



City of Takoma Park

City Manager Comments

Report of April 1, 2020

Census Day 2020 - You Count!

Information to Share

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Update

#Together TKPK

Today is the 19th day of the State of Maryland's declared health emergency for the Covid-19 pandemic. In the past two and half weeks, City staff have transitioned to working at home or working at a distance fairly well.

The biggest issue for Takoma Park is that the worst of the pandemic is yet to come and things will be scary. Stay calm, continue to socially isolate and practice good health habits, and be caring towards others. We can get through this together.

The City of Takoma Park is continuing to provide public safety, public works and most other City services. We have transitioned to providing many services remotely. What is awesome is how much we have been able to do to help others during this health emergency while continuing to do key City functions.

For Covid-19 information and resources, including links to many of the items listed in this report, go to: [Covid-19 Information and Resources](#)

Assistance to residents in multifamily buildings. One area of a great amount of staff time has been on working with residents and building managers of multifamily buildings. We have information on our Covid-19 Resources webpage that answers a number of questions. And, we are doing and planning a great deal of outreach to residents, building managers and property owners. This Montgomery County [FAQ](#) document is helpful. Some of the issues we are hearing:

- What to do about rent? Can I get evicted?
- What if someone in my building has Covid-19? If it's me, will my privacy be protected? How do we safely get to our unit, get our mail, do our laundry?
- What should building management be doing to help keep us safe?
- How will apartment buildings and condominium buildings be able to withstand non-payment of rent or HOA fees?

- What happens if there is a facility problem in my unit? How will inspections be done?

Business support and for people looking for work. Another area that has required a great deal of staff time is economic development work. Here are some of the activities:

- [Citywide Small Business Mini-Grant program](#) has been launched. Grants of up to \$3000 for emergency business assistance.
- [Online Donations for the Small Business Mini-Grant program.](#)
- [Takoma Park To-Go](#) web page launched. A list of all the restaurants that are offering delivery, pick-up, and curbside delivery.
- Employers Hiring: We are continuing to work with our employment partners at WorkSource Montgomery to bring you up to date information on "essential business" employers who are hiring. Find current job opportunities at this link: <https://worksourcemontgomery.com/blogs/current-job-opportunities/> WorkSource Montgomery also has webinars on topics like how to do a virtual interview. See: <https://worksourcemontgomery.com/calendar/>
- Recreation Center Community Engagement process is moving ahead with our selected firm, Brick & Story. We are reimagining the community engagement activities and connecting to our Start-Up in Resident tech firm, Kuorum, to amplify and adjust the engagement activities.
- Working with the Old Takoma Business Association and Takoma Langley Crossroads Development Authority, as well as reaching out to businesses not represented by a business association.
- Looking to connect businesses and potential employees to local hospitals as they prepare for the coming influx of patients.

General assistance to residents facing financial problems. Our [Emergency Assistance](#) Grants are available to people facing an immediate financial problem. We also are accepting community donations to this fund. To those who have already donated: Thank you!

Public Works is very busy. They have been making signs, doing a lot of deep cleaning work, will be starting some sidewalk and stormwater construction work, continue to work on the full range of permits, are doing the tree bulk buy program and planning for tree plantings, and continue to oversee the Flower Ave project which is working on sidewalk construction.

Communications, IT and the City Clerk's Office have been working very long hours. They are working to get virtual meetings planned, transition staff safely to working

remotely, and making sure that communications to the public are frequent, accurate and in the various modes that are needed.

Preparation of the FY21 Proposed Budget. Despite the pandemic, the City of Takoma Park needs a budget as of July 1. Preparation of the City's budget in a normal year is very difficult, as there is no dedicated budget department or staff in the City government. Couple the work that each department head and the Finance office staff does on the budget with a pandemic and working remotely and the workload increases exponentially. Staff has done an amazing job and I will give a presentation on the proposed budget on Monday, April 6. This year, there will be more changes than usual as the budget is being considered by Council through mid-May. As we learn new cost or savings information, budget figures will need to be adjusted. Look for details in the Takoma Park Newsletter that will be out this week.

Library, Recreation and Arts programming continues. Despite the limitation of the health emergency, many fun activities are now online. Whether you want to hear children's stories, do a workout, listen to a wonderful concert or do fun projects, City staff has been reaching out. In addition, the Recreation Department has been reaching out to seniors with the Phone a Neighbor Program and encouraging folks to email support letters to our Police and Public Works staff who are working each day in our community. Find links to all of these on our Covid-19 Information and Resources page online and then follow your favorites on social media.

Planning and Community Development work also continues. Longer term planning on many important projects is being done by staff working remotely. And, staff is helping out on communications and other pandemic response efforts as well. Just before the pandemic really hit here, Planner Jamee Ernst was fortunate to participate in the Post-Carbon Cities of Tomorrow Program (POCACITO). POCACITO is a European-American exchange program that facilitates professional exchanges on topics related to the post-carbon economy organized by the Ecologic Institute and funded by the Germany Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy. This year's program took place on March 1st to 7th and brought together 17 young professionals in urban planning, sustainability, and waste management from across the United States and travelled to Frankfurt, Cologne, and Aachen. The program discussed German sustainability initiatives from a variety of perspectives including city planners, German national bank officials, small business owners, autonomous vehicle research centers, and start up incubators. Though the program emphasized the urgency on a national level in Germany to take action around climate change, it also highlighted the United States' commitment to equity and accessibility which was not as present in the German planning process. Jamee is grateful for the opportunity to be included on this trip and to work for a City that is progressively advocating for sustainability and climate change solutions.