



City of Takoma Park

## City Manager Comments

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### Report of July 22, 2020

#### COVID-19 Related Information

##### **Wear a Mask**

It's not new information.

It's not exciting.

It can be a fashion statement or not.

It just needs to be a habit.

It's simply this – wear a mask over your nose and mouth when you are near others.

Thank you. :)

##### **Recap of Last COVID-19 Testing Event**

On July 16, Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services hosted a second pop up COVID-19 testing event at the Takoma Park Recreation Center. During the event, the Montgomery County DHHS team tested 612 people over the course of 4 hours. This was 212 tests higher than expected, due in part to the County allowing walk-ins in addition to people with scheduled appointments. DHHS would like to continue to test at a higher pace, and has asked to move to a larger space in Takoma Park with more parking, so we are currently exploring options for an alternative site. In the meantime, you can now make an appointment for any of the testing sites in Montgomery County online:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing/appointments-en.html>

##### **Public Information Act Status Report**

Due to the pandemic, the compilation of some responses to Public Information Act (PIA) requests are delayed longer than the normal 30 day response time. The following PIA responses are over the 30 day response time:

- Domer and Flower Neighborhood Association (Jay Driskell) request
- Jeremy Berry-Cahn request for a copy of the Domestic Partnership Registry

#### Other Information

##### **Race Equity Work**

Although we are in the midst of a pandemic and have more work on our plates than ever, one effort has continued, and that is the work of challenging ourselves to implement the Council's goals of race equity into every aspect of our work. Our GARE (Government Alliance on Race and Equity) cohort of four senior staff members continues to study and lead in this effort. While

their focus as a study group has been on the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees, as leaders, they are challenging us to build better systems in our City government.

Race equity is easier to think of as something for other people. However, race equity means confronting and dismantling white entitlement and systematic and institutional racism for the greater good and prosperity for everyone. It's not just something we should do, but something that we must do to remain the viable and diverse community that we are. For this reason, I will be looking at each Race Equity Considerations section of the Council agenda cover pages also with an eye to confront and dismantle elements that perpetuate white entitlement and institutional racism. While we still lack data to provide robust impact analyses, I believe this will be helpful in ensuring that information is before Council in a way that supports implementation of Council priorities.

### **Recycling Temporarily Not Accepted at Prince George's County Facility**

Due to overcapacity, the Prince George's County recycling facility informed us a few days ago that they would not accept Takoma Park single stream recycling temporarily, beginning July 23. We were searching for alternative disposal locations but then were surprised that the cut-off began today instead of tomorrow. For that reason, our sanitation crews had to put recycling materials in our trash trucks today. Now we have learned that we will again be permitted to use the Prince George's County facility starting tomorrow. A major issue with recycling services is that each facility has different rules. Some won't accept glass, others require recycling to be separated into types. Prince George's County allows the single stream recycling the City of Takoma Park uses. Kudos to Public Works Director Daryl Braithwaite for her very hard work on trying to find other last-minute solutions to the disposal of our City's recyclables!

### **WSSC Water Shutdown on July 23rd**

WSSC has issued a scheduled night-time water shutdown in portions of Ward 5 as part of the Flower Avenue water main installation. The shutdown will start Thursday, July 23rd, beginning at 9 pm and may last until 5 am on Friday, July 24th. Those impacted were already notified and WSSC offered a water station on Tuesday evening. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3g0hUOM>

### **New Home Stretch Program Recipient!**

We are happy to congratulate Mr. Edwin Andino, who will be purchasing his Lee Avenue condominium home tomorrow, using both the City's Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Law and the City's Home Stretch down payment assistance program. We are delighted to see these programs being used exactly as envisioned and welcome Mr. Andino to home ownership in Takoma Park!

### **Commemoration Commission Report**

The Commemoration Commission has prepared a short report to the City Council regarding the names of Jackson-Boyd Park, Heffner Park, Generals' streets and regarding commemorative plaques. The report is at the end of these comments.

## **Takoma Junction Project Update**

The City's development partner, Neighborhood Development Company, has submitted additional information for review by the Montgomery County Development Review Committee (DRC) regarding the Takoma Junction Project. The revised application will need to be reviewed by the various agencies that make up the DRC to see that requested changes or additional information has been provided. I have been told it generally takes a couple of weeks to do that review. If more information is needed by them, that information will be requested. The plans are posted on the Montgomery County [Development Activity Information Center](#) for Application #120190150 and #820190090. Please note that the plans will continue to change on an iterative basis and some of the drawings are to show certain aspects only and so may not include trees or other features that would also be on the site.

If the information submitted is found to meet the County's development review requirements, the review of the plans moves to the next step, which involves detailed City staff technical review and setting future dates for Takoma Park City Council and Montgomery County Planning Board consideration. It will likely be the fall before the schedule is even set. Pursuant to the Development Review [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the City of Takoma Park and the Montgomery County Planning Board, the project will come to the Takoma Park City Council for review and adoption of a Resolution expressing its position on the site plan which is then submitted to the Planning Board as part of its consideration of the Takoma Junction project. The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) had approved the earlier draft massing and design plans for Planning Board review and, if the plans are approved by the Planning Board, the HPC will then consider the revised plans for a Historic Area Work Permit. Steps regarding trees, while discussed throughout the project, will really only occur near the end of the approval process.

Years of public discussion, careful crafting of legal language and Council resolution text, and a long development review process have taken place so far on the Takoma Junction project. When the County's staff review of the Takoma Junction project site plan is completed, City staff will review the revised site plan from a professional planning and engineering perspective, as well as assess how it adheres to the provisions detailed in the 12-page City Council [Resolution 2018-41](#) and the lengthy [Development Agreement and Ground Lease](#) signed between the City of Takoma Park and the Neighborhood Development Company. This analysis will be part of the information the City Council considers as it prepares a Resolution on the site plan for the Planning Board.

Recently, there has been a revived round of comments from people believing that the Takoma Junction project will harm the Takoma Park - Silver Spring Coop (TPSS Coop) grocery store. This claim has little basis. The [Development Agreement and Ground Lease](#) signed between the City of Takoma Park and the Neighborhood Development Company provide remarkable protections and special treatment for the TPSS Coop.

The City strongly supports the TPSS Coop as a local business and has put in strong measures to protect the Coop during construction and when receiving deliveries. The Coop is more likely to be harmed if the project does not move forward as these protections may not be able to be

accommodated with alternate uses or ownership of the land, including ownership by the Coop itself. For these reasons, the City had taken these strong steps to define special protections in the Development Agreement for this project.

There have also been claims that building on this infill site will cause gentrification. This project does not displace any residents, many of the businesses in the Junction own their own property so business lease rates are less likely to be affected, and it provides space for the kinds of non-profits, businesses, and activities that Takoma Park has indicated it wants. Specificity of the uses the community wants and does not want is in the [Development Agreement and Ground Lease](#) and in [Resolution 2018-41](#) (see lines 94-153, 321-323, 382-391, 518-522). Which actual non-profits and businesses may occupy the spaces cannot be finalized until it is known that the project is moving forward and the timeline for the project is clear. The project does need to be profitable, which is why the City partnered with a successful local development company on the project.

There have also been some surprising statements that the project is contrary to the race equity goals of the City of Takoma Park. This project, which is a City partnership with a Black-owned company, is designed to bolster the economic base of the City and to ease the property tax impacts on the City's homeowners. This is particularly needed because the City provides substantial services and programs to residents, which is a costly commitment. As we look to really working on race equity initiatives and long-term economic self-sufficiency of people of color, we need to support ownership of property, homes and businesses by people of color and work to ensure our programs and services can continue.

One statement we have heard is that opposing the Takoma Junction project is a race equity matter because most of the employees of the TPSS Coop grocery store are people of color and if the TPSS Coop is hurt, their livelihoods will be hurt. As has been noted, the City is committed to not hurting the TPSS Coop grocery store and that is the reason for the very strong provisions of the Development Agreement. We as a City government also put strong efforts into protecting jobs in our community. All thirteen grocery stores in the City of Takoma Park have employees who are people of color, and most of the stores are owned by people of color. To help support our local economy while helping further race equity in our community, I encourage residents, particularly white residents of Takoma Park, to support all of our grocery stores to help them thrive and keep their staffs employed. Please, shop at MegaMart, Aldi's, Red Apple, Caribbean Market or any of the wonderful halal meat markets or Indian or Ethiopian food stores as well as the TPSS Coop. The success of all of these businesses is critical to Takoma Park's long term financial health and to our long term race equity goals.

As mentioned before, years of discussion, careful crafting of legal language and Council resolution text, and a long development review process have taken place so far on the Takoma Junction project. The Historic Preservation Commission supports the overall design and massing of the project, and the project will need to come back to the City Council to review how the revised plans meet the specifications provided by the Council in [Resolution 2018-41](#). While it will still take a while, I look forward to seeing the City take an ugly patch of asphalt and

transform it to something that is of greater use and of greater financial and environmental benefit for the whole community, while protecting the adjacent businesses and neighborhood.

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## REPORT OF THE COMMEMORATION COMMISSION

To: Takoma Park City Council

Re: Commission Recommendations and Activities

Submitted By Commission Members: Richard O'Connor, Co-Chair, Bruce Williams, Co-Chair, Fred Schultz, Howard Kohn, and Diana Kohn

Date: July 20, 2020

The Commission reports the following activities by the Commission:

1. Jackson-Boyd Park. The Commission recommends that the Park's name be changed. Commission recommends that the new Park name reflect a generic theme, rather than named for an individual. Examples of generic theme names:  
Women's Park, Activist's Park, Black Lives Matter Park, or Artist's Park

The Council should institute a public review of proposed names using multiple media to gain public input as to the new name. Examples include use of a survey monkey, newsletter poll and/or virtual town meeting via Zoom. The Commission also recommends creation of a memorial plaque wall to honor residents who have had a direct impact on Takoma Park( i.e. If named Women's Park - plaques honoring women in Takoma Park). The Commission awaits the Council's direction on generic vs. proper name.

2. Heffner Park Rename. The Commission held two public meetings in the Fall, 2019 with neighborhood residents. Based on comments from a large majority of participants at these meetings, the Commission recommends that the Council not change the name of the Park, but install a commemorative plaque in the Park outlining the history of the Park's creation.

3. General's Street Names - The Commission has examined this issue for the past eighteen months and has forwarded our recommendations to the Council in three reports. The Commission recommended that the street names not be changed and an interpretive plaque be placed on the history of the street names at Grant and Maple Ave. Council members have indicated that they do not wish to proceed with this interpretive plaque.

4. Commemorative Plaques. The Commission approved a commemorative plaque application in December, 2019 and the plaque was installed on a bench in Old Town in March, 2020. A dedication ceremony was cancelled for April due to Covid-19. Additional plaque applications have been delayed due to Covid-19.