



# THE ESSENCE OF ATHENS

A Strategic Design Plan for Economic  
Enhancement and Community Competitiveness



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A Strategic Design Plan for Economic  
Enhancement and Community Competitiveness

July, 2014

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# KEEPING US ATHENS

This plan is a way to make sure that the City of Athens continues to be defined by the key elements that make Athens what it is. We consider Athens to be a wonderful, interesting, and rare place and we want to ensure that it continues to be so. Ours is a community that is rich with history, culture, art, and soul, and our built environment should always reflect all of these things.

The City of Athens has been thinking and working on this in many ways for the last several years, but until *The Essence of Athens Plan*, a good way to tie it together had not been conceived. This plan is a topical update of our adopted *2003 Athens Comprehensive Plan*. It specifically enhances the Local Attitudes & Planning Themes and Land Use and Urban Design Sections of that adopted plan. Adding this layer of detail gives us a set of bottom-up, locally-organic recommendations we can implement that reinforces the unique aspects of Athens. This plan will help to address ways to ensure that our city is not just a collection of nice or better places, but truly Athens places.

## WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR:

This plan is for anyone who may be contemplating real estate projects (homes, offices, retail, churches, workplaces—or any new structure), adding or improving infrastructure, or changing the ground or buildings in Athens, Ohio. For your project or remodel to be as successful as it can be, we welcome and encourage you to create a part of who we are; this material can help you add the essence of our culture into your design.

Particularly, this guide is for:

- The City of Athens to guide Athens-specific themes into our public works and public spaces;
- Real estate developers who are considering a new project in our city;
- Local business owners who are thinking about redesigning their places of business, including signs; and
- Local citizens who are contemplating an overhaul to their homes, paved areas, or yards.

Unlike many other plans that attempt to guide design and development with prescriptive architectural dimensions and design standards, this plan encourages readers to understand and be inspired by what makes Athens, Ohio a one-of-a-kind city. Please use this book to implement our “Athens Design DNA” (featured on Page 31) into the things you build in our city so you can help us express who we are. Make us say, “Oh, Yes! That’s *Athens!*” when we see your development proposal and your finished product.

We hope that you will rouse us with designs that will be appreciated and celebrated here. Since most buildings in Athens will be with us for generations, your plan to conceive Athens-inspired designs for your new development project and/or improvements to existing structures and land in Athens will be appreciated for a long time.

# HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL:

This book is heavy on images and light on text to make it easy to use. Begin by understanding the plan's format and the most efficient way to travel through the document in order to gain the intended inspiration.

## **Step 1: Understand the meaning and intent of what we want you to do.**

This plan is based on a philosophy that encourages local design as an economic development tool. Please take some time reading through the process section of our planning initiative so you can join the process for making our already-unique community even more remarkable.

## **Step 2: Glean design ideas from the “SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE” section to discover and understand the Athens Design DNA.**

Use this information in pre-design meetings with your architects, landscape architects, land designers, and planners to showcase and celebrate our special features in your projects.

## **Step 3: Learn how to take action in the REINFORCING OUR CULTURE section, have fun creating Athens-centric homes, restaurants, office buildings, and any other structures you choose to build or remodel as a result of implementing our design DNA in your projects.**

In return, we will showcase and celebrate your masterpiece to our friends, family, and visitors.

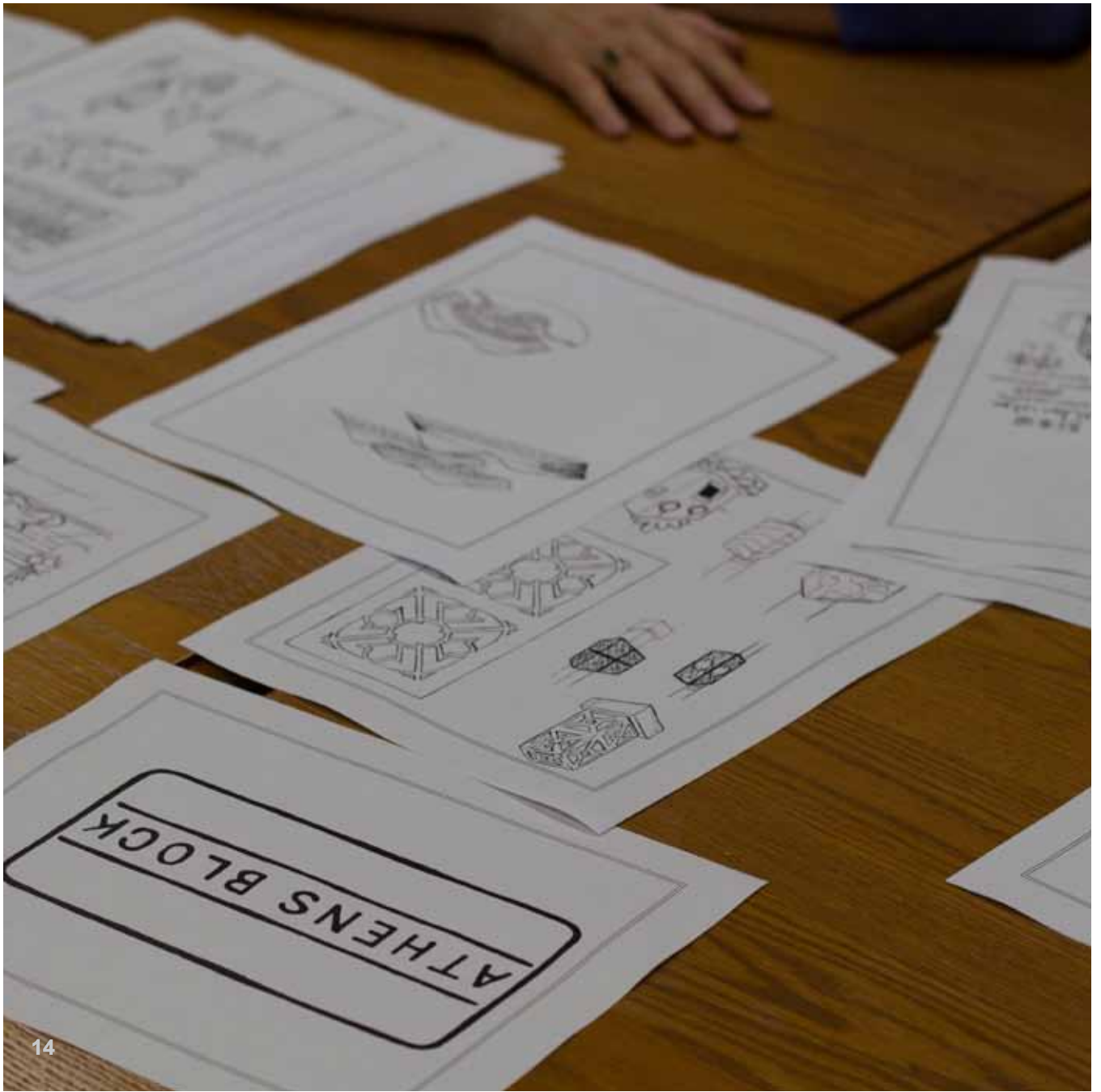
## OUR HOPE

We're already Ohio's favorite college town where students fall in love at first sight and stay on the hook for the rest of their lives. We have long been aware that our city is known for being the kind of place that people like to be a part of and talk about. And even though we're unusual, gorgeous, and decidedly quirky, we hope that this plan will help us stay this way and become even more of these things in the future.

We hope that the story of remarkable Athens, Ohio grabs peoples' attention when they talk about us and are drawn to us. We also hope that this plan features locally-inspired design inspirations that can be used to build everyday things such as sidewalks, light poles, street signs, colors, public art, homes, businesses, offices, and everything else. Over time, implementation of our design hopes and wishes will leave a lasting impression on visitors and encourage an even deeper ownership by locals. Athens' special designs, colors, materials and special touches fit with the community's one of a kind story.

This plan was inspired from within. This is our signature. Over time and over years of implementation, the one-of-a-kind built environment in Athens will ensure that we will be forever set apart from the rest of cities in Ohio, Appalachia, and the world. With the embrace of the content in this document and the new ideas that are generated, we expect to forge an even more extraordinary Athens.





# PROCESS

Kicked off by Mayor Paul Wiehl and city planner Paul Logue on May 8, 2013, nearly 70 diverse members of the Athens community convened at the Athens Community Center to discuss tactics and ideas for making Athens, Ohio even more unique. Over the summer of 2013, the greater Athens community was engaged through an outreach program using social media where Athenians were asked to submit photos that represented what they believed Athens *IS*, not what they liked about it or what it should be. Over 500 photos and accompanying descriptions were submitted via Facebook, Twitter, and email.

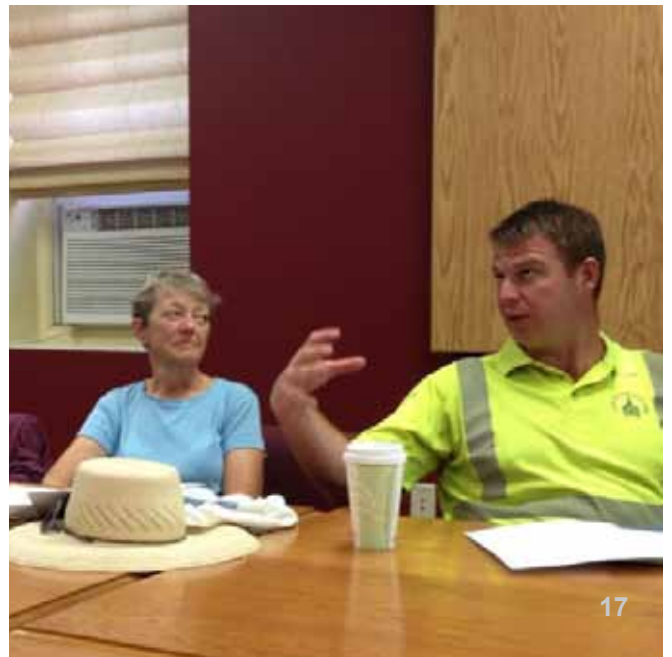
Some people chose to send a few sentences and others contributed full essays about what makes Athens special. Immediately following the summer of public input, Mayor Wiehl then convened The Essence of Athens Steering Committee to oversee the honing of the community's ideas. The Committee reviewed the individual submissions and worked through Autumn 2013 on specific ideas and adjectives that could inspire citizens, designers, and developers to envision Athens' unique signature in any project that would be visible on the ground. To further this process, trained designers sketched out loose "napkin ideas" followed by more detailed thoughts and suggestions that would help realize these ideas.

## ABOUT THE NAPKIN SKETCHES

Sometimes initial ideas don't need to be perfect. Some of the best ideas first appeared as sketches on napkins in coffee shops. This is why we treated our process as if we were in a coffee shop and all ideas were good ideas. 100+ of these sketches were contributed and many of them have been developed further in this document. If you have a good idea, sketch it out! Don't worry about the quality of the sketch; the quality of the idea is what matters most.









# ECONOMY OF UNIQUENESS

Here in Athens, Ohio University hopes students will fall as much in love with the surrounding community as the campus itself. Businesses and entrepreneurs often decide to locate in a city based on the ‘vibe’ of a place and the uniqueness of a particular address. Visitors and tourists want to stop and spend their hard-earned money in the most interesting, noteworthy communities. There are many studies on the impacts of special places on local economies (notably, *The Economy of Uniqueness* by The World Bank, 2012) and this *Essence of Athens* plan helps solidify our future as even more of a great place to live, visit, and spend money. This document serves as a blueprint for ensuring that the community does not level its economic development playing field by allowing itself to become just another version of every other place. The clear objective of this plan is to increase the viability of Athens as a place where people want to invest money, time, and brain power.

## Economy of Uniqueness:

*Cities that embrace a visible, definable, and representative cultural heritage are more economically healthy than those that ignore their unique qualities.*

## AN “ONLY IN ATHENS” PARADE

Honey for the Heart is an outrageous puppet show parade with human-sized (and larger!) puppets that are carefully made of recycled materials by members of the Athens community. The parade is another source of pride that defines the remarkable spirit of our city.



# BUILDING IS BRANDING

Branding usually involves inorganic, top-down approaches and outcomes that include logos, slogans, and claims that often can't be backed up. If a place's landscape doesn't match the new story it wants to tell, then the branding effort will fail. Such proclamations often fall on deaf ears and the inauthentic story will be forgotten.

Implementing *The Essence of Athens Plan* means building things that are ATHENS which becomes the collective cultural brand of the city. By creating special infrastructure and real estate development that will especially be appropriate and relevant in Athens, we will never try to make our neighborhoods into some currently famous neighborhoods. We will never sell something that doesn't or will never exist. We will cultivate our unique story by uncovering our culture and amplifying it onto our public and private spaces, and we will do this everywhere.

## OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT /S OUR BRAND

We are fortunate to have notable, memorable structures throughout our community. As the years pass and as a direct result of this plan, our buildings and parklands will become even more alive and lovable.



# THE POWER OF OUR STORY

Athenians appreciate the stories behind our homegrown products and services, especially compared to the mass-produced, geographically non-specific versions. We are drawn to the stories that are tied to “home” because these stories make us feel like we are an important part of the continuing evolution of this special place. We have firsthand knowledge and stories of particular individuals and families who built their businesses here and many of us know these folks personally. This is why we take personal ownership and pride over special products we buy and consume which allows us to richly participate in our immediate human and physical environments. We *belong* to Athens.

What has been generally missing in this push for designing artisan services and homegrown products is the lack of locally-specific community design. We generally haven’t been creating places that are as geographically-specific and loved as, say, fresh vegetables that are locally grown in nearby organic farms or beer crafted by local breweries.

As a community, we already see how our uniqueness is a big part of our economy. This plan will help us tell remarkable stories as the years pass.

## ATHENS’ OFFICIAL FLOWER

Passion Flowers are constructed from recycled aluminum printing plates from our local newspaper. All flowers are constructed hand-painted by Passion Works Studio artists. They can be hung indoors or outside. The flowers are created by both disabled and abled artists who share love and passion for Athens.





# GOALS OF THIS PLAN

## **1 EXPLAIN OUR ATHENS-SPECIFIC DESIGN INSPIRATIONS TO SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE THE DESIGN OF ATHENS**

This is a design guidebook to inspire:

1. the City of Athens when it designs and builds our public spaces and infrastructure;
2. members of the real estate development community who provide places for us to live and thrive;
3. members of the business community (including retail and office) who provide employment and services; and
4. individual members of the greater Athens community who want to contribute to the ‘Athens spirit’.

## **2 ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR “ATHENS-INSPIRED DESIGN” IN ORDER TO REINFORCE THE CULTURE OF ATHENS**

By setting a new standard for what Athens looks like to us, this plan defines and inventories local design assets and inspirations that have been hiding in plain sight. We hope that the creative implementation of these assets become everyday expectations by local Athenians in the design of the things that people build for us.


## **3 ENCOURAGE WIDESPREAD / INCREASED CELEBRATION OF “ATHENS” SO WE CAN SHARE ATHENS WITH THE WORLD.**

This plan sets a new bar for imagination and possibilities (instead of stifling with overly-prescriptive design rules that can hinder creativity) for the City of Athens, developers, businesses, and individuals, all of whom love this place and want to protect it. This plan also doubles as a kind of ‘dream book’ for non-local individuals and entrepreneurs so they can see what living life and doing business in Athens feels like.



**PART 1**

# SHOWCASE

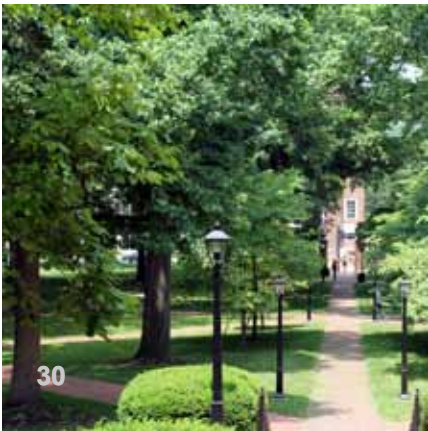


For:  
The City of Athens  
Architects  
Land Developers  
Landscape Architects  
Engineers  
Policy Leaders  
Business Owners  
Citizens

**& CELEBRATE**







# DESIGN DNA OF ATHENS

As a result of our extensive public participation process, clear elements for what makes Athens unique emerged. Whether it's an implementation project by the City of Athens, a private developer who wants to create an appreciated addition to city infrastructure, or an individual property owner designing a new patio or garden, the following framework provides an opportunity to create myriad designs and forms that express the Essence of Athens while maintaining an overall unity.

This framework becomes a family of components that speak to the core themes of The Essence of Athens. You should mix and match these into your designs. You may also choose to emphasize one element more than another if you reinforce the other elements. We hope to see a wide variety of Athens expressions.

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# OUR HILLS

**define our landscape and our neighborhoods.  
They ascend and descend, overlap and layer.  
They are uneven, at times they're lush, at  
times colorful, at times gray.**

## THIS IS OUR CITY SKYLINE

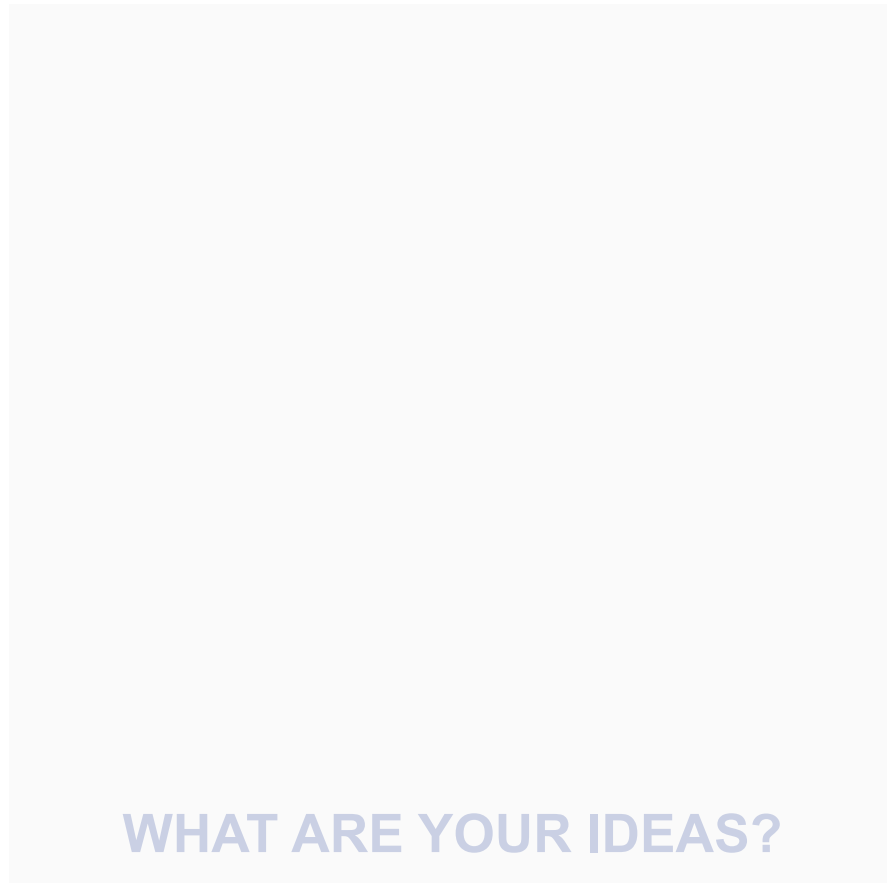
From many tall points around our city, the Athens County Courthouse tower pierces the sky and marks the center of the city as it bleeds into the campus of stately Ohio University. Our hills provide a wider variety of viewsheds and visual perspectives than flat communities can.

SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# HILLS PALETTE

**Interpret these Hills elements into your designs.  
Weave Ohio Appalachia into the projects you  
are creating.**

We've left you  
space here to  
doodle your dreams  
for implementing a  
hilly theme into your  
upcoming project in  
Athens.



WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?

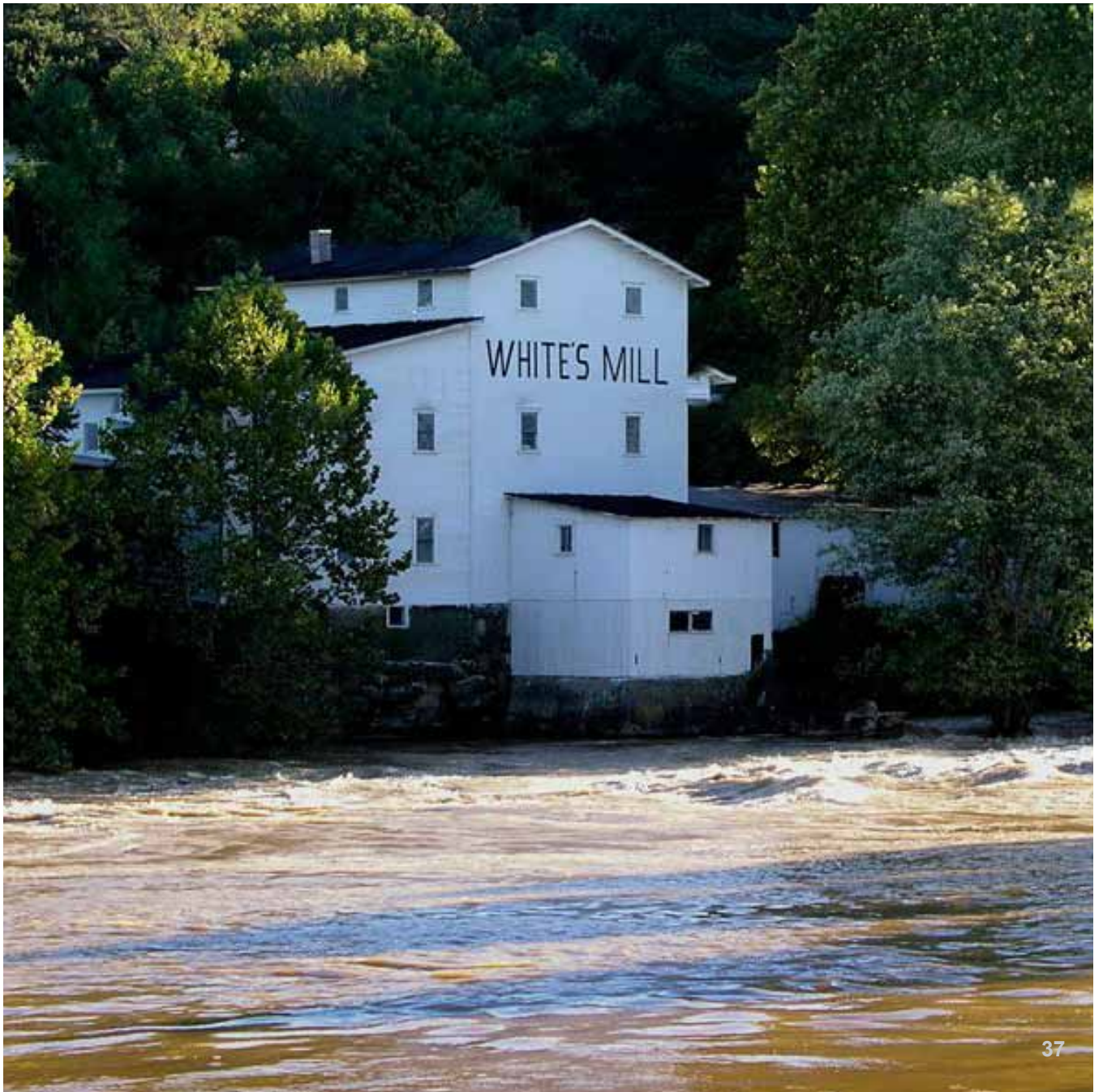


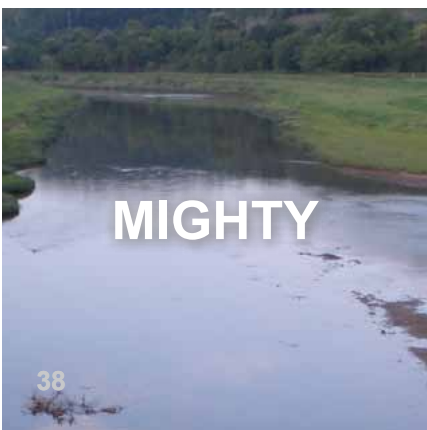
# OUR RIVER

**meanders gracefully. It flows southward, cutting, with water rising and falling, ever seeking to break its bounds, providing habitat, rerouted and reengineered, both barrier and corridor, part of the city's original story.**

## WHITE'S MILL

At more than 200 years old, White's Mill is one of Athens' most identifiable structures along our Hocking River.





SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# RIVER PALETTE

**We want to see the essence of our Hocking River implemented into the spirit of whatever you choose to design and build here.**

Don't just day-dream about the possibilities for an Athens development masterpiece. Pen your initial inspirations here.

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?





# OUR NATURE

**is lush. It's diverse in size, color, and form. It ever attempts to reclaim and repopulate, always defying the grid. It's also seasonally variable, edible/nourishing and delicious.**

## SERENITY AND ESCAPE

Sells Park links the east side of Athens with Stroud's Run State Park. Here, we relax, blend with nature, hike, mountain bike, and appreciate the abundant natural beauty that we can enjoy without ever leaving town.

SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# NATURE PALETTE

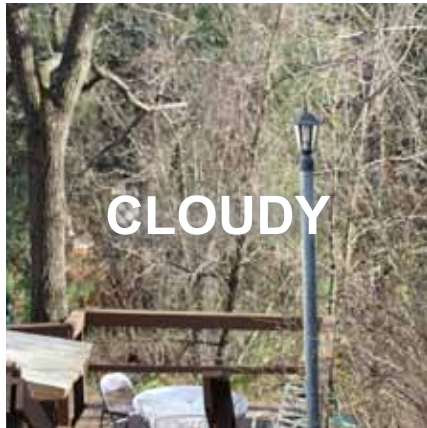
**Natural Athens is a prominent theme that represents the organic influences that we enjoy in our beloved valley.**

Consider combining nature with other DNA elements for a one-of-a-kind signature project for us.

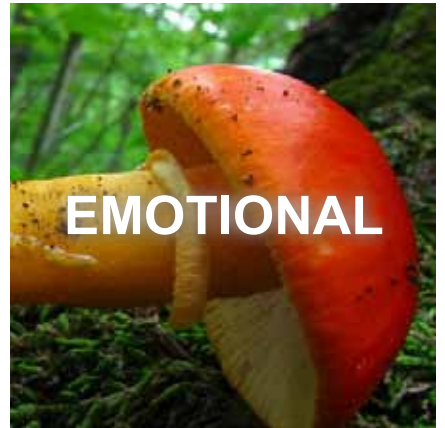
WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?



**SUNNY**



**CLOUDY**



**EMOTIONAL**



**SOLID**



**GENEROUS**



**DURABLE**



**SUSTAINABLE**



**HARMONIOUS**



**ARRESTING**

# OUR MUSIC

**honors its Appalachian origins, but it's infused with the ongoing immigration of outside influences in a variety of forms—big band, garage band, orchestra, bluegrass, street musicians, bars and coffee shops, festivals, and other expressions.**

## MUSIC ANIMATES OUR SPACES

Our collective tastes in music form the soundtrack to the places we inhabit. Whether planned gigs in festivals or an impromptu street corner jam, we are brought together by tunes and lyrics. We hope that our built environment will continue to provide inspiration to match our unique soundtrack.





**IMPASSIONED**



**FRESH**



**INSPIRED**



**STRENUOUS**



**UPLIFTING**



**APPEALING**



**CATCHY**

46



**SPIRITUAL**



**HARMONIOUS**

SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# MUSIC PALETTE

**Things built in Athens should resemble the pride that our local music makes us feel and can be expressed in many creative ways.**

Your project should sing. It should lift our imagination and spirit. Brainstorm. Sketch unbridled.

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?





SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# OUR BRICK AND STONE

are a part of who we are. These two natural materials define much of our built environment that has been fashioned from the earth; our brick and stone warps with the movement of nature, reflecting the patina of time and culture.

## REPRESENTATIVE MATERIALS

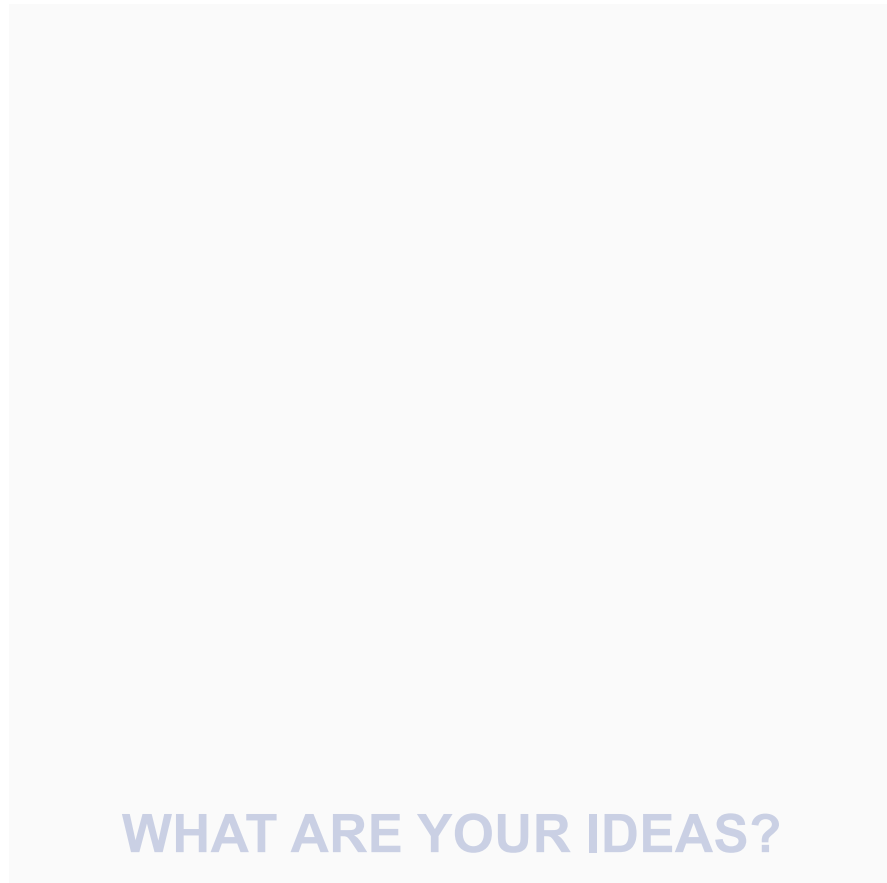
Born in 1890, our Athens Block bricks have become a beloved product of the (now closed) Athens Brick Company. These bricks can still be found covering buildings and streets all over the world. Our stone, as old as Mother Nature, makes the Sells Park entrance “stairs” special, memorable Athens.

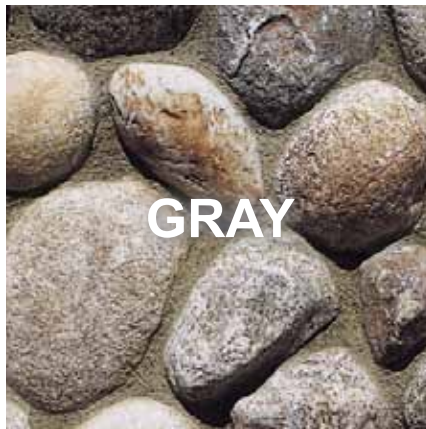
SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# BRICK AND STONE PALETTE

**Materials used in building our city should celebrate our well-known local resources and geology.**

It's easy enough to slap on a façade. We acknowledge that brick and stone façades are better than most alternatives, but we're waiting to see your ideas for innovating and integrating our native materials into your primary design.





SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# OUR YOUTHFUL OUTLOOK

**keeps us playful, whimsical, hopeful,  
enthusiastic, boisterous, testing boundaries,  
ever seeking a purpose.**

## HALLOWEEN IN ATHENS

For over 40 years, Athens has hosted one of the largest Halloween events in the U.S. Up to 30,000 participate in our yearly costume party.





**FRESH**



**INSPIRED**



**CATCHY**



**SPIRITUAL**



**STRENUOUS**



**APPEALING**



**HARMONIOUS**



**UPLIFTING**



**IMPASSIONED**

SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# YOUTHFUL OUTLOOK PALETTE

**Our youthfulness sets us apart from most other communities. This provides fun chances for inspired design that may not fit elsewhere.**

What does a youthful real estate development project look like to you? Flesh out your thoughts here.

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?





SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# OUR LITTLE BIGNESS

**makes our little town feel like it's much bigger even though it is intimate and interconnected. A dynamic energy can be felt here that is more passionate than ambitious.**

## COURT STREET

North-south oriented Court Street is our one-way "Main Street," This is our city's spine where we eat, drink, shop, protest and celebrate. Notably, Court Street is paved with our signature Athens Block brick pavers.

SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# LITTLE BIGNESS PALETTE

**The element of surprise as a result of the vast opportunities in our otherwise small town should be part of your inspiration.**

We are interested in how you might bring big city design and make it work in our small town, but please don't get caught up trying to recreate our existing historic buildings. Make your own history with your Athens-inspired design.

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?

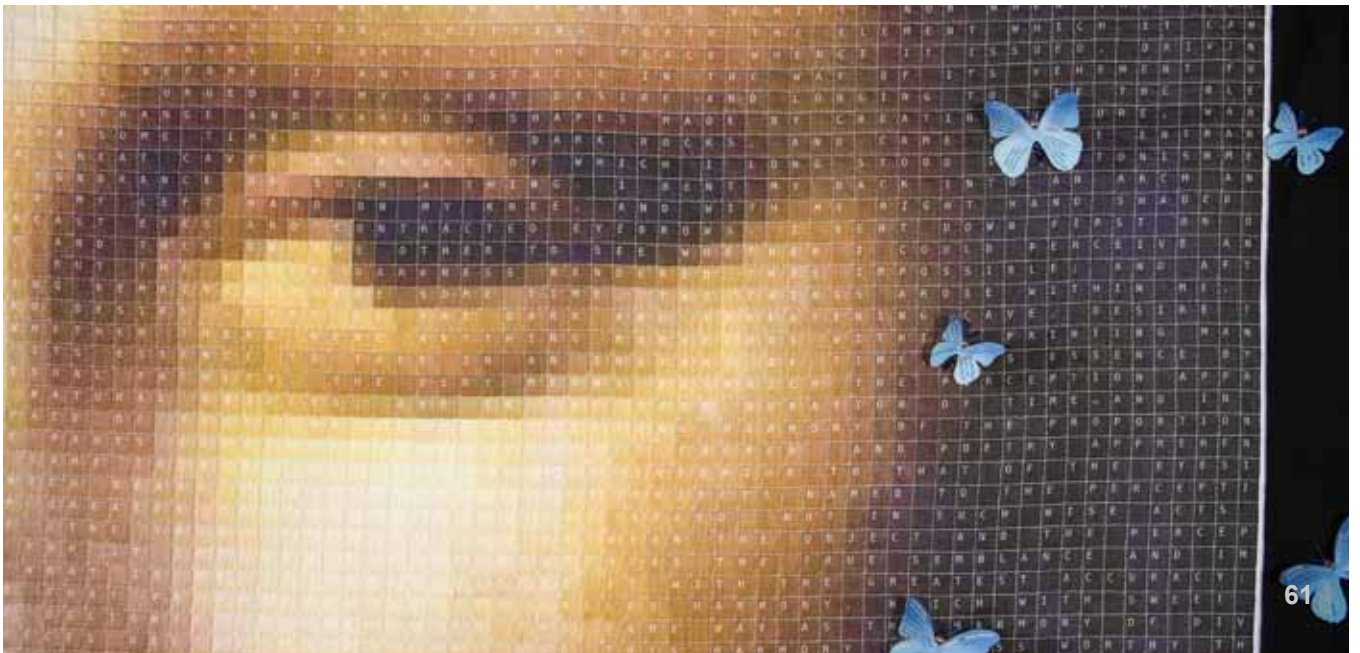


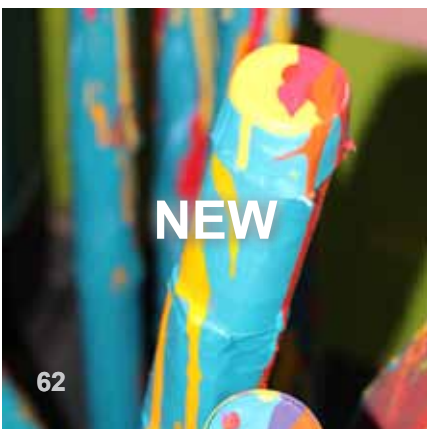
# OUR INVENTIVE SPIRIT

**shows in our originality, intellectual curiosity, and in our artistic, creative ingenuity. We consider ourselves to be forward looking—neither stuck in the past nor ignoring its lessons as we reuse/repurpose our materials and respect our environment.**

## BARNs + QUILTS

Quilt barns have large quilt squares painted or hung on their facades. They are often traditional patterns used by Ohio quilters to celebrate the area's Appalachian Heritage. John Lefelholz's "Mona Lisa in the Age of the Social Butterflies" captures the spirit of Athens' inventiveness.





SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# INVENTIVE SPIRIT PALETTE

**We want you to be creative and push boundaries.  
Build things that make us think.**

It may be hard to shake what you are used to implementing in other communities, but we insist that you try!

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?





SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

# OUR ACCEPTING ATTITUDES

**make it easy to welcome diverse opinions and lifestyles, building on strengths. They also make our community accessible to all as we nurture ideas.**

## FEW CITIES ARE AS EXPRESSIVE

If you live in Athens, you are almost expected to do things a bit differently. Particularly, if something is normal or boring, a sprinkle of fun is appreciated. We want to encourage this in the things we build as much as how we already decorate our possessions and ourselves.

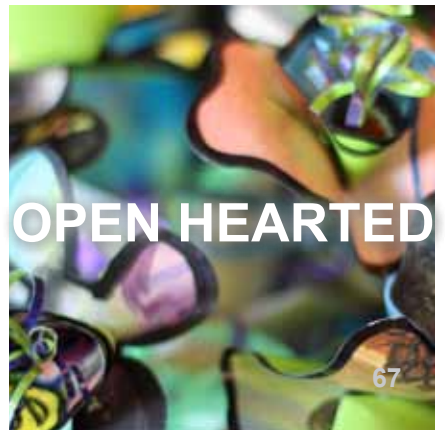
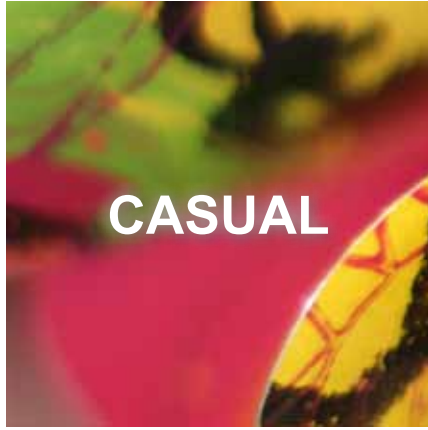
SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE OUR DESIGN DNA

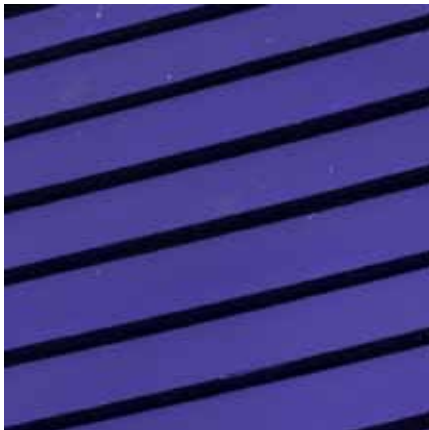
# ACCEPTING ATTITUDES PALETTE

**We insist that you respect our open-minded community by building open-minded projects in our city.**

We believe translating accepting attitudes into your design it's an opportunity for you to show your highest level of creativity to tell a memorable Athens story.

WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?





# OUR COLORS


Color helps Athens stand out as unique. The colors in this palette were established by colors that are already prominent in the city. Expanding and enhancing new and existing real estate development with these hues will go far to solidify Athens' design success. The colors of Athens include those in the city's official flag, Passion Works Studio's "The Passion Flower," (Athens official flower), our surrounding nature, and prominent exterior paint colors that have long been seen on vibrant businesses and homes in Athens. These Athens colors contrast sharply from homes and commercial buildings in most other communities in southeast Ohio and the greater region in general.



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. A pencil with a blue and red body is positioned diagonally from the top left, pointing towards a map. The map features various colors: green, yellow, and blue, with black lines representing geographical features. The overall aesthetic is bright and educational.

**PART 2**

# REINFORCING



For:  
The City of Athens  
Architects  
Land Developers  
Landscape Architects  
Engineers  
Policy Leaders  
Business Owners  
Citizens

# ATHENS





# PUBLIC PROJECTS

In usual city planning situations, land developers have the primary responsibility to follow sets of rules and build the city's vision out over time. (If indeed a city has put forth a published vision.) Because the City of Athens is continuously improving the public realm with updated infrastructure that citizens use in their daily lives, a special opportunity is offered here for The City of Athens to take the lead in and set an example for implementing Athens specific-designs in the place of otherwise ordinary (visible) infrastructure. *The City of Athens is therefore choosing to proactively set the design expectations for the greater community as project opportunities and public and private funding sources emerge.*

Out of the hundreds of ideas that came from the community planning process, the following ideas were deemed priorities by The Essence of Athens Steering Committee to kick start the implementation of this plan. The selection criteria for these priority projects included being doable, being affordable, and providing the highest impacts in our community.



## ATHENS DESIGN DNA INFUSION

Our public infrastructure (such as our bikepath system and the Richland Avenue Roundabout (photo left)) is second to none. Going forward, our infrastructure will be built and retrofitted on the blocks of our design DNA.



BEFORE



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BEFORE

# WORLD FAMOUS COURT STREET

While named for what occurs in the Athens County Courthouse, untold couples started their lives on Court Street, our most important and famous street for courting. Special local infrastructure will showcase the love that began on our beloved main corridor of Uptown.

The Essence of Athens Committee noted that, with the exception of a few parcels, most of Court Street is “built out,” making a signature project unlikely along the Court Street frontage. It was determined that the alleys that connect the west side of Court Street would provide the most impactful opportunities for an ‘Athens-style’ improvement project that has the potential to become revered in the community and beyond.

## ALLEYS

Court Street alley scenes could be mistaken for alleys in Manhattan. The blank canvases that these spaces represent call for “Athens-ization.”

## INSPIRATION

Across the world, cities use the public realm to celebrate newfound love. Padlocks are often used to symbolically bind love between two people.

### Paris

Perhaps the most famous city known for this practice is found in Paris where locks adorn fencing along the Pont de l'Archevêché, Pont des Arts, Passerelle Léopold-Sédar-Senghor and other bridges. But this practice doesn't only occur in Paris—virtually every city has love locks hooked to either formalized or random chain link fences and other lockable surfaces.

### Other Cities

Colonge, Germany; Taipei, Taiwan; Dublin, Ireland, Florence, Italy, and many lesser known cities around the world feature officially designated and spontaneous places for love to be sealed with padlocks.

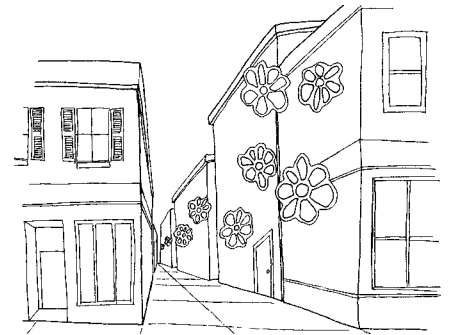
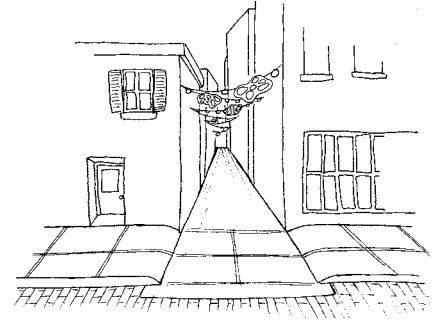


## THOUGHT PROCESS

The Essence of Athens Steering Committee discussed the idea of “branding” Athens with the words “Love, Athens” because the community is in love with their city. It was discussed that painting or posting the words “Love, Athens” on the walls of buildings throughout the City in conspicuous locations would be an effective way to brand the city. By ‘building not branding’, Love, Athens can be implemented in the confines of the Court Street alleys. (Although the word ‘love’ seemed to fit better in the design standing alone.) New sections of lockable material made of metal mesh will be constructed to start a new, more specific tradition along Court Street—locking lovers permanently to Athens.

Because *The Essence of Athens* process is meant to generate specifically-Athens ideas, there were significant concerns over using locks. Designers explored using tree tags instead of locks to come up with a uniquely Athens way to lock love. There was talk of reshaping any “passion flower metal droppings” or perhaps using key chains. In the end, all of these ideas seemed very forced. People already understand locks and what to do with them. Metaphorically, people already understand how love and a lock are connected. In the end, it was agreed that love is universal; neither Athens nor Paris has a patent on love. The symbolism of “locks” is universal, and in this case, after much consideration, it was decided that in this situation it is appropriate to stick with what the world understands. However, it was also agreed that Athens must provide a way of doing this that separates it from all other places.

Additional thought went into testing the layering of different densities of mesh and attempting to create different elevations, but this ended up looking cluttered. Graphic letters ended up working best.

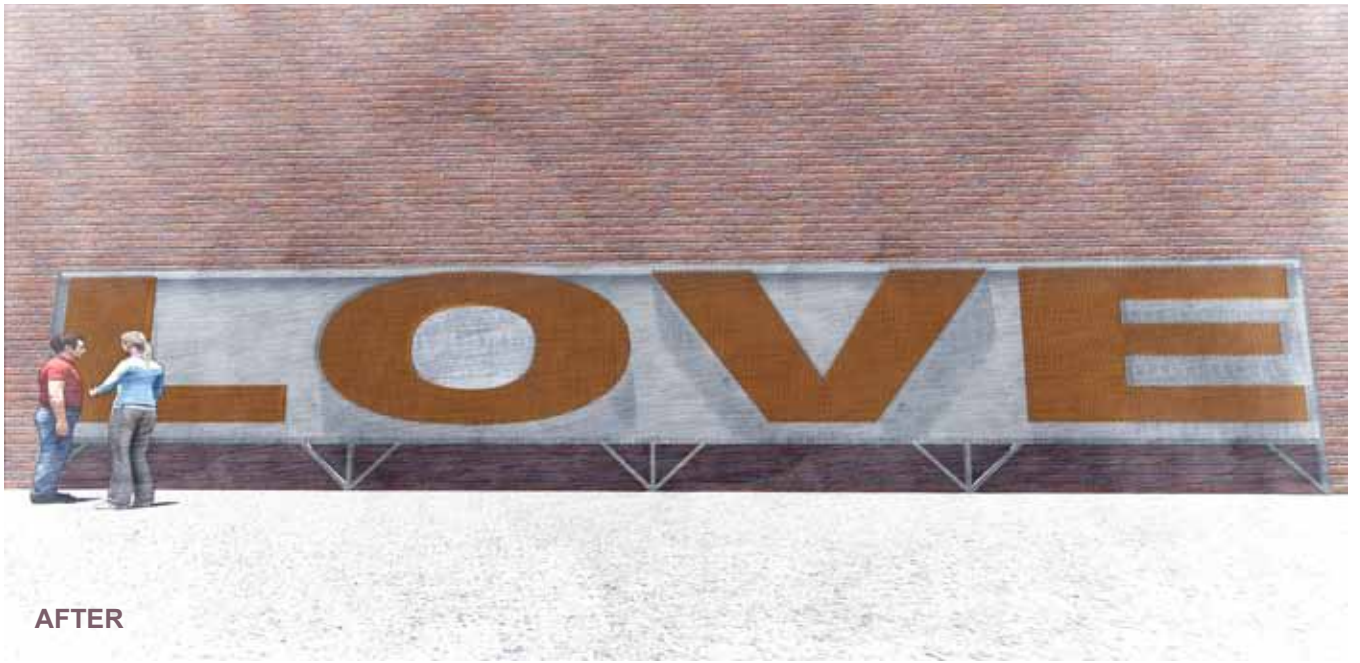


## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the Athens Love Locks will require designing and building sections that can stand nearly flush against the adjacent building walls.

Design specifications will be determined, but initial requirements include:

- Multiple 6-foot sections that can handle heavy weights when many locks are attached should be included.
- Bases for legs should be spaced every six feet.
- A potential apparatus should be integrated into the buildings that keep the sections from tipping over into the alley while not damaging the buildings.
- Sections should be designed as removable bollards to allow long-term maintenance of the buildings to be possible. The City of Athens must be willing to lift these sections out of their bases to allow owners of the buildings to paint and/or tuck point the brick. A maintenance truck will need to be able to pull up, hook on, lift the section straight out of the ground and move it and store it somewhere when necessary. This will also happen when the locks are filled to capacity (and then placed in another location).
- Love text should be solid in some areas with mesh for locks surrounding the text. In other locations along the alley, this love text should be the mesh area for locks surrounded by solid and smooth (in other words ‘unlockable’) material. The idea is to have dimensionality of text.
- In front of some sections and if the building owners are amenable, ‘love’ could be painted on the buildings before the mesh is secured.
- Different ‘love’ copy will provide an interesting way to capture the diversity of love for lots of different things in Athens—the people, the lifestyle, Ohio University, the beauty, and other lovable characteristics. Different fonts can also represent diversity effectively.
- Optical illusions could be designed into the alleys by elongating one or more ‘love’ words. Doing so will create an oblique angle from the entrance to the alley so the word can be clearly read at a distance.
- There should be enough space in the mesh to take up as many years’-worth of real estate as possible so there is a long time until space runs out for locks. However, given the large number of Ohio University students who fall in love in Athens, space may be filled faster than anticipated.
- A location for the “finished art” lock sections (perhaps in a park, along a bikepath, or the middle of the roundabout) should be officially secured. These finished sections will find a permanent home which, joined with many other finished sections, will eventually build into its own participatory art as the years pass.



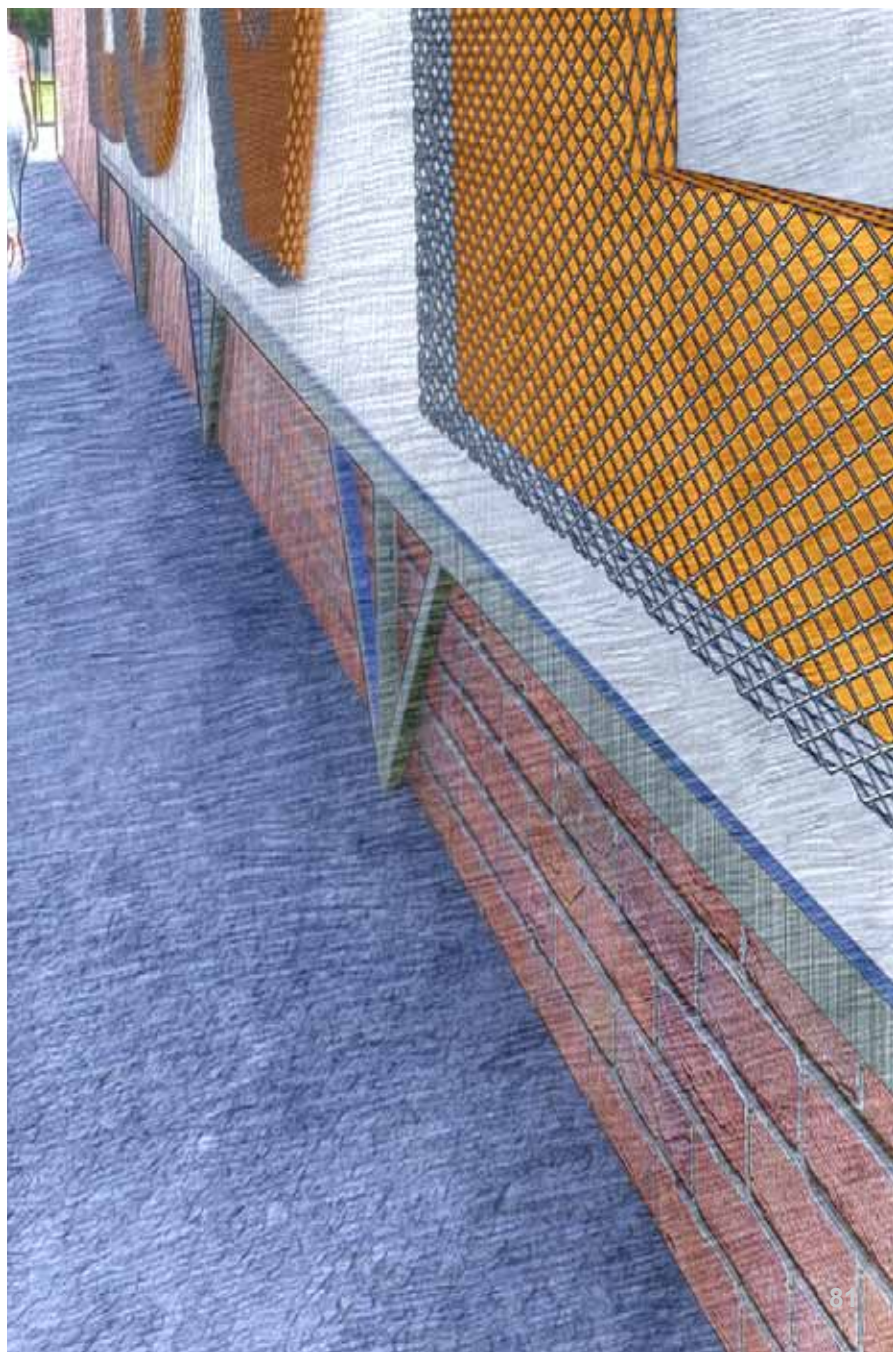
AFTER



AFTER









# ATHENS PARKING GARAGE

We're thankful for our city-owned parking garage on the corner of East Washington Street and South College Avenue, but let's face it, it's currently not much to look at, and it doesn't represent who we are very well.

Too many parking garages have been designed as an afterthought. They are huge and imposing. Our Uptown Athens' garage provides a needed and appreciated service for people who want to park their cars, but its design generally stunts sidewalk activity and rhythm along the street. It eliminates opportunities for window-shopping and commerce where these activities would be expected to occur. The current boxy, brutal design also limits imagination—it is a cold behemoth surrounded by warm, interesting, historic structures.

Worldwide (and latently, here in Athens) there has been a great deal of interest in designing inspiring new garages and/or creatively retrofitting old ones. There is a general consensus in Athens that we are long-overdue for retrofitting our Uptown garage.

## LET'S ATHENS-IZE OUR GARAGE!

When a parking garage is built today planners and designers are careful to include sidewalk retail and sometimes prominent residential or office uses that disguise the 'coldness' of parking. Since mixed use is not a near-term possibility for our garage, we should bring it to life Athens-style.

## PUBLIC PROJECTS - PARKING GARAGE

# INSPIRATION

Designers researched many similar, otherwise-ordinary parking garage designs that had been transformed into noteworthy (even beloved) structures,

### Colors

Some of the most exciting parking structures showcase bright colors that are spotlighted during nighttime hours.

### Plantings

“Green” parking garages have become popular around the world, especially in warm climates.

### Patterns

Quick fix garages often use metal or mesh to provide interest and contrast from the ordinary parking structures.

### Our Passion Flower

There is inspiration in the varied colors of our official city flower, the various versions and colors of Passion Works’ Passion Flower.



## THOUGHT PROCESS

The Steering Committee deliberated on many ideas to help our garage capture more of the spirit of Athens. One of the first ideas was to willingly acknowledge and even celebrate its Brutalist design to showcase it rather than trying to hide or change it. Another idea included painting the concrete exterior walls with words that read “parking” in as many languages as would fit on the façade to represent the international citizens of Athens and Ohio University students.

Other popular ideas: painting the garage vibrant Athens colors; painting the garage to create a more natural look with green plants and vegetation; and donning the parking garage with Athens’ official flower, the Passion Works Studio’s Passion Flower.

The actual design process began with the idea that added color was probably the best way to spring new life to this brown/gray skeleton of concrete. The Committee agreed that the Passion Flower idea would make the greatest impacts and be most appreciated by the community. Professional materials designers then began testing passion flower implementation materials to see which were most feasible and appropriate for the garage. One major concern was that a literal interpretation of passion flowers would be, in effect, “stuck” on the garage in their actual flower form could seem contrived. There was also concern that using a literal Passion Flower for the garage would conjure up thoughts of Chicago’s “Cows on Parade” public sculpture project and all of its derivatives. (For instance from past, mostly temporary efforts such as Grand Rapids, Michigan’s Rabbits, Lexington, Kentucky’s horses, Columbus, Ohio’s Ears of Corn, and other similar installations.)

It was decided that using the actual Passion Flowers would not translate effectively. It was concluded that the Passion Flower idea as an influence is indeed extraordinary and among the most significant and meaningful Athens themes. The Passion Flower must be exploited somehow on this garage in some way to amplify its uniqueness while not being literally translated in its familiar flower form.



## IMPLEMENTATION

Designers first tested the feasibility of a mesh screening that would cover the garage using a colorful exterior pattern influenced by bright Passion Flower colors. The cost of the screening proved to be too expensive and perhaps too heavy-looking or overpowering. Instead, specially-cut metal cladding in different lengths and sizes would be a better, less expensive and more flexible option. The custom cladding design also offers the opportunity to easily control the level of transparency and color density. It would also allow the option for leaving areas completely uncovered to drive costs down if necessary. The large coverage of the building's facade raises concerns about how much color is too much color; great attention will need to be paid to make sure that the correct amount of color will be paired with the correct scale of the exterior cladding. Also, the amount of structure that should be left uncovered will be a part of this critical balance.

- The cladding will be fabricated from recycled or upcycled materials such as scrap metals (including siding, corrugated metal, street and highway signs, and other similar materials).
- The individual metal pieces will be painted with auto-quality paint finishes for weather durability.
- Individual pieces will be hung from steel wires attached securely to the top of the garage and fastened throughout the area of its façade.
- Because the exterior cladding will be colorful and bright, eliminating any car driver/parker confusion and increasing public understanding will be important. Therefore, the openings of the garage must be left clear of cladding in order for non-locals to recognize the building as a functional parking garage.
- A new, red, traditional 'Circle P' sign should therefore be placed at the entrance to the parking lot to show where the ingress point is located.
- To cut overhead, the construction could be done locally by local structural artists and by the City of Athens Public Works Division's engineers and qualified volunteers in the community including Ohio University students.
- Finally, a plaque should be attached to a prominent wall where the greatest number of car parkers and pedestrians would notice. This plaque will explain the Essence of Athens Plan and the story of the "Passion Flower-Inspired Parking Garage." Otherwise, the new garage design may not be immediately appreciated by the non-local and new-to-town users.



AFTER



AFTER





# ATHENS CROSSWALKS

As a major college town where thousands of pedestrians travel from the Ohio University campus through Uptown and beyond to the neighborhoods, crosswalks are vital to support pedestrian safety. Compared to other communities of our size, we have a much higher percentage of everyday pedestrians. Athens-izing our crosswalks will therefore make big, lasting impacts on the psyche of our walkers. In Athens, crossing the street shouldn't be a routine way to get from place to place; it should be an act of celebration of being a pedestrian in a our city.

## THE RIDGES CROSSWALKS

This is how The Ridges window grate pattern crosswalk would appear at the intersection of Court and Washington Streets.

## INSPIRATION



Embellishing crosswalks is far from a new idea: many cities and towns all over the world have implemented decorative crosswalk treatments in their neighborhoods.

### Methods and Textures

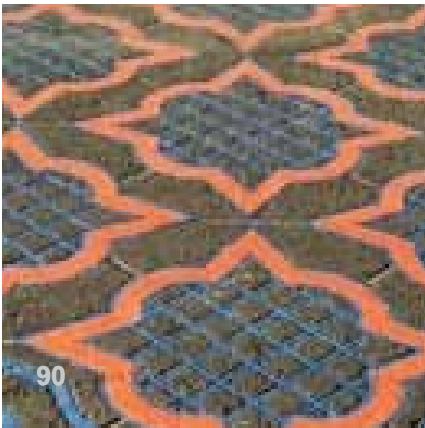
Most notably pavers, textured stamped concrete or asphalt, hardened plastic, decorative stamped crosswalks, and everyday street paint are used for celebrating the journey across streets.

### Colors

Crosswalks can also be any color a community can dream up. Our Athens Design DNA offers a local palette.

### Patterns

There are plenty of design inspirations that we could have chosen, but The Ridges' interesting window grating patterns make a good fit for representing Athens' crosswalks.

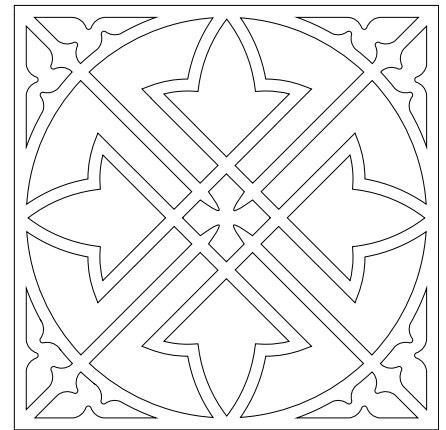
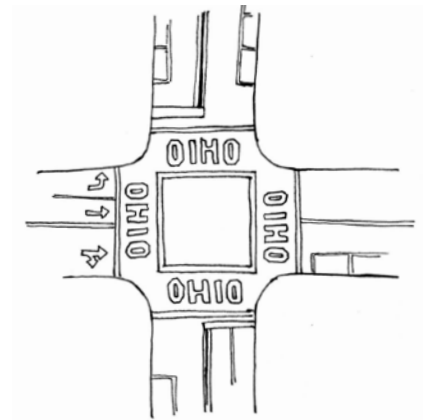


## THOUGHT PROCESS

The Ridges, a former “insane asylum” (now an historic part of Ohio University) that perches over the City of Athens and Hocking River is beloved by Athenians as a beautiful and educational point of geographic reference and as the trailhead for paths that top the southwest Athens hills. The intricate ‘in-pointing-arrows’ grillwork pattern from The Ridges can easily be translated into a purely Athens crosswalk striping.

Crosswalk striping in Uptown is an opportunity for creative exploration. In particular, an important opportunity to implement a one-of-a-kind crosswalk pattern is at the ‘Barnes Dance’ crossing at Union and Court Streets. Here, the pattern can be featured at a large scale that creates a visual pathway for pedestrians.

Simpler crossings throughout the city could use a similar large-scale striping design or one that implements The Ridges patterns into a traditional zebra striping pattern where smaller The Ridges grillwork shapes combine to create several small grillwork blocks. These blocks would join together to form the zebra rectangles.



## IMPLEMENTATION

- The City of Athens may choose only one or several The Ridges patterns and produce CAD files that provide exact specifications for the chosen designs that will be laid over our streets.
- Since many new decorative crosswalk treatments will be placed over existing Athens Block bricks, careful consideration for the crosswalk materials must be researched and tested.
- Once a vendor is determined, the Athens designs can then be sent to any number of crosswalk materials companies that will manufacture the patterns for The City of Athens.
- During installation, care must be taken on the brick pavers in order for the new crosswalk material to adhere properly.
- Asphalt-paved crosswalks across Athens should also be decorated with this new treatment.
- As is the case for all public infrastructure, The Public Works Department will be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the crosswalk materials.

### OUR FUTURE RIDGES BARNES' DANCE

Sometimes called a “scramble intersection” and an “X intersection,” our Barnes’ Dance at Court Street and Union Street is rare in Ohio and the U.S. This complex crosswalk design has fallen out of favor with civil engineers as it indulges the needs of the pedestrian over automobiles. Embellished in an Athens design, our Barnes’ Dance will become even more special and beloved.



AFTER



# ATHENS STAIRWAYS

Many Athenians live high in our lush hills that overlook the city. Currently there are five stairways that cut through city owned right-of-way with one more potentially on the way. Ohio University also controls their own series of stairways. Combined, this network of sidewalks and stairways link streets in lower elevations to the streets perching above, trimming minutes from many on-foot commutes. While functional, our concrete-clad stairs are generally void of any design interest. Because they are essentially blank canvases, we have unique opportunity to turn our current (and future) stairways into infrastructure we can love.

## NORTH HILLS STAIRWAY

Connecting Uptown Athens to the North Hill neighborhoods, this stairway system offers a convenient short cut for Athenians to access Court Street and campus. The stairway also helps pedestrians overcome topographical challenges to walking in a hilly city.

## INSPIRATION

For many people, climbing a long flight of stairs is not their idea of fun. This is one good reason why designers throughout the ages have taken care of the climbers by showcasing interesting and fun ways to climb and descend. Cities around the world embellish their stairways in subway stations, airports, parks, and as part of larger city pedestrian system.

### Stairway Designs

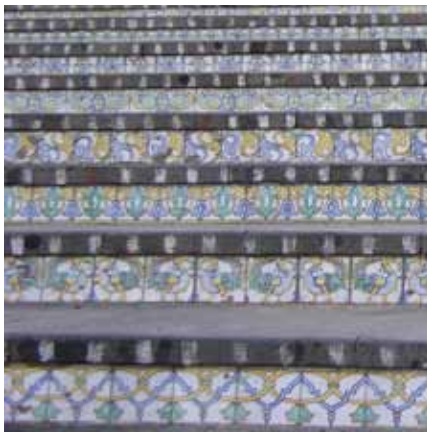
While current stairways in Athens are constructed of concrete and are finished, design modifications are possible through future years. New stairways can also be more creatively designed using the Athens Design DNA.

### Patterns and carvings

As has been evident, designs in Athens can take many shapes and patterns including The Ridges windows, hill shapes, and organic or abstract visions that live in the minds of local artists.

### Imprints, Materials, and Colors

The Athens Design DNA provides good guidance and inspiration for ways to embellish our stairways.





## THOUGHT PROCESS

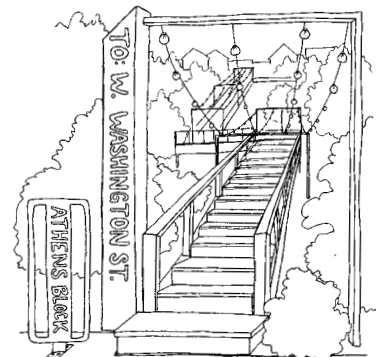
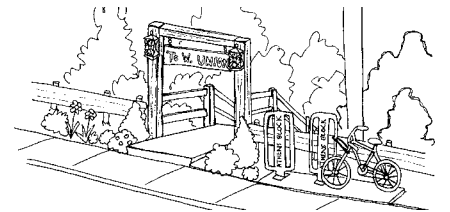
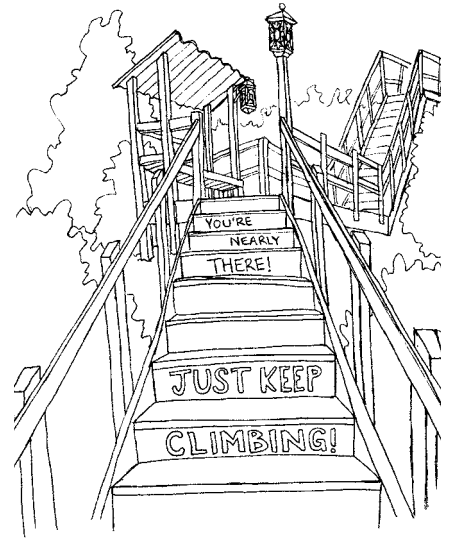
Many Athens staircases run through semi-wooded or natural areas between streets. These staircases are made of concrete, producing hard edges that pierce more naturalized landscapes. This contrast between natural and man-made provides interesting opportunities for design imagination, for instance, the staircases could be transformed completely into something new and different such as a falling stream that cuts a path through the woods.

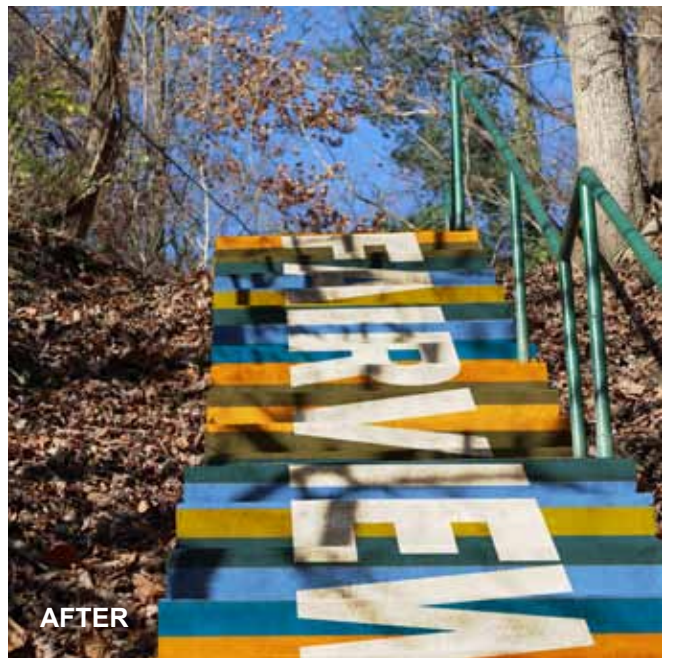
Designers conceived graphic waterfalls in a Grandma Moses style flowing down, eventually pooling on the base below. Another idea included painted treatments that featured fish jumping at random from the water. Another contemplated a Japanese art-inspired theme that would provide a stark contrast to the existing natural landscape; geometric patterns that make it hard (and fun) to see the steps that are covered in vivid graphics; painted optical illusions that get bigger as they go up to throw people off; and painting the steps to resemble double steps.

Napkin sketchers honed new ideas for pedestrian wayfinding in a rustic and natural Athens style. Committee ideas were congealed to create resting spots, Athens Block bike racks at the base and top of the staircases, and lampposts with The Ridges windows grillworks pattern (similar to the crosswalk patterns that were previously featured).

Designers tested the feasibility of all options and decided on treating the staircases with simple entrance frames with lettering that helps pedestrians understand where they are going. A trio of mini-lantern light strings will make nighttime stair-stepping a more enjoyable experience.

Another idea that was settled on by designers was to provide a full-color treatment of the risers that would display the street name for the destination (upper) street. A combination of these ideas (and better ideas by the Athens Cultural Affairs Commission) are worth exploring.





## IMPLEMENTATION

- Proposed designs for stairway embellishments should be reviewed and approved by the Athens Municipal Arts Commission.
- Any art that will cover the building material of the stairways will likely need to be printed in “rough wrap” material and reviewed by the Athens Municipal Arts Commission before installation.
- ‘Winning’ on-stair treatments will be applied with a heat gun only to the risers that would pose no slipping issues, will weather better, and will keep debris from landing on it.
- The Athens Engineering and Public Works Department would be responsible for designing or commissioning the designs for the wayfinding entrances to the staircases on both top and base ends.
- Electricity must be available for light strands along the stairs if the globe lighting becomes a part of the final plan for the staircases.
- Durable materials should be chosen for the entrance casings and street sign wayfinding.
- Conditions of the implemented stairway enhancements should be monitored by citizens, the Athens Engineering and Public Works Division, and the Athens Municipal Arts Commission.
- The Athens Engineering and Public Works Division will be responsible for the maintenance of these new stairways.
- Public-private partnerships should be sought for future funding to connect and celebrate stairways around Athens and Ohio University.



# ATHENS LOUNGE AND PROTEST SPACE

The southwest corner of Court and Union Streets, the site of the Athens County Courthouse, has long been the center for public gathering and public expression in our greater community. Although nice, the space is not as welcoming and encouraging as it could be for people who want to gather and/or speak out. Many ideas were discussed by the Essence of Athens Committee on the need to improve areas for community sitting and more formal places to protest.

## FREE SPEECH IN ATHENS

By and large, we Athenians love and appreciate free speech because as a community we believe that each opinion has merit. We are open to new ideas and new ways of thinking about the world and we believe we can achieve change by speaking out.

## INSPIRATION

### Wood Carvings

Benches and other outdoor seating opportunities are commonly made of wood which fits in with Our Hills, Our Nature, and also Our River themes of the Athens Design DNA. As a material, wood is also effective in showcasing shapes associated with how we see ourselves. Carvings can effectively highlight Our Hills, Our curvy River, and wood-carved seating can be treated to highlight Our Nature, Our Youthful Outlook, or any other aspect of our DNA. Napkin sketches helped the Committee test these ideas.

### Wood Shapes

Shapes can be created out of wood to interpret aspects of the Athens DNA, especially the hills and river and specific patterns from The Ridges. Opportunities to “sculpt” and form wood into beautiful and locally-meaningful figures are abundant.

### Brick

Naturally, Athens Block bricks were suggested to create outdoor seating areas in our community. These create a more hard-edged, blocky experience that celebrates our brick heritage.

### Nature / Passion Flower

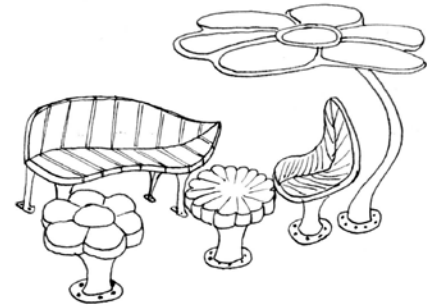
More organic shapes conceived to enhance outdoor seating were provided by the Committee, notably passion flower-inspired canopies that hang-over seating areas or a one-piece (metal-based) flower/flower stem/and leaf seating. Other passion-flower derivatives included actual flower beds, umbrella/petal-like structures over seating, and giant flower petal park shelters. This round of ideas mostly represented Our Youthful Outlook and Our Innovative Spirit aspects of the Athens DNA.



## THOUGHT PROCESS

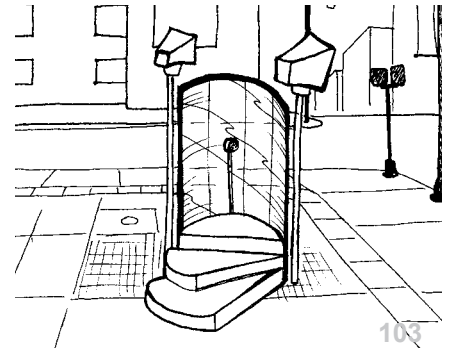
### Seating

The Courthouse Protest Area mentioned above was a spot pinpointed by the Steering Committee as a place where high-profile impacts can be made for Athens-style seating. Hills and nature were decided on by designers as a test theme. The design process began with a search for methods to create a cast concrete bench, a workable solution for sculpting hills into seating. Ways to craft concrete into something that resembles wood was sought to capture a more organic, natural environment. It was decided that the seating should be built out of natural materials instead of concrete, and, since lumber mills are typical of the area and old barns speckle the surrounding hills and valleys, wood could be salvaged locally to create this special Athens seating.



### Protest Space

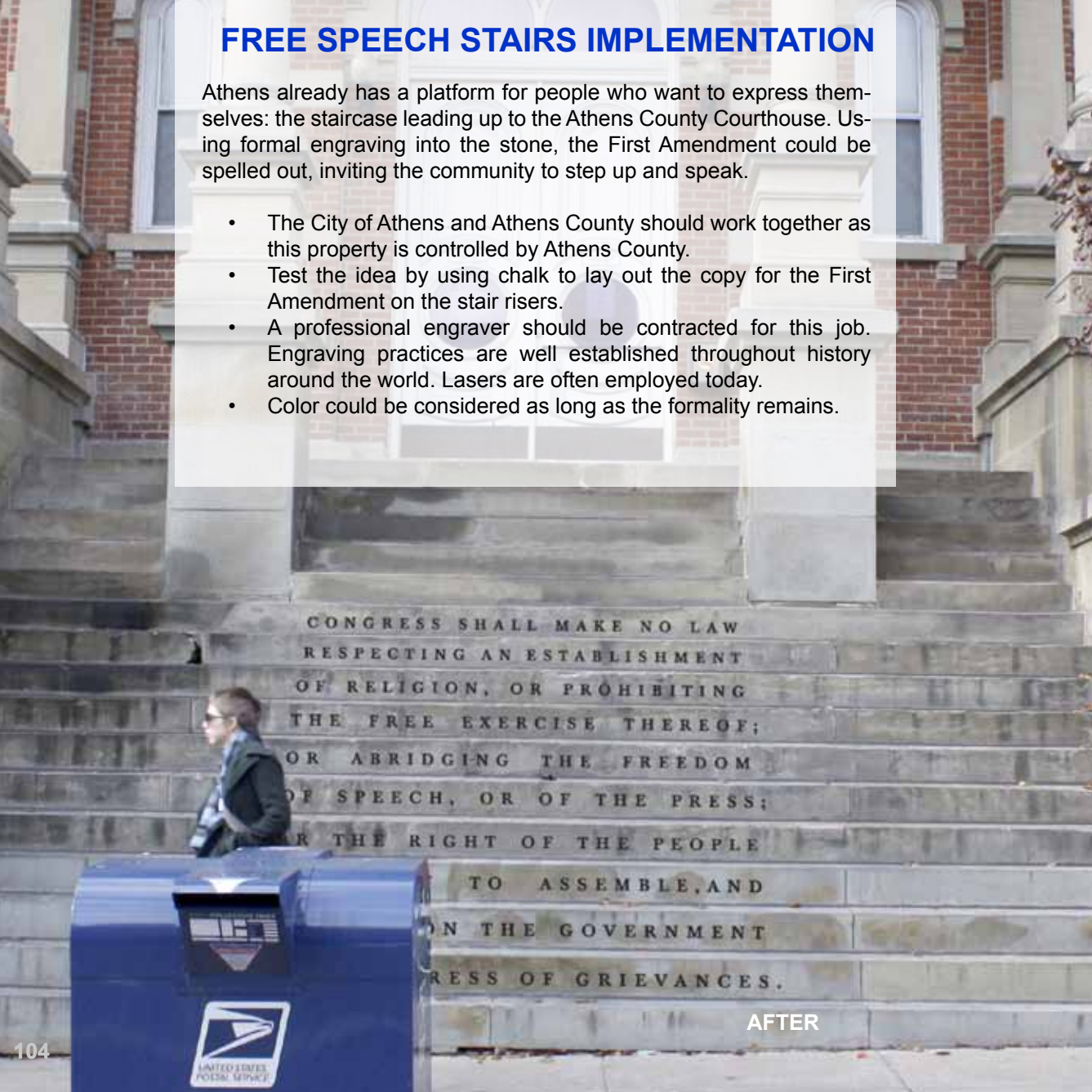
Literal interpretations of “soap boxes” where protestors would be able to stand on an actual bar of soap were discussed and sketched. Other platforms for speaking up, such as a step-up microphone and speakers, were among several ideas for potential development. It was concluded that the First Amendment is too important for implementing kitsch and that a more formalized experience would be more appropriate.



## FREE SPEECH STAIRS IMPLEMENTATION

Athens already has a platform for people who want to express themselves: the staircase leading up to the Athens County Courthouse. Using formal engraving into the stone, the First Amendment could be spelled out, inviting the community to step up and speak.

- The City of Athens and Athens County should work together as this property is controlled by Athens County.
- Test the idea by using chalk to lay out the copy for the First Amendment on the stair risers.
- A professional engraver should be contracted for this job. Engraving practices are well established throughout history around the world. Lasers are often employed today.
- Color could be considered as long as the formality remains.



CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW  
RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT  
OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING  
THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF;  
OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM  
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;  
OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE  
TO ASSEMBLE, AND  
ON THE GOVERNMENT  
PRESS OF GRIEVANCES.

AFTER



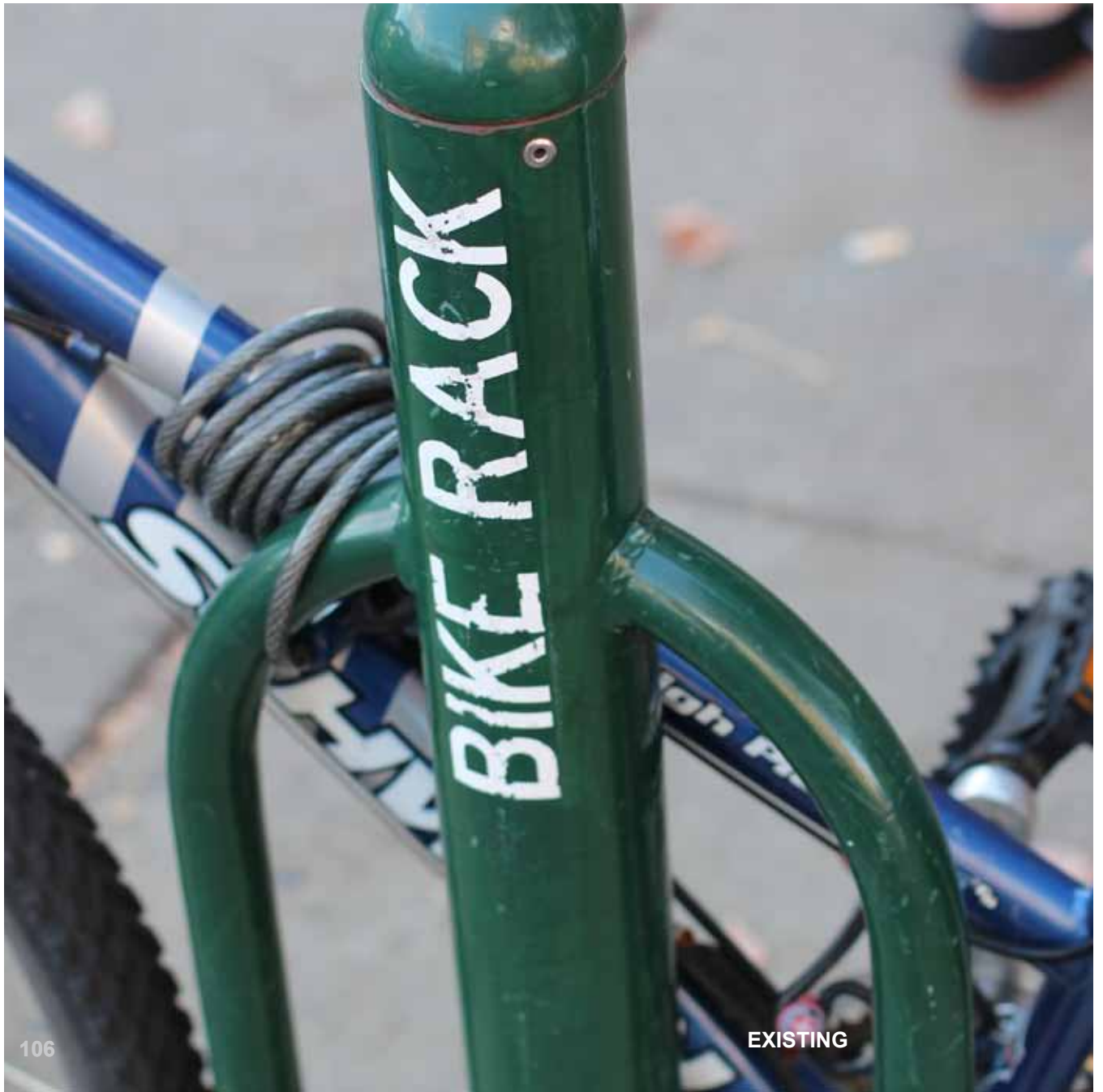
## SEATING IMPLEMENTATION

The model: born from a ball of clay molded to the shape of the Athens Hills, these benches began to take their form. The clay molds were digitally layered onto an image of the protest space, given a wood color and contours to mimic the flows of the wood sculpture.

- Carpenters / sculptors should consider rough-sawn local hardwoods and research how ship framers were built, perhaps using a 3-D topographic map.
- Such a bench would resemble building the 'ribs' of the ship.
- Design would include curvaceous flowing bends of the river including contrasts that would be shoehorned into the corner of brick and stone of the protest area. This contrast of organic and rigid will provide interest to the formal protest space. It could be possible to create the bench with pegs without the need for metal fasteners.



AFTER



# ATHENS BICYCLE RACKS

As a major college town, The City of Athens and Ohio University have long provided bike racks for citizens and students. These free standing racks are secured to the ground and placed in strategic, heavy bike use areas around the community. As an intellectually curious city where people love to cycle and love their bikes, Athens deserves to have equally inspired bicycle infrastructure for us to park our cycles.

## OUR OLD FASHIONED BIKE RACKS

Old fashioned in a good way, these racks were found in many other cities spanning past decades, but most communities have updated to more modern versions, making these old racks interesting and unique by default. This is why Athens shouldn't completely eliminate these racks. Newly-designed, Athens-style racks should accompany these historic racks, especially in important locations.

## PUBLIC PROJECTS - BICYCLE RACKS

# INSPIRATION

Bicycle parking infrastructure normally is a matter of choosing a popular model bollard or “U-rack” that can be found in any other city. Art for art’s sake is also a popular method for determining bicycle rack design in many cities. Athens must therefore design and engineer an Athens-specific bike rack.

### Athens Block

Although not currently rectangular in shape, Athens’ existing green bike bollards Athens Block could be altered to resemble the colors of Athens Block and modified to their rectangular shapes.

### Objects

Cities around the world are implementing whimsical objects that double as bike racks. While interesting, these objects often have little or nothing to do with the local history or culture.

### Color

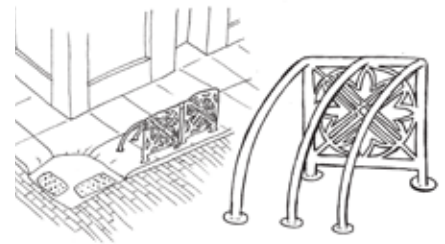
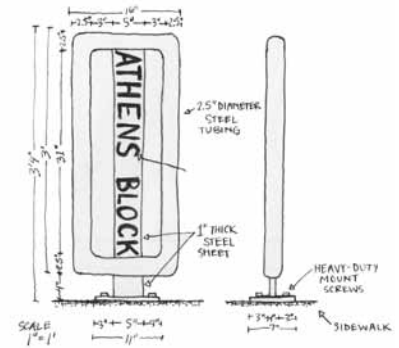
Cities around the world use color on bicycle infrastructure to raise interest and visibility to cycling and to their communities.



## THOUGHT PROCESS

During the Essence of Athens Committee's brainstorming / napkin sketch process, one particular Athens Block design clearly emerged as especially intriguing to the Committee. Designers took the napkin sketch and added an extra line to graphically capture the two existing straight lines on the Athens Block. Then each individual rack was given one of three colors in order to resemble the colors of real Athens Block brick. (A shade of orange-red, a muted purple hue, and a special shade of brickish brown were added to make the bike racks come alive and look more like actual bricks and less like a random shape). These colors will make the greatest impacts when a row of these racks are implemented.

Other ideas (bottom left) were taken from The Ridges' window grates. It was determined that since the crosswalks would use The Ridges patterns, Athens Block brick should be the spotlighted for signature Athens bike racks.



## IMPLEMENTATION

- The Athens Engineering and Public Works Department will be in charge of design specification and manufacture of the bike racks.
- Bike racks could be manufactured and/or assembled in-house by The City of Athens or outsourced.
- Research must be thorough for appropriate paint for metals. A durable paint and finish will need to withstand the heavy scraping of U-locks as well as cable locks and their associated pad locks. Paint must also survive a variety of heavy materials from bicycles that will rub against the paint many times a day.
- As the paint colors are important to resemble the colors of real Athens Block bricks, careful consideration must go in to decision-making on these colors. (Consult the Athens Municipal Arts Commission.)
- These new bike bollards should be placed throughout the City of Athens.
- The Athens Engineering and Public Works Department will install and maintain the bike racks as it does all public infrastructure.









# ATHENS TRAFFIC SIGNAL BOXES

Most Athenians and visitors to our city overlook necessary yet ordinary infrastructure such as traffic signal boxes, but ordinary things and Athens don't mix. Traffic boxes can be a conspicuous way for turning something bland into something brilliant.

## OUR EXISTING TRAFFIC BOXES

Hiding in plain sight, every traffic signal in Athens has a corresponding traffic box. As is the case in every city, these 'dead' boxes do nothing to contribute to the local culture and story.

## INSPIRATION

This idea is not new—plenty of communities (and some in Ohio) have recognized that traffic signal boxes are enormous refrigerator- sized opportunities. While they're not necessarily ugly, they are certainly not interesting. Some people see them as a colossal invasion of the public realm, and, because there is one for every traffic signal, we have many city-wide chances to inspire. We should consider them canvases.

Athens DNA

The Athens Municipal Arts Commission will use the Athens Design DNA to determine what will make the traffic signal box art purely "Athens."

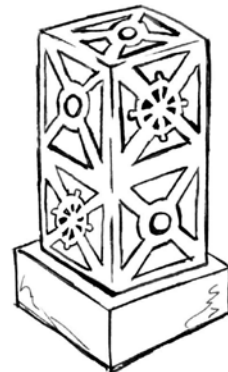
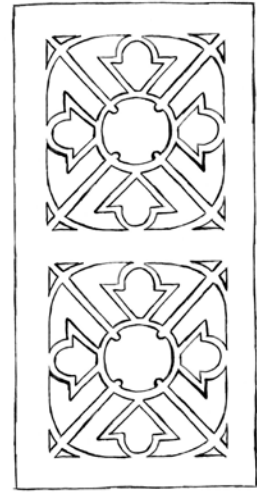


## THOUGHT PROCESS

For demonstration purposes, the existing The Ridges patterns and Athens Block brick theme seemed like a natural way to begin thinking about how these boxes could be decorated. However, it quickly became clear that instead of a top-down decision-making approach that might be imposed on the community, the canvases could be a special chance for a bottom-up, organic local artist approach that we prefer in Athens. We can make our traffic signal boxes uniquely Athens by tapping our deep pool of artists to create fresh, locally-inspired work.

It should be noted that of all the ideas in this book, this idea is probably the least original-- lots of cities have implementing and/or currently touting art on traffic signal boxes. In fact, many other cities such as Missoula, Montana, Columbia, Missouri, and Seattle, Washington (among many others) commission artists for this purpose-- exactly what is being proposed here. While local artists will automatically make this idea local to Athens, more attention is needed to make Athens' boxes truly notable and different from the programs and outcomes found everywhere else.

The Athens Municipal Arts Commission, the City of Athens, and the citizens of Athens must be diligent in determining fresh ways to do what so many other communities have long been doing.





## IMPLEMENTATION

- Every six months, Athens artists will be invited to submit entries.
- Entries will be reviewed by the Athens Municipal Arts Commission that will act as curator and primary sponsor.
- Box art should be distributed throughout Athens in as many (or all!) traffic signal boxes in the city.
- Other sponsors could join the Athens Municipal Arts Commission in a public-private partnership to help raise money for the program.
- Artists should think specifically about the boxes they are going to be decorating: will they include a deep thought or make some sort of point—for instance, a mirrored box that makes the box go away because the box shouldn't be there in the first place. Or maybe it's simply locally-inspired decoration.
- The Athens Municipal Arts Commission could come up with specific design themes for each period of review.
- Artists will not directly paint the boxes. They will be creating digital artwork that will be reproduced.
- The Athens Municipal Arts Commission should supply artist dye lines or a pattern to fill to streamline the process and make it easy for entrants.
- The Athens Engineering and Public Works Department will be in charge of installing and removing the art from the boxes every 6 months.
- The Athens Municipal Arts Commission should research other communities' programs and make sure that something besides local artists make the Athens program notable and important.

### WHO KNOWS WHAT WE'LL GET!

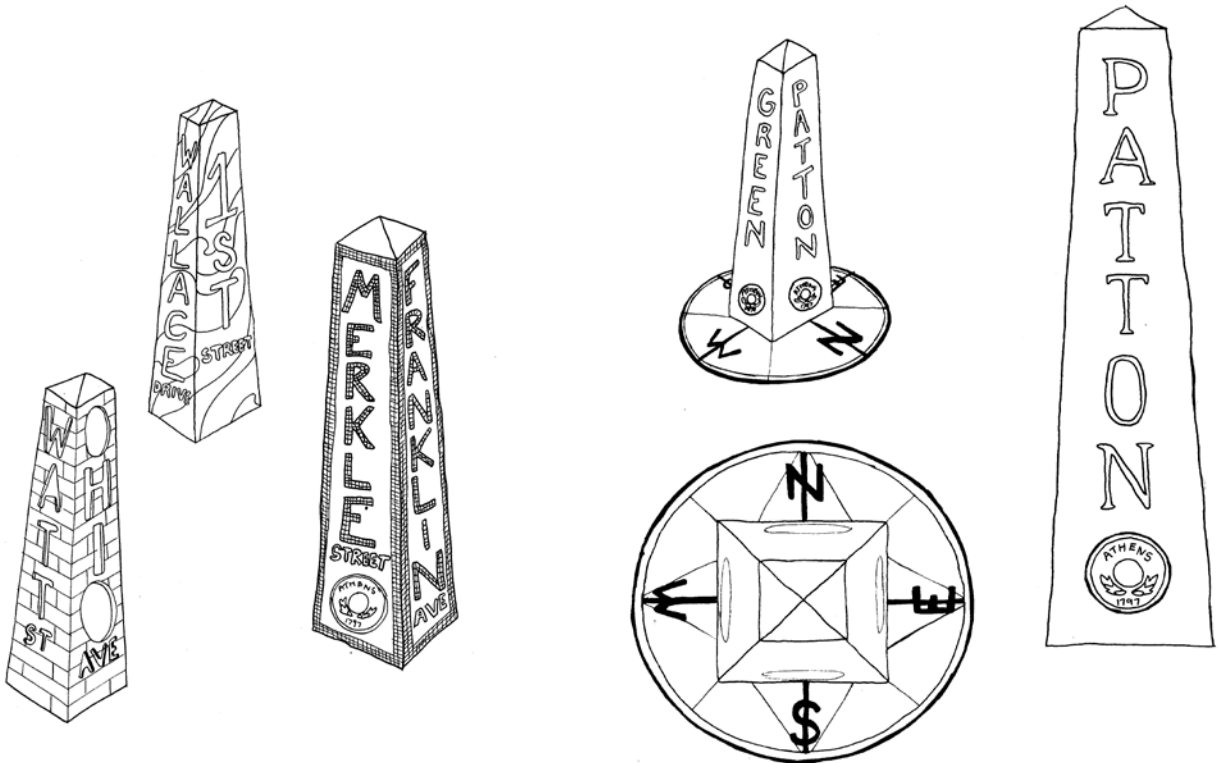
These examples are demonstrations. Athens artists will provide more meaningful and local expressions. (Left photos: "Two Chairs" by Mary Chamberlain; top right: "Blue Splash" by Pandy Reiser; bottom right: "Symphony In Yellow" by Terry Fortkamp and "Blue Splash" by Pandy Reiser. All images were provided courtesy of The Dairy Barn Arts Center.)

# OBELISKS

During World War II, many men were unemployed. The U.S. government started a program called Works Progress Administration to put these men back to work. This is the period when our street name obelisks were installed. Many of these are gone now. The Essence of Athens Committee recommends a resurrection of the obelisk program.

Implementation:

- The Athens Municipal Arts Commission should look for public/private partnerships that would involve inexpensive ways to manufacture the obelisks.
- Obelisk art and embellishments will bring increased interest to the existing historic pattern.





AN EXISTING STREET OBELISK





# BRICK PAVER TREATMENTS

The spirit of many elements of our Athens Design DNA (especially Youthful Outlook, Inventive Spirit, and Accepting Attitudes) encourages creativity and pushing boundaries. Athens loves its Athens Block Brick pavers because they were made locally, feature the word “Athens” prominently, and are everywhere in town. This is why the Essence of Athens Committee asked an important question....

“What if some of these bricks could feature the color palette of Athens?”

Do we dare?

## Implementation:

- While it is possible to bake colors into new bricks, it was determined by the Essence of Athens Committee that durable paint that would withstand weather extremes and many tires per day would be the most suitable option.
- Paint colors should be reviewed by the Athens Municipal Arts Commission .
- Paint and paint colors should be tested on a small area before committing to this project.
- Only targeted streets (perhaps Court Street and a few others and not the entire city) should be recipients of the colored brick treatment.
- The City of Athens Engineering and Public Works Department will be responsible for implementing and maintaining the colored bricks.

## < SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

This version includes bright primary colors, but any variety and hue of Athens-specific colors could be used.

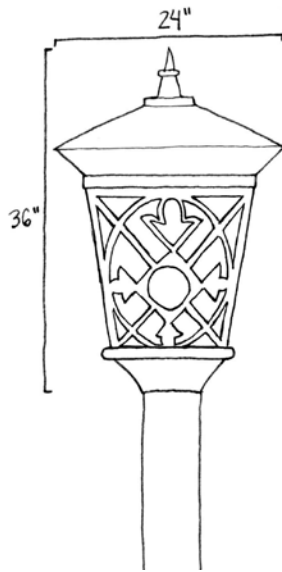
# STREET LIGHTING

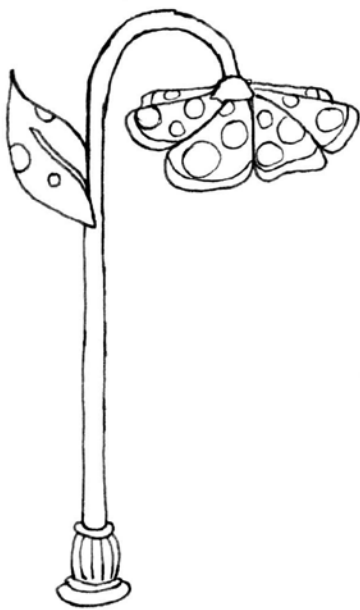
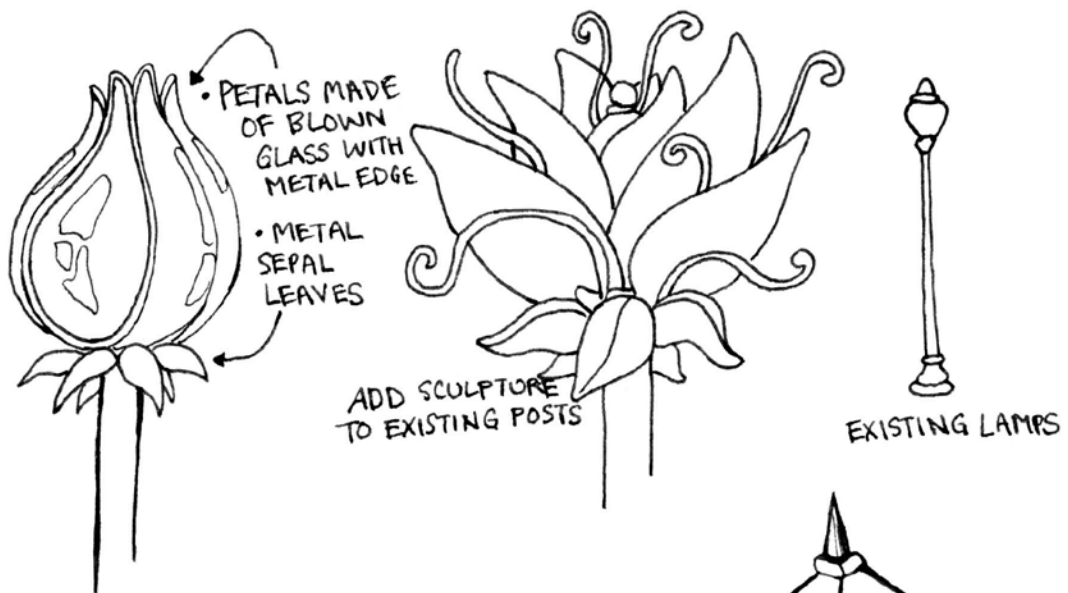
Athens could create locally-meaningful street lighting.

These napkin sketches were heavily inspired by our Passion Flower and The Ridges window grate patterns. Many of these ideas were also inspired by Athens DNA elements.

## Implementation:

- The Athens Municipal Arts Commission will be in charge of selecting which light designs will make the biggest impacts and where they should be placed.
- The Engineering and Public Works Department will make it happen.





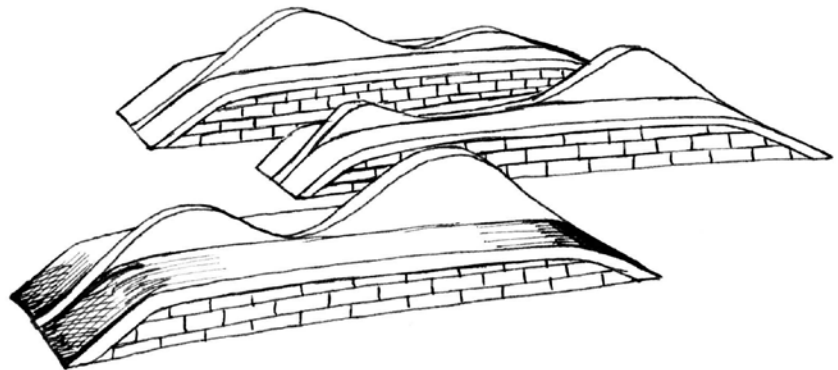
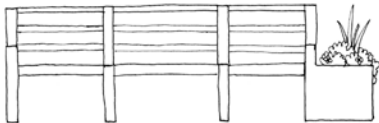
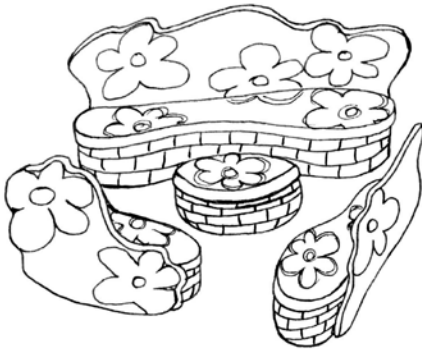
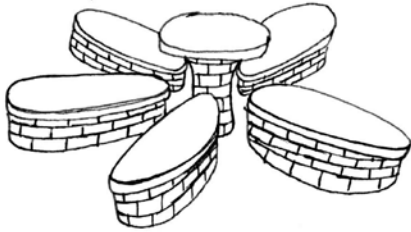
# BENCHES

In a city where pedestrianism is a hallmark, benches are an important part of the physical environment. They shouldn't be an afterthought.

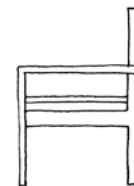
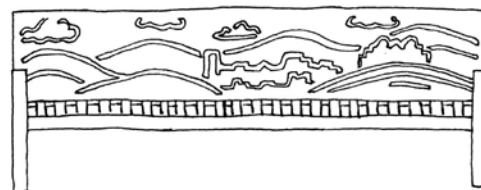
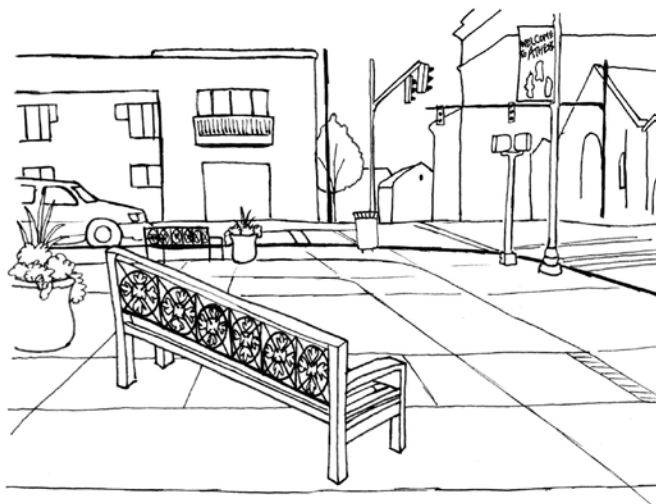
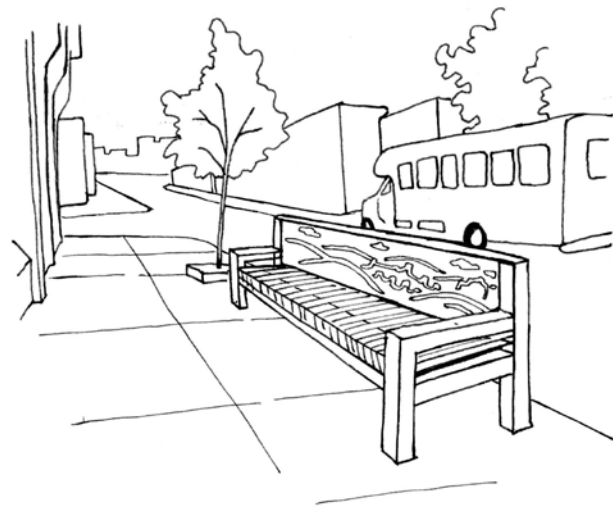
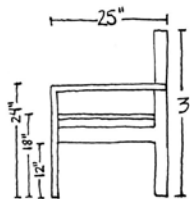
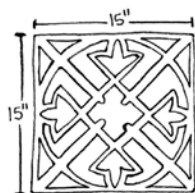
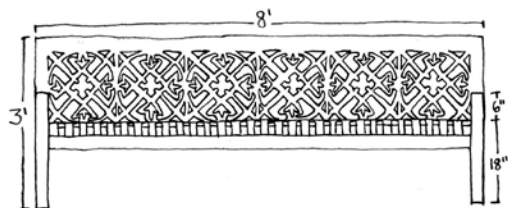
These sketches were inspired by the Passion Flower, The Ridges, Our Hills and other defining features of Athens.

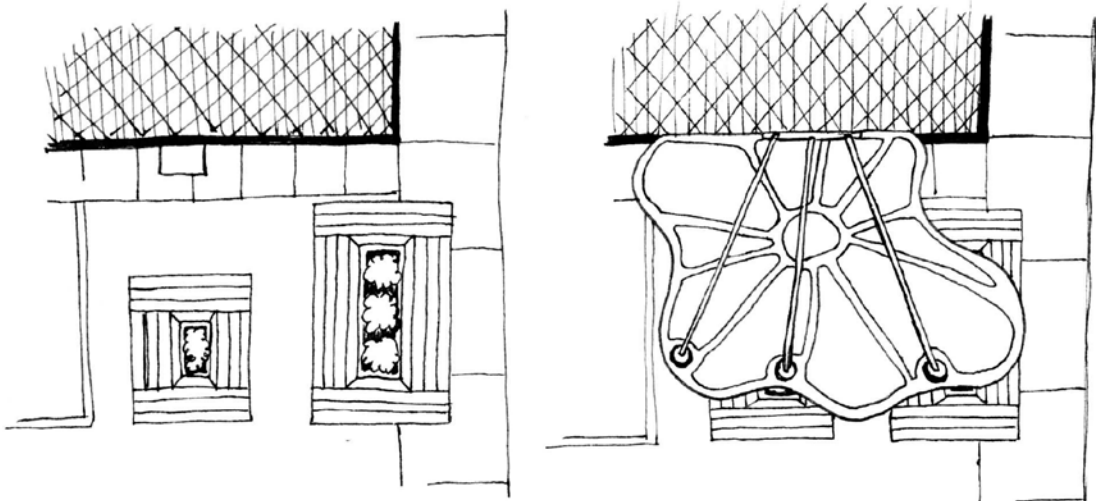
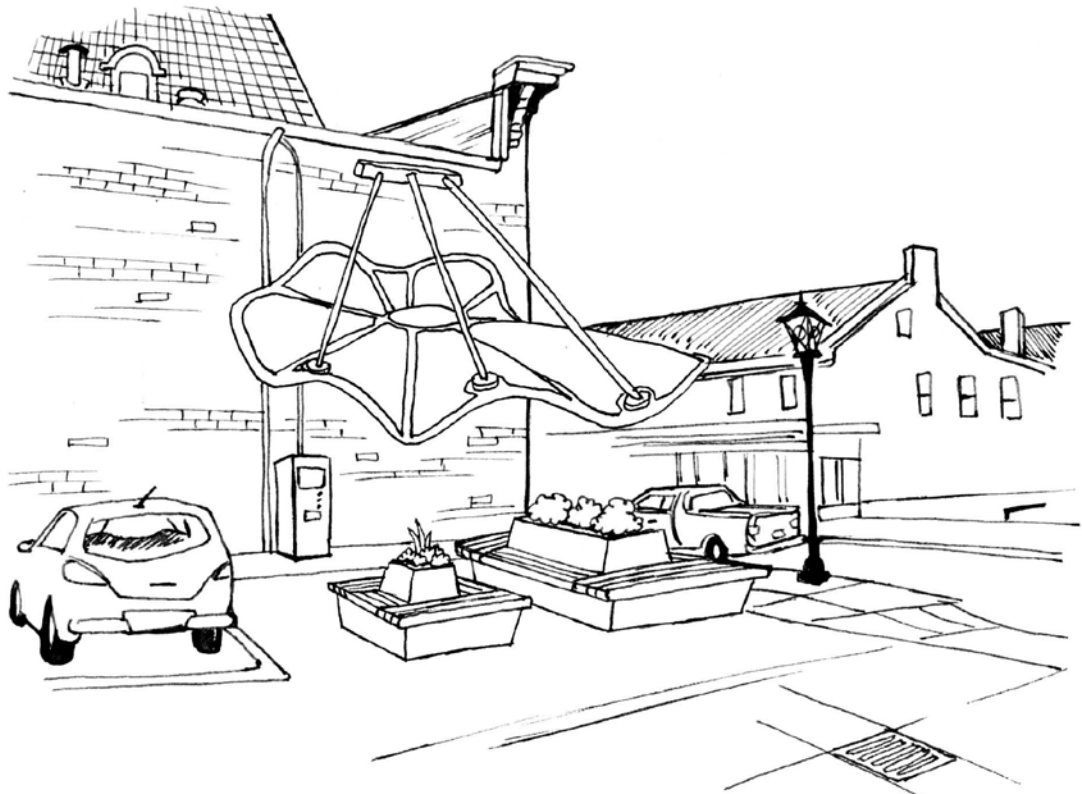
## Implementation:

- The Athens Cultural Commission will be in charge of selecting which bench designs will make the biggest impacts and where they should be placed across Athens.
- The Engineering and Public Works Department will make it happen.

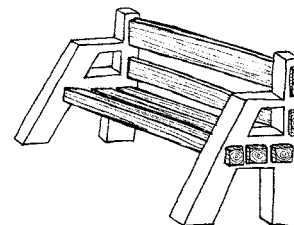
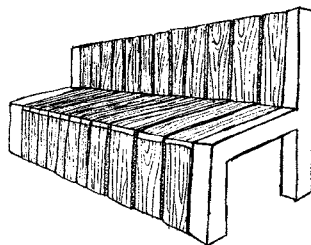
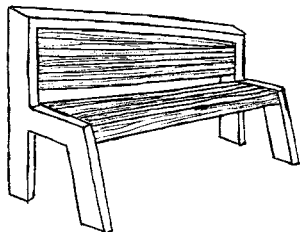
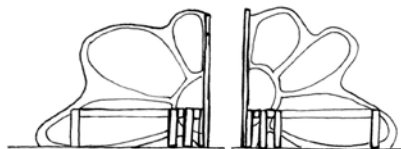
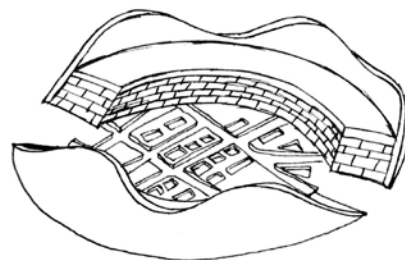
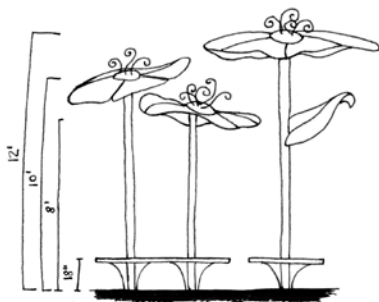
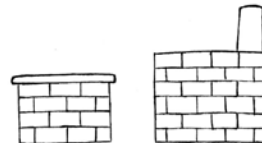
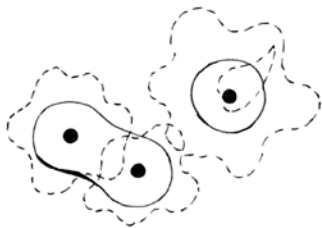
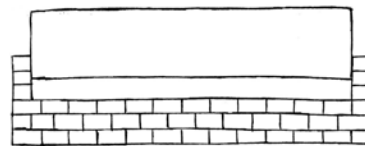
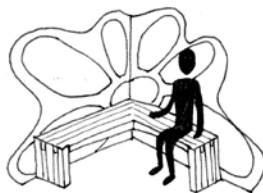


PUBLIC PROJECTS - BENCHES

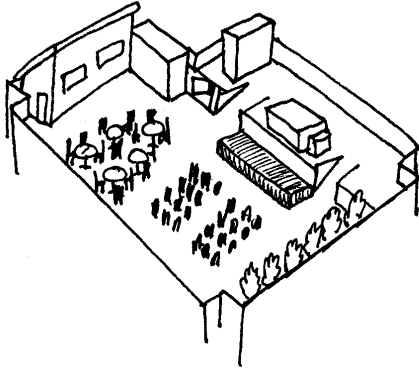




# PUBLIC PROJECTS - BENCHES



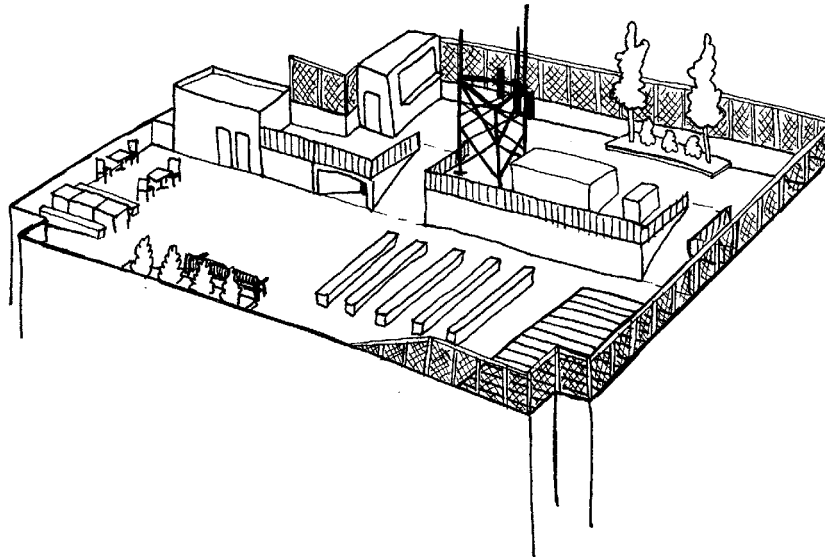
# PARKING GARAGE ROOF



The top of our parking garage provides many unrealized opportunities. These sketches give an idea of how this space with great views and in a great location could be transformed from an ordinary parking deck to something more useful and inspiring.

## Implementation:

The City of Athens Parks and Recreation department should explore the feasibility of converting this space on a short term basis in hopes of long term transformation. Large gatherings present a great opportunity to test out this concept.



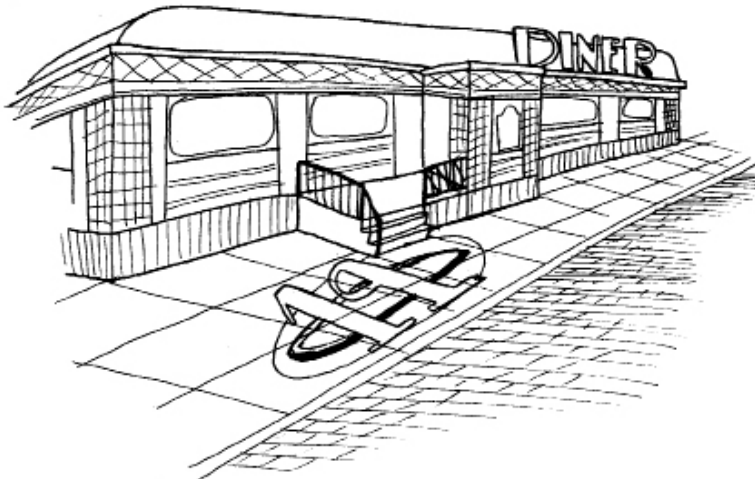


# HISTORIC WALK

Many students and visitors come to Athens without a complete understanding of the history of the city. By creating a historic walk, the city could open up its past to visitors as well as encourage them to travel by foot. Numbers will be provided on the sidewalks to correspond with information about the site.

## Implementation:

Site information can be provided on brochures and digitally (phone applications and QR codes (or newer mechanisms) to a website, for instance.) The Athens Municipal Arts Commission will be in charge of determining the sites, what the numbers will look like, and providing the informational context. Engineering and Public Works will need to be involved in implementation.



# BUSINESS HISTORY WALKS

Athens, like any city, is in a constant state of flux. When a student graduates from Ohio University, time stands still in their minds as they remember the businesses they frequented. Over the decades these businesses change. This is why, for alumni who return to the City for events or for pure nostalgia, Business History Sidewalks will be provided to celebrate their time here and encourage them to reminisce thoroughly and accurately.

For instance, Skis Teases on 55 North Court Street would have the following names on its frontage sidewalk:

The Dugout, Mama Einstein's, Mac Sweeney's, Home Restaurant, Hobbit House, The Grotto, The Bluebird Café, Brown's Restaurant

Habibi's at 19 South Court Street would feature:

G.G's Bubble Tea, The Dragon's Cup, 19 South, Cranky Joe's BBQ, EVO, Evolution, Night Court, The Downstairs, The Hobbit House

And so on.

## Implementation:

- The history markers could be as simple as stenciled spray paint or as elaborate as a formal placard paver. More formal methods would stand weathering and foot traffic more effectively.
- The Engineering and Public Works Department should be in charge of this program as they oversee public infrastructure in the city.

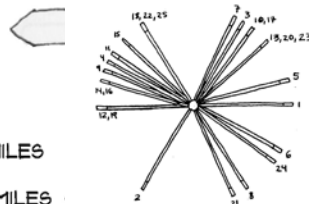
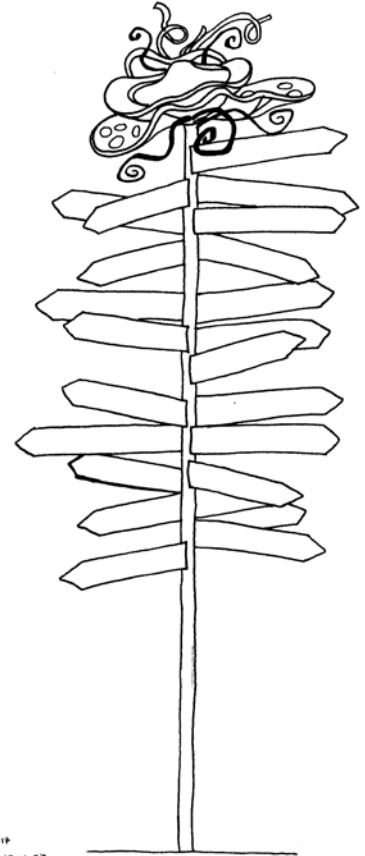
# DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Donned with a Passion Flower, this special sign will provide directions to peer college towns, most notably Oxford, Ohio and Amherst, Massachusetts. Being a major college town is a privilege to be cherished and celebrated; without Ohio University we would not be Athens. Pointing to our peers will help us remember this.

## Implementation:

- The Athens Cultural Commission will choose the number of communities and the communities themselves that will be featured. The Commission will also choose the best location for the sign that will make the greatest visual impacts.
- The Engineering and Public Works Department should be in charge of designing and implementing the directional sign.

1. CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 335 MILES
2. BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA 309 MILES
3. MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA 149 MILES
4. DAVIS, CALIFORNIA 2446 MILES
5. NEWARK, DELAWARE 416 MILES
6. WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA 438 MILES
7. BURLINGTON, VERMONT 162 MILES
8. ATHENS, GEORGIA 544 MILES
9. BOULDER, COLORADO 1351 MILES
10. AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS 689 MILES
11. PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 2548 MILES
12. FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA 1851 MILES
13. STORRS, CONNECTICUT 663 MILES
14. BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 282 MILES
15. IOWA CITY, IOWA 610 MILES
16. LAWRENCE, KANSAS 769 MILES
17. ORONO, MAINE 974 MILES
18. ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 262 MILES
19. COLUMBIA, MISSOURI 601 MILES
20. DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE 795 MILES
21. CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA 379 MILES
22. EUGENE, OREGON 2523 MILES
23. STATE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA 328 MILES
24. BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 225 MILES
25. LARAMIE, WYOMING 1396 MILES





# PRIVATE PROJECTS

Public infrastructure is implemented within our public rights-of-way, so it is a given that design execution will be carried out to the best of the city's ability. However, public sector projects are only a part of the development that constitutes the makeup of our city. Before this plan, the City of Athens had weak (or no) standards that call for Athens-specific designs for development and landscaping that is initiated by the private sector or the general public.

As citizens of Athens, we hope that your creativity and initiative will help the community carry out the Essence of Athens on the land that you control. Developers who build within the city should understand that it is a privilege to contribute to our design essence and agree to build things that keep us competitive and unique, not common and forgettable.

Fortunately, many citizens and business have voluntarily contributed to the 'Athens feel' even in the absence of existing design standards. This section does not constitute an official zoning code or official design rules; it provides ideas to voluntarily keep Athens unique and make it even more so. (Your neighbors and patrons will appreciate your vision and passion for Athens design.)

## **THE MILLER'S CHICKEN "FEEL"**

The chicken seems better here, more special here, than if it were eaten in an ordinary building that can be found anywhere else in the country. Miller's is a good example of "Athens-local" design in the private sector. We want to see more of this kind of development, the kind that can last for generations and be universally loved by visitors and locals.



# ATHENS YARDS

Many Athens lawns, yards, and gardens are as free-thinking as the people who tend to them. The landscaping across our city often expresses Athens “quirk.” When remaking our outdoor spaces, Athenians are encouraged to review the Athens DNA section to become inspired to bring forth quirky yards.

Here are some other ideas:

- Remember Athens Block Stamps for otherwise plain concrete. (Page 142)
- Express yourself!
- Celebrate your trees and keep them happy. (Page 136)
- If you have hilltops on your property, preserve them, don’t destroy them.
- Keep your lawn garden organic in all senses of the word.
- Grow food. Lots of fresh, delicious, nourishing food.

## **NATURAL. EXPRESSIVE. SPONTANEOUS.**

Athens’ yards are not forced. They are easy to care for and appreciated by wildlife, people, and pets. Our yards tend to conserve water, attract the right insects, and create a beautiful landscape that’s easier to care for.





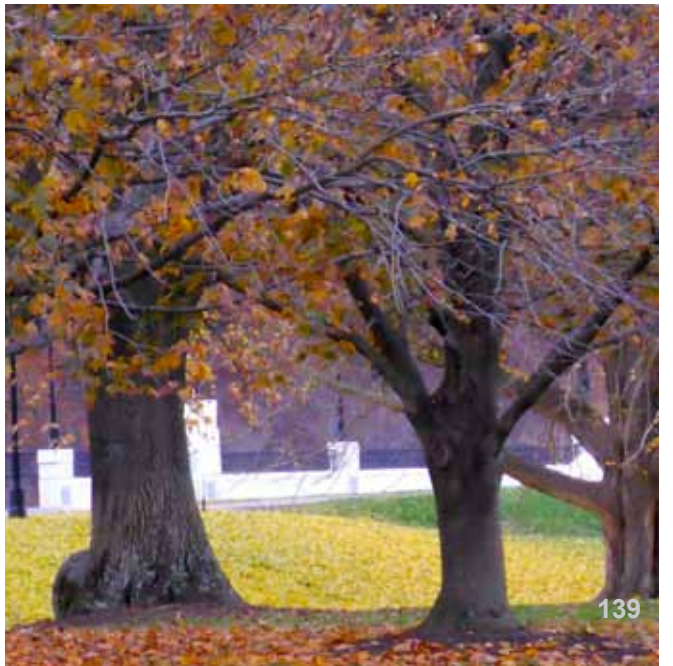


# CELEBRATE TREES

We've got mature Norway and silver maples, fruit-filled pawpaws, strong and burly Hickories, bright redbuds, yellowwoods, beech, ash, cottonwoods, hundred year old oaks, and our famous cherry trees along the Hocking River. (Only to name a few.) Without our trees, Athens just wouldn't be Athens. While trees aren't technically a part of our built environment, we planted most of them and love them all. If fallen by an act of God or felled by human hands, some of our trees would be equally as missed as a historic structure. Protecting our trees and planting new ones is a powerful aspect of who we are and what we stand for.

## Implementation:

Always remember that our trees are important to us and protect them. Plant as many new trees as possible for the next generation of Athenians.



# ATHENS HOME

While there is no one specific style of architecture that is (nor ever should be) associated with Athens (we're too loose and creative to allow such things to happen), existing homes improved on in Athens should honor the Athens DNA and the Athens color palette. This ensures that we stand out as other communities embrace beige and brown color schemes for home exteriors and accept standard, universal house designs. Our homes are storytellers with bright, vibrant colors not usually found in the rest of our region.

Consider your home to be your chance to be as expressive and creative as possible.

If you are building a new house or housing development in Athens, please consider the Athens DNA even more carefully as you design individual houses, subdivisions, condominiums, and apartments. Architects and landscape architects should be particularly aware of our expectations. Please come for a visit and learn first-hand about our culture before committing to any cookie-cutter residential designs.



PRIVATE PROJECTS - ATHENS HOME



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# ATHENS BLOCK STAMP

As mentioned in the Athens DNA section above, it should be clear that Athenians love their “Athens Block” brick pavers. These bricks were born nearly 130 years ago when the Athens Brick Company first opened in 1890 on Stimson Avenue. The company shipped our special Athens Block bricks around the world, primarily for street paving. The City of Athens used these bricks extensively to pave our streets until paving methods transferred to asphalt during the first years of the 20th Century. Many Athens streets still feature these original Athens Block brick pavers on a large number of our main streets and back streets. For generations, locals, including Ohio University students, have fallen in love with these bricks as an important symbol of Athens.

Contrarily, plain concrete is opposite in character and story-telling ability when poured in Athens. Our concrete shouldn’t be ordinary. To fix this problem, The Essence of Athens Steering Committee recommends that **a hand-held stamp** featuring the Athens Block letters found in the brick imprints be designed and administered by The City of Athens Engineering and Public Works Department to help citizens localize their hardscape and pavement projects in a kind of stamp check out service. Whether Athenians are using concrete to pave a new driveway, new sidewalks or paths, patios, garage slabs, or any exposed concrete projects, they will be able to check out these special Athens Block concrete stamps to create their own signature experience that celebrates Athens.







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# ATHENS STYLE DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps the most important aspect of our cultural landscape is the way we design our service and retail structures. After all, these are the places where we mingle, dine, and shop. If you're building or remodeling, consider the following:

- Show us Athens-specific design feature DNA as featured in Part 1 of this book.
- Propose and build structures that stray from the usual prototype designs widely found in every other community.
- Make your commercial signs contribute to the Essence of Athens in the same way buildings and public infrastructure do. Enhance signs with the Athens Design DNA.








**PART 3**

**SHARE WITH**





For:  
Everyone

# THE WORLD



# HOW TO REALIZE THIS PLAN

While each of the public and private ideas provided in this plan offered implementation steps, the following recommendations provide specific directions for big picture realization. Successful implementation requires buy-in and diligence by leaders and citizens over time.

## **A** EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS TO REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, ARCHITECTS, URBAN DESIGNERS, AND BUSINESS OWNERS

1. Provide hard copies to principals of high-profile development proposals who we know will be building in Athens.
2. Provide digital copies that can be available for download on the City of Athens' website for the design and business community.
3. Hold regular and one-on-one meetings with local developers, designers, and business owners to discuss plan implementation.
4. Produce a video that can be shared with the development and design community about plan expectations.

## **B** EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS, LEADERS, THE STAFF OF THE CITY OF ATHENS, ATHENS COUNTY, AND OHIO UNIVERSITY.

1. Hold informational meetings with elected officials and leaders to discuss creative ideas for the plan's communication and implementation.
2. Provide a digital copy to all members of the government and educational community. Produce a video that can be shared with the development and design community about plan expectations.



## HOW TO REALIZE THIS PLAN

# C

### **EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANT ROLE TO THE ATHENS MUNICIPAL ARTS COMMISSION REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION**

1. Provide a training session to members on how to implement this plan.
2. Make a list of everything in this plan that will eventually come before the Commission and distribute this list to each commissioner.
3. Have the Commission prioritize the first five projects that it will be in charge of managing.
4. Establish a timeline for the Commission to implement specific aspects of this plan as soon as possible after formal adoption.

# D

### **TIE THE INFRASTRUCTURE IDEAS TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET**

1. The Engineering and Public Works Department must work with the Athens Municipal Arts Commission on a priority list for implementation.
2. This list should be tied to the capital improvements budget.
3. Before any improvements to any public infrastructure are implemented, this plan should be referenced. If there are no specific ideas for the infrastructure that will be improved, the Department should consult the Athens Municipal Arts Commission to avoid missed opportunities. Copies of this book should be provided for all members of the City of Athens staff.

# E

### **PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY**

1. Local businesses and organizations should be invited to join resources to implement this economic development strategy for the advancement of the local economy.
2. Local foundations should be asked to partner on particular ideas that match their missions.

## HOW TO REALIZE THIS PLAN



### **F** CITIZENS, INCLUDING OHIO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, SHOULD BE INVITED TO HELP IMPLEMENT THIS PLAN

1. Citizens who own businesses, homes, and land should be asked to do what they can to make their private property match the values of Athens. (If their properties don't already match.)
2. Ohio University students who rent should discuss positive ways to implement the plan where they live with their landlords. Students living in dorms on campus could also "practice" implementation by creating an Athens-specific dorm room.



### **G** SCHOOL CHILDREN (THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY) SHOULD IMMEDIATELY BECOME INVOLVED WITH IMPLEMENTATION.

1. Members of the Essence of Athens Committee should consider visiting every school and making school-wide presentations about the plan.
2. Middle and High School students should be taught how they can implement the plan at home.
3. Elementary and younger students should be given the *Essence of Athens* coloring book (to be designed) and asked to dream about the future of our city.



### **H** WE SHOULD BRAG. WE TELL PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT, WHY, AND HOW WE ARE DOING ALL OF THIS.

1. Athens is the first community to complete such an ambitious plan of this kind.
2. Talking about what will be accomplished as a result of this plan to as many people as possible becomes self-perpetuating.
3. Be proud of what this plan will bring to Athens.

**TOWARD A FOREVER BELOVED ATHENS, OHIO.**









**DESIGNING LOCAL**  
**MKSK**



OHIO, USA