



Planning & Development Services Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Planning & Development Services

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

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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Letter from the Director

Small but mighty. I often use that phrase to describe the remarkable people that make up Planning and Development Services, and this Annual Report proves it true once again. Despite our size, this team has delivered an extraordinary range of projects and work that positively shape Columbia’s future.

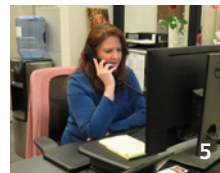
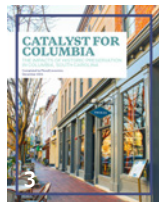
One significant area of achievement has been our continued emphasis on community outreach and education. With the launch of the Development Deep Dive series, we provided the community with valuable insights into the zoning, permitting, and development processes. Our team facilitated critical discussions on the Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Design Guidelines, ensuring that the community remains engaged in shaping our urban fabric. Our partnership with Historic Columbia and PlaceEconomics resulted in the *Catalyst for Columbia* report, demonstrating the economic benefits of preservation and confirming the importance of protecting Columbia’s historic character. Our team does an outstanding job documenting these and other activities in our informative Annual and Monthly reports and newsletters.

We have expanded our efforts to improve our permitting and development processes to provide a smoother and more predictable experience for residents and businesses. The introduction of enhanced digital tools and resources allows applicants to navigate zoning, permitting, and inspections more seamlessly. Our Pedestrian Accommodation Guide for Temporary Encroachments exemplifies how our team collaborates across departments to provide critical development information in a clear and accessible manner. These efficiency efforts helped our staff support Columbia’s continued growth, with the Development Center issuing over 6,400 permits—representing nearly \$880 million in project value. This work facilitated over 19,000 building inspections, leading to the creation of 717 new multi-family units and more than 300 new homes, helping to meet Columbia’s growing housing demand.

Working in local government is not for the faint of heart. It demands patience, perseverance, and the ability to balance diverse and sometimes competing perspectives while solving complex problems. Yet, it is immensely rewarding—we have the privilege of working with a wonderful community to help to shape the growth and vitality of this beautiful city. I am incredibly proud of this team and hope you will join me in expressing appreciation for their expertise, commitment, and dedication.



Krista Hampton
 Director, Planning & Development Services



1: Participants in the Planning Month Bike Tour pause to discuss the Vista Greenway’s history and development
 2: Members of the Development Community attend a Development Deep Dive session
 3: The *Catalyst for Columbia* report
 4: Hands-on instruction during a brick repointing workshop
 5: Development Center Coordinator, Carmen Powers, helps a customer over the phone
 6: Susan Vaughan McPherson, Columbia Chamber, poses with her right-of-way design and meeting passport during a Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan public open house.

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.

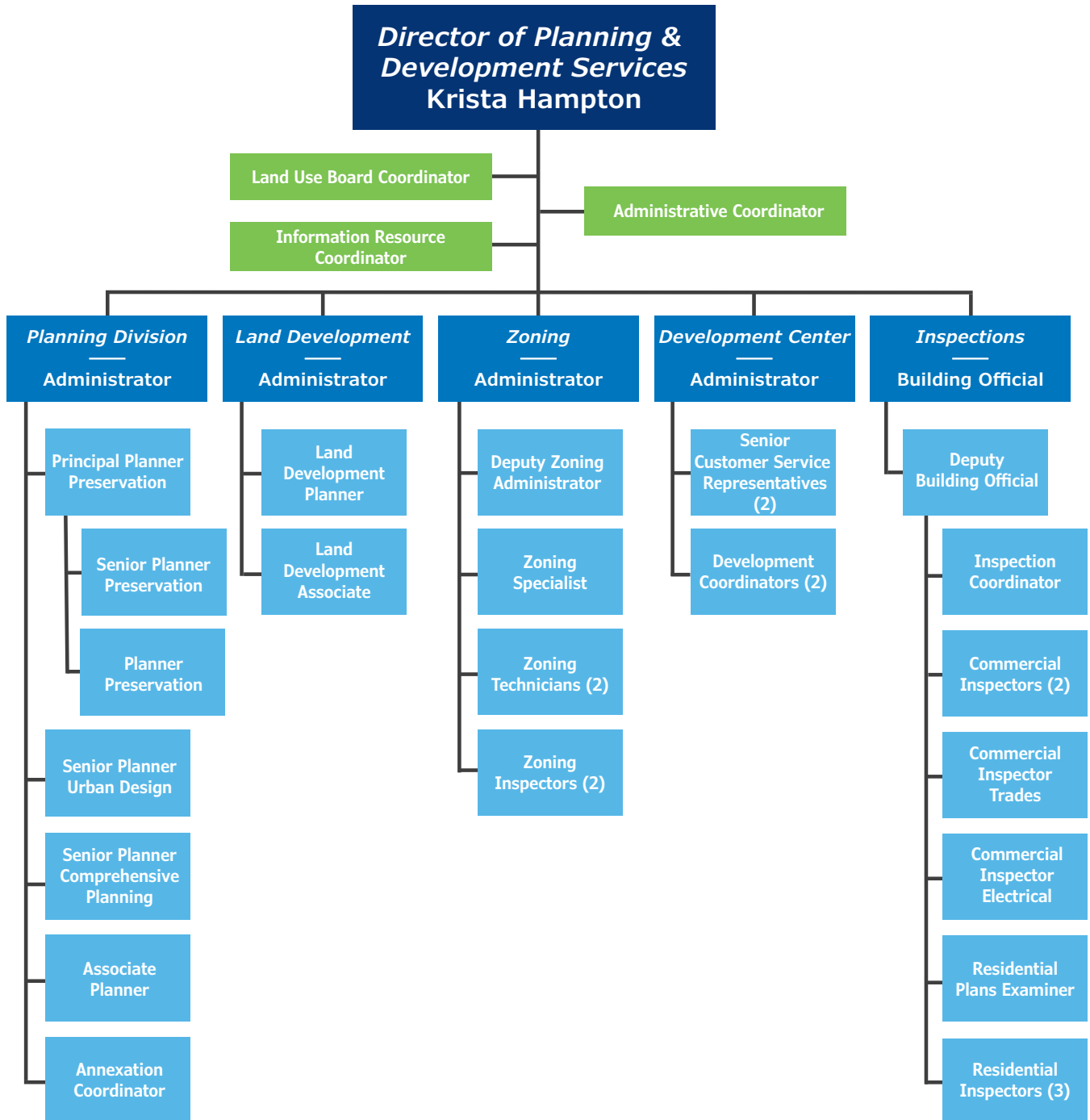
ZONING

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 FY 2023-2024.



Employee Spotlight

We saw a number of staff changes in FY 2023-2024, including welcoming new staff to several divisions. In December, Planning and Development Services staff gathered to celebrate the season, calendar year accomplishments, and service milestones. Planning and Development Services staff tenure ranges from under a year to over 27 years with the City of Columbia, and this blend of tenure across our staff brings experience, expertise, and innovation to our workplace every day.



Staff pictured from left to right: Erica Jaen, Brandon Burnette, Amy Moore, Bill Park, Johnathan Chambers, Erica Geiger, and Krista Hampton

In 2023, the following employees received service pins:

- » Erica Jaen, Deputy Zoning Administrator (5 years)
- » Brandon Burnette, Development Center Administrator (5 years)
- » Amy Moore, Principal Preservation Planner (20 years)
- » Bill Park, Residential Building Inspector (15 years)
- » Johnathan Chambers, Land Development Administrator (25 years)
- » Erica Geiger, Development Center Coordinator (5 years)
- » Hope Hasty, Zoning Administrator (5 years)

We appreciate the dedication of all of our employees to public service, and are thankful for the chance to celebrate these milestones as a department!

Department-Wide Initiatives & Efforts

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 kept Planning and Development Services staff quite busy. Some notable highlights include our extensive departmental outreach efforts, including our Development Deep Dive series; ongoing reporting efforts; and the creation of a Pedestrian Accommodation Guide for Temporary Encroachments. We take pride in our public service, and we are glad to highlight our many accomplishments over this past fiscal year!

OUTREACH EFFORTS

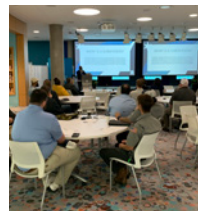
Department staff worked to support a number of collaborative outreach efforts during Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Each of these outreach events represents an opportunity for staff to help demystify the planning process and in turn build community capacity and knowledge, and we continue to prioritize outreach and engagement as a department in order to better reflect the community's vision and needs in our planning efforts and policies.

Ongoing departmental outreach efforts - including our e-newsletters, celebrations of National Bike Month and National Historic Preservation Month each May, facilitation of PARK(ing) Day each September, and celebration of Planning Month each October - are discussed in more detail under the [Planning Division](#) section of this report. In addition to a continuation of ongoing outreach efforts, this past fiscal year we also introduced a new engagement effort - our [Development Deep Dives](#) - and helped facilitate project-specific meetings and workshops for the [Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Guidelines](#), the [restriping of River Drive](#), and the release of the [Catalyst for Columbia report](#).

Development Deep Dives

In FY 2023-2024, the department kicked off a new outreach initiative - our Development Deep Dives. We invited members of the development community to breakfast meetings at Richland Library in October and February, with the goal of building both community and knowledge. Staff from across divisions presented and answered questions on permitting and inspections processes, subdivision development, urban design, and zoning - and we even had a guest presenter from the City's Stormwater Division share her knowledge and expertise.

While in-person events were limited to development professionals, a number of these presentations have been recorded and can be viewed on City's YouTube channel under [the Development Deep Dive playlist](#).



Development Deep Dive sessions at Richland Library were well-attended by the development community, and we anticipate hosting new sessions in the coming fiscal year. **Above:** Hope Hasty, Zoning Administrator, presented on the City's Unified Development Ordinance in February; **left:** Johnathan Chambers, Land Development Administrator, spoke about the subdivision process in October.

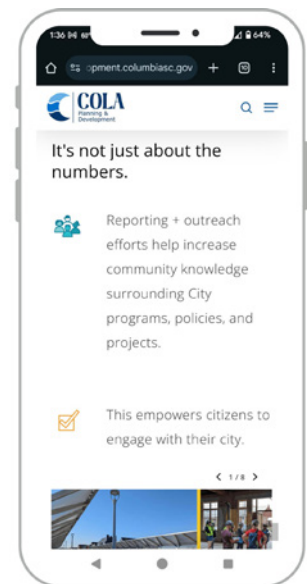
ENHANCED REPORTING

The importance of regular and accessible reporting was a focus of *Columbia Compass*, the City's comprehensive plan, and staff continued to produce a number of reports in FY 2023-2024 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. Our 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, department staff issued a number of reports, and in the Spring of 2024, worked to update all departmental templates to align with the City's new branding (including this report template). All departmental reports are hosted on our [reporting and outreach webpage](#) for easy access.

Reports completed in FY 2023-2024 include:

- » [monthly departmental reports](#) that cover permitting data, plan submittals, board and commission actions, and planning activities;
- » [the D/DRC annual report for 2023](#), highlighting board actions and projects reviewed;
- » [the Catalyst for Columbia report](#), which quantified the impact of preservation on Columbia's economy, completed in December 2023 by Donovan Rypkema of PlaceEconomics and in partnership with Historic Columbia;
- » [a summary and analysis of pedestrian and bicyclist count data](#) collected in calendar year 2023; and
- » [the departmental fiscal year report](#) for FY 2022-2023

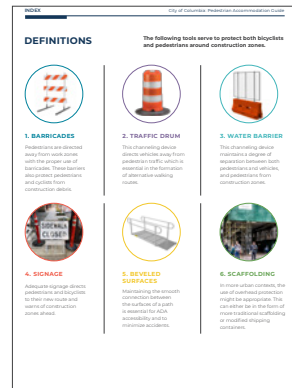


As we move into Fiscal Year 2024-2025, we'll continue to build on our success, continuing and expanding on existing reporting, and revisiting reporting on Columbia Compass implementation.

PEDESTRIAN ACCOMMODATION GUIDE FOR TEMPORARY ENCROACHMENTS

As our community continues to experience exponential growth and development, it has become increasingly clear to our staff that providing standard approaches to ensure access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists in and around construction zones would help not only streamline development processes but also clarify expectations on all sides. A team of staff across our divisions worked to pull together examples of best practices and acceptable treatments, and with input from other City departments, developed a document that could be easily accessed and understood by those applying for temporary encroachments.

Where proposed construction will result in the blockage of a sidewalk, bicycle lane, or other public bicycle or pedestrian path for a duration of more than 48 hours, the document also helps guide users through the creation of a pedestrian routing plan.



Pages from the Pedestrian Accommodation Guide, above, provide clear and concise information that is helpful to those whose planned work within the public right-of-way will disrupt access to existing pedestrian or bicyclist infrastructure.

Do I need an encroachment permit?

If you are conducting work within the public right-of-way, or if you wish to modify the public right-of-way, an encroachment permit is required. The City processes four types of encroachment reviews: temporary encroachment permits, outdoor dining encroachments, permanent encroachments, and utility encroachments. All encroachments are reviewed for ADA compliance, pedestrian and vehicular safety, and any potential conflicts. Learn more about the City's review process [here](#).

If you are working within City limits and within a right-of-way owned or maintained by SCDOT, you must obtain encroachment permits from both the City and SCDOT prior to beginning work.

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 help facilitate 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.

During FY 2022-2023, 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 are brightly-colored and use colors similar to those in the previous design, and are sturdier, with bolder, easy to read graphics, and 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 (PC), and the Zoning Public Hearing (ZPH) process at City Council. With a little tweak to align with the City’s new branding, and after making sure to use up our old signs first, the new signs were deployed in FY 2024-2025!



The newly design signs were deployed early in FY 2024-2025 after being updated to reflect the City’s new branding.

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 2023-June 2024)

- » Sherard Duvall
- » Kathryn Fenner
- » John Gregory
- » John Guignard
- » Celia Mackintosh
- » Marcellous Primus
- » Jonathan Vang
- » Davis Whittle



Board of Zoning Appeals members standing in Council Chambers. Pictured (from left to right): Jonathan Vang, Kathryn Fenner, Sherard Duvall, and John Gregory.

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 2023-June 2024)

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

Design/Development Review Commission members standing in Council Chambers. Pictured (from left to right): Robert Broom, Mary Beth Sims Branham, Chloe Jaco, Andrew Saleeby, and Charles Leedecker.

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 2023-June 2024)

- » Ryan Causey
- » Harris Cohn
- » Steven Cook
- » Anna Davis
- » Sanford Dinkins
- » James Frost II
- » Mason Harpe
- » Jacqueline Marshall
- » Carlos Osorio
- » Raquel Thomas

Planning Commission members standing in Council Chambers. Pictured (from left to right): Jacqueline Marshall, Mason Harpe, Anna Davis, Steven Cook, and Carlos Osorio.

Building Inspections

The Building Inspections Division reviewed all facets of the construction surrounding the 6,481 permits issued in FY 2023-2024, conducting 1,547 plan reviews and 19,262 inspections and issuing 1,252 certificates of occupancy (1,148 residential COs and 104 commercial COs).

While reflecting on FY 2023-2024, our Building Inspections team came up with a few key reminders for folks taking on work in the future:

- » Per IRC Code Section R314.2.2, when a building permit or electrical permit is required, it is also required that smoke alarms be installed in the dwelling unit as required for new construction.
- » The City of Columbia requires construction plans for all commercial and residential new construction and additions. Plans may also be required for some interior remodels. The plan review process takes 15 business days for commercial plans and three business days for residential plans.
- » Residential plans are now reviewed using eReview. Plans are still uploaded onto the access portal and reviewers are able to review plans and add comments or code changes, which can then be viewed on the portal. This shift has made the residential plan review process clearer and more user-friendly.

Employee Spotlight

Though the Building Inspections Division’s staff is fairly small, there were some notable shifts during FY 2023-2024.

Jeremy Tarrant joined the Division as a Residential Building Inspector in July of 2023 after working in the construction industry.

Richard Roberts, who had been a City of Columbia employee since 1995 (minus a brief retirement that started in 2010), retired (for a final time) as the City’s Residential Plans Examiner in May of 2024. He is greatly missed, as are his stories, sense of humor, and vast knowledge of the building industry.



Jeremy Tarrant



Richard Roberts

LOOKING AHEAD

In CY 2025, all building codes will remain the same for the City of Columbia. The City is currently under the 2021 International Building Code, 2021 International Residential Code, and the 2009 Energy Code.

The Building Inspections Division continues to encourage the use of the online customer portal for permit and inspection requests. The portal allows users to view the most current information about their permits, as well as to schedule their next required building inspection. Licensed contractors and design professionals may access the portal at access.columbiasc.gov.

Development Center

The Development Center issued 6,481 permits in FY 2023-2024, with a total value of issued permits of \$877,403,276. The Development Center also issued 1,252 Certificates of Occupancy (COs) during FY 2023-2024, continuing a trend of year-over-year increases in the number of COs issued with over 200 more COs than last fiscal year.

Of note this year, while the number of commercial building permits decreased from the prior fiscal year, both the number of residential building permits and the total number of permits increased. Interestingly, the total number of permits this FY was only 4 fewer than seen in FY 2022-2023, and the number of residential building permits was only 3 fewer than the high we saw in FY 2021-2022.

Valuation-wise, all categories (total permits, residential building permits, and commercial building permits) exceeded those values seen in FY 2022-2023 – and residential building permit values even surpassed those seen in FY 2021-2022. You can dig further into departmental data by visiting the [By the Numbers](#) section of this report.

Notably, the top five highest permit values in FY 2023-2024 were tied to a mix of uses again this fiscal year, including the construction of a private student dormitory, the revitalization of Finlay Park, and a warehouse and distribution facility. Those five permits had a combined valuation of over \$187 million.

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. They give staff the opportunity to 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 149 pre-application meetings throughout the fiscal year.

In FY 2023-2024, Development Center staff:

- » **Implemented prescribed grazing permits** in accordance with the ordinance adopted by City Council. This new ordinance and resulting permit type allows both homeowners and business owners the opportunity to use new, more innovative, and environmentally-friendly methods to maintain the vegetation on their properties!
- » **Issued over 300 more single-family, two-family, and townhome permits than in the prior fiscal year.**
- » **Issued permits for 717 new multi-family units** - an increase of over 200 multi-family units from the prior fiscal year.
- » Worked with staff from other PDS Divisions and other City departments to develop best practices for work in the right-of-way. This collaborative effort resulted in the creation of a **Pedestrian Accommodation Guide** (see [page 8](#) for details).

LOOKING AHEAD

Division staff will continue to work with the Building Inspections Division to improve portal access for customers utilizing the portal to navigate the permitting and inspections process and to view Certificates of Occupancy for their projects online. The Division will also continue to lead the monthly reporting effort, collaborating across the department to provide timely data analytics.

Land Development

Land Development Division staff works daily to support citizens, property owners, and developers by answering questions, facilitating community conversations, conducting on-site inspections, coordinating site plan review meetings, and more. In helping to facilitate the development process, they have observed a number of trends this year:

- » As with last fiscal year, staff has observed **a greater number of townhome and smaller multi-family development proposals**. This surge is a continuation of that observed subsequent to the UDO adoption in 2021, when the threshold for Planning Commission review increased from 6 to 26 units, thereby expediting the process for multi-family developments of 25 units or fewer.
- » The **number of major subdivisions under construction has increased**, as those plans reviewed in prior fiscal years begin to build out infrastructure. We also anticipate this will lead to an increased number of land development inspections and bonded plats in FY 2024-2025.

Employee Spotlight

In FY 2023-2024, Land Development also welcomed a new employee, Sarah Nyikos. Sarah, who joined the City in March of 2023 as a Land Development Associate, is assisting with the review and approval of Minor Subdivision plats.



Sarah is a Columbia area native, who came to the City after working in research and nonprofits, with experience in urban forestry and geography, land management, and water quality.

Conserving Columbia’s Tree Canopy

DYK the UDO has standards related to tree canopy retention? Based on existing tree canopy coverage of a parcel and the zoning district, a percentage must be retained to the highest extent possible or replanted until that required percentage is re-established. This prevents clear cutting of lots and further encourages the preservation of trees within the City.

Canopy retention is critical – just a few of the ways it positively impacts Columbians is by helping to address our urban heat island (see last year’s report for details), maintaining water quality, preventing erosion, decreasing urban flash flooding, and preserving wildlife habitat.

COLUMBIA TREE & APPEARANCE COMMISSION (CTAC)

The Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission (CTAC) is made up of citizens appointed by City Council and consists of 11 members that include an arborist, horticulturist or landscape architect; developer or realtor; architect or engineer; a member of Columbia Green; and seven 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. This past fiscal year, CTAC presented on both the heat mapping efforts and utility undergrounding draft ordinance to City Council’s Health, Social, and Environmental Affairs Committee for consideration in March, and has also been engaged in the [Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Design Guidelines](#) planning process. In general, CTAC has focused this year on being more strategic in their engagement, as they continue to pursue potential grant opportunities with local partners.

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.

Scott Holder, Land Development Planner, has been serving as the Planning and Development Services Department’s staff representative in the City’s Smart Surfaces Coalition. Of note for the coming year, the local coalition is working with experts at the nationwide coalition to develop a host of tools that can be utilized by City staff and residents to help quantify the short- and long-term benefits of installing different types of smart surfaces in Columbia. According to coalition research, cities that deploy Smart Surfaces can cut urban heat, reduce flood risk, save money, and make communities more livable. Smart surfaces include cool roofs, green roofs, trees, solar, reflective pavements, porous pavements, green stormwater infrastructure, and low- and zero-carbon concrete.



The Land Development Division coordinates a monthly site plan review meeting, during which staff across Planning and Development Services divisions and from other City departments gather to discuss pending applications.

Sustainability in City Standards

As most development under construction during FY 2023-2024 is governed by the standards of the updated UDO, we’ve begun to see the positive impacts of the UDO’s green building standards on site design. These standards, in Sec. 17-5.11, have resulted in an increase in the popularity of new residential developments incorporating EV charging stations and pre-wiring residential units for solar. We know that any changes to the built environment will impact Columbians for generations to come, and we can all appreciate the positive changes these standards have implemented.

Planning

Planning Division staff are engaged in both current and long-range planning efforts by the 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 efforts planned to begin for FY 2024-2025, are summarized under topic-specific headings on the pages that follow.

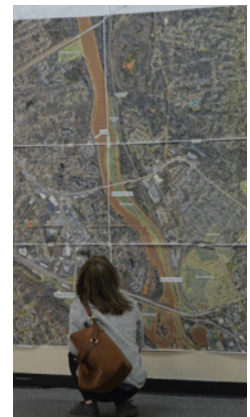
COLUMBIA COMPASS & LONG RANGE PLANNING

Implementation of *Columbia Compass: Envision 2036*, the 10-year update to the City’s comprehensive plan, continued in FY 2023-2024. Regular updates on plan implementation by City departments and partners were provided throughout the year via the *Columbia Compass* e-newsletter.

During FY 2023-2024, the Planning Division has participated in several regional efforts, taking part in a focus group for the Town of Irmo’s comprehensive plan update, as well as serving on stakeholder committees for two regional planning efforts led by the Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) - the *Columbia East Traffic Improvement Area Plan* and the *Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan*. As the recommendations of the Reaching Riverbanks plan extend past the SCDOT rights-of-way and address land use, growth and conservation, and multimodal transportation connections, the City anticipates adopting the *Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan* as an addendum to the comprehensive plan in FY 2024-2025, so that it can serve as a guiding policy document.



Above: participants speak with a member of the consultant team for the Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan during the charrette at Dutch Square Mall. Right: a community member pauses to take in a map of the study area.



Looking ahead to FY 2024-2025, both the City of Columbia and Richland County will be taking on comprehensive plan updates. Richland County is due for their 10-year rewrite, whereas the City’s plan, *Columbia Compass*, is due for its five-year update. For *Columbia Compass*, we anticipate providing updates to population data, the urban service area plan, and plan implementation, as well as incorporating an additional element - resiliency - in alignment with changes to the SC Code of Laws.

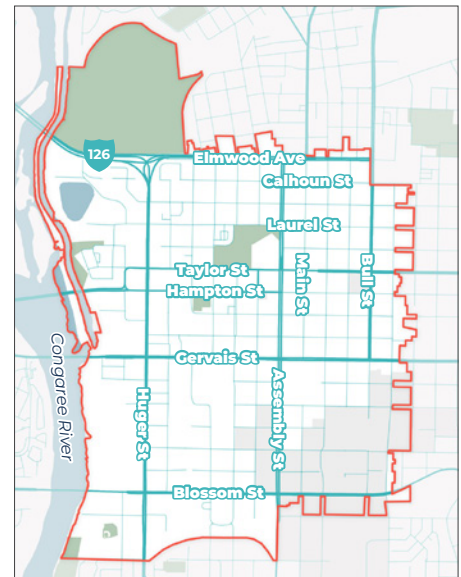
DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA STRATEGIC PLAN & GUIDELINES

The effort to discern a refreshed community vision for the quality of the downtown built environment kicked off in early 2024, and illustrates the collaboration between long-range planning and urban design disciplines. Extensive **past planning efforts** (the 1999 *City Center Master Plan*, 2007 *Innovista Master Plan*, and the more recent smaller-scale 2017 *West Gervais District Plan*) have led to major changes in the City’s center - major infrastructure projects have been completed or are underway and thousands of housing units have been built. With the City’s new Unified Development Ordinance (2021) and the adoption of *Columbia Compass* (2020), as well as changes in transportation and land use trends related to COVID-19, new technologies, and more, the time to develop an updated vision for downtown has come.

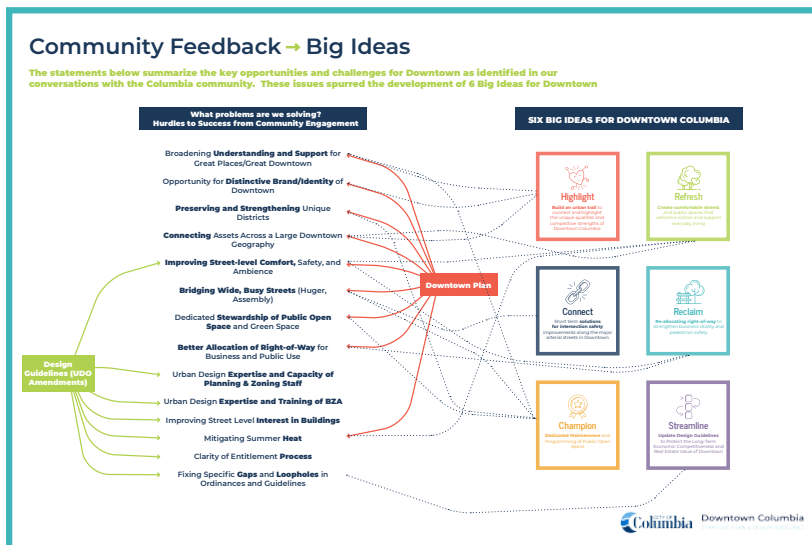
The goals of this strategic planning effort are to:

- » Create a community-driven vision for the public character of Downtown.
- » Establish priorities for public policy and public investment in the Downtown built environment.
- » Protect the unique character and assets of the historic urban core.
- » Form the basis for Downtown Design Guidelines to help shape great public places.

During the latter half of FY 2023-2024, the planning process quickly gathered steam, with stakeholder roundtables in March of 2024, and an online survey and mobile workshops in April. This stage of the planning process focused on gathering initial feedback in order to formulate a draft vision and recommendations that could be presented during the August public open houses.



Above: the study area for the Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan & Design Guidelines. Left: how the themes that emerged from community engagement were distilled into the six big ideas; this and the other boards from the August open houses can be found on the project webpage. Below: mobile workshop attendees at the provide their feedback at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.



The draft recommendations were distilled into six big ideas:

- » **Highlight.** Build an urban trail to connect and highlight the unique qualities and competitive strengths of Downtown Columbia.
- » **Refresh.** Create comfortable streets and public spaces that welcome visitors and support everyday living.
- » **Connect.** Short term solutions for intersection safety improvements along the major arterial streets in Downtown.
- » **Reclaim.** Re-allocating right-of-way to strengthen business vitality and pedestrian safety.
- » **Champion.** Dedicated maintenance and programming of public open space.
- » **Streamline.** Update design guidelines to protect the long-term economic competitiveness and real estate value of Downtown.

The project team anticipates wrapping up the planning process in FY 2024-2025. This will include the release of a draft plan document and draft guidelines, final public meetings, the legislative process to adopt the plan as an addendum to the comprehensive plan, and an urban design zoning overlay district to correspond with the study area where the guidelines will become the new governing document for future development.

Interested in Downtown Plan updates?

Sign up [here](#) - you'll be the first to receive updates tied to the plan, as well as any news and updates and the Columbia Compass e-newsletter, which tracks planning and implementation news on a monthly basis.

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 by providing standards for architecture, streetscapes, and open spaces. 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 - Projects Permitted & Underway

Gateway 737, the 12-story private student dormitory at the intersection of Gadsden, Greene, and Devine is nearing completion, with projected move-ins planned for August 2025. This project will house 940 students and will have retail tenants on the first floor to include Chick-Fil-A, Knowledge Perk, and Roxanne’s Market, and a 570-space parking structure. The 12-story building is in the Innovista Design District was permitted in Spring 2023, and completed 700,000sf of structure in a 12-month period.



Gateway 737, image credit: USC Development Foundation

The **Silver Hills** development is a 250 unit, five and six-story multi-family development at Huger and Washington Streets, adjacent to the State Museum property and across Huger Street from the Spring Hill Suites.

The project was approved in November 2023, after making some positive changes to the design to better address the City Center Design Guidelines. The project will include improvements to the public streetscape on both Huger and Washington Streets, to include 8’ sidewalks, street trees, and decorative lighting. The building provides balconies on upper floors and stoops on the first level to provide residents with outdoor space, which will also contribute to a lively public realm. The project also received site plan approval from the Planning Commission in September 2023 and has received building permits.



Silver Hills, images taken from the D/DRC submittal.



Subtext (previously known as **Verve**) is a 4-story, 233-unit private student dormitory at the corner of Blossom and Huger, identified as a principal gateway by the Innovista Master Plan.

The building will replace a gas station and a truck rental facility on the block, providing 6’ and 8’ sidewalks, decorative lighting, and street furnishings consistent with the Innovista Design District standards. The building features a prominent corner entrance, and elevated residential stoops to activate the streetscape along Huger, Blossom, and Williams. The overhead power lines on Huger will be buried, so that shade trees can be planted on the three major frontages. Both DDRC and Planning Commission approved the proposal in December of 2023, and permits have been issued.



Subtext, images taken from the D/DRC submittal.



In March of 2024, the D/DRC and the Planning Commission approved **The Woodley**, a residential project consisting of two, 4-story buildings and a leasing office with resident center.

The 102-unit project, on Main Street north of Elmwood Avenue, has frontage on Main, Sumter, and Scott Streets and will provide 6’ sidewalks, street trees, and decorative lighting along the perimeter of the project. The buildings conceal surface parking on the interior of the block and address the public realm with balconies and elevated residential stoops with access to the street. The project is currently in permitting.



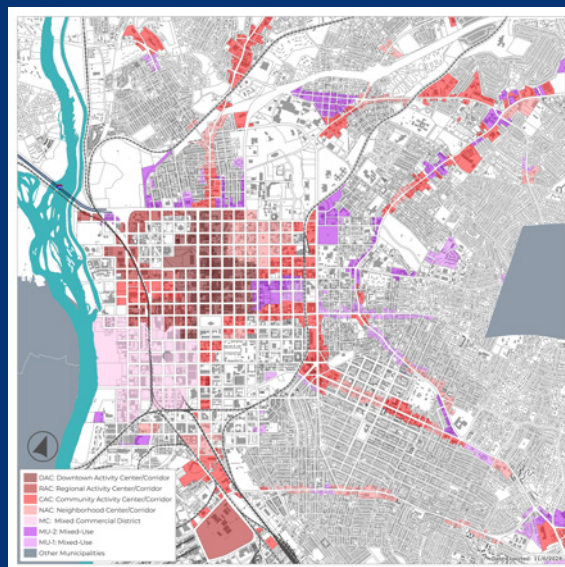
The Woodley, images taken from the D/DRC submittal.

Pondering Parking Policy

Did you know that the development of a large amount of Columbia’s downtown and urban corridors does not require developers to provide parking?

Considering Henry Grabar recently noted that for every car in America, there exist as many as six parking spaces, and most vehicles spend an estimated 95% of their “life span” simply parked*, well, we think it might be worth re-spreading the word that parking minimums do not apply in seven of the City’s zoning districts (DAC, RAC, CAC, NAC, MC, MU-2, and MU-1).

The map to the right helps illustrate the many areas within downtown and along redeveloping corridors where these zoning districts are assigned, and therefore where there are no minimum parking requirements.



As these areas redevelop with an emphasis on urban design and multimodal access, they have the potential to transform the livability and accessibility of Columbia for the better. Where parking is necessary, sharing it across uses can also be a great solution to the overabundance of spaces!

*Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World

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 2023 marked the City’s 8th celebration! This was the third year PARK(ing) Day also included two design contests - a juried Best Design Award and a People’s Choice Award. With 13 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 (it’s always the third Friday in September!) by visiting columbiacompass.org/parklets.



The HDR installation (above) won the juried 2023 Best Design Award, while in a three-peat performance (with a new design), the LS3P Associates installation (below) won the 2023 People’s Choice Award.



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 190 individual landmarks. During FY 2023-2024, 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, and helped facilitate Preservation Month events hosted City staff and community partners.

Notable Preservation Projects (FY 2023-2024)

COMPLETED: 1009 King Street

This one story craftsman style bungalow in the Old Shandon/Lower Waverly District was constructed in 1925 and still retains many of its original exterior features. The property was approved for the Bailey Bill in July 2023 and renovations were completed in April 2024. Approved Bailey Bill expenses included installing a new roof, painting and repairing original wood siding, and repairing original windows. Total renovation expenses totaled approximately \$180,000.



UNDERWAY: 1419 Anthony Avenue

This building was constructed as the Advent Christian Church in 1942 but is now being converted into a private residence. The new owners are currently undertaking renovations to the exterior that will restore the building to a more historic appearance. Using the Bailey Bill, the scope of work includes removing all vinyl siding, repairing original wood siding and features, repairing the upstairs windows, re-roofing, and removing the enclosure of the front porch. The project scope and Bailey Bill were approved by the D/DRC in November 2023.



UPCOMING: 1001 Senate Street

The former Columbia Central Fire Station, constructed 1949-1951, is a National Register Structure that also has the Bailey Bill. The building was designed in the Moderne and International styles by Heyward Singley, a prominent Columbia architect who was the architect of all of Columbia’s fire stations constructed between 1940-1952. Also included on the site is a six-story concrete fire tower, used for training purposes, and brick service building for the fire trucks. The fire station itself was converted for mixed-use purposes several years ago and will now be converted to a boutique hotel with a restaurant and bar. Hotel rooms will be incorporated into all three buildings and with additions as approved by D/DRC in December 2023 incorporated into the design to allow for additional rooms and connectivity of the buildings.



Rendering of 1001 Senate Street, Garvin Design Group

Preserving Local Landmarks

The City of Columbia boasts over 180 buildings and cultural sites that have been designated as Individual Landmarks. This designation is based on architecture or associations with people or events significant in the history of Columbia and the state of South Carolina. Individual Landmarks can be designated as Type 1, Type 2, or Type 3 as laid out in Section 17-3.7(j)(4) of the Unified Development Ordinance. The City has been designating Individual Landmarks since the 1960s under the guidance of the Landmarks Commission, which operated from the 1960s-1990s, and then evolving into the current day Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC). Due to their inclusion in the UDO, both in the OV-HP zoning overlay district and within the text itself, proposed local landmarks are also reviewed by the Planning Commission (PC) prior to public hearing and a vote by City Council.

During FY 2023-2024, three buildings were brought before the D/DRC and PC for a recommendation for landmarking; each of these structures was built in the mid-century period and feature modern design features and uses.

1531 Taylor Street

The building at 1531 Taylor Street was built in 1946 for automotive use, specifically for the Columbia Tire Company. Businesses focusing on the maintenance and repair of automobiles boomed in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s as suburban development increased and the ownership of cars became more attainable. Taylor Street, as a major thoroughfare, became a popular location for automobile related business. The Columbia Tire Company structure is a unique example of a building in the Taylor Street vicinity which was purpose-built for automotive services, retaining this use and its architectural integrity through the decades, making it one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the Taylor Street area. This building was officially landmarked by City Council in November of 2023.

1800 Senate Street

Also known as Hampton House, this c. 1969 modern apartment building was recommended for Landmark approval by both the PC and D/DRC in May of 2024 and was officially designated by City Council in July of 2024.

1100 Kortright Street

Constructed as a modern doctor’s office, this structure was also built in 1969 and followed the same timeline for Landmark approval as 1800 Senate - with PC and D/DRC in May of 2024 and official designation by City Council in July of 2024.

Did you know?

Local historic districts designate a “period of significance” and structures within a district may or may not be considered to be “contributing” to the district. Both local areas and structures must be at least 50 years old to be considered for designation.

Midcentury structures have only recently become eligible, as they cross the fifty-year age mark - and Columbia is host to many fine examples of Mid Century Modern architecture. As a result, while many of our local midcentury structures are not considered contributing to their locally designated historic district - many are eligible to be landmarked in their own right due to their architectural or cultural significance.

In fact, we are known to have the best collection of in-tact midcentury buildings in South Carolina! A statewide organization focused on the preservation of Modernist architecture, MidModSC, has hosted multiple walking tours in Columbia to highlight a number of these structures that contribute to our unique built environment.

Quantifying The Effect of Preservation Efforts In Our Community

Catalyst for Columbia, an in-depth report completed in December 2023 helps quantify the economic impact of preservation efforts in Columbia. The City of Columbia, in partnership with Historic Columbia, engaged a consultant, Donovan Rypkema of PlaceEconomics, to do a deep dive into the economic impact of historic resources in Columbia. Mr. Rypkema, an internationally recognized analyst with over 30 years of experience, and his team looked at the role that the City’s historic resources play in generating tourism dollars, their impact on property values and affordable housing, and the influence of local historic tax incentives.



View the presentation on the City of Columbia YouTube Channel’s [Preservation Playlist](#) by clicking the image above. The report was also featured on the South Carolina Business Review (May 2, 2024 edition) - access that recording [here](#).

The conclusion: **historic preservation activities have created quantifiable positive economic impacts in Columbia.**

Preservation Planners Win Statewide Award



Preservation planners (left to right) Betsy Kleinfelder, Rachel Walling, and Amy Moore, pictured with their Preservation Service Award at the awards reception.

In June, City of Columbia preservation staff were recognized with a Preservation Service Award due to their energetic and creative efforts at outreach and advocacy for the preservation and appreciation of the community’s historic resources. Since 1995, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Preservation South Carolina, and the Office of the Governor have recognized exceptional accomplishments in the preservation, rehabilitation, and interpretation of our architectural and cultural heritage with a series of statewide awards. In their announcement, the jury noted it was impressed by the variety of [programs](#) produced by the preservation staff, including educational videos, newsletters, events, and reports such as the above impact study.

Check out [the press release](#) + learn more about [the awards](#).

Coalition of Columbia’s Historic Districts (CCHD)

The coalition serves as an avenue for neighborhood associations, business districts, and individuals to collaborate on shared goals and initiatives. The coalition is independent from the City of Columbia, and works to support preservation efforts in the community at large.

Initiatives

In the Fall of 2023, the CCHD designed and sold a wall calendar to raise funds for future preservation outreach activities. The 2024 Paws for Preservation Calendar included photos of local pets and preserved structures selected through a contest. Funds from the 2024 calendar sales were utilized to host two workshops during Preservation Month. Workshop topics addressed brick repointing and energy efficiency measures for historic structures - teaching participants skills through hands-on learning. This successful effort will be replicated in the new calendar year. To learn more about the CCHD and their ongoing efforts (and to view photos of 2025’s featured pets), visit [their webpage](#).



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’s Preservation Month events 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.

Cemetery Workshop + Tour

Led by members of the Committee for the Beautification and Restoration of Randolph Cemetery, participants spent a morning touring this historic African American cemetery and learning about proper stone maintenance and repair through hands on demonstrations.



The Green Book + African American History Bike Tour

This year’s tour is the fourth guided bike tour developed by preservation staff. This year’s tour explored sites related to Columbia’s rich African American history, including visits to Green Book sites that were safe havens for traveling African Americans during the Jim Crow Era. This 5+ mile ride visited both extant sites and structures lost to history.



Children’s Craft at Richland Library

City staff partnered with Richland Library to host a children’s craft and story time event at Richland Main again this year. Families with children of all ages created their very own travel journal based on the historic Green Book, prompting both creative play and thoughtful discussion!

Happy Hour Meet & Greet

In partnership with Columbia’s Coalition of Historic Districts (CCHD), City preservation staff hosted a happy hour drop in at the Graduate Hotel. City preservation staff and other local preservation experts and contractors were on hand to answer questions for coalition members and property owners.



Preservation Economic Impact Study Lunch + Learn

Citizens joined City of Columbia preservation staff and Historic Columbia staff to hear about the key takeaways from the Catalyst for Columbia economic impact study. Participants met at the Pastor’s Study, housed in a historic building on Main Street above Lula Drake.

Want to stay up to date on historic preservation news and events in Columbia? Sign up for the Preservation e-newsletter [here](#).

Mabel Payne Award: Todd Avant

As part of the City’s annual celebration of National Historic Preservation Month in May, preservation staff recognized local property owner and developer Todd Avant with the Mabel Payne Award.

Todd Avant’s Work & Ongoing Legacy

Todd’s quiet but committed work on several historic buildings in Columbia shows his deep appreciation of historic buildings. His conservation and stewardship of local historic resources include the Dupre Building at 807 Gervais, the 1932 National Biscuit Company warehouse on Lady Street, the 1840s Maxcy Gregg House (1518 Richland Street), and the old Bull Street campus Laundry Building (1701 Fig Street).

Each of these rehabilitated buildings have benefited from Todd’s unflinching deliberation and attention to each point of a rehabilitation. He cares about whether he has the right approach and the right materials for a building. He wants the right people on a job. His attention to detail and follow through is exceptional.



Photo by Jeff Amberg



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, organizations, and neighborhoods for their outstanding efforts in education, leadership, conservation, or stewardship which supports our built environment and, ultimately, the entire City. 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.

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 and Planning Processes Underway & Completed in Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Calhoun Street Improvements

Calhoun Street improvements, including resurfacing and restriping, were completed in early 2024 between Wayne and Harden Streets. The project, which included a change in the traffic pattern supported by traffic volumes, was managed by the City of Columbia, funded in part by the Richland County Penny Tax for Transportation and by the Richland County Transportation Committee (CTC).

The restriping of the prior travel pattern to accommodate bicyclists and reduce travel lanes was a recommendation of Walk Bike Columbia, and the implementation of this recommendation was a long time coming. The Walk Bike Columbia plan built in recommendations for those bikeways included in the 2012 Penny Tax referendum, using them as key segments within the proposed multimodal network. In June of 2018, the City and County held a joint public meeting to review the road diet concept; an additional meeting was held in November 2018. Given the roadway condition, funds were sought for resurfacing as well, and eventually obtained from the CTC. A final public outreach meeting, scheduled for March of 2020, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and eventually rescheduled for June of 2021 ([online](#)). The procurement process, in the midst of COVID material and staffing shortages and price increases, took longer than anticipated - so we are overjoyed to report on the project’s completion this fiscal year!



Above: the online public informational meeting for Calhoun Street is available on the City’s YouTube channel, and provides project details. Below: the project shortly after completion.



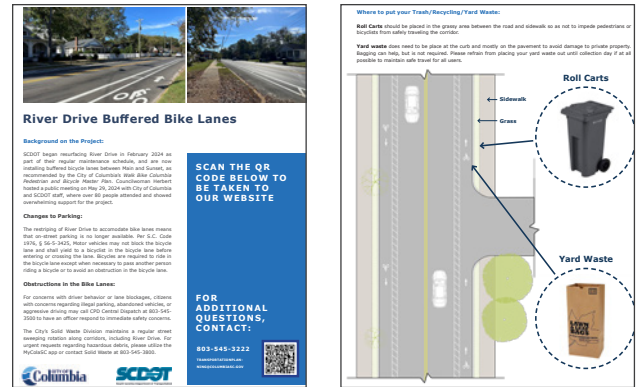
River Drive Buffered Bike Lanes

SCDOT began resurfacing River Drive in February of 2024 as part of their regular maintenance schedule. As the City’s adopted *Walk Bike Columbia Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* had specific recommendations for buffered bike lanes along River Drive, SCDOT worked to explore a restriping plan with bicyclist accommodations in accordance with SCDOT’s Complete Streets Directive. Given the width of the vehicular lanes along River Drive, the design was able to accommodate buffered bike lanes within the existing right-of-way and roadway surface without reducing the number of travel lanes. These buffered bike lanes are the first in the Midlands of SC!

After a well-attended and highly supportive public meeting at Earlewood Park in late May, SCDOT issued a notice to proceed to their striping contractor, which then had to work the detailed handwork into their contract schedule. River Drive between Main and Sunset was striped to accommodate buffered bike lanes, right-size vehicular lanes, and reduce pedestrian crossing distances in October of 2024.

Outreach and engagement was key to this project’s success, as was ongoing collaboration with SCDOT District 1 and other City departments. Prior to the public meeting, in addition to the regular press releases, informational newsletters, and social media blasts, the Planning Division sent mailings to residents along the project corridor, communicated directly with neighborhood leadership, and placed signs along the project corridor to advertise the public meeting. With the installation of the striping pattern, staff worked to develop a webpage with information and frequently asked questions, which was also referenced in a subsequent mailing to adjacent property owners.

Celebrating success was also a critical component - and celebrations in FY 2023-2024 included a ribbon cutting press conference and a community bike ride organized by the Cola Town Bike Collective and Councilwoman Herbert.



Above: the informational flier sent to residents after the installation was complete. Left: the completed buffered bike lanes. Below: Councilwoman Herbert and Mayor Rickenmann show their support at the ribbon cutting.



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 Main Street between Pendleton and Blossom - an expanse that included a number of University-related holdings and underutilized



The above photos, taken in February 2024, track the progress of construction. The expansive sidewalks seen on the left will be found on both sides of the street, as will the cycle tracks, emerging in green concrete on the right.

spaces. The consultant team from Sasaki had previously 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.

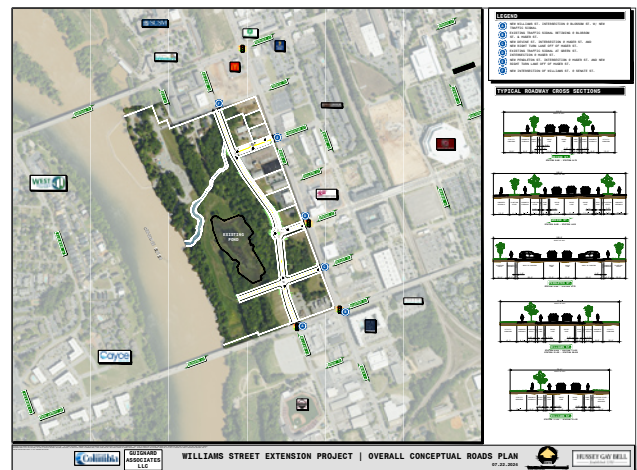
Vista Greenway Extension

Plans for an extension of the Vista Greenway north of Elmwood Avenue remain underway, with the right-of-way transfer complete from SCDOT. The transfer includes property along the N. Main Street/River Drive area 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. The new buffered bike lanes along River Drive will provide an excellent connection to this extension!

Williams Street Extension

The Williams Street extension, which will connect Blossom Street to Senate Street as a gently curved parkway along the riverfront, is currently in the design phase as a partnership between the City, property owner, and Richland County. The project is the first major infrastructure improvement that will provide access to the future riverfront park, envisioned in City planning documents for more than one hundred years.

The parkway will provide two travel lanes for cars, a separated cycle track on either side, and wide, tree-lined sidewalks as envisioned by the *Innovista Master plan* in 2007, and subsequently supported by the *Walk Bike Columbia* master plan in 2015. The design documents are 30% complete, and construction is estimated to start in 2025. Meanwhile, the City is working on an agreement with project partners to start the process of planning and designing the park and associated development opportunities.



The above conceptual plan shows how the extension of Williams Street and creation of a riverfront park will increase multimodal connectivity and access to the Congaree River.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Action Planning Grant

USDOT selected the City of Columbia as one of 235 communities nationwide to receive a *Safe Streets and Roads for All* planning grant funding in their 2023 grant cycle. The City was one of seven communities in South Carolina selected in that grant cycle; the awards were announced in late October of 2023, and the final grant agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was developed during FY 2023-2024, and executed in the first half of FY 2024-2025.

The federal funding, which requires an in-kind match of City hours dedicated to the planning process, will help the City procure a consultant team to build on the success of the *Walk Bike Columbia* plan, developing a comprehensive safety action plan that utilizes the Safe System Approach and meets with the SS4A requirements for subsequent infrastructure funding.

The principles and objectives of the Safe System Approach, summarized in the USDOT graphic to the right, will be utilized to guide the planning process.



The goal of this action plan will be to, as USDOT puts it, “develop a holistic, well-defined strategy to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries.” Action plans contain [eight components](#):

- » **Leadership commitment and goal setting:** an official public commitment must be made by City to reach an eventual goal of zero roadway fatalities and serious injuries.
- » **Planning structure:** a committee, task force, implementation group, or other similar body will be charged with the oversight of the plan development, implementation, and monitoring.
- » **Safety analysis:** to include existing conditions and historic trends and an examination of crash data and locations, this analysis will allow for the geospatial identification of higher-risk locations.
- » **Engagement and collaboration:** robust engagement with the public and relevant stakeholders, as well as overlapping jurisdictions, will ensure the resulting plan is built on a foundation of community engagement and informed experience.
- » **Equity:** the plan itself is developed using an inclusive and representative process, engaging underserved communities and ensuring an equitable approach to any proposed projects and strategies.
- » **Policy and process changes:** as part of the planning process, current policies, plans, guidelines, and standards will be assessed to identify opportunities to improve how processes can better prioritize transportation safety.
- » **Strategy and protect selections:** a list of projects and strategies will be identified that contain interventions focused on infrastructure, behavioral, and/or operational safety.
- » **Progress and transparency:** a method is set forth to measure progress over time, with required annual public and accessible reporting on progress towards reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries.

Once the plan is completed and adopted, infrastructure projects recommended by action plans are considered eligible for grant application under the competitive SS4A implementation grants within five years of adoption.

SCDOT Road Safety Assessments: Assembly, Gervais, and Millwood (+ resurfacing of Millwood)

The SCDOT Safety Office studies, makes recommendations for, and implements infrastructure improvements along roadways with the state’s highest crash rates. In FY 2022-2023, SCDOT identified three routes within the City: Assembly Street (Elmwood to Rosewood), 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 took part in the subsequent audits of Gervais and Millwood in October 2023.

Once each audit is 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. The first of those public meetings, for Assembly Street, occurred in August of 2024, with Gervais and Millwood meetings anticipated in FY 2024-2025. The meeting materials, including preliminary conceptual designs for Assembly Street, can be found [on SCDOT’s webpage](#).

During FY 2023-2024, SCDOT District 1 was able to complete the second phase of the Millwood resurfacing and restriping project, with the first phase (Gladden to Gervais) having been completed in 2020. With the extension of the restriping pattern from Gladden to Devine, the entirety of the corridor from Gervais to Devine now has right-sized vehicular lanes and bike lanes. As the road safety assessment was well-timed with the scheduled resurfacing, SCDOT District 1 was able to develop an updated striping pattern reflective of additional safety recommendations that came out of the assessment; the handwork for high-visibility ladder-style crosswalks and the midblock crossing near Dreher High School should be completed by SCDOT’s striping contractor in FY 2024-2025.

Central Midlands Council of Governments Plans

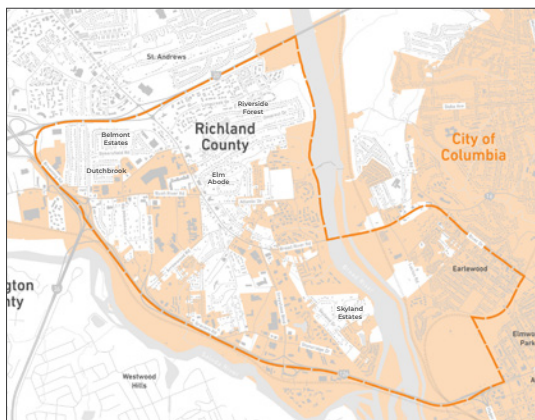
The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) facilitated the development of two transportation-related area plans in Columbia over FY 2023-2024. City planners served as stakeholders during both of these processes, and gathered data for the consultant teams, provided feedback on plan recommendations, and spread the word to help citizens engage in the planning processes.

The *Columbia East Traffic Improvement Plan* focuses on multimodal traffic issues 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 participated in the interview process as a stakeholder in Spring 2023, and the public engagement process kicked off in early FY 2023-2024 with a presentation to a City Council subcommittee and a well-attended public information meeting occurring in August 2023.



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

Once feedback from the initial set of meetings is received, the project team developed initial recommendations for the area, and held an additional public meeting in the Fall of 2024. The plan’s recommendations focus on improvements within the SCDOT right-of-way along major transportation corridors in the area, most notably Garners Ferry Road. Due to an overlap of SCDOT District 1’s existing resurfacing schedule with the planning process, there was some public confusion that the resurfacing in early 2024 was implementation of the plan’s recommendations, which had not yet been fully formed or released for public comment. Subsequent to the public meeting, the CMCOG board reviewed and adopted the plan as a study to inform the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).



The map to the left depicts the study area with an orange outline, with the City of Columbia’s municipal limits in light orange, and unincorporated Richland County in white.

The *Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan* focused on the intersection between land use and transportation and how to best facilitate multimodal connectivity throughout the study area, which is bounded by the river to the West and Interstate 20 the North, and then follows the Broad River, crossing the river at Broad River Road/River Drive to include Earlewood and the Elmwood Cemetery (shown in the map to the left).

A primary goal of the planning process was to develop a guiding policy document that could help the community look to the future to be better prepared for the possibility of substantial new growth and development. The City of Columbia and Richland County both participated as stakeholders during this process, with the hope that the resulting plan would be adopted by both jurisdictions as an addendum to each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan, in order to help guide future policy decisions.

The consultant team held a week-long planning charrette in late February/early March of 2024 at Dutch Square Mall. During the week, the team presented information about land use, transportation, and the housing market to community members; facilitated focus group conversations; met with key stakeholders; and utilized feedback received to develop and present early recommendations to charrette participants.

Feedback received during the charrette process was utilized to develop a clear vision and goals as well as more detailed draft recommendations. These draft recommendations were presented to the community at a public presentation in September, and the City’s Planning Commission also hosted the lead consultant for an informational presentation during that time. The team also presented to City Council’s Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee in the Fall of 2024, and we anticipate the plan document will be adopted by Council as an addendum to *Columbia Compass* in early 2025.

What role does the Planning Division serve in multimodal transportation planning efforts?

Local, county, regional, and state transportation planning efforts lay the groundwork for strategic investment in our transportation infrastructure in the Midlands. At its core, the planning process should result in a plan that incorporates the community vision, best practices, and strategies for implementation, and planning for multimodal transportation in the Midlands is no different. Planning Division staff are highly engaged in planning for multimodal transportation in a number of ways:

Keeping the Community Informed

Planning processes are only successful when the community is engaged - and that goes doubly for transportation planning, where plans generally lead to changes in infrastructure that can impact the daily lives of residents. Division staff helps spread the word through e-newsletters and reports, as well as partnering with the City's Public Relations, Media, and Marketing Department to amplify outreach efforts for City, County, regional, and state-wide planning efforts.

Facilitating Planning Efforts

The Division is responsible for the development of long-range plans for the City as a whole (our comprehensive plan, Columbia Compass, incorporates Walk Bike Columbia within the Transportation Chapter), as well as area, neighborhood, and corridor plans, many of which include a number of multimodal transportation-related recommendations. As new planning efforts begin, staff ensures these adopted plans, best practices, and community input help inform each new planning process. Staff also helps provide stakeholder feedback that aligns with adopted City plans and policies in transportation planning efforts facilitated by others, including other local governments and regional and statewide transportation agencies.

Working Toward the Implementation of Adopted Plans

Division staff utilizes the recommendations of adopted plans to provide formative feedback and further implementation - whether it's in discussions with community members or developers, or in collaboration with other departments or transportation agencies. As such, we are able to use our adopted plans as a tool to further discussion and action.

Multimodal Planning Efforts Quick Reference Guide

- » **Columbia East Traffic Improvement Plan, CMCOG:** started in Spring 2023, the plan was adopted by CMCOG in late 2024.
- » **Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan, CMCOG:** started in late 2023, the plan was adopted by CMCOG in late 2024, and we anticipate the City and Richland County will both adopt the plan as an addendum to their comprehensive plans in 2025.
- » **Safe Streets and Roads for All Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, City of Columbia:** [USDOT/FHWA grant](#) to create a safety action plan that complies with federal standards. Grant announcement in late 2023, grant agreement signed in late 2024, procurement and planning anticipated to begin in FY 2024-2025.
- » **Columbia Compass Five-Year Update, City of Columbia:** this update to the City's comprehensive plan will take a fresh look at population data, reexamine priorities and their implementation, and incorporate a resiliency element. The planning process is anticipated to run through 2025.
- » **Reimagine Richland 2025 (10-year comprehensive plan rewrite), Richland County:** comprehensive plans address a host of topics, including, transportation, land use, housing, and economic development. The planning process is anticipated to run through 2025.
- » **Congestion Management Process (CMP) for the Midlands, CMCOG:** congestion management plans throughout the state are updated on a roughly four year cycle as part of part of SCDOT's regional mobility program; initial public meetings were held in November 2024.
- » **Regional Bike + Pedestrian Planning PILOT, SCDOT:** regional plan for Richland, Lexington, Newberry, and Fairfield Counties. Public input Fall of 2024; planning process ongoing.

Multimodal Planning Efforts Quick Reference Guide (cont.)

- » [Momentum 2050: Moving South Carolina Forward, SCDOT](#): statewide multimodal transportation plan, public engagement in 2024, anticipated plan adoption in 2025.
- » [Parks & Recreation Master Plan, City of Columbia](#): initiated in 2023, with anticipated completion in 2025. Survey findings and input public input received prioritized greenways and multimodal connections to parks.
- » [South Carolina Statewide Rail Plan, SCDOT](#): a long-term vision of statewide policy to improve freight and passenger rail. Public input occurred in mid-2024, and a draft plan was released in late 2024 for final comment. SCDOT has submitted the plan to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for required concurrence approval, which they anticipate receiving in early 2025.

What role does the Planning Division have in multimodal transportation projects?

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

Planning 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 FY 2023-2024, 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 the resurfacing of River Drive, the 2025 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

Planning 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

- » **Calhoun Street (Wayne to Harden), City of Columbia:** resurfacing and restriping to include bike facilities, completed in early 2024.
- » **Garners Ferry Road, SCDOT:** routine resurfacing in Spring-Summer 2024; not associated with *Columbia East Traffic Improvement Plan*, which was under development at the time.
- » **River Drive (Main - Sunset), SCDOT:** resurfacing and restriping to right-size vehicular lanes and include buffered bike lanes, completed in late October 2024.
- » **Millwood Avenue (Gladden to Devine), SCDOT:** resurfacing and restriping to right-size vehicular lanes, add bike lanes, and incorporate early recommendations of Road Safety Assessment in 2024; remainder of detailed striping work, including midblock crossing, anticipated in early 2025.
- » **Main Street (Pendleton to Blossom), SCDOT:** under construction, anticipated completion in Summer 2025.
- » **Harden, Blossom, and Devine Road Safety Project, SCDOT:** under construction, anticipated completion Summer 2025.
- » **Wheat Street Pedestrian Bridge, USC:** approved by D/DRC in 2023, construction in 2025; the bridge will connect existing elevated pathways at the Blatt P.E. Center and the terraced green space next to South Quad and East Quad without modifications at the street level.
- » **Vista Greenway Extension, City of Columbia:** right-of-way transfer finalized in early FY 2022-2023 and alignment being finalized; a public planning process is anticipated for the right-of-way in FY 2024-2025.
- » **Assembly Street (Elmwood – Rosewood) Road Safety Project, SCDOT:** assessment complete. Under design through 2025; construction anticipated in 2026.
- » **Assembly Street (Lady to Pendleton), City of Columbia:** a consultant team is developing plans shovel ready plans for a redesigned streetscape in hope of future additional funding. The project team is coordinating with the SCDOT Road Safety Project team.
- » **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 FY 2023-2024 and a public meeting to review the proposed alternatives occurred in early 2025.
- » **Williams Street Extension (Blossom - Senate), City of Columbia:** in design, construction anticipated to begin in 2025
- » **Gervais (Millwood – the river), Millwood (Gervais – Devine) Road Safety Assessments, SCDOT:** completion of assessments and public meetings anticipated in FY 2024-2025, with design and construction to follow.
- » **Penny Tax for Transportation, Richland County:** some projects from the 2012 referendum are still in design or under construction; the maximum revenue using the 2012 Penny was set at \$1.07 billion. **A second referendum passed in November of 2024** with a 25-year or \$4.5 billion cap on collection. The referendums fund multimodal transportation projects, including roadway projects, bike and pedestrian facilities, rail projects, and The COMET transit system.
- » **Bike Share System Relaunch, City of Columbia + Blue Cross Blue Shield of SC:** procurement process ongoing. The City and Blue Cross Blue Shield of SC, who is the primary sponsor of the system, hope to make an announcement and move towards relaunching the system in 2025.
- » **Carolina Crossroads, SCDOT:** interstate highway project with impacts to I-26, I-20, and I-126. Phases One (Colonial Life Blvd at I-126) and Two (US-176/Broad River Road and I-20) of the five-phase project are underway.

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 2023 and Spring 2024. In the Fall 2023 count, 32 of the 34 locations were counted at least once (either on a weekend or weekday) and 14 of these locations were fully counted (on both a weekend and weekday). Subsequent to the Fall 2023 Counts, the Planning Division compiled and released [a report summarizing the data collected in the 2023 calendar year](#). This report carries forward and builds upon the updated, more highly-visual report style consistent with the Department’s reporting efforts, which will continue to be utilized for annual count reports moving forward.

During the Spring 2024 counts, 27 of the 35 possible locations were counted at least once, and 15 of the locations were counted fully. As with last fiscal year, Fall 2024 counts will target those locations missed during the Spring, in an effort to ensure all locations are counted at least once. In 2024, count locations were revisited, and in all 35 locations were identified for counts for calendar year 2024 and 2025. Count locations will only be removed from the list once two years’ worth of data has been collected at a site and if no land use or infrastructure changes are anticipated surrounding the count location in the near future.

INDIVIDUALS COUNTED

FY 2023-2024

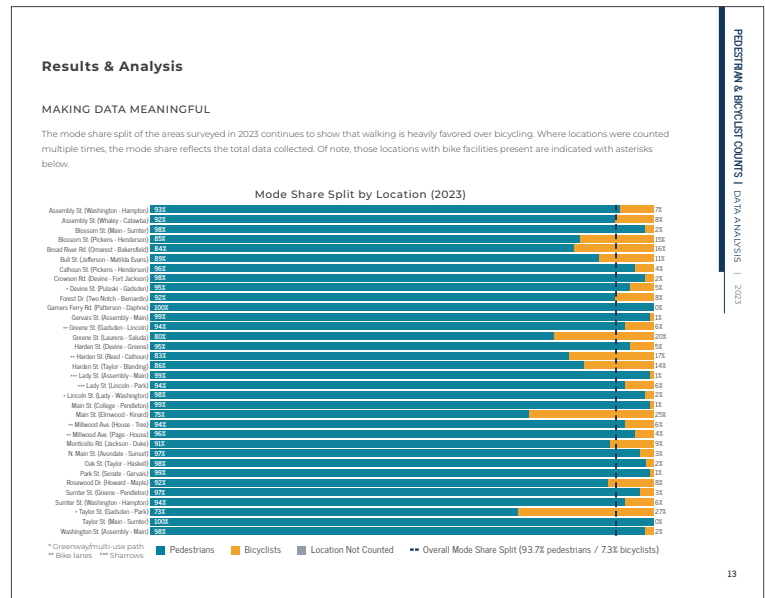


10,561
PEDESTRIANS



333
BICYCLISTS

A report released in April of 2024 analyzed data and reported on trends from prior counts. The report page summarizing the modal split between pedestrians and bicyclists for each of the counted locations is shown to the right.



Bike Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)

The Bike Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) is made up of citizens appointed by City Council and is staffed by the Planning Division 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.

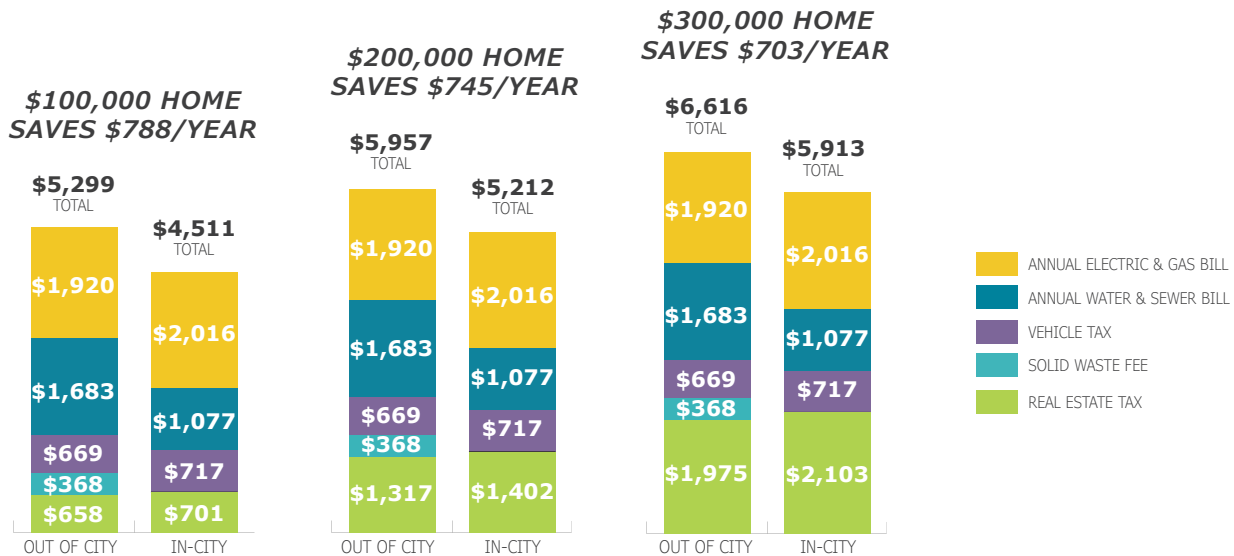
ANNEXATION

The City of Columbia grew by about 433 acres through 29 separate annexation petitions from July 2023 through June 2024. Over 40% 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 FY 2023-2024 include 923 proposed new single-family and duplex units. Together with the annexation of existing residences, this is estimated to add over 2,100 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 \$700 a year on their bills compared to their unincorporated neighbors, while gaining access to our excellent services!

HOMEOWNER SAVINGS AFTER ANNEXATION

BASED ON ASSESSED TAXABLE VALUE



The examples above are based upon the most recent tax year (2023) for the 1UR and 1LR tax districts and assumes the average residential water & sewer use (8 units/month), \$25,000 vehicle value, and an average \$160 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 2023-2024, the Planning Division continued to work creatively in order to engage with the public on a variety of planning-related topics and broader department initiatives. While details on our many outreach efforts are interwoven throughout this report, we're highlighting some of our more extensive efforts below.

River Drive Buffered Bike Lanes

When SCDOT began resurfacing [River Drive](#) in February 2024, Planning Division staff quickly engaged with SCDOT District 1 to facilitate implementation of SCDOT's Complete Streets Directive, which considers the implementation of multimodal facilities recommended by adopted plans. Together with Councilwoman Herbert and SCDOT, the Planning Division organized a well-attended public meeting at Earlewood Park in late May, at which staff presented on the plan's recommendations as well as the proposed restriping. With overwhelming public support at the meeting and via subsequent public comment, SCDOT was able to move forward with the proposed striping plan for River Drive in FY 2024-2025, installing the first buffered bike lanes in the Midlands!



1: Councilwoman Herbert speaks to those assembled; 2: those who live near the proposed project raise their hands; 3: discussions with staff after the presentation; and 4: a community member submits written comments.



Development Deep Dive



As part of the departmental Development Deep Dive series, Lucinda Statler, Planning Administrator, provided an informative and engaging

presentation on how urban design works to provide a sense of place, increase livability, and help drive economic activity. That presentation, along with other presentations given as part of the series during FY 2023-2024, is available [on the City's YouTube playlist](#).

Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan & Guidelines

The [Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Guidelines](#) planning process launched in early 2024, with a multitude of stakeholder roundtables in March, an online survey, and mobile workshops where planners posted up at the Convention Center, Arsenal Hill, and on USC's campus in April. Outreach and engagement continued into the start of FY 2024-2025, where planners conducted video interviews of community leaders in order to encourage citizens to attend the August 1st open houses and take an active role in the planning process.



Planners were quite pleased with the number of students and faculty eager to engage with the Downtown Strategic Plan process during the mobile workshop at USC; even the robots seemed interested!

Ongoing Engagement Efforts

Planning 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 now reach well over 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.



Planning Division staff is also responsible for the compilation of the Planning and Development Services Annual Report, and partners with Development Center on the Department’s monthly report. In FY 2023-2024, the Planning Division also released a report on Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC) calendar year activities in 2023. While the [By the Numbers](#) section of this report also includes a host of D/DRC-related data points for the fiscal year, the D/DRC report breaks down the types of projects reviewed in CY 2023, provides a status update on each project, and highlights completed projects. You can access that report, and all of our reports, on the department’s [reporting and outreach webpage](#).

Staff also continues to coordinate and implement updates to both the [departmental microsite](#) and the [Columbia Compass website](#), sometimes creating project-specific websites like those developed for the Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and River Drive buffered bike lanes.

LOOKING AHEAD

In addition to ongoing facilitation of development, upcoming transportation projects, and support of reporting efforts, the Planning Division has a number of projects and initiatives planned for FY 2024-2025.

The Division anticipates wrapping up the [Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Guidelines](#) planning process, which began in early 2024. The plan and resulting guidelines are focused on the creation of high-quality public space that prioritizes pedestrian activity, a dynamic public realm, and fosters urban living and economic development.

The Division will be taking on additional planning processes in the fiscal year to come - on both the micro and macro scale:

- » our five-year update of [Columbia Compass](#), the City’s comprehensive plan, will begin in 2025;
- » we anticipate moving forward with the USDOT-funded [Safe Streets and Roads for All Action Plan](#) effort now that a signed grant agreement is in place; and
- » we will be partnering with other City departments and a consultant team to foster a small-scale planning process for the land acquired from SCDOT that will be adjacent to the planned Vista Greenway extension.



The above map, taken from the FY 2022-2023 departmental report, depicts the right-of-way area to be considered as part of a future planning process.

Each fiscal year is punctuated by recurring outreach events, as well: our bi-annual Pedestrian & Bicycle Counts each Spring and Fall, PARK(ing) Day in September, National Community Planning month in October, and both National Bike Month and National Historic Preservation Month in May! Keep an eye on the City’s social media pages for updates.

Zoning

Zoning Division staff processed 666 permits and 122 code cases, while working on a daily basis to support citizens, property owners, and developers by answering questions, facilitating community conversations, and more.

Staff collaborates regularly with other divisions to host pre-application conferences, review proposed structure and use changes, and pursue enforcement actions when necessary. Staff also aids in the posting of public meetings and hearings. In FY 2023-2024, that meant posting signs on any properties where applications were heard at monthly meetings of the Board of Zoning Appeals, Planning Commission, Design/Development Review Commission, or City Council. That’s a lot of signs, with 149 agenda items between the three land use boards and commissions alone!



Zoning inspectors post signs for upcoming land use board and commission meetings, as well as zoning public hearings. Signs are posted on properties under consideration so that they might be seen from the right of way, and may be posted in front of structures, or on undeveloped property, as seen in the above image.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Zoning Division will continue their outreach efforts in the coming fiscal year to ensure that citizens understand the City’s Unified Development Ordinance, especially as any 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.

Do your plans require zoning approval even if they don’t require a building permit?

Perhaps! There are some property modifications that generally require approval from zoning - even when a building permit is not required. These include:

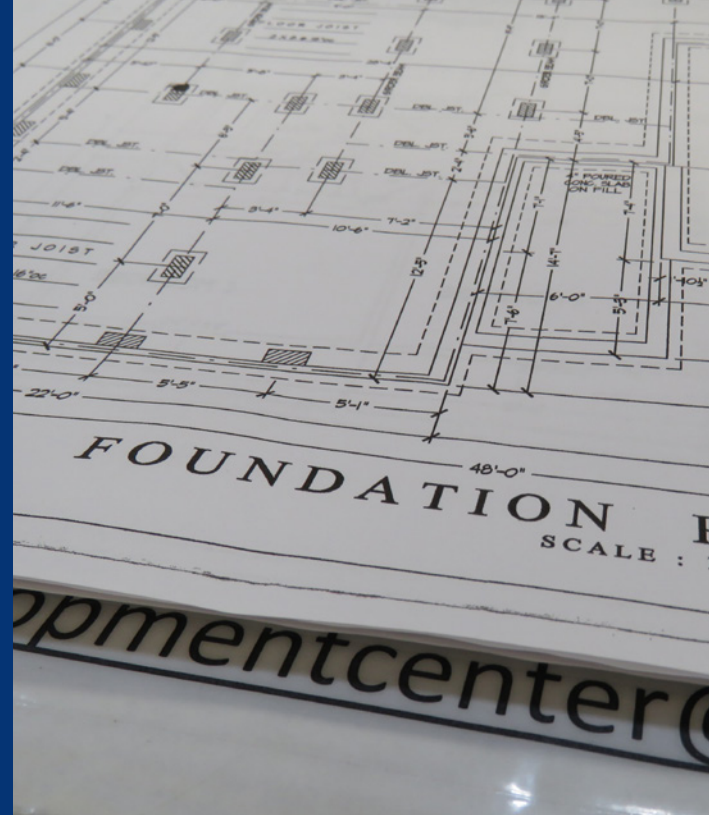
- » The construction of fences or walls (whether they are decorative or structural)
- » Signs (permanent or temporary)
- » Accessory structures (200 sq.ft. or less, detached, and uninhabitable)
- » Temporary uses
- » New uses or changes in use within existing structures or on unimproved property

Not sure if a zoning permit is required? [Send us an email](#) describing what you’re planning on constructing and/or using the property for, or give us a call at (803) 545-3333.

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.



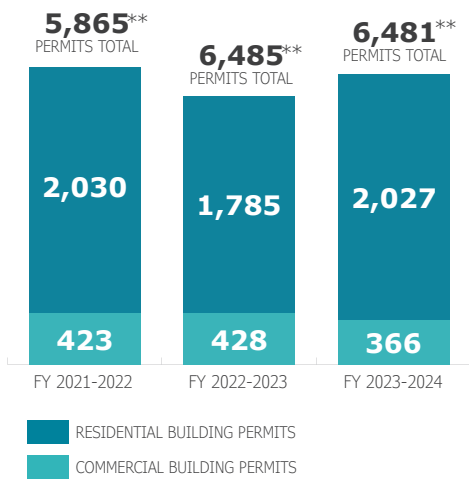
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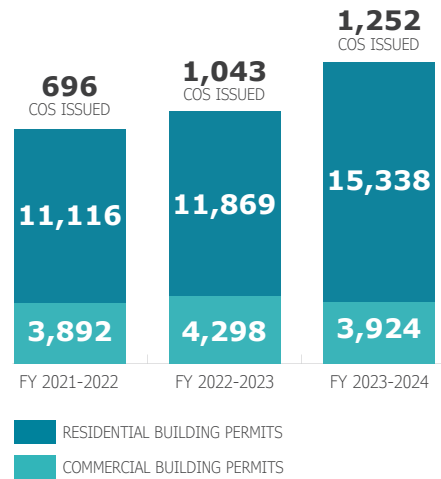
Permits and Inspections

All regulated construction 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 departments or agencies. Building Permits require the review of the Permits and Inspections Division, the Zoning Division, and typically at least one other City division (e.g. Engineering, Plans Examiner). Some building permits may also require land development reviews by staff and/or a land use board or commission (Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, or Design/Development Review Commission) depending on the proposed scale, massing, or use. 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*



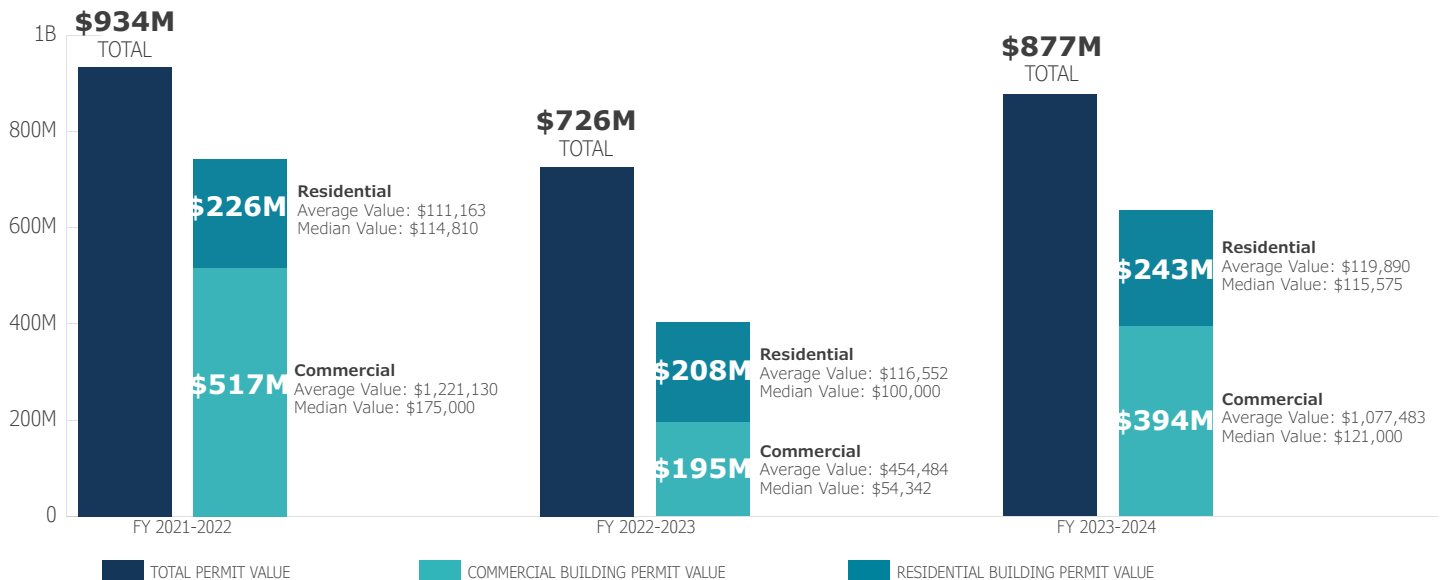
BUILDING INSPECTIONS



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

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

PERMIT VALUATION*



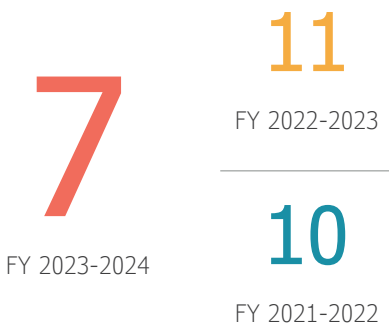
*Total values for all permits, commercial building permits, and residential building permits shown in the above chart are rounded to the nearest million. Average and median values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Land Development

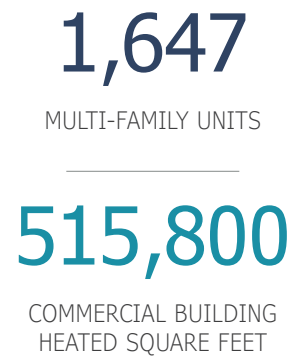
The Land Development Division of Planning and Development Services reviews group/individual commercial and group residential developments, mixed-use planned unit developments, and residential/commercial subdivisions for compliance with the City of Columbia’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The Land Development Division also coordinates the review of major and minor subdivisions and street naming. Division staff conducted 74 land development inspections in FY 2023-2024.

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

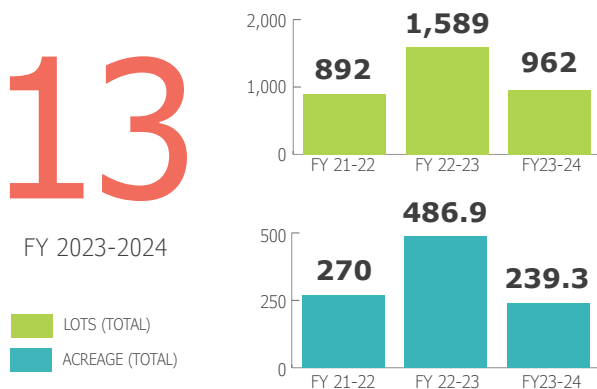


MAJOR SITE PLANS APPROVED BY PC (FY 2023-2024)

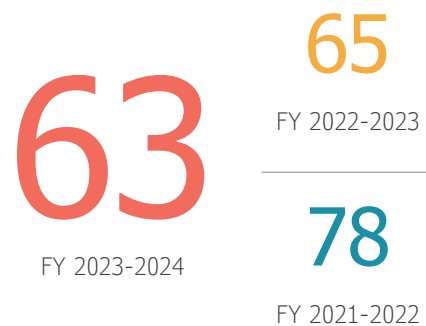


BONDED PLATS PROCESSED

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



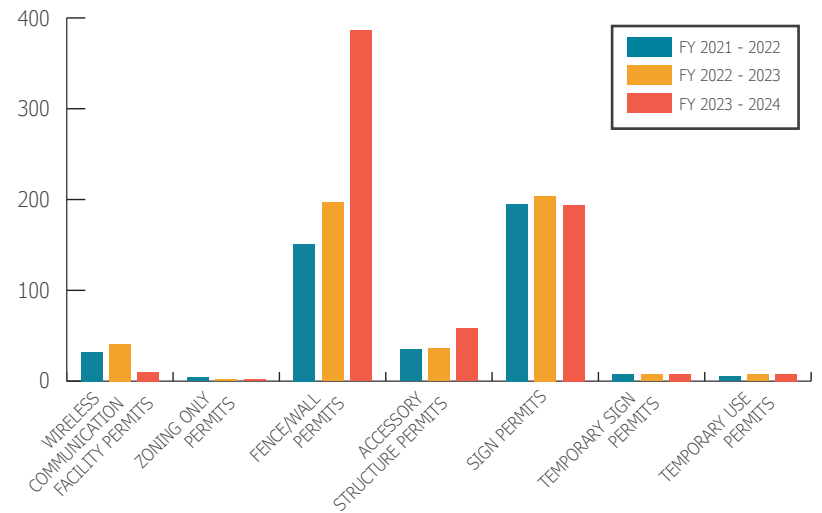
Zoning Permits

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).

ZONING PERMITS ISSUED



ZONING PERMITS BY TYPE, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



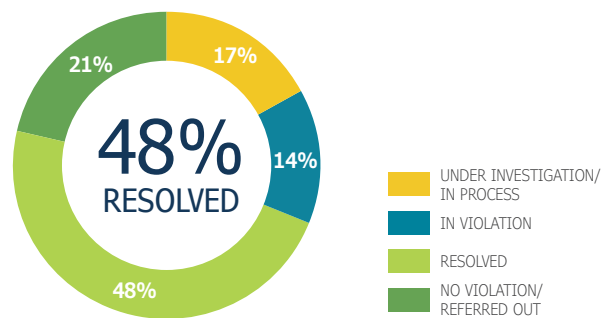
Zoning Code Cases

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.

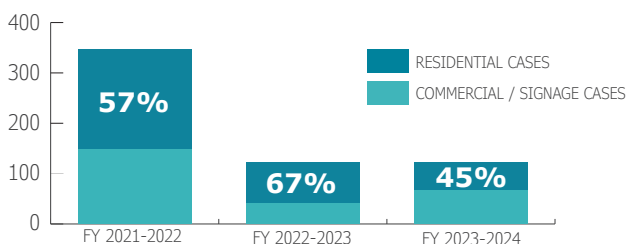
ZONING CODE CASES LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



CODE CASE STATUS FY 2023-2024



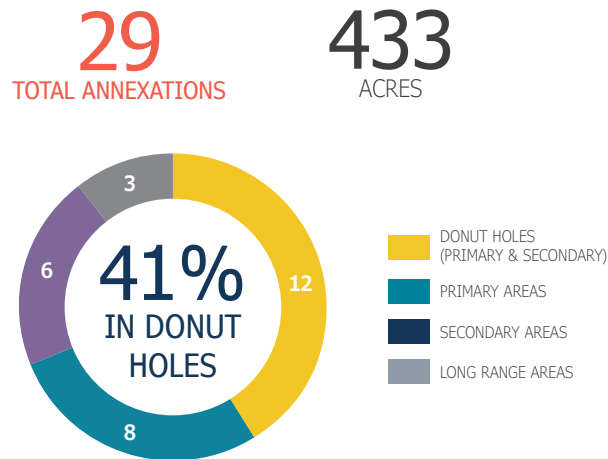
ZONING CODE CASES BY TYPE, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



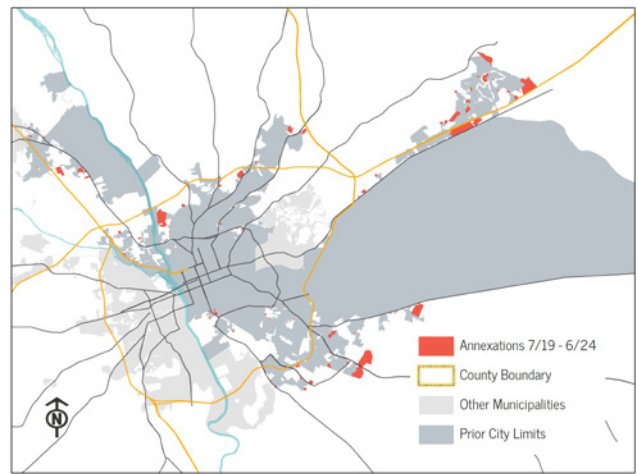
Annexations

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.

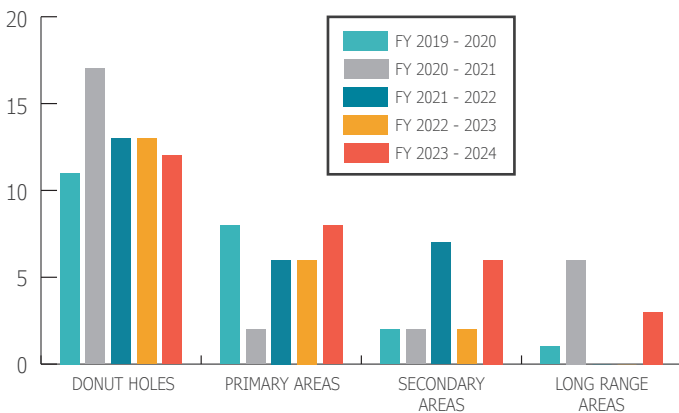
ANNEXATIONS FY 2023-2024



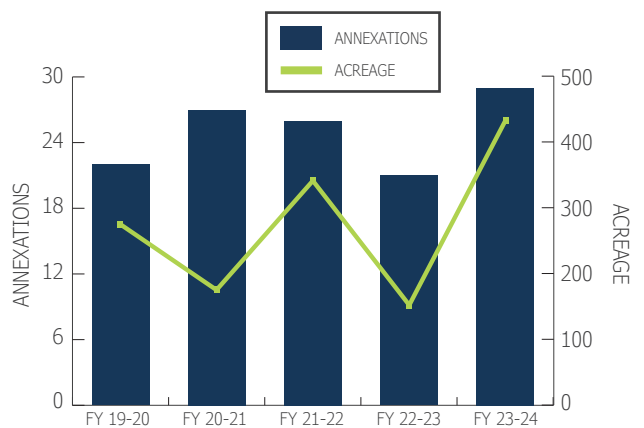
ANNEXATION LOCATIONS LAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS



ANNEXATIONS BY URBAN SERVICE AREAS, LAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS



FISCAL YEAR COMPARISON PROPERTIES ANNEXED, LAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS



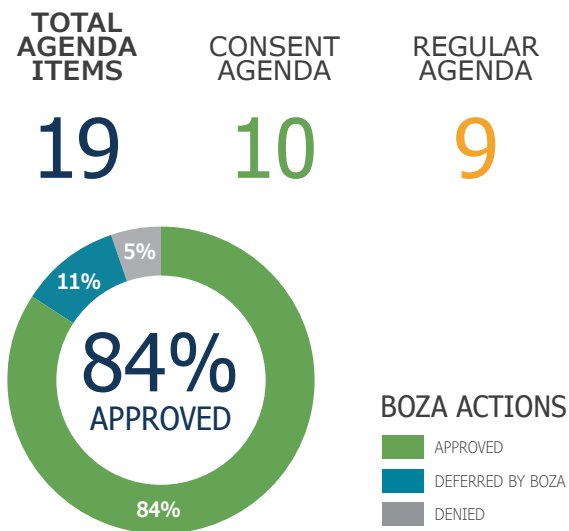
Cost or Savings?

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!

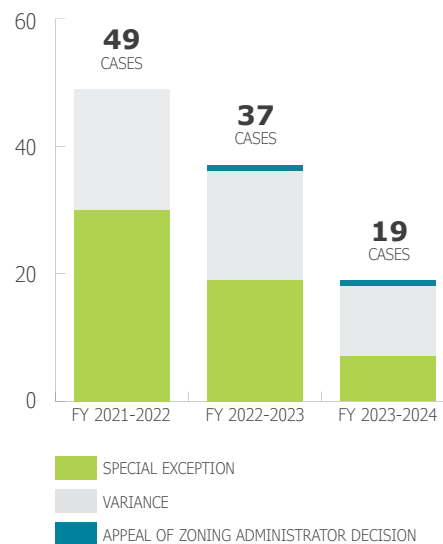
Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA)

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 2023-2024



BOZA CASES BY TYPE, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



What is a Variance?

The Board of Zoning Appeals may grant a variance to certain provisions of the Zoning Ordinance if they find that a strict enforcement of the provisions of the Ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship, in consideration of other criteria designed to protect nearby properties and uphold the purpose and intent of the Unified Development Ordinance.

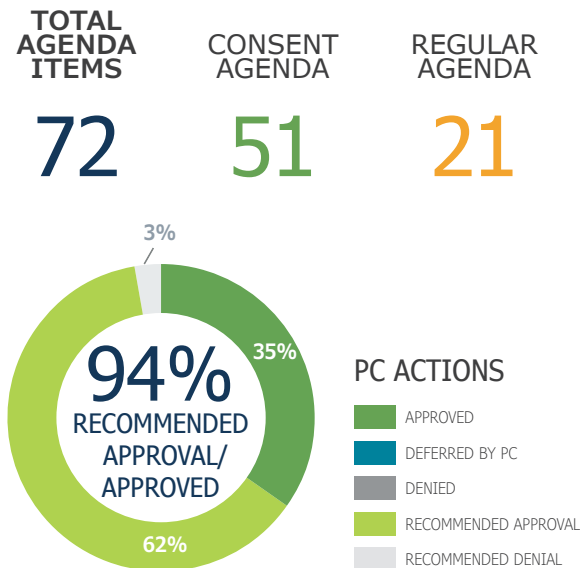
What is a Special Exception?

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.

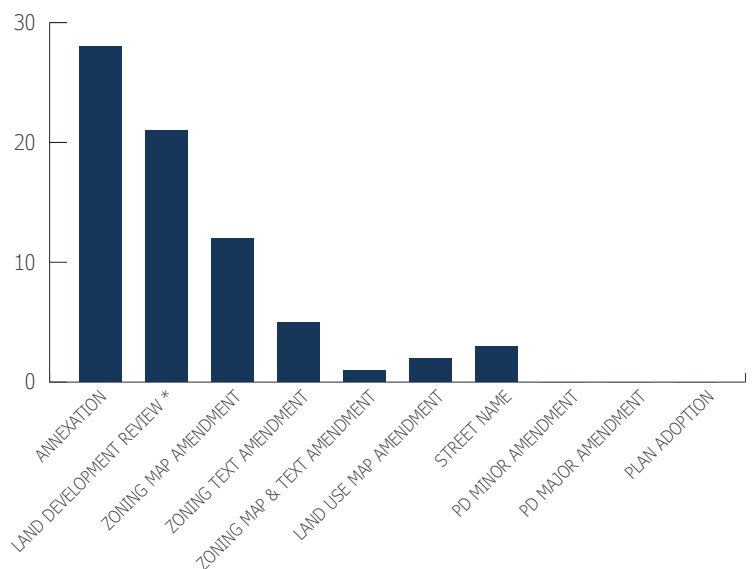
Planning Commission (PC)

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.

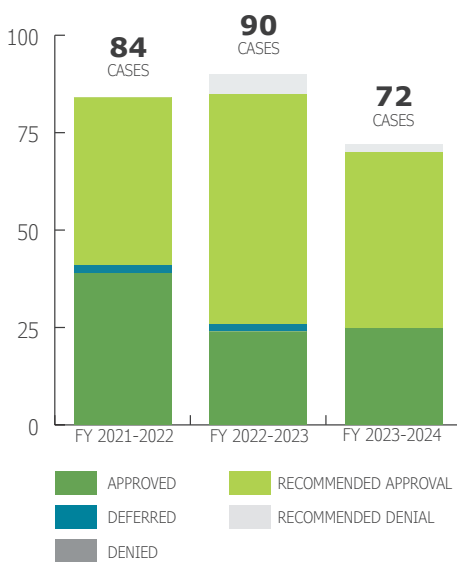
PLANNING COMMISSION CASES FY 2023-2024



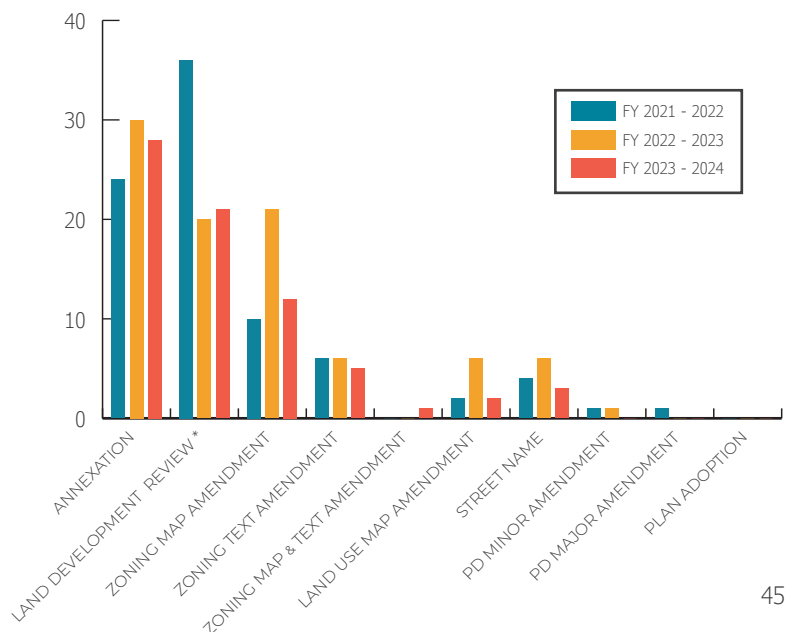
PLANNING COMMISSION CASES BY TYPE, FY 2023-2024



PLANNING COMMISSION CASES ACTIONS, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



PLANNING COMMISSION CASES BY TYPE, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



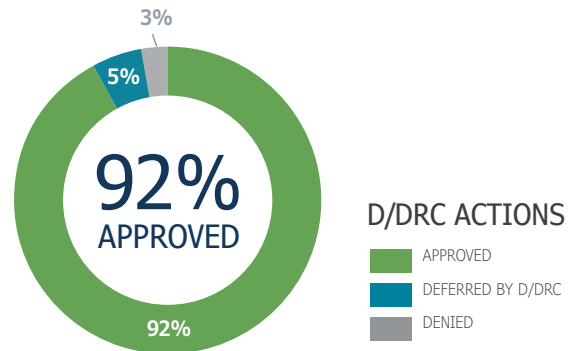
*For the charts to the right, Land Development Reviews include both major site plans and major subdivisions.

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.

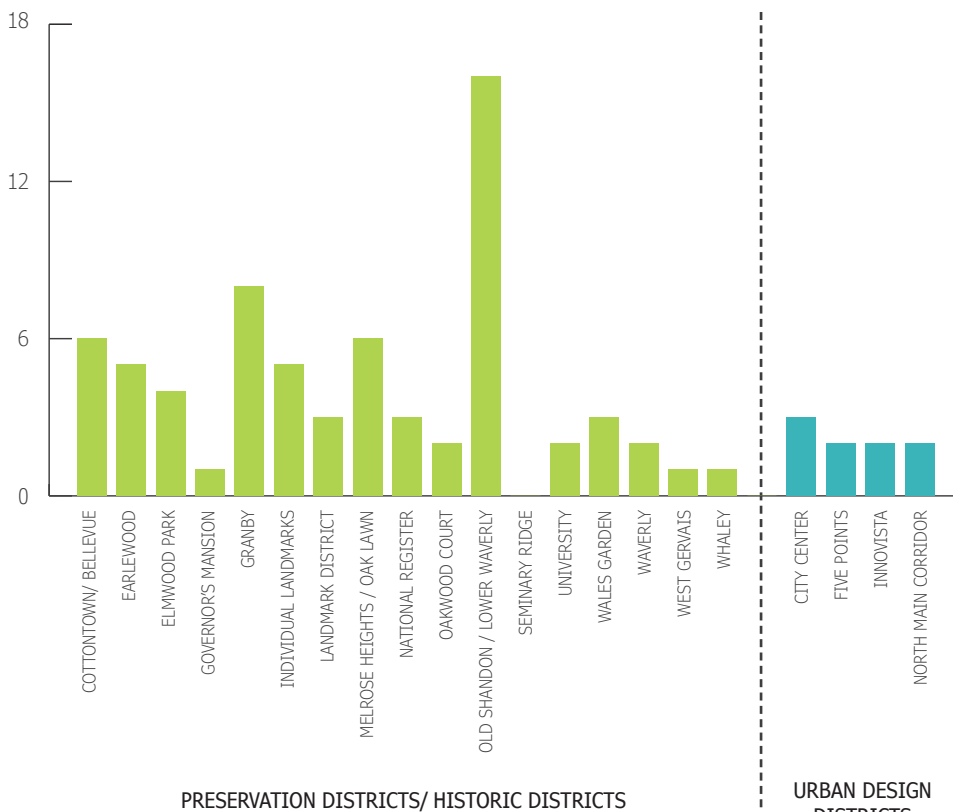
D/DRC CASES

FY 2023-2024



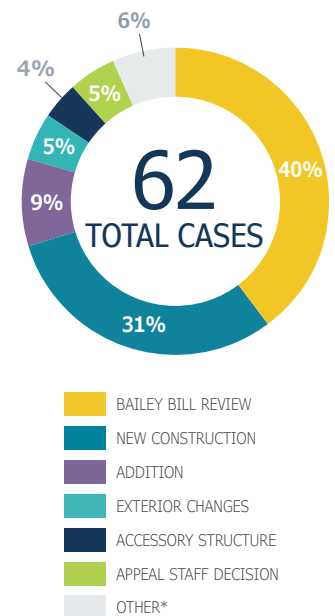
D/DRC CASES

BY DISTRICT, FY 2023-2024



COMMON REQUESTS

D/DRC, FY 2023-2024



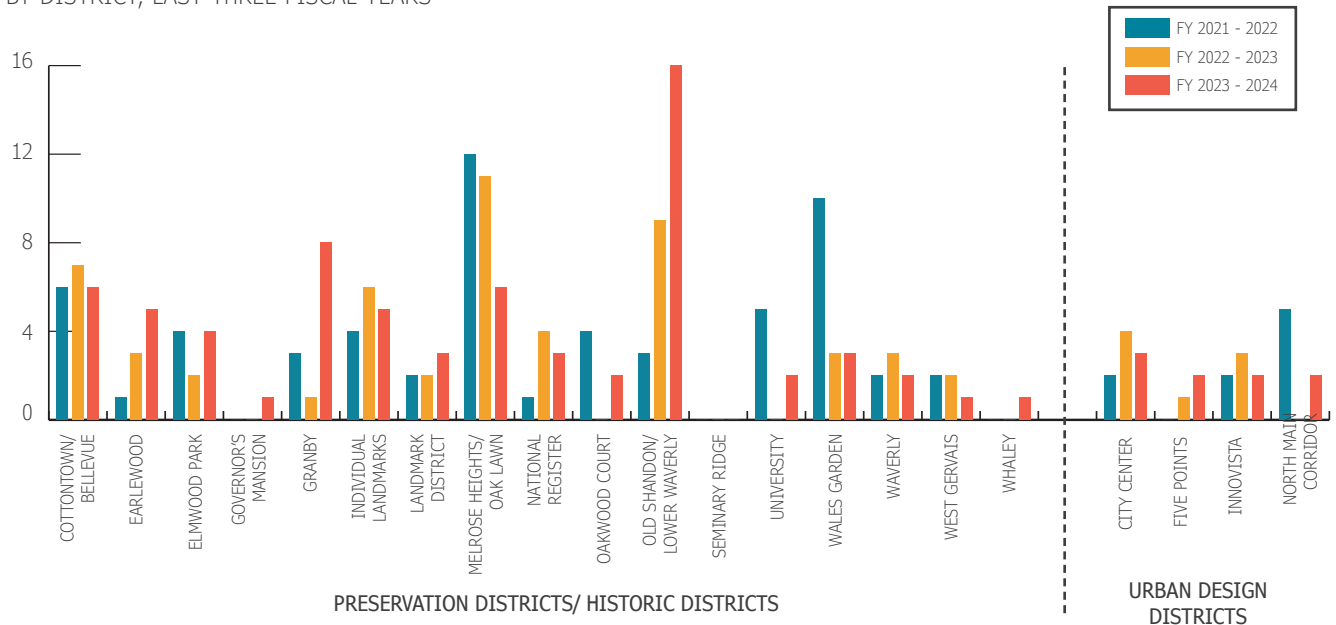
*For the above chart, "other" includes demolition, landmarking, fence review, and other more rarely received requests.

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 in Old Shandon/Lower Waverly and Melrose Heights/Oak Lawn 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)).

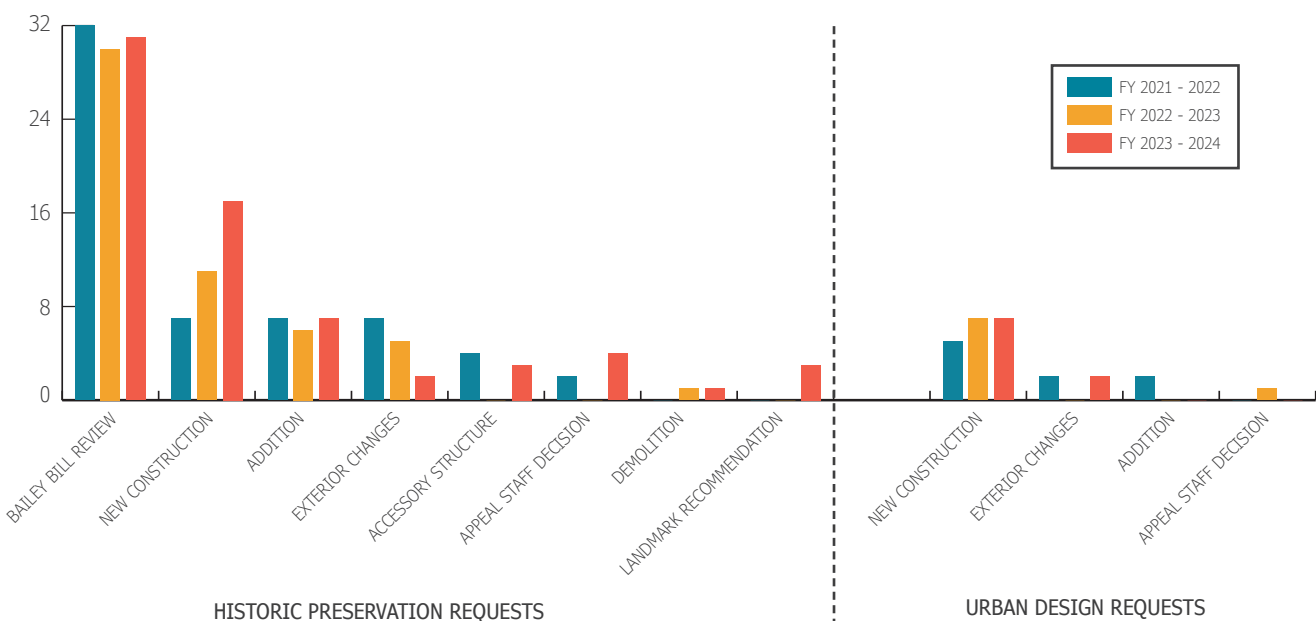
D/DRC CASES

BY DISTRICT, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



D/DRC CASES

BY REQUEST, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



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.

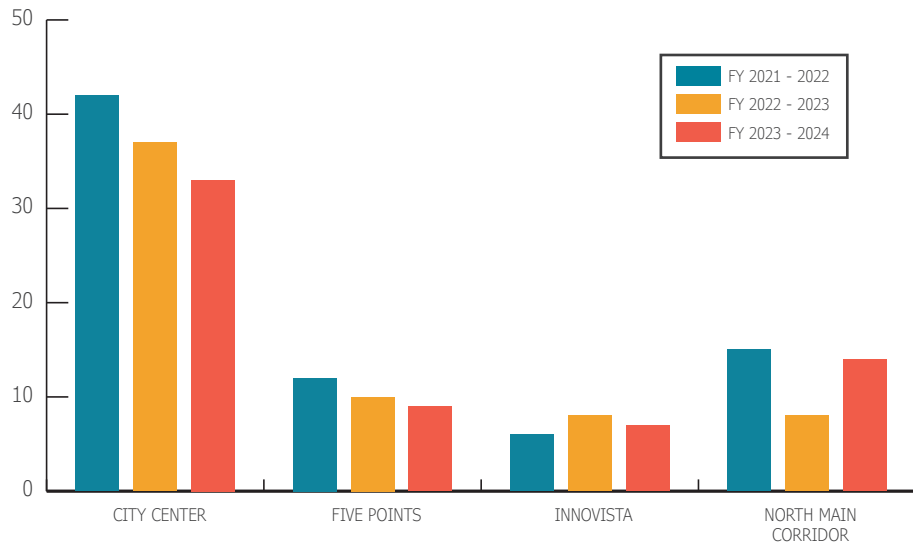
URBAN DESIGN CDAs

FY 2023-2024

63

TOTAL ISSUED

URBAN DESIGN CDAs BY DISTRICT, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



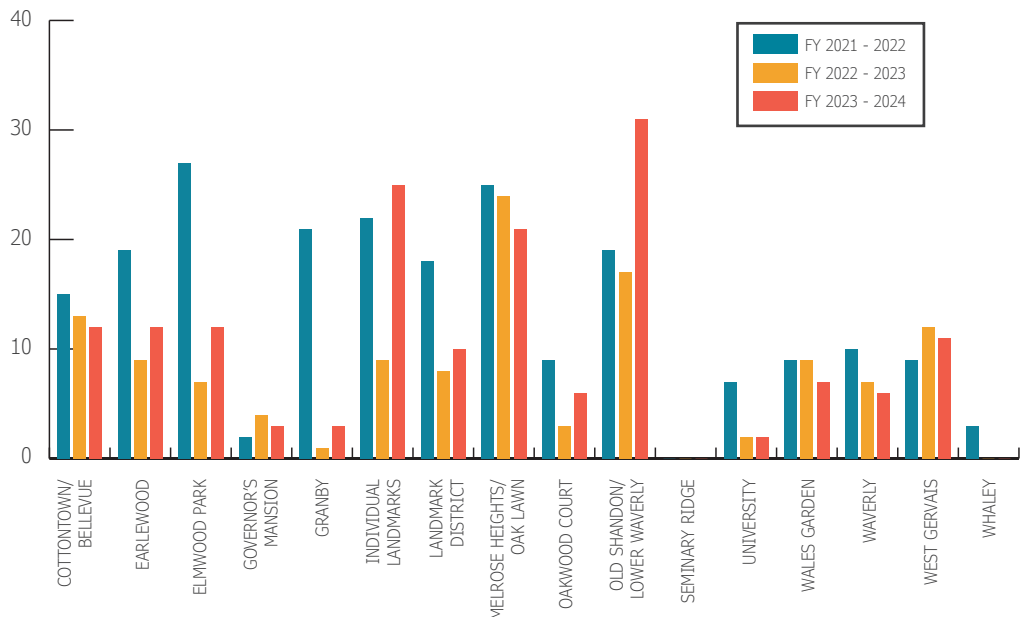
HISTORIC PRESERVATION CDAs

FY 2023-2024

161

TOTAL ISSUED*

HISTORIC PRESERVATION CDAs BY DISTRICT*, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



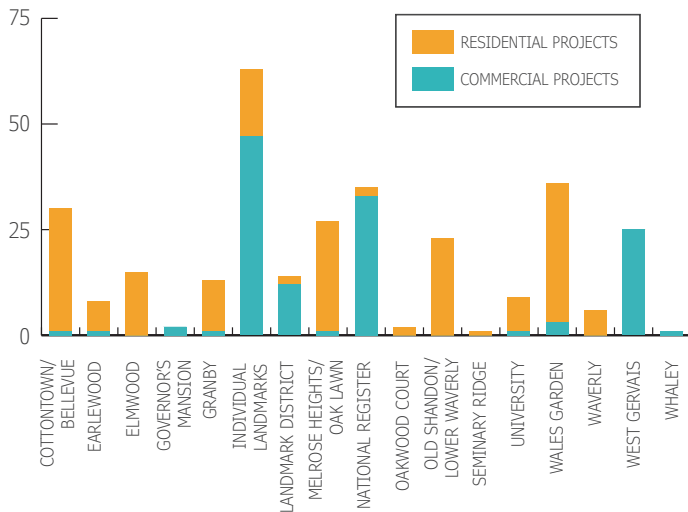
*158 unique CDAs were issued in FY 2023-2024. This number includes CDAs issued for National Register properties utilizing the Bailey Bill (whether or not they are in a locally-designated district) and projects in Community Character Districts.

**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

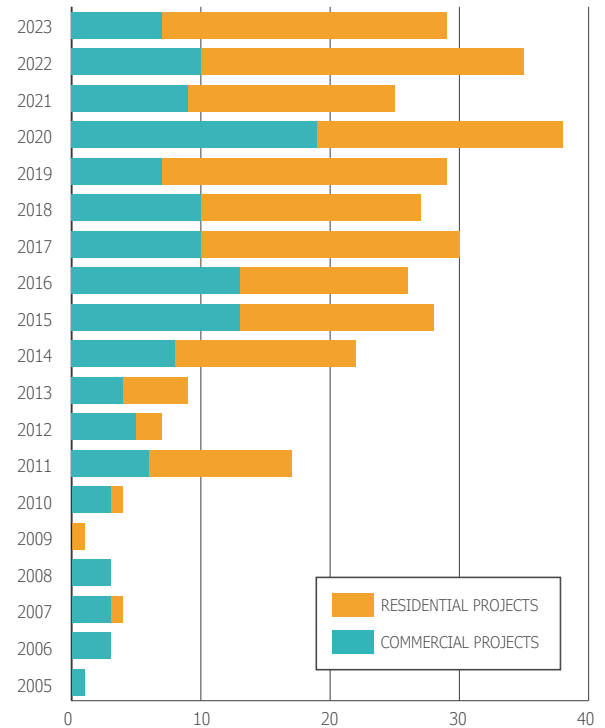
Since the current version of the Bailey Bill was adopted in 2005, applications for participation in the preservation tax abatement program have generally increased year-to-year. Currently, there are 310 historic properties in the City of Columbia that are part of the program. These properties are found 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.

BAILEY BILL PROPERTIES ACTIVE**, BY DISTRICT



*Bailey Bill projects are added and expire based on calendar year
 **Active Bailey Bill properties have at least received preliminary certification for the Bailey Bill and currently have the tax abatement applied

BAILEY BILL APPLICATIONS BY CALENDAR YEAR*



BAILEY BILL PROPERTIES ACTIVE**, CITY-WIDE

310

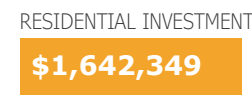


BAILEY BILL PROJECTS FY 2023-2024

| PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATION | COMMERCIAL PROJECTS | RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 28 | 4 | 24 |
| FINAL CERTIFICATION* | COMMERCIAL PROJECTS | RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS |
| 18 | 4 | 14 |

TOTAL INVESTED**

\$4,363,436



*Final certification and compliance reviews for the Bailey Bill are completed at staff level
 ** In Bailey Bill projects finalized in FY 2023-2024; as reported by property owners in final certification paperwork



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City of Columbia

Planning & Development Services