

Public Space Public Life Action Plan Columbia, SC

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Prepared by Gehl
June 20, 2016

Gehl



Imagine a Columbia that:

01

Supports & Attracts Creative Talent

02

Is a Leader in the Region for Family Friendly Public Life



Columbia aspires to be a family-friendly, walkable, and bikeable downtown, and grow as an attractive hub for young, creative talent – competitive in the region with cities like Greenville SC, Raleigh NC, and Lexington KY.

What sets these cities as excellent benchmarks is that they are not afraid to try new things to invite public life. For Columbia to cultivate this exciting shift to a lively, people-first city, it will need to do the same: be bold and test new ways to attract more people downtown — and outside — while inviting them to stay longer. In other words: create everyday spaces and experiences for people.

Vibrant districts for people are not afraid to try new things, offering streets and spaces that invite us to stop and stay a while.



Good News: People Are on Board!

The City is thirsty to be out downtown, together. Events are popular and visioning efforts draw tremendous public imagination, rethinking downtown Columbia as a regional magnet for people. The city is not starting from scratch. Still, everyday public life remains relatively quiet. How might Columbia bridge this gap between an event-based city and one that hums with daily public life?



The public support and energy is there for a more dynamic downtown public life. People want it, and they show their enthusiasm by 'voting with their feet' during city events. Here are examples of Columbia at its most active, during events like First Thursdays and Soda City. How can Columbia invite some of the energy of events into its everyday public life?



This is where Gehl enters.

We help imagine the untapped potential in the space between buildings. How can they work together to create a more magnetic downtown, rich with Public Life?

We start with an honest look at how people experience Downtown Columbia today to understand how it can change to better support people *first* tomorrow.

Main Street stays active through dinner and beyond even on week nights. But it remains concentrated around one of the few restaurants with tables and chairs outside. Here, passers-by banter with a group out for dinner. Columbia is a sociable urban center - something special to leverage moving forward.



wish we had a place to sit!

What do we mean by Public Life?

Public life is what happens in the spaces between buildings. It is what a collective group of people create when they live their lives outside of their home, workplace, and car.

We believe that robust public life is the essence of our cities. Public space knits the components of public life—people, place, and culture—together.

1. Public life is Authentic. It reflects the culture and social norms unique to a place. It is derived from history-political, economic, and intellectual.

2. Public life is Dynamic. It has an infectious energy. People like to be in the company of other people and public space allows them to do so.

3. Public life is Contextual. It responds to and varies according to the surroundings. Public space can provide clues as to what participation is appropriate and encouraged.

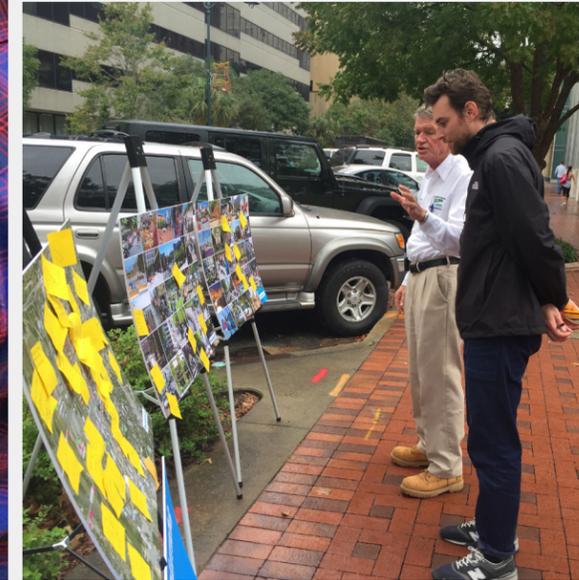
4. Public life is Inclusive. It encompasses the preferences and choices of the many and the few. All are invited to participate in the activity of the city.

5. Public life is Spontaneous. It has a life of its own. Public life responds to the regular rhythms of people's lives and the disruptions that unforeseen events cause.

GETTING TO KNOW
COLUMBIA'S
**PUBLIC
REALM**

In the Fall of 2015 and Winter of 2016, Gehl Studio, with the support of the Knight Foundation, conducted a series of public workshops, pop-up "sidewalkshops" and online engagement. Listening and learning from a wide cross-section of Columbians helped to identify where to look and what to measure. Where are the hot spots? Where do people steer clear? And what do Columbians want in their public realm?

From there, we conducted a Public Space Public Life (PSPL) Survey to observe and measure what everyday life is like in the city. We looked at how people move through the city on foot and bicycle; where they stay, for how long, and what they are doing.



Gehl

On the Vista

"I love the way it is getting more active and growing and changing. The potential is great too."

On Main Street

"It has a combination of history, art, vitality, and has a good pedestrian scale."

On the Riverfront

"It is nature right in the city, a peaceful and lovely place to go, at once convenient and secluded as well as solitary but with other people."

SHARED VALUES & QUALITY CRITERIA

We started with a look at quality. What qualities do Columbians cherish most in their public space? Distilled from hundreds of public responses, key spatial qualities and shared values rose to the top, forming the foundation of what Columbians aspire for in their public spaces.

These can be seen as a guide for what future public spaces ought to pursue.

SHARED VALUES

Residents are proud of maintaining and defining local identity (ies).

There is a collective delight in Columbia's natural resources.

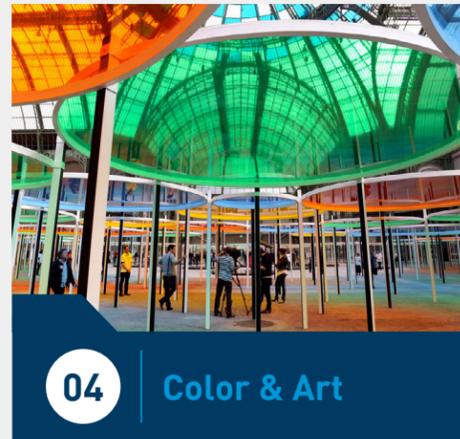
When there is a reason to come together, Columbians do it enthusiastically.

People want to expand their options to get around safely (biking and walking)

There is a collective curiosity, a thirst for places to draw you in, surprise you, and make you smile.

Families want to feel invited, that includes places for kids and their parents.

QUALITY CRITERIA

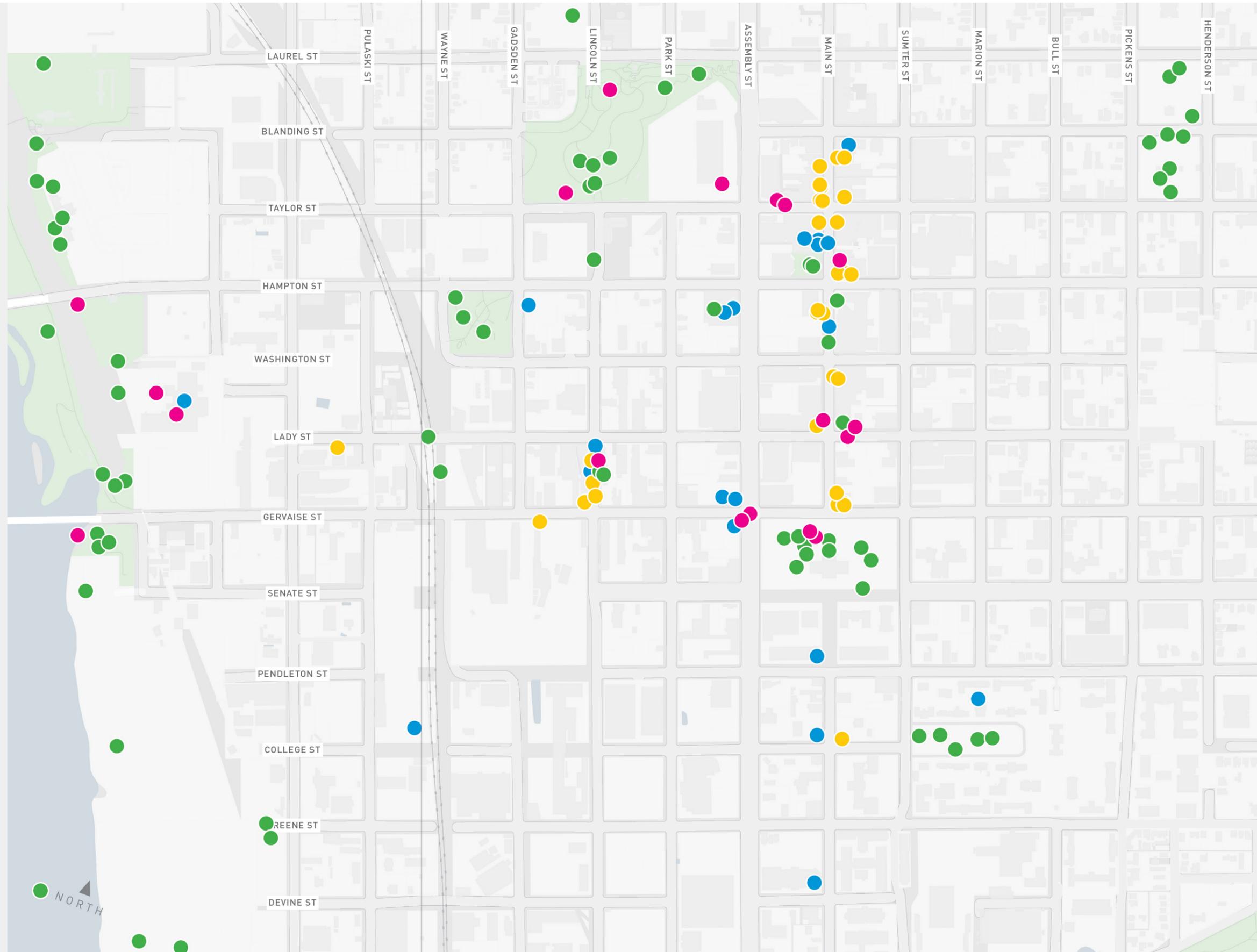


FAVORITE PLACES

With a clear picture of the qualities that Columbians aspire for their public realm, we then looked at public spaces in Columbia: where do people go and spend time today? What qualities draw people to these places?

We captured over 200 responses. These favorite places are categorized on the map by:

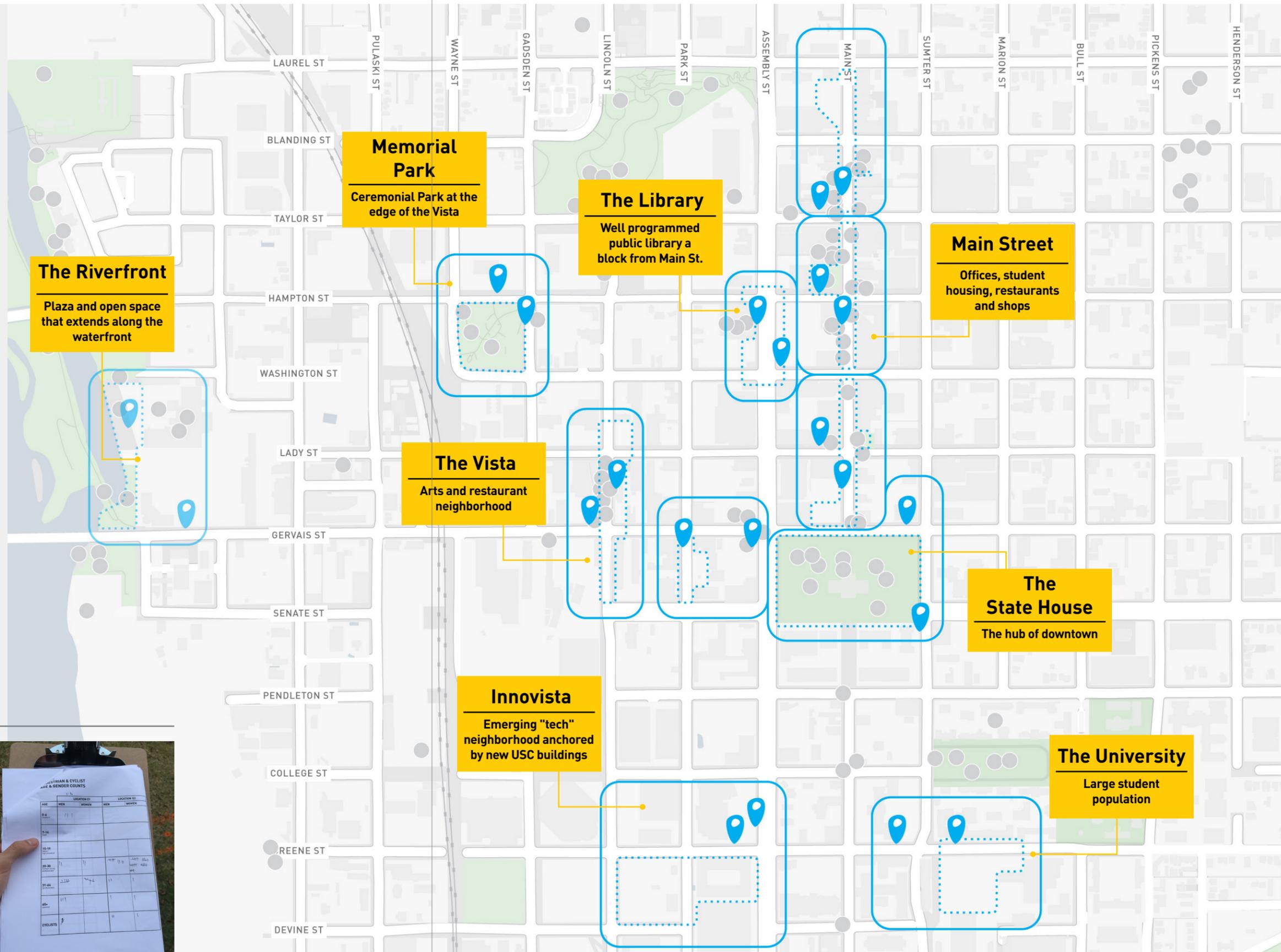
- Places I Go To Learn Or Be
- Places I Go To Relax & Retreat
- Places I Go To Eat, Drink, Shop, Socialize
- Places I Wish I Could Spend More Time



OUR PSPL LOCATIONS

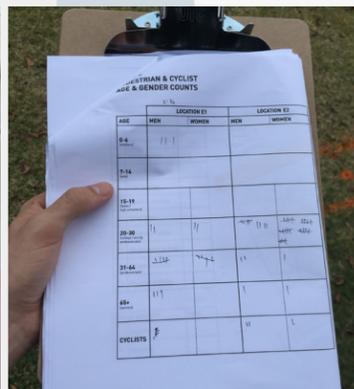
Clusters of activity started to emerge largely along Main street, the Vista and the Riverfront. But how are they supporting and inviting public life now? How can they improve for more in the future?

Based on public feedback, we identified 11 focus areas (22 specific survey locations) for a Public Space Public Life survey, an architectural ethnographic analysis of the city that Gehl has employed around the world.



50 volunteers from various city departments and the university, as well as local urban enthusiasts, helped survey 20 locations over two days in Columbia.

Because a flood closed the Riverfront to the public, volunteers were unable to survey that area.



AGE	M		W		TOTAL
	PEDESTRIAN	CYCLIST	PEDESTRIAN	CYCLIST	
5-14	1	1	1	1	4
15-19					
20-29	1	1	1	1	4
30-39					
40-49	1	1	1	1	4
50-59					
60-69	1	1	1	1	4
70+					
CYCLISTS					

01

How Are People Moving in Columbia?

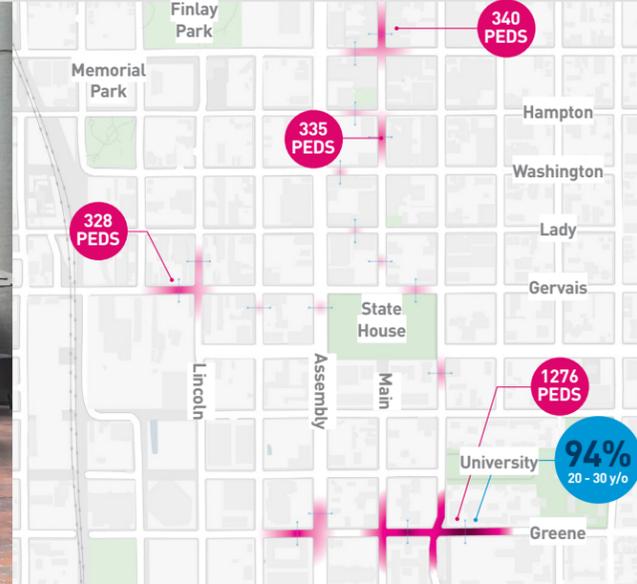
PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT
WEEKDAY



8-10am **Morning Commute**

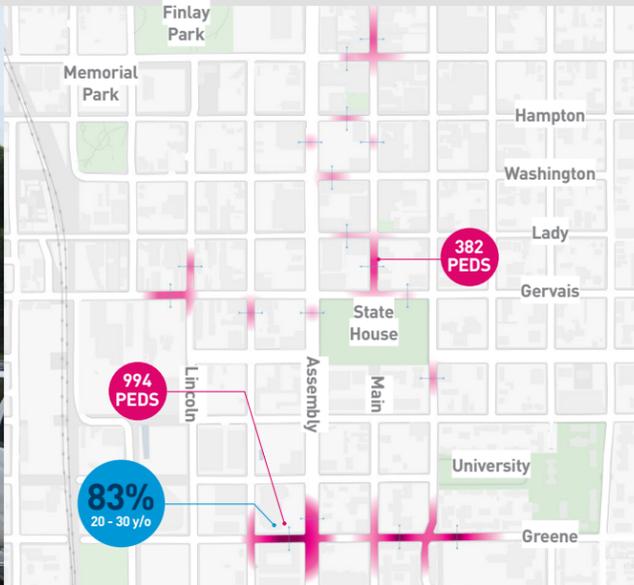
These illustrative heat maps visualize how Columbia's foot traffic swells and dissipates throughout the day at key times. The morning commute

is characterized by quiet pedestrian (ped) volumes throughout the district. Activity around the university is the exception.



11-1pm **Lunch Break**

With over 1,200 ped/hour, lunch is one of the busiest times during the week. Hotspots include the university, Main St and Lincoln St.



4-6pm **Commute Home**

Main Street by the State House sees its highest volume as people commute home or head out for happy hour.

Over 1,000 ped/hour at Assembly and Greene are mostly students going home to student housing after school.



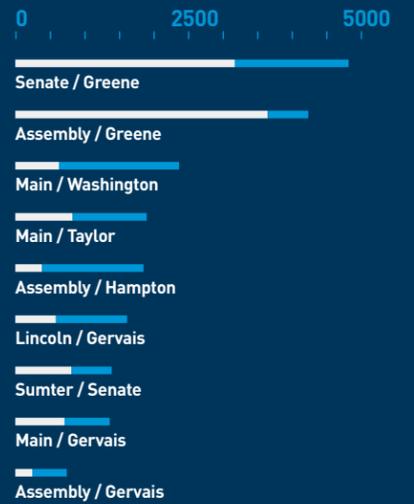
6-8pm **Happy Hour**

During the week, the hours after work see more people linger. The happy hour crowd energizes parts of Main Street and Lincoln.

Jaywalking.

Besides football, jaywalking might be the most popular sport in town. Columbians know where they're going, and they like to get there as quickly as possible. Every key intersection we surveyed saw significant jaywalking. Some, like those on Greene, Main, and Assembly, had over 1,000 people a day crossing against the "walk" signal or crossing mid-block.

Number of Jaywalkers a day



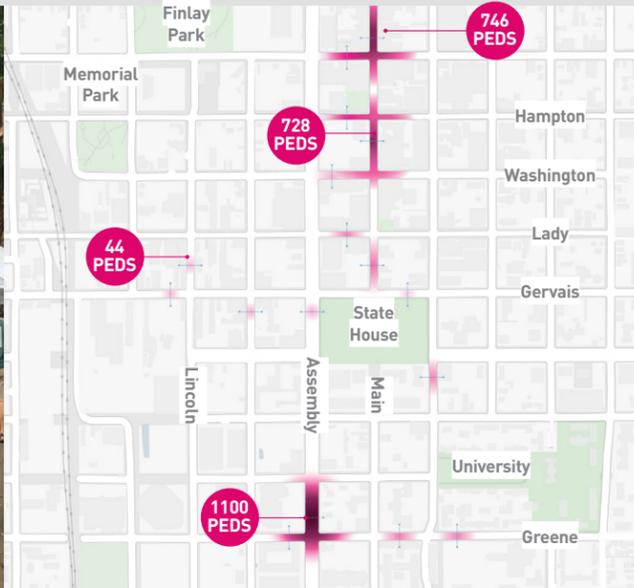
Wait. Wait. Wait. Walk fast!!
A word on signal timing.

One of the key issues is that signal timing leaves very little time for people to cross the street without walking against a no-walk signal.



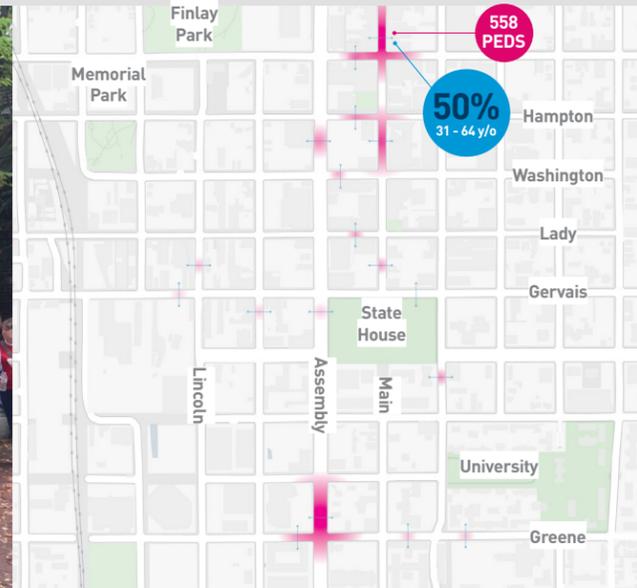
(Example from Assembly / Greene)

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT WEEKEND



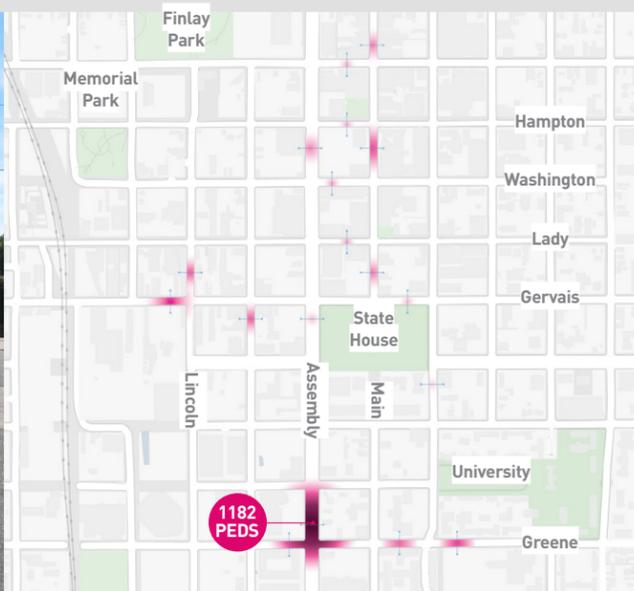
10-12pm Morning Market

Weekend mornings see two strong nodes of activity: Soda City market on Main Street and the academic buildings near Assembly and Greene. The rest of the district is very quiet.



12-1pm Lunch Time

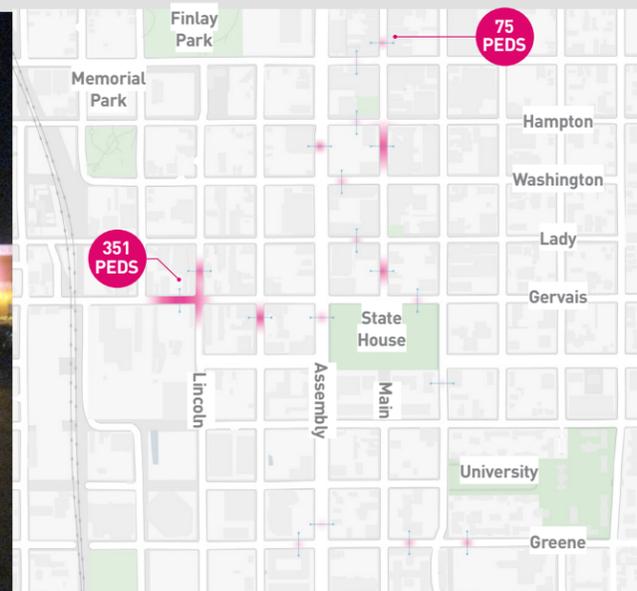
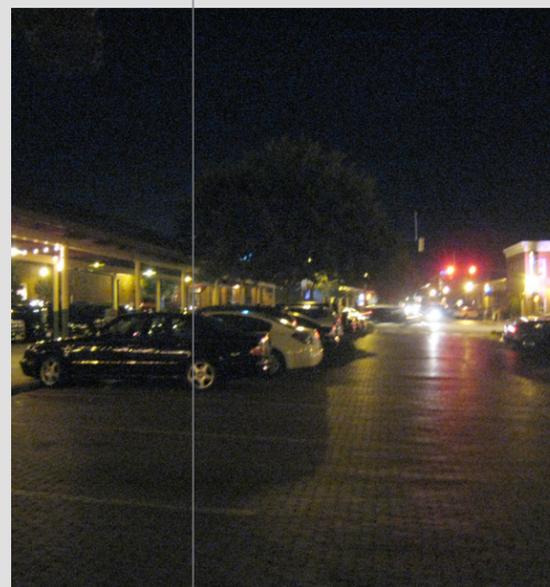
As the market powers down, so does the rest of downtown. Some people remain on Main Street, lingering by Boyd Plaza, but generally people leave.



5-7pm Evening

The early afternoon leading to the evening sees downtown remain quiet. A stark contrast from the morning market. But, like the morning,

Assembly and Greene sees over 1100 pedestrians as students head home.



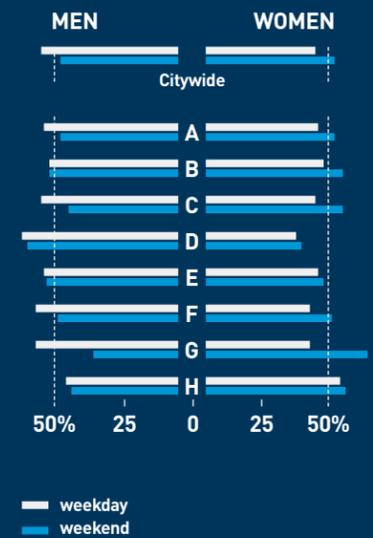
8-10pm Where is everyone...

At night, people are out and parking lots are full, but few people are seen walking around downtown. The Vista sees some activity, but this does not

match the energy in the restaurants and bars. How can we invite people to stick around and walk a bit more?

Men and Women Downtown.

Columbia has a consistently greater proportion of women to men on the weekend. This is likely because weekend events create a family friendly atmosphere and a destination.

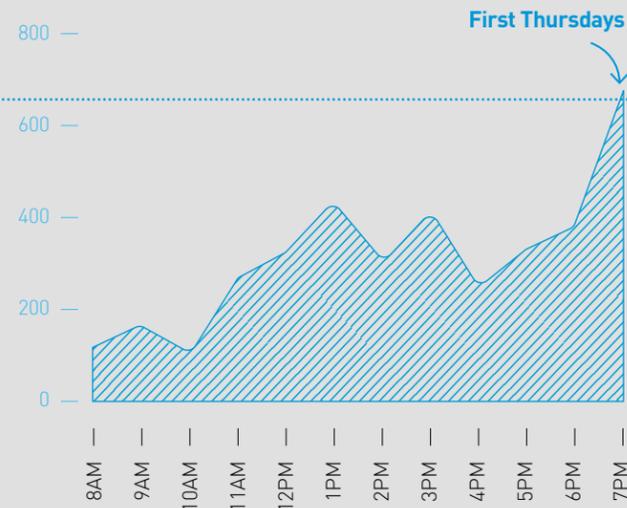


- A. Main / Taylor
- B. Main / Washington
- C. Main / Lady
- D. Assembly / Hampton
- E. Sumter / Senate
- F. Lincoln / Gervais
- G. Assembly / Greene
- H. Senate / Greene

IN COMPARISON

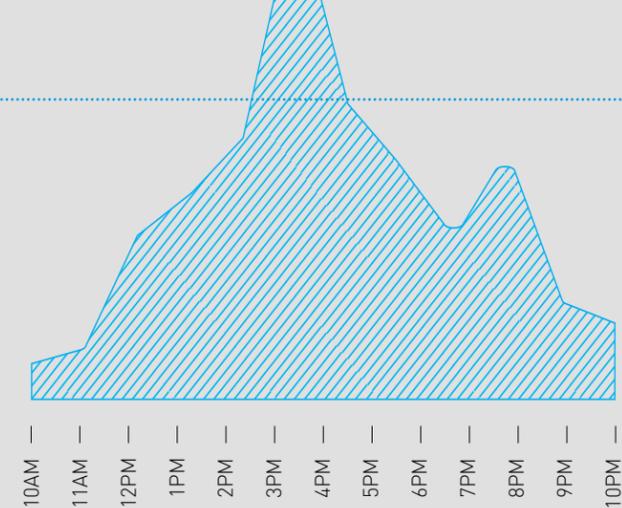
Columbia, SC Main Street

Peak: 672 per hour
Average: 312 per hour



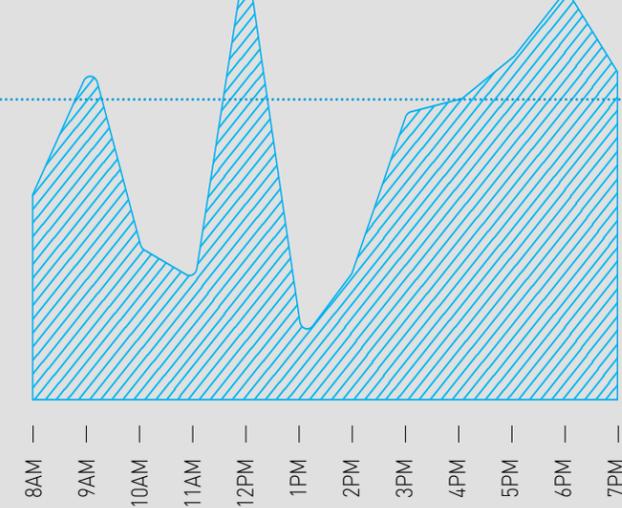
Lexington, KY Short Street

Peak: 1092 per hour
Average: 424 per hour



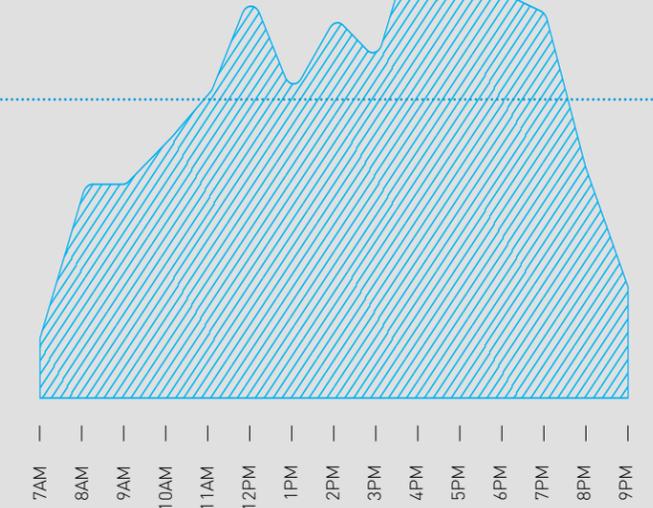
Charlotte, NC Trade & Tryon Street

Peak: 900 per hour
Average: 533 per hour



Philadelphia, PA Market Street

Peak: 1470 per hour
Average: 668 per hour

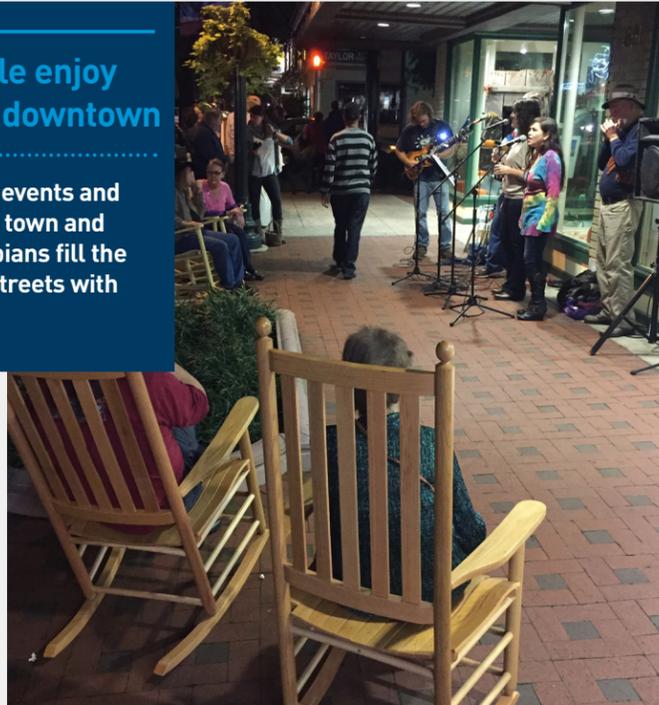


When downtown Columbia is hosting an event, its peak pedestrian activity rivals the volume of activity in other great, similar sized cities (and even some notable larger cities, like Philadelphia). In other words, when people are invited, people head out. The rest of the day, however, is much quieter than comparable cities.

TAKEAWAYS

01 People enjoy their downtown

When there are events and reasons to be in town and outside, Columbians fill the sidewalks and streets with enthusiasm.



02 Few walking to and from work

During commuting hours, especially in the morning, very few pedestrians are walking in the district.



03 People come out for Lunch

There's an up-tick at lunchtime. People are out in the Vista and Main Street during lunch hours. Wouldn't it be great if there were places for people to sit and enjoy their lunch outside?



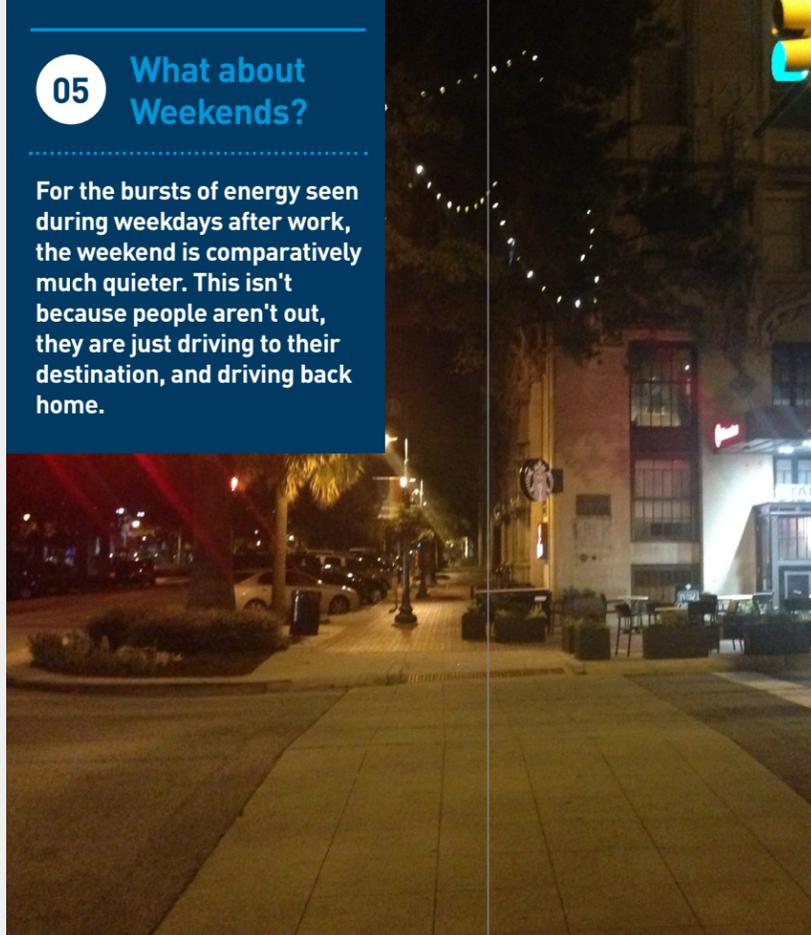
04 Happy Hour Crowd

During the week people are out after work. Restaurant and bar-goers mingle with coworkers and passers-by, lending to a dynamic weekday evening energy.



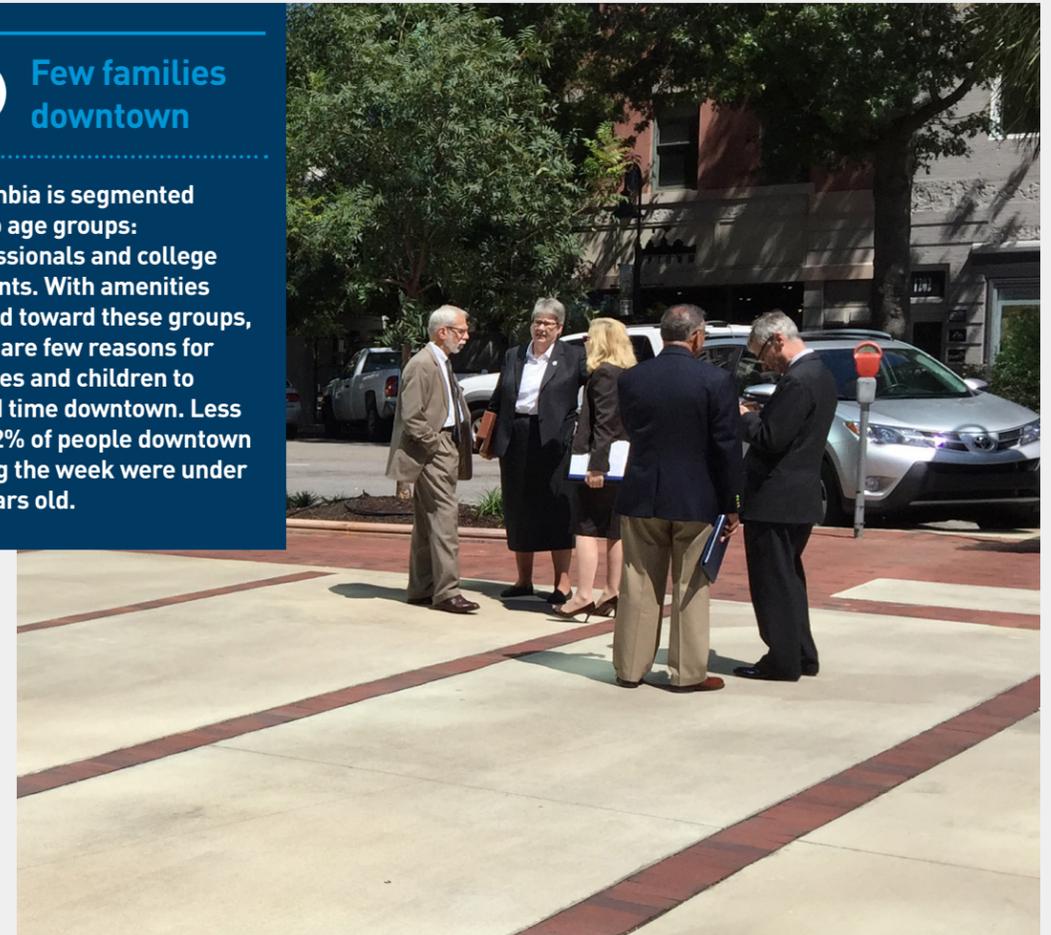
05 What about Weekends?

For the bursts of energy seen during weekdays after work, the weekend is comparatively much quieter. This isn't because people aren't out, they are just driving to their destination, and driving back home.



06 Few families downtown

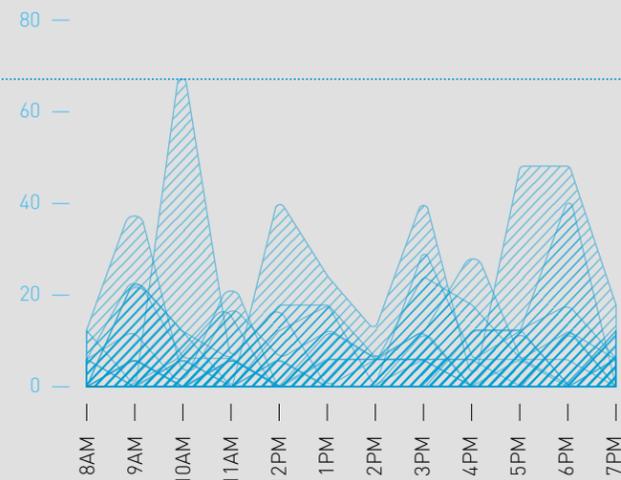
Columbia is segmented in two age groups: professionals and college students. With amenities geared toward these groups, there are few reasons for families and children to spend time downtown. Less than 2% of people downtown during the week were under 14 years old.



IN COMPARISON

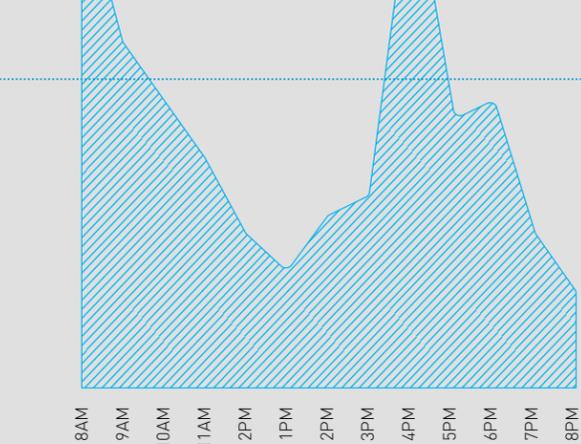
Columbia Key Streets - weekday

Peak: 72 per hour
Average: 6 per hour



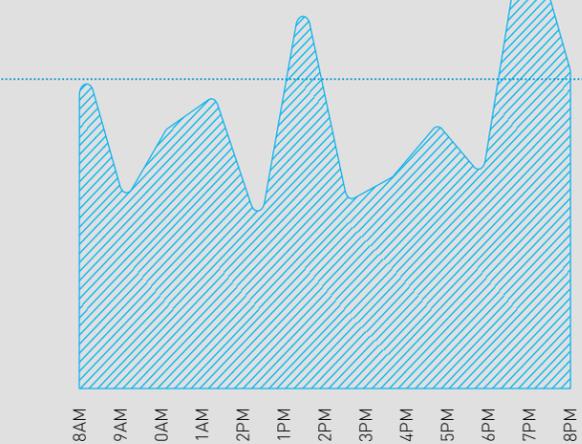
Philadelphia Walnut Street

Peak: 150 per hour
Average: 75 per hour



Denver 15th Street

Peak: 108 per hour
Average: 63 per hour



No Separation

While the average number of cyclists per hour is low – 6 cyclists an hour – looking at Columbia's key streets together, there is evidence of a latent demand for cycling. At their peak, some streets see 40+ cyclists an hour. This occurs despite a lack of protected bicycle infrastructure.



Bollard Separation

A simple bollard-protected bike lane on busy Walnut Street in Philadelphia helps make cyclists feel safe and visible.



Bollard and Paint

Enhanced visibility in Denver further reduces the stress of cycling in the city, defining a clear path forward.

Bike Routes

Everything is so close in Columbia, but many destinations feel far away from each other. Bicycling collapses distances and helps overcome these perceived distances. Below are a few examples of "favorite" destinations linked in less than 10 minutes by bike.

Riverfront - University



Main Street - Vista



Riverfront - State House

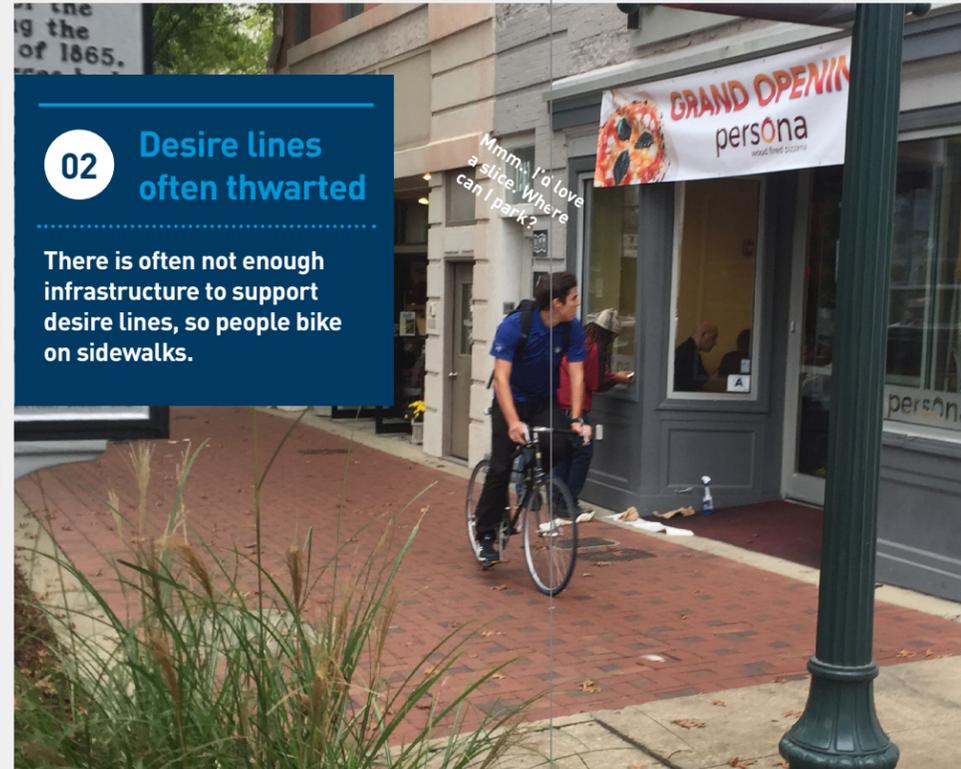


TAKEAWAYS



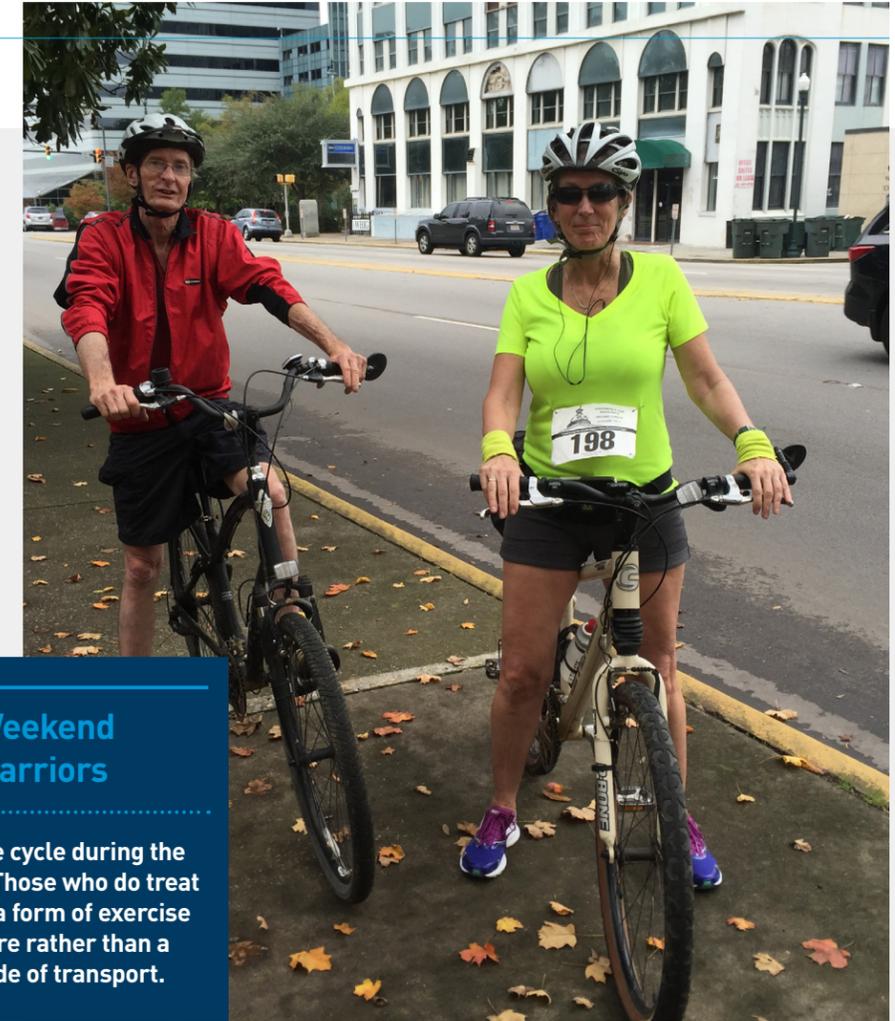
01 People bike to work & school

Outside student housing and offices on Main Street, bike parking is often spilling over. Folks are cycling!



02 Desire lines often thwarted

There is often not enough infrastructure to support desire lines, so people bike on sidewalks.



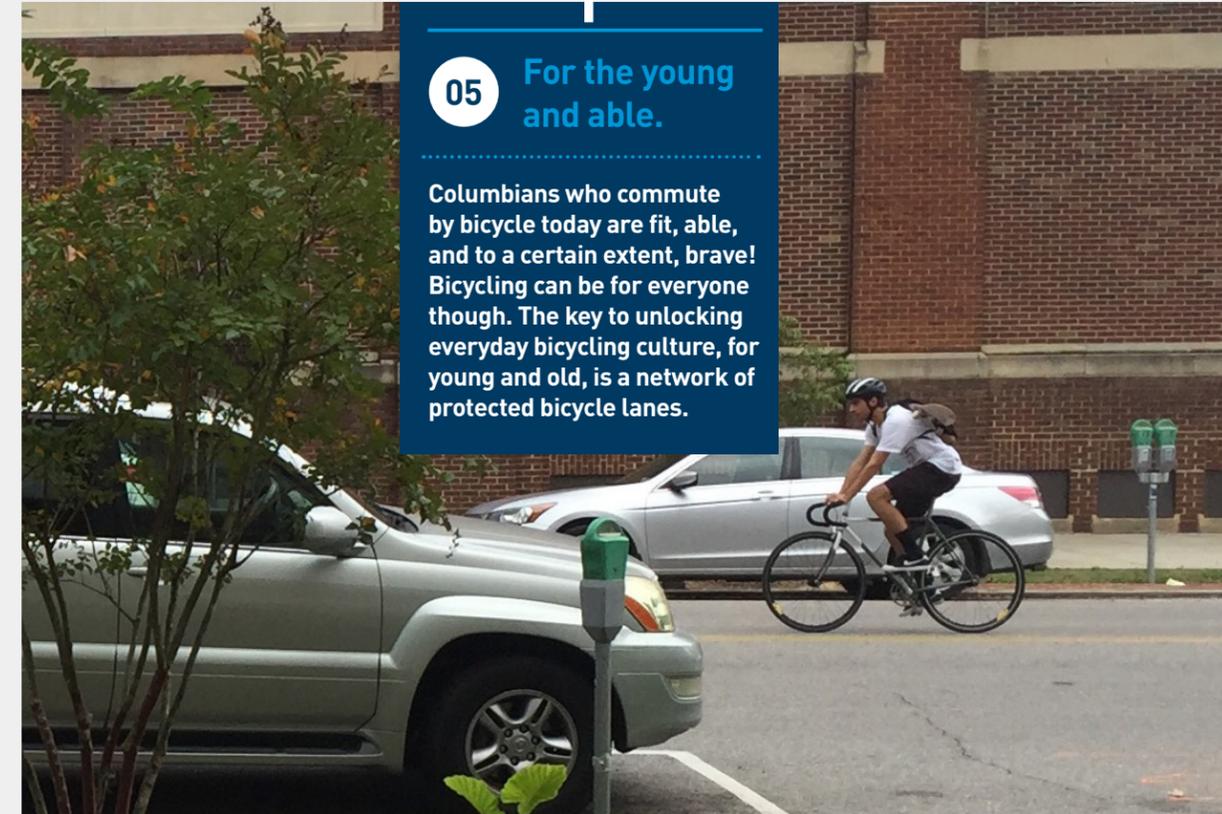
04 Weekend warriors

Few people cycle during the weekend. Those who do treat it more as a form of exercise or adventure rather than a simple mode of transport.



03 A marginal activity

Existing bicycle lanes either squeeze cyclists to the edge of the road, unguarded, or they disappear, forcing bikers to share the road with cars (sharrows).

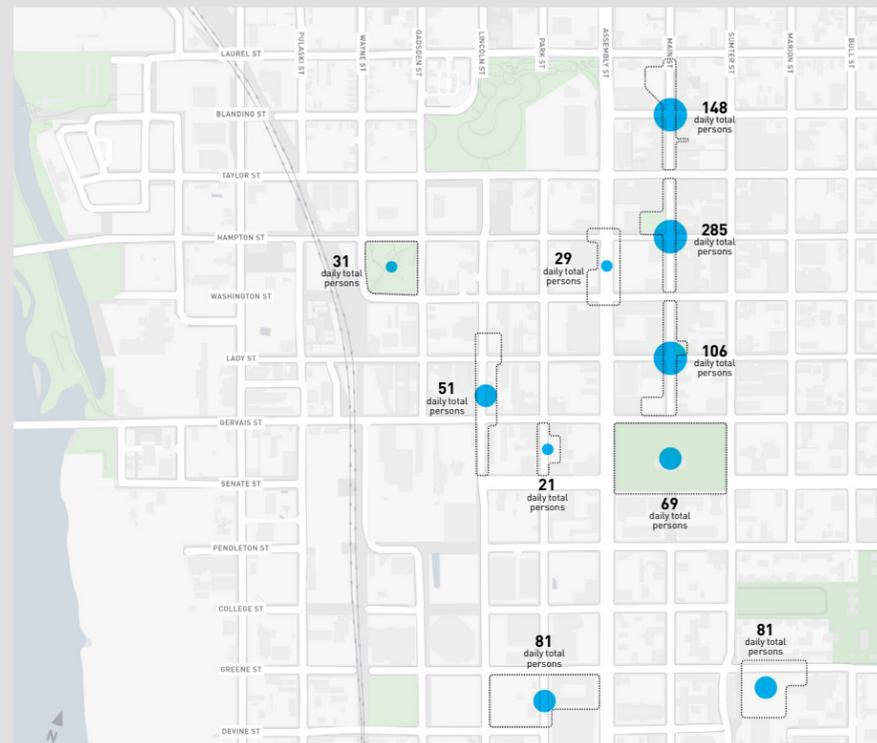


05 For the young and able.

Columbians who commute by bicycle today are fit, able, and to a certain extent, brave! Bicycling can be for everyone though. The key to unlocking everyday bicycling culture, for young and old, is a network of protected bicycle lanes.

02

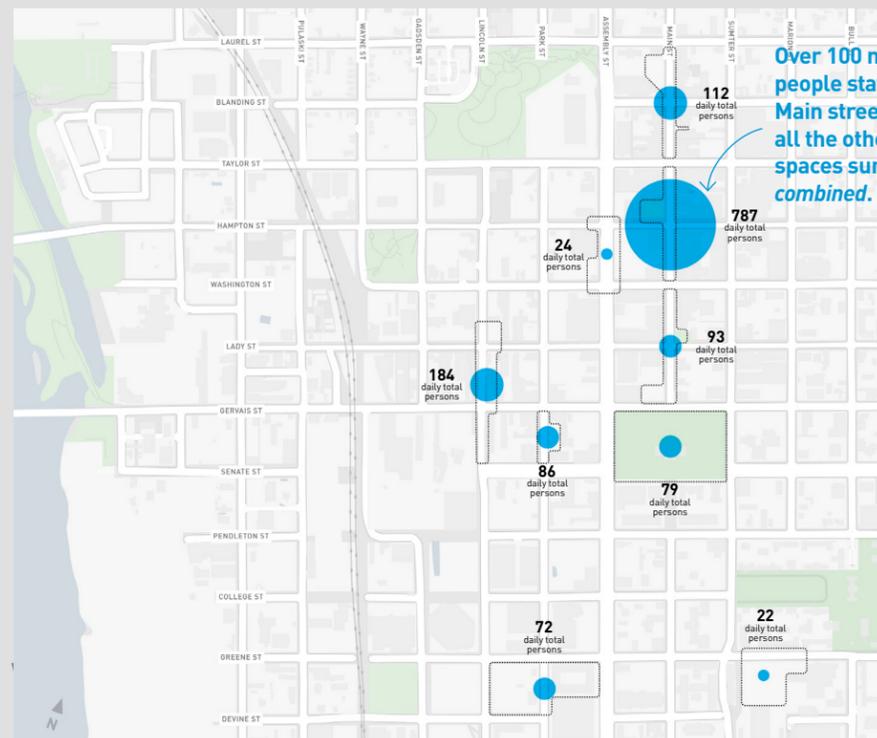
How Are People Staying in Columbia?



Total Volume

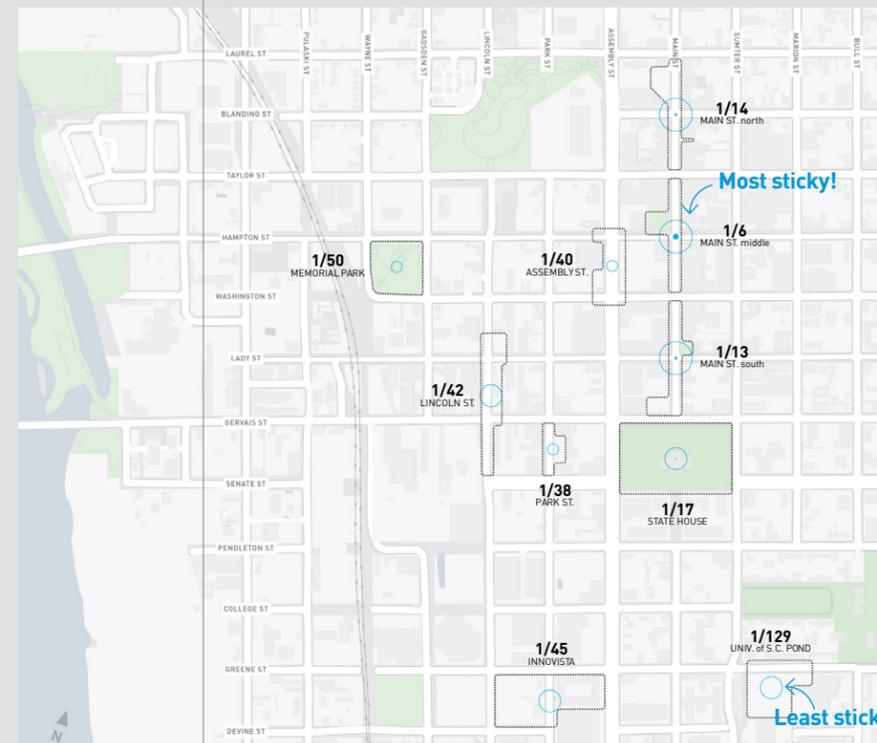
These maps illustrate the total number of people staying in a given location throughout the day. In general, more people are lingering and spending time on the weekend than on weekdays. Of particular note is Main Street, which during events, such as Soda City, Greek Fest, and St. Pats draws more than every other place combined.

WEEKDAY

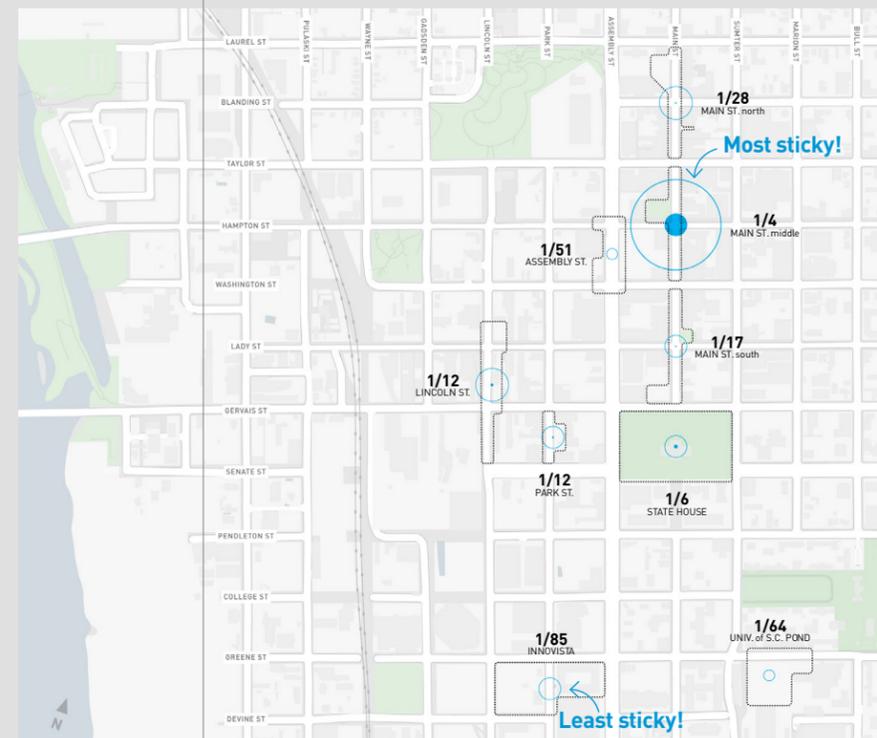


Over 100 more people stay on Main street than all the other spaces surveyed combined.

WEEKEND



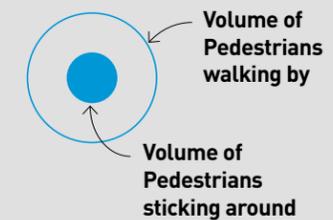
WEEKDAY



WEEKEND

Stickiness

These maps illustrate how many people stay and linger at a given place compared to the number that walk by. We call this stickiness. Comparing staying against pedestrian flow sheds some insight on how inviting a space is. In Columbia, with the exception of Main Street and the Statehouse, which attract about 1 of every 5 people, few places attract more than 1 in every 40 people that walk by. That's less than 3%. But, without many places to sit and stay, streets are designed less as places and more as corridors to move through.



What are people doing in public space? Standing.

A closer look at staying activity in Columbia shows that 65% of people who stick around a place are standing. If there were more options to sit, then people would stay longer.

Places to sit?

Including bus stops, restaurant outdoor seating, plazas, and private courtyards, Main Street has 262 places to sit. But 90% of these seats are private. This highlights a significant need. There are only about 30 public seats on Main Street for an area that sees up to 700 pedestrians an hour.

90% of seating on Main Street is private

Hourly Average of Pedestrians staying on Main Street



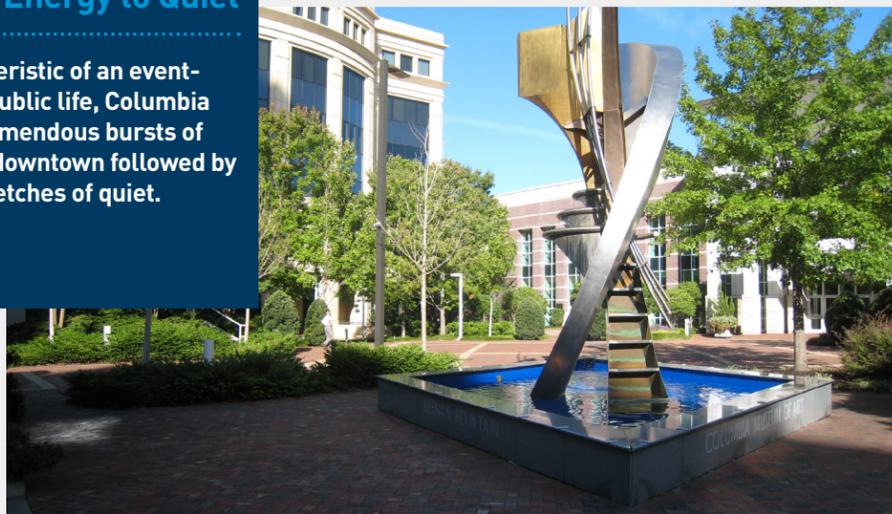
Two of Columbia's most popular events show a great increase in staying activity. But still, most people are standing.

TAKEAWAYS



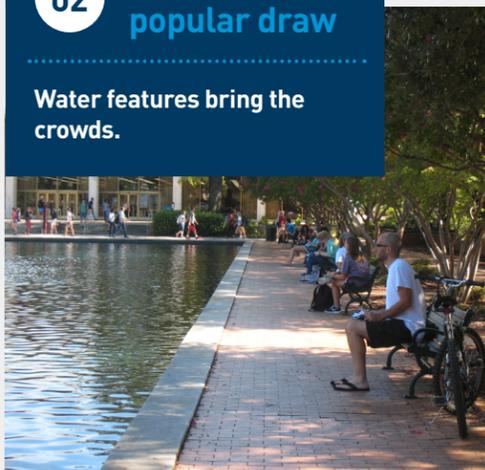
01 From High Energy to Quiet

Characteristic of an event-driven public life, Columbia sees tremendous bursts of energy downtown followed by long stretches of quiet.



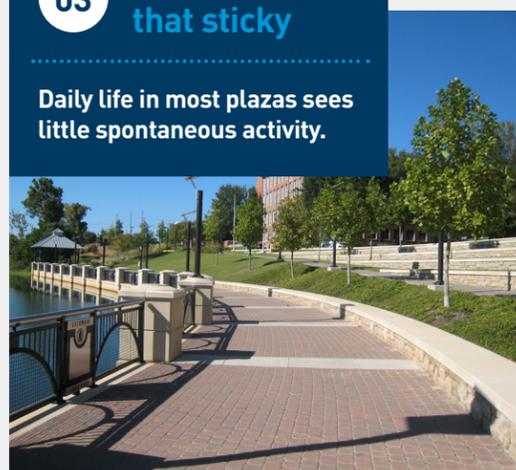
02 Water is a popular draw

Water features bring the crowds.



03 Plazas are not that sticky

Daily life in most plazas sees little spontaneous activity.



04 Destination Spaces

Most public spaces are destinations for planned get-togethers, rather than spontaneous meet-ups and casual hanging out.



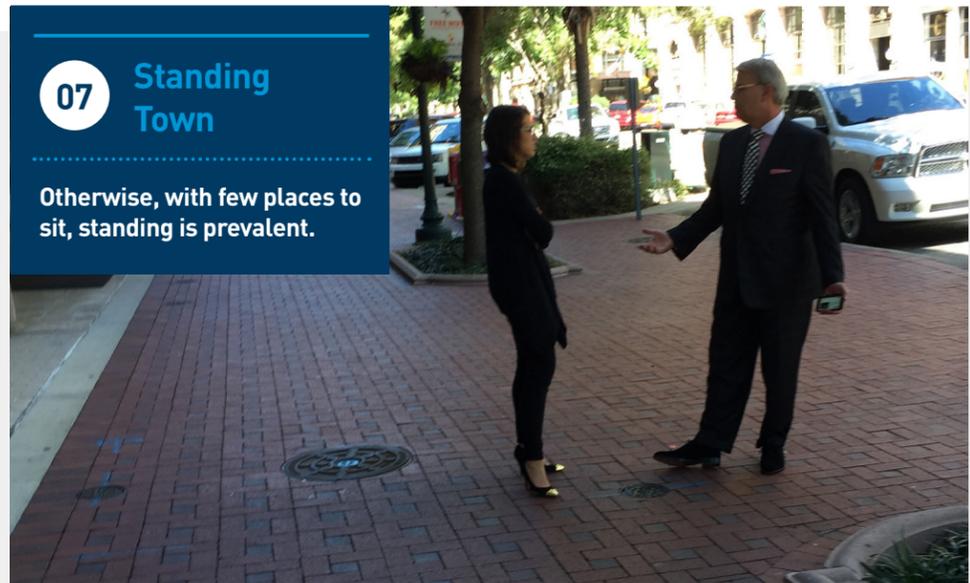
05 Grab it- while you can!

With few good public seating options in the city people are quick to take a load off where there is!



06 People pay to Sit

The cafe and outdoor restaurant seats are consistently filled. People want to be outside when the weather is nice.



07 Standing Town

Otherwise, with few places to sit, standing is prevalent.



08 Secondary Seating

People find their own places to sit or even bring their own bench.. or chair, or hammock!



03

How does Space support People?

While Columbia has some beautifully maintained streetscapes, great historic buildings, and a strongly programmed downtown event cycle, there are some prevailing challenges. As part of the PSPL survey, public space qualities were documented and qualified. Here are some key characteristics that rose to the top.

There is great demand for public life in Columbia, why don't we see it more daily?

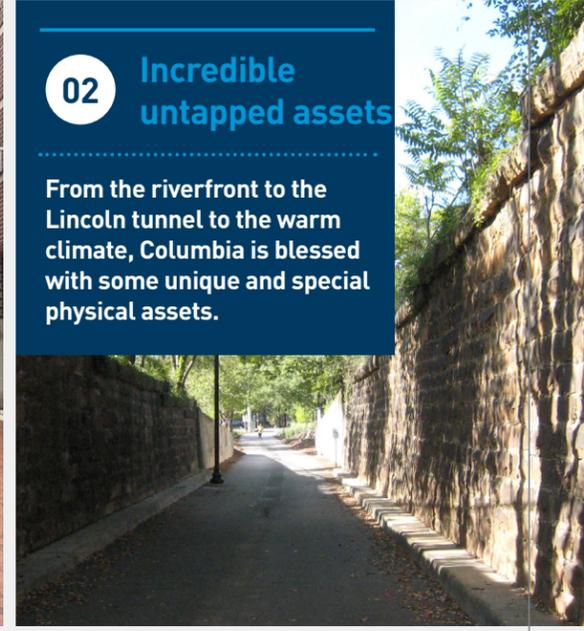
Let's look at the quality of the supply.

TAKEAWAYS



01 High quality streetscaping

Columbia has some beautifully landscaped and maintained streets and spaces, including Main, Lincoln, the Statehouse, and Riverfront to highlight a few key nodes.



02 Incredible untapped assets

From the riverfront to the Lincoln tunnel to the warm climate, Columbia is blessed with some unique and special physical assets.



05 Long crossings / Short signals

Long crossing distances + short crossing times = RUN! Walk signals are timed for 7 seconds or less, while waiting can be over a minute. This is a recipe ripe for jaywalking.

I may just beat my world record!



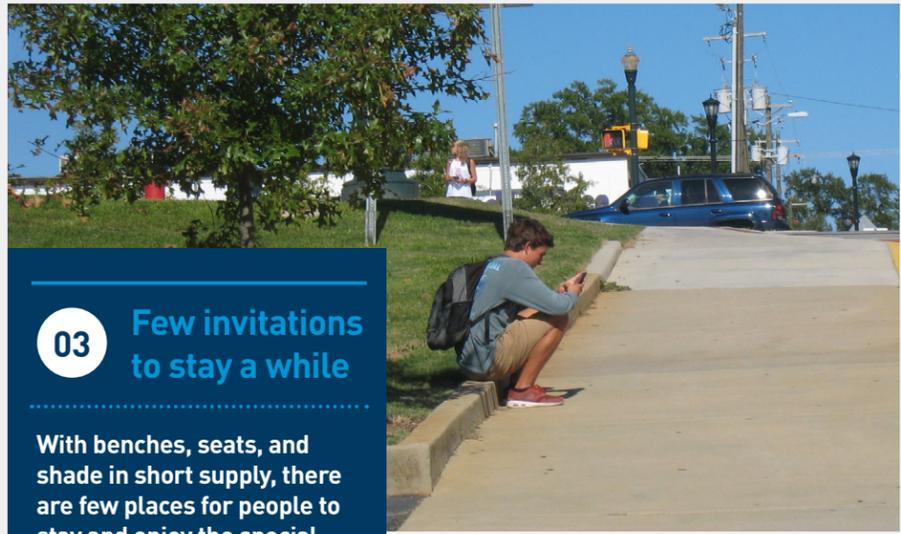
06 Just getting permission takes effort

Adding to the long signal timing, people need to announce themselves at each intersection. These buttons are not always consistently placed or marked.

Found it!

Third time's a charm!

SAT test?



03 Few invitations to stay a while

With benches, seats, and shade in short supply, there are few places for people to stay and enjoy the special spaces in Columbia. Instead, people are nudged to just walk by - or be creative and find seating on steps, ledges, or elsewhere.



04 Someplaces: Sidewalk SOS!

Even with some high quality streetscaping and sidewalks, other places are neglected with crumbly sidewalks or simply no sidewalk at all.

No, pretty sure this is the way to the water... but thanks



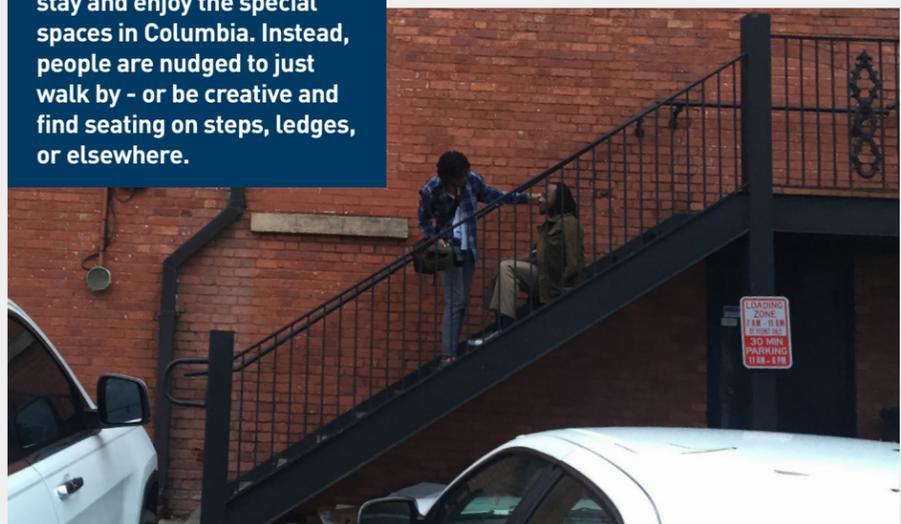
07 Confusing signage for people

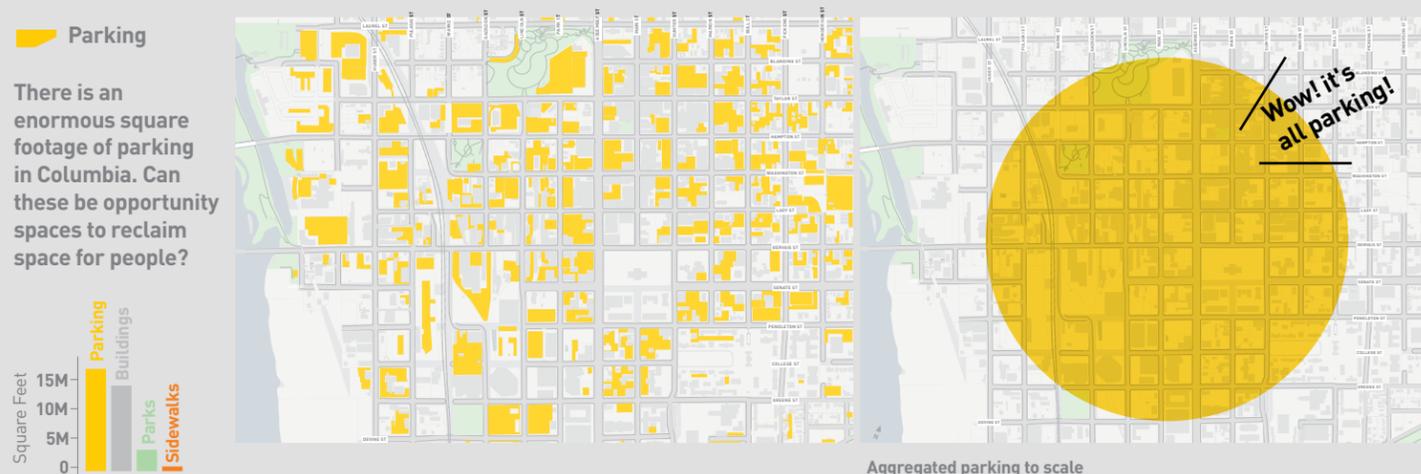
Signage is auto oriented. There are few markers for people to find their way to Columbia's great assets.



08 Hardscapes & Blank Facades

Much of the built environment is characterized by dominating hardscapes & blank facades.





Columbia has a lot of the pieces, they just need to be connected, leveraged, and celebrated – without spreading them out too thin.

Guided by 6 Public Space Public Life strategies, Downtown Columbia can establish and reinforce a diverse network of public places and streets to create an inviting district for people.

01**DEFINE A
PEOPLE-FIRST
CORE****02****PARK
ONCE****03****EMBRACE YOUR
WATERFRONT &
NATURAL ASSETS****04****FIND YOUR
EAST-WEST
CONNECTOR****05****CELEBRATE
AND ENRICH
YOUR HUBS****06****CREATE
STEPPING STONES
IN BETWEEN**

01 DEFINE A PEOPLE-FIRST CORE

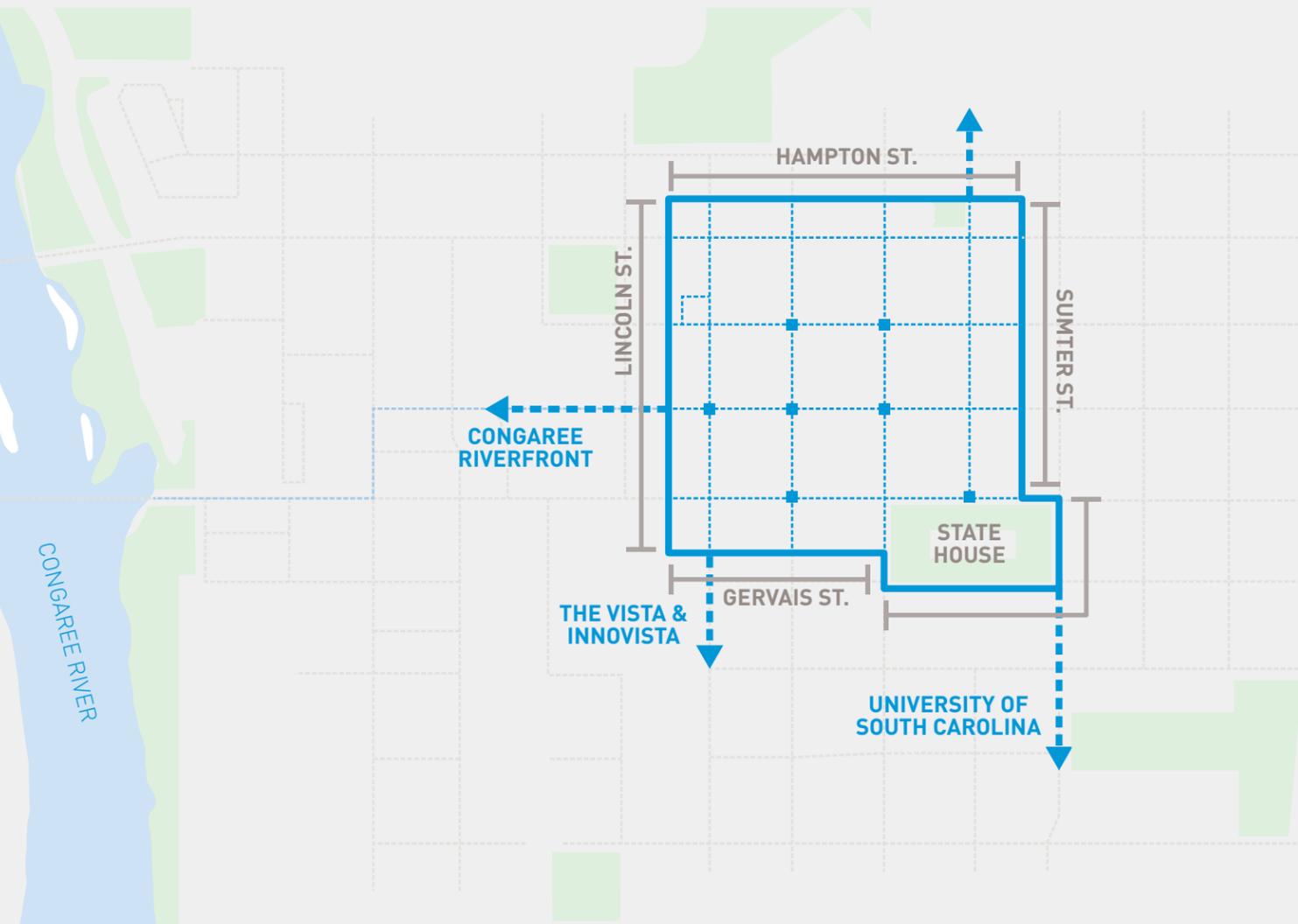
Define a core where pedestrian, cyclist, and transit experiences are prioritized ahead of auto efficiency. Pedestrian intersection improvements, including signal timing and crosswalks, should be prioritized within this core.

Safe and Slow Streets

- Reduce traffic speeds to 25 mph.
- Create visible crosswalks at key intersections.
- Ensure sidewalks are complete and in good condition.
- Make longer, more people friendly signal timing.
- Implement traffic calming.

Bicycle Network

- Prioritize improved bicycle infrastructure and bike lanes within the core.



02 PARK ONCE

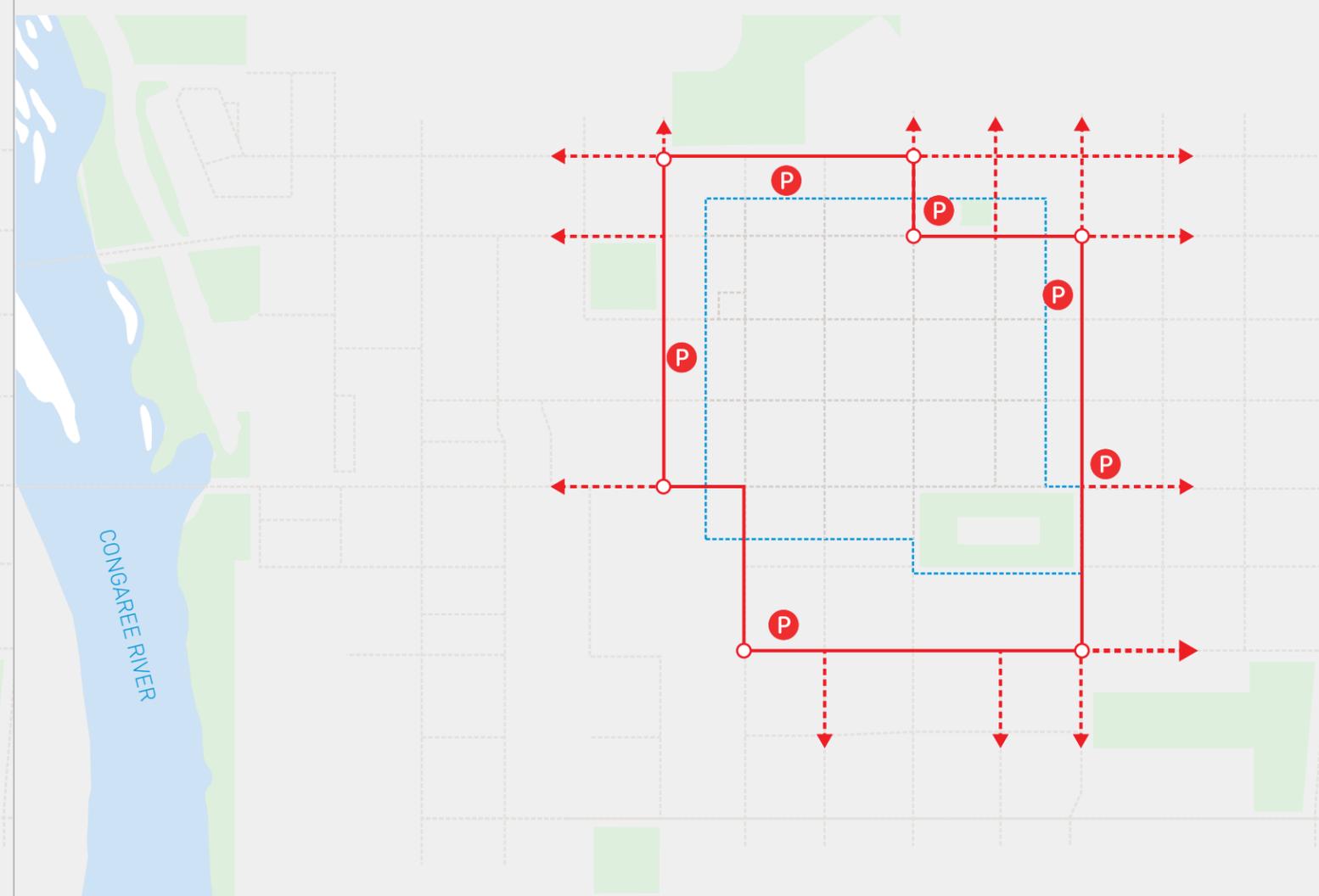
People drive in and out of Columbia. That's okay. To make room for pedestrians in the 'people core', however, Columbia should find creative ways to encourage parking in the city just once - and walking from destination to destination from there. This strategy should focus on key parking spaces and lots at the edge of the people core that link into important streets like Main, Lady, and Lincoln.

Key Car Parks

- Identify key parking lots at the periphery of the pedestrian core and pilot incentives such as inexpensive or free tolls in these lots.
- Couple this with no free parking in the core.

Around, not Though

- Traffic mobility through the core should not be prioritized.



03

EMBRACE YOUR WATERFRONT & NATURAL ASSETS

Use what you've got. Columbia can celebrate its natural assets, embrace the warm climate, and leverage the great access to water as a defining and differentiating feature of the city. Denver and other active cities can provide inspiration and strategies that enmesh nature and recreation in the urban fabric.

Riverfront as an Urban Amenity

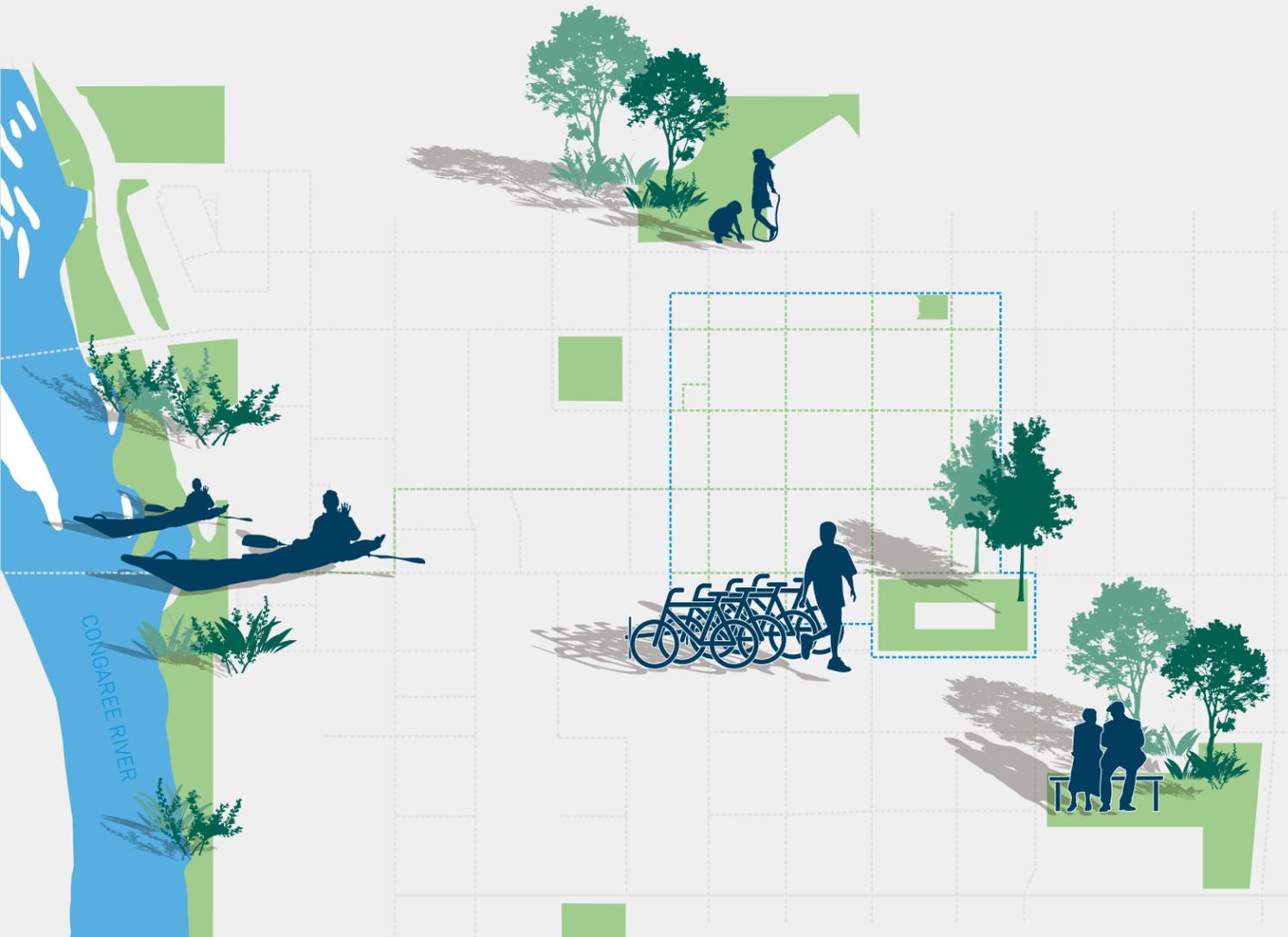
- Make the waterfront part of the city's network of parks and public spaces, not just a destination to drive to.

Connective Tissue

- Improve pedestrian and bicycling connections to the waterfront and other key parks downtown, for example, Finlay and the Statehouse.

Warm Climate

- With the city's warm climate, working outside can be part of everyday life. Support this with great shaded spaces, tables and seating.



04

FIND YOUR EAST-WEST CONNECTOR

Columbia has great stuff on both east and west. Now it's time to connect them. The city's strong north-south people corridors — Main Street, Lincoln Street, and the waterfront — are not brought together by any clear link. Columbia should look to Lady Street as a human scaled street to bring people from east to west.

Event Life

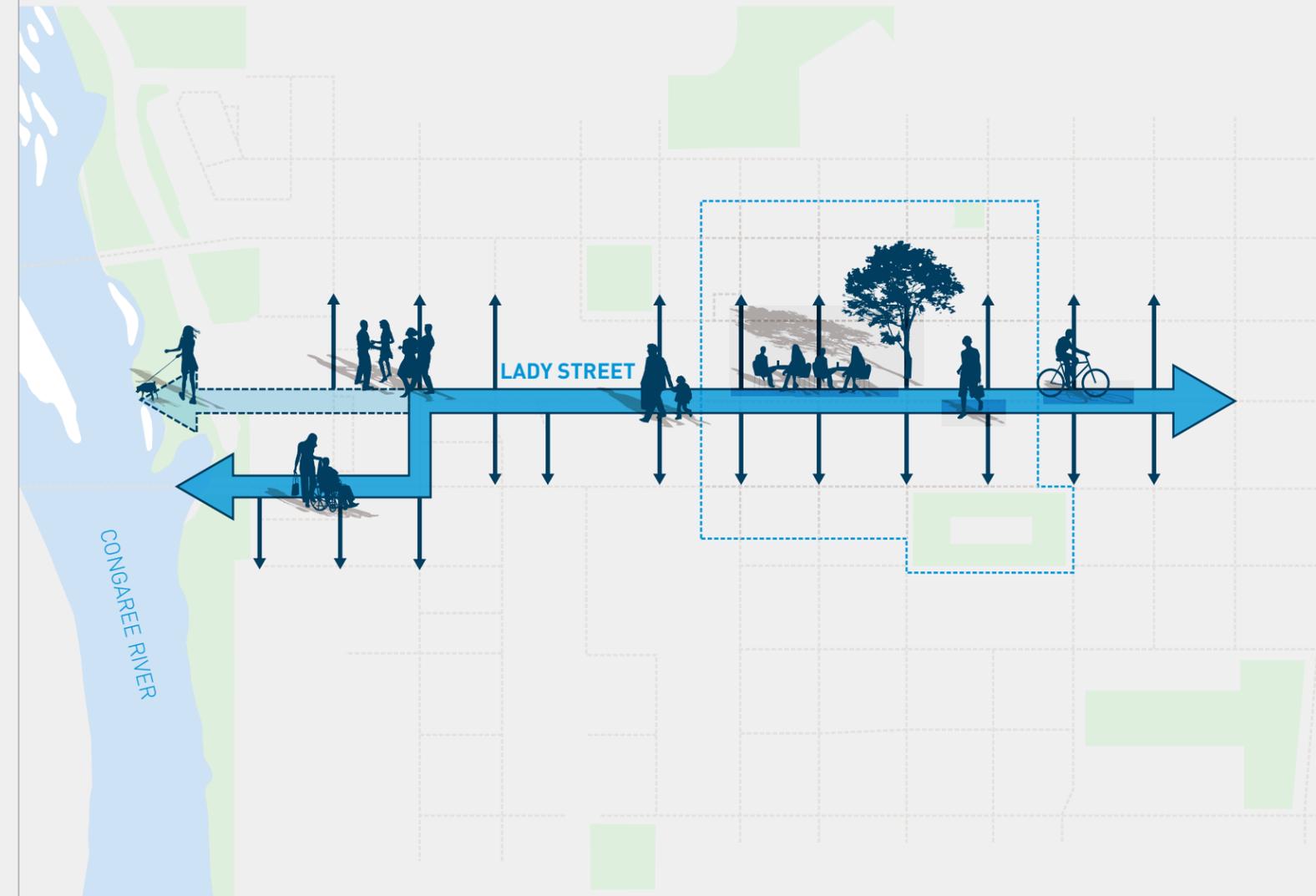
- Make Lady Street an event space similar to Main Street to pilot new activities and make it part of people's mental map of the city as a place for people before cars.

People First Wayfinding

- Direct people to and along Lady Street with clear, fun, vernacular wayfinding for people, e.g. "2 blocks to Lincoln Street!"

Cars Second

- Take cues from Columbia's other people friendly streets, Lincoln Street and Main Street. Cars are permitted but their mobility is not prioritized.



05

CELEBRATE AND ENRICH YOUR HUBS

Before developing new hubs and centers of activity, enrich existing hotspots within the core to build momentum while broadening amenities so they feel more welcoming and safer for families and people of all ages, young and old.

More Places to Stay

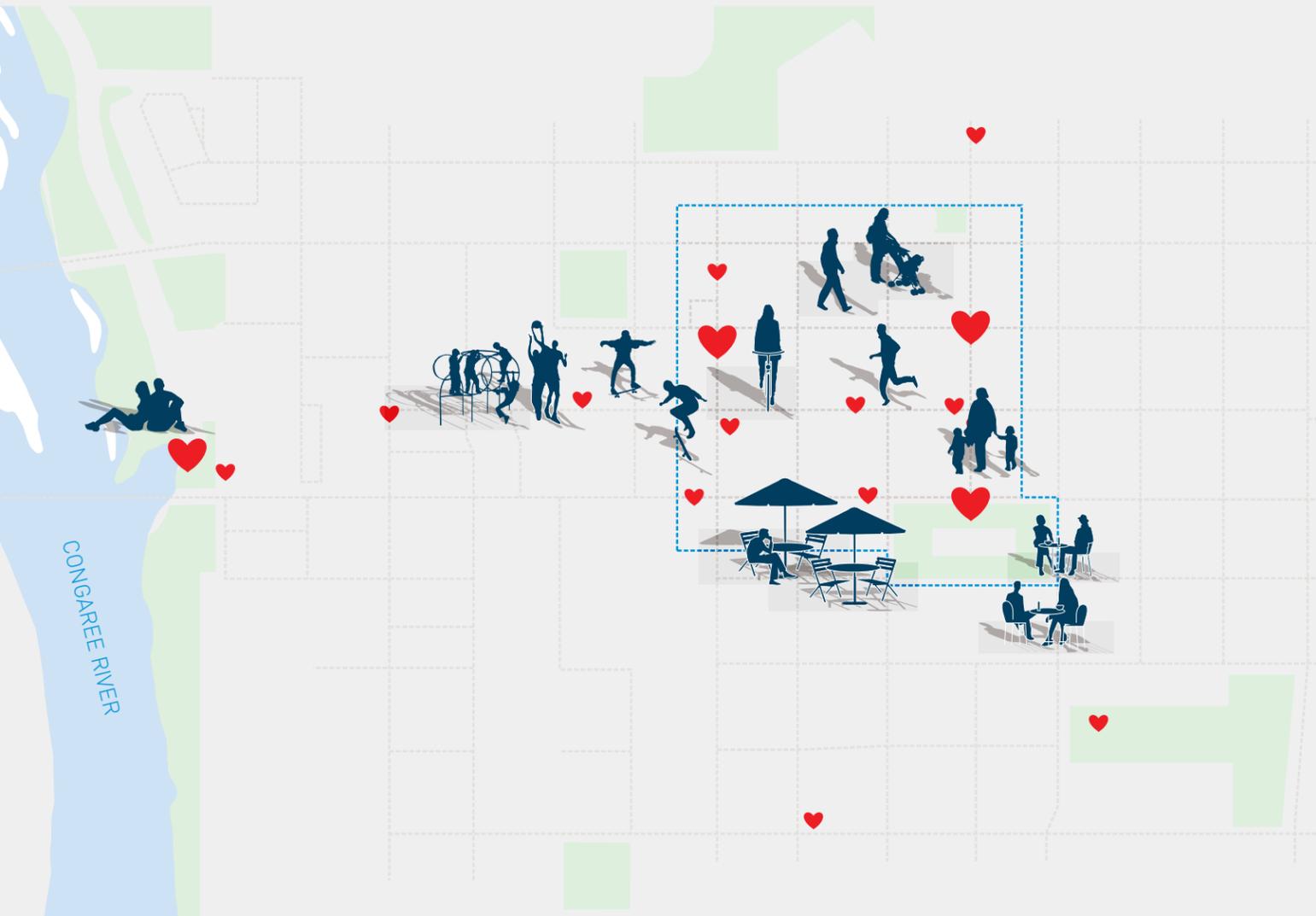
- Expand public seating
- Ensure facades are active on pedestrian corridors

More Places to Play

- Find places downtown to be active, and where families can bring children to play.

More Places to Work

- WiFi is available downtown, now encourages people to work outside with tables, chairs and shade (umbrellas)



06

CREATE STEPPING STONES IN BETWEEN

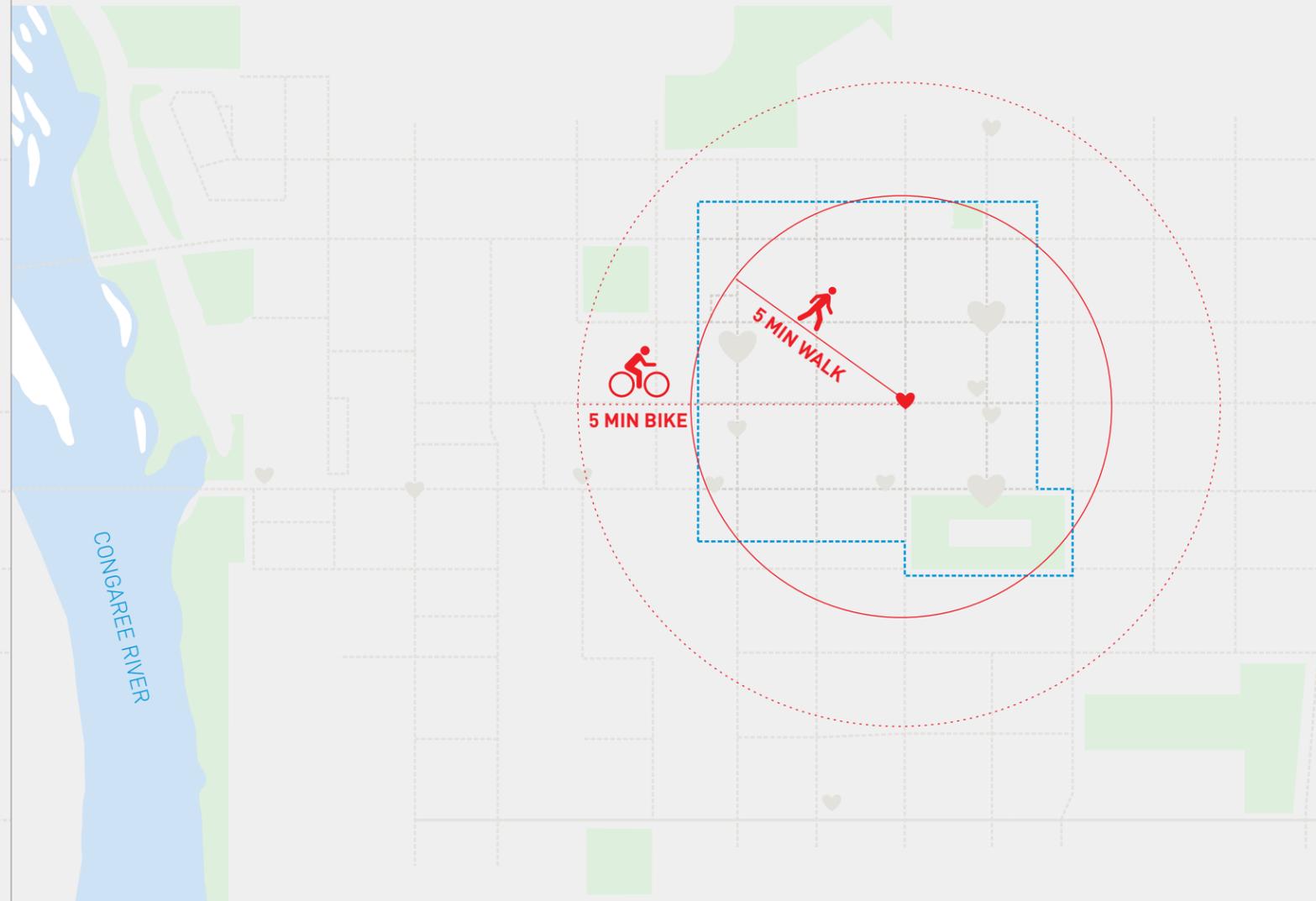
Make places feel as close as they are. Key hubs in Columbia are within a 5- to 10-minute walk or bike ride from each other, but they feel farther and it's not always clear how to get from A to B. Make it clear and inviting by laying "stepping stones" in between key destinations.

People First Wayfinding

- Direct people to and along Lady Street with clear, fun, vernacular wayfinding for people, e.g. "2 blocks to Lincoln Street".

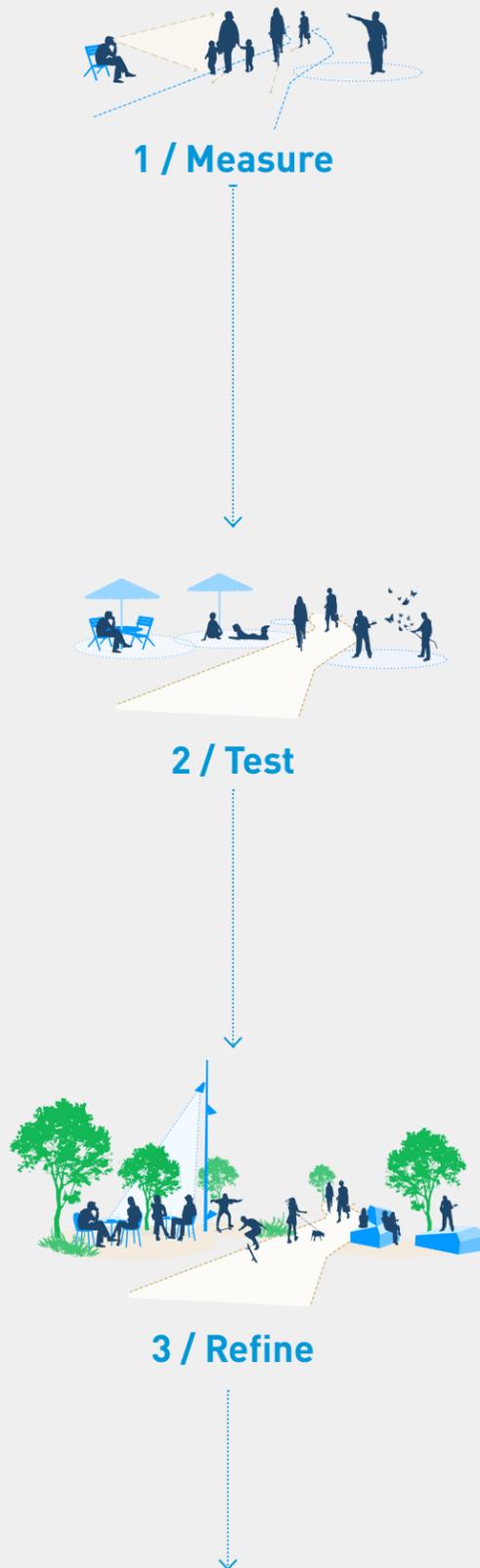
Moments of Art and Delight

- Fill in the gaps between two hubs of activity with engaging art pieces and creative street furnishing.



Testing Strategies through Pilot Projects

To realize these strategies, a series of temporary pilot projects, carried out in an iterative process, can generate buzz and begin to set the groundwork for a district that puts people first in the public realm.

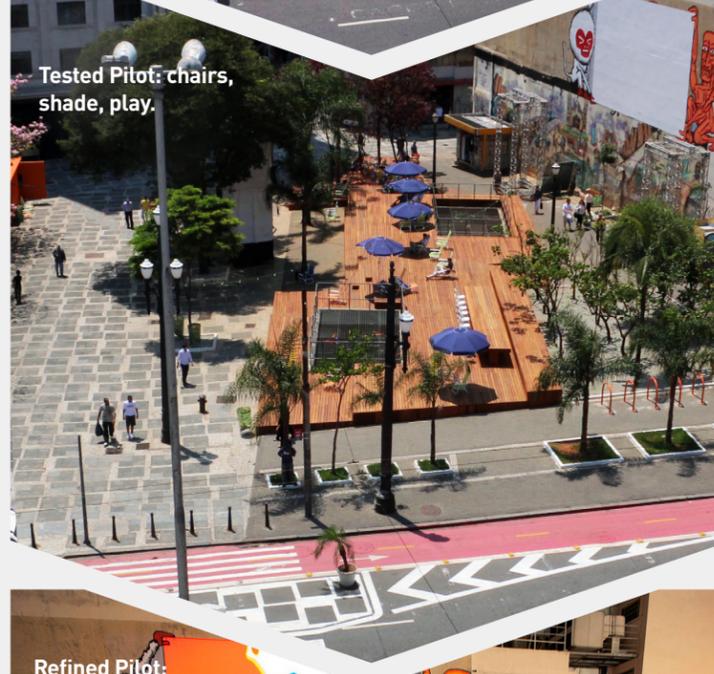


Pilot example: São Paulo Pilot

Measured the site



Tested Pilot: chairs, shade, play.



Refined Pilot: evening programming



The following low-cost, high-impact pilot projects are prototypes that can be experienced, measured, and evaluated for refinement by the City of Columbia, the Community Foundation, and other partners and local champions. Developed to meet the five PSPL strategic objectives, each project invites stakeholders and users to see new possibilities and test ideas in the district. The intention is to attract new users to stay and begin to develop an identity for Downtown Columbia as a vital people-first place.

By making people a part of the pilot project process, Columbia can start to build consensus and excitement around improvements, creating a case for longer-term interventions.

Overview of Pilot Projects

Set within a framework that focuses Columbia's energy within a defined pedestrian core, the pilots work together to leverage existing assets, fill in the gaps, connect east and west, and create new meeting places that invite more people to stay, and stay longer.

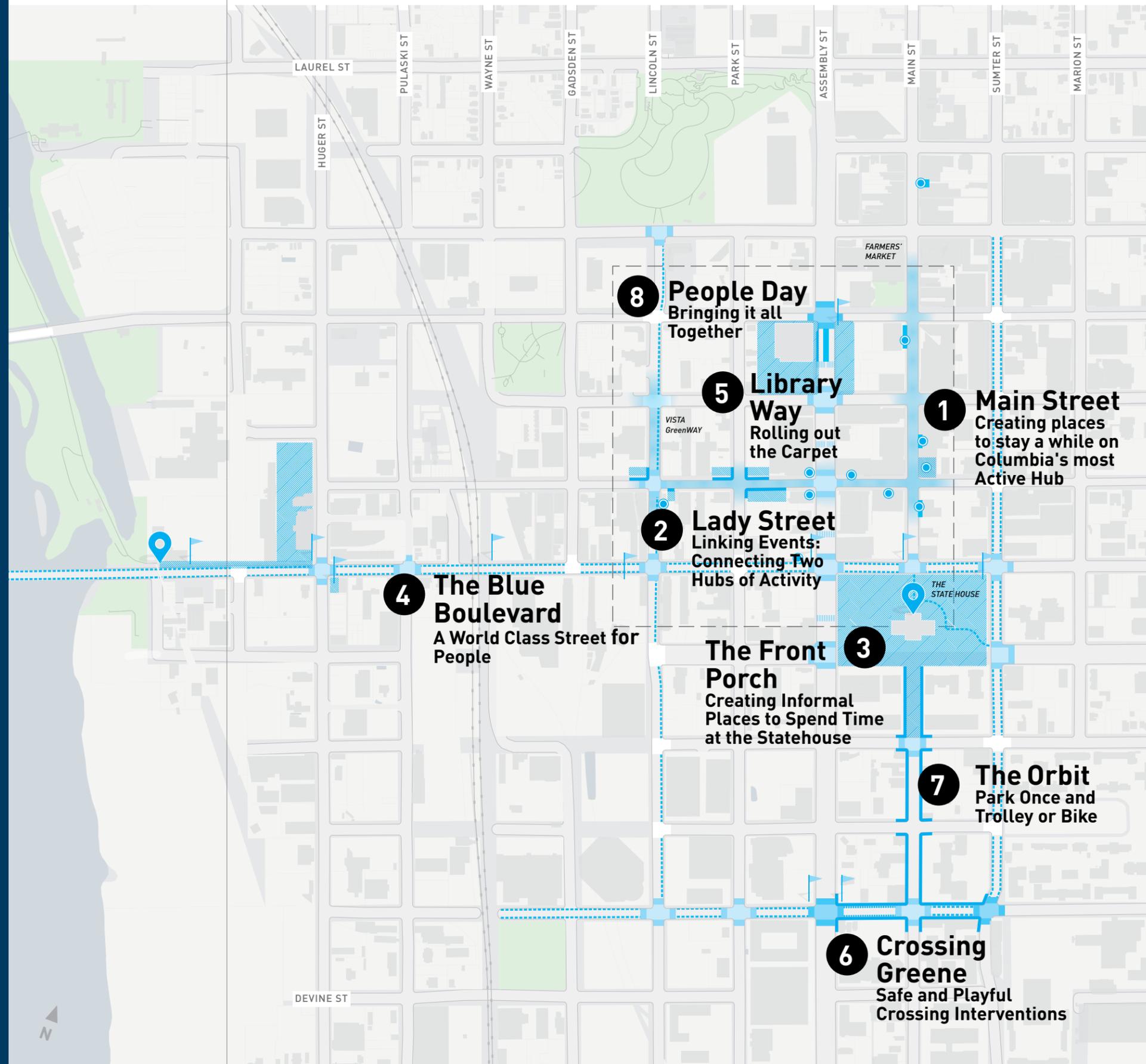
Priority Pilot Areas

These 3 areas rose to the top for their potential impact.

- 01 Main Street**
Creating invitations to stay and rest
- 02 Lady Street**
Connecting anchors through program
- 03 The Front Porch**
Creating an inviting asset for families

Opportunity Areas

- **The Blue Boulevard**
Connecting people to the waterfront
- **Library Way**
Allowing for moments of delight
- **Crossing Greene**
Creating safe and fun crossings
- **The Orbit**
Park once and take trolley loop
- **People Day**
Layering all initiatives on one day or weekend to show what's possible

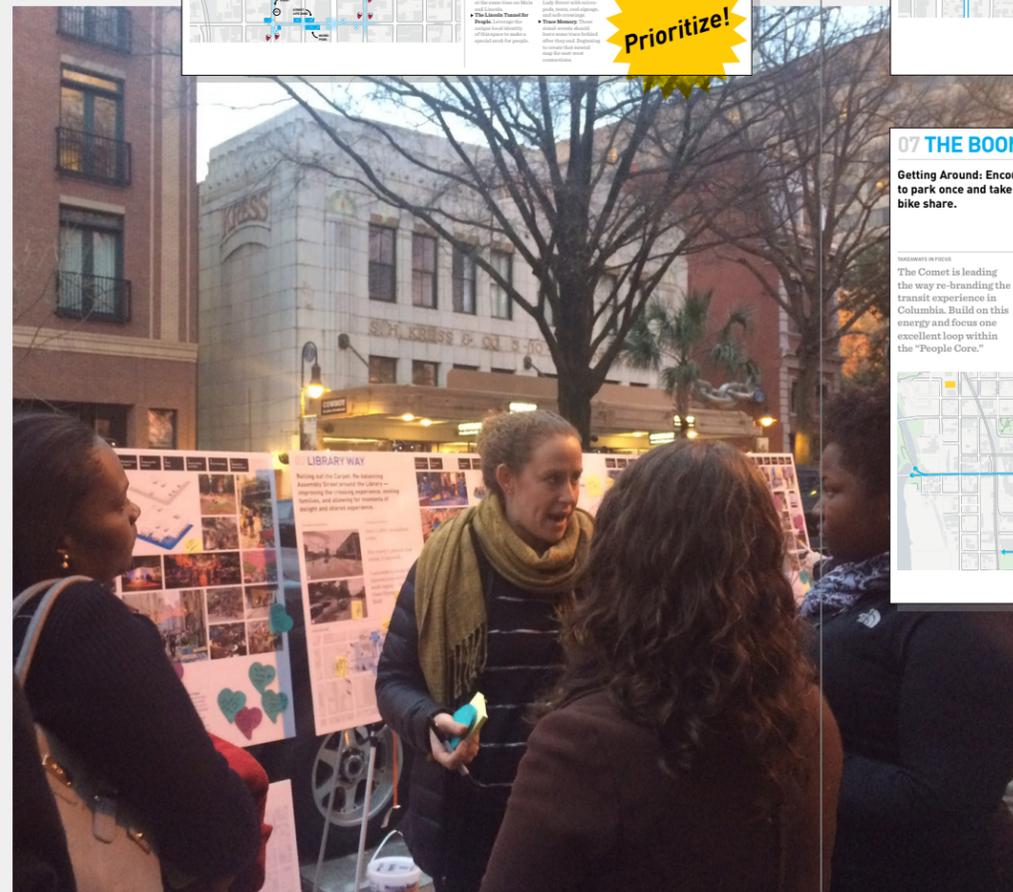


- 8 People Day**
Bringing it all Together
- 5 Library Way**
Rolling out the Carpet
- 1 Main Street**
Creating places to stay a while on Columbia's most Active Hub
- 2 Lady Street**
Linking Events: Connecting Two Hubs of Activity
- 4 The Blue Boulevard**
A World Class Street for People
- 3 The Front Porch**
Creating Informal Places to Spend Time at the Statehouse
- 7 The Orbit**
Park Once and Trolley or Bike
- 6 Crossing Greene**
Safe and Playful Crossing Interventions

WHERE TO START -NOW

To focus on three pilot areas, we engaged key stakeholders, city officials, and the broader public to help refine and prioritize some initial hunches for how to invite for public life. Participating in a generative charrette session centered around eight hunches, we wanted to know which had the greatest potential and which resonated most.

Building on the six guiding strategies to carry forward Columbia's Public Space Public Life framework plan, all eight ideas found their respective champions, and each should be considered key opportunities to move forward. But, rising to the surface were: Main Street, Lady Street, and The State House.



01 MAIN ROCKS

Out that Standing Out! Creating informal gathering places to linger and more invitations to rest and relax — without having to pay for it.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

Gervais is the most direct connection to the waterfront, one of Columbia's most cherished assets. Walking along Gervais you wouldn't know it though.

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better in "Lady Park":** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.

Prioritize!

02 THE BLUE BOULEVARD

Gervais for People: Connecting People East-West and to the waterfront along amenity-rich Gervais Street with a Low Stress Bikeway and a more engaging walking experience.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

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- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better in "Lady Park":** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.

Prioritize!

03 LIBRARY WAY

Rolling out the Carpet: Re-balancing Assembly Street around the Library — improving the crossing experience, inviting families, and allowing for moments of delight and shared experience.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

Over 1,000 jaywalkers a day.

For every 1 person that waits, 2 Jaywalk.

5 seconds to cross the intersection with a walk signal — faster than Olympic Usain Bolt!

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Rolling Out the Carpet:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.

04 LINKING EVENTS

Share the Love: Connecting two anchors on Main and Lincoln by programming parallel events and laying breadcrumbs along Lady Street to bring them together.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

People love their events in Columbia. Over 7,000 pedestrians during Soda City. But it remains concentrated. Leverage this energy and draw people west with another event at Lincoln to begin to build momentum for an East-West connector.

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Link the Events:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.

Prioritize!

05 THE FRONT PORCH

A Hub For People: Creating an Inviting Neighborhood Asset for Families. Fulfilling a Latent Demand for Hanging out, while re-imagining the State House as a great public Front Porch.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

1 in 6 stick around on a weekday and 1 in 3 stick around on a weekend, but the volume of people is low. The State House functions as a destination, but, it could be a spontaneous place to spend time. The latent demand is there.

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better in "Lady Park":** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.

Prioritize!

06 CROSSING GREENE

Crossing Safely and with a smile along Greene Street.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

About 1,100 people walk through Greene and Sumter every hour, which is on par with Madison Avenue in New York City. Yet, the intersections are designed and timed for cars, not for people.

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better in "Lady Park":** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.

07 THE BOOMERANG

Getting Around: Encouraging people to park once and take trolley loop and bike share.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

The Comet is leading the way re-branding the transit experience in Columbia. Build on this energy and focus one excellent loop within the "People Core."

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better in "Lady Park":** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.

08 PEOPLE DAY

Pilot the Future: Layering all the people-first initiatives in Columbia — and more — on one day or weekend to create great impact and show what's possible.

EXISTING EXPERIENCE

LOCATION MAP

TAKENAWAYS IN FOCUS

Columbia is an event city. People come out in amazing numbers. There is a thirst to park the car and be out, together.

ESSENTIAL MOVES

- **Fix the Sidewalk:** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better:** "Fix the sidewalk" and "add more trees" to improve the walking experience.
- **Walk Better in "Lady Park":** "Add more trees" and "add more seating" to improve the walking experience.

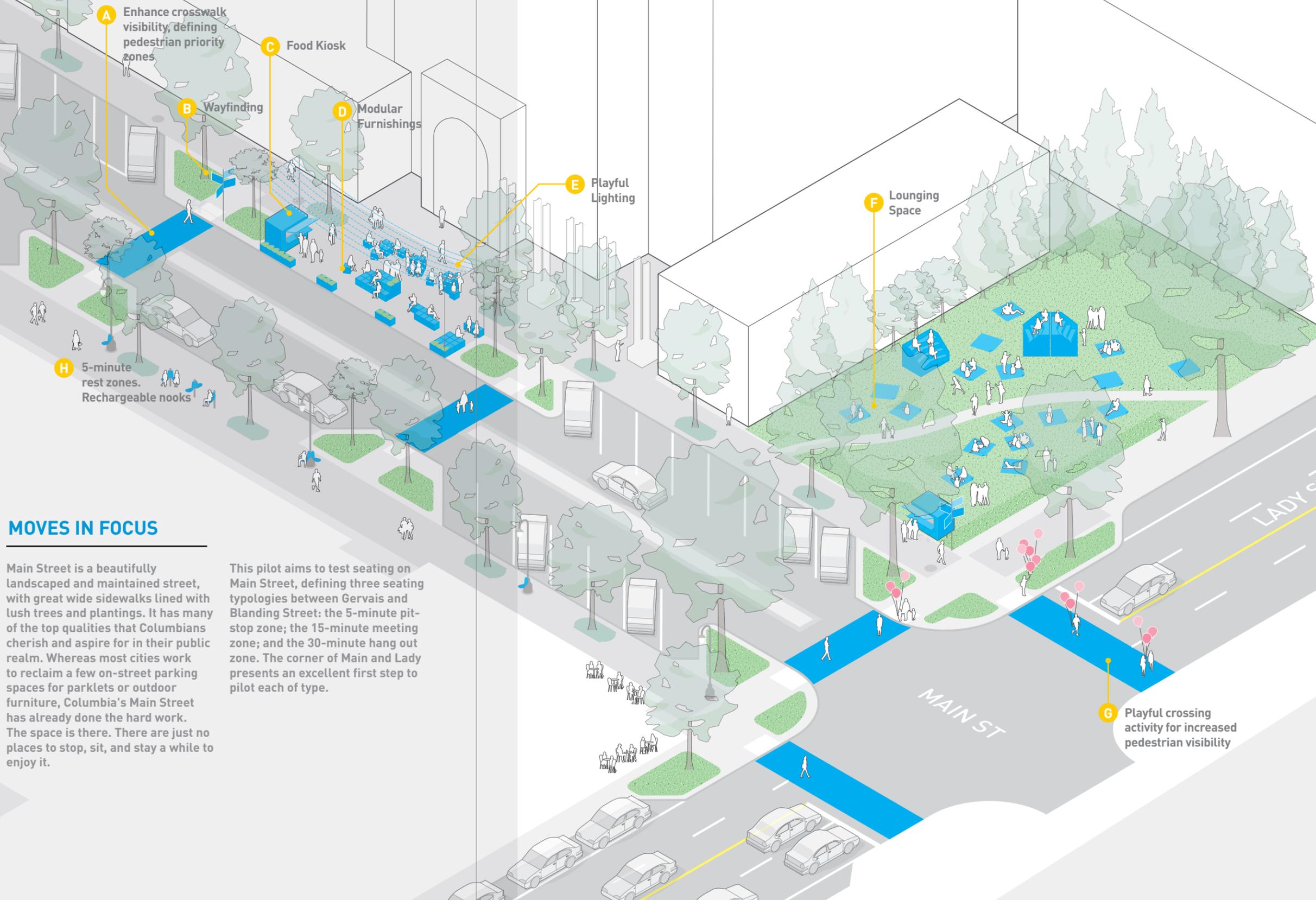
Over 100 people at First Thursday on Main Street stopped by to share their thoughts and preferences on the pilot hunches, helping us zero in on three ideas to dive deeper into.

01

MAIN STREET

Creating informal gathering places to linger and more invitations to rest and relax — without having to pay for it.

During events like First Thursdays and Soda City, Main Street comes alive. But when the events power down, so does the energy of the street. Some hotspots continue to flicker where there happens to be some outdoor seating (around Drip Coffee's cafe benches and Bourbon's picnic tables). The latent demand to stay is there. There are just so few invitations to sit, stay, and enjoy the space. Main Street should be humming with people throughout the day, not just at events; it should be considered just as much a place as a corridor.



MOVES IN FOCUS

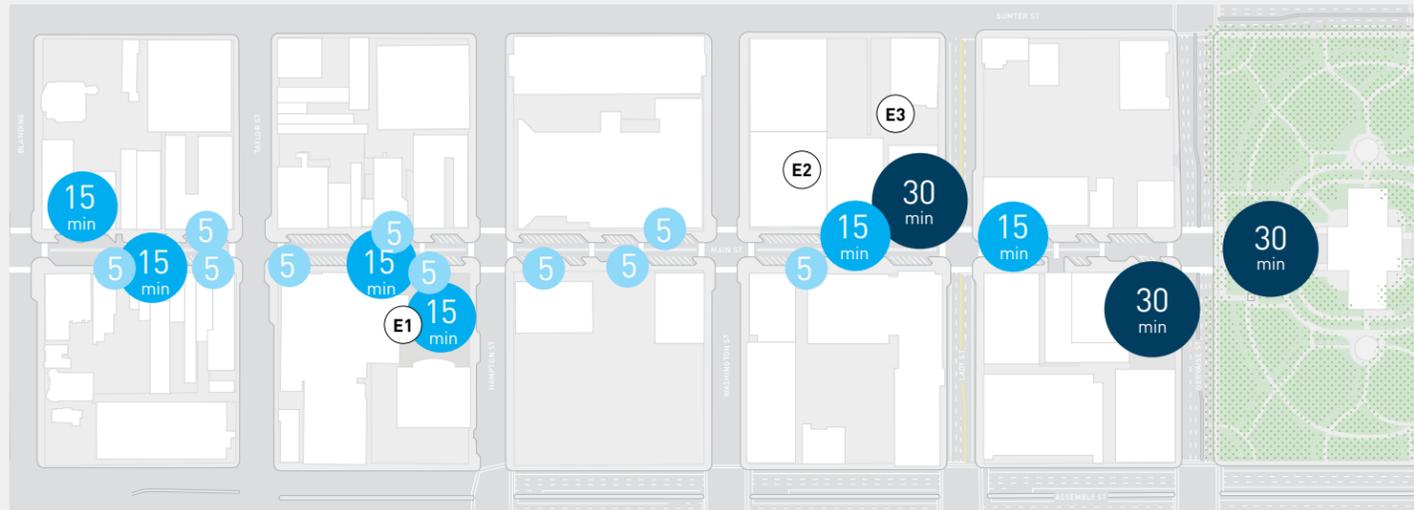
Main Street is a beautifully landscaped and maintained street, with great wide sidewalks lined with lush trees and plantings. It has many of the top qualities that Columbians cherish and aspire for in their public realm. Whereas most cities work to reclaim a few on-street parking spaces for parklets or outdoor furniture, Columbia's Main Street has already done the hard work. The space is there. There are just no places to stop, sit, and stay a while to enjoy it.

This pilot aims to test seating on Main Street, defining three seating typologies between Gervais and Blanding Street: the 5-minute pit-stop zone; the 15-minute meeting zone; and the 30-minute hang out zone. The corner of Main and Lady presents an excellent first step to pilot each of type.

G Playful crossing activity for increased pedestrian visibility

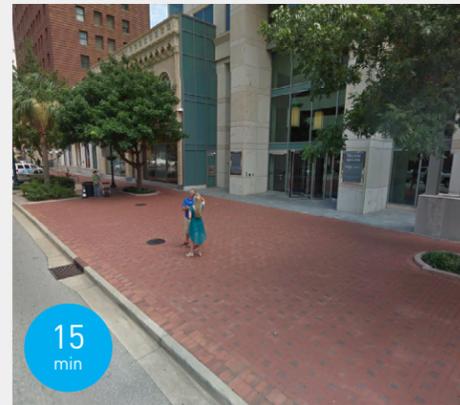
Leisure duration

Along Main Street there are a number of spaces and extra wide sidewalks perfect for different types of leisure. To start, focus seating on Main Street between Lady and Washington.



5-minute pit-stop

Areas along Main Street for the informal quick stop and chat. These can be simple secondary seating options that connect to existing infrastructure.



15-minute meeting place

A small nook, similar to a parklet, with tables, chairs, lighting, and a food kiosk. These should be on the widest portions of Main Street's sidewalks. This type of seating space should be prioritized.

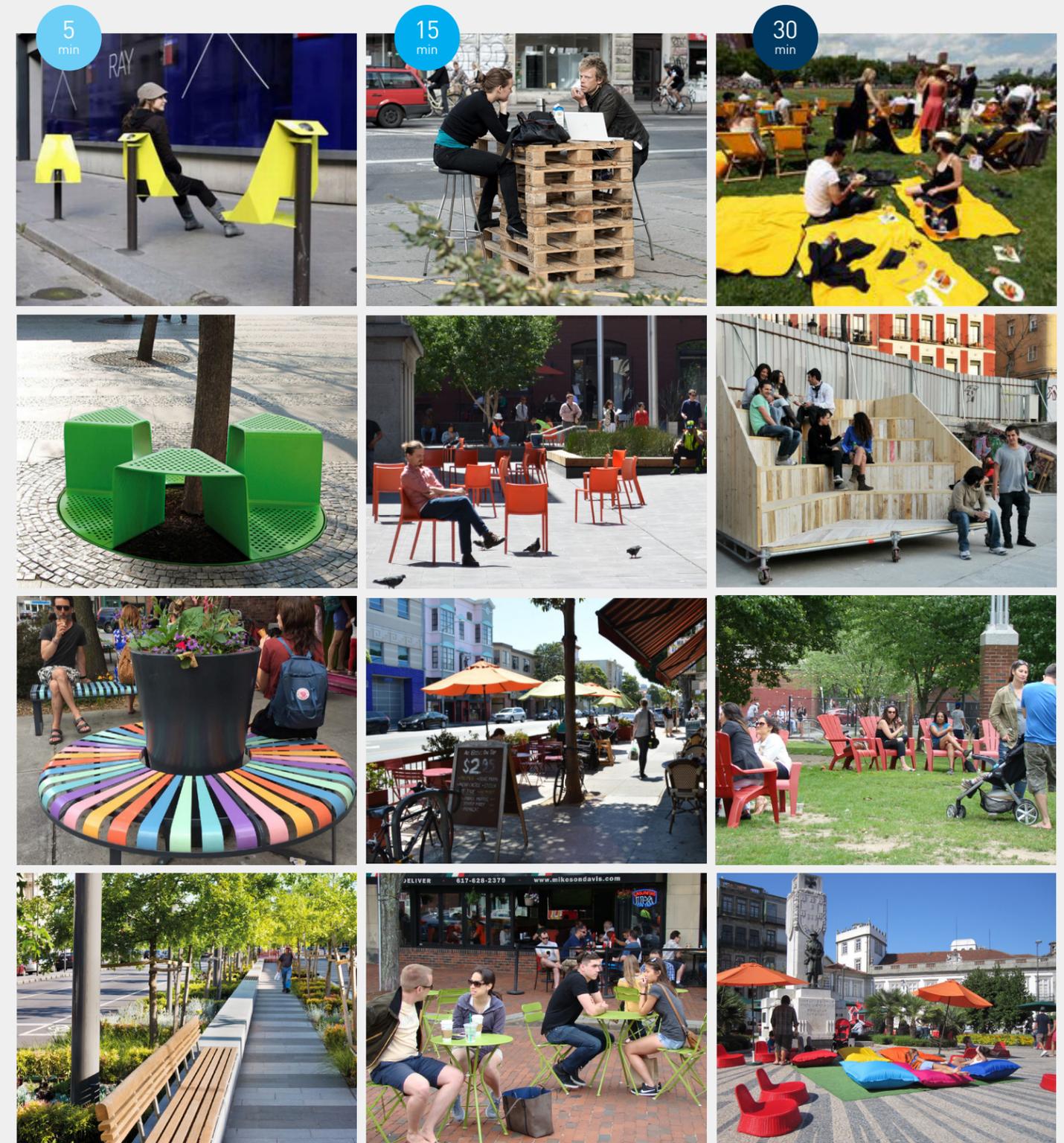


30+ minute hang out

Places for people to sit outside, have lunch, and hang out with friends without having to pay for a restaurant table are few and far between on Main Street. But the demand is there. WiFi is advertised along Main Street, but there are no comfortable places to sit, surf the web, or do some work outside. Make the green space at Lady and Main a comfortable area for gathering and working outside. Include kiosk and other inexpensive pop-up amenities.

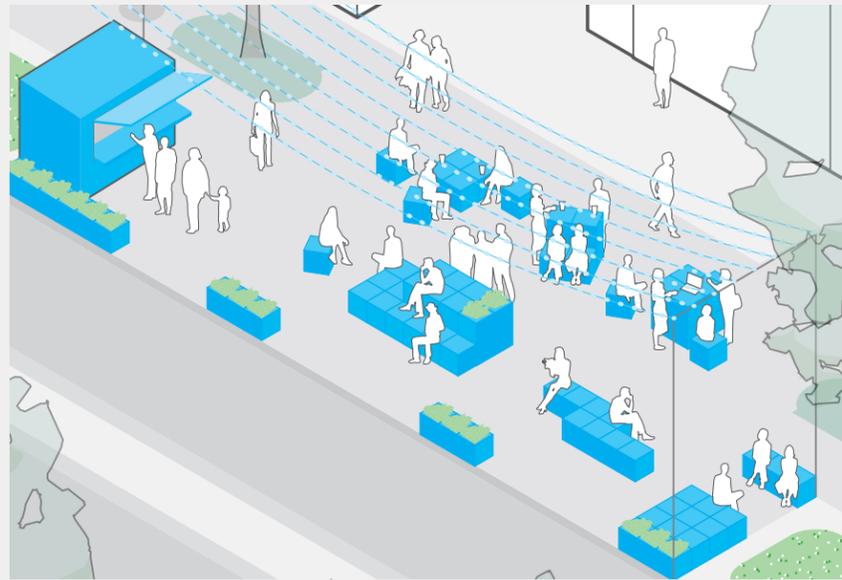
Seating types

Examples of seating options for each space type.



First step

Modular cube seating is a playful way to invite for more everyday lingering. These can be combined to create a bench, or stacked for a table. But, simple movable bistro chairs can be just as effective if easier to source as a first step.



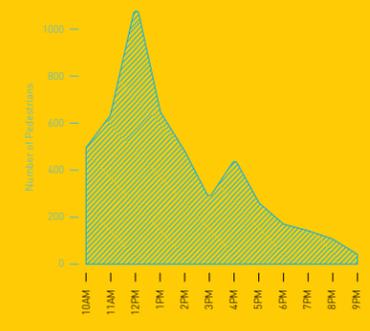
Charger bench

Soofa produces benches that let you charge your devices while you hang out. This type of infrastructure can work both for the quick pit-stop, or equally, to invite for longer outdoor working sessions.



KEY FINDINGS

1. **Main Street comes alive during its events, but gets really quiet the rest of the day.**



2. **Even during events, Main Street remains a predominantly "standing room only" zone.**

85% v. **14%**
Standing v. Sitting

TRACKING SUCCESS

More People Out and About
Most pedestrian activity is concentrated around events and dinner hours. A more pedestrianized urban core will invite more people to walk along Main Street throughout the day and stick around.
Target: More people heading out for lunch and enjoying Main Street

Take a Seat
A more evenly balanced split between people standing and sitting on Main Street.
Target: People are heading out and enjoying their lunch outside on public seating

02

LADY STREET

Share the Love: program parallel events on Main and Lincoln Street, while creating stepping stones along Lady Street to draw people along.

People love their events in Columbia. Over 7,000 pedestrians walk through and visit Soda City on Main Street for example. But it remains concentrated, focused on one or two blocks of Main. There is an opportunity to leverage this energy and draw people west along Lady with another event on Lincoln Street. This could begin to build momentum for an East - West connector.

MOVES IN FOCUS

Lady Street has a great human scale and quiet traffic. The potential is there to make it a great people-first east-west connector.

Shift events closer to Lady.

Move Soda City and other events down a couple of blocks between Washington and Lady, using First Pavilion Park as a place for people to gather.

All Together Now!

Plan two events that compliment each other at the same time on Main Street and Lincoln Street.

Morning Market.

Leveraging the energy of Soda City specifically, plan a concurrent event on Lincoln Street, by the tunnel.

The Lincoln Tunnel for People.

Leverage the unique local identity of this space to make a special nook for people. The second event can happen here.

Filling in the Gaps.

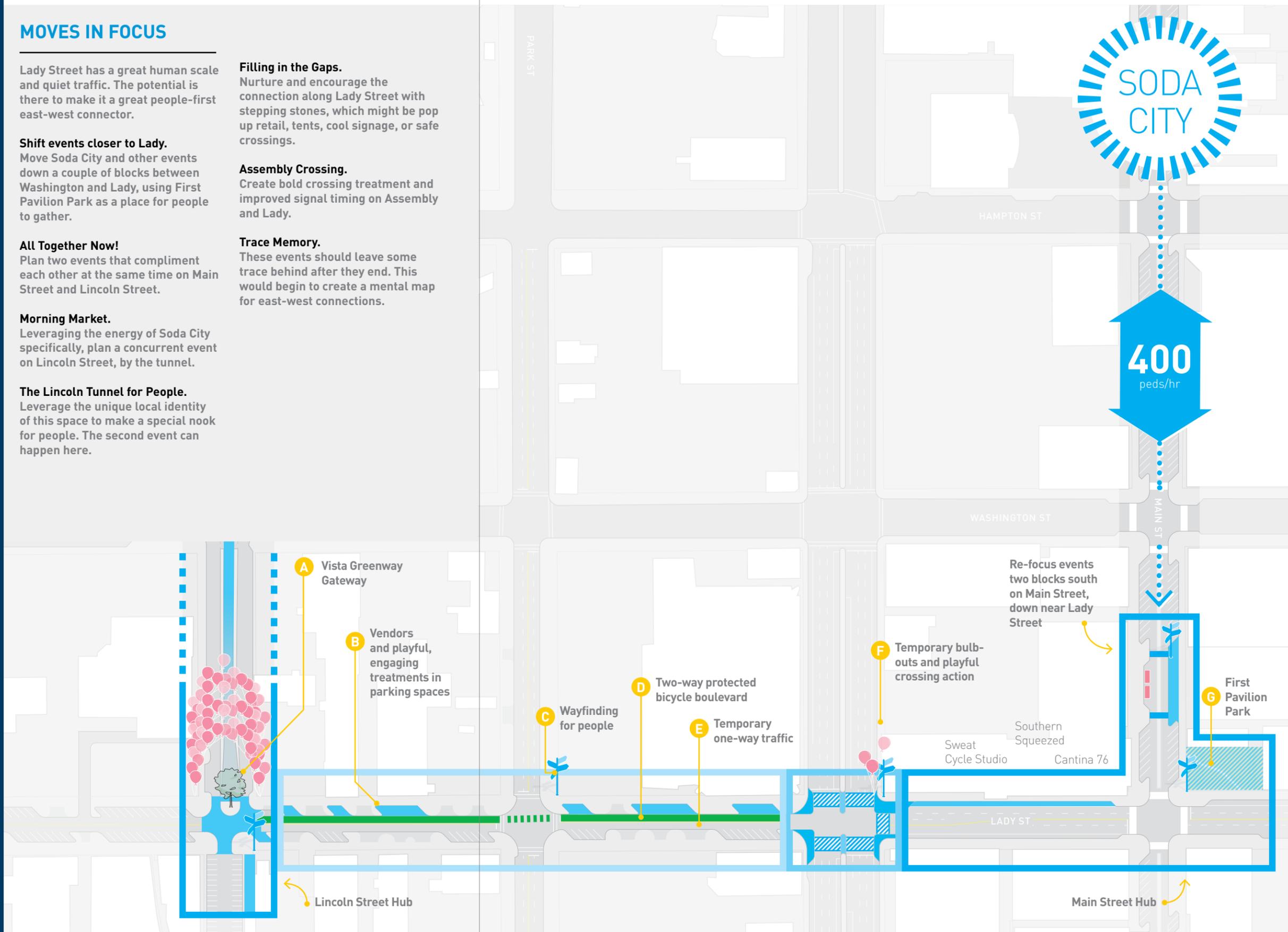
Nurture and encourage the connection along Lady Street with stepping stones, which might be pop up retail, tents, cool signage, or safe crossings.

Assembly Crossing.

Create bold crossing treatment and improved signal timing on Assembly and Lady.

Trace Memory.

These events should leave some trace behind after they end. This would begin to create a mental map for east-west connections.



A Vista Green Way



The approach to the Lincoln Street tunnel provides an excellent opportunity to anchor the west end of the Soda City events and create a public space for art, events, and hanging out. A playful, visual canopy can create a draw and some shade, while modular furniture along the edges leave room for people to pass through unencumbered, or stay.

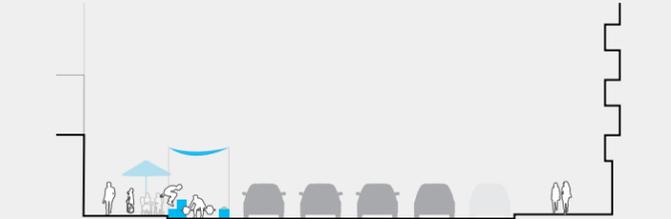
Creating place

Leveraged for their unique physical qualities, these spaces provide an example that the Lincoln tunnel should follow.



B Vendors and playful features filling in the gaps along Lady Street

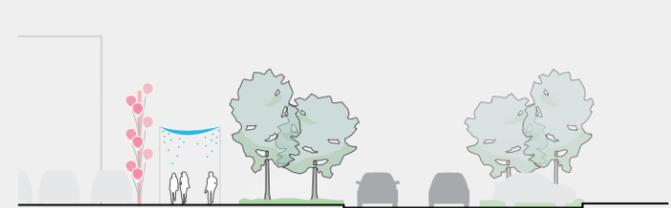
Lady between Main and Assembly →



Lady between Assembly and Park →

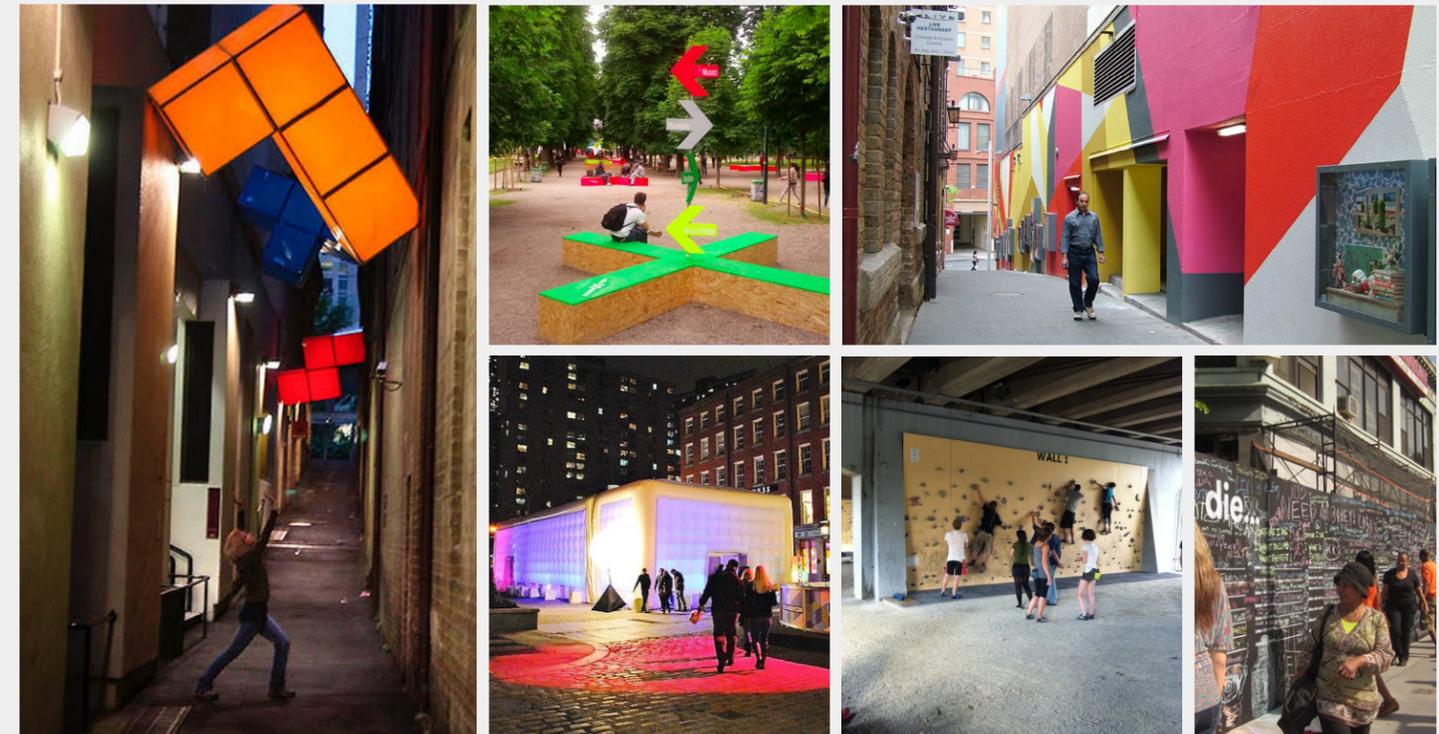


Lady between Park and Lincoln →



Stepping stones

Lining Lady Street with small moments of delight to draw people through might vary from cool signage and lighting to more interactive, playful features.



E Assembly Crossings

Assembly is one of the key barriers hindering fluid east-west connections. This is an opportunity to prototype improved crossing experiences on Assembly at key intersections: Lady, Hampton, and Green. Surface treatment along with improved signalization will signal to motorists to slow down, while softening the pedestrian experience.



Assembly Today →
Precedents



G First Pavilion Park

A key move before kicking off simultaneous events on Lincoln and Main is to shift Soda City down a couple of blocks between Washington and Lady, using First Pavilion Park as a place for people to gather.



KEY FINDINGS

1. Moving east to west on foot is made difficult by Assembly Street, which cuts downtown in two halves. People are putting their lives at risk to cross!

Over 6000
daily jaywalks on
Assembly!

2. Tremendous energy concentrates on one block of Main Street; it's very quiet a few blocks away

753 people
at Main and Washington

↪ But just
47 people
three blocks away

TRACKING SUCCESS

Less Jaywalkers, but More East West Walking.

More people will be crossing along Assembly with the pedestrian signal to get from the Vista to Main street and beyond.
Target: Significantly fewer jaywalkers.

Stretch Out.

The great number of people that pour on to Main Street for Soda City yet remain concentrated in just one block speaks to how much Columbians enjoy being out together, but also shows that there are few invitations to draw that crowd beyond the immediate event. Columbia can capitalize on the event crowd to start building energy along Lady and Lincoln Street.
Target: When people think of Soda City, they think of a network of spaces and events, not simply a block of Main Street.

03

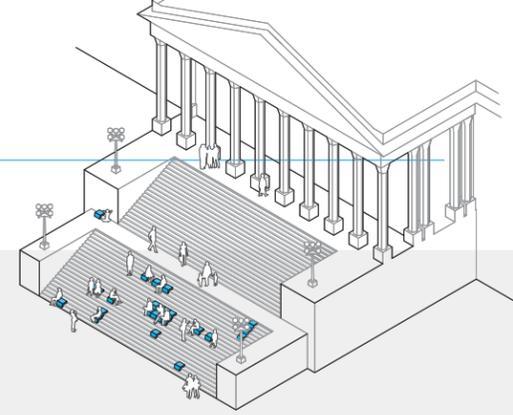
THE FRONT PORCH

A Hub For People: Creating an inviting neighborhood asset for families and fulfilling a latent demand for hanging out, all while re-imagining the State House as a great public front porch for all.

Today, the State House functions as a destination and a ceremonial center of the city, but it's positioned to be much more. By formalizing more invitations for people to stay, the State House could become a spontaneous place to spend time and transform into an active 'central park' play, leisure, and outdoor working space. The latent demand is there. During its most active hours on weekends, 1 in 3 people stick around, and the variety of activity is diverse: from yoga, to exercise, to simply hanging out and enjoying the space.



The statehouse can be a canvas and a beacon to express different events during the year: graduation, astrology night, earth day, and so on.



Today the stairs are used by a great cross section of Columbians: from joggers getting some exercise, to teenagers hanging out, to families finding a place to rest while their kids play in the field. More formally

inviting people to the statehouse with playful furniture and easier access across Gervais street will make this a hub for people and a defining space in Columbia.





MOVES IN FOCUS

This pilot looks to facilitate access from Main Street and the University by improving intersection treatment at Gervais and Senate, inviting people to stay with playful seating, and flipping the perception of the space from a serious and ceremonial place to a State House for everyone with inclusive, family-oriented programming.

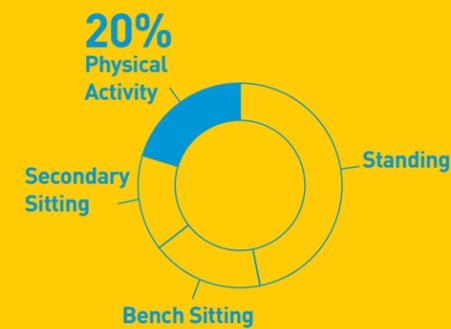
- Social Objects.** Inject the area with some play and draw on Columbians' curiosity with fun furniture options.
- Summer Field.** Re-brand a portion of the grounds as "Summer Field" and plan events / concert / movie series on weekends in the summer.
- Under the Stars.** Dark pockets make this area uninviting at night. Improve lighting throughout.
- Outdoor Meetings.** Create a WiFi zone, ideal for outdoor conferences and working.

People already bring their own color and play to the space. Support this with a series of light, playful furniture options.



KEY FINDINGS

1. Compared to other spaces surveyed, the State House saw a strong proportion of physical activity and play in the space - about 1/5 of all activity.



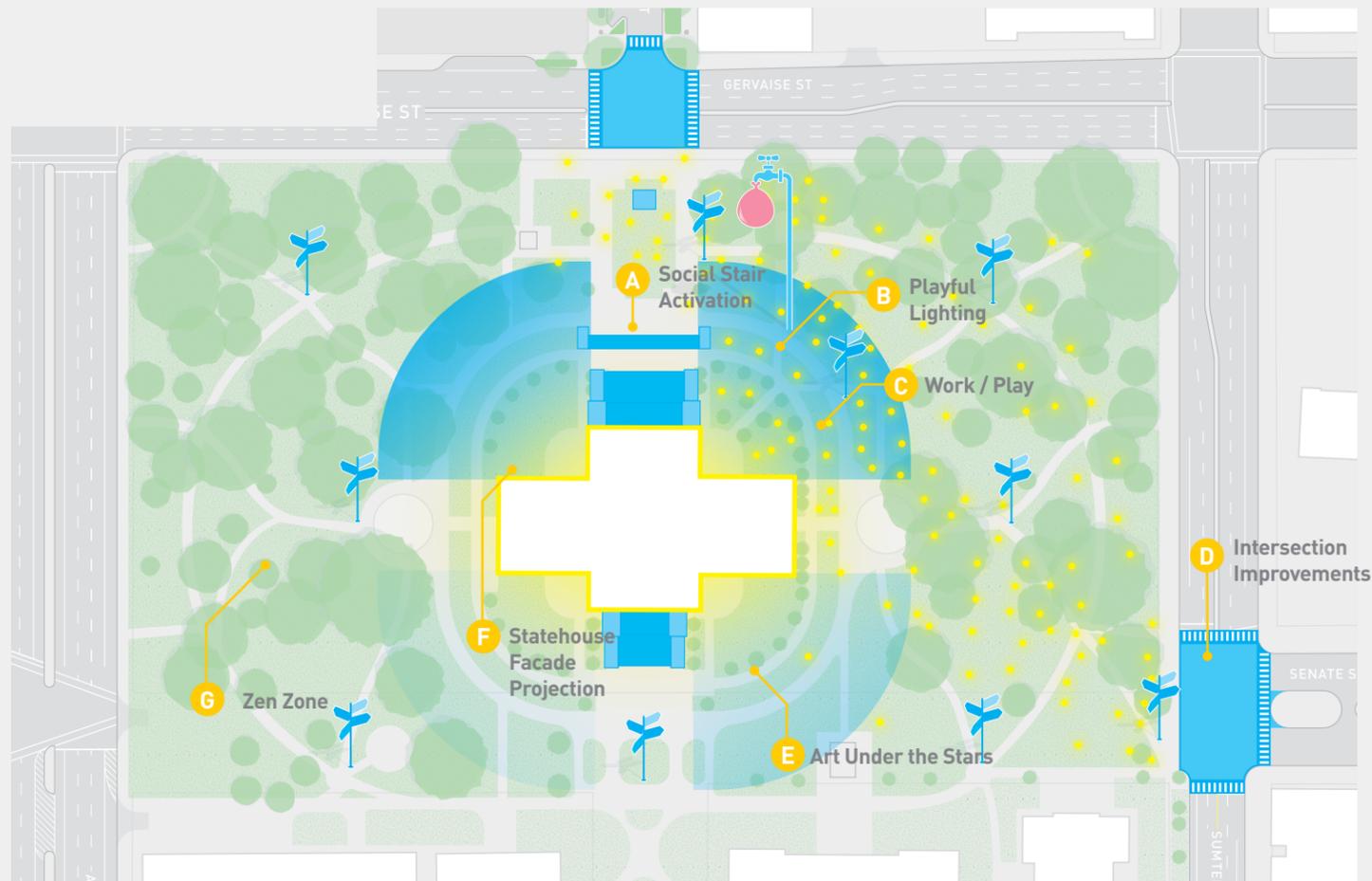
2. The State House is a destination. We observed lots of get togethers: yoga, bike meets, a running club. The space functions as a hub and meeting place for people.

TRACKING SUCCESS

Quality. The State House should ace Columbia's Quality Criteria. **Target:**

Water & Natural Resources	Greenery & Plants	Relaxing & Peaceful
Color & Art	Dynamic & Active	Togetherness
Closeness & Fine Grain	Whimsical & Creative	Fun & Play

A redefined hub. The space should become a hub not just for planned activities, but also for spontaneous ones. **Target:** During lunch and weekends 1 of 2 pedestrians walking by ought to stay.



Getting there: First steps

Columbia is well positioned to accomplish great, people-first initiatives downtown. With the Mayor's leadership and the council's support, the political will to implement public realm improvements is there. Combine this with a public enthusiasm to create and participate in engaging events and experiences downtown, the opportunity is now to be bold and test these pilots.

Each pilot can be undertaken in any sequence, but ideally they would happen in order: first establishing some seating on Main Street between Lady and Washington targeting the wide sidewalk spaces and First Pavilion park; then building energy east and west on Lady Street; and finally defining a new people-first landmark and "Central Park" in the statehouse.





Client Team

Central Carolina
Community Foundation

The City of Columbia

With Support from
the Knight Foundation

Project Team

Gehl

Gehl is a people first design consultancy. We work with clients to create mutually beneficial relationships between people's quality of life and their built environment.

We are Urban Planners, Designers, Architects, Landscape Architects, Sociologists, and Real Estate Professionals.