

2022
Annual
Report

Downtown Columbia Partnership



Downtown Columbia Partnership

Dancin' Under the People Tree is a summer tradition at the Lakefront.



The establishment of the Downtown Columbia Partnership (DTCP) was an integral part of Howard County government's adoption of the Downtown Columbia Plan, which was passed unanimously by the Howard County Council in 2010 to guide the redevelopment of Columbia's center.

Created by legislation in 2013 as a non-profit organization, the DTCP is singularly focused on working on behalf of every business and resident in Downtown to support an urban community that is a destination of choice for people to live, work, play and visit.

The functions of the DTCP also include supporting transportation initiatives; initiating and sponsoring cultural arts and sustainability programs; and promoting public safety.

Everything the DTCP does involves partnerships. It partners with other organizations – such as the Columbia Association, the Howard County Office of Transportation, the Merriweather Arts & Culture Center (formerly known as the Downtown Columbia Arts and Culture Commission), and Columbia Festival of the Arts – and, of course, it partners with Downtown Columbia businesses, especially Community Developer The Howard Hughes Corporation, which has been a primary funder of the Partnership.

ON THE COVER

People gather at Color Burst Park for concerts in the summertime.

Highlights of 2022

In some ways, 2022 was a year of recovery. Students were back in school, workers returned to offices, residents and visitors could be found at Downtown Columbia entertainment centers and restaurants. As in prior years, awards for Columbia poured in throughout 2022. Below are some of the accolades.

Best Place to Live Columbia was named “one of the best places to live in the U.S.” by survey company Niche.com. The city was cited as “a top spot for young professionals and families thanks to its highly rated public schools, employment rate, job and business growth, and cost of living.”

Happy Columbia was named the second “Happiest City in America” for 2022 by WalletHub, the personal finance outlet. WalletHub compared 182 of the largest cities across three key dimensions: emotional & physical well-being, income and employment and community and environment.

Jobs According to WalletHub, Columbia was named “the best city for jobs.” In recent studies, WalletHub found “your luck of finding work depends largely on location.” In comparing 180 American cities across 31 key indicators of job-market strength, Columbia had the highest overall ranking. Factors ranged from job opportunities to employment growth to monthly average starting salary.

Rent Columbia is the “Best Place to Rent” housing in America, according to WalletHub, a consumer information website, which recently compared more than 180 rental markets based on 22 key measures of rental attractiveness and quality of life. Columbia was named #1 overall in the ranking and came in 11th place in Rental Market and Affordability and #5 in Quality of Life.



Tenable cyber exposure firm is a major employer in the Merriweather District.



Howard Community College is one of Columbia's major assets.

Highlights of 2022

Livability Columbia has been ranked in the Top 25 in the 2022 “Top 100 Best Places to Live” by Libability.com, outpacing more than 2,500 cities with populations between 20,000 and 1 million in this data-driven ranking. Cities were measured on economics, housing, amenities, infrastructure, demographics, social and civic capital, education and health care.

Livability2 Columbia was recognized as the “Best City for People with Disabilities” in Maryland by WalletHub, which placed Columbia fourth in the nation across three areas: economy, quality of life and health care.

Livability3 *Money Magazine* recognized Columbia as the best place to live in Maryland, and the 6th most desirable community in the nation based on economic opportunity, supply and demand for homes, cost of living, quality of schools, racial and economic diversity, and health and safety.

YogaSix holds classes outdoors at Color Burst Park.



Development Update



The year 2022 saw construction continue in the Downtown Columbia area, and there were many announcements of things to come.

The biggest development news in 2022 was The Howard Hughes Corporation announcement that it would be investing \$325 million in the Lakefront District. The first project of the new investment is the \$45.8 million, four-story, 86,000-square-foot South Lake medical office building which is under construction south of the Whole Foods Market building and is expected to be completed at the end of 2023.

In the Lakefront North area, three new residential buildings are proposed, with a total of 625 apartments and street-level retail space. Improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure will connect pathways within the complex to the existing 100-mile network of hiking and biking trails throughout Columbia. Two parks will also be included. The ambitious project will get underway in late 2023.

South Lake medical office building is under construction in the Lakefront District.

Development Update

In other Lakefront news, two husband-wife teams – Josh and Joyce Butts and Randy Smith and Staci Samaras – announced they will open long awaited replacements for Clyde's and the Soundry. Seasonal coastal food will be featured at Offshore and the entertainment venue, Encore, will spotlight live music and other performances. A grand opening is planned in mid-2023. Nearby, in the space formerly occupied by Lupa, The 3rd, a nonprofit coworking and collaboration space created by and for women of color entrepreneurs, opened.

The Mall in Columbia also contributed to the dining scene by adding Chicken + Whiskey, a South American rotisserie chicken restaurant and whiskey bar, a concept from Star Restaurant Group, which also operates The Walrus Oyster & Ale House and Walrus Roadside Stand at the Mall.

Many changes at The Mall in Columbia have been overseen by long-time business and civic leader Barb Nicklas, who retired from her position as Senior General Manager at The Mall in Columbia in 2022. She was replaced by Mary Williams, a Brookfield Properties veteran.

The Lakefront District is slated for a major residential community to replace the surface parking at Sterrett Place.





Marlow apartments are attracting more residents to the Merriweather District.

Elsewhere in Downtown Columbia, Howard Community College made progress on its latest addition, the 193,000 square foot Mathematics and Athletics Complex, and brought on board its fifth president, Dr. Daria Willis.

The Merriweather District, where redevelopment was first concentrated, is booming as a center of culture and commerce.

Leasing at Marlow, a 510,000-square-foot apartment residence, picked up speed. The 7-story Marlow features 472 apartments (30 of which will be affordable units) and 32,000 square feet of retail in the center of the Merriweather District's walkable neighborhood of offices, shops and restaurants. Its sister, Juniper apartments, is on the other side of popular Color Burst Park.

Already a restaurant destination, the Merriweather District will include many more options in 2023.



Chicken & Whiskey joined The Mall in Columbia's restaurant row in 2022.



Good Kid-izen, a program for youngsters at Color Burst Park, includes arts and crafts.

Events

Journalist Judy Woodruff interviewed journalist and author Carl Bernstein at Books in Bloom.

Symphony of Lights remains a popular holiday attraction.



Run The Downtown Columbia Partnership hosted its annual Discover Downtown Columbia 5k/10K in April. The event, appropriate for all levels of runners, is a collaboration with Rip It Events who also produce the Downtown Columbia Turkey Trot. The race continues to grow in popularity and participation year over year and the route is intended to connect participants to the built environment and showcase how close and connected everything is in Downtown Columbia.

Crawl The Downtown Columbia Partnership and The Mall in Columbia presented the Spring 2022 Patio-to-Patio Cocktail Crawl in The Plaza at The Mall. Crawl attendees enjoyed appetizers and drinks created by restaurants Seasons 52, Main Event, Maggiano's Little Italy, The Walrus Oyster & Ale House, and Chicken + Whiskey.

Read Books in Bloom 2022, the annual book festival presented by the Downtown Columbia Partnership and The Howard Hughes Corporation attracted over 3,000 people to Color Burst Park in May. The headliner was Carl Bernstein, the author and Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* reporter who famously broke the Watergate story with colleague Bob Woodward. Jamie Raskin, representative for Maryland and author of *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth and the Trials of American Democracy*, was also featured.

*Dior Ashley Brown
performed during the
Color Burst concert series.*



Listen Columbia Association, in partnership with Columbia Festival of the Arts, launched a new concert series, Lakefront Live at Lake Kittamaqundi, featuring a diverse group of performing artists. CA provided 50 nights of free entertainment at the Lakefront through the summer and beyond.

Amped Meanwhile at Color Burst Park, the free Amped in the Park series presented by the Merriweather District also attracted hundreds of people to Color Burst Park over the summer.

Bike The Downtown Columbia Partnership's third bi-annual BikeAround Downtown Columbia in close collaboration with the Howard County Office of Transportation took place in Spring and Fall. For both iterations, the event started with a Block Party at Color Burst Park, and participants rode the course from Downtown Columbia to Oakland Mills Village and back.

*The Chrysalis in Symphony Woods
at Merriweather Park was the site of
the annual Asian American Pacific
Islander celebration.*



Events

Busboys and Poets owner Andy Shallal was one of the participants in the Over the Edge fundraiser for Special Olympics.



Fourth of July fireworks attract thousands to the Columbia Lakefront.

Fifth graders from all over Howard County converged on Merriweather Post Pavilion for the annual Battle of the Books.

Participate LakeFest, the Columbia Festival of the Arts' free family entertainment at the Downtown Columbia Lakefront, returned in June, after two years in virtual quarantine.

Walk Girls on the Run of Central Maryland, in collaboration with Downtown Columbia Partnership and the Howard County Office of Transportation, hosted Sip, Snack & Stroll, a walk-about fundraiser in June.

Rappel Over the Edge, the exciting fundraising event for Special Olympics Maryland – Howard County, was a highlight event of September with participants rappelling 12 stories of the 6100 Merriweather office building.

Tour Downtown Columbia Partnership and the Howard County Office of Transportation hosted the 2nd Annual Culinary Walking Tour of Downtown Columbia in October.

Art The Howard Hughes Corporation, in partnership with the Downtown Columbia Arts and Culture Commission, hosted a family-friendly hands-on Community Art Day workshop at Color Burst Park. Participants created an art piece for the UNBOUND Exhibition featuring multimedia artists.



Transportation

The Downtown Columbia Partnership expanded its focus on transportation demand management activities and bike and pedestrian focused events in 2022. Efforts were made in close collaboration with the Howard County Office of Transportation and through a relationship with Bike HoCo.

Alternatives to Single Occupancy Vehicle Use

To promote alternatives to single occupancy vehicle use, efforts were made to educate and engage the public through events and other opportunities. Transportation-related activities in 2022 included:

- Partnered with Go Howard and the Howard County Office of Transportation to create and promote events to educate the community on the benefits of and opportunities provided by traveling via modes other than single occupancy vehicle (SOV), e.g., bi-annual BikeAround Downtown weekends and Block Parties, Culinary Walking Tour of Downtown Columbia, Sip, Snack & Stroll (in partnership with Girls on the Run), and Cranksgiving (a food drive on two wheels which supports Grassroots).
- Worked with local bicycling advocacy group Bike HoCo and the Howard County Office of Transportation to launch Bike HoCo Rewards, a program in which businesses reward customers who arrive via bike; to increase the number of events with staffed bike corrals to promote event travel by bike; and to add a guided family-style ride to BikeAround Downtown Block Parties to encourage parents and others unsure of riding by themselves to participate in the events.
- Joined the Howard County Office of Transportation and RTA to hold two rider appreciation events on Car Free Day for both RTA and MTA Commuter Bus riders.
- Partnered with the Howard County Office of Transportation, The Howard Hughes Corporation, the Columbia Association, and other sponsors for Bike to Work Week (B2WW) in Downtown Columbia in collaboration with Baltimore Metropolitan Council.



Cycle enthusiast Kevin McAiley test drove an e-scooter at the launch.

Transportation

Runners rush from the gate at the annual Discover Downtown Columbia 5K.

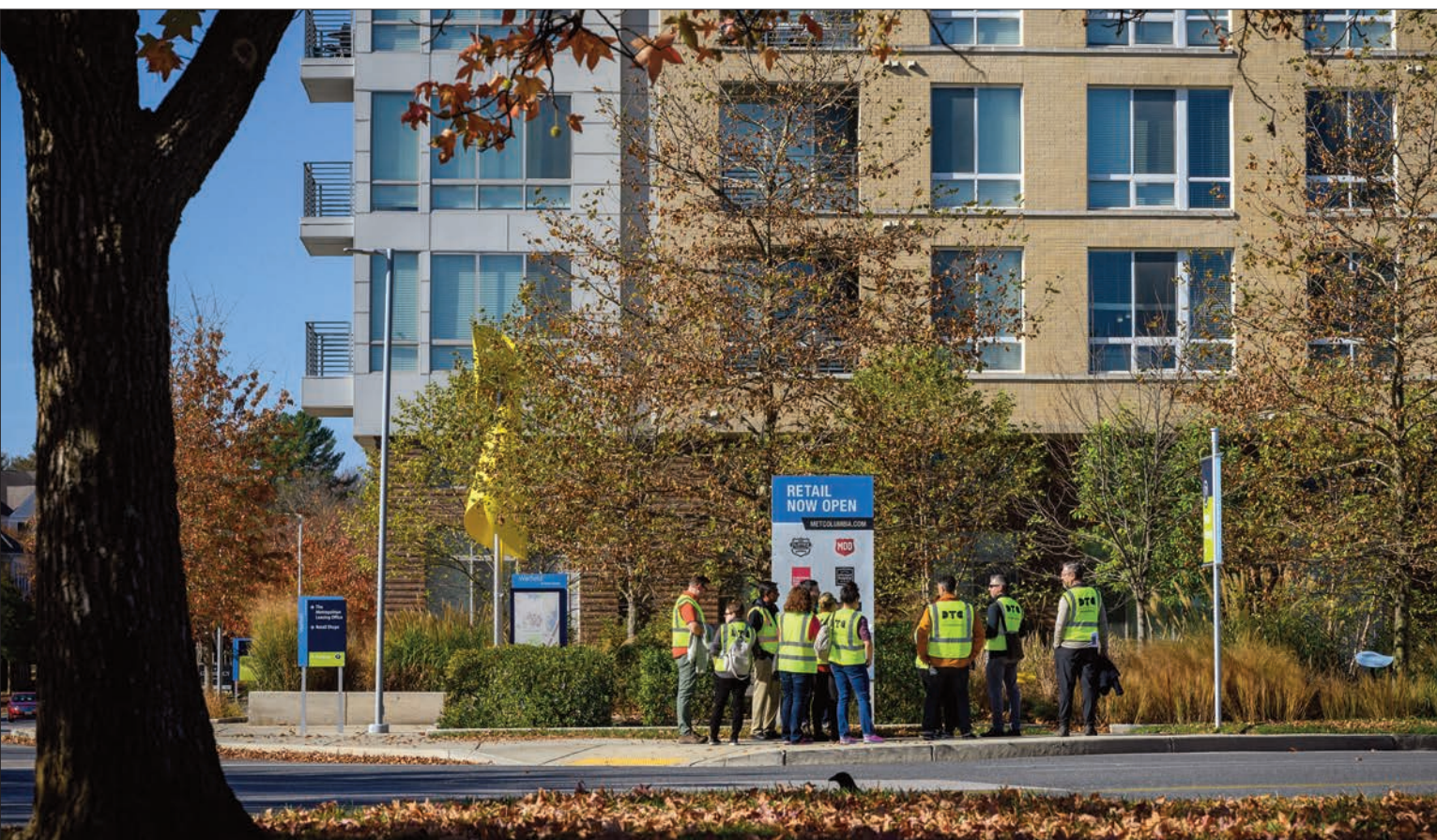


Audit to Improve and Increase Walkability

The Downtown Columbia Partnership, as part of its work transforming Downtown Columbia into a walkable, urban town center, convened a series of stakeholder walks in Downtown Columbia in Fall 2022 to observe existing pedestrian conditions, discuss potential infrastructure improvements to make Downtown Columbia more walkable, and build consensus on the scope and timing of future improvements. To supplement this information, the Downtown Columbia Partnership conducted extensive stakeholder engagement that focused on the pedestrian experience of Downtown Columbia residents and visitors.

The Partnership contracted with Toole Design Group to manage this project and members collected data and drafted a report to document observations from the initial site visit, stakeholder walks, and online stakeholder engagement survey. The report concludes with a set of design recommendations organized by geographic area and intended to provide a list of actionable items which the Downtown Columbia Partnership and its partners can use to guide their efforts in realizing a more walkable Downtown Columbia.

Stakeholders checked out Downtown Columbia's walkability for a Pedestrian Improvement Action Plan.





Downtown Columbia Partnership Executive Director Phillip Dodge gave an update on transportation efforts to an audience at the Residences at Vantage Point.

Pilot on Shared Electric Scooters

Shared scooters are a new and rapidly growing mode of transportation that has gained popularity in recent years. The concept of shared scooters is simple: electric scooters are placed around a city or town, and users can rent them for a short period of time, usually through a mobile app.

A pilot project to determine the feasibility of scooters as alternative transportation vehicles included contracting with a vendor and compiling data on use of the scooters. Collected data was gathered on the number of trips taken on the scooters, the distance traveled, the duration of each trip, and the destinations of the trips. It was determined that the scooters were mainly used for short trips within a small radius. However, there was consistent and heavy use by individuals traveling from the Village of Oakland Mills, across the Route 29 bridge, and into The Mall in Columbia and other employment centers. The timing and frequency of these trips suggests that individuals were using the scooters as an alternative to the bus for commuting to and from service/hospitality jobs. Additionally, anecdotal evidence of scooters stashed in obscured locations near the service entrances of the Mall and restaurants and retail locations in Downtown Columbia support this conclusion.

For future pilots, data should be directly gathered from users to gain insights into why they chose to use the scooters instead of other modes of transportation, how often they used the scooters, and whether they were satisfied with the experience. This will require a deeper partnership with a future scooter operator.

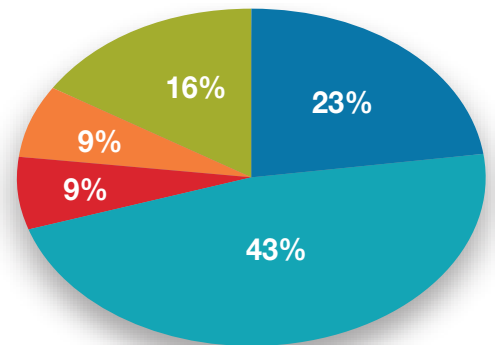


A canine passenger joined in the annual BikeAround Downtown Columbia.

Financial Snapshot FY22

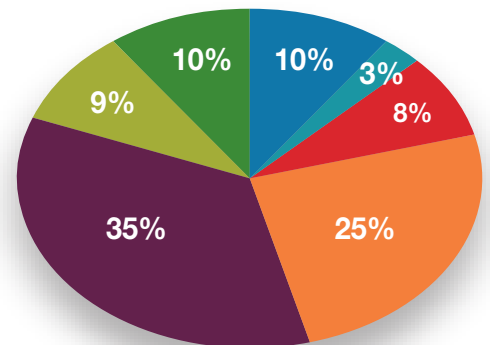
REVENUE

The Howard Hughes Corporation	\$	158,000
CEPPA 25 Assessments	\$	293,093
Howard County Grants	\$	58,000
Memberships, Sponsorships & Event Income	\$	61,282
In-kind Services	\$	105,250
Total	\$	675,625



EXPENSES

Administration	\$	73,808
In-kind Services, Rent & Supplies*	\$	21,250*
Marketing & Advertising	\$	61,191
Events & Sponsorships	\$	197,469
CEPPA 25 Transportation	\$	269,544
Maintenance & Beautification*	\$	74,000*
Other Program Costs	\$	75,956
Total	\$	773,218



*All in-kind services



The Splash Pad at Color Burst Park is the perfect place to cool off.

Leadership

Board of Directors

Greg Fitchitt

Chair

President, Columbia

The Howard Hughes Corporation

Rashida George

Secretary

Community & Legislative Relations

Manager

The Howard Hughes Corporation

Chuck Bubeck

Treasurer

Business Owner

Jennifer Jones

Howard County Government

Dennis Matthey

Interim President/CEO

Columbia Association

Mary Williams

Sr. General Manager

The Mall in Columbia

Staff

Phillip Dodge

Executive Director



Advisory Committee

Lynn Foehrkolb

Town Center Village Board

Joan Lancos

Resident Representative

Barbara Lawson

Resident Representative

Leonardo McClarty

Chamber of Commerce

Eric Galarza

Kettler

Larry Twele

Howard County EDA

Minah Woo

Howard Community College

Columbia's schedule of community activities is capped by Symphony of Lights during the holidays.



P A R T N E R S H I P

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