



Town Center Community Association

January 11, 2022

To: Howard County Planning Board and Design Advisory Panel

RE: Plan No. 22-02 Lakefront Neighborhood FDP and 5565 Sterrett Place

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The Board of the **Town Center Community Association (TCCA)** reviewed the proposed changes to the Lakefront Neighborhood FDP being presented to the Design Advisory Panel on January 12 and listened in to the pre-submission meeting for 5565 Sterrett Place on January 10. We are excited that the development of Downtown Columbia is continuing and that the Howard Hughes Corporation is working with the public and its many partners to continue to make Columbia “**the place to live, work and play.**”

The TCCA Board has been deeply involved in the redevelopment of Downtown Columbia from the first charrette in 2005, through the adoption of the 2010 General Plan and various Zoning Regulation Amendments, the completion of Downtown-wide Design Guidelines, and the completion of the Downtown Final Development Plan (2014).

We have many questions about the areas highlighted in pink including entire map sections, e.g., pages 13 and 15 of the **Plan No. 22-02 Lakefront Neighborhood FDP.**

We understand that the “**Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines**” fully replace the Downtown-wide Design Guidelines and “...are comprehensive and complete and serve as the guide for the design and development of Lakefront Neighborhood.” We would like you to consider our following specific comments and questions as these proposed amendments work their way through the Planning and Zoning Process:

1. **Building Heights, Site Locations and Uses:** we have been opposed to building heights exceeding fifteen stories in the Lakefront Core to not overwhelm the openness and atmosphere of the lakefront. It looks like it is proposed to allow to build to thirteen stories on page 20 but not increase overall height beyond 145’. As noted in the pre-submission meeting of January 10, the lower height of residential versus office space allows for more floors but the same height. Do we also assume this will be done with more below grade parking and levels as noted on page 24, Parking Section, with the addition of the word “below”?
 - a. With three new residential buildings at Sterrett Place will there be enough parking for residents, visitors, workers, and the general public? There is not any *designated public parking* in Town Center per se (Downtown, North or Central) and, as more development expands there may need to be more parking.

What about designated public parking in other locations as Lakefront Core development continues?

- b. Will any of the three residential buildings at Sterrett be closer to Lake Kittamaquandi than other residential projects? Are there any sight lines to the Lake from the residential units? Do the site plans for all these buildings take into consideration the sights lines/views from the condominiums **Lakeside at Town Center**? If sight lines are going to be 100% blocked, is there anything that can be done with the exterior design of the new building that would reflect more light to those facing **Lakeside at Town Center**?
 - c. We applaud that there is more open space with the Sterrett Place project. This will make the North Sterrett Development pleasing to all residents, visitors, workers, and the public. Why was there a shift from less office space to more residential in the Sterrett Project?
 - d. Is the shift of 100,000 SQF+ less office space with the Sterrett project a function of declining office occupancies? What is the current and projected rental occupancy of Town Center office space?
2. **Trail Path to Water's Edge Community**: is the proposed trail pathway to the Water's Edge community over Columbia Association or County land (noted on page 31 map)? Community input from Water's Edge is needed and/or easements.
 3. **Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines**: the changes seem a little broad with the use of the word "should" as it allows the master developer broad interpretation when submitting an FDP or SDP to the County for approval. The word "shall" may be more appropriate in certain sections as it identifies mandated criteria as you explain in the definition on page 3.
 4. **Walkability, Traffic and Parking**: it is noted on page 5 to "Strengthen Wincopin as a major pedestrian-oriented street connecting the north and south areas of Lakefront to each other as well as linking Downtown to the Lakefront Neighborhood as the civic core of Columbia."
 - a. Given these proposed changes, are additional parking areas being contemplated for Downtown visitors, residents, and workers? Will the three primary "amenity space" corridors noted on page 6 be all "at grade?" Are any pedestrian bridges being contemplated in the redevelopment assuming the existing pedestrian bridge is being demolished? With the new

street alignments noted on pages 30 and 31, and a proposed third interchange, do you anticipate a significant traffic bottleneck in and around this core lakefront area?

- b. Will there be a traffic bottleneck with the street redesign of “Road A” as noted on pages 15 and 19 of the documents? We are pleased that a second green space was added but the spaces front the Merriweather Lakehouse and there is not a direct connection through to the Lake pathway system. Will these two green spaces and the “Wincopin Extension” have the direct impact of bottlenecking traffic?
 - c. Similar to the point raised in (b) above, if the major East/West connection for pedestrians between the mall and Lakefront is at Sterrett Place over Little Patuxent Parkway (LPP) does the “chopped up green space” create islands that just become traffic bottlenecks especially since the pedestrian bridge over LPP is set to be demolished. These areas need greater focus and should not be minimized.
5. **Demographic, Ownership and Target Market:** the 5565 Sterrett Place project is designed to be 100% rental units and not condominiums. It was mentioned on the Pre-Submission call about the target market for these rental units. What is the demographic makeup (income, family distribution, ages, profession, etc.) of **existing buildings** in Town Center and how does that compare to the target market that was mentioned on the call for rental units? How many more people overall will be added? What pressure, if any, does this put on the school system in the County?

When exactly will condominium projects be available for sale in Town Center? As we heard on the January 10 Pre-Submission call there is strong interest in having both “owned” and rental units in Town Center.

We look forward to seeing all of the site designs for all of the projects. These are our preliminary comments on the design and guidelines as submitted recently for review.

We appreciate the investment of Howard Hughes Corporation and the County in the development of Downtown Columbia which is near and dear to everyone. Our comments and questions are for clarification and not intended to infer that we are not in support of a vibrant Downtown Columbia. All stakeholders working together can achieve the best results that continue to make Columbia the best place to “live, work and play.”

<p>Mission: To advocate for quality of life, to increase social engagement, and to foster a sense of community and safety for all in our mixed-use neighborhoods.</p>
