

# D o w n t o w n C o n n e c t i o n s



R/UDAT

Springfield, Illinois

2002

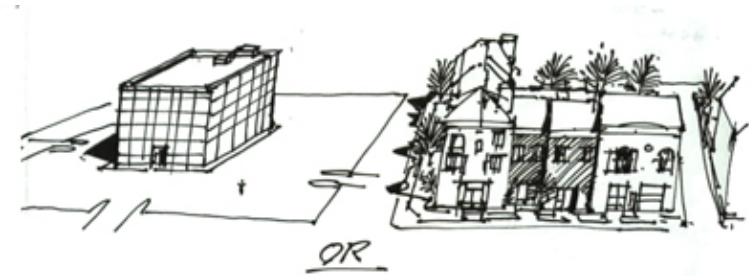
# D o w n t o w n C o n n e c t i o n s

## Streetscape Treatments

A five-minute walking tour of downtown Springfield in the vicinity of the historic statehouse provides ample evidence of the successes which result from well-designed, well-implemented streetscapes. The environment in this district is exemplary and will be difficult to improve upon. Its obvious success should inspire continued implementation in all directions within the overlay district described herein. The current State Capitol grounds should, however, exhibit a singular identity in its streetscape presentation, the most notable, a difference in scale (see Capitol Streetscape). Improvement is possible with any design and will be necessary as materials wear and new products are introduced over time.

While no changes are recommended in the palette of materials, the special pavements might be expanded to include crosswalks on some streets where narrowing occurs. In these instances stamped concrete is the material of choice over clay-fired unit pavers. A successful example of this system has been installed on Washington Street and Adams Street north and south sides of the Old State Capitol.

It is important to remember that as the currently installed streetscape ages and expands within the downtown, changes in furnishings, colors and detail should be expected. The underlying order of a good streetscape design is the continuity provided by a clearly delineated amenity zone behind the curb, adherence to an established pattern of trees and street lights, and superb maintenance of all components.



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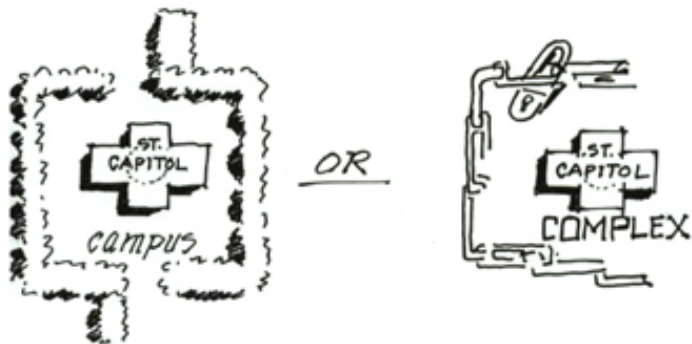


## The State Capitol Environs

Appropriate development of the grounds of the Illinois' capitol campus include a singular identity, an unmistakable order and a presentation of superb site detailing that benefits the state's most prominent civic property. Creation of a streetscape vocabulary and appropriate ceremonial treatment of the property commensurate with the Capitol structure itself is long overdue.

Sadly, a visitor's perspective of the magnificent structure is seen across and through a myriad of poorly ordered parking lots and featureless gray surfaces. Visible to the eye? Yes. Welcoming? No. Is this the image the State of Illinois wishes to project to its citizenry?

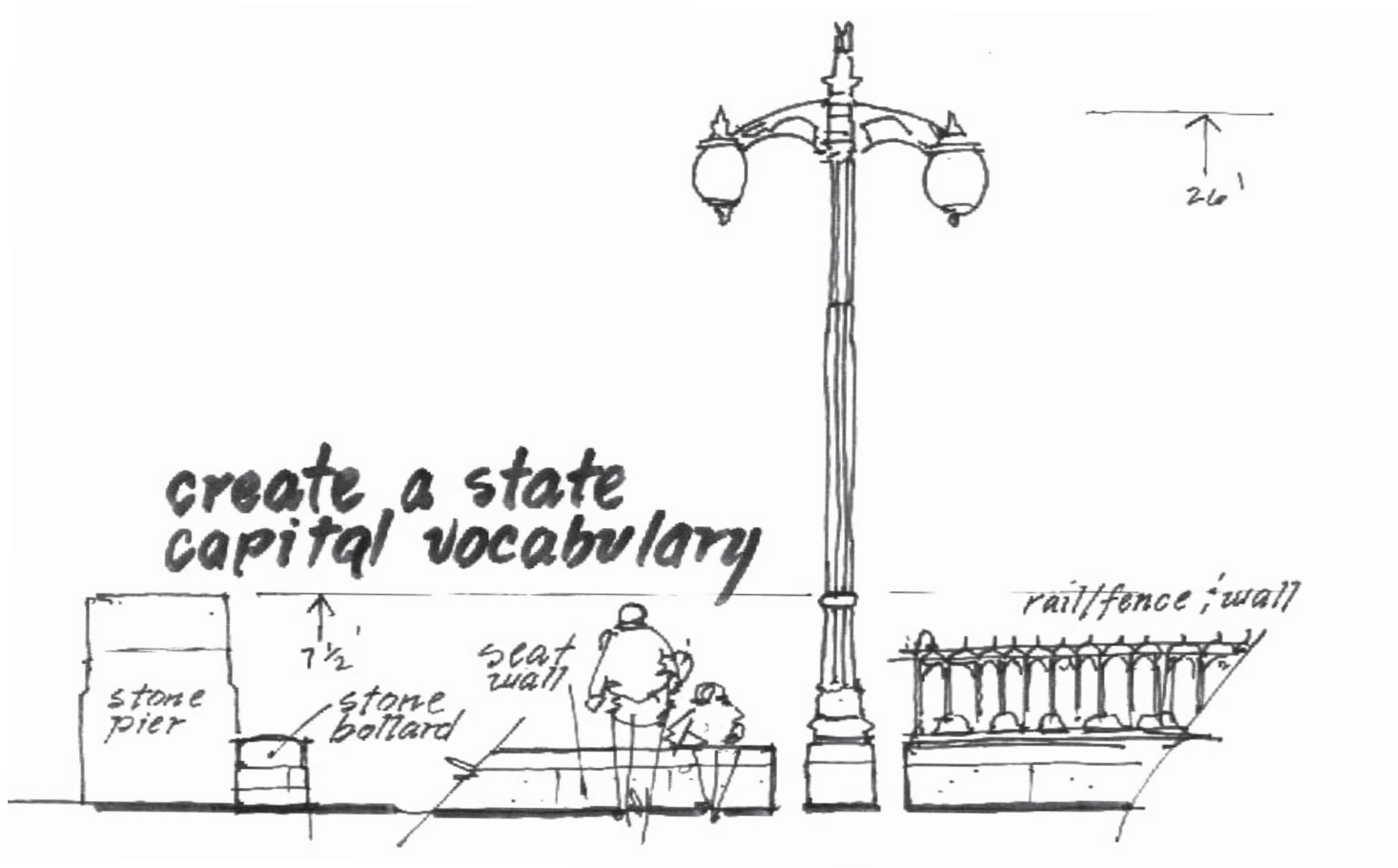
Though numerous plans have been made, dating back decades, little or no order is evident in the physical arrangement of the other capitol campus structures, walks, parking lots, green spaces, signage, etc., in the "complex", referred to as a "campus" herein.



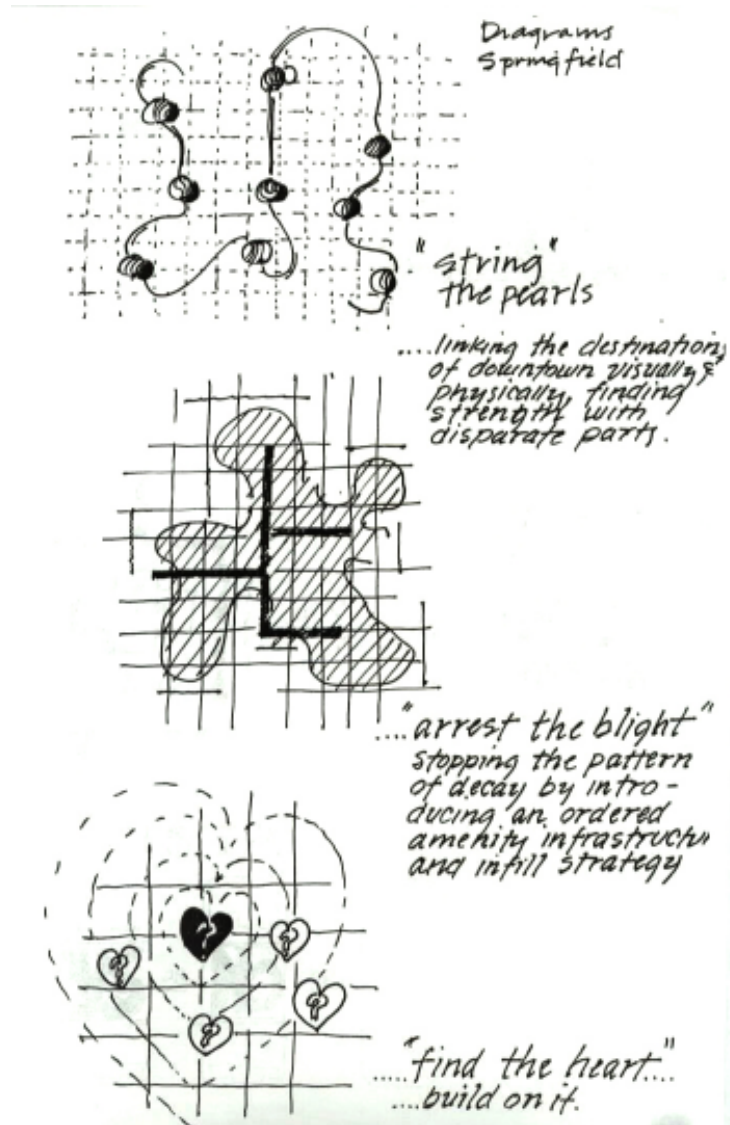
The recommendations which follow address State Capitol streetscape issues only and begin with Capitol Avenue itself. The Capitol Avenue approach is arguably the most important streetscape environment in the city of Springfield. In addition to the vista it provides to citizens and visitors to Illinois, it functions as a ceremonial drive and a marquee for the statehouse.

For these reasons the team recommends development of a one-way promenade commencing at 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Improvements should include:

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- reduced travel lane width to 28 feet curb to curb (one-way west).
- double row of hardwood trees from end to end. Trees will frame and reinforce the existing view corridor to the dramatic east facade of the statehouse. Trees should be planted 6 inches minimum caliper and limbed up to 10 feet to permit views to commercial storefronts.
- "special" pavement within the travel lanes will further punctuate the ceremonial nature of this special corridor making it recognizable and detectable at each intersecting street.
- walks on either side of the Capitol promenade should be generous in width  $\pm 12$  foot minimum and well illuminated by appropriately scaled fixtures (a standard selected for the capitol grounds and Capitol Avenue only).
- Beyond the tree plantings, beds should be irrigated and filled with perennials, ground covers, and annual changeout plants.
- Reconstruction of the Union Pacific Railroad bridge at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The bridge is in need of repair and provides an obvious opportunity to celebrate one's arrival at the Capitol Campus. Its design and reconstruction should embrace the Capital streetscape vocabulary in material, scale and detail. Across its west face might read "Illinois Capitol Campus welcomes you."
- Improvements at the east arrival or forecourt on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street should include construction of a limestone sign wall which compliments the existing wall.
- A Capitol streetscape vocabulary could include a typical streetlight, curb and pavement, seatwall, sign pier, etc., for the grounds.



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## **Jackson Street Improvements**

An important, well-documented secondary pedestrian opportunity useful in linking the State Capitol campus, the Governor's Mansion and the historic Lincoln home-site exists in the Jackson Street corridor.

As a pedestrian route, Jackson is interrupted by a parking lot between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. Negotiation of this impasse will permit development of a superb walking and biking environment as the route is shaded and traverses a gentle change in grade between 5<sup>th</sup> and the Capitol. The corridor will also ultimately will provide an alternate route for pedestrians making long trail bike connections across town, and will improve the attractiveness of the district for commercial redevelopment and infill. For these reasons, the design implementation corridor is strongly recommended as a key element of an overall networking strategy in the downtown.

Physical improvements may include a 10 to 12 foot bike trail on one side of the right-of-way and augmentation of existing plant material and lighting standards.

## **Near Downtown Trail and Corridor Connectors**

A substantial effort has been made in Sangamon County toward development of a county-wide trail system. The team focused its efforts on recommendations for connections to these planned systems from the downtown proper and on promising pedestrian corridors. Trailheads are recommended in established parks.

- Capitol Avenue east to Jaycee Park and 11<sup>th</sup> Street need to be strengthened as pedestrian corridors as they can provide access to the Bunn Park Golf Course to the south where a connection can be made from downtown to the Lost Bridge Trail.

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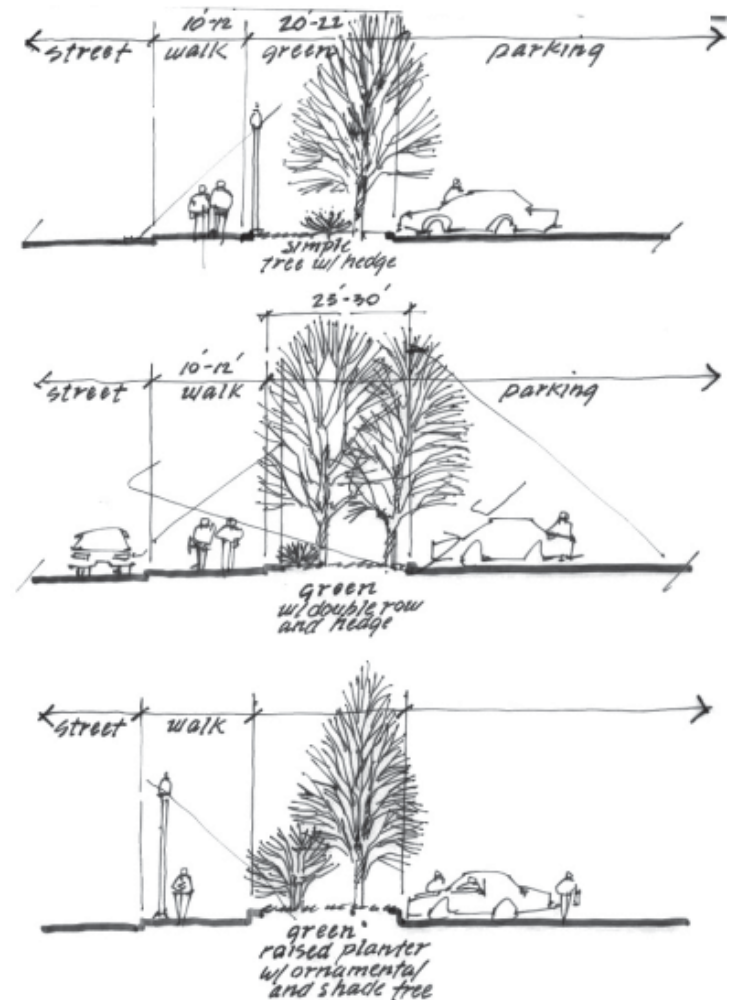
- The location at 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Street north to Reynolds and on to Douglas Park has potential. A trailhead here can serve a new connector ultimately accessing the Sangamon Valley Trail to the northwest.
- Williams Boulevard to Washington Park, along Outer Park Drive and ultimately to the Wabash Trail.
- A link along North Avenue to Bryn Mawr to Bunn Park will connect the Wabash Valley Trail with the Lost Bridge Trail.
- If the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street rail corridor is abandoned in the future, its right-of-way can be used as a trail connector to North Avenue.

## Parking Lot Treatments

Streetscape treatments are noticeably absent as one ventures beyond the immediate downtown area. Parking lots, large and small, contribute to a poor image in these areas and a breakdown in the friendly density and scale of the adjacent commercial core.

While our team is recommending consolidation of these lots where feasible into multi-story decks, we understand that this process may require considerable time. Therefore, we recommend the application of landscape treatments to strengthen urban edges, screen parked vehicles and generally upgrade the image of these zones.

A variety of treatments are shown. Others have been documented repeatedly in the recent past. The team considers treatment of these unsightly conditions imperative if the momentum established in the commercial core is to continue.



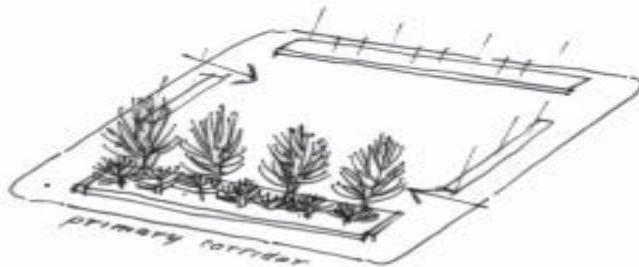
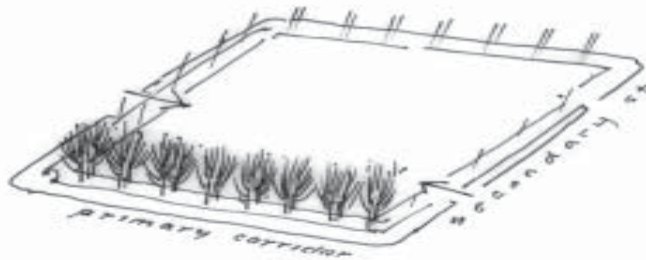
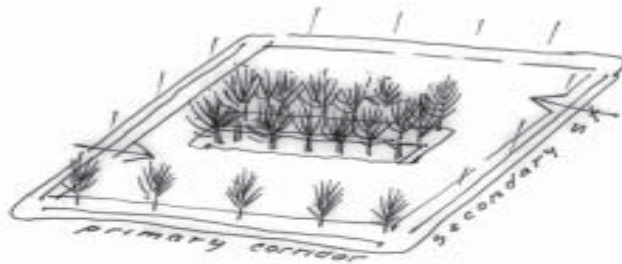
## Parking Schemes

In general, landscape treatments that reflect the civic personality of Springfield, with simple crisp edges, low walls and hedges, as illustrated, are preferable to treatments that use soft berms, meandering alignments and irregular profiles.

Because many of the lots contain 150 cars or more and cover entire blocks, provisions for pedestrian access across and through them are especially important.

## Landscape Ordinance

The R/UDAT team reviewed the recently adopted landscape ordinance. In general, the ordinance is a positive tool that will help the community achieve its goals to create a pleasant downtown environment. One area of concern, however, was discovered in the ordinance related to the “point system” used to determine compliance. Continuity in design will be difficult at best from block to block or parcel to parcel. The team recommends that the landscape guidelines be amended to provide an exception to the process for applications within the proposed Capital Downtown Overlay Zoning District, whereby all landscape plans will be subject to design review prior to approval. In this way, continuity of landscape design can be maintained along specific street corridors in the downtown.



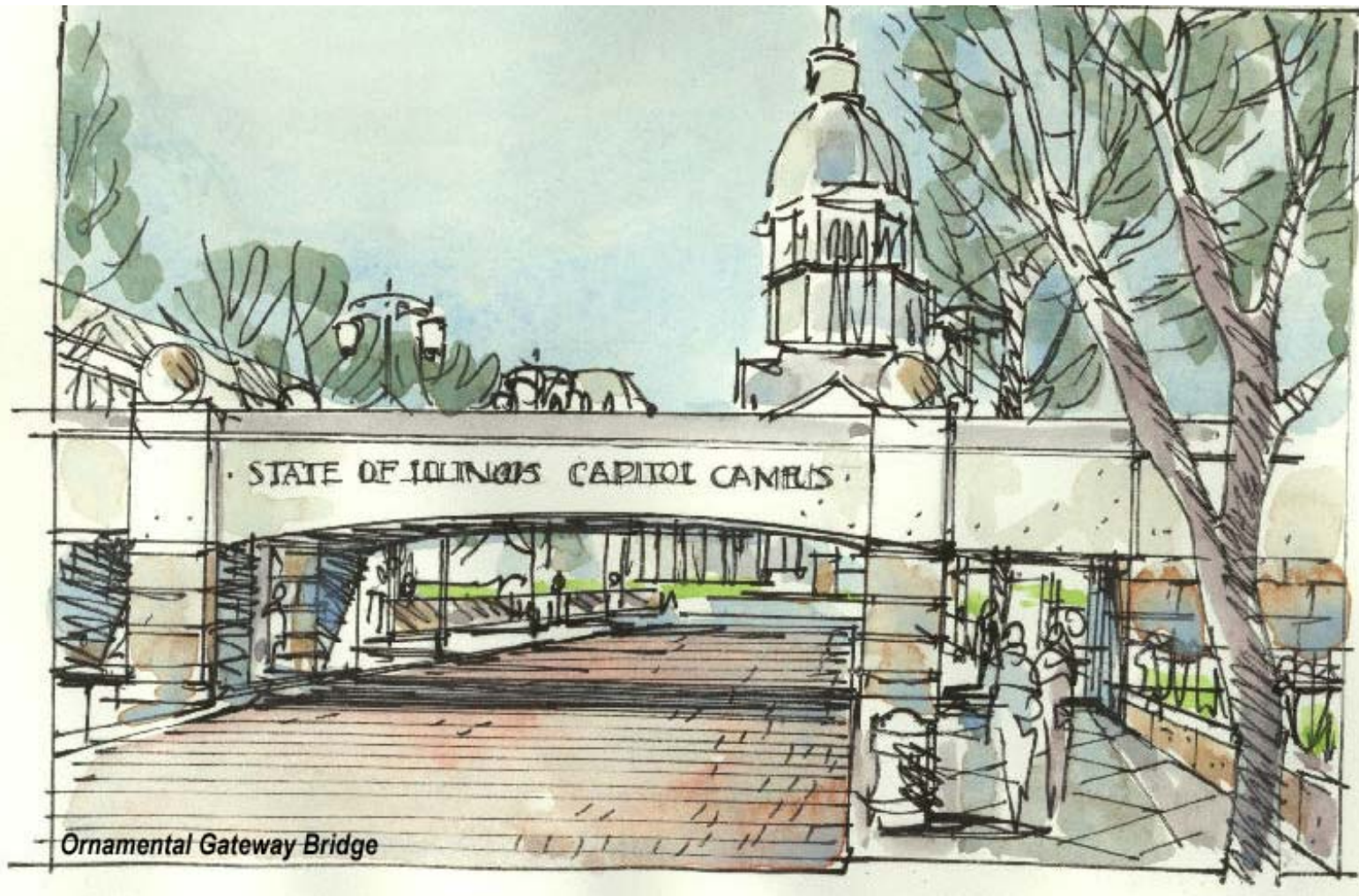


**Capitol Avenue Promenade**

*...ceremonial approach provides a fitting  
image for the seat of Illinois government,  
similar to other state capitals*



**Governor's Mansion**  
*...mixed use infill respectful to formal setting*



Ornamental Gateway Bridge