

Downtown Columbia

STRATEGIC PLAN & DESIGN GUIDELINES



**WELCOME TO OUR
COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE!**

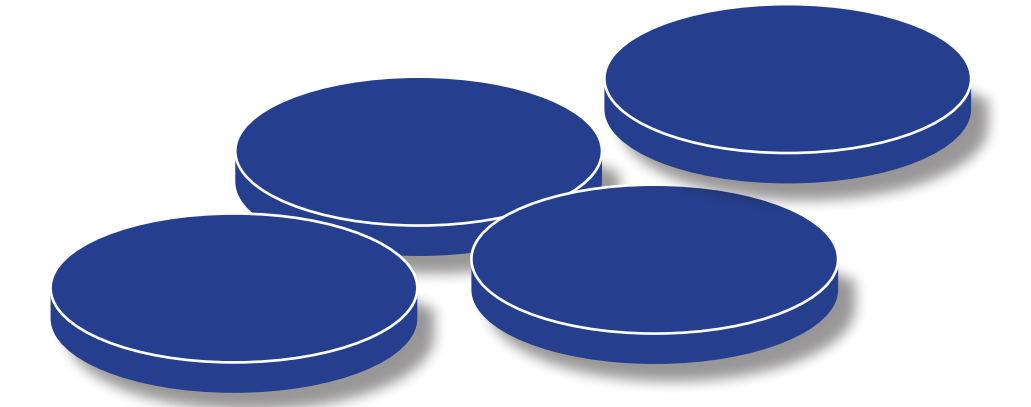
PLEASE SIGN IN AND GRAB A BROCHURE

Six Big Ideas for Downtown

The Plan's recommendations are organized through the following six big ideas for Downtown Columbia. Learn more about each idea below, and tell us how you would like to prioritize their funding afterwards

HELP US PRIORITIZE THE BIG IDEAS:

Using 10 chips tell us which of the six ideas are most important to you. Place the poker chips in the jar in front of the Big Idea you would like to spend your chips on.



01
Highlight

Big Idea #1: Highlight

Build an urban trail to connect and highlight the unique qualities and competitive strengths of Downtown Columbia.

To better link Downtown's most popular destinations, which are disconnected and spread over a large geographic area, and to help strengthen the identity of Downtown, **a signature urban trail is envisioned for the heart of Columbia.**

The trail will offer a safe, accessible, low-stress route for local residents and employees, and provide a distinctive linear park experience for both locals and visitors.

With a boom in the value of trail-oriented development around the country, this presents an opportunity to attract and retain people and investment in Downtown Columbia.

The Capital Loop and Vista Loop urban trails are primarily located on locally-owned streets, providing the most flexibility for streetscape enhancements and trail amenities that will encourage daily use. They are also aligned with Downtown's major retail corridors, providing support to the restaurants, retailers, and businesses that rely on daily foot traffic.



02
Refresh

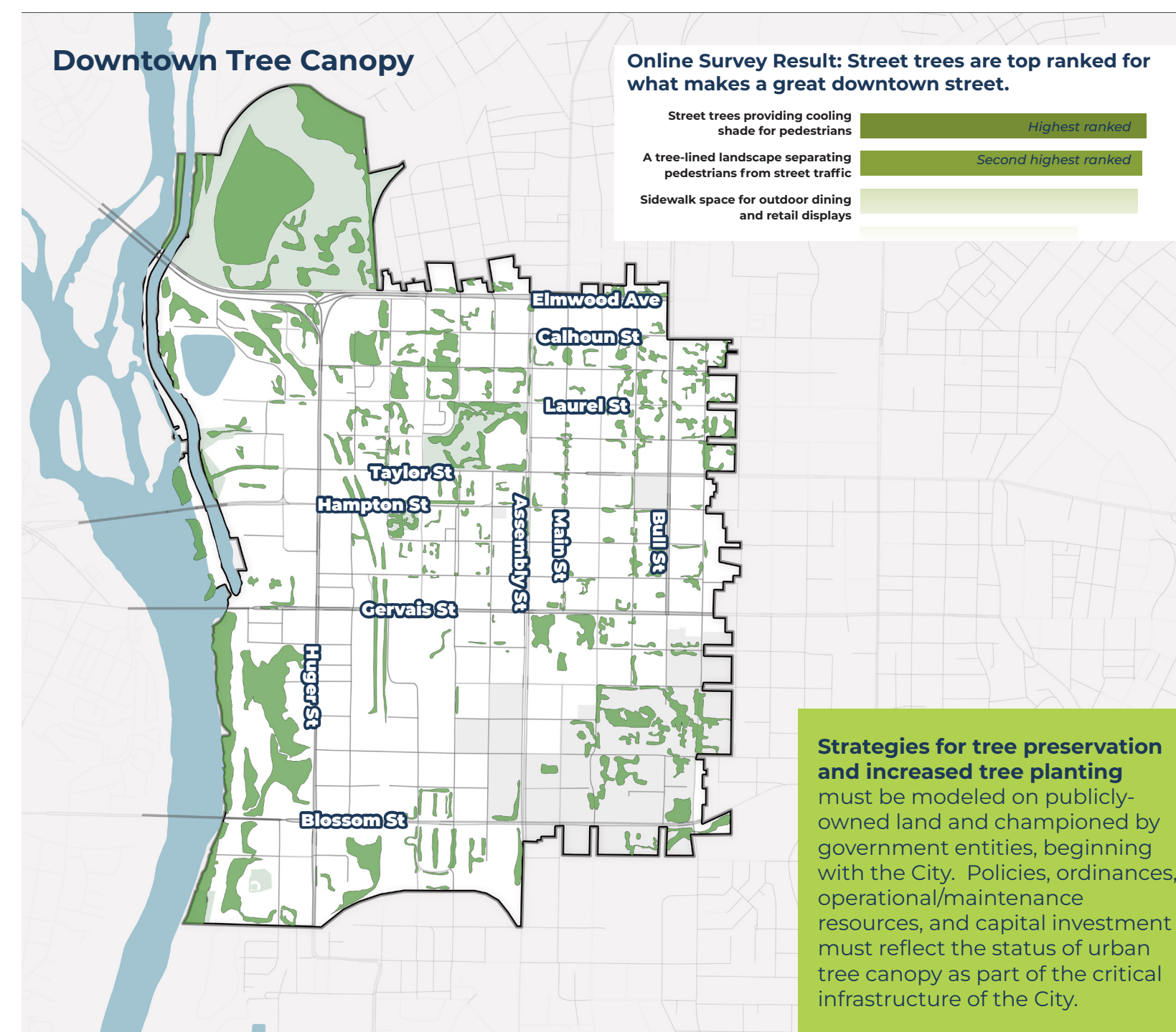
Big Idea #2: Refresh

Create comfortable streets and public spaces that welcome visitors and support everyday living.



To keep the local community and visitors cool, safe, and healthy in public spaces, an increase in the urban tree canopy must be a priority. **The presence of shade trees in downtown can provide a wide range of substantial benefits:**

- Supports retail and restaurant business performance
- Improves property value
- Decreases heat on summer days
- Improves safety for outdoor workers and pedestrians
- Reduces traffic speed through natural traffic calming effects
- Minimizes cooling load and energy costs in buildings
- Reduces air pollution
- Absorbs stormwater (reducing flooding and sewer loads)
- Provides wildlife habitat
- Encourages walking and cycling (to reduce traffic congestion)



03
Connect

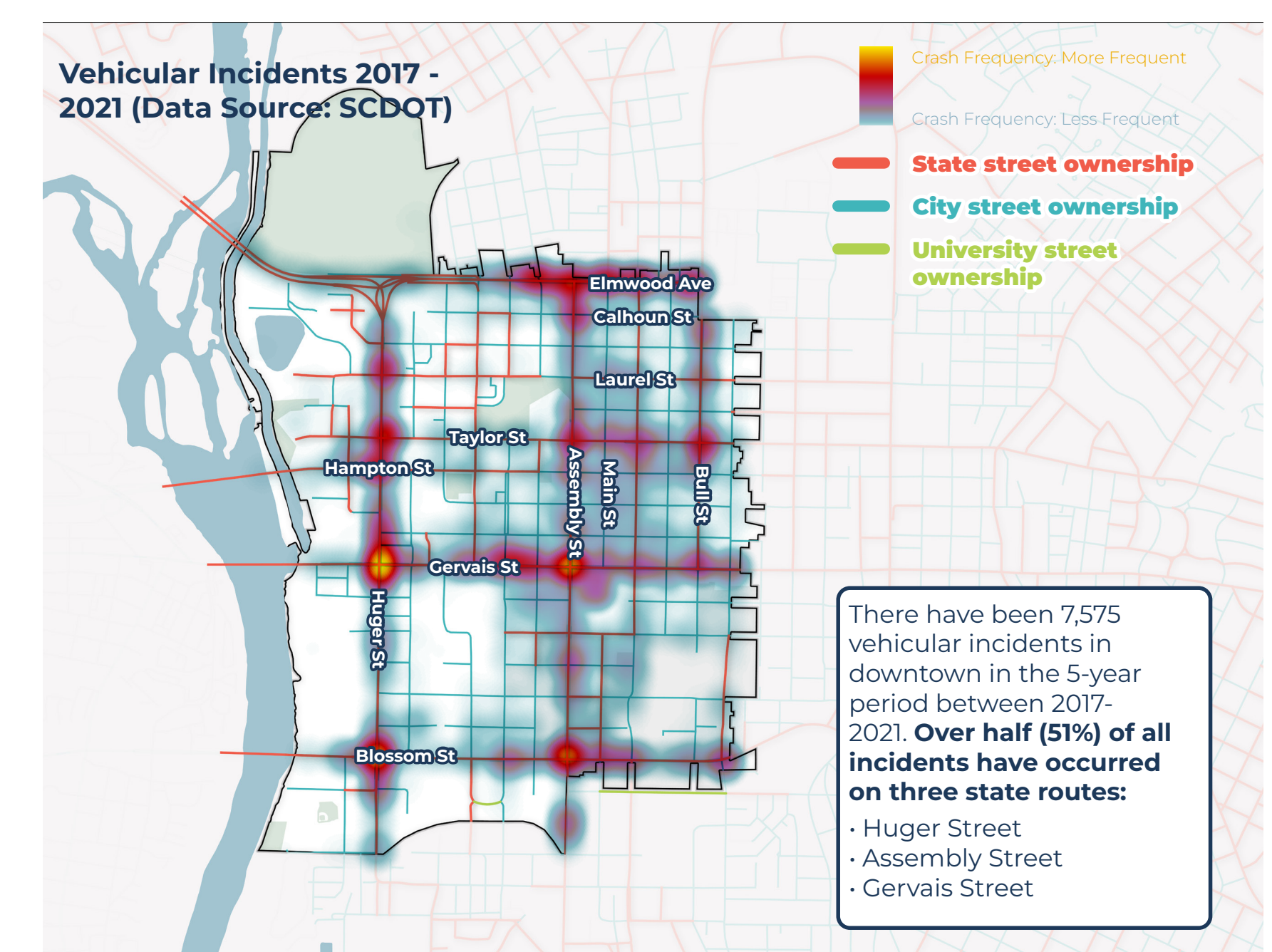
Big Idea #3: Connect

Short term solutions for intersection safety improvements along the major arterial streets in downtown.



Intersections create points of conflict for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and represent 1/4 of all traffic fatalities and 1/2 of all traffic-related injuries nationwide.

In Downtown Columbia, major arterials such as Huger, Elmwood, and Assembly serve as barriers to pedestrian movement. The perceived and real risks of crossing wide, multi-lane streets with high speed vehicles effectively compartmentalizes areas of Downtown, negating many of the agglomeration benefits that businesses and residents derive from their Downtown location.

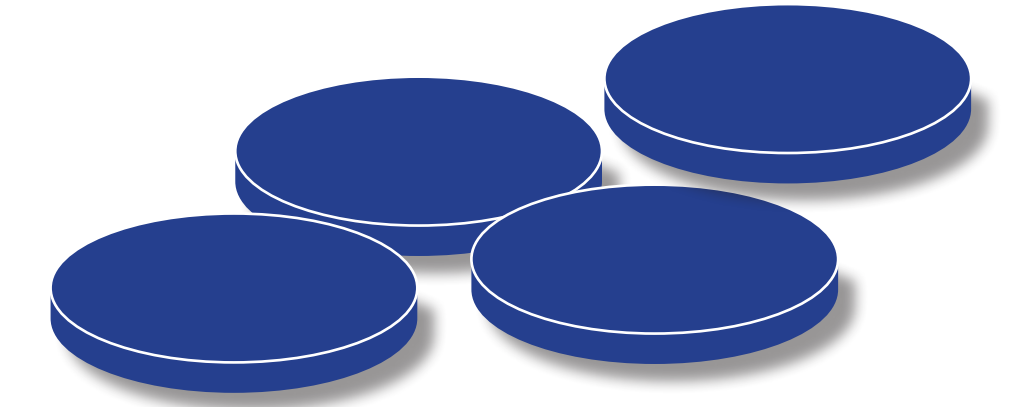


Six Big Ideas for Downtown

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04
Reclaim

Big Idea #4: Reclaim

Re-allocating right-of-way to strengthen business vitality and pedestrian safety.



The wide streets of Downtown Columbia have vastly more space dedicated for vehicular travel lanes than is required by engineering standards. This inefficient use of land results in several conditions that limit the success of local businesses and that limits the attractiveness of Downtown to potential residents and visitors.

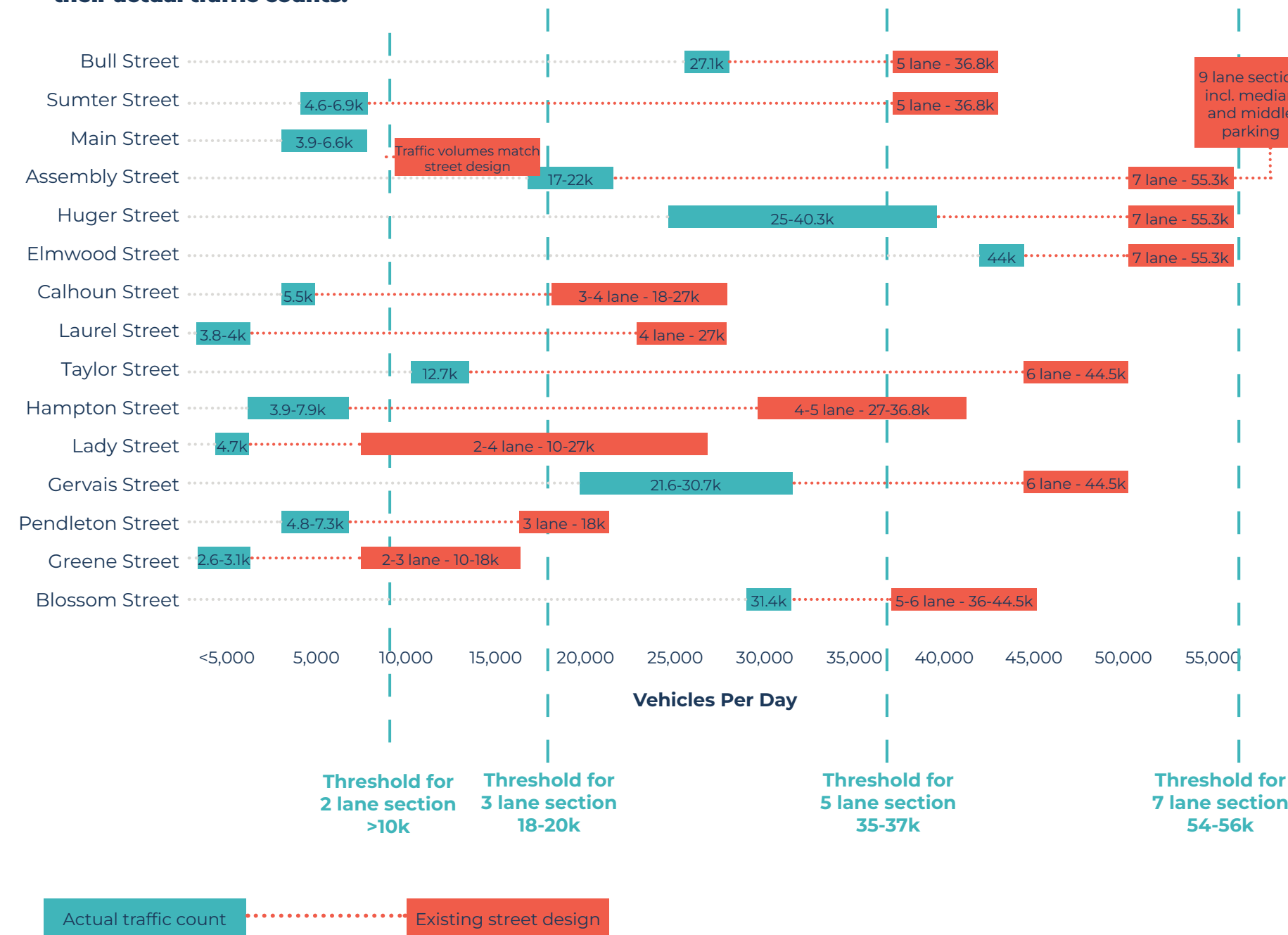


96% of Columbia respondents agree that great public spaces are important for downtown!

Assembly, Sumter and Bull Streets are a few examples of how over-engineered Downtown streets are, providing excessive lanes and pavement widths that cause high speeds and lack safety for bikers and pedestrians.

Downtown Streets are Too Wide

Overall, Downtown Columbia's streets have excessive lanes and pavement widths that cause high speeds and lack safety for bikers and pedestrians. The chart below compares street design with their actual traffic counts.



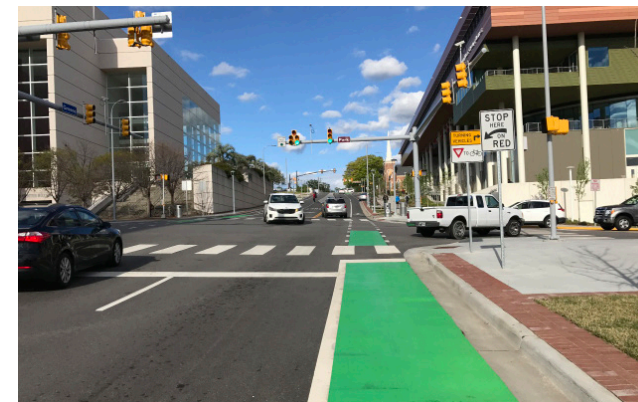
05
Champion

Big Idea #5: Champion

Dedicated Maintenance and Programming of Public Open Space.



Downtown is a unique geography within the City of Columbia and plays a significant role in the economic, cultural and social life of the City:



High Visibility & Visitorship: Downtown hosts a substantial concentration of visitors and is a large part of the brand and identity of greater Columbia

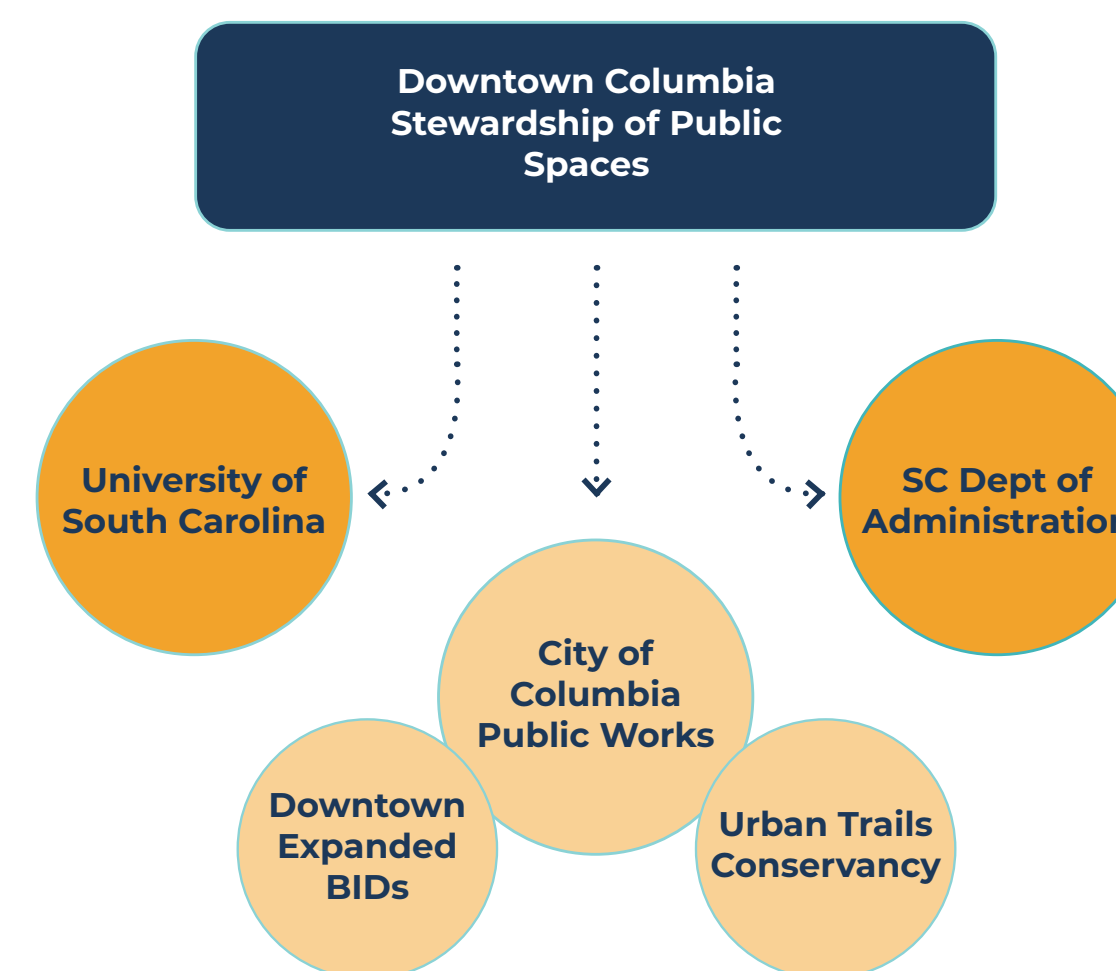
Business & Employee Density: Downtown has a critical mass of both small business and large employers

Tax Base & Fiscal Impact: The value of Downtown property and the result of economic activity downtown is a driver of fiscal resources and a key part of the local and regional economic development strategy

Cultural & Historic Resources: Downtown Columbia is home to a wealth of cultural and historic resources which, in addition to their inherent value, form the core of civic pride and community identity while making significant contributions to the local economy.

State Capital & Flagship University: The industries of state government and public education are towering institutions within Downtown Columbia with state, national, and international significance.

Downtown Public Spaces Roles & Responsibilities



06
Streamline

Big Idea #6: Streamline

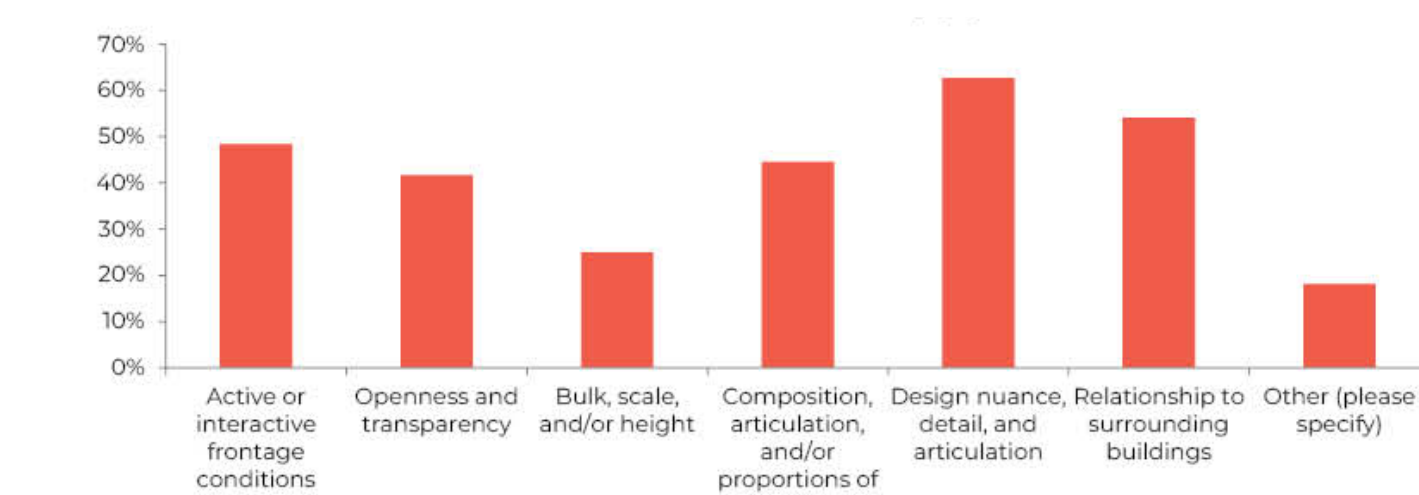
Update Design Guidelines to Protect the Long-Term Economic Competitiveness and Real Estate Value of Downtown



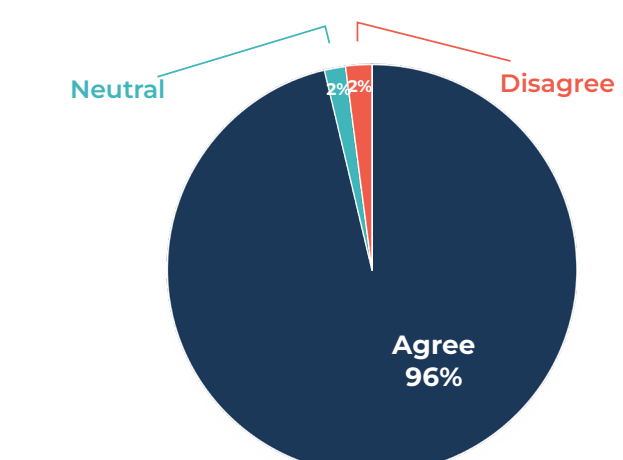
This plan thus recommends the creation of Design Guidelines to shape how future buildings and public spaces relate to the downtown realm. These guidelines have various benefits, such as:

- Protecting the unique character and assets of Downtown.
- Creating a consistent, high-quality Downtown street-level experience
- Supplementing zoning controls by creating more sensitivity to context
- Providing clarity in the entitlement process for Downtown developers
- Serving as clear criteria for design review

How Buildings Contribute to Downtown Columbia



The Downtown Plan and Design Guidelines are based on the premise that creating great public spaces – streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks and greens – is essential for a healthy economy and for the daily comfort and needs of those that live and work in Columbia. Do you agree or disagree with the importance of creating great public spaces in Downtown Columbia?



Overwhelmingly, Columbia residents agree that creating great public spaces are important to downtown.

Downtown Design Guidelines: Overview

This board introduces the general purpose and objectives of the Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines and outlines guiding principles for development.

The Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines at a Glance

The Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines serve as an implementation tool that establishes design-based guidance and standards for development activity within the Downtown Columbia Overlay District.

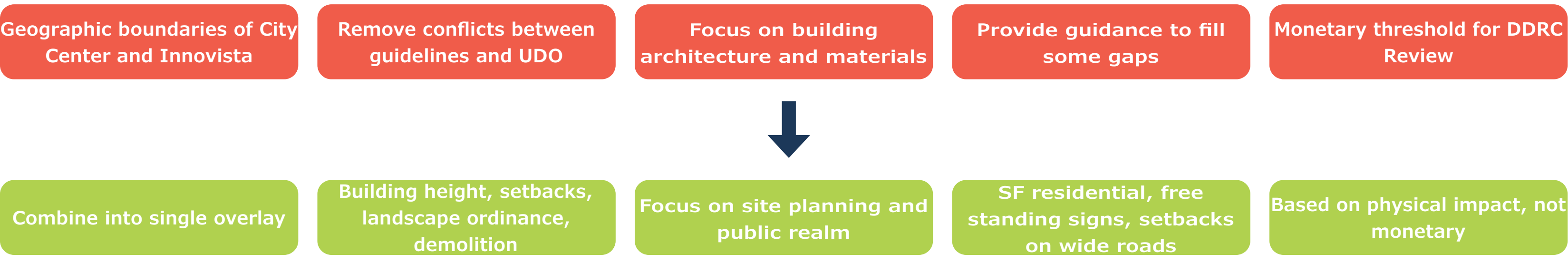
Specifically, the purpose of this document is to guide new construction, conversion, adaptive reuse, enhancement, and conservation of buildings and streetscapes within Downtown Columbia.

The Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines functions as a Zoning Overlay containing supplemental development guidelines and standards applying to the base zoning districts within the bounds of the Downtown Columbia Overlay District.

The primary objectives of these guidelines are to foster a built environment that:

- ▶ Emphasizes development's relationship with the public realm;
- ▶ Prioritizes design and promotes design excellence in order to enhance existing and future character of Downtown Columbia's many neighborhood districts;
- ▶ Provides flexibility and generates a variety of potential design solutions and outcomes;
- ▶ Improves the communication and participation among the development community, City staff, elected/appointed officials, and the public; and
- ▶ Expresses and conveys the interests of the community through well-written, clearly understood development and design guidelines.

Key Changes



Guiding Principles

Be Uniquely Columbia

Developments should reflect Columbia's uniqueness in some way, whether through building typology, using local building materials, responding to nearby historic building context, incorporating local public art, or by incorporating input gathered from stakeholders.



Create Comfortable Streets & Spaces

Developments should incorporate shade trees along sidewalks, in private open spaces, and in parking areas as much as possible to mitigate the urban heat island and provide comfortable spaces for pedestrians.



Reclaim Space for Pedestrians

Developments should reclaim space along streets to strengthen business vitality and pedestrian safety, and design buildings and adjacent spaces to engage pedestrians and encourage activity.



Connect People & Places

Developments should prioritize connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable users by designing spaces that are safe, comfortable, and easy to navigate.



Downtown Study Area

City Center Master Plan: 25 Years Old

126

Elmwood Ave

Calhoun St

Laurel St

Taylor St

Hampton St

Assembly St

Main St

Bull St

Gervais St

Congaree River

Huger St

Blossom St

Innovista Master Plan: 17 Years Old

The Downtown Study Areas, as seen on this map, includes parts of downtown covered by the City Center and Innovista Overlay Districts, which generally includes Elmwood Avenue on the north to Catawba Street on the south and Pickens Street to the east and the Congaree River to the west.