



City of Takoma Park

City Manager Comments

Report of July 1, 2020

Information to Share

COVID-19 Related Information

Closed Playgrounds

Although Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) play areas are being reopened, the City of Takoma Park is not yet reopening its playgrounds. Unfortunately, some residents have torn down fencing to gain access to City playgrounds; that fencing will be reinstalled. The City is having appropriate signs made to be installed when the playgrounds are reopened. The signs will inform patrons that play equipment is not cleaned or disinfected, that masks should be worn, that people should maintain a safe distance from each other, and that hands should be washed before and after play. Takoma Park COVID-19 rates remain significantly higher than Montgomery County in general. While we wish to see children at play, children 2 and over need to wear masks and must maintain a social distance from people outside of their family. This can be very hard to enforce. A strong commitment from families and the whole community to mask-wearing and social distancing is needed so that children can play safely. Our Recreation Department is exploring some ways to coordinate more outdoor activities for young people, while maintaining the health safety requirements.

COVID-19 Pop-Up Testing Was Heavily Attended!

Montgomery County's first Community Pop-Up Testing at our Recreation Center last Thursday, June 25th, successfully tested 431 people in 4 hours - a County record for a testing event! Testing results are typically available within three business days. If you were tested, and have not received your results, you can contact the AdvaGenix lab directly at <https://advagenix.com/>. The Montgomery Health and Human Services (DHHS) team has expressed interest in holding a second event at the Recreation Center. We are meeting with DHHS this week to discuss what worked and what could be improved, as well as to obtain more detailed data on how many Takoma Park residents were tested. We will be communicating feedback we received from Council and from residents at that meeting. The fact that Takoma Park's COVID-19 infection rate of 2.4% continues to double Montgomery County's infection rate of 1.4% lends urgency to our effort to plan additional testing events. As of June 26, there were 429 confirmed positive cases in Takoma Park. More information is posted on our [COVID-19 Resource Page](#).

Takoma Park Healthy Business Initiative

The City's Economic Development Division will be launching the Takoma Park Healthy Business Initiative which was created in response to the ongoing needs of our local businesses who are

working to make changes to their operations to address COVID-19 challenges. The initiative includes four distinct support programs:

- 1) Outdoor Seating & Hand Sanitizing Stations to be placed at the Takoma Streeterly on Laurel and throughout the commercial areas in the Old Town, the Crossroads, and Flower Ave.
- 2) Public Health Signage packages to be provided to all storefronts that receive clients and customers
- 3) Business Recovery Cleaning assistance for businesses that have owners or employees test positive for COVID-19
- 4) Healthy Business Grant program to support additional needs and changes to business operations.

The Healthy Business Initiative will launch next week beginning with outreach to local businesses. Delivery of signage and hand sanitizing stations are expected in 3-4 weeks. A look at the type of signs to be provided:



Building Closures Continue

City of Takoma Park governmental facilities remain closed to the public and most work will continue to be done remotely except for Public Works and Police services. The main areas of the Community Center will remain closed for some time. City Council and Committee meetings will continue to be held virtually. A few additional staff will begin to operate out of City facilities beginning July 6, including the Neighborhood Services Team.

Although the City facilities are closed to the public, the Police Department is always open for emergency services and can be accessed through the Police Lobby on the lower level of Maple Avenue. Please wear a mask when entering the building and follow the traffic flow path that has been laid out to help maintain social distancing.

Takoma Park Library Books-To-Go

Our contactless library book check out process will begin on Monday, July 6! We will be getting the word out soon about how to borrow the books!

Other Information

Update on K-9 Incident

We have received questions about the outcome of investigations of the incident in December 2018 when a Takoma Park Police canine bit a woman passerby just inside the Washington, D.C. border when Takoma Park Police were responding to a call. Investigations conducted by Washington, D.C. and Takoma Park officials found that the incident was an accident; the Takoma Park officer to whom the canine was assigned did not intend to have the dog bite the woman. Takoma Park Police immediately transported the woman to medical attention. Investigations showed that some procedures and best practices were not followed and so disciplinary action was taken. The Takoma Park Police officer involved no longer works for Takoma Park and the dog is no longer in service to the Department. It should be noted that there was no delay on the part of either Washington, D.C. nor Takoma Park in investigating the case, but investigations such as this often require a long period of time and some aspects of the case are not yet concluded.

In addition to the investigation of the incident, a review of our General Orders and procedures regarding canines and the Police officers that work with them was undertaken and policy changes were made or clarified. Other matters regarding the pros and cons of having a K-9 unit are still to be discussed. We are evaluating what is appropriate for Takoma Park.

Update on Schedule of Takoma Junction Redevelopment Plan

Several residents have inquired about the schedule of the Takoma Junction Redevelopment Plan by the City's partner Neighborhood Development Company. The proposal remains in the Montgomery County Development Review process.

Our understanding is that Neighborhood Development Company is continuing to work on its revisions and resubmission application to the County, responding to comments and requirements that were raised in the Development Review process. Those plans will include more details about design and materials, as well as rear elevations. The agencies need to review those plans to see that the revised plans meet their requirements and that their questions were answered. There may be outstanding matters that still need to be addressed, particularly related to the comments of the Maryland State Highway Administration. It is not clear when the County's Development Review process will be completed.

When the County's Development Review process is completed, however, the Site Plan (as revised, based on the agency findings and comments during Development Review process) will come back to the City Council for review and comment. This is the normal process under the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the City of Takoma Park and the Montgomery County Planning Board regarding the development review process. In this case, it is also called for in City Council Resolution 2018-41: "Be It Further Resolved That, the Council will provide additional comment on any modifications made to the Site Plan during the Montgomery County development review process...and will include those comments in a Resolution to the Montgomery County Planning Board when the draft Final Site Plan/Preliminary Plan comes before the Montgomery County Planning Board for consideration."

As is traditional, the Planning Board will work with the City on the scheduling of consideration of the Site Plan so the City Council will have the opportunity to weigh in. As a reminder, if the Montgomery County Planning Board wishes to take a position contrary to a position of the Takoma Park City Council, a supermajority vote of the Planning Board is required. And, under the terms of the Development Agreement between the City and Neighborhood Development Company, the City can end the project at any point.

General information on the development review process can be found here:

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/housing-and-community-development/community-development/development-review/>

Independence Day

Independence Day is on Saturday, July 4th. In honor of the holiday, most City employees will not be working on Friday, July 3rd. With the COVID-19 pandemic, Independence Day activities that encourage the gathering of people have been canceled for this year. Please celebrate safely, keep gatherings small, wear masks and keep social distances. Please also remember that **no fireworks are permitted in Montgomery County!** Fireworks are dangerous and this is not a time to have to go to a hospital due to a fireworks accident or burn. Be safe as you celebrate!