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For Their Mutual Benefit: Public Support and Private Development of Historic Buildings In Columbia, South Carolina

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FOR THEIR MUTUAL BENEFIT: PUBLIC SUPPORT AND PRIVATE
DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on successful rehabilitations of historic buildings in Columbia, South Carolina. All were undertaken between 1976 and 2013 by private developers in conjunction with public support. The cases presented are located in four downtown districts known as the Vista, the Main Street Corridor, the Granby and Olympia Mill Villages, and Innovista. The rehabilitations differed due to variables unique to their locations in each of these areas as well as conditions in the years that they took place. Public support included financial incentives and guidelines offered by federal, state, regional, and local governments and professional guidance provided by the staff of government agencies and non-profit organizations. The examples selected are just a few of many rehabilitation projects in downtown Columbia completed by private developers with public support. I chose these collaborative projects because they were considered successes by both the public and the private developers, though they often came about after some compromise. For the public, the projects were deemed successful because significant historic buildings were preserved that in many cases would not have been saved through public or private resources alone. In addition, these projects encouraged economic growth. For developers, success was achieved by turning an acceptable profit. Additionally, in some cases the projects were a good fit with company branding or an interest in contributing to historic preservation in the community. The cases presented are representative of similar projects completed in cities throughout the United States. By

providing these examples of successful rehabilitations in Columbia, I hope to demonstrate how public-private collaborations can be mutually beneficial for communities and developers across the nation.

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INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons for the public to support the preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive use of historic buildings by private developers. One reason is that historic buildings are vital to the understanding and appreciation of a community's unique culture. They are also appealing for their aesthetic and cultural value. Another reason is that the most environmentally sustainable buildings are those that are already built. Rehabilitation is less of a burden on the environment than demolition and replacement with new construction.¹ A third reason is that the reuse of historic buildings is economically advantageous for communities and private investors.

I selected the cases presented here over other available examples of adaptive use in Columbia, South Carolina because the projects were considered successes by both the public and the private developers who undertook them and therefore mutually beneficial. The public deemed them successful because significant historic buildings were preserved that in many cases would not have been saved through public or private resources alone. In addition, these projects encouraged economic growth. Developers perceived success through acceptable profits and an opportunity to contribute to historic preservation in the community through projects that often aligned with company branding or missions.

1. Preservation Green Lab, *The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2011), accessed May 15, 2013. http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/sustainable-communities/green-lab/lca/The_Greenest_Building_lowres.pdf.

Many historic building rehabilitations are considered “adaptive use,” wherein buildings are reconfigured for uses other than those for which they were originally constructed. The cases presented in this paper are successful examples of adaptive use projects in Columbia, South Carolina between 1976 and 2013. Private developers, in conjunction with public support, undertook the rehabilitations. Columbia retains much of its historic fabric because of these collaborations. It is important to recognize, however, that adaptive use projects are rarely undertaken unless there is an almost certain economic advantage in addition to aesthetic, cultural, and environmental considerations.

Some ardent preservationists argue that the historical significance of a particular building is reason enough to justify government or private funding to preserve it, even in cases when there is little to no apparent potential to recoup the investment. However, the public agencies and private developers that save many culturally and architecturally significant historic buildings in communities throughout the United States have no intention of losing money. Federal, state, and local financial incentives and public policies that support efforts to rehabilitate historic buildings were adopted in order to realize aesthetic, cultural, environmental, and economic gains for communities and businesses through public-private collaborations. For the most part these goals have been met.² This is true nationally and the Columbia examples presented here demonstrate the mutual benefits of these programs and policies.

2. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Technical Preservation Services, *Federal Tax Incentives for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, Statistical Report and Analysis for Fiscal Year 2012* (Washington, DC: December 2012), accessed June 21, 2013. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/tax-incentives-2012Annual.pdf>.

The public supports the government agencies and non-profit organizations that provide services for historic rehabilitation via taxes and private donations. This funding provides for the financial incentives, policies, and guidelines that are offered by federal, state, regional, and local governments. These include tax credits, low interest loans, easements, grants, and review mechanisms. This support also funds professional guidance for rehabilitation projects provided by the staff of government agencies and non-profit organizations. These include historic preservation offices, planning and economic development departments, and historical associations. The benefits of investment in rehabilitation incentives and the support of policies that protect historic buildings are evident on revitalized Main Streets and in vibrant neighborhoods across the United States. Downtown Columbia is no exception; the preservation of its historic fabric adds to the city's cultural value and the retention of its unique character.³ These qualities create attractive communities that draw visitors, businesses, and residents.

The cases presented here are located in four of Columbia's distinct downtown neighborhoods, the Vista, Main Street Corridor, Granby and Olympia Mill Villages, and Innovista. Each of these areas was negatively affected by a depressed economy in the

3. Donovan Rypkema, Caroline Cheong, and Randall Mason. *Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation, A Report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation* (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 2011), accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.achp.gov/docs/economic-impacts-of-historic-preservation-study.pdf> The ACHP is an independent federal agency that oversees the historic preservation review process for federal projects and conducts preservation programs related to sustainability, Native Americans, economic development, promoting public appreciation of cultural heritage, national preservation policy, and legislation. The Council advises the President and Congress on matters related to national historic preservation policy.

mid- to late twentieth-century. The first three areas experienced revitalization following successful historic rehabilitations. Columbia's leadership has begun this process in the fourth area, Innovista, by purchasing the only remaining significant historic building in the proposed district. The city plans to sell the building to a private developer who will rehabilitate it for adapted uses.

Each section begins with a description of the area followed by a history of the buildings that were adaptively used. The developers of each project utilized various incentives and support available to them at the time. These are described near the end of each section to demonstrate the breadth of collaborative opportunities that led to mutually beneficial rehabilitations. I conclude this introduction with examples of federal and state incentives and local support for historic preservation and rehabilitation to provide historical context for the case studies.

The United States Department of the Interior, via the National Park Service, guides and administers the preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive use of historic buildings. *The United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (Standards) were created in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Standards provide guidelines for the four recommended approaches to retain historic buildings: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. The Standards recommend rehabilitation as the most appropriate treatment when a historically significant building requires extensive repairs and

replacement of original materials, or if alterations or additions are necessary for an adapted use.⁴

The Technical Preservation Services (TPS) office of the National Park Service (NPS) sets the Standards. TPS develops the federal historic preservation policies that guide the preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and since 1976 has administered the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program (HPT) that is to used help offset the cost to rehabilitate historic buildings.⁵ NPS's Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) division works with State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), local governments, Native American tribes, other federal agencies, colleges, and non-profit organizations to identify, evaluate, protect, and preserve historic properties in their communities. HPS provides the financial assistance, incentives, educational guidance, and technical information with the division's partners that facilitates the adaptive use of historic buildings.⁶

The Standards provided by TPS include guidelines for the sustainability of historic buildings. The adapted use of existing buildings can be less harmful to the environment than the practice of demolition and rebuilding. Developers truck less construction material to landfills, and less energy is often used to rehabilitate an existing

4. Kay D. Weeks, ed. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2001), accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide>.

5. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Technical Preservation Services," accessed April 3, 2012, <http://www.nps.gov/tps/about.htm>.

6. National Park Service, "Heritage Preservation Services" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/hps/index.htm>.

building than to construct a new one. Many older buildings use less energy and cost less to heat and cool, especially when they were built before the advent of modern heating and cooling systems.⁷ These national guidelines were the result of grassroots efforts in historic preservation in the early twentieth century.

In Columbia, public and private support for the preservation and rehabilitation of significant historic buildings began in earnest by 1929. The American Legion and its Ladies Auxiliary organized efforts to save the boyhood home of United States President Woodrow Wilson from being razed to make room for a new building. The state legislature supported the effort with an expenditure of \$17,500 and private sources raised matching funds to purchase and rehabilitate the property.⁸ Unfortunately, the potential destruction of the house and the subsequent campaign to save it did not immediately galvanize the rest of the community to call for policy changes that would have protected other historic buildings or to organize a historical association.

By 1951, however, Columbia's city leadership had established a municipal planning commission to monitor and implement proposed changes to the built environment. In 1970, the newly-formed Central Midlands Regional Planning Council began the governmental administration of these matters. Columbia's planning efforts followed the federal urban renewal guidelines of the time through these entities. Under this model, hundreds of buildings that were deemed derelict or hindrances to highway construction or other modern improvements were demolished, often leaving empty lots in

7. Preservation Green Lab, *The Greenest Building*.

8. Tim Hartis, "1929 State Campaign - Kids Do Share to Help," *The Herald*, May 17, 2004.

their wake.⁹ In some instances, entire communities were displaced.¹⁰ Some buildings were eventually replaced by surface parking lots. Other lots remained undeveloped fifty years later.

By the late 1950s, public opposition to actual or potential losses of historically significant buildings began to build. In 1961, a group of citizens founded the Historic Columbia Foundation (HCF) in a grassroots effort to save the Ainsley Hall House from demolition. The National Park Service added the house to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and designated it a National Historic Landmark in 1973. The house, built in 1823 for a wealthy merchant, is significant as a superior example of the Classical Revival style that “preserves architecture that is of national importance because of the period it represents, the quality and type of its design, the excellence of its restoration, and the fame of its architect.”¹¹ HCF leadership renamed it the Robert Mills House in honor of its nationally prominent architect, best known for creating the Washington Monument. HCF led an effective capital campaign that spanned several years and raised \$800,000 from citizens, businesses, and government agencies to

9. Central Midlands Regional Planning Council, “An Inventory and Plan for the Preservation of Historical Properties in the Central Midlands Region” (Columbia, SC, 1974.)

10. See Ashley Nichole Bouknight, “‘Casualty of Progress’: The Ward One Community and Urban Renewal, Columbia, South Carolina, 1964-1974” (Master’s Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2010.)

11. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, “National Register Properties in South Carolina, Ainsley Hall House, Richland County (1616 Blanding St., Columbia),” accessed July 8, 2013. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740007/index.htm>; Terry Libscomb, “The Legacy of Ainsley Hall,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 99, No. 2. April 1998, p. 166.

purchase and rehabilitate the house for use as a house museum.¹² HCF continues to operate the house and its grounds as a tourist site.

In 1963, only state legislatures could create agencies that were eligible to receive federal funding for historic preservation. HCF leaders worked with South Carolina legislators to create such an agency. By an act of the General Assembly, the Richland County Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC) was created that year.¹³ The Commission received the first federal open space grant for historic preservation in the state.¹⁴ RCHPC and HCF led further efforts in subsequent years preserved and rehabilitated a variety of buildings that were deemed to be important architecturally or culturally, in relation to local, state, or federal history. The public supported both organizations through private and governmental funding.

In 1971, in its role as an advocate for Columbia's history, HCF began to present annual awards for the best projects completed by private and public entities that preserved, rehabilitated, and adaptively used historic buildings.¹⁵ These awards created recognition in the community for these efforts and promoted the importance of the structures. HCF's educational outreach continues to inform students and visitors of

12. Historic Columbia Foundation, "Robert Mills House and Gardens," accessed Jun 20, 2013. <http://www.historiccolumbia.org/site/visit/houses/robert-mills-house-and-gardens/history/index>.

13. South Carolina General Assembly, "Summary: Richland County Historic Preservation Commission," (Columbia, SC, 2005), accessed March 15, 2013. http://www.schouse.gov/sess116_2005-2006/bills/4922.htm.

14. Jennie Clarkson Dreher, *Papers, 1797-1994* (Columbia, SC: South Caroliniana Library), PU-1B, Box 3.

15. Historic Columbia Foundation, vertical file (Columbia, SC: Richland Library).

physical sites throughout the greater Columbia area and through online content, web applications, and social media platforms. The Foundation's work also generates economic development while it helps to preserve Columbia's history. HCF's properties operate as historic museums and tourist attractions. In another example of a collaboration of public-nonprofit entities, some of the properties that HCF operates are owned by the City of Columbia. In addition to the Foundation's work managing historic properties and educating the public, HCF supports adaptive use rehabilitations by private developers through research, advocacy, and promotion.¹⁶ The rehabilitations often result in neighborhood revitalization even as they preserve historic buildings, to everyone's mutual benefit.

In the 1970s, economic downturns and suburban development left city governments, including Columbia's, with fewer resources and many vacant buildings. This led many cities to raze deteriorated structures, which often resulted in downtown districts with empty lots in addition to vacant storefronts. These abandoned, derelict downtowns deterred potential property developers, business owners, residents, and visitors from spending time or money in these areas. That many downtowns were dead or dying left cities and towns bereft of the economic and cultural base that was once their center.¹⁷

16. John Sherrer (Director of Cultural Resources, Historic Columbia Foundation), interview with the author, June 15, 2012.

17. Jeff Wilkinson, "Retail, Residential and Office Coming Together for a Main Street Renaissance," *The State*, October 25, 2008, accessed May 23, 2013.

By the 1980s, local government leaders sought to remedy this situation and to attract people and business back to their downtowns. Many supported projects that sensitively adapted their historic buildings for new uses; by the 1960s this had become a common method of preservation throughout the United States. Cities with downtown areas that feature adaptively used historic buildings retained environments that are distinctive and unique. The rehabilitations generated subsequent private investment, new jobs, and additional tax revenues. While new construction projects in downtown areas resulted in some of these outcomes as well, these generally increased pedestrian traffic primarily during weekdays. Historic districts were more of a draw for tourists, residents, and small business owners who also stayed downtown in the evenings and on weekends.¹⁸

In 1983 statewide interest in stimulating economic growth resulted in the creation of the South Carolina Downtown Development Association (SCDDA). The state legislature voted to fund the organization. Its mission was to revitalize South Carolina's downtowns which were in decline. In Columbia, the organization collaborated with private developers on projects that created new office towers along Main Street near the statehouse as well as residential redevelopment in some of Main Street's historic buildings. The investment paid off. Within five years of SCDDA's founding, nearly

18. National Trust for Historic Preservation, "What are the Advantages of Establishing an Historic District?" accessed June 28, 2013. <http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/faq/historic-districts/what-are-the-advantages-of.html#.UdghJTv2a9s>.

1,000 new jobs were created in downtowns across the state and \$19.5 million in new private investment was generated.¹⁹

In South Carolina, the HTC stimulated over \$83 million in private investment in historic buildings between 2000 and 2006.²⁰ This incentive was especially vital during the economic downturn in 2008, when banks were no longer providing financing for new construction projects. The perspective of individuals who were involved in the rehabilitation of historic buildings is that many of them would not have been saved from demolition were it not for the tax credits.²¹ Because of public support for incentives and policies that created protections and possibilities for the private development of historic buildings, communities like Columbia retained their cultural fabric even as they

19. Crystal A. Baker, "Main St. Downtowns Make a Comeback," *The State*, February 8, 1988.

20. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, *Preserving Our Past*.

21. Richard Burts (private developer) interview with the author, Columbia, SC: November 30, 2012; Fred Delk (Executive Director of the Columbia Development Corporation, a public-private organization) interview with the author, Columbia, SC: November 20, 2012; Dan Elswick (Senior Historic Architecture Consultant, South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office), interview with the author, Columbia, SC: December 2, 2012; Matt Kennell (President and CEO of City Center Partnership, "South Carolina's first Business Improvement District (BID)...[which] was formed to manage Columbia's downtown BID in the 36-block area bounded by Gervais, Elmwood, Assembly and Marion streets. The organization provides public space management, economic development, marketing services, and public advocacy for downtown Columbia. The Board of Directors oversee the organization's mission — to focus on filling vacancies in commercial properties, retaining existing downtown businesses and recruiting new ones, expanding the downtown residential base, and creating a safe, clean, and friendly downtown environment," see <http://www.citycentercolumbia.sc/about.php>), interview with the author, Columbia, SC: March 28, 2013; Amy Moore (City of Columbia Planning Division), interview with the author, Columbia, SC: November 22, 2012; Tom Pioreschi (private developer) interview with the author, March 26, 2013; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Federal Tax Incentives for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/tax-incentives-2012Annual.pdf>.

generated economic growth. Because of this same support, private developers were compelled to invest in these projects.

The Center for Urban Research completed research and produced the *Annual Report on the Economic Impacts of the Federal Historic Tax Credit for FY 2012*. Funded by the National Park Service, this study provides statistics that show that investment in HTC-related historic rehabilitation projects produce extensive economic benefits for communities. For example, as of 2011, the U.S. Treasury invested \$19.2 billion in the HTC over the past thirty years that generated \$24.4 billion in federal tax revenues. The HTC is a better investment in terms of the positive impact on jobs, wages, and taxes generated than federal government spending on highways, manufacturing, new construction, and other job stimulus strategies.

The programs that encouraged and supported redevelopment of historic properties created economic impact beyond the government's original investment.²² Adaptive use projects in Columbia demonstrate that publically funded financial incentives, policies, and expertise that preserved and rehabilitated historic buildings were and are an effective means for economic growth and revitalization. In downtown Columbia, as elsewhere across the United States, decisions to support adaptive use of historic buildings had a

22. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, *Preserving Our Past to Build a Healthy Future: A Historic Preservation Plan for South Carolina, 2007-2015*, accessed May 1, 2013, <http://shpo.sc.gov/about/Documents/prezplan07W.pdf>.

catalytic effect on the economy that spurred further private investment that in turn resulted in the creation of jobs, neighborhood revitalization, and stability.²³

Adaptive use projects are beneficial for both private investors and the communities that support them. The cases presented here demonstrate the efficacy of these projects. Though some perceive the rehabilitation of historic buildings as prohibitively expensive, the facts show otherwise. As Donovan Rypkema reported in *The Economics of Rehabilitation*, citing studies conducted by numerous entities, including the Urban Land Institute, the United States Department of Commerce, and the United States Department of the Interior, that rehabilitation project costs were proven to be on average three percent to sixteen percent less than those for new construction.²⁴ Property owners and developers realized greater, more acceptable, profit margins by utilizing incentives that in many cases made projects financially feasible for them.

Communities wanting to retain their historic buildings without shouldering the entire cost for their continued maintenance and management instead assist private property owners and developers with professional guidance and financial support for their preservation and rehabilitation. Taxes generated from empty lots and vacant buildings are far less than those assessed for occupied, income-generating properties. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data before and after the rehabilitation and adaptive use of historic buildings show that government sources of support for these

23. David Listokin and Michael Lahr, *Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, May 1997.)

24. Rypkema, *The Economics of Rehabilitation*, 7.

projects create positive outcomes for communities.²⁵ By financially supporting incentives and expertise through their tax dollars and private contributions, communities contribute to the preservation and rehabilitation of their historic buildings, increase tax revenues, and create economic growth. These examples of successful rehabilitations in Columbia demonstrate how public-private collaborations can be mutually beneficial for communities and developers across the nation.

25. Allan Provins, David Pearce, Ece Ozdemiroglu, Susana Mourato, and Sian Morse-Jones, "Valuation of the Historic Environment: The Scope for Using Economic Valuation Evidence in the Appraisal of Heritage-related Projects" (*Progress in Planning* 69, 2008), 131-175. For many more studies that analyze the economic impact of tax credits and other government incentives, see the bibliography of *Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation: A Report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*: <http://www.achp.gov/docs/economic-impacts-of-historic-preservation-study.pdf>.

Part I

THE VISTA

Private developers with public support led some of Columbia's earliest economic development efforts involving the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Columbia city officials saw the potential for redevelopment in an area of downtown adjacent to and sloping down toward the Congaree River; by 1984 they had dubbed the 600-acre area the "Congaree Vista." By the 2000s, Columbians often colloquially shortened the name to "the Vista." This case study includes the examples of the West Gervais Street Historic District, the R.L. Bryan School Book Depository, and the Publix grocery store. The West Gervais Street Historic District is presented as an early example of the city's economic development planning that demonstrates the positive effects of rehabilitation in a cohesive area. The R.L. Bryan School Book Depository is the first building rehabilitated for an adaptive use and an example of a project that spurred other rehabilitations. The Publix grocery store is a more recent example of adaptive use that was considered a rousing success by some and an acceptable compromise by others. These examples highlight the advantages of adaptive use incentives for the public and for private developers and show a range of perceived success.

The district is just west of the statehouse grounds and ends at the eastern bank of the Congaree River. Streets include the east-west running Gervais, Lady, Senate, and Washington, and the north-south running of Assembly, Park, Gadsden, Lady, Wayne,

Pulaski, and Huger. Some descriptions of the district extend these boundaries to Hampton and Taylor Streets to the north and to Blossom Street to the south, encompassing Greene, Devine, and College Streets.

The Vista's red brick buildings range in height from one story to three stories. They include a grain elevator, three railroad depots, warehouses, and retail establishments. Most of the district's structures were built between 1846 and the 1930s. Seventy-one percent of the forty-one buildings that contribute to the significance of the district were built between 1900 and 1920. Northern troops targeted several buildings for destruction during the Civil War, including a printing plant. Many of the district's extant structures were built after the war. Several of the mercantile buildings feature cast iron storefronts and display windows. Two brick-paved streets and the near absence of building styles after the period of significance added to the historical integrity of this district.²⁶

Until the 1960s, the southern end of the district also included the residences, churches, and businesses of Columbia's predominantly African-American Ward One community. The city razed nearly all of these buildings during the 1960s after declaring them irreparably uninhabitable. In their stead, in 1968 the city built the Carolina

26. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, "National Register Properties in South Carolina, West Gervais Street Historic District, Richland County (Columbia)," accessed March 29, 2013. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740070/S10817740070.pdf>.

Coliseum while supporting further private development in the neighborhood by the University of South Carolina and other investors.²⁷

By the 1970s, economic downturns virtually halted construction and left the area neglected and ripe for redevelopment. By the end of the decade, Columbia's leadership began to implement plans to create a new arts and entertainment district and private developers undertook the first adaptive use project. One aspect of the city's plans was to obtain a National Register of Historic Places Historic District designation for the area. The designation would allow private developers to become eligible for federal tax credits, thereby giving them an incentive to invest in the area.

In 1976 private developers, with financial and administrative support from the city, initiated the first significant adaptive use project in downtown Columbia in the Vista's West Gervais Street District. Developers adapted the former R.L. Bryan School Book Depository, located at the corner of Lady and Gadsden Streets, for use as a restaurant and lounge known as Bryan's Warehouse. The rehabilitation immediately spurred fourteen similar projects within the district. Eight of the fourteen projects applied for \$5,000 matching funds for façade improvements that were offered through the city's community development fund program. After more than two decades of operation as an eating or drinking establishment, a large law firm redeveloped the Bryan building to house its offices.²⁸ In the late 1980s, other developers who saw the potential to adaptively

27. "Casualty of Progress."

28. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, "National Register Properties in South Carolina, West Gervais Street Historic District."

use the area's historic red brick warehouses and office buildings began to rehabilitate them for adapted uses.

The West Gervais Street Historic District is located within the Vista. In 1983 the National Park Service listed the district on the National Register of Historic Places as a section of the Historic Resources of Columbia. The district is significant for its cohesive grouping of historic structures related to the history of transportation and milling industries in Columbia. Until the city relocated them in the 1970s, railroad tracks carrying passengers and cargo crisscrossed the area for over 100 years. Significant buildings in the area include the Columbia Mills Building. Mill owners constructed the four-story, 280,000 square foot building between Huger Street and the Congaree River in 1893. Historians determined that the building housed the first textile mill in the United States to be operated by electricity. Textile milling operations continued there until 1981.²⁹ The massive building was one of the earliest adaptive use projects facilitated through public support. The South Carolina State Museum opened there with great fanfare in October 1988.

Between 1995 and 1997 the city spent more than \$7 million in federal and local money to beautify nine blocks along Gervais Street in the Vista. It buried power lines, planted trees, and installed streetlights and sidewalks.³⁰ Within two years, the number of

29. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, "Columbia Mills Building, Richland County (Gervais St. on the Congaree River, Columbia)," accessed March 29, 2013. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740067/>.

30. Michael Sponhour, "Gervais Street Beautification Project Begins," *The State*, July 8, 1995.

shops and restaurants in the Vista doubled to thirty. Following that success, a similar project for Lady Street began in 1999. Due to an architectural conservation overlay implemented by the city, most new construction in the district is of a similar building style that further contributes to the cohesiveness of the area.

The city faced controversy around this time due to public concerns over government subsidies and the creation of a special tax district in the Vista. Columbia City Council members debated the details and costs.³¹ The plan included \$1.7 million in public funds to supplant the private development of the vacant Confederate Printing Plant for an adapted use as a Publix Supermarket.

Between 1993 and 2003, the city spent nearly \$115 million in federal, state, and local funding on rehabilitation projects in the Vista. In addition to state and federal grants and money from a fund that is used to administer Columbia's water system, the city, along with Richland and Lexington Counties, committed accommodations taxes and property taxes to new development. Those government funds spurred subsequent significant private investment, and the value of taxable property rose from \$174.6 million to \$219 million in a span of ten years.³² By 2012, after more private developers built new apartments and condominiums within walking distance of the supermarket, property values in the immediate area had tripled.

31. Jeff Wilkinson, "Lady Street Makeover Plan Gets Mixed Reviews from City," *The State*, November 11, 1999.

32. Editorial, author not cited, "Public Funds Started Vista, Private Sector Must Take Next Steps," *The State*, July 16, 2003.

When considering the adaptive use of historic buildings, public and private stakeholders must take many factors into account in order to meet profitability thresholds and make strategic investments. For example, in some instances the proposed use would no longer be financially feasible after making required modifications to the building. In other cases, if the developer fails to adhere to guidelines outlined in the United States Department of the Interior Standards, the project could be deemed ineligible for anticipated federal, state, and local tax credits. Additionally, modern building codes often require modifications to address safety and egress. These requirements could cause the overall cost to rehabilitate an historic building for an adapted use to be higher than anticipated and lower profit margins to unacceptable levels.³³

The rehabilitation of the former Confederate Printing Plant as a Publix Supermarket is an example of a government-subsidized rehabilitation project that did not meet the projected return on investment for its developers as quickly as anticipated. The slower return on investment occurred when Publix executives elected not to follow the federal guidelines after the project was underway. During the rehabilitation process, executives learned that in order for the building to remain eligible for federal historic tax credits, certain historic architectural elements had to remain. Publix opted to implement

33. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Bulletin, Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning, Use of Survey Data in Planning, Chapter IV,” accessed July 9, 2013. <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb24/chapter4.htm>.

their planned design instead of complying with the guidelines, since the retention of the specified details would significantly alter their standardized layout.³⁴

Yet the owners still deemed this project a successful venture in terms of the eventual return on investment and continuing profitability. The community viewed the project as a success since it led to subsequent economic development; rehabilitation and reuse of a vacant, deteriorating building of historic significance; and a downtown grocery store much appreciated by the public. Despite the design compromise, much of the historic exterior was retained. A year-end wrap-up in *The State* newspaper described the new store as a “project contributing to downtown Columbia's growth, significant in size and in impact.” The project won several adaptive use awards and many people in the community considered it an asset.³⁵

Some of Columbia’s historic properties are grouped together in areas that are designated as National Register of Historic Places districts, local architectural conservation districts, and design protection areas. Property owners in these districts and areas are eligible to apply for incentives that reduce the cost of rehabilitating historic buildings. A 2000 study conducted by the state government found that property values in Columbia's local historic districts had increased twenty-six percent faster per year than in the overall market.³⁶ The rehabilitations in the Vista of the West Gervais Street Historic

34. Mike Ramsey, “City Approves Design to Refurbish Dispensary,” *The State*, January 8, 2003.

35. Seth Rose, “Columbia Compress Reuse Can Move Community Forward,” *The State*, March 22, 2013.

36. James D. McWilliams, “‘Historic’ Designation Prized,” *The State*, March 25, 2006.

District, the R.L. Bryan School Book Depository, and Publix Supermarket are a range of successful examples that demonstrate the efficacy of incentivizing the adaptive use of historic buildings in a cohesive district. The next section provides examples of adaptive use along downtown Columbia's Main Street Corridor that took place more recently.

Part II

THE MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

Another significant example of adaptive reuse in Columbia is the Main Street Corridor. Two adaptive use projects anchor this successful project, Mast General Store and the Brennen Building. Staff from the city's economic development department and a public-private agency that serves downtown recruited the owners of Mast General to locate a new store in one of Main Street's historic buildings. First Citizens Bank, the owners of the Brennen Building, are in the process of rehabilitating the building for adapted uses.

Downtown Columbia's Main Street Corridor lies between Gervais Street and Elmwood Avenue just east of the Vista and north of the statehouse. The architecture is a mix of one-, two-, and three-story, nineteenth-century mercantile buildings and multi-story, twentieth and twenty-first century office towers. Many of the building facades underwent modernization in the twentieth century, which, along with new construction, resulted in a blend of architectural styles including Victorian, art deco, moderne, international, modern, and contemporary. In the nineteenth century, Main Street's stores sold produce, furniture, hardware, or clothing, depending on their specialty. During most of the twentieth century, department stores, including Efir's, Tapp's, Macy's, and Belk, sold everything from jewelry to appliances to Columbia's consumers alongside the specialty stores.

As with the Vista, economic downturns negatively affected the Main Street corridor by the 1970s. Newly built suburban malls lured shoppers and retail businesses away from main streets throughout the United States. After the last department store closed up shop on Columbia's Main Street in the 1990s, there was very little foot traffic downtown in the evenings. The remaining Main Street businesses operated on weekdays and closed before the evening, leaving workers with little choice but to leave the corridor after work. Shuttered storefronts, empty sidewalks, and economic decline replaced the once vibrant hub of activity. Columbia's leadership began to seek ways to bring the vitality and revenues back to downtown.

The city, with funding from various public sources, gave the primarily commercial district a \$15 million dollar facelift between 2004 and 2006. The city installed new streetlights, planters, benches, and wider and more decorative sidewalks, along with new storm drains, traffic lights, angled parking spots, and new parking meters. When completed, the two-phase project transformed several blocks of Main Street between Gervais and Laurel Streets.

In 2008, staff of the City of Columbia's Office of Economic Development (OED) and City Center Partnership actively pursued the executives of Mast General Store to encourage them to open a new branch of their popular franchise in Columbia. Mast General had a reputation as a proven generator of spin-off retail in the Southeast, which was the type of business the City hoped to attract. The company's other stores, housed in historic buildings in Greenville, South Carolina, Knoxville, Tennessee, and western

North Carolina, were known as tourist attractions.³⁷ OED staff pitched the idea of 1601 Main Street as a potential location for a new store to Mast General’s executives. The building was a match for the company’s mission to revive classic downtown retail locations and their vision for “a better community, a better future, and a better world.”³⁸

The circa 1872 building at 1601 Main was home to grocers, clothiers, saloons, furniture makers, and a meat market in its first decades of use. In the early to mid-twentieth century, the building housed three department stores: Efir’s, from 1919 to 1958; Belk, from 1958 to 1960; and Lourie’s, from 1960 to 2008.³⁹ The building is located on the block that contains Main Street’s oldest buildings, between Taylor and Blanding Streets. Though this block of buildings is not currently listed as a National Register Historic District, city preservationists are currently preparing a nomination. These buildings are a likely prospect for a historic district due to their cohesive proximity and significance in the history of commerce in Columbia. The investment in the

37. April C. Lucas and James Gambrell, “Case Study: City of Columbia and Mast General Store.” (Columbia, SC: Nexsen Pruet, LLC, 2012), 2-3; Dana W. Todd, “The Downtown Savour,” *Columbia Business Monthly*, January 2013; accessed May 1, 2013, <http://www.columbiabusinesmonthly.com/View-Article/ArticleID/3278/Mast-General-Stores-The-Downtown-Savour.aspx>; Anne Chesky, “Can Agritourism Save the Family Farm in Appalachia? A Study of Two Historic Family Farms in Valle Crucis, North Carolina,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2009), pp. 87-98.

38. Mike Fitts, “Mast General Store Called a Game-Changer,” *Columbia Regional Business Report*, November 5, 2009; South Carolina Jobs-Economic Development Authority, News, “Stimulus Money from JEDA Helps Mast General Store Move to Columbia,” accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.scjeda.com/jeda-helps-mast-general-store-move-to-columbia>.

39. Capitol Places, “Lourie’s 1601 Main Street,” accessed April 8, 2013, http://www.capitolplaces.com/8%205x11flyer_LL.pdf.

building's rehabilitation was a prime example of a profitable adaptive use project that was financially beneficial for the community and the business owner.⁴⁰

The company collaborated with staff from the City of Columbia's planning department, the Columbia Development Corporation, City Center Partnership, Historic Columbia Foundation, and South Carolina's State Historic Preservation Office. Through these historic preservation, planning, and development professionals, whose services were provided free to the company, Mast General's executives learned that in addition to the federal rehabilitation tax credit, with which they were already familiar, there were also state and local financial incentives available that made the location an attractive candidate for their newest store.⁴¹

Complex historic rehabilitation projects like the one undertaken by Mast General benefited from professional staff of city, county, and state agencies and community-supported non-profit organizations that played essential roles. These individuals worked collaboratively to present all of the resources, both existing and potential, that created the winning combination for Mast General's executives to select Columbia. After analyzing the demographics of the area, company executives considered the city's demonstrated commitment to historic preservation and all of the incentives available to them. They then

40. Kristy Eppley Rupon, "Main Street Prepares for Several New Players on the Block - Downtown Corridor on the Rise," *The State*, July 25, 2012; Jeff Wilkinson, "First Citizens Brewing up Coffee Shop Bank," *The State*, June 3, 2013, accessed June 15, 2013, <http://www.thestate.com/2013/06/03/2800491/first-citizens-brewing-up-coffee.html>.

41. Fred Delk; Matt Kennell; Tom Pioreschi.

chose 1601 Main Street as the best location rather than other cities who were courting them at the same time.⁴²

Staff from government agencies and non-profits assisted Mast executives in many valuable ways. First, to qualify for federal, state, and local tax credits and other financial incentives, the building had to have an official designation as a certified historic property. A former intern working with HCF researched, prepared, and submitted a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).⁴³ After the nomination received the necessary recommendation of SHPO staff, the request was sent to the National Park Service (NPS) for its approval. In 2012, the NPS added the building to the National Register due to its local historical significance in the area of commerce.⁴⁴

The owners were eligible for Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives (HPT) after the NPS certified the structure as historic. The HPT encouraged private investment and was one of the most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs of the United States federal government. The NPS and the Internal Revenue Service, in

42. Kristy Eppley Rupon, "Mast General Timeline Coming," *The State*, February 4, 2010; Priorieschi, March 26, 2013; Kennell, March 28, 2013; Todd, "The Downtown Savour."

43. John Sherrer.

44. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, National Register Sites in South Carolina, "Efird's Department Store, Richland County (1601 Main St., Columbia)," accessed April 1, 2013, <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740154/index.htm>.

partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices, administered the program.⁴⁵ This incentive allowed property owners who choose to sensitively adapt certified historic buildings into income-producing properties to receive a one-time federal income tax credit of twenty percent.⁴⁶ A ten percent income tax credit is available for owners who rehabilitate commercial buildings that are more than fifty years old that are considered “non-historic,” which means that they are not deemed to contribute to the historic character of the area. The HPT generated nearly \$100 billion in private investment and created 2.2 million jobs since its inception nearly thirty years ago.⁴⁷

Second, to secure eligibility for a local financial incentive known as the Bailey Bill, staff of the city’s planning and development services department sought and received a Design Preservation Overlay for the building through the Board of Zoning Appeals (BoZA). After submitting the history of the building for review and receiving the approval of BoZA and the city’s Design Development Review Commission (DDRC), Columbia City Council voted to rezone 1601 Main Street as a Group II Local Landmark.⁴⁸ This designation, via the Bailey Bill, allowed the property owners to lock in

45. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Technical Preservation Services,” accessed April 3, 2012, <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>.

46. To the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s rehabilitation standards.

47. Center for Urban Policy Research, *Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit for FY 2012*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2013, accessed May 1, 2013, <http://ntcicfunds.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Annual-HTC-Report-Exec-Summary.pdf>.

48. Columbia City Council, “Map and Text Amendment Case Summary: Amend the Zoning Ordinance and Map to Add DP (Design Preservation) Overlay to 1601 Main Street as a Group II Landmark (Efird/Lourie Building), March 17, 2010,” accessed March 10, 2013, http://www.columbiasc.net/depts/city_council/downloads/03_17_10_Agenda_Items/3-4_Main_1601.pdf; City of Columbia Group II Landmarks

the property tax rate of the assessed value of their building, prior to improvements, for twenty years. Property owners must invest the equivalent of twenty percent of the building's pre-improvement assessed value in approved repairs, updates, and restoration work in order to receive this incentive.⁴⁹

The South Carolina state legislature enacted the Bailey Bill in 1992 to give local governments the option of granting property tax abatement to encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties. Following amended state legislation in 2004, Columbia's City Council also adopted an amended local version of the bill in July 2007. Richland County Council amended its version of the bill to correspond with the city's version in March 2013.⁵⁰ One downside of this incentive may be that many property owners who might benefit from this do not take advantage of it because they are not aware of it. However, Richland County's recent amendment specified that the county

consist of structures or sites which constitute a delineation of Columbia's material visual history. The landmarks are evidence of one or more of the following criteria: (1) The sites of events, homes of men, etc., having contributed to local history; (2) Reasonably distinctive characteristics in architectural design, not necessarily unique; (3) Somewhat rare type within Columbia; (4) Belonging to a family or "genera" of buildings of which it is a good example; (5) The work of an architect of local importance. (6) A good example of a style or type of building which is becoming, or is in danger of becoming, extinct locally. Where at all possible, these properties should be preserved on their original sites, possibly by "adaptive use." Where the interior is impossible to preserve, the exterior should be retained by conservation and/or restoration.

49. City of Columbia, Planning Department, "Ord. No. 2007-063, § I, 9-5-07, Sec. 17-696," accessed March 2, 2013. http://columbia.sc.gov/cocextranet/assets/File/PlanningDevelopmentServices/Preservation/CoC_Bailey_Bill_Ordinance.pdf.

50. Richland County Council, Administration and Finance Committee, "March 26, 2013 Report of Actions," accessed April 8, 2013, <http://www.richlandonline.com/departments/countycouncil/committees/Administration%20and%20Finance%20Committee/Actions/20130326.pdf>.

would work to promote the program in order to encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties.⁵¹

The third incentive allowed the city to recommend 1601 Main Street to Mast General even though the building contained twice as much space as the company needed for the store. Since the first and basement levels of the four-story building provided all of the square footage that Mast General needed, city staff identified and secured another company, Capitol Places, to develop the top two floors. Capitol Places built twenty-six residential apartments called The Lofts at Lourie's in the space. This arrangement allowed the building to be divided in a way that was financially profitable for both companies.

Another government incentive facilitated financing for the project. City and county officials agreed to pay the interest on a \$2,000,000 loan over ten years and provide partial payment for the closing costs. Federally-backed Recovery Zone bonds were issued by the City of Columbia (\$973,000) and Richland County (\$2,200,000). The tax exempt bonds were the first of their kind used in South Carolina and allowed for below-market financing.⁵² The funds came through the South Carolina Jobs-Economic Development Authority, which utilized facility bond allocations that the city and county received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The government required the company to pay back the funds at a later date.⁵³

51. Richland County Council, "March 26, 2013 Report," 1.

52. Lucas and Gambrell, "Case Study," 4, 7-8.

53. South Carolina Jobs-Economic Development Authority. "Stimulus Money."

Mast General Store's move to Main Street was a boon to the local economy. It created sixteen new full-time jobs and twenty-four part-time jobs related to store operations. Construction during the rehabilitation also created jobs, many of them highly skilled labor. The store was a draw for pedestrian visitors. Several new businesses and more residential units followed its opening, generating more jobs and tax revenue from newly occupied, long-vacant buildings. The government investments and policies that facilitated the rehabilitation of Mast General and other historic buildings like it are measures that both protect important structures and create economic growth and stability. The businesses housed in the rehabilitated buildings provided a significantly higher source of revenue for Columbia and Richland County in the form of taxes on sales, income, business, and property. They also created new jobs that generated further spending at other businesses in the immediate area by the employees. When buildings were razed or left unoccupied by revenue-generating businesses like Mast General, the only income for the city and county for the parcel or building was in property taxes, which were lower for unimproved lots. Thus, city leaders reasoned that an investment of resources that would help to secure a revenue-generating business would create benefits for the city overall and they proved to be correct.

Local officials continued to invest in the Main Street Corridor. In 2012, the City of Columbia's Commercial Façade Improvement Program spurred \$426,000 in loans to provide facelifts in Main Street's central business district that resulted in \$6.6 million in new development. The program offered loans of up to \$20,000 to those making

improvements of at least \$100,000 to windows, signage, lighting, doors, and awnings.⁵⁴

A research study conducted by Main Street South Carolina found that downtown revitalization efforts totaled investment of \$704 million that created 9,900 jobs in its Main Street communities between 1984 and 2005.⁵⁵

Richland County had a similar program that offered grants to commercial property owners and business tenants to help them make improvements to their buildings' street-facing exteriors. The stated intent of the program was to reduce and prevent "blight," contribute to job creation, restore and expand the area's economic vitality, and enhance the marketability of individual businesses and business districts. The Richland County Planning and Development Services Office administered the federally funded program. Grants ranged from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for work carried out by city-approved contractors. A new business district was chosen each year to ensure that funds were distributed throughout the county.⁵⁶

The City of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan included a goal to "promote the preservation and protection of Columbia's significant historic buildings, structures, districts, landscapes, and facets."⁵⁷ This plan was put to the test when First Citizens Bank

54. Jeff Wilkinson, "City Facade Program to Dress up North Main," *The State*, August 3, 2012.

55. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, *Preserving Our Past*.

56. Richland County, South Carolina, Planning Department, "Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program," accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.richlandonline.com/departments/Planning/CFIGrants.asp>.

57. Columbia City Council, "Map and Text Amendment Case Summary Amend the Text of the Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Map to Designate 1321 Lady Street as a Group II Landmark (Owen Building)," accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.columbiasc.net>

built a new office tower at the corner of Lady and Main Streets in 2004. Bank executives planned to raze several older buildings to create the footprint on which to construct their new building, parking lot, and courtyard. To get the square footage they wanted at the location they desired, just one block from the statehouse, the bank's leadership chose new construction over rehabilitation of existing buildings. Due to a belief that its rehabilitation would be too costly, their original plan included razing Main Street's oldest structure, the circa 1870 Brennen Building. However, vocal opposition by historic preservationists, city officials, and Columbia's citizens was immediate and the company revised the plan. A bank spokesperson stated that city and state tax credits made rehabilitation financially feasible.⁵⁸

The Brennen Building's local landmark status protected it from immediate demolition. The National Park Service listed the building on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 due to its significance as the best surviving example of Victorian commercial architecture in Columbia. The style, which features ornate cast iron balconies and eyebrows over the windows on the second story façade and cast iron columns framing the storefront windows at street level, was once a prominent one on Main Street.⁵⁹

/depts/city_council/downloads/10_02_2012_Agenda_Items
/9_Lady_1321_DP_Amend_ZPH_PKT.pdf.

58. Jeff Wilkinson, "Renovated Brennen Building Promises New 'Focal Point' on Main Street," *The State*, November 28, 2012, accessed June 11, 2013, <http://www.thestate.com/2012/11/28/2535308/renovated-brennen-building-promises.html#storylink=cpy>.

59. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, National Register Properties in South Carolina, "1210-1214 Main Street,

First Citizens initiated the rehabilitation of the Brennen Building in 2012. The building had not been in use since 2002. The bank's wealth advisory department will be housed in the second story of the building while storefronts on the first floor will be utilized for a restaurant and a café.⁶⁰ The Brennen Building had housed the Capitol Café from 1911 until 2002. The restaurant was reportedly the site of many negotiations among the state's legislators and was also popular with downtown workers. The building's history includes its distinction as the location of the city's first automobile dealership.

The results of the public-private collaborations that resulted in Main Street's preserved historic buildings demonstrate that these projects are mutually beneficial for both groups.⁶¹ Public policies and support incentivize the rehabilitation of historic buildings by private developers. These projects were deemed successes for the community and the developer because they encouraged economic revitalization and allowed buildings to be saved while being economically viable.

One incentive that was not utilized for the Main Street projects is available for the rehabilitation of South Carolina's defunct textile mills and their associated buildings.

South Carolina legislators enacted the South Carolina Textiles Communities Revitalization Act in 2004 to provide incentives for the renovation, improvement, and

Richland County (Columbia)," accessed July 4, 2013. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740035/index.htm>.

60. Jeff Wilkinson, "Brennen Building Getting New Life," *The State*, July 25, 2012.

61. Jeff Wilkinson, "Renovated Brennen Building Promises New 'Focal Point' on Main Street," *The State*, November 28, 2012, accessed June 11, 2013. <http://www.thestate.com>; Fred Delk; Matt Kennell; Tom Pioreschi.

redevelopment of abandoned textile mill sites.⁶² The next section presents successful applications of this incentive for buildings in the Granby and Olympia Mill Villages.

62. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, “South Carolina Textiles Communities Revitalization Act,” accessed July 1, 2013. <http://shpo.sc.gov/programs/tax/Pages/TextileMill.aspx>; South Carolina Legislature, “South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 12,” accessed July 1, 2013. <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t12c065.php>.

Part III

GRANBY and OLYMPIA MILL VILLAGES

Columbia's Granby and Olympia Mill Villages provide yet another example of successful rehabilitation of historic mill buildings into sites now known as 701 Whaley and the Olympia and Granby Mills Apartments. Textile mills and their associated buildings are important reminders of Columbia's history. They also offer unique opportunities for private developers to rehabilitate the buildings for adapted uses. The developers of these projects took advantage of financial incentives available for the rehabilitation of textile mills as well as funding for façade grants and federal and state tax credits to create economically viable projects. The public benefited from the retention of the historic fabric and neighborhood revitalization. Like the West Gervais Street Historic District in the Vista, there is a cohesive group of historic buildings in the mill villages that includes the massive mills and entire neighborhoods of mill housing.

The Granby Mill Village and the Olympia Mill Village were founded in 1897 and 1899 respectively with the opening of their eponymously named mills. The villages are located one mile south of the statehouse. Granby was the second mill in Columbia owned and built by W.B. Smith Whaley, who had designed and built many mills throughout South Carolina and the Southeast. The National Park Service added the Granby Mill Village Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993 due in part to the "...physical neatness, cohesive character, and predominant "saltbox" design present a

distinctive and striking visual impact characteristic of the translation of the traditional New England mill village design to a late nineteenth century Southern setting.” At the time of the nomination the village retained 112 of the 121 original residences. It was also notable as one of the best preserved examples of a turn-of-the-century mill village in the state. Granby includes portions of Catawba, Church, Denmark, Gist, Heyward, Huger, Pall Mall, Piccadilly, Tryon, Whaley, and Williams Streets.⁶³

Olympia Mill Village is bounded on the northeast by Bluff Road, on the southeast by Granby Lane, on the southwest by Olympia Avenue, and on the north by Heyward Street. Textile milling was the leading industry in South Carolina in the early twentieth century. The National Park Service added the Olympia Mill to the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 as “an important example of the Romanesque Revival style applied to industrial architecture and as the work of important mill designers W.B. Smith Whaley.”⁶⁴

In 1903, W.B. Smith Whaley built the Mills Avenue Company Store at 701 Whaley Street to supply the needs of mill workers. The National Park Service added the building to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 because it is “significant for its social and cultural impact on the mill villages it serviced and for its architectural

63. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, “National Register Properties in South Carolina, Granby Mill Village Historic District, Richland County (Columbia),” accessed October 21, 2012. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740101/index.htm>.

64. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, “National Register Properties in South Carolina, Granby Mill Village Historic District, Richland County (Columbia),” accessed October 20, 2012. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740101/index.htm>.

significance and association with its designer, W.B. Smith Whaley.”⁶⁵ Following a 1918 addition that housed a swimming pool, the building’s exterior could be described as a “large irregularly-shaped two-story brick building built as a vernacular two-part storefront with elaborate cornices, decorative brickwork and corbelling that reflects many elements of the Olympia and Granby Mills located nearby.”⁶⁶

Pacific Mills bought the mill and its associated buildings in 1915. The original company store became known as the Pacific Community Association Building and later as “The Y.” It closed in 1941.⁶⁷ For several decades the building was the center of community activities for the children and adults who lived in the mill village. Recreational activities available there included swimming, basketball, billiards, bowling, weekly dances, and movies. There was an auditorium that could hold up to 800 people for group meetings, a barber shop, a medical office, a sewing room, and a reading room. Pacific Mills sold the building and forty-one parcels surrounding it in 1940. Between World War II and 1996, the building was used as a textile workers’ union office, a bakery, a machine shop, and manufacturing or retail businesses.⁶⁸ Between 1997 and 2001 the building was used as an arts center. By 2001 the building was vacant and in a

65. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office, “National Register Properties in South Carolina, Pacific Community Association Building, Richland County (701 Whaley St., Columbia),” accessed September 30, 2012. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740142/index.htm>.

66. “Pacific Community Association Building.”

67. “Pacific Community Association Building.”

68. Jennifer Martin, *Olympia Mill and Village: Upper Richland County, South Carolina, Historical and Architectural Inventory* (Columbia, SC: Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc., 2002).

state of severe deterioration. Poor management of the building's exterior during these years led to it nearly being demolished in 2005.⁶⁹

The building's roof had collapsed and it was thought by many to be beyond repair.⁷⁰ A trio of private development partners thought that it could be saved and utilized once again as a center of community activity. The partners purchased the building in 2005 with financial assistance in the form of loans and grants from the Columbia Development Corporation (CDC) and the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC).⁷¹

The CDC paid for environmental and structural studies and retained ownership of them so that they could be used by future stewards of the building. When Burts and his partners purchased the building, the CDC was their first stop. They knew that they would not be able to finance the rehabilitation through a bank loan since no bank would take a chance on a condemned building. Though the investment was risky, the CDC's board decided to loan the partners \$600,000 so that they could pay for the building and some of the initial stabilization work that needed to be done. Since the CDC did not have the necessary capital to make a loan at that level without depleting its revolving fund, it in turn borrowed the money from a City of Columbia incentive program called the

69. Jeffrey Day, "Gallery 701: A Vision in Flux." *The State* (Columbia, SC), March 11, 2001; Jeffrey Day and Dawn Hinshaw, "Roof Collapse Closes Arts Center," *The State* (Columbia, SC), September 8, 2000; Jack Gerstner, "Community Help Needed to Save Gallery 701," *The State* (Columbia, SC), January 1, 2005; Jeff Wilkinson, "Gallery 701 Owner Must Repair Roof," *The State* (Columbia, SC), December 20, 2004; Richard Burts; Fred Delk; Dan Elswick; Amy Moore; Robin Waites.

70. Richard Burts; Fred Delk; Nancy Stone-Collum (Conservation Coordinator, Richland County Conservation Commission), interview with the author, October 19, 2012.

71. Richard Burts; Fred Delk; Nancy Stone-Collum.

Empowerment Zone. Arrangements were made for the partners to pay the loan back to the CDC, who then paid back the loan to the city.

The partners next met with staff of the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Historic Columbia Foundation, and the City's Planning Department for guidance. HCF assisted by preparing the National Register of Historic Places nomination that would allow the partners to apply for federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. SHPO and Planning staff reviewed the project for Standards compliance. In addition to the federal credit, the partners also received state and local tax credits, including the Bailey Bill and the South Carolina Textile Communities Revitalization Act credit.⁷² Though the building's transformation was not without unanticipated expenses, the rehabilitation of 701 Whaley was considered a profitable venture for its developers.⁷³

Columbia continues to benefit from the restoration of the neighborhood gem, home to unique event spaces, an art gallery, several non-profit organizations, small businesses, and residents since 2009. Some community members feel that the building represents an earlier time when they believed life to be simpler. Other community members feel that the building "stands as a monument to all the best of what community can mean: self-sufficiency, togetherness, service to others, shared history, and pride."⁷⁴ Even though many in the community thought that the building was beyond repair, the property's developers saw the cultural value in saving the building and they did so

72. Richard Burts; Robin Waites.

73. Richard Burts; Fred Delk.

74. Alvin W. Byars, *Olympia-Pacific: The Way it Was, 1895-1970* (Columbia, SC: Professional Printers Limited, 1981), 475.

sensitively and profitably, in part by utilizing government-supported financial incentives and through other the support of public agencies and programs.⁷⁵

Granby Mills, at 510 Heyward Street, and Olympia Mills, at 600 Heyward Street, are located around the corner from 701 Whaley. The mills shut down operations in 1997. Ten years later, two multi-million dollar projects to create high-end student apartment buildings out of the long-vacant mills were underway.⁷⁶ The adaptive use project added 345 housing units and hundreds of residents to the mill villages. The property developers utilized federal tax credits and the textile communities revitalization credits for the project. Members of the community and the private developers believe that the project played a key role in the revitalization of downtown Columbia, despite a plan to direct taxes for improvements in the area falling through.⁷⁷

Six years earlier, Richland County administrative staff proposed the creation of a special tax district for Olympia. Also known as tax increment financing, the plan was expected to dedicate more than \$6 million in new property tax revenues generated within the district to be spent within the district on infrastructure projects. Revenues generated by the new Granby Mills and Olympia Mills apartment complex would have been spent on road, sewer, park, and drainage improvements.⁷⁸ In 2005, members of Richland

75. Richard Burts; Fred Delk; Nancy Stone-Collum; Robin Waites (Executive Director, Historic Columbia Foundation), interview with the author, October 16, 2012.

76. Dawn Hinshaw, "Plans for Nearby USC Ballpark, New Homes Invigorate Old Neighborhood," *The State*, December 24, 2006.

77. PMC Property Group, "Granby and Olympia Mills," accessed July 8, 2013. <http://corporate.pmcpropertygroup.com/projects/granby-olympia-mills>.

78. Lisa M. Collins, "County Considers Olympia Tax District," *The State*, October 29, 1999.

County Council ascertained that if the developer took advantage of the Bailey Bill, thus holding the company's property taxes in place at the pre-improvements level for twenty years, the district would have been left with insufficient immediate revenue to support its infrastructure needs, so the plan was dropped.⁷⁹

However, in 2006, Columbia City Council voted to approve \$2 million in hospitality tax funds to be spent on infrastructure improvements in Olympia. Richland County Council planned to follow suit, and another \$2 million was expected from a community partnership with the University of South Carolina. The funds were also to be used to create loan programs to rehabilitate historic homes and improve business facades.⁸⁰ The investments in rehabilitation by both the public entities - local governments and non-profits - and private developers that took place in Columbia's mill villages encouraged economic growth and neighborhood revitalization. The examples of successful rehabilitation of mill buildings served as evidence for those who supported a similar rehabilitation in Columbia's proposed development district, Innovista.

79. John O'Connor, "Olympia Revitalization: Special Tax District on Hold," *The State*, December 5, 2005.

80. Gina Smith, "Columbia to Help Fund Olympia Improvements," *The State*, March 23, 2006.

Part IV

INNOVISTA

In 2006, the City of Columbia, the University of South Carolina, and Guignard and Associates formed another public-private partnership that involves adaptive reuse, though to a lesser extent than in the districts discussed above. On April 21, 2006, representatives of the city, the university, and the Guignard family presented a master plan to the public to redevelop 500 acres along the city's downtown waterfront. The proposed name of the district was "Innovista," a combination of "innovation" and "Vista." The Guignard family descends from John Gabriel Guignard, the land surveyor who laid out Columbia's first grid of streets. The family owned much of the waterfront acreage in the proposed district.

The district is bounded by the Congaree River on the west, the Vista district on the north, the University campus on the east, and Olympia and Granby Mill Villages on the south. The master plan described the area's built environment as "historically...mills and warehouses related to Columbia's waterborne transportation and power generation."⁸¹ At the time of the plan's release in 2006, the area featured "...vacant property, commuter parking lots, light industrial uses and small suburban-style office

81. "Innovista Master Plan."

buildings...[though] vestiges...remain in the form of warehouse and mill buildings.”⁸²

The plan stated: “Taken together, these elements represent a significant opportunity for redevelopment and reuse.”⁸³

The Innovista plan expanded the University’s vision of a multi-use neighborhood to house residents, businesses, and University offices and classrooms. The coalition was the result of a decision by the University of South Carolina and Guignard Associates to coordinate their urban planning efforts. A committee that included regional business, community, and environmental leaders was formed to steward the planning process. The Innovista master plan lauded Columbia’s adaptive use projects in the Vista and the mill villages of Granby and Olympia and included the retention of historic buildings and the use of publically-funded incentives in its plans.⁸⁴

There were few historic buildings remaining in the planned Innovista district. Thus, the Palmetto Compress Warehouse (PCW), located at 617 Devine Street, the largest existing significant historic building in the area, was of vital importance. Built in sections in 1917 and 1923, the warehouse is on a large, four-acre parcel near the planned district’s center in a very visible, high traffic area. It is located within a block bounded by Blossom, Pulaski, and Devine Streets, which is a gateway to Columbia and Innovista from the west.

82. “Innovista Master Plan.”

83. “Innovista Master Plan.”

84. “Innovista Master Plan.”; Columbia Planning Department, “The City of Columbia Comprehensive Plan, 2008-2018, Columbia, SC: 2008.”

Columbia architect James B. Urquhart designed the four-story, 320,000 square-foot former cotton warehouse. The PCW was constructed of red brick with thick timber beams supporting the ceiling, heavy timber floors, and small windows at the ends of each of four large bays on each floor. The warehouse had the capacity to hold 55,000 bales of cotton, which it did throughout the first half of the twentieth century until operations ceased there.⁸⁵ Until 2013, the building was used as a mini-storage facility.

In 1978, the National Park Service listed the Palmetto Compress Warehouse as a historically significant, contributing building on the National Register of Historic Places' Historic Resources of Columbia. In 1985, NPS placed the building on the National Register of Historic Places due to the significance of its architecture and its importance to the textile and mill industry in Columbia and in South Carolina. At the time of its listing, it was one of only four cotton compress facilities remaining in the Southeast.⁸⁶ The PCW is included here to demonstrate the potential continued success of public support for the private development of adaptively used historic buildings.

In 2006, developers announced that they had entered into a contract with the building's owners to convert the PCW into 173 condominiums. The deal would not be set, though, until they had "run the numbers."⁸⁷ The project fell through before the end of

85. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, National Register Properties in South Carolina, "Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company Building, Richland County (617 Devine St., Columbia)," accessed April 21, 2013, <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740074/index.htm>.

86. "Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company Building."

87. Jeff Wilkinson, "Vista Edifice Eyed for Condos," *The State*, June 17, 2006, accessed July 5, 2013.

the year. In 2007, the developer stated that the problem was “just a matter of a temporarily bloated inventory” for rental property in the area.⁸⁸ Other Columbia developers disagreed that the market was oversaturated.⁸⁹

In 2012, the building’s owners announced that they were unable to secure a buyer who wanted to rehabilitate the building and that they had entered into a contract with a developer who planned to demolish it to make way for a new student housing complex.⁹⁰ Though there were protected historical districts nearby in the Vista and Granby, the PCW was not located in either of them, nor was it safeguarded as an official individual City of Columbia landmark. The mayor, who had previously submitted a request to City Council to add the warehouse to the city’s list of local landmarks, withdrew his nomination after touring the building with the owners and being convinced that rehabilitation was not feasible from a financial standpoint..⁹¹

Public discussions about the future of the warehouse were highly contentious as opposing groups squared off in the press and at City Council meetings in support of either saving it or demolishing it. Those who opposed saving it with public funds included retired firefighters and police officers. Their opposition resulted from the fact

88. Kristy Eppley Rupon, “Condo Market Down, Not Out - Real Estate Experts Dispute Developer's Statement That Sales in Columbia Have Collapsed,” *The State*, October 4, 2007, accessed July 6, 2013.

89. “Condo Market Down, Not Out.”

90. Clif LeBlanc, “Sides Argue Fate of Warehouse - Building Our City,” *The State*, October 10, 2012, accessed July 6, 2013.

91. Jeff Wilkinson. “Preservationists Decry Demolition of Palmetto Compress Warehouse,” *The State*, November 6, 2012, accessed July 6, 2013.

that the city was considering using their health care funds temporarily to finance the building's purchase. Those who supported saving it included members of the historic preservation community. They insisted that the building had potential as an economically viable reuse project as well as having historic significance. Concerned citizen groups organized meetings and launched a social media campaign to save the warehouse.⁹²

After much debate, several changes of heart, and multiple rounds of voting, Columbia City Council approved the purchase of the building in April 2013 for \$5.65 million with the intent to quickly sell the building to private developers who would sensitively adapt it for other uses.⁹³ The rehabilitation of the PCW has the potential to benefit the city and the building's developers economically in much the same way the redevelopment of other significant historic buildings in the Vista, the Main Street Corridor, and the Granby and Olympia Mill Districts did. While multiple buildings in these districts have collective impact, the PCW has the opportunity to be of singular impact as a focal point in a district where few, if any, historically significant buildings remain.

92. Warren Bolton, "Columbia Grappling with Self-preservation," *The State*, March 24, 2013.

93. Clif LeBlanc, "SOLD! Palmetto Compress Bought by Columbia City Council," *The State*, April 23, 2013, accessed June 22, 2013, <http://www.thestate.com/2013/04/23/2738763/sold-palmetto-compress-bought.html#storylink=cpy>.

CONCLUSION

The examples presented in this paper show that publically supported policies, incentives, and guidance have created positive economic outcomes for Columbia. These efforts benefited private developers while also allowing Columbia to retain much of its historic fabric. Neighborhood revitalization, subsequent private investment, job creation, and new tax revenues resulted from publically-supported programs.

One goal of city, as stated in the Comprehensive Plan that it adopted in 2008, is “to promote the preservation and protection of Columbia’s significant historic buildings, structures, districts, landscapes, and facets.”⁹⁴ The plan also states that, “preservation of the City’s important visual history and the review of new development ensure a Columbia that is uniquely itself.”⁹⁵ Local landmark designation can protect significant historic buildings from being demolished or permanently altered without due process.⁹⁶ Some of Columbia’s historic buildings were torn down even though they were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. To the surprise of many, listing on the NRHP does not provide adequate protection from the threat of demolition. To ensure that the

94. “Map and Text Amendment.”

95. Columbia Planning Department, “The City of Columbia Comprehensive Plan, 2008-2018” (Columbia, SC: 2008), 138.

96. “Columbia, South Carolina, Code of Ordinances, Code of Ordinances, Chapter 17, Planning, Land Development and Zoning, Article V, Historic Preservation and Architectural Review, Division I, Generally,” accessed April 21, 2013, <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=13167>.

city's comprehensive plan is successfully implemented, the current process for nominating a building for landmark status should be opened up to community members.

As of 2013, city policy stipulates that only Columbia City Council members can request a vote to approve or deny local landmark designation. The city does not currently have enough staff to prioritize the research required to make recommendations to City Council for buildings that should be added to the local landmarks list. If concerned citizens were permitted to nominate buildings for consideration for landmark status and these building were then granted landmark status by a vote of City Council, more buildings would require DDRC review and be safeguarded from demolition. If the city had designated the PCW as a Group II Landmark, it would have been safeguarded from the threat of demolition.

While compromises were made by the developers and the public for many of the adaptive use projects presented here, in each case both parties benefited from the rehabilitations. Private investors attained acceptable profits and the community benefitted from the economic development inspired by the projects. Both could also be said to have benefited from the saving of community treasures. Investors benefitted directly as members of the community and their businesses benefitted indirectly from the positive association with saving historic structures. Both parties also benefited from projects that were friendlier to the environment.

Public support for the private development of historic buildings has proven successful on many levels in Columbia. Continued public support for the private development of historic rehabilitation now and in the future should reap similar benefits in Columbia that can serve as an example for other cities across the United States.

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