

Public Space Management Plan Survey Results

In September, 2020, the City of Takoma Park released a survey that invited all residents of Takoma Park to share their opinions about public space management priorities and opinions about the current state of public space in the city. Participants accessed the 20-question survey via a link to a Google Form. The survey remained open from September 10th, 2020 to March 5, 2021, and a total of 225 unique participants responded. The following summarizes the primary findings from the survey.

Public Space Access

The vast majority of survey participants reported easy access to public parks and greenspace within a short distance from their homes. Just over 90% of participants reported that they can walk to a park within 10 minutes from their home and 82% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that there is a park or natural area in their neighborhood which provides good access to nature. By the same measure, 72% of participants felt that there was adequate tree cover on their street. The nearby public spaces get significant use as well. Nearly half (47%) of participants said they use the park closest to their home daily or multiple times per day, and 27% use it on a weekly basis.

Public Space Needs

The survey asks participants to answer three versions of a question to assess what they see as public space needs in their neighborhood and Takoma Park as a whole. The first asks about which factors cause participants to use a park further from their home than their local park. The top five most common replies were:

- More open space (46%)
- Better playground equipment (28%)
- More seating options (21%)
- Change of scenery (8%)
- More nature and/or wildlife viewing opportunities (8%)

The second question asks what kinds of public space that participants believe are needed in Takoma Park as a whole? The top five most common replies were:

- Green space or natural area (62%)
- Repurposed street spaces for other uses such as farmer's markets (55%)
- Small urban gathering spaces such as plazas (54%)
- Playgrounds or other recreation space (35%)
- More community gardens and cultivated garden spaces (4%)

There were five pre-populated answers offered to participants, as well as an opportunity for anyone to submit additional answers, which reflects the wide disparity between the 4th and 5th most common replies.

The third question asked participants what they believe are the parks, recreation, or other public space needs in their neighborhood. Without any pre-populated answers, participants suggested a wide range of needs for their neighborhood. For a full breakdown of the themes, as well as specific project suggestions, see Appendix A. The top five replies were:

- Improved maintenance including landscaping, lawn care, facilities repairs, and trash collection (10%)
- More places to gather (8%)
 - *This was frequently mentioned in relation to spaces for adults to get together that weren't designed explicitly for children.*
- More community gardens and cultivated garden spaces (7%)
- More seating options, including picnic tables (6%)
- More open space (6%)

Public Space Priorities

Six questions on the survey were designed to identify priorities for public space, including an option for residents to suggest any priorities not represented in the options displayed. Two themes emerged as the most important priorities that the city should pursue by substantial margins: the maintenance and improvement of existing public spaces (95%) and ensuring equal access to public space for all residents (93%). As seen in Table 1, the remaining priorities were still supported by a majority of participants, but by a smaller amount: Creatively repurposing existing right of way as public space (79%), developing criteria to evaluate existing public space and future opportunities for public space (71%), and acquiring new public space (51%).

The responses included 122 participants who wrote-in additional comments on what they would like to see prioritized. Most of the comments either elaborated on why they ranked certain priorities the way they did; reiterated a desire for equity as a core component of public space access, maintenance, and strategic planning; spotlighted specific projects to devote time and resources toward, such as the public spaces at Takoma Junction and the Laurel Ave street closure; or noted factors that impact how people use public space, such as the need for specific traffic calming measures.

Table 1: Summary of Prioritization					
	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	Not Important at All
Maintaining and improving existing public space	73%	22%	4%	0%	0%
Ensuring equal access to public space for all residents	79%	14%	6%	0%	0%
Acquiring new public space	23%	28%	31%	11%	6%
Creatively repurposing existing right of way as public space (Including improving access for bikes and pedestrians on City streets, creation of parklets, outdoor cafes, ect)	59%	19%	12%	6%	4%
Developing criteria to evaluate existing public space and future opportunities for public space	44%	27%	22%	4%	3%

Participant Demographics

Before finishing the survey, participants were optionally asked to share demographic information about themselves relating to where they live (which was coded to match with their ward), race/ethnicity, gender, age, and physical disability status. Not all participants submitted this information, but 86% of participants shared some or all of the requested information.

- ***A large majority of participants live in Wards 1, 2, and 3 (76%),*** whereas participants from Wards 4, 5, and 6 made up only 19% of respondents. The remaining 5% of participants were either not local or did not give an address precise enough to attribute to a specific ward.
- ***83% of participants described themselves as White;*** 6% identified as multiracial; 4% identified as Asian; 3% identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 3% identified as Black/African American, and the remaining 1% identified as something other than what was offered.
- ***66% of participants identified as women;*** 31% identified as men; and the remaining 3% identifies as non-binary or “Other”.
- ***Participants aged 45-64 were the most represented age group (46%).*** Combined with the 65+ age group (17%), the total percentage of participants over age 45 was 63%. The remaining 36% of participants appear to fall into the 22-44 age range, but an error in the age-group parameters means that ages 19-21 were not included in the survey. Only one participant identified as 18 or younger (0.5%).
- ***Only 4% of participants self-identified as someone living with a physical disability.***

Appendix A: Summary of Responses to the Question: “In your neighborhood what do you believe are the parks, recreation, or other public space needs?” and the Accompanying Write-in Suggestions

Response Themes	% of Participants	Specific Suggestions
Poor maintenance at local parks	9.7%	Better maintenance
More places to gather	7.5%	5th ave is hilly and cars fly down the hills. Safety of the street needs to be addressed by installing children at play or speed limit signs
More community and cultivated garden space	6.6%	A better playground
More seating options	6.2%	A better recreation center/gym facility!
More open space	5.8%	A bit more maintenance - often mushrooms and weeds are taking over parts of the playgrounds. In addition, educational signage about trees or interesting features would be great (e.g. plaque at Becca Lilly), to learn about the history or features of the park.
Better playground equipment	5.3%	a community garden to serve apartment dwellers
More bicycle facilities	5.3%	A concrete or wooden wall for throwing balls or kicking balls against
More trees/shade	4.9%	A forest garden, and more trees. Also, STOP CUTTING DOWN TAKOMA'S TREE COVER. Do you not realize why the area is so beautiful, why it's cooler here than in DC, and why we still have some semblance of wildlife? And with the climate emergency things are going to get hotter and more dire. Save the trees. And enforce the ordinance requiring people to plant a tree if they cut one down. I've seen zero evidence of this recently.
Invasive species removal	4.4%	A place for outdoor music with a dance floor.
More public space programming	4.4%	a sign to show Kelly Park is a TP pub space
Other	4.4%	adding trees, bushes. decreasing invasive plants. reducing noisy traffic and speeding. add speed bumps.
No changes needed	4.0%	After requesting over and over that the main path in Spring park be repaired, the repaired only half and told us they didnt have enough money for the other half. It remains falling apart and barely stroller or wheelchair access.
More trail facilities	4.0%	As mentioned, downtown gathering center.
More child-friendly place spaces	3.5%	Bathroom, more play equipment, updated basketball court, a tennis court; New sports facilities

Traffic calming	3.5%	Becca Lilly park is beautiful but needs some maintenance of the older equipment. It would be nice to improve tree cover on Wildwood Drive as a lot of older trees were removed to put in sidewalks and the new trees that were planted are too small and short (and most died) to provide cooling shade. Larger trees would have to go into people's property so city would need to work with residents to make it happen. The portion of the neighborhood closer to the University and Caroll intersection has a lot of young families and no park nearby. A park or amenity there (green space playground) would be great. Also the Adventist campus has tons of green space but it is underutilized. Can we build a kids splash park there under the beautiful mature trees?
More space for games or recreation	3.1%	Better baseball diamond and basketball court. Just paint lines on basketball court in Forrest park!
No issue	3.1%	Better bike path access to Sligo creek trail & downtown Takoma
Public, outdoor exercise facilities	2.7%	better drainage, grounds maintenance, things similar to DC parks (outdoor exercise equipment, interesting adult options).
Better stormwater management	2.2%	Better storm water management
More nature/wildlife viewing opportunities	2.2%	Better stormwater management. Updated playground equipment. More picnic benches with grills and trash cans next to them.
Dog-specific facilities	1.8%	better support for bicycles
Public bathroom access	1.8%	better upkeep
New sports facilities	1.8%	Better, bigger, more creative dog park, trash more regularly emptied at existing playgrounds/parks, grass cut at Opal Daniels
More facilities/features for multiple age groups	1.8%	Children's playspace
Better sidewalk infrastructure	1.3%	Clean up and maintenance. We have 3 public spaces that surround our neighborhood and all 3 are essentially unmaintained and 2 of 3 are littered with trash - Circle Woods, Dorothy's Woods, and the forest at poplar and New Hampshire Ave. junction.
Improved signage/wayfinding	1.3%	community garden, sport facilities
More public art	0.9%	Community/Public outdoor pool
More curbside/sidewalk dining opportunities	0.9%	Dedicated spots for vendors/artisans that are affordable.
More splash pads/spray parks	0.9%	Do something with waldos wild
Swimming pool	0.9%	Dog parks
Add WiFi	0.4%	Engaging Art Projects
More public plazas	0.4%	Established and delineated bike lanes that are continuous, safe, and clear; outdoor space for dining and distances social activities like exercise classes; continuous stretches of roads closed to traffic

Better lighting	0.4%
Public drinking fountains	0.4%

Event space, green space/picnic tables/grills. Community gardens , food access / local food pathways
Exercise equipment, deer management
Green space with seating and paths
Heffner Park; Takoma-Piney Branch Park
Hillwood Manor needs more streetlights on 13th Ave by the playground. Cars use that area as a cut through and drive very fast and there are no sidewalks and it is hard for drivers to see families walking home at night..
I think Opal Daniels Park is not well utilized. It is almost always empty. I go there every day with my dog but I think the space could be much better utilized. Frankly, I think there could be more housing built there. Or there could be an actual dog park and a basketball court since there are kids that play in the street near there. Also, there's a pavilion and people sometimes throw parties there and don't clean up. If it was better utilized I think people would feel more of a responsibility to clean up. But pre-COVID, since the park was empty it was just a perfect spot for teenagers to smoke weed.
I think the closed Adventists school space should be absorbed into Spring Park
I think they are good now. Maybe more sports fields for youth leagues, but my kids aged out of that a while ago
i think we are in quite good shape
I think we are very lucky and have more than enough public space- at least 2 playgrounds and Sligo Creek trail. I hope all neighborhoods can have the same plethora of options!
I would like to see a space for outdoor concerts with space for people to put down a picnic blanket to hang out on.
I would like to see native plant gardens, exercise equipment for adults, separate trails for bikes
I would love walking trails through Dorothy"s woods.
I'd like to see my closest park under the auspices of the City rather than M-NCPPC
I'd love a flat, freshly paved space for rollerblading
I'm not sure. I think outdoor gathering spaces And space for outdoor dining
If some green space was developed more as a garden I would enjoy that. Trees, flowers, specimen plants, paths, water features, etc.
Improved access to public fruits, nuts, and vegetables.
improved trash and recycling receptacles and more consistent pick up. esp in sligo creek trails and parks.
in my part of the city I think we are pretty covered for public space. Having another field that kids could play soccer would be great.
In the PEN neighborhood, there isn't a single obvious playground to use. There is Belle Ziegler and Piney Branch, but both are across major

thoroughfares and a bit of a walk. A closer community park would be nice.
Invasive plant removal, features like paths, benches in non-park settings (e.g., circle woods)
Invasive species removal
it's over a mile to the nearest community garden plots, would be great to have many more closer, as well as more edible landscaping in the parks
It's time to re-purpose Takoma Branch park into something usable.
Keep them clean, trash picked up.
Keep up with maintenance, the enjoyable walking portion of spring park was shut down for weeks because tree maintenance wasn't kept up
Lack of quality and larger play grounds is an issue specially compared to other jurisdictions.
large green spaces for social use
Large parks, our parks are too small
larger open space for gatherings - dances, events
Less tire rubber mulch and more natural materials
Maintenance
Maintenance
maintenance, long branch park is a mess.
More 'garden/park' less activity space.
More areas of visual relief and pollinator gardens with native plants
more inviting for children
more low impact trails through natural spaces
more natural areas; community gardens
More open area unprogrammed, a place to set up a picnic and read a book
More open space to picnic
More open space, free of cars.
More open space/fields
More opportunities for adults to gather, picnic tables
More options to gather -- more and better seating areas, more covered picnic spaces, wifi
More picnic tables and shelters in parks - especially during COVID. It would also really be nice to have portapotties in all parks.
More places to play sports/games
More public gathering space parks for adults. Not just playground equipment.

more public space for socializing
More public space is always a goal in itself. It neednt be specially programmed
More seating, bit six (6) ft clear on all sidewalks during pandemic
More shade trees, benches to sit, less pavement
More shaded area at our neighborhood park (I believe called Sligo Overlook Park, it's the one on Orchard and 5th) to make it functional for older adults. More sidewalks to increase accessibility for wheelchairs and strollers and safety for kids. More bike lanes.
More space to socially distance on trails. We live close to Sligo Creek, but we rarely go there except on weekends when the road is closed because it's too hard to socially distance due to COVID
More stuff to climb higher on at the Sligo Mill Overlook Park rather than the ornamental flower poles; clean-up of Sligo Mill/Poplar Mill Park to remove hazardous sharp waste; stopping illegal dumping there including dumping by Public Works staff
more tables
More trash cans, water fountains for people and dogs, and possibly public restrooms
More trees, ours are all dying
More trees. make area near the community garden more inviting. there are some areas proximate to new hampshire that are very industrial and bit unwelcoming
Mosquito control- I've just about given up on spring park because the mosquitos are unbearable.
Mostly our park (Sligo creek) is wonderful! Have loved the street being closed extra days and would love to see that expanded.
My neighborhood has easy access to two parks and a handful of wooded areas. My main concern is ensuring that the opportunity to grow food is accessible to those living in apartment buildings or neighborhoods without sufficient green spaces nearby.
My neighborhood has good open space options with two MNCPPC parks in close proximity. However, not all of Takoma has these options.
My neighborhood has great access to parks. More outdoor dining due to the pandemic would be great, though I am sensitive to the needs of people who have physical disabilities and need to be able to navigate the sidewalks. I support reconfiguring the intersection at the Junction to merge Sycamore with Carroll and create a new public plaza that is easily accessible and more inviting than the current space. .
My neighborhood has plenty of parks
My neighborhood is good, with nice sidewalks
My nieghborhood is actually really well-equipped.
My park is on Sligo Creek. The community could use another park.
Natural spaces for walking, sitting, birdwatching, enjoying.

Natural spaces, protected but key lanes, adult exercise equipment, and seats for people to work outside amongst trees
Need for newer playground equipment, maintenance of existing equipment.
need space for live music, food trucks, get together, maybe cool water fountain
No needs in my ward 2 neighborhood—I can walk to 5 parks. More for ward 5 and 6!
None
None
none - we are very blessed to have forest park and spring park as well as Dorothy's Woods.
None; we have good spaces
None. We have more than enough public space.
Not enough safe places to enjoy the outdoors space - need to ensure separation of vehicles and people and create pleasant spaces to be in
Nothing I think Sligo creek is great generally
Open public space at Takoma Junction, green lawn around library
Open space surrounded by lots of trees. Places to bike, play sports, and for little ones explore. Safe places for elderly to walk. Tracks to run on recreationally.
Our tree cover is rapidly vanishing due to dying trees. Need aggressive replanting to restore canopy.
Outdoor space specifically for kids to utilize when the rec center is closed.
PERHAPS another two benches around the perimeter.
pickleball courts
Place to entertain / educate kids, give dogs exercise, meet with friends and family
Places for children during the day; shaded/paved/snow-cleared trails for dog walkers and exercisers. Eradication of invasive plant species like multiflora rose that are steadily overtaking public wild spaces to the exclusion of all else and equally important replanting those areas with vigorous, competitive natives capable of preventing the invasives from returning.
Play area for older kids
playground equipment for the children; traffic slowed as it passes the park
Playgrounds and family recreation spaces; linear parks for recreation
Pool

Pretty much the same answer as above: We should be permanently closing BOTH sides of Laurel as a permanent pedestrian zone, etc. We should be cleaning and maintaining the many green areas for more public use and "opening up" some of the closed street areas in neighborhoods to actual park use. We have the tree cover and the green space, but it has to be converted, cleaned, maintained and cooperative deals worked with county and WSSC partners to have full use of space, access to water, unburying water, etc.
programmable gathering space at Laurel Ave
Protected bike lanes, wider sidewalks, widened/additional trails that separate bikers from walkers/joggers, and calisthenics equipment like dip bars and pull up bars.
Protecting of Forest Park Ravine from development
Public space next to co-op used for events, food trucks, food distribution. I also want places to meet, sit and eat outside.
reduced traffic flow on residential streets through making streets dead ends and one way to minimize/eliminate cut throughs.
Restore native plants at Dorothy's Woods and use property to educate residents on sustainable environmental practices
Restrooms
Safe sidewalks
Safer space for cycling and other non-car transportation.
Safety concern at intersection of Kennebec & Sligo Creek
Signage! I realize that in America the 'Me' culture seems to be paramount but without guidance humans can be even more stupid when they are out and about. In the UK we use signs to let people clearly see what they can and can't do and definitely must not do.
Signs to discourage off-leash dogs, which are currently very commonly encountered on public trails and in public parks near me.
Sligo Creek Park
Sligo creek trail is great but it's too crowded. We need more/wider trails that separate bikers from walkers/joggers so everyone can enjoy trails safely. We also need more fitness opportunities in parks, especially during covid. I would love a park with equipment for dips, pull ups, and other calisthenics activities!
Something more for adults
space with tables, chairs area like mini parkour course at Ed Wilhelm Field. Yes. I know its a kids playground 😊
Spaces for growing food, both by and for community members; attention to and removal of invasive vines that threaten to topple mature canopy trees.
Spray park
spring park needs work.

Stewart Park needs trimming And planting.
Support for pollinators, agricultural education programs such as Charles Koiner Foundation and Farm initiatives.
Takoma/Langley Xroads needs a community space
The existing public space is good.
The folks in apartments on Maple ave would benefit from additional accessible copmmunity garden and park space, especially thozse residents who are elderly, poor, and/or unwell
The grass area next to the Takoma Park Rec Center feels like it needs to be renovated for a park/recreating area. Maybe a soccer field? There are so many children in the two highrises next to it that love to play there.
The park in my neighborhood is on Sligo Creek and is not part of the city parks.
The playground equipment is an amalgamation that is of little use to kids older than five and younger than 13. It is a park that lacks a swing set and therefore kids do not come or hang around. There is no seesaw either. We want the grass removed and replaced by plantings as in some of the better city parks like Spring Park
There aren't any needs. Our neighborhood is already incredibly privileged with having city-focus. Other poorer neighborhoods should get the focus. If anything, the Triangle park on PG ave near New Hampshire could have a brainstorming session over its future. I'd like to potentially see a skate park or something similar in that space for youth.
Tree and forest health: need to manage long term against invasive species (including plants), and climate-adapted tree plantings
Tree protection, bike lanes
upkeep, gathering areas, better seating, better playground equipment
Ward 3 seems to have lots of playgrounds, but maybe some little areas with bench groupings and some fun outside art.
We have a tiny park/lot owned by the city. We, the neighbors, have done a ton of work there but compared to other parklets, the city has done almost nothing - no signage, no benches, tree maintenance only when we ask multiple times
We have a very nice park--Opal Daniels. Would like more bike lanes
We need more natural surface walking trails for health reasons.
We need more play space for kids, and there is city owned land to do it.
We need spaces that will bring people together
WiFi
would be cool to have outdoor rec classes at our local parks on an ongoing basis, even after covid. Like yoga at Forest Park.
Would be nice if the woods at the top of my street along Columbia and Circle Woods were made easier to enjoy by adding paths and benches.

Yes