



Columbia, Mo.

PROFILE:

POPULATION: 106,774
MEDIAN INCOME: \$40,816
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$164,900
% W/ BACHELORS DEGREE: 28.2%
WALK SCORE: 30/100

STATISTICS:

[Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program Results](#) (2007—2011):

- Bicycling and walking increased 62.9% and 46.1%, respectively
- Added 1,165 bicycle parking spaces
- Added 34 miles marked bike routes and 100 miles of bike lanes
- [Windsor/Ash Bicycle Boulevard](#) sees 124% increase in bicycle traffic after installation of a bike boulevard
- 4,000 people [gained bike safety and skills](#) through GetAbout Columbia

QUOTES:

"People who have a choice of where to live look for a location that offers the quality of life they want. They want quality schools, a downtown that is fun to be in, good restaurants, places with sidewalk eating, cultural opportunities. And believe it or not, they want a place with a great trail system—a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly city. People approach me all the time and tell me the trails are what keep them in Columbia."

—[DARWIN HINDMAN, Mayor of Columbia 1995–2010](#)



'A Wonderful Place,' With Room for New Ideas

As a midpoint on the nation's [longest rail-trail](#), Columbia has consistently been recognized as a leader in active transportation. The city's commitment to fresh ideas was recognized by *Outside* magazine in 2008, when Columbia [ranked 11th](#) on a list of "Best Towns" embodying "America's 21st Century Renaissance." Inquiring minds want to know: How did a "Renaissance" come to a modest college town in Missouri, smack in the middle of 'flyover country'? Nature has not granted the hilly city any concessions, and Columbia is not particularly dense. So what caused Columbia to embrace trails, walking, and bicycling so whole-heartedly? The answer lies in an amazing sense of community in which residents have bonded together over a common goal, supported by an enthusiastic city council.

Nurturing that community through education and advocacy, the city has engrained active transportation deep into its culture. Many of the bicycling and pedestrian programs within Columbia are aimed towards the intermediate and novice, reassuring those that may be getting on a bike for the first time that they are accepted. [PedNet](#), Columbia's non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the city's bicycling and pedestrian network, has over 6,000 members, ranging from individuals and schools to businesses and organizations within the University of Missouri. Classes and workshops promoted through the website ensure that the active transportation community remains involved and enthusiastic. Columbia's selection for the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program in 2005 acted as a catalyst, further encouraging the active transportation community. This conglomeration of active transportation advocates has led to many new ideas, and in turn some creative innovations.

One of the most interesting innovations is the on-street marking system found throughout Columbia. These markings serve not only to increase the awareness of drivers, but also to allow for beginner bicyclists and pedestrians to easily learn the rules of the road. Thermoplastic wayfinding markers are one example of a cheap and easy integration of the on-street marking

"The project has been extremely important to this community. It has provided numerous benefits, including choices for transportation, health, and transportation equity, and a large benefit to university students. An extremely popular program, it has done a great deal to connect neighborhoods. By making Columbia a more attractive community, it has already had a positive result in recruiting businesses and retirees to the city. It has made Columbia an even greater place to live."

—[DARWIN HINDMAN, Mayor of Columbia 1995—2010](#)

"It doesn't need to be hard. Don't let the mentality of 'I need X, Y, Z to be a cyclist' stop you from biking. Find a comfortable bike and go."

—[JONATHAN SESSIONS, Columbia Public Schools Board Member](#)

"Columbia has done a great job in creating a safe environment for biking and walking. I want to personally thank Mayor Hindman and the city council for all of the work they have obviously done to make this such a great city to walk and bike in. As a newcomer, this has been a key in making me feel like I have chosen a good place to live."

—[CASEY CORBIN, Executive Director of Sustainable Farms and Communities, Inc.](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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system. These indicators can be found throughout the city, both on public streets as well as on the campus of the University.

The Green Merge Area (GMA) is another innovation that is currently being tested. When an automobile lane must cut across a bike lane at an intersection, the GMA functions to increase visibility and awareness, and provides guidance to users so as to allow for a safe environment for all.

The Signal/Loop Detector Actuation Symbol may sound complicated, but in reality is being effortlessly integrated into the transportation system of Columbia. The detector signal shows where to stop when a bicyclist arrives at an intersection so as to activate a traffic signal for that bicyclist. And innovation in Columbia is not all about engineering—[GetAbout Columbia's](#) outreach, communications, and advertising reminds residents that [they "live in a wonderful place,"](#) celebrating the positive feedback cycle connecting walking, bicycling, and quality of life.

Columbia was able to get multiple innovations on the ground fairly rapidly by implementing the pilot program as working plan in order for it to function as a 'living document,' adapting quickly to new revelations and opportunities. As they are implemented and evaluated, the innovations are being documented for other communities to consider. The Federal Highway Administration is also engaged in this process as a potential source for new national standards. Even though there may be some initial skepticism when a new idea is first being tested, Columbia is never afraid to experiment, always keeping its strong active transportation community in mind.