



Dear candidate for elected office in the 2024 Takoma Park City Council election,

Thank you for standing for election to public office. It is a vital function in our democracy, and we appreciate your willingness to serve, spend personal time, and represent our community.

[Takoma for All \(TFA\)](#) is a group of Maryland and Washington D.C. neighbors working to strengthen a vibrant, inclusive, prosperous, resilient, and transit-friendly community. We advocate for [smart growth principles](#) and for creating and preserving affordable and market-rate housing, commercial spaces, and community amenities, including schools, parks, recreation facilities, and public spaces.

We would be honored if you would respond to the following questions, which will help us better understand your position on key topics of interest to our group and the Takoma Park public. Your responses will be published on our website, and TFA members will vote to endorse candidates who align most closely with our priorities and vision, based on your feedback.

Vision

1. Please share your overall vision for Takoma Park in broad strokes. Include your views on actions that address sustainability, economic vibrancy, and housing affordability or housing access.

My vision for Takoma Park is a place where families of different incomes, geographies, and family types can work together to help each other. My family moved here so our kids would be in school with kids that didn't look like them, spoke different languages, and lived in different kinds of housing. We also wanted a walkable community that allowed our kids to play safely outside. Those things exist today but we must work hard to improve on past successes.

I believe our city will be more vibrant and sustainable with housing for all income levels. A sustainable future requires giving people transportation options that don't involve driving alone in a car. Economic vibrancy requires talking to people who want to invest in our city and not demonizing them. It also requires new businesses like ours.

I am laser focused on actions the City Council can actually take in a timely manner to address these issues. I support the four housing tax credit proposals on the table at the council, and hope the council votes on them soon. I support safer roads for our kids to walk alongside and attacking the climate crisis with a city-wide traffic calming plan that makes people comfortable getting out of their cars. I support dialogue with leaders in the development industry to find ways to move forward after the junction debacle. I want us to be productive partners in redevelopment of simpler projects, like those on New

Hampshire Ave, so that in the future we can have an Adventist Hospital site that meets our community's needs.

In sum, I am less interested in talking about big picture grandiose ideas that can often be unfeasible, and more focused on what the city council can actually do. I am action oriented and simply don't have the time in my day to wax philosophical. If you want to get things done, you should ask a busy person to do them. I'm that person.

Inclusion and Consensus Building

2. A [consultant report](#) recently commissioned by the City Council found that "Takoma Park is a 'Tale of Two Cities' with very clear, stark divides across lines of race and class. Understanding how to provide multiple platforms for diverse voices in the city and how to elevate those voices that often remain unheard will be critical for the success of any engagement effort deployed in the future." How will you ensure that diverse perspectives are adequately represented in city discussion and decision-making, particularly with respect to residential, commercial, and public facility development? How do you plan to build consensus across different perspectives around sensitive subjects, and what experience do you have in reaching "across the aisle" and overcoming divisions?

When I finished graduate school, my first job was running the mail room for Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR). One thing I learned very quickly was that we didn't make policy there based on the loudest voices in the room, but by considering who might be left out of decisions. If we did things based on volume, we would have been working on conspiracy theories all day long. The same holds true at the local level - most people simply don't have the time or resources to engage with city decisions. The job of any elected official is to balance the concerns of all her constituents, not just those who have the time to participate the most. That sometimes includes people who don't live here yet! We're responsible for having a welcoming community, and that requires thinking about the people who want to live here too.

I wasn't involved in the divisive politics that have defined our local government for the last few years. I was slightly nervous about running for this position given that reputation. Happily, I've found 99% of the people I talk to are reasonable and willing to talk.

At our bookstore, we've worked hard to make a place where everyone can feel welcome, regardless of their viewpoint or politics. And as a former policymaker on Capitol Hill, I'm comfortable reaching across the aisle to pass laws and advance priorities - it's really the only way things ever get done there. I would put those skills to work in this position.

As part of my effort to reach out to people in the Ward who may not feel heard, I am doing my best to find people where they are. That includes snail mail to every house in the ward, text messages inviting people to events where I can hear their concerns, social media advertisements, and phone calls. We need to be proactive in engaging people who might not otherwise feel they have a say in the future of our city and I'm running a campaign engaged in that work.

Commercial, Residential, and Public Facility Development

3. The city and county approved the [Minor Master Plan Amendment](#) earlier this year, which envisions new residential and commercial development along Maple Avenue and Flower Avenue, including the Washington Adventist Hospital site, in the coming decades. Do you agree with the plan? What specific development projects would you like to see in this area, and how do you envision this project enriching the community and local economy? What would you advocate for the City to do over the next term to advance this plan?

Yes, I would have voted in favor of the resolution on the MMPA at the city level and I was glad to see the County Council approve it. It's important to note that the City of Takoma Park doesn't have land use authority, and the only real lever we have in that space is making noise. I would like to see as much multifamily housing as possible at the Adventist site, along with transit options, retail, and medical space. An urgent care at the site is sorely missed. The city needs to work productively with Washington Adventist University, which now owns the hospital site, and avoid talking any future project to death.

The major hurdle to redevelopment at the Adventist campus is that our reputation as a place to build anything new is in the gutter due to the divisive fight around the junction. We need to prove ourselves as a fair actor willing to be a partner in development - and I'm focused on a couple sites where we can walk before we run (more on that in the next answer).

4. What are your approaches and priorities for induced economic growth in the city? Where do you see economic growth opportunities, what are current barriers that need to be addressed, and what expertise can you leverage?

I'll tell you from firsthand experience: we need more retail space, badly. When we wanted to open our bookstore, it took over a year to find a space that met our needs, and required a lot of work to beat it into shape. Our community is wonderful about supporting small businesses in Old Town, and I'm hopeful we can be just as supportive of businesses along New Hampshire Ave. Completing these projects successfully would be productive for our reputation as a place to invest, and provide us the platform to get to the best possible Adventist Hospital site plan. It is dangerous to write off development as inherently bad -- technically, my wife and I are developers because we developed the bookstore into a community gathering space. I am confident that we can continue to develop Takoma Park in a way that fits with our values, like encouraging neighbors to shop local and providing employment opportunities for our community.

5. Takoma Park hasn't seen new apartment buildings added since the 1980s, in contrast to significant growth in the county, the state, and the Takoma neighborhood in D.C. Why do you think this is? As a councilmember, what would you do about it?

Takoma Park has a great history of building multifamily housing. I'm not a historian and I'm not sure it's helpful to argue over why we haven't kept that streak going. As a councilmember, I will support forward

looking tax credits, discussions with homebuilders, and an action-oriented agenda to move these projects forward, focusing specifically on the two potential projects mentioned above.

6. City staff has [proposed new tax incentives](#) to stimulate new housing development and preserve existing affordable housing. Some observers have suggested [reforms](#) to Takoma Park's rent stabilization law to stimulate multifamily development. Relatedly, [Montgomery County recently passed a new rent stabilization law](#) suggesting that Takoma Park could align its rent stabilization law. Do you support the proposed tax incentives? How, if at all, would you advocate changing rent stabilization in the city?

I support all four tax credits, and would ask city staff to work on additional incentives for building. I do not support changing the city's rent stabilization laws.

7. [Traffic fatalities have doubled in Washington D.C.](#), and Takoma Park has also seen several recent fatalities, especially along New Hampshire and University Blvd., despite Vision Zero and other initiatives. What specific actions would you propose to make our city more friendly and safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others?

This issue is personal to me, and has been a professional passion for a long time. As a daily cyclist and parent of two children, traffic safety is one of my biggest concerns in the city, and one that the city actually has control over. I'm a former transportation staffer on Capitol Hill and in that capacity worked hard to [bring attention to](#) safety issues for cyclists and pedestrians, [increasing funding for bike and pedestrian facilities](#), and [expanding the Transportation Alternatives program](#).

The city has no coordinated safety program, and the newly inaugurated speed bump program requires residents to spend lots of time gathering signatures and knocking on doors, something most working families simply don't have time to do. You shouldn't have to spend dozens of hours of your life to live on a safe street. Instead, we need a city-wide traffic safety plan that particularly focuses on places with more traffic incidents, based on data.

We need to start construction on the [improvements to the Met Branch Trail](#) in the city quickly. We need to execute on long-proposed safety improvements along New Hampshire Avenue - the "New" New Hampshire Ave program is now over a decade old without much to show for those efforts. We need to finish the New Hampshire Ave bike lanes next year. We need to finish the Maple Avenue redesign to make it a safer street for the many families walking and biking to school.

Specifically within the Ward, I'm committed to working with ANC members on the DC side of the boundary to fix Eastern Avenue's lane striping problems, put Eastern on a road diet, and install a four way stop sign at Eastern and Walnut. I will work to make sure Laurel Avenue near the streetery gets necessary safety improvements as well - right now we've got a de facto playground with no fence next to an active road, which is particularly dangerous on the weekend. I would support a two-way closure of Laurel Avenue on the weekends for those safety reasons. We need to fix the bike lanes (which are incorrectly striped) and the sidewalks (which are still damaged from the 2008 earthquake) along Carroll

Avenue between Old Town and the junction. That's probably plenty of work for the next two years, but I'm going to be open to any safety improvements we can make.

This answer is already way too long, but perhaps the most important thing we do for all of these priorities is to fill the vacant Housing and Community Development director position with someone who has the skills, experience, and passion to start closing out some of these long-standing priorities and who understands the importance of these issues.

8. The Purple Line is now 70% complete, with opening planned for Winter 2027. Please describe how you will leverage this opportunity with Purple Line developers and local stakeholders for the city's and residents' benefit, as well as by advancing other connected transportation means like sidewalks, bike lanes, buses, etc., to increase efficiency and ease for users and reduce CO2 more deeply.

We need to finish all the projects listed in the above question, and also finish our bus stop improvement program. We must provide a safer New Hampshire Ave so that all the new residents living near the Purple Line can commute and play safely.

9. The [New Hampshire Ave Recreation Center site](#) has not seen any redevelopment action despite being a priority over several councils. What is your vision for the site, and what actions do you propose to make progress?

The rec center has been a tough nut to crack, largely because we haven't gotten a proposal that met the city's desires. I'd love to see multifamily housing on the site, but if no developer can propose such a thing within our cost structures then we need to find a way forward on redevelopment with or without housing so that the communities the facility serves can have a future at the site. It's probably worth going out for another RFP once we have proven ourselves on other projects.

10. The decade-long Takoma Junction revitalization project recently failed. The city has not yet developed any new vision for the parking lot. The traffic situation was a key sticking point for the State Highway Administration, and several [studies conducted by the city and the State Highway Administration](#) found that reconfiguring the Takoma Junction intersection would reduce congestion and cut-through traffic in the adjacent neighborhoods. What would you propose to be done at Takoma Junction? Would you advocate for reconfiguring the intersection? If so, how would you help advance this process?

Finally, the elephant in the room! I recently heard another candidate for this prestigious post suggest we "beautify the parking lot", which seemed to me to be a deeply sad sentiment. Free city-owned parking is probably the worst possible use of the site. As soon as possible, we need to start charging a fair rate for parking there, and if the nearby businesses feel like reimbursing their customers for that service, they can feel free. At our store, we pay rent, property tax, insurance, and maintenance for our parking lot, and other businesses should do the same. I sometimes hear that the parking lot is a "third space" where people gather. My sense it is 99% of the time a place where cars gather, and I know a little bit about third spaces.

I support reconfiguring the intersection to make it safer for pedestrians and bikers, and to discourage dangerous driving behavior, like people speeding around stopped buses. We've studied it to death, and I think it's past time we fix the intersection. To do so, I'd work with our state representation and MDOT to get to a decision on which is the best potential site change, and how quickly we could do it.

In the long run, the city needs to put something, anything, other than free private car storage paid for by taxpayers at this site. I'm open to any and all ideas about how to get it done, but again my view is that we lack the credibility to approach it at this time, and no private money would invest on a project there right now.

11. Thank you for your time and working to make our city a great place for everyone.