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October 16, 2025

Hon. Opel Jones, Chair
and Members of the Howard County Zoning Board
3430 Court House Dr.
Ellicott City, MD 21043

**Re: Long Reach Village Center – Preliminary Development Plan Amendment
Justification Statement and Supplemental Information**

Dear Mr. Jones and Member of the Zoning Board,

This letter is provided on behalf of Columbia Concepts LLC (the “Petitioner”) in support of its petition to amend the Preliminary Development Plan for Long Reach Village Center. It includes the Justification Statement required by Section 125.0.J.4.a.8 of the Zoning Regulations, with each criterion listed in order followed by the Petitioner’s response. Following the Justification Statement is supplemental information demonstrating compliance with Sections 125.0.J.4.a.7, 125.0.J.1.c, and 125.0.J.1.d of the Zoning Regulations.

1. Section 125.0.J.4.a.8 - A justification statement which identifies the impacts of the proposed Major Village Center Redevelopment on the nature and purpose of the Village Center and its relation to the surrounding community. The justification statement shall demonstrate how the Village Center Redevelopment meets the following criteria:

(a) The Village Center Redevelopment will foster orderly growth and promote the purposes of the Village Center in accordance with the planned character of the NT District;

Petitioner’s Redevelopment Plan for Long Reach Village Center (the “Redevelopment Plan” or the “Plan”) will foster orderly growth by creating a cohesive, mixed-use Village Center that blends diverse housing, retail, arts and cultural, and community spaces. The Plan connects these uses with surrounding neighborhood through trails and transit, and emphasizes accessibility and walkability. The new uses will be constructed and activated in orderly phases, and will ultimately restore the Village Center as a vibrant community focal point and regional destination.

These aspects are consistent with the New Town District’s planned character and Columbia’s founding vision as developed by James Rouse. In 1965, the County Council created

the New Town District as a way to permit “a more effective and harmonious blending of the various land uses than is possible through piecemeal development,” “create a sense of spaciousness by the establishment of well located open spaces”, and “encourage civic responsibility through the development of well planned neighborhoods in which the inhabitants can develop a sense of personal relationship with their communities.” *See Howard County NT Zoning Resolution, Section 1 (1965).*

Such principles remain at the core of the planned character of the New Town District. This is discussed in the most recent update to Howard County's General Plan, *HoCo By Design*, which was adopted in 2023. The Plan does not propose changes to New Town zoning, stating that “New Town embodies much of *HoCo By Design*’s intended goals: walkability, diverse housing options, and equitable access to open space. Continuity of neighborhoods is critical to the feel and success of New Town.” *See HoCo By Design at 163.*

The Redevelopment Plan as discussed herein remains faithful to these principles while bringing a comprehensive approach to revitalizing Long Reach Village Center, which the County Council has recognized as a underutilized, blighted area suffering from disinvestment. This Plan responds to and incorporates the mandate of the community members and leaders, who all yearn for something meaningful that helps Long Reach rise again and the County shine. It utilizes exciting new urban and architectural design considerations while staying true to the founding principles of the 21st Century Planned Community of Columbia.

(b) The amount of commercial business floor area contained in the Village Center Redevelopment is appropriate to provide retail and commercial service to the village as a location for convenient, diverse commercial business uses which serve the local neighborhoods of the village and surrounding local community;

The Plan proposes 122,600 square feet of total commercial space, plus an additional 136,260 square feet with the multi-sports complex. An integrated retail strategy creates a destination point where various demographic segments can meet their day-to-day needs. Retail will be located at the base of the building at ground level surrounding the redeveloped Village Center. It will be anchored by a community-focused grocery anchor. The remainder of the retail will focus on destination anchor retail and community-serving ground-level retail, including dining options, like a common or ghost kitchen. The retail uses will increase access to basic goods and services for the Long Reach community and surrounding neighborhoods and create new and unique shopping experiences.

The development team will market the proposed retail areas to a mix of nationally recognized chains as well as locally based chains and smaller specialty stores. This approach will help to reinforce existing retail districts and encourage new retail districts in the immediate neighborhood and help to improve the mix of goods and services available to the community. The retail/commercial functions, such as a sports facility and interactive retail uses, will help bridge the needs of families, millennials, and aging residents. This commercial strategy will create a vibrant, sustainable economic ecosystem which complements the residential and civic uses.

- (c) *The Village Center Redevelopment will foster the purpose of a Village Center as a community focal point providing good opportunities for community interaction and communication;*

The Redevelopment will restore the Village Center as a true community focal point and gathering place in line with James Rouse's original vision of Village Centers. Pedestrian-friendly streets and transit access will make it easy for residents and visitors to access the new retail and civic uses. Flexible commercial spaces will support markets, performances, and festivals. Anchors like the modernized arts center, senior center, and community-focused grocery will ensure broad multigenerational engagement. The central civic promenade will serve as an interconnected gathering space with sightlines into the arts center and sports complex. Together, these features create a vibrant hub for daily interaction, communication, and shared community life.

- (d) *The location and the relative proportions of the permitted uses for commercial businesses, dwellings, and open space uses, and the project design will enhance the existing development surrounding the Village Center Redevelopment;*

The balance of new uses will create a vibrant, accessible hub that complements nearby development and restores the Village Center and existing surrounding development as a community destination. The entertainment options, retail destinations, community spaces, and optimal residential density will attract younger people, families, seniors, and homeowners, engaging the County's regional business districts. The strategic layout blends harmoniously with the existing development, with new residential uses placed near existing apartments and commercial uses concentrated along roadways, increasing retail visibility while buffering neighborhoods.

- (e) *The Village Center Redevelopment provides accessible useable landscaped areas such as courtyards, plazas or squares;*

The Redevelopment Plan will prominently feature accessible useable landscaped areas. A prominent, centrally located civic promenade will support and facilitate a range of passive and active recreation. Walkways will have landscaped shoulders with native plantings, flowering trees, and seating to establish a more engaging environment for those who live, work, and visit. A densely landscaped setback along the east side will provide a transition and buffer between the heavily traveled Tamar Drive. Walkways and crosswalks have been incorporated throughout to promote pedestrian safety and walkability and to connect with the existing trail network.

- (f) *The Village Center Redevelopment is compliant with all applicable environmental policies and requirements, and provides new environmental improvements to the redevelopment area through the use of methods such as, but not limited to, green building standards, water conservation, natural drainage systems, the planting of native vegetation, the removal of existing invasive plants, the improvement of stormwater deficiencies, and following low impact development practices;*

The Redevelopment Plan is fully compliant with all applicable environmental policies and requirements, and will provide new environmental improvements to the redevelopment area. The

Plan includes integrated stormwater management in landscape areas as well as green infrastructural practices. On an architectural scale, our plan will exceed the County guidelines with each building's design sustainability practices. Under the *Sustainable Community Designation*, Long Reach Village opens potential grants and resources from the state and County.

(g) *The Village Center Redevelopment fosters pedestrian and bicycle access;*

As mentioned, walkways and crosswalks have been incorporated to promote pedestrian accessibility and connections to the larger trail network. This will spur connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods and pedestrian/bike paths. A bike share adjacent to the Village's bus stop has been included to further promote alternative modes of transportation.

(h) *Public transit opportunities are appropriately incorporated into the Village Center Redevelopment;*

The Plan expands public transit by offering a new bus stop at the main entrance, bringing surrounding residents to the Village Center's front door. The development team will work in coordination with the Office of Transportation to as determined in coordination with the Office of Transportation to incorporate additional or alternative transit stops at appropriate locations.

(i) *The Village Center Redevelopment is compatible with the surrounding community;*

Connectivity and compatibility with the surrounding Long Reach community is a central design consideration in the Redevelopment Plan. The area surrounding Long Reach Village Center enjoys an extensive network of trails that link disparate neighborhoods. The increased accessibility through the new bus stop, integrated bicycle access and landscaped sidewalks will allow nearby residents to easily access the site for a nightly dinner or as part of a fitness route. The new street entrance allows pedestrians to access the existing sidewalk on Tamar Drive and the existing crosswalk which connects to the existing trail network on the Northeast side of Tamar Drive.

(j) *The Village Center will continue to meet the definition of a New Town Village Center.*

The definition of a New Town Village Center was added to the Zoning Regulations in 2009, articulating James Rouse's vision of a Village Center as "a community focal point and gathering place for the surrounding village neighborhoods" which includes a blend of accessible, pedestrian-oriented outdoor spaces, retail outlets to fulfill daily resident needs, residential uses, and space for community or institutional uses.

The diverse mix of residential and commercial uses in this Redevelopment Plan will promote the economic and cultural self-sufficiency of Long Reach Village Center. Such uses will be complemented by thoughtful design elements which are spacious and pedestrian-friendly, integrated with the surrounding community, and intended to foster community investment and pride. As such, it will continue to meet the definition of a New Town Village Center in accordance with Section 125.0 of the Zoning Regulations and the County's development vision as expressed in *HoCo By Design*.

2. **Section 125.0.J.4.a.7 - Comment on whether the proposed redevelopment is in harmony with the Village Center Community Plan;**

Petitioner's Redevelopment Plan for Long Reach Village Center is in harmony with the Village Center's Community Plan as expressed in the Long Reach Community Association's Village Center Master Plan 2025 (the "Community Plan"). The components of the Community Plan are Connectivity, Aesthetics, Types of Uses, Sustainability, and Housing/Retail Mix.

- a. Connectivity: The Redevelopment Plan emphasizes connectivity and accessibility to the Village Center. A new primary entrance off Tamar Drive and a comprehensive circulation plan will guide vehicular traffic. A new bus stop will promote access by public transit, and a new bike share and paths will promote bicycle access. Walkways and crosswalks have been incorporated throughout to promote pedestrian safety and walkability and to connect with the existing trail network.
- b. Aesthetics: The aesthetics of the Redevelopment Plan will transform the Village Center into a modern, welcoming space with a cohesive design and significant curbside appeal. The Plan will also incorporate public art throughout the development.
- c. Types of Uses: The Community Plan calls for a variety of uses for a redeveloped Village Center which are found in the Redevelopment Plan. This includes retail space for a wide variety of retail uses, areas for planned events, and areas for recreation and family play. This also includes retaining Long Reach Village operations and Art Center operations within the Village Center.
- d. Sustainability: In line with the Community Plan's emphasis on modern sustainability principles, the Redevelopment Plan incorporates native plantings, integrated stormwater management, and green building techniques like green roofs and photovoltaics.
- e. Housing/Retail Mix. The Redevelopment Plan includes a variety of new housing supporting the retail uses, with modernized residential buildings offering mixed-income housing units with designated spaces for senior living.

3. **Section 125.0.J.1.c - The amendment shall comply with Section 125.0.A.4. concerning the maximum residential density of 2.5 dwelling units per acre in the NT District;**

The maximum residential density for the 14,272 acres zoned NT is 2.5 dwellings per gross acre, which equates to 35,680 units. Currently, there are 34,594 dwellings at a density of 2.4239 units per gross acre. Therefore, 1,086 dwelling units can still be built. The Redevelopment Plan proposes adding 505 units, which would increase the density to ~~2.4593~~2.4372 units per gross acre, below the maximum residential density of 2.5 units per acre.

4. **Section 125.0.J.1.d** - Any Major Village Center mixed-use Redevelopment shall be considered to be a "Commercial" use in the chart contained in Section 125.0.A.8. of the Regulations for purposes of calculating compliance with the chart's requirements as to the minimum and maximum percentage of "Commercial" in the total area of the New Town District. The Village Center Redevelopment shall not result in a net loss of open space.

Redevelopment of the existing village center will not result in a net loss of open space per Section 125.0.A.8, since it does not contain any credited open space.

Sincerely,

CarneyKelehan, LLP



Owen Jarvis, Esq.