

The logo graphic on the left consists of several overlapping, semi-transparent grey rectangular shapes of varying sizes and orientations, creating a layered, architectural effect. The word "MIDTOWN" is written vertically in a large, light grey, serif font, positioned to the right of these shapes.

MIDTOWN

MidTown, Inc.

An Overview of Community Impact
since 2005

Spring 2018 Update

Long-term Investment/Impact

- In 2016, the MidTown, Inc. Board of Directors defined **five strategic focus areas** to advance the organization's mission and guide projects and programs: Neighborhood Enhancement/Sense of Place; Economic Development; Business Support; Active Transportation and Connections; and Organizational Capacity.
- Since 2005, businesses, sponsors, individuals and foundations **have invested over \$4 million** to advance MidTown, Inc.'s mission in the community through support for projects, programs and operations. On May 18, 2017, MidTown, Inc. received a **matching grant of up to \$300,000** over 3 years (2017-1019) from an **anonymous donor who loves MidTown**.

Affirming work to date and helping advance a vision for a thriving MidTown, the grant was given through the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley, Inc. to help build a broad base of annual support for MidTown, Inc.'s operations.

- **Knight Cities Challenge: In 2015, MidTown, Inc. was named one of 32 national winners—from over 7,000 applicants.** The **18-month \$200,000 grant** allowed citizens to work with world-renowned Gehl Studio planning team members to create a **Minimum Grid Mobility Plan** to better connect the Core Community for walkers, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers, and activate public spaces that better engage our diverse community.

Columbus 2025 identifies “Vibrant and Connected Places” as one of its five strategic goal areas. The Minimum Grid Mobility Plan amplifies Columbus 2025 recommendations to build our local economy and to create a vibrant place that attracts and retains talent and serves all local residents.

This project and long-term plan are **leveraging investment by the GDOT and City Planning and Engineering**, and cooperative planning with other initiatives like the Dragonfly Trails. Moreover, the Minimum Grid is working in concert with the creation of MidTown **Tax Allocation Districts** and a small-scale development initiative to **generate in-town private reinvestment**.

- **Incremental Development Alliance (IDA):** Through a **2016 Knight Cities Challenge** grant, MidTown, Inc. partnered with a national team to remove barriers and champion neighborhood regeneration through small-scale development. Jim Kumon, IDA founding director, stated: ***The IncDevA team chose MidTown as a national demonstration site for its diversity of population and eras of development patterns, and for MidTown, Inc.'s capacity to convene local stakeholders and champion reinvestment.***
- **Reimagine and Regenerate 13th Street** was an ongoing series of programs, studies, analysis, visioning and community engagement that focused attention on the 13th Street connection between MidTown and Uptown. **On February 13, 2018, Columbus Council voted in support of the recommendation to reallocate travel lanes to help revitalize the area.**
 - On May 18, 2017, the MidTown Business Association re-introduced residents to the street's commercial potential with a pop-up market and celebration. May 2017 also saw a series of demonstration walks, bike rides and pop-up events—with traffic testing to determine if a reallocation of lanes was possible.
 - MidTown, Inc. partnered with local property owners in late 2017 and engaged Rick Hall, P.E., president of Hall Planning & Engineering, to undertake in-depth analysis and visioning for the connector. A case for accepting GDOT's recommendation to reallocate lanes on 13th Street from 5th to 13th Avenues was built on test data, Hall's research and analysis, and a coalition that brought together a first-time alliance of MidTown, Uptown, Columbus 2025, the Chamber of Commerce, City Planning & Engineering, GDOT, Columbus State University, the IDA, and local property and business owners.
 - On February 13, 2018, Columbus Council passed a resolution to accept GDOT's recommendation to reduce the number of vehicle travel lanes from 4 to 2 to help revitalize the area. Within the month a business leased a long-vacant property, in part based upon Council's vote and a long-term vision for the area.
- **Tax Allocation Districts:** MidTown, Inc. invested \$20,000 in 2016 to engage the Bleakly Advisory Group and work with the City of Columbus to establish two new tax allocation districts **to support future revitalization and growth within the MidTown area.** The **MidTown East** and **MidTown West TADs** were unanimously approved by Council in the fall and went into effect January 1, 2017. The TAD districts add incentive for investment and redevelopment of underutilized, vacant and abandoned properties identified through the **Incremental Development** partnership.
- MidTown, Inc.'s ongoing work and advocacy have helped realize a resurging MidTown real estate market. **A comparison of 2015 and 2016 showed that for residential properties in MidTown, the average number of days on the market dropped by 40% and the average sale price increased by 8%.**
- A thriving business community is essential to a vibrant and diverse MidTown. The purpose of the MidTown Business Association (MBA) is to *sustain, promote and grow business within MidTown Columbus*. The **MBA has grown from 30 to 130 member**

businesses. Annual dues support promotions in print and social media. MBA-member Realtors close scores of residential properties in MidTown through listings on the MidTown website and in The MidTowner e-newsletter.

- The **MidTown Mingle** is now an established community event that introduces almost 700 patrons annually to the host site in MidTown neighborhoods and business districts. As MidTown, Inc.'s sole annual fundraising event and the organization's single largest source of operating revenue, the Mingle has **raised almost \$600,000** in seven years to support the work of MidTown, Inc.

Investment and Advocacy, Direct Impact and Returns

- Secured two GDOT grants (2007 and 2011) to support the Wynnton Streetscape Enhancement and **raised \$450,000 from local foundations to leverage a \$2.5 million project** to help erase a dividing line (Wynnton-Macon Road), recreate a heart of the community, and catalyze business reinvestment in the area. **The project broke ground on October 24, 2017.**
- The **Minimum Grid Demonstration Project** linked Lakebottom Park to the Dragonfly, Uptown and the River via 13th Street, 13th Avenue and Linwood Boulevard. It **added 1.6 miles of on-street bike lanes, expanding the City's on-street bike lane network by 67%** From 2.36 miles to almost 4 miles (spring, 2017). The project also leveraged additional investment allowing it to grow beyond its original scope. These investors/investments included: the City (pedestrian crossing beacons, 13th Street), the Knight Fund (Big Red Arrows, directional art in Dinglewood Park), and private donors (enhancing demonstration programs).
- The **Minimum Grid Mobility Plan** identified opportunities to improve pedestrian connections in the area of **Warren Williams Boulevard and 13th Avenue**. A partnership between the River Valley Regional Commission, the City of Columbus and the Georgia Department of Transportation realized an overall **investment of over \$140,000 through a Multi-modal Safety and Access grant award** (May 1, 2017) and **City investment in new sidewalks, crosswalks and ADA ramps**.
- MidTown, Inc. advocated for a zoning variance and worked with **Incremental Development Alliance** partners in 2017 to facilitate an **expansion of Xpress Printing's business on 13th Avenue**. The expansion will result in over **\$150,000 in direct reinvestment and long-term business growth in the 13th Avenue/5 Points area**.
- **Invested \$30,000 in 2009 to leverage a \$600,000 GDOT improvement** and beautification of the **Brown-Peacock Avenue intersection** on Wynnton Road. This served as a direct catalyst for rehabilitation and improvement of two adjacent properties.
- **Lindsay Creek Flood Study**, seeded with **\$60,000 funding from MidTown, Inc.** Effective June 2, 2014, the study **removed 100 residential properties from floodway (annual savings of \$1,400 per household)**; and opened 30 acres of underutilized commercial property for redevelopment, **resulting in a \$6 million reinvestment in the MidTown Shopping Center**.
- **Cross Country Plaza:** MidTown, Inc. facilitated a compromise rezoning of the property in 2009 which led to extensive rehabilitation of the property and the sale to Coro Realty in 2013 for \$36 million. Coro CEO John Lundeen credited the advocacy of MidTown, Inc. as a significant factor in their decision to invest in the property: ***A strong commitment from the local community is a vital factor for our decision to purchase Cross Country Plaza.***
- **MCSO School of the Arts:** MidTown, Inc. advocated, educated and invested political capital to help secure a central, accessible in-town site for this school. The **\$36 million Rainey-McCullers School of the Arts opened in the fall of 2017** and joined the Library, Muscogee Public Education Center, City Services Center and Aquatic Center in a **\$140 million Civic Commons** that serves the greater Columbus area.
- The **Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Program** (\$10,000, 2011) focused on the 13th Avenue-13th Street gateway intersection, providing incremental steps toward revitalization of the area. **Reinvestment** since then includes the rehabilitation of the historic Sho-Place property and its activation as a dance studio, the removal of an intruding billboard, and the re-purposing of a vacant corner as a retail nursery.
- **Rezoning residential properties** (2013): partnered with the City to rezone 52 non-compliant residential properties in MidTown historic districts, **stabilizing neighborhoods by stemming commercial creep, and saving residents \$700 per property by waiving rezoning fees (\$36,400 savings in fees)**.
- **MidTown, Inc.'s initiatives encourage local reinvestment.** A **MidTown Case Study**, informed by the **Incremental Development Alliance, the Minimum Grid project, and the establishment of MidTown TAD districts**—all initiatives of MidTown, Inc.:
 - Purchase of vacant property, \$245,000
 - Renovation, \$100,000
 - Purchase of business, \$165,000
 - Addition of 12 jobs and annual payroll of \$300,000+
 - Incremental purchase of adjacent properties (houses, vacant lot, billboard) exceeding \$300,000

- **Placemaking investments:** **Dinglewood Disc Golf Course** (2014); **Lakebottom Park pedestrian crosswalks** (2013); **Little Libraries** (2016); **Public Art**, the Big Red Frame and Bandshell Murals in Lakebottom Park; 5 Points Mural Project (2016), and the **Big Red Arrow** series of interactive directional art (2017); Website development (2011).

Soft Impact, Selected Projects and Programs

- **Lunch at Lakebottom** brought residents together over an informal lunch to listen and share ideas to foster a more connected, thriving community. MidTown, Inc. served as a superhost for the November 7, 2017 city-wide **On the Table**.
 - First response: Litter was identified as a problem at each of the tables. These conversations resulted directly in the initiation of the first Clean MidTown day on April 21, 2018, in partnership with Keep Columbus Beautiful and other community organizations.
- **Artbeat:** MidTown, Inc. has been active in the city-wide Artbeat celebration with interactive projects that include the **Lakebottom Red Frame** (2016); **Little Red Frames** and **Big Red Arrows** (2017); and a showcase of work by creative MidTowners—**Made in MidTown** (2018)— in a recently renovated Wynnton Road commercial property.
- **Building Common Ground:** a series of programs offered in partnership with the Muscogee County School District and the Columbus Public Library to bring a diverse community together with nationally renowned speakers to address challenging current issues and celebrate the arts. 2 years, 6 programs, \$60,000.
 - Observation: Programs bring people together and build community. In April, 2013, American poet Nikki Giovanni drew a diverse, full house audience of 700 to MidTown's George Washington Carver High School for an evening of "Community Inspired Action through Art." It was the first such program where Barnes and Noble Bookstore sold out their consignment of books. More importantly, it drew people from throughout the city to a signature new school in a part of town that many had never driven to before.
- **Community Speaker Series—Advancing Small Business and Urban Planning Best Practices:** MidTown, Inc.—with local organizations and business partners—has presented a series of programs and workshops by national leaders in community and transportation planning and business development. **Over 1700 local civic and business leaders have participated**, and the education process is evident in a more progressive local mindset where quality of life issues ARE issues of economic development.
- The identification and formal recognition of twelve **Proud MidTown Schools** fosters a partnership with the MCSD and a sense of place and pride among students and faculty.
- Partnership and advocacy on behalf of Turn Around Columbus to advance a **Martin Luther King, Jr. Learning Trail**. MidTown, Inc.'s 2017 investment of \$250 in the first Rigdon Road trail marker engendered long-term goodwill and partnership opportunities, and helped raise awareness for long-term change. Ground broke in January, 2018 for a 1.9 mile addition to **the Dragonfly Trail** network on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard between Brewer Elementary School and 10th Avenue. The new multi-use path will define MidTown's southern boundary, with the **Fall Line Trace** defining the northern boundary.
- **Social, electronic and print media:** MidTown, Inc. connects with a broad community via the website, Facebook (5,200 Likes); Twitter (1,900 Followers); Instagram (1,250 Followers), and e-newsletters with over 4,000 recipients. The MidTown, Inc. website provides in-depth information about neighborhoods, businesses, community connections, projects, programs and events. **These platforms inform residents (and potential residents and businesses), enhance a sense of place, promote MidTown, sell properties and grow business.**



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MidTown, Inc. was established in 2005 **to sustain and enhance the neighborhoods and businesses within MidTown Columbus.**