



A MASTER PLAN FOR MIDTOWN COLUMBUS

for
The MidTown Project
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This Technical Appendix is a supplement to the MidTown Project Master Plan Summary report. It includes additional background information obtained and analyzed during the course of the project.

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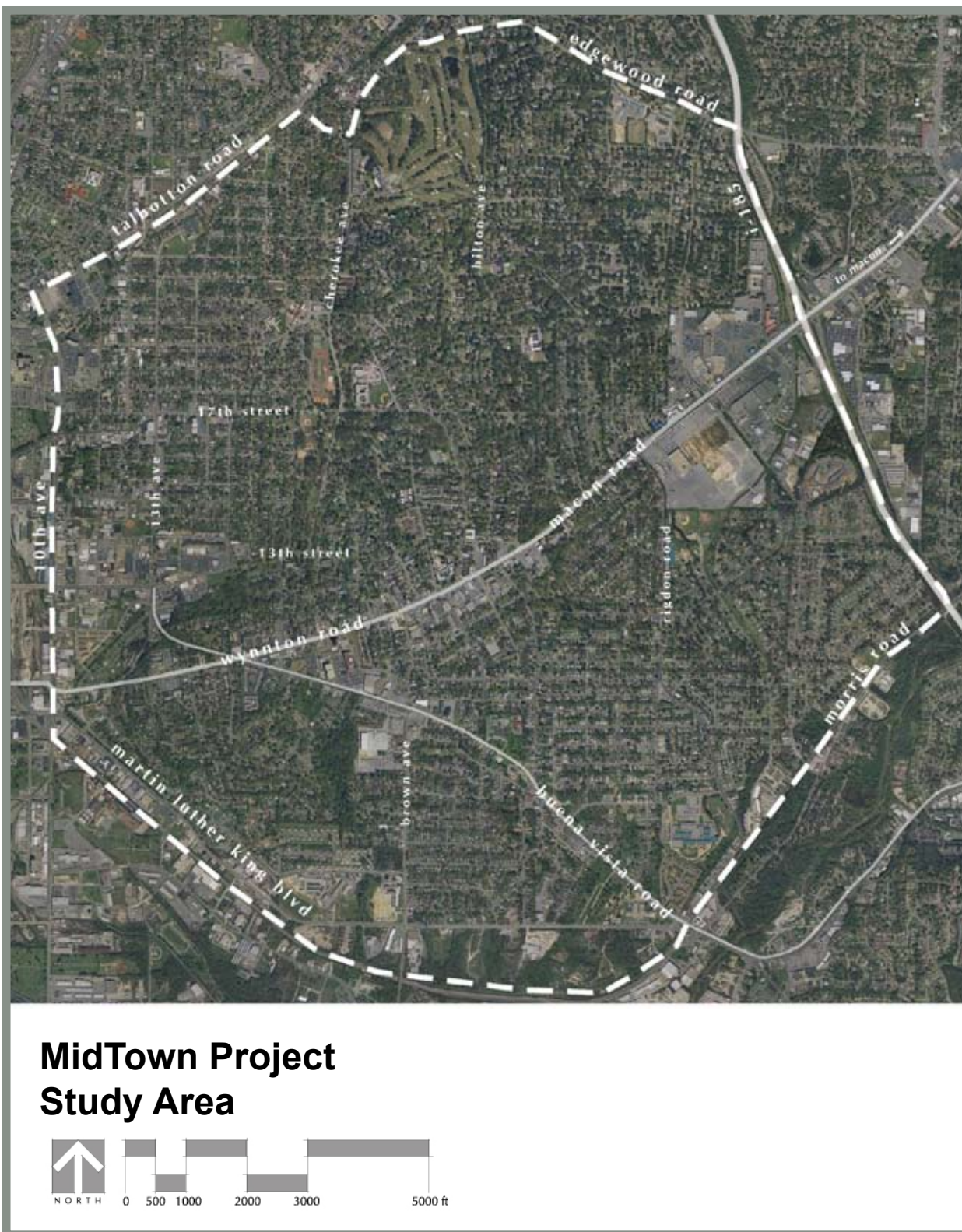


Figure IA.1: Midtown Columbus Study Area

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A. Community Patterns

Overview

Streets and blocks are defining characteristics of a community. While buildings and land uses often evolve, the platting pattern of a community may remain unchanged for centuries. Blocks and streets are the “bones” of a community. And just as bone structure defines the height and stature of an individual, so the arrangement of block and street patterns affects a community and the way that people relate to it, live in it, or move through it.

The placement and massing of buildings and streets can work together to form a whole greater than the individual parts. Spatial forms impact our psychological reaction to specific environments. For example, the relationship of adjacent building heights to the width of a street affects both pedestrians and motorists by providing a sense or lack of enclosure. Pedestrians feel safer and motorists drive slower when buildings and trees line the street and the ratio of building height to street width is no greater than 1:3.

Street Patterns

There are two principal types of block and street patterns: dendritic and interconnected.

1. **Dendritic** street systems are made up of many small and disconnected local streets that feed into fewer collector streets that, in turn, feed into even fewer arterials. Because this pattern contains many dead-end local streets it forces all traffic onto collectors and arterials and results in large block sizes and increased trip distances.

The dendritic pattern unnecessarily increases travel distance and thereby discourages walking and bicycling. It encourages traffic congestion on collectors and arterials, and creates a transportation system that is prone to shutdown when incidents disrupt traffic on arterials. Its creation of longer trips also supports conventional suburban-style land uses marked by automobile orientation, separation of use, and disregard for the quality of the streetscape. These great distances also have a direct impact on the ability of emergency vehicles to respond to situations in an efficient manner.

2. **Interconnected** street systems are made up of a series of small and medium sized streets arranged in a grid or modified grid pattern. In this pattern, virtually all streets connect to other streets. This provides small blocks, ensures many possible routes of travel and eliminates the need for wide and high traffic arterials and collectors.

The interconnected street pattern encourages walking, bicycling and other forms of non-motorized transportation because it increases the likelihood of being able to make a trip without being forced onto a high-speed, high-volume arterial or collector. It also tends to support pedestrian-oriented land uses by allowing land uses to be closer together, thus increasing the opportunities for shared parking and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes.

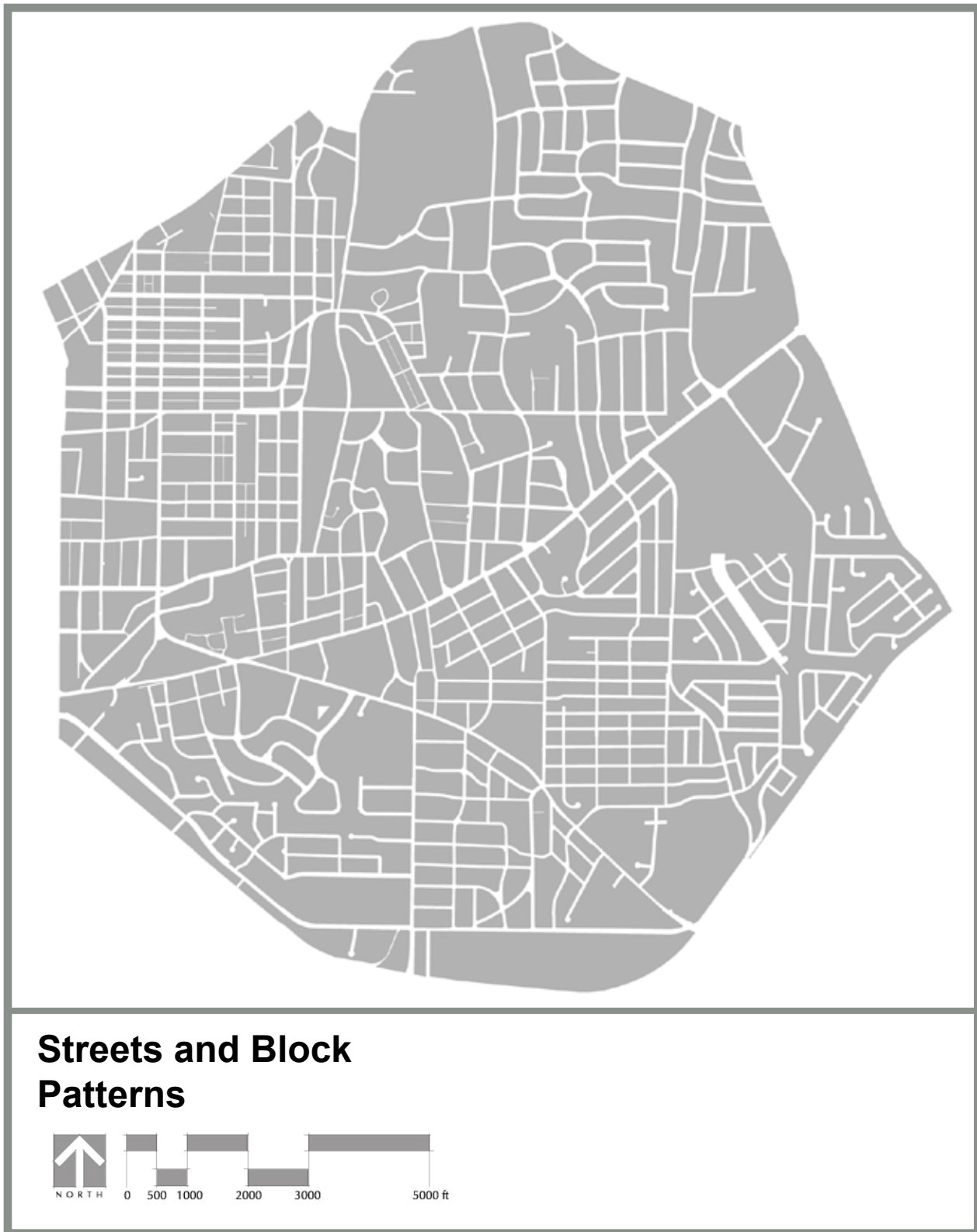


Figure 1A.2: Streets and Block Patterns

Research supports an interconnected system over a dendritic system for its ability to better balance pedestrian and vehicular needs. Both cars and pedestrians operate more efficiently when many routes of travel are available.

Defining Community Character

The arrangement of streets can also define significant public spaces and building sites. In traditional community design, important buildings were often located at the end of a street vista, on a prominent corner, or across from a significant open space.

The arrangement of buildings and spaces also impacts a community's physically defining characteristics. Traditional urban form is vertically oriented with interconnected, multi-story buildings forming a seamless facade within each block. Identity is achieved through the sum-of-the-parts, often supported by consistency of architectural style. In contrast, retail and residential suburban development since WWII is horizontally oriented, with free-standing low-rise buildings set within substantial landscape or asphalt buffers. Identity is focused on the individual building or space, often without regard to adjacent conditions.



This church occupies a prominent position in the urban landscape, contributing to the overall community character.

Existing Conditions

The majority of the Midtown Study Area was developed in the early twentieth century with a well-defined and dignified community form. Each neighborhood has unique qualities in setbacks, house styles, street dimensions, and block shapes. Well-proportioned and orderly streets are the hallmark of this historic area. Due to the large proportion of single family homes, Midtown has an overall traditional suburban small town community character. Building heights, with the exception of the AFLAC headquarters building on Wynnton Road, are usually one to two stories in height.

Certain areas have a retail "village" atmosphere with parking to the rear and storefronts along the sidewalk. These nodal forms of development encourage neighborly interaction, instill a sense of place, and promote smaller-scale retail. The most notable occurrences are along: 13th Street at Delauney Ave, where significant redevelopment attention has turned a historic storefront row into modern shops; Wynnton Road between Lawyers Lane and Cedar Avenue; 13th Street between 13th Ave and 10th Ave; Wildwood Road at Wynnton Road; at the north end of Weracoba Park near Garrard and 18th Ave.; and to a lesser extent, at the fork of Rigdon and Illges Roads. These are important focal points of neighborhoods - architecturally, practically and symbolically - that should be given proper attention in a revitalization strategy.

However, other parts of the Study Area - especially along Macon Road and the Cross Country Plaza environs, and in Wynnton Village - lack the aforementioned retail nodal structure. Most recent developments by chain retailers include individually styled, disconnected buildings with large amounts of parking between the building and street. These poorly defined open spaces and accompanying vehicular circulation patterns seriously undermine the age-old urban fabric found at these historic resources.

The street/block pattern in Midtown is made up of a variety of interconnected forms, including:

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The manner in which these buildings relate to the street and sidewalk increases pedestrian comfort by hiding parking and putting their “face” first.



Newer development patterns contrast to the preexisting Wynnnton Village context. The experience of the street is de-emphasized, with individual buildings and automobile access now the main focus.

- a 300' x 600' grid-like pattern of street and alleys in the East Highlands area;
- the beautiful undulating system of Wynn's Hill/Overlook;
- the Olmstedian curves and response to topography of Peacock Woods/Dimon Circle;
- and the modified grid found in Wynnnton Village, Hilton Heights, Boxwood Estates and the area around Lindsay Creek.

The different styles of grids make this area a rich and interesting experience for any mode of travel and contribute to an array of neighborhood forms—from flowing organically placed houses to more orthogonal arrangements of lined-up porches and front yards.

Blocks within the Study Area are small to medium in size, ranging from 250' x 250' to 300' x 1200'. The largest block (excluding the Country Club) is the site of the new Muscogee County Library on Macon Road. Redevelopment at that site should include careful attention to breaking down its size and scale with carefully articulated public streets, appropriate street to building ratios, and interconnectivity.

B. Public Realm

Overview

Public spaces are the physical foundation upon which communities flourish. Plazas, parks, national/state forests, and other public spaces are the common ground shared by all. In a world where people find themselves increasingly isolated by technology and fast-paced lifestyles, many are recognizing the value of these public spaces and seeking communities where they can connect with neighbors. Because well-designed public spaces are rarely included in typical development today, the historic places that contain these amenities are increasing in value and importance. In fact, one of today's real estate trends is the neo-traditional community where public spaces are again part of daily life. The inclusion of parks and open spaces in a new development has been shown to increase values up to 20% for adjacent and nearby properties.

Public Space Categories

The five major categories of public space generally found in the United States include:

1. **Streets and sidewalks** are the most often used public spaces in towns and cities. In addition to serving as a conduit for transportation, streets and sidewalks can also encourage human interaction and community building. Streets can serve as parade routes or the location of special festivals, while sidewalks can provide room for cafe dining, street furniture, and shade-providing trees.
2. **Plazas** are hardscaped gathering spaces located in a town or city center and surrounded by commercial, mixed-use, and/or civic buildings. Plazas often include fountains, benches and similar elements. Their entire surface is accessible to the public and consists of stone, concrete, or durable pavement interspersed with trees and limited plant materials.
3. **Parks** are landscaped recreation and gathering places that can be located in any area of a town or city. They may be surrounded by residential or commercial buildings, and are often the focal points of neighborhoods. In addition to trees, lawns and paths, parks may include picnic facilities, drinking fountains, benches, and playgrounds. Larger parks may incorporate ponds, sports fields, and courts. Well-designed parks are defined at their edges by streets.
4. **Greenways** are linear parks that can serve as corridors for transportation, wildlife migration, or protection of key habitats that occur in a linear manner, such as the riparian zones along creeks and rivers. Greenways can also connect plazas, parks and conservation lands, sometimes at the edge of a well designed roadway within a wider right-of-way.
5. **Conservation Lands** protect and enhance areas of environmental and historic significance and are typically located at the edge of town. Because their primary purpose is the protection of open space, they can include camping sites and trails.



This greenway in Athens, Georgia links acres of natural amenities and provides miles of recreational opportunities.

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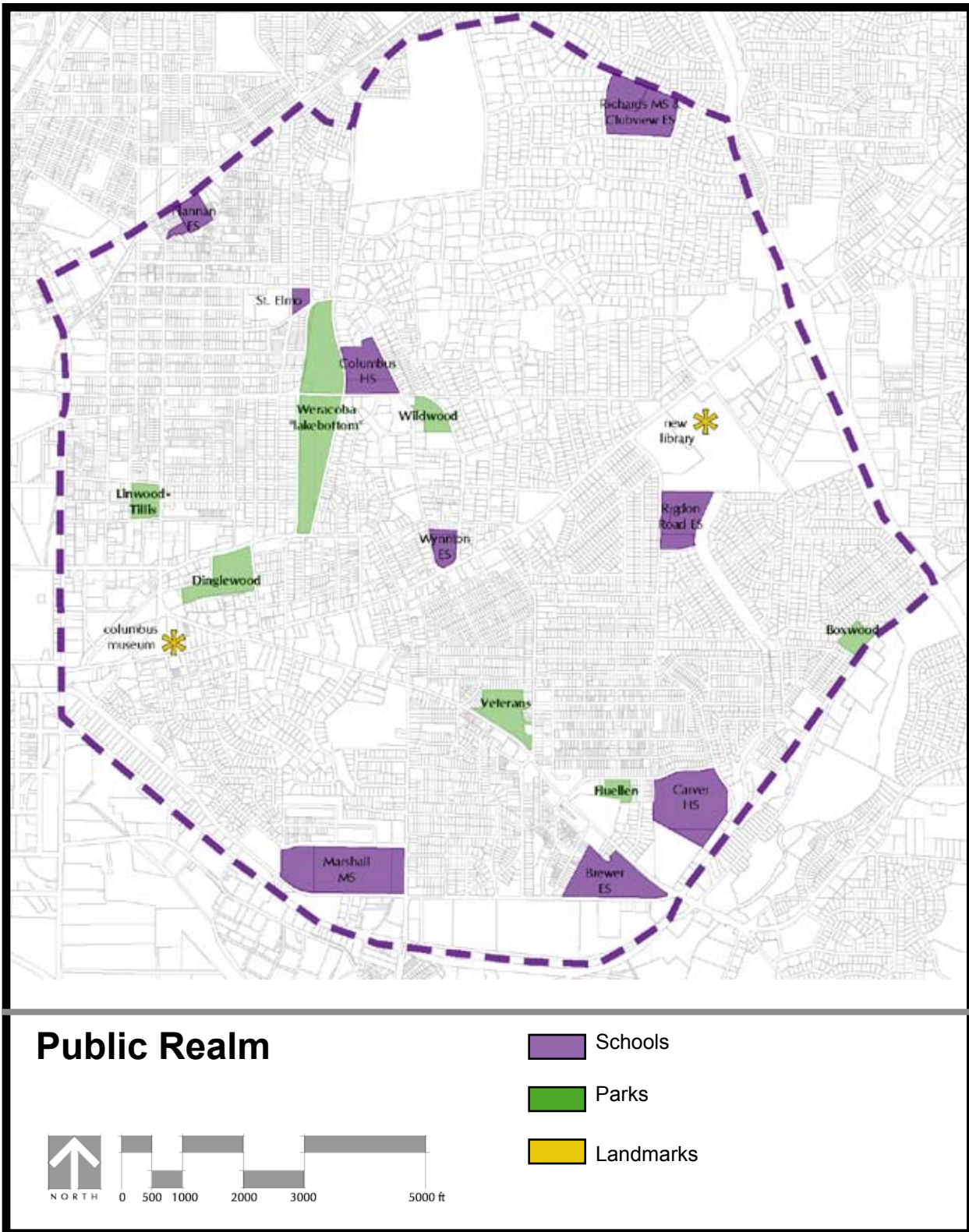


Figure 1A.3: Public Realm.

In addition, civic facilities such as schools, libraries, and Town Halls play an important role in providing places for community interaction.

Existing Conditions

For the majority of the study area basic notions of public realm have been maintained. Historic neighborhoods, such as Weracoba, East Wynnton, and Overlook include enjoyable public spaces. Nine public schools are located within Midtown, and the new library will provide a significant public facility enjoyable by many county residents. Sidewalks are found throughout of the study area.

Numerous parks in MidTown serve a variety of needs, although some would benefit from increased visibility and physical improvements. Two parks on Buena Vista Road appear underused because of little activity at their edges and lack of park improvements. Dinglewood Park off Warren Williams Blvd could be an even greater asset with a small amount of intervention. Nearly all the schools contain beneficial green spaces though some school sites could be further integrated into the community by enhancements along their edges and primary building placement.

Weracoba Park

The demand for quality public space is clearly shown in Columbus in the popularity of Weracoba (Lake-bottom) Park. From both a real estate and community perspective, the benefits to the City of Columbus and MidTown residents provided by this public park cannot be underestimated. The design, layout, and variety of elements make Weracoba one of the most well designed and implemented urban parks in Georgia. A quick list of its attributes could serve as a benchmark for future park expansions and acquisitions within Muscogee County.

- This natural amenity preserves and celebrates (for a short segment) the Weracoba Creek and serves as a sustainable means for handling floodwaters;
- By ringing roads around its perimeter, Weracoba supports full public access and a sense of ownership along its edges;
- Residential and commercial development occurs along the perimeter and faces into the park, creating safety and visibility through “eyes-on-the-street;”
- Curved and tapered road designs shape the park, creating excitement and dynamic form, while on-street parking shields users from traveling autos;
- Mixed land uses around the park (educational, neighborhood retail, institutional, civic, single-family and multifamily residential) promotes park use during all hours of the day;



While this landscape along Macon Road is the “public realm”, its experience is neither memorable nor enjoyable.



Veterans Park along Buena Vista Road is seen here in its green splendor. Simple improvements and attention to its edges could make it a stronger attraction for the surrounding neighborhoods.

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- The park is located within a stable, established historic neighborhood;
- Shared use of athletic fields by both Columbus High School and the Muscogee citizenry efficiently and economically accommodates the needs of multiple user groups;
- A broad range of amenities meet both active and passive recreational needs;
- Additional amenities support use by a range of age groups - from playgrounds and tennis courts to simple walking paths and benches;
- The park's scale (40 acres) fits its context, and its dimensions (800 feet at its widest and 4000 feet long) allow many homes within close proximity;
- and, shady areas with mature trees and sunny open swaths further support a range of experiences.



Park users enjoying Weracoba Park. A simple walking trail at the edge of the park serves as a multi-purpose gathering space.

Lindsay Creek

There is potential to repeat the success of Weracoba Park at Lindsay Creek, especially where the creek flows behind the old Mall site. Not only would a floodplain park catalyze new development and give a focus to the overall site but it could serve as an important community gathering spot. Portions of Lindsay Creek could be restored to a natural state, accompanied by a greenway trail system that could link Columbus State University and the Chattahoochee Riverwalk. Environmental restoration, alternative transportation, and the public realm could harmoniously intertwine here.

Such a project is consistent with the goals of the 2000 Columbus Community Greenspace Report and the Columbus Greenspace Program. The City seeks to permanently protect natural resources such as flood plain areas, local parks, targeted agricultural and forestry areas, historic resources, wildlife habitat, and greenway corridors to meet a Muscogee County goal of 20% permanently protected open space.



Lindsay Creek is an under utilized natural feature relegated to a banal concrete culvert protected by chain-link fencing.

The Columbus Community Greenspace Report identified several locations within MidTown for permanent protection through conservation easements:

- Lakebottom/Weracoba Park (46.3 acres);
- Drainage areas on 13th St. between 16th Ave. and 18th Ave. (2.27 acres), and at 13th St. and Owsley Ave. (.31 acre);
- Dinglewood Park and Littlewood Park (20.2 acres).

Other Public Realm Opportunities

Parks are just one type of public realm element. A simple plaza in the right location or a tree lined street of outdoor cafes can achieve similar support for community building. The new Muscogee County Library on Macon Road, as well as MidTown's existing and potential commercial nodes are public realm opportunities that will be pursued in this plan.

C. Historic Districts, Buildings and Sites

Columbus' rich heritage, vast stock of surviving historic resources, and strong preservation ethic surpasses that of most communities in Georgia and across the nation. While much of the community's preservation efforts during the past several decades have focused on downtown and the original portion of the city, the MidTown area also has its share of historic properties and neighborhoods. In looking at the overall physical evolution of Columbus, MidTown can be viewed as the second major phase of growth, occurring during the first half of the 20th century. No plan for MidTown would be complete without an evaluation of the study area's historic resources and programs to protect them. This section of the inventory and analysis for MidTown addresses the following four issues related to historic resources and historic preservation programs:

- Historic Sites Inventory
- National & State Register Historic Resources
- Local Historic Preservation Program
- Preservation & Rehabilitation Incentives

It is noteworthy that many of the issues addressed in this section apply not only to MidTown, but to the city-wide preservation program as well. For example, Columbus has a single historic preservation ordinance that applies to the entire city and all of its local historic districts. Therefore, this section's critique of that ordinance would not be limited to considerations for MidTown only.

Historic Resources Survey

In order to preserve historic and cultural resources, a community must first identify those existing resources and place them in one or more historical, cultural and architectural contexts to make judgments about their significance and value. Therefore, historic resources surveys are planned, undertaken and maintained to identify significant properties. Published and disseminated inventories of these historic sites are central to raising a community's awareness of its cultural heritage, and they are important to its planning efforts. The most important resources identified through surveys have potential for designation not only as local landmarks and districts, but for listing at the state and National Register levels as well. Moreover, the research materials, photographs and other documentation generated by a survey create an irreplaceable record of the present condition of that heritage, and an indispensable teaching tool for expanding community awareness and understanding of the historic built environment.

MidTown's historic resources were surveyed most recently in 2000. That survey was part of a county-wide historic resources survey that was conducted by a consultant and funded by a local philanthropist. The survey records are presently stored in two places: with the State Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division and with the Historic Columbus Foundation, Inc. Along with the individual survey forms for each property, there is also a 100-page survey report, which includes maps. The report is organized around 11 different areas of the city, and each area combines adjacent neighborhoods. With respect to MidTown, most of the historic areas predating roughly the 1950s are included, while neighborhoods that developed during the 1960s and 1970s are not. Although a standard form was used for each property, most of the information is relatively general and there are gaps in information on many forms.



Although most of MidTown developed during the early 20th century, the area has several scattered 19th century dwellings, such as this frame house on 12th Street.

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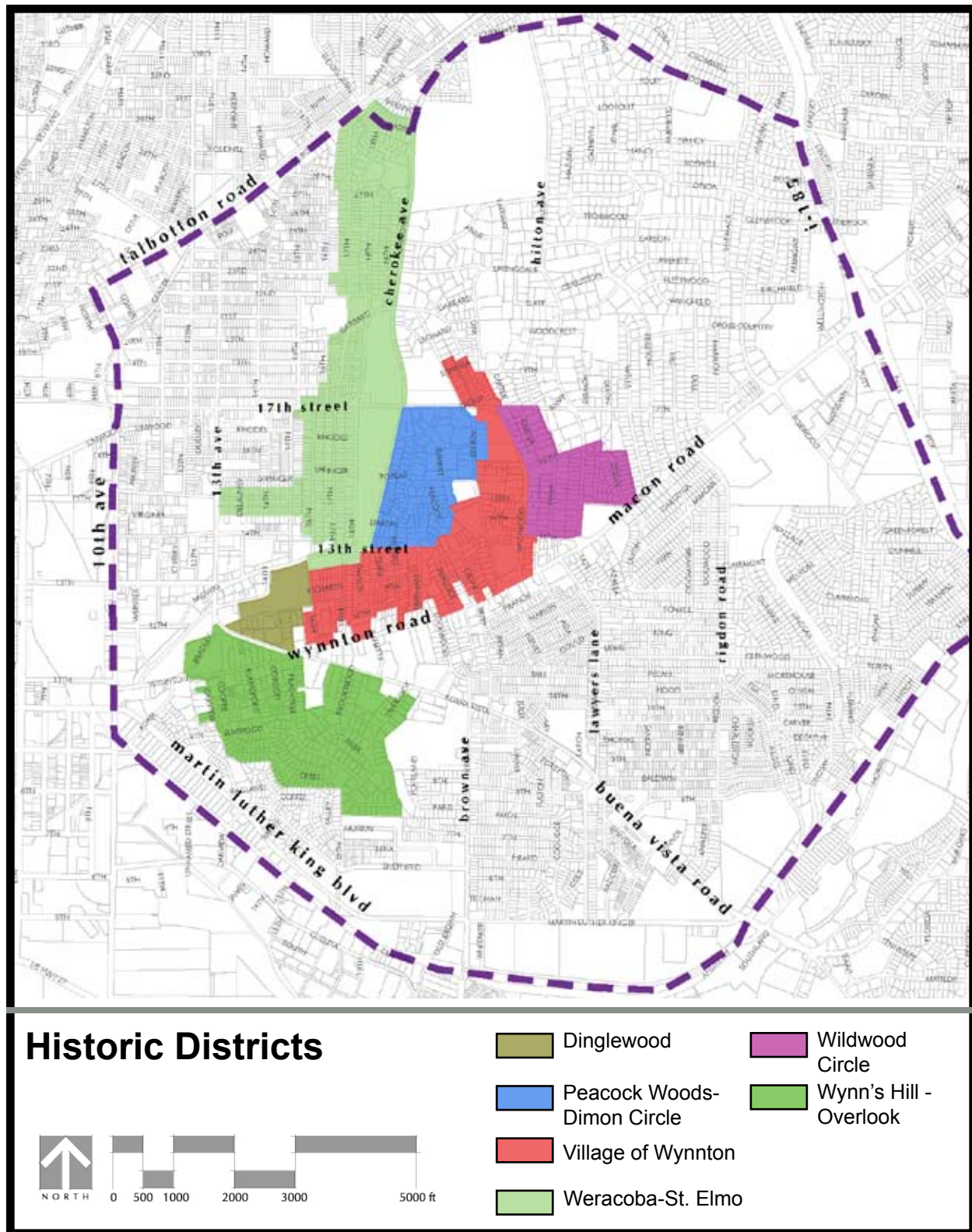


Figure IA.4: Historic Districts

National & State Register Historic Resources

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Included among the more than 77,000 listings across the country that make up the National Register are:

- All historic areas in the National Parks System;
- Over 2,300 National Historic Landmarks, which have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior because of their importance to all Americans;
- Properties across the country that have been nominated by governments, organizations, and individuals because they are significant to the nation, to a state, or to a community.

National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards. These criteria recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have contributed to the history and heritage of the United States, and are designed to help state and local governments, Federal agencies, and others identify important historic and archeological properties worthy of preservation and of consideration in planning and development decisions. Listing in the National Register contributes to preserving historic properties in a number of ways:

- Recognition that a property is of significance to the nation, the state, or the community
- Consideration in the planning for federal or federally assisted projects
- Eligibility for federal tax benefits
- Qualification for federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available

Another designation affiliated with the National Register is National Historic Landmark status. Only a minority of properties can attain National Historic Landmark status, as they are the most nationally significant of the nation's resources. They receive the same benefits as National Register properties, and in some cases the benefits are slightly greater. There are only three National Historic Landmark sites in all of Columbus, and none of them are located in the MidTown area.

National Register Districts & Sites

The MidTown study area features six National Register districts and eleven individually designated National Register sites, as listed below:

National Register Districts

Dinglewood Historic District
Peacock Woods - Dimon Circle Historic District
Village of Wynnnton Historic District
Weracoba – St. Elmo Historic District
Wildwood Circle – Hillcrest Historic District
Wynn's Hill – Overlook Historic District

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National Register Individual Sites

The Cedars – 2039 13th Street
Dinglewood – 1429 Dinglewood Street
Dismuke-Jarrell House
The Elms – 1846 Buena Vista Road
Highland Hall
Hilton – 2505 Macon Road
Old Dawson Place (Gordonido) – 1420 Wynnton Road
St. Elmo - 18th Avenue
Woolfolk House - 1615 12th Street
Wynn House – 1240 Wynnton Road
Wynnton Academy – 2303 Wynnton Road

It is noteworthy that each of the National Register districts in the MidTown area is also a locally designated historic district, although there are minor differences in district boundaries for one district. Also, all but one of the districts in MidTown, Weracoba – St. Elmo, has been designated since 2000. Since these districts are also local districts, they are described in more detail below in the section entitled “Local Historic Preservation Program.”

National Register Protections

Although National Register designation does not offer protection from many activities that might threaten resources, there are protections for any federal, federally licensed or federally funded projects. Examples would include highway projects and activities requiring an Army Corps of Engineers permit. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that federal agencies allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the National Register. The Advisory Council oversees and ensures the consideration of historic properties in the federal planning process. Alternative actions and measures for mitigation of negative impacts on historic resources are sought, and the State Historic Preservation Office implements the Section 106 Review process at the state and local levels. Lucrative tax benefits that are available for qualified rehabilitation projects for National Register listed or eligible properties are described below in the section entitled “Preservation & Rehabilitation Incentives.”

State Register Program

In Georgia, the State Register and National Register programs are parallel in that, once a property is listed on the National Register, it is automatically placed on the Georgia Register. Georgia Register sites receive the same protections as National Register sites. Georgia's preferential property tax assessment program for Georgia Register and National Register properties are discussed below in the section entitled “Preservation & Rehabilitation Incentives.”

Local Historic Preservation Program

The four primary components that constitute or otherwise impact Columbus' local preservation program are:

- 1) Local districts and individual sites
- 2) The City's historic preservation ordinance
- 3) The City's design guidelines, and
- 4) Zoning and building codes

Local Historic Districts & Individual Sites

It is important to note that National Historic Landmark sites and locally-designated historic sites are quite different. National Historic Landmarks are the most significant of all National Register sites, they are federally designated, and none exist within the MidTown area. Local individual historic sites, on the other hand, are designated by Columbus. Based upon Columbus' designation criteria, these locally-designated individual sites are also National Register individual sites.

There are six National Register and locally-designated historic districts in the MidTown Study area. Below is a description of each district and a summary of the individually designated properties.

Dinglewood Historic District

This 27-acre district is located between 13th Avenue on the south and west, 16th Street on the east, and Warren Williams Road on the north. It developed around the circa 1859 Italianate home of Colonel Joel Early Hurt – “Dinglewood.” This building, designed and built by Columbus architects and builders Bar-ringer and Morton, was individually listed on the National Register in 1972, which was prior to the district's designation. The 30-acre Dinglewood estate was subdivided in the early 20th century, and 16 houses were constructed between 1917 and 1951. The 8-acre residential portion of the district features a small privately-owned circular park called Circle Park, with the balance of the district being a 19-acre City-owned park. This park was established in 1946. The house Dinglewood fronts onto Circle Park. The breakdown of resources by type and significance is as follows:

<u>Resource Type</u>	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Non-Contributing</u>
Buildings	15	3
Sites	0	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	15	3

The district's architectural styles include Italianate, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival. A distinguishing feature is the three entrances into the district, each flanked by granite pillars inscribed with the name “Dinglewood.” National Register areas of significance for Dinglewood are “architecture” and “community planning and development.”

Peacock Woods - Dimon Circle Historic District

This 69-acre district is roughly bounded by 17th Street, Forest Avenue, 13th Street, and Cherokee Avenue. The Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle Historic District is an early- to mid-20th-century residential neighborhood. The district is composed primarily of four subdivisions that were platted from 1922 to 1928. The district contains an excellent collection of early to mid-20th-century house types and styles built from 1922 to 1954, with a majority of the houses constructed before 1939. Common house types in the district include English cottage, English house, Georgian house, Georgian cottage, bungalow, and ranch. Many of the houses in the district were designed by well-known architects and represent popular styles of the period in Georgia. The breakdown of resources by type and significance is as follows:

<u>Resource Type</u>	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Non-Contributing</u>
Buildings	107	10
Sites	0	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	107	10

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Architectural styles represented in the district include Colonial Revival, Craftsman, English Vernacular Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival. A few historic apartment buildings are located in the southwest corner of the district. The district also includes a unique example of a 1954 California ranch-style house designed by Brook, Bank, & Murphy with landscaping designed by Thomas D. Church of San Francisco. The neighborhood was never a streetcar suburb, but instead built for automobiles, as reflected in its remaining historic garages, back alleyways, and original driveways consisting of two narrow, paved strips. As a planned, early 20th-century, residential neighborhood, the district's character-defining features include curvilinear streets, informal landscaping, and uniform setbacks in a park-like setting. Its National Register areas of significance include "architecture," "community planning and development," and "landscape architecture."

Village of Wynnton Historic District

This 135-acre district is located on the north side of Wynnton Road and is bounded by the Dinglewood, Peacock Woods-Dimon Circle, and Wildwood Circle-Hillcrest historic districts. The Wynnton Village Historic District is an early- to mid-20th-century streetcar suburb composed of a series of subdivisions of antebellum estates along the streetcar line. Antebellum resources located within the district include the c.1837 Greek Revival-style The Cedars, c.1840 Gothic Revival-style garçonnier at The Cedars, the c.1835 Greek Revival-style John W. Woolfolk House, and the 1843 Wynnton Academy (now the Wynnton School library). The district contains an excellent collection of early to mid-20th-century house types and styles built primarily between 1920 and 1950. Common house types in the district include Georgian house, Georgian cottage, English cottage, English house, gabled ell cottage, bungalow, and ranch.

Resource Type	Contributing	Non-Contributing
Buildings	310	21
Sites	2	0
Structures	4	0
Objects	0	0
Total	312	21

Many of the resources in the district were designed by well-known architects and represent popular styles of the period in Georgia. Architectural styles represented in the district include Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and English Vernacular Revival. There are a number of historic apartment buildings in the district, most of which are two-story brick buildings with Colonial Revival details. Two historic gas stations are also located within the district along Wynnton Road. Community landmark buildings within the district include the 1843 Wynnton Academy (later Wynnton School) and 1957 Temple Israel. As an early 20th-century, residential neighborhood, the district's character-defining features include mature trees, informal landscaping, and uniform setbacks. The district's National Register areas of significance include "architecture" and "community planning and development."

Weracoba - St. Elmo Historic District

This district is located in the northwest portion of the MidTown study area, and its linear form is oriented on a north-south axis along Weracoba Park. The park serves as the district's eastern border for its southern half. Although this district has an irregular shape with convoluted boundaries, some of the key boundaries include: Talbotton Road on the north; Midway on the south; 15th, 16th and 17th Avenues on the west; and Cherokee Avenue on the east. The district consists of hills located northeast of the original town grid. It was developed as eight separate subdivisions during the 1920s and 1930s, and it was intended for a middle-class market. Weracoba Park was originally created in 1890 as Wildwood Park, but it was later given its current name. Streetcars operated by the Columbus Railroad Company connected the town with the park, which was then anchored by a lake. The lake was later drained and developed with Columbus High School. The breakdown of resources by type and significance is as follows:

Resource Type	Contributing	Non-Contributing
Buildings	408	76
Sites	1	0
Structures	4	0
Objects	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	413	76

According to the City's design guidelines document, the Weracoba - St. Elmo "features the city's largest and most intact concentration of 1920s and 1930s middle-class housing." Architectural styles include Craftsman bungalows, Tudor Revival, Neo-classical Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival. There are also some houses dating from the 1940s and 1950s, although 85% of the houses were constructed between 1920 and 1941. Non-residential buildings include the 1930 St. Elmo School, a Collegiate Gothic building that served as an elementary school until 1989, and the 1939 St. Elmo Shopping Center, considered Columbus' first shopping center. There are very few buildings in the district that would be classified as incompatible "intrusions." Although block shapes and sizes vary, the street pattern is a modified grid, and streets are lined with mature deciduous trees.

Wildwood Circle – Hillcrest Historic District

The key streets of this 63-acre district include 13th Street, Hilton Avenue, Wynnton Road, Dixon Drive, Harding Drive, Stark Avenue, Wildwood Avenue, and Carter Avenue. The district is roughly centered on the intersection of 15th Street and Stark Avenue. This area was initially the family compound of real estate developer John Francis Flournoy, where he lived in his Queen Anne-Eastlake mansion "Hillcrest," which was built in 1890. His real estate company established Wildwood Circle as a subdivision in 1911. The National Register registration form treats Wildwood Circle and Hillcrest as two distinct areas within the district. The breakdown of resources by type and significance is as follows:

Resource Type	Contributing	Non-Contributing
Buildings	105	22
Sites	2	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	107	22

One significant building once existing in the district was the mansion known as Hilton. It was listed on the National Register in 1970. Located at the southeast corner of the district, the house burned in 1983, but the foundation, a brick outbuilding, stone retaining wall, plantings, and original hardwoods remain. Although no formal archaeological investigation has been initiated on the site, there is a strong probability for archaeological potential on the 6-acre site that has had no postbellum development. Architectural



(Top) This early-20th century commercial building by Weracoba Park on Garrard Street is an appropriate model for future infill development in many areas of MidTown.

(Bottom) Residents of the Weracoba - St. Elmo Historic District are proud of their neighborhood, as evidenced by the many "Park District" banners on homes.

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These early 20th century brick apartments in the Wildwood Circle area would be good models for future multi-family infill development in much of MidTown.

styles in this district include Greek Revival, Queen Anne-Eastlake, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Mediterranean Revival. Several historic apartment buildings and multi-family dwellings are also located within the district. Landscape features found throughout the district include mature trees, informal plantings, and wide sidewalk strips. The district is also significant in the area of literature for the childhood house of Carson McCullars (1917-1967), the renowned novelist and playwright, located at 1519 Stark Avenue. McCullars lived in the house from 1927 to 1934 and often returned to the house from the late 1930s through 1944 to recover from her frequent illnesses. Many of McCullars' works were conceived, written, or rewritten in the house, including *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *Member of the Wedding*. National Register areas of significance include "architecture," "community planning and development," and "literature."

Wynn's Hill – Overlook Historic District

The 140-acre Wynn's Hill-Overlook Historic District is an early- to mid-20th-century Columbus neighborhood that was developed from earlier mid-19th-century estates. The northern end of the district includes the triangular portion of the 19th-century Woolfolk estate bounded by Bradley Drive and Buena Vista and Wynnton roads. This part of the district features four, large early 20th-century houses, the c.1926 Sarling Park, the Columbus Museum, and two residential gardens designed by the Olmsted Brothers firm. The majority of the district is located on the south side of Wynnton Road. Located along Wynnton Road, the c.1838 Greek Revival-style Wynn House and c.1837 Greek Revival-style Old Dawson Place (Gordonido) are two of the 19th-century estates that were subdivided in the 1920s into the picturesque, early to mid-20th century neighborhood known as Overlook. The breakdown of resources by type and significance is as follows:

Resource Type	Contributing	Non-Contributing
Buildings	165	87
Sites	0	0
Structures	1	0
Objects	0	0
Total	166	87

The district contains an excellent collection of early to mid-20th-century house types and styles built primarily between 1920 to 1950. Common house types in the district include Georgian house, Georgian cottage, bungalow, and ranch. Many of the resources in the district were designed by well-known architects and represent popular styles of the period in Georgia. Architectural styles represented in the district include Colonial Revival, Craftsman, English Vernacular Revival, Mediterranean Revival, and modern ranch houses. As



These two houses, an early 20th century frame NeoClassical home and a mid 20th century brick ranch, represent the range of architecture found in the Wynn's Hill – Overlook Historic District.



a planned, early 20th-century, residential neighborhood, the district's character-defining features include curvilinear streets, sidewalks, informal landscaping, and uniform setbacks in a park-like setting. The National Register areas of significance include "architecture," "community planning and development," and "landscape architecture."

Individual Sites

These sites were already listed in the section entitled "National & State Register Historic Resources."

These properties tend to fall into one of two categories: institutional buildings or historic mansions. One example of an institutional building is Wynnton Academy, while examples of historic mansions include The Cedars, Dinglewood and Wynn House.

Historic Preservation Ordinance

The City of Columbus adopted its historic preservation ordinance - Section 22-39 of the City code - in 1970. While its adoption lagged considerably behind pioneering cities such as New Orleans and Charleston, it was well ahead of most communities, which did not get serious about historic preservation until the country's bicentennial in 1976. The purpose of the ordinance was to control any exterior physical alterations to historic resources that are either part of a locally designated historic district or a locally designated individual landmark.

As with the thousands of existing preservation ordinances throughout the nation, Columbus' ordinance is dictated by state statutes and can only regulate what is allowed through such enabling legislation. In Georgia, that statute is the Georgia Historic Preservation Act of 1980, which prompted a 500% increase in the state's number of local historic commissions between 1981 and 1995 (*Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources website*). That law, Chapter 44-10-20, does not require communities that adopted their preservation ordinance prior to the 1980 state law to comply, even if the ordinance has changed substantially since 1980. However, in order to qualify as a Certified Local Government and be eligible for the associated state preservation grants, Columbus' ordinance and overall preservation standards would need to comply with the state law. Based upon a review of that state law, Columbus' program does appear to substantially comply.

In general terms, Columbus' existing preservation ordinance is well written and includes the same basic provisions as the country's best models for preservation ordinances. Below is a critique of this ordinance organized by key sections in the same sequence as they occur in the ordinance.

Board of Historic Architectural Review (BHAR)

The following provisions apply to the BHAR:

Powers – This section gives the BHAR a broad range of powers, including recommendations to the City Council on the designation of districts and landmarks, the review of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs), and the preparation of historic sites inventories. Like most preservation ordinances, Columbus' ordinance does not regulate interior alterations, which is consistent with the state preservation law. While the ordinance does not require review and approval for activities defined as ordinary maintenance, that fact is not noted in this section but should be. Also, although the BHAR has the authority to review proposed subdivisions within all local historic districts, it is not clear in the ordinance, so it needs to be written more explicitly.

Board Composition – As currently written, the BHAR is comprised of members who represent a variety of specific organizations, including the Columbus Homebuilders Association, the Columbus Board of

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Realtors, and various historic organizations. In practice, the current Board appears to be reasonably effective, so the composition requirements do not appear to be problematic. However, there is considerable potential for the Board to take on a political tone that could compromise the integrity of the BHAR's processes. It was likely the intent of the Board composition requirements to keep the board "balanced" between preservation interests and those of groups with strong "property rights" sentiments, such as the Homebuilders and Realtors groups. However, because the members are appointed by the City Council, there are already built-in checks and balances to insure a balanced Board that reflects the philosophy of the Council. Rather than using membership in certain organizations as the standard for Board composition, most preservation ordinances around the country have requirements that are based upon an individual's profession and/or area of expertise. In fact, the 1980 state preservation law requires that a majority of Board members have a "demonstrated special interest, experience, or education in history or architecture." Examples of commonly required professions and areas of expertise include architects, architectural historians, landscape architects, city planners, attorneys, historians, archeologists, preservation contractors and developers.

Board Structure – This provision describes how the BHAR is organized and how decisions are made. The Board cannot make a formal decision unless at least six (6) of its eleven (11) members are present. All decisions must be made by a majority vote of the Board members present. Therefore, as little as four (4) Board members can make decisions. Given that this small number of required votes represents barely more than one-third of the full membership, it is a relatively low threshold. Most preservation ordinances require either: a) a larger quorum, or b) that a majority of the full membership vote in a particular way, rather than simply the majority of the members present. The current provisions make it quite possible for a proposed action to be approved that the considerable majority of the full Board does not support, depending upon member availability on that particular day.

Meetings – As currently written, BHAR meetings must occur on the "second Monday of each month." Most preservation ordinances simply state that the Board will meet monthly on a regularly designated day, thereby giving the Board the flexibility to adjust its schedule pursuant to the collective needs of the individual Board members.

Designation of Districts and Properties

Noteworthy provisions include the following:

Historic Districts Criteria - There are four specific criteria that any proposed district must meet in order to become a designated local district, and they include: Georgia or National Register designation, special historic character or aesthetic value, representation of a particular period or style, and a visibly perceptible area of the community. These standards are substantial because, by using the word "and" after the third of the four criteria, all four standards are required. Most preservation ordinances use the word "or" to require just one of these required conditions to occur. The biggest hurdle to designation is the Georgia or National Register requirement because, to become a local district in Columbus, the area must have state or national significance.

The ordinance requires that each individual property within a district be classified as either: historic ("contributes to the district"), Non-historic ("does not contribute but does not detract from the district") or Intrusive ("detracts from the district"). It is unclear where within these three categories a compatible new infill building would fall, although it is likely that it would be considered a "Non-historic" building, even if it does contribute to the character of the district.

Historic Properties Criteria – The criteria for individual properties is very similar to that of districts, with one

important distinction. Rather than using the word “and” after the next to the last criterion, the word “or” is used. This seemingly minor difference in language is substantial because it means that only one of the five standards must be met, rather than all of them, as in the case of districts. This situation is unusual, as the threshold for designation in most preservation ordinances is typically higher for individual properties than it is for districts. Individual sites are usually more difficult to designate because of property rights concerns and the perception that an individual property is being arbitrarily singled out rather than receiving the same treatment as all properties within a given district.

Ordinance Adoption Requirements – The process for adopting an ordinance to designate a local district or individual property includes an application by an individual or specific group, a public hearing, a recommendation by the BHAR, and a vote by the City Council. Although it is consistent with the requirements of the state preservation law, the threshold for adopting an ordinance to designate a district or individual property is relatively low compared with other preservation ordinances. For example, some ordinances require that the nomination of an individual property be initiated only by the property owner, as opposed to historic and neighborhood groups also having that ability. Likewise, most district designations require a petition to be signed by effected property owners, and some even include a minimum percentage of owners to support designation (typically 50 to 60 percent).

Notification of Designation – This provision requires all effected property owners and occupants to be notified in writing once formal designation has occurred. The provision states that a COA is required for any “material change in the appearance of the historic property.” Although it is noted earlier in the ordinance that interiors are not reviewed, it should be repeated here in this section.

Moratoriums on Alterations or Demolitions – This provision, which places a freeze on the status of an involved property while designation is being considered, is very progressive and not included in most preservation ordinances.

Certificates of Appropriateness

The following provisions are among the most noteworthy regarding applications for a COA:

When Required – As with the “Notification of Designation” provision noted above, this provision does not state that interior changes are not reviewed. It is particularly important that this fact be clear in this provision since it stipulates when a COA is or is not required.

New Structures – Parking lots are listed among “new structures” that require a COA, which is positive for preservation efforts. Parking lots are sometimes overlooked in preservation ordinances despite their potential negative impact on historic districts and individual landmarks.

Workmanship – This provision heading is misleading and in need of renaming. The “Workmanship” provision relates to abrasive cleaning of exterior walls, such as sandblasting, rather than the quality of craftsmanship, as is implied.

Interior Alterations – This provision heading is also misleading. Although the provision states that interior alterations are not reviewed, because the heading “Interior alterations” is listed among the actions requiring a COA, the waiver of interior alterations from review may not be apparent to someone not reading the ordinance carefully.

Applications for a COA

With only a few minor exceptions, Columbus’ provisions for obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness are

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quite sound relative to most preservation ordinances. For example, the ordinance references both the “Design Guidelines for Columbus” and the Secretary of the Interior’s federal standards and guidelines for rehabilitation as the basis for Columbus’ standards, giving them solid footing. Below are the most noteworthy provisions:

Undue Hardship

The inclusion of this provision, which acknowledges that there may be special circumstances deserving a waiver from the ordinance’s strict application, is important for defending the ordinance’s legal validity. It is also consistent with the state preservation law. It wisely states that, in order for a circumstance to be considered a legitimate hardship, it cannot be self-inflicted by the applicant. One omission in this section that is included in many preservation ordinance’s is a list of the types of information that the Board can require from the applicant when considering a hardship, including a structural evaluation and detailed financial information on the property. Also, some ordinances do not allow hardships to be considered as part of the initial COA process. Instead, if an application is denied the applicant may then apply to the Board specifically on the grounds of a hardship so that the hardship is the sole focus of the application in order to determine whether the denial should be reversed.

Review Procedures

Public Notification - As currently written, the ordinance requires that the Board “take such action as may reasonably be required to inform the owners of any property likely to be affected materially by the application...” Although the language is consistent with the state preservation law, this requirement is relatively weak even if the City elects to take aggressive measures to inform neighboring owners. Many preservation ordinances require a legal notice in the newspaper of record, as well as mailed notices to all properties within a certain distance of the application site.

Time Requirements for Action - As required by the state preservation law, the Board must automatically approve the COA application within 45 days of receiving a complete application if no action is taken otherwise within that time frame. This provision is important to protect the rights of the applicant. In the case of a proposed demolition, the Board has up to 90 days to approve or reject the application. While it is good that the 45-day standard is exceeded for demolitions in order to gain more time to seek alternatives, it is not as aggressive as many ordinances, some of which allow for as much as 6 months to decide on demolition. The state preservation law does not appear to address this particular issue.

Applications for New Construction - For proposed new construction, the ordinance requires that a “building elevation” must be provided for each building within 100 ft. of the site. This language needs clarification, as it could be interpreted as requiring costly architectural drawings of adjacent building elevations rather than merely photographs.

Monitoring of Projects - This section of the ordinance also requires that, whenever a COA is approved, two members of the Board be assigned to monitor the progress of the project. While the professional expertise of Board members such as architects and contractors is certainly welcomed, it is burdensome on them to include this requirement when City staff members are better positioned to carry out that responsibility.

Signage

A full page of the ordinance is dedicated to sign standards, which would be more appropriately located in the supporting design guidelines document. The design guidelines do address signage in a very general manner with a handful of principles, but it also references the City’s “Comprehensive Sign Ordinance,”

as well as the standards contained in the preservation ordinance. Clearly, this confusion needs to be cleaned up with a single set of consistent standards. As currently written in the preservation ordinance, the sign standards take a “one size fits all” approach with the same dimensional standards for all signs of a given type, regardless of the associated building’s size, setback considerations, street type and other important variables. The beginning of this section fails to include the “method of illumination” among the characteristics that are listed for consideration, although lighting is actually addressed later in the signage section. This section also prohibits neon signs all together, which - when controlled through some minimal standards – are considered by many to be appropriate within attractive and vibrant urban commercial districts.

Voiding of COA

The ordinance requires that a COA, which runs concurrently with a building permit, shall become void if construction does not begin within six months of being issued. This requirement is a hardship for applicants who may incur any number of potential snags, such as funding. Given that circumstances are unlikely to change over a short amount of time with respect to the acceptability of a COA, a time limit of one or two years might be more encouraging for those considering building rehabilitation projects.

Appeals

Appeals of a BHAR decision are decided upon by the City’s Board of Zoning Appeals, and the BZA can only overturn a BHAR decision if it determines that the BHAR “abused its discretion in reaching its decision.” Appeals of the BZA decision must then go to the superior court. As noted previously, Columbus is not obligated to adhere to the state preservation law because it adopted its ordinance before 1980. However, it is noteworthy that the state law requires that BHAR appeals go to the municipality’s governing body and then to the superior court. The City’s approach to appeals is friendlier toward preservation goals than is the state’s approach, as BZAs tend to be slightly less political than governing bodies.

Maintaining of Historic Property

Columbus’ preservation ordinance is progressive in that it includes a “demolition by neglect” provision that requires owners to maintain their properties. Although it is often a challenge to effectively enforce, it is an important provision for both preservation objectives and the protection of the community’s housing stock.

Definitions

This section is located at the very end of the Columbus preservation ordinance unlike most such ordinances, which provide the definitions at the beginning. The definitions section appears to be thorough in the terms it includes, which is critical to an effective ordinance.

Implementation of the Ordinance

The details of how the ordinance is implemented on a daily basis are not stipulated in the ordinance, but it is an issue warranting discussion here.

Staffing of BHAR

The BHAR is staffed by two different entities: the Columbus Consolidated Government’s Planning Division, and the Lower Chattahoochee Regional Development Center. The development center is one of 17 throughout Georgia. The City planning staff handles all of the procedural aspects of the BHAR, such as serving being the point of contact for submitting COA applications. However, because the City’s Planning Division does not include historic preservation planners, the regional development center’s Preservation Planner deals with the substantive issues for the BHAR. The Preservation Planner prepares a review memorandum for each COA application, and it is submitted to the BHAR prior to the monthly meetings to

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decide on the COAs. The Preservation Planner, whose office is conveniently located in Columbus, also attends the meetings to provide further technical assistance. Staff of the Historic Columbus Foundation are also involved in the review and recommendations for COAs.

Administrative Approvals

One issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that the City planning staff member who processes COAs also has the authority to grant administrative approvals for minor work. While the use of administrative approvals is a positive approach, the fact that the City staff is not trained in historic preservation is a problem. Another problem is that administrative approvals are not regularly reported to the BHAR so that they can monitor the process. Also, while administrative approvals are permitted through an adopted resolution of the City, there is no reference to this process within the current preservation ordinance.

Application Form

The current one-page COA application form could benefit from some minor revisions, primarily with respect to the information required as part of each application. For example, a scaled site plan is now required for any type of COA application, despite the fact that a property's overall site layout may be irrelevant to a particular application, such as the replacement of an inappropriate porch balustrade with a historically appropriate one. Rather than attempting to guess at what information might or might not be needed, some communities use a check list that includes the full range of potential information that might be needed for an application. The items needed for the specific application are checked off by the design review body's staff prior to the application's submission. Some communities also provide an applicant with an example of a well-prepared application. The application form also requires a "Letter from the Historic Columbus Foundation" for any application to demolish a historic resource, yet there is no indication as to why a letter is needed and what it should state. The purpose of the letter is to determine whether the property has ever been surveyed and whether it is a "historic," "contributing," "non-contributing" or "intrusive" property. While this requirement is a useful one, its purpose needs to be clarified.

Application Process

At present, there is no process for holding pre-application meetings between applicants and representatives of the BHAR, although it often occurs informally. This situation is not unusual for historic preservation commissions, although communities that do utilize a standard pre-application meeting have found great value in it. By sitting down with the design review body's staff and a board member or two (especially architects or others with technical skills), the applicant can avoid the expense of having an unacceptable proposal design only to have to be turned down by the review body and having to then get it redesigned and resubmitted. Whether it is voluntary or mandatory, it is an option that Columbus may want to consider in order to have fewer unacceptable proposals from applicants.

Design Guidelines

The "Design Guidelines: Columbus, Georgia" were prepared in August of 2000 by an in-state consulting firm. In addition to the very general Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, these guidelines serve as the specific design standards to supplement the City's historic preservation ordinance. In fact, these guidelines are referenced in the ordinance. The guidelines apply to all of the City's local historic districts except the Uptown district, which has its own set of design guidelines. The guidelines are organized into the following nine sections:

- Introduction
- Design Review in Columbus

- History of Local Historic Districts
- Descriptions of Historic Buildings & Landscape Elements
- General Preservation Principles
- Residential Rehabilitation Guidelines
- Institutional and Commercial Rehabilitation Guidelines
- Landscape Guidelines
- New Construction Guidelines

The document's Appendices section also includes several useful supplemental materials, such as a COA application, the City's preservation ordinance, landscaping information and a glossary. In addition to serving as the basis for the City's mandatory preservation requirements, it also serves as a useful tool for those not required to go through a design review process, but seeking guidance for their rehabilitation projects.

In general, these design guidelines are a well-written, detailed and useful document. The guidelines are also heavily illustrated with both photographs and sketches. It provides a solid context for the design review context, a history of the various historic districts, and a description of the most common architectural types found in Columbus' historic districts. In particular, it documents key landscaping elements in the various districts far beyond the level found in most design guidelines. It also exceeds most guidelines by including a description of an eight-step process for implementing a successful rehabilitation project. Another helpful aspect is that the guidelines illustrate both the appropriate and inappropriate approaches to rehabilitation.

Despite the many merits of the existing guidelines, there are reasons for needing a revised and updated version of the guidelines. When the guidelines were prepared in 2000, there was only one historic district in the MidTown area. There are now six districts, and some of them have design characteristics not adequately covered in the design guidelines. One particular example is the need for more detailed guidelines for new infill development. Infill was not as significant an issue for the four existing districts in Columbus when the guidelines were written, but now it is a very important issue for some areas. Many who use the design guidelines regularly believe that a useful supplement to them would be new sections that address the unique characteristics of each district.

Building Codes

Columbus utilizes the International Building Code (IBC). Although Chapter 34 of the code is geared toward working with historic buildings, many people find its provisions to be cumbersome and confusing, so they are often not implemented in an effective fashion. Many other communities, on the other hand, are adopting special provisions for historic buildings designed to be more flexible and responsive to unique conditions. Cincinnati, for example, has alternatives for any contributing buildings within either a National Register or local historic district, as allowed by state law. Examples of provisions include: allowing winding stairs for access, and not mandating additional requirements that would otherwise be triggered by higher ceiling heights. Likewise, the State of New Jersey has perhaps the best model code for historic rehabilitation found in the country. The State of Maryland also has the Maryland Building Rehabilitation Code Program, which is a component of their "Maryland Smart Growth Initiative."

Preservation & Rehabilitation Incentives

Incentives for historic preservation within the MidTown area are described below based upon their federal, state or local origin.

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Federal Incentives

The only existing significant federal incentives for historic preservation are the investment tax credits for building rehabilitations, explained below:

Federal Investment Tax Credit for Historic Rehabilitation

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program is one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. The program fosters private sector rehabilitation of historic buildings and promotes economic revitalization. It also provides a strong alternative to government ownership and management of such historic properties. The tax credit is available for buildings that are National Historic Landmarks, listed on the National Register, determined as being National Register eligible, and/or are contributing to National Register Historic Districts and certain local historic districts. Properties must be income-producing and must be rehabilitated according to standards set by the Secretary of the Interior. A federal tax credit worth 20% of the eligible rehabilitation costs is available for qualified buildings and projects. A building should be eligible for listing at the beginning of the rehabilitation project, but need not be officially listed until the tax credit is claimed by the owner.

Eligible Buildings & Costs

The work undertaken as part of the project must meet The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The tax credit is available only for income-producing properties, such as office, retail, hotel and apartment projects. Owner-occupied residential properties are not eligible for the credit. The credit is also limited to buildings only, so structures such as bridges and silos do not qualify. The tax credit is designed for substantial rehabilitation projects, not small remodeling projects. The eligible project costs generally must exceed the value of the building itself (not including the land) at the beginning of the project. Most rehabilitation costs are eligible for the credit, such as structural work, building repairs, electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, roof work and painting. Certain types of project costs are not eligible for the credit, such as acquisition, new additions, furniture and landscaping.

Application Process

An application for the tax credits must be submitted before the project is completed, although work may begin prior to the application or approval. Ideally, the application should be submitted during the planning stages of the work so the owner can receive the necessary guidance to ensure that the project meets the Standards for Rehabilitation, and therefore may qualify for the credits. The application consists of three parts. Part One, the Evaluation of Significance, determines if the building is eligible for the National Register and, thus, the credits. Part One is not needed if the property is already individually listed on the National Register. Part Two describes the proposed work, and photographs are required showing the major features of the building prior to work beginning. Part Three of the application is submitted upon completion of the rehabilitation. Because the tax credit requirements, which include both National Park Service and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations, can appear confusing at times, the staff at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Historic Preservation Division assist property owners in understanding and applying for the credits.

Level of Use in Columbus

Because people seeking to take advantage of the federal investment tax credit typically start the process by contacting the Historic Columbus Foundation, its level of use is relatively easy to track. In the past three years there have been six tax credit projects in Columbus, resulting in an average of two projects per year. Of those six, only one was in the MidTown area. That project was the rehabilitation of a two-story house on Wildwood Avenue for use as an office.

Ten Percent Tax Credit

The IRS also allows a separate 10% tax credit for income-producing buildings constructed prior to 1936, but not listed in the National Register. While not as valuable financially as the full 20% credit, it provides some incentive for preserving older buildings with less stringent rehabilitation standards being applied.

State Incentives

State Investment Tax Credit for Historic Rehabilitation

This program is modeled after the federal program described above. This new program was established in January of 2004. Properties using the credit must be either listed on, or eligible for, the Georgia Register of Historic Places. As with the federal incentive, the project must be consistent with federal preservation standards. The incentive is available for income producing properties, but unlike the federal program, it is also available to non-income producing properties. The most significant limitation is the \$5,000 cap on the tax credit per project. Because this incentive is so new, its effectiveness cannot yet be evaluated.

State Property Tax Assessment Freeze

The State of Georgia adopted a preferential property tax assessment program in 1989 for the rehabilitation of historic properties. The program is intended to encourage the rehabilitation of both commercial and residential historic buildings that would otherwise be neglected. This program provides an eight-year freeze on the tax assessment of properties that have undergone a substantial and qualified rehabilitation. In the ninth year the assessment increases by 50% of the difference between the recorded first-year value and the current fair market value. In the tenth and following years the assessments are based on the fair market value. The following requirements apply to qualify for this program:

- The property must be listed, or eligible for listing, on the Georgia Register of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as a contributing building within a district.
- The property owner must have initiated the rehabilitation project after January 1, 1989.
- The rehabilitation project must be done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation.
- The project must be a "substantial rehabilitation." This threshold is determined by the county tax assessor and its definition depends on the property's use. In the case of non-income producing properties, the rehabilitation must increase the property's fair market value by at least 50%. For properties combining income producing and non-income producing uses, the value increase must be at least 75%. If the property is used solely for income producing purposes, the market value must increase by at least 100%.

This program is not only good for historic preservation, but it also increases property tax revenues for local governments, particularly once the assessed value freeze have terminated for a property. This program is implemented by the State Department of Natural Resources' Historic Preservation Division, and the application process consists of two parts. Part A: Preliminary Certification documents the property's historic status and verifies that the project meets the Secretary of the Interior's standards, while Part B: Final Certification documents the finished work. To date, only a few properties in MidTown have used this incentive.

Georgia Heritage Grant Program

In 1994 the State created this grant program providing funds to local governments and non-profits for both "predevelopment" and "development" activities. Predevelopment activities include historic sites surveys, historic structures reports, site-specific plans, and similar studies. Development activities include archeol-

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ogy, stabilization, preservation, restoration and rehabilitation work. The maximum grant amount that can be requested is \$40,000 for development projects and \$20,000 for predevelopment projects.

Each year the National Park Service (NPS) allocates each state with funds from the Historic Preservation Fund. The state then allocates 10% of those funds for grants to Certified Local Governments (CLGs). Columbus is a designated CLG. The CLG program provides funding to enable local communities to develop programs and participate in Georgia's preservation process. CLG grants require a cash or in-kind service match from the community. Eligible grant projects include, but are not limited to: training for local preservation commissions; completing or updating surveys of historic resources; producing historical walking or driving tour brochures, videos or other educational materials; preparing preservation plans; and preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations. Only cities and counties officially designated as a CLG by the State can apply for these grants.

Georgia has create a three-tier system in categorizing each of its CLG communities. Tier 1 communities are those that have not been CLG communities for a very long time and they lack the full spectrum of preservation tools that they need, particularly a historic sites survey. Tier 3 communities, at the other end of the spectrum, are those that have been CLG communities for a substantial time and are already equipped with the most basic preservation tools. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending upon how it is viewed, Columbus is a Tier 3 community. While that rating indicates Columbus' achievements over the years, it also makes CLG grants much more difficult to obtain. The last CLG grant they received was in 2000 when the City was granted \$14,000 for the preparation of the design guidelines.

Local Incentives

The primary local incentive for rehabilitating historic structures in Columbus is the Historic Columbus Facade Loan Program, described below:

Historic Columbus Facade Loan Program

This program was established in 1999 by the Historic Columbus Foundation to assist owners in the rehabilitation of historic residential buildings. Priority is given to low and low-to-moderate income applicants, and maximum loan amounts are \$5,000. The loans are interest free, and borrowers have up to five years to pay off the loan. Payments can be either monthly, quarterly or annually, depending upon the agreement for each particular loan. Multiple loans are not granted to the same person, as the foundation waits until an outstanding loan is paid off before making another loan to the same individual. The requirements for a Historic Columbus Loan (HCL) include the following:

- The property must be located within a historic district, landmark district or be individually listed on the National Register
- The current use of the property must be residential
- The applicant must own or be in the process of purchasing the property through a valid contract
- The rehabilitation project must be physically and financially feasible
- The funds may only be used for exterior improvements

Also, owner-occupied properties are given priority over other



An effective preservation program combines regulatory tools with incentives to encourage more building rehabilitations such as this Greek Revival structure on 12th Street.

applicants. According to the program literature, the project must be completed within three months from the time the loan is approved, although this requirement is not mandated in practice. Funding for the program is raised, in part, through the foundation's profits from the Riverfest festival. Since the program's inception, 60 loans have been made totaling \$375,000, and there have been only two loan defaults. Within the MidTown area, the Weracoba – St. Elmo district has used the loan program the most.

D. Vehicular Circulation

Functional Classification of Streets

With respect to their traffic-carrying function, the streets within Midtown Columbus (Figure IA.5) fall into five categories (typically termed “functional classifications”):

1. **Principal Arterials** serve longer distance trips, with many having neither origin nor destination in the immediate surrounding community (Midtown Columbus, in this case). Many of the motorists on principal arterials are non-regular users, traveling for occasional (non-daily) purposes such as vacations or medical services. Typically, principal arterials are multi-lane (more than two lanes of through traffic) designed for higher speed travel (45 mph or greater). All freeways (Interstate highways or other expressways) are principal arterials. Access (to driveways into adjacent land uses, to cross streets) is discouraged, and opportunities for this access are minimized.

Within or adjacent to Midtown Columbus, the principal arterials are Interstate 185, bordering Midtown on the east, and Macon/Wynnton Road through Midtown Columbus.

Interstate 185 is a limited access freeway, with access only at designated interchanges. Macon/Wynnton Road, typical of most arterial highways in Georgia, has become a major commercial address, with numerous commercial driveways. On earlier-developed frontage (for example, between Buena Vista Road and Brown Avenue), driveways were provided to many small, individual parcels of land, many of them converted from former residential use. In the more recently developed commercial area (just to the west of I-185), access to individual parcels was consolidated, at the time of property development, to driveways spaced like local streets.

2. **Minor Arterial Streets** are intended primarily for mobility (as contrasted to property access) serving trips between regions within the greater Columbus area. Many travelers on minor arterials are regular daily users, for example, work commuters, shoppers, or parents transporting students to/from schools. Most trips in Midtown Columbus use minor arterials for part of their route. In Midtown, as in most Georgia cities, minor arterials have, like principal arterials, become a preferred address for businesses, particularly those serving the immediately surrounding community.

3. **Major Collector Streets** serve as the indispensable link between the arterial system (either principal arterials or minor arterials) and the ultimate residential origins of trips (almost always local streets), and are therefore a segment of almost all trips. Major collector streets have continuity through several neighborhoods, often furnishing a continuous route of one to three miles. Almost all collector street frontage is in residential use, with a small amount fronted with local businesses, small offices, institutions (churches and schools) and parks.

4. **Minor Collector Streets** are closely similar to major collectors (above) except for a shorter continuity, frequently only 5-10 blocks in length, and with continuity often not extending beyond the immediate

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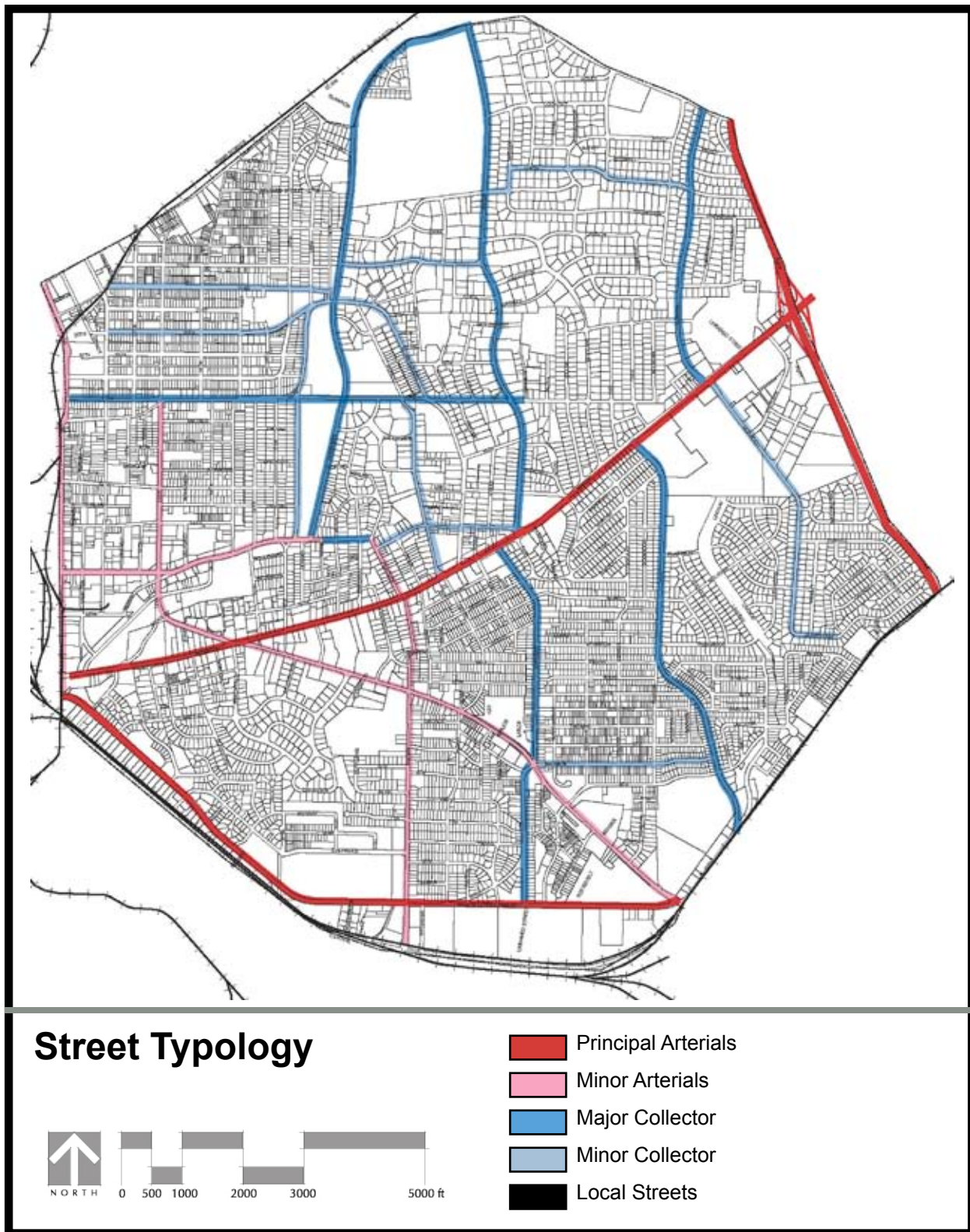


Figure IA.5: Street Typology

neighborhood or subdivision. Midtown Columbus, with its inherited grid pattern of streets and its unusual degree of connectivity among newer subdivisions, has more of this category of street (i.e., minor collector) than comparable Georgia communities. Minor collectors are an important part of the street network, providing a vastly increased number of routings for the local portion of most trips. On the other hand, minor collectors are frequently pressed into service as parts of “cut through” routes, with peak hour traffic using them to escape delays on arterial streets such as Macon/Wynnton Road. The rapidly expanding field of traffic calming, dealing with minor street design changes to reduce vehicular speeds, is aimed directly at problems of cut-through traffic on minor collector streets.

5. Local Streets are designed primarily to maximize access to locally fronting properties (many driveways, on-street parking) and, conversely, to minimize mobility (through short street segment, low connectivity, narrow street size). Over 90% of the street mileage within Midtown Columbus is in local streets, yet these streets carry less than 10% of the total vehicle miles of travel, ratios that emphasize the role of these streets for access, not mobility.

All local streets in Midtown Columbus are two lanes in width. However, there is a wide variation in pavement/verge/sidewalk combinations within the local street category. The rich variety of local street types within Midtown Columbus, and the opportunities that this variety presents for improvements in neighborhood character (historic or otherwise) are discussed in a following section of this report.

Street Size and Traffic Control Devices

Within Midtown Columbus, the only multi-lane streets (defined as streets with more than two through lanes, i.e., a single lane of traffic in each direction) are Wynnton/Macon Road, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, a portion of Buena Vista Road, Talbotton/Warm Springs Road and a segment of Thirteenth Street. The mileage of multi-lane street versus two-lane street is low for Midtown Columbus, in comparison with most other small cities in Georgia and throughout the U.S. One explanation for the relatively low amount of multi-lane streets is the high degree of connectivity between collector streets, yielding a network that provides many options other than the use of arterial and major collector streets, and therefore reduces the need to widen them. A further reason for the small amount of multi-lane streets is the quality and intactness of the historical and traditional neighborhoods in Midtown Columbus. In Midtown Columbus as in similar neighborhoods throughout Georgia, neighborhood stakeholders tend to resist the widening of collector streets, even in situations where these streets are carrying volumes of traffic classed, by traffic specialists, as “over the capacity” of a two-lane street.

The pattern of traffic control devices (traffic signals and auxiliary lanes) in Midtown Columbus is typical for this type of area in small cities. Almost all signals and auxiliary lanes are on the arterial streets. Only a few isolated traffic signals are located off the arterial system, and these are at intersections of major arterials.

The use of auxiliary lanes (additional lanes for turning movements at intersections) is low in Midtown Columbus, relative to typical suburban areas throughout Georgia and the U.S. In some instances where auxiliary lanes are warranted, they have not been installed because of anticipation of major road widening projects in the future. In some other instances (for example, along Wynnton Road), previous street widening to four lanes has already exhausted the right-of-way available for street use, and the additional widening needed for auxiliary lanes can be obtained only at expensive property acquisition or unacceptable narrowing of sidewalks.

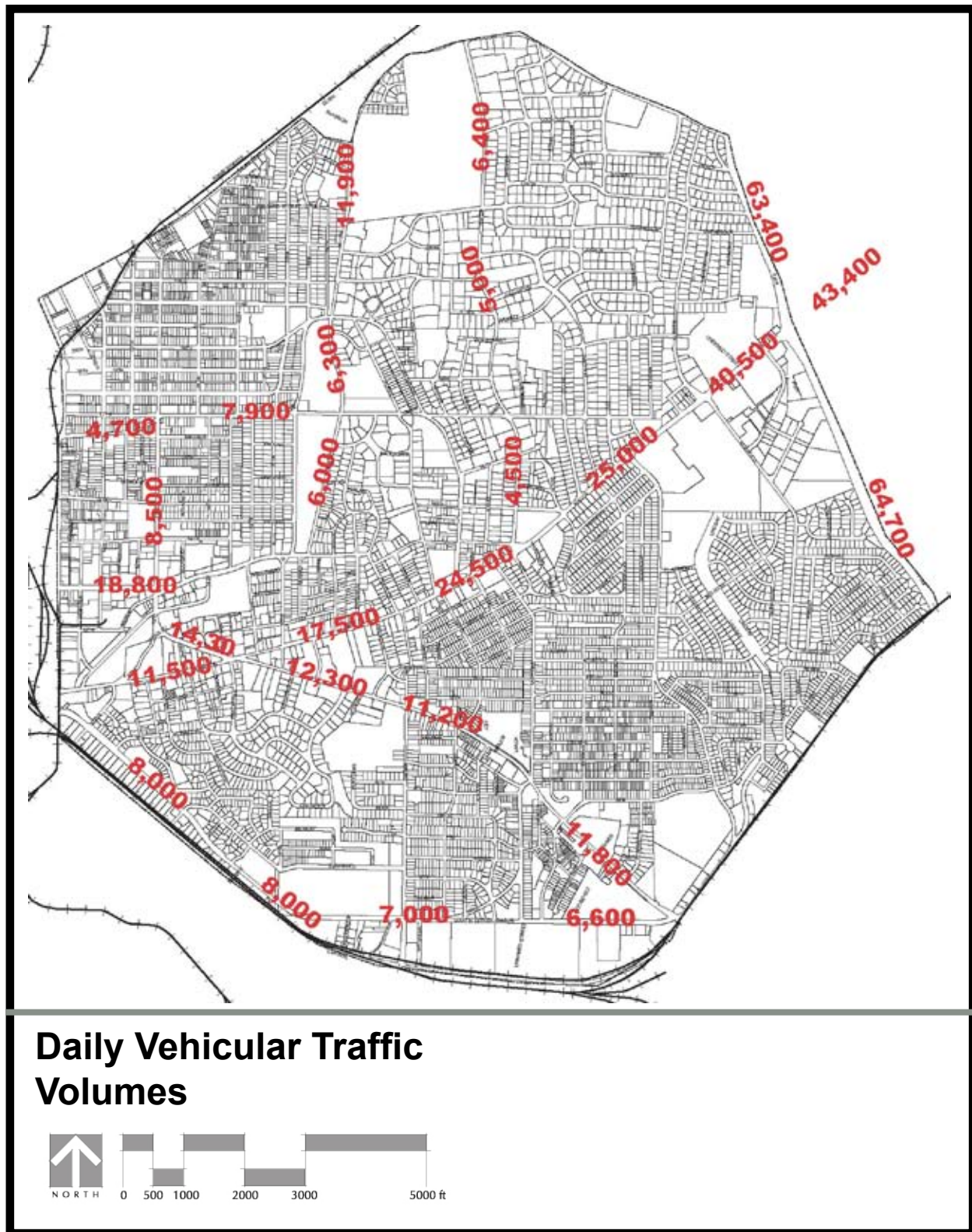


Figure IA.6: Daily Traffic Counts.

Traffic Volumes

Daily traffic volumes are summarized in Figure IA.6. Except on Macon Road in the vicinity of I-185, and in the immediate vicinity of isolated traffic generators (AFLAC, for example), the growth in traffic volumes is low, averaging less than 1% of growth a year over the past five years. This low growth in traffic volumes is typical of the established, older segments of small cities throughout the Sunbelt U.S. It reflects the reduced role of downtowns in employment and shopping, the shift of commercial activity out to suburban rings, the focus of much commercial activity around bypass interchanges (I-185 in the case of Midtown Columbus) and the reduced use of the arterial streets for longer-distance through traffic as new options for bypassing (for example, US180/27) were developed.

In established urban districts, such as Midtown Columbus, road improvements based solely on the projection of increased traffic volumes are regularly a source of controversy and challenge. This has occurred on both of the major projects programmed for Midtown Columbus (i.e., the Wynnton/Brown/Peacock intersection widening, and the Buena Vista Road widening). The low or non-existent growth in traffic on these roads, the interest in community stakeholders in having a community-based plan for their streets, and the high cost (right-of-way, construction and impacts) of programmed widenings, all suggest a fundamental change in emphasis in transportation planning, away from “volumetric-driven” planning seeking to accommodate some future traffic flow, and instead toward planning that begins with community values, as stated by the community. This direction is discussed in the “Issues and Opportunities” section of this analysis.

Street Cross Sections

The small amount of multi-lane street mileage in Midtown Columbus is all on a small quantity of arterial streets (Figure IA.7): a short segment of seven lanes on Macon Road, five-lane segments on 0.4 miles of Macon Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, and four lanes on 0.9 miles of Thirteenth Street, Wynnton Road and a short segment of Buena Vista Road.

A wide and interesting variation is present for the very large mileage of two lane streets in Midtown Columbus.

Street widths for the two-lane streets (Figure IA.8) fall into three distinct groupings: (1) the 24-28 foot pavement, which, when parked vehicles are present, establishes a “yield” mode of traffic flow in which one direction of traffic must yield right-of-way to the other, a preferred operation on local residential streets; (2) the 28-30 foot pavement width, which allows moving vehicles to pass in opposite directions, but slowly, when parked vehicles are present; and (3) the pavement width of 32 feet or greater, which

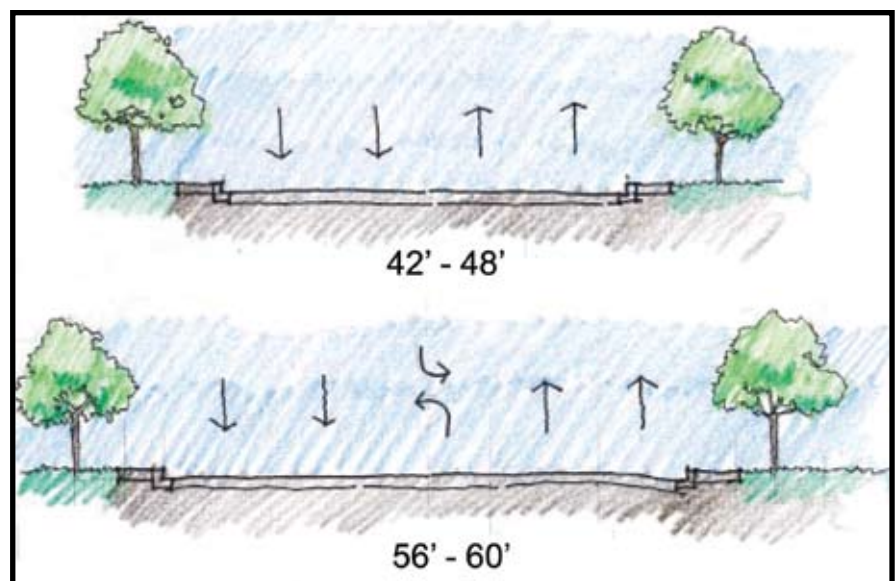


Figure IA.7: Multi-Lane Street Sections

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permits unchecked vehicle speeds in both directions, even when parked vehicles are present. Fortunately, the great majority of streets are in the first two categories noted above, thereby assuring a high degree of built-in traffic calming on local streets.

The treatment of the sidewalk and verge (planting strip between curb and sidewalk) varies greatly on residential streets in Midtown Columbus. Fortunately, almost half the streets have an unusually generous verge (8 feet-14 feet) which readily accommodates major tree plantings, one of the most important factors in the aesthetics of the street. A small minority of local street mileage (estimated at around 15-20 percent) has a narrow verge, 2-4 feet in width, and therefore not suitable for tree planting. A significant mileage of streets (estimated at 30-40 percent) has no sidewalk on either side. In most instances, the street right-of-way would permit the placement of a sidewalk, at least on one side, with sufficient verge for major tree plantings.

The mileage of local street of a “rural” cross section (i.e., without curb and gutter) is small, less than 5 percent of the total street mileage and considerably less than that found in comparable communities. The explanation for this low mileage of rural cross-section roads most likely stems from the careful attention to good town planning at the time that the residential areas of Midtown Columbus were being established. Also, it is likely that there were few existing rural lanes at the time of development of Midtown, and, possibly, that some of those that were in place were rebuilt to town street standards.

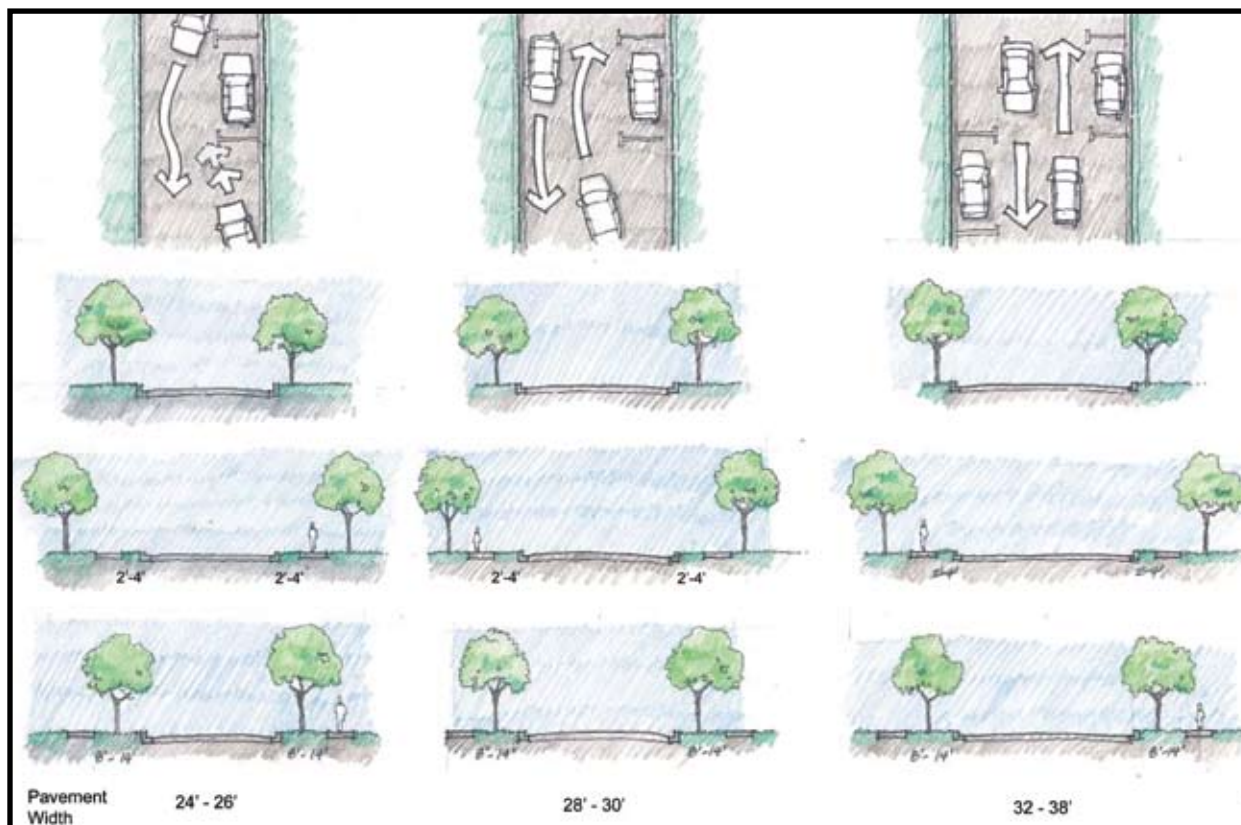


Figure 1A.8: Cross Sections, Two-Lane Streets

Planned Road Improvement Projects in Midtown Columbus

Two major road projects have been recently proposed and evaluated for Midtown Columbus (Figure IA.9):

- The Wynnton/Brown/Peacock Intersection. Initial plans called for the relocation of Brown Avenue westward to form a normal four-approach intersection, the widening of both the approach on Wynnton Road to allow for a left-turn lane, and the widening of Peacock Road from the north to allow a left-turn lane.

The need for this project and the design of the improvement were challenged by the Historic Wynnton Council, and the Council has proposed an alternative plan which retains the relocation of Brown Avenue, forms a normal four-approach intersection, but does not provide left turn lanes on Wynnton Road and therefore does not require its widening.

- The widening of Buena Vista Road, from its present two-lane configuration to five lanes, or a 1.32 mile segment between Lockwood Avenue and Illges Road. The Overlook Community Preservation Association and Historic Wynnton Council have proposed an alternative design, a three-lane cross section, that accommodates existing traffic at a high level of service, that will accommodate growth in traffic, and that incorporates numerous community-building features along the roadway that were not included in the original five-lane proposal.

Summary of Major Directions

The Consultant Team's analysis yields the following four major conclusions and associated strategies:

1. *Traffic projections alone are no longer a good basis for transportation planning in the Midtown Historic District.*

The community regularly challenges projects based solely on meeting a projected future travel demand. Recent examples are the Brown/Peacock/Wynnton intersection widening, and the widening of Buena Vista Road to five lanes. Both of these projects were based on meeting a projection of future travel. These forecasts, however, have not achieved a consensus on validity within the community.

Some of the rationale for increasing road capacity is based on system continuity; specifically, that adjacent links of a roadway have already been widened, and therefore the remaining non-widened links must be brought to a comparable capacity, to provide a continuous system. However, in the case of major roads in the Midtown area, the originally planned system has already eroded or been withdrawn to the point that there is little additional consequence to withdrawing remaining plans for widenings.

Future traffic volumes are now seen, by concerned stakeholders and communities of places everywhere, as but one (and not necessarily the most important) of many, often competing design criteria.

Several possible strategies respond to this issue:

- Withdraw all plans based on volumetric transportation planning, thereby eliminating the case-by-case contentiousness over projects remaining from this earlier stage of transportation planning.
- Begin a process of vision-based transportation planning, that starts with the community's vision

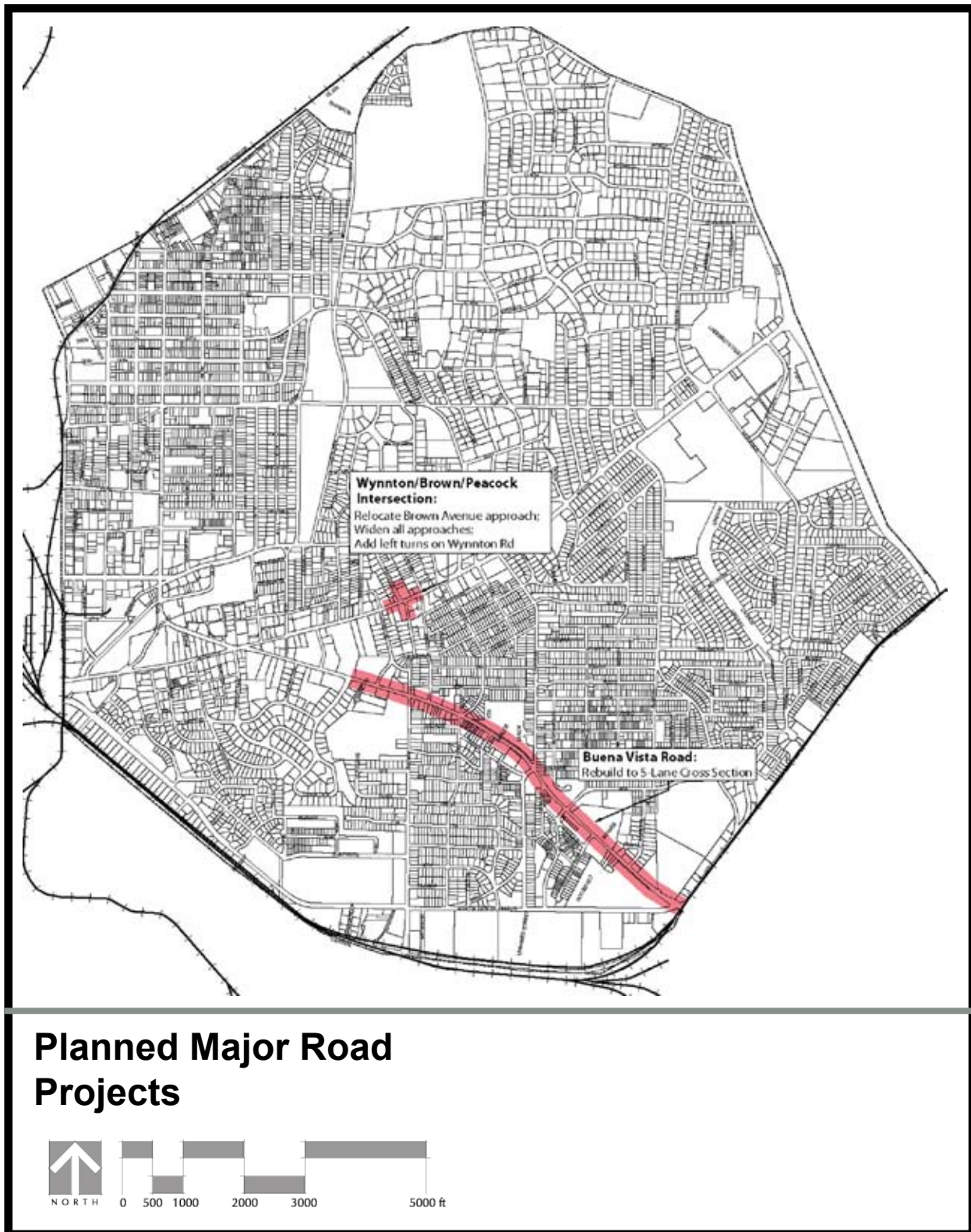


Figure IA.9: Planned Major Road Projects

for itself, how streets fit in that vision, and how the competing functions of street (traffic capacity being one) fit into that picture.

2. Road design is only part of the solution to blighted corridors.

A large number of stakeholder comments associate the blighted appearance of the arterial corridors (Macon/Wynnton Road, Buena Vista Road and Martin Luther King Jr.. Boulevard) with the design of the street, particularly with those segments of the streets that have been recently widened. While there are indeed some road features contributing to the blight (for example, skimpy sidewalks immediately adjacent to high-speed traffic lanes), a far more pervasive factor in the blight is the configuration of the adjacent land use. All recent development has taken the form of “highway strip” development, in which the dominating feature of the development is the parking area fronting the street. This feature alone guarantees that the road corridor (for example, Macon Road) becomes regarded as a blighted, dysfunctional corridor.

The reclamation of the blighted corridors, therefore, can be accomplished only through a combination of road design and site design. The single critical factor in removing blight from arterial highways is a land development pattern that, over time, reverses the position of commercial buildings and their parking with commercial buildings fronting the street and parking concealed in the rear. Only then do the street design elements that support a multi-mode corridor – gracious sidewalks, controlled vehicle access, notable landscaping – become feasible. The importance of building placement along arterial streets to the function and design of the street is summarized in Figure IA.10.

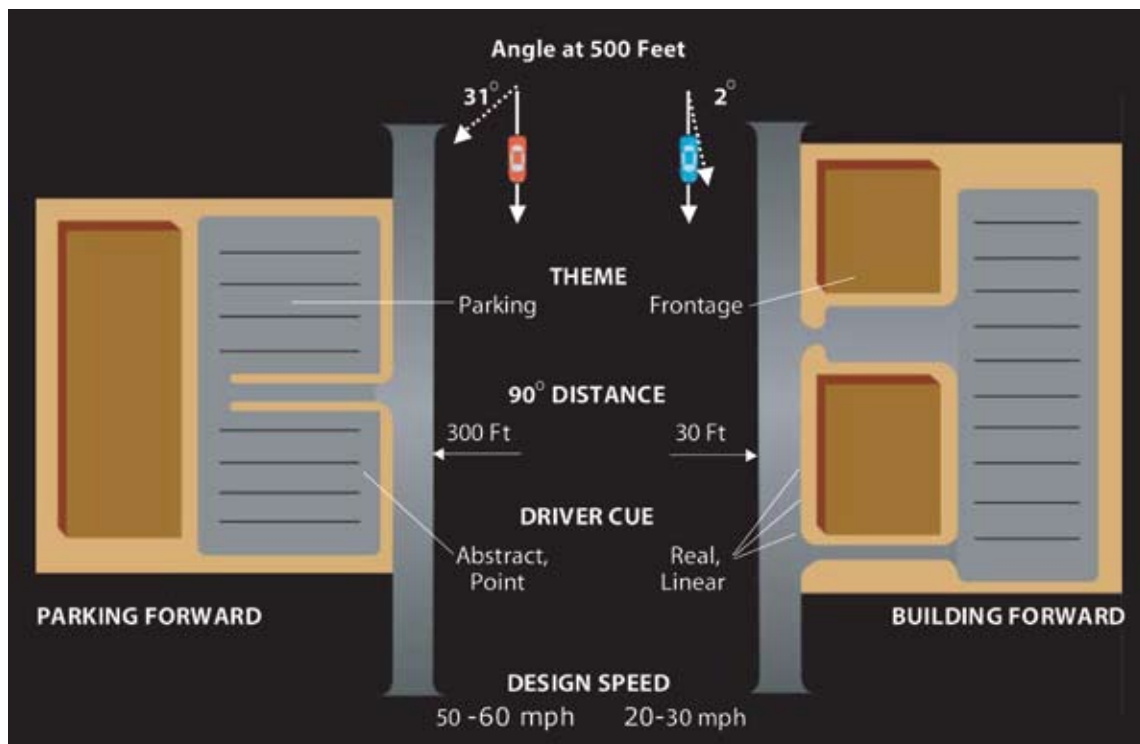


Figure IA.10: Commercial Building Placement and Street Performance

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3. The highly connected grid is both an advantage and a challenge.

While the highly connected grid of streets in Midtown Columbus is a large advantage for traffic flow and livability, it also poses a growing challenge, to neighborhoods, in the form of “cut-through” traffic; that is, traffic with neither origin nor destination in the neighborhood but using neighborhood streets to evade congestion or unsightliness on their proper routes, the arterial and major collector streets.

Within the last decade, a large number of neighborhood traffic calming measures have been developed, demonstrated and successful installed on thousands of neighborhood streets throughout the U.S. These

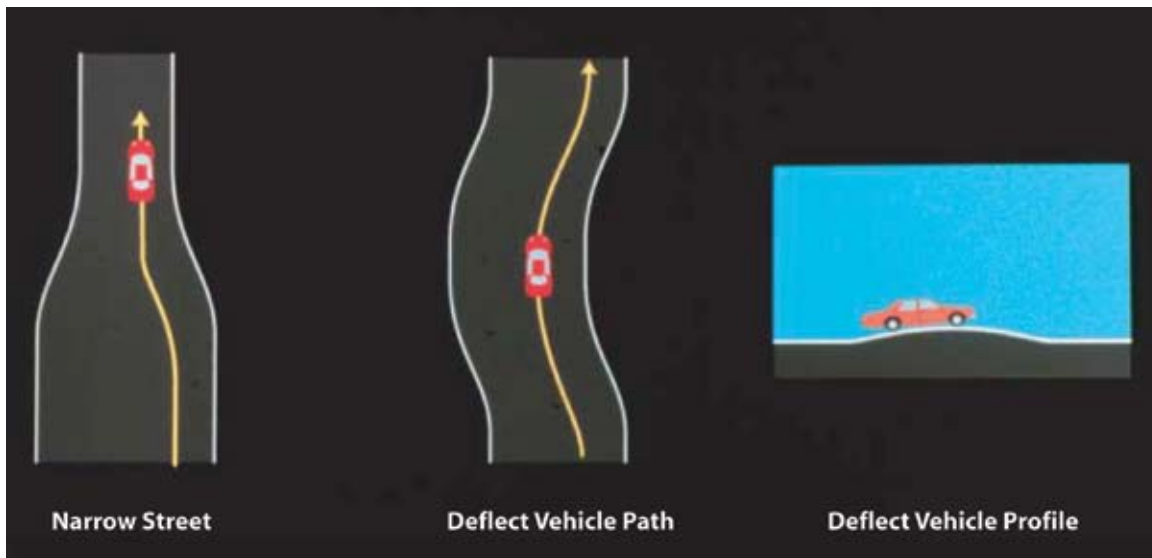


Figure IA.11: Traffic Calming Principles for Street Design

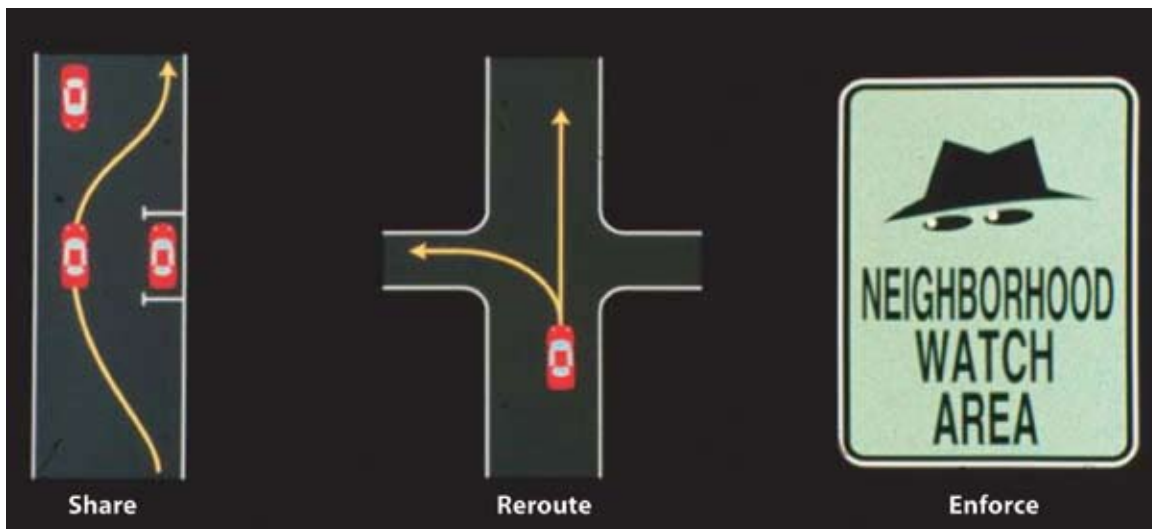


Figure IA.12: Traffic Calming Principles for Street Use

measures are particularly applicable to the “minor collector” streets in Midtown Columbus, which have the potential for becoming attractive routes for cut-through traffic.

Although a large number of traffic calming measures are not in use, they are all based on only a few basic principles (Figures IA.11 and IA.12).

A systematic traffic calming program, focused primarily on the major and minor collector streets in Midtown Columbus, would include a varied but coherent package of individual elements (Figure IA.13). Most of these measures have the potential for simultaneously controlling traffic behavior and improving the appearance of the neighborhood, through landscaping, street pavement changes, sidewalks and crosswalks.

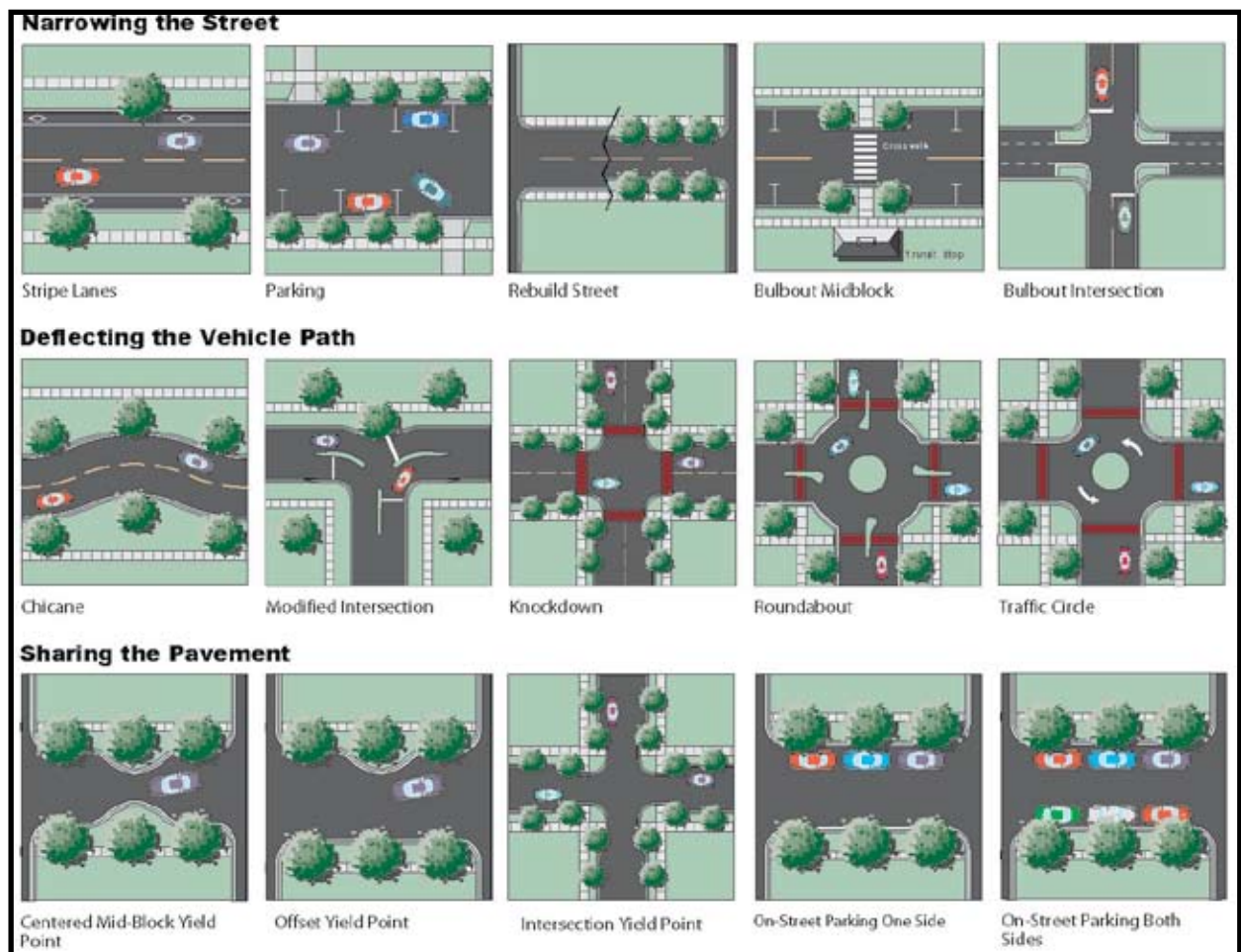


Figure IA.13: Typical Menu of Traffic Calming Principles

E. The Environment

Overview

Natural systems are the vegetative, hydrologic and topographic features that define an area. They should serve as an underlying basis for all planning decisions, as they directly impact the suitability of certain lands for development.

Awareness has been raised in recent years of the degradation to the air, water, and animal life by factors such as careless development trends and urban expansion, among others. Much of the negative affects of growth can be avoided by using natural systems to shape and inform development decisions and patterns. It is only logical that municipalities guard and protect natural features on which they depend such as watersheds or wetlands for water and animal life or forests for clean air.

Natural systems also serve as significant pieces to enhance local character and flavor. Many places have capitalized significantly on their natural amenities and enjoy an increased quality of life from celebrating the landforms specific to an area.

For most of Georgia, the most significant natural system affecting development suitability is hydrology. Rivers, streams and floodplain areas are governed by a strict combination of state and federal laws that directly impact the ability to develop in and near them. These regulations are reviewed below:

Floodplain Regulations: The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration's Hazard Mapping Division maintains and updates a set of National Flood Insurance Program maps that show all 100 and 500 year floodplains within the United States. Through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a federally backed flood insurance program, communities are encouraged to enact and enforce floodplain regulations. To be covered by a flood insurance policy, a property must be in a community that participates in the NFIP.

River and Stream Bank Protection: Georgia State Law, adopted in 2000, requires a minimum 75-foot natural undisturbed setback from the stream bank, on both sides of any stream. This creates a continuous, linear protected area, which, including the stream itself, is more than 150 feet wide.

Existing Conditions

The significant natural features within the Midtown Study Area are the two North-South creeks (Weracoba and Lindsay) and a steep west-facing hillside along Weracoba Creek. From an environmental assessment nearly all of the land within the Study Area is appropriate for development (excluding floodplains) and has already experienced some form of development or improvement.

Weracoba (Lakebottom) Park is an excellent example of planning using natural systems. The name reflects its origins as a floodplain (Wildwood Park) for the Weracoba Creek and capitalizes on its very logical and appropriate park location. Alternatively, Lindsay Creek, over 1 mile east of Weracoba Creek, has been transformed into a functional, unattractive stormwater overflow area. Its original form is constrained to a concrete culvert allowing little of its function as wildlife habitat or pleasurable green space to surface. The right-of-way around Lindsay Creek in certain places near Glenwood and Clairmont roads is over 200 feet wide, creating the potential for creative designs to free the banks of that Creek.

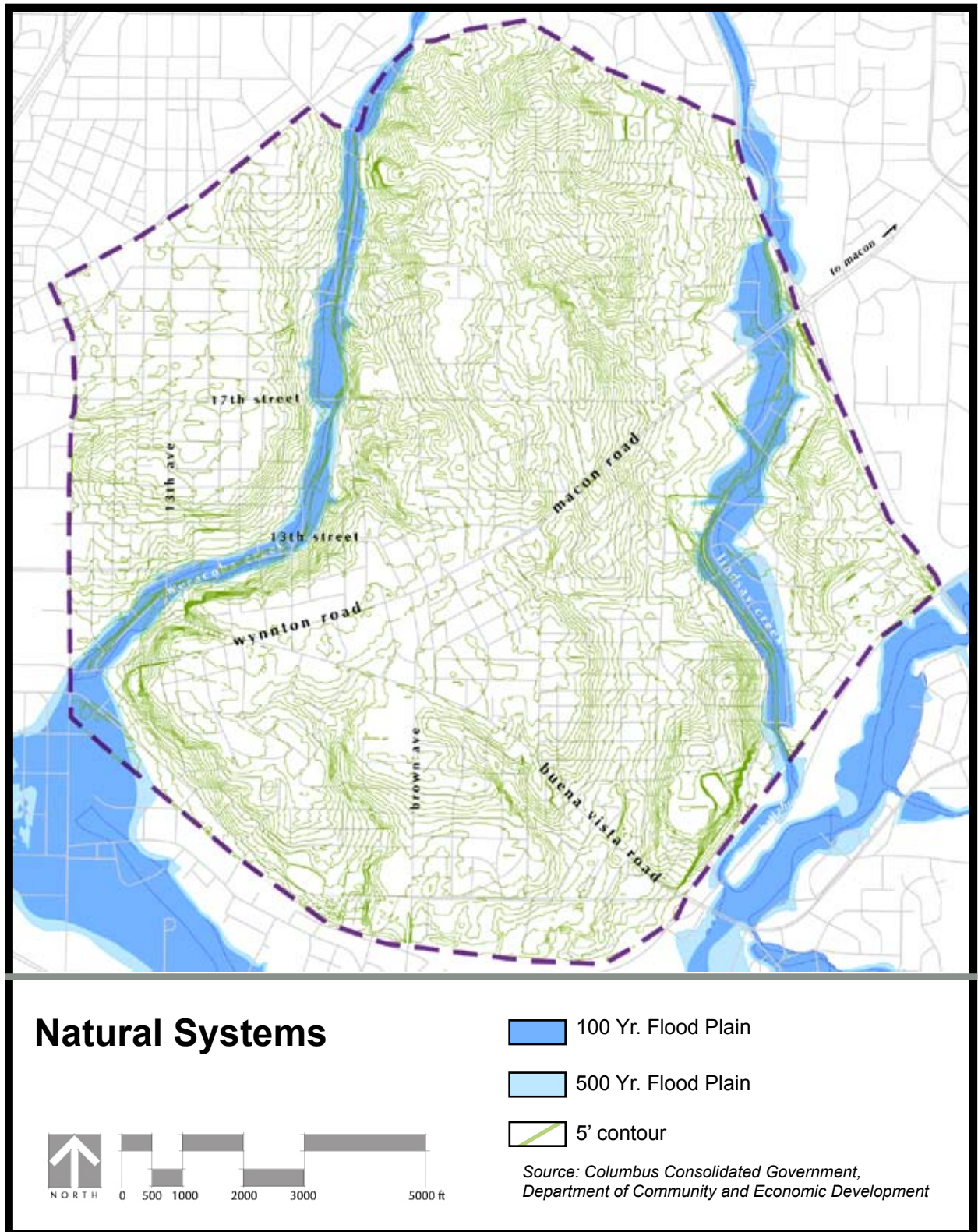


Figure IA.14: Natural Systems

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Topography across much of the Study Area is level or gently rolling, as the Study Area is located on a ledge approximately 70 feet above downtown and the Chattahoochee River. The highest point in the Study Area is in the northeastern portion near the Country Club, at an elevation of approximately 425'. The southeast and southwest portions of Midtown contain the lowest elevations (approximately 250') along the creeks and their flood plains. The Overlook neighborhood is aptly named for its position at this unique condition. There is a valuable promontory known as the "Hilton property" on an undeveloped site that could be preserved and utilized overlooking Macon Road (on the old J.H. Bickerstaff parcel) between Dixon and Hilton Avenues.

F. Infrastructure

Overview

Infrastructure is the foundation upon which successful and healthy communities are built. Infrastructure supports development and economic growth by providing essential services such as water distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, and stormwater management. Effective and efficient infrastructure systems are essential to the continued health of a community.

Existing Conditions

The Study Area is served by water and sewer systems managed by the Columbus Water Works and stormwater systems managed by the City of Columbus. Based on preliminary conversations with Water Works engineers, redevelopment in Midtown should have no water or sewer capacity constraints in terms of capacities that are generally consistent with predevelopment. Redevelopment can simply use existing infrastructure at vacant or underutilized sites. The old mall site has infrastructure in place with adequate capacity to support redevelopment that has similar demand characteristics. The Redevelopment Authority and CWW in the past has provided some subsidies to Technical/Industrial parks regarding water/sewer infrastructure in order to promote industrial growth but it is not a frequently deployed policy. No water or sewer funds to support the Midtown Project recommendations have been budgeted.

Water Supply

The existing water distribution network provides complete coverage to the Study Area. Larger water mains, generally 10 or 16 inches in diameter, are found along major roads such as Macon Road. Smaller lines are found along minor roads and in residential subdivisions.

Sewer

The existing wastewater collection and treatment system provides service to all of the Study Area. Most of the sewer lines in the Study Area are typically 8-inch gravity sewers, excepting large 24-36 inch gravity sewers following Lindsay Creek. There are no septic systems in the Midtown Study Area. Data provided by the Water Works indicate a proposed rehabilitation along Cherokee Avenue between 17th Street and Leonard Street. A proposed sewer rehabilitation project is scheduled for the sewer along Benner Avenue from King Street south past Martin Luther King Boulevard. Two sewage lift stations, both in the Lindsay Creek area, are to be upgraded.

Stormwater

The Study Area covers parts of four drainage basins, running generally north-south following the two major waterways: Lindsay and Weracoba Creeks. The creeks within the Study Area, according to 2002

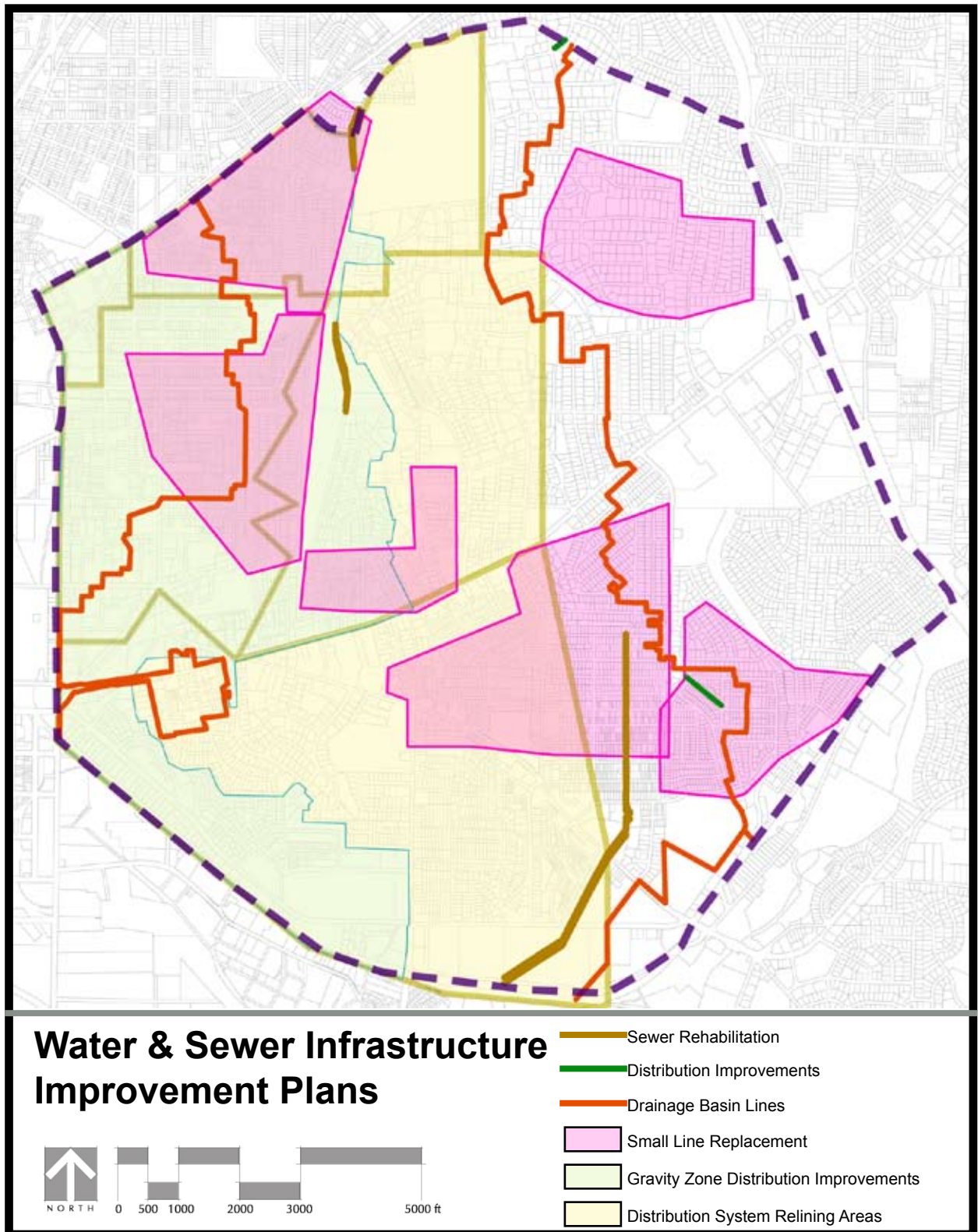


Figure IA.15: Water and Sewer Infrastructure Planned Improvements

Source: Columbus Water Works

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Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) data, are meeting State water quality standards. However the data shows that as Weracoba just south of the Study Area is classified as not meeting standards due to urban runoff.

G. Land Use and Regulations

Overview

Land uses and the relationship between them impact the quality of life in a community. Different land uses have varying impacts on transportation and utility systems. The physical arrangements of these land uses and their proximity also support or discourage the use of different modes of transportation, including bicycling and walking.

Towns and cities were traditionally built as mixed-use environments featuring housing, shops, offices, religious institutions, schools, parks, and factories all within a short walk of one another. As the benefits of mixed-use areas are rediscovered, it becomes necessary to understand the design implications and compatibility of their uses.

Existing Land Use

The Study Area's roughly 3900 acres (6 square miles) contain a wide variety of land uses. Most of the (horizontal) mixing of uses occurs along the corridors. No vertically mixed sites, such as a traditional residential unit above a retail storefront, exist within the Study Area,

Table II.16 shows existing land uses excluding ROW (Right-of-Way) total 3168 acres. Residential land uses total 62%, while Commercial/Retail accounts for 13%. Other existing uses include Civic (7.4%), Parks (6.2%), Office (4.5%) and Industrial (4.1%).

Most commercial retail and office uses are found along the traveled arteries, particularly Wynnton and Macon Road. Two major nodes of retail uses are clustered along that highway at Wynnton Village and another at Auburn/Boxwood Avenue. Other noteworthy neighborhood-scaled nodes of retail occur at 13th Avenue and 17th Street, Wildwood Road at Wynnton Road, 13th Street and 13th Avenue, Brown Avenue and Buena Vista Roads, Rigdon and Illges Roads, and 18th Street at Garrard Street.

Land Use	Acres total	percentage
Park	197.3	6.2%
Civic	235.1	7.4%
Low Density Residential	1,040.4	32.8%
Medium Density Residential	677.4	21.4%
High Density Residential	244.7	7.7%
Mix Office/High Density Residential	142.0	4.5%
Neighborhood Commercial	187.9	5.9%
General Commercial	210.8	6.7%
Industrial warehouse	130.0	4.1%
Vacant	103.5	3.3%
	3,168.9	

The Study Area's eastern retail node at Auburn/Boxwood is marked by the low-density, auto-

Table IA.16: Existing Land Use Summary

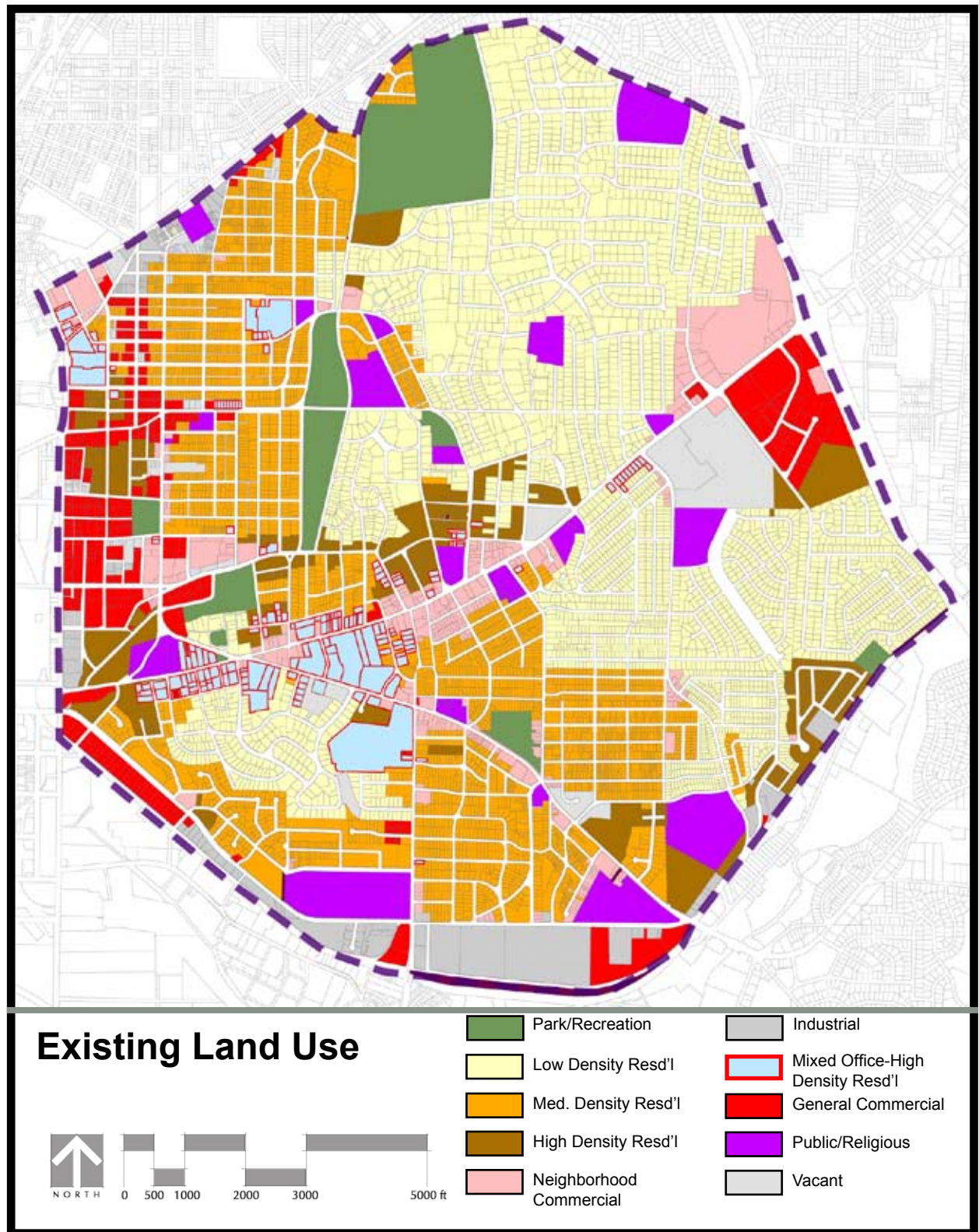


Figure IA.17: Existing Land Use

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mobile-oriented commercial uses commonly associated with strip highways. Many of these uses are fast food restaurants, gas stations, pawn shops, and low-density shopping centers.

Two major pockets of Office Institutional land use and dense concentrations of employment found in Midtown are the:

- AFLAC headquarters between Macon Road and 8th Street, and west of Brown Avenue;
- and the Medical Center in the northwest corner.

The majority of the study area consists of single family residential neighborhoods, with only a few multi-family developments and scattered pockets of condominiums. Civic and greenspace are sprinkled throughout the Study Area.

Vacant land use makes up only 3.3 percent or 103 acres of the total existing land uses in the Midtown Study Area. Vacant sites are generally found along the major corridors. The largest is by far has been the old Columbus Square 70-acre Mall site. However, once the new Muscogee County Library is constructed, remaining vacant land will make up only 1 percent of total MidTown land area. Thus, major changes in MidTown's land use and/or physical form will require redevelopment vs. the generally more economical greenfield development.

Figure II.18 shows vacant parcels and yellow circles around current properties for sale. Vacant land was identified using 2003 aerial photography and for-sale property was taken from the Columbus Chamber of Commerce Economic Development website. These measures indicate opportunities for potential redevelopment nodes around the old mall area and around 13th Street between 10th and 13th Avenue. Other vacant parcels should also be studied for suitability of compatible infill development.

Zoning

A key implementation tool of the Comprehensive Plan is zoning. The Columbus Consolidated Government regulates the development of property through the use of zoning districts. The districts control things such as height, use, setbacks, parking, etc. They are the implementation tool of the 15 Year Future Land Use Plan and should support the desired future land uses. Because it directly shapes development, zoning has a profound impact on built environment. More than any other element, zoning affects how a community looks and functions for decades.

There are currently nine zoning districts represented in the Study Area; five are residential, three business, and one mixed residential and business. The five residential districts are found within the existing neighborhoods and include R-1A, R-2, R-3, R-3A, R-4. The three business districts exists are found primarily along the arterial and collector streets such as Wynnton/Macon Roads, Buena Vista Road, along the western portions of 13th and 17th Streets, and along 13th Avenue. These districts include C-2, C-3 and M-1. The one mixed residential and business district, A-O (apartment-office) includes the AFLAC head-

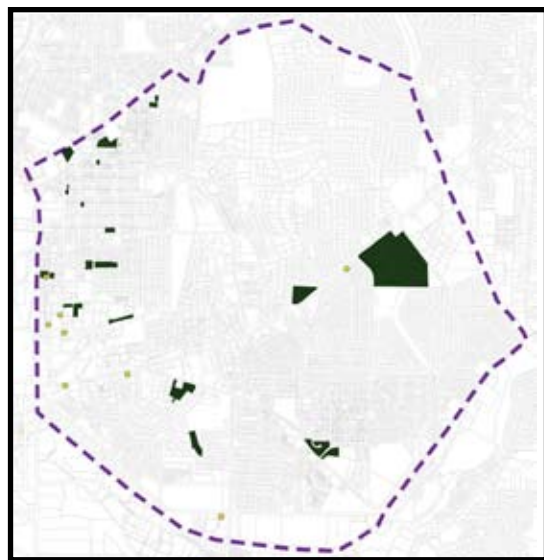


Figure IA.18: Vacant & For Sale Land

Source: Columbus Consolidated Government, Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development

quarters, scattered multifamily sites, and the institutional uses along west Wynnton Road, north of the Overlook neighborhood.

With the exception of A-O, these zoning districts are primarily single-use. Business districts do not allow residential uses and residential districts do not allow business uses, other than those meeting the definition of “Home occupation” established in the Zoning Ordinance. A-O permits both uses however as either/or. It is intended to provide flexibility for either a high density residential dwelling or office use. While it is clearly desirable to protect residential areas from commercial encroachment, this lack of residential zoning permission in C-2 and C-3 properties limits redevelopment when there is no longer demand for single-use commercial space. It could also limit the opportunity to provide a greater range of housing types, including townhomes, condominiums and multifamily.

Within each residential zoning district a range of housing densities are permitted. The following table summarizes the current net residential development permissions by district. Please note that the Zoning Ordinance bases development permission on minimum lot area per family, not net residential density; the chart below represents a translation of current development permissions to dwelling units per acre (du/a).

District	Single-family	Townhome	Condominium/Multifamily
R-1A	4.35 du/a	None	None
R-2	5.81 du/a	None	None
R-3	7.26 du/a	None	None
R-3A	7.26 du/a	18.15 du/a	14.52 du/a
R-4	10 du/a*	18.15 du/a	21.78 du/a
A-O	10 du/a*	18.15 du/a	43.56 du/a

Table IA.19. Net residential development permissions by district. Note: The Zoning Ordinance does not specifically contain a maximum number of single-family homes per acre. This number presents an estimate of the highest possible density of detached homes possible from a construction point of view.

The Zoning Ordinance does not provide for any sort of design control, other than those expressed through the requirements of designated historic districts. As a result, all major commercial corridors within the Study Area are not subject to any basic standards of design compatibility. The on-the-ground result of this is a significant visual disconnect between the visually attractive historic neighborhoods and the commercial areas around them. This lack of control also limits development, by failing to protect would-be investors from incompatible new development; few commercial developers will invest money to create a quality building when the property next door is not held to the same standards.

C-2 and C-3 districts also contain certain requirements that are counter to the historic urbanism found in MidTown. Minimum front setbacks of 20 feet make the replication of MidTown’s historic sidewalk-fronting commercial structures illegal without a variance. In addition, they permit the location of parking between the building and the street – one of the worst offenders to the pedestrian and the visual quality of a street. Sign regulations allow free-standing sign by-right; these signs are not always compatible with their context.

On-site parking requirements within the Zoning Ordinance vary. Apartments and multifamily units require 1.5 spaces per unit, while most retail (excluding food stores) require 5.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Food stores and restaurants require 10 spaces per 1,000 square feet. With the exception of Uptown, these requirements are applied evenly across the consolidated City of Columbus/Muscogee County. While such parking requirements are appropriate for newly developed suburban areas, they are generally higher than customarily found in other historic neighborhoods across Georgia, where people may park at one business and patronize several. They may also limit redevelopment by forcing valuable land to be

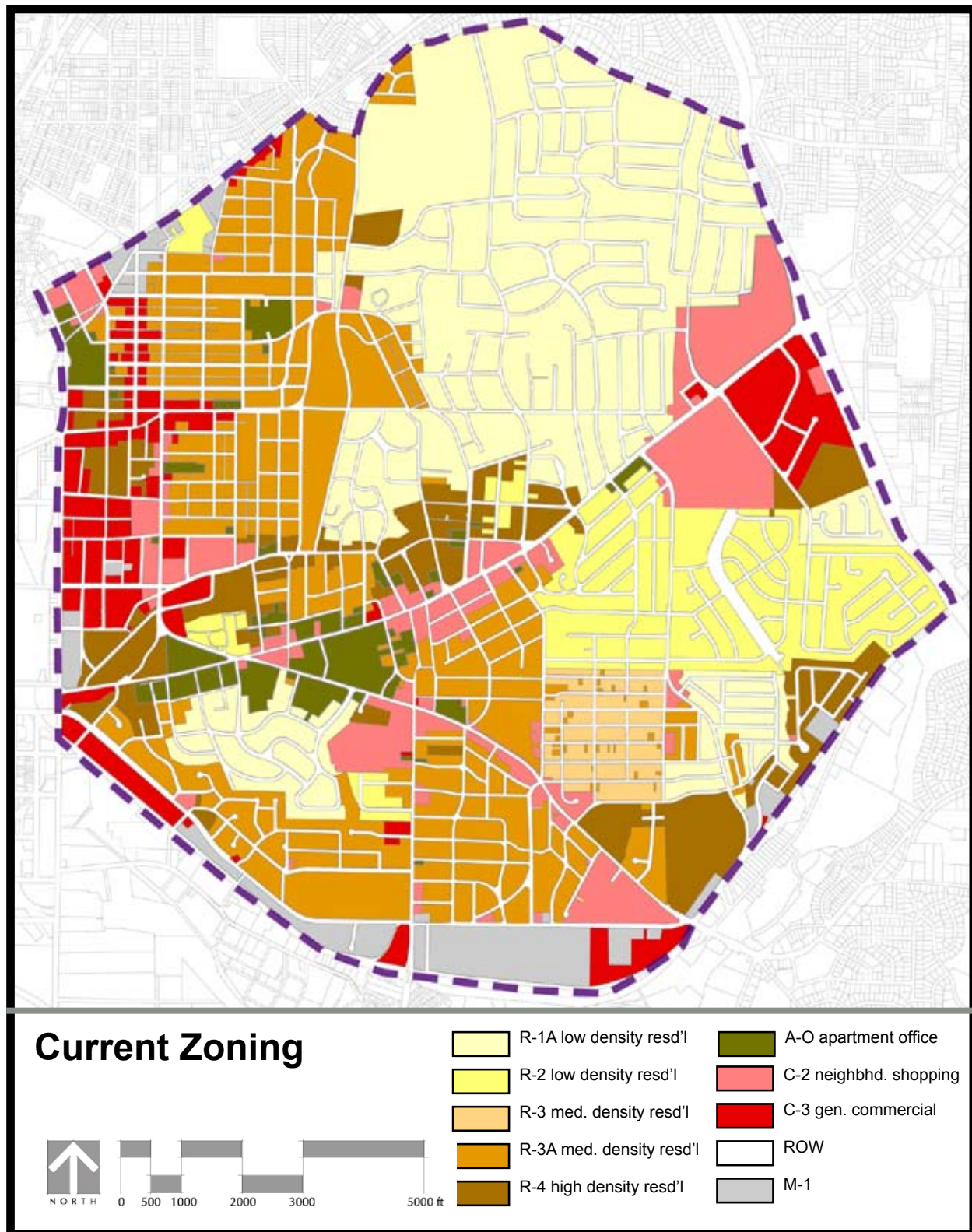


Figure 1A.20: Current Zoning

Source: Columbus Consolidated Government,
Department of Community and Economic Development

dedicated to unneeded parking or necessitating a variance.

Opportunities exist for changing the Zoning Ordinance to be more in-keeping with the historic character of MidTown and its future potential. Key to this is the creation of a new zoning district that reflects the unique demands of the Study Area. This district could include both residential and mixed-use areas. It could also include basic design regulations and other provisions that would support reinvestment; these regulations need not and should not enforce a specific architectural “style,” but rather should promote the placement of buildings along the street, relegated parking, and the creation of a cohesive and enriched public realm. Creation of such could be challenging, particularly given a potential aversion to increased residential densities in current non-residential districts. There could also be resistance based on an unwillingness on the part of commercial property owners to see the value of additional requirements.

Future Land Use Plan

The Comprehensive Plan establishes future land use classifications for all areas of the Columbus Consolidated Government via Future Land Use maps. The classifications need not comply with current on-the-ground land uses, but rather reflect desired long-term land use desires. Under Georgia law, the future land use plan serves as the legal basis for rezoning activity on the part of the consolidated government. Therefore, it is important that the plan accurately reflects the desired vision for Midtown. The classifications should serve as a guide for directing public infrastructure improvements that support the desired future land use.

For the purpose of reflecting the different parts of the city, Future Land Use maps are organized by Planning Districts. Planning Districts are sectors of the city with relatively similar development histories and land use patterns. There are thirteen districts in the city. Midtown is located in Planning District 8, which is generally bounded to the north by Manchester Expressway, to the east by I-185, to the south by Morris Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, and to the west by Uptown and Veterans Parkway. In general, the Future Land Use Plan reflects the current land use patterns in Midtown.

Single-family residential areas are primarily classified “Low Density Residential,” with the exception of the historic neighborhoods west of Cherokee Avenue that are classified “Medium Density Residential.” Areas that do not reflect current or historic uses include portions of the East Highlands neighborhood, west of 12th Avenue, which are classified “Offices,” reflecting a long term policy to transition the area professional uses. Similarly, the classification of the historic neighborhood south of Macon Road and east of Brown Avenue is “Low Density Residential,” which includes a maximum density of three units per acre, even though historic densities are much higher. Several historic neighborhood commercial nodes scattered through are also not reflected by this classification.

Areas classified “General Commercial” include Macon Road near I-185, as well as the blocks surrounding the intersection of 13th Avenue and 13th Street. This classification reflects a policy to support single-use commercial developments in these areas, rather than mixed-use ones.

Three other major classifications found in Midtown include: “Mixed-Office/Commercial” along Wynnton Road and Brown Avenue; “Offices” around AFLAC’s corporate headquarters; and “Mixed Commercial/Industrial” along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. These business-oriented classifications preclude mixed-use developments.

In addition to the Land Use Plan map, the Comprehensive Plan also includes other land use policy recommendations that affect Midtown:

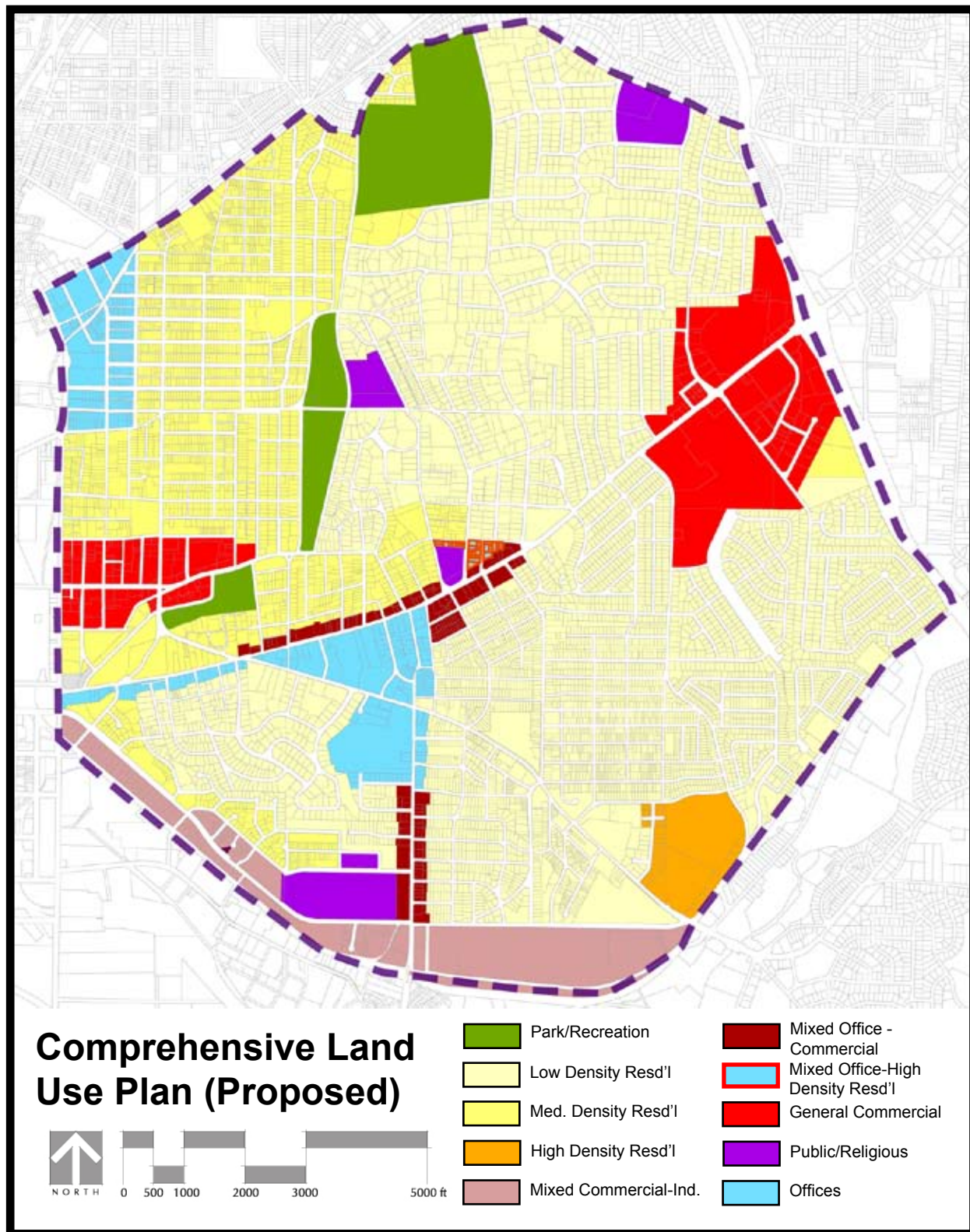


Figure IA.21: Future Land Use Plan

Source: Columbus Consolidated Government,
Department of Community and Economic Development

- Protecting older residential areas from incompatible encroachment of uses and traffic;
- Protecting historic resources;
- Promoting industrial uses along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard;
- Strengthening existing commercial areas and holding their boundaries;
- Focusing rehabilitation and redevelopment efforts in deteriorated areas of Talbotton, Warm Springs and Buena Vista Roads, 10th Avenue, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard;
- Concentrating office and related services along Warm Springs Road;
- Increasing housing options via new construction;
- Protecting natural systems; and
- Providing increased park space.

It is also important to note that, although not explicitly stated, the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use map shows a continuation of residential uses along Macon Road between 13th Street and Rigdon Road. This is a key policy aimed at preserving one of the gateways to historic Columbus, rather than allowing it to degrade into a commercial strip, as far too often occurs on major roadways into urban cores. This is consistent with one of the Plan's general policies to "Reinforce support for existing commercial that demonstrate potential long term viability."

To this end, this and other policy recommendation can be described as strengthening historic land use patterns by protecting neighborhoods and encouraging new development on under-utilized commercial and industrial sites along their edges.

H. Public Safety

Overview

The perception and reality of an area's public safety can impact spending patterns and usage of public facilities like parks and greenways. Crime negatively influences housing prices and commercial land values when its numbers exceed an acceptable level and in cases where individual crimes are highly publicized. While Master Plans can have significant effect on public safety, the reasons and methods for improving safety are complex and far beyond the scope of this study.

Existing Conditions

Preliminary data received from the Columbus Police Department shows that:

- The total number of crimes in MidTown increased 16% from the year 2001 to 2003, from 2810 to 3254. The largest increase in crimes were in an assortment of categories including Cruelty to a Child, Stalking, and Identity Fraud, while the trends for the most violent crimes - Armed Robbery, Concealed Weapons, and Statutory Rape - decreased.
- The most frequent crimes occurred in property related categories. Theft by Taking, Entering an Auto, and Criminal Trespassing, the three most frequent crimes from 2001-2003, comprised over half the total crimes committed.
- Crime is distributed fairly evenly throughout the area.

INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Most of the Police Zones in Midtown (Figure II.22) showed a similar quantity of crimes committed in the years 2001 to 2003. The highest crime zone (Zone 56) makes up 7% of the total for Midtown, the next highest (Zone 57) is 6% and several zones account for 5% (Figure II.23).

Figure IA.22:
Police Zones Within Midtown



Crime Comparison by District
2001-2003 totals

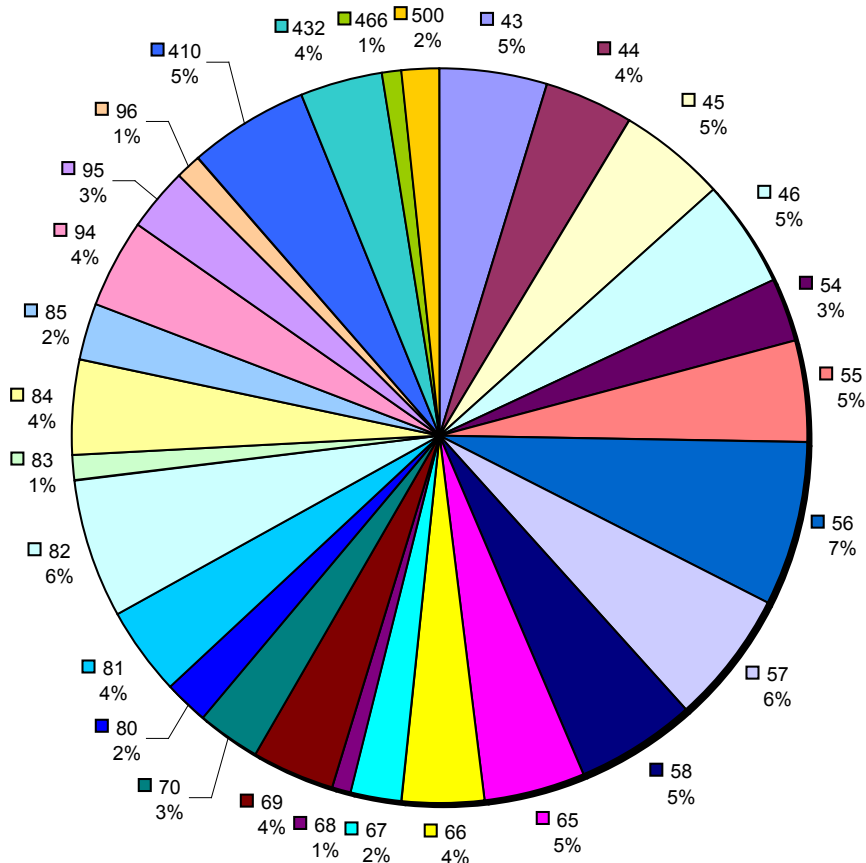


Figure IA.23: Distribution of Crimes by Police Zone Within Midtown

DEMOGRAPHICS & MARKET INFORMATION



A. Summary of Economic Inventory

OVERVIEW

A key element of the Midtown plan includes market and economic analyses that will gauge the depth of market support and degree of financial feasibility for specific uses. Further, the economic analysis will also include realistic implementation strategies that serve as a “roadmap” to help guide the critical decisions required from both the public and private sectors for future investment and redevelopment efforts in Midtown. More detailed study will be conducted in later phases to examine revitalization opportunities for specific, priority locations.

The economic analysis is designed to serve as an independent assessment of real estate market dynamics as they affect potential for various uses, including new housing, workplace (e.g. office), supporting services (e.g. convenience and service retail) as well as destination or specialty uses (e.g. restaurants).

The following highlights key findings related to relevant demographic and economic characteristics for Midtown as well as the City of Columbus-Muscogee County and/or MSA as appropriate.

Market Study Objectives

The objectives of the market and economic inventory and analysis conducted for the MidTown Project are as follows:

- Understand those market forces affecting the competitive position of MidTown and how these advantages and disadvantages will inform appropriate revitalization strategies;
- Test Midtown’s economic potential and market support for a variety of uses;
- Provide a “roadmap” that will help guide future investment and redevelopment efforts by both the public and private sectors;
- Identify the “drivers of demand” that may inform redevelopment opportunities for specific, priority sites; and
- Outline the economic/financial conditions necessary to position these specific sites to support uses envisioned by both the City and private-sector interests.

As the basis for identifying development opportunities in Midtown Columbus, ERA evaluated appropriate economic indices or “drivers” *designed to measure and create fundamental sources of demand*. We reviewed growth trends and forecasts for specific factors such as population, households, age composition, employment, household incomes, retail sales and the like in both Columbus and Muscogee County. In addition, we examined real estate market conditions across various uses, including housing, commercial (office and retail), and other uses to understand development trends and market capacity. We reviewed market conditions and development activity such as housing starts, commercial construction,

DEMOGRAPHICS & MARKET INFORMATION

absorption, building inventory, rents, land and building prices/values, occupancy levels, room rates, historic absorption, tenant characteristics, operating costs, and ongoing construction and proposed projects. This market research was completed in order to understand the competitive impacts and implications on development opportunities for Midtown.

Data Qualification

Data used in this initial inventory analysis included the following:

- Detailed demographic information for 1990-2000 is based on U.S. Census data.
- Detailed demographic forecasts for Midtown are based on data provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions for 2003-2008. ERA segmented the Midtown study area into six sections (Figure DM.1)
- Employment trends as provided by the Georgia Department of Labor and Texas A&M University as well as forecasts prepared by Woods & Poole, Inc.—a key barometer in measuring demand for commercial real estate—are limited to the consolidated city/county level only.
- Partial data containing information on the study area's inventory (in sq. ft.) of commercial office and retail space is available, based on several sources—including the [2004 Shopping Center Directory](#) for the South, the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Valley Partnership website on available commercial properties, and City permit information.
- There is only limited information available on annual absorption trends to understand leasing activity in commercial office and retail properties; this is a critical factor necessary to measure overall demand for such space.
- Permit activity for residential uses is available but limited to the consolidated city/county level only; data area not segmented by geographic areas within the City of Columbus.

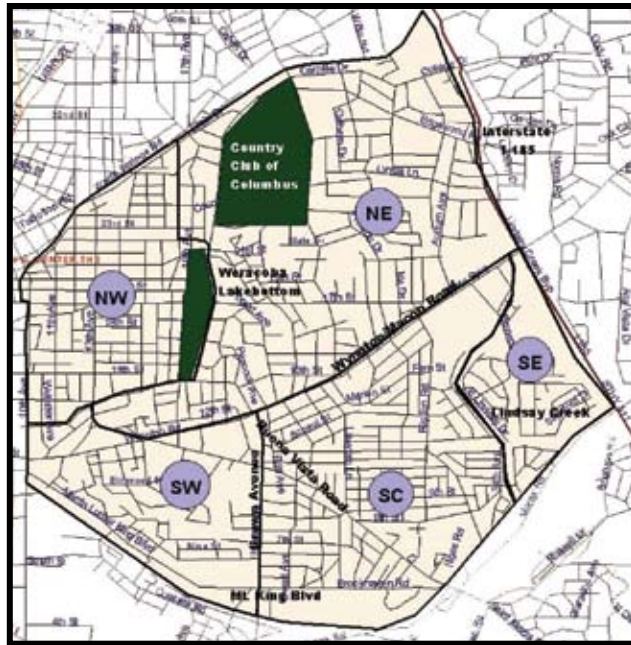


Figure DM.1: Market Segmentation Designations

KEY FINDINGS

Demographic Profile: Muscogee County (Tables 1-4)

Columbus and Muscogee County are a consolidated city/county government. As such, our demographic analysis is presented at two levels—for the MSA and City/County as a whole and for the Midtown study area in particular. Key demographic information is highlighted below:

DEMOGRAPHICS & MARKET INFORMATION

- The Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) population increased from 261,000 in 1990 to 274,600 in 2000—a 5.3% increase. In 2002, the metropolitan area's population estimate was **275,900**. Muscogee County comprises roughly 68% of the region's overall population—with **187,500** residents.
- Population growth was fueled by births (which outnumbered deaths) as well as some international migration. Notably, there was negative domestic (out-) migration of almost 3,000 residents.
- According to ESRI Business Information Solutions, the County's population is forecast to increase only *slightly* over the next five years—from 187,500 in 70,400 households to **189,000 in 71,700 households in 2008**—a nominal population growth rate of 0.9%. Like many localities, however, the rate of household creation is higher, attributable to singles, the elderly, and unmarried couples or partners fueling this growth.
- The County's racial profile is also diversifying, with a decline in the Caucasian population, and increases in most other categories, including African Americans, Asians and Hispanics.
- Like many communities nationwide, other notable demographic characteristics include an expected aging of the population. Over the next five years, all age cohorts through the age of 44 are expected to *decline* in Muscogee County. By comparison, the number of residents between ages 45-59 is expected to increase by more than 4,700. As these typically include the highest earning cohorts with discretionary income potential, this bodes well for retail opportunities. In addition, it also suggests a focus on particular types of housing and amenities oriented to active adults and empty nesters.
- The County's median household income—currently \$41,800—is forecast to increase *faster* than the rate of inflation—to **\$48,900** by 2008.
- In terms of housing characteristics, the number of owner-occupied units is expected to remain stable in the range of 55% of the County's total housing stock. The number of rental units, on the other hand, is forecast to increase to roughly 45% of the County's total inventory, or 32,000 units.

Demographic Profile: Midtown (Tables 5-7)

ERA examined demographic characteristics and forecasts in the Midtown study area based on information obtained from ESRI Business Information Systems. As illustrated in the accompanying map, ERA segmented the study area into five sections, with boundaries that follow natural or physical features such as Lindsay Creek, Wynnton/Macon Road, Lake Bottom Park, etc.. These findings are highlighted below:

- According to the U.S. Census, the study area contained 21,300 residents in 9,100 households in 1990. Median household income (in 1989 dollars) ranged from a low of \$10,200 to almost \$52,000. Racial composition ranged from 41% Caucasian to 59% African American.
- By the 2000 Census, **the population of the Midtown study area declined by almost 10%—to 19,400** in 8,500 households—across the eight Census tracts comprising the study area. In fact, the population of Census Tract 28 (along Buena Vista Road in the southern portion of the study area) dropped by over 20%. Only the population of Overlook increased and, at that, only nominally.
- Median household incomes (in 1999 dollars) ranged from a low of \$14,000 to more than \$70,000.

DEMOGRAPHICS & MARKET INFORMATION

Incomes increased in every Census tract.

- Notably, during the 1990s, Midtown's racial composition changed—with the Caucasian population declining from 41% in 1990 to 37% in 2000 and the African American population increasing from 59% to 61% during this period. There has also been some movement of the minority population from the south side of Macon Road to the north side, particularly in the area between Cherokee and Hilton Avenues.
- Demographic forecasts for the next five years suggest the population of Midtown will stabilize or decline only slightly in the range of **20,600 residents in 9,400 households**. Midtown's population is also expected to continue diversifying—while the Caucasian population is projected to decline slightly, the African American population will be stable while the proportion of both Asian and Hispanic groups is expected to increase between 8% and 16% over the next five years.
- Importantly, income levels are expected to rise *above* the rate of inflation—upwards of 23%. Income growth is expected to be highest in both the Northeast (Hilton Avenue/Country Club areas) and Southeast (Lindsey Creek) sections of the study area. By 2008, **median household incomes will range from roughly \$24,000 to more than \$76,000 per year**. This should bode well for discretionary consumer spending.

Employment Trends & Projections (Tables 8 & 9)

A critical indicator in evaluating demand for commercial real estate is employment growth and visitation. Notable trends and projections for the Columbus MSA are highlighted below:

- **Job growth in the Columbus MSA has been strong.** In fact, according to Woods & Poole, Inc., a demographic forecasting service, between 1990-2000, the MSA added more than **23,000 new jobs**—a solid growth rate of 1.6% per year (we note that these figures also include part-time and self employment).
- The strongest employment sectors included Wholesale & Retail Trade (fueled by population growth and consumer spending), and Services (to support a growing population)—which collectively added more than 21,000 new jobs.
- It would appear that the significant *decline* in Government jobs during the 1990s (3,600 jobs lost) may be due, in part, to outsourcing to private contractors those jobs formerly held by Government (military) employees at Fort Benning.
- The MSA also added more than 3,700 jobs in Finance/Insurance/Real Estate (FIRE) during the 1990s—a core sector that creates demand for office space.
- One of the critical challenges that Columbus faces with respect to an economic development strategy is the attraction of high-quality, well-paying jobs. Significant job creation among such sectors as Retail Trade and, to a lesser extent, Services, do not typically translate into high-paying jobs.
- Woods & Poole employment forecasts for 2000-2015 suggest that job growth in the Columbus MSA could create **more than 27,000 new jobs over this 15-year period**. This translates into an average annual growth rate of 1.04%.

DEMOGRAPHICS & MARKET INFORMATION

- If forecasts hold true, job growth will be strongest in many of the same sectors that exhibited growth during the 1990s; these include Retail Trade, FIRE and Services. Interestingly, Woods & Poole is also forecasting net new job growth in the Government sector.

Residential Market Conditions (Tables 10-15)

- The Columbus (MSA) housing market has exhibited significant growth since 1980. In fact, more than **28,000 permits were issued** over this 22-year period for new housing construction—the majority (67%) for single-family detached product. Most activity has been in outlying locations in the northern end of the County. By comparison, multi-family product (greater than five units) comprises about 28%; the remaining activity includes properties with 2-5 units.
- The housing market accelerated during the 1990s; roughly 1,500 residential permits were issued annually during the 1991-2002 period; again, the vast majority of new housing is single-family detached.
- Of roughly 30,300 renter-occupied housing units in the 2000 Census, median rents in 2000 were **\$500**.
- As illustrated in Table 15, the Columbus Board of Realtors reports that the average price of for-sale housing units in Midtown ranged from a low of \$62,320 (Area 5)—the lowest price point citywide—to a high of \$120,000 (Area 3) in 2003. By comparison, sales levels in other parts of the City vary from \$78,000 to more than \$175,000 in the Northwest area (North Columbus). The Board of Realtors data do not segment previous year sales activity by geographic area, thus ERA is unable to examine trends in housing sales.

Commercial Market Conditions (Table 16)

Only limited information is available on the commercial office and retail market in Midtown. ERA is awaiting more specific information on rental rates, absorption (leasing) activity and other market performance indicators for the limited number of office buildings that are located in Midtown. In addition, ERA will also research the impacts of economic activity generators such as AFLAC on Midtown's commercial real estate market. Limited information is noted below:

- Brokers report that commercial office rental rates generally fall in the range of **\$5 to \$12 per sq. ft.**, depending on building quality and location.
- A number of former residential properties along Wynnton/Macon Road have been converted to commercial use. These include *1430 Wynnton Road*, a vacant, 5,320 sq. ft. house currently offered for sale at a reported asking price of \$450,000 (\$85 per sq. ft.). The formerly vacant Hardee's Restaurant at *1612 Wynnton Road*, a 3,500 sq. ft. pad building with front-end surface parking, was offered for sale for \$650,000 (**\$186 per sq. ft.**), and the Sno-White Cleaners, a 9,850 sq. ft. commercial building at *1100 Wynnton Road*, is being offered for sale at \$285,000 (**\$29 per sq. ft.**).
- Muscogee County contains almost **4.9 million sq. ft. of retail space**. This includes space in neighborhood and community centers as well as two regional centers—*Peachtree Mall* (814,000 sq. ft.) and *Columbus Park Crossing* (750,000 sq. ft.) in North Columbus. Based on market data

DEMOGRAPHICS & MARKET INFORMATION

obtained from the 2004 Shopping Center Directory for the South, the region's retail market is stable, with reported vacancies in the range of 3% to 5%. Limited information on rents indicates shopping center rates vary from a low of \$3.00 per sq. ft. to a reported high of \$21 per sq. ft. at Columbus Park Crossing, which contains the bulk of Big Box and category killer tenancies typical of power centers.

- In addition to the small commercial properties lining Wynnton/Macon Road, Midtown contains two community centers: *Cross Country Plaza*, a 400,000 sq. ft. center recently re-tenanted with Publix and Books-a-Million. Vacancy is reported at 8%, with rental rates in the range of **\$13.00 per sq. ft.** Midtown Shopping Center, a 226,000 sq. ft. community center located at 3200 Macon Road, includes two anchors—a Big K-mart and Rhodes Furniture. Rental rates are reported in the range of **\$5.00 per sq. ft.**; the amount of vacant space was not available.
- Thus, Midtown contains roughly 700,000 sq. ft. of retail space, or roughly 14% of the County's total retail inventory.

Household Incomes & Consumer Expenditures (Tables 17-22)

Tables 17 through 22 illustrate household consumer spending across retail categories typical of community and lifestyle centers. These categories include eating out, apparel, leisure and entertainment and household furnishings. Notable highlights are summarized below.

- The six sectors comprising the Midtown study area spend roughly **\$164 million** annually across these four merchandise categories. This is known as “buying power”. This equates to annual spending of almost **\$17,400 per household**, which is almost 30% *less than* the national average.
- On a preliminary basis, ERA estimates that Muscogee County's total buying power is in the range of \$1.3 billion; thus, Midtown comprises only **13%** or so of the County's total buying power.
- Further, ERA will also examine the degree of “retail leakage” occurring in Midtown; that is, the amount of household consumer spending that “leaves” Midtown (i.e., is spent elsewhere). If the estimated 700,000 sq. ft. of retail space in Midtown generates annual sales at an average of \$130 per sq. ft. per year, or \$91 million, suggests that Cross Country Plaza and Midtown Shopping Center capture roughly 55% of Midtown's total buying power. This suggests significant leakage to other competitive retail centers.

B. Charts and Tables

Supporting data and tables referenced in the Demographics and Market Information Summary are found on the following pages.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

A. Results of Visual Preference Survey & Public Workshop



Over 250 people completed an image based survey to gauge preferences for MidTown's' visual character. This was followed by community workshops where land use placement was emphasized and determined through small group sessions. A summary of these activities is found on the next pages.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

B. Market Demand Potentials

Demand potentials are estimates of the future demand for retail goods and services and housing. For purposes of this study, projections are provided for a five year time horizon for all categories.

Table 1: Employment Trends and Projections

Table 2: Multi-Tenant Office

Table 3: Housing

Table 4: Existing Household Retail Expenditures

Table 5: Potential Restaurant and Retail Demand

Summary

Table 1
Employment Trends & Projections for the Columbus, GA MSA, 1990-2015
Midtown Visioning & Master Plan

CATEGORY	1990	2000	2003	FORECASTS (1)	
				2005	2015
Mining & Construction	7,523	8,068	8,287	8,361	8,877
Manufacturing	21,561	21,800	21,761	21,807	22,262
Transp/Comm/Public Utilities	4,114	5,084	5,209	5,260	5,534
Wholesale & Retail Trade	25,169	30,558	31,018	31,360	33,640
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	8,759	12,515	13,081	13,460	15,595
Services	28,784	44,857	47,908	49,956	61,165
Government	43,409	39,796	40,514	40,941	42,906
TOTAL:	139,319	162,678	167,778	171,145	189,979
Net Gain/(Loss):		23,359	5,100		18,834
Average Annual (1990-2003):					2,189
Average Annual (2005-2015):					1,883

Compound Annual % Growth Rate (CAGR):

1990 - 2000 Actual	1.56%	
2000 - 2003 Actual		1.03%
2005 - 2015 Forecast		1.05%

(1) Forecasts prepared by Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.; figures include part-time and self-employed.

Source: Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Economics Research

Table 2
Demand Potentials, 2005-2015

MULTI-TENANT OFFICE
Midtown Visioning & Master Plan

CATEGORY	% OF OFFICE USERS	SQ. FT. PER OFFICE USER	DEMAND FOR NEW SPACE (In Sq. Ft.)	
			<i>Estimates</i>	
			1990-2003	2005-2015
<i>Demand</i>		<i>(1)</i>		
Mining & Construction	10%	150	11,460	7,740
Manufacturing	20%	150	6,000	13,650
Transp/Comm/Public Utilities	40%	200	87,600	21,920
Wholesale & Retail Trade	15%	175	153,536	59,850
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	80%	225	777,960	384,300
Services	30%	175	1,004,010	588,473
Government	50%	175	(253,313)	171,938
Total (Rounded):	35%	179	1,787,000	1,248,000
		<i>Estimates</i>		
Plus:				
Vacancy Adjustment		(2)	44,675	31,200
Cumulative Replacement Demand		(3)	89,350	62,400
TOTAL OFFICE SPACE DEMAND (Sq. Ft., Rounded):			1,921,000	1,342,000
<i>Average Annual</i>			160,000	134,200

<i>Capture Potentials</i>				
To Midtown				
Moderate Growth (Fair Share Capture)	(4)	2.8%	2.8%	
Total Demand (In Sq. Ft.):		53,000	37,000	
High Growth (Induced Capture)	(5)		5.5%	
Total Demand (In Sq. Ft.):			74,000	

- (1) Reflects office-using employees in each employment sector requiring office space.
- (2) This allows for a 2.5% "frictional" vacancy rate in new space delivered to the market.
- (3) This represents new space required by existing businesses to replace obsolete or otherwise unusable space. This is assumed to represent 5% of total demand.
- (4) This represents Midtown's **fair share** of office space demanded by future employment growth. This analysis assumes that Midtown's fair share is held constant over time (i.e., Midtown is no more or less competitive in 2015 as compared to other office submarkets in Columbus than it is today).
- (5) An induced capture reflects Midtown's ability to strengthen its competitive positioning through the judicious use of public funding in infrastructure and other neighborhood improvements to leverage private-sector investment.

Source: Economics Research Associates, July 2004.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Table 3
Demand Potentials, 2003-2008 (1) (2)

HOUSING Midtown Visioning & Master Plan						
AREA	2003 Existing Conditions			2008 Forecast By Scenario		
	Population	HHs		If Nothing Changed...	Moderate Growth...	High Growth (Ft. Benning)
Demographic Forecasts						
Columbus MSA	187,506	70,406		189,136	71,731	203,496
Persons Per HH		2.66			2.64	2.64
Midtown						
Persons Per HH	20,986	9,441		20,605	9,364	23,345
Fair Share (As % of MSA)		2.22			2.20	2.20
If Fair Share Increases by 2.5%		11.2%		11.2%	11.5%	11.5%
NET GAIN/(LOSS) TO MDTOWN:			(381)		(77)	2,359
Demand Generators						
Housing Units Attributable To:						
Population Growth					420	1,168
Annual Turnover @ 35%					147	409
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS DEMANDED:					566	1,577
Housing Potentials to Midtown						
If Moderate Capture @					50.0%	15.0%
No. of Supportable Units					283	237
If High Capture @					75.0%	35.0%
No. of Supportable Units					425	552

- (1) The Moderate Growth scenario assumes incremental improvements in Midtown's overall competitive position to attract new residential development based on a conservative 2.5% increase in its "fair share" of the metropolitan area's population. The ability to capture some portion of this growth (estimated at 50% to 75%) will be dependent on numerous factors, including site assembly, timing/phasing of construction, public commitments, etc.
- (2) The High Growth scenario assumes full growth of 'force structures' as identified in the Fort Benning Futures Partnership of the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Midtown's capture is expected to be reduced as a result of significantly greater regional competition among housing developers for this growth. Growth include 5,670 military/civilian employees, 3,686 spouses, and 6,634 children, for an estimated total of 15,990 new residents to the MSA.

Source: Economics Research Associates, updated October 2004.

Table 4
Midtown Household Retail Expenditures, 2003

RETAIL & RESTAURANTS

Midtown Visioning & Master Plan

RETAIL CATEGORY	ANNUAL EXPENDITURES		
	Total	Per HH	As % of Med HH Inc
No. of Households	9,441		
Median HH Income	\$ 34,576		
Apparel	\$ 32,773,880	\$ 3,471	10.0%
Home Furnishings	30,009,991	3,179	9.2%
Food & Beverage	26,366,313	2,793	8.1%
Groceries/Pharmacy	41,009,598	4,344	12.6%
Leisure & Entertainment	33,761,637	3,576	10.3%
TOTAL:	\$ 163,921,419	\$ 17,363	50.2%

Comparison to U.S.:

Difference between U.S. and Midtown

\$ 24,241

-39.6%

Source: ESRI Business Information Systems, Inc.; Economics Research Associates, updated October 2004.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Table 5
Potential Retail Expenditures & Supportable Space, 2008

RETAIL & RESTAURANTS						
Midtown Visioning & Master Plan						
			Moderate Growth		High Growth	
EXPENDITURE POTENTIALS						
Trade Area Households						
Total			9,761		10,502	
Median HH Income (In Current \$)	(1)	\$	45,004	\$	45,004	
Household Expenditure Potentials (As % of Household Income)						
Apparel & Accessories	10.0%	\$	44,104,616	\$	47,453,204	
Furniture & Home Furnishings	9.2%		40,385,183		43,451,378	
Food & Beverage	8.1%		35,481,796		38,175,707	
Groceries/Pharmacy	12.6%		55,187,624		59,377,676	
Leisure & Entertainment	10.3%		45,433,865		48,883,375	
Resident Expenditure Potentials (Rounded):		\$	220,593,000	\$	237,341,000	
On-Site Office Employees						
			In Square Feet			
Multi-tenant Office Space			37,000		74,000	
MCSD Administrative Offices			125,000		125,000	
City Office Space			25,000		25,000	
Total (Sq. Ft.):			187,000		224,000	
Total Employees @	180		669		875	
	SF per Employee	(2)		(2)		
Annual Office Employee Expenditure Potentials						
Apparel & Accessories	\$	275	\$	184,097	\$	240,625
Food & Beverage		1,200		803,333		1,050,000
Leisure & Entertainment		200		133,889		175,000
Employee Expenditure Potentials (Rounded):		\$	1,121,000	\$	1,466,000	
SUPPORTABLE SPACE: APPAREL & ACCESSORIES						
Trade Area Households						
Annual Expenditures		\$	44,104,616	\$	47,453,204	
Estimated Capture Rate @			1.50%		2.50%	
Captured Expenditures:		\$	661,569	\$	1,186,330	
Required Productivity	(3)	\$	200	\$	200	
Supportable Space - HHs:			3,308		5,932	
On-site Office Employees						
Annual Expenditures		\$	184,097	\$	240,625	
Estimated Capture Rate @			5.0%		10.0%	
Captured Expenditures:		\$	9,205	\$	24,063	
Required Productivity	(3)	\$	200	\$	200	
Supportable Space - Employees:			46		120	
Plus Inflow @	(4)		5.0%		5.0%	
Supportable Space - Apparel (Rounded):			3,500		6,400	

(1) Assumes 2003 median household incomes of \$42,608 exhibit real growth of 1.5% per year.

(2) Includes 325 employees at MCSD Administrative offices.

(3) Required productivity is the estimated minimum annual performance (in sales per sq. ft.) required by all retail tenants.

(4) Represents potential expenditures from other market segments to Midtown, such as business visitors to Midtown employers, visitors to the Columbus Museum of Art, etc.

Supportable Development, 2008

MIDTOWN PROGRAM SUMMARY

Midtown Visioning & Master Plan

USE		Moderate Growth	High Growth (1)
COMMERCIAL (Rounded)			
Multi-tenant Office	(2)		
Sq. Ft.		14,800	29,600
Multi-plex Cinema	(3)	-	30,000
Retail (Sq. Ft.)			
Apparel & Accessories		3,500	6,400
Furniture & Home Furnishings		5,500	8,800
Food & Beverage		6,500	10,400
Leisure & Entertainment		7,100	13,000
Subtotal - Retail:		22,600	38,600
TOTAL - COMMERCIAL (Sq. Ft.):		37,400	98,200
RESIDENTIAL			
Housing Units			
Without Fort Benning		283	
		to	
		425	
With Fort Benning (Full Growth)			237
			to
			552
Assumed Average Unit Size @	1,500		
	(4)		
TOTAL - RESIDENTIAL (Sq. Ft.)		425,000	355,000
		to	to
		637,000	828,000

- (1) The High Growth scenario assumes full deployment at Fort Benning as identified in the Fort Benning Futures Partnership of the Chamber of Commerce.
- (2) The commercial office program reflects an interim (2008) program based on 10-year employment forecasts; these estimates are roughly 40% of the total space demanded.
- (3) Assumes relocation of existing Carmike cinema to the Library site.
- (4) Average unit size reflects a mix of residential product and densities, ranging from condominium flats, market rate rental, townhouse, and small-lot, single-family detached. This may be accommodated in selected, "in-fill" locations across Midtown as well as on priority sites.

Source: Economics Research Associates, updated October 2004.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATIONS



Supporting or expanded materials for several Recommendations are further detailed in this section:

1. Enlarged views of proposed Lindsay Creek recreational greenway/park scope
Note: Segments start with “A” at south end and move northward. The green shaded areas are proposed parklands. Blue shaded areas are in the existing floodplain.
2. Historic Buildings and Neighborhoods
3. City proclamation concerning Buena Vista Road improvements

CONCEPT PLAN & RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

An expanded report on Commercial and Business Retention Strategies and the Financial Impact Analysis are included in this section.

IMPLEMENTATION
