



City of Takoma Park, Maryland
TAKOMA JUNCTION CONCEPT PLAN
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHEET
Updated October 10, 2017

As part of the Takoma Junction redevelopment, Neighborhood Development Company, as the selected partner for the City's project, has submitted a concept plan for Council's review. Following Council's feedback, NDC will continue to refine the project, returning to Council in January 2018 with a site plan/preliminary plan for Council's approval. The following are questions members of the community may have about the concept plan, along with responses to each. This information will be periodically updated to respond to additional questions posed by the community.

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

Is the building going to look like the sketch that was included in NDC's September 27 presentation? It appears to be larger and less open and welcoming than community members had anticipated.

To answer this question, we turned to representatives from NDC and Streetscape for a response.

"The image shown at the Council meeting does not reflect an architectural design for the Takoma Junction Project. It was a simple sketch, intended to demonstrate, in the most general visual terms, how the associated portions of the proposed project assemble together on the site – horizontally and vertically, how the project meets its neighboring context and how the different facades of the building might be very active and engaging, while others are more subtle and unassuming. Specificity is still to come – specific locations of walls and public spaces, the specific massing and bulk, the specific tenants and daily users, and the specific materials of which it is made are all a part of the next steps of design. And they are already underway – our designs will be greatly informed in large part from the input of the community and the City's desire for a new and contributing piece of Takoma Park's collection of wonderful and beloved buildings.

Currently, we are asking the City ONLY to approve the site configuration of the project – which reflects more time and effort attending to site areas and distances, numbers of floors, locations of major service, public and private spaces.

As the project moves forward, the architecture will begin to be explored in much greater detail – from materials to configurations and techniques. The building must be lasting,

memorable and reflective of the community of Takoma Park. We have received lots of great feedback about the project, and we look forward to our continued partnership with the City, with the different Agencies and with the community to make Takoma Junction a place we all want and can be proud of.

Is NDC's concept plan bigger than their original proposal?

NDC's original concept plan, presented in 2014, included commercial space of 23,880 square feet, 10,300 square feet second floor residential space, and 16,000 square feet rooftop community gathering space, garden, and urban farm. Since that time, NDC moved from residential to office space in response to Council and community feedback. The new addition to the concept plan is the partially enclosed space on the rooftop, creating a partial third floor on the rear of the building. The new concept plan has a square footage of 53,400, which is 3,000 square feet larger than NDC's original proposal of 50,180 square feet or 6.4 percent larger. NDC's original proposal included 49 parking spaces total; the new concept plan includes 72 parking spaces.

The Concept Plan for the project includes a lay-by for deliveries off of Carroll Avenue. How will the lay-by work and will it accommodate all the deliveries without disrupting traffic?

A lay-by is used in commercial urban centers, where it is possible to pull out of the travel lane for a limited amount of time to perform loading/unloading operations and deliveries. Lay-bys allow for space that can be used as deliveries during times of the day when needed and may expand pedestrian areas at other times of day. Bollards may be installed for pedestrian safety.

NDC has done extensive modeling of deliveries by 18-wheeled trucks and the lay-by provides the only safe access to the property that doesn't require crossing the Carroll Avenue yellow line. Their models indicate that the lay-by as proposed is adequate in length for the 65-foot trucks that the Co-op specified in their letter to NDC on May 10, 2017. The concept plan proposal meets this size specification. The Co-op has specified that they receive seven 18-wheelers per week and many smaller truck deliveries.

The lay-by will not be used by public buses; it will only serve the purpose of deliveries for the businesses.

Can the area accommodate more traffic? Will it be safe for pedestrians and Bikeshare users? When will the traffic study happen?

As part of the development review for this project, NDC is required to do a traffic study to understand any increased pressure that the development may add to the existing conditions. Though NDC has done initial traffic counts, the full study is awaiting the Council's feedback on the concept plan because the projection of the traffic impact is dependent on specifics of the project: size, type of activity, etc. The City is undertaking an expanded traffic study, building on NDC's work, to look at the broader impact, including the safe flow of pedestrians and bikes,

which is essential to the functionality of the intersection. The current situation is exacerbated by the work of the State Highway Administration and their contractors on the intersection and traffic lights. When this work is completed, SHA will turn over the operations of the traffic signals to Montgomery County, which will be better able to adjust the signals as needed. The concept plan does not preclude retention of the crosswalk at Grant Avenue.

There have been many conversations regarding the configuration of the intersection, the street layout, the light at Sycamore, and possible changes to improve traffic flow. Once the concept plan is approved, the subsequent traffic studies will clarify best options to address these issues.

Will the Grant Avenue crosswalk be removed as a result of the development?

There are no plans to remove the crosswalk. It will be included in the study of traffic flow and pedestrian safety. It is possible that the crosswalk may be relocated slightly to ensure pedestrian safety if the traffic study indicates the need to do so.

What are the development requirements regarding density and setback for the development?

The property is zoned Neighborhood Retail (NR), which is “intended for commercial areas that have a neighborhood orientation. The NR zone addresses development opportunities within primarily residential areas with few alternative mobility options and without a critical mass of density needed for pedestrian-oriented commercial uses” (Montgomery County Zoning Code 59.4.6.1). The Floor Area Ratio, which addresses the amount of density that is allowed on the property, is 0.75. The building setback must be compatible with neighboring properties. NDC proposes aligning the building with the setback of the Co-op building, and pushing the center part of the building even further back from the street for outdoor seating and community gathering space.

What is the height allowed?

The Neighborhood Retail zoning with the Takoma Park Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone allows for a maximum building height of 42 feet. The concept plan design shows the front of the building on Carroll Avenue as two stories and approximately 30 feet tall and the rear of the building at 3 stories and approximately 42 feet. The surrounding area includes many buildings that are two and three-stories: the Takoma Park Fire Station at the intersection of Philadelphia and Carroll Avenues is 55 feet tall; many three-story multifamily units are in the vicinity, such as on Manor Circle and Lee and Grant Avenues; the Takoma Masonic Center at 117 Carroll St is three stories; the Busboys and Poets building, 235 Carroll St, is four and five stories; the Scissors and Comb building, 7009 Carroll is two and three stories.

What about noise impacting the neighborhood?

Noise considerations and recommendations are part of the Montgomery County development review process. Unlike events at the current parking lot, where the ambient sound travels in all directions, the orientation of the building and various design and landscaping features are intended to mitigate noise from the site.

What are the going rates for commercial rent in the area?

Unlike residential rental rates, commercial rates are established through contracts and can include many factors impacting the tenant arrangement. Common considerations are the length of the lease, costs of build-out and maintenance of the space, common area maintenance fees, real property taxes, insurance, the amount and location of the space on the property, and the type of tenant. Some contracts include a base rent and a percent of the business revenue; other contracts may set a low initial rent while a business gets established with escalator clauses as it matures. The private negotiations between NDC and the Co-op included many issues and the cost of the rent reflected the complexity of the discussion. Commercial rents in new and newly renovated buildings in the Old Takoma area currently range from \$45 to \$50 a square foot, based on information provided by the Old Takoma Business Association and CoStar.

What is Council's role in the selection of tenants in the development?

The Development Agreement sets the parameters for commercial businesses. It specifically requires NDC to “establish a retail/commercial destination with a tenant-mix made up predominantly of local and regional tenants” (p. 2). The Agreement prohibits any tenants that would directly compete with the Co-op such as another food co-operative or grocery store, however it does allow specialty food businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, frozen yogurt shops, gourmet food, or wine and beer shops (p. 4). Having set the framework, Council does not have a further role in the private negotiations or contracts between NDC and business tenants.

Does the project have enough parking?

Parking requirements fall under Montgomery County zoning regulations and will be discussed during the development review process. The need for parking is calculated by the particular use and the time of day it is required. Shared parking, when daytime needs for office employees and evening needs for restaurant customers can be met with the same parking spaces, allows a development to meet the needs of customers with less space and resources devoted to asphalt. Parking requirements can be reduced with the addition of transportation alternatives that encourage people to use other modes, like carpool/vanpool spaces and Bikeshare. NDC has included 72 underground parking spaces for the development. The Junction parking lot currently has 50 striped spaces, 16 currently leased by the Co-op, and is underutilized.

What about the public space in the project?

Building on the feedback NDC received from the community meetings they held in February and March to get input from residents, the design includes community gathering space on the street level with a setback that allows for activation of the sidewalk and outdoor seating. The second level includes outdoor balconies and possible outdoor space on the back of the building in the form of gardens or social space. The third floor is dedicated to outdoor roof activity or gardens, adjacent to activity space. NDC does not propose to do any development in the wooded area on Columbia Avenue.

How can residents participate in the development review process?

There are many opportunities for public input at each step in the development permitting process, which requires approvals from several different agencies:

- Takoma Park Facade Advisory Board
- Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission
- Takoma Park City Council
- Montgomery County Planning Board

Comments can be sent to clerk@takomaparkmd.gov for distribution to the Takoma Park City Council.

How can I track the status of the project?

Information about the project is available online at takomaparkmd.gov/junction. Interested parties are encouraged to check the page for regular updates as the project progresses.