

Town Center - C

April 4, 1966

Dear Victor:

Many thanks for your letter of March 4 and your forthright statement of disagreement with our Town Center plan for Columbia.

I do not believe that we are making the mistakes of Northland. We have considered, in elaborate detail, the elements which might be included within a Town Center. We have taken the pains to dissect the activities of small cities such as Racine, Wisconsin and Charlotte, North Carolina in order to make sure that we have identified and provided for the activities and services that are a natural part of a community such as Columbia. We have worked with Larry Smith, and others to close in on the secondary uses that are found in downtown just off the main retail centers and which are so often overlooked in the Regional Shopping Center. We have studied recreation, cultural, and entertainment centers to provide richly for these activities in downtown Columbia.

The net result of this work is that the Town Center in Columbia will perhaps provide for the most comprehensive range of activities and services that has ever been contemplated in a new town center. In addition to 6 department stores and 1,800,000 square feet of retail space, we have provided for 1,500,000 square feet of office space, 800 hotel rooms, a concert hall, a university, a branch of the Peabody Conservatory of Music and the Maryland Institute of Art, the headquarters of Columbia Medicine, including a 300-bed hospital, a 25-acre culture-entertainment-recreation area (our "Tivoli Gardens") that will include restaurants, bandstands, theaters, nightclubs and discotheques, amusement park, ice rink, roller rink, small boat marina--plus the Columbia Pavilion of Music as the summer headquarters of Washington's National Symphony.

In addition, we have provided for centers for automobile sales and services and space for non-retail, non-office establishments that can well be located at the heart of the town, such as a newspaper and printing plant, research and development facilities, etc.

We have also provided extensively for high density residential use, for a 50-acre park and an 80-acre lake. All this is served by a system of roads and public transportation as well as pedestrian malls, walks, and paths.

Mr. Victor Gruen

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You may disagree with the manner in which we have related these components to one another, but you would not say, I think, that we have been inattentive. We have considered and rejected the compaction of these functions into a multi-level center because we consider it less human, less efficient, less economic.

There will be enormous variety and change of pace in the Town Center of Columbia. It will be convenient for the automobile driver but not overwhelmed by the automobile. There will be a positive difference between the environments in which people shop and those in which they work, play, study, dream. We hope and believe it will be a place in which a person feels comfortable, stimulated, delighted, friendly--as well as a place in which business works well. We have used the lake and the forest as integral parts of downtown. We will also use the enclosed mall, the roads, the walks, the plaza. Each will play an important part and they will be rationally and comfortably related to one another.

We are enthusiastic about the Town Center of Columbia. We do not regard it as a grudging compromise, for we did not seek a victory for the technology of multi-level construction. We think it will be a place that Kemija and you will enjoy--on a tourist trip, but more important, day after day, year after year--and I will look forward to meeting you there, often.

Please give my best regards to Kemija.

Sincerely,

James W. Rouse

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dbh

bcc: Mr. Walter Sondheim  
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