

# Midtown grant a quality of life boost for city

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The part of Columbus that has come to be designated as Midtown involves only 3 percent of the city's area, but more than 12 percent of the Columbus population lives there. It's a section of town where preserving and enhancing quality of life is key to the future of the greater community.

The Knight Foundation, which serves cities where the former Knight-Ridder published newspapers, has just announced recipients of 32 Knight Cities Challenge Grants. One of them, for \$200,000, has been awarded to Midtown Inc. and its director, Anne King, who obviously impressed the foundation's decision makers with an idea called "Minimum Grid: Maximum Impact."

Not even King knows exactly what that will be, except that it will involve pedestrian, bicycle and transit routes connecting Midtown and Uptown.

What it will not involve is more "curb-cut" development, something Columbus has seen more than enough of over the years.

Travel writer/humorist Bill Bryson has described contemporary urban-suburban blight in terms of business districts that are not just pedestrian unfriendly, but literally unwalkable -- designed for people to drive out of one parking lot onto a thoroughfare and into another parking lot mere yards away.

In stark contrast to that model, King described "an interconnected system of pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections within and between Columbus' core community of Midtown and Uptown ... We want to learn how to support and encourage a community that walks, bikes and connects, as well as drives, between points A and B."

There are plenty of what King calls "scattered gems" all over Columbus. This grant will help create fresh ways of moving among them.