



Many Voices • One Vision

General Plan Amendment

September 2008



town center
columbia



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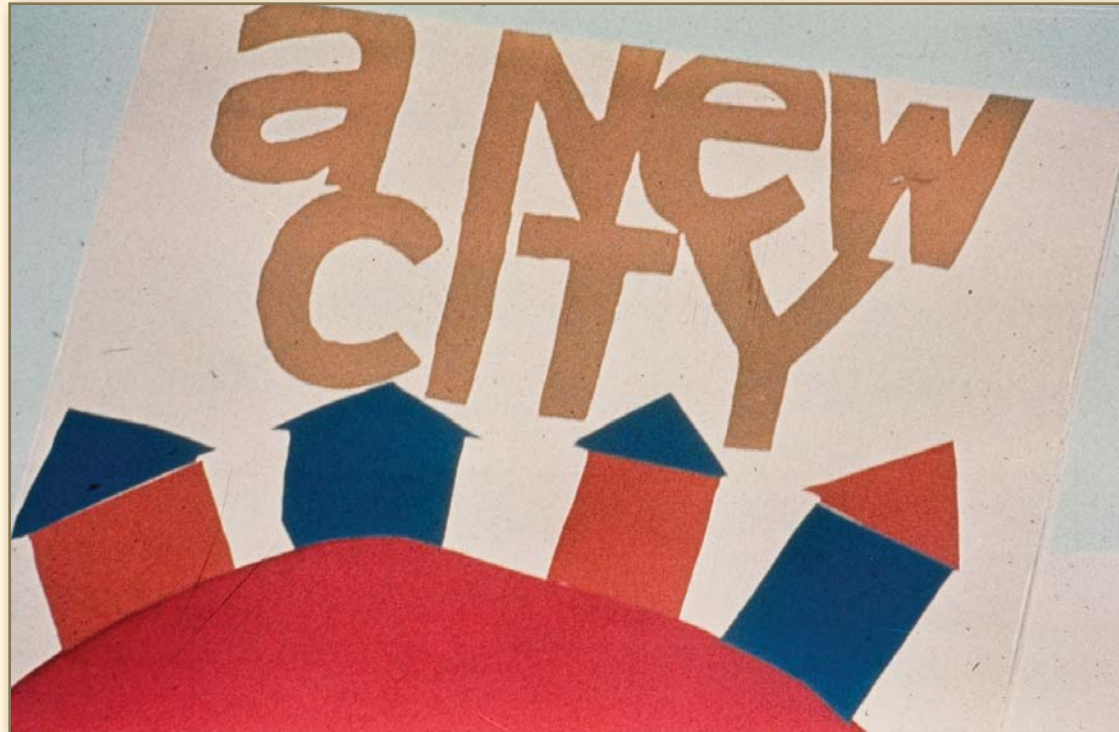
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1	Introduction	39	Sustaining the Environment
5	Making a Special Place	39	Green Technology
5	Rouse Vision	42	Nature
7	Symbols	44	Central Park
8	Districts	46	Outdoor Spaces
14	Commercial Balance	49	Balancing and Phasing Growth
16	Diverse Housing	49	General Plan
19	Economic Activity	55	Phasing
21	Civic Life	64	Monitoring
23	Arts & Culture	67	Involving Everyone
26	Design	67	Participation
29	Moving and Connecting People	69	Collaboration
29	Multi-modal System	71	Exhibits
31	Traffic	81	Supplemental Documents
32	Pedestrians		<i>(bound separately)</i>
34	Transit		
36	Parking		



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INTRODUCTION



POSTER BY GAIL HOLLIDAY

COLUMBIA HAS AN ACTIVE AND engaged community that was born out of the progressive urban planning ideas of the late Jim Rouse, its founder, more than 40 years ago. Now Rouse's pioneering planned community is embarking on a new phase in its growth and development, as its residents and officials seek to redesign and rebuild its unique downtown.



Rouse hoped to make Columbia a new kind of American community that would, through rational planning, avoid the problems associated with the decay that was settling upon America's big cities and the unplanned and often unsightly sprawl that marked its ever-burgeoning suburbs. Though in part motivated by social concerns, Rouse also was a successful and unsentimental business man who knew that Columbia had to be profitable if it was to survive and thrive.

Almost since Columbia's founding, its residents and officials have debated how to improve its downtown core or Town Center. Most recently, in October 2005, residents gathered with Columbia and Howard County government officials for a week-long series of public meetings called a "charrette." The meetings were designed to listen to the thoughts of the community on how Town Center should be redeveloped over the next 30 years and from the input, to develop a master plan to guide downtown's continued evolution as the County's economic and cultural center.

Officials of General Growth Properties (GGP), which acquired Columbia's original developer, The Rouse Company, in 2004, participated in those



Charrette, 2005



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA ARCHIVES

The Original Work Group

meetings as a primary stakeholder in the plan to redevelop downtown.

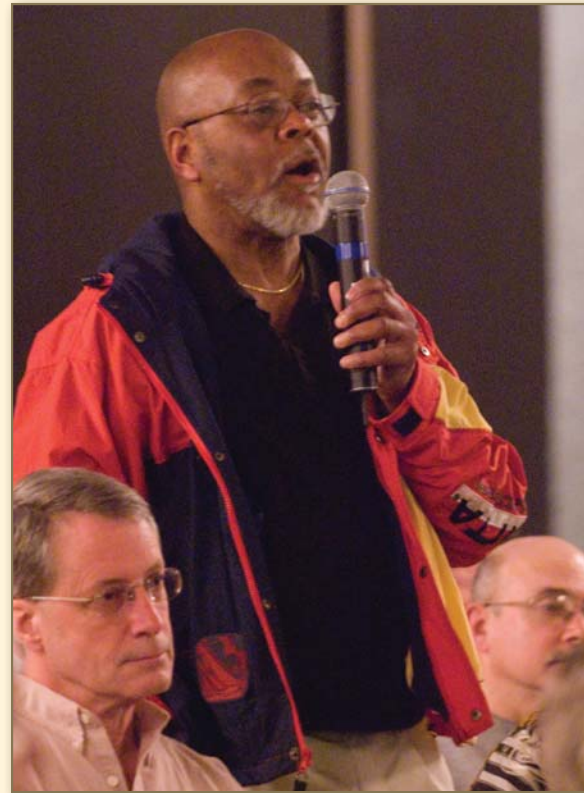
The consensus of those meetings was that Town Center should become more vibrant and relevant to Columbia's residents and that these goals could be achieved by increasing the number of people living downtown and by adding more residences, shops and recreational and cultural amenities downtown, while also making downtown more attractive and easier for pedestrians to navigate.

As a result of the charrette, County officials, with the assistance of residents and planning consultants, released a preliminary draft master plan in February of 2006 that proposed new residential, office, retail and cultural development downtown, along with reconfigured road and pedestrian networks. A community-based task force was formed by the County to provide feedback to that draft plan. They met between February and

September of 2006 and provided feedback that the County utilized in the writing of their subsequent vision plan.

In late 2007, the County released a document entitled *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*, which lays out a series of planning guidelines that County officials believe will lead to a redeveloped downtown that is lively, friendly to pedestrians and sensitive to the environment. The document makes clear that County officials consider that Rouse's original goals for Columbia continue to be relevant and must guide any plan to rebuild downtown.

In response to the guidance provided by *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*, General Growth Properties and its affiliates including The Howard Research and Development Corporation, herein referred to as General Growth Properties or GGP, has developed a 30-year plan to revitalize and redevelop downtown Columbia. ■



recommendations about its future redevelopment. Both *General Plan 2000* and *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision* aim to continue the evolution of downtown Columbia into a mixed-use urban center supported by a variety of open spaces and amenities in a pedestrian-friendly environment. This Amendment focuses on Columbia Town Center specifically and recommends a number of policies and approaches to guide its redevelopment in the future.

This Amendment does not attempt to modify existing language in *General Plan 2000*. Rather, the Amendment is intended to provide a guide for creating the future of downtown Columbia and recommends specific land use, transportation, environmental, community conservation and housing policies central to that guidance. This

Amendment is intended to serve as a new, updated chapter to the *General Plan* and by its updated terms to be the controlling expression of planning policy moving forward.

Any drawings, sketches, photographs, plans and diagrams included in this Amendment are for illustrative purposes only and are intended to convey a general sense of desirable future character rather than specific commitment to a particular detailed design.

The following recommendations for the revitalization and redevelopment of Columbia Town Center have been prepared to meet the demands and aspirations of today's residents, businesses and visitors, while providing the flexibility necessary to assure that the future will also be served. ■

General Plan 2000 Amendment

This **submittal package** functions as the proposed Amendment to Howard County's *General Plan 2000* and details how officials of GGP, in collaboration with the community and a dedicated and experienced team of consultants, has created a 30-year master plan for the revitalization and redevelopment of Town Center that is true to Jim Rouse's original vision and adheres to the guidelines contained in *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*. It specifically takes each chapter and subsection outlined in the County's framework plan and provides a response.

This Amendment reconfirms the recommendations of the *General Plan 2000* concerning the future of Columbia Town Center. It also provides additional



Lakefront