



Historic Takoma, Inc.

Preserving the Heritage of Takoma Park, MD and DC
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Montgomery County Council
Public Hearing on the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan
January 25, 2024
Testimony Presented by Historic Takoma, Inc.
7328 Carroll Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Historic Takoma, Inc., is a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve the heritage of Takoma Park, Maryland and the Takoma Park neighborhood of the District of Columbia. Having reviewed the proposed Minor Master Plan for the Washington Adventist property and Maple Avenue, we urge the Planning Board to focus solely on development of the hospital site at this time and to adopt a plan that is compatible in scale with the surrounding community.

We fully support redevelopment of the site of the former hospital, but urge the planning board to consider right-sizing the MMP to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, particularly paying attention to:

- the scale and architectural character of the existing adjacent buildings
- the limited street capacity
- the potential environmental impact on Sligo Creek

At the same time, we strongly recommend that changes in zoning on Maple Avenue from Sligo Creek Parkway to Philadelphia Avenue be removed from the Minor Master Plan. Perhaps the most affordable neighborhood in the whole of Montgomery County, Maple Avenue provides housing for lower and moderate income residents and is home to hundreds of families.

The rental units serve people of many backgrounds and ethnicities, including many recent arrivals to this country. It is a harmonious and welcoming community that deserves stability and affordability. We are concerned that the minor master plan as currently written threatens to displace these residents and introduce gentrification at their expense.

Changes to current zoning restrictions would open the door to developers who could then tear down and replace existing buildings with new and much larger structures. Owners would be able to charge market rates for 5 years before Takoma Park's highly regarded rent stabilization restrictions would apply, further reducing possibilities for affordable housing. Moreover, the introduction of upzoning and the resulting increase in height and density along Maple would erode the more gradual transitions moving from multi-family housing to the single family homes on adjoining streets.

(continued)

Some argue that there has been no major new development in the City of Takoma Park for many decades. This may be true, but that is because we are already densely developed, with a greater proportion of affordable and moderately priced rental units than any other segment of the county.

Moreover, on the Takoma, DC side, there is significant redevelopment underway adjacent to the Takoma Metro station and at Laurel and Eastern Avenues that will impact our roads and other infrastructure on the Maryland side. This increased density must be taken into account when making plans in the City of Takoma Park.

Finally, our understanding is that Montgomery County land use planning follows the principle that upzoning should be considered for sites close to public transit hubs. Neither the Maple Avenue corridor nor the Adventist property is near or adjacent to a Metro station. Therefore, the density of development proposed in the minor master plan is inconsistent with current practice elsewhere across the County.

As a mature suburb, the City of Takoma Park deserves sensitive planning to preserve its affordability and livability as a diverse community with a rich architectural and social heritage.

Submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Kohn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Diana Kohn, President
Historic Takoma. Inc.