

PUBLIC COMMENT ON TAKOMA JUNCTION

2018 DATE	NAME	WARD*	COMMENT
5/9	Joanne Royce	2	<p>I write to urge you to postpone the May vote on a resolution regarding the site plan for Takoma Junction to enable the stakeholders to review the final traffic studies and attempt to resolve other outstanding concerns. If you are unable to postpone the vote, please vote “no” to the existing proposal.</p> <p>I’ve lived in Takoma for nearly 20 years and I must say I’m disappointed in the leadership which has brought us to this point in negotiations over the fate of the city lot next to the TPSS Co-op. I assumed – mistakenly, I now believe - that negotiations to reasonably accommodate the Co-op and the surrounding neighborhood would be undertaken in good faith. Seeing the proposed site of the lay-by for trucks delivering to the Co-op convinces me otherwise. Traffic at the Junction is already a challenge without adding irregularly scheduled giant semi’s into the mix. Nor is it an answer that similarly hazardous and/or poorly planned arrangements have been made for deliveries to ACE Hardware and the Republic. At the Junction, we have an opportunity to design a far more accessible and neighborhood friendly alternative to the development as currently envisioned and I urge you to reject the current proposal if postponing the decision is not an option.</p> <p>At a minimum, the vote should be postponed until the community has time to read and digest the traffic studies, as yet uncompleted. In addition, I share most of the concerns addressed by Michael H. Shuman in his excellent memo to the Mayor and City Council. It is not too late to seriously consider his far-sighted proposals to, for example, deploy public property for public gain and require that all tenants be locally owned. However, my most immediate concerns are (1) avoiding the traffic nightmares which the current proposal all but promises and (2) assuring the continued viability of the TPSS Co-op. Until I am assured that a feasible traffic plan exists, which reasonably accommodates TPSS Co-op operation, I will oppose any proposed development and I urge you to do the same.</p>

PUBLIC COMMENT ON TAKOMA JUNCTION

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5/9	Kathryn Desmond	1	<p>I am writing to express my strong objections to moving forward with the vote on the proposed Takoma Junction development until 1) significant problems with the NDC proposal are addressed and resolved, and 2) traffic studies are fully analyzed and decisions made about any rerouting or redesign.</p> <p>I object to the NDC proposal as it stands because:</p> <p>1) there is so little public, green space.</p> <p>2) the lay-by for truck deliveries is in the wrong place! It should not be right smack in front of a development that is intended to promote community connections, walkability, and ease of traffic congestion at the junction. Deliveries to existing (Coop) and future businesses should be made off the road by means of a driveway accessible by all businesses.</p> <p>3) Takoma Park does not really need any more "upscale" businesses or white-tablecloth restaurants. If you, elected officials, truly want to make this development work for ALL the people of Takoma Park, not just the wealthy, consider a development that will have something for everyone. Green space, meeting space, parking space, and delivery space, as well as a bus stop, bikeshare dock, and electric vehicle charging stations. Did I mention a ZipCar lane? And plenty of road space for emergency vehicles to respond to 911 calls.</p> <p>4) Who wants to park in an underground, paid parking lot at an already crowded intersection to make a quick stop for groceries? Keep some of the free, (or meter it) parking, and convert it to permeable pavers. Allow room for a truck delivery zone and there is still room for a smaller building.</p> <p>5) The Coop has raised legitimate concerns about their continued viability if the NDC project moves forward as planned. I think it would be very foolish to pursue a plan that makes it more difficult for the Coop to stay in business at the Junction. In addition to being a "gem" and an icon of sorts, the Coop is owned by 10,000 member households (and while not all in Takoma Park, the number is equal to almost two-thirds of the Takoma Park population) - a significant shopping bloc! The Coop should be viewed as a necessary component of any new development. I do much of my shopping in downtown Takoma Park when I also need to make a trip to the bank or post office, necessary services. Without the Coop at the Junction, I am not likely to walk up to windowshop at the latest novelty shop or trendy coffeeshop.</p> <p>The discussion so far, at Council meetings and among neighbors, has grown increasingly strident and divisive. I urge you to take a collective deep breath, step back, and have the courage NOT to move forward with a flawed plan. You will be remembered for your prudence.</p> <p>Kathryn Desmond</p>

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5/9	Elliott Andalman	?	<p>Hi Kacy,</p> <p>Thank you for the enormous time and patience you have shown in conducting meetings with constituents involving the Takoma Junction development. I believe the current plan before the Council is flawed in numerous ways that have been well discussed and documented, including, but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Insufficient public space; 2. Failure to address the needs of the coop; 3. Failure to provide adequate provisions for deliveries and for garbage pickup for both the new stores and the coop; 4. Parking should be ground level and not underground (the underground parking adds significant expense which results in the building being larger, thus taking away the space needed for public space, garbage pickup and deliveries). <p>I think the vast majority of residents agree that we should develop the lot in question. However, the plan that can bring the community together will look much more like the alternative plan recently unveiled rather than the developer plan that is before the Council. I think it is important for you to take a public position in this matter as soon as possible and that your position should be that you cannot support the plan before the Council. Having followed this controversy, I think the only way to successfully move forward is to go back to the drawing board and have the Coop be the anchor of the new development. At this point, the City should put in place a mediation between citizens opposed to the plan, the developer and the coop, to try to come up with a new plan that does that. Otherwise the City should notify the developer that this plan does not meet the needs of the city and ask the developer to come up with a new plan along the lines of the alternative plan.</p>

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5/9	Jessica Landman Nadine Bloch Neal Chalofsk Paul Chrostowski Colleen Cordes Jimmy Daukus Kathryn Desmond Robert Engelman Karen Elrich Sarah Fitzpatrick Gina Gaspin Jill Gay Joseph Gilday Dana Haden Kathie Hart Larry Himelfarb Ferd Hoefner Irene Huntoon Jamie Iwugo Byrne Kelly Evan Light Cynthia Mariel Sue Katz Miller Bruce Kozarsky Joe Klockner Dorothy Lee Karen Lovejoy Lorraine Pearsall Dan Robinson Judith Rosenthal Roger Schlegel Susan Schreiber Jane Silver Jan Stovall Betsy Taylor Catherine Varchaver Elias Vlantou	?	<p>We are writing to insist that you postpone voting on a resolution regarding the site plan for Takoma Junction while key outstanding issues remain unresolved. If a resolution is nevertheless put before you, then a 'no' vote is essential at this time. There are two principal reasons for postponing a vote.</p> <p>First, the Council and community must be given adequate time to obtain and review the traffic studies and arrive at a recommended traffic mitigation plan before a decision is taken with respect to the site design for the Takoma Junction project. Your own 2017 Resolution calls for nothing less. Resolution 2017-53 states that "following further consultation with NDC, and completion of the traffic studies, a Draft Site Plan/Preliminary Plan may be prepared that would be consistent with the Council's goals and desired vision..." Then and only then would it be approvable by the Council.</p> <p>Today no such site plan can exist and be approvable, because the studies are not complete.</p> <p>If the City were to proceed to a vote on a site plan before the traffic studies are even completed and made public, much less a bad option selected, the City would be acting arbitrarily and capriciously, ignoring its own sensible roadmap for the order of taking action.</p> <p>Second, a premature vote in one or two weeks' time would further violate your own Resolution of October 2017 which specified that the "Council expects to see a Draft Site Plan that meets the criteria of Resolution 2015-19 and the Development Agreement... including the Agreement's provisions relating to reasonable accommodations of the TPSS Co-op." The City has clearly not reached that point, inasmuch as the Co-op has testified and written to you repeatedly to say that the draft plan leaves its four principal concerns unresolved.</p> <p>While these two are the most glaring reasons why it is premature to vote to accept the pending proposal, there are numerous other clearly-stated criteria in Resolution 2015-19, laying out the Council's vision that NDC has not yet met, among them providing "a large amount of vibrant, comfortable" public space and "accommodation of delivery, trash and recycling in a manner that does not cause traffic problems and optimizes public enjoyment of the site."</p> <p>The City has pledged to give citizens adequate time to respond to changing plans and conditions but we have yet to see final traffic studies and are on a schedule to have only a few days to assess a city resolution and a possible altered site plan.</p> <p>In short, there is no rational basis for the City to proceed in haste to commit to this non-compliant proposal. Therefore, we urge you to reject precipitous action, complete the traffic study, re-convene discussions with the developer and the Co-op, and use your leverage to ensure that the project reflects the vision you so meticulously developed and articulated in 2015 and reiterated in October, 2017.</p> <p>Finally, we remind you that, according to the terms of the Development Agreement, if NDC does not provide you with a signed lease from an anchor tenant by June 2018, the City can walk away from this proposal if it so chooses with no obligation to insist that the City's own criteria be met, and we hope and expect you to use that leverage on our behalf.</p>

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5/9	Matt Liddle	2	<p>Just a quick note to get our opinion on the record regarding the Junction development. I'm certainly in favor. The lot is an underutilized piece of public land that could create more value and vitality under the Junction plan. We're enthusiastic members of the TPSS Co-op, but we favor the Junction development to go forward as planned.</p> <p>Best, Matt Liddle</p>
5/9	Caroline Taylor	NR	<p>On behalf of Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA) I ask that you to ensure that the NDC development plan for Takoma Junction fully accommodate the needs of the TPSS co-op which in turn provides for the well being of the residents of your community. By way of short background, MCA is local non-profit keenly focused on the protection of Montgomery County's nationally recognized Agricultural Reserve and the health of our local food system. Local farmers and producers rely heavily on this store as an outlet for their products. It serves as a backbone market for our regional food system. Local, county and state governments should support and build markets for local and regional food products. Thoughtful development that provides for both strong local economy and community well being will truly keep Takoma Park both vital and unique.</p> <p>Respectfully, Caroline Taylor</p>

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2018 DATE	NAME	WARD*	COMMENT
5/10	Keith Kozloff	?	<p>I have decided to lend my support to a new petition which asks the Council to take steps to build community support for the proposed development at Takoma Junction before approving the project. I recognize that some signatories will want to use delay in an effort to make the project go away. There are, however, significant actions that the City Council could take to broaden community support whose implementation would not necessarily delay the Council's vote on the site plan. Here are some possible ideas to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include provisions in its forthcoming draft resolution regarding the site plan that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •require NDC to enter into mediation with the Coop if the Coop is also willing to do so; •require the mediator to report on progress to the Council (or lack thereof) •allow the Council to consider at a later date potential adjustments to the project's design, construction, and/or operation that would become necessary to implement relevant agreements between the Coop and NDC emerging from the mediation; •require NDC to appoint a member of its team (who has appropriate training and skills) to serve as a public community liaison during the final design, construction and operational stages of the project; •require NDC to establish and publicize a mechanism to receive and respond to comments and concerns from members of the community during the final design, construction, and operational stages of the project; •require NDC to report periodically to the Council on the results of this public comment mechanism; and •require NDC to be as transparent and detailed as possible (without compromising confidential business information) about such items as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o its planned construction schedule, o on-site employment opportunities, o its community development commitments, o consideration of potential tenant types (including preference for local and regional tenants), and o operational aspects of the project. 2. Announce a date for a public forum to be developed, organized, and led by an independent facilitator and with participation by the City, which is designed to acknowledge and heal divisions among community members resulting from conflict about the Junction. 3. Strengthen the capacity of the City Council and staff to manage community engagement around future development projects (e.g. Purple Line expansion, WAH site, CentroNia JNA site) by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •convening a forum to distill potential lessons about public engagement emerging from Takoma Junction case, and discuss possible approaches that could be applied to future projects, including early assessment of likely stakeholders and their respective interests; and •adding relevant expertise to the Department of Housing and Community Development through training existing staff, one of the new hires, or a consultant. <p>Apologies for adding to your already crowded in-boxes. Keith Kozloff</p>

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2018 DATE	NAME	WARD*	COMMENT
5/10	Beth MacNairn	2	<p>I want to reiterate my support for the development project at the Junction. I can see that the rhetoric continues to escalate between friends and neighbors, which makes it difficult to express one's opinion publically. I am finding the Co-Op leadership's arguments (and other such arguments) for slowing/replacing the NDC plan both illogical and counterproductive.</p> <p>Again, I share many of the concerns of my community about the draft NDC Plan including: the potential for over development, lack of green space, scale of buildings, types of businesses which might come to the new site, the strong desire to protect our existing business (not just the Co-Op but long-time businesses like Mark's Kitchen and Middle East Market as well as the new Seoul Food restaurant, etc.) traffic and safety.</p> <p>We are long-time Co-Op members but are frequenting the store less often as a result of the rhetoric their supporters are putting out there. This is not what they intended, I am sure.</p> <p>Thank you for your leadership. I believe that we need to move forward and work with NDC to make their plan as responsive as possible to our community's needs.</p> <p>Beth MacNairn</p>

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5/10	Frederick Schultz, Bruce Williams, Timthy Male	6 3 2	<p>The City Council is preparing to vote May 23 on a resolution endorsing Neighborhood Development Company's (NDC's) proposed Site Plan for the City-owned lot at Takoma Junction. We urge City Council members to vote in favor of the proposed site plan. Doing so will enable NDC to formally submit its site plan application to the county for its review and eventual approval.</p> <p>Since the inception of this process over 4 years ago, the City Council has methodically worked together to bring this project to where it is today. The undersigned were deeply involved in this process from the start. In July, 2016 the City signed a legally binding Development Agreement and Lease with NDC.</p> <p>Until recently Council members have remained supportive of the process, despite occasional disagreements about plan details. Councilmember Jarrett Smith has announced his total opposition to the project without qualification. Previously he had not expressed publicly or privately any serious concerns; rather, he had been enthusiastically supportive of NDC's plans. Councilmember Smith has, of course, the right to alter his thinking on any matter at any time. At this advanced stage It would be unfortunate for Council to allow his change of position to deter you from moving forward with this project in a timely manner.</p> <p>We are confident that the proposed site plan now before you largely meets the priorities set by earlier councils and resolutions, and meets major goals identified by the Takoma Junction Task Force. We believe NDC's proposal meets the intent of the development agreement and largely meets the letter of the requirements of that agreement. Where work remains to be completed on the site plan, it is in areas that are appropriate to the county process ahead. Were the City Council to try to terminate the agreement, we believe you would be in violation of the terms of the agreement because NDC has met your conditions set forth in that agreement. We remain supportive of the structure of the land use agreement: a 99-year ground lease. This arrangement was suggested and championed by Councilmember Smith, whose recommendation on this land tenure arrangement we were happy to follow while on Council.</p> <p>Prior city councils have spent decades making sure that city residents and businesses have a say in what happens at Takoma Junction. First the city purchased the lot, then numerous councils established transparent public processes to gather input to come up with a plan for the lot that would improve the life of residents and businesses in our city. Prior city councils have devoted enormous energy to see this through. Voters elected you to continue this process and bring the NDC project to life. The City has made legal commitments to NDC and moral commitments to residents. In the coming year NDC's plans for this site will continue to evolve through the Site Plan process so as to address remaining design concerns. This project is of vital importance to the City.</p> <p>We strongly urge you to stay the course and approve the Resolution on May 23. Bruce R Williams, former Mayor Timothy Male, former Councilmemeber Ward 2 Frederick Schultz, former Councilmember Ward 6</p>

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5/11	Eric Saul	?	<p>I just thought I would forward the email exchange below of my response to Rachel Hardwick addressing the recent letter sent to you all by the Co-op and some TKPK business owners. I hope this email gives you an alternate perspective from those of us who haven't been outspoken about the recent Junction issues.</p> <p>I have additional points to counter some of these claims made (for example, she is claiming that the future paid parking lot will be problematic, when in fact the current parking lot isn't free and already contains a parking meter machine), but I'm sure you all are aware of the inconsistencies already.</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to read it and thank you especially for working so hard on this project.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Sorry, couldn't help myself. #5 is just not true. I've designed buildings abutting 100+ year old, 5 or 6 story structures in DC, and without any damage to the neighboring building, including several floors of underground parking. Construction on the lot will have virtually no effect on the historic homes in the area, let alone the co-op building if done properly.</p> <p>I don't think it is fair to use fear tactics like this to get support.</p> <p>Thanks, Eric Saul</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Hi Eric -</p> <p>The concern is over construction means and methods as well as safeguards during construction, none of which have been discussed or reviewed to date. It is possible for NDC to safeguard and protect adjacent and existing historic buildings but like several other issues, we have seen very little in terms of actual details. Of the issues on the table, this one is among the easiest to solve with some collaboration with NDC but we need their proposed plan first.</p> <p>Thanks, Rachel Hardwick</p> <p>*****</p> <p>Rachel, I know you are really concerned and that you care strongly for the survival of the co-op. The co-op is lucky to have someone like you with such a strong passion for the community.</p> <p>However, I'm finding myself struggling to stay neutral when I read emails like your latest one. It contains many unfair points and misleading "questions" that seem to be a last ditch effort to derail the project, rather than improve the design.</p> <p>I'm sure a lot of the technical issues, like construction means and methods, can easily be explained, but it's as if you're demanding steps 5 and 6 when you're trying to stall at step 1. As an architect, I can't tell my clients how the structural elements carry loads when I haven't been fully approved to move forward on the design. It starts with conceptual approvals before you can get to the details. What you are essentially doing is telling everyone that their buildings could collapse (which they won't). Instead of blasting the entire neighborhood with scary unknowns, why not talk to engineers, architects, and developers and find out how things work if you are unsure of the details? I'm happy to be a resource if need be.</p>

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5/11	Eric Saul (cont'd)		<p>A couple of weeks ago, you wrote a letter to all of us saying the co-op board is actually pro-development, unlike the rumors, and brought up some technical concerns about the development, which some were fair and legitimate. Your new email is not even about the technical issues anymore - it's doubting the entire project's feasibility. I've even seen an entirely new design pop up by co-op supporters with a building about 1/8th in size. How can we expect to have technical questions answered when you're trying to stop the project from even starting?</p> <p>Also, in your last email to the entire city, you made two contradicting points. First, you say that you are worried the new development will bring too many new people to the area and ruin everything. Then you say you are worried that it will sit empty and vacant for a long period of time? Sounds like you are trying to have it both ways. Again, another example of strange arguments that confuse people, rather than educate them.</p> <p>I'll repeat myself yet again (and it's annoying that I have to repeat it for fear of failing the new purity test in Takoma Park), I want the co-op to exist. But these tactics of using petty arguments against the development are not a good look on the co-op. There are legitimate concerns, we agree with you on this, but they are getting drowned out from the partisan talking points ("small businesses will suffer," etc) and countless new excuses to try to stop the development. We need to have a better discussion.</p> <p>We are all friends and neighbors, and we all should debate issues concerning our city. The city has voted to move forward. Let's move forward then. We don't need to tell people their buildings will crumble or start all over with a e development WILL happen. Let's be sure we make it the best it can be by focusing on legitimate concerns.</p> <p>Thanks, Eric Saul</p>

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5/11	Stephanie Hartman	2	<p>NDC has had every opportunity to fulfill their contractual obligation to make the development community-centered, rich in green space, supportive of local businesses, and Co-op friendly. They have not done so.</p> <p>Jane Jacobs wrote in <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i>, "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody." By ignoring so much of the development agreement, and the City Council's list of points to be addressed in the concept plan, NDC has in effect cut community out of the process. The resulting development provides primarily for NDC. It still—again—does not give us what was asked for.</p> <p>I recognize that development in this location is challenging and that every plan will disappoint somebody. But the city owns this lot. Takoma Park bought it to specifically to ensure that it be used for the public good, to benefit our community, to give us a voice in how it is developed. Supposedly this is a public-private partnership, but the public's voice—at least the public that values what is distinctive about Takoma Park—has been repeatedly ignored. It's hard to imagine any private developer offering a plan with less greenery, less public space, or less effort to preserve the Co-op. Even the most mercenary, least visionary developer includes a few trees and benches.</p> <p>I have been to well-designed shopping areas that were lovely places to hang out, and have seen neighborhoods revitalized by restaurants and shops that reflect the creativity and dedication of its locals. But the hulking rectangle of commercial space that NDC has proposed is not inviting or innovative. Moreover, NDC does not plan to pass on the favorable terms of its 99-year lease to local and independent tenants.</p> <p>While apparently some residents would be glad for a fast-casual chain restaurant and an Abercrombie & Fitch at the Junction, I treasure our small-town atmosphere, local businesses, healthy food, creativity, and community-mindedness. If I didn't, I would have bought a house in Silver Spring, where the taxes are much lower. I particular love being able to walk to a grocery store.</p> <p>We can learn from other recent developments. At the Takoma Metro, EYA's original development plan was sized up, leading to years-long antagonism between the community and the developer. Takoma Central was built without any parking for customers or employees, and led to the loss of free parking next to the professional building for others. (The reasoning for not including parking—that all local people would walk and all non-locals would take the metro—proved to be wishful thinking.) We can do better, by making sure that the plans fit into and enhance our existing community, and by carefully considering the impact of this development upon traffic and other businesses, rather than blithely dismissing valid concerns (as NDC does in its October 17 letter: "The impact of this development will not materially affect the current traffic issues."). Giving in to NDC's intransigence (and their bait-and-switch) is not the answer. I'm not sure what is, but I do know that it is reasonable for us to want development that responds to community input and reflects our community's needs and values. I don't like being bulldozed by a developer who treats the development agreement as a mere wish list.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>

PUBLIC COMMENT ON TAKOMA JUNCTION

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5/11	Karin Anderson	?	Like the idea of development but on a much smaller scale than what the developer is proposing. Our local architects have presented a good proposal and I so hope you will look at it and be in favor of it.
5/11	Mica Bevington	2	<p>I want to ensure that my comments from Wednesday night are recorded as full SUPPORT for the development of the Junction. I love a few ideas about this project, which i don't feel I expressed well that night (it had been a long day!):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walking distance to new services, goods, and restaurants for those of us in Ward 2, sure, but also for our neighbors nearby along Maple Ave, which lacks the shopping options that those of us in Ward 2 enjoy to our east (Takoma/Langley) 2. Possible employment opportunities for our neighbors (and selfishly, my rising teens!) as the space is developed 3. Increased tax revenue for the city from new businesses 4. Increased foot traffic in and around the Coop, where I'm a member (and have been for a decade) 5. Potentially less of a reliance on Langley and Silver Spring for shopping options (again - it's walkable!!) 6. More foot traffic in the area makes me feel, personally, safer. More eyes, fewer crimes is my general experience. 7. A redevelopment of the traffic pattern in this congested area, preferably leaning on Eric Saul's design concept! 8. Finally, going forward sends a signal to other developers that Takoma Park is a city that's worth working with. I say this with my mind firmly on the Hospital space, and its redevelopment options in the near future. <p>I could go on, but please count my family, a decade into our Takoma Park residency, a fist of five-person support for this exciting project!</p> <p>Sincerely, Mica Bevington</p>
5/11	Thomas Kenney	?	<p>As a business owner (Immerman and Kenney Properties, LLC and MAD Fitness) in the Junction, and as a neighbor having my domicile on Poplar Avenue for more than 35 years- I encourage the Council to approve the plan and move forward toward actualizing the project.</p> <p>This long awaited improvement to the Junction I feel has been thoroughly vetted and modified in response to concerns about the preceding design options.</p> <p>The vitality of the Junction has substantially improved from the investments made by the new businesses that were added in recent years; and I look forward to continuance of that trend with the addition of services and businesses resulting from the Junction Development project. This asset will provide revenue for the City, which I support as means to help ameliorate upward pressure on tax rates. And, the renderings suggest an improvement of the current streetscape.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my opinion.</p> <p>Thomas Kenney</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