



Town Center Community Association

On November 13, 2019, the Town Center Community Association Board of Directors voted to support this proposed CA policy.

COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION POLICY REGARDING VEHICULAR TRAFFIC IN SYMPHONY WOODS

Merriweather Park at Symphony Woods (“the Park”) is an urban park designed and intended for pedestrian experiences. It is the obligation of Columbia Association (CA) to protect these approximately 51 acres of green space at the heart of Columbia’s newly urbanizing downtown for the use of current and future generations. As a result, this policy is intended to state CA’s position on vehicular traffic on its property in the Park.

The Park surrounds Merriweather Post Pavilion (MPP), now owned by the Downtown Columbia Arts and Culture Commission (DCACC). Because it is impossible to access MPP without crossing CA property, decades ago CA granted certain ingress and egress easements to the then owner of MPP. The intention and terms of those easements were to allow people and vehicles to get to and from MPP by crossing certain portions of the Park. These easements are perpetual and run with the land, although an easement can be modified with the approval of the parties to the easement.

More recently, CA granted an easement to Inner Arbor Trust (IAT) to develop and operate a cultural, arts and entertainment park within the Park. With the acknowledgment of CA, IAT entered into a reciprocal easement agreement which now runs to the benefit of DCACC as the owner of MPP. Among other provisions, that agreement modified one of the old easements providing access on the east side of the Park.

CA acknowledges that these easements provide certain rights to and impose certain obligations on DCAAC regarding ingress and egress to MPP. It is CA’s position, however, that those rights are not unqualified and that those easements limit use to reasonable means to get to and from MPP. Moreover, in order for the exercise of the easement rights to be reasonable, CA also believes that all vehicular use of the roadways must meet the guidelines established by CA for the protection of the Park.

Given the foregoing, as a matter of policy, CA opposes any further “drive-through events” through the Park. “Drive-through events” are defined as events in which people remain in moving vehicles and drive in a steady stream observing installations or other entertainment or activities from their vehicles. The Park’s infrastructure is not designed for such intense driving experiences. Moreover, the potential damage from long lines of slow-moving cars threatens not only the land but also the environment. Such activity is in direct conflict with CA’s strategic initiative to take additional steps to further reduce environmental impacts on CA-owned property. This strategic initiative and the corresponding steps align with a primary goal in CA’s 2019 Strategic Plan, which is to become a statewide leader in environmental sustainability.

This policy is not intended to oppose the use of vehicles on roadways within CA’s property in accordance with the terms of the easements.

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