



**City of Takoma Park, MD
Reimagining Public Safety Task Force
Meeting Summary
June 8, 2021**

Welcome, Review Charge, Timeline, and Public Comment Form

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Business Walk Report

Jamal Holtz (co-facilitator) introduced Kayleigh Gunnoud, Executive Director, Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority who reported on the Crossroads Business Walk which took place on Friday, June 4. Task Force members who attended included Cedric Boatman, Michael Rubin, Adam Braskich, and Kiminori Nakamura. Kayleigh Gunnoud, Executive Director, Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority, organized the walk, which was also attended by Deputy City Manager, Jessica Clarke; co-facilitator Jamal Holtz; and LINK staff, Carole Lambert.

Jamal invited the Task Force members who participated to share their experiences and noted that business owners and staff comments fell into the following areas:

- *Enforcement wanted.*
- *Deal with loitering.*
- *Deter “casing the joint”.*
- *Investment in lighting and speed bumps to lead to savings down the road.*
- *STOP signs at intersections within parking lot to reduce accidents.*
- *Police regular rounds to act as deterrent.*
- *Deal with public drunkenness.*
- *Have a fund for upgrades, i.e., cameras, fencing, gates.*
- *Improve communication with the Hispanic community.*



Ms. Gunnoud gave thanks and “huge kudos” to the Task Force members who joined the walk on Friday. Ms. Gunnoud offered the following comments and observations:

The name of the game at the Crossroads – because we always have difficulty getting people to online forums – is going door to door. I learned things for myself on Friday. The City of Tacoma Park created the district management authority to get resources into the Crossroads area; license fees help to support the resources. The authority is responsible for common area maintenance, promotion, and security. There are some gaps: our mandate is common areas. Litter, for example, is picked only in city areas. Businesses in the Crossroads have been targets of specific criminal groups; they come in vans to panhandle and shoplift. So there is room for improvement hopefully coming from the Task Force initiative. One of the items the business community would support is improved safety in the Crossroads which is right on the Montgomery County/Prince George’s County line. Find a way to overcome cross-jurisdictional issues and develop a form and model of working together. Our customers are all in Prince George’s County; things may not be going well on either side of the line. Language access and the ability to connect are critically important to build trust. The police presence not adequate. There are real substance abuse problems. I’m not an expert but I’m not aware of any specific interventions in our area: there is a gap in service. Montgomery County street level outreach to people in distress in the Crossroads is contracted to Bethesda Cares which gets a worker to the area one or two times per month. How can we resource more? Personally, I’m all for that. That’s my wide-angle view of public safety and challenges and how it’s working in the Crossroads.

Q: Is there a need for coordination on the policing side between Prince George’s County and Takoma Park? Are there associations you interact with? Can you get all businesses together?

A: We’re much more organized on the Takoma Park side. Originally the CDA intended the relationship to be equal. Recently there is some energy on the Langley Park side. There is a new nonprofit: CDC Northern Gateway. Its objectives are broader and it is a much younger organization; it does share some common goals with us. We are a (C) (6) CDA so we do not have access to grants. We are starting a foundation which will be cross-county and that will give us some possibilities.

Q: What kind of collaboration is there between businesses regarding video cameras, and the systems in place, and sharing information with the police? Video systems vary widely in quality and features so there is room for improvement with the police department involved and making recommendations on how to set systems up.

A: External security cameras are a problem and a challenge. Businesses have their own camera array within their stores. Trying to address the external camera situation we must collaborate with owners. CDA rebate funds are about \$10K and businesses can apply for help with buying cameras. The economic development manager in the city is working with businesses. There is a big liability challenge for city in having the police department advise on security cameras and equipment.



Q: Have you assessed how much economic damage there has been as a result of COVID in the Crossroads? Is there a way to receive ARPA money to support those businesses and further economic development?

A: The metric we can look at is vacancy. We did lose a number of business but the market remains very strong in the Crossroads. We have no net loss in the Crossroads. We have not seen the end of this and are concerned with what happens when the funding ends. ARPA funds are coming to city and the business associations have a weekly meeting with the city economic development manager. We don't know how funds will be distributed; a priority list is being built; we have talked about security.

Q: I'm trying to understand the camera issue-what was the issue-what kind of liability?

A: The first concern is invasion of privacy. Then, if the city buys the systems and something happens, something doesn't work, is city held liable? There are questions in the Crossroads and in Takoma Park regarding undocumented persons and civil liberty concerns. Could the systems be used by ICE? Takoma Park is a sanctuary city and wouldn't do that.

Q: Part of advocacy is to get Takoma Park to buy the cameras. How can you resolve those issues?

A: It would probably have to be subsidy by property owners; that's a positive direction to go in.

Ms. Gunnoud thanked the Task Force for their work and focus and addressing the business community too – it is appreciated. Ms. Gunnoud looks forward to seeing the recommendation drafts and continuing to talk with the team.

End Meeting

Jevin Hodge thanked attendees for participating and ended the public meeting.

Subcommittee Breakout Work Sessions: Begin Formalizing Recommendations

The public portion of the meeting ended and the Task Force reconvened in subcommittees. Michael Akin (co-facilitator) oriented the subcommittees to the process and purpose for this evening's work session: facilitators will walk the subcommittees through the draft recommendation language to 1) evaluate alignment with the charge, goals and objectives, and focus areas; and 2) identify what is missing and needs to be added or is outside the scope of the Task Force.

The draft language was drawn from Task Force meeting and Listening Session summaries, stakeholder and focus group reports, summaries submitted by Task Force members, public comment, and the Prince George's County Reimagining Public Safety Report which Task Force members had identified as being the model most nearly aligned to the goals of Takoma Park.



What follows are high-level takeaways from the general review and discussion of the drafted material for each subcommittee.

#1 Community Quality of Life – Jevin Hodge/Sawa Kamara

The subcommittee reviewed draft recommendations provided by committee members. The subcommittee started to place the recommendations into categories which follow in parentheses.

- License plate reader technology. (*Programmatic reform and Budget reform*)
- The establishment of a 24-hour victim response line that is staffed, not by police officials. Identify a subset of officers who shall be responsible for responding to calls for police assistance without weapons. Provide specific training to these individuals violence prevention and de-escalation. Incorporate additional new staff dedicated to serving as case managers, mental health service providers, and outreach specialists. Rename this division as a Community Safety Team and remove it from the supervision of the Police Department.
- Budgetary Recommendation: re (Preferred Non-police availability) and to avoid both calls for police and mental health (Community Safety Force #4), more community serviced based volunteers that don't carry weapons.
- Establish a full time civilian staffed, volunteer Takoma Park Public Safety Task Force. (Not based on hourly perspective)
- Publicize any increases in funding for police in Takoma Park's annual budget at least 30 days before the budget is voted on by the City Council. Have the increases reviewed by a standing committee of Takoma residents mentioned above which will be responsible for reviewing and approving the increases
- Subcommittee members will share notes regarding topics not covered by email.

#2 Alternative Methods and Responses – Cordell Carter

Subcommittee members considered whether they want to have a lot of recommendations or a few solid recommendations that the council can act on. They think it is important to have solid and clear recommendations. They like the idea of starting a smaller list, making those happen, and then adding more.

- Helpful for Task Force to establish a recommendation that the momentum of this Task Force will continue after this report is sent out, that the work isn't finished after the report is sent.
- Idea of permanent Task Force after this Task Force is done? What could this look like? There needs to be a standing committee that reports to the City Council on how we're doing and continuing to gather data after this Task Force is done. Composition-by ward, by demographics? Stipend?



- Setting recommendations with metrics and define what success looks like after the recommendations have gone out.
- Establish clear guidelines of what we want to see, in numbers and data prior to the report being sent out.
- Concerns about teachers, principals and administrators and those that report minors' issues that eventually escalate into larger incidents. Can suggest training re behavior issues that is highly recommended? Supported by grants?
- Fund for tax credit for businesses hit by pandemic? Recommend putting speed bumps in parking lots to deal with concerns of accidents and incidents? Businesses would be interested in meeting for this.
- Note: release to the public all data the Task Force has received, especially the interactive data presented to the Task Force.

#3 Community Engagement and Transparency – Jamal Holtz/Lauren Van Tol

Subcommittee members spent time discussing the process by which full Task Force recommendations will be formulated. Topics included:

- How recommendations will be elevated from each subcommittee for discussion by the entire Task Force.
- Ensuring the subcommittees all see what each other have been working on.
- Subject matter experts: we know the timeline is getting tight, but there are more people we want to hear from. We want to ensure our recommendations are specific enough to drive action.

The facilitators reviewed topics that were pulled from the meeting notes from past meetings of this subcommittee, outlined the process by which other groups have been getting to recommendations, and offered to support this group in whatever manner is most helpful. The goal is to get initial recommendations down on paper ASAP that reflect the great work of this committee.

7:20 Subcommittee Breakout Work Sessions End