

TFA Responses—Doug Glynn

1. Vision, Inclusion and Consensus Building

Please share your vision for Takoma Park, including how you would approach sustainability, economic vibrancy, and housing access. A 2021 consultant report commissioned by the City found that Takoma Park is a "Tale of Two Cities," with stark divides across lines of race and class. How would you ensure a wide range of residents is heard in decisions about residential, commercial, and public facility development? When those views conflict, how would you weigh them and explain your decision, and what experience do you have building consensus across a real division?

The 2021 report describing Takoma Park as a “Tale of Two Cities” identified a problem we should take seriously: residents do not have equal access to civic life, public resources, or the decision-making process. The City has taken meaningful steps to address that divide, including expanded multilingual outreach, greater engagement with renters and immigrant communities. I think that work is a good foundation, but now we need to scale what works.

Community engagement has to reach beyond City Council meetings. Public hearings are one tool, not the whole engagement process. The people who have the time, childcare, transportation, language skills, and familiarity with city government to attend a meeting are not necessarily representative of the city as a whole. We should meet residents where they are, including apartment communities, schools, businesses, houses of worship, neighborhood organizations, and community events.

I would also support providing childcare at major community meetings. If parents cannot attend because they cannot find or afford childcare, then we are not really hearing the whole community.

Language access is civic access. I am a university professor with a PhD, I am fluent in Spanish, and much of my professional life has involved language and education. I would like to see the Library and Recreation Department expand opportunities for English-language learners as well as residents interested in learning a second language. That could include more bilingual classes, conversation groups, and programs that bring residents from different linguistic communities together.

My vision for housing is straightforward: build more housing and protect the people who already live here. We should preserve existing affordable housing and tenant protections while creating opportunities for additional housing at different price points and of different types. RSG’s analysis also gives us some perspective about the scale of this debate. It identified only about 13 vacant or underutilized parcels in Takoma Park and concluded that much of any future housing growth will have to come through redevelopment. RSG also found that housing production is affected by land availability, redevelopment costs, financing conditions, regulations, and regional market pressures, and that the available evidence does not isolate rent stabilization as the cause of our housing-production challenges.

I think we sometimes turn housing into a symbolic fight between YIMBY and NIMBY positions when the choices before us are more complicated and more practical than those labels suggest. We can protect rent stabilization, improve the quality and maintenance of existing rental housing, and still look seriously at where additional housing can responsibly be built.

Those goals do not have to be enemies.

My experience in academia has taught me something about disagreement. Academics disagree, sometimes fervently. The first step in reaching consensus, or even mutual understanding, is to establish a dialogue. I am accustomed to listening to people who strongly disagree with me, examining their arguments, expressing my own position with evidence, and continuing to foment the established dialogue. Consensus does not mean everyone abandons what they believe. It means finding areas where seemingly opposing interests actually overlap and being willing to work from there.

I know there are sharp divisions in Takoma Park, particularly around housing and rent stabilization. I do not think those divisions have to be permanent. My responsibility on the Council would be to listen broadly, make a coherent argument for what I believe is right, weigh the evidence and the tradeoffs, and explain my decision clearly. People may still disagree with the result, but they should know they were heard and understand how the decision was reached.

2. Housing, Zoning and Rent Stabilization

Takoma Park has not seen a new multifamily building since the late 1970s. Much of the city is zoned R-60, which permits only detached single-family homes, and Montgomery County, not the City, sets the zoning. Meanwhile, the City's rent stabilization law, the first of its kind in Maryland, is under review by the current Council. What changes to the law, if any, would you support, and what would you pursue at the County on zoning? How would you bring renters, housing providers, and homeowners to an outcome that each can accept?

I support rent stabilization and would not support dismantling it. I do think the current review gives us an opportunity to make the system work better, particularly when it comes to maintaining and reinvesting in our aging multifamily housing.

I would like to see us separate predictable maintenance from extraordinary expenses.

For new development, major redevelopment, and potentially on a phased basis for existing larger multifamily properties, I would support requiring a long-term maintenance and capital reserve plan. The idea is similar to the reserve planning used by condominium associations. A building owner would identify major systems and predictable expenses, such as roofs, HVAC equipment, exterior painting, windows, stairs, and other components with reasonably foreseeable useful lives. The plan would establish an expected replacement schedule and a method of funding those expenses over time.

That would accomplish two things. Tenants would have greater assurance that the building is being maintained for the long term, and housing providers would have a predictable way to incorporate ordinary capital needs into the economics of the property rather than waiting for a crisis.

But genuinely extraordinary expenses are different. A major repair, emergency replacement, new legal requirement, or other legitimate expense that could not reasonably have been anticipated in the maintenance plan should have access to a much simpler Fair-Return process.

Takoma Park already allows housing providers to seek rent increases above the annual allowance through a Fair Return Petition when operating or capital expenses rise enough to affect the property's financial return. The problem is that the process can require substantial financial documentation and can become cumbersome.

I would like that process to become much more straightforward for legitimate expenses. If an owner can show the expense, demonstrate that it was not already contemplated and funded

through the building's approved maintenance plan, and document the reasonable cost, the application should be able to move through an expedited review. Tenant protections and the ability to challenge unsupported expenses should remain, but we should not create unnecessary barriers to replacing a failed boiler or making an essential structural repair.

I would also connect this system to public incentives. Takoma Park already has a Multifamily Building Improvement Grant program that can cover up to 80 percent of eligible electrification projects, with awards of approximately \$100,000, although the current program is limited to buildings with five to thirty units. I would look at expanding that concept to larger buildings and a broader range of major building improvements, particularly when the investment improves energy efficiency, housing quality, or long-term affordability.

I would also work with our District 20 delegation and Montgomery County to pursue additional state and county funding for major multifamily rehabilitation.

My goal is to create a clear bargain. Renters receive stable rents and a meaningful guarantee that their buildings will be maintained. Responsible housing providers receive predictable rules, a practical way to plan for capital expenses, and a simpler path for recovering legitimate extraordinary costs.

Protect affordability, protect tenants, and protect the housing itself. Those goals do not have to be antagonistic.

3. Development Sites and Tax Base

Single-family homes make up about half of Takoma Park's housing units but pay about 77 percent of its property taxes. Meanwhile, the next Council will inherit decisions on several of the city's most significant sites: the former Washington Adventist Hospital campus, the New Hampshire Avenue Recreation Center, Takoma Junction, the McLaughlin property on Poplar Avenue, and 6530 and 6600 New Hampshire Avenue. What is your vision for these and similar sites, how would you attract developers who can deliver it, and what role should new development play in easing the burden on homeowners?

For me, the starting point is fairness. Takoma Park should be a good partner in development. Residents should receive meaningful public benefits, the City should strengthen its tax base, and developers should have a realistic opportunity to build financially viable projects.

Former Washington Adventist Hospital campus: Residents have already spent years defining what they want here: substantial housing, including affordable housing, together with green space and a park-like environment. The Minor Master Plan has established the framework. Now I want Takoma Park to be a constructive partner and advocate for those priorities while recognizing that the final project will depend on the property owner, developer, financing, and Montgomery County approval process.

New Hampshire Avenue Recreation Center: We need a substantially better recreation center, but we should make fuller use of this valuable property. I would support housing or mixed-use development around a modern recreation facility if it helps pay for the public improvements, adds housing, and expands our tax base.

Takoma Junction: The long argument over Takoma Junction was never simply about a parking lot. It represented competing visions for this part of the city. For now, the parking and loading functions are useful to the Co-op and nearby businesses. I would focus on making the space more flexible so it could also accommodate festivals, outdoor movies, music, performances, and

community gatherings, perhaps with a small stage or other infrastructure that allows the lot to serve multiple purposes.

McLaughlin property on Poplar Avenue: I would identify the environmentally important areas that should be protected and then determine what responsible development can occur elsewhere on the property. Preservation and development do not have to be all-or-nothing choices.

6530 and 6600 New Hampshire Avenue: We have been trying to find a productive long-term use for 6530 since the building was constructed in 1959. It has served as an office building, housed Adventist Home Health Services, and been considered over the years for a business incubator, commercial uses, housing, and other projects. I think the strongest redevelopment opportunity may come from assembling a larger site. If the owners of 6530, 6600, the Jiffy Lube, Mid Atlantic Seafood, or other adjoining properties were willing to consider combining parcels, I would be enthusiastic about helping pursue a substantial mixed-use project. The challenge would be accommodating development while protecting as much of the significant tree canopy as reasonably possible.

Maryland Gateway at New Hampshire and Eastern: I strongly support revisiting the City's earlier Maryland Gateway concept involving 6300 and 6350 New Hampshire Avenue. The 2008 corridor plan already identified those properties as a potential combined redevelopment site. (takomaparkmd.gov) If the landowners were willing to entertain a joint development, I think this could be an exceptional opportunity to add a significant number of both market-rate and affordable homes, together with neighborhood-serving commercial space.

The site is already well positioned for transit. It sits on major bus routes and has reasonable access to both the Purple Line corridor and the Red Line at Takoma. With attention to bus frequency and connections, I think it could support substantially more housing with less dependence on cars. Parking could also be handled in part through structured or subterranean parking rather than consuming valuable surface land.

I see the same basic opportunity farther north along New Hampshire Avenue around the old union building and the former motorcycle- and auto-oriented properties. These small parcels are much harder to redevelop individually. If willing owners can assemble them into a larger site, the economics and design possibilities become far more attractive.

Across all of these sites, the fiscal goal matters. If homeowners are paying roughly three-quarters of our property taxes, the answer is not simply to tax what we already have more. We need to broaden what we have to tax. Responsible new housing, commercial development, and mixed-use projects can add assessed value and economic activity while spreading the cost of City services across a larger tax base.

The City should not force private landowners into these combinations. But when willing owners and credible developers see an opportunity, I want Takoma Park to be the kind of partner that helps a good project happen.

4. The Purple Line and Safe Streets

The Purple Line is expected to open in late 2027, with a station at the Takoma Langley Crossroads. New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard remain dangerous corridors despite Vision Zero and other initiatives. How would you leverage the Purple Line for the city's benefit, and what would you do to make those corridors, and for that matter, the city, safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, scooters, and other non-car travelers?

I have real questions about the Purple Line, particularly about safety and whether the people who live around Takoma-Langley will receive the benefits we have been promised.

Some of the crossings around New Hampshire Avenue are terrifying. I have watched parents run across these wide roads with very young children just to get to a supermarket, a dentist, a restaurant, or a bus. I do not think we have fully resolved how people are going to move safely through this area once the trains are operating.

If I am elected to the Council, that will be one of the issues I want to focus on. We need to look carefully at crossings, signals, turning lanes, fencing, lighting, and the actual paths people use to reach businesses and transit, not simply the paths we expect them to use.

I am also concerned that the Spanish-speaking community around the Crossroads has not been sufficiently included in this conversation. These residents support businesses that speak their language, understand their community, and provide services they rely on. If getting to those businesses becomes more difficult or feels unsafe, everybody loses. I want engagement in this area to include Spanish-language outreach, translation, and childcare so that the people most affected can actually participate.

I also have questions about affordability. Ride On buses are now free. If a resident can make a trip for free on the bus, but the Purple Line costs roughly \$2 each way, that is potentially \$4 a day, \$20 a week, and around \$80 a month for someone commuting five days a week. The Purple Line may be faster and may provide valuable regional connections, but we should not assume that automatically makes it the best transportation option for every household.

I hope the Purple Line succeeds. But I want us to judge it from the perspective of the people who live around it. Can they cross the street safely? Can they afford to use it? Does it help them reach the places they actually need to go? And are they meaningfully included when we make decisions that affect their neighborhood?

Those are the questions I would bring to the Council.

5. Growth and Climate

The City has committed to net zero emissions by 2035, but modeling presented to the City Council in January 2026 shows 55 percent of that goal is not achievable on the current path. Transportation is the largest single source at 54 percent of the City's emissions, and Montgomery County, not the City, sets building energy codes. How would you close that gap? Would you support making the 2035 target binding for municipal operations, where the City does control the levers, and what role does land use play for the rest?

I support the 2035 net-zero goal, but I think we have to be honest about what Takoma Park controls and then be much more aggressive about the things we can actually influence.

Transportation is our largest source of emissions, so EV charging has to be part of the answer. Right now, I do not think we have made EV ownership practical enough for renters and people living in multifamily buildings. EV ownership should not become something that is practical only for homeowners with private driveways and garages.

I would substantially expand the Multifamily Building Improvement Grant program and make EV charging, electric stoves, heat-pump water heaters, electrical upgrades, and other building-electrification projects much easier to fund. If we are serious about moving away from fossil fuels, then we have to put real money behind that transition.

I would also like to see at least one City employee specifically assigned to work with multifamily property owners, both large and small, to connect them with available funding. That person should function as a kind of grant navigator: identifying which buildings are good candidates for which programs, helping owners apply, coordinating City, County, State, utility, and federal funding, and staying involved through implementation.

The money exists in different places, but that does not mean it is easy to access. We need someone whose exclusive job is to match the building to the money.

That is especially important for older multifamily properties, where owners may not have the staff or financial capacity to navigate complicated grant programs on their own. If we want them to install EV chargers, replace gas stoves and water heaters, upgrade electrical systems, and move toward cleaner energy, we have to make those investments financially realistic.

I would also work closely with our District 20 delegation to pursue substantially more State funding for multifamily electrification and charging infrastructure. Takoma Park has a large multifamily housing stock, and that means we should be making the case in Annapolis that climate funding has to reach renters and apartment buildings, not just homeowners.

If we say we are moving away from fossil fuels, then we have to build the infrastructure and provide the funding that allows people to do it. We can and will do better if I am on the Council.