



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

A. J. Campbell, Candidate for City Council, Ward 5

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 hold a master's in Public Administration and Information Systems. One of the first international agreements I helped negotiate was the United Nations Basel Convention on Recycling, and the second was the United Nations Economic Committee on Europe Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution Agreement. I was a lead negotiator on the Liability Protocol portion of the Basel Convention. Various clients of mine have had an environmental focus; for example, I worked with the Audubon Naturalist Society in Washington for my marketing small business that I ran out of my home in Takoma Park.

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 reduce Takoma Park's climate impact rapidly, 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?

I want to designate a public work to exclusively work with multifamily buildings to add solar panels to their parking lots and charging stations to their parking spaces to remove the barrier to electric car adoption. I would continue the city tree planting promotion and offer a 10% credit on property tax bills for any homeowner who can demonstrate movement from fossil to renewable fuels through durable goods purchase or systems installation.

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?

The City should be funding local nonprofits delivering food like Small Things Matter, so that the organization can spend less time fundraising and more time doing what they do best, getting food from shops to fridges.

Increased heat can be combatted most effectively by replacing many cut or fallen trees with two replacements. I would also limit the trees that could be planted to favor oak vs. ornamental trees like a cherry tree. The oak has a longer life span and is a more shade-producing, water-absorbing tree.

Stormwater management is a big issue both city-wide and between properties. I think we will see the most damage caused on private property, so I suggest a mechanism through which I could file against my neighbor if there is a stormwater issue, and the city would help resolve it. So that neighbors can move forward together to find solutions with the city's expertise and guidance.

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 the community and resident-led adaptation and mitigation partnerships?

It is no secret that environmentally active residents have been shut out of Maple ave. The dynamic between activists and staff is even more important now that we are in a post-wackadoodle world. I would like a dedicated staffer and a regular 360 review of the city's interaction with residents.

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?

I would like to see a real comprehensive dynamic action plan created, but sadly, the city plans tend to be unidimensional and discarded as soon as they are created. We can review plans, but I want the plans to reflect actual tactical goals, not just lofty ones with no means to attain them.

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?

I would favor the city managing the process and receiving the results to be shared with both parties, but I think the cost burden should be shared with the homeowners.

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

I would listen to people who know more than I do.

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

I would move the police department out of its current residence and replace it with a recreation space that, if flooded, would not destroy the police department headquarters. The library could easily be moved to the other side of the community center, allowing that space to be used for water diversion.

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 want to move the library build site to the other side of the community center or on to the WAU site.

S5. Would you support a Citizen's 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?

Yes.

2 Can you comment on it?

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

If TSS wants to be a strategic partner with Takoma Park; it should become a full-fledged nonprofit with staff, a governing board, and a structure. Then the city should draft a standard ongoing consulting agreement. Right now, the city is actively avoidant any conversation with people and organizations that it is not paying. It is partly due to the eroded relationship and the city's preference for dealing with professional consultants.

While the underlying reason for this would take the collective powers of Freud, Young, and Marx, I can deduce that the city is seeking liability mitigation. The city lowers its liability by putting many decisions on consulting professionals. If the City is sued because it made a mistake and caused harm, the defense will be that it relied on this consulting group for this action.

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

As I stated before, the city has a vital role in stormwater mitigation across property lines. I don't think the city will have to do much to incentivize; most property owners know the damage that can be caused by failing to act. The city must develop a way that downstream property owners can constructively engage with upstream water generators to come to a mutually beneficial arrangement to solve the runoff issue. This may take several forms, including expert independent advice and reminders about compliance with existing regulations.

Wildlife Corridor & Native Plants

Many of you have heard of Doug Tallamy's [Homegrown National Park](#) movement 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, but my concern is cost and our ability to implement the plan.

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?

My concern about the Plans, as we currently do them, is that they tend to be an exercise with the consultants that eventually collect dust in a nice three-ring binder. I am in favor of assessing and restoring public green spaces.

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.

I am. I would love to see a nature center there.

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

We would need to elevate the role of the city's Gardner and promote plant giveaways, education programs, and festivals. We could encourage the library staff and arts and humanities staff to coordinate programming during spring and fall planting.

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.

Instructions

Please enter your replies to each question in this document and send the completed document to pbogdonoff@gmail.com . Thank you!