

# Takoma Junction Task Force

Report to the Takoma Park City Council • February 2012



# Takoma Junction Task Force Report



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# 1 Executive Summary

The Takoma Junction Task Force was appointed by the Takoma Park City Council in the fall of 2010 to further efforts to revitalize the city's Takoma Junction area, the Old Takoma business district at the intersection and confluence of Carroll Avenue and Route 410.

The area includes a fire station, a mix of commercial spaces (including a substantially sized undeveloped parcel owned by the City), parking, a community park space, heavily trafficked roadways, sidewalks, and residential neighborhoods

At the outset, the following goals were established:

1. Evaluate current conditions in Takoma Junction and identify opportunities for the redevelopment and revitalization of the area;
2. Develop an outreach plan designed to solicit comment on future redevelopment proposals, increase awareness of available incentive programs and engage the community in revitalization initiatives that may be undertaken by the City and others; and
3. Create work plans with recommended near- and long-term actions for Council consideration that address the community's interest in improving existing traffic patterns; resolving pedestrian safety concerns; increasing public use of public spaces; providing for the redevelopment of city-owned properties; enhancing the physical appearance and condition of properties; and increasing the economic viability of area businesses.

In concert with these goals, the Task Force took into consideration the following guiding principles:

*"The vision for Takoma Junction is of a village center with a traditional small town charm."*

– Takoma Park Master Plan, December 2000

*"A Takoma Park that is fiscally, environmentally, and economically sustainable... a livable community that is vibrant, health, and safe, with convenient transportation for all its residents."*

– City of Takoma Park Strategic Plan, FY2010 - FY2015

The goals and guiding principles were synthesized into the following **Mission Statement** which became the conceptual framework for the group's efforts as reflected in this report.

Takoma Junction, predominantly located in the Takoma Park Historic District, is a small commercial district in the heart of a residential community, with historically significant resources and a vital fire station that should...

- Encourage motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists to slow down, park, relax, and shop, while functioning adequately as a link within the local road and transit networks,
- Encourage sustainable commercial opportunities and provide convenience to local consumers,
- Serve as a cultural meeting-point for old and young in a diverse community, and
- Blend harmoniously with adjacent residential neighborhoods,
- All in a forward-thinking, attractive and environmentally sensitive way.



The Task Force began its work in October, 2010 with a completion date of September 30, 2010. The Council extended the Task Force in September, 2010 to allow time for report completion and revision in light of consultation with city staff and for presentation and discussion with the Council in an anticipated January 2012 work session.

Two key aspects of Task Force research were (a) an extensive effort to involve the community in the process and (b) extensive consultation with officials and other persons with expertise to share. Community outreach initiatives included ten residential outreach events with over 150 participants; outreach to every business as well as civic organizations, and pedestrian intercepts. The goal of these outreach efforts was to gain a solid understanding of the perspectives and preferences of local residents, businesses, and consumers. The ideas shared by participants in these outreach efforts have played a major role in shaping the options under consideration by the Task Force as well as the recommendations below

The Task Force, with an eye on commercial revitalization, focused its work on steps to improve conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle drivers in the Junction right of way (ROW: streets, signals, and sidewalks); and on possible beneficial uses of the paved, city-owned lot on Carroll Avenue. The Task Force also considered aesthetics, business vitality, community amenities, environmental concerns, historic preservation, parking, and public transit. The Task Force held many full-group and subcommittee meetings, some centering on discussions with state, county, and city officials; some intended to solicit and discuss community desires and concerns; and some with individuals with development experience and expertise. The Task Force reported its progress and interim recommendations on three occasions to the City Council, the last on September 19, 2011.

The collective opinion and findings of the Task Force should not be considered legally binding.

## **Task Force Recommendations**

### ***City-owned Parcels***

A. The Task Force recommends that the City adopt and implement a plan for the C1 parcel, which is nearly half wooded, that blends elements of what we have called Option 1 (Community/Entrepreneurial Space) and Option 2 (Community-driven Development). We further recommend that any plan for the C1 parcel be shaped by the following guidelines:

C1. As part of any larger redevelopment plan for the Junction, the City should use the C1 parcel for four complementary and multi-faceted purposes that include:

- Independent, non-chain, community-scale business (which could include the TPSS Co-op or a like business and food-truck vendors),
- Expanded community use, including a pavilion, playground, garden space, and/or a park,
- Improved pedestrian, bicycle, and auto access, improved sidewalks, and enhancements to the streetscape, and
- Consolidated parking for visitors and employees in the Junction as a whole.

C2. Any new development on the C1 parcel should harmonize with the existing architecture and scale of activity, and should not exceed two stories in height based upon previous commercial infill in the Historic District.

C3. The City should give priority to using the C1 parcel to support an addition to the TPSS Co-op (or a like business), especially if priority is also given to expanding the present building onto the parking lot east toward Sycamore Avenue. Doing so would help to solve traffic bottlenecks related to the parking lot east of the Coop building and would preserve space for expanded public uses of the present C1 parcel.

C4. In any revitalization of the parcels adjacent to the C1 parcel, the City should encourage retention and repurposing of the Turner and Healy buildings.

C5. The City should work to help building owners adjacent to the C1 parcel (and throughout the Junction) to obtain tax credits or grants for aesthetic improvements to buildings and landscaping, consistent with an overall streetscape improvement plan for the Junction.

C6. A Phase 1 Environmental Assessment (detailed record search) should be performed for the C1 parcel, if there is any consideration of removing the current impervious service, in order to clarify the anecdotal information about potential waste handling/disposal in this area. After the Phase I assessment is completed, consideration should be given to whether a Phase II Environmental Assessment is necessary based upon 1) the desired use of this parcel and 2) the conclusions of the Phase I Assessment.

C7. The City should improve vegetative cover of the wooded area, provide basic maintenance for the area, pick up trash, and care for the trees in the area.



C8. The City should put a switchback path through the wooded area, if this can be done without causing erosion or exacerbating environmental problems.

C9. The City should evaluate the degree of community interest in maintaining all or part of the wooded area.

C10. In evaluating C1 parcel development options or proposals, the City should include an assessment of their impact on the wooded area in terms of the environmental services it provides as well as its function as a buffer between commercial and residential areas.

B. The City should preserve the R60 parcel as a wooded area.

C. In support of the above recommendations, the Task Force makes the following additional recommendation:

The City Council should instruct the City to prepare a document titled "Instructions and Information for Prospective Parties Interested in Developing or Using the C1 Parcel." This document would describe as fully as practicable the various user/owner issues involving this parcel. Thus the document should put forward most of what is included in the "City Owned Parcels" section of the Task Force report and back-up documentation relating to:

- a. the physical and environmental condition of the properties;
- b. their encumbrances;
- c. all Historic District considerations;
- d. augmented livability and green conditions desired by the City;
- e. the desire for allowance for community space;
- f. required adequacy of parking under any proposed plans.

This document would then be distributed to all parties interested in approaching the City with a view toward utilizing or purchasing this parcel.

### ***Traffic Improvements***

T1. The City should work with SHA to complete the current plan to optimize signal cycles and timing as quickly as possible. Once the plan is completed, the City should work with SHA to collect data for baseline measurements of vehicular and pedestrian volumes, speeds, and wait times.

T2. The City should work with SHA to set up a public forum and work sessions that try to achieve a holistic success for vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety and access through the Junction. The discussion would include cycles, sequencing, phasing and sight-lines as well as timing. One option at the Junction would be to establish different timing at different times of day. Changing the traffic light pattern of the Sycamore Avenue light to allow westbound traffic on Ethan Allen Avenue to proceed through the intersection while eastbound traffic is stopped, and vice versa, is also an avenue to explore.



T3. The City should urge SHA to prioritize upgrading the Junction traffic lights, such that they would be on the system coordinated by the Montgomery County Transportation Management Section. This system would allow for regular review of efficiency, optimized timing, and the possibility of immediate changes, when necessary.

T4. The City should solidify a relationship with SHA to involve regular, proactive information-sharing and consultation on all City-related matters within SHA's purview, including right-of-way maintenance, pavement markings, and roadway configuration.

T5. The City should enlist the offices of the Maryland District 20 legislative delegation, as needed.

T6. To ease congestion for westbound Ethan Allen traffic at Sycamore, the Task Force recommends in favor of stricter enforcement of use of the bus bay by bus drivers.

T7. The Task Force also recommends in favor of an upgraded transit stop on Ethan Allen at Sycamore that would decrease the time needed for the pickup and discharge of passengers.

T8. If stricter enforcement of bus-bay use does not reduce traffic congestion on Ethan Allen in a meaningful way, the Task Force recommends that the City make an evaluation of other options, including the possibility of a second through lane at the Ethan Allen/Carroll westbound intersection.

T9. As part of this evaluation, the Task Force urges the City to set up a public forum for a discussion about the needs of the bus-transit system, as well as the role buses play in reducing overall vehicular traffic. Included might be a study of whether the sizes of buses are correctly calculated for the number of passengers along the Ethan Allen route.

### ***Pedestrian Improvements***

P1. Establish a pedestrian-signalized crosswalk between the corner of Grant Avenue and the area of the current City-owned parking lot.

- The Task Force believes the new crosswalk should be a high priority, that cost should not be a hindrance, and that the timing of the crosswalk signal should allow pedestrians to cross the street within a “reasonable” time so as to avoid the temptation to jaywalk.

P2. Begin immediately to provide crossing guards at the Junction during traditional hours when children travel to and from school.

- The Task Force believes that crossing guards should be employed up until the point that a new signalized crosswalk is installed, at which point the guards should not be necessary. The Task Force also encourages the crossing guards to direct schoolchildren across the streets in accordance with the timing of the traffic lights so as not to risk an accident due to any confusion on the part of motorists.

P3. Prevail upon the State Highway Administration (SHA) to hold a public forum to allow clarification and full public discussion of the outcomes and options that SHA has in mind with respect to changes to the signalization at the Junction.



### ***Access and Parking Improvements***

AP1. Prioritize funding to make all sidewalks in the Junction ADA compliant, with (wherever feasible) a green strip with trees and plants to create a buffer between traffic and pedestrians, as soon as possible. This can be done using funds from speed camera revenue. Sidewalk improvements should include not only Junction portions of Ethan Allen and Carroll Avenues but also Columbia Avenue between Poplar and Sycamore. The Task Force recognizes that there are differing opinions about whether sidewalks on State Highways are the responsibility of the City or of SHA. The Task Force recommends that if this cannot be resolved such that SHA makes these sidewalks ADA compliant within 6 months of this report, the City go ahead and make the sidewalks compliant, rather than waiting for resolution of this issue.

AP2. Construct a switchback pathway through the wooded area of the City-owned parcels to provide a direct, gentle-gradient pedestrian link between Poplar Avenue and the City-owned parcel on Carroll Avenue. (This recommendation is also made in the City Parcels section of this report.)

AP3. Promote pedestrian and bicycle movement between the Junction commercial node and the Maple Avenue civic node via Grant Avenue.

AP4. Explore the need for more bike racks; determine optimal locations and needed capacity.

AP5. Continue to explore the possibility of locating a County bikeshare station at the Junction.

AP6. Create signed and marked bike routes on side streets to and through the Junction, parallel to the main arteries, and publish a bike map for the Junction.

AP7. Aggressively promote use of public transit by Junction visitors and employees.

AP8. In Junction marketing, include encouragement to use walking, biking, and public transportation.

AP9. Conduct a feasibility study for a “green” shuttle service linking the Takoma Metro, Old Town, the Junction, Washington Adventist University, Takoma/Langley Crossroads, and possibly other commercial and civic nodes in the City.

AP10. Make the process easier for neighborhoods in proximity to commercial areas to request a permit parking arrangement, possibly by reducing the size of the group of residents who need to agree to support a parking zone.

AP11. Ask a developer to do a multi-modal study which would measure access modes and parking demand as well as forecast new demand associated with any redevelopment under consideration. Then coordinate

planning and action with the future use of the City-owned parcels.

AP12. Encourage businesses in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue to receive deliveries in the rear.

AP13. Restripe the City-owned parking lot to maximize the number of parking spaces (an estimated twenty additional spaces are possible); combine this with closure of one of the two driveways if this is determined to promote efficient use of the parking lot.

AP14. Provide for handicapped parking along or near the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue.

AP15. When any new development or use will have an impact on parking demand, take the needs of the entire Junction into consideration when determining the net change in parking associated with the new development or new use.

AP16. Evaluate the appropriateness of Junction parking meter durations, rates, enforcement periods, and enforcement protocols.

### **Streetscape Improvements**

S1. Construct ADA-compliant sidewalks throughout the Junction that also accommodate tree and planter boxes (like those on Carroll West of the Fire Station) to create a buffer between traffic and pedestrians.

This will require expansion onto privately owned land (for which the city may or may not have the right of way) and/or onto the current street, the right of way for which is owned by the SHA. If the City does not own the right of way, property owners may be willing to accept encroachment onto their property if the City is paying for landscaping, a decorative wall, or other improvements.

As recommended in the “Access and Parking” section of this report, give the Junction high priority for sidewalk improvement, and use City funds to pay for such improvement if questions about SHA ownership/responsibility for sidewalks are unresolved within six months.



S2. Work with SHA to install a buffer strip and plantings along both sides of Carroll/Ethan Allen Avenue. Large and medium-sized, grade-level tree boxes should be installed for a range of native hardwood species. On the north side of Carroll Ave, plantings should start in front of the houses in lots 14 and 15 and down Carroll to Lee, enlarging the planter boxes in front of the stores between 7300 and 7334 Carroll Ave to accommodate larger trees.

Work with SHA, and with willing private property owners, to install low stone walls at various points along the newly widened sidewalks to create visual unity with lower Carroll Avenue and to help harmonize the mix of homes and businesses in the Junction. Low stone walls could be erected in front of both Healey Surgeons and Takoma Auto Clinic and along the City Lot. A stone wall could also replace the current brick wall in front of RS Automotive as well as the current brick plant box.

S3. At B.Y. Morrison Park, replace the present concrete cap with a permeable surface if it is advisable to do so; then replace the stairs with a slope. Take out the brick planters and replace them with two or three large shade trees, placed so that they do not block the name “Takoma Junction” on the pavilion. Replace the current plantings with other low, attractive plantings. If the small asphalt parking area is reconfigured (as recommended in the “Access and Parking” section of this report), integrate any new green space with the rest of the park.

### **Other Revitalization Actions**

O1. Convene a consultative stakeholder group to work with the City on Junction revitalization.

O2. Convene all property owners to discuss strategies for revitalization.

O3. Identify facades and storefronts most in need of aesthetic improvement, and work with owners, OTBA (Old Takoma Business Association), and HTI (Historic Takoma, Inc.) to help achieve improvements.

O4. Track environmental remediation processes and help shepherd these processes to completion.

O5. Encourage business incubation in vacant or underused spaces.

O6. Provide space for carshare parking, e.g. Zip Car.

O7. Continue City funding support for Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA), with an understanding that OTBA will work as a key stakeholder in carrying out a strategy for Junction revitalization.

- O8. Pay for directional signage and find non-SHA-controlled property on which to install it along the edges of Takoma Park (e.g. at University and Carroll; at Flower and Carroll; at New Hampshire and Ethan Allen).
- O9. Install Historic District identifier signs within the Junction.
- O10. Pay for design and/or installation of interpretive signs to tell the history of the district.
- O11. Fund a new annual event to highlight the district.
- O12. Prepare the B.Y. Morrison structure for re-use by a low-impact vendor tenant.
- O13. Plant shade trees or other landscaping plants, and budget for their ongoing care as needed.

### **Revitalization Strategy**

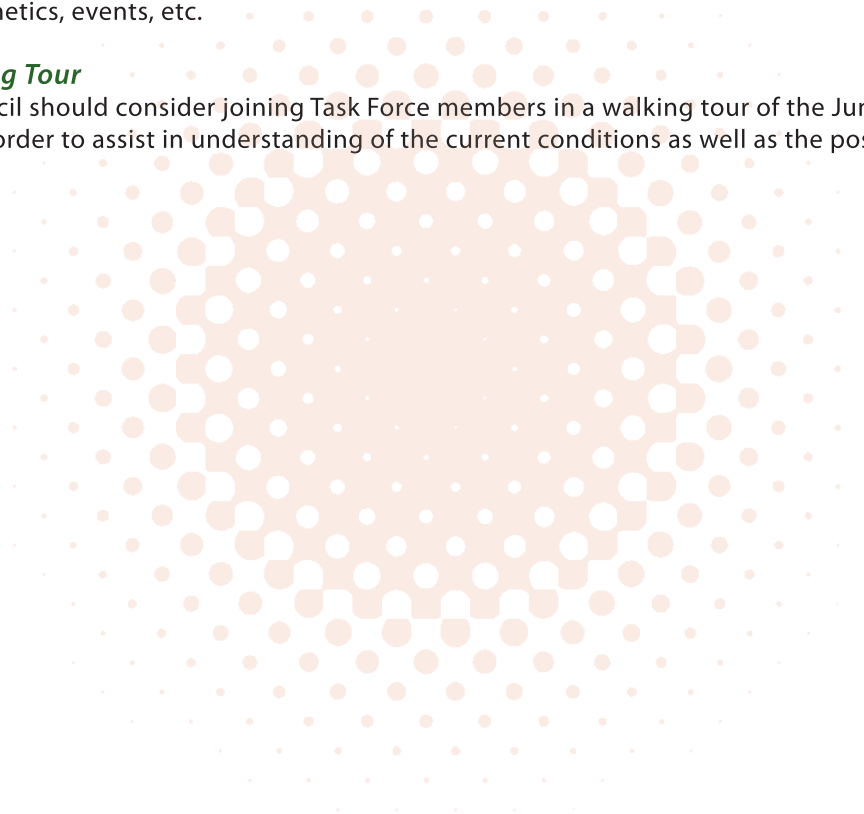
R1. The City should engage Junction stakeholders in partnership and, together, select a set of measurable goals to achieve, select a set of actions to pursue to achieve those goals, and set a timetable for the completion of these goals.

R2. The City should then establish a program budget to fund and track the progress of these actions, and assess progress toward the goals on an annual basis, making adjustments to the strategy as needed.

R3. The City should focus on accomplishing “lynchpin” changes (physical improvements, policy changes, relationship-building, goal-setting) that will create the underlying conditions for revitalization to occur. The City should then work closely with stakeholders in recruiting new businesses, assisting existing businesses, marketing, aesthetics, events, etc.

### **Council Walking Tour**

The City Council should consider joining Task Force members in a walking tour of the Junction at the earliest opportunity, in order to assist in understanding of the current conditions as well as the possibilities described in this report.



## 2

## Introduction/A Tour of Takoma Junction

### Membership

The City of Takoma Park solicited applications for membership on the Task Force in August 2010 through local print and online publications. The Council appointed all 20 applicants to the Task Force on September 27, 2010 and appointed one additional Task Force member on October 25, 2010, for a total of 21 members. Task Force members are listed in Table A.

Table A. Takoma Junction Task Force Members and Wards of Residence

1	Hailu L. Aichehi	Ward 4
2	Lorig Charkoudian	Ward 2
3	William Coulter	Ward 3
4	Kay Daniels-Cohen	Ward 3
5	Steve Dubb	(DC, Ward 4)
6	James DiLuigi	Ward 6
7	Megan Gallagher	Ward 3
8	Rosalind Grigsby (resigned)	Ward 1
9	Seth Grimes	Ward 1
10	Andrew Kelemen	Ward 1
11	Howard Kohn	Ward 3
12	Linette Lander	Ward 6
13	Katrina Oprisko	Ward 2
14	Lorraine Pearsall	Ward 1
15	Jennifer Sisane	Ward 3
16	Susan Robb	Ward 3
17	John Salmen (resigned)	Ward 3
18	Roger Schlegel	Ward 3
19	Jeffrey M. Trunzo	Ward 3
20	Ellen M. Zavian	Ward 3
21	Barbara Muhlbacher	Ward 2
22	Dan Seligman (appointed July 2011)	Ward 3

Task Force members hailed from 5 of the 6 city wards, and represent residential, business, environmental, and historic preservation interests across the city.



The Council, at its September 26, 2011 meeting, extended the life of the Task Force to January 31, 2012, reappointing all members except Hailu Aichehi and Jennifer Sisane, at their request. The extension was intended to allow the Task Force to review options and recommendations with city staff and to prepare and participate in a January 2012 Council work session. The Task Force was extended a second time to allow for a February presentation of this report and any necessary follow-up.

### Organization

In early Task Force meetings, members agreed on processes for making decisions. The group decided to operate by the principals of limited rules in October 2010. Specifically, for votes on action items, there were four steps: Motion, Second, Discussion, Vote. Those options with a majority of votes ruled.

Co-chairs and co-secretaries were identified through this process. These positions were held by Howard Kohn, Seth Grimes, Roger Schlegel, and Jeff Trunzo, respectively. In addition, on November 7, 2010, three subcommittees were created in which responsibilities were delegated as follows:

Business District, including the city lot, focusing on potential development uses and issues, planner and developer input and parking.

Research and Outreach, including organizing and engaging business and community stakeholders and synthesizing previous Junction work, studies, and proposals (e.g., OTBA market study, Fireplace group, neighborhood initiatives, charrettes, and other historical initiatives).

Traffic, pedestrian, streetscape, livability (Dan Burden walkability report, liaison parking with subcommittee A's work).

### Geographic Boundaries

On October 25, 2010 the following geographic boundaries for the Junction were accepted: Lee Avenue and Grant Avenue as far as #6 Grant Avenue to the north, the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Co-op and Columbia Avenue to the south, Sycamore Avenue to the east, and Philadelphia Avenue to the west. The Task Force agreed to take into consideration areas outside the Junction insofar as those areas impact the Junction or could be impacted by changes at the Junction.

## Task Force Research

Task Force members contributed their own time and expertise to researching existing conditions at the Junction, interviewing other members of the community, and consulting with city staff and others to obtain relevant background information. Two key aspects of Task Force research were (a) an extensive effort to involve the community in the process and (b) extensive consultation with officials and other persons with expertise to share.

### Community Voices

The Task Force conducted a variety of outreach initiatives that included:

1. Ten residential outreach events; approximately 150 participants.
2. At outreach gatherings, individual surveys plus recording of group findings.
3. Business surveys – outreach to every business.
4. Outreach to civic organizations (Historic Takoma and Old Takoma Business Association)
5. Pedestrian intercepts.
6. Informal conversations, and visitors to Task Force meetings

The goal of these outreach efforts has been to gain a solid understanding of the perspectives and preferences of local residents, businesses, and consumers. The ideas shared by participants in these outreach efforts have been shared with the Task Force and have helped to influence the options under consideration by the Task Force.

In the "Findings" connected with each of five sections of this report – City-owned Parcels, Traffic, Pedestrian Safety and Movement, Access and Parking, and Revitalization -- relevant opinions that emerged during outreach efforts are presented in summary form. These summaries attempt to present faithfully, and in a most general sense, the predominant points of agreement and disagreement among participants.

Community-outreach findings are documented in a report appendix.

### ***Meetings with Officials***

Takoma Junction Task Force subcommittees met with a number of state, county, and city officials and with other experts including local developers.

These included meetings with:

1. Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor for the Office of Historic Preservation for Montgomery County, on January 20, 2011.
2. Cedric Ward of the Maryland State Highway Administration, on April 20 and June 17, 2011.
3. Developer Bruce Levin, in the spring of 2011.
4. Takoma Park Public Works Director Daryl Braithwaite and Housing and Community Development Director Sara Daines, on May 31, 2011 (verify).
5. Developers John Urciolo and Jeff Topchik, on August 17, 2011.
6. Takoma Park Police Chief Ronald Ricucci and Housing and Community Development Director Sara Daines, on August 24, 2011.

A list of meetings, with notes or minutes where required and available, is posted at <http://takomajunction.org>. The Task Force had other conversations with city Senior Planner Ilona Blanchard; Ben Myrrick with the SHA; Ed Myers (involved in the 2006 Junction study) at Kittelson Associates; and Charles (Charlie) Edwards, Montgomery County project manager for the Takoma Park fire station rebuilding.

The Appendix and annexes to this report contain detailed documentation of Task Force outreach and research.

### ***About the Options and Recommendations Contained in this Report***

The Task Force operated on a consensus basis. After gathering as much information and as many ideas as possible, the Task Force worked to refine a list of “options” for various aspects of Junction improvement. Each option was brought up for discussion at a Task Force meeting or meetings, with further research being carried out to the extent possible for this volunteer group. If an option could not be ruled out by general consensus, it was kept on the list. Thus, in listing options in this report, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. The Task Force further recognizes that some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.

In making its recommendations, the Task Force also operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved broad consensus.

### ***Acknowledgments***

The Task Force would like to thank the scores of people who shared their time, experience, expertise, and insights over the past fifteen months: City residents; business and property owners; City, County, and state officials; Junction visitors; and consultants. The Task Force is in particular grateful to the members of the 2009-2011 and 2011-2013 City Council for creating and supporting this effort. Special thanks go out to a number of residents, as well as the TPSS Co-op, for hosting outreach meetings; and to the City staff who provided support ranging from answering research questions, to copying agendas and attachments, to preparing and cleaning the meeting spaces. Historic Takoma also generously hosted subcommittee meetings as well as meetings with SHA and County officials. Lastly, the Task Force would like to acknowledge all previous incarnations of Junction-related study groups for laying the groundwork and providing the historic context for this current effort. The Task Force hopes that the decisions that follow from this report will prove all the energy of those mentioned above to have been well-spent.



Takoma Junction satellite image.

## A Tour of Takoma Junction

### *Commercial and community spaces*

Takoma Junction houses a fire station and a mix of commercial spaces, parking, community spaces, an undeveloped wooded lot, roadway, and sidewalks, surrounded by residential neighborhoods.

Junction focal points include the recently rebuilt fire station, a city-owned lot that currently provides public parking spaces, the TPSS Co-op, BY Morrison Park, store-front commercial strips running along Carroll Avenue, a gasoline station, and two auto-repair shops.

City-owned Junction land, purchased in the mid-1990s, is comprised of two parcels. The first parcel includes the area that is paved for parking, as well as a large portion of the wooded area behind. It is approx. 1.16 acres, is zoned C1 and is included in the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone. The second parcel, residentially zoned R60 and approx. 0.25 acres in size, is part of the wooded area and fronts on Columbia Ave. Both parcels are inside the Historic District, and any development is subject to review by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission.

### *Business and community stakeholders*

#### *Business Inventory*

Takoma Junction is part of Old Takoma, an area represented by the Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA), and which also includes Old Town and Takoma DC.

Most of the businesses at the Junction fall into the category of personal goods and services, other convenience services, or repair services -- a business mix consistent with the goal expressed in the 2000 Master Plan. The Master Plan envisioned the Junction as village center with a traditional small-town charm, essentially an extension of Old Town, providing unique stores and services to both nearby neighborhoods and regional visitors. The Plan suggested that revitalization of the Junction capitalize on three strengths: walking-distance neighborhoods, visibility to pass-through traffic, and existing public spaces. The Plan observed that most parcels are small and parking is limited, and so recognized the potential for customers to park on nearby neighborhood streets.

Currently the Junction provides a different business mix than Old Town, where retail and dining are more

dominant.

The businesses at the Junction are, in general, stable and long-lived. Examples include the barbershop, the automotive service shops, the cleaners, the computer repair shop, the business and postal center, the framing shop, the pizza shop, the laundromat, and the veterinary clinic. Three fairly recently established businesses appear to be quite successful: the Organic Falafel, the Green Commuter, and Bikram "Hot" Yoga.

The Takoma Park-Silver Spring Food Cooperative (Co-op) functions as an "anchor business" for the Junction. It draws shoppers on a consistent, year-round basis and is successful enough that it is planning for possible expansion. To a certain extent, the Co-op serves as a second destination for consumers whose primary destination has been elsewhere in the Junction. For example, someone who has been to the Junction to pick up dry cleaning may remain in the Junction to buy groceries at the Co-op. However, the inconvenient parking locations, combined with the time required to cross Carroll Avenue, may work to discourage many multiple-stop shopping trips.

As of December, 2011, twenty-four (24) businesses or other institutions were in operation at the Junction, with an additional three vacant properties and one vacant office suite. (Historic Takoma is awaiting a final occupancy permit.) The active businesses and institutions, beginning at the northeast end of the district and moving counter-clockwise, are as follows:

1. Heritage Building and Renovation
  2. Suds, A Laundromat
  3. Takoma Park Animal Clinic
  4. Historic Takoma, Inc.
  5. Bikram "Hot" Yoga
  6. Pizza Roma
  7. The Green Commuter
  8. ATSI Computer Services
  9. Takoma Framers
  10. Salon 2000
  11. Carriage House Cleaners
  12. 7306 Carroll Avenue (vacant; formerly Glad Rags)
  13. Takoma Postal and Business Center
  14. The Summit Lighthouse
  15. 7300 Carroll Avenue (vacant; former TJs convenience store)
- (The businesses above are housed in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue.)
16. #6 Grant Avenue: Universal Designers and Consultants
  17. #6 Grant Avenue: Hungry for Music
  18. #6 Grant Avenue: Johrei Fellowship
  19. #6 Grant Avenue: (vacant)
  20. The Organic Falafel (food truck)
  21. RS Automotive (gasoline and service station)
  22. Kinetic Artistry
  23. Roland's Unisex Barber Shop
  24. 7212 Carroll Avenue (former "Letter Shop" – vacant)
  25. Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service
  26. Austin-Healey Surgeons
  27. Takoma Auto Clinic (sometimes referred to as "Johnny's")
  28. Takoma Park-Silver Spring Co-op

The district also includes two houses on Carroll Avenue across from the Fire Station: 7200 and 7206 Carroll Avenue. These properties are commercially zoned.

### *Community Stakeholders: Key Organizations That Could Contribute to Revitalization*

The City has a limited ability to shape Takoma Junction's future identity on its own, and county and state funding is likely to be scarce. The decisions of business and property owners, consumers, and City residents will together create the next chapter for this commercial district. Thus, any successful revitalization of the Junction will likely depend upon sustained, positive partnerships with organizations such as those described here:

The **Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA)** focuses on community revitalization and commercial vitality in the Old Takoma area, which includes three commercial nodes: the DC node centered around the Takoma Metro station; the "Old Town" node centered around the Carroll/Laurel intersection; and Takoma Junction. OTBA has received some funding from the City for the past several years. The mission of OTBA is to bring together businesses, residents, and community organizations dedicated to developing a vibrant market center, to enhance our unique and historic town setting. OTBA runs the Main Street Program, which assists in community revitalization by building on historic assets. In a more general sense, OTBA "works on issues essential to locally-owned, independent businesses and to a thriving town." OTBA membership is not restricted to "main street" businesses (retail, restaurant, professional service); it also includes non-profit organizations, home-based businesses, and concerned/engaged residents. There is an open invitation for new members to join.

OTBA is led by a sixteen-member Board. Board members also chair four committees which include other members: Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotions, and Organization. The Design Committee focuses on the physical appearance and health of the community. Projects include clean-up days, window design support and competitions, flower pots and keyhole gardens, adopt-a-tree and adopt-a-spot programs, and a façade improvement program. The Economic Restructuring Committee works on business mix, retention, and recruitment, including networking with various levels of government. Projects include market analysis and strategic action planning, a revolving loan fund, work on parking issues, outreach to property owners, mapping of commercial properties, business assessments, and quarterly meetings for business owners. The Promotions Committee carries out events and activities in the Old Takoma area and is responsible for outreach and advertising to a broader audience. Current projects include monthly events, marketing, and an annual coupon book. The Organization Committee produces the structural support for the entire Main Street Takoma effort. Current work includes membership, volunteer coordination, and website work.

OTBA commissioned a market analysis for the entire Old Takoma area that was completed in October 2009. Findings and recommendations from that market analysis are detailed in other "Findings" subsections of this report.

OTBA continues to work on its own to pursue the recommendations contained in the Market Analysis. The Task Force recognizes that OTBA will continue to play a lead role in shaping the kinds of economic activity at the Junction.

**Historic Takoma, Inc. (HTI)** has the mission of improving the quality of life in the Takoma community by: educating the public about the value of historic preservation; promoting public policies that foster preservation of historic resources; preserving the architecture and physical environment of the Takoma community; working with the greater community to revitalize business areas; procuring and preserving artifacts, documents, and other archival materials relating to the history of the community; establishing and maintaining historic structures and exhibits for the public; holding meetings, sponsoring lectures and demonstrations, and supporting other events for the instruction and information of the membership, community, and general public.

HTI has approximately 350 members and is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors. HTI has purchased and renovated a property at the Junction, in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue. This property will soon open as HTI headquarters and will be made available as a space for community meetings and events.

Three **Community Associations** directly adjoin or include Takoma Junction: S.S. Carroll (north side), B.F. Gilbert (south side), and Old Town/Carroll (western edge). Three more Community Associations extend to within two (2) blocks of the Junction: Boyd-Carroll (to the north), SOSCA (to the east), and PEN (to the west). An additional six Community Associations extend to within six (6) blocks of the Junction: Ritchie Citizen Association (north), Hodges Heights (northwest), WACO (southwest), Circle Woods (south), Pinecrest (south), and Aspen/Cherry/Colby (east).

S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association has been particularly engaged with Takoma Junction issues in recent years. An S.S. Carroll initiative from December 2007 to March 2008 presented findings and made formal



requests to the City that are captured in Findings at various places in this report.

The **Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department**, affiliated with the Montgomery County Fire Department, includes career and volunteer firefighters; the volunteer side dates back to the 1890s.

The **Takoma Park/Silver Spring Co-op** is a consumer-owned business with deep roots in the Takoma Park community and a commitment to supporting local organizations and promoting a sense of community (its motto is “Growing Community Through Food”). The Co-op’s presence as the “anchor business” of the Junction and its interest in expansion are discussed elsewhere in this report; the “City-owned Parcels” section contains an extensive discussion of the Co-op’s interest in expanding at the Junction. The Co-op’s recent and ongoing support for the vitality of the Junction has included co-sponsorship of Earth Day and “Screen on the Green” events as well as the free use of its community meeting room.



The **Takoma Farmers Market** has been a mainstay of Old Takoma for decades. It could serve as a model or provide active assistance in launching a complementary weekly or monthly market (food or other goods) at the Junction.

The **House of Musical Traditions (HMT)** has been a very successful destination business in Old Town for many years and has been a leader in promoting local musical events, including concert events in the City-owned parking lot. If HMT continues to expand its scope of operations with respect to classes, repairs, or performances and finds that it needs more space, it might consider opening a satellite location at the Junction.

Local **green businesses** could provide technical expertise with landscaping or with retrofitting of historic buildings to improve efficiency, install green roofs, or install solar panels.

**Friends of Sligo Creek** is a volunteer organization committed to restoring to health the water quality, natural habitat, and ecological well-being of the Sligo Creek watershed by bringing neighbors together to build awareness, improve natural habitat, and protect our community’s heritage. The organization includes many Takoma Park residents and would have a natural interest in how rooftops and paved areas are designed and managed at the Junction. Beyond issues of storm water management, Friends of Sligo Creek might be able to serve as a liaison to other environmental organizations, such as the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (headquartered in Takoma Park), who could partner with the City and with local business and property owners to pursuing environmental sustainability initiatives at the Junction.

The **Takoma Horticultural Club**, which has been in existence since 1916, has as its objective the promotion of knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of horticulture in the Takoma Park community and beyond via a wide range of educational and outreach programs. Many Club members are instrumental in helping to care for plantings in Takoma Park public spaces and throughout Old Takoma, including at the Junction.

The **Recreation Committee and/or the Play Committee** could assist in developing programming for public spaces to help make the Junction an intergenerational gathering place.

The **Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Commission**, whose motto is “celebrating the creative spirit of our community,” serves in an official advisory role to the City Council on all matters related to the arts and humanities, which promote, coordinate and strengthen public programs to further cultural development of the City. The Commission, which was established in 2003, consists of 15 members, appointed by the Takoma Park City Council, who serve staggered three-year terms.

The **Façade Advisory Board** was created by Takoma Park ordinance. It exists to provide guidance and assistance to commercial building and business owners in the Takoma Junction/Old Town area. It is intended to assist individuals who may be planning to renovate or restore the exterior of a building, or planning to install a sign for identifying their business. By ordinance, Board members consist of architects, developers, residents, historic preservationists, property and business owners. Meetings are open to the public and are typically held at 7 pm on the second Tuesday of every other month. Projects with which the Façade Advisory Board is involved typically require permits from Montgomery County Permitting Services and a Historic Area Work Permit from the Historic Preservation Commission. The Façade Advisory Board can help to facilitate the permitting process and can assist in identifying potential funds and tax credits to offset the cost of some types of projects.

The **Maryland State Highway Administration** controls the right-of-way for Routes 195 and 410 at the Junction (Carroll Avenue and Ethan Allen Avenue). As has been detailed in the "Traffic" section of this report, a strong working relationship with SHA is vital to the success of any Junction improvement. Beyond traffic management, SHA's involvement will be needed for many streetscape and signage changes.

A **Community-Based Credit Union** or **Community Development Corporation** might be a way to promote investment by local residents in business development at the Junction. As of January 2012, local residents Dan Robinson and Nadine Bloch were leading an exploratory group considering the establishment of a community-based credit union.

## Why the Junction Matters

Takoma Junction's importance within the future economic and cultural life of the City is likely to be greater than its size might suggest. This is due to five basic factors:

1. The Junction is near to the geographic center of the City and close to the Maple Avenue civic corridor. As transportation costs continue to climb, the Junction will be well-positioned to provide convenience goods and services to a significant proportion of Takoma Park's population.
2. The Junction is the only sizeable commercial district in Takoma Park that is not shared with another jurisdiction. Thus it is an important place for communicating and celebrating Takoma Park's special heritage and spirit – and a centrally located "community living room" for Takoma Park residents and their friends.
3. New Hampshire Avenue Gateway development, growth at Takoma/Langley Crossroads, and redevelopment of the Washington Adventist Hospital campus will make the Junction a more crucial node, linking these areas with Old Town, Takoma Metro, and Montgomery College.
4. Takoma Junction represents a unique opportunity for revitalization that blends historic preservation with environmental sustainability. Successful Junction revitalization could serve as a model for similar efforts elsewhere and help re-center Takoma Park as a progressive leader.
5. As time passes and regional growth continues, the historic character of Takoma Junction will increasingly set it apart as a unique destination.

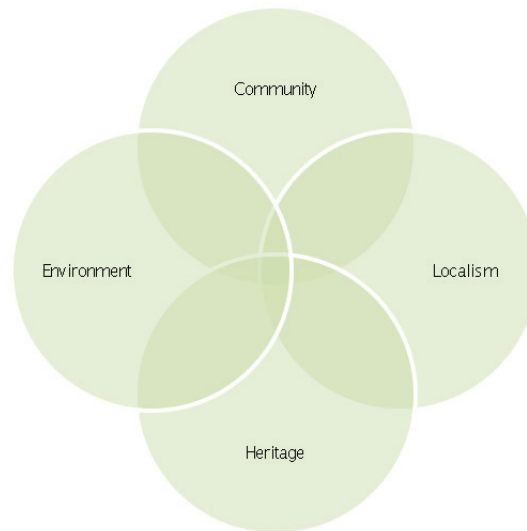
## *What the Junction is Not*

The Task Force recognizes that the Junction is not:

- Big
- Silver Spring or Bethesda
- Next to Metro
- An extension of Old Town
- Generic
- Chain-store oriented
- Another arts district

Further, the Task Force recognizes that the Junction is but one of several Takoma Park commercial districts, and that any Junction revitalization must be conceived and undertaken in a way that complements commercial activities (both now and in the future) at Takoma/Langley Crossroads, along the New Hampshire Avenue gateway, elsewhere in Old Takoma, and in the small commercial districts on Maple Avenue and Flower Avenue. There is no point in encouraging development or change at the Junction that undermines commercial activity elsewhere in Takoma Park, or that will prove unsustainable as development proceeds along the New Hampshire Avenue corridor.

## Four Complementary Themes



Task Force members have imagined many “ways forward” for the Junction, but four common themes have emerged again and again: Community, Localism, Heritage, and Environment.

As the diagram above indicates, these themes can overlap and complement one another. For example, encouragement of local shopping for locally made or grown items is good for the environment and makes the Junction a stronger community gathering place and neighborhood hub. This increased activity in turn helps the Junction reclaim and celebrate its heritage as a bustling center of local activity. Community gatherings and high-quality, personalized service in turn make the Junction a place that is integral to the ebb and flow of people’s daily lives.

### *The Importance of Experiencing the Junction First-Hand*

On a Saturday morning in November 2010, members of the newly formed Task Force conducted an extensive tour of the Junction. This tour allowed some members to take note of details and of visual perspectives that they had never attended to before – even if they had been visiting the Junction on a regular basis for years. Just to cite a few examples, participants ventured behind the Fire Station to view the parcels and the elevations behind the City-owned parking lot and the automotive shops; examined the parking areas behind the Carroll Avenue stores; sat in B.Y. Morrison Park for a period; used the pedestrian crossings; observed the movements of public transport (buses, ambulances, fire trucks); noted the conditions of the sidewalks and the extensive number of driveway apron cuts; and witnessed difficulties experienced by cyclists, pedestrians with children and strollers, and handicapped visitors. This was just the first of many visits that Task Force members made to gain a clear and accurate sense of the present conditions at the Junction.

The Task Force believes strongly that City Council members and, indeed, all community stakeholders who wish to be involved in continuing discussions about the revitalization of the Junction should take time to slow down and see the Junction with fresh eyes. As the length and thoroughness of this report suggest, the choice of solutions for improving this important space in our community will arise from an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the place – not only its physical features but also the ways that people interact with those features on a daily basis. Accordingly, one overarching recommendation of this report is that the Council join Task Force members on a walking tour

### 3

## Historic Preservation

The Takoma Junction intersection and the surrounding properties considered by the Takoma Junction Task Force are located within the Takoma Park Historic District, which is a cultural resource with federal, state and local standing. This makes consideration of this District, and the regulations that protect it, a central issue when considering development of any kind in this area. The District is administered by a variety of agencies, including the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and the Maryland Historical Trust. The origins of this Historic District date back to 1976, when Takoma Park confronted development proposals such as road widening and demolition of homes due to proposed transportation, commercial, and institutional development projects.

Protections for all cultural resources, such as historic districts, are put in place to maintain their character and integrity. To support these efforts, governments also convey tax credits on federal, state and the local level as an extra incentive to maintain the integrity of the district. Loss of character and integrity incrementally over time degrades the value of the district and therefore makes it easier for more damaging future alterations that could then be justified from a preservation compliance perspective.

An extensive regulatory framework safeguards the Takoma Park Historic District. On the County level, this is Chapter 24A. On the State and Federal level, it is the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 106 review; a State law that parallels Section 106; and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, which bars a DOT agency from using a historic property for project purposes if there is any prudent and feasible alternative to doing so. When considering development within an historic district, the regulatory process across all agencies will always lean toward the alternative that has no impact or minimal impact.

### *Almost Lost – The Origins of the Takoma Park Historic District*

The Takoma Park Historic District is today the largest historic district in Montgomery County, Maryland. The impetus for its creation was a direct response to major losses and development threats beginning in the 1960s and continuing for decades.<sup>1</sup> The largest scale threats involved the creation of the North Central Freeway,<sup>2</sup> the proposed widening of MD 410,<sup>3</sup> the expansion of Montgomery College,<sup>4</sup> the development of the Metro Station.<sup>5</sup> There were also a myriad of smaller scale losses of individual historic homes and institutional buildings. (see endnotes for details)

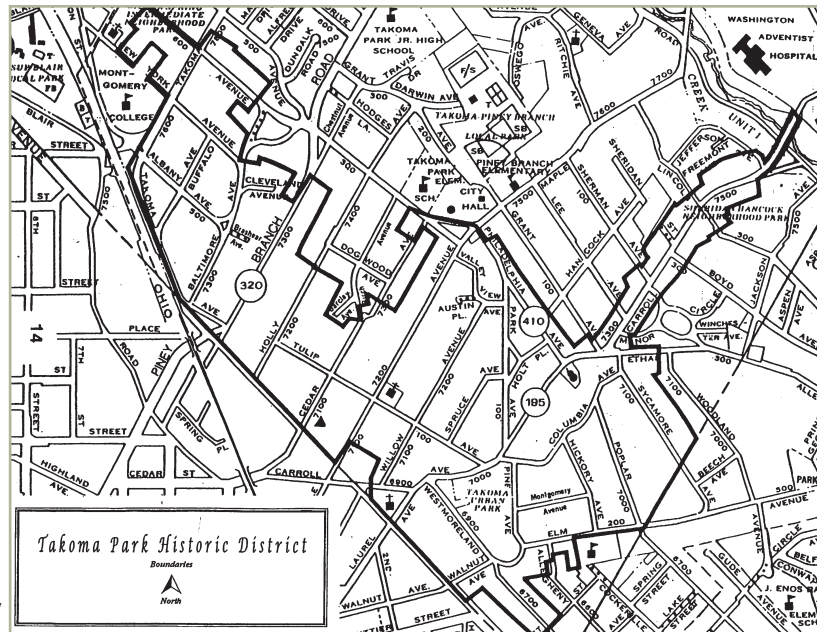
Our community fought back by first placing the oldest residential portions of Takoma Park within a National Register District, which was officially established in 1976 (see National Register Historic District map). This was the strongest level of protection available at that time, and in those days only residential areas were considered for National Register status. National Register Districts and National Register-eligible Districts (outside the boundaries of the National Register District) provide, in addition to tax credits, some important and specific protections with respect to state and federally funded projects such as road construction, road widening and other intrusive public work projects that are very relevant to Takoma Park.

In 1976, there was not yet an existing legal framework for a local historic district with protections against private demolition threats. However, the establishment of the National Register District was strategic and allowed for the necessary political recognition of the value of preserving our community. For example, the existence of this National Register District allowed the North Takoma community to prevent more demolition of Victorian houses by Montgomery College through public and political pressure prior to the creation of a local district.

In 1979, Montgomery County adopted the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24A) ultimately recognizing the cultural value of preserving its older communities. In the

1980s, Montgomery County, together with Takoma Park residents, focused on the involved process for creation of the Takoma Park Historic District to provide more comprehensive protections at the local level than afforded by the National Register District alone. This effort culminated in the County designation of the Takoma Park Historic District in 1992 (see Takoma Park Historic District map).<sup>6</sup>

One of the major stated purposes for establishing it was to protect against “unsympathetic alteration and insensitive redevelopment.” This local district incorporated to a great extent the 1976 National Register Historic District and added the commercial areas in Takoma Junction and Old Town, some additional residential areas, and the Carroll Avenue Bridge. This entire district is regulated by Montgomery County, and the local preservation stewardship helps to protect the integrity of the National Register District over time. The boundaries of the Takoma Park Historic District define its environmental setting.



The boundaries of the Takoma Park Historic District define its environmental setting.

### *The Importance of Environmental Setting*

Environmental setting is a critical concept within historic preservation, whether considering an individual historic resource or an historic district. Why is this so important? A district together with its setting reflects a community’s pattern of development during a defined period. It therefore tells the story of the evolution of a unique cultural resource over its critical period of development (which spans the 1880s up to WWII in Takoma Park). It interprets the built environment in its totality as a cohesive unit together with its buildings, roads, street patterns, trees and open spaces, all of which come under and are part of the protections within the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Therefore, an historic district is not just about individual buildings; rather it is the sum of all its parts and how the parts relate to each other. The environmental setting of a given historic district is always unique, each one dependent upon those site-specific factors that influenced a given area’s development over a defined time. Takoma Park developed as a small town with meandering roads, not as a central business district or major urban center. This small town character of the late 19th and early 20th century development of Takoma Park is directly represented to this day by its existing streetscapes, road patterns, profusion of trees, residential and commercial architecture, and the low scale of the commercial buildings, which exist adjacent to residential neighborhoods in order to serve the needs of that community.

The environmental setting of an historic district is thus protected as part of the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation. In fact, the integrity of the Takoma Park Historic District, is a first line of defense against the widening of MD 410 in the future. In a 2010 public hearing, SHA Administrator Neil Pederson, stated that our Takoma Park Historic District was in SHA’s opinion the stronger protection against the widening of MD 410.<sup>7</sup>

### *Role of Local Government*

Local preservation ordinances are the most effective tools for protecting historic places and are enacted as part of a jurisdiction’s zoning powers. In Montgomery County, the local ordinance is Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code, which states that its purpose is to:

“Provide for the identification, designation and regulation, for purposes of protection, preservation



and continued use and enhancement, of those sites, structures with their appurtenances and environmental settings, and districts of historical or archeological, architectural or cultural value in that portion of the county which is within the Maryland-Washington Regional District.”

In order to provide such protection, a Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) is required for any change that will have a material effect upon the District. This is defined in the following way:

(1) “Constructing, reconstructing, moving, relocating, demolishing or in any manner modifying, changing or altering the exterior features of any historic site or any historic resource located within any historic district.”

(2) “Performing any grading, excavating, construction or substantially modifying, changing or altering the environmental setting of an historic site or an historic resource located within an historic district.”

(3) “Erecting or causing to be erected any sign or advertisement (with the exception of those signs which temporarily advertise for sale an historic site or an historic resource located within an historic district, or which for a temporary period advertise a political viewpoint) on the exterior or on the environmental setting of any historic site or any historic resource located within any historic district.”

Hardscape changes with the potential for negative impact on the Historic District and that would most assuredly require review under the permit process include: road widening, construction of traffic circles and new roads, intersection reconfiguration and street pattern changes; major sidewalk changes; tunnel or overpass construction; changing the relationship of historic commercial stores fronting on main street through street/road re-configurations; road changes that result in harmful impact to structures within the district.

It is the role of local government to protect our historic district from proposed changes that may harm/weaken its integrity through introduction of nonconformities into the streetscape. In 2008, the Chair of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission wrote a letter to the State Highway Administration in strong opposition to an intersection feasibility study for major alterations in the Junction proposed by Kittelson & Associates (see Letter from HPC to SHA).<sup>8</sup> This study detailed drastic changes of street patterns, impacts to houses and property, and the introduction of two traffic circles including one in front of the fire station (which was not illustrated and its reference buried at the end of the text). In this letter, the HPC Chair stated:

“On behalf of the HPC, I would like to express reservations that the alternatives proposed in the Feasibility Study may adversely affect historic resources and/or the historic setting of the Takoma Park Historic District.”

Specifically on the idea of a traffic circle that would alter existing street patterns, the HPC warned the State not to proceed in this direction:

“We encourage consideration of alternatives that would achieve enhanced pedestrian safety and traffic flow without adversely affecting the historic streetscape and/or historic resources through the introduction of traffic circles.”

Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor for the Montgomery County Office of Historic Preservation met with Task Force members on January 20th, 2011 and answered several questions.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Whipple stressed the concept and principle of “minimal impact” applicable to project review, and why review was so seriously considered with respect to alterations, as recorded in the Task Force minutes:

“Historic districts can be degraded with the incorporation of incompatible elements. This can be undesirable, because at some point the cultural context can be sufficiently diminished or completely lost, resulting in the possibility that future development could be approved that would be significantly less conforming to the remaining historic elements.”

### ***Role of State and Federal Government***

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) is by law the State Historic Preservation Office that administers programs and monitors changes to both National Register and National Register-eligible districts when there is federal or state involvement. Non-routine and major public works alterations to historic districts trigger a major formal process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; Maryland’s parallel law to Section 106 review, and also Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, which bars an agency such as SHA from using a historic property for project purposes if there is any prudent and feasible alternative. This process is similar to the one that would be followed for widening MD 410.<sup>10</sup> This is not trivial and it should be approached with caution. These laws provide an avenue for public participation, intervention and legal challenges on the state or national level.

MHT must be involved when there are major changes proposed for either a National Register District, or one

that is National-Register eligible in order to ensure the district is not diminished. With respect to maintaining the strength of the protections afforded by our historic district, MHT's compliance office cautions:

"Regarding the issue of integrity – a major change (or successive minor changes) to the community can erode its historic integrity. Once incompatible elements are introduced into the streetscape, it could make future alternations to the streetscape more tolerable (or less egregious) from a preservation compliance perspective."<sup>11</sup>

In other words, once the integrity of the historic district is changed sufficiently, it will be easier for SHA, or any State or Federal agency to argue in the future that the impact of widening of our roads or other major alterations no longer matters because the overall integrity has been eroded. It is therefore important to consult with MHT when considering any alterations that can have unintended negative consequences literally down the road.

Other thoughts from MHT regarding potential improvements within Takoma Park (see previous footnote):

- The alternative that causes the least harm or produces a net benefit to the district should be selected;
- The focus should be on retaining the integrity of the community and maintaining the existing character of the streetscape;
- Changes to the streetscape should be context sensitive and maintain Takoma Park's unique sense of place.



### ***State Highway Administration Position on the Takoma Park Historic District***

In a public hearing before the Takoma Park City Council and the community, State Highway Administration (SHA) Neil Pederson addressed the difficulties that SHA would face if it decided at some point in the future to widen MD 410.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Pedersen noted that although MD 410 was widened in other areas, that was not so in Takoma Park:

"The roadway is quite appropriate in terms of its current cross section as it goes through Takoma Park given the historic nature of the area that it passes through."

After explaining the political alignments that would have to happen to widen MD 410, Mr. Pederson felt the legal protections were stronger and noted the following to our City Council, which has direct bearing on the importance of maintaining the National Register-eligibility of our district through which MD 410 passes:

"Second, and perhaps even a stronger protection from my perspective are the historic preservation acts at both the federal and state level. The National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, provides protections for the very types of areas that MD 410 passes through and places an extremely high hurdle on the SHA to be able to do any significant changes to roadways through a section such as Takoma Park; and there is similar legislation on the State level that is worded very similarly to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. An even stronger provision of Section 106 of NHPA is Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966 which provides protections for both parklands and National Register eligible historic sites, which this area of Takoma Park would qualify [as], and basically says that SHA cannot be making improvements if there are prudent or feasible alternatives. Second, Section 4(f), I can tell you, places an extremely high hurdle and has a long case history in law including a landmark Supreme Court decision that makes it extremely difficult if not in most cases impossible for us to do the type of improvements that widening would entail."

## 4

# City-Owned Parcels

**Parcel descriptions:** City-owned Junction property was purchased on September 15, 1995. The primary reason for the purchase was to prevent private development of the property in a manner that did not accord with community values and interests.

The property is comprised of two parcels.

The first parcel ("C1 parcel") is approximately 1.16 acres, is zoned C1, and is included in the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone. It includes the area that is paved for parking as well as the majority of the adjacent wooded area. Approximately 41% of the C1 parcel is currently paved with a macadam surface or is landscaped along Carroll Avenue.

The second parcel ("R60 parcel"), residentially zoned R60 and approximately 0.25 acres, is residentially zoned R60, and comprises a triangular portion of the wooded area that fronts on Columbia Ave.

Both parcels are inside the Historic District, and any development is subject to review by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (Council work session, Jan. 25, 2010).

The current market value of the parcels is unknown. The price on the Deed (dated 9/15/95 and recorded 9/19/95) is listed as \$483,000.00. A small portion of this property (0.1921 acres) was conveyed to Montgomery County on or about June 16, 2006 for the fire station rear garage. The City's fixed asset acquisitions ledger (Asset Record Number 0000001145) notes the basis value as \$490,692.14. There is no assessed value assigned to the property as it is publically owned.

## Findings for C1 Parcel

**Current Use:** About half of the C1 parcel is paved and used primarily for parking, with two driveways fronting Carroll Avenue. (The second of these driveways was constructed a few years ago when the temporary fire station was erected on the west side of the parking lot.) Most of the surface is macadam, but the west side includes a concrete pad that was constructed for the temporary fire station. There are approximately 37 striped parking spaces on the paved portion, along with storage sheds and trash receptacles. A handful of these spaces appear to be used for on-going storage of vehicles at present (Task Force observations, summer 2011). The parking lot is also used occasionally for community events such as the annual Earth Day celebration in April, film screenings, and concerts. When the temporary fire station was operational on the west side of the parking lot, there were electrical and water hookups on the site; anecdotal reports suggest that these are still in place.

About half of the C1 parcel is wooded and undeveloped. A separate subsection below contains findings and options related to the wooded area.

**Current Co-op License:** In July 1998, the City entered into a "revocable but non-exclusive" land license with Takoma Park-Silver Spring Cooperative, Inc., which allows for the use of a portion of the parking lot for customer and employee parking, placement of containerized storage, trash receptacles, and access to its loading dock. The agreement remains in place until terminated by either party and states that, in the event the property is developed or improved by the City, the Co-op no longer has access to the property. The license may be transferred, at the request of the Co-op to another party with the City's written consent. The agreement specifically states that the Co-op does not have any appurtenant right (ownership rights) to the property (Council work session, Jan. 25, 2010). When community events or parking lot maintenance are planned by the City, the Co-op can be asked to vacate the City-owned parking lot with a few days' notice. Under the current terms of the agreement, the Co-op pays the City \$18,000 per year for this land license.

**Zoning:** In the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, Takoma Junction is designated as part of a larger Takoma Park-East Silver Spring area in need of revitalization so as to:

- foster economic vitality and attractive community character

- promote enhanced pedestrian environment and an improved circulation system for pedestrians and bicycles as well as motor vehicles
- provide for the combination of residential with commercial uses.

The "C-R"(Commercial Revitalization) zoning ordinance, which applies to the C1 parcel, provides flexibility in certain design standards to allow for more commercial development and better design than would otherwise be achieved. For example, it allows the Planning Board, in the course of site plan review, to waive requirements for parking setbacks and numbers of spaces (to help accomplish goals of the master plan including revitalization, enhanced pedestrian environment, and encouragement of transit use); it also allows the Planning Board to reduce building setbacks to accomplish master plan objectives.

Among several modifications to standards for dwellings in the overlay zone, the ground entry floor for a project including residential uses must be devoted to commercial use unless this requirement is waived by the Planning Board.

Building height within the overlay zone is limited to 30 feet; but the Planning Board may allow up to 42 feet for commercial development, and up to 50 feet to accommodate residential development if the Planning Board finds that such buildings are compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with the intent of the applicable master plan (Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, Section 59-C-18.21. Takoma Park/ East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone).

The Historic Preservation Commission would play an important role in the design process for any new development. Historic district considerations would likely limit the height of any new structure to the lower end of the range described above.

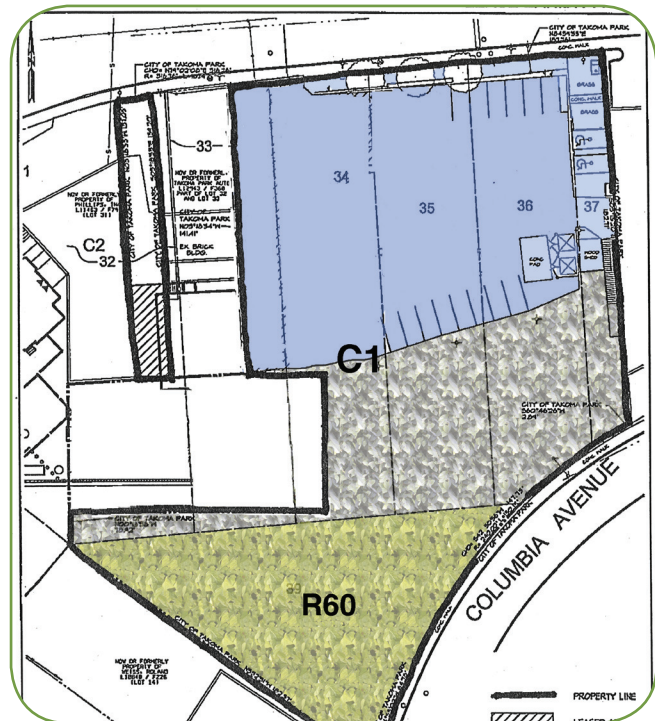
**City staff recommendations (Council work session, Jan. 25, 2010):** Staff recommended that the City Council (a) discuss available redevelopment options and provide direction to staff on how to proceed; (b) if the Council wishes to proceed with the development of a RPF or RFQ, establish a formal work group to assist in its preparation; and (c) include in the FY11 budget, if the Council finds that either or both properties are no longer needed for the public use, funding to assist in their sale or transfer.

**City staff additional information (December 2011):** It appears that the City cannot engage in negotiations for the long-term use of City property without entering into a bid process. City contracts (which would include a sales contract, as well as a lease or development agreement) are to be awarded by competitive sealed bidding or competitive sealed proposals unless one of the exceptions applies. None of the exceptions to competitive bidding would seem to apply. Also, under City Charter sec. 401.b.41 Property) and Md. Code, Art. 23A, sec. 2(b)(24), 20 days public notice is required before selling or conveying real or leasehold property belonging to the municipality.

The City can, however, set the evaluation criteria for an invitation for bids or proposals. A preference for locally-owned businesses, for example, could be one of the evaluation factors.

Dwelling setback, green area, and lot coverage requirements are as per the underlying zone (C-1), while parking setbacks may be waived. Building setbacks may also be reduced to accomplish master plan objectives by the Planning Board. Permitting Services also has some waiver processes.

Historic District considerations: The design of any new development on the C1 parcel, including such aspects as size, height, massing, and facade, would be subject to review by historic preservation agencies in keeping with the concept and principle of "minimal impact." (Historic district issues are discussed in a separate section of this report.) The primary purpose of such review is to guard against the degradation of the historic district through "the incorporation of incompatible elements" which could contribute to the diminishment or loss





of the cultural context of the historic district (Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, Montgomery County Office of Historic Preservation, meeting with Task Force members, Jan. 20th, 2011).

**Environmental conditions: City-owned C1 parcel and adjacent properties on the south side of Carroll Avenue**

C1 parcel -- There is limited geotechnical information and no environmental information about the C1 parcel, and little is known about past uses of this property at this time. In 1988, four geotechnical borings were collected to a depth of 20 feet when a development was being considered on this property (see attached results). The borings provide information on the presence of fill material. The fill was found to be thickest (down to 11 feet) at the two borings closest to 7221 Carroll Avenue. Fill material was shallower moving toward the Turner property, and ranged from 4.5 to 7.5 feet in thickness, with the shallower depth closest to the Turner property. There were no field readings for volatile chemicals or samples collected for analysis at this time. Therefore, this information is limited, but does indicate soil disturbance in this area.

There is anecdotal information within the community that trash handling and/or disposal occurred on the C1 parcel, including partially down the wooded hill.

7211 Carroll Avenue (Austin-Healey Surgeons): In the early 1990s, this property was found to have petroleum products leaking from underground storage tanks. Three storage tanks were remediated or removed. Although contaminated soil was found under the tanks, the MDE did not consider the levels sufficiently high to warrant soil removal. Currently, MDE considers this case to be closed.

7221 Carroll Avenue (Takoma Auto Clinic) – The Dawes family began a trash business in 1956, C. Dawes & Sons Trash Company, that operated for approximately 30 years until Waste Management and BFI moved into the area (Roland Dawes interview, 2001, Historic Takoma, Inc.). In 1990, this property was found to have petroleum products leaking from underground storage tanks. Six underground storage tanks were removed and disposed of off-site. Contaminated soil was also removed. Some residual contamination remained under the tanks, however; the MDE did not consider the levels sufficiently high to warrant soil removal. Currently, MDE considers this case to be closed. In 1994, this property was purchased by the Takoma Auto Clinic.

See “Developer Considerations” below for further discussion of environmental concerns related to the C1 parcel.

**Traffic, parking, and residential buffer considerations:** The Task Force has noted in its discussions that the proximity of the C1 parcel to signalized intersections, as well as its current use as the Junction’s public parking area, will be key considerations in the design of any potential new development on the site. Specifically, an analysis would need to be completed on the link between Junction parking requirements and possible new construction on the C1 parcel. The Task Force has also noted that the current wooded area functions as a buffer between commercial and residential areas of the city; this is elaborated upon in the “Wooded Area” subsection that follows.

**Conveyance:** The Municipal Charter gives the City the right to “convey any real or leasehold property when no longer needed for the public use, after having given at least twenty days public notice of the proposed conveyance.” In the Jan. 2010 work session, City staff pointed out that municipal policy calls for the City “to convey any real or leasehold property when no longer needed for the public use” (Municipal Charter, Section 401(b) 41).

**Redevelopment Options and Costs:** At the Jan. 25, 2010 Council work session, City staff outlined the options available to the Council if it wishes to proceed with redevelopment of the property. These options include:

- Sell the property to the highest bidder. The price offered by the purchaser, rather than the plans for the site, would be the primary factor determining this type of property transfer. State law restricts the right to sell the property to an individual without a public offering.
- Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ) which would define the parameters of the proposed sale and establish specific parameters for its redevelopment. The more restrictive the development parameters, the more incentives are often required. Under this scenario, more weight is given to the type of development proposal and less weight is given to the price. Perhaps an estimate of the allowed square-footage requirements for any new structure would need to be included as well.
- Retain ownership and develop the property for a public purpose (e.g. parking, green space, market space, arts space, etc.).

Assessing fiscal impact, staff stated that the cost of transferring the commercial parcel on Carroll and the residential parcel on Columbia is currently unknown; that the properties should be appraised; that survey or engineering work may be required to facilitate the sale or transfer; that there would be expenses associated



with the marketing of the property; and that funding for these costs, if the Council wished to proceed with disposition of one or both properties, would need to be included in the City budget.

#### **Studies:**

In 1996 the City of Takoma Park carried out a Junction Revitalization Study, which included facts and recommendations related to the City-owned parcels.

In the five-faceted Takoma Park Strategic Plan, adopted in 2009, the first facet is Fiscal Sustainability. One of the eight priority projects and initiatives in service of Fiscal Sustainability is to create, using community-based planning techniques, a redevelopment plan for Takoma Junction, and to provide for the redevelopment of the City-owned parcels. The “Key Indicators” for this project/initiative include “an increase in the City’s property tax base resulting from new residential and commercial development” (City Council Strategic Plan).

A State Highway Administration sponsored study completed in 2008 included assessment of a “Concept B” mini-roundabout scenario that involved realigning Columbia Ave. [through the R60 and C1 parcels] to form the south leg of a Grant/Carroll/Ethan Allen/Columbia intersection, and replacing signalized control with a mini-roundabout (Kittleson and Associates, Inc., Intersection Feasibility Analysis, January 2008).

A market analysis of the entire Old Takoma area, completed in 2009 for the Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA), included several findings and recommendations related to the C1 parcel. Recommendations for new business included an expanded TPSS Co-op, to include an outdoor café. Specifically, the report recommended a 10,000 square foot expansion of the Co-op. It called for Takoma Junction to remain a distinct and separate convenience and commercial district anchored by an expanded food Co-op with features to encourage pedestrian activity (such as an outdoor café) and strengthened pedestrian linkages between the Co-op and other retailers across Carroll Avenue. Another recommendation for the C1 parcel involved a gardening center, perhaps associated with the Co-op, with supplies, garden/cooking classes, and programming associated with the Farmers Market (this recommendation predated the opening of the hardware store in Old Town). These ideas were consistent with the study’s general call for infill development to activate “dead” spaces such as parking lots, and with its recognition of situational disadvantages of the Junction, including the small scale of the area, less concentration and massing of commercial activity than Downtown Old Takoma, and “one-sided shopping” (i.e. the lack of stretches of roadway with shopping on both sides).



**Outreach findings:** A key consideration for business development in the Junction is the desire for a new “game-changing” use of the C1 parcel. In the Task Force’s outreach meetings, a majority of participants expressed support for a multi-use development on the C1 parcel, including a potential Co-op expansion, provided that such a development did not impact traffic on Columbia/Sycamore Avenues, maintained an adequate level of parking in the Junction as a whole, and improved the attractiveness and livability of the Junction. The vision of “multi-use” development discussed by participants generally involved a mix of community space and business space. The possibility of mixed-use involving upper-level residential space was not explored in outreach meetings. In terms of scale, the expectation of participants – based upon Task Force findings to that point – was that any new development would be limited to two or perhaps “two-and-a-half” stories above ground, due to historic district limitations.

Participants were broadly supportive of the use of a portion of the current paved area for non-permanent business activities, such as food trucks, crafts, or apparel vendors, periodic festival/market events, or a dance pavilion. Participants were also broadly supportive of the use of all, or a portion, of the currently paved area as permanent or periodic cultural/gathering spaces for activities such as games, music, or dancing.

Participants stressed that the design of any new development on the C1 parcel, or other changes made in conjunction with such a development, should ensure that an adequate supply of parking (for visitors and business employees) is available to the Junction as a whole. Nearly all participants shared the view that any new development in the Junction should harmonize with the existing architecture and scale of activity, and should favor independent businesses over “chain stores.” Regardless of the type of development, residents expressed a strong desire for aesthetic improvement of the nondescript stretch along the south side of Carroll Avenue

between the Fire Station and the Co-op.

A common thread running through many outreach participant suggestions is the desire for more community gathering space (public or private) at the Junction. Frequently expressed suggestions for community amenities include: an area for small outdoor games such as bocce ball; a community patio; and a tot lot. In general, there is a strong desire for making the Junction a more attractive place to meet and mingle, with many expressing a desire for intergenerational activities.

**Developer considerations:** Task Force members interviewed local developers Bruce Levin, John Urciolo, and Jeff Topchik about possible development of the C1 parcel. These interviews indicated that considerable limitations apply to any potential development of all or part of the C1 parcel. A summary of those conversations follows:

1) Most developers would not be interested in developing the site without a lead tenant. If the Co-op committed to being a lead tenant, developers who would not otherwise be interested, might become interested. Both Urciolo and Topchik agreed that expanding the Co-op made the most sense from a business standpoint for developing the C1 parcel.

2) The C1 parcel itself is too small to do very much with, especially given that it may be necessary to build a tall retaining wall at the back edge where a steep slope drops to Columbia Avenue. The cost of a wall would be hard to justify for a small development. Furthermore, in order to fit into the area and to meet parking demands, one could probably not construct a building higher than three stories. However, if the neighboring commercial parcels were combined with the City-owned C1 parcel, it might justify a larger commercial building or the cost of a retaining wall.

3) Retail seems to have more potential than office or residential space. Office space is not in high demand, and the location is not ideal for office space. Mixed-use does not seem viable because of the size of the C1 parcel, and because part of the wooded area on the steep slope is zoned for residential use, specifically for single-family housing.

4) The traffic pattern is difficult for entering and exiting the C1 parcel, making it less attractive.

5) Parking would be a significant challenge. Underground parking is very expensive (approx. \$40K/space), however if the area needs significant excavation due to environmental concerns, it may be more efficient to build underground parking. Rooftop parking could be considered.

6) Many developers consider the local bureaucracy a challenge to work with, and this fact may decrease interest in the C1 parcel.

7) Part of the C1 parcel, away from the street, was once a gully, which was then used as a repository until sometime in the mid-twentieth century for trash and commercial rubble. Four engineering borings were carried out in 1988 for a proposed mixed-use project that would have involved the Co-op occupying the first floor and condominiums or offices on second and third floors. The borings raised a question about the stability of the site for construction purposes (Joseph Klockner and Marc Elrich interviews). Most likely, "deep drilling" to find bedrock on which to place load-bearing beams is necessary, or excavation of the trash and rubble.

8) The engineering borings did not investigate environmental conditions; the site also may contain hazardous materials that could require remediation. Potential clean-up costs may be significant. As an example of how this concern could discourage development on the C1 parcel, Urciolo mentioned that former City Manager Bev Habada issued an RFP several years ago and undertook discussions with three developers. At the time, the developers indicated that they would not consider any development without an assurance that the City would either resolve in advance any potential environmental problems or guarantee the project against environmental risk. However, there is no indication that the environmental issues have been resolved. Urciolo and Topchik concur that soil tests at the site could cost \$30-50,000, that boring and analysis to determine what lies buried at the site could cost \$100,000, and that developers would still require indemnification or guarantees before engineering the site.

**Takoma Park/Silver Spring Co-op interest in the C1- parcel:** The Co-op received a \$125,000 grant from the City in 1997 at the time it moved into the old Turner Electric building at the Junction. The grant has been repaid, with interest. The Co-op has operated in the Junction since 1998, specializing in local, natural, organic and alternative products. The Co-op is leasing a brick building owned by the Turner estate on a five-year contract that expires on December 31, 2014 (Lorig Charkoudian, Dec. 11, 2011), with an option to renew for another five years. The contract does not include an option to buy the building. Currently the Co-op provides customers with 17 parking spaces that are part of the Turner property, along Sycamore Avenue, with an additional 16 spaces guaranteed in the City-owned

parking lot per the licensing agreement with the City (see above).

**Co-op desire for expansion:** The store has approximately 5,750 square feet on the retail level. According to the Co-op board, food retailers begin to plan expansion or relocation when annual sales per square foot reach \$1000. With a gross of \$7.35 million annually, Co-op sales per square foot have gone over \$1300. The Co-op board has stated that expansion would allow the store to stock a wider variety of products while creating a dozen on-site jobs (Co-op Board interview). In October 2011 at the Membership Meeting, the Co-op membership voted to authorize the Board to pursue expansion (Lorig Charkoudian, Dec. 11, 2011).

The Co-op has shared with the Task Force its current estimates for planning purposes: To promote future growth and stability, the Co-op board has expressed a need for a footprint of approximately 12,500 square feet, which would yield approximately 8,125 square feet of retail space (based on a standard 65% assumption). A recent market analysis conducted by Debbie Suassuna, based upon the above estimated footprint, indicates that an expanded Co-op in the Junction can be successful, if parking and traffic issues can be addressed. A 12,500 square-foot store would require 63 parking spaces to comply with county code. Additional parking spaces are required for patrons of other businesses in the Junction. The market study estimates that an expanded Co-op would have initial annual gross sales of \$11,205,000 rising to \$15,659,000 annually by the fourth year. The Co-op estimates that an expanded store would provide 24 additional full-time equivalent jobs for a total of 67 full-time equivalent jobs.

To support potential expansion, the Co-op has created a capital reserve fund of \$500,000, and the Co-op board has committed to raise the necessary debt and equity financing. It recently amended its by-laws to allow for the creation of equity by selling preferred shares to members. Thus, the Co-op believes it is in a good position to gain financial backing for a wholesale expansion (Task Force meeting with Co-op Expansion Committee, Feb.8, 2011).

**Co-op expansion options:** Two basic options for expansion in the Junction are under consideration, either adding to the Turner building or constructing a new free-standing store (Task Force meeting with Co-op Expansion Committee, Feb. 8, 2011).

**Adding to the Turner building:** Expansion of the current facility to 12,500 square feet would likely require merging the Turner property with a portion of the City-owned C1 parcel. Construction of new store space would then take place entirely on the C1 parcel. Another option would be to expand the Co-op to the east, into the parking lot associated with the Turner property; however, this would not provide the full 12,500 square feet.

**New structure on City-owned C1 parcel:** The Co-op Expansion Committee is evaluating several possibilities for relocating into a new structure by purchasing or leasing the City-owned C1 parcel. As of Feb. 8, 2011, these included:

- (1) a one-story building adjacent to the Turner building, with surface parking to the west;
- (2) a one-story building adjacent to the Takoma Auto Clinic, with surface parking to the east;
- (3) A one-story building filling most of the space along Carroll Avenue between the Turner building and Takoma Auto Clinic, with surface parking in the rear;
- (4) a two-story building with one story above ground and underground parking; and
- (5) a two-story building fronting on Carroll Avenue, with the second floor for offices and a deck facing the street, with surface parking in the rear. This would likely require underground or rooftop parking, as well as extension into the wooded area.

Amateur sketches generated as part of the Expansion Committee's work indicated that options 1-5 above would all require some use of the currently wooded area. In general, these sketches depict the new parking area (or the structure, if adding on to the Turner building) extending southward to a line running perpendicular to the southwest corner of the existing Turner building. These sketches were executed in early 2011 and have not been refined since then. It should be emphasized that the Co-op Expansion Committee is early in the process of identifying options and does not have any professional drawings at this time.

The Co-op board has cited several contingencies that apply to successful expansion. An acceptable lease or purchase must be negotiated with the City and/or the Turner estate for use of the necessary property. Adequate debt and equity financing must be secured from Co-op member-owners and outside funding sources. Building-site and environmental suitability must be evaluated and the environmental issues in the C1 parcel must be resolved. Permitting must be obtained, in compliance with all applicable laws, codes and regulations. The owner-members of the Co-op must vote to finance the expansion project (they authorized the project at the October 2011 meeting). A public-private partnership may need to be created to resolve parking and other issues.

The Co-op board has also stated its interest in ensuring the façade of any structure blends with the historic nature of the Junction business district.

Members of the Task Force expressed to the Co-op Expansion Committee (Feb. 8, 2011 meeting) that it would be ideal if a new Co-op building and parking area would provide space for community events.

The TPSS Expansion Committee has a website which contains information (including the sketches described above) related to its work: <http://tpss.coop/expansion.html>.

**Other business interest in use of the C1 Parcel:** During the past year, two other Takoma Park-based businesses have expressed interest in use of the C1 parcel. In the first half of 2011, The Organic Falafel, a vendor-truck business that operates in the parking lot of the service station across the street, expressed interest in relocating to the City-owned parking lot. In December 2011, Blessed Coffee owner Tebabu Assefa made a brief presentation to the City Council in which he proposed constructing a small coffee “hut” on the City-owned parking lot.

**OTBA study in progress:** OTBA Executive Director Rosalind Grigsby identified and applied for, in late summer 2011, a Commercial Assessment Services Grant to focus on Takoma Junction properties. The intent, according to Main Street Maryland, is to “provide the selected Main Street community with personalized recommendations for a block or specific set of properties within the Main Street district (up to 4 properties). The assessment will identify potential opportunities and actions to develop, revitalize, preserve or re-position that real estate.”

The Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization, via the Main Street Maryland program, announced in October 2011 award of a grant to OTBA. The assessment, to be conducted by TVM Real Estate Solutions LLC of Annapolis, kicked off in November 2011 and will look, in particular, at Healey Surgeons, the Takoma Auto Clinic (Johnny’s), the City-owned C1 parcel, and the TPSS Co-op. Public meetings will be part of the assessment process.

**Funding sources:** As described in the “Funding” section of this report, funding may be available from governmental, foundation, business, and other sources in support of Takoma Junction revitalization, including state funding for assessment and clean-up of environmental contamination in areas where redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

## Options for Use of the C1 Parcel

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

Some of these options would impact the wooded portion of the C1 parcel. Refer to the “Wooded Area” subsection that follows for a separate examination of options for the wooded area, which includes the R60 parcel and a portion of the C1 parcel.

All of these options (except for Option 6 – “Make No Changes”) are seen as advancing the Council Strategic Plan’s stated goals of increasing the tax base and enhancing livability.

### 1. Community/Entrepreneurial Space

The City could keep the asphalt surface as is and preserve many of the current parking spaces, based on the recognition that sufficient parking is integral to the Junction as a whole. At the same time, this option would significantly improve the aesthetics and uses of the currently unwooded portion of the C1 parcel. Rough calculations based on a formula of 350 square feet per parking space (including access lanes) suggest that somewhere between 54 and 60 spaces could be accommodated in the existing paved space, although it would require removal of the shed(s), storage bin(s) and loading dock.

The paved portion of the C1 parcel could be reconfigured to accommodate vendors and other small business enterprises as well as concerts, dances, picnicking and other leisurely activities. A temporary pavilion could be erected to be used for community gatherings and periodic markets. Space could also be set aside for everyday enterprises such as high-end food trucks. The C1 parcel could thus serve as a “business incubator” whereby entrepreneurs could test the market without having to incur substantial start-up costs.



The pavilion could be designed so that a portable floor could be temporarily put down for dances during warmer seasons and a portable rink put down for ice skating during the winter.

In addition, picnic tables, benches, large planter boxes and other amenities could be added to create a welcoming atmosphere.

The wooded area, currently something of an eyesore with dead trees, fallen limbs and windblown litter, could also become more of an integral part of the paved area. The area could be cleaned up and regularly maintained, and a switchback pedestrian path could be added, with protections against erosion. (See following section on Wooded Area.)

**Arguments for:**

- Would add the vitality that is lacking in the area
- Offers an opportunity to local, small-scale entrepreneurs to possibly expand into permanent businesses in the Junction or other parts of Takoma Park, which could ultimately add to tax revenue
- Preserves many current parking spaces
- A plausible fit within the constraints of the currently paved area
- Establishes a space for community events in the Junction that residents have asked for
- Multiple groups might become interested in the Junction
- A synergy for other Junction businesses may occur
- Creates an additional relaxation center for the community
- Enhances “greening” by supporting local, organic, and community-ownership values set forth in the Council Strategic Plan and the report of the Task Force on the Environment
- Does not expose the City to any potential cost for environmental remediation

**Arguments against:**

- No financial gain to the City either in terms of a one-time sale or an ongoing lease
- Regularly scheduled market events would require management, adding a new cost to the City budget
- Restrooms may be needed, with associated costs and maintenance, depending on what short-term uses are developed
- Inconsistent flow of income
- Traffic conditions would continuously change depending on activity/businesses
- Parking spaces would be lost
- May hinder the Co-op parking and delivery/disposable needs
- Could impact the public parking needed for the other Junction businesses

## **2. Fast Track – Community-driven Development**

The City may prefer to proceed with an entity or entities that have a history of engagement with the community, are familiar to the City, and understand conditions at the Junction. While the City cannot engage in negotiations for the long-term use of City property without entering into a bid process, the City can set the evaluation criteria for an invitation for bids or proposals (see “City staff additional information” in Findings above). As an outcome of such a process, the City could enter into a lease arrangement, an outright sale, or a public-private partnership, in order to facilitate the development of the Junction with a known partner or partners.

For this option, the Co-op is an obvious potential development partner. It is strongly interested in expansion at the Junction, as described in the Findings above; and the City and residents have a long and favorable engagement with the Co-op and may desire to assist its expansion plans. Other potential partners may exist: The Organic Falafel and Blessed Coffee, for example, have both expressed interest in locating on the C1 parcel; and there may be other Junction-based or nearby businesses that have an interest in expansion and/or relocation.

Another variation would be for the City to pursue independent commercial development of the C1 parcel but with the understanding that the Co-op and/or other locally-based businesses would be anchor tenants.

Ideally, a synergistic development approach would ensure that the Junction as a whole retains an adequate supply of parking and would provide space for community events.

**Arguments for:**

- Provides revenue to the City from a lease or sale of the C1 parcel, plus ongoing tax revenue
- Provides a plausible fit within the constraints of the C1 parcel
- Could add the vitality that is lacking in the area



- Could support local, organic, and community-ownership values set forth in the Council Strategic Plan and the report of the Task Force on the Environment
- May include a café or restaurant, a popular suggestion for the Junction
- May include a commercial kitchen for micro-enterprise food processing, and the resulting food products can then be sold in the Co-op
- If the Co-op emerges as a partner in development, this would:
  - solidify the Co-op as business anchor at the Junction
  - fulfill the Co-op's identified need for expansion without requiring it to relocate
  - help to sustain a community-owned business (of the 6,000-plus Co-op owner-members, many live in Takoma Park)

**Arguments against:**

- Reduces surface parking (while most likely increasing the demand for parking), which would require construction of new parking spaces either underground, on a rooftop, or extended into a portion of the currently wooded area
- Requires the City to address the potential environmental hazards in the material under the C1 parcel
- Could eliminate space that is currently used for temporary community events
- May leave the Turner building without a tenant
- A better option for Co-op expansion might be to expand within the Turner property, which would also alleviate traffic problems generated by the current parking lot on the Sycamore Avenue side
- Traffic conditions could worsen with additional customers and deliveries
- Could impact the public parking needed for the other Junction businesses

### 3. Independent Commercial Development

The City could solicit bids from developers to construct a building (or buildings) that could be used for a restaurant, shops or other business purposes.

As a way to recruit businesses that fit within the commercial framework of Old Takoma, the City could establish broad criteria to ensure that new development reflects and enhances the unique character of the Junction.

This approach would differ from Option 2 above in that it would seek to market the C1 parcel to as broad a range of potential developers as possible, while recognizing the desire to maintain the character of the Junction.

**Arguments for:**

- Revenue for the City from a lease or sale of the C1 parcel, plus ongoing tax revenue
- Would add the vitality that is lacking in the area
- A plausible fit within the constraints of the C1 parcel
- May include a café or restaurant, a popular suggestion for the Junction
- Could preserve many current parking spaces and even add to the parking

**Arguments against:**

- Reduces surface parking (while most likely increasing the demand for parking), which would require the construction of new parking spaces either underground, on a rooftop, or extended into a portion of the currently wooded area
- Requires the City to address the potential environmental hazards in the material under the site
- May cause the Co-op to relocate elsewhere
- Could eliminate space that is currently used for temporary community events
- May leave the Turner building without a tenant
- Could impact the public parking needed for the other Junction businesses

### 4. Mixed-Use Development

The City could solicit bids for a development that combines commercial use on the ground floor with high-density residential housing on the top floor or floors as well as a section dedicated to public space.

The City could impose a height limitation or restrictions on massing, although developers are typically given a freer hand for this type of development. Examples might include the condo/retail buildings at the Takoma Metro.

**Arguments for:**

- Revenue for the City from a lease or sale of the C1 parcel, plus ongoing tax revenue

- Would add the vitality that is lacking in the area
- A plausible fit within the constraints of the C1 parcel
- Could add a second anchor to the Junction
- Does not expose the City to any potential cost for environmental remediation if developer is responsible and City indemnified.

**Arguments against:**

- May not fit the character of the Junction, which is comprised of low-scale neighborhood commercial buildings in close proximity to historic single-family homes
- Depending on height and massing, a mixed-use development may not be compliant with Montgomery County historic preservation rules
- Could max out space on the C1 parcel, with no room for other community needs, including parking for existing businesses (as described in "Arguments against" for Options 2 and 3 above)
- Could lead to more traffic congestion with the addition of more residents
- May hinder the Co-op parking and delivery/disposable needs
- Could eliminate space that is currently used for temporary community events
- Requires the City to address the potential environmental hazards in the material under the site
- Could impact the public parking needed for the other Junction businesses

### 5. Multi-Property Development

The City could undertake a process to invite independent developers to acquire three nearby properties – the Turner building, the Takoma Auto Clinic and Healey Surgeons – and join them together with the City-owned C1 parcel.

This option would allow for a larger scale development involving a variety of possible businesses as well as the potential for new housing.

**Arguments for:**

- Potential revenue for the City from a lease or sale of the joined properties, plus ongoing tax revenue
- Would add the vitality that is lacking in the area
- Could preserve current public parking
- Could change the number of driveways to and from Carroll Avenue, impacting traffic
- Offers an opportunity to local, small-scale entrepreneurs to possibly expand into permanent businesses in the Junction or other parts of Takoma Park, which could ultimately add to tax revenue

**Arguments against:**

- May not fit the character of the Junction, which is comprised of low-scale neighborhood commercial buildings in close proximity to historic single-family homes
- Depending on height and massing, a multi-property development may not be compliant with Montgomery County historic preservation rules
- Could lead to more traffic congestion
- May hinder the Co-op parking and delivery/disposable needs
- Could eliminate space that is currently used for temporary community events
- Could require the City to address the potential environmental hazards in the material under the site

### 6. Make No Changes

The City could decide to continue to maintain the C1 parcel for its current purpose, with potential restriping of the parking area to accommodate more spaces. Rough calculations based on a formula of 350 square feet per parking space (including access lanes) suggest that somewhere between 54 and 60 spaces could be accommodated in the existing paved space, although it would require removal of the shed(s), storage bin(s) and loading dock. Improvements suggested in the "Wooded Area" subsection below, as well as in the Streetscape section of this report, might address concerns about the unattractive appearance of the wooded area and parking lot at present.



### **Arguments for:**

- Maintains or increases current level of parking
- Does not expose the City to any potential cost for environmental remediation
- Allows for the continuance of temporary community events on the site

### **Arguments against:**

- No financial gain to the City either in terms of a one-time sale or an ongoing lease, as well as no new tax revenue
  - No economic enhancement of the Junction
  - Costs would be associated with any aesthetic improvements

## **Findings for the Wooded Area**

As described earlier, more than half of the property owned by the City consists of undeveloped, wooded land within the C1 parcel, as well as all of the triangular-shaped R60 parcel which fronts on Columbia Avenue.

Much of the area is steeply sloped, with the exception being the portion closest to Poplar Avenue. This area has been designated a conservation area by the City, and is signed with the following: "Woodland Conservation Area. Do not disturb seedlings, shrubs or trees. Tree protection area, machinery and stockpiling prohibited. Trees for your future." There is additional signage that states: "No Dumping - \$1,000 Fine." According to Todd Bolton, city arborist, there are few significant native trees on the site, and, if it is to remain undeveloped, it would benefit from removal of exotic species and planting of new trees. On the west side of the wooded area, an informal footpath runs from the corner of Columbia and Poplar Avenues up to the southwest corner of the paved area. A great deal of trash has accumulated along the east side of the wooded area, adjacent to the Co-op (Task Force research, June and Dec. 2011).

A narrow, non-ADA-compliant asphalt sidewalk runs along Columbia Avenue on the south edge of the property between Poplar Avenue and the rear of the Co-op.

There is some anecdotal information that material from trash disposal/handling activities may have extended partially down the slope from the paved area, but this is uncertain at this time.

According to city staff, the R60 parcel would accommodate one or possibly two houses, based on a "house yield" of the total area (in square feet) divided by 6,000.

The Environmental Task Force's "Habitat" recommendations included: enhancing the Tree Protection Program for urban forest trees; including setting forest cover/tree canopy goals of at least 40% for the more urbanized areas of Takoma Park; increased plantings of additional native trees on public rights of way and other public property; and consideration of new Open Space conservation easements (Task Force on Environmental Action: Final Report, April 30, 2010).

Task Force outreach meetings found that the wooded area is widely valued as a buffer between commercial and residential areas. The vast majority of participants favor its preservation.

## **Options for the Wooded Area**

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

### **1 – Preserve and Improve the Wooded Area**

The City could continue to preserve this area as open space and evaluate whether additional trees and shrubs should be planted for birds and other wildlife. This option could include basic restoration of the undergrowth combined with tree-planting, or it could be extended to include the addition of a switchback path (if the slope allows), benches, picnic tables, or exercise stations within the constraints of environmental stewardship and consistent with community preferences.



**Arguments for:**

- Environmentally sound to preserve open space
- Provides value as natural beauty and support for wildlife
- Supports the goal of enhanced tree canopy in the City
- Provides a residential buffer to commercial uses above on the hill
- Might avoid environmental and structural investigation of this area
- Might improve pedestrian access to the Junction from the south
- Might provide a new recreational amenity for the community; might encourage physical fitness

**Arguments against:**

- No revenue to the city from sale and development of this property
- Cost of any new plantings, pathways, lighting, or other fixtures, as well as upkeep, is the City's responsibility
- Any new construction of pathways, etc. might involve disturbing environmentally problematic material beneath the surface
- Limits options for development of C1 parcel

**2 – Develop All or Part of the Wooded Area**

The City could allow the C1 parcel's wooded portion to be included in any redevelopment of the C1 parcel's paved portion, which fronts Carroll Avenue. This option could involve any combination of the following:

- Extension of parking into the top of the wooded area (as depicted, for example, in sketches of a new Co-op building on the C1 parcel)
- Extension of new structure(s) into C1 portion of the wooded area
- Use of a portion of the wooded area for entering and exiting underground parking via Columbia Avenue
- Residential development of the .25-acre R60 parcel that fronts Columbia Avenue. This parcel is zoned for single-family housing.

Special attention would need to be paid to the aesthetics of any such development, including the appearance of any retaining walls or cantilevered structures, as viewed from the wooded area and Columbia Avenue.

**Arguments for:**

- Revenue to the City from sale or lease of land
- Inclusion of this land (for access to underground or for parking extending over the top of the slope, for example) may provide further options for development of the C1 parcel

**Arguments against:**

- It would be reasonable to expect strong community opposition to the development of a City-designated conservation area
- Loss of open space, which provides value to all living things
- It would reduce or remove an important buffer between commercial and residential areas and bring commercial development and traffic closer to residential Columbia and Poplar Avenues, particularly if Columbia Avenue were used as a parking or delivery entrance for a multi-level development. With respect to potential impacts on nearby residential property values, it should be noted that the value of these properties at present may already reflect their proximity to a commercially-zoned parcel.
- Development in this area would require review because it is located in the Takoma Park Historic District, and it may be difficult to develop this area without adverse impacts to Columbia and Sycamore Avenues, which would be protected.
- There is uncertainty as to the degree to which this land could be developed, due to its slope and subsurface material.

**Recommendations**

**A.** The Task Force recommends that the City adopt and implement a plan for the C1 parcel and the associated wooded area that blends elements of Option 1 (Community/Entrepreneurial Space) and Option 2 (Fast Track -- Synergistic Development). We further recommend that any plan for the C1 parcel be shaped by the following guidelines:

1. As part of any larger redevelopment plan for the Junction, the City should use the C1 parcel for four complementary and multi-faceted purposes that include:
  - Independent, non-chain, community-scale business (which could include the TPSS Co-op or a like business and food-truck vendors),
  - Expanded community use, including a pavilion, playground, garden space, and/or a park,

- Improved pedestrian, bicycle, and auto access, improved sidewalks, and enhancements to the streetscape, and
  - Consolidated parking for visitors and employees in the Junction as a whole.
2. Any new development on the C1 parcel should harmonize with the existing architecture and scale of activity, and should not exceed two stories in height based upon previous commercial infill in the Historic District.
  3. The City should give priority to using the C1 parcel to support an addition to the TPSS Co-op (or a like business), especially if priority is also given to expanding the present building onto the parking lot east toward Sycamore Avenue. Doing so would help to solve traffic bottlenecks related to the parking lot east of the Coop building and would preserve space for expanded public uses of the present C1 parcel.
  4. In any revitalization of the parcels adjacent to the C1 parcel, the City should encourage retention and repurposing of the Turner and Healy buildings.
  5. The City should work to help building owners adjacent to the C1 parcel (and throughout the Junction) to obtain tax credits or grants for aesthetic improvements to buildings and landscaping, consistent with an overall streetscape improvement plan for the Junction.
  6. A Phase 1 Environmental Assessment (detailed record search) should be performed for the C1 parcel, if there is any consideration of removing the current impervious service, in order to clarify the anecdotal information about potential waste handling/disposal in this area. After the Phase I assessment is completed, consideration should be given to whether a Phase II Environmental Assessment is necessary based upon 1) the desired use of this parcel and 2) the conclusions of the Phase I Assessment.
  7. The City should improve vegetative cover of the wooded area, provide basic maintenance for the area, pick up trash, and care for the trees in the area.
  8. The City should put a switchback path through the wooded area, if this can be done without causing erosion or exacerbating environmental problems.
  9. The City should evaluate the degree of community interest in maintaining all or part of the wooded area.
  10. In evaluating C1 parcel development options or proposals, the City should include an assessment of their impact on the wooded area in terms of the environmental services it provides as well as its function as a buffer between commercial and residential areas.
  11. The City should preserve the R60 parcel as a wooded area.

**B.** In support of the above recommendations, the Task Force makes the following additional recommendation:

The City Council should instruct the City to prepare a document titled "Instructions and Information for Prospective Parties Interested in Developing or Using the C1 Parcel." This document would describe as fully as practicable the various user/owner issues involving this parcel. Thus the document should put forward most of what is included in the "City Owned Parcels" section of the Task Force report and back-up documentation relating to:

- a. the physical and environmental condition of the properties;
- b. their encumbrances;
- c. all Historic District considerations;
- d. augmenting livability and green conditions desired by the City;
- e. the desire for allowance for community space;
- f. required adequacy of parking under any proposed plans.

This document would then be distributed to all parties interested in approaching the City with a view toward utilizing or purchasing this parcel.

*(Note that some recommendations contained elsewhere in this report, e.g. Streetscape Improvements, Revitalization, and Access and Parking, may also be relevant to the City-owned parcels.)*



## 5

# Traffic Safety and Movement

## Findings

### Overview

Traffic congestion at the Junction has been a frequent complaint over the years.

According to State Highway Administration data, as of 2008, daily traffic on Route 410 Ethan Allen Avenue near Carroll Avenue totaled 9,560 vehicles, and Carroll Avenue traffic in the same area had an average daily count of 9,892 vehicles. (By comparison, the average daily traffic count for Route 410 in Silver Spring near Colesville Road was 22,240.)

A mix of single-family homes and small-scale businesses line the Junction roadways.

Traffic in the Junction area is managed by three red-yellow-green signals, all within one block of each other. For example, a westbound motorist approaching the Junction on Ethan Allen encounters a traffic light at Sycamore Avenue and another traffic light at Carroll Avenue. A third traffic light is at Philadelphia Avenue in front of the Fire Station.

### Congestion and related problems prior to recent SHA adjustments

Overall, the three traffic signals were not timed to facilitate traffic flow through the Junction.

One glaring dysfunction used to occur at the Ethan Allen/Carroll light for southbound Carroll Ave. traffic attempting to turn right. During peak morning hours this light frequently allowed only two or three motorists to make the turn and reach the next block in one cycle. This caused traffic to back up nearly to Lincoln Avenue, frustrating motorists into honking their horns and running red lights.

Moreover, at any point during the day, the second or third cars in the queue could be stopped for two cycles at Ethan Allen/Carroll and again at Philadelphia/Carroll because the timing of the signals at the intersections was not coordinated.

### Improvements since SHA adjustments

Recent adjustments by SHA in the signalization of Junction intersections have improved traffic flow.

Southbound traffic on Carroll Avenue now clears the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection in one cycle even when southbound is backed up to Sherman Avenue and beyond. In addition, motorists also can continue through the light at Philadelphia/Carroll in the same cycle during non-peak periods.

In addition, during morning rush, westbound Ethan Allen traffic – which appears to be of a heavier volume than southbound Carroll – currently clears in one or two cycles, but more study is necessary.

### Current points of congestion and related problems

A bottleneck occurs for westbound Ethan Allen traffic near Carroll Avenue when bus drivers stop in the roadway to pick up or unload passengers rather than pull into a bus bay opposite the front entrance to the TPSS Co-op. Bus drivers typically do not use the bus bay during rush hour because it is difficult for them to re-enter the stream of traffic.

A bottleneck occurs in the same location when westbound motorists stop in the roadway while waiting to turn left onto Sycamore Avenue or turn left into the adjacent Co-op parking lot.

The proximity of the Sycamore and Ethan Allen traffic signals is also a concern. Vehicles turning left from Sycamore onto Ethan Allen sometimes rush before the signal changes, which can strand those vehicles in the middle of the intersection where they become obstacles to traffic movement.

In the opposite direction, drivers traveling from the Old Town commercial area often encounter a bottleneck

at the intersection in front of the Fire Station because there is no separate lane to turn left onto Philadelphia from Carroll Avenue.

Drivers heading south on Carroll Avenue are tracked into a single right-hand lane. Drivers in the left-hand lane are restricted to left turns. In the 1980s and 1990s, drivers in the left-hand lane had an option to turn either left or right.

As a result of all the obstacles at the Junction, many motorists take alternate routes through residential streets. Residents in the near vicinity are particularly inconvenienced by cut-through traffic.

### ***Takoma Park Master Plan (2001 & 2005)***

Montgomery County prepared a supplement to the Takoma Park Master Plan in 2001 that addressed pedestrian and bicycle routes in the City. Continuing this effort, County planners included Takoma Park in a "County-wide Bikeways Functional Master Plan" that was prepared in 2005.

The City also worked with the District of Columbia to prepare a small area transportation study. The Takoma Transportation Study addressed future expected traffic flows and recommended changes to address traffic congestion, pedestrian access and other issues.

### ***Dan Burden Walkability Tour (2003)***

In the summer of 2003, the City invited Dan Burden, a well-known expert on transportation issues, to assess the walking conditions in Takoma Park. According to the City web site, the walkability tour recommended a mini-roundabout at the Junction. The ideas developed in the Dan Burden study were then addressed by the 2005 Walkable Communities study.

### ***Walkable Communities Study (2005)***

In addition to impediments to pedestrians and bicyclists, the report identified other issues:

- 1) The lack of strong visual boundaries to give the Junction a sense of place or signify it as a destination. The report recommended that landscaping or other eye-catching beautifications be included with any roundabout or gateway arches or other landmark artwork across Ethan Allen and/or Carroll be installed. (Locations for a min-roundabout included Ethan Allen & Carroll, or near Lee & Carroll, or at Philadelphia & Carroll.)
- 2) Lack of sufficient pedestrian facilities. The report recommended that the sidewalk in front of Carroll Avenue shops be widened to enable outdoor seating and licensed "pushcart" vendors.
- 3) Cut-through traffic impinging on residential neighborhoods. The report recommended using traffic-calming measures such as narrow lanes and street trees or placing "identity measures" such as public art so that commuters might gain a respect for the neighborhood and choose alternate routes.

### ***SHA Workshop (2005)***

In October 2005, the State Highway Administration sponsored a workshop to look at pedestrian safety in the Junction. The workshop was led by Bob Chauncy of the National Center for Biking and Walking. Workshop discussions revolved around ideas of how to make the Junction safer for shoppers, bicyclists, school children and seniors without decreasing pedestrian accessibility or inhibiting a steady, safe flow of vehicular traffic.

The report on these workshops, presented to the City Council on May 1, 2006, covered recommendations of community participants as well as City staff.

The report listed impediments to pedestrians and bicyclists, including: 1) wide street crossings and few crossing options; 2) long waits for cars and pedestrians, resulting in dangerous crossing behavior from pedestrians and bicyclists; 3) failure of buses to use available bus bays; 4) the added signal phase necessitated by the light at Sycamore Avenue.

The many statements and observations of the report included: 1) Changing the design of the roadways might be an asset to Junction businesses; 2) The busy streets of the Junction act as a dangerous barrier between the Co-op and the shops along Carroll Avenue; 3) Even though the commercial area is adjacent to single-family neighborhoods and two clusters of multi-family housing there is a low level of pedestrian activity.

Among the recommendations were:

- 1) Create a T-intersection by moving B.Y. Morrison Park to the west side of Carroll, increasing accessibility and use of the park and shifting Carroll Avenue east to align with Sycamore Avenue. The resultant intersection would "use a 3-phase cycle to remove the turning lanes on Carroll (MD 410 and MD 195), narrow

the crossing distances, improve the streetscape, and add on-street parking.”

2) Construct a roundabout with splitter islands, directly north of the Co-op, at the Carroll/Ethan Allen intersection. This would involve relocating the Morrison gazebo and mural, converting Sycamore Avenue into right-in, right-out only, converting part of the turning lanes to streetscape, sidewalk, and parking, and having on-demand lights for visually impaired pedestrians, or very narrow lanes to slow traffic speed to a rate that cars naturally yield to pedestrians. The report noted that the Council passed a resolution on February 9, 2004 supporting the recommendation for a roundabout.

As an action step, the report called for the City to write a letter to SHA requesting a feasibility study on these two recommendations, which was subsequently carried out by Kittelson and Associates, Inc.

After previous reports recommended a roundabout at the Junction, the City staff requested that SHA complete a feasibility study for a roundabout. This study was seen only as an initial step. Significant community comment and participation were expected in any design that might follow. The City staff requested that SHA develop a public process to solicit comments and options.

### ***Kittelson and Associates, Inc. Intersection Feasibility Analysis (2008)***

The Kittelson study focused on the offset pair of intersections adjacent to the Co-op (i.e. Sycamore/Ethan Allen and Ethan Allen/Carroll). The study assessed three scenarios: 1) maintaining existing signalized control; 2) realignment of Carroll Ave. to the east, with a roundabout at the thus-formed Ethan Allen/Sycamore/Carroll intersection replacing signalized control; 3) realigning Columbia Ave. through the City lot to form the south leg of a Grant/Carroll/Ethan Allen/Columbia intersection, and replacing signalized control with a roundabout (this concept would also have eliminated left turns to or from Sycamore Avenue).

The study began with an analysis of existing conditions, based on 2006 signalized intersection operations. Analysis indicated that the offset pair of signalized intersections was currently operating under capacity during the weekday morning and afternoon peak hours, with average delays of about 23 and 24 seconds respectively.

The report projected how “Concept A” (installing a roundabout by realigning Carroll through B.Y. Morrison Park) would handle the existing traffic load. The conclusion was that “Concept A” would shorten delays by about 9 and 12 seconds respectively.

With “Concept B” (installing a roundabout between the Co-op and Grant Avenue by rerouting traffic through the City-owned lots) the report projected that delays would be shortened by about 8 and 12 seconds respectively.

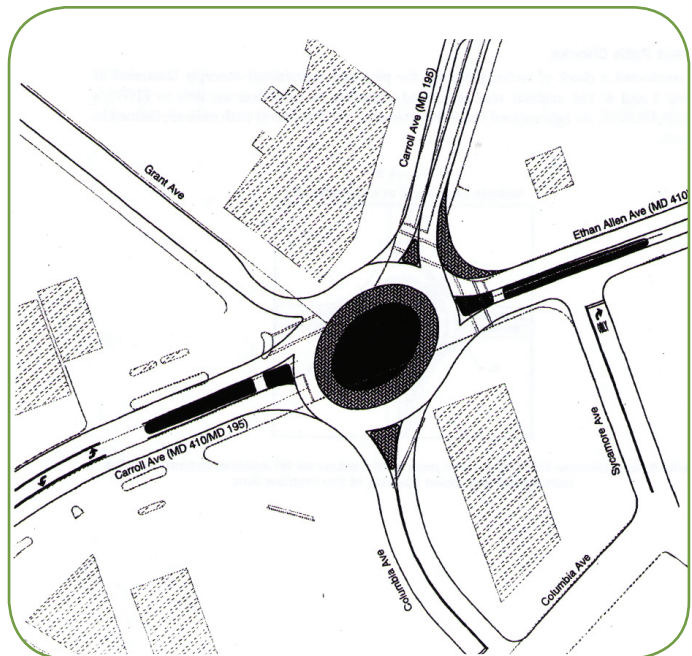
The report cited safety advantages associated with roundabouts (e.g., reduction of conflict points, elimination of high-severity crashes, shorter pedestrian crossing distances). It also recognized right-of-way constraints and the need to accommodate pedestrian concerns.

The report stated that the roundabout designs under consideration did not incorporate bike lanes.

It also made observations about capacity and growth. The existing intersection was characterized as “close to capacity.” The report stated that without roadway improvements “growth in the area was recognized to be minimal” [sic].

The report called for “a public involvement process” “to address the concerns of local stakeholders and to solicit additional comments or ideas for improvements.” It added that the new roadway alignments resulting from Concepts A and B would “impact local property owners.”

It also stated that either design might lead to: 1) narrowing the current four-lane section of Carroll Ave. between the Co-op and the Fire Station to a three-lane section, with the central lane reserved for left turns; and 2) replacing the intersection at the Fire Station with a second roundabout.



### ***S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association Initiative (2007-2008)***

The S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association, which encompasses the neighborhood that borders the Junction on the north side, formed a committee in early December of 2007 to develop a vision for the revitalization of the Junction and to consider alternatives to a roundabout design.

The two leaders of this initiative, Kay Daniels Cohen and Ellen Zavian, later served as members of this Takoma Junction Task Force and shared their experience and findings.

In a summary letter to the Council dated March 25, 2008, S.S. Carroll set forth a vision for the Junction that included: 1) attractive development of City-owned parcels; 2) facelifts on existing structures; 3) pedestrian-friendly walkways; 4) ease of parking.

Three major concerns were emphasized: 1) pedestrian safety; 2) traffic flow; 3) business vitality.

Noting indications of renewed City interest in Junction revitalization – including the just-completed Kit-telson roundabout study – S.S. Carroll made several formal requests. Those related to traffic and pedestrian movement included:

- 1) Initiate a comprehensive traffic study to find alternatives to the roundabout layout, with pedestrian safety and revitalization of existing and future Junction businesses as priorities;
- 2) Update the 1996 Junction Revitalization Study in order to make its findings applicable to the 2008 Junction characteristics;
- 3) Provide a plan whereby S.S. Carroll could work with the City on long-term goals (i.e. revitalization, pedestrian safety, traffic flow, municipal and infrastructure upgrades) “to make the Junction live up to its historical, true potential now and in the near future.”

As a follow-up, Ward Three Councilmember Dan Robinson hosted a meeting in March 2008 that was attended by approximately 30 residents representing all the Ward Three neighborhood associations. At the meeting a vote was taken regarding a roundabout at the Junction. The group unanimously opposed a roundabout.

### ***Old Takoma Business Association Retail Market Analysis (2009)***

OTBA’s analysis of the Old Takoma area, conducted by Randall Gross of Development Economics and completed in October 2009, included data, observations, and recommendations related to traffic and pedestrian movement in the Junction.

The analysis recommended that physical linkages be strengthened between the Co-op and sister businesses across the road. OTBA analysis called for gateways to “celebrate arrival into the area” and to distinguish the Junction from the other Old Takoma nodes (Old Town and the Metro area). Also, the analysis recommended development of an Urban Design Plan to include a traffic and parking management study, recommended transport/infrastructure improvements, and a directional signage program.

### ***Task Force on Environmental Action report (Adopted April 30, 2010)***

The Environmental Task Force’s top recommendations included taking steps to construct a roundabout in the Junction. The report also called for SHA to adjust traffic light timing in ways that would reduce traffic delays. A primary goal was to decrease vehicle idling. Specifically, the report stated that “one minute should be the time limit for anyone to keep their engine on” while waiting in a traffic line.

In other recommendations, the report called for City action to “tip the balance” in favor of pedestrians and bicyclists via such actions as separate bike paths on Ethan Allen Avenue and Philadelphia Avenues.

All of these recommendations were based on concerns about greenhouse gas pollution and ozone and particulate emissions.

### ***Historic District considerations***

A separate section of this report details the Junction’s status as part of the Takoma Historic District and the implications of this status in considering potential alterations to traffic patterns, particularly those involving changes to roadway configurations and alignments.

To cite just one example from that section, the chair of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) wrote to SHA in 2008 to say that the HPC would “encourage consideration of alternatives that would achieve enhanced pedestrian safety and traffic flow without adversely affecting the historic streetscape and/or historic resources.”

Hardscape changes with the potential for negative impact on the historic district, which therefore would

require review, include: 1) road widening; 2) construction of traffic circles and new roads; 3) reconfiguring the intersection or changing street patterns; 4) major sidewalk changes, tunnel or overpass construction; 5) changing the relationship of historic commercial stores fronting on “Main Street” through street/road re-configurations; 6) road changes that result in harmful impact to structures within the district.

### ***Takoma Junction Task Force outreach findings (2010-2011)***

The following is a summary of the opinions that emerged during Task Force outreach efforts with respect to traffic and pedestrian movement. These statements represent predominant points of agreement and disagreement among participants.

Disincentives for local businesses cited by participants include the poor connection between the north and south sides of Carroll Avenue. Pedestrians would like to use the Junction for more activities, but they tend to perceive the Junction as a frustrating and often dangerous place to navigate, due to the limited number of crossing locations, the distance and the delays associated with crossing Carroll Avenue, and the uncomfortable proximity of sidewalks to traffic.

A significant proportion of participants would like to see widened sidewalks where possible to allow for outdoor dining or vendors. One group suggested that a 15-foot sidewalk width is needed to make a gathering space possible.

Parking for Junction businesses is seen by many as difficult to access, mainly due to the need for left turns. The parking is dispersed in several locations, and there is no easy way for drivers to “circle around” either the north side or the south side of the Junction to search these various areas for potential parking spaces.

Traffic congestion during peak times is a mild to moderate frustration for a significant number of drivers, especially for those seeking to travel through the Junction en route to other destinations. Exhaust fumes from idling traffic are a concern for nearby residents.

Nearby residents on both sides of the Junction are concerned about the use of side streets by cut-through traffic during peak hours.

Most support actions to increase environmental sustainability in the Junction, including better pedestrian conditions as well as encouragement of public transportation and bicycling. Efforts to minimize the pollution impacts of noise and exhaust fumes upon nearby residents would also be welcomed.

Most outreach participants are open to experimentation with signalization, crossings, and even street re-alignments as potential options for improving traffic and pedestrian movement in the Junction.

While some participants favor the installation of a mini-roundabout at the intersection of Ethan Allen and Carroll Avenues, most participants demonstrate little familiarity with such designs and do not tend to suggest mini-roundabouts as traffic solutions.

Bus service at the Junction is widely appreciated, although some would like to see efforts to reduce the impact of bus stops on traffic flow. Participants also feel that at present, or in the near future, an expansion of public transportation through the Junction would be beneficial. Suggestions tend to focus upon smaller shuttle operations that would link dense and outlying residential areas with the Junction and other commercial/cultural nodes around Takoma Park.

Several participants brought up concerns about the safety of children crossing Carroll Avenue at the Junction. Concerns most frequently expressed are those of parents who avoid the Junction out of fear that their young children will run into traffic; and residents who fear for the safety of unsupervised school-aged children crossing the intersection on their way to catch a bus or en route to and from school.

### ***Further Findings Related to Pedestrian Safety and Movement***

According to the Takoma Park Police Department, no serious pedestrian injuries at the Junction were reported in the 2001-2011 period. Nonetheless, pedestrian safety is a concern.

The current signal structure does not allow pedestrians to cross both Ethan Allen and Carroll in one continuous movement. Instead the system is designed as a two-stage crossing where pedestrians are expected to stop at the midpoint in front of B. Y. Morrison Park and wait through another sequence of light changes before crossing the second roadway. Based on the current per-foot timing of the crosswalk signals, SHA acknowledges it is unsafe to cross both streets without the extra stop.

Rather than endure a lengthy wait, however, many pedestrians choose to endanger their safety by rushing across both streets. One resident has described the situation as “a culture of disobedience” in which state and local governments are complicit because of their emphasis on an expedited flow of vehicular traffic.



When motorists drive from Sycamore toward the Junction to turn right onto Carroll, there is often only time for one or two vehicles to make the turn before the traffic light changes to yellow. Sometimes more motorists attempt to make the turn. They do not stop or slow down even though there is a “No turn on Red” overhead sign.

This results in an unsafe situation for pedestrians crossing Carroll in a westward direction because they have their backs to any motorists making the illegal rushed turns. The “WALK” sign lights up immediately when the traffic light turns red. However, if vehicles do not stop and pass through the light while it is in transition from yellow to red, they enter the painted pedestrian crosswalk at the same time as pedestrians who have been given the “WALK” sign.

Adjustments by SHA could include timing changes and a “red right-turn arrow” signal rather than just a “no-turn-on-red” sign.

## Goals for Traffic and Pedestrian Improvements

The Task Force is in agreement about the following goals:

- Manage a large volume of cars effectively through traffic-calming measures,
- Improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists,
- Contribute to a commercially viable and aesthetically pleasing destination for consumers,
- Provide a visual entry to the Junction,
- Minimize cut-through traffic in nearby neighborhoods,
- Serve to stimulate business growth,
- Decrease pollution caused by idling vehicles,
- Enhance the function of traffic movement to support and sustain the surrounding historic community.

## Traffic Options (Lesser Modifications)

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

The following options are categorized as those requiring the least level of modification to the Junction.

### 1. Optimizing the Traffic Signals

On April 20, 2011 and June 17, 2011 members of the Task Force met with Cedric Ward, the SHA assistant district traffic engineer for Montgomery County, and asked that SHA address the three signals at Ethan Allen/Sycamore, Ethan Allen/Carroll and Carroll/Philadelphia and to treat these three signals as a unit.

It is the observation of Task Force members that improvements have already occurred due to adjustments in signal timing.

For example, Southbound traffic on Carroll Avenue now clears the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection in one cycle even when southbound is backed up to Sherman Avenue and beyond.

SHA further determined that the video detection system, a component critical to coordinating the three signals, was inoperable. As of the date of this report, new equipment is installed but is not yet operable.

Also, as of this date, SHA is planning to upgrade the traffic detection system at the Junction signals. The upgrade will generate more reliable or consistent data between the computer that regulates signal timing and the cameras that detect vehicles in the intersections. Once the upgraded system is operational, SHA may adjust the timing at one or more signals and will coordinate all three signals.

In this option the City would ask SHA to continue to optimize the operation of traffic signals that affect traffic flow through the Junction, specifically: 1) complete the current upgrade of a vehicle detection system in a timely manner; 2) finalize all traffic-timing and pedestrian-signal adjustments at the three main Junction intersections; 3) repeat signal adjustments and upgrades as necessary until the highest level of performance is achieved and proven durable; 4) evaluate whether recent timing adjustments have created any new bottle-

necks at points east on Ethan Allen, on Carroll Avenue toward Old Town, and especially at the Maple/Philadelphia intersection; 5) coordinate all signals affecting the Junction traffic flow in a holistic approach; 6) provide periodic updates to the community.

In addition, because there has been no full public discussion of all the options under consideration, the City would work with SHA, the Task Force and other stakeholders to organize a public forum, followed by work sessions. The discussion would include options both for the flow of vehicular traffic and for pedestrian access and safety (see Pedestrian section). The goal would be to gain greater public understanding of all the options and to increase the likelihood that the most advantageous options will be selected.

**Arguments for:**

This is the most efficient option. It may yield positive results with no obvious negative consequences.

This option would require no hardscape changes and would not have any impact on the status of the historic district.

All three traffic signals at the Junction are addressed.

**Arguments against:**

None determined.

**2A. New Lane on Westbound Ethan Allen Avenue**

Congestion is caused on Ethan Allen near the Junction when westbound motorists block the through lane of traffic as they attempt to turn left into the TPSS Co-op parking lot.

Elongating the bus bay opposite the Co-op so that it becomes a second through lane would afford westbound motorists the option of using two lanes as they travel through the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection.

**Arguments for:**

Vehicular traffic could proceed more quickly, reducing the amount of pollution in the nearby residential and business areas.

**Arguments against:**

Modifications to the sidewalk and curbing at B. Y. Morrison Park would be necessary, requiring a historic district review, approval, and work permit.

A wider pedestrian crossing would be created.



**2B. New Lane on Westbound Ethan Allen Avenue and/or Stricter Enforcement of Bus-Bay Use**

Westbound traffic on Ethan Allen is often stalled when westbound buses stop in the through lane to pick up or drop off passengers near the intersection with Carroll Avenue.

One option is for the City to take a more proactive approach in enforcing the rule requiring bus drivers to pull into the bus bay when discharging or loading passengers. At the same time the City would advocate for the installation of an upgraded transit stop with regard to a passenger shelter, curb height for seamless access and improved mobility and a decreased need for bus “kneeling” or other time-consuming functions that would, in aggregate, allow for faster and safer pickup and discharge of bus passengers.

As a precursor to taking these steps the City would work with both the Montgomery Transit Authority and Montgomery Ride-On to set up a public forum with a focus on the needs of bus passengers and the requirements of the bus-transit system. The forum would bring in stakeholders to help with transit stop designs and schedules to facilitate increased transit usage and minimize disruptions to traffic flow.

Another option is for the City to advocate for turning the bus bay into a second through lane, thereby affording westbound motorists two lanes as they travel through the intersection.

**Arguments for Stricter Enforcement:**

Vehicular traffic can proceed more quickly, reducing the amount of pollution in the nearby residential and business areas.

This option would require no hardscape changes and would not have any impact on the status of the historic district.

**Arguments against:**

More conflicts between buses and cars may result when bus drivers re-enter traffic from the bus bay.  
Delays in the bus schedule may result.

**Arguments for New Lane:**

Vehicular traffic can proceed more quickly, reducing the amount of pollution in the nearby residential and business areas.

**Arguments against:**

Modifications to the sidewalk and curbing at B. Y. Morrison Park would be necessary, requiring a historic district review, approval, and work permit.

A wider pedestrian crossing would be created, possibly affecting pedestrian safety.

Ethan Allen would be widened, reducing a physical and visual buffer and affecting the highway appearance of the intersection.

**2C. One-way on Sycamore Avenue for One Block or Right-in-Right-out-Only at Sycamore & Ethan Allen**

Congestion often occurs when westbound Ethan Allen traffic must stop to allow left-turning motorists to enter the traffic flow from Sycamore Avenue or to westbound Ethan Allen motorists to turn left onto Sycamore.

. One option is to change Sycamore into a one-way southbound street for one block, starting at Ethan Allen. This would eliminate the traffic signal at that intersection and change the traffic pattern. Traffic into and out of the Co-op's adjacent parking lot would need to mimic the same pattern for the change to work.

Another option is to allow motorists either entering Ethan Allen from Sycamore, or entering Sycamore from Ethan Allen, to make right-hand turns only. This would eliminate the traffic signal at that intersection and change the traffic pattern.

**Arguments for One-Way:**

Traffic congestion would be eased, and the amount of pollution in the nearby residential and business area would be reduced.

New parking spaces along the one-way portion of Sycamore could be added.

**Arguments against:**

Motorists on Sycamore and Columbia would need to drive a greater distance on residential streets to exit the neighborhood.

Co-op shoppers who park in the lot adjacent to Sycamore would be forced to drive through a residential area when they leave.

Overall, traffic in the Sycamore-Columbia neighborhood would increase.

**Arguments for Right-in, Right-out:**

Traffic congestion would be eased, and the amount of pollution in the nearby residential and business area would be reduced.

**Arguments against:**

Cut-through traffic may increase on Boyd and Jackson Avenues from motorists who are forced to turn east onto Ethan Allen when their destination is to the west.

**3. New Right-turn Option on Southbound Carroll Ave.**

Prior to the year 2000, southbound motorists on Carroll Avenue could use both lanes at the Junction to make a right-hand turn. Currently, they can only make a left-hand turn from the left lane. This option would restore the original traffic pattern.

**Arguments for:**

Traffic congestion and vehicle idling would be alleviated.

Risk of injury to pedestrians may be lessened since motorists may not speed up to make the light.

**Arguments against:**

The chance of vehicular accidents may increase because of motorists changing lanes in the block between Carroll/Ethan Allen and Carroll/Philadelphia.

#### **4. New Turn Lane from Eastbound/Northbound Carroll onto Philadelphia**

A back-up happens during morning and evening rush hours when northbound vehicles get stuck on Carroll Avenue at the Fire Station intersection behind motorists attempting to turn left onto Philadelphia Avenue.

Prior to the construction of the new Fire House the width of northbound lane in front of the firehouse allowed motorists to proceed forward while other motorists were waiting to make a left-hand turn – de facto, there were two lanes.

This change would either create a new left-hand turn lane or add enough width to the northbound lane as existed before construction.

At the request of the Task Force, SHA investigated traffic flow at the Carroll/Philadelphia and decided the amount of congestion did not warrant a change. A SHA representative wrote in an e-mail message, "We found that the left-turning vehicles along eastbound approach were minimal and all motorists can complete their maneuver within reasonable time. In addition, redesigning the intersection to include a left-turn lane would require a portion of roadway widening. Due to the existing operational conditions and the limited right-of-way, a left-turn lane is not recommended at this time."

##### **Arguments for:**

Traffic congestion may be eased, and the amount of pollution in the nearby residential and business area may be reduced.

##### **Arguments against:**

Reconstruction of the firehouse driveway would be required.

A bike lane may be eliminated, and motorists may be encouraged to drive closer to pedestrians.

### **Traffic Options (High-impact Modifications)**

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

These potential modifications would need further study to assess their impact on pedestrian safety, community identity, traffic efficiency, livability and local business development. All options would require simulations to ascertain effectiveness toward goals and potential interdependencies including the traffic impact on the following intersections:

Maple Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue

New Hampshire Avenue and Ethan Allen Avenue

Flower Avenue and Carroll Avenue

The simulations would need a number of restraints for an objective assessment. In addition to simulations carried out via computer programs, options should be piloted before implementing so that public comments can be ascertained.

See Appendix V for a list of companies contacted by the Task Force that could perform traffic simulations.

#### **1. Mini-Roundabout at Ethan Allen & Carroll**

Mini-roundabouts are of varying sizes. The diameter can be in the range of 80-to-120 feet or larger.

The Task Force was not able to determine the minimum dimensions of a mini-roundabout for the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection. Rather the Task Force discussed roundabouts of two general sizes.

One would, in theory, fit within the paved portion of the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection and would not require any changes to the curbing or sidewalks. The other would be larger, as suggested by the SHA-commissioned Kittelson study, and would necessitate changes to the curbing, sidewalks and adjoining properties.

In the case of the smaller roundabout, the center island would be approximately at-grade and constructed of materials such as bricks or cobblestones that are fully traversable by motorized vehicles.

In the case of the larger roundabout, the center island would be "bunkered" (and perhaps landscaped) so that motorists would be forced to drive in a circular pattern and not be allowed to drive across it.

In either case, the traffic lights and crosswalk signals at the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection would be removed. It may be necessary to install a signal or flashing siren that can be triggered to allow unimpeded access for emergency vehicles.

Also, in either case, the travel lanes between Ethan Allen/Carroll and Philadelphia/Carroll would be reduced from four to two, but a center lane would be designed to be used primarily for left-hand turns.

Other possibilities include:

- 1) A splitter island in any of the intersecting lanes that would be used for pedestrian crossings;
- 2) Removal of the Sycamore/Ethan Allen traffic light and replacement with a right-in/right-out-only constraint;
- 3) Removal of the Ethan Allen/Jackson stop sign;
- 4) Construction of additional roundabouts at Carroll/Philadelphia (in front of the firehouse) and at Philadelphia/Maple.

In the case of a larger roundabout Sycamore Avenue could be incorporated as an access point, negating the need for a separate light or stop sign at the Ethan Allen/Sycamore intersection. To route Sycamore traffic directly into the roundabout, the location of the street where it enters Ethan Allen would have to be moved to run through what is currently the TPSS Co-op's parking lot, eliminating all existing parking spaces.

For the purposes of this report, only the fully traversable roundabout is listed as an option.

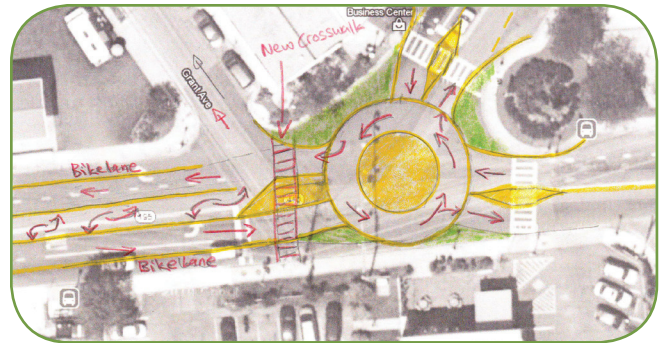
### **Arguments for:**

#### **SAFETY**

- 1) Drivers entering a mini-roundabout must slow down, potentially making the intersection safer for pedestrians. Slower speeds usually result in fewer accidents, especially fewer fatalities or serious injuries.

(See [http://www.teachamerica.com/roundabouts/RA051\\_ppt\\_O'Neill.pdf](http://www.teachamerica.com/roundabouts/RA051_ppt_O'Neill.pdf); [http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_syn\\_264.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_syn_264.pdf); [http://www.frcog.org/pubs/transportation/Roundabouts/Roundabout\\_FAQ\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.frcog.org/pubs/transportation/Roundabouts/Roundabout_FAQ_FINAL.pdf) (page 5-6); <http://www.k-state.edu/roundabouts/news/MarylandRoundaboutSafetyExperience.html>

- 2) Pedestrians can use a splitter island as a mid-point refuge when crossing roadways. A splitter island could create a new and convenient crossing between the City-owned parking lot and the Grant Avenue intersection.
- 3) Discontinued travel lanes between the Carroll-Ethan Allen intersection and the firehouse can provide space for new bus bays, improving pedestrian safety and traffic flow.
- 4) A roundabout may decrease the amount of conflict points between vehicles and between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists, compared to a signalized intersection.



#### **ENVIRONMENT**

- 5) Toxic emissions and noise pollution may be reduced because of fewer back-ups, fewer idling vehicles and the overall efficiency of traffic flow. (See [https://www.nysdot.gov/main/roundabouts/files/Emissions\\_Reduction.pdf](https://www.nysdot.gov/main/roundabouts/files/Emissions_Reduction.pdf); [http://www.sidrasolutions.com/documents/ACE2006\\_AKCELIKPaper.pdf](http://www.sidrasolutions.com/documents/ACE2006_AKCELIKPaper.pdf)

#### **AESTHETIC**

- 6) The splitter island(s) may provide an opportunity for landscaping (See <http://www.virginiadot.org/info/faq-roundabouts.asp>)

#### **COMMERCIAL**

- 7) Because of the new appearance more people may be attracted to the Junction, which is in need of revitalization.
- 8) A roundabout can create a separation between the residential and commercial areas of the Junction, emphasizing the shops along Carroll Avenue.
- 9) The discontinued travel lanes between the Carroll-Ethan Allen intersection and the firehouse can be used for a center left-turn lane to facilitate access into the businesses along that stretch.



## TRANSIT

10) Roundabouts typically have a traffic-calming effect since the central island constrains circulating speeds, splitter islands narrow the entry path and entering vehicles must yield to circulating traffic (See <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/fulltext/M22-01/1320.pdf>)

11) Bike lanes can be accommodated in the space freed up by the discontinued lanes between the Carroll-Ethan Allen intersection and the firehouse.

## TOPOGRAPHY

12) A mini-roundabout may be able to fit within the paved area of the Carroll-Ethan Allen intersection and should not require significant hardscape modifications.<sup>1</sup> (See also [http://www.teachamerica.com/roundabouts/RA054A\\_Waddell\\_ppr.pdf](http://www.teachamerica.com/roundabouts/RA054A_Waddell_ppr.pdf))

13) Engineering of a center island and circular traffic lanes may be able to adjust for a drop in grade between the front of the Co-op and the shops along Carroll Avenue, which is approximately four feet<sup>2</sup>

14) A fully traversable center island may not interfere with the visibility of drivers since the height of the island is limited to a few inches above grade.

## ***Arguments against:***

### HISTORIC DISTRICT

1) Any type of constructed roundabout within the boundaries of the historic district would negatively affect the historic character of the Junction and diminish future protections for Takoma Park. (See Historic District section, and the March 7, 2008 letter from the Chair of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission to the SHA.)

### SAFETY

2) Emergency vehicles may be impeded due to physical obstructions, lane reductions and traffic back-ups. A second mini-roundabout in front of the firehouse may create additional obstacles. Local governments are vulnerable to lawsuits from the disabled, accident/fire victims and first responders for traffic-calming devices on primary emergency routes. (Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Commission 1997, Bowman 1997, Bunte 2000, Calogne 2003).

3) Without traffic signals, bicyclists and pedestrians (especially children, the elderly and the visually impaired) may be at increased risk if motorists do not yield. (USDOT 2000, Bunte 2000, Florida DOT 2000).

4) The complexity of 5-point decision-making for entering, exiting, filling gaps, and accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians can cause accidents and has led to reinstallation of signals. (USDOT 2000, Calongne 2003, Gazette 2011 article on 16th Street Traffic Circle).

5) A fully traversable center island can set up a dangerous conflict between motorists and pedestrians. Crosswalks may be placed at a distance from the roundabout, lengthening paths between destinations and tempting pedestrians to cross onto the center island rather than the splitter islands. At the same time motorists may pass over the center island rather than travel around the circle.<sup>3</sup>

6) The learning curve for a traffic circle can lead to accidents, and enforcement may continue into the long term. (Takoma Junction minutes, August 24, 2011, interview with Takoma Park police chief Ron Ricucci).

## TRANSIT

7) The introduction of a roundabout may generate an increase in traffic volume, particularly of commuters. (Thompson 2008).

7) The reduction from four lanes to two may cause traffic back-ups. If the firehouse intersection remains signalized, back-ups at the intersection, particularly westbound, could bring traffic to a halt in the roundabout. When westbound Ethan Allen traffic is heavy, it may be difficult for southbound Carroll Ave. traffic to enter the circle.

8) To facilitate traffic flow, it may be necessary to construct a second roundabout in front of the firehouse (Kittelsohn & Associates, 2008) and potentially a third roundabout at the Philadelphia/Maple intersection. If the front of the firehouse is not large enough for a roundabout, the traffic light may have to be replaced with a three-way stop, which may impede traffic flow in the roundabout at Ethan Allen/Carroll. (Kittelsohn & Associates, 2008)

9) Numerous curb cuts at the City Lot, the Co-op parking lot, RS Automotive, Takoma Auto Clinic, and Healy Surgeons, as well as three bus stops, may have an adverse impact on traffic flow.

10) Bus stops and pull-outs would need to be located beyond splitter islands, making access to transfers more difficult for the elderly and persons with disabilities (USDOT 2000).

#### ENVIRONMENTAL

11) Roundabouts have been found to negatively impact air quality both during construction and operation. Traffic back-ups and frequent braking and accelerating may be of increased concern for emissions of hydrocarbon, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides. Regardless of traffic controls, higher volumes of traffic typically increase emissions (Coelho et al. 2006, Mustafa et al. 1993, Bunte 2000, WIDOT 2008, Gloucestershire Echo 2011).

12) Fuel consumption and emissions of carbon dioxide were found to be significantly lower with a signalized roundabout in comparison to an unsignalized roundabout (Akcelik 2006).

#### COMMERCIAL

13) A roundabout may be detrimental to commercial use and development if pedestrians and bicyclists avoid the Junction because they feel at risk or if crossing locations are not convenient to the shops.

#### TOPOGRAPHY

14) Concern was expressed by an SHA representative that the current road width may not provide sufficient turning radius for large southbound vehicles on Carroll Avenue attempting to turn east onto Ethan Allen (Task force Minutes April 20, 2011, Cedric Ward meeting)

15) A grade difference of approximately four feet from the front of the Co-op diagonally to the Carroll Ave. shops may not be conducive to visibility for drivers and may be problematic for design and construction of a roundabout.

#### LIVABILITY

16) Nearby residents may be deprived of a neighborhood sensibility because the structural dominance of transit-oriented roundabout could act as a physical barrier between low-scale commercial neighborhood shops and residences.<sup>3</sup> (See Appendix for links to referenced documents. For an overview of roundabouts, see <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/00067/index.cfm>)

## 2. T-Intersection at Ethan Allen & Carroll

A T-intersection would reconfigure Ethan Allen Avenue at its westbound end so that it intersects Carroll Avenue at a 90-degree angle, by curving the end of Ethan Allen northward across what is now the landscaped brick promenade of B.Y. Morrison Park. The re-aligned Ethan Allen Avenue would terminate in front of the Takoma Postal Center or Carriage House Cleaners.

This change could allow for two continuous right-hand turns via dedicated exits that would be separated from the rest of the intersection by triangular pedestrian islands. Traffic on Carroll Avenue could proceed “right” onto Ethan Allen, and eastbound Ethan Allen could proceed “right” onto outbound Carroll Avenue. The current acute-angle right-hand turn from Ethan Allen onto Carroll would be changed into a right angle.

Three crosswalks would serve the intersection. One would cross from the area near the Carriage House Cleaners across Carroll to B.Y. Morrison Park. A second would cross Ethan Allen from B.Y. Morrison to the Co-op. A new crosswalk would cross from the Co-op to the upper end of the Carroll Avenue shops.

The 2009 Old Takoma Business Association Market Analysis study recognized the lack of a “100% corner” (a traditional Market-and-Main St. intersection with businesses on four corners) as a disadvantage for the Junction. This realignment of Ethan Allen Avenue would upgrade the intersection from a “50% corner” to a “75% corner.”



NOTE: A different 90-degree T-intersection could be created by reconfiguring Carroll Avenue to intersect with Ethan Allen Avenue at the same location. The promenade of B.Y. Morrison Park would be lost. The realigned roadway in this configuration would face the front of the Co-op. Additional space for streetscape amenities would be gained by the reclamation of previous roadway space in front of the 7400 Carroll Avenue storefronts up to Grant Avenue.

**Arguments for:**

- 1) Visibility of Carroll Avenue may be emphasized, potentially reducing confusion for drivers and creating a more unified sense of place, especially an improved awareness of Junction businesses and amenities. This may make the area more attractive to shoppers.
- 2) Emergency response time may be improved since westbound vehicles from Ethan Allen could turn right onto Carroll Avenue more easily.
- 3) By reducing the crossing distance, pedestrian ease and safety may be enhanced.
- 4) Traffic proceeding from Ethan Allen toward the Fire Station, or vice versa, may be calmed by introducing a curve or a 90-degree left turn.
- 5) Traffic congestion and emissions may be reduced.
- 6) The gazebo and artwork at B.Y. Morrison Park would be preserved even though the size of the park would be reduced.
- 7) The distance between the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection and the Fire Station would be increased, providing more time for drivers to change lanes for turns as needed. Conversely, this configuration allows more distance for drivers exiting the City-owned lot to proceed north on Carroll toward the hospital.
- 8) With the establishment of a direct crossing of Carroll Avenue, shoppers may be more likely to park in the City-owned lot and walk across the street to the Carroll Avenue businesses.
- 9) Eastbound morning backups on Ethan Allen and westbound evening backups on Carroll might be reduced by the introduction of dedicated right-turn lanes that bypass the signals.

**Arguments against:**

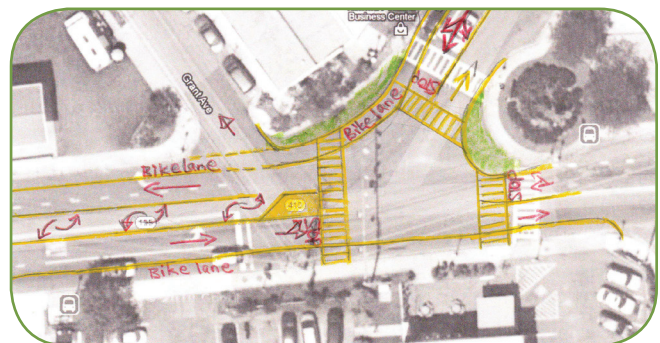
- 1) Reconfiguration of intersections within the boundaries of the historic district would negatively affect the historic character of the Junction and diminish future protections for Takoma Park. (See Takoma Park Historic District Section).
- 2) The change in elevation as Carroll proceeds north into the intersection may present a design challenge for a T-intersection.
- 3) A T-intersection might require changes in entry, egress and/or signalization at Sycamore and changes in entry and/or egress for Grant Avenue.
- 4) Other nearby properties, residential and commercial, could be adversely affected.
- 5) Only one of the Junction intersections is addressed.

### **3. Three-Way Stop at Ethan Allen & Carroll, and at the Carroll/Philadelphia**

The current traffic lights at the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection would be changed to red-yellow blinking lights or stop signs. At the same time the number of travel lanes would be reduced to one lane in all three directions. Currently, there are two lanes approaching eastbound from the Fire Station, two lanes approaching southbound from Carroll Avenue and one lane approaching westbound from Ethan Allen.

The crosswalk signals for pedestrians would be removed.

This option would also require a three-way stop in front of the firehouse, at Carroll/Philadelphia, and the removal of crosswalk signals at that intersection. As at the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection, the firehouse three-way stop could utilize either blinking lights or stop signs.



**Arguments for:**

- 1) The wait time and crossing distance for pedestrians may be reduced.

- 2) The sight-lines of drivers approaching the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection may be improved.
- 3) The discontinued traffic lanes could be converted into wider sidewalks, bike lanes, landscaping or a new center lane for left-hand turns between the Co-op and the Fire Station.
- 4) A crosswalk from the corner of Grant Avenue to the front of the Co-op could be added.
- 5) During times that are not rush hours the wait time for vehicles may be reduced, possibly resulting in less pollution.

**Arguments against:**

- 1) Traffic backups may increase during rush hours.
- 2) Pollution and noise may increase during all hours due to increased stop-and-go traffic.
- 3) Pedestrians may avoid the Junction based on a perception that they are at higher risk of accidents without crosswalk signals.
- 4) Modifications to sidewalks and curbs may be required.

#### **4. X-Crossing for Sycamore & Carroll**

The Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection would be realigned so that Sycamore connects directly with Carroll by rerouting the streets through the Turner building's parking lot, currently used by the Co-op, and through the west side of B. Y. Morrison Park.

**Arguments for:**

- 1) This would create a traditional four-way intersection that would clarify vehicle movement and shorten pedestrian crossings.
- 2) Westbound motorists would have more time and distance to switch lanes in the stretch prior to the Fire Station for turns into the City-owned lot or for turning onto Grant Avenue.
- 3) New public space (albeit sloping) would be created in front of the upper end of the shops on Carroll Avenue.

**Arguments against:**

- 1) Reconfiguration of intersections within the boundaries of the historic district would negatively affect the historic character of the Junction and diminish future protections for Takoma Park. (See Takoma Park Historic District Section).
- 2) The value of the Turner property would be significantly diminished by the loss of the parking lot, which likely would necessitate an expensive public purchase of the property.
- 3) Neighborhood traffic may increase on Sycamore, Poplar and Columbia Avenues.
- 4) There would be a cumulative net loss of parking in the Junction, including spaces that currently exist at B. Y. Morrison Park.
- 5) Pedestrians would be required to walk a greater distance to cross Carroll Avenue, potentially making the Carroll Avenue shops less appealing to shoppers.
- 6) Other nearby properties, residential and commercial, could be adversely affected by the changing relationship of commercial buildings to the street and the movement of street and traffic closer to residential homes.

#### **5. Eliminating a "Choke" Lane on Westbound Ethan Allen**

Currently two lanes of westbound traffic on Ethan Allen cross New Hampshire Avenue and then merge into a single lane during a two-lane stretch of pavement that extends for about 75 yards beyond New Hampshire before the street narrows.

This option would restrict westbound traffic on Ethan Allen so that only one lane would be allowed to proceed forward. The second lane in the 75-yard merger would be eliminated.

**Arguments for:**

- 1) The number of idling vehicles near the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection may decrease, reducing vehicular emissions in that neighborhood.
- 2) Local residents may be able to enter onto Ethan Allen more easily from driveways or from side streets such as Prince Georges, Jackson, and Woodland.
- 3) Commuters may be discouraged from proceeding on Ethan Allen toward the Junction and may seek alternate routes, reducing overall volume of traffic in the Junction.

**Arguments against:**

Traffic back-ups at the Ethan Allen/New Hampshire intersection are likely to increase, adding to pollution along that stretch of roadway.



## Recommendations for Traffic Improvements

1. The City should work with SHA to complete the current plan to optimize signal cycles and timing as quickly as possible. Once the plan is completed, the City should work with SHA to collect data for baseline measurements of vehicular and pedestrian volumes, speeds, and wait times.

2. The City should work with SHA to set up a public forum and work sessions that try to achieve a holistic success for vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety and access through the Junction. The discussion would include cycles, sequencing, phasing and sight-lines as well as timing. One option at the Junction would be to establish different timing at different times of day. Changing the traffic light pattern of the Sycamore Avenue light to allow westbound traffic on Ethan Allen Avenue to proceed through the intersection while eastbound traffic is stopped, and vice versa, is also an avenue to explore.

3. The City should urge SHA to prioritize upgrading the Junction traffic lights, such that they would be on the system coordinated by the Montgomery County Transportation Management Section. This system would allow for regular review of efficiency, optimized timing, and the possibility of immediate changes, when necessary.

4. The City should solidify a relationship with SHA to involve regular, proactive information-sharing and consultation on all City-related matters within SHA's purview, including right-of-way maintenance, pavement markings, and roadway configuration.

5. The City should enlist the offices of the Maryland District 20 legislative delegation, as needed.

6. To ease congestion for westbound Ethan Allen traffic at Sycamore, the Task Force recommends in favor of stricter enforcement of use of the bus bay by bus drivers.

7. The Task Force also recommends in favor of an upgraded transit stop on Ethan Allen at Sycamore that would decrease the time needed for the pickup and discharge of passengers.

8. If stricter enforcement of bus-bay use does not reduce traffic congestion on Ethan Allen in a meaningful way, the Task Force recommends that the City make an evaluation of other options, including the possibility of a second through lane at the Ethan Allen/Carroll westbound intersection.

9. As part of this evaluation, the Task Force urges the City to set up a public forum for a discussion about the needs of the bus-transit system, as well as the role buses play in reducing overall vehicular traffic. Included might be a study of whether the sizes of buses are correctly calculated for the number of passengers along the Ethan Allen route.

## Pedestrian Options

### 1. New Crosswalk

There is currently no direct way for pedestrians to cross from the TPSS Co-op to the Carroll Avenue shops. For most of the last half of the 20th century, however, a signalized crosswalk existed across Carroll Avenue between the corner of Grant Avenue and the area of the current City-owned parking lot.

This change would restore that previous crosswalk.

#### **Arguments for:**

- 1) Pedestrians would risk less chance of an accident or injury if they are no longer tempted to jaywalk because of the current lengthy, two-stage crossing.
- 2) A new synergy among the businesses in the Junction might be created if pedestrian-shoppers could walk more conveniently from one side of the commercial district to the other.

#### **Arguments against:**

- 1) It may take longer for vehicles to travel through the Junction.
- 2) The SHA has raised concerns about an increased risk of accidents, although there may be a misunderstanding on the part of the SHA.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Crossing Guards for Schoolchildren

A number of parents who live in the neighborhoods east of the Junction have made it known that, because of the risk of an accident while trying to cross traffic lanes at the Junction, they do not allow their children to walk unescorted to and from schools west of the Junction. In circumstances where parents cannot walk with their children, they often drive them, adding to traffic congestion.

In the case of unescorted schoolchildren who do walk back and forth to school through the Junction, it's been observed that they often jaywalk, taking a diagonal route outside the existing crosswalks, perhaps because they are uncertain about the safest way to cross.

This option would oblige the City to begin immediately to provide crossing guards at the Junction during



traditional hours when children travel to and from school.

**Arguments for:**

This would significantly reduce the risk of accidents involving schoolchildren..

**Arguments against:**

There would be an additional and unplanned cost to the City budget.

**3. Public Forum with SHA**

Although SHA is in the process of making changes to the signalization at the Junction, there has been no full public discussion or clarification of the outcomes SHA has in mind or the options under consideration.

In order to help clarify the ongoing work and to involve local residents and business owners in a discussion of the options, the City could prevail upon SHA to hold a public forum.

**Arguments for:**

Public understanding of the pedestrian and traffic considerations at the Junction may be improved.

SHA may modify current plans in order to improve pedestrian and traffic conditions at the Junction.

**Arguments against:**

None determined.

**Recommendations for Pedestrian Improvements**

The Task Force recommends in favor of all three options, with additions as stated for Recommendations #1 and 2:

1. Establish a signalized crosswalk between the corner of Grant Avenue and the area of the current City-owned parking lot.

The Task Force believes the new crosswalk should be a high priority, that cost should not be a hindrance, and that the timing of the crosswalk signal should allow pedestrians to cross the street within a “reasonable” time so as to avoid the temptation to jaywalk.

2. Begin immediately to provide crossing guards at the Junction during traditional hours when children travel to and from school.

The Task Force believes that crossing guards should be employed up until the point that a new signalized crosswalk is installed, at which point the guards should not be necessary. The Task Force also encourages the crossing guards to direct schoolchildren across the streets in accordance with the timing of the traffic lights so as not to risk an accident due to any confusion on the part of motorists.

3. Prevail upon the State Highway Administration (SHA) to hold a public forum to allow clarification and full public discussion of the outcomes and options that SHA has in mind with respect to changes to the signalization at the Junction.

## 6

## Access and Parking

One of the keys to the vitality of any business and cultural node is accessibility. Visitors and employees (as well as service vehicles) need efficient, reliable ways to get to the district. Takoma Junction's layout, tight dimensions, distance from the Metro station, quarter-mile separation from Old Town, and significant role in the regional transportation network present particular challenges to accessibility. Although the Junction is located near the geographic center of "the most walkable city in Maryland," there is not sufficient population within walking distance to make pedestrians the primary source of customers for its mix of convenience goods and services businesses.

Because the Junction has limited parking capacity, a key goal is to get more people to the Junction without increasing the number of auto trips to the Junction. As detailed in the "Traffic" and "Revitalization" sections of this report, impediments to pedestrian movement within the district tend to discourage some nearby residents from traveling on foot to and from the Junction, and bicycle riders lack dedicated lanes in the Junction. Although the Junction is served by several bus routes, there is a sense that the potential for Junction visitation by public transit users is not fully realized. At the same time, some Junction activities such as exercise, pet care, grocery purchases, and computer repair do not lend themselves so easily to the use of public transit. Given the continued prevalence of automobiles as the preferred mode of transportation for business patrons, parking convenience and availability are key concerns for Junction business owners, as well as key considerations in evaluating business development for the Junction.

Opinions vary within the Task Force, as within the wider community, about whether current parking arrangements at the Junction provide sufficient capacity and convenience. At almost all times, Junction parking capacity appears to be sufficient to meet current demand; however, it is not known to what extent some of the demand is being handled by the use of nearby residential streets.

Under current conditions, commercial parking is perhaps more an issue of inconvenience rather than lack of capacity. The Task Force's general sense is that better management and coordination of parking, in combination with other improvements, could improve both convenience and availability for the short term. Beyond this, the need for additional parking capacity at the Junction will largely depend upon four factors:

- (1) the amount and type of new development that takes place on the south side of Carroll Avenue;
- (2) the types of businesses that come to fill currently vacant spaces on the north side of Carroll Avenue (as well as south-side businesses if the Co-op relocates to the C1 parcel);
- (3) the extent to which Junction visitors switch to alternative modes of transportation (walking, biking, transit); and
- (4) the extent to which nearby residents are willing to accept the use of side streets as parking areas for Junction patrons and employees.

This section of the report provides an overview of current accessibility issues, with particular attention to parking; the focus of this section is on how Junction users choose to reach the Junction (and, for drivers, the related question of where they park while at the Junction). The "Traffic" and "Streetscape Improvements" sections of this report provide additional discussion of automobile, bus, bike, and pedestrian movement issues within the Junction, including sidewalks and crosswalks.

### Findings

As described above, parking issues should be integrated with public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access issues when evaluating current conditions and considering potential improvements.

### Studies

#### ***Takoma Park Master Plan, Dec. 2000: Commercial and Institutional Centers***

The Plan called for good pedestrian routes, transit, and auto access, as well as adequate parking, for each Takoma Park commercial center. It observed that most parcels are small and parking is limited, and so recog-

nized the potential for customers to park on nearby neighborhood streets.

Montgomery County prepared a supplement to the Takoma Park Master Plan in 2001 that addresses pedestrian and bicycle routes in the City. Continuing this effort, County planners included Takoma Park in a County-wide Bikeways Functional Master Plan that was prepared in 2005. These planning documents included bike-ways serving the Junction.

#### ***City of Takoma Park Strategic Plan, FY2010-FY2015 (Adopted May, 2009)***

The Strategic Plan's second facet, Environmental Sustainability, does not mention the Junction specifically, but includes several priority projects and initiatives which bear relevance to Junction redevelopment. These include expansion of the sidewalk network and an increase in the number of residents rating the ease of travel by walking as good or excellent.

#### ***SHA Walkable Communities Study (2005)***

In October 2005, the State Highway Administration sponsored a workshop in Takoma Junction led by Bob Chauncy of the National Center for Biking and Walking. The report on this and three other workshops, which was presented to the City Council on May 1, 2006, covered recommendations made by community participants as well as City staff. The report's overview of impediments to pedestrians and bicyclists at Takoma Junction included: wide street crossings and few crossing options; long waits for cars and pedestrians, resulting in dangerous crossing behavior from pedestrians and bicyclists; and the failure of buses to use available bus bays.

The report's many statements and observations included the following: The busy streets of the Junction act as a dangerous barrier between the Co-op and the shops along Carroll Avenue. The entire commercial area is adjacent to single-family neighborhoods and two clusters of multi-family housing but this is not apparent in the level of pedestrian activity.

Among other Junction issues identified, the report noted:

- Lack of sufficient pedestrian facilities. The report recommended that the City/State widen the sidewalk in front of Carroll Avenue shops to enable outdoor seating and use the pavilion area for one or two licensed "pushcart" vendors.

- Shortage of parking in the area. The report recommended putting diagonal parking in front of the Carroll Avenue shops and exploring the possibility of underground parking as well as researching the feasibility of a parking district.

As a resource for achieving some of the goals above, the report suggested that the City seek funding through the SHA Community Safety Enhancement Program.

#### ***S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association Initiative (December 2007-March 2008)***

The S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association encompasses the neighborhood that borders the Junction on the north side. S. S. Carroll formed a sub-committee in early December of 2007 to develop a vision for the revitalization of the Junction. The two leaders of this initiative, the acting president of S.S. Carroll (Kay Daniels Cohen) and the sub-committee chair (Ellen Zavian) have served as members of the Takoma Junction Task Force and shared the experience and findings of the S.S. Carroll initiative.

In a summary letter to the Mayor and Council dated March 25, 2008, S.S. Carroll set forth an overall vision for the Junction that included revitalization recommendations for "pedestrian friendly walkways" and "ease of parking." S.S. Carroll formally requested the City to develop a plan for Junction revitalization that would involve the S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association.

#### ***Retail Market Analysis for Old Takoma Business Association, conducted by Randall Gross of Development Economics (October 12, 2009)***

OTBA commissioned a market analysis of the entire Old Takoma area. The analysis was completed in October 2009. Based on the findings of the market analysis and input from the consumer intercept surveys, the report called for new business to complement and build on the existing OTBA business base.

Relevant to parking and access issues, the report called for infill development to activate "dead" spaces such as parking lots and for better management of parking overall.

The market analysis provides extensive findings from "consumer pedestrian surveys." Anecdotal information indicates that these surveys were carried out primarily in Old Town and near the Metro station. Strengths of Old Takoma cited by consumers included walkability (20%). About 81% of surveyed consumers shop regularly

in the OTBA area. 70% shop in the area at least once a week. 49% drive and 44% take Metro.

In terms of weaknesses, nearly 20% of consumers surveyed noted issues with parking and visibility of parking areas.

The market analysis included the following recommendations related to parking and access in its “Development and Management Recommendations”:

- the development of an Urban Design Plan to include a traffic and parking management study
- later store hours to accommodate the evening rush commuter (move store hours to 11 AM to 7 PM or later)
- parking meters with longer time allowed, to encourage shoppers to patronize more than one store
- parking holidays on certain normally slow shopping days.

### ***Task Force on Environmental Action: Final Report (Adopted April 30, 2010)***

The Environmental Task Force’s “Climate Change” recommendations identified potential sites for solar parking lot and solar bus stop canopies. The report also called for aggressive City action to “tip the balance” in favor of pedestrians and bicyclists via such actions as the establishment of separate bike paths on Ethan Allen Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue as well as the marking of separate bicycle lanes or in-lane bicycle symbols on all major roads.

### ***Takoma Junction Task Force Outreach Findings (February-September, 2011)***

Outreach participants cited two accessibility problems as disincentives for local businesses: scattered parking spaces and a poor connection between the north and south sides of Carroll Avenue.

Pedestrians would like to use the Junction for more activities, but they tend to perceive the Junction as a frustrating and often dangerous place to navigate, due to the limited number of crossing locations, the distance and the delays associated with crossing Carroll Avenue, and the uncomfortable proximity of sidewalks to traffic. (These concerns relate to accessibility but are addressed in the “Traffic” and “Streetscape Improvements” sections of this report.)

Parking for Junction businesses is seen by many as scarce or difficult to access, mainly due to the need for left turns. The parking is dispersed in several locations, and there is no easy way for drivers to “circle around” either the north side or the south side of the Junction to search these various areas for potential parking spaces. However, other outreach participants feel that the existing parking capacity is adequate and report that they rarely have difficulty finding a place to park.

Two security concerns cited by participants may influence consumers’ choices of whether and when to come to the Junction: (a) some perceive the parking lots behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue as too isolated; and (b) some senior citizens feel a need for extra caution when walking in the Junction at night.

Nearby residents, particularly on the north side of the Junction, report an excess of commercial parking on residential streets.

Most support actions to increase environmental sustainability in the Junction, including better pedestrian conditions, encouragement of public transportation and bicycling, and planting of shade trees – which some say would make for more pleasant pedestrian access and use.

Bus service at the Junction is widely appreciated, although some would like to see efforts to reduce the impact of bus stops on traffic flow. Participants also feel that at present, or in the near future, an expansion of public transportation through the Junction would be beneficial; suggestions tend to focus upon smaller shuttle operations that would link dense and outlying residential areas with the Junction and other commercial/cultural nodes around Takoma Park.

Several participants brought up concerns about the safety of children crossing Carroll Avenue at the Junction. Concerns most frequently expressed are those of parents who avoid the Junction out of fear that their young children will run into traffic; and residents who fear for the safety of unsupervised school-aged children crossing the intersection on their way to catch a bus or en route to/from school.

## **Modes of Access**

Little data exist on the modes of access used by visitors to Takoma Junction. The OTBA market analysis (see above) surveyed pedestrians primarily in Old Town and near the Metro. Of those surveyed, 49% drove and 44% used Metro.

The Task Force conducted short pedestrian intercept surveys in the Junction in late summer 2011. Junction visitors were asked how they got to the Junction. The results of these surveys could not be located.

### **Public Transit Access**

Takoma Junction is currently served by both Metrobus and RideOn routes. Many people use the Junction as a bus transfer point.

### **Underuse of Public Transportation**

Several Ride-On and Metrobus routes serve the Junction, and there appears to be potential for much greater use of the Junction by those who travel through the area via bus. Many Ride-On users may be unaware that Ride-On allows free re-boarding within two hours. Thus, many evening commuters might be encouraged to deboard at the Junction on their way home, to shop or take care of errands.

### **Bicycle Access**

Accessing the Junction by bicycle can be easy, moderate, or difficult, depending on the direction of approach. The Junction is adjacent to the highest point in Takoma Park (Manor Circle) and is situated along a ridge running from Old Town to New Hampshire Avenue along Carroll/Ethan Allen Avenues. The Junction is also the point where two state highways converge and share a stretch of roadway. Taken together, these two factors (grade and traffic) together strongly influence the conditions for bicyclists approaching the Junction.

The easiest bicycle approach to the Junction is from the Old Town area along Carroll Avenue. The grade is nearly flat, there are few intersections, and there are painted bike lanes on both sides of Carroll Avenue almost all the way to Philadelphia Avenue at the fire station. However, from that point eastward, there are no bike lanes on Carroll Avenue (i.e. the lanes end prior to the four-lane stretch of 410/195). Task Force members have observed that many cyclists approaching the Junction from Old Town move up onto the sidewalk at the fire station driveway and proceed (illegally) along the sidewalk in front of the City parking lot and the Co-op.

The three easy-to-moderate bicycle approaches to the Junction are (1) from Maple Avenue via Grant and Lee Avenues, (2) from Sligo Creek or Flower Avenue via Carroll Avenue, and (3) from the south via Sycamore Avenue. The grade of each of these routes is moderate to steep, and there are no dedicated bike lanes (mainly an issue on Carroll Avenue).

The most difficult bicycle approaches to the Junction are along 410 from either direction. Philadelphia Avenue is quite narrow, is heavily used by vehicles, and has no bike lanes. Similarly, Ethan Allen Avenue is narrow, is heavily used by vehicles, and has no bike lanes. For cyclists approaching the Junction from New Hampshire Avenue, there is no convenient alternate route north or south of Ethan Allen Avenue (i.e. using Elm Avenue, Boyd Avenue, etc.) in part because of the change in elevation as one moves off the ridge on which Ethan Allen Avenue runs.

As discussed in the report of the Task Force on the Environment, the Junction does not have any dedicated bike lanes. Other than the stretch of Carroll Avenue from Old Town (described above), there are no bike lanes painted on any of the approaches to the Junction. A nearby painted on-road bike route is on Maple Avenue, at the bottom of Grant and Lee Avenues. The nearest off-road bicycle route is along Sligo Creek, about a half-mile north of the Junction.

New bicycle routes proposed in the Master Plan and County bikeway plan (see above) detail improved bicycle access to Takoma Junction, but these routes have not been created yet.

Some bicycle parking is available at the Junction, e.g. in front of the TPSS Co-op.

In late 2011, the Montgomery County planning office was holding hearings to assess possible locations for stations in a bikeshare network. Takoma Park was one area under consideration.

Two bike-related businesses at, or near, the Junction provide support to cyclists (sales, repairs, advice, etc.) and could be involved in efforts to encourage greater bicycle use in the Junction and around Takoma Park in general. These businesses are the Green Commuter (in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue, at the Junction) and the bicycle shop located on Carroll Avenue in Old Town across from Westmoreland Avenue.

### **Pedestrian Access**

(Pedestrian movement issues within the Junction are discussed primarily in the “Traffic” and “Revitalization” sections of this report.)

It is easy to observe that a significant number of Junction visitors choose to walk to and from the area.

As described in the “Bicycle Access” section above, the Junction’s location along a ridge means that the easiest pedestrian approaches, in terms of amount of exertion required, are from the west, along Carroll Avenue (from Old Town), and from the east, along Ethan Allen Avenue. From Sligo Creek along Carroll Avenue, and from Sycamore Avenue, the elevation change approaching the Junction is more gradual.



The steepest approaches are from Maple Avenue, directly north of the Junction, along Philadelphia, Grant and Lee Avenues; and from Poplar/Columbia Avenues, directly south of the Junction, below the wooded area of the C1 parcel. The very steep block of Columbia Avenue, from Poplar Avenue to Sycamore Avenue presents a significant challenge to many pedestrians.

In general, the Junction's approach routes are adequately served by sidewalks, with two exceptions: (1) The north side of Ethan Allen Avenue does not have a sidewalk. However, aside from Ethan Allen residents, most residents of the the neighborhood north of Ethan Allen Avenue use side streets to reach the Junction via Manor Circle. (2) The sidewalk on Columbia Avenue between Poplar and Sycamore Avenues is inadequate. It is a very steep, uneven, narrow, asphalt walkway which does not meet ADA requirements because it is too narrow, is blocked by utility poles, and lacks a proper curb-cut ramp at the lower end.

A few years ago, significant improvements were made to the sidewalks along Carroll Avenue between Philadelphia Avenue and Tulip/Columbia Avenues. This stretch now has attractive sidewalks on both the north and south sides, and the south sidewalk includes a colored ribbon of inlaid stones that enhances the visual connection between Old Town and the Junction. These improvements, which also include the bicycle lanes describe above, were called for in the 2000 Master Plan.

It is worth noting that the City's most densely populated neighborhood along Maple Avenue, which includes its primary "civic node" at the Civic Center, is not well-linked to the nearest significant business district at the Junction. At the Civic Center (and along Maple Avenue in general) there are no visual cues to indicate that goods and services are located just two blocks up Grant or Lee Avenue. A small streetscape project at the entrance to Grant Avenue, combined with signage at Carroll and Maple Avenues, might promote pedestrian movement between the Maple Avenue/Civic Center area and the Junction.

### ***Delivery Services***

For a business district without a large supply of parking, delivery services can be a way to achieve increased sales revenue in an area without requiring a corresponding increase in parking capacity or traffic. Delivery services can encourage consumers, including commuters, to walk, bike, or use public transit to visit the business district, since they do not have to haul their purchases home but can have them delivered later in the day. Other types of delivery services include telephone orders and online shopping. Several Takoma Park specialty businesses have used internet-based sales as a part of their revenue stream in recent years; examples include the House of Musical Traditions in Old Town, Austin-Healey Surgeons at the Junction, and Glad Rags, which was formerly located at the Junction.

The extent to which Junction businesses currently rely on, or offer, delivery services is not fully known. Examples of Junction businesses that offer delivery or provide shipment of goods include:

- Pizza Roma
- Kinetic Artistry
- Austin-Healey Surgeons

According to Abdi Bosh, interim General Manager of the TPSS Co-op, the Co-op at present does not deliver groceries but would like to look into this option for the future. Of special concern will be the cost of insurance, what type of vehicle would be used (personal or Co-op owned), and who would do the actual delivering. In Mr. Bosh's view, an increase in sales without further complicating the parking situation would make delivery a worthwhile option (Abdi Bosh email, Dec. 22, 2011).

### ***Automobile Access (Parking)***

#### ***Parking Inventory***

##### ***Off-street parking.***

At present, Takoma Junction has an approximate total of 121 off-street commercial parking spaces -- 34 in the City Lot are open to the general public; approximately 51 additional spaces are available for customers or employees of specific businesses, including the Co-op; and the remaining 36-38 spaces are generally off-limits to customer parking (used for vehicle storage or employee parking only). None of these spaces is metered.

1. The City Lot currently has 34 striped parking spaces (including three handicapped), although a better alignment could net more spaces. The Co-op leases an additional 18 spaces in the Lot, two of which are used for storage sheds and garbage/recycling.
2. The Turner lot on the east side of the Co-op, next to Sycamore Avenue, accounts for 19 parking spaces (including one handicapped). The entrance to this area is from the north end, on Ethan Allen Avenue,

and the exit is on the south end, onto Sycamore Avenue. (The old loading dock behind the Co-op contains space for one or two employee parking spots but is not used for this purpose.)

3. The businesses in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue have parking and loading areas in the rear, with an approximate total of 30 marked parking spaces at present. These areas are privately owned, and ownership is broken up among several different properties. Most of the parking/loading area is accessible from Lee Avenue. This area contains approximately 17 privately-owned, marked parking spaces along the rear of the properties. A second, much smaller parking area behind the middle of the block is accessible via a mid-block driveway between 7312 and 7316, is a second small parking area containing eight spaces. A palisade fence separates this area from the larger area to the northeast. The third parking area is accessible from Grant Avenue and contains approximately five spaces. This area is separated from the mid-block parking by bollards and a chain. Some of the parking spaces behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue shops are available to customers while others are reserved for employees; and a few seem to be used strictly for long-term vehicle storage. The largest of these three parking areas (the one accessible from Lee Avenue) is currently used by customers of businesses on the south end of the block.

4. Accessible via a driveway at No. 6 Grant Avenue are a total of 15 privately-owned parking spaces (including one handicapped). Three of these are along the driveway; eight (including the handicapped space) are in the No. 6 Grant Avenue rear lot and reserved for use by No. 6 Grant customers and employees; two spaces are located just behind, and reserved for, Kinetic Artistry; and two spaces are located just behind, and reserved for, Roland's Barber Shop. Like the area behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue, this area is not open for parking by members of the general public who are doing business elsewhere in the Junction.



5. The three automotive service businesses at the Junction have a total of approximately 23 parking spaces, which are generally used for the short-term storage of vehicles undergoing service or repair. At the corner of Grant and Carroll, RS Automotive (the gas station) has 11 parking spaces; Healey Surgeons has approximately five parking spaces in front; and Takoma Auto Clinic has approximately seven parking spaces in front.

### **On-street parking.**

Aside from parking spaces located in front of residences, Takoma Junction has approximately 29 on-street parking spaces along side streets, 16 of which are metered.

1. At the top of Lee Avenue, there are five parking spaces, including two metered parking spaces adjacent to Heritage Building and Renovation and three unmetered spaces across the street.
2. In front of the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue, there are seven metered parking spaces.
3. The north side of B.Y. Morrison Park has four metered parking spaces.
4. On Columbia Avenue, between Sycamore and Poplar Avenues, there are approximately 10 parking spaces which do not seem to be used by local residents, six of which are on the north side of the street, behind the wooded lot; and four are on the south side of the street.
5. There are three metered parking spaces on Grant Avenue, across the street from RS Automotive.

### ***Parking Meters and Enforcement***

Task Force direct observations indicate that Junction parking meters are generally in effect 7 am to 7 pm Monday through Saturday, but two meters on Carroll Avenue and two at B.Y. Morrison Park are also posted for 7 am to 1 pm on Sunday. The above meters generally allow for one-hour parking, although one meter on Carroll Avenue allows two hours. In the observation of one Task Force member who regularly walks through the Junction, typically, one or two meters are not working at any given time.

Maximum times and periods of enforcement for meters are not always consistent with the needs of nearby businesses. Some business owners surveyed feel that the enforcement times for metered parking are too long in extent and thus act to discourage parking during lower-use periods.

Parking enforcement occurs intermittently at best in the Junction business district. All meters may be occupied, but it is rare to find more than one or two meters with money in them. Also, cars are often parked facing the wrong direction at the meters on Lee Avenue.

### ***Impediments to Parking, Real and Perceived***

Drivers may avoid visiting the Junction because of actual or perceived difficulties associated with parking. The following observations have been made by Task Force members and other community members:

#### **Parking can be hard to find or awkward to get to.**

- On the south side of the Junction, access to Co-op and City lot parking can be difficult during peak traffic periods because of left-turns located along a busy stretch with two traffic signals at each end. In addition, the 17-space Co-op parking lot on the east side of the Turner-owned property contributes to traffic congestion on Ethan Allen and Sycamore Avenues. (This situation is also described in the "Traffic" section of this report.)
- On the north side of the Junction, metered parking on Grant, Carroll, and Lee Avenues is available on only one side of the street.
- Parking is not consolidated, with spaces in small areas, spaces not visible from the main streets, and limited signage. The lack of familiarity with the many parking "nooks and crannies" discourages new patrons (both local and non-local) from doing business in the area.
- Some drivers searching for parking perceive it to be a problem that neither the south or north side of the Junction offers an easy "circle-around" option. A local example of the "circle-around" configuration can be found in the new parking lot in Old Town behind Laurel Avenue, which allows drivers to enter from Carroll Avenue, circle behind the Laurel Avenue businesses to look for parking, and then exit onto Eastern Avenue and circle back onto Laurel if no spaces are found in the rear.

#### **The north-south divide.**

As discussed in greater detail in the "Traffic" section of this report, there is no efficient way for pedestrians to cross Carroll Avenue at the Junction. This presents practical problems for visitors who choose to park on one side or the other of Carroll Avenue. For example, someone who has parked in the City-owned parking lot or the Co-op parking lot will be disinclined from making a quick additional stop at a Carroll Avenue business because the crossing is inconvenient and slow. Likewise, someone who has parked along Carroll Avenue in the 7300 block may reject the idea of stopping in at the Co-op because of the time required to wait twice for the pedestrian crossing (the second time with groceries in hand). The practice of "chaining" one's shopping and other errands is thus discouraged by the poor north-south pedestrian crossing of Carroll Avenue.

### ***Traffic Impediments Created by Current Parking Arrangement***

- The dispersed nature of Junction parking at present – people looking for spaces
- Left-hand turns
- Excess of driveway aprons on Carroll Avenue
- B.Y. Morrison Park – awkward egress from four metered parking spaces
- Co-op parking lot on Sycamore Avenue (discussed elsewhere)

### ***Resident Concerns Related to Commercial Parking***

Any assessment of parking at the Junction should take into careful account the impact of parking demand on surrounding neighborhood streets. Task Force outreach and the experiences of some Task Force members indicate that the choice of many Junction visitors to use side streets for parking creates inconvenience and frustration for nearby residents.

Many business patrons and employees appear to prefer to use free parking on a residential street rather than metered parking. Residents on Grant Avenue, South Manor Circle, and Lee Avenue have noted the following issues:

- Business employees park on residential streets, for 12 or more hours on occasion.
- Business patrons park on residential streets for two hours or more.
- Business patrons occasionally block access to residential driveways.

- Residents coming home after 8 pm often cannot find parking on their street.
- Some visitors, who may be in search of parking, or departing after parking, ignore posted One-Way/Do Not Enter signs on Grant Avenue and South Manor Circle.

These conditions exist even though commercial parking areas (behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue, in metered spaces on streets, and in the City-owned parking lot) are not used to capacity.

## Options for Access and Parking Improvements

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

### **1A. Promote more pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit access at all times.**

The City could pursue a strategy of increasing the use of walking, biking, and public transit as modes of access to the Junction, in order to reduce the demand for parking at present and in association with any future development. Several options can be pursued:

- Bring sidewalks up to ADA requirements on Columbia Avenue between Poplar and Sycamore, Carroll Avenue, and the Junction portion of Ethan Allen Avenue.
- Construct a switchback pathway through the wooded area of the City-owned parcels to provide a direct, gentle-gradient pedestrian link between Poplar Avenue and the City-owned parcel on Carroll Avenue.
- Promote pedestrian and bicycle movement between the Junction commercial node and the Maple Avenue civic node via Grant Avenue.
- Increase the number of bike racks in the Junction.
- Establish a bikeshare station at Takoma Junction as part of a larger County network, linked with the District of Columbia bikeshare network.
- Create signed and marked bike routes on side streets to and through the Junction, parallel to the main arteries, and publish a bike map for the Junction.
- Establish dedicated, striped bike lanes on the full length of Ethan Allen Avenue.
- Undertake an education campaign to encourage use of the Ride-On and Metrobus routes that serve the Junction. Many Ride-On users may be unaware that Ride-On allows free re-boarding within two hours. Many evening commuters might be encouraged to stop at the Junction to shop or take care of errands.
- Promote walking, biking, and using public transportation to get to the Junction through the use of a marketing campaign slogan such as "Walk Right In."

#### **Arguments for:**

Low cost of implementation, relative to construction of new parking spaces; supports City environmental goals; more efficient land use

#### **Arguments against:**

Costs of construction for some options; uncertainty about future land use, particularly on the City-owned C1 parcel; vehicular traffic impacts associated with new bike lanes

### **1B. Institute shuttle service at peak times or at all times.**

The City, perhaps working in partnership with a private entity such as Washington Adventist Hospital, Washington Adventist University, or a consortium of Takoma/Langley business and property owners, could establish a shuttle system, bringing people from the Metro to the Junction as well as other business hubs such as Old Town, and possibly Takoma/Langley Crossroads. This could be free, similar to the shuttle that circulates in downtown Silver Spring. The service could be piloted for special events, such as Earth Day; or it could be piloted during a few hours of the day. It would also improve mobility for residents without cars and for seniors, such as residents of Victory Tower.

According to a Washington Post article dated Wednesday, December 21, 2011, the Chevy Chase Land Company has recently established a similar community shuttle bus service between the Bethesda Metrorail station



and the Chevy Chase Lake business district in North Chevy Chase. This service operates between 7 am and 7 pm, with pickups at each location about every 40 minutes and a schedule available online at [www.cclandco.com](http://www.cclandco.com).

A shuttle service might provide information useful when considering potential transit links between the Takoma Metro and a future Purple Line station at Takoma/Langley Crossroads. In the fairly distant future, such links might include an extension of the District of Columbia's planned streetcar line, which would terminate at Takoma Metro.

For a pilot project, the City's current shuttle could be used.

**Arguments for:**

Integration of Takoma Park commercial and civic nodes; increased accessibility to the Junction for a wider market of potential visitors; reduced need for parking capacity at the Junction

**Arguments against:**

Unknown demand for this service; cost of signage, marketing, operation, and maintenance -- including opportunity costs, vehicle wear-and-tear, and personnel costs associated with using the City-owned shuttle bus for a pilot project

**2. Encourage the use of delivery services where possible.**

The City could work with OTBA and Junction businesses to encourage selected businesses to offer local delivery services or to assist in the development of online sales strategies.

The City could also work with OTBA and Old Takoma (or city-wide) businesses to develop a unified delivery service encouraging residents to shop local and reduce car usage. Such a service might be provide a source of local employment and operate in conjunction with a job-skills development program for local young people.

**Arguments for:**

Reduces automobile use and demand for parking at the Junction; complements City's interest in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and encouraging local shopping.

**Arguments against:**

Funding and expertise needed to establish such ventures, particularly the unified delivery service.

**3. Take steps to encourage visitors to park in commercial areas.**

If residents are in favor, a parking zone can be created for the portions of South Manor Circle and Grant, Lee, Sherman, Hancock, and Sycamore Avenues that are not metered, to reduce the impact of commercial parking on nearby residents.

The existing process for residents to request a permit parking zone is cumbersome. The City could make the process easier for neighborhoods in proximity to commercial areas to request a permit parking arrangement, possibly by reducing the size of the group of residents who need to agree to support a parking zone.

**Arguments for:**

Reduces use of residential streets for commercial parking; clarifies the actual demand for commercial parking in the Junction district proper

**Arguments against:**

Difficulty of enforcement, inconvenience for people coming to visit neighborhood residents



**4. Measure, monitor, and forecast access modes and capacity needs; develop a coordinated access/parking plan for the Junction.**

The City could ask a developer to do a multi-modal study which would measure access modes and parking demand as well as forecast new demand associated with any redevelopment under consideration. The City could then coordinate planning and action with the future use of the City-owned parcels.

**Arguments for:**

Low cost, ensures that access/parking changes will remain appropriate and workable when any new development occurs.



### ***Arguments against:***

Difficulty of developing a comprehensive plan involving many stakeholders, delays some incremental changes that might be of benefit in the short term

### ***5A. Make convenience, efficiency, and connectivity improvements related to public parking areas.***

At B.Y. Morrison Park, the existing four metered spaces could be moved to allow easier entry and egress while reducing what is currently an excess of pavement. The goal would be to make the parking spaces more visible from the street, provide more direct access, reduce the amount of paved surface in the park, allow for improved landscaping and aesthetics, and allow for a better pedestrian access path to/through the park.

A single entrance/exit to the C1 Parcel at the extreme northeast corner of the property could be created, so that the entrance/exit is aligned with northbound Carroll Avenue going to/from the hospital and an X-intersection is thus created. This would make possible a new direct-crossing crosswalk on the west side of this new intersection, going from the west side of the new C1 parcel driveway to the corner of Carroll and Grant. (This arrangement would be very similar to what one finds now at the Old Town clock, with the entrance to the Urciolo lot aligned with South Carroll Avenue coming up from the Metro, and a crosswalk on the east side of this "X.")

### ***Arguments for:***

Provides a signalized entrance to the largest parking area in the Junction, creates an opportunity for direct pedestrian crossing from C1 parcel to the north side of Carroll Avenue

### ***Arguments against:***

Addition of new signal phase(s) would have unknown impact on traffic congestion; limits possibilities for new development on C1 Parcel; cost of hardscaping changes and new signalization

### ***5B. Explore with private property owners any potential changes to the layout of their parking areas which might promote convenience, efficiency, and connectivity.***

Some property owners in the Junction area might consider making changes to the layout of, or access to, their parking areas if such changes were deemed to be good for business, or simply good for the Junction as a whole. Recognizing the right of property owners to make their own decisions concerning their property, the City could nonetheless invite consideration of the following ideas:

**The driveway between 7312 and 7316 Carroll Avenue** could be re-purposed to allow easier access to the rear, in an arrangement similar to that in place at Woodmoor Shopping Center in Four Corners. However, this driveway is very narrow.

**An access easement for the rear parking areas on the north side of Carroll Avenue** between Philadelphia and Grant, including the No. 6 Grant Avenue lot, could make possible the removal of one driveway apron on Carroll Avenue (next to the former print shop), if access to all parking were via the No. 6 Grant Avenue driveway.

**"Circle-around options"** could be created on both the south and north sides of the Junction.

The north side arrangement is detailed in 6B below. It involves connecting the parking areas behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue, between Grant and Lee Avenues, with a one-way entry from Grant Avenue allowed and a two-way entrance at Lee Avenue maintained.

A south side arrangement would be much more expensive to achieve and would have to be associated with new development on the south side of Carroll Avenue. Such an arrangement might use the old loading dock behind the Turner-owned Co-op building as the beginning of an "alley" connecting through the upper portion of the wooded area to new development on the City-owned parcel. This "alley" might conceivably be extended roughly on a level to join with the Fire Station's rear parking lot, if the Fire Station were to provide an easement for this use.

**Consolidation of parking on the south side of Carroll Avenue** could be achieved by eliminating the Co-op parking lot adjacent to Sycamore Avenue and adding additional parking in conjunction with development of the City-owned C1 parcel. The most likely scenario by which the Sycamore Avenue parking lot could be eliminated would be if the Co-op used that parking area to expand eastward, within the current Turner property.

### ***Arguments for:***

Improved convenience for drivers seeking parking, which might encourage occasional visitors to return more frequently

### ***Arguments against:***

These options require extensive negotiation with, and agreements among, private property owners. Some

of these options might increase traffic on Grant and Lee Avenues. The elimination of parking on the Turner property would require a permanent provision of nearby parking, most likely on the City-owned C1 parcel, to maintain the Turner property as viable for business. The south-side “circle-around” option would intrude on the wooded area of the C1 parcel, and it would likely be difficult to gain an access easement from the Fire Station.

**Businesses in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue could be encouraged to have all deliveries made in the rear.**

**Arguments for:**

Maximizes the availability of street parking; prevents any traffic tie-ups associated with street-side deliveries

**Arguments against:**

Possible inconvenience for some businesses

**6A. Expand surface parking capacity in the City-owned parking lot.**

Restriping of the City-owned parking lot, possibly combined with removal of the Co-op’s storage structure and related equipment, could add **up to 20 additional spaces** to the lot. Achieving this total would likely require closure of one entrance to the lot. (A second entrance was added recently, when a portion of the lot was being used for a temporary firehouse.) The general idea here is to maximize the number of spaces in the City-owned parking lot by reducing the space dedicated to aisles and ingress/egress and increasing the area dedicated to parking, as a commercial enterprise would do.

**Arguments for:**

Increased parking capacity; might allow for some new spaces to be dedicated to car-share parking, e.g. Zip Car.

**Arguments against:**

None determined, although if Co-op storage and related equipment were to be moved, a suitable alternate location would have to be found

**6B. Explore with private property owners any possibilities for expanding surface parking capacity in the north side of the Junction.**

The creation of new parking capacity on the north side of the Junction would be at the option of private property owners. As with the 5a options above, the City could simply explore these possibilities with private property owners to determine interest, and could possibly provide assistance in making changes.

1) Behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue, in the parking area accessible from Lee Avenue, there are some additional spaces which could be painted perpendicular to the rear of the businesses (however, see #3 below). Space requirements for loading docks and garbage containers might make some of these parking spaces unfeasible.

2) It has been suggested that the combination of the three parking areas behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue might create a more user-friendly area for customer parking, with a one-way circulation pattern (entrance from Grant Avenue; exit onto Lee Avenue). The creation of a continuous route behind the 7300 block would be possible, but would require the removal of several parking spaces in the two smaller lots as well as the upper end of the largest lot. A rough estimate is that 7-9 parking spaces would have to be removed to make room for a through-traffic lane. In combination with the circle-around option described above, this would result in a small net gain of perhaps 4-6 total parking spaces in the rear of the 7300 block. It should be emphasized that two-way traffic would still be needed at the Lee Avenue entrance to allow for truck deliveries.

3) It has been noted that the upper end of the parking lot for the Carroll Gardens apartments located just north of the Junction, between Grant and Lee Avenues, contains about 14-18 unused parking spaces, which might be made available for employee parking under some sort of lease/use agreement.

**Arguments for:**

Fairly low-cost changes to create or relocate parking capacity

**Arguments against:**

Benefit to private property owners is unknown; encourages automobile use rather than alternate forms of transportation; requires negotiated agreements with property owners; increases traffic on Lee and Grant Avenues and turns into/out of those streets onto Carroll Avenue

**6C. Create more on-street parking in conjunction with any traffic management changes on State Highways (410 and 195).**

The “Traffic” section of this report details a number of possible changes to traffic and pedestrian flow at the Junction, some of which involve significant changes to signal locations, phases, and timings, lane markings,

street access/egress, and/or roadway alignments.

Some of these potential changes could create room for additional on-street parking in the Junction area. In all but the first two cases, the State Highway Administration, which has authority over the Route 410 and Route 195 rights-of-way, would have to approve these changes.

**In front of the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue**, an additional four spaces could be created if the area were converted to diagonal back-in-only parking. These spaces could include a handicapped-designated space in front of the Historic Takoma building. One parallel parking space could remain at its current location closest to the traffic light. Diagonal parking could increase pedestrian space and opportunity for landscaping, e.g. large flower boxes with benches in front of them could be installed in the “triangles” created by the diagonal parking spaces. However, back-in-only diagonal parking could have a negative effect on traffic flow during the parking maneuver (particularly for handicapped individuals), and diagonally parked cars would narrow traffic lanes. As drivers back into the spaces they could present a hazard to storefronts and pedestrians if cars jump the curb. Too many boxes and benches could block pedestrian access onto the sidewalk.

**If traffic management arrangements on Carroll Avenue allow it, Grant Avenue could potentially be closed to through-traffic** at a point north of the #6 Grant Avenue driveway, and the resulting cul-de-sac might be re-configured as a small parking area. This change could take place in conjunction with the creation of a pedestrian/bike-friendly corridor linking the Junction with the Civic Center via Grant Avenue.

By removing one or possibly two of the four driveway aprons at RS Automotive, metered parking can be accommodated on both sides of Grant Avenue.

**If Sycamore Avenue were converted to a one-way street in either direction**, metered parking could be created on the west side of the street between Ethan Allen and Columbia Avenues, adjacent to the Turner property. The east side of the street contains a driveway and is less suitable for adding on-street parking.

**If the Ethan Allen/Carroll Avenue intersection is redesigned as a three-way stop or a T-intersection**, a lane of Carroll Avenue (on either side of the intersection) could be given over to parking. The simplest arrangement would likely involve diagonal parking in front of the 7300 block and parallel parking in front of the City-owned C1 parcel.

**Arguments for:**

More convenient parking, traffic calming

**Arguments against:**

Proximity to intersections, cost of hardscaping changes, potential congestion, right-of-way space is arguably better used for bicycle lanes or widened sidewalks.



**6D. Provide for handicapped parking along or near the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue.**

The north side of the Junction currently contains no provision for handicapped parking. Establishment of at least one handicapped parking space would provide convenience for handicapped visitors to frequent businesses in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue as well as Historic Takoma, Inc.

**Arguments for:**

Promotes ease for handicapped visitors to the Junction

**Arguments against:**

Removes one parking space from general use

**7. Build new parking in conjunction with new development on the south side of Carroll Avenue.**

The City could require that any new development on the south side of Carroll Avenue incorporate sufficient parking capacity to support the foreseen needs of the Junction when it is fully built-out.

**Arguments for:**

Ensures adequate parking capacity for the Junction as a whole

**Arguments against:**

Runs counter to City environmental goals of reducing greenhouse emissions; may be prohibitively expensive

for developer(s); increases traffic; may impact wooded area

**8. Evaluate the appropriateness of Junction parking meter durations, rates, enforcement periods, and enforcement protocols.**

The City could ensure that times for metered parking are consistent and clearly posted. Maximum times and periods of enforcement for parking meters could be made more consistent with business needs. In general, metered parking should encourage greater turnover of parking spaces during peak-use periods, but should not discourage parking during low-use periods. For example, 2-hour meters are needed on Carroll Avenue to serve the needs of patrons of Bikram Hot Yoga.

The City could check parking meters more regularly to ensure that they are in working order. Parking enforcement could be improved. All meters may be occupied, but it is rare to find more than one or two meters with money in them. Routinely, cars park at the meters on Lee Avenue facing the wrong direction.

**Arguments for:**

Increased revenue to City; improved access for those seeking parking

**Arguments against:**

Cost of effective enforcement; possible ill will engendered by increased enforcement

**9. Establish a parking management district in conjunction with—or in preparation for—any combination of the above options.**

To explore some of the options described above, the City could establish a Junction parking management district. Such a district might be expanded to include the civic node around the Civic Center on Maple Avenue.

A parking management district need not lead to an increase in metered spaces (in public or private lots), but it would seek a rational approach to managing the four types of parking (residential street, public lot, public metered street, and private unmetered lot) that now coexist in an uncoordinated manner at the Junction.

**Arguments for:**

Encourages unified, cohesive planning to meet parking needs while encouraging use of alternative modes

**Arguments against:**

Requires City resources to establish; new parking restrictions might discourage visitors to the Junction

## **Recommendations**

1. Prioritize funding to make all sidewalks in the Junction ADA compliant, with (wherever feasible) a green strip with trees and plants to create a buffer between traffic and pedestrians, as soon as possible. This can be done using funds from speed camera revenue. Sidewalk improvements should include not only Junction portions of Ethan Allen and Carroll Avenues but also Columbia Avenue between Poplar and Sycamore. The Task Force recognizes that there are differing opinions about whether sidewalks on State Highways are the responsibility of the City or of SHA. The Task Force recommends that if this cannot be resolved such that SHA makes these sidewalks ADA compliant within 6 months of this report, the City go ahead and make the sidewalks compliant, rather than waiting for resolution of this issue.
2. Construct a switchback pathway through the wooded area of the City-owned parcels to provide a direct, gentle-gradient pedestrian link between Poplar Avenue and the City-owned parcel on Carroll Avenue. (This recommendation is also made in the City Parcels section of this report.)
3. Promote pedestrian and bicycle movement between the Junction commercial node and the Maple Avenue civic node via Grant Avenue.
4. Explore the need for more bike racks; determine optimal locations and needed capacity.
5. Continue to explore the possibility of locating a County bikeshare station at the Junction.
6. Create signed and marked bike routes on side streets to and through the Junction, parallel to the main arteries, and publish a bike map for the Junction.
7. Aggressively promote use of public transit by Junction visitors and employees.
8. In Junction marketing, include encouragement to use walking, biking, and public transportation.
9. Conduct a feasibility study for a “green” shuttle service linking the Takoma Metro, Old Town, the Junction, Washington Adventist University, Takoma/Langley Crossroads, and possibly other commercial and civic nodes in the City.
10. Make the process easier for neighborhoods in proximity to commercial areas to request a permit

parking arrangement, possibly by reducing the size of the group of residents who need to agree to support a parking zone.

11. Ask a developer to do a multi-modal study which would measure access modes and parking demand as well as forecast new demand associated with any redevelopment under consideration. Then coordinate planning and action with the future use of the City-owned parcels.

12. Encourage businesses in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue to receive deliveries in the rear.

13. Restripe the City-owned parking lot to maximize the number of parking spaces (an estimated twenty additional spaces are possible); combine this with closure of one of the two driveways if this is determined to promote efficient use of the parking lot.

14. Provide for handicapped parking along or near the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue.

15. When any new development or use will have an impact on parking demand, take the needs of the entire Junction into consideration when determining the net change in parking associated with the new development or new use.

16. Evaluate the appropriateness of Junction parking meter durations, rates, enforcement periods, and enforcement protocols.



## 6

# Revitalization

As is suggested by the organization of this report, the Task Force has concluded that many of the most significant governmental actions that could be taken to help revitalize the Junction would involve physical changes to improve traffic and pedestrian movement, to improve access and parking, and to repurpose the City-owned C1 parcel so as to encourage more economic and/or cultural activity. This section of the report offers ideas related to one additional set of physical changes – Streetscape Improvements. However, any physical changes would simply lay the groundwork for the new or expanded economic and cultural activities that are the ultimate goal of revitalization. To that end, this section of the report offers findings, ideas, options, and recommendations related to the broader question of how the Junction can better serve as a center of economic and cultural activity.

## Overview

### *Primary and Secondary Markets*

Any strategy for revitalizing the Junction should be clear about the Junction's intended market – not only for goods and services, but also for community gathering.

The **primary market** for the Junction should be residents of “greater Takoma” (Takoma Park and its environs) who currently choose to spend their time and money in socializing, purchasing convenience goods and services, and enjoying dining and entertainment, at some distance beyond Takoma Park and its immediate environs. The Junction should seek to “capture” a portion of the time and dollars that these nearby residents currently spend in commercial areas such as Hyattsville and College Park to the east; Columbia Heights and (soon) Fort Totten to the south; Wheaton and Beltsville to the north; and Friendship Heights, Bethesda, and Rockville Pike to the west.

The **secondary market** for the Junction should be regional consumers, who live at a somewhat greater distance from Takoma Park and would enjoy a non-generic, “small-town” setting in which to meet, shop, and enjoy “traditional” participatory activities (such as dancing, cooking, or storytelling).

These ideas align with the recommendations of the OTBA market analysis and with the vision set forth in the Master Plan, as well as with the general consensus of participants in Task Force outreach meetings (see “Findings” below).

### *Priority Properties*

A fully-occupied business district presents a more inviting face to potential visitors. In addition to the City-owned C1 parcel, four unused properties need to be fully occupied and activated in order for the Junction to be revitalized. These properties are:

- 7212 Carroll Avenue (the former “Letter Shop”)
- 7300 Carroll Avenue (the former TJs convenience store)
- 7306 Carroll Avenue (the former “Glad Rags”)
- Historic Takoma, Inc.

### *Priority Aesthetic Improvements*

People prefer to spend time in aesthetically appealing places. If the following components could be improved in appearance, the Junction would present a more attractive face to those traveling through or visiting:

- The plaza portion of B.Y. Morrison Park
- The landscaping and fence along the front edge of the City-owned C1 parcel
- The landscaping, front edge and side wall of Takoma Auto Clinic
- The landscaping and front edge of Austin-Healey Surgeons, as well as the cluttered interior visible from the street

- The front yard areas of the “letter shop,” Roland’s, and Kinetic Artistry
- The front and sides of Kinetic Artistry, including the ramshackle sign on the side wall
- The faded streetcar mural along Grant Avenue (the side of 7300 Carroll Ave.)
- The uninviting or empty window treatments at 7212 Carroll (the former “Letter Shop”), 7300 Carroll, 7306 Carroll (the former “Glad Rags”), and Historic Takoma, Inc.

### ***Potential Opportunities***

The best opportunities in a gradual, organic redevelopment of the Junction will be those that involve:

- Underused space (see “Priority Properties” above)
- Business/property owners who are retiring, moving, or interested in selling
- Business owners who want to diversify their range of goods and/or services
- Business owners who want to expand
- Businesses beyond Takoma Park that fit the “theme” of the Junction and would like to relocate here

### ***A Short List of Potential Businesses to Grow at the Junction***

Based on Task Force outreach findings as well as the OTBA market analysis, the Junction would benefit greatly from the establishment of one to three “secondary anchor” businesses to complement the TP/SS Co-op. Ideally, at least one secondary anchor would be located on the north side of Carroll Avenue.

The following business types are among those that would be welcomed by local residents and would have a sufficient market to succeed at the Junction:

- A sit-down restaurant, perhaps with local-source food or ethnic food
- A variety store or general store
- An “information hub” (coffee shop with internet, independent bookstore)
- A “lunch counter” or additional places to grab a bite to eat
- a wine and beer store (local opinions were mixed on this idea)
- specialty food business(es) such as a bakery, a butcher, a fish market, or a wine-and-cheese shop (local opinions were mixed on the idea of alcohol sales)
- a doctor or dentist’s office
- a business that conducts classes, e.g. music, cooking, traditional arts, small repairs

## **Findings**

### ***Task Force Outreach Findings***

Participants in Task Force outreach meetings and surveys shared a great variety of opinions and ideas which have helped to guide the Task Force’s formulation and consideration of options for revitalization. What follows is a summary of the predominant points of agreement (and disagreement) that emerged among participants in the course of outreach efforts. Some of this input, which is germane to discussions of traffic, access, parking, and the City-owned parcels, is also been referenced in other sections of this report.

### ***Economic activity***

The Junction’s current mix of businesses provides many useful and appreciated goods, services, and amenities to local residents. Frequently cited businesses include the TPSS Food Co-op, the Takoma Park Animal Clinic, the Business Center, Pizza Roma, and Carriage House Cleaners and the auto repair shops in general. Recently established businesses that receive frequent mentions include the Green Commuter and the Organic Falafel food truck located in the gasoline station parking lot.

Many local residents are not fully aware of the goods, services, and amenities available at the Junction – and in fact, many residents are not familiar with the term “Junction” itself.

The Takoma Park/Silver Spring Co-op is well-used by local residents, and is clearly seen as the anchor business for the area.

Lower-income residents would like to see more low-cost goods and services available at the Junction.

Most feel that the Junction would “take off” in a positive way if one or two additional “anchor” businesses or destinations became established at the Junction. Several note that the Junction offers little to do in the evenings.

Community members have made a wide variety of suggestions for new businesses or community amenities. Frequently expressed business concepts that would serve the immediate market area include: a general store with basic, standard groceries, lottery tickets, and personal care items; a coffee shop; a wine and beer store (opinions were mixed on this idea); a lunch counter; and an ethnic restaurant. Repeatedly expressed business concepts that would serve to some extent as “destination businesses” (attracting consumers from a wider area) include: a dance hall; a local-source restaurant; specialty food businesses (bakery, butcher, fish market, wine-and-cheese, etc.); a doctor or dentist’s office; and businesses that conduct classes.

A common thread running through many suggestions is the desire for more community gathering space (public or private) at the Junction. Frequently expressed suggestions for community amenities include: an area for small outdoor games such as bocce ball; a community patio; and a tot lot. In general, there is a strong desire for making the Junction a more attractive place to meet and mingle, with many expressing a desire for intergenerational activities.

Disincentives for local businesses cited by participants include scattered parking spaces, the inventory tax, a poor connection between the north and south sides of Carroll Avenue, vacant storefronts, lack of coordinated marketing, and a lack of visual integration and consistent aesthetic appeal across the business district.

### ***Accessibility and attractiveness***

Nearly all residents would find the Junction a more attractive place to visit if it were more aesthetically appealing in terms of landscaping, shade, public spaces, storefronts, business signage, and street signage. The aesthetic “negative” mentioned most often is the nondescript stretch along the south side of Carroll Avenue between the Fire Station and the Co-op. Other aesthetic negatives frequently mentioned are vacant storefronts, poor window treatments, peeling paint, and the lack of shade trees.

The structure at B.Y. Morrison Park and the wooded area of the City-owned parcels are widely appreciated as buffers between commercial and residential areas.

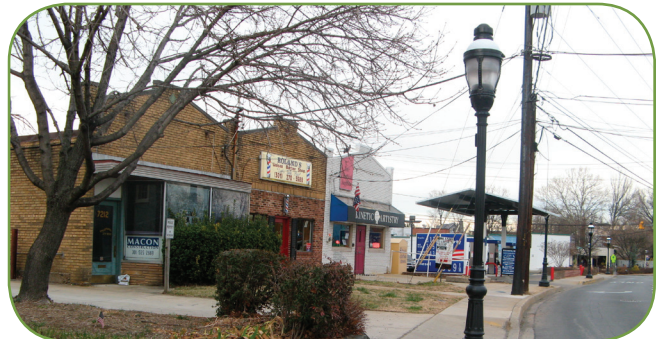
Pedestrians would like to use the Junction for more activities, but they tend to perceive the Junction as a frustrating and often dangerous place to navigate, due to the limited number of crossing locations, the distance and the delays associated with crossing Carroll Avenue, and the uncomfortable proximity of sidewalks to traffic.

A significant proportion of participants would like to see widened sidewalks where possible to allow for outdoor dining or vendors. One group suggested that a 15-foot sidewalk width is needed to make a gathering space possible.

Parking for Junction businesses is seen by many as scarce or difficult to access, mainly due to the need for left turns. The parking is dispersed in several locations, and there is no easy way for drivers to “circle around” either the north side or the south side of the Junction to search these various areas for potential parking spaces. However, others feel that the existing parking capacity is adequate and report that they rarely have difficulty finding a place to park.

Traffic congestion during peak times is a mild to moderate frustration for a significant number of drivers, especially for those seeking to travel through the Junction en route to other destinations. Exhaust fumes from idling traffic are a concern for nearby residents.

Security is a concern for at least one business. In general, most frequent users of the Junction do not express concerns about personal safety, with three exceptions: (a) some perceive the parking lots behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue as too isolated; (b) some senior citizens feel a need for extra caution when walking in the Junction at night; and (c) several residents feel that the vacant storefronts along Carroll Avenue create the impression that this is a blighted and potentially unsafe area, which may deter potential shoppers.



### ***Ideas for development***

A majority of participants would support a multi-use development on the city-owned lot, including a potential Co-op expansion, provided that such a development did not impact traffic on Columbia/Sycamore Avenues, maintained an adequate level of parking in the Junction as a whole, and improved the attractiveness and livability of the Junction.

Participants stress that the design of any new development on the City lot, or other changes made in conjunction with such a development, should ensure that an adequate supply of parking (for visitors and business employees) is available to the Junction as a whole.

Participants are broadly supportive of the use of all, or a portion, of the city-owned lot for non-permanent business activities, such as food trucks, crafts, or apparel vendors, periodic festival/market events, or a dance pavilion.

Participants are broadly supportive of the use of all, or a portion, of the city-owned lot as permanent or periodic cultural/gathering spaces for activities such as games, music, or dancing.

Participants express a range of opinions about B.Y. Morrison Park. Some feel that the park functions well as it is; some would like it revitalized and made suitable for more recreational activities or small-scale commercial activities; and still others see the park as possessing little value or potential.

### ***Overall “feel”***

Although few are familiar with the historic district designation of the Junction or of the Junction’s history, some long-time residents fondly recall a more bustling district that provided many convenience goods and services. Nearly all participants shared the view that any new development in the Junction should harmonize with the existing architecture and scale of activity, and should favor independent businesses over “chain stores.”

### ***The big picture***

Participants are by-and-large pragmatic in their perspectives, and acknowledge the built-in limitations that the Junction faces in terms of its site, its size, its local market area, its building stock, and its role within the road network.

Participants recognize that budgetary and market constraints restrict the types of initiatives that might be feasible at the Junction in the near future.

Across the board, whether the question relates to commercial activity, cultural activity, or traffic, most participants feel that the “status quo” at the Junction is less than desirable, and would strongly support any effort that seeks to make “something” happen – even if the effort is incremental or experimental in nature.

### ***Other Challenges for Junction Revitalization***

#### ***Little cohesion among property owners or business operators***

Local residents, business owners and property owners all seem to agree that the lack of a genuine business “community” at the Junction is an impediment to its revitalization. The business owners and operators at the Junction are in general heavily focused on their own enterprises and have little time during the day, or outside of business hours, to meet, discuss common concerns, or work on coordinated marketing strategies. With a few exceptions, there is little involvement from Junction businesses in the Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA). It is also a challenge to contact some of the property owners.

#### ***Vacant properties***

As described in the “Business Inventory” above, there are, as of January 2012, three vacant properties at the Junction; Historic Takoma’s headquarters constitute a fourth unused property at present (the final occupancy permit has not been issued). Although a frequently expressed view is that high rents are the reason for these vacancies, there does not seem to be a general pattern underlying the vacancies. As detailed below, two of the vacancies are due to environmental remediation processes that need to be completed.

Even though the occupancy rate for Junction properties is reasonably good – especially in the midst of a significant recession – the high visibility of the vacant properties, particularly 7212 and 7300 Carroll Avenue, may cause some casual visitors or commuters passing through to perceive the Junction as a blighted area.

### ***“Single-destination” visitor tendencies***

Junction businesses operate quite independently of one another. There is little communication among business owners, and business owners have little participation in the Old Takoma Business Association. To a certain extent, business owners may perceive that they have little to gain from working together because of the disparate nature of their enterprises.

Many consumers who do frequent some Junction businesses are not familiar with other Junction businesses which they might also be interested in using. This suggests that greater awareness of the convenience goods and services available at the Junction might help increase economic activity in the area.

Also, businesses that can involve bulky or expensive items (such as computer repair, bicycle repair, pet care, theatrical equipment rental, and picture framing) may tend to discourage multiple-stop shopping trips, as customers want to park near these businesses and also may not want to leave items in their vehicles while shopping elsewhere.

Several of the businesses might tend to be “single-destination” in nature, as customers at these businesses do not tend to linger in the Junction to patronize other businesses. For example, customers at the Animal Clinic do not tend to shop elsewhere once they have picked up their pets. Similarly, someone picking up a car from a repair shop may not combine this visit with, say, getting a picture framed; and someone getting a haircut may not proceed to the laundromat.

In essence, many Junction businesses offer important and valued services which are used infrequently by any given customer and so do not function as part of a regular routine.



### ***Marketing challenges***

The term “Takoma Junction” is not known consistently in nearby neighborhoods and may not be known outside the boundaries of Takoma Park. Also, there are no directional signs at New Hampshire and Ethan Allen, or at Carroll Avenue and University Boulevard, to indicate the proximity of Takoma Junction.

The disparate nature of services offered at the Junction contributes to the lack of a coherent marketing strategy. Also, the location of many of the businesses, in relation to roads and traffic lights, reduces their visibility for drivers passing through. For example, Route 410 commuters waiting at the Sycamore Avenue light in the morning may have their view of the businesses in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue obscured by B.Y. Morrison Park or the rising sun; then in the evening, they will not be able to see those businesses while waiting next to the City Lot for the traffic signal to change. Similarly, many drivers along the common stretch between the Fire Station and the Co-op will be focused on making safe lane changes and may not notice the businesses to either side of them.

### ***Security concerns, real and perceived***

One business surveyed along the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue reported significant security concerns. After experiencing an armed robbery, this business decided to stop offering merchandise for sale and focused on repair business only. The business owner suggested that the installation of one or two wide-angle video surveillance cameras on light poles in the Junction could discourage potential burglaries and robberies.

There is some anecdotal evidence that limited lighting of the parking area behind the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue as well as the City-owned parking lot creates a feeling of insecurity among some business customers. In outreach meetings, residents also suggested that the three vacant properties along Carroll Avenue create a blighted appearance, which some potential shoppers could associate with greater crime risks.

### ***Poor north-south pedestrian connections***

As detailed elsewhere in this report, one of the most frequent complaints expressed by both residents and business owners is the poor availability of pedestrian crossings of Carroll Avenue at the Junction. There are only two signaled, marked crossings of Carroll Avenue for pedestrians: one is at the extreme western end, beyond the Fire Station at Philadelphia Avenue. The other is in front of the Co-op; however, this crossing leads one to the corner of B.Y. Morrison Park, where one may have to wait for an additional pedestrian-activated



signal to cross Carroll Avenue, depending on one's walking speed.

Many pedestrians report three-minute wait times for crossing Carroll Avenue via B.Y. Morrison Park. Residents commonly state that if they park on either side of the Co-op and shop at the Co-op, they may consider doing other errands along the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue but reject the idea because of the time and distance involved in crossing the intersection. The operator of Roland's Barbershop similarly reports that customers often complain about the distance they must walk to cross the street safely to the barber shop after parking in the City-owned lot.

Changes to traffic signalization were ongoing as of January 2012. Some conditions may be different from those reported by pedestrians at various points in 2011.

### ***Need for streetscape improvements***

In keeping with the aesthetic concerns expressed by outreach participants, the section below entitled "Options: Streetscape Improvements" details three aspects of Junction streetscape that the Task Force has identified as needing improvement: (1) sidewalks; (2) landscaping, including walls, planter/tree boxes, and plantings including trees; and B.Y. Morrison Park.

### ***Subsurface environmental contamination issues, outside of the City-owned parcels\****

\*(N.B. The "City-Owned Parcels" section of this report contains a separate discussion about potential subsurface contamination on the City-owned parcels. Information about environmental concerns at other commercial properties on the south side of Carroll Avenue (7211 and 7221) is included in that section and repeated here.)

Four Junction properties at this time are known to have been the focus of environmental actions by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). They are each in different stages of activity. The hazardous substances detected at the properties are largely chlorinated and petroleum hydrocarbons, associated with dry cleaning and gas station activities. The information summarized here is based on public documents provided by MDE in response to a Maryland Public Information Act Request and meetings with relevant MDE and contractor personnel.

**7300-7308 Carroll (Dry Cleaner Property)** -- The Junction property that has been investigated the most for environmental contamination is the property running from 7300 to 7308 Carroll Avenue, and work is still underway.<sup>1</sup> This is an 11,140 square foot property that was developed in approximately 1927. A dry cleaner has occupied 7308 Carroll Avenue since at least 1959. Dry cleaners from this period are known sources of contamination by hazardous substances.<sup>2</sup> The dry cleaner at this property has been undergoing environmental investigation since 2007. The property was entered into MDE's Voluntary Cleanup Program by the owner in 2008, and most of the investigation has taken place within oversight of this program. Hazardous substances including vinyl chloride, acetone, cis-1,2-dichloroethene (DCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), trichloroethylene (TCE), ethylbenzene, xylenes, isopropylbenzene, and naphthalene have been found in soil, soil gas, indoor air, and/or groundwater associated with the site. Vinyl chloride, DCE, PCE, and TCE are probably associated with the dry cleaning operation. The source of the other contaminants is not currently known, however, they are common constituents of gasoline. The MDE believes that the PCE and TCE contamination is the most problematic and has set cleanup goals for these materials.

In 2011, the property owner submitted a response action plan (RAP) to the MDE for on-site remedial work. A public meeting was subsequently held at the Takoma Park/Sam Abbott community center. The owner proposes to remediate the contamination by installing a de-pressurization system under the foundational slabs at 7306 and 7308 Carroll Avenue; no remediation is required at 7300, 7302 or 7304 Carroll Avenue. This system will pump the contamination from the soils under the slab and release it into the ambient air where MDE believes it will be diluted to safe levels. Sampling at the property will occur periodically until the cleanup goals for TCE and PCE have been reached. The construction and initial monitoring of the system will take approximately 90 days. Since achievement of the cleanup is based on monitoring the performance of the system, the ultimate time to accomplish the cleanup is unknown. At this time, the RAP is under review by MDE, and it is anticipated that the remedial system will be installed sometime during the first half of 2012.<sup>3</sup>

Concurrently with the cleanup, MDE has required a further off-site investigation of groundwater near the site in the direction of migration of the chemical plume, which is toward Lee Avenue. The extent of the contamination, especially in groundwater, is currently under investigation. Groundwater in Takoma Park is not used as a drinking water source. The site is also distant from Sligo Creek where groundwater may ultimately discharge

and MDE believes that either human or ecological exposure to contaminants in groundwater is unlikely. Additional field work (monitoring well installation and soil gas sampling) has been completed and the results will be forwarded to MDE at the end of November 2011, at which time MDE will make a determination on whether additional field work will be required (see previous footnote).

In January 2012, Barbara Brown, section head with the MDE's Voluntary Cleanup Program, provided a status update and a copy of property owner Thomas Oliff's filing. Mr. Oliff enrolled the properties in the State of Maryland's Volunteer Clean-up Program in 2008. Progress has been slow, but Mr. Oliff's response action plan (RAP) was approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on November 21, 2011 -- to cover underslab venting that would intercept vapors emanating from the soil and ground water -- with plan implementation slated to begin within 60 days of the November 22 date on which approval was transmitted to the applicant, Mr. Oliff. Once venting is in place, the property owner will take periodic samples to measure vapors in the property. (The Implementation Schedule says monitoring will start 30 days after Subslab Depressurization (SSD) system installation.) According to Ms Brown, the time it will take to reach acceptable levels depends on solvent levels under the slab and on the effectiveness of the venting. A month would be typical, at which time the properties could be rented for commercial use. According to Ms Brown, the property owner will also need to do off-site investigation to ensure that the solvents aren't creating an off-site problem. The investigation would not affect the usability of the properties. (Per page 3 of the RAP, "Off-site groundwater investigation is being conducted as required by the MDE, and is not part of the VCP RAP.") A link to this information is provided at <http://takomajunction.org/RevisedResponseActionPlanFinal10-9-11rev11-11-11.pdf>

The plan also includes some site history: "It is believed that a dry cleaner has operated in [7308 Carroll Ave] since at least 1959. The adjacent space addressed as 7306 Carroll Avenue was formerly occupied by the dry cleaner tenant prior to 1990; however, this space was formerly used for customer service and storage, and dry cleaning equipment was not reportedly located in the space. According to the current operator, PCE has not been used for dry cleaning since May 2001" (per Seth Grimes, January 2012).

**7224 Carroll Avenue (Service Station property)**

-- Leaks of petroleum products from underground storage tanks at older service stations are extremely common.<sup>4</sup> Contamination was discovered at this property (currently known as Takoma Junction Liberty) in the late 1980s. A substantial amount of remedial activity subsequently took place under the supervision of the MDE. This included excavating and disposing of contaminated soil and removal of 11 underground storage tanks. Following remediation, MDE noted that residual contamination did remain in the soil at the site, however, the levels were not high enough to be of concern. Currently the station has three underground storage tanks with a combined capacity of 30,000 gallons. The operations at this location were inspected in 2009 and failed in several areas. Following implementation of remedial action, the station passed inspection in March 2010. The MDE considers this to be a closed case.

**7211 Carroll Avenue (Austin-Healey Surgeons)** -- In the early 1990s, this property (currently Healey Surgeons) was found to have petroleum products leaking from underground storage tanks. Three storage tanks were remediated or removed. Although contaminated soil was found under the tanks, the MDE did not consider the levels sufficiently high to warrant soil removal. Currently, MDE considers this case to be closed.

**7221 Carroll Avenue (C. Dawes & Sons Trash Company)** -- The Dawes family began a trash business in 1956 that operated for approximately 30 years until Waste Management and BFI moved into the area.<sup>5</sup> In 1990, 7221 Carroll Avenue was found to have petroleum products leaking from underground storage tanks. Six underground storage tanks were removed and disposed of off-site. Contaminated soil was also removed. Some residual contamination remained under the tanks, however, the MDE did not consider the levels sufficiently high to warrant soil removal. Currently, MDE considers this case to be closed. In 1994, this property was purchased by the Takoma Auto Clinic.

**Summary of Current Status of Known Environmental Remediation Cases:** The properties at 7224, 7211, and 7221 Carroll have been remediated to a degree acceptable to the MDE. Some residual contaminated remained in the soil at these locations following remediation, however, the amounts were not of concern to



the MDE. Investigation is continuing at 7300-7308 Carroll Avenue, and remediation at 7306 and 7308 Carroll Avenue is expected to begin in the first half of 2012. No remediation is required at 7300, 7302 and 7304 Carroll Avenue.

### ***Other Environmental Concerns***

1. Stormwater system problems at north end of rear parking area in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue. The storm drain adjacent to Lee Avenue is clogged and appears to be failing to handle run-off effectively.
2. Lack of shade trees along Carroll Avenue throughout the district, as well as in parking areas.
3. Vehicular emissions from idling traffic at traffic signals, particularly during congested periods.
4. Lack of a continuous bike-lane through the Junction.
5. Noise pollution and light-pollution concerns for nearby residents.

### ***Environmental Opportunities***

1. There is potential for solar electric power generation on commercial rooftops and parking areas, as well as the Fire Station. The Junction contains thousands of square feet of flat rooftops which are not obscured by any tree canopy. These rooftops are on buildings which are unlikely to be replaced because of their historic character. Therefore the Junction is perhaps the best place in the City to pilot a solar-electric cooperative using a cluster of commercial rooftops.
2. Greater reliance on biking, walking and mass transit is one way to address vehicular pollution and congestion. (See "Access and Parking" section of this report.)

### ***Plans, Studies, and Regulatory Guidance***

#### ***Takoma Park Master Plan, Dec. 2000: Commercial and Institutional Centers***

The M-NCPPC Master Plan for Takoma Park, still in effect, stated that each commercial center should be safe – designed for visibility, good lighting, and a general feeling of security; successful – economically viable, with a clear market orientation, and a good land use mix; community-serving – meeting retail and service needs of area residents, and often providing an outdoor space for public use and gatherings; attractive – well-maintained, with nice-looking buildings and facades, nice landscaping, and undergrounding of utilities; and convenient –with good pedestrian routes, transit, and auto access, as well as adequate parking. The Master Plan recommended that revitalization of commercial areas provide for the combination of residential with commercial uses.

The Master Plan envisioned Takoma Junction as village center with a traditional small town charm. The Junction should function as an extension of Old Town, providing unique stores and services to both nearby neighborhoods and regional visitors. The Plan suggested that revitalization of the Junction capitalize on these three strengths: walking-distance neighborhoods, visibility to pass-through traffic, and existing public spaces. The Plan observed that most parcels are small and parking is limited, and so recognized the potential for customers to park on nearby neighborhood streets.

#### ***City of Takoma Park Strategic Plan, FY2010-FY2015 (Adopted May, 2009)***

In the five-faceted Takoma Park Strategic Plan, still in effect, the first facet is Fiscal Sustainability. One of the eight priority projects and initiatives in service of Fiscal Sustainability is to create, using community-based planning techniques, a redevelopment plan for Takoma Junction, and to provide for the redevelopment of the City-owned lot. The "Key Indicators" for this project/initiative include "an increase in the City's property tax base resulting from new residential and commercial development."

The Strategic Plan's second facet, Environmental Sustainability, does not mention the Junction specifically, but includes several priority projects and initiatives which bear relevance to Junction redevelopment. These include expansion of the sidewalk network, encouragement of storm water management projects, and an increase in the number of residents rating the ease of travel by walking as good or excellent.

The Strategic Plan's third facet, Economic Sustainability, while not mentioning the Junction specifically, emphasizes the interest of residents in supporting local businesses and service providers, as well as the importance of ensuring that buildings are in good condition and have a pleasant appearance. Priority projects include implementing economic development recommendations from the Main Street Takoma Plan and helping businesses gain funding to improve the appearance of their building or site.

The fourth facet of the Strategic Plan – Livability – includes such strategies as developing creative and di-

verified recreational programming, capitalizing on local interest in arts and culture, and promoting volunteer based community events. Priority projects include providing expanded opportunities for intergenerational activities and increasing cultural programming and access for residents in all phases of their lives.

The fifth and final facet of the Strategic Plan, which calls for “Engaged, Responsive, and Service-Oriented Government,” includes the strategy of encouraging the development and implementation of limited term demonstration projects.

### ***SHA Walkable Communities Study (2005)***

In October 2005, the State Highway Administration a workshop at Takoma Junction, led by Bob Chauncy of the National Center for Biking and Walking, to look at pedestrian safety on specific state highways, comment, and suggest solutions. The report on these workshops, which was presented to the City Council on May 1, 2006, covered recommendations made by community participants as well as City staff. The report’s recommended action steps were intended to provide guidance to the Council in future policy decisions.

In addition to the issue of impediments to pedestrians and bicyclists, the report identified three issues relevant to business revitalization at the Junction:

- The lack of strong visual boundaries to give Takoma Junction a sense of place or signify it as a destination. The report recommended that the City, in combination with the State: beautify the proposed roundabout, or erect gateway arches across MD 410, or install public art on both sides of MD 410; install a small landscaped roundabout near the intersection of Lee and Carroll; and install a second textured but not raised roundabout at Philadelphia and Carroll with textured splintered islands to accommodate the fire engines.
- Lack of sufficient pedestrian facilities. The report recommended that the City/State widen the sidewalk in front of Carroll Avenue shops to enable outdoor seating and use the pavilion area for one or two licensed “pushcart” vendors.
- Shortage of parking in the area. The report recommended putting diagonal parking in front of the Carroll Avenue shops and exploring the possibility of underground parking as well as researching the feasibility of a parking district.
- Car commuter traffic (cut-through traffic) impinging on residential neighborhoods. The report recommended using traffic calming measures such as narrow lanes and street trees; and placing “identity measures” such as public art so that commuters respect the neighborhood or choose alternate routes.

As a resource for achieving some of the goals above, the report suggested that the City seek funding through the SHA Community Safety Enhancement Program.

### ***S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association Initiative (December 2007-March 2008)***

The S.S. Carroll Neighborhood Association encompasses the neighborhood that borders the Junction on the north side. S. S. Carroll formed a sub-committee in early December of 2007 to develop a vision for the revitalization of the Junction. The two leaders of this initiative, the acting president of S.S. Carroll (Kay Daniels Cohen) and the sub-committee chair (Ellen Zavian) have served as members of the Takoma Junction Task Force and shared the experience and findings of the S.S. Carroll initiative.

In a summary letter to the Mayor and Council dated March 25, 2008, S.S. Carroll set forth an overall vision for the Junction that included these revitalization recommendations: attractive development of City-owned lot, facelifts on existing structures, pedestrian friendly walkways, and ease of parking. SS Carroll sought make the Junction a local and non-local destination and to ensure financial support from the community for the long term.

S.S. Carroll stressed that to achieve its vision for the Junction, three major concerns would have to be addressed: (1) pedestrian safety, (2) traffic flow, and (3) business vitality. S.S. Carroll noted that these same concerns were addressed in a study completed in 1996 by the City of Takoma Park.

S. S. Carroll stressed the importance of taking an integrated approach to Junction improvement that would carefully consider revitalization, pedestrian safety, traffic flow, and municipal and infrastructure upgrades. S. S. Carroll formally requested that the City provide a plan that would detail the process in which S.S. Carroll could work together with the City on revitalization and expressed a strong desire to work with the Mayor, City Council and City of Takoma Park “to make the Junction live up to its historical, true potential now and in the near future.”



***Retail Market Analysis for Old Takoma Business Association, conducted by Randall Gross of Development Economics (October 12, 2009)***

OTBA commissioned a market analysis of the entire Old Takoma area, completed in October 2009. The extensive report projected that in Old Takoma as a whole, there will be “net” warranted retail demand for about 60,000 square feet of additional retail space in the near future (on top of the current 100,000 square feet). Of this demand 53% will be for “shopper’s goods store,” and 19% will be for convenience goods, including expansion of grocery store food opportunities. There is also significant demand for entertainment, plus some additional eating and drinking and personal service use.

Based on the findings of the market analysis and input from the consumer intercept surveys, the report called for new business to complement and build on the existing OTBA business base. Recommendations for new business included an expanded TPSS Co-op, to include an outdoor café. Specifically, the report recommended a 10,000 square foot expansion of the Co-op.

Other recommendations -- which were applicable to Old Takoma as a whole and not the Junction specifically -- included a gardening center, with supplies, garden/cooking classes, and programming associated with the Farmers Market; a local-source restaurant as well as a “streetcar” diner offering breakfast; a health or spa-related business; a sporting goods store such as a bicycling center (this was prior to the opening of the Green Commuter); a general merchandise anchor store; a destination art supply store; a pub or bar; an information hub (book/music store, internet café, IT center, non-profit information center); more live performance and film; and a tourist attraction of some kind (museum or alternative energy information center).

The report recognized that Old Takoma encompasses three “unique districts.” It called for Takoma Junction to remain a distinct and separate convenience and commercial district anchored by an expanded food Co-op. Pedestrian activity (such as an outdoor café) and pedestrian linkages would be strengthened between the Co-op and other retailers across Carroll at Takoma Junction. In general, the report called for the Junction to retain a quieter, neighborhood feel, with most dining, boutique shopping, and destination attractions to be located in Old Town or near the Metro.

The report recommended a full array of enhanced marketing strategies for the Old Takoma area, including an extensive public art campaign; celebration of gateways, improved streetscape, façade improvements, and business signage; and the marketing of themes focused on the community’s unique brand of progressivism, with a particular focus on health of mind, body, and spirit. The report emphasized the need for branding and imaging, better “curb appeal,” use of all media, and a strong public relations campaign. Destination marketing strategies, aimed at specific target audiences, were recommended.

The market analysis report called for OTBA-led business recruitment, in combination with City staff and Montgomery County on the Maryland side, with a focus on local, independent businesses. To assist in business recruitment, the report called for creation of an Urban Design Plan, which would be developed with the participation of community stakeholders and property owners.

In terms of development and management, the report called for infill development to activate “dead” spaces such as parking lots and for better management of parking overall, including longer-duration parking meters. It also recommended building consensus for later store hours.

The “Existing Conditions” section of the market analysis provided 2008 SHA data on traffic counts. Average daily traffic on Route 410 near Carroll Avenue was 9,560, and Carroll Avenue has average daily traffic of 9,892. By comparison, Route 410 traffic counts in downtown Silver Spring are 22,240. The report observed that the lower traffic volumes at the Junction translate to less exposure for businesses located there.

This section of the report also noted some other situational disadvantages of the Junction, including small scale of the area, less concentration and massing of commercial activity than Downtown Old Takoma, “one-sided shopping” (i.e. the lack of stretches of roadway with shopping on both sides), the lack of public art, the relatively long distance between Old Town and the Junction, and the upcoming departure of Washington Adventist Hospital.

Real and potential emerging situational advantages of the Junction include the presence of approximately 1,250 students and staff at Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University), the pending redevelopment of the Washington Adventist Hospital campus, and New Hampshire Avenue commercial corridor redevelopment at the east end of Ethan Allen Avenue.

The market analysis provides extensive findings from “consumer pedestrian surveys.” Anecdotal information indicates that these surveys were carried out primarily in Old Town and near the Metro station. Strengths of



Old Takoma cited by consumers included walkability (20%), the large number of independent and locally-owned stores (18%), the unique and “funky” businesses (17%), nice people (15%), quaint historic ambiance (14%), and safety (7-8%). Other findings included the facts that 81% of surveyed consumers shop regularly in the OTBA area, with about 43% shopping on their regular commute and 20% attracted by a specific store. 70% shop in the area at least once a week. 49% drive and 44% take Metro.

In terms of weaknesses, 20% of consumers noted the need for more “diverse” stores. Almost as many noted issues with parking and visibility of parking areas. A large share also noted a lack of eating places and “things to do” in the area. Very few noted any issues with the quality of the merchandise.

Specific recommendations on what would attract people to the OTBA area included “ethnic” restaurants, but an even higher share of the responses related to the need for more “nightlife” or entertainment activities, and “things to do” at night and on weekends. Cumulatively, nightlife and bars accounted for nearly 40% of all responses. 20% of responses related to more or larger festivals and events.

Recommendations for other uses and activities in the OTBA area included an expanded folk/acoustic music and dance festival; a summer “Screen on the Green”; a Streetcar Museum, History of Progressive Politics Museum, or other visitor attraction; and a stronger civic or cultural facility presence in the area, such as an arts/cultural center or a meeting/conference space.

The report proposed a Market Strategy for Takoma Junction in particular, which included the following five points:

- Takoma Junction will probably remain a geographically distinct retail node.
- Takoma Junction can best serve the community as a convenience district, anchored by the Takoma Park- Silver Spring Co-op.
- Physical linkages need to be strengthened between the Co-op and its sister businesses across the road.
- The Co-op can create more spin-off through additional activities (outdoor café, expanded full-service gardening center, etc.).
- In the long run, however, due to physical constraints, Takoma Junction will remain primarily a smaller, convenience-oriented node.

The Bethesda Urban Partnership and the Downtown Frederick Partnership were cited as examples of “best practices” for similar areas elsewhere in the region.

In its design recommendations, the market analysis called for more public art to convey “the expressive qualities of this community”; gateways to “celebrate arrival into the area and distinguish between the three distinct nodes”; consistent sidewalks, streetlights, and street signage within nodes or the district as a whole; façade improvements to enhance attractiveness; and business signage consistent in character and quality.

The market analysis included suggestions for a range of marketing and business recruitment strategies for the entire Old Takoma corridor, with estimated costs for each component.

The market analysis also offered “Development and Management Recommendations.” The following recommendations were most pertinent to Takoma Junction:

1. Development of an Urban Design Plan to include existing and proposed land use and zoning plans, a traffic and parking management study, public art implementation plan, recommended urban design improvements, recommended transport/infrastructure improvements, site plans for targeted development parcels, renderings of proposed development concepts and urban design improvements, and a directional signage program.
2. Later store hours to accommodate the evening rush commuter. In line with other specialty shopping districts throughout the Washington metro area (including Old Town Alexandria), OTBA should work with businesses to move their store hours to 11 AM to 7 PM or later.
3. Parking meters with longer time allowed, to encourage shoppers to patronize more than one store. Parking holidays on certain normally slow shopping days.
4. Property ownership programs to encourage businesses into property ownership, which provides businesses with more freedom and long-term stability. The report noted, “This is often a critical issue in areas where absentee landlords wreak havoc on small businesses by failing to maintain and upgrade



properties, increasing rents at higher than market rates, and refusing to negotiate lease terms. Many OTBA businesses currently benefit from benevolent local-based landlords. Rent-to-own programs and below-market capital loans can help spur businesses to ownership.” Finally, the market analysis also included an Implementation Action Plan.

### ***Task Force on Environmental Action: Final Report (Adopted April 30, 2010)***

The Environmental Task Force’s “Climate Change” recommendations included installing solar on public buildings, including buildings owned and operated by Montgomery County where possible; and identifying potential sites for solar parking lot and solar bus stop canopies. In a similar vein, Energy recommendations included City-facilitated installation of solar electric panels on community buildings, at least partially financed by residents; and formation of a Municipal Electric Utility which might simply supply or also distribute electricity. “Habitat” recommendations included support for the increasing interest in growing and consuming local foods; setting forest cover/tree canopy goals of at least 40% for the more urbanized areas of Takoma Park; increased plantings of additional native trees on public rights of way and other public property; and consideration of new Open Space conservation easements.

### ***City of Takoma Park Façade Advisory Board***

The Façade Advisory Board was created by Takoma Park ordinance. It exists to provide guidance and assistance to commercial building and business owners in the Takoma Junction/Old Town area. It is intended to assist individuals who may be planning to renovate or restore the exterior of a building, or planning to install a sign for identifying their business. By ordinance, Board members consist of architects, developers, residents, historic preservationists, property and business owners. Meetings are open to the public and are typically held at 7 pm on the second Tuesday of every other month. Projects with which the Façade Advisory Board is involved typically require permits from Montgomery County Permitting Services and a Historic Area Work Permit from the Historic Preservation Commission. The Façade Advisory Board can help to facilitate the permitting process and can assist in identifying potential funds and tax credits to offset the cost of some types of projects.

The Façade Advisory Board has created a detailed set of Guidelines, which are intended to benefit commercial buildings of all types, in all areas of the City. However, they are intended to be especially beneficial for commercial buildings that lie in the Takoma Park Historic District and which are subject to further review by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The introduction to the Guidelines states that “designs that are compatible with the existing character of a neighborhood will typically enhance a building and its surrounding neighborhood” -- whereas incompatible designs will likely have the opposite effects -- and that “good maintenance practices help to retain and preserve the buildings and enhance the character of the neighborhood.”

In pursuit of these values, the Guidelines outline owner and tenant responsibilities, summarize the permit and design review processes, describe factors to consider in various types of projects, list “character defining elements” for buildings (setbacks, orientation, scale, proportion, rhythm, massing, height, materials, colors, roofs, storefronts, ornamentation, landscape features, secondary buildings, and lighting), provide detailed guidance on signage, and offer useful resources for property owners -- including regulatory and review agencies, preservation organizations, and financing tools.

### ***City of Takoma Park Wayfinding System***

Based upon the recommendations of a study by Gallagher and Associates, (February 1, 2005), the City Council adopted a wayfinding system and began installing a number of approved sign types with common graphic design features. “Sign types” that are, or might be, involved in Junction design or marketing include:

- i. Historic District boundary signs.
- ii. Area identification signs (such as park name signs).
- iii. Pedestrian kiosks (such as that located in front of the Co-op).
- iv. Historic markers.
- v. Interpretive panels.
- vi. Gardens markers.
- vii. Pageantry banners (affixed vertically to light poles or other supports)

In conversations about marketing of the Junction, it is sometimes noted that nearby major arterials such as

New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard do not have any “Vehicular Directional Signs” which would point motorists toward area destinations or commercial/civic nodes (such as “Washington Adventist Hospital,” “Old Takoma,” or “Takoma Langley Crossroads”). Although the Gallagher study recommended a design for this type of sign, the design was not approved by the State Highway Administration.

### **Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, Section 59-C-18.21. Takoma Park/East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone**

In the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, Takoma Junction is designated as part of a larger Takoma Park-East Silver Spring area in need of revitalization so as to:

- foster economic vitality and attractive community character
- promote enhanced pedestrian environment and an improved circulation system for pedestrians and bicycles as well as motor vehicles
- provide for the combination of residential with commercial uses.

The Commercial Revitalization overlay zoning ordinance provides flexibility in certain design standards to allow for more commercial development and better design than would otherwise be achieved. It sets forth requirements for design review, and it allows or limits specific uses inconsistent with the master plan vision so that, in effect, the development standards of the base zones in the master plan can be modified. *It should be noted, however, that the inclusion of Takoma Junction within the Takoma Historic District has the practical effect of restricting the flexibility provided for in the zoning ordinance, particularly with respect to issues that could impact that district's overall historic character such as building height, massing, and facades.*

The overlay zoning includes land use regulations which list uses allowed by right -- these “by-right” uses include dwellings -- as well as uses that are restricted. Non-conforming uses are “grandfathered” and may continue as conforming uses. Previously conforming buildings (prior to the establishment of the overlay zone) may continue as conforming buildings and may be rebuilt, repaired, or reconstructed. “Grandfathered” buildings and uses may expand up to 1,000 square feet, subject to site plan review.

(In the Junction at present, there do not appear to be any nonconforming uses. The auto repair shops and filling station would be nonconforming if they directly adjoined or confronted lots zoned “residential”).

The overlay zoning modifies a number of development standards. For example, it allows the Planning Board, in the course of site plan review, to waive requirements for parking setbacks and numbers of spaces (to help accomplish goals of the master plan including revitalization, enhanced pedestrian environment, and encouragement of transit use); it also allows the Planning Board to reduce building setbacks to accomplish master plan objectives.

In the overlay zone, a site plan is required not only for new construction but also for:

- additions/reconstruction/alterations that change gross floor area by more than 1,000 square feet
- expansions of up to 1,000 square feet in prior existing buildings or uses (“grandfathered”) that are allowed to continue as conforming although similar new buildings or uses would be non-conforming to the adopted overlay zone standards
- a waiver of more than 50% of the off-street parking requirements
- conversion of an existing structure to residential use.

A review by “the Planning Board or its designee” is required for additions/reconstructions/alterations that change a building by less than 1,000 square feet (this applies to non-“grandfathered” building uses). If there are existing buildings on the site or on an adjacent property, minimum setback may be reduced by the applicant to conform to the existing setback on the site or on the adjacent property.

Planning Board approval in the overlay zone requires certain additional findings. Each structure or use must

- be consistent with the recommendations in the applicable master or sector plan
- meet all of the purposes and requirements of the overlay zone as well as applicable requirements of the underlying zone
- be compatible with other uses and with other site plans and with existing and proposed adjacent development

Of course, City of Takoma Park review processes still apply in the overlay zone.

## **Options: Streetscape Improvements**

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

Streetscape enhancements would increase the appeal of the Junction to shoppers, make the area a more appealing gateway, and improve pedestrian safety.

Improvements to sidewalks can encourage more walking to and through the area and bring people closer to the businesses. A unified and aesthetically pleasing streetscape can create a sense of place that supports marketing and enhances business development.

Eventually, installation of large shade trees would reduce the heat-island effect of the expanse of concrete and asphalt.

The upgrades could address the following three aspects of the Junction's streetscape:

### **1. Improve Sidewalks**

At present, the sidewalks through the Junction can create a feeling of danger and unease as large vehicles pass. The situation is exacerbated by several "chokepoints" that make the Junction dangerous for pedestrians, especially when pedestrians are traveling in a group, with children, with strollers or with children on bicycles, with pets, or if they are disabled. For instance, walking east from the fire station and approaching Healey Surgeons on the south side of Carroll Avenue, a concrete plant box, streetlamp, and utility poles constrict the sidewalk in places to two or three feet (in contrast with the ADA standard of five feet), creating a dangerous temptation for pedestrians to step in to the street when meeting pedestrians walking the opposite direction. The sidewalks at either corner where Philadelphia joins Carroll are also narrow, and restricted by various telephone poles, street lamps, and guy wires. Likewise, a telephone pole and supporting guide wire over the sidewalk on the east side of Philadelphia Avenue heading north away from the fire station makes passage tricky and dangerous. The low brick wall running in front of the gas station poses a special hazard because it forces pedestrians either onto a narrow sidewalk or onto the gas station's concrete pad.

### **2. Install walls, planter boxes, grade-level tree boxes, and trees**

The Junction has an assortment of fences, walls, and brickwork along sidewalks and in Morrison Park that create a disheveled and neglected impression. The planting of trees and bushes is erratic, and they are poorly maintained.

Entering the Junction from the west on the north side of Carroll Avenue, visitors see a mix of a white picket fence in front of private properties, a low brick wall and matching planter box in front of RS Automotive, opening up to wider brick sidewalks and tree boxes with a mix of medium and small trees as one turns north on Carroll.

On the south side of Carroll, in front of Healey Auto Surgeons, the low concrete plant box on one side squeezes the sidewalk to less than two feet in width, as described above. A low, wrought-iron fence with two sliding gates separates Takoma Auto Clinic's parking lot from the sidewalk. The Co-op parking lot is separated from the sidewalk by stretches of split-rail fence. A young willow oak occupies the grass strip between this fence and the sidewalk. However, the remainder of the grass strip in front of the lot lacks trees of any size. Also, two entryways to the City-owned parking lot increase the amount of concrete visible from the sidewalks and diminish the space that might be used for plantings. The Co-op grounds lack trees, with the exception of several ginkgos along Sycamore which do little to cast shade in the summer.

The cumulative effect of the poor streetscape design is to detract from the value of the Junction as a gateway to Takoma Park and from the historic character of the surrounding neighborhoods, thus diminishing the appeal of the Junction to potential shoppers, businesses, and the surrounding community.



### **3. Improve B.Y. Morrison Park**

B. Y. Morrison Park is fundamentally a missed opportunity, and yet it is a gateway to the Junction with its art deco lettering on the pavilion. The brick planters bear no relationship to the surrounding architecture, including the "band shell." The stairs and concrete cap on the park are crumbling. The plantings are barberry bushes, an upright blue spruce and mid-sized locust trees in the planters.



## Options: Potential Actions, Organized by Cost

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

The following ideas, gathered from recent studies, Task Force discussions, and Task Force outreach responses, are organized in three categories according to relative cost. Any of the revitalization strategies presented above could involve a mix of actions chosen from the three groupings below. (Options for the City-owned parcels, for access and parking, and for traffic/pedestrian movement, are presented in separate sections of this report.)

### Low/No Investment Cost

Convene a consultative stakeholder group to work with the City on Junction revitalization. Decide upon a theme for the Junction.

Co-sponsor a renaming contest for the Junction, to communicate the theme, to foster a sense of community ownership, and to help build a sense of place. The Junction could be renamed for a person, e.g. "\_\_\_\_\_'s Corner" to honor a resident or an inspiration figure befitting the chosen theme.

- Use the Junction to host an important gathering related to the chosen theme, i.e. if the chosen theme is Ecology/Environment, host a conference on municipal responses to climate change

- Convene all property owners to discuss strategies for revitalization

- Identify facades and storefronts most in need of aesthetic improvement, and work with owners, OTBA (Old Takoma Business Association), and HTI (Historic Takoma, Inc.) to help achieve improvements

- Provide OTBA and property owners with lists of desired new uses

- Help City residents or a community credit union/development corporation to invest in a key property if one becomes available

- Track environmental remediation processes and help shepherd these processes to completion

- Provide free parking meter passes to Takoma Park residents who live beyond a certain radius of the Junction

- In general, encourage a collective, community-driven sense of place

- Designate locations where local organizations can install or exhibit public art

- Encourage business incubation in vacant or underused spaces

- Provide space for carshare parking, e.g. Zip Car

- Working through OTBA, take any necessary steps to encourage the establishment and/or maintenance of a high standard of personalized, responsive customer service at all Junction businesses – this might include adoption of later opening and closing times to accommodate evening commutes, as recommended in the OTBA market analysis

- Working through OTBA, help to facilitate local consumer feedback for businesses, to help businesses assess consumer preferences, perceived quality of customer service, and possibilities for expansion or diversification

### Moderate Investment Cost

- Continue City funding support for Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA), with an understanding that OTBA will work as a key stakeholder in carrying out a strategy for Junction revitalization

- Invest City dollars in a B-Corp or other community investment partnership to buy or develop one challenged property

- Pay for directional signage and find non-SHA-controlled property on which to install it along the edges of Takoma Park (e.g. at University and Carroll; at Flower and Carroll; at New Hampshire and Ethan Allen)

- Pay for Historic District identifier signs and install them within the Junction

- Pay for design and/or installation of interpretive signs to tell the history of the district

- Fund a new annual event to highlight the district

- Co-sponsor an annual banquet, with awards for best individual volunteer, best community organization, best property owner, and best business owner contributions to Junction revitalization

- Prepare the B.Y. Morrison structure for re-use by a low-impact vendor tenant

- Foster the creation of a youth-operated delivery business serving the Junction, possibly including other commercial districts in the City



- Install security cameras to respond to concerns of business owners
- Plant shade trees or other landscaping plants, and budget for their ongoing care as needed
- Install/pay for wi-fi coverage for the Junction
- Provide electric vehicle plug-in parking spaces

### **Higher Investment Cost**

- Carry out streetscape improvements on the south side of Carroll Avenue (see “Streetscape Improvements” above)
- Redesign and/or rebuild B.Y. Morrison Park (see “Streetscape Improvements” above)
- Install new walls, planters, and window boxes (see “Streetscape Improvement” above)
- Build or help to finance a signature attraction, e.g. a wind turbine, public art, a community “back deck” overlooking the wooded area, an accessible green roof area, a solar cooperative using commercial rooftops, a fountain or other water feature, or an access stairway/elevator to rooftops in the 7300 block of Carroll Avenue

## **Options: Revitalization Strategies**

*Options are courses of action that might be taken. In listing an option, the Task Force does not imply a preference or recommendation; and the order of listing does not imply a ranking of favorability. Some options require further investigation to confirm their feasibility.*

*The Task Force operated by consensus. Accordingly, the Recommendations which follow the Options are restricted to those actions about which the Task Force achieved consensus.*

**Junction improvement involves (1) physical changes and (2) changes in human activity.**

Physical changes (“site” changes) include possible development of the City-owned parcels, improvements in access and/or parking, improvements to traffic and pedestrian movement, and streetscape enhancements. (Options and recommendations for the City-owned parcels, access/parking, and traffic/pedestrian movement are discussed in separate sections of this report.)

These physical changes lay the groundwork for new economic and cultural activities – the ultimate goal of revitalization.

If the City wants to move beyond physical changes and seize a more active role in influencing the kinds of economic and cultural activities that take place at the Junction, it could choose from one of the following three strategies, or could devise an approach involving a mix of these strategies.

### **1. City-Led Revitalization**

The City could engage stakeholders in partnership and, together, select a set of measurable goals to achieve, select a set of actions to pursue to achieve those goals, and set a timetable for the completion of these goals. The City could then establish a program budget to fund and track the progress of these actions, and assess progress toward the goals on an annual basis, making adjustments to the strategy as needed.

The City would focus on accomplishing “lynchpin” changes (physical improvements, policy changes, relationship-building, goal-setting) that would create the underlying conditions for revitalization to occur. The City would then work closely with stakeholders in recruiting new businesses, assisting existing businesses, marketing, aesthetics, events, etc.

### **2. Theme-Controlled Revitalization**

The City could lead Junction stakeholders in developing and marketing an overarching theme for the Junction, and in helping to sustain positive energy for revitalization around this theme. Some possible themes that have been touched upon in Task Force meetings and outreach responses include:

- “Community commons/Playful City” theme (Junction as place to meet and relax)  
*Bocce ball ... Croquet ... Skating ... Rooftop, patio, or “back-deck” dining*
- “Convenience” identity (Junction as place to get basic needs with great service)  
*Easy access ... Delivery services ... Personalized service ... Food vendors ... Broader range of convenience goods/services*

- “Conscience Corner/Eco-Corner” theme (Junction as regional model of progressive environmentalism)  
*Rooftop or parking-lot solar power ... wind turbine ... urban forest ... locally-grown food ... electric shuttle ... bikeshare station ... plug-in vehicle recharging stations*
- “Cooperative/B-Corp” theme (Junction as model for community ownership)  
*Co-op expansion ... Other B-Corp businesses ... Community investment ... Community-determined use of public spaces?*
- “Mind-Body-Spirit” or /“Slow City” theme (Junction as a nexus of holistic approaches)  
*Dance hall ... Fitness activities ... Storytelling ... Classes in cooking or other traditional arts ... Link between Montgomery College nursing school, Washington Adventist Hospital, and local alternative-medicine practitioners*
- “Specialty services” theme (Junction as a place of technical expertise and quality craftsmanship)  
*Kinetic Artistry ... Takoma Framers ... Healey Surgeons .. local-source furniture maker?*
- “Back to the Future” theme (Junction as a pedestrian/bike/transit oriented place hearkening back to early twentieth century roots)  
*Streetscape improvements ... “streetcar”-like shuttle service ... variety store ... new development with front porch rocking chairs?*

### 3. Laissez Faire Revitalization

The City could focus on creating the best possible conditions for entrepreneurs to experiment with new businesses as well as new uses for public space. “Entrepreneurs” would be defined broadly to include not only business operators but also community groups. There would be no effort to devise an overarching “theme” for the Junction or to create and pursue a coordinated revitalization strategy. Rather, the identity of the Junction would be allowed to change and respond to market conditions and visitor preferences. Elements of this entrepreneur-based strategy might include:

- Using existing organizations and communication channels to solicit interest in development of new businesses at the Junction
- Working with OTBA to help new businesses find space to incubate in unused or underused commercial spaces
- Working with the owner(s) of 7200 and 7206 Carroll Avenue (the two houses across from the fire station) to consider developing appropriate commercial uses for these properties
- If a multi-use pavilion is erected on the City-owned C1 parcel, helping food trucks or other vendors get established (on a daily or periodic basis)
- Generating positive publicity for new and existing business ventures at the Junction
- Making changes to City policies, such as the inventory tax, to encourage business activity
- Changing City tax policy, if possible, to create an incentive for owners of vacant properties to find occupants
- Coordinating property owners and community groups to establish a solar electric cooperative using commercial rooftops
- Setting aside space in the C1 parcel, in B.Y. Morrison Park, or (with owner agreement) in vacant or underused commercial buildings for community groups to program as leisure, art exhibition, performance, dance, garden, or historical interpretive space.

## Challenges in the Design of a Revitalization Strategy

In deciding what strategy and what actions to pursue, the City and its private partners must take into account the following four challenges:

**Budgetary limitations:** State and county funding are hard to come by . The City itself must choose among many priorities in allocating what economic development funds it may have available.

**Volunteer interest and availability:** Takoma Park’s great activist spirit is a two-edged sword with respect to Junction revitalization: while there are no doubt many residents with the willingness to donate time or resources to make the Junction a place that is livelier, more attractive, etc., this same pool of residents is pulled in many directions by the plethora of civic activities around town. A revitalization strategy that relies heavily upon volunteer spirit is likely to falter over time without a clear set of goals and deadlines, strong leadership, efficient coordination, good publicity, and ongoing recognition.

**Market realities:** As appealing as many ideas for new businesses or cultural activities may be, the success of such new ventures is dependent upon there being a sufficient market for them – a market that can be sustained over time.

**Changes coming to other nearby nodes:** The course that Junction revitalization takes will be influenced greatly by the type, scale, and pace of new development elsewhere in Old Takoma, at the Washington Adventist Hospital campus, at Long Branch, along Fenton Avenue in Silver Spring, at Takoma/Langley Crossroads, along New Hampshire Avenue, on the grounds of the former Walter Reed hospital, and along Georgia Avenue.

## Recommendations

### *Recommended Streetscape Improvements*

1. Construct ADA-compliant sidewalks throughout the Junction that also accommodate tree and planter boxes (like those on Carroll West of the Fire Station) to create a buffer between traffic and pedestrians. This will require expansion onto privately owned land (for which the City may or may not have the right of way) and/or onto the current street, the right of way for which is owned by the SHA. If the City does not own the right of way, property owners may be willing to accept encroachment onto their property if the City is paying for landscaping, a decorative wall, or other improvements.

As recommended in the “Access and Parking” section of this report, give the Junction high priority for sidewalk improvement, and use City funds to pay for such improvement if questions about SHA ownership/responsibility for sidewalks are unresolved within six months.

2. Work with SHA to install a buffer strip and plantings along both sides of Carroll/Ethan Allen Avenue. Large and medium-sized, grade-level tree boxes should be installed for a range of native hardwood species. On the north side of Carroll Ave, plantings should start in front of the houses in lots 14 and 15 and down Carroll to Lee, enlarging the planter boxes in front of the stores between 7300 and 7334 Carroll Ave to accommodate larger trees.

Work with SHA, and with willing private property owners, to install low stone walls at various points along the newly widened sidewalks to create visual unity with lower Carroll Avenue and to help harmonize the mix of homes and businesses in the Junction. Low stone walls could be erected in front of both Healey Surgeons and Takoma Auto Clinic and along the City Lot. A stone wall could also replace the current brick wall in front of RS Automotive as well as the current brick plant box.

3. At B.Y. Morrison Park, replace the present concrete cap with a permeable surface if it is advisable to do so; then replace the stairs with a slope. Take out the brick planters and replace them with two or three large shade trees, placed so that they do not block the name “Takoma Junction” on the pavilion. Replace the current plantings with other low, attractive plantings. If the small asphalt parking area is reconfigured (as recommended in the “Access and Parking” section of this report), integrate any new green space with the rest of the park.

### *Other Recommended Actions (Low Investment Cost)*

1. Convene a consultative stakeholder group to work with the City on Junction revitalization.
2. Convene all property owners to discuss strategies for revitalization.
3. Identify facades and storefronts most in need of aesthetic improvement, and work with owners, OTBA (Old Takoma Business Association), and HTI (Historic Takoma, Inc.) to help achieve improvements.
4. Track environmental remediation processes and help shepherd these processes to completion.
5. Encourage business incubation in vacant or underused spaces.
6. Provide space for carshare parking, e.g. Zip Car.

### *(Moderate Investment Cost)*

7. Continue City funding support for Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA), with an understanding that OTBA will work as a key stakeholder in carrying out a strategy for Junction revitalization.
8. Pay for directional signage and find non-SHA-controlled property on which to install it along the edges of Takoma Park (e.g. at University and Carroll; at Flower and Carroll; at New Hampshire and Ethan Allen).
9. Install Historic District identifier signs within the Junction.
10. Pay for design and/or installation of interpretive signs to tell the history of the district.

11. Fund a new annual event to highlight the district.
12. Prepare the B.Y. Morrison structure for re-use by a low-impact vendor tenant.
13. Plant shade trees or other landscaping plants, and budget for their ongoing care as needed.

***Recommended Strategy: City-Led Revitalization***

1. The City should engage Junction stakeholders in partnership and, together, select a set of measurable goals to achieve, select a set of actions to pursue to achieve those goals, and set a timetable for the completion of these goals.
2. The City should then establish a program budget to fund and track the progress of these actions, and assess progress toward the goals on an annual basis, making adjustments to the strategy as needed.
3. The City should focus on accomplishing “lynchpin” changes (physical improvements, policy changes, relationship-building, goal-setting) that will create the underlying conditions for revitalization to occur. The City should then work closely with stakeholders in recruiting new businesses, assisting existing businesses, marketing, aesthetics, events, etc.

## 7

# Funding Plan

There will be financial costs associated with Takoma Junction revitalization. These costs will go beyond current operational and carrying costs, whether funded by taxes, fees, grants, or as business expenses. They will take the form of capital investments, likely involving expenditures by the City of Takoma Park, the Maryland State Highway Administration, and Takoma Junction property and business owners.

The funding plan is simply stated: For each improvement or revitalization step to be considered or undertaken, review possible funding sources. Apply for those available grants and loans that make sense in light of affordability (loans) and anticipated benefits.

Of course, property and business owners would be expected to raise funds on work they undertake for their own benefit, and the City and state would fund certain activities via taxes and fees. The City would also seek to recoup its investment in Takoma Junction by one of more of the following mechanisms:

- Sale of property for development.
- Lease, or licensed use, of property for business operations.
- Activity (occasional use) fees.

Sales prices and rents are typically established by fair-market means, although there may be special situations where the City will consider benefits that factor in, but are not computed exclusively, from financial return. As one precedent, consider the City's land-license agreement with the TPSS Co-op, created in 1998 and permitting the Co-op to use portions of land on the City's paved lot for parking spaces, containerized storage, trash receptacles, and a loading dock. The Co-op pays \$18,000 per year for use that includes 16 parking spaces. This amount may be projected out to provide one estimate of the licensing value of the full lot.

## Funding Sources

Funding may be available from governmental, foundation, business, and other sources in support of Takoma Junction revitalization. Purposes may include business, environmental, community, transportation, traffic, and public-safety evaluation, studies, design, planning, development, and operations. Parties eligible to receive, or to serve as a conduit for, third-party funding may include the City of Takoma Park, businesses, the Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA), Historic Takoma, Inc. (HTI), neighborhood associations and community groups. OTBA, in particular, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that serves the business district that stretches from Takoma Junction, along Carroll Avenue through Old Town, to 4th Street NW and Blair Road NW in the District of Columbia.

Sources described below generally apply to businesses and properties rather than to work in the public right-of-way, on the roads and sidewalks.

### *Maryland Environmental Programs*

The City-owned paved and wooded lots in Takoma Junction were used as a dumping ground for commercial and residential waste for several years. The ground under the back portion of the paved lot, away from Carroll Avenue, and the top portion of the wooded lot may be contaminated, requiring environmental clean-up as part of any development or use in other than their current states.

The Maryland Brownfields Redevelopment Reform Act of 2004 (extending earlier, 2007 legislation) "encourages the cleanup and redevelopment of... abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial or commercial properties where redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination." The state has two programs that may be applicable to Takoma Junction, an assessment program and a clean-up program, as follows:

1. "The Brownfields Site Assessment Initiative was established by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to encourage the redevelopment and reuse of contaminated and potentially contaminated properties.



"The Initiative is designed to help eligible property owners or prospective property owners determine the extent and type of contamination on their property AT NO COST. The Initiative, funded by the federal government, will help Maryland put abandoned or underutilized properties back into productive use." Eligibility is extended to property owners where certain site conditions hold: "perceived or known contamination"; "vacant or underutilized"; "located in a commercial or industrial area"; "redevelopment of property may create jobs"; and "remediation is feasible and will improve local tax base."

2. "The Land Restoration Program (LRP) is one of two hazardous waste programs within the, Land Management Administration, Maryland Department of the Environment. LRP focuses on cleaning up uncontrolled hazardous waste sites throughout Maryland."

The program component that would apply would likely be the Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP)/Brownfields Division: "This division of LRP encourages voluntary cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties through a streamlined cleanup process that provides certainty regarding environmental requirements, allowing parties to more accurately predict costs and time lines associated with a cleanup. The program also enables eligible purchasers of property to substantially limit liability for past contamination before purchasing property. The VCP works hand in hand with the Brownfields Revitalization Incentive Program administered by the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. It provides incentives including tax credits, loans and grants for the redevelopment of eligible brownfields in participating jurisdictions."

### ***Maryland Sustainable Communities***

The Maryland Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 creates a designation for certain areas that targets those areas for priority or enhanced consideration for programs of possible Takoma Junction applicability:

1. "[The] Community Legacy Program is administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and provides local governments and community development organizations with funding for essential projects aimed at strengthening communities through activities such as business retention and attraction, encouraging homeownership and commercial revitalization."

2. "[The] Neighborhood Business Works Program is administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and provides loans through gap financing, i.e. subordinate financing, to new or expanding small businesses and nonprofit organizations."

The City of Takoma Park intends to adhere to this program, per an October 24, 2011 City Council resolution.

### ***Maryland Main Street***

Takoma Junction lies within Takoma Park's Main Street Maryland district. The Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA) administers the program locally.

OTBA Executive Director Rosalind Grigsby identified and applied for, in late summer 2011, a Commercial Assessment Services Grant to focus on Takoma Junction Properties. The intent, according to Main Street Maryland, is to "provide the selected Main Street community with personalized recommendations for a block or specific set of properties within the Main Street district (up to 4 properties). The assessment will identify potential opportunities and actions to develop, revitalize, preserve or re-position that real estate."

The Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization, via the Main Street Maryland program, announced in October 2011 award of a grant to OTBA. The assessment, to be conducted by TVM Real Estate Solutions LLC of Annapolis, kicked off in November 2011 and will look, in particular, at Healey Surgeons, the Takoma Auto Clinic (Johnny's), the City-owned C-1 parcel, and the TPSS Co-op. Public meetings will be part of the assessment process.

### ***AIA Design Assistance***

The Center for Communities by Design of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) runs the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) Program, which, while not connected to the state program, in a sense, implements the "sustainable communities" concept. It is similar in approach to the Main Street commercial assessment although much broader in scope. City authorities may wish to investigate this program at a future time.

### ***Maryland Smart Sites***

The Maryland Economic Development Association's has administered a program called Smart Sites, although according to John Papagni, Program Officer, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, "there are no plans to designate additional Smart Sites at this time."

The program is described as follows :

"Smart Sites are site-specific capital projects that encourage public and private investment and green building practices in existing Maryland communities. Smart Sites demonstrate how State and local partners can work together to coordinate and align investment in innovative ways that catalyze smart growth in appropriate areas throughout Maryland. The size of Smart Site projects may vary; however, they all strengthen public and private partnerships at the local level that leverage substantial private investment in appropriate growth and revitalization areas; educate about the range of exemplary growth and revitalization projects and partnerships in progress in communities throughout Maryland; and coordinate State, local and private investment in high impact projects in targeted areas, including BRAC zones, TOD sites, Main Street Maryland districts and designated Sustainable Communities."

### ***Loans and Small Grants***

The Montgomery County Department of Economic Development administers an Economic Development Fund Grant/Loan Program that "provides flexible, low-cost financing for expanding and newly located county businesses that demonstrate a significant economic impact. The EDF is strategically used to attract private sector capital investment and the creation of high-paying jobs," with assistance "typically in the form of low interest loans; loans often convert to grants based on businesses attaining certain performance measures. Loans generally range between \$5,000 - \$100,000; higher amounts are possible for businesses involved in large expansion projects."

The Old Takoma Business Association administers a revolving-loan fund to provide loans for capital improvements to businesses in Old Takoma and also runs the Main Street Takoma Facade Improvement Program (FIP).



## Endnotes

### Section 4: Historic Preservation

<sup>1</sup> The threats were not just in Maryland, but also in DC. Takoma Park DC also established an historic district due to the major losses of grand Victorians along Eastern Avenue including the threatened loss of the Cady-Lee Mansion, one of the most important examples of grand Queen Anne-style architecture in this metropolitan area (See Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, Historic Takoma, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> A proposed 10 lane freeway off of the Beltway system that would have cut a 1,000 foot swath through our community with the loss of hundreds of houses. See Portrait of a Victorian Suburb.

<sup>3</sup> The Master Plan of Takoma Park – Langley Park Planning Area, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, 1963. This plan stated: "the improvement of Philadelphia Avenue will involve the construction of 1.8 miles of two 36-foot lanes with a 16-foot median strip within a 120-foot right of way. No substantial improvement through widening is possible without the taking of homes along one side or the other. There are 118 residential structures, one commercial building and two gas stations falling within the 'taking' area of the right of way." The potential widening of MD 410 in Takoma Park surfaced again briefly in 1992 and approximately 8 years ago during the exploration of routes for the Purple Line. Both of these "explorations" were fought off by a vigilant community.

<sup>4</sup> Montgomery College Takoma Park: As Built Study for the Redevelopment of the Takoma Park Campus, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1971. Montgomery College sought to acquire the entirety of residential Block 69, the block bordered by Takoma, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia Avenues. The college did manage to demolish half the buildings with its expansion into this neighborhood.

<sup>5</sup> Takoma Park Transit Impact Area Plan. Proposed Amendment to the Takoma Park-Langley Park Master Plan, Montgomery County, Md., 1971. This plan envisioned that all the historic homes bordered by Piney Branch Road, and Tulip, Willow and Eastern Avenues would be razed for dense high-rise commercial and residential development in proximity to the new Metro.

<sup>5</sup> Approved and Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland: Takoma Park Historic District & Carroll Manor/Douglas House, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Testimony of Neil J. Pederson, Administrator, State Highway Administration at Takoma Park Public Hearing regarding ownership and maintenance of MD 410, November 8, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> This March 7, 2008 letter from the Chair of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission to the State Highway Administration was copied to the City of Takoma Park, but was not included in the informational packet provided to the Takoma Junction Task Force.

<sup>9</sup> Takoma Junction Task Force Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes, January 20, 2011, see minutes for detailed discussion.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.MarylandHistoricalTrust.net](http://www.MarylandHistoricalTrust.net)

<sup>11</sup> Communication of Tim Tamburrino, MHT Preservation Officer, Review and Compliance, to Lorraine Pearsall, January 20, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Testimony of Neil J. Pederson, Administrator, State Highway Administration at Takoma Park Public Hearing regarding ownership and maintenance of MD 410, November 8, 2010.

### Section 6: Traffic

<sup>1</sup> The diagonal distance of the current paved highway, curb-to-curb from the Co-op to the corner at 7300 Carroll Avenue, is about 85 feet. By comparison, the diameter of a mini-roundabout on Glenside Ave. near New Hampshire Ave., in Takoma Park, is about 80 feet. The Glenside roundabout has a landscaped center island with a 50-foot diameter and a circular travel lane with a 15-foot diameter, but does not include a truck apron. A mini-roundabout at the Junction could have a smaller central island with a truck apron and a slightly wider travel lane.

<sup>2</sup> The drop in grade at an existing mini-roundabout at Elm Ave. and Lincoln Ave., in Takoma Park, is steeper than four feet. At Elm-&-Lincoln, there is a landscaped center island with a 28-foot diameter, no truck apron, and a traffic lane with a 23-foot diameter, which can also accommodate parked cars.

<sup>3</sup> One recent mini-roundabout installed in the United Kingdom was observed to have 20 cars driving over rather than around the circle in a 5-minute period (Reading Post 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Following is an excerpt from an e-mail sent on October 28, 2011 at 10:46 p.m. by Cedric Ward, the SHA assistant district traffic engineer for Montgomery County, to Lorraine Pearsall, a member of the Task Force:

"Regarding the crosswalk placements at MD 195 and Ethan Allen Avenue/ Grant Avenue, the existing crosswalk locations are the safest for pedestrians. Relocating the crosswalk to Grant Avenue will put pedestrian in a more hazardous condition as the heavy right-turn movement will increase pedestrian-vehicular conflict. The current crosswalks at the north leg and the east leg are to accommodate the bus amenities at the east side of the intersection. As a result, we do not recommend relocating the crosswalk to Grant Avenue at this time.

### **Section 6: Revitalization**

<sup>1</sup> Information in this section is abstracted from ATC 2010. Additional Site Assessment Report, 7300-7308 Carroll Avenue, Takoma Park MD and ATC 2011. Response Action Plan 7300-7308 Carroll Avenue, Takoma Park MD.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about dry cleaners and environmental issues, see [http://www.drycleancoalition.org/download/citizens\\_guide\\_drycleaner\\_cleanup.pdf](http://www.drycleancoalition.org/download/citizens_guide_drycleaner_cleanup.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Conversation with Irena Rybak of MDE, October 25, 2011, information conveyed to Lorraine Pearsall.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.epa.gov/swrust1/pubs/musts.pdf> for further information on this topic.

<sup>5</sup> Oral History of Roland Dawes, 2001, Historic Takoma, Inc.

### **Section 7: Funding Plan**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/clerk/agenda/items/2009/102609-3b.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/ResearchCenter/ReportsandPublications/LandPublications/Documents/www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/Brownfields\\_Redevelopment\\_Reform\\_Act\(1\).pdf](http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/ResearchCenter/ReportsandPublications/LandPublications/Documents/www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/Brownfields_Redevelopment_Reform_Act(1).pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/ResearchCenter/FactSheets/LandFactSheet/Documents/www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/brownfields/brwnflds\\_sai\\_fs.pdf](http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/ResearchCenter/FactSheets/LandFactSheet/Documents/www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/brownfields/brwnflds_sai_fs.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Land/MarylandBrownfieldVCP/mapping/Documents/www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/LRP%20Fact%20Sheet%20April%202008.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.neighborhoodrevitalization.org/Programs/CL/CL.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.neighborhoodrevitalization.org/Programs/NBW/NBW.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/clerk/agenda/items/2011/102411-1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS075372>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.medamd.com/content/maryland-projects>



## Appendix I: Existing Conditions Summary

AREA OF CONCERN	STRENGTH OR OPPORTUNITY	WEAKNESS, THREAT, OR LIMITATION
Movement	Relatively high volume of bicyclists and pedestrians Relative proximity to Metro Well-served by Ride-on	Rush-hour through-traffic congestion Drive-in shoppers need easier parking Pedestrian crossings feel unsafe Need for more/faster pedestrian crossings Cyclist safety Location of bus stops Emergency vehicles and trucks need passage Hard for drivers to see signage, signals
Business	Co-op is an existing anchor Co-op is positioned to expand OTBA can provide marketing help Well-used local convenience goods and services – some draw from farther afield Through-traffic provides visibility Existing festivals provide visibility	Vacancies Need for coordinated marketing Need for branding Nearby arteries lack directional signs Parking is a concern for businesses and residents Desire for expanded Co-op Desire for restaurant Desire for “lunch counter” Desire for variety/dollar store with basic groceries, personal and household items Many one-stop shoppers; need a way to encourage people to “stick around”
Environment	Small neighborhood commercial district encourages “localism” Small wooded section provides canopy, buffer, area for wildlife Opportunities for rooftop solar Opportunity for wind turbine (?)	Lack of shade, trees Stormwater control Congestion produces unwanted emissions Potential noise concerns (audible crossing signals, emergency vehicles, nighttime deliveries) Pollution cleanup needed for property(ies) at top of Carroll Row Anecdotal evidence that City-owned lot lies on top of potentially hazardous fill/dump material
Aesthetics	Historic Character Landscaped “pocket parks” B.Y. Morrison structure Murals Distinctive buildings and facades Woods and B.Y. Morrison provide buffer from residences	Tired-looking storefronts and facades Desire for better landscaping Dumping/trash in wooded lot Vacant/underused properties suggesting blight Need for gateways (?) Visual clutter (wires, signs) Lack of visual integration as a district Limited integration with Old Town district and Civic Center district Some deliveries, storage, and garbage hauling are in plain view
Social Factors	Co-op is popular Historic Takoma will provide community meeting space Success of food vendor truck with outdoor tables	Lack of a popular establishment for gathering Underuse of BY Morrison Park Desire for public gathering place (outdoor) for events Not currently a “destination” as recommended by OTBA Market Analysis Some merchants have security/safety concerns Gas station and auto businesses are a visual concern for some Area may be underused by nearby residents of lower income Unknown how future developments (Old Town/ Metro area, Walter Reed, WAH campus, New Ave., Takoma-Langley) will impact traffic and use in Junction area

## Appendix II: Task Force Residential Outreach Data

### A. Residential Group Discussion Summaries

*These summaries attempt to capture the essential themes that emerged during each outreach meeting's group discussion.*

#### **Co-op Meeting, 2/22/11: "Stone's Throw" Residents**

About 15 in attendance.

Interesting Observations: 15-20 feet from traffic makes sit-down diners feel comfortable. Businesses are heavy weekend businesses, nothing to do at night.

Negatives observed: Danger, fumes, lack of shade, destination, Fire Station makes you want to avoid walking there, lack of shade along the Common Stretch, jaywalking, unclear signage for main intersection confuses visitors, traffic congestion, parking bleeding over into residential areas, Noise, Lights from Co-op are too bright on Columbia, inventory tax, "vacant" look of the City lot

Desires affirmed by most of group: Sycamore light deemed "needed" by this group; Group strongly favored retaining green space on wooded lot WITH walking access but NO vehicular access to City lot; BY Morrison enjoyed as open space and as garden, sitting, eating, place – Coffee Shop there? Sit-down restaurant desired. In favor of managed parking district

Central Question: Are we trying for destination or trying to serve local people? Can we make the Junction feel less disjointed?

Aha moments: You can't fit 10 pounds of stuff in a 5 pound bag. To add something you have to lose something. "Game Changers" for City lot would be condos, community green space

#### **Pinecrest Community Association Meeting, 3/8/11**

About 8 in attendance. Ideas for, and opinions about, the Junction were solicited during the meeting.

Interesting Observations:

Negatives Observed: Poor pedestrian crossing options for Carroll Avenue. Only a few businesses mentioned as routine destinations for those in attendance. Tricky for those coming from the south side of the Junction to access parking easily.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Create a "Barnes" crossing for pedestrian at the main Junction intersection, whereby all traffic stops periodically to allow pedestrians to cross in any direction.

Central question: What would draw more Pinecrest residents to the Junction?

"Game Changer": a nice, quiet restaurant.

#### **S.S. Carroll Community Association Meeting, 3/22/11**

About 25 in attendance.

Interesting Observations:

Negatives Observed: Red light runners; buses don't use cut-ins; traffic blocks the Firehouse; cars go wrong direction on Grant sometimes; stormwater runoff from City Lot; perception of no parking; addition of new filling bay at gas station bothered one resident

Desires affirmed by most of group: Red Light Cameras at 410/Carroll; State-approved crosswalks desired all along sides of business district; direct crossing (Co-op to Gas Station) desired; Other ideas: Take out Morrison Park to change intersection, create a gathering space on the north side of Carroll; Café, Park space, people-friendly quality; eating establishments

Central questions: How much money do we really have to make changes? What's driving the Task Force? Is high rent influencing the success of businesses?

Aha moments:

"Game Changers" Vegan/Gourmet/Organic Food Trucks on one side of the City Lot. One more anchor business. Better organized coalition of businesses, property owners, city staff, local organizations, and residents.

#### **Sycamore Avenue Living Room Meeting, 3/22/11**

About 6 in attendance.

Interesting Observations: The traffic light at Sycamore has made it easier for people to exit Sycamore.

Negatives Observed: No sense of vitality to the district. Overflow parking for the Co-op creates problems

on the upper end of Sycamore Avenue at times. Pedestrian crossing at the Junction is difficult. The auto repair shops provide useful service but are eyesores at present.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Attract Takoma Park residents from outlying parts of the city with concert series, cultural events, or other activities to reconnect young and old. Create space where people can spend time together (public and/or private; if public, consider more use of Historic Takoma, Inc. and of City lot, if private, consider coffee shop, restaurant). Make sure any new development at the Junction maintains an adequate supply of accessible parking. Conduct a traffic study. Avoid changes that might encourage additional traffic through the neighborhood. Consider pedestrian-actuated lights.

Central question: How do you increase the vitality of the Junction as an attractive place to meet and mingle?

Aha moments: Maybe it's best if the City maintains control of the City lot, since this is an unusual community-owned amenity (flat space in a commercial district, akin to a town square).

"Game Changers": Destination businesses (a la Weaver Street Dairy in Carrboro, NC) that conduct classes. A gathering place for young and old. Music and cultural events.

### ***Victory Tower Meeting, 3/24/11***

About 25 in attendance. Invitations to this meeting went out over several Ward 1 listservs, but all attendees were residents of Victory Tower.

Interesting Observations: Junction is simply unattractive ... "Uninhabitable, dreary, drab ...". Area feels unsafe to some after dusk.

Negatives Observed: Seniors need more time to cross Carroll. Loss of TJ's Convenience market seen as negative by many; vehicular left-turns make for scary crossings for seniors. Confusing to judge what traffic is doing.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Seniors want be able to walk to shopping, not take bus or drive; lunch counter, healthy food restaurant; keep the bus stops well-positioned; more affordable Co-op prices for seniors; flea market on Sundays w/craft/clothing vendors would be nice for City lot; more public art

Central question: If Co-op expands, will it be any more affordable? Can the Junction be made more aesthetically appealing?

Aha moments: Affordability is a big factor for people on fixed incomes. Co-op is not affordable. As a side note, lots of controversy about alcohol sales – some strongly for, some strongly against

"Game Changers" – A place to buy lottery tickets, a place to buy beer-wine? A place to buy basic necessities, personal care items, and small gift items is strongly desired; Intergenerational activities (music and dancing, etc.); physical therapy/occupational therapy

### ***SOSCA (South-of-Sligo Community Association), 3/30/11***

About 15 in attendance.

Interesting Observations: Lack of clarity on what is meant by the term "The Junction."

Negatives Observed: Walk signals not sequenced properly; Sycamore light not needed; Congestion (buildup of traffic on Ethan Allen). Absentee owners, businesses with parking issues, two empty storefronts. Lack of parking perceived.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Coffee shop, restaurant (fine dining and/or health food). Resequence lights and remove Sycamore light. Beer and wine store. Dance hall. Food trucks/carts, art kiosks,

Some were in favor of a roundabout and/or getting rid of the BY Morrison structure to change traffic pattern

Central question: What kind of community do you want to live in?

Aha moments: "Make it more charming." Move from Talk to Action.

"Game Changers" Food. Dance Hall. Cohesive Idea for the Junction, i.e. a Food Area and a place to hang out (fish vendor, baker, wine, limited take-out). Better encouragement of public transportation (frequency, location of stops); roundabout. Aesthetics of signage (public and private). Flags/banners to tie the area together. Improve visual connection from Fire Station to main intersection. Market days, Art market. Use of a shuttle to connect with Old Takoma/Metro. Places to sit in the City lot. Better window treatments.

### ***B.F. Gilbert Living Room Meeting, 5/3***

About 6 in attendance.

Interesting Observations: Historic Character is important but any changes should be open for discussion and negotiation nonetheless

Negatives Observed: Safety of children, timing of lights, too long of a delay in light phase; Cut-through traf-

fic; Glad Rags is missed. TJ's is missed. Auto businesses seen by some as negative.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Barnes dance pedestrian crossing; clean up and preserve the wooded lot but make easier access to Carroll from Columbia for pedestrians BUT NO vehicular access from Columbia. Improve parking behind Carroll Row shops. Make it easier/more efficient to get to parking. Improve facades. Wind turbine desired. Better landscaping.

Central question: Are there any changes that could be made at the Junction that would make it harder to widen 410 in the future? How can the properties be made to look vibrant again?

Aha moments: Bocce Ball in the City lot! Could this area again feel like the "end of the trolley line"? Would it help to make Columbia a one-way street for all or part (to reduce cut-through traffic)? Could residential development at City lot (e.g. small units, affordable for retirees, singles) make the area more vibrant?

"Game Changers" Realign Sycamore through part of Co-op lot, then cut front of BY Morrison to align Sycamore with Carroll in "X" intersection. For City lot, a two-story row of businesses with parking in front; restaurants on bottom, businesses on top. OR a mix of uses from front to back in the City lot, i.e. front is public space, back is businesses or vice versa. Wind turbine, local farmer restaurant, dance hall, regularly scheduled vendor market could help make Co-op a destination.

### ***The Franklin Apartments, 6/20/11***

About 25 in attendance. Interview format rather than formal facilitated discussion.

Interesting Observations: No one was aware of the term "The Junction."

Negatives Observed: Laundromat and grocery are too expensive. No place to eat.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Reasonably priced cleaners, food, and dollar-store items. A place to pay bills, do money orders, get lottery tickets. A place to buy basic groceries affordably.

Central question: How can the Junction better serve low-income people in the vicinity?

Aha moments: Many shopping dollars are being spent at Giant on Arliss St. and at Shoppers Food Warehouse.

"Game Changers" Affordable goods and services for people on fixed incomes and low incomes.

### ***"Paula's Group" (Adult Seniors in the Recreation Department; meeting at the Library), 6/25/11***

5 in attendance.

Interesting Observations: Group wasn't familiar with the term "The Junction."

Negatives Observed: Hard for pedestrians to negotiate Junction

Desires affirmed by most of group: Do away with metered parking. Make it easier for pedestrians. Have a farmers' market there on a different day than the other two in town.

Central question: How do you create a village atmosphere at the Junction?

Aha moments: We need a clear vision of what we want.

"Game Changers": Create a village atmosphere. Unify the district and tie it together better. Celebrate the history of Takoma Park through installations/signage at the Junction. An "old country store."

### ***Final Outreach Meeting, 9/8/11***

About 30 in attendance.

Interesting Observations: Any development of City parcel must accommodate ongoing need for deliveries to Co-op. Restriction/calming of traffic on side streets, e.g. one-way streets, creates a greater "choke point" at the Junction.

Negatives Observed: Vacant storefronts; need for interim window treatments. Signal timings, especially for Sycamore Ave. light. Buses not pulling into bus bay across from Sycamore.

Desires affirmed by most of group: Pedestrian safety, better traffic flow, improved streetscape and storefronts

Central questions: How do we get full business occupancy with possibly a second anchor business, and isn't a better pedestrian crossing essential to achieving this? How to improve traffic flow? Some supported major physical changes to facilitate improved pedestrian and traffic flow. Curiosity about T-intersection possibility; some interest in "X" crossing to link Sycamore with Carroll w/o compromising B.Y. Morrison structure; little interest expressed in mini-roundabout.

Aha moments: "A long term solution needs to be bold."

"Game Changers" Some sort of covered pavilion to allow for multiple uses, including dances. Promoting the Junction as a whole to increase awareness of businesses there. More OTBA attention to the Junction.

## **B. Resident Survey Sheets**

*These tabulations consolidate input received from residents at outreach meetings, generally at the outset of the meetings, prior to group discussion.*

### **Tabulation of Six-Question Surveys from Residential Outreach Meetings (Through September 7, 2011)**

Methodology: Invitations were extended to contacts for all community associations within a half-mile of any portion of Takoma Junction. An invitation was also extended to Hampshire Gardens in Ward 6. An outreach meeting for “stone’s throw” (residents within 100-200 yards of the Junction in all directions) was publicized via fliers. Additional outreach meetings/conversations were eventually carried out with residents of SOSCA, Pinecrest, S.S. Carroll, B.F. Gilbert, Sycamore Ave., and Victory Tower. A “wrap-up” outreach meeting was publicized to all previous participants and to other residents of Ward 4. An outreach meeting with residents of Maple Avenue is still pending.

The purpose of these initial residential outreach meetings was to get initial input from residents, not to gauge residents’ reactions to potential recommendations. All participants were invited to stay in touch (with the option of providing email addresses). A commitment was made to share emerging Task Force recommendations with all outreach participants for their comment/feedback.

Questionnaire: At each residential outreach meeting, the facilitators handed out a six-question survey to participants. They were asked to write down answers BEFORE the discussion began. In some cases, however, participants continued filling in their sheets during/after the discussion, so responses were to a certain extent influenced by the direction each discussion took. These six questions were also distributed to TF members (a few responded) and at an Old Takoma Business Association meeting; those responses are also included here.

Tabulation of responses: Question 1 responses are tabulated separately, as are Question 2 responses. Interests expressed in Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 are combined into a single tabulation, grouped in the following categories: Businesses, Residential Development, Environmental/Greening, Traffic/Access, Destination/Culture, and Other Comments.

Note: This tabulation should not be considered a scientific, balanced reporting of the data. For example, if a respondent mentioned several nuances in a suggestion, each was registered separately, e.g. “Maintain the parking in the City Lot and add a pocket park there for public events” would be registered as “parking,” “pocket park, and “events.” Thus, respondents who wrote more, or who provided more detail, have received more “weight” in this tabulation than those who wrote few comments or non-specific comments.

The specific mentions of “roundabout/traffic circle” (positive and negative) are labeled by neighborhood.

“Flip-Chart” responses: During most of the meetings, flip-charts were used to record observations, points of wide consensus, points of wide disagreement, and ideas generated during the group’s conversation. The contents of these flip-charts have been summarized separately as group responses.

#### **Question 1: How do you currently use the Junction?**

Businesses/amenities used:

Austin-Healey Surgeons  
Takoma Auto Clinic (Johnny’s) I  
TPSS Co-op I  
Heritage Building  
Laundromat  
Animal Hospital (Vet) I  
Pizza Roma I  
Bikram Yoga I  
Computer Repair I



Framers II  
 The Green Commuter IIII  
 Takoma Business Services/Postal Center IIIIIIIII  
 Carriage House Cleaners IIIIIIIII  
 [Glad Rags]  
 [T.J.'s] II  
 Church  
 Liberty Gas IIIIIII  
 R.S. Auto Service IIIII  
 Falafel Truck/Yaron IIIII  
 Grant Ave. Businesses (Office building)  
 Roland's I  
 Kinetic Artistry  
 "Print Shop"  
 Historic Takoma I  
 B.Y. Morrison Park (to look at, not used) I  
 B.Y. Morrison parking spaces I  
 Parking Lot [sic] I  
 Bus Stop IIIIIII  
 General Pedestrian/Consumer IIIIIIIII  
 Festivals I  
 Non-specified car repairs II  
 Fire Station Appreciated II

**Question 2: How does your proximity to the Junction affect you in other ways?**

Modes of transportation mentioned:

Bike I  
 Car IIIIIIIIIII  
 Walk IIIIIIIII  
 Bus I

Negatives mentioned:

Bad/Slow Traffic IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII  
   I avoid during rush hour I  
   Slow to exit from Sycamore II  
   Driveway blocked by Sycamore traffic I  
   Ethan Allen back-ups I  
 Bad light sequence II  
 Cut-through Traffic IIII  
 No street parking in front of my house I  
 Bad for pedestrians/hard to cross IIII  
 Difficulty Crossing Street(s) (north-south) II  
 Noise I  
 Pollution from standing traffic I  
 Trash/tires dumped in wooded lot I  
 Shabby Stores I  
 Storefront Church I  
 Tacky Things I  
 Unaesthetic swath of pavement I  
 There are few interesting shops I  
 Unsightly II  
 Dangerous II  
 Unsafe sidewalks II  
 [General negative/"sad"] I

Positives mentioned:

Mural I

Never have trouble parking I

Like to walk there I

Some very useful things I

Convenient/convenient stores/services III

An easy landmark for visitors I

Near my husband's office I

[General Positive] I

**Questions 3/4/5: What would you like to see more of/less of at the Junction? Specific concepts/ideas for improvements?**

Businesses

Strong draw for walk-up businesses IIIII

Aesthetic IIIIIII

Dull and Drab Looking III

"No more awful-looking murals" I

"Spruce up business district" I

Storefronts more presentable IIIII

Great storefronts on redeveloped City lot I

Nice businesses II

Make sidewalks more attractive I

Relocate sidewalk farther from Carroll with verge in between I

More Businesses/Fill Vacant Spaces IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII

Break out walls to let in larger businesses I

Lower/reasonable rents for businesses I

"Commercial Redevelopment" I

NO increase in business volume/traffic IIIII

NO development that raises tax liabilities without revenue offsets I

Destination Business I

Restaurant IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII

Seated IIIII, Brunch I

Ethnic restaurants I

Pizzeria (sit-down) I

Health food restaurant IIIII

Take-out III

Café IIIIIIIIIIIII

Bakery III

Ice Cream I

Butcher III

BBQ restaurant I

Fish Market II

Deli II

Lunch counter I

Lottery tickets I

NO Lottery I

Wine-beer IIIIIII

NO cheap liquor store II

NO bar II

NOTHING with loud music I

"REI"-type store, but locally owned I

Clothing store I

"Barcelona Nuts!" I

NO "mega-store"/nat'l chain/big box/Ellsworth style development IIIIIII

NO fast food/restaurant chains III  
     [Remove storefront church] II  
 [Remove consignment/secondhand shops] I  
 [Remove/Fewer Auto Shops] II  
 [No additional pizza restaurants] I  
 Flea market I  
 Retail IIII  
     Specialty shop I  
 Convenience Goods and Services III  
     Economical/affordable III  
     Affordable/General Store IIII  
 Personal Care/Spa I  
     Food II  
 Conventional grocery store II  
 Affordable groceries IIII  
 Shoe Repair I  
 Office Products I  
 Drugstore I  
 Day Care I  
 Office Space I  
 Predictable hours for businesses I

Residential Development  
 Residential IIII  
 Single & small family I  
 More dense I  
 Affordable for green commuters I  
 Apartments okay as part of multi-use development  
 NO residential/condominium development on city lot I

Environmental/Greening  
 Environmentally Friendly businesses I  
 Natural Environment IIII  
 LESS parking lots/pavement IIII  
 Preserve Woods IIII  
     NO driveway/traffic onto Columbia II  
     NO parking decks in rear onto Columbia I  
     Gardens I  
     Community Garden I  
     Butterfly bushes I  
 Better stormwater management I  
 More greenery in general I  
 More Trees IIIIII  
 Protect B.Y. Morrison Park I  
 Move Morrison Park to be in front of stores III  
 Park/playground IIIII  
     Tear down entire Junction and make it a park with large species trees I  
     Pocket park in City Lot II  
 Improvement of the park II  
 More Green Space at BY Morrison I  
 Alternative Energy  
     Solar or Wind Power II  
 Less Litter I  
 Less Sirens I

Less Noise I

"NO loud groups of kids" I

#### Traffic/Access

Less Traffic/Less Congestion I

Traffic Flow I

Left turn onto Philadelphia I

Better regulated/shorter traffic lights I

Make traffic light less confusing I

Remove driveway cuts I

No driveway/traffic onto Columbia I

"Rework intersection" II

Allow right on red for inbound Carroll Ave; tie to closure of Grant entry I

Repair roads, esp. Ethan Allen I

Calm Traffic II

Discourage cars I

Reduce support for 410 through-traffic flow I

Toll Booth/EZ Pass I

Install Traffic Cameras (speed/red light/pedestrian control) III

Close access to Grant to streamline traffic I

Fix Sycamore light, quicker egress from Ethan Allen II

Re-align street(s) so Sycamore and Carroll meet IIII

Allow "Left on Red" I

PRO Traffic circle/roundabout: SOSCA IIII;

ANTI circle/roundabout: OTBA I; Stone's Throw III; BF Gilbert I; SOSCA I; City-wide I

Remove traffic lights to reduce vehicle stops: SOSCA III;

Get people easier way to turn north on Carroll from Ethan Allen by keeping westbound traffic in motion I

More pedestrian friendly I

Clear snow off sidewalks I

Improved Crosswalks III

Crosswalk: TJ's to Co-op III

Crosswalk: Grant Ave. I

Crosswalk poorly timed I

Barnes Crossing III

Crosswalk for Sycamore II

[Crosswalk needed at Carroll and Lincoln] I

Faster/easier crossing III

Bridge for pedestrians II

Narrow the street surface for safer/easier crossing I

Safety (pedestrian) III

Better access II

Parking I

Tie new construction to increased parking III

More parking (diagonal?) in front of Carroll storefronts I

Public parking BEHIND Carroll Ave stores; remove fence I

Maintain current level of parking I

"NO parking lots in front of the stores" I

Bike Access/Lanes IIII

Access

Wider sidewalks II

For tables and benches I

Fewer utility poles I

Signage I

Circulator Bus II

Discourage cut-through traffic I  
 No street widening III

#### Destination/Culture

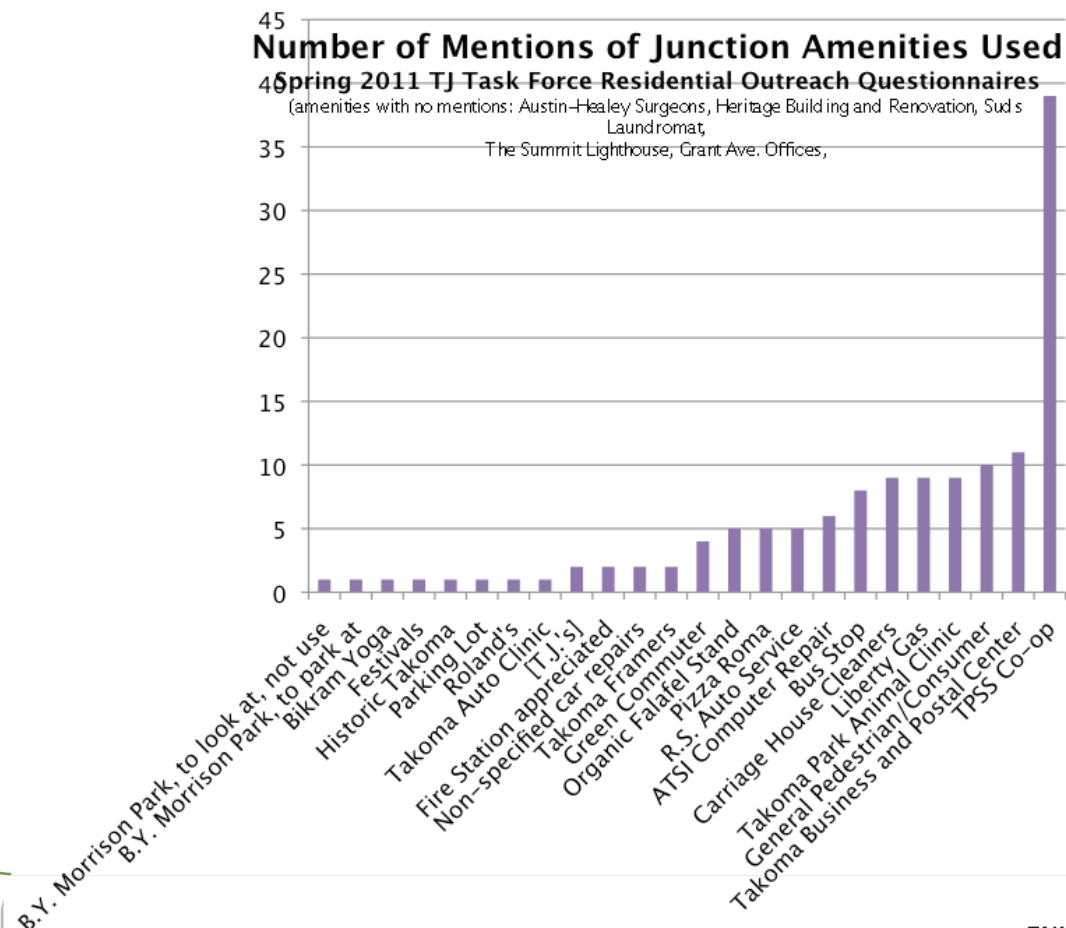
Desire for Energy/Liveliness; "Brooklyn" feel II  
 Place to be/linger/sitting areas IIIIIIIII  
 Sense of Connection Between the Shops, BY Morrison, Co-op, Old Town I  
 Events III  
 Live music at the park II  
 Temporary Art Gallery I  
 Activities for seniors II  
 Art cooperative I  
     Fenton Street market I  
 Culture/Historic Takoma II

#### Other Comments

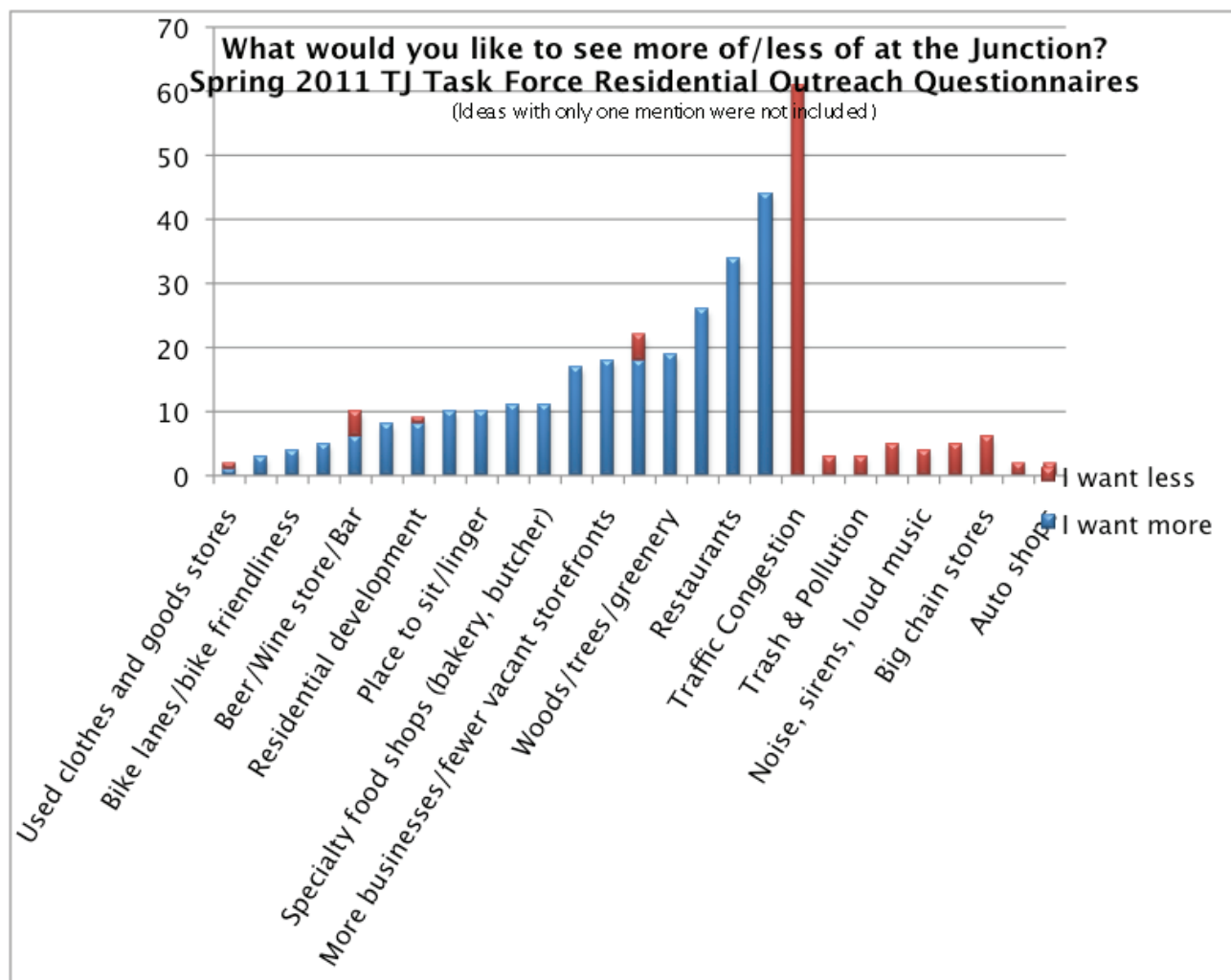
Historic Limitations Are Short-sighted I  
 Protect BY Morrison structure I  
 Multi-use development for city lot II  
 LACK of action; EXCESS of talk I  
 Change is needed/no change would be unacceptable IIII  
 Problem: Too many desires for this small space I  
 Hire professional services (not pro bono input) I  
 Allow community/city input in connection with development I  
 "People are nice" I

### C. Bar Graphs of Amenities Used and Concerns Cited

*N.B. These graphs were generated in early June 2011 and do not incorporate responses received at the last three outreach meetings (the Franklin, "Paula's Group," and the final September outreach meeting.*







#### D. Other Input

##### NOTE ON PEDESTRIAN INTERCEPT SURVEYS

A few pedestrian intercept surveys were conducted in August 2011. The comments received via these surveys tended to corroborate input received in residential outreach meetings.

##### WOODLAND AVENUE MEETING, DECEMBER 2009

In December 2009, residents of Wards 2 and 3 in the vicinity of Woodland Avenue organized a living room meeting to discuss ideas for the revitalization of Old Town and the Junction. The 12 attendees lived on Prince Georges, Conway, Woodland, Poplar, Ethan Allen, and Allegheny avenues. The task force recognized this meeting as an additional useful source of public comment related to the Junction. The following comments, adapted from meeting notes, pertained to Takoma Junction:

The group expressed strong support for a coordinated effort involving residents, neighborhood leaders, elected officials, city staff, organizations such as CHEER, and businesses to develop a strategy for improving the “vibrancy” of “downtown Takoma.” Those present would be happy to lend their support to such an effort.

**Frustrations:** a seeming pattern of resistance to new residential development, which would enlarge the market for local businesses; the difficulty of negotiating traffic at the Junction, whether on foot or in a car; a sense that the city is not working assertively to attract retailers and other employers; a sense that consumers put up with poor service quality in some businesses for far too long (the biggest complaints had to do with

uncleanliness and slow service); the loss of local places to work or meet during the day (at this time, Savory, the Drifting Nomad, and Mayorga Coffee in south Silver Spring had all closed or announced closure).

**Desires:** A brew-pub or other venue for locals to meet with friends from elsewhere in the area; more family-friendly lunch/dinner options along the lines of Franklin's in Hyattsville.

**Positive:** The continuing presence of the Co-op is much appreciated.

**Reality Checks:** The group sees the following as realities to be accepted in the short or long term: (1) Takoma Park residents don't dine out often (lunch or dinner) and thus don't present as much of a market base for restaurants and cafes as a comparably-sized population in DC might represent; (2) retailers based in Takoma Park, in order to be viable, probably need to make a significant portion of their sales online.

**Vision:** The group generally agreed on the following visions for Takoma's commercial district. (These ideas arose mainly in the context of a discussion about the Junction.)

- Some growth is needed to achieve vibrancy, but the end result should still feel like a "small town" with a slow pace, where the majority of those shopping in the area are "regulars" who live locally.
- The large number of Ward 4 residents on Maple and Lee Avenues have an important contribution to make to the commercial success and vitality of the Junction and should be included in the discussion.
- More walk-up offices or businesses/nonprofits would attract daytime employees and visitors. Suggestions included businesses that provide music/ dance lessons and nonprofit headquarters.
- The Junction could benefit from a redesign to improve sidewalks, increase separation of pedestrians from vehicles, and make it easier to cross from the Co-op to businesses on the other side. This could potentially include a traffic circle or the relocation of the underused park to the business side of Carroll (aligning Carroll with Sycamore).
- A weekly evening market on the city-owned lot (perhaps with an international flavor) in the spirit of Eastern Market might make the Junction more vibrant.

### ***E. Summary of Traffic/Pedestrian Concerns Expressed in Early Outreach Meetings***

Gathered from outreach and task force discussion conducted as of April 20, 2011

#### **Pedestrian Issues (Moving East to West)**

Carroll Avenue inbound: No marked crosswalks at Lincoln, Boyd, Sherman, Lee, or either Manor Circle entrance; vehicles moving at very high speeds coming up the hill on Carroll to try to make the light.

Unpredictable pedestrian crossings at Carroll/Ethan Allen: sometimes the actuated signal does not work; at other times, all traffic is stopped with no pedestrian in sight. Many jaywalkers as a result.

Pedestrians crossing Carroll at B.Y. Morrison park report fear of being hit by fast-moving vehicles coming up Carroll Ave., or by left-turning vehicles heading north (outbound) on Carroll Ave.

Calls for a crosswalk to connect the Co-op and Grant/Carroll corner (across Carroll) Children jaywalk to reach school bus. No marked crosswalk on Carroll between Morrison Park and the far side of Firehouse.

[Need for city-painted crosswalks on both Manor Circle and Grant Ave. at Carroll Ave.]

#### **Vehicular Issues (Moving East to West)**

Long waits at the Sycamore Avenue light for Sycamore traffic seeking to turn onto Ethan Allen. General sense that the phase for Sycamore traffic could be "actuated" (rather on fixed timing) at all times.

Buses not using bus pull-in bays on both edges of B.Y. Morrison Park and thus blocking traffic.

Left-turning vehicles trying to get into the Co-op lot from Ethan Allen block westbound traffic.

Sequencing of Sycamore light with Ethan Allen/Carroll light “strands” some vehicles partway through their passage of these combined intersections. Many choose to run the second light they encounter.

Major morning backups on Ethan Allen Ave. approaching the intersection with Carroll.

On Carroll Avenue inbound at the Co-op intersection, the need for the left-turn phase (turning onto Ethan Allen) varies randomly from cycle to cycle. Can the left-turn lane be “actuated”?

Alternate question related to inbound Carroll: can center lane (currently for left turns onto Ethan Allen) be given the option of turning right or left (i.e., both inbound lanes can turn right toward Firehouse)?

On combined 195/410, backup of westbound Carroll traffic at Firehouse light (Philadelphia/Carroll) sometimes creates gridlock across the Ethan Allen/Carroll intersection. In opposite direction, backups block egress from Firehouse. Also, left-turning vehicles using filling station or Co-op back up traffic.

At Firehouse light (Philadelphia/Carroll), there is no left-turn lane for eastbound Carroll Ave. traffic seeking to turn left onto Philadelphia. An informal turn lane used to exist prior to Firehouse rebuild.

Bike lanes coming eastbound on Carroll Avenue into the Junction end abruptly at the Firehouse.

Major evening backups on Carroll Avenue eastbound (approaching Junction from DC) lead to cut-through traffic on Columbia Ave. to the south, with resultant stacking of traffic at Sycamore light.

### Appendix III: Table of Business Outreach Findings

The Task Force outreach team made an effort, via email and in-person visits, to contact all business owners in the Junction, with the exception of the TPSS Co-op (Subcommittee A arranged a separate meeting with members of the Co-op Expansion Task Force). The core questions asked of each business related to (a) parking needs, (b) suggestions for Junction improvements that would benefit the business climate, and (c) interest in diversifying to serve identified local needs/interests.

Takoma Junction Task Force, May-Sept. 2011 Responses from Outreach to Business Owners/Operators

Business	Improvements Suggested	Busiest Times	Modes of Transportation	Interest in Diversifying	Comments
Roland's	Crosswalk straight across common stretch of 195/410. Improve parking lot appearance, and paint spaces, BUT no meters.	Friday, pm and Saturday, pm	Estimated 65% walkup	Already provides Co-op grocery deliveries for Victory Tower residents; hauling service; plowing	Other business's employees park in metered spots all day - unticketed

Business	Improvements Suggested	Busiest Times	Modes of Transportation	Interest in Diversifying	Comments
ATSI Computer	Fill vacancies. Provide more parking. Ticket those who park too long. Install security cameras (2?) on corners of buildings and on light poles to deter crime	Steady	Almost all drive-up; nearby parking is a need	Happy with local market share; might go into sales again if security situation improved	Main concerns are security and parking – no parking in back. Yoga place has brought in new customers.
Universal Design	Improve pedestrian circulation all around the Junction. Bulge out the space in front of the old TJ's by moving the BY Morrison park across the street so that Carroll aligns with Sycamore		50-50 drive-up, walk-up. Drivers park in private lot, others arrive by Metro/bus.	Building tenants might change or existing tenants might diversify in future	Customer are often disabled – better pedestrian facilities would help. Business's private lot gets overflow/stress from other business customers.
Bikram "Hot" Yoga	. Add a (lighted) sign and security lighting to the City Lot parking. Do not lose the parking in the development of the City lot. Paint the lines; indicate it's City parking. A secondary issue is the flow of traffic (the lights). The speed of traffic, especially turning vehicles and those heading up the hill, is a concern. Fill vacant businesses. Meters should all be 2 hours; or on Carroll Ave. they should end at 6 pm. Shellac the public benches which are sun-damaged.	5:30- 6:00 pm arrivals for class; 7:30 -8:00 pm arrivals for class; 9:30-10 am arrivals for class.	Half is drive-up. This is a destination business. Like the dry-cleaners and vet, this is also a one-stop business, i.e. customers don't usually extend their visit by going to other shops.	Open to adding fitness clothing, yoga mats, fitness gear, nutritional supplements.	Yoga customers have trouble because class time/length makes it impossible to fill/feed meters appropriately; so they risk ticketing or park elsewhere
Takoma Auto Clinic (Johnny's)	Parking spaces in City lot are much-needed. Keep them. Do not develop City lot.	No pattern.	[Obviously drive-up for drop-off of vehicles.] Customer base is local; extends as far as Hyattsville.	No diversification desire. Business is strong	Fire Station was a great improvement to the Junction area.
Pizza Roma	Not surveyed on this question.	Evening	Mix of delivery and walk-up.	Possibility of adding tables; owner is off site and would have to approve.	Not surveyed on this question.

Business	Improvements Suggested	Busiest Times	Modes of Transportation	Interest in Diversifying	Comments
Green Commuter (Joe Reyes)	He wants car-free days in Takoma Park, associated with the Farmers' Market, to encourage biking lifestyle. He would like speed cameras or red light cameras along Carroll north of the junction to control aggressive driving that affects bikers at the junction. He would also like better syncing of pedestrian crossings to improve safety and efficiency.	Store is busiest on weekdays from 4-8pm, and week-ends after 11am.	Almost all business is bike-up or walk-up. Occasionally people drive to the store to pick up special order bikes. They need to park nearby but have never reported having any trouble. He doesn't think that parking is an issue at all.	Joe Reyes would like to grow the business but he is financially tapped out and would like community investors. He is interested in turning the Green Commuter into a co-operative model like TPSS Co-op. A co-op is very responsive to community needs/desires.	Not surveyed on this question.
Washington DC Teaching Center (Susanne Ville-neuve and Martha Strickland)	Susanne mentioned how difficult it is for church members to cross the intersection from the co-op where many buy food. She said that she often has to be in long board meetings and that the meters at the junction should allow for longer hours. She would like to see shops that offer plants and electronics. (I told her about the computer shop a couple of doors down.) Martha mentioned that the funding offered for facade improvement would not be enough to cover window replacement (\$1,000 grant but cost is about \$3,000).	Church is busiest on Sundays but board has meetings during the week.	Suzanne reported that that members travel to the church from other parts of the region by car, so more parking would be very helpful. At this point, church members park along Carroll, Grant, and Lee, and occasionally in the right-hand co-op lot.	Response to Demand: The Church is not interested in being responsive to neighbors desires.	



Business	Improvements Suggested	Busiest Times	Modes of Transportation	Interest in Diversifying	Comments
Takoma Framers (Mark Howard)	Get all the stores rented and filled with goods and services that will attract customers to the area – perhaps a convenience store of some type	No comment – closed Wednesday and Sunday; maintains later hours (till 7 pm) on Thursdays	Almost all customers drive to the business because they are bringing something to be framed...there is some minor walk-in especially when there was a consignment shop also...parking has never been an issue.	Response to Demand: The Church is not interested in being responsive to neighbors desires.	

## Appendix IV: Task Force Timeline

The Task Force created the following high-level timeline in early November, 2010. It works backwards from the original September 30, 2011 wrap-up date (now extended to January 31, 2012) but is presented forwards and was created with the idea that it would be revised as needed.

November 9, 2010 -	Task Force meeting: Organizing focus.
November 17, 2010 -	Task Force meeting: Appoint subcommittees.
late November-early December, 2010 -	Subcommittee first meetings: organize & draft work plans.
December 8, 2010 -	Task Force meeting: Subcommittees present draft work plans.
mid December, 2010 -	Subcommittees meet
December 21, 2010 -	Task Force meeting: Subcommittees present completed work plans.
January, 2011 -	Task Force presentation of work plan to City Council.
January-February, 2011 -	Stakeholder outreach.
Communicate FY12 TJ related funding needs to city staff & City Council.	
February 28, 2011 -	Subcommittee interim reports to the Task Force.
early March, 2011 -	Assemble subcommittee interim reports.
Draft Task Force interim report to City Council.	
March 15 -	Task Force interim report to City Council.
spring, 2011 -	Public meeting
May 15, 2011 -	Completion of subcommittee work.
spring/early summer, 2011 -	Urban Land Institute engagement (contingent).
July 2011 -	Assembly, synthesis, and smoothing of subcommittee materials.
Draft final report.	
July-August 2011 -	Review, gap-filling
September 2011 -	Presentation to the City Council.
Report revision (as needed) and publication.	

Recommend Task Force continuation or follow-on as indicated.	
The Task Force planned the following steps during its extension period, through January 31, 2012:	
October 11, 2011	Report editing group meeting
October 26, 2011	Task Force meeting
November, 2011	Meetings with city staff, report revisions as needed
January, 2012	City Council worksession on Takoma Junction

The Council worksession on Takoma Junction was postponed until February, so the Task Force was extended one more time, into May 2012, to allow for presentation of the final report to the Council on February 13, as well as time for additional follow-up with the Council.

## Appendix V: Investigation of expert-consultant engagement

*The Task Force investigated engaging an outside consultant whose professional expertise could help in efforts to improve the design and functionality of Takoma Junction. The Task Force issued a request for information and received several responses.*

*Task Force member Steve Dubb observed in March, 2011, that there are a number of interesting ideas raised in the proposals themselves that could improve the Junction, some of which have received relatively little discussion by the Task Force. He prepared an assessment of the individual proposals which is summarized below. N.B., his opinions have not been voted upon by the Task Force and should not be taken as representing Task Force views.*

*Ultimately, the Task Force decided not to work with a consultant because of time constraints, costs, and the desire of many Task Force members to rely upon local expertise and knowledge. These assessments are included in this report for informational purposes, should the City choose to engage with a consultant on Junction-related issues.*

### 1. Jason Stuart/ULI:

**Strengths:** Urban Land Institute's multi-disciplinary approach (8-10 member team that includes a wide range of skill sets) and its set, flat (and low) fee of \$12,000 are obvious strengths. Jason recognizes that "Takoma Park is not Kensington" and that a historic preservation expert would necessarily be part of the design team. It is notable that Toole Design Group separately expressed interest in working pro bono as part of a ULI team; thus TDG believed that a "ULI approach" made sense to addressing the issues faced at Takoma Junction.

**Weaknesses:** ULI's proposal does not show as much local knowledge as many of the other proposals. The notion that the Technical Assistance Panel operates as an independent body making recommendations based on "the facts" could be a concern, as ULI's relationship to the "panel sponsor" seems a little different than the typical contractor-client relationship. This weakness of "not fully working for us" is mitigated somewhat by the fact that the ULI approach does provide for alternate scenarios, and the Task Force/City could pick and choose from among those.

**Assessment:** If the Task Force selected ULI, it would be desirable to involve the Toole Design Group as part of the team, since the Toole Design Group clearly brings a lot more local knowledge to the table.

### 2. Toole Design Group

**Strengths:** TDG demonstrated strong local traffic knowledge and presented a powerful idea of a "concept level streetscape panel" to provide a "more comfortable walkway between the Fire Station and the Co-op," as well as to assess the viability of bicycle markings and additional pedestrian crossings."

**Weaknesses:** No dollar amount – not even a range – was provided. TDG also seemed to define the entire Takoma Junction set of issues as traffic and pedestrian related, ignoring the importance of business development.

**Assessment:** Toole Design Group would be a great as part of a ULI panel that looked at the broad range of issues, but might not be an ideal group to engage with independently.

### 3. Richard Layman/TND Planning Group/Just Economics LLC

**Strengths:** Layman raises an important point about the upcoming impact of the Purple Line on Takoma Junction. While undoubtedly complicated to establish, a streetcar line on Carroll from Takoma Metro to Ta-

koma/Langley Crossroads could be a critical element to ensuring the long-term viability of Takoma Junction as a business district and would also help connect the currently largely isolated Crossroads area with the rest of the City. (As for historic preservation, note that Carroll for decades had a streetcar line that ran between Laurel and Sligo; see <http://takoma.com/archives/copy/2004/02/streetcar.html>. In a sense, putting a streetcar line back on Carroll would be an act of historic restoration).

Also, it is worth noting that if/when the Purple Line starts operating, through traffic in Takoma Junction may decline (folks driving 410 may instead take the Purple Line direct to Silver Spring). This would be good for reducing congestion, but not so good for business.

Additionally, Layman balances the business development (talks about Co-op and creating a sub-district around food) and transit aspects of the issue – rather than just one or the other. Also, Stu Sirota's past employment with the Maryland Transit Administration just might possibly assist in building relationships with the County and State.

**Weaknesses:** The cost is \$25-40K, which is the highest of the proposals submitted. Also, arguably the scope of work outlined is beyond the mandate of the Task Force (i.e., no one asked the Task Force to propose a new streetcar line).

**Assessment:** If the money were available, Layman's team would be a top choice.

#### **4. Lauren Wheeler/Natural Resources Design**

**Strengths:** The proposed charrette process seems clear, as is the relationship to the client (unlike with ULI). It is attractive that the Task Force would be involved in dialogue with the charrette team at every step of the process.

**Weaknesses:** The costs include a \$15,500 fee and additional expenses billed hourly; an "all in" fee would be preferable. Another apparent weakness is that their area of expertise seems to have more to do with environmental restoration than traffic management or business development – two key Task Force issues.

**Assessment:** Their proposed process seems better suited to developing a park but might not be the most realistic option for addressing Takoma Junction issues.

#### **5. RK&K Team**

**Strengths:** As a big firm, RK&K might be able to exert more influence in helping to get the plan emerging from the process approved and implemented. The work plan looks reasonable and the relationship to the client is clear. They know Scott Whipple (executive director of Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission) and understand historic preservation issues.

**Weaknesses:** The cost range of \$10,000 to \$150,000 is quite broad. If the Task Force can't afford the upper end of that range, it would in essence be a minor client for a major corporate entity and might be working with less experienced personnel.

**Assessment:** This is an acceptable option, although if the Task Force investigated this option further, it would be important to gain more clarity regarding which principals within the RK&K team would actually be working with the Task Force.

#### **6. Ourston Roundabout Engineering**

**Strengths:** This firm clearly knows and understands the issues surrounding roundabouts.

**Weaknesses:** The Task Force has not agreed in favor of traffic circles. Other questions, e.g. the possibility of a streetcar line, would need to be resolved before investigating ideas for altering the shape of the intersection. Additionally, the issues of the Junction involve business development, as well as traffic, and Ourston does not demonstrate expertise with business issues.

**Assessment:** If at some point the Task Force or City decides in favor of a roundabout, Ourston would be a good firm to hire. But they are not a viable option at this point.

## Appendix VI: MCHPC Letter to State Highway Administration



### HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Isiah Leggett  
*County Executive*

Jef Fuller  
*Chairperson*

March 7, 2008

Mr. Mike Niederhauser  
State Highway Administration Office of Traffic Safety  
7491 Connelley Drive  
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Mr. Niederhauser:

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has been made aware of an Intersection Feasibility Study, prepared by Kittelson & Associates, Inc., reviewing the viability of installing various traffic circle alternatives at the intersection of Ethan Allen, Carroll, Sycamore and Grant avenues in Takoma Park. This intersection – and adjacent historic structures – are located within the Takoma Park Historic District. Under Chapter 24A-6 of the County historic preservation ordinance, the HPC must review and approve a Historic Area Work Permit for projects on public or private property that involve constructing, moving, demolishing or otherwise altering the exterior features of historic resources, or performing any grading, excavation or otherwise modifying, changing, or altering the environmental setting of a historic district.

It also bears noting that in addition to receiving protections as a locally designated historic district, portions of Takoma Park are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, this project would also likely be subject to the review of the Maryland Historical Trust, the State Historic Preservation Office, under the State compliance process (Article 83B Section 5-617 and 5-618 of the Maryland Code).

On behalf of the HPC, I would like to express reservations that the alternatives proposed in the Feasibility Study may adversely affect historic resources and/or the historic setting of the Takoma Park historic district. Proposals involving the demolition or relocation of historic resources are particularly troubling. The HPC is aware that this intersection as currently configured poses traffic and pedestrian safety concerns. We encourage consideration of alternatives that would achieve enhanced pedestrian safety and traffic flow without adversely affecting the historic streetscape and/or historic resources through the introduction of traffic circles. The HPC, and its staff, would welcome the opportunity to work with you and the City of Takoma Park in pursuing other options to make enhancements appropriate for the historic district. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me or Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, at 301.563.3400 or [scott.whipple@mncppc-mc.org](mailto:scott.whipple@mncppc-mc.org).

Sincerely yours,



Jef Fuller  
Chairperson

cc: Bruce Williams, Mayor, Takoma Park  
Douglas Rose, Chief Engineer for Operations, SHA  
Elizabeth Cole, Administrator, Review & Compliance, MHT  
Sabrina Baron, President, Historic Takoma, Inc.



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Historic Preservation Commission • 1109 Spring St, Ste 801 • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 • 301/563-3400 • 301/563-3412 FAX

## Appendix VII: Links

### *Roundabout – Arguments against*

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# **Takoma Junction Task Force**

**Report to the Takoma Park City Council • February 2012**