Date: May 18, 2017
To: Columbia Association Board of Directors (CA Board)
From: Jane Dembner, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Affairs
Subject: Planning for the Columbia Lakefront at Lake Kittamaqundi

Background and Coordination
CA has engaged urban design and landscape consultants, Groundswell Design Group (Groundswell), to prepare conceptual design ideas for the enhancement of Lakefront Plaza. At the May 25, 2017 CA Board meeting, Groundswell will present their ideas on how to further enliven and enhance the use and attractiveness of this central and highly-valued civic space in Columbia. They will also share ideas for enhancing pedestrian connections and access to and activity at the water’s edge.

Timing is important. Later this month, Howard Hughes Corporation (HHC) will begin the Downtown Columbia redevelopment process for the Lakefront Core Neighborhood and that process includes coordination among land owners. CA and HHC are the only two land owners in the Lakefront Core.

CA owns the majority of lakefront property and amenity space. HHC’s ownership is comprised mostly of developable property. However, HHC also owns amenity space parcels at the lakefront. CA and HHC’s holdings at the lakefront are seen by the public as one amenity area. Without a parcel map, no one today would be able to tell that there are two owners. As we move forward with plans, it is important that the lakefront remain an inviting and attractive and unified area and that both owners work together, so that to community users, the lakefront works as a seamless, central gathering and activity space.

Groundswell is an urban design firm specializing in place-making, public space, landscape design and hospitality. Projects range in scale from large public parks and waterfront areas, art installations to pop-up activations. For each project, Groundswell draws inspiration from the surrounding landscape, context and community to create a unique sense of place. They have worked on projects close to their home base in Philadelphia as well as across the US and abroad.

CA hired Groundswell to provide conceptual ideas to enliven and enhance the use of CA’s Lakefront civic space. They are focused on ideas (rather than detailed plans at this
point) to enhance CA’s lakefront for civic use and enjoyment, expand pedestrian access and amenity areas near the water’s edge and ways to increase visitation throughout the year, not only during special events. HHC hired Groundswell as their urban designer on their consultant team of architects, planners and engineers to design HHC-owned amenity space areas, increase visual and pedestrian connections from Little Patuxent Parkway to the Lakefront, and integrate these designs with CA’s Lakefront. Groundswell is well-familiar with CA’s holdings and the Lakefront context.

We have met several times with HHC and their consultant team on the Lakefront and have invited Greg Fitchett of HHC to attend the Board meeting.

**Next Steps**

The intent of the presentation and discussion is to share preliminary ideas for the Lakefront and to make the Board aware of the coordination between CA and HHC on the Lakefront Core. While no Board decisions are needed at this time, we look forward to Board member’s reaction to the ideas presented.

Following the presentation and refinement of the concepts, the next steps for CA would be to hire consultants to prepare a detailed master plan and implementation cost and phasing plan so that we may anticipate and plan for potential capital investments. At this point, CA has engaged with Groundswell only for the upfront conceptual work.