

HOWARD COUNTY HOUSING AFFORDABILITY COALITION

County Council Public Hearing:
Long Reach Village Center Urban Renewal Contract Approval (CR 161-2024)

January 21, 2025

The Housing Affordability Coalition appreciates this opportunity to voice its support of the Long Reach Village Center Urban Renewal Project, particularly the intent to create an “Inclusive Housing Destination.”

As the redevelopment project evolves, we look forward to additional details about how the forecasted 330 rental and for-sale units will help meet the proffered vision of meeting the “community’s needs regardless of their age, income level, family dynamics and stages of their life.” Specifically,

- Will the residential component include 20 percent Moderate Income Housing Units (MIHUs) across the multifamily apartments, senior and townhouse ownership phases?
- How many rental units will be affordable to households making 60 percent or less of AMI?
- What will be the affordability income level for the for-sale townhomes?
- What level of accessibility and visitability will there be across all units? Will those accessibility standards meet the needs of seniors and people with physical disabilities?
- Will the HoCo By Design goal of 10 percent accessibility of all affordable housing units be met?
- What amendment to the Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) zoning requirements will be required to include the proposed residential uses effectively?
- What amendments to the Final Development Plan (FDP) will be required to implement the Plan?

One issue of Coalition concern is *Destination Long Reach’s* statement that if the affordable housing is put on Howard Hughes land, that that housing would be counted toward Howard Hughes’ obligations under the Downtown Columbia Plan’s Developers Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (DRRA). The Long Reach Village Center is not within the Downtown footprint and therefore in the Coalition’s view, it would be inappropriate for such a transfer of obligation.

Thank you, Council members, for the opportunity to express the Coalition’s support for CR 161. We are enthusiastic about the redevelopment of this important part of our community which will bring much needed housing and economic stimulation.

Respectfully,

Jackie Eng

Jackie Eng, Coalition Coordinator

The Coalition is composed of 40 organizations and over 900 individual members and allies. Our goal is to achieve community understanding, policy making and regulatory decisions that will lead to an increase in—and equitable access to—Howard County affordable housing. We seek to contribute to a community-wide recognition that Howard County’s economic vitality is dependent upon access to jobs, housing that individuals and families can afford, a quality educational system, and resident mobility.

Council Members and Guests,

My name is Jonathan Song, a lifelong resident of Columbia, MD, student at Bryant Woods, Burleigh Manor, Wilde Lake High School. I taught at Talbott Springs Elementary and Triadelphia Ridge Elementary School as a public school teacher, and served our community in Columbia MD with the Church of Philippi for over 3 decades, helping 2nd Generation Korean American individuals like myself find meaning, purpose, and serving our city in tangible acts of mercy and love.

I now Pastor a congregation in the Long Reach Village Center called City of Hope Presbyterian Church, where the church has served the community there for almost 2 decades. We see firsthand how the community of Long Reach benefits Columbia and the surrounding region; it's demographic makeup reaches all across socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural divides that gives an important perspective to the community. We long for Long Reach, in its developmental process to reinvest into this community, to seek out how potential changes would be equitable for those who currently reside on Tamar drive and the neighbors, be a resource for Long Reach High School students who will find the Village Center to be a refuge after school, and provide community services that cares for the poor, the orphan, and the widow, as our faith tradition reminds us, to provide essential food and clothing for those in need. In these things we hope that we open the door not just to economic opportunity for our region, but community building in a world in need of compassion and care for loving our neighbor.

When a redevelopment considers the needs of not just the potential growth of its economic investment, we really believe that the Long Reach community will thrive into a place that longs to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before our God. As a son of first generation immigrants who found Columbia to be the place to not just fulfill an American dream, but to live out their faith to benefit over 2,000 Korean residents, the message of our Gospel is one that reminds us that it was through sacrifice of one on a cross, Jesus Christ that showed us the pathway for peace and reconciliation with God and with one another. We pray that Long Reach and its development team would share that same spirit of sacrificial love and care for this community as it considers its plans moving forward. Thank you for your time.



January 21, 2025

The Honorable Liz Walsh, Chairperson
The Howard County Council
3430 Court House Drive,
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Dear Ms. Walsh and members of the Council:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Howard County, I appreciate the opportunity to convey strong support for Council bills CR161-2024 and CR162-2024.

These bills both move the Long Reach Redevelopment and Reinvigoration project forward. The inclusion of affordable housing is in line with county goals as expressed in the General Plan and in the League's long-standing support for affordable housing. This Columbia village needs affordable housing and amenities within walking distance and the League supports the project and the land sale.

The League would also like to express strong support for CB3-2025 which approves Enterprise Community Development's request for approval of the Section 108 Loan guarantee allowing both the Ranleigh Place and Waverly woods redevelopment housing projects to proceed. For more than 50 years, these communities offered a significant number of affordable houses to low-income county residents. The properties have deteriorated significantly over time. Preservation and expansion of these properties is consistent with the General Plan that calls for existing affordable housing preservation.

There will be homes for households making 60% and below of Howard County median income and some even below 40% of median income. In addition, these projects will expand the number of accessible units for disabled county residents. Enterprise's commitment to serving the needs of this population is very welcome.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to these issues with you.

Sincerely,

Laura Mettle, President
The League of Women Voters of Howard County

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*The League of Women Voters of Howard County, Inc. is a 501c (3) non-profit organization.
All donations made to LWVHC are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.*