



February 27, 2015

Dear Councilmembers and County Executive:

On behalf of the members of People Acting Together in Howard (PATH) we are writing this letter to share our perspective on the legislative recommendations to the Howard County Council from the Columbia Downtown Housing Corporation (CDHC).

PATH is an organization of 15 congregations and non-profit organizations in Howard County working on issues that are important to people in our institutions and community. We are an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, which has helped build thousands of affordable housing units up and down the east coast, and won hundreds of millions of dollars of funding for affordable housing in our region.

PATH's current issue agenda came from asking more than 1000 people in our congregations, organizations and neighborhoods, "What keeps you awake at night?" From those conversations, it was clear that more workforce housing, particularly for households making \$30-80,000 a year, is crucial for our county to remain vibrant and sustainable.

On October 21, 2014, 650 PATH leaders and members gathered at St John Baptist Church where they asked for commitments from political candidates to ensure that 15% of all housing units built in Howard County, including the redevelopment of Downtown Columbia, be consistent with the 15% MIHU requirement in other parts of the county.

PATH has carefully reviewed the legislative recommendations put forth by the CDHC and has the following position on the recommendations:

1. The CDHC legislative recommendations are a vast improvement over the current agreement with Howard Hughes.
2. The recommendations are not strong enough. The redevelopment of Downtown Columbia should be held to the same standard as other parts of Howard County. The entire redevelopment should have a requirement that 15% of all housing units be affordable to moderate income households, ones making, on average, 60% of the Howard County Area Median Income.
3. Approving the development of any further housing units in Downtown Columbia should be postponed until the Council has introduced and passed new



legislation requiring developers to comply with the above-mentioned 15% requirement.

The intent of the original legislation on the redevelopment of downtown Columbia was that it would include 15% moderate income housing units, made possible through a combination of the fees paid by Howard Hughes, and the developer's work to get financing to develop moderate income units. Five years into the development process, no financing or concrete commitments for moderate income housing units have materialized. Without legislation requiring it, we will remain far short of having 15% MIHU built in Downtown Columbia, which is the standard for other parts of Howard County. This lack of movement on affordable housing in Downtown Columbia is unacceptable to PATH and the members of our organization.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us via our Lead Organizer, Cynthia Marshall at path.iaf@gmail.com or 443-433-8054.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Robert Turner
PATH Co-Chair

Guy Moody
PATH Co-Chair