



City of Takoma Park

City Manager Comments

Report of May 12, 2021

COVID-19 Related Information

All residents 12 years of age and older can now be vaccinated!

Please get vaccinated as soon as possible. You can register through Montgomery County and the State of Maryland, and many pharmacies. A number of locations are offering walk-up vaccinations. Vaccination opportunities are popping up all over! Thanks to Deputy City Manager Jessica Clarke for helping identify Takoma Park locations for vaccination sites.

COVID-19 testing in Takoma Park

There will be COVID-19 testing this Saturday in Takoma Park at the Recreation Center on New Hampshire Avenue. The County recommends being tested monthly. For details on this and other testing options, please see the information here: [Montgomery County Testing Sites](#).

COVID-19 Dashboard

Each week, the City's COVID-19 Dashboard is updated. The most recent one is here: [COVID 19 Dashboard](#).

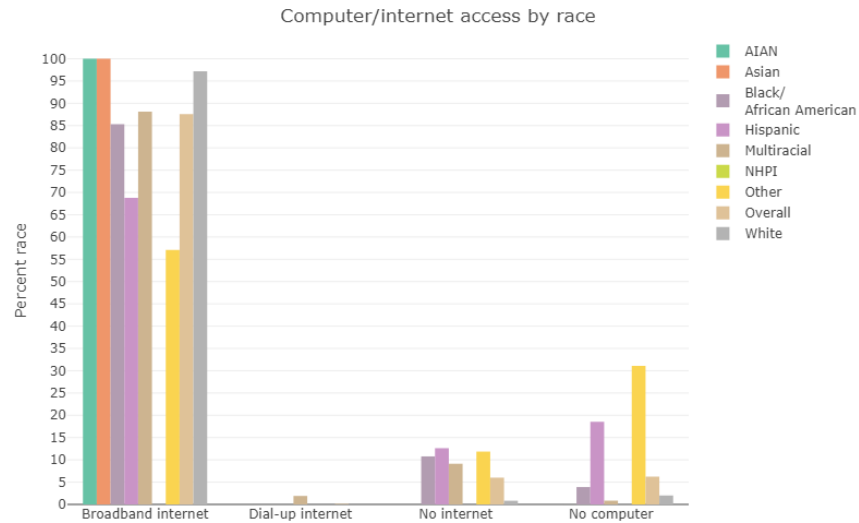
Will the Takoma Park, Maryland Library reopen to the public soon?

Montgomery County has announced that it will open some of its public libraries starting June 1. The nearest one to Takoma Park that will reopen is the downtown Silver Spring Library. Montgomery County Libraries will be open only by appointment and only on certain days. Some information is available in the County press release:

https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=35281

But, what about the Takoma Park Library? Our library will be permitted to be open under County health rules, but all of the City's buildings remain largely closed to the public and we are also in this period of preparing for new library construction. Construction is not anticipated to begin until November. What are the factors we are considering between now and November?

- 1) *People need wi-fi, computer and printer access for a variety of purposes including studying.* These services are critical for our lower-income residents, the majority of whom are people of color. We are working to find ways to provide these services here and in locations across the City. Between funds in the Library budget and anticipated federal funds, we will be getting these services out to the public as quickly as possible. This chart shows computer and internet access by race in Takoma Park.



- 2) *People miss browsing books in libraries.* It's not the same, but our talented librarians take pleasure in helping residents getting Books-to-Go or book delivery by making book and other resource suggestions. Having libraries open by appointment only limits the availability of browsing to those residents with more time and the ability to schedule such appointments, so opening by appointment likely does not uphold our racial equity service focus. We are investigating mobile or outdoor displays of some books so that we can allow residents access to do some browsing. And, we may organize special group visits to the library. More to come on that!

- 3) *People want to gather in libraries to read and attend programs.* These activities are less likely to occur this summer inside the Takoma Park Library. We will continue to offer virtual and outdoor programs, and we hope to have places for people to gather around town as the County health safety rules are relaxed.

So, stay tuned! **Our librarians miss you just as much as you miss the Library**, so we are looking to make things work in the best way possible.

County Council Supports GO Committee Recommendations on Tax Duplication Fairness!

Thanks to a large-scale push by Montgomery County municipal leaders and residents, and the leadership of Government Operations (GO) Committee Chair Nancy Navarro, the full County Council today endorsed the recommendation of the GO Committee that the municipalities get the [municipal tax duplication](#) rebate amount they had been requesting for FY22 and put the processes in play to get fair rebates in FY23 and beyond. This is a tremendous win! Council President Tom Hucker now needs to put the full amount of the additional money in the Reconciliation document for final approval.

What is the amount recommended for FY22? GO Chair Nancy Navarro proposed adding \$5 million to the County Executive's proposed amount for tax duplication rebates. The \$5 million

was divided into three amounts (\$2 million, \$1.5 million, \$1.5 million), in case a decision is made that the County cannot fully fund the entire \$5 million. The \$5 million would be divided among the County's municipalities; if the County fully funds the increase, the City of Takoma Park would receive an additional \$480,000.

What is the plan for FY23 and the following years? The next most important step is to determine a fair amount to be reimbursed for police services. The City of Takoma Park currently receives about \$4 million for police services, but that is based on an obsolete model of policing. Gaithersburg, Rockville and Chevy Chase Village get no money for their police services, because they do not have full-service police agencies. The County Code needs to be changed to allow rebates for shared services and the four jurisdictions with police departments need to negotiate with the County on a reasonable formula that would estimate what the County would spend if they provided all of the police services. Negotiations are to be concluded by this October so that the amounts can be in the FY23 budget. In addition to determining the formula for police services, a formula for park maintenance costs also needs to be developed.

What can you do to ensure that Takoma Park and the other Montgomery County municipalities get back all of the money that has been overpaid to the County?

First, thank the County Councilmembers for their support, then contact Council President Tom Hucker and reinforce the importance of putting the entire additional \$5 million in the reconciliation budget. We understand that the amount might be on the "Category 2 List." The definition we have been given for Category 2 is: "Additions to the base budget that should be considered as soon as additional resources are available. During FY22, perhaps as early as this summer, the Council can consider adding items from this list to the base budget if additional resources become available. For example, receiving more FEMA reimbursements than anticipated could free up County General Fund dollars."

So, send thanks to:

Councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov
Councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov
Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov
Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov
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Councilmember.Riemer@montgomerycountymd.gov

And, urge Council President Tom Hucker to expedite the \$5 million in additional funding.

Councilmember.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov

Speaking of Additional Funding...

U.S. Treasury Department guidance on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was released on Monday. Staff is still reading the guidance document and getting interpretations and additional information from professional associations that have been studying this law. So we will share more details when we know them. But, I am thrilled that many aspects of the regulations are written in ways to allow great flexibility by local jurisdictions.

Through ARPA, Takoma Park is expected to receive approximately \$14.8 million in two tranches: \$7.2 million likely next month and then an additional \$7.2 million one year from now. States, counties and large municipalities received their allocations this past Monday. “Non-entitlement units of government,” such as Takoma Park, will receive funds via a pass-through process from the state governments. The actual amount that Takoma Park will receive has not yet been finalized, but we are hoping to hear soon.

Programs and work that can be funded through this money include the kinds of direct services to residents and businesses hurt by the pandemic that we have been providing through the City’s COVID-19 fund. But, the amounts are much greater and the services that we can provide are broader. We can also provide premium pay for essential workers (although there are some special definitions related to this subject), and we can assist whole communities facing health disparities. There are many more examples of services that we can provide, such as: mental health, internet access, community approaches to reduce violence, workforce development.

In addition, we can invest in infrastructure improvements:

- Stormwater infrastructure
- Public buildings with improvements needed, such as locations that are dense worksites
- Affordable housing development
- Roads and other infrastructure improvements that are paid for from regular tax or similar revenue sources (not via bonding)

A key provision for most of the uses of the funds is that the funds should go to communities, businesses and nonprofits that were hardest hit by the pandemic, and the amounts provided should be reasonably related to the amount of negative impact. These are critical criteria to consider in determining how ARPA funds should be spent.

Very exciting to me is the effort to make handling these funds not too onerous on small municipalities. We are given the money up front; it is not a reimbursement program where we have to spend our own funds first. And, we will file annual reports on October 31, rather than filing the quarterly reports required of larger governments.

Also, while the ARPA funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, the funds do not need to be spent until December 31, 2026. This is much more reasonable when dealing with larger projects and allows us to be thoughtful on how we decide to accomplish City goals with the federal funds.

Hooray!

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Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

May 12, 2021

Honorable City Councilmembers and Residents,

On April 7, I presented the Proposed FY22 City budget to you. Tonight, the Takoma Park City Council is adopting at First Reading the FY22 Budget Ordinances for the City.

The theme of my recommended budget was “Planning for a New Day.” With vaccinations now widely available and federal funds coming to help communities recover from the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, that “New Day” is truly in sight. With this adopted budget, the Council is building on those positive signs by providing the foundation and tools for staff and a new City Manager to meet the needs of the coming year.

As I noted in my budget transmittal message, preparation of the City’s Budget each year is a herculean task. Fortunately, the City has a remarkably skilled, dedicated staff who do much, much more than is indicated by their job titles.

Thank you to Finance Director Susan Cheung. She keeps the financial systems of the City safe, provides wise advice to managers, and coordinates the budget preparation process each year. Thank you to Deputy City Manager Jessica Clarke who brought her own budgeting experience to the City a year ago and has greatly improved our internal processes. Thank you as well to Budget and Accounting Manager Ron Kawaley, Communications Specialist Donna Wright and all of our department heads for their hard work. The City has won the prestigious Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the last three years because of their work and due to the commitment to budget transparency by the City Council.

My work preparing, presenting and improving the budget each year and ensuring the continued excellent financial management of the City are the elements I am most proud of regarding my service to the City of Takoma Park as City Manager. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Suzanne R. Ludlow