

# INVOLVING EVERYONE



**“The community will be actively engaged in decisions concerning the evolution of downtown.”**

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**5.1 PARTICIPATION** | ENHANCE COMMUNICATION between citizens and County decision-makers through opportunities for public information and public participation, so that citizens are knowledgeable about the planning and development of Downtown and have multiple opportunities for input.”  
—*Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*

The process that has been undertaken to create this Amendment began in the spring of 2005 with a series of Town Hall meetings hosted by General Growth Properties. This was followed in October of 2005, by a week long charrette, sponsored by Howard County and Columbia officials, to further elevate the community engagement and conversation about the future of Town Center. The public release of *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*, the County’s resulting framework for the revitalization and redevelopment of downtown Columbia, was accompanied by another set of public meetings. As GGP worked on the Amendment to *General Plan 2000*, company representatives also met with a variety of civic and business organizations and other groups to gather information and guidance. Starting in March of 2008 and continuing through to the present, GGP has intensified its outreach, hosting an extensive series of community meetings.



THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM THAT GGP UNDERTOOK IN 2008 INCLUDED:

### Community Forums

Evening events in the Spear Center, GGP Building, featuring GGP design and planning team members:

March 5th

Alan Ward, Sasaki Associates, Inc., the project landscape designer

March 19th

Gail Dexter Lord, Lord Cultural Resources, the project arts and culture consultant

April 2th

Keith Bowers, Biohabitats, the project environment and sustainability consultant

April 9th

Jaquelin T. Robertson, Cooper, Robertson & Partners, the project master plan architect

### Many Voices; One Vision

Draft Master Plan released

April 28th

Community presentation in the Spear Center, GGP Building, featuring Greg Hamm, Columbia's General Manager for GGP, and GGP planning team members

### Vision in Focus

Issue-based community forums held in the Spear Center, GGP Building, featuring GGP design and planning team members

May 6th Sustainability/Environment

May 7th Transit/Traffic

May 8th Culture

July 9th The Neighborhoods

### Community Discussion Series

Village-based meetings to gather community comments and ideas relative to this Amendment  
May 12<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> – Dorsey Search, Harper's Choice, Hickory Ridge, Kings Contrivance, Long Reach, Oakland Mills, Owen Brown, River Hill, Wilde Lake and Town Center

### Vision in View

Exhibit in the Spear Center, GGP Building, showcasing key elements of the draft plan to revitalize and redevelop downtown Columbia  
July 16<sup>th</sup> – July 24<sup>th</sup>



Detailed notes were taken or transcriptions were made of the GGP meetings and shared with the design and planning team as well as posted to the Web site [www.columbiatowncenter.info](http://www.columbiatowncenter.info).

In addition to the meetings hosted by GGP, company representatives have met with such organizations as the Columbia Association, Howard County Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Howard County, Howard County Public School System, Transportation Advocates, and Voices for Change, as well as the nine village boards and the Town Center board.

These meetings engaged a wide variety of community members as participants in the planning process and contributors to the draft plans for the revitalization and redevelopment of Columbia Town Center.

Additionally, as the County detailed in its vision framework document, *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*, there are specific public processes – meetings where citizens can participate – included as part of the Planning Board and County Council review which will allow further community engagement and guidance.

It is only after this entire process is complete with all the requisite public meetings that the County Council will vote on the adoption of the Amendment to *General Plan 2000* and the associated Zoning Regulation Amendment.

Finally, even after an Amendment to the General Plan is adopted, the review process will follow the zoning and subdivision regulations appropriate to each redevelopment phase, and at each step of that review there will be public meeting requirements and additional opportunity for community engagement.

The Columbia Town Center community outreach has involved an extensive community conversation and produced a plan that reflects an engaged community. It is clearly one vision as a result of many voices. ■



**5.2 COLLABORATION** | “ENCOURAGE A PARTNERSHIP in planning and implementation, realizing that many of the recommended strategies will depend on collaboration among the County, private property owners, residents, business owners and community organizations.”

—*Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*

This Amendment proposes the establishment of an umbrella organization with several subsidiary associations to carry out important ongoing service and community functions in downtown Columbia. The mission of the umbrella organization (or Columbia Town Center Partnership) will be to oversee the operation of the subsidiary associations and to serve as the focal point for carrying out the vision for Columbia Town Center as established by this Amendment. The Columbia Town Center Partnership should also promote



economic development of the downtown. Subsidiary associations may also be desirable and could be established to market and promote the downtown area, to promote public safety; to educate and provide security patrols; to provide outreach to at-risk populations; to implement ongoing and one-time downtown beautification and maintenance projects; and to coordinate with other associations concerning the programming of public spaces downtown.

Other associations discussed elsewhere in this Amendment include a Columbia Town Center Transportation Management Association, Columbia Town Center Cultural Commission, Columbia Town Center Community Housing Foundation and Columbia Town Center Sustainability Association.

These organizations are a suggested means of addressing many ongoing matters of importance to downtown Columbia. These or suitable alternatives may be developed that will also meet the objectives identified above. ■

