

ORIGINAL

RESOLUTION NO.: R-2026-024

*Authorizing a Public Hearing for the Proposed Improvement Plan for the
Vista Business Improvement District*

WHEREAS, pursuant to South Carolina Code §5-37-10, et seq., municipalities are authorized to create municipal improvement districts; and,

WHEREAS, it is proposed that Columbia City Council create a Municipal Improvement District for the area described in the within referenced Improvement Plan, generally bounded as follows:

The Western boundary is: the western property line of property on the East side of the Congaree River from Blanding Street to Blossom Street.

The Northern boundary is: the northern property line of property on the South side of Taylor Street West from Assembly Street to Pulaski Street then heading Northwest to the parcel bounded by Gist Street, Laurel Street, Blanding Street and Huger Street and then heading West along the South side of Blanding Street to the East side of the Congaree River.

The Eastern boundary is: the eastern property line of property on the West side of Assembly Street from Taylor Street to Senate Street.

The Southern boundary is: the southern property line of property on the North side of Blossom Street between the Congaree River and Williams Street then South along the western property line on the East side of Williams Street to the North side of Wheat Street, then East along the North side of Wheat Street to the western property line of the railroad tracks then North along the eastern property line of property on the West side of the railroad tracks to the North side of Pendleton Street at Wayne Street, then East along the southern property line of the property North of Pendleton Street to Park Street, then North along the eastern property line of the property West of Park Street to Senate Street, then East along the southern property line of Senate Street until the West side of Assembly Street.

WHEREAS, it is the desire of Columbia City Council to receive public comments thereon; and,


WHEREAS, South Carolina Code §5-37-50 requires that certain resolutions be adopted and that a public hearing be held on the question of the creation of such a district; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Columbia, South Carolina this 17th day of March, 2026, that the attached “Improvement Plan for The Vista Improvement District dated March 6, 2026 (the “Improvement Plan) be and it is incorporated herein by reference and this Improvement Plan shall form the basis for a public hearing to be held before Columbia City Council on Tuesday, April 14, 2026 at 4:00 o’clock p.m. in Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina, 29201.


Requested by:

City Manager

Approved by:

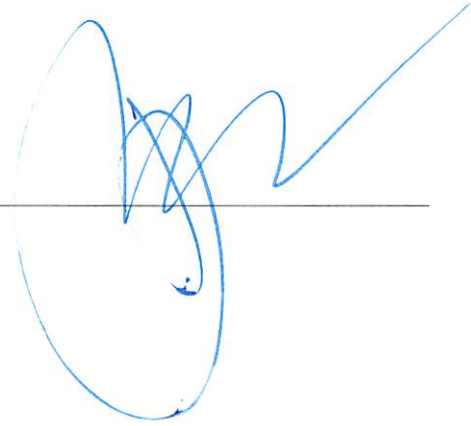

City Manager

Approved as to form:



City Attorney

Introduced: 03/17/2026
Final Reading: 03/17/2026

Mayor



ATTEST:


City Clerk

Improvement Plan
The Vista
Business Improvement District
Columbia, SC

Prepared pursuant to the State of South Carolina

Municipal Improvement Act

To authorize an improvement district in

The Vista, Columbia

March 6, 2026

Improvement Plan
The Vista Improvement District
Columbia, South Carolina

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Section 1: Why a Business Improvement District for The Vista?

To catalyze new investment while safeguarding existing assets, property owners in The Vista are initiating a private-sector, self-governance model to help fund enhanced services beyond those already provided by the City of Columbia. By utilizing the South Carolina Municipal Improvements Act, these stakeholders are proposing the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID), a locally and nationally proven mechanism designed to provide a competitive edge through dedicated funding and professional place management. This strategic move is driven by a collective commitment to ensuring The Vista remains a destination rooted in the uniqueness of its history, leisure and hospitality offerings, and public programming. Property owners in The Vista are taking action for several key reasons.

1. Generate Consistent Funding to Improve the Health and Safety of The Vista

Over the years, cleanliness and quality of life issues have become primary pain points for property owners, businesses, tenants, residents, and visitors to The Vista. A primary goal of the Improvement District is to create a professional, visible "Clean and Safe" program. This program would include the hiring of ambassadors to support supplemental services such as cleaning, litter removal, graffiti abatement, and others that help retain existing and attract new users to the district, protect property values, beautify streetscapes, and improve the daily pedestrian experience. A well executed clean and safe program assists in visibly signaling that The Vista is a safe and healthy place to live, work, play, and invest.

2. Provide a More Vibrant District Experience that Strengthens The Vista's Identity

The proposed BID will act as a strategic steward of The Vista's brand, actively reinforcing its unique historic, arts, hospitality, and entertainment identity. With consistent and sustainable year over year funding, the BID will be equipped to create a more vibrant public realm through curated activities, including marketing, district promotion, and events, that strengthen the experience of the district, attracting new users and investment while ensuring the district's uniqueness remains consistent and compelling.

3. Foster Economic Growth and Enhance Property Values

Across the country, business improvement districts have been shown to help facilitate the financial and professional resources that equip property owners and community members with the tools to collaborate and act as strategic partners in the success of their districts. BIDs bring a stable financial and governance model that helps to both protect and enhance investments while providing leadership capabilities that influence the implementation of new development. A BID in The Vista helps partners collaborate, lead, and shape the district's future, ensuring challenges will be addressed.

As Columbia and South Carolina continue to attract new, and many young, residents to the state, The Vista needs to continue to compete for new investment, residents, and businesses. With recent and future investments in the pipeline, including Finlay Park, the Waterfront, student housing, and many adaptive reuse projects, The Vista is at a strategic moment to capitalize on existing energy and

attract investment in a coordinated way. A business improvement district provides the financial resources to develop and implement an economic development strategy that will capitalize on new investment to increase economic growth, enhance property values, and bring development to underutilized spaces across the district.

4. Establish Unified Leadership to Further District Priorities

The proposed Vista BID is expected to be managed by a new non-profit, 501(c)(3) established to manage the funding generated by the properties within the district. District work plans and budgets, based upon this ten-year plan, will be refined annually by a board of directors representative of the property owners who are paying the assessment with direct accountability to those who are paying into the district. The BID will operate under private-sector performance standards, ensuring every dollar is tied to measurable results.

As a nonprofit dedicated to achieving success within the Vista, the organization will also act as its champion, creating lasting working relationships with partners, including property owners, residents, business owners, other nonprofits, the City Council, and other public stakeholders. Specifically, the nonprofit will work closely with the Main Street BID creating a shared experience within Columbia's commercial core from Downtown to the waterfront. By unifying our stakeholders, the BID will serve to champion the interests of Vista property owners and other community members with City, County, and State partners.

Section 2: What Is a Business Improvement District?

The International Downtown Association estimates about 4,000+ place management organizations exist globally, 2,500 of which function in North America. These organizations are also known as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), Partnerships and Alliances. Led by the private sector, these organizations are typically nonprofits primarily supported by special assessments within specific geographies. BIDs exist in nearly every state at a diversity of sizes. According to the IDA, each organization on average “provides \$1.2 million in services to their districts to help businesses thrive and to make the district a great place for workers, residents and visitors.” These enhanced improvements and activities, which can include security, cleanliness, maintenance, and marketing, are in addition to those provided by the local government.

A Property-Based Business Improvement District (BID) is based upon the “benefit assessment district” concept, which provides for an assessment on real property and improvements upon real property to be raised within a specific geographic district with the proceeds directed back to the district to provide enhanced services that benefit the district and properties located within the district boundaries.

BIDs allow for a wide range of service options, including security, cleanliness, maintenance, marketing, economic and housing development, special events, etc.

BIDs offer a number of unique advantages. They are:

- Designed and created by those who will pay the assessment
- Governed by those who pay through a property and business board that supervises operations and submits a yearly implementation plan.
- Implemented by those who pay through a non-profit, private sector, management organization.
- Established through the support of the property owners who will pay the proposed property assessments.
- Established for a predetermined number of years with a sunset clause that requires a new approval by those who pay to renew the BID

Section 3: Vista Improvement Plan Summary

Improvement Plan Summary

Developed by property owners in The Vista, the Vista Improvement District Plan conveys special benefits to properties within the proposed BID. The District provides enhanced improvements and activities, including maintenance, public space cleaning, security, homeless outreach, marketing, and economic development, above and beyond the baseline services provided by the City of Columbia.

Location

An area defined in Section 4 of this plan, bounded generally by Taylor Street (North), Blossom Street (South), Assembly Street (East), and the Congaree River (West). (See Exhibit 1).

Value of District

The total estimated fair market value of the private, non-exempt properties within the proposed district as appraised by the Richland County Assessor as of February 2026 was \$755,537,100.

Improvements, Activities, Services

- **Public Space Management:** Enhanced security patrols (Ambassadors), visitor assistance, and improvements to street lighting/parking.
- **Enhanced Maintenance:** 16/7 cleaning, graffiti removal, pressure washing, and specialized trash/cigarette debris collection.
- **Landscape Programs:** Tree grate maintenance, seasonal flower planters, and sidewalk weeding.
- **District Marketing:** Marketing campaigns, visitor guides, business recruitment, market research, and public art installations.
- **Quality of Life & Planning:** Grant writing, residential recruitment, and improved connectivity to neighboring districts.

Method of Financing:

A levy of assessments upon real property and buildings which benefit from the improvements and activities.

Budget:

Anticipated district budget contribution from private property assessment for the year 2027 of operation is **\$1,464,844**.

Cost:

Annual assessments are based upon an allocation of specific program costs. Two property assessment variables, appraised value and street frontage on Gervais and Lady between Assembly and Huger, and on the side streets between Gervais and Lady: Huger, Pulaski, Gadsden, Lincoln, and Park, are used in the calculation.

The annual yearly assessments are not expected to exceed the rates listed below during the full term of the BID unless specifically authorized by City Council.

Assessment Rate

Per Dollar of Fair Market Value: \$.001844

Per Foot of Property Frontage: \$4.01

- Gervais and Lady between Assembly and Huger, and on the side streets between Gervais and Lady: Huger, Pulaski, Gadsden, Lincoln, and Park. (See Exhibit 2).

****Properties fronting these streets are subject to both assessments.****

City Services:

The City has agreed that existing City services will continue to be provided within the BID District at the same level as before the BID was created, consistent with City services provided in other areas. BID services are in addition to existing City services.

District Formation:

A District may be formed by either of two processes.

1. Submission of signed petitions from property owners who represent a majority per capita of all owners of real property within the district, which is not exempt from ad valorem taxation.
2. The City may create an improvement district through an ordinance adopted by a majority of council after a public hearing at which the plan is presented, including the proposed basis and amount of assessment.

This plan anticipates that the City will form the district using Process No. 2.

Duration:

The Business Improvement District will have a 10-year life (January 1, 2027 through December 31, 2036). After nine years, a new implementation plan must be developed, and the approval process must be repeated in order to continue beyond the tenth year.

Governance:

The City of Columbia as the governing body must approve the 10-year implementation plan. The Vista Improvement District budgets may be refined annually within the limitations set forth in the district implementation plan, by the Board of the private sector management/implementation organization. Any changes to the implementation plan during the term of the district that are not within the limitations set forth for changes in the plan, must be approved by the City Council acting as the governing body.

Through a contract with the governing body (i.e., City of Columbia), a property owner-led, private sector, non-profit district management/implementation organization is expected to implement the improvements and activities defined in the Plan and to manage the day-to-day operations of the District. To ensure immediate impact and fiscal efficiency, the BID can contract with an established management entity to jumpstart services and reduce administrative overhead. On a yearly basis a report summarizing the accomplishments of the District as well as a report of the financial activities of the District will be submitted to the governing body and to each assessment-paying property owner.

Section 4: Vista Improvement District Boundaries

The area within the following district boundaries have been identified for the Vista Improvement District. The map on Exhibit 1 of this report identifies these district boundaries. These boundaries

were determined by the Vista Property Owners group.

District Boundaries

The District includes all properties within an area defined by the following boundaries:

The southwest corner of Taylor Street and Assembly Street intersection shall serve as the point of beginning. From the point of beginning, proceed South on Assembly Street five city blocks to the north side of Senate Street. Follow Senate Street in a westerly direction one city block to the southwest corner of Park Street, then south one city block along Park Street to the northwest corner of Park Street and Pendleton Street. Continue west three city blocks on Pendleton Street to northwest corner of Pendleton and Wayne Streets, thereafter continue south five city blocks along the railroad tracks to the northwest of Wheat Street. Thereafter three blocks west to northeast of Wheat and Williams Street and one block north to the northeast corner of Williams and Blossom Street. Follow Blossom Street west to the east bank of the Congaree River and proceed north following the shore of the Congaree River for eleven city blocks to the corner of the southside of Blanding Street. At which point, follow Blanding Street to the southeast corner of Gist Street then north one city block to Laurel Street. Turn east on the south side of Laurel and proceed to the southwest corner of Laurel and Huger Street. At Huger Street, proceed one city block south then travel southeast along the railroad tracks from Huger at Blanding Streets toward the southwest corner of Pulaski and Taylor Streets. Continue east along Taylor Street to the point of origin at Assembly Street. The eastern boundary of the district is to adjoin the western boundary of the City Center Business Improvement District. The properties on the eastern side of Assembly Street with frontage on Assembly Street will not be assessed by or included in the Vista BID boundaries due to their existing inclusion in the Main Street District.

For a graphic representation of the boundaries of the Vista Improvement District see the map labeled "Exhibit 1."

Exhibit 1: The Vista BID Proposed Boundaries

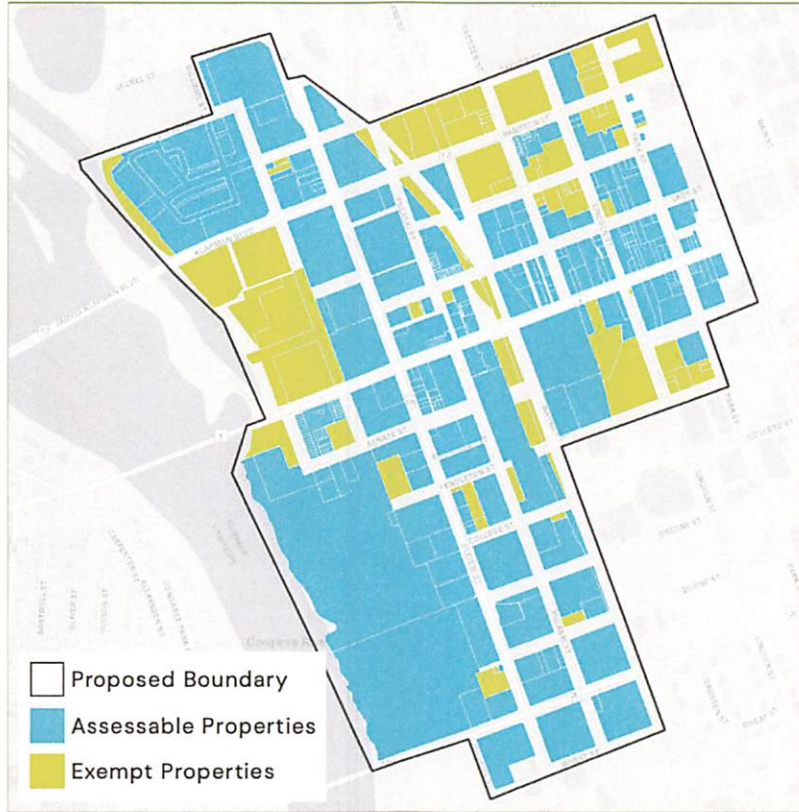


Exhibit 2: The Vista BID Proposed Boundaries of Additional Assessment Frontage



Section 5: Programs And Services To Be Provided

Process to Establish the Improvement District Plan

Through stakeholder engagement in the Vista, priority improvements and programming activities to be delivered by the Vista Business Improvement District were determined to be clean and safe, maintenance, marketing/communications, and economic development.

All properties within the Vista BID will receive a core level of all the district's services. In addition, Gervais and Lady between Assembly and Huger, and on the side streets between Gervais and Lady: Huger, Pulaski, Gadsden, Lincoln, and Park is expected to receive a higher level of maintenance. The additional frontage assessment on these streets reflects the increased level of services provided.

PUBLIC SPACE DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

- **Public Safety Program**

- **Integration with the Columbia Police Department:** The Vista public security program is expected to work closely with The Columbia Police Department and integrate the Vista program with that of the Department. The public safety program's mission is to support the police department, property owners, and tenants in overall crime prevention efforts and reduction in street disorder, while offering a customer service orientation to pedestrians and motorists. It provides highly visible security and is intended to supplement the individual building security and the Columbia Police Department already provided
- **Foot Patrol:** The patrol program is expected to help deter aggressive panhandling and other anti-social street behavior. The goal of this patrol is to help deter and report illegal street vending, illegal dumping, and street code violations. They will handle a myriad of quality of life problems including: drinking in public, urinating in public, indecent exposure, trespassing, prostitution observations, among others. They will perform goodwill gestures such as escorting employees, helping lost persons, and retrieving keys from locked cars. The patrol program also can assist with traffic control in the event of accidents, fires, or unusual occurrences. They will patrol assigned routes, covering all in the district. They will be professional, assertive, friendly, courteous, people-oriented individuals in excellent physical condition. The patrol program officers will complete customized classroom district training and additional hours of field training.
- **Evening Safety Patrol:** The evening patrol program will increase the sense of safety for the nighttime users of the restaurants, churches, hospital, hotels, and all businesses that cater to a nighttime clientele. The evening patrol program has the same mission and receives the same training as the foot patrol program.

- **Maintenance Program**

- **Vista Clean Team:** In order to deal effectively and consistently with maintenance issues, a Vista Maintenance Plan will be established. A multi-dimensional approach will consist of the following elements:
 - **Sidewalk Maintenance:** Uniformed, radio-equipped personnel sweep litter,

debris and refuse from sidewalks and gutters of the district. Personnel also collect trash and debris as necessary, including maintaining pet “comfort stations.”

- **Graffiti Removal:** Removal of graffiti by using solvent and pressure washing. The District will maintain a zero tolerance graffiti policy. All tags will be removed within 24 hours once the team is notified of the presence of graffiti.
 - **Sidewalk Pressure Washing:** The district standard is to have all sidewalks cleaned at least every other month with high use areas cleaned more frequently.
 - **Paper Sign and Handbill Removal:** Paper signs and handbills taped or glued on public property, utility boxes, poles and telephones are removed by hand or when necessary by high-pressure hose.
 - **Special Collections:** A district truck will be available to collect items illegally dumped in the district.
 - **Maintenance Problems Requiring Third Party Intervention:** Problems that create blighted or unsafe conditions in the district, but are outside of the jurisdiction of the district to repair will be monitored, and the responsible party to be contacted and asked to deal with the issue. These types of problems include blocked or damaged sewers or drains, damaged sidewalks/streets/alleys, non-operating streetlights, damaged or missing street signs, etc.
- **Landscape Maintenance Program**
 - **Litter/Weed Removal:** Public landscape areas, tree wells and planters will be maintained and kept free of litter and weeds.
 - **Seasonal Planting:** A program of seasonal plantings of colorful flowers will be developed.
 - **Special Projects Program:**
 - **Signage:** A Vista Wayfinding program will be developed to improve the ability of users to find destinations within the district as well as increase the ease of pedestrian use of the district.
 - **Public Art:** A program will be developed to facilitate the installation of public art within the district.
 - **Street Furniture:** A program will be developed to provide additional street furniture such as trashcans, benches and children's play areas.

DISTRICT MARKETING

1. Communications/Marketing

- An integral piece of the improvement plan is to create a program to tell the story of change and improvement in The Vista. The program that will be developed by the

property owners is expected to maintain, create, or improve upon:

- Street Banner Program
- Visitor Guides and Parking Map
- Business Directory
- Public and Media Relations
- Special Events
- Improved Signage
- Regional Marketing Campaign

2. Business Development

- Several tools will be developed to support the efforts of individual property owners and brokers to attract and retain tenants. Some of these tools are:
 - Market Research & Data Collection
 - Defined Business Recruitment and Retention Strategy
 - Investor, Tenant and Broker Recruitment Support Packets
 - Residential Recruitment and Demographics Development
 - Building Improvement Programs
 - One Stop, Available Space Resource Center
 - Business Attraction, Support, and Retention
 - Façade or Other Business Improvement Programs

3. Planning

- Public/Private Planning Activities
- Economic Development Studies (e.g., market, zoning and land use, parking)
- Resource Sourcing
- Grant Writing

ADMINISTRATION

1. Management Personnel

- A professional staff with centralized administrative support is expected to manage the Vista improvements and activities. This staff will be responsible for representing the property owners before public agencies and advocating on behalf of business and property owners. District services are estimated to be delivered 16 hours a day, seven days a week, requiring management staff 16 hours a day, seven days a week.
- To ensure immediate impact and fiscal efficiency, the BID can contract with an established management entity. This approach bypasses the overhead of a dedicated internal staff while providing consistent representation before public agencies. By leveraging existing infrastructure, the BID will deploy 16/7 district services and management oversight from day one, ensuring property owners receive professional advocacy without the delay of a centralized startup phase.

Section 6: Operating Budget

FY 2027 Operating Budget Summary

The summary of the FY 2027 operating budget for the Vista Business Improvement District is provided. The total improvement and activity plan budget for 2027 is projected at the expected assessment of **\$1,464,844** and made up of the following components:

PUBLIC SPACE MANAGEMENT

A public clean and safe program is an essential component of BID activities.

- **Enhanced Security Programs:** The public safety programs are designed to improve both the reality and the perception of safety in the Vista. Individual public safety programs are detailed in Section 5.
- **Enhanced Maintenance:** In order to establish and maintain cleanliness throughout the District the Maintenance program will remove trash, debris, and graffiti, provide sidewalk maintenance and pressure washing, and other services as detailed in Section 5.
- **Enhanced Landscape Services:** To provide a more positive perception of the Vista an enhanced landscape program will be provided as detailed in Section 5.
- **Special Projects:** Special projects are projects that are important to increasing the quality of life in the public environment, but do not fit within one of the other categories. Special project details are found in Section 5.

The budget for the public safety program is **\$878,907 or 60%** of the **total District budget**.

DISTRICT MARKETING

In order to tell the story of The Vista, and continue to build upon the positive changes in both perception and reality, the Vista BID will implement a district marketing and communications program as detailed in Section 5.

The budget for the district marketing program is **\$292,969 or 20%** of the **total District budget**.

ADMINISTRATION

In order to manage the day-to-day activities of the BID a professional administrative staff and office are necessary to ensure the delivery of quality services.

The budget for administration is **\$292,969 or 20%** of the **total District budget**.

Section 7: Assessment Methodology

Assessment Methodology

Vista property owners and stakeholders have emphasized that the assessment formula for the District must be fair, balanced and have a direct relationship between benefits received and costs.

Calculation of Assessments

The preceding methodology is applied to a database that has been constructed by the Vista property owners and its consultant team. The property data was obtained from the County Assessor's Office.

Based upon the methodology as set forth above, property data compiled by the Vista property owners and the District budget is expected to yield the following assessments for each benefit zone.

The annual yearly assessments are not expected to exceed the rates listed below during the first year of the BID.

- **Assessment Rate:** \$.001844
Per Dollar of Fair Market Value
- **Frontage Assessment Rate:** \$4.01
Per Foot Frontage on Gervais and Lady between Assembly and Huger, and on the side streets between Gervais and Lady: Huger, Pulaski, Gadsden, Lincoln, and Park

In future years, assessments may change, up or down, if appraised value information changes. We do not anticipate any increases in the assessment rates unless unforeseen circumstances occur.

Budget Adjustments

If there is a budget surplus, it will be rolled into the following year's District budget. Yearly expenditures and budgets shall be set so that at the end of each year there will not be a planned deficit at the end of any year.

Time and Manner for Collecting Assessments

As provided by state law, the Vista BID assessment will appear as a separate line item on annual property tax bills.

Government Assessments

The Vista Improvement District plan assumes that the City, County and Federal Government will pay fair-share assessments for property owned within the boundaries of the District.

It is the intent of the improvement district law to provide services only to those properties that pay assessments. District services will not be provided to government properties that do not pay District assessments. All reasonable efforts will be made to include government properties on a voluntary basis in the District assessment.

Residential Assessments

Owner occupied residential property which is taxed under Section 12-43-220 (c) will not be assessed unless the owner gives the governing body written permission to include the property within the improvement district. Multi-unit residential property and non-owner occupied horizontal property regime units which are not taxed or will not be taxed pursuant to Section 12-43-220 (c) will be assessed.

Non-profit Assessments

Property held in a non-profit status that does not currently pay ad valorem taxes will not be required to pay District assessments by the Vista Partnership Board of Directors. All reasonable efforts will be made to include non-profit properties on a voluntary basis in the District assessment.

Section 8: Governing The Business Improvement District

Private Sector, Management/Implementation Organization

Through a contract with the governing body (i.e., City of Columbia), a property owner-led, private sector, non-profit district management/implementation organization is expected to implement the improvements and activities defined in the Plan and to manage the day-to-day operations of the District. This group's professional management staff is expected to handle communications and administration for the District. The Board of this non-profit organization will be representative of property owners within the district. Upon creation of the non-profit district management organization, the Board may choose to contract with an established management entity to jumpstart services and reduce overhead.

The City of Columbia as the governing body, must approve the 10-year implementation plan. The Vista Business Improvement District budgets and policies may be refined annually within the limitations set forth in the district implementation plan, by the board of the private sector management/implementation organization. During the term of the District, any changes to the implementation plan that are not within the limitations set forth for changes in the plan must be approved by the City Council.

On a yearly basis the management/implementation organization will issue a report summarizing the accomplishments of the district as well as a report of the financial activities of the district. The report will be submitted to the City Council as the governing body and to each assessment-paying property owner.

Section 9: Continuation Of City Services

All BID services are supplemental. They are designed to enhance—not replace—existing municipal services. The City of Columbia maintains existing services at verifiable “baseline” service levels.