



Public Engagement

Face-to-Face

- Public Open Houses
 - October 2018
 - February 2019
- Neighborhood Meetings
 - Fall/Winter 2018
- Business Districts
- Civic Organizations
- Lunch With a Planner
- Focus Groups
- Community Events

Online/Mailing

- Interactive Online Surveys
 - Fall 2018
 - Spring 2019
- Website
- MailChimp Emails
- Newsletters
- Facebook & Twitter
- Dedicated Email for Comments
- Water Bill Mailers

We estimate 5,500 pieces of engagement so far!
(Not including 1,000+ water bill mailers or social media)



Appendix L

Public Engagement

This appendix highlights the various forms of engagement with the public that have occurred throughout the life of this planning process. While some types of engagement were more effective than others, they all provided opportunities to learn more about how Columbians engage with their City and how they perceive the future of Columbia.

2036?

IN THIS SECTION

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TOPICS

Public Meetings and Open Houses, Focus Groups, Social Media Outreach, Other Digital Outreach

APPENDIX L

Introduction

The most important part of any planning process is getting feedback from the public. Ensuring that all members of the community have the opportunity to voice their opinions results in a plan that is the most reflective of the desires and needs of the community at large. Ultimately, a plan that is developed by the people is more likely to be followed, implemented, and seen to fruition than a plan that lacks community buy-in.

To ensure that as many members of the public were reached as possible, a number of varied engagement strategies were used throughout the planning process. These techniques ranged from formal open houses and public meetings to in-person meetings with neighborhood groups and focus groups. One of the most effective ways the public was able to engage in this process was through the use of technology in the form of online surveys, informational emails, a website, and through social media. By using these techniques citizens were able to engage in the planning process in the manner that worked best for them.

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In-Person Participation

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups provided an opportunity to discuss topics with leaders in their field in a small group setting. Focus groups allowed City staff to ask more pointed questions to participants and gather feedback about specific subjects. The numerous focus groups that were held throughout this planning process provided City staff with information that assisted in the creation of a number of recommendations in this plan.

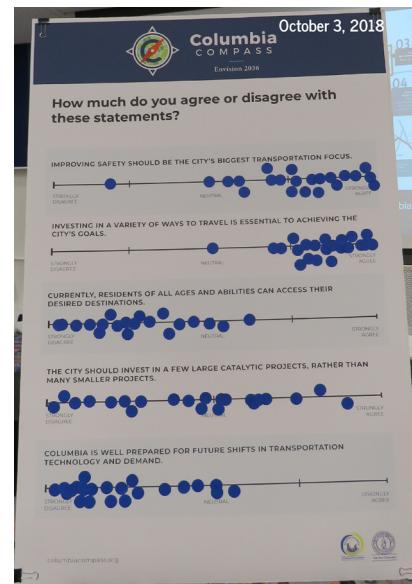
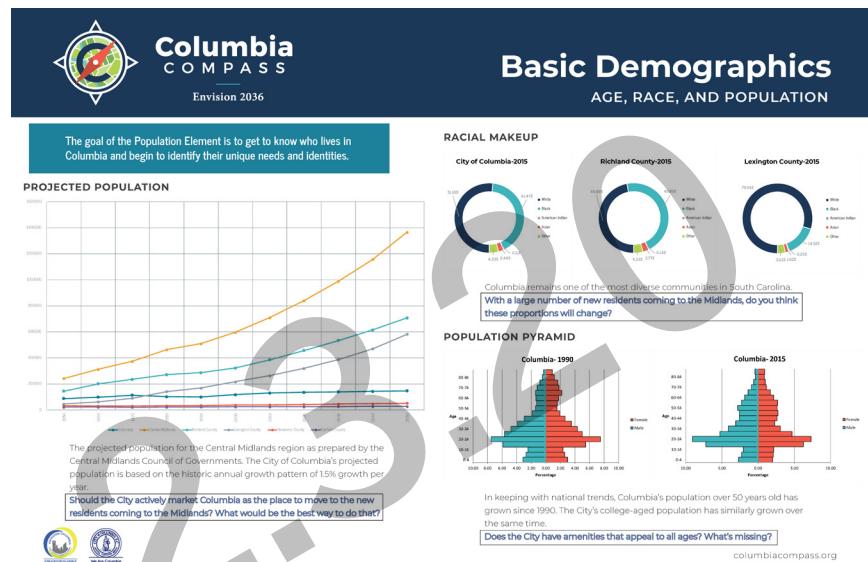
During this planning process, the Planning team met with over 500 people in nearly 50 separate focus group meetings. These individuals represented organizations and groups that play critical roles in the development of Columbia as well as the daily functions of the City. Focus group participants included: representatives of citizen groups, business leaders, educators, and City and government leaders, among others.



In-Person Participation

OCTOBER 2018 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

In the Fall of 2018, the first formal events of the Columbia Compass planning process were held. These Open Houses were held at Richland Library Main Branch and the Eau Claire Print Building. Over 60 people attended these two meetings. Attendees were provided an opportunity to learn more about the comprehensive planning process and the nine elements of the plan, and provide feedback about their vision for Columbia's future. Interactive boards were provided for each element which allowed participants to give feedback to specific questions about each element. Additionally, a recorded video with subtitles was played on repeat during the meeting to allow people to learn about the plan without the need of a formal presentation.



In-Person Participation

FEBRUARY 2019 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

In February 2019, City staff hosted another round of Public Open Houses. These Open Houses were drop-in meetings which had a series of displays for each of the nine elements to provide information that had been gathered during the first phase of the planning process. This format allowed participants to interact directly with the project team and provide more direct feedback. Specifically, participants were asked to pick their top draft implementation strategies for each element. This feedback allowed the project team to fine tune and reprioritize topics that would eventually be put into the final plan. These Open Houses were conducted at the Richland Library Main Branch and at the Woodland Park gymnasium and over 60 people attended.



Natural Resources GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NATURAL RESOURCES GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We believe in...

- Fostering a culture** that appreciates and is committed to protecting our natural resources. (Goals 3, 4, and 5)
- Leading by example** - the actions of our employees and our citizens set the standard in our state. (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)
- A Columbia that reduces, reuses, and recycles** - decreasing our production of waste and pollutants. (Goals 1, 3 and 5)
- Clean and accessible waterways**. (Goals 3, 4, and 5)
- A robust urban tree canopy** that contributes to the health and beauty of our city. (Goals 2, 3, 4, and 5)
- A Columbia where our natural resources benefit our community's health**. (Goals 2, 3, and 4)
- A prepared and resilient community** in the face of our changing climate. (Goals 1, 2, 3, and 5)
- A Columbia powered by clean and sustainable energy**. (Goals 1, 2, and 5)
- A data-driven and innovative approach** towards natural resource conservation and preservation. (Goals 1, 2, 3, and 5)



Are we missing any guiding principles for this element?
If so, leave yours with us on a sticky note!

We believe in...

ENVISION COLUMBIA GOALS

#1 Grow opportunities for entrepreneurship, business development and a skilled workforce to achieve a healthy economy.

#2 Connect the City, neighborhoods and business districts through cohesive land use, infrastructure development, and transportation planning.

#3 Foster a healthy quality of life focusing on safety, culture, and recreation.

#4 Collaborate and partner with entities within the Midlands region to become the state's prime destination for residents, visitors, and businesses.

#5 Provide high quality municipal services, effectively, efficiently, and respectfully.

columbiacompass.org



Natural Resources

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Which three of the below are the most important (●) for Columbia to accomplish in the next 10 years? Let us know by placing dots.

Pick 3! most important (●)

GROW AWARENESS

Partner with state and local agencies, nonprofits, schools/universities, neighborhoods, businesses, and other community groups to grow awareness and affect cultural change.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Examine City policies and practices to identify baseline data, improve efficiencies to conserve resources, names of buying power, and reduce, reuse, and recycle.

COLLABORATE & MAINTAIN A SYSTEMS APPROACH

Natural resource issues do not adhere to municipal boundaries - continue watershed-based planning efforts and collaborations, and partner to provide consistent and effective messaging on regional needs and goals.

PLAN FOR RESILIENCY

Identify and implement robust strategies for managing natural hazards and increased strains on resources, including consideration of climate change-related risks.

BE READY FOR 100% CLEAN & RENEWABLE ENERGY

Move to 100% clean energy generation for City facilities.
Invest in and increase clean-energy usage in development.
Invest in and increase energy efficiency in buildings while prioritizing access for citizens facing the largest energy burdens (financial burden) and pollution hazards.

TACKLE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

Move to improve water quality through:
- Education and outreach
- Stream restoration and mitigation
- Sustainable stormwater and wastewater infrastructure improvements

PROTECT, PROVIDE, & ENHANCE ACCESS

Protect natural areas and waterways to:
- the City's rivers and waterways
- open spaces and natural areas
- a healthy urban tree canopy

DEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT SUSTAINABLY

Set the standard for integrating the river into City life in a way that provides public access, brings activity to the riverfront, and protects ecosystem services.

TRACK OUR PROGRESS

Work to identify and gather the data needed to set a baseline and measure both our successes and failures.

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Is there a strategy we are missing that we should consider accomplishing in next ten years? Write it down on a sticky and leave it here.

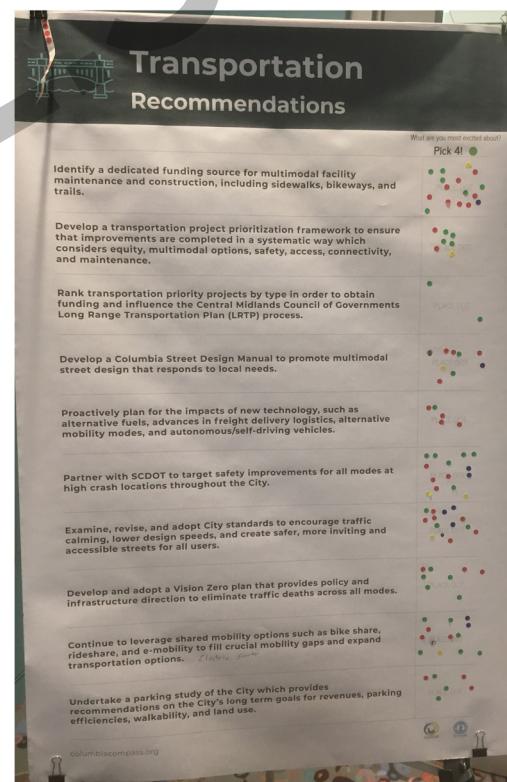


In-Person Participation

JANUARY 2020 PUBLIC MEETINGS

In January 2020, the City entered the final phase of the Columbia Compass planning process by holding the last series of public meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to present the completed draft of the plan to the public. These meetings provided an opportunity for the public to interact with the project team and provide any comments about the draft of the plan. Unlike the Public Open Houses, these meetings included a presentation which was held twice each evening. Participants were asked to identify the top four recommendations from each element they were most excited about. The feedback from this meeting was used by City staff to reconsider the prioritization of recommendations of the plan. These Open Houses were conducted throughout the City at the Richland Library Main Branch, the Richland Library St. Andrews Branch, the Richland Library Southeast Branch, and the Busby Street Parks building. These meetings were held earlier in the evening than previous meetings, from 5:30 to 7:30. The earlier portion of each meeting saw the highest attendance. In total, over 130 people attended these meetings.

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In-Person Participation

MEETINGS IN A BOX

In an effort to streamline community meetings and ensure that each meeting conveyed the same critical information, City staff worked to develop a “Meeting in a Box.” The Meeting in a Box concept was developed by City staff in coordination with the consultant team of Clarion Associates and planning NEXT. The purpose of this meeting format was to allow City staff to be adaptable to different audiences, time constraints, and content. The initial plan for this meeting type was to standardize meetings for various time frames and allow for these meetings to occur simultaneously throughout the City, thereby improving efficiency.

City staff used the Meeting in a Box format to conduct small format community meetings in the Fall of 2018. These meetings were used to bridge the gap between the first and second open houses by having meetings with groups of neighborhoods, located within neighborhood centers. These meetings provided attendees with a brief explanation of the comprehensive planning process and City staff asked open-ended questions to elicit feedback and discussion. Attendance at these meetings varied but provided an opportunity for staff to reach out to specific neighborhoods for their feedback. Unfortunately, these small-scale meetings did not result in a large enough participation to be considered worthwhile. This series of 10 community meetings had less than 60 participants in attendance combined.

Why do we need to hear from you?

- Community input is a priority for City leaders.
- Your input is needed to make sure the plan reflects community needs and values.
- The comprehensive plan will impact your community.

Question 1

What do you think are critical opportunities that this city-wide plan should address to make Columbia a better place?

Slides developed for the Meetings in a Box

In-Person Participation

AMPLIFY MEETINGS

Amplify Columbia was a collaborative effort between the City of Columbia and One Columbia which aimed to identify opportunities for broadening public participation in arts and cultural activities. The Amplify Columbia planning process helped to inform the Cultural Resources element of the Columbia Compass plan. Facilitated community conversations were held involving a broad cross section of Columbia's community. Amplify meetings focused on four core areas:

- Economic prosperity for the Columbia region
- Cultural vitality
- Social and cultural equity
- Ways to embed arts and culture across the City's comprehensive plan.

These meetings were held with community, advocacy, and business groups throughout the planning process.



In-Person Participation

LUNCH WITH A PLANNER

In an effort to provide a greater variety of opportunities for the public to engage with City staff during this planning process, an event called Lunch with a Planner was created. Lunch with a Planner encouraged the public to bring their lunch and meet with City staff during lunchtime hours. These drop-in events gave members of the public an opportunity to discuss the nine elements of the comprehensive plan and other planning topics in a more casual atmosphere than traditional public meetings.

The Lunch with a Planner events gave City staff an opportunity to go to where the people are rather than enticing people to come to them. To achieve this, these events were held in areas where people would be midday. These areas included the City's business districts such as the Main Street District and Five Points, as well as popular public areas like Riverfront Park. The results of this program were hit-or-miss with certain areas of the City providing a larger number of participants than others. While public participation in these events was limited, the Lunch with a Planner events provided a valuable opportunity for staff to learn more about how to effectively engage with the public. In total, 6 Lunch with a Planner events were held with less than 20 people participating.

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In-Person Participation

OTHER COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In an effort to spread awareness of the Columbia Compass planning process and elicit as much feedback as possible, Planning staff sought unique ways to meet with the public. The manner of outreach was largely dependent on the event or meeting staff was attending. Some of the outreach that was conducted included, but is not limited to:

- Placing advertising inserts in customers' monthly water bills
- Presenting to Columbia's Council of Neighborhoods
- Presenting to the Forest Acres and Downtown Rotary Clubs
- Handing out information to students on USC's campus
- Presenting to a teen group at the Boys & Girls club
- Presenting to a children summer camp at City Hall
- Providing information to attendees at National Night Out

Throughout the planning process, staff worked to present to as many people as possible in an effort to get a diverse range of respondents and grow awareness of Columbia Compass.

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Staff handing out information to students on USC's campus

Online Participation

MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS

Throughout the planning process newsletters were developed with two goals in mind. The first goal was to allow residents, businesses, City employees, and City Council members to stay engaged in the planning process. The second goal was to be able to provide information, data, and knowledge that was being collected during the planning process to the public throughout the process instead of just at public meetings.

The newsletters focused on each of the nine elements as well as key themes and general background information. Newsletters were available in paper format at outreach events, and were also posted to the project website. Those that signed up for the Columbia Compass email list also receive links to the newsletters.



February 2019

Please Join Us!

Land Use Planning: Framing the Vision

What is land use planning?

Land use planning is the process of planning about how we live, work, play, and play in our environment to look in the future. Built on a visioning process, it frames the discussion for the steps needed to move the community's vision for the future. As a municipal government, the City helps facilitate this community-wide visioning process. This newsletter is the first comprehensive plan and through small area planning.

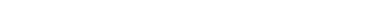
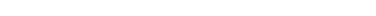
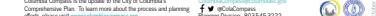
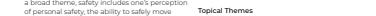
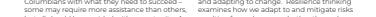
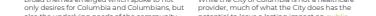
As part of the broader comprehensive plan, the land use element helps provide guidance on where and how growth should occur within the existing urban area and surrounding areas. The planning process helps to identify three components: the community's desired built environment and makes recommendations for improvements from reinvestment and regeneration to preservation and protection.

Did you know?

The City's Boards & Commissions frequently look to the recommendations made in the land use element for recommendations made in adopted neighborhood, area, and corridor plans, when making decisions about applications for rezoning or site plan review. These recommendations are non-binding, they help provide context by informing decision makers of the community's vision and guiding principles.

Columbia Compass is the update to the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan. To learn more about the process and planning efforts, please visit www.columbiacompas.org.

Planning Division: 803.45.3222



Online Participation

SOCIAL MEDIA

A new way City staff sought to elicit feedback and provide information about the Columbia Compass planning process was through the creation of a social media presence. Planning staff created a Facebook and Twitter account using the handle @ColaCompass. These Columbia Compass social media accounts allowed staff to interact with the public in a real-time, informal manner and provided an avenue to disseminate information about the comprehensive plan.

As the Planning Division did not have a social media account prior to the Columbia Compass planning process, staff worked to build these accounts from the ground up. Staff relied on the City's Public Relations, Media & Marketing Department for guidance and partnered with other City department and outside agencies to build the Columbia Compass social network. The social media accounts were also bolstered by "boosting" posts and creating ads on Facebook advertising the page and upcoming public meetings which allowed staff to reach people who may have not been previously engaged in this process. As of February 2020, the Columbia Compass Facebook and Twitter accounts had over 300 followers combined.



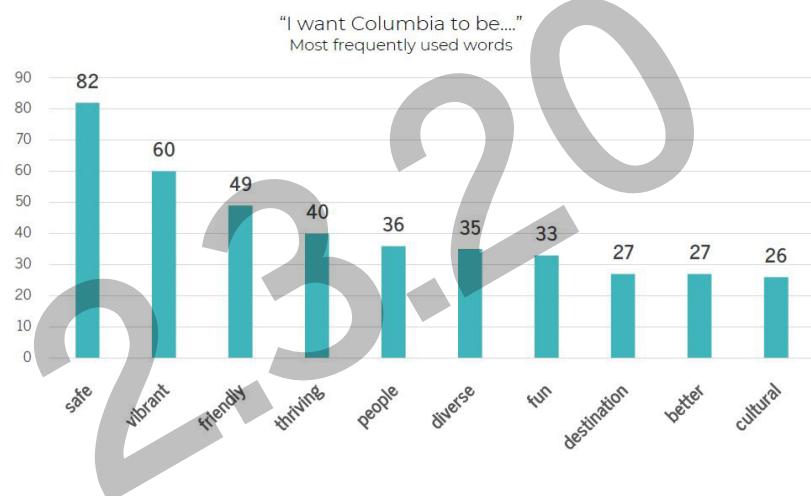
Online Participation

ONLINE SURVEYS

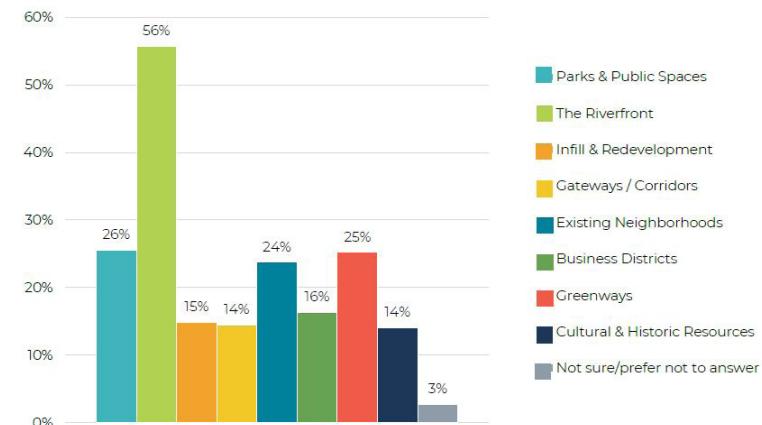
During the Columbia Compass planning process, two surveys were created to allow participants to provide direct feedback and opinions about Columbia's future. The first survey was created in conjunction with the first series of public open houses and launched in September 2018. This survey was created using the MetroQuest survey platform and was administered by Kimley-Horn and Associates. This survey was used to collect feedback on the following topics: Plan Elements, Planning Statements, Mapping, Vision, and Demographics. Over 1100 participants took the first survey.

A second survey was created in February 2019 to collect feedback on potential improvement strategies. This second survey, which used the Survey Monkey platform, allowed Planning staff to use the feedback and information that had been gathered from the previous survey and public meetings to ask more pointed questions of participants. Feedback from this survey and other feedback was used to create the plan's recommendations. Over 1800 participants took the second survey.

These surveys were boosted using the Columbia Compass Facebook page to gain additional participants from ZIP codes that have had lower participation. We also used this information to post about participation by ZIP code which encouraged others to participate. Detailed results and participation of these surveys are presented in Appendices I and J.



Which of the following opportunities should Columbia capitalize on for the most impact? (Select up to two)

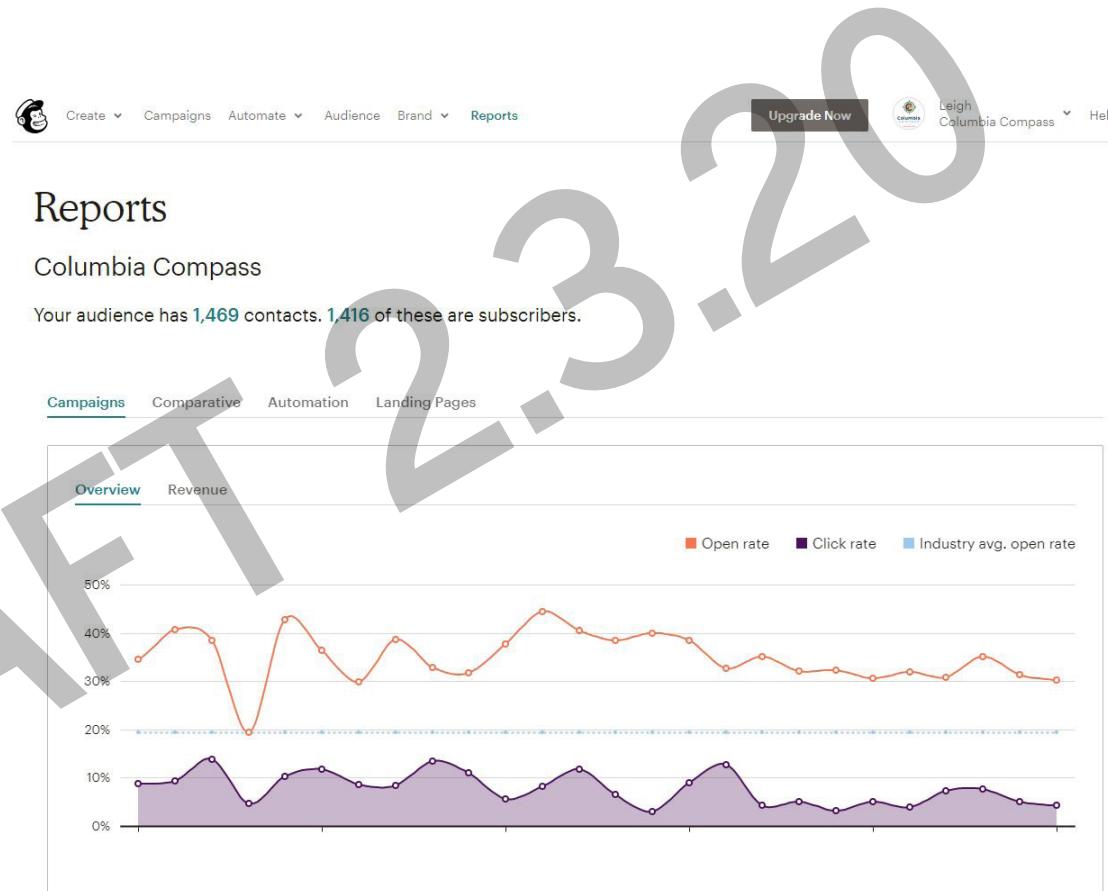


Online Participation

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

To facilitate public participation, Planning staff created a MailChimp participant email list and the email address columbiacompass@columbiasc.gov. This email list was used to alert subscribers to upcoming Columbia Compass events and meetings. The email list was also used to distribute newsletters and other information and solicit participation in surveys and other forms of feedback. The subscriber list was initially created by adding City department heads and neighborhood presidents, but quickly grew as participants requested to be alerted to news about the comprehensive plan. From an initial list of 322 contacts who received the first MailChimp email in September 2018, the number of subscribers grew steadily, building to 1,418 by late January 2020.

This email was curated using the marketing platform Mailchimp.com. MailChimp was selected due to its ability to integrate other planning outreach efforts such as social media accounts and the Columbia Compass website while maintaining the branding style of the Columbia Compass plan. These factors helped the Columbia Compass email to surpass average open and click rates for the industry and reach people in their own homes.



MailChimp audience and participation rates from September 2018 to January 2020.

Online Participation

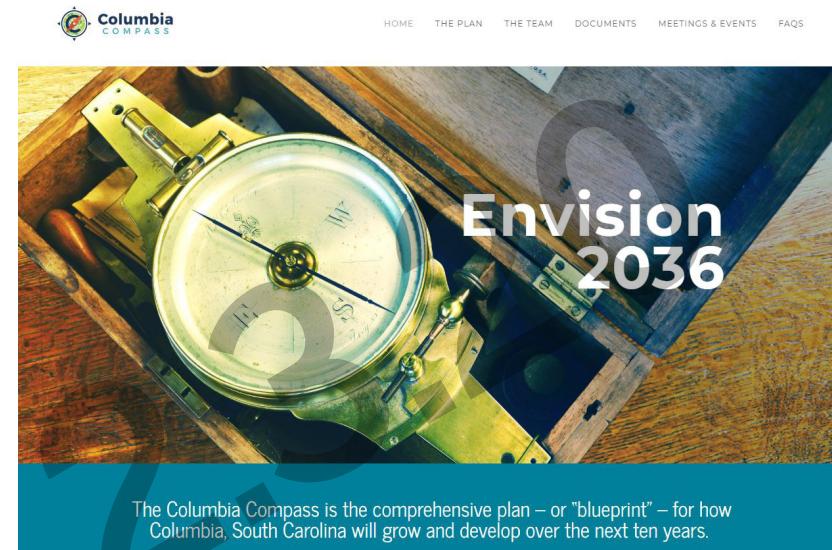
WEBSITE

To provide a hub for all information pertaining to the Columbia Compass planning process, Planning staff and the graphic design and marketing team created a website and purchased the URL www.columbiacompass.org. Developed using Weebly, a web hosting service company, the Columbia Compass website functioned as a place to provide easy to access information about the comprehensive plan and ways to participate. The website also allowed users to easily access the plan's social media accounts and sign up for Mailchimp emails.

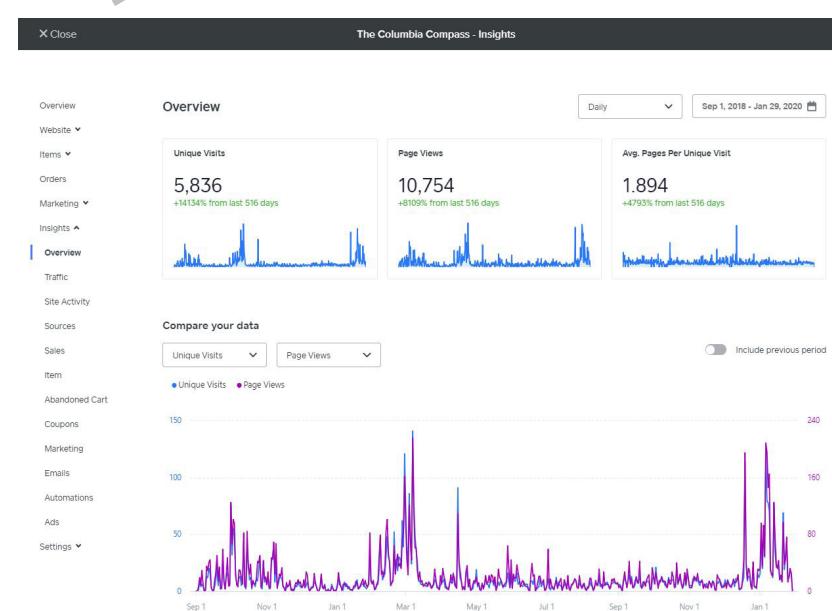
The website hosts information about the various elements of the plan as well as information about the history of the planning process, the staff working on the plan, meetings and events, documents, and FAQs. The website also allowed for dynamic editing which provided the most up-to-date information about the planning process.

Following the completion of the plan, the website will remain active and be updated regularly.

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The Columbia Compass is the comprehensive plan – or “blueprint” – for how Columbia, South Carolina will grow and develop over the next ten years.



Overview

Unique Visits: 5,836 (+14134% from last 516 days)

Page Views: 10,754 (+8109% from last 516 days)

Avg. Pages Per Unique Visit: 1.894 (+4793% from last 516 days)

Compare your data:

- Unique Visits
- Page Views

Include previous period

240

190

160

130

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10 Sep 1 Nov 1 Jan 1 Mar 1 May 1 Jul 1 Sep 1 Nov 1 Jan 1