



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043-4392

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September 22, 2016

Andrew Stack
Chair, Board of Directors
Columbia Association, Inc.
6310 Hillside Court
Columbia, MD 21046

Dear Mr. Stack,

It has come to our attention that the Columbia Association Board of Directors is scheduled to make a decision on an easement agreement that would allow a veterans' memorial to be built in, around and on the Lakefront fountain. Although we believe that honoring the men and women of our community who have served our country is important and are encouraged by CA's desire to locate a memorial in Columbia, we have grave concerns about this location.

We think it is important to remember that the fountain, which CA holds in trust for the residents of Columbia, was created by Columbia's chief planner Mort Hoppenfeld. Inspired by fountains that he visited in Italy in 1963, it was designed to be an integral and interactive feature of the new downtown lakefront. Like the People Tree, the fountain is one of Columbia's earliest sculptures and has become one of its icons. We cannot imagine that the CA Board would give an easement for another sculptural element to be intertwined with the People Tree, so we wonder why it would be considering that fate for the fountain. It is important to recognize the fountain as a work of art and respect its creator and place in Columbia's history.

As was discussed during the creation of the Downtown Columbia Plan and included in the document, "A revitalized and redeveloped Downtown Columbia will look to the future in its planning and design, as it preserves the culturally and historically important features of the built and natural landscape." In addition the Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines state, "The central Lakefront area at the existing fountain in an important, symbolic gathering space in Columbia... This culturally significant landscape should retain its purpose as a central gathering space and amenity area but also be revitalized." Given that CA owns the lake's edge, any revitalization would happen under CA's direction. We look to CA to be an integral force in the growth and revitalization of the Lakefront. Granting a

perpetual easement in such an important area of the Downtown would add a dimension of difficulty to any revitalization efforts—one that can be avoided.

In addition to revitalization efforts, the Board should recognize the historic uses of the fountain. Included are photos that show people playing in the fountain on the Fourth of July, the fountain being used as a mini amphitheater and as the base for a performance by Strange Fruit, which enthralled audiences during the Columbia Festival of the Arts. By granting the easement, the Board would be closing the area to many future artistic possibilities. As a community, Columbians believe in the arts and see the Lakefront as one of our premier locations for enjoying local, regional, national and international artists.

For the above reasons, we would ask the Board to reject this easement. CA may have many other locations that would be suitable, as does the County, for example, Symphony Woods, Centennial Park, the plaza at the George Howard Building, the new courthouse or the park in area three in the Crescent. All of these locations would be visible and easily accessible with plenty of parking for special events.

We're sorry that we can't be with you tonight, but as you know the Council is conducting a public hearing on Downtown Columbia. We appreciate your taking the time to consider our comments.

Sincerely,



Calvin B. Ball



Mary Kay Sigaty



Jennifer Terrasa

Enclosures

July 4, 1993, Columbia Lakefront



Strange Fruit performance, Columbia Lakefront



Performing Artists, Columbia Lakefront