



## REALITY CHECK

# Midlands Action Collaborative

### FUTURE PERFECT: SHAPING THE SOUTHERN CITY OF THE FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CREATIVE PLACEMAKING SYMPOSIUM

APRIL 16, 2015, COLUMBIA, SC

“ I’ve got two other major Fortune 50 companies I’m talking to about needing space in there (the Innovation Center). So in the next three years I hope that entire building will be private Fortune 100 companies,

- Bill Kirkland, University of South Carolina

Connectivity will be key as our region grows to an estimated 1.3 million people between now and 2030. Connecting the urban centers of Columbia, connecting the cities and towns within our region, connecting people to regional assets and most importantly connecting people to people will enable us to create a sustainable, creative, thriving Southern city of the future.

Speakers and attendees at Future Perfect: Shaping the Southern City of the Future - a collaboration between the Urban Land Institute South Carolina’s Midlands Action Collaborative and Indie Grits and the Nickelodeon Theater -- all emphasized the need for connectivity. Staged across three venues -- the Nickelodeon Theater, Richland Library and the Tapp’s Arts Center -- the symposium brought the artistic and creative community to the table along with members of the Urban Land Institute to talk about how art and technology can help shape our city as it grows.

The symposium was the second of three staged by ULI looking at the Guiding Principles that grew out of the Midlands Reality Check 2013 visioning exercise. This symposium centered on Economic Drivers. An October 2014 conference focused on Transportation and Infrastructure. A third symposium on Efficient Development and Green Space will be held later in the year.

Keynote speaker Bert Crenca, founder and artistic director of AS220 in Providence, R.I., set the tone for connectivity explaining how the artistic/creativity community in Providence connected with the business and government communities to fuel a downtown renaissance and catalyze ongoing economic investments. AS220 now owns three buildings representing a \$25 million in investment in downtown and offering artists the opportunity to live, work, exhibit and/or perform in its facilities.

Panelists representing each of the economic drivers identified during Midlands Reality Check 2013 – the universities, downtown Columbia/central business district, agriculture and the military – offered their own perspectives on the need for connectivity as essential to success.

Attendees asked to tackle a place making or development challenge all chose to take on issues centering around connectivity -- from improving public transit and parking garages, to activating the riverfront, to connecting Main Street and the Vista, to bridging Assembly Street.

*“I believe the next decade is going to be about connections, connecting the districts here in Columbia and becoming the center of a vibrant region, that is what we are all about today,” Matt Kennell, City Center Partnership*



Urban Land Institute  
South Carolina

## THE CHALLENGE:

Five tables, each with a mix of ULI members and members of the artistic/creative community, were asked to develop an approach to solving a placemaking or development challenge through the lens of our region's economic drivers. Tables could choose from a list of challenges --- Assembly Street, Bull Street, North Main Street, Three Rivers/Three Cities, Parking Garages, Public Transportation – or determine their own.

## CREATIVE PLACEMAKING THROUGH OUR REGION'S ECONOMIC DRIVERS: Central Business District, Universities, Agriculture, the Military

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transit is underutilized. While the buses and the riding experience have improved, the lack of nice bus stations and stops can make waiting on a bus unpleasant.

The Solution:

- Encourage artists and community groups to create unique bus stops.
- Bring the arts community to the buses and bring art to bus riders.
- Utilize parking garages as transportation hubs, making it easier for riders to get around.
- Create a payment system that allows the same card to be used for the bus and/or parking.

### PARKING GARAGES

Parking garages are underutilized, while increased downtown residential development continues to create parking challenges. How can parking garages become more useful?

The Solution:

- Better market garages and associated services, such as the downtown shuttle.
- Improve appearance through public art.
- Increase utilization of ground level retail spaces.
- Use a parking app that ties into the city's new pay by phone system to create personal parking solutions. Rates would be determined by usage and location.
- Reduce the number of reserved parking spaces and maximize garage use based on demand, weather, and personal preferences.

### THE RIVER AND THE RIVERFRONT

Activate the riverfront, long an underutilized resource.

The Solution:

- Develop a zip line from Riverbanks Zoo to an outdoor center on a nearby island.
- Create a bike up and raft down the river experience. Use public art installations and concessions as points of interest along the trail.
- Develop pontoon architecture on the river to create a linked set of small-scale floating retail spaces allowing you to float from one concession to another.
- Improve the appeal of the Columbia Canal. Consider installing information and retail kiosks. Add a bike sharing program that could be tied into a trolley loop.

### CONNECTIVITY

Assembly Street and Huger Street serve as barriers not only to pedestrian access but also to connection. A disconnect exists between Main Street, the Vista and West Columbia.

The Solution:

- Create a trolley route down Main and Gervais streets through the Vista to the river.
- Put buskers, musicians, on the trolleys and at the trolley stops, to help increase tourism and provide a friendly atmosphere. Incorporate public art into the trolley stops.
- Develop a phone app to use the trolleys, and take away the hassle of needing to have change.
- Create a vision to connect other places such as Riverbanks Zoo, West Columbia and 5 Points.

### ASSEMBLY STREET

How can Assembly Street be redeveloped/redesigned to slow traffic and make it more interactive?

The Solution:

- Serpentine Assembly Street from Laurel to Blossom streets through a combination of splitting the street, expanding the median and creating green and interactive spaces.
- Expand the median and sidewalk in strategic locations to create pedestrian friendly spaces -- at the U.S. Post Office to house the Soda City Market and serve as an entrance to Findlay Park, at the Richland library to create a dedicated outdoor flex reading space, at Assembly and Gervais streets for a large public art piece, at the Koger Center for an outdoor amphitheater.
- Encourage redevelopment of the parking lots at Assembly and Gervais into low-rise or mid-rise projects with interactive plaza spaces facing each other.

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Make downtown a place you want to go, a destination by bringing retail & local businesses that are unique and serve as cultural attractions.

Soda City Market is the 1400 & 1500 blocks of Main Street every Saturday year-round. Approximately 600 entrepreneurial vendors and about 100 non-profits generate about \$4 million a year in taxable sales for the

The military needs the support of the creative and artistic community to enhance innovation.

Focus on local and sustainable farms & connect them to local shops; highlight local shops and businesses

USC working with the military with an emphasis on predictive maintenance and analytics for helicopters, jets and the manufacturing floor, drawing interest from Lockheed-Martin, Boeing, Michelin.

Have a sense of street life. Events like First Thursdays and Soda City Market critically important to branding downtown and the city as a destination, a place of street life.

The National Guard and the Army have invested more than \$25 million in USC over the last 15 years just on developing Condition Based Maintenance programs.

Companies collaborating with USC, create net new hires for Columbia

Connecting the military's culturally diverse workforce to the region is a huge opportunity.

Relationships with the university -- which has led to the onslaught of student housing -- and those with companies, many involved with the university, to keep their headquarters downtown to build new buildings and attract new development downtown.

The Midlands is well-positioned for future growth and business development. There is a strong and growing economic base of a the downtown Columbia Central Business District, agriculture, a large military presence and large University located Downtown.

Located just 16 miles from the city center, Fort Jackson welcomed 120,000 visitors last year. This is a tremendous opportunity for the shops and restaurants in downtown Columbia.

Agriculture is essential to the quality of life in South Carolina. There are 4.8 million acres of farmland in the state of South Carolina and agricultural industry represents a multi-billion dollar statewide industry. Soda City Market and Farm to Table Events are helping the regional agricultural community thrive and changing the culture sustainability, local food production and providing the public with good food.

The University of South Carolina is an epi-center of innovation. Partnerships with the military and the Central Business District are transforming the research and corporate landscape of downtown Columbia and the surrounding communities.

There are an intrinsic connections between the growth and success of each of these economic drivers. These connections will lead to much larger regional transformations and result in improved economic, cultural and social wellbeing.

## • Reality Check Guiding Principles

- Infrastructure & Transportation: Encourage development where infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and schools) is available, planned or can be provided cost effectively, and support regional improvements in walkways and bikeways, public transit, rail and air service.
- Economic Drivers: Protect and enhance the region's primary economic drivers, including the universities, downtown Columbia/Central Business District, agriculture and the military.
- Efficient Development & Green Space: Promote the use of vacant lots and support healthy, vibrant neighborhoods while protecting open space for regional parks and permanent preservation.



## • Program Committee

### **Mary Beth Branham**

Managing Principal, LS3P Associates  
Midlands Action Collaborative, Chair

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### **Matt Kennell**

President & CEO of City Center Partnership  
ULI South Carolina Midlands Vice Chair

### **Irene Dumas Tyson**

Director of Planning, The Boudreaux Group  
Midlands Action Collaborative, Vice-Chair  
ULI South Carolina Chair of Mission Advancement

## • Speakers

### **Karen Brosius**

Executive Director, Columbia Museum of Art

### **Bill Kirkland**

Executive Director, Office of Economic  
Engagement, University of South Carolina

### **Bert Crenca**

Co-Founder & Artistic Director, AS220  
Providence, Rhode Island

### **Ken May**

Executive Director, South Carolina Arts  
Commission

### **Emile DeFelice**

Founder & Operator, Soda City Market

### **Colonel Brad Owens**

Deputy Chief of Staff Operations & Training, S.C.  
Army National Guard

### **Vanessa Driscoll**

Founder/Owner, Farm to Table Events

### **Matt Kennell**

President & CEO, City Center Partnership

### **Andy Smith**

Executive Director, The Nickelodeon Theater

