



Oakland Mills Community Association

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The Oakland Mills Village Board and cOMmunity have great interest in the Department of Planning and Zoning's NT Zoning evaluation with the NT Task Force. We realize that Columbia is 58 years old, and a review of NT zoning's viability for the next 20-30 years is warranted.

New Town Zoning - NT

NT zoning has been extremely successful. It was the tool that the Rouse Company used to realize James Rouse's vision.

James Rouse established **four key goals for Columbia**:

- **Build a complete city:** Rouse aimed to create a comprehensive urban environment that would serve the needs of its residents.
- **Respect the land:** Rouse emphasized the importance of preserving natural resources and the environment.
- **Provide for the growth of people:** Rouse sought to foster the development and growth of the community.
- **Make a profit:** Although not the primary goal, Rouse also aimed to generate economic returns from the development.

Sources: Columbimaryland.org, Preservationmaryland.org, and Columbia Association.

The Rouse Company created the unincorporated city of Columbia and used New Town zoning with the covenants to guide development. That process delivered one of the best places to live in the United States as rated by U.S. News, Money Magazine, Sperling's Best Places, Niche.com and Livability.

If changes to NT zoning and the covenants are desired, how easily can they be amended? According to a presentation to the Columbia Association Board in 2023 by one of the original Rouse Company lawyers, the covenants and NT zoning are almost impossible to change. Rouse designed it that way to preserve the integrity of Columbia. The Columbia Association legal counsel noted the same point in a presentation to Village Board Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Village Managers earlier this year.

Our Board realizes that some changes would be good. Approximately ten years ago each Columbia village created its Village Center Community Plan that would guide any future redevelopment of the Village Center area within the context of NT zoning. Oakland Mills VCCP calls for more upscale owner-occupied housing if any can be added. The VCCP is filed with the Department of Planning and Zoning.

NT Zoning has been very successful. Leave NT Zoning intact.

Moderate Income Housing Units - MIHU

Affordable housing is a current concern in the county, but what is the definition of affordable housing? How can it be defined in terms of Area Median Income?

The NT Zoning Task Force is being asked to look at Moderate Income Housing Units requirements for NT. How would blanket MIHU requirements throughout NT zoned areas affect the FARM rates?

High percentages of students who receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARM) in many Columbia schools are a major concern. There are 13 Title 1 elementary schools in Howard County per the HCPSS website. Seven are in Columbia. Should all Title 1 school attendance areas be exempt from any below AMI housing mandate (MIHUs)? Should all elementary school attendance areas with more than the county average FARM rate (30.2%) be exempt from any below AMI housing mandate?

Accessory Dwelling Units - ADU

The NT Zoning Task Force is being asked to look at providing ADUs as a matter of “by right” and not “by condition.” “By right” could lead to a significant increase in density. Controls on ADUs that are provided by “by condition” zoning are needed to safeguard communities. “By condition” provides the necessary oversight to preserve community integrity so that villages are not overwhelmed. All ADUs must count toward density. If not, we are ignoring reality.

Conclusions

All zoning decisions must be considered within the context of impact on infrastructure. How are roads, parking, water and sewer, schools, hospitals, services, etc. affected? We must maintain and enhance community integrity.

All housing decisions must move the FARM rate at the affected elementary school toward the county average. We must enhance educational opportunities for all students.

The Oakland Mills Village Board wants the Rouse Vision to continue to make Columbia a great place to live, work, play and visit.

Thank you,

Oakland Mills Community Association Village Board