

Lowry Mall completed at last

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It took over two decades to complete, but Lowry Mall is finally finished.

In a ceremony Friday, UMC Chancellor Barbara Uehling dedicated the mall to the people of UMC. Her words ended the years of committee meetings and construction that were needed to complete the mall.

For a simple thoroughfare connecting the Memorial Union and Red Campus, Lowry Mall has been a large thorn in the side of the University. As far back as the 1960s, student leaders wanted to make "Lowry Street" a pedestrian area of campus.

At the time, it was little more than another Columbia city street. Today, however, the red brick, terraced mall is a campus meeting area. It is a place where people talk to friends study, listen to speakers or even watch movies.

"There are very few places on campus where students can sit outside and meet their friends," said Bill Ruppert, UMC landscape architect. "Lowry

Mall accommodates a hell of a lot of people."

Ruppert knows a lot about Lowry Mall. As a UMC student, he was involved in the Student Fees Capital Improvement Committee, which provided much of the impetus—and funding—for the \$878,000 project.

Although complaints about Lowry Street began in the 1960s, it was not until 1973 that the University finally reached an agreement with the city to limit automobile traffic on the street during certain hours of the day. It was another five years before students finally persuaded the administration to close the street permanently.

"It took the Uehling administration to really move the Lowry Mall project to the point of reality," Ruppert said. "After all those years of discussion, it didn't happen until (Uehling) said 'Yes, this is right. Let's do it.'"

The big problem was money. In 1978, the way was cleared when the Student Fees Capital Improvement Committee recommended allocation of funding. It was not until 1980,

however, that serious discussions even began.

Those discussions were massive affairs, with as many as 50 people attending, representing all sectors of the University. The meetings formulated a basic format for the mall.

"One of the big things at that time was that there was concrete all over campus," Ruppert said. "What came out of those meetings was that no one wanted concrete, so we got red brick."

The mall was completed in five phases, since money was so tight. Most of the money for the project came from the Student Fees Capital Improvement Committee and private donors.

"It took so long strictly because of funding," Ruppert said. "There was not enough money at any one time.

"We were heavily dependent on outside contributions, and without anything to show people, it's hard to get them to donate money," he said. "We never would have made it through phase one and phase two without funding from the Student Fee Capital Improvement Committee and the University."