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Glossary

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Glossary

The following definitions were collected from a variety of resources, primarily from professional experience and knowledge from City staff. However, several sources were referenced to confirm some of the definitions. These include www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary as well as sources noted at the end of this glossary.

A

ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act. Signed into law on July 26, 1990, the ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services.¹

ADA-Accessibility

Standards that are required by the Americans with Disability Act. These standards range from physical amenities like wheelchair ramps to technological amenities like closed captioning and computer screen readers.

Affordable Housing

Generally speaking, housing is considered to be affordable if the cost of the housing, including utility bills, property taxes, and maintenance costs, do not exceed 30% of the homeowner's or renter's monthly gross income. In the City of Columbia, the definition of affordable housing may vary based on the program or grant.

American Community Survey (ACS)

An ongoing survey from the United States Census Bureau that provides information annually on jobs and occupations, educational attainment, population and demographics, housing, transportation, and more.

Area Median Income (AMI)

The median, or midpoint, of a region's household income distribution. The AMI is calculated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annually. AMI is often used to calculate affordability of a region and can be a criteria to be eligible for an affordable housing program (i.e. households earning 60% or less of the AMI are eligible).

At-Grade Crossing

An intersection of a railroad track with another transportation facility (another track, road, bicycle/pedestrian facility) at the same level.

B

Baby Boomer Generation

The generation of people who were born between approximately 1946 and 1964.

Biodiversity

The variety of life, either worldwide or in a particular ecosystem or habitat. Biodiversity can occur within a species, between species, or between ecosystems.

Bioswale

A landscaping feature vegetated with plants that are designed to slow down, collect, infiltrate and filter runoff storm water from impervious surfaces. Bioswales are most often found in areas with large amounts of impervious surfaces such as roadways or parking lots.

Brownfield

A tract of land that has been developed for industrial purposes, polluted, and then abandoned.

Business Improvement District (BID)

A private corporation governed by business property owners within a geographically defined area. These organizations are authorized at the state level and require approval of the local jurisdiction. Once established, property owners pay an assessment that funds the BID and its activities.

C

Capital Improvement

The addition of a permanent structural change or the restoration of some aspect of a property that will either enhance the property's overall value, prolongs its useful life, or adapt it to new uses. Individuals, businesses, and cities can make capital improvements to the property they own. In a business or municipal sense, this process may also be known as capital expenditures.²

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Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

A short term plan, generally 3 to 6 years, that identifies capital improvements that are or will be necessary, a method for implementing those improvements, and possible funding sources.

Carbon Footprint

The measurement of the amount of carbon dioxide (CO²) and other carbon compounds by that individual, organization, or geographic area due to the consumption of fossil fuels by an individual, organization, or geographic area.

Census Block Group

A United States Census Bureau geographic designation that encompasses between 600 to 3,000 people. Census tracts are further broken down into Census blocks.

Census Tract

A United States Census Bureau geographic designation that encompasses between 2,500 to 8,000 people. Census tracts are further broken down into Census block groups and Census blocks.

Central City

A city that constitutes the densely populated center of a metropolitan area.

Central Midlands

A designated geographic area that consists of Richland, Lexington, Newberry, and Fairfield counties.

CMCOG

Central Midlands Council of Governments. There are ten Councils of Government in South Carolina. Councils of Governments serve as an extension of county and local governments, serving as a resource for technical assistance, securing state and federal dollars to address critical issues for our communities, and by advocating at a state and national level for economic and quality of life improvements for the state.

COMET

The Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority. The COMET is the operator of mass transportation in Lexington and Richland counties in the Columbia metropolitan area.

Complete Neighborhood

A neighborhood that offers a range of housing options and provides residents with safe, convenient access to employment, schools, transit, and other goods and services that people may use on a daily basis, such as grocery stores, health care, utilities, sidewalks and bike lanes, emergency services, parks, and more.

Complete Street

An approach or policy to the design of streets which requires streets to be designed, planned, operated and maintained to ensure comfortable, safe and convenient access and travel for all users across different modes of transportation.

Connectivity

The measurement of a system of streets with multiple routes and connections serving the same origins and destinations. Simply stated, a high degree of connectivity means there are many ways to get from Point A to Point B.³

Corridor

A passage linking two or more spaces, typically referring to a major street or thoroughfare.

Cultural Memory

A shared history that defines a culture.

Cycle Track

An exclusive bike facility that combines the user experience of a separated path with the on-street infrastructure of a conventional bike lane. A cycle track is physically separated from motor traffic and distinct from the sidewalk.

D

Data

A value or set of values that represent a specific concept or concepts. These can be numbers (quantities), descriptions, symbols, etc.

Dataset

A named collection of related records, with the collection containing data organized or formatted in a specific or prescribed way.

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Design Speed

The speed a roadway or other travel-way is designed to accommodate comfortably. Streets with lower design speeds tend to have geometric features that help cue drivers to travel at a certain speed, such as narrower lanes, pedestrian bumpouts, traffic calming measures, or street trees. Often roadways are designed to accommodate higher speeds than the posted speed limits, resulting in safety concerns across all modes.

E

Ecosystem

A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. Ecosystems can be defined by the habitat type (i.e. forest or freshwater), and can be used to describe a large or small physical environment.

Ecosystem Services

The beneficial impacts provided to humans and other organisms as a result of a well-functioning ecosystem. The beneficial nature of functioning wetlands is often used to exemplify ecosystem services, as wetlands provide wildlife habitat, natural flood control, and water purification, along with a number of other benefits.

Empty-nester

Typically refers to parents whose children have moved out of their homes.

Encroachment

The building of structures beyond their property lines which may belong to the government, an individual or an institution.

Entrepreneur

One who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise.

F

Food Desert

An area where people have limited access to a variety of healthy and affordable food.⁵

G

Gateway

A strip of undeveloped land set aside for recreational activities.

Generation X

The generation of people who were born between approximately 1965 and 1980.

Generation Z

The generation of people who were born after 1996. The exact ending year for Generation Z is continuing to be studied.

Great Recession, The

A term that represents the sharp decline in economic activity during the late 2000s. This period is considered the most significant downturn since the Great Depression.⁴

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is defined by Section 502 of the Clean Water act as "...the range of measures that use plant or soil systems, permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or landscaping to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems or to surface waters."

Greenhouse Gas

Greenhouse gases are those gases which absorb and trap infrared radiation, or heat, in the atmosphere, leading to a warming effect, often referred to as the greenhouse effect. Carbon dioxide (CO²) is the most highly emitted gas in the United States according to the USEPA, however Methane (CH⁴), Nitrous oxide (N²), fluorinated gases are all also powerful greenhouse gases.

Greenway

A corridor of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use or environmental protection.

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H

Homestead Exemption

In South Carolina, the Homestead Exemption is a complete exemption of taxes on the first \$50,000 in Fair Market Value of your Legal Residence for homeowners over age 65, totally and permanently disabled, or legally blind.⁶

I

Impact Fee

Impact fees are payments required by local governments of new development for the purpose of providing new or expanded public capital facilities required to serve that development. The fees typically require cash payments in advance of the completion of development, are based on a methodology and calculation derived from the cost of the facility and the nature and size of the development, and are used to finance improvements offsite of, but to the benefit of the development.⁷

Infill

New buildings constructed in the space available between existing structures. Can be considered the opposite of urban sprawl.

Institutional Knowledge

Collective knowledge gained by experience. Institutional knowledge is a primary reason for increasing efforts to retain employees.

L

Livability

The sum of environmental, economic, and cultural factors that add up to a community's quality of life.

Location Quotient

An analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit (usually the nation). An LQ is computed as an industry's share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, GDP by metropolitan area, employment, etc.) divided by the industry's share of the national total for the same statistic.⁸

M

Mean

The average found by summing a series of values, then dividing by the number of values.

Median

The midpoint value of a series of values. Median averages are typically used to without being influenced by extreme values.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A document that expresses mutual agreement between two or more parties.

Metadata

Data that provides information about other data. Data.gov requires certain fields including title, description, tags, last update, publisher, etc.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

A geographic region that contains a core area with substantial population density, along with adjacent areas that are integrated with the core. Specific standards are applied by the United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Columbia MSA consists of Richland, Lexington, Calhoun, Fairfield, Kershaw, and Saluda counties.

Millennial Generation

The generation of people who were born between approximately 1981 and 1996.

Mixed Use

A type of development which brings together commercial, residential, institutional, cultural or industrial uses in a functional and physical way. Mixed-use can be a singular building, a whole city block and even an entire neighborhood.

Multifamily Housing

A building containing three or more dwelling units, with each unit sharing common vertical walls and/or horizontal floors and ceilings with another dwelling unit. Multifamily dwellings include apartments, tenements, condominiums, cooperatives and similar types of structures, but not townhouse dwellings.

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Multimodal

Accommodation of all users, from cars and trucks to bicyclists, pedestrians, those provided for by the Americans with Disabilities Act, transit users, and sometimes rail transit (passenger and freight).

Municipal Improvement District (MID)

A special assessment district that assess fees to property owners in a specific area to fund public improvements that provide a benefit to the properties in the district.

O

Open Data

Data that can be freely used, re-used, and redistributed by anyone. It should be machine-readable, available in bulk, and provided in an open format such as a .CSV (Comma Separated Values) file.

P

Peer City

Cities that are similar in size or have similar aspects as Columbia.

Placemaking

A planning approach that emphasizes a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

Plan- Area, Neighborhood, or Corridor

A community-driven plan that addresses the vision for a specific area, neighborhood, or corridor. Such planning efforts are comprehensive in nature, but may target specific issues present in the study area, and tend to result in more detailed recommendations for the built environment than a broader city-wide comprehensive plan effort.

Priority-Based Budgeting

An accounting tool that seeks to improve performance by assessing an organizations activities and determining priorities prior to adopting a budget. The goal of the system is to reduce costs and channel resources into high priority areas of the organization.

Public Realm

The streets, squares, and public spaces that belong to everyone and may be accessed freely.

Q

Qualitative Data

Data that is descriptive in nature, rather than numerical. Qualitative data is generally gathered through interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

Quantitative Data

Data that is numerical and can be analyzed mathematically.

R

Resiliency

"...the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure."⁹ Planning for resiliency involves thinking about how we adapt to and mitigate risks resulting from changes - whether those changes are due to population growth, development pressures, or our changing climate.

Ride Sharing

An arrangement in which a passenger travels in a private vehicle driven by its owner, for free for a fee, especially as arranged by means of a website or app.¹⁰

Riparian

Areas relating to or situated along river or stream banks or associated wetlands. Riparian areas provide critical ecosystem services, and healthy riparian areas facilitate biodiversity.

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S

Safe Routes to School

A national program that brings together parents, schools, and community leaders to encourage students, including those with disabilities, to walk and bike to school.¹¹

SCDOT

South Carolina Department of Transportation.

School Attendance Zone

The geographic area that determine the public elementary, middle, or high school assignment of children within that area.

Shared Mobility

Transportation services that are shared among users, including public transit; taxis and limos; bikesharing; carsharing (round-trip, one-way, and personal vehicle sharing); ridesharing (car-pooling, van-pooling); ridesourcing; scooter sharing; shuttle services; neighborhood jitneys; and commercial delivery vehicles providing flexible goods movement.¹²

Single-Family Housing

A building containing exactly one dwelling unit, not physically attached to any other principal structure, and specifically excluding mobile homes.

Smart Infrastructure

A framework which collects data from citizens, devices, and assets that is processed and analyzed to monitor and manage traffic and transportation systems, power plants, utilities, water supply networks, waste management, crime detection, information systems, schools, libraries, hospitals, and other community services.¹³

Start-Up Facilities

Spaces where new and start-up companies can begin their businesses. Also called business incubators.

STEM

Refers to degrees and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Strategic Partnership

A relationship between two commercial enterprises, usually formalized by one or more business contracts. A strategic partnership will usually fall short of a legal partnership entity, agency, or corporate affiliate relationship.¹⁴

Streetscape

The visual elements of a street, including the road, adjoining buildings, sidewalks, street furniture, trees, and open spaces that combine to form the street's character.

Suburbanization

The pattern of population movement away from the urban core of cities to outlying areas that develop into suburbs.

T

Tactical Urbanism

A way to experiment with solutions to problems in public spaces in a creative, inexpensive, temporary way. Tactical urbanism gives people who live around and use public spaces chance to respond in a practical and creative way to the problems/issues/opportunities they see. Also, known as DIY urbanism, Planning-by-Doing, Urban Acupuncture, or Urban Prototyping.

Talent

A region's ability to provide a skilled workforce to meet the demands of industry in its economy. Metrics include GDP per worker, STEM degrees awarded, STEM salaries, percentage of knowledge workers, educational attainment and percentage of global talent.¹⁵

Talent Index Value

A construct meant to monitor the changes in talent of cities over time.

Tax Abatement

A partial or total reduction in a tax.

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Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

A public finance tool that municipalities use to help revitalize an area that has become, or is in danger of becoming, run down or blighted. A TIF allows municipalities to incur debt for the redevelopment of a project area and use the additional property tax revenue generated by the redevelopment projects to pay off that debt.¹⁶

Trade Cluster

A group of business which are located near one another and draw economic advantages because of their location and serve markets beyond the region.

Traffic Calming

The combination of measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for non-motorized street users. Traffic calming consists of physical design and other measures put in place on existing roads to reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.¹⁷

Transitional Housing

Accommodations for persons in need of temporary housing services. Populations in need of transitional housing might include persons challenged by or at risk of homelessness, recovering from addiction, returning from incarceration, or recovering from natural disasters.

U

Underutilized Parcel

A parcel that is developed but not used to its full developable potential.

Urban Sprawl

The spreading of urban developments (such as housing and shopping centers) on undeveloped land near a city. Urban sprawl generally follows the extension of utilities like water and sewer which allows for the development of residential suburbs.

Utility, Public

A business organization (such as an electric company) performing a public service and subject to special governmental regulation.

V

Vector-Borne Diseases

Vector-borne diseases are human illnesses that are caused by the bacteria, parasites, and viruses transmitted by mosquitoes, sandflies, triatomine bugs, blackflies, ticks, tsetse flies, mites, snails, and lice. The World Health Organization notes that a combination of the major vector borne diseases account for around 17% of all infectious diseases.¹⁸

Vehicle Throughput

The number of distinct vehicles (or people) able to enter or exit the system during the analysis period.

Venture Capital

Capital (such as retained corporate earnings or individual saves) invested or available for investment in the ownership element of a new or fresh enterprise. Also called risk capital.

Vulnerable Neighborhood

A neighborhood that is in decline or threatened with decline and/or where there are above average concentrations of populations that are at risk of involuntary displacement. Several metrics can be used to determine whether a neighborhood is declining, including the number of nuisance complaints and code enforcement issues in the neighborhood, the number of building permits being applied for, reported property maintenance issues, and property valuation changes over time (when compared to comparable neighborhoods or the area as a whole). Populations that may be of greater risk of involuntary displacement include renters, communities of color, low income households, single parent households, etc.

Z

Zoning

A legal restriction affecting urban design, parts of cities being deemed to be for particular uses – ex: for businesses, housing, etc. – and the heights and volumes of buildings being prescribed.

Endnotes

- 1 https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm
- 2 <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/capitalimprovement.asp>
- 3 <https://www.chescoplanning.org/MuniCorner/Tools/connectivity.cfm>
- 4 <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/great-recession.asp>
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