



## Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment, Scope of Work

**MCPB**

Item No. 6

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### Description

Scope of Work for the *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment*.

### Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposed Scope of Work and Minor Master Plan Boundary.

### Summary

The *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment*, as an update to the *2000 Takoma Park Master Plan*, includes a portion of the area bound by that plan. This memorandum presents the Scope of Work for the Minor Master Plan Amendment, including the proposed Plan boundaries and purpose, the context and background of the Plan area, overall planning framework, elements to explore, a public engagement strategy and the Plan schedule.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Takoma Park is a community with a mix of single-family and multi-family housing, small-scale retail, and diverse demographics. The relocation of the Washington Adventist Hospital to White Oak has eliminated one of the largest employers from the Takoma Park community. The *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment* seeks to re-imagine this site and surrounding area in a holistic and comprehensive way that will guide its re-use and re-investment.

The purpose of this document is to define the scope of work, study area, and Plan Boundary for the proposed Master Plan Amendment, an update to the 2000 *Takoma Park Master Plan*.

Takoma Park is home to many diverse groups. The planning team and City staff will work hard to engage all communities to ensure everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in the planning process. This plan will guide future growth in the area surrounding the Washington Adventist Campus and its recommendations will be built on the engagement of the entire community.

The City and the Planning Department have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Attachment A, to define the roles and responsibilities to be undertaken by each party in the conduct of the Plan. The City and the Planning Department agree that a coordinated cooperative approach is essential to ensuring an equitable, transparent, and fruitful Master Plan process.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **History**

Native Americans utilized the land comprising Takoma Park before the English colonization of Maryland in the mid-1600s. Through the late nineteenth century, the land was sparsely developed and used primarily for agriculture. Several houses from this period remain, including the c. 1875-1885 Woodward House at 25 Holt Place (c. 1875-1885) and the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Douglas House at 18 Sherman Avenue. Union Army General Samuel Sprigg Carroll's (1832-1893) farm in this area was subdivided after his death.

The establishment of the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century-initiated development and spurred population growth in Takoma Park. In 1883, developer Benjamin Franklin (B.F.) Gilbert purchased a 90-acre farm and began to subdivide and develop Takoma Park as one of the first railroad-accessible suburbs in the Washington, D.C. area.

The community prospered through the Victorian period and into the 20th century with large and small homes and the construction of the earliest multi-family dwellings to be built in Montgomery County. The population expanded quickly, and the City of Takoma Park was incorporated by the State of Maryland in 1890. Rapid growth continued in the early 20th century after the opening of streetcar lines, with new subdivisions farther away from the original railroad line, and community institutions including stores, hotels, schools, and churches.

In 1904, Takoma Park became home to the world headquarters of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which maintains the Washington Adventist University and several churches and other local facilities in the

city. In 1907, the church opened the Washington Sanitarium along Sligo Creek, the facility which became the Washington Adventist Hospital. The church relocated its headquarters to Silver Spring, Maryland in 1989.

The hospital regularly expanded with additions and newly constructed buildings throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the oldest facilities have been demolished, including the original sanitarium building, demolished in 1982. Some of the hospital buildings remaining today were built as additions to the main structure in the 1940s and 1950s. Further research is needed to confirm dates of construction across the hospital campus.

Twentieth-century community history has been less well-documented and will be a focus of the current planning effort. Takoma Park's more recent history includes a tradition of civic activism, and preliminary research through the statewide LGBTQ Historic Context Study has identified a concentration of sites in Takoma Park associated with this movement for equality.

In 1992, the Takoma Park Historic District was designated in the county's Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The District is significant for its rich variety of wood-frame architectural styles from the late-19th to early-20th centuries, as well as for its early-20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial structures.

Until 1997, the City straddled the line between Prince George's County on the east and Montgomery County on the west. In November 1995 a state-sponsored referendum resulted in a vote in favor of unification of Takoma Park in Montgomery County. Following subsequent approval by both County Councils and the Maryland General Assembly, the county lines were moved to place all land within the City into Montgomery County.

### **Previous Planning Initiatives**

The 2000 *Takoma Park Master Plan* established a planning framework for the city. The Plan recommends sustaining and enhancing residential neighborhoods and existing commercial centers, adding and improving facilities to serve the community, enhancing parks and the environments and adding a neighborhood friendly circulation system that accommodated local and regional traffic while providing pedestrian bicycle, and auto access to transit, recreation and retail shops.

In recent years, the County Council and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission have approved and adopted two Sector Plans for communities surrounding Takoma Park:

- 2012 *Takoma-Langley Crossroads Sector Plan*
- 2013 *Long Branch Sector Plan*

These plans, in addition to the 2021 "Retail in Diverse Communities" study which focused on these areas, will inform the Plan process.

### **Plan Boundary and Study Area**

This Scope of Work establishes a Plan Boundary that defines the geographical limits of the Minor Master Plan Amendment (Attachment B). Contrasted with the larger Study Area, only property included within

the Plan Boundary will be subject to the recommendations of the Minor Master Plan Amendment, including but not limited to any changes to zoning or public facilities, including road rights of way, parks and open spaces, and/or potential school sites. The properties included in the Plan Boundary are a subset of those included in the plan boundary for the 2000 *Takoma Park Master Plan*, which includes all property within the boundaries of the City of Takoma Park. For the properties included in the Plan Boundary, the recommendations of this Minor Master Plan Amendment will supersede those of the 2000 Master Plan.

Montgomery County Planning Staff has coordinated with the City of Takoma Park planning staff to finalize the proposed plan boundary. The City Council voted on a resolution supporting the proposed boundary. (Attachment C).

To better understand how properties in the Plan Boundary and the neighborhoods, commercial areas, and road network outside it impact each other, the Plan also includes a Study Area (Attachment D) that will be used for broader demographic and traffic analysis, as well as community engagement.

## **PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

### **County-wide Initiatives**

The Planning Department, County Executive Agencies, and the County Council are pursuing a number of county-wide efforts that will inform and guide the planning process and the development of Minor Master Plan Amendment recommendations:

- **Vision Zero**: Vision Zero aims to reduce transportation-related deaths and severe injuries. The County adopted a resolution mandating the approach in 2016 and all transportation planning efforts and policies need to align with the Vision Zero principles. The target goal is to reach zero traffic fatalities by 2030;
- **Net Zero**: In December 2017 the Montgomery County Council adopted a resolution stating that by 2035 the county will reach a goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the resolution, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission will assist the county in achieving that goal;
- **Thrive 2050 (General Plan Update)**: The Planning Board approved the update to the “General Plan” (The 1964 [\*On Wedges & Corridors: A General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties\*](#)) on April 8, 2021. It is now under review by the Montgomery County Council.
- **Pedestrian Master Plan**: The Montgomery County Planning Department is developing the county’s first Pedestrian Master Plan. The plan will make walking and rolling safer, more comfortable, more convenient and more accessible for pedestrians of all ages and abilities in all parts of the county.

- Complete Street Guidelines: Complete Streets are roadways that are designed and operated to provide safe, accessible, and healthy travel for all users of the roadway system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. On a Complete Street, it is intuitive and safe to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to school. The approach to Complete Streets will vary in different parts of Montgomery County.

### **An Equity Lens for Planning**

In 2019, Montgomery County passed a Racial Equity Bill cementing the county's commitment to racial equity and social justice. The bill requires the Planning Board to consider racial equity and social justice impacts when preparing a Master or Minor Master Plan Amendment. The Planning Department continues to build on previous efforts that focused on racial equity. This is reflected in the mission statement of the General Plan, and it will be a driver for the *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan* Amendment as well. Equity is about giving all people the resources they need to have an equal chance at success. This does not mean that all people need the same resources; it is about meeting people where they are and removing barriers so that success is possible.

Research has shown that developing an "equity tool" for a planning team to employ throughout the engagement and planning processes is one way to work towards an equitable plan. Broadly, this means that for all aspects of a plan, the team needs to ask and answer questions that address the history of a community and the inequities that exist, consider how the team can engage residents who have been historically excluded from planning processes, and explore what actions or approaches to planning can be pursued that embrace equity and help to discourage inequity. In coordination with the Planning Department's Equity Peer Review Group, the planning team will continue to explore and implement tools and methods that will promote an equitable planning process that assesses the racial equity and social justice impacts of the Plan's recommendations.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Engagement Plan**

The Planning Department, with the City of Takoma Park is initiating a collaborative effort with the Washington Adventist University, a major stakeholder in the plan. As stated above, a goal of the plan is to execute an equitable engagement process. Broadly, we hope to reach as many individuals as possible in and around the Plan Boundary. We are outlining an engagement plan in this Scope of Work, but we expect to fill in the details of the plan as we meet with stakeholders and learn from them how best to reach their communities.

Over the course of the planning process, we will reach out to:

- Residents, both homeowners and renters, of all ages, from teens to seniors;
- Civic and neighborhood associations;
- Employers, business owners and local business alliances;
- Major property owners;
- Individuals who work in Takoma Park;
- Visitors who come to Takoma Park to eat, shop and enjoy entertainment;
- Students;
- Faith-based groups;
- Ethnic community and business organizations;
- Community Facilities and their users

While elements of this engagement plan will be the typical activities conducted by the Planning Department, we hope to pilot new ways of reaching stakeholders. The team has been working with staff from recently completed plans to hear their “lessons learned” from reaching diverse populations thoughtfully.

We envision the engagement effort to be implemented in four phases over the course of developing the plan recommendations:

- *Listening*

The first phase will focus on listening sessions. The planning team will reach out to leaders and groups that represent the communities within the Study Area to let them know the plan is beginning and to find out how best to reach their members. We will be reaching out to individuals through phone, email and mailed communication, and in person as it is safe to do so. We anticipate that many listening sessions will be small, but we will also hold virtual town halls as well, to maintain maximum flexibility. As restrictions are loosened, we hope to meet in small groups, following the appropriate guidelines. We will give participants the information and tools they need to effectively participate in the planning process. We hope to identify the diverse concerns of the Takoma Park communities as we are collecting and analyzing our existing conditions data.

- *Visioning*

This phase will be a series of workshops held at different times and places throughout the community over several months. Some of the locations and format for the workshops will be defined by what is learned in the first listening sessions. We may hold the workshops in different spaces to ensure that all members feel included. Language interpretation services, food/drink and/or childcare may be provided during these workshops so that participation can be broad-based. At these workshops the planning team will hold collaborative, interactive discussions about the long-term vision for the Plan Area.

- *Refining*

This phase will be concurrent with staff's formation of preliminary Minor Master Plan Amendment recommendations. We will bring these to the community to hear members' feedback. As in previous phases, the number of sessions and the way we bring recommendations back to the community will vary by constituency, and we will plan this out once we have identified the best ways to reach people.

- *Sharing*

The final phase will be the presentation of the staff recommendations. In this phase we will explain what is being recommended and how those recommendations will benefit the community over the coming 20 years. We will also try to clarify for participants how the initial thoughts and ideas we brainstormed together evolved into plan recommendations.

### **Engagement Tools and Approaches**

In addition to meetings during daytime, evening, and weekend hours as needed, the engagement plan will include a range of additional ways to get involved, provide feedback and participate in the planning effort:

- Canvassing services to reach residents where they are.
- Internet-based updates (social media, plan website, email newsletter, listserv);
- Attend community events such as the local farmer's markets, arts events, and festivals to meet people where they are. If virtual versions of these events are planned, staff would coordinate with the organizers to determine how/if the Planning Department can attend.
- "Pop-in" visits to local business and community facilities (coordinated with the owners);
- Regular attendance at the meetings of established groups like relevant civic associations and multi-family apartment associations.
- Incorporate creative engagement methods such as neighborhood canvassing, interactive mapping, and surveying.
- Office hours: planning staff will hold regular 90-minute sessions where stakeholders speak with staff directly and ask the planning staff anything. The office hours will be held virtually or in a central location within the Plan Area. The staff anticipates a hybrid process that incorporates both virtual and in person office hours, as needed.
- Pilot neighbor-to-neighbor engagement program.
- New initiatives to be developed once the team begins to meet with community leaders.

### **ELEMENTS TO EXPLORE**

Below is a list of elements the team will explore. It is anticipated that additional elements will be added as the engagement effort and existing conditions analysis begin. No issue is studied in a vacuum; all plan recommendations will be considered as part of a holistic approach to shaping the future of the Plan Area.



### **Washington Adventist University**

The Washington Adventist University is a major stakeholder in Takoma Park and supported the initiation of the Minor Master Plan Amendment, which in part will seek a creative solution for the vacant Washington Adventist Hospital site. The University desires to provide additional student and faculty housing as a part of their vision. The planning team will explore this vision with the University and develop recommendations that best address their goals.

### **Community Identity and Character**

Understanding the elements that contribute to this sense of place will be essential to ensuring that future development for this area is reflective of and responsive to these different identities. The planning team will learn about all of the various communities during the engagement process and will explore ways to highlight the various cultures that comprise the community through urban design, architecture, and open space planning.

### **Housing**

In 2019, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments set a regional goal of adding more than 320,000 housing units by 2030, 75 percent of which need to be attainable for low- and middle-income households. Takoma Park has potential to provide opportunities for additional attainable housing towards that regional target. This plan will examine the existing zoning and land use in and around the Plan Area to determine how, where, and what type of new residential development can be accommodated. The plan will also consider the housing goals of the Thrive 2050 plan as the work on that plan continues.

### **Economic Development**

Takoma Park has long had a commitment to its small neighborhood-oriented businesses. The plan will analyze the existing economic profile of the Plan Area and explore ways to create conditions to continue to build on that commitment in new and innovative ways.

### **Transportation, Access and Connectivity**

The plan will examine access to transportation systems and connectivity both within the Plan Area, between the Plan Area and the surrounding region. The transportation analysis will also include the evaluation of existing conditions and future land use/transportation scenarios using a set policy area-level transportation system performance metric. Results of the transportation analysis will inform recommendations for improving circulation, accessibility, and multi-modal safety at key intersections within the Plan Area, as well as gateway intersections that connect the Plan Area to the larger transportation network, consistent with Vision Zero.

### **Energy and Environment**

The plan will explore various approaches to realizing a sustainable Takoma Park consistent with the county's net zero greenhouse gas emissions goal. The plan will examine existing conditions in the Plan Area including impervious surface cover, tree/green cover, habitat health, stormwater management, water/air quality, carbon emissions and other elements. The team will assess the urban ecosystem of the area within the Plan boundary and its capacity to provide environmental benefits to the people, flora and fauna within the Plan Area.

### **Parks and Open Space**

With the increase in density in the growing areas of Montgomery County, parks and open spaces have become essential to creating livable, healthy, and complete communities. Informed by a data-based analysis approach established in the 2018 *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan*, the team will assess current deficits in resources and will develop recommendations for the Plan Area that will support a local and regional open space network that provides accessible green spaces of various types and sizes to meet the needs of the community. The Plan will also study how privately-owned public spaces are a part of this open space network.

### **Historic Resources**

Through research and community engagement we will expand and recontextualize our understanding of the history of The Washington Adventist Campus and the surrounding area to include communities that may have been historically and systemically underrepresented. In addition the team will review the recommendations of the *Approved and Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Takoma Park Historic District* (June 1992) and conduct the necessary surveys to update documentation and determine which individual resources and/or districts should be listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and the *National Register of Historic Places*.

### **Community Facilities**

The City has numerous community facilities in and around the proposed Plan Area, including the central municipal complex with town hall, community center, and library, as well as several parks including Sligo Creek Park and two schools, Takoma Park Elementary and Piney Branch Elementary. The Plan will review ways to improve upon these facilities and explore the potential for new ones.

### **CONSULTANTS**

Outside consultants will be engaged on Outreach and Community Engagement.

### **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

The *Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment* will be initiated with the approval of this Scope of Work by the Planning Board. Milestones are anticipated below but are subject to change as the plan develops. Takoma Park City Council review will be conducted at each milestone, per the MOU.

Scope of Work: September 2021

Existing Conditions Analysis/Commence Engagement: May 2021 – November 2021

Visioning and Preliminary Recommendations: December 2021 – April 2022

Development of Staff Draft Report: May 2021 – August 2022

Public Hearing and Planning Board Work Sessions: September 2022 – December 2022

Planning Board Draft: January 2023

County Executive Review, County Council Review/PHED Work Sessions: January 2023 – June 2023

Commission Adoption of Plan: August 2023

Sectional Map Amendment: October 2023

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<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/downcounty/takoma-park/takoma-park-master-plan/>

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**A: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT AND THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK (MOU)**

**B: PROPOSED PLAN BOUNDARY**

**C: CITY OF TAKOMA PARK RESOLUTION 2021-22**

**D: PROPOSED STUDY AREA**