



Planning & Development Services Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Planning & Development Services

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Our Mission:

To guide the development of the City in a manner that enhances quality of life, promotes distinctive neighborhoods, supports businesses, and protects the environment through professional, positive, solution-oriented planning, permitting, zoning, and enforcement services.



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We Are Columbia



#ENVISIONCOLUMBIA

Letter from the Director

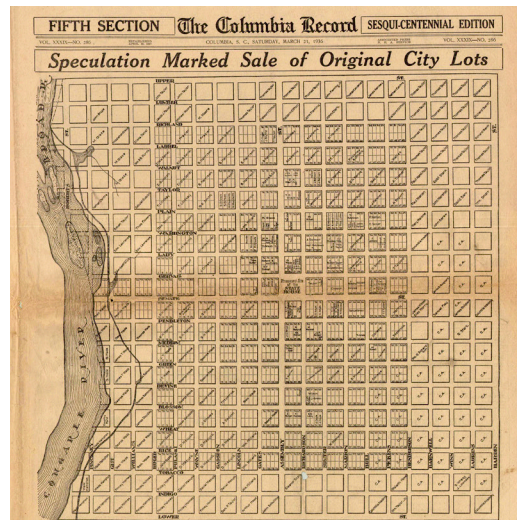
Look around you right now. Look at the objects and the space that surround you. The computer, chair, pen, or window; they were all designed by someone. Some were designed with thought and care and perform their function effortlessly and beautifully, perhaps providing comfort or making a task easier. Others were more haphazardly conceived and can be frustrating to use or actually do more harm than good.

The components that make up a city or town function in the same way. Good design can make our experience of a place comfortable, enjoyable, and maybe even joyful. Trees can cool our walk and sidewalks can make it safe. Bike lanes offer safety to the rider and the motorist alike. Well-designed buildings, streets, and the inclusion of public art, create an inviting space for people to conduct business, eat outside, play, or rest. The presence of these and other thoughtfully designed elements create a city in which people thrive and want to linger. Without these elements, the result can be a hot, brutal, and lifeless environment in which people do not feel comfortable or want to be.

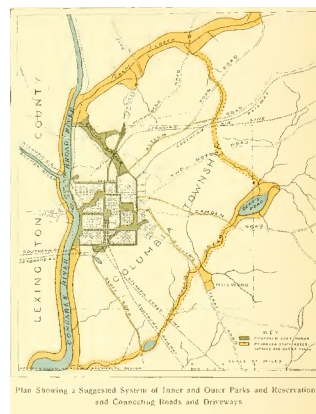
Columbia has a long history of intentional design. From its inception in 1786 as one of the first planned cities in the United States that employed enviably wide streets and boulevards to the privately initiated 1905 Kelsey and Guild plan that conceived of a series of greenways to the 1998 City Center Master Plan, which first implemented urban design principles, Columbia has supported a well-designed community. How we employ design continues to change, however, as we adapt to new development types, new modes of travel, and new challenges of (even more) heat and heavy rain events. One of the wonderful aspects of a well-designed city is that it is the ultimate public-private partnership. It is a broad coalition of multiple levels of government, citizens, and stakeholders working together over time to make it happen. The smart and dedicated people who make up the Planning and Development Services team are honored to be a part of the current coalition that make Columbia such a wonderful place and we look forward to doing our part to continue to make it even better.

Krista Hampton

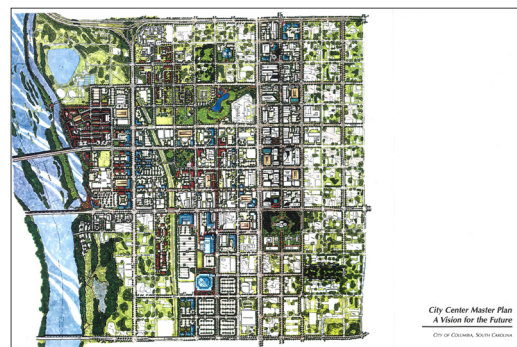
Krista Hampton
 Director, Planning & Development Services



For their sesquicentennial edition in March of 1936, The Columbia Record published a reproduction of the original sales map of the City, noting that the sale resulted in high levels of land speculation, "indicated by the large numbers of lots resold before the final date noted in 1804."



Excerpts from the Kelsey and Guild plan, *The Improvement of Columbia, South Carolina* (left) and *The City Center Master Plan* (below) set forth visions for Columbia that included parks, public spaces, and a vibrant built environment.



Our Divisions

BUILDING INSPECTIONS

The Building Inspections Division reviews plans and monitors construction work to ensure they conform to established building codes and regulations. Staff also provide inspections for businesses when they move or open in a new location to make sure the space is safe and meets building codes.

DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Development Center provides a single point-of-entry for construction review and permitting. The staff shepherds projects from plan submittal to permitting, ensuring that reviews are completed concurrently where possible. Coordinators provide a wealth of information on the requirements and steps in the permitting process.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Land Development Division reviews group/individual commercial and group residential developments, mixed-use planned unit developments, and residential/commercial subdivisions for compliance with the Unified Development Ordinance. The Land Development Division also coordinates the review of major and minor subdivisions and street naming.

PLANNING

The Planning Division facilitates and implements long and short-range plans for the City, its business districts, corridors, and neighborhoods. This division also provides staff support to the Planning Commission and the Design/Development Review Commission, which includes historic preservation and urban design.

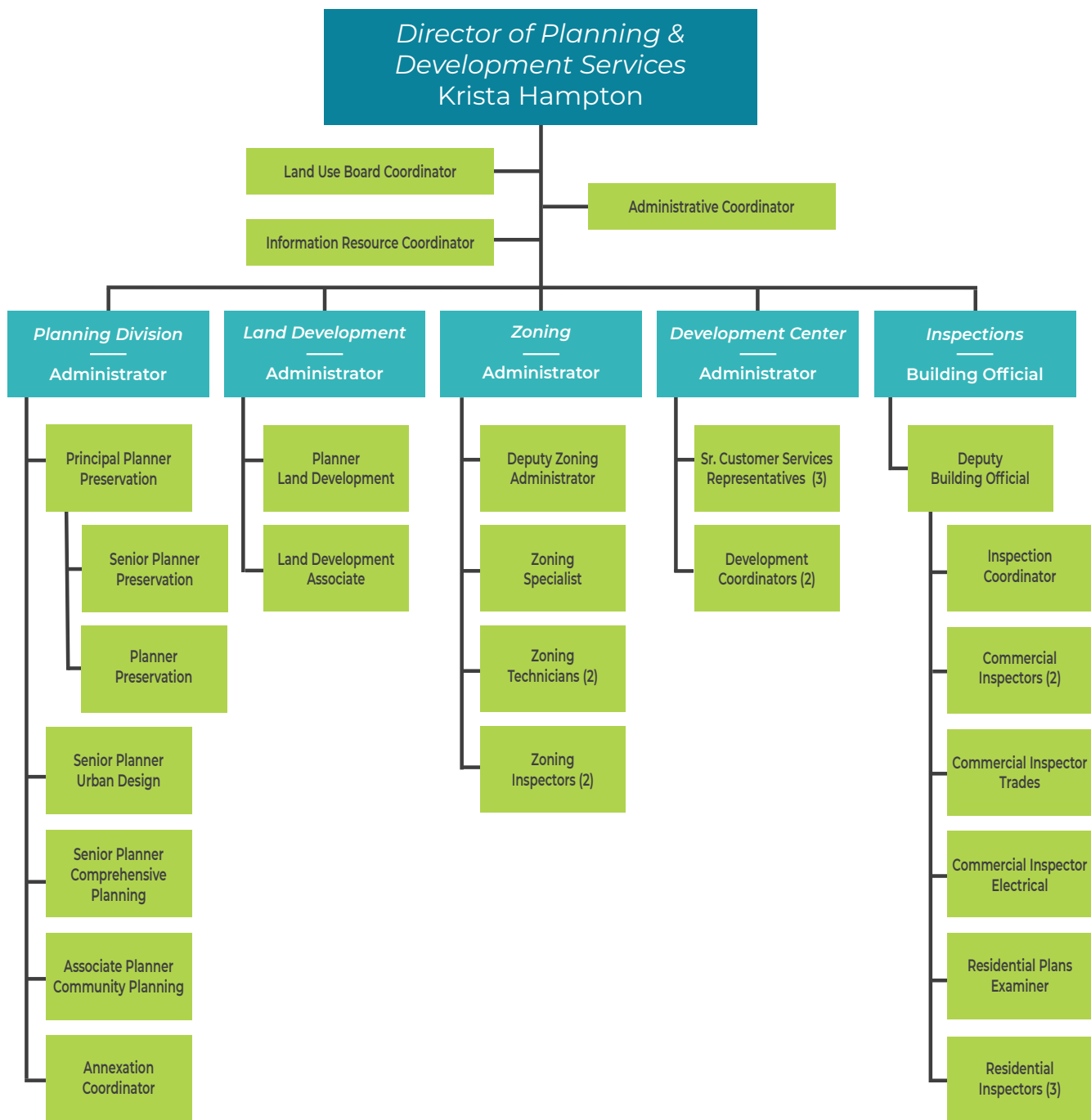
ZONING

The Zoning Division administers the zoning regulations for the City. This covers issues such as where certain uses can be established, the size and placement of buildings, signage, and parking requirements among others. Staff also provide support to the Board of Zoning Appeals.



DEPARTMENT AT A GLANCE

The below chart reflects changes effective in FY2022-2023, as well as modifications instituted as part of the approval of the FY2023-2024 budget.



Department-Wide Initiatives & Efforts

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 was another busy one for Planning and Development Services. Some notable highlights include further steps to streamline permitting process and increase accessibility, outreach efforts, enhanced reporting and analysis, and a number of updates to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). We have worked hard and we are proud of our accomplishments this past fiscal year!

ENHANCED REPORTING

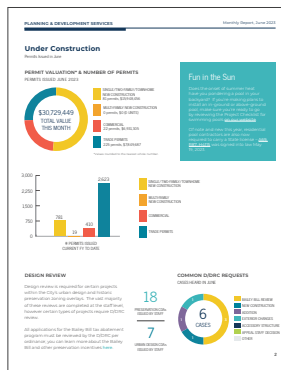
The importance of regular and accessible reporting was a focus of *Columbia Compass*, the City's comprehensive plan - and staff worked to produce a number of reports in FY2022-2023 accordingly. Reporting is one of the many ways we continue to innovate as a Department and a City. Reporting is not just a benchmarking tool - it helps policy makers, citizens, and staff better understand key trends, while increasing knowledge surrounding ongoing programs, policies, and projects. Reporting is also a response to an often heard comment during the *Columbia Compass* public meetings - citizens were unclear what recommendations of prior plans had been moved forward, and were unsure that their participation in the planning process was a worthwhile use of their time. Through developing highly visual, accessible, and regular reporting - we hope to change that - and in doing so help empower Columbians as they engage with their city.

During this past fiscal year, staff used the template developed in the prior fiscal year to release regular and highly visual **monthly reports** that reflect the varied day-to-day work and notable achievements of each division. We also rolled out the second **departmental annual report** in recent history, updating and fine-tuning a framework developed in the prior fiscal year that is used in this report as well.

The Planning Division developed a **progress report for *The Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia***, our first progress report for a neighborhood, area, or corridor plan. This process required collaboration across departments and with partner agencies, organizations, and community stakeholders.

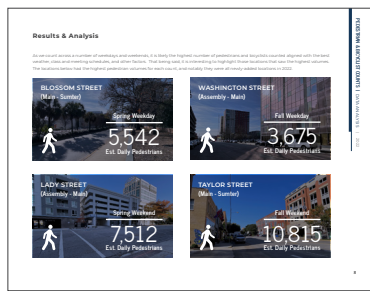
The Planning Division also **compiled and analyzed the data collected during Pedestrian and Bicyclist counts** completed in the 2022 calendar year, shifting to a more highly visual reporting style that can serve as a template for future reports.

As we move into Fiscal Year 2023-2024, we'll continue to build on our success, continuing and expanding on existing reporting, and revisiting reporting on Columbia Compass implementation. You can access each of these reports on the Department's webpage: planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/pds-reporting.



Above: a page from the monthly report (left) and the cover of the departmental annual report (right).

Middle: the conclusion from the progress report for *The Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia* summarizes progress to date.



Bottom: the *Pedestrian + Bicyclist Count Report* uses data gathered by staff and volunteers to extrapolate daily averages.

STREAMLINED PERMITTING

Planning & Development Services staff continue to work to streamline and improve upon permitting processes. These efforts are highly collaborative and require inter-divisional and interdepartmental partnerships and coordination to succeed. Some examples include:

- » An online permitting portal provides for the application of 40 different building and zoning permit types and submission of eight development plan types electronically by customers, 24-7. New in FY2022-2023 was the addition of City Engineering Utility Plans and Business Licenses.
- » Electronic plans submittal and collaborative review as an option continues to increase in usage. Applicants, specifically design professionals, can see in real-time required corrections and markups by City reviewers, allowing for shorter turnaround times for resubmittals.
- » All invoiced development-related fees can be paid online through the permitting portal, as well as business license fees, rental property fees, and other invoiced property maintenance fees.
- » Inspection requests for issued building permits is further enhanced with improved options through the portal, the addition of a designated Inspections Coordinator, an inspections hotline, and a dedicated building inspections email address.
- » Use of mobile applications technology allows building inspectors remote access to permits and associated information, which improves the efficiency and timeliness of inspections.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Department staff worked to support a number of collaborative outreach efforts during Fiscal Year 2022-2023. In October, department staff participated in a forum organized by the Economic Development Department at the Columbia Museum of Art which was geared towards real estate professionals and developers. In January, staff helped support Councilwoman Herbert’s meeting on the development of North Columbia, presenting on existing plans, regulations, and how to engage in the land use board and commission review process.



Citizens filled the Eau Claire Print Building in February to hear from a variety of departments on the future of the North Columbia area in a meeting organized by Councilwoman Herbert.

UPDATES TO THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

The City adopted a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that became effective in August of 2021, and as staff and the public have worked with the ordinance, modifications have been identified, including a number tied to the City’s Business Friendly Initiative. As a result, a number of amendments have been made to the text of the Ordinance, covering topics including permitted uses, setbacks, definitions, and parking requirements.

Proposed UDO amendments are first reviewed by the Planning Commission and then voted on by City Council after a public hearing. Once amendments are adopted, they are formatted and reflected on the Planning and Development Services website here: planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/code-of-ordinances.

Unclear what regulations apply to your project?

Please reach out - that's what we are here for! You can contact the Zoning Division directly by calling **(803) 545-3333** or emailing zoning@columbiasc.gov.

LAND USE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

The City of Columbia's land use boards & commissions are comprised of citizens appointed by Council to make and assist with development reviews and land use policy decisions in accordance with state law.

There are currently three boards and commissions that the Department serves: the Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA), the Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC), and the Planning Commission (PC). These groups conduct short or long term planning, research, and discussions of specific issues which are essential to the continued growth and prosperity of the City. Some bodies are designed to be the policy-making authorities over a particular division of the Zoning Ordinance; for others, their mission is to make recommendations and advisory opinions to City Council. Meetings are public and involvement from the community is strongly encouraged.

In FY2022-2023, the use of the telephone-based PublicInput system for comment was discontinued as it became rarely utilized by members of the public. Instead, Planning and Development Services transitioned to using emails specific to each land use board and commission to avoid any confusion regarding the provision of comments on cases to board and commission members.

During FY2022-2023, the Planning and Development Department also worked with local artist and graphic designer Cait Maloney to redesign the posters for land use board and commission meetings to make them more eye catching and accessible. The new posters will be brightly-colored using colors similar to those in the previous design, but will be sturdier, have bolder, easy to read graphics, and will include a QR code for a quick link to the relevant webpage and agendas. These posters provide basic information about a variety of cases that go through the Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA), the Design Development Review Commission (D/DRC), the Planning Commission, and the Zoning Public Hearing process at City Council.



Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA)

Purpose

The Board of Zoning Appeals is a seven-member quasi-judicial board that makes decisions regarding zoning issues, including variances, special exceptions, and administrative appeals. Variances apply to specific cases where, owing to special conditions, a literal enforcement of the Unified Development Ordinance will, in an individual case, result in unnecessary hardship. A special exception is a use that is generally compatible with other uses permitted in a zoning district, but something about its nature, such as its potential impact on adjoining parcels, means that it must receive special approval. Appeals to the Board may be taken by any person aggrieved by any decision, determination, or requirement which is alleged to be in error made by the Zoning Administrator in the enforcement of zoning regulations.

Members (July 2022-June 2023)

- » Gene Dinkins, Jr.
- » Sherard Duvall
- » Kathryn Fenner
- » John Gregory
- » John Guignard
- » Celia Mackintosh
- » Marcellous Primus
- » Davis Whittle



Board of Zoning Appeals members seated at the dais in Council Chambers. Pictured (from left to right): Celia Mackintosh, John Guignard, Marcellous Primus, Gene Dinkins, Jr., John Gregory, Sherard Duvall, and Kathryn Fenner.

Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC)

Purpose

The Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC) is the City's nine-member quasi-judicial architectural review board. The D/DRC reviews work proposed within the City's historic districts, urban design areas, and on designated landmarks. In addition, the D/DRC makes recommendations to City Council regarding zoning map amendments for design districts, historic districts, and landmark designations. The D/DRC is made up of members with expertise or interest in urban design and historic preservation.

Members (July 2022-June 2023)

- » Mary Beth Sims Branham
- » Robert Broom
- » Sanford Dinkins
- » Bruce Greenberg
- » Chloe Jaco
- » Phillip Maguire
- » Andrew Saleeby
- » Taylor Wolfe



Design/Development Review Commission members standing in Council Chambers. Pictured (from left to right): Taylor Wolfe, Sanford Dinkins, Robert Broom, Mary Beth Sims Branham, Andrew Saleeby, Bruce Greenberg, Phillip Maguire, and Chloe Jaco.

Planning Commission (PC)

Purpose

The Planning Commission is a nine-member administrative board which reviews items that impact the physical, social, and economic growth, development, and redevelopment of Columbia. They are responsible for the review and recommendation of zoning text and map amendments, planned developments, and development agreements to City Council. This includes the adoption of area and city-wide plans, such as *Columbia Compass*, the City's 10-year comprehensive plan. In addition, the Commission is responsible for the review of major site plans, major subdivision preliminary plats, street or road name changes, and land development variances.

Members (July 2022-June 2023)

- » Ryan Causey
- » Harris Cohn
- » Steven Cook
- » Anna Davis
- » James Frost II
- » Toby Goodlett
- » Mason Harpe
- » LaTrell Harts
- » Raquel Thomas
- » Ford Tupper



Planning Commission members standing in Council Chambers. Pictured (from left to right): Mason Harpe, Steven Cook, Anna Davis, James Frost, II, Ford Tupper, Raquel Thomas, and Ryan Causey.

Want to become more involved?

Apply to serve on a land use board or commission! See existing vacancies [here](#).

Get agendas for land use boards, commissions, and committees straight to your inbox! Sign up [here](#)!

Building Inspections

The Building Inspections Division reviewed all facets of the construction surrounding the 6,465 permits issued in FY2022-2023, conducting 1,400 plan reviews and 16,167 inspections and issuing 1,043 certificates of occupancy.

In January 2023, the state and city moved into a new code cycle, implementing the 2021 International Building and Residential Code editions. As part of this transition, Division staff worked diligently to learn and teach all significant changes from the 2018 Editions. The City remains under the 2017 ANSI 117.1 (Accessible Code) and the 2009 Energy Code.

Also notable during FY2022-2023, the Division underwent a restructuring, as illustrated by the organizational chart provided earlier in this report. Three positions were created/redefined: a Deputy Building Official, an Inspections Coordinator, and a Commercial Trades Inspector.

The Deputy Building Official role consolidates prior Commercial Plans Examiner and Inspector Supervisor roles, in addition to other duties.

The Inspections Coordinator serves as the main point of contact for all inspection requests and scheduling. The Commercial Trades Inspector is a consolidation of two roles - the Commercial Plumbing Inspector and the Commercial Mechanical Inspector.

This restructuring resulted in a net reduction of Division staff, from 12 to 11 team members.



Anna Cassatt began her new role as the first Deputy Building Official for the City of Columbia in May of 2023, previously serving in the role of Commercial Plans Examiner.



Carol Richardson joined the building inspections team as the Building Inspection Coordinator in May of 2023, after previously working in the Development Center as a Senior Customer Service Representative.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Building Inspections Division continues to encourage the use of the online customer portal for permit requests and inspection requests. As the Development Center continues to implement the use of Bluebeam in the review process, the customer portal allows for the expedited exchange of information and tracking of projects. Licensed contractors and design professionals may access the portal at access.columbiasc.gov.

Also, be on the lookout for a new Building Inspections FAQ and Checklist coming soon to the [Planning and Development Services website](#). There you will be able to find information on what inspections are needed, when to schedule, and other useful information to insure your inspections are successful.

Development Center

The Development Center issued 6,465 permits in FY2022-2023, with a total value of issued permits of \$726,160,201. Of note this year, while the number of residential and commercial building permits decreased from the prior fiscal year, the total number of permits increased - likely reflective of an increase in trades permits tied to finishing out some of those new building starts from last fiscal year. The valuation of permits issued during FY2022-2023 did reflect a decrease from the prior fiscal year, however the total value is still much higher than seen in both FY2019-2020 and FY2020-2021. The Development Center also issued 1,043 Certificates of Occupancy (COs) during FY2022-2023, an incredible increase of 347 COs from the previous fiscal year. Dig further into departmental data by visiting the By The Numbers section of this report.

Notably, the top five highest permit values in FY2022-2023 were tied to a mix of uses, including senior housing and industry - a departure from the prior fiscal year where all were tied to multi-family housing. Those five permits had a combined valuation of just under \$66 million.

The Development Center helped facilitate a number of procedural changes tied to increasing accessibility and efficiency during the fiscal year, most notably helping to facilitate the roll out of Bluebeam-based e-reviews of commercial plans submitted through the permitting portal. This technology allows multiple reviewers to quickly and efficiently provide feedback to applicants, whom are able to receive clear guidance and consolidated comments as a result.

Pre-application meetings for certain types of applications are a part of the formal application process. These meetings help increase efficiency and improve permitting outcomes for both developers and staff, as they facilitate the discussion of projects in the early planning stages, and helping staff provide critical information about permitting stages and time frames, what to anticipate in the review process, design considerations, and answer any early questions from the development team. As the main point of contact for the permitting process, Development Center staff organized and hosted 153 pre-application meetings throughout the fiscal year.

Development Center staff also worked diligently throughout the fiscal year to ensure a smooth and thoughtful roll out of the Department's new monthly reporting structure, communicating across Divisions and with Information Technology to provide for inclusion in the City's dashboard reporting system.

LOOKING AHEAD

Division staff played a critical role in expanding monthly reporting to incorporate Department-wide data and updates, and will continue to lead this reporting effort. In the coming fiscal year, Development Center staff will continue to seek and implement procedural improvements to help increase customer access and permitting efficiency.



Land Development

Land Development Division staff observed a shift in development this fiscal year, reviewing a higher number of infill-oriented townhome developments than in prior years. With the UDO adoption in 2021, the threshold for Planning Commission review increased from 6 to 25 units, expediting the process for multi-family developments of 24 units or fewer.

Division staff works daily to support citizens, property owners, and developers by answering questions, facilitating community conversations, conducting on-site inspections, and more.



COLUMBIA TREE & APPEARANCE COMMISSION (CTAC)

The Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission (CTAC) is made up of citizens appointed by City Council and consists of 13 members that include an arborist, horticulturist or landscape architect, developer or realtor, architect or engineer, a member of Columbia Green, and nine at-large members. Land Development and Forestry partner to staff the Commission. The Commission’s role is to review and recommend policies and ordinances affecting the planting, removal, and preservation of trees on public and private property; provide advice on the allocation of resources and polices for the planting, care, and removal of trees in the City of Columbia; make recommendations to City Council on disbursements of the Columbia Landscape and Tree Fund; and serve as an advisory body to the Forestry and Beautification Superintendent by reviewing and making recommendations related to the Forestry Division’s annual work plan and any comprehensive urban forestry or reforestation plans. They also provide public education and advocacy on tree value, preservation, and care by sponsoring the annual Arbor Day celebration, the City’s Treasured Tree program, and Columbia Choice Awards. CTAC’s current strategic initiatives include: under-grounding of overhead utility lines; the completion of a city-wide tree resource survey; advocating for the implementation of the recommendations of the recent heat island study; and the annual tree planting and beautification plan.

Urban Heat Island Mapping Report

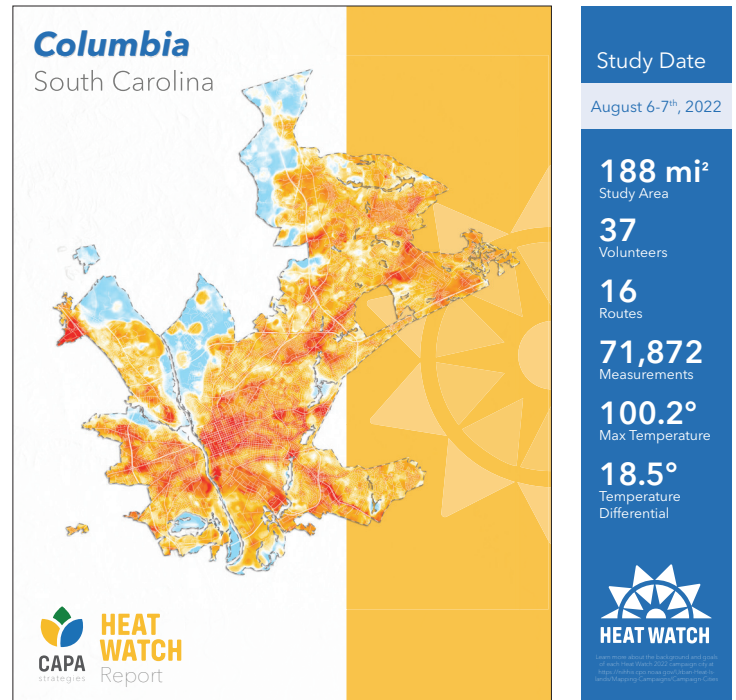
During the Summer of 2022, NOAA/NIHHS and community scientists mapped the hottest parts of 14 U.S. cities and counties, and for the first time, two international cities. Due to a successful grant application submitted by CTAC in FY2021-2022, this international initiative included 190 square miles of urban and urbanizing Columbia, West Columbia, Cayce, and Richland County.

Scientists and volunteers participated in a weekend mapping event in August of 2022, and the grant will also fund a number of stationary sensors throughout the mapping area. The final report can be found at bit.ly/ColaHeatMap.

Concrete is Famously Hot
 While early morning temperatures across the study area varied by 9 degrees Fahrenheit, by mid-afternoon those temperatures varied by just under 18 degrees – with those areas with the most impervious cover (and fewest trees) sending temperatures into the triple digits. With the heat stored in impervious surfaces, it also becomes harder for those areas to cool, even as the sun sets and nighttime temperatures drop.

The grant application was submitted by the City of Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission with financial and in-kind support from the University of South Carolina Department of Geography, the Richland County Conservation Commission, and Columbia Green as well as in-kind support from Benedict College Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Environmental Health; the City of Columbia Planning and Development Services Department and the Public Works Department; and the Richland County Department of Community Planning and Development.

In order to collect area-wide data, citizen scientists drove 16 pre-planned routes from 6-7am, 3-4pm, and 7-8pm. The temperature and humidity data collected by vehicle-mounted is modeled spatially and graphically in the resulting report.



LOOKING AHEAD

As a series of anticipated updates to the Unified Development Ordinance come into effect, the Land Development Division will continue their outreach efforts to ensure that citizens understand the updated regulations. Staff will continue to work with developers through formal pre-application meetings as well as in one-on-one interactions to ensure their development applications and review are as streamlined as possible.

Caring for our Canopy

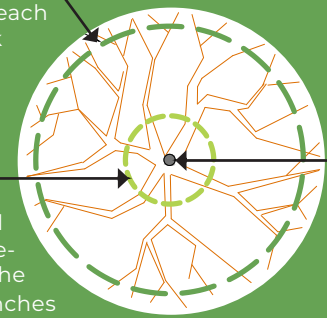
Did you know that the UDO sets forth two distinct zones to protect the existing tree canopy from damage during on-site construction? The **structural root zone** provides the tree stability against wind throw, and the **critical root zone** preserves sufficient root mass to give a tree a reasonable chance of survival. Shade trees are slow growers, and ensuring the protection of the mature and maturing tree canopy while planting additional, younger trees ensures the health and long-term viability of the urban forest and contributes to the livability and desirability of our city.

Critical Root Zone

Radius equal to one foot for each inch of trunk diameter

Structural Root Zone

Radius equal in feet to one-third times the number of inches of trunk diameter



Planning

Planning Division staff are engaged in both current and long-range planning efforts by nature of their work. Staff worked closely with property owners, developers, community members, and other stakeholders to facilitate long-term planning goals, the design review process, the annexation of properties into the City, and outreach and engagement activities and materials related to planning and development in the City of Columbia. Due to the diversity of the Division's work, these activities, as well as anticipated efforts to be undertaken in FY2023-2024, are summarized under topic-specific headings on the pages that follow.

Columbia Compass + Long Range Planning

Implementation of *Columbia Compass: Envision 2036*, the 10-year update to the City's comprehensive plan, continued in FY2022-2023. Regular updates on plan implementation by City departments and partners were provided throughout the year via the *Columbia Compass* e-newsletter.

Aligning with the recommendations of Columbia Compass, Division staff worked to complete a progress report on the implementation of *The Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia* (2005). The report was presented to the public at a meeting that addressed the relationship of City policies and programs to the development of North Columbia. The report identifies the status of the plan's recommended Action Items and Catalyst Projects, compiling information on implementation efforts taken on by City departments, local partners, and state agencies. The area plan and progress report are both available at planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/city-plans.

An report summarizing the implementation of *Columbia Compass* recommendations during FY2021-2022 and FY2022-2023 is forthcoming; when released, it will be available at columbiacompass.org.



Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia
Progress Update

About the Plan
The Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia was completed in 2005, the result of a collaborative effort between the City and community stakeholders. Five community goals framed the plan's development:

- Diversify the image of North Columbia;
- Preserve existing single-family neighborhoods;
- Develop supportive retail services;
- Maintain and develop new parks and community open spaces; and
- Increase educational services and outreach programs.

Plan Implementation
The plan identified a host of recommendations in the master plan, followed by a list of action items and catalyst projects. Some of these action items and catalyst project recommendations were singular, while others were compound, and recommendations varied in their levels of specificity as well:

The plan's 21 action items were grouped under each of the plan's five goals. Short narratives identified steps to be taken toward implementation, as well as partners in the implementation effort.

The plan set forth 25 catalyst projects to occur on specific sites throughout the study area. These projects, which were grouped into three tiers for implementation purposes, identified recommended development activities on both publicly- and privately-held lands. Catalyst projects can be especially hard to move forward, where not only funding but also property ownership determines the success of implementation.

90% Progress has been made on 19 of 21 of action items since plan adoption

36% Progress has been made on 9 of 25 of catalyst projects since plan adoption

80% 20 of 25 catalyst projects would require substantial funding and/or purchase of private property to progress

Learn more about area plans throughout the City and access the full progress report for *The Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia* at planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/city-plans.

Above: Comprehensive Planner Leigh DeForth presented the findings of the progress report to North Columbia residents gathered at the February 2023 public meeting.

Left: a one-page summary document developed by the Planning Division for meeting attendees.

Interested in updates? Sign up for the Columbia Compass e-newsletter: bit.ly/ColumbiaCompassnewsletter

Urban Design

Urban design is, quite literally, the design of the urban realm, which consists of buildings, streets, and all of the spaces in between. Urban design plans and guidelines typically address these components with architectural guidelines, streetscape plans and standards, and open space/landscape standards. Importantly, however, urban design is more than aesthetics - it involves the sustainability of urban places by making them functional, comfortable, and safe for a diverse population of users to live, work, and play. Urban design is the thoughtful and purposeful connection between people and places, both built and natural, within the city.

The City of Columbia has four urban design overlays that address these issues in defined areas: City Center, Innovista, Five Points, and the North Main Corridor. Urban design staff also plays a role in transportation projects and encroachment reviews to help to guide projects within the public realm to meet urban design principles.

The City's urban design districts and their corresponding guidelines were each designated as a result of public input received during public area planning processes. Each of the four design districts has their own unique set of principles and guidelines that reflect the community's vision for the designated area in addition to best practices and design principles. In total, these design districts make up 1.7% of the acreage of the current municipal boundary.

URBAN DESIGN DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

Recently Completed Projects

The Standard, a 16-story private student dormitory at the corner of Assembly and Washington Streets, opened in August 2023 and houses nearly 700 students in a variety of 206, 1-5 bedroom units.

Part of the design approval process includes working with the development team on improvements to the public right-of-way adjacent to the building to ensure better pedestrian accommodations both for the new residents and for the public at large. The project installed wider sidewalks with a planted buffer between the sidewalk and the travel lanes,

new accessible ramps, and a pedestrian refuge on Assembly Street.

The building design includes large storefront windows and a corner entrance, and painted murals along Washington Street to help screen the garage frontage.



The Standard was initially approved by the Design/Development Review Commission in August 2016, and after a number of changes initiated by the Developer, Clayco Realty Group, it was ultimately approved by the D/DRC three times, with the latest and final design approval in January 2021.

Tracking Change in Our Backyard

Catty-corner from Planning & Development Services offices at Washington Square, our staff had a parking garage view of the site work and building construction. Lucinda Statler began taking pictures each Friday at 5pm, and we've compiled a video of her images. Check it out [here](#).

Until 2018 when it was demolished, the site was home to 2-story building built in 1914 (pictured to the right), which housed several African-American businesses in the early 20th century when the Washington Street corridor was an established African-American business district. The businesses included Regal Drug Store and the office of Nathaniel J Frederick, prominent attorney and activist for racial equity.



Left: a March 1914 article in *The State* announces the building planned for 1401 Assembly. **Right:** a photograph of the building when it housed AAA Used Furniture.

Alongside the final block of the Greene Street bridge and streetscape from Gadsden to Huger Street, the **South Carolina State Credit Union expansion**, approved in 2021 (and highlighted in the 2021-2022 annual report), is near completion. The 3-story addition to the credit union’s complex provides an important mass to the corner of this wide intersection. In addition to providing visual interest, having vertical mass (buildings and trees) adjacent to streets helps to define a space for pedestrians that is more comfortable to walk in.



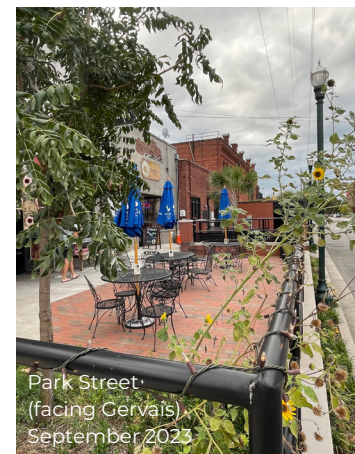
The **South Carolina State Credit Union** expansion helps define the key intersection of Greene and Huger.

Completed in the Summer of 2022, the **Park Street improvements** brought both vibrancy and practicality to a section of the Vista. The City of Columbia managed the project, which included the addition of protected pedestrian sidewalks, the creation of an attractive sidewalk dining space, and the placement of a refuse enclosure in partnership with the Vista Guild. Perhaps not as apparent to the passerby, the project also included extensive utility work, and made space for the placement of street trees.

This long-planned-for project increases pedestrian safety, fills gaps in the City’s sidewalk network, and helps to extend the sense of place so strongly felt in the core of the Vista’s entertainment district down Park Street to additional businesses.



Images of Park Street taken before the **Park Street Improvements**.



Images of Park Street taken after the **Park Street Improvements**.

Projects Permitted + Underway

The **Gadsden and Greene**, another private student dormitory under construction, was permitted in the Spring of 2023 and is being built by the USC Development Foundation. This 12-story project in the Innovista Design District will house nearly 950 students in 310 units and will have a 12,500SF retail component and a 525-space parking structure.

The project, one block west of Foundation Square, is situated along the Greene Street corridor and new bridge - opened in December 2022 - with bicycle and pedestrian facilities connecting east through campus to Five Points and west to Huger Street, which will ultimately extend to the Congaree Riverfront parkway, currently in design.



The **Gadsden and Greene** was approved by the D/DRC in December 2022 and received site plan approval from the Planning Commission in February 2023. Rendering by Cooper Carry.

Vista Depot, a complex which includes two hotel buildings and a multi-family apartment building situated on about 12-acres between Adluh Flour and the Convention Center, is also located in the Innovista Design District.

The dual-branded Hyatt Centric and Hyatt House will provide 301 guest rooms as well as a restaurant, lounge and a rooftop bar. The multi-family apartments will provide 183 one and two-bedroom units atop a 385-space parking structure.

The complex will provide pedestrian connectivity through the site from Gervais Street to Pendleton Street, east to the convention center, and will connect to the Gadsden Street sidewalks to the south that are

being constructed as part of the recently permitted USC surface lots behind the Colonial Center.



The **Vista Depot** received both D/DRC approval and site plan approval from Planning Commission in January 2023. Rendering by Derek Cox for Kollin Altomare Architects.



The **Homewood Suites/Tru hotel** received D/DRC approval in July 2022 and site plan approval from Planning Commission in August 2022, and is currently under construction. Rendering by Craig Otto, Architect.

In addition to a number of student housing developments, there are also several hotel projects in the works. The **Homewood Suites/Tru hotel** is currently underway at the corner of Gervais and Williams Streets in the Innovista Design District. The 7-story structure will provide 249 rooms and a surface parking lot on Senate Street.

The red brick and exposed concrete structure sits back a bit further from Williams Street due to the high transmission lines; the hotel will utilize the extra space for a semi-private patio space for guests.

The Finlay Park revitalization project began construction in the Summer of 2023. The planning and design process, led by Stantec and coordinated through Parks and Recreation, was a comprehensive, multi-year effort.

The design team balanced the need to update connectivity and accessibility throughout the park, the desire to add new amenities such as a central event space, a destination playground, and new water features, and to preserve and update many of the historic features designed by Robert Marvin, notably the iconic Finlay Park fountain.

The architectural design, by LS3P, includes a new stage, an amenity shelter, and a splash pad building as well as revitalization of the existing buildings

to include turning the Laurel Street building into a ranger station. Civitas, Chao, and WP Law also provided consulting services for the project.



The *Finlay Park Revitalization Project* received D/DRC approval in November 2022, and construction began in the Summer of 2023. Rendering courtesy of Stantec.

Car Washes in Urban Design Districts

One may notice there are a couple of new car washes around Columbia's urban center that look a bit different from your typical car wash. Big Dan's on Elmwood Avenue is within the City Center Design District, and Time to Shine on Gervais Street - just starting construction - is on the edge of the Five Points Design District, both of which are designated urban design overlays.

These districts have design guidelines that require developments to be more pedestrian-friendly. Why would a car wash need to be pedestrian-friendly, you might wonder, when all of the customers are driving? The success of an urban environment depends on the ability of people to walk safely and comfortably between convenient destinations.

The urban design principles that support pedestrian-friendly development include elements such as wider sidewalks, trees between the sidewalk and the traffic lanes to provide shade and a buffer between pedestrians and automobiles, and a continuum of interesting things to look at along the way, such as building details and storefront window displays.



Big Dan's Car Wash, Elmwood Avenue

If you've ever walked along a busy street on a narrow sidewalk between fast-moving traffic and a surface parking lot, you know how unnerving (and boring!) it is. Having mature trees and buildings closer to the street provides a safer and more comfortable sidewalk environment, and is a proven traffic-calming technique as well!

ACTIVATING DOWNTOWN'S PUBLIC SPACES

In addition to the regulatory role of urban design guidelines within the City, planning staff is involved in other special projects and initiatives that have an impact on the public realm, such as urban parks, streetscapes, wayfinding, and public seating.

PARK(ing) Day

PARK(ing) Day is an annual open-source global event where citizens, artists, and activists collaborate to temporarily transform metered parking spaces into "PARK(ing)" spaces: temporary public places.

The Planning Division has helped facilitate the City's celebration of PARK(ing) Day since 2015, and 2022 marked the City's 7th celebration! This was the second year PARK(ing) Day also included two design contests - a juried Best Design Award and a People's Choice Award. With 17 temporary installations throughout the City's center, this tactical urbanism event helps inspire and educate citizens about the value of high quality urban design and the use of public space. Find out more, and save the date for the next celebration by visiting columbiacompass.org/parklets.



The BOUDREAUX installation (above) won the juried 2022 Best Design Award, while in a repeat performance (with a new design), the LS3P Associates installation (below) won the 2022 People's Choice Award. The Capital City Shag Club (right) also received an honorable mention under juried Best Design.



Tactical urbanism is a city, organizational, and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change.

As defined by the Tactical Urbanism Guide



Historic Preservation

Columbia has a long history of historic preservation, beginning in the early 1960s with efforts to protect the Robert Mills house from demolition and the adoption of the City’s first historic districts. Today Columbia has 15 historic districts, with a variety of designation levels, and more than 180 individual landmarks. During FY2022-2023, historic preservation staff assisted homeowners, business owners, developers, and neighborhoods as they worked to preserve and bring new life to Columbia’s historic structures. Historic preservation staff are also active in engaging citizens, both virtually and at in-person events. This fiscal year, preservation staff produced original outreach materials, including the popular “Love Your Neighborhood” videos that were published on [the City’s YouTube Preservation Playlist](#), and helped facilitate Preservation Month events hosted City staff and community partners.

NOTABLE PRESERVATION PROJECTS REVIEWED OR COMPLETED (FY2022-2023)

» **1813 Main Street, (The Klondike):** This 1961 building, known as the Klondike Building, was designed by the prominent local architectural firm of Lafaye, Fair, and Lafaye. The Klondike Building was developed as part of the mid-century urban renewal effort in downtown Columbia to bring newer and more modern buildings to the Columbia skyline. As part of an effort to update this particular building in the early 1980s, the façade was stuccoed over and the original streamlined, mid-century façade was lost. Exploratory efforts found the original brick and granite features under the painted stucco on the façade which allowed this building to be designated as a local Landmark and benefit from the Bailey Bill tax abatement. The Bailey Bill project included restoration of the original materials and installation of a historically appropriate storefront, based on historic images. Recently completed renovations were successful in bringing back the sleek and simple original design of this mid-century building.



The Klondike

» **1518 Richland Street (Maxcy Gregg House):** This house was built in 1841 and in 1854 was purchased by Maxcy Gregg, who later became a Confederate General in the Civil War. The Land family bought the property in 1880 and occupied it for almost 100 years. The house reportedly started with a single bay front porch and a belvedere built onto the roof, but these features are no longer extant, likely because of a major rehabilitation in the early 1900s by the Land family. The front porch was extended to be full width and three dormers were added at this time. Today, this building is a one and a half story, five bay structure with a raised basement and features a front entry in the central bay with an elliptical fanlight and diamond patterned sidelights. Approved for the Bailey Bill in March 2023, the renovation will include scraping and painting the siding, addressing any rot on the dormers, soffit, and fascia, and handling water issues on the porch roof and around the foundation of the building.



Maxcy Gregg House

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

National Historic Preservation Month was started in the 1970s by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a way to promote historic places. Each May events and activities are scheduled across the country to celebrate the history and architecture of communities big and small. This year marked a return to a host of in-person events Preservation Month, which were well attended and provided citizens a host of opportunities to engage in the month-long celebration. A complete calendar of events can be found on the [Celebrate May webpage](#), which serves as a hub for the City’s celebration of National Historic Preservation Month and National Bike Month, both of which occur each May.

Love Your Neighborhood Video Series

In order to produce the Love Your Neighborhood video series, preservation staff also contacted, interviewed, and pieced together videos of more than 30 individuals whose efforts have helped preserve Columbia’s historic built environment. These videos, posted weekly during Preservation Month, can be streamed via [the Preservation Playlist on City’s YouTube channel](#).

Preservation + Urban Design Bike Ride

A fully-booked bike tour provided participants with a free chance to explore their city on two wheels while learning about recent and ongoing projects. This 7+ mile ride was organized by preservation staff, who developed the route and tour discussion points, even working with local developers and property owners to provide attendees with behind-the-scenes tours at several of the stops.



Participants paused in Finlay Park to learn about the planned improvements and the park’s historic past.

Children’s Craft at Richland Library

City staff partnered with Richland Library to host a pre-Mother’s Day children’s craft event at Richland Main. Families with children of all ages created faux stained glass windows, a true partnership between preservation and creative play!



Family fun at the Preservation Month children’s craft.

Preservation Happy Hour

In partnership with Cottontown/Bellevue Historic District, City preservation staff hosted a happy hour drop in at Indah Coffee. Preservation staff developed and shared quick 5-10 minute presentations on a variety of popular preservation topics, while also taking the time to engage with residents and answer their questions.

Mabel Payne Award: Kandie Wright

As part of the City’s annual celebration of National Historic Preservation Month in May, preservation staff recognized local property owner and Historic Melrose Neighborhood resident Kandie Wright with the Mabel Payne Award.

Kandie Wright’s Work & Ongoing Legacy

Kandie’s rehabilitation projects in the Historic Melrose neighborhood have transformed dilapidated “lost cause” buildings into some of the most desirable houses in the neighborhood. This includes her own home, the Prairie-style Powell House, and a unique Airplane-Bungalow on Maple Street. Both of these projects resulted in the transformation of neglected historic homes into shining examples of their respective architectural styles.



With every building that Kandie takes on, she works to preserve historic character with an eye to detail that adds value to the neighborhood. Kandie’s preservation work brings new life to these historic buildings and for provides an exceptional example of how one person can make a huge difference.

About the Award

Given annually by the Planning Division, the Mabel Payne Award is named for one of the City’s first planners whose dedication and advocacy for historic structures laid the groundwork for preservation in Columbia and made her a trail blazer in preservation. The award recognizes individuals and neighborhoods for their outstanding efforts in education, leadership, conservation, or stewardship which supports our built environment and, ultimately, the entire City.



Buildings within the Main Street District, the Vista, the Robert Mills District, and in our historically designated and non-designated neighborhoods—all of these are pivotal to the character of Columbia and are still with us only through the cumulative efforts of many people. Mabel Payne Award winners may work behind the scenes or they may be front and center, but their work has had a significant impact on Columbia and its historic built environment through their outstanding efforts in education, leadership, conservation, or stewardship of the City’s historic resources.

About Mabel Payne

Mabel Payne was a City of Columbia employee whose work in the 1950s documenting and preserving historic structures laid the foundation for preservation in the City. Her records of historic properties are often the only surviving information available on demolished buildings that were once a part of the City’s historic downtown.

Want to stay up to date on historic preservation in Columbia?
 Sign up for the Historic Preservation newsletter [here](#).

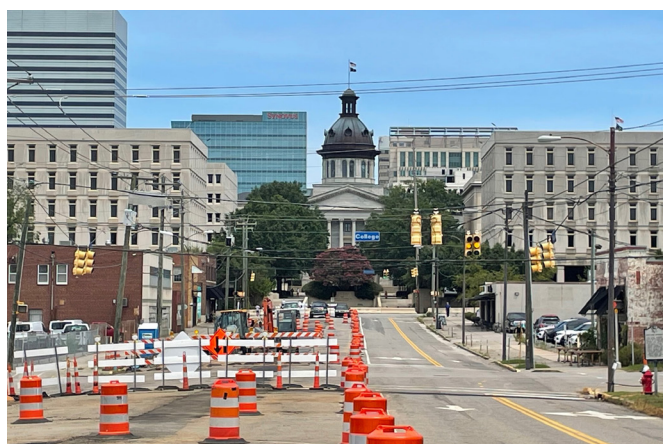
Multimodal Transportation Planning

Planning for multimodal transportation means designing for all users and ensuring the safety of the most vulnerable. Multimodal refers to multiple modes of travel, and considers the infrastructure needed by pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, cars, trucks, and freight. The Planning Division works with other City departments and local and state agencies to further the multimodal infrastructure recommendations of [Walk Bike Columbia](#) and [Columbia Compass](#). The Division also works to gather and analyze data surrounding vulnerable users and the use of public space, which can help provide a broader understanding of how right-of-way design can impact and serve the needs of all of Columbia's citizens.

PROJECTS UNDERWAY & COMPLETED IN FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

Main Street (Pendleton to Blossom)

This transformative redesign of Main Street from Pendleton to Blossom is led by SCDOT and represents a partnership with the University of South Carolina and the City of Columbia. Phase 1 construction began in March of 2023, allowing businesses to retain access while managing traffic through signage and shifts. The project, which is anticipated to be completed in the Summer of 2025, includes a road diet and street rebuild with substantial undergrounding of utilities, as well as the provision of sidewalks, protected bikeways (which will be the first cycle tracks in Columbia), street trees, decorative lighting, and other landscaping.



Project History

[The South Main Capital District Area Plan](#) was developed in 2017 through a planning process driven by the University of South Carolina in partnership with the City of Columbia. This plan examined the eight-block area surrounding adjacent to Main Street between Pendleton and Blossom - an expanse that included a number of University-related holdings and underutilized spaces. The consultant team from Sasaki came to the table having worked on the City's [Innovista Master Plan](#), a highly visual plan which resulted in the development of design guidelines as well as catalyst projects including Foundation Square and the Greene Street Bridge, the latter of which was completed in late 2022.

N. Main Street (Anthony to Fuller)



The N. Main Street project came to a close this fiscal year, with an official ribbon cutting held in April 2023. The 1.7 mile-long project included widening, repaving, improved intersections and pedestrian crossings, street lighting, sidewalks, the undergrounding of overhead utilities, and landscaped medians in some locations. This substantial project implemented recommendations of [The Master Plan for the Villages of North Columbia](#), and leveraged a number of funding sources: \$35.4 million from the Richland County Penny Tax for Transportation, \$16.7 million from a federal TIGER grant successfully obtained by the City, \$5.8 million from the City for water and sewer work, and \$1.3 million from federal legislation.

Vista Greenway Extension

Plans for an extension of the Vista Greenway north of Elmwood Avenue saw substantial progress in FY2022-2023, with the allocation of additional funding for greenway alignment as part of the State’s budget and the completion of right-of-way transfers from SCDOT in early FY2022-2023. These right of way transfers include property along the N. Main Street/River Drive area (shown to the right in dark green) that can provide space for a critical extension of the Vista Greenway. The City’s Engineering Department is working to finalize the alignment, and has begun to seek funding for greenway construction. SCDOT is currently working on a design for the replacement of the River Drive bridge over the railroad, and how to best connect greenway users to pedestrian and bicyclist facilities along this stretch has been a part of the conversation, too!



An illustrative map of the existing greenway and additional right-of-way depicts the potential for expansion.

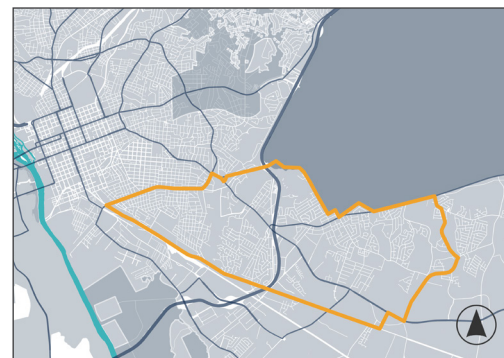
Bike Share Expansion Study



Blue Bike, Columbia’s bike share system, is going through a transformation. After 5 years running and growing ridership each year, the Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) sponsored an expansion study to see how the system might grow and expand across the river to become a regional system. Conducted by Toole Design, the study included coordination with the City of Columbia, City of Cayce, City of West Columbia, and the Town of Springdale, as well as with the system’s title sponsor, Blue Cross Blue Shield and transit partner, the COMET. The system is temporarily out of service due to the previous operator, Bewegen, shuttering their bike share operating business in Spring 2023; however this pause provides an opportunity to look at changes and improvements to the current system as the future expansion plans move forward. Explore the expansion study [on the CMCOG website](#).

Columbia East Traffic Improvement Plan

The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) is working with a consultant team and local stakeholders, including the City of Columbia, to develop the [Columbia East Traffic Improvement Plan](#). The study focuses on transportation and land use in the area surrounding the growing Garners Ferry Road corridor from Fort Jackson Boulevard to Trotter Road (as shown to the right). Planning Division staff was brought into the interview process as a stakeholder in Spring 2023, and the public engagement process kicked off in early FY2023-2024 with a both presentation to a City Council subcommittee and a well-attended public information meeting occurring in August 2023. Once feedback from the initial set of meetings is received, the project team will develop recommendations for the area, hold additional public meetings, and draft a plan, with anticipated plan completion in 2024.



The above map shows the Columbia East study area in orange.

SCDOT Road Safety Audits: Assembly, Gervais, and Millwood

The SCDOT Safety Office studies, makes recommendations for, and implements infrastructure improvements along roadways with the state’s highest crash rates. In FY2022-2023, SCDOT identified three routes within the City: Assembly Street (Elmwood to Flora), Gervais Street (Williams to Marion), and Millwood Avenue (Page to Woodrow), adding them to the statewide projects list. City staff participated in a Road Safety Audit of Assembly in April 2023 as stakeholders, and anticipate taking part in the subsequent audits of Gervais and Millwood in early FY2023-2024. Once these audits are completed, SCDOT’s consultant team will make recommendations for each corridor, and will present these recommendations in a public meeting setting before defining the scope of infrastructure improvements for each of the corridors.



City staff joined SCDOT, consultants, and community stakeholders in a road safety audit of Assembly Street in April. In the above image, auditors investigate the cause for the gap between the sidewalks along Assembly + Wheat streets; surface drainage issues appear to have both eroded and buried the connecting concrete.

Did you know? Sometimes backing up is thinking ahead.

Reverse-angle parking has been around for a while, but the only place you can find it in Columbia is adjacent to Page Ellington Park in Bull Street. So, why is it so special? When backing out of an angled parking space, drivers are faced with blind spots that their mirrors can’t fix where they cannot see oncoming motor vehicles or other road users, like bicyclists.

With reverse-angle parking, the risk of hitting someone (or something) that you can’t see is greatly reduced. Wheelchair users can also load or unload from the side or rear, away from the flow of traffic. Reverse-angle parking also means trunk space is accessible from the sidewalk for safer loading and unloading – at Bull Street this means those sweet pups heading to the dog park can be unloaded more safely, too!



Planning Division Involvement

Local infrastructure projects are a collaborative effort, and they impact Columbians whether or not they are led by the City. With the majority of roads in the City owned and maintained by SCDOT, inter-agency collaboration is critical and necessary for the implementation of plan recommendations. Depending on the project lead and needs, Planning Division staff work closely with other departments and agencies to facilitate public outreach, develop striping plans, and respond to feedback. With other key infrastructure projects listed here, the Division’s role is a little different, and varies based on the project.

Reviewing

Division staff is part of a team that works to review plans submitted by other agencies on City streets. Staff also provides support for large grant applications for transformative infrastructure projects, and provides feedback on proposed SCDOT projects. With SCDOT’s adoption of a [Complete Streets Departmental Directive](#) in February of 2021, comments provided on SCDOT projects regarding the recommendations of Walk Bike Columbia now carry additional import. In FY2022-2023, staff conducted extensive reviews of pending SCDOT projects to identify and highlight plan recommendations for complete streets improvements. As a result of these reviews, detailed comments were provided on local bridge projects, the 2024 Pavement Improvement Program, and to the SCDOT road safety project team for Assembly, Gervais, and Millwood.

Centering the Conversation

As stakeholders in the process, Planning Division staff ensures that the recommendations of [Walk Bike Columbia](#), [Walkable 29203](#), [Columbia Compass](#), and [other adopted plans](#) are part of the conversation, focusing on design oriented towards our most vulnerable users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and those accessing transit systems. The Division facilitates bi-annual pedestrian and bicyclist counts (see next page) to help make sure infrastructure planning addresses the needs of our most vulnerable users.

Spreading the Word

Division staff also works to apprise the community of proposed transportation projects in the City, regardless of the project lead. The Division produces the [Walk Bike Columbia](#) and [Columbia Compass](#) e-newsletters and partners with City Public Relations, Media & Marketing to spread the word about upcoming projects, opportunities for public comment, and more.

Key Infrastructure Projects Quick Reference Guide

- » N. Main Street (Anthony to Fuller), Richland County: completed Spring 2023.
- » Greene Street bridge (Gadsden to Huger), Richland County: completed late 2022.
- » Main Street (Pendleton to Blossom), SCDOT: under construction, anticipated completion in Summer 2025.
- » Calhoun Street (Wayne to Harden), City of Columbia: anticipated construction in 2023 (see the [FY2020-2021 Annual Report](#) for details).
- » Blossom Street bridge (Gadsden to Huger), SCDOT: under design, anticipated construction 2023/2024.
- » River Drive bridge (Anthony to Beaufort), SCDOT: under design. Info: [SCDOTGIS.ONLINE/US176RIVERDRIVE](#)
- » Vista Greenway Extension, City of Columbia: right-of-way transfer finalized in early FY2022-2023 and alignment being finalized.
- » Assembly Street (Lady to Pendleton), City of Columbia: a consultant team is developing plans for a redesigned streetscape are underway to create a shovel-ready project for future funding opportunities. The project team is coordinating with the SCDOT Road Safety Project team.
- » I-126/Elmwood Bridge, SCDOT: in early planning stages.
- » Assembly Street Railroad Separation Project, SCDOT: NEPA analysis wrapping up, funding being sought at state and federal levels. The project was added to the COATS MPO TIP in early FY2023-2024.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST COUNTS

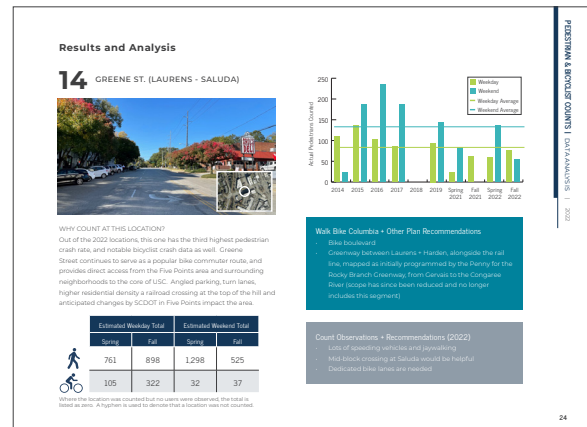
Pedestrians and bicyclists are not counted as part of typical traffic counts, which makes it difficult to truly plan for complete streets in a data-driven manner. Since 2014, the Planning Division has worked to meet this need, organizing annual pedestrian and bicycle counts in over 30 locations throughout the City. These counts require both staff and volunteer counters to fully capture the desired data, and counts are held on weekdays and weekends, generally in the Fall of each year.

Counts were completed on weekdays and weekends, in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. In the Fall 2022 count, 27 of the 34 locations were counted at least once (either on a weekend or weekday) and 16 of these locations were fully counted (on both a weekend and weekday). Subsequent to the Fall 2022 Counts, the Planning Division compiled and [released a report summarizing the data collected in the 2022 calendar year](#). This report utilized an updated, more highly-visual report style consistent with the Department's reporting efforts, which will be utilized for annual count reports moving forward.

During the Spring 2023 counts, 28 of the 34 possible locations were counted at least once, and 13 of the locations were counted fully. Fall 2023 counts will target those locations missed during the Spring, in an effort to ensure all locations are counted at least once. Moving forward, count locations will only be removed from the list once two years worth of data has been collected at a site and no land use or infrastructure changes are anticipated surrounding the count location in the near future.

INDIVIDUALS COUNTED

FY 2022-2023



A report released in March of 2023 analyzed data and reported on trends from prior counts. Cut sheets specific to each location included the reasons the location was counted, estimated daily volumes of pedestrians and bicyclists, tracking of count data over time, location-specific infrastructure recommendations made by adopted plans, and qualitative observations made during the calendar year's counts.

BIKE PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC)

The Bike Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) is made up of citizens appointed by City Council, and the Planning Division staffs the Committee with support from the Engineering Division. As an advisory committee, BPAC has worked toward implementation of *Walk Bike Columbia's* many recommendations since the adoption of the plan in 2015. Planning Division staff provides BPAC with planning resources and research; updates on City projects, programs, and policies; and administrative support. In addition to providing feedback directly to Council, BPAC has promoted and developed a number of engagement and education opportunities around walking and biking.

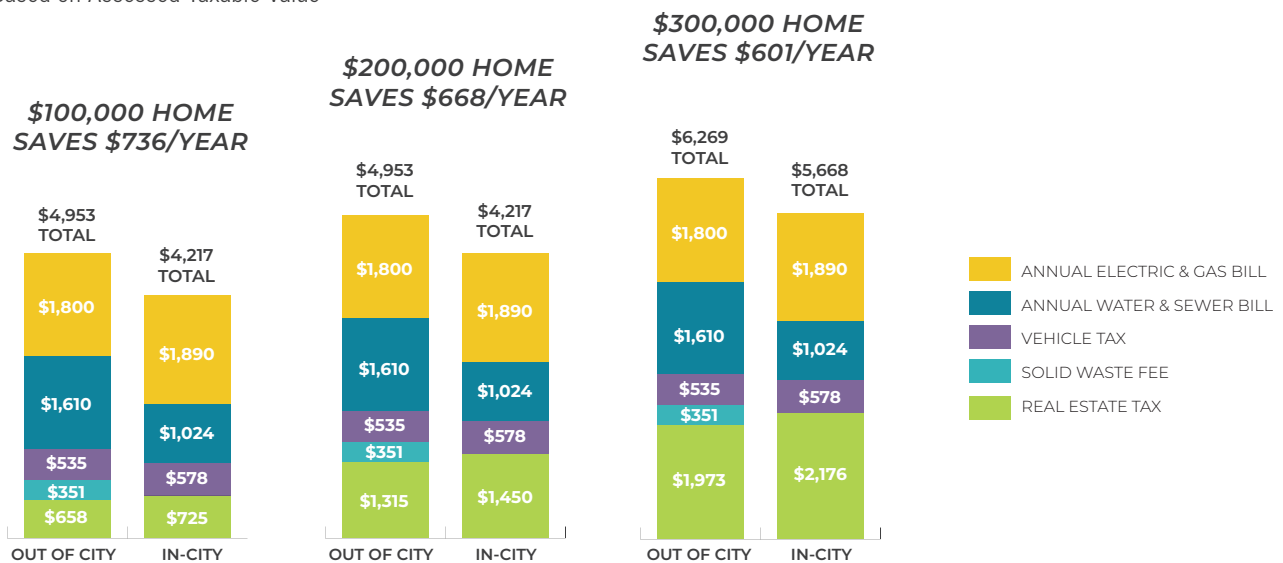
Annexation

The City of Columbia grew by about 150 acres through 21 separate annexation petitions from July 2022 through June 2023. Nearly two-thirds of these annexations were inside “donut holes”, or enclaves of unincorporated property surrounded by the City. Many of the rest were new developments on properties adjacent to the City limits. Annexations over FY2022-2023 include 111 proposed new single-family and duplex units and 240 new multi-family units. Together with the annexation of existing residences, this is estimated to add over 800 new residents to the City when development is completed.

Annexation is how the boundaries of a city grow, and also how property owners and residents outside of but adjacent to the City limits can receive our full range of City services. Because the City generally serves urban or urbanizing areas, these services can be provided more efficiently than to areas outside of the City limits. In fact, the typical homeowner annexing into the City of Columbia will save over \$600 a year on their bills compared to their unincorporated neighbors, and add our excellent services, too!

HOMEOWNER SAVINGS AFTER ANNEXATION

Based on Assessed Taxable Value



The examples above are based upon the most recent tax year (2022) for the 1UR and 1LR tax districts and assumes the average residential water & sewer use (8 units/month), \$20,000 vehicle value, and an average \$150 monthly electric & gas bill. Every homeowner is different - to learn how your unique circumstances would be affected by annexation, contact staff or visit planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/annexations.

Outreach

During fiscal year 2022-2023, the Planning Division continued to work diligently to engage with the public on a variety of planning-related topics and broader department initiatives.

Staff participated in a number of collaborative efforts throughout the fiscal year: speaking with the Columbia Tree & Appearance Commission (CTAC) about urban design; working with SCDOT to spread the word about the planned River Drive bridge replacement and other projects; supporting outreach surrounding a number of Central Midlands Council of Governments regional planning efforts, such as the Bike Share Expansion Study; and developing a progress report and participating in a meeting hosted by Councilwoman Herbert regarding development in North Columbia.

City of Columbia & District 1 Councilwoman Tina Herbert

Thursday, February 2
6:00pm - 7:30pm at
Eau Claire Print Building
3907 Ensor Ave

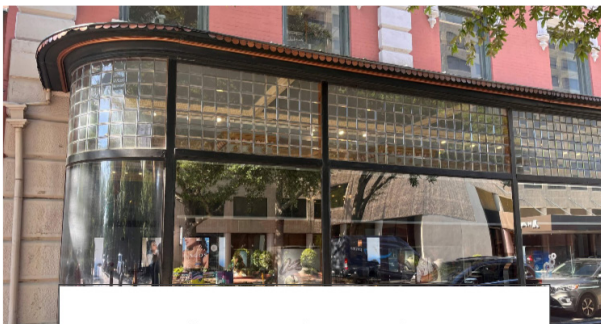
THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH COLUMBIA
COMMUNITY MEETING
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Discussion Focus
Status of the plan for North Columbia

Who Should Attend
Residents, business owners, and citizens interested in the development of North Columbia

Anyone wanting to submit ideas or a proposal for a development project in North Columbia, please send all information to District1@columbiasc.gov

Deadline to send information is THURSDAY, JANUARY 26



Local Landmark

- Addition to the 1870s building was built in 1905 and allowed for more display area for the jeweler
- Prismatic glass reflects light deeper into the building
- Decorative transoms were used on commercial storefronts starting in the late 19th century



We're highlighting a historic window each month.

Columbia is home to many beautiful windows hidden in plain sight. Do you have a favorite historic window in town? Learn more, including how you can [nominate a window](#) today.

This year, preservation staff also worked to highlight historic windows throughout Columbia, providing education regarding architectural design, materials, and more. **This monthly web-based highlight** is also distributed via the historic preservation e-newsletter, and has been highlighted in the departmental monthly report.

Division staff is responsible for Mailchimp-based newsletters for **historic preservation**, **Columbia Compass**, and **Walk Bike Columbia**. These e-newsletters continue to offer ways for staff to engage with the public and provide information about local and regional programs and efforts, as well as provide opportunities for comment and engagement. Combined, these three newsletters reach just under 2,000 community members, business owners, and neighborhood leaders with updates regarding plan implementation, incentives and other historic preservation resources, upcoming multimodal infrastructure projects, and more.

Staff facilitates a number of annually-recurring events and initiatives, including National Historic Preservation Month and National Bike Month each May, Pedestrian + Bicyclist Counts in the Spring and Fall, PARK(ing) Day each September, and National Community Planning Month each October. By supporting each of these efforts, staff is able to engage with members of the public on a host of planning-related topics, broadening public understanding and participation in future planning efforts.

Division staff is also responsible for the compilation of the Planning & Development Services Annual Report, and partners with Development Center on the Department’s monthly report. Staff also continues to coordinate and implement updates to both the [departmental microsite](#) and the [Columbia Compass website](#).

LOOKING AHEAD

In addition to upcoming transportation projects, ongoing facilitation of development, and support of reporting efforts, the Planning Division has a number of projects and initiatives planned for FY2022-2023. In the coming fiscal year, the City will initiate a strategic master planning process for downtown Columbia to articulate a current vision for the future development of the downtown area. The plan will focus on high-quality public space that prioritizes pedestrian activity, a dynamic public realm, and fosters urban living and economic development.

In the near term, PARK(ing) Day in will be held in September, as will the Fall iteration of Pedestrian & Bicycle Counts. In October the Division will be celebrating National Community Planning month! Keep an eye on the City’s social media pages for updates. Other items to keep an eye out for are a second Annual Report on the progress of *Columbia Compass* implementation and an analytical report on the data gathered during both Spring and Fall Pedestrian & Bicyclist Counts.



Upcoming in Urban Design

Our streets are our most important public spaces in downtown; they are much more than thoroughfares for cars- sidewalks are where the City comes alive. The design of public infrastructure - streets, sidewalks, trees, and lighting is important, but even the most beautifully designed streets need people to become vibrant. Residential density, a mix of uses, and the design of buildings along the sidewalks are the key elements to creating a consistent urban fabric that enables and encourages people to walk between destinations rather than to drive and park short distances. Urban design guidelines help to shape these elements to ensure they contribute positively to the public realm. In FY 2023-2024, the City will kick off a strategic master planning process to update and streamline the urban design guidelines for downtown.

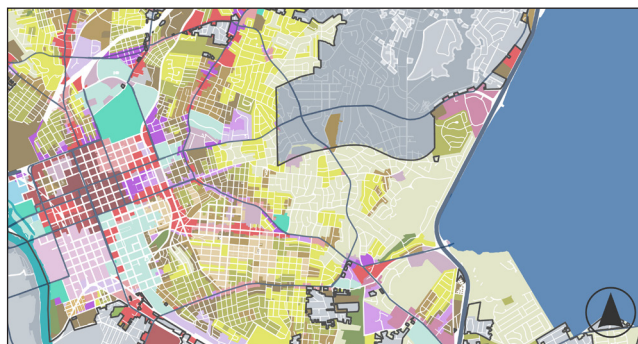
Stay tuned for more information about how to participate in this exciting and important process.

Zoning

Zoning Division staff processed 494 permits and continued to work on a daily basis to support citizens, property owners, and developers by answering questions, facilitating community conversations, and more.

Several text amendments to the UDO were adopted this past fiscal year, including expanding the table of permitting uses in certain districts, adjusting some setback requirements, clarifying definitions, and eliminating parking requirements in some circumstances. This last amendment is significant and in-line with a nationwide movement to reform minimum parking standards required for development or redevelopment.

The change was to eliminate required parking minimums in the City's mixed-use zoning districts and, in the other business districts, eliminate them for non-residential uses occupying 7,500 sq. ft. or less. Mandated parking minimums can impose harmful effects that are in conflict with other goals articulated in the Comprehensive Plan and other policies of the City while having positive impacts to include: reduced housing and business costs, improved development patterns that encourage walkability, reduced impervious surfaces with a potential to decrease stormwater runoff and heat island impacts.



LOOKING AHEAD

The Zoning Division will continue their outreach efforts in the coming fiscal year to ensure that citizens understand the updated regulations, especially modifications to the UDO are made. Staff will continue to take part in pre-application conferences as well, which provide an additional opportunity to work with developers early in the process to ensure their development applications and review are as streamlined as possible.

Want to learn more about the Zoning of your property? Take a look at [City Information Viewer](#) for more information. The site also includes details about voting districts, school districts, and solid waste pick ups.

If you need assistance navigating the [City Information Viewer](#), check out [this video!](#)

Planning & Development Services

By the Numbers

Each year the Planning and Development Services Department produces reports quantifying the work completed by each division in the last fiscal year. This section explores the output that can be quantified year to year.



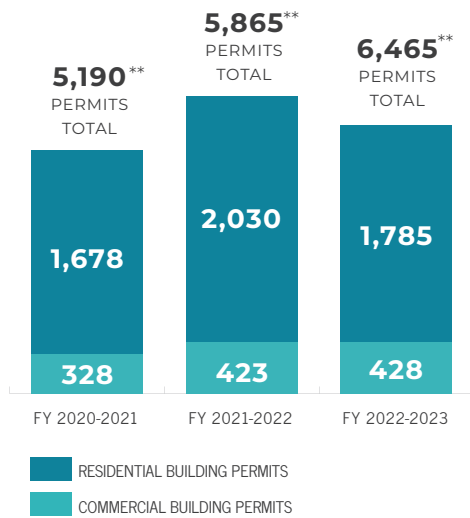
IN THIS SECTION

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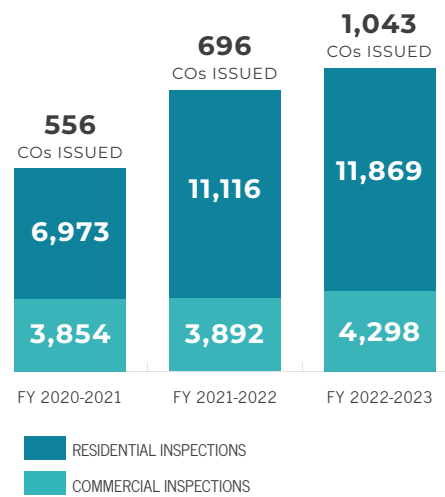
Permits and Inspections

All regulated work performed in the City of Columbia must have a permit. Two types of permits can be issued depending on the type of work being performed - either a Building Permit or a Building Trade Permit. Building Trade Permits include work such as electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and gas that typically does not require the review of Zoning, the Plans Examiner, Engineering or other agency outside of Permitting. Building Permits require the review of Permitting and Zoning, and typically at least one other City division (e.g. Engineering, Plans Examiner) and may require land development reviews by staff and possibly a land use board or commission such as the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and/or Design/Development Review Commission. A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) may be issued only upon satisfactory completion of construction of a building or structure and installation of electrical, gas, mechanical, and plumbing systems in accordance with the technical codes, reviewed plans and specifications, and after the final inspection.

PERMITS ISSUED*



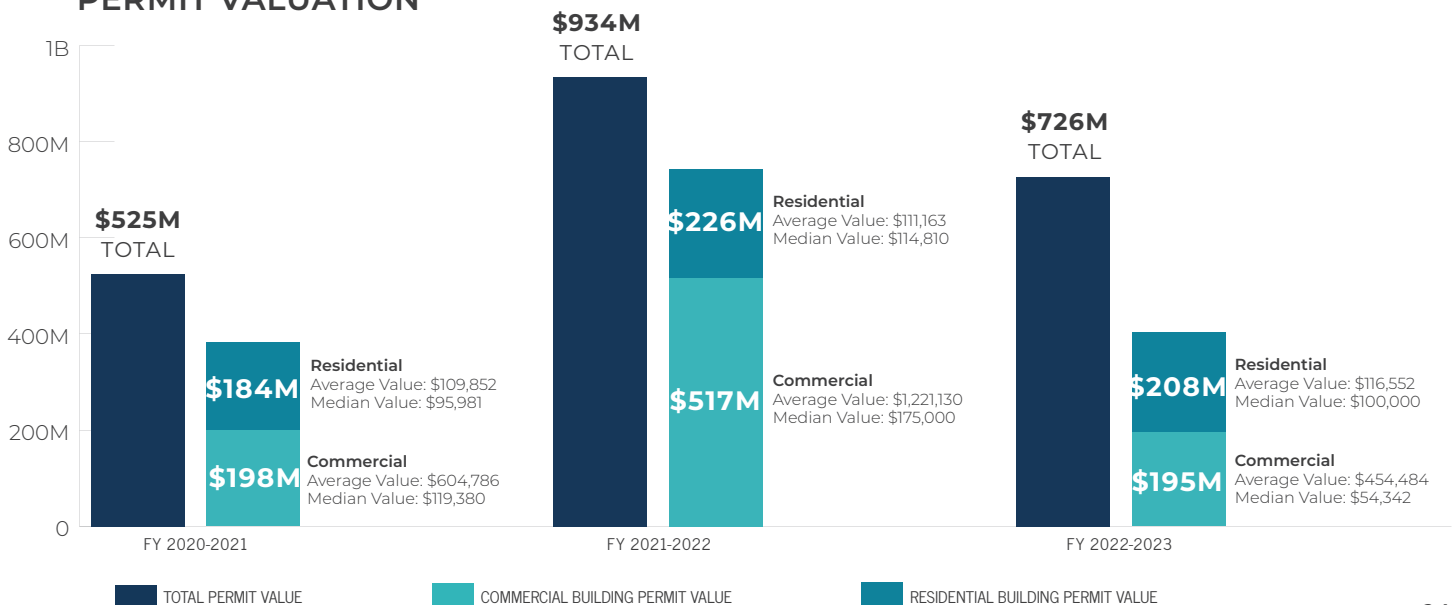
BUILDING INSPECTIONS



*Permits calculated based on the issue date, rather than application date

**This number includes all permits; numbers listed in the chart below include residential building and commercial buildings permits specifically

PERMIT VALUATION*



*Total values for all permits, commercial permits, and residential permits shown in the above chart are rounded to the nearest million. Average and median values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

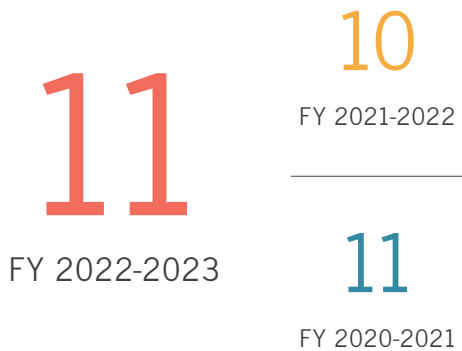
Land Development

The Land Development Division of Planning and Development Services reviews group/individual commercial and group residential developments, mixed-use planned unit developments, and residential/commercial subdivisions for compliance with the City of Columbia’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The Land Development Division also coordinates the review of major and minor subdivisions and street naming. Division staff conducted 74 land development inspections in FY 2022-2023.

Approval for Major Subdivisions and Major Site Plans is granted at the Planning Commission (PC) level, whereas Minor Subdivisions and Minor Site Plans are reviewed solely by staff for compliance with the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). **Major Subdivisions** are subdivisions of lots where platting, construction, opening, or extension of at least one of the following occurs: new streets, improvement of existing streets, water or sewer facilities, storm drainage facilities, and other utilities. **Major Site Plans** propose at least one of the following: nonresidential development of 100,000 square feet or greater, multi-family development of more than 25 units, or the development of new principal uses and structures on a lot.

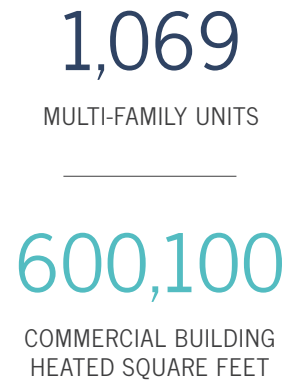
MAJOR SUBDIVISIONS

APPROVED BY PC



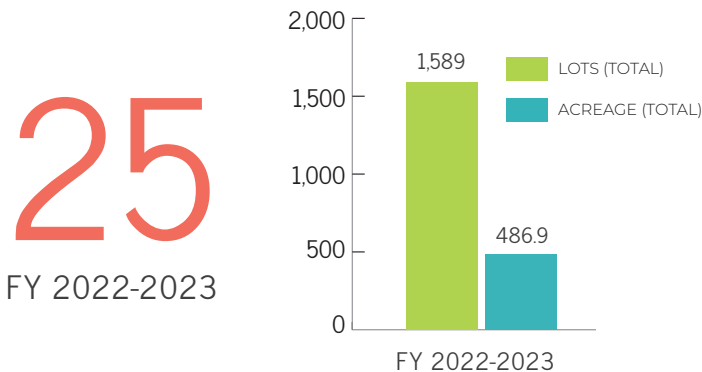
MAJOR SITE PLANS

APPROVED BY PC (FY 2022-2023)



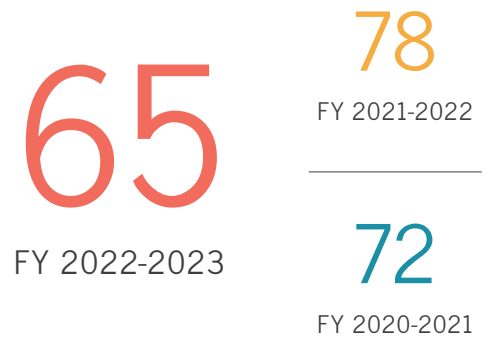
BONDED PLATS PROCESSED

The submittal of a bonded plat indicates the final phase of land development is commencing - utilities, roads, and other infrastructure are installed or bonded, and the subdivision of land allows the lots to be sold and built upon.



MINOR SUBDIVISIONS

PROCESSED



Zoning Permits

Zoning permits grant permission to construct, move, build onto, or structurally alter any residential or commercial structure in the City. Zoning permits may be issued for fences and walls (decorative or structural), signs (including temporary), and accessory structures (200 square feet or less and not attached to the principal structure).

PERMITS ISSUED

FY 2022-2023

494

\$4,286,482
TOTAL VALUATION*

FY 2021-2022

430
PERMITS

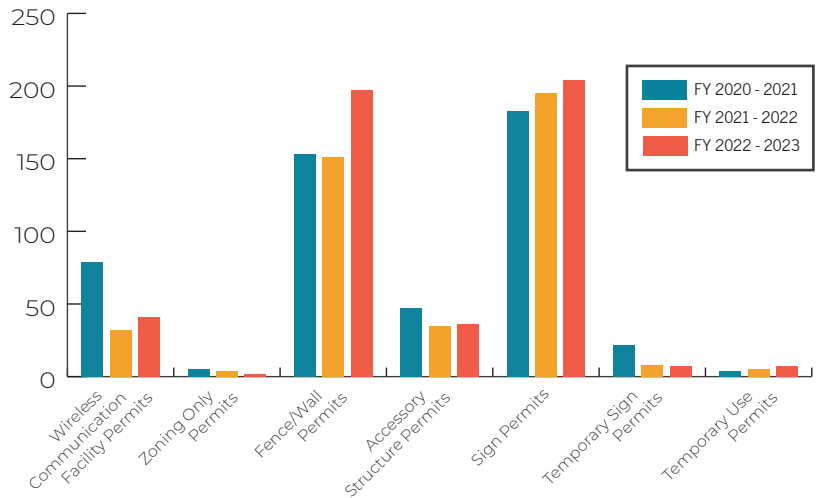
\$3,167,263
TOTAL VALUATION*

FY 2020-2021

493
PERMITS

\$2,023,497
TOTAL VALUATION*

ZONING PERMITS BY TYPE



*Value rounded to the nearest whole number.

Zoning Code Cases

Zoning inspectors are tasked with enforcing the Unified Development Ordinance. In monitoring the City for compliance, violations are occasionally discovered. Items which constitute a violation of the Unified Development Ordinance include working without a permit - including fence and sign permits, parking on an unprepared surface, and more than three unrelated residents living in a single family dwelling.

ZONING CODE CASES

FY 2022-2023

123

FY 2021-2022

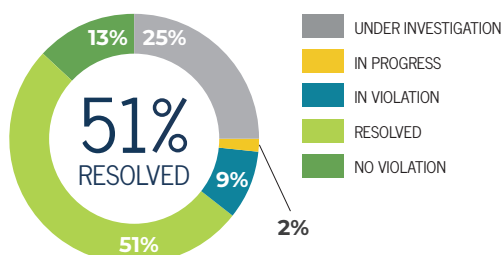
348

FY 2020-2021

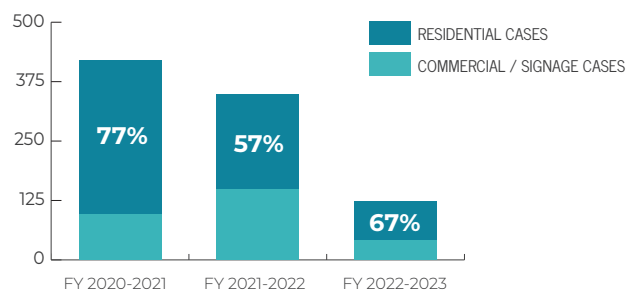
421

CODE CASE STATUS

FY 2022-2023



ZONING CODE CASE BY TYPE



Annexations

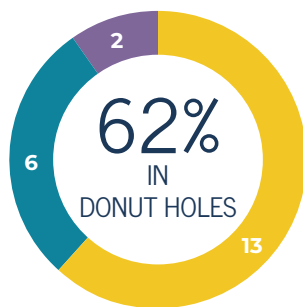
There's no one way to measure annexation or determine the success of the City's annexation program. However, the City's Urban Service Area Plan, adopted in 2009 and updated in 2020, helps prioritize the City's growth through annexation. In most years, areas classified in the plan as donut holes (areas surrounded by the City) and primary areas make up the bulk of Columbia's annexations. Other measures, such as acres annexed, illustrate the changing geographic size of the City.

ANNEXATIONS

FY 2022-2023

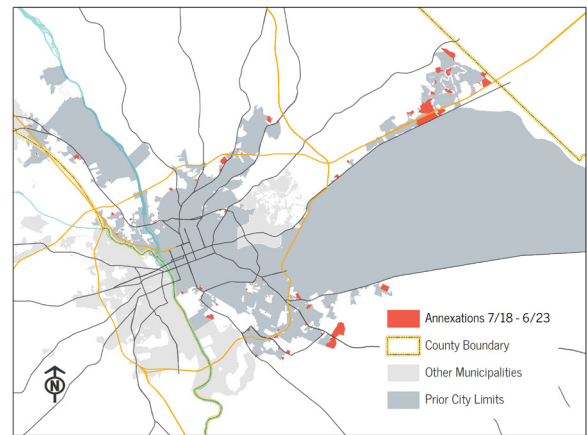
21
TOTAL
ANNEXATIONS

- DONUT HOLES (PRIMARY & SECONDARY)
- PRIMARY AREAS
- SECONDARY AREAS
- LONG RANGE AREAS

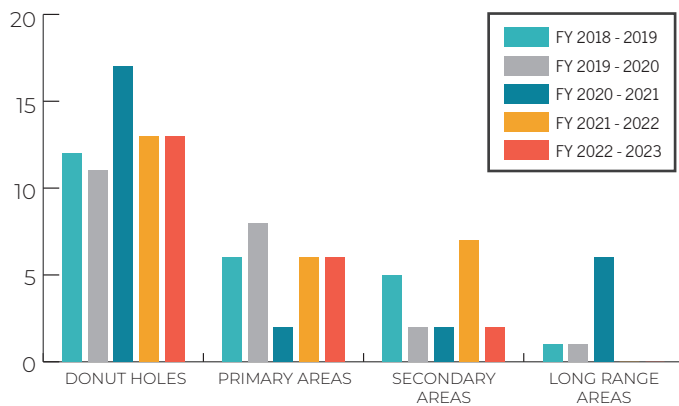


ANNEXATIONS

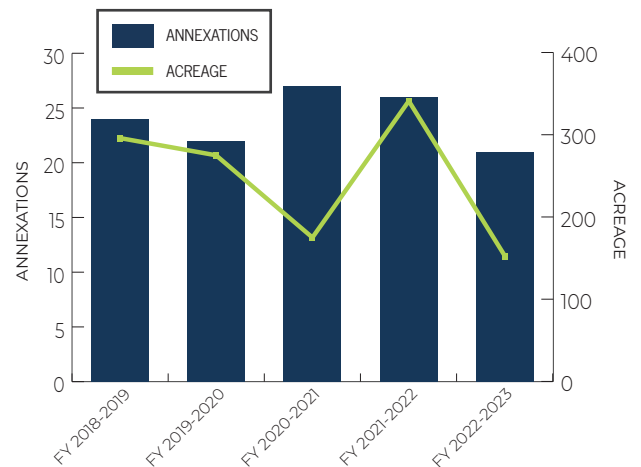
FY 2018-2023



ANNEXATION BY URBAN SERVICE AREAS



ANNEXATIONS BY YEAR



Cost or Savings?

How can you pay taxes to the County AND City, and still save money? Homeowners typically see savings because of the effects of annexation on four common bills: property tax, vehicle tax, water/sewer bills, and electric/gas bills. The "average" homeowner often saves money by annexing - check out our [Annexation Calculator](#) for details!

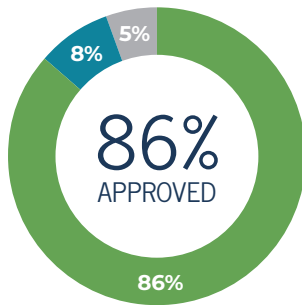
Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA)

Matters requiring review and approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA) are listed in Sections 17-2.3(c) of the Unified Development Ordinance. The BoZA uses the consent agenda to approve non-controversial or routine matters by a single motion and vote. Examples of items commonly found on the consent agenda include special exceptions which are required by a zoning district but which are generally compatible within the context, or variances from setback requirements due to special conditions that make the existing setback impracticable.

BOZA CASES

FY 2022-2023

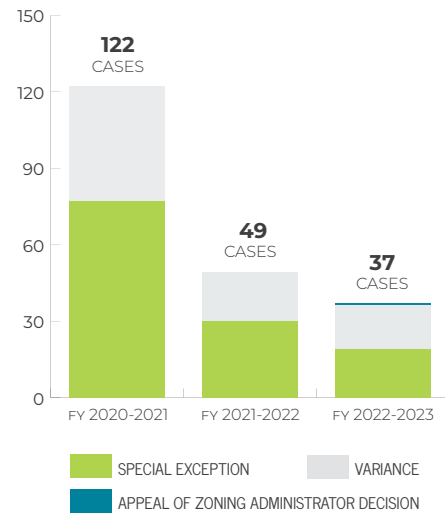
TOTAL AGENDA ITEMS	CONSENT AGENDA	REGULAR AGENDA
37	23	14



BOZA ACTIONS

- APPROVED
- DEFERRED BY BOZA
- DENIED

BOZA CASES BY TYPE



What is a Variance?

The Board of Zoning Appeals may grant a variance to certain provisions of the Zoning Ordinance where a literal enforcement of the provisions of the Ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship. For the Board to approve such a request, certain criteria must be met.

What is a Special Exception?

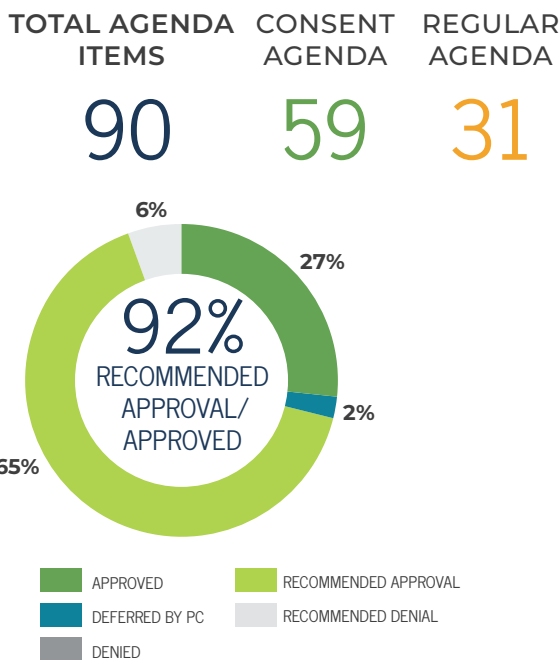
Certain uses are permitted in zoning districts with permission from the Board of Zoning Appeals. These permissions are called Special Exceptions. The Board of Zoning Appeals approves or denies applications for Special Exceptions based on the appropriateness of the use in the district and surrounding community and whether or not the use meets the required minimum criteria.

Planning Commission (PC)

Matters requiring review by the Planning Commission are listed in Section 17-2.3(b)(1) of the Unified Development Ordinance. Motions made by the Planning Commission may be to approve or deny certain requests, however, certain items, such as annexations, rezonings and the adoption of plans, require City Council action. For those items that require Council action, the Planning Commission recommends approval or denial to Council. The Planning Commission uses the consent agenda to approve or provide recommendations on non-controversial or routine matters by a single motion and vote. Examples of items commonly found on the consent agenda include applications that are consistent with adopted plans and/or the Unified Development Ordinance.

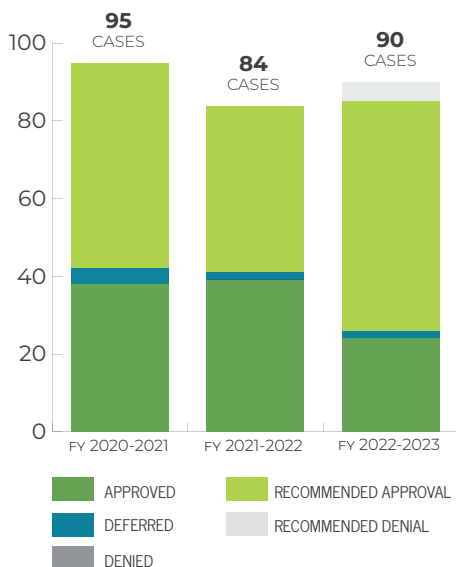
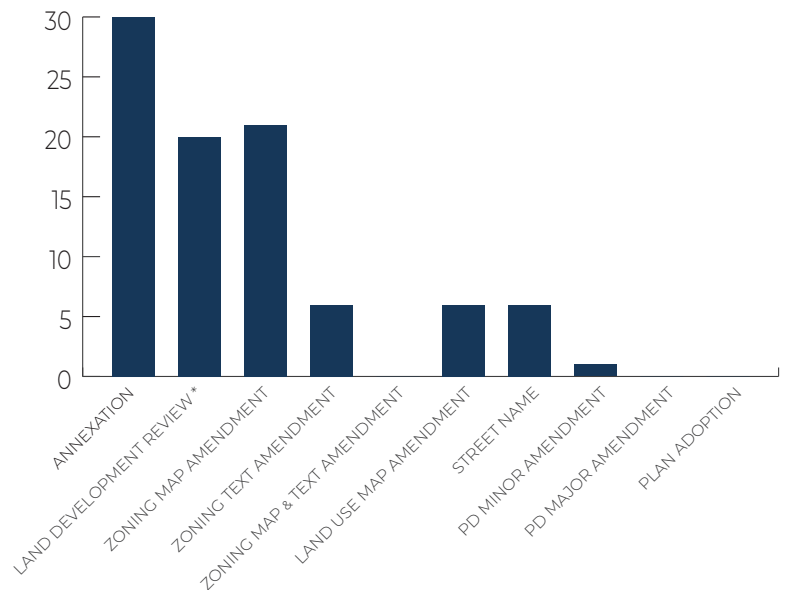
PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

FY 2022-2023

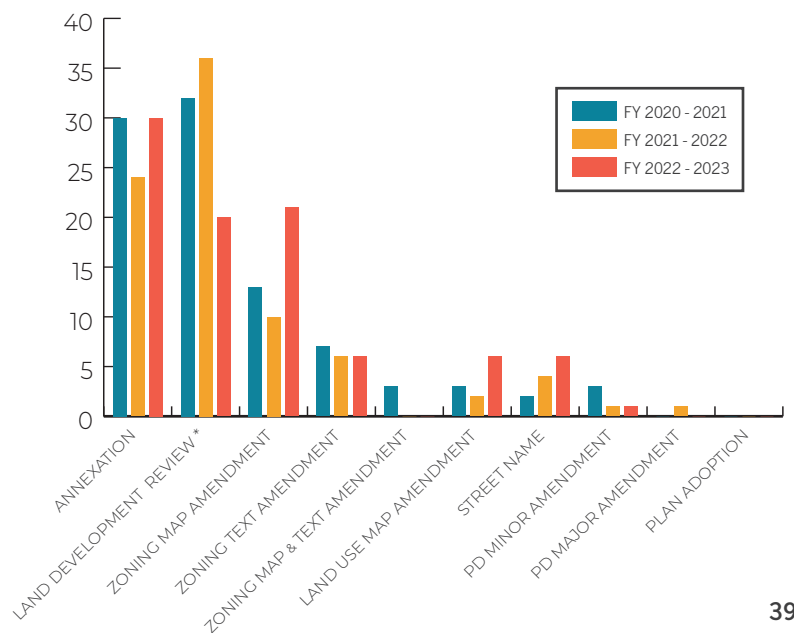


PLANNING COMMISSION CASES BY TYPE

FY 2022-2023



PLANNING COMMISSION CASES BY TYPE



*For the charts to the right, Land Development Reviews include both major site plans and major subdivisions.

Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC)

Matters requiring review and approval by the D/DRC in preservation and urban design districts are listed in Sections 17-2.5(g) and 17-2.5(h) of the Unified Development Ordinance. Most urban design districts include a monetary threshold. Within historic districts, new construction and Bailey Bills always require D/DRC review. The D/DRC utilizes the consent agenda to approve non-controversial or routine matters by a single motion and vote. Examples of cases commonly found on the consent agenda include items that meet the design guidelines and most Bailey Bill projects.

D/DRC CASES

FY 2022-2023

TOTAL AGENDA ITEMS

62

URBAN DESIGN

8

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

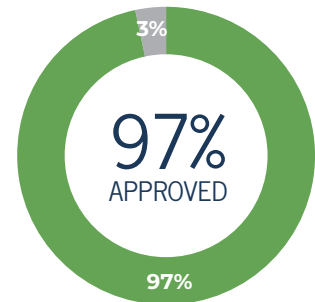
54

CONSENT AGENDA

REGULAR AGENDA



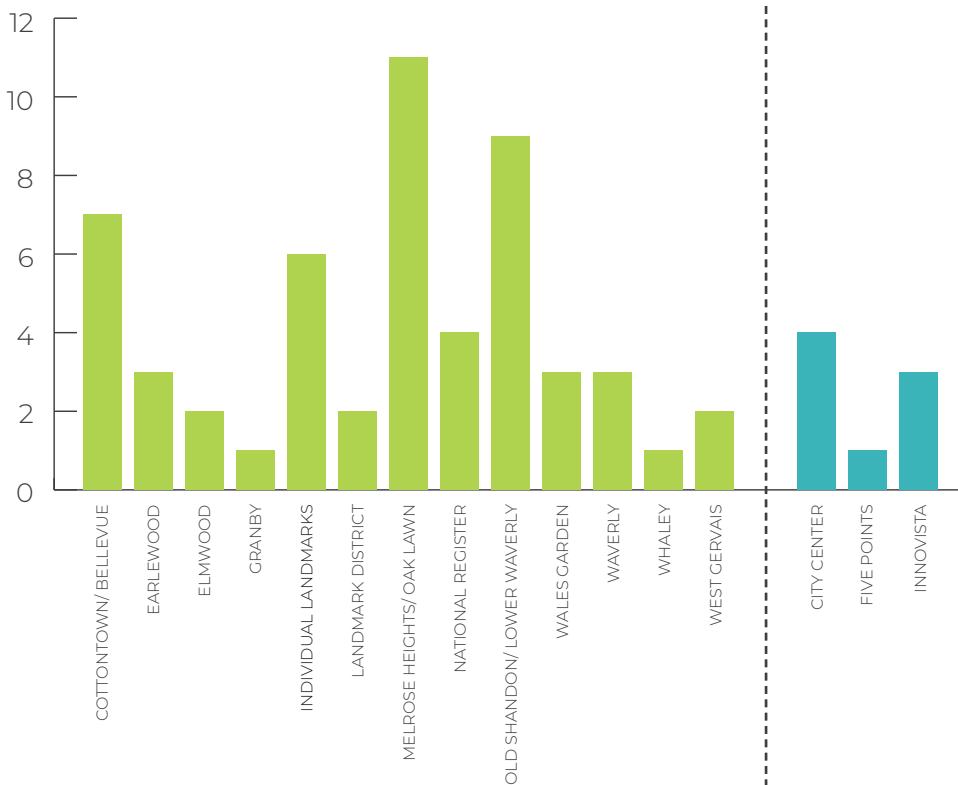
D/DRC ACTIONS



- APPROVED
- DEFERRED BY D/DRC
- DENIED

D/DRC CASES BY DISTRICT

FY 2022-2023

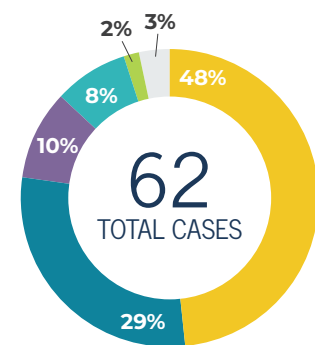


PRESERVATION DISTRICTS/ HISTORIC DISTRICTS

URBAN DESIGN DISTRICTS

COMMON D/DRC REQUESTS

FY 2022-2023



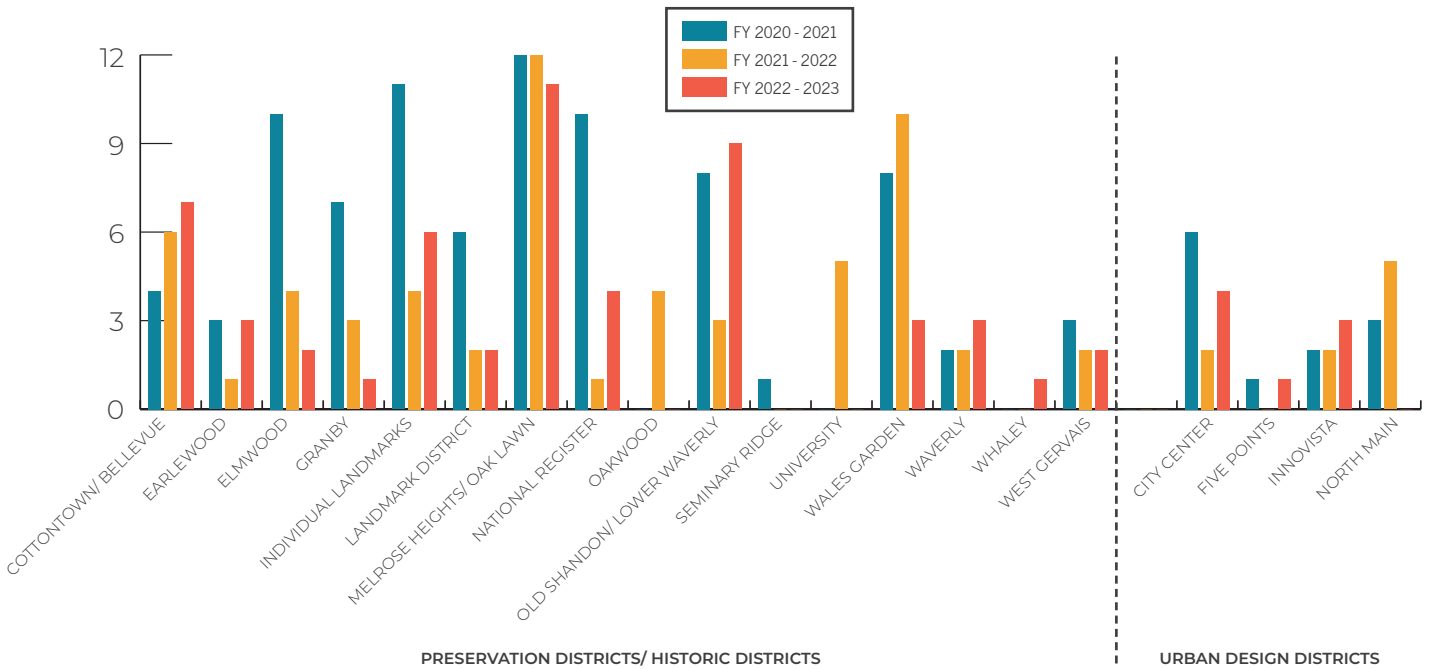
- BAILEY BILL REVIEW
- NEW CONSTRUCTION
- ADDITION
- EXTERIOR CHANGES
- ACCESSORY STRUCTURE
- APPEAL STAFF DECISION
- OTHER*

*For the above chart, "other" includes demolition, individual landmark, fence review, and other more rarely received requests.

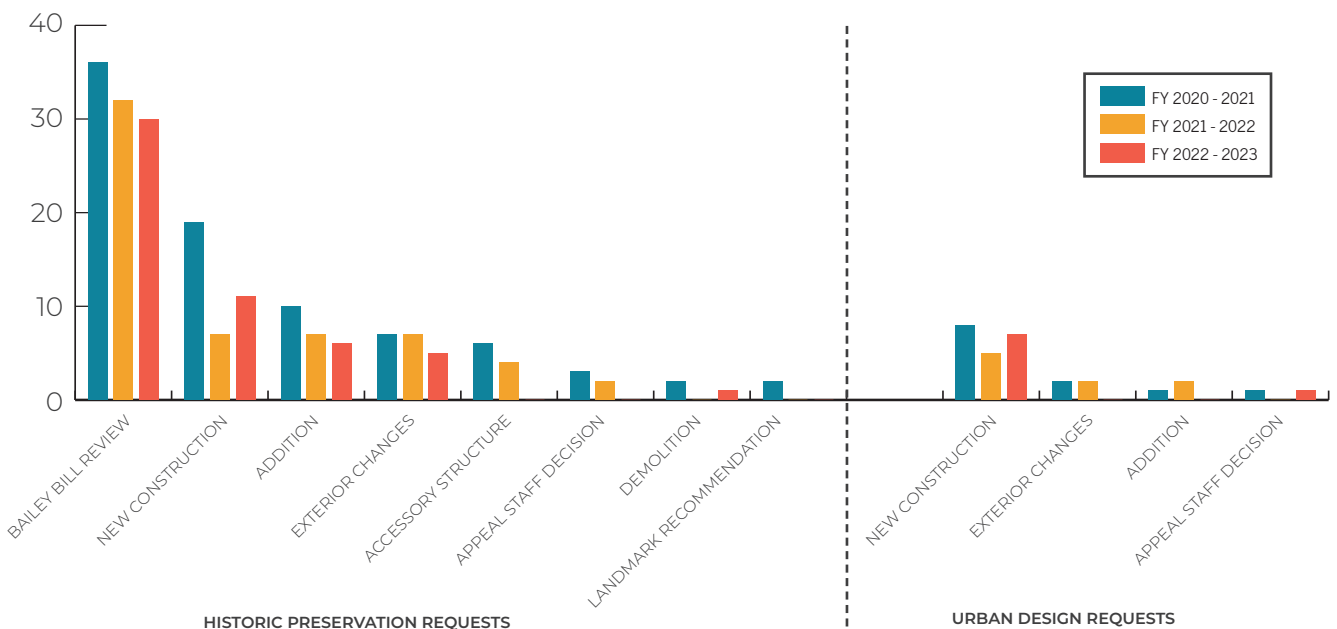
Design/Development Review Commission Cases

Averaged over the past three fiscal years, the highest number of requests requiring review by the D/DRC, as listed in Sections 17-2.5(g) and 17-2.5(h) of the Unified Development Ordinance, involved buildings designated as individual landmarks (outside locally-designated historic districts), and buildings located within the Melrose Heights and Wales Garden historic districts. The most common requests taken to the D/DRC in historic districts have consistently been for preliminary certification for the Bailey Bill and in urban design districts for new construction (when meeting monetary thresholds as listed in Section 17-2.5(h)).

D/DRC CASES BY DISTRICT



D/DRC CASES BY REQUEST



Certificates of Design Approval (CDAs)

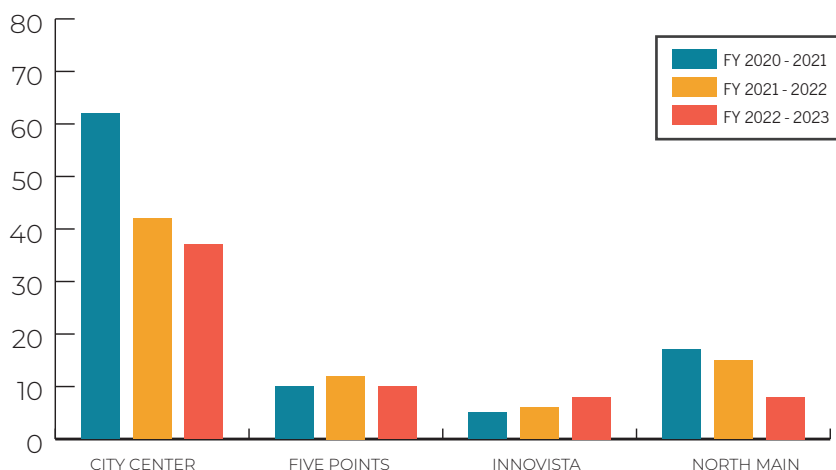
Urban design and preservation staff issue CDAs for changes visible from the public right-of-way for all designated properties. The vast majority of design review is completed at the staff level; in certain circumstances, D/DRC review is also required prior to the issuance of a CDA. The design review process and parameters for urban design and historic preservation are set forth in Sections 17-2.5(h) and 17-2.5(g) of the Unified Development Ordinance, respectively.

URBAN DESIGN CDAs

FY 2022-2023

63
TOTAL ISSUED

CDAs BY URBAN DESIGN DISTRICT

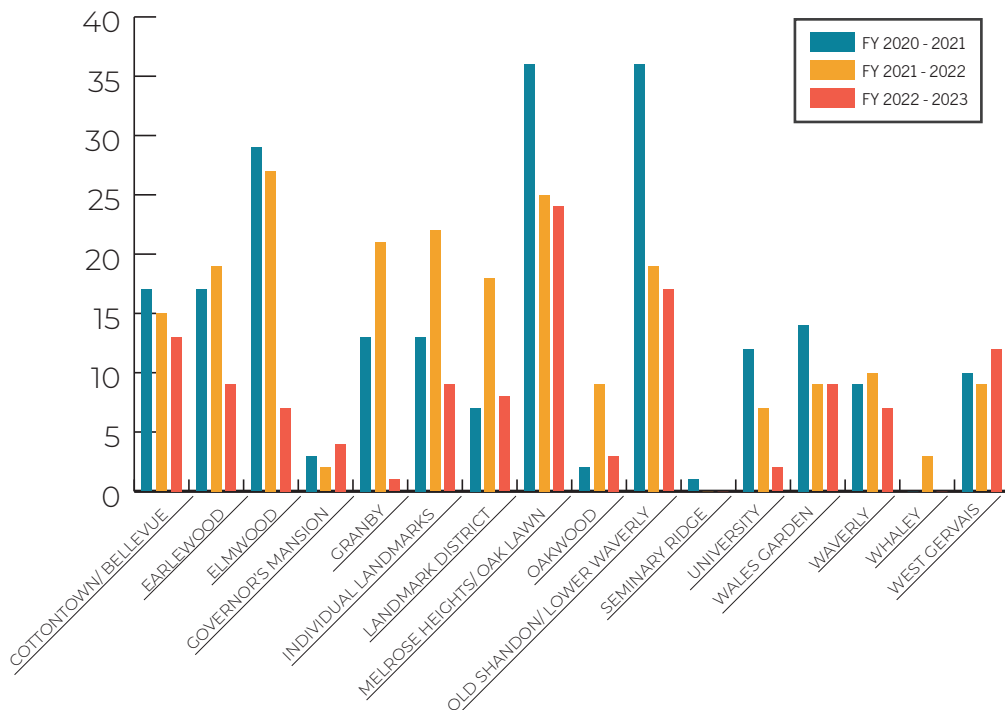


HISTORIC PRESERVATION CDAs

FY 2022-2023

127
TOTAL ISSUED*

CDAs BY HISTORIC DISTRICT**



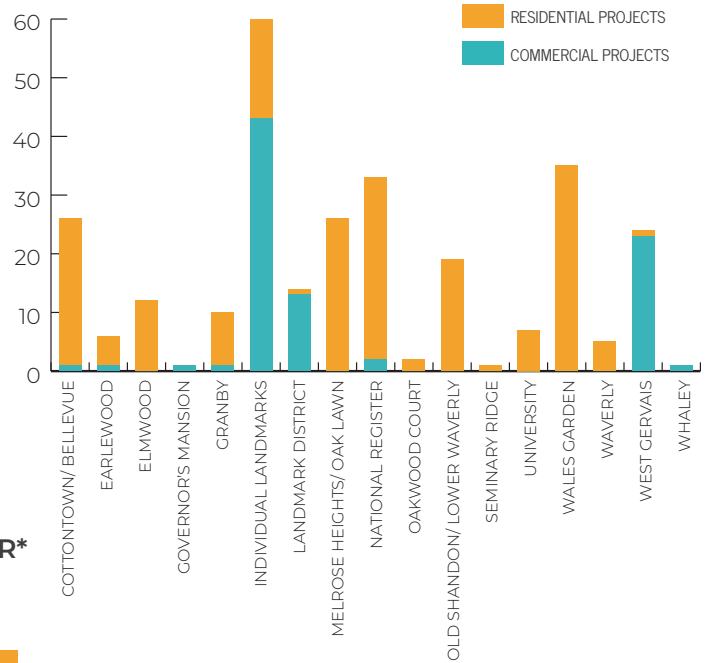
*127 unique CDAs were issued in FY 2022-2023. This number includes CDAs issued for National Register properties utilizing the Bailey Bill (whether or not they are in a locally-designated district) and projects in Community Character Districts.

**Some CDAs were counted twice in the above graph as they fall in both a historic district and are designated as Individual Landmarks.

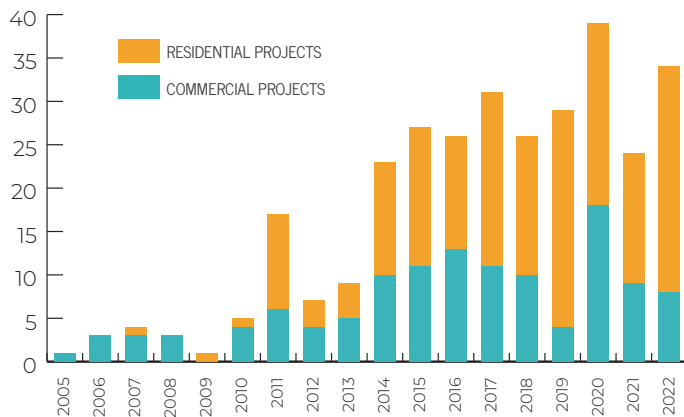
Bailey Bill Projects

Since the current version of the Bailey Bill was adopted in 2005, applications for participation in the preservation tax abatement program have generally increased year-to-year. Currently, there are 281 historic properties in the City of Columbia that are part of the program. These properties are found within all of the City's 15 historic districts, within several different National Register Districts, and include a large number of Individual Landmark buildings and National Register Structures. Total investment into properties participating in the Bailey Bill program represents millions of dollars of reinvestment into our city each year.

ACTIVE BAILEY BILL PROPERTIES BY DISTRICT



BAILEY BILL APPLICATIONS BY CALENDAR YEAR*



*Bailey Bill projects are added and expire based on calendar year

ACTIVE BAILEY BILL PROPERTIES**

281



**Active Bailey Bill properties have at least received preliminary certification for the Bailey Bill and currently have the tax abatement applied

BAILEY BILL PROJECTS

FY 2022-2023

PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATION	COMMERCIAL PROJECTS	RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS
30	9	21
FINAL CERTIFICATION*	COMMERCIAL PROJECTS	RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS
31	17	14

*Final certification and compliance reviews for the Bailey Bill are completed at staff level

TOTAL INVESTED**

\$13,050,708

COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT

\$1,558,675

RESIDENTIAL INVESTMENT

\$1,492,033

** In Bailey Bill projects finalized in FY2022-2023; as reported by property owners in final certification paperwork

City of Columbia

Planning & Development Services