

PUBLIC COMMENT ON TAKOMA JUNCTION

2018 DATE	NAME	WARD*	COMMENT
4/18	Roger Schlegel	3	<p>I'm writing to raise a question about the protection of the Woodland Conservation Area located behind the parking lot on the City-owned property. I documented that this area was signed as a "Woodland Conservation Area" in 2011, and the sign was in place when the Takoma Junction Task Force submitted its report in 2012. I can find no record of this area having been changed in its designation, so I am assuming it is still a Woodland Conservation Area.</p> <p>The attached document provides the visual evidence of the signage, a timeline, and the related questions.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to this important question. To emphasize, NDC's Combined Site Plan indicates an intention to remove between 4,000 and 5,000 square feet of the wooded area for the footprint of the new building along with between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet for a bioretention area. Such a design would appear to conflict with the requirements of the "Woodland Conservation Area."</p> <p>Sincerely, Roger Schlegel ++++++ (Attachment)</p>
4/18	Mica Bevington	?	<p>I'm starting to put my head around the Junction development, and I want you to know how strongly our family supports this. It gives my middle school aged kids a place to walk to with friends, and it gives my husband and i a meeting place with friends, as well as the walkable coop. I want to ensure you know that the Bevington family on Hilton really supports the smart development of the area.</p> <p>I cannot attend the meeting next week as I'll be on a work trip. PLEASE image me standing there in support! :)</p> <p>That said, I'm very concerned about what happens to the hospital space. As soon as this vote passes, I'd love to learn more about the town's efforts around the hospital space.</p> <p>Sincerely, Mica Bevington</p>

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4/18	Andrew Strongin	3	<p>Dear Neighbors,</p> <p>It is welcome news that the City has asked the traffic consultants to account for other pending developments in their study of the likely impacts of the NDC development on the Junction. That is a good start, but that is not enough. There is more work to be done. Please read below re: additional matters of concern that I've raised with Mayor Stewart, Ward 3 Rep Kostiuk, and City Manager Ludlow that really do require community engagement. If we don't make ourselves heard now, it will soon be too late.</p> <p>My full email is set forth below, but for those in a hurry, here's the gist:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demand the City to fix the Junction before adding to the problem with more development. The Council seems to think State Highway will bail us out if we create a traffic safety problem of sufficient magnitude, but that is a dangerous gamble. 2. Ask the City Council to delay its development schedule to permit adequate time for community discussion of the traffic studies to be released this coming Monday, April 23, for which we've waited years. Presently, the Council is expected to debate the entirety of the NDC proposal on May 2, and to vote on May 9. That is not enough time for consideration of highly detailed, complex traffic studies with which many residents are unfamiliar. 3. Ask the City to hold a Town Hall meeting allowing for open dialogue between residents and the Council for substantive discussion of the traffic/safety impacts of the NDC proposal. The three-minute blocks of time where residents talk at an impassive Council is not sufficient. <p>Regards, Andrew Strongin 7002 Poplar Ave astrongin@... -----</p>

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	Andrew Stongin (cont'd)		<p>Kate, et al.,</p> <p>Thank you, I very much appreciate inclusion of the JNA proposal in the traffic consultants' considerations. Still, time remains quite compressed. Hopefully, opportunity will be provided for the Council and Traffic Consultants to take questions from residents, and for residents to address any specific concerns to the City. Perhaps a town hall-type setting where there can be real dialogue between questioners and our elected representatives. I know Kacy has a couple planned for Ward 3 residents, which I applaud, but the three-minute blocks where we talk at the Council en masse really is not adequate for an issue of this magnitude.</p> <p>If this feels to the Council like plowing old ground, please recall that many of us—including those who invite development in our commercial areas—have been urging the Council NOT to increase traffic at the Junction without FIRST fixing the Junction. As you know, many of us believe that the status quo is untenable, and expect the traffic studies to do nothing more than confirm the obvious: adding a car magnet to the middle of the Junction, and perhaps another on Elm, the parallel neighborhood cut-through-- will only make it worse.</p> <p>Some in the City government apparently believe that SHA will rescue us from ourselves if we develop in reverse; by overwhelming the Junction, SHA will have to bail us out. I have yet to see anything to suggest that SHA in fact will do that, and good reason to believe that SHA's mission is not to rescue us from ourselves, much less to fix the intersections in a way that will preserve the Takoma we want. If I'm correct, SHA, at best, will get us intersections that pass adequate facilities tests; since when, I ask you to consider, has "adequate" been good enough for Takoma?</p> <p>As things stand, the traffic studies will serve as the foci of the debate lying ahead and—hopefully, I'm wrong—distract from the essential question the City should be asking: Is this the Takoma we want, regardless of whether NDC's traffic consultant can massage the numbers to pass minimum standards. If something is amiss regarding the traffic studies, there is very little time afforded to address that with the Council, or to organize the community in the event the Council is unresponsive or unconcerned. I've heard all of you say, at one time or another, that Takoma is a special place, not some cookie-cutter, bedroom, commuter community; yet, these two pending projects, alone and together, stand to continue to turn us into an alimentary canal for cut-through traffic and resulting congestion that necessarily will negatively impact the livability of Takoma. If adequate time is not provided to debate this issue, there will be an uproar, and justifiably so.</p> <p>I know some will say I continue to jump the gun with some of these concerns, but that's a result of compressed schedules that do not pay adequate fealty to the special nature of Takoma Park. I didn't move here for lack of resources to buy in Bethesda; I grew up over there, and moved her in 1992 specifically to get away from Bethesda. The NDC plan looks a LOT like Bethesda Ave., and I don't say that in a good way, especially with NDC refusing to identify its prospective anchor tenants whom, if I have my guess based on predicted rents, will look more like those found on Bethesda Ave., than those found on Laurel Ave. or across the street from the Co-op. I've heard NDC say that it has not identified anchor tenants, but that doesn't pass the smell test. We've already effectively replaced La Mano with Starbucks, just for example; what's next?</p> <p>Andrew Strongin</p>
4/18	Matthew Blumin	3	<p>I am a relatively new homeowner on Poplar Ave. (7114), and I just wanted to weigh in (if that's OK?) that I basically agree with all of the below. I find these issues very tricky, because I both want development at the junction and the increased diversity in our neighborhood that CentroNia will bring. I just want to make sure it all happens responsibly, and right now, from what I can tell, both of these projects are zooming through in ways that will make our block extremely congested due to pressure on both sides--the timing is just very bad if not done perfectly. It all is just very scary and seems rushed and will harm us and our entire neighborhood if not done correctly.</p> <p>Thanks, Matt</p>

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4/18	Carter Dougherty	1	<p>If we're going to talk about public space as part of the Takoma Junction revitalization, I suggest we start with some numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NDC is proposing that about 2700 square feet of public space, but conceivably north of 3000 square feet, I am told. That's more than 10 percent of the total retail square footage. ● B.Y. Morrison, aka the under-utilized Takoma Junction is a little less than 2100 square feet. ● The red-brick part of the Takoma Park gazebo on Carroll Ave. across from Roscoe's pizzeria is about 2400 square feet. <p>So to be clear, this proposed design would be larger what is arguably the main public space in Takoma Park -- indeed in many small towns around the United States -- the gazebo. That really surprised me; examining the renderings did not drive that home, for me at least. I hope the Council will consider this fact highly. That seems to be a pretty good start.</p> <p>If anyone argues that there should be more public space carved out on a property that is on long-term lease to a private party, I'm all ears. I'm not saying there's no argument, but I haven't heard one beyond, "I'd like more public space."</p> <p>There's also a fair case to be made that we should consider the retail space in the proposed site plan as a contribution to the public realm, even if it's not technically public. My reasoning is provided by the neighboring Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op.</p> <p>We have heard much over the last few years of debate that the Co-op is a community resource, and I don't think that's because of the few picnic tables outside the Co-op, most of which seem to be on the city property next door.</p> <p>It's because people run into each other there, interact with people from around Takoma Park, and generally make merry and mischief there. (I've done a surprising amount of advocacy for my views of the Takoma Junction redevelopment on Co-op property, even as I am handed leaflets arguing for a different position.)</p> <p>The "public space" that's actually on Co-op property is about 15 by 20 feet -- that's only 300 square feet. Right now it's being displaced by the products of springtime: mulch, soil, and, I am guess, vegetable seedlings. Lest we apply double standards, either the new development is making a contribution to public space via its retail space OR the Co-op should be required to dedicate a similar proportion of its outside space to public use. Talking to various Takoma Parkers I did come across one innovative idea: a rentable space in the development. It's worth some thought. Maybe that's something NDC can explore with possible tenants. Better usage of the roof would be nice, though I understand there are entry/exit issues with a space like that.</p> <p>In any case, we're on the right track. Onward.</p>

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4/18	Melissa Ferguson	?	<p>As a long-time resident of the Takoma Park/Silver Spring area, and a member of the TPSS co-op for nearly 20 years, I am greatly concerned that the plans to develop the parking lot adjacent the co-op are not taking into consideration the space needed for food delivery, the pick-up of trash and recycling, or co-op customers' access to vehicles while carrying groceries and/or pushing carts. I remember when the co-op moved to Takoma Junction and I know that ever since, the co-op has been the anchor business in that section of downtown. Please make sure you consider all the needs that the parking lot serves for the co-op as you choose development plans.</p> <p>Thank you very much for your time and consideration for the viability of this important community resource. The co-op isn't just a food store - it is community, and supports our best intentions for the planet.</p> <p>Sincerely, Melissa E. Ferguson</p>
4/18	Dennis Huffman	3	<p>I am writing to express my disappointment with plans for Takoma Junction and the surrounding area – my neighborhood. Everything I have seen appears to be taking bad situations and making them worse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ The Co-op needs more space: Let’s hem it in. ☒ Traffic is congested: Let’s add density and narrow the main thoroughfare. ☒ Large commercial vehicles don’t have space to maneuver and make deliveries: Let’s move that activity into the street. ☒ Neighborhood streets (Elm, Columbia) are narrow and challenging during rush hour: Let’s force more commuters to cut through those neighborhoods in frustration. <p>I thought our leaders could be trusted to exercise common sense and act for the long-term good of the community. I no longer feel that way., but there are some things you could do to turn this around.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Traffic at the Junction has been a mess forever. Develop an overall traffic plan for the area BEFORE approving this project. ☒ Include in those plans projected traffic related to the John Nevins Andrews site. ☒ Take seriously the need for not just the Co-op but all of the business in the plan to have safe and efficient delivery area. <p>Thank you for your attention to this.</p>

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4/18	Paul Huebner	3	<p>Thanks for your commitment shown during the long late hours at the last City Council meeting. Kudos also on your two City initiatives on protecting women against domestic violence by restricting guns in those homes and your work on the development of a much needed child care facility.</p> <p>Today I write to you about the City’s plans for Takoma Junction. I attempted to speak with you at the Saturday, April 7th discussion but you were inundated with residents.</p> <p>I fervently hope you took notice of City residents’ reactions at the April 11th Council Meeting.</p> <p>Thirty to thirty-five residents from all over the City testified in opposition to the latest site plan, while only two spoke in favor and one seemed on the fence. These are our neighbors and tax-paying residents who are every bit as busy as the purported supporters of the existing development plan. We are the people who have paid the taxes and supported the policies that have made Takoma Park a special place.</p> <p>Yet it seems that the City Council has neglected the Takoma Junction Task Force recommendations and has forgotten multiple, different written commitments to put the Food Co-op at the top of the priority list. Here are the ways :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The City’s current Takoma Junction development plan allows for a new anchor tenant (while almost all residents understood the anchor tenant was to be the Co-op) -The lay-by will choke off the Co-op and further endanger public safety at that intersection (Just yesterday a Budget Truck was parked in the Carroll Ave./Takoma Junction bus stop, forcing the Ride-On bus to stop in the northbound lane, with traffic behind the bus going around it into the oncoming lane and with the Ride-on blocking the crosswalk) -The current plan provides no realistic adequate room for trash storage or dumpster access -Parking proposed would be considerably less than we have now and more expensive -The plan ignores the wishes of a vast majority of residents for green space (the slope is not usable green space) <p>What does the Food Co-op do for the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It serves the needs of local residents from all around the town -It draws many customers from surrounding areas -It pays decent wages and provides health care coverage for its staff -It employs the most diverse staff in the City -It supplies locally grown, organic food <p>I would like to ask you to support the residents of the City of Takoma Park in requiring NDC to change their current development plans for the site so that we have a realistic plan that re-focuses on providing a space that meets the communities’ wishes & needs, as well as those of any site tenants, most especially the Food Co-op.</p> <p>Thank you, Paul Huebner Carroll Avenue – Ward 3</p>

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4/18	Susan Huffmn	3	<p>Dear Mayor Stewart and Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I feel that I have allowed your plans for Takoma Junction to go too long without addressing them. I believed that in the long run you would have our best interests in mind, and that you would reverse many of the NDC plans on our behalf. Unbelievably however you have forged ahead and I can now envision this monstrosity becoming reality.</p> <p>For 21 years I drove to work taking Hickory Avenue, Columbia Avenue and Sycamore Avenue to turn onto Rt. 410. Frequently cars rushed to John Nevins School, and I had to drive carefully along narrow roads pulling aside to let harried parents get their children to school on time. And then there are people who use Columbia to avoid 410 and I have pulled aside for them too. I can't imagine what traffic will be like with parents dropping children off at John Nevins and more people avoiding Takoma Junction. I suppose more people will use Elm Street which can also be fairly hazardous during rush hour. I simple can't imagine how the large number of people driving to Takoma Junction won't make all local and narrow roads hazardous to drive. My husband and I were members of the Coop when it was in Silver Spring, and we shop there regularly. What will the Coop be like without dedicated nearby parking? I love the fact that I can pull up and rush in. This was one of the reasons we chose to live on Montgomery Avenue.</p> <p>And we all know how hard it already is to access stores at Takoma Junction without holding up traffic. Why would you bring even more traffic into an already congested intersection?</p> <p>And how will months of massive construction make it all worth it? I see no way in which this development will enhance my life as a resident and see only anger and resentment in my future. Please do what is right and safe and hold off on your plans.</p> <p>Thank you, Susan Huffmn</p>
4/18	Ian MacNairn	2	<p>I support the proposal for commercial development at Takoma Junction, next to the coop at Carroll and Ethan Allen intersection.</p> <p>Thank you, Ian MacNairn</p>

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4/18	Jeffrey Trunzo	3	<p>I support NDC/Streetsense’s efforts to create useful and attractive public space at Takoma Junction, and endorse their efforts to make the redevelopment as sustainable as possible. Indeed, replacing the asphalt parking lot with a useful and sustainable building, and creating appealing public space out front, will provide many more opportunities for Takoma Park residents to consider walking rather than driving the short distances from their home to Takoma Junction. It will also create a safe and attractive pedestrian connection between our neighborhoods and other destinations such as Old Town, Metro, and schools.</p> <p>Regarding the public space, the potential for an art installation on the front of the building is a very compelling component for creating a sense of place. I regret that so little of the roof is being activated, and that none of the roof will be available for event space. It seems a terrible loss of opportunity for the community.</p> <p>I am also very confused about why the discussion of public space and sustainability is one-sided. How do we support the Co-ops plans, if any, for their public spaces at the front, side and rear elevations of the Turner building? The Co-op management has not provided any transparency about a vision to adapt to the tremendous design opportunity of the street-scape improvement that is going to occur here. Specifically, what does the Co-op plan to do with their landlord to ‘mesh’ with the sidewalk and new crosswalk? Will they assent to relocating their walkway along the front of the building to unify with the shopping district and facilitate their customers’ access to the new parking deck? Will the Co-op relocate their entrance and check-outs to the front of the building to accommodate shoppers arriving from either direction?</p> <p>How does the Co-op propose to improve the front façade to be more appealing? What community uses do they have planned for their space between the curb and the storefront? What will their green space look like and will it follow the new landscape design language? What budget have the Turner’s committed to regarding redevelopment improvements around their building? These details about public space are necessary, and overdue, and I am not aware of any proposals from the Co-op or information from the Turner family for community review and comment.</p> <p>Regarding sustainability, the core concepts are in the redevelopment proposals: preserving the wooded slope and improving the plant materials and attractiveness, LEED certification of the new building, a below-grade parking deck, separation of the pedestrians from the roadway with a well-designed and dense green buffer space, and a green roof to slow rain water run-off. The new building should not be a surface parking lot. I urge the City to encourage NDC/Streetsense to amplify their plans with additional incremental sustainability improvements, for instance, an exploration of solar generation of electricity and different levels of LEED certification. I also encourage the City to consider the development of more design concepts for the wooded slope, for instance, can invasive plants be removed and replaced with native plants that will support pollinators? Can a storm water management feature that would maximize the absorption of storm water be located on site, and possibly present a</p>

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	Jeffrey Trunzo (cont'd)		<p>visually attractive cascade on the wooded slope? We need to emphasize the importance of the new tree canopy in the front of the building along the roadway, and encourage the selection of suitable tree species that will provide both architectural beauty and durability, and eventually provide a substantial amount of shade over the public space. By including a few signs explaining the redeveloped area's new sustainability features, the area could be both beautiful and useful to educate school children and the public about the importance of environmentally sensitive practices.</p> <p>My main sustainability concern is the lack of any information from the Co-op about their plans, if any, to increase their sustainability features. How is the Co-op planning to support the many more residents who will now be willing to walk rather than drive to a livelier Takoma Junction? How is the Turner building roof used now, and what do they plan for the roof in the future? What is the plan to address the unattractive rear elevation of the Turner building along Columbia Avenue? What are the Co-ops plans to reduce their CO-2 contribution in the future? How will the Co-op capture more sales from people who shop or work in the new spaces adjacent to their store? How will the Co-op leverage the new direct crosswalk across Carroll Avenue to encourage more shoppers from neighborhoods like Maple Avenue, formerly hesitant to cross the street, to begin using their store? I would like to see very detailed proposals from the Co-op for their sustainability plans relevant to the redevelopment.</p> <p>I encourage your efforts to ensure that redeveloped Takoma Junction provide usable public space and set the standard for sustainability for new construction in Takoma Park.</p> <p>Thank you! Jeffrey Trunzo</p>

*Ward is included if it was provided or can be looked up by address. NR denotes non-Takoma Park resident commenter. Question mark ? denotes not enough information provided. NA denotes that ward is not applicable