



Columbia
C O M P A S S

Envision 2036



Columbia COMPASS

Envision 2036



CITY OF COLUMBIA

Comprehensive Plan Envision 2036

Adopted
Month XX, 2020, Ordinance XXXX-XXX

Acknowledgments

The completion of Columbia Compass: Envision 2036 would not have been possible without the participation of the many citizens of Columbia and the Midlands who took the time to participate in public meetings, focus groups, and to provide critical feedback through surveys. Recognizing that we cannot hope to provide a comprehensive listing of those many individuals whose support and feedback was crucial to the process, we do wish to specifically recognize the efforts of the following individuals:

City Council (2018-2020)

- Mayor Stephen K. Benjamin
- Councilman Sam Davis
- Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine
- Councilman Moe Baddourah
- Councilman Will Brennan
- Councilman Howard E. Duvall, Jr.
- Councilman Edward H. McDowell, Jr.
- Councilman Daniel J. Rickenman

Planning Commission

- Richard Cohn, Sr., Chair
- Brian Dolphin
- James Frost II
- LaTrell Harts
- April James
- Isa Mandell
- Dale Stigamier
- Ford Tupper
- Craig Waites

Focus Group Participants

Citizens of Columbia & the Midlands

City Management

- Ms. Teresa Wilson, *Manager*
- Ms. Pamela Benjamin, *Chief of Staff*
- Ms. Missy Gentry, *Assistant City Manager*
- Mr. Clint Shealy, *Assistant City Manager*
- Mr. Henry M. Simons, *Assistant City Manager*
- Mr. Jeffrey Palen, *Assistant City Manager*

Project Team

- Krista Hampton,
Planning & Development Services Director
- John Fellows, AICP, Assoc. AIA, *Planning Administrator*
- Leigh DeForth, AICP
- Megan McNish
- Amy Moore
- Andrew Livengood
- Shane Shaughnessy, AICP
- Lucinda Statler, AICP
- Rachel Walling
- Andrea Wolfe

Consulting Partners

- Clarion
- BBC Research & Consulting
- Kimley-Horn and Associates
- One Columbia & MJR Partners (Amplify)
- PlanningNEXT
- 4D Engineering

With special thanks to:

City of Columbia staff, as well as our counterparts throughout the Midlands. We are grateful for their support and willingness to share their time and expertise throughout this planning process.

We are also grateful to the many State of South Carolina employees and University of South Carolina faculty members who have generously provided their time and knowledge, as well as helped to compile the data that informed this planning effort.

Also deserving of our thanks are our many stakeholders and advocates who have not only stayed engaged but also acted as a resource during this planning process - their passion for Columbia inspires us all in our vision for the future.

Letter From The Mayor

Greetings!

As Mayor of this great city, I am honored to be part of guiding Columbia towards our 250th anniversary in 2036. Planning for our future is a critical part of what I and my fellow councilmen and councilwomen work on as your elected officials. In many ways, it is our shared passion for planning that brings us to public service. That being said, long-range planning is not just for Council and City staff - we hope that you, too, continue to be engaged in this critical collaborative effort.

Columbia is a City built on planning - as one of the first planned cities in the United States, our very purpose grew out of a planning effort, and we continue to honor this tradition with *Columbia Compass: Envision 2036*. In my time as Mayor, we have adopted critical updates to the City's comprehensive plan, including the adoption of the *Walk Bike Columbia Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan*, and the *Plan Columbia Land Use Plan*. As a City, in recent years we also have thought more about how we envision public space - partnering on a *Public Space Public Life Action Plan* for the



City's core, and taking up demonstration projects such as Park(ing) Day, Do Good Columbia, EnjoySC, and Open Streets Columbia.

This planning process has helped us all better understand the city we love, and the analysis of our needs and your critical input has led to developing actionable steps as we look towards Columbia's future. As a City, the tasks it lays at our feet are neither small nor to be taken lightly. While most of the recommendations set forth herein

may require the involvement of City staff, most also identify the public partnerships essential to their implementation. We have come together as a City to develop a vision and a plan for the next ten years, and our continued collaboration will be critical to Columbia's success. I look forward to seeing all Columbia can accomplish in the years to come.

Always remember that together, we're growing a great city for all people.

Sincerely,

Mayor Steve Benjamin
City of Columbia, South Carolina



Executive Summary

About Columbia Compass

Columbia Compass is the comprehensive plan - or “blueprint” - for how Columbia, South Carolina will grow and develop over the next ten years. The Columbia Compass planning process provided citizens with the opportunity to help shape the vision and recommendations that will guide decision-making in the City for years to come.

Regular comprehensive planning represents good stewardship and establishes a foundation for well-supported policies to create the best possible future. A comprehensive plan is a long-term guide that expresses the values and aspirations of a community. It is the broadest public policy document a community can create, and it establishes a long range vision for a community.

A comprehensive plan is also a tool to prepare for change and acts both a business plan and a guidebook for decision makers. The plan is not a regulatory document, but it serves as a foundation for City budgeting, zoning and land development regulations, capital improvements, development decisions, and more.

Cover photo iStock.com/Kruck20

What’s in a name?

The name Columbia Compass helps remind us both of the tools that surveyors used to lay out the original grid of Columbia and how the comprehensive plan will help us navigate our future. While Columbia Compass is a ten year plan as determined by the SC Code of Laws, we believe that our vision for Columbia in 2036 (and on its 250th anniversary) is important, and the goals we set and the changes we plan for over the next ten years will be integral in making that vision a reality.



Our Vision

Columbia Compass builds upon the vision set forth by City Council in Envision Columbia. In the document that follows, analyses and recommendations have been related back to the seven focus areas set forth by Council in Envision Columbia. The goal of Columbia Compass is to define concrete, implementable strategies that can work to bring the Envision Columbia vision to life.

Executive Summary

Plan Elements

The SC Code of Laws requires that comprehensive plans address all of the elements shown to the right. This plan is organized accordingly, with a chapter for each element. However, as the name implies, the elements of a comprehensive plan are interwoven with one another, and together they tell us the story of Columbia's future.

Project Timeline

The planning process for Columbia Compass can be broken into three key phases. The project team began with initial research and focus group meetings in 2018, hosting public meetings and an online interactive survey in Fall 2018 to better understand the goals and desires of Columbians. Once this initial analysis was complete, the team returned to the public through meetings and a second survey in early 2019, asking citizens and City staff to provide critical feedback on potential priorities for implementation. This iterative process allowed the project team to develop a robust draft plan document during the final phase, built upon citizen feedback and in-depth case study research of implementation successes elsewhere.



POPULATION

A study of historic trends and population projections helps us better understand our community and plan for the provision of services for all.



NATURAL RESOURCES

In identifying our natural resources, we can better understand how to conserve, protect, or improve upon them in the years to come.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

How do we encourage a diverse, resilient, and vibrant economy which attracts employers **and** employees?



HOUSING

What does our housing market look like, and where are there gaps? This element considers different sizes and types of rental and owned-housing and how they are interwoven into the fabric of Columbia.



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is about mobility and accessibility for all – not just cars, but pedestrians, bikes, transit, freight, and passenger rail.



LAND USE

How we look at density, scale, and context – what types of uses are appropriate, and where?



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

We all rely on community facilities, from utilities and emergency services to parks and educational facilities – how we plan for these services over the next 10 years is vital to the heartbeat of Columbia.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Columbia is a city steeped in culture, from historic structures and fine arts to engaged artists and arts educators. The Amplify Columbia planning process helps define this element.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT

A guide to how we can move forward and bring our shared vision for the City to life. In a broad sense, this element represents the City's 10-year to-do list.

Executive Summary

Public Engagement

A critical component of the Columbia Compass planning process was developing opportunities to engage with the public. By providing opportunities for discussion and feedback, the planning team was better able to understand community desires and concerns, and to distill these in order to first develop and later test a shared vision for Columbia.

The project team developed a broad engagement strategy that included in-person public and neighborhood meetings, interactive online surveys, lunch and learn events, newsletters and email updates, social media outreach, and more. As a result of this strategic approach, we estimate that during the first two phases of the planning process, staff had **over 5,500 points of engagement**.



February 2019 public open house

What We Heard

The wealth of feedback the project team received is summarized throughout the plan, and this feedback was essential to charting the course for our future through the development of implementation strategies, or recommendations.

VALUES

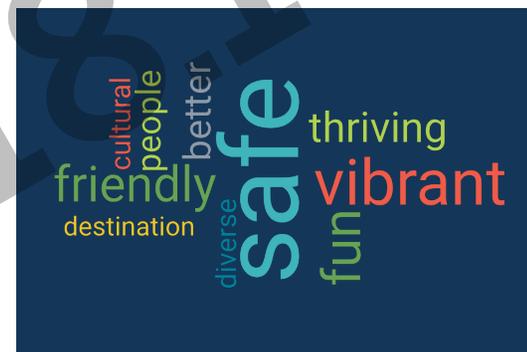
Throughout the process, citizens noted how much they valued their neighborhoods, the City's cultural offerings, opportunities for engagement, the City's historic and cultural assets, and walkability. These values informed not only their vision for Columbia, but also their priorities for plan implementation.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

In order to address our future, we must learn from the lessons our past has to offer. During the planning process members of the public were open and honest with their feedback, both positive and negative. Columbians routinely noted that they felt that as a City, we:

- do not prioritize,
- do not complete the projects we start,

- are disconnected from one another through physical and social barriers,
- do not act in a way that leverages our resources, and
- have looming infrastructure needs - related to maintenance, modernization, and implementation.



During the first survey, Columbians were asked to describe what they wanted Columbia to be. The most frequent words indicated in response are depicted above.

Executive Summary

Identifying Themes

A number of themes were identified during the planning process as a result of public input, research, and analysis. While the chapters of Columbia Compass are organized by element, it is important to note that these themes run through the plan as a whole, interweaving elements and influencing recommendations. The themes of Columbia Compass are organized into broad themes and topical themes.

Throughout the planning process several broad themes emerged which spoke to not only desires for Columbia and Columbians, but also the underlying needs of the community. These themes of **Equity & Accessibility**, **Safety**, **Public Health**, and **Resiliency** relate back to the community's overall vision for Columbia.

Topical themes are more nuanced, and tend to be complementary to one another. The relationship of these themes to plan recommendations is identified to help the reader understand the broader impacts of plan implementation.

Topical Themes

- Data
- Partner
- Lead By Example
- Plan & Implement
- Equity & Accessibility
- Engagement & Outreach
- Safety
- Built Environment
- Conserve & Preserve
- Innovation & Technology

Recommendations

Specific recommendations for priorities and actions for the coming years are made in the chapters that follow, and are summarized in the priority investment chapter. Recommendations are the heart of the document, and they are built upon the foundation of the data and public input collected. The recommendations of Columbia Compass are organized to provide information about the critical path forward, and, where necessary, to provide case studies of similar implementation successes in other communities.

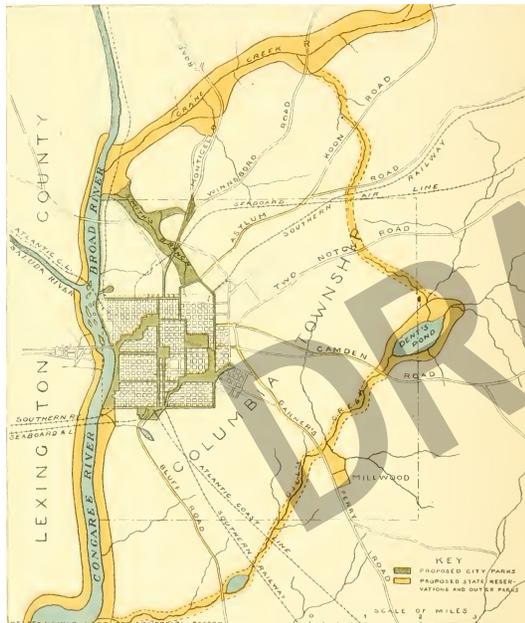
The Next 10 Years

The real work of Columbia Compass: Envision 2036 is in the next ten years. Learning from our past, we can strategically focus on bringing our shared vision to life by using this document as a tool and as a guide for action. The course that the City and community partners choose for the next ten years should not only reflect but also build upon this shared vision. Through regular reporting on the plan outcomes, we will be celebrating our successes and learning from our failures in the years to come, adhering to our priorities, but willing to modify them where necessary.



Notable Past Planning Efforts

Once the City was established, the first major comprehensive planning effort undertaken was through the development of *The Improvement of Columbia South Carolina: Report to The Civic League, Columbia South Carolina, by Kelsey & Guild, Landscape Architects, Boston, Massachusetts (1905)*. Civic leaders contracted with the landscape architecture firm to develop a vision for Columbia. This vision, based in the City Beautiful movement, included a survey of the streets and native trees.



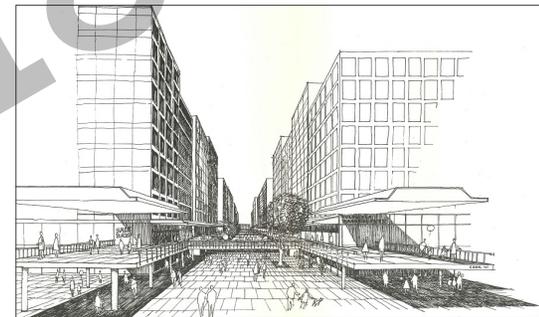
A plan for parks, recreations, and connections excerpted from the 1905 plan.

Among its broader recommendations, the plan included those for linear parks and green connections, public parks to promote the welfare and happiness of all of Columbians, broad boulevards with wide sidewalks, powerline removal, and a system of alleyways. Recommendations were also made for a number of parks and streets by name, establishing existing conditions and desired improvements.

As perhaps the first attempt at fostering an identity and feel specific to Columbia, many of the recommendations have been and continue to be echoed both by the community and subsequent planning efforts.

Another plan which had the potential to vastly reshape the City's feel and identity was the 1969 *Central City Columbia SC Master Plan*, also known as the Doxiadis Plan. While the Kelsey & Guild plan had been designed with the flow of people in mind, it had also focused on botany and the creation of idyllic open spaces - a reaction to the industrial conditions seen at the turn of the Eighteenth Century. In contrast, the Doxiadis Plan was a modernist plan - it focused on efficiencies, density, and the flow of goods and services through the now auto-dominated City.

Plan recommendations focused on not just the built environment, but the constructed environment - development was to be dense and hardscaped, with focus on ensuring productivity and maximizing efficiency. Also comprehensive in nature, the plan's signature projects sought a wholly new identity for Columbia, rejecting the past in favor of a constructed future. Recommendations included a raised mall along Main Street, and block style apartments fortified against the river's edge.



Conceptual drawings of the recommendations for Main Street (above) and the riverfront (below) made by the 1969 plan.



Planning for the City

The purpose of comprehensive planning is to create a long-term guide that expresses that values and aspirations of the community. The comprehensive plan is the broadest policy document a community can create, and it establishes a long range vision for the City. This plan, as with those that preceded it, is a tool to prepare for change, and acts as both a business plan and a guidebook for decision makers. Comprehensive plans are not regulatory documents, but they serve as a foundation for City budgeting, zoning and land development regulations, capital improvements, development decisions, and more.

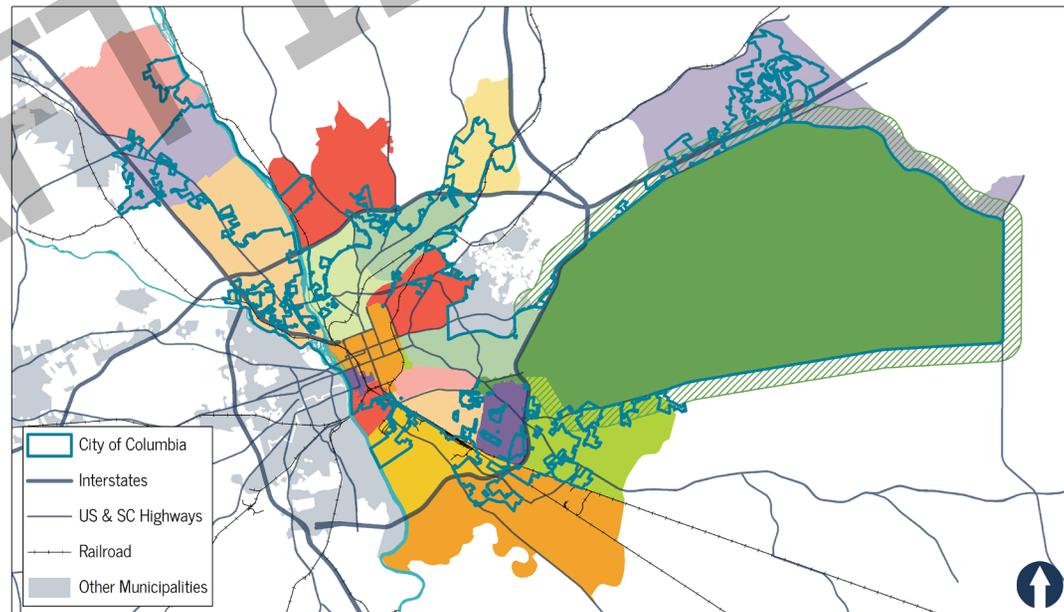
The City's comprehensive plan undergoes a thorough update once every ten years, as required by the State Code of Laws. The prior ten-year update, *TCP 2018: The Columbia Plan*, was adopted in 2008. Subsequent major amendments to *TCP 2018* included the adoption of the *Plan Columbia: Land Use Plan* and *Walk Bike Columbia*. The *Plan Columbia: Land Use Plan* represented a thorough update to

the land use element of *TCP 2018*, whereas *Walk Bike Columbia* was a detailed, long-range plan which replaced the bicycle and pedestrian section of the transportation element.

With the adoption of *Columbia Compass*, we anticipate regular updates to the plan which will summarize progress toward implementation, address shifting trends, and incorporate new priorities for the City. Broader shifts may require similar updates to individual elements of the plan, the replacement of sections, or the addition of new elements as the City plans for the future.

Planning for Smaller Areas

While comprehensive planning takes a broader approach, the City also has a rich history of planning for neighborhoods, areas, and corridors in partnership with community members. As part of the *Plan Columbia: Land Use Plan*, the City sought to more strategically identify areas for future neighborhood, area, and corridor planning efforts. Recognizing that municipal limits do not necessarily reflect perceived community boundaries, a number of the future planning areas identified represent joint planning areas, where multiple jurisdictions work together to best plan for a community.



Future neighborhood, area, and corridor planning areas. Larger maps are located in the Land Use chapter.

Envision Columbia

Council's Strategic Plan

The Envision Columbia Vision Statement was unveiled in 2017, and helps to define Council's strategic plan. The City of Columbia will celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2036, and Envision Columbia identifies what the ideal state for citizens, businesses, students, and tourists should look like as we celebrate. The document includes seven different focus areas, and is intended to drive new projects and initiatives in the coming years.

The Plan & The Vision

The connection between Envision Columbia and the comprehensive plan update has been at the forefront of the Columbia Compass planning process. In the document that follows, analyses and recommendations have been related back to the seven focus areas set forth by Council in Envision Columbia. The goal of Columbia Compass is to define concrete, implementable strategies that can work to bring the Envision Columbia vision to life.

The Vision

"By 2036, Columbia has captured the new American dream. While embracing our 250-year rich history, we enthusiastically welcome the future. We are proud of our soul, our unique character, our diversity, and our human potential. We stand as a city for all people. As a center of commerce, technology, and education, we have defined our city as one full of vitality and inclusion with a charming and cosmopolitan feel. We will create our desired future. We will continue our success."

The Focus Areas

The vision is clarified further through the development of seven focus areas (shown below), which are articulated on the following pages.



Envision Columbia

1 Attracting & Retaining Talent

Columbia, South Carolina is the center of the global knowledge economy and the leading hub of insurance technology in the world. It is home to more corporate headquarters than any other city in the Southeast and home to the talented leaders and employees of those companies. Having sought innovative ways to nurture businesses over 20 years ago, Columbia today reflects progressive energy and highly desirable growth. It attracts business interests and investment from around the globe.

A laser-like focus on ensuring a business-friendly environment has resulted in Columbia being the jewel of the south. Its results include the largest GDP of any city in South Carolina, the lowest unemployment, and a steady stream of talent that emerges from its colleges and universities. Columbia experiences a steady increase in its number of residents and businesses with disposable income. There is a low business vacancy rate and phenomenal growth throughout Columbia and the surrounding region. Columbia's thriving urban core serves as home to most of the state's cultural

destinations with the core surrounded by vibrant neighborhoods and schools. Columbia's exciting riverfront is the envy of the Southeast.



iStock.com/Dean Mitchell

2 Planning Together

Building on its history as the first planned capital city in America, Columbia continues its pace in defining what a great American city can be. Its planned underground grid showcases an integrated utility and City operating system. It preserves and treasures its natural resources and historic properties, evidenced by the City's multiple recognitions as one of the best planned, sustainable cities.

Columbia is well recognized as a genuinely authentic, well-planned city, and continues to set the pace for America. The planning process features and protects a strong urban core, fully developed riverfront, great neighborhoods, well-canopied streets, both large scale and pocket parks, well-connected modes of intermodal transportation, and an abundance of pedestrian and bike paths.

Regional government exists, offering superior, cost-effective basic services to citizens and businesses with a well-balanced, growing tax base. The success of this new government is largely the result of engaged citizens and visionary leaders.

Envision Columbia

3 Connecting Our Community

With three beautiful rivers running through the heart of the City, three interstate highways that connect the region to over 75% of the American economy, and a historically designated and well-planned urban core, Columbia is recognized as the economic engine of the South. The City's laser-like focus on the delivery of sound and sustainable infrastructure, along with its best practices and cutting edge technology have enabled it to manage and operate one of the largest and most modern utility systems in the South.

Columbia has integrated infrastructure delivery that is coupled with a vision of establishing itself as the most walkable city in America. The City thus provides its citizens with a green, high tech inter-modal transportation system that services and connects the entire metropolitan area. A superior network of 100 miles of bike and pedestrian friendly connectivity supports the healthy lifestyles of Columbia's citizens and visitors and has earned the community accolades for decades. The City's stunning tree canopy makes Columbia the longest consecutively recognized municipality by

Tree City USA. The canopy camouflages an intricate network of smart technology, green infrastructure, and renewable energy sources that serve citizens and businesses, while promoting healthy living.



iStock.com/CasarsaGuru

4 Empowering Our Residents

Columbia is an inclusive, caring, and compassionate city that embraces diversity. We provide a variety of services and resources that develop human potential and invest in the growth and development of all residents.

Our citizens live in safe, sustainable neighborhoods where children are thriving, learning, and having fun. Our residents are financially and physically healthy and lead peaceful and productive lives. Our citizens are invested in the community and empowered to live their fullest potential. Columbia prides itself on engaging its citizens and providing a high quality of life with endless possibilities.

From premier educational institutions to strong neighborhoods and thriving businesses, the City is well known as an environment in which there are opportunities for all. We are home to state-of-the-art K-12 schools, a myriad of public and private institutions of higher learning, as well as a nationally ranked technical school system. All of these opportunities empower residents to transform their lives and inspire

Envision Columbia

people, young and not so young, to achieve their dreams. Workforce development is a hallmark of the Columbia community, coupled with a focus on successfully leveraging public and private partnerships to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to obtain skilled, high paying jobs.

High level medical services, abundant recreational amenities and a beautiful and safe natural environment allow citizens to live healthy and active lives.



iStock.com/skynesher

5 Economic Prosperity & Endless Possibilities

Columbia is a capital city of endless possibilities! A balance between fiscally responsible government and strategic investment has encouraged desirable private sector growth. The City has an internationally recognized business friendly environment that has produced a sustainable revenue stream to support reinvestment in our public infrastructure, schools, neighborhoods, and our arts and cultural community.

The City creates an atmosphere that generates rewarding employment opportunities for all. The state's flagship institution of higher learning, the University of South Carolina, along with our many high quality universities and colleges and world-class technical college system support abundant, well-focused job training. Our many core educational facilities have attracted high tech industry and innovative businesses that change the world.



iStock.com/YinYang

Envision Columbia

6 Enhancing Columbia's Neighborhoods

Columbia reflects neighborhoods that are filled with historic homes, museums, parks, and natural resources. The City boasts safe, secure neighborhoods that are free from over-development and other consequences of growth. Housing exists for residents in a variety of income categories and states of life, including choices from traditional single-family homes with tree-lined streets to high-rise urban living. Our city is a seamless mix of neighborhoods with tree canopies that create a nurturing environment in which our citizens can prosper and grow. The City maintains a diverse mix of housing stock from urban development to family oriented neighborhoods with backyard cookouts.

The City protects and honors the uniqueness and character of its history. Columbia attracts employees and families that desire a safe, sustainable, and accessible community. It has distinguished itself by managing growth to protect and improve its valued quality of life. Sustainable development has been carefully blended

into the City. Careful expansion and redevelopment have made Columbia a pedestrian-friendly, livable, social and economic center.



Photograph by Brett Flashnick
Image courtesy of ExperienceColumbiaSC

7 Leading the Way in Innovative & High Quality Municipal Services

Long considered a leader in municipal service delivery, the City of Columbia embraces new technologies and is committed to the highest level of customer care and constituent service for residents and visitors.

We operate in an environment that is business friendly to promote the growth of our small and large businesses. Our practices are solution-oriented. Our business processes have been streamlined to ensure an effective and efficient approach to address the needs of our business community.

Tools for citizen engagement are utilized to empower our residents to interact and access City services in an efficient, timely, and helpful manner. The city of Columbia's staff implements best practices that are on the cutting edge of municipal governance. The use of technology allows City staff to increase productivity and decrease response time in addressing customer requests and concerns.

Engaging the Public

Why Planning is a Public Process

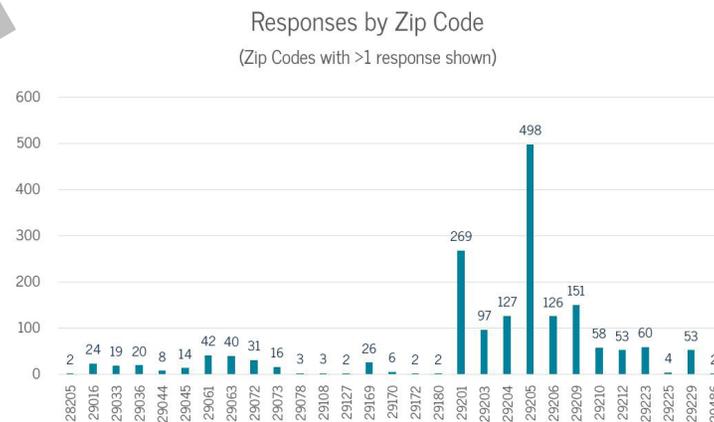
A critical component of the Columbia Compass planning process was developing opportunities to engage with the public. By providing opportunities for discussion and feedback, the planning team was better able to understand your desires and concerns, and to distill these in order to first develop and later test a shared vision for Columbia.

Trying New Tactics

As planners, there are a number of ways we hope to provide opportunities for meaningful public input. As with other plans, the planning team reached out to citizens through holding public meetings, facilitating stakeholder focus groups, and by attending neighborhood and business association meetings. Having found recent success with the Walk Bike Columbia interactive online survey, the team also developed two separate interactive online surveys, with varying formats, and advertised these widely, reporting on participation by zip code in an effort to increase participation in underrepresented areas.

We know that technology and access have changed how we communicate as a society - planners have also seen these changing trends impact how the public engages with planning processes. While planning is critical to the City's success, it is rarely high on one's daily to-do list - in a society where there are increasing demands on our time, we recognize we have to innovate in order to obtain the meaningful public input that planning efforts hinge upon.

The team built upon our prior successes in public engagement by trying new tactics as well. Neighborhood meetings were grouped in an attempt to reach all neighborhoods, to varied success. New spaces, such as Richland Library, were utilized for public meetings, in hopes of engaging with participants who might not have previously been engaged in planning processes. City staff sought speaking engagements with civic organizations throughout the region. Embracing technology, the team developed a project brand and website that was bright, attractive, and easy to navigate, and linked to social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. We employed an email subscription service - one which was easy for the public subscribe (or unsubscribe) to, and which could provide important analyses back to staff on the effectiveness of newsletters and other messaging. As a result of this innovation, we estimate that during the first two phases of the planning process, staff had **over 5,500 points of engagement**.



Survey participation was tracked by zip code, allowing the project team to monitor participation and target certain zip codes for additional outreach while the surveys were open. The above shows the participation by zip code results from the Spring 2019 survey.

Engaging the Public

Why Planning is a Public Process

A critical component of the Columbia Compass planning process was developing opportunities to engage with the public. By providing opportunities for discussion and feedback, the planning team was better able to understand your desires and concerns, and to distill these in order to first develop and later test a shared vision for Columbia.

Trying New Tactics

As planners, there are a number of ways we hope to provide opportunities for meaningful public input. As with other plans, the planning team reached out to citizens through holding public meetings, facilitating stakeholder focus groups, and by attending neighborhood and business association meetings. Having found recent success with the Walk Bike Columbia interactive online survey, the team also developed two separate interactive online surveys, with varying formats, and advertised these widely, reporting on participation by zip code in an effort to increase participation in underrepresented areas (analyses of these survey results are provided in the appendices).

We know that technology and access have changed how we communicate as a society - planners have also seen these changing trends impact how the public engages with planning processes. While planning is critical to the City's success, it is rarely high on one's daily to-do list - in a society where there are increasing demands on our time, we recognize we have to innovate in order to obtain the meaningful public input that planning efforts hinge upon.



October 2018 open house, Richland Library Main

The team built upon our prior successes in public engagement by trying new tactics as well. Neighborhood meetings were grouped in an attempt to reach all neighborhoods, to varied success. New spaces, such as Richland Library, were utilized for public meetings, in hopes of engaging with participants who might not have previously

been engaged in planning processes. City staff sought speaking engagements with civic organizations throughout the region.

As a result of this innovative approach, we estimate that during the first two phases of the planning process, staff had **over 5,500 points of engagement**.

Embracing technology, the team developed a project brand and website that was bright, attractive, and easy to navigate, and linked to social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. We employed an email subscription service - one which was easy for the public to subscribe (or unsubscribe) to, and which could provide important analyses back to staff on the effectiveness of newsletters and other messaging.

What We Heard

A Plan Built on Engagement

The wealth of feedback the project team received is summarized throughout the plan, and this feedback was essential to charting the course for our future through the development of implementation strategies, or recommendations. More comprehensive summaries and analyses of public engagement opportunities are provided within the appendices, as well as mentioned throughout the plan document.

Values

Throughout the process, citizens noted how much they valued their neighborhoods, the City’s cultural offerings, opportunities for engagement, the City’s historic and cultural assets, and walkability. These values informed not only their vision for Columbia, but also their priorities for plan implementation.

Public Perception

In order to address our future, we must learn from the lessons our past has to offer. During the planning process members of the public were open and honest with their feedback, both positive and negative. Columbians routinely noted that they felt that as a City, we:

- do not prioritize,
- do not complete the projects we start,
- are disconnected from one another through physical and social barriers,
- do not act in a way that leverages our resources, and
- have looming infrastructure needs - related to maintenance, modernization, and implementation.



During the first survey, Columbians were asked to describe what they wanted Columbia to be. The most frequent words indicated in response are depicted in the adjacent graphic, and are sized according to their relative frequency of use.

Navigating the Plan

Using the Plan

Columbia Compass is meant to serve not only City staff and decision-makers, but all Columbians. As such, this document attempts to set forth the complexities of planning for Columbia in a concise and accessible manner. This section is meant to provide a road map to Columbia Compass, and help the reader not just navigate but also utilize the plan. As an official City policy document, Columbians can and should engage with Columbia Compass and help move these recommendations forward by partnering with their communities, the City, and local organizations to implement recommendations.

Plan Elements

The SC Code of Laws requires that comprehensive plans address all of the elements shown to the right. This document is organized accordingly, with a chapter for each element. However, as the name implies, the elements of a comprehensive plan are interwoven with one another, and together they tell us the story of Columbia's future. As such, these connections between and across elements are identified throughout the narrative.



POPULATION

A study of historic trends and population projections helps us better understand our community and plan for the provision of services for all.



NATURAL RESOURCES

In identifying our natural resources, we can better understand how to conserve, protect, or improve upon them in the years to come.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

How do we encourage a diverse, resilient, and vibrant economy which attracts employers and employees?



HOUSING

What does our housing market look like, and where are there gaps? This element considers different sizes and types of rental and owned-housing and how they are interwoven into the fabric of Columbia.



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is about mobility and accessibility for all – not just cars, but pedestrians, bikes, transit, freight, and passenger rail.



LAND USE

How we look at density, scale, and context – what types of uses are appropriate, and where?



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

We all rely on community facilities, from utilities and emergency services to parks and educational facilities – how we plan for these services over the next 10 years is vital to the heartbeat of Columbia.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Columbia is a city steeped in culture, from historic structures and fine arts to engaged artists and arts educators. The Amplify Columbia planning process helps define this element.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT

A guide to how we can move forward and bring our shared vision for the City to life. In a broad sense, this element represents the City's 10-year to-do list.

Navigating the Plan

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles were developed for each element (with the exception of Priority Investment) in response to the feedback received and analysis conducted, and in reflection of best practices. These principles were established relatively early in the process, and tested and fine-tuned through public engagement. These principles support the overall vision set forth in Envision Columbia.

Existing Conditions

Each element chapter contains a brief synopsis of the data gathered during the planning process. This summary of existing conditions provides a concise review of data relevant to the element as a whole, and to the recommendations within. Existing conditions reports with far greater detail are provided, per element, within the plan's appendices.

Unique Content

Certain plan elements contain additional content that is not found all of the element chapters. The Population chapter does not contain recommendations, but contains a much more detailed statistical analysis of Midlands trends, as well as a review of demographic projections. Both the Transportation and Land Use chapters contain official maps, which incorporated into the plan document provide policy guidance in addition to the guidance provided in the recommendations section. The Land Use chapter also contains policy guidance within each of the critical components identified within the chapter.

Recommendations

Recommendations are the heart of the plan document - built upon the foundation of the data and public input collected, through these recommendations we develop an action plan for the next ten years and lay the framework for our 2036 vision to be realized. Throughout Columbia Compass, these recommendations are organized in the same format, and all of the recommendations of the plan are compiled and summarized

within the Priority Investment chapter. Recommendations contain the following information:

-  Who is Responsible?
-  Duration
-  Priority
-  Cost
-  Reference to Themes & Other Elements
-  Data to be Collected
-  Measuring Success
-  Connection to Envision Columbia

Navigating the Plan

Responsibility

The recommendations set forth in Columbia Compass often identify City of Columbia divisions or departments as responsible parties, in addition to other entities. Where only one or two divisions within a department are listed as responsible parties, these are called out specifically. In the interest of brevity, where three or more divisions of a single department are responsible, the department as a whole is listed as a responsible party. If a single division should be listed as the primary facilitator, this will always be identified, whether the department is listed or not.

Budget, Grants & Program Management	Columbia Police Department (CPD) Administrative Bureau Code Enforcement Community Safety Officers Emergency Services Office of the Chief Office of the Deputy Chief Operations Bureau Professional Standards/Accreditation Public Information Special Services Bureau Traffic Safety Unit	Economic Development	Information Technology GIS Help Desk Network Systems	Procurement & Contracts
City Clerk		Emergency Management		Public Relations, Media & Marketing
City Manager		Engineering Architect Civil Engineering Construction Management Floodplain Mapping Real Estate Stormwater Survey	Legal	Public Works Animal Services Forestry & Beautification Solid Waste Streets Sustainability Traffic Engineering
City Management Office City Council Liaison & Constituent Services Governmental Affairs/Special Projects Mayor's Office & Staff			Municipal Court	
City Council	Columbia - Richland Fire (CFD) Administration Budget & Communications/IT Fire Marshal Health & Safety Operations Professional Services Public Information		Office of Business Opportunities	
Columbia-Richland 9-11		Finance Accounting Business Licensing Payment Center Payroll Treasurer	Parking Services	Safety & Risk Management
Columbia Water Customer Care Engineering Utility Operations			Parks & Recreation Operations & Maintenance Park Rangers Parks Recreation	Support Services
Community Development Community Liaison	Development Corporations Columbia Development Corporation Columbia Empowerment Zone, Inc. CHDC Two Notch Development Corporation Eau Claire Development Corporation	Fleet Services		Utility Operations Drinking Water Compliance Wastewater Compliance Wastewater Maintenance Wastewater Treatment Plant Water Maintenance Water Plant
Customer Care		Human Resources	Planning & Development Services Building Inspections Development Center Land Development Planning Zoning	
		Internal Auditor		

Navigating the Plan

Priority Investment

The Priority Investment element acts as a summary, or to-do list, of the recommendations of the plan. As such, this chapter is organized in a different manner from the other element-based chapters, and organizes the recommendations set forth in all of the element chapters by their priority (high, medium, or low).

Thematic Index

Ten topical themes identified during the planning process allow the reader to review the plan not only by element, but also by theme. Recommendations that relate to each of these themes are listed in a thematic index, much like a cookbook provides an index by ingredient. This index is meant to help the reader navigate the recommendations by theme, should they wish to read the plan in such a manner.

Glossary

While we have tried to stay away from the use of jargon wherever possible, a glossary is included which is meant to help the reader understand new or unfamiliar terms during their review.

Appendices

In order to focus on key messages and the implementation of recommendations, a number of appendices are included in Columbia Compass. These appendices include background data and information, as well as summaries of feedback received throughout the planning process.

DRAFT 12.18.19

Taking a Thematic View

Identifying Themes

A number of themes were identified during the planning process as a result of public input, research, and analysis. While the chapters of Columbia Compass are organized by element, it is important to note that these themes run through the plan as a whole, interweaving elements and influencing recommendations. The themes of Columbia Compass are organized into broad themes and topical themes.

Broad Themes

Throughout the planning process several broad themes emerged which spoke to not only desires for Columbia and Columbians, but also the underlying needs of the community. These themes of Equity & Accessibility, Safety, Public Health, and Resiliency relate back to the community's overall vision for Columbia.

Equity & Accessibility

Equity and accessibility is both a broad theme and a topical theme for Columbia Compass. In focusing on equity, we look to provide Columbians with what they need to succeed – some may require more assistance than others, but all should be provided with opportunity. A component of addressing equity is examining how accessible the City's spaces and services are, with our diverse population in mind.

Safety

Safety emerged as a broad theme early in the planning process, receiving the greatest number of references in the Fall 2018 survey. As a broad theme, safety includes one's perception of personal safety, the ability to safely move throughout one's community (using all modes of travel), safety in relationship to natural and man-made hazards, and public safety/emergency management. Safety is also a topical theme.

Public Health

While the City of Columbia is not a healthcare provider, much of what the City does has the potential to leave a lasting impact on public health. The City is involved in conserving our natural resources, providing safe and attractive infrastructure and spaces for recreation, and engaging with members of the community to facilitate healthy choices and opportunities.

Resiliency

Planning for resiliency is about anticipating and adapting to change. Resilience thinking examines how we adapt to and mitigate risks resulting from changes, whether those changes are due to population growth, development pressures, or our changing climate. The recommendations made within Columbia Compass all seek to identify ways that the City and its partners can better provide for the community with adaptation and mitigation of risks in mind.

Taking a Thematic View

Topical Themes

In addition to the four broad themes discussed above, ten topical themes were identified which allow the reader to review the plan not only by element, but also by theme. Each of these themes is prevalent throughout the document, and these themes have been identified for the reader specific to each recommendation. The themes that follow are complementary to one another and often overlap, however a single primary and in some cases secondary themes have been identified for each recommendation. Throughout the document, the meaning of the following topical themes may be nuanced, and might shift slightly across different plan elements.

- Data
- Partner
- Lead By Example
- Plan & Implement
- Equity & Accessibility
- Engagement & Outreach
- Safety
- Built Environment
- Conserve & Preserve
- Innovation & Technology

Data

In our increasingly technologically-driven and outcome-oriented society, much of how we view the world is driven by data. Access to meaningful data can allow the City and the community to set informed priorities; to better address inequities; to receive feedback on and adjust systems and services to improve quality and efficiency; and to measure successes.

Partner

While Columbia remains the largest city and the center of employment in the Midlands region, the City must plan and provide for its citizens while keeping the region in mind. Columbia's future is intertwined with that of the region, and both public and private partnerships are crucial to implementing the recommendations of Columbia Compass.

Lead By Example

As the regional hub and state capital, the City of Columbia should lead by example. Many recommendations set forth in Columbia Compass rely upon not only a commitment to excellence but also a cultural shift – when City staff, and the City as a whole, choose to lead by example, we can act as a catalyst for our community, our region, and beyond.

Plan & Implement

Anyone involved in a planning process has heard the old adage about plans just sitting on a shelf and gathering dust. This theme is not just about the planning process, but about setting and sticking to priorities and seeing them through.

Equity & Accessibility

Equity and accessibility is both a broad theme and a topical theme for Columbia Compass. In focusing on equity, we look to provide Columbians with what they need to succeed – some may require more assistance than others, but all should be provided the opportunity. A component of addressing equity is examining how accessible the City's spaces and services are, with our diverse population in mind.

Taking a Thematic View

Engagement & Outreach

Engagement and outreach is about providing all Columbians with the tools and information required to help our community thrive. Local government functions are often a mystery to the average citizen – this theme tackles how we as a city can facilitate a broader understanding through developing relationships with and aiding in the education and empowerment of our community, while also improving upon the customer experience. Engagement and outreach efforts may often work to target equity and accessibility concerns as well.

Safety

Safety can include one's perception of personal safety, the ability to safely move throughout one's community (using all modes of travel), safety in relationship to natural and man-made hazards, and public safety/emergency management. Safety is also a broad theme.

Built Environment

The City's built environment includes buildings, gateways and corridors, connections, design and historic character, public space, walkability, accessibility, and more. This theme is about how development, in the broadest sense of the word, shapes the feel and functionality of our City.

Conserve & Preserve

As members of a community, we are all caretakers of our resources. This theme is about how the City, businesses, and citizens alike can lighten our impacts and plan responsibly for our future needs and the needs of our broader ecosystem.

Innovation & Technology

As Columbia seeks to attract and retain talent, focusing on and fostering innovation and technology will be central to these efforts. Innovation is not just about bringing something new to Columbia, but instead is defined by setting the bar, for the region or beyond, and thinking outside the box. Much of this innovation will hinge on technological advances, both within City government-operated systems and within the region. This theme is often complementary to the themes of lead by example and data.

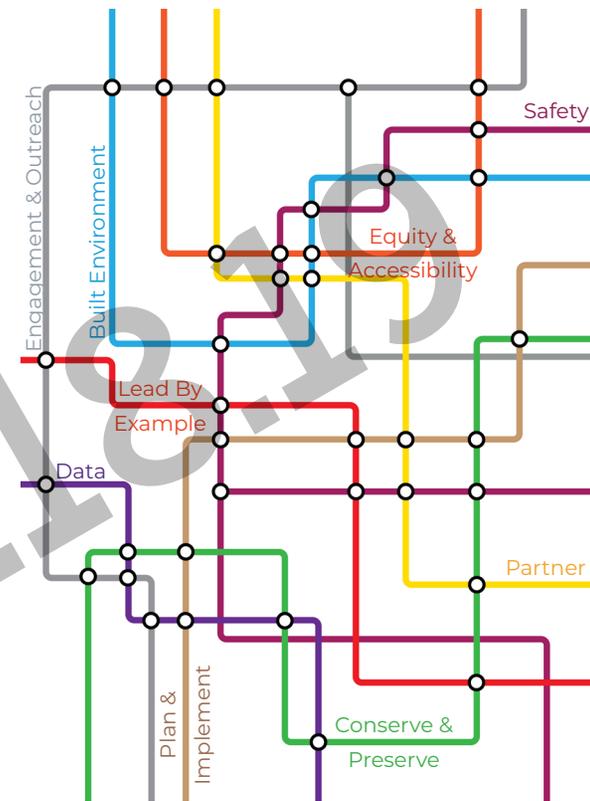


Image: iStock.com/Svetlozar Hristov