

**City of Columbia Historic Preservation Commission  
Application for Most Notable Property**

**Community Development Department, Planning Division  
City of Columbia, 701 E. Broadway, Columbia, MO 65201  
[Planning@CoMo.Gov](mailto:Planning@CoMo.Gov)**

**Address Being Nominated** Historic Highway 40 (now Business Loop 70)

**Date Property Built (if known)** Signed into being on November 11, 1926

**First Owner/Builder/Architect (if known)** United States Numbered Highway System, a collaboration of federal and state governments.

**Current Owner's Name** Missouri Department of Transportation  
*(properties may be nominated by non-owners but owners must give permission for photography/  
videography of property- see page 2 for release)*

**Address** Business Loop 70 from Stadium to Eastland Circle

**Phone Number** n/a **E-mail** n/a

**Submitter's Name** Carrie Gartner, The Loop Community Improvement District

**Submitter's Phone number** 573-443-5667 **E-mail** carrie@theloopcomo.com

**NOTE:** The following information provides a starting point for historic research on the property. However, a lack of information should not be a deterrent for an application. All properties chosen for Most Notable will have a history of the property compiled by a historic preservation professional. This history will be provided to property owners for their own records.

Has anyone of local, regional, or national historic note ever occupied the property? If so, whom?

Please see attached.

Does the property have any notable or unusual architectural qualities? If so, please identify.

Please see attached.

Have any recent renovations been performed that have helped restore the property? If so, describe them briefly.

Please see attached.

Is the property recognized by any other historic preservation organizations? If so, please identify.

Please see attached.


Please describe any other unusual or interesting attributes or stories about the property.

Please see attached.

**Please attach current and/or early pictures of the property.**

Additional street and building photos, as well as motor court postcards, are available upon request.

Owner's release for city public communications to photograph/video record around exterior property **and** for property information to be included online in an interactive historic map *(required for nomination)*

—  — \_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

Owner's release for city public communications to photograph and video record up to three rooms/elements in the interior of the building *(optional- will require owner's presence)*

Rooms/elements of interest in the building's interior:

1. Specific locations can be determined at a later time

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

—  — \_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

Please note: As a member of the Historic Preservation Commission, I will recuse myself from the Most Notable Properties discussion and vote.

## Timeline of Highway 40

### Early Cross-Country Travel

Before automobiles, traveling across Missouri was more work than pleasure and required careful navigation of farm roads, stagecoach routes, and even walking paths. While manageable on horseback and somewhat less so by wagon, it was nearly impossible in a car. Many roads were dirt and weren't connected to a larger system, leading to a lot of dead ends and doubling back. Often referred to as "trails" they were maintained (with various degrees of success) by local booster organizations known as "trail associations."

In 1911, Governor Herbert Hadley announced plans for Missouri's first cross-state highway. After a seven hour committee hearing in the stifling August heat of Jefferson City, the central route connecting Kansas City and St. Louis via Columbia was finally agreed upon and given the name "Old Trails Road," which in many places mirrored the old Boone's Lick Road. Funding eventually fell short for this ambitious project but the foundation had been laid.



Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri, Leonard D. and Marie H. Rehkop Collection of Algert T. Peterson Photographs, C3888-G0043

## The Good Roads Movement

Realizing the need for better transportation—and the funds to make it happen—the Good Roads Movement began advocating for a 1920 ballot initiative that would bond for \$60 million to build and maintain a cross-state road. Support for paved roads didn't just come from auto enthusiasts—Missouri “wheelmen” (AKA bicyclists) also threw their weight behind this project.

The Good Roads Movement started their campaign in St. Louis with much fanfare and a truck tour of the state—and promptly got stuck in the mud. The whole entourage, trucks included, was loaded onto a train and taken back to St. Louis. In spite of this (or perhaps because of this) the ballot initiative passed in 1921 and by 1931, 7500 miles of road had been built.



Photo: Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Special Collections

## Birth of Highway 40

Although the Old Trails Road had been mapped through Columbia, within town the road was known as More's Boulevard. Columbia's northernmost road was named after wealthy farmer and landowner E.C. More, who also built the artificial lake that bears his name.

On November 11, 1926 the United States Numbered Highway System was signed into law and created an integrated network of roads that could be used to transport goods, livestock, travelers, and more. More's Boulevard and the Old Trails Road would be incorporated into the new federal numbered highway system. Highway 40 connected two additional auto trails, the National Road and the Victory Road, to create one of America's first cross-country highways. Highway 40 originally ran from Atlantic City, New Jersey to San Francisco, California—right through Columbia, Missouri—and became known as the Main Street of America.

Columbians quickly recognized the value this road began investing in this area of town. Hickman High School was built on 40 acres of property that had once been home to the David H. Hickman family and later the Boone County Fair. A decade later, the first cancer hospital west of the Mississippi, Ellis Fischel, was built just down the road on the site of a baseball park used by Columbia's semi-pro team. In fact, the state was kind enough to allow the team to finish up their 1938 season before beginning construction on the hospital.



Photo: Missouri State Historical Society



Photo: MU Health Care

## The Travel Boom

While Highway 40 was important during WWII to transport troops and supplies, it came into its own during the post-war period when more Americans owned cars and found time for leisure travel. Service stations began popping up along the street to cater to travelers needing gas and fix-a-flat services.

In keeping with the era's love of Westerns, many of the auto courts, stores, and restaurants bore names like the Arrow Head Motel, Teepee Town, or the Wigwam Cafe that likely wouldn't be chosen today. Others, such as the All States Motor Court or the Drive-eat-eria leaned into the new automobile lifestyle with motels and restaurants designed for drive-up travelers. In fact, Ray Kroc handpicked a spot on the road for Columbia's first McDonald's.

As automobile sales increased and "touring" became a popular pastime, travelers would pack up tents, cots, linens, cooking kits, and other necessities and head cross county. Tourist camps started as just that—places to pitch a tent—and soon grew into collections of cottages, and then later into motels featuring fancy amenities like pools and outdoor patios. All States Village, for example, started as a camp in 1928 and grew to nearly 50 cabins by the 1950s. Signs along Highway 40 advertised the cottages with jaunty little poems like this gem:

*A legitimate business  
Is our dower  
No cabins rented  
By the hour*





Photo: Boone County History and Culture Center

You're both sure to enjoy those tall, cool steins of beer and the knotty-pine atmosphere of this quiet taproom.

**CHIEF'S TAP ROOM**  
Next to Teepee Town, Hiway 40 West

Photo: Nancy Obermiller Kiser, You Know You're From Columbia MO When Facebook group

## Interstate 70

The Federal-Aid Highway Act was signed in 1956 and Missouri lays claim to building the first interstate in America. Roughly tracing the same route as Highway 40 through the state, I-70 diverted travelers off the highway and onto the new interstate. The interstate also ran through the middle of Columbia, splitting the road in two, destroying neighborhoods, and creating a barrier for residents. The old Highway 40 was renamed Business Loop 70 and despite the loss of travelers, it continued to be Columbia's main east-west thoroughfare and popular destination for locals.

Parkade Plaza was built in 1962 on the site of the former Parkade Drive-In Theater, and customers flocked to the city's first mall to shop at J.C. Penney, Ben Franklin, Kroger, Tina Fabrics, and Sunshine Pets. And of course, the Flaming Pit was a top spot for diners, largely because their happy hour started a half an hour before their competitors. The success of Parkade Plaza on the new Business Loop led to 80 downtown businesses either closing or moving to Parkade and a widespread (but incorrect) belief that downtown would never recover.



Photo: On display at Parkade Plaza

## Slow Down

The heyday was not to last as the popularity of I-70 continued to pull travelers away from the Business Loop. Despite being a MoDOT road, state and federal funding shifted away from the old highway system and maintenance and repairs along Business Loop slowed. Although serving more as a city street and less as an interstate travel route, neither the funds nor the will existed to bring the Business Loop up to par with other Columbia roads with sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, or other amenities.

J.C. Penney pulled out of Parkade Plaza and other retailers and restaurants followed them to the newly built Columbia Mall. Still, many long-time businesses, loyal to the street, chose to stay. And well-known Columbia fixtures, including The Blue Note, Glenn's Cafe, and Mug's Up Drive In, all found a home on old Highway 40. The Business Loop eventually solidified its position with auto sales and services and home improvement businesses thrived. And kids still cruised The Loop on the weekends. Still, the road was becoming more of a convenient way across town rather than a destination deserving of investment.



Photos: Nancy Obermiller Kiser, You Know You're From Columbia MO When Facebook Group

## The Road Today

Recognizing that Business Loop 70 was not a priority, a group of property and business owners came together in 2016 to create the Business Loop Community Improvement District (The Loop CID), a local organization that would advocate for the street and provide programs and services over and above what MoDOT or the City were providing.

A series of high visibility projects including colorful banners and the transformation of a vacant lot into a park demonstrated the group's commitment to improvements and the public began taking notice. The CID also built a shared commercial kitchen on the street which is now home to more than 45 small food businesses. Within just a few years, the rehabilitation of the Business Loop was underway.

Of note, 2026 is the centennial of Highway 40 and the ten-year anniversary of The Loop CID.



Photo: The Loop Community Improvement District

## What's Next?

Realizing the path forward required city rather than MoDOT ownership, the Loop CID partnered with the City of Columbia to secure funding for a massive renovation project. The first step was a \$2.13 million planning grant award from the US Department of Transportation –and a smaller but equally important Safe Streets for All grant to identify ways to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians alike.

Features to be studied will include a complete streets design, storm water management, beautification elements, and design improvements to intersections, bike lanes, and pedestrian connections. Creating these detailed engineering documents is the first step to take in preparation for a capital improvement project that will upgrade the entire street and is estimated to cost between \$25 and \$45 million. The public planning process begins this year.



Photo: City of Columbia and CBB Engineering Road Safety Audit Study

## **Historic Properties of Note**

Arrow Head Motel (demolished) MNP

Calvary Cemetery, an African-American Cemetery est. 1929 MNP

Columbia National Bank, now True Media MNP

Columbia Airport, now Cosmo Park

David H. Hickman High School

Ellis Fischel State Cancer Hospital (demolished)

Municipal Power Plant and More's Lake MNP

Pierce Pennant Motor Hotel MNP