



R M A

REINVENTING YOUR CITY

# **WEST COLUMBIA, SC**

## Citywide Redevelopment Plan



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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City of West Columbia  
*Bridging Past, Present and Future*

**Prepared for the City of West Columbia, South Carolina**

WEST COLUMBIA CITYWIDE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



**Prepared by**

REDEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES

REINVENTING YOUR CITY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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A Redevelopment Plan should be a living, breathing document that incorporates specific recommendations and strategies. This Redevelopment Plan provides a clear road map to bring positive change to West Columbia for residents, property owners, businesses and visitors alike. The Plan is based on RMA's market analysis, development assessment, and stakeholder and public input. Targeted areas are defined, including catalyst sites, pedestrian friendly areas of town, parking, community facilities, and residential sites. The Plan takes into consideration the cost of redevelopment and contains the first five-year projection of expenses.

***The Plan presents realistic Recommendations and Strategies developed to position West Columbia to compete for investment and increase its tax base, while maintaining and strengthening its community character.***

Implementation of this Plan is grounded in several key areas: Leadership and Empowerment; History; Connectivity; Activity and Vibrancy; Aesthetics; Quality of Life; and Private Investment. RMA strongly believes that successful revitalization and redevelopment of West Columbia will require the convergence of these seven areas.

The City of West Columbia intends, through the implementation of a comprehensive Redevelopment Plan, to continue to improve the quality of life for its citizens. The Plan contains comprehensive recommendations and strategies for economic growth that ensure opportunities to prosper are extended to all areas, including distressed neighborhoods and the families that live there, as well as the commercial corridors and riverfront areas.

The Market Analysis section of this Plan provides background information and a summary of the existing conditions in West Columbia, including a physical assessment, as well as economic and demographic information.

The Redevelopment Plan has been created with an emphasis on Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization as the engines to drive the program. Areas of study and recommendation include public improvements and infrastructure, housing and residential development, transportation, transit and parking, business attraction, place branding and redevelopment support.

### **Incorporate Smart Development Principles**

New urban planning principles are incorporated for smart development in this Plan and will serve the City well now, and in the future. Skinny streets, wide sidewalks, on-street parking, bicycle lanes, shade trees along the right-of-way, small neighborhood parks, community gathering places, low parking ratios, and shared parking are a core part of this plan. Catalyst sites that will provide opportunity for revitalization and growth are identified, and recommendations and strategies are incorporated. These general elements comprise a Redevelopment Plan, but it is the implementation and execution of the Plan that becomes the most important part of this process for the City of West Columbia. It requires bold leadership and effective problem-solving to advance critical policies and legislation that will continue to improve the City of West Columbia. It also requires empowering all citizens, including untapped segments such as artists, volunteers, and entrepreneurs, to help solve these problems and strengthen the community.

West Columbia is truly bridging the past, present and future. Historic areas stand side-by-side with new development adding to the charm and livability of West Columbia. It has a collection of unique attributes and assets that can be built upon to serve as the foundation for future improvement and redevelopment.

### **The Area is Ideal for Commerce**

Thanks to its business-friendly attitude, low taxes and utility rates, the City is concentrating on economic development and is eager to attract business start-ups and/or relocations. Additionally, major interstates, highways, the airport, and the City of Columbia are just minutes away.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Create A Pedestrian Environment

Connectivity options between different areas of the City are illustrated for consideration. The continued development of mixed-use residential and commercial properties throughout the City is also encouraged.

Revitalization occurs when residents activate the streets, support the retailers and restaurants, join cultural institutions, and participate in activities of the community. Mixed-use projects in West Columbia that are carefully planned and that are respectful of the neighboring areas, will continue to add a sense of vitality to the City.

### Plan Highlights

Goals are defined in detail and include recommendations and strategies to ensure implementation occurs. The following sections of the plan are highlights for targeted implementation:

- Focus on opportunity areas including a strong riverfront which will once again serve as an anchor of West Columbia.
- Focus on connectivity and ensuring major corridors and streets connect featured development areas and public assets.
- Take advantage of the extensive recreational, tourism and hospitality offerings that exist in West Columbia.
- Expand arts and culture venues.
- Focus on the development of city brand.
- Incorporate neighborhood and quality of life initiatives into city operations that support the city brand aesthetic improvements along the commercial corridors.
- Positioning West Columbia as a great place to live, work and play, with pleasing aesthetics, activities and social offerings.
- Identify and secure appropriate funding for implementation.
- Ensure the organizational structure is in place to implement this visioning plan.

### **As quality of life becomes more of a consideration for job selection, lifestyle choices are extremely relevant.**

Activities, recreation, schools, healthcare, cost of living and many other factors influence these choices. This Plan positions West Columbia as a place where people will want to live, and families will want to raise their children.

### **A Community Pride Campaign in Certain Areas is Recommended**

A community pride campaign can significantly help West Columbia's reputation and position in the marketplace. This, along with continued attention to maintaining and enhancing the efficiency of the regulatory process that is important to prospective businesses and investors, will help improve the area's reputation as a great place to live and do business.

### **Protect and Enhance the Neighborhoods and Riverfront**

Improvement recommendations and strategies are necessary to provide a clean and safe city. Additionally, expanded housing options for new residents, which improve West Columbia's market position, are key to attracting professionals that are associated with the University and/or the Capitol. These recommendations and strategies can be implemented while protecting the quality of life and the character of the neighborhoods currently enjoyed by West Columbia's residents.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Improve Wayfinding, Directional Signage Program, Gateway Signage and Utilities

Capital improvements recommended include wayfinding and a directional signage program, gateway signage and expansion of the City's utilities. They also include road improvements and pedestrian walkways that connect the various areas of the City. Many cities have demonstrated that recreational corridors and trails can also serve as real transportation modes, and not just be used for exercise and fun. The proximity to the University and State Capital of Columbia provides an opportunity to extend transportation options between the two cities.

**In summary, the "elevator speech" for the West Columbia Redevelopment Plan is that the City has a strong history and a very bright future, and that the Plan:**

- Preserves the community character, history and quality of life;
- Enhances the aesthetics, market position and connectivity;
- Exposes obstacles to investment and redevelopment;
- Invests in the City's identity, image, and public spaces; and
- Capitalizes on the City's location and natural assets.

This historic City retains the character of its past, while exhibiting the strong foundation required for growth and investment, and the key to successful redevelopment and revitalization is the use of realistic, achievable actions which improve the perception and identity of the area, and which enhance its marketability to investors, developers, businesses and residents. These actions are specific, and the results are measurable.



*New Brookland Historic District is considered the historical nucleus of West Columbia with commercial, institutional and residential contributing buildings. It is an area that should be preserved, enhanced, exposed, capitalized on and invested in.*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The key goals for actions which improve West Columbia's market positioning and marketability for redevelopment involve economic development, place branding, urban design and planning, public improvements and infrastructure, housing and residential development, transportation, transit and parking, and redevelopment support. These goals, with expanded initiatives, are outlined in the Plan.

- Goal #1** Create a thriving riverfront district and encourage a quality retail, restaurant, cultural, and business environment serving West Columbia residents and visitors.
- Goal #2** Create viable commercial corridors by encouraging and facilitating sound real estate acquisition, assemblage, development and public private partnerships.
- Goal #3** Recruit targeted commercial business uses and industries in West Columbia.
- Goal #4** Incorporate cultural arts, tourism and hospitality as critical components of economic development.
- Goal #5** Improve market positioning.
- Goal #6** Coordinate city, county, state and federally-funded Public Improvements within the City of West Columbia commercial areas.
- Goal #7** Support and establish neighborhood improvement programs to reduce slum and blight conditions in residential neighborhoods.
- Goal #8** Create a healthy mix of affordable, workforce, market rate, and luxury housing options.
- Goal #9** Provide safe and convenient mobility, transportation and transit options.
- Goal #10** Provide efficient and attractive parking to support retail, restaurant, cultural, office and industrial facilities.
- Goal #11** Encourage and support sound and redevelopment-friendly land use regulations within the City of West Columbia.
- Goal #12** Use powers of borrowing, land acquisition and disposition to further West Columbia redevelopment goals and initiatives.
- Goal #13** Provide incentives and other support to projects that further West Columbia redevelopment goals and initiatives.



# INTRODUCTION

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West Columbia is truly bridging the past, present and future, and possesses the unique opportunity to redevelop areas that will encourage future growth in today's urban format. This Plan provides a foundation for the successful redevelopment of West Columbia and an enhanced quality of life for its citizens.

## History of West Columbia

West Columbia was first chartered as a town in 1894 under the name Brookland. The town was called Brookland due to the vast number of clear water brooks. In 1936, the name was changed to West Columbia. Brookland was originally planned as a source of housing for mill employees, as the development of Columbia Mills was planned. The decision, however, was made to locate the world's first electrically driven textile mill on the eastern shore of the Congaree River, and house the working population on the western shore.

As the plant developed, the major problem was transporting the workers to their job site. Ferry boats were used initially, but quickly became impractical. The first bridge was built across the Congaree, made of wood. It provided access to the mill and eased transportation of the people and freight. A business district evolved, with dry goods, livery stable, grocery store, post office, vegetable markets and mercantile stores. The trade center developed on what is now Meeting Street, and a small portion on what is now State Street. In 1905 a fire destroyed the entire Brookland community, the only home that was saved was the Finnegan house at 412 Spring Street. The next ten years were spent rebuilding the homes and the buildings still seen on Meeting and State Streets. The wooden bridge, ravaged by floods, was finally replaced with the Gervais Street Bridge in 1927. The Gervais Street Bridge, Mount Hebron Temperance Hall, New Brookland Historic District, and Saluda Factory Historic District are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This information was gathered from the City's website.

## Key Anchor Institutions

With the major industries of government, legal, and education dominating the region, companies have an opportunity to enter not only an affordable, but also an educated, market. The State Capitol complex and nearby departments employ over 10,000 people. There is tremendous value and stability in having strong anchors like the State Capitol, University of South Carolina (USC), and Lexington Medical Center in the area. This is evidenced by the fact that 23,000 out of 35,000 government employees in the entire state are living in Richland and Lexington Counties.

The University of South Carolina is the largest university in the state with a population of over 36,000 students. Over 27,000 students are on campus in Columbia, aided by a staff of 4500+/- . The presence of USC, as well as other local educational institutions is a draw for businesses and residents looking to invest in the West Columbia area. West Columbia's population also features a high percentage of residents attaining a bachelor's degree (20.45%) and graduate or professional degree (11.45%).

The Lexington Medical Center is one of the largest employers in the area. Over 6,500 healthcare professionals are employed by the institution which provides a comprehensive, countywide health care network of over 600 physicians. Several accolades have been received by the facility including Columbia's "Best Place to Have a Baby", "Best Hospital", and one of the "Top 25 Best Hospitals to Work for in the U.S." Lexington Medical Center is building a 545,000-square-foot patient care tower that is expected to open in 2019. This will make Lexington Medical Center one of the most modern, state-of-the-art hospitals in South Carolina, according to the Center's public information website.



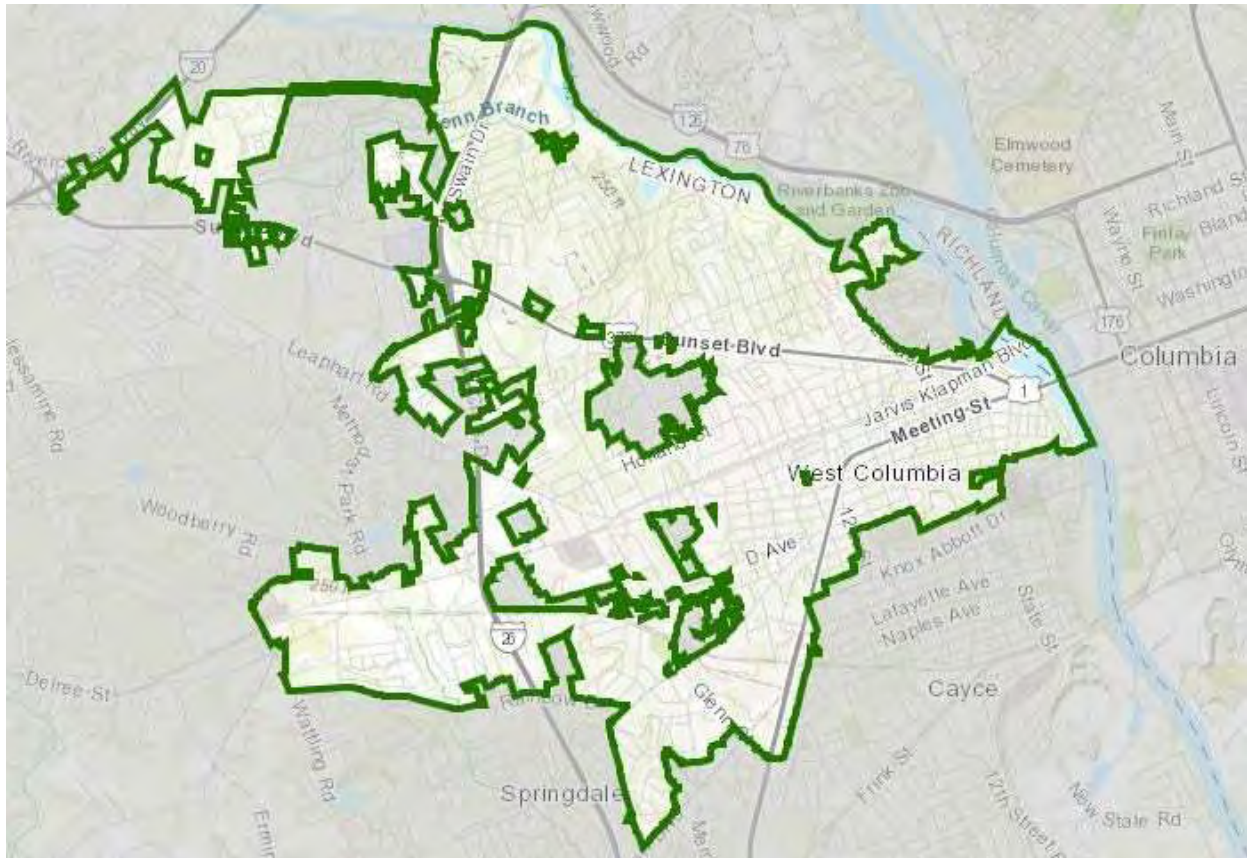
*Image provided by Lexington Medical Center.*



# INTRODUCTION

## Study Area

The City of West Columbia is a suburban city of approximately 18,000 residents located in Lexington County, South Carolina. West Columbia is separated from the state capital of Columbia by the Congaree and Saluda Rivers. The City serves as a commuter town for the surrounding areas which include the University of South Carolina and the Capitol of the State of South Carolina. The City has a total area of approximately 8 square miles and is part of the greater Columbia metropolitan statistical area.





## MARKET POSITIONING FOR REDEVELOPMENT

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Successful repositioning to attract investment and grow a city's tax base ultimately depends on how people (investors, developers, business owners, residents) "think and feel" about a community and how that affects their willingness to spend their money (or go into debt) to become a part of that community.

**Recent studies have demonstrated that the most important elements that connect people to the place that they live are:**

- Aesthetics – how a place looks and feels;
- Social Offerings – activities, and the opportunity for citizens to engage with each other;
- Openness – how open and welcoming a community is;
- Uniqueness – what makes a place special and different from others.

**These are four critical values that shape a community's position for growth, revitalization and investment. The most important elements to implement these values as part of a redevelopment strategy are:**

- Walkability
- Tourism and Hospitality
- Art, Culture and Special Community Events
- Place Branding and Identity
- Opportunity Areas and Catalyst Sites

### Assessment Findings

Several assessments were conducted during this process, including a market assessment, a safety perception assessment, aesthetic and physical environment assessment, as well as an evaluation of business climate themes which included significant public input.

The market analysis (attached as Exhibit A) and public input sessions included a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, as well as an Economic Development Opportunity analysis, that resulted in the following findings.

### SWOT Observations

#### Strengths

- Proximity to Columbia (State Capitol)
- Proximity to University of South Carolina and Midlands Technical College- High percentage of students, faculty and alumni in West Columbia
- Affordable Real Estate Market
- Accessibility- proximity to Interstates 20, 26, and 77
- Access to riverfront
- Access to healthcare
- Quaint, small town feel with big town accessibility
- Emerging arts and food scene along State Street
- Low cost of doing business
- Diverse housing stock
- High educational attainment
- Safety
- Convenience



# MARKET POSITIONING FOR REDEVELOPMENT

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## Weaknesses

- Infrastructure issues- sidewalks, water lines, lighting, road ways
- Limited public transportation
- Aesthetics (Citywide but particularly in Triangle City, District 5, and City Gateways)
- Limited parks and green space
- Presence of slum and blight in neighborhoods (particularly in District 5 and Mill Village)
- Access challenges in District 5
- Low median household income
- Lack of community gathering places (neighborhood community centers)

## Opportunities

- Large number of vacant industrial and retail properties- Opportunities for adaptive re-use
- Build branding message - (Citywide as well as individual districts) how does West Columbia want to be positioned in the market? (Community Pride campaign)
- New housing development
- Proximity to assets
- Build off success of growing food, arts and entertainment scene
- Port of Charleston

## Threats

- Proximity of major food processing plant and its related traffic and odor
- Perception of the West Columbia area as not having assets in comparison to Columbia being perceived as "the" place to be
- Lack of visibility in real estate market

## **Economic Development Opportunities**

What should be **preserved** that will support new investment in West Columbia?

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Community Character | • Tree Canopy           |
| • Historic Areas      | • Political Leadership  |
| • Community Pride     | • Riverwalk and Views   |
| • Diversity           | • Waterfront Properties |

What can be **enhanced** to encourage economic development and investment and improve quality of life in West Columbia?

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| • Aesthetics                                 | Communications               |
| • Sense of Community Pride                   | • African American Ownership |
| • Pedestrian Oriented Zoning                 | • Riverwalk Accessibility    |
| • Connections                                | • Parks and Green Space      |
| • Market Opportunity / Financial Feasibility | • Restrooms at Parks         |
| • Social Media                               | • Music, Art and Culture     |
|  | • Code Enforcement           |



## MARKET POSITIONING FOR REDEVELOPMENT

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What can be **enhanced** to encourage economic development and investment and improve quality of life in West Columbia?

- Aesthetics
- Sense of Community Pride
- Pedestrian Oriented Zoning
- Connections
- Market Opportunity / Financial Feasibility
- Social Media
- Communications
- African American Ownership
- Riverwalk Accessibility
- Parks and Green Space
- Restrooms at Parks
- Music, Art and Culture
- Code Enforcement

What can be **exposed** and promoted to attract more development in West Columbia?

- Opportunity for Residential
- Connectivity between Business District, Riverfront District
- Opportunity for Student Housing
- Deep Roots
- Community Pride & Heritage
- Opportunity for new and unique businesses
- Hidden Assets i.e.. Southern Culture
  - Presence of Riverbanks Zoo and Botanical Gardens
- Interactive Park
- Location
- Quality of Life
- Shuttle / Connecting parking
- Walkability

What can be **invested** in that will improve West Columbia's competitiveness?

- Branding and Strategic Positioning
- Entrance Feature
- Parking
- Public Spaces
- Community Pride
- Signage & Banners to Cross Promote with Riverfront District
- Education (i.e. Disaster Recovery)
- Activities and Events
- Aesthetics
- Life Safety and Disaster Preparedness
- Police Presence
- Land, Parks & Recreation
- Community Gardens
- Gathering Places
- Landscaping
- Infrastructure
- Transportation including Transit Link
- Sidewalks, Streetscaping & Themed Streetlights
- Waste management
- Expand Business District
- Incentives for New Development
- Façade and Property Improvement Grants
- Targeted Businesses
- Real Estate
- Redevelopment Implementation Plan



## MARKET POSITIONING FOR REDEVELOPMENT

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What can be **capitalized** on to establish West Columbia as a good location for investment?

- Market Potential and Position
- Location / Proximity /Connections to Other Assets
- Walkability
- Workforce Housing Incentives
- River
- Existing Tourist/Visitor Market Food/ Art Scene
- Recreation Opportunity
- Return on Investment
- Existing, Thriving Local Businesses
- Proximity to Ports

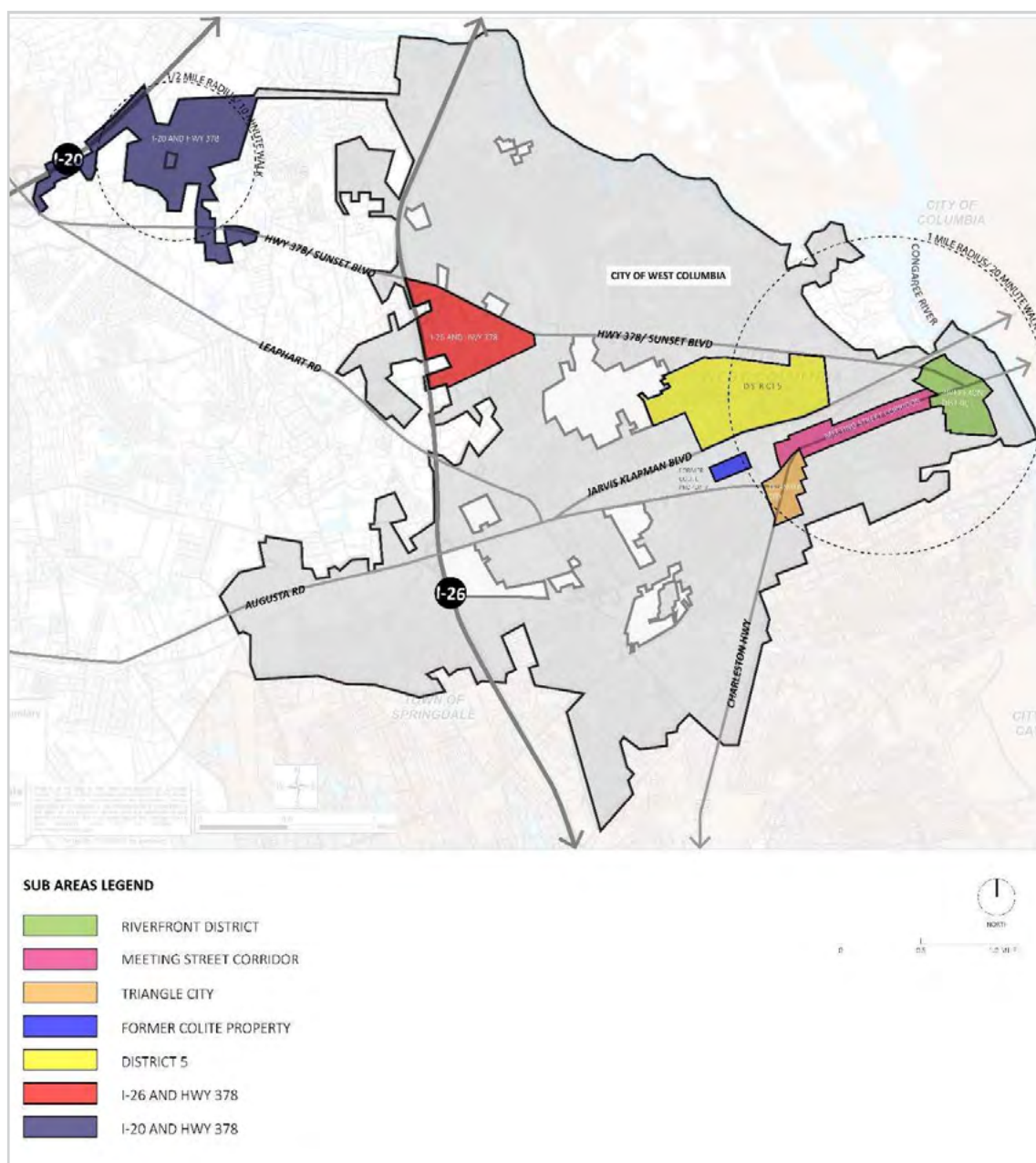
The Redevelopment Plan positions West Columbia to attract targeted businesses and leverage the state's economic development programs. South Carolina is home to some of the most successful and innovative companies in the aerospace, agribusiness, automotive, manufacturing and technology industries. These key facts provided by the state and county economic development departments demonstrate that it makes sense to locate a business in West Columbia:

- More than 500,000 in the labor force within one hour's drive time.
- Labor force growing in all age cohorts between 16 and 64 years old.
- Excellent labor-management relations climate.
- The county-wide civilian labor force is adding 3,500 workers per year on average.
- 15,000+ student Midlands Technical College.
- 35,000+ students University of Carolina and 11 other higher education institutions in region.
- ReadySC®, the nation's premier customized training program for new and expanding employers, according to an analysis by IBM-Plant Location International.
- Conservative state and local elected leadership.
- Mandated balanced state and local government budgets.
- The Right-to-Work in South Carolina is constitutional, not statute.
- Customized incentives reduce both start-up and long-term operating costs.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Opportunity, or catalyst, sites are defined as those properties that offer significant upside for development that will increase the tax base and provide benefits to the community. These catalyst sites serve as building blocks for economic development. RMA has identified the following catalyst sites for the City of West Columbia to focus on and continue to seek ways to encourage development of these areas.

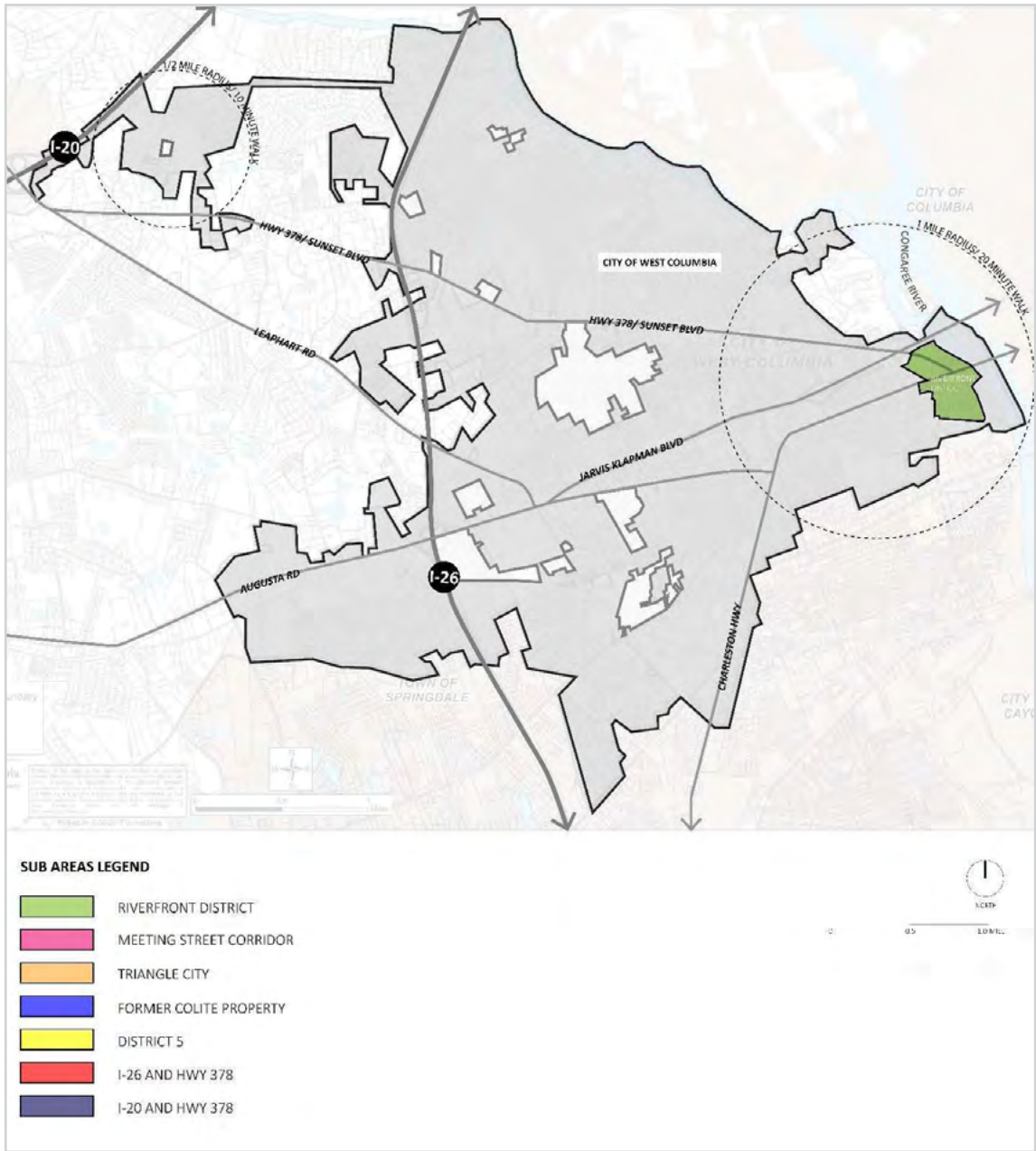


*Opportunity Areas Map*



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## RIVERFRONT DISTRICT



*Riverfront District Map*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

The Riverfront District embodies the heritage of the City. The objective is to create a thriving riverfront area to encourage a quality retail, restaurant, cultural and business environment serving West Columbia residents and visitors.

While West Columbia recognizes the benefits of smart development that includes mixed-use projects, care must be taken to respect the surrounding properties. The new Brookland Development is an example of the commitment of the City, by creating a district to encourage development, provide parking solutions and revitalize the entire area. This comprehensive approach serves the City well and inspires a renewed confidence in the rebirth of this area.



*Riverfront and Riverfront District, West Columbia*

Developments with office components add new jobs and increase the customer base for local shops and services. Multifamily brings new residents, creating a demand for restaurants, movie theaters, grocery stores, and entertainment venues. As retail consumption shifts back to more traditional neighborhood-based patterns, more development to accommodate this occurs. The retail component adds to the tax base, and the parking helps control traffic and establish and keep the pedestrian friendly design. The main benefits of these dense urban projects, are that people could come to work, drop their kids off at day care, get coffee, and exercise for example, all within a walkable, desirable area. The objective is to create a community gathering place, consisting of a compatible mix of retail, office, and cultural uses all in one area. The new all-inclusive Enabling Playground and parking area are examples of proactive projects that serve the community tremendously.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

With West Columbia's proximity to the University of South Carolina and the State Capitol, opportunities exist to offer an alternative to the busy, congested areas of Columbia. The Riverfront District is becoming a focal point of residential and commercial activity. With new residential developments, successful restaurants and Riverwalk Park, this part of West Columbia is poised for a renaissance. The most successful pedestrian districts include national retail tenants for economic sustainability, plus regional and local businesses to create character and a sense of place.



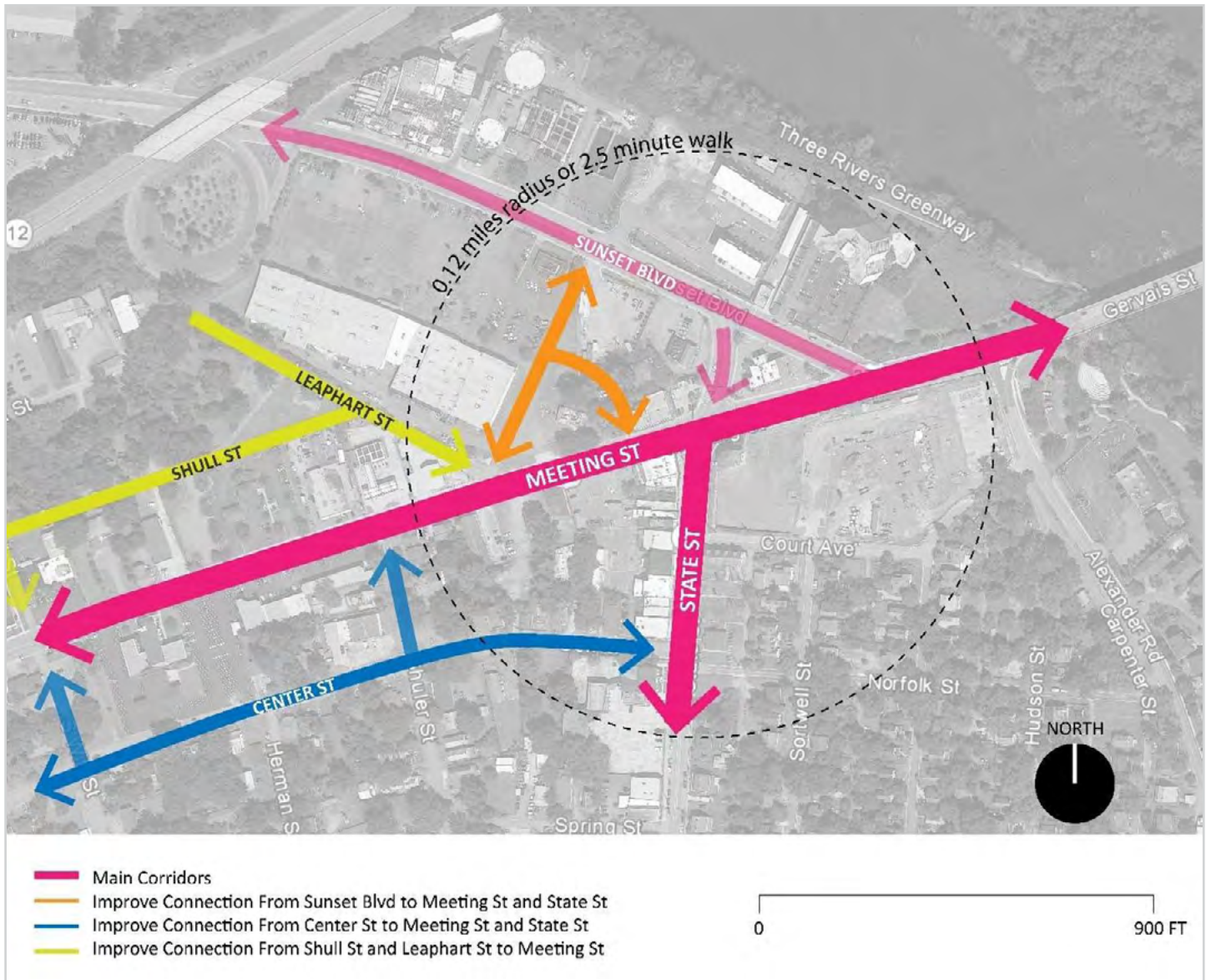
*Historic bridge over Three Rivers Greenway/ Riverwalk*

This area is primed to attract a diverse mix of businesses to strengthen the local economy and increase nighttime foot traffic throughout the Riverfront District and along Meeting Street. Through discussions with stakeholders including owners, merchants and business organizations, restaurant, cultural arts such as galleries and entertainment recruitment is a priority. Many of the City's older buildings are difficult and costly to retrofit to restaurant use. To promote recruitment and encourage these uses, incentives should be provided to offset start-up operations. One suggestion received during input sessions was to allow mobile vendors near the riverfront.

The businesses on State, Center, Leaphart, Shull and Meeting Streets are poised to benefit from this cycle of the market. Capitol Square Shopping Center, House of Raeford, The View and the new Brookland project are in premier locations. However, the connection between these areas is not defined. Mill Village, while located just outside the Gateway Overlay District, is a significant historic area of town with many homes appropriate for renovation. The recommendations in the Connectivity Section of this Plan should be incorporated to build on this positive redevelopment trend. The following rendering demonstrates the connections that should be made to increase pedestrian traffic in this area



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



The City will need to help new businesses succeed with programs that provide marketing and branding, as well as continue the façade improvement program. According to a 2016 study by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 59 percent of independent retailers reported being worried about the escalating cost of rent, with one in four describing it as a top challenge. Therefore, merchant assistance programs and special events will be important for businesses to succeed in this area.

For example, an open container ordinance that permits consumption of beer and alcohol in certain places may be considered. Chattanooga recently enacted this program, allowing open containers that are also marketing and branding identities to be used throughout a defined area. Signs are posted that call out the observance of this program in an area of the City similar to Riverwalk.

The charm of this area, along with the beauty of the natural environment, offers a chance to revive the Southern Lifestyle that makes South Carolina famous. High impact, low cost solutions such as improved pedestrian access and connectivity in this area will provide the stepping stones for successful revitalization and redevelopment.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Detailed wayfinding information for these areas not only gives the outdoor enthusiast the opportunity to navigate to nearby areas, thereby increasing its potential for regular, daily use, but it also gives users the option to spend money at nearby establishments. Making trail users more aware of the area businesses and how to access them may encourage these establishments to market their resources through traditional and non-traditional methods. An additional area to explore is working to make sure that the public is aware of the areas available for parking. At some point a shuttle can be considered that connects the areas, and a marketing campaign to expose the parking areas and connectivity is needed.

Mill Village is an eclectic neighborhood that is diverse, family-oriented and has a true sense of community. Although the Village is outside the Gateway Overlay District (GOLD), redevelopment advantages for this area are tremendous.



*New Brookland Mill Village historic image. source: SC Dept. of Archives and History.*



*New Brookland today*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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The new Brookland development in West Columbia will contain apartments and condominiums as well as stores, restaurants and offices in multi-story buildings overlooking the Congaree River. This catalyst project will provide parking for residents and the public in certain areas for visitors to businesses and the nearby Riverwalk.

Interspersed with small public parks and plazas, the \$40 million, 4-acre live-work-play complex will feature four multi-story buildings housing 202 apartments, 15,000 square feet of retail and office space and a two-story parking deck, according to the project's developer.

The following rendering and conceptual site plans depict the project that is currently under construction.



*New Brookland Development Rendering*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*New Brookland Development Area*



*New Brookland Development Site Plan*

This additional density to the area provides additional basis for the success of businesses. Retail shops on both sides of the street will provide additional strength for the area core



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### Recommendations and Strategies

#### 1. Public-private Partnership Development

Work with the private sector to identify and create public-private partnerships for commercial, residential, cultural and mixed-use projects to realize redevelopment goals and increase the tax base. These partnerships are further described in the specific site opportunity discussions, including House of Raeford, Capitol Square, Triangle City, Former Colite Property, Brookland Lakeview Area, and the Interstate 26 area.

#### 2. Commercial Rehabilitation/Beautification Grants

Implement additional funding programs for rehabilitation and beautification of commercial buildings to help local businesses attract new customers. These grants may be made available to Business Owners and/or Commercial Property Owners.

Continue the façade improvement incentive program in the Gateway Overlay District (GOLD) and require advanced lighting reviews to enhance safety perceptions.

Continue selected demolition of deteriorated properties to create green space.

#### 3. Merchant Assistance Program

Fund programs to provide technical assistance/consulting services to existing business owners for training and minor aesthetic improvements to the interior of a business. Many of the City's older buildings are difficult and costly to retrofit to restaurant use. To promote recruitment and encourage these uses, incentives should be provided to offset start-up operations as part of this program.

Implement a media campaign and broker events to advise the public of incentives and opportunities.

Implement an open container ordinance that permits the consumption of alcohol and beer in designated areas.

#### 4. Commercial Clean Team/Code Enforcement/Community Policing

Provide funding and/or staffing for proactive "clean and safe" programs and activities, including pressure cleaning of sidewalks, litter control, graffiti removal, code enforcement and additional community policing.

Strictly enforce the City's ordinances regarding abandoned buildings and vehicles, debris, public nuisance violations, signage, land use, lighting and habitable structures.

#### 5. Tourism and Hospitality Initiative

Provide funding and staffing for a visitor tourism program that targets ecotourism, heritage tourism and agri-tourism.

Create a walking/cycling guide that introduces visitors to the area.

Target specific uses for the Riverfront area that will serve as economic engines, such as a hotel, and a brewery or distillery.

#### 6. Art and Culture Initiatives

Provide funding and staffing to encourage the expansion of the arts and to provide support for cultural activities that benefit the entire community as described in the Art and Culture section of this Plan.

Commission a gateway entrance feature that is a statement and speaks to West Columbia's character.

Continue to support events that promote art and culture, including activating empty storefronts to encourage these activities.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### 7. Other Riverfront District Initiatives

Provide funding and support for programs and activities that further the Economic Development of West Columbia. Based on discussions with stakeholders including owners, merchants and business organizations, the recruitment of restaurants, cultural arts such as galleries and entertainment should be a priority.

Construct pedestrian walkways and make roadway improvements to connect Capitol Square to Meeting Street, and Meeting Street to Center Street as discussed in the Connectivity Section of the Plan, recognizing that safety is a prime concern for users. This includes additional streetlights, with shorter, more pedestrian-scale poles.

Pursue a marketing campaign to expose the parking areas and connectivity to the general public and potential visitors.

Implement a business attraction campaign to attract targeted businesses to the Riverfront area, including a grocery store, brewery/distillery, and hotel.

Encourage a diverse mix of businesses to strengthen the local economy and increase nighttime foot traffic throughout the Riverfront District and along Meeting, State and Center Streets.

Impose architectural guidelines that address scale and character in this area.

Explore a unified valet parking system to overcome concerns about the safety of parking.

#### **Create and support Open Space/Community Enhancement Projects, including:**

- Riverwalk Park and Amphitheater
- Art in Public Places
- Community Events
- Gervais Bridge Public Art Enhancements
- Renovate parks to include additional lighting and amenities
- Create safe and natural pathways to parks and sporting fields



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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*State Street, West Columbia. Via Cayce West Columbia News*



*State Street, West Columbia consists of coffee shops, antique stores, pubs, and specialty shops.*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

### RIVERFRONT DISTRICT OPPORTUNITY SITE

**Capitol Square (8.57 Acres)**  
483 Sunset Blvd, West Columbia



*Capitol Square Opportunity Site*

#### Situation

This property in West Columbia, just across Gervais Street bridge, is convenient to Columbia, Meeting Street and Jarvis Klapman Boulevard. The size of the property is approximately 5.8 acres and has a structure that was built in 1974 and is considered second generation. The site is C-2 Zoning which is a general Commercial district. As the population of West Columbia became more suburban, tenants vacated, and the shopping center declined.

The owners are receptive to redevelopment of the property and have resources that are available if suitable tenants can be introduced and the financial analysis is acceptable. Aesthetically it is typical of second-generation shopping centers. The Riverside Water Treatment Plant is in this area in addition to three primary transmission mains. Additionally, one of the City's primary wastewater trunk lines passes parallel to the Saluda River providing ample capacity.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

### Opportunity

RMA's analysis of this property concludes that as one of the gateways to the City, and as the anchor of the Riverfront District, redevelopment of this catalyst property is critical. The large underutilized parcel has the potential for infill development on the current surface parking lot and if the chicken plant is relocated and multifamily is built across Sunset, the ability to provide a hidden parking structure to accommodate current and future parking needs for the entire district may be realized.

Currently, the shopping center has 7 spaces and just over 60,000 square feet of available, or vacant, space. The spaces range from 2,000-23,000 square feet with rents between \$5.00 - \$8.00 /SF/Yr. This high vacancy offers opportunity to repurpose the center to reflect the change in the neighborhood's demographics.



*Current Capitol Square Façade*



*Improved Capitol Square Facade*

With the addition of more than six hundred residential units in the immediate area, a grocery store or fresh market is one targeted use for the property.

Another use considered for this location, that would not only energize and increase revenue for the owner, but also benefit the community is the addition of a brewery or distillery. RMA's experience indicates that breweries can prove to be a major attraction, and that multiple breweries in an area are a bonus. The following analysis was conducted to determine the feasibility of a brewery or distillery in this location.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### Pros

- Critical mass of breweries in Columbia- opportunity to capitalize on existing market and events
- Proximity to State Street and the Riverfront District
- Residents expressed desires for a micro-brewery or brewpub
- Vacancies in shopping center
- Ceiling heights and square footage of bays
- Ideal craft beer market
  - Above average median household income (\$43,665)
  - High percentage of population with a bachelor's degree (20.45%) and graduate or professional degree (11.45%)
- Breweries are an allowed use under zoning code (see below)
- Local, affordable water supply
- New Brookland and Flow developments bring additional customers and buying power
- Easy access and plenty of available parking
- Visibility from Jarvis Klapman and Sunset Blvd

### Cons

- Proximity of food processing plant and its related traffic and odor
- Shopping center is blighted, large investment likely needed to make improvements
- The proliferation of breweries in Columbia (over 20 breweries and tap rooms) can also be a con in the sense that it will be tough to get USC students and Columbia residents to cross the bridge into West Columbia with so many options closer to home.

**Zoning Code:** The use MicroBrewery is classified as Artisan Manufacturing which is permitted within the district with the following conditions:

705.1.35 Artisan Manufacturing with the following conditions: (1) Must be attached to a retail component selling the goods produced on site; (2) Outdoor storage is permitted only in the C-1 (Intensive Commercial) and C-2 (General Commercial) district. Any activity storing materials outdoors shall construct an opaque fence at least six (6) feet in height or two (2) feet higher than the stored material, not to exceed 8 feet. Outdoor storage is prohibited in the Gateway Overlay District (3) Where the site abuts a residential district, service door openings or loading docks oriented toward the residential zone district residential use shall be screened with a 100% opaque screening comprised either of vegetation, a privacy fence or combination, at least 6 feet high. (4) Micro-distilleries must be at least 300 feet from any lot that contains a school, a place of worship or a playground.

Microbrewery- Any establishment where malt liquors are manufactured and packaged on-premises or off-premises, manufacturing no more than 30,000 barrels of malt liquor on its licensed premises each calendar year. One-barrel equals 31 gallons.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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*Example of Microbrewery. Funky Buddha Brewery, Oakland Park, FL*



*Example of Microbrewery. Wicked Weed Brewing, Asheville, NC*



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## Recommendations and Strategies

### 1. Enhance Capitol Square Building and Street Façade.

Encourage redevelopment of Sunset Boulevard in the event of relocation of the chicken plant. Utilize a public-private partnership to incentivize redevelopment such as a percentage rebate of increased municipal tax revenues based on development for an agreed upon period of years or consider a rebate of impact fees based on agreement.

Implement additional funding programs for retrofit of the exterior façade of the shopping center and beautification of the grounds.

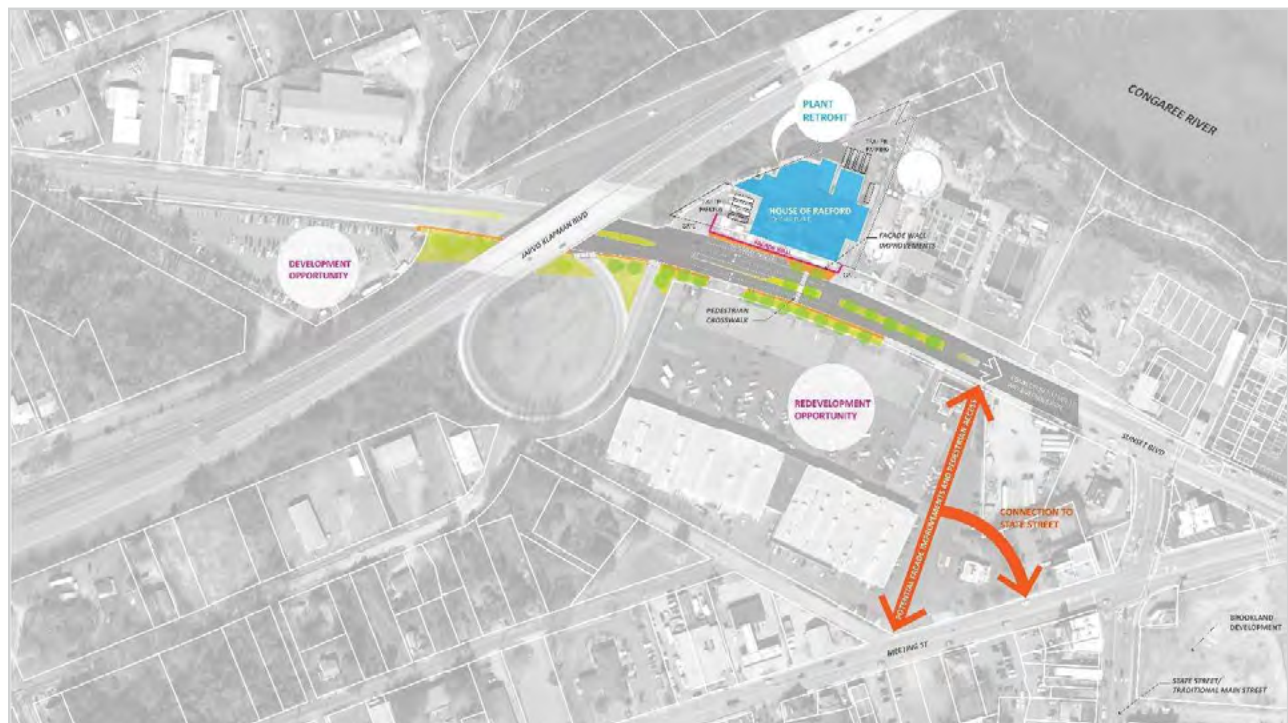
### 2. Improve connectivity between Capitol Square, the Riverwalk, Meeting, Center and State Streets.

Construct pedestrian walkways between the shopping center, Meeting, Center and State Streets. Make public improvements to the street systems to accomplish this objective.

### 3. Improve the public perception of the area's safety.

Enhance public and private lighting in the area, especially on pedestrian pathways, underpasses and parking areas.

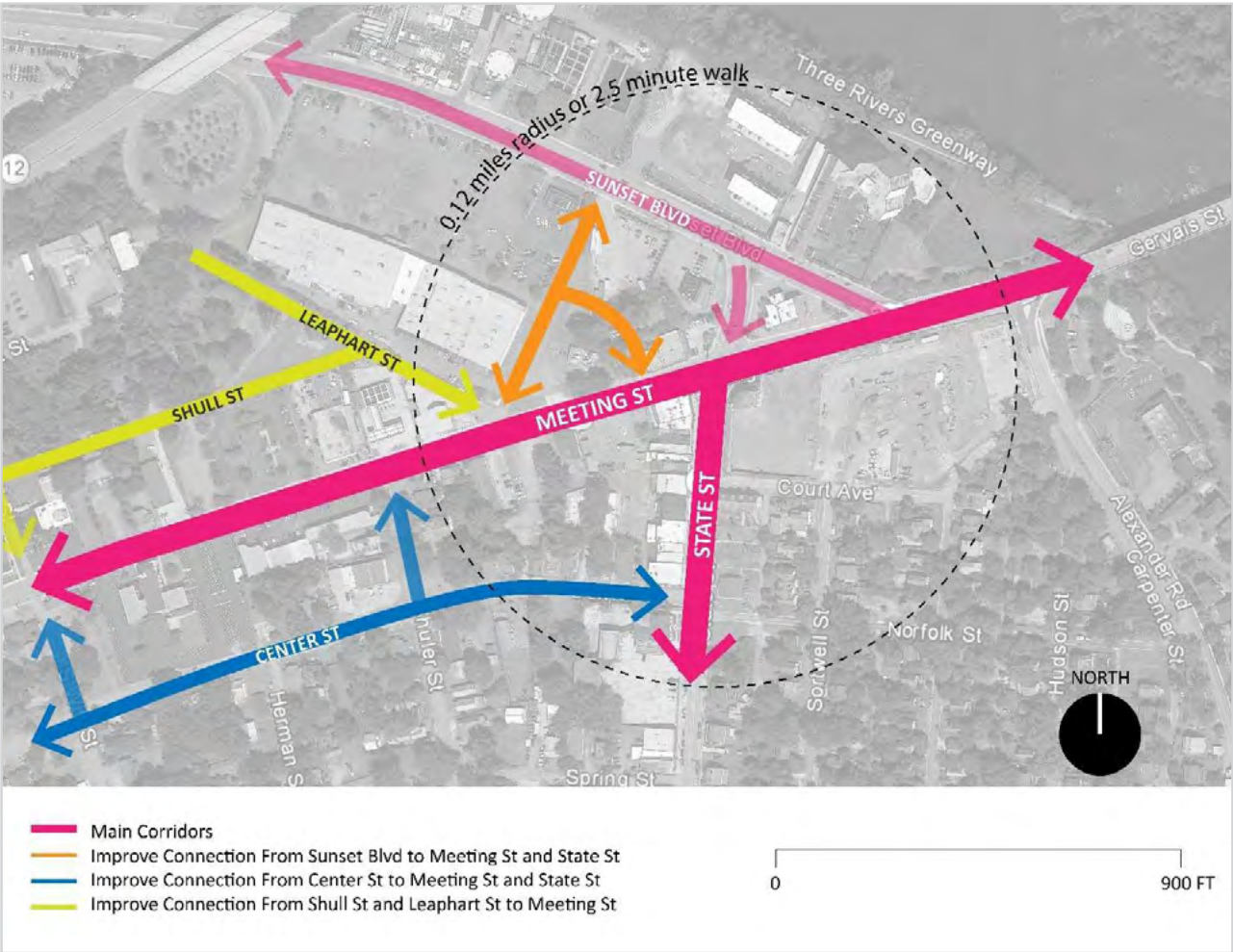
### 4. Consider instituting an open container ordinance in this area.



*Possible Roadway and Connectivity Enhancements Diagram*



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS



Capitol Square Potential Redevelopment



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

### RIVERFRONT DISTRICT OPPORTUNITY SITE

#### House of Raeford

410 Sunset Blvd, West Columbia



*Illustration of Successful Redevelopment*

#### Situation

House of Raeford is one of the City's oldest businesses and employs 800 people in West Columbia. This business is very successful; however, local real estate experts and investment bankers consider its location as a barrier for new investment in this area. RMA's opinion regarding this property is that relocation and/or mitigation efforts are necessary in order to facilitate redevelopment of the West Columbia Riverfront District.

The exterior of the building is drab and reminiscent of the old factories that were so prevalent along waterfronts, because of their water requirements. Delivery trucks stack up on Sunset Boulevard, and traffic congestion is a problem. A new pedestrian crosswalk has alleviated some of the safety issues for employees who park across from the plant. However, the visual appearance of the building and the pronounced odors continue to be a concern of residents, business owners, and potential investors.

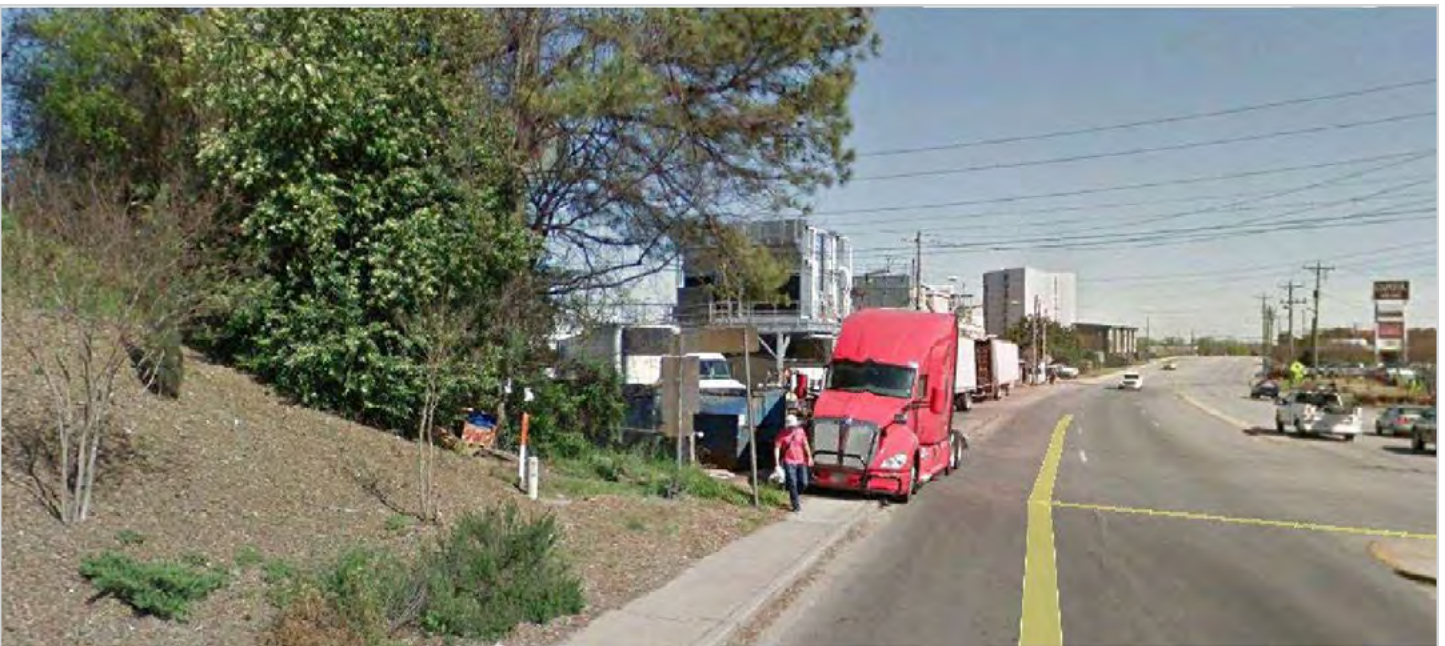


## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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*House of Raeford- Existing Conditions – Looking north on Sunset Blvd. Visible open dumpsters from the street and truck parked on sidewalk obstructing pedestrian circulation*



*House of Raeford- Existing Conditions - Looking south on Sunset Blvd*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### **OPTION 1: PLANT REMAINS IN CURRENT LOCATION**

#### **Recommendations and Strategies**

These strategies are to address aesthetics and safety concerns at the existing plant. An alternative, and preferred option follows.

1. Improve Safety, Circulation and Streetscape.

Improve pedestrian safety with signage and crossing markings.  
Improve pedestrian connections to and from parking locations with wider sidewalks.  
Enhance streetscape with street trees and vegetation.  
Mitigate chicken plant aesthetics and odor with landscape.  
Improve trucks accessibility with designated parking zones.

2. Improve Odor and Waste Management.

Improve techniques to eliminate odor with biofilters and greenery.  
Improve waste management system with closed compact dumpsters connected to biofilter. Request plant ownership to provide an engineer led analysis to mitigate odor and improve waste procedures.  
Use code enforcement to encourage the ownership to seek and provide solutions to the odor problem.

3. Enhance House of Raeford Street Façade.

Retrofit plant's image in a dramatic fashion, such as trompe l'oeil painting that provides imagery and optical illusion to hide ugly facades.  
Construct a street façade wall to screen the plant with public art.  
Improve loading and unloading logistics within the plant.  
Provide fence and gate to screen truck and trailer parking.  
Provide a continuous vertical element along sidewalk to improve public realm.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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*House of Raeford Sunset Blvd Facade Current Conditions*



*House of Raeford Sunset Blvd Facade Improvements*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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*House of Raeford Sunset Blvd Facade Current Conditions. Looking from Capitol Square*



*House of Raeford Sunset Blvd Facade Improvements. Looking from Capitol Square*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*Current Sunset Blvd Streetscape at House of Raeford*



*Proposed Sunset Blvd Streetscape Improvements at House of Raeford*







## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Below are conceptual renderings to illustrate potential uses and provide a visual tool for the audience.

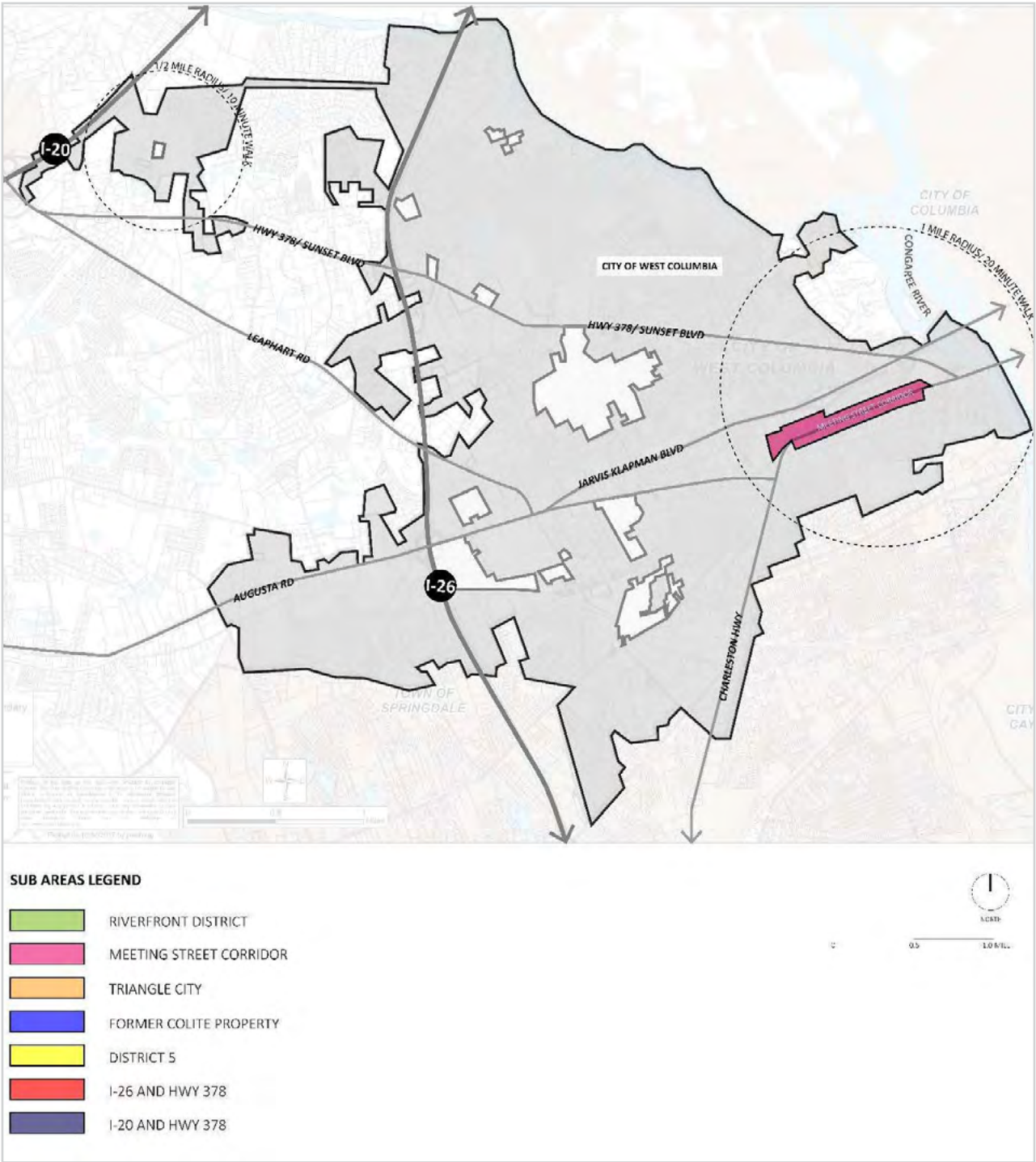


*Sunset Avenue Road Improvements*



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## MEETING STREET CORRIDOR









## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

As the Riverfront area expands, it is natural for retailers to cluster in an area, especially one that offers amenities and features for doing business, without the Columbia rental rates. The eclectic offerings along the Meeting Street Corridor are a treasure of delight for the jaded consumer, tired of the mall chain retailers, and cookie-cutter restaurants that dominate the landscape of so many of our cities today. The Gateway Redevelopment Plan notes that planned pedestrian scale lighting improvements and that sidewalk/pedestrian safety is a critically needed item. The suggestions by the GOLD plan about outdoor seating and an interactive fountain will help with real/perceived safety, and by extending those improvements, the Corridor stands a great chance to develop into a mecca for specialty retail. The opportunity to brand this corridor and expand the success of State Street restaurants and businesses, is very realistic, and one that will provide significant returns in a relatively short period of time.

A unique cluster of businesses including interior designers, home improvement providers, specialty retailers, salons, music, book stores, a boot store, a flag supply store and antique/thrift stores are located along this corridor. The businesses have initiated a banner program to promote business along this busy corridor.

**Several business clusters have been identified within the City including:**

- Music/Audio-Visual/Broadcast
- Architecture/Interior Design/Antiques
- Arts/Arts Education
- Museum/Gallery
- Event Planning/Production

Target new businesses as redevelopment builds momentum by leveraging these unique firms, their draw, customer base and appeal to the market.

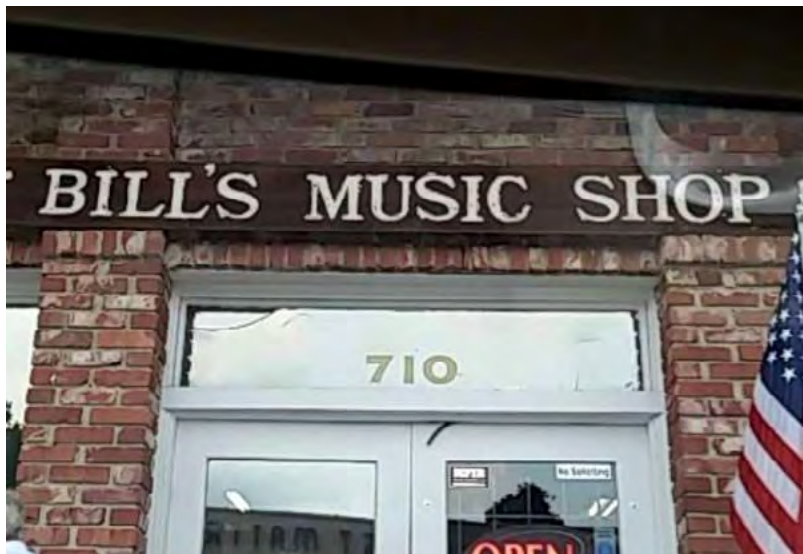
**The current banner program boundaries, which is also administered by the business association, are shown here:**





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Some of the unique businesses located within the Meeting Street Corridor and Triangle City:



FRAME OF MIND

OPTICAL GALLERY AND PURVEYOR OF FINE THINGS



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

### THE OBJECTIVE IS TO CREATE VIABLE COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS WITHIN WEST COLUMBIA

#### Recommendations and Strategies

##### 1. Real Estate Acquisition and Assemblage

Work with the private sector to encourage and facilitate real estate acquisition, assemblage, and development along the Meeting Street Corridor. Using the City's powers of acquisition, work to tenant and activate empty storefronts.

##### 2. Corridor Access and Aesthetics

Work with South Carolina Department of Transportation and Lexington County to create strategies for successful transit, access and aesthetics for all corridors, with the reduction of lanes on Meeting Street a top priority.

Create and implement a streetscape improvement plan that includes wider sidewalks, on street parking where appropriate, seating, and shade trees coordinated with enhanced and well-placed lighting. Use road art, also referred to as road tattoos, to visually connect the areas.

Install wayfinding signage that connects the Riverwalk, Meeting Street and Triangle City.

Use blade signs for businesses to increase visibility.

##### 3. Create cross promotional campaigns and partnerships with organizations for events, especially as the Corridor improves its walkability

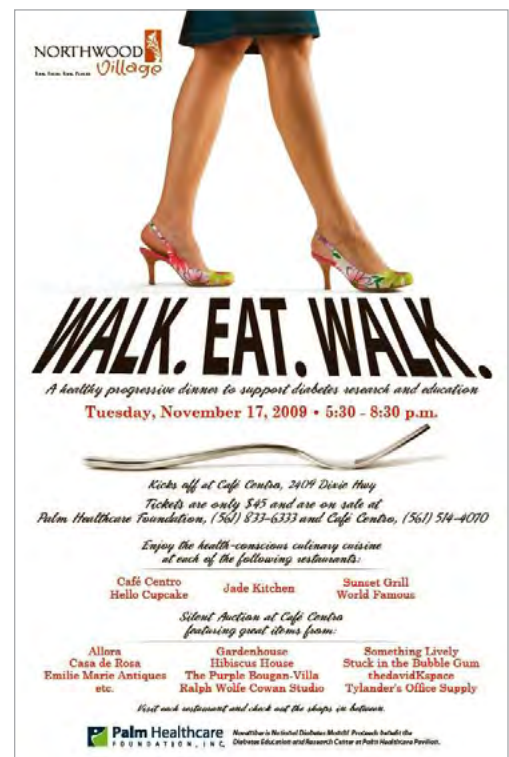
##### 4. Other Commercial Corridor Initiatives

Create and implement a Real Places, Real Faces campaign as described later in this Plan that will extend the banner program in cooperation with the business communities including Meeting Street and Triangle City.

Develop and implement projects (such as murals and urban acupuncture) that beautify and/or activate this area.

Create and implement a walking map of the area that connects Riverwalk, Meeting Street, State Street, Center Street and Triangle City.

Expand the City's façade grand improvement program to improve storefronts.





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*Example of Improved Sidewalk-Building Relationship. Downtown Greenville Main Street. Greenville, SC*



*Meeting Street current conditions*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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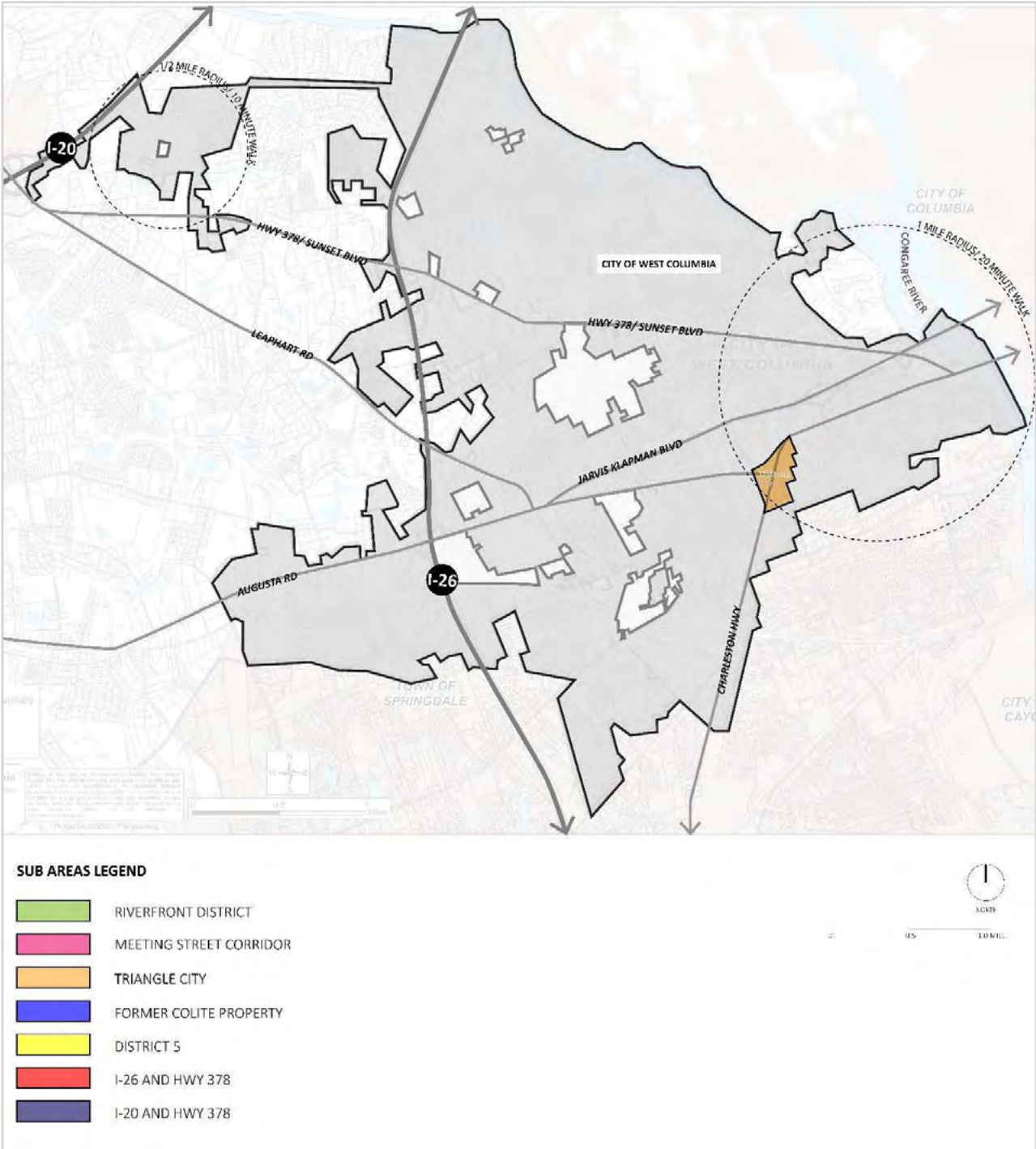


*Example Streetscape Improvements. Muskogee Ave Tahlequah, Oklahoma*



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## TRIANGLE CITY





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



### *Triangle City, West Columbia*

The convergence of 12th Street, Meeting Street, and Charleston Highway creates a series of triangles in West Columbia known as the Triangle City district. While this is a high activity area within the City, the Triangle City district lacks an identity. The area features an unorthodox mix of uses including automotive, restaurants, niche retail, and office. Zesto's restaurant has been a staple in West Columbia since 1949, drawing many visitors to Triangle City.

Efforts have been made to improve aesthetics in Triangle City by planting trees along 12th Street and adding a gateway feature at the northern tip of the district, as well as planters with flowers. Despite these efforts, the appearance of Triangle City is still in need of improvement. The flower pots need repainting, buildings and streetscapes are in disrepair, and the presence of raw concrete and low-hanging light/utility poles are all barriers to creating a vibrant shopping/dining environment in Triangle City.

To facilitate redevelopment investment, repair broken sidewalks, and consider adding features like street benches, planters, bike racks, trees with a healthy canopy, and tree boxes.

Currently, the City has sufficient water distribution and collection infrastructure in the Triangle City area. In addition, the City has developed a Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) Grant Program to assist existing Food Service Industries who work with this type of material and need to upgrade their existing apparatus in order to prevent FOG from entering the City's sewer system per EPA Standards.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*Zesto of West Columbia. Vintage eatery*



*Triangle City Gateway Feature- Augusta Road Looking South. Via Google Earth*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

### Chain Link Fence Disguise

Throughout the City, there are areas where unsightly junk and discarded furniture, cars, etc. are stored. Using art in an inexpensive, but statement making approach provides screening for these eyesores and lively discussion.

***Below are some examples of inexpensive treatments to address blighted areas:***





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*Street Painting*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### Recommendations and Strategies

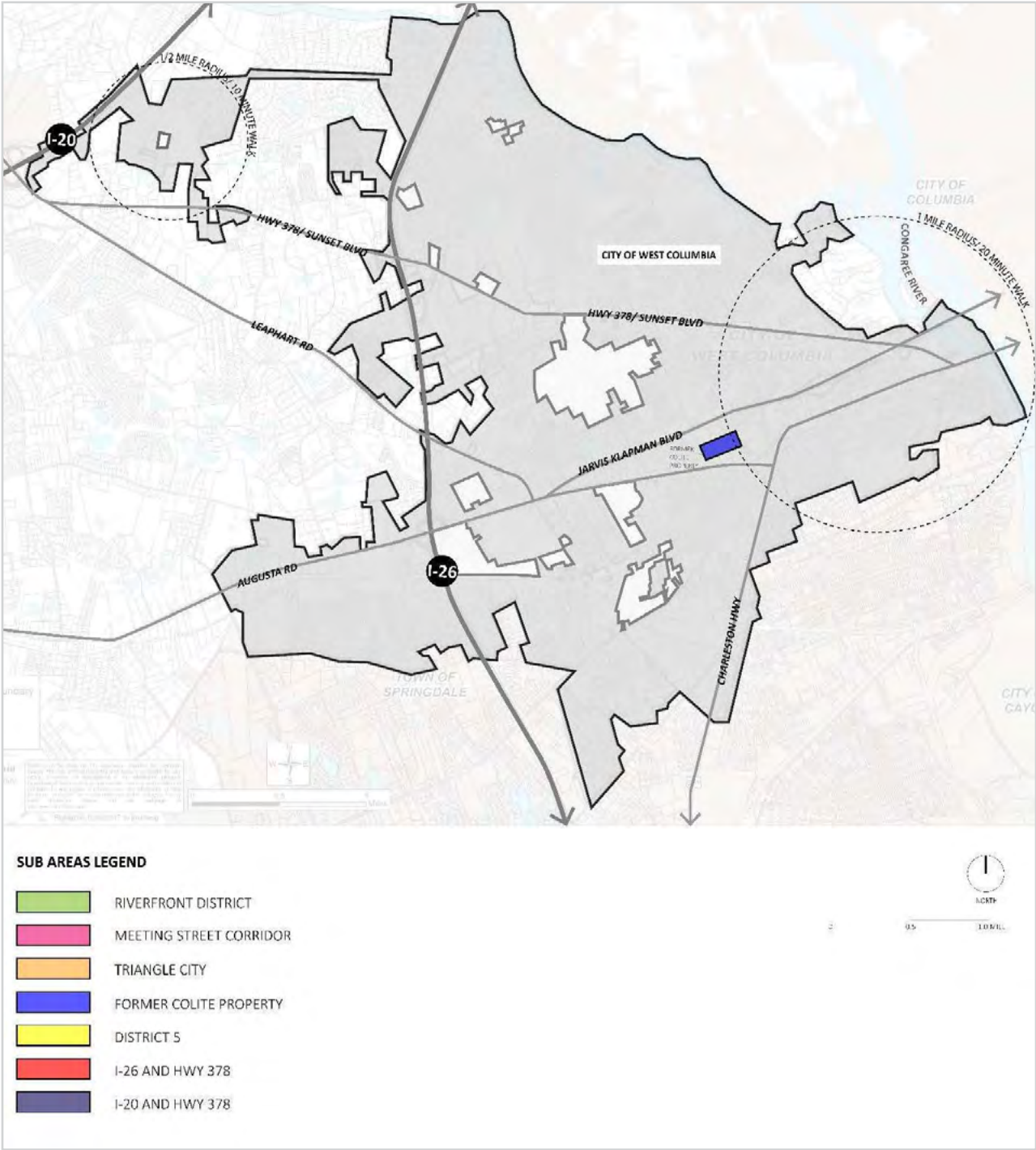
1. Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district as a funding tool to incentivize redevelopment. The biggest issue in this area is the need for a major street re-design and possibly a directional change in traffic.
2. Create and implement a Neighborhood Branding Campaign.
3. Install wayfinding signage that connects the Riverwalk, Meeting Street and Triangle City. Use blade signs to increase visibility.
4. Commission an extended banner program in cooperation with the business community that includes Meeting Street Corridor and Triangle City businesses.
5. Create and implement a streetscape improvement plan that includes wider sidewalks, on street parking where appropriate, seating, public art, flowers and shade trees coordinated with enhanced and well-placed lighting.
6. Repaint existing planters and add hanging baskets to improve appearances. Use road tattoos to visually connect the areas.
7. Create and implement a Merchant Assistance Program for business operations.
8. Create and implement a walking map of the area that connects Riverwalk, Meeting Street and Triangle City.
9. Capitalize on Zesto's, Compton's Kitchen, and True BBQ as major activity generators and consider the creation of a "food district" as a brand identifier for Triangle City.
10. Continue to support and assist the West Columbia Beautification Foundation in their efforts.
11. Create and implement a media campaign to inform business and property owners of grants and opportunities for property improvements, including the FOG Program and façade improvement grants.
12. Expand the City's façade grant improvement program to improve storefronts.



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## FORMER COLITE PROPERTY

228 N Parson St.





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

### Recommendations and Strategies

This catalyst/opportunity site is approximately ten-to-twelve acres (depending on assemblage) and was a former sign manufacturing company. There are several owners of the parcels, however, there has been an attempt to assemble the parcels. Due to its infill location, the property is suitable for a mixed- use, multi-family project with limited service retail and entertainment/conference facilities that will serve as a focal gathering place for the community. Design standards as part of a development agreement can be created to incorporate a public square, plaza, park/greenspace, and accessible sidewalks to provide much needed amenities in this area of West Columbia. West Columbia's goals to incorporate placemaking initiatives into their economic growth recommendations and strategies will greatly benefit a project in this location.



### Situation

The site is currently serviced by the City's utilities and is near City Hall. It is also located in an area that provides other municipal services within walking distance, including the library. The City has plans to rehabilitate portions of the wastewater collection system at, and adjacent to, the Colite property. Water system improvements in that area will include increasing the main size and the installation of new mains to provide better circulation throughout the area. The property is zoned Light Manufacturing.

The market analysis indicates this property possesses all the necessary components for redevelopment, including the financial feasibility given the current market, regulatory reality, and brand connection.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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There are several positive indications in today's market for multifamily, such as demographic shifts— delayed childbirth and marriage—and changing preferences, such as greater comfort levels regarding renting over owning. There is also a renewed focus on living in or near active communities. These factors contribute to healthy demand growth, and with supply not keeping pace, the issue becomes the diminishing availability of affordable housing. As capital continues to invest in multifamily and there continues to be limited availability of those assets, a very healthy environment for investment exists today.



*Former Colite Industry Building*

However, for investment to occur, the perception of risk about investing in impoverished communities must be lowered. This risk is reduced when communities are safer, which reduces turnover in housing. **Most investors and analysts agree: “When people know their neighbors, it’s a safer neighborhood.”**

Today, the diversity of people and activation of spaces make for great communities. There is a shift toward “placemaking” in the multifamily arena by developers who recognize the need for a sense of community. As redevelopment occurs, it becomes more attractive for developers to invest in the area due to reduced risk and the real estate market conditions.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### Opportunity

The opportunity to offer diverse housing product that attracts the University of South Carolina student population, young professionals, and families is apparent. There is also opportunity to attract middle to upper income government professionals and university professors who have made the decision to downsize and are looking for multi-family amenities.

The addition of a cultural center or conference center to this area of West Columbia would be the catalyst for a strong community center. The activities of the arts and culture sector and local economic vitality are connected in many ways. Arts, culture, and creativity can: improve a community's competitive edge; create a foundation for defining a sense of place; attract new and visiting populations; integrate the visions of community and business leaders; and contribute to the development of a skilled workforce.

Properties in this area may be eligible for New Market Tax Credits, and Tax Increment Financing. These funding mechanisms are discussed in detail in the Funding Section of this Plan. Other funding incentives to encourage development here may include payments in lieu of taxes, which will require state and county cooperation, outside of the City's domain and control.

### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district as a funding tool to incentivize redevelopment.
2. Provide a streetscape improvement plan that includes wider sidewalks, on street parking where appropriate, benches and shade trees in this area of the City.
3. Develop and implement a plan to enhance aesthetics in this area.
4. Consider a public-private partnership for this property to ensure that community needs are addressed, as well as providing for greenspace and recreation areas, and cultural offerings.
5. Integrate advanced Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) solutions to enhance real and perceived safety along key pathways and connections. This is a multidisciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design. CPTED strategies rely upon the ability to influence offender decisions that precede criminal acts.
6. Encourage the private sector to create Affordable, Workforce, Market Rate, Luxury, and Mixed-Income Housing within the City.
7. Facilitate use of public funds to private sector development to create Workforce and Affordable Housing.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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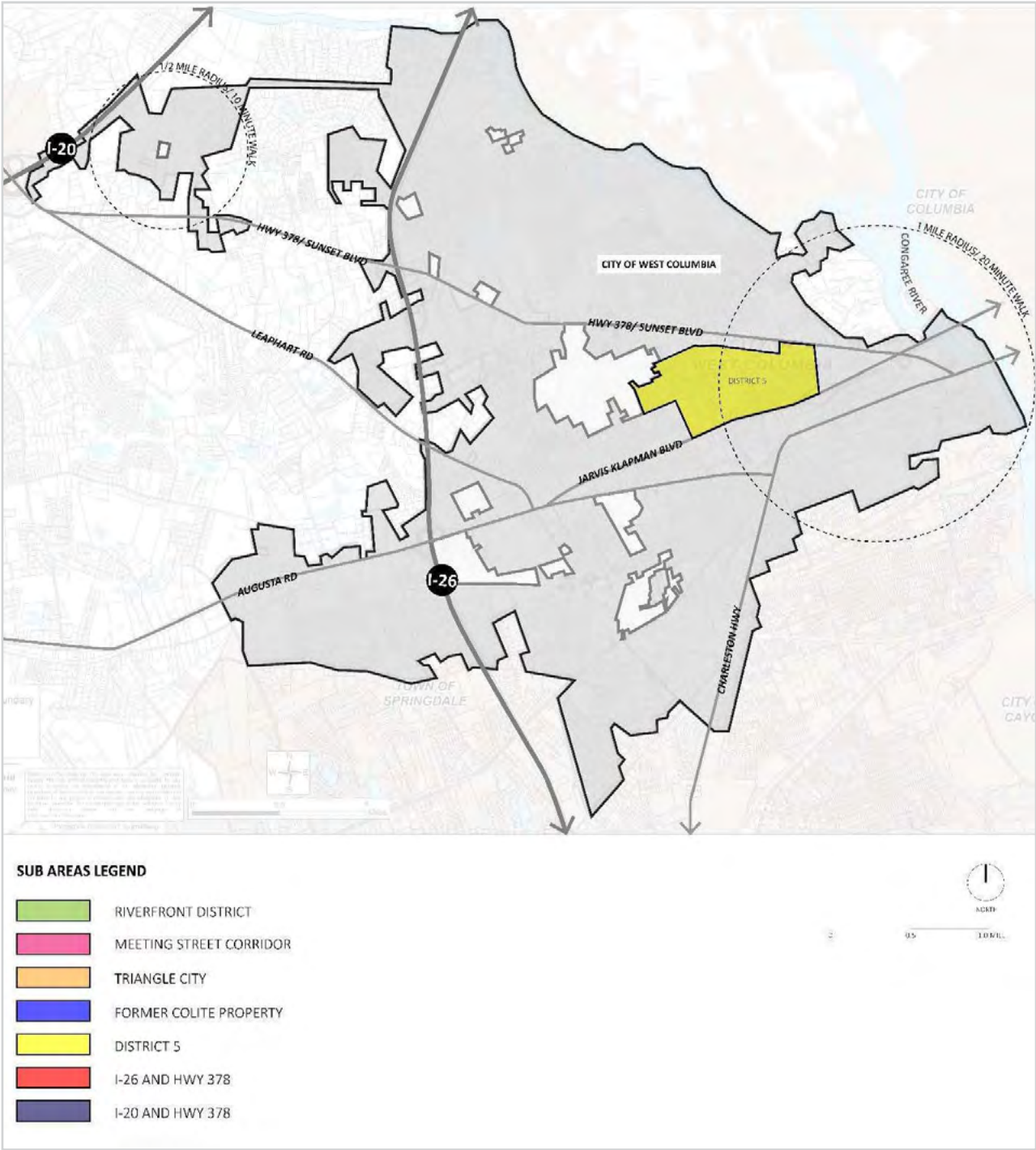
*Example of Mixed-Use Development Market Area. Ponce City Market Atlanta, GA. Photo: Amanda Seevers*



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## DISTRICT 5

Brookland Lakeview Empowerment Center





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*District 5 Map*

### Situation

The property is approximately 9.2 acres and is a former school in an older section of West Columbia. The property is zoned R-2, medium-density residential, the district is intended as a medium-density residential area characterized by single-family detached residences and two-family attached residences on the same lot. Operations proposed at this site include a technical training institute, academic and athletic programs for youth, and an expanded senior citizen program.

Commercial district revitalization programs are promising in terms of broader neighborhood impacts, because they focus more directly on quality of life issues such as crime, health and wellness, education and opportunities.

Retail development has large-scale impacts on community economic health, mainly through more indirect outcomes including changes in internal and external perceptions of the neighborhood and ultimately changes in neighborhood residential composition. Because neighborhood level retail growth is closely associated with middle income growth, retail development may be a key component to building the kind of stable mixed-income communities that are most likely to positively impact existing low-income residents. In other words, mixed use projects that raise the standard of living with improved housing options, also provide neighborhood stability and an increase in service providers. Retail strips, commercial corridors and neighborhood shopping centers serve as a kind of "front door" to any community. If the strip is run down and partially abandoned it sends a negative signal about the quality of the whole neighborhood. If, on the other hand, the neighborhood commercial district is improving, people are likely to see this as a strong sign that the whole neighborhood is improving.

The Revitalization Plan includes discussion about the benefits of new service-related businesses in this area in great detail, please refer to that document for extensive discussion regarding this subject.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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### Opportunity

Brookland Lakeview Empowerment Center has a new Executive Director with experience in redevelopment, community programming, and outreach initiatives. The new director will manage all the activities in the facility. Interviews with stakeholders indicate that there is a focus on health and wellness, job opportunities, and safety and security, as well as the restoration of value and integrity to the neighborhood. Some residents expressed concerns about the safety challenges including gang related incidents, shootings, and drugs. With housing opportunities limited in the area surrounding Lakeview, there exists a need for affordable housing in this well-located community. The historic name recognition provides additional branding recognition for the project. Target projects would include: vocational and job training facilities, commercial development, business attraction, and mixed-use buildings, market rate housing, workforce housing, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

Lakeview is experiencing growth from a road infrastructure and traffic count perspective. The area is also home to a significant mega-church which invests in the community, along with a local church that contributes job training, education requirements and certifications, and other social assistance to the community.

The City plans to rehabilitate select portions of the collection system in this area. Plans to upsize or add new water mains in this area to provide better circulation are in the works. The area has existing municipal infrastructure and is near the county-managed recreational park and fields. The City may also want to consider purchasing the property directly across from Brookland Lakeview on Bachelor Street which fronts Jarvis Klapman Boulevard. This parcel, if developed properly, would provide visual site lines and connectivity from Klapman Boulevard to Brookland Lakeview Center. Developing the property would also provide a link connecting the new city complex to new development in the Brookland Lakeview Center. ***Redevelopment of this property should be a priority.***

The area is one of the priority locations identified in the City of West Columbia Community Redevelopment and Revitalization Plan. Projects locating in the area would potentially be eligible for New Market Tax Credits, and Tax Increment Financing, which are discussed in the funding section of this Plan. For a comprehensive list of recommendations relative to this catalyst area of West Columbia, please refer to the West Columbia Revitalization Plan.

### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district as a funding tool to incentivize redevelopment, with residential development a targeted use.
2. Encourage the private sector to create Affordable, Workforce, Market Rate, Luxury, and Mixed-Income Housing within the City through Public -Private Partnerships.
3. Facilitate use of public funds to private sector development to create Workforce and Affordable Housing.
4. Create a cultural center that offers programs for music, and the performing arts, with outdoor events that activate spaces, especially in the evening.
5. Implement the Revitalization Plan recommendations in this area, including Neighborhood Pride and Ambassador campaigns.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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The picture below illustrates an incubator company. Notice the industrial lighting, and whiteboard for creative ideas.

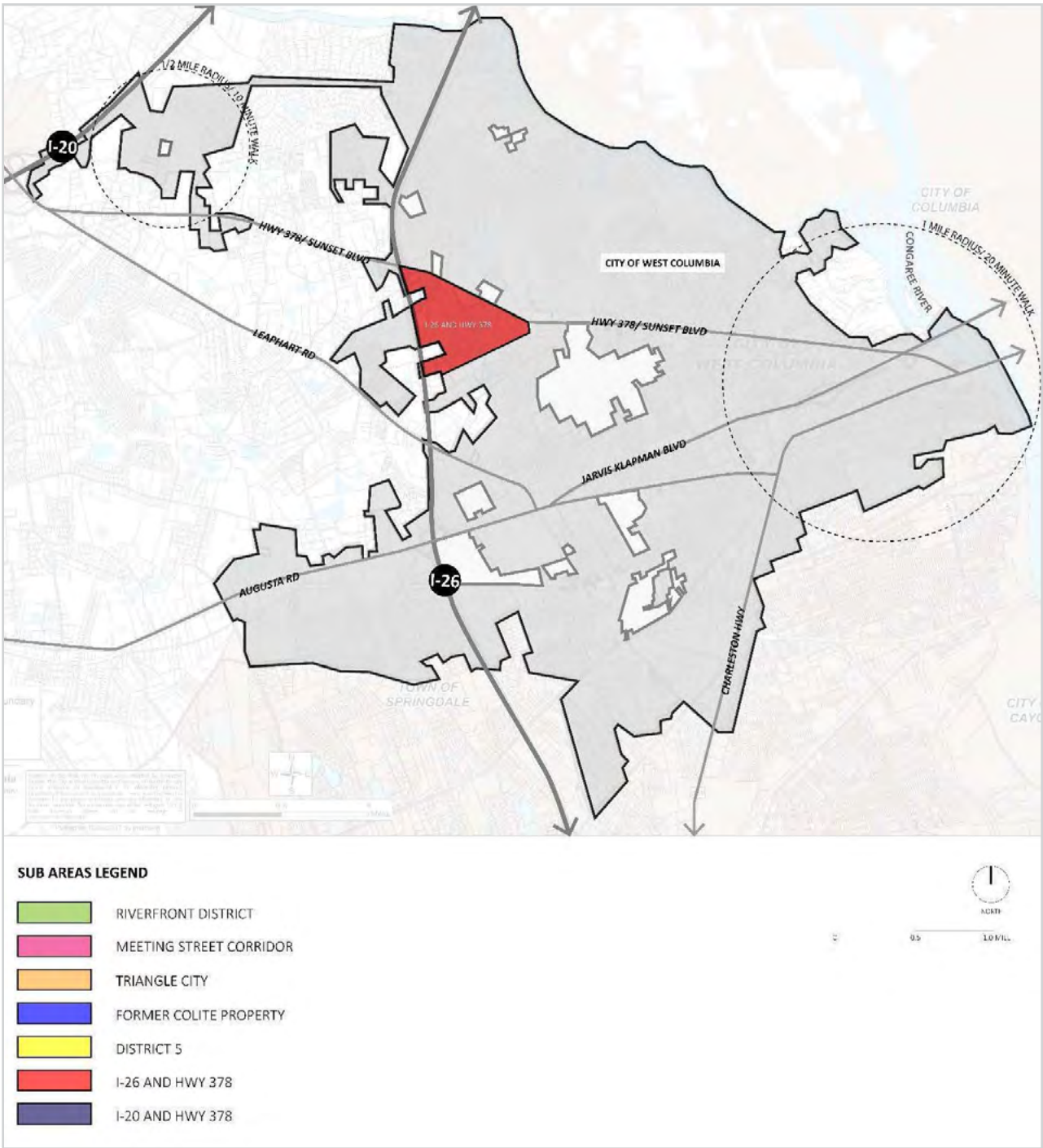


*Example of startup, incubator, accelerator through tax incentives. New Jersey. photo: njspotlight*



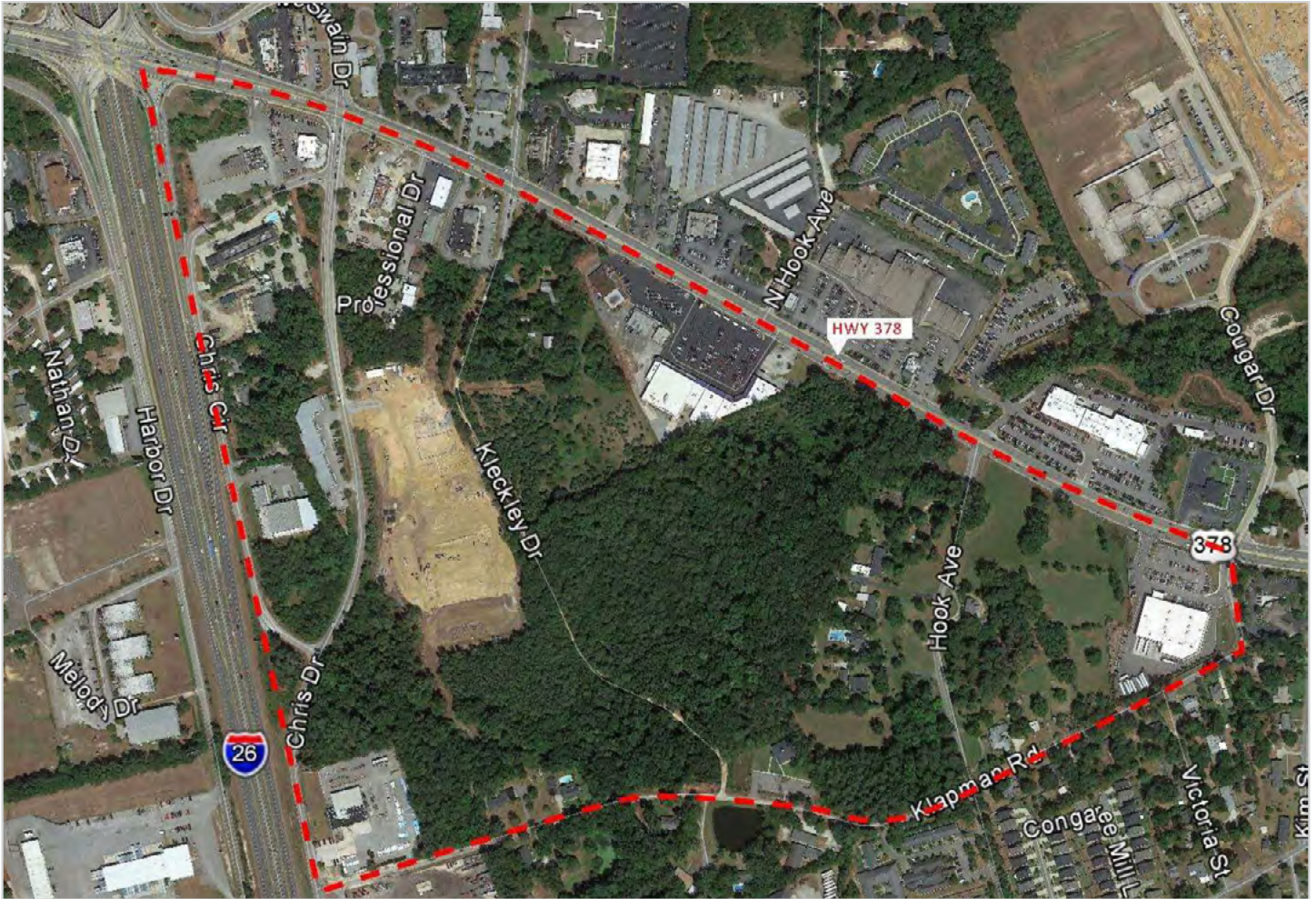
# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## I-26 AND SUNSET BOULEVARD AREA





## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



*I-26 and HWY 378, West Columbia*

### Situation

The I-26 and Sunset Boulevard area is surrounded by various residential communities, businesses, and is across the interstate from Lexington Medical Center. This area includes the high traffic thoroughfares of I-26 and Sunset Boulevard. Within the immediate area there are several large vacant parcels with direct access to major roadways.

### Opportunity

This area provides development opportunities with quick access to the region's transportation network, and residential, retail and office development opportunities that complement the area's expansion. The interchange of I-26 and Sunset Boulevard offers the City of West Columbia the ability to influence the development in this area, provide another means to promote tourism in the area, provide needed service providers such as restaurants and hotels, and instill awareness of the many attributes and attractions of West Columbia.

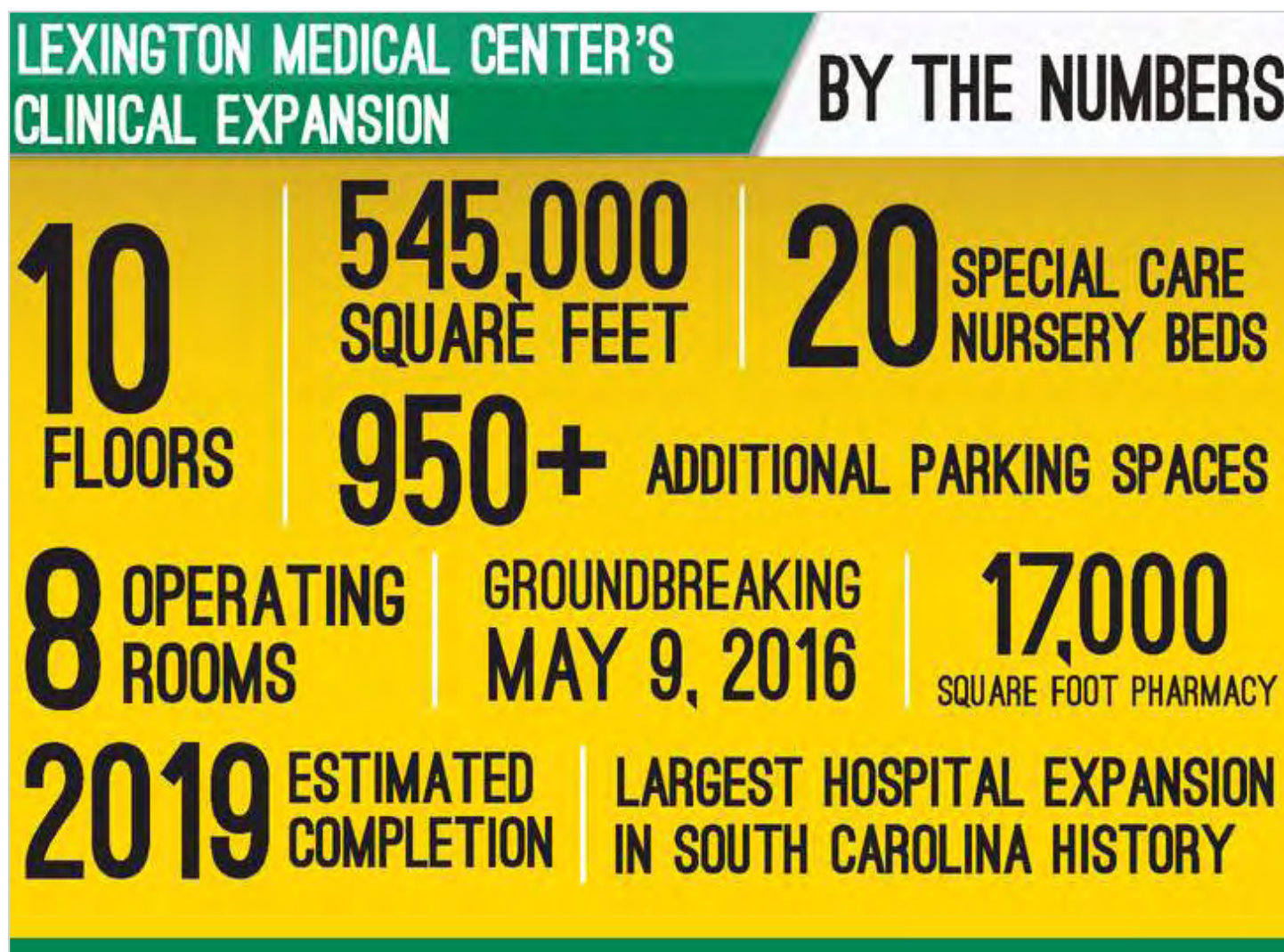
Attract industries to West Columbia that support the economy and provide employment opportunities by providing information about the county-owned business parks consisting of more than 500 acres of available fully serviced sites. These areas, most of which are outside the City limits, host an impressive list of companies including: Columbia Metropolitan Airport, United States Post Office Regional Distribution Center, UPS Ground & Air Hubs, Federal Express, Amazon, Nephron Pharmaceuticals, SCE&G Corporate Headquarters and others.

Although located outside West Columbia, new development in these areas will provide new jobs, offer opportunities, and provide an expanded residential base for the City.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Lexington Medical Center is located at this interchange, just outside the City limits. There are several hotel chains and quick service restaurants at this location as typically found around medical facilities and Interstates. The economic impact of the Medical Center and the proximity to Columbia Metropolitan Airport make this area prime for development. **The Center's website provides the following information:**



There is a large tract of land that is currently being developed as a charter school. Another large tract of land is available for development and a significant project with various mixed uses such as retail, multifamily, medical and office is feasible in this immediate area. The potential development site is less than a mile from Lexington Medical Center, has residential neighborhoods to the south, west, and north of Sunset Boulevard, and is in proximity to Northside Middle School. All these area assets could potentially support new development.

Through various research outlets and study of the I-26 and Sunset Boulevard area, our analysis concluded there is also an opportunity for another grocer in the area. The I-26 and Sunset Boulevard area has the traffic counts and surrounding residential density that could support additional grocers.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS



Identify businesses and industries expanding/relocating within the Midlands Area. The medical and education professions provide opportunities for new commerce and employment, so leverage Lexington Medical Center and the medical industry to attract new businesses.

### **Promote the assets of West Columbia and the area for business recruitment:**

- County-wide civilian labor force adding 3,500 workers per year on average;
- More than 500,000 in the labor force within one hour's drive time;
- Labor force growing in all age cohorts between 16 and 64 years old;
- Excellent labor-management relations climate;
- Relocation/Tenant Improvements Program.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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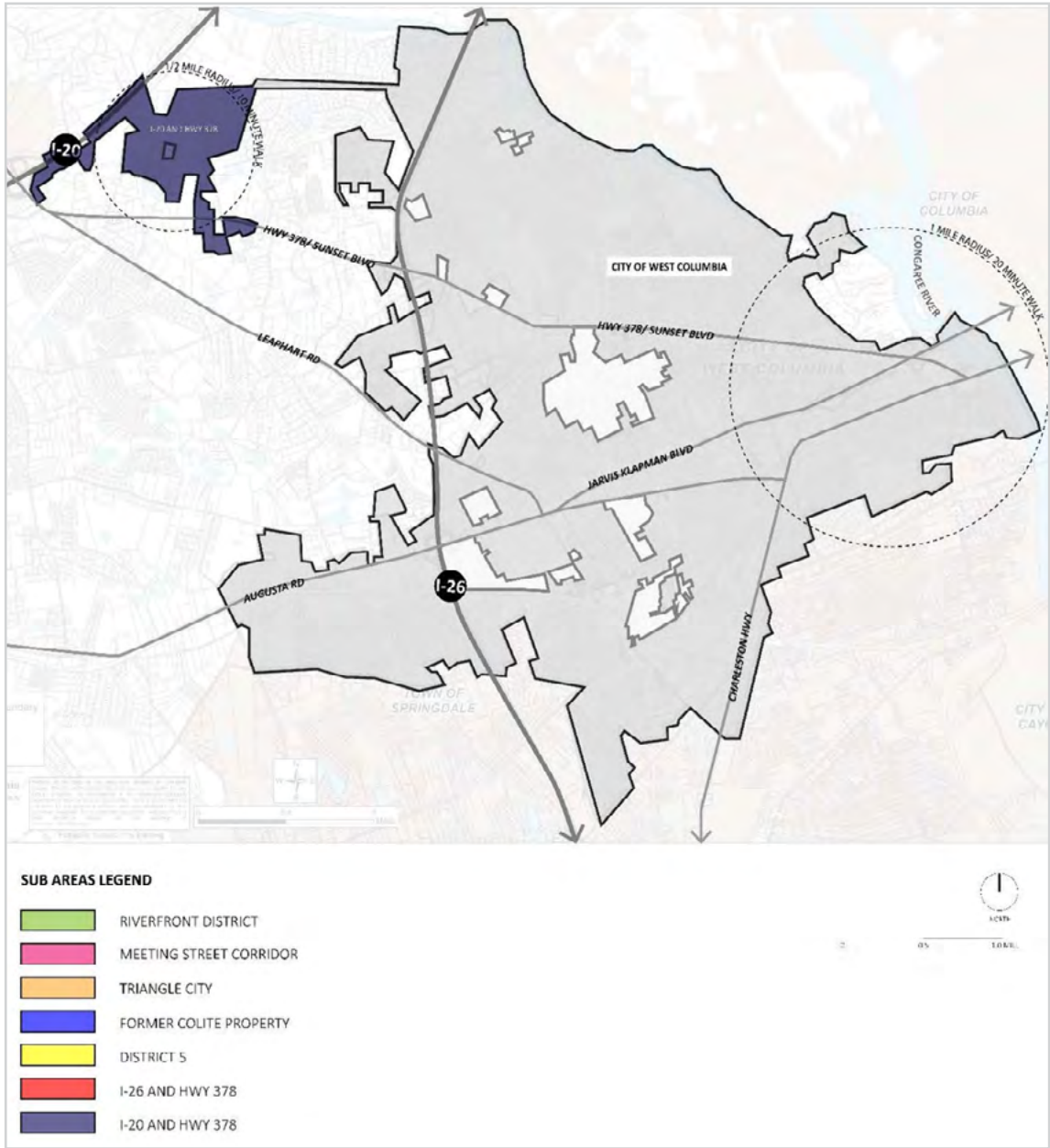
### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Provide incentives for development such as waiver of impact fees and tax abatement programs.
2. Consider a Public- Private Partnership for these properties in this area to ensure that community needs are addressed, as well as providing for greenspace, recreation areas, and cultural offerings.
3. Target technical and educational institutions to locate in this area and by doing so provide talent and training for Lexington Medical Center.
4. Target service business uses in this area to complement Lexington Medical Center and leverage the daytime employment numbers.
5. Strengthen access to, from and through West Columbia with improved road systems at this interchange.
6. Create equitable distribution of the public right-of-way for pedestrians, runners, bicyclist, drivers, and transit users.
7. Develop a series of traffic calming techniques to control vehicle speeds in the nearby neighborhoods.
8. Assure pedestrians and bicyclists with comfortable, accessible, convenient, and safe routes.
9. Provide for coordinated advocacy, and grant initiatives.



# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## SUNSET BOULEVARD/HIGHWAY 378 CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-26 AND I-20



*I-20 and HWY 378 Map*



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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Sunset Boulevard, aka Highway 378, is one of the most traveled roads in the City of West Columbia. However, this corridor offers the City limited opportunities unless more properties are annexed into the City.

Expansion of the City's boundaries will provide the utilities for new businesses and services in the area. The City has successfully annexed multiple properties in this area and is actively working on several additional annexations. If infrastructure upgrades are needed in areas such as this and infrastructure costs are subsidized in greenfield areas, the competition for private development investment can be an uneven playing field. It is critical to ensure that regional infrastructure investment decisions consider full and complete costs, including the long-term replacement costs that will someday be needed for new infrastructure. Infill development can increase costs because developers may have to repair or upgrade aging infrastructure that already exists, but in other circumstances where existing infrastructure is in good condition, infill can help reduce construction costs.

**Weak market demand for real estate, resulting in low prices and rents, is common. As a result, certain types of development are not financially feasible without public incentives or investments. Some common market challenges are:**

- **Market dilemma:** Sometimes, a private developer simply cannot generate adequate returns on its investment to justify the risks and challenges. As a result, the local government must intervene with an investment or incentive to make the project attractive. Unless an incentive is available, the market for infill could struggle to reach a "tipping point" where incentives are no longer needed. Most distressed communities cannot afford to make the needed investments, but nor can they wait for sufficient market demand.
- **Risk gap:** Developers that are willing to take on the additional risk and invest in an infill project could find it difficult to secure financing. Lending institutions are risk averse and might shun infill projects because they are perceived as higher risk than similar projects in more affluent areas. Once again, the local government might find that it needs to provide incentives to an infill project or invest directly in the project to close the financing gap between what the lender is willing to provide and other private investment.

A regional market can absorb only so much growth. The growth might happen in greenfield areas, infill areas, or most likely, some combination of the two. Development in greenfield locations can absorb market demand that could have gone to infill areas, such as downtowns or established neighborhoods. Therefore, market demand for infill development can be influenced by a region's balance of greenfield and infill development.

- **Infrastructure condition:** Developers are wary of building in areas where they might need to make expensive infrastructure improvements. As the cost of replacing infrastructure increases building costs, developers might not be able to get high enough rents or sale prices to recoup their investment.

Common public-sector responses to these challenges include funding infrastructure improvements, acquiring and selling property for redevelopment, and offering financial incentives that require significant public funds. However, these strategies may not be achievable because the public sector cannot afford to make these major investments. Funding resources that could remedy the market and infrastructure challenges are discussed in the funding section of this Plan. For example, the federal and state governments have funding programs that can help close the gap between the cost to build and feasible rents and sale prices. These programs are often complex, and funding typically goes to experienced applicants.

These challenges affect both supply and demand for development. On the supply side, distressed communities need developers that are willing and able to produce homes, shops, and office space in infill locations. Enticing these developers might require the City to help fill near-term financing gaps, assemble parcels, clean up a contaminated site, improve nearby amenities such as parks and streetscapes, or otherwise make infill more attractive. On the demand side, communities need people and businesses that want to rent or buy space. Demand is affected by many factors, but local demographics, the economy, income levels, and public perception play important roles.



## OPPORTUNITY AREAS

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Provide funding for relocation of new “targeted use” businesses, such as medical supplies, technical training and pharmaceutical development, including incentives for tenant relocation, acquisition, rehabilitation or tenant improvements (buildout) to existing properties.

The City and other committed partners can help increase demand in several ways, such as improving public perception, helping to recruit anchor businesses, and creating location-based incentives for prospective investors and buyers. The City will need to consider all these factors as they craft approaches to increase both the supply of and demand for development.

### **Recommendations and Strategies:**

1. Continue to focus on connecting annexed areas into the City.
2. Provide infrastructure improvements, sewer lines, and utility connections as needed. Currently, the water main lines are not sufficient to support commercial development in certain areas of this part of West Columbia.
3. Target retailers such as grocery stores to provide convenient shopping for residents.
4. Target anchor institutions and industries that are compatible with West Columbia including distribution centers, medical, research, and education facilities.
5. Mobile home parks provide opportunities if they can be acquired and redeveloped. Continue to maintain dialogue with property owners to seek solutions and assist property assemblages for redevelopment.
6. Acquire properties that have come off the tax rolls, either through foreclosure, or abandonment. These properties can be assembled and offered to developers through a request for proposals process.
7. Improve blighted areas with low cost solutions that add interest to the neighborhoods and provide temporary relief from unsightly properties. Fence art, trump l’oeil, street tattoos, and cycle markings are all low-cost solutions to these issues.



# CONNECTIVITY

***"The street is the river of life." --William Whyte***

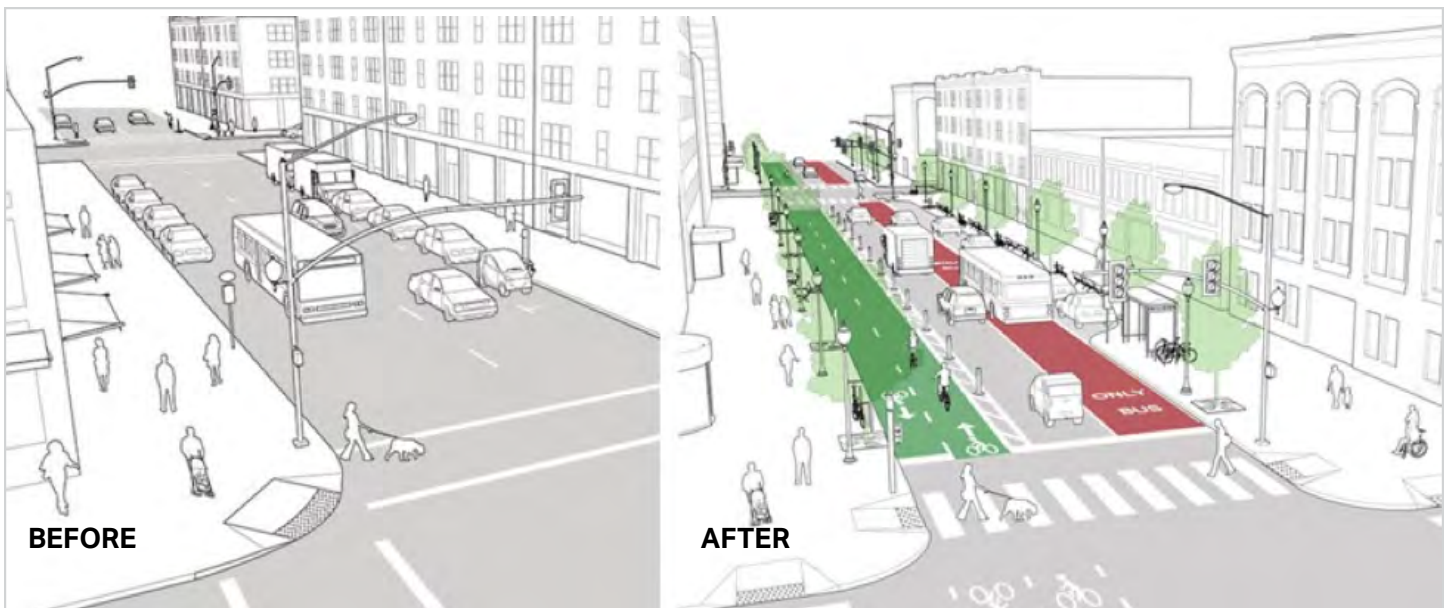
As residential development in both urban and suburban locales evolves, one thing is clear and that is the desire and demand for a more pedestrian-focused, community-oriented lifestyle.

Pedestrian and cycling friendly cities are the Focus of the 21st Century. Effective, efficient, and safe walkability and cyclability improves the health of the community, enhances transportation options, decreases crime, and increases economic activity. Additionally, walkable/cyclable communities tend to have more social activity.

## **Complete Streets are Streets for Everyone**

They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. Many cities today are adopting a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

This smart planning includes tree canopies and crosswalks that are well defined, lighting that not only provides brighter areas, but is also visually attractive.



*Complete Streets conceptual design guide (Source: NACTO Design Guides)*



## CONNECTIVITY

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### **Pedestrian and Cycling Friendly Communities**

In pedestrian and cycling friendly communities, residents are likely to walk to places such as local businesses, schools, places of worship, public parks and other establishments necessary for daily life. While walking or biking about the community, residents can interact with their surroundings more regularly and thus feel more connected to and responsible for their physical community which will increase the success of redevelopment and revitalization initiatives. Furthermore, by regularly walking/biking in their communities, residents will also interact more frequently with their neighbors creating a richer community network which can increase individual peace of mind, community trust, civic engagement, and may decrease crime rates.

West Columbia is currently making efforts to enhance walkability and cyclability for residents, however, in its current state, West Columbia's walkability is diminished by large surface parking lots, poor sidewalk conditions, interrupted connectivity and inconsistent lighting throughout the City which make walking and cycling in West Columbia difficult. The proposed West Metro Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan is a great step in the right direction. The plan includes an existing conditions analysis as well as recommendations and strategies to increase walkability and cyclability for West Columbia, Cayce, and Springdale. Desired outcomes of the West Metro Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan include: A 43-mile, low-stress network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities exists; Amenities, destinations, and neighborhoods are accessible through multiple modes of transportation; All ages, abilities, genders, and income levels are comfortable walking and biking throughout the area; Bicycle ridership will increase annually; Residents are regularly engaged about walking and biking in the West Metro area through programming and events; Future development that embraces a walking and biking culture; Active transportation planning efforts are led by an advisory committee made up of stakeholders from all three communities; School-age children can safely walk and bike to schools within the West Metro area; and transit can be accessed safely and conveniently by walking or biking.

### **Activity Nodes in West Columbia**

More people today are gravitating to urban infill areas because they have a very strong need and desire to feel connected and part of a community. The circles in the map following represent a 0.25-mile radius or 5-minute walk, considered the distance the average American will walk rather than drive, from each activity node. Improving walkability within these areas will help to connect the different districts of the City and improve economic mobility. Smart Growth America's National Complete Streets Coalition has a wealth of documents on how to implement a Complete Streets policy and change the way city streets are designed and built on their website at [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets).

**For a city to encourage walking and biking, it must have a dense mixture of land uses, integrated with streets and open spaces, all designed for people. The San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) offers the following principles for cities looking to improve walkability:**

#### **Walkability Principles Based on SPUR:**

1. Create fine-grained pedestrian circulation.
2. Orient buildings to street and open spaces.
3. Organize uses to support public activity.
4. Place parking behind or below buildings.
5. Address the human scale with building, lighting and landscape details.
6. Provide clear, continuous pedestrian access.
7. Build complete streets in key pedestrian areas for day and night.
8. Integrate safety solutions.



## CONNECTIVITY



*West Columbia 0.25-mile radius/ 5minute walk from activity nodes displays the walkability opportunity of this area*



Meeting and State Streets provide the main anchors of the area, and by actively connecting Summit, Shull, Leaphart

These pedestrian activities may well create five- or six-lane pedestrian circulation as discussed earlier in this section.



## CONNECTIVITY

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### Parking

Parking is an expensive use of valuable real estate. And though it is an important feature that supports the livelihood of any downtown, it should be used strategically. Parking options should allow people to park once and then walk to multiple destinations, and ideally multiple people throughout the day should use each space.

Successful parking recommendations and strategies come in a variety of forms. However, the objective remains to provide a safe and convenient and healthy street life. Healthy street life means a critical mass of activity where people are more likely to incorporate it into their daily lives. Successful parking helps create destinations, which means a mix of commercial tenants and noncommercial activity that will keep people coming back; a nearby population base of residents, workers, or both; and daytime and evening uses, to keep life on the streets as long as possible.

Parking lots are much more than a place to temporarily store a car, they are often the first part of a space you visit or live next to. It is typically the gateway through which residents, customers, visitors or employees pass before they enter a building or area. Parking lots have a major impact on the design and character of a community and carry direct environmental impacts such as storm water-run off. It is also one of the critical elements of pedestrian-friendly design.

According to CityLab estimates, there are three nonresidential parking spaces for every car in the United States. That adds up to almost 800 million parking spaces, covering about 4,360 square miles. ***Placing parking lots in front of businesses, civic institutions and apartment/condo buildings not only diminishes aesthetics but also creates a separation between the buildings from sidewalks and streets.***

This creates longer and more dangerous walking routes for pedestrians and makes public transit less attractive and viable, because the transit user's journey from the bus stop to the store or apartment must take place through a large, crowded parking lot that is unprotected from the elements of heat, rain, etc. Additionally, having a high parking requirement for residential and commercial developments increases costs and reduces viability of projects.

Throughout the U.S., cities are making efforts to reimagine parking lots by making them cleaner, safer and eco-friendlier. Examples include increasing shade and air quality by providing trees and landscaping, promoting efficient storm water runoff management, improving visual aesthetics, adapting zoning policy related to parking to increase economic vitality and livability, providing incentives for alternative transportation, working with local employers to encourage car-pooling, bicycling, and walking and even the use of solar panels for shaded parking and sustainable energy production.

West Columbia has already taken steps to address parking issues by purchasing property in the Riverfront District and State Street area to provide for public parking. The parking lot will increase access for residents to the downtown business as well as the riverfront park area. The lot will feature 100+/- public parking spaces and a linear park. More than 270 parking spaces are being created in the Riverfront District at the time of this Plan.

Automated parking solutions are being used in smart cities throughout the world. These solutions can provide efficient parking and can also provide an additional revenue source for the City. The Riverfront District and Meeting Street Corridor are prime areas where parking should continue to be improved. The ability to activate office parking for nighttime use is another tool for adding parking options to areas that are currently challenged, as is being done at the New Brookland development.

As parking becomes more of a necessity for growth, the City will want to use it also a tool to attract private sector investment. Redevelopment that encourages a live, work, play environment by concentrating a variety of daytime (office, commercial, retail, restaurants, etc.) and nighttime (restaurants, breweries, public entertainment, cultural arts, etc.) uses tend to be successful.

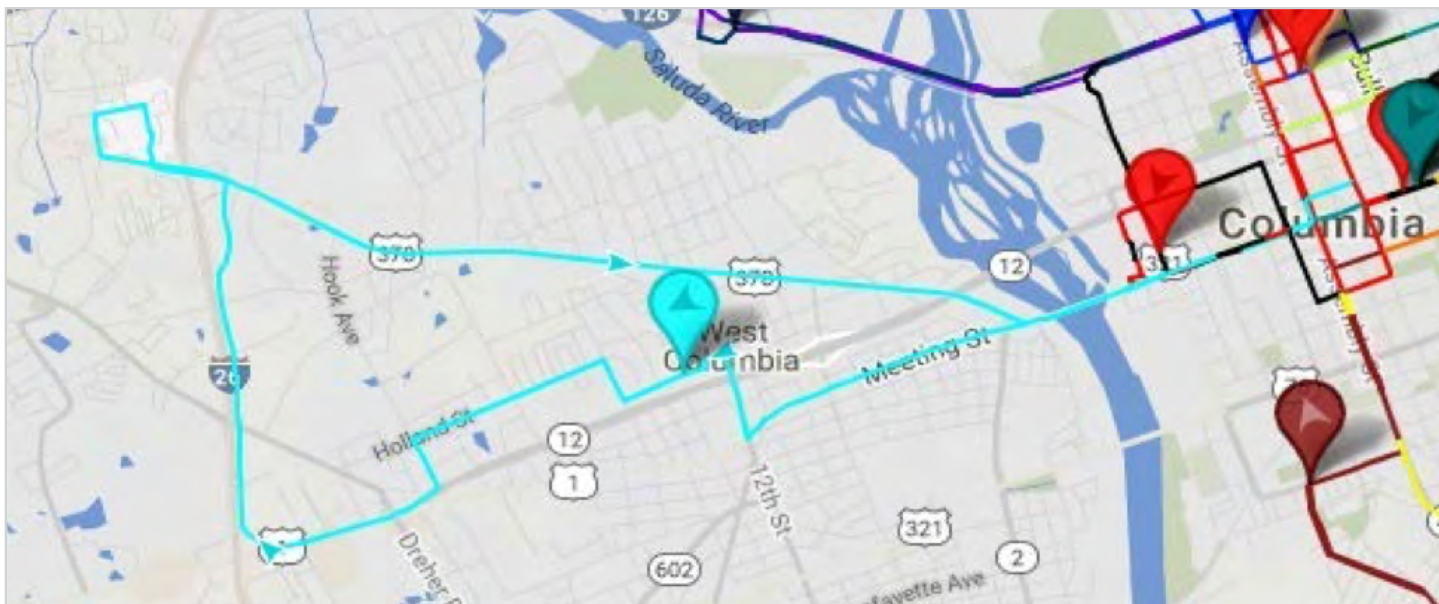


## CONNECTIVITY

### Transit

The West Columbia and metropolitan area are known for being famously hot, so it's fitting that the transit system is known as the Comet. Previously, the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority (CMRTA) provided fixed route and demand response service in the Columbia area, including West Columbia. Known as the COMET, the transit system provides service throughout West Columbia via Route 26 (refer to map below). The Comet mass transit system establishes a connection to West Columbia's opportunity areas by linking Lexington Medical Center, to I-26 and Sunset Blvd Development area, to Riverfront District, to Riverfront Columbia, Back to Riverfront West Columbia, to Meeting Street Corridor, to Triangle City and Former Colite Property area, and to District 5/ Lakeview Empowerment Center. The Comet system also provides access to the City of Columbia and the various amenities within the City.

The proposed extension of the Soda Cap connector, the fleet of teal-hued buses capitalizing on the popularity of the Main Street Soda City market, will open the Riverfront area to visitors and people looking for alternate dining experiences.



#### *West Columbia COMET Route 26*

The West Columbia COMET Route 26 runs three trips on weekdays from 6:00 AM - 7:04 AM, 11:30 AM - 12:34 PM and 5:30 PM - 6:37 PM. There are no weekend or night trips. The Comet features live route tracking and an app to monitor bus status. Fare information is as follows: Standard One-Way \$1.50, All Day Pass: \$3.00, 5 Day Pass: \$12.00, 7 Day Pass: \$14.00, 31 Day Pass: \$40.00, 10 RIDE Pass: \$12.00. Discounts are offered for seniors, children, students, veterans and Medicare recipients.

The connectivity of the Opportunity Areas can be enhanced as geographical anchor locations, provided use of The Comet (Route 26) is rider friendly. The Riverfront District, Meeting Street Corridor, Triangle City, the former Colite property and Brookland Lakeview areas would all benefit from increased public transportation options. A connected transit system along key locations reduces the need for everyday individual automobile use; and as a result, reduces personal expense and general congestion.



## CONNECTIVITY

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*COMET Stop- Jarvis Klapman Blvd. & Hook Ave., West Columbia*

However, upgrades are necessary to increase participation. Throughout the public input process, RMA heard concerns over the conditions of public transit in West Columbia. While the COMET connects key areas of the City and provides access to the State Capitol of Columbia, West Columbia only features 6 stops. There are only three trips daily and no night or weekend service. The bus stops in West Columbia lack adequate shelter/amenities and signage is poor.

**The objective is to improve connectivity within the City and to encourage safe, convenient, efficient and effective motorized and alternative-means of transportation and transit systems within the City.**

### **Recommendations and Strategies**

Consider a complete streets strategy connecting the various activity nodes in West Columbia, specifically Meeting, State, Sunset, Center, Leaphart and Shull Streets. Coordinate roadway, sidewalk, landscaping, street lighting, street furnishings, on-street parking, and infrastructure improvements within the Riverfront District and along Commercial Corridors, including:

- Sunset Boulevard between Meeting Street and Jarvis Klapman Boulevard
- Meeting Street Corridor between Gervais Bridge and 12th Street
- Between Capitol Square and Meeting Street
- Along State Street between Meeting Street and Augusta Street.



## CONNECTIVITY

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1. Coordinate wayfinding signage, the banner program and street improvements to enhance connectivity activities.
2. Evaluate and upgrade lighting along commercial corridors, gateways and strategic residential areas, including street light poles that are pedestrian scale.
3. Develop lighting standards for private developments and public realm improvements, including parks.
4. Follow the walkability principles and use the West Metro Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan as a guideline for enhancing connectivity for redevelopment along these specified roads
5. Create shared parking so that office users have reserved parking during the daytime, but at night the parking becomes open for evening visitors and residents. This is the program being used at Brookland.
6. Encourage the reduction of surface parking through zoning codes and regulation, specifically in the Riverfront District and along the Meeting Street corridor.
7. Plan for and create automated parking so that future needs can be addressed, and additional revenue generated for the City. This includes making sure that the City is in a position to support new technology that advances automation and addresses new operations such as Uber and Lyft.
8. While parking is limited in some areas currently, consider a vendor operated district valet parking system on the weekends for the State Street and Riverwalk areas. The service should run from at least 4:00 pm to midnight, with strategic pick up and drop off locations, alleviating some of the parking issues in the area and enhancing customer experience.
9. Consider a Public- Private Partnership for the Capitol Square and House of Raeford properties to provide public parking and attract private sector investment.
10. Work with the Transit Authority to:
  - Assess transit stop conditions in West Columbia and develop a strategy to enhance signage and shelter.
  - Assess level of participation of Comet Riders in West Columbia.
  - Strengthen access to, from and through West Columbia.



## RECREATION, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

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Why should tourism be a priority for West Columbia and a piece of the Redevelopment Plan?

***Because it starts with a visit!*** The first impression that the City makes is oftentimes the most lasting and can be the determining factor in the decision to relocate and raise a family, or start a new business, or even relocate a manufacturing facility or corporate headquarters.

***Riverfronts are often the “soul” of a community and become their most important overall economic development asset. As Arthur Frommer once said, “Tourism simply does not go into a city that has lost its soul.”***

West Columbia offers kayaking, canoeing, tubing, parks, waterfront concerts, walking and biking trails, dining and entertainment districts, and much more, including access to the renowned Riverbanks Zoo, Botanical Gardens, and Waterfall Junction. These attributes and the beauty of the natural environment add to the allure of West Columbia. South Carolina has a robust tourism department, known as Discover South Carolina. “Tourism” at this time is primarily related to the hospitality industry, as area hotels earn income from visitors that are primarily coming to visit the Columbia Metropolitan Area. Visitors traveling through the area on their way to other locations provide revenue for the hospitality industry, which is one way the tourism department reports. These overnight “stopovers” are visitors traveling to visit sites in the region or points further north or south inside and outside of the state. Another category of visitors in this area includes traveling families that are coming for football games, reunions and special occasions. And finally, there are traveling youth sports and recreational groups, their coaches and their families that are coming into the area to compete in seasonal tournaments or participate in seasonal activities.

***Tourists and travelers in general prefer to stay in areas where there are activities, restaurants and shopping areas.***

If there are ample attractions that can be marketed along the highway and on the Internet for these travelers, longer stays and more spending in the local economy will be encouraged and provide a reflection of the charm and hospitality of West Columbia.

Locations such as the I-26/Sunset Boulevard Interchange and I-20/Hwy 378 Interchange provide an opportunity to offer these accommodations for these travelers, however, it is also a great opportunity to welcome them and invite them to stay and see what West Columbia has to offer.

Tourism and hospitality revenue are exports because money from outside the jurisdiction is spent in the local community. The more options visitors have with which to spend their money in the destination, generally the more successful destinations become, which aids in economic development. Tourism can also have a much broader benefit in the economy. Economic multiplier figures for tourism make use of a model developed by the U.S. Travel Association, which incorporates certain percentages of revenue from as many as 10 industries that all benefit from visitor spending. ***Tourism plays a major role in furthering the goals of economic development in West Columbia.***

For West Columbia to develop tourism, an investment of time, creativity and resources in product development must occur. Encouraging more people to stay longer will require a long-term effort and marketing. Developing tourism works best with community involvement, including hotels, non-profit community groups and sports organizations.

Visitors just need more reasons to come to West Columbia. RMA discovered that there are several opportunities for “niche market” tourism in West Columbia. They include ecotourism, heritage tourism, agri-tourism, and sports tourism.

It is recommended that a targeted marketing and branding campaign be created and implemented to make more people aware throughout the country of the multiple attractions for vacationing that exist in West Columbia.



## RECREATION, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

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**Nature-based tourism or “ecotourism”** as it is commonly referred to is a rising niche market that is increasing in popularity around the world. Whether it is for active nature experiences such as kayaking, canoeing, hiking or bird-watching – or simply quiet enjoyment of the view of the river, the presence of beautiful unspoiled nature provides opportunity. It has been said that waterfronts are “gold” in attracting visitors, and West Columbia has a big pot of gold to offer.

**Heritage Tourism.** Untapped historic sites and special events are another opportunity to develop tourism. The State Museum was voted one of the three top museums by Southeastern readers of Southern Living magazine. The Museum has more than 70,000 artifacts in its collection, and it is still a very young institution. The State Museum is

housed in its largest artifact, the former Columbia Mill. This former textile mill also is a world-first. When it opened in 1894, manufacturing cotton duck cloth (a canvas-like material), it was the first totally-electric textile mill in the world. It was also the first major industrial installation for the General Electric corporation. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Consider a “one off walking” tour of historic properties along State Street and neighboring residential areas as a great opportunity to introduce visitors to West Columbia, including the New Brookland Mill Village area.

**Agri-tourism** is yet another trending form of tourism that could tie in with and promote West Columbia. Agri-tourism has been highly successful in other areas of the southeast and is an initiative of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. The State Farmers Market has a West Columbia address and draws customers and vendors from more than 100 miles away. By leveraging internet and social media searches that cite this location, more visitors can be reached and the attractions that West Columbia has to offer highlighted in a very positive manner.

### **Visitor attractions associated with the West Columbia area include:**

- Farmer’s markets
- Bed and Breakfasts
- Farm-to-table menus in local restaurants
- Homemade goods using local products
- Wineries, breweries and distilleries

**Sports Tourism** is one more opportunity to encourage tourism in West Columbia. Sports Tourism refers to travel which involves people either observing or participating in a sporting event outside of their usual environment. In other words, travel team sports. Sport Tourism is a fast-growing sector of the global travel industry and equates to billions of dollars in revenue. It is important for communities to develop an understanding of the benefits and impacts of sport tourism, of the process of bidding for events, possible sponsorship opportunities and other elements involved in the planning and hosting of a successful sport event if this revenue activity is pursued.

### **Over time the following types of sports activities could be developed and promoted, which will bring in additional visitors:**

- Youth team sports, specifically those sports that are practiced at the University.
- Field sports for all levels of skill.
- Special sporting events – running, biking and walking events.
- Fishing, kayaking, canoeing and other water activities.

To better take advantage of the rivers as an attraction, more parks, riverside trails, boat ramps and other types of nature experiences should be developed to provide reasons for people to come to the area.



## RECREATION, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

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Collaborations with non-profit organizations are also helpful in creating new outdoor endeavors, not to mention the fact that they provide welcome opportunities for residents to participate in their community. To help activate parks and open spaces in the evenings and enhance real and perceived safety, guided tours at dusk can point out nocturnal fauna, introduce children to stargazing, or include tours of lighted public art.

With a small investment, various sites could be revived and spotlighted, and their stories appreciated by tourists and future generations. A heritage initiative should be launched to help ensure that these stories are not forgotten and that they can become an economic development tool through tourism. Federal and private foundation grants for historic preservation and possible state support should be pursued for this purpose. By leveraging the proximity of the South Carolina Museum, West Columbia can offer “one off” tours of the area.

Heritage events offer opportunities to invite visitors and expand the events. New Brookland Historic District is a national historic district that encompasses 23 contributing buildings in the central business district and the “mill village” sections of West Columbia. It is recommended that these events be developed and marketed with the help of the state Tourism organization.

Sponsor Agri-tourism workshops to promote this form of tourism with the State Farmers Market and promote Agri-tourism to the travel and tourism trade through participation in the state program.

This area has been named one of the top 10 canoeing areas in the country by Paddler Magazine. Cooperate with the State Tourism Department to promote West Columbia and its assets. The additional expenditures of visitors to West Columbia if a Tourism Program is created are certainly a strong measure of the reason to promote tourism, and the exposure that the City gains (branding) is another tangible benefit that is significant.

Develop sports facilities, programs and improve the parks. The key to success of sports for tourism is planning and marketing. Both youth and adult sports should be considered, especially those associated with river activities. Continue to provide the opportunity for food trucks to service the Riverfront District.

**Some of the other opportunities for resident and visitor attraction are shown in the following examples:**



The Riverwalk is a system of paths and boardwalks running along the banks of the Congaree River. It accommodates all levels of physical access including baby carriages and wheelchairs. The Park provides spacious walkways with picturesque views of the River and the Skyline of Riverfront Columbia. The natural beauty of the park provides a peaceful backdrop to a walk, run or bike ride.



## RECREATION, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

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Riverbanks is a 170-acre Zoo & Garden featuring two distinct parks along the scenic Lower Saluda River. Since opening day on April 25, 1974, it has been their mission to foster an appreciation and concern for nature.

Riverbanks Zoo houses more than 2,000 animals in natural habitat exhibits. Each area of the Zoo offers a combination of animal exhibits, graphics, enrichment programs and special feedings to make the visit enjoyable and informative. In addition, the Zoo offers a variety of interactive programs and educational experiences that can be enjoyed by all age groups.

### Natural Resources and Activities

The Lower Saluda Scenic River is recognized as an outstanding recreational resource. The tailrace waters from Lake Murray reservoir provide a cold-water fishery and varying water levels for recreational boating. Trout and striped bass fishing as well as whitewater (Class II to V rapids) and flatwater paddling are very popular on this piedmont river. These factors, combined with the surrounding topography and rock outcrops like mountain streams and the heavily wooded landscape, make the Lower Saluda River corridor an outstanding natural resource within the urban environment of metropolitan Columbia. Kayaking, Canoeing, Tubing, and Fishing are enjoyed on the waters of the Lower Saluda and the Congaree. ***The system has been ranked among the Top 10 Canoe areas in America by Paddler Magazine.***

### Kayaking

The Lower Saluda River is considered a “low flow” river on most days. This makes the river an outstanding playground for beginning Kayakers. The 10-mile stretch known as the Lower Saluda offers nine sets of rapids rated from Class II to Class IV during normal flow. Advanced Kayaking is enjoyed during High Release days from the Lake Murray Dam. The strong currents provide paddling opportunities usually found in the mountains.

### Canoeing, Tubing and Fishing

The Lower Saluda and the Congaree offer a wealth of canoeing options and variety for all ages. Paddling the Lower Saluda brings some play with the sets of rapids encountered. As you converge into the Congaree the river settles into a more peaceful flow continuing some 47 miles to its confluence with the Wateree River. Another popular way for the traveler to enjoy a scenic West Metro afternoon is a float down the river in a custom designed tube. This may be the most peaceful way to unwind for the weary business traveler, and the frazzled legislator. A float down the cool river on a warm summer’s day is an escape to nature only minutes from the busy Riverfront business and capital district. Local anglers have kept secret one of the most incredible experiences for decades. The rivers of the West Metro area provide a unique fishing experience in the shadows of the State Capitol.

**The objective is to create an environment that is conducive to the expansion of recreational activities throughout the City.**



### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Create and implement a targeted marketing and branding campaign to make more people aware throughout the country of the multiple attractions that exist in West Columbia.
2. Promote and encourage a bike share program and/or new opportunities for watersports vendors along the riverfront.
3. Develop trails and natural experiences and promote them in a media campaign.
4. Activate parks and open spaces in the evenings through dusk tours, stargazing, or tours of lighted public art along the river.
5. Launch a heritage initiative to promote tourism and leverage the proximity of South Carolina Museum in cooperation with the state tourism department.
6. Sponsor agri-tourism workshops in cooperation with the state tourism department.
7. Collaborate with the University to offer outdoor activities and events to promote the area.
8. Continue to provide the opportunity for food trucks to service the Riverfront District.



## ART & CULTURE

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Art generates tangible and intangible benefits, and in the most successful instances, it becomes an integral and beloved part of the community. Enhancing its environment, art enriches residents' lives, instills a sense of civic pride, creates a shared history, connects communities, and provides opportunities for dialogue, engagement, and learning. By promoting cultural participation, public art stimulates cultural industries and the creative economy. And, especially important to revitalization, public art boosts the economy in a hyper-local way. The economic impacts benefit residents directly, driving spending to local businesses and creating jobs and opportunities for artists and residents alike.

Art institutions have a unique role in telling our stories, reflecting our cultures and helping us understand the world around us. And to remain relevant, they must adapt to the way people participate in culture today. The arts bring people together and create community, fostering ideas, participation, and inclusionary societies.

***"The arts have the rare power to bring diverse communities together, provoke personal reflection, and inspire new ways of thinking," said Victoria Rogers, Knight Foundation vice president for the arts.***

Arts and culture are at the core of a strong community and local economic vitality and can also be incorporated into an Events Program Strategy. A thriving community must offer stimulating attractions and events that challenge its citizens to participate and contribute to their success.

**The activities of the arts and culture sector and local economic vitality are connected in many ways. Arts, culture, and creativity can:**

- Improve a community's competitive edge;
- Create a foundation for defining a sense of place;
- Attract new and visiting populations;
- Integrate the visions of community and business leaders; and
- Contribute to the development of a skilled workforce.

West Columbia enjoys the unique position of being close to everything in the Midlands involving the arts. Within a ten-mile radius one will find theatres, museums, art galleries, performing arts, and music from bluegrass to chamber. The Koger Center for the Arts is located on the University of South Carolina campus. The center is the home of the Columbia City Ballet, the South Carolina Philharmonic, and is also used for other functions such as The State of the State Address, The South Carolina Body Building Championships, The South Carolina Science Fair, Freshman Orientation, The Conductor's Institute, and the dance concerts for the Columbia City Ballet, Southern Strutt's year-end concert and the university's doctoral hooding ceremonies.

However, apart from art galleries, these important assets of the community are located outside the City.

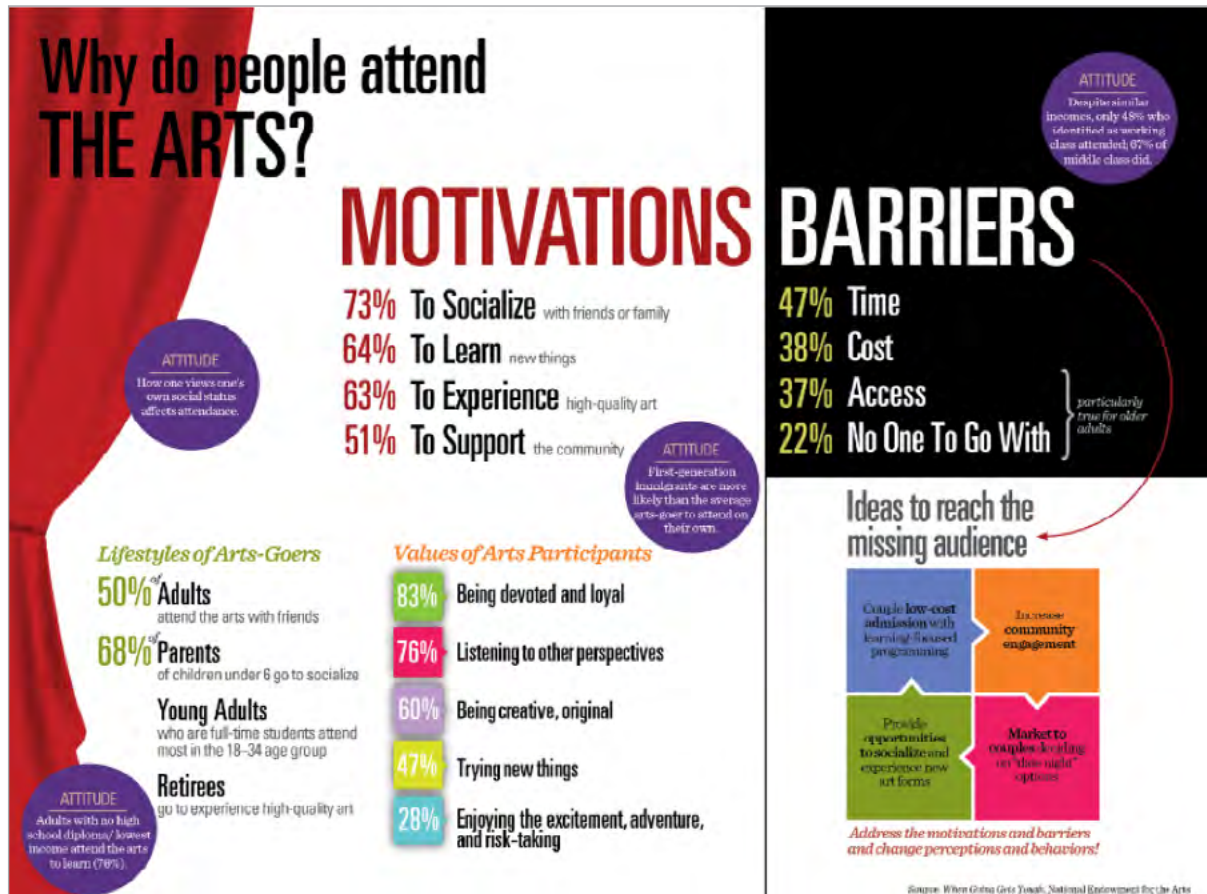
**Our analysis of the area and stakeholder input indicates the following areas are of importance to the community:**

- Preserve the history and historic assets
- Enhance parking
- Expose the opportunity for murals and cross-promotions with local businesses
- Invest in aesthetic improvements
- Capitalize on the Riverfront's success



## ART & CULTURE

In January of 2015, the National Endowment for the Arts revealed new findings about the impact of arts and cultural industries on GDP, as well as how and why Americans participate in certain arts activities. Their findings from three separate reports shows a comprehensive view of a single year in the life of the arts and cultural sector from three different angles: supply, demand, and motivations for consumer behavior. This information can help arts providers and cities more effectively understand and develop strategies to engage individuals and communities in the arts. The following infographics are a summary of the report.



Harnessing the spending power of the tourists that visit Columbia and the University is vital to the City. A destination and activity hub will benefit the entire community, not just the out-of-town guests, and will provide West Columbia with a sense of place. When theaters, museums, arts and culture are seen as a part of the community, residents take pride of ownership. Event sponsorships for the downtown area are a way businesses and organizations demonstrate community spirit. By providing venues for music groups, art exhibits, storytelling festivals, and small theater productions, the City may benefit tremendously.

The City of West Columbia, its residents and visitors, the real estate development and investment community, foundations, and others doing business here all stand to benefit greatly from the implementation of a public art program and cultural amenities. The City's public art should be developed according to best practices and encourage participation of local artists.



## ART & CULTURE

State Street merchants have been active in transforming this area of the City into an arts district, with unique shopping opportunities, and one of a kind restaurants. The district is simply dubbed State Street Shopping by its merchants. A zoning change now enables a coffee roaster, a visual artist or a craft brewer to manufacture a product on site and have a retail shop as well. More artisan manufacturers are now considering the area for new locations. The interactive Art Walks have been tremendously successful and are another example of positive activity in the arts and culture domain of the City. Another way to encourage artists to become active in the area is to Invite artists to create installations. Work with a local artists' alliance to create public artworks in vacant spaces. Artworks that include light elements are particularly engaging after dark.

Public Art has been memorialized right across the river in Columbia with one of the most famous mural artists in this century, Blue Sky. Blue Sky was born Warren Edward Johnson in Columbia, South Carolina, on September 18, 1938. He attended Dreher High School before his acceptance at the University of South Carolina, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in art and education. In 1974, he legally changed his name to Blue Sky, and engraved it across his most famous work, Tunnelvision, a year later. The proximity of this artist and gallery provides another opportunity to leverage the assets of this region to benefit the City of West Columbia.



*Blue Sky née Warren Edward Johnson Postwar/Trompe-l'oeil American, b 1938*

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was established by Congress in 1965. The NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America.

Art Works is the NEA's largest category and focuses on funding the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with art, lifelong learning in the arts, and strengthening of communities through the arts. There is an opportunity for West Columbia to participate in programs such as these. The following examples are grants awarded to cities like West Columbia, particularly in population size.

- A \$15,000 grant to the Jamestown Arts Center in Jamestown, Rhode Island (Population 5460) to support production, outreach, and educational activities in conjunction with the film Cunningham which traces the artistic evolution of choreographer Merce Cunningham.
- A \$35,000 grant to Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts in Pendleton, Oregon (Population 16,834) to support a printmaking residency program for Native American artists.
- Our Town is the NEA's signature creative placemaking program that supports partnerships of artists, arts organizations, and municipal government that work to revitalize neighborhoods. This practice places arts at the table with land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies to address a community's challenges. An example of this placemaking program includes a \$150,000 grant to the IDEAS xLab to support Project HEAL, a program to increase public engagement in local public issues through the arts in rural Jackson, Kentucky.



## ART & CULTURE

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*The above gateway art signage in Delray Beach, Florida provides a strong statement to visitors arriving in the City.*

The entrance gateway was designed to impress visitors when they entered the City. This design has succeeded and fulfilled their goal with significant acceptance and praise from the community and throughout the state and country. The 600-foot-long-by-100-foot-wide gateway, features six 8-foot-wide, curved columns, three on each side of Atlantic Avenue, heading east off the I-95 ramps. Backed by concrete to withstand hurricane-force winds, the poly carbon panels display colorful images of the City's history, culture, shells and flowers. The gigantic, hurricane-proof columns are illuminated at night, to reflect an enlightened community.

Signage is a vital element of defining a sense of place. Community identity and messaging can be reinforced throughout the City of West Columbia with consistency in signage, entry features and pedestrian wayfinding. Gateway signage must be a statement or signature-announcement of the new West Columbia, full of opportunity. The most logical locations for new gateway signage are at the different entrances into the City from Columbia, Cayce and Charlotte.



## ART & CULTURE

### West Columbia Events

The City has an impressive calendar of events, and all appear to be accepted and attended widely by the community, and support arts and culture.

**Below is a listing of some of the more popular events.**

#### Brookland Brunch

Soda City and West Columbia's new Brookland development have partnered to present a riverside brunch. From waffles and coffee to ethnic food, the Brookland Brunch vendors vary. It's every Sunday at the West Columbia Riverwalk Amphitheater.

#### Tartan Day South

Kirkin of the Tartans is a tradition in Celtic culture. Annual Tartan Day South Celebration is a four-day event honoring Celtic heritage. The festival offers different events at many different venues featuring unique sports, incredible music, great foods and interactive as well as interesting exhibitions. The City of West Columbia is a sponsor of this event that attracts close to 11,000 people, of which 7,000 attendees come from the immediate local area.

#### Rhythm on the River

The Spring Rhythm on the River Concert Series is every Saturday in April and May. The popular shows are from at the West Columbia Riverwalk Amphitheater. This music series features local and regional music artists, food trucks and the best view of the river in the Midlands. Included is a weekly "dessert" truck feature and the Department of Agriculture features a South Carolina Grown or Specialty Vendor each week.

#### Kinetic Derby Day

The City of West Columbia held the First Annual Kinetic Derby Day in April 2018. This unique celebration included a parade of kinetic sculptures (human-powered, handmade floats that highlight the community's pride and creativity.) The parade was followed by an afternoon of adult and child soapbox derby racing. It is anticipated that this event will become an annual event for the City.

#### Art on State, Art Crawl

The event on State Street, features live music, food and drink from several restaurants on State Street. There are live street mural paintings by noted artists, and other artisan demonstrations. Art on State is funded by hospitality dollars. Businesses on State Street have specials for the event. The beautiful view of the city skyline, and the ability to dine, stroll and immerse yourself in art are all part of this event.

The recognition of the area's arts and culture assets (and the marketing of them) is an important element of economic development. Creatively acknowledging and marketing the community assets can attract a strong workforce and successful firms, as well as help sustain a positive quality of life. Creative-class theory suggests that a high-tech, highly educated workforce prefers a location with creative amenities.

Well-designed public and cultural spaces are the cornerstone of a community. This essence of community conveys a sense of connecting by providing spaces that are welcoming, safe, and attractive, but to be successful they must also be active. They must provide ample and comfortable seating, offer protection from the weather and connect to the City. This Plan recognizes the important part that Art and Culture play in the successful redevelopment of the City.





## ART & CULTURE

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Happy Town, Sugar Town, New Brookland Mill Village, and Triangle City are all areas of town that have special associations that reflect the character and history of the City. By using these associations artistically, the opportunity exists to not only remind the public of these associations but expand on them in a very positive way. The Happy Town and Sugar Town areas require targeted strategies, partnerships, and financing in preparation for inclusion in city-wide marketing and tourism programs.

**The objective is to create an environment that is conducive to the expansion of performing and visual arts and recreational activities throughout the City. This environment is enforced with the connectivity recommendations and strategies that include streetscaping and wayfinding signage improvements.**

### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Create and Implement a business attraction program to encourage new galleries, music venues, museums and recreational related businesses.
2. Aggressively pursue the development of an arts/performance center in the City. Work with the school district to achieve this goal. The former Colite property is ideally located to service the entire community and offers a significant opportunity for the creation of a cultural center. The Brookland Lakeview area also offers a great location for a center. Whether it's a theater for performing arts, or a gallery for visual art and sculpture, the idea is to create a community gathering place to celebrate the arts.
3. Encourage local storytelling and exhibits at events that demonstrate the rich history of West Columbia.
4. Commission a gateway public art display, again using the strengths of the culture and history of West Columbia to cohesively promote the brand.
5. Implement wayfinding signage, landscape and streetscape improvements that promote branding and reflect the culture and history of West Columbia, i.e. Happy Town, Sugar Town, New Brookland Mill Village, and Triangle City. By connecting the City visually through its history and culture, a new identity emerges, that will brand West Columbia in a new and exciting way. This requires coordination and a professional approach to create the "look and feel" that's right for West Columbia.
6. Continue to sponsor and fund events monthly that promote art and culture in the City. Events should include fun, daytime and after-dark activities for families with children to enhance real and perceived safety.
7. Bundle the business attraction program, the arts and performance center, public art display and the wayfinding signage and streetscape improvements into a program that speaks to place making, which may trigger grant opportunities as described previously from the NEA.
8. Use Trompe-l'oeil, Road Tattoos and Fence Art as tools to transform ugly buildings and structures and add a unique look to West Columbia.





## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

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### It starts with a visit!

Through the redevelopment and revitalization planning process, several initial steps of brand development and marketing strategy are underway, however additional steps need to be taken to create a citywide brand promise, and business and consumer attraction marketing plan and campaign.

**Promote the City of West Columbia and its assets to increase awareness, elevating the opportunity for investors, developers and businesses to discover the business - friendly environment in West Columbia, including participation in:**

- Chambers of Commerce
- Trade Shows
  - Trade shows that are forums for expanding businesses including retailers, restaurants and other businesses should be part of the City's Business Attraction Program. For example, International Council of Shopping Centers has over 70,000 members and conducts conferences throughout the year that afford the opportunity to meet representatives from the industry and talk with them about the City and its opportunities. The annual regional conference is held in Atlanta in October.
- Discovery tours during events
- Banker/Broker/Developer events and tours

**The adoption and prioritization of the Plan goals will guide the branding and marketing plan and campaign development process. The steps generally include:**

### Collect

Additional market research with stakeholders (particularly business and property owners on State Street, the Meeting Street Corridor and in Triangle City) to define specific audiences and connect the audience to West Columbia's potential. A comprehensive understanding of West Columbia's main commercial areas' image, particularly expressed by business and property owners in these areas, is crucial for the development of a sustainable place brand and effective campaign strategy. This insight, combined with the implementation of the goals outlined in this plan, leads to the development of specific message and campaign recommendations and strategies. Involving stakeholders in the process leads to the sense of ownership that is necessary for the brand and marketing plan and campaign strategy to be adopted and advocated by people/stakeholders.

### Connect & Collaborate

Additional stakeholders include local authorities, tourism offices, the chamber of commerce and other business groups and organizations (i.e. West Columbia Beautification Foundation). It is important to connect people and places that may have never been connected before and for various stakeholders and groups to collaborate. The goal during this stage is to articulate the City's existing and/or aspirational brand promise and value proposition and build consensus and advocacy for the City's goals, both internally and externally.

### Create

A comprehensive marketing plan and campaign strategy will include a variety of specific objectives, recommendations and strategies, tactics, budget and campaign measurement tools. These tactics are developed to further the goals outlined in the redevelopment plan by identifying specific marketing recommendations and strategies that connect "people to place" focusing on the specific "opportunities" available in West Columbia to the targeted audiences (opportunities for residence, work, leisure, education, investment and general quality of life). This stage includes all creative development (logos if necessary, brand standards, collateral, descriptive words, campaign messages, etc.)



## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

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### Communicate

The brand promise, the City's value proposition and the campaign strategy are then communicated, showcasing West Columbia's benefits and improvement recommendations and strategies – it's vision for the future. The previous stages of the process provide this stage with the content of communication.

The process then begins again, collecting data to analyze the effectiveness of the tactics and campaign and adjust efforts accordingly.

These steps are often overlapping, occurring simultaneously. Place making through the implementation of the goals and objectives outlined in this plan is a part of the branding process and not a separate activity. Additionally, all marketing strategy should be regularly evaluated and adjusted (generally on an annual basis).

### *Examples to successfully reposition a City visually through branding:*

#### Old Town Untapped

The Old Town Untapped event was strategically designed to support local brewery production and to familiarize people with using the area in a new way providing a vision to the visitors/attendees with a Downtown atmosphere. The event includes a biergarten, food trucks, live music, vendors, and artists at work/ open access to the BaCA art gallery. In just one-year, Old Town Untapped has grown from 250 to over 5000 attendees! The vendors have grown from 15 to 50, food trucks from 4 to 12+, and art gallery visitors from 50-100 to over 500.

Since the event is also an activator for the space, we launched the Untap Your Potential campaign and installed signage in all the vacant commercial spaces. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in interest in the spaces and new businesses are already open. The events success, building on an authentic base of locating in Pompano Beach, combined with the targeted real estate Recommendations and Strategies, has led to a "cluster" effect as 3-4 additional microbreweries are now looking to open in Pompano Beach. Pompano Beach's Old Town Untapped model can be adapted to help reach the strategic redevelopment/revitalization goals in West Columbia.





## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

### Real Places Real Faces Campaign



Places are special because of people and visitors and customers are attracted to places where they have an idea of what type of experience they can expect. A "real places and faces" campaign visually illustrates the unique experience one can expect and projects the brand of the place while also building community pride and deep connections. In redevelopment projects, often the outside environment lacks visual appeal (facades that need updates or repair, landscaping, streetscape and sidewalks that are due for improvements, etc.), but businesses, old or new, are operating in these districts and business attraction efforts are underway to fill vacant spaces. During this beginning phase of the redevelopment process, if the consumer can be enticed to stop and explore, they often discover an entirely different world on the "inside" ...it's this "inside" experience that is visually expressed in the "outside" environment.



## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

The objective of branding is to create a sense of place and visually illustrate what a visitor / customer can expect to experience “inside” the various shops, restaurants and service businesses within a designated district. Below is an illustration of the process involved in branding an area.



### 1. Define the Area “feeling” with descriptive words and photography

- Inventory and categorize the existing merchandise mix and identify target business types for vacant shops to fill the gap and enhance the current mix.
- Determine the number of banners based on district boundaries, pole count, and number of business categories. Usually 12 to 18 different banner styles will be necessary to showcase restaurant, retail and service offerings in a district along with welcome banners at the district entry points.
- Host a workshop with business/property owners to select words that describe the area (i.e. stylish, eclectic, trendy, welcoming, etc. Business/property owner participation ensures consensus and brand ownership.)
- Hire a professional photographer to photograph business owners in their shops, interesting items in shops and restaurants and anything that matches the descriptive words selected during the workshop. In most districts, not every business owner can be featured on pole banners so using a professional photographer who artistically selects the business owners that most effectively represent all business owners in that category is a fair and impartial way of determining the “faces” that are used. It is important to note that no



## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

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business name goes on these banners...only images that collectively represent the whole. (NOTE: if the business owners elect to financially participate in the project by paying a portion of the costs, everyone's "face" who pays could potentially be included on the banners. Again, the business name should not be included – only the descriptive words associated with the business type.)

- Finalize banner designs and install.

### **2. Walker's guide, district app and/or district website**

- Using the photography and descriptive words, business inventory and categories, develop a printed walkers guide for the district. (These guides can be printed annually and include a disclaimer that new businesses may have opened in the district since the last printing.)
- Distribute the guides to all area businesses so they can easily cross promote their business neighbors and to area hotels or other locations that will accept distribution.
- Create a temporary parking lot map sign matching the walkers guide to help new visitors find destinations. The temporary sign will be replaced in later phases of redevelopment, when permanent parking lots and/or structures are completed with permanent wayfinding systems.
- Develop an app or website for the district utilizing the photography, descriptive words and business guide. Each business listed on the guide can have a link to their business websites.

### **3. Host a district brand launch event**

- During a regularly scheduled art walk event, unveil the "Real Places, Real Faces" district campaign
- Follow all typical announcement procedures such as press releases, social media announcements and advertisements, email blasts, etc.



## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

### Example: North Miami, FL

- Step 1.** Development and Adoption of Updated Redevelopment Plan outlining the vision for North Miami and specific redevelopment goals and strategies.
- Step 2.** Development of a Comprehensive Downtown Marketing Plan and Campaign Strategy to position the area for business and consumer attraction based on the goals outlined in the Redevelopment Plan.
- Step 3.** Creative Design and Campaign Launch.



During the development of the downtown marketing plan, stakeholders and community members were engaged through focus groups, one-on-one meetings and surveys specifically crafted to gain insight regarding the existing North Miami image. The resulting creative design and campaign capitalized on the design elements in the City's logo and the campaign slogan was developed.



Words describing the experience one can expect in Downtown NoMi (tasteful, rhythmic, artistic, eccentric) were selected and are used in social media posts, on downtown banners, and in all communications forms, such as press releases, e-newsletters, blogs and website.



## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

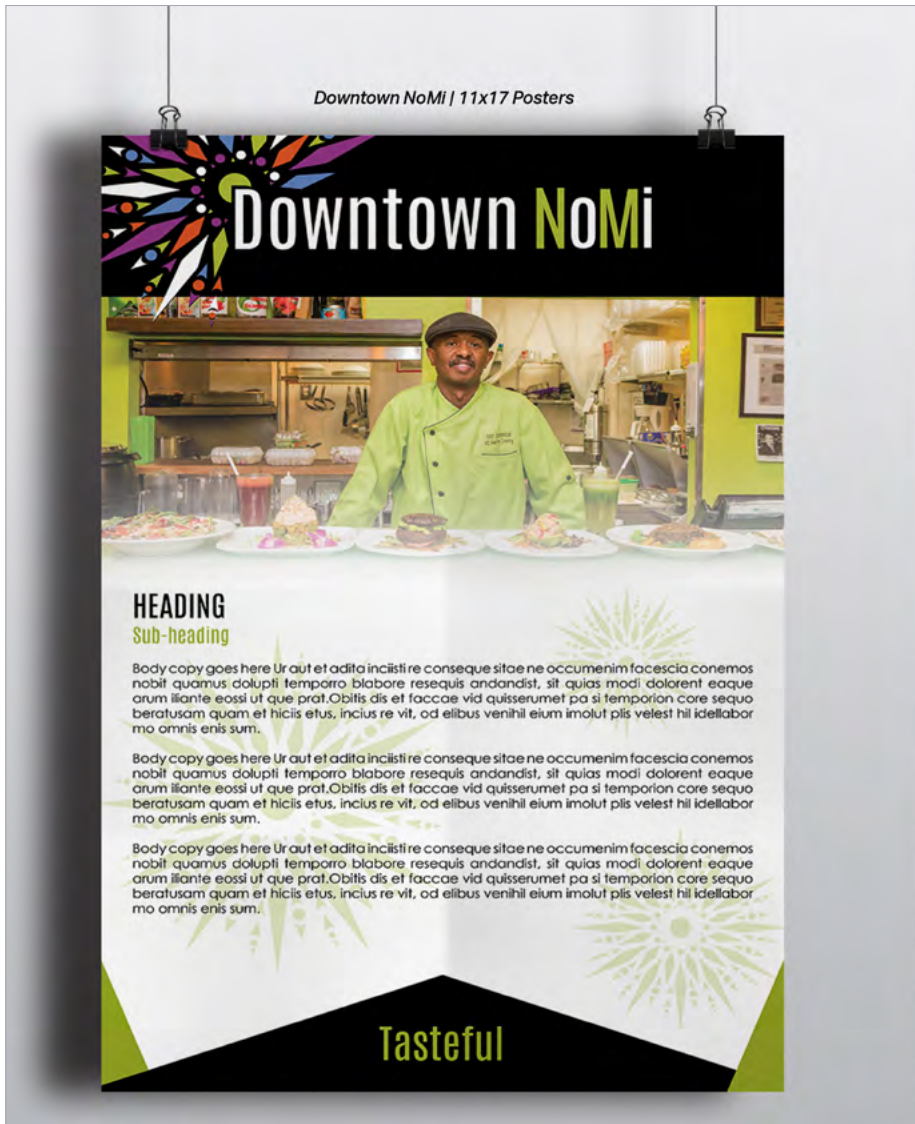
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## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

A Downtown NoMi walkers guide was developed as a multi-purpose tool for the redevelopment team to showcase available space to potential business owners, for downtown business owners to connect and cross-promote other businesses in the area and for consumers to have a hand-held guide to locate shops and restaurants. A downtown walker's guide digital app is planned in the future.





# PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

## Example: Oakland Park, FL

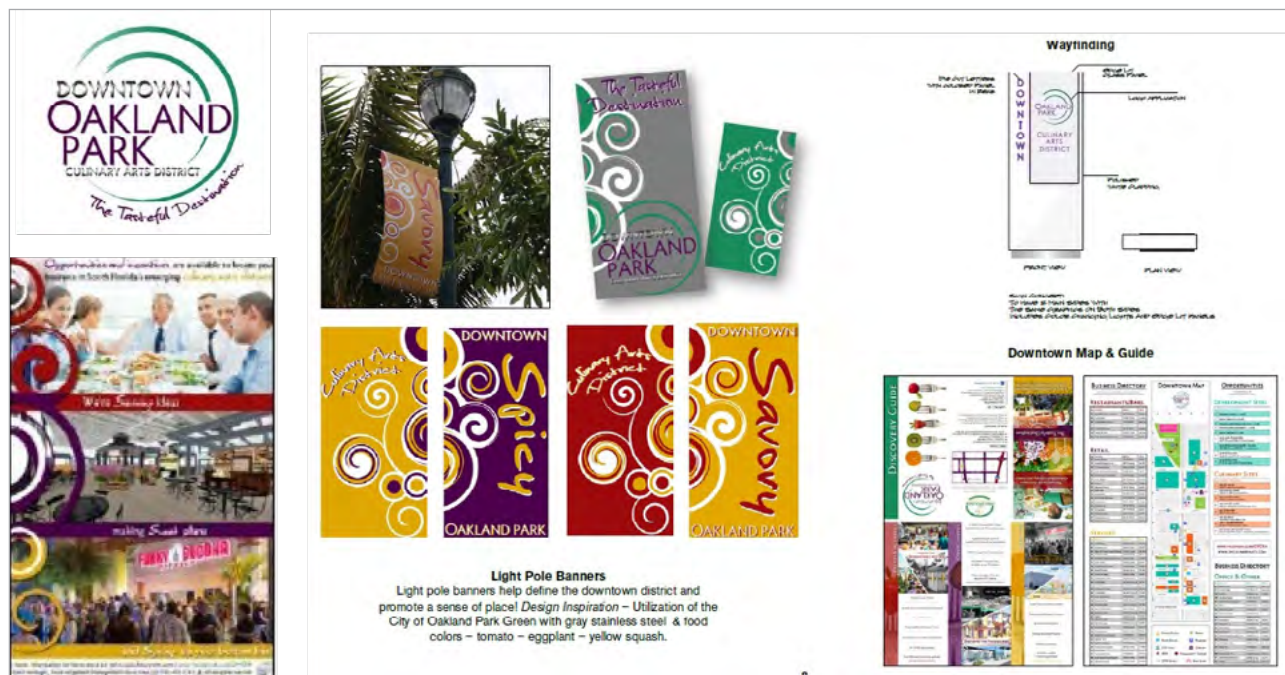
- Step 1.** Development and Adoption of five-year Citywide Strategic Plan with twelve locations identified as redevelopment target sites.
- Step 2.** Development of a Comprehensive Downtown Marketing Plan and Campaign Strategy to position the area for business and consumer attraction based on the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.
- Step 3.** Creative Design and Campaign Launch

A similar process was followed in Oakland Park to uncover what could be an authentic, meaningful and achievable brand position. During the research and discovery process, it became apparent that there was an existing cluster of kitchen related businesses (cabinet makers, knife makers, restaurant supply, etc.) in the City. Combining this discovery, the existing building infrastructure and stakeholder input led to the idea that the area could be positioned as a culinary arts district. The idea was presented to community stakeholders, City staff and leaders and was adopted, along with a comprehensive marketing plan to position the downtown's opportunities for residential and commercial development and to attract businesses.

The campaign had two messages and two target audiences.

**Consumer:** Downtown Oakland Park Culinary Arts District – Where we **savor moments**, make **sweet memories** and **spice up your life!**

**Businesses/Investors:** Downtown Oakland Park Culinary Arts District – Where we **savor ideas**, make **sweet plans** and help you **spice up your bottom line**.





## PLACE BRANDING & BUSINESS ATTRACTION

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### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Create and implement a Citywide Branding Campaign.
2. Create and implement a destination/identity branding campaign for each district connecting one to the other through messaging and signage.
3. Design and create Historic Walking Tours (Lakeview, New Brookland Mill Village, State Street).
4. Improve aesthetics, with clean and safe programs, including pressure cleaning of sidewalks, litter control, graffiti removal, area code enforcement and community policing.
5. Hold Public Events and Festivals with targeted audiences.
6. Improve ambience of specific areas with amenities such as fountains, street furniture, and sidewalks.
7. Support West Columbia Beautification Foundation.
8. Establish metrics for business attraction efforts.
9. Cooperate with State Tourism Department to increase visitors to the area.
10. Connect brewery and distillery initiative to South Carolina's "Satisfy Your Thirst Tour."
- 11. Bundle the business attraction program, the arts and performance center public art display, wayfinding signage, streetscape and landscaping improvements into a program that speaks to place making, which may provide grant opportunities.**



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

The following section identifies strategies tied to neighborhoods and the overall quality of life for residents, businesses, and the community at large. The City needs to ensure there are direct connections between how engaged the community is in the redevelopment process, and what is happening in the city related to housing, schools and education opportunities, social activities and the overall city brand and vision.

Include the following:

- 1. SOCIAL OFFERINGS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**
- 2. THE OVERALL CITY BRAND AND IMAGE**
- 3. SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**
- 4. HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE**





# NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

## 1. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Strong communities have engaged resident and business members. A Neighborhood Ambassador Program creates a forum to ensure the residential and business communities are made aware of and participate in the redevelopment process. These “Ambassadors” are key to providing an army of people who are actively promoting the shared vision and future of the City.

### Objective

Promote Community Involvement through events and a **Neighborhood Ambassadors Program**.

### Recommendations and Strategies

- Support Neighborhood initiatives and promote concepts that have a direct impact on the quality of life of residents.
- Engage the community and create a platform for outreach and exposure for the initiatives outlined in this Plan and the Revitalization Plan.

### Neighborhood Ambassadors Program

A Neighborhood Ambassador Program is strongly recommended. The objective of the Neighborhood Ambassador Campaign is to educate and engage residents in the redevelopment and revitalization efforts of West Columbia and its neighborhood and commercial districts through social networking events presented by the City of West Columbia and hosted by area shops and restaurants. To provide an opportunity for neighbors to get to know local businesses and the owners in a welcoming, festive atmosphere that encourages neighbors to keep these businesses “top of mind” when making their buying/dining choices. **Below is an illustration of the program:**





# NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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## Guide to Establishing and Managing a Neighborhood Ambassador Program

### Neighborhood Ambassadors are

- Liaisons between local neighborhood businesses and area residents.
- In the “Know”.
- Know the “News” (New Restaurants, New Shops, New Services).
- Share the Treasures (Iconic Restaurants, Shops, Services).
- Great Volunteers.
- Fun & Energetic!
- Attend Grand Opening Events.
- Volunteer for Special Events.
- Make a Difference.
- Encourage friends and neighbors to learn about West Columbia businesses and City redevelopment plans.

### Target Marketing

- Invitations emailed to the community within and surrounding the redevelopment districts with attention paid to West Columbia neighborhood presidents and homeowner associations. They should be contacted by phone/email to explain the program and ask them to forward the invitation to their neighborhood email list.
- Postcards should be distributed to all area businesses to hand out to customers and to cross-promote area businesses.
- Postcards should be distributed to the West Columbia Chamber via email and hard-copy.
- A local radio morning show host should be asked to promote the event program as a community-based effort.
- Press releases should be sent to all area media.
- All businesses in the West Columbia redevelopment areas should be invited to participate by attending the event and offering coupons and/or special offer for the “goodie bag”. (When space allows, participating businesses may have an opportunity to display items or host an auction).

### Monthly Events: Date, Time and Location, Registration

- Select a consistent mid-week monthly or quarterly date (i.e. third Thursday of each month).
- Select time (i.e. 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm).
- Produced by the City of West Columbia
- Hosted at a West Columbia retail shop or restaurant.
- Guests sign in at a registration table manned by City staff and/or volunteers.
- Guests receive a name tag, two beverage tickets and a “goodie bag” filled with information about the City projects and programs and special offers/coupons from area businesses.
- Additional information available for pick-up at the registration table will be items such as flyers about properties available for lease/sale in the redevelopment areas and existing development plans to promote business attraction.



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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### Guidelines

- City staff should work with each individual business owner to logistically plan and execute events.
- City should provide all rentals and materials necessary to produce the event (in the event any rental items such as tables, chairs or tents are needed and not available from host).
- The focus of the Ambassador program is to showcase the existing businesses located within the redevelopment districts and to promote available opportunities for new business growth and development within those areas.
- Each business owner that agrees to host an Ambassador event must be willing to work within the guidelines set forth by the City.

### Refreshments

- When hosted at an area restaurant, refreshments will be prepared and provided by the restaurateur.
- When hosted in an area retail shop, City Staff will arrange to showcase a restaurant or caterer located in the area being promoted.
- City Staff will coordinate event details with the restaurant or shop owner by collecting RSVP's and communicating with host.
- A price per person will be established by City Staff and event refreshment providers (whether restaurant or caterer) so that budgets are adhered to.

## 2. THE OVERALL CITY BRAND AND IMAGE

People tend to define and describe a city based on certain assets and attributes (or lack of). Once a city has undergone a branding and visioning process, it's important to convey that message and reinforce the brand. Everything from signage, print materials, city logo, tag lines, color schemes, design guidelines, regulatory guidelines, retail storefronts, building heights and connections, perception of safety, decorum at city council meetings, and even types of landscaping materials all contribute to the image of a city. The constant reminder of "WHO" the city is should be part of everyday discussion inside city hall.

### Objective

Promote the City as a desirable place to live and do business.

### Recommendations and Strategies

- Create a Citywide branding campaign as described in the previous section.
- Create community identity through architecture, furnishings and other improvements.
- Support building renovations and façade improvements for retail and "Paint/Plant/Pave Programs for housing renovations. (Discussed later under Housing and Neighborhood Pride)
- Support effective waste management and collection techniques and encourage recycling, which processes used materials (waste) into new, useful products. This is done to reduce the use of raw materials that would have been used. It uses less energy and is a great way of controlling air, water, and land pollution. The sale of recyclable materials helps defray the cost of the program. Effective waste management can safeguard health, foster sustainability and keep public spaces clean and litter-free.
- Create signature events for communities to connect and celebrate.
- Hold "Banker/Broker" Events – this program is designed to engage both the banking and brokerage industries in the redevelopment process. The Neighborhood Ambassadors can assist with the event. Information about what the City is doing to attract business and promote housing opportunities and development is provided during a fun and entertaining event. Tours can be arranged to tour the attendees around key sites to inform them of what's going on in the City. Collecting a data base of contacts begins the



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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process of ongoing communication and outreach and results in word spreading about the efforts underway.

- Implement a clean and safe program: Adequate law enforcement is required to protect property values, commercial activity levels and the quality of life of the residents. The term “clean and safe” is the modern, urban phrase for well-maintained streets and a police presence. The reputation of the City rests on the shoulders of a safe environment where residents and visitors feel safe to walk throughout the area at all times of the day and night. Community policing involves a plan that includes proper staffing and training of personnel, and engagement with the citizens and businesses of the area.
- Prepare design guidelines to address visual aesthetics of corridors, signage and properties (Highway 378 Corridor and Highway 1 Corridor).

### 3. SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Even though the City does not have direct control, or even influence over the school system, the City has a responsibility to be involved in ensuring there is coordination and communication between the two forms of government. Existing programs can be promoted to existing residents by the Neighborhood Ambassadors, and the vast amount of education opportunities can be promoted to future residents to help brand the City as a great place to raise a family. ***This in turn impacts the housing market.***

Schools and the quality of the education system in a city has a direct impact on the ability of a city to attract and retain families with school age children. Business owners will also check out the school system before relocating their headquarters or operations to a city. As they explore options for educating their children, oftentimes families will choose to leave a city they love just to access a better education system. Unfortunately for cities, there is no direct control over the education system. There is however the ability to create a message in the city brand, that education is an important issue for city leaders. This matters to families and it's a simple gesture that can be built upon. Secondly, cities can create a forum for discussion that may lead to better awareness of educational opportunities, and/or spotlight where there is a severe need for improvement by communicating with elected and management school officials.

According to District 2 of Lexington County which encompasses West Columbia, there continues to be a healthy school district with “Champions for Children”, which is their logo.

Lexington Two is in the home stretch of its \$225 million school improvements package, which when finished in 2019 will include three new schools as well as upgrades to all others, according to the District's website. The District will be celebrating new names and new locations this fall, that will be of significant benefit to West Columbia. The work is part of a package of school improvements approved by Lexington Two voters in 2014. The following improvements and changes in the West Columbia area have been accomplished thus far.

**Riverbank Elementary:** The district's newest elementary school combines Pineview and BC Grammar No. 1 elementary schools into a single facility at 160 Cougar Drive, West Columbia.

**Saluda River Academy for the Arts:** The elementary school is moving back home, at 1520 Duke St., West Columbia, after extensive renovations that include a larger media center; expanded arts space; renovated restrooms; and a new gym/cafeterium to accommodate performances and activities.

**Springdale Elementary:** This school is also moving back home, to 361 Watling Road, West Columbia, with a new cafeterium; two new and four converted classrooms in the former office/media center area; a new administration complex; and new and renovated restrooms.

A new Performing Arts Center is part of the school improvements plan for District 2. Initial reports from the School District state that it will contain about 30,000 square feet, a working stage, fly loft, and state-of-the-art sound and lighting.



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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The 2018 first quarter land deal between District 2 and Still Hopes Episcopal Retirement Community was the first step toward providing a new home in West Columbia for the Columbia Children's Theater and for development to move forward for the new \$18-\$19 million performing arts center.

Continuing activities that affect the existing school facilities and the needs of the City and its residents are in various stages of planning and development and will have a significant effect on the City of West Columbia. However, residential development anticipated within this Plan will likely represent only a small percentage of overall County population growth and therefore not have a significant effect on school population.

### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Identify the main issues associated with the school system that the City could contribute input or engage in.
2. Appoint an elected official to serve as a representative to the school board so that both sides can liaison regarding the school system.
3. Promote the positive educational resources and programs that are available for residents.
4. Seek alternatives for children who cannot or will not access these opportunities. One example is The Harlem's Children Zone (HCZ) <https://hcz.org/>. This is a nationally recognized concept that captures kids from "cradle to college". Launched in 1970 by a very passionate individual, Geoffrey Canada, who took on a monumental challenge of serving every child in Harlem by reaching them at birth and following them through their formative years. The Harlem Children's Zone is a non-profit organization for poverty-stricken children and families living in Harlem, providing free support in the form of parenting workshops, a pre-school program and other resources as children age through the system. The goal is to ensure every child is supported and accesses quality education and can attain college acceptance. The City could consider having some version of the HCZ where by block by block mentors and neighborhood leaders create an outreach system to catch kids before they fall through the system and begin a downward spiral.

## 4. HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE

In addition to the large redevelopment projects that can occur in Opportunity Areas, objectives have been established for the existing housing stock, and to attract the real estate brokerage community to participate in the housing market.

### Objective #1

Ensure that the City's housing inventory represents the image and brand of the Citywide Vision Plan by working with the private sector to create a "Healthy Mix" of housing and updating and maintaining the existing housing stock.

### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Inventory the housing stock and determine the gaps in specific housing types.
2. Create specific incentives for specific housing price points to encourage a healthy blend of housing options in various parts of the City.
3. Provide incentives to the private sector to create the mix of affordable, workforce, market rate, luxury, and mixed-income housing within the City. Incentivize housing with Increment Revenue, if necessary and when possible.



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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4. Monitor and track delinquent tax properties for acquisition and disposition according to housing needs for both low-income and workforce housing.
5. Cooperate with Lexington County for homebuyer assistance program.
6. Create and maintain a list of qualified housing developers.
7. Expedite low-income and workforce housing redevelopment approvals in under-invested areas.
8. Refer to the funding section on Pro-Neighborhoods for additional options to support these recommendations.

### **Objective #2**

Improve the dilapidated and tired image of the existing housing stock in blighted areas. Create a strong neighborhood fabric and improve neighborhood pride.

### **Recommendations and Strategies**

#### ***Initiate a Paint/Plant/Pave Program (PPP)***

Blighted or broken-down elements on the façade of a house create a syndrome referred to as “The Broken Window Syndrome”. The concept refers to the negative impact that comes from an area that has a cluster, or even a few houses, with broken windows, peeling or worn paint, dead landscaping and other blighting conditions. As properties deteriorate, neighborhood pride dissolves and more people let their properties fall into disarray. Property values then decline. Sometimes the lack of funds, especially for seniors, is a major cause of the lack of maintenance.

The PPP Program allows the City to provide assistance to homeowners to help spruce up the front of their homes. The program can be custom designed to address the issues specific to West Columbia but in general have the following guidelines:

- Painting – house, eaves, fascia board, architectural elements
- Plant - limited landscape, irrigation, pruning and replanting
- Pave – driveway improvements compatible with the area

#### **The program can include the following efforts:**

- Promote the Program - A local community sponsor is found to help promote the program. Local press is invited to promote the program and the City can inform residents in water bills or other mechanisms that reach homeowners.
- Who Qualifies? - A decision on which homes qualify depend on the goals and the issues to be addressed as well as the amount of funding available for the program. Generally, it is for homeowners not renters, however in some cases a landlord can participate unless there are multiple code violations and there is reason to believe there is lack of care on the owner’s part.
- Program Costs - The amount of funds can range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars per home. Generally, a guideline is between \$1,000 - \$5,000 depending on the program allowances and home value. Sometimes the homeowner must provide a match that would reduce the City’s portion of assistance or would increase the amount of funds available. Other times, and in cases where the homeowner doesn’t have the cash to match, they can provide in-kind services or sweat equity in the form of labor.
- Look for Sponsors - A local home improvement center should be identified to provide materials at cost or below cost



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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- Look for Technical Volunteers - The City can identify a pool of builders or subcontractors to provide man hours to “oversee” the work to be done.
- Labor Force - Local volunteers combined with stipends paid to workers generally meet the labor requirements. Neighborhood Ambassadors play a large role in this effort.
- Location of Program - The most effective approach is to target one neighborhood at a time where the results can be clearly and immediately seen for instant results. A small neighborhood block gathering can be held to showcase the improvements when done, then move on to the next neighborhood.
- Who Maintains the Improvements? - Maintenance of the improvements is mandatory and owners are required to sign a document saying they will maintain the improvements for a period of years.

In summary, the program can be customized to address the issues specific to West Columbia.

### Objective #3

Encourage the public sector – City /County/other Agencies – to create Affordable, Workforce and Mixed Income Housing within the City and support their efforts.

### Recommendations and Strategies

Provide funding and support for programs and activities that further Public Improvement initiatives in residential neighborhoods and the marketing and branding of West Columbia.

(1) The HUD funded Public Housing Agencies that serve Lexington County are the South Carolina State Housing Finance Authority and Cayce Housing Authority.

There are 33 low income housing apartment complexes which contain 1,507 affordable apartments for rent in Lexington County, South Carolina. Many of these rental apartments are income-based housing with about 5,638 apartments that set rent based on your income. Often referred to as “HUD apartments”, there are 2,854 Project-Based Section 8 subsidized apartments in Lexington County. There are 5,189 other low-income apartments that don’t have rental assistance but are still considered to be affordable housing for low income families.

There are four low income housing apartment complexes which contain 330 affordable apartments for rent in West Columbia, South Carolina. Many of these rental apartments are income-based housing with about 68 apartments that set rent based on income. The four housing complexes with West Columbia addresses are:

- Sandwood Apartments, 1151 Comanche Trail, West Columbia (outside City limits but contiguous)
- Asbury Arms, 100 Asbury Lane, West Columbia (outside City limits but contiguous)
- Gentle Pines, 566 North Brown Street, West Columbia
- Westbridge Apartments, 100 B Avenue, West Columbia

There are 262 other low-income apartments that do not have rental assistance but are still considered affordable housing for low-income families.



## NEIGHBORHOODS & QUALITY OF LIFE

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(2) The HUD funded Public Housing Agency serves West Columbia and is known as the LHA. The LHA offers rental assistance to the homeless population through its HCV special partner vouchers. The agency plans to continue to craft local initiatives to address long term needs and meet the following objectives:

- Increase the number and quality of affordable housing choices throughout Lexington County.
- Increase the number of families moving toward self-sufficiency;
- Increase and strengthen the number of community partnerships benefitting residents with special needs, especially those not adequately served elsewhere in the community and those requiring a "service-enriched" housing environment; and
- Reduce the agency's administrative costs while limiting the administrative burdens placed on staff and residents.



## FUNDING

A city's redevelopment success is heavily reliant on the amount of investment a city, or area, receives. The public sector has utilized Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for decades to generate revenue and improve designated areas. Typically, these designated districts serve different purposes with the overall goal being an increase to the quality of life and local economy. TIF funds can be used towards development projects, parking enhancements, streetscape and infrastructure improvements for example.

Public- Private Partnerships (P3s) are another way cities across the country have successfully delivered capital improvements. This type of partnership between the city and private sector community has been used to deliver projects such as entertainment and cultural facilities, governmental facilities, infrastructure improvements and land development. P3s allow both the public sector and private sector to collectively come together and deliver public enhancements to a community.

West Columbia has created a successful TIF District that has spurred activity in the Riverfront and Riverfront District. This is an example of the public and private sectors coming together and becoming a catalyst for the surrounding area and should be considered in other areas of the City.

### New Markets Tax Credits



*New Markets Tax Credit Eligibility Map*

In addition to the newly proposed Opportunity Zones, the above map illustrates areas of West Columbia that are eligible for New Markets Tax Credits. The New Markets Tax Credit Incentive Program provides low-interest, private-sector financing for commercial and mixed-use projects in low-income areas. Eligible projects must meet a minimum capital investment of \$5 million and varying job creation thresholds for consideration. Tax credits totaling 39 percent of the original investment amount are issued to individual and corporate investors making one-time, upfront equity contributions to qualified development projects through community development entities and claimed over a period of seven years. In the map above, areas shaded in blue represent those eligible for new markets tax credits. Developers of residential, multifamily, and mixed-use projects are candidates for this program. Projects such as proposed for the Brookland-Lakeview area and the former Colite property may qualify for this program.

This federal program incentivizes business and real estate investment in low-income communities of the United States via a federal tax credit. It is administered by the US Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund and allocated by local Community Development Entities across the United States. A significant portion of the City of West Columbia meets the criteria for the NMTC program (see previous referenced map).



## FUNDING

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### PRO Neighborhoods

PRO Neighborhoods is a \$125 million, five-year initiative by JPMorgan Chase & Co. to help bring economic opportunity to distressed neighborhoods across the country. One component of PRO Neighborhoods' work entails commissioning research that identifies challenges facing various communities to arm local Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) as they form collaboratives to tackle those challenges. That commitment to data and analysis is a significant component of the firm's model for impact, which helps develop inclusive growth through strategic philanthropic investments in crucial pillars of economic development. Example: \$5,000,000 Rental Housing Innovations in Crisis Areas of Orlando MSA/Urban Florida (Orlando, FL)

### Federal Incentive Opportunity Zones

The West Columbia Opportunity Zones Designation was recently received by the City, one of the only cities in the area to get three zones selected for this program. This program provides a federal tax incentive for taxpayers who reinvest unrealized capital gains into "Opportunity Funds," which are specialized avenues dedicated to investing in low-income areas called "Opportunity Zones." The designation of these areas will work to enhance the City's redevelopment and revitalization plans.

This new federal tax incentive program will help spur industrial and commercial development in the City by companies and encourage investors to consider West Columbia as an investment opportunity. The Opportunity Zones program recently passed in a \$1.3 trillion spending bill in Congress to encourage long term private-sector investment in low-income census tracts across the U.S.

Of South Carolina's 1,097 census tracts, 538 — 49 percent — of those communities were designated as eligible, low-income tracts for the Opportunity Zone status by the U.S. Treasury Department, based on census data criteria. States could select 25 percent of eligible communities for the program, narrowing South Carolina's to 135 areas from across the state. Each of the state's 46 counties has at least one proposed zone. The sites are a mix of poorer rural areas across the state and, in some cases, ripe business real estate in suburban counties just outside major cities such as Charleston.

Other factors influencing the selection of these areas include demographics, labor force participation rate, unemployment rate and median household income. These areas will be eligible for tax incentives designed to encourage companies to create businesses — both industrial and commercial — in these tracts. The program also encourages private-sector investors to keep their businesses in these communities, offering more incentives the longer they stay.

### The intent of the designation is to focus on the following areas:

- Promoting economic vitality in parts of the state that have not shared in the general prosperity over the past few years;
- Fund the development of workforce and affordable housing in areas with escalating prices and inventory shortages;
- Fund new infrastructure to support population and economic growth;
- Invest in startup businesses who have a potential for rapid increases in scale; and
- Upgrade the capability of existing underutilized assets through capital improvement investments.

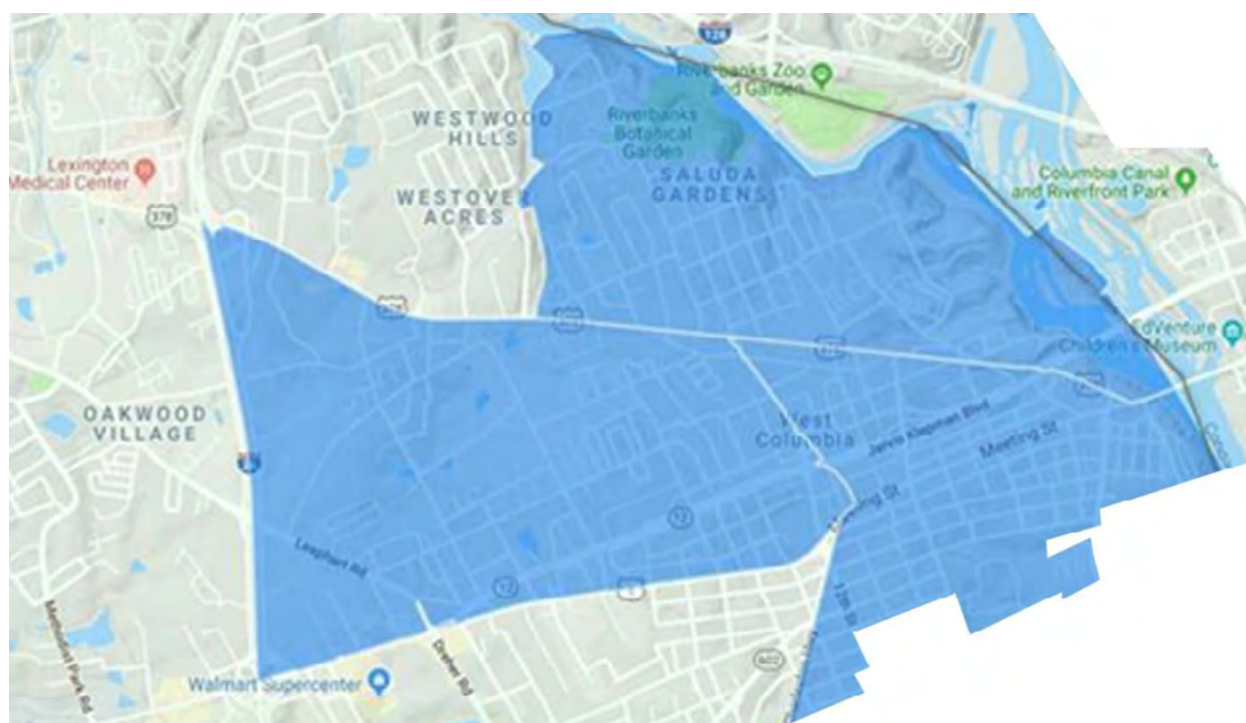


## FUNDING

**The Opportunity Zones program offers investors the following incentives for putting their capital to work in low-income communities:**

- Investors can roll existing capital gains into Opportunity Funds with no up-front tax bill;
- A 5-year holding increases the rolled-over capital gains basis by 10%;
- A 7-year holding increases the rolled-over capital gain investment basis 5% for a total of 15%;
- Investors can defer their original tax bill until December 31, 2026 at the latest, or until they sell their Opportunity Fund investments, if earlier;
- And Opportunity fund investments held in the fund for at least 10 years are not taxed for capital gains.

The program is still in its early stages, but it will be an economic development tool to encourage growth in these areas.



*Opportunity Zones Map*

### Grants

#### **South Carolina Community Development Block Grant Program**

Provides grants to eligible local governments (towns, cities and counties) that do not directly receive CDBG funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. CDBG grants can fund a wide variety of projects from revitalizing neighborhoods to improving community infrastructure, providing public facilities and creating or retaining jobs. The county administers this program on behalf of West Columbia. The state program is administered by the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Grants Administration. **South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA)** makes grant assistance available in two competitive program categories:

- **Basic Infrastructure**

Funding will assist communities in bringing facilities into compliance with environmental quality standards, protecting the public health from other environmental concerns or improving the capacity of existing infrastructure.

- **Economic Infrastructure**



## FUNDING

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Funding will help build local infrastructure capacity to support economic development that will create or retain jobs and boost opportunities for long-term community sustainability.

The maximum grant award for both categories is typically \$500,000.

### **The State Revolving Funds**

State revolving funds are federally capitalized loan programs for water and waste water infrastructure projects. The programs offer low-interest financing for waste water treatment and collection, drinking water supply and distribution, water quality, and storm water infrastructure. It is jointly administered by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control and the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority. In the past 27 years, more than \$1.2 billion in SRF loans have been closed, ranging in size from less than \$500,000 to \$35 million for clean water (sewer) and drinking water projects.

### **The Existing Industry Program**

Part of SC Commerce offers assessment services to industries in every county to help them achieve peak performance. This program helps connect industry with local and state entities.

### **Tony Hawk Foundation**

Principal focus is to encourage and facilitate the design, development, construction and operation of new, quality skateboard parks and facilities in low-income communities throughout the United States. The Foundation provides support to parks that are designed and built by qualified and experienced contractors, include local skaters in the design process, and demonstrate a strong grassroots commitment to the project. Also, parks that have a creative mix of obstacles and terrain, don't over-regulate or restrict access to the park, don't charge money, and are in areas that currently have no skateboarding facilities are preferred. Nonprofit organizations and government agencies, including public schools, are eligible to apply.

### **Community Programs**

A division of the Housing and Community Facilities Programs is part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development mission area. Community Programs administers programs designed to develop essential community facilities for public use in rural areas. These facilities include schools, libraries, childcare, hospitals, medical clinics, assisted living facilities, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers, public buildings and transportation.

### **Purpose Built Communities**

Purpose Built Communities is working to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. They accomplish that by helping local leaders transform struggling neighborhoods and bringing together the vital components necessary for holistic community revitalization: high quality mixed-income housing, an effective cradle-to-college education pipeline, and comprehensive community wellness resources, organized and driven by a single purpose non-profit community quarterback. This non-profit consulting firm works with local leaders to implement a holistic approach to revitalizing distressed neighborhoods. By applying the holistic model to areas of concentrated urban poverty around the nation, Purpose Built Communities is helping local leaders make a positive impact in some of this country's most distressed neighborhoods.

The Northside Initiative in Spartanburg, S.C., led by the Northside Development Corporation, represents a successful, comprehensive approach to community redevelopment that is without precedent in the state. The transformation involves a collective effort of dozens of partners representing local business, health care, education, non-profit and philanthropic sectors, as well as significant contributions from private citizens and residents.



## FUNDING

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The Northside Development Corporation was formed in 2011 and included a collective of dozens of partners representing local business, health care, education, non-profit and philanthropic sectors, with significant contributions from private citizens and residents. Some of the accomplishments to date include \$2 million in secured funds to obtain property for a Master Revitalization Plan that includes 700 units of mixed income rental housing and 30 or more single family homes. The cradle to college initiative resulted in the Cleveland Academy of Leadership receiving a Palmetto Award from the State Department of Education for its growth in student test scores. Several areas of discussion in West Columbia are perfect candidates for this type of program.

### Historic Buildings and Abandoned Buildings

In South Carolina there are also several tax incentives to help with the costs of preserving historic buildings. Both owner-occupied historic homes and historic buildings used to produce income -- stores, offices, apartment buildings, for example -- may be eligible for tax incentives.

A taxpayer who is allowed a federal income tax credit pursuant to Section 47 of the Internal Revenue Code for making qualified rehabilitation expenditures for a certified historic structure located in this State is allowed to claim a credit against a combination of income taxes and license fees imposed by this title. A taxpayer may elect a twenty-five percent tax credit in lieu of the ten percent tax credit, not to exceed one million dollars for each certified historic structure.

A taxpayer who rehabilitates an abandoned building is eligible for either:

- a credit against income taxes imposed pursuant to Chapter 6 and Chapter 11 of this title, corporate license fees pursuant to Chapter 20 of this title, taxes on associations pursuant to Chapter 13 of this title, or insurance premium taxes, including retaliatory taxes, imposed by Chapter 7, Title 38, or a combination of them; or
- a credit against real property taxes levied by local taxing entities.

South Carolina boasts the following:

- No local income taxes, inventory, state property taxes
- No sales tax on manufacturing machinery, industrial power or materials for finished products
- No wholesale taxes
- No unitary tax on worldwide profits
- Favorable corporate income tax structure

### Job Tax Credit Program

Manufacturing, processing, warehouse and distribution, research & development, agribusiness operations, research and development and qualifying technology intensive facilities and corporate office facilities who have created a minimum monthly average of ten (10) net new jobs.

Corporate office facilities housing the majority of the headquarters functions must create a monthly average of ten (10) new jobs.

Certain health care and social assistance service-related firms may qualify. The minimum job creation requirement in such firms varies from county-to-county. Other factors such as average wages paid in the state and the locality, the occupation of a building that's been vacant for more than 12 months and other factors. The job tax credit is available for a five-year period beginning with Year 2 (Year 1 is used to establish the created job levels) if the jobs are maintained.



## FUNDING

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### Corporate Headquarters Credit

Companies establishing or expanding a corporate headquarters facility in South Carolina are allowed a credit against South Carolina corporate income or license taxes equal to 20% of the qualifying costs of establishing a corporate headquarters in South Carolina or expanding an existing corporate headquarters. Corporate Headquarters facilities are defined as the facility where corporate staff employees are physically employed and where the majority of the company's financial, personnel, legal, planning, information technology or other related functions are handled on a regional, national or global basis.

The credit is made up of two parts including real and personal property. The company may qualify for either or both parts of the credit. The corporate headquarters credit is not limited in its ability to eliminate corporate income or license taxes, and unused credits may be carried forward for up to 10 years.

### Investment Tax Credit

South Carolina allows companies a credit against income tax for its investment in new qualified manufacturing and production equipment. The property must be tangible, depreciable, and used as an integral part of manufacturing, production, or providing transportation, communications, or utility services.

### City Grant Programs

The City currently has a Façade Improvement Grant Program designed to encourage enhancement and investment to the overall revitalization of West Columbia. This program provides grant funds to finance exterior improvements to a commercial building that will be aesthetically pleasing and complimentary to local design guidelines. The eligible area for this program is the Gateway Overlay District. The City also has a Fats, Oil and Grease Grant Program to assist existing Food Service Industries who work with this type of material and need to upgrade their existing apparatus in order to prevent FOG from entering the City's sewer system per EPA Standards.

### Tax Increment Revenues

Tax Increment Revenue is an attractive source of funding for redevelopment projects. There may be options to target tax increment districts in certain neighborhoods or for targeted redevelopment projects.

### Redevelopment Revenue Bonds

Redevelopment revenue bonds can be issued to fund major projects depending on the ability to leverage debt. A financial analysis is needed to determine the most appropriate form of debt to fund the initiatives within this plan

### Direct Borrowing from Commercial Lenders

Most cities are authorized to fund redevelopment projects and programs through direct borrowing of funds. Depending on the project(s) funding requirements, and state and municipal charters and regulations, the City may utilize both short and long-term borrowing.

### Corporate Sponsorships

This is an excellent way for the community business leadership to participate in the redevelopment and improvement of the City. A strategic plan to attract sponsorships will need to be created to achieve this objective.



## FUNDING

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### Recommendations and Strategies

1. Create additional Tax Increment Financing Districts when warranted
2. Seek State and Regional Partners
3. Engage Philanthropic Organizations such as Purpose-Built Communities
4. Explore Employer-Assisted Housing
5. Attract Private Equity
6. Generate Revenue through Corporate Sponsorships



## REDEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

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Successful redevelopment and revitalization is a team effort. It is not only the purview of economic developers, but that of the entire City organization in partnership with the local business and residential community. Responsiveness, meaningful information, and credibility are key values that are necessary for successful implementation. Additionally, there are several key resource areas that support redevelopment efforts.

### **Redevelopment Administration and Assignment of responsibilities**

The City staff is the first line of resources available to implement a plan. This Citywide Redevelopment Plan is a guide and a tool for the City to utilize for decades to keep the focus on well documented and vetted projects and programs. This will guide the future vision of the City over an extended period of time and therefore must outlast changes in staff and elected officials.

A thorough analysis of WHO will implement the plan is needed to ensure success and accountability. It will not be enough to simply assign these tasks to already burdened existing City staff, or to assign tasks that are beyond the technical ability of a staff member. The attached matrix includes an area for the City to thoroughly discuss the strategy of implementation by clearly identifying who will be responsible for each initiative. This will likely prompt the need to create priorities since there will never be enough staff resources or funding to do everything all at once.

### **Lobbying and Lobbyists**

The City is competing with multiple cities and states when they seek funding for projects and programs, therefore, it's essential to ensure there is adequate representation in both capitals. Hired lobbyists are an option, however, the most effective approach is the combination of hired personnel and a team of delegates made up of local elected officials and businesses. This approach can make the difference between securing or losing funding for major roadway, transportation or public improvement projects.

### **Traffic Circulation**

Redevelopment impacts traffic, so the sooner the relationships are forged with the Department of Transportation and other entities impacting traffic flow the better. As part of this redevelopment effort, it is anticipated that the City will make a significant investment in improving roadways, including street reconstructions, lighting, beautification, landscaping, traffic calming, and pedestrian walkway enhancement. These improvements should result in better traffic flow and enhanced mobility for pedestrians and non-motorized transport.

Congestion at the Interstates where they intersect is being addressed currently by the South Carolina Department of Transportation. Highway 378 continues to have tremendous traffic and congestion. This situation affects the City and its residents, and may influence business decisions, and people looking to locate in the City. The City should be active in the discussions and advocacy regarding these road improvements.

Implementation of individual redevelopment projects may require improvements or modifications to the existing roadway network. These localized impacts will be reviewed when specific projects are approved. It is also recommended that architectural and site-specific design solutions be considered to mitigate potential traffic and parking impacts of specific projects on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

### **Environmental Quality**

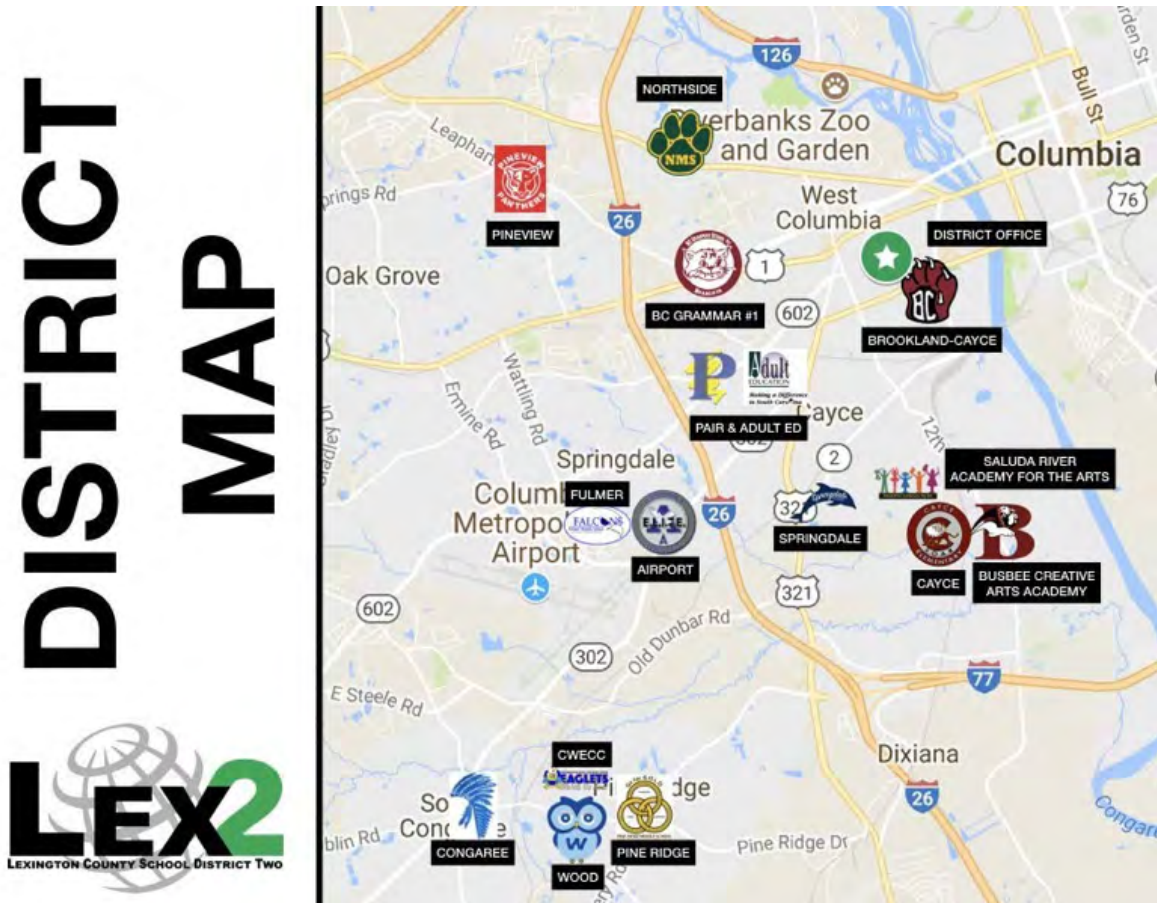
The Redevelopment Goals and Initiatives proposed in this Plan are intended to improve the environmental quality within the City of West Columbia. Several initiatives, such as the Façade Improvement Grant Program will provide funding for businesses and commercial property owners in the City to make exterior improvements to their properties. It is anticipated that improvements resulting from these programs will foster a new sense of community pride and spur additional revitalization efforts throughout the area, further reducing slum and blighted conditions. Streetscape and landscape improvements associated with redevelopment projects will, when completed, upgrade the overall appearance of the area. Future redevelopment will improve the appearance of Riverfront West Columbia and the Commercial Corridors throughout the City. The City's and private developers' efforts will significantly improve environments in residential neighborhoods throughout the City.



## REDEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

### Availability of Community Facilities and Services

The City of West Columbia provides a full range of community services and facilities. However, due to the age of existing facilities, there is a potential problem with conditions and obsolete design. Implementation of individual redevelopment projects and public improvements may require modifications to existing systems by both the public and private sector. The Revitalization Plan addresses the issue of gentrification and provides solutions.



District 2 of Lexington County is a very healthy school district. Currently there are plans that affect the existing school facilities and the needs of the City and its residents. These activities are in various stages of planning and development and will have a significant effect on the City of West Columbia.

Adequate law enforcement is required to protect property values, commercial activity levels and the quality of life of the residents. Community policing Recommendations and Strategies designed to reduce crime are important for redevelopment. As discussed earlier in this Plan, the term "clean and safe" is the modern, urban phrase for well-maintained streets and a police presence. The reputation of the City rests on the shoulders of a safe environment where residents and visitors feel safe to walk throughout the area at all times of the day and night. Community policing involves a plan that includes proper staffing and training of personnel, and engagement with the citizens and businesses of the area.

Implementation of this Plan will supplement City and County infrastructure projects and encourage private development in the area.



## CONCLUSION

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**This Redevelopment Plan is designed to provide a framework, recommendations and strategies to realize West Columbia's goals.**

This Redevelopment Plan is based on market reality, community character, and opportunity. It is realistic, actionable and achievable. It supports smart growth, tax base enhancement, job and wealth creation, and quality of life.

Reinventing a city takes a vision, strong leadership, a plan and a team to implement the plan. Redevelopment is about bringing people together. It's about how they feel when they are in West Columbia. It's about creating a culture of hospitality. And it's about providing a clean and safe environment for the citizens.

It's also about providing connections and attractive public spaces that encourage people to participate in their community. Consequently, over time the economy is expanded and employment opportunities for people of all income levels become available. That is the goal of redevelopment.

Through public engagement, strategic planning, public commitment, and ongoing development support, West Columbia is poised to take the next steps forward in the redevelopment of the City.

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***"The lack of resources is no longer an excuse not to act. The idea that action should only be taken after all the answers and the resources have been found is sure recipe for paralysis. The planning of a city is a process that allows for corrections; it is supremely arrogant to believe that planning can be done only after every possible variable has been controlled."***

***Jaime Lerner – Architect, urbanist, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil***