

# City Council Priorities 2023-2025

## I. Advancing a Community of Belonging

- 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.
- Further the City's racial equity work.
- 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, immigrants, and people with developmental disabilities.
- 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.

## II. Fiscally Sustainable Government

- Explore expanding City revenue options to identify long-term solutions necessary to diversify the City's revenue streams.
- Explore ways to provide a more equitable property tax assessment system including providing property tax adjustments to residents in need.
- Continue to build on improvements in the budget process, presentation of budget information, and communication to residents.
- Establish the City's long-term fiscal sustainability strategy.

## III. Environmentally Sustainable Community

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

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

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

- Hire and onboard a new City Manager.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

- Ensure that a range of safe, high quality, affordable, green and energy efficient housing options are equitably available in neighborhoods throughout the community.
- Improve transportation planning and outreach to create a safer, more environmentally sustainable and more racially and economically equitable community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle occupants.
- Plan and prepare for development in the City and region while maintaining the special character and economic and racial diversity of Takoma Park.

## 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 is a social safety-net 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 taskforce 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. Consider 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.

**Desired Outcome**

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

**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 Plan](#)

**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, immigrants, and people with developmental 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 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.

**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 Ambassadors 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. 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.
- Build on recommendations from City Organizational Assessment and explore cost-saving alternatives to program 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](#)

- II. 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 City'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

**III. 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 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 Outcomes**

- 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](#)

**IV. Establish the City's long-term fiscal sustainability strategy.**

**Strategy**

- Review City policy on the appropriate level of unassigned reserves that should be maintained and determine whether updates are needed.
- Establish policies for the appropriate level of reserves in 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 the 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 the concerns raised by the Nuclear Free Committee about Truist Bank, City staff resources, 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](#)



## 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 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 planning 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 Outcomes**

- 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](#)
- [Resilience and Adaptation Memo](#)

### ***III. Manage our Community's Natural Resources Sustainably: Protect, maintain, and improve the health of our urban forest and ecosystems, 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.
- 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.
- Explore viability of using City tree funds to motivate and enable lower income property owners or those with higher numbers of trees to better maintain tree or grove health.
- Conduct innovative, culturally appropriate environmental outreach and education to all residents in ways that connect with issues relevant to them, such as litter's effect on water quality.
- Adopt and implement the Public Space Management Plan with 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, including leveraging volunteer efforts and partnerships.

#### **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

### ***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.***

### **Strategy**

- 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.***

**Strategy**

- 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 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 Downpayment 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 of all races, ethnicities, and varying income levels and of all races, and ethnicities.

### **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 Downpayment Assistance Program](#)
- Review selected county policies that support City housing, equity and sustainability goals.

- II. Improve transportation planning and outreach 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.