

My comments to County Council public hearing on MMPA – to be held on Thursday, January 25, 2024

Text of my remarks – followed by Graphics as attachments.

Good evening, my name is Wayne Sherwood. I have lived in Ward One in Takoma Park since 1991. I received a Master's degree in City Planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) in 1966. I spent most of my career working in research and advocacy in the field of affordable housing. I also served briefly several years ago as a "community member" of the Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP), but I have not been affiliated with MHP since then.

The proposed Minor Master Plan Amendment (MMPA) is not a Plan.

The only thing the MMPA does is make zoning changes in the central area of Takoma Park, far from major transit nodes, that would result in a huge amount of new development in the plan area -- a degree of development that far exceeds what is appropriate for this planning area or that could be sustained by existing infrastructure such as streets, highways, public transit, schools, and local government services.

The results of the proposed zoning changes would also be to disrupt the most diverse area in Takoma Park, and is likely to result in economic gentrification and displacement as new higher-income populations move in.

The Plan would totally change the character of this part of Takoma Park, from being primarily an area of affordable housing, as it is now, to being an upscale area for much higher income residents, with high end rentals, condos and shops.

Other parts of the Minor Master Plan document contain suggestions for things that might happen in the future if "someone" does them. There are pictures of green areas and children playing. But there is no Plan to do them.

The population of the residents in the apartment buildings and condos along Maple Avenue is now almost entirely "Persons of Color" (or "black and brown"). See population attachment below.

All of the high-rises that currently exist along Maple Avenue could be considered affordable under one definition or another.

All of them could be lost if the owners decide to tear them down and replace them with new buildings instead.

The recently released PB climate assessment says the following things about the MMPA:

... assuming the Plan is adopted as proposed, at full build-out (every rezoned property is torn down and redeveloped at maximum allowance) the model projects an overall increase in GHG emissions of approximately 78% by the year 2045.

There would also be higher emission levels associated with Lifetime Embodied Building Waste

The increases in these two emissions factors can be linked to the Plan's anticipated rise in population from approximately 4,000 (current population) to over 10,000 people

most of the property proposed for redevelopment and zoning changes will generate waste material and embodied emissions. An increase in population will also increase individual waste generation over the life of the Plan. This is the largest GHG emissions sources in the plan area.

County Planning Board members said that all of these units (in high rises along Maple Avenue) were built a long time ago and that it would be too expensive to rehabilitate them and bring them up to current standards, and that they are therefore likely to be torn down. This could represent a loss of 1260 such units. (see Ira Kowler table below).

The Plan says it hopes that there won't be any loss of affordable housing in the Plan area, but it contains no concrete recommendations for implementing those hopes.

An earlier draft of the Plan said that it hoped that Takoma Park’s Rent Stabilization law/regs might be useful in maintaining some affordable housing in Takoma Park. But the Chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board, Artie Harris, personally told MoCo planning staff – at a Planning Board meeting -- to add wording to the MMPA urging the City of Takoma Park to change its Rent Stabilization law/regs so that a rent stabilization exemption for new development could be extended for some indefinite future period of time. It seems to me that would be likely to directly benefit the developers who are part of MHP and who could build new housing in these areas.

I ask that the County Council not vote to approve this MMPA, but that the County council either to come up with a new plan itself, or else send this MMPA back to the Planning Board for further consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

Wayne Sherwood

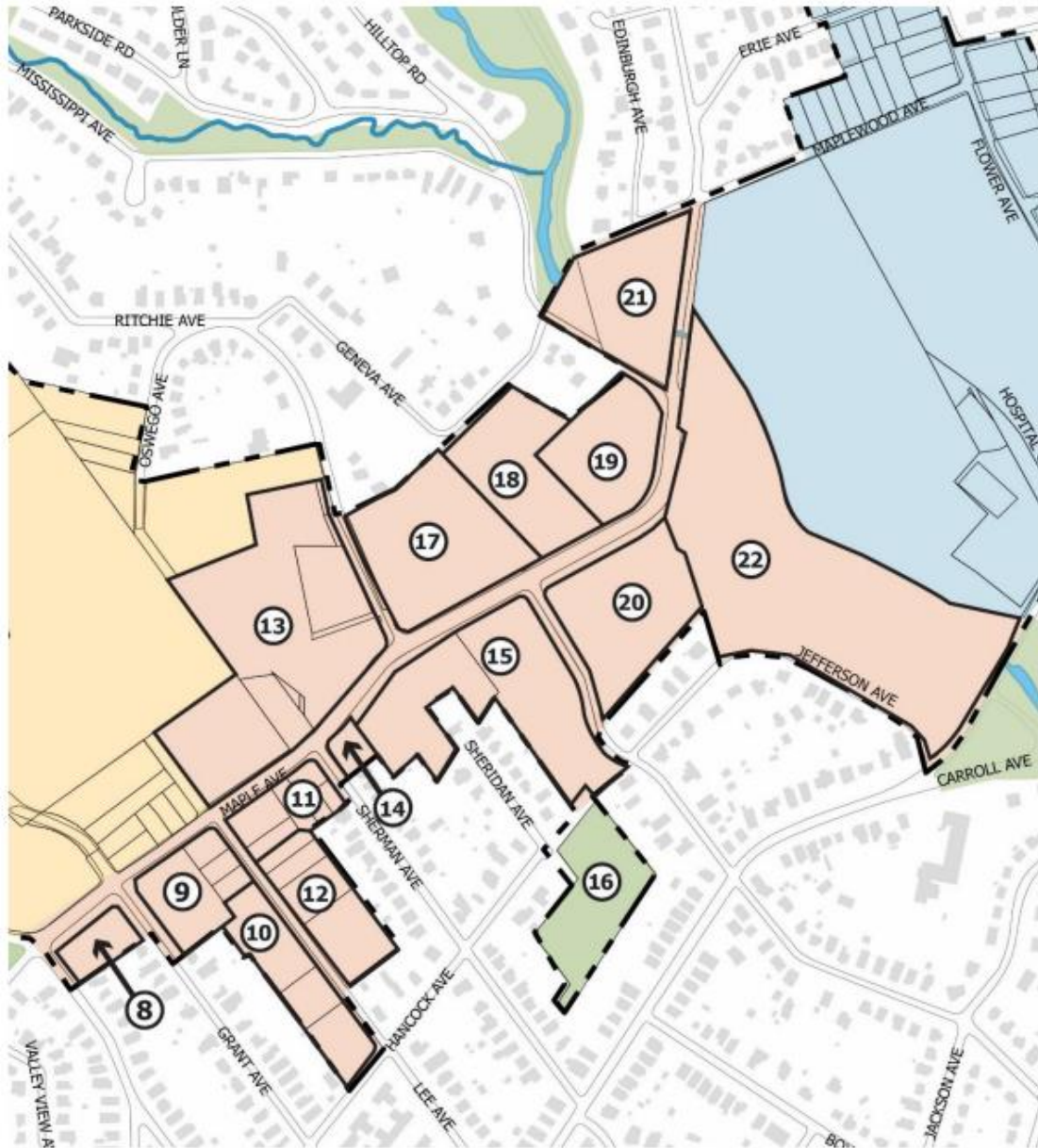
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Graphic #1

The following is the proposed zoning in the MMPA along Maple Avenue.

4.2.2.1 Land Use and Zoning



Map 15: Maple Avenue District Sites Zoning Map Key

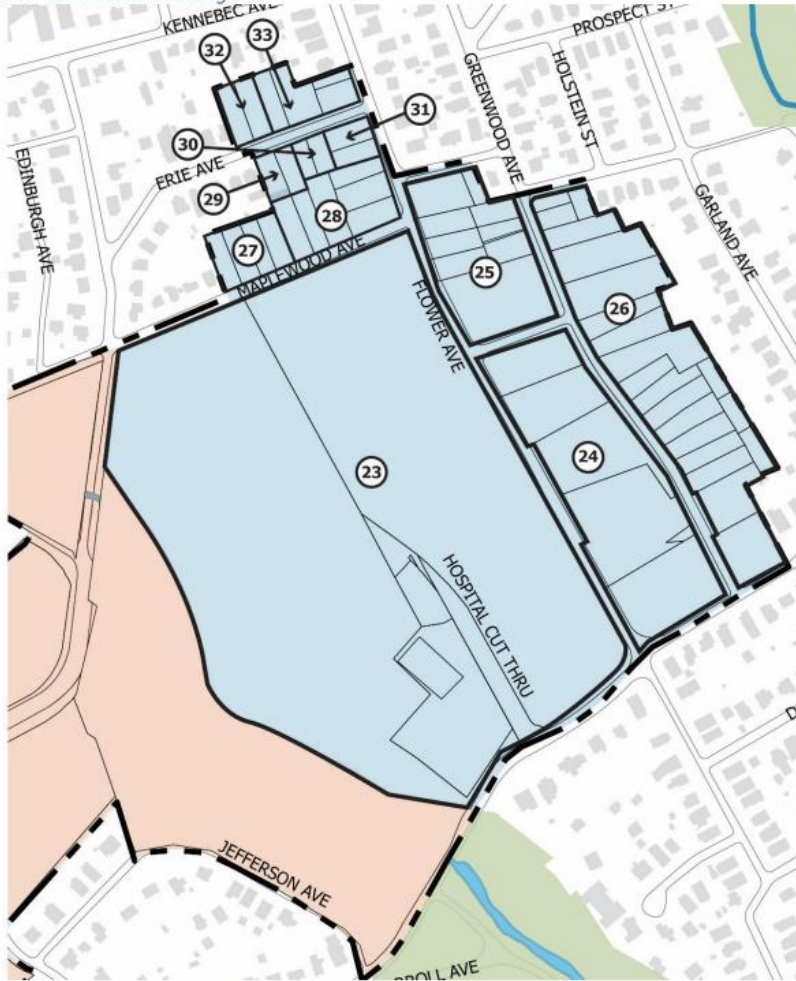
At ten sites, [8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20] the new zoning would increase the high limits and allow buildings up to 150 feet high.

The zoning proposed for the “Flower Avenue District” includes site 23 (see map below). It includes Washington Adventist University buildings, and the former

Adventist Hospital. The proposed maximum building height for most of this site would be 120 feet, except along the edges.

4.3.2 Recommendations

4.3.2.1 Land Use and Zoning



Map 16: Flower Avenue District Zoning Map Key

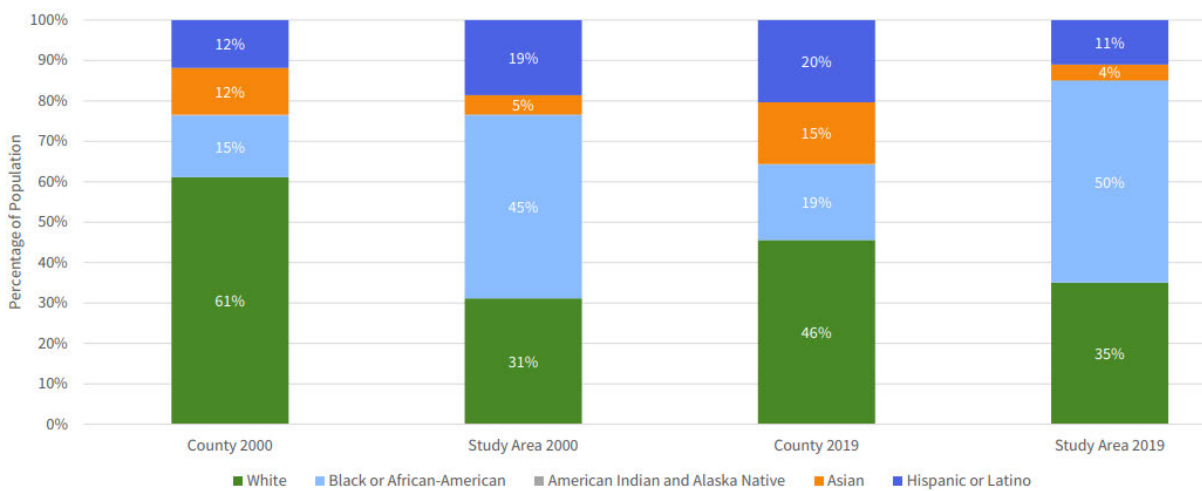
- Rezone Site 23, currently occupied by Washington Adventist University buildings and the former Washington Adventist Hospital, from R-60 to CR-1.25 C-1.25 R-1.25 H-120 to allow for potential future development flexibility. The maximum building height should transition to a maximum height for buildings fronting Flower Avenue of 70 feet for a horizontal distance of 20 feet. Along Maplewood Avenue, the maximum building height should conform to the compatibility requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Graphic #2 – Demographics of the study area

Study Area Population (source MMPA)

The study area population was 45% black or African-American in 2020, and 31% Hispanic or Latino. It was only 19% white.

Study Area - Race and Ethnicity

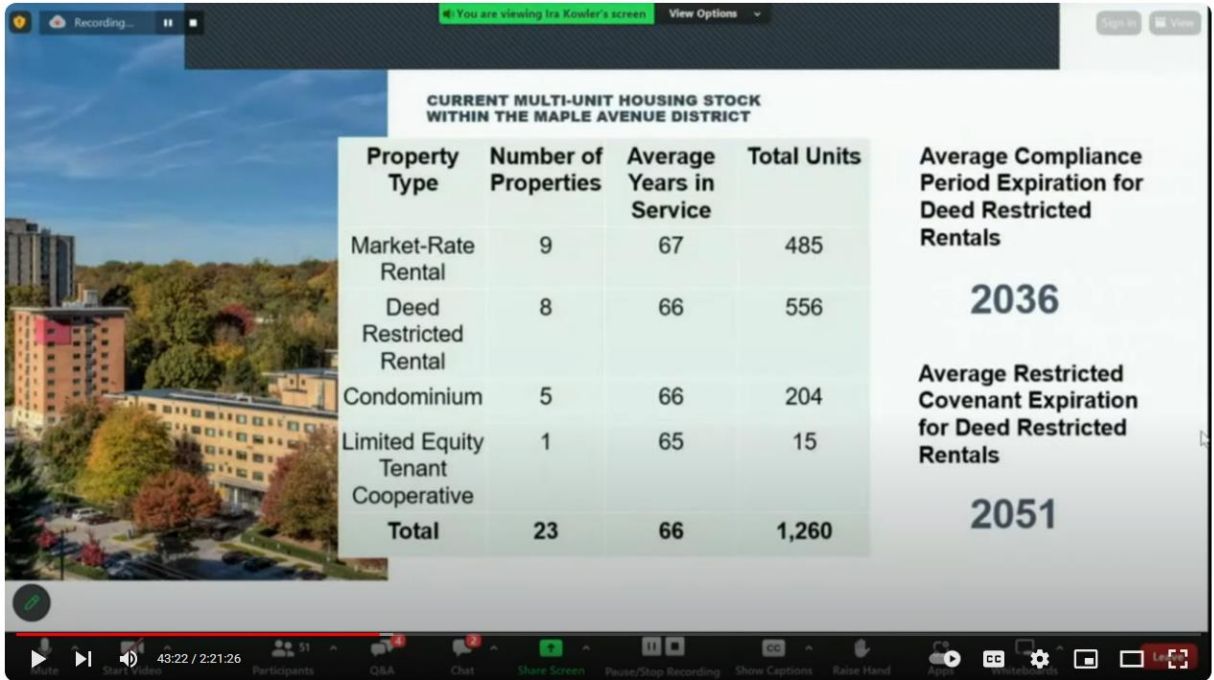


Source: 2010 US Census and 2015-2019 ACS

Graphic #3 – Multi-family housing along Maple Avenue

A chart presented by Ira Kowler (of the City of Takoma Park) at a Takoma Park city council meeting showed that there are 1260 units of multi-family housing along Maple Avenue. All of these can be considered “affordable” at present under some definition.

All of these sites could be subject to demolition and redevelopment under the MMPA.

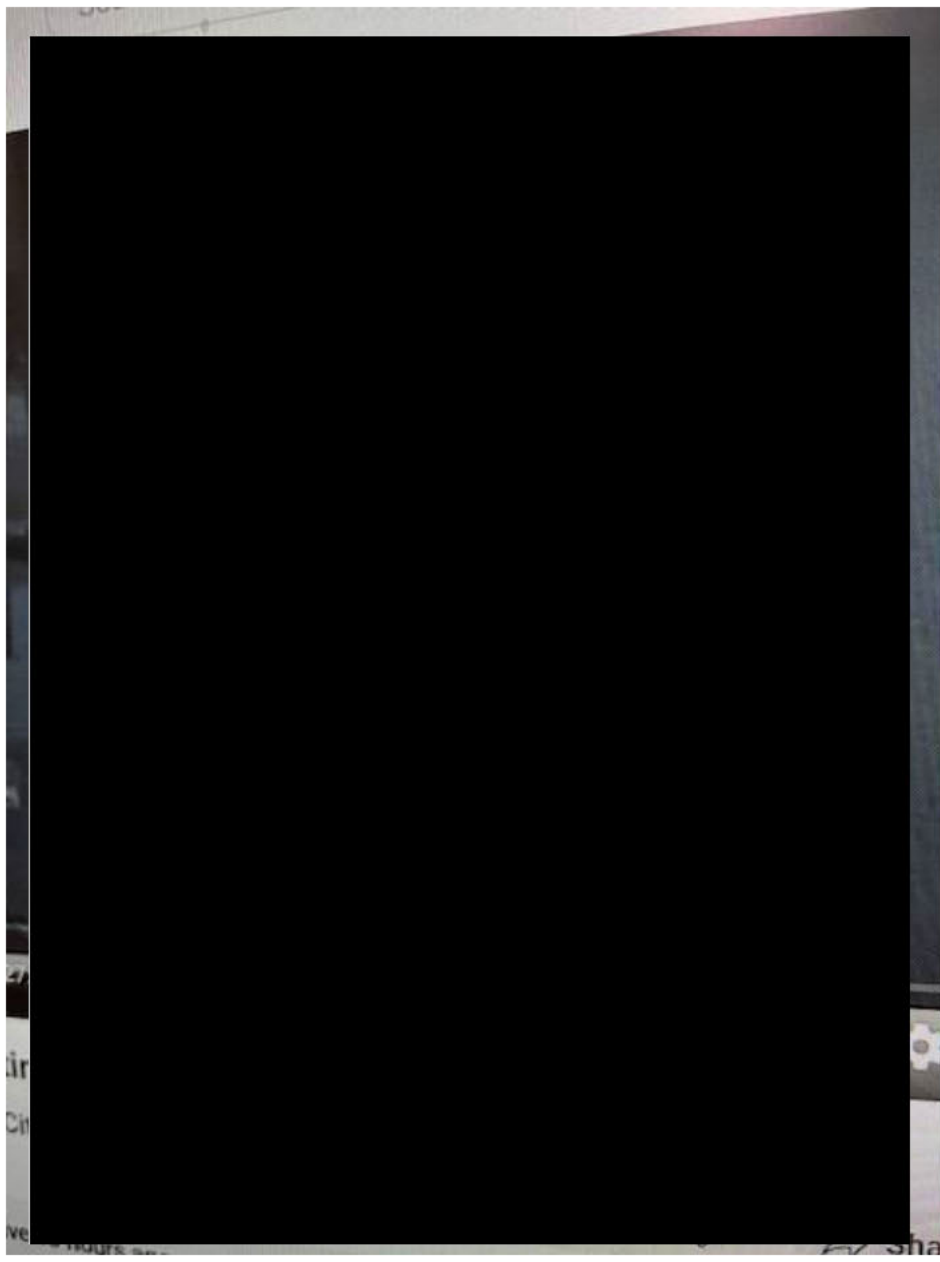


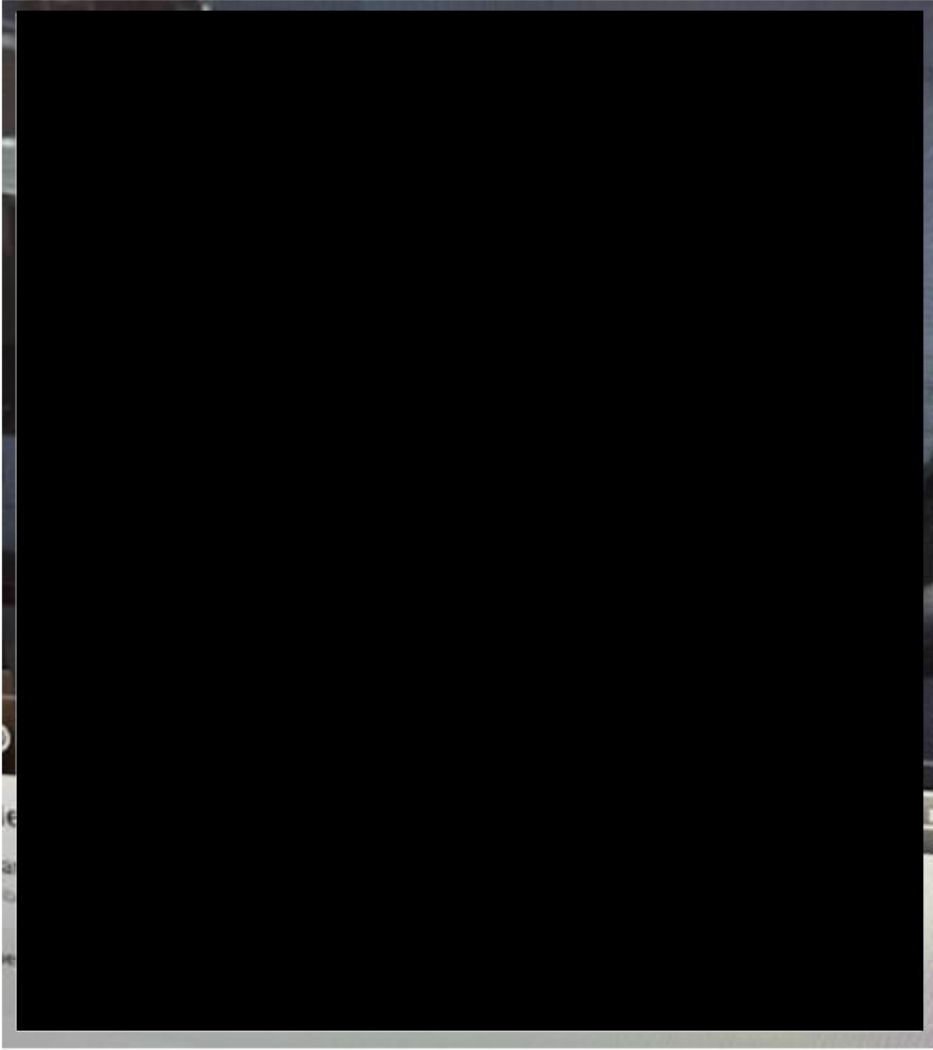
City Council Minor Master Plan Informational Session - Wednesday, August 16, 2023

Graphic #4 – Testimony by [REDACTED] before Takoma Park City Council, January 17, 2024

[This testimony was typed up by Wayne Sherwood while watching the archived video after the City Council meeting. WS]

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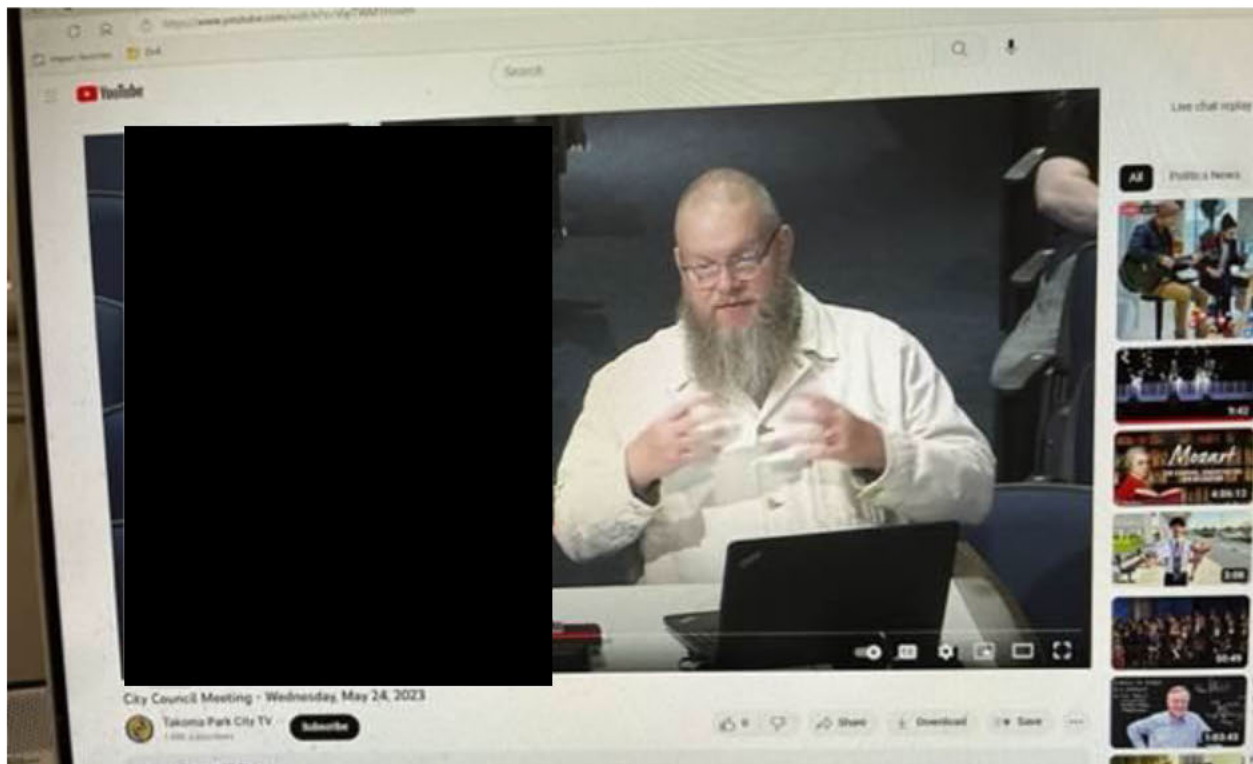
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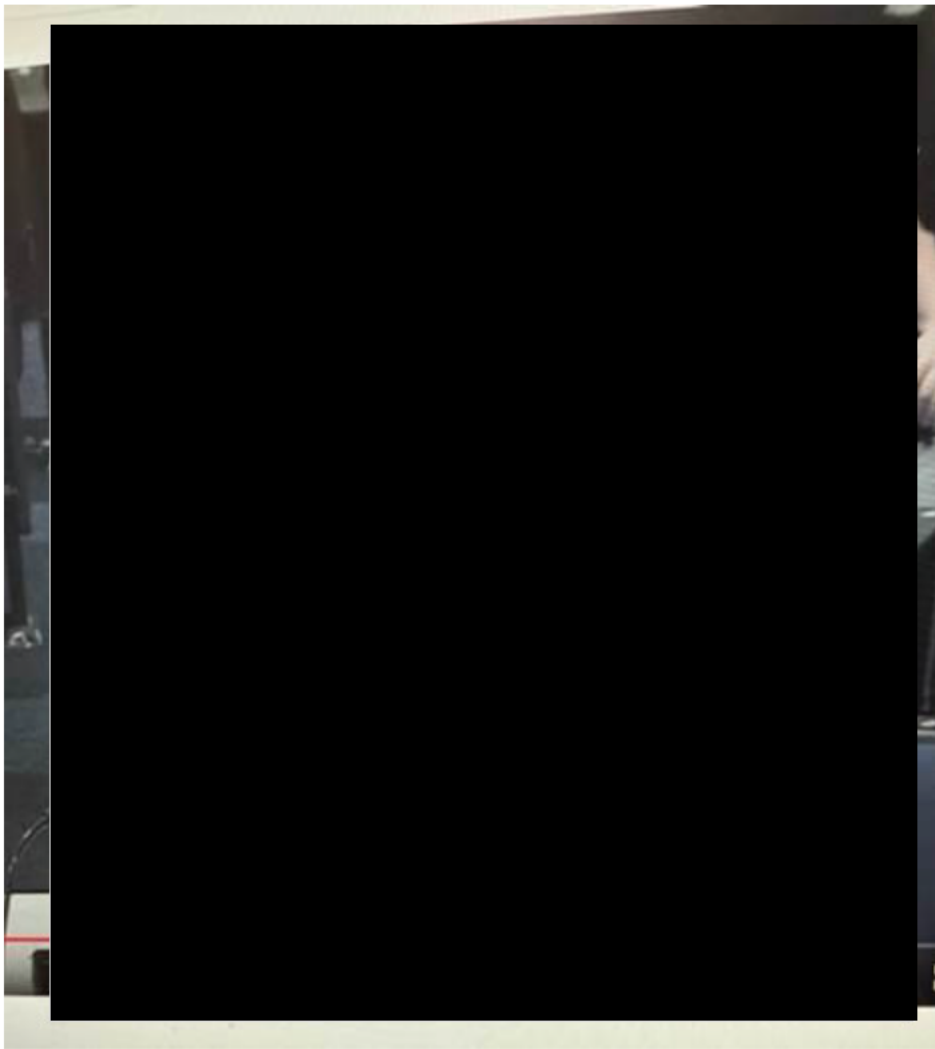
Graphic #5 – Some selections from a presentation of the MMPA to the Takoma Park City Council on Wednesday, May 24, 2023.

Councilmember Jason Small (Ward 6)

I am concerned about land uses – specifically the Adventist Campus area. And the designations for zoning. What are the other potential options for mixed use zoning in these areas? And I am also concerned about the realities of the potential public use of spaces in the area. With regard to the one large open space in the area... which is potentially the Adventist Hospital space... I'm curious about whether there are anticipated uses... (see maps 23, 24 and 25)... that would include a green space, public use, open use type area... I ask about this area specifically because it is relatively flat ... and I'm concerned about the lack of spaces to actually play... in this area – would be good to have marked out playing fields. Little League. Soccer. **The proposed Plan is woefully incomplete in terms of addressing the socio-economic realities of the youth in this place.** The Overlook kids, the Hampshire Tower kids, because there's no place to play over there..... If you're talking about putting in additional verticality here.. without consideration of any of those issues, I think that it is a profound mistake... **So I feel that this is incomplete... with regard to the broader needs of Takoma Park...**



(Planners): referring to a question about building materials -- 55 is gonna be, you know, a five-story building, it's going to be built from wood, 70 is probably going to be a six-story building.. with potential for retail on the ground floor... or again, probably going to be built from wood.. so the height is going to give you a better sense of how big the buildings are going to be, **on the campus where maximum is 120, that's an eleven story apartment building....** The plan recommended that that be built overlooking the park.. Those are going to be concrete and steel buildings, those are going to look like the apartment buildings, ahh, not cosmetically, but structurally, they're going to look like the taller buildings along Maple Ave.



County Planners: And **we assume that they (the Adventists) would maximize the potential for the property.**

[MC planners. **The development market, short of other methods, is what is going to determine what goes there, based upon what the market is. We want to give people the flexibility to do whatever makes sense to them to do at the time.]**

Small:

I'm interested in where the University is in the process of this proposed zoning change. I'm sure they were an active part of it, and in the way in which you came to these conclusions. But it would seem to me that there may be some questions about the actual use of that area as well, if those designations come about, and people are prevented from using this space. I'm not trying to cast aspersions on the University over there, but there have been layoffs over there and the size of the University is significantly smaller than it used to be. If those trends continue, what happens then?

I am also curious if you could talk more about the nexus between the property owner, being the university or the hospital, and how we came to this particular formulation, only because it seems to me that you would have to have spoken to them to some substantive degree, and it does seem to me to kind of "except" them out of some stuff, based upon what you're saying, and so I'm curious about, has there been a larger conversation about if or when the land-owner has anticipated development? Are there conversations being had about that and what do those mean for this process? And I'm only saying that because I'm always concerned about people who are gaming the system because of the public nature of requiring and having these conversations. **I'm concerned that this seems like a little bit of a fait accompli from the perspective of a new councilperson.** So I'd like it if you could talk a little about where we are with respect to the University and previous conversations that you've had, that would be great.

MC Planner: Sure. So we've been speaking with the University for probably four years at this point, since we started having the conversations about the Minor Master Plan Amendment here. And more recently in the last year, we've been having conversations with the Adventist Health Care folks, and the University folks, and the University has goals, they have plans, Adventist Health Care has goals and plans. We've discussed our recommendations with them, and the idea is to provide them the greatest flexibility possible. In the presentation to Adventist Health Care, they were a little uncertain about what they could do there. They could do housing. They could do senior housing. They could do medical. Offices. Any number of things that they could do there. And so the zoning recommendations that we've provided allow enough density on the site for them to... for there to be a lot of potential. And I think that at this point I think that the discussions are looking at potentials, to pad things out. Nothing specific, but they've seen our recommendations for zoning and "they're game."

Councilmember Randy Gibson (Ward 3)



I wanted to follow-up on – wanted to be clear on the Mayor’s question about the financing of the CIP. Am I to understand that we are being asked to put together a Resolution without knowing what the costs are?

MC Planners. Yes. We won’t know what the costs are. The Planning Board won’t know what the costs are until we get to the County Executive. There’s no obligation anywhere. This is a 20 year plan. We’ve identified great things that could be in the plan area. And there’s an accounting that these things would cost this much if they were implemented. That’s not to say that they would ever be implemented.

Gibson. I get it. But without knowing the costs of things, you can’t... it’s difficult to give any kind of priority to one or the other. It’s like the whole Plan, everything, and then afterward you find out the costs, and maybe we can afford it – whatever portion the city can take on – but without costs it’s difficult to make decisions.

MC Planners: this is really just a wish list. The city could do whatever it wants.

Gibson: And I’m not very familiar with the zoning, but am I correct in thinking that particularly **around mixed-use zoning, basically we’re saying “what the market will bear.” That’s right?** And so if a property owner or developer wants to do, then that property owner will try to, within the terms of that particular zone, **“they will make the most money that they can.”** To go back to “the missing middle”, they may not want to serve the missing middle. They may want to serve the affluent. Upper middle. **Am I correct in understanding, again, “what the market will bear” is the primary driver here.**

MC Planner. I certainly think that is one possibility. There are other properties in Takoma Park, e.g. along Maple Ave., where other developers have provided affordable housing, such as MHP. So what you’re describing is one option, but it’s not the only option. The zoning plan says you can do x, and the numbers we’ve provided give a maximum. Those questions all get discussed during the over-all process.

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Graphic #6 - Some buildings along Maple Avenue

Some large properties along Maple Avenue in Takoma Park

I have shown below the official photos of four high-rise MHP properties along Maple Avenue, as well as for one non-MHP condo property at the corner of Maple Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway (which is in Ward Five), along with some photos I took myself over the past year.

The recently released “climate analysis” said that the proposed new zoning would allow the existing older buildings to be torn down, and replaced with new 150 high buildings. I think that in some cases that would be two new buildings on a site.

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Edinburgh House – 7513 Maple Ave.



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Franklin apartments – 7620 Maple Ave.





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Parkview Towers – 7667 Maple Avenue



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7610 Maple Avenue.



7610 Maple.



Condo at the corner of Maple Ave. and Sligo Creek Parkway (not MHP)





GRAPHIC #7 - Climate Assessment

Here is a “Word” version of a few selections from the Climate Assessment for the MMPA. Wayne

Climate Assessment for Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment Planning Board Draft (from Montgomery Planning)

Using the new Quant Tool and assuming the Plan is adopted as proposed, at full build-out (every rezoned property is torn down and redeveloped at maximum allowance) the model projects an overall increase in GHG emissions of approximately 78% by the year 2045.

The emissions levels associated with Lifetime Embodied Building Waste are calculated using the average number of people per building type (residential, commercial, etc.) multiplied by the annual average waste produced per person for each building, multiplied by the lifetime of the building. Lifetime Transportation emissions are calculated using vehicle miles traveled per person, vehicle type, and emissions factors. The increases in these two emissions factors can be linked to the Plan's anticipated rise in population from approximately 4,000 to over 10,000 people. As the population increases, so does the amount of waste generated and disposed of, and the amount of travel.

Transportation Activities Related to Total Lifetime Transportation GHG Emissions

Vehicle miles traveled by type (personal vehicles, commercial trucks or vehicles, rideshare, school buses, motorcycles). **Negative impact**

Transportation Planning staff modeled an overall increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) within the transit area due to the projected increase in population from 4,033 to 10,669 people. This increase will result in a need for greater connectivity and transit to adjacent neighborhoods, shopping areas, work, and town centers (Takoma Park, Silver Spring, Piney Branch), which will impact VMT throughout the plan area.

Building square footage. **Negative Impact.**

It is anticipated that there will be an increase in the overall square footage of large buildings. An increase in building square footage will increase material use for building construction (embodied energy), construction activities, and additional energy use of buildings, all of which will increase emissions. While many green building certification standards require materials to be sustainable or sourced within a certain distance, it is not possible to know whether this requirement will apply to new construction projects.

Building lifespan. **Negative Impact**

A shorter building lifespan results in greater turnover of emissions associated with building demolition and the construction of new buildings. In contrast, a longer

building lifetime results in lower overall embodied emissions. The Plan recommends upscaling density on most properties, which may increase embodied emissions by approximately 31% and increase lifetime building energy emissions by 25%. To reduce embodied energy emissions, the plan suggests preserving existing buildings and materials on the Washington Adventist campus where feasible.

Waste Activities Related to Total Lifetime Building Waste GHA Emissions

Material waste produced. **Negative Impact.**

Material waste is sent to a combination of recycling, landfilling, and waste combusting facilities, which can increase GHG emissions. Although the Plan recommends salvaging building material (steel, wood, brick, glass, asphalt, and concrete) during demolition, most of the property proposed for redevelopment and zoning changes will generate waste material and embodied emissions. An increase in population will also increase individual waste generation over the life of the Plan. This is the largest GHG emissions sources in the plan area.