

# ROCKHILL RIDGE

## Neighborhood Assessment Report

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Neighborhood Workshop Date: February 12, 2000



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

City of Fountains



Heart of the Nation

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<b>City Services</b>	<b>Action Center</b>	<b>513-1313</b>
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Abandoned Cars on Public Property	Kansas City, MO Police Department	234-5000
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Building Permits	Codes Administration	513-1451
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Paint Program	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-3266
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Potholes	Public Works - Street and Traffic	513-2777
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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

# 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/](http://www.kcmo.org/focus/)**, or
- e-mail **[focus@kcmo.org](mailto: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



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**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 members mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.



A Rockhill Ridge resident finds her home on the "Heart Map"



# NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE

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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.



Residents chat during a break at the Rockhill Ridge Neighborhood Assessment workshop

# THE ROCKHILL RIDGE PERSPECTIVE

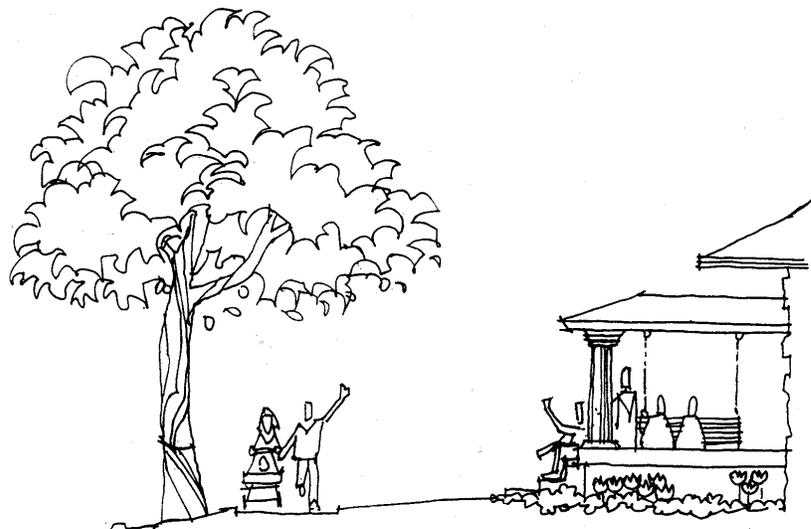
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Rockhill Ridge was platted in the early part of the 1900s as part of the Rockhill Neighborhood. The area was planned and developed by William Rockhill Nelson, publisher of *The Kansas City Star*. Mr. Nelson's design for the Rockhill neighborhood, with its tasteful homes, is considered a physical expression of the "City Beautiful" movement, which Mr. Nelson promoted in news stories and editorials. Rockhill Ridge, located in the Fourth City Council District, is part of Kansas City's unique concentration of historic, cultural and architectural resources, and boasts of some of the most desirable real estate in the city.

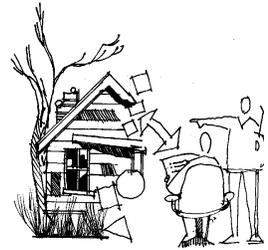
Today, Rockhill Ridge represents the current trend in neighborhood revitalization and urban reinvestment. This neighborhood is surrounded by a flurry of public projects which include the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Stowers Institute for Medical Research, the Rockhurst University expansion, Brush Creek redevelopment, the recent groundbreaking for the Discovery Center, and the construction of Gates Plaza. These developments are helping to drive a renewed interest in living in Rockhill Ridge and other surrounding residential areas.

The Rockhill Ridge self-evaluation workshop, held at Rockhurst University on Saturday, February 12, 2000, brought people together in an important community building discussion. The workshop participants discussed their concerns about their neighborhood and identified some creative ways to work as an interconnected community. In particular, this neighborhood is anxious to meet with the new UMKC Chancellor, Martha Gilliard, to discuss plans for UMKC and the neighborhood. Another concern for this neighborhood is to identify a role for the community to play in helping the Kansas City School District with accreditation issues.



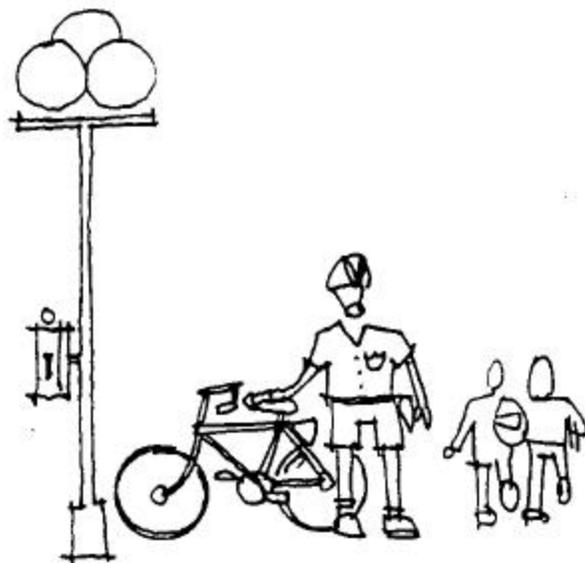
# THE ROCKHILL RIDGE PERSPECTIVE

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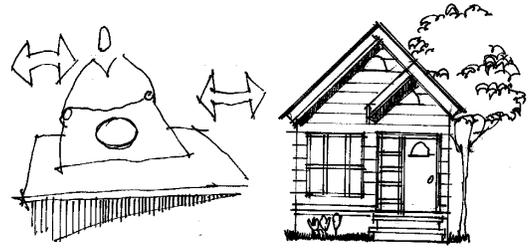
At the workshop participants described Rockhill Ridge as a Conservation neighborhood. As a Conservation neighborhood, they enjoy well-maintained homes, wide, tree-lined streets - especially Rockhill Road - and the quality of new developments such as the Stowers Institute for Medical Research. At the same time, the neighbors have good ideas how to enhance the businesses on Troost Avenue with renovations, facelifts, and plans to attract new businesses to the area.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the neighbors seemed eager to work with City government, community partners and others as they look toward a better Rockhill Ridge neighborhood and community.



# PRIORITIES

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Residents of the Rockhill Ridge neighborhood named the following as their priority issues:

## **Work with Other Organizations to Enhance the Neighborhood**

The residents identified numerous possibilities that exist in working with other groups to enhance Rockhill Ridge and the surrounding area. Some of these ideas include:

- Invite the newly appointed UMKC Chancellor to meet with the residents to discuss plans for UMKC and the surrounding community
- Meet with representatives of the Stowers Institute, the Kauffman Foundation, Rockhurst University, and the Discovery Nature Center to develop ideas about marketing the Rockhill Ridge
- Work with the neighborhood associations east of Troost on issues that would help eliminate the stigma of the “Troost dividing line”
- Consult with the Troost merchants and businesses with ideas and plans to update existing businesses, and attract new businesses to the area
- Identify a role for the neighborhood to play in helping to improve the Kansas City, Missouri schools, such as promoting neighborhood schools

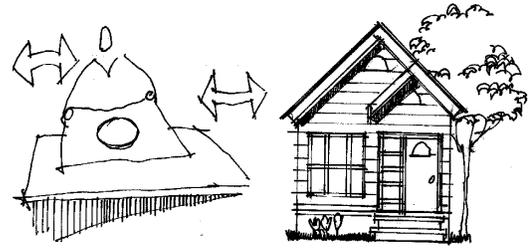
## **Maintain Rockhill Ridge as a Quality Place to Live**

The group recognized that Rockhill Ridge is attracting higher market values for the their homes. The residents want to see this upward movement continue with these suggestions:

- Continue the work on rehabbing homes in the area that will attract higher market rate values for the homes
- Encourage renters in the neighborhood to become a part of the neighborhood association
- Work with realtors and rehabilitation companies on marketing ideas for the neighborhood

# PRIORITIES, CONT'D

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## Address Basic Services and Maintenance Issues

The group discussed some basic services and infrastructure concerns that they would like to see addressed:

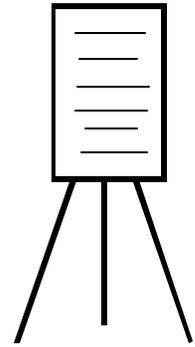
- Schedule additional leaf & brush collections; the current Spring and Fall collections are not enough for the volume of yard waste that accumulates throughout the year
- Complete public infrastructure projects such as curb/sidewalk repairs and stormsewer cleaning in more timely manner
- Trim public trees on an annual basis to preserve the overall maintenance of the trees



A Rockhill Ridge resident expresses herself during the workshop

# CHART NOTES

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The Rockhill Ridge Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from 55<sup>th</sup> Street to 60<sup>th</sup> Street, and from Troost Avenue to Oak Street.

## Neighborhood Slogans

The attendees listed several slogans to describe their neighborhoods. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their community.

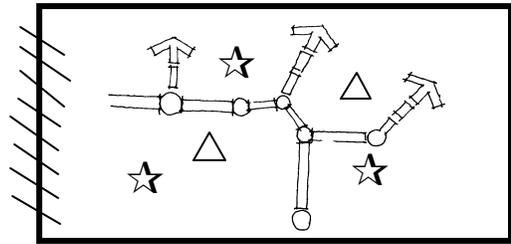
The selected slogan: **Classic Kansas City**

Other suggested slogans:

- Safe, Wonderful Neighborhood
- Solid As a "Rock"
- Great Mixed Bag of People
- Watching The Neighborhood Flourish
- Heart of the Urban Forest



Rockhill Ridge residents discuss their ideas during the workshop



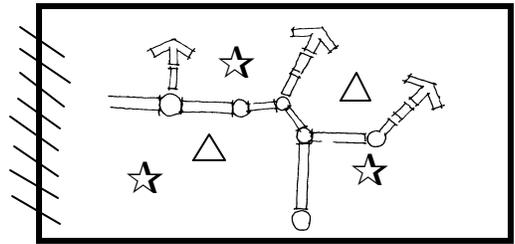
## STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

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.

- △ **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



Morningside Place: One of the features in the Rockhill Ridge neighborhood



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## Landmarks

- Morningside Shops on 59<sup>th</sup> Street
- Crestwood Shops at 55<sup>th</sup> and Oak
- The Urban Wilderness residence at 57<sup>th</sup> and Charlotte
- Troostwood Garage at 55<sup>th</sup> and Troost (east side)

## Paths

- Rockhill Road (a boulevard)
- Residential sidewalks and streets for walking and jogging
- The Rockhill and Troost ATA public bus service routes

## Activity Centers

- Rockhurst University
- University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)
- St. Francis Xavier Church and School at 52<sup>nd</sup> and Troost
- Central United Methodist Church at 52<sup>nd</sup> and Oak
- Second Presbyterian Church at 55<sup>th</sup> and Oak
- St. Marks Baptist Church at 59<sup>th</sup> and Kenwood
- Olive Branch Church at 59<sup>th</sup> and Harrison
- The D.R.E.A.M. Center at 5541 Forest
- Traffic signals at 55<sup>th</sup> and Troost and 59<sup>th</sup> and Troost
- Brookside Park at 57<sup>th</sup> and Brookside (Suicide Hill)

## Districts

- Brookside Shopping District
- Crestwood Shops
- Plaza Shopping District

## Features

- Trees (except for the gum balls dropping from the sweetgum trees)
- Newly installed streetlights on Rockhill Road
- Dry cleaners at 55<sup>th</sup> and Troost
- Cousin Jed's service station at 56<sup>th</sup> and Troost
- Mike's Tavern
- Jimmy's Restaurant
- The proposed charter school at 5605 Troost

# ROCKHILL RIDGE IMAGES

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Landmark and  
Activity Center: Rockhill Baptist  
Church is one of the regular meeting places for  
the Rockhill Ridge neighborhood association



Landmark,  
Activity Center  
and Feature:  
Rockhurst University, site  
of the Rockhill Ridge  
Neighborhood Assessment  
workshop

# ROCKHILL RIDGE IMAGES

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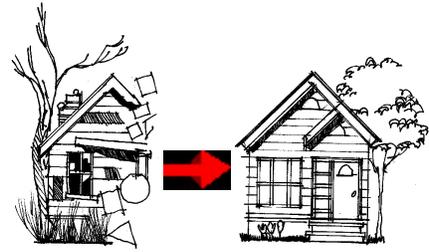


Feature and Landmark:  
Stowers Institute for Medical Research

Landmark and Feature:  
Groundbreaking for the Discovery Center took place in spring 2000; expected completion is spring 2001



Feature: The "Urban Wilderness," residence of environmentalist Marty Kraft



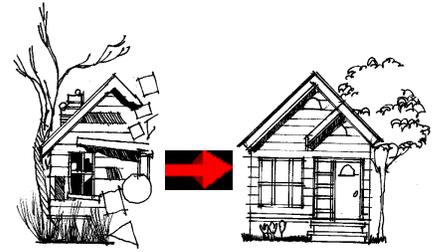
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## STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These issues can inhibit residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of “fixes” that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Rockhill Ridge neighbors and the surrounding area.

### Neighborhood Livability

- Initiate an ad campaign for littering; post “No Littering” signs in neighborhood
- Work with youth organizations (i.e. Boy and Girl Scouts) on a project to eliminate littering
- Repair the vacant house at 5701 Rockhill; it is a nuisance, eye-sore; stray animals are seen running in and out of the house, a.k.a., Cat Lady’s house
- Control the frequent water main breaks on Rockhill Road
- Remove the broken metal pole in the street at 57<sup>th</sup> and Holmes; the pole is lying partly in the street and damages car tires
- Enforce the animal leash laws and require owners to clean up behind their pets
- Identify where sidewalks and curbs need replacing in Rockhill Ridge
- Replace diseased/dying sweet gum trees with a variety of other trees; sweet gums balls which fall from the trees are hazardous for pedestrians and clog up curbs and catch basins
- Clean out catch basins to prevent clogging and flooding after it rains; rodents also live in catch basins and create health problems
- Remove trash dumped at 59<sup>th</sup> and Troost
- Establish a curbside recycling program in the neighborhood
- Schedule frequent street sweepings to prevent debris clogging up curbs and catch basins



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## Neighborhood and Community Building

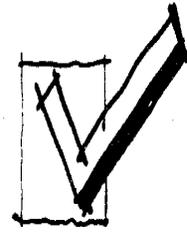
- Invite the newly appointed UMKC Chancellor to discuss with the neighbors the plans for the neighborhood and UMKC
- Enforce property codes for all building owners; encourage UMKC and other state agencies that own buildings/businesses on Troost to maintain property to codes standards
- Work on a plan to redevelop the businesses on Troost (55<sup>th</sup>-63<sup>rd</sup> Streets)



This house has been vacant for a long time and attracts stray animals and vandalism; residents would like to see it with a homeowner.



Gum balls that fall from sweet gum trees are hazardous to pedestrians and motorists. They clog up catch basins and accumulate in the streets and curbs.



## STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Workshop participants identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. The assets include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other features that add value to the neighborhood.

### Places to Go and People to See

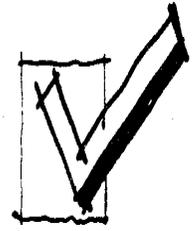
- Proximity to the many new public and private amenities (The Kauffman Foundation, Discovery Center, Stowers Institute, The Kansas City Zoological Park, Swope Park, ATA Trolley Trail, proposed new Plaza Library)
- Nelson-Atkins Museum and grounds
- Linda Hall Science and Engineering Library

### Other Assets

- "It's not the suburbs"
- Changing attitudes about "living east of Troost"; residents west of Troost should walk in the neighborhoods east of Troost
- Great places to walk
- Best shopping districts (Plaza, Brookside, Morningside Place shops)
- Good businesses/restaurants on Troost
- Beautiful gardens surrounding the home at 55<sup>th</sup> and Holmes



One of the well-built and well-maintained homes in Rockhill Ridge



- 
- 49/63 Neighborhood Coalition
  - Value of houses is appreciating
  - Strong sense of community
  - Well-built homes
  - Many life-long residents in the area
  - Mature trees (except sweet gum trees)
  - Diversity of people (age, gender, education, race) and houses (size and architecture)
  - Young families and children in the neighborhood



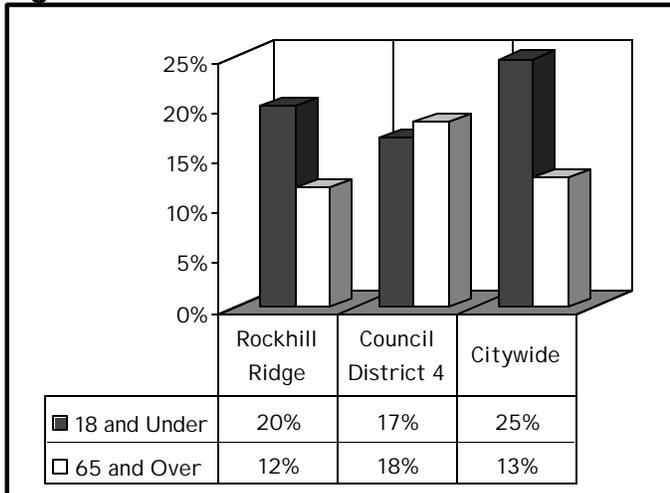
Young families and children are an asset to Rockhill Ridge



## STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

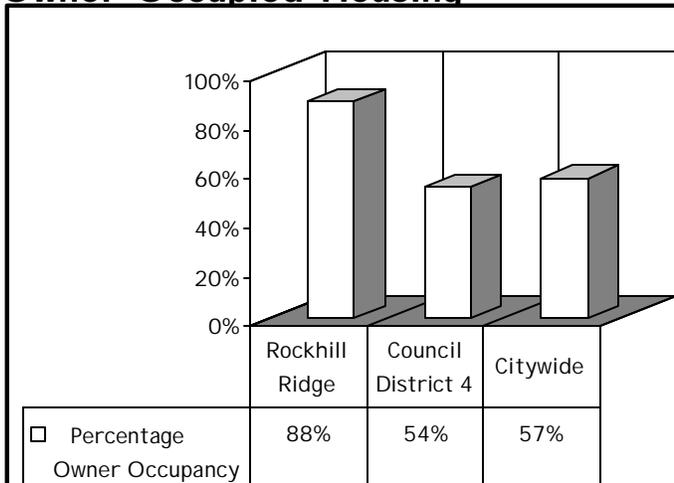
The data presented at the Rockhill Ridge Neighborhood Assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census, and from 1999 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts the participants said were surprising or noteworthy. (See the neighborhood assessment workbook for more detail.)

### Age Distribution



Residents expressed their surprise about the ratio of youth and young families in the neighborhood. While they are pleased about this change, they are concerned that the young families move to other neighborhoods in the metropolitan area due in part to the concerns about the Kansas City Missouri School District.

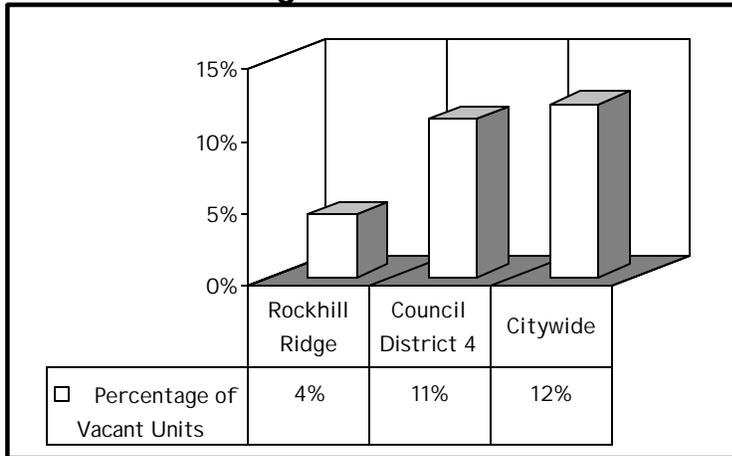
### Owner Occupied Housing



While the percentage of owner occupied housing is high (88%), there was one concern as to the number of persons that can be allowed to live in a single-family residence.

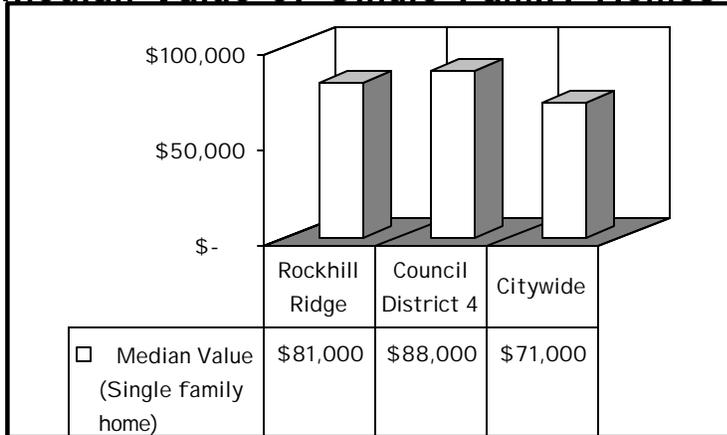


**Vacant Housing Units**



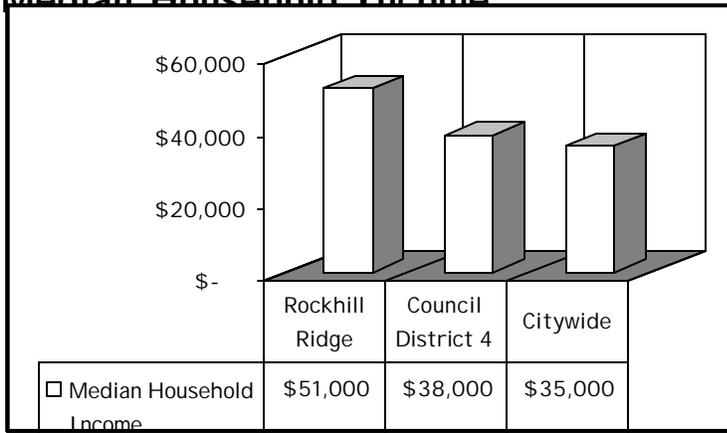
Residents would like to see this small percentage of vacant housing units turned into owner occupied housing.

**Median Value of Single Family Homes**



The workshop participants were pleased that the median value of a single-family home is \$81,000. They also commented that the current value may be as high as \$90,000, given the recent trend in the housing market.

**Median Household Income**

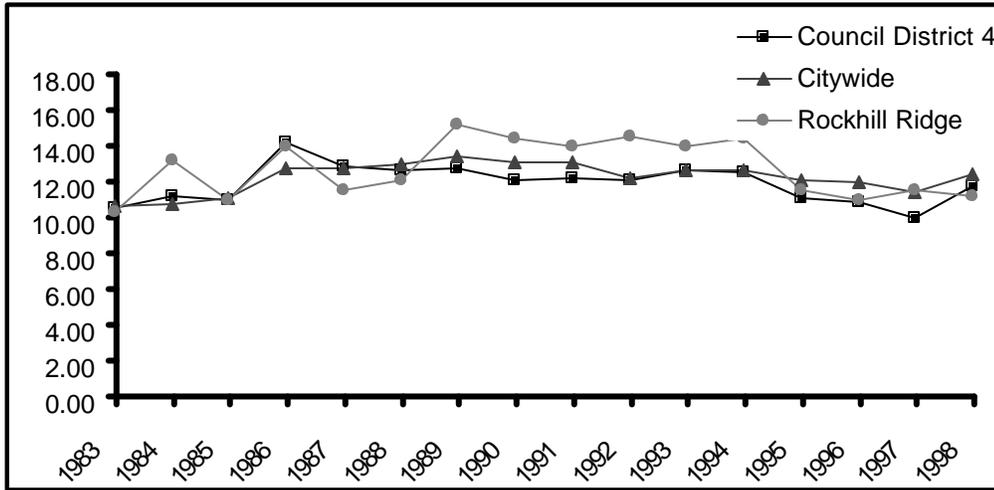


The median household income of \$51,000 is related to the median value of single-family homes (\$81,000) in that residents have the resources to support the costs of maintaining their homes.

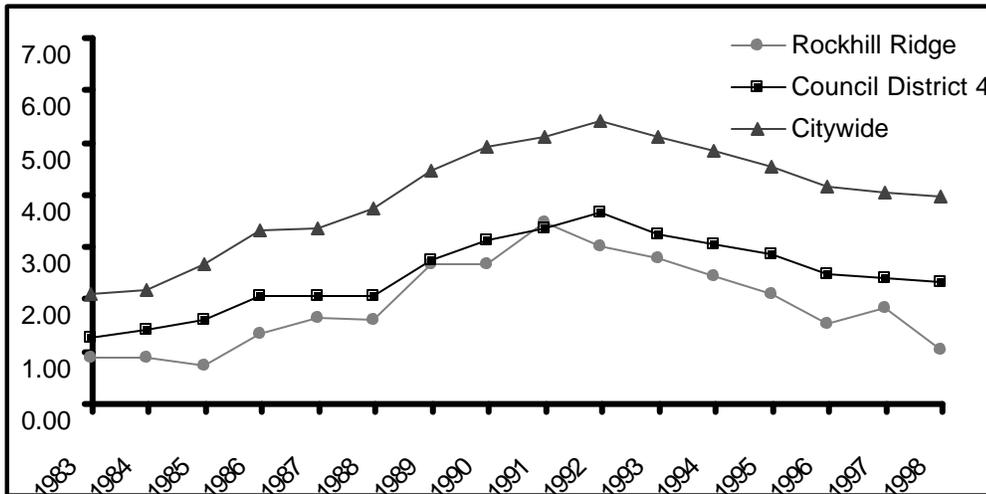


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### Non-Violent Crime Per 100 Persons



### Violent Crime Per 100 Persons



Residents commented that the Metro Patrol Division of the Kansas City Police Department, the neighborhood associations, the 49/63 Neighborhood Coalition all have had a tremendous effect in reducing crime and the perception of crime in the Rockhill Ridge neighborhood and surrounding community.



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## STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

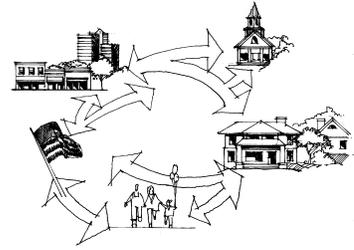
Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the Neighborhood Type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was Conservation.

### Conservation

My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Established businesses and institutions are located in the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide many 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. Most of the houses are occupied. Little demolition has occurred here and vacant land is scarce.

It appears that both public and private areas are well-maintained, although a house or business periodically falls into disrepair from a lack of routine maintenance (painting, yard upkeep, awning repair, etc.). Some infrastructure repairs may be needed to keep the neighborhood attractive. Generally the problems that do come up can be addressed by our neighborhood association, by a call to the City, or through neighbors getting together to help one another.



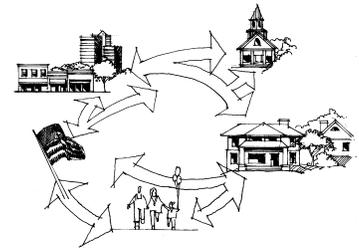
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## STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

Neighbors talked about specific actions their 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. Below is a list of all the ideas mentioned by workshop participants. They voted on the ideas that they most want implemented to make their neighborhood better.

### Things we can do **Ourselves**:

- Invite the newly appointed UMKC Chancellor to meet with the neighbors to discuss plans for the neighborhoods and UMKC
- Invite City officials to neighborhood meetings to help explain the City budget process; residents have a voice in setting priorities about City services
- Establish neighborhood watch groups that can walk/drive around the neighborhood to learn what's going on
- Help pass the curbside recycling ballot issue in August, 2000
- Register to vote and then vote
- Complete and return the 2000 U.S. Census Form
- Increase participation in the neighborhood association
- Educate residents about problems of sweeping leaves and debris into catch basins; clogged catch basins create surface water problems when it rains
- Design a "Welcome New Neighbor" orientation brochure to educate new neighbors on how to be good neighbors and get to know at least 5 people on your block
- Use the neighborhood block captains to welcome new neighbors on the block
- Join the "Adopt-a-Street" program to keep the neighborhood clear of litter
- Work with City forester to identify a variety of trees to replace diseased or dying tree instead of the current gum ball trees
- Volunteer for the police department's "Ride-Along" program to learn more about the job of the police officer
- Work together to dispel the myth of "City vs. the residents" mentality
- Work with the neighborhood associations on the east side of Troost to erase the stigma of living "east of Troost"



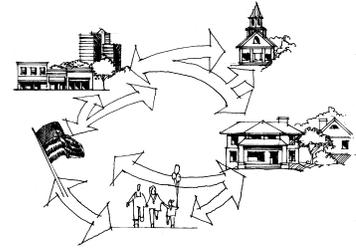
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Things we can do with a **Partner**:

- Work with UMKC to encourage them to make their building facilities on Troost Avenue more attractive and complimentary to the neighborhood
- Meet with Kansas City Missouri School District officials and charter school officials to improve public school education quality in the area, such as promoting neighborhood schools
- Encourage the Area Transportation Authority (ATA) to supply cigarette disposal containers at the bus stops, also supply more recycling containers and trash containers; ask the ATA to schedule more frequent pick-ups of these containers



Residents vote on their priorities for their neighborhood

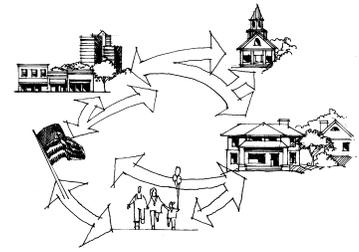


Things the **City** should do:

- Repair/replace curbs & sidewalks throughout Rockhill Ridge, particularly in the 5800 block of Rockhill Road and the 5900 block of Holmes Street
- Schedule the cleaning of catch basins throughout Rockhill Ridge
- Resurface streets throughout Rockhill Ridge
- Repair storm drains at 60<sup>th</sup> and Holmes
- Replace burned out streetlights in a timely manne
- Post "Fine for Littering" signs in Rockhill Ridge to curtail littering, illegal dumping
- Identify a role that City government can play to help improve the Kansas City Missouri School District, such as promoting neighborhood schools
- Incorporate the businesses along Troost (55<sup>th</sup> to 63<sup>rd</sup> Street) with the upcoming 63<sup>rd</sup> Street corridor study



Troostwood Garage at 5500 Troost is a longtime area business and landmark



- 
- Develop a plan to upgrade/renovate the businesses along Troost Avenue (55<sup>th</sup> to 61<sup>st</sup> Street)
  - Work with Area Transportation Authority (ATA) to improve public and mass transportation needs, such as better bus routes, designs for attractive bus stops/shelters
  - Place recycling containers and trash containers at bus shelters to reduce litter and trash problems
  - Repaint pedestrian crossing and center turn lane markings in the streets which are currently difficult to see



One of the sidewalks in need of repair in the Rockhill Ridge neighborhood

## Rockhill Ridge and Surrounding Area Neighborhood Assessment Participants

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David Baker	Doug Harding	Betsey Molinario
Cynthia Carduff	Susan I kazaki	Ren'ee Neades
Darrell Coleman	Jim Jay	John Pajor
William Cooper	Becky King	Cecelia Parle
Juanita V. Curry	Charlotte Kullman	Jim Rice
Steve Eklund	Martin Licktery	Rusty Smith
Peggy Everist	Anita Maltbia	Imogene Theisen
Larry Falkin	LaNor Maune	Sherry VanWinkle
Brent Fitzpatrick	Joe McFarland	Carolyn Vellar
Commander Darryl Forté	Maureen E. Mille	Michael Watson
Carol Grimaldi	Linda Miller	

## Getting Involved

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To find out more about the Rockhill Ridge Neighborhood Association, call President Charlotte Kullman at (816) 822-9648. For information about the 49/63 Neighborhood Coalition, call President Tom James at (816) 444-4963, or visit [www.4963.org](http://www.4963.org). For information about the Southtown Neighborhood Council, contact Dr. Gene Ray or Marti Lee at (816) 523-5553, or visit [www.southtown.org](http://www.southtown.org).

For information about training and other services available to neighborhoods, contact Ed Linnebur of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance at (816) 753-8600 or [www.kcna.org](http://www.kcna.org), or call the Neighborhood Assistance Center at City Hall, (816) 513-3200.

## Sponsors and Contributors

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- Rockhill Ridge Neighborhood Association
- Rockhurst University
- Sodexo Marriott Catering



# 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  
*Sixth District*

## City Planning and Development Department

- Vicki Noteis, AIA, *Director*
- Diane Charity, Sharon Cheers, Willie Mae Conway, Suzy Latare, John Pajor, Robert Rutherford, *Neighborhood Assessment Team*

## City Support

- Charmaine Stigler, *Action Center*
- John DeBauche, *City Planning and Development*
- Teri Casey, *Neighborhood Preservation*