

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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PUBLIC HEARING: TAKOMA PARK MINOR MASTER PLAN  
AMENDMENT

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THURSDAY  
SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

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The Montgomery County Planning Board met at 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, Maryland and via Video-Teleconference, at 6:26 p.m., Artie Harris, Chair, presiding.

## PRESENT

ARTIE HARRIS, Chair  
MITRA PEDOEEM, Vice Chair  
JAMES HEDRICK, Commissioner  
JOSH LINDEN, Commissioner

## ALSO PRESENT

MELISSA WILLIAMS, Planner III,  
Downcounty Planning

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (6:26 p.m.)

3 CHAIR HARRIS: Welcome and good  
4 evening. My name is Artie Harris. I'm the  
5 Chair of the Planning Board. We have four  
6 planning board members serving tonight besides  
7 myself. There is Vice Chair Pedoeem. There is  
8 James Hedrick to her left, and there's Josh  
9 Linden to my right. So welcome here. Welcome  
10 to Takoma Park Municipal Center. So tonight we  
11 are focusing on the public hearing for the  
12 master plan item Takoma Park Minor Master Plan  
13 Amendment. So thank you very much. This is  
14 just for public testimony tonight. No one has  
15 asked, I believe, for any translations but --  
16 to help with translations. But we do, if  
17 someone needs help, we have a French, Amharic,  
18 and Spanish to help if anyone needs that  
19 assistance.

20 So of the board members, from time  
21 to time, some may leave, but they're only in  
22 the back and they're -- it's on -- there's a

1 television in the back or -- that's projecting  
2 this. So if a board member is not here, they  
3 are also listening in the back. So just wanted  
4 to let you know that.

5 So we'll start tonight. The project  
6 manager for this minor master plan is Melissa  
7 Williams. She'll make a brief announcement,  
8 and then we'll get going with testimony. We'll  
9 bring up five at a time and then we'll start  
10 from there. We'll do first in person. Well,  
11 based on this list is mostly -- we'll start the  
12 in person, and then we'll go to Takoma Park.  
13 So thank you so much for coming. We really,  
14 really want to hear your testimony. Thank you.

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. And thank you,  
16 Chair. For the record, my name is Melissa  
17 Williams, and I'm the Lead Planner for the  
18 Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment. I'm  
19 with the Montgomery County Planning Department  
20 Downcounty Planning Division. This public  
21 hearing for the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan  
22 Amendment was advertised in the Washington

1 Times on June 26th, 2023 and duly notified via  
2 hard copy and/or electronic formats on or  
3 before June 30th to the city of Takoma Park,  
4 the Takoma Park City Council, Montgomery County  
5 Council, Montgomery County Executive,  
6 Montgomery County Planning Board, applicable  
7 Montgomery County Departments and other public  
8 agencies, public libraries near the plan area,  
9 the residential neighborhood, community  
10 organizations, homeowners associations, and  
11 other interested parties. The public hearing  
12 is an opportunity for the Montgomery County  
13 Planning Board to receive testimony on the  
14 public hearing draft of the Takoma Park Minor  
15 Master Plan Amendment. The Planning Board will  
16 continue to take public comments on the draft  
17 plan until September 30th. And there will be a  
18 series of Planning Board work sessions  
19 beginning October 19th to incorporate public  
20 comments and review and revise the draft plan.

21 The Takoma Park Minor Master Plan  
22 Amendment Public Hearing Draft is an amendment

1 to a portion of the 2000 Takoma Park Master  
2 Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, the county's  
3 general plan, the 2013 Countywide Transit  
4 Corridors Functional Master Plan as amended,  
5 the 2018 Technical Update to the Master Plan of  
6 Highways and Transit Ways as amended, the 2018  
7 Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan as  
8 amended, and the Master Plan of Historic  
9 Preservation as amended. I'd like to enter  
10 into the public record the following documents:  
11 the 2000 Takoma Park Minor -- I'm sorry, 2000  
12 Takoma Park Master Plan, Thrive Montgomery  
13 2050, the county's general plan, the 2013  
14 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master  
15 Plan as amended, the 2018 technical update to  
16 the Master Plan of Highways and Transit Ways as  
17 amended, the 2018 Montgomery County Bicycle  
18 Master Plan, and the Master Plan of Historic  
19 Preservation as amended.

20 The following supporting studies and  
21 reports are also entered into the public  
22 record: the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan

1 Amendment Community Engagement Update Report,  
2 the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment,  
3 Existing Conditions Report Presentation, and  
4 the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment  
5 Appendix. All of these documents, as well as  
6 other meeting materials and recordings, are  
7 available via the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan  
8 Amendment project website, which is located at  
9 [montgomeryplanning.org/tpmma](http://montgomeryplanning.org/tpmma).

10 I am also entering into the public  
11 record the following documents, which are  
12 attached to the agenda report for this meeting  
13 item: we have Resolution 202316 from the Takoma  
14 Park City Council recommending support of the  
15 Planning Board designation of the public  
16 hearing draft of the Takoma Park Minor Master  
17 Plan Amendment, a letter transmitting the  
18 public hearing draft to the County Council  
19 President Evan Glass dated June 26th, a letter  
20 transmitting the public hearing draft plan to  
21 the County Executive Marc Elrich dated June  
22 26th, a letter transmitting the public hearing

1 draft plan to the Mayor of Takoma Park, Talisha  
2 Searcy, dated June 26th, and all of these are  
3 June 26th, 2023, and a proof of publication  
4 from the Washington Times Newspaper ad in the  
5 papers June 26th, 2023 issue. I'd also add  
6 that the staff supports the Takoma Park City  
7 Council request that the public record remain  
8 open until September 30th, 2023, at the close  
9 of business. And that completes my statement  
10 for the record.

11 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay. Thank you very  
12 much. So we'll have the first five speakers  
13 come up to the table, please. Mayor Talisha  
14 Searcy, David Reed, if he's here, Michael  
15 Douma, Carrie Ann Hamilton, and Robert Dreher.

16 Oh. Oh, we have another one? Okay.  
17 Is Mica Bevington here? Salim Furth? Thank  
18 you. So individuals will have three minutes  
19 for their testimony. And groups will have six  
20 minutes. So we'll start with Mayor Searcy.  
21 You will have six minutes, please. Please  
22 state your name and then you can begin your

1 testimony.

2                   MAYOR SEARCY:       Good evening.    My  
3 name is Talisha Searcy and I'm the Mayor of the  
4 city of Takoma Park.     Thank you for the  
5 opportunity to speak tonight on behalf of our  
6 residents regarding the minor master plan  
7 amendment.  I also want to thank the Montgomery  
8 County planning staff who worked on this plan.  
9 The city of Takoma Park's housing and economic  
10 development goals are threefold:  preserve,  
11 protect, and produce.     We want to preserve  
12 existing businesses and affordable housing in  
13 Takoma Park, including in revitalizing areas,  
14 produce more housing and opportunities for  
15 businesses to start and grow across the income  
16 spectrum, and allow the city to meet our  
17 diverse housing and economic needs, and protect  
18 renters, homeowners, and local businesses from  
19 discrimination and displacement and our  
20 environment from destruction.     With the  
21 unexpected relocation of the Washington  
22 Adventist Hospital, the minor master plan



1 amendment opens a door for our community to  
2 realize what is needed to advance its housing  
3 and economic development goals as well as  
4 support the advancement of vital city  
5 resources, such as: affordable housing,  
6 schools, parks, and municipal buildings.

7           However, the plan needs to be  
8 revised to better reflect the city's values as  
9 well as ensure that the plan takes the  
10 necessary steps to protect the most vulnerable  
11 among us. Resolution 2316, the council stated  
12 that the minor master plan amendment should  
13 include zoning amendments that are designed to  
14 incentivize the creation of a range of housing  
15 types, retain and improve existing affordable  
16 housing, retain existing and attract new local  
17 businesses, create new public space  
18 opportunities, and strengthen social and  
19 environmental assets. To ensure that this  
20 happens, the Takoma Park City Council passed  
21 Resolution 202333 and the planning -- and  
22 requiring the Planning Board to hold work

1 sessions on four topics of great importance to  
2 the community.

3           The first topic is the potential  
4 redevelopment of the Washington Adventist site  
5 and the Flower Avenue District. We implore you  
6 to take a closer look at the plan to examine  
7 how the development requirements, including  
8 setbacks, building heights, and step-downs, lot  
9 coverage, and density of the newly proposed  
10 zoning for the Washington Adventist site impact  
11 neighboring single family housing. The plan  
12 should reduce the scale, height, and apply  
13 appropriate setbacks of parcels adjoining  
14 Maplewood and Greenwood Avenues. Additionally,  
15 the plan should retain the green space at  
16 Hospital Hill and increase the recommended one-  
17 half acre central public open space. The plan  
18 should also clearly state the allowable line of  
19 development for property abutting Sligo Creek.

20           The second topic is promoting a  
21 diversity of housing in the plan area. Like  
22 other communities, the city of Takoma Park

1 needs missing middle housing. It's important  
2 that the plan aids in providing a diversity of  
3 housing options. The plan should recommend  
4 that any new units constructed within the plan  
5 area help meet the city's objectives of  
6 increasing the number of units, the variety of  
7 housing types across the affordability spectrum  
8 that result in economically diverse  
9 communities. Where appropriate, the Maple  
10 Avenue District and plan should encourage  
11 innovative infill development and opportunities  
12 on underutilized portions of parcels that do  
13 not adversely impact existing affordable  
14 housing. The board should also hold a work  
15 session on the public space infrastructure and  
16 amenities within the plan.

17 Please examine the impact of the  
18 density proposed on access to and provision of  
19 public space, infrastructure, recreational  
20 facilities, school capacity, roads, public  
21 utilities, and healthcare. The plan should  
22 include more specific recommendations around

1 the activation and creation of usable green  
2 space, including the activation of the green  
3 space neighboring Essex House and  
4 identification of additional opportunities for  
5 ball fields and structured play areas. The  
6 plan should also clearly support improvements  
7 in multimodal transportation, help to meet city  
8 and county climate goals, and address the  
9 current and future challenges of local vehicle  
10 traffic in the plan area. Lastly, the city of  
11 Takoma Park contains four percent of the  
12 county's housing stock, but we make up nine  
13 percent of the county's affordable housing  
14 units. It is vital that we protect affordable  
15 housing in the city and demand the board hold a  
16 work session focused on protecting existing  
17 housing affordability in the plan area.

18 Specifically, the board should  
19 examine how the plan stakeholder can retain  
20 existing housing affordability while improving  
21 the quality of existing housing. Additionally,  
22 the board should explore what protection

1 mechanisms are in the plan to prevent  
2 displacement of current renters and ensure no  
3 net loss of affordable housing. In addition to  
4 the affirmation work session, the city would  
5 also submit for the public record additional  
6 comments and information requests that we would  
7 like for the board to address prior to  
8 advancing the revised plan to the city council  
9 and the Montgomery County Council. As a  
10 critical partner in future success of the plan,  
11 the city expects the opportunity to review and  
12 react to the findings of the upcoming work  
13 sessions prior to the advancement of any  
14 planning board draft. The city of Takoma Park  
15 supports the re-envisioning of the Washington  
16 Adventist Hospital campus and the enhancement  
17 of critical civic economic and housing  
18 resources in the surrounding neighborhoods  
19 along Maple Avenue corridor. However, it must  
20 be done in a manner that enhances the quality  
21 of life of residents and is environmentally and  
22 financially sustainable. The plan is a vital

1 step towards realizing the shared goal. Thank  
2 you.

3 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much  
4 for your testimony, Mayor Searcy. So next will  
5 be David Reed.

6 MR. REED: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
7 My name is David Reed. I'm an economist. I am  
8 also the President of the Long Branch Sligo  
9 Community Association, and I'm a founding  
10 member of the Community Equity Coalition that  
11 I'll be representing tonight. A fundamental  
12 controversy, the MMPA regards the urgently  
13 needed rehabilitation of the high-rise  
14 buildings along Maple Avenue. The MMPA  
15 proposes upzoning as a sole instrument to  
16 incentivize that rehabilitation process.  
17 Unfortunately, privileged use of that  
18 instrument disregards two basic economic facts.  
19 One, upzoning does not mobilize private sector  
20 investment without raising the cost of housing.  
21 Private investors need a robust stable return  
22 on their investments. Rent increases, hence

1 are inevitable. Second, upzoning does not  
2 promote renovation without major dislocation of  
3 tenants, unless accompanied by public  
4 financing. Absent such funding, displacement  
5 of many vulnerable families is inevitable.

6 How then can the MMPA claim that it  
7 aspires to achieve no net loss of affordable  
8 housing by using this very blunt economic  
9 instrument and without public financing?  
10 Further, even a cursory reading of American  
11 urban change over the past five decades  
12 highlights how upzoning has been a privileged  
13 tool in displacing hundreds of thousands of  
14 low-income families, largely Brown and Black,  
15 from urban centers.

16 I therefore propose two steps to try  
17 to address this important challenge. One, that  
18 the Maple Avenue District be severed from the  
19 MMPA so that construction of urgently needed  
20 housing in the Flower Avenue District can move  
21 forward expeditiously. And second, I propose  
22 that the planning board mandate a tailored

1 urban design process on Maple Avenue, that  
2 among other things, among other options, one,  
3 explores expansion of public ownership  
4 opportunities, MHP as a main target and  
5 opportunity for them, I believe, that  
6 encourages economic cooperative development and  
7 that opens missing middle opportunities and  
8 options for other folks. Two, that it convenes  
9 a forum with private owners to explore  
10 obstacles, financing, and timing regarding  
11 rehabilitation of their properties. And three,  
12 that it identifies sources of public financing  
13 that are needed to ensure temporary relocation  
14 of residence in buildings undergoing  
15 rehabilitation.

16 A dedicated planning process along  
17 Maple Avenue will be required to meet the  
18 requisites of the equity and master planning  
19 framework by which you are guided, to which the  
20 department must incorporate racial equity and  
21 social justice when preparing master plans. I  
22 close in thanking Mayor Searcy for her



1 dedication and that of the city council in  
2 trying to find inclusive answers that the  
3 challenge posed by the current MMPA. And I  
4 close expressing the ardent commitment of the  
5 hundreds of residents that I represent to work  
6 with you in finding equitable and enduring  
7 solutions to our city's needs. Thank you.

8 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Reed.  
9 Next will be Michael Douma. Thank you.

10 MR. DOUMA: Hi, I'm Michael Douma.  
11 I live on Garland Avenue, east of the upzoned  
12 land on Greenwood Avenue. And I have one  
13 picture I wanted to show. It's the one that's  
14 kind of green and pink, but you can put it up  
15 later. So tonight I want to talk about the  
16 Green Promenade. So I love that the planners  
17 suggested a pedestrian path on the west edge of  
18 the old hospital site. I love that the idea of  
19 a visual connection to Sligo Creek and the  
20 proposed connection to Long Branch. But I want  
21 to emphasize that the neighborhood is hilly.  
22 It's tricky to move east and west between the

1 Sligo Creek and Long Branch Stream Trails. The  
2 Green Promenade diagram that's in the draft  
3 Figures 1 and 8, it's not realistic on the east  
4 side. Maplewood, it's steep for kids to bike  
5 up or to push a stroller. Even the dogs don't  
6 like going up and down Maplewood. In the  
7 middle of the Adventist site, it's really  
8 steep.

9           So to add some ground truth to this  
10 conversation, I prepared this map from the data  
11 on the MC Atlas site. So this is the two-foot  
12 contours and the lidar kind of mixed together.  
13 Guess you guys can see it. So you can see that  
14 the cliffs and the hills really kind of stand  
15 out there. So if there's a diagram that's like  
16 this, it helps you know what routes are going  
17 to make sense and where they don't make sense.  
18 And I -- my request is for the county planners  
19 to make a map really similar to this so that we  
20 can see where the bikes should go, where the  
21 walking should go. I'm happy to share my map.  
22 GAS Department I'm sure can make one.

1                   So how do you go up a steep hill?  
2                   Well, you don't go up a steep hill. You use  
3                   switchbacks. That's what people do when  
4                   they're hiking. And so I am proposing a route  
5                   that kind of weaves back and forth, and so I  
6                   want to make the suggestion. And so looking at  
7                   this map, you can't really see where folks are  
8                   sitting, but on the top edge, there's, like,  
9                   there's a dotted line that goes along  
10                  Maplewood. That's the one that I think is  
11                  unrealistic. There's also one that just kind  
12                  of arches right through the middle of the  
13                  property. And maybe that was a concept, that  
14                  line. I don't think that's realistic either.  
15                  So what could happen? So we could extend from  
16                  the bridge that's on Carroll Avenue all the way  
17                  around on the west side of the hospital site  
18                  over to Maplewood and Maple, so just as was  
19                  proposed. But I'd like to see this on a map so  
20                  that people can really see where it could be.  
21                                 And that's a really nice path  
22                  because you can walk it. It has a bit of an

1 uphill climb. Then from the east side of it,  
2 you can swing around to Carroll and Flower,  
3 which was proposed also, and that's walkable.  
4 From the corner of Flower Avenue and Carroll,  
5 the sidewalk is perfectly good. And that  
6 brings you up some more of that hill. So that  
7 brings people all the way around in a way that  
8 they can walk.

9           Then how do you get down to Long  
10 Branch? Because Maplewood isn't going to work.  
11 And my suggestion is to have something else  
12 that weaves all the way behind Greenwood.  
13 There's a swath of right of way that the city  
14 owns and then there's the back of those  
15 Greenwood properties and there's lots of space  
16 there. And if a path was put there connecting  
17 to Garland, it could go across. And that might  
18 be my timer. There's no timer up here. But  
19 the basic idea is, make a map and then see if  
20 we can weave through something that people can  
21 walk, because I think people would love to use  
22 that.

1 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you so much.  
2 Next is Carrie Ann Hamilton and Robert Deher.  
3 Robert.

4 MR. DREHER: Good evening. My name  
5 is Bob Dreher, and I live in Takoma Park. As  
6 you'll hear tonight, the proposed master plan  
7 amendment has raised deep concerns in our  
8 community. People are taken aback by the sheer  
9 size of the development that would be allowed  
10 under the proposed plan. 150 and 120 foot tall  
11 residential and commercial buildings throughout  
12 the inner core of our city, increasing our  
13 city's population by as much as 40 percent.  
14 People are apprehensive that the economic  
15 incentives provided by this massive upzoning  
16 will lead to replacement of existing, highly  
17 affordable apartment buildings along Maple  
18 Avenue, displacing residents and destroying the  
19 most affordable and diverse neighborhood in  
20 Montgomery County. People are concerned about  
21 environmental impacts from all this  
22 construction, including stormwater, climate

1 impacts, and harm to our park lands along Sligo  
2 Creek. And they're worried about what this  
3 huge increase in our population will do to  
4 traffic, schools, and other infrastructure.

5 What's striking to me is how little  
6 we actually know about the consequences of this  
7 plan. We do not have any environmental  
8 analysis, any analysis of stormwater impacts,  
9 any traffic studies, or any socioeconomic  
10 analysis of the impacts of upzoning on existing  
11 buildings and residents. There's been no  
12 apparent consideration to alternative  
13 approaches to planning for this vital area of  
14 our city. Zoning schemes will lower building  
15 heights and less density, for example, or  
16 zoning schemes that focus on the Adventist  
17 Hospital site and defer changes to Maple  
18 Avenue. As someone who has spent much of his  
19 career working on planning for federal lands  
20 and resources, I find this astonishing,  
21 frankly. Federal decision making for land  
22 development is governed by the National

1 Environmental Policy Act, which requires  
2 thorough analysis and public disclosure of  
3 potential environmental impacts at the proposal  
4 stage and consideration of alternative  
5 approaches that would cause less environmental  
6 damage. It requires transparency and public  
7 involvement throughout the planning process.  
8 Although the NEPA process doesn't eliminate  
9 disputes over proper management of federal  
10 lands, it ensures informed decision making and  
11 it can lead to development of alternative  
12 approaches that can win broad public support.

13 I think the Planning Board should  
14 follow that model here. I know NEPA doesn't  
15 apply to you, but the reasoning of NEPA to look  
16 before you leap seems eminently sensible. So I  
17 think you should direct your staff to study the  
18 potential environmental climate and  
19 socioeconomic impacts of the proposed plan and  
20 compare those impacts to alternative approaches  
21 that establish lower building heights and less  
22 density and that separate out Maple Avenue from

1 the current plan. And you should disclose  
2 those studies and the alternative approaches to  
3 the public and take more public comment before  
4 voting on a plan.

5 I know this will require effort and  
6 take some time, but it will provide the  
7 information that our community and you need to  
8 understand the likely consequences of this  
9 major change to our city. We can't afford to  
10 simply sign a blank check for developers. And  
11 it may help bring people together around an  
12 approach that promotes new affordable housing  
13 in our city without endangering the environment  
14 and the welfare of existing residents. Thank  
15 you.

16 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
17 Dreher. Next is Salim Furth.

18 MR. FURTH: Thank you Chair and  
19 commission members. I appreciate your time.  
20 My name is Salim Furth. I'm a Takoma Park  
21 resident and an abutter to the current plan  
22 boundary. I'm also a housing economist. The



1 land directly behind where I live is already  
2 zoned for 100-foot height limits, as is much of  
3 the Maple Avenue Corridor. So there isn't  
4 really an upzoning going on here. I understand  
5 the county is, you know, updating the zoning.

6 I -- I'm fine with either way. What's  
7 important to me as an abutter is that as that  
8 building, which is already not great  
9 structurally, as it reaches the end of its  
10 natural life, that the condominium owners can  
11 responsibly take action to either rehabilitate  
12 or replace the building in a way that doesn't  
13 leave a vacant structure waiting for variances,  
14 waiting for appeals, going through a messy  
15 process because the zoning is not clear and  
16 permissive.

17 So my interest is in having clear  
18 permissive zoning that maintains the existing  
19 high height limits and allows us to continue to  
20 have tall buildings on Maple Avenue Corridor.  
21 I'm also very concerned about the rising cost  
22 of housing in Takoma Park. On my block, houses

1 now go for about \$1.5 million. My brother, two  
2 years ago, looked to move to Takoma Park with  
3 his growing family, and it was just  
4 unrealistic. Nowhere in the city could he  
5 afford to buy a house. And the only way, you  
6 know -- we know the status quo zoning has  
7 brought us here. So we know how to get where  
8 we are and that's what we've done so far, which  
9 is to put shrink wrap zoning over almost all of  
10 the city. The only way to bring down housing  
11 costs and to make space for new neighbors is to  
12 build more housing.

13           There's no amount of rearranging the  
14 deck chairs or studying things that is going to  
15 make housing more affordable, and no number of  
16 restrictions that is going to add units in  
17 Takoma Park. The Adventist site, which is  
18 really the core issue here, is the only one of  
19 its kind in Takoma Park. There's no other  
20 site. If we decide to make this a park, we're  
21 not going to build housing somewhere else.  
22 There's nowhere else anywhere near the core of

1 Takoma Park that could house a significant  
2 amount of housing. If we fail here, then new  
3 people can, as now, only move to Takoma Park by  
4 outbidding, buying out, or displacing someone  
5 else. That's the status quo. Thank you for  
6 considering this amendment. I -- this -- and I  
7 support it in its current form. I look forward  
8 to the improvements, but I really hope that you  
9 don't back down from the core of the plan,  
10 which is to allow significant amounts of dense  
11 housing at the Adventist site. Thank you.

12 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Furth.  
13 And thank you, all of you, for coming. And  
14 we'll call up the next five people. So the  
15 next is Anne Hollander in here? Aaron  
16 Seyedian, Naomi Edelson, William Hernandez,  
17 Frank Demarais, Jacqueline Moore, Rachel  
18 Hardwick, Susan Miller.

19 MR. BENAS: It looks like several of  
20 the people you're asking about are online, if  
21 you'd give them a chance to respond.

22 CHAIR HARRIS: Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

1       Okay.

2                       MR. BENAS:   You might want to just  
3       start over at the beginning.

4                       CHAIR HARRIS:  Yeah.  Yeah.  I'll  
5       start again.  So is Mica Bevington online?  How  
6       about Anne Hollander?  Naomi Edelson?  Oh,  
7       there -- and William Hernandez, is William  
8       online?  So who did I miss that was online?  
9       Oh, Frank.  Okay.  Okay.  Okay.  So why don't  
10      we do this?  Why don't we take Frank first?  
11      And Frank, you're representing the Sligo Creek  
12      Parkway, Kennebec, Flower, Maple, Maplewood  
13      Neighborhood Association.  So thank you for  
14      participating.  You have six minutes for your  
15      testimony.  You need to get off of mute, Frank,  
16      please.

17                      MR. DEMARAIS:   Thought I had it.  
18      Thought I had it.  Thank you very much.  Yeah,  
19      again, my name is Frank Demarais.  I live on  
20      Maple Avenue, Takoma Park.  And I submitted a  
21      written statement with a series of observations  
22      and recommendations on how to improve the plan.

1 Fundamentally, I personally am in support. I'm  
2 actually speaking on behalf of myself and only  
3 myself at this point.

4 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay.

5 MR. DEMARAIS: But the plan is well  
6 aligned in its stated objectives and intentions  
7 with, I think, the Takoma Park community,  
8 Takoma Park city values, and you know, what the  
9 city was intending when it advanced this idea.  
10 The one thing I do want to speak to this  
11 evening that I highlight in that written  
12 submission is that the minor master plan as the  
13 first plan under the new Thrive General Plan  
14 speaks to and stresses the importance of  
15 preservation of existing affordable housing.  
16 Takoma Park has a rent stabilization structure  
17 that for the past 40 years has protected  
18 residents from rent increases, exceeding  
19 inflation. It's created an extraordinarily  
20 mixed income and diverse community where a  
21 significant percentage of the population in  
22 each of our racial and ethnic categories at the

1 median incomes for those categories can afford  
2 the median rents in Takoma Park. That doesn't  
3 exist anywhere else.

4 Our rents are 20 to 30 percent lower  
5 than adjoining areas and countywide averages.  
6 It's critical for the county to recognize that  
7 when you create this level of density, the plan  
8 as it's proposed, particularly on the occupied  
9 parcels, increases the incentives and the  
10 likelihood of redevelopment, which is the  
11 purpose, create new units. But every single  
12 redevelopment will result in the elimination of  
13 affordable housing. That the 12 and a half,  
14 even if you went to 15 percent MPDU,  
15 redevelopment will eliminate significant  
16 majority of the affordable units on those  
17 sites. And that's because any new construction  
18 is going to be looking to rents that are  
19 substantially above market averages and above  
20 the current rents in Takoma Park. And that the  
21 county has recognized this, stresses it in all  
22 of the plans, but has not provided in the minor

1 master plan any structure, any requirements,  
2 any limitations that would really protect  
3 existing residents.

4 And the county has done that,  
5 Planning has done that in the Veirs Mill  
6 Corridor Plan, particularly on the Twinbrook  
7 property. It's provided that for five  
8 identified properties in the Silver Spring  
9 Business District and adjoining communities  
10 plan. And in the Takoma Park Minor Master  
11 Plan, the plan needs to adopt no net loss. The  
12 county can and should protect the numbers of  
13 existing units with a requirement that when a  
14 property with affordable units is redeveloped,  
15 and with the Takoma Park rents and the rent  
16 stabilizations, well documented the rents, that  
17 the replacement units should include one for  
18 one replacement of those existing units at a  
19 minimum. As someone in the affordable housing  
20 industry, I fully appreciate the impact, the  
21 cost, et cetera. But also as a member of this  
22 community, recognize, you know, the absolute

1 value and actually irreplaceable value.

2 So even though we have restricted  
3 units that are 20 years or better in terms of  
4 the restrictions, at some point, those expire.  
5 A significant number of unrestricted units and  
6 every redevelopment that produces desired new  
7 housing will, by definition, replace. And so  
8 if you have 101 unit building and you could  
9 build 250 units on that site and you replace it  
10 with 12 and a half and MPDUs, that's 32 units.  
11 101 affordable units would be lost, 32 replaced  
12 at MPDU rents above the existing rents on that  
13 property. It's doable. It puts the onus on  
14 the property development community, the  
15 landowners to work with that requirement to  
16 find a solution generally will require some  
17 public involvement. But right now, the plan  
18 only requires a best effort, a striving for  
19 that.

20 And the fundamentals with no net  
21 loss in all of our plans of striving and best  
22 efforts, et cetera, are insufficient,



1 particularly in the community where that is the  
2 fundamental component that keeps this community  
3 are residents able to live here, multi-  
4 generational, and builds the sense of community  
5 that comes with security that you will be able  
6 to stay here. So I just want to, you know,  
7 stress this as the most critical. And it's the  
8 first opportunity coming out of Thrive to  
9 really do this right. And you know, the  
10 fundamentals here are you either do or do not.  
11 Try is not good enough. So thank you very much  
12 and leave you with that.

13 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Damarais. The next person will be -- is it  
15 Aaron Seyedian?

16 MR. SEYEDIAN: Hi there. My name's  
17 Aaron Seyedian. I live on Garland Avenue, so  
18 just across the way from the plan area. I've  
19 lived in Takoma Park since 2018. And I also  
20 operate my business outside of 6930 Carroll  
21 Avenue, which is another repurposed Adventist  
22 building, I believe used to be Adventist World

1       Headquarters.       You know, my story in town  
2       starts with me and my wife moving into a multi-  
3       family building on Tulip Avenue that probably  
4       couldn't be built today, smackd in the middle  
5       of single-family homes.   It was where we moved  
6       when we had our first child.   Now we own a  
7       house on Garland Avenue.   And then of course, I  
8       did mention my business.   You know, I employ 35  
9       people.   We're proud to operate out of Takoma  
10      Park.   And the people that come to work every  
11      day spend money in our community and, you know,  
12      liven up the streets.

13                    I don't think that the presence of  
14      the old Adventist building on Carroll Avenue,  
15      if you know it -- it's 10 stories right on your  
16      way to the Metro, I don't think it takes away  
17      or detracts from anything on Willow, Maple,  
18      Tulip.    These are all iconic Takoma Park  
19      streets of people living kind of beautiful  
20      Takoma Park lives.   So anyway, when I think  
21      about the proposed plan, I really don't have  
22      many quibbles.    If it has more kinds of

1 commercial land, I think that's great. If it  
2 brings more multi-family housing into the city,  
3 I think that's wonderful. I think about how  
4 those kinds of things have impacted my life for  
5 the better and how if we build more of it,  
6 it'll impact more people's lives for the  
7 better. I know that some folks have kind of  
8 mentioned traffic, storm water, affordability.  
9 Those tend to be, I think, the key things that  
10 people are worried about. From my perspective,  
11 you know, the plan as proposed would address  
12 all of those things instead of create more  
13 issues.

14 MS. WOLCHIK: Oh, would not.

15 MR. SEYEDIAN: Please be respectful.

16 MS. WOLCHIK: Would not.

17 MR. SEYEDIAN: Please be respectful.

18 You can talk later. Anyway, stormwater, you  
19 know, it's an inactive site right now. Me and  
20 my son play on the hills and he loves -- when I  
21 drive through the parking garages, it's a bunch  
22 of impervious surfaces. I can't imagine that

1 this kind of crumbling campus manages  
2 stormwater better than something, you know,  
3 newly construed and newly built. In terms of  
4 traffic, you know, if I got to fill a  
5 prescription at CVS, I hop in my car, I'd drive  
6 down either to Old Town or New Hampshire Avenue  
7 CVS. If there were things that I could walk  
8 to, I'd walk to them. So that gets me out of  
9 my car, that reduces traffic.

10 And in terms of affordability, I  
11 mentioned I am a businessman. I believe in  
12 supply and demand. I agree with Mr. Furth, who  
13 spoke before me. I think that building more  
14 housing is the way to have cheaper housing.  
15 And also, you know, smaller size housing,  
16 right? Part of the affordability of apartments  
17 is just that they're not as big. And so we  
18 need all kinds of sizes apart from just supply  
19 and demand in order to have affordable options  
20 in Takoma Park. So lastly, I just want to  
21 highlight, you know, Mayor Searcy mentioned the  
22 city of Takoma Park's council passed the

1 resolution supporting this. From my  
2 perspective, the last two elections in Takoma  
3 Park for the mayoralty were a referendum on  
4 development, I think that those are very  
5 democratic avenues that feedback has been  
6 solicited. And I hope that, you know, we don't  
7 get bogged down in endless process on  
8 weeknights when I think the people of Takoma  
9 Park have already spoken. Thanks.

10 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
11 Seyedian. Thank you for your presentation.  
12 Next is Naomi Edelson.

13 MS. EDELSON: Hello. I'm Naomi  
14 Edelson. I'm a wildlife biologist by trade,  
15 and here's my binoculars to prove it -- my  
16 beat-up binoculars. I live at 716 Erie Ave in  
17 Ward 5, one block from the hospital, two blocks  
18 from Sligo Creek. I am for the development of  
19 the hospital grounds to be more like what  
20 Walter Reed is. I'm here to raise grave  
21 concerns about the density and height of the  
22 plan. It's very much an overreach, and I'm

1 very worried about the worst-case scenario. I  
2 love Takoma Park. We moved here in 2010. I  
3 especially love Sligo Creek. It's the heart  
4 and soul of Takoma Park, and people of all  
5 stripes and backgrounds use it extensively. I  
6 walk and bike along it every day. The path is  
7 so busy that I bike on the street and I  
8 actually fell on it today, but I didn't break  
9 my arm, but it's a little bruised.

10 But this Sligo Creek is beloved.  
11 And I just want to say, as an example, tomorrow  
12 eve, as some of you may know, is Rosh Hashanah,  
13 which is a time of reflection and renewal to  
14 Jews, myself. It's a tradition where you throw  
15 bread into a body of moving water and express  
16 regret for your sins. But I don't put bread in  
17 Sligo Creek because I know as a wildlife  
18 biologist, it hurts the fish, the turtles, and  
19 the ducks, of which all live there. I use  
20 little broken up leaves, which there are  
21 plenty. And I just want to say, you know,  
22 Sligo Creek, people don't realize that there

1 are kids playing in it, there are dogs drinking  
2 out of it. It is an unhealthy creek. And it  
3 used to be worse. It has had so much county  
4 money and other funds put into it that it has  
5 gone from three species to now 15 or more.

6 It's getting better. I saw a bald eagle there.  
7 I didn't have my binoculars, but I knew what it  
8 was because it -- it's easy, and I've seen fish  
9 and ducks. And I love it so much that I  
10 applied for county grants, which I got from  
11 RainScapes and DEP, which is right in this  
12 building, to help congregations remove  
13 impermeable space like lawns and put in native  
14 plant gardens to slow the flow of storm water  
15 runoff and help people in wildlife.

16 And it turns out that Takoma Park  
17 section of Sligo Creek is the most degraded,  
18 and the county as you know, manages it, but  
19 it's the city that's contributing to it. More  
20 density, which height increases density. More  
21 density is going to lead to more traffic, more  
22 lawns, more impervial pavement, more poop,

1 which is one of the biggest problems, that dog  
2 poop, and it's going to create more  
3 degradation. I think Takoma Park, Sligo Creek  
4 is the heart and soul, and we need to keep it  
5 that way. We need to keep this beautiful place  
6 that's important to us, spiritually,  
7 physically, and emotionally. And I wish you-  
8 all a sweet and healthy happy new year, and I  
9 wish that for Sligo Creek. Thank you.

10 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms.  
11 Edelson, for your testimony. Next will be  
12 Jacqueline Moore.

13 MS. MOORE: My name is Jacqueline  
14 Moore and I'm a resident of Takoma Park. In  
15 Takoma Park, we have a historic Black community  
16 that's dealt with the consequences of racism  
17 throughout the history of the city. In the  
18 short film produced by Historic Takoma  
19 Incorporated, They Called Him Mr. Lee, Mr.  
20 Cedric Boatman discusses how he felt to be  
21 tolerated, but not accepted by the white  
22 residents of Takoma Park while growing up.



1 When Black residents wanted a playground, they  
2 were told by the city council to clear the land  
3 and raise the needed funds themselves. The  
4 playground was built in the early 1950s, but by  
5 the mid-1950s, it was seized by the cities to  
6 be used for the Department of Public Works.  
7 There are still some Black residents today in  
8 2023, who feel tolerated rather than accepted  
9 despite our city council's stated priority of  
10 being a welcoming community.

11 We also have a community of people  
12 along Maple Avenue, many of whom are recent  
13 immigrants to the US. The buildings they live  
14 in may not possess the same kind of cultural  
15 and historic -- historical touchstones that are  
16 present in Victorian houses and bungalows -- I  
17 don't live in one of those -- throughout Takoma  
18 park's historic district, but these residents  
19 bring with them their rich histories and  
20 traditions. The residents in lower income  
21 housing along Maple Avenue have gone through  
22 severe economic stress caused by the 2008

1 recession and the housing crisis and the COVID  
2 pandemic. Most of the people who live in the  
3 apartment buildings will not be returning if  
4 they are pushed out of Takoma Park. Recent  
5 immigrants are in danger of having their lives  
6 upended once again. The fabric of our diverse  
7 city will be irreparably torn asunder. Valerie  
8 Babb, author of Black Georgetown Remembered,  
9 stated, Bettering an environment is about  
10 bringing your best self and welcoming the  
11 diversity in others.

12           The displacement of Black families  
13 from Georgetown to Anacostia in the early mid-  
14 20th century is just one example of the harmful  
15 effects of gentrification in the DC, Maryland,  
16 Virginia region. This is not a history that I  
17 wish to see repeated, especially not in Takoma  
18 Park. I ask you what exactly in the minor  
19 master plan for Takoma Park betters our  
20 environment and protects diversity. Are you,  
21 the planning board members and the planning  
22 board staff, bringing your best selves and

1 welcoming the diversity that currently exists  
2 in Takoma Park? The people who live in the  
3 MMPA area now have a history, too. We just  
4 don't know it. Isn't it time we try to find  
5 out, recognize it and honor their history too?  
6 Most importantly, when will we validate their  
7 worth to our city and do everything possible to  
8 make sure that they get to continue to live in  
9 Takoma Park? Please sever the Maple Avenue  
10 corridor and the municipal corridor portions of  
11 the MMPA. These parts of the current plan can  
12 be revisited once we see what happens with the  
13 Washington Adventist Hospital site. History  
14 will remember our names, our words, and our  
15 deeds. Thank you.

16 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms. Moore.  
17 Next is Rachel Hardwick.

18 MS. HARDWICK: Thank you. I'm  
19 Rachel Hardwick. I live at 7400 Flower Avenue,  
20 Takoma Park, which is two blocks from the  
21 hospital site and the corner of Carroll and  
22 Flower Avenues. I am in favor of housing at

1 the hospital site and recognize as we all do,  
2 that Montgomery County needs more housing  
3 units, especially for people who need middle  
4 income and affordable housing. Nevertheless,  
5 I'm very concerned that the proposed zoning  
6 changes will add far too many units to the  
7 hospital site, making our schools even more  
8 crowded and traffic and pollution in our  
9 community unsustainable. Before we are too far  
10 into this process, please analyze the effects  
11 on traffic, stormwater runoff, demands on city  
12 and county services such as the police  
13 department, the impact on already crowded  
14 schools, and figure out how to solve problems  
15 that we know will come if 12-story buildings  
16 are allowed at the hospital site.

17 In front of my house, for example,  
18 we have a real and dangerous traffic problem.  
19 That section of Flower Avenue is very narrow.  
20 When it was built in the 1920s, it was not  
21 meant to handle the volume of cars of modern  
22 times. For over 17 years, I have shared my

1 concerns with Takoma Park city leaders about  
2 the volume of traffic and the need for  
3 enforcement of the stop signs. The majority of  
4 drivers do not stop at the stop sign in front  
5 of my house, likely, because they're frustrated  
6 by the narrowness of the street and the volume  
7 of cars, which we have not yet solved despite  
8 lots of conversations. And we can only expect  
9 those problems to greatly increase. If  
10 thousands of housing units and six to 7,000  
11 people are added to a site over a mile from the  
12 Metro and over a half a mile to the purple  
13 line, many, many cars will travel on  
14 surrounding streets, including from Carroll  
15 Avenue to Sligo Creek Parkway on Flower Avenue,  
16 and vice versa.

17 As a parent of recent Blair High  
18 School graduates, I know that at a minimum,  
19 Blair High School and Rolling Terrace  
20 Elementary School are overcrowded now. Blair  
21 is bursting and added portables through the  
22 years my kids were there, save for the

1 pandemic. We are talking about increasing  
2 Takoma Park's population by possibly 40  
3 percent. Where will the students go to school?  
4 And how many other communities outside of  
5 Takoma Park will be affected by adding  
6 additional students to the public schools?  
7 Again, I am in favor of housing at the hospital  
8 site, but let's go into it with eyes wide open.  
9 Before agreeing to the zoning changes  
10 recommended by county planners, I implore you  
11 to ensure that an analysis of such building on  
12 the site will have on surrounding streets,  
13 government services, and on the schools. The  
14 analysis is conducted in a meaningful and  
15 transparent way.

16 Finally, know that whatever the  
17 zoning allows, that is what will be built when  
18 for-profit developers develop the site. We  
19 experienced that particular phenomenon at the  
20 junction in Takoma Park. The chosen builder  
21 worked very hard to maximize profit, which I  
22 understand, but it would've cost the community

1 a lot. Let's not write that same blueprint  
2 here. Please use your authority to plan as  
3 best as possible for our beloved community.  
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms.  
6 Hardwick. I think everyone has spoken at --  
7 oh, I'm sorry. Could you -- I'm sorry. Would  
8 you repeat your name and --

9 MS. MILLER: Sue Miller.

10 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay. Thank you, Ms.  
11 Miller.

12 MS. MILLER: Good evening. I'm here  
13 tonight representing Community Vision for  
14 Takoma, a community Group for almost a decade  
15 now, with over a thousand people on our list.  
16 I moved to Takoma Park, after living for years  
17 in West Africa, and then Brazil. Like many in  
18 our city, I chose Takoma Park because I wanted  
19 my children to continue to grow up surrounded  
20 by racial, cultural, and socioeconomic  
21 diversity. My children attended Piney Branch  
22 Elementary, the school in the minor master plan

1 area, on Maple Avenue. At Piney Branch, they  
2 were part of a student body made up of equal  
3 proportions of White, Latino, multi-  
4 generational Black American students, and  
5 students from African immigrant families.

6 As the Piney Branch PTA president, I  
7 got funding to enliven the front of the school  
8 facing Maple with the murals that are still  
9 there. There's a photo highlighting them in  
10 your planned draft, I think. And we waged two  
11 successful city and county battles to save the  
12 unique public pool on Maple, behind the school.  
13 These days, I volunteer for a nonprofit making  
14 grocery deliveries for seniors on Maple, in the  
15 building where my best friend lives. For me,  
16 Maple Avenue is the heart of Takoma Park. It  
17 makes Takoma Park what it is. Decades ago, our  
18 community created a network of public,  
19 nonprofit, and private entities, to produce  
20 what we believe is the densest corridor of  
21 affordable housing in the county on Maple.

22 It's never been clear to us why



1 Maple Avenue was appended onto this plan. The  
2 conditions and built landscape on Maple present  
3 entirely different issues than the abandoned  
4 hospital site. We hope we will see new housing  
5 on the hospital site, but the issue of aging  
6 buildings on Maple will not be solved by this  
7 amendment except through teardowns that could  
8 lead to displacement and gentrification. And  
9 only about half the buildings on Maple are  
10 protected by deeded covenants. So it feels  
11 like a plan developed under a previous planning  
12 board is going forward despite widespread  
13 opposition from the community's most impacted.  
14 Maple Avenue is a community, not an empty  
15 campus. They did not ask for upzoning, and in  
16 fact had no idea this was part of the plan,  
17 since outreach sessions were difficult in the  
18 pandemic and focused on questions such as, what  
19 would you like to see on the hospital site, or  
20 why do you like your neighborhood?

21 We realized there is a commitment  
22 under Thrive to build more housing. But why

1 should the Maple Avenue community absorb the  
2 additional density when they already live in  
3 our densest neighborhood? Why would we try to  
4 shoehorn new 15-story buildings into an already  
5 dense neighborhood outside any transit walk  
6 shed? And how could it be equitable to fill in  
7 the only open spaces on Maple? Spaces that  
8 bring light and sky and trees to people already  
9 living there in high rises. Taking all this  
10 into consideration, CVT urges you to remove the  
11 Maple district and municipal district from the  
12 amendment. Short of that, we urge you to  
13 reduce the proposed zoning on the streets  
14 surrounding the campus and down Maple and Lee,  
15 and instead match the current heights and  
16 density in order to protect our rent stabilized  
17 and garden apartments and to protect our  
18 current residents.

19 Please reduce the commercial  
20 quotient, which risks displacing more housing  
21 with entirely commercial buildings. And on the  
22 hospital site, please confine high rises to the

1 center of the site away from the creek and  
2 surrounding neighborhoods. This amendment  
3 could set in motion the undoing of all that  
4 makes these neighborhoods affordable. We urge  
5 you to look at this plan with the fresh eyes of  
6 a new board. Surely you do not intend to  
7 trigger displacement and rising rents. There's  
8 no reason to barrel forward with the totally  
9 inappropriate broad brush upzoning in this  
10 amendment. And so we urge you to take all  
11 necessary time and make all necessary changes.  
12 Thank you for your service to our community.

13 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms.  
14 Miller. I think everyone at this table has  
15 gone now, so we'll bring up a new set. Karen  
16 Elrich, I -- maybe you're -- are you in Takoma  
17 or are you -- oh, you're here? Thank you.  
18 Alexandra Rays Pinkston, are you here, or  
19 online? Karen Burditt? Stuart Benas?  
20 Weymouth Spence? Jason Klein?

21 MR. BENAS: Stuart Benas is here.

22 CHAIR HARRIS: Jason -- Jason's on -

1 -

2 MR. BENAS: This is Stuart Benas  
3 online.

4 CHAIR HARRIS: Oh, Benas. Okay.  
5 Tom --

6 MR. BENAS: You've already --

7 CHAIR HARRIS: Tom Hilde? Hold on,  
8 please. Tom Hilde, are you --

9 MR. BENAS: You already called my  
10 name.

11 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: He's writing it  
12 down.

13 CHAIR HARRIS: And we're not ready  
14 for yet. I'll call you. One second, please.

15 MS. WOLCHIK: Then why did you call  
16 him?

17 CHAIR HARRIS: With Ms. Elrich?  
18 Karen Elrich? Yes.

19 MS. ELRICH: Yeah. Hello. My name  
20 is Karen Elrich, and I live in Takoma Park. My  
21 home is just outside the area addressed by the  
22 minor master plan. I appreciate the

1 opportunity to address you today regarding the  
2 minor master plan for our community. My  
3 concern lies in the absence of inequity  
4 analysis within this plan, particularly as it  
5 pertains to the potential upzoning of Maple  
6 Avenue, an established low-income neighborhood  
7 with valuable affordable housing. I question  
8 why this street was included into our need to  
9 rezone the hospital. And I would prefer that  
10 it was dropped from the plan so that the  
11 residents on Maple Avenue could be more  
12 involved in the actual planning of what happens  
13 in their neighborhood. But if we keep it in  
14 the plan, it is insensible for us to consider  
15 the long-term impact of any of the decisions  
16 made here.

17 Without a comprehensive equity  
18 analysis, we risk opening the door to  
19 unattended consequences for the Maple Avenue  
20 residents. The upzoning of this area may lead  
21 to gentrification, displacing vulnerable  
22 families who have called Maple Avenue home for

1 decades. Equity should be at the forefront of  
2 our planning process. We must ensure that any  
3 changes made benefit all members of our  
4 community, especially those who are  
5 economically disadvantaged. This includes  
6 preserving affordable housing options,  
7 protected by rent stabilization and protecting  
8 the character of neighborhoods like Maple  
9 Avenue. I urge the board to prioritize an  
10 equity analysis as an integral part of this  
11 master plan to ensure that our decisions lead  
12 to inclusive, sustainable, and equitable,  
13 development. I'm concerned about why the board  
14 does not have to have a policy on having an  
15 equity analysis for all their plans and would  
16 like to know your rationale for not having this  
17 policy. Thank you.

18 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
19 Next is Karen Burditt. Who's --

20 MS. BURDITT: Yes. My name is Karen  
21 Burditt. I am the vice chair of the Historic  
22 Preservation Commission for Montgomery County.

1 And tonight I'm speaking to you on behalf of  
2 the Historic Preservation Commission. On May  
3 10th, 2023, the Historic Preservation  
4 Commission received a briefing from the  
5 planning department's historic preservation  
6 office staff, on the Takoma Park Minor Master  
7 Plan Amendment. The Historic Preservation  
8 Commission regularly provides comments to the  
9 planning board on master plan updates, which  
10 impact historic resources or include  
11 significant historical elements. The plan  
12 proposes the historic designation of several  
13 important resources through a concurrent  
14 amendment to the master plan for historic  
15 preservation.

16 As part of HPCs role and  
17 responsibilities under Chapter 24A of the  
18 Montgomery County Code, I am pleased to offer  
19 the commission's recommendations to the  
20 planning board. The Historic Preservation  
21 Commission recommends that the planning board  
22 list three individual properties in the

1 locational atlas and index of historic sites  
2 and recommend that the county council designate  
3 the properties in the master plan for historic  
4 preservations. The three properties we're  
5 going to talk about are the Heffner Park  
6 Community Center, at 42 Oswego Avenue,  
7 Krestview, at 7625 Carroll Avenue, and the  
8 Sligo Seventh-Day Adventist Church, at 77  
9 Carroll Avenue.

10 The Heffner Park Community Center  
11 was built by Takoma Park in 1959 as a  
12 segregated recreational facility for the city's  
13 Black residence. The building and park are the  
14 results of decades of advocacy by the city's  
15 African American residents to demand  
16 recreational outlets for Black children in the  
17 years preceding the county's 1963 public  
18 accommodation law. The Heffner Community  
19 Center satisfies three designation criteria.  
20 1A, it is a historic resource that has  
21 character interest or value as part of the  
22 development heritage or cultural



1 characteristics of the county state or nation.  
2 The Heffner Park Community Center is associated  
3 with the development of historically Black  
4 neighborhood of the hill within the city of the  
5 -- and the community building efforts of the  
6 residents.

7 Residents of the hill work for  
8 decades to meet the community need for  
9 recreational outlets and outdoor gathering  
10 space. And Heffner park served as the social  
11 and community needs that were unmet during --  
12 due to racial segregation. It survives as a  
13 representation of these political institutions  
14 and the development of the Black community.  
15 The Heffner Community Center is also associated  
16 with the leadership and advocacy of Lee Jordan,  
17 who is recognized by the city of Takoma Park as  
18 one of the most influential residents in the  
19 community history, and it provides a direct  
20 link to Jordan's broad community leadership as  
21 well as his particular emphasis on the  
22 importance of recreation. The Heffner Park

1 Community Center also stands as a reminder of  
2 racial segregation and discriminatory public  
3 policy in 20th Century Montgomery County. And  
4 the center was one element in the landscape of  
5 segregated recreational facilities within the  
6 city of Takoma Park and the county at large.

7 Moving on to the Sligo Seventh-Day  
8 Adventist Church. The Sligo Seventh-Day  
9 Adventist Church is a three-story wedge-shaped,  
10 streamlined, modern building of steel frame  
11 construction, built between 1942 and '44. The  
12 church is as significant as the home of a  
13 progressive congregation within the global  
14 Seventh Day Adventist Church and as an  
15 excellent representation of the streamline  
16 modern style. The project satisfies three  
17 designation criteria. The Sligo church  
18 reflects the growth of the Adventist community  
19 in Takoma Park and holds significance as the  
20 site of pioneering advances towards racial  
21 integration and gender equity that are  
22 distinctive within the Adventist faith.

1                   Through the mid to late 20th  
2 Century, the Sligo Church acquired prominence  
3 for desegregating church membership before  
4 National Church Leadership was prepared to do  
5 so and for ordaining women as ministers in  
6 direct response to a globally adopted Adventist  
7 policy against this practice. It is also an  
8 excellent and distinctive example of  
9 streamlined modern architecture.  
10 Architecturer, J Raymond Mims, design employees  
11 defining features of the style and the church  
12 exterior is predominantly composed of smooth  
13 panels of Indiana Limestone with limited  
14 ornamentation and embellishment. This  
15 restrained ornamentation is keeping with the  
16 streamlined modern style and also befitting the  
17 Seventh day Adventist values and design  
18 precepts, which promote simplicity, limited  
19 ornamentation, and avoidance of vanity. The  
20 Sligo Church also occupies a prominent location  
21 at the corner of Flower and Carroll Avenues.

22                   And the other property is Krestview,

1 a two-story craftsman style bungalow, built to  
2 house leadership of the Adventist Church. And  
3 in particular, it was the home of Dr. Daniel  
4 and Loretta Cress who acquired the property in  
5 1918. The Cresses were prominent Adventist  
6 medical missionaries and physicians who  
7 promoted faith-based healthcare, and the home  
8 is also a significant site of women's history  
9 for its association with Dr. Loretta Cress, one  
10 of the earliest female licensed physicians and  
11 surgeons in Montgomery County, and a leader of  
12 obstetric care in the early 20th century.  
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
15 I think we're -- Mr. Spence?

16 DR. SPENCE: Here we go. Dear Chair  
17 Harris and members of the planning board, I am  
18 Dr. Weymouth Spence, the president of  
19 Washington at Venice University. I wish to  
20 thank the city of Takoma Park, the planning  
21 board and its staff, for the willingness to re-  
22 image what the growth areas of Takoma Park may

1 become through the pending Takoma Park Minor  
2 Master planned amendment. Our approximately  
3 24.8-acre University is one of the potential  
4 growth areas in the plan, and we welcome the  
5 opportunities that the public hearing draft  
6 presents to us. The university is bounded by  
7 Maple Avenue, Flower Avenue, Carroll Avenue,  
8 and the former Washington Adventist Hospital  
9 site.

10 We have been in Takoma Park since  
11 1904 and have been -- and I have been president  
12 since 2008. The university is owned by the  
13 Seventh-Day Adventist Church and offers a  
14 quality education to students of different  
15 faiths from around the world. There are  
16 currently a little over 600 students enrolled,  
17 with our highest enrollment ever, of 1498 in  
18 our undergraduate and graduate programs.  
19 During my tenure, I have put together a  
20 leadership team that elevated and transformed  
21 the former Columbia Union College to University  
22 status and is continuing to build on the legacy

1 of former presidents to elevate the  
2 university's standing to one of international  
3 distinction. This is the right time and the  
4 right team for the university to capitalize on  
5 the opportunities that the minor master plan  
6 amendment presents.

7 When the amendment was first  
8 introduced, the university partnered with our  
9 longtime affiliate, Adventist Healthcare, that  
10 controls a 17.4-acre former Washington  
11 Adventist Hospital campus to the west of the  
12 university. Together we wanted to envision how  
13 our combined portion of the mini master plan  
14 area could grow to address current and future  
15 university needs. We also understood that the  
16 combined campus could help address area-wide  
17 housing, recreation, and connectivity  
18 opportunities if the plan were done correctly.  
19 I'm pleased the public hearing draft has  
20 recognized the need to rezone our university  
21 property and the former Washington Adventist  
22 Hospital property to a more flexible zone that

1 also respects the building environment outside  
2 of the campus. Under its current zoning, the  
3 university must make comparison to other  
4 similar sized universities. The CR zoning  
5 recommended in the public hearing draft  
6 provides the critical flexibility for the  
7 university to grow as needs and funding will  
8 allow.

9 The zoning further accommodates some  
10 creative housing and connectivity opportunities  
11 that could certainly invoke the area. These  
12 changes present transformational opportunities  
13 for the university to ensure it may continue to  
14 support and attract students for many more  
15 decades at the current location. We also look  
16 forward to discussing other recommendations in  
17 the public hearing draft that are currently  
18 unclear or may not align with our future  
19 vision. These matters include the proposed  
20 study to designate the university as a National  
21 Historic District. We also have concerns about  
22 the green permit recommended alongside

1 Maplewood Avenue and into the campus. The  
2 limited right of way and great challenges  
3 associated with these improvements should be  
4 reviewed closely to ensure a realistic outcome  
5 for this aspirational vision. We are  
6 interested in how the proposed pedestrian and  
7 bicycle infrastructure will coordinate with our  
8 campus plans and have concerns about the  
9 blanket call for adaptive reuse of campus  
10 buildings.

11 As such, we look forward to staying  
12 engaged as the mini master plan evolves and  
13 look forward to working with the city, the  
14 planning board and planning staff to ensure  
15 that the plan may accommodate the positive  
16 changes that are envisioned for Takoma Park.

17 Thank you for your consideration of our  
18 comments.

19 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, President  
20 Spence. We appreciate your comments. So next  
21 we have Jason Klein.

22 MR. KLEIN: Dear Chair Harris and



1 members of the planning board, I am Jason  
2 Klein, executive director of Corporate Real  
3 Estate for Adventist Healthcare, and I'm  
4 pleased to offer some comments on the public  
5 hearing draft for the Takoma Park Minor Master  
6 Plan Amendment regarding the former Washington  
7 Adventist Hospital campus that is within the  
8 amendment area. As you are aware, Adventist  
9 Healthcare and its hospital were a community  
10 anchor in Takoma Park for well over a hundred  
11 years. In order to provide better regional  
12 access to healthcare, Adventist Healthcare made  
13 the difficult decision to relocate the hospital  
14 to the White Oak area of Montgomery County.  
15 However, Adventist Healthcare remains committed  
16 to coordinating with its partner, the  
17 Washington Adventist university to ensure that  
18 the former hospital site continues to be a  
19 viable and valuable community asset. The  
20 public hearing draft is a great start to  
21 repositioning the campus for its next phase, in  
22 which it may continue to solve pressing

1 community needs such as housing, open spaces,  
2 and neighborhood serving amenities.

3 The former Washington Adventist  
4 Hospital property is 17.4 acres, and is located  
5 east of Sligo Creek, between Maplewood Avenue  
6 and Carroll Avenue. The Washington Adventist  
7 University flanks the eastern edge of the  
8 property. The former hospital campus currently  
9 contains the aging hospital structure, which  
10 will be removed, and a medical office building  
11 that will remain. I note that the medical  
12 office building along Carroll Avenue is  
13 independently owned and operated, and any new  
14 development on the site will need to  
15 accommodate the existing structure and its  
16 established access routes. Adventist  
17 Healthcare and Washington Adventist University  
18 have been active participants in the minor  
19 master plan amendment process by attending all  
20 the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning  
21 Commission Open Houses, providing a community  
22 briefing in late 2022 and attending all

1 planning board and Takoma Park City Council  
2 plan updates.

3 We are impressed by the efforts that  
4 planning staff and city staff have made to  
5 engage Takoma Park residents and incorporate  
6 their feedback in the public hearing draft.  
7 The resulting land use and zoning  
8 recommendations for the hospital property and  
9 the public hearing draft respond to community  
10 comments by providing flexibility and density  
11 to achieve the desired outcomes of housing,  
12 central gathering places, and trail connections  
13 within the property. The public hearing draft  
14 also accommodates the dedication of Sligo Creek  
15 Parkland from the hospital property in a manner  
16 that supports redevelopment through the density  
17 capture and other regulatory credits associated  
18 with the to be dedicated park out area.

19 Other recommendations in the public  
20 hearing draft meet laudable planning  
21 objectives, but currently lack the flexibility  
22 to respond to a likely piecemeal build-out with

1 unknown future market conditions. These  
2 include the following: a requirement for  
3 redevelopment to occur under one sketch plan,  
4 dedication of significant Carroll Avenue right  
5 of way, a publicly accessible pedestrian path  
6 overlooking Sligo Creek Park, and retention of  
7 the crenelated stone walls along Carroll  
8 Avenue. Such recommendations should be refined  
9 to address conditions in which the  
10 recommendations are infeasible or cannot be met  
11 due to design or cost constraints. Adventist  
12 Healthcare will continue to remain engaged in  
13 the minor master plan amendment process to  
14 address these issues and ensure that the former  
15 hospital property will remain a community  
16 anchor well into the future.

17 I close by commending the planning  
18 board and the Takoma Park City Council for  
19 undertaking this minor master plan amendment  
20 effort. It has the potential of addressing  
21 pressing city needs within an environment that  
22 is welcome and accessible to all city

1 residents. Adventist Healthcare is proud to be  
2 part of this important process. Thank you for  
3 your consideration of our comments.

4 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you so much. I  
5 appreciate it. So next will be -- is it Tom  
6 Hilde?

7 MR. HILDE: Hi. Thank you, Board,  
8 and thank you to the chair. I'm speaking as a  
9 resident on Greenwood Avenue, just outside of  
10 the Takoma Park city boundaries, and right next  
11 to Washington Adventist University in  
12 Montgomery County District 4, the Flower Avenue  
13 area. I'm a professor of Environmental and  
14 Climate Policy and Sustainable Development, and  
15 I've committed my life to the kinds of issues  
16 and values that are in the documents that we  
17 have thus far. Our community, however, was not  
18 consulted on this plan at all, and I don't know  
19 anyone who reads the Washington Times.  
20 Although we'll be directly impacted, our  
21 community's already zoned for multi-family  
22 residences, which renders the community

1 economically and ethnically diverse already,  
2 more than most, or if not all of Takoma park,  
3 apart from the Maple high rises. We have a  
4 welcoming neighborhood of nurses and  
5 construction workers, scientists and artists,  
6 government workers and homemakers, students and  
7 teachers, young families and retirees. It's a  
8 community of people committed to the public  
9 good. Our community is friendly, tranquil, and  
10 eminently walkable already. It's home to  
11 diverse flora and fauna. It also has a deep  
12 history, like other parts of Takoma Park,  
13 reflected in the land, in its residents, and in  
14 the homes themselves. It's therefore a  
15 socially, historically, and ecologically  
16 important neighborhood, and this is the kind of  
17 community that many others aspire to.

18 I have a few points. One, scholarly  
19 research on upzoning is at an early stage and  
20 the results are inconclusive. It can lead to  
21 more diverse communities. It can also lead to  
22 accelerated gentrification and displacement.

1 The plan doesn't speak to the risks of upzoning  
2 and, frankly, seems unaware of them. Two, a  
3 separate study commissioned by Takoma Park in  
4 2017 found that a key weakness of its planning  
5 is that subsidized multi-family properties are  
6 not dispersed throughout the city. On the  
7 studies map, one sees that Ward 5 and our area  
8 are already dense in such properties, while  
9 Wards 1 and 3, for example, have little or zero  
10 subsidized rent-controlled multi-family  
11 property. This plan doesn't address one of the  
12 city's own weaknesses. Three, the proposed  
13 development is portrayed as green. However,  
14 the rezoning allows for much taller buildings  
15 that would -- as we've heard, in much larger  
16 footprints. This extends beyond the hospital.

17 The rezoning extends to Greenwood  
18 Avenue, which has hardly been mentioned here at  
19 all, which entails destroying green spaces.  
20 More construction requires processes and  
21 materials along the supply chain that are  
22 leading causes of carbon emissions globally, no

1 matter whether the final product is designed to  
2 attain lead certification. We haven't seen a  
3 comprehensive environmental and climate  
4 analysis and accounting of the proposed  
5 development. That would include GHG emissions,  
6 not only from operations but also the supply  
7 chain, land use change, and the loss of green  
8 space.

9 One last point. Our neighborhood's  
10 character is defined by its green spaces and  
11 wildlife habitat. The diverse wildlife uses  
12 the green corridors between Sligo Creek and  
13 Long Branch Creek, extending beyond Takoma Park  
14 city. This includes the woods and green areas  
15 at the corner of Maple and Maplewood, the  
16 undeveloped area between Greenwood and Garland  
17 Avenues, which has been mentioned, and other  
18 green spaces needed for safety, raising  
19 offspring, and food. Dense construction, more  
20 traffic, more runoff, and more people will  
21 clearly impact wildlife in the neighborhood,  
22 but there has been no wildlife impact study.



1 CHAIR HARRIS: Mr. Hilde, could you  
2 wrap it up, please? Okay.

3 MR. HILDE: I'm sorry?

4 CHAIR HARRIS: Another 15. You had

5 --

6 What? Was it three minutes he was -

7 -

8 Yeah. You -- you've exceeded your  
9 three minutes. Take another 30 seconds and  
10 please complete your --

11 MR. HILDE: Okay. I'm concluding  
12 right here. Adding 3,500 new residents and  
13 increased commercial and residential traffic in  
14 our community, with inadequate understanding of  
15 the broader economic environmental climate and  
16 community impacts of upzoning, does not seem  
17 terribly responsible to me. To do so without  
18 consulting the diverse community members  
19 outside of Takoma Incorporated, while couching  
20 the project in the language of equity,  
21 diversity, and in abundance of green  
22 development planning buzzwords is deeply

1       problematic. Thank you.

2                   CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.

3                   I think there's everyone at the  
4 table. We'll go back to -- is it Mica  
5 Bevington, who's in Takoma Park?

6                   And then -- and so we'll also --  
7 after you, Ms. Bevington, Marcia Morris can be  
8 ready and then Paul Huebner can be ready.  
9 Thank you.

10                   We can't hear you there.

11                   MS. BEVINGTON: How about that?

12                   CHAIR HARRIS: Great. Thank you.

13                   MS. BEVINGTON: Perfect. My name is  
14 Mica. I am a resident in Ward 2. I live two  
15 blocks from the Flower Avenue District. My  
16 comments are in particular around this section  
17 of the plan. I going to -- I -- other people  
18 have said otherwise, but I feel this process  
19 has actually not been rushed. I appreciate the  
20 efforts to engage neighbors, which reach back -  
21 - and in my experience, in our neighborhood,  
22 way back into the middle of the pandemic, when

1 we had calls with the university, kind of  
2 teeing up what was to come. I have a few  
3 concerns, but these are not red lights. And  
4 I'm going to extend some trust in regard to  
5 these concerns, trust to the county and the  
6 city to answer my questions and my neighbors'  
7 concerns and questions.

8           When and if developers ever turn up  
9 questions around public transport and roads,  
10 when the buildings come onto the drawing  
11 boards, I need assurance that the county and  
12 city will finally answer my neighborhood's  
13 serious concerns about traffic flows, questions  
14 around enrollment in our public schools. It's  
15 tight right now. It would be great to welcome  
16 new students, but where? And questions around  
17 stormwater runoff. We are at the confluence of  
18 two creeks in our neighborhood, and this flower  
19 district is right at the top of the hill  
20 between them.

21           And I know this is odd in this  
22 moment in time, but with trust, I look forward

1 to the new zoning and to probably waiting  
2 decades for any developer to show up. But I  
3 hope with transparency, that when we get to  
4 that next point, we achieve some new zoning in  
5 this area, that the city and the council are  
6 ready to meet our pretty regular concerns about  
7 traffic flow, stormwater, and schools. Thank  
8 you.

9 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms.  
10 Bevington.

11 Next from Takoma Park, we'll have  
12 Marcia Morris.

13 MS. MORRIS: Hi. Thank you for  
14 letting me comment. My name is Marcia Morris.  
15 I've been at 7710 Garland Avenue for 25 years,  
16 and I had several concerns: green space, height  
17 limits around the edge of the plan, stormwater,  
18 and net loss of affordable and rent-stabilized  
19 housing. Green spaces, my property is -- I'm  
20 on Garland, which is directly behind the  
21 university property on Greenwood. But right  
22 behind my house is a city right of way, which

1 is a wonderful green space that is not really  
2 recognized anywhere. It's trees, it's used by  
3 the deer every day. We have foxes in the  
4 spring. We have rabbits. There are owls.  
5 It's really lovely, and it's not recognized  
6 and, surely, is only one of many places like  
7 that within this zoning area, which are green  
8 and valuable but not recognized. I would like  
9 to see that kind of my -- the space behind my  
10 house recognized and I'd like to see spaces  
11 like that recognized in the zoning plan, so we  
12 don't lose them.

13 Height limits are important around  
14 the edges of the zoning plan. The university  
15 property on Greenwood comes right up to the  
16 back of my property, and it's now zoned or  
17 planned to be zoned for 55 feet height. The  
18 houses in our neighborhood along Greenwood are  
19 one and two-story. It's a long-established,  
20 warm, and welcoming neighborhood, and having  
21 those kinds of buildings put right up against  
22 us is not compatible with the kind of life we'd

1 like to have.

2 Stormwater. I heard someone brush  
3 that question aside, but if they lived on  
4 Garland, behind the university, they would not  
5 be brushing it aside. Runoff from the land of  
6 the university has caused flooding in our yards  
7 and our houses. We had several meetings with  
8 the university and the city, but nothing came  
9 of those. I think the only people who got any  
10 relief were those who filed lawsuits against  
11 the university. This new construction is going  
12 to bring endless, endless numbers of projects,  
13 and my concern is are we, as homeowners, going  
14 to be forced to fight against each and every  
15 project and its problems on our own? I'd like  
16 to see the city and the county acknowledge our  
17 problems and be -- support us.

18 I have just one point. Net loss of  
19 affordable and rent-stabilized housing, that's  
20 not part of the Flower Avenue District but it's  
21 part of what's happening in Takoma Park. And I  
22 would like to see there be a requirement that

1 there is no net loss of that kind of house.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms.

4 Morris.

5 And next will be Paul Huebner.

6 MR. HUEBNER: Look to you buddy?

7 All right. You got it. Good evening. Paul  
8 Huebner, Takoma Park, Maryland. As both a past  
9 president of the AIA and another noteworthy  
10 local resident have said, the MMPA is neither  
11 minor nor master nor an amendment. It is a  
12 massive upzoning and permits an insidious form  
13 of urban removal. Any approvable plan should  
14 rightly follow what residents are trying to  
15 create. Low and missing-middle-income housing  
16 on the old hospital fight alone. Instead, we  
17 get a blunt instrument that lacks any analysis  
18 of potential displacement of local residents,  
19 any analysis of traffic, stormwater, schooling,  
20 or environmental impacts. Noticeably, it  
21 neglects any equity analysis.

22 We asked but have not received any

1 actual plan for a number of housing units per  
2 sector. The plan merely acknowledges the  
3 addition of some 3,500 new housing units, which  
4 equates to nearly 9,000 new residents. Many of  
5 us are mystified as to why the Maple Avenue  
6 Corridor is even in this so-called plan. The  
7 current MMPA will not just keep lower and  
8 middle-income folks out. It will likely  
9 displace many existing residents and will  
10 effectively keep them out for the first five-  
11 year period that any rent controls are  
12 eliminated. The MMPA flips the script on  
13 Montgomery County zoning, which has been  
14 traditionally used to add residential units to  
15 commercial corridors. The current plan allows  
16 more and bigger commercial buildings into the  
17 residential area that currently provides the  
18 lowest per unit housing costs of any area in  
19 Montgomery County. The allowance for these  
20 massive new heights will increase property  
21 values and further increase costs to build and  
22 to rent. It will also potentially allow the



1 most destructive thing that could possibly  
2 occur, tearing down the existing buildings on  
3 the Maple Avenue Corridor due to higher land  
4 values, increased density and commercial  
5 development. This plan will allow, by right,  
6 any developer to build anything included in the  
7 new zoning, unless specifically precluded in  
8 writing. Please consider carefully.

9 Why was the Maple Avenue corridor  
10 included at all? What specific protections  
11 will be afforded in writing to protect all  
12 current residents, especially those in rent-  
13 controlled units and to protect all city rent  
14 controls? When and how will you require a  
15 detailed and comprehensive environmental  
16 analysis? When and how will you require a  
17 detailed traffic study? When and how will you  
18 discuss a realistic stormwater management plan?  
19 And when will you release a detailed plan with  
20 the housing units and locations? I know how  
21 important affordable, stable, and safe housing  
22 is. I grew up in rental apartments. My

1 mother, sister, and I moved nine times during  
2 my childhood, but I was one of the lucky ones.  
3 I got to continue attending the same schools.  
4 Protect the people in our community. Thank you  
5 for your time.

6 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
7 Huebner.

8 I think we just have one more person  
9 in Takoma Park, so why don't we just take that  
10 person and then we'll go back here. So Richard  
11 Masterson.

12 MR. BENAS: Actually, you called my  
13 name a half-hour ago and I am in Takoma Park.

14 CHAIR HARRIS: Who's that? Okay.  
15 Who -- Richard Masterson, please --

16 MR. BENAS: You called my name a  
17 half-hour ago.

18 CHAIR HARRIS: You'll be next, sir,  
19 after this person.

20 Mr. Richard Masterson, please.  
21 Thank you.

22 MR. MASTERSON: Richard Masterson,

1 Ward 5 here in Takoma Park. And I want to  
2 thank the professional planners for coming up  
3 with something. I don't think the citizens  
4 themselves would've taken the initiative to  
5 develop anything. As diverse as we are, our  
6 interests and daily habits and practices would  
7 not do -- initiate such a thing. But what we  
8 need is for these professionals, who have their  
9 interests and their skills in designing  
10 developments, to work with the people who live  
11 there. The buildings are not going to be built  
12 for financiers. They're going to be built for  
13 residents. I agree with most of those people  
14 that are advising caution on several issues. I  
15 would like to see something about the streets'  
16 traffic. The bridge across Sligo Creek has  
17 about a 12-inch turn radius on one corner.  
18 Most streets in town have three-foot turn  
19 radii, which is still way too small if you  
20 drive anything with over a 10-foot wheelbase,  
21 which is anything.

22 The exclusion of rent control for

1 five years after building is, apparently, a law  
2 that's widespread, but I don't understand it.  
3 I think a building is built in the market it's  
4 built in. I don't know why they get five years  
5 to manipulate things. And any roof or paving  
6 is something that sheds water and takes water  
7 out of the groundwater. Most water supply,  
8 most vegetation relies on groundwater, so we're  
9 defeating ourselves when we allow stormwater to  
10 escape. And I haven't heard a lot of detail  
11 from the Washington Adventist Hospital and the  
12 Washington Adventist University about what  
13 their sites are for that Green Hill acreage.  
14 Do they plan on high-rise schools? Are they  
15 going to stop with the buildings they have and  
16 consider that the end of their physical growth?  
17 Is all their property going to be put on the  
18 market? Is that what they want?

19 And building heights. We don't  
20 picture ourselves a high-rise urban center. We  
21 would like some staging, some stepping in those  
22 heights so that we don't have 10-story

1 buildings next to two-story houses. And I'll  
2 leave it to the architects to define that and  
3 explain it. We like sunlight and we like  
4 green, and we like to be able to meet people.  
5 I would like to see that our designers discuss  
6 all the details and as many of otherwise  
7 unintended consequences a professional designer  
8 can predict before construction is initiated.  
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
11 Masterson. Thank you very much.

12 So next we'll have Mr. Stuart Benas.

13 MR. BENAS: Thank you.

14 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you for  
15 waiting.

16 MR. BENAS: I live on Greenwood  
17 Avenue. I've been here for about nine years  
18 and I'm about one block from where this  
19 upzoning will occur. I find the plan, frankly,  
20 naive, and the people of downtown Takoma Park  
21 who support it probably will be unaffected by  
22 it. Putting 3,500 units in this area will

1 drive most of the traffic onto Flower Avenue  
2 and the surrounding streets. When we put a few  
3 stop signs on Flower Avenue just to create some  
4 traffic smoothing, what I noticed immediately  
5 was that Greenwood Avenue and Garland Avenue  
6 became racetracks during rush hour. I dare any  
7 member of the planning council to come to the  
8 corner of Flower Avenue and Piney Branch at  
9 5:00 p.m. and watch the reckless way in which  
10 people try to get through that light within  
11 three cycles. The streets in this neighborhood  
12 are too narrow and do not support any increase  
13 in growth, much less what has been proposed.  
14 This plan is naive.

15 I would recommend that you limit the  
16 growth to three stories or to townhouses only.  
17 The -- once this goes on the market, you are  
18 drawing people from the -- with housing that is  
19 within a mile of DC will be advertised as  
20 walking distance to two metros. It will drive  
21 prices out of sight. The idea that this would  
22 be affordable housing is not realistic. I

1 would encourage the people that live in Takoma  
2 Park to go ahead and widen streets like Park  
3 Valley so there are other ways out of the  
4 neighborhood to support this proposed growth.

5 I think that Park Valley makes an excellent  
6 exit from this neighborhood. I think widening  
7 it to four lanes would be a great way to start  
8 this project off. I want people to volunteer  
9 to have their houses eminent domain so that we  
10 have the roads necessary to accommodate half  
11 the proposed growth.

12 I just do not understand how this  
13 plan was proposed and I think that it needs to  
14 be rejected outright. I think that the idea of  
15 the plan needs to be studied and a more  
16 realistic plan put forth to the people that  
17 will be affected by it before anyone even  
18 considers voting on it. Or we can start  
19 killing kids on Greenwood and Garland, which is  
20 what's going to happen with the traffic  
21 overflow. It's your call.

22 CHAIR HARRIS: Yeah. Thank you.

1                   We'll now have five more people to  
2 come up front here.

3                   Mr. Martin Shore, Colleen Cordes,  
4 Jennifer Martin, Robert Goldman, Mark Brochman.  
5 Okay. Okay. We'll start with Mr. Shore.

6                   MR. SHORE: Hello. Yeah. My name  
7 is Martin Shore. I've lived in Takoma Park  
8 since 2009, but I really discovered Takoma Park  
9 when I went to University of Maryland at  
10 architecture school in 1989, so I've known the  
11 neighborhood for a long time. And the first  
12 thing I noticed about Takoma Park was, when I  
13 came from the University of Maryland, all of a  
14 sudden, you reach New Hampshire Avenue and  
15 East-West Highway, and you know, four-lane  
16 highway becomes a two-lane highway. And it  
17 immediately told me that something's different  
18 about Takoma Park. That was a conscious  
19 decision that someone made, to keep that  
20 highway narrow. In fact, all the highways and  
21 all the streets in Takoma Park that are major  
22 at routes are two lanes, and that's important.



1 It's one of the things that gives Takoma Park  
2 its character.

3           Yeah, I want to talk also about the  
4 environment a little bit. You know, first of  
5 all, I want to say everybody who went before  
6 me, they said it so eloquently. I'm so happy I  
7 live in this neighborhood with so many talented  
8 people. You know, the worst intersection  
9 besides the one at Piney Branch, which the man  
10 said before, is at the Sligo Creek Parkway in  
11 Maple. Awful. Awful, awful, awful. I think  
12 the man said that it has a three-degree turn.  
13 It can't take the traffic. Plus, at certain  
14 times of the year, I don't know if you know  
15 this, but it floods. You can't use it because  
16 it floods. So I just wanted to say those two  
17 things.

18           Secondly, I'm an architect. I'm not  
19 against development. I appreciated the mayor's  
20 notion about preserve, and the woman from the  
21 Historic Preservation Council. I have -- my --  
22 I work at an agency that also the mission is to

1 preserve. I'm in the camp where the greatest  
2 preservation, the most important sustainable  
3 building is the building that's already there.  
4 We have buildings that define the character of  
5 the university and the hospital. By the way, I  
6 did develop a plan. I'll share it with you.  
7 And you have school buildings there, use the --  
8 do you need more schoolrooms, use that as  
9 schoolrooms. You have apartment houses there,  
10 double-loaded corridors with bathrooms. That's  
11 why office buildings can't be transferred to  
12 apartments easily, they don't have enough  
13 bathrooms. Hospitals, each room has a  
14 bathroom. It would be -- it makes reusing and  
15 recycling that as apartments much easier.  
16 Anyway, that's all. Thank you.

17 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.

18 Next is Colleen Cordes.

19 MS. CORDES: Good evening. Colleen  
20 Cordes. Sorry. Colleen Cordes, Takoma Park  
21 Resident, former chair of the city's Tree  
22 Commission. First, I urge you to remove the

1 Maple Avenue and Municipal Districts from the  
2 plan area. No persuasive rationale has been  
3 offered for their inclusion, yet it poses a  
4 grave threat of displacement for current Maple  
5 residents. This may be the most affordable  
6 neighborhood in the entire county. It's also  
7 that rare affordable neighborhood, rich in  
8 public services and amenities, good schools,  
9 three parks, bus line access, and a wide range  
10 of city services, all within walking distance.  
11 To gamble with this neighborhood's future  
12 through careless upzoning would reinforce  
13 systemic racism.

14 Second, please oppose the racially  
15 and economically inequitable goal for tree  
16 canopy cover that is proposed for the plan  
17 area. The proposed goal of 45 percent directly  
18 conflicts with the citywide tree canopy goal  
19 set by the city council in 2020 of 60 percent.  
20 A 45 percent goal is unfair, especially given  
21 the severity of the heat island effect in the  
22 plan area documented in the draft plan. It

1 would continue the inequitable access to trees  
2 many benefits for residents of the plan area.  
3 The estimated tree canopy in the area now is  
4 about 43 percent. That's well below the  
5 current city average of about 58 percent.  
6 Appendix B shows the plan area is majority  
7 residents of color and majority residents with  
8 low and modest incomes. The city council has  
9 set a clear policy of prioritizing planting and  
10 preserving trees in areas with a lower canopy  
11 to improve equity. This is one such area. So  
12 expanding tree canopy should be prioritized in  
13 the plan. Instead, it undermines Takoma Park's  
14 citywide goal. Again, please avoid  
15 perpetuating systemic racism. Raise this goal  
16 to 60 percent.

17 Third, the draft states the plan  
18 could yield as many as 3,500 additional housing  
19 units. However, it does not calculate how many  
20 new units each of the three districts would  
21 contribute. That's obviously critical  
22 information for planning purposes. Please ask

1 the planning staff to prioritize doing that  
2 calculation and sharing it with you and the  
3 public, the city council, and city staff ASAP.

4 Fourth and last, the proposed  
5 upzoning unwisely allows redevelopment of  
6 almost all sites in the plan area for 100  
7 percent commercial uses. The reason given: to  
8 increase flexibility for future development.  
9 Such extreme flexibility looks like a plan not  
10 to have a plan. For example, the old hospital  
11 site offers the prime opportunity for more  
12 urgently needed housing, affordable to  
13 residents with middle, moderate, and low  
14 incomes, but the plan allows it to be developed  
15 with no residential units at all. That major  
16 housing opportunity could be lost to totally  
17 commercial uses like a new hotel. Even worse  
18 could happen to Maple Avenue. Almost through.  
19 Displacement of many residents, a permanent  
20 actual loss in affordable housing could be lost  
21 to some commercial use, again, for example, a  
22 hotel. Please correct that glaring flaw in the

1 plan as well. Thank you so much.

2 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.

3 And next is Ms. Jennifer Martin.

4 MS. MARTIN: Good evening. I grew  
5 up in Takoma Park. My family moved there in  
6 1963. I am here tonight representing Historic  
7 Takoma, a nonprofit organization whose mission  
8 is to preserve the Heritage of Takoma Park,  
9 Maryland, and the Takoma Park neighborhood of  
10 the District of Columbia. Having reviewed the  
11 proposed minor master plan for the Washington  
12 Adventist Property and Maple Avenue, we urge  
13 the planning board to focus solely on  
14 development of the hospital site at this time.  
15 We fully support redevelopment of the site of  
16 the family hospital but urge the planning board  
17 to consider rightsizing the minor master plan  
18 to be compatible with the surrounding  
19 neighborhood, particularly paying attention to  
20 the scale and architectural character of the  
21 existing adjacent buildings, limited street  
22 capacity, and the potential environmental

1 impact on Sligo Creek. At the same time, we  
2 strongly recommend the changes in zoning on  
3 Maple Avenue from Sligo Creek Parkway to  
4 Philadelphia Avenue be removed from the minor  
5 master plan.

6 Perhaps the most affordable  
7 neighborhood in the whole of Montgomery County,  
8 as many have mentioned, Maple Avenue provides  
9 housing for lower and moderate income residents  
10 and is home to hundreds of families. The  
11 rental units serve people of many backgrounds  
12 and ethnicities, including many recent arrivals  
13 to this country. It is a harmonious and  
14 welcoming community that deserves stability and  
15 affordability. We are concerned that the minor  
16 master plan, as currently written, threatens to  
17 displace these residents and introduce  
18 gentrification at their expense. Changes to  
19 current zoning restrictions would open the door  
20 to developers who could then tear down and  
21 replace existing buildings with new and much  
22 larger structures. Owners would be able to

1 charge market rates for five years before  
2 Takoma Park's highly regarded rent  
3 stabilization restrictions would apply, further  
4 reducing possibilities for affordable housing.  
5 Moreover, with the introduction of upzoning and  
6 the resulting increase in height and density  
7 along Maple, this would erode the more gradual  
8 transitions moving from multi-family housing to  
9 the single-family homes on adjoining streets.

10 Some argue that there's been no  
11 major new development in the city of Takoma  
12 Park for many decades. This may be true, but  
13 that's because we're already densely developed,  
14 with a greater proportion of affordable and  
15 moderately priced rental units than any other  
16 segment of the county. Moreover, on the  
17 Takoma, DC, side, there's significant  
18 redevelopment underway adjacent to the Takoma  
19 Metro Station and at Laurel and Eastern  
20 Avenues, that will impact our roads and other  
21 infrastructure on the Maryland side. This  
22 increased density must be taken into account



1 when making plans in the city of Takoma Park.  
2 Finally, our understanding is that Montgomery  
3 County land use planning follows the principle  
4 that upzoning should be considered for sites  
5 close to public transit hubs. Neither the  
6 Maple Avenue Corridor nor the Adventist  
7 property is near or adjacent to a metro  
8 station, therefore the density of development  
9 proposed in the minor master plan is  
10 inconsistent with current practice elsewhere  
11 across the county. As a mature suburb, the  
12 city of Takoma Park deserves sensitive planning  
13 to preserve its affordability and livability as  
14 a diverse community with a rich architectural  
15 and social heritage. Thank you for your time.

16 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.

17 Mr. Goldman.

18 MR. GOLDMAN: Mr. Chair and members  
19 of the planning board, thank you for this  
20 opportunity to address you on the Takoma Park  
21 Minor Master Plan Amendment. My name is Robert  
22 Goldman, and I am president of Montgomery

1 Housing Partnership, or MHP. By way of  
2 background, MHP is one of the largest nonprofit  
3 affordable housing providers in Montgomery  
4 County. Our mission is to preserve and expand  
5 quality affordable housing in Montgomery County  
6 and the region. Our success over the years has  
7 been a result of taking a comprehensive  
8 approach to developing affordable housing that  
9 integrates three things: housing people,  
10 empowering families, and strengthening  
11 neighborhoods. We serve over 4,000 residents  
12 and provide close to 3,000 quality affordable  
13 homes.

14 MHP is one of the largest multi-  
15 family property owners within the master plan's  
16 boundaries. We own five separate properties,  
17 comprising over 400 homes within the master  
18 plan area, most of which are located along  
19 Maple Avenue. Between our ownership and  
20 another affordable housing group's ownership  
21 along Maple Avenue, the city and the county can  
22 be assured that there will be affordable

1 housing in the community for the long term.  
2 MHP does not have any current plans to  
3 redevelop its properties now, but we do support  
4 the zoning being recommended by staff as it  
5 would provide an opportunity to increase the  
6 amount of income-restricted affordable housing  
7 if redevelopment is deemed necessary.

8 As properties along Maple Avenue  
9 continue to age and come to the end of their  
10 useful life, Takoma Park will face a number of  
11 very difficult challenges. Additional density  
12 will provide a tool for redevelopment over the  
13 long term. Any redevelopment, if it does  
14 occur, should be done in a way to minimize and  
15 prevent displacement. The site of the former  
16 Washington Adventist Hospital provides an  
17 exciting opportunity for the community. We  
18 urge the planning board to incentivize and  
19 encourage affordable housing on this site. The  
20 site represents a generational opportunity to  
21 address the acute need for affordable housing  
22 in Downcounty and enhance the quality of life

1 for all city residents.

2 We are generally in support of the  
3 recommendations in the affordable housing  
4 section of the plan. We especially support the  
5 language seeking to increase the amount of new  
6 affordable housing, prioritize two and three-  
7 bedroom MPDUs, and encourage developers of  
8 private residential lots to partner with  
9 nonprofit affordable housing providers to reach  
10 deeper levels of affordability. While we  
11 support the general comments in the early part  
12 of the plan suggesting the encouragement of no  
13 net loss of affordable housing, we did not see  
14 that in either the affordable housing section  
15 or the district recommendations.

16 In addition, we note that in many of  
17 the -- or some or many of the CR zones in the  
18 county, especially in areas where there has  
19 been an increase in density, the county has  
20 been moving to increase the MPDU requirements  
21 to 15 percent. Given the higher densities  
22 being provided to owners in this plan, we would

1 encourage a 15 percent MPDU requirement instead  
2 of the 12.5 percent currently being proposed.  
3 Lastly, we recommend strengthening the language  
4 in the plan regarding pilots or payment in lieu  
5 of taxes agreements as a tool to preserve and  
6 expand affordable housing within the master  
7 plan. In 2021, Montgomery County revamped its  
8 policies and procedures around pilots to  
9 provide for automatic tax abatements that meet  
10 affordability levels. Whereas in the city of  
11 Takoma Park, these agreements are executed on a  
12 case-by-case basis, which provides less  
13 certainty for pilots. The new county policy --  
14 and currently the city has put on hold all  
15 requests for pilots. The new county policy has  
16 had a significant positive impact on the  
17 ability of nonprofits to acquire naturally  
18 occurring affordable housing. And we believe  
19 that strongly encouraging the use of Buy Right  
20 pilots in Takoma Park will help to preserve  
21 existing affordable housing within the master  
22 plan areas boundaries. Thank you for your

1 consideration.

2 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
3 Goldman. Next will be Mark Brochman.

4 MR. KLEIN: Hello. My name is Mark  
5 Brochman. I live at 8305 Roanoke Avenue in  
6 Ward 5, and I've lived in Takoma Park for over  
7 25 years. I'm looking forward to affordable  
8 housing at the old hospital site. I understand  
9 the need for rezoning on that site. Ideally a  
10 height limit of 75 feet would be enforced in  
11 order to keep the cost down so that the  
12 resulting apartments will be affordable housing  
13 instead of luxury apartments. Specific to the  
14 changing building codes along Naval Avenue I  
15 may have missed it, but in the plan, I didn't  
16 see the part of the plan that states where  
17 people will live temporarily while the new  
18 building is being constructed to replace their  
19 current one. And I didn't see the part of the  
20 plan that covers the financial assistance that  
21 would be provided to them if their temporary  
22 housing costs more per month than what they had

1       been paying.

2                   And I didn't see the part of the  
3       plan that states who would be paying expenses  
4       for the tenants to move out and then back in  
5       when each project is complete. And I looked,  
6       but I didn't see the part of the plan that  
7       provides financial assistance to current  
8       residents during those first five years without  
9       rent control. I'm sure the information is in  
10      there somewhere because we know that people  
11      aren't going to just stand at the bus stop  
12      while the crew is putting up steel beams. They  
13      got to live somewhere. Don't get me wrong, I  
14      know you guys have worked really hard for the  
15      past two years on this. So the plan must be  
16      comprehensive in scope. I'm sure since, you've  
17      been so kind as to invite us here to give  
18      public comments on the plan that it includes  
19      all the necessary things, like a traffic  
20      analysis for how new construction will affect  
21      our local streets or an environmental study of  
22      how the project will affect the existing green

1 spaces in the area, as well as the nearby Sligo  
2 Creek.

3 And I have no doubt you've included  
4 an equity analysis to ensure that you are  
5 promoting greater equity, diversity and  
6 inclusion within our community because that's  
7 the kind of what Takoma Park is all about. But  
8 maybe I missed that too. Or did these things  
9 come later after the new building codes have  
10 been improved, after the time for public  
11 comment to make any tangible recommendations to  
12 the plan has already passed? I'm sure all that  
13 information is in the plan now, it's got to be,  
14 and if it's not, it should be. Thank you for  
15 your time.

16 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
17 So I think we're taking everyone at the table.  
18 We'll go for the next group. Dennis Jones.  
19 Oh, Denise Jones, I'm sorry. Jim Schulman.  
20 Seth Grimes. Dan Reed. Okay. Oh, so is every  
21 -- is anyone that's here that hasn't come to --  
22 come up to speak? Okay. Why don't you come



1 up, please? Please come on up. Yeah. Excuse  
2 me. What is your name, please? Okay. Okay.  
3 Okay. Great. Okay. So let's do these three,  
4 please. So Denise Brock -- Denise Jones, I'm  
5 sorry.

6 MS. JONES: Dear Chairman Harris and  
7 Planning Board, my graduate school daughter and  
8 I were talking today about a chapter she read  
9 about justice focused coaching, often aimed at  
10 transforming systems that are inequitable,  
11 unjust and insidious in power dynamics. This  
12 immediately made me think of the city of Takoma  
13 Park and the Montgomery County Planning Board.  
14 We must acknowledge the privileges and  
15 identities we bring to our working and  
16 community relationships. And this is the heart  
17 of my objections to the minor master plan for  
18 Takoma Park. I am a longtime resident, a small  
19 business owner who lives on Maple Avenue. I  
20 raised my daughter there and some years ago, I  
21 formed a tenant association to gather tenants  
22 to build trust and strengthen community before

1 my building had a major renovation that was  
2 extremely disruptive. However, the pandemic  
3 did us in and today, I don't believe there are  
4 any tenants associations on Maple Avenue, which  
5 brings me back to my concerns of equity and  
6 power dynamics.

7 Why was this plan extended to Maple  
8 Avenue? In doing so you have created a classic  
9 gentrifying displacement plan. Gentrification  
10 as defined in a US Housing and Urban  
11 Development report, displacement of lower  
12 income families in urban areas, defines  
13 gentrification as a form of neighborhood change  
14 that occurs when higher income groups move into  
15 low-income areas potentially altering the  
16 cultural and financial landscape of the  
17 original neighborhood. Best practices on the  
18 ground have varied, but they're all  
19 strengthened by four key strategies that could  
20 address displacement of lower income families  
21 and longtime residents in urban areas and  
22 alleviate the pressures on housing

1     affordability and community resistance to  
2     change.       Number one, preserve existing  
3     affordable housing. And you have -- we --  
4     you've gotten a lot of questions, the board and  
5     your -- this board and the city council, but  
6     you haven't really told us how you're going to  
7     protect the homes of the current residents.

8               Number two, encourage greater  
9     housing development, including, but not limited  
10    to, affordable housing. I'm glad to see that  
11    our city council and many more residents have  
12    been in support of the development of  
13    reasonable height at the hospital site. Three,  
14    engage existing community residents. This  
15    effort wasn't effectively conducted, not  
16    without centering the community. I'm very  
17    active in Takoma Park but did not hear anything  
18    about this plan until this spring. Number  
19    four, take a broader look and use regional  
20    rather than localized strategies. Why is the  
21    county looking to solve a housing shortage in  
22    this developed dense corner of the county

1 rather than developing acreage up county? Why  
2 must Maple Avenue bear the density impacts in  
3 building more housing? Why are the apartment  
4 dwellers losing the benefits of tree canopy in  
5 the reduction from the city's 60 percent policy  
6 to 40 percent. And lastly, why is the planning  
7 board determining the culture of the place we  
8 call home with its broad-brush approach of  
9 possible opportunities. Thank you for your  
10 consideration.

11 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
12 Next, Mr. Schulman.

13 MR. SCHULMAN: Thank you. My name  
14 is Jim Schulman and the Alliance for Regional  
15 Cooperation, ARC, which I lead, is a nonprofit  
16 organization focused on sustainable regional  
17 economic development. The proposed plan  
18 amendments under consideration addressed many  
19 factors that can heavily impact quality of life  
20 for residents. And ARC does observe that there  
21 are a number of elements in the plan that  
22 support community sustainability, including the

1 green promenade, revitalizing the hospital  
2 site, the goal of protecting Sligo Creek, and  
3 on one of the very last pages, allowing food  
4 production and processing as permitted uses on  
5 the former hospital site. Given, however, the  
6 various eco crises it is now obvious that human  
7 civilization faces, any plan that does not  
8 stringently stipulate the preservation of  
9 mature trees in the manner -- oh, sorry. Or  
10 the creation of more green space and a plan  
11 that does not incentivize the adaptive reuse of  
12 buildings, like Marty Shore mentioned, or is  
13 disconnected from sound transit infrastructure  
14 planning or otherwise works counter to  
15 Montgomery County's strong climate action plan.

16 Any of those circumstances should be  
17 considered by this commission to be dead on  
18 arrival. As ARC has testified before similar  
19 boards in Arlington, Virginia and the District  
20 of Columbia, we support and I -- forgive me for  
21 changing the negative to the positive in my --  
22 from my written text. So it's positive now

1 that we support to the greater provision of a  
2 variety of housing types, mixed use or mixed  
3 income neighborhoods, the adoption of  
4 alternatives to auto dominated land uses, and  
5 land use policies that will actually serve  
6 those with great financial need, whether or not  
7 they happen to own property. ARC, however, has  
8 strong concerns about the zoning that has been  
9 proposed. We consider the proposed across the  
10 board upzoning to be a form of quality-of-life  
11 confiscation that will eventually deliver an  
12 unprecedented increase in property values and  
13 tax dollars yet will displace the very people  
14 it claims to protect folks historically  
15 marginalized by government policies.

16 Land value inflation will only  
17 increase gentrification. Most importantly, we  
18 feel that any commercial zoning added to the  
19 properties with existing predominant  
20 residential uses be limited to one or two  
21 floors at grade or above the residential  
22 floors, to prevent the wholesale conversion of

1 Maple Avenue into a commercial strip. ARC  
2 endorses concerns that have been or will be  
3 brought to your attention by my esteemed design  
4 colleague, Carl Elefante, who I understand has  
5 submitted written testimony. ARC also endorses  
6 concerns articulated by the Climate Action  
7 Coffee, the Community Equity Coalition and  
8 Community Vision for Takoma. We appreciate  
9 your willingness to receive our input. Thank  
10 you.

11 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much,  
12 Mr. Schulman. Next, Ms. Laurie McGilvray,  
13 please.

14 MS. MCGILVRAY: Good evening. My  
15 name is Laurie McGilvray and I'm a longtime  
16 resident of Takoma Park. I'm also active in  
17 climate and equity issues at the county and  
18 state levels, and I use this lens to review the  
19 Takoma Park Minor Master Plan. I'll highlight  
20 four points from my written comments. First,  
21 housing, the proposed one size fits all CRT  
22 zoning in the Maple Avenue District conflicts

1 with some of the existing buildings, steep  
2 topography, proximity to Sligo Creek and the  
3 protection of affordable housing. It also is  
4 unlike other county plans that have more  
5 nuanced zoning that fits with the existing  
6 neighborhood while also adding housing. An  
7 example is the Forest Glen Montgomery Hills  
8 Sector Plan, which retains some existing  
9 residential zoning and reserves the greatest  
10 density and 120-foot heights for parcels  
11 adjacent to the Metro, rather than applying a  
12 one-size-fits-all high-density CRT zoning.

13 I suggest Takoma Park could benefit  
14 from this fine-tuned approach, such as by  
15 revising the zoning to allow flexibility for  
16 affordable housing nonprofits to add density  
17 while treating existing three to seven story  
18 condominiums differently than high rise  
19 apartments retaining, residential zoning for  
20 two to four story garden style apartments and  
21 adding commercial development in service, not  
22 in lieu of residential uses. We'd need an



1 approach which protects affordable housing and  
2 avoids making it harder for tenants to use the  
3 city's right to purchase law due to an increase  
4 in property values that are out of their reach.

5 Second, commercial development, the  
6 proposed CR zoning is perplexing. It would  
7 allow existing residential buildings to be  
8 replaced and new buildings to be constructed  
9 100 percent commercial. This is contrary to  
10 the plan's goal of achieving no net loss of  
11 affordable housing. And I recommend the CR  
12 zones be limited to C1 or less. Climate, in  
13 general, the greenest building is one that's  
14 already built. While the plan notes the need  
15 for reinvestment in older buildings, it only  
16 recommends the city explore incentives and  
17 policies. It doesn't mention the county's  
18 building energy performance standards or new  
19 resources such as the Green Bank and Inflation  
20 Reduction Act, which can improve and extend the  
21 life of buildings. Regarding new buildings,  
22 the planning fails to encourage all electric,

1 net-zero, passive house construction and  
2 doesn't mention forthcoming updates to the  
3 county's building and energy codes. I  
4 recommend the plan encourage climate friendly  
5 construction and retrofit, discuss the county's  
6 goals and regulations, and reference available  
7 resources.

8           Regarding storm water, a growing  
9 climate problem, I recommend revising the plan  
10 and zoning for appropriately sized infill  
11 developments, such as on parking lots and new  
12 construction to reduce storm water runoff to  
13 Sligo Creek. Finally, while the climate  
14 assessment is due seven days before the county  
15 council hearing, it would be very beneficial to  
16 have it sooner. And I recommend the draft  
17 climate assessment be completed and made  
18 publicly available before you make a final  
19 decision. Transportation, as mentioned, we  
20 need a comprehensive transportation analysis.  
21 Takoma Park is a wonderfully diverse community,  
22 we want to retain that diversity, and so I

1 recommend that the planning board could make  
2 changes consistent with my recommendations.  
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
5 I think we've taken everyone here. Just  
6 confirming, anyone else here has not spoken  
7 that wants to speak or that is signed up to  
8 speak? Okay. We're going to go now, and I  
9 think everyone in the city of Takoma Park has  
10 spoken that is signed up to speak. Is that  
11 correct?

12 MS. WOLCHIK: No, no, it isn't.

13 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay. We're --

14 MS. WOLCHIK: This is Sharon Wolchik  
15 and I've been here since 6:45 and I would like  
16 to have my three minutes virtually.

17 CHAIR HARRIS: No, no. We're going  
18 to go to the Teams after. I just want to make  
19 sure I got everyone at the municipal building.  
20 Oh, so we have one more. Okay.

21 MS. WILLIAMS: We do not. I am just  
22 clarifying that we are complete with the

1 testimony from the Takoma Park Community  
2 Center.

3 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay. Great. Thank  
4 you so much. We'll go to Teams now.  
5 Catherine, where should I start? Should I  
6 start with Troy Jacobs? Yeah. Okay. We'll do  
7 this order, so you can be ready. Troy Jacobs,  
8 Ashley Brookshier, Seth Grimes, Dan Reed and  
9 Tom Gagliardo.

10 MS. WOLCHIK: I still am not  
11 included, and I have been --

12 CHAIR HARRIS: Yes. Who?

13 MS. WOLCHIK: Sharon Wolchik.

14 CHAIR HARRIS: Who is speaking  
15 again?

16 MS. WOLCHIK: Sharon Wolchik, and I  
17 have been here since 6:45. I'd like to at  
18 least know I'm on somebody's list to speak  
19 virtually. I didn't hear my name mentioned.  
20 Are there still other groups?

21 CHAIR HARRIS: Yes. Yes. We  
22 checked you in. You're, yeah, you're number 48

1 on the list that -- so yes, we haven't  
2 forgotten you. You -- we -- you will -- we  
3 will not leave without you. So we're number  
4 33, Troy Jacobs. Welcome, Troy.

5 MR. JACOBS: Thank you, Chair. And  
6 thank you to the board for giving me this  
7 opportunity to speak. I live at 8010 Flower  
8 Avenue in the Flower Avenue District of the  
9 minor master plan. I am -- on two sides of my  
10 property are businesses. And I want to say  
11 that, you know, from my perspective, I do not  
12 want to have further fragmentation of the plan  
13 because the coherency is very important. What  
14 I have right now is piecemeal development and  
15 zoning, and that has been a real frustration.  
16 This plan offers coherency that doesn't exist  
17 currently. The second thing that I would say  
18 is that I'm very supportive of the direction  
19 that the minor master plan is going, the  
20 amendment. You know, what I am looking for is  
21 the maximum amount of flexibility in terms of  
22 density, in terms of height and other

1 considerations, to address the uncertainties  
2 that we will have to deal with in the future,  
3 so that we can consider all options on the  
4 table going forward.

5           And there will be a time and place  
6 where we will have hopefully development  
7 proposals that we will have to consider. And  
8 at that time, it will be very appropriate, in  
9 my mind, to delve into the minutia. But at  
10 this time, I am just very supportive of the  
11 plan going forward. The third thing that I  
12 would say is that, and others have spoken to  
13 this, is that we do have a racial equity  
14 problem in the city of Takoma Park. And this  
15 is not something that is being generated from  
16 the minor master plan. This is actually, if we  
17 are to believe the census data, it's been 40  
18 years in the making. And while it is great to  
19 hear from the White residents of the city of  
20 Takoma Park and from the residents who've lived  
21 here for decades, it is very in -- we need to  
22 understand, and we need to know what has become

1 over the last 40 years of the renters, the  
2 Black and Brown persons, the immigrants that  
3 were born here or settled here, you know, where  
4 did these people go?

5 Because our population has been  
6 static for about 40 years. Did they go to  
7 Silver Spring? Did they go to Prince George's  
8 County? Did they go elsewhere? This is a  
9 shared problem. It is not a problem that the  
10 Montgomery planning needs to take on by  
11 themselves and it's not incumbent in the plan.  
12 I mean, it is a shared responsibility and  
13 hopefully going forward and I will commend the  
14 efforts of the city and the Montgomery planning  
15 in terms of bringing in voices, but we will  
16 need to incorporate these voices in the  
17 planning and hopefully in the development  
18 proposals that we'll get in the future. Thank  
19 you.

20 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you. Mr.  
21 Jacobs. Next is Ashley Brookshier.

22 MS. BROOKSHIER: Good evening. I

1 live on Carroll Avenue, just over the bridge  
2 from the plan area. I'm very excited about the  
3 vision for the future of Takoma Park that is  
4 offered by the draft minor master plan  
5 amendment, and I hope the board will vote to  
6 support it in full. Although I am speaking on  
7 my own behalf tonight, I did help to draft and  
8 also signed the letter of support from Takoma  
9 For All, which is a group of Maryland and DC  
10 neighbors supporting a sustainable, equitable,  
11 transit-oriented community that includes plenty  
12 of homes. My points tonight will perhaps,  
13 unsurprisingly, since I drafted the initial  
14 version of that letter, mirror those in that  
15 written testimony, which was signed by 100  
16 names. Takoma Park has to do our part to  
17 alleviate our region's housing crisis. These  
18 zoning updates are going to make plenty of --  
19 are going to make building plenty of new homes  
20 possible, while also giving property owners the  
21 flexibility they need to balance housing and  
22 commercial interests.



1           The board should not reduce any  
2 building heights or take any other action that  
3 would limit the number of housing on this site.  
4 This is especially important, given the  
5 appalling fact that no new multi-family housing  
6 has been built in Takoma Park since the 1970s.  
7 That is before I was born, and it is  
8 unacceptable. Zoning on the Adventist site is  
9 a once in a generation opportunity, and we  
10 cannot mess it up by thinking small or caving  
11 to a loud, but unrepresentative and ultimately  
12 selfish minority. I love living in Takoma Park  
13 and I want as many people as possible to join  
14 me and to have the same opportunities that my  
15 family and I have living here. I'm excited  
16 about the potential new businesses that the  
17 mixed-use zoning will permit in my  
18 neighborhood. I look forward to walking  
19 towards them and spending lots of my family's  
20 time and money in the plan area.

21           But the part that I am most excited  
22 about is the green promenade. I have a four-

1 month-old son, and while we are close enough  
2 for him to eventually walk to school, there is  
3 no universe in which I would let him do so on  
4 the current configuration of Maple Avenue.  
5 Driver's speed, run stop signs, ignore stop  
6 lights or stop signs, crosswalks, excuse me,  
7 it's extremely dangerous. My hope is that a  
8 new configuration of the road will be much  
9 safer for children, like my son, to be able to  
10 get to and from school independently. I think  
11 the promenade is going to be a beautiful  
12 sustainable space that will connect our whole  
13 community. In fact, I think the entire plan  
14 draft will promote a sustainable connection of  
15 different areas of our city and I urge the  
16 board to resist the calls from the usual voices  
17 to preserve our city in amber. In order to  
18 live our Takoma Park values of inclusivity,  
19 sustainability and diversity, we have to allow  
20 some change. And in this case, that means  
21 advancing this plan with minimal provisions.  
22 Thank you.

1 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Ms.  
2 Brookshier. Next is Seth Grimes.

3 MR. GRIMES: Good evening. Thank  
4 you, Mr. Chair Harris. I am Seth Grimes. I'm  
5 a resident of Takoma Park and a former city  
6 council member. I don't want to bury the lead,  
7 I believe that the hospital site -- the former  
8 hospital site will support housing density,  
9 including buildings of 12 to 17 stories,  
10 matching others in the immediate area, without  
11 damaging property values or quality of life.  
12 In fact, I believe it will increase quality of  
13 life by welcoming new neighbors to Takoma Park,  
14 to provide housing that is much needed in our  
15 region, and I think that the impact is very  
16 manageable. I contrast this particular hearing  
17 today with one I testified on -- during -- in  
18 May, the Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master  
19 Plan, Dan Reed, who follows me, testified then,  
20 I think maybe there were maybe five or six  
21 people, not 48 or more who testified. I recall  
22 that that master plan recommendations included

1 road diets and understanding that we want to  
2 transform areas by making them more friendly to  
3 pedestrians and businesses locally. And this  
4 plan before us today will do that with the  
5 higher density zoning and the commercial  
6 provisions that are part of the  
7 recommendations. So I wholeheartedly support  
8 them.

9 Let's address equity concerns, which  
10 has been noted by Mr. Jacobs, have often been  
11 articulated by representing people other than  
12 the people articulating them. I think that  
13 this plan is inequitable in the sense that it  
14 should be actually a Takoma Park Master Plan  
15 rewrite. The Takoma Park Master Plan was  
16 enacted in 2000, it's over 23 years old. That  
17 is past the normal life cycle for these things.  
18 What is inequitable is that we do not have the  
19 missing middle housing, the provisions for  
20 multi-unit housing in residential neighborhoods  
21 that are now single-family homes with the  
22 exception of accessory dwelling units.

1 Councilmember Will Jawando's ZTA, Zoning Text  
2 Amendment 2007, a few years ago, which was  
3 withdrawn pending the enactment of Thrive 2050,  
4 would have created this.

5 We need a systematic redo of zonings  
6 throughout the area, including the residents of  
7 single family home neighborhoods, like the  
8 majority of people who spoke today, to  
9 reestablish housing, multi-unit housing, like  
10 the four apartments in the single family,  
11 what's now a single family house across the  
12 street from me when I first moved in. So that  
13 is the only equitability -- inequitable portion  
14 of this plan, that it is not a larger, covering  
15 all of Takoma Park.

16 I am very appreciative of Mr. Robert  
17 Goldman from Montgomery Housing Partnerships'  
18 statements that his mission-driven and other  
19 mission-driven nonprofits will not sell or tear  
20 down their properties and displace tenants.  
21 That is very reassuring. And I do note that  
22 the opposition here is from people who claim to

1 support development, but they have  
2 consistently, in fact, actually opposed it,  
3 whether it is in Takoma Junction, at the Takoma  
4 Metro site. We have seen development,  
5 including high density, succeed here in Takoma,  
6 District of Columbia without disruption,  
7 without overtaxing the roads, without  
8 overtaxing the stormwater systems. This  
9 project will succeed with CRT zoning on the  
10 hospital site. I urge you to move forward on  
11 that basis. Thank you for the opportunity to  
12 speak.

13 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Grimes. Next is Dan Reed.

15 MR. REED: All right. Can you hear  
16 me? Oh, can you see me? Hello.

17 CHAIR HARRIS: Can't see you but can  
18 hear you.

19 MR. GRIMES: All right. Well,  
20 that'll have to do. My name is Dan Reed and I  
21 serve as the regional policy director for  
22 Greater Greater Washington, a nonprofit that

1 works to advance racial, economic,  
2 environmental justice and land use, housing and  
3 transportation here in the DC area. And we  
4 enthusiastically support the draft  
5 recommendations for the Takoma Park Miner  
6 Master Plan. The hospital has been gone for  
7 four years and this plan is a huge opportunity  
8 to reimagine the campus. You know, I live  
9 about three quarters of a mile from here and I  
10 pass by frequently, usually when walking my dog  
11 through Sligo Creek Park. I think about this  
12 place a lot, especially in light of the  
13 redevelopment of the former Walter Reed  
14 Hospital in Takoma DC. That hospital is now  
15 home to hundreds of new homes, including deeply  
16 affordable homes for seniors, significant  
17 amounts of public open space in the big plaza,  
18 and new retail, including a daycare, a grocery  
19 store and restaurants. It's a community  
20 destination and it's a gathering place.

21 We can and should expect the same  
22 with the former Adventist Hospital, and this

1 plan lays the groundwork to do so. As many  
2 have noted this evening, this section of Takoma  
3 Park is home to a significant portion of the  
4 city's market rate and income restricted and  
5 subsidized affordable housing, which is an  
6 important asset in an increasingly expensive  
7 community. Takoma Park is already gentrified,  
8 it is a very expensive place to live, that  
9 horse is out of the stable. We need more homes  
10 and more permanently affordable homes. And  
11 this plan addresses that by rezoning the  
12 hospital for housing at heights appropriate to  
13 the very tall buildings around it, as well as  
14 adjusting the zoning along Maple Avenue to  
15 preserve the buildings that are already there.  
16 And then having opportunities to provide more  
17 affordable homes, ensuring that longtime  
18 residents have the chance to stay here.

19 I should note that my understanding  
20 from actually reading the plan is that staff  
21 did extensive public reach on Maple Avenue,  
22 including hundreds of in-person interviews with



1 residents, 70 percent of whom identified as  
2 African, African American or Latinx. We can  
3 only infer that this plan represents, to some  
4 extent, what they asked for. For instance,  
5 this plan creates opportunities for more  
6 shopping and retail at the hospital site,  
7 including a potential for a full-service  
8 grocery store, something Takoma Park does not  
9 have, and the public outreach found people  
10 would like. I personally would love a grocery  
11 store a 15-minute walk from my house.  
12 Residents in this -- one of the city's most  
13 vulnerable communities could now have access to  
14 healthy fresh food without having to travel a  
15 long distance. Finally, this plan also  
16 identifies ways to make this community more  
17 resilient in the face of climate change.  
18 Flooding is already an issue here and it'll get  
19 worse in the future. I can speak to this  
20 personally, as someone whose basement used to  
21 flood multiple times a year until I got it  
22 waterproofed.

1                   This plan recommends expanding the  
2 tree canopy, reducing impervious services that  
3 cause stormwater runoff, restoring natural  
4 areas along steep slopes to reduce erosion, and  
5 expanding access to green space. Notably it  
6 discusses the possibility of an outdoor  
7 gathering and performance space, something this  
8 community could also benefit from. As an  
9 advocate for more equitable and sustainable  
10 communities, and as a neighbor, I urge the  
11 planning board to approve this plan. The  
12 greenest most equitable thing that we could do  
13 is put a bunch of apartment buildings in this  
14 community right by Sligo Creek, as opposed to  
15 putting -- pushing people to live, you know,  
16 20, 30 miles away. If we want people to drive  
17 less and have a smaller carbon footprint, if  
18 you want people to have a chance to live in a  
19 very expensive and very gentrified community,  
20 we need to give these people more places to  
21 live to be the welcoming community Takoma Park  
22 says it is. So our organization looks forward

1 to working with you and the county council to  
2 find ways to make these recommendations in this  
3 master plan a reality sooner rather, rather  
4 than later. Thank you for your time.

5 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: Thank you, Mr.  
6 Reed. Next, Mr. Paul Chrostowski, three  
7 minutes.

8 MR. CHROSTOWSKI: Excellent  
9 pronunciation. You must be Polish at heart.  
10 My name is Paul Chrostowski, I'm a longtime  
11 resident of Montgomery County, and I'm also a  
12 consulting environmental scientist in private  
13 practice in Takoma Park. I conducted a  
14 technical peer review of aspects of the  
15 proposed amendment that could impact human  
16 health of the natural environment. My detailed  
17 review is contained in written testimony  
18 submitted separately.

19 The development contemplated in the  
20 amendment area as written, likely will result  
21 and a severe environmental impact to Takoma  
22 Park and adjacent neighborhoods. Because of

1 this, the board should undertake a  
2 comprehensive environmental assessment covering  
3 climate change, air pollutants, water  
4 resources, the urban heat island effect,  
5 geotechnical conditions and chemical  
6 contamination. This assessment should be  
7 publicly transparent, performed in consultation  
8 with stakeholders and subject to independent  
9 peer review. The amendment process should be  
10 paused until the assessment is completed and  
11 any subsequent problems are mitigated.  
12 Assessment of greenhouse gas emissions should  
13 be conducted using a conceptual site model  
14 lifecycle analysis approach and include  
15 emissions from --

16 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: Paul, you are  
17 muted. You are muted. If I can call you,  
18 Paul. Okay.

19 MR. CHROSTOWSKI: Yes. I don't know  
20 how that happened. At any rate, just to  
21 repeat, assessment of greenhouse gas emissions  
22 should be conducted using a conceptual site

1 model lifecycle analysis approach and include  
2 emissions from demolition and construction, as  
3 well as operation, maintenance, and end of life  
4 of structures. This assessment should include  
5 a discussion of the probability that the city  
6 and county can reach their net-zero goals if  
7 the development proceeds. A strategic plan is  
8 needed for strong mayoral management in the  
9 amended area, including impacts on Relic  
10 Brashier's Run (phonetic), Sligo Creek and Long  
11 Branch. These sub watersheds are currently  
12 poorly delineated and need better delineation.

13 Goals for permeability,  
14 evapotranspiration, soil storage, water quality  
15 and active treatment should be considered.  
16 Maple Avenue is especially vulnerable to  
17 flooding. And this problem will only increase  
18 as climate change alters rainfall patterns and  
19 amounts. Currently, there is no comprehensive  
20 flood vulnerability plan for Maple Avenue and  
21 adjacent low-lying areas. This information gap  
22 direly needs to be corrected prior to

1 implementation of the plans in the amendment.  
2 A geotechnical and seismic stability study  
3 should be performed on the hospital property,  
4 adjoining Sligo Creek, and on areas along Maple  
5 Avenue proposed for large multi-use  
6 development. Finally, an environmental site  
7 assessment based on ASTM guidelines, including  
8 the extent of asbestos, lead, PCBs and  
9 radionuclide contamination should be conducted  
10 for the hospital site. Thank you for your  
11 attention.

12 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: Thank you,  
13 Paul. Next, Ms. Bethany Mandel. Are you here?  
14 Ms. Mandel. Okay. So we go to Mr. Keith  
15 Berner.

16 MR. BERNER: My name is Keith  
17 Berner. I live at 7902 Flower Avenue in the  
18 Flower Avenue District of the MMPA. I would  
19 like to highlight five objections I have to the  
20 current MMPA draft. First, the MMPA areas are  
21 too large and contain elements that are best  
22 addressed separately. The context and needs of

1 the Flower Avenue District are completely  
2 different from the Maple Avenue and Municipal  
3 core districts. For example, the  
4 appropriateness of new construction on the  
5 Adventist campuses is obvious and has no  
6 displacement implications, which is not true of  
7 the Maple Avenue District. The MMPA should be  
8 split into two or three separate plans.  
9 Second, the building heights proposed for the  
10 Flower Avenue District are out of scale with  
11 the surrounding communities. Buildings on the  
12 Adventist campuses should be limited to seven  
13 stories and step-downs to the periphery of the  
14 district should also be proportionally reduced  
15 and existing single-family homes on Erie,  
16 Flower, and Greenwood should not be up zoned at  
17 all.

18 Third, potential displacement and of  
19 disadvantaged people and people of color in the  
20 Maple Avenue District needs to be taken  
21 seriously. Protections need to be in place for  
22 existing tenants and types of tenants, and

1 rezoning should take place mostly only to match  
2 current conditions. I'm skeptical of planner's  
3 claims that the MMPA would not negatively  
4 impact diversity in Takoma Park. Fourth, it is  
5 unacceptable for consideration of the MMPA to  
6 proceed without ample time for the community to  
7 examine detailed environmental and climate  
8 analyses. Further, traffic studies cannot be  
9 put off. Flower and Carroll Avenues were close  
10 to failure back when the WAH was proposing its  
11 expansion in the mid-aughts, an expansion that  
12 now seems quite modest. We need to know now if  
13 development will require widening these or any  
14 other streets and how adjacent properties will  
15 be impacted.

16 Fifth, the planner's actions thus  
17 far seem to be too accommodating of WAU'S  
18 interests. I note that the hospital and  
19 university have had contentious relationships  
20 with the community for decades. I acknowledge  
21 the legitimacy of their profiting from on-  
22 campus development at this point but call on



1 planners to show some more skepticism vis-a-vis  
2 their wish list. This city should allow and  
3 embrace development that is good for it, but it  
4 doesn't owe anything to WAU. I'm in favor of  
5 dense development on the WAU campus, including  
6 more people in Takoma Park and increasing the  
7 city's tax base. But the zoning changes in the  
8 MMPA are maximalist. They need to be scaled  
9 back to fit their surroundings and address  
10 community concerns. Thank you.

11 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: Thank you. The  
12 Chair Harris is back here. I can introduce the  
13 next one, but he can drink his water. Okay.  
14 Mr. Kit -- Marty Ittner.

15 MR. ITTNER: Hi, can you hear me?

16 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: Yes. Yes.

17 MR. ITTNER: Okay. Great. Hi, my  
18 name is Marty Ittner and I've lived for 23  
19 years -- 23 years on Flower Avenue, next door  
20 to the Washington Adventist University. I  
21 believe that climate change should be the top  
22 priority to making land use choices in this

1 valuable green space. I have three examples.  
2 Number one, the parking lot that slopes down to  
3 Sligo Creek at the Carroll Avenue Bridge. Over  
4 the years, I have seen a sinkhole, mudslides,  
5 and ice on Sligo Creek Path beneath after heavy  
6 rains. I think the master plan should mark  
7 this area on the map as a heavily flooded zone  
8 that could possibly be mitigated with a pocket  
9 park planted with native trees and plants.

10 Number two, the university campus is  
11 home to many beneficial, mature trees,  
12 including a beautiful stately willow oak in  
13 front of the library building, which I deemed  
14 to be the most beautiful tree in Takoma Park.  
15 I have seen squirrels, hawks, and many other  
16 bird species in these trees. It takes decades  
17 for trees to reach this size, and I advocate  
18 for their preservation.

19 Number three, the service road  
20 behind the hospital and campus sits atop a very  
21 steep wooded bank above Sligo Creek. The  
22 service road should be removed and planted with

1 green plants and trees to merge the hillside  
2 and create a green filter to keep pollution out  
3 of Sligo Creek. I feel strongly that these  
4 types of environmental insights be documented  
5 in the minor master plan. I'm happy to share  
6 my views from over 20 years of walking my dogs  
7 near Sligo Creek and Washington Adventist  
8 University. Thank you.

9 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
10 Thank you very much. This is your -- next is  
11 Jim Delagiacoma. If I pronounce that  
12 correctly.

13 VICE CHAIR PEDOEEM: Is he not here?

14 CHAIR HARRIS: Is Jim available?  
15 Okay. Laurie Y. Okay. Laurie Yancey. Is Ms.  
16 Yancey available?

17 COMMISSIONER HEDRICK: She's coming,  
18 one second.

19 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay. Thank you.  
20 And next will be Kacy Kostiuik. Is Ms. Yancey  
21 available?

22 MS. YANCEY: Hi, my name is Laurie

1 Yancey. I live on Greenwood Avenue just  
2 outside of the city of Takoma Park. My main  
3 concern is that our streets don't support  
4 enough traffic or parking for the residents of  
5 our community. I'm also very confused as to  
6 the part of the plan that is asking for more  
7 affordable housing. I don't understand how any  
8 new development housing could possibly be any  
9 more affordable than what our neighborhood  
10 already has to offer. We have hundreds of  
11 apartments around Flower, Greenwood, and  
12 Garland Avenue, up to Piney Branch Avenue, New  
13 Hampshire Avenue, University Avenue, that are  
14 very affordable. A lot of the single-family  
15 homes have basement apartments. They have  
16 attic apartments. Those are for rent. I just  
17 do not believe that any new construction could  
18 possibly more -- be more affordable than what  
19 we already have to offer.

20 I'm not opposed to development. I  
21 do appreciate the new small businesses in our  
22 neighborhood, like Monsa Kunda and Koma,

1 they're great restaurants. And I look forward  
2 to having new small businesses in our  
3 neighborhood, but we do not want commercial  
4 businesses in our neighborhood. The stormwater  
5 issue is also a problem. We have been  
6 reporting that to the county for more than 10  
7 years, and nothing has been done about the fact  
8 that our street turns into an ice-skating rink  
9 every winter. So I don't know how this plan  
10 will alleviate that. That being said, I think  
11 that the plan should focus on the Washington  
12 Adventist Hospital campus and leave out the  
13 Flower Avenue corridor. Thank you.

14 CHAIR HARRIS: Yeah. Thank you.  
15 Ms. Yancey. Next is Kacy Kostiuik.

16 MS. KOSTIUUK: Can you hear me?

17 CHAIR HARRIS: Yes.

18 MS. KOSTIUUK: Okay. Thank you for  
19 the opportunity to comment tonight. I'm a  
20 resident of Takoma Park and I live about two  
21 blocks from the Washington Adventist Hospital  
22 site. So for that reason, I'm keenly

1 interested in ensuring that the vacant hospital  
2 space is used to increase housing and benefit  
3 the community. I'm excited about the -- what  
4 the plan proposes for that location. I also  
5 want to provide my comments on the importance  
6 of increased density. As you know, the  
7 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
8 has forecast a significant shortfall of housing  
9 in our region. We need to build more housing  
10 units in order to meet the need, and those  
11 housing units should be built in activity  
12 centers in close-in suburbs that have access to  
13 high occupancy transit exactly like Takoma  
14 Park. We need increased density for equity and  
15 climate reasons. We need more housing in  
16 places where people can walk, bike, or take  
17 transit to their jobs where they have access to  
18 great schools and city programs, and where they  
19 feel a part of a vibrant community. That  
20 housing needs to be built somewhere and it  
21 should not be built in places that encourage  
22 more driving, more sprawl, and less connected

1 communities.

2           For this reason, I strongly support  
3 zoning that increases density in Takoma Park.  
4 At the same time, it is important to consider  
5 the potential impact of new zoning on  
6 affordable housing and the potential for  
7 displacement. These are real concerns that  
8 need to be addressed. And I believe they can  
9 be addressed alongside increased density by  
10 working together with the city of Takoma Park  
11 staff, the city council, property owners and  
12 managers, and residents. Careful assessment  
13 and implementation of protections can protect  
14 against problems. It should not be an  
15 either/or. We know that we need more housing,  
16 and that increased housing density is a climate  
17 imperative. We also know that we need more  
18 affordable housing, and that people should not  
19 be displaced. We should seek solutions that  
20 allow us to achieve all of this. Some of  
21 Takoma Park's existing housing policies can be  
22 utilized to protect against negative outcomes.

1           And there could be additional  
2 policies or plans that need to be created or  
3 modified to ensure the outcomes we want, as  
4 well as other types of support. This is our  
5 opportunity to dream big and design a plan that  
6 gives our community and region everything we  
7 want. And what we want should be increased  
8 density, no loss of affordable housing, in  
9 fact, a gain would be good, and supports and  
10 protections for people who currently live here.  
11 I ask you to embrace all of those points,  
12 including the importance of density as this  
13 plan moves forward. Thank you very much.

14           CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.  
15 Next is -- we had skipped Carter Dougherty.

16           MR. DOUGHERTY: Can you hear me?

17           CHAIR HARRIS: Yes.

18           MR. DOUGHERTY: Okay. Thank you  
19 very much. Go Blair Field Hockey. They won  
20 tonight. That just complicated my  
21 participation earlier. So my name is Carter  
22 Dougherty. I live in Takoma Park, a little



1 street called Crescent Place just off of  
2 Carroll. I think a lot of things in these  
3 hearings end up getting said over and over and  
4 over. So I don't want to waste your time  
5 saying what's already been said. I just wanted  
6 to say in broad brush something that I have  
7 emphasized to the Takoma Park City Council,  
8 which is that the main -- you hear a lot about  
9 racial equity and socioeconomic diversity and  
10 all those values that we all feel very  
11 strongly. In my day job, I worked for a  
12 nonprofit called Americans for Financial  
13 Reform. We were formed to fight Wall Street,  
14 to fight the financialization of the economy,  
15 and to pass significant reform of the financial  
16 system. And affordable housing and the  
17 conditions that that created are one of the  
18 things we work on.

19 Right now the thing that is most  
20 averse to racial equity and justice and housing  
21 is scarcity. We simply need to build more.  
22 And I think when -- in situations like this,

1 when you are balancing various competing  
2 interests that you really should err on the  
3 side of simply building because of all the  
4 solutions we can think of for Montgomery  
5 County's housing shortage, all of them include  
6 simply building so that more people can have a  
7 roof over their head. So consider the  
8 arguments, use your expertise, I'm of the mind  
9 that what I very much would like to see is our  
10 institutions function effectively. I don't  
11 want to be a technical expert who sits here and  
12 tells you exactly what to do. I believe you  
13 have the expertise to do the right thing. So  
14 build.

15 Put roofs over people's heads and do  
16 it in Takoma Park. I live a quarter mile away  
17 from the area in question. I'm a regular user  
18 of Sligo Creek Park. Nothing would make me  
19 happier than to see more people in Takoma Park  
20 enjoying what I get to enjoy. Thank you.  
21 Enjoying what I get to enjoy.

22 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you for your

1 comments. I really appreciate them. Next is  
2 Ismail Lapp-Kamara. Did I say that right,  
3 Ismail?

4 MR. LAPP-KAMARA: Yeah. You said  
5 that correctly. Thank you so much. Good  
6 evening, everyone. My name is Ismail. I am a  
7 resident of the Maple Avenue District in Takoma  
8 Park. I'm excited, but also skeptical about  
9 the planned investment in Takoma Park. Before  
10 anything, I want to express my thanks to  
11 everyone who has worked on this matter.  
12 However, I also have a few concerns regarding  
13 this plan. Number one, the mayor of Takoma  
14 Park in the last informational session for the  
15 Takoma Park Master Plan mentioned Takoma Park  
16 needing a cheap eats and/or dollar store.  
17 These stores do not represent what is needed in  
18 the community. We need quality and affordable  
19 businesses that provide quality employment and  
20 goods to our community. Development in Takoma  
21 Park should continue to promote and encourage  
22 small businesses to come into the community,

1 not big corporations. We have enough of those  
2 in nearby Silver Spring, Langley Park, and  
3 Wheaton.

4 Over the years, Takoma Park has done  
5 a great job growing the number of small  
6 businesses and preserving its historical  
7 architectural character in the area, and I hope  
8 we continue to do so. Number two, I also have  
9 concerns regarding the possible increase in  
10 well, more than likely increase in traffic  
11 regarding the plan that mentions the possible  
12 addition of 3000 units in the area. There  
13 should be a plan to protect the walkability and  
14 safety of residents here. Takoma Park has  
15 always been a very walkable city and safe for  
16 families. I hope this can continue to preserve  
17 what makes Takoma Park a beautiful place to  
18 live?

19 Number three, lastly, but most  
20 importantly, I am concerned about the  
21 displacement of the Takoma Park, our diversity  
22 of residents. Most people of color and low-

1 income residents in the Takoma Park live in the  
2 Maple District. We must protect the residents  
3 that don't seem to have a voice at this venue.  
4 Affordability is essential to protecting our  
5 most valuable -- or vulnerable residents, and  
6 improving this area should not come at the cost  
7 of displacing those most vulnerable. Overall,  
8 Maple Avenue District has always been left  
9 behind in terms of its development for many  
10 years. So I am excited to see how it is  
11 updated to reflect the rest of the Takoma Park  
12 Main Street. Takoma Park has a great sense of  
13 community that has taken generations to be  
14 created. Please take into account the history  
15 of Takoma Park when it comes to this investment  
16 in the community. Any development should fit  
17 the current diversity of cultures and pre-  
18 existing soul and values of Takoma Park. Thank  
19 you so much.

20 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Lapp-  
21 Kamara. So the next is Sharon. We haven't  
22 forgotten you, Ms. Wolchik. We -- you're next.

1 You're muted now. Please unmute yourself.

2 You're still muted. Oh yeah, you're --

3 MS. WOLCHIK: Unmute.

4 CHAIR HARRIS: Oh, there you go.

5 MS. WOLCHIK: Am I okay now?

6 CHAIR HARRIS: You're --

7 MS. WOLCHIK: Thank you. And I did  
8 not mean to be impatient. I just had no idea,  
9 you know, how we're going through people.  
10 Okay. My three minutes. First, I have to say  
11 that unlike some of the recent speakers, I am  
12 not in favor of this proposed amendment. I'm  
13 not going to talk about that part of it which  
14 deals with the former Washington Adventist  
15 Hospital site or the section around the  
16 university there. I think that's something  
17 that will have to be worked out with neighbors  
18 in that area and also the university as it goes  
19 forward. So I would urge you to eliminate the  
20 Maple Avenue section from this proposed  
21 amendment. And I'd ask you to do that on  
22 several grounds. Again, and I don't want to

1 repeat what many people have said. Laurie  
2 McGilvray has very adequately and very  
3 eloquently, I think, summarized many of our  
4 objections to this plan, especially as it has  
5 to do with the Maple Avenue area.

6 I want to make just a few additional  
7 points. One, Takoma Park is a small town. To  
8 propose putting a corridor of what, 12, 15, 17  
9 story buildings up Maple Avenue right next to  
10 our Victorian designed and inspired community  
11 center, city hall, et cetera, seems to me to be  
12 absolutely ludicrous. And it also does not fit  
13 with the neighborhood of low scale, multiple  
14 housing units and single-family homes in the  
15 area. The issue of displacement of the most  
16 vulnerable is a serious issue that I don't  
17 think is adequately addressed in this model.  
18 If there -- someone has said that there's not  
19 an army of developers waiting to descend on  
20 Takoma Park, well, there will be if there is  
21 profit to be made. So let's not assume that we  
22 can increase zoning height, and nothing will

1       happen.  Something will happen and it's not  
2       going to be favorable, at least in my view.

3                   I also want to emphasize something  
4       that the spokesperson for Historic Takoma did.  
5       And that is the fact that we can't ignore  
6       what's been happening just across the boundary  
7       into DC.  There have been and are under  
8       construction, 2000 new units in what is  
9       effectively Takoma Park in terms of traffic on  
10      the streets and density.  Density is a very  
11      nice key word, but we're already pretty dense  
12      compared to some other aspects of the county  
13      that need perhaps to bear their share of the  
14      burden without overburdening us with thousands  
15      of additional new residents who will need city  
16      services and will imperil the nature of our  
17      community.  And I have lived here since 1980,  
18      and I hope that you will seriously rethink this  
19      proposed amendment and at the very least get  
20      rid of the Maple Avenue segment of it until  
21      that area and some of the issues my colleagues,  
22      my neighbors, have raised have been addressed.



1 Thank you for the time.

2 CHAIR HARRIS: Thank you very much.

3 Next is Michael English and the last person I  
4 have on my list is Christine Kenngott, but  
5 there may be others.

6 MR. ENGLISH: Thank you very much  
7 for agreeing to hear my testimony a little bit  
8 of housekeeping before I get started. I think  
9 it's been resolved, but just in case. I  
10 unfortunately, unintentionally, initially  
11 registered on my work email address. So I just  
12 want to clarify for the record that I'm  
13 testifying in my personal capacity. So like  
14 the testimony and views I'm about to present  
15 are my own opinions and not the position of the  
16 Department of Transportation or any federal  
17 agency. That out of the way, I, Michael  
18 English, private citizen am here to speak in  
19 support of the planned amendment. I did  
20 prepare remarks. I frankly plan to ignore most  
21 of what I prepared because I feel compelled to  
22 respond to a lot of what was said today. And I

1 want to be careful how I do this, because I do  
2 sincerely think most people mean well, but we  
3 always do this.

4 We always say that housing's okay,  
5 but somewhere else. We always say, I'm not  
6 opposed to housing but, or housing's okay in  
7 this site. That is not where I am, it's down  
8 the street, right? And some speakers have  
9 brought up the fact that the rest of Takoma  
10 Park should bear more of a burden. That is  
11 true. And I mean, I personally don't think  
12 single family zoning that only allows single  
13 family homes should exist anywhere let alone in  
14 Montgomery County. And I encourage people to  
15 say this when these plans come up, like Seth  
16 Grimes had pointed out. But this is not just  
17 on the Washington Adventist site, but, you  
18 know, there's vacant parking lots. There are,  
19 you know, other opportunity sites where housing  
20 can and should be built. I do take more  
21 seriously the concerns about displacement in  
22 the currently affordable housing.

1           The plan does have language about  
2 prioritizing known and less affordable housing.  
3 If that can be strengthened by all means, but  
4 like -- with things like stormwater, new  
5 housing development, generally improves that,  
6 like, I'll tell you right now, the vacant  
7 parking lots have worse stormwater runoff than  
8 whatever will be those bioswales, there's green  
9 roofs, these tend to improve, not make  
10 stormwater worse. Again, I think people have  
11 the sincerest motivations and I think that  
12 people do truly value the diversity of their  
13 community. But many people have come here and  
14 said they value that while opposing the very  
15 kind of housing that non-White, non-rich people  
16 tend to live in proportion to the population.  
17 And like don't take my word for it, the county  
18 has this data available.

19           We always make an excuse and  
20 somewhere else will also make an excuse, and we  
21 need to stop making these excuses. This area  
22 and many other good progressive areas are very

1 good at patting ourselves on the back and  
2 saying, we're good progressives and saying that  
3 we don't really oppose this. We just want to  
4 preserve our quality of life and our  
5 sustainability. And we, you know, we're  
6 concerned about profits and all that while we  
7 sit in, like -- I'll tell you right now, I'm  
8 very used to people in 800, 900,000 and seven  
9 figure homes calling my sub \$300,000 condo  
10 luxury housing because it's dense and  
11 relatively new. These things are not simple.  
12 Market rate housing doesn't solve at all. Rent  
13 stabilization helps. I was happy to see the  
14 law that the county passed recently. We need  
15 social housing. We need LIHTC housing. We  
16 need all of this, but we need this, too. I see  
17 my time is running out. Thank you very much.

18 CHAIR HARRIS: And thank you,  
19 Michael, Mr. English. Appreciate your  
20 comments. And next is Christine Kenngott. Are  
21 you there, Christine?

22 MS. KENNGOTT: Yeah. Can you hear

1 me?

2 CHAIR HARRIS: Yes.

3 MS. KENNGOTT: Hi. I'm Chris  
4 Kenngott and I live at 7711 Garland Avenue near  
5 Carroll. I've lived in Takoma with my wife and  
6 two teenage daughters since 2017. I'm a Takoma  
7 Park soccer coach, a landlord with two rent  
8 controlled affordable units on my property.  
9 And this year, my house turns 100 years old and  
10 comes with a lot of very expensive issues. I  
11 want to thank the board for having us and  
12 taking the time to hear all of us. I also want  
13 to thank our Ward 5 Takoma Park City  
14 Councilperson, Cara Honzak, because she's  
15 really worked tireless tirelessly to educate  
16 people about this and really give people a  
17 voice. I think sometimes people have said that  
18 there's been plenty of information about this,  
19 but in reality, a lot of people in my  
20 neighborhood haven't heard any of it because  
21 they fall just like, you know, right outside  
22 the zone and so they weren't included, and

1 we're very surprised and really just found out  
2 about this a couple of weeks ago.

3 I think that development is critical  
4 to creating affordable housing, but I do have  
5 concerns about maximum density zoning and  
6 commercial that's being suggested, with no  
7 guarantees that upzoning won't create  
8 displacement. But also without considering the  
9 realities of our current infrastructure, this  
10 is not good for current residents or future  
11 residents. I think sometimes everyone's  
12 talking about doing this for future residents,  
13 but if you -- this won't be your Takoma for  
14 them if we destroy what Takoma is. I hope the  
15 board adopts the city council's amendment for  
16 setback and step-downs. It seems that the MMPA  
17 is max out first and deal with all the fallout  
18 later. We get one shot at developing the  
19 hospital space and we should prioritize careful  
20 planning and development. Our neighborhood of  
21 Garland, Greenwood is uniquely -- Garland,  
22 Maplewood, and Greenwood are uniquely affected

1 by the development.

2 We had one small development project  
3 that went terribly wrong. An Adventist  
4 University parking lot wreaked havoc on houses.  
5 It turned backyards in our streets into  
6 mosquito swamps, flooded houses, polluted the  
7 creek, cost homeowners thousands of dollars.  
8 It's one thing to have the issue, but then to  
9 add insult to injury, nobody cared. Takoma  
10 didn't care. Adventist didn't care.  
11 Montgomery County didn't care. So buyer  
12 beware. So you can see that the Garland area  
13 has a trust issue with any development. But  
14 really what I want to talk about is lack of  
15 infrastructure. It's really surprising that  
16 there's been no traffic study done. Actually,  
17 it's not surprising because if you want to max  
18 it out, you can't do the traffic study because  
19 you'll realize it doesn't work. Infrastructure  
20 of Silver Spring has Georgia Avenue and  
21 Colesville Road.

22 We have two lane roads. Carroll and

1 Philadelphia, already maxed out bumper to  
2 bumper during rush hour. Those two lanes  
3 service school buses and city buses. It's  
4 already dangerous with at least one death on  
5 Carroll that I know of and many accidents on  
6 Carroll. Flower, Piney Branch, and Parkway  
7 take sometimes up to five lights to get  
8 through. Garland Avenue is becoming a busy  
9 passway with drivers looking for new ways to  
10 rush through traffic. Any parent knows that  
11 Takoma Park Junior High is an accident waiting  
12 to happen with children and cars chaotically  
13 everywhere. That's no joke. Let's talk about  
14 Ward 5 schools, Rolling Terrace and SSI are  
15 unhealthy buildings. How is it fair for those  
16 new residents? Hey, welcome to Takoma Park now  
17 go to outdated aging and unhealthy crowded  
18 schools.

19 I also want to talk about green  
20 space really quickly. Turf and grass. We have  
21 a turf crisis in this area in Downcounty.  
22 Upcounty, you've got fields for days.



1 Downcounty, you've got adult teams and  
2 children's teams fighting over grass and the  
3 one field that exists, not that we get to use  
4 it, but on the campus is going to be placed  
5 into a building. So anyway and more  
6 transparency on the land behind Garland, what's  
7 going to happen with that? It doesn't look  
8 clear on the map. So please make that more.  
9 And I'll stop there. I just want to say thank  
10 you again for all your work and all that you've  
11 done for the community. Thanks.

12 CHAIR HARRIS: Yeah. Thank you, Ms.  
13 Kenngott, is there anyone that we did not hear  
14 from that signed up that's on Teams tonight?  
15 Well, I'd like to -- if not, I'd like to end  
16 this public testimony and I'd like to thank,  
17 first of all the people that testified tonight  
18 either by providing written testimony or in  
19 public. And also, I'd like to thank the staff  
20 of the MNCPPC tonight for putting this on and  
21 the staff at the city of Takoma Park by doing  
22 it both from there and from here. So thank

1 you. And good evening and have a safe trip.

2 MR. HISEL-MCCOY: Mr. Chair, one  
3 thing I just wanted to clarify, we are holding  
4 the record open, is that correct? Until the  
5 end of the month?

6 CHAIR HARRIS: Yeah. And what's the  
7 fund? It's --

8 MR. HISEL-MCCOY: Elza Hisel-McCoy,  
9 chief Downcounty Planning for the record,  
10 September 30th, close of business.

11 CHAIR HARRIS: Okay. So thank you,  
12 and everyone have a safe trip home.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled  
14 matter went off the record at 9:16 p.m.)  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Takoma Park Minor Master Plan Amendment

DATE: 09-14-23

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*Neal R Gross*

**NEAL R. GROSS**

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