



Good Evening,

My name is Talisha Searcy, and I am the Mayor of the City of Takoma Park. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight on behalf of our residents regarding the Minor Master Plan Amendment. I also want to thank the Montgomery County planning staff who worked on this Plan.

The City of Takoma Park's housing and economic development goals are threefold: preserve, protect, and produce. We want to preserve existing businesses and affordable housing in Takoma Park, including in revitalizing areas; produce more housing and opportunities for businesses to start and grow across the income spectrum and allow the City to meet our diverse housing and economic needs; and protect renters, homeowners, and local businesses from discrimination and displacement, and our environment from destruction.

With the unexpected relocation of the Washington Adventist Hospital, the Minor Master Plan Amendment opens a door for our community to realize what is needed to advance its housing and economic development goals as well as support the advancement of vital City resources such as its affordable housing stock, schools, parks, and municipal buildings. However, the plan needs to be revised to better reflect the City's values as well as ensure that the plan takes the necessary steps to protect the most vulnerable among us.

The Minor Master Plan Amendment should include zoning amendments that are designed to:

1. Incentivize the creation of a range of housing types;
2. Retain and improve existing affordable housing;
3. Retain existing and attract new local businesses;
4. Create new public space opportunities; and
5. Strengthen social and environmental assets.

To ensure that this happens, the Takoma Park City Council passed a resolution requiring that the Planning Board holds worksessions on four topics of great importance to the community.

The first topic is the Potential Redevelopment of the Washington Adventist Site and the Flower Avenue District. We implore you to take a closer look at the Plan to examine how the development requirements,

including set-backs, building heights and step downs, lot coverage and density of the newly proposed zoning for the Washington Adventist site impact neighboring single-family housing. The Plan should reduce the scale, height, and apply appropriate set-backs of parcels adjoining Maplewood and Greenwood Avenues. Additionally, the Plan should retain the green space at Hospital Hill (i.e., Maplewood Ave and Maple Ave) and increase the recommended ½ acre central public open space. The plan should also clearly state the allowable line of development for property abutting Sligo Creek.

The second topic is Promoting a Diversity of Housing in the Plan Area. Like other communities, the City of Takoma Park needs missing middle housing. It is important that the plan aids in providing a diversity of housing options. The Plan should recommend that any new units constructed within the Plan area help meet the City's objectives of increasing the number of units and variety of housing types across the affordability spectrum that result in economically diverse communities. Where appropriate, in the Maple Avenue District, the Plan should encourage innovative in-fill development opportunities on underutilized portions of parcels that do not adversely impact existing affordable housing units.

The Board should also hold a work-session on the Public Space, Infrastructure, and Amenities within the plan. Please examine the impact of the density proposed on access to and provision of public space, infrastructure, recreational facilities, school capacity, roads, public utilities, and healthcare. The Plan should include more specific recommendations around the activation and creation of usable greenspace including the activation of the greenspace neighboring Essex House and identification of additional opportunities for ballfields and structured play areas. The Plan should also clearly support improvements in multi-modal transportation, help to meet City and County climate goals, and address the current and future challenges of local vehicle traffic in the plan area.

Lastly, the City of Takoma Park contains 4 percent of the county's housing stock but we make up 9 percent of the county's affordable housing units. It is vital that we protect affordable housing in the City and demand that the Board hold a work session focused on Protecting Existing Housing Affordability in the Plan area. Specifically, the board should examine how the Plan's stakeholders can retain existing housing affordability while improving the quality of existing housing. Additionally, the Board should explore what protection

mechanisms are in Plan to prevent displacement of current renters and ensure no-net loss of affordable housing.

In addition to the aforementioned work sessions, the City will also submit for the public record additional comments and information requests that we would like for the Board to address prior to advancing the revised Plan to the City Council and the Montgomery County Council. As a critical partner in the future success of the Plan, the City also expects the opportunity to review and react to the findings of the upcoming worksessions prior to the advancement of any Planning Board Draft.

The City of Takoma Park supports the re-envisioning of the Washington Adventist Hospital campus and the enhancement of critical civic, economic, and housing resources in the surrounding neighborhoods along the Maple Avenue corridor. However, it must be done in a manner that enhances the quality of life of residents and is environmentally and financially sustainable. The Plan is a vital step towards realizing this shared goal.