

Jan. 25, 2023

My name is Carter Dougherty and I'm a resident of Takoma Park, in Ward 1, up by the fire station.

Thanks to the Montgomery County Council, and especially Council President Friedson for holding this event here in Takoma Park, far from Rockville or for that matter his home in Chevy Chase. Welcome to our small but slightly mouthy town where we are sure to debate everything. Councilmember Stewart, a special welcome to you. I hope you enjoyed the chance tonight, as you once had every day, to walk to work – in keeping with the spirit of what we're discussing.

I'm speaking on behalf of Montgomery for All, a grassroots, community-led group advocating for sustainable and inclusive land use, housing, and transit policies in Montgomery County, Maryland. I am on its steering committee.

The planned zoning changes under the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment are an important step forward for Takoma Park and Montgomery County for a prosaic yet important reason: it will pave the way for building more housing.

With the whole country debating how to ease a terrible crisis of housing availability and affordability, this line from [a recent study by the Urban Institute](#) jumped out at me: "a massive supply shortage is causing high home prices and rents, and the way to fix it is to build more housing ... *Any factor that does not influence the housing supply or the demand for household creation is of second-order importance.*"

Also, I addressed a similar point in an article for Greater Greater Washington: "Scarcity of housing in the United States might be the most deleterious form of systemic racism right now." It's well-documented how a hot, expensive housing market squeezes out Black homebuyers and renters.

So, it's good that this amendment to the master plan will re-zone the area by the former Adventist hospital into a place where people might one day live. It's within walking distance of the future Purple Line and an existing commercial district at Flower and Piney Branch. When I walk by the playgrounds, bike trails, and forests of Sligo Creek Park, I find myself hoping that the children of the future can enjoy it, as my own kids did.

We hope that, in time, non-profit developers will strengthen their commitment to affordable housing in Takoma Park by building in the area. That said, the Minor Master Plan Amendment can also contribute to the creation of a diverse collection of housing that avoids over-concentration of affordable housing on Maple Avenue.

Last year, the median – the median! – home price hit \$820,000 last year. We should be seeking out opportunities to create housing that costs much less than that. Right now, Takoma Park has

residential segregation, with most affordable housing clustered in a single area, and a polarized housing stock.

We tip our hats to Mayor Talisha Searcy and her work in pro-actively reaching out to people in the community. When city staff and interns knock on doors at the behest of the mayor to make sure there is resident input, we should be proud. That's local government that works.

Finally, we'd like to address an incorrect notion that is often repeated without becoming any more correct. Takoma Park's affordable housing stock, a key pillar supporting our diverse community, is not under threat from this change. Non-profit developers like Montgomery Housing Partnership own a number of buildings in Takoma Park, and are under a mandate to serve low-income tenants in perpetuity. Also, Takoma Park has a rent stabilization ordinance. Montgomery County, as you well know, has its own brand-new such law. And county rules on minimum requirements for affordable units remain in place.

No one disputes that Montgomery County desperately needs more housing. Similarly, few would dispute that it will take some time to remedy this problem. That said, you have the ability to speed up this process, at least a bit. Approve the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment as soon as possible. Let's start building.