



# Planning & Development Services Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

# Planning & Development Services

## Fiscal Year 2024-2025

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.



### CONTENTS

Letter from the Director	3
Our Divisions	4
Department-Wide Initiatives & Efforts	6
Building Inspections	9
Development Center	10
Land Development	11
Planning	12
Zoning	29
By the Numbers	30

## Departing Words From Our Director

It is always a privilege and a great source of pride to share the outstanding work of our team in this Annual Report. This year is no different; however, the pride I feel is tempered with a touch of sadness, as I write this letter for the fifth and final time. After nearly three decades of service, beginning as a graduate student intern in 1996, I will retire in October 2025.

Milestones such as this inevitably invite reflection, and whether you have lived in Columbia for five years or fifty, you know how much has changed in our city and in the world. I recall that when I began my career with the City, the idea of a vibrant downtown, where people lived as well as worked, was just beginning to take shape. Today, Columbia boasts multiple thriving downtown districts and a range of living options we could hardly have imagined then. There is energy day and night, and opportunities for culture and entertainment are both diverse and abundant.

We are all familiar with a speech or tribute that recounts how one event or person revitalized a community. I would suggest that this is rarely accurate. With my background in historic preservation, which looks to the past, and in planning, which looks to the future, I have seen firsthand that real change comes from the cumulative efforts of many. CEOs, elected officials, and developers all play important roles, but so too do neighborhood leaders, small business owners, and artists. Each, in ways large and small, contributes to the growing vitality we are experiencing. There is still a lot of work to do, and my hope is that more people will discover how they can make their own unique contributions to creating an even better Columbia.

A recurring theme in all of my annual letters, and one I repeat with enthusiasm here, is my deep appreciation for the extraordinary people of Planning and Development Services. Their work is challenging, but it is meaningful and rewarding. They are creative, dedicated, smart, and caring. They accomplish a great deal with limited resources, and it is an absolute joy to work with them each day. My gratitude also extends to City leadership and to my colleagues across departments, who approach their roles with passion and professionalism.

Serving this city has been one of the great honors of my life. I am truly thankful for the opportunities it has given me to work alongside so many wonderful people and to contribute to the community I live in and love. I look forward to the next chapter, not only in my own life, but also in the life of this special city.

Krista Hampton  
Director, Planning & Development Services



1: Betsy Kleinfelder documents a historic home in the Waverly Historic District  
2: Williams Street extension public informational meeting in June 2025  
3: Participation in the Downtown Strategic Plan Open House in August 2024  
4: Preservation Month Bike Tour 2025

## 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.

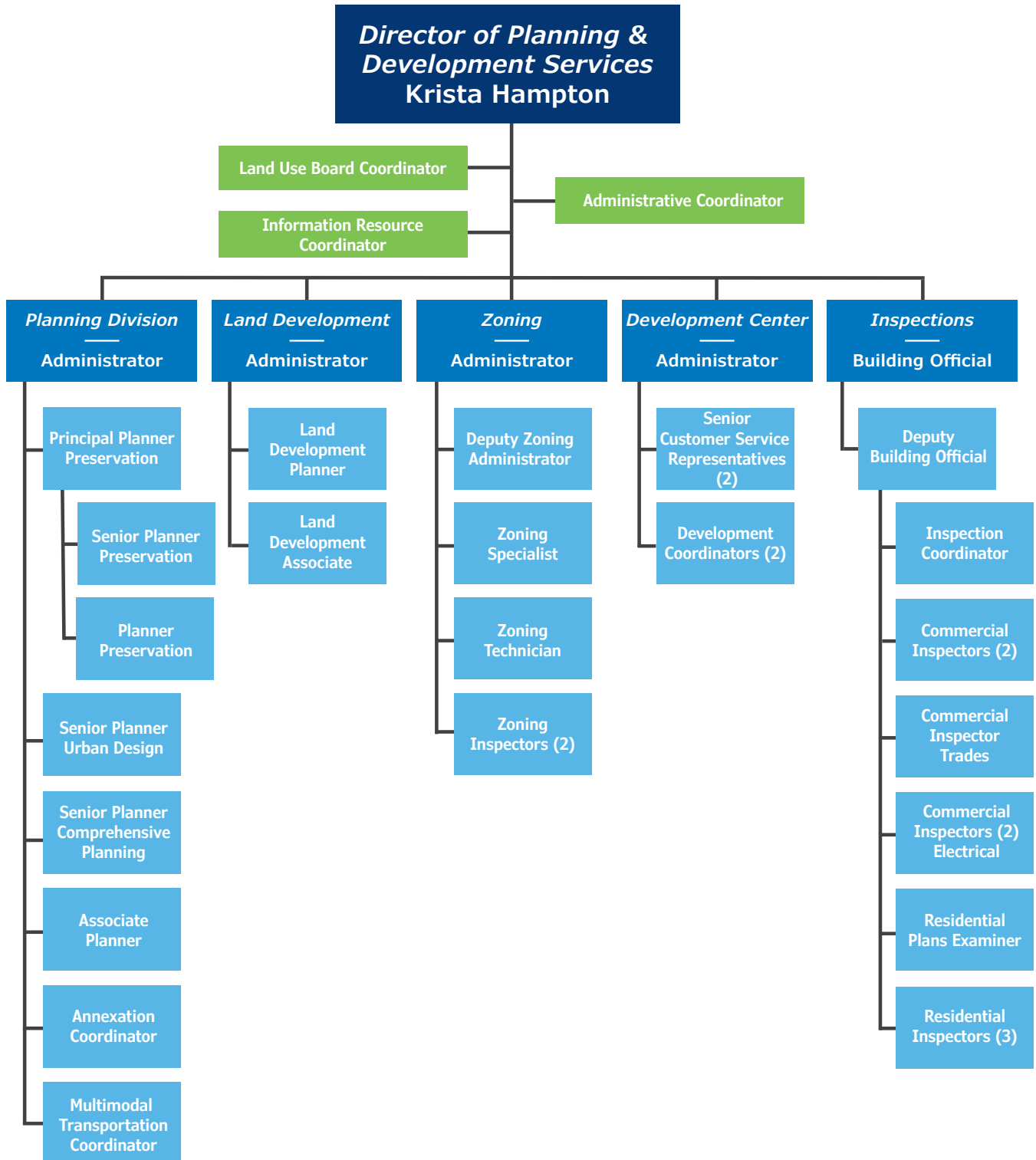
### ZONING

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 2024-2025.



## Department-Wide Initiatives & Efforts

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 kept Planning and Development Services staff quite busy. Some notable highlights include our extensive departmental outreach efforts, including our ongoing reporting efforts; the adoption of our Downtown Strategic Plan and Guidelines and our River Drive / Former I-277 Right-of-Way Workshop Charette. 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 2024-2025. 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.

### ENHANCED REPORTING

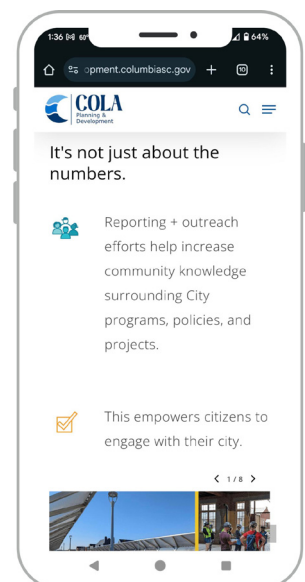
The importance of regular and accessible reporting was a focus of *Columbia Compass*, the City’s comprehensive plan, and staff continued to produce a number of reports in FY 2024-2025 accordingly. Reporting is one of the many ways we continue to innovate as a Department and a City. Reporting is not just 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, all of which are hosted on our [reporting and outreach webpage](#) for easy access.

Reports completed in FY 2024-2025 include:

- » [monthly departmental reports](#) that cover permitting data, plan submittals, board and commission actions, and planning activities;
- » [the D/DRC annual report for 2024](#), highlighting board actions and projects reviewed;
- » [the departmental fiscal year report](#) for FY 2023-2024

As we move into Fiscal Year 2025-2026, we’ll continue to build on our success, continuing and expanding on existing reporting, and revisiting reporting on Columbia Compass implementation.

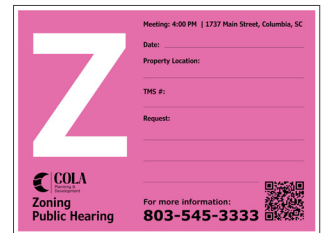


## Land Use Boards & Commissions

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.

New signs for land use board and commission meetings were deployed early in FY 2024-2025. 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.



### Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA)

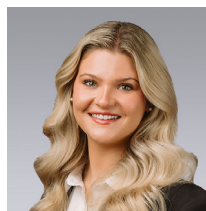
#### Purpose

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 2024-June 2025)

- » Colton Driver
- » Sherard Duvall
- » Kathryn Fenner
- » John Gregory
- » Sydney Lanham
- » Celia Mackintosh
- » Jonathan Vang
- » Davis Whittle



Board of Zoning Appeals members (from left to right): Colton Driver, Sherard Duvall, Kathryn Fenner, John Gregory, Sydney Lanham, Celia Mackintosh, Jonathan Vang, and Davis Whittle.

**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 2024-June 2025)**

- » Bob Broom (term ended 7/2024)
- » Emily Gallo
- » Bruce Greenberg
- » Chloe Jaco
- » Charles Leedecker
- » Hunter McKenzie
- » Andrew Saleeby
- » Joshua Shelton
- » Mary Beth Sims Branham
- » Megan Thomas



Design/Development Review Commission members (from left to right): Robert Broom, Emily Gallo, Bruce Greenberg, Chloe Jaco, Charles Leedecker, Hunter McKenzie, Andrew Saleeby, Joshua Shelton, Mary Beth Sims Branham, and Megan Thomas.

**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. 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 2024-June 2025)**

- » Ryan Causey
- » Harris Cohn
- » Steven Cook
- » Lilly Coveney
- » Anna Davis
- » Mason Harpe
- » Darren Holcombe
- » Jacqueline Marshall
- » Carlos Osorio



Planning Commission members (from left to right): Ryan Causey, Harris Cohn, Steven Cook, Lilly Coveney, Anna Davis, Mason Harpe, Darren Holcombe, Jacqueline Marshall, and Carlos Osorio

## Building Inspections

The Building Inspections Division reviewed all facets of the construction surrounding the 8,130 permits issued in FY 2024-2025, conducting 1,617 plan reviews and 19,030 inspections and issuing 1,110 certificates of occupancy (1,020 residential COs and 90 commercial COs).

Our Building Inspections team have a few key reminders for folks taking on work in the future:

- » It is important to remember that per IRC Code Section R314.2.2, when a building permit or electrical permit is required for work being done, it is 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. They are also required for addition and some interior remodels. The plan review process takes 15 business day for Commercial and three business days for Residential.
- » The most efficient way to schedule a required building inspection is to us the Access Portal. The portal allows you to view the most current information about the permit as well as schedule your next required building inspection. If you have questions or need help on the portal, you may contact the Building Inspections Department at [buildinginspections@columbiasc.gov](mailto:buildinginspections@columbiasc.gov) or 803-545-3422.
- » Residential building plans are now reviewed using eReview. Plans are still uploaded on the access portal. The reviewers are able to review the plans, add comments or code changes onto the plans, which can then be viewed on the access portal. This makes for a more clear and user friendly plan review.

### Employee Spotlight

Though the Building Inspections Division added two new inspectors to staff during FY 2024-2025.

**Tony Eastin-Jones** is a Residential Building Inspector who has worked in several construction trades since he graduated school. When not working, Tony enjoys hunting, fishing and camping with his two little boys and wife.

**Jon Lemmond** is a Commercial Building Inspector who has lived up and down the east coast doing all kinds of construction work but was born and raised in Florence, South Carolina. When he is not at work, he enjoys disc golfing and is an avid gym goer.



Jon (Tony) Eastin-Jones



Jon Lemmond

### LOOKING AHEAD

In CY 2026, 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](https://access.columbiasc.gov).

## Development Center

The Development Center issued 8,130 permits in FY 2024-2025, with a total value of issued permits of \$1,033,166,406.13. The Development Center also issued 1,110 Certificates of Occupancy (COs) during FY 2024-2025.

Of note this year, the number of commercial, residential and total building permits increased from the previous fiscal year. Interestingly, the number of commercial permits this FY was the same as those issued in FY 2022-2023. Valuation-wise, all categories (total permits, residential building permits, and commercial building permits) exceeded those values seen in both FY 2023-2024 and FY 2022-2023. You can dig further into departmental data by visiting the [By the Numbers](#) section of this report.

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 164 pre-application meetings throughout the fiscal year.

In FY 2024-2025, Development Center staff:

- » Issued over **25 more permits** for new commercial construction than in previous fiscal year.
- » For second consecutive fiscal year, issued over **1,000 permits for new single, two-family and townhomes**.
- » Issued permits for **699 new multi-family units**, almost matching the permits issued for 717 new multi-family units in the previous fiscal year

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### Employee Spotlight

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In FY 2024-2025, the Development Center gained two new employees.

**LaToya Richardson** is a Development Center Coordinator responsible for issuing building permits and navigating projects through the development process. She brings almost two decades of hands-on experience from the environmental science field, where she tackled everything from Phase I and II investigations and remediation projects to ensuring wastewater system compliance for a state agency. This diverse background gives her a unique edge in her current role, offering a comprehensive perspective on both development and environmental considerations.



LaToya Richardson



Cassandra Cade Jones

**Cassandra Cade Jones** joined the Development Center in August of 2024 as a Senior Customer Service Representative. As part of the Development Center team, she works with contractors, property owners, and city staff to help facilitate the permitting process.

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### LOOKING AHEAD

Division staff has already and 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 assist in 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 some trends this year:

- » During FY 2024-2025, Land Development staff observed a **greater total number of Major Subdivisions approved** by the Planning Commission and **Minor Subdivisions processed**.



Above: Renovations to Finlay Park during FY 2024-2025.

## 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.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Thanks to funds from the USDA Forest Service through the Inflation Reduction (IRA) Act and the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC), The Green Infrastructure Center has awarded the City of Columbia with the 2025 Trees4SC! Grant for Urban Forest Planning and Planting Support. This two-year grant will create a Strategic Tree Canopy Plan that includes mapping our urban tree canopy, reviewing our tree codes, policies and practices, as well as building community support for on-going tree car and stewardship.

### Did you know:

Projects that exceed the City’s minimum Green Building Standards may qualify for development bonuses. These include:

- Density Bonus: Up to one additional dwelling unit per acre.
- Height Increase: Up to one extra story or 14 feet above the base zoning limit.
- Lot Coverage Increase: Up to 10% more than the maximum allowed
- Parking Adjustment: A 15% reduction in required parking spaces or a 15% increase in the maximum allowed.

These incentives are designed to reward sustainable development practices and encourage environmentally responsible

## 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.

### Employee Spotlight

In FY 2024-2025, Planning welcomed a new employee, Afroza Hossain Misty. Afroza, who joined the City in February of 2025 as an Associate Planner, is organizing the city’s annual Bicyclist and Pedestrian Counts while working on other active transportation initiatives.



Afroza Hossain Misty

Afroza is originally from Bangladesh where she earned her bachelor’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning. She subsequently completed her master’s in Urban and Regional Planning at Portland State University, and during her studies also contributed to transportation safety initiatives with the City of Beaverton, Oregon.



Tristan Kercher

Tristan Kercher, an Associate Planner since October 2023 with a background in architecture, was promoted to the position of Urban Design Planner in June 2025.

## COLUMBIA COMPASS & LONG RANGE PLANNING

Implementation of *Columbia Compass: Envision 2036*, the 10-year update to the City’s comprehensive plan, continued in FY 2024-2025. Regular updates on plan implementation by City departments and partners were provided throughout the year via the *Columbia Compass* e-newsletter.

During FY 2024-2025, the *Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan* and the *Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan* were both adopted by City Council as guiding policy documents. Adopted area plans provide further guidance on how comprehensive plan implementation and proposed changes to land use should be tailored to best reflect the vision for these specific geographic areas. You can access all of the City’s adopted area plans and studies, as well as a FAQ about the different types of long-range plans, [on the Planning and Development Services website](#).



Above: Reaching Riverbanks study area

Looking ahead to FY 2025-2026, the City of Columbia has already begun the public planning process to develop a citywide comprehensive safety action plan, *Sharing the Road*, with funding from a USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant (more information about that process is provided in this report under Multimodal Transportation Planning). The City will also continue work on an update to the comprehensive plan to incorporate updated demographic data, a resiliency element, and implementation updates.

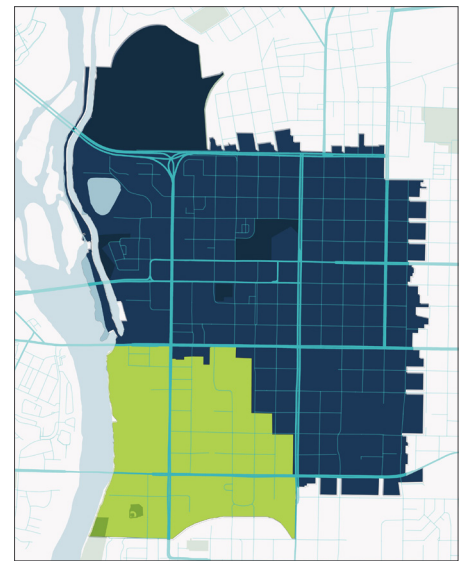
## DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA STRATEGIC PLAN & GUIDELINES

The Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Guidelines planning process was completed during FY 2024-2025 following the Community Open Houses held on August 1, 2024, release of the draft plan and guidelines in January 2025, and final public meetings in March 2025. The new Strategic Plan and Guidelines were adopted by City Council on June 24th, 2025 with a delayed effective date of January 5, 2026 for the guidelines.

The [Downtown Strategic Plan](#), which replaces the 1999 City Center Master Plan and has been adopted as an addendum to the comprehensive plan, is comprised of recommendations based on feedback from the public that are organized through the following 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 Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines will replace the existing City Center and Innovista guidelines.



### 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

Reorganize structure of City Center and Innovista	Align north-south, between guidelines and ORD	Focus on building architecture and materials	Provide guidance to all zoning categories	Revisory threshold for Code Review
Combine two design centers	Linking nearby networks, transit and connectivity	Focus on site planning and public realm	Set precedence, from existing rules, on public realm	Add an physical realm on signage

#### 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 provide connectivity for pedestrians, bicycles, and other vulnerable users by designing spaces that are safe, comfortable, and easy to navigate.

Downtown Columbia  
STRATEGIC PLAN & DESIGN GUIDELINES

Above: The study area for the Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan & Design Guidelines. **Left:** An overview of the Downtown Design Guidelines from the March 2025 Public Open House. **Below:** Guidelines open house attendees at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.



The Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines consist of four sections - Site Planning, Private Realm, Public Realm, and Signs - that each cover a range of topics and feature clear statements of intent. The purpose of this document is to guide downtown development and redevelopment toward the principles identified in the Downtown Strategic Plan's "Six Big Ideas." That involves being uniquely Columbia, creating comfortable streets and spaces, reclaiming space for pedestrians, and connecting people and places.

## 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 roughly 1.4% of the acreage of the current municipal boundary. With the adoption of the new Downtown Design Guidelines, the total number of urban design districts will be three in FY 2025-2026.

### Urban Design District Highlights - Projects Permitted & Underway

The new **Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union** at 1300 Sumter Street will consist of a five-story headquarters structure and an adjoining freestanding parking garage that houses a 3,000 SF fitness center at its base. The ground floor of the headquarters building contains the lobby with a security desk, a bank branch office, and an approximately 6,000 SF leasable restaurant space with a commercial kitchen. The project broke ground near the end of FY 2024-2025.



*PCFU*, image taken from the D/DRC submittal.

The proposed mixed-use multifamily development at **2222 Main Street** came back to the D/DRC in FY 2024-2025 for a modification to the overall building height. In this latest proposal, a fourth story and additional structured parking were added to the previously 250 unit, three-story structure that is situated on the site of the former Jim Moore Cadillac dealership between Main and Sumter Streets, and between Franklin and Scott Streets. Permits have been issued for the now 320 unit apartment complex and construction is anticipated to begin in FY 2025-2026.



*2222 Main*, image taken from the D/DRC submittal.

### Urban Design District Highlights - Projects Permitted & Underway

The proposed **Oliv Columbia** development at the block of downtown bounded by Assembly, Hampton, Main and Washington Streets was approved during FY 2024-2025. Core Spaces, the developer of the project, anticipates breaking ground in the fall of 2025.

The mixed-use multifamily structure consists of a 26-story, market rate residential tower that fronts onto Main Street and a 22-story, residential tower with designated student dormitory units that fronts onto Washington and Hampton Streets. A 15-level parking structure situated at the corner of Hampton and Assembly Streets contains roughly 1,600 parking spaces that will serve residents of the roughly 725-unit apartment complex in addition to City of Columbia employees with offices at 1401 Main Street.

The ground floor of the market rate tower on Main Street houses a retail space that is flanked by public open spaces on all three sides. Improvements to the rights-of-way on Assembly, Hampton, Washington and Main Streets will include widened sidewalks, additional shade trees, landscaping, and new hardscaping to name a few.



*Oliv Columbia*, images taken from the D/DRC submittal.

### River Drive / Former I-277 Right-of-Way Workshop



1: Workshop participants; 2: Toole Design and City staff reviewing sketches; 3: Diagram of study area 4: City staff presenting concept sketches; 5. Community members and Councilwoman Herbert discuss ideas.



In 2025, the City undertook a multi-part visioning and redevelopment process to catalyze the now City-owned land, concurrent with the planned extension of the Vista Greenway. In order to move forward strategically before releasing the property for private development through a competitive process, the Planning Division and the Economic Development Department worked together to ensure meaningful public input and clear market expectations.

In mid-May, a team from Toole Design led a community design workshop, where neighbors and stakeholders were able to help shape ideas for the site. Their input resulted in three high-level concept plans, all of which integrate the future greenway. A final report summarizing the community input and preferred design direction is posted online.

Agora Partners will use this report to explore how the site could be developed. They will look at market data, outline potential uses and building types, and help the City understand financial and zoning needs. Their work will also support the future selection of a development partner through a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) process, anticipated in late 2025. You can learn more about this exciting project by [visiting the webpage dedicated to this process](#).

### 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 2024 marked the City’s 9th celebration! The theme for 2024 was all about the opportunity creative spaces present - summed up in the phrase “Park less, (...) more.” This was the fourth year PARK(ing) Day also included two design contests - a juried Best Design Award and a People’s Choice Award. With 12 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](http://columbiacompass.org/parklets).

**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



The **Catchy Name Collective** installation (above) won the juried 2024 Best Design Award. The **Ghost Boss Podcast** installation (below) won the 2024 People’s Choice Award.



## 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 195 individual landmarks. During FY 2024-2025, 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.

### Notable Preservation Projects (FY 2024-2025)

#### Underway: 207 Wateree Avenue

This two-story home was built in 1922 based on the design of Leila Ross Wilburn, the state of Georgia’s second female architect. Leila Ross Wilburn had a small number of commissions throughout her career but she found success by producing a series of plan books that made her designs accessible throughout the South. The house at 207 Wateree Avenue is one example of her plan book designs. The house design that closely resembles 207 Wateree Avenue was included in Wilburn’s Brick and Colonial Homes as design No. 112. The book describes the house as an “uncommonly attractive design” with “very distinctive Colonial lines”. The house is contributing to the Wales Garden Architectural Conservation District and was also approved as an Individual Landmark in August 2024. The house is currently undergoing renovations and repairs under the Bailey Bill.



#### Completed: Sylvan’s Clock

This Seth Thomas Street Clock, located in the public right-of-way at the corners of Main and Hampton Streets, is affiliated with 1500 Main Street, the Sylvan Building, once owned by Gustof and Johannes Sylvan. The Sylvan brothers were entrepreneurs and jewelers and when they moved into the their building around 1908, they also installed the elaborate four-faced clock at the sidewalk in the public right-of-way outside their front doors. Mass production of clocks began in the early 1800s in Connecticut by Eli Terry who was accompanied by Seth Thomas and Silas Hoadley in this endeavor. By the 1850s the Seth Thomas Company, which evolved from this partnership, was a premier clock-making company in the United States, known for its excellence for craftsmanship. This clock was approved as a Landmark by City Council in August 2024 due to its “rare design, which strongly contributes to Columbia’s visual history”.



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

**Notable Preservation Projects (FY 2024-2025)**

**Completed: The Laundry**

The Laundry Building was a part of the State Hospital on the Bull Street campus. It was, as its name suggests, a utilitarian building in which staff and patients worked while the asylum still operated as a round the clock facility. Designed by George LaFaye and constructed in 1883, it is located directly behind the Babcock Building and its dining halls. The building suffered a great deal of neglect over the years and required a new roof, rehabilitation of existing windows and manufacturing replica windows, exterior paint removal, repointing, asbestos abatement, system replacements, and more. The project was approved for the Bailey Bill in May 2020 and, although it met the Bailey Bill investment threshold early on, full rehabilitation was not complete until early 2025. The building is now open and functions as an event space.



**Completed: 1200 Main Street**

Completed in 1913, this Gothic Revival building was designed by Atlanta architect William Augustus Edwards and was originally known as the Union Bank Building. As originally constructed, the building included an exterior of elaborate terra cotta panels. This beautiful detail was covered by glass panels in the 1960s which remained on the building for decades. The recent renovation of the building to house the Moxy Hotel involved returning the building to a more historic appearance by exposing the original terracotta exterior and infilling with new material to match as needed. As a Bailey Bill project, this building will benefit from the tax incentive for the next two decades.



**Did you know?**

The City of Columbia is a Certified Local Government (CLG). The CLG program recognizes local governments that have established preservation programs. Jointly administered by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS), these agencies provide CLGs with access to additional funding, technical assistance, and training, helping CLGs be better prepared to manage historic resources in their developing, active, and vibrant communities. As a Certified Local Government, the City of Columbia recognizes and designates local historic resources, and our preservation planners work diligently to share knowledge, empower citizens, and encourage the preservation of local resources.

## 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.

### Happy Hour Meet + Greet

In partnership with the [Coalition of Columbia’s Historic Districts \(CCHD\)](#), City preservation staff hosted a happy hour drop in at The War Mouth to kick off the start of Preservation Month 2025.



### Masonry Repointing Workshop

In this hands-on workshop, hosted in collaboration with CCHD, participants learned the basics of masonry repointing and repair with an expert mason.

### Window Repair Workshop

Hosted by Staci Richey with The Committee for the Restoration & Beautification of Randolph Cemetery, this workshop taught participants the basics of historic wood window repair including unsticking windows, re-roping, and restoration.



### Lunch & Learn: Protected or Not

Hosted by preservation staff at All Good Books, this lunchtime lecture focused on the hows and whys of Columbia’s preservation protections.

### Bike Ride: Cottontown, Earlewood, & Elmwood

This year’s tour explored recent projects in the Cottontown, Earlewood, & Elmwood historic districts. The ride included behind-the-scene tours of recently completed or in-construction historic renovation projects.

### Blower Door Demonstration + Window Workshop

Led by a certified weatherization technician this workshop taught participants how to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The workshop included demonstrations of a variety of diagnostic tools to show how energy was being used, where leaks happened, and how to fix them. The concurrent window workshop included the basics of historic window/wood repair and maintenance.

### Happy Hour: Preservation + Architecture

Hosted by preservation staff at Hampton Street Vineyard, participants and special guests Scott Garvin and Gretchen Lambert discussed architecture and preservation in Columbia.

### Mabel Payne Award: Scott Garvin

As part of the City’s annual celebration of National Historic Preservation Month in May, preservation staff recognized local architect and developer Scott Garvin with the Mabel Payne Award.

#### Scott Garvin’s Work & Ongoing Legacy

Scott has worked as both architect and developer on a number of high visibility local rehabilitation projects.

Projects by Garvin and his team include Granby and Olympia Mills, Palmetto Compress, 701 Whaley, Hendrix, Mast, Shepherd’s Hotel, Gadsden Place, City Market, and Gervais Place, to name a just a few. The beautiful work on these buildings, which allows them to retain their character while adapting to new uses, reflects Garvin’s eye for detail and commitment to quality.



Scott Garvin, pictured with Preservation Planner Amy Moore

#### 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 2024-2025

#### 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! See the [FY 2023-2024 report](#) for additional details on this project.



Image from the November 2024 ribbon cutting ceremony for the River Drive Buffered Bike Lanes.



The above photos, taken in July 2025, show the completed streetscape on the east (left image) and west (right image) sides of Main Street.

#### 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 was 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 spaces.

### 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 City and consultant team held a public informational meeting in June 2025 which provided attendees with updates on the project and asked attendees to provide feedback as they worked to fine-tune the design considerations for the extension of the City’s historic grid. As a part of the moving the project towards construction, the City’s Planning Commission (PC) reviewed and approved the preliminary plat submittal in July of 2025.



The City and project partners have also begun the process of planning and designing the park and associated development opportunities, releasing an RFQ in early 2025, resulting in a short list of respondents who will be invited to submit proposals for the park and associated master plan.

The June 2025 Williams Street Extension Meeting at Stormwater Studios.

### 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, allows 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. This procurement process wrapped up towards the end of FY 2024-2025, and a team from Kimley-Horn was selected to help facilitate [the planning process](#), which is anticipated run throughout FY 2025-2026.

The process will begin with an analysis of crash data, with public engagement anticipated to begin later in 2025 – make sure you stay in the loop on future updates and [sign up to receive our Columbia Compass e-newsletter](#) if you haven’t already!

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.” 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 Millwood), and Millwood Avenue (Gervais to Devine), 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. In FY 2024-2025, public meetings were held for Assembly Street (August 2024) and Gervais Street (March 2025), and a meeting for Millwood is anticipated in FY 2025-2026. The meeting materials, including preliminary conceptual designs can be found on SCDOT’s project pages for [Assembly Street](#) and [Gervais Street](#).

As the road safety assessment of Millwood was well-timed with a scheduled resurfacing between Gladden and Devine, 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 was installed by SCDOT’s striping contractor in late FY 2024-2025.

## Multimodal Infrastructure Improvements

- » **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, completed in 2025.
- » **Main Street (Pendleton to Blossom), SCDOT:** completed July 2025.
- » **Harden, Blossom, and Devine Road Safety Project, SCDOT:** (under construction, anticipated completion/completed Summer 2025).
- » **Wheat Street Pedestrian Bridge, USC:** approved by D/DRC in 2023, under construction in Spring/Summer 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 for the property as a whole kicked off in May of 2025.
- » **Assembly Street (Elmwood – Rosewood) Road Safety Project, SCDOT:** assessment complete. Under design through 2025; construction anticipated in 2027.
- » **Assembly Street (Lady to Pendleton), City of Columbia:** a consultant team is developing 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.

## Walk/Bike Columbia Planned Infrastructure Implementation, Cont.

- » **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:** design finalized Summer 2025, with anticipated bid date in late 2025.
- » **Millwood (Gervais – Devine) Road Safety Assessment, SCDOT:** completion of assessments and public meetings anticipated in FY 2025-2026, 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.
- » **Riverfront Park, City of Columbia:** portions of the park and trail will be closed, starting June 2025, for approximately six months while new water plant intakes are constructed as part of the City's Resilient Water Supply project.
- » **Lower Saluda Greenway Project (aka Saluda Shoals Riverwalk), Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission:** this 8-mile greenway connection between Lake Murray with the rest of the Saluda River greenway trail broke ground in late April of 2025. Phase One is a two-mile extension of an existing greenway in Saluda Shoals Park upstream to the dam. The second phase will extend the trail downstream from the park to where I-20 crosses the river, and the third phase – extending the current trail through the Carolina Crossroads project area, will have to wait until that SCDOT project is complete.
- » **Laurel Street (Harden – Two Notch) resurfacing, City of Columbia:** funded by the CTC; the City anticipates installing sharrows as recommended by *Walk Bike Columbia* once the resurfacing is complete.
- » **Whaley Street (Huger – Sumter) resurfacing, SCDOT/City of Columbia:** maintenance/ownership varies along this stretch, with funding for the state's portion tied to regular resurfacing funds, and for the City's portion from CTC. Funds were included to improve pedestrian crossings and ADA ramps; bikeways may also be installed as part of the project.

## 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 2024 and Spring 2025. In the Fall 2024 count, 30 of the 35 locations were counted at least once (either on a weekend or weekday) and 22 of these locations were fully counted (on both a weekend and weekday). During the Spring 2025 counts, 31 of the 33 possible locations were counted at least once, and 18 of the locations were counted fully.

As with last fiscal year, Fall 2025 counts will target those locations missed during the Spring, in an effort to ensure all locations are counted at least once. One location was removed due to counter safety concerns, and two locations were paused for construction in Spring 2025; however, we plan to resume counting at those latter sites in the fall too. 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 2024-2025



13,919  
PEDESTRIANS



846  
BICYCLISTS



### 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, and was invited to be part of the SS4A and Safety Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

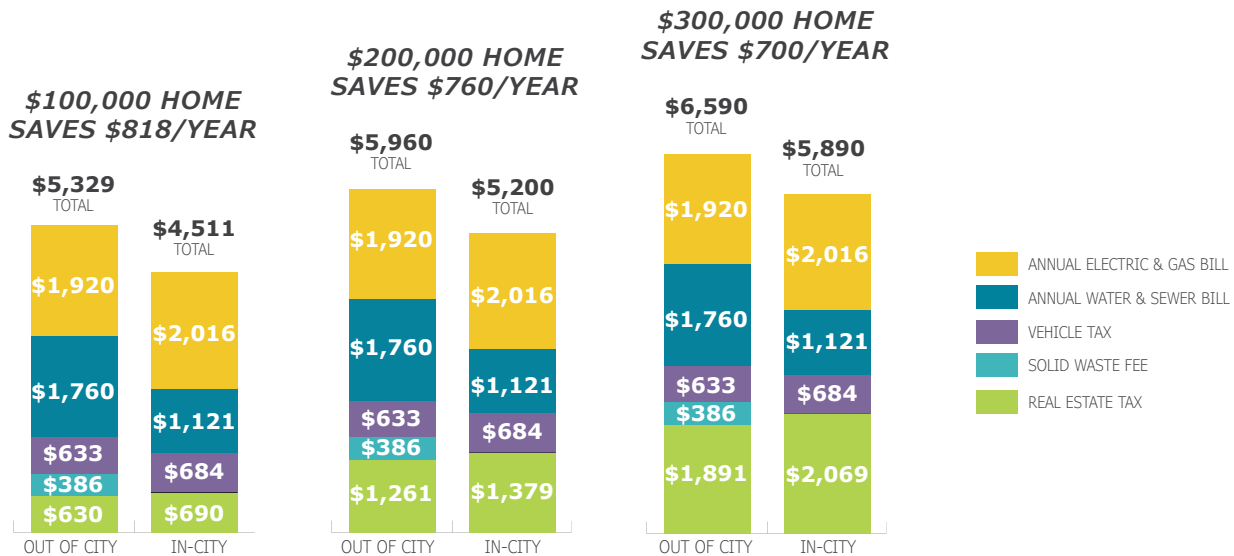
## ANNEXATION

The City of Columbia grew by about 124 acres through 27 separate annexation petitions from July 2024 through June 2025. Over 63% 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.

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 \$700 or more per 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



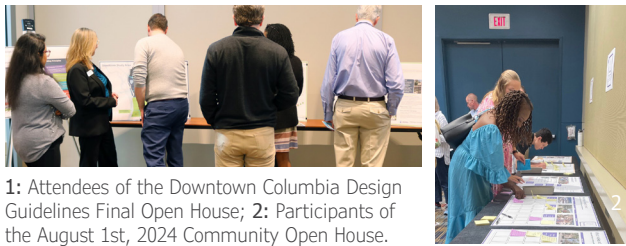
The examples above are based upon the most recent tax year (2025) for the 1UR and 1LR tax districts and assumes the average residential water & sewer use (8 units/month), \$25,000 vehicle value, and an average \$160 monthly electric & gas bill. Every homeowner is different - to learn how your unique circumstances would be affected by annexation, contact staff or visit [planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/annexations](http://planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/annexations).

## OUTREACH

During fiscal year 2024-2025, 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.

### Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan & Guidelines

The [Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan and Guidelines](#) planning process that began during FY 2023-2024 concluded in FY 2024-2025. Multiple outreach and engagement activities - namely the August 1st, 2024 Community Open House, second round of mobile workshops the following month, and the Downtown Design Guidelines Open House in March 2025 - gave citizens a chance to take an active role in the planning process.



1: Attendees of the Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines Final Open House; 2: Participants of the August 1st, 2024 Community Open House.

### Reaching Riverbanks Final Open House

The draft [Reaching Riverbanks Community Mobility Plan](#) was released to the public at the September 11th, 2024 final presentation held at the Dutch Square Mall. The draft plan was a product of collaboration between City of Columbia Planning Division staff, community members, and various stakeholders.

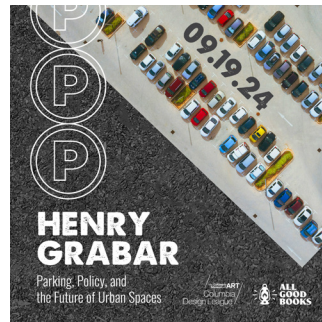
The plan's recommendations focus on creating new relationships with the area's riverfront, surrounding neighborhoods, and Downtown Columbia that expand mobility options for all residents.



### Paved Paradise Book Talk

In October of 2024, 15 individuals - including neighborhood leaders, students, business owners, public health professionals, USC faculty, and Planning Division staff - had the chance to chat about how parking explains (and has changed) the world at All Good Books.

This discussion of Henry Grabar's *Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World* came after Grabar presented his research at the Columbia Museum of Art on the eve of 2024's PARK(ing) Day



Henry Grabar's presentation of his work was followed by a productive discussion with community members at All Good Books.

### 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 over 2,500 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 edestrian + Bicyclist Counts in the Spring and Fall, PARK(ing) Day each September, and National Community Planning Month each October.



Participants of the May 2025 Bike to Work Day

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.

Staff 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 Guidelines** and the River Drive buffered bike lanes **project**.

## 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 2025-2026.

The Division anticipates producing a five-year update of Columbia Compass, the City's comprehensive plan, by the end of 2026.

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

- » Working with the soon-to-be selected consultant for the Waterfront Park district planning process and outreach;
- » Working with community partners on a pilot program for bicycle-route signage;
- » Continuing to coordinate with Economic Development on the River Drive/ former I-277 right-of-way redevelopment;
- » Starting 2026 off with newly reconfigured D/DRC boards, one focused on Historic Preservation cases, and one specifically for Urban Design cases;
- » Developing a comprehensive safety action plan for the City of Columbia, [Sharing the Road](#), in alignment with USDOT's Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program
- » Welcoming new staff to the Division, both in Annexation and Multimodal Transportation.



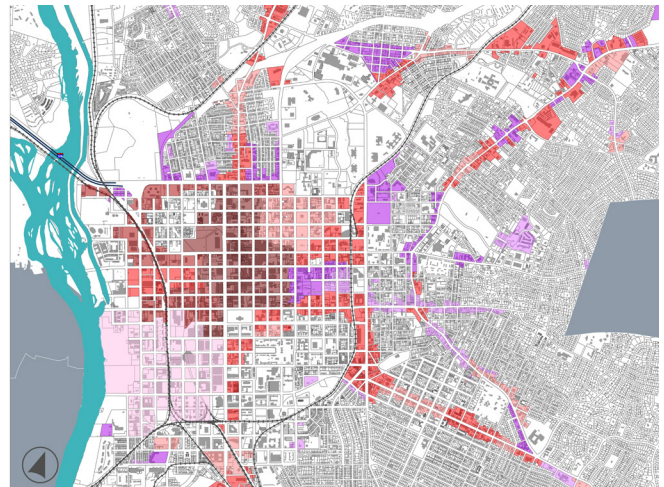
Study area of the I-277 right-of-way redevelopment

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 697 permits and 176 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 2024-2025, 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 185 agenda items between the three land use boards and commissions alone!



### Employee Spotlight

A few notable staffing shifts occurred during FY 2024-2025 in Zoning.

**Andrew Livengood** stepped into the role of Zoning Administrator during FY 2024-2025. When asked to remark on the significance of this staffing shift, Krista Hampton, Planning & Development Services Director, remarked: “I have had the honor and pleasure of working with Andrew during his twenty-year tenure. He started as a Zoning Analyst at Laurel Street where he had file cabinets as an “office.” He then moved on to help me establish the Development Center. He later served as Information Resource Coordinator, Deputy Zoning Administrator, and, as you all know, he most recently has been directing the City’s annexation program. Andrew has a great depth of knowledge, skill, and experience and I know he will be a great success. Please join me in congratulating him as well as providing him your support as he starts this new chapter in his career.”



Andrew Livengood

### 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.

**Where can I find out about my property's Zoning?**  
Use our **City Information Viewer** to view a variety of information about your property!

# 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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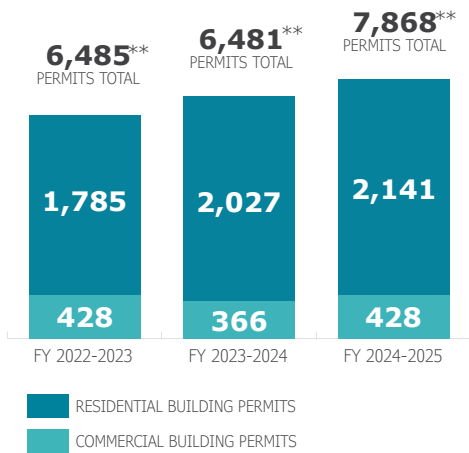
### IN THIS SECTION

<b>Permits and Inspections</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Land Development</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Zoning Permits</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Zoning Code Cases</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Annexations</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA)</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Planning Commission (PC)</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Design/Development Review Commission (D/DRC)</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Design/Development Review Commission Cases</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Certificates of Design Approval (CDAs)</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Bailey Bill Projects</b>	<b>40</b>

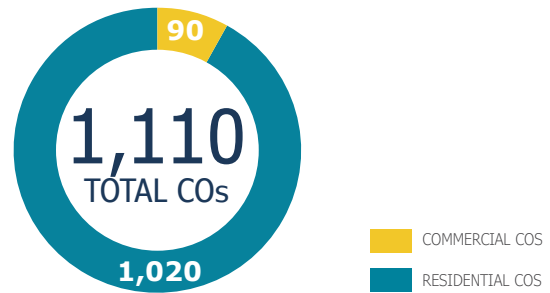
## Permits and Inspections

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\*



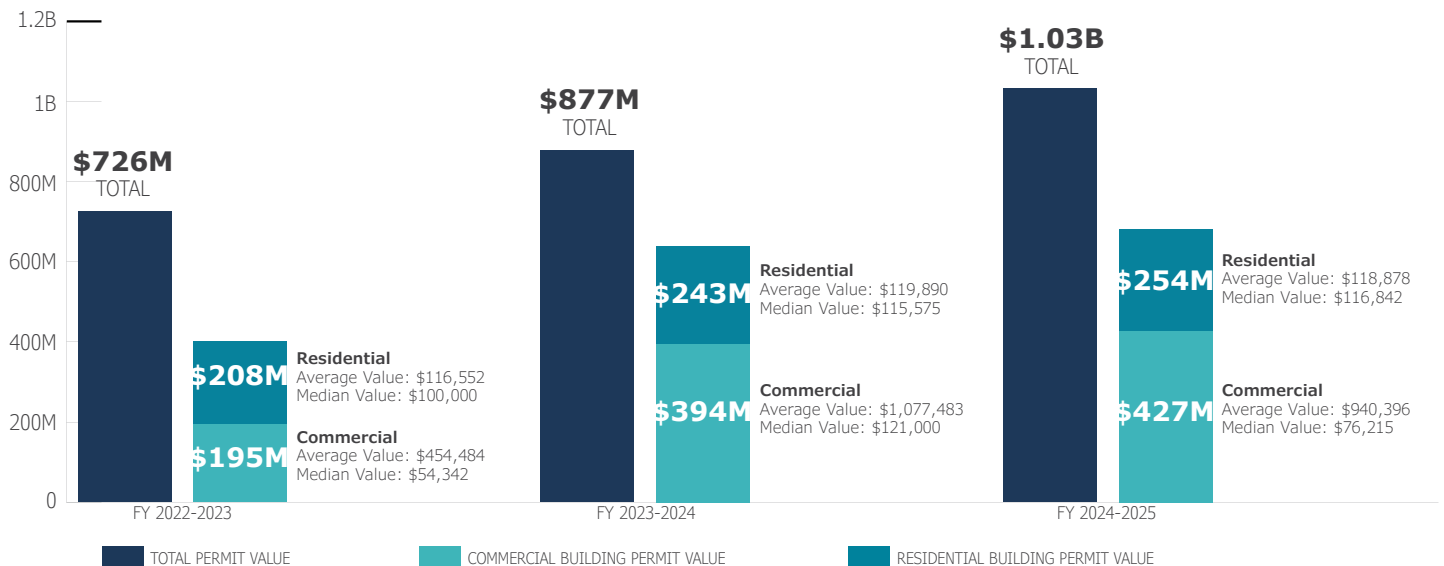
### CERTIFICATES OF OCCUPANCY



\*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\*



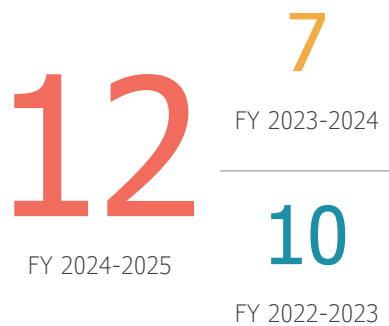
\*Total values for all permits, commercial building permits, and residential building permits shown in the above chart are rounded to the nearest million. Average and median values are rounded to the nearest whole number.

## Land Development

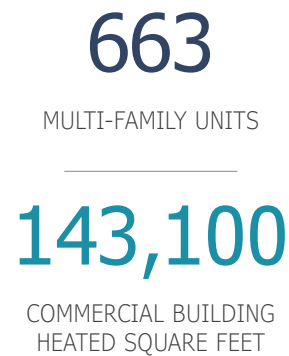
The Land Development Division of Planning and Development Services reviews group/individual commercial and group residential developments, mixed-use planned unit developments, and residential/commercial subdivisions for compliance with the City of Columbia’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

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

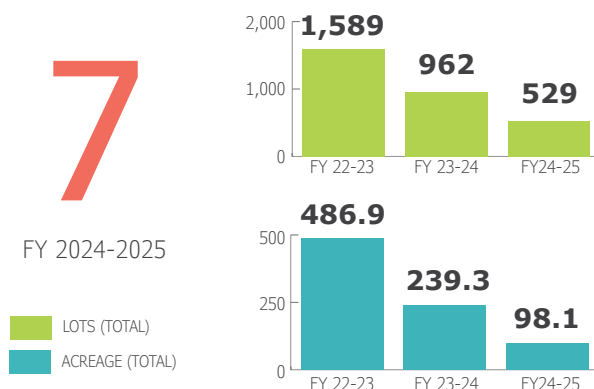


### MAJOR SITE PLANS APPROVED BY PC (FY 2024-2025)

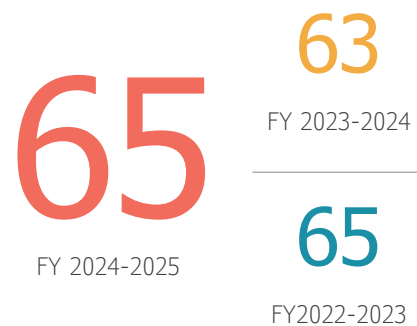


### BONDED PLATS PROCESSED

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



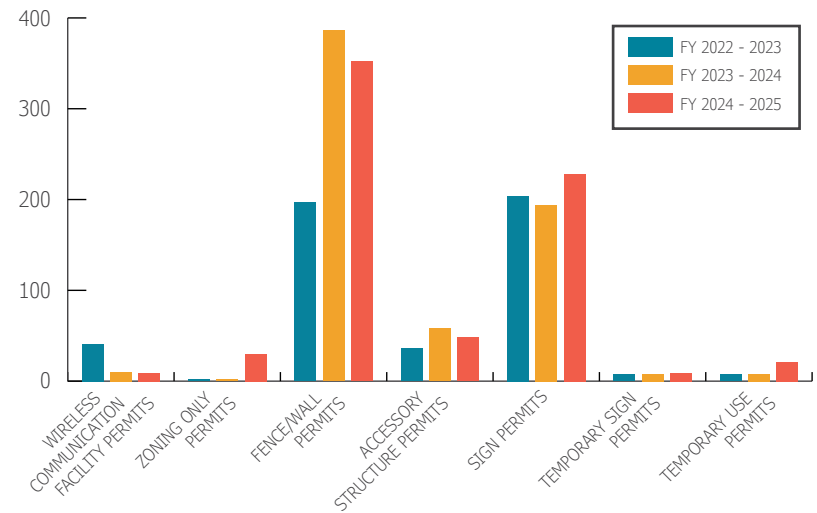
## Zoning Permits

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.

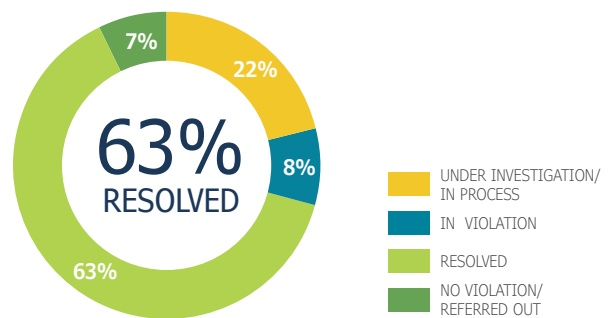
### ZONING CODE CASES

LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



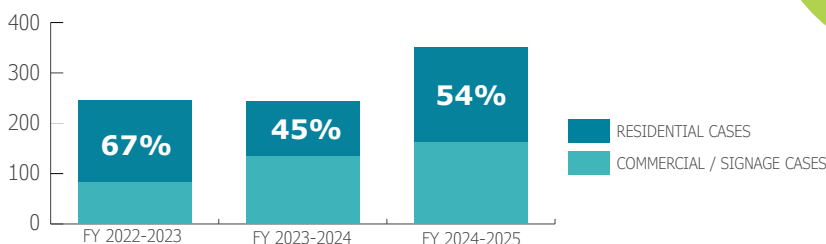
### CODE CASE STATUS

FY 2024-2025



### ZONING CODE CASES

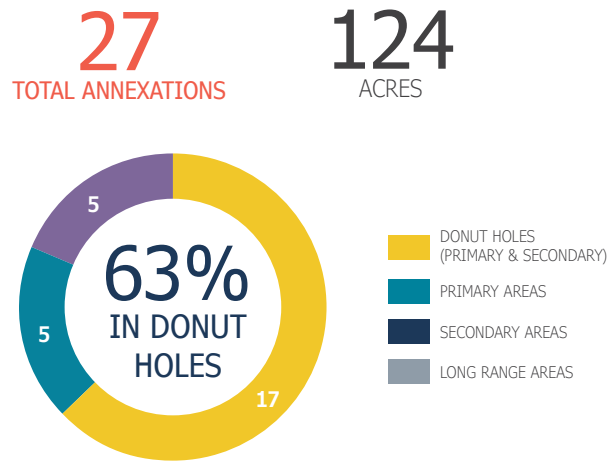
BY TYPE, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



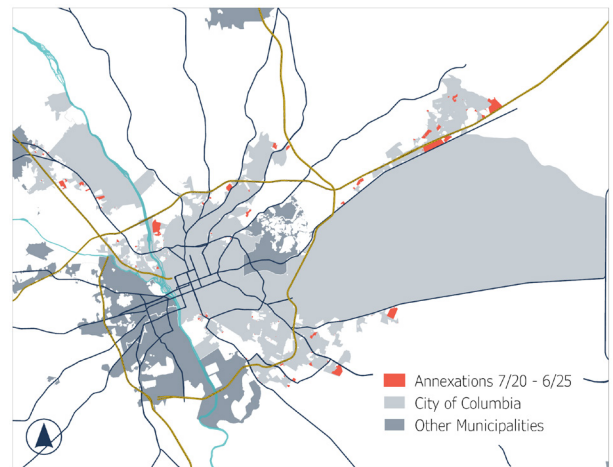
# Annexations

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.

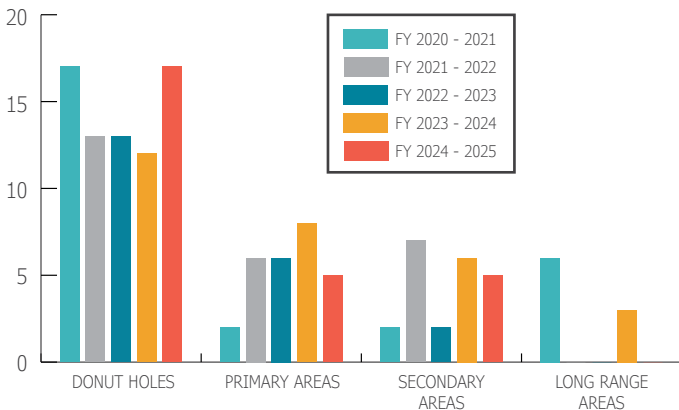
## ANNEXATIONS FY 2024-2025



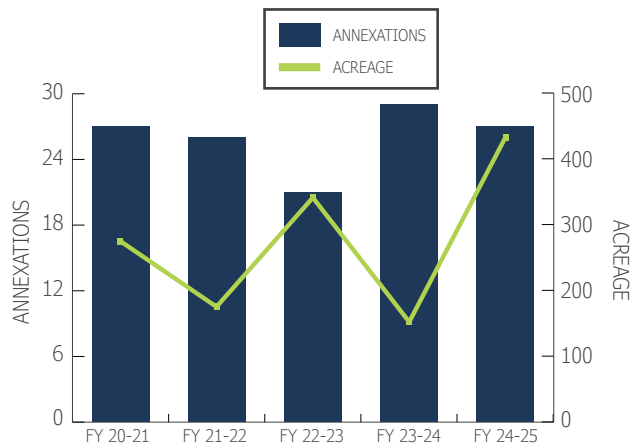
## ANNEXATION LOCATIONS LAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS



## ANNEXATIONS BY URBAN SERVICE AREAS, LAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS



## FISCAL YEAR COMPARISON PROPERTIES ANNEXED, LAST FIVE FISCAL YEARS



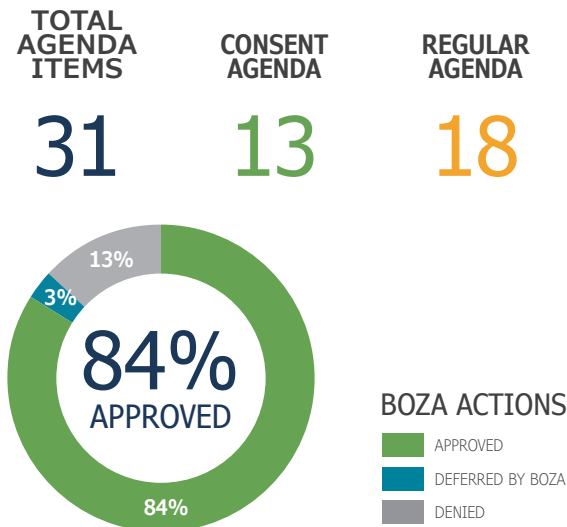
## Cost or Savings?

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!

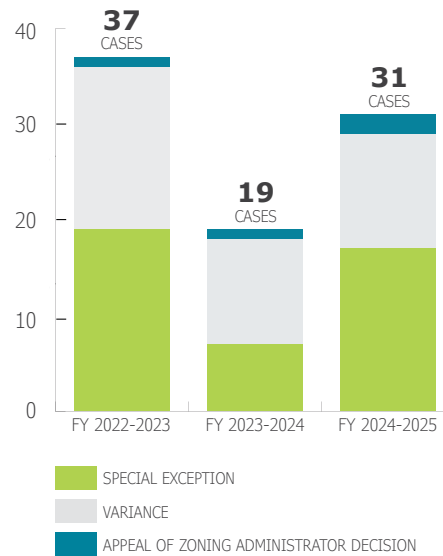
## Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA)

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 2024-2025



### 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.

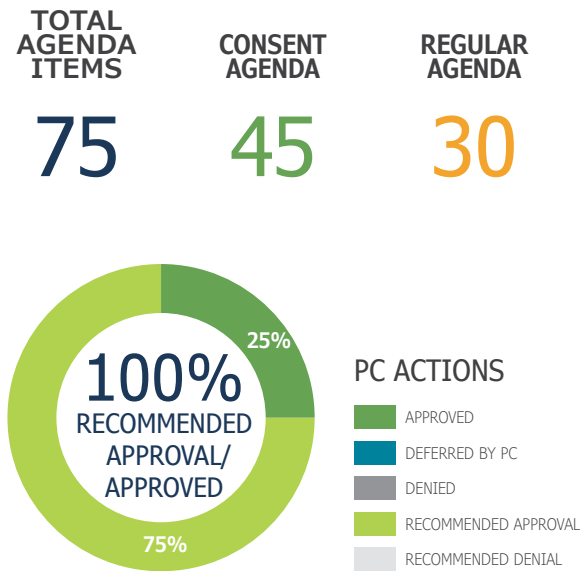
### What is a Special Exception?

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.

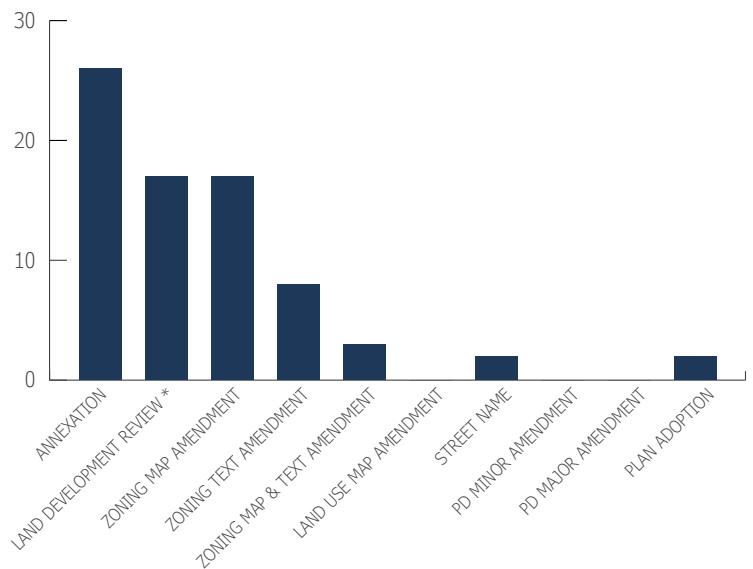
## Planning Commission (PC)

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.

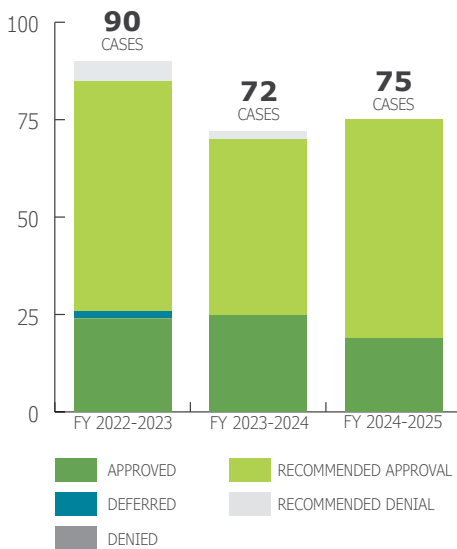
### PLANNING COMMISSION CASES FY 2024-2025



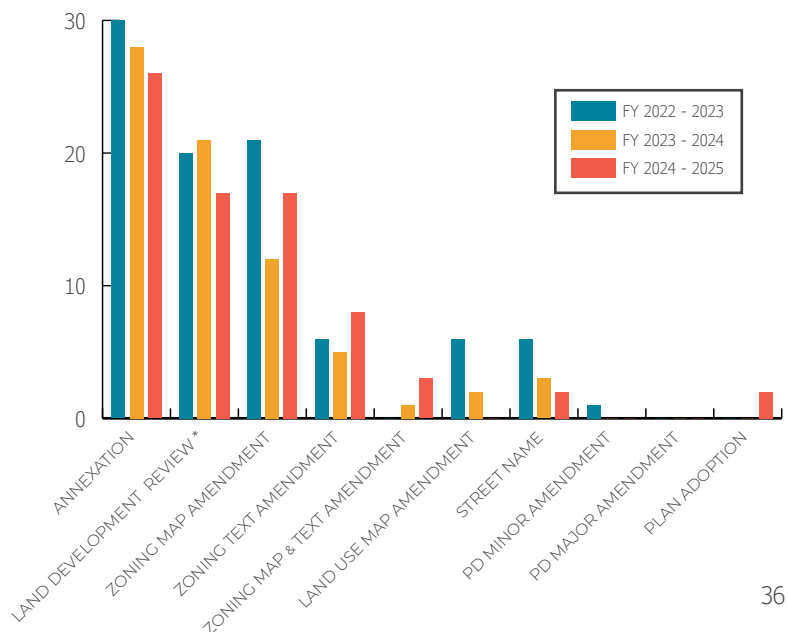
### PLANNING COMMISSION CASES BY TYPE, FY 2024-2025



### 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 2024-2025

TOTAL  
AGENDA  
ITEMS

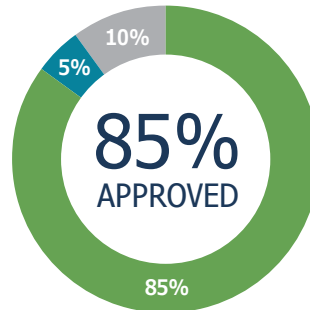
79

URBAN  
DESIGN

19

HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION

60



D/DRC ACTIONS

- APPROVED
- DEFERRED BY D/DRC
- DENIED

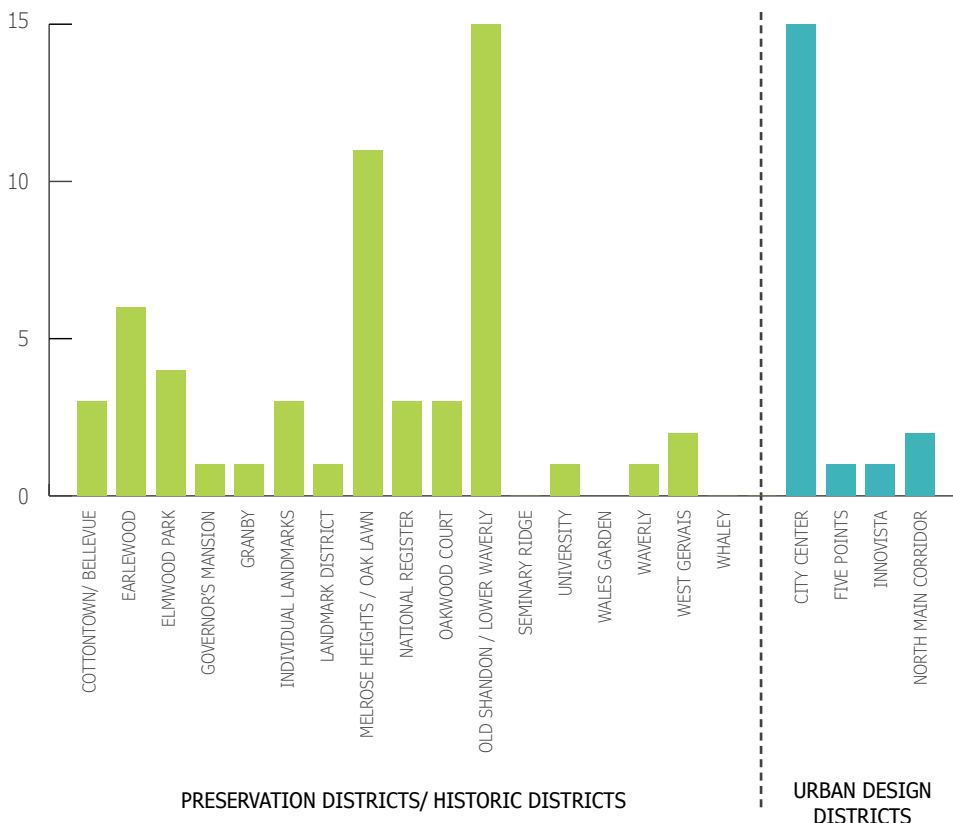
CONSENT AGENDA



REGULAR AGENDA

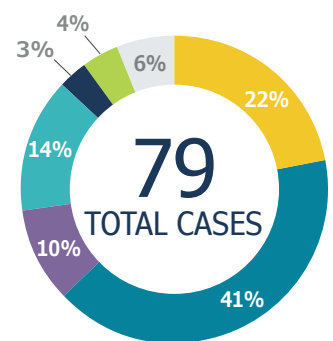
### D/DRC CASES

BY DISTRICT, FY 2024-2025



### COMMON REQUESTS

D/DRC, FY 2024-2025



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

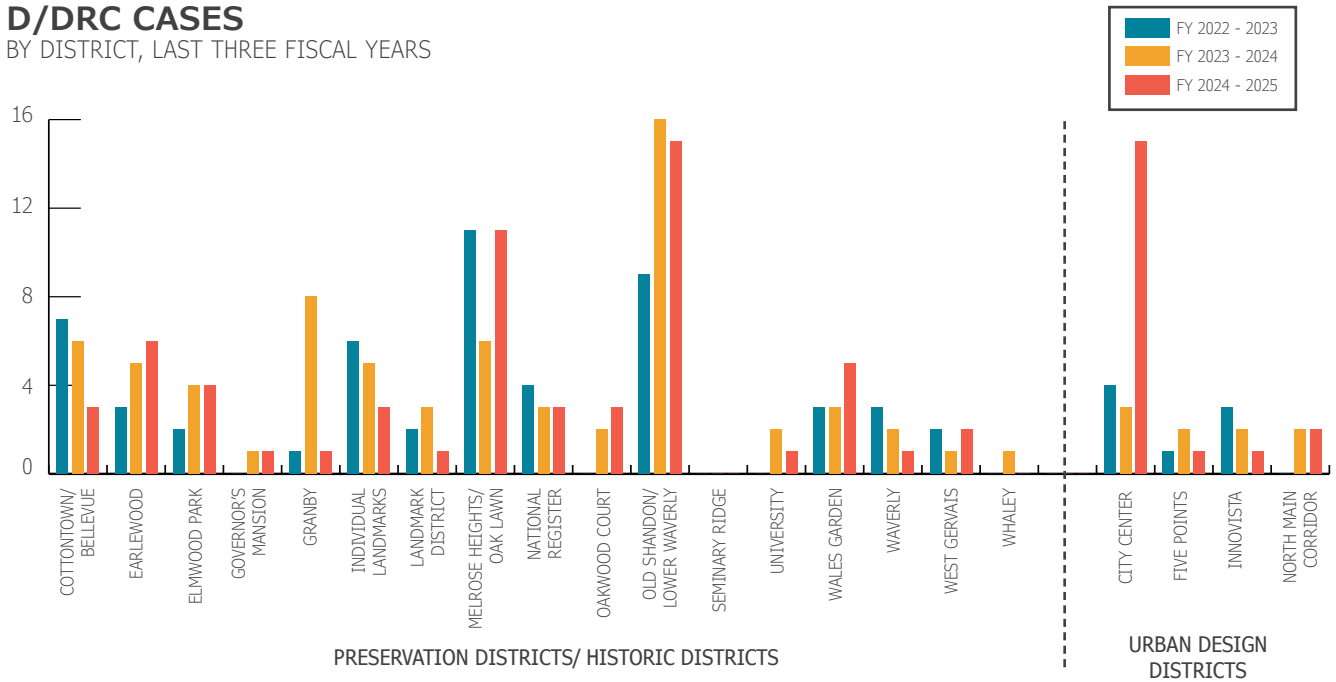
\*For the above chart, "other" includes demolition, landmarking, fence review, and other more rarely received requests.

## 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. This year, the most common request taken to the D/DRC in historic districts was new construction - the first time that has been the case since tracking data by request type began in FY 2018-2019. New construction also represented the bulk of requests in urban design districts during FY 2024-2025

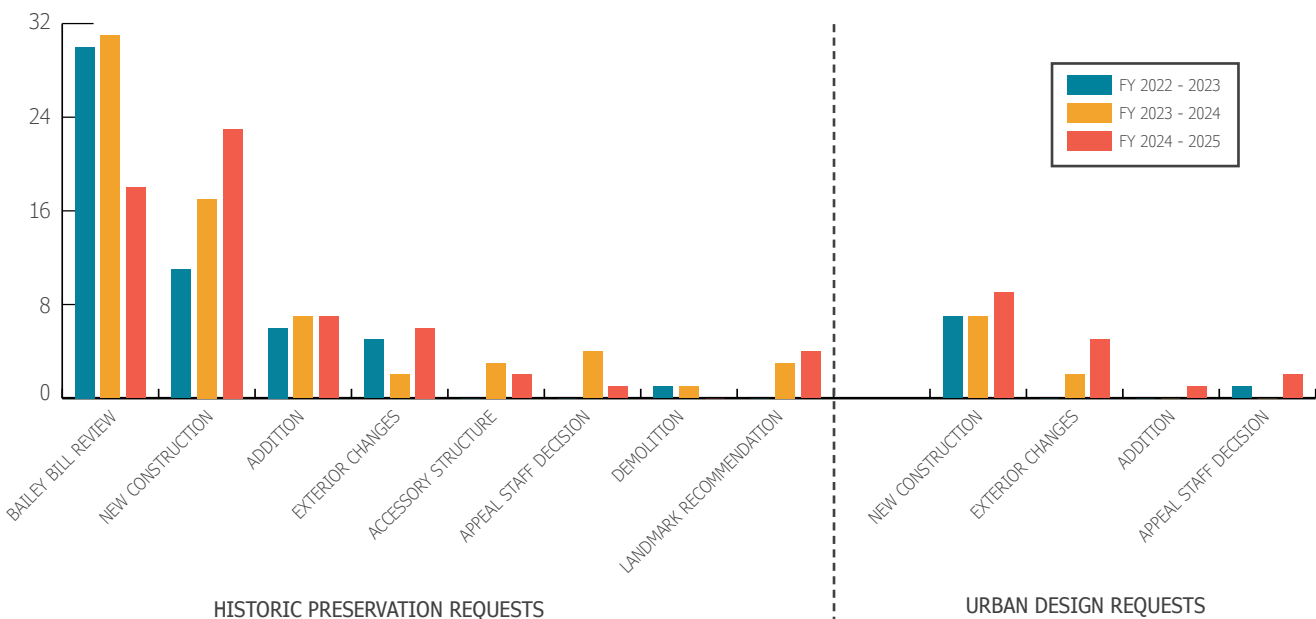
### D/DRC CASES

BY DISTRICT, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



### D/DRC CASES

BY REQUEST, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



## Certificates of Design Approval (CDAs)

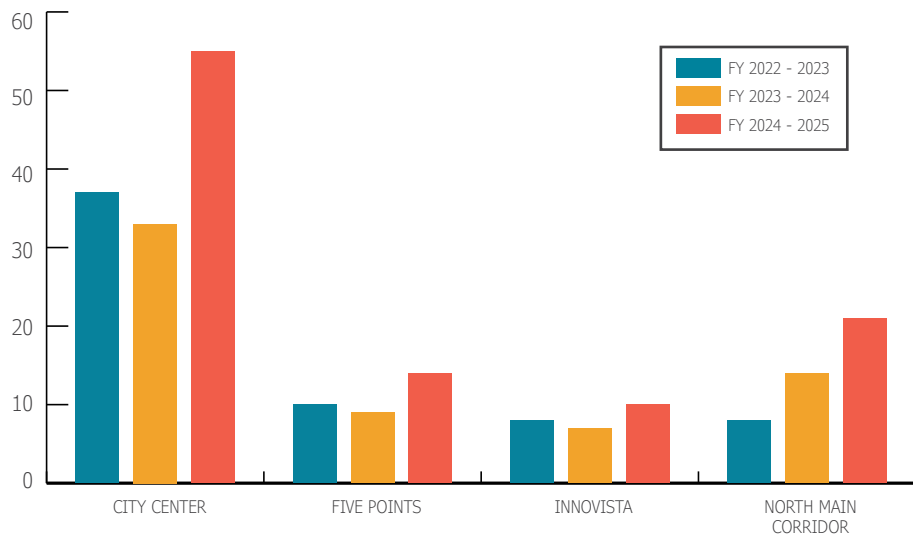
Urban design and preservation staff issue CDAs for changes visible from the public right-of-way for all designated properties. The vast majority of design review is completed at the staff level; in certain circumstances, D/DRC review is also required prior to the issuance of a CDA. The design review 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 2024-2025

**100**  
TOTAL ISSUED

### URBAN DESIGN CDAs BY DISTRICT, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS

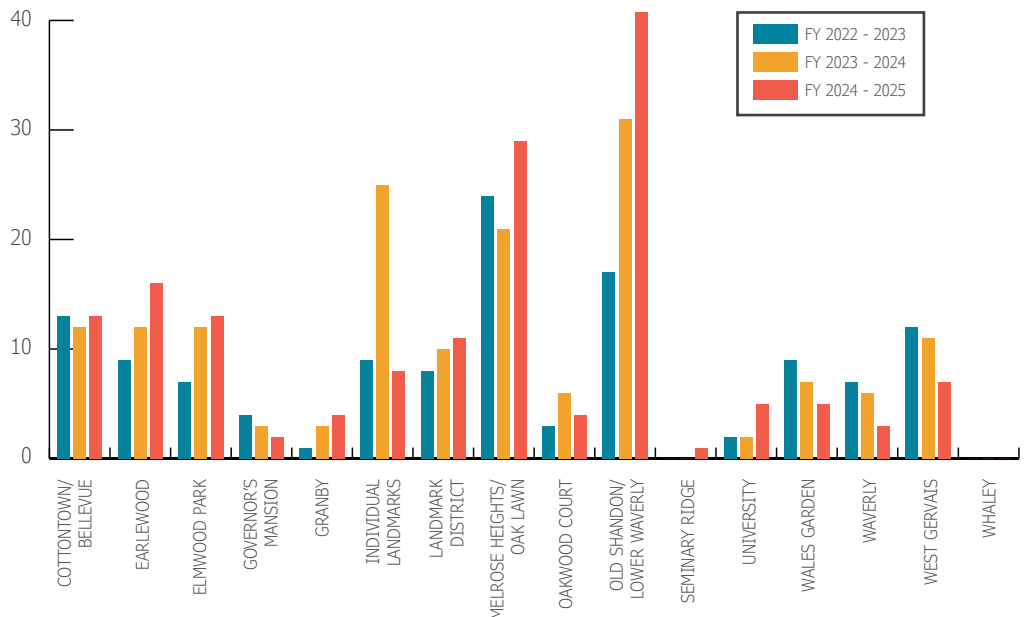


### HISTORIC PRESERVATION CDAs

FY 2024-2025

**171**  
TOTAL ISSUED\*

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION CDAs BY DISTRICT\*, LAST THREE FISCAL YEARS



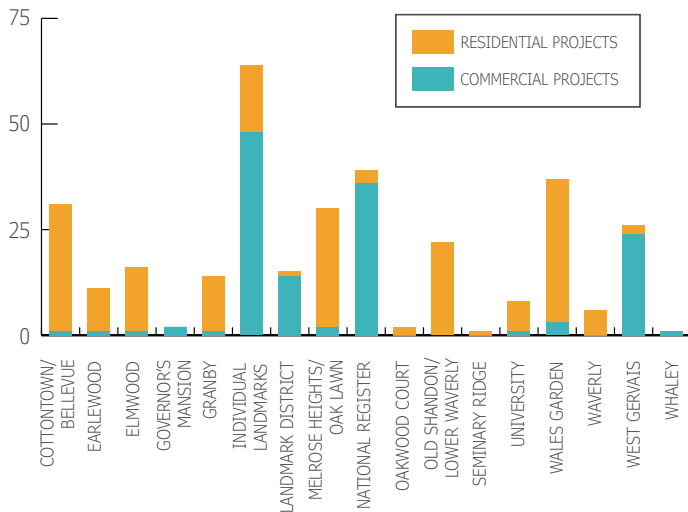
\*171 unique CDAs were issued in FY 2024-2025. This number includes CDAs issued for National Register properties utilizing the Bailey Bill (whether or not they are in a locally-designated district) and projects in Community Character Districts.

## 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 323 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

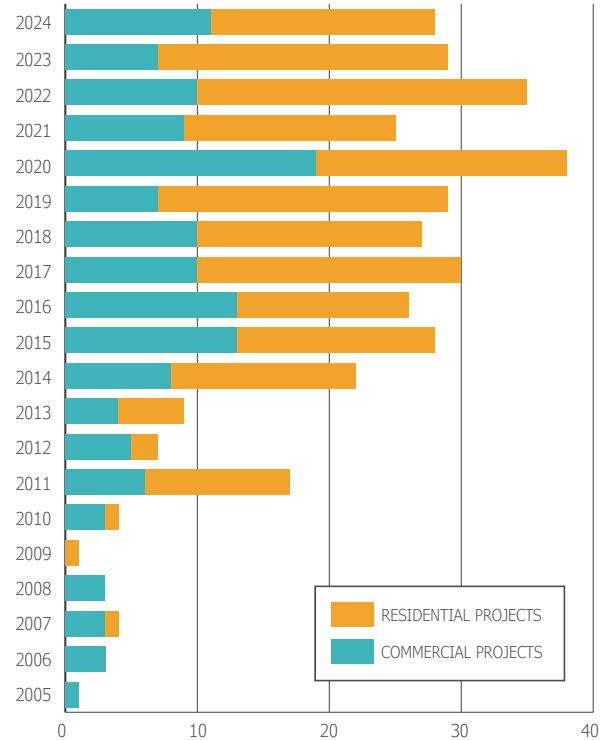
ACTIVE\*\*, BY DISTRICT



\*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

323



### BAILEY BILL PROJECTS

FY 2024-2025

PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATION

18

COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

9

RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS

9

FINAL CERTIFICATION\*

21

COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

3

RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS

18

### TOTAL INVESTED\*\*

\$3,172,789

COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT

\$1,049,357

RESIDENTIAL INVESTMENT

\$2,123,432

\*Final certification and compliance reviews for the Bailey Bill are completed at staff level  
 \*\* In Bailey Bill projects finalized in FY 2024-2025; as reported by property owners in final certification paperwork



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**City of Columbia**

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Planning & Development Services