

# Greater Downtown Kansas City Area Plan

## Green Sub-Area, Meeting #1

July 1, 2008

Union Station-Arthur Stillwell Room

5:45 – 8 pm

### Overview

The first sub-area work group meeting in the green sub-area convened on Tuesday, July 1 at the Arthur Stillwell Room at Union Station. Over 100 members of the community were in attendance, as well as representatives from the consultant team and City Planning and Development.

The presentation was lead by Stephen Hardy (BNIM) 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 9 groups of 10-12 persons to discuss a “vision” for the Greater Downtown area. The 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 21<sup>st</sup> century city? (environment, economy, social equity)

- Updated infrastructure—potentially sustainable (stormwater, etc...)
- The Downtown Area requires effective transportation options for multiple modes and it is necessary to build infrastructure for every mode.
- Transportation—diversity of choices...WALKABLE.
- Parks need to be people friendly and accessible
- Continuity in planning; future area plans should happen in areas adjacent to the DAP
- Parking redevelopment—need vision between planning and transportation...free until transportation improved, then meters?
- This planning work could be a model for other cities/areas
- Improved safety / security
- Reverse our auto-oriented emphasis in the Downtown Area
- More shopping choices
- Education—very important.
- Safety—improve and get on top of perception vs reality issue.
- Housing—workforce near economic centers.
- Overall wellness—become a “well” city.
- Encourage small business! With marketing and incentives.
- Capitalize on arts and entertainment energy...keep it up.

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

- Close to the action--central geographic location (regionally and nationally)
- Navigable street grid
- Existing building stock
- River—unexploited
- Diversity of people
- More Neighborly than the suburbs – not like the suburbs where people just drive into their garages and never interact.
- Affordable Cost of living
- Midwestern hospitality—we are polite.
- Cleanliness – Our City is relatively clean
- Easy airport – KCI is very manageable—how to capitalize?
- Cultural amenities – The Downtown area is becoming a cultural hub.
- Available space – There is available land near downtown—for development, parking solutions or greenspace.
- Trains—make us different.
- Hard-working labor
- Proximate higher education

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

- Strong neighborhood identities—how to capitalize this into an overall identity without sacrificing authenticity?
- Midwest urban charm – A term coined by the group to describe the unique friendly urbanism in downtown.
- Available diverse real estate
- Culture of courtesy
- Sense of pride.
- Paris of the Plains—mixture of arts and western town
- BBQ and cowtown and railroads—how to positively spin this?
- Interests, Race, Lifestyle
- Density friendly – People who live in the Downtown Area enjoy a density of people/amenities/buildings
- Strong historic ties
- Multi generational – many surrounding neighborhoods still have residents that have stayed for generations and are family friendly
- More access to culture, becoming the center of culture
- Architectural legacy

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

- Basic amenities need a lot of improvement—grocery store and other basic stores—not big box though. Health care, too.
- Better local transportation within Downtown area...circulator busses within district to encourage folks to bus into the area and then ride to work and meetings...would have to be frequent.
- Streetscape – “have some”—current streetscape totally blown out in areas
- Maintenance—trash and weeds.
- Encourage CIDS and make sure they communicate—good on multiple levels.
- Watch out for too much taxation
- More incentives for small projects

- Education improvement...schools and training.
- How to attract families?
- More walkable, bikeable...lets do this and stop talking about it!
- Recycling centers—one in each hood.
- Trees, stroller/walker friendly
- Improve connections between hoods—huge problem.
- Improved Lighting, neighborhood markers, trashcans
- Better maintain public open space. City needs to lead, businesses / residents need to follow. This thought evolved into a group consensus that businesses, residents and the City were all equally responsible in the upkeep and improvement of neighborhoods. The group expressed a desire for some leadership that they could support that would do the work of cleaning and improving open spaces.
- Equitable accountability - Ensure that enforcement does not unduly burden any particular group. Also, require everyone lives up to expectations.
- Better Communicate expectations - one idea was a packet that could be distributed to new residents explaining what the expectations are to help make the area a better place.
- Environmental improvements are a must
- Storm water improvements are an opportunity to green the area: rain barrels and gardens
- New building projects need to be environmentally friendly
- encouragement to follow LEED
- Get on top of homeless situation. Would benefit homeless as well as residents and businesses operating in homeless-heavy areas.
- U.N. (united neighborhoods) –Born from a comment that all of the neighborhoods have the same issues. The concept would be for a United Neighborhood Association that could lobby and organize in mass for the entire Downtown Area.
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## **5. How do we make Downtown a better place to do business?**

- Help catalyze small business - there was a marked resentment of new chain retailers in P&L receiving what was perceived of as an unfair leg up over locally grown small businesses. We need to nurture local businesses – tailor codes and incentives to encourage small businesses and startups
- Incentives for targeted anchor biz: grocery store.
- Do survey to gauge what business owners want / are concerned about.
- Get on top of panhandling situation—bad for safety perception. Getting hassled is bad for those on the fence about participating civically...they'll remember hassle and stay home next time.
- Safety perception.
- Use light rail to stimulate local business
- Create incubators for small business—capitalize on KCMO being known as an "entrepreneurial" city—Kaufman center, etc.
- Density of business will lead to walkability.
- Add hotel rooms.
- Bike racks and scooters.
- Schools – without improved schools even businesses are hurt because it is harder to attract employees and new workforce is not up to par.
- Fairness of the earnings tax – there was some perception that the earnings tax creates a disincentive for downtown businesses.
- Zoning code needs to be small business friendly

- Adequate consolidated parking – Parking must be adequate but should not be in surface lots.
- Improved transportation options—better understand the relationship btwn workable transportation (which doesn't exist yet) and affordable parking.
- Perception of walking distances—maybe publish 5 and 10 minute walk circle maps?
- Improve connections between neighborhoods—overpasses are inertia killers now. Cap 670 and turn into large urban park: “lungs of the city”
- Capitalize on river front...its an unknown quantity now and doesn't provide a tangible edge condition.
- Encourage biz to stay open after 5...sales tax free after 5?
- Street food: get people out their doors and walking. Will encourage walk-bys.

## 6. How do we better connect the 11 neighborhoods?

- Better business density + improved streetscape = walkability
- Bike lanes on Broadway from plaza to river, and on sw blvd going e / w.
- Seamless transition from area to area, but maintain character of hoods
- Trails, streetscape and consistent greenspace connections
- Slow down traffic at key points—pedestrians feel endangered all over downtown.
- Increase and improve signage.
- Encourage hoods to develop own identity and create signage—utilize professionals though so it doesn't feel rinky dink.
- Creative connections – turn barriers and gateways into opportunities for creative improvement projects—art projects, interesting lighting etc
- Safety issues @ underpasses.
- Social capital – Use the energy and intelligence of the Area to build social connections through better interaction opportunities
- United Neighborhood assoc—with good communication.
- Encourage CIDs to improve hoods—would encourage visitation by others
- We all have the same issues

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

- Must fix what drags us down currently, because it saps our pride: education, disconnection, racial issues, car-centric, homeless issue...
- Stay authentic—first understand who we are and how we're different from St Louis, St. Joe, Omaha, Olathe etc.
- Sponsor a real spirit fest once a year—professionally promote it to deliver messages and update folks in addition to entertaining
- CIDs build pride
- Keep doing big projects and encourage small ones
- Make it easier to do streetscape...currently a battle with codes.
- Arts and Culture – Continue to nurture our Arts and Cultural venues and participants. KC has historic ties to a rich cultural character. That character needs to be continually supported.
- Nurture 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine, crossroads, etc.
- Play up our history. How can we make the fascinating stories and buildings of our past come to life in a real way, without being too nostalgic?
- Play up our “edge”. We were a fun town once...now we risk being too vanilla.
- Neighborhood incubator – Just as we need business incubators the group talked about the concept of a Neighborhood Incubator. The incubator would be a

catalyst for greater neighborhood change and the source of the implementation of community projects. The Neighborhood Incubator would be a constant force pushing for improved conditions across a neighborhood.

- Neighborhood “Red Phone” – perhaps the neighborhoods need a direct line to the City to improve communication.
- Communication – There is a need for better communication within the neighborhoods, between neighborhoods, and with the City Government. There was an expression of hope that the communication infrastructure built by the DAP would be institutionalized as a method to improve communication.
- Build relationships with suburbs.