EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building the Public Realm

Over the past 37 years, Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. has undertaken a major expansion of the public realm in downtown Charleston. Among those projects is Waterfront Park, a public space that changed life in downtown Charleston for residents and visitors alike.

In that same spirit of expanding the public realm, we propose a new public square, located not on the waterfront but centrally within the city. This would be a fully public park, not belonging to any one group, but open to visitors and residents alike. At 1.8 acres, this square could be large enough to significantly improve quality of life for Charleston.

Located at the junction of King, Spring and Columbus streets, this square would serve Cannonborough/Elliotborough, the East Side, West Side and Radcliffeborough. Designed properly, it will also serve to host special events periodically and offset the effects of high-density development in this area. This New King St Square has the potential to add tremendous value for all people in Charleston for a very long time to come.

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A LEGACY OF GREAT PUBLIC SPACES

40 Years of building public life
From Waterfront Park to Charleston Place and the King Street streetscape, the City has undertaken a major campaign to expand our public realm.

Nationally recognized events
These outstanding events, from Fashion Week to the weekly seasonal Farmer’s Market, add life to our City but also add wear and tear to Marion Square. A new space could help distribute some of that high-traffic event use.

THE PENINSULA’S NEW CENTER

Moving on up
As redevelopment moves further up the peninsula, the Columbus/King/Spring intersection holds a key location. It ties together major east/west and north/south routes, but also occupies the near-center of the developed downtown.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS
New mid-rise construction near this part of the peninsula is ongoing. With densities greater than traditional downtown Charleston, these developments would be balanced through the addition of a new public square.
**CASE STUDIES**

**Similar squares across America and Europe**
Squares of this size have a unique set of design requirements, and we have studied 5 public spaces across the US and Europe for their best qualities.

**MARKET SQUARE**
Pittsburgh, PA
1.8 Acres
Redesigned in 2011, Market Square has revitalized this portion of downtown Pittsburgh with its outdoor seating, flush curbs and informal shade tree plantings.

**BRYANT PARK**
New York City
6 Acres
With its street vendors, constant events and outdoor dining, Bryant Park is financially self-sustaining. We recommend adopting this model for the management of New King St Square.

**UNION SQUARE**
San Francisco, CA
2.6 Acres
As the heart of a shopping district, Union Square also accommodates a variety of special events and outdoor dining.

**PLAZA REAL**
Barcelona, Spain
1.2 Acres

**JAMISON SQUARE**
Portland, OR
1.5 Acres
A GREAT SQUARE

Inside the Square

1. At the center, build a space at least 120’ x 120’. This allows the space to be covered by one or two large event tents.

2. A grid of trees, at least 35’ wide, allows for plenty of shade at the perimeter, but spaced at an interval appropriate for moving large trucks in and out of the park without damage.

3. A public green gives a softer surface for children and dogs.

4. A grand fountain, located at one side of the park, gives a focal point and brings users closer to the sound and cooling effects of water.

5. Outdoor dining, located throughout the square and served by nearby cafes, fills the park with passive users.

6. Kiosks for restaurants, vendors or public restrooms should be located within the square.

Adjacent Development

7. Wherever possible, make adjacent streets easy to cross or pave them in a complementary material.

8. Future construction around the square should create an excellent street level experience, coordinating with the park design where possible and providing ground-level programming every 30’.

9. Redevelop adjacent sites so they face the park, instead of turning a back to the public space.
REDEVELOPED RAIL
The existing, abandoned rail corridor should be rebuilt as public space. It may incorporate park elements or act as the hub for a future trolley system, but in either outcome it should be an addition to the great public realm of our city.

GREAT EDGES
The “edge” of a public space - its perimeter bordered by buildings - should be a great place for people. We recommend that Columbus and King Streets be considered as places for outdoor dining, easy walking, and a new paving surface to slow cars.
A SPACE FOR RELAXATION

The perimeter of this new park should be lined with shade trees and programmed with active uses and a variety of sitting options.

The open center provides expansive views to the city beyond and keeps the center open for active movement and play.
A SPACE FOR EVENTS
The center of the space, paved across with a durable, beautiful material, should handle the heavy use of special events. These events often need large trucks and heavy equipment in addition to accommodating the foot traffic of thousands of people at once. Designed correctly, New King St Square can accommodate these events with ease.