PLANNING COMMISSION

May 2, 2016 at 5:15pm
City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, SC 29201

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT CASE SUMMARY

City Council District: 2

Proposal: Request recommendation to adopt the West Gervais District Plan as an addendum to the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan.

Applicant: City of Columbia

Staff Recommendation: APPROVAL

PC Recommendation: PENDING, 07/11/2016

SUMMARY

Introduction to Plan:
Staff recommends approval of a resolution recommending the adoption of the West Gervais District Plan be adopted as part of the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends to City Council the adoption of an ordinance adopting the West Gervais District Plan as part of the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan.

The Study Area:
The heart of the Vista was used for this study area, which was defined by the Congaree River to the West and Assembly Street to the East. The study area abuts the Innovista District to the South and follows the natural line of collective uses along Washington and Hampton to the North. The planning area is 184 acres, and the majority of the area is utilized for commercial and entertainment uses. The planning area also contains a number of landmarked structures and two –Design and Preservation Area Zoning Overlay Districts: the West Gervais Historic Commercial District and the West Gervais Historic Protection Area District.

Purpose:
The West Gervais District planning area is one of South Carolina's premier arts and entertainment districts, and a vital economic and cultural driver in Columbia today. The last planning for this area occurred in the late 1980's and was followed by implementation over the following 20 years. As many implementation items have been completed, market trends have changed and increased development is anticipated within this area an update to the 1980's planning efforts was requested. The development of an area Plan, especially as the City embarks upon a substantial code rewrite, has the ability to identify this vision and provide implementable strategies to make this vision a reality.

Summary of the Plan and Organization:
The Plan analyzes the existing conditions in the District, as well as the numerous comments received during the public input process. A vision statement frames the discussion of future land use, where specific recommendations are made for ground floor activity zones, mixed-use residential zones, mixed-use commercial and office zones, a height overlay district, and a setback zone along Huger Street. The Plan discusses connectivity, citing the adoption of Walk Bike Columbia, and

incorporating those recommendations within the West Gervais District Plan. A discussion of the public realm follows, where recommendations are made for outdoor dining and plazas, wayfinding, site furnishings, shade, and public art. The possibility of the creation of a pedestrian zone and the development of a plaza at Lincoln Street and Lady Street is specifically mentioned within the public realm section. The Plan further notes that the West Gervais District is an excellent location for the development of green alleys, green roofs, and parklets. Based upon the issues and opportunities identified through the planning process and within the Plan text, a series of implementable policy and physical recommendations conclude the Plan document. These recommendations include concise strategies, assign responsible parties, and identify a timeframe for completion (short-, mid-, or long-term).

Vision Statement:
The West Gervais District Plan is guided by a Vision Statement developed in collaboration with community stakeholders and confirmed by hundreds of participants over the course of multiple public outreach meetings.

1. The West Gervais District is a mixed-use neighborhood with a coordinated development pattern that celebrates the past through conservation of historic resources and looks to a vibrant future.
2. The West Gervais District is a place that provides a mix of transportation choices with a strong commitment to the pedestrian environment; a City neighborhood that has a high level of internal and external connectivity and accessibility with the urban form.
3. The West Gervais District is a district that provides a high level of transportation amenities.
4. The West Gervais District is an urban neighborhood that allows for individuality yet encourages an aesthetic quality that keeps a pedestrian-scaled development pattern, promoting increased retail, entertainment, employment and residential units throughout.

Future Steps:
The document, if adopted by City Council, will serve as guidance for elected and appointed officials and City staff when making decisions about infrastructure improvements, amendments to local ordinances, and development reviews where applicable. The policy recommendations related to zoning will be taken into consideration as part of the code rewrite process.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of a resolution recommending the adoption of the West Gervais District Plan be adopted as part of the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends to City Council the adoption of an ordinance adopting the West Gervais District Plan as part of the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan.

West Gervais

DISTRICT PLAN

6.21.16

DRAFT

WEST GERVAIS DISTRICT PLAN

Columbia, South Carolina

2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CITY ADMINISTRATION
Teresa Wilson, City Manager
S. Allison Baker, Senior Assistant City Manager
Melissa Gentry, Assistant City Manager
Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager, CFO

CITY STAFF
Krista Hampton, Planning & Dev. Services Director
John Fellows, Planning Administrator
Lucinda Statler, Urban Design Planner
Amy Moore, Preservation Planner
Staci Richey, Preservation Planner
Stephen Zigmund, Comprehensive Planner
Leigh DeForth, Comprehensive Planner
David Eisenbraun, Community Planner

CITY COUNCIL
Stephen K. Benjamin, Mayor
Sam Davis
Tameika Isaac Devine
Leona Plaugh
Moe Baddourah
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Gene Dinkins, Jr., Vice Chairman
John Taylor
Joshua McDuffie
Dale Stigamier
Craig Waites
LaTrell Harts
April James
Brian Stern

Prepared for the City of Columbia and the Vista Guild.

Thank you to the citizens who participated throughout the process.

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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

The West Gervais District planning area, or "The Vista" as it is known locally, is one of South Carolina's premier arts and entertainment districts. It is also a vital economic and cultural driver in Columbia today.

Once home to a vibrant cotton warehousing industry and railway terminal, by the early 1980's the area had fallen into disrepair and neglect before undergoing the commercial renaissance that continues to this day. This legacy is preserved today in the large concentration of turn of the Twentieth Century structures that make up the West Gervais Historic Commercial District. But, the District's history as a warehousing center also exists in the areas of industrially zoned property and transport-oriented roadways.

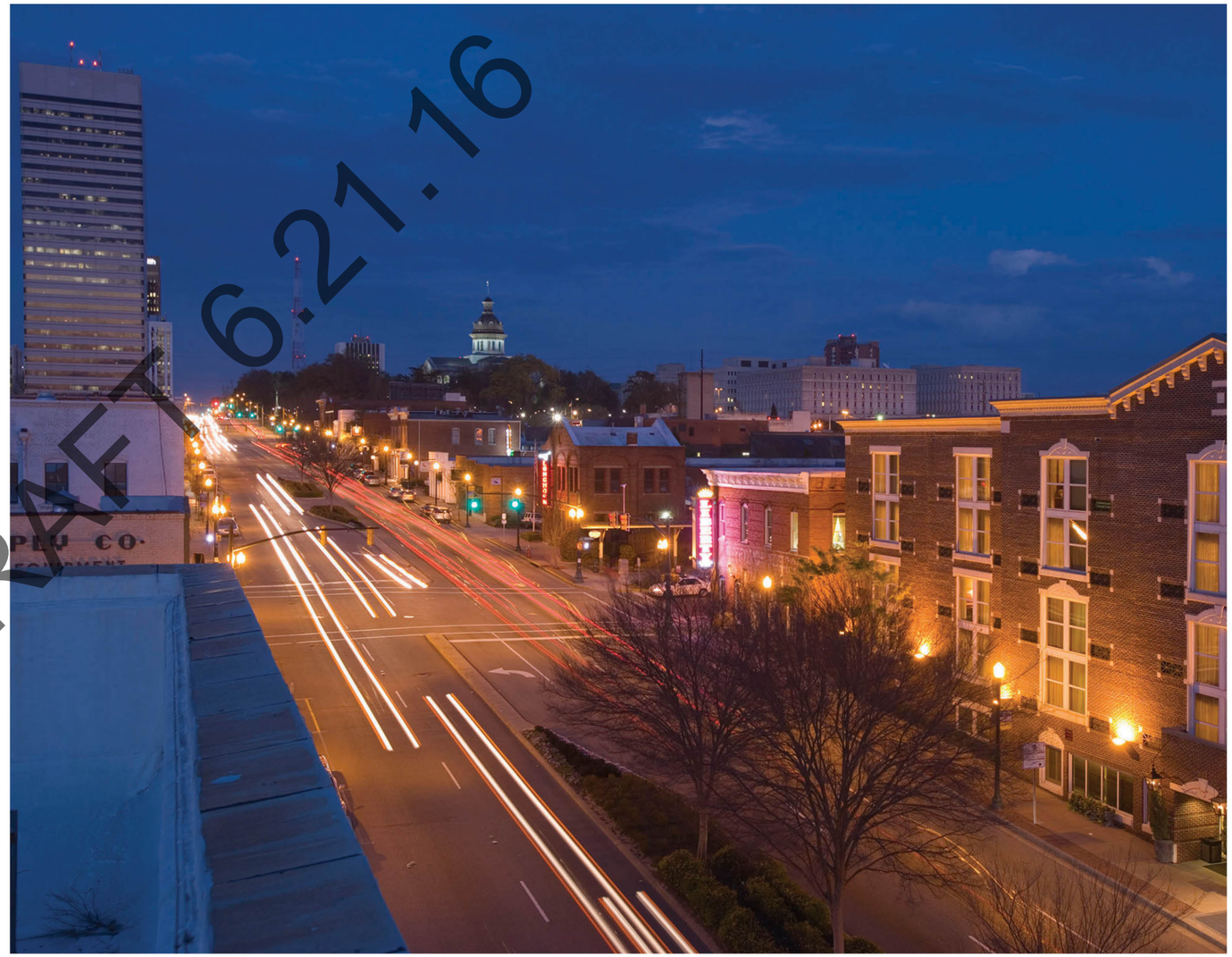
The industrial zoning has been modified through the adoption of overlays over the years to address the incompatibility of the old zoning with the character of the revitalized district. This process has resulted in an increasingly complicated set of land use regulations.

In addition, the success of The Vista's numerous commercial and cultural attractions has created an increased demand for pedestrian connections to provide residents, employees, and tourists quick and easy access in and around the district.

Building on the momentum and excitement for the future that currently exists in the area, the intent of this Plan is to provide land use guidance for both public and private development, thereby ensuring the District maintains its vital economic and unique cultural position in the city and region.

The Plan was created through a public process that brought together residents, business owners, property owners, and policy makers to reach consensus on a vision for the future.

The West Gervais District Plan is a democratic and optimistic document that represents a common vision for the area while being a decision making guide for City staff on a day-to-day basis. It is also a guide for investment in the area by individuals, families, businesses, religious organizations, and non-profit institutions.



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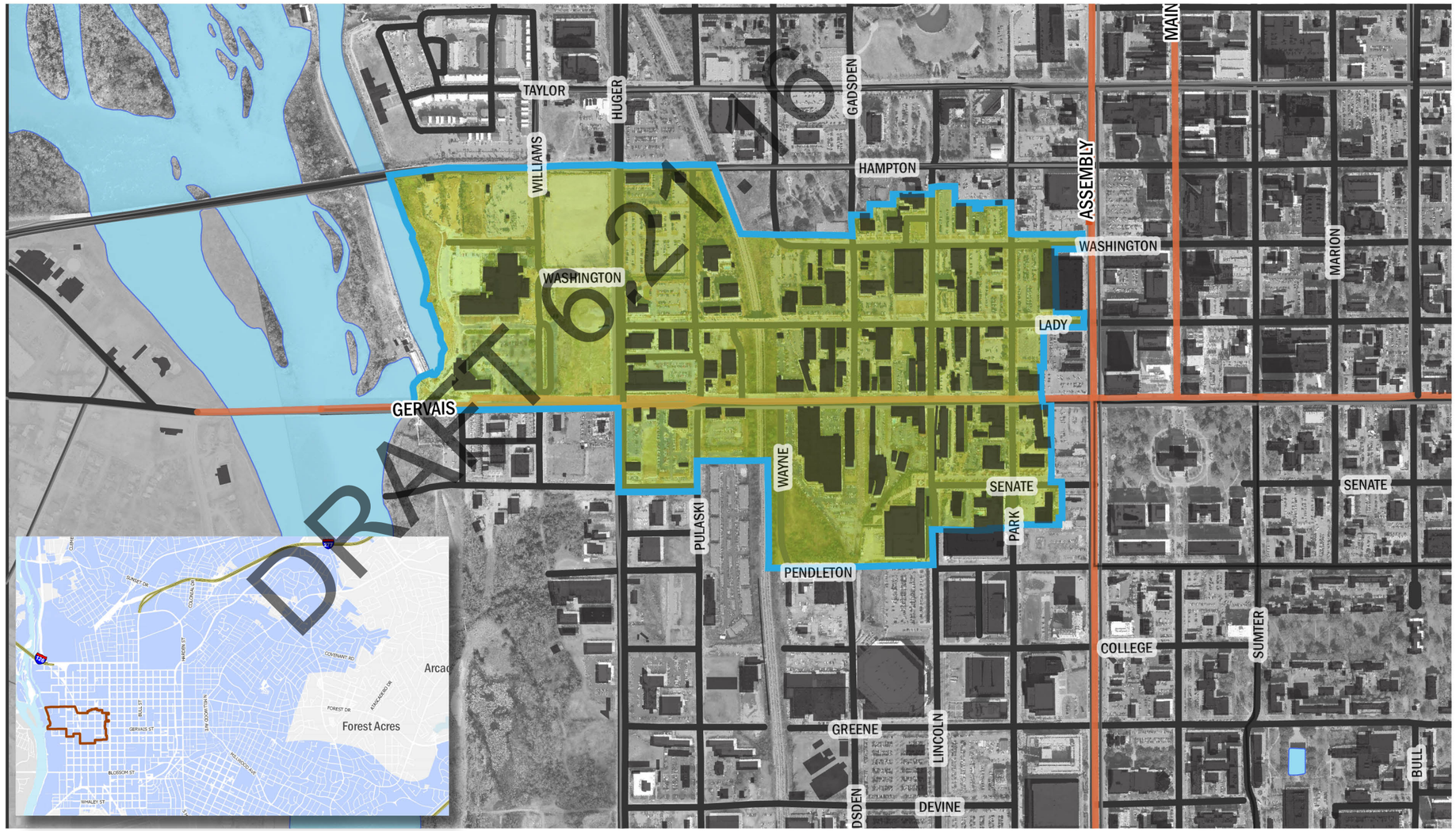
WEST GERVAIS DISTRICT PLANNING AREA

The heart of the Vista was used for this study area, which was defined by the Congaree River to the West and Assembly Street to the East. The planning area is 184 acres, a third of which is land that is publicly-held and under State or City management.

Because of the area's largely commerical and entertainment land uses, there are few permanent residents. Only 382 permanent residents, located in 115 residential units, live in the study area according to the 2010 US Census and staff surveys. Opportunities for housing are rapidly becoming more available, both within and nearby, however these are driven by the housing demands of students and young professionals.

These, and other recent developments, have significantly diminished large vacant properties and adaptive reuse opportunities. However, the area land market remains highly sought after. The next phase of development, already under way, will be infill on existing surface parking lots. This is likely to create tension over the loss of parking as the area transitions to serving residents and employees who live and work within walking distance.



VISION

The West Gervais District Plan is guided by a Vision Statement developed in collaboration with community stakeholders and confirmed by hundreds of participants over the course of multiple public outreach meetings.

1

The West Gervais District is a mixed-use neighborhood with a coordinated development pattern that celebrates the past through conservation of historic resources and looks to a vibrant future.

2

The West Gervais District is a place that provides a mix of transportation choices with a strong commitment to the pedestrian environment; a city neighborhood that has a high level of internal and external connectivity and accessibility with the urban form.

Photo Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/laurasandy/2009

3

The West Gervais District is a district that provides a high level of transportation amenities.

4

The West Gervais District is an urban neighborhood that allows for individuality yet encourages an aesthetic quality that keeps a pedestrian-scaled development pattern, promoting increased retail, entertainment, employment and residential units throughout.

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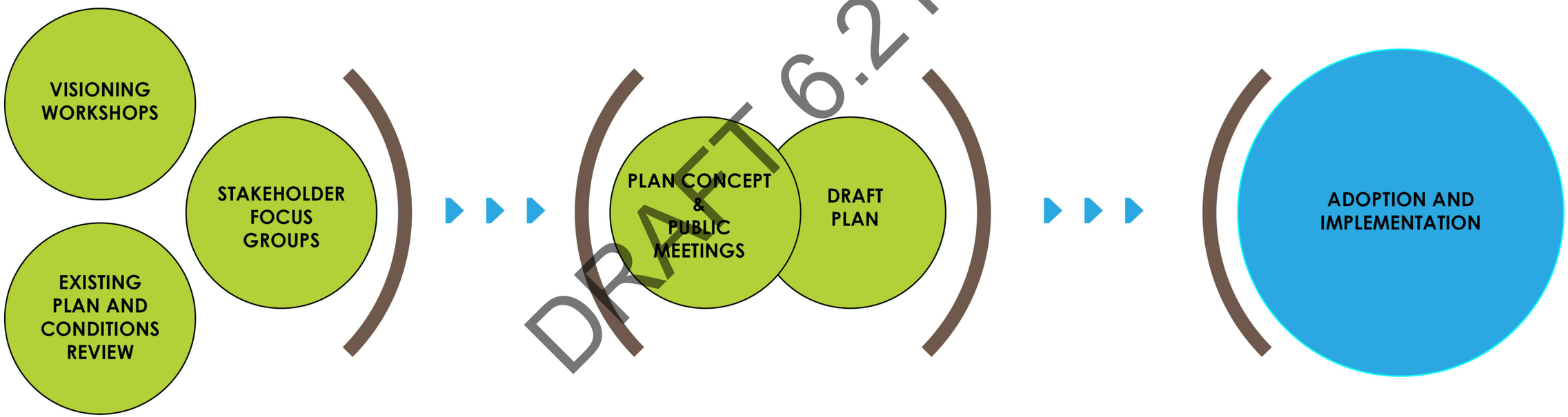
PROCESS

The West Gervais District Plan is the official policy for the future growth and development of the Vista.



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PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Visioning Workshop with the Vista Guild
Review of existing conditions by City Planning staff
Focus Groups with area stakeholders

Public meetings held on Gervais & Lincoln Streets
Draft concept unveiled at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center
Final Plan preparation by City Planning staff

Planning Commission
City Council Public Hearing
City Council 2nd Reading

OUTREACH

The study included a public engagement effort unprecedented for the City of Columbia.

First, a week-long series of focus groups representing the area's wide variety of stakeholders was conducted by City staff. Stakeholder groups included art gallery owners, area hotel and convention center management, property owners, real estate brokers, residents, restaurant operators, retail representatives, and public infrastructure service providers.

The information received during the focus group sessions was crafted into a public survey designed to capture broader community opinions, representative of the West Gervais District's regional significance. This survey was distributed via email to neighborhood groups, posted on the City's website, and offered in hard copy format during public input sessions. Overall, nearly 250 people took the opportunity to register their opinions and ideas.

During this same period, planning staff conducted two public input sessions at key times and locations on Gervais Street. Presentation boards displayed under the historic train canopy in the heart of the District allowed people to vote on a range of urban design intervention choices and historic preservation strategies.

The event was an effort to engage people where they work, shop, or meet others for food or entertainment.

Rather than traditional public input sessions which require people to make special trips during work or late into the evening, this event provided the opportunity for people who may not otherwise participate in formal public meetings to voice their opinions as well as vote on such topics as housing types, potential public spaces, and other preferred development choices for the West Gervias District.

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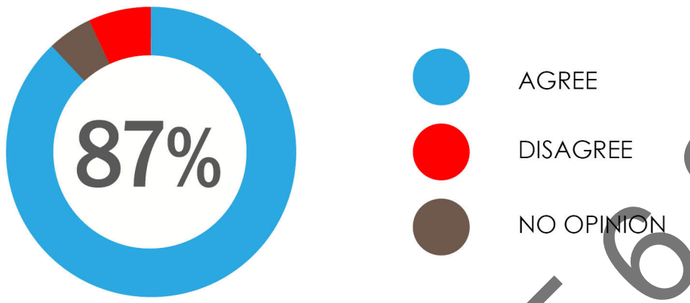
PUBLIC SURVEY

The survey portion of the planning process was compiled from key issues, concerns, and desired development types determined by both focus group participants and planning staff. Surveys were available online for two months and paper copies were also collected at public input sessions. The survey received nearly 250 responses - over 60% from visitors and workers in the West Gervais District. Results showed broad support for more land use variety (particularly retail), denser housing choices, and traffic-calming strategies.

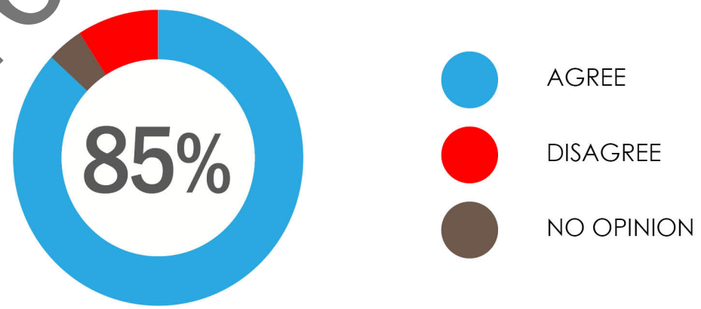
An overarching theme which emerged from this survey was a desire to see the area become more accessible. Better sidewalk connections, slower traffic speeds, and increased space for outdoor dining were supported by over 80% of respondents. There was also strong support for more housing options, provided they do not detract from the area's unique character.

Finally, respondents showed a surprising unawareness of available parking. In an area where surface lot parking spaces can be $10 on weekend nights, half the participants did not know that the City operates two garages less than two blocks from Gervais Street, suggesting that the concern about parking availablity is largely due to a lack of public awareness.

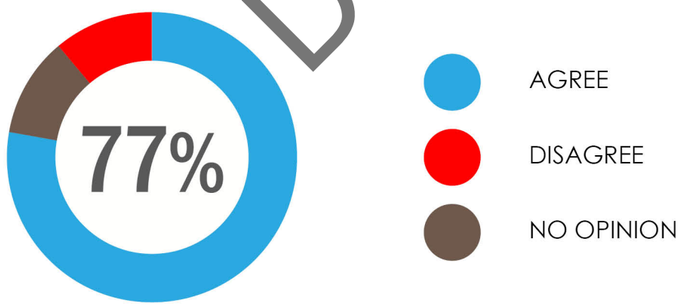
Q I would like more space on sidewalks for outdoor dining options.



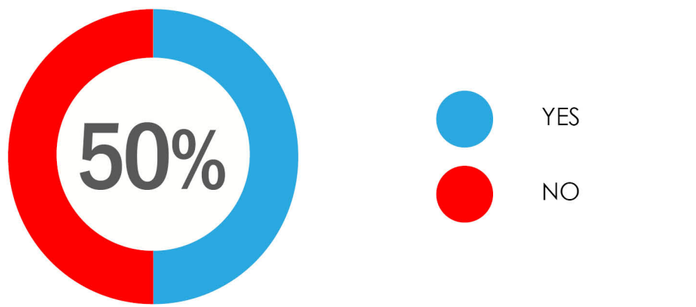
Q Preserving the unique character and architecture of the neighborhood should be a priority.



Q I would support the installation of traffic calming devices within the area.



Q Did you know the Vista has 1,525 parking spaces within two city parking garages?



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WISH WALL

A "Wish Wall" was created nearby on the storefront window of Regions Bank by asking passers-by to write down on index cards things they would like to see in The Vista and post them on the window.

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Participation
Over one hundred "wishes" were collected with retail, restaurants, and entertainment, accounting for nearly half of the requests.

Retail
Participants were very specific and varied in their requests for more shopping choices in the study area. Requests ranged broadly, including books, clothing, and toys (for both the young and old). Thus it is clear that demand for retail in the West Gervais area is high, and as yet, unmet.

Restaurants and Entertainment
Despite the area's reputation as one of the City's premier destinations for dining and nightlife, the high number of requests for more of both indicates that these uses in West Gervais are far from reaching a saturation point. These uses should not be discouraged, but rather guided to appropriate locations (such as on Gervais Street West of Gdsden, and on the East end of Lady Street to Assembly Street) to strengthen a 24/7 activity connection to existing amenities such as the riverfront and Main Street.

Parking
A recent Urban Land Institute study determined that the West Gervais District actually had dedicated too much space to parking and not enough to other uses to drive development. This point was confirmed by the survey which showed that participants were often unaware of the existence of public garages. This disconnect can be remedied by better way-finding signage and public education (such as free parking with ticket validation from an area store or restaurant).

Plan Context

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The West Gervais District is continually described as having a distinct character. This character has been defined by over 200 years of development and redevelopment with a great deal occuring within the past three decades.

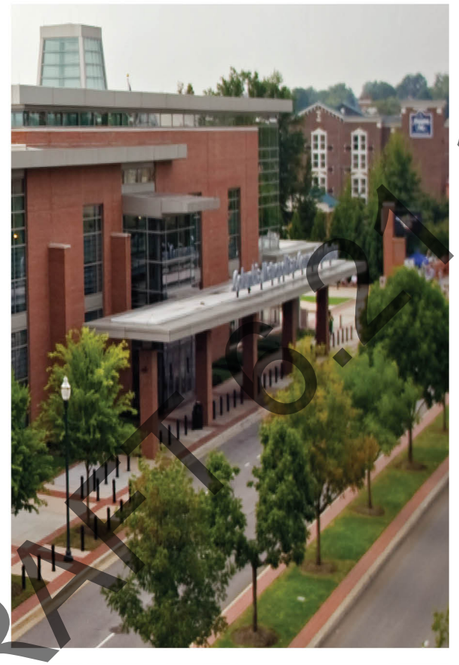
The West Gervais District Plan is intended to build on the success of the recent past while preserving the historic fabric that contributes so much to the area's unique character.

Additionally, several recurring themes emerged from the public outreach phase. The West Gervais District Plan is designed to address the desire expressed for increased walkability, outdoor dining, places to live, and retail shopping choices while maintaining the historic feel of the District. These considerations resulted in the development of plans and recommendations for future land use, connectivity, and the public realm, as well as an update to the existing West Gervais Historic Commercial District Guidelines.

Recent Planning Efforts

Since the West Gervais District Plan effort kicked off, two major City-wide master plans have been adopted by City Council. The first, the Plan Together Land Use Plan, is an update to the Future Land Use element of the City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan. The second, Walk Bike Columbia, is a master plan for multi-modal transportation improvements in the City. These plans directly affect the West Gervais District and as a result have been integrated into the Future Land Use Plan, Connectivity Plan, and Public Realm Plan recommendations herein.

Throughout the planning process a variety of public participation meetings were undertaken. Once the planning study is reviewed by the Planning Commission they will make a recommendation to City Council by resolution. Once the Plan has been reviewed by City Council, Council will be presented with the opportunity to adopt the Plan as part of the Comprehensive Plan of the City.



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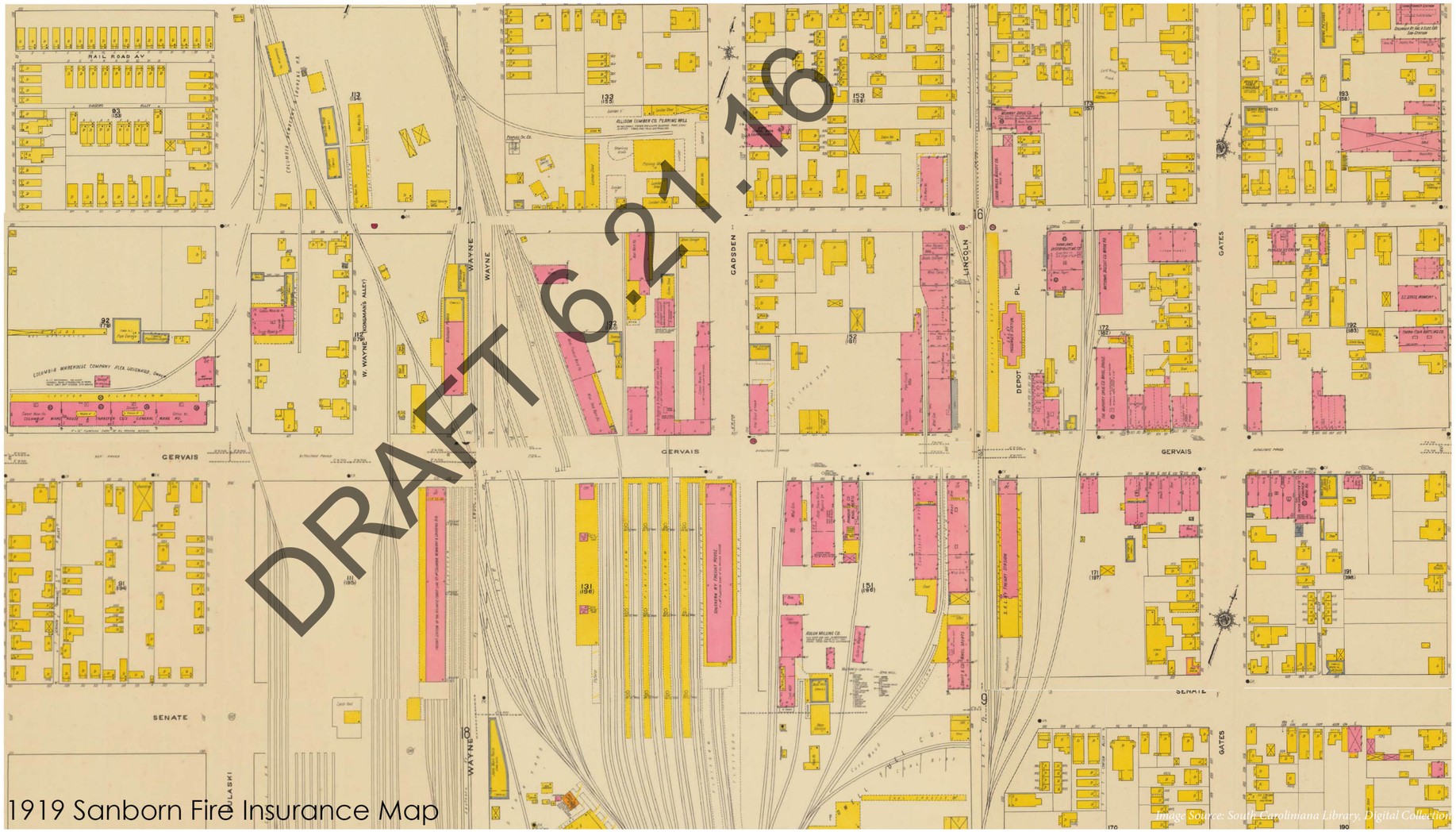
HISTORIC WEST GERVAIS AREA

The current development pattern of the West Gervais Area can be traced back to beggining of the 20th Century. The railroad terminals and spur lines between Lincoln Street and Wayne Street interrupt the commerical core of historic brick structures that make up what is today the West Gervias District.

As seen in this 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, rail dominated the area and drove its development. Brick warehouses, several of which exist today, stored goods and provided employment. A major terminal at Lincoln Street connected Columbia regionally and a dense pattern of largely wood frame residential construction developed.

The effect of this legacy is visible today in the rich stock of intact brick commerical structures, but also in the uneven street pattern between Gervais and Pendleton Streets designed for industrial uses rather than the pedestrian-oriented uses that this plan calls for.



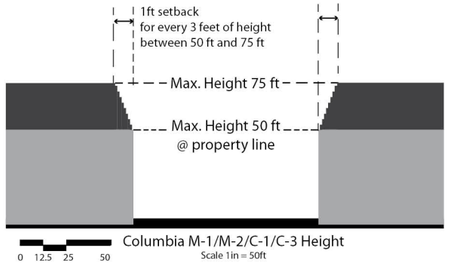
1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

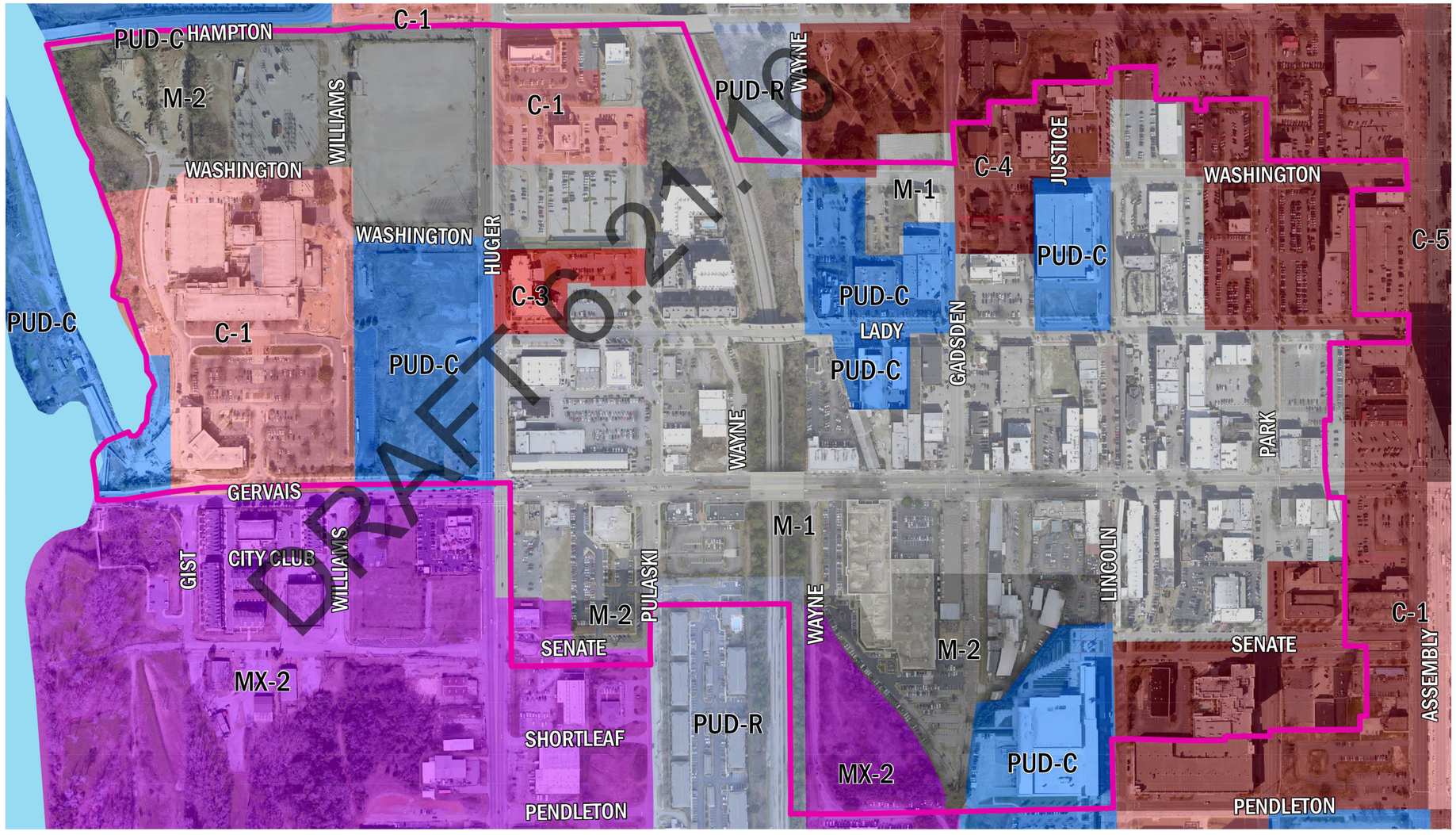
Image Source: South Caroliniana Library, Digital Collection

Legend Brick Building Frame Building

Existing Zoning Districts

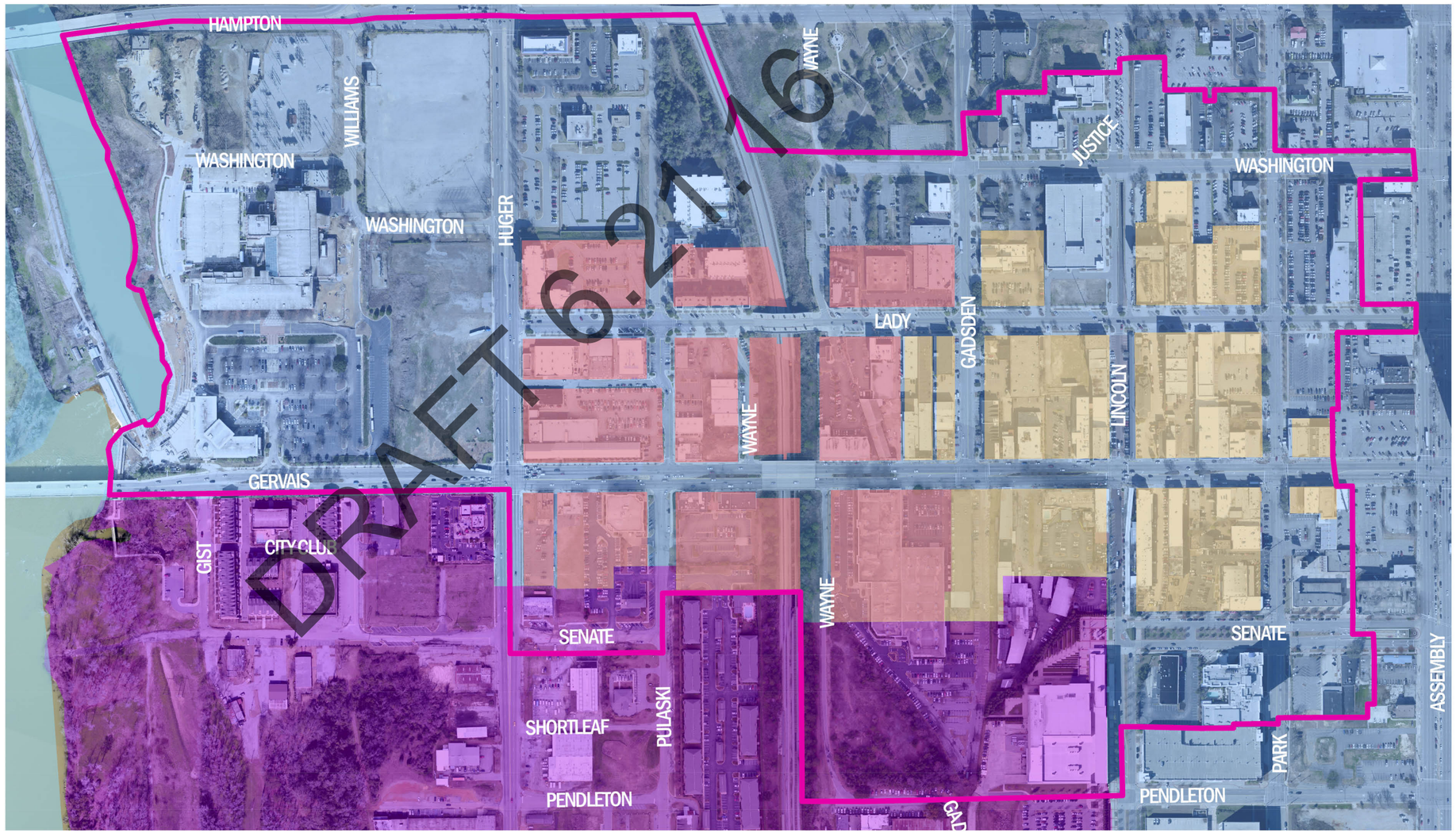
As development pressures have increased over the past two decades the regulation of building height has become the source of much confusion and frustration. Several factors currently contribute to this situation. The first has to do with the base zoning in the area. Despite the relatively small amount of land area involved and the area's primary function as a commercial/entertainment district, the majority of the District is currently zoned for industrial (M-1 or M-2), with smaller portions zoned C-3 (General Commercial) and C-1 (Office and Institutional). These classifications allow for a maximum height of 50 feet at the lot line. This can increase to 75 feet if the building façade steps back one foot for every three feet of height (see diagram below). It should be noted that surrounding the study area are the MX-2 (Innovista) and C-4 (City Center) Zoning Districts, which do not have a height limit except when adjacent to the West Gervais Historic Commercial Overlay District.





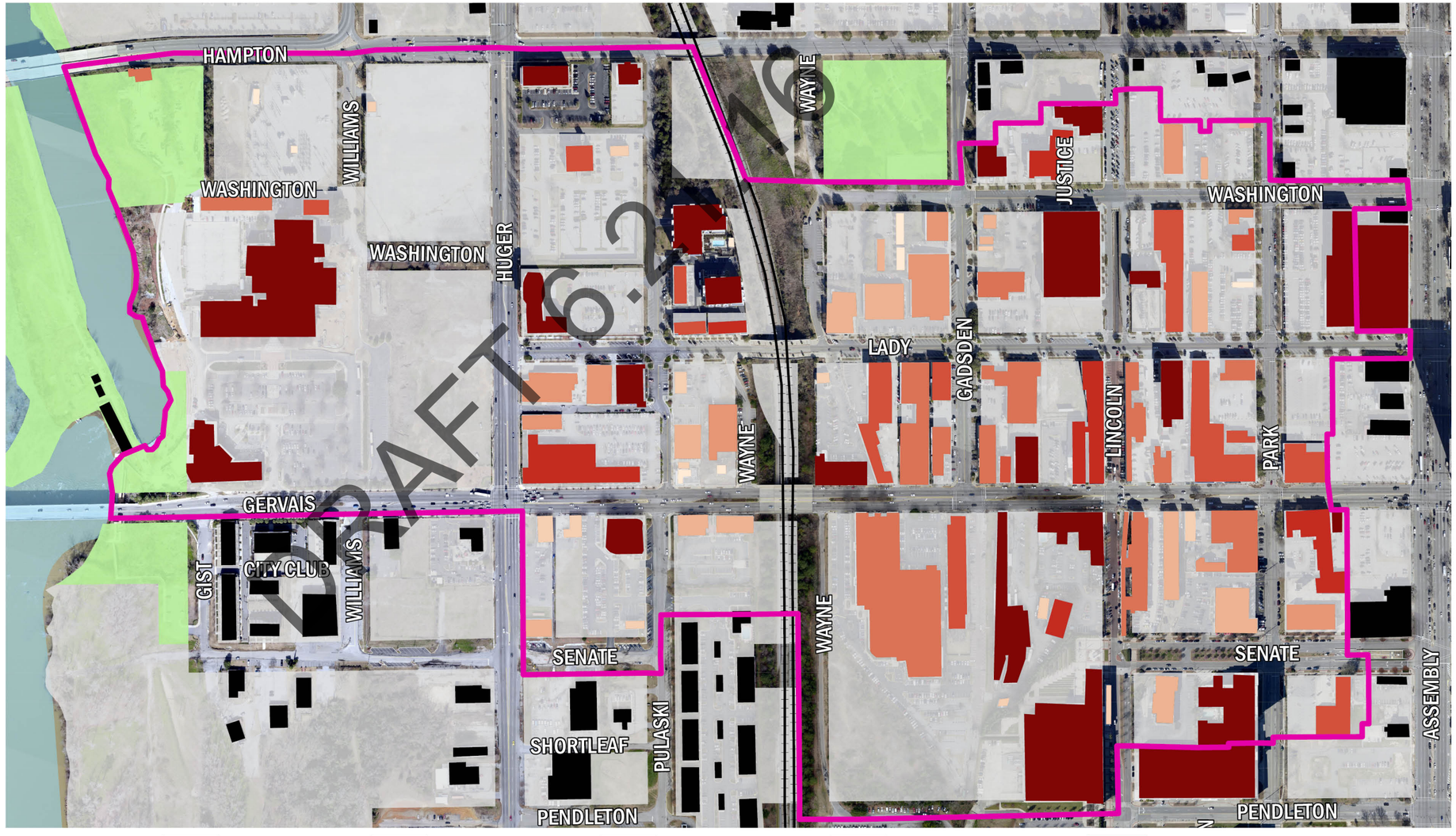
Existing Design & Preservation Overlays

Finally, the West Gervais District is subject to three separate design district overlays – the West Gervais Historic Commercial District, the City Center Design/Development District, and the Innovista Design District. The boundaries of these districts often follow parcel lines rather than the street network. This creates an irregular pattern that has led to neighboring developments being subject to different and some times conflicting regulations.



Existing Building Heights

Not surprisingly, the uneven zoning, multiple design and preservation overlays, and large variation of existing lot sizes (as a legacy of industrial use) has resulted in a variety of building heights. Outside the largely intact historic core of two and three story structures between Park and Lincoln Streets, the area has seen four, five, and even six story buildings constructed in the last decade. As developable land becomes more scarce in the West Gervais District the pressure to increase building heights above six stories will only increase, making the need for coherent regulations and guidelines even more pressing.



Future Land Use

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PLAN COLUMBIA

The Plan Columbia Land Use Plan designates the entirety of the West Gervais Area as an **Urban Core Regional Activity Center (UCAC-3).** This land use classification envisions future land uses that support intense, mixed use developments within the urban context.

The West Gervais District Plan is designed to support this designation while providing more specific guidance for new development within the District.

The Plan Columbia Land Use Plan lists the following use types for areas classified as UCAC-3:

Primary Types
- Small to Extra Large Business/ Employment (incl. High-rise, excl. Flex)
- Multi-family Medium and High-rise Mixed-use

Secondary Types
- Multi-family Medium to Highrise
- Small to Large Flex
- Civic/Institutional
- Parking Structures

Tertiary Types
- Single-family Attached
- Cemeteries & Mausoleums
- Parking Lots

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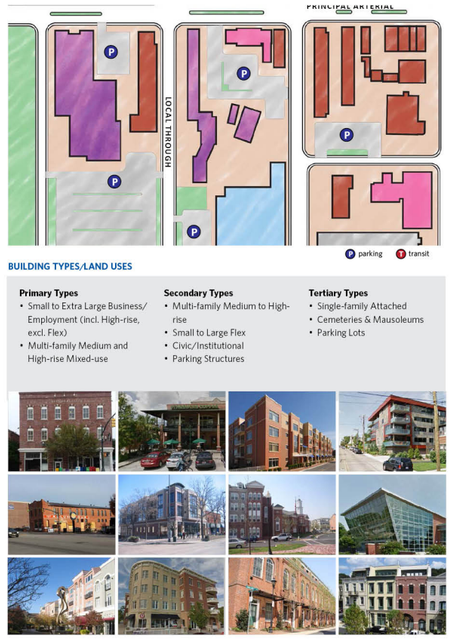
UCAC-3 Urban Core Regional Activity Center

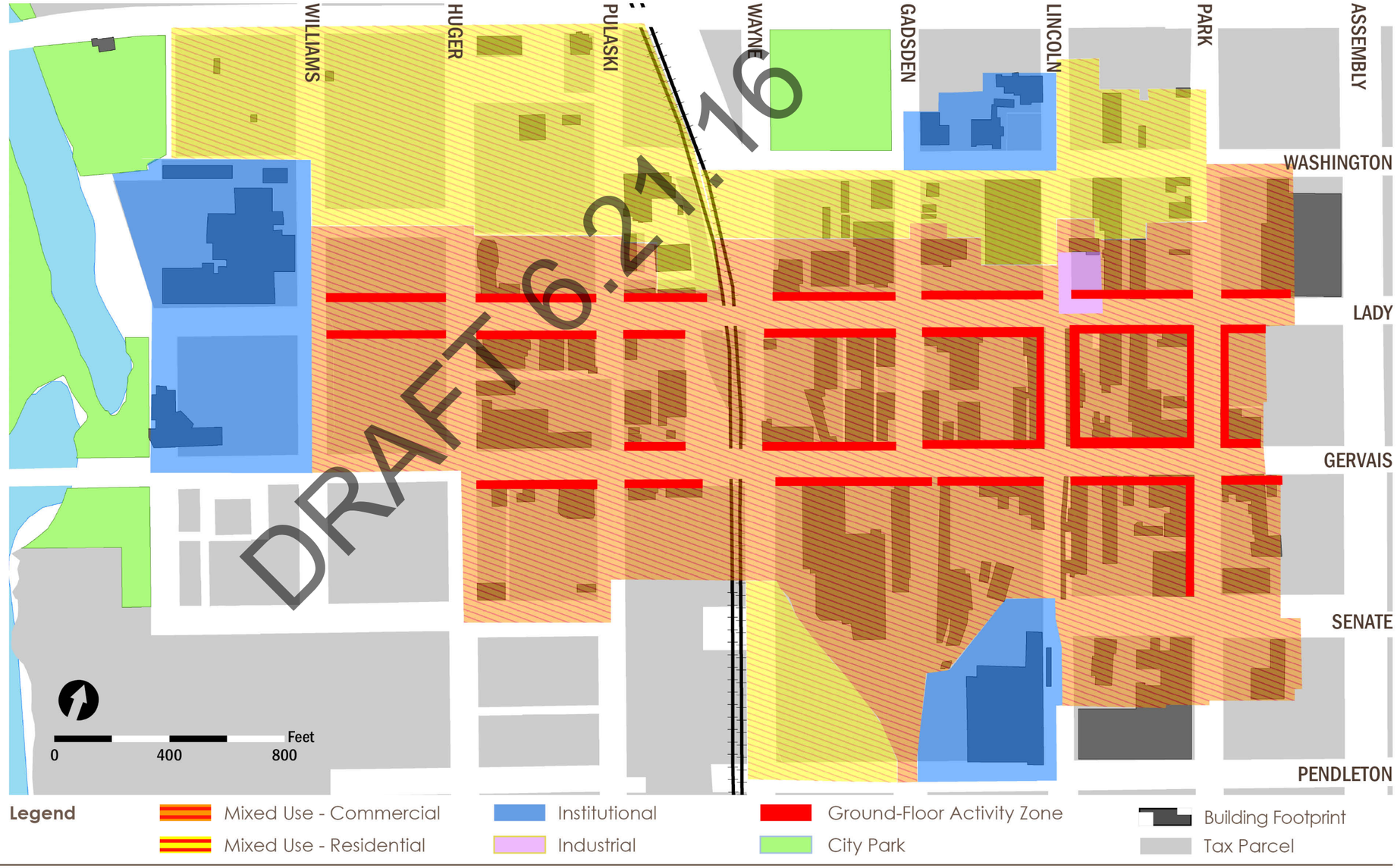
These developments are intense mixed-use business districts within the urban context. They may be adjacent to the central business district or found in outer areas of the city. They are primary destinations for work and play which attract people from more than a 20-mile radius or drive distance. The uses are built within the urban blocks and grid, and whole scale redevelopment of blocks or adaptive reuse of existing structures may occur in these areas. Their scale is large and may take up multiple city blocks. Their primary use is as a business district but high-intensity residential in mixed-use buildings is also appropriate.



West Gervais District Future Land Use

Columbia's downtown is currently experiencing high rates of residential and commercial growth, and the West Gervias District has been a focal point of much of this development. Two new hotels (one completed, one approved), multiple redevelopments, and dozens of new restaurants opening within the past year speak to this trend. Additionally, over 1,000 new housing units are under construction within blocks of the study area. With this in mind, the Future Land Use Plan allows for mixed-use flexibility of commercial and residential developments throughout the area.

The future land use vision for the area is for a mixed-use district, with commercially-focused uses concentrated between the Gervais and Lady Street corridors, and residentially-focused uses surrounding a commercial core. The strong preference for pedestrian accessibility of the area will be encouraged through Ground-Floor Activity Zones throughout the commercial core to promote active street life, enabling the area to receive the many associated economic, social, and environmental benefits of a vibrant urban core.



ZONES

GROUND FLOOR ACTIVITY ZONES

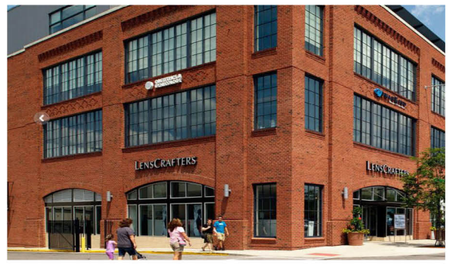
To achieve and encourage the types of mixed use developments envisioned by the West Gervais District Plan, Ground Floor Activity Zones are designated along and between Gervais and Lady Streets. These zones feature commercial uses that generate high volumes of pedestrian traffic and activity. An important goal is to generate uses and interest in the District that make it active 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Examples of recommended commercial uses are retail, restaurants, hotels, and certain office types and services.

MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL ZONES

To support the high volume of commercial retail this Plan is calls for Mixed-Use Residential Zones are designated primarily off Washington and Hampton Streets. These zones should be primarily dense, residential developments (16 dwelling units per acre or greater) while allowing for some supporting commercial uses to encourage street-level activity. The Plan envisions minimum building heights of two floors.

MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL & OFFICE ZONES

Reserved primarily for the West Gervais Historic Commercial District, Mixed-Use Commercial & Office Zones are recommend to be comprised of of predominantly commercial uses that add to the District's existing entertainment focus by encouraging the development of employement corridors, thereby reinforcing West Gervais' function historically as a workplace as well as a commercial destination.



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West Gervais District Proposed Height Districts

During the public meeting phase of the planning process, twelve ways building height could potentially be regulated were presented, with examples from Columbia, Charleston, and other areas. These examples include solely using the base zoning to govern height (as is currently the practice) or adding a series of overlays, enabling a more site-specific approach. Support has been expressed throughout the process for the development of simple and easliy understood height regulations for the area. As Charleston has shown, the adoption of height overlay districts has proven to be a highly effective solution. The proposed height of a minimum of 30 feet and maximum of 80 feet with a 25 foot setback is similar to Charleston's 30/80 District.

The West Gervais District Plan proposes a Height Overlay Area within a defined boundary as proposed in the adjacent map. There would also be an eight foot setback zone along Huger to bring unity to the street from the Innovista Standards South of Gervais. Explanations of these proposed overlay districts and zones are detailed in the adjacent maps and diagarms.

HEIGHT DISTRICTS

1 HEIGHT OVERLAY

Along Gervais, Lady, and other marked streets, there shall be a zoning overlay district which further governs height.

2 BASE ZONING AREAS

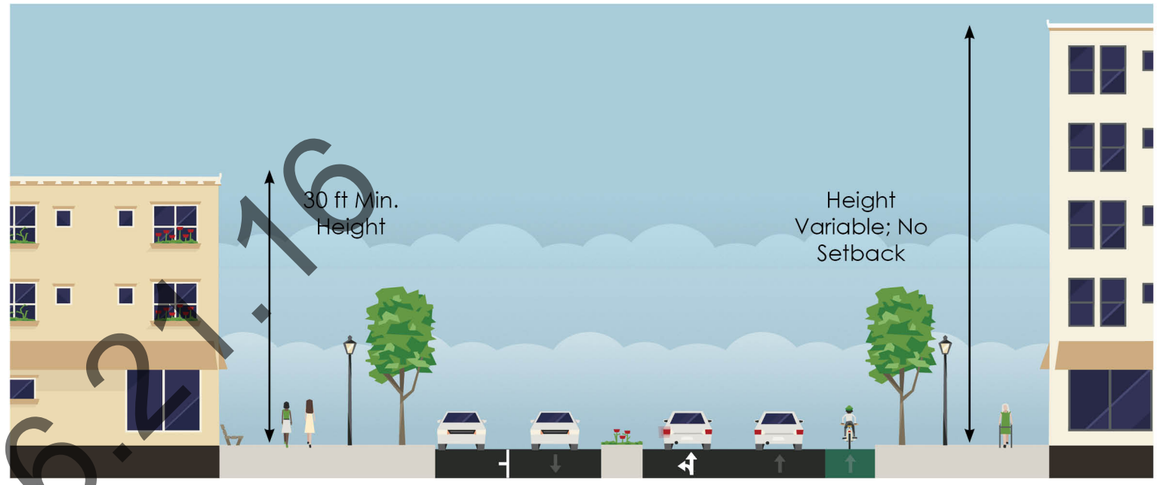
These areas would have the height of a buidling determined by the base zoning district requirements.

1.1 8' SETBACK AREA

These areas are located along Huger Street continuing the eight foot setback design element found in Innovista to the South. The eight foot setback is designed to encourage a well-defined public realm and provide a buffer for pedestrians. This zone should be used for wider sidewalks, trees, and other amenities.

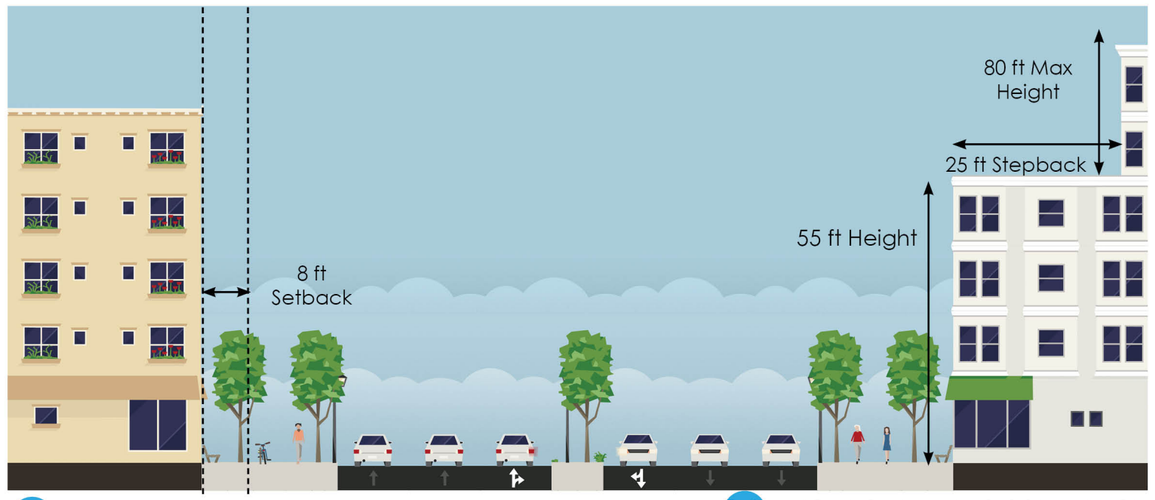
1.2 25 FT UPPER FLOOR STEP-BACK AREA

Along Gervais, Lady, and other marked streets, there shall be a a 30' minimum height and a 55' maximum height at the property line. To exceed 55', the building must step-back at least 25', after which it can be up to 80' in height.



1 HEIGHT OVERLAY: MINIMUM HEIGHT

2 BASE ZONING AREAS



1.1 HEIGHT OVERLAY: 8' SETBACK AREA - HUGER

1.2 HEIGHT OVERLAY: 25' STEP-BACK

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Connectivity

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WALK BIKE COLUMBIA

WALK BIKE COLUMBIA is a City-wide Plan for a network of complete streets, policies, and programs which will greatly increase the safety and comfort of pedestrians. These measures help to encourage walking or cycling between destinations rather than driving, particularly for short trips.

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS
The pedestrian improvements recommended in the Walk Bike Columbia Plan include both sidewalk and intersection improvements. Only six intersections within the City limits were rated as the highest priority need; three of these are within or directly adjacent to the study area.

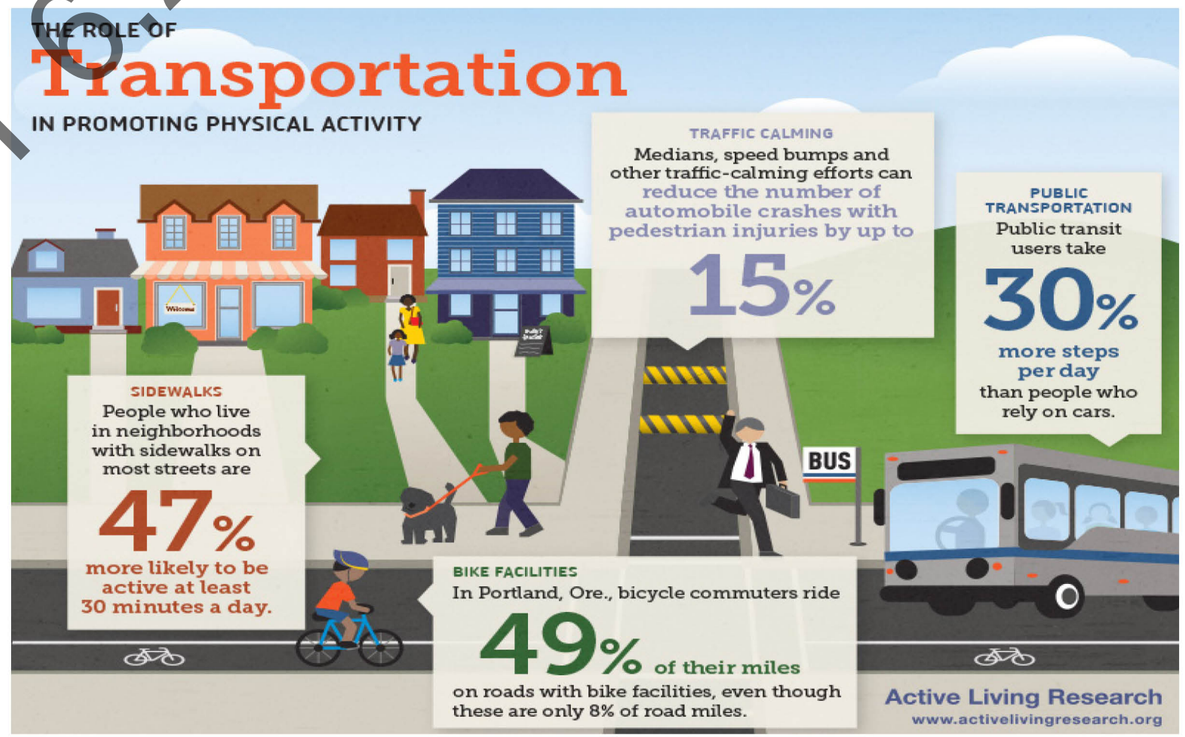
BICYCLE IMPROVEMENTS
The proposed bicycle network includes several types of on-street facilities, including on Gervais and Lady Streets. These East-West facilities will provide a needed connection for cyclists between the North-South connecting Vista Greenway and the Three Rivers Greenway.

BICYCLE PARKING
Fundamental to creating a bicycle friendly area is providing bike parking. Of the locations identified in City-wide user surveys, the top two were Gervais Street and The Vista. Bike parking can be provided by private businesses and by the City in garages and bicycle corrals.

BIKE SHARE
The plan also recommends a 25-station system concentrated in the City Center, with four locations in the West Gervais District. This proposed system would provide another choice for short trips within the District, between The Vista and Main Street, and provide access to the Vista Greenway.

WALK BIKE COLUMBIA

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA | PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE MASTER PLAN



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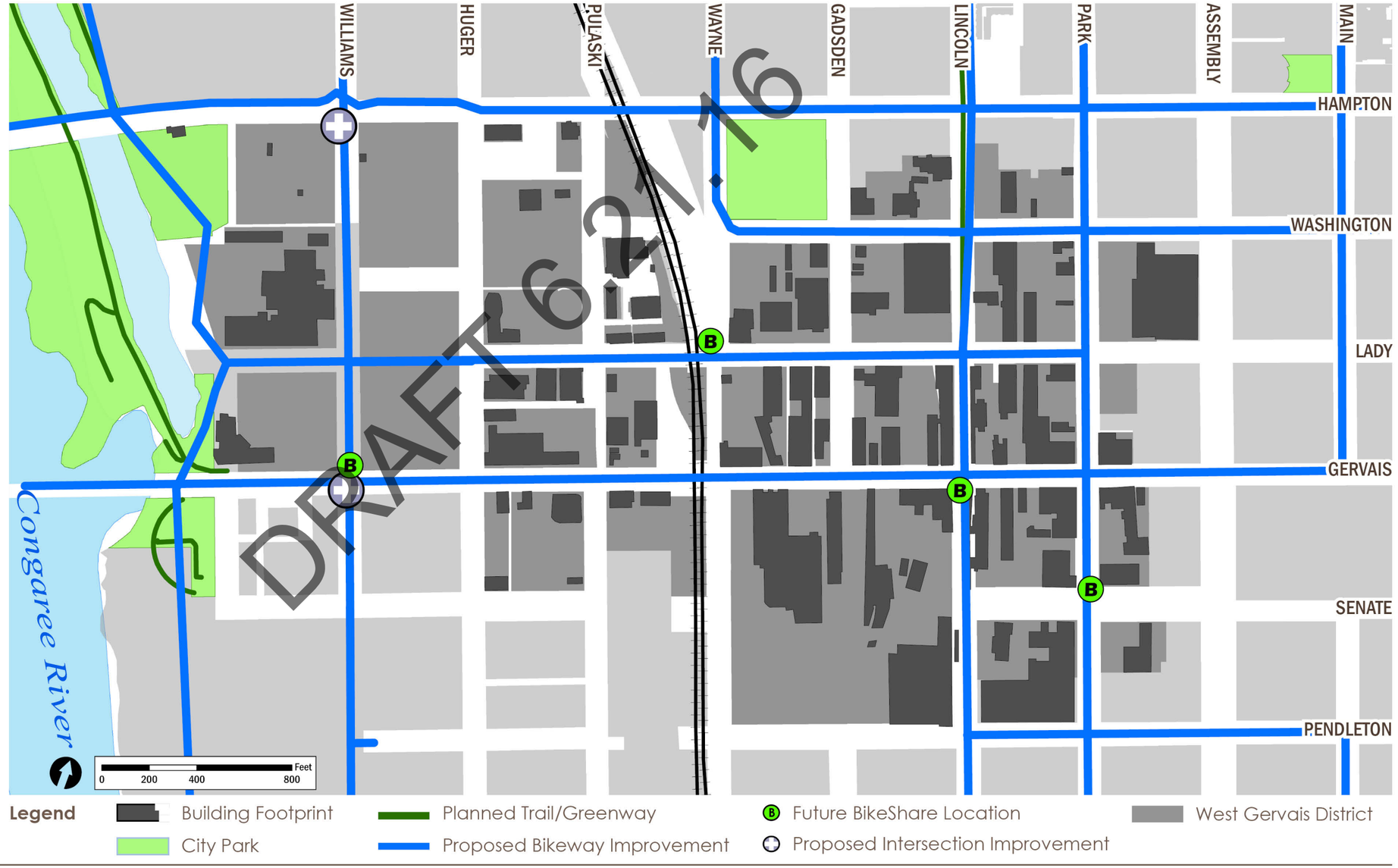
Proposed Bikeway Improvements

The West Gervais District is a mixed-use area, and continues to build on its diversity of uses with several recent residential projects adding to the existing entertainment, retail, and regional draws such as the convention center and the museums. As the District builds the critical mass of residents necessary to support neighborhood retail, pedestrian connectivity becomes even more essential. By providing safe and easy routes for pedestrians and bicyclists particularly for the short trips within the District- vehicular congestion is reduced benefiting all users.

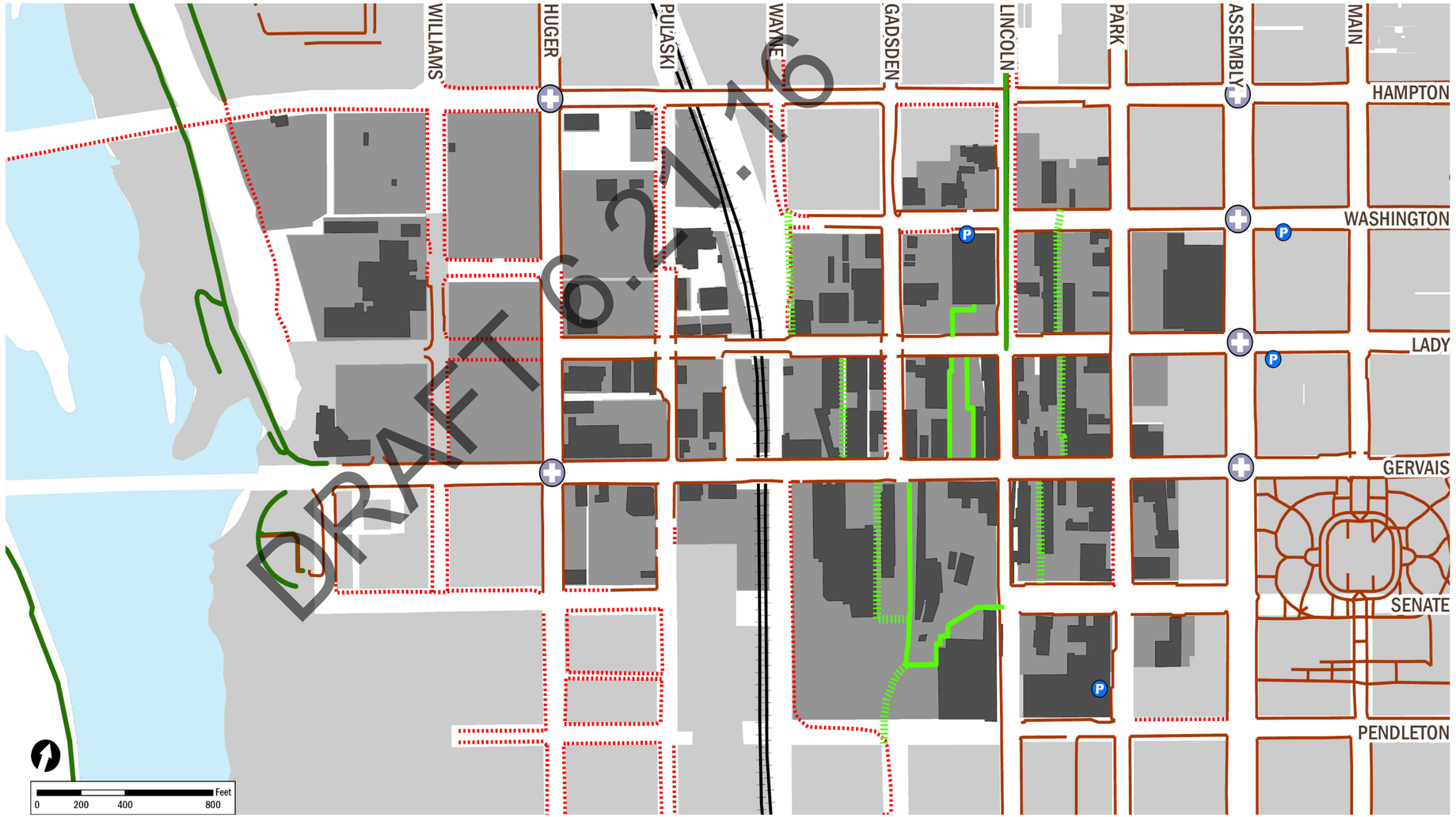
The challenges to connectivity in this District include high-volume, high-speed corridors such as Huger, Assembly, and Gervais which are difficult to cross for pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, the large blocks which make up Columbia's street grid can be cumbersome to traverse to some destinations on the next street over.



Proposed Pedestrian Improvements

Beyond the obvious infrastructure needs such as sidewalks and crosswalks, other elements are imperative to ensuring our urban streets are safe, attractive and vibrant spaces for pedestrians. Providing safe and comfortable facilities for people with disabilities is an integral element of true connectivity. Shade trees provide comfort in the long hot summer months and provide a buffer between pedestrians and auto traffic. Site furnishings, street lighting, and public art contribute to the pedestrian realm and attract use.

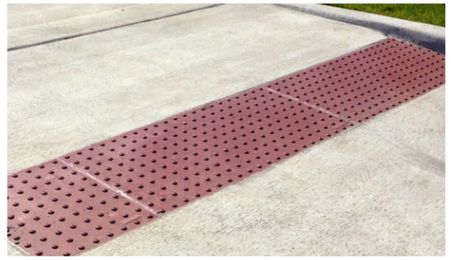
Currently, a couple of mid-block alleys exist within the District which allow for greater connectivity. These are heavily used and several more are currently being planned in conjunction with private developments. These alleys provide an opportunity to create attractive public spaces for pedestrians to use and inhabit throughout the day and evening; the design of these spaces is critical to ensure user safety and comfort.



IMPROVEMENTS

PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

In order to improve the safety and the comfort of pedestrians in the District, a number of improvements are recommended, including signalized crossings with continental crosswalks, wide sidewalks buffered from traffic by a tree zone, and updated curb ramps with detectable warning surfaces. Traffic calming measures, such as bulb-outs, have been implemented in some areas.



BICYCLE FACILITIES

The long-term vision for bicycle connectivity in the District includes a cycle track on Gervais Street. This is an on-street bicycle lane that is separated from traffic by a buffer zone and a physical barrier such as bollards or a curb. In the shorter term, recommendations include a bicycle boulevard on Lady Street, a buffered bike lane on Park Street, and a bicycle boulevard on Lincoln Street from the Vista Greenway South. Bicycle parking is also an essential element in providing a truly bicycle friendly environment.

BIKE SHARE

The bike share recommendations in the Walk Bike Columbia Plan include a 25 station system with four of those stations in the West Gervais District. The entire system is focused in the core of the City, as they are most effective in providing a choice for short trips. The West Gervais District is a strategic location for bike share stations and use because of its popularity as an entertainment district and its proximity to the Three Rivers Greenway, the Vista Greenway, and Main Street.

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Public Realm

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ESSENTIALS

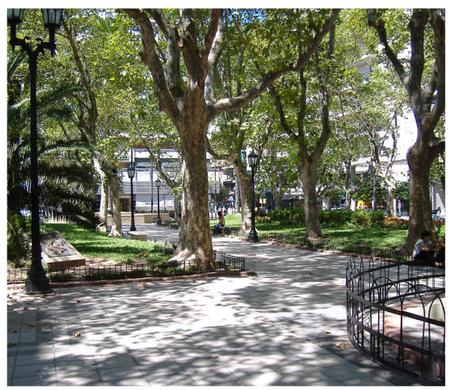
OUTDOOR DINING AND PLAZAS
Whether a public plaza or a restaurant patio, providing spaces for people to rest and inhabit at various times of the day creates an inviting and lively atmosphere for the District. Seeing others relaxing and enjoying themselves is contagious and encourages more of the same.

WAYFINDING
As a primary entertainment district with regional destinations, the West Gervais District is continuously inhabited by new visitors. Providing legible, attractive pedestrian kiosks consistent with the City's Wayfinding Master Plan provides an opportunity for branding throughout the District and beyond.

SITE FURNISHINGS
Street lights, benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, and other furnishings add style and continuity to the District. The design of site furnishings can help define the District along the streets and also in public plazas and alleys. The West Gervais District has traditional site furnishings to complement the historic architecture.

SHADE
Columbia's mild climate makes it a great city for outdoor activities. With six months of warm to extremely hot weather, shade is an critical part of the public realm that can make a difference between a space being comfortable and unbearable. The trees and shade structures enhance the District immensely.

PUBLIC ART
In addition to historic buildings, public art can define what is unique about a place and draw people to it. The West Gervais District has a history of local art studios and galleries and celebrates with art-related events throughout the year. There are several pieces of public art within the District and many opportunities for more.



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West Gervias District Public Realm Plan

One of the primary character-defining elements that survey respondents want to see more of is interactive public space within the District. Some of the positive comments have to do with outdoor dining and public art. Having safe, comfortable spaces that are attractive and inviting throughout the District has immeasurable benefits. These spaces provide opportunities for interaction, public art, performances, or simply places to relax after a day of shopping or a bike ride. More people occupying the District's public spaces make it a safer place, and the vibrancy of street life is a direct benefit to the businesses in the District as well.

As within the larger City center, the streets of the West Gervais District are the primary public spaces. In many cases however, the sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate some of the desired activities that activate public space. There are a variety of ways to accomodate these activities; the installation of greenways, parklets, and public art can enhance and activate pedestrian spaces.

West Gervias District Pedestrian Zone

One of the primary items that was discussed by survey respondents and those attending public meetings was more space for outdoor activities such as dining, busking, and special events. Upon analysis of the area it was clear that widening sidewalks and reducing travel lanes may be difficult, especially on streets with only two lanes of traffic, thus other options were explored.

Many communities are embracing outdoor space and looking at and implementing pedestrian zones. A pedestrian zone is not permanently closed to other modes of transit, but will typically limit certain types of transit at various times of the year or week. Within the US there are a number of successful streets designed for pedestrians travel as the main transit mode. These include: State Street in Madison WI which allows transit but prohibits cars; Downtown Crossing in Boston which prohibits cars only during the day; and many streets within New York City. Other examples include streets which are limited to pedestrian travel only in summer months (Montreal) or only on Sundays (Toronto).

As the Vista becomes more utilized by pedestrians, sidewalks and other public spaces will become crowded and burst at the seams. Based upon data gathered in the Fall of 2015, Gervais, Lincoln and Park have some of the highest pedestrian counts within the downtown area of Columbia. These pedestrian counts are sustained from the morning rush, to lunch, to the commute home and into the evening entertainment hours. On weekends, Friday and Saturday night pedestrain counts increase greatly within this area.

One of the key elements of this Plan is connectivity within the District and to places beyond the District. The data on customers in restaurants, bars, and other entertainment places and pedestrian count data show that the study area is full of people; the question is how we can invite people to stick around and enjoy the community beyond dining. Without a key public square in the District, the concept of a temporary pedestrian area is an option to explore. Suggested pedestrian street segments could be along Lincoln from Senate to Gervais, Lincoln from Gervais to Lady.

Kelly Wilson 2015 American Planning Assocation

DRAFT

West Gervias District
Lincoln and Lady Plaza

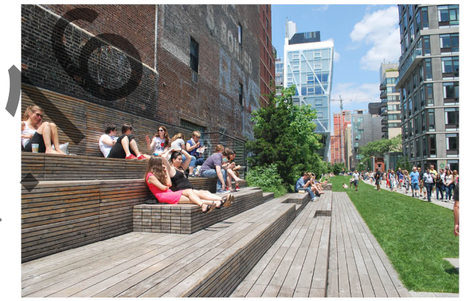
One of the primary character-defining elements that survey respondents want to see more of is interactive public spaces. Currently the District does not have a major public space. Memorial Park is within the District, but the programing of this space has been developed in a ceremonial pattern which does not attract interactive uses.

Review of existing plans, context, and connectivity within the District highlights Lincoln Street as a primary North-South connector between the City center and the Vista. Lincoln Street in the future will be the link between the Vista Greenway and the Rocky Branch Greenway, becoming a key urban greenbelt around the central portion of the City. Foundation Square and the Vista Greenway Phase 2 opened in the summer of 2016 as the first step in the linkage of this greenway system.

The District clearly does not have a defined public space other than the traditional street right-of-way. The opportunity for a plaza at the trail head of the Vista Greenway would be a key element in meeting the economic, social, and connectivity goals of this Plan. Thus a key recommendation of this Plan is the development of this area as a well-developed, flexible public space.

Over the years there have been many proposals for development of a plaza at the trail head of the Vista Greenway. Each of these plans calls for a flexible space, high quality materials, a water feature, opportunities for unique lighting features, and most importantly a space for public gathering and links to other parts of the City.

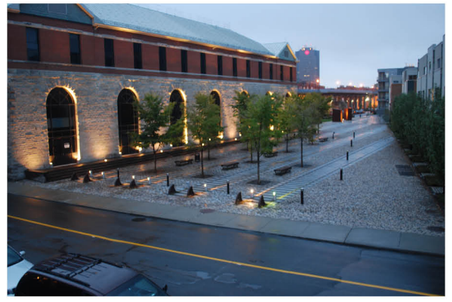
Flexible seating locations in the shade



Seating options in the sun

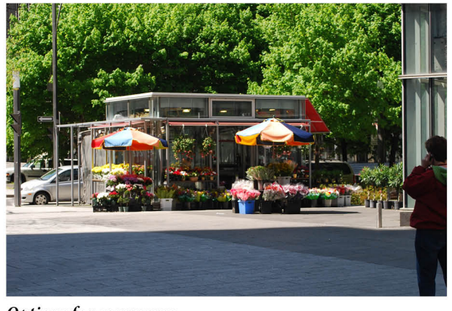
Places for children

Flexible places for busking, strolling, and watching



Honoring the railroad / night lighting

Night lighting



Options for commerce

Seating in the sun and shade; interactive water feature

Vegetation

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West Gervias District Open Street Opportunities

Across the nation there is a movement occurring referred to as Open Streets. This is an initiative to close streets to automobile traffic so that people may use them for walking, bicycling, dancing, playing and socializing. As of the Spring of 2016 there are over 100 documented initiatives in North America.

The concept of Open Streets dates back to 1965 when Seattle, Washington created its Bicycle Sundays event. This was followed by similar events in NYC in 1966, San Francisco in 1967, and Ottawa in 1970. In 1974 Bogotá Columbia held its first Ciclovia event (Ciclovia means "Bike Path").

Open Streets events nationwide generally promote public health, environmental, social, and economic goals. The Open Streets Project lists the following initiatives:

- Encourage physical activity and allow participants to reimagine their communities as places to walk and bike for transportation
- Improve the air quality of cities by removing cars from the road
- Provide a novel type of public space that helps people meet and make social connections, thereby allowing individuals, community organizations, and political leaders to build relationships
- Bring thousands of people to frequent businesses and fuel local economies

Sunday, November 1, 2015 from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., the Market Common was full of people for Myrtle Beach's first Open Streets event called Cyclovia. This was the first Cyclovia in South Carolina.

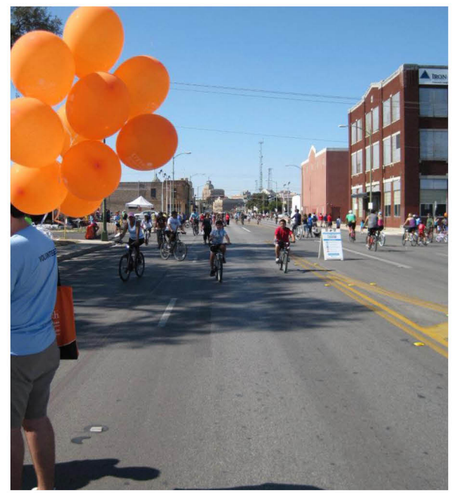
CYCLOVIA
OPEN STREETS • MYRTLE BEACH
Walk • Ride • Shop • Fun

Durham NC Summer Street Event 1 mile Closed loop
Image: PBIC Image Library 2010 Laura Sandt

LA Ciclovia
Image: PBIC Image Library 2010 Ryan Snyder

What are Open Streets?

Open Streets events temporarly close streets to automobiles so that people may utilize them for healthy and fun physical and social activities. Open Streets events should not be confused with block parties, or street fairs. Open Streets events are desiged to actively encourage physical activity, increase community engagement, and build support for transportation choices.
www.openstreetsproject.org



San Antonio Ciclobia Event 2011
Image: PBIC Image Library Julia Diana

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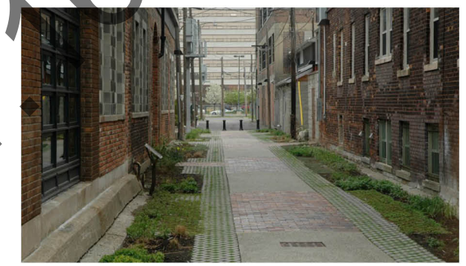
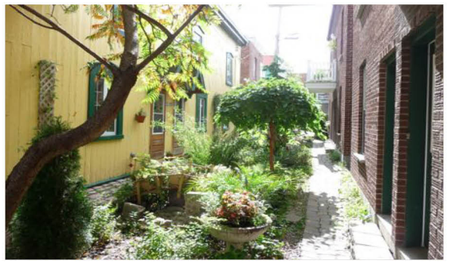
CASE STUDIES

GREEN ALLEYS

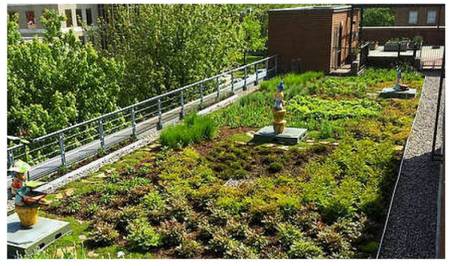
Columbia's downtown was not designed with service alleys, however the District has a number of alleys which provide mid-block pedestrian access and, in some cases, back-of-house service access. Cities such as Chicago have implemented a Green Alley Program adopting best management practices to encourage improved surfaces for drainage and reflectivity, inclusion of plant material, dark sky lighting, and other tactics to improve alleys city-wide.

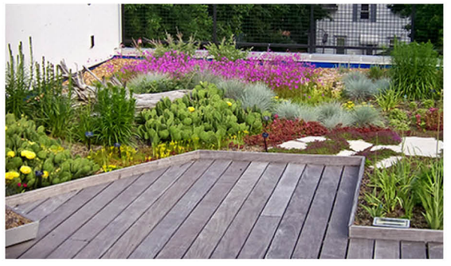




GREEN ROOFS

In a part of the City with prime real estate values, businesses and developers often cannot afford to provide outdoor spaces on developable land. However rooftops throughout the District provide interesting opportunities for additional open space. Roofs can also be designed to accommodate plants and even trees, providing increased energy efficiency, decreased stormwater runoff, and improved aesthetics. Cities throughout the Country offer various incentives for green roofs, such as tax breaks and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) bonuses.





PARKLETS

San Francisco pioneered the parklet movement to take advantage of on-street parking spaces as a way to provide additional public spaces for people. Many cities have created parklet ordinances, including Miami, Phoenix, and Raleigh. Typically a parklet is sponsored, designed, and permitted by an independent group, must meet certain design criteria, be covered by liability insurance, and must be removable and renewed annually. The West Gervais District is an excellent area for a pilot parklet program.

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Recommendations

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IMPLEMENTATION

General Recommendations

The Plan recommends multiple policy and physical recommendations to guide these implementation efforts. In developing these recommendations, the issues and opportunities presented earlier within the document were considered and incorporated as appropriate. Supporting each recommendation are implementation strategies, time frames, examples and resources and the entity responsible for implementation.

Time frames have been organized into four categories with each time frame having a specified time as follows:

- Immediate - approximately 12 months
- Short-term - approximately 1-2 years
- Mid-term - approximately 3-5 years
- Long-term - approximately 5-10 years or beyond

Plan recommendations have been divided into Policy Recommendations, Land Use Recommendations, Public/Private Investment Projects, Urban Design and Placemaking Recommendations, and Mobility Recommendations.

1.1 Adopt the Plan

Adopt the West Gervais District Plan, allowing it to serve as the framework to guide land use decisions, policy decisions, and Captial Improvment Plan (CIP) decisions for the area and set the stage for commencing improvements in the area. The Plan should be updated every ten years to maintain its relevancy and allow for flexibility given changing market conditions and city and community priorities.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services, City of Columbia Planning Commission, City of Columbia Council.

Timeframe: Immediate

1.2 Modify Historic District Guidelines

Encourage adoption of revised West Gervais Historic Commercial District and West Gervais Historic Protection Area District guidelines to address preservation of existing resources and promote compatible development patterns.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services, City of Columbia Design/Development Review Commission, City of Columbia Council.

Timeframe: Immediate

1.3 Modify Zoning

Encourage support of the Plan Together Zoning and Land Development Ordinance rewrite to allow for quality urban development.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services.

Timeframe: Short-term

1.3.1 Zoning Height Standards

Encourage creation and adoption of height plan/standards with a step back similar to those adopted by Charleston SC for a portion of the regional activity center (UCAC-3) generally from Senate, the River, Washington and Park streets within the Study area as recommended by the Plan Columbia Land Use Plan and this document.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services.

Timeframe: Short-term

1.3.2 Mixed-Use Zoning

Encourage the creation of one or two mixed-use districts that promote a mixture of commercial and retail uses on the ground floor and residential and office on upper floors. Emphasis of uses on upper floors should be office within the core of the District (Gervais) and residential on the perimeter of the District (Lady/Washington) through the code rewrite noted in 1.3 above.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services.

Timeframe: Short-term

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IMPLEMENTATION

2 Land Use Recommendations

2.1 Housing

Encourage a mixture of additional residential development throughout the area.

2.1.1 Density Bonuses

Develop programs and policies for density bonuses within prescribed building envelopes to incentivize higher density development and encourage enclosed parking. Such policies could allow for an increase of floor area ratio when parking is provided below grade, or within parking garages of at least two levels.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services.

Timeframe: Short-term

2.1.2 Mixture of Housing Types

Develop programs and policies that promote a mixture of housing types to address workforce housing and family size units. Such policies and regulations could allow for increased floor area ratio when dwelling units meeting affordable housing definitions

Responsibility: City of Columbia Planning & Development Services, Community Development.

Timeframe: Short-term

2.1.2 Live Downtown Incentives

Develop incentives with area employers to encourage living near one's place of work. Successful programs often provide forgivable loans towards the purchase of the primary residence, proving allowance of funding to the cost of renting units for the first and second years, allowances for renewal of leases, and matching grant programs for exterior improvements to buildings. For an example of similar programs refer to http://www.detroitlivedowntown.org/incentives/ or http://www.downtownonthego.com/live/live-close-to-work.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development Departments.

Timeframe: Short-term

2.2 Retail

Develop programs and policies to encourage a larger variety of retail options within the lower levels of existing and new developments, while maintaining office, hotels, and residential uses on upper floors.

Responsibility: Economic Development Department, Vista Guild, Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Short-term

2.3 Office

Develop programs and policies to encourage a variety of creative professionals such as those within the industries of art, design, computer programing, engineering, business finance and similar to locate or remain within the District.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Economic Development Department, Vista Guild, Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Short-term

Housing Options

3 Public/Private Investment Recommendations

3.1 Incentivize new development including mixed use projects and public infrastructure as recommended using a variety of financing options as allowed within South Carolina.

Responsibility: Economic Development Department, Columbia Development Corporation

Timeframe: Long-term

3.1.1 Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

Under State Law, municipalities and counties can create tax Increment financing districts. Once an improvement is identified, the base property value is determined. Public and private investments will increase the value of the property over the base. Taxes are then levied on the new increment, and used to pay debt service for the bonded improvements. Consideration of mini TIF projects could be undertaken. An example of such as project would be a one or two parcel TIF for a hotel where the increment would be used for development of public improvements within the right of way and development of a public plaza.

Responsibility: Columbia Development Corporation, Vista Guild, Planning and Development Services.

Timeframe: Mid-term

3.1.2 Brownfield Grants

Since 1998, brownfield assessment grants from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are available to private entities planning to develop "real property, the expansion, redevelopment or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties takes pressures off of undeveloped, open land and both improves and protects the environment. The goal of the program is to leverage brownfields funding to attract private-sector investments which transform economically underutilized regions of the city into areas where high-skilled people live, work and play.

Responsibility: Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Long-term

3.1.3 Infrastructure Grants.

Infrastructure grants are project specific, and can be underwritten by either local or state agencies. The amount of the grant is directly related to the capital investment. The cost recovery schedule is based on property taxes. This implementation strategy is common for the installation of: curb

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IMPLEMENTATION

and gutter, sidewalks, underground utilities, and signalization.

Funding for such Grants can come from multiple sources:

General Obligation Bonds are municipal bonds with fixed interest rates and terms. These bonds can be used for a variety of improvements, and typically offer a lower interest rate than would be available privately.

Revenue Bonds: Revenue Bonds use fees from services to repay debt. Common forms of revenue bonds are for water/sewer improvements, airports, and toll roads.

Low Interest Loans: Low interest loans are underwritten by a public entity to provide debt for specific projects. These loans typically offer lower interest rates than would be available in the private market.

Responsibility: Planning and Development Services, Parks, Administration, Engineering.

Timeframe: Mid-term

3.2 Boost investor confidence in the area to attract non-residential development.

Consider Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). These districts are defined geographies where parcels are assessed for a service to improve or maintain the area. Landscape maintenance and security are two examples of such services. To pay for the services, a special assessment tax can be levied in relation to the benefit a property receives from a defined service and/or the size of the parcel. A demonstrated commitment from existing property owners to fund such extra services often boosts potential investors' confidence in investing in the area.

Responsibility: Columbia Development Corporation and Vista Guild.

Timeframe: Short-term

3.3 Continue Momentum

Define and participate in catalyst projects that will continue the momentum that has been built over the past 20 years with public and private investment.

Responsibility: Columbia Development Corporation, Vista Guild, Planning and Development Services, Engineering, Public Works, Economic Development, Community Development and Administration.

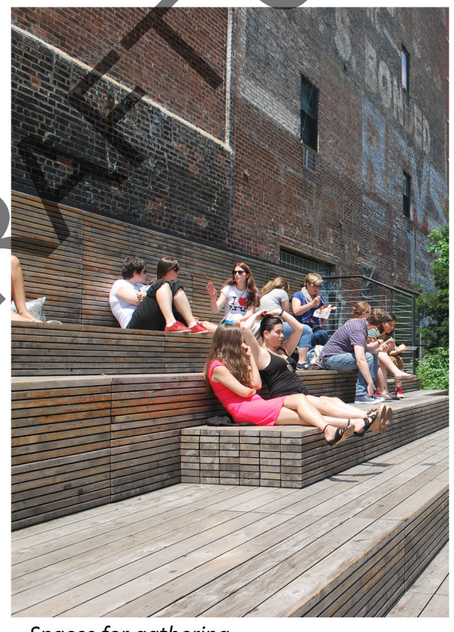
Timeframe: Long-term

3.4 Public Plaza / Gathering Places

There are many opportunities within the West Gervais District on both public and private property to create gathering spaces. A priority should be the creation of a pedestrian plaza at the head of the Vista Greenway at Lincoln and Lady. Other areas that should be improved concurrent with development include those behind the Convention Center, parallel to the railroad, along the river, within the Kline and SCE&G properties, and the right-of-way on Park Street South of Gervais.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Economic Development Department, Vista Guild, Columbia Development Corporation, Planning and Development Services, Parks and Recreation, Engineering, and Public Works.

Timeframe: Mid-term



Spaces for gathering

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4 Urban Design and Placemaking Recommendations

4.1 Accessibility and Programing of Convention Center Open Space

This area at the North side of the property and just West of the current vehicle drop off area has great opportunities that are underutilized. The space would be an ideal pedestrian connection to potential development to the West. It could also be a great venue for a Jazz in the Park series modeled off successful events at the National Gallery of Art Jazz in the Garden, Milwaukee East Town Association Jazz in the Park, New Orleans Jazz in the Park or many other similar venues.

Responsibility: Convention Center and Vista Guild.

Timeframe: Mid-term

4.2 Public Art Walk

Develop a multi-use trail along the East side of the railroad tracks from Greene Street to Blanding Street. This multiuse trail would be a continuation on of the Innovista Multiuse trail that is located on the east side of the railroad tracks South of Greene. This area should emphasize public art at key locations and have gathering spaces as well as active street/trail frontages. Connectivity of this trail to Lady Street and the Vista Greenway will provide important connectivity throughout the District. The High Line in New York City would be a precedent. http://www.thehighline.org/

Responsibility: One Columbia , Vista Guild, Private Development, Columbia Development Corporation, Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Development Services.

Timeframe: Mid-term/ Long-term

4.3 Night Time Illumination

Night time illumination has been found to contribute to the value of sites and enhance the night time economies of cities and business districts. Such lighting does not need to be bright or intensive but rather can be subtle and designed to have minimal glare. Funding for a plan, as well as funding for installation and long term maintenance will need to be explored and examined. Refer to BID recommendations for potential funding opportunities.

4.3.1 Public Art Illumination

Develop a night time illumination plan for the District with emphasis on lighting for public art/sculpture as well as lighting for holiday and festival events.

Responsibility: Vista Guild, Public Works, Planning and Development Services, Columbia Development Corporation, One Columbia.

Timeframe: Long-term

IMPLEMENTATION

4.3.2 Building Illumination

Develop a night time illumination plan for the Vista with emphasis on illumination of specific facades or architectural features of specific structures.

Responsibility: Private Development, Vista Guild, Public Works Department, Planning and Development Services Department, Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Long-term

4.4 Trash

Currently within the District most commercial business rely on curb side carts that are placed along public sidewalks. Pick up currently occurs during the evening hours. These carts are unattractive, have an odor, and juices that get tracked and create dirty sidewalks. A coordinated solution for garbage collection for commercial development within the West Gervais District should be examined and considered.

Responsibility: Vista Guild, Public Works Department, Municipal Solid Waste Division, Planning and Development Services, Traffic Engineering.

Timeframe: Immediate

4.5 Wayfinding

The City of Columbia developed a Wayfinding Master Plan in the early 2000s. Portions of this plan have been implemented while other elements have not. It is recommended that this plan be revisited and elements such as kiosks should be considered for funding throughout the District.

Responsibility: Vista Guild, Public Works Department, Columbia Development Corporation, Planning and Development Services Department.

Timeframe: Mid-term

4.6 Connectivity to Memorial Park, Finlay Park, Riverfront Park, and Convention Center Plaza

The West Gervais District has some great existing public spaces within a 10 min walk from the intersection of Gervais and Lincoln. These include the Convention Center upper and lower plazas, Vista Greenway trail head, Memorial Park, and Finlay Park. The Riverfront Park is a 15 + min walk from the District. These spaces are not seen as integral to the districts. Programing activities within these spaces and providing a higher concentration of office, retail and residential uses around these spaces will allow these valuable resources to be better integrated into the area. In addition, connectivity and infrastructure enhancements will provide better access to these areas (see mobility section below).

Responsibility: Economic Development Department, Vista Guild, Private Development, Columbia Development Corporation, Planning and Development Services Department.

Timeframe: Mid-term

4.7 Found Space – Through Other Enhancements

Within urban environments the smallest urban spaces can contribute greatly to the area; found open space can come in a variety of forms. In 2012 the City and Vista Guild installed bump-outs that enhanced pedestrian crossings along Gervais, shortened the travel distance of pedestrians, and provided additional greenspace. Similar opportunities should be explored as infrastructure is built, rebuilt and developments are planned. Found spaces should be considered for each public and private development and should include the following, as well as opportunities that may not be listed:

- Bump Outs
- Streetscapes
- Outdoor Dinning
- Mid-Block crossings
- Parklets
- Green Alleys
- Green Roofs

Responsibility: Economic Development Department, Vista Guild, Public Works Department, Stormwater Management Division, Engineering Services Department, Private Development, Columbia Development Corporation, Planning and Development Services Department

Timeframe: Mid-term

4.8 Outdoor Dining

Outdoor dining is increasingly becoming a common design element within open spaces of popular urban commercial and residential districts throughout the Nation and Columbia. The West Gervais District has some significant challenges with accommodating such amenities due to the width of sidewalks within the area. As sidewalks and streets are redesigned, consideration shall be given to the reallocation of public space for other uses such as outdoor dining.

Responsibility: City of Columbia Economic Development Department, Vista Guild, Public Works, Forestry, Planning and Development Services, and Traffic Engineering.

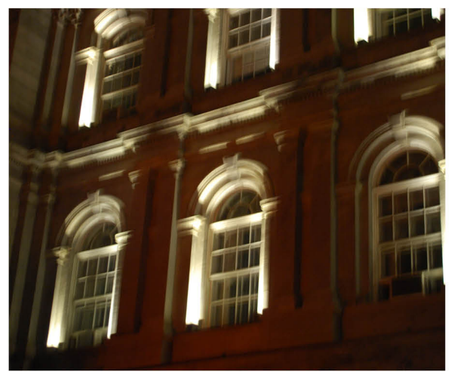
Timeframe: Mid-term

4.9 Green Alleys / Railroad Spur Pedestrian Enhancements

Within this Plan there are specific recommendations for using and enhancing abandoned railroad spurs for pedestrian and connectivity opportunities. A program for green pedestrian alleys including standards and funding opportunities should be developed. Many case studies exist in cities throughout the country from Washington, DC to Chicago and LA. Funding for such projects might include private funding, BID or Vista Guild funds, Stormwater Management Grants and Funds, or a combination of those. Such projects can provide for better connectivity and economic vitality in a business district.

The development of these green alleys should be coordinated with the unified development code and required at the time of redevelopment of properties.

Responsibility: Vista Guild working with private developers/railroad ownership, Public



Night time building illumination

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Works Department, Engineering Department, Stormwater Management Division, Planning and Development Services Department, Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Mid-term

4.10 Mid-Block Crossings

Within this plan there are specific recommendations providing for better connectivity. Given Columbia's "famously hot" status, pedestrians often seek and use the shortest routes to and from a location. When this occurs pedestrians can often be found in areas that are not typical such as mid-block conditions etc. In many areas such as Lady Street and Washington Street, mid-block connections should be encouraged, particularly at locations that will connect existing and future pedestrian alleyways (as noted in 5.12 above). Mid-block crossings along Gervais and other streets will need formal analysis and involvement with SCDOT but should be explored as Gervais street has some of the highest pedestrian counts in the area.

Responsibility: Vista Guild in assocation with City and State agencies, Public Works Department, Engineering Department, Planning and Development Services Department, Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Mid-term

4.11 Green Roofs & Green Infrastructure

Stormwater is an ever-increasing area of concern for the area and community. As the density of this area increases, areas for water infiltration diminish. The majority of the area is already impervious, but opportunities and advancements in technology are rapidly developing. These opportunities include green roofs, bio-swales and similar treatments which can be integrated into new building design or streetscape design, with an end result of a more green and healthier urban environment.

Responsibility: Vista Guild, Public Works Department, Engineering Department, Stormwater Management Division, Planning and Development Services Department, Columbia Development Corporation.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Yield to pedestrian sign - Greenville, SC

5 Mobility

In June of 2015 the City of Columbia Council adopted the Walk Bike Columbia Plan as a component of the City's Comprehensive Plan. This Plan created a long-term vision for walking, biking and transit within the City. This Plan has specific recommendations within the West Gervais District. These recommendations include intersection improvements, bike facilities, and sidewalk improvements designed to work with the Comet. Below is a summary of the types of improvements recommended within the West Gervais District. Maps showing specific recommendations can be found within the Walk Bike Columbia Plan, and are incorporated herein by reference.

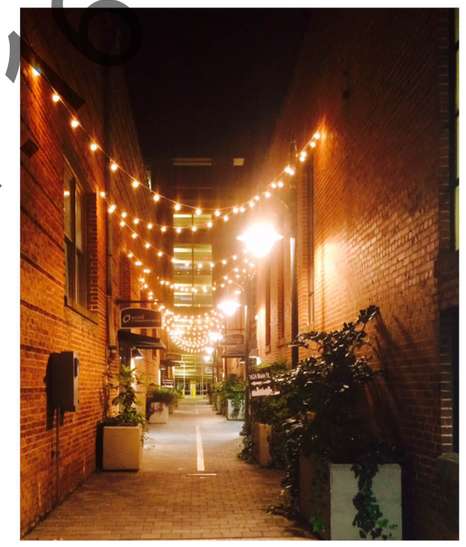
Design and implementation of these improvements should adhere to the recommendations of the Walk Bike Columbia Plan.

Pedestrian Improvements.

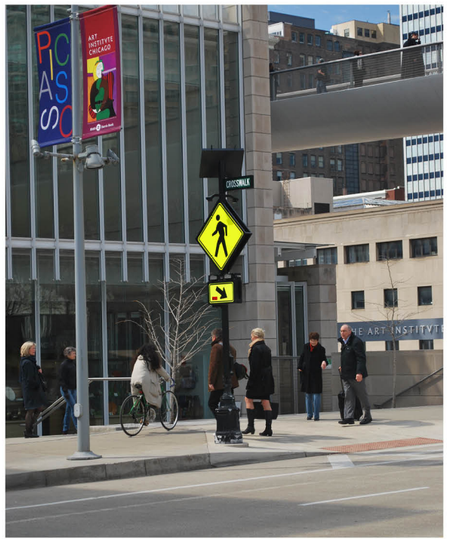
Pedestrian facility types fall into three categories: sidewalk improvements, intersection improvements, and mid-block connections. An overview of these improvement categories is provided below.

5.11 Sidewalks

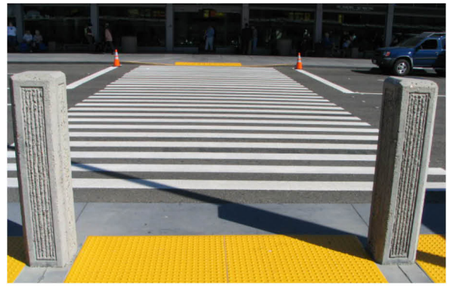
Sidewalks are the most fundamental element of the walking network, as they provide an area for pedestrian travel separated from vehicle traffic. A variety of consider-



Green alley: impervious pavement, plantings, and night time illumination



Mid-Block Crossing beacon- solar operated



High-quality pedestrian crosswalk markings

Pedestrian area with art integration

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ations are important in sidewalk design. Providing adequate and accessible facilities can lead to increased numbers of people walking, improved safety, and the creation of social space.

Sidewalks must be more than areas to travel; they should provide places for people to interact. There should be places for standing, visiting, and sitting.

Sidewalks should be thought of as having specific areas for various activities, uses, and have an organized system of design throughout the area.

Sidewalks should contribute to the character of neighborhoods and business districts, strengthen their identity, and be places where adults and children can safely participate in public life.

The following streets are planned to have pedestrian improvements as specified within the Walk Bike Columbia Plan.

Intersection Improvements for Pedestrians

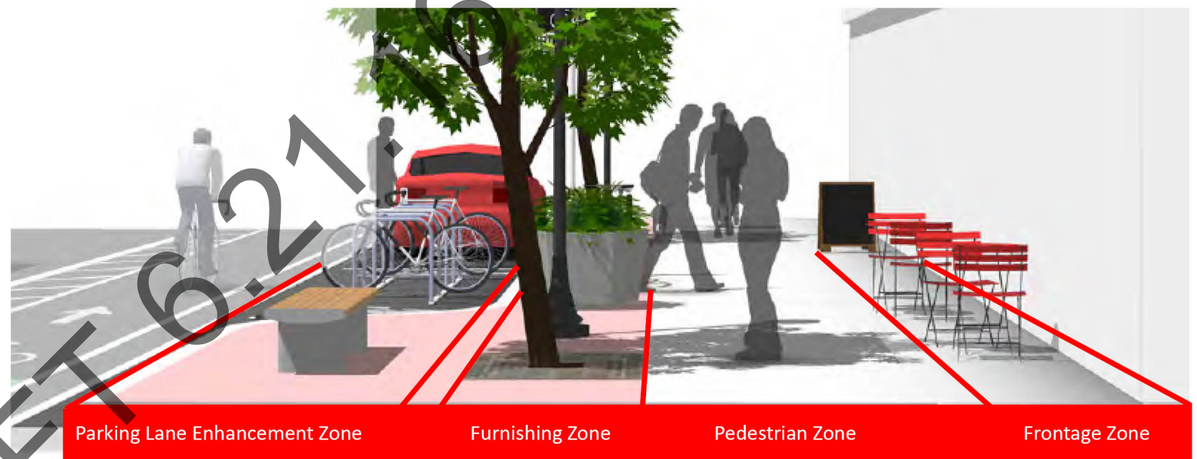
Signalized intersections are typically preferred crossing locations for pedestrians since traffic is typically stopped in one direction and motorists generally expect pedestrians to be crossing. However, vehicular turning speed, visibility, crossing distance and signal timing can be great barriers for pedestrians on roadways that are designed to primarily accommodate vehicular traffic.

Treatments such as high-visibility crosswalks, bulb-outs/ curb extensions, roadway geometry improvements, adding pedestrian signals, lengthened/leading pedestrian crossing intervals and pedestrian median refuges can improve new or existing intersections for pedestrian users.

Crossings/Mid-Block Connections

A marked/unsignalized crossing typically consists of a marked crossing area, signage and other markings to slow or stop traffic. This can occur at an unsignalized intersection or mid-block, where no intersection exists. The approach to designing crossings at unsignalized locations depends on an evaluation of vehicular traffic, line of sight, pathway traffic, use patterns, vehicle speed, road type, road width, and other safety issues such as proximity to major attractions. When space is available, using a median refuge island can improve user safety by providing pedestrians and bicyclists space to perform the safe crossing of one side of the street at a time.

Mid-block crossings can be an important element within the retailing environment



Parking Lane Enhancement Zone	Edge Zone	Furnishing Zone	Pedestrian Zone	Frontage Zone
The parking lane can act as a flexible space to further buffer the sidewalk from moving traffic. Curb extensions and bike corrals may occupy this space where appropriate. In the edge zone there should be a 6 inch wide curb.		The furnishing zone buffers pedestrians from the adjacent roadway, and is also the area where elements such as street trees, signal poles, signs, and other street furniture are properly located.	The through zone is the area intended for pedestrian travel. This zone should be entirely free of permanent and temporary objects. Wide through zones are needed in downtown areas or where pedestrian flows are high.	The frontage zone allows pedestrians a comfortable "shy" distance from the building fronts. It provides opportunities for window shopping, to place signs, planters, or chairs. Not applicable if adjacent to a landscaped space.

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of the area particular when considering the climate of Columbia. Columbia has a rather long block length and by strategically providing mid-block crossings the distance pedestrians are required to walk through the area can be lessened, while also allowing for better connectivity points. Strategic placement near mid-block pedestrian alleys will be important to providing connectivity from one public space to another.

While the Walk Bike Columbia Plan does not recommend specific locations for mid-block crossings, it does recommend them as tool to improve connectivity within specific blocks or road segments. Throughout the public input session and observations of pedestrian movement this plan does recommend a number of mid-block crossings be considered in the future.

5.4 Greenways

Utility and waterway corridors often offer excellent shared use path development and bikeway gap closure opportunities. Utility corridors typically include powerline and sewer corridors, while waterway corridors include canals, drainage ditches, rivers, and beaches. These corridors offer excellent transportation and recreation opportunities for bicyclists of all ages and skills. For more information regarding greenways please refer to the Walk Bike Columbia Plan.

Bike Improvements.

Bike facility types fall into two categories: on road and off road improvements. An overview of these categories is provided below.

5.5 Bike Boulevards

Bicycle boulevards are low-volume, low-speed streets modified to enhance bicyclist comfort by using treatments such as signage, pavement markings, traffic calming and/or traffic reduction, and intersection modifications. These treatments allow through movements of bicyclists while discouraging similar through-trips by non-local motorized traffic. For more information regarding Bike Boulevards please refer to the Walk Bike Columbia Plan. The following streets are planned to be Bike Boulevards:

5.6 Buffered Bike Lanes

Buffered bike lanes are conventional bicycle lanes paired with a designated buffer space, separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane and/or parking lane. Buffered bike lanes follow general guidance for buffered preferential vehicle lanes as per MUTCD guidelines (section 3D-01).

Buffered bike lanes are designed to increase the space between the bike lane and the travel lane and/or parked cars. This treatment is appropriate for bike lanes on roadways with high motor vehicle traffic volumes and speed, adjacent to parking lanes, or a high volume of truck or oversized vehicle traffic. For more information regarding buffered bike lanes please refer to the Walk Bike Columbia Plan.

The following streets are planned for Buffered Bike Lanes:

5.7 Cycle Tracks

Protection is provided through physical barriers and can include bollards, parking, a planter strip, an extruded curb, or on-street parking. Cycle tracks using these protective elements typically share the same elevation as adjacent travel lanes.

Raised cycle tracks may be at the level of the adjacent sidewalk or set at an intermediate level between the roadway and sidewalk to separate the cycle track from the pedestrian area. For more information regarding cycle tracks please refer to the Walk Bike Columbia Plan. The following streets are planned for Cycle Tracks:

5.8 Intersection Improvements for Bikes

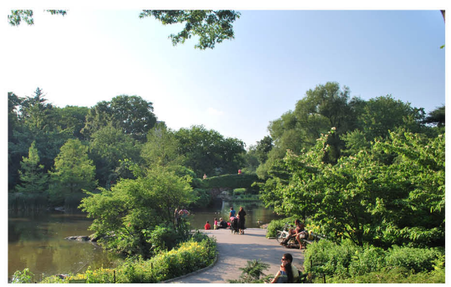
There are a number of bicycle spot intersection improvements recommended with the Walk Bike Columbia Plan as seen in the bicycle recommendations maps of that document. These should be implemented in conjunction with linear bikeway improvements they correspond to. Due to the wide variation in improvement types and subsequent costs, this Walk Bike Columbia Plan did not include cost estimates for these improvement types. For more information regarding intersection improvements please refer to the Walk Bike Columbia Plan.

Bike directional signage

Cycle track improvements

Intersection improvements

Mobility considered for all users



Greenways: places to gather

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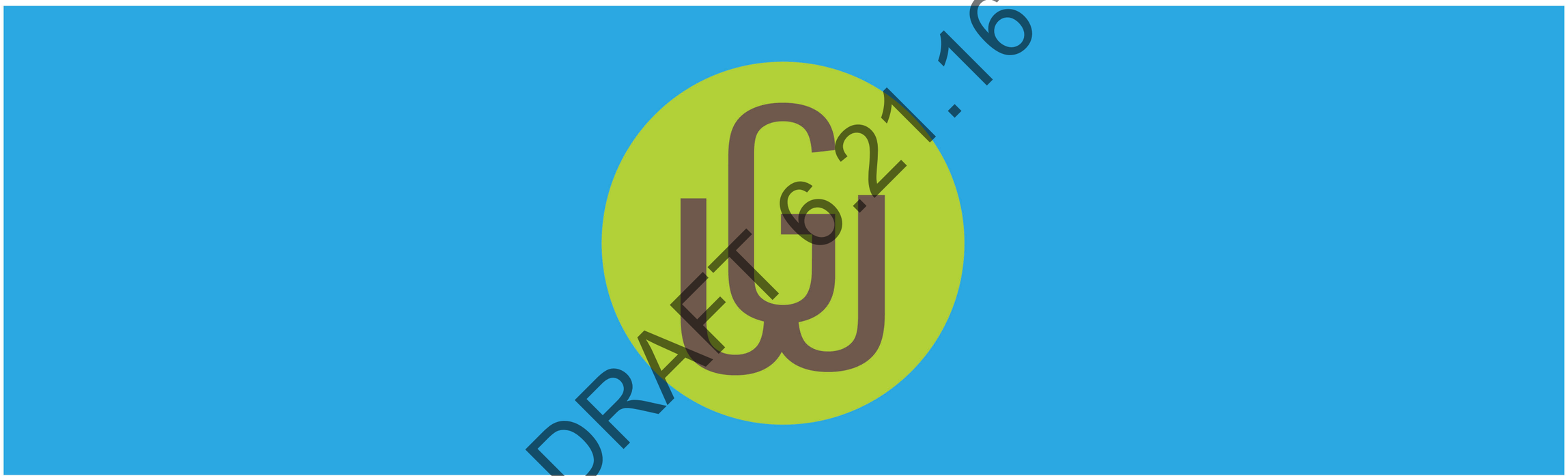
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