



City of Takoma Park, Maryland
Takoma Junction Development Review
Council- NDC-Staff Conference Call Notes
March 15, 2019

As part of the Takoma Junction redevelopment, Neighborhood Development Company, the selected partner for the City's project, has submitted a combined preliminary plan/site plan application to Montgomery County. On March 1, 2019, Takoma Park City Council members, NDC representatives and City staff began holding a weekly conference call to share updates and ask questions.

For more information, please check the City webpage for the Takoma Junction Redevelopment: <https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/takoma-junction-redevelopment/>

Participants on the conference call:

Mayor Kate Stewart and Council members Kacy Kostiuik and Peter Kovar; City staff Jason Damweber and Rosalind Grigsby; NDC representative Jingjing Liu.

NDC updates

NDC, with their landscape architect, met with City staff on site to discuss the tree protection plan and tree replanting. NDC expects to meet with the Takoma Park Tree Commission in April. The Development Review Committee meeting is next week, on March 19th and NDC will present an update to Council on March 20th.

Staff updates

No updates at this time.

Questions for Discussion:

1. *What's the height from bottom of the visible building from Columbia to the top?*

There are two questions here: the height of the building and what is visible from Columbia Avenue. The wooded area, with existing and newly planted trees, will hide some of the building. The actual height of the building will depend on the grade of the slope; some portion of the garage on the western side will be below grade and thus not visible. The average height of the building from the rear, including the parking garage, will be 46 feet; the highest part on the eastern side, where more of the garage is visible above grade, will be 53 feet. This building plan has a greater setback distance from Columbia Avenue than the plans for the larger building did, which will reduce the visibility of the building from Columbia.

The rear façade will still have doors and windows, as NDC wants to bring in as much natural light as possible. The materials and treatments of the rear façade may also help with masking the visibility of the building.

Currently, the Development Review process focuses on the schematic design phase. When the project receives Planning Board approval, then the focus will shift to the next stage of permitting, where project details such as materials, code compliance, green building design and construction impacts are all finalized.

2. *As for elevation on the stormwater part, what are the dimension of bio-retention area?*

The dimensions of the bio-retention area vary from 1.2 inches to 4 feet in height, moving from west to east, depending on the grade. The length is 91 feet.

3. *What are the plans for car exhaust in the garage? Will this be vented to the back of the building, and if so, where? How will this impact the wooded area and the residences nearby?*

The garage will have louvers for ventilation and will be required to meet the County code for regulations. The garage will have a ventilation system that will circulate on and off as needed, since this is a relatively small garage with fairly low levels of vehicles. The pollution levels five feet from the garage will be very low. The landscape architect does not anticipate any negative impact on the wooded area.

Questions for city staff:

4. *Will the DRC process consider construction impacts? If not, when will the specifics of this be discussed?*

The DRC process is a technical review and does not consider construction impacts. The resolution states that an MOU will be developed between the Council and NDC prior to construction. I imagine the specifics will be discussed following the approval of the site plan itself by Montgomery County. Currently, we do not have an exact date for this and it will depend on the site plan approval timeline and when the project is slated to break ground. When NDC is seeking permits, they will have a construction general contractor who will be involved in mitigating impacts.

5. *Line 476 on, the Council requires a number of specifics in its resolution that may go beyond county requirements. Can you clarify when and how these technical requirements are reviewed. I assume the city role at the DRC meeting is to raise these points, to let other agencies know what the City expects, get any technical input on these, and to make sure there's not conflicting comments or requirements.*

The specific requirements called out in the [Resolution](#) to go beyond County requirements are stormwater management, the use of green construction materials and practices and the creation of an energy neutral building. The City Engineer is responsible for reviewing stormwater concept plans and this process is not part of the DRC. In terms of construction practices and energy, this would be addressed in an MOU between the City Council and NDC prior to construction.

6. *Have we gotten confirmation from Public Works that the stormwater plan from last summer included a green roof with 3 separate units? If not, can NDC share the specific drawing that shows this?*

From Daryl Braithwaite, Director of Public Works:

The original plan that was submitted for the concept plan include a single green roof with a square footage of 12,000 and a treatment capacity of 1,600 cubic feet. Since then, the City Engineer has been in communication with NDC's engineers and has gotten revised plans, which show the green roof broken into 3 areas. The back and forth as design elements get reconsidered is fairly standard. They have a treatment capacity they must meet based on the amount of impervious area and the building size. After the building plan is finalized at the County level, then the stormwater details will be finalized. NDC has consistently planned for a green roof and the bioretention facility as their stormwater treatment.

From the City Manager's comments:

For the Takoma Junction project, State law requires 2,545 cubic feet of stormwater to be treated (1,161 CF from existing impervious area and 1,385 CF from new impervious area). The proposed bioretention facility is calculated to provide 1,690 CF of treatment and the green roof is calculated to provide 1,546 CF of treatment. Together these equal 3,236 CF of treatment of the 2,545 required or 27% more than required.

From NDC:

NDC's commitment to the maintenance and functionality of the green roof remains unchanged.

Questions for NDC:

7. *Can you clarify the site plan (12/4/2018 plan) use for a separate commercial kitchen - is this a stand-alone like the one in the Takoma Park Presbyterian church, or space for a restaurant kitchen?*

The commercial kitchen shown on the plans is part of the restaurant business, it is not a free-standing commercial kitchen. It is important to note that the businesses will need to go through the County permitting process for build-out in the project and will be required to meet all requirements including zoning compliance.

8. *Waiver questions:*

Can you clarify, on the setback waiver, that the rear lot is city owned?

Yes, the City owns the triangular-shaped, residentially zoned lot behind the commercial zoned parcel.

Can you confirm whether the 12 overflow spaces in the neighborhood are being counted as part of the justification for the parking waiver?

No, the 12 parking spaces for which NDC is requesting a waiver are not counted as part of the justification for the parking waiver. NDC's parking, as a development with more than one type of use, is based on the shared parking analysis using the Urban Land Institute Shared Parking Model (Second Edition, 2005), as allowed in Montgomery County Code [59.6.2.3.1.3]. NDC is providing 79 spaces and is required to provide 91, based on the types of uses in the building. NDC has requested a parking waiver for 12 spaces. According to the [Takoma Park Master Plan](#), "Waivers of parking requirements may be approved where overflow parking will not be a problem in nearby residential areas. Considerations for approval of waivers should include provision of adequate transit service and of improvements to circulation and appearance of commercial centers." (p. 45). NDC expects many customers for the property will walk or use public transit, thus reducing the parking pressures.

The Junction site is served by the following:

- RAIL – The site is within one mile of the Takoma Metro station (the Red Line), enabling easy pedestrian, bike, and bus access to metropolitan wide rail destinations.
- BUS – Bus stops served by four bus lines in the Junction connect to the Takoma, Silver Spring, and Prince George's Plaza metro stations, as well as the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Transit Center. The bus routes that pass through the Takoma Junction are: WMATA F4 and RideOn 12, 13, 16 and 18.
- BIKE – A Capital Bikeshare station is located in the Junction. The Sligo Creek Hiker-Biker Trail is within a half mile.

In addition, many nearby residents will walk to the site, as is the experience with other Old Takoma businesses, though that estimate is not included in the parking model. The County Code covers parking in Chapter 59.6.2.

9. *Can you clarify the exact calculations used to go from number of spaces the required by county down to number in waiver request? Are there any supporting documents?*

The Urban Land Institute Shared Parking Model calculates the parking requirements based on the different businesses located at a site, and the different times of day of peak parking demand for each use. For example, the office uses are primarily expected to require parking during the weekdays, whereas a restaurant will be more likely to have peak parking demand in the evenings. The model allows for the parking to be calculated by type of use and concentrated demand. NDC's consultant, The Traffic Group, made the parking calculations using specialized software, factoring in car share, bike share, public transit, and other factors that impact parking demand.

10. *Can you confirm that NDC will allow public parking for all Junction uses, and not privatize all spaces in the building for the exclusive use of the tenants?*

Yes, NDC will allow public use of the parking garage. There may be some spaces reserved for office or tenant use, but the parking garage will serve as public parking.

11. *Traffic questions:*

Were the larger cafe and the fitness center on the 12/4/18 plan incorporated into the trip generation for the development or the shared parking analysis for the parking waiver? What are the formulas used for calculating trip generation and parking analysis, and how would they change if the uses are changed? The concern is that these uses would generate more trips than regular retail, and also require more parking.

NDC used the ULI Shared Parking Model. The fitness center was not included in the calculation because the required parking for that space would be lower than the retail, restaurant or office categories due to the different estimates for each use. NDC chose to consider business uses that would require a higher number of parking spaces in order to have more flexibility with different types of business tenants moving forward. The calculations for shared parking requirements are not a simple formula.

NDC call wrap-up

The group confirmed the value of a weekly call and will plan on continuing next week. As the project continues through the County process, the Council will consider a resolution in May regarding the plans and any substantive changes that come out of the Development Review process.