

Date: 14 July 2016

Subject: Testimony to County Council Regarding Affordable Housing in Downtown Columbia

The Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) asks why do we have after eleven years no Affordable Housing in Downtown Columbia? We all should be ashamed. We have 817 units having been completed so why not one unit of Affordable Housing? Do we really care about our most valuable commodity? Yes – I am speaking about our teachers, policeman, fireman, EMS and hospital personnel, etc. Why is the County partnering with Howard Hughes when they are requesting only 10 percent Affordable Housing allocation when the going rate throughout the County is 15 percent?

Now there are two proposals before the Council, 8 Bills, 3 Resolutions; consisting of a total of 245 pages, the Development Rights Agreement and the Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and at least 33 documents on the County website applicable to these proposals. We have ZRA-170, the County's plan and ZRA-162, Councilwomen Jen Terrasa's plan. After looking at these ZRA's it is inexplicable to us why ZRA-170 should be adopted as it calls for an additional 900 units plus 160 units at the Flier building than the designated 5500 as stated in Plan Howard 2030. Plan Howard 2030 is supposed to be the vision of Howard County. It should not be amended to allow a massive increase in density. Our infrastructure can simply not handle it and infrastructure is not just roads and schools. It is police, fire EMS and the hospital! Ideally the TIF should stand for "Total Infrastructure Funding." This would include not just the roads and parking but the aforementioned quality of life issues. Does anyone really care about these issues? Some of the TIF money should go to these most important areas. Can the Council unequivocally state that if either one of these plans are approved are we fully prepared? In 2014 we had over 183,000, 911 calls as stated in the Annual Police Report. This means that every 1.63 citizens in our County are calling 911. Wow! The hospital 2015 statistics on their website shows there were as follows:

- HCGH provided services to more than 220,000 people.
- Evaluated and treated 75,880 patients in the Emergency Rooms.
- Admitted to or observed in the hospital 23,309 patients.
- Performed 11,962 surgeries; of these, 3,686 were performed in the hospital and 8,276 were performed as outpatient procedures.
- Delivered 3,596 babies.
- Treated 68,638 patients with a wide variety of outpatient services (including laboratory / excluding outpatient surgery).
- Provided outreach and wellness programs to more than 40,000 people.

Can we afford such an increase in growth, especially regarding health care? We have only one hospital in the County and with Laurel Regional full service closing in 2018 will the hospital be able to handle the increasing emergencies and need for more inpatient beds? Never mind the projected growth of the County by 2030 will explode by 100,000 additional residents. The sad thing is that no matter that HCCA recommended motions to put quality of life measurements in the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance during the APFO Task Force they failed to pass. Whichever ZRA is passed it will have a lasting effect on us all because the developer gets a free ride and apparently the County are not concerned even though the quality of life categories are documented in PlanHoward2030 found in Chapter 8 - Public Facilities and Services.

Yes – the approval of ZRA-170 would be a major mistake because the infrastructure is not in place. Please use your vision and think what is best for the county and your constituents. How much more can we build without having a real strategic plan to ensure sanity. This is not only Downtown Columbia but all compass points in our County. Under the circumstances by you passing ZRA-162 this makes the most sense. Is it possible you will surprise us? I seriously doubt it. How about surprising us all!

We would like to testify specifically on some of the Bills that comprise the ZRA's but unfortunately time will not permit which is unfortunate. This is why HCCA has been trying to promote the need for more time for such a complex proposed development. We readily saw the complexity with the many questions the Council asked at their Work Session. Because of not allowing enough time to digest all the parts it looks like this is indeed a "done deal." To show us this is not a "done deal" then please listen and act as the majority of your constituents; especially the Banneker residents are dismayed about the reality of the future. They do not want to be immersed into the proposed number of additional residents nor have units over the firehouse. Just leave them alone!

Is this strictly all about cents? We sincerely hope that the formula is more than just cents. Hopefully sense will prevail so at the end we do not have utter nonsense. We ask the Council to make a wise decision to protect the future of not only Downtown Columbia but throughout the County and give us a picture we can all be proud.

Thank You,

Stu Kohn
HCCA, President