



Good morning!

As you may have heard, the Board of the Columbia Special Business District recently voted to support efforts to remove the Broadway canopy. In keeping with its goal of enhancing the appearance, architectural and historic integrity and economic viability of The District, the SBD favors the removal of all remaining segments of the concrete canopy.

The SBD is not mandating removal. We understand that the canopies belong to the individual property owners. We also understand that each property owner has a very different budget for improvements such as this. That's why we are providing information to help each property owner make a decision about their own canopy. There are so many resources available to remove the canopies—from tax incentives to renovation guidelines to technical assistance. Our goal was to put all of this in one easy package for you to review.

Before we went ahead with this, we surveyed other Midwest towns who removed their downtown canopies to see what the outcome was. The results were more than encouraging—they were amazing! For instance:

- Sales increased for businesses—some up to 50%.
- Drive-by traffic could now see businesses previously hidden under the canopy.
- Signs and window displays became more effective at drawing in customers.
- Sidewalks became larger, sidewalk cafes opened up, and there was more room for festivals.
- People started saying things like "When did you plant the trees downtown?" and "Is this a new restaurant?"
- Other beautification measures became possible, such as street trees, new street lights, and so forth.

Over the past few years, many local property owners have renovated buildings and we've found that this isn't just a way to show pride in Columbia's history—it's a key economic development tool. In an era of generic, big box stores, people want to shop, eat and work in a building with unique architecture and a sense of history. Even the Columbia Mall recently renovated their food court to look like an old downtown!

So please, take a look at this packet and see what options are available to you. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (573) 442-6816. Also, local preservation consultant Deb Sheals has offered to help with questions you may have about State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits or basic renovation questions. She can be reached at (573) 874-3779. Thanks for your consideration.

Best wishes,

Carrie Gartner
Director
Columbia Special Business District