

PUBLIC COMMENT ON TAKOMA JUNCTION

2018 DATE	NAME	WARD*	COMMENT
5/14	Max Parness	2	<p>I wanted to write you to express my support for the proposed redevelopment at the Junction. I live less than a ten minute walk from the Junction. I think that what NDC has proposed will turn an ugly parking lot into a fun, walkable, sustainable neighborhood center, while generating much needed tax revenue. I pass through the junction M-F twice a day on the 12, 13, or 16 bus to the Metro. I know that traffic is already problematic, but I think the traffic studies show that there are solutions to that issue. And in any case, the impact of the Junction relative to all the traffic already passing through will be limited. I shop at the co-op a few times a month. It's unfortunate that the co-op has turned the redevelopment process into a discussion about the business practices and needs of the co-op, instead of what is good for Taking Park. I think the redevelopment and resulting additional business in the area will ultimately only benefit the co-op. It's hard for me to make it to city meetings weekday evenings because we have 3 month old baby. So, please consider this letter instead of in person testimony.</p> <p>Sincerely, Max</p>
5/15	Sara Collna	1	<p>As a proud Takoma Park resident and member of the TPSS Co-op for almost two decades, I STRONGLY support the City's initiative to transform the ugly parking lot built on garbage into a usable, integral part of our community. As we redevelop this precious city land, I find nothing about the status quo that is worth keeping— including the Co-op. I am a long-time member and frequent (large-family) shopper, but from my perspective, the location has always been a problem (yes, since 1998). I never let my children bike to the co-op, and even walking there has been a problem. I have observed many car accidents in front of the Co-op and of course have found the traffic to be a headache. There are MUCH better locations that would serve the Co-op (and the community) better. I find the notion of limiting the development of one of the last precious walkable parts of Takoma Park to accommodate large truck deliveries to be illogical (and ironic). I am delighted with the two-story building proposed but would prefer something larger, in keeping with the principals of smart growth. I live near Old Town and in the last twenty years, we have gained numerous large buildings as well as dozens of new businesses. We have more traffic, yes, but also more walkers and more delightful places to meet and enjoy our neighbors. Each of these changes was resisted by neighbors, and each development is imperfect because making a building financially profitable usually conflicts with other community needs. But our community is more vibrant than ever.</p>
5/15	Sara Collna (cont'd)		<p>Like most of my neighbors, I have remained silent during this community discussion in large part because I have observed so much anger from those who oppose the various proposals put forward. But please remember that while the angry are always most vocal, they are rarely the most plentiful. I am writing this now because I believe that if we let this opportunity slip away, the community will be ill-served with the status quo for many decades to come. I also want to let you know that I feel the junction development process has been well managed and the opportunity for community input extensive; no amount of time will create a community consensus so that cannot be the goal. It also seems to me that both our hard-working council and incredibly professional city staff have worked hard to move this forward in a manner that will meet the needs of the broader community. I am deeply grateful for your service to Takoma Park.</p> <p>Sara Collina</p>

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5/15	Kari and Denis McDonough	?	<p>First of all, thank you for the hard and thoughtful the entire council has put into how to improve the area around the junction. We feel with this effort that its time to simply move forward. So much has been invested in this, and although the plans aren't perfect, no plan ever is. To keep this space in the status quo, caught up in constant deliberations, is to pass up a good opportunity. Our top priority as this project moves forward is to work to increase pedestrian safety in that stretch-. There is a lot that can be done there, and I hope you can continue to press the State Highway, and our own Takoma Park experts throughout the building phase to look for ways this can be improved. Outside of the Junction area we'd also like to continue the discussion of what flags or reflective poles can be placed in the stretch from the coop- Woodland Ave, a place where cars especially accelerate. As a side note, I think it may be best to have a right turn only turn out of the parking lot for car safety. This is done in many places-- including the Trader Joes on 14th Street.</p> <p>Appreciatively, Kari and Denis McDonough</p>
5/16	Sat Jiwan "SJ" Ikle-Khalsa	2	<p>Longtime listener, and repeat offender for commenting way too late into the evening. I've been disappointed with the at times extreme arguments and sometimes mean spirited communications that are coming out of the debate about the Takoma Junction redevelopment project. The word "divisive" is what I'm feeling most. And I heard more of all of that tonight. I want redevelopment of the junction to come as a community building project and not leaving one side a winner and another side a loser. For whatever development vision you have of the specific space, I hope it includes a high priority on maintaining and strengthening our community. A few other neighbors and I found common ground with these sentiments and have composed a letter to the city council. We are asking the council to generate more community support for this project as a path forward to building community, and not just a development...here's the letter.</p> <p>Dear Kate, Kacy, Jarrett, Cindy, Talisha, Peter, and Terry, We the undersigned love Takoma Park, as we know you do, and want the best for it. We are dismayed that the development process for the Takoma Junction has become so divisive. Therefore, we request that the Council take appropriate steps to meaningfully broaden community support before voting on a resolution on the site design. "Broad community support" is a collection of expressions by affected individuals and groups (including businesses) in support of the project, and there may be broad community support even if some individuals or groups object to the project. Disagreements about local projects are inevitable, have happened before in Takoma Park, and will undoubtedly occur in the future. We also recognize that the Council-led process, including public participation, has already consumed disproportionate time and resources. The incentives to move forward expeditiously are strong, especially given that the Council has other priorities. However, the current degree of conflict around this project is incompatible with deeply held community values of inclusion, respectful engagement and trust. We recognize that community members themselves have an important role to play in maintaining these values, even as they seek to reconcile their respective interests. Thank you all for your service and consideration of the above request.</p>
5/16	Sat Jiwan "SJ" Ikle-Khalsa (cont'd)		<p>That's the letter: We've barely organized ourselves and started a week ago. Have collected 50 signatures. I invite other to join in the effort to find a "middle way". Sign the letter. Support our council in an effort to have a community building project. Not a community dividing project. Personally, I want to see a project at the Junction cross the finish line... but I just hope the council will help bring more of the community into the winner's circle. PS> I am glad to hear of the city funded mediation process and the Coop's agreement to participate. It's important to define the parameters and expectations of such a process. And I second Adam Frank's comments that ask the city to be a player in that mediation, or at the least be an observer. This news of mediation appears to be one step in generating broader community support. Keep on Moving Forward!</p>

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5/16	Sally Taber	2	<p>I am writing in response to the latest plans on Takoma Junction redevelopment. I have been a coop member since we moved to Takoma Park in 1986 and I like the convenience of having the store at the Junction. However, I am dismayed and frustrated that the discussion of the Junction redevelopment seems to have become such a divisive issue in our community. I DO NOT WANT TO START OVER IN THE REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS. I think we can only go forward and try to reach a compromise--which means that all sides may have to give something up for the final plan. Suzanne Ludlow, the City Manager, told me at the open house on the budget that Takoma Park is now getting interest from businesses that are potentially interested in locating in or near our town. More economic development should result in additional tax base that will help fund the services that residents are requesting, but for which the City has not had the funds because residents are concerned about paying higher property taxes. This lot has been used for the last 20 years for parking, not the highest and best use of city property. I do have questions and concerns about the redevelopment. I am concerned about increased traffic since I have to go through that intersection to get to and from downtown Takoma Park. The city is now renovating the Ethan Allen / New Hampshire intersection and I am waiting to see if it will affect traffic that now backs up at times between the Junction and New Hampshire Avenue. The lay-by for coop and other business deliveries has been getting a lot of attention. I would hope that we could find a solution that will satisfy the coop so that this development can move forward. I just saw an email today that the coop is willing to enter mediation with the City and NDC about their concerns. I hope that this happens. We are also a community with a lot of knowledge of how to work on and solve problems. I am confident that if we work together we can develop a plan that will meet residents' needs without adding to the stresses of living in an urban community.</p>
5/16	Mike Ashford	2	<p>I want you to know that I support the Takoma Junction development and urge Council approval. Thank you! Mike Ashford</p>
5/16	Karin Anderson	?	<p>I am in favor of a smaller development that that which is proposed.</p>

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2018 DATE	NAME	WARD*	COMMENT
5/16	Andrew Strongin	3	<p>I am writing to express my opposition to the NDC Development Project as presently constituted, for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed structure is too massive, overwhelming the adjacent structures on Carroll Ave and literally looming 55' tall over the residences on Columbia. It'll be like the Mormon Temple hovering over the Beltway, except it'll be a parking garage towering over the "treed lot" and the BF Gilbert residential neighborhood. That you allow NDC to continue to refer to the undeveloped portion as a "treed lot" is an affront to trees everywhere. Also, the drawing off which you're working, which the City staff insistently and misleadingly references as a "Site Plan," of course is nothing of the kind, which should be obvious to anyone with any familiarity with the Zoning Ordinance. A Site Plan is an actual thing, with a real definition. Among other things, a "Site Plan" would include a scale drawing, whereas the concept presented by NDC is neither to scale nor realistic given it fails to show the shadow that will be across the sidewalk for most of every day. 2. The underground parking plan is obviously unsafe, as those exiting the unsignaled driveway will have to negotiate a blind turn onto Carroll, whether into or across oncoming traffic. There literally is no way a car can exit the driveway and see the traffic coming eastbound on Carroll without pulling all the way across the sidewalk and nosing into the traffic lanes. This is unsafe, and unless it is addressed should be a nonstarter. 3. There is no useful public amenity offered by NDC, except to those who can afford to shop in the (still unnamed) shops/restaurants. Indeed, the reported callousness of one among you, who allegedly suggested that residents who can't afford to shop in the new stores/restaurants nevertheless will be permitted to "window shop," if true, is astoundingly, staggeringly foul. Seriously, I hope the report is untrue. Beyond that, NDC is trumping up its bogus claim that the cement pad and fixed benches will provide a great gathering place for the public. That simply is bunk, even if the building line is pushed back a few feet. Let's face it: due to the traffic safety issues for cars entering/exiting the proposed underground parking, there cannot be any street-level screening or vegetation/plantings to separate the public space from Carroll Ave. That area will need to be clear down to about two feet high, to permit drivers rushing to beat the gaps in traffic to enter the parking garage without running over pedestrians, including the two-year-olds who walk the area. Those drivers will need to be able to see pedestrians on the sidewalk, meaning the pedestrians must not be obscured from view. Anyway, the layby lane virtually guarantees that the public space will be disfavored. <p>Finally, I hear that the City has urged the Co-op to enter mediation with NDC. As I have explained to some of you personally in light of my decades of experience as an arbitrator and mediator, successful mediation is going to require the City's participation. It is the City that holds the power over NDC, and the City that has standing to appeal to the Co-op's sense of community; neither is likely to budge unless and until told, in plain terms, that concessions are required.</p> <p>Andrew Strongin</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