

Columbia, Maryland: Residential Perspectives on the Community's 50th Birthday

Jane Baden, Emily Dooley, Richard Griner,
Charles Howell, Noah Maghsadi, Kara McClure, Benjamin Mitrani,
Lauren Muraca, Mary Skora, Nicolas Taylor, and Monique Watson

Under the supervision of Professor L. Jen Shaffer

Course #: ANTH 4680/6890
The University of Maryland – College Park
June 2016

For Columbia Association



PALS - Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability
An initiative of the National Center for Smart Growth

Gerrit Knaap, NCSG Executive Director
Uri Avin, PALS Director

Contents

Introduction	2
Methods	2
Research Project Development.....	2
Oral History Collection	3
Interview Text Analysis	4
An Important Note on Context for Interpreting Results	6
Results	6
Planning Principles	6
Initial Impressions	8
Sense of Community.....	9
Integration/Diversity	11
Education.....	13
Recreation	14
Environment.....	16
Sustainability.....	16
Summary of Key Findings	18
Appendix A: Oral History Questions	20

Introduction

Planned communities are one way that people have attempted to influence land use patterns and living situations to accommodate specific sociocultural, economic, and environmental needs and desires from the very start of settlement. Columbia, Maryland, a planned community, will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2017. At its beginning, James Rouse and his planning team used a sociological approach to develop Columbia, and help achieve its original goals, including: the creation of a fully, self-sustaining city where residents could both live and work, respecting and integrating the natural environment into the built environment, sustainably accommodating the future growth of the community, integrating mixed income and racially diverse families, and making a profit. Almost 50 years on, Columbia, via Columbia Association, is interested in understanding the staying power of the original goals as it looks forward and plans for Columbia's future.

In Fall 2015, Columbia Association, PALS (Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability), and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland collaborated to collect oral histories from Columbia's residents on their experiences of living in the community over the past 50 years. Nine undergraduate students and one graduate student taking *ANTH 4680/6890: Researching Environment & Culture*, under the direction of Dr. L. Jen Shaffer in the Department of Anthropology, interviewed 28 men and women residents of Columbia. An additional four interviews from Columbia Association's archives were added to the transcripts of the collected oral histories for further analysis. The analysis of the interview texts explored residents' experiences of economic, demographic, sociocultural and environmental change over the past 50 years and examined responses to such change in the effort to identify ideas for developing sustainable plans to respond to future changes in Columbia. All audio and video recordings of the oral history interviews are archived at Columbia Archives at Columbia Association.

Methods

Research Project Development

As part of Columbia's 50th birthday celebration plans, Columbia Association decided to videotape local residents discussing their experiences living in Columbia. They worked with PALS (Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability) to describe and promote a possible oral history project that could be conducted by students at the University of Maryland. In the spring of 2015, representatives from Columbia Association were matched with Dr. L. Jen Shaffer in the Department of Anthropology as she sought to develop her 2015 fall term applied methods course *ANTH4680/6880: Researching Environment and Culture*. Through phone conversations and emails, Columbia Association and Dr. Shaffer determined three groups of residents for interviews based on when they first came to Columbia and identified themes for interview questions that would highlight experiences of living in the community. These three groups are Pioneers, Settlers, and Newcomers. Pioneers are those residents who moved into Columbia between 1968 and 1979. Settlers moved into the community between 1980 and 1999.

Newcomers arrived after 2000. The interview themes identified at this time touched on initial impressions of Columbia, community change over time, Rouse's original planning goals, environment, and sustainability.

Over the summer of 2015, Columbia Association recruited people for oral history interviews through flyers distributed in the community, via social media and with the help of other organizations, and through the association's website. In order to ensure a balanced distribution of interviewees, interested residents filled out an application form that asked for more information about their gender, age, date of joining the community, home village, and race/ethnicity. More than 70 residents responded to the call for oral history volunteers. Columbia Association selected a mix of 28 men and women for the oral history interviews making every effort to include a representative time of residency, ages, villages, and races/ethnicities. **Figure 1** (following) shows the basic demographics of the individuals who participated in the oral history interviews. Information provided on gender, race/ethnicity, age, income, prior communities, and home villages only covers those interviews analyzed for this report.

Semi-structured oral history interview questions were developed over the summer by Dr. Shaffer in consultation with Columbia Association (**Appendix A**). The questions invited residents to share their initial impressions of Columbia when they first moved in; their impressions and views on James Rouse's original planning goals for Columbia; more specific impressions and experiences regarding environmental, community, and integration planning goals; changes Columbia experienced during their time in the community; and ideas for supporting future sustainability goals in Columbia. An initial section on personal demographics was added to help provide context for interviewee responses.

Oral History Collection

Nine undergraduate students and one graduate anthropology student participated in the Fall 2015 applied methods course. The undergraduates came from a variety of departments including Anthropology, Environmental Science and Policy, English, and Education. From late September through October, the student researchers traveled to Columbia on weekends to conduct oral history interviews with the residents recruited by Columbia Association. Student researchers generally followed the interview question script created for the project. Occasionally they pursued specific comments made by residents in order to gather more information and expand personal descriptions of experiences living in Columbia. This is standard practice for ethnographic and oral history interviewing. These oral history interviews lasted 40 minutes to almost two hours in some cases. Twenty-six people were interviewed individually, and one daughter-father interview was conducted. Columbia Association staff facilitated the interviews at Columbia Association headquarters in Columbia; scheduling interview times and assisting the student researchers and residents in getting comfortable with each other.

Columbia Association also videotaped the interviews for Columbia Archives at Columbia Association and for production of video materials for the 50th birthday celebrations in 2017. Many student researchers recorded their own audio of the interviews for use to begin transcription. Columbia Association also provided audio, derived from the video recordings, to the students so that they could ensure the best

quality interview transcripts and link the time stamps on the transcripts to the video materials. The student researchers transcribed interviews throughout the months of October and November. They also wrote short summaries to accompany these transcripts that describe the resident, and in some cases, the interview itself. All student audio recordings were deleted at the end of the fall term. Copies of all interview transcripts and summaries were given to Columbia Archives to be stored with the video.

Figure 1. Oral history participant demographics. Information regarding gender, race/ethnicity, age, income, prior communities, and home villages is only provided for those interviews which were analyzed for this report. One of the student researchers experienced unforeseen personal circumstances that resulted in only 25 interview texts being coded for the final analysis.

Resident Category	Total Interviews	Gender	Race / Ethnicity	Age	Income	Prior Communities	Villages in Columbia
Pioneers 1968-1979	17 total 13 analyzed	9 women 4 men	6 Caucasian 6 African American 1 Multiracial	40-49 = 1 50-59 = 2 60-69 = 3 70-79 = 2 80-89 = 1 No response = 4	<\$45K = 1 \$45K-75K = 2 \$75K-110K = 2 \$110K-\$150K = 1 >\$150K = 2 no response = 5	DC; Baltimore; Gilford, MD; Bladensburg, MD; Detroit, MI; Pittsburgh, PA; Oakland, CA; Ireland	Harper's Choice, Long Reach, Wilde Lake, Town Center, River Hill, King's Contrivance, Owen Brown, Oakland Mills, Hickory Ridge
Settlers 1980-1999	9 total 8 analyzed	6 women 2 men	6 Caucasian 1 Asian 1 Multiracial	30-39 = 2 40-49 = 1 50-59 = 1 60-69 = 3 70-79 = 1	\$45K-75K = 2 \$75K-110K = 1 \$110K-\$150K = 5	Baltimore; Crofton, MD; Greenbelt, MD; Montgomery Cty., MD; Princeton, NJ; Tucson, AZ; Colorado; England; India	Dorsey's Search, Long Reach, Wilde Lake, Town Center, River Hill, King's Contrivance, Owen Brown, Oakland Mills
Newcomers 2000-2015	5 total 4 analyzed	3 women 1 man	2 Caucasian 2 African American	30-39 = 2 40-49 = 2	\$45K-75K = 2 \$75K-110K = 1 \$110K-\$150K = 1	Baltimore, Silver Spring, MD; Montgomery Cty., MD; New York	Dorsey's Search, Harper's Choice, Long Reach, Wilde Lake, Town Center

Interview Text Analysis

While working with the interview transcripts, student researchers developed eight analysis themes and one subtheme. These included planning goals, initial impressions, integration, sense of community, education, recreation, environment, and sustainability, with a planning goals subtheme of James Rouse. **Figure 2** provides details regarding theme definitions used to search for text related to the theme in interview transcripts. These analysis themes were confirmed during a November class meeting with Columbia Association. During the meeting, the student researchers presented their initial results, asked Columbia Association representatives their thoughts regarding interviews as they had been present, and learned more about the purpose of the oral history collection from the perspective of Columbia Association.

Figure 2. Thematic codes and their definitions used for analysis.

Theme	Definition
Planning Principles	Comments made in reference to specific original planning goals or developer James Rouse. The original goals for Columbia included: to build a complete city with opportunities to live, work and play; to respect the land and have access to nature; to provide for the growth of people as individuals and to have a mix of people of all racial, income, and age groups; and to make a profit so that Columbia could be an economic success and provide a model for other new communities.
James Rouse (subtheme)	This is a subtheme under Planning Principles. Many residents spoke specifically about Mr. Rouse and this theme captures both personal stories and the work of Mr. Rouse in developing the planning goals.
Initial Impressions	Experiences and first impressions when residents moved to Columbia. This includes talking about living in Columbia in the past and comparisons of living in other communities.
Integration/Diversity	Anytime people talk about a mix of races, ethnicities, or income levels. This may include the physical manifestation of integration such as how communities are laid out, ethnic restaurants/grocery stores/etc. or lack of such, and discussion of neighbors and other community members with specific reference to economic status, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, or sexuality.
Sense of Community	Social interactions between residents of Columbia that make them feel connected to one another. People talk about how they feel connected to others in Columbia through the events they attend, involvement in specific activities like school, religious communities, or sports, and their neighbors. They may also talk about places that are dangerous in comparison to their community and don't consider these places part of their community.
Education	Comments related to Columbia's public schools, education of the narrator, and reasons for moving to Columbia.
Recreation	Any discussion of activities people in Columbia do for fun that is legal. This includes, but is not limited to, outdoor activities, gyms, school, arts/film, music events, and community celebrations.
Environment	Any mention of open or green space, parks, outdoor activity, environmental problems, the built environment, transportation, and community infrastructure.
Sustainability	People describe changes to how the community works in regards to the planning goals, and suggest ways to keep the community going in the future.

Four undergraduate student researchers signed up for independent study with Dr. Shaffer in the spring 2016 term to finish the text analysis and prepare a report for Columbia Association. At this time, two

transcripts from interviews conducted in 1991 were added to the 27 oral histories previously collected for a total analysis pool of 29 interviews. Three student researchers were given eight texts and one given seven texts to code with the themes identified by the class in Fall 2015. MAXQDA software was used for the coding. One of the student researchers experienced unforeseen personal circumstances that resulted in only 25 interview texts being coded for the final analysis. Details regarding the demographic characteristics of individuals included in the final analysis may be found in **Figure 1**.

Once the coding was finished and checked, thematically tagged text was collated into a series of Excel files. Each file contained only those snippets of text related to the theme being analyzed. Student researchers reviewed the files to look for patterns of similarity and any outlying differences in resident interviews, as well as quotes that highlighted the content of these patterns or outliers. The students wrote summaries of these analyses for the findings section of this report.

An Important Note on Context for Interpreting Results

It is important to note that the 2015 oral history interviews were conducted with the aim to celebrate Columbia's 50th birthday. These interviews were video-taped for the purposes of creating celebratory materials and archiving permanently at Columbia Association. As such, residents self-selected to participate and most of the comments made by residents throughout the interviews are very positive. The few that provided critique did so in a constructive way meant to improve a community that they had already stated was a "*wonderful place to live.*"

Findings

This section is organized by the nine main themes that arose during the review and analysis of the interviews.

Planning Principles

Columbia opened as a planned community in 1967. Creator and developer, Mr. James Rouse, saw Columbia as an opportunity to enhance the quality of life for residents rather than merely an economic opportunity. The original goals for Columbia included: to build a complete city with opportunities to live, work and play; to respect the land and have access to nature; to provide for the growth of people as individuals and to have a mix of people of all racial, income, and age groups; and to make a profit so that Columbia could be an economic success and provide a model for other new communities. Although specific questions were asked regarding integration and environment planning principles, oral history participants were also asked about their knowledge about Rouse's full suite of goals in general and how these may have changed, if at all, over the years.

Pioneer and Settler residents all knew about James Rouse's vision and the goals he used in the planning and design of Columbia. In fact, this information was usually a deciding factor for them when they bought

a home within the community. The Pioneers and Settlers either had read about the vision and goals in a national publication, knew someone that worked with the Rouse Company, or knew someone already living in Columbia. Some Settlers mentioned the importance of visiting the Welcome Center prior to buying a home or just after moving in to learn about the vision and goals. Many Newcomers didn't know about Rouse's vision or goals until they were brought up in the actual interview. However, once they learned about these ideas they made a direct connection to the special characteristics related to the environment and diversity that influenced their decision to join the Columbia community. As one Settler stated, *"Columbia is a special place. It's the diversity, the community. It's dedication to the environment, open space, green space. It's the variety of amenities that serve everyone in the community, not just the majority."* People move to Columbia based on its reputation; a reputation built upon James Rouse's vision and goals.

A number of interviewees expressed the belief that James Rouse was a true visionary. One Settler stated,

"He walked his talk. I feel very strongly about that... He was a real hero. He did these things and he inspired people to think about the world in a different way. And he brought down barriers, because when you live with people you naturally go to the same stores, the same schools, the kids, the events that go on in the village centers and the community centers. You see it."

Rouse designed Columbia to foster tolerance and acceptance of racial, ethnic, religious, and economic differences, and help people learn to live, work and play together in a time when hostility towards difference was still part of laws and regulations across the United States. Despite major sociocultural and governance shifts, Americans continue to experience prejudice, intolerance, and structural violence. Columbia's founding principles stand out as a testament to the creation of community and sociocultural sustainability, and remind us of what can be done when people put in the effort and work together. Interviewees all appreciated the courage and vision of Mr. Rouse in building a community where individuals could grow into the people they would need to be to meet future challenges. Columbia was purposely designed, from its village centers and parks to walking paths and central mailboxes, to bring people together in positive ways and grow relationships, individuals, and families. One woman who grew up in Columbia, left, and returned as an adult poignantly stated, *"I probably cannot account for all the ways it has benefitted me growing up in Columbia and being a beneficiary of James and Patty Rouses' vision... so I would like to say thank you."*

Interviewed residents, regardless of when they first moved in, agreed that Rouse's original vision and goals remain important for Columbia. Some expressed a concern that the goals have weakened over time due to rapid population growth, increased emphasis in pursuing profit over growing people, and larger changes in society. Many newcomers do not know about the original vision and goals; and the Welcome Center, which several Settlers cited as key to their understanding about Columbia, no longer exists to provide this information. Columbia Association website provides a wealth of information to newcomers about the original vision and goals, as well as ongoing programs and ways to become involved in the community.

“As we evolve as a society, and not just in Columbia, but as society in general, we learn about what works better. I think the challenge of Columbia is to take what we learn from other places and incorporate it into our community as we evolve for the future, and do it in a way that still is true to our values and the principles that we were founded under.”

[man Settler]

The flexibility of Rouse’s original vision and goals provides a solid foundation for Columbia and its citizens to continue to grow. However, residents cited increasing traffic congestion, the technology revolution, better understandings of the natural environment, rising housing prices, generational turnover, and new incoming populations as areas Columbia will need to address in planning ahead for the future. One long-term resident stated, *“you can’t perfectly control the evolution of society or the evolution of a community, but you can steer it.”* This quote encapsulates the idea, expressed by some interviewees, that future planning needs to be flexible and adaptive because while some of the changes they observed could be anticipated such as increased traffic accompanying growing populations and business development; others like new conservation ideas, generational values and norm changes, and the technology revolution could not. This sort of adaptive planning will require participation of diverse and representative stakeholders throughout the community if Columbia is to remain true to its founding vision and goals.

“To encapsulate Rouse’s vision as it’s been brought forward is to make Columbia a place to live, work, play, and learn. That’s the core of it. Columbia Association is here to help with that – to serve the people that work, live, and play here. It’s the greater community. It’s not just the residents. It’s the businesses that are here. It’s the people who commute into Columbia that work here. They’re in the community, they’re part of the community... We’re not maintaining the vision, we’re growing the vision. The vision, like everything else, is fundamentally sound. It’s the expression of the vision.” [man Settler]

Initial Impressions

The majority of initial impressions Columbia’s residents describe reflect the original planning goals Jim Rouse had in mind when designing this community. Diverse. Beautiful. Friendly. Safe. Affordable. A place to grow. One woman mentioned that on her first visit to Columbia in 1966, she left feeling that the community would never make it as Rouse was *“building a city out here in the middle of nowhere.”* However, six years later she and her husband moved in and loved it. Another person mentioned that they did not like Columbia very much when they first moved in. However, this man moved into Columbia as a teenager, slowly grew to appreciate the community, and only after leaving for university did he realize just how special Columbia was. He has now returned with his wife to raise their family.

Many Pioneers and Settlers spoke of coming to Columbia because of what they had read beforehand regarding the original planning principles. These folks were looking to live in an economically, racially, and ethnically diverse community at a time when in the United States this wasn’t common. *“It was a very*

deliberate decision to come here, because Columbia was, and I hope still is, perceived as being a very open and accepting and diverse community,” said one resident. A few Pioneer and Settler residents specifically mentioned the affordability of housing as part of their initial impressions of Columbia. This affordability drew them to the community, but also supported the income diversity they found after they moved in. They really appreciated that people from all walks of life were accepted and welcomed. Settlers and Newcomers mentioned that they too were drawn to the community’s income, racial, and ethnic diversity, even if they were unaware of the planning principles. People were and still are friendly to new residents, tolerant of difference, and one person specifically mentioned that they didn’t feel a need to work at being accepted into the community.

The community’s open spaces, lakes, and woods impressed a number of residents when they first moved into Columbia. Even those coming from rural areas were impressed by the green beauty they found. *“It’s like living in a resort!”* claimed one woman. Another woman described how she first moved to Columbia she didn’t know anyone, so she went Lake Kittamaquundi because she had visited the lake while house hunting. *“It was October and I just remember seeing these beautiful orange, you know these beautiful orange trees across Route 29 and just looking at all these families. And I said I want to raise a family here and I did. And so I have this tie to downtown Columbia... It’s just so special.”*

Other residents, new and old, talked about how they saw Columbia as a good place to raise a child. Although the community’s school system ranking has influenced newer residents, all residents talked about how the diversity of people and tolerance for difference were important values for children to learn. They also felt that Columbia was safe and comfortable for children with many places to play. The immediate sense of community that they felt also meant that people kept an eye out for each other’s children. One woman commented that the planning principles were very comparable with her own. The diversity and representation made the community feel *“very joyous. And that [was] the kind of place I want[ed] my kids to grow up.”*

All of the oral history participants love Columbia and love living in Columbia. Some have tried moving away, but they return because, as one person stated, *“once you’ve lived places that don’t have that [Columbia’s diversity, green spaces, etc.] you realize that you really can’t live without it once you’ve had it.”*

Sense of Community

The sense of community in Columbia is extremely strong and very special to those who call the area home. Early on in the first years of the planned community, the circles with which people interacted with were much smaller than they are today. The village centers served their true purpose – as centers of interaction for everyone who lived in that village and made it possible for them to acquire everything they might need in one central location. Each village had a strong sense of pride and community and residents interacted on many different levels. Kids went to school with the children who lived around them. The open spaces of the villages and Columbia as a whole allowed for residents to interact even while getting in some physical activity or just relaxation.

More so, each neighborhood also had strong community ties between local residents. One man remembers how his street was very close and told us how *“My street they have, I guess a club would be the right word; they have regular barbecues and parties and holiday parties. We moved in November and that week we got an invitation to go to their Christmas party.”* On even a smaller scale, two main streets in one of the neighborhoods developed teams and had a softball game once a year, creating a strong bond and camaraderie amongst the neighbors. Many felt that the community used to interact on smaller scales all across Columbia. Many residents were very connected to their neighborhood through a homeowners association or their village boards, opportunities that allowed them to become more involved and be introduced to other leaders throughout the community. Over the years, Columbia has grown, and that small-scale sense of community has somewhat changed into a more wide spread feel with less allegiance to neighborhoods. One person we interviewed brought up how many in the community are now more focused around the educational system; whatever schools their kids attend, or what bus the children ride, or who plays on their school sports teams.

A good portion of community has been fostered around recreation and the open spaces of Columbia, in the form of the pathways, the parks, and community facilities run by Columbia Association. *“I love all those facilities since I am a senior, there is a lot for us to do with Columbia Association,”* one woman remarked, *“with the pools, and gyms, and I think it is wonderful we don’t have to go outside the city to seek that.”* Another woman added to this thought in her own words when she said *“there’s fun things to do here, Merriweather Post, there’s just so much to do, the lakes, the paths.”* The vast amount of participants that remarked on the pools was surprising, whether it was people on the older end of the age spectrum who remember taking their kids there, or those who grew up in Columbia and have fond memories of spending their summers at the pool with their friends. Similarly, those who regularly use the pathways throughout the area remarked along the lines of *“We’re outside, we’re walking around the paths, we see each other a lot. You really feel like you know your neighbors.”* This is how one resident fondly thinks of the paths and how they build up a sense of familiarity. The fact that everything you can possibly need exists in Columbia allows for the community to grow stronger, because you see the same people often. They grow to remember you and eventually you will develop a bond, if even just a smile. One of the interviewees grew up as a “Navy kid” and appreciates even the trips to the local grocery store.

“We grew up everywhere, all over the place, right. And so, I still get a real thrill when I walk into the Giant in River Hill and all the cashiers know me. You know it’s like I belong here; most people take it for granted but because I didn’t have that so much growing up I really feel like I’m part of that community, they live elsewhere but they work there and when I walk in they know me by name, how are you doing, one comes around and give me a hug, you know, so I just feel like I’m really integrated into the community and I love that.”

The long tenure of such a great percentage of Columbia residents has allowed the sense of community to only grow stronger and stronger - with so many of the original homeowners still residing somewhere in Columbia, a good amount of their kids deciding to raise their own families there, and new people are

coming in, able to be taken under the older residents wings. The sense of community has been fostered not only because of a good plan for the city originally, but because of the efforts of those who moved here to really welcome everyone, beautifully summarized in a remark collected from a resident while reflecting on the summers at the pool.

“I remember just sitting on the deck of the pool in a chair, and my wife and my daughters were swimming around in the shallower end, and I looked out and there were just a ton of people at the pool. And I'm okay around crowds, I don't love crowds of people, but there was something about that moment, the sun, the way everything was so perfectly matched or aligned, just the light was right, the weather was right, the trees were that sort of brilliant early-summer green before they started to get brown, and I just looked out over the pool and I just remember thinking like, ‘Wow, this is Columbia.’ It's kids of all ages, all different backgrounds, kids of every race, parents, grandparents, just everyone in the pool like this great, big Columbia soup. And it was another one of those pinch-yourself moments, because to me, these are-- that's what Columbia is about. And it's great to go somewhere and share that space with your neighbors and to feel a connection with place and with people, and to just have it in your neighborhood is pretty awesome.”

Integration/Diversity

A topic of interview interest was the theme of integration and how well Columbia succeeds at becoming a diverse community. James Rouse intended for Columbia to be a place where not only wealthy Caucasians could reside, but an area for all people in all walks of life to call home. But why would integration be so important when developing a new area? Almost every single person we talked to remarked that they valued the diversity within the community, and it was one of the biggest positives about living in Columbia.

One woman remarked on her appreciation for integration when she said her children *“had the opportunity to be exposed to other backgrounds and other experiences and um, other traditions, and other folk.”* It is evident through the responses of the interviewees that Columbia has been integrated in a number of ways for a long time, like housing, religion, race, education, and other small areas that impact the community as a whole. A notable amount of people who had moved to Columbia close to the beginning mentioned that when they first started to think about moving there, they were impressed with Columbia's desire to be integrated and diverse because it was very different than how the country was at the time of Columbia's inception. The community became a place of equality. The harsh realities of white flight from urban areas or racial prejudice within neighborhoods were minimized and eliminated by ensuring that families of different backgrounds mixed, even along a single street.

At the beginning of the planned community, the racial divide was primarily between black and white, with some other small populations of other ethnicities. It was a very big deal that Columbia was a place for both blacks and whites to live in harmony. It seems as though this was possible because of the effort made to blend the types of housing options and thus spreading economic classes within the community.

"I don't think that if one family has more money than another that you are supposed... that you deemed yourself to be better than another," an interviewee commented – providing a perfect example of how Columbia has created an atmosphere where people aren't necessarily categorized by the amount of money they make. Additionally, the area has seen a very large number people from Asian and Hispanic backgrounds take up residence in the community and creating an even more diverse mixture of people.

The growth in diversity has affected other aspects of the community, most predominantly religion and education. One woman remembers how the Catholic community was very strong even in the early years of Columbia, whereas another resident recalls how he was very close with Jewish neighbors and how they were greatly involved in their synagogue. Although not Jewish himself, he stated that *"I have been going to Passover Seder for 10 years. This is in Hebrew. I wear my yarmulke."* This seems to be a part of the community that he really values because he later remarked that *"it is such an easy conformable way to live and I think it is the one thing Columbia really is and it was proven in 1964 and even when I came in 1969."* More so than just Judaism and Catholicism were present though at the beginning as the interfaith center has played a large role in many residents' experiences in Columbia.

Diversity in Columbia also extended into the schools, where children were being educated about not just one culture, but many cultures, and were friends with peers from all walks of life. *"It's been key in large part in helping this generation break down racial stereotypes, classifications,"* one man stated. He later went on to say regarding families who are of different races/orientations that, *"They're here, and I don't think anybody thinks consciously of, 'Oh, they're here... it's just part of the community'."* The diversity within the community gave the new generation a very unique atmosphere to grow up in, even if they didn't realize it at the time. This was the case for a woman who grew up in the community.

"I think I first became aware of it, when I first started hanging out with people who weren't from Columbia, because I remember thinking, you don't know what Passover is? You don't know what Ramadan is? Like how weird is that that you don't know? Because I didn't realize that other kids didn't necessarily grow up with other people from different races or religions or different socio economics - sometimes I think that it is very easy when you are a kid to think that your situation is everyone's situation, um and I didn't really have that because growing up I had friends who lived in apartments and friends who lived in townhouses and friends who lived on horse farms so I knew there was a wide experience of life out there and it wasn't until I started making friends with people in high school who grew up outside of Howard County and who grew up outside of Columbia, that those experiences were more unique than I realized."

Her statement beautifully sums up how the culture in Columbia is very different than other regions, and how the goals of Rouse have indeed created a community for everyone.

There are some negatives that arose during the interviews that are worth noting. Of the 22 people who spoke on the topic of integration, a large number commented on how affordable housing has become less available to those who need it. They fear that Columbia is becoming economically divided. For

example, one man brought up the topic of River Hill, telling us that *“River Hill is obviously a general community that has a higher than average level of affluence, even for Columbia standards. I think some of the village centers have evolved over time and some of the neighborhoods around them have evolved over time, not necessarily in a positive way.”*

It is safe to say, based on resident’s perceptions and experiences, that Columbia has done a good job at creating an atmosphere of racial, cultural and religious diversity. Although work remains on supporting socio-economic diversity, the community remains a distinctly diverse community.

Education

Education is one of the most, if not the most, emphasized attribute to an area when attracting potential new residents. Howard County’s school system is considered to be one of the top school systems in the country. This reason is one reason why many people with children move to Howard County. People want to live in Columbia because their child or children can attend a school system that stresses education, and provides a culturally diverse environment for learning. These are two important factors for growing into a well-rounded adult. The parents of children already in Columbia’s school system agree that they have no plans on moving their child no matter what.

“Howard County schools are some of the best schools in the nation and I'm gonna keep him in these schools, I don't care what I have to do. Ha ha, but yeah, as I want him to grow around different types of people from different backgrounds. And now the school he is at now - like he was at Lake Elkhorn [Middle School] which is right around the corner, which is probably like 80% African American - the school he is at now he is more the minority.” [woman resident]

Diversity plays a key role in what Columbia is today. Like anything that is strong in a community, strength builds up from the roots of its population. While many schools across the country are seeing a reduction in their student population diversity, Columbia’s schools and the community as a whole are more diverse than many of our nation’s schools.

Of course, there have been changes to the school system, how it works, population demographics, emphasis on different learning objectives. However, interviews suggest that parents believe their children are getting a great education while becoming well-rounded human beings. Former graduates from schools in Columbia and their parents also talked about the holistic education children received in the past that prepared graduates for college and wider opportunities. From the beginning, James Rouse emphasized education in the community’s planning goals. One resident explained this well in her interview.

“There is the village center and then there are apartments and townhouses. Because of that...my daughter goes to school with a lot of different kids, from different backgrounds, from different religions, from different races. And I think that that is structuring her to be

a very, very tolerant person. When she plays with a doll, it is nothing for her to have two females or two males get married...or have a relationship. Or... it is the same with religion. She will talk about it like it is nothing. Because there is some kid in her class that is celebrating a different holiday. All of that gives her these relationships that make her just very tolerant of other people. Where usually intolerance is because people haven't had a friend or a coworker who has been from a different background. So there is no face to put with it"

Several of those interviewed observed that the school system doesn't only just benefit children. Adults become more involved with the community when their children are going through school in the hopes of helping their children become bright, well-rounded adults. This helps keep James Rouse's original goals refreshed. Parents join English as a second language programs to help, they join the PTA, or try and work with the county. Even before school, there are programs at the library where parents can go and read to their children and other children. Parents also serve on PTA or in the school system which benefits all students. All of these activities contribute to Columbia's goal of developing a strong sense of community.

Recreation

Columbia has a rich amount of recreational activities, including events and festivals that bring people together. There is something for everyone. This helps Columbia reach the goals set by James Rouse. Recreation builds a great sense of community, and brings different people living and sharing their lives together. We see this on the walking/biking paths where neighbors talk. The social atmosphere recreation helps create, leads to experiencing new things. People who participate in different organizations, sports teams, and clubs grow their social network and, overall, better their community. The sense of community in Columbia is very well depicted by one woman summed up this sense of community well in her interview stating, *"I walk around. I go to a lot of concerts that are out there on special nights lots of fun music and people are dancing, sitting outside Clyde's or one to the restaurants eating, talking to friends, just walking around. It's just a very happy, peaceful, vibrant place."*

Columbians emphasize recreation through fitness activities and community events in open spaces when they discussed building relationships and a strong sense of community. The interviews indicate that open spaces are a big hit because they allow people to be physically active while enjoying natural surroundings. Outdoor activity supports a healthy body, mind, and life. In many instances, our interviewees spoke about not being a treadmill or gym type of person as they don't like indoor exercise. Another reason people seem to enjoy these open spaces is that outdoor recreation allows people to meet new Columbians, and see old friends and family. One interviewee spoke about how interacting with people on trails allows them to experience the environment and the diverse sense of community of Columbia simultaneously. They stated that, *"even when you're walking alone you feel like you're not. You see diversity, you're at one with nature."*

Recreation in Columbia's open spaces is also a common theme with good memories. Residents and adults who grew up and stayed in Columbia speak of their memories biking around the paths with their friends. One man spoke about his childhood and learning his way around Columbia.

"So, my first experience on them was riding bikes with my friends in high school, and I had one friend in particular who's still a very good friend of mine. We would do things like intentionally go get lost. Just ride on paths until we didn't know where we were and then find our way back. That was a great experience for me, because that's how you learn. That's how you learn how to get around. You've got to go get lost before you can find your way. I have always loved riding my bike. I have used the pathways, I am reasonably confident that I have ridden every pathway in Columbia [chuckles] at this point in my life. And the pathways. Honestly, that was the first thing that really clicked for me in terms of falling in love with Columbia is like how great are these pathways? They're almost like these little wormholes to another world where you can get on a pathway and find your way to somewhere that you would have to take a completely different route to drive there. And just feeling that connectedness of the pathway system, and the way that it connects the community I thought was great. I still use the pathways to ride my bike. I rode to work today and back on the paths. I ride on the paths with my kids now, now that they're getting old enough to ride bikes. We go for walks everyday with my dog. We walk to the playgrounds. We have little routes, little circuits, we know. My kids have little names for the different playgrounds. So we'll say, 'Let's go to the Jake playground,' which is a reference to a pirate, because it feels like a pirate ship to them. Even though it doesn't-- but that's the game we play when we go to that playground. And we know the route, and that's how we walk to school. My daughter walks to school every day, which I think is like-- I feel bad for kids who live close enough to walk to school but get driven there. In Columbia, it's silly for us to drive to school, because it's shorter to walk to our school than it is to drive. What a great experience. The other day I had one of these moments of, 'God, this place is amazing,' when we walked to school."

Indoor recreational activities like gym classes, sport team clubs and pool memberships also contribute to Columbia's community. Gyms were mentioned as a great place to exercise and get fit in Columbia. With a community gym membership, you can visit any gym in Columbia. For example, many mentioned meeting new people and seeing familiar faces while trying new classes like Zumba and yoga.

Sport team clubs are another fitness activity that brings Colombians of all ages together across the community. No matter their experience or skill level a child has an opportunity to play every sport. Adults also play. However, one interviewee stated the problem with sport clubs is that there are so many of them. This is a good thing, as it allows everyone to have a place to play sports and do things that they enjoy.

Fitness, sport teams, and pool memberships are not the only items that bring Columbia's community together. There are many camps and clubs in Columbia, with different focuses. Columbia has no shortage

of opportunities to join organizations based on language, environment, or any other interests. It truly has a diverse and rich population full of different interests with something for everyone.

Finally, those interviewed mentioned that special and outdoor events bring Columbians together as well. The Fourth of July event at the lakefront brings the whole community together, as does the annual Bike About and many other events and festivals. Merriweather Post Pavilion, a unique Columbia venue, built as one of Columbia's first buildings, hosts outdoor concerts in the warmer weather.

Environment

Not every single Columbia resident interviewed spoke about the environment specifically; however, those that discussed the community's environment spoke positively and at length. Residents mostly talked about the walking paths, tot lots, bike paths, and other amenities offered throughout Columbia.

Overall, residents feel like Columbia doesn't physically feel like a city at all due to its design. The physical sense of community provided by the integration of people and amenities also reflects how Columbia lacks back-to-back store fronts, congestion, and noisy roads and neighborhoods. A few residents spoke about Columbia being so relaxing that they noticed a drop in their blood pressure. After travelling to other areas they are relieved to return so that they can get that relaxing feeling back.

The walking and bike pathways serve as a built-in gym for many Columbians. The pathways are also a platform not only for exercising but also entertainment. Kids can explore while parents meet with people throughout the community and converse. Nature is accessible to everyone, even those in wheelchairs. Although ideas about nature preservation have changed over the past 50 years, residents still believe that there has been a great attention to detail put into the continuous preservation of safety, comfortability, and green space in Columbia. Residents state that there has been minimal deforestation in Columbia because neighborhoods are built within the woods that are owned and maintained by Columbia Association as dedicated open space. They like the trees and feeling of being in a forested landscape. During interviews, people talked about how Columbia Association has been a key enforcer that emphasizes the importance of nature preservation within the community. Residents also spoke about Columbia Association's partnership with homeowners that has resulted in the development of hundreds of raingardens that reduce run off. They believe that that Columbia is progressing towards efficient and new environmental practices with the help of Columbia Association.

Sustainability

Throughout the interviews, we found that Columbians desire more sustainable practices than just recycling bins and compost piles. Open spaces are used a lot, but residents believe that more could be done to make Columbia more sustainable and be a pilot for new and innovative ideas that still meet Jim Rouse's original planning principles. Non-traditional forms of sustainability are growing as new technology emerges and Columbia continues to grow. The ideas residents discussed in interviews included transportation, village centers and economic sustainability, and housing. Despite some

conflicting opinions, Columbian residents who were interviewed consider the community in general to be extremely environmentally conscious.

A major subject expressed by almost all of the interviewees was the distress about the lack of efficient, effective, and affordable transportation options within in Columbia. They believe that while Columbia was built for cars future congestion will be harmful. One resident even suggests an Uber-like system which could be made up of electric vehicles to take residents to their destinations on demand. Those interviewed expressed the view that transportation is a problem in Columbia. Residents brought up their frustration with the inefficiency of the public transportation system that serves Columbia, especially for the older generation who may not drive anymore. Many residents we interviewed believe that if the public transportation system was better, the consistent traffic problems would not exist as there would be fewer cars on the roads.

Some interviewees discussed that getting around Columbia via bike pathways was not as easy as they would like. Some stated that if they wanted to walk or bike to another area in Columbia, that using the pathways could be a challenge because of hilly terrain or long-distances or because the bike pathway does not connect to their intended destination directly. Some stated that they found the roads too dangerous to ride on because there are only a few bike lanes. A couple of residents called the existing bike lanes on roads “death traps.” Between the public transportation and bike commute comments, it is clear that many Columbians simply want a better way to get around without using a car.

Maintaining thriving village centers has been a particular issue in Columbia. Residents have noticed that when anchor stores close, the centers do not do well financially. For example, when the Giant Store at Wilde Lake closed down in 2006, the shoppers gradually stopped coming to the village center. There was no reason to shop there when they could drive a short distance to Target or Walmart to get everything that they needed in one place and that shopping habits and options have changed quite a bit since Rouse’s design of Columbia. Some residents noted that when village centers had regained an anchor store, visitor traffic gradually increases.

Many residents are looking to adopt a healthier lifestyle; which includes their diet and food security. The community is thriving with elderly people who were the first to buy homes in Columbia, and some initiatives have been put into place to help keep them alive and well. “Roving Radish,” for example, provides prepared meals to families and individuals in Howard County, and most importantly, Columbia. Food pantries and programs within the schools have also been implemented to provide for families in need. These kinds of charitable and government programs provide food security through healthy meals and weekly grocery supplements to low income and elderly residents.

An aging housing and building infrastructure is another area of interest amongst Columbia’s homeowners. Upgrades can cost a lot of time and money. Efforts to make Columbia affordable for everyone, energy efficient, and visually pleasing with a solid infrastructure will require making the upgrade process for residents easier and practical. Interviewed residents want to address lowering loans for residents of Columbia who are looking to repair or update the foundations and roofs of their homes.

Solar panels have already been placed on multiple structures and residents believe that Columbia Association does a good job of reducing its carbon footprint. One resident suggested a village of tiny homes that are not only energy efficient but also affordable. This new village might attract younger people to live in Columbia. Those that grew up in Columbia, but left, could have a reason to come back to an affordable, sustainable place to live.

Summary of Key Findings

The results presented previously suggest that many of the key themes overlap and are interconnected with James Rouse's original planning goals, community growth, and long-term sustainability. In thinking ahead to the future of Columbia, Maryland, there are several key points that should be considered.

1. The residents interviewed for oral histories LOVE living in Columbia. They greatly appreciate the thought that James Rouse and his team put into designing the community and developing the original planning goals. Many of the original pioneers came to Columbia specifically because of the openness and tolerance for economic, racial and ethnic difference, emphasis on community, and respect for the natural environment. More recently settled residents, once made aware also appreciate these original planning goals. Older residents believe that the core planning principles haven't changed, but that the population growth and changing economy has left them weakened. Several long-term residents recommended the reinstatement of the Welcome Center to educate Newcomers about Rouse's original planning goals and reinforce his vision as Columbia continues to grow.
2. The original planning principles and community design supported the development of a strong sense of community for Columbians. Residents meet and talk in Columbia's open spaces like parks and along walking/bike pathways, as well as at village centers and recreational facilities. Get-togethers small and large in these places support the strong sense of community residents feel.
3. Economic, racial, and ethnic integration remain important to Columbians. They see this as a key characteristic of Columbia that draws new residents and keeps people in the community. Many oral history participants noted the area's changing demographics – specifically more Asians and Hispanics settling in Columbia.
4. Oral history participants expressed worries about the ability of Columbia to maintain economic diversity as housing costs rise. Specifically, that affordable housing in the community has become less available to those who need it and that the presence of homeless people highlights this need. Suggestions regarding housing and infrastructure sustainability were made that address housing costs and upgrades to existing homes for low income residents. Some felt that perhaps a loan program could be developed that would provide funding to low income residents to repair or update foundations, repair roofs, install solar panels, and improve energy efficiency. One individual thought that Columbia might look into the development of a special village of tiny homes that would be both energy efficient and affordable. These homes might attract younger people, as well as lower income families, to live in Columbia.
5. Many interviewees spoke about maintaining the high quality of public education in Howard County, as this is a big draw for new residents and important for current residents with children in the school

system. Some perceive that Howard County does not invest equally in all of its schools – Long Reach schools were mentioned specifically. Maintaining affordable housing and ensuring a mix of incomes within neighborhoods and villages supports a well-rounded and diverse education in the schools over the long-term.

6. There is a strong sense of community in Columbia. Development of a strong sense of community was linked by some interviewees to children’s school and extracurricular activities. Parents meet up with other parents at these activities, and those that get more directly involved through the school board, coaching, event management, etc. contribute to Columbia’s community feeling.
7. Everyone loves the events, festivals, parks, pathways, and recreational facilities. They see these places and events as opportunities to develop community and maintain personal health. Many mentioned the conservation measures Columbia Association has sponsored in the effort to maintain open space, woodlands, and community facilities. As Columbia continues to grow such efforts remain important.
8. The woods, lakes, parks, and pathways were highlighted in initial impressions as influences attracting new homeowners and supporting them in staying. These areas provide support for the physical and mental well-being of residents old and new. Trees and open spaces give Columbia its special non-city feel despite being a community of over 100,000 people.
9. Transportation infrastructure was the single biggest issue that nearly all interviewees had with Columbia. The public transportation system, one that many elderly, disabled and low income residents depend upon, is inefficient, ineffective, and expensive. More routes and more buses are desired. A 15 minute car ride can turn into 2 hours on a bus. Those who prefer bicycles to cars discussed the lack of connections on bike paths *between* some villages. Bikers frequently need to get back on the road to travel, where bike lanes are not yet plentiful and riders feel less safe.
10. Village Center revitalization was another area residents targeted in their suggestions for improving community sustainability. They expressed concern about that lack of economic vitality at some centers with the loss of anchor stores. They recognize that Rouse’s design for these centers underpins a strong sense of community while creating a self-contained community.
11. Food security was another area that was discussed when people were asked about sustainability. Food pantries, free and reduced school meals, elderly meals, and government programs for low income residents that supplement weekly grocery baskets are seen as necessary assistance. People would like to see these programs continue.

Economic changes, population shifts, and new technologies are, and will continue to, shape Columbia. The planning principles Rouse used to design Columbia remain strong, but as the community has matured and grown some residents feel that they’ve been diluted. As Columbia approaches its 50th birthday as a planned community, it will be an opportunity to review its rich and diverse community building efforts and explore how to advance the nation’s most well-known planned community. James Rouse’s vision for a community that grows people remains as valid and important today as it was over 50 years ago.

Appendix A: Oral History Interview Questions

Hello. My name is _____, and I am an anthropology student at the University of Maryland. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the oral history project our class is conducting in conjunction with Columbia Association. Our interview today will start with a few introductory questions to give us and future researchers interested in Columbia's history a sense of who you are, and then I'd like to ask you more about your experiences and views about living in Columbia.

(A) Demographic Information

1. Could you please tell me your name?
2. Please tell me your age today.
3. How would you describe your race? Ethnicity?
4. How would you describe your income level/economic class? (less than \$45,000, \$45-75,000, \$75-110,000, \$110-\$150,000, greater than \$150,000)
5. When did you move to Columbia? (year, month if possible)
6. Where did you move from?
7. Which village do you live in?
8. Have you always lived in this village? If not, what other village/s have you lived in before now?
9. Did you have children living with you under the age of 18 when you moved to Columbia or did you anticipate having children as part of your household?

(B) Initial Impressions

I'd like to first speak with you about your initial impressions of Columbia when you first moved here with your family in (response to Q5).

1. Can you tell me a little about your initial impressions of Columbia when you first moved here?
2. Since that time, have your impressions of this community changed? If yes, what happened to change your view?

As you probably know, Columbia is a planned community that opened in 1967. Creator and developer, Mr. James Rouse, saw Columbia as an opportunity to enhance the quality of life for residents rather than merely an economic opportunity. The original goals for Columbia included: to build a complete city with opportunities to live, work and play; to respect the land and have access to nature; to provide for the growth of people as individuals and to have a mix of people of all racial, income, and age groups; and to make a profit so that Columbia could be an economic success and provide a model for other new communities. In the next series of questions, I'd like to talk with you specifically about how these goals may or may not have influenced your life in Columbia.

(C) Original Planning Goals Overview

1. Please think back to the time before you moved to Columbia, do you recall being aware of Rouse's goals when you decided to move here?

- a. If so, is there anything specific you would like to share about goal/s that appealed to you or any discussions you had with other family members?
 - b. Also, if yes, were they part of the reason you chose to move to Columbia? A major factor?
2. If you were not aware of the goals, did you learn about the goals after you moved to Columbia?
 3. Have the goals played any role in your decision to remain living here in Columbia? How so?
 4. Can you tell me how, if at all, have Mr. Rouse’s goals and vision for Columbia changed during the time you’ve lived here? *(for pioneers/settlers only)*

(D) Environmental Goals

Open spaces, like parks and pathways, that weave throughout the community are a foundational characteristics of Columbia, and provide many opportunities for residents to interact with nature.

1. How have you and your family enjoyed Columbia’s open spaces since moving to Columbia?
 - a. Do you have any stories of special times you would like to share?
 - b. Do you, and/or your family have special places in Columbia you like to visit?
 - c. What sorts of things do you do when you are there?
 - d. How often do you and your family use these open spaces?
 - e. What sorts of other outdoor/recreational facilities, such as bike paths, basketball courts, golf courses, pool, etc., do you and your family use?
 - f. Could you tell me a little more about how you use these facilities? How often? How are these spaces important to you and your family?
2. Could you tell me a little about how you feel these spaces have improved your life and well-being?
3. A lot of folks have mentioned that visiting Columbia’s open spaces helps them feel more a part of the community. Do you feel this way?
 - a. Could you explain a little more about what you mean?

(E) Racial, Ethnic, Income Level Integration Goals

One of the key goals of Columbia was creating a community of people with a mix of race, ethnicity and income levels.

1. How important was this particular goal in your decision to move to Columbia?
 - a. If yes, could you tell me a little more as to why?
2. What sorts of changes, if any, have you noticed in Columbia’s population since you first moved here (racially, ethnically, and/or income wise)?
3. How important is it to you today that there be a mix of races, ethnicities, and income levels in Columbia?
 - a. Could you tell me a little more about why you think this sort of integration is important/not important/other?

(F) Community Feeling

Feeling like you are a part of a community is an important part of having a good quality of life, part of Mr. Rouse’s original vision.

1. How does living in Columbia give you a sense of community?
 - a. Would you describe this feeling of community geographically? socially? culturally? racially? ethnically? religious?
2. How do you and your family participate in community in Columbia?
 - a. With social groups? Recreational activities, religious or cultural group activities, political groups? Volunteering? Sports teams?
3. How is your sense of community different in Columbia than other places you've lived?
4. Has your sense of community changed since you moved to Columbia?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b. If no, why not?
5. Do you feel that there are people in the community that don't have a voice?
 - a. Who?
 - b. Why do you believe it is important to include them in these larger conversations about community and the future of Columbia?

(G) Columbia's Sustainability

Columbia's 50th Birthday is approaching, and it seems like a good time to revisit Mr. Rouse's original goals to think about their role in the future - maybe modifying or adding new goals to support the community over the next 50 years.

1. Given all we've discussed today, do you believe Columbia's original planning vision continues to work?
 - a. Where and how do you see this in Columbia today?
2. Are there any changes you think might be necessary in the future to
 - a. Accommodate and welcome new populations?
 - b. Accommodate growing populations?
 - c. Deal with economic shifts?
 - d. Deal with cultural changes?
 - e. Deal with environmental changes?
 - f. If so, could you explain what you mean (for any of the above)?

(H) The Best/Worst (if these haven't been answered previously)

1. What do you like best about living in Columbia?
2. What do you like least about living in Columbia?

(I) Wrap Up

1. Before we finish today, is there anything else you would like to tell me about living in Columbia?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time!