



Candidate: Mimi Diez  
Ward#: 3

Embracing Change,  
Championing Inclusive Growth

[www.takomaforall.org](http://www.takomaforall.org)

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Dear Candidates for Elected Office in the 2022 Takoma Park City Council Election,

Takoma for All (TFA) is a group of Maryland and Washington D.C. neighbors working to strengthen a vibrant, inclusive, prosperous, resilient, and transit-friendly community. We advocate the creation and preservation of affordable and market-rate housing, commercial spaces, and community amenities including schools, parks, recreation facilities and public spaces.

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: As a community we need to think outside the [junction] box on responsible development that will connect residents, attract businesses and welcomes visitors. Takoma Park topography is complex, unique, water rich and not every tract of land can support infrastructure. As our climate crisis persists, stormwater management strategies that have been used over the past ten years may need to adapt to prevent flooding and damage. Leaving things they way they are may not always be the right solution for this community. If elected I would evaluate these discussions on a case by case basis and welcome responsible land revitalization where possible.

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: I'm not an expert on rent control, so I can't speak to the advantages or disadvantages of such an exemption. I do believe that housing development must be meaningful and meet the interests of the community, developers, and businesses. Business in Takoma Park is our economic engine, and I would welcome mixed use development and commerce for mixed income residents. I want to be reasonable with affordability requirements in this city, and in order for our community and businesses to thrive, I plan on looking at all the tools the City has at its disposal which could include financing, offsets, or rezoning as some examples. I think it's reasonable to say that in order for our residents and businesses to thrive we have to put our heads together and make it work with all our stakeholders, existing and new residents.

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: Takoma Park residents are fortunate to be in areas close to public transit hubs and main highways. Creating safe transportation infrastructure for residents of all ages is a high priority of mine as well as connecting residents to mixed use development. While we are seeing more Purple Line development occur, we need to keep our residents and business safety top of mind. I'm not well versed in the Thrive 2050 plan, but I welcome discussions on making our community safer and more connected.

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: I do not have enough information about this topic to respond. The pandemic has taught us a lot of things, and we must be flexible and innovative in how we learn, work, and do business and this includes our public schools.

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 don't have enough information about this topic to respond. Again going back to my first comment, we need to think outside the box to find solutions for our priorities in this city.

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 don't have enough data or information on this topic, however I would welcome conversations with all community stakeholders to discuss the use of public space, not just on Laurel Ave but in other areas of Takoma Park.

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: Yes, and I would argue that cycling and micro mobility is a proven affordable and climate-friendly method for all people regardless of income. I would like to see more protected bike/micro mobility lanes all throughout Takoma Park, not just those two corridors listed.

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 want to attract future residents and businesses in Takoma Park without compromising safety. Maybe I'm misunderstanding, but I'm assuming the owner and landlord are one in the same. Yes I would welcome using City and county tools to prevent vacant properties and engaging with property owners on what the barriers are to occupying these locations.

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

A: In my current role as a federal employee on Capitol Hill, I'm very well versed in looking at challenges holistically and finding opportunities for improvement that work for all entities on either side of the isle. What I love most about this place is how much folks love this city and there is no political isle. I hope to bring the spirit of collaboration and problem solving that won't polarize this city or alienate our community.

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'm of Cuban heritage and I've been in Takoma Park for almost 15 years. I have to give a shout out to Kacy Kostiuk, Talisha Searcy, Cindy Dyballa, and Kate Stewart. It was through their leadership that gave me the courage to reenvision my role as a resident and give back to this community that I love so much. The ladies on City Council allowed me to envision a forum where all voices are needed for Takoma Park to thrive. New perspectives, expertise and voices are desperately needed to participate in committees, but City Council can't do this alone. We need to rethink accessibility to these committees and advertise in local businesses, churches and centers. We need our most active and vocal residents to act as mentors and push others forward. We need multilingual communications that reach all the Wards and radically engage our residents and businesses so as not to exhaust our repeat volunteers. We need to fold in skills from residents of all ages and cultures to continue growing this beautiful place.

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