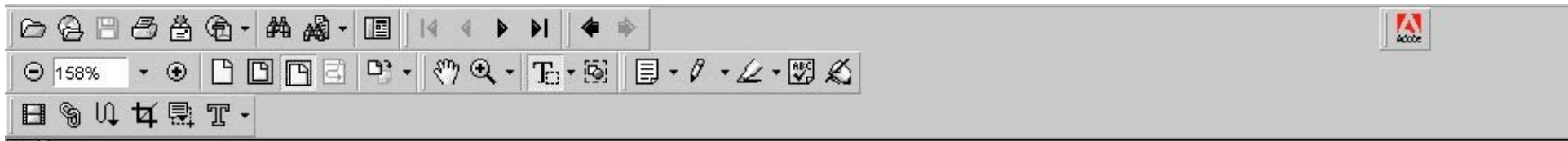


Traffic Standards and Historic Parkways



Daniel Serda, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Kansas City Design Center

CNU Transportation Summit
Friday, November 18, 2005



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Historic Parkway Design

A Look at the AASHTO Green Book

Summary of Position Paper

Paul Daniel Marriott

This country has a rich history of parkway development. Beginning in the early decades of this century, a concerted effort to promote, design, and develop safe, attractive, and pleasurable drives led to the development of numerous parkways. Such motor ways threading through a landscape were designed to offer the urban dweller visual repose, recreation, and interaction with the natural environment. **This relationship between the park and its many uses, and the roadway with its automobile function, is what distinguishes a parkway from other types of roadways.** The pleasure of the driving experience is paramount.

With the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), and a new view

greater flexibility available to local and state governments in the distribution and use of federal funding has generated new approaches for addressing transportation issues. Many communities are now responding by implementing creative transportation solutions and enhancements that would have been difficult only a few years ago. In order to respond to this demand and still maintain the safe movement of people and goods, it will be necessary for highway design standards to recognize and respond to these new attitudes and opportunities.

National Significance

The existing and potential losses to the structure and character of historic parkways represent not only the loss of detail or historic character to a particular roadway, but a significant loss of an important national resource. Historic parkways are the legacy of the history of highway development in this nation. They represent a period in which significant advances were made in highway engineering. They demonstrate the successful interaction of diverse professional groups working together to integrate the automobile with the landscape. The engineers, landscape architects, planners, architects, and conservation professionals who developed, designed, and built parkways were developing corridors for transportation, recreation, environmental management, and community enhancement. These multi-use transportation corridors in many ways embody the established goals of ISTEA.

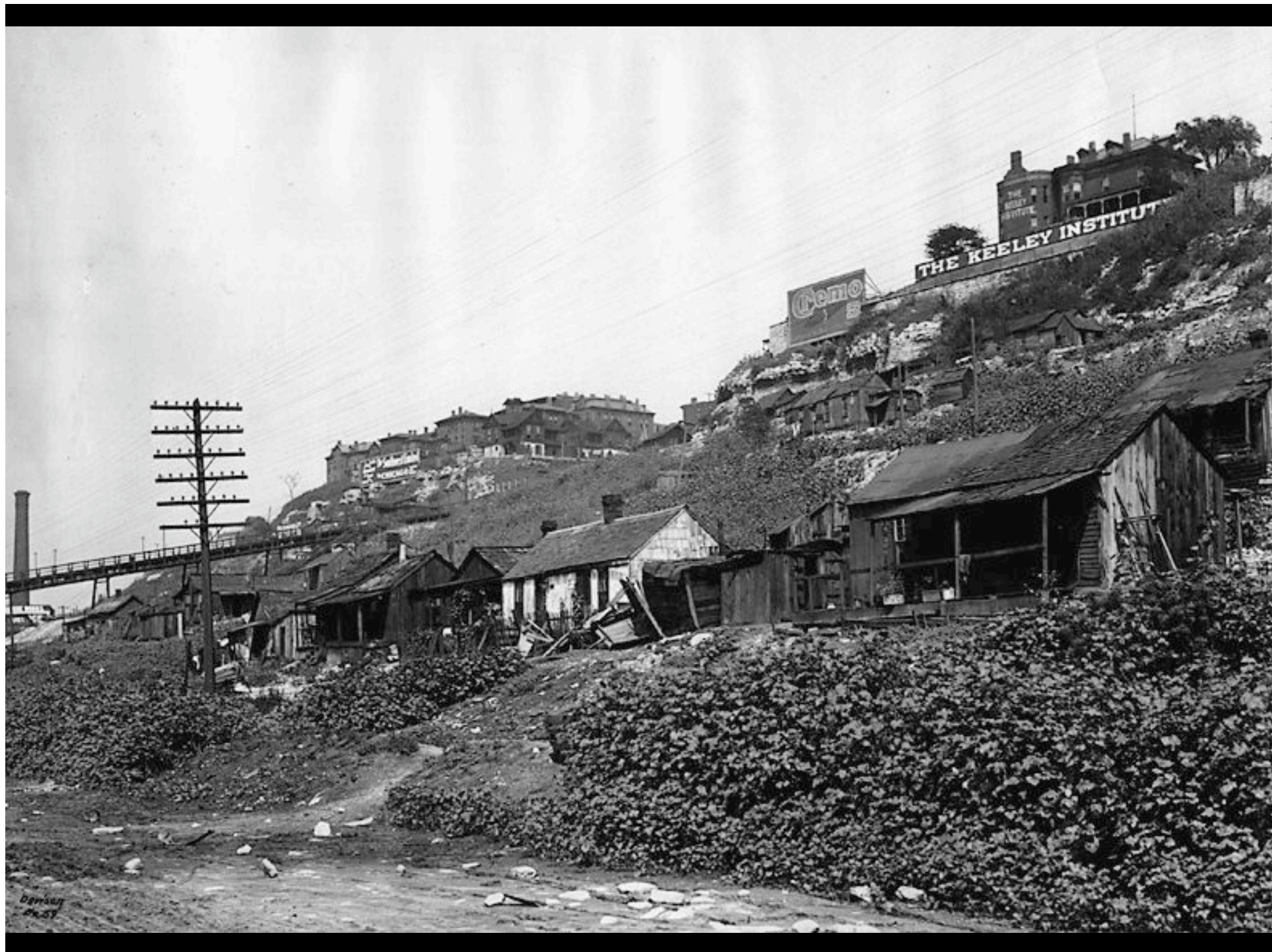
Recreational driving is now the number two form of recreation in the United States.¹ Closely related is the

Taming the Industrial City







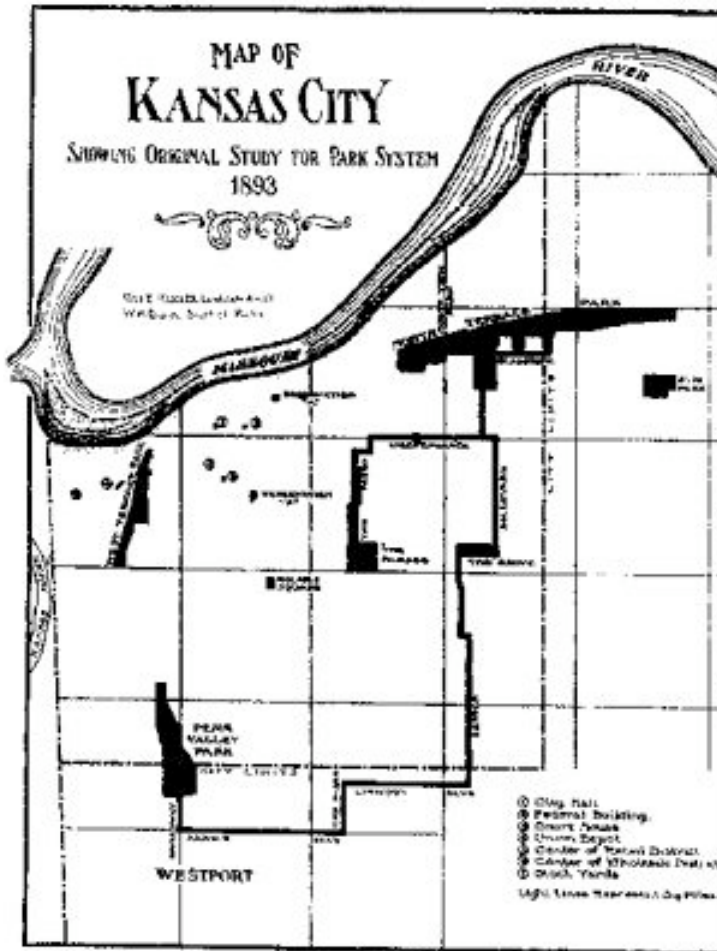


D. W. H. 1917
No. 17



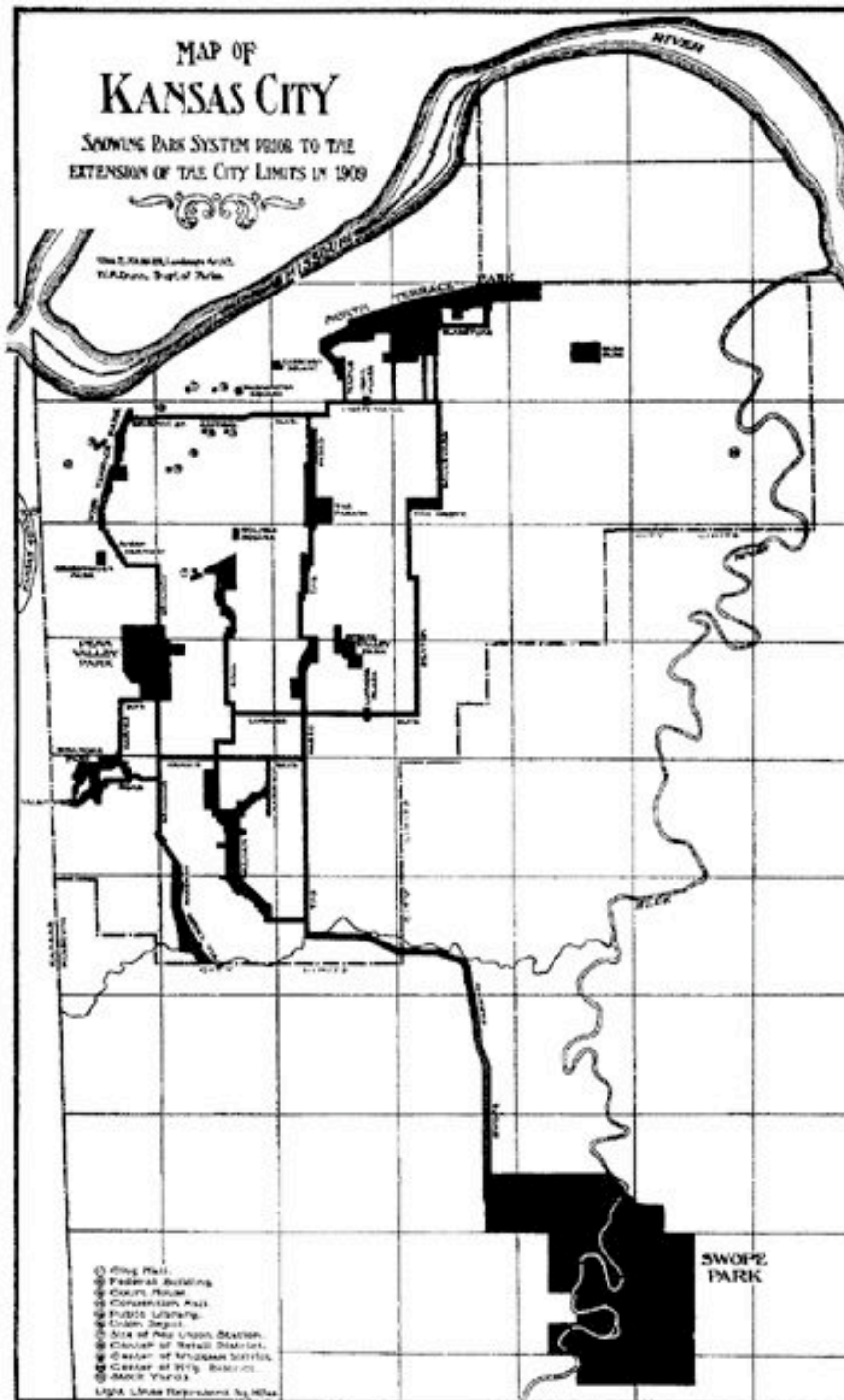






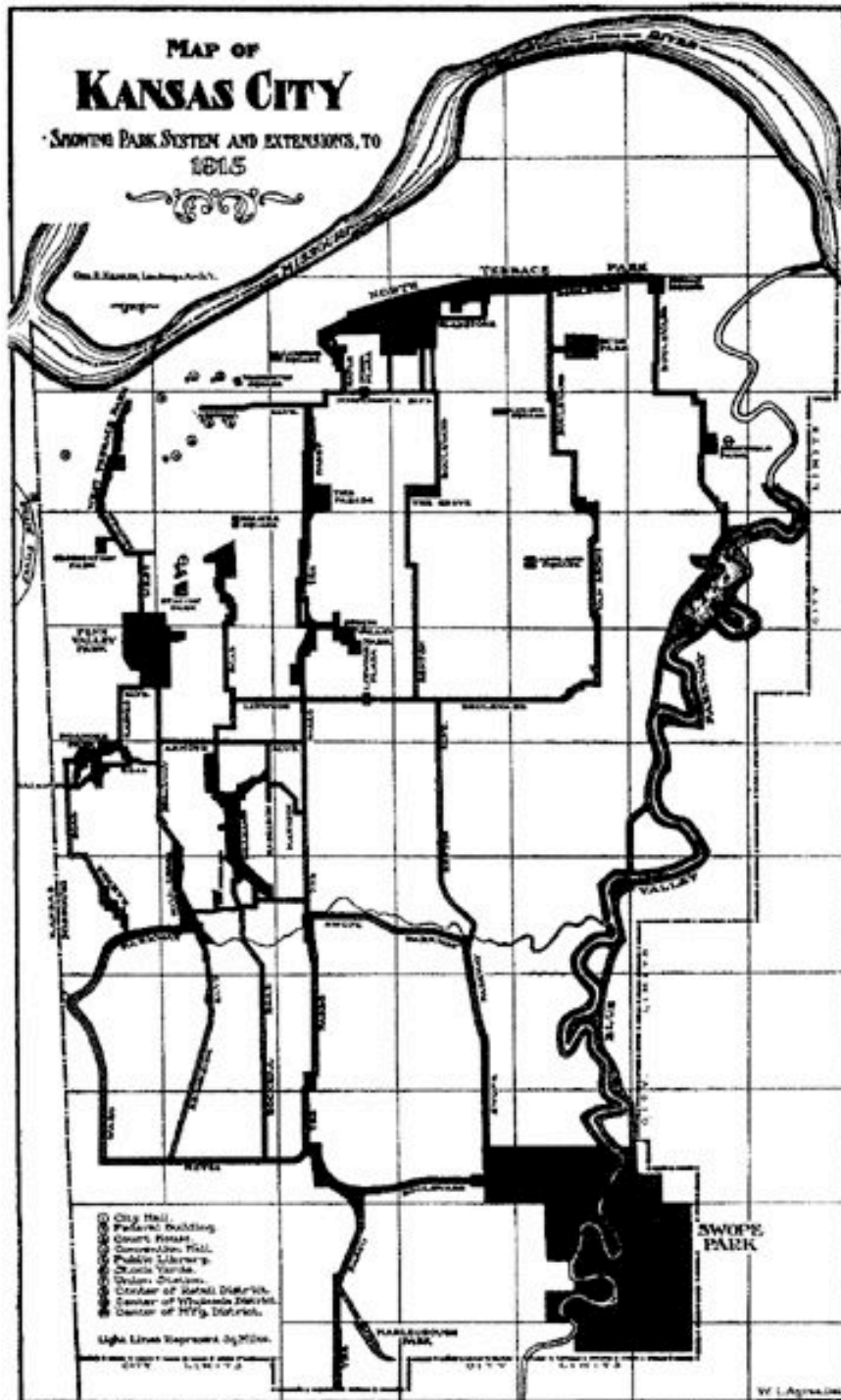
The Board's initial recommendations in 1893 included 324 acres of parks and 9.85 miles of boulevards.

The system was to include both local play centers and pleasure grounds, as well as some larger outlying parks, all interconnected by boulevards and parkways traversing the city's residential districts and connecting with downtown.



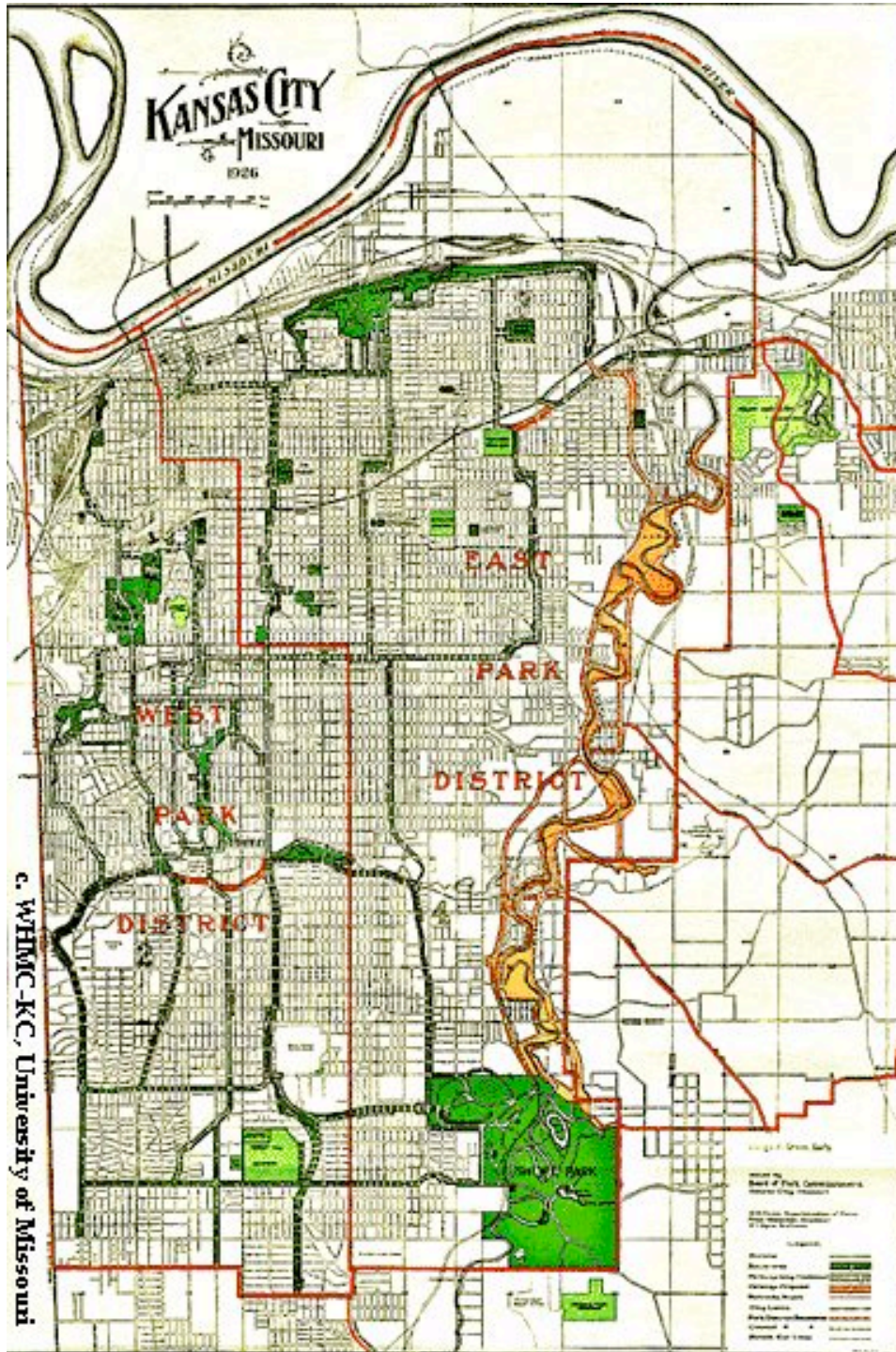
By 1909, several new parks had been added:

- The 1,400-acre **Swope Park**
- Various community and neighborhood parks
- Admiral Boulevard** connected outlying Independence Boulevard to downtown
- The Paseo** ran 4.5 miles to Brush Creek
- Gillham Road** extended 4 miles from the southern end of downtown to Hyde Park
- West Pennway** joined West Terrace and Penn Valley Parks
- Swope Parkway** extended 3.5 miles from The Paseo to Swope Park



By 1920, 64 of the 67 parks and boulevards proposed in 1893 had been approved or adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners.

- Construction of **Ward Parkway** commenced in 1926 as J.C. Nichols began developing Sunset Hill and the Country Club District
- **Meyer Boulevard** connected Ward Parkway to The Paseo and Swope Parkway



By 1940, Kansas City's system of parkways and boulevards not only connected scenic vistas and provided pathways for transportation, but also served as the connective tissue binding together neighborhoods throughout the rapidly-growing metropolis.

George Kessler's Design Approach

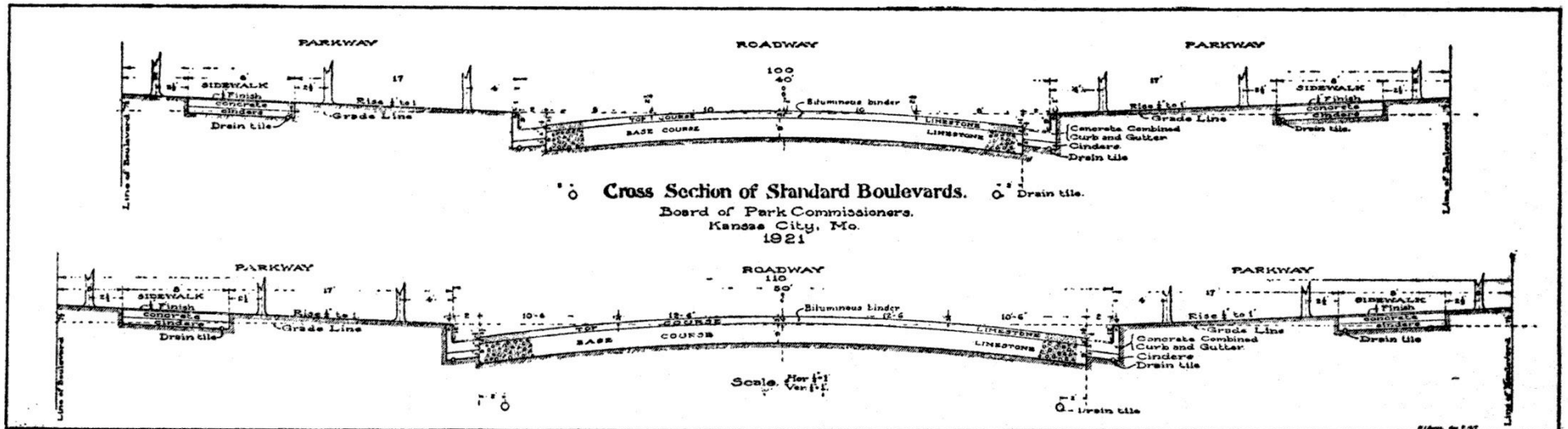


George Kessler designed Kansas City's parkways to serve two important functions:

1) To connect recreational areas -- including neighborhood pocket parks and larger regional parks, golf courses, and wooded areas -- to each other and neighborhoods throughout the city;

2) To provide a series of highly attractive scenic landscapes for pleasure driving without having to contend with the commercial traffic and congestion found on the city's major streets.

Boulevard Geometry



Cross Sections by Courtesy of Kansas City Park Department

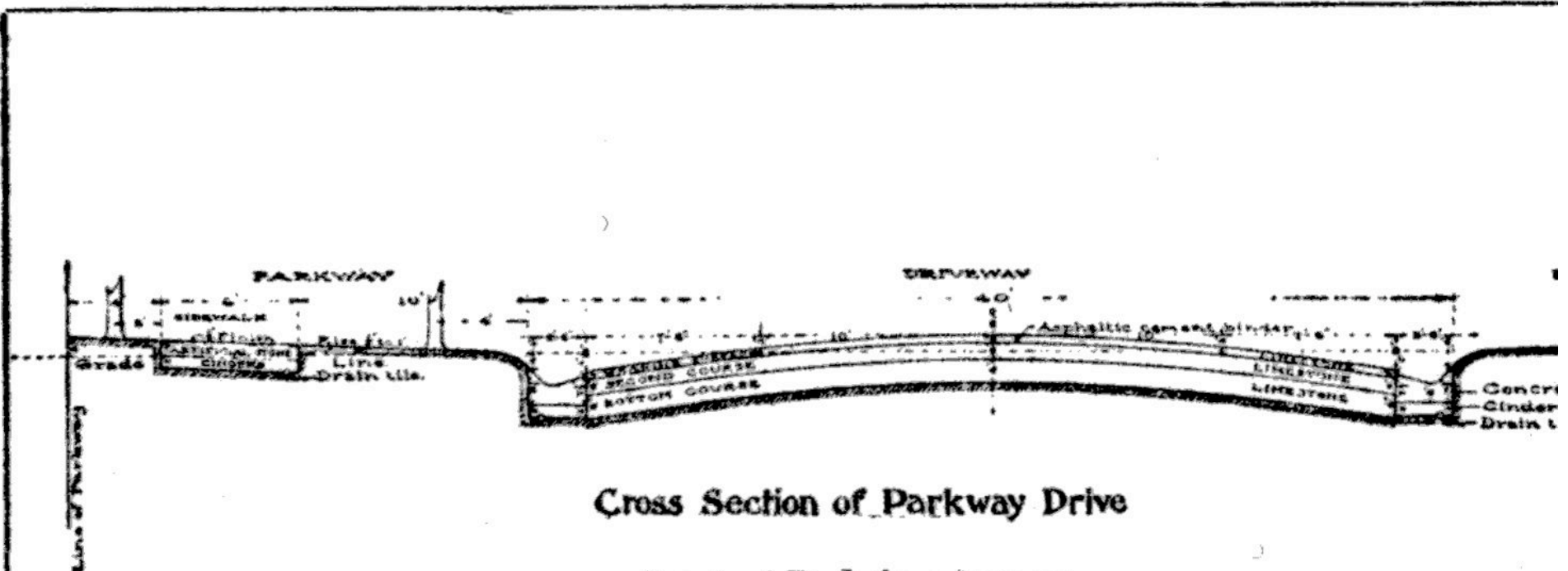
FIGURE 8

Typical roadway: original standard was 100 feet (later 110 feet)

Parkway: 6-foot sidewalks, 10-foot “planting strip” between sidewalk and curb

Landscaping: Three rows of columnar trees, two in grass median, one between sidewalk and property lines

Parkway Geometry



Cross Section of Parkway Drive

Board of Park Commissioners
Kansas City, Mo.
1912

Typical roadway: 35 feet (double roadways); 40 or 56 feet (single roadways)

Parkway: 6-foot sidewalks, 10-foot “planting strip” between sidewalk and curb

Landscaping: Two rows of columnar trees, two in grass median, one adjacent to property lines

The Paseo, 1908







Parkways or Trafficways?

“The purpose for which these parkways were developed renders impossible their general utilization by commercial traffic. While their presence is highly desirable from the standpoint of vehicular movement, it is regretted that Kansas City does not possess a similar and parallel system of commercial traffic ways.”

A Traffic Control Plan for Kansas City,
(Chamber of Commerce, 1930)

Armour Boulevard, 1907



BY JOHN J. DOOHAN



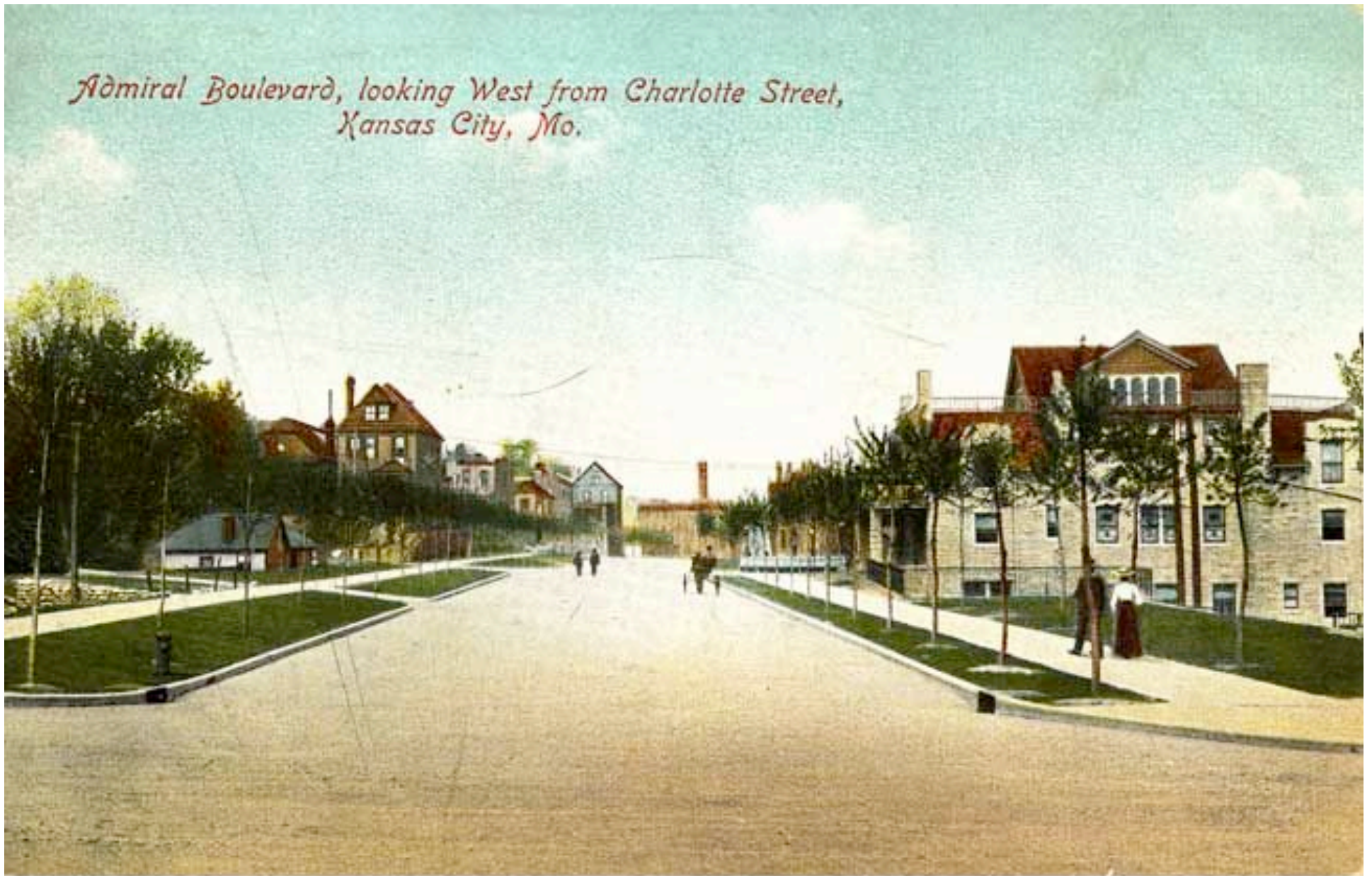
The motorcar was becoming more and more popular, and the city had to face facts: Armour Boulevard just wasn't wide enough anymore. So in 1929 eight feet were added to each side of the street between Main and Broadway.

While still a busy thoroughfare, Armour Boulevard, named for the Armours of packing-house fame, has lost the prominence it enjoyed when the elite of the city lived along it. Some of the mansions still stand but the families are long gone. The house built by Andrew W. Armour remains at the southwest corner of Walnut and Armour, as does the home of Charles W. Armour, the second building east of Main on the south side of the street. But the Kirkland B. Armour house, which stood at the corner of Armour and Warwick, is gone.

This photo was taken looking west along Armour from Wyandotte to Broadway.

John J. Doohan is a retired Star reporter and librarian.

*Admiral Boulevard, looking West from Charlotte Street,
Kansas City, Mo.*



Historic Kansas City Foundation Postcard Collection





Trafficways and Convenience

“Narrow, worn, and outdated roads are being replaced as quickly as possible with broad, modern concrete parkways designed to handle comfortably the accelerated traffic of today and the anticipated traffic of tomorrow . . . thus completing the transformation from ‘horse and buggy’ to modern motor-vehicle roadways.”

*J.V. Lewis, Supt. of Parks,
“Everything’s Up to Date in Kansas City’s Park System”
(American City, December 1952)*

Penn Valley Park, 1906





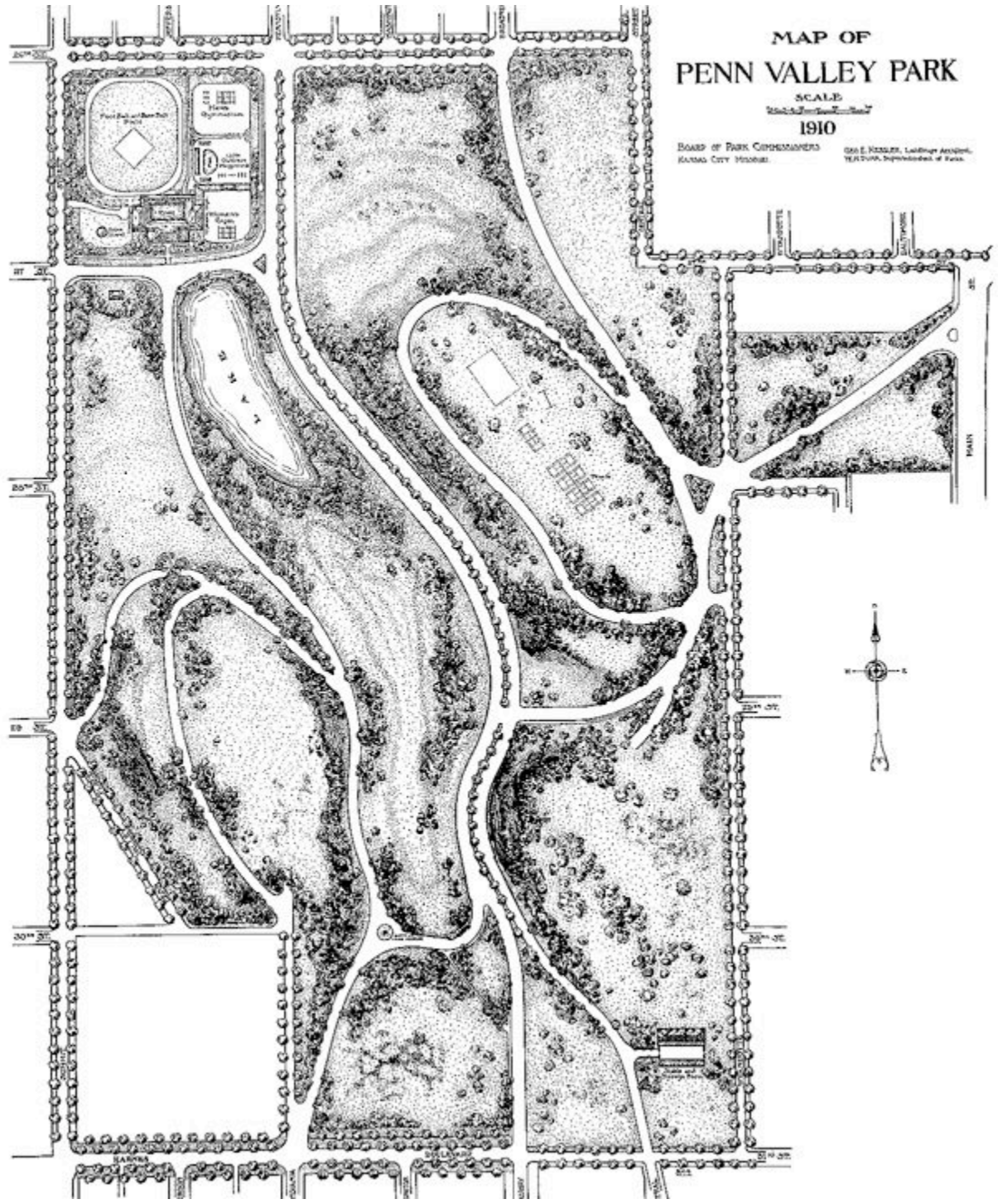
MAP OF PENN VALLEY PARK

SCALE
1" = 100'

1910

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

DR. E. HAZLET, Landscape Architect,
VERLIND, Incorporated, of Kans.



Converting Parkways to Trafficways

“The Southwest Trafficway offers an opportunity of relieving the congested conditions of the north and south streets between the downtown district and the south and southwest part of the City, including the serious conditions in Penn Valley Park and at Southwest Boulevard.”

*The Civic Improvement Committee of 1000,
Proposition No. 8 - To Plan, Design and Construct a Southwest Trafficway
(May 26, 1931)*





Posted on Mon, Jul. 18, 2005

Traffic signals cause debate in KC

Safety, funding at odds with aesthetics

By MATT CAMPBELL *The Kansas City Star*

The charm of Kansas City's century-old boulevards is being pitted against modern realities: traffic safety and federal highway money.

A tempest that arose this spring with the specter of galvanized-steel traffic poles looming over all three lanes of shady Ward Parkway has become a test of how the city can preserve its unique heritage in the 21st century.

It is also a public dialogue that may be unique in the country.

Residents and two city departments have been grappling over an aggressive program to upgrade traffic signals at hundreds of intersections by hanging one over each lane from horizontal "mast arms."

It's safer, proponents say.

It's ugly and it mars the boulevards, critics respond.

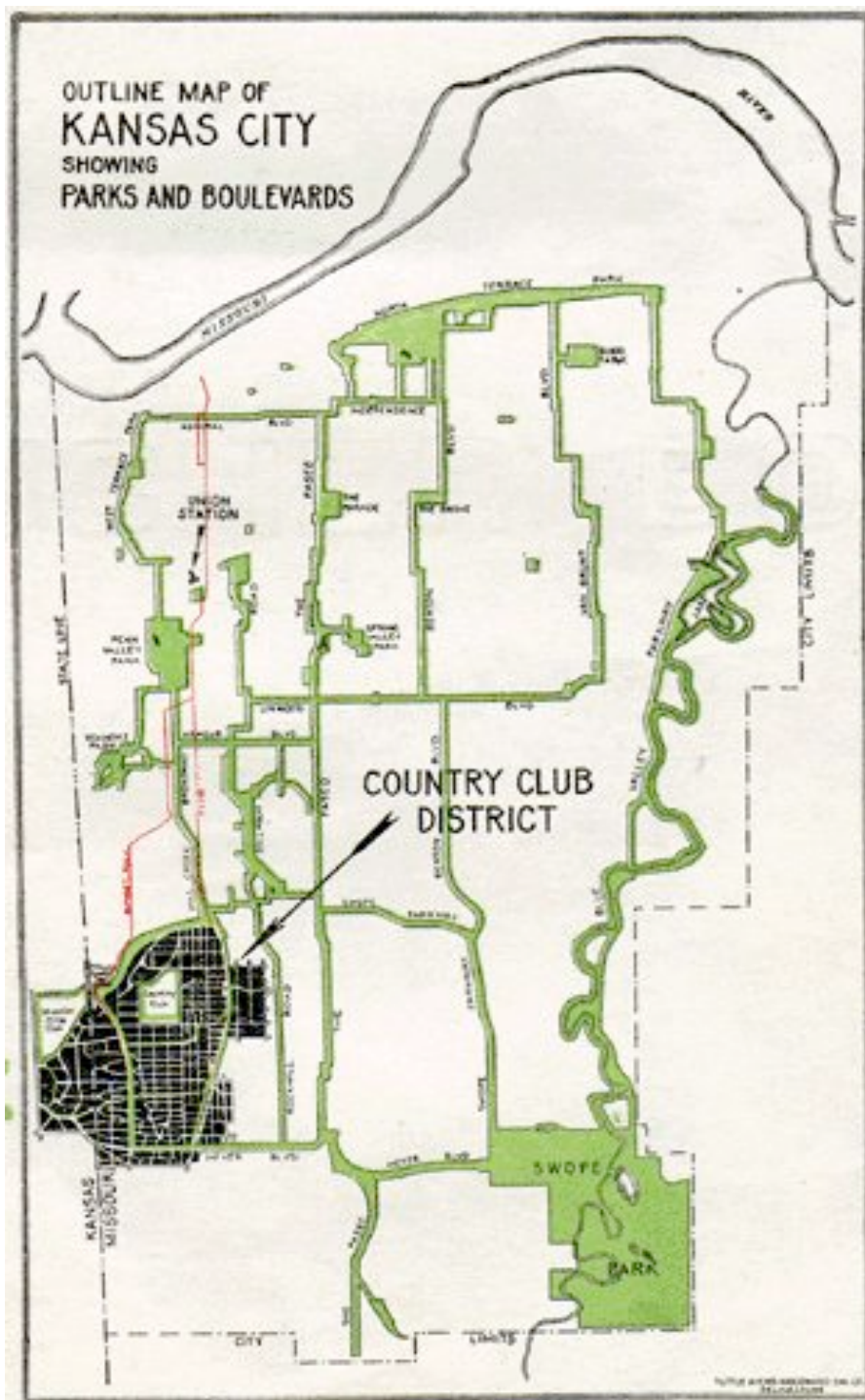
This week the Public Works Department said it would defer and not insist on imposing the new stoplights on the Parks and Recreation Department, which by city charter has jurisdiction over the boulevards and parkways.

"We're not going to force mast arms on the boulevards," said Public Works Director Stan Harris.

But the department will submit a list of more than 40 boulevard locations where it still recommends installing the overhead signals, forcing the parks department to evaluate each one.

"We're going to be looking at accident experience as well as location and the type of roadways they serve," said Larry Frevert, assistant park director of engineering.

OUTLINE MAP OF
KANSAS CITY
SHOWING
PARKS AND BOULEVARDS





Ward Parkway at 59th St., view North (1924)





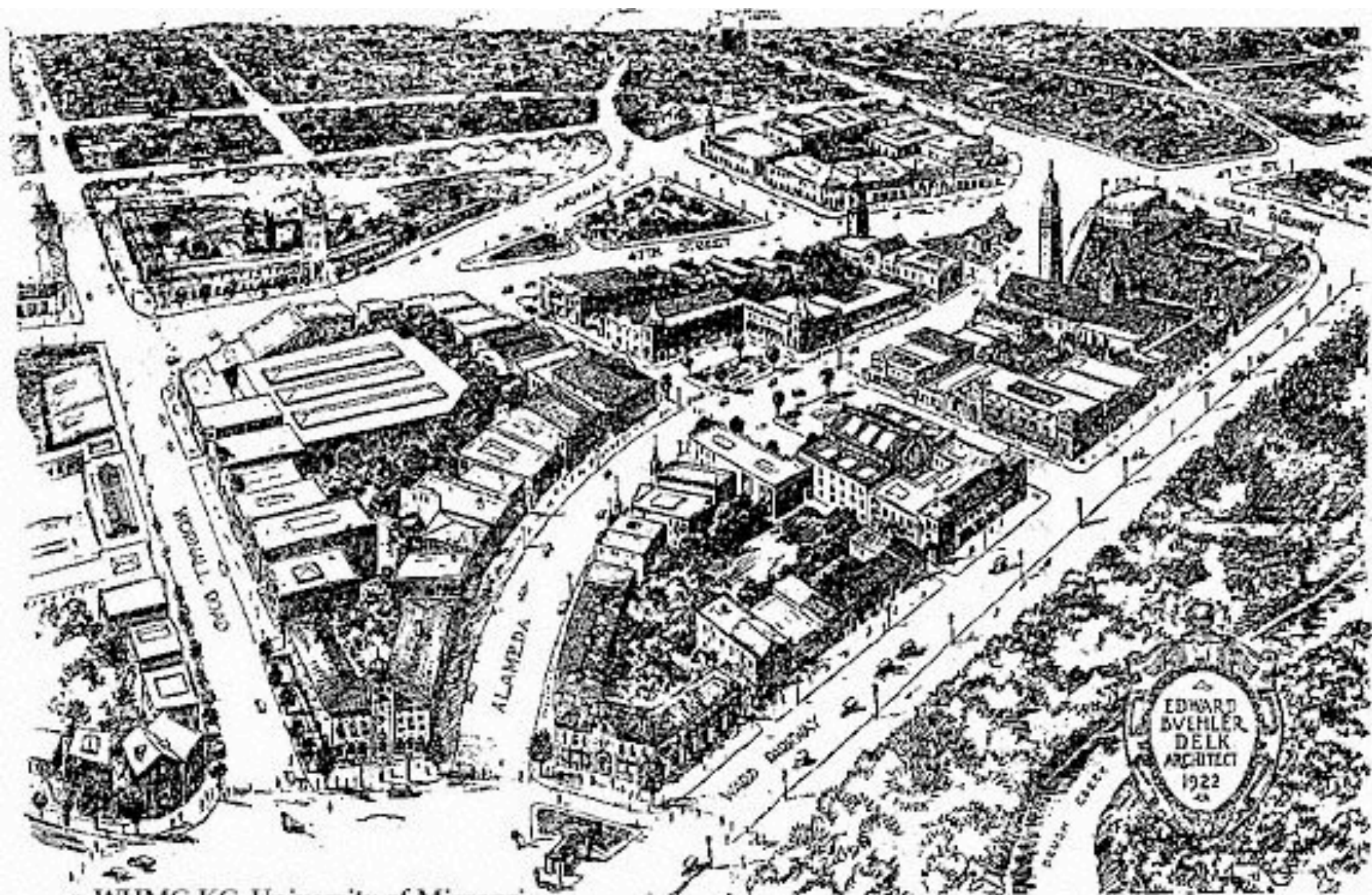
Ward Parkway

Many features of the original Hare and Hare design, such as the reflecting pools, fountains, and gardens, have been restored in the last 15 years.

Significant threats to the integrity of Ward Parkway loom due to engineering standards that fail to adequately consider landscape design, pedestrian accessibility and safety, and materials/ finishes.







c. WHMC-KC, University of Missouri

A 1922 drawing of Country Club Plaza at Forty-seventh Street and Mill Creek Parlaway. This plan will be improved as its various groups of related buildings are finished. By building Country Club Plaza horizontally rather than vertically, automobile congestion will be relieved, and by limiting the buildings to one and two stories in height, patrons will be saved crowding and loss of time in the use of elevators.

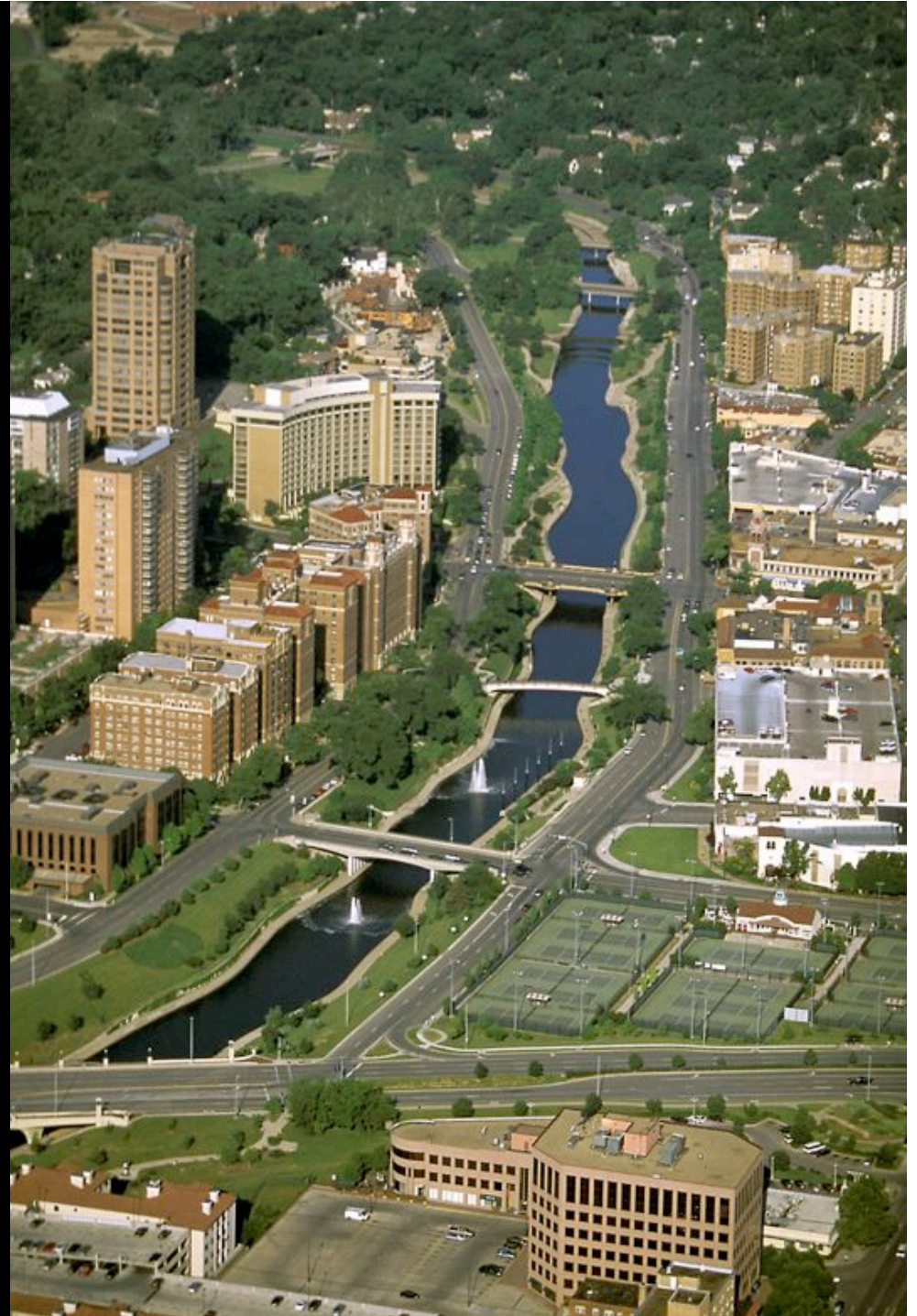


Ward Parkway and Brookside Boulevard

In 1990, Main Street was realigned to connect directly to Brookside Blvd.

As part of the Corps of Engineers realignment and improvements to Brush Creek, many of the pedestrian and vehicular bridges across Brush Creek have been replaced, and interchanges re-designed.

The resulting roadway geometry emphasizes speed and volume over aesthetics, landscape quality, and pedestrian accessibility.





Conclusions

- Threats to the aesthetic integrity of historic parkways are often incremental and slow to emerge, but insidious in their cumulative impact;
- Established transportation engineering guidelines impose inappropriate expectations and geometric design standards on roadways that were designed as integral landscapes, not merely as conduits for vehicular traffic;

Conclusions

- Design standards that respond to the distinctiveness of historic parkways are strongly needed -- safety and efficiency need not crowd out historic character, sense of place, and the beauty of a regional landscape tradition.
- An additional challenge for urban parkways is the need to better coordinate land use, subdivision, and zoning regulations that are harmonious with the principles underlying the design of historic parkways and boulevards.

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