

**Minimum Grid,
Maximum Impact:
A Public Space and
Mobility Plan for the
Core Community
Columbus, Georgia**

Prepared for
MidTown, Inc.

by Gehl Studio
December, 2015

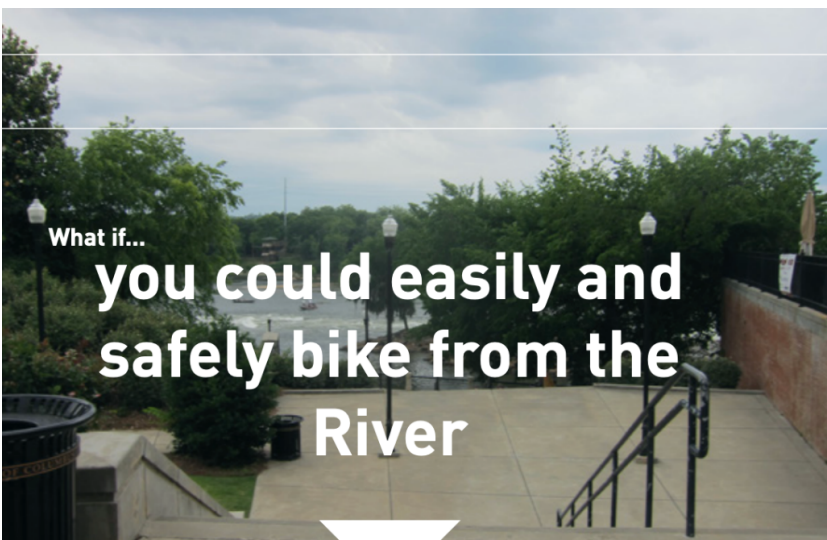
CivicInnovato
Knight Cities Challenge

Gehl
Studio New York



MIDTOWN, INC.

Georgia Planning Association
September 15, 2022



What if...

you could easily and safely bike from the River

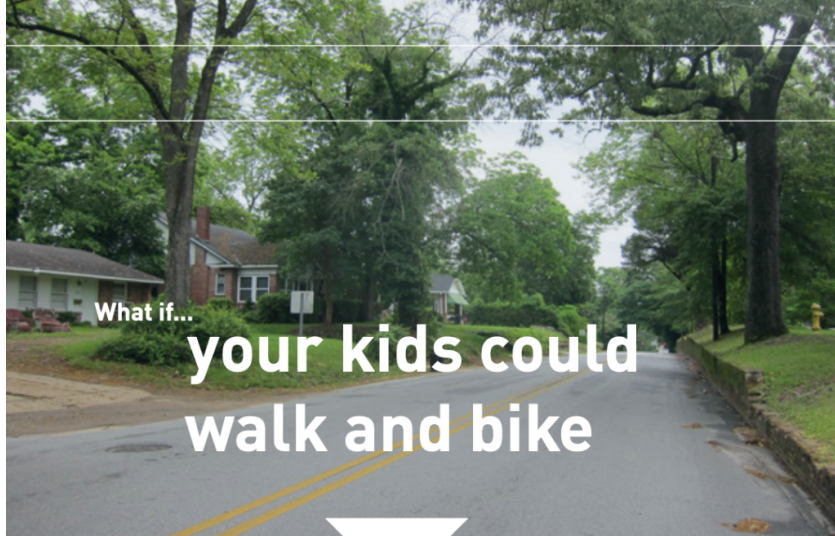


to the Woods?



What if...

the walk from the Library to Country's BBQ was convenient, safe and attractive?



What if...

**your kids could
walk and bike**



**to school and
to other activities?**



What if...

**bus stops connected
to sidewalks and
became comfortable
places to wait?**



What if...

the River



**and Uptown's
entertainment were
connected?**



What if...

**the Columbus
Museum was
a civic hub**



**where you could also
spend time outside?**



01. We listened

• We asked, what are your favorite places in Columbus and why?

02. We observed and experienced together

• Using the PSPL, intercept survey and a mobility workshop, we spent time in the field to better understand how people get around and spend time in public space.

03. We strategized

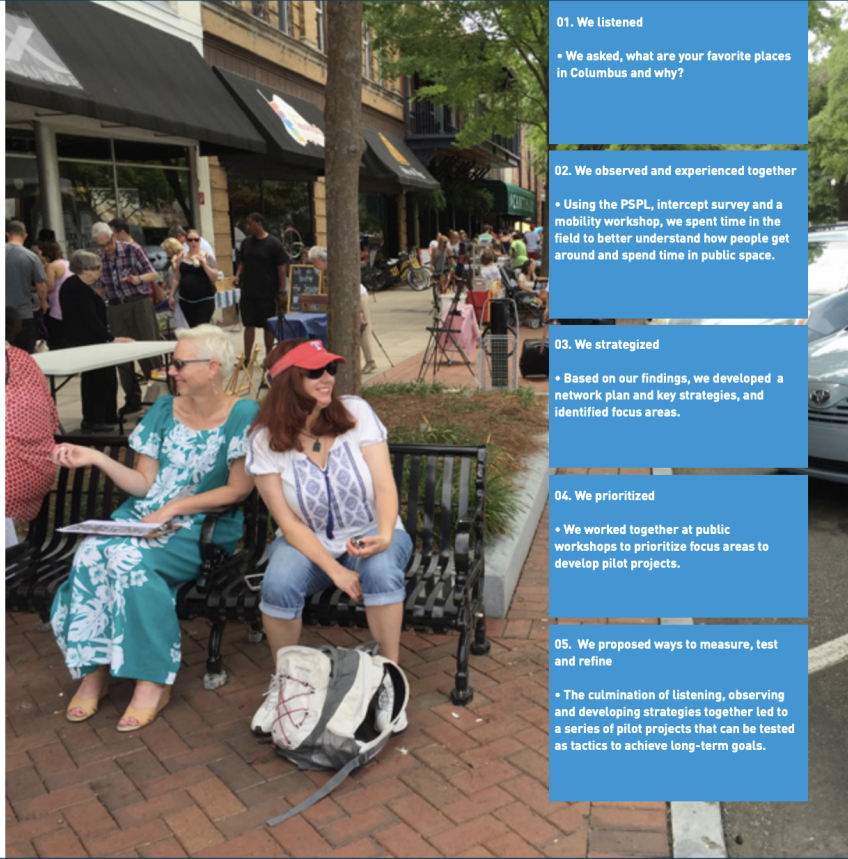
• Based on our findings, we developed a network plan and key strategies, and identified focus areas.

04. We prioritized

• We worked together at public workshops to prioritize focus areas to develop pilot projects.

05. We proposed ways to measure, test and refine

• The culmination of listening, observing and developing strategies together led to a series of pilot projects that can be tested as tactics to achieve long-term goals.



↑ Surveyors count pedestrians on Broadway, mid-day on the weekend

Columbus Mobility Quality Criteria

Location:

+ = YES # = IN-BETWEEN - = NO

Connectivity

Continuous space for walking & cycling

- clearly marked routes
- connections from A - B
- presence of sidewalks, bike lanes, paths

Crossings

- extra crossings
- pedestrian islands
- desire lines supported & destinations connected

Access to public transport

- bus stops in key locations
- walk to the bus stop
- quality bus stop

Safety

Protection from traffic

- buffer zone
- speed reducing elements
- presence of delineation

Space for walking & cycling

- high quality sidewalks
- protected bike lanes
- shared streets, low speed
- clearly marked intersections

Protection from crime

- presence of light
- people presence

Experience

Built, Active Edges

- defined streets
- ground floor functions, retail etc.
- activity along the street

Access to Buildings / Destinations

- clearly marked entrances
- end of journey facilities, such as bike parking
- no barriers, fences

Street Appeal

- shade
- greenery
- high quality street furniture
- seating 'rest areas'
- art & lighting
- signage

6 Guiding Principles

01

Prioritize People, not Transportation

Focus on how people live and their everyday routines; follow their 'desire lines.'

02

Support Democratic Streets

Provide choice and options by fostering equally safe, convenient, affordable and comfortable ways to move around.

03

Create Streets as Public Spaces

Make streets places, not just thruways to move from A to B.

04

Listen to Columbus

Engage with residents, businesses, students and all stakeholders to understand how they experience public space.

05

Connect Places and People

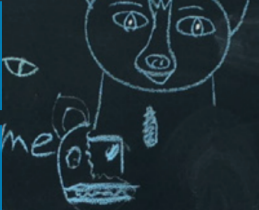
Focus on connecting places with activity, favorite places, cultural centers, shopping hubs, schools, major intersections, and parks.

06

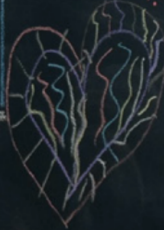
Focus on Design and Programs

Change the design of places, but also host events and programs that draw people to a place.

WN Art Experience



Arts in the park!



Mapping what people want and care about

At a **Favorite Place Workshop** with 130 participants, held in March 2015 at the Columbus Museum, people worked in small groups to map their favorite places and identify the qualities that make them special. Understanding what people love and care about is an important element to making a successful mobility and public space plan reflective of Columbus' identity, characteristics, and resident desires.

We asked:

What is your favorite place, and why?

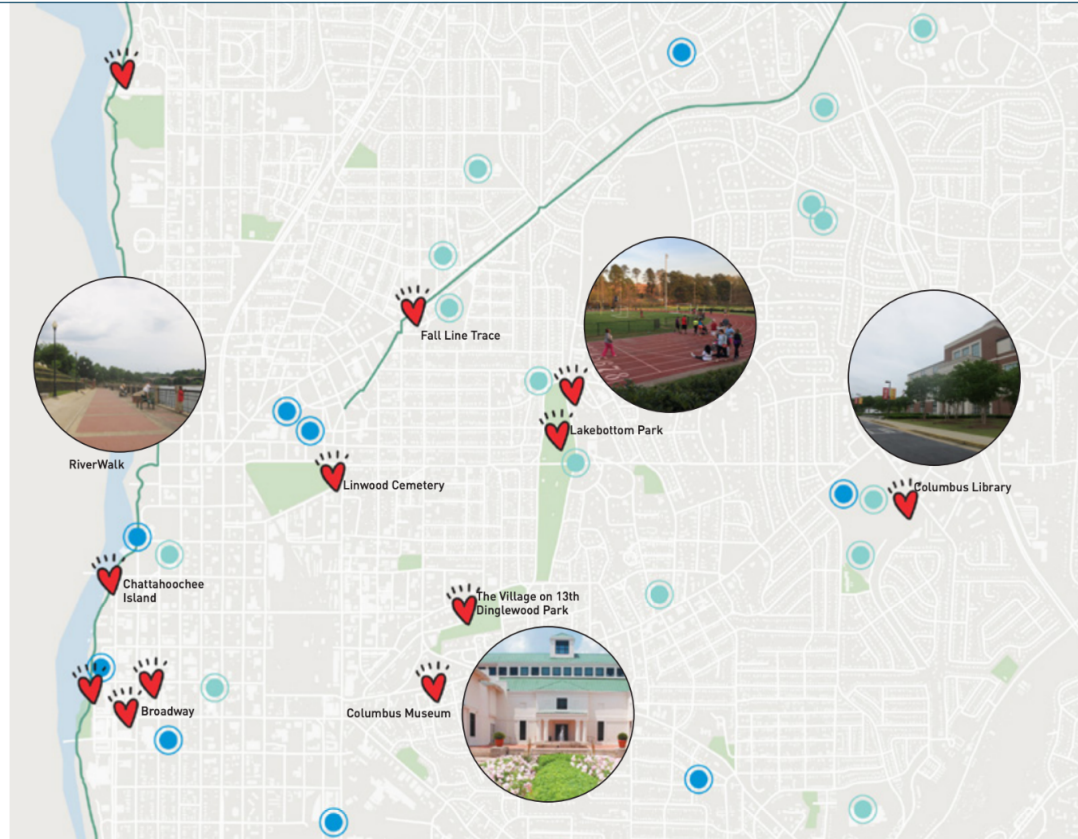
Where do you feel invited to spend time?

What are the qualities of those places? What makes you want to spend time there?

Favorite places ranged from parks and trails, active streets and busy coffee shops, to civic institutions. Despite their differences, each creates places for people to be together or to be alone, but still around others.

The places mentioned more than once were:

1. RiverWalk [31]
2. Lakebottom Park [28]
3. Broadway [20]
4. Uptown Area [14]
5. Iron Bank Coffee [9]
6. 14th Street Bridge [8]
7. Flat Rock Park [8]
8. Bibb City / Fall Line Trace / Linwood Cemetery / The Village on 13th / Fountain City Coffee [4]
9. 1000 Block of Broadway / Maltitude / City Island [3]
10. Buena Vista Road at St. Mary's Road, at Peabrook Rd / City Village / Columbus Museum / Columbus Library [2]



Favorite Places



Major Employers



Schools

Places that lack what people love

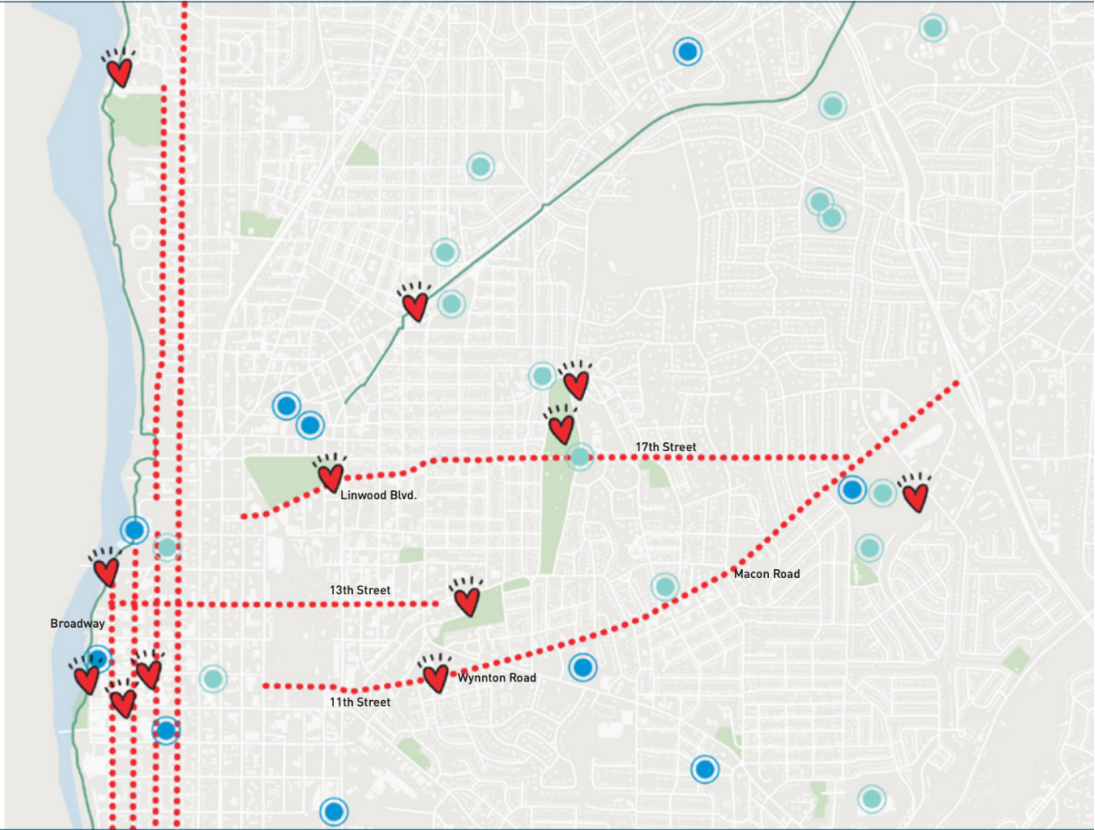
At the same workshop, participants mapped locations that present the greatest barriers to walking, biking or taking transit and that lack the qualities associated with favorite places.

As the map to the right shows, **all of the locations identified were roads**. This further emphasized that **Columbus has great places and destinations - it is connecting to them that is the challenge**.

The top priority areas identified (mentioned more than once) included:

1. 13th Street (20)
2. 1st Avenue (14)
3. Front Avenue (11)
4. Civic Commons / Linwood Boulevard (8)
5. Macon Road (7)
6. 2nd Avenue / West 5th Avenue / Wynnton Road (5)
7. West 10th Street (4)
8. Central Railroad (3)

The priority, challenge streets, along with the favorite places, helped identify where additional analysis and observation would be needed, as well as identifying opportunities for pilot projects.



The map shows the relationship between challenge areas, favorite places and major destinations.



Favorite Places

Major Employers

Schools

Challenge Areas

Columbus Quality Criteria

A locally defined evaluation tool

Findings from the Favorite Place workshops - the attributes people liked about their favorite places, as well as a set of quality images* - were used to develop local 'Quality Criteria'.

The Quality Criteria will be a tool to support engagement and planning. It can be used to evaluate current conditions and pilot projects, to generate ideas about how a space could work better, and to engage people in thinking about public space design and activation.

The Columbus Quality Criteria was tested at a second workshop and edited according to feedback.

More information about where it will live can be found in the Pilot Projects section.



*The quality images are a deck of photos representing quality public space, programming and activation examples from around the world. The images serve to inspire and kick-start dialogue.

See Appendix for Columbus Quality Criteria Hand-Outs



Linking the Four Key Takeaways

01 Even geographically close places seem disconnected and difficult to navigate if you aren't in a car.

02 Streets are not seen as public spaces.

03 People want more options to move around than they feel currently exist.

04 When people feel invited, they come.

...to the Four Key Strategies

01 Improve connections between destinations and favorite places. Leverage existing qualities to decrease perception of distances.

02 Design streets that invite people to stay - not just move from A to B.

03 Provide more options for how to move around the city that are equally convenient, connected and comfortable.

04 Create more everyday invitations with events and quality buildings and streets.

Network Plan: Connecting Columbus

Creating a Minimum Grid to realize the four strategies

The proposed network plan serves as a starting point for a connected Columbus where people can easily walk, bike or take public transport. The selected streets form an overall network that connects across neighborhoods and between Favorite Places.*

The network prioritizes streets that can:

- Improve connectivity between destinations and favorite places;
- Become places, with enhanced design and programming;
- Provide more convenient and comfortable options to move around the city; and
- Accommodate everyday invitations to walk, bike or spend time.

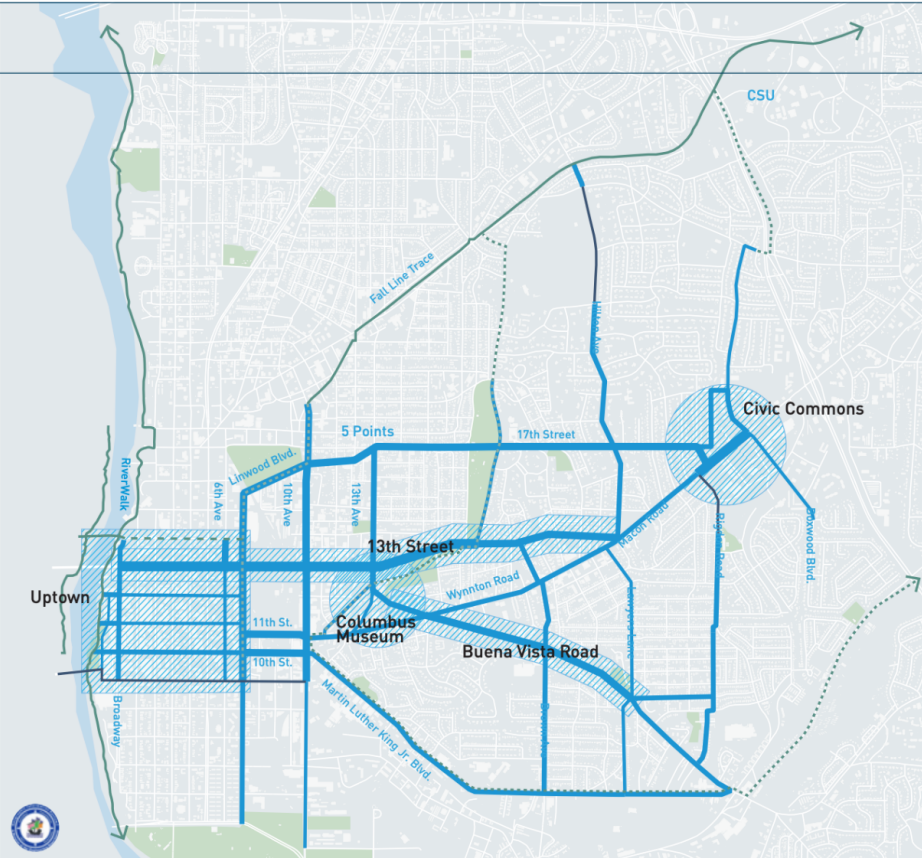
The network should be evaluated and adapted over time, according to future City projects, changes in people's walking and biking behavior, and changing needs and desires.

Street Typology and Treatment

Many of the streets and intersections in the network can benefit from the same types of treatments that can calm traffic and support walking and biking (such as the addition of bike lanes, crosswalks, and sidewalks). Yet it is important to note that all streets need to be studied in their local context, and the unique character of each street should be considered to identify the best possible solution to enhancing options for walking and biking.

For example, larger streets with higher traffic volumes require a balance that provides safe space for all modes, including high quality connected sidewalks, separated bike lanes and upgraded intersections. Local, neighborhood residential streets, that are narrower, with less space to work with, require a different approach. These solutions may focus on traffic calming with chicanes, narrowed car lanes and upgraded /new crossings and intersections.

For all streets, streetscape enhancements should be included. Street greening, lighting, having places to meet and rest, signage and wayfinding are all important factors in creating a more desirable walking and cycling environment.



*Smaller, local streets are not integrated in the overall network plan. This does not mean that they are not important or could not potentially be subject for redesign and programming. They should be addressed as the network develops and when they are integral to supporting the network's expansion. See Focus Area plans 1-5 and pilot projects for how to integrate neighborhood streets.

Network Plan: walking and cycling distances

The network plan highlights short- and long-distance connections between and within Uptown and MidTown

Improved mobility requires creating a range of invitations to walk, bike or take the bus. These may involve enhanced opportunities to walk within neighborhoods and to bike or walk and/or take the bus between neighborhoods, such as from Uptown to MidTown's Lakebottom Park. Creating a Minimum Grid is about creating options - some days walking may be more appealing, others biking and still others driving. **The overarching purpose of the network plan is to strive for a network where walking, biking, taking the bus, and driving are comfortable, convenient and connected.**

Focus Areas

The focus areas represent locations that were mentioned the most frequently during workshops and meetings over the past six months, both for their importance as places to connect Favorite Places and the Uptown and MidTown neighborhoods, as well as northern and southern parts of MidTown (such as across Macon or Buena Vista roads). They help identify major destinations and connection points that bridge places and communities. They were selected to help identify the most strategic locations for pilot projects. They are:

1 - 13th Street

Connecting people from woods to water, and a few places in between

2 - Civic Commons

Creating fine grain connections between major civic assets

3 - Uptown

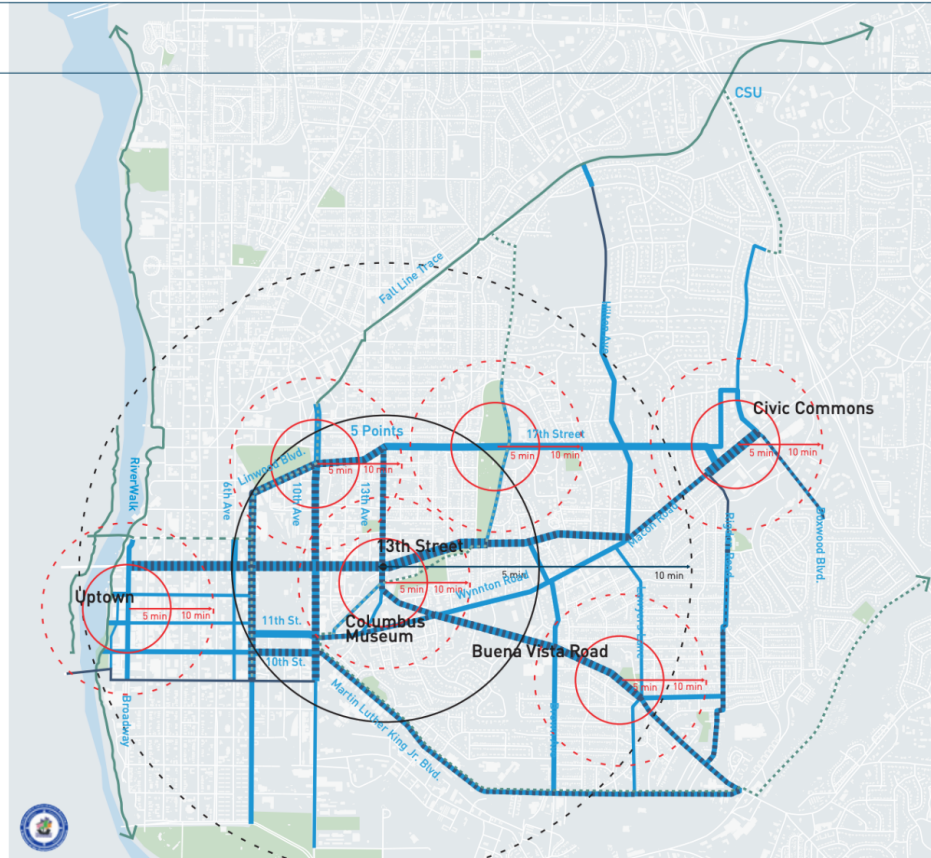
Connecting the public life of Uptown and activity along the RiverWalk

4 - Columbus Museum

Activating the streets with arts and culture

5 - Buena Vista

Connecting people to Favorite Places and workplaces



Plan for separated bike lanes

Plan for other types of traffic calming

Red circles - walking distances

Black circles - cycling distances

1 From Woods to Water on 13th Street

2 Connecting neighborhood assets around 13th Avenue

3 Connecting civic assets at the Civic Commons

From Woods to Water on 13th Street

1

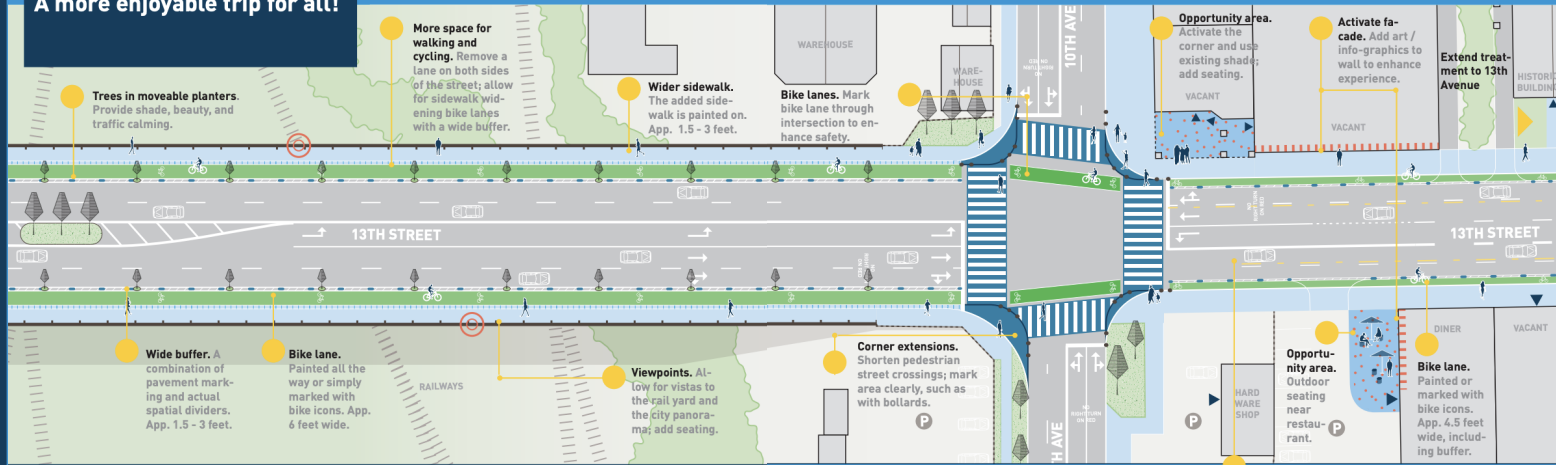
Create a safe, inviting environment for people to walk and bike on 13th Street and that enhances connectivity between the RiverWalk, Uptown, the Village on 13th and Lakebottom Park - with the possibility of extending all the way to Civic Commons.

Key elements for safety and enjoyment:

- Protected bike lane with buffer
- Wider sidewalk
- Narrowed intersections
- Shade
- Green
- Invitations to sit
- Art
- Lighting
- Vista points on bridge
- Activations of dead facades



A more enjoyable trip for all!



Traffic volumes today - a study conducted by URS for the City of Columbus in 2014 found that the city streets,

overall, have a capacity ratio that exceeds the traffic volumes. *The segment between 10th and 11th Ave could potentially become a critical point if a lane is removed. Here we suggest narrowing the existing lanes

and adding a narrow bike lane. On the rest of the street we suggest testing the removal of a full lane on either side, or one lane and re-striping, allowing space for central turning lanes. Source: Alternative Transportation Study page 13.

Re-striping - to not take out two full lanes*, a road re-striping is suggested on this segment, still allowing for bike lanes with a buffer zone. Place trees in planters on sidewalks instead of in buffer zone.

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From Woods to Water on 13th Street - The Pilot

1

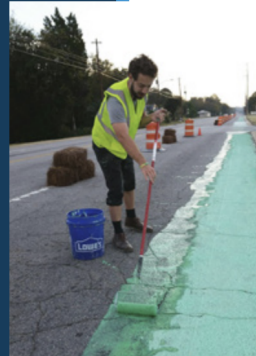
How to start? Open Streets

- Kick start the process with an 'Open Streets' program, that changes the street layout with moveable items and wash-away paint.
- Help people see the street differently, even if just on a temporary basis.
- Get started right away, without all investment needed for long-term change, to allow for a faster process and one that helps people visualize future changes.

The Open Streets should be accompanied by positive campaigning that:

- Encourages people to share the road; and
- Creates opportunities for people to engage in the design and planning process

**13th Street becomes a space
for all!**



From Woods to Water on 13th Street - The Pilot

1

Short term changes lead to long term changes. The pilot project serves as a test for how a permanent street redesign could function.

Space division can be scaled accordingly and adapted to the road width available in the different sections of 13th street.

13th Street Bridge - A Place!



From Woods to Water on 13th Street - The Village

1

The Village on 13th is a Favorite Place in Columbus. Many functions are in close proximity, but are not convenient to walk between.

Changes to the street surface can visually and physically enhance connecting the two sides of the street, slow traffic speeds and invite for cycling and walking. In addition, providing safer street crossings, places to sit, and places to wait for the bus can encourage businesses to open up towards the street and further enhance the area as a place.

At this particular segment of 13th street the road can become a shared surface area, with a safe zone for pedestrians. Or another option is to remove a lane, and re-stripe and add bike lanes - see yellow line on plan.

A neighborhood meeting place!



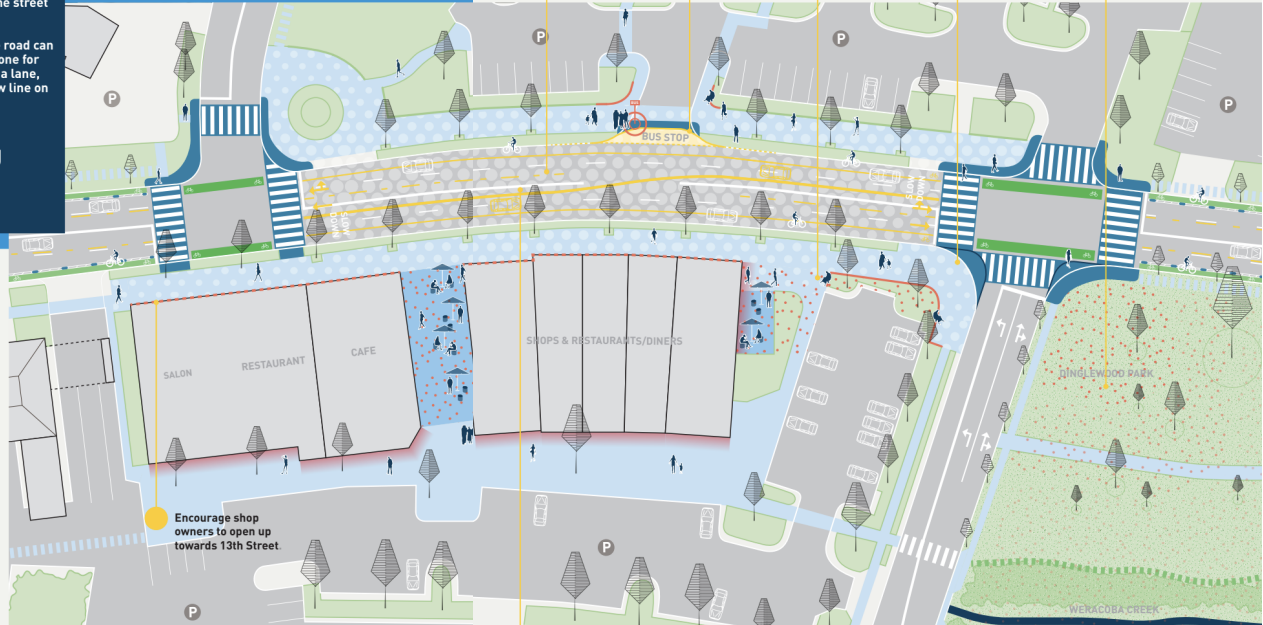
Share the road. Mark the street with temporary materials. Enhance neighborhood node and calm traffic.

Bus stop. On street bus stop with shade and seating on edges of existing planters.

Opportunity area. Add seating on public and private property and shade elements along planter beds.

Enhance the pedestrian crossing. Add sidewalks along 13th St. and Warren Williams Road. Extend sidewalks to side streets.

Opportunity area. Add features (play, seats) to Dinglewood Park. Connect to future trail to Lakebottom Park.



Encourage shop owners to open up towards 13th Street.

Bike lanes and re-striping. Another option for this segment of 13th Street is to remove a lane and re-stripe e.g. yellow lines on diagram. This will provide traffic calming without creating a shared surface.

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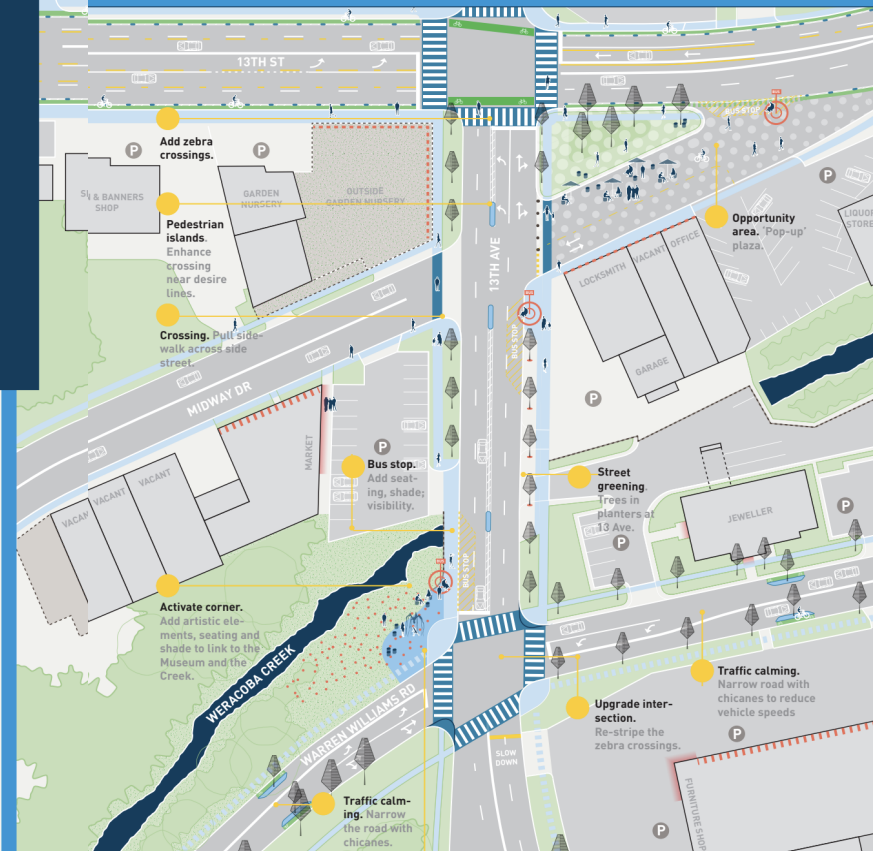
Connecting neighborhood assets around 13th Avenue

Key elements

- Higher quality local walking connections
- Traffic calming on local streets
- Invitations to linger in relation to existing assets, such as Weracoba Creek
- High quality waiting experience for bus riders
- Temporary closing of 'slip-lane' - Midway Drive by The Village. Weekend / event related.

Streets as public spaces!

2



Continue fencing enhancements. Around the back side / Old - Garden Center on the corner - make the fence green. Potential partner for adding planters to the 13th Street 'Pop-Up' Plaza?

Upgrade sidewalks - Low cost solution: level out unpaved areas and stamp to create even surface; add small ramps in asphalt by zebra crossings to improve access. Medium cost: add epoxy gravel to create hard, even surface. High cost: add sidewalks, with paving stones and access ramps at zebra crossings.

Connecting neighborhood assets around 13th Avenue - The Pilot

2

Short term changes lead to long term changes. The pilot project is a test for how a permanent street redesign could function.

Short term: start with the corner and intersection at 13th Avenue and Warren Williams Drive. Upgrade the zebra crossings, add ramps for universal access and even out the surface for pedestrians where there are missing sidewalks. Follow pedestrian desire lines. Add trees in planters for a more pleasant walking environment.

Upgrade the bus stop with seating and shade and orient it in relation to the creek bridge and corner of Warren Williams. Create a mental link to the Museum with an art installation.

Long term: a neighborhood with connected sidewalks, traffic calmed streets, clear connections to civic assets, such as the Museum, the Creek and local shops, and high quality bus stops.

This place is made for walking! And waiting for transit, relaxing and socialising!





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