

**City of Takoma Park
Reimagining Public Safety Task Force
3.30.21 Meeting Summary**

High-Level Overview:

The planned conversations and specific outcome – the report – prompt optimism that the Task Force members will look at the issues together and develop something meaningful. Given the tremendous amount of material to cover in a small amount of time, Task Force members want to spend their time wisely. They want to get at the issues specific to Takoma Park and examine how those issues interact with and are constrained by the city budget and reliance on county support. How the city responds to citizens' needs related to homelessness, substance use, mental health, and domestic violence are central to the conversation and the work.

Task Force members want to get to work: identify the issues, define the terms, set the subcommittees, look ahead to outcomes as represented by the recommendations and the report. They want to hone in on the data, hear directly from subject matter experts (SMEs), and see how Takoma Park compares to similar cities. Task Force members would like to have access to SMEs on each element they are assessing. Task Force members want to hear from community organizations that can provide insight on what is working or not.

Task Force members noted that many questions and concerns come back to the police department. What kind of police department does the city have? What jurisdiction does it have? What can and can't it respond to? Are department members knowledgeable about the many cultures in Takoma Park? Are they skilled in dealing with them? Do city leadership and the police department represent the diversity of the city?

The conversations during this session came down to what is working, what is not, and what we can do moving forward.

Recap and Overview of *Where We Are, and We Are Going*

Task Force Breakout Room Discussion

(Breakout Room Discussion on Sub Committees and Structure)

Feedback Overview: Discussion on Subcommittee Structure and Themes

- **Questions:** Facilitators used the following guiding questions to elicit feedback during the initial breakout rooms:
 - What are you looking forward to on this Task Force? How are you orienting to the work of this Task Force? How are things going?
 - Is there any feedback you may have to help make this process better? How can we as facilitators be of support to you?

- **Task Force Feedback Themes:**
 - Scope and Expectations: A desire for more explicit parameters around what is and is not possible for the Task Force to accomplish within the short timeframe established. There is curiosity around what outcomes the Council, Mayor and city leadership had in mind when the Task Force was formed.
 - Data Distillation: Members expressed a need for more synthesized data and direction regarding how to review and digest the most salient portions of the given reports. Due to the short-term nature of the Task Force, a data deluge may cause analysis paralysis. The Task Force members asked for a Table of Contents for the various materials that have been presented, which will be prepared and sent around before the next meeting.
 - Expert guidance and data: Members noted that they are invested community members. There is a desire to speak to Takoma Park department heads and connect with local or national leaders who have proven success in reimagining public safety. Members want to gather feedback from the Takoma Park Community adequately before making final recommendations.

Feedback Overview: Discussion on Process

- **Questions:** Facilitators used the following guiding questions to elicit feedback during the initial breakout rooms:
 - Based on our discussions from our last two meetings and after hearing from some city agencies, what are some of the themes you've heard?
 - What are the subcategories you want this group to focus on? Are there key words that come to mind? (Ex. mental health and wellness, social services & recreation, etc.)

Task Force Feedback Themes:

- Community Quality of Life: *This subcommittee will consider the intersection of public safety and quality of life issues, including housing, mental health, and more, as well as the implications for Takoma Park programs, policies, and budget.*
- Alternative, Methods, and Response: *This subcommittee will assess Takoma Park's current policing practices for emergency and non-emergency calls, including calls related to mental health.*

Also, this subcommittee will compare and contrast new potential approaches and best practices that may apply to Takoma Park.

- Community Engagement and Transparency: *This subcommittee will evaluate practices and policies related to sharing data and budget information among the public as well as efforts to engage community partners in public safety efforts. Additionally, this subcommittee will review existing efforts and consider new approaches to recruiting and retaining public safety professionals.*

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Meet the Urgency with Specific Action: there is palpable urgency among Task Force members and an eagerness to get to work on an action plan. Going forward, Task Force members will be given action-specific directions before, during, and after meetings, such as reviewing specific portions of the data and returning to meetings with clear deliverables, potentially conducting research outside of meetings as necessary, etc.
- Identify a citizen lead for each subcommittee to work directly with LINK and Expectant Advisory on meeting agendas, and subcommittee processes and communications.