

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today.

I am a resident of Long Reach Village and happily have resided there for many years.

Revitalizing the Long Reach village center is much needed and welcome, but I have concerns regarding the proposed redevelopment as submitted. I would like to speak to the need for: reducing the density of the proposed dwellings, providing more opportunity for ownership in lieu of rental dwellings, scaling back the size of the buildings, ensuring there is sufficient parking, and shortening the redevelopment construction timeline. I base my comments on my experience as a resident, conversations with other residents, and my recollection of what was shared at meetings I attended.

DENSITY and LACK OF OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The proposed redevelopment plan is a mixed-use approach that includes residential dwellings. With regard to the residential aspect, the plan proposes a significant increase in density, specifically 505 dwellings, which is a 60% increase over the previously approved number of 315 dwellings. In the community engagement meetings during spring and summer 2025, I recall multiple attendees raised concerns regarding the number and type of units that potentially would be proposed, especially as the number of units increased as the meetings went along. Some attendees also expressed concerns of the lack of dwellings proposed for ownership.

Four hundred fifty five (455) of the 505 proposed dwellings are rentals, with roughly 200 of those for seniors. The 50 proposed dwellings for ownership are comprised only of townhomes. Diversity and inclusivity principles have been mentioned, but with respect to the dwellings, the plan largely proposes more of what already is located close to the village center, which are multifamily rental apartment communities, including a multifamily dwelling community owned by Howard County, and apartment communities for seniors.

The proposed 50 townhouses out of the 505 dwellings will not do enough to address the lack of home ownership opportunities in the village center area. Consistent with the Howard County Executive's goal of promoting home ownership opportunities, as well as the goals of diversity and inclusivity, more consideration should be given to ownership opportunities in the redevelopment, such as

Zoning Case 201132M

Applicant/Protestant Undeclared

condominiums, which could include 55+ condominiums, and less consideration given to apartment dwellings of which there is a disproportionate amount clustered in the village center area.

HEIGHT/SIZE of BUILDINGS

The density is such that the proposed 7-story buildings will alter the appearance of the area and overshadow existing dwellings. The communities in the Long Reach village center area mostly comprise garden style units of 3 or 4 stories or similar sized townhomes. The nearby high school, and more recent business park and tennis club on Old Dobbin Lane also are similar in height to the residences of the community. The two proposed 7-story buildings would stand out and dominate the surrounding communities. These should be scaled back to be more in-line with the area aesthetic.

PARKING

As already mentioned, a redevelopment is welcome. However, the lack of sufficient parking in the proposed version could negatively impact the potential success of the redevelopment, as well as the surrounding communities that are not prepared to contend with issues of overflow.

More than 70% of Columbia residents travel by personal vehicle. The average car ownership in Columbia is 2 cars per household, with an average commute of close to 30 minutes. The usage rates are due, in part, to commuting patterns.

The addition of dwellings, and retail and entertainment, within the village center area likely will do little to change the commuting patterns.

The sports complex has been touted as potentially drawing from outside Columbia, outside the County, and possibly outside the State, if so, that most likely would be by means of vehicular traffic.

Sufficient parking is essential for dwellings occupants, as well as those coming from elsewhere for the commercial and entertainment aspects, for any version of a redevelopment to be successful.

There has been mention of reducing vehicle dependency, which is a commendable future goal. However, that cannot be accomplished in a single, localized redevelopment such as the village center. Therefore, the parking accommodations for the proposed village center should be commensurate with demand. Otherwise, it increases the risk of failure because people will not rent or buy with too few

Long Reach Village Center Redevelopment – Testimony of Todd Zimmerman
Submitted in addition to verbal testimony at the hearing on March 18, 2026

spaces available to them and their guests, and people from elsewhere will avoid the area due to lack of parking.

TIMELINE

The timeline was something upon which the Design Advisory Panel commented. The timeline stretches nearly 10 years, introducing a risk of not fully completing the redevelopment, especially the last phase by its being further into the future.

The last phase is the townhome construction. If the townhome phase of the redevelopment plan does not happen, that would mean that the dwellings added are all rental apartments.

CLOSING

There has been little discussion as to the impact on traffic, schools, police, fire and emergency medical services, public safety, and the environment, as the impacts to those are yet to be evaluated. Those aspects impact the quality of life of the residents and should be evaluated thoughtfully and thoroughly as the ramifications of not correctly getting a redevelopment of Long Reach Village Center are far too lasting.

I again thank you for the opportunity to share my comments and ask that the zoning board consider them in its decision.