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Wydown Boulevard: Clayton, Missouri



Summary

Known as much for its scenery and attractiveness for walking, jogging, and biking as its dignified historic neighborhoods, Wydown Boulevard serves both public and private users equally well.

DESIGNATED AREA

The entire 1.6-mile length of the street, from Skinker Boulevard at the east end to Hanley Road at the west end.



Originally a streetcar right-of-way, Wydown's wide and verdant median spans the length of the boulevard and serves as a popular walking route. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Simons.

PLANNING EXCELLENCE

Known as much for its scenery and attractiveness for walking, jogging, and biking as its dignified historic neighborhoods, Wydown Boulevard serves both public and private users equally well.

The street's origins date back to the early 1900s when wealthy St. Louis businessmen sought to escape urban congestion. Four subdivisions were built along the street that reflected the garden city concepts and sensitivity to the natural environment advocated by Henry Wright, Lewis Mumford, and the Regional Planning Association of America.

The gentle curves of Wydown Boulevard are lined with more than 100 architecturally prominent single-family houses. The residences, in turn, form a visually harmonious backdrop to the Gothic buildings of Washington University. Moorlands Addition, a historic apartment district bordering the avenue's western-most block, offers multi-family housing. Remnants from the boulevard's history as a streetcar line and host of the 1904 World's Fair are also evident.

The wide and verdant median, defined by its lush tree canopy and footpath, acts as an extension of Forest Park, the eastern terminus of the boulevard. Wydown Boulevard's reputation as a safe right-of-way attracts pedestrians of all sorts throughout the day and evening, from elementary, middle school, and college students to residents, joggers, and bicyclists.



Wydown Boulevard is characterized by large, single-family homes. Its esteemed neighborhoods exhibit ideas espoused by the Regional Planning Association of America in the early 1900's and advocated sensitivity to the natural landscape. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Simons.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS, FEATURES

Planning Legacy, Historic Neighborhoods

- Four National Register historic districts share a border with Wydown: Brentmoor Park, Brentmoor and Forest Ridge District (added 1982); Carrswold District (1982); Wydown-Forsyth District (1988); Moorlands Apartment District (2009)
- Separation of City of St. Louis from St. Louis County in 1876 led Clayton to become county seat; first streetcar (1895) to run along what is now the Wydown Boulevard median connected Clayton to St. Louis; set stage for area development

- Subdivisions along trolley line originally developed as "private places," characterized by large 1- to 3-acre lots with traditionally designed single-family estates, mature trees, and native plants
- Four subdivisions platted in the early 1900s were either designed by or reflected ideals expressed by Henry Wright who, along with Lewis Mumford, became a member of the Regional Planning Association of America (organized in 1923) and advocated a restructuring of urban living with a higher sensitivity to the natural environment
- Brentmoor Park, Brentmoor, and Forest Ridge subdivisions (platted 1910, 1911, 1913 respectively) designed by Wright; Carrswold subdivision (platted 1924) designed by Jens Jensen and based on Wright and Mumford's principles
- Wydown-Forsyth District between Washington University and Forest Park includes Georgian, Tudor, Spanish, Italian, and French Eclectic homes set back on well-manicured lawns; planned by Forest Park designer Julius Pitzman in 1874
- Moorlands Addition, originally planned as a "private place" in 1922 by Julius Pitzman, adopted revisions to allow multi-family housing in 1926 to accommodate a wider range of residents; the period-style, low-rise apartments add variety to large single-family homes along boulevard

Impressive Streetscape

- Zoning ordinance restricts buildings heights to no more than 35 feet for houses and 45 feet for apartment buildings along boulevard
- Architectural Review Board approval for all construction
- City of Clayton forms partnership in 2007 with Washington University, Fontbonne University, and the Clayton School District to improve median's landscaping and to maintain it as a linear park
- A diversity of mature trees line the median and sidewalks, forming lush canopy

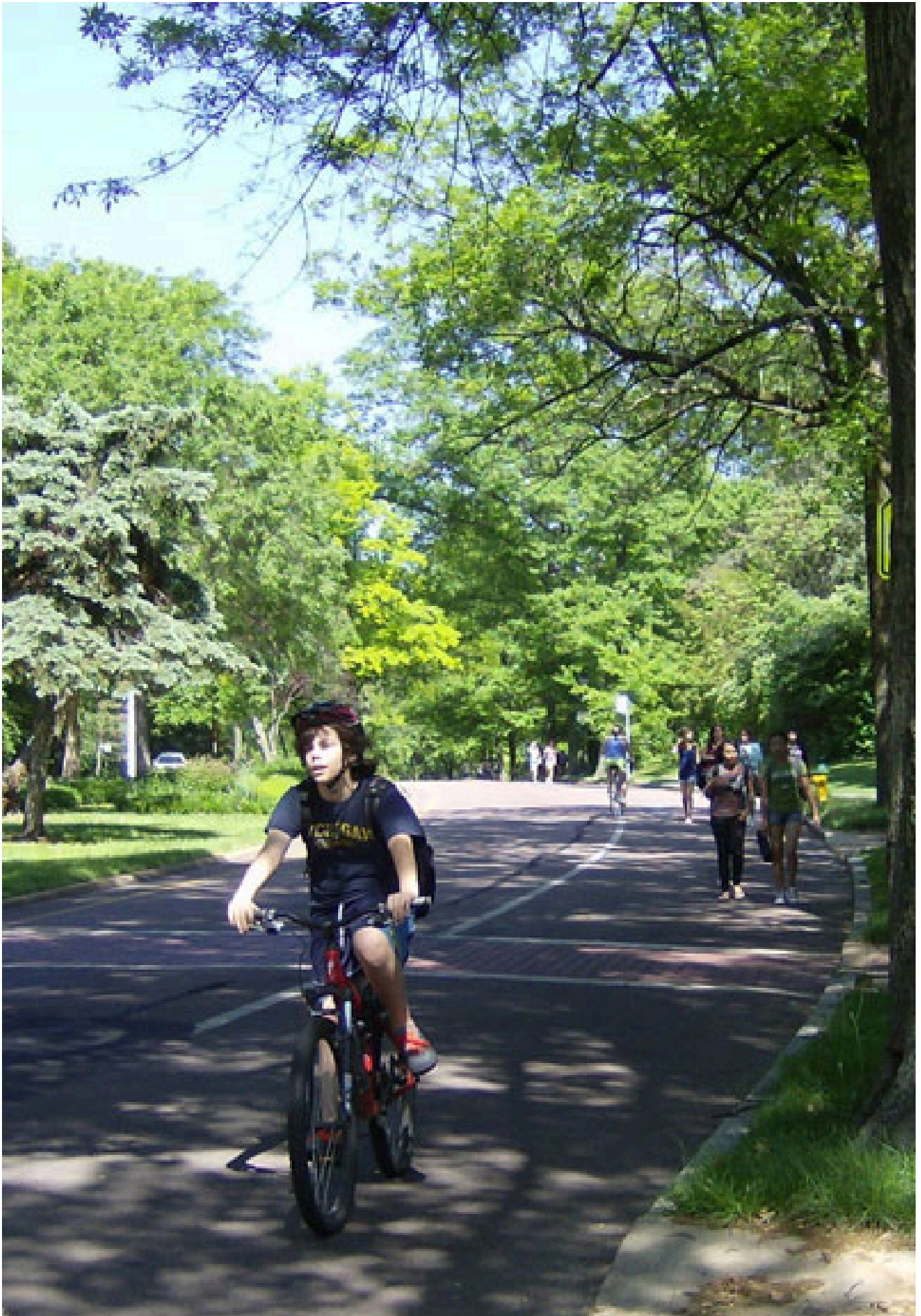
Unique Design

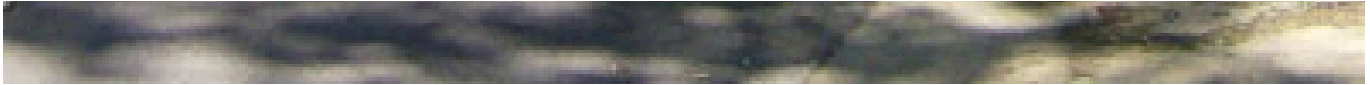
- Fernando Botero's "Man on Horse" statue creates a distinct gateway at the western end (intersection with Hanley Road); the 1.25 ton bronze sculpture was put in place in 1999 by St. Louis Gateway Foundation
- Boulevard's eastern end marked by entryway to Forest Park — a 1,300-acre urban park that is 50 percent larger than New York City's Central Park
- Raised, planted median (as wide as 40-feet) separates two lanes of vehicular traffic, five-foot-wide bike lanes, and seven-foot-wide parallel parking lanes
- Four stone streetcar boarding stations still remain from the late 1800s when boulevard's median accommodated trolley car tracks

- Wydown Terrace, located in the Wydown-Forsyth District in the eastern portion of the boulevard, is a sunken park remnant of a large, man-made lake (Arrowhead Lake) built for the 1904 World's Fair
- Wydown Park, located just east of Hanley Road along the boulevard, is a one-half acre relaxing retreat; renovated in 2002; includes seasonal gardens, stone sculptures, and patio area with tables and chairs

Street Use


- Median transformed into footpath in when trolley line transitioned to a bus route in 1949; City of Clayton, neighboring educational institutions install reinforced turf (2007) to prevent deterioration
- Bike lanes completed in 2009; part of 77-mile on-street Bike St. Louis network
- Two MetroBus bus routes serve Wydown and connect it to Downtown Clayton, MetroLink light rail stations, Washington University Medical Campus, and St. Louis Community College; three mid-block crosswalks provide mobility to pedestrians and easier access to and from median







Wydown Boulevard's picturesque streetscape attracts bikers and joggers to the thoroughfare. The street's continuous bike lanes connect to Forest Park and a regional 77-mile on-street trail throughout St. Louis. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Simons.

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