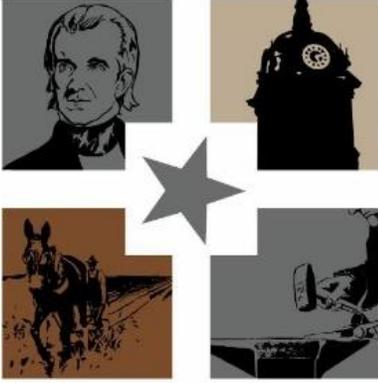


CITY OF COLUMBIA



T E N N E S S E E

Something good around every corner.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2016

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Columbia City Council Establishes the “City of Columbia Arts District”

COLUMBIA, Tennessee – The Columbia City Council approved a special zoning overlay on second and final reading of an ordinance establishing the *City of Columbia Arts District* at the July 14 City Council meeting. The special zoning overlay creates the legal framework for a “live-work” district adjacent to the historic commercial downtown district in Columbia.

The *City of Columbia Arts District’s* (CAD) provides an additional property right for owners and tenants for properties within the special zoning overlay limited for use of artists/artisans and the establishment of artistic and creative enterprises, workshops, and retail and living spaces regardless of existing zoning classifications. Allowing mixed-used zoning for arts enterprises, property owners and tenants in the new CAD will enjoy more flexibility within the district. The new Arts District and Downtown Columbia are the only two areas within the Columbia city limits at present to permit mixed land use alternatives for neighborhood residents and business owners.

The project to establish an arts and cultural district in Columbia began with the creation of the Columbia Arts Council in 2014. The Columbia Arts Council was established “to promote the Arts in the City of Columbia through awareness, appreciation, education and support thereby creating a connection between artists and audiences to enrich the quality of life for all and position the greater Columbia area as an arts rich community and regional arts destination.” Members of the Columbia Arts Council, along with a representative from the City Council and City Administration would travel to Paducah, KY in July 2015 to visit the Paducah Arts District to see firsthand the economic and community development/redevelopment successes that a similar cultural district provided after a decade plus project in Paducah.

The City Council included creation of a Columbia Arts District in the current year 2015-2016 strategic plan in August 2015. By October, staff worked towards the objective of creating an arts district in Columbia, one of the more ambitious activities included in the annual strategic plan.

Work began with the Columbia Arts Council at which time a loose arts district concept had been discussed based on the Paducah, KY. Research of arts and cultural districts in Tennessee and

nationwide also aided staff as the review included cities that ranged in size, proximity to metro versus rural areas and activities that the City would assume responsibility were considered.

The ultimate goal was to create a dynamic and vibrant Arts District in Columbia that would promote arts and culture, serve as one more “destination” making element complimenting the city’s numerous arts and culture destinations and attractions, and act to enhance economic and community development in the CAD neighborhood, the surrounding area and citywide. The Columbia Arts Council approved a district map in December 2015 and broad objectives for the proposed Arts District in January 2016.

Columbia Arts Council and Development Services Department staff then began collaborating on focusing the broad objectives discussed by the Columbia Arts Council and drafting a special zoning overlay. The overlay is a legal instrument that would, as proposed, establish rules for a place where artists, musicians, artisans and creatives can: live and work in a walkable neighborhood with an identity ground in the arts and culture; encourage the engagement in artistic enterprises in close proximity to Downtown Columbia's Commercial Historic District and other cultural and tourism assets in and near Downtown Columbia; enjoy easy access to Downtown Columbia, the proposed area between S. High Street to S. Garden Street, which is immediately adjacent and connected to the downtown commercial area; and locate and operate a neighborhood that allows mixed residential and commercial uses, i.e., live and work, which includes the sale of goods and services for creative and arts-related enterprises.

Mike Greene, City Council liaison to the Columbia Arts Council and a local artisan, recently noted the calls and visits that he has received following from interest in the district over the last two years generated when the Columbia Arts Council was established and the first conversation of an arts district took place. Since that time, Councilman Greene has worked with several artists that have already relocated to the district and building gallery space at present, a music industry representative in Nashville expressing interest in the new district and has received calls as far away as Chicago, where a portrait painter has actively sought commissions in the area as well as pursued the purchase of a residential dwelling located in the district. Over the last week, City staff has received calls from the Middle Tennessee region and as far away as Ohio. The native Ohio artist referenced existing plans to move to Columbia and expressed interest in the new Arts District after learning about the district form their realtor.

Arts, history and culture make Columbia an existing and natural arts hub in both the Middle and South Central regions of Tennessee. Bustling with activity, the neighboring historic commercial downtown area adjacent to the *City of Columbia Arts District* and the city more broadly offers high quality-of-life amenities, the feel of *small town life* and charm that appeals to virtually any and all types of life preferences, be it rural or urban, and a home-grown arts and music scene only 45 miles South of Nashville. With ease and direct access to I-65 driving north or south, Columbia also boasts a well-maintained network of US and State Route highways in addition to the regional airport and rail access.

Perhaps most notable is that historically Columbia is and remains one of *Tennessee’s Great Cities*. Presently, Columbia falls within both the Middle and South Central Tennessee market areas, serving as a trade hub to cities and counties in South Central Tennessee. The city is experiencing renewed population growth, new commercial development activity that includes

record retail sales activity in the historic city center and new and developing commercial corridors, and the strongest pace of new residential development in well over a decade.

Columbia faces a unique opportunity to ensure that the arts is a driving economic and cultural force in the city moving forward, anticipated to promote continued downtown growth, attract creatives and young professionals in particular, among others, and serve as the primary arts and cultural anchor in the South Central Tennessee region. Additionally, arts and cultural districts in other cities and states have facilitated neighborhood renewal and ground-up community development. Finally, cultural districts are destinations that bring tourists, which the *City of Columbia Arts District* is expected to increasingly attract visitors as the district grows.

According to Mayor Dean Dickey, “the new arts district will continue to evolve and grow as artists continue to move to the neighborhood and as the city begins infrastructure improvements already planned and new projects under review and consideration which will all work to improve the neighborhood at the center of the new arts district and demonstrate the city’s commitment to the *City of Columbia Arts District*.”

As the city and region experiences historic growth with Columbia cultivating new, high-quality amenities and superior municipal services within the region, the city is well positioned to leverage current arts and culture assets, diverse and appealing natural and built environments and unique community character to capture artists, artisans, and creatives as the City continues to grow and pursue numerous initiatives focused on continually improving quality of life in Columbia, where the City’s motto continues to ring: “*Something good around every corner.*”

For more information on the *City of Columbia Arts District*, go to www.columbiatn.com/community/ and select “Arts & Culture” on the left side menu.

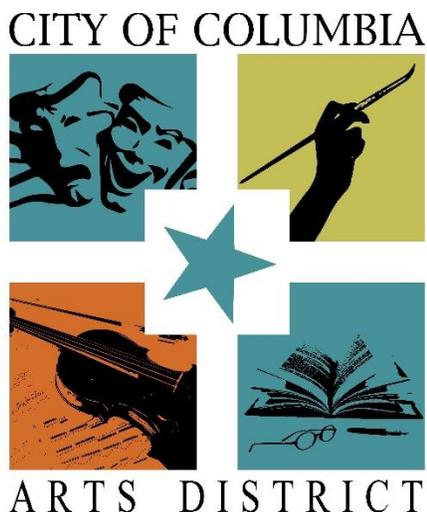


Photo above shows the City of Columbia Arts District logo.