

Greater Downtown Kansas City Area Plan
Blue Sub-Area, Meeting #1
June 24, 2008
Gregg Klice Community Center
5:45 – 8 pm

Overview

The first sub-area work group meeting in the blue sub-area convened on Tuesday, June 24 at the Gregg Klice Community Center. Approximately 15 members of the community were in attendance, as well as representatives from the consultant team, City Planning and Development, and students from the summer K-State Planning and Design Studio.

The presentation was lead by Stephen Hardy (BNIM) and Leonard Graham (Taliaferro and Browne) and included an explanation of what is an area plan, the importance of planning and an overview of the project and how the public will be engaged.

Small Group Discussion

Following the presentation, participants divided into three groups of six to ten individuals to discuss a “vision” for the Greater Downtown area. A set of seven guiding questions was posed to each workgroup at each area meeting. Interestingly, the responses were strikingly similar both among the workgroups as well as across the sub-areas. However, the views expressed by many of the blue sub-area participants were particularly weighted towards social concerns and posed a number of community based solutions to planning issues.

Near the end of the meeting, a representative from each workgroup shared the findings of their discussion to the entire group.

Following is a summary of the guiding questions and participant feedback collected via group flip charts, public comment forms and facilitator notes.

1. **How do we become a model 21st century city? (environment, economy, social equity)**
 - **Major themes – “Safe” “Clean” “Green”**
 - Make use of vacant land – “fill in the donut”
 - Address abandoned properties and related social ills
 - Return of economic development and increase effectiveness of City services
 - Affordable housing and job opportunities
 - Reinforce a sense of belonging and community
 - Accessible and reliable public transit routes
 - Reinforce authentic identity / Jazz and BBQ
 - Safety
 - Increase walkability
 - Keep the downtown area clean and well maintained
 - Provide accessible amenities and beautiful landscapes
 - Create oasis in the form of green pocket parks
 - Attractive, friendly
 - Reinforce a positive image by highlighting existing positive characteristics such as trees and fountains
 - More family attractions and activities
 - Balance large events with safety and parking

2. What are the competitive advantages of the Downtown Area? How are we different from our peers?

- **Major themes – “Civic Assets” “Central Hub” “Diversity”**
- Civic Assets:
 - Sprint Center
 - Municipal Auditorium
 - Beautiful fountains, Variety of activities
 - KCPL District
 - Kaufman Performing Arts
 - Crossroads, First Fridays
 - KC Museums
 - River Market
 - Union Station, Liberty Memorial/WWI Museum
 - American Jazz Museum
 - Gem Theater
 - Mutual Musicians Foundation
 - Negro League Baseball Museum
 - Public Art
 - Parks and Recreational Opportunities (should make better use of river)
- Need for attractions for Children
- Large businesses impact existing smaller owner operations
- Desire more local businesses
- Employment hub / office density
- Transit hub
- Proximity to airport and commercial train
- Architecture
- Views and skyline
- Cultural diversity
- Wide range of live, work, play opportunities
- Economic hub
- Lower taxes than other Midwestern cities

3. What is the identity of the area and what makes a Downtown resident unique?

- **Major themes - “Symbolic Heart” “History” “Eclecticism”**
- Heart of the bi-state area
- Center of power
- Sense of community – history - character
- On its way to being walkable
- City in the middle of a forest
- Hub for the Arts / Artists (high/low brow art)
- Historic places of worship and historic architecture
- Gangster / cowboy past
- Casual, friendly, down-to-earth, culturally and economically diverse
- Urban “looking for the action”
- Youthful (but few school age children)

4. How do we make the Downtown Area a better place to live?

- **Major themes – “Schools” “Security” “Housing” “Innovation”**
- Free parking
- Increased and diverse retail – Wal-Mart, Macy's, etc.
- Grocery store – Price Chopper, etc.
- 24 hour public transit
- Better security and traffic control

- Control panhandling, street people (engage homeless in positive civic interaction)
- Better public services and innovative infrastructure
- Pocket parks, community gardens, neighborhood farmers markets
- Better public schools
- Better connections between neighborhoods
- Sustainable density – a range of affordable housing
- Age appropriate amenities for children and young adults

5. How do we make Downtown a better place to do business?

- **Major themes - “Parking” “Small Business Incentives” “Density” “Amenities”**
 - Affordable rents, tax incentives, start-up incentives, reduced bureaucracy, better public relations, encourage CID’s
 - Reconfigure land usage and include local business in planning process
 - Encourage business organizations
 - Encourage retail with local flair (organic growth (Kauffman Economic Tools)
 - Affordable and sufficient parking
 - Better public transit
 - Increased 24 hour density
 - Attract workforce
 - Pedestrian amenities (user friendly) (no dress codes)
 - Support diversity of culture, ethnicity, age and services
 - Encourage boutique businesses rather than corporate
 - Positive identity “not a cow town”
 - Nice and affordable housing, shopping and entertainment

6. How do we better connect the 11 neighborhoods?

- **Major themes - “Physical AND Social Connections” “Communications” “Community Building”**
 - Community meetings every three months
 - Inter-neighborhood association forum/newsletter
 - Inter-neighborhood garage sales, community projects, “heritage” festivals, events
 - Work together through schools, churches and businesses
 - Neighborhood Tourist Development Fund (NTDF)
 - Pedestrian friendly walkways balanced with vehicular traffic (safety)
 - Increased residential density to “knit together” neighborhoods
 - Micro public transit (trolleys)
 - Multi-modal venues
 - Car pooling to create stronger sense of community
 - Increased green spaces as connecting nodes
 - Public art
 - Wayfinding signage

7. How do we continue the resurrection of the Kansas City Spirit?

- **Major themes - “Arts” “Inclusive” “History” “Spirit”**
 - Promote the Arts (including jazz)
 - Be more inclusive
 - Promote regionalism (cooperate with other Counties)
 - Work with schools and clergy to encourage “KC Spirit”
 - “Toot our own horn”
 - Embrace our history, architecture, prairie landscape, freedom

- Bring back retail and services
- Encourage entrepreneurial activity
- Increase residential density outside the loop
- Better sports teams
- Recognize local citizens for their contributions
- Incorporate good design – thoughtful
- Encourage dynamic events such as:
 - Fireworks
 - Parades
 - Trains
 - Bike Races
 - Cows on Parade
 - Music Events / Rockfest, Rhythm & Ribs
 - First Fridays