

Avenue of the Columns Columbia, Missouri



Project Overview and Update

Avenue of the Columns Committee

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A Timeline of Activities

- 2000 A group of local citizens gathers to discuss the possibility of reviving the Eighth Street Beautification Committee.
- The first official meeting of the Avenue of Columns Committee takes place in October 2000.
- 2001 The AOC Committee agrees to engage in a master plan process that will set a roadmap for beautifying and revitalizing the street. Donations from Boone County National Bank, the Missouri Press Association, the University of Missouri-Columbia, First National Bank and Bank of America fund the competition.
- A request for proposals is sent to over 50 local and regional architectural firms to participate in an Eighth Street Design Competition.
- Four firms are chosen to participate in the competition.
- As part of the competition, business and property owners are invited to meet with the design firms and a public meeting is held in the Boone County Government Center.
- In the final selection process, all four concepts are displayed at a Twilight Festival and feedback is gathered. The committee meets with all four firms for their final presentations.
- Jeffrey L. Bruce Associates is chosen to create the Avenue of the Columns Master Plan in September 2001
- 2002 Fundraising to pay for the Master Plan begins.
- 2003 Funding from the City of Columbia, the University of Missouri-Columbia, the Missouri Press Association, the County of Boone and Boone County National Bank allows the master plan process to begin in August.
- 2005 The master plan document is accepted by the Avenue of the Columns Committee in February.

The Eighth Street Vision

Project Concept

Eighth Street is central to the history and growth of Columbia since its founding in the 1800s. When the Smithton Company laid out its plan for the city, Eighth and Walnut was clearly designated as the center of town. The decision to build a country courthouse at that exact spot solidified the street's role as a community gathering spot.

Beyond the history, the street bears witness to the dynamic relationship between Columbia, Boone County and the University of Missouri. Linking the historic columns at Courthouse Square to the columns in the shadow of Jesse Hall in Francis Quadrangle, the Avenue of the Columns represents dynamic relationship of town and gown.

Clearly this street is important and yet the character of the street today barely touches the inherent vigor and excitement of a future Downtown Columbia. It neither nods to the past nor sets the stage for an exciting future.

Civic Columns - Proposed



Mission Statement

The mission of the Avenue of the Columns Committee is to create a beautiful, historic walkway from Columns to Columns that incorporates landscaping, trees, brickwork/stonework, and creative lighting that encourages the development of retail and gathering space wherever possible. The effort should focus on the history of Columbia, especially as it relates to the Town/Gown relationship.

Civic Columns - Existing



The Master Plan

Goal

The goal of the master plan is to provide recommendations for recharacterizing and invigorating the Avenue of the Columns including implementation strategies focused on capturing the potential of the street.

Recommendations in the plan build on the strengths of the existing neighborhood and businesses to focus on improvements in the interaction of pedestrians and identify opportunities to reframe the character of the street to include potential space for civic, retail, office and residential uses.

Objectives

- Guide the nature of public and private improvements
- Create a pedestrian oriented environment that is safe, visually pleasing, accessible and comfortable.
- Promote sidewalk interest and activity that supports commercial interests.
- Enhance the character of Downtown Columbia.
- Reinforce the unique character of Columbia, Boone County and the University of Missouri.
- Integrate diverse uses into a common fabric.
- Maintain a sense of connection to the history of the community.
- Unify the visual image of the Avenue of the Columns.



Streetscape and Economic Development

Two Parts of a Whole

Throughout the planning process, it was clear that two major efforts had to work in parallel to create the street envisioned by the Avenue of the Columns Committee.

One effort created a visually beautiful street with intimate, pedestrian proportions that integrated well with Downtown Columbia.

The other effort must create an economically viable street that encourages mixed-use development and economic activity such as retail and living space.

Streetscape Framework

The master plan establishes a unifying framework for the Avenue of the Columns that is expressed in a base palette of dimension, elements, materials and finishes.

While the plan establishes the framework, specific designs of the actual component aspects of the streetscape are not part of the plan. Specific improvements and a “design manual” need to be developed by a group of citizens in conjunction with city staff.

In order to unify the street, it is important to define the unique activities already taking place on the street and define potential areas for change.

- Civic and Government – Boone County expansion plans, the new City Hall and the amount of land actually owned by the city and county influences the use of the street.
- Institutional – Boone County National Bank, First National Bank and Bank of America all “live” on Eighth Street.
- Historic Mixed Use – The Guitar Building and the Tiger Hotel are the signature buildings. Both are used for more than one central purpose – living and shopping/working and shopping.
- Educational – The University of Missouri and its Journalism School and the Missouri Press Association form a bookend to the street, which leads all the way up through the entrance to the traditional campus at Elm Street.
- Redevelopment – Surface parking lots, underutilized buildings and parking lots create a “gap” of activity and street character. Redeveloping these areas of potential are critical to a successful street, one that is diverse in use and function. General guidelines for redevelopments should include:
 - Buildings and facades oriented to the street.
 - Ground floors dedicated to retail activity.
 - Buildings consistent in scale and character to Downtown Columbia and surrounding structures.
 - Avoidance of large, undifferentiated areas of façade including integration of art, entryways and ornamentation.
 - Ground level transparency to encourage pedestrian interaction and exchange.
 - Lighting that accentuates the street’s character.

Streetscape and Economic Development

Streetscape Environment

Within the framework, a sense of place must be created, a place that is pedestrian friendly and intimate. Whether pedestrians are heading to work or class, stopping for a meal or shopping, they have to feel comfortable. Elements that contribute to comfort are street trees, clear and accessible signs and barrier-free pedestrian access.

Pedestrian Friendly:

- Curbside street trees evenly spaced at 20 to 35 feet.
- ADA accessible ramps at all crosswalks and drive cuts.
- Pedestrian scale lighting focused on the sidewalks and social spaces
- Inclusive signs and guide people through the street and Downtown.
- Bumped out sidewalks at intersections and key mid-block areas to encourage interaction.



Intimate:

- Streets visually separated from pedestrian zone through paving.
- Paving patterns denote space uses such as gathering, walking, etc.
- Continuous banding at curbside will define the pedestrian zone and allow for a better planting domain.
- Sidewalk focus areas such as bump outs should include accessible ramps and signals.
- Pedestrian-scale lighting.
- Vertical plantings or ornamental fencing should be placed where sidewalks abut open parcels.
- Street furnishings and other amenities should facilitate social interaction.

Sense of Place:

- Colorful awnings and interesting signage should be encouraged.
- Storefronts should be transparent for free visual exchange of activities.
- Lights and sign bases should be fashioned after historically relevant styles.
- Raised planters and seating areas should be at every intersection.
- Banners should be integrated into street light poles.
- Art should be integrated into the street.
- Intersections should be signified by a vertical architectural element that aids the transition of scale from pedestrian to building.

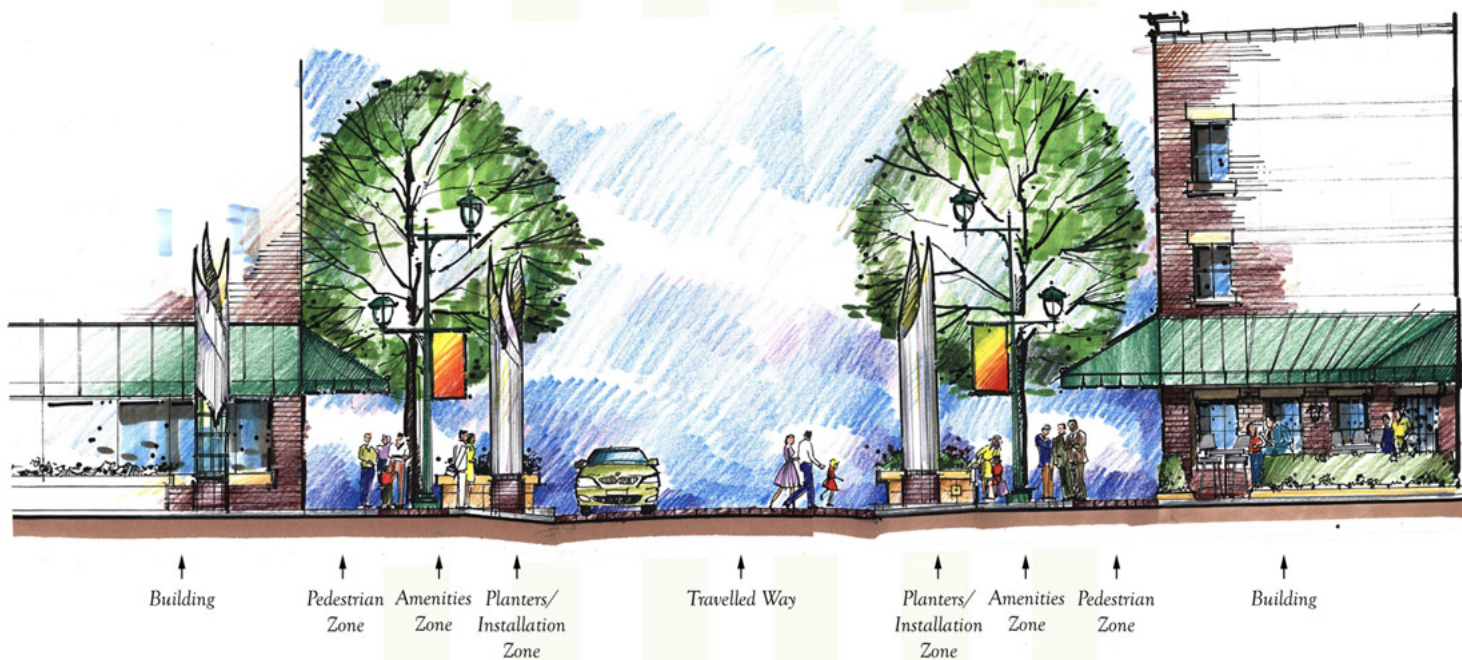
Streetscape and Economic Development

General Streetscape Design

The design recommendations for the Avenue of the Columns focus on creating meaningful pedestrian scale space, acknowledging functional key points and focus areas, and creating space for pedestrian movement and interaction.

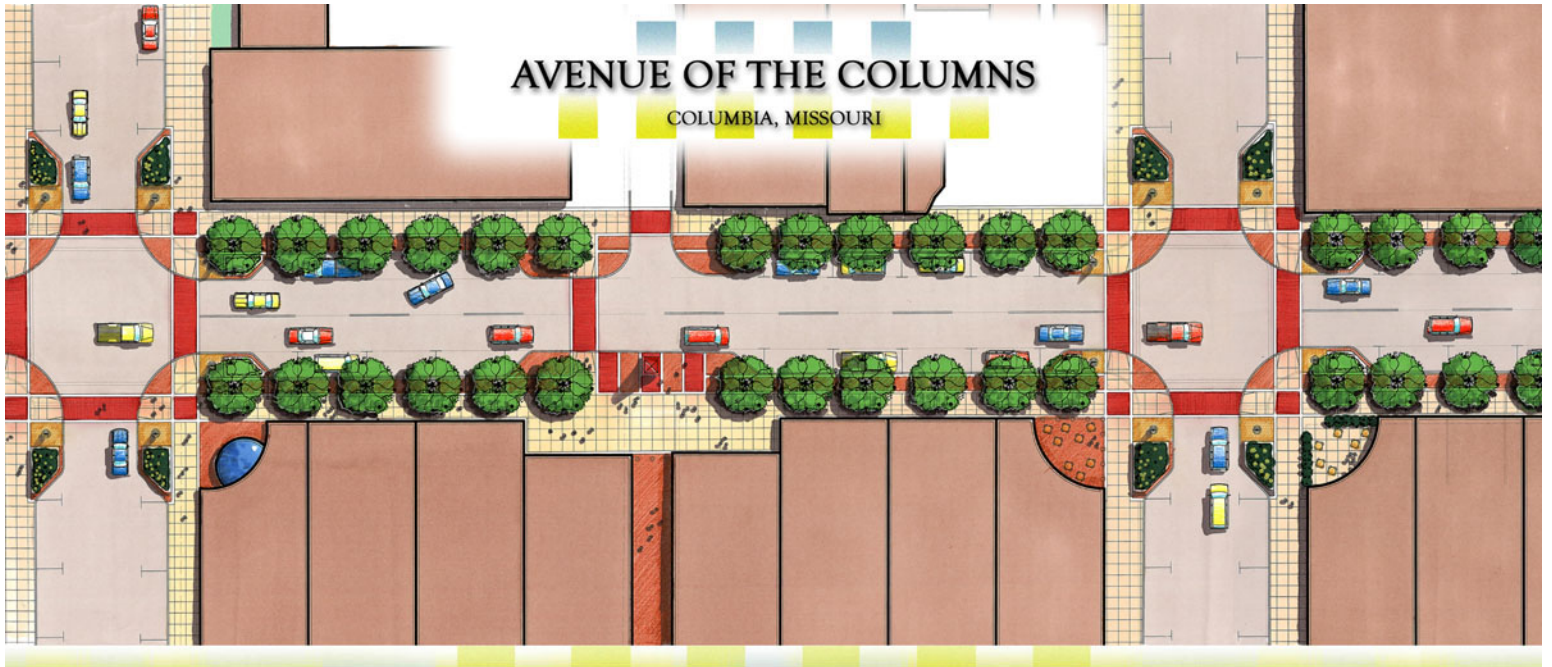
The current footprint between buildings currently ranges from 65 feet to 67.5 feet on the Avenue. The master plan recommends 11-foot lane widths, 8.5-foot parking zones, 5-foot amenities zones and eight-foot pedestrian zones. At intersections and other focus areas, bump-outs are created for social spaces. Paving of different colors helps to define the spaces and create linkages along the street.

Typical Intersection Diagram



Streetscape and Economic Development

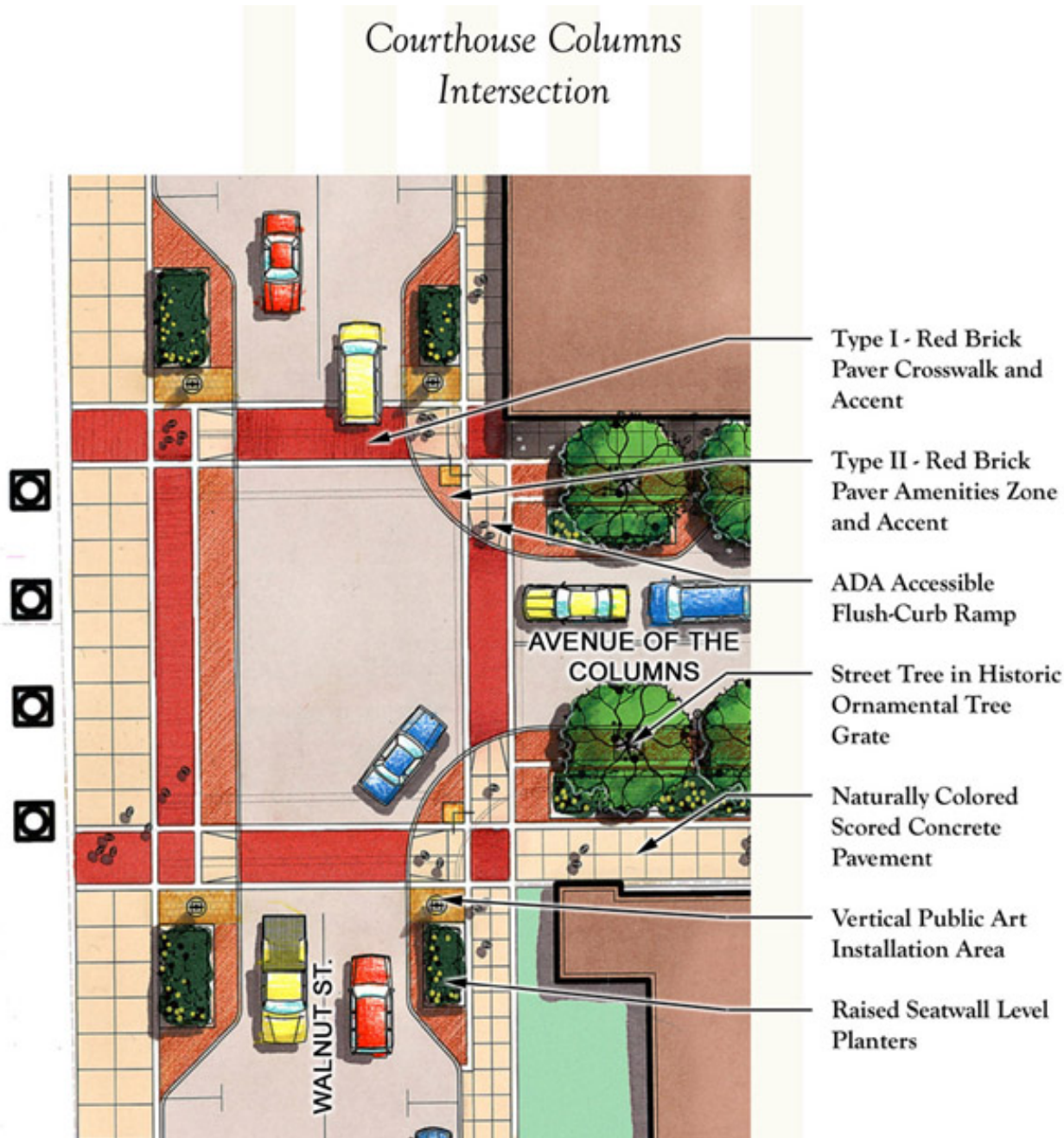
Parking is preserved along the Avenue to aid in mixed-use development but is removed where more space is needed for social space. Mid-block paving treatments acknowledge the pedestrian activity between alleys.



Cherry-Locust Block Concept Plan

Streetscape and Economic Development

Transitions between the Avenue and the Courthouse Columns as well as the more dramatic one between the street and the campus are acknowledged and celebrated through the design. For example, opening up the space around the gateway monuments literally opens up the campus to Downtown rather than creating a barrier.



In the concept for the Courthouse Columns there are direct historic connections to the city of Columbia and 8th Street. The columns have the potential to be accentuated and celebrated with the development of the Walnut/8th intersection. This concept incorporates vertical landmark elements located toward the ends of the extended bumpouts. Special paving in bump outs, crosswalks, and ground extensions of the columns emphasize and honor the columns. Vertical art installations and raised seatwall level planters are located on bumpout extensions.

Streetscape and Economic Development

Design treatments for the amenities zone are easily adapted from the design standards already developed for Downtown Columbia. Rather than create a visual barrier, the Avenue of the Columns can help create a new voice for urban beautification.

Street Furnishings

HISTORIC ECLECTIC PALETTE

Accents



Bollards



Lighting



Benches



Banners



Streetscape and Economic Development

Economic Development

While the streetscape plan speaks to one part of vision for the Avenue of the Columns, the desire for revitalization of the area requires residential and commercial activity. Creating more and broader activity on the street is the only way to fundamentally change the Avenue of the Columns to the street is should be.

Because of its prominence and meaning within the community, the Avenue of the Columns could serve as a model initiative upon which a broad-based revitalization of Downtown Columbia could occur. While there is activity and momentum in Downtown Columbia, there is also a great deal of potential.

Economic Development programs are an extensive and complex process that require a highly collaborative approach to funding and implementation. It is our belief that the

first step in this process is working with a consultant with extensive civic and economic development experience to help us form the appropriate legal entity for moving us forward on these complex decisions.

Ultimately, the streetscape and economic development initiatives must move along a parallel track to achieve the vision for the Avenue of the Columns. One without the other will not achieve the mission.



Redevelopment Area: Central Focal Point

The Future of Eighth Street

Next Steps

Once the master plan is approved through the Columbia City Council, the next phase will be implementation of the plan. The committee will have to determine the correct structure and timeline for both the streetscape and the economic development programs.

In some cases the streetscape plans can be incorporated into new development projects such as the Columbia City Hall and First National Bank's parking lot and sidewalk improvements, and in other cases a cooperative effort between public and private entities will have to work together to make it happen. Cooperation has been a hallmark of this process from its first day and will continue to be critical to its success.

More importantly, the committee's continued involvement in the development of areas within the public right of way will be critical. As a grassroots effort, the Avenue of the Columns must continue to address the vision of the community.

From an economic development perspective, the creation of an appropriate legal entity to steward this process is exciting for the Avenue and all of Downtown Columbia. If we can create a vital, active, economically positive Eighth Street, we can create a vital, active, economically positive Downtown.

For more information:

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