

Hello, my name is Karen Elrich, and I have been a resident of Takoma Park for almost 45 years now. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on the minor master plan created by park and planning. However, I must admit that without the necessary information, it is difficult for me to provide an educated response regarding the plan's impact on Takoma Park. Our city has already expressed concerns, but it seems that these concerns have not been adequately addressed by park and planning.

In order to make an informed decision, there are several critical questions that need to be answered. These questions are vital for all of us: residents, the city, and yourselves, in determining whether this plan will have a positive or detrimental impact on the future of Takoma Park.

Firstly, I want to emphasize my passion for affordable housing. I firmly believe that everyone has the right to secure housing, and I am proud that Takoma Park currently offers the best affordable housing in Montgomery County, thanks to our rent stabilization policies. With that in mind, I have specific concerns related to this plan:

Will this plan genuinely increase affordable housing in a fair and equitable manner? The plan seems to prioritize developer flexibility, but I fail to see how it safeguards our existing affordable housing on Maple Ave. Park and planning has acknowledged that there may be displacements, so we need to know who will be affected and what measures will be taken to support them. As a resident of this diverse city, protecting our affordable housing must be a priority, rather than leaving it susceptible to the interests of developers. One of our major goals in Takoma Park is to be an equitable city, so why is park and planning applying a sweeping approach to increased zoning and density for the entire Maple Ave. section? If we examine other proposed zoning changes in Forest Glen, Glenmont, and Lyttonsville, we can observe a more cautious approach, concentrating higher density within walkable areas defined by Metro stations and reducing density further out. Since Maple Ave. is not within this walkable area, it raises questions as to why such a significant increase in density is applied to one of the most densely populated parts of Takoma Park, which notably consists of economically disadvantaged black and brown communities. A thorough equity study is vital in this regard.

This plan could potentially increase Takoma Park's population by over 30%. It is crucial that we consider the implications this will have on our city.

Do we have the necessary infrastructure in place? Are there sufficient funds and staff to support this increase?

How will this impact our already crowded schools? We have been advocating for the school board to address this issue for years, and it is essential to assess how this plan will exacerbate the problem.

With ongoing apartment developments on Eastern Ave. and near the Metro, as well as plans for a large development by the Metro, it is important to understand how this proposed development will affect traffic. We need a comprehensive traffic study specifically tailored to Takoma Park, rather than relying on studies conducted for Silver Spring.

And please give us time to examine the environmental study to make sure that it enables us to meet our sustainability goals here in Takoma Park.