

# Plan Recommendations

**Plan recommendations are presented in this plan by topic:**

1. Neighborhood Character
2. Land Use & Zoning
3. Transportation & Infrastructure

City zoning allows for **Urban Conservation Overlays**. Benton-Stephens and East Campus Neighborhoods have UC-Os.

The purposes of the UC-O district are:

- (i) To maintain neighborhood character and integrity by focusing special attention on the maintenance of the physical environment; the enhancement of physical, social and economic resources and the accommodation of desirable change;
- (ii) To promote the efficient use of urban lands including the encouragement of compatible infill development on vacant and passed-over parcels;
- (iii) To encourage and to support rehabilitation of the physical environment and programs for the conservation of urban areas; and
- (iv) To foster the harmonious, orderly, and efficient growth, development, and redevelopment of Columbia.
- (v) To recognize and protect specific property, neighborhoods and roadway corridors of special historic, architectural or scenic qualities.

## Priorities and Implementation Recommendations

Over the course of two neighborhood meetings held on February 26th and 28th, 2015, West Central neighbors participated in voting exercises designed to develop and identify the top “Big Ideas”, which consist of goals, strategies, and projects identified during the planning kick-off survey and stakeholder input meetings held in January, 2015 (see voting graphic on page 23).

These ideas were then presented as recommendations with associated strategies for additional review and feedback at meetings held April 25 and April 30, 2015. The recommendations are categorized into the three broad theme areas: Neighborhood Character, Land Use & Zoning, and Transportation & Infrastructure.

Ideas and their corresponding recommendations and implementation strategies are listed within each theme area according to the total number of votes they received from stakeholders during the prioritization phase of the planning process. The implementation strategies incorporate available programs, resources, and scheduled capital improvement items.

Image:  
The Columbia Housing Authority (CHA), as part of the renovation of its Columbia Square properties, added craftsman details to the facades of building to reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhood.



## Neighborhood Character

Priority 1: Create an urban conservation overlay (UC-O) district to preserve single-family character.

Support downzoning from R-2 (Two-Family Dwelling) to R-1 (One-Family Dwelling) where single-family homes are the predominant dwelling type, and create an urban conservation overlay (UC-O) district in areas supported by neighbors to encourage preservation and redevelopment that is consistent with historical housing characteristics. (The UC-O is described in detail in the sidebar on this page).

This strategy was the most popular “Big Idea” to emerge during plan development, and was particularly desired within the West Ash Neighborhood Association boundary.

While this plan presents voluntary design guidelines for new development and redevelopment, the UC-O would include mandatory architectural and site design guidelines developed by residents during the overlay designation process.

*Note: The related down-zoning component of this strategy is discussed in more depth under the Land Use & Zoning topic. See page 32.*

## Architectural & Site Design Guidelines

During the planning kick-off survey, nearly 90% of participants indicated support for some form of conservation standard to help protect or promote the traditional housing characteristics found in the older parts of the neighborhood. These standards would apply to new development

### What is Downzoning?

Downzoning is a rezoning action that results in a reduction in density and intensity of available land uses on a property.

In order to begin the downzoning process, a property owner submits an application to the City. Downzonings require a public hearing at the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council and approval by the City Council. The public hearings allows for neighbor properties to receive notifications about the request to rezone property and to speak on the matter if they so choose.

### Historic Preservation and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):

Where zoning allows higher densities, the demolition of older housing stock occurs not because of any animosity toward history or preservation, but because of economics.

Allowing ADUs can change that calculation in favor of existing buildings if historic homes in developed neighborhoods are able to be more useful by allowing a little flexibility in density. For example, multigenerational families can care for elderly relatives or grandparents can care for grandchildren, or homeowners can earn extra rental income. With these additional options, preserving historic properties may become more attractive.

## Land Use & Zoning

Priority 1: Downzone land to preserve single-family character.

Support downzoning of single-family character areas to R-1 (One-Family Dwelling), and apply an overlay zoning district to accommodate continued eligibility of ADUs (accessory dwelling units) within the area as a means of supporting first time homeowners and retirees.

*Note: The overlay component of this strategy is discussed in more depth under the Neighborhood Character topic (P. 26).*

Many of the residential lots in West Central are zoned to accommodate duplexes, despite being developed with single-family homes. This mis-matched zoning and land use reflects a 1957 decision by city leaders to accommodate higher density in the area by revising the zoning map for most of the neighborhood from R-1 (One-Family Dwelling District) to R-2 (Two-Family Dwelling District). As the community grows and changes, allowing density in the central core helps to prevent sprawl by accommodating additional dwelling units where existing infrastructure and amenities are already located.

This strategy has not resulted in much change, as most of the area's original single-family residential stock remains in place today. Part of this lack of transition from single- to two-family may be due to small and narrow lot configurations that don't lend themselves to conventional side-by-side duplex designs as well as zoning height and area standards that render such redevelopment impractical.

The introduction of accessory dwelling unit (ADU) standards in July, 2014 provided an alternative option for second dwellings to co-locate on narrow lots with historical single-family homes. While this approach is considered preferable to duplex redevelopment from a historic pres-

ervation perspective, and is popular with neighborhood stakeholders, the strongest approach to preserving single-family character is to downzone to the single-family zoning designation. In recognition of the desire to retain the ADU option in this area (ADUs are not currently allowed in the R-1 district), an urban conservation (UC-O) overlay district should be concurrently applied to retain this development right.

*Note: See Priority 1 in the Neighborhood Character section for details about potential uses of overlay districts for historic preservation purposes (P. 26).*

Efforts to downzone large portions of neighborhoods have been attempted in both Benton-Stephens and East Campus in the past, with mixed results. In those cases, downzoning was dependent on individuals or groups of property owners submitting voluntary requests to rezone their properties from R-2 or R-3 (Medium-Density Multiple-Family Dwelling District) to R-1. The City supported these requests by waiving application and processing fees and recommending approval of all such requests.

Despite several decades of neighborhood associations actively promoting this stabilization effort, success has been mixed, with only a few areas achieving critical mass in the form of an assemblage of several contiguous lots. For the most part, however, the result has been a peppering of individual R-1 zoned lots within a matrix of higher-zoned parcels.

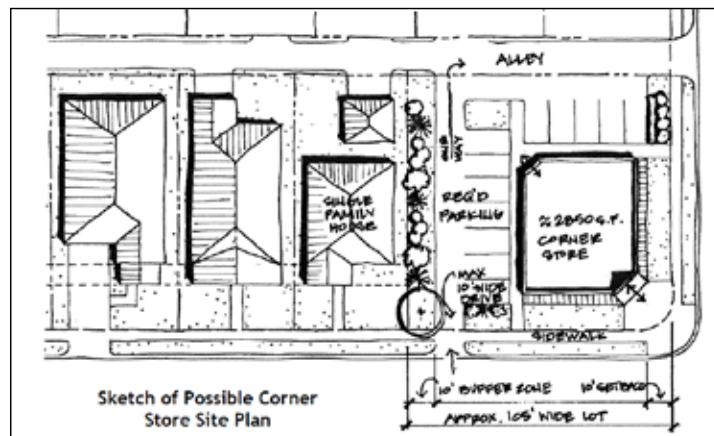
Planning staff suggests that willing participant property owners, when possible, jointly petition City Council for a change in zoning with other interested neighbors to maximize the stabilization potential of the action. Staff will assist interested property owners in filing any such zoning change requests to downzone to R-1, from single parcels to multiple properties that are either contiguous or non-contiguous.

Priority 2: Upzone land to support neighborhood mixed use corners.

Support upzoning to pedestrian-oriented mixed use neighborhood office and commercial districts at major street intersections to accommodate uses that are appropriate in type and scale to enhance the neighborhood. Examples of desired neighborhood uses include small corner pubs, coffee shops, and grocers. Commercial uses may not be considered appropriate on corners in close proximity to schools (e.g., Worley & West Blvd. and/or Ash & West Blvd).

Any rezoning and/or redevelopment of such corners should be oriented toward uses that meet the needs of local residents, and should be subject to traffic impact assessment to ensure that they will not substantially impact traffic flow on adjacent streets.

The City of Columbia is in the midst of a two-year process to replace its antiquated development regulations with a modern Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that includes improved land use and site design standards to more effectively accommodate a broader mixture of land uses. The new UDO includes standards for pedestrian-oriented mixed use (i.e., residential and commercial) developments that are tailor-made for small neighborhood corners.



Neighborhood Protection standards within the new Ordinance incorporate additional design features and requirements to further mitigate potential impacts of commercial or multi-family uses on low density residential neighbors. Planned district zoning may also be used in areas where unique issues or concerns exist.

Priority 3: Carefully allow upzoning in declining and/or underutilized areas so as to revitalize them and add to the quality of life current neighborhood residents desire and enjoy.

Apply minimum spacing requirements between higher density developments to limit large concentrations of high-density housing. Any upzoning within this area should be subject to conditions that ensure new housing is affordable and accessible to elderly or people living with disabilities.

This strategy calls for distribution rather than concentration of residential density throughout the neighborhood, and may be incorporated into the previous strategy (Priority 2), or built as stand-alone residential projects. Mixed use developments at street corners offer an opportunity to include higher density residential housing options throughout the single-family fabric of the neighborhood. Multiple-family dwellings are often incorporated into mixed use commercial developments as a means of providing a transitional use between commercial and single-family uses.

Alternatively, small-scale stand-alone **cottage redevelopments** which allow for higher densities while maintaining a single-family feel, should be supported, subject to minimum spacing between such projects to prevent concentrations that might otherwise overwhelm the existing character of the street on which they occur. Staff suggests applying an interval limitation of 1,000 feet (measured along interconnecting streets) as general guidance for determining appropriate minimum spacing between cottage developments.

### What is Cottage Housing?

Cottage Housing is generally defined as a grouping of small, single family dwelling units clustered around a common area and developed with a coherent plan for the entire site. They have gained popularity in recent years as a type of infill development on small sites, within existing developed areas.

The cottage units may have other shared amenities. The shared common area and coordinated design may allow densities that are somewhat higher than typical in single family neighborhoods while minimizing impacts on adjacent residential areas. As a result, cottage housing can offer its owners a quality living experience that is less expensive than traditional single family housing.

It also offers a degree of privacy and some of the benefits of single family housing combined with the lower cost and maintenance of attached housing. The clustered arrangement can contribute to a sense of community. Even so, its departure from existing patterns and its higher density have encountered resistance in some communities.

--<http://mrsc.org/Home.aspx>

### Columbia Imagined: Livable and Sustainable Communities Policy One:

Support diverse and inclusive housing options:

Promote home ownership and affordable housing options, and encourage integrated residential densification via flexibility and dwelling unit options. P. 143

An **urban village** is a medium-density development that includes mixed-use residential and commercial property, good public transit, and pedestrian-oriented urban design. In urban villages, everything you need is within walking distance (e.g. grocery stores, services, entertainment, and restaurants), including public squares to relax and meet people. These urban villages are a contrast to auto-centric, fringe development.

--*Columbia Imagined*, p. 123.

The **Neighborhood Marketplace** provides for the sale of day-to-day needs and should be built around a primary tenant. The Neighborhood Marketplace should be between 30,000 and 100,000 square feet of gross leasable area and contain a mix of retail and office uses. Ideally, the primary tenant would be a grocery store containing approximately 40,000 square feet of retail space. Other services may include small office uses, sit-down restaurants, specialty retail uses and service station/car wash, along with high density multi-family residential.

--*Metro 2020: 4.8 Neighborhood Marketplace*

This strategy acknowledges the need for reinvestment in underutilized areas that have seen disinvestment in recent years. In order to ensure that the strategy is successful, support for upzoning from low density residential to multiple-family residential districts should be conditioned upon high-quality developments which fit into the existing neighborhood fabric and enhance the quality of life via amenities or services. Developers should also demonstrate a clear intent to meet the needs of the city's first-time homebuyers, low/moderate-income, elderly, or differently abled populations by providing units that are both affordable and accessible. Securing such conditions may only be possible through the use of planned district zoning, which allows the integration of unique operational limitations and design features into zoning and development plan approval.

Partnerships between neighborhood associations, private developers and the Community Development Department, Columbia Housing Authority, and other agencies dedicated to administering affordable housing funds and building housing to meet the needs of Columbia's underserved populations are strongly encouraged.

Priority 4: Support higher density housing near existing commercial and recreational entities while preserving tracts of existing single-family housing as property owners and residents warrant.

Allow some upzoning to multi-family housing in the area immediately east of the Broadway Shopping Center while supporting downzoning of existing contiguous tracts of single-family homes to help preserve the neighborhood's character and stock of viable, single-family detached homes. Support an overlay district to accommodate eligibility of ADUs within the area.

Property owners, residents and neighborhood associations can take an active role in promoting zoning changes to affect density and property usage in established areas.

The City's Comprehensive Plan (*Columbia Imagined*) promotes the creation of walkable communities, which includes situating higher density housing near neighborhood commercial, recreational, and educational institutions to support this goal. Planning staff are available to work with individuals who wish to voluntarily upzone their properties. Neighbors may consider working together to upzone multiple properties at once. Likewise, planning staff are also available to work with those who wish to downzone their single family properties, and neighbors may consider working together to downzone single family properties under one joint application.

Redevelopment within West Central should encourage mixed uses of a neighborhood scale. Uses and designs that are consistent with the "**urban village**" concept expressed in *Columbia Imagined* (see sidebar to the left), the Neighborhood District and **Neighborhood Marketplace** compatibility guidelines (referenced within *Columbia Imagined*), and the **Mixed Use Neighborhood District** (Pedestrian) standards in the draft Unified Development Code will encourage redevelopment which fits into the neighborhood's existing urban fabric (see below).

#### M-N Mixed Use – Neighborhood District

**Purpose:** The Mixed Use-Neighborhood district is intended to provide commercial shopping and service facilities in or near a residential neighborhood. The principal land use is a small shopping area with sales and services oriented to the needs of a local population. The district is intended to accommodate both pedestrian-oriented shopping areas with walkable connections to surrounding neighborhoods and small auto-oriented shopping centers convenient to lower density residential areas, through the use of two different sets of development standards. The principal uses are small-scale commercial and residential, as shown in Table 29-3.1 (Permitted Use Table).

--*DRAFT Columbia Development Code Module 3 Base Zoning Districts: 29-2.2*



Priority 5: Establish appropriate land use transitions at the neighborhood edge.

Support voluntary upzoning of land on the northwest and southwest corners of West Boulevard and Aspen Drive from single-family (R-1) to mixed use and office.

This recommendation identifies the vulnerability of the neighborhood's edge where single-family residential uses abut commercial corridor uses. Commercial uses and zoning have a tendency of gradually extending from edge areas into the residential heart of neighborhoods, sometimes with undesirable consequences.

Mixed use offices represent a low impact land use that would allow a combination of office and residential units, and is commonly recommended as a buffer use in situations where low density housing would otherwise directly abut high intensity commercial uses. This office use area would cap the spread of more intensive general commercial uses off the corridor by defining the ultimate extent of non-residential use area at the north end of West Blvd.

The presence of existing office uses and zoning within the area make this a natural extension and an ideal buffer for those residents located directly across the street on the east side of West Blvd. The existing State Farm office on the east side of West Blvd. provides transition from the I-70 Drive Commercial Corridor to the residences to the south, as an example.

The neighborhood edge could be further defined and reinforced by erecting entry signs and gateway landmarks, welcoming visitors to West Central and clue motorists to the need to reduce speeds as suggested by Priority 4 of the Neighborhood Character Recommendations section of this plan (P. 30).

## Special Planning Areas

Following feedback from the April 30, 2015 public input on proposed plan recommendations, staff revised the initial planning process schedule to allow for residents from smaller sub-areas to work together on area-specific recommendations. City Planning Staff conducted small group listening sessions in the spring and summer to gather localized input from neighbors within two special planning areas (SPAs) that were identified in early staff analyses as most likely to/already experiencing redevelopment pressure due to a combination of factors, including the following:

- Transitional (trending up or down), polarized or relatively low property and home values;
- Some properties in poor condition (lack of re-investment/maintenance);
- A history of rezoning and redevelopment requests;
- Lot assemblage;
- Close proximity to existing commercial centers;
- Relatively high rental rates;
- Relatively large lots and low development densities;
- Recent demolition of structures and relatively high lot vacancies.

Below: A diagram of residential property transitioning in terms of density.



Images:

Top: Small-scale office buildings provide a transition from more intensive commercial uses into residential areas, and can blend well with single-family homes.

Bottom, Commercial property for sale on Sexton Avenue directly to the north of single-family property. Without transitional land uses to serve as buffers, screening, landscaping, and conditions on lighting, hours of operation and other terms may offer protection to nearby residential property.

