

Introduced by: Councilmember Grimes

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

Resolution 2013-68

Resolution Regarding Development Proposed for the Site of the Takoma Metro Station

- WHEREAS,** the City of Takoma Park deeply values the access to bus and rail transit provided by the Takoma Metro station on our border with Washington, D.C.; and
- WHEREAS,** the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is a public body whose responsibilities include providing exemplary transit services while maximizing transit accessibility, use, and transit-generated revenue; and
- WHEREAS,** any development of WMATA-owned land must maintain exemplary transit access and service while seeking maximum financial returns from development activities; and
- WHEREAS,** WMATA wishes to enter into an Amended Joint Development Agreement with EYA, which had previously proposed building a townhome development on the Takoma Metro station property; and
- WHEREAS,** as part of that Agreement, a design for development of the Takoma Metro station property has been prepared similar to the one presented to the Takoma Park City Council by a representative of EYA on July 22, 2013; and
- WHEREAS,** any design to be considered as part of a Joint Development Agreement should incorporate changes stemming from the findings of the traffic study and the comments of the community, and WMATA should work with the City of Takoma Park as a Local Jurisdiction before the Agreement is considered for WMATA board and board committee approval; and
- WHEREAS,** the City looks forward to the site's development because, done well, the project has enormous potential to be a signature project for the City of Takoma Park as much as for the District of Columbia; and
- WHEREAS,** the City looks forward to working in close coordination with WMATA, our Washington, D.C. neighbors, and EYA to fully realize the potential of the site; and
- WHEREAS,** the City acknowledges that the project needs to succeed financially for the developer and notes that this outcome need not be incompatible with the City's objectives; and
- WHEREAS,** in the final design, the access by pedestrians, bicyclists, handicapped patrons, and

bus riders should be easy, safe, comfortable and attractive and the transit facilities must be of an adequate capacity to accommodate the community's transit needs for decades; and

WHEREAS, any development of the property should be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods in Takoma Park, Maryland and Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, the Council held a public hearing on the Takoma Metro development design on October 7 and received testimony from 26 people and organizations with varied opinions on the proposed development; and

WHEREAS, the current design (attached) places the drop-off location for the Metro station's elevator entrance at a distance two to three times greater than the current location, posing a hardship for the elderly and persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the design places a loading dock in a location opening directly onto Eastern Avenue and in a configuration such that large vehicles, including waste-hauling and delivery trucks, must back across the sidewalk (which will be a primary pedestrian path to the transit facilities); and

WHEREAS, the design shows five stories along Eastern Avenue, with three stories set back just 23 feet from the street and two additional stories just eight to ten feet back from the front of the building, which would be a large mass directly across a narrow right of way from single family homes; and

WHEREAS, the R-5-A zoning of the portion of the proposed Takoma Metro development site on Eastern Ave. NW allows a maximum height of three (3) stories/forty (40) feet. The C-2-A zoning of the portion of the site set some distance back from Eastern Ave. NW allows a maximum height of fifty (50) feet. While a Planned Unit Development process could allow deviation from current zoning, neighborhood compatibility suggests that the building height should comply with zoning limits, with the step-up to more than three stories of the building set back to the boundary of the C-2-A zone; and

WHEREAS, the design places parking access lanes only nine feet from the adjoining multifamily residential property on Eastern Avenue, providing little buffer for the residents; and

WHEREAS, the design shows 178 parking spaces for the 212 apartment units which, at a .844 parking ratio is too high for a transit-oriented development, creating neighborhood traffic impact and risking sacrifice of transit-use revenue to driving; and the plan shows just 98 parking spaces for transit users despite significant community demand for parking, discouraging transit use by community residents who wish to drive to the Takoma station; and

WHEREAS, green space on the property is a valued amenity and should be recorded as a

permanent park of approximately the same size as the existing green space; and it is important that the green space be attractive and usable; and

WHEREAS, WMATA is conducting a traffic study for the area around the Takoma Metro property to provide information on the extent to which the development may impact streets and intersections in the area and on the measures that may be taken to address that impact, which the City will comment on at the appropriate time;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT

SECTION 1. The City of Takoma Park requests that WMATA’s staff and board consider the comments of the City at all stages, prior to all actions that would affect the Takoma Metro station property and transit facilities and the neighboring community and business district.

SECTION 2. The City asks WMATA and developer EYA to modify the design associated with the Takoma Amended Joint Development Agreement, to fully address concerns expressed here about the safety (loading-dock positioning), transit-accessibility (location of drop-off for persons with disabilities), neighborhood compatibility (setback from Eastern Avenue, NW; massing on, and step-back from, Eastern Avenue NW; building height within current zoning limits; and adequate buffer from neighboring building), and traffic and transit-use impact (number of residential parking spaces) of the Takoma project prior to a vote on the Amended Joint Development Agreement.

SECTION 3. The City appreciates WMATA’s policy that it “coordinates closely with Local Jurisdictions to implement its joint development program” and asks that such coordination, with the City of Takoma Park as a Local Jurisdiction, continue for the duration of the Takoma project, and that developer EYA, per WMATA’s requirement “to work with Local Jurisdictions throughout the joint development process,” maintain regular contact with the City, working in a timely way with the City regarding design changes, planning, and other project milestones.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City shall inform the Maryland Secretary of Transportation, the Montgomery County Executive, and the Montgomery County Council of the City’s comment to WMATA concerning the Takoma Amended Joint Development Agreement.

Adopted this 28th day of October, 2013.

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter, CMC
City Clerk