

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment about the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment. I reside in Takoma Park's Ward 4 with my husband and children. We are frequent users of the area proposed for redevelopment. My son walks along Maple Ave. on his way to middle school, we take daily drives up Flower Ave. and often walk along Sligo Creek as a family past the vacant Adventist Hospital campus.

I fully support the mixed-use approach recommended for this site. This is an opportunity for the people of Takoma Park to have greater access to shops and amenities, while diversifying our housing, bringing in new residents, and making the area safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Currently on Maple Avenue, we have high-rise apartment buildings with no shops below them; three small retail shops with no housing above them; and vast parking lots that do not make smart or environmentally friendly use of space.

I was pleased to see that the plan embraces *Thrive Montgomery 2050's* "15-minute living" recommendation. I have personal experience living in other cities that have encouraged development of 15-minute mini-downtowns that include both housing and retail development. These mixed-use zones foster neighborhood comradery and cohesion. They provide jobs and cultural opportunities by creating space for new residents and local businesses, and they make it easier for senior citizens to age in place.

As a parent whose child regularly rides his bike to school, I appreciate the focus on increased and safer bicycle routes. I encourage the county to work with the City of Takoma Park in creating physically separated bike lanes through the Maple Avenue corridor.

The Maple Avenue District is home to both life-long Takoma Parkers and new immigrants. As an immigrant myself who moved frequently as a child, I understand the need for stable, affordable housing. I encourage the county to consider how to minimize disruptions to existing residents – especially those who rely on the area's affordable housing. I equally urge the council to proceed with smart, thoughtful redevelopment.

Every city needs to continually renew itself in order to thrive. The redevelopment proposed in the Minor Master Plan will create more diverse housing, bring in new business and create more opportunities for neighbors – old and new – to enjoy Takoma Park. That is the best way, over the long term, to ensure that this part of Montgomery County remains a place where people of diverse economic and cultural backgrounds can build a life for themselves and their families. I urge the council to approve the Minor Master Plan Amendment.

Thank you,

Raquel Pichardo