

The first train came to Springfield on April 21, 1870 followed shortly by construction of the first passenger depot just north of Benton and the first freight depot at the head of Boonville or Boonville hill as it was the way to Nathaniel Boone's homestead north of town. Most of the brick buildings you see around you were built between 1880 & 1900 with bricks brought in by train. Commercial Street was the downtown of the City of North Springfield, a railroad boom town often referred to as "newtown" from 1870 until 1887 when it was annexed by nearby Springfield.

Commercial Club is one of Springfield's oldest service organizations and the major force in revitalization efforts, dating from the early 1990's. One of the earliest photos of the board of Commercial Club taken in 1910 resembles the makeup of today's Chamber of Commerce and features then Mayor T.K. Bowman and businessmen like James Doling & William Jones (Dry Goods), George Garlick (Butcher), Fred Platte (Hardware), J.H. Rathbone (Hardware), George Hinds (Banker), John W. Rose (Bookstore), Charles S. Cook (Real Estate & Insurance) and Emmet Cavin (Furniture).

Present day Commercial Club has been applying Community Development Block Grant funds to streetscaping, landscaping & planning efforts since 1989. Recently, some of these funds were also allocated by Commercial Club for plans for a permanent home for the Commercial Street Farmers market adjoining the Footbridge Plaza. Also, the Jefferson Avenue Footbridge project was just completed with a combination of Missouri Department of Transportation & City of Springfield funding as well as additional CDBG funds both through the Commercial Club and UDA with special support of DSA and Walnut Street.

In 1992, CC worked with Hammons School of Architecture to produce a long-range plan, a road map of improvements for the area. This plan was updated in 2000 under the guidance of Alkis Tsolakis, then president of Commercial Club and instructor at Hammons School of Architecture. The importance of the growth of the residential element in stabilizing the neighborhood was emphasized in both plans.

Labor Day Sunday is Commercial Club's annual loftwalk, a fundraiser for artistic projects such as the molten metal pour held in 2001 at the Footbridge Plaza and additions to the open air gallery of sculptures featured in the walking tour brochure. This year promises to be a special one as plans include the loftwalk as well as a Ragtime festival & centennial celebration & dedication of the Footbridge.

Momentum is building with new lofts underway and exciting new businesses moving into the historic district monthly. Investors are wandering the street as word of unique opportunities spreads. Your continued support is needed to maintain this momentum and positive energy.