



City of Takoma Park

## City Manager Comments

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### Report of January 13, 2021

#### We Are In This Together

It has been just a week since the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol Building occurred. As you have seen from the messages of Takoma Park Police Chief Tony DeVaul, our police department is conferring with other public safety agencies, monitoring locations in Takoma Park, and scheduling staff to be prepared for the impacts of potential violent disruptions as we near the Presidential Inauguration on January 20.

Besides the work of the Police Department, all City departments are on call to serve the needs of public safety in Takoma Park. From communicating to the public, to reporting suspicious activity, to making sure we have barricades or equipment ready, to providing support to residents and staff, staff throughout the City government are working to ensure that we are prepared even as we keep calm.

As Chief DeVaul has said, there is no indication at this time that Takoma Park is a target. Please rest assured that we are working jointly to take care of our community.

What can you do?

First, avoid going to downtown Washington, D.C. on days of higher risk, particularly January 17-20. Inauguration activities are scheduled to take place mostly virtually, so you can watch safely from home.

Second, if you see or hear something that is especially concerning, contact Takoma Park Police at 301-270-1100 or – if an emergency – call 9-1-1.

Third, help bring down the anxiety level. The mental health pressures of these last months have been heavy, and comments or listserv postings that sound scary can add to the unease. Yes, be vigilant. But also help reassure others that we are in this together and the City of Takoma Park has your back.

Keeping Takoma Park residents safe and secure in Takoma Park is a team effort. It involves all departments of the City government, our business owners, elected officials, and residents. In these unprecedented times, this team effort and collaborative strength will serve us well.

Thanks to you and the wonderful City staff for being this caring team!

## **COVID-19 Related Information**

It has been ten months since we went into lock-down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the scary confusion of March 2020, we have learned that COVID-19 transmission mostly occurs from breathing in air that has been exhaled from an infected person, whether or not the infected person shows any signs of illness. For that reason, wearing masks correctly, keeping a distance from others, and avoiding crowded locations are the most effective steps to take to stay safe.

Remarkably, several highly effective vaccines are now available to be used and targeted vaccination efforts are beginning. It will take a number of months before the vaccine is available to all. Takoma Park's essential employees have begun to be vaccinated through the Montgomery County Health Department. The order of those eligible to receive vaccinations has changed several times and may change again. Go to [Montgomery County Vaccine Information](#) page to learn about when and how vaccines will be provided and to sign up for email or text alerts regarding vaccine availability.

Staff will continue to wear masks and adhere to all health protocols long after receiving the vaccines. When you are able to get a vaccine, please do so! Our community and economy cannot move forward until a substantial majority of residents have been vaccinated.

### **COVID-19 testing in Takoma Park**

Free, no appointment COVID-19 testing is being held most Wednesdays and Saturdays at the Takoma Park Recreation Center, 7315 New Hampshire Avenue from 10 am to 5 pm. For this and other testing options, please see the information here: [Montgomery County Testing Sites](#)

### **Tax Preparation Assistance**

Staff has been working to help coordinate the availability of free tax preparation assistance during the pandemic for our residents. The Community Action Agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is currently using a virtual tax preparation model during the COVID-19 emergency. Virtual VITA allows residents to use an online platform to securely upload their tax documents and have their taxes prepared for free by a certified tax preparer. No in-person contact is required, allowing for the health and safety of staff and community members to be maintained. They are now scheduling virtual appointments. Montgomery County residents with household incomes of \$57,000 or less may call 240-777-1123 to schedule an appointment.

### **Other Information**

#### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration**

Many of the standard ways to serve and celebrate on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day are different this year due to pandemic health concerns. It should still be a day "on" and not a day off. Montgomery County has a wonderful website with ways to serve: [MLK Week of Service](#). Folks in Takoma Park also recommend volunteering at food distribution sites, picking up litter in Sligo Creek or other public areas (use gloves and take trash and recyclables home), and helping your neighbors. In addition, on Monday, January 18 from 7:00 – 7:15 pm, they urge all to go outside onto a front porch, balcony or yard area and lift a flashlight or candle into the evening sky.

Due to the holiday, City services are closed on Sunday, January 17 through Monday, January 18. The Police Department is always open for emergency services.

### **Free Flu Clinic – January 22!**

The City has coordinated with CCI Health and Wellness Services to sponsor a free flu clinic on Friday, January 22 from 3 to 6 pm at the Takoma Park Recreation Center, 7315 New Hampshire Avenue in Takoma Park. This is a first come, first serve opportunity.

### **Update on COVID-19 Response**

The City of Takoma Park has been providing assistance to residents and businesses since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in this area. A full [Report](#) on what had been done to date was presented to the Council on October 14, 2020 and updates are in preparation.

Weekly we provide information about COVID-19 cases in Takoma Park on the COVID-19 Dashboard: [COVID-19 Dashboard](#). The dashboard was created by Deputy City Manager Jessica Clarke and now will be overseen and maintained by Public Administration Specialist Daniel Powers.

Jessica Clarke has worked closely with Montgomery County officials on bringing COVID-19 testing to Takoma Park, and advocating for the County to do vaccinations in Takoma Park.

City facilities staff have been hard at work to make facility improvements to lessen virus transmission. All HVAC equipment now has increased outside airflow and air purification systems to greatly reduce the potential of COVID-19 transmission in our buildings.

Work continues on serving residents and business owners with information, financial assistance, food, PPE and cleaning supplies, and, most of all, a helping hand and a friendly voice.