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From: Jervis Dorton

To: Columbia Flier <hcletters@trnc.com>

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Subject: Two Columbias ?

Listening to testimony at the Special Public Hearing last week on competing Council Bills concerning Affordable Housing and Tax Increment Financing (TIF), I was struck that we now have two Columbias.

The testimonies I heard for an hour, with one exception, were all in favor of the Council Bills that concentrate Affordable Housing in three locations on County property versus Howard Hughes and Council Resolutions for Tax Increment Financing that relieves them of the usual developer's obligation for the infrastructure financing in their development of The Crescent downtown. Beyond the usual roads and utilities, the proposed TIF offers the prospect of a new Library, an Arts Center, an Elementary School, a Fire Station, a Transit Center and a Parking Garage. The promise of this legislation obviously is too seductive and is responsible for misplaced enthusiasm and idealism. Let the good times roll !

Oakland Mills is overwhelmed by Affordable Housing and a lack of disposable income to support a viable Village Center. A lot has been vacant for 12 years following the demise of the gas station, 5 supermarkets have come and gone and small retailers continue to struggle. TIF was really created to stimulate investment in places, such as this, where the prospects for redevelopment are otherwise little or none. Oakland Mills is closer to The Mall and Lakefront than The Crescent. With the addition of a new bridge, Downtown is only a 10 minute walk or 4 minute ride away and its existing affordable housing would satisfy much of Downtown's demands and offer hope and opportunities to Village Center residents and businesses.

Jervis Dorton