



Turning Plans into Action

We've been asking you all to think about some big picture ideas, and during this process you may have wondered what the City's track record is on plan implementation. With this newsletter, we've chosen to highlight the implementation of two of the City's more successful planning efforts: the *Congaree Vista Revitalization Plan* (1983) and the *City Center Master Plan* (1999). A subsequent effort, the *Innovista Master Plan* (2007), built upon the successes of these two plans and is also in the process of implementation. Given the age of these plans, we are able to revisit some of the implementation efforts that with hindsight can be seen as catalysts for these areas.

The Vista



By the time the *Congaree Vista Revitalization Plan* was completed in 1983, a few major initiatives were also in the works, reflecting the groundswell of enthusiasm for revitalization in the Vista. These efforts helped to shape the Vista as we know it today. Planning

had begun for railroad relocation and grade separation allowing the rail lines to be removed from the heart of the Vista, with construction to occur in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Columbia Development Corporation had been established by the City in 1980, and was charged with aiding the proposed revitalization of the area. The Riverfront Park project was underway, scheduled for completion in 1983. The State Museum was set up in 1986 in the historic Mount Vernon Mill, and plans to build what is now Finlay Park were in the works.

Upcoming Events

The City's Sixth Annual Pedestrian & Bicycle Counts are underway! You can still count September 17, 18, 19, & 21. These two-hour counts on weekday and weekend mornings help ensure that transit riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists are also counted and taken into account for road design. Sign up to count [here!](#)

Celebrate Park(ing) Day
September 20, 10:00am - 4:00pm
Visit parklets on City streets throughout downtown - a map of parklet locations will be released prior to the event [here.](#)

The *Congaree Vista Revitalization Plan* built upon this groundswell, making a number of recommendations that were subsequently implemented, and some of which are still in process. With the planned removal and relocation of rails from the Vista and tax increment financing (TIF) to help with funding, property in the area was ripe for redevelopment, and a vision was key to ensuring the area would thrive. What is now the Vista Towers development was identified for highrise residential development in the plan. The state correctional facility was also identified for residential redevelopment to bring residents back to the Vista, and is now the Canalside development. The plan also recommended the rehabilitation of existing historic buildings and amendments to the zoning code that would eventually allow for the mix of uses that we see in the Vista today.

City Center

As with the Vista, the planning process for the City Center Master Plan was part of a larger interest in the revitalization of the historic core. The plan split the area bounded by the river, Elmwood, Pickens, and Blossom into five districts: the Arena District, Arsenal Hill, Canal District, Main Street/Central Business District, and the Vista, making recommendations each area, and providing a detailed market analysis of the study area. The plan began as a strategic assessment, which also recommended the development of design guidelines for the area, and conducted a location assessment for the arena/convention center.

Recommendations of the plan included the attraction of local and regional retailers and restaurants, the development of a convention center, arena, and associated hotel on Lincoln Street, the streetscaping of Assembly Street between Gervais and Blossom, revitalization of the Arsenal Hill community through the renovation of existing units and placement of new homes in the abandoned railroad cut, redevelopment of the Kline Steel site at Huger and Gervais, and the streetscaping of Main Street to name a few. With collaboration and wide support, implementation of the plan transformed the City's center, building upon efforts already underway. Though there are many examples we can point to for implementation, two stand out: Main Street and the Convention Center/Colonial Life Arena.



Columbians take in Main Street's generous tree-lined sidewalks in front of the Meridian Building, a Class A office tower built in 2004.

Did you know?

Elevated rail lines used to travel up Lincoln Street, served by a train station that is now the Blue Marlin. This line continued to a rail yard at what is now Finlay Park, and had once been Sidney Park prior to its use as a rail yard by the Seaboard Line.

Main Street

The redevelopment of Main Street has been a huge success for Columbia. The City helped bring the Columbia Museum of Art to Main Street in 1998 and took on the streetscaping of Main Street north of Gervais during the early 2000s, widening sidewalks, adding trees, and reducing vehicular travel to two lanes. The business improvement district (BID), known as City Center Partnership, was formed in 2001, and TAPP'S was rehabilitated and its apartments opened in 2003. Mast General Store came to Main Street in 2011, along with TAPP'S Art Center, and between 2011 and 2016 over 50 more businesses followed. Students came to Main Street with the redevelopment of the SCE&G offices into the Hub in 2014, and Main Street continues to thrive and grow.

Convention Center & Colonial Life Arena

The planning effort helped identify and build consensus on a site for development of the Colonial Life Arena (2002) and the Convention Center (2004). Both venues serve to attract visitors regionally and nationwide to events, recently hosting the NCAA tournament, Elton John, and the three-night kickoff for Hootie & the Blowfish's Group Therapy Tour. The Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center is South Carolina's only downtown convention center.

Stay Tuned!

We'll be releasing a series of videos in the coming months as we continue to draft the plan document. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Twitter @ColaCompass, and sign up to receive our emails if you haven't already - that's how we'll get the word out!

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.columbiacompass.org.

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