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in Columbia



Friends Await at ACA

Dive into the relationships and marketing opportunities that define the ACA Business Club of Columbia's impact in our city. Get to know members and stories on page 33.

Modern living
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What's inside?

Communities & Neighborhoods • Education in Columbia • Where to eat, play & explore • Wellness & Retirement resources • Plus plenty more!

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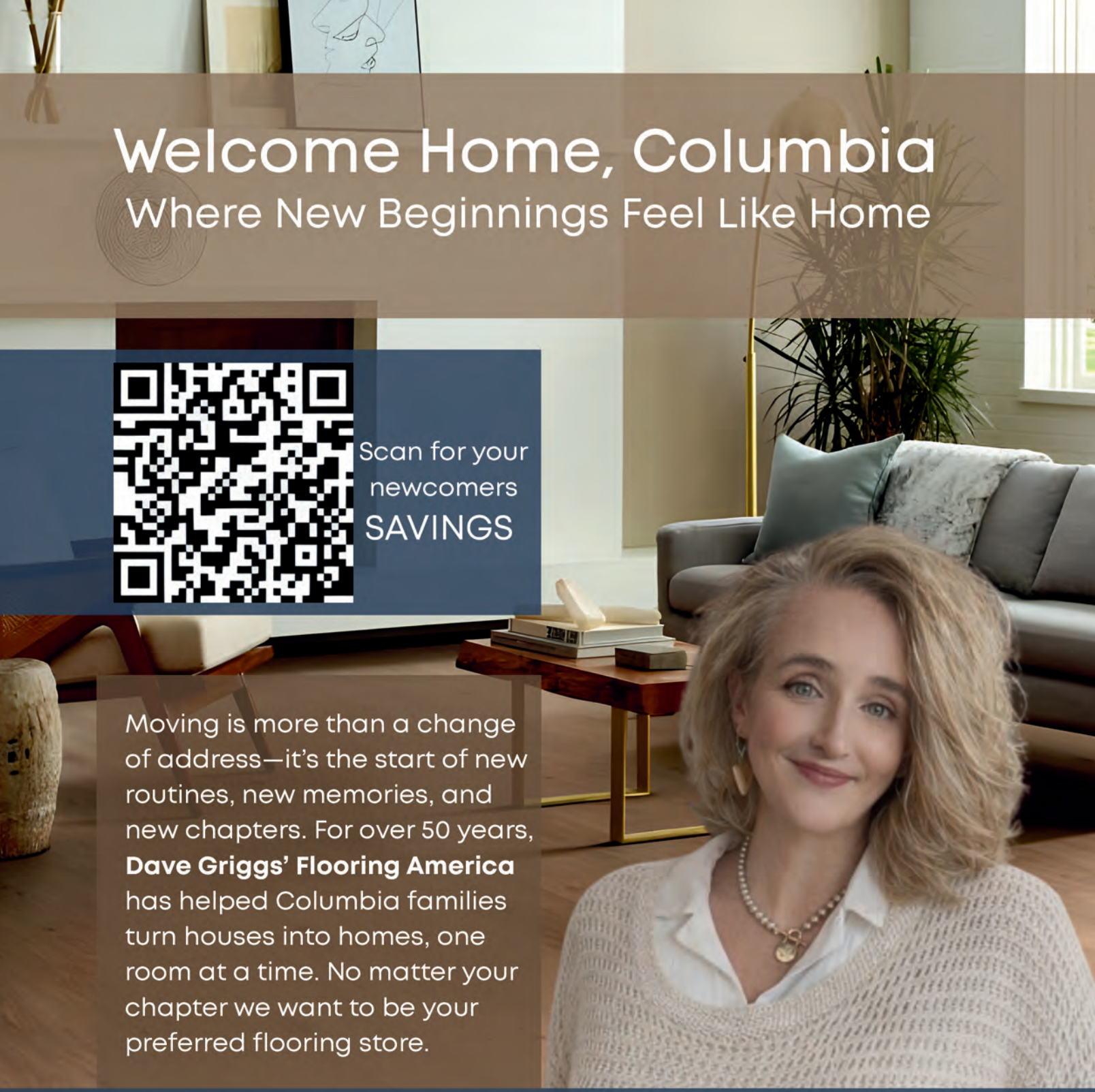
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Relocating in Columbia

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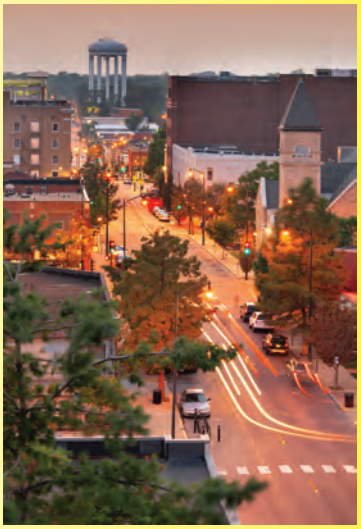
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Welcome to Columbia!

Columbia is more than just a place to live—it's a vibrant, welcoming community rich in culture, education, business opportunity and midwestern charm. From its thriving arts scene and local dining to its beautiful parks and strong sense of community, Columbia offers something for everyone.

Through both our print publication and our online platform, we strive to be a trusted resource for newcomers—connecting them with local experts, highlighting essential services and sharing the stories that make Columbia such a special place to call home. Whether you're just beginning your search or settling into your new life here, we're honored to be part of your journey.

Lili Vianello
Editor

Relocating in Columbia

Relocating in Columbia is made possible by a dedicated team of local professionals passionate about showcasing the very best of Columbia and helping newcomers feel right at home.

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Columbia, Missouri at a Glance

Where education, culture and community meet.

Columbia, Missouri offers a unique blend of small-city charm and big-city opportunities. Known for its vibrant energy and regional leadership, it is a place where a high quality of life meets a deep-rooted history of innovation.

Location & Regional Context

Columbia is the county seat of **Boone County** and serves as the hub of **Central Missouri**. Strategically situated at the crossroads of **Interstate 70 and U.S. Highway 63**, the city is located roughly midway between St. Louis and Kansas City (about 120 miles from each) and approximately 30 miles north of the state capital, Jefferson City. The community is also nestled near the scenic Missouri River.

Community Snapshot

With a city population of approximately **132,000** and a county population reaching **186,000**, Columbia maintains a youthful and dynamic atmosphere. The median age is roughly **29 years**, a figure heavily influenced by its robust student population. The city is celebrated for successfully blending college-town energy with quiet, family-friendly neighborhoods.


Jessica Capshaw


Jon Hamm



J'Den Cox

Martin Gabor/UWW

Notable People Connected to Columbia

Columbia has been home to, or the alma mater of, many influential figures:

Born in or Long-time Residents: Carl Edwards (NASCAR), Jessica Capshaw (Actor), J'den Cox (Olympic wrestler), Rob Benedict (Actor), Kate Capshaw (Actor), Sophie Cunningham (WNBA), and Michael Porter Jr. (NBA).

University of Missouri Alumni: Brad Pitt (Actor), Jon Hamm (Actor), Sheryl Crow (Musician), Sam Walton (Founder of Walmart) and David Koechner (Actor/Comedian).

A Brief History of Columbia

Founded in **1821**, Columbia was settled by pioneers from Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia who were drawn to the area's fertile land. The city is named for Lady Columbia, the historical female personification of the United States.

A turning point occurred in **1839** when Columbia was selected as the site for the **University of Missouri**, the first public university west of the Mississippi River. While the community was divided during the **Civil War**, it avoided large-scale destruction, allowing for steady growth through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

By the mid-20th century, Columbia gained national recognition for the world-renowned **Missouri School of Journalism**. Today, it is recognized as one of the state's most progressive and livable cities.

Education, Workforce & Economic Strength

Columbia is a powerhouse for higher education, research and workforce development. Home to the **University of Missouri (Mizzou)**, the state's flagship research university, the city also features **Columbia College**, **Stephens College** and **Moberly Area Community College (MACC)**, along with a range of trade and vocational schools that strengthen the skilled workforce.

This concentration of academic and technical training fuels a strong local economy anchored in education, healthcare, insurance, financial services and government research. Major regional employers include the University of Missouri, Boone Health and Shelter Insurance, reinforcing Columbia's reputation as a center for opportunity and long-term growth.


Photo by Notley Hawkins

Climate & Average Temperatures

Columbia experiences four distinct seasons within a humid continental climate:

Winter: Highs of 40–45°F | Lows of 20–27°F

Spring: Mild to warm with seasonal rain

Summer: Highs of 85–89°F | Lows of 65–69°F

Fall: Cool, pleasant and colorful

Annual Stats: Average temperature of ~54–55°F; ~40–44 inches of precipitation; ~16–17 inches of snowfall.



City Leadership: Columbia

The City Council and administrative staff manage infrastructure, public safety and strategic planning. The legislative body is composed of six ward representatives who ensure each district has a voice in local governance.

Mayor: Barbara Buffaloe

City Manager: De'Carlon Seewood

Ward Representatives:

First Ward: Valerie Carroll

Second Ward: Vera Elwood

Third Ward: Jacque Sample

Fourth Ward: Nick Foster

Fifth Ward: Christina Hartman

Sixth Ward: Betsy Peters

Boone County Leadership

County officials work with specialized offices to guide the broader landscape, managing everything from election integrity to regional safety.

Presiding Commissioner: Kip Kendrick

District I Commissioner: Justin Aldred

District II Commissioner: Janet Thompson

Key Administrative Leaders:

Sheriff: Dwayne Carey

County Clerk: Brianna Lennon

Collector: Brian McCollum

Prosecuting Attorney: Roger Johnson



Kofi Adadey
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Volunteering in Columbia

Columbia's civic landscape is powered by a long tradition of "service above self," supported by dedicated chapters of international and local organizations. Groups like the various Rotary and Kiwanis clubs anchor the community through consistent philanthropy, funding everything from inclusive playgrounds to youth sports and literacy initiatives. Beyond direct service and fundraising, the League of Women Voters of Columbia-Boone County remains a vital non-partisan force for democracy. The organization provides voter education and hosts candidate forums that are staples of the local election season. These clubs have served as the backbone of local volunteerism for more than a century, fostering deep connections between residents and local needs.

Scan the QR code to view a list of civic organizations ▸▸▸



Columbia Dog Parks

Whether you have a high-energy pup who needs to sprint or a social butterfly who loves to splash, Columbia's dog parks offer some of the best off-leash experiences in mid Missouri. The city manages several distinct areas, each catering to different "dogalities." Garth Nature Area is a local favorite, boasting a massive three-acre fenced space where dogs can run full tilt. Twin Lakes Dog Park is perfect for water-loving pups, featuring the "Paws in the Pond" swimming area. For a more adventurous experience, Grindstone Nature Area offers a free-range, off-leash environment where well-trained dogs can explore wooded trails. Indian Hills and Cosmo Park provide reliable fenced-in spaces for fetch and socialization, complete with shaded benches for humans to relax while their furry friends play.

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Welcome to Columbia

A Newcomer's Guide to Getting Started

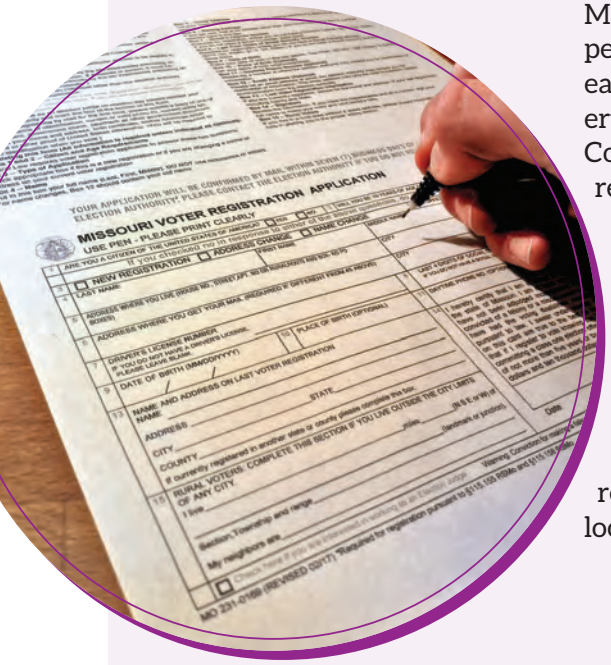
Moving to a new city comes with plenty of excitement — and just as many logistics. Columbia, Missouri, makes it easy to settle in, and with a little guidance, you can get your essential services in place quickly. Consider this your introduction to the resources that help new residents feel at home.

The Connection Exchange is a local resource designed to help you skip the "tourist" phase. Through a "Welcome Visit", they'll pair you with a Community Connector who can recommend local businesses and services that fit your lifestyle. It's a great way to start feeling like a local from day one.



Setting Up Utilities and City Services

Most core utilities in Columbia—including electricity, water, sewer and trash collection—are provided by the City of Columbia. New residents can start service online or by phone. Monthly billing is consolidated, which means you'll handle all city-managed services in one place.



Driver's Licenses, Vehicle Registration and Personal Property Tax

If you are new to Missouri, you'll need to update your driver's license and vehicle registration through the Missouri Department of Revenue. Columbia has two license offices, and wait times are often longest during lunch hours and late afternoons.

Missouri requires residents to pay personal property tax on vehicles each year. A paid personal property tax receipt from the Boone County Collector is required when renewing license plates.

Registering to Vote

New residents can register to vote through the Boone County Clerk's Office, online through the Missouri Secretary of State or at several public locations in the community. Once registered, you can participate in local, state and federal elections.

Trash Collection and Local Services

Trash service is included with your City of Columbia utilities account. Households can choose the cart size that best fits their needs, with trash collected weekly. The city also provides biweekly recycling, large-item pickup and seasonal disposal programs for added convenience.

Welcome to CoMo

Once you've checked off the essentials, you can start exploring what makes Columbia unique. The city offers a blend of quiet neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, extensive trails, parks, cafés and community events. Whether you're here for a few years or putting down long-term roots, Columbia has a way of making newcomers feel like they belong.

Scan here for more info and resources ▸▸▸



Where the Trails Lead

Columbia isn't just a college town, it's a sanctuary for outdoor enthusiasts. Boasting one of the most admired trail systems in the Midwest, the city maintains dozens of paths that stretch across lush parks, serene nature sanctuaries and dense wooded areas.

Whether you are looking for a challenging rugged terrain for a weekend hike or a scenic route for your morning run, Columbia's infrastructure has you covered. In fact, trail life is a core part of the local culture; according to city data, a staggering **82% of households** utilize the trail system.

A Trail for Every Pace

With more than **48 trails** listed in the Parks & Recreation directory, the variety is nearly endless. From paved, family-friendly strolls to backcountry paths that test your endurance, the message from the community is clear: in Columbia, there is a trail for everyone.



Local Favorites

If you're looking to explore, here are some standout networks that define the Columbia hiking and biking experience:

- **MKT Nature & Fitness Trail:** A local crown jewel. This trail is highly popular for biking and running, primarily because it serves as a vital connector to the famous Katy Trail.
- **Katy Trail State Park:** For those looking for distance, this scenic gravel trail spans more than 240 miles across the state and is accessible right from Columbia.
- **Devil's Icebox / Spring Brook Loop:** Perfect for the adventurous soul, this moderate hike features fascinating caves and unique, natural geological formations.
- **3M Wetland Trail:** A must-go for nature lovers and birdwatchers, offering a peaceful look at thriving wetland ecosystems and local wildlife.
- **Three Creeks Conservation Area:** If you prefer rugged terrain, this area offers limestone bluffs and natural bridges that make for a more strenuous yet rewarding trek.



Photo by Blocks Fletcher on Unsplash

Travel Made Easy

Columbia is centrally located in Missouri, with **Interstate 70** and **Highway 63** running directly through the city, making it one of the state's most accessible communities. I-70 connects Columbia to Kansas City and St. Louis, while Highway 63 provides a direct north–south route to Moberly and Jefferson City. The city is also served by **Columbia Regional Airport** with daily commercial flights. Rideshare fills the gaps when schedules or routes don't match your needs.

It's a city small enough to navigate easily, but connected enough to get you almost anywhere.



Photo source: www.como.gov

Public Transit

Best for: Daily commuting, budget-friendly travel

GoCOMO buses are free to ride, making them one of the most affordable ways to get around Columbia. Public transit also helps reduce traffic congestion and emissions, making it an environmentally friendly option.

Routes connect key areas including downtown, the University of Missouri, major shopping areas and residential neighborhoods. Many buses are equipped with bike racks, making it easy to combine biking and bus travel.



Cycling & Walking

Best for: Short trips, recreation or eco-friendly travel

Columbia is known for its extensive trail network, including the MKT Trail, which connects to the Katy Trail State Park. These trails make it easy to move through the city while enjoying scenic views.

Cycling and walking are both healthy and practical options. They provide great opportunities for fitness and are especially useful for avoiding traffic and parking challenges around campus and downtown.



Rideshare & Taxis

Best for: Late-night travel, airport trips or quick point-to-point rides

Rideshare services and local taxis offer on-demand convenience, eliminating the need to worry about parking. They're especially helpful for visitors who may not be familiar with the area.

Scan the QR code to find bus schedules, maps of Columbia and other commuter resources ▸▸▸

Buying or selling a home is a big decision, and having the right guidance matters!

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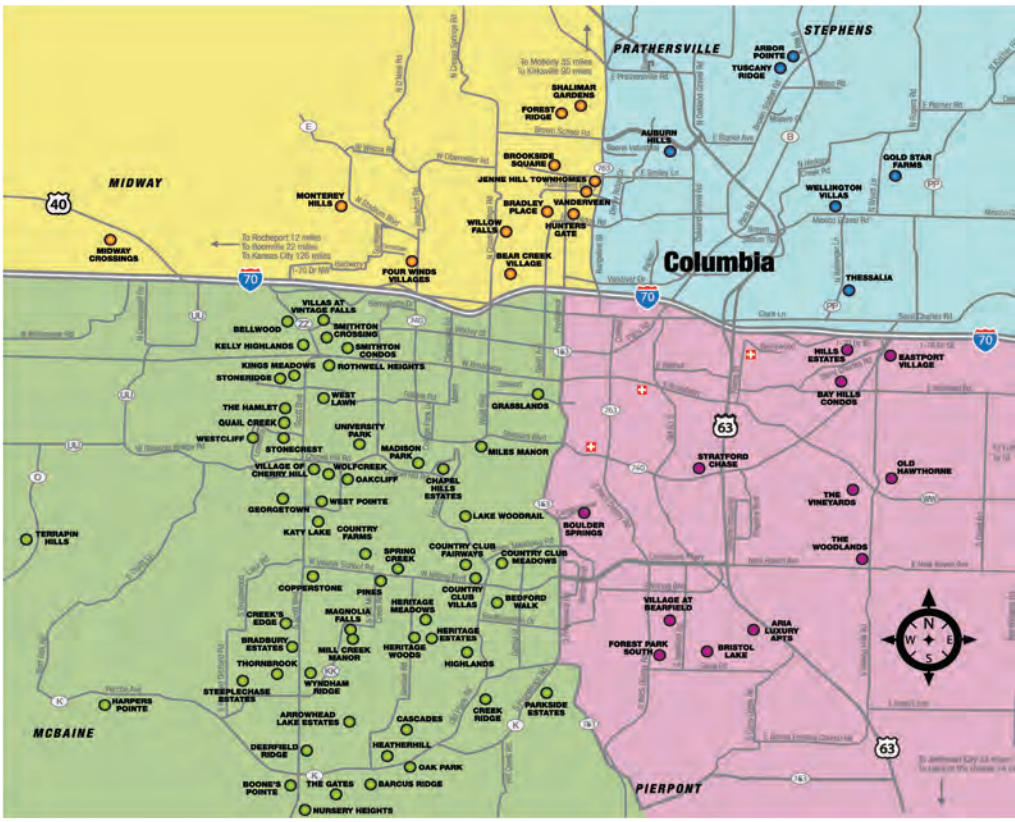
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Neighborhoods & Communities

Finding Your Place in Columbia

Choosing a neighborhood in vibrant Columbia, Missouri is more than selecting a house. It is about finding a community that aligns with your lifestyle, priorities and pace. From historic streets rich with character to thoughtfully planned developments with modern amenities, Columbia offers options for every stage of life. With strong public schools, expanding healthcare systems and steady residential growth, the city continues to attract families, young professionals and retirees alike.





Using the Map to Explore Columbia

Columbia's neighborhoods are often grouped by region.

- North Columbia features established residential areas and convenient access to Highway 63 and Interstate 70.
- Central Columbia includes the University of Missouri, the District Downtown and some of the city's most historic neighborhoods.
- South Columbia continues to grow with newer developments, family-friendly subdivisions and proximity to parks and trails.
- East Columbia offers quick highway access and a mix of long-standing communities and expanding residential areas.
- West Columbia is known for quiet streets and easy access to shopping and dining.

Insuring CoMo with Stephanie's Gold Standard

For State Farm Insurance Agent Stephanie Wilmsmeyer, the call to help others through insurance came from a deeply personal experience, one that instilled in her a lifelong mission to provide security and peace of mind to families and businesses in Missouri.

A Personal Journey to a Professional Calling

Born and raised in Boonville, Missouri, Stephanie experienced firsthand the profound impact of being prepared for life's uncertainties. As a young girl, she and her family faced the sudden loss of her father. With life insurance to cushion the financial blow, her family was able to navigate the financial strain caused by losing a parent. It was a defining moment—one that shaped her understanding of the crucial role insurance plays in protecting loved ones and securing futures.

By 2007, she had opened her own State Farm agency in Columbia, where she has since dedicated herself to serving individuals, families and business owners with personalized and proactive insurance solutions.

More Than a Policy—A Partnership in Protection

Whether it's securing a home, safeguarding a business or preparing for life's unpredictable moments, Stephanie ensures that each policy is crafted with a clear understanding of a client's present needs and future goals. She believes it's her job to ask the tough questions now so that she'll never need to look your family in the face and tell them why she didn't. "Insurance isn't just about policies; it's about people," Stephanie shares. "We take the time to understand each client's unique story, helping them build a safety net that supports their dreams and future."

Her commitment to the community extends beyond insurance—she actively supports local initiatives, small businesses and charitable organizations that make Columbia a thriving place to live and work. Stephanie remains passionate about helping clients protect what they love. If you're looking for a trusted insurance partner who understands the value of preparation, security and personal care, look no further than Stephanie Wilmsmeyer and her team.



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Turning Moves Into Milestones Across Mid Missouri

Central Missouri Real Estate stands as a reflection of what passion and community commitment can build. Led by Natalie Wier and her husband Aaron Wier, the brokerage has quickly become one of the most active and trusted teams in mid Missouri— consistently ranking among the leaders in transaction volume and customer satisfaction across the region.

Natalie's journey began with a deep-rooted understanding of Missouri communities and warm hospitality. Born in Marceline, MO—famously known as the hometown of Walt Disney—she has since planted roots in Columbia, raising her own family while helping countless others do the same. That personal perspective fuels her approach to real estate, especially when guiding families through the relocation process. She understands firsthand the importance of finding not just a house, but a place to truly call home.

As a full-service brokerage, **Central Missouri Real Estate** specializes in everything from first-time home purchases to investment properties and custom builds. Their clients benefit from a professional office environment where ideas come to life. Whether it's securing land, connecting with trusted builders and tradesmen, or touring homes across the area's diverse neighborhoods, every client receives personalized attention and expert guidance.

Known for innovative marketing strategies and a forward-thinking mindset, Natalie stays ahead of industry trends while maintaining a client-first philosophy. One of the most notable achievements for Natalie includes being named the **2022 Joel Radman Award** recipient. Realtors® in their first two years of service to the industry are the only agents that qualify for the award. This prestigious honor takes into account the realtor's sales numbers, level of industry knowledge, creative marketing efforts and contributions to the industry and community. Between winning awards, caring for family and treating clients to the service they deserve, Natalie, Aaron and their team at Central Missouri Real Estate stay true to their core values.

At the heart of it all is a simple promise: **Buy with confidence. Sell with success!**



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Art Lives Here.

Columbia's creative identity is deeply rooted in visual art and theatrical expression that elevate the city's cultural landscape. In 2007, the Missouri Arts Council named Columbia the state's first "Creative Community" in recognition of its vibrant arts industry and commitment to fostering a cultural environment.



Columbia's visual arts scene thrives year-round, with local and regional organizations showcasing emerging and established artists. **The Museum of Art and Archaeology** offers a respected permanent collection alongside traveling exhibitions, while the **North Village Arts District** features regional work through exhibitions, community events and the monthly First Fridays art crawl.



History buffs will enjoy the **State Historical Society of Missouri**, headquartered at the Center for Missouri Studies, where archives and exhibits bring Missouri's story to life. The **Boone County History & Culture Center** highlights local history, adding another layer to the city's rich cultural scene.

Theater is another cornerstone of Columbia's arts scene. Local groups such as **Talking Horse Productions**, **Columbia Entertainment Company**, **Maplewood Barn Community Theatre** and **TRYPS Children's Theater** present a wide range of performances, from classic plays and musicals to contemporary and original productions, along with youth-focused programming that nurtures the next generation of performers.

Columbia comes alive each year with performing arts events that showcase creativity and connect the community. The **True/False Film Festival** showcases innovative documentaries from around the world, the **Heritage Festival** highlights local and cultural traditions and the **Firefly Music Festival**, the Missouri Symphony's signature summer series, combines orchestral and chamber performances with artist talks and community events.

Scan here for more info and resources ▸▸▸

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Shaped by Place



Musical prodigy John William "Blind" Boone's home in Columbia is on the National Register of Historic Places and has been restored through the efforts of the John William "Blind" Boone Heritage Foundation.



Photo by Devry Becker Jones

Columbia is a city known for its vibrant culture and university energy, b ut beneath the modern streets lies a rich and often overlooked history: the story of its African American neighborhoods. This history is carefully preserved today along the *African American Heritage Trail*.

The African American Heritage Trail spans just more than two miles across downtown Columbia, yet it covers centuries of history. With 29 historic markers, the trail highlights key people, places and events that shaped the lives of Black residents in the city. Visitors can walk in the footsteps of entrepreneurs and community leaders, experiencing a part of Columbia that often remains invisible in everyday life.

The Heritage Trail features many key sites:

Sharp End: A cultural and economic hub for Columbia's Black community from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s, the Sharp End was home to Black-owned businesses, social clubs, meeting halls and more.

McKinney Hall: Built in 1917 by entrepreneur Frank McKinney, this hall hosted dances, social events and even national jazz stars like *Count Basie*, making it a cornerstone of Black cultural life.

Noble Court: Columbia's first Black subdivision, created in the 1930s by Lewis Monroe Noble and Mary Jennings Noble, provided quality housing during segregation. It was a lasting testament to community resilience.

Columbia Cemetery: Established in 1857, this historic cemetery includes a section dedicated to many prominent Black residents whose contributions shaped Columbia's civic, business and cultural history.

As you walk the trail, take time to reflect on the lives of the people who built and nurtured these communities. Their legacy is woven into Columbia's very foundation, and it's a story that continues to inspire.

Scan here for more info and resources ▸▸▸

The Historic Missouri Theatre



Photo courtesy University of MO Concert Series

Built in 1928, the **Missouri Theatre** is a stunning example of a pre-Depression "movie palace." Modeled after the Paris Opera House, its interior dazzles with ornate details, including an 1,800-pound Italian chandelier and gilded moldings that transport visitors to an era of elegance and spectacle. It has been carefully preserved and restored, earning designation as a National Historic Place. Originally a venue for vaudeville and silent films, the theater has evolved into a cultural hub, serving as the home of the Missouri Symphony and hosting a wide array of University of Missouri performances and concerts. Beyond its architectural splendor, the Missouri Theatre continues to be a vibrant gathering spot for arts and entertainment, drawing audiences from across the state.



Scan here for more info and resources ▸▸▸

Feel the BEAT!

Music pulses through Columbia, shaping the city's identity as a destination for both performance and music education. From concerts and competitions to touring musicians and local acts, Columbia supports music at every level.

The Missouri Symphony (MOSY) stands as a cultural anchor, bringing together musicians from across the country and offering performances ranging from orchestral staples to bold collaborations. As a premier stage for the **University Concert Series**, the historic **Missouri Theatre** anchors the city's music scene, hosting a blend of local productions and nationally acclaimed acts. For fans of live contemporary music, venues like **The Blue Note** and **Rose Music Hall** keep the city buzzing with local and touring rock, indie and jazz acts, making every night out an opportunity to discover new sounds.

Dance is equally vibrant in Columbia, with studios offering instruction for all ages and interests. **DanceArts of Columbia** and the **Columbia Performing Arts Center** provide high-quality training for dancers at every level, while other options, like **Bratten School of Irish Dance**, **Muse Pole Fitness** and **Midwest Country Connection** offer great variety.

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Ensuring a Connection to CoMo

Everyone's "Welcome to Columbia" story is unique. When Shelter Insurance® agent Krista first came to Columbia to attend college, she chose the big MIZ(ZOU) and relocated from Rolla with her high school sweetheart, Curt Kippenberger. Little did she know that as they continued to fall deeper in love, they'd both fall deeply in love with the town.

Columbia maintains a reputation as one of the best places to live, work and play in many surveys, yet it's the people who contribute to that culture.

"Having great schools for the kids, seeing a growing support system for business startups and enjoying the beautiful balance of parks to urban development, Columbia just immediately felt comfortable — felt like home," Krista Kippenberger says. "So, we settled in, started a couple of businesses and now do our best to contribute to the culture that kept us here after college."

Krista's business is her Shelter Insurance® agency located in the Broadway Shopping Center on West Broadway. Dr. Curt runs Focus on Health Chiropractic serving customers from his office at the Village of Cherry Hill in west Columbia.



Krista has grown her agency by being involved in multiple organizations such as the Chamber Ambassadors, Women's Network and the ACA Business Club. In addition, she is a board member for the Christian Fellowship School, the Columbia Ballet Academy and on the United Way Leadership Circle. This involvement has allowed her to get to know more about the community and see her customers from different perspectives.

"My favorite part of working with my customers is building meaningful, long-lasting relationships that go beyond just selling insurance policies. I enjoy getting to know my clients personally—their stories, goals and concerns—and being a trusted advisor who helps them navigate important decisions that impact their financial security and peace of mind."

This dedication to her clients has helped many individuals and families moving to Columbia. "I take pride in educating my clients about their options and empowering them to make informed choices. Whether it's helping a young family find the right life insurance policy to help protect their future, assisting a small business owner in safeguarding their livelihood or helping answer questions about the claims process, I find fulfillment in knowing I've made a positive difference in their lives."

Understanding the important legacy of Shelter Insurance®, with headquarters in Columbia, Krista Kippenberger continues to serve those who relocate here each year and have questions about new or existing coverage.



Startup City



Entrepreneurs in Columbia benefit from a supportive, well-connected community that helps turn ideas into thriving businesses. A strong network of nonprofits and civic organizations also fuels workforce development and collaboration, strengthening the local economy and moving the region forward together.

First Stop

Business owners in Columbia are backed by strong institutional support from day one. The **Columbia Chamber of Commerce** champions the local business community and creates opportunities for visibility, while the **City of Columbia Business License** office provides guidance through licensing and regulatory requirements. The **Missouri Small Business Development Center** offers no-cost, confidential advising and training. Growing companies can also tap into the **Missouri Innovation Center** for strategic mentoring and funding connections.

Many founders begin at **Regional Economic Development Inc.**, which drives business growth and attraction in Columbia and Boone County. The **Missouri Women's Business Center** supports women entrepreneurs with practical tools and counseling, while the **Community Foundation of Central Missouri** strengthens the broader business and nonprofit community through strategic funding and support.

Connection is at the heart of Columbia's entrepreneurial energy. Each Wednesday morning, **1 Million Cups** brings together early-stage founders who present their ideas to a room of peers, sparking collaboration. For professionals seeking consistent networking opportunities, **ACA Business Club** hosts regular coffee gatherings every Tuesday and Friday that foster meaningful business relationships in a relaxed setting.

In Columbia, launching a business does not mean going at it alone. From community engagement to ongoing mentorship, this city offers an environment designed to help entrepreneurs not just start, but succeed.

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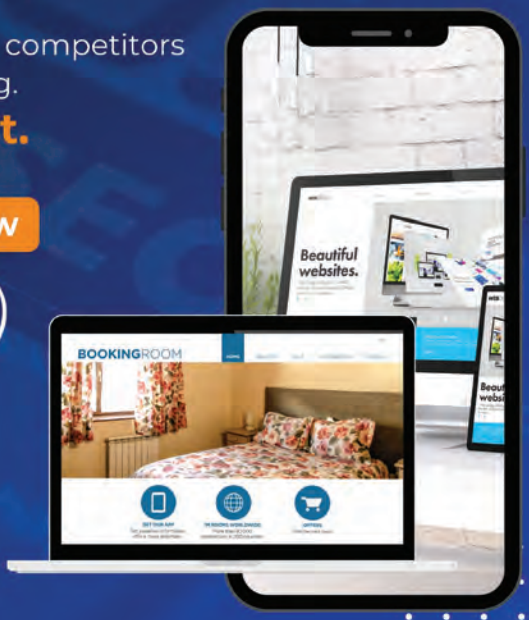
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Annie Fisher

Born in Columbia 1867 to two formerly enslaved parents, Annie Fisher became one of the cities most successful entrepreneurs. She built a business empire on her "real old Missouri style" cooking, specifically her famous beaten biscuits. Her culinary skills were so renowned that she won a gold medal at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair and even served President William Howard Taft. Fisher shipped her biscuits across the U.S. and parlayed her success into a full catering enterprise and later a restaurant. She used the profits to build herself a 16-room mansion, purchase rental properties for Black families and send her daughter to college—proving that "elbow grease" and business savvy could overcome the era's intense discrimination.

A New Chapter in Referral Networking

The Rise of Missouri Business Referrals

For many entrepreneurs, professional networking groups are a powerful engine for growth—creating referral pipelines, accountability and meaningful connections. But for some seasoned members, rigid structures and strict requirements can begin to feel limiting.

That was the experience of **Jen Wheeler**, owner of **Rock Bridge Insurance** in Columbia. Rather than let those challenges dissolve long-standing relationships, Wheeler and her colleagues made a decision to stay together—but on their own terms.

As **Mike Messer** of **Shelter Insurance** shared, "We chose to keep our relationships intact and build something that worked better for us."

Out of that decision came Missouri Business Referrals (MBR). "We kept the trusted referral partnerships," said **Dave Kopriva**, owner of **Dave's Painting**, while **Jason Richardson**, founder of **J & C Construction**, added, "and removed many of the restrictions that didn't fit our schedules."

The result is a more flexible, entrepreneur-friendly structure. Attendance expectations are relaxed, performance is encouraged through incentives rather than penalties and costs are lower. Owner of **Floating Ax Technologies**, **Ellis Benus** noted, "It's rewarding to bring in new partners and be recognized for it."

"We already had the trust," added **Doris Scribner**, the Human Resources Consultant with **Executive Advantage**. "Now we have a structure that fits how we actually do business."

Today, the flagship MBR group meets every Wednesday from 8:15 to 9:30 a.m. The chapter is led by President **Kofi Adadey** of **Drewing Auto**, with Secretary **Tracy Holmquest** from **Accounting Plus** and Vice President **Damien Shafer** of **E Mortgage Capital**.

"We welcome anyone to come check it out," Adadey shared. Holmquest emphasized, "There's no pressure if you can't attend every week," while Shafer said, "Members get out what they put in—it's about building real relationships."

Weekly meetings focus on education, connection and opportunity. As **Luana Fields**, **Edward Jones Financial Advisor** explained, "We share what we do, who we serve and how others can connect us to the right clients." Referrals are celebrated openly, reinforcing a culture of shared success. **Brian Korb** owner of K**orb Electric** added, "When I'm busy and can't make it, I still know the group is looking out for my business needs!"

For **Adam Davis** of **Adam's Plumbing**, the impact is clear: "It's been a major driver of growth for my business over the years."

A defining feature of MBR is category exclusivity. "Only one member per industry is allowed," said Broker/Owner of **Central Missouri Real Estate**, **Natalie Wier**, ensuring no internal competition. **Tracy Davis**, the Custom Window Treatments Expert with **Urbane Country**, added, "That allows us to truly support each other's growth."

The results speak for themselves. In the first six months, members passed more than $500,000 in business among 40+ professionals. **Diane Barker** of **Barker Law, LLC** shares, "It's been a great space to connect with other professionals as I continue building my practice in Columbia and expanding into Clayton, MO."

At its core, MBR offers a simple but powerful approach: a referral network built on trust, flexibility and real relationships. As **Eric Chole** of **Columbia Carpet Cleaning** put it, "When local businesses work together, everyone succeeds."



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Where Business Meets Community: The ACA Business Club

In every growing community, professionals are looking for more than networking—they want real relationships, meaningful collaboration and a place where business feels natural. In Columbia, that place is the ACA Business Club.

Founded in Overland Park, Kansas by **Martin Hess**, ACA was built on a simple idea: create a social business club where professionals connect authentically without rigid rules. That philosophy has taken hold in Columbia, where the chapter has grown into one of the region's most active professional communities under the leadership of **Lili Vianello** of **Visionworks Marketing Group** and **John Shrum** with **Sandler Training**.

Unlike traditional groups, ACA removes strict attendance policies and performance pressures, allowing members to engage in ways that fit their schedules. **Jackson Brawner** of **Prime Exteriors** tell us, "The result is a welcoming, community-driven environment where business is passed and people flourish."

"We put relationships first," says **Denise Payne** of **Weichert Realtors – House of Brokers**. "When people enjoy being together, business follows."

Members stay connected through regular opportunities like coffee networking on Tuesday and Friday mornings at 8:30am. "It's a relaxed way to connect and welcome new faces," shares **Brad Young** of **B Young Insurance – Allstate**.

ACA also brings creativity into networking through its monthly Art Reception. "It turns networking into a cultural experience," says **Neil Carr** of **Hawthorn Wealth Management**. **Brad Crum** of **Brad Crum Creative** adds, "I enjoy supporting artists and finding great pieces at accessible prices."

The social calendar keeps things fun and engaging. "From soup suppers to BBQ contests, it's about building friendships," says **Keith Sohn** of **Honey-Do Handyman**.

Members can also join Business Development Teams and Special Interest Groups. "These groups help us grow professionally and personally," explains **Robbin Kimbell** of **ReMax Boone Realty**. **Michele Snodderley** of **True North** adds, "They create space for collaboration, mentorship and connection."

For some, the impact goes beyond business. **Robbie Crandall** and **Scott Crandall** of **Robbie's Rummy Goodies** found a community rallying around Scott's search for a kidney donor. Robbie says, "When it seems like almost no one cares, you find the people at the Club do care and they care a lot about your business and your personal life."

At its core, ACA is built on trust and authentic relationships. "It's a place where networking feels natural," says **Amber Klempke** of **Iron Gate Real Estate**.

Casey Twidwell with **Heart of Missouri CASA** adds, "You can go from being new in town to feeling like you don't know a stranger anymore, really quickly with a group like this!" In town, ACA Business Club continues to grow as a place where business and community truly come together—one conversation at a time.

Education in Columbia

Columbia is a city that defines itself through the lens of learning. From the research-driven classrooms of the university district to the innovative hallways of its public and private schools, the community is united by a commitment to academic excellence. Whether a family is seeking a rigorous college-prep environment or hands-on vocational training, Columbia's diverse educational ecosystem provides a tailored path for every student to explore and succeed.



Early Childhood Education

Columbia offers a wide range of early childhood options for families, from traditional centers to small specialty programs. Montessori-based preschools like **Little Sprouts Montessori** and nature-focused programs such as **The Wonder Lab Outdoor Preschool** provide diverse approaches to early learning. Specialty programs, including **City Garden School** and **Escuelita Alegría**, offer individualized attention and culturally rich instruction. For students who benefit from highly personalized support, **High Road School of Boone County** provides alternative instruction in a small, structured environment.



With a variety of programs, families can find early childhood education that fits their child's needs while connecting them to the broader community.

Public Education

Columbia Public Schools (CPS) serves as the heart of the local educational landscape, committed to providing an excellent education for all students. As one of the top-rated districts in the state, CPS focuses on academic excellence and innovation across its schools. Columbia Public Schools consists of 36 schools and programs including: 21 elementary schools, seven middle schools, four high schools, one career center, one early childhood education center and two specialized learning centers. By fostering a supportive environment that encourages critical thinking and community engagement, CPS ensures students are well-prepared for their next steps.

Alternative Schools

While our public schools provide a strong foundation for learning, the community also recognizes that education is not one-size-fits-all. To meet the diverse interests and goals of students, Columbia offers a wide range of alternative schools.

Families seeking non-traditional or private schooling will find diverse options throughout the city. **Columbia Independent School** offers a college-preparatory education for Pre-K through 12th grade with an emphasis on global learning and academic rigor.

For those prioritizing faith-based learning, Columbia offers a wide range of denominational and interdenominational programs. This includes long-standing Catholic institutions like **Tolton Catholic High School** and **Our Lady of Lourdes**, various Protestant academies such as **Christian Fellowship** or **Christian Chapel**, and specialized options like the **Islamic School of Columbia Missouri** and **Columbia Christian Academy**. These programs vary significantly in structure, ranging from standard elementary curriculum to multi-age, personalized models.

Career, Technical & Trade Education

Columbia emphasizes career readiness alongside academic achievement. The **Columbia Area Career Center** offers high school students access to hands-on training in fields such as health sciences, skilled trades, culinary arts and technology, allowing students to earn industry credentials while completing their diplomas. These programs reflect the community's investment in workforce development and practical learning paths.



Steering the Future

The Columbia Public Schools Board of Education serves as the primary governing body responsible for setting district policy and overseeing the educational welfare of the city's youth.

Superintendent: Dr. Jeff Klein

Board President: John Lyman

Board Vice President: Paul Harper

Board Members:

April Ferrão
Alvin Cobbins
Erica Dickson
Jeanne Snodgrass
Suzette Waters

Colleges & Universities

Columbia is widely known as "College Town, USA," thanks to a quartet of institutions that have shaped its character for generations. At the heart is the **University of Missouri**, founded in 1839 as the first public university west of the Mississippi River. A major research hub, it is renowned for the world's first school of journalism and for being the "Home of Homecoming." Blocks away sits **Stephens College**, the nation's second-oldest women's college, founded in 1833. Stephens is celebrated for its distinguished programs in fashion and the performing arts. **Columbia College**, originally established as Christian College in 1851, offers a liberal arts education to both traditional students and nontraditional learners across the country. Adding to this mix is **Moberly Area Community College** (MACC), with a campus in town providing accessible associate degrees and technical training.



Columbia's Food Scene

As you make the exciting transition to your new home here, one thing you'll quickly discover is that Columbia has an incredible food scene. From local favorites to international cuisines, Columbia has what you're craving. With more than 100 locally-owned restaurants, cafes, bars and familiar chains, there's something here for every palette and budget.







Downtown is home to many longtime favorites. **The Heidelberg** has been a staple for decades, serving classic German fare in a lively setting. Just down the street, **Shakespeare's Pizza** remains a local icon known for its hand-tossed pies. For a more refined evening, **CC's City Broiler** offers steaks and seafood in an upscale atmosphere, while **Murry's** pairs eclectic dishes with live jazz.

Columbia's global influences shine just as brightly. **Kampai Sushi Bar** brings a modern take on Japanese sushi favorites, while **Las Margaritas** remains a longtime destination for Mexican and Tex-Mex classics. **Endwell Taverna** blends Italian-American family recipes with contemporary creativity. And for bold, flavor-packed tacos or the can't-miss Burger of the Month, try **44 Canteen**.





Barbecue is its own conversation here. **COMO Smoke and Fire** puts its own Como spin on smoked meats, while **Big Daddy's BBQ** blends Texas and Kansas City influences with classic soul food. At **Barred Owl Butcher & Table**, **Sycamore** and **Flyover**, seasonal ingredients and thoughtful technique take center stage, showcasing a side of Midwest dining that is both locally rooted and creatively inspired. Downtown favorites such as **Tellers Gallery & Bar** and **Addison's** continue to draw locals in with their creative takes on American classics.

If you are in the mood for a relaxed night out, Columbia's pub and brewery scene rounds things out nicely. Local brewpubs like **Flat Branch Pub & Brewing** and **Broadway Brewery** craft their own beers in-house and pair them with hearty, flavorful fare. Meanwhile, spots like **Logboat Brewing Company** offer a laid-back taproom atmosphere perfect for gathering with friends.

No matter what you're in the mood for, Columbia's dining scene makes it easy to explore. From comfort food to inventive cuisine, the city invites you to find your favorites.

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A Life of Service

For Brad Young, helping people prepare for the unexpected isn't just part of his job, but something that has guided much of his life. After two decades serving in law enforcement and the military, Brad built his career around protecting others. Today, he continues that mission in a different way as an Allstate Insurance agent in Columbia.

Brad officially opened his agency in January of 2023, bringing his discipline and commitment to service into the world of insurance. While the setting may be different from his previous roles, the purpose remains the same: helping people feel protected and confident about their future.

Built on Columbia Roots

Brad's connection to the area runs deep. Born and raised in Columbia, the 2000 Hickman High School graduate has remained deeply embedded in the community. This familiarity allows him to relate personally to the families and homeowners he serves. His goal is to make coverage understandable and approachable so clients know exactly what they have and why they should have it.

Opening his agency in Columbia was more than a business decision, it was an opportunity to give back to the community that shaped him. Whether he is guiding first-time homeowners through their initial policy or helping longtime residents optimize their coverage, Brad prides himself on being a resource his neighbors can rely on.

A Team That Values Education

Brad has cultivated a team that shares his "service-first" philosophy. By focusing on client education rather than just transactions, the agency has quickly earned top-tier recognition within the Allstate network. This includes the Pinnacle Elite distinction and the prestigious Honor Ring, awarded to a select group of agents who balance significant growth with an uncompromising level of customer care.



While the agency assists with a wide range of insurance needs, home coverage remains a specialized focus. Brad works closely with homeowners to secure policies that provide robust protection at competitive rates.

A Lasting Commitment to Community

For Brad, service extends far beyond the walls of his agency. He remains a dedicated advocate for local causes that strengthen the mid Missouri area, maintaining active commitments to vital organizations such as Central MO Stop Human Trafficking, the Police Foundation of Hallsville, Missouri Girls Town and Welcome Home.

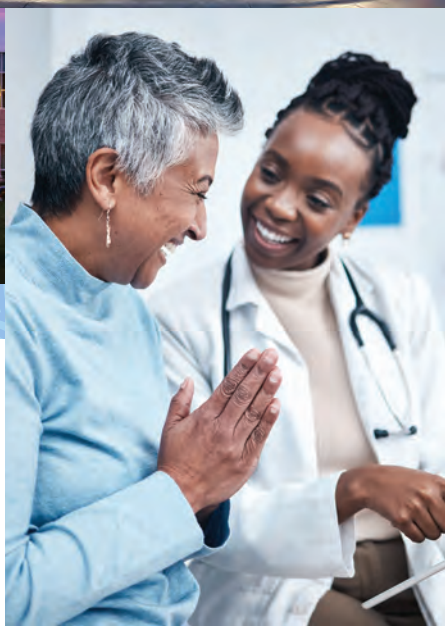
Brad and his team believe that strong communities are built through consistent involvement and a willingness to give back. It is a commitment that reflects the same sense of duty that guided his earlier career and continues to shape how he approaches both his work and his role in the community today.

For Brad Young, the mission has never wavered. Though his uniform has changed, his commitment to safeguarding the lives and well-being of his community remains as strong as ever.

In Search of Good Health







Moving to a new area can be intimidating, especially when it comes to finding quality healthcare. Fortunately, Columbia offers a full spectrum of medical providers and facilities to choose from. The city is home to some of the best healthcare in the state, with state-of-the-art hospitals and experienced medical professionals ready to care for you and your loved ones

Boone Hospital Center serves as a full-service regional referral center, while **University Hospital – MU Healthcare** offers advanced academic medicine, including central Missouri's only Level I trauma center, the **Ellis Fischel Cancer Center** and a women-focused hospital. Veterans receive specialized care at **Harry S Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital**, and families can rely on **Children's Hospital – MU Health** for pediatric care in a family-centered environment. **The Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment** further strengthens the community's healthcare network by providing comprehensive services, research and support for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and their families.

Columbia makes both routine and urgent care easy to access. Local **urgent care** and **quick-care clinics** provide prompt attention for minor injuries and non-emergency needs, while the city's network of more than **100 doctor's offices**, **60 dental practices**, and over **90 chiropractic and alternative medicine centers** ensures residents can receive high-quality care close to home.

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Nonprofits

Columbia's nonprofit landscape is remarkably diverse, with organizations dedicated to nearly every social, environmental and cultural cause imaginable. From high-level initiatives addressing food security to hyper-local efforts preserving historic architecture, the city's safety net is both wide-ranging and robust. Nonprofits in Columbia tackle everything from crisis support and refugee resettlement to arts education, environmental stewardship and sustainable agriculture, ensuring that virtually every community need has a champion. These organizations not only provide essential services but also foster civic engagement and partnerships that strengthen the city's sense of community and shared responsibility.

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The clinic also prioritizes **early detection and management of eye disease**, using modern imaging to identify concerns before symptoms appear. For patients with more complex needs, specialty contact lenses provide customized solutions for optimal vision and comfort.

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Retuva also provides a full range of services, including injectables, hormone optimization, medical weight loss, laser treatments and advanced dry eye therapy in coordination with Family Focus Eyecare.

This integrated, physician-directed model allows patients to access both wellness and aesthetic care in one place—delivering safer, more effective and longer-lasting results.

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La Colomba

Standing tall across the street from Daneil Boone Regional Library, *La Colomba* (Italian for "The Dove") is a striking 10-foot stainless steel sculpture. Created by artist Larry Young and installed in 1979, the abstract depiction of a bird in flight serves as a symbol of peace and the city's commitment to public art. Its reflective surface catches the light throughout the day, giving the impression of movement even while standing still. *La Colomba* is a central piece of the "Standing Ovation" art walk and remains a favorite landmark for locals and visitors alike, often serving as a reminder of Columbia's vibrant cultural spirit.



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Day Trips from Columbia

Columbia is smack-dab in the middle of Missouri, making the city an ideal base for a quick getaway to some fabulous nearby destinations. These day trips can take you through the heart and soul of the Show-Me State and have you back home again by nightfall.

Rocheport (15 miles)
This charming river town features scenic bluffs, boutique shops and the **Katy Trail**. Visitors can enjoy leisurely strolls and wine tasting at **Les Bourgeois Vineyards**, which offers panoramic Missouri River views from its popular A-Frame wine garden.

Boonville (25 miles)
Historic Boonville offers architectural tours, the **River, Rails, and Trails Museum** and casino gaming. A highlight is the **Hotel Frederick**, a 1905 landmark where visitors can enjoy boutique lodging and dining at "**The Fred**" right off the Katy Trail.

Fulton (30 miles)
Fulton is known for the **National Churchill Museum**, featuring a section of the Berlin Wall, and historic architecture. The town's **Brick District** blends local shops, dining and a lively community atmosphere.



Jefferson City (31 miles)
Missouri's capital sits atop the Missouri River, where the striking **State Capitol** overlooks the city and its scenic riverfront. History and culture mingle here, from the Capitol's art and memorials to unique museums covering military history and veterinary science.

Moberly (40 miles)
Moberly offers a unique mix of culture and outdoor fun, anchored by one of North America's few indoor-outdoor theaters. Historic venues, **Rothwell Park's miniature railroad** and scenic green spaces make it a perfect stop for families and history lovers alike.

Arrow Rock (43 miles)
A National Historic Landmark village, Arrow Rock features historic homes, museums and artisan shops. Highlights include the **Lyceum Theatre**, Missouri's oldest professional regional theater, and the **J. Huston Tavern**, the oldest continuously operated restaurant west of the Mississippi.



Photo by Jerome L. Goolsby, Flickr

Hermann (65 miles)
Experience a taste of Bavaria along the Missouri River. Hermann's renowned wineries, microbreweries, German cuisine and seasonal festivals create a festive and scenic getaway with plenty of local stay options for the weekend.

Lake of the Ozarks (90 miles)
With more than 1,150 miles of shoreline, the Lake of the Ozarks offers boating, golfing, shopping and a wide variety of recreational activities for day-trippers and weekend visitors alike.

Warrensburg (92 miles)
This town blends history, art and outdoor fun. Explore the **Spirit Trail** at Knob Noster State Park or stroll through **Powell Gardens**. The area is also home to **Whiteman Air Force Base**, the world's only B-2 Stealth Bomber base, where visitors can tour the Oscar-01 Missile Launch Control Facility museum.



Grip It and Rip It: Columbia's Golf Scene Delivers

Columbia, Missouri, offers a golf scene that appeals to players of all skill levels, making it an attractive destination for those considering a move to the area. With a mix of public and private courses, golfers can enjoy a wide range of layouts, playing styles and challenges throughout the season.

Public courses in Columbia provide accessible, well-maintained options for everyday play. **Lake of the Woods Golf Course** is known for its scenic setting and tree-lined fairways, offering a relaxed but engaging round. **A.L. Gustin Golf Course**, located near downtown, is a popular choice for players seeking convenience and a walkable design. **L.A. Nickell Golf Course** delivers championship-style play with challenging greens and water features.

For golfers seeking a more exclusive experience, Columbia's private clubs provide premium amenities and elevated course conditions. **The Country Club of Columbia** is one of the area's most established clubs, offering a classic design paired with a strong social and competitive golf culture. **The Club at Old Hawthorne** is widely recognized for its championship-caliber course, pristine conditioning and tournament-level challenge. The **Country Club of Missouri**, established in 1971, is a member-owned club serving the west side of Columbia with golf, swimming and social activities.

Beyond the traditional greens, the city also boasts a vibrant disc golf community with several premier courses, including the highly-rated **Harmony Bends**, which is often cited as one of the best in the nation. These open-field layouts offer a unique way to enjoy Columbia's natural beauty for those who prefer plastic to pros.

Together, these courses create a diverse golf landscape that supports casual rounds, competitive play and everything in between. For golfers relocating to mid Missouri, Columbia stands out as a community where the game is both accessible and highly regarded.

Scan here for more info and resources ▸▸▸



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Keeping Columbia Flowing: How Adam's Plumbing Became a Hometown Essential



In a growing city like Columbia— where historic neighborhoods meet new construction and busy families juggle work, school and weekend plans—there's one thing every homeowner depends on but rarely thinks about until it fails: plumbing. For more than 15 years, Adam Davis has owned Adam's Plumbing, helping local households keep the water flowing and their homes running smoothly.

With more than 20 years of residential plumbing experience, Davis offers a hometown alternative to corporate service chains. Adam's Plumbing is locally owned and operated, and when customers call, they can still speak directly with the owner—by phone, email or via online scheduling—creating the approachable, trustworthy service the company is known for.

"Our core values are Affordable. Dependable. Honest," Davis says— a promise that continues to resonate in a community where reputation matters.

Plumbing problems rarely arrive at convenient times. From ceiling stains and dripping faucets to running toilets or cold showers, small issues can quickly disrupt daily life. Adam's Plumbing specializes in residential repair and installation, including water heaters, water softeners, sink and toilet upgrades, garbage disposals, gas lines and plumbing for remodels. From leak detection to tub-to-shower conversions, Davis brings precision and care to every job.

In an era of DIY home repairs, Davis has seen plenty of well-intentioned fixes go wrong—overtightened fittings, mismatched materials and quick patches that don't last. While he's happy to offer advice or parts, he reminds homeowners that small mistakes can lead to costly damage.

His guidance is simple: ice cubes don't sharpen disposal blades, eggshells shouldn't go down the drain and chlorine tablets can damage toilet components.

For Davis, the reward is straightforward—a happy customer and another Columbia home protected from costly water damage.

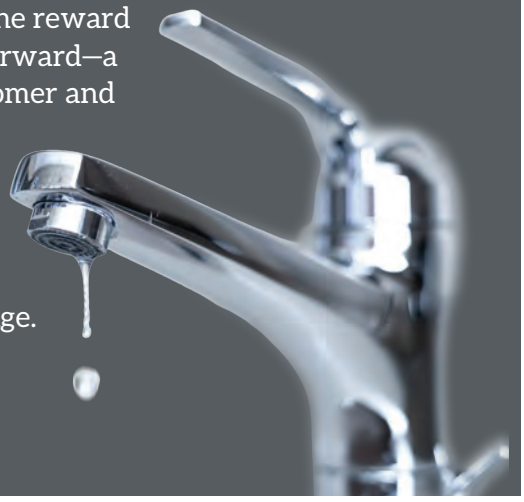




Photo courtesy St. Thomas More Newman Center

Faith Walk

Christianity remains the cornerstone of the local religious landscape, but far from being a monolith, it is a vibrant spectrum of practice. Data suggests there are **more than 300 religious organizations** in the metro area. From historic Catholic parishes and their long-standing parochial schools to varied Protestant churches to massive, modern non-denominational campuses, the options for worship are as diverse as the residents themselves.

Downtown is anchored by a majestic **"Mainline Row,"** where towering steeples and stained-glass facades serve as both architectural landmarks and spiritual compasses. These historic sanctuaries, some dating back to the city's frontier origins in the early 1830s—form a corridor of tradition that defines the city's skyline. These sites are far from relics of the past. For many residents, they serve as the city's "third places," acting as active community hubs beyond Sunday service. Behind their oak doors you'll find preschools, midweek concerts and meeting spaces for everything from civic forums to recovery groups.

The Global Influence

Columbia's status as an educational hub has fostered a cosmopolitan religious environment rare for a city of its size. The Jewish community maintains a robust presence through **Congregation Beth Shalom** and the **Hillel** center, which serves as a "home away from home" for students.

The **Islamic Center of Central Missouri** serves as both a place of worship and a vital cultural bridge, while various Buddhist meditation groups highlight the city's role as a landing spot for international cultures. These communities may be smaller in number, but their impact on Columbia's cultural festivals and local dialogue is profound.

A Landscape of Diversity

Indigenous traditions also form a vital part of the area's heritage. While less visible in terms of public buildings, the spiritual history of the Osage and Missouria peoples remains a subject of deep respect and academic study at the universities. Additionally, historic Black congregations like **Second Missionary Baptist** serve as powerful reminders of the city's enduring legacy of faith and resilience.

The Rise of the "Nones"

One of the most striking trends in Columbia mirrors a national shift: the rise of the religiously unaffiliated. Often referred to as "Nones," this group—including atheists, agnostics or those who identify as "nothing in particular"—makes up roughly 26% of the state's population. This doesn't necessarily mean a lack of community; instead, it manifests in social justice activism and a strong emphasis on "spirituality without religion."



Built on Team Spirit

From time-honored college traditions to youth leagues, competition and team spirit are woven into the Columbia community. If youth sports or tailgating aren't your lane, Columbia still delivers plenty of ways to stay active with a wide range of recreational facilities and leagues that invite residents of all ages to "get in the game."



Recreational Sport Resources

For those that have a competitive spirit or plan to stay active, Columbia is home to a multitude of recreation centers, sports facilities and outdoor complexes that cover all your athletic needs. Businesses like **The Deuce** offer sand volleyball leagues during the warm months of the year, giving residents a chance to enjoy both competition and a local staple. Columbia is also the host of the **Show Me State Games**, which gives youth through senior athletes an opportunity to compete in a multitude of sports.

Columbia has plenty of options when it comes to recreational facilities, such as the **Mizzou Rec Center**, **Columbia Sports Fieldhouse**, **Armory Sports and Recreation Center** and the **Activity & Recreation Center (ARC)**. These facilities serve as hubs for adult and youth activity year-round, offering everything from open gym time to organized leagues. They provide a variety of services, making it easy for residents to find an activity that fits their lifestyle and schedule.



Outdoor enthusiasts will also appreciate Columbia's parks, trails and sports complexes, which allow athletes and casual participants alike the opportunity to stay active while enjoying the natural beauty of mid Missouri. Parks like **Cosmopolitan Recreation Area** and **Rock Bridge Memorial State Park** provide a wide variety of options from soccer fields and tennis courts to walking and biking trails and open green space.

Youth Sports

Youth sports are a cornerstone of Columbia's sports culture, offering young athletes opportunities to learn teamwork, discipline and confidence at an early age. The City of Columbia youth sports leagues provide a wide variety of programs designed to introduce kids to athletics in a supportive and organized environment. In addition to city-run programs, Columbia is home to well-established organizations like **Daniel Boone Little League**, **The Diamond Council** and the **Columbia Youth Football League**.







A City That Supports Aging Well

Columbia, Missouri, is a place where people can thrive at every stage of life. Long known as a college town, Columbia is also gaining national recognition as a top destination for retirees. The Milken Institute ranks Columbia No. 4 among the best small cities for successful aging, citing affordability, cultural amenities and strong health care access. *Forbes* highlights the city's abundant physicians, good air quality, bike-friendly environment and solid economy.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15.5% of Columbia's population is age 60 or older, up from 12% in 2010. That growth has fueled expanded senior living options, offering choices that support independence, aging in place and long-term care — all within a vibrant community.



Lenoir Woods remains one of the city's most well-known life plan communities, providing independent living, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing on a single campus. Residents benefit from extensive amenities, wellness services and the security of lifelong care.

Additional senior living communities across Columbia offer a wide range of lifestyles and care levels. **Cedarhurst of Columbia** provides assisted living and memory care in a residential setting with personalized services and enrichment programs. **Tiger Place**, developed through the University of Missouri, focuses on aging in place by bringing evolving care directly to residents' homes. **Solstice Senior Living** and **Bedford Walk** offer independent living with supportive services as needed, while **The Terrace** emphasizes a close-knit community atmosphere.

Columbia is also home to **Westbury Senior Living**, **Mill Creek Village Senior Living**, **Bluff Creek Terrace Senior Living** and **Colony Point Senior Living** — each offering distinct environments, care options and amenities to meet varying needs and preferences.

With quality health care, cultural attractions, accessible recreation and diverse housing options, Columbia continues to stand out as a welcoming, resource-rich community for seniors and those planning their next chapter.

From Foundations to Second Chances: The Steve Long Story



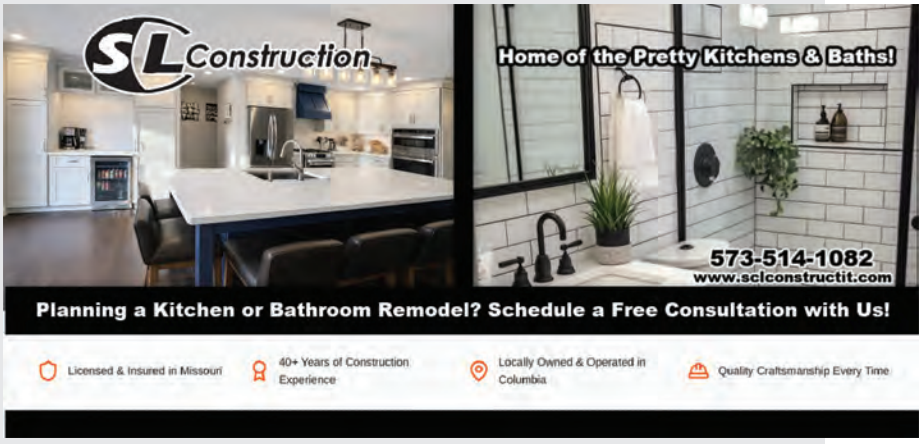
In Columbia, few stories capture the true spirit of craftsmanship and community impact quite like that of Steve Long. As the founder of SCL Construction, Steve has spent more than four decades building not just homes, but a reputation rooted in quality and trust.

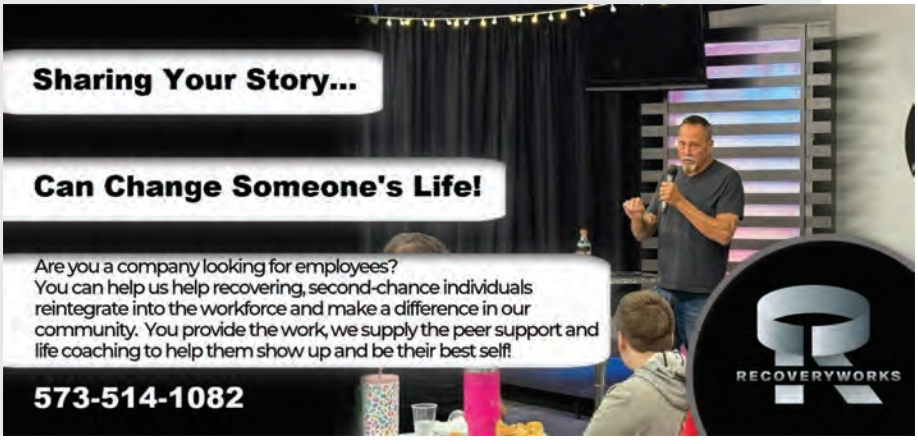
Since 1984, SCL Construction has delivered professional remodeling services across mid-Missouri, specializing in kitchens, bathrooms and full home renovations. Known for dependable timelines and high-quality craftsmanship, the company has completed hundreds of projects. Each one is guided by a proven process and a commitment to doing things the right way. With deep knowledge of local building codes and strong relationships with area suppliers, Steve and his team have become a go-to resource for homeowners and businessowners looking to invest in their spaces with confidence.

But Steve's impact extends far beyond construction sites. Through his newest non-profit venture, RecoveryWorks, he is building something even more meaningful—second chances. Born from decades of firsthand experience working alongside individuals facing homelessness and addiction, RecoveryWorks connects those in recovery with employers willing to offer opportunity and hope.

What began as informal mentorship on job sites has grown into a structured mission: providing job training, coaching and real pathways back into the workforce. By pairing individuals with mentors who understand their journey, Steve is helping reshape lives—and the community itself.

With upcoming initiatives and partnerships, including a major event at Head Motor Company Harley-Davidson, RecoveryWorks is gaining momentum. At its core, Steve Long's work is about more than building structures, it's about rebuilding lives, one opportunity at a time.





Golden Years, Active Living



Columbia continues to draw residents in their golden years thanks to its wide range of activities, entertainment and medical care. The city offers a balanced mix of culture, recreation and relaxation, making it easy for seniors to stay active and engaged.



Golf enthusiasts enjoy access to several well-maintained public and private courses, while nature lovers take advantage of walking trails, parks and scenic green spaces throughout the community. Columbia's vibrant arts and entertainment scene also appeals to retirees, with live music, theater productions, lectures and festivals offered year-round, many connected to the University of Missouri.

For those looking to keep their minds as active as their bodies, **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** at Mizzou offers a lifelong learning community for adults 50 and up. Members can explore a wide range of courses and activities while socializing with like-minded peers and nurturing their curiosity and physical health. Similarly, the **Columbia Senior Activity Center** provides a welcoming hub for active seniors, offering classes, events, social opportunities and programs designed to support both mind and body.



Shopping, local dining and community events provide daily opportunities to socialize, while organized programs and clubs help seniors build meaningful connections. Just as important, Columbia is known for its strong health care network, anchored by major medical facilities and specialty providers, offering peace of mind and convenience.

With affordable living, accessible health care and plenty of ways to stay active, Columbia stands out as a welcoming destination for seniors seeking a vibrant and fulfilling lifestyle.



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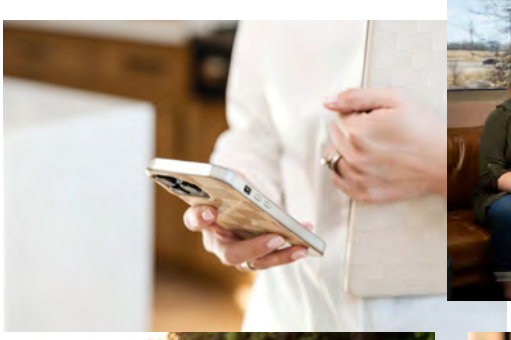
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