



To: Columbia Association Board of Directors  
From: Jessica Bellah, Acting Director, Planning and Community Affairs  
Subj: Lakefront North FDP-DC-L-2  
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## **Introduction**

At its October 10th work session, the Columbia Association Board of Directors (Board) will be discussing Howard Research and Development's (HRD) development proposal for a section of the Lakefront Neighborhood in Downtown Columbia. This memo provides an overview of the required development review process and opportunities for public comment; summarizes the development proposal; and outlines CA staff identified issues and related activities to date.

## **Downtown Development Project Review Process and Opportunities for Public Comment**

When development is proposed in Downtown Columbia, the following submission documents are required: a Final Development Plan (FDP), Neighborhood Specific Design Guidelines, a Neighborhood Concept Plan, and the Neighborhood Specific Implementation Plan.

The Final Development Plan pertains only to those properties included within its boundaries. It provides the acreage and parcel description, the proposed use and associated maximum gross floor area, the maximum number of residential units, maximum building heights, and descriptions of the proposed Downtown Community Commons, their minimum size and general location. These features will be further refined in subsequent Site Development Plan (SDP) submissions.

The purpose of the Neighborhood Specific Design Guidelines (NSDG) is to express what character-defining urban design criteria will differentiate the Lakefront Neighborhood from the other five downtown neighborhoods and carry forward the vision outlined in the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines. This document provides narrative and illustrative descriptions of the desired built environment. NSDG are developed and submitted in tandem with the first FDP submitted for a particular neighborhood and supersede criteria and planning guidance found in the Downtown Columbia Plan and Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines. Subsequent development proposals within the same neighborhood may either develop under the approved NSDG or propose modifications.

The Neighborhood Concept Plan (NCP) essentially shows a block and street layout for the entire neighborhood and must demonstrate how the proposed FDP works within this plan. The NCP shows

how both the FDP and the overall neighborhood plan conforms with the relevant descriptions, plans and diagrams included in the Downtown Columbia Plan. It also incorporates previously approved FDPs and Environmental Restoration SDP areas within the neighborhood

While individual parcels will be developed according to market conditions and subsequent SDP’s may redistribute where and when uses are built in a particular FDP or neighborhood, the Neighborhood Specific Implementation plan outlines the phasing schedule for development of the FDP area compared to the overall development planned throughout Downtown Columbia. This includes outlining the required transportation, amenity, utility, and other infrastructure that will be developed in concert with build out of the FDP area.

The FDP process for Downtown Columbia development requires a number of steps. Outlined below are project-specific steps and dates (as known) for the HRD Lakefront North proposal. In addition, opportunities for public comment are highlighted.

Development Review Process Step	Date	Opportunity for Community Input
✓ Pre-submission community meeting	11/13/2018	In person
✓ Design Advisory Panel meeting	11/28/2018	Written input only
✓ Submission of Plans & County Staff Technical Review		
HRD submission of FDP & related documents to DPZ	1/17/2019	Input to DPZ by phone, email or letter
DPZ Subdivision Review Committee written comments & request for revised plans	3/13/2019	
HRD written response and submission of revised FDP & related documents to DPZ	4/30/2019	
DPZ Subdivision Review Committee written comments & request for revised plans	6/10/2019	
HRD written response and submission of revised FDP & related documents to DPZ	7/25/2019	
✓ County staff determination that application is complete	9/19/2019	
⇒ DPZ schedules Planning Board public hearing – PB 448 <b>Decision Making Meeting</b>	11/7/2019	Community input at the meeting, by email, or letter

# Overview of Lakefront North Development Proposal

FDP-DC-L-2 pertains to a majority of the HRD owned properties within the northern portion of the Lakefront Neighborhood of Downtown Columbia. The proposal includes five blocks/building sites, a network of private streets, and amenity spaces that will consist of a neighborhood square, the Wincopin Green and the Warfield Promenade amenity spaces.

The FDP covers a 12.8 acre portion of the Lakefront Neighborhood located just north of the Lakefront Core area. This area is currently developed with 155,912 square feet of office space split between one standing and one previously demolished building. The proposal calls for the demolition of the existing Sterrett Building and utilization of the previously demolished Ridgley Building site. Other developed area within the FDP boundary includes surface and garage parking.

While specific building programs for building blocks/sites in the Lakefront Neighborhood are not prescribed until the SDP stage, the overall development program proposed is a maximum of some 775 residential units, 150,000 square feet of retail and restaurant uses and 200,000 square feet of office uses. HRD’s Justification Statement indicates that they intend to utilize the proposed uses in the following manner:

Residential	125 age-restricted apartments and another 650 non-age-restricted units
Retail	50,000 sf general retail 20,000 sf restaurant, including a potential food hall 80,000 sf fitness/athletic club
Office	200,000 sf medical offices

The proposed development levels of the revised FDP are significantly reduced from those presented at last fall’s pre-submission community meeting. While the amount of residential and retail use development has remained relatively the same, the proposed amount of office space is substantially reduced from the previously proposed 1.05 million sf. This change better aligns with the planning guidance from the Downtown Columbia Plan for the Northern portion of the Lakefront Neighborhood to primarily serve as a residential hub with some office uses.



 FDP-DC-L-2  
 CA Owned or Leased Property

HRD's submitted Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines indicate that the specific land use and design vision for the neighborhood will be a Health/Wellness/Fitness District. The Northern section of the Lakefront Neighborhood is described in the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines as a modestly scaled, primarily residential and hotel community oriented toward Lake Kittamaqundi. The scale and massing of buildings were described as mid-rise residential and some office buildings. The Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines also envision the area as lively and the mixed-use retail and restaurant components proposed in the FDP will help achieve this.

## **CA Staff Identified Issues and Related CA Staff Activities to Address These to Date**

### *Multi-use Pathway*

A ten-foot wide multi-use pathway is planned along the eastern side of Little Patuxent Parkway. This will be a great benefit to improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation within and around Downtown Columbia. CA owns a strip of land along the corridor that currently includes a sidewalk in this location. CA's land holdings vary in width along the corridor, but in this area, it is approximately 30 feet wide. While the land is owned by CA, CA planning staff understand that the requirement to build the pathway would fall upon the developer of the adjacent lands. In this case, HRD. Of course, the applicant would have to request and receive an easement from CA to access and construct this pathway on CA land.

A few potential issues related to the pathway have been identified by CA planning staff. The first is that the current FDP boundaries do not extend fully to Little Patuxent Parkway and do not incorporate the CA land corridor. This may not be an issue as prior multi-use pathways associated with the development of Downtown Columbia have been constructed with a separate SDP and no FDP requirement. Staff is working to confirm this. The second issue is that the existing Exxon Station fronting the parkway is also not scheduled for redevelopment or inclusion in this FDP, however, any development of a multi-use pathway associated with this FDP should also include this section of frontage so as not to leave a gap in the transportation network. And the third issue is that throughout the Lakefront Design Guidelines the language referencing this trail connection indicates that it is an optional or desired but not required element. CA planning staff would prefer that the language of the guidelines be updated to make clear that the shared use connection is a development mandate in the Lakefront Neighborhood whether on CA property or other property.

CA planning staff have asked DPZ to clarify and confirm that the planned multi-use pathway will be required to be constructed by the adjacent developer in the Lakefront Neighborhood and to ensure that both the neighborhood design guidelines and FDP reflect this.

### *Amenity Spaces -Wincopin Green*

The proposed Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines and FDP envision the Wincopin Green amenity space to be located in the southeast quadrant of the Sterrett Place and Wincopin Circle intersection, one block north of the location shown in the Downtown Columbia Plan. This change is being proposed in

order to accommodate a more desirable street and block plan and avoid undesirable views of an existing loading dock and service entrance. Although the purpose for this change is reasonable, the relocation of Wincopin Green to a more active street corner location does alter the original intended use of this space.

As outlined in the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines, the original vision for Wincopin Green was a tucked away contemplative/passive area with space for children's play and dog walking. While the proposed Lakefront Design Guidelines note that the green will still retain some of its intended use as a passive gathering space, it is important that the design guidelines continue forward the more specific intent of this amenity space or identify how other amenity areas in the neighborhood will accommodate them.

CA planning staff recommends that CA ask DPZ and/or the Planning Board to include language in the Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines indicating that these activities should be appropriately accommodated within at least one of the proposed amenity space areas within the FDP proposal and revise the FDP as needed.

### *Building Height*

HRD has proposed to increase the maximum building height from 9 stories and 120 ft. to 9 stories and 145 ft. within the FDP area. HRD indicates that the purpose of this change is to accommodate greater ceiling heights of 22 ft. on the first and second floors and 14-foot ceiling height per floor for office uses. The submitted Lakefront Neighborhood Design Manual includes language indicating that medical and health related office uses generally require taller ceilings than other office uses. CA planning staff has concerns about the potential impact the additional height would have on the character of the neighborhood as a modestly scaled, primarily residential neighborhood if it does not also reflect the Downtown Plan's primary goal of encouraging a variety of building forms and heights.

In both the Downtown Columbia Plan and Downtown-wide Design Guidelines, the maximum building height plan not only sets a maximum number of stories expressed as an "up to" clause but also a maximum building height in linear feet expressed in an "and not to exceed" clause. This is an and clause that should be respected and the Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines and FDPs should be approved to reflect both conditions. As written, while on paper the proposed building height is maintained at 9 stories, the reality is that from the exterior of the building, the greater linear feet height is more comparable to an 11 or 12 story building. While it is up to the discretion of the developer to determine what floor to ceiling heights are most viable for the success of their development, these are decisions they should make within the guidance of the Downtown Columbia Plan.

The primary goal of the Downtown Plan's recommended building height guidance is to achieve a variety of height within a neighborhood. To achieve this, the Downtown wide design guidelines do recommend modification of maximum height sub zones and encourages heights to vary by building within each neighborhood from the minimum to the maximum outlined in Exhibit F of the Downtown Columbia Plan. However, FDP-DC-L-2 proposes this modification in linear feet height increase across all building sites

within the FDP, which does not achieve the intent or particular goals of the Downtown Columbia Plan. While it may be appropriate to increase the linear feet height for specific areas in the FDP boundaries to accommodate market opportunities for specific use goals in the neighborhood, this should be tiered within the FDP area and not throughout.

While the specific profile and massing (the shape of the buildings) will be addressed at the SDP stage, CA Planning staff has concerns about the massing of the proposed buildings at this point in the process as described in the Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines and the FDP. As a result, staff recommends that CA ask DPZ and/or the Planning Board to include language in the Lakefront Neighborhood Design Guidelines and the FDP indicating that the architecture of the four main building sites in the FDP shall provide for a variety of heights within their own footprint and in relationship to one another and that this relationship should be directly proportional to offset the added height requested in association with specific office land uses. For example: 9 stories and 120 ft. is the base maximum building height permitted in the FDP area, except that, for specific medical office uses, the final height of a building accommodating such uses may be increased to 145 ft. provided that the maximum height of other building(s) in the FDP area be reduced by an equal or greater reduction in linear height. Architectural guidance in the design manual should prescribe how best to articulate such offsets and the relationship between these buildings.

### **Board Discussion**

These and other issues are to be discussed at the October 10 Board work session. CA planning staff will be on hand to provide additional information and answer the Board's questions related to the proposed Lakefront North development.

Please note that the staff analysis presented in this memo is based on the most recent publically available plan documents and relevant submission material. Such materials may have been altered or updated to reflect DPZ comments. It is anticipated that the final versions of these documents will be submitted to DPZ within the next several weeks leading up to the Planning Board meeting. Staff will review these documents as they become available and determine if the issues raised in the memo or in the Board's discussion have been reasonably addressed.