



Climate Action Coffee Questions for Takoma Park 2022 Candidates for Mayor and City Council

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These questions have been prepared by [Takoma Park Climate Action Coffee \(CAC\)](#) with assistance from its working groups (Pollinators, Takoma Stormwater Solutions, and Community Food Forest). CAC is a part of the Takoma Park Mobilization (TPM) and began meeting weekly starting in October 2019.

We are providing these questions to all candidates. When responses are received, they will be shared with our members and other Takoma Park organizations who may be interested, likely including TPM's email list of ca. 2,500.

We ask candidates to provide succinct answers addressing these questions.

Your Background and Experience; What Will You Bring?

B1. Can you describe the skills, training, and background you feel qualify you for the position you seek? Do you have budget experience? Project management? Do you have any background related to the environmental issues we will increasingly experience due to climate change, like heat, drought, fires, more severe storms and flooding, economic impacts on lower income communities, etc.? What practical experience do you bring to the table?

From school to entrepreneur going through my professional major, I have been president of a lot of organizations. I am currently an administrator of Takoma Park-based healthcare business, owner of a transportation company, and president of non-profit organization called 4D (Right and Duties for Sustainable Development). I am also a member of associations with a lot of budget experience. I was the hydroponic project manager at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) for years, worked at the UDC's Water Resources Institute as researcher in water and soil quality, worked at Vika Capital LLC and DOEE as internship in storm water best management practices projects in the District of Columbia (DC), and I worked in forestry in the Republic of Benin. I earned my Master's degrees in water resources management, history, geography, and environmental science. Environmental science is my passion.

Climate

Keeping in mind that Takoma Park has residents, businesses, and organizations with incredible talents and resources who are very informed on these topics and who are eager to be engaged:

C1. What will you do to lead the community to rapidly reduce Takoma Park's climate impact, both to reduce the City's carbon footprint, and to increase carbon drawdown and sequestration? How will you effectively coordinate climate and environmental adaptation and mitigation strategies across all City Departments?

To begin with, let's acknowledge that many of our Takoma Park residents are aware of environment issues and the impacts of climate change. Our city government has not yet tapped the expertise of our residents who have knowledge and skills that could help us become more resilient. If elected, I will help to guide our city through the processes needed to become more resilient. The impacts of climate change must be prioritized in all of the city's decisions. Once elected, I want to work with the council to understand that climate issue cannot be systematic and same action for all residents, then we need to take action according to resident's needs. Action for X at some places may not work for Y at some place some times. It will be selfish to think that one solution will be applicable to everyone everywhere. The solutions will vary according to residents, and all decisions must be equitable.

C2. What will you do to lead our community's resilience for the impacts already upon us – such as increased rainfall, increased heat, food insecurity – and affecting especially those in our community with limited access to resources?

We all know that environmental impact is not only a single action but also communities and world action. I believe we encourage the establishment of food pantry distribution efforts and that we promote home gardens and local farms. Another solution is to specifically assist our residents with finding job opportunities and take advantage. The city just came up with policy which they want residents to promote gardens and permeable surface in their property to get tax credit at the end of the year. The question is, how many permeable surface (parking, sidewalk, public space...) and gardens was the city able to build by itself? I believe action for environmental impact is not only about putting policy in place but making sure the policy is affordable and will work. I think the city should help residents build gardens and create permeable surfaces by providing residents with funds and tax incentives. One other good action is to make sure our residents have access to information about these types of opportunities. Other things, we cannot continue to leave out those residents who are in rental units and who are at the mercy of their landlords when there are floods and others concern.

C3. How would you actively involve concerned residents and experts who live and/or work in the City? What policy priorities and strategies will you recommend to encourage greater civic engagement and partnership with the City? Would you be willing to designate one or more staff person(s) with specific responsibility to help coordinate and work with community and resident-led adaptation and mitigation partnerships?

I believe this is one of the mains reason why I am running. We need to take a specific strong action on communication instead of limiting our workers and residents only on newsletters and website. We need to include councilmembers, staff, and residents in the process of finding and implementing solutions.

We need to to improve communication so that all residents can benefit from services and opportunities offered by the city, county, state, and the federal levels. If the city is able to detail police forces and others services by house to house to ticket residents vehicles and others, it should be able to details services to everyone house to find out their needs and help them to find solutions.

C4. Many jurisdictions consider Climate Action Plans to be, of necessity, living documents that continually must be revised to reflect changing outlooks and conditions. What will you do to bring Takoma Park's plan up to date?

Like I said at the beginning of this survey, climate action is not one single activity and it is not one person or community action but a continual series of actions at local, state, national and international levels. Once I am on the city council, I will work to make sure

our city has experienced experts that address up to date climate actions that will not cause great financial strain on our residents. I read CADMUS report and find this as a great tool to use to better plan climate action in the city.

Stormwater

Residents are experiencing the impacts of the growing amounts and intensity of rainfall during storms.

S1. Are you in favor of City funding for architectural & engineering studies for environmental services collaboration on private property?

This is imperative. My background and experience have shown me how important this is. The critical part is to make sure we offer affordable projects to the city and residents.

S2. How would you address flooding in the most vulnerable neighborhoods/watersheds like Maple Avenue and Circle Woods?

One of the best solutions might be to incorporate water retention best management practices for each property. Since this will come with a cost, the city has to assist property owners with the building of these water retention projects. Property owners should be encouraged to work together to make sure that they work together to find stormwater solutions that will benefit those at the top of a hill down to those at the bottom of a hill. The city can implement grant programs to support property owners. The city itself should start working on making the surfaces of all city-owned public areas permeable. This includes sidewalks and public parking lots.

S3. What would you do to address flooding that could be exacerbated by City projects?

The city needs to take responsibility, specifically financial responsibility, for any of its actions that exacerbate flooding. If the proper studies are done by a coalition of city government staff and local experts, the city can work more effectively to avoid flooding that can be caused by city projects.

If needed, the city will find grant funding sources. There are a lot programs that support those kind of projects that will help the city to help its residents.

S4. What are your thoughts regarding concerns that the Library is sited in a floodplain likely to experience increasingly severe flooding events as climate change accelerates?

I understand the need for improvements at the library. Need that I think we can handle differently. However, the millions of dollars in cost overruns on this renovation are hard to understand. It is especially troubling that the city chose to spend American Rescue Plan Act funds on the library project's cost overruns. This money was intended to go to people dealing with food insecurity, the cost of rent, and access to health care.

S5. Would you support a Citizens task force on stormwater to help the City prepare a strategic plan for stormwater management? Have you read our Takoma Stormwater Solutions' PROPOSED PLAN FOR DEVELOPING A STORMWATER RESILIENCE STRATEGIC PLAN IN TAKOMA PARK?¹ Can you comment on it?

I support a citizens task force on stormwater management to help the city develop a strategic plan. I believe Takoma Park stormwater solution proposal is a great tool for the city to use to address the environment impact of climate change.

S6. What is the City's role and responsibility to educate and incentivize residents to mitigate stormwater on their property?

The city needs to assist residents in practical ways to address stormwater on their property. I have a great example of this question. For three years I have been trying to build a permeable surface driveway on my property. I have been gone to the city many times to seek help, but nothing has been done. The city needs to actions to help residents when the residents come to their offices seeking assistance. The council members need to hold the city staff responsible for helping the residents. The city should take effective action to assist property owners as they try to mitigate the effects of stormwater. It is for the city to organize and conduct frequent survey to hear from residents.

Wildlife Corridor & Native Plants

Many of you have heard of Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park movement² and most likely the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club's effort to create and map a wildlife corridor of native plants from the Appalachian Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay. This corridor of native plants would provide a safe haven for insects, butterflies, and other creatures to ensure their survival and protect biodiversity because they are badly threatened by climate change.

¹ TSS Proposed Plan ... - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N6AE--z-2BpiLQkK-8xNkluPuekpN95_/view

² <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

W1. As a candidate do you believe that the City of Takoma Park should endorse this project as one of its climate change initiatives as other communities in Montgomery and Prince George's County have?

The creation of wildlife corridors is essential. Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, one of the founders of Panthera, used this concept in Central America and parts of Asia to create a wildlife corridor for jaguars and other large cats. The creation of wildlife reserves causes problems in the gene pools of plants and animals and reduces diversity, whereas wildlife corridors allow for freedom of movement of insects, birds, animals, and plants. I believe the city should support the project. However, a good project study need to be done on the project to take all other factors in consideration specially those who will be living around that corridor as human life have to be on top of all projects.

W3. Will you advocate for an updated Open Space Management Plan that gives priority to assessing and restoring public green spaces and parks with native trees and plants?

Yes, I will advocate for an updated Open Space Management Plan. This plan cannot be a static document. It must be reviewed so that necessary changes can be made to create and maintain healthy native trees and plants.

W4. Are you open to the idea of using Dorothy's Woods as an educational and demonstration area for sustainable urban habitat and watershed management.

Yes, I do support this plan for Dorothy's Woods. This would be a wonderful tool for both adults and children to use to learn how to create and maintain sustainable urban habitat. It would also be a terrific teaching tool for learning about water management. I have a lot of experience with best water management practices, and I would like to share what I know with the community.

W5. What else would you do to encourage the proliferation of native plants on public and private space in the City of Takoma Park?

I will make sure we have good policies in place that protect what we plant, especially in our public spaces. I will also encourage our city staff to write and share articles with residents, both on the city's website and the newsletter, about the benefits of using native plants on their properties. I want to encourage the owners of rental units to incorporate native plants and trees in the green spaces around their buildings.