



Inner Arbor Trust, Inc.
10630 Little Patuxent Parkway
Century Plaza Suite 315
Columbia MD 21044
w 410 - 740 - 0029
f 410 - 740 - 0362
inARTrust.org

MERRIWEATHER PARK AT SYMPHONY WOODS



May 27, 2014

Ms. Jessamine Duvall
Village Manager
Hickory Ridge Village
The Hawthorn Center
6175 Sunny Spring
Columbia, MD 21044

Dear Jess:

The Village of Hickory Ridge means a great deal to me, personally. I have been a resident of Hickory Ridge for the past 26 years, living on a Columbia Association spur of beautiful wooded open space that connects to the precious Middle Patuxent Environmental Area. More importantly, the Trust and the development of a world-class park in Symphony Woods was originally borne out of my conversations, literally on the path, with my Hickory Ridge neighbor and representative on the Columbia Association Board, Gregg Schwind.

I look forward to briefing the Hickory Ridge Village Board about the plans for Merriweather Park at Symphony Woods and taking a walking tour of the site. Until that time, here is an update on the past six months, followed by a brief history of events.

Update (December 2013 to May 2014)

- On December 2, 2013, the Trust held its Pre-submission Community Meeting. At this public meeting the Trust and its design and engineering team unveiled and delineated the plans for the Symphony Woods property. The meeting resulted in many press accounts of the plan, as well as a very favorable editorial by the Baltimore Sun. (Click here for the [Baltimore Sun article](#)).
- On December 11, 2013, after the Trust publicly and thoroughly disclosed its plans for the Park, Columbia Association executed the Perpetual Easement Agreement with the Trust.
- On December 18, 2013, the Trust executed a \$3.5 Million Grant Agreement with Howard County.
- On December 28, 2013, the Trust submitted its IRS Form 1023 application for tax exempt status, and on January 31, 2014 the Trust was determined by the IRS to be to be a 501(c)(3) charitable, tax exempt organization, allowing the Trust to seek broad financial support for the development of the Park.
- On February 26, 2014, the Trust's entire design and engineering team presented to the Howard County Design Advisory Panel (DAP) for two hours, after which the DAP voted unanimously to support the design as submitted. (Click her for [Design Advisory Panel minutes](#) and click here for the [Baltimore Sun article](#))
- On March 26, 2014, Trust Board Member Martin G. Knott, Jr. was made Chair of the Trust. Martin was appointed by Governor O'Malley to the Board of the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), where he serves as Chair. Martin is also the Chair of the Governor's Workforce Investment Board, and Chair of the Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation, among other civic and charitable responsibilities. Martin is co-owner of Knott Mechanical, a commercial HVAC and plumbing service provider, and Wye River Technologies, a software development company.
- On April 28, 2014, the Trust formally submitted its Site Development Plans to Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning. A hearing before the Planning Board is expected in late summer 2014.



MERRIWEATHER PARK AT SYMPHONY WOODS

Ms. Jessamine Duvall
May 27, 2014
Page 2

– On May 21, 2014, the Howard County Council approved County Executive Ulman’s recommendation of an additional \$1.5 Million of funding for the Trust in a Challenge Grant. This brings Howard County’s total support to \$5 Million and, with CA’s seed capital, the Trust’s total funding is \$6.6 Million.

– On May 21, 2014, the Howard County Council approved \$10 Million in funding to go to our sister organization in the Merriweather - Symphony Woods Neighborhood, The Downtown Columbia Arts and Cultural Commission, for the redevelopment of Merriweather Post Pavilion. (The Trust and the Commission have two interlocking Board Members, as Trust Board Member Debbie Ellinghaus is the Chair of the Commission, and the President of CA is an Ex Officio Member of both Boards.) With Howard Hughes Corporation’s funding included, a \$19 Million renovation of Merriweather Post Pavilion will commence planning immediately, and the whole neighborhood will be planned as per the Howard County Plan for Downtown Columbia mandate (see below). The Trust will be an active participant in this process. (Click here for the [Baltimore Sun article](#))

History (2010 to 2013)

To provide context, below is a brief history of events which led to the Inner Arbor Trust plan for Symphony Woods.

– On February 1, 2010, the Howard County Council enacted into law the Plan for Downtown Columbia. The Plan defines the Merriweather - Symphony Woods Neighborhood, for which the mandate is that it be, “*a new kind of culture park, where the landscape becomes a setting for arts, culture and civic uses.*” (Click here for the [2010 Howard County Plan for Downtown Columbia](#))

– On July 13, 2011, Columbia Association presented a plan to the Howard County Design Advisory Panel (DAP). CA had paid planning consultant, Cy Paumier, to author this plan. A long term resident of Columbia, Mr. Paumier worked for three years for The Rouse Company, from 1969 to 1972. (Click here for the [CA/Paumier Design Presentation](#))

– The DAP was critical of the CA/Paumier Plan, and the then DAP Chair, Rob Hollis, wrote in the official opinion of the Panel, “...without stronger design influence Symphony Woods Park will be just an assortment of paths, a fountain, a café and a set of stairs. At this point, I fail to see strength of design in the Symphony Woods Park submission.” (Click here for the [DAP 2011 Opinion](#))

– The July 15, 2011 Baltimore Sun article on the DAP’s reaction to the CA/Paumier Plan reported on remarks by DAP Member, Mohammad Saleem, “I don’t hear or see a vision or narrative, or a description of what is the goal for the park. What are the resources that you see that are valuable, that need to be kept, enhanced, expanded, preserved? What is the big picture for this park? ... It’s not just a gathering place.” (Click here for the [Baltimore Sun article](#))

– On September 22, 2011, I first became involved with the restoration of Symphony Woods, commenting at the Columbia Association Board Meeting during Resident Speakout. (Click here for the podcast of the [McCall Speakout](#) , for which the password is “McCall Speakout”.)

– On July 12, 2012, the CA/Paumier Plan was taken to the Planning Board for Final Development Plan approval. (The Final Development Plan, despite its name, is not at all the finale step, but only the midpoint of Howard County’s 16 step process.) (Click here for the [CA/Paumier Plan](#))

– The July 12, 2012 proposed CA/Paumier Plan was still composed of two straight and very dominant pedestrian malls in a cruciform configuration, with a fountain at their intersection. The CA/Paumier Plan also included what planners call a “bubble diagram”, which called for and located a Shared Use Amphitheater, a Play Activity Area, a Shared Use Pavilion (a “possible signature building” of Food & Beverage and Toilets), and a Woodland Garden Area.

– In formal testimony before the Planning Board, the CA/Paumier planning team stated that just their proposed paths and fountain plaza alone would require 63 trees to be removed. (Click here for the [Planning Board Decision & Order](#))



MERRIWEATHER PARK AT SYMPHONY WOODS

Ms. Jessamine Duvall
May 27, 2014
Page 3

– On September 6, 2012, the Planning Board issued its Decision and Order, conditionally allowing CA to move to Step 10 of the 16 step process, but only under the stipulations that: 1) Meandering Paths must be employed in a new design so as to work around existing trees; and, 2) CA must Work With Merriweather (which CA/Paumier had not done) in the planning of the Park, as the Park completely surrounds the legendary music Pavilion. (Click here for the same Howard County [Planning Board Decision and Order](#))

– In October of 2012, Phil Nelson, then the President of Columbia Association, called to ask me for help with Symphony Woods. Having heard my Resident Speakout over a year earlier, Phil was aware that my opinion of the CA/Paumier Plan was consistent with the Design Advisory Panel's official opinion, and that I appreciated the Planning Board's stipulations imposing a mandate for meandering paths and planning with Merriweather.

– Phil was also aware of my background and credentials, which start with having worked closely with Jim Rouse for a decade, from 1982 to 1992, as Vice President of Development at The Enterprise Development Company. I then founded my own development consulting company, and have worked with numerous types of clients and projects. I am also a 32 year resident of Columbia. (Click for the [Baltimore Sun profile of Michael McCall](#) .)

– As per Phil's request, I volunteered to develop an alternant plan, which was completed in the fall of 2012.

– On January 24, 2013, the Inner Arbor Conceptual Plan was presented to the CA Board, in an open meeting.

– On January 31, 2013, the Inner Arbor Plan was presented at a community meeting at Slayton House.

– On February 14, 2013, the Inner Arbor Plan, the enabling legislation for the Trust, the seed funding and the Perpetual Easement were approved by an 8 to 2 vote. (Click here for the [CA enabling legislation](#))

– After working with CA's General Counsel and outside counsel (DLA Piper), the Trust's Articles of Incorporation were filed on April 26, 2013 and the Trust was organized on May 10, 2013.

– Our first objective, as per the Planning Board's stipulation, was to jointly master plan the Neighborhood with Merriweather. This collaborative master planning has informed all of our subsequent design.

– Our second objective was to hire the same Baltimore-based firm, Mahan Rykiel Associates (MRA), which had worked under Cy Paumier on the CA/Paumier Plan for Symphony Woods. MRA is a highly qualified firm of international reputation, and has years of experience with Symphony Woods.

Jess, I hope that this documentation of the facts gives you a good idea of the tremendous progress the Trust has made in fulfilling its mandate in the past six months, as well as the the legal and practical antecedents which brought the Trust into being with responsibility for those mandates. I look forward to scheduling a presentation & tour of Merriweather Park at Symphony Woods for the Hickory Ridge Village Board.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL S. MCCALL
President & CEO

cc: County Executive Ken Ulman
Howard County Council Members Calvin Ball, Greg Fox, Mary Kay Sigaty, Jen Terrasa, Courtney Watson
CA Board Chair Andy Stack
Hickory Ridge Village CA Board Representative Gregg Schwind
Inner Arbor Trust Chair Martin Knott