



City of Takoma Park, Maryland
TAKOMA JUNCTION CONCEPT PLAN
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHEET
Sustainability Features
October 23, 2017

As part of the Takoma Junction redevelopment, Neighborhood Development Company (NDC), 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 have raised about how the project advances the City's sustainability goals. For more information, please check the City webpage for the Takoma Junction Redevelopment: <https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/takoma-junction-redevelopment/>

What is smart growth and how does this project fit in?

Smart Growth is a set of cohesive urban planning principles that can be blended with unique local conditions to design, develop, and build inclusive communities that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. Principles of Smart Growth include the efficient use of land and infrastructure; human-scale, mixed-use centers; conservation of environmental and cultural resources; a sense of community and place; increased citizen participation in the planning process; transit-accessible, pedestrian-oriented, development patterns and land reuse; and processes and regulations that promote diversity and equity.

The Takoma Junction redevelopment project presents an opportunity for the City of Takoma Park to apply many of the principles of Smart Growth locally, right here in our back yard. Takoma Park is a first ring suburb in an increasingly sprawling region, and redeveloping parts of the city would provide both local and regional efficiencies. Pursuing projects that allow for infill development, redevelopment, and the adaptive reuse of buildings in neighborhoods that are already served by ample public transportation, roads, and other public services provides environmental and economic benefits. Though many definitions of Smart Growth put a higher emphasis on density, in this context, emphasizing walkability and building retail along the sidewalk (with parking relocated away from the front of the building) is both consistent with Smart Growth principles and part of the historic neighborhood commercial design in Takoma Park.

What is LEED Certification and what role does it play in this project?

LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a certification program primarily for new construction to evaluate the environmental performance of a building and encourage sustainable design. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, "LEED

certification ensures electricity cost savings, lower carbon emissions and healthier environments for the places we live, work, learn, play and worship. LEED's global sustainability agenda is designed to achieve high performance in key areas of human and environmental health, acting on the triple bottom line - putting people, planet and profit first."

For the Takoma Junction proposal, the Development Agreement requires the developer to "design and construct the Project so that the Building satisfies the requirements for LEED Gold or higher certification from the U.S. Green Building Council or an equivalent certification" (page 6). Gathering spaces with opportunities for public art, wide sidewalks and benches, and the proposed event space and covered outdoor area will maintain the human-scale of the neighborhood and promote a sense of community.

What are the plans for the green space on Columbia Avenue?

Nearly half of the City-owned lot will remain open space. The concept plan presented by NDC to Council on September 27 retains the slope down to Columbia Avenue as a green space. Because the Environmental Site Assessment confirmed that the property was used as a dump, it is possible that some of the slope is fill and will need to be cleaned up or stabilized and landscaped. The area will not be developed but will be landscaped and maintained under the current scenario included in the Concept Plan.

What is the environmental impact of the existing parking lot?

The parking lot is an impermeable asphalt surface, with untreated stormwater runoff. Any pollutants from automobiles or activities on the lot end up in storm drains and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay. Any new development on the lot would be required to treat all storm water on site through environmental site design, reducing the adverse impacts of the parking lot. A large asphalt parking lot also operates as a heat sink, increasing the ambient temperature of the area.

Why does the Concept Plan only include 72 parking spaces and why will I have to pay?

Planners throughout the country have been supporting policies that cut down on parking and encourage the use of other modes of transportation. Research on the topic has shown that providing too much free and cheap parking has been found to be correlated with more driving, sprawling land-use patterns, more single driver commute trips, worse traffic, and more general reliance on driving. Recent studies have gone as far as saying that providing excessive cheap parking is a likely cause of increased driving. With regard to the Takoma Junction project, the decision to provide 72 paid parking spaces is intended to encourage patrons to use alternative modes of transportation, to walk, bike, or use the bus to access the area as much as possible.

What do we know about the ground contamination under the asphalt?

The City contracted with RK&K to do an Environmental Site Assessment, Phase I and Phase II. The Phase I study indicated the site had served as a dump for many years, which is why the City proceeded with the Phase II study. Any necessary environmental cleanup will be undertaken during the development of the site.

From the Phase II executive summary:

Based on the results of this investigation, all soils samples were below Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) cleanup standards for residential development, except for a detection of the SVOC benzo[b]fluoranthene at TJ-GP-01. Petroleum impacted soils below MDE residential cleanup standards were identified on the western side of the property boundary, near the Takoma Auto Clinic at 7221 Carroll Avenue. Low levels of SVOCs and some RCRA metals were also detected below MDE cleanup standards. PCBs and VOCs were not detected above their respective laboratory detection limits. Subsurface soil impacts were absent or below MDE soil cleanup standards beneath the eastern portion of the parking lot area bordering Carroll Avenue and the undeveloped wooded area to the south of the property. Samples collected from the southwest portion of the parking lot and the southern portion of the 10-foot wide right-of-way between 7221 and 7211 Carroll Avenue indicate the presence of historical petroleum impacts. As a result of historical subsurface releases, localized zones of petroleum impacted soil may persist in these areas.

The Phase I and Phase II reports are available on the City's website:

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/takoma-junction-redevelopment/takoma-junction-history-and-time-line/>

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.

www.takomaparkmd.gov/junction