

CITY OF COLUMBUS



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY**

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Columbus Economic Development Authority

The City of Columbus Economic Development Authority (EDA) is a 7-member body made up of 5 elected officials and 2 “at-large” community representatives. The Mission of the EDA is to promote the business districts in Columbus with the goal of creating new jobs and increasing tax base. Columbus’ EDA and City Council work together to make final decisions on how to best attract new business and expand current businesses. In 2021 the members of the Columbus EDA included:

Jesse Preiner (President, Mayor)

Sue Wagamon (Commissioner, Council Member)

Shelly Logren (Treasurer, Council Member)

Janet Hegland (Commissioner, Council Member)

Robert Busch (Commissioner, Council Member)

Robert Berens (Vice President, At-large)

Mark Daly (Commissioner, At-large)

At their 2020 meeting, the EDA elected the following officers for 2021:

Elizabeth Mursko (Executive Director, Assistant Treasurer, Secretary)

Jessica Hughes (Assistant Secretary)

In 2020 the EDA recognized that Columbus is on the brink of significant development coming to the area. 2021 brought the beginnings of this development and changes will be happening to the landscape of the City.

2021 In Review

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect how business was conducted in 2021, it did not change the trajectory of Columbus' growth. City Staff continued to process a considerable number of applications and City representatives tackled numerous obstacles. The fruits of their effort can be seen driving through Columbus today: development on both sides of the I-35 and TH-97 interchange, new buildings erected in the south end of the City, and spots of updated infrastructure well-suited for the future addition of businesses. It is clear based on transportation projects, new and existing business, mixed-use developments, and what the future holds that the trajectory of Columbus' growth has been unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EDA is proud of what has been accomplished and what is to come.

Transportation Projects

In 2021 a major construction project was completed in the Freeway District – the reconstruction of Hornsby Street south of TH-97. The reconstruction project overhauled a 50+ year-old gravel road to create a 10-ton paved road capable of handling considerable truck traffic from current and future development on that road.

This portion of Hornsby Street is the main thoroughfare in the City's Highway Commercial and General Business Zoning Districts. Completing this



Paving of Hornsby Street in June of 2021

improvement will facilitate the these districts' growth by providing a road designed for heavier and more frequent traffic than before.

2021 also saw the completion of the extension of Zurich Street to the north of Lake Drive. The extension improves access to developable land in commercial and mixed-use zoning districts. In the future, this stretch of road will be used to reach a key area of the Columbus-owned freeway district.

New and Existing Business

The most visible and talked about change in the freeway district in 2021 was the beginning of the Love’s Travel Stops development in the southeast I-35 quadrant. Crews officially broke ground on October 11th, 2021, to begin construction of the considerably sized travel plaza.



North Elevation of Columbus' Love's Travel Stop

This development will include fresh food and snack options, gas for trucks and commuter

vehicles, a separate truck service building, a Godfather’s Pizza, and a Hardee’s. Overall, the travel plaza is expected to bring roughly 60 new jobs to the area. The anticipated opening date is summer of 2022, depending on weather. The EDA is thrilled to have this development come to Columbus.

The other visible change to the area is located on the west side of the I-35 interchange, next door to the newly-finished Viking Industrial – EcoFun Motorsports. EcoFun is in the process of constructing a 31,000 square foot building that will house a storefront, warehouse, and



EDA Members Attend a Ceremonial Groundbreaking of the EcoFun Site in Columbus

service center all in one location. This is a family-owned business specializing in scooters, mopeds, youth ATVs, youth snowmobiles, motorcycles, electric bicycles, ATVs and side by sides.

Construction began in October of 2021 and is expected to be complete in Spring 2022. The EDA is happy to welcome such a reputable family-owned business to the area. EcoFun’s new building will certainly set the tone for retail destination in the the commercial district on the northwestern side of the I-35 interchange.

In addition to these developments in the freeway district, change is also happening in the Commercial/Industrial district on the south end of the City. A preliminary plat for “Waldoch Addition” was recently approved by the City for a large piece of land on the west side of Lake Drive. This plat creates 7 new commercial properties which will be accessed by a new road to be extended from Lake Drive.

Approvals were recently granted for one of those lots to Street Smart Rental, a traffic safety equipment rental and sales company. Street Smart is the industry’s largest rental provider of specialized traffic safety equipment.

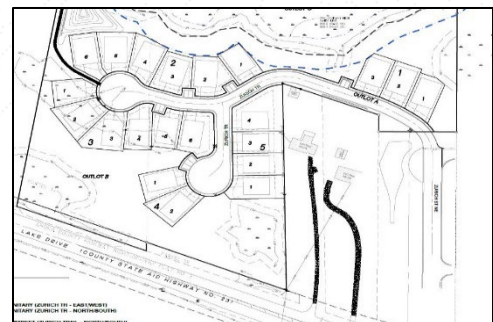


Street Smart Rental – Credit: streetsmartrental.com

They will be constructing an office/warehouse building in the Waldoch Addition, with outdoor storage in the back for their products.

Mixed-Use Development

One of the newest zoning districts established in the City is Mixed-Use Medium Density, located to the west of the new Zurich Street extension. In 2021 the City Council approved plans for the first residential development in this district – St. Clair Lakes. This development will include 21 detached



St. Clair Lakes Plat

townhomes located in a neighborhood accessed from the new extension of Zurich Street. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2022.

2022: Looking Ahead

2022 is already shaping up to be a big year for economic development and growth in Columbus. In addition to the completion of Love’s Travel Stop and EcoFun Motorsports, new construction is anticipated to begin for Caribou Coffee and Hy-Vee Fast ‘n Fresh locations in the NE I-35 quadrant.

The City Council recently approved a site plan for a Caribou Cabin just off Hornsby Street to the north of TH-97. This location will provide drive-thru service, with limited seating outside the building. This is a new concept for Caribou Coffee and other coffee businesses throughout the country. This establishment will undoubtedly draw attention and traffic to the City.



Caribou Cabin Concept in St. Peter, MN

Land in the NE I-35 quad is also ready and waiting for Hy-Vee’s Fast ‘n Fresh location to be built just across Hornsby Street from where the Caribou Cabin will be located. This development has been long anticipated and will be scheduled at Hy-Vee’s direction.

Transportation projects never seem to stop in the City of Columbus, and 2022 will be no different. A kickoff meeting will be held in January to begin discussion on the extension of W. Freeway Drive to the north. A roundabout was recently installed at the intersection of W. Freeway Drive and Lake Drive,



North West Freeway Drive Roundabout Sign

and this project would extend the fourth leg of that roundabout to additional commercial land available for development.

The extension of this road is a continuation of the I-35W overlay and TH-97 bridge project completed in 2020. W. Freeway Drive to the north is a crucial component of the area’s infrastructure – providing access to land that is adjacent to the freeway on the northwest side.

Lastly on the docket for 2022 is continued collaboration with Anoka County’s Economic Development Director



Anoka County Regional Economic Development Logo

Samantha Markman and Minnesota Technology Corridor Representatives. Markman works to ensure Anoka County is prepared for development and helps facilitate connections between developers and Cities ready for development. Her expertise and connections are highly valuable and will be utilized to bring the best talent and stakeholders to Columbus’ growing commercial areas.

The Minnesota Technology Corridor is a partnership between entities in the area to attract tech businesses. The group actively seeks projects suitable for land in Anoka County – including lots along Hornsby Street and I-35 in Columbus. Such available land in Columbus exhibits desired attributes for targeted tech businesses and the MN Tech Corridor group will proactively work to promote this land to a national audience and attract the ideal developments.