

BLUE HILLS

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: July 24, 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 | 513-9000 |
| Abandoned Cars on Public Property | Kansas City, MO Police Department | 234-5000 |
| Abandoned Homes | Neighborhood and Community Services | 513-9000 |
| Air Quality | Health Department | 513-6314 |
| Animal Control | Neighborhood and Community Services | 513-9800 |
| 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 | 513-9000 |
| Housing Code Violations | Neighborhood and Community Services | 513-9000 |
| 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 | 513-7500 |
| 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 |

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.



Blue Hills residents get signed in and find their homes on the "Heart Map"



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 consider the positive aspects of their neighborhood

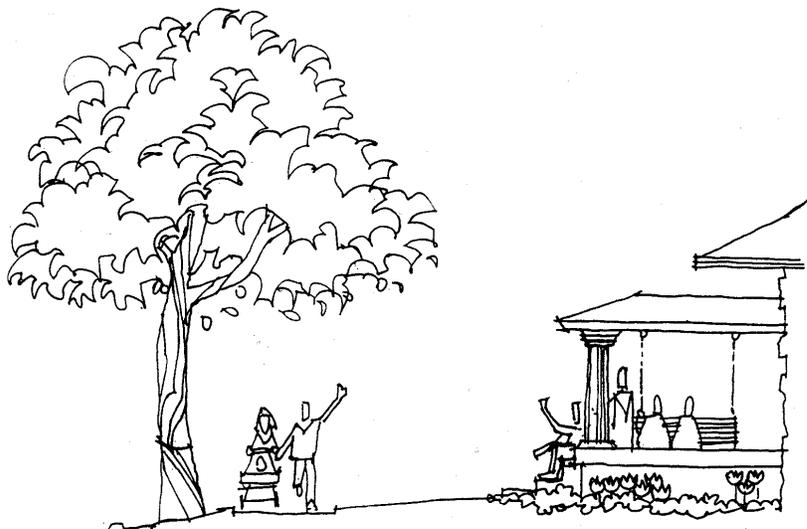
THE BLUE HILLS PERSPECTIVE



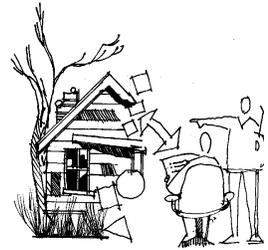
Some 67 residents, community partners and businesses of the Blue Hills neighborhood gathered on July 24, 1999 at St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church for their neighborhood assessment. They arrived prepared for an important community building discussion and to make a difference in the neighborhood they cherish.

This strong Blue Hills community is a prime example of a central city neighborhood committed to overcome the many challenges that surround them. Residents can boast of having one of the most influential neighborhood associations in the Kansas City area. They are home to a strong Community Action Network Center (CAN) located within St. Therese's parish that works with the neighbors to address concerns. Neighbors feel up to the challenge to fight negative circumstances such as "white flight," the erosion of a strong economic base on the Prospect corridor and in the Metro Shopping Center, and abandoned and vacant properties throughout the residential area.

The neighborhood association and community / business partners are eager to attract businesses that will compliment the neighborhood such as a grocery store. In addition, a group known as "100 Men of Blue Hills" has organized to "take back the community" from drugs and crime.

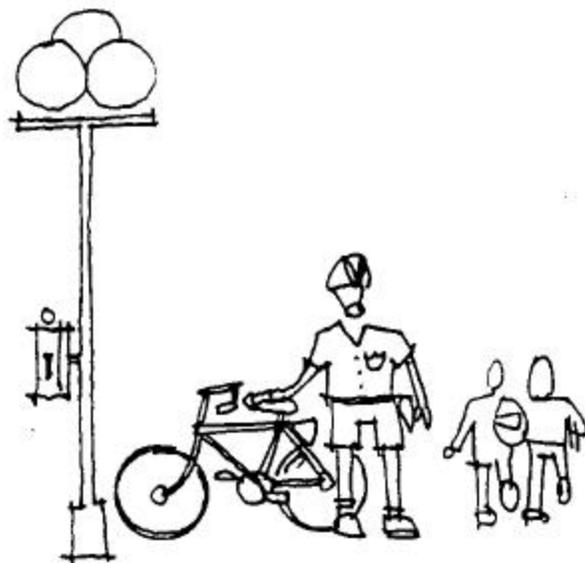


THE BLUE HILLS PERSPECTIVE

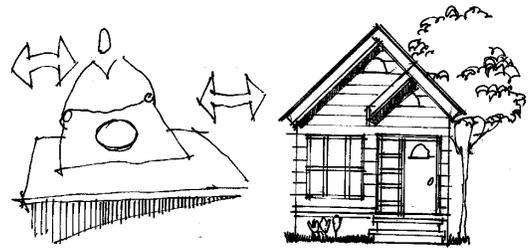


During one part of the neighborhood workshop, the group developed an extensive list of their own initiatives they can do to ensure a quality of life in Blue Hills. (See "Things We Can Do Ourselves," pages 19-21.) For example, the residents want to maintain the residential character and architectural desirability of the various styles of homes, and preferably have them occupied with homeowners. They want to take control of the number of vacant lots and enhance them as common area parks, recreational paths and walkways. They also want to develop partnership opportunities with the businesses in the Metro Shopping Center.

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



PRIORITIES



Residents of the Blue Hills neighborhood named the following as their priority issues:

Encourage Residential Participation in Neighborhood and Community Projects

The workshop participants saw themselves as hard-working and want to encourage more neighborhood participation. They suggested the following:

- Come and participate in the neighborhood association meetings, held at 5309 Woodland, on the 4th Saturday of each month; telephone: (816) 333-7232
- Educate residents, landlords/tenants concerning property maintenance and homeowner responsibility
- Continue to work with CCO and merchants in the Metro Shopping Center on improving the shopping center
- Identify ways in which Blue Hills Neighborhood Association and Citadel Homes Association can work together on common concerns, i.e. a memorial garden for Judge Michael H. Colbern, who died while in an abandoned and vacant building, and improvements to Blue Hills Park with walking trails, playground equipments, landscaping

Maintain and Improve City Services

The residents want more follow-through on basic City services. They came up with these ideas:

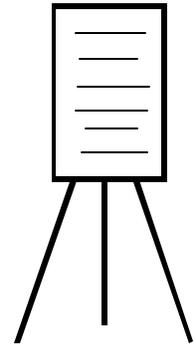
- Streamline the demolition process and development plans for the Little Sisters of the Poor property located at 55th and Woodland
- Allow the neighborhood association to purchase the vacant lots throughout the neighborhood; neighbors can landscape these lots to enhance the desirability of their neighborhood
- Schedule additional leaves/brush collections, street sweeping, bulky waste collections, tree trimming

Promote Business and Economic Development

The attendees want businesses in their area to compliment their neighborhood:

- Work with Douglass Bank to establish more services for the neighborhood: low interest loans, grants, etc., and educate residents concerning business practices of check-cashing stores, pawn shop, title loan business

CHART NOTES



The Blue Hills Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from 47th to 63rd, and from Paseo Boulevard to Prospect.

Neighborhood Slogans

Residents of Blue Hills recognize the potential for growth in their neighborhood. This idea was clearly stated when they voted on the slogan that best described their area.

The selected slogan:

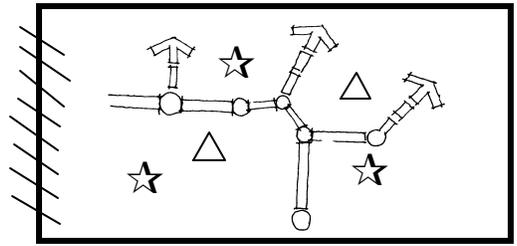
A Place to Grow

Other suggested slogans:

- The Heart of the City
- Historical Neighborhood
- Come to Our Rose Garden
- Blue Hills: Building Community
- We Are All Joining Together
- Blue Hills: "Small Town Feel" Atmosphere!



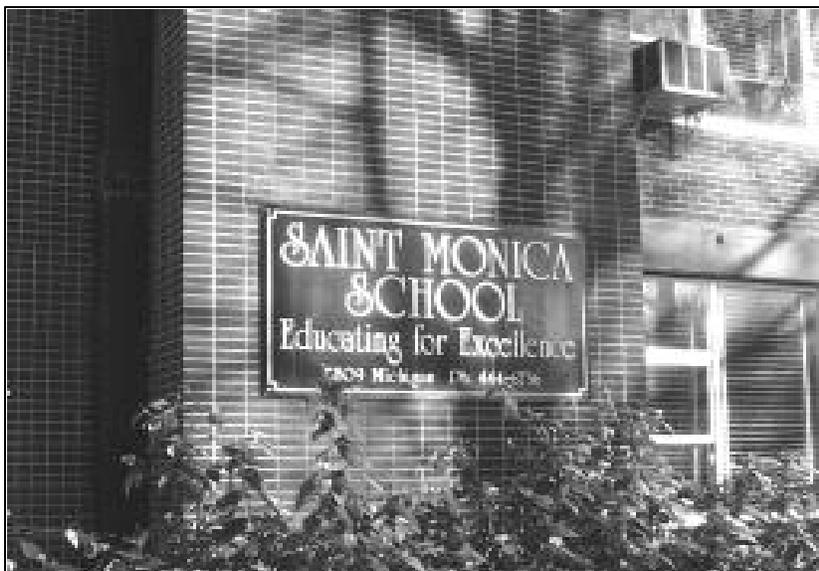
Two of the many young people in Blue Hills - A Place to Grow



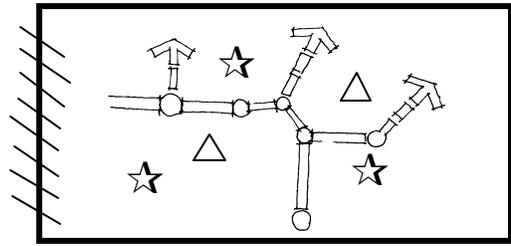
STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

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



Saint Monica School, one of the assets in the Blue Hills neighborhood



Landmarks

- Blue Hills Park
- Many churches
- Blue Hills Neighborhood Association House, 5309 Woodland
- Paseo Academy, 47th & Flora
- St. Monica's School, 58th & Euclid
- St. Therese's Catholic Church
- Frances Willard School
- The Citadel Building, Location #1
- J.J. Pershing School at 59th & Park
- Daycare at 55th & Woodland

Paths

- The walking path between Woodland & Highland, 57th Street to 58th Street
- The city sidewalk on 49th Terrace from Paseo to Troost

Activity Centers

- Swope Parkway Library
- Paradise Baptist Church, 58th & Highland
- St. James United Methodist Church
- The YMCA
- All churches within the Blue Hills neighborhood boundaries
- Paseo Academy, 47th and Flora
- St. Monica's School, 58th & Euclid
- St. Therese's Catholic Church
- Frances Willard School
- Daycare at 55th & Woodland

Districts

- The Citadel neighborhood
- Metro Shopping Center
- Prospect business corridor from 47th to 63rd Street

Edges or Barriers

- Little Sisters of the Poor, 54th & Woodland
- 55th Street from Park to Prospect
- 52nd & Olive Street, residents avoid passing the dilapidated drug house
- 51st & Wabash, residents avoid walking past the trashy, vacant houses
- 56th & Prospect, huge, over the road trucks block the view onto Prospect, potential accident site
- 56th & Park, residents avoid walking down this street of eyesores

Features

- Many churches
- Paseo Academy, 47th and Flora
- Citadel Building, Location #1

BLUE HILLS IMAGES



Landmark: Blue Hills Park



Landmark: Blue Hills
Neighborhood Association House



**Landmark, Activity
Center, and Feature:**
Paseo Academy

BLUE HILLS IMAGES



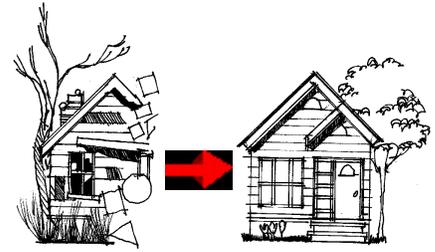
Landmark and Activity Center:
Saint Therese Little Flower Catholic Church



Landmark, Activity Center and Feature: St. James United Methodist Church



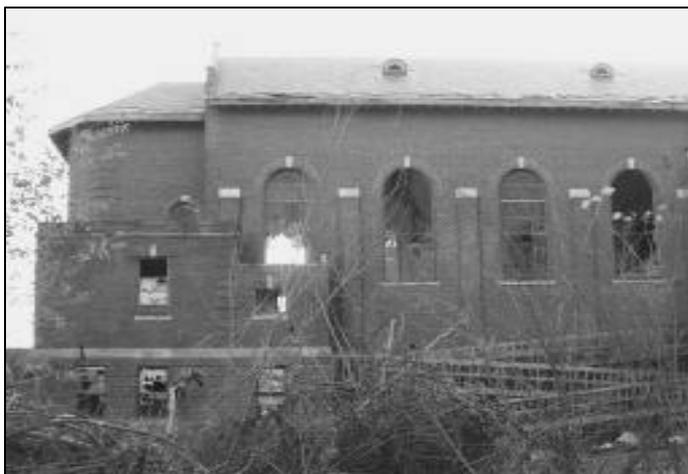
Landmark and Activity Center: Frances Willard School



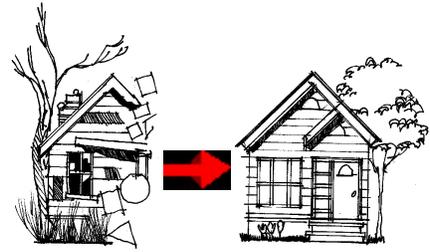
STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

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 Blue Hills neighborhood.

- Create a Memorial Park on the building site where Jackson County Judge Michael Colburn was killed in an elevator shaft
- Reduce the number of crime incidents in Blue Hills!
- Reduce trash!
- Build a youth center within walking distance
- Repair sidewalks throughout Blue Hills
- Capture loose and stray dogs that roam the neighborhood
- Quickly pickup leaves and brush
- Repair/replace storm sewers/drains
- Eliminate excessive parking on the street
- Pave a path on 58th Street between Woodland and Highland
- Cut the weeds on the numerous vacant lots that dot Blue Hills
- Bring/invite absentee landlords to neighborhood meetings
- Research addresses of absentee landlords
- Mail newsletters to absentee landlords
- Bring about an increase in homeownership by selling absentee landlord's homes
- Obtain Little Sisters of the Poor building for a youth center



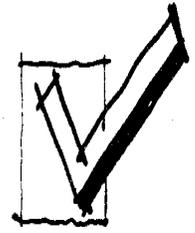
The former Little Sisters of the Poor, a building residents would like to see razed; the building received historical designation in July of 1999, and residents feel this will delay dealing with the unsightly property.



- Neighborhood Association should purchase and beautify as many as possible of the numerous vacant lots DOTTING Blue Hills
- Improve Blue Hills Park by installing playground equipment, picnic tables and landscaping
- Remove weeds and debris in alleyways
- Strictly enforce rules on bulky items being placed on curbs to include placing them the night prior to pick-up
- City's Environmental Management staff should pick up the trash that falls out of trashbags when they collect trash from the curbs
- Pour ammonia in the trash bags to deter dogs from tearing up these bags
- Reduce the number of old trees to prevent old roots from breaking up the sidewalks
- Band together to get rid of drug houses
- Establish an ongoing "home improvement program" for senior citizens to help them with exterior painting, etc.
- Provide low interest rates for people who do not qualify for the home improvement programs
- Establish Landlord Licensing or develop a "Landlord Agency"
- Educate Blue Hills residents about Douglass Bank's loans
- Educate Blue Hills residents on the pitfalls of using check-cashing stores that practice predatory lending; i.e. charging 20% use fee
- Reduce overall trash on the street
- Street should be swept once per month
- Work together to address all Blue Hills' problems



Illegal dumping in the Blue Hills neighborhood



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 feature that adds value to the neighborhood.

Places

- Numerous commercial businesses located in the Metro Shopping Mall
- The Metro Police Station
- U.S. Social Security Office

Institutions

- Many churches
- Douglass National Bank
- Research Hospital
- Baptist Hospital
- The number and wealth of businesses and resources

Organizations

- Church Community Organizing
- Blue Hills Neighborhood and Community Association



Metro Shopping Mall and Douglass Bank, two of the area's assets



Community

- Family oriented
- High home ownership
- Proximity to cultural centers, i.e. Brush Watkins Cultural Center, Paseo Academy
- Small town atmosphere
- Centrally located
- The return of peace and quite
- Existence of multi-family and single family housing
- Community police officers located at St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church
- Meetings such as the FOCUS Neighborhood Assessment

Streetscape

- Transportation and access to it
- Recent neighborhood improvements, i.e. streetlights!
- Redevelopment of roads: Blue Hills Road
- Beautified bridges
- Unique structure of many houses



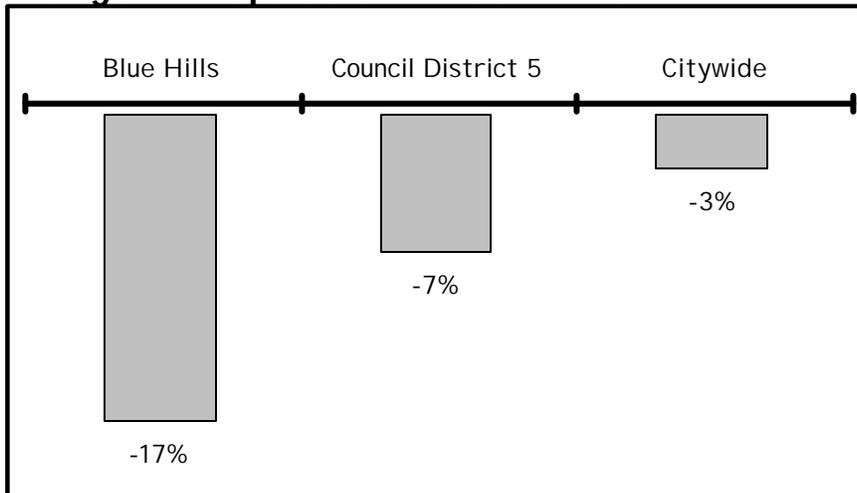
One of the many homes with beautiful landscaping in the Blue Hills neighborhood



STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

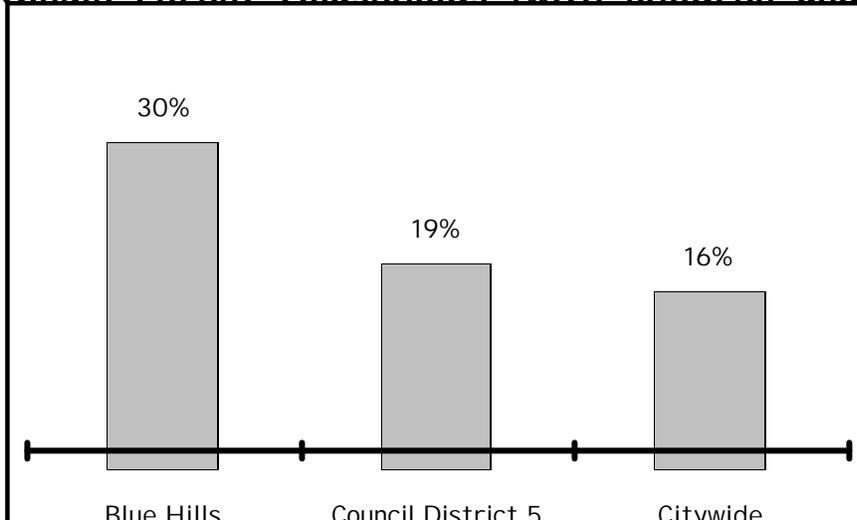
The data presented at the Blue Hills Neighborhood Assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census, and from 1998 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts the participants said were surprising or noteworthy. (See the neighborhood assessment workbook for more detail.)

Change in Population 1980-1990



Participants believe many who grew up in Blue Hills are moving back as adults; residents stated that increased participation in the 2000 Census count will be important, to obtain the most accurate figures.

Single Parent Households (with children under 18 years of age)

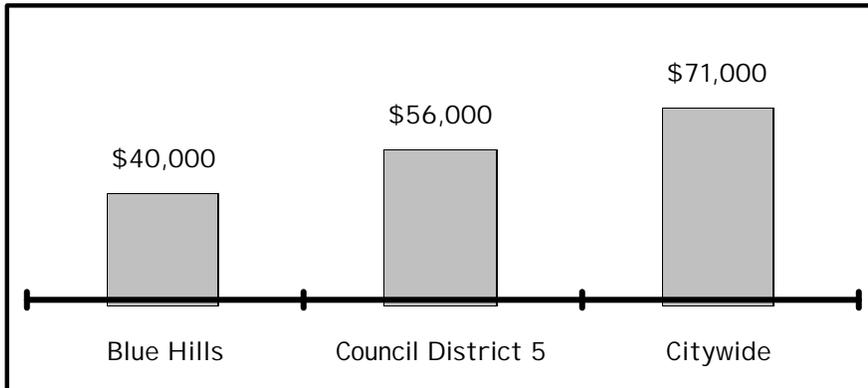


Residents agreed the rate of single parent households is high. These rates and others are dynamic and a part of a national trend, but even so, the rate is excessive.



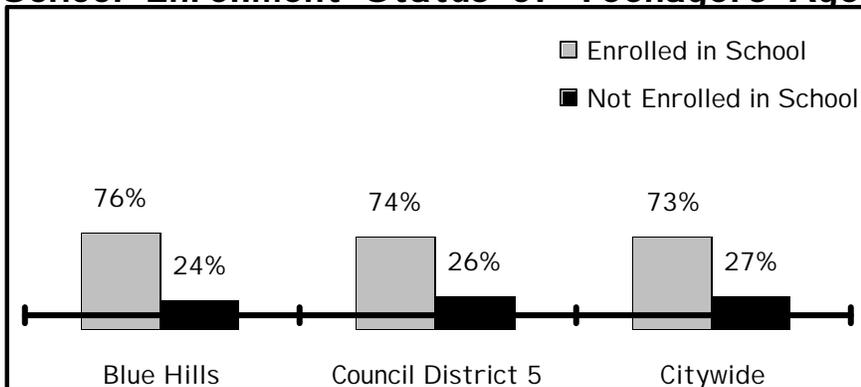
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Median Value of Single Family Homes



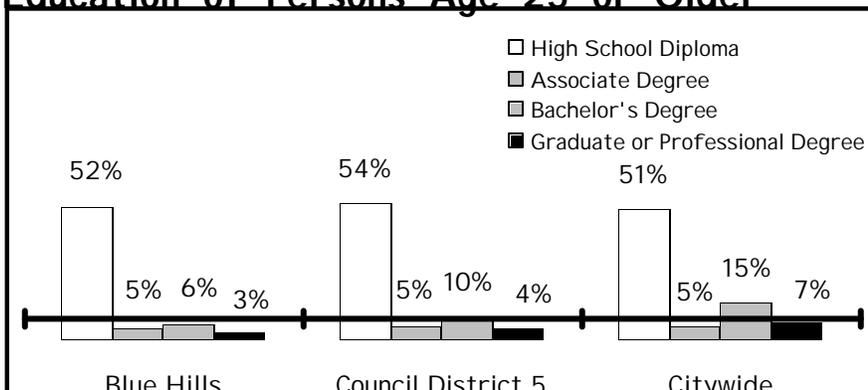
Those present felt the median value of homes was too low. They felt they are assessed incorrectly, but that's o.k. because taxes are low.

School Enrollment Status of Teenagers Ages 16-19



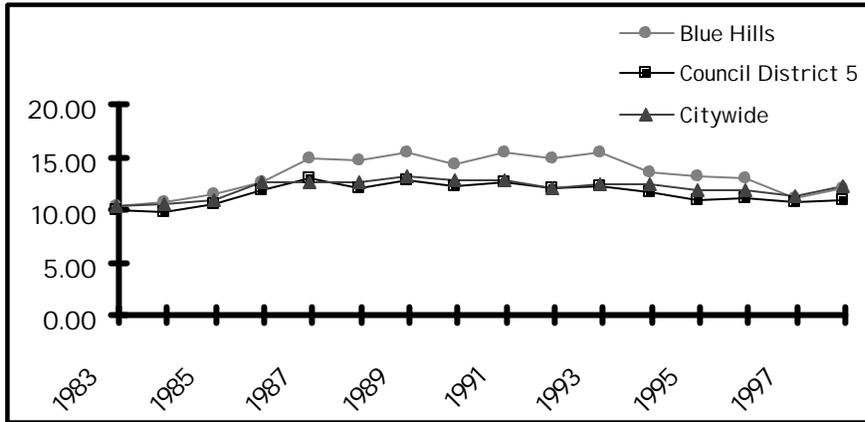
Neighbors commented they have a relatively higher rate of young people going to school, yet a lower percentage of people obtaining an education higher than high school – education begins at home!

Education of Persons Age 25 or Older

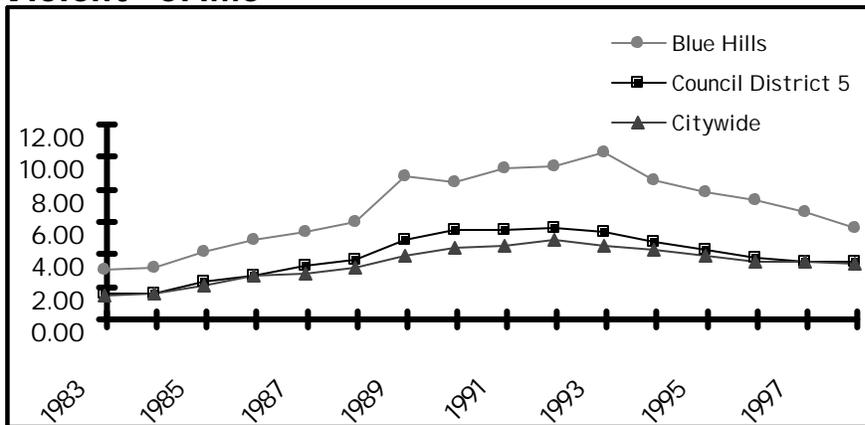




Non-Violent Crime

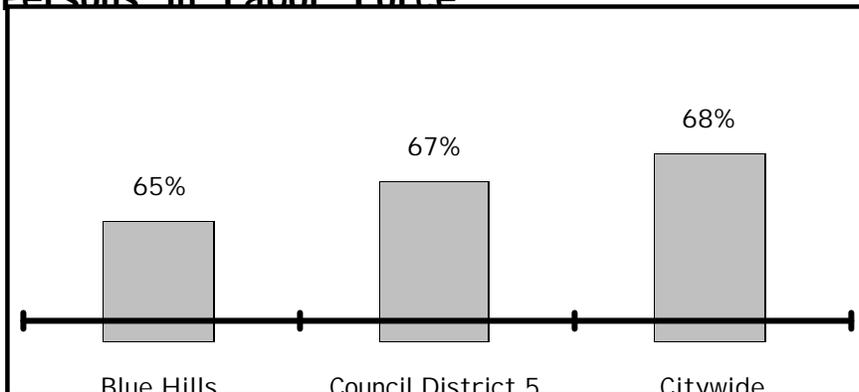


Violent Crime



Residents believe there is a correlation between crime, persons not in the labor force, and educational attainment (see previous page).

Persons in Labor Force





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STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

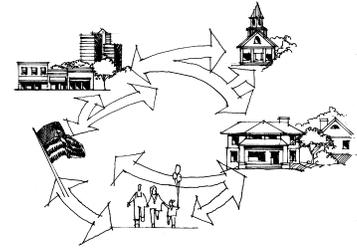
Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the Neighborhood Type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was Stabilization.

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

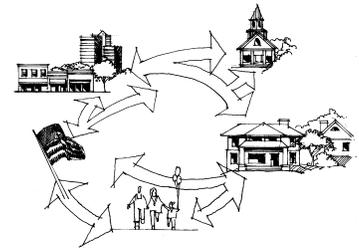
Blue Hills neighbors talked about specific actions their community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. Below is a list of all the 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**:

- Participate in the many neighborhood clean-ups that are already organized. Volunteer!
- Help feed the volunteers
- Read your newsletters
- Start planning events early in order to notify restaurants of the need for food donations
- Solicit vendors (local and citywide) to donate
- Keep our individual properties and our immediate area clean
- Educate neighbors about bulky item pickup
- Stay informed about existing development plans
- Utilize neighborhood representatives



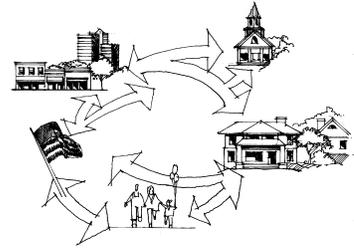
Blue Hills residents discuss the actions they can take in their neighborhood



- Increase residents' participation in Blue Hills activities by using the following strategies:
 - Distribute flyers to all residents through:
 - Block representatives (give each block captain enough flyers to distribute to each house on their block)
 - Neighborhood churches bulletins & flyers
 - C.C.Y.D., Blue Hills Ameri*Corps and neighborhood youngsters; Ms. Jamesetta Weaver & Ms. Willie Mae Conway will work with the youth to go door to door. Suggestion: the Neighborhood Association can compensate the youth in lieu of expense for bulk mailing.
 - Include the following enticing information on flyers:
 - CAN team will be there
 - Door prizes
 - Education, housing, public safety, income, employment
 - "Bring your own ideas"
 - Design separate flyer for renters
 - Contact by telephone:
 - Utilize the Crime Commission telephone notification system (phone tree)
 - Get the CAN Center's phone tree up and running
 - Call next door neighbors
 - Keep a positive attitude



A Blue Hills resident offers her suggestion to improve the neighborhood

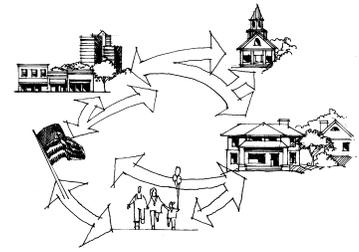


Things we can do with a **Partner:**

- Priority: Create a pilot program in which neighborhood banks provide the following to the Blue Hills community: education to any resident (homeowners and renters) on most effective ways to re-establish and maintain good credit ratings; low interest loans for home repair
- Encourage all businesses within Blue Hills to provide some type of refreshments for volunteers participating in the "Christmas In October" massive home repair project and all neighborhood clean ups
- Request that Family Dollar on 55th & Prospect be a better neighbor, donate to community events
- I identify a new community organizer in the neighborhood to work with the block clubs
- Establish a partnership with Jackson County's C.O.M.B.A.T. to address dangerous situation at 5601 Michigan
- Demand that politicians remove their election signs from the light poles the day after election!
- Make absentee landlords aware of nuisances they impose when they do not take care of their property; invite them to a neighborhood meeting
- Partner with KCMO School Board to demand/work toward higher educational achievement among students
- Educate residents how particular legislation will effect them. All elected officials need to "educate before they legislate"!



A Neighborhood Watch sign is an indicator of one of the partnerships between Blue Hills and the KCMO Police Department



Things the **City** should do:

- Encourage Codes Officer Michael Simmons to strengthen partnership with ALL Blue Hills residents. Site violators who park on the grass.
- Continue to put inserts regarding bulky item and leaves and brush pick up into water bill
- Pick up bulky items more often wherever they are – even vacant lots! Pick up by zones!
- Educate before you legislate! (tell neighbors – in person – what’s going on in the City Council)
- Streamline the demolition process and development plans for the Little Sisters of the Poor property
- Allow the neighborhood association to purchase the vacant lots throughout the neighborhood
- Schedule additional leaves/brush collections, street sweeping, bulky waste collections, tree trimming



Bulky item trash on the streets of Blue Hills is of grave concern to residents



Becky Nace, 5th District Council Representative, welcomes workshop participants

Blue Hills Neighborhood Assessment Participants

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Robert Anderson | Gertha O. Johnson | Velma Scott |
| Lillian Anderson | Pat Keeling | Cheryl Scott |
| Nadine Baker | Ella M. Kinnell | Jackie Scott |
| Doris J. Bigham | Sr. Ann Landers | Wayne Scott |
| Cliff Breaux | Johnella Lewis | Kelvin Simmons |
| Luwillis Canada | Antonio Lewis | Julia St. Hill |
| Martin Clark | Ava Moore | Junnie Suggs |
| Willie Mae Conway | Becky Nace | Ronnell Suggs |
| Cleary Culelager | Alvenia Parker | Nora Tancardi |
| JoAnn Ellett | Denzel Porter | Paul Tancardi |
| Doris Franklin | Willie Porter | Sharon Turner-Jackson |
| Sarah Hall | Rose Porter | Charita Vine |
| William Hart | Laura M. Pryor | Marquita Wade |
| Bernadette Hoyt | Zelma Richardson | Larry Washington |
| Edna M. Hubbert | George Riddlespriger | Jamesetta Weaver |
| Jean Ingram | Juliette Ridley | Pauline Webb |
| Marzelle Irvin | Carma Robinson | Charlie White |
| Thressela Jackson | I sreal Rogers | Nannie Williams |
| Neotus Johnson | Ruby Savage | Karen Wright |

Sponsors and Contributors

- Blue Hills Neighborhood 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

City Planning and Development Department

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