate for renovations at Piney Branch Elementary School and increased public school facilities in the City or nearby
- Review selected county policies that support City housing, equity and sustainability goals as they are proposed