Creating a Cohesive Parkway for the Corridor

Why did you select this project (4th year) and why you chose your study area?

In selecting my project, I looked at the entire corridor as an integral part of the City of Cincinnati transportation network, and as a route that is often underappreciated by those who regularly traverse it. The City of Cincinnati has many major arterial streets, but few serve as a major east-west transportation route, and connect residences, businesses, parks, and recreation in the way that the Madison Road- Martin Luther King Drive- Hopple Street- Westwood Northern Boulevard Corridor does. As a result (and combined with the plethora of additional right-of-way that existed along the route), I saw the corridor as an opportunity to create a non-interstate, elegant, transportation route, connecting these many features.

Upon analyzing the route it was realized that bisecting the corridor are Central Parkway, Victory Parkway (formerly Bloody Run Parkway), the Gilbert Avenue Greenway (recently created as a gateway to Downtown Cincinnati), and Torrence Parkway. To the west of the study corridor, but along the same alignment is Westwood Northern Boulevard. With such connection to the existing Parkway System, it is only natural that an east-west, non-Interstate, connection be created.

What were you trying to accomplish with your plan?

With my plan, I attempted to create a “Parkway” in the Cincinnati Parks sense of the word, incorporating the features which the Cincinnati Park Board often incorporates in Parkways and Boulevards throughout the City. The route should be unique and memorable for the person traveling the route, with enhancements including landscaped medians, street trees and other streetscape improvements, improvement of pocket parks, gateways, and public art features, as identified in the Cincinnati Parks Centennial Master Plan.

What theory did you derive your approach from? (4th yr only- be specific on the theorist or theory involved and where you found it)

The theory involved in this project originated out of the 1907 publication “A Park System for the City of Cincinnati” by George Kessler. This theory was revisited in subsequent Park plan updates in Cincinnati, and therefore warranted investigation for the subject corridor.

What existing plans or ideas from stakeholders (e.g.recent city plans or plans as described by our city visitors) were you responding to and in what way?
Firstly, many of Councilwomen Qualls’s comments regarding the proposed Hopple Street interchange reconfiguration revolved around the prominence of Central Parkway in regard to the Cincinnati System of Parkways and Boulevards. This sparked my interest in creating an important component of the cohesive Parkway and Boulevard System.

Several individuals from the Department of Transportation and Engineering of the City of Cincinnati visited our class throughout the quarter. Ideas that were gained from these individuals included narrowing lanes through the use of traffic islands and medians, removing dedicated 24 hour on-street parking where it was not heavily utilized, and replacing it with fewer lanes (and rush hour restricted parking).

Also, the Centennial Parks Master Plan, as well as the 1907 Parks Plan by George Kessler, and updated that occurred between the two plans were consulted regarding ideal designs for Parkways and Boulevards.

**What precedents did you learn from or use in your plan? (be specific with references)**

While analyzing many local examples (as mentioned before), as well as the Great Streets text of Allen Jacobs, I was able to learn what design features constitute well designed streets, where streets would interact best with pedestrians and motorists, while relating to the setbacks of surrounding structures.

**What aspects of your plan did the engineering students contribute to?**

The Engineering students provided valuable information regarding standard (and acceptable) lane widths, structural information regarding bridges and overpasses (as what could be built on them, and what could not be built on them), The engineers also provided random cost estimates (what was expensive, what was probably cost prohibitive, etc).

**Comprehensive Corridor Improvements**

- **Lighting** on the corridor should be distinctive and unifying, while creating an attractive environment for both motorists and pedestrians.
- **Reforestation** of the right-of-way along the route is necessary. Trees should be installed to reduce the travel speed of traffic and create a continuation of green along the corridor. Trees and unique landscaping should be incorporated in medians when possible.
- Where the existing right-of-way is ample for the amount of traffic that exist along the route, **medians** should be installed to reduce the pavement width and create a continuous “park-like atmosphere” for the corridor.
- **Power lines** should be relocated below grade when possible. Due to the high cost of relocating these lines, consolidation to one side of the street is a less expensive option.
- Neighborhood and city **gateways** should be incorporated into the landscape of the corridor, when possible.
• A **single name** should be chosen for the route. Preferably, this name should invoke some of the **historical context** of the route.

**The Grand Residential Boulevard**

“Generally wide, such streets are invariably **tree-lined**, they often have **graceful curves**, they are shaded and cool in the summer. They come with or without a planted median and they are long. Lined with **large homes, spaced at some distance from each other and well set back from the street on cared-for lawns**, these **bespeak a sense of well-being**.” Great Streets (Allan B. Jacobs)

The segment of Madison Road between the DeSales Corner Neighborhood Business District and the O’Bryonville Neighborhood Business District is a prime example of a potential “Grand Residential Boulevard”. Lined with **opulent mansions with large setbacks and well manicured lawns**, this area provides a nearly ideal atmosphere as is. However, the **installation of a landscaped median**, the removal of unused dedicated 24/7 onstreet parking (and replacement with rush hour restricted curb lane parking), and installation of **decorative lighting and street trees** would create a truly **elegant parkway with scenic vistas** through the corridor.

**Bridge and Viaduct Enhancements**

Bridges and viaducts should receive decorative viaduct treatments, including **decorative lighting and railings**. Those bridges, overpasses, and viaducts that occur along the route should be iconic and evoke the **architecture and character of the surrounding neighborhoods**. These structures define the corridor to those on routes that bisect the corridor.

**Proposed Interchange Improvements**

The planned interchange with Interstate 71 and the redesigned interchange with the Mill Creek Expressway (Interstate 75) should incorporate **architecturally distinctive overpass and underpass designs**. Pedestrian and vehicular needs should be balanced in these designs, in an attempt to create a pedestrian friendly vehicular arterial.

**History of the Parkway System**

Originating as part of the 1907 **Kessler Plan for Cincinnati Parks**, a comprehensive system of Parkways and Boulevards was established for the Cincinnati area that would **connect parks, landmarks, geographical districts and greenspaces through a series of “landscape scenery, architectural scenery, or some combination.”**

Subsequent plans have invoked this plan and the concepts involved with them, leading future parks plans to retain a Parkway plan for the City. These plans have morphed into elegant major transportation routes, including Central Parkway, Columbia Parkway, Torrence Parkway, Victory Parkway, and Westwood Northern Boulevard.

**What Makes a “Parkway”?**

• Parkways are “intended for **significant roadways** in the city-wide roadways network”.
• **Existing or potential scale of right-of-way** to accommodate “parkway and/or boulevard enhancements” is necessary.
The following elements should be incorporated, when possible:

“street trees, forested/native planting areas, trails and other forms of alternate transportation, open lawns or meadows, ornamental landscaped areas, decorative lighting and furnishings, public art features, neighborhood/district gateways, architectural features, and/or wayfinding signs”

- Inherent scenic potential should exist, whether architectural or geographic, and is paramount to a successful design.
- The route should be memorable, and invoke emotion in those traversing it.

Major Route Connectivity
The corridor crosses countless major arterials and two interstates, providing an essential east-west route between the Mill Creek Valley and the far East Side, connecting eleven Cincinnati neighborhoods and two municipalities. Four major neighborhood business districts exist along this corridor (Camp Washington, O’BRYonville, Oakley Square, and Madisonville).

Providing direct access from corporation line to corporation line, the Westwood Northern Boulevard- Hopple Street- Martin Luther King Drive- Madison Road corridor is one of the few streets to provide seamless, non-interstate access across the City of Cincinnati (with the exception of the four name changes that occur).