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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Councilwoman Jen Terrasa Files Legislation to Ensure
Affordable Housing in Downtown Columbia**

Ellicott City, MD (October 1, 2015) Howard County Councilwoman Jen Terrasa filed new legislation today that would require development in Downtown Columbia to include a full spectrum of housing options as originally envisioned in the Downtown Columbia Plan.

After the first three residential projects approved for Downtown Columbia failed to include any affordable housing units, a 2014 Council resolution asked Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation (CDHC), a nonprofit organization established in accordance with the Downtown Columbia Plan to oversee the inclusion of affordable housing in the development of Downtown Columbia, to offer specific recommendations for legislative changes to ensure the inclusion of affordable housing moving forward. Following months of research, stakeholder input, and thoughtful deliberation, CDHC offered a set of very clear, well-reasoned recommendations to the County Council for achieving this goal. Implementation of those recommendations, however, was delayed in order to give the Howard Hughes Corporation (HHC) an opportunity to negotiate the recommendations with CDHC.

"CDHC was left to defend the vision of affordable housing that was laid out in the Downtown Columbia Plan," said Terrasa. "That is rightfully the responsibility of the greater community. CDHC had to compromise, and ultimately supported a modified version of the HHC proposal that falls substantially short of their initial recommendations. Neither CDHC nor our community should be forced to compromise our values. Today, I am introducing legislation that implements the CDHC's initial recommendations."

In line with the original CDHC recommendations, Terrasa's proposal would require at least 15% of the units in each new rental housing project to be affordable to households earning 40-80% of Howard County's median income. At least 15% of for-sale housing would have to be affordable to households earning 80% of Howard County's median income. In keeping with CDHC's recommendations, the proposal includes incentives to provide more units at lower price points and provisions for additional flexibility if some projects provide more affordable units than required.

"Inclusionary zoning requirements such as this are no different than the requirements that we place on almost every other developer in the County," Terrasa explained. "It is the most proven and effective way that the development industry has been able to provide affordable housing options without an ongoing reliance on subsidies from County taxpayers. I have heard no compelling reason as to why the Howard Hughes Corporation should be given preferential treatment."

"While I appreciate the time and energy that various people have put into recent attempts to reach an agreement, I believe the draft agreement compromises too much," Terrasa went on to say. "It relieves HHC of their financial responsibility to provide affordable housing, and instead shifts that burden to the Howard County taxpayer. This was not the vision of the Downtown Plan, and it is not responsible government."

The legislative package, which includes both a General Plan Amendment and Zoning Regulation Amendment, must first be reviewed by the Department of Planning and Zoning and heard by the Planning Board before coming to the Council.

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