

From: The Downtown Leadership Council (DLC)  
To: Mayor and City Council  
Date: July 25, 2018  
Re: Completion of the Downtown Charrette

Dear Mayor Treece and Members of the Council:

Two of the primary duties you have given the Downtown Leadership Council are:

- 1) To create a comprehensive downtown strategic plan, and
- 2) To monitor the implementation and recommendations from the initial downtown planning Charrette project and future DLC downtown planning projects.

Given that, and for the reasons below, the DLC requests the Council approve the completion of the original Downtown Charrette process, to help ensure that Downtown Columbia continues to thrive as the economic, civic, and cultural core of our City.

**Background: The original Downtown Charette**

In May of 2009, the DLC and the City released our Interim Report which found urban design to be crucial to any future vision of downtown, especially emphasizing “place making” and the key elements of place and urban design, and investigated the many layers of the urban environment including: buildings, public space, streets, transportation, landscape, social concerns, historic preservation, and energy. The City Council then authorized and provided funding for a “Downtown Urban Design Charrette” to synthesize the previous planning efforts and develop a consensus vision for the future of Columbia’s Downtown core.

The initial Downtown Charrette was completed by H3 Studio under the leadership of the DLC in October 2010, but due largely to budget constraints was limited to two demonstration areas: the “Providence and Broadway” area, and the “North Village Eco-Arts District” (College Avenue) area, as the two primary gateways to the downtown core.

**Successes of the initial Downtown Charette**

Despite its limited scope, the initial Downtown Charrette was widely viewed as a very successful introduction to a large-scale, multiple stakeholder, inclusive process. The initial Charrette has provided guidance to the city staff, the Council, boards and commissions, and to citizen groups and private developers. The Charrette was used as a guiding document for the development of the Uniform Development Code. The creation

of the M-DT form-based zoning district for most of downtown was one of the key recommendations of the Charrette.

**The original Downtown Charrette remains unfinished:**

However, because it did not include the entire downtown, the long-term benefits of the process are somewhat mixed, and has not fulfilled the DLC's charge.

Creation of a long-term vision/development plan for the entire downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods is essential foundational work that needs to be completed:

- to provide the long-term conceptual planning context to guide the implementation of the new downtown form-based zoning code (Uniform Development Code),
- before the City does any more detailed development planning for downtown and
- in order for the City to move forward with transportation and parking management planning.

It is the belief of the DLC that any further planning done without completion of this work will be sub-optimal, and would be a continuation of the somewhat ad hoc development process that has created various problems downtown and across the City in the past.

**Complete the Charrette in order to implement a vision for Downtown:**

The DLC requests that the City Council (and other partners) fund completion/extension of the Charrette Process to the entire downtown as foundational work for all future planning for downtown, the colleges/universities, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

As a guiding document, the completed Charrette should provide a future vision for the downtown for the next 30-40 years and, within that context, include implementation recommendations for the next 10-15 years.

The DCL recommends the scope of the Charrette include the goals of original Charette:

1. *Create an authentic place based on Columbia's specific history, culture, and natural conditions.*
2. *Create a walkable, mixed-use, & mixed-income downtown integral to neighborhoods.*
3. *Expand existing and develop new centers of innovation, education, and culture.*
4. *Increase appropriate range and scale of uses and densities downtown.*
5. *Create healthy, humane & active living environments to improve the quality of life for residents & users.*
6. *Build blue & green infrastructure by utilizing regional and local rivers, parks, trails and greenways as a framework for development.*
7. *Provide and promote varied forms of transportation and connectivity.*
8. *Adapt and re-use sites, landscapes, and buildings.*

- 9. Build the soft infrastructure and create urban vitality.**
- 10. Build in a holistic manner for urban systems and multi-generational sustainability.**
- 11. Create vibrant and complete streets and public spaces.**

The DLC recommends the scope also include:

- 12. Create affordable housing with diversity of residents.**
- 13. Increase the amount of available retail and commercial space.**
- 14. Increase the amount of small business space.**
- 15. Address parking in the context of #7 above.**
- 16. Increase start-ups and incubator space.**
- 17. Plan for infrastructure, solid waste/recycling.**
- 18. Address public safety issues facing downtown.**
- 19. Social services.**
- 20. Preserving our historic structures and cultural amenities, both commercial and residential.**

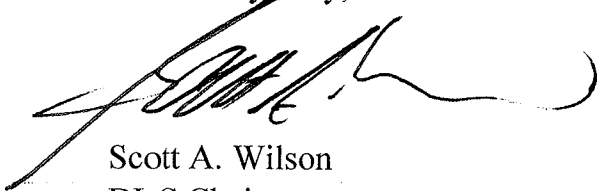
As with the initial Charette process, the DLC is prepared to assist the completion of the downtown Charrette, but with planning input from additional stakeholders in order to encourage broader financial support for the project by those stakeholders.

A consensus of the DLC believes the new Charrette should include the entire expanded DLC study area, so that the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown core are included in the actual report, and not just asked to provide input during the charette.

While some work already completed in the initial Charrette process should still apply, the DLC estimates the completion will cost between \$150,000-\$250,000 depending on scope, and recommends the City provide at least 50% of the total funding.

The DLC acknowledges the City's budget constraints, but believes the completion of the Charrette to be important to the long term viability of the city core as an economic engine for the entire city.

Yours very truly,



Scott A. Wilson  
DLC Chair