



Howard County Citizens Association

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The Voice Of The People of Howard County

1 Feb 2018

Jervis Dorton
5963 Gales Lane
Columbia, MD

Re: PB 435 Downtown Columbia Lakefront Core

Chairperson Engelke and Planning Board Members

I am here tonight testifying and as authorized on behalf of the Howard County Citizens, HCCA. I have read the documents and contend that this FDP for the Downtown Lakefront Core does not satisfy the Planning Board Review and Approval Criteria as follows:

The Neighborhood Design Guidelines submitted are not in accordance with the 2010 Downtown Columbia Plan. For example: on page 31 - The Maximum Building Height Plan limits the height to 9 stories, but this petition proposes to raise this to 15 stories. Under the New Town Zoning Section 125, FDP submission requirements on page 240 paragraph b “limited change in height is allowed based on compatibility and height of nearby existing or planned development.” The proposed change in height from nine to fifteen stories is a 66% change and can in no way be considered a “limited change”. It is a SUBSTANTIAL change. Therefore 15 stories violate the Downtown Columbia Plan.

Note also that the word “compatible” in planning language does not mean that increasing height to match nearby existing buildings is desirable. In fact the opposite applies in this case. The 10-story Merrill Lynch and the 9-story Little Patuxent Square Building Tenants enjoy lake views that will be obstructed by the 15-story buildings proposed. The 9-story limit on the Lakefront Core is commensurate with good planning practices to maximize lake views from all properties surrounding the Lake Front Core.

Also, I must point out that the HRD’s cover letter, page 16 second and last paragraphs are exceptionally misleading. In the Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines for the Lakefront Neighborhood maximum heights are stipulated on page 33 as 9 stories. Other neighborhood maximum heights are capped at 7, 9, 15, and 20 stories. The Zoning Regulations allow “limited change” to the lower maximum heights: not that changes to 20 stories are allowed by right in all neighborhoods which is what the letter infers.

Another violation of the Downtown Columbia Plan page 36, Street Framework Diagram shows the N-S leg of Wincopin Circle terminated at the existing traffic circle in front of the Teachers Building. The proposed FDP extends Wincopin Circle south to Whole Foods. Not only is this a violation, but it destroys The Hug sculpture vest pocket park which under New Town Zoning Section 125 page 241 paragraph n should be considered a location of historic and cultural significance being contiguous with CA's Lakefront Fountain Plaza. It also creates another street crossing, adding another impediment discouraging rather than encouraging pedestrian access to the lake. This is contrary to the Neighborhood Design Guidelines Vision for the Lakefront Core, page 5, to enhance connectivity between the Lakefront, The Mall, and other downtown destinations.

Another concern is the relocation of the Lakefront Connector 100 feet further south than on the Downtown Columbia Plan Primary Amenity Framework Diagram. This no longer places the Connector on the access of The Mall entrance, consequently the terraced plaza featured in the Downtown Columbia Plan page 10 is compromised irrevocably.

Turning to page 9, paragraph J of the Technical Staff Report the development is NOT adequately served by public facilities. No parking spaces are provided for the general public visiting the lakefront just to enjoy the open space amenities. Neither is there any parking for those attending the many CA lakefront events. At least a reciprocal easement agreement between Howard Hughes Corporation, Whole Foods, and CA should be included with this petition to secure the right for CA and the public to use on-grade and garage parking.

Concerning the Planning Board's Review Criteria, the petition does not satisfy the following criteria in the Technical Staff Report page 6 paragraph A. It does not conform to the Downtown Columbia Plan, specifically the Street and Block Plan the Maximum Building Height Plan, the Street Framework Diagram, and the Primary Amenity Space Diagram. The Neighborhood Specific Design Guidelines referred to do NOT conform to the Downtown-wide Design Guidelines.

Consequently, I urge this Planning Board to only Approve with Conditions this petition: conditions that require submission of the plan and criteria revisions I have presented here.

Thank you for your attention.

Jervis Dorton
HCCA Board Director
Rouse Company employee 33 years
Royal Institute of British Architects Charter Member