

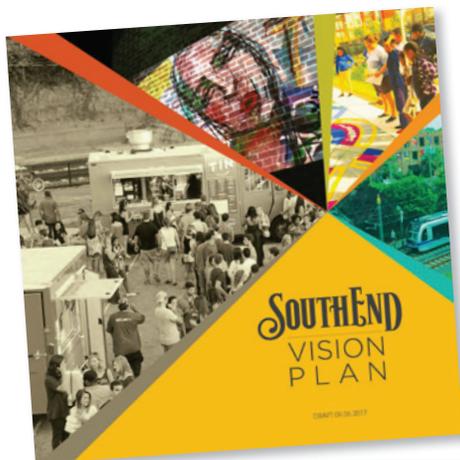
Charlotte's Historic South End district totals 750 acres along a 2-mile corridor adjacent to Charlotte's Uptown. It is home to a local arts scene, exploding brewery culture and was recently identified as one of the fastest growing apartment sub-markets nationwide. The South End Vision Plan (SEVP) identifies a series of goals and initiatives for future development, and a companion document establishes urban design standards that will help South End continue to evolve into a truly vibrant place, capitalize on its real estate value, and maximize its potential as Charlotte's most walkable, transit-oriented neighborhood.

A case for replication. South End is much like other post-industrial urban districts. Once trafficked by freight rails dedicated to textile factories and warehouses, the district became decreasingly relevant to the local economy as factories shut down. Overlooked for decades, transit investments later spurred the re-introduction of the Charlotte Trolley in the late 1990s and opening of the Lynx Blue Line light rail project in 2007. The 9.6-mile Blue Line with four transit stations in South End connected Uptown and south Charlotte and propelled the district into a wave of growth, seemingly overnight.

Baseline metrics. A 2017 development report showed how South End's access to the \$600 million light rail line contributed to some \$2 billion of private investment. Since 2007, South End has seen a 58% increase in housing units and a 49% increase in dining and entertainment establishments. Additionally, 53% of all dwelling units have been constructed since the Blue Line opened. Not only do these and other statistics help us understand how this unprecedented growth came to be, but it provides a baseline from which we can measure impacts of the South End Vision Plan in the future.

Today, South End is home to more than 9,000 residents, and over 16,000 jobs are held across the district's 750

businesses—half of which are design and creative-oriented businesses with another quarter being shops and restaurants. The challenges of this growth have been many, including a growing



dissatisfaction for the blandness of the architecture, the lack of a quality public realm, a loss of landmark entertainment venues and older character businesses, and a level of density that, while significant, dramatically undershoots the regional expectations for transit station area density.

Sustainability and representation. The SEVP was borne from growing public frustration and need for a course correction. Led by Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP) in partnership with the City's Urban Design Division, and supported by Stantec's Urban Places team, the SEVP initiative champions a community-driven vision plan that comprehensively addresses economic, social, and cultural ambitions for the neighborhood's next 25 years.

To develop a sustainable plan for the long term needs of such a creative and explosively growing neighborhood, a robust community engagement strategy was utilized. It leaned on a large and diverse steering committee of more than 30 members along with some creative outreach methods. Despite South End's high percentage of rental dwellings and somewhat transient population, long-time residents, leaders of non-profits, small businesses, and corporations, and developers alike came together to include their voice and guidance.

Innovation. Two major community events were the book ends of CCCP's inclusive community process and in between smaller outreach efforts in non-traditional venues were included. The kickoff event was set up along the South End Design Center as a festival atmosphere with games, interactive activities, and a pop-up parklet. At the "Shop" station, visitors were handed fake money and prompted to choose how to spend those dollars in South End. This shed light on the retail and commercial offerings that participants most wanted to see in the district. At the "Move" station, attendees were interviewed about mobility issues and opportunities while riding stationary cycling equipment. Local artists were also engaged in the idea generating and information gathering process. Artists drew participants' ideas on a digital platform for all to see, and in a video booth, attendees recorded their favorite memories of South End. At yet another station, participants could send a postcard to the future describing their vision of an 'ideal South End.'

The other major community input activity was held as a 'tap house takeover' event at a local brewery. This quiz show style evening was hosted by a local theatrical

group and featured teams of brewery owners and local business owners going head to head. Quiz questions were packed with information about the plan and the district alike. Information stations were also open to gather feedback on the goals and initiatives of the plan as well as to educate the community on the planning process.

Outcome. For the purposes of this plan, this study follows best practices in urban planning and design and includes the plan’s context. The plan’s site extends two blocks beyond “official” South End boundaries, because the defining limits are not experienced on the ground as hard boundaries, but shared corridors of public space—urban rooms within the city.

Throughout the year-long planning process, the steering committee, major stakeholders, and the general public helped to craft seven key goals that are critical to the long-term success of South End.

1. **Grow By Design.** Expect density; Pay attention to the details; Bake in amenities.
2. **Expand Our Mix.** Support entrepreneurship; Curate vibrant shopping and entertainment; Attract a daytime population.
3. **Pursue Affordability.** Encourage mixed-income housing; Preserve/provide affordable workspaces.
4. **Celebrate Public Space.** Complete the Rail Trail; Construct many, varied public spaces; Attract and support cultural and entertainment venues.
5. **Move.Connect.Network.** Put people first; Connect all modes; Embrace the mobility revolution.
6. **Never Stop Experimenting.** Encourage spontaneity; Embed art into everything; Be creative.
7. **Manage Our Common Resources.** Organize parking as a public resource; Preserve valuable building stock; Prepare for the future.

Execution. From these goals, 10 key initiatives were adopted:

1. Continue development of the Rail Trail;
2. Finish the conversion of South Boulevard to South End’s Main Street;
3. Adopt new regulations to ensure a high quality public realm;
4. Attract cultural facilities/ venues;
5. Preserve and provide affordable workplaces;
6. Construct Wilmore Centennial Park and other green spaces;



Over the past 10 years, South End has grown into one of Charlotte’s most dynamic locations. From its history as a neglected industrial and commercial part of town in the 1980s, it reinvented itself as a low-cost haven for artists and other creative people in the 1990s and early 2000s.

7. Construct a new crossing and transit station near Hawkins/Rampart;
8. Increase density expectations at station areas;
9. Manage parking as a district; and
10. Embed art into everything.

This plan was not only critical for the district, but it was instrumental in driving a citywide re-write of the existing transit-oriented district (TOD) ordinances. Design guidelines provided in the South End Vision Plan were pulled forward and used as a framework for the TOD ordinance updates, a draft of which has recently been released for public comment by the Charlotte Planning Department. In addition, the Charlotte Department of Transportation conducted corridor planning in South End in unison with the SEVP to find ways to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and amenities in the district. On the back of that corridor plan, funding has been recently secured from the City Council for pedestrian and bicycle enhancements to corridors in South End.

Action inspired by bold vision. That’s the new South End way.