KCMO Boulevard and Parkway System
The “Three Legs” Sustaining the KCMO Boulevard and Parkway System
Questions

What was the purpose of the parks and boulevard system in Kansas City, Missouri? History

What are the defining characteristics of a boulevard and a parkway? Geometry

What makes them different from an ordinary street or each other? Land Use
Perspective

History, geometry, and land use are the three things that set our Boulevards & Parkways apart from being “any other street”. The changes requested to the zoning code are a necessary and vital part to the preservation of Kansas City’s Neighborhoods and the Boulevard & Parkway system!
History

The answers can be found in:

a) the 1893 Report of the Board of Park Commissioners; “The Kansas City Park System and Its Effect on the City Plan” by George E. Kessler;

b) various Annual Reports to the Board of Commissioners;

c) the 1920 booklet “Souvenir” The Park and Boulevard System of Kansas City, Missouri;

d) the historic surveys that were completed in 1989 and 1991 and

e) the Boulevard and Parkway Standards adopted by Board of Park Commissioners August 28, 2010
History

In 1917 Kessler stated:

“The boulevards and parkways of Kansas City have accomplished the real purpose outlined by Mr. Meyer in the first report 1893, namely, the tying together all sections and the uniting of Kansas City as a whole into a community whose purposes and actions are for the benefit of the city as a whole at all times.”
History

Purpose of the Historic Parks, Boulevard & Parkway System

Make communication between the different sections of the city, commercial, residential and to some extent industrial direct and distinctive.

• “... tie the slightly localities together and make them one.”
• Make Kansas City a residence city with homeowner communities.
• Fix the best property for residential use purposes only and for residences of the same character.
• Increase property value by giving a permanent residence character to certain sections of the city and check suburb sprawl.
• Support healthful minds and bodies by providing rural surroundings and beautiful natural scenery for city residents.
• Provide pleasure drives for light driving.
• Draw businesses and population by providing a beautiful city.

❖ The Historic KCMO Boulevard & Parkway system is currently being evaluated for placement on the National Register.
Geometry

Boulevard features within the right-of-way:
• Gas streetlights of dark color staggered along both sides of the roadway.
• Street markers of blue lettering on white tile, set in sidewalk at intersections.
• “Traffic” gaslights with ruby glass installed in the middle of boulevards on concrete bases to add to the safety of pedestrians and vehicle passengers.
• Wide, formal, landscaped street with a park-like setting. Symmetrical.
• Standard is 100’ right-of-way with 40’ roadway and 30’ margins for wide grass verges, sidewalks and triple row of same kind of trees almost equally spaced.
• Front walks from the house to the sidewalks did not cross the lawns to the curb.
• Appearance differed “radically” from that of the ordinary street.
• No medians.
• Connected with recreation parks and/or parkways.
• Generally followed the formal gridiron street system.
• Multiple points of ingress/egress with intersections at all cross streets.
Geometry

Parkway features within the right-of-way:

• Generally have sufficient change in alignment and gradient to largely obliterate the impression of formal lines.
• Picturesque drives with or without recreational facilities.
• Standard is 200’ right-of-way with 22’ roadway on each side of an 80’ median.
• 38’ margins for wide grass verges, sidewalks, trails, and double row of same kind of trees almost equally spaced.
• Where possible occupied the valley lands.
• Unique in overall look and furnishings.
• Multi-modal transportation and recreation functionality.
• Variable width.
• Limited access.
Geometry

The special geometry that define boulevards and parkways was adopted by the City Council on October 23, 2011 in Ordinance 110249.

This ordinance made the Boulevard and Parkway design criteria part of the City’s Major Street Plan.
Land Use

The land use criteria, found in Boulevard and Parkway Standards, formalize the expectations related to preservation of the existing system as well as appropriate expansion and growth of the system.

This is imperative to the sustainability of the Boulevard and Parkway system and the many neighborhoods in which the system resides.
Land Use

The land use criteria and policies regarding private and public property adjacent to parks, boulevards, and parkways is an issue that has never been comprehensively addressed in one document until the Board of Park Commissioners adopted the standards on August 27, 2007.
Current Prohibited Uses

Current uses prohibited along the boulevards and parkways under the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners adopted standards are:

Adult businesses, outdoor advertising, day labor employment agencies, check cashing services, pawn shops, junk and salvage yards, and warehouse businesses. It also includes vehicle sales and services, correctional facilities and major utility services.

These uses are generally regulated by City zoning ordinances. Changing the rules to allow for any of these uses would typically require a request for re-zoning as well as consideration by the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners.
USES CURRENTLY REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL

Drive through Facility:
Eating and Drinking Establishments
   Issues of concern:
   * traffic and sidewalk deterioration,
   * buildings need to be consistent with context of area
   * need for pedestrian-accessible siting and screening of the parking and drive-through traffic.
   * curb cuts required for additional traffic
   * hours of operation may exceed those of surrounding area

Food and Beverage Retail Sales
Liquor Store
   Issues are similar to above with the additional concern of trash and alcohol consumption within nearby park amenities.
Auto related Uses: to include gasoline and fuel sales, parking surface or structure and motor vehicle repair, limited.

Issues of concern:
* access to and from the street (curb cuts)
* gas pumps, parking
* storage tanks, truck traffic and fueling concerns
* safety issues as well as noise
* screening, signage and pedestrian safety
Parking facilities and Lodging concerns include scale of the building, traffic, noise and impermeable surfaces to be used for vehicle use.

Additional concerns include site orientation, green-solutions, hours and site access improvements. There should be, as much as possible harmony with the surrounding area.
The least complimentary uses which would require Board approval includes mining/quarrying and utility services. These uses would require the most screening for the site and may not be appropriate for boulevard use at all, or only in rare situations.

Quarry locations bring issues of truck traffic, site disturbance and storage issues. Underground mining/quarry situations could be modified in rare situations. Artistic screening has been used in the past for the necessary placement of utility services near underserved areas.
Land Use

Many uses currently exist that do not enhance the experience of the boulevard and parkway systems.
Land Use
Land Use
Development Distinctions

When the historic boulevard system was developed, it was intended to connect parks to the people. Commercial development was discouraged along the boulevards, which did not create much of a problem because the grid-system provided parallel city streets which could accommodate the commercial needs of the citizens in close proximity to their users. Institutional uses like churches and schools often selected boulevards for their home. Redevelopment and in-fill development should strongly consider these historic underpinnings as a guide.

Now as areas of new development occur, as is the case for Twin Creeks, many of the major arterials being built are parkways. There has been several discussions about providing for the commercial needs of the residents near the parkways. Some feel that these major roadways should include areas in which commercial uses are encouraged. Quality development and the protection of the integrity of the parkway system remains a paramount concern to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners and members of the general public.
Nodes in the Twin Creeks Area
Summary

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Questions

Comments

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