

MEETING NOTES

Meeting No. 2

Date: July 22, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting (Webex Platform)

Virtual meetings are recorded. The recording of this meeting is located on the project website: [New Town Task Force | Howard County](#)

Attendance Record:

A. Task Force Member	Present/Absent
Nicole Campbell	Absent
Nina Basu	Present
Rene DuBois	Present
Brian England	Present
Karin Emery	Present
Greg DesRoches	Present
Ian Kennedy	Present
Michael Golibersuch	Present
Ryan Hermann	Present
Tim May	Present
Joan Lancos	Present
Collin Sullivan	Absent
Judelle Campbell	Present
Kristi Smith	Present
Matt Abrams	Present
David Costello	Present
Robbyn Harris	Present
Sharon Cooper-Kerr	Present
Ashley Vaughan	Present
Stacy Spann	Present
Fran LoPresti	Present

Other Attendees

Department of Planning and Zoning Staff: Mary Kendall, Kristin O'Connor, Sarah Latimer, Jeff DelMonico, Hannah Weber.

New Town Task Force Consultant Team (JMT): Jennifer Ray, Tobi Louise Kester, Scott Rasmussen, Cassidy Burlace.

Two members of the public were in attendance.

B. Welcome, Introductions, and Recap

- The project team announced that the meeting is being recorded.
- The project team provided an overview on how Task Force members may operate WebEx settings and reiterated that cameras should remain on during the meeting for continued engagement.
- The project team reviewed the agenda which includes a quick recap of previous meetings, reviewed information requests and the introduction of the SWOT analysis.
- Two task force members were unable to attend the first meeting due to prior commitments and were provided an opportunity to introduce themselves.
- The project team asked task force members for a brief recap of what resonated with them most from the first meeting. The responses included:
 - the general consensus of the branding of Columbia
 - the value of green spaces.
 - appreciation for the work to date on the project
 - the diversity of people involved on the taskforce.

C. Task Force Purpose and Ground Rules

- The project team reaffirmed the goals and themes of this committee. Went over ground rules of the meeting that includes raising your hand before speaking.

D. Overall Schedule and Expectations

- The project team reviewed the overall schedule and anticipated milestones. As of now, the task force is in the visioning stage.
- The project team requested everyone provide their expectations for the meeting. Below are expectations that were expressed:
 - interest in hearing what others had stated for their homework/vision statement.

- concern that this group cannot make any changes to New Town Zoning and if any recommendations from the group could legally change covenants.
 - want to better understand the scope and role of the task force and its recommendations.
 - interest in learning more about the case studies identified in the agenda.
- The project team responded to several of the questions that were brought forward during the expectations portion of the meeting.
 - Questions were raised about the purpose of the vision statement and how it is related to discussing zoning. The project team explained that the task force is not identifying a new vision statement for the County, nor for Columbia, as both already exist. The purpose of this vision statement is for what Columbia (New Town Zoning District) will look like in the future so any recommendations coming forward can look to this statement as the “litmus test” to determine if it meets the needs to continue discussion. The project team responded that we need to make sure Columbia has the opportunity to redevelop as the future unfolds 50 years from now as there is no longer a clean slate. It is important to honor and protect the old slate of Columbia.
 - Questions were raised about covenants. The project team acknowledged that while covenants are important to understand, especially given their large impact on Columbia, the Task Force’s charge is to make recommendations regarding zoning and the contents of the New Town (NT) Zoning District, as outlined in Section 125.0 of the Howard County Zoning Code. The County has authority to amend the zoning code but does not have jurisdiction over covenants since they are private land-owner agreements.

E. Meeting No. 1 Additional Information

- The project team introduced the Meeting 1 Minutes draft. Discussion noted that edits were requested to the minutes, and that approval of minutes with a formal vote would occur at the third Task Force Meeting on September 30, 2025. The issue of approving the minutes was tabled.

- A request was made to see more substance and details of conversation in the meeting minutes. Indicated that the minutes posted looked like an outline instead of meeting minutes.
 - Task Force Decision: Revised meeting minutes will be sent, and a review of those revised minutes will occur in the next task force meeting.
- Meeting Materials: The project team reviewed the expectations for materials.
- Administrative Procedures Act: The project team reviewed the Administrative Procedures Act.
- Open Meetings Act: The project team reviewed the Open Meetings Act.
- The project team outlined the roles of zoning versus covenants, and where they overlap. In addition, the team reviewed the layers of what goes into the New Town Zoning and what this Task Force is looking at to identify recommendations (Zoning Regulation Section 125.0 governing the process and policies for the Preliminary Development Plan, Comprehensive Sketch Plans, Final Development Plans, and Site Development Plan).
 - There was a disagreement in the definition of “covenants” as presented and cited the Sousa case and a request about having experts in the room, including lawyers, to be able to speak to the intention of covenants when they were written.
 - A specific court case was brought forward, citing a different situation than was presented.
 - There was a question about how zoning regulations interface with CA and Village Boards, and it was recommended that an attorney be present to speak about zoning law and implications of the recommendations.
 - It was suggested that the County may enforce covenants as well.
- There was a request for each of the entities/agencies speak about their responsibilities.

F. Case Studies

- The project team briefly reviewed the three case studies (Montgomery Village Maryland, Reston Virginia, and Greenbelt Maryland) and presented the time they were developed, the approximate size, and the main highlights of each location that was also using New Town zoning concepts. The details of each are located in the presentation.

G. Visions Exercise

- The project team reviewed the purpose of the vision exercise and that it is not intended that the Task Force create a new visioning statement for the County, or the Columbia Association, but rather to create a vision for the task force to use as a barometer against which their zoning recommendations can be measured.
- The project team reviewed the specific vision statements for the County and Columbia Association noting the similarities in both of them.
- The project team reviewed the output of the homework assignments submitted through the word cloud (provided in the presentation) noting that word clouds function so that the more a word is used, the larger and bolder it is illustrated graphically.
- With this information, the task force was split between four breakout sessions in which they were paired with a facilitator to help identify a statement(s) or grouping of words that the small group could come to concurrence on.
- The groups sessions lasted for 15 minutes. At the end of the breakout sessions each of the facilitators added the group's output to the presentation, which was further discussed as an overall group.

Breakout Group Assignments:

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Facilitators	Tobi Kester	Cassidy Burlace	Scott Rasmussen	Jennifer Ray
County	Mary Kendall	Kristin O'Connor	Hannah Weber	Jeff DelMonico
	Ashely Vaughan	David Costello	Greg DesRoches	Brian England
	Fran LoPresti	Judelle Campbell	Michael Golibersuch	Ian Kennedy
	Matt Abrams	Karin Emery	Robbyn Harris	Joan Lancos

	Renee DuBois	Sharon Cooper-Kerr	Stacey Spann	Nina Basu
		Tim May		Ryan Hermann
				Kristi Smith

- Breakout Group Notes:
 - **Notes from Group 1** Vision Exercise
 - Request - Word cloud - which words are really important to you in this grouping + then read the responses from the visioning exercise
 - Group 1: What words resonate with each of you?
 - “connection” - applies to so many things - land, people, process; the word community feels like a given.
 - **“nature and place”** - feels that Columbia is in harmony with and close to nature -grew up in NYC and didn’t really have access to nature, so Columbia is different - nature is important because it impacts your demeanor. With regards to place, Columbia is a **“unique place”** - not so much in terms of architecture, but because of the people - the people connect together to make the place.
 - **“connection”** is good but the question was asked: what’s the purpose of this vision - are you creating a vision for what the zoning will be or the community of Columbia could be? Are we creating a vision for Columbia? Are we changing the vision for Columbia Association? Should we be asking more neighbors?
 - Does NT Zoning contain the outparcels?
 - A response was made by a Task Force member that this is a vision that guides where Columbia will go.
 - Another member chimed in and said this is about the place and how we might change zoning.
 - The Facilitator said that this exercise is about informing zoning changes
 - **“Housing, growth, growing”** - these relate to needing more development and housing for more people
 - **Summary - connection, people, place housing, growth, nature** - Suggestion: “Columbia is a place where everyone can be welcome and connected to people and nature”

- **Notes from Group 2 Vision Exercise**

- Request - Word cloud - which words are really important to you in this grouping + then read the responses from the visioning exercise

Group 1: What words resonate with each of you?

- **Community**
- **Integrated**
- **People**
- **Inclusivity**
- Covenants was mentioned by a member.
- Additionally it was asked how the county would mandate diversity in zoning and the concerned with changing New Town Zoning as and changes would increase property restrictions.
- There was expressed concern that there will be conflicts with covenants if there are changes in zoning.
- A Task Force member asked what the problem was that we are trying to solve and suggested that if its village centers - they are dying, however Columbia is located in a great location (between WDC/Balto), has good schools, and has areas that are built up all around us.
- Another member asked the group: what is it that you don't want to lose from zoning? What zoning challenges do we want to change? The member suggested that this group should focus on likes and dislikes of the zoning and asked that the group focus the discussion on what the zoning can do better, what's working, what's not. It was suggested that the discussions also center around how the zoning is it helpful to developers and how is it problematic.
- A member shared that the zoning was his reason for investing in property in Columbia for its flexibility and broad range/diversity of uses. He does not want to see the loss of flexibility in the zone.

- **Notes from Group 3 Vision Exercise**

- Request - Word cloud - which words are really important to you in this grouping + then read the responses from the visioning exercise
- Group 3: What words resonate with each of you?
 - the vision statement should work for everyone not just for people in today's age

- A vision statement is too premature at this stage
 - Do we continue to have new town zoning and the covenants.
 - Rouse brought housing styles that were not seen before and was a breath of fresh air for the Baltimore region and that he spurred economic prosperity that did not seem possible in this area
 - leadership from CA and DPZ needs to move Columbia forward.
 - **infrastructure** needs to be maintained
 - New Town Zoning needs to be perfect for the lucky 105-110k individuals who get to live there
 - need to keep the population steady at 105-110k as it goes against the original spirit of Columbia which thrived off inclusivity and socioeconomic integration
- **Notes from Group 4 Vision Exercise**
- Request - Word cloud - which words are really important to you in this grouping + then read the responses from the visioning exercise
 - Group 4: What words resonate with each of you?
 - **Community** - people are thinking towards the future as a place to live.
 - **dynamic and thrive**
 - Community means different things to different people. It's not surprising that community is most prominent word in the word cloud.
 - **Play** is so small. I don't think of Columbia as a commuter town.
 - Play, I think of live - that's more meaningful to me.
 - This tells me that we're embracing that Columbia can get better
 - The Next America.
 - Many were sold on Columbia as being the Next America. And **"People"** is an important element, we need to connect people more than ever. It's the essence of our community.
 - The 15 minute city is the trend of the moment. Of all the things I whine about Columbia, but with thoughtful redevelopment, the overall design should support new opportunities.
 - Columbia is a model for the rest of the County. If we want more housing, there's room for another village in the west. Take the lessons from Columbia and move out there.
 - The Maple Lawn community is another world. It's poorly designed, they didn't take anything from Columbia.
 - Columbia should be Intra-connected.

- **Thrive and vibrancy** should be in the vision.
 - Since Columbia was the first integrated city, **diversity** is important.
- The Task Force came back together following the breakout meetings to discuss each group's findings.
 - It was noted that several answers focused on **inclusivity and diversity** of the community.
 - A comment was made that some in the group are struggling and missing to embrace the future of Columbia. Think it is important to honor those values but also have a forward-looking approach for a future. We do not want to prohibit the visions in the future.
 - A comment was made on how Columbia needs to value its uniqueness. You will know you are in Columbia by just walking a couple of blocks.
 - Breakout Session Output:
 1. COMMUNITY: Intra-connected, vibrant, thriving, growing, place for everything, garden city, DIVERSITY
 2. To be respectful of past ordinances and bylaws, but to continue to grow an inclusive and integrated Community.
 3. Inclusiveness, people, community, diversity, spirit of Columbia maintained, nature, walkable and green space
 4. People connecting; housing, growth and development, connection to land: people, process
 - Combined Output
 - People and Community, Diversity and Inclusivity, Open Space, and green space aid in maintaining the spirit of Columbia
 - Embrace the future while honoring the values that Columbia was based upon
 - Columbia is a place that needs to value its uniqueness / based on its history.

H. Online Survey Information

- The project team introduced the topics for the online survey questions that under development for the general public for the two public meetings. The online survey will consider the phrases we just pulled together in the breakout exercise and

address the strengths of Columbia. The project team advised task force members to send any recommendations to DPZ.

I. Introduction to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

- The project team introduced and summarized the SWOT analysis process and how our past conversations will be used.

J. Homework for Next Meeting

- The project team reviewed the homework assignment for the next meeting outlines in the presentation.
- Several questions were asked regarding the example to use, and it was identified that it should be an example that people could speak to if they did not have a personal example of their own.

K. Wrap-Up

- The project team quickly reviewed the materials covered during this evening's task force as well as major topics that will be used in the pending series of meetings that will pertain to the SWOT analysis.
- The project team noted that there will be no meeting in August, and the next Task Force meeting will be in September (virtual).
- The project team noted that there will be a public meeting in September and if individuals have ideas for the best place to hold this in-person to reach out to DPZ to let them know.

L. Open Comments

- The project team asked if any other comments regarding the meeting be emailed to DPZ.

M. Adjourn

Please Email DPZ staff recommendations of a location for the upcoming public meeting in September.