



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

Mimi Diez, Candidate for City Council, Ward 3

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?

I am so excited to receive this questionnaire from the Climate Action Coffee and its working groups, as climate resiliency is what I do for a living. I have committed my career to working on issues addressing climate change challenges in city-like environments. In the spirit of transparency, the general public should know that it is not clear whether Randy Gibson, a Climate Action Coffee member and my ward 3 opponent, contributed to developing these

questions. Any endorsement by the Climate Action Coffee or the Takoma Stormwater Solutions taskforce to its current members running for city council would be seen as inappropriate.

I have almost 19 years experience in managing and executing corporate responsibility and change management strategies in large, complex organizations such as the EPA, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and now the Architect of the Capitol. I have my bachelors in anthropology and a masters in Global Environmental Policy; I am currently pursuing a degree in environmental engineering. I got my start in my career working on environmental justice issues and transitioned into environmental social responsibility and governance. I've always been housed in the construction & facilities operations realm and implement programs that reduce the environmental impact through human behavior in the built environment. I have extensive knowledge on stormwater management policy, practices and construction; waste management project development; sustainable supply chain management; climate resiliency projects; and balancing sustainability and historic preservation.

Some of my key career accomplishments are:

- I developed the largest sustainable cleaning contract for the federal government
- I created knowledge sharing platforms between Universities in Iceland and Guatemala to scale up geothermal projects.
- I published a green building design manual for loan officers in Latin America in English and Spanish
- I presented to the United Nations in New York and Paris on high performance buildings best practices
- I'm the recipient for 4 Architect's Honor Awards including creating the agency's first affinity group.

Do you have budget experience?

Yes, I've managed million-dollar organizational budgets for the federal government and have created contracts that generate revenue for sustainability projects. I also have a super power of doing a lot, with less.

Project management?

Yes, I am a six sigma green belt which is all about process improvements and project management. A good chunk of my career has been dedicated to implementing sustainability programs into the built environment, construction projects, setting sustainability standards and policies and creating sustainability goals. This requires engaging with stakeholders, end users, and juggling many moving parts on a tight deadline. I don't get flustered on projects that take years to complete and am patient with taking them to the finish line.

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?

Yes, not only do I have the technical knowledge in adapting and mitigating the impact of climate change, but my passion is outreach and engagement and getting all voices and ideas heard to make cultural change within city-like environments. The Takoma Park community needs more representation from our under-represented residents who feel the impact of climate change every day.

## 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?

The city has already developed a sustainability action plan and recommendations to get the city on track with their goals. As a council member, I would assist in creating policies and standards so that sustainability is an ingredient that is "baked into" how we operate and implement city projects and is not a stand-alone project that is sprinkled on like a garnish. I would ensure that we keep pressure on attracting and retaining subject matter experts and creating funding mechanisms to assist with the action plan that would allow the city to achieve its goals.

I would help the city identify federal resources and funding that can help Takoma Park envision a future with more renewable energy; electrification of city fleet and providing more EV charging stations for personal vehicles; food forests; safe infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation; turning our waste into revenue; focus community engagement on communities historically under-represented; and equity-focused training to help the city reach its climate resiliency 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?

We live in a water-rich region, and extreme weather events are occurring in rapid succession. If elected I would look for work towards identifying opportunities to take our storm water management practices and infrastructure to the next level and equip our city employees with the better resources. One of my personal passions is urban food forests, and I would welcome discussions with the community and city on how to create opportunities for urban agriculture for residents and local restaurants. However my personal interests may not be what our city residents want. I look towards having more meaningful interactions with the city and residents on what would be most useful to them.

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?

We live in such a unique city where our residents are hyper engaged in finding solutions for future generations. I've been fortunate to participate in the Takoma Safe Streets committee and hope that our city can continue to create new committees or communities of practice and have meaningful actions towards our shared goals. Communication and feedback is already a challenge in this city. We must meet the people where they are, and many residents are balancing a lot on their personal and professional plate making any type of civic engagement a challenge. We still have work to do in engaging communities under-represented in the planning process. We need new approaches to connect and build upon their needs that are culturally relevant. I would be open to coming up with outreach and engagement strategies for a more vibrant participation from all members of our community regarding climate resiliency and what would be most meaningful for them.

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?

As a city council we should be ensuring that there is sufficient budget to attract and retain talent to continue working on the city's sustainability action plan. City Council should also serve as governance to review quarterly goals and metrics and provide resources as needed so to ensure the city is meeting or exceeding its goals.

## 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 don't have enough information to determine the advantages or disadvantages of providing such services for private property. If the city is unable to provide services than this is something to engage the county on as our taxes are going to similar services.

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

Without background information or data to properly answer what the current conditions are like in those areas, I can't advise on any strategies that would remedy this. Like I mentioned before, our current stormwater management practices may need to adapt to the changing environment. I would welcome conversations that would future plan our city from flooding and reduce damage to personal or city owned property.

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

Without background information or data I can't speak to what city projects you're referring to. In my career, environmental and energy considerations are baked into the design of every project. If there are city construction projects that do not have environmental safeguards, then I would welcome discussions on how to properly require this. Typically, construction projects managed by the state of Maryland already have environmental and stormwater requirements and are subject to code and would require QAQC and inspections to ensure these measures are being followed. This is usually done by environmental engineers and technicians, not by city council members. Again, I'm open to learning more about what opportunities there are at addressing flooding in our city.

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 don't have enough information or data to speak to this claim. I would welcome discussions on the construction and commissioning of this building and ensuring that the construction follows the Takoma Park Sustainability Action Plan.

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?*<sup>1</sup> Can you comment on it?

I don't have as much background information into the impetus of this document, the strategic vision, or goals. It is also not clear to me if this document was prepared by a consultant, or has been approved by the city, or the level of stakeholder engagement from Wards 1-6 into this plan.

As mentioned before, as a member of the Climate Action Coffee and the Takoma Stormwater Solutions taskforce, any endorsement to Randy Gibson would be seen as inappropriate as he has probably had some input into the creation of this document.

Regardless, I was happy to see such a plan, because I recently created a contract for my federal agency on Capitol Hill to have a hydrology study awarded to map the flow of water throughout the complex, and recommendations on how Capitol Hill can adapt and mitigate those issues. I have 8 years experience in managing large government contracts and agree with the need of understanding Takoma's geohydrology.

While I believe that having civic engagement is important, I don't have enough information on whether the Takoma Stormwater Solutions subcommittee or Climate Action Coffee are subject matter experts on managing procurement contracts or projects on issues such as stormwater resiliency which requires hydrology studies, modeling, and scientific projection as noted in this proposed plan. For example, on page 18, it sounds like the TSS and CAC want to serve as a governance wing to city procurement contracts related to stormwater management. Again, I'm not clear whether TSS or CAC are subject matter experts on managing such city contracts. I look forward to having further discussions on this as I think this working group has put feet on the ground in understanding the opportunities and potential solutions that the city and its residents can achieve in partnership.

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<sup>1</sup> TSS Proposed Plan ... - [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N6AE--z-2BpiLQkK-8xNkluPuekpN95\\_/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N6AE--z-2BpiLQkK-8xNkluPuekpN95_/view)

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

I think our role is not to reinvent the wheel and look to Montgomery County and DC for possible best practices or resources in terms of developing financial and technical incentives for stormwater management.

## Wildlife Corridor & Native Plants

Many of you have heard of Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park movement<sup>2</sup> 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

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

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 don't have enough information about the advantages or disadvantages of using this particular site as an educational and demonstration site.

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 would use all the tools the city has available to them to create a standard for native plants or xeriscaping throughout Takoma Park.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>