

From the Baltimore Sun

CA downtown-planning panel sought

By Tyrone Richardson
sun reporter

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A Columbia Association committee will ask its board of directors to form a task force to help the homeowners association shape its role in the plans to develop Columbia's downtown. The association's planning and strategy committee will ask the board Nov. 21 to adopt its motion.

The county, with the help of General Growth Properties Inc., the principal landowner in Columbia, has been sculpting plans for developing downtown into a bustling urban environment.

Last year, the county appointed a focus group, consisting of local residents and businesses, to study the development plans and make recommendations that contributed to another draft expected to be unveiled next year.

Phil Marcus, board member representing Kings Contrivance, made the task force recommendation Thursday at a Columbia Association meeting because he said there have been many suggestions about how the association should contribute.

"I'm no expert on urban planning, and nobody on the board is. It's a specific thing that deserves some expert analysis and interpretation for the association," Marcus said.

If the task force is created, Marcus and other members of the board are asking that the group be made up of local experts in fields such as urban planning, sociology, architecture and urban economics.

"Columbia is blessed to have all kinds of experts here who are willing to serve on this, and it will be a great benefit," Marcus said.

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