



Takoma for All (TFA) 2022 Candidate Survey

DYBALLA responses

Thank you for standing for election to city office. To help us understand your position on topics of interest to our group and the Takoma Park public, would you please respond to the following questions?

1. Despite the recent failed Takoma Junction project, Takoma Park has several large tracts of land that are unused or underused. Please describe your vision for what you'd like to see Takoma Park officials do to promote these sites for revitalization?

A: I'd like to see these properties be revitalized to better serve all our community. The city's new economic development program and our adopted housing/economic development strategy are tools to achieve this. Each property has its own barriers and opportunities. For example, we are working on county plan amendments for the Washington Adventist Hospital site, which includes possible rezoning, a limit to using the site. At the McLaughlin school, the city and the owner have together obtained a state grant for a physical feasibility study, since building condition is a limitation.

2. Takoma Park hasn't added any apartment buildings ever since [it adopted rent control in 1981](#). If elected, would you support providing an incentive for builders to construct apartments by giving them an automatic exemption from rent control restrictions for a fixed period of time (e.g. 10-20 years)?

A: We need to produce more, and more varied types of, housing throughout the city, a goal of the city 2019 housing strategic plan I voted for, including rental housing. A necessary next step, before supporting any specific incentive to meet this goal, is to review for their impact all the options the city can allow or promote, such as changes to the city PILOT program, Opportunity Zone benefits,

increased zoning density requirements in exchange for more affordable housing units, and other builder incentives.

3. Do you support Montgomery County's proposed general plan, known as "Thrive 2050"? If so, do you support Thrive's central tenet to revise land use designations for properties that are adjacent to transit hubs like the Takoma Metro Station in DC and proposed Purple Line Stations in Takoma Park?

A: I support Thrive 2050, including revised land designations for properties adjacent to transit hubs. The city should continue to be proactive with residents, property owners and business tenants near proposed Purple Line stations, in helping to address the impacts of these changes.

4. Although Takoma Park kids can choose from several high schools, Montgomery Blair High School is the "home" school for most kids and it is overcapacity by more than 300 kids. Blair HS is projected to be more than 900 kids over capacity in [less than 10 years](#) (p.6). Do you support the building of a new high school located in Takoma Park or Silver Spring?

A: Takoma Park kids also attend several elementary schools, and at least one (Rolling Terrace) is also significantly over capacity. I support a county decision to build a new school below the Beltway, even if it involves bending some of the county school board siting criteria to fit it into a down county urban environment.

5. The Montgomery County Public School system has previously proposed expanding Piney Branch Elementary School in a way that would eliminate the indoor pool. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

A: I've been a supporter of the pool as a school and community resource for some time, given the lack of a good alternative. I am not convinced that the pool is a major limiting factor in school overcrowding. And I note that the pool is scheduled to reopen this month, after this round of school renovations.

6. Takoma Park city employees are currently developing a much-needed public space management plan, but it's already clear that some recent changes have been successful such as the partial closure of Laurel Avenue during the pandemic to increase public space. If elected, will you consider voting to permanently close all or part of Laurel Avenue and other commercial spots to increase the public space for our residents and commercial patrons?

A: I've already voted to pilot and to extend this program, and I would like to adopt this successful approach permanently. One challenge has been working with commercial property owners and their tenants, to persuade them to convert private parking spaces to other uses.

7. Cycling is a proven method to provide our kids and our poorest residents with a climate-friendly mode of travel around Takoma Park, but only if it's safe for users. Maple and Carroll Avenues are among the city's most active cycling corridors due to their proximity to community amenities. If elected, will you vote to provide our children and most vulnerable residents with a safe place to use their bicycles to access critical Takoma Park amenities?

A: I support adopting ways to provide greater and safer biking and walking (non-vehicle) access. Creative bikeway approaches such as the New Hampshire corridor bikeway, which I support, are possible. In practice, for example on lower Maple Ave, I want safer bicycle access built in to the final street redesign, and I've found that combining safety for cyclers young and old with other residents' needs for the space is a bit more challenging.

8. The City of Takoma Park [currently only requires](#) vacant properties to be registered as such by their owners. If elected, would you support the creation of a vacancy tax to encourage landlords to make productive use of their properties?

A: I support creating a vacancy tax, and have looked into how it could be structured, for example through our property tax rates. The question for me is how high would be a tax need to be to actually create an incentive for these property owners.

9. How do you envision building consensus around controversial subjects likely to come before the council? What is your experience in reaching "across the aisle" and thereby overcome possible division in the city?

A: I have demonstrated, as a council member, and before that as a member of city committees, that I am open to listening and to moderating my views in order to make progress on an issue. I look for underlying common interests, and try to build on that to reach consensus. That said, consensus is only possible when all parties see that as their goal.

10. What are your plans to allow for residents with diverse backgrounds, e.g. renters, minorities, immigrants, and young families to be an active part of the discussion and decision making in the city (e.g. in Committees)?

A: I plan to continue my demonstrated commitment to actively engaging residents from all walks of life in our city discussions. For example, I worked with a council subgroup to restructure the committee process and provide stipends to help meet the costs of service, and I recruited a record number of people of color to city committees from my ward. Committees are just one way to engage residents of diverse backgrounds. I want to continue and expand more varied city approaches, such as more targeted and varied program outreach techniques, neighborhood workshops with translators, community navigators to connect residents with our government, and posing issues in terms relevant to a variety of backgrounds.