

Guiding Principles for the 21st Century Planned Community of Columbia, Maryland



Introduction

James Rouse established four goals for Columbia. These goals are often cited when the history and framework of Columbia is discussed. The Rouse goals were: ***to build a complete city; to respect the land; to provide for the growth of people; and to make a profit.***

When Wilde Lake was dedicated in 1967, James Rouse remarked that he hoped Columbia would never be finished, that the community would continue to develop and that the residents who would come to call Columbia home would be actively engaged in the process. That has proven to be true and the development and evolution of Columbia is ongoing.

As we look to the future, almost 50 years after Columbia's founding, Columbia Association (CA) acknowledges the continued relevance of those early Rouse goals. Columbia Association has established guiding principles, which we believe to be fundamental to the continued evolution and growth of Columbia as a planned community of choice in the 21st Century.

These principles are organized in five categories that are in alignment with Rouse's goals for Columbia and focus on the characteristics that make Columbia distinctive: Diversity; Stewardship; Land Use and Design; Neighborhoods and Destinations; and Community Facilities and Services.

Guiding Principles – Managing Columbia’s Growth and Change

The following guiding principles are a set of values and establish expectations for the planned community of Columbia as it continues to evolve and change.

1. Diversity / Inclusion Principles

- a. **Population Diversity.** Diversity in Columbia’s population in all respects (age, race, ethnicity, religion, economic etc.) is important. Columbia should be a community that is attractive to all generations.
- b. **Mix of Housing Types.** Housing should accommodate households of different sizes, income levels and ages/stages of life including families, singles, couples and older adults.
- c. **Civic Engagement.** Columbia is a place where civic engagement is a core part of community life.

Relationship to Rouse’s Vision: Rouse built Columbia as an “open community,” one that would be a new model to overcome racial and economic discrimination and segregation. He also incorporated amenities to enhance the lives of Columbians of various ages and stages of life.

2. Stewardship Principles

- a. **Permanent Open Space.** The number of permanent open space acres in Columbia must be retained.
- b. **Environmental Stewardship.** Focus environmental enhancement on natural resource conservation. Reforestation and conservation of tree cover should be emphasized, including the replacement of trees removed on a one-for-one basis.

Relationship to Rouse’s Vision: The distinctive tight weave of Columbia’s open spaces, residential neighborhoods and other development is a distinguishing feature of the community. These open space resources provide health, recreation, aesthetic and ecological benefits that contribute to Columbia’s quality of life.

3. Land Use and Design Principles

- a. **Land Use Mix.** Residential, shopping, recreational, cultural, and employment choices in Columbia must continue to evolve to meet the desires of its diverse population and changing regional and national economic trends.
- b. **Employment.** Columbia should continue to be Howard County’s employment hub.

- c. **Design and Architectural Excellence.** New buildings and associated civic spaces and public art should create a sense of place and exemplify excellence in design.
- d. **Redevelopment.** Accommodating new residents and jobs in Columbia is important to create the critical mass needed to support desired services, amenities and multi-modal transportation opportunities. Future growth in Columbia will be predominantly through on-going redevelopment, a key component of reinvigorating and enhancing the community.
- e. **New Housing.** The addition of new housing is vital to the viability and attractiveness of Columbia for existing and new residents. Residential options will range from the more urban Downtown Columbia setting to traditional suburban neighborhoods.

Relationship to Rouse's Vision: Rouse imagined and planned for a "complete city", not just a residential community. The focus on livable neighborhoods in close proximity to a significant amount of employment and shopping areas set it aside from other developments. He also planned for the long-term, understanding that Columbia would continue to grow and evolve over time.

4. Neighborhood and Destination Principles

- a. **Downtown Columbia.** The redevelopment of Downtown Columbia as a mixed use and walkable, urban center should reinforce the downtown area as the county's primary location for specialty/destination retail stores, places of employment, higher density multi-family residential properties, and entertainment uses.
- b. **Village Centers.** To maintain the vitality of Columbia's village centers as important local destinations and service and social hubs, village centers within highly competitive environments should be repositioned with alternatives to an anchor grocery store and with the potential addition of residential uses. For the other village centers, incremental change should include enhancements to the mix of retail and food and beverage offerings, and the potential addition of residential uses. It is important to maintain and enhance the village centers as mixed use community focal points that provide places for people to gather and socialize as well as live, shop and access programs and services.
- c. **Corridors.** Both a vision and development guidelines are needed for some of Columbia's commercial/industrial corridors. Without a planned development approach, these areas may present a host of economic, safety, environmental, aesthetic and (re)development challenges.
- d. **Neighborhood Revitalization.** In neighborhoods where the housing stock has outlived its useful life or is in poor condition, existing housing should be enhanced

through rehabilitation where possible. However, when rehabilitation is not possible or feasible, these properties present opportunities for redevelopment and residential infill that can improve the attractiveness and desirability of the neighborhood. Any new residential redevelopment should be designed as an integral part of the community.

- e. **Neighborhood Conservation.** Additions and alterations to existing properties in neighborhoods with positive physical and economic characteristics should be consistent in scale and architectural character with what is already developed.

Relationship to Rouse's Vision: Rouse envisioned quality neighborhoods organized three or four to a village that would be anchored by a village center comprised of shopping, educational and civic/recreational uses. The nine villages were developed around a Town Center, the commercial core of Columbia.

5. Community Facilities and Services

- a. **Balanced Transportation System.** Increased connectivity in and around Columbia is important to serve the community's diverse resident and employee populations. Investments in transportation should focus on systems that connect people of all ages with the places and activities they need to reach. Investments should also expand safety for all users, including drivers, transit riders, pedestrians, and cyclists. Columbia's signature pathway system should continue to be enhanced.
- b. **Public Safety.** As Columbia continues to develop and change, it is important that public safety services be responsive to these changes. Public safety is vital to the quality of life in the community.

Relationship to Rouse's Vision: Rouse placed great emphasis on, and planned for, transportation, public facilities, civic and recreational uses to serve the whole community.

How Will the Principles be Used?

The guiding principles will be used to guide those involved in shaping the future of Columbia. For instance, they would be used by CA managers who have the responsibility for planning, facilities and natural resources, finance, communications/advocacy or other CA functions related to decisions and investments impacting the Columbia community. They would also be used as CA coordinates and partners with Howard County government or the State of Maryland and as the Howard County government reviews and updates the New Town zoning regulations.