

Most hopefuls oppose downtown Columbia redevelopment plan

Sara Michael, The Examiner
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Howard County -

Traffic engineering firm Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart Inc., based in Orlando, Fla., found that traffic in downtown Columbia would be unbearable if the maximum proposed residences and businesses are built.

Up to 5,500 additional apartments and 6.5 million square feet of office space could be built in the next 30 years, as Columbia's Town Center is redeveloped into an urban area.

What would you do to ensure that the traffic concerns are alleviated?

County Council candidates

Calvin Ball: "Work to ensure that we do not have 5,500 additional apartments and up to 6.5 million square feet of office space unless there is adequate infrastructure and community input."

Tom D'Asto: "I've stated that the idea of developing Columbia into an ultra-urban center is an idea that I flatly reject. "The 'Next American City' doesn't need to be another typical city."

Don Dunn: "Alleviate is not the correct term. Prevention is the answer. General Growth Properties, the CPRA and the county are all involved. Nobody is in charge. A charter change will make the county responsible."

Gina Ellrich: "I believe more research is necessary to better understand the full impact of further development of Columbia and the traffic implications that would result. I do not support 5,500 units."

Greg Fox: "I don't concur with the assumption that Town Center will redevelop into an urban area.

"The study and input from stakeholders should be evaluated to determine the appropriate development mix."

Tony Salazar: "I support a moratorium on Town Center development so that we can create a great plan that properly addresses traffic and other concerns. I will oppose high-density development."

Mary Kay Sigaty: "Support road improvements and increased public transit options; investigate perimeter parking with shuttle bus for commercial users; ultimately approve only residential density and commercial space that can be supported."

Jen Terrasa: "I believe that 5,500 additional units and 6.5 million square feet are too much for downtown Columbia, and the traffic study is proof."

Donna Thewes: "I would not approve 5,500 units. I would meet with residents, study the present roads and create a plan with limited height restrictions and growth we can all live with."

Courtney Watson: “I would require independent traffic studies and a plan to manage traffic be prepared and funded prior to approving new construction. I would make developers pay more for road improvements.”

COUNTY EXECUTIVE CANDIDATES

Chris Merdon: “I will not make any decisions ... for one year to understand the impact of density to traffic, the environment, cultural amenities and ... infrastructure. I will work with the community and council ... on long-range plans.”

Ken Ulman: “I believe the maximums suggested are out of the question. Any master plan considered by my administration will have much less development, certainly no more than our infrastructure can handle.”

Stephen Wallis: “I would manage the process differently, reviewing community input, conferring with General Growth Properties and synthesizing Glatting results to provide a pedestrian-oriented, exciting, but scaled-back product with appropriate infrastructure support.”

Howard County executive:

Chris Merdon (R)

Ken Ulman (D)

Stephen Wallis (I)

County Council:

» District 1: Ellicott City, Elkridge and Hanover

Tony Salazar (R)

Courtney Watson (D)

» District 2: Elkridge, Ellicott City, Jessup and Columbia Villages of Long Reach and Oakland Mills

Gina Ellrich (R)

Calvin Ball (D, incumbent)

» District 3: Allview/Arrowhead, North Laurel, Savage, Guilford, Jessup and Columbia Villages of Kings Contrivance and Owen Brown

Donna Thewes (R)

Jen Terrasa (D)

» District 4: Columbia Villages of Dorsey Search, Harper’s Choice, Hickory Ridge, River Hill, Town Center and Wilde Lake, and parts of Clarksville, Highland and Fulton

Tom D’Asto (R)

Mary Kay Sigaty (D)

» District 5: West Howard County

Greg Fox (R)

Don Dunn (D)

Source: Howard County Board of Elections

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