



Howard County

Internal Memorandum

SUBJECT: Testimony & Fiscal Impact Statement
Council Resolution No. ____-2024 – Approving – Urban Renewal Project –
Long Reach Village Center

TO: Brandee Ganz,
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Brian Shepter,
Deputy Chief of Staff

DATE: October 24, 2024

The Administration requests Council’s favorable action on the above-referenced resolution approving an Urban Renewal Project for the Long Reach Village Center. These plans articulate a compelling vision for this neighborhood asset and approval of this Urban Renewal Project is a necessary step toward realizing the comprehensive redevelopment our community deserves.

In 2014 and 2015, the County acquired 7.71 acres of property within the Long Reach Village Center (LRVC) under the authority of the Urban Renewal Law, finding that the property had become a blighted area. This effort followed the shuttering of the Safeway grocery store, which served as an anchor for the center. After Safeway’s exit, the condition of LRVC rapidly deteriorated, manifested by growing commercial vacancy and building façade decline. Since acquiring the subject property, the County has worked to stabilize the facility, increasing commercial tenancy and improving aesthetics as it prepared for a comprehensive redevelopment project.

To this end, in July of 2023, the County issued an RFP (attached as Exhibit A) seeking a developer to purchase and redevelop LRVC. Proposals were accepted through January of 2024. The sole proposal received by the County for this project was from Columbia Concepts, LLC. The Columbia Concepts team is a joint venture of several established local companies with demonstrated experience in commercial redevelopment.

Pursuant to the Urban Renewal Law (Title 13, Subtitle 11), properties within an Urban Renewal Area must have an Urban Renewal Project that describes the methods used to eliminate blight and which may include redevelopment. An Urban Renewal Project is subject to the approval of the County Council.

Columbia Concepts envisions the future center as a vibrant mixed-use destination for multi-generational living, athletics, arts, culture, entertainment and shopping. Consistent with the ReImagine Long Reach plan, this project will bring back to life this once-vibrant focal point of the community.

The project is complete with a strong mix of for-sale and for-rent residential opportunities attainable to residents of various incomes, including townhomes and senior housing. The village center will include a senior center, community gathering space, grocery store, interactive retail with immersive arts installations, centralized pedestrian thoroughfare and active outdoor amenity areas. In the heart of the project is a 100,000 sf multi-sports indoor facility will space for volleyball, basketball, pickleball and rock climbing.

In total, the project envisions nearly 150,000 sf of retail space across multiple buildings. Site improvements will include ample parking, bike and pedestrian facilities for safe multi-modal connections and enhancements through sustainable green design. And Long Reach's connection to art will be incorporated throughout the project, with spaces and installations for local art and artists to grow and thrive.

After a decade of County ownership, the time has come to deliver the redevelopment that the Long Reach community has eagerly sought. With the approval of the Urban Renewal Project, as represented in the Columbia Concepts plan, the County will take an exciting first step toward making Long Reach not only a vibrant place to live and gather but a destination for people around our region to enjoy athletics, arts, dining and entertainment.

Fiscal Impact

There is no immediate fiscal impact from adoption of the Urban Renewal Project pursuant to this resolution. However, the County operates LRVC at a net loss of roughly \$300,000 annually, in addition to the foregone tax revenue that would otherwise be collected were the property privately held. The County will experience significant fiscal benefits from the ultimate sale and redevelopment of the property, to include annual savings from shifting the operating costs to the private sector, one-time revenues at sale, potential benefits from new job creation and anticipated one-time impact fees from home building as well as annual tax revenues at full build out.