RUSKIN HEIGHTS
RUSKIN HILLS
KIRKSIDE
CROSSGATES

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: May 22, 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.

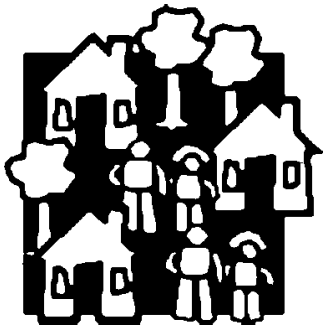
For more information about **FOCUS Kansas City**:

- 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 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 assessment:

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

This community conducted the neighborhood assessment 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.

Participants assemble for 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:

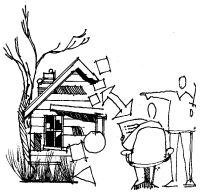
Developing **Conservation** **Stabilization** **Redeveloping**

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.

Workshop participants discusses their neighborhood

THE RUSKIN HEIGHTS, RUSKIN HILLS, KIRKSIDE AND CROSSGATES PERSPECTIVE

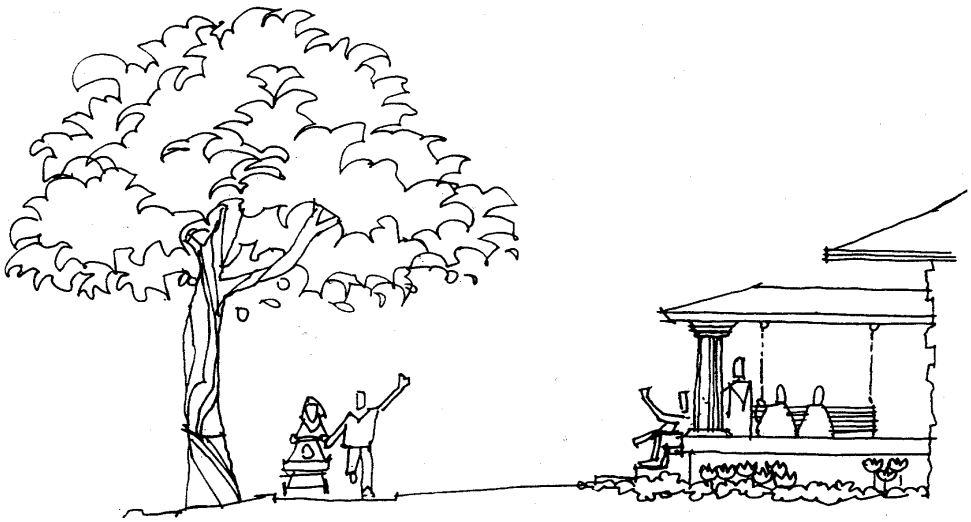


Members of the Ruskin Heights, Ruskin Hills, Kirkside and Crossgates neighborhoods came together Saturday , May 22, 1999 for a neighborhood assessment workshop. The workshop was an opportunity for individuals to look at the connections between where they live, work and socialize. The participants engaged in a neighborhood mapping exercise, they discussed challenges and barriers facing their neighborhood. In addition, they identified the assets in their community and voted on their neighborhood type.

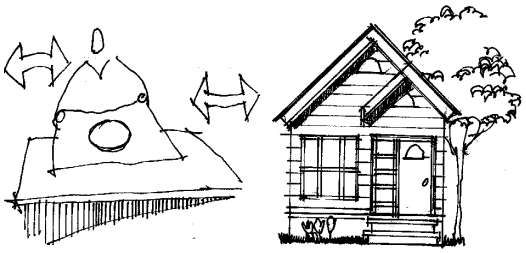
The residents described their community as caring and friendly. They boasted of the diverse population and ecumenism in the area, along with a core group of committed and hard working residents. Further, they stated that most of the homes were nice and they felt that the Homes associations in the area were among their assets along with the institutions and businesses.

Not only did the residents talk about the positive things about their area, they also noted the challenges. They discussed the need to be proactive regarding the issues and are currently involved in addressing and resolving their problems. Some of the concerns stated were the need to improve the infrastructure, improve code enforcement and to establish a community development corporation in the area.

Residents are eager to build on their successes. The purpose of this report is to help clarify goals and identify resources. The following page contains a summary of priorities and some possible improvement strategies. The report also contains the list of assets, barriers and ideas for improvements stated by the residents in the workshop. Finally, a list of frequently used City services is provided.



PRIORITIES



The following themes were the result of the workshop participants' ideas concerning ways to improve their neighborhood.

Implement Infrastructure Improvements

Improving the basic infrastructure in the neighborhood is vital to maintaining a sense of pride and establishing that the neighborhood is a healthy enjoyable place to live. Actions towards this goal are:

- Educate residents on the process of communicating infrastructure needs to the appropriate City Department
- Actively participate in the City's Public Improvement Advisory Committee to address infrastructure issues

Improve Code Enforcement

Residents felt that most of the neighborhoods were clean, however there are those areas that need improvement. Stiffer Code enforcement may help address these challenges. Recommendations are:

- Raise the consciousness of residents whose properties are starting to decline and educate them to the benefits of improving their property for themselves and the community
- Continue to work with the City to enforce property code maintenance against absentee owners and landlords
- Develop a long term strategy for maintaining and improving the neighborhood via continued education
- Encourage all residents to get involved in their neighborhood by discovering their issues via relationship building

Establish a Community Development Corporation

Residents realize that their community is transitioning and will continue to change. To help facilitate this process and to help effect this change, they are aiming to be proactive via the following:

- Promote the collaboration of resident, partners and the City to develop plans for a Community Development Corporation
- Partner with agencies to develop a marketing strategy for the neighborhood to attract residents and businesses to the area

CHART NOTES

The Ruskin Heights - Ruskin Hills - Kirkside - Crossgates Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from 107th Street to 119th Street, and from Blue Ridge Boulevard to Raytown Road.

Neighborhood Slogans

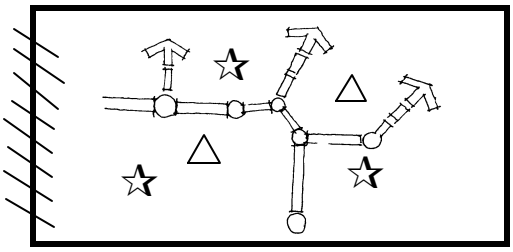
The workshop participants, who were divided into two workshop rooms, listed several slogans to describe their neighborhoods. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their neighborhoods.

The selected slogan: **Together We Stand; Divided We Fall**

Other suggested slogans:

- A Community of Hope
- Where People Come Together
- Hope
- Change One Block At a Time
- A Community that Wants to Come Together
- Bridging Our Community
- Building Our Community One Neighbor At A Time
- Now or Never

Workshop participants discuss neighborhood issues



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

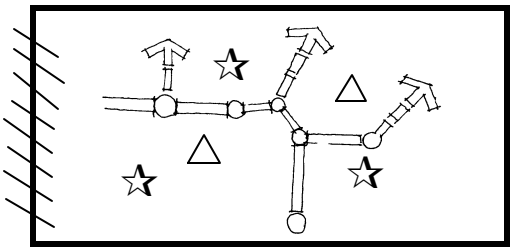
○ **Activity centers** — gathering places to do some activity

▭ **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

Landmark: St. Matthew Catholic Church



Landmarks

- Belle Acres Park
- St Matthew Parish
- Longview Lake
- Burke Elementary School
- Kirktown Homes
- Ruskin Place Apartments
- Memorial to the tornado victims at Blue Ridge Blvd. and Ruskin Way
- Crittenton Center
- Ruskin High School
- 7-Eleven Store at 107th Blue Ridge Blvd. Ruskin Heights Presbyterian Church
- Ruskin Heights Baptist Church
- Ruskin Heights Lutheran Church
- St. Matthews Catholic Church
- Longview United Methodist Church
- YMCA
- Engels Elementary School
- Traffic Circle at the Intersection of 111th and Ruskin Way
- Symington Elementary School
- Christ Our Redeemer AME Church
- Smith-Hale Junior High
- Johnson School

Paths

- Longview Road
- Greenwood Road
- Foodlane
- Drainage area at South 117th
- Blue Ridge Boulevard
- Raytown Road
- Ruskin Way
- Sycamore
- Traffic Circle at the intersection of 111th and Ruskin Way
- Bristol Terrace
- 114th Terrace

Activity Centers

- Engels School
- Smith Hale School
- YMCA on Longview Road
- St. Matthew Parish
- Longview Lake
- Churches

Features

- Longview Lake
- Burke Elementary School
- Entry Way Markers at:
  - Longview Road
  - Palmer Road
  - Manchester Road
  - Delmar Road
  - Bennington Road
  - Fuller Road
  - Beacon Road
  - Belmont Road

RUSKIN AREA IMAGES

Landmark and Activity Center: Longview YMCA

Landmark: Symington Elementary School

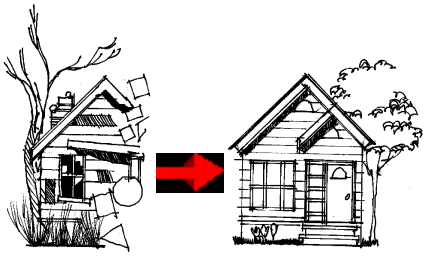
Feature: Kirkside entryway marker at Delmar and Longview Road

RUSKIN AREA IMAGES

Optimist Hall on Blue Ridge Boulevard

Landmark:
Ruskin High School

Activity Center:
Iser Park



STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

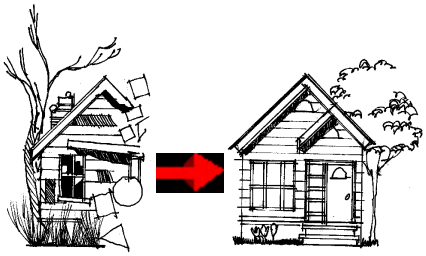
In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These issues stop residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do.

Below is the list of "fixes" that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Ruskin Heights, Ruskin Hills, Kirkside and Crossgates neighborhoods:

Public Works

- Replace sidewalk on Eastside Blue Ridge Boulevard. (Entire east side of Longview Road to Grandview City Limits)
- Fix Drainage problem (surface water after it rains) at Longview United Church and Food Lane
- Enforce speed limits on all streets
- Install speed limit signs and Delmar Drive at 118th St
- Install stop sign at 118th & Fuller
- Install 4-way stop at 117th Place & Delmar
- Enforce Yield sign at Beacon & Delmar
- Install 4 way stop and pedestrian walk sign at 117th Place and Delmar
- Trim trees at all stop signs and lights. (118th & Food Lane)
- Install curbs and sidewalks along all major thoroughfares (children currently walk and ride their bikes in the street or on gravel shoulders)
- Install grates on Storm basins throughout the neighborhood

Residents make suggestions about things they'd like fixed in their neighborhood



Code Enforcement

- Enforce Codes at an old junk yard with old junk cars located next to Crossgates Cleaners at the intersection of Artimatage Blueridge Blvd.
- Cut high weeds, fix surface water, cattails at eastside of Winchester, Longview Rd. to 116th St.
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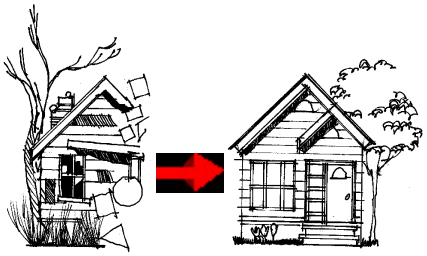
- Prohibit kids from cutting through 116th & Palmer to get to Ingels School
- Enforce the City's noise ordinance to stop the loud noise coming from parties at Freemont & 117th St.
- Enforce property maintenance in Crossgates. (remove junk cars, fix gutters and cut weeds)
- Enforce proper disposal of tires
- Educate the residents on the Bulky Item pick up process
- Implement a weekly yard waste pick-up (provide list of lawn services to area)
- Preclude parking of large 18 wheel trucks on residential streets
- Enforce absentee landlord laws i.e. rental property next to homeowner with over hanging limbs on property
- Maintain Blueridge Blvd. – enforce codes bulky item, garage repair at home on 107th & Blueridge
- Parcel land across from Ingels school. Possibly use it for a park
- Cut down the weeds at the vacant lot on the corner of 7103 E. 113th
- Enforce better maintenance of rental properties along Bristol Terrace and Ruskin Way
- Promote and enforce the eliminate drug houses

Vacant house on Longview Road with broken windows, tall grass and weeds



Parks and Recreation

- Upgrade neighborhood parks with fountains, playgrounds, ball diamonds, basketball and tennis courts
- Build an Olympic size pool in Iser Park
- Build a Community Center on the East Side of Blue Ridge

Environmental Management

- Implement more regular leaf and brush pick-ups
- Teach children and all residents not to litter
- Promote the implementation of Curbside recycling
- Hire people to pick-up litter

Neighborhood & Community Services

- Get residents more involved in neighborhood activities
- Encourage neighborhoods participation in the KC 150 event
- Develop more organizations for youth
- Establish more activities for children and all residents

Health

- Install a health facility in the area or expand health services at the YMCA

Law Enforcement

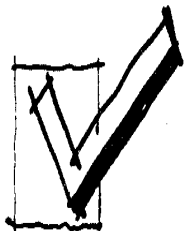
- Provide a Security Patrol for Ruskin Hills
- Promote and enforce the elimination of drug houses

Community Partners

- Promote the strengthening of Schools
- Help economically disadvantaged residents become self-supporting
- Reduce the number of rental properties in the neighborhood
- Promote free YMCA programs
- Increased funding for the Community Assistance Council

Metropolitan Transit Authority

- Provide a more comprehensive Metro bus service



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 thing that adds value to the neighborhood.

Community

- Caring, friendly people and community
- Caring Senior citizens
- Southern Community Coalition
- Diverse Population
- Ecumenical religions
- Crossgates Home Owners Association
- Kirkside Home Owners Association
- Community Team 2000 (part of school programs)
- Kansas City Missouri Police Department
- A core group of committed, hard working residents
- Nice homes
- Moderately priced houses
- Large lot sizes
- Stable property values

Institutions and Organizations

- YMCA on Longview Road
- American Legion Post at Blue Ridge Blvd
- Optimist Hall
- Community Assistance Council
- Well Baby Clinic
- Head Start Program
- Kansas City Police Department Community Action Team
- Churches that act as Community Anchors
- Church Community Organization

Institutions – Schools

- Ingels School
- Smith Hale School
- Ruskin School

Businesses

- Post Office
- IGA Grocery Store
- Truman Corners Shopping Center
- True Value Hardware
- Garden Center
- Blind Thrift Store
- Blue Ridge Boulevard Commercial Corridor
- Longview Shopping Corridor

Streetscape

- Interstate 70
- Interstate 435
- Interstate 35
- Easy access to highways

Lakes and Horticulture

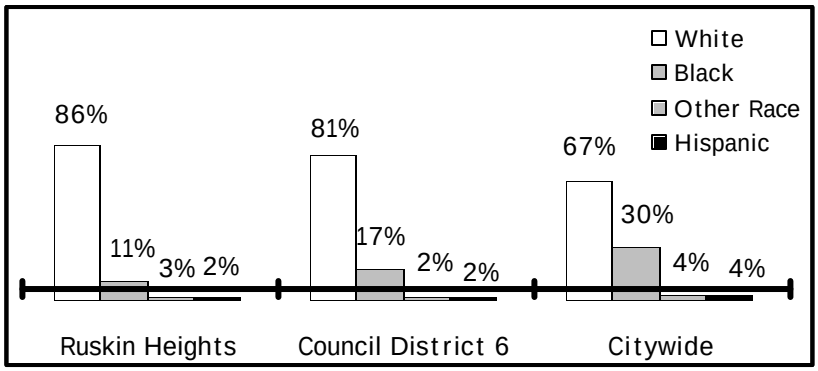
- Longview Lake
- An abundance of trees

IGA Super-Center on Blue Ridge Boulevard

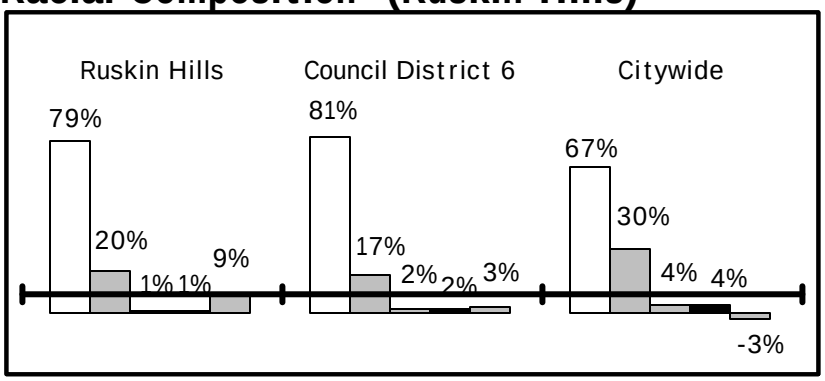
STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

The information presented at the Ruskin Heights - Ruskin Hills - Kirkside - Crossgates 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 noteworthy. (See the neighborhood assessment workbook for more detail.)

Racial Composition (Ruskin Heights)

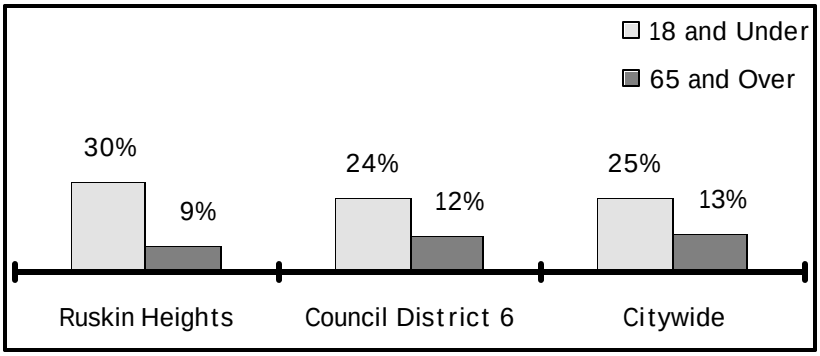


Racial Composition (Ruskin Hills)

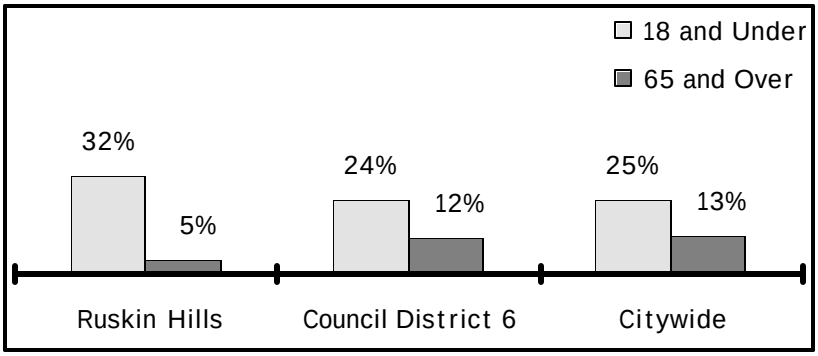


The residents feel that the racial demographics in Ruskin Hills and Ruskin Heights are 50% Black and 50% White.

Age Distribution (Ruskin Heights)

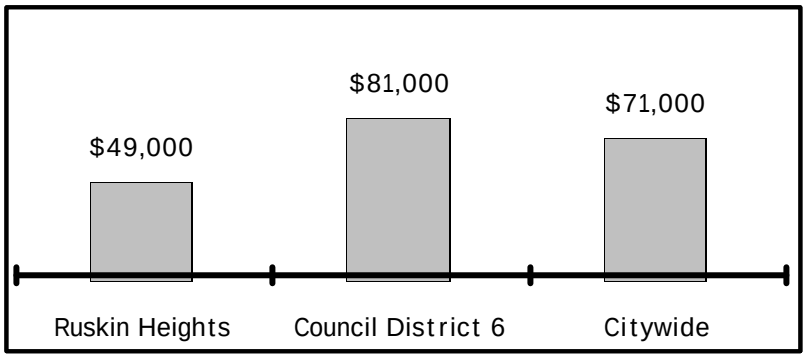


Age Distribution (Ruskin Hills)

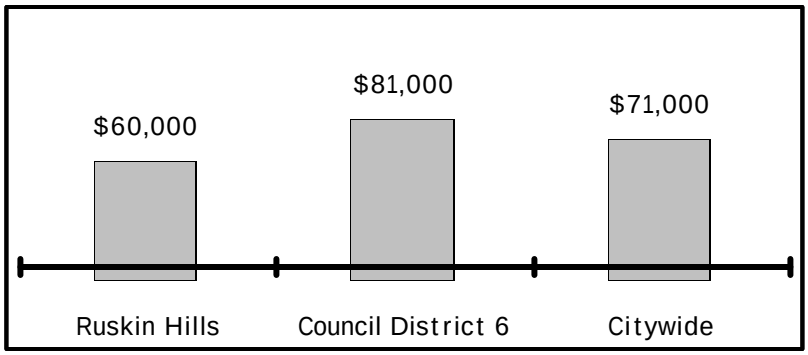


Residents of Ruskin Heights and Ruskin Hills feel that there are more chilidren in the neighborhood than ten years ago.

Median Value of Single Family Homes (Ruskin Heights)

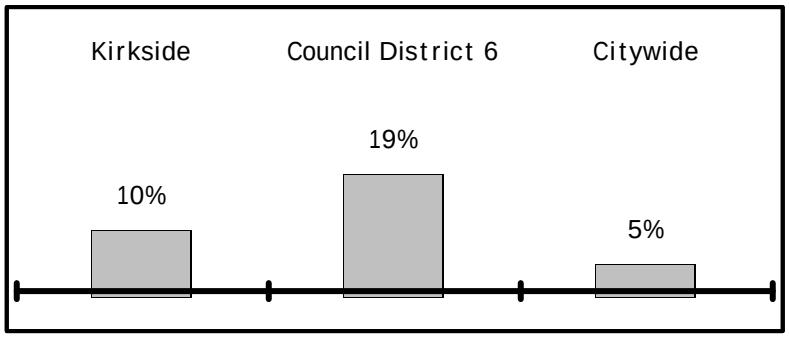


Median Value of Single Family Homes (Ruskin Hills)



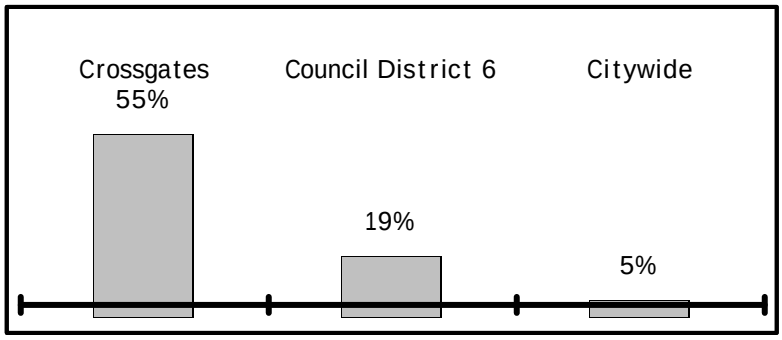
The residents of Ruskin Heights and Ruskin Hills feel that the real estate value in the area is rising. Recently a home sold for $64,000 in Ruskin Hills, while the Real Estate Industry states that the average home values are $49,000 (Ruskin Heights) and $60,000 (Ruskin Hills).

Change in Number of Housing Units (Kirkside)

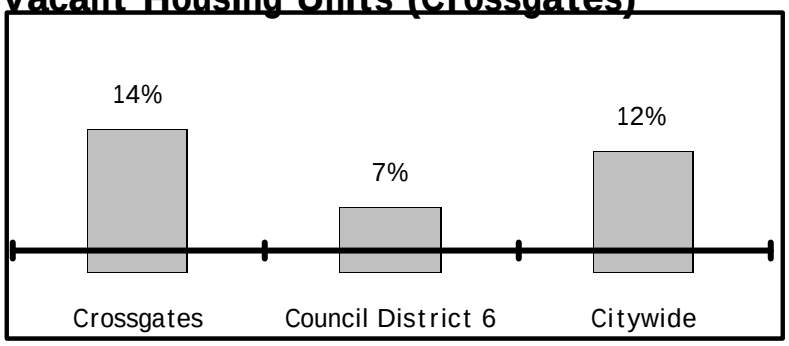


The residents of Crossgates and Kirkside feel that the housing population has changed due to an influx of Section 8 housing over the past 9 years.

Change in Number of Housing Units (Crossgates)

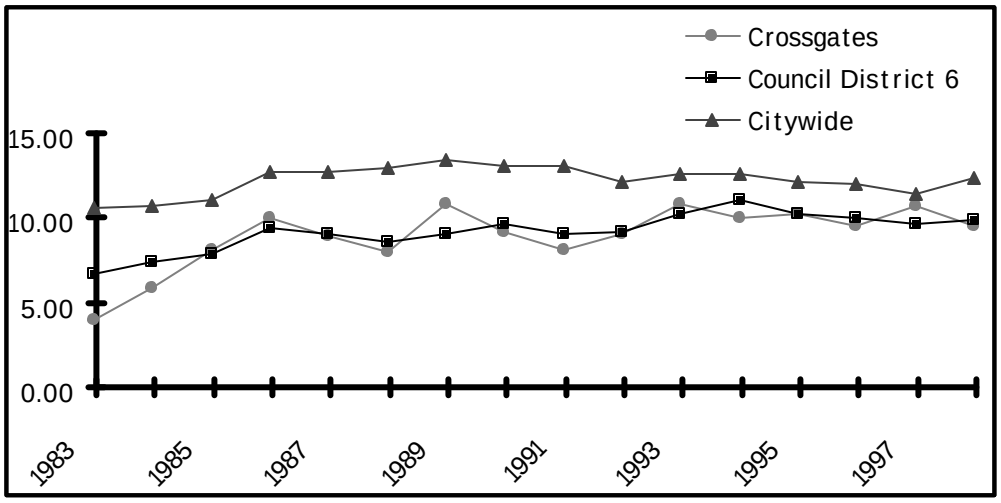


Vacant Housing Units (Crossgates)

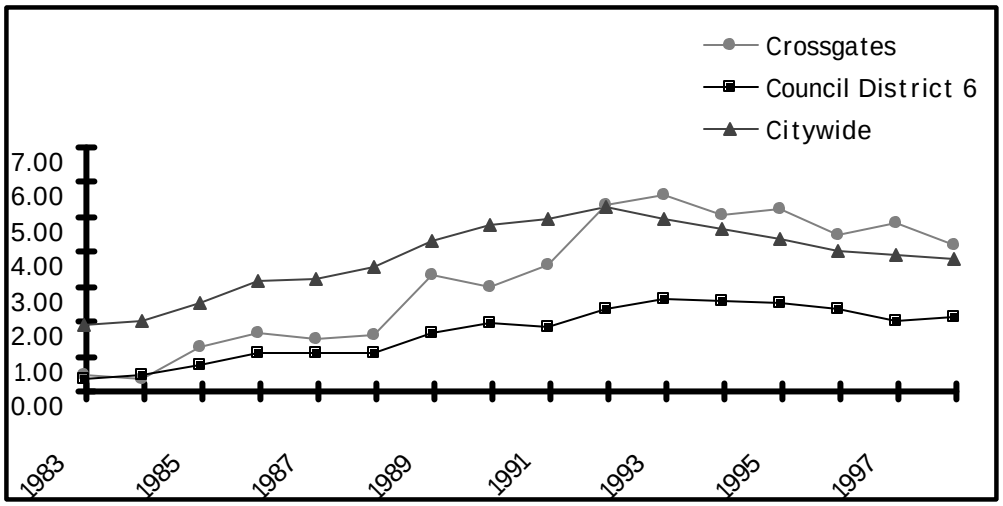


The Crossgates residents feel that vacant housing is a problem and that owners do not maintain their property.

Non-Violent Crime (Crossgates)

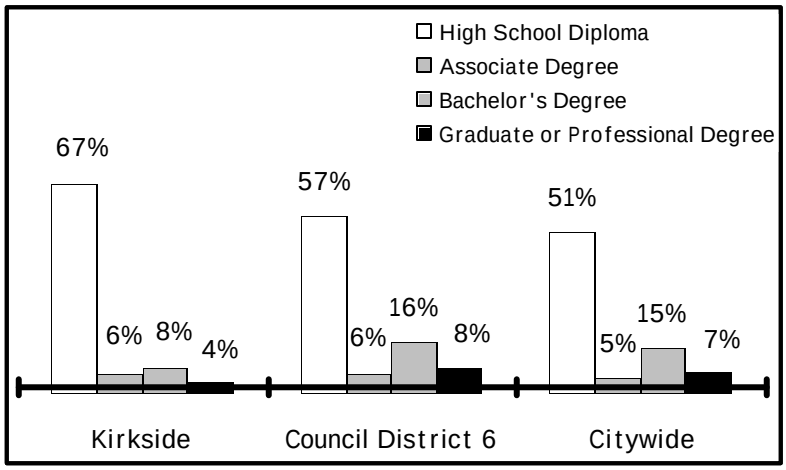


Violent Crime (Crossgates)



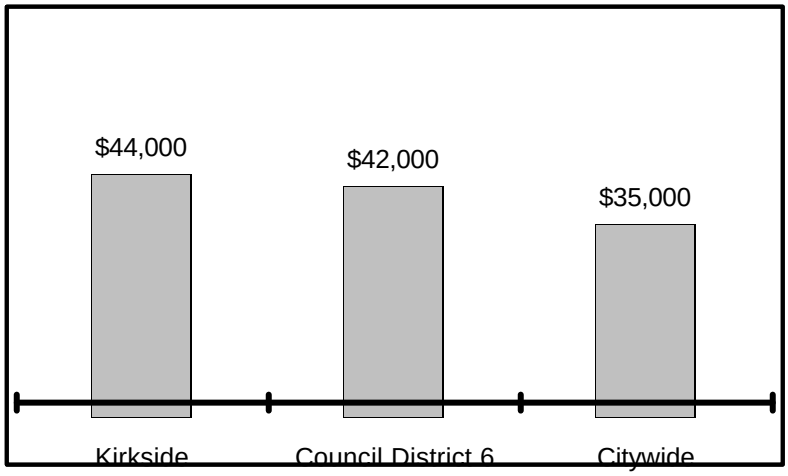
The Crossgates residents feel that the crime statistics are skewed to include a larger boundary.

Education of Persons Age 25 or Older



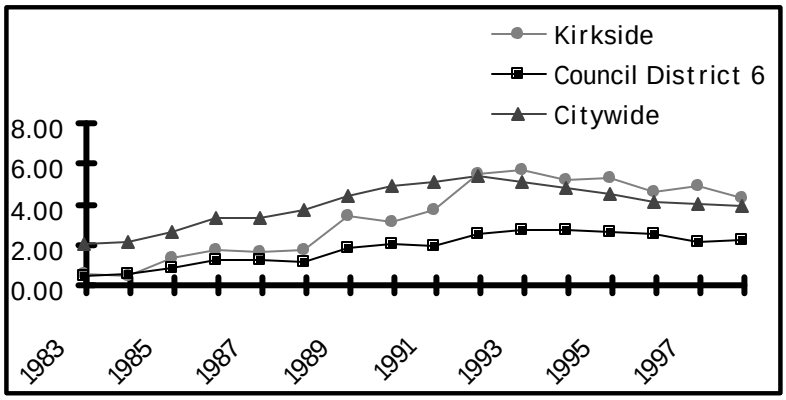
The Kirkside residents felt that more people in their area are getting bachelor degrees and that baby boomers are going back to school.

Median Household Income



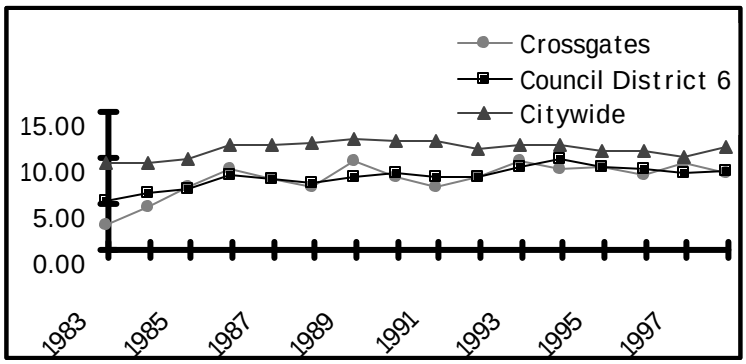
The Kirkside residents felt that the median income is higher than illustrated in the data.

Violent Crime (Kirkside)



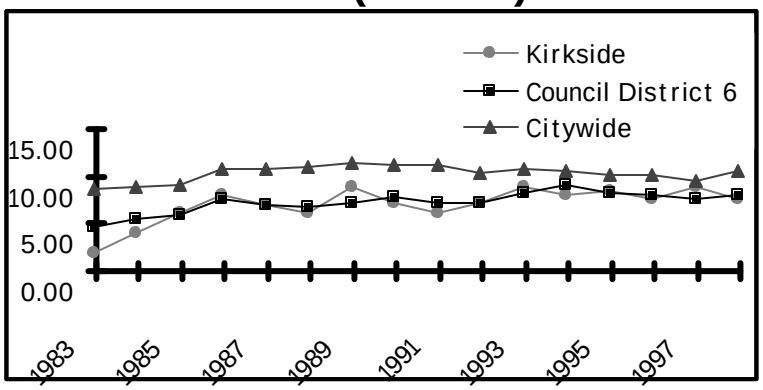
The Kirkside residents felt that the violent crime is largely due to domestic violence.

Non-Violent Crime (Crossgates)



Both the Crossgates and Kirkside residents felt that the non-violent crime on the Blueridge corridor is mostly burglaries.

Non-Violent Crime (Kirkside)



STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

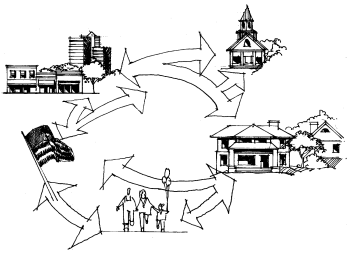
Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the neighborhood type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was Stabilization.

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.



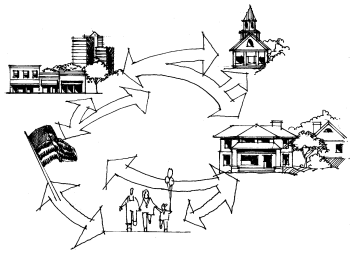
STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

Workshop 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. They voted on the ideas that they most want implemented to make their neighborhood better.

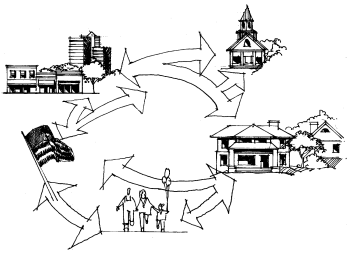
Things **We** can do by ourselves:

- Residents can request meeting with City Council, County and other elected officials regarding their concerns
- Residents can ask City of KCMO and City of Grandview to work together on issues such as Clean Sweep . Crossgates and Kirkside subdivisions overlap in both Cities
- Each Homes Association notify each other of upcoming events
- Residents can come together more to get to know each other, i.e. have block parties
- Residents can establish Block Captain programs to help monitor kids in neighborhood
- Residents can establish Block Watches and call police on suspicious activity
- Residents can partner with area businesses, schools, churches and other institutions regarding area issues

Councilmembers Alvin Brooks (Sixth District-at-Large) and Charles Eddy (Sixth District) communicate with participants at the Ruskin Area neighborhood assessment.



- Residents can establish a welcome wagon to help new residents learn about the neighborhood and community
- Residents can develop a “skills inventory” profile of residents to discover specific skills to best utilize them in the neighborhood. This would aid in finding persons who have skills and talents working with youth. This profile can be established in all 4-neighborhood associations
- Residents can develop a resource list of area business and residents with special skills in working with youth
- Residents can establish a fund to pay neighborhood youth for performing services such as lawn mowing and snow removal
- Residents who have an interest in working with youth can set-up screening process, training process and child CPR. Also, they can use the Girl Scout Organization for training on CPR
- Residents can get to know their neighbors better and should talk to their neighbor if they have a problem with them or the way they maintain their home
- Invite inactive as well as new members to get involved in the neighborhood association
- Residents can be vigilant of activity when walking or jogging in the neighborhood
- Make a commitment to spend time in the neighborhood
- Set a good example by keeping your property up
- Neighbors can agree to pay more taxes to fund a bond to fix neighborhood infrastructure
- Neighbors can develop their own bulky item pick-up process
- Take brush over to 470 and Raytown Road

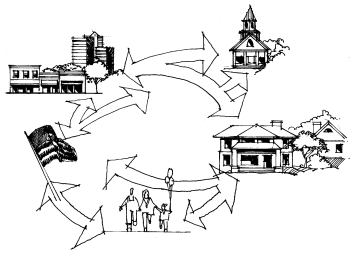


Things we can do with a **Partner**:

- Residents can work with the South Patrol Division of the KCPD on establishing community programs such as McGruff Houses and other community policing training opportunities.
- Residents can work with the YMCA on Longview Road to learn more about existing youth programs and possibility of a community swimming pool
- Residents can get involved in the Big Brother/Big Sister program and/or establish a chapter in their community
- Residents can contact Kauffman Foundation for possible funding source for youth projects
- The 4 neighborhood associations (Ruskin Heights. Ruskin Hills, Kirkside and Crossgates) can work together on common issues. They can also host meetings with their elected officials with their concerns
- Residents can work with the Kansas City Housing Authority and the City Housing and Economic Development Department to state their concerns regarding the proposed public housing development
- Develop better relationships with area institutions such as St. Joseph Health Services, Bannister Mall, Hoechst Marion Roussel
- Seek a partner to develop curbs and sidewalks in the neighborhood
- Work with area businesses to partner with homes associations on neighborhood improvement projects

Ruskin Shopping Center

Lamar's Donuts



Things the **City** should do:

Public Works

- Clean and repair all catch basins in the neighborhood
- Install curbs and sidewalks on Blue Ridge Blvd., Bristol Terrace, 107th Street, Longview Road, Ruskin Way and Sycamore
- Trim trees away from street signs and lights
- Improve lighting on 114th Street
- Replace missing street signs (obtain list from Shirley Dobbins)
- Fix the broken storm drain that causes “Lake Winchester” to overflow
- Fix the drainage (surface water after it rains) problem at Longview Road and Palmer
- Notify residents, especially senior citizens when the street crews will clean the streets and remove snow from the residential

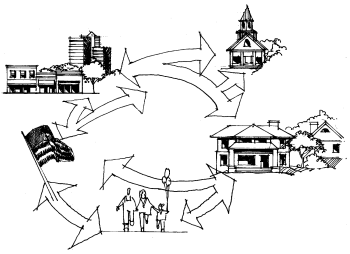
Parks & Recreation

- Build a public pool in the 6th District area for the youth
- Develop more activities for youth
- Continue to sponsor Hot Summer Nights program for youth

Code Enforcement

- Improve the Codes Departments ability to compel people to improve their properties

Auto Detailing shop
in Crossgates



Environmental Management

- Improve Bulky item pick-up service, residents should not have to wait so long to have items picked up
- Increase yard waste pick-up to twice a month

Neighborhood and Community Services

- Increase Minor home repair grants for the neighborhood

Planning

- Provide a FOCUS Center in the South part of the City

Communications

- The City needs to have a “welcome wagon” brochure with information about City services and the respective community
- Educate the area regarding Senior Citizen programs

Vacant Wood Glen clubhouse

Ruskin Heights, Ruskin Hills, Kirkside and Crossgates Neighborhood Assessment Participants

Richmond Anderson
Phyllis Bahner
James G. Benson
Nochus Berry
Alvin Brooks
Julius & Michelle Brown
Rosie Burns
Pat Carlton
Bob Chambers
Nancy Chipchase
R. K. Clifton
Dale Coffey
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Leo & June Hamilton
Bobbie & Charles Henderson
Joe Ann Herron
Judy Hoffman
Joe Hollendorf
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Bob & Eva Miller
J. Mouton
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Betty Patton
Sheri Reilly
Ruby M. Rice
Cheryl Richards
Gene Roberts
Penella Rollie
Police Officer Steve Schmidt
Ray Schroeder
Betty Smith
Robert Spaw
Howard & Harriet Stone
Fr. Jim Taranto
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Denise Wilson
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Virginia Woods
Tui Ziegler

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Bill Tudor, *State House of Representatives*

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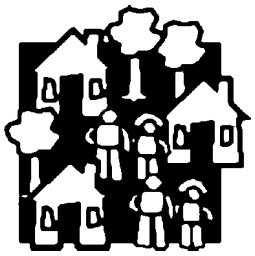
Councilman Charles A. Eddy, Sixth District
St. Matthew Apostle Church
Ruskin Heights Homes Association
Ruskin Hills Homes Association
Kirkside Homes Association
Crossgates Homes Association



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

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John Tangemon, *Department of Housing and Community Development*