



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.**

Thanks to Takoma For All for posing these important questions. I hope that these in-depth responses encourage creative problem solving. I invite readers to reexamine [my responses to the 2020 Takoma For All questionnaire](#) as well.

My vision is that Takoma Park is the centerpiece of a broader, interconnected community reaching from Rock Creek to Northwest Branch and from the Beltway to the Fort Circle ridge in DC. Within our boundaries, we are prizing and protecting the waters of Long Branch, Brashear's Run, Takoma Branch, and Sligo Creek; our patchwork of protected upland and bottomland forests, and the urban forest canopy, understory, and other vegetation that provide habitat, refuge, and migration routes for animals as part of a healthy ecosystem. We as humans are recognizing that we belong to this Takoma Park land for as long as we live here and are obligated to pass it on in a more healthy condition than we find it now, even with the threats posed by climate change. We are educating each other and cooperating to manage public and private land in ways that respect the ecosystem's interconnectedness – through efforts such as canopy protection, stormwater management, food forest plantings, energy efficiency upgrades, local alternative energy generation, greater reliance on the local foodshed, and the use of non-automotive transportation by those able to do so.

In terms of our built environment, I envision that we are putting into practice the concept of “healthy urbanism” or the “fifteen-minute neighborhood” where people are healthier and happier, where life is quieter, where relationships are stronger, and where money circulates more within the community. The economic vibrancy of this place begins with access to affordable and nutritious food and primary health and personal services. It proceeds to sustainability-oriented businesses that provide green approaches in terms of buildings, energy, transportation, and landscape. Retailers, food establishments, and places for performances or festivities round out the economic picture, along with local offices or meeting places for businesses that may or may not have their headquarters here. The mix of businesses in Takoma Park serves and mirrors the cultural diversity of the broader area, including parts of Silver Spring, Prince George’s County, and the District. Young people growing up in Takoma Park find their first job experiences here and proceed to build meaningful relationships with local employers that help them develop great work skills as well as career interests.

In terms of housing, Takoma Park functions as a true hometown in my vision, in the sense that people at any stage of life, from youth to retirement, can find affordable options for continuing to live in the community should they wish to do so in their next stage of life. No one has to fear or worry about being displaced from their home, and homes, whether rented or owned, are maintained in healthy conditions. The provision of affordable housing remains exemplary and well above average for the County and in comparison to the District – such that workers earning lower wages need not endure costly, unhealthy, and environmentally damaging commutes; there are also realistic options here for people displaced from elsewhere by climate change to find good homes here. In no way does Takoma Park feel like an affluent enclave. The overall mix of housing occurs at a wide range of price points but skews toward affordability, which is achieved by creative and purposeful public, non-profit, and private efforts and policies. There is a robust program of rent stabilization designed to prevent renters from being housing burdened while providing complementary resources and measures to ensure that rental housing is climate-adapted, safe, and comfortable. Moderately-priced starter homes and downsizer homes are a significant part of the housing supply and are made possible in part by judicious guidance given to builders or renovators that has gradually reduced the typical square-feet-per-capita size of homes, either at the time of construction or through incentives to create more than one dwelling unit within the same existing structure or on the same plot of land. New housing has thus appeared in different ways throughout the City, although a large amount of new housing has been created in originally automobile-oriented sites along New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard and on vacant institutional land. New clusters of housing have been carefully designed to provide a village-like feel, with green gathering space, good linkages to pre-existing neighborhoods, and business, educational, and play spaces that help to draw the broader community together.

In my vision, our city is organized around twelve linked nodes of activity (in addition to the parks). Along the edge, and shared with neighboring jurisdictions, are (1) the Crossroads, (2) Brown’s Corner (north end of Carroll Avenue), (3) Long Branch (top of Flower Avenue), (4) Montgomery College, (5) Old Town, (6) the New Hampshire Gateway (Eastern to Poplar), and (7) the Ethan Allen Gateway. An inner ring of nodes entirely within the City includes (1) the Sligo Creek Entrance/Recreation Center area, (2) the University/former Hospital/Erie Avenue area, (3) Maple Avenue, (4) the Municipal/Library/Schools area, and (5) Takoma Junction. A reliable and frequent circulator network serves these twelve nodes as well as Purple Line, Bus Rapid Transit, and Metro stations, provides transfers to the Silver Spring

circulator, and attracts significant ridership from areas just outside the City boundaries. Circulator routes provide advantages over driving because they are able to pass through certain street connections exclusively, so that automobile cut-through traffic is discouraged. Cyclists and walkers benefit from well-lit, shaded, and safe routes across the community, with cyclists afforded routes that ease the burden of hill-climbing. The speed limits in residential neighborhoods are 18 mph or lower, with a courtesy rule of “5 mph when people are present.” Not only children but also wildlife can safely step into the street, every time. Visitors to Takoma Park come away wanting to implement the “human ecosystem” policies, designs, and patterns of interaction that they have experienced here.

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?

We can do much better with engaging residents in community decision-making. The City must encourage stronger neighborhood, tenant, and community organizations by routinely calling for their input in processes of visioning, design, decision-making, and evaluation. The City can help to catalyze an independent citywide network of civic organizations by providing space, resources, and publicity for periodic summits or other get-togethers. Designs and strategies crafted upon the lived experience and expertise of residents will be more effective and will be sources of community pride. With regard to issues in my own ward (3), residents need to be involved in how the City addresses issues such as Lincoln and Boyd cut-through traffic, Laurel Avenue street closure, stop-sign running, Eastern Avenue construction, New Hampshire Avenue development, and Sligo Mill Road beautification. Involvement doesn't necessarily require proximity; for example, the post office on Laurel Avenue has patrons from all over the City, all of whom deserve a voice in determining how access to the facility is made available.

Over the three months of this campaign, I am working to reach as many voters as possible in person and to engage in quality conversation about issues, especially those related to housing and development. On a basic level, this is outreach and knowledge-building that I intend to bring to my work on the Council and amplify in deliberations. I will continue to make this work a priority while on the Council, not only by providing informative report-outs on Council matters and City opportunities for engagement, but also by actively seeking out people from my campaign notes who are not choosing or able to be more participatory, with a particular emphasis on residents' diversity of backgrounds, lived experience, type of housing, makeup of household, stage of life, and views on the issues. The time needed for this kind of outreach doesn't appear out of nowhere. A council member must open up this time by being judicious in responding to, and sometimes redirecting, very active residents who may be accustomed to having their concerns given priority. I have worked hard in my profession as a teacher to

make equitable choices in how I seek information, avoid assumptions, set priorities, initiate interactions, respond to requests, and include or exclude people from the conversation.

With this in mind, it is essential that our City Council and staff avoid making assumptions or speaking on behalf of people who will be most affected by policies, ordinances, and site plan review decisions related to housing and/or development. To cite a few examples: it is essential that City Council members (and staff) sit down with residents of multifamily buildings *in their buildings* and, if possible, spend time in apartments, so as to understand what the living environment is and how residents feel about it as individuals or as members of a community. It is essential that Council members experience what it is like to walk or take public transportation to a grocery store. It is essential that Council members understand the factors constraining “mom-and-pop” landlords of small properties from updating or improving their tenants’ living situations. It is essential that Council members seek out and listen to the perspectives of house-burdened homeowners who are feeling squeezed by taxes, can’t afford to renovate to support accessory dwelling units, want to downsize, but don’t want to move out of the community. It is essential that Council members talk with children and young people about their experiences with the schools, recreation, and early job opportunities they are seeking out.

To undermine patterns of participation that are dominated by white residents, homeowners, and to some extent residents without young children, there are a host of strategies that the City should undertake, and the key is always fostering lasting relationships rather than searching out one-time connections. To this end, I would support Council and staff action to: (1) reach out to property managers at multifamily properties, churches, resident leaders, and local organizations to maintain connections in the broader community; (2) nurture the relationships among city agencies and share communication networks in order to reach more residents; (3) emphasize culturally competency to go beyond mere language translation; (4) identify Community Liaisons who can work specifically with communities where trust of City institutions and agencies may be an issue; (4) Use texting as a regular means of disseminating information to those who prefer it; (5) prioritize in-person, on-site engagement opportunities as much as virtual or Civic-Center-based events; (6) repurpose the City Newsletter to pack in a far greater amount of short “blotter”-style announcements and reminders in the same column space; and (7) gently guide highly-engaged residents to use existing channels to resolve problems, while keeping Council members in the loop if staff responsiveness seems to be lacking.

When it comes to climate change, the City can use its communications media and convening power far better to provide residents, property owners, and businesses the know-how and support they seek to respond to climate threats. Early adopters of sustainable living approaches are in every neighborhood. The City newsletter and other media should provide them with platforms for sharing their knowledge and how-to’s so that many more can join them. City sustainability staff should coordinate ongoing dialogue among renters and property owners who are trying to go green – with efficiency, energy generation and storage, transportation, waste, food, repair, reuse, and support for native plants and animals. This dialogue and knowledge-sharing can accelerate community efforts and focus City policies in response to obstacles, gaps, and opportunities. Renters in multifamily buildings particularly need support in advocating for efficiency and energy improvements. To the extent the City is involved with increasing demand for environmentally friendly efficiency, energy, transportation, and landscape improvements, this is a great opportunity to foster local green services and employment opportunities,

perhaps through partnerships with Montgomery College and with existing businesses and nonprofits. Any sustainability initiatives must respect those whose routines are built around climate-unfriendly technologies and who need more time, resources, or assistance, or new infrastructure in place, before they can make transitions.

In terms of reaching “across the aisle” to develop consensus, in my campaigning in Ward 3, I have not been detecting the kind of polarized, binary distribution of views about development that this question seems to assume. I have been finding broad consensus that some degree of new infill development and new housing can be beneficial to the City and community. There is broad consensus that such growth needs to be guided in ways that preclude the addition of expensive, “luxury” housing, fail to grow the supply of affordable housing proportionately, cause traumatic short-term displacement, cause involuntary relocation out of the community, harm the natural environment, discourage human-scaled interactions, or ignore the need for a transition to a carbon-neutral community. The major differences of opinion seem to be around (a) how much control the City can exercise over private-market development; (2) how viable the options are for using federal, state, nonprofit, or local resources to reduce the costs of development; (3) how much compromise or incentivizing (through tax breaks) is needed to get development underway; (4) the advisability and feasibility of tearing down rather than retrofitting buildings; and the level of trust that residents’ have in the City government’s protection of City interests and values. A sixth question that generally hasn’t been asked, but that would likely have a range of responses, concerns what the ideal built-out population for the City would be, i.e. what is a good target for the City’s population density?

My approach to building consensus is to ask direct questions and listen closely, with empathy, to the answer; to seek to have deliberations grounded in accurate facts, to call attention to common interests in what seem to be divergent views, to call out and reject superficial, binary characterizations and name-calling; and to engaging people in searching for well-synthesized paths forward that help to ameliorate multiple local issues. My experience in building consensus comes broadly from 30 years’ work as a classroom teacher and from years of collaborative theater direction. My three most important local experiences in building consensus in Takoma Park have been (1) as a co-president of the Takoma Park Cooperative Nursery during a challenging period, (2) as president of the Pinecrest Community Association when negotiating a plan for a neighborhood playground that had to be harmonized with the existing community garden, and (3) on the Takoma Junction Task Force, where I brought extensive research and community-outreach findings into the deliberations and helped to lead the development of the final report’s consensus recommendations. Those who worked with me in these situations noted my patience, authentic listening, optimism, and creativity, which helped lead to harmonious outcomes despite the range of perspectives present at the table. When I encounter people who feel differently from me about an issue, even if they are rude, I have trained myself to stay engaged and actually to increase my eagerness to understand where they are coming from and what lies beneath or behind their frustration and anger. I have worked to be transparent not only with my thinking but also with my emotions so that I have stamina and genuine interest in engaging with conflicts. I also have trained myself to admit and apologize for my own mistaken assumptions and bad judgments. I never give up on the possibility of developing trust, which is always founded upon honesty and accountability.

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?**

People treasure living in Takoma Park because of its unique degree of diversity in the metropolitan area (as well as its relatively healthy natural environment). We must protect, preserve, and grow the City's economic diversity in the face of our challenging regional housing market. When the County Council was deliberating on the proposed Minor Master Plan Amendment (MMPA), I stood up to point out that the rezoning provided "by right" protections and opportunities for developers of infill or tear-down projects, while providing mainly aspirational language about environmental protections, infrastructure capacity, protection against displacement of residents, and assurance of no net loss of affordable housing. I also said that a rezoning in accordance with Takoma Park's demographic diversity ought to incentivize the addition of new affordable housing at various price points.

With the MMPA now in place, Takoma Park needs to guard against displacement and protect affordability and diversity with the limited tools available. It's easy to see that gaining new neighbors through greater density can be a positive for our close-in community. That said, this year's zoning change, which allows greater density and high-rise buildings along Maple Avenue, on the Adventist university and former hospital campus, and in nearby areas, has made tear-downs of existing buildings a profitable option for property owners. It does not include hard-clad guards against displacement, let alone proportional increases in the supply of affordable housing. The City now needs to focus its energies on educating and supporting residents who seek to avoid displacement. Anything the City can do to help generate smaller housing units will create more long-term affordability in this market. Supporting the establishment of a community development bank supported by local investors is one tool to explore.

Children growing up in Takoma Park, families outgrowing smaller units, and adults downsizing in Takoma Park should have accessible options to stay so that this is a true hometown community. Given the historic and continuing economic impacts of systemic racism, the City has an obligation to prioritize the needs of people who are housing burdened in this very costly regional market. Maintaining quality, affordable housing is also key to any comprehensive response to the climate emergency because it allows people without high incomes to live closer to where they work in this very traffic-congested region.

The best locations for mixed-use development projects in our area (the City) are in the areas that were originally built in the 1950s as auto-centered business districts, primarily along New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard. I'm addressing these areas elsewhere in this questionnaire. Within City neighborhoods outside of the MMPA, there are some good infill development opportunities at three

sites in Ward 3: the former John Nevins Andrews school campus on Elm Avenue; the Washington-McLaughlin School (former Ray Road School) campus between Woodland and Poplar Avenues, and the church property for sale at the corner of Jackson and Ethan Allen Avenues. There are two large parking lots in Old Town and (of course) the parking lot at the Junction, but the cost of excavation and then building upward at these sites, given their relatively small size and Historic District height constraints, seems to make infill development difficult. The separate parking areas on parcels behind Carroll Avenue might support a building that wouldn't undermine the historic character of the district, but the complexity of combining multiple parcels for such a project might make it difficult. At the north end of Flower Avenue at Piney Branch Road, a significantly-sized commercial area also contains multiple small parcels and has some new construction already underway.

Within the MMPA, the most advantageous site for development is the large former hospital campus. While I am not privy to the information, I expect that City staff have already been in talks with the property owner, as well as the University, to try to work out ways to encourage mixed-use development on that site. I agree with the MMPA's aspirational statements about reusing, rather than demolishing, existing structures where possible, establishing good connections for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit through the property, protecting the original campus green as public space, and – of course – ensuring ample provision of new affordably-priced housing units. I would like to see the City Council stand up for these components in any site plan process.

Along Maple Avenue, the large sloping parking lot next to the Park Ritchie is obviously an excellent site for infill development that could actually reduce the amount of impervious surface on that property. The challenge for any new development along Maple Avenue is that if developers are expecting to provide parking while eliminating surface lots, they are likely to encounter Brashear's Run groundwater not far below the surface once they start excavating in that floodplain. Maple Avenue is, as far as I can tell, the most intensively developed floodplain in the entire County because nearly every other floodplain and bottomland in the County has been protected by M-NCPPC. If developers (or redevelopers) along Maple Avenue seek to provide residential parking without excavating deeply, they will wind up trying to use some of the lower floors of their buildings for parking. This will become a tricky proposition in the site plan process because the vision expressed in the MMPA is for a mixed-use, walkable street, ostensibly with retail storefronts.

Piney Branch Elementary School is aging, overcrowded, and restricted in its ability to expand. An obvious idea for the County to explore is moving the school to a new campus on the former hospital site, perhaps in conjunction with a land swap that would allow mixed-use development on the current school site. Related to this idea, it may be possible that the County could purchase the entire hospital campus, which would make land costs lower for any public-good uses, including affordable and moderately priced new housing.

Three critical needs in the MMPA area are access to a full-service grocery store, improvement of transit and bike connections to the Takoma Metro and the two new Purple Line stations, and protection of Sligo Creek. The latter must include careful transportation planning to ensure that Sligo Creek Parkway retains its original purpose as a pleasure drive and is prevented from becoming a major thoroughfare for new residents in the area.

If property owners or developers decide to renovate or tear down/replace existing buildings on Maple Avenue, the City Council should seek ways to implement a coordinated, phased approach to prevent displacement of residents who wish to remain living on Maple Avenue. Ideally, a phased approach would begin with government-supported rental of a brand-new building (e.g. on the lot next to the Park Ritchie) which would then provide the temporary housing for residents displaced when other buildings were under renovation or replacement. Developer impact fees could help to fund the temporary use of this first new building for that purpose. It might be that each subsequent building, once renovated or constructed, would take over serving as temporary housing for residents of the next building in the queue, in an ongoing sequence.

I have stated elsewhere my strong interest in supporting, not only “no net loss” of affordable housing, but also a proportional increase in affordable housing so that with new population, the City remains welcoming to new lower-income residents. I would advocate with Council colleagues to put these stronger objectives in place when guiding and incentivizing development in the MMPA area. To my mind, high-priced or “luxury” housing is the least of our needs, so the mix of new housing units should be dominated by a variety of “missing middle” and affordable units.

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?

In terms of economic development, I would like the City to prioritize green businesses. Existing companies that do renovations, landscaping, or roofing, for example, could be assisted to get into, and expand, the market for efficiency upgrades, solar and geothermal installations, and urban agriculture. With the proximity of Montgomery College and the University of Maryland, the City could partner with these organizations (and the County) to help young people prepare for careers in this likely-expanding sector of the economy. Other green business opportunities could include installation of EV chargers, assistance to local car rental companies in adding EV's to their fleets, and bike, furniture, clothing, and home appliance repair services. It remains to be seen what happens to the regional office-space market over the next few years.

Cross-jurisdictional relationship building, especially with Prince George's County, is also very important in developing a common vision and coordinated incentives for economic development, particularly along lower New Hampshire Avenue, which has the potential to be a vibrant bi-county “Main Street” and hub of commercial activity. An early and urgently-needed first step towards this kind of cooperation is the establishment of effective Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between police agencies and much better performance measures to evaluate how well our own Takoma Park police are deterring crime along New Hampshire Avenue and promoting not only the reality of safety but also the perception of safety. This includes the basic imperative of preventing littering and illegal dumping in areas such as the Sligo Mill Conservation Area. To these efforts, I can bring long standing, detailed knowledge of the New Hampshire Avenue corridor and its neighborhoods on both sides as well as in Lamond-Riggs across the line in the District. I also have cultivated personal relationships with business owners on the

Takoma Park side of New Hampshire Avenue and have assisted business or property owners in gaining access to Housing and Economic Development grants or assistance.

With clear Council direction, staff expertise can help our community engage with development in positive ways. Experience has shown that it's too much to expect a small staff on its own to fast-track development, let alone co-manage projects, while also providing responsive community engagement. Putting hard-clad protections in place to prevent displacement of existing small businesses should be the first priority for City staff. Leveraging available grants and funding sources for improved non-automotive transportation options (e.g. a circulator shuttle) is a second important preparatory step if the City seeks to lay the groundwork for more density. A third priority, as suggested above, is facilitating community visioning processes for areas such as lower New Hampshire Avenue in Pinecrest, so that the City and community organizations can respond with one voice when development applications are in the works.

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?

I am aware that Takoma Park hasn't added new apartment buildings since the 1980s, but I have heard only anecdotal explanations for this, which generally emphasize either that "developers have been scared away" or that "rent stabilization makes it impossible to build new housing." I have not heard an evidence-based argument that developers are doing the numbers and simply finding it not feasible to build in Takoma Park, or that they are so in fear of local opposition that they won't try to pursue projects.

The citing of the failed Takoma Junction project as a disincentive to developers seems to be a red herring to me. That case involved an idiosyncratic site with intense design constraints (steep-slope forest, historic district limitations, state highway routes, curves, district-wide parking needs) that the developer either failed to anticipate or found it financially unfeasible to work with. The City first failed the developer by not making those constraints clear up-front; then the developer failed the City by repeatedly bringing forward essentially the same unresponsive plan; then the City extended the process by a couple of years while seeking right-of-way changes (that the State Highway Administration would not support) in order to accommodate the developer's failing design. This was not a site where development was impossible; it was a site where two non-profit organizations had reasonable proposals, in fact, that might have worked within the site constraints.

It seems unlikely that a potential developer of land on, say the hospital campus, the large parking lot next to the Park Ritchie on Maple Avenue, or New Hampshire Avenue would "do the numbers," find a project financially feasible, but then opt not to proceed simply because of a project that hadn't passed muster in the Historic District (and whose developer had then gone bankrupt).

Another possible explanation for the lack of new multifamily housing in the past 40 years is that Takoma Park, like other inner suburbs in this region and around the country, reached a plateau, in terms of how built-out it was, sometime around 1980, and that suburban sprawl in the metropolitan area

made it cheaper to build farther out for the next four decades. Not to be flip, but just to throw in a little humor here: it is also true that Takoma Park hasn't seen any new bowling alleys, movie theaters, gas stations, soccer fields, libraries, churches, or recreation centers since the 1980s! Now, however, with gas prices rising and the desirability of long commutes fading, it seems possible that owners of the large parcels in town best suited for development have been quietly waiting for Purple Line and Bus Rapid Transit completion (or nearly so) before they will collectively, and in a somewhat coordinated way, jump into redevelopment or infill development. It is also important not to overlook that non-profit redevelopers such as Montgomery Housing Partnership, albeit with Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) incentives, have indeed been able to renovate large buildings in the City, and not even with an emphasis on market-rate housing.

As a Council member, I would urge colleagues and staff to get a fully-informed picture of the opportunities and obstacles to development, as experienced by for-profit as well as non-profit developers, and with regard to the whole range of costs, including land, permitting, financing, design, construction, advertising, taxes and fees, and ongoing operating costs. I would not accept some of the simplistic arguments that have been amplified in much of the discourse of late. These include the "no new multifamily in forty years" statement (a fact in search of an explanation) considered above. They also include the specious argument that creating new market-rate housing will automatically, via a trickle-down effect, generate new affordable housing. From an economics standpoint, this argument may make sense on a national or even regional level, but it makes no sense in an in-demand small jurisdiction like Takoma Park: as fast as this jurisdiction adds market-rate housing, relatively affluent buyers and renters are likely to pour into this jurisdiction. Takoma Park is more like Vancouver or San Francisco in this regard than it is like Youngstown or Petersburg. These simplistic arguments also include the notion (implied or stated) that the combination of private developers and private equity investors is the only tool for getting new development underway. Private developers, charging a 4-5% fee, and private investors, seeing 12-20% returns on investments, will of course make the argument to legislators and policy makers that they need x dollars in incentives before a shovel can go in the ground. Firms specializing in non-profit development may not insist upon the same requirements.

One great way to get, and maintain, more "accessible" or "missing middle" housing in Takoma Park is to push for smaller units, i.e. comfortable homes that allocate fewer square feet per occupant, with plenty of options for families. Units with smaller per-capita footprints are likely to remain more affordable over time even if they are not subject to rent stabilization. These could be accessory dwelling units, tiny houses, duplexes, triplexes, or smaller apartments. These smaller places would be closer to the scale of homes that predominated in the 1950s, 1960s, and even 1970s; they would have smaller environmental footprints as well. As Ward 3 residents may recall with the cases of Circle Woods and Dorothy's Woods, our community has in the past zealously guarded natural areas. It's important to ask whether the City wishes to continue along this path. Regardless, the City must keep on prioritizing environmental protection and restoration in considering any redevelopment.

To repeat and emphasize, as Council member I would advocate for our deliberations about housing policy to be informed by transparent fiscal analysis. At the September staff-led Housing Policy Forum, I asked how staff determined that the proposed 10+5 year property tax forgiveness policy (for market-rate multifamily housing) offered the "sweet spot" that would tip potential developers in favor of pursuing

new projects. The staff member did not provide an answer to the question although he had implied earlier that staff had landed on that number after some form of careful consideration or analysis. Indeed, as of this writing, the fiscal analysis to justify that and other tax-incentive programs has not been completed yet. Sound policy must be based on sound information, calculations, and projections. Private developers shouldn't be demonized, but their role often is to view land as a profit-making opportunity; the City's role is to look far into the future and ensure a high quality of life long after developers have moved on.

- 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?**

It may be that, by the time the next Council begins its term, some kind of policy for subsidizing market-rate projects through property tax forgiveness will have gone into effect. I hope that any policy put into place will be based upon extremely careful consideration of the tradeoffs involved. With a structural budget deficit and property tax collections increasing faster than the rate of inflation, it is necessary to recognize that new projects, and new residents, will generate more demand for City services, as well as potentially new infrastructure. From a fairness standpoint, it doesn't seem just to ask existing residents to cover the cost of City services for new residents – *of the same or greater incomes* – for fifteen years or more, unless the City makes commitments to forestall the expansion of services and expenditures.

The City should be certain that it effectively calibrates any incentives in light of regional demand and County zoning, planning, and policies, which may be incentives enough for developers to increase the local supply of market-rate housing. (The City should continue to monitor the impact of any new legislation at the federal or state level and be prepared to adjust its policies accordingly.) Here are two of the emerging patterns that may already be creating incentives for development within the City boundaries: (1) Takoma Metro-area development will have impacts that need to be evaluated, managed, and perhaps mitigated. (2) Upcoming Purple Line and Bus Rapid Transit stations, including along New Hampshire Avenue in Ward 3, will likely encourage market-rate redevelopment without further incentives.

I understand that rent stabilization is a broad-strokes approach that requires period reexamination to ensure that its structuring and details are meeting policy objectives. As mentioned earlier, there is good reason for reexamining how our rent stabilization ordinance can better incentivize and/or make feasible good-faith efforts by landlords to maintain, update, or retrofit properties for environmental efficiency. This reexamination should take into account not only the policies themselves but also the application processes and access to information and assistance, and overall simplicity of meeting program requirements. From an equity standpoint, it also seems fair to investigate how some kind of means-testing or sliding-scale fine-tuning of rent stabilization could be accomplished without invading people's financial privacy or oversimplifying the financial constraints faced by people in various stages of life and in various situations.

Overall, however, I strongly support rent stabilization on principle as a way of allowing the Takoma Park housing market to resist regional market pressures and thus maintain income diversity within the community. I would strongly resist efforts to align Takoma Park's rent stabilization ordinance with that of Montgomery County, on three grounds: (1) the vast majority of property-tax paying residents I have spoken to favor rent stabilization even though they understand that it effectively increases their tax burden; (2) Montgomery County's rent stabilization doesn't commence for many years longer after the initial occupancy of a building and is thus far weaker in preventing high rents; and (3) Montgomery County's much greater size (in area and in housing supply) creates a far-different market than what we have in our very close-in, in-demand municipality; so the provision of affordable housing here in Takoma Park requires more vigilance and proactive effort.

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 question breaks down into two topics: safety on and near major arteries, and safety along neighborhood streets. To make pedestrians and cyclists safer along roads like New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, we need to begin by recognizing that these areas, especially the Crossroads area, are among the *most* pedestrian-used places in the County while also being among the *least* pedestrian-safe places. Simply put, drivers of cars and trucks moving through these areas need to encounter pavement surfaces, signage, lighting, narrowed lanes, pedestrian peninsulas and refuges, speed cameras, and stop light cameras, all working together to get vehicles to slow down and be ready to cede the street at any moment to a pedestrian. The speed limit should be lowered to 20 miles per hour (or less) along University Boulevard between Carroll Avenue and Riggs Road, and along New Hampshire Avenue between Merrimac Street and Merwood Avenue. The median fencing and curbside fencing currently installed to channel pedestrians toward safe crossings should be maintained, but if desire paths indicate the need for mid-block crossings, these should be opened up, signaled, and striped. If the Crossroads area undergoes redevelopment, a cycling route along the back edge of the B.F. Saul parcel (southwest quadrant) should connect with the service lanes along the south side of University Boulevard leading toward Carroll Avenue. In the southeast quadrant, a bikeway should be established one "block" east of New Hampshire (see response below to question 8).

Safety along neighborhood streets is a top priority for me as a candidate. I have engaged residents in examining conditions at the Streeter and along the mid-Ward 3 cut-through corridor that includes Walnut, Elm, and Pine as well as Westmoreland Avenue. I've made my own observations during the peak hour at neighborhood intersections. I've worked in the past as Pinecrest Association president to fill gaps in the neighborhood sidewalk network and to get an agreement to keep a Pinecrest-based roofing company's trucks off residential streets. For improved pedestrian safety in neighborhoods, we need to examine each intersection to see how the location of the stop line or nearby vegetation and fencing might need adjustment to ensure that stopping vehicles can see to the right and left. We need to experiment with stop sign cameras at intersections such as Walnut/Westmoreland and Sligo Mill Road/Orchard Avenue to train drivers to obey the signage. We need to paint crosswalks to connect

ADA ramps wherever cut-through or reckless traffic is becoming a pattern. These incremental changes need to be taken with an understanding of how the cut-through traffic behaves across neighborhood corridors. If possible, the City should instruct navigation apps to remove routes from their databases. If absolutely necessary for safety, the City should begin to explore how forced turns and one-way routings might make cut-through routes too circuitous to be inviting, if this benefit outweighs the added inconvenience for residents entering or exiting their neighborhoods. (It's easy and cheap to experiment with these kinds of routing alterations by using temporary cones or barricades.) With the hiring of a new Traffic Planner position, the emphasis should be on a systems-thinking based approach that emphasizes safety above all.

For greater cyclist safety, I support the completion of the Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan segments in town. I would like to see the southernmost segment of the New Hampshire Avenue Bikeway very carefully designed to eliminate dangers at the three turns along the route where cyclists are sharing the road with cars. I also would like to experiment with signage that requires vehicles traveling downhill on steep blocks to yield to uphill-traveling cyclists. Piney Branch Road through Ward 1 is a vital route for cyclists offering no safety from cars. This is a long-standing problem not easily remedied, but a reduced speed limit and emphasis on opening up space for "climbing lanes" on uphill sections would make a big difference. New development in the MMPA area should be accompanied by public-amenities agreements with builders to support a convenient, comfortable bike route all the way from the Takoma Metro to the Takoma Langley Purple Line station.

Last, to protect both cyclists and pedestrians – and especially children – the City should see how far it can go in legally reducing speed limits on neighborhood streets. It would seem that an 18 or 15 mph speed limit would be appropriate, along with a rule stating "pass at 5 mph when people or animals are present" – reinforced with signage along flat, play-intensive blocks.

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.

As I stated in my 2020 questionnaire responses, the Takoma-Langley Crossroads commercial area is excellently situated for mixed-use infill development, located as it soon will be along a key transit corridor. (The small commercial area at the southeast corner of Flower Avenue and Piney Branch Road in Ward 5 has similar potential because of its proximity to the Arliss Purple Line station.) As I discussed in my response to question 4 above, there is a need right now to accelerate cross-jurisdictional relationship-building, positioning current small business owners and adjacent residents at the forefront in revisiting, updating, and fine-tuning the visions contained in the Sector Plan. If and when the time arrives that major property holders decide to coordinate their timing for redevelopment, this cross-jurisdictional vision can help to guide plans and reduce conflict. I don't know the ins and outs of the grants and assistance that can be made available to help businesses persist in the face of redevelopment, have a stake in the profits, and finally find new homes in new buildings; but our Council

should push in every way to ensure that if that land gains monetary value, the businesses that currently occupy it will gain as well.

My vision for the Takoma-Langley Crossroads area continues to be for mixed-use development that protects existing affordable goods and services, generates rental and ownership housing units at a variety of price points, incorporates excellent public amenities including a piazza or public square and a play area, improves pedestrian and bicycle access to the area from Wards 6, 2, and 5, protects the Long Branch and Sligo Creek stream valleys, and maintains the character of the adjacent Ward 6 neighborhood in terms of noise and light buffering and traffic circulation patterns.

I continue to believe that care should be taken to integrate the design of the entire Crossroads area and to coordinate the timing and logistics of construction projects across jurisdictions, so that the area, when developed, has an even more cohesive feel and so that the two major road arteries do not function as dividers between neighborhoods or sub-districts. Any redesign of local bus/circulator routes and networks should allow for easy transportation to connect Takoma Park's commercial and major institutional nodes with the Crossroads. (See my response to the first question above in this questionnaire.)

To encourage walkability and bikeability as well as reduction of our community's carbon footprint, innovative designs should be encouraged in coordination with the Counties and State. These could include rooftop or parking-lot based solar installations, narrow-profile wind turbines, the planting of canopy-scale shade trees, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian pathways, and possibly even a cross-intersection pedestrian bridge.

Specifically, the two quadrants of the Crossroads lying within Takoma Park could be redesigned along the lines of the Station at Riverdale Park, with narrow pedestrian-oriented access lanes between buildings that generate shade while providing necessary access for persons with disabilities and small-scale deliveries. On the east side, Holton Lane and its connecting driveway leading down to University Boulevard provide a starting point for thinking about how such a tiny-streets grid might be configured to allow access while discouraging and circulating traffic. On the west side, it would be wonderful to create a north-to-south, shady, pedestrian-oriented route, one "block" off New Hampshire Avenue, that would lead into and through the Takoma Overlook property, past the Recreation Center, and on to the lovely Hillwood Manor garden at Sligo Creek. On the east side, a newly designed development could provide an internal connection to the New Hampshire Avenue bikeway already planned.

The large B.F. Saul-owned property at Takoma Langley Crossroads Shopping Center presents an uninterrupted barrier to the adjoining neighborhood right now. To encourage walking and biking, it would seem to be good to create a couple of pedestrian access points (I believe these are envisioned in the Sector Plan). The northern portion of New Hampshire Gardens is the last neighborhood in the city without access to a neighborhood playground, and this has been noted since the adoption of the 2000 Master Plan. Redevelopment of the Crossroads area should definitely include acquisition or transfer of a plot of land well-suited to making a fine new playground that should attract children and families from all over the City and beyond.

I agree with the widely-held vision that Takoma Langley Crossroads and indeed the entire New Hampshire corridor should retain its international economic diversity and be recognized and celebrated as a major economic engine for the northeast side of the inside-the-Beltway DMV. To amplify this identity, it would be great for the State of Maryland, perhaps in conjunction with the Smithsonian or the University of Maryland, to establish a National Museum of the Immigrant Story at the Crossroads. This would be a dynamic institution preserving and celebrating the stories of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa and elsewhere from the years since Ellis Island ceased to be a major arrival point and especially since the Great Society era, when Eurocentric immigration quotas were liberalized. This institution would also have a community and regional presence in helping immigrant communities stay organized, share their heritage, and pursue communal healing in response to trauma and injustice experienced here or elsewhere in the world.

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?

Friends of the Recreation Center and other community advocates worked very hard to try to achieve a public-private partnership success at the Recreation Center site that would have produced an updated recreation facility and housing, including some affordable housing. I agree with this vision for the site. Ultimately, a suitable partnership arrangement couldn't be worked out. With the City now facing a \$1.2 million structural deficit, ARPA funds depleted, and very large debt payments associated with the Library construction bond, there doesn't appear to be much financial ability for the City to replace the Recreation Center absent major grant monies. This situation doesn't preclude the possibility of doing phased renovations, hopefully using smaller grants, that would renew the building and extend its versatility as an activity and gathering space.

I think that two keys in considering projects of this kind are (1) emphasizing functionality rather than "signature" design and (2) maintaining a laser focus on project objectives, with an emphasis on equity. There may be out-of-the-box solutions for providing more recreational space on a tight budget, perhaps in dispersed or temporary locations across time. For example, the Washington-McLaughlin School property between Woodland and Poplar Avenues in Ward 3, steps away from New Hampshire Avenue, has a large unused north end that includes several large classroom spaces and an auditorium space. The empty Gussini shoe store on New Hampshire Avenue south of Ethan Allen is also a large open space with a high ceiling that could accommodate many kinds of indoor sports and fitness activities. Even on the current Recreation Center site, it might be possible to accommodate a temporary "tennis bubble" type of structure next to the existing building, perhaps in conjunction with a renovation project or perhaps on an ongoing basis. The City's recent experience with the temporary library on Upper New Hampshire Avenue has shown that there is more than one way to deliver excellent services to residents.

I think it is important to note that in the vicinity of the Recreation Center, at the southeast end of Sligo Creek Parkway and wrapping around onto New Hampshire Avenue, there is a significant row of commercially zoned parcels. If some of this land were acquired with Program Open Space or County

funds, it could serve as a bargaining chip in a new public-private partnership arrangement that could involve a combination of mixed-use development and Rec Center revitalization, with both that area and the existing Rec Center site in play as part of the negotiation.

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?

This question somewhat appears to misinterpret the findings of the Vision Study that the City asked the State Highway Administration to conduct a few years ago. That study did not recommend significant changes to the layout of the streets and intersections at Takoma Junction. Setting aside the fact that the Historic District designation of the Junction severely constrains redesign of streets, it is conceivable that adjustments to Junction streets, intersections, legal movements, or signal timings could decrease travel times through the Junction (increase the number of vehicles per hour) during peak hours. However, given the well-known phenomenon of induced demand and the amount of through-traffic in and around Takoma Park, any reductions in congestion would be short-lived, as navigation apps and driver choices would quickly reroute drivers from more congested routes into the Junction and/or would generate more local trips.

Even if new patterns defied the induced-demand phenomenon, reconfigurations at the Junction that improved traffic flow there might serve only to *move* congestion downstream, e.g. at Carroll and Flower, along Ethan Allen, in Old Town, or along Philadelphia Avenue. The Vision Study ultimately, and reasonably, emphasized safety improvements rather than major reconfigurations of the area. Therefore, I would not propose reconfiguration of the intersection or further studies in this regard. I base this opinion on many, many hours spent studying this issue and examining all kinds of options while on the Takoma Junction Task Force and later while tracking the development process, traffic studies commissioned by the City and developer, and while participating in and following the SHA Vision Study process.

Anyone who has sat for three minutes straight at the Sycamore Avenue traffic signal (as I do frequently – I call it the “one song light” when my radio’s on) has soon asked, “Why don’t they just get rid of that old gas-station shell and realign Carroll Avenue so that it aligns with Sycamore?” Believe me, that was a question I raised soon after starting on the Takoma Junction Task Force. After studying the possibilities closely, I saw that this realignment idea is not as good as it might seem. Beyond the aforementioned prohibitions related to Historic District designation, there are more fundamental problems involved with creating this alignment: the Poplar-Columbia route would instantly become an attractive part of a through-the-Junction bypass for commuters trying to avoid back-ups on New Hampshire Avenue; *and* at the same time, Columbia Avenue would essentially become a southern bypass to Carroll Avenue between Ethan Allen and Old Town.

A traffic roundabout is another possible “solution” that occurs to anyone frustrated by the Junction. Our Takoma Junction Task Force also looked closely at this idea. Because of the elevation changes in the area and underlying conduits, it would be very costly, if not impossible, to regrade the combined intersections to accommodate a roundabout. A roundabout would come into conflict with the traffic signal at Philadelphia, would also encourage the establishment of a Poplar-Columbia-Sycamore commuter corridor, and would move congestion elsewhere in the corridor in proportion to the amount of additional capacity it added at the Junction.

I will go ahead and mention three ideas that don’t involve reconfiguring streets. First: just recently, the SHA restriped Carroll Avenue in front of the Fire Station, taking it from two lanes (outbound) down to one. This has generated additional congestion in the area because vehicles coming from Old Town and planning to proceed on Carroll Avenue towards Sligo Creek have to share a lane for about 100-150 feet with vehicles following 410 from Philadelphia towards Ethan Allen. This also generates dangerous blocking of the Fire Station driveway when vehicles get “hung up” and then has the added negative effect of encouraging honking. As a Council member, I would immediately seek clarity on why the SHA has done this. I have a few theories but no answers at this point, so while I see that the change has created a huge problem, I reserve judgment pending more information.

Second: one possibility that the Council might explore – with ample input from the affected neighborhoods – would be to restrict left turns from Ethan Allen Avenue onto Sycamore, perhaps at peak times. In my observation, a single car waiting to turn left onto Sycamore can stop a long string of cars from passing through the intersection during a green light cycle. Restricting left turns there would have obvious trade-offs and, like any change, would have to be evaluated with consideration of the entire system of streets south of Carroll and Ethan Allen Avenues.

Third, and this is merely a potentiality to keep in mind for the future: If it ever becomes feasible, all things considered, to excavate underground parking at the current City-owned parking lot site (e.g. for an appropriately sized development), it *might* be possible to create a one-way circulation pattern (at least for lower-clearance vehicles) that would work as follows: The entrance ramp would be to the right of the Co-op building, in line with (and using) the existing signaled intersection of Ethan Allen and Carroll. The egress for the underground parking would be via the Fire Station rear parking lot, under the cantilevered portion of the Station, and out onto Carroll Avenue just west of Philadelphia (the stop line for Carroll Avenue would have to be moved back). This arrangement would eliminate the mid-block driveway entrance that currently exists and would allow for signaled entry and exit from an underground parking area.

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