



CAC Questions for Takoma Park 2022 Candidates for Mayor and City Council

Cindy Dyballa, Candidate for City Council, Ward 2

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?

I appreciate the work of CAC on these issues, and the opportunity to respond to these questions. I have extensive background and experience, both professional and volunteer, in climate, sustainability and stormwater issues, in budget, and in community volunteer efforts.

As a water and energy resources professional, I have decades of experience in water and energy efficiency policies and programs with state and federal agencies, as an independent consultant to nonprofit groups, and as a cooperative extension service agent working with community groups and volunteers (on programs from home weatherization to wetlands delineation).

Before serving as city council member ward 2, I co-chaired the city committee on the environment when the city's sustainability program and the first home energy challenge were first launched. I am a county-trained weed warrior, and was active with the group of residents working with the City to acquire Dorothy's Woods.

Climate

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?

As we move past the pandemic, I want to ramp up efforts to implement the adopted city climate action framework, which I coauthored. I want to continue our recent focus in city tree and gardening programs on native plants and on expanded replanting programs. Both these must be done with careful attention to equity and coordination with other city goals. Strengthening coordination across city departments is not unique to climate issues, and I want to explore an inter-departmental staff team for the city sustainability program. I will also rely on city committees such as emergency preparedness and the sustainable MD committee, and engage residents in programs that meet our climate goals.

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?

I'd continue practical steps for targeted city policies, with focus on those with limited access to resources. With ARPA funds, for example, we funded food security efforts of local nonprofits, and energy efficiency measures built into multifamily rehabilitation. As an early volunteer with the community center and (former) rec center teaching gardens, I recognize the importance of local food production. One city tool for reducing heat impacts is a stable tree canopy, expanded in target areas, a policy I've worked on. And I

want to encourage the city to target the worst flooding areas and work with groups of residents to develop joint solutions.

Impacts of increased rainfall

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 have a long history of engaging with groups of concerned residents in civic projects, and will continue to support active engagement of residents from all walks of life, not just residents with expertise in an issue. I plan to continue my demonstrated commitment to this. I want to continue and expand more varied city approaches, such as more targeted and varied program outreach techniques, neighborhood workshops with translators, community navigators to connect residents with our government, framing city issues in terms relevant to a variety of backgrounds, and continuing to recruit and appoint more people of color to city committees through our restructured city committee process.

City staff in several program areas already include staff whose responsibilities include coordination and work with residents and with city committees. While I would welcome a dedicated staff person for community and volunteer coordination and engagement, the question is are we willing to pay for this, and what will we cut back on to make this possible.

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?

The climate action plan and framework have not been reviewed since the pandemic began, and an update is a good idea. In practice some of our strategies have adjusted, such as closer work with state and county representatives on legislation that would support city climate goals, and use of federal ARPA dollars for multifamily buildings. I've been tracking both the new federal Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, which include funds that the City, and city residents might access to implement the plan. GHG emissions data is already updated periodically through the Council of Governments.

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?

Technical assistance to groups of residents for collaboration on private property would be useful, but pricey. Cost is a concern, as the city stormwater program has to date been self-funded, and I have not yet found federal dollars that would support such a program (I've been looking).

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

I would target city efforts to the intersection of our most severe flooding locations, those that most affect our public spaces (such as roads), and residents who are most vulnerable in the sense of most needing the financial and technical help.

S3. What would you do to address flooding that could be exacerbated by City projects? City projects must at a minimum meet county and state requirements for water management.

I support changes in the county and state requirements to incorporate impacts of climate change.

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?

The entire city is likely to experience more flooding events, and as a community we must address this. This issue specific to the library was discussed in city council work sessions. We reviewed the information on compliance with current requirements and possible capacity of the area to handle more water. The current design raises the floor one foot and incorporates other features to address water management.

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? Can you comment on it?

I have read the report, would like to discuss some of the proposals in it, and like the focus on pilot projects and public-private efforts, and how PES might apply to multifamily properties. I note that the city council appropriated \$150,000 to focus on private

property flooding issues the current city program does not address, not a full strategic plan, which as the report states would cost more. I was one of the council members who raised the option of a resident stormwater task force in the context of the LIDC contract. The council decided to move ahead with the project without a formal task force, in part because the project is not a full-blown strategic plan. I want to team up with the county flood management project to look for broader solutions.

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

The city's role generally is to educate residents on issues, and NPDES stormwater permits require some educational effort on stormwater. The current LIDC stormwater project will make more information available on private stormwater management techniques. Partial incentives are already in place, through the revised stormwater fees program. I am open to changing regulation as well.

Many of you have heard of Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park movement¹ 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.

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?

Yes, the city can endorse this. For me, the bigger question is what actions the city can commit to, to implement such an endorsement.

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?

I have advocated for an updated public space management plan, with a focus on best using the spaces we already have, and the city is in the process of doing this. This will address restoring our green spaces as well as other issues. The city already has a policy of planting native trees where possible, and I am open to formalizing that policy for other native plants. As with so many issues, my bigger concerns are integrating equity concerns and the budget implications.

¹ <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

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.

As one of the group of residents who worked to acquire the Woods, yes, I am and have been open to this idea. Some constraints are the city's restrictive preservation covenant, the city budget, and staff capacity to adequately support volunteer projects. One concern I have is access for target audience(s), particularly when equity concerns are factored in. As with many projects, working this out requires flexibility in program design and partnerships with others, including the neighbors to the Woods.

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

To start, we can formalize the existing policy of planting native plants in city parks and public spaces where possible, continue city sponsored native tree plantings, and continue cooperation with city staff to bring more volunteers to parks to help with the work. I appreciate the residents who are providing information to residents about native plants on private spaces.

Food Forests

FF1. Food Forests and/or Foragers Gardens (see local example in Bowie, MD - <https://www.forested.us/>) are a way to address multiple issues: 1) they improve food security and increase food sovereignty, especially for low income families; 2) they increase biodiversity; 3) they help tackle stormwater problems; and 4) they both build resilience to and mitigate the climate crisis, especially with respect to cooling. Are you willing to advocate for the City to explore what it could do to support more food forests throughout the City, both on public property, as well as to provide education and assistance to private property owners who may like to establish food forests?

Yes, I support further exploring how the city can support community gardens, foragers gardens and food forests, identify suitable locations, and support groups already working to implement these concepts in our community. The city public space plan

provides a framework for weighing these uses with other uses of suitable public locations.

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