

TOWN FORK CREEK

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: October 2, 1999



FOCUS Kansas City
City Planning and Development Department
City of Kansas City, Missouri

City of Fountains



Heart of the Nation

SERVICE	AGENCY OR CITY DEPARTMENT	PHONE
City Services	Action Center	513-1313
Abandoned Cars on Private Property	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Abandoned Cars on Public Property	Kansas City, MO Police Department	234-5000
Abandoned Homes	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Air Quality	Health Department	513-6314
Animal Control	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-5900
Building Permits	Codes Administration	513-1451
Bulky Item Pick Up	Environmental Management	513-3490
Curb Reconstruction	Public Works	513-2590
Dangerous Buildings/ Demolition	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Housing Code Violations	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Illegal Dumping Hotline	Environmental Management	513-3485
Neighborhood Assistance/ Services	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-3265
Paint Program	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-3266
Parks and Community Centers	Board of Parks and Recreation	871-5600
Potholes	Public Works - Street and Traffic	513-2777
Senior Citizens Transportation	Share-a-Fare/ATA	842-9070
Sewers - Problems	Water Department After Hours	513-2180 513-2109
Sidewalks - Repair	Public Works	513-2602
Storm Drains	Water Department	513-2180
Street Light Repairs	Kansas City Power and Light	654-1400
Weatherization Program	Housing and Community Development	513-3015

Underlined phone numbers will change in the next few months.

THE VISION OF FOCUS KANSAS CITY

We, as Kansas Citians, envision our city as a people-centered community. From economic development to the readability of street signs, we consider people first. Kansas City shapes and guarantees its future by examining first and foremost the impact of every decision on future generations.

We, as Kansas Citians, are full of hope. We demonstrate this hope through our investment in our families, our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, our businesses and our city.



For more information about **FOCUS Kansas City**:

- call the office at **513-2822**,
- visit **www.kcmo.org/focus/**, or
- e-mail **focus@kcmo.org**.

To reach the Neighborhood Assessment Team, call **513-2909**.

FOCUS - **F**orging **O**ur **C**omprehensive **U**rban **S**trategy



FOCUS KANSAS CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSESSMENTS



FOCUS Kansas City, Kansas City's strategic and comprehensive plan, recognizes that neighborhoods understand best how to direct their own futures. The first initiative in the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* is a strategic assessment / evaluation that enables a neighborhood to evaluate its strengths and needs. Through the assessment process, a neighborhood can direct its assets towards its most critical needs. The *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* identifies the assessment format.

There were two objectives for this neighborhood during the self-evaluation:

1. To self-identify its **neighborhood type** from the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan*.
2. To develop **improvement strategies** that will direct neighborhood improvement, a "To Do" list/Action Steps incorporating participation by the neighborhood, community partners, and the City.

This community conducted the neighborhood evaluation workshop with assistance from City staff. Residents, business people and people who work in local institutions provided input. These community members mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.



Assessment participants express their ideas about improvement strategies during the workshop



NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE

The FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan recognizes that not all neighborhoods in Kansas City are the same. The character and condition of where we live varies according to age, history, type of housing and other factors. Each community has different strengths and opportunities. Each has different assets and priorities that drive unique strategies for improvement. FOCUS developed four unique Neighborhood Types that generally describe Kansas City neighborhoods. These four Types (assigned the colors Blue, Orange, Purple and Green in the Neighborhood Assessment workshop) are:

Developing Conservation Stabilization Redeveloping

Each Neighborhood Type suggests what actions are required for an area to become or stay healthy. The Assessment is a beginning point from which the community can move forward and achieve quality living environments through a commitment to continuous improvement. The descriptions for these four Neighborhood Types are contained in the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan, Appendix A, "General Neighborhood Description / Types."*

In the workshop, participants defined the tools, actions and strategies for improving their community. They will use this information to strategically apply public and private resources in a way that is based on existing conditions, trends, opportunities, strengths and needs. Once other neighborhoods identify their Type, then similarly "typed" Kansas City communities can connect and partner around common issues and projects while assisting each other in developing their organizations.



Town Fork Creek residents described the dynamics of their community during the neighborhood assessment

THE TOWN FORK CREEK PERSPECTIVE

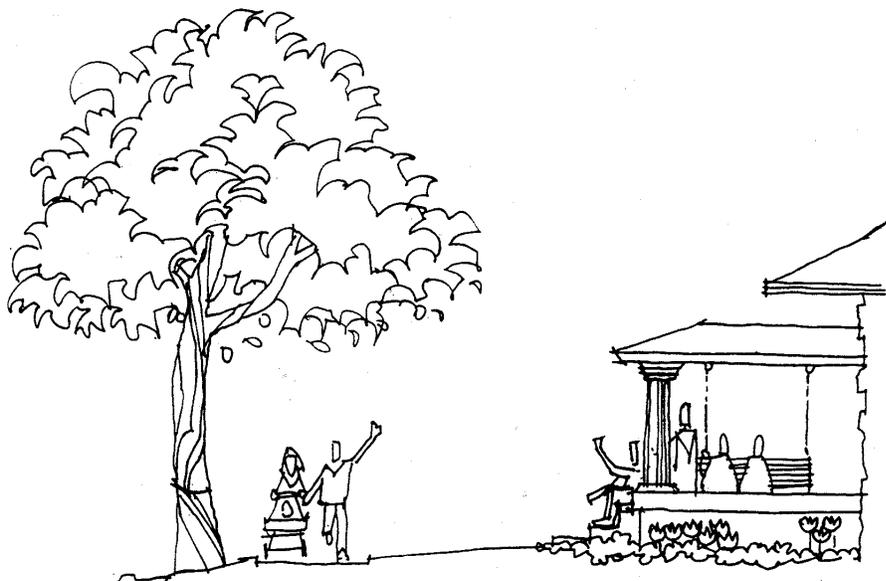


Town Fork Creek is a densely populated residential neighborhood of about six thousand people. The majority of the homes in the neighborhood are single family dwellings and most were built before 1960. The Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Association is one of the oldest neighborhood groups in Kansas City and is currently led by president Patricia Golden.

The neighborhood takes its name from the stream that enters the community near 59th and Bruce Watkins Drive and flows northeast until it empties into Brush Creek north of Swope Parkway. A key feature of the area is the greenway that runs along the banks of the creek. One element of the greenway is a walking trail extending from 51st and Indiana to Town Fork Creek Park at 58th and Agnes.

The creek is an asset to the area in the sense that it provides drainage and green space. Over the years the creek has also presented a significant challenge to the people who live nearby. Major floods in 1977 and 1998 wreaked havoc with homes and caused extensive property damage. The KCMO Public Works Department commissioned a study of the problem in 1995 that resulted in the development of the Town Fork Creek Watershed Master Plan. Recently, a work team from the Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Association took the first steps in implementing the Master Plan recommendations and addressing the threat of future flooding.

The work team plans to utilize funds from the half-cent sales tax project and other sources to implement incremental flood control improvements. The first phase of this project is targeted to improve drainage in the area near 58th and Agnes.



THE TOWN FORK CREEK PERSPECTIVE

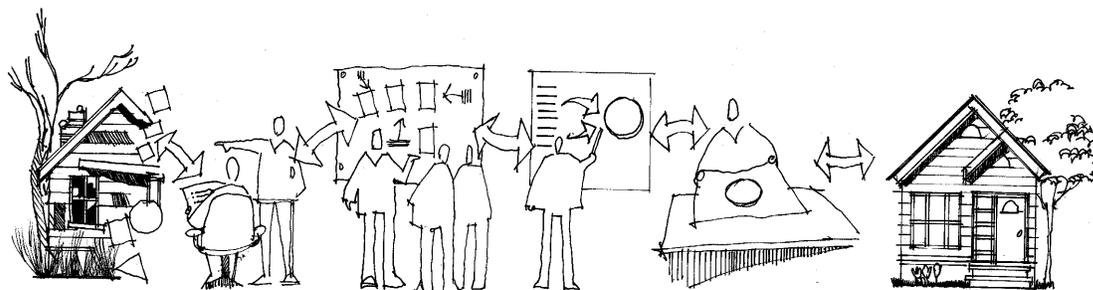


Aside from the creek, the neighborhood has many other distinct characteristics. Town Fork Creek is framed by some of Kansas City's major corridors: Brush Creek on the north, Swope Parkway on the east, 63rd street on the south and Bruce R. Watkins Drive on the west. The corridors connect the neighborhood to many local partners and resources including Brush Creek Community Center, Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Center, Swope Parkway Health Center and Swope Park.

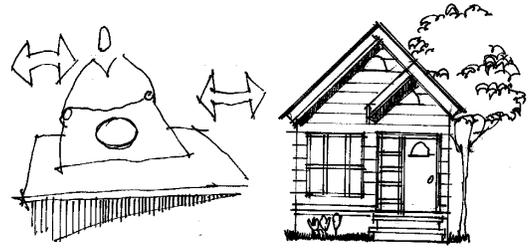
Increasingly, neighbors in Town Fork Creek are engaging their community partners in projects to benefit residents. Neighborhood activists are currently working with Community Builders of Kansas City, an affiliate of Swope Parkway Health Center, on programs to organize the neighborhood and improve neighborhood health and safety.

Individual residents, businesses and local institutions from the Town Fork Creek neighborhood are also participating in the Swope Parkway Corridor Renaissance initiative. Through this initiative many residents, businesses and institutions on both sides of Swope Parkway are working together for the betterment of the broader area.

Within the context of the FOCUS neighborhood types, participants identified Town Fork Creek as a Stabilization neighborhood (see page 15). One of the strengths of a Stabilization neighborhood is the presence of a core group of residents, businesses and institutions who have demonstrated a commitment to the area over time. Because of the limitations of time and space only a small portion of that community commitment is recorded in this report.



PRIORITIES



Residents of the Town Fork Creek neighborhood feel the most important issues they have before them are:

Flood Control

Flooding from Town Fork Creek has caused major property damage in the last twenty years. Many residents feel that eliminating this hazard is a key to making the neighborhood more livable. Some improvements are already underway. Here are initiatives that need to be pursued:

- Maintain a strong action group that can advocate for improvements to the creek
- Request and strategically apply funds from the Public Improvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) to make incremental improvements to the creek
- Clear the creek of all debris to maximize drainage

Improvement of Neighborhood Safety

No one can be comfortable in their neighborhood if they don't feel safe. Safety is impacted by many variables like crime, vacant properties and even stray dogs. Here are some things residents can do to feel more secure:

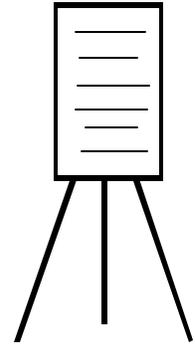
- Encourage neighbors to get to know one another and look out for each other
- Report suspicious activity, loitering, illegal dumping and stray animals
- Participate in the activities of the neighborhood association and groups like the the Community Security Initiative sponsored by Community Builders

Neighborhood Beautification

Many of the assessment participants want their neighborhood to be a cleaner, more pleasant place to live. Here are some of their suggestions:

- Work together on neighborhood clean-up projects
- Report homeowners and landlords who do not maintain their properties
- Install attractive Town Fork Creek markers at key entrances to the neighborhood

CHART NOTES



The Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from Prospect Avenue on the west to Swope Parkway on the north and east, and 63rd street on the south.

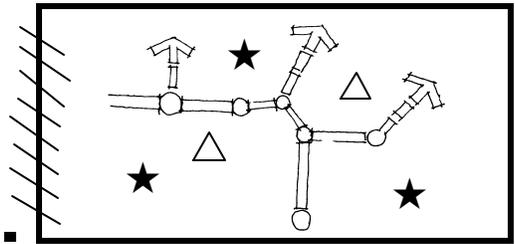
Neighborhood Slogans

Residents of the Town Fork Creek are pulling together to achieve goals for the benefit of the entire neighborhood. They choose a slogan that reflects this sense of unity:

Town Fork Creek: Neighbors Working Together

Other suggested slogans:

- Without You There Is No Us
- The Pulse of The City
- Town Fork Creek On The Move
- Together We Can Do It
- Together We Stand, Divided We Fall
- Unity



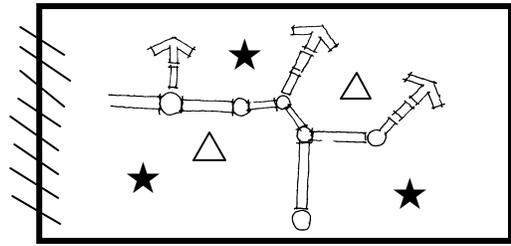
STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

Workshop participants identified how they experience their neighborhood, and considered those things they want to protect, preserve or enhance in the neighborhood. They thought about the landmarks, paths, activity centers, districts, edges or barriers, and features. These were noted on a wall map, using the key below, and are listed on the next page.

- △ **Landmarks** — significant physical objects, like buildings or signs
- ⦚ **Paths** — routes people use to get places
- **Activity centers** — gathering places to do some activity
- **Districts** — areas of recognizable character
- ▨ **Edges or barriers** — a limit or boundary that prevents people from enjoying the neighborhood or something in it
- ★ **Features** — things people like and would like to preserve or enhance



Town Fork Creek Greenway is one of the major physical features of the neighborhood. This new sign in the park at 57th and Agnes is the result of work between residents and the Parks and Recreation Department.



Landmarks

- Satchel Paige Stadium
- Swope Parkway Christian Church
- Southeast Community Center
- The Southeast Library
- St. Louis Church (The Upper Room)
- Town Fork Creek Park
- Buy Rite Plaza
- Swope Ridge Geriatric Center

Features

- Bruce Watkins Cultural Center
- Swope Parkway Health Center
- St. Louis Community Center
- Swope Park
- Starlight Theater
- Southeast High School and Middle School
- Research Hospital
- Pinkerton Elementary School
- Graceland School
- Metro Plaza Shopping Center

Paths

- Bruce Watkins Drive

Activity Centers

- The Family Resource Center
- DuBois Center, 55nd & Cleveland

Edges or Barriers

- Town Fork Creek
- Bea's Liquor
- Liquor store at 51st and Walrond
- Country View Liquor Store at 58th and Swope Parkway



An assessment participant points out some of the features of the neighborhood

TOWN FORK CREEK IMAGES



Town Fork Creek



Youth enjoying a game of ping pong at Southeast Community Center



A view of downtown and Bruce R. Watkins Drive from the bridge on 51st Street

TOWN FORK CREEK IMAGES



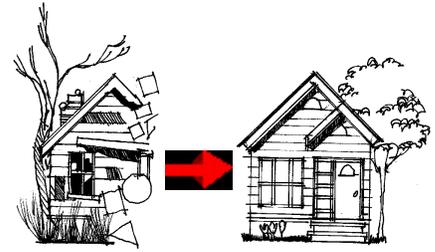
Town Fork Creek residents came out in force to support the Mayor's Clean & Green initiative on November 13, 1999



The walking trail along Town Fork Creek



An attractive home in the neighborhood



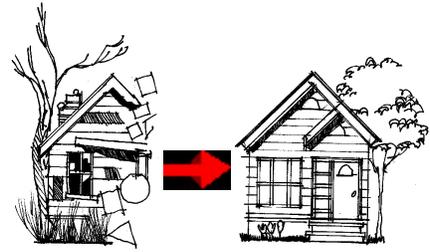
STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These things stop residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of "fixes" that participants said they would like to see in Town Fork Creek:

- Clean-up the tall weeds and trash along 59th Street
- Improve drainage in low areas: 59th and South Benton
- Strengthen code enforcement
- Upgrade parks with play equipment
- Regulate speeding on College from 47th to 51st
- Eliminate loitering on 62nd and Bellefontaine
- Eliminate drug activity on 60th and 61st and Indiana
- Create a more visually appealing barrier between the neighborhood and Bruce Watkins Freeway
- Repair or remove the former Muslim Mosque
- Identify and prosecute illegal dumpers
- Enforce the lease law
- Clear the debris in Town Fork Creek
- Eliminate the water that pools after a rain at 63rd and Bellefontaine
- Encourage home ownership in the neighborhood
- Call the police when problems occur
- Make the neighborhood safe for children
- Motivate landlords and tenants to take better care of their property



This chain link fence provides a necessary safety boundary between the neighborhood and Bruce R. Watkins Drive but it is visually unattractive. Could shrubs or other plantings be used to form a more a more effective visual and sound barrier?



- Install sidewalks on 54th and Benton and 55th and Jaudon
- Improve drainage to stop the basements from flooding in the 6000 block of College
- Clean up weeds and illegally dumped materials at 49th and Chestnut
- Install curbs in the 6000 block of College on the east side
- Install curbs in the 6200 block of South Benton on the west side
- Clean up the vacant lot on 47th and Cleveland

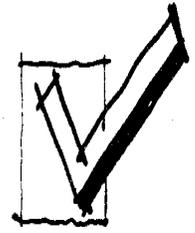
- Install curbs on Chestnut from 58th from 59th
- Upgrade storm drains on 60th and Indiana and 60th and Cleveland
- Eliminate the dumping at 59th and Agnes
- Eliminate standing water at 58th and Chestnut
- Create markers with flowers and landscaping at major entry points to the Town Fork Creek neighborhood
- Eliminate illegal dumping at 62nd and South Benton



This section of the creek trail is impassible due to illegal dumping



These tires were dumped on a lot near 51st and Prospect



STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Residents identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. The assets include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other thing that adds value to the neighborhood.

- Our neighbors; we don't feel alone.
- St. Louis Church: after school programs, summer programs, senior center, transport for seniors, Father Don Farnan, food pantry, social services
- Covenant Church
- Church of Christ on Swope Parkway
- W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center
- The Southeast Library
- Police Officer Dale Secor
- The Family Resource Center
- Neighborhood Preservation Department
- Bruce Watkins Drive
- The Swope Corridor Renaissance
- The Building Blocks program
- Community Security Initiative
- Drug and alcohol programs offered by Swope Parkway Health Center
- Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Association



The Community Security Initiative (CSI) is a forum that allows local residents, police and service providers to work together for a safer neighborhood.

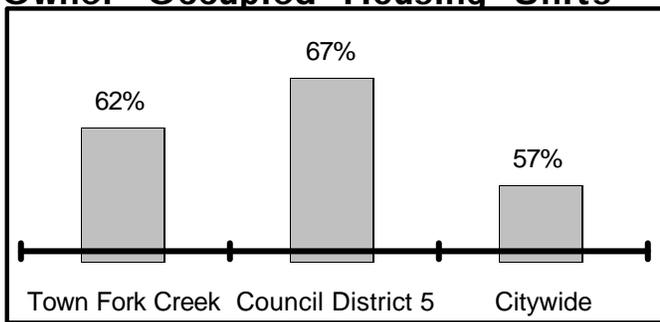
These children participate in an after-school program sponsored by St. Louis Church.



STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

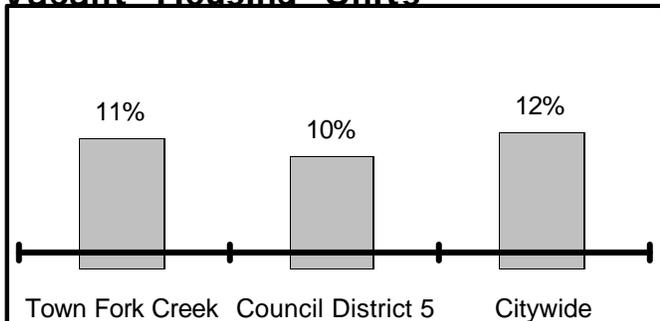
The information presented at the Town Fork Creek neighborhood assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census and from 1998 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts that participants said were surprising or had changed since the information was gathered. (See the neighborhood assessment workbook for more detail.)

Owner Occupied Housing Units



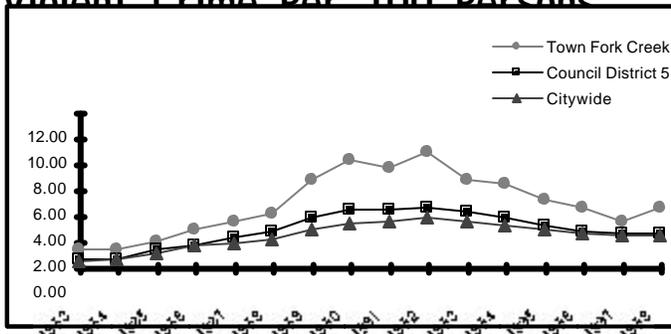
Some residents felt that the percentage of owner occupied units may have dropped to 50%.

Vacant Housing Units



Participants spoke about the possible correlation between vacant housing and violent crime.

Violent Crime Per 100 Persons





STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

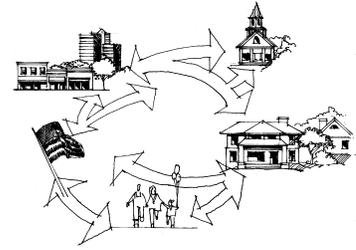
Those who attended the assessment were asked to vote on the neighborhood type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was Stabilization.

Stabilization

My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Several of the businesses and institutions located in the neighborhood may be changing, either recently expanding, scaling back services, just moved into the neighborhood or considering moving to another location outside the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide opportunities near my home.

Tree-lined streets, historic structures or qualities, public art and/or other amenities characterize the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Due to age, several of the streets and sidewalks need repair or replacement and the water and sewer services may also need to be upgraded. Many houses, businesses, and public areas appear to lack routine maintenance (painting, yard upkeep, tree trimming, awning repair, etc.) or are vacant. Such conditions are impacting the value of my property and I don't know if I want to invest more money in the property.

Problems are starting to add up and are becoming harder to fix through our neighborhood association, a call to the City, or neighbors getting together to help one another. There are good aspects to the neighborhood but there are also problems that need to be addressed if the neighborhood is going to continue to be a place I want to live.



STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

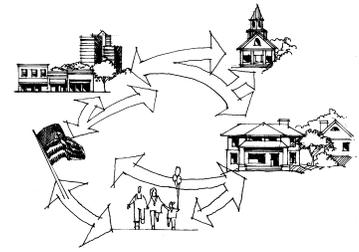
Participants talked about specific actions the community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. This is a list of all the ideas mentioned by workshop participants.

Things **We** can do by ourselves:

- Work with neighbors to clean up unsightly properties
- Organize block clean-ups
- Clean-up illegal dump sites
- Establish a neighborhood directory
- Put bleach and pepper on trash bags to repel dogs
- Report stray animals to animal control
- Organize block clubs
- Contact elected officials about unfair tax assessments
- Report abandoned cars to the police
- Increase participation in the neighborhood association
- Create more action groups



The Town Fork Creek residents got to know each other better during a neighborhood Christmas party.



-
- Keep our own properties neat and clean, especially the front of the property
 - Keep in contact with our neighbors
 - Beautify our properties
 - Join and support neighborhood groups
 - Patronize neighborhood businesses

Things we can do with a **Partner**:

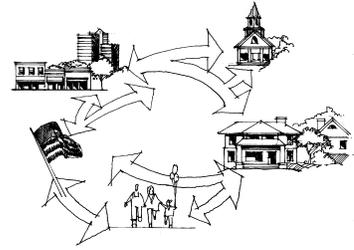
- Work more closely with Neighborhood Preservation Department
- Beautify the fence along Bruce R. Watkins Drive
- Organize clean-ups with Community Builders
- Involve more businesses in neighborhood beautification



Residents worked closely with the Public Works Department to have this fence installed over a drop-off into Town Fork Creek on 59th street.



The Swope Parkway Health Center and the affiliated Community Builders Program are major partners for the Town Fork Creek neighborhood.



Things the **City** should do:

- Implement the Town Fork Creek Watershed Master Plan
- Work with residents on Town Fork Creek neighborhood markers
- Work with the neighborhood to have curbs and sidewalks installed in the areas where they are needed (see Fixes)
- Improve animal control
- Keep street lights clear of overhanging limbs
- Implement a more effective method to remove abandoned cars
- Increase street sweeping
- Implement more effective enforcement of building maintenance codes
- Help us clean up Town Fork Creek
- Pick up yard waste more often
- Pick up bulky trash more quickly
- Increase police patrols in the neighborhood
- Improve response time for street repairs



The Town Fork Creek Master Plan calls for the rubble to be removed from this portion of the creek near 59th street and Bruce R. Watkins Drive.

Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Assessment Participants

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Sponsors and Contributors

- Councilman Kelvin Simmons, *Fifth District*
- Councilwoman Becky Nace, *First District-At Large*
- Community Builders of Kansas City
- The Family Resource Center/Neighborhood FOCUS



Acknowledgements

The Honorable Kay Barnes, *Mayor*
Robert L. Collins, *City Manager*

City Council

The Honorable Ed Ford
First District-at-Large

The Honorable Teresa Loar
First District

The Honorable Bonnie Sue Cooper
Second District-at-Large

The Honorable Paul Danaher
Second District

The Honorable Troy Nash
Third District-at-Large

The Honorable Mary Williams-Neal
Third District

The Honorable Evert Asjes III
Fourth District-at-Large

The Honorable Jim Rowland
Fourth District

The Honorable Becky Nace
Fifth District-at-Large

The Honorable Kelvin Simmons
Fifth District

The Honorable Alvin Brooks
Sixth District-at-Large

The Honorable Charles A. Eddy
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