

How did our housing systems get so broken?



From UNC Charlotte Urban Institute <unccurbaninstitute@uncc.edu>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
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Lessons from 'Fixer-Upper: How to Repair America's Broken Housing Systems'

By Aaron Houck

The data and anecdotes agree: people in the Charlotte region are struggling to find adequate, affordable housing. Potential buyers are spending months searching for attractive and available homes—and even then, sales prices often exceed their budgets. Longtime neighborhood residents are being displaced by rising rents. And an unconscionable number of individuals are confronting outright homelessness.

Dr. Jenny Schuetz, a senior fellow with Brookings Metro, has written *Fixer-Upper*, an accessible and engaging book that—as its subtitle asserts—offers a guide for "how

to repair America's broken housing systems." It is a must-read for anyone interested in housing policy.



Less driving, why people don't choose buses and a data potpourri: Diving deeper into the Strategic Mobility Plan

By Ely Portillo

A far-reaching new plan could shape Charlotte's transportation infrastructure for decades to come, reorienting a car-dependent, sprawling Southern city towards a denser, transit-oriented, bike- and pedestrian-friendly future.

But the Strategic Mobility Plan isn't just an outline of policies meant to guide future growth — it's also a rich trove of data and analysis on the state of Charlotte's transportation system. For people who like to nerd out on transit and transportation infrastructure, the 164 pages are full of nuggets to unpack.



Excessive sick leave blamed for shoddy bus service

By Tony Mecia

CATS chief John Lewis on Wednesday shed new light on the reasons that his transit agency's buses increasingly are late or don't show up, saying that drivers using their allotted paid sick days are leaving the agency without enough workers to operate routes and contributing to unreliable service.

CATS is authorized to have 571 bus drivers, but as of Wednesday, 74 positions were unfilled. Some 292 drivers are needed each weekday, and on Wednesday, 107 called in sick — more than 1/5 of the system's drivers. Transit chief John Lewis warned that service cuts could be coming, including slashing weekday service to Saturday levels for several months.

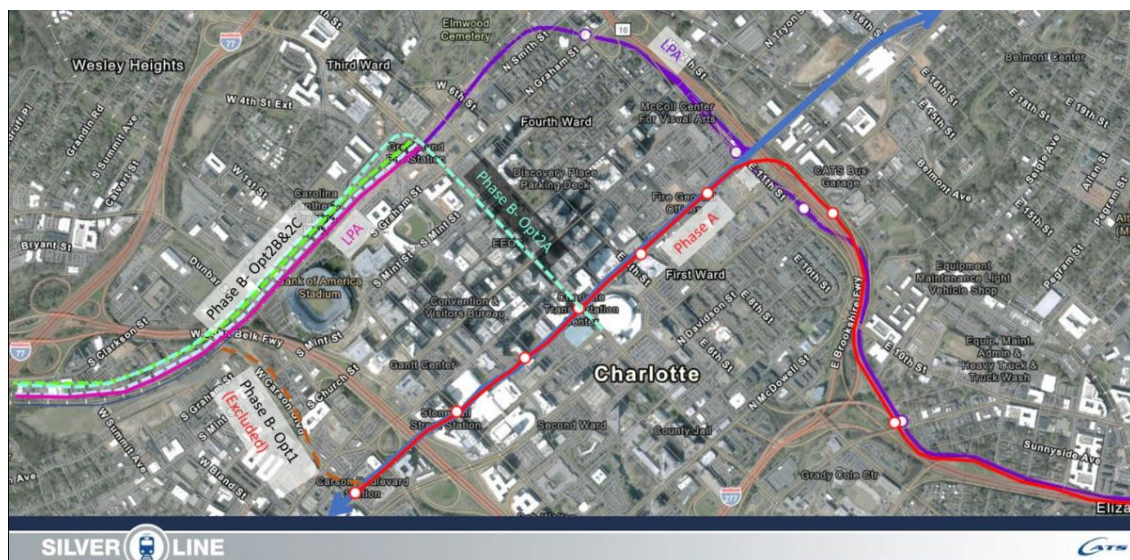


Rediscovering an overlooked native plant: Ninebarks

By Ruth Ann Grissom

Common or eastern ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) occurs across much of the Midwest, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. This shrub can be found growing six to ten feet tall in a variety of habitats, from rocky slopes to moist streambanks, in our state's Piedmont and mountains.

Despite my goal to establish a multitude of native shrubs in my backyard, it had somehow escaped my notice. I first encountered it at a Wing Haven plant sale several years ago. At first glance, it wasn't impressive — a few rangy limbs with small medium green leaves. Another shopper saw me studying the gallon-size plant. "Get it," she said. "You won't regret it."



Catch up on the news: New Silver Line plan: Ridership favored over development

By Steve Harrison

For three years, transit advocates have lobbied for the proposed Silver Line to bring passengers closer to uptown — instead of the planned route that would follow Interstate 277.

The Charlotte Area Transit System refused, saying the I-277 route north of uptown would spur more development. The transit system also said bringing the train into the center city would be too complicated.

But a surprising thing happened this week: CATS proposed a new route for the Silver Line that would do just that — bring the train directly into the heart of uptown.

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UNC Charlotte Urban Institute
9201 University City Blvd
Charlotte, NC 28223

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