



# Howard County

## Internal Memorandum

**Subject:** CR 120-2014 – Downtown Columbia Plan

**To:** Lonnie R. Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

**From:** Thomas P. Carbo, Director  
Housing and Community Development

**Date:** October 8, 2014

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Resolution 120-2014 requests the Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation to recommend legislative changes to ensure that the Downtown Columbia Plan's vision for a full spectrum of affordable housing can be achieved.

### **Background**

In 2010, the County Council enacted Council Bill 58-2009, which adopted a General Plan Amendment creating the "Downtown Columbia Plan" for the revitalization and redevelopment of downtown Columbia. A key component of the Plan is to "provide a full spectrum and diverse mix of housing, ensuring that low-, moderate- and middle-income families have an opportunity to live in Downtown, thus continuing the original vision of Columbia as an inclusive community." In furtherance of this vision, the County Council enacted CB 24-2012, creating a Downtown Columbia Housing Fund, and CR 154-2012, recognizing the non-profit Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation (CDHC) to administer the Fund and to work with developers and other stakeholders to find ways to incorporate affordable housing opportunities into the downtown redevelopment. The directors of the CDHC include dedicated citizens with demonstrated expertise, skill and knowledge in the fields of housing development, finance, management, human services, and advocacy.

After nearly two years of diligent effort to explore options and opportunities to develop affordable housing in downtown, including extensive discussions with downtown developers, the CDHC identified a number of substantial challenges to achieving its goals, including:

- High development costs and a strong market for high-rent housing
- Limited development opportunities
- Inadequate funding of the Fund
- A lack of incentives for developers to incorporate a mix of affordable housing
- No affordable housing requirement in downtown

These structural impediments have made it extremely difficult for the CDHC to achieve the Plan's goals. Consequently, the CDHC has come to the conclusion that legislative changes are needed.

CR 120-2014 requests the CDHC to consider what, if any, legislative changes are necessary and appropriate to ensure the Plan's vision for a full spectrum of affordable housing and to make recommendations to the County Council and County Executive by March 1, 2015. It directs the CDHC to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders, including the Howard Hughes Corporation, other owner and developers of residential projects in downtown, major employers, representatives of the business community, community groups, and the Howard County Housing Commission. The resolution further directs that the CDHC shall have staff support from the Departments of Housing and Community Development and Planning and Zoning.

**Fiscal Impact**

CR 120-2104 will have no fiscal impact.

The Howard County Department of Housing and Community Development recommends approval of the Resolution.

cc: Ken Ulman, County Executive  
Jennifer Sager, Legislative Coordinator