

associations and civic groups; as were officials from City, County and State transit and public works departments and Public Safety departments.

It is also misleading to list only the opportunity costs of spending money on the New Hampshire charrette, and to ignore the opportunity costs of not doing so. Such silence serves to trivialize the very real costs—economic, cultural and human—of assenting to the status quo. People are killed on New Hampshire, regularly, precisely because of its lack of walkable, pedestrian-oriented design features.

Furthermore, the corridor's present speed-way orientation (and the long list of other design flaws that were exhaustively covered during the charrette) make the area's shops and cultural centers feel both inaccessible and unsafe. Many of these places would be considered gems of the community were it not for the strangling effect of New Hampshire Avenue itself.

The design concept drawn up by Stuart Sirota and his team holds the potential, but not of course the certainty, that over time these flaws can be corrected. At the heart of this new concept is the conversion of New Hampshire into a Multi-way boulevard (see below).

Fortunately, and precisely because the talented Mr. Sirota and his team (dismissed as "a bunch of white guys" by Mr. Kelly) were sensitive to specificities of place, they did not present us with an over-designed, superficially impressive, but ultimately generic and Disney-fied blueprint.

Instead, they did what practical-minded designers should have done: they defined a new street grid with smaller blocks and better connections; they defined key sites for future squares and plazas; they indicated where environmental restoration would give us the biggest bang for the buck. They pointed out where and how public markets could best be worked into the urban fabric so that the small and the local (right down to the micro-business scale) can be incorporated into a rejuvenated Takoma Park.

And this is just a small part of what this months-long process produced. A much more complete description (including write-ups of public meetings, and sketches of the new boulevard concept) is available at <http://takomaparkmd.gov/gateway/>.

One final point. Building a city is, in the first place, a political process. Politics means participation, enthusiasm, dialogue, even argument. But when it comes to re-building a city, the most important political quality is the ability to re-imagine what is there.

Outsiders—as we learn once again from Roberta Gratz—are often needed to jump-start this process of re-imagining because "long-time residents are often die-hard skeptics. They see things as they are without fresh vision of what can be."

But once the process of positive change has been given a good start—as in our case it has—it can be taken forward, and actually get built, only by the heart and labor of those who live and work in that city. In Takoma Park, that means all our incredible diversity of local talent, all our fantastic wealth of ethnicities and belief systems; yes, and even some of us 'white guys,' need to roll up our sleeves and get down to it.

— Paul Grenier

*The author works on a contractual basis for the City of Takoma Park planning department. The views expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the City of Takoma Park.*

## What do you think?

Send letters to  
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# Local activists meet with Van Hollen, urge impeachment of President

BY THOMAS NEPHEW

On the morning of Thursday, September 20, over two dozen impeachment supporters from Takoma Park, Garrett Park, and elsewhere in Maryland's 8th Congressional District crowded into a Longworth House Office Building conference room for a discussion with Rep. Chris Van Hollen.

State Senator and constitutional expert Jamie Raskin and Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter were among the delegates, who also included Lisa Moscatiello, myself, and Hank Prensky from Takoma Park, Warren Kornberg and Jim Agenbroad from Garrett Park, and Alan McConnell from Silver Spring, to name but a few.

Rep. Van Hollen was presented with the Takoma Park City Council impeachment resolution, prepared statements by several of the delegates, books about impeachment -- and a small box of "Impeachmints" candy bought at "Now and Then."

What came next was a town hall meeting on Capitol Hill. In prepared statements by Lisa Moscatiello and others, as well as in frank discussion, we told Rep. Van Hollen that impeachment must be tried and can succeed. While we regret he doesn't agree with us (yet!) we're encouraged by the fact that he really listened to us at length -- the meeting was scheduled to last just half an hour, but went to nearly twice as long -- and that he promised to keep talking with us.

Van Hollen said he agreed on the merits of the impeachable issues Lisa and others raised; but between the courts and congressional oversight, he said, these issues were being addressed. He didn't agree that Congress had been "silenced," and argued a failed, "botched" impeachment attempt would be worse than none at all.

I disagree. Congressional "oversight" has amounted to political theater: stern talk and cheap subpoenas the White House refuses to honor. There have been departures from the administration -- but those don't change its underlying lawlessness and deceit.

Meanwhile, which is worse for the rule of law: a prosecutor who falls short of convicting criminal gang members with buddies in the jury -- or one who gives up in advance and refuses to bring cases to trial? Let the American people see the charges argued; let them see who defends Bush -- and who defends the Constitution.

Van Hollen -- who chairs the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) -- claimed impeachment appeals to the "base," not the general electorate. As we replied, 54 percent of Americans supported Cheney's impeachment in a recent poll, with support for Bush's impeachment not far behind.

Garrett Park's Warren Kornberg said Van Hollen was staking everything on the outcome of the next election. In a tense exchange, Hank Prensky asked whether Van Hollen was waiting for more co-sponsors of H.Res.333, Kucinich's bill calling for Cheney's impeachment; Van Hollen said he resented that. Garrett Park's David Haley said independent voters like him would react if they see

Congress has let Bush run off with the Constitution.

It was an extraordinary meeting. In her remarks, Mayor Porter said grassroots impeachment support was one of the biggest movements she's seen in Takoma Park. And it's spreading: Garrett Park residents have forced a referendum on the issue in upcoming city elections. The Montgomery County Council may consider an impeachment resolution as well.

I think Congress will reach a tipping point for impeachment—and we got closer on September 20. It will come for Congressman Van Hollen, I hope, when he reflects less on politics, and more on his real duties. His claim that the current Congress is already an effective check on Bush and Cheney is difficult to accept.

The shameful "Protect America Act" cave-in on warrantless surveillance in August actually has us going backwards on one of

the items in the Takoma Park impeachment resolution. Congress proved more willing to censure MoveOn for speech about a disastrous war than to punish Bush or Cheney about deceiving us about that war in the first place. (Van Hollen supported neither measure.)

At minimum, Congress should lay impeachment groundwork by demanding a special prosecutor for the still-unresolved issues in Alberto Gonzales' Justice Department -- as a condition for the approval of his successor.

To extend my own remarks at the meeting, Van Hollen's deepest obligation isn't to Speaker Pelosi, the DCCC, or the Democratic Party; it isn't even to pass good legislation or end the Iraq war. It is in his oath of office: "to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies." Impeachment can't be swept "off the table" on a political whim; it's a fundamental obligation when we face constitutional wrongs that subvert the structure of government or undermine the Constitution itself.

If Congress doesn't impeach a President who lied about war, approved torture, and conducted illegal warrantless surveillance, it will become an accomplice to its own irrelevance. It will assist the stealthy revision of our Constitution to one beyond recognition, meaning merely whatever a President says it means. And it will reduce our best means of opposing that -- impeachment -- to a dead letter, used only to sanction narrow infractions rather than systematic lawlessness.

Call 202-225-5341, and urge Congressman Van Hollen to lead the country and support the impeachment of George Bush and Richard Cheney. Urge him to start by co-sponsoring H.Res. 333, the resolution calling for Cheney's impeachment. The Constitution you save may be your own.

*Thomas Nephew is a Takoma Park resident. He is the mind behind the Newsrack blog: <http://pages.prodigy.net/thomasn528/blog/newsrackblog.html>*

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