

BLUE VALLEY

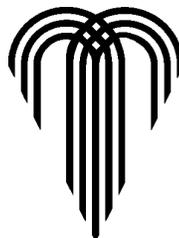
Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: June 17, 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-related Complaints	Action Center	274-2222
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	983-4301
Animal Control	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-5900
Building Permits	Codes Administration	274-1562
Bulky Item Pick Up	Environmental Management	274-1811
Curb Reconstruction	Public Works	274-1468
Dangerous Buildings/ Demolition	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Housing Code Violations	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Illegal Dumping	Environmental Management	274-2200
Neighborhood Assistance/ Services	Neighborhood and Community Services	274-1851
Paint Program	Neighborhood and Community Services	274-1851
Parks and Community Centers	Board of Parks and Recreation	871-5600
Pothole Hotline	Public Works	871-3326
Senior Citizen Transportation	Share-a-Fare/Area Transportation Authority	842-9070
Sewers - Problems	Water Department After Hours	274-2800 274-1256
Sidewalks - Repair	Public Works	274-2333
Storm Drains	Water Department	274-2800
Street Light Repairs	Kansas City Power and Light	654-1400
Weatherization Program	Housing and Community Development	274-1211

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.



Workshop participants learn about resources in their neighborhood



NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE

The *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* recognizes that not all neighborhoods in Kansas City are the same. The character and condition of neighborhoods vary according to their age, history, type of housing and other factors. Each neighborhood has different strengths and opportunities. Each neighborhood has different assets and priorities, driving different strategies. *FOCUS* developed four unique neighborhood types that generally describe Kansas City neighborhoods. The four neighborhood types (assigned the colors Blue, Orange, Purple and Green in the neighborhood assessment workshop) are:

Developing Conservation Stabilization Redeveloping

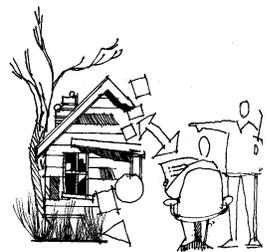
Each neighborhood type suggests what actions are required for a neighborhood to become or stay healthy. The assessment is a beginning point from which the neighborhood can move forward and achieve quality living environments through a commitment to continuous improvement. The descriptions for these four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

In the assessment, the neighborhood defined the tools, actions and strategies for improving the neighborhood. The community will use this information to strategically apply public and private resources in a way that is based on the existing conditions, trends, opportunities, strengths and needs. Once other neighborhoods identify their Type, then similarly Typed Kansas City neighborhoods can connect and partner around common issues and projects and assist each other with developing their organizations.



Neighbors discuss the positive aspects of their neighborhood

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

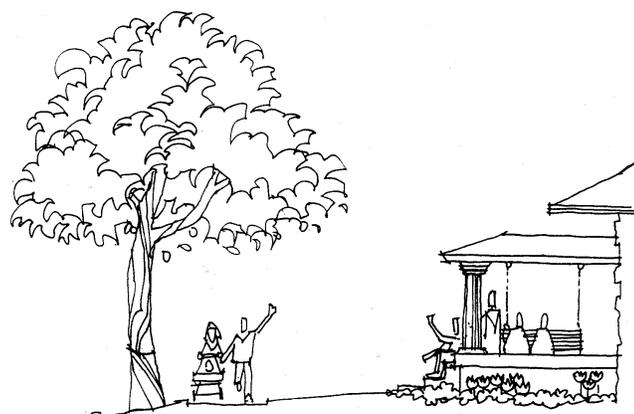


Members of the Blue Valley neighborhood gathered on Thursday evening, June 17, 1999 at the McCoy Elementary School for their neighborhood self-evaluation workshop. The workshop was an opportunity for the residents, institutions and business to look at the place where they live and work as an interconnected community. They engaged in several workshop exercises, including an exercise on "Thinking About Truman Road," in which they listed development ideas about Truman Road that would compliment their neighborhood. They also voted on their neighborhood type.

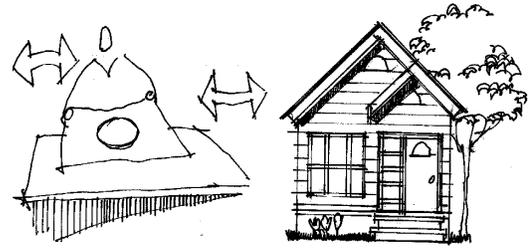
The residents and other community participants discussed their concerns about their neighborhood with reference to vacant houses/lots, absentee landlords, lack of property maintenance, housing code enforcement, criminal activity, and infrastructure enhancements, including the reopening of the 23rd Street Bridge and street improvements to Manchester Avenue. Most of the workshop participants have been working on the Blue Valley Plan that commenced in 1996. The City's FOCUS Plan will combine both plans.

The Blue Valley residents identified their neighborhood as a Redeveloping area. In particular, they were concerned about increasing the value of their homes, attracting more homeowners as opposed to tenants that rent the homes, better maintenance of public sidewalks, curbs, and increasing public services such as bulky item pick-up and cleaning up illegal dumping sites. The participants are also interested in the upcoming Truman Road Corridor study and how they can move forward to improve Truman Road.

Those in attendance are willing to continue their work with City Government, community partners such as Kauffman Foundation and St. Paul's School of Theology and others, as they look toward a better Blue Valley neighborhood.



PRIORITIES



The following themes were the result of the workshop participants' ideas concerning ways to improve their neighborhood. These themes are also mentioned in the Blue Valley Neighborhood Plan (1996).

Maintain and Improve the Housing Market

Participants were very concerned about the housing market value in their neighborhood. They want to improve the single-family residential character of their neighborhood. They suggested these actions:

- Enforce the housing codes to discourage the deterioration of the housing stock
- Demolish houses that conditions are unsuitable for rehabilitation
- Streamline the process for finding owners of abandoned houses
- Market houses for homeownership instead of allowing landlords to purchase them as rental property

Maintain and Improve City Services

Blue Valley residents want to see more public works improvements done in their neighborhoods. They suggested these actions:

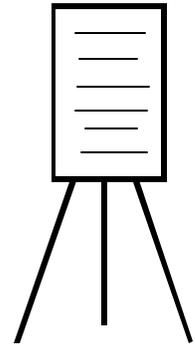
- Complete the repairs and improvements to the 23rd Street Bridge and Manchester Trafficway
- Request the Water Services Department to repair and clean catch basins and sewers, especially the sewers and catch basins along Truman Road that flood with each rainfall
- Install new curbs and sidewalks throughout the Blue Valley Neighborhood

Eliminate Criminal Activity

The workshop participants want to continue to see crime against persons and property decrease in the neighborhood. They suggested these actions:

- Continue to work with the East Patrol Division Police Officers in reporting criminal activity
- Increase awareness and resident participation in crime prevention strategies
- Improve the physical conditions of the houses, businesses, and institutions in the neighborhoods that will deter criminal activity and enhance personal safety and well-being

CHART NOTES



The Blue Valley neighborhood covers the area from 12th Street to I-70 and Van Brunt to I-435.

Neighborhood Slogans

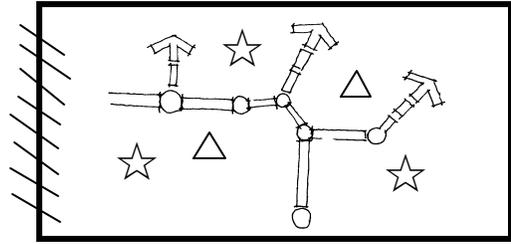
The attendees listed several slogans to describe their neighborhoods. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their community in which they live.

The selected slogan:

Together We Can!

Other suggested slogans:

- Forgotten
- Blighted
- A Nice Place to Live
- Good Location
- Now Livable
- A Place to Learn and Play
- Many Faces



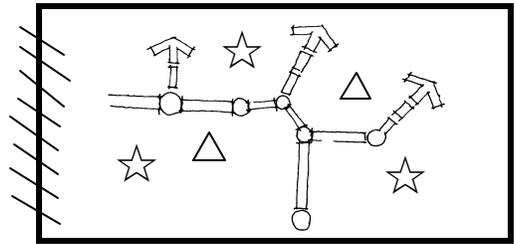
STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

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



Blue Valley President, Nancy Tolbert, identifies physical assets on the map



Landmarks

- Elmwood Cemetery, Truman Road and Van Brunt
- St. Mary's Cemetery, 24th and Jackson
- St. Paul's School of Theology, 5123 Truman Road
- McCoy Elementary School, 15th and White Street
- Trailwoods Environmental Elementary School on East 17th Street
- J.A. Rogers Elementary School on East 23rd Street
- Former East High School, 1600 Van Brunt
- Fire Station Number 24, 2039 Hardesty
- First Regular Baptist Church, 2007 Hardesty
- Wesley Heights United Methodist Church, 1903 Hardesty
- Church of the Brethren, 1925 Hardesty
- Apostolic Church of God, 1917 Hardesty
- C.H. Nowlin Hall for Senior Citizens, 1905 Hardesty
- Blue Valley Park on 23rd Street
- Corrington Park on East 19th Street
- Van Brunt Park at 20th and Hardesty
- The Santa Fe Trail

Activity Centers

- Whatsoever Community Center
- HAZMAT Facility/Unit on Truman Road and Bennington
- Salvation Army
- Blue Valley Recreation Center
- Blue Valley Park, Van Brunt Park and Corrington Park

Districts

- Blue Valley Industrial Park with several new million dollar business
- Blue Valley Park

Edges or Barriers

- Truman Road at White Street
- 12th Street
- 23rd Street
- The 23rd Street Bridge
- Van Brunt Street
- Hardesty Street
- Topping Street
- Manchester Trafficway

Features

- Blue Valley Park
- Van Brunt Park
- Corrington Park
- Santa Fe Trail

BLUE VALLEY IMAGES



Landmark and Activity
Center: Blue Valley Park



Landmark and
Feature:
The Blue River

BLUE VALLEY IMAGES



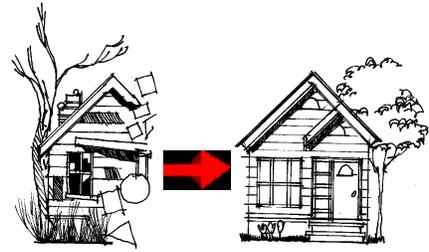
Grain, Brock and Feed, one of the new "million dollar" businesses in the area



Repairs are being completed on the 23rd St. Bridge

Workshop participants expressed concern about the many thrift stores along Truman Road





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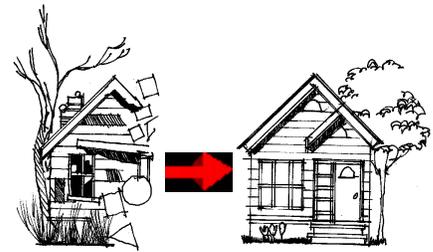
STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These things 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 Blue Valley neighborhood:

Public Works Issues

- Install curbs and sidewalks on: 16th Street from Belmont to Freemont; 17th Street at Truman and Belmont; 23 Street, and 27th Terrace
- Increase the number of street lights along 17th Street
- Install guardrail at 18th and Winchester (this is a private residence that is impacted by a great deal of public traffic)
- Prevent large commercial trucks (60 foot long) from driving on residential streets particularly Winchester and Bristol; trucks are destroying curbs and storm sewers
- Provide a public swimming pool in the neighborhood
- Trim trees in the 6000 block of East 14th Street; 17th and Truman Road; and 15th Street between Topping and White
- Eliminate poor drainage (storm water run off) at the North end of Van Brunt Park;
- Clean and repair catch basins - Truman Road and Belmont intersection floods with every rain
- Trim Trees throughout Blue Valley Area and sweep up “gumballs” from the street
- Rehab single family homes to make them affordable for homeowners, NOT landlords
- Close bars at 1:00AM instead of to 3:00 AM



Code Enforcement

- Enforce housing maintenance codes against slum landlords
- Demolish vacant home at 1710 Bristol; 5824 East 15 Terrace
- Demolish vacant house at 5829 Truman Road; cut overgrown bushes, grass at that address
- Demolish house at 1720 Bristol that is vacant and uninhabitable
- Pick-up furniture and bulky items sitting out on sidewalk at house at 5824 East 15 Terrace,
- Cut overgrown bushes, grass in alley and along the fence at House at 5826 East 15 Terrace
- Cut weeds at house at 1617 Topping
- Repair or demolish empty boarded up building at 15th and White
- Clean-up the many trash bags in front of building at 14th and Topping

Other Fixes

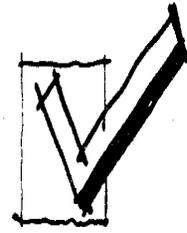
- Request that City Council or City Planning Department approve the Blue Valley Plan that was funded in 1996 by Kauffman Foundation
- Residents need to revitalize Block Clubs so that neighbors can work together on their concerns
- Increase KCPD patrol cars south of 23rd Street
- Residents need to work together to create places in the neighborhood that are safe for children to play
- Blue Valley Recreation Center could be better maintained. Residents want access to use this facility



One of the many used car lots on Truman Road



Abandoned house and vacant lot in the 1600 block of Drury



STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

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

Community

- The "whole community " (its people and its buildings)
- Affordable single family housing
- Kansas City Police Department-East Patrol Division 5100 East 27 Street
- Captain Kevin Masters, KCPD, East Patrol Division

Schools

- McCoy Elementary School, Caring Community and other community partners within the School
- East High School
- St. Paul School of Theology
- Trailwoods Elementary School
- J.A. Rogers Elementary School
- Askew Elementary School

Parks

- Blue Valley Park
- Corrington Park
- Van Brunt Park

Places

- Nowlin Hall (housing for senior citizens) , 1921 Hardesty
- Lawndale Estates (housing for senior citizens)
- HazMat Fire Department Unit at Truman Road and Bennington-(residents fought to save the old fire station that was converted into the Hazmat facility)

Businesses

- Good child-care/preschools at Whatsoever Center and the Salvation Arm
- Reliable public transportation via Area Transportation Authority-ATA
- Fire Station Number 24, 19th and Hardesty Street

Streetscape

- Close, easy access to downtown via Truman Road
- Interstate 435

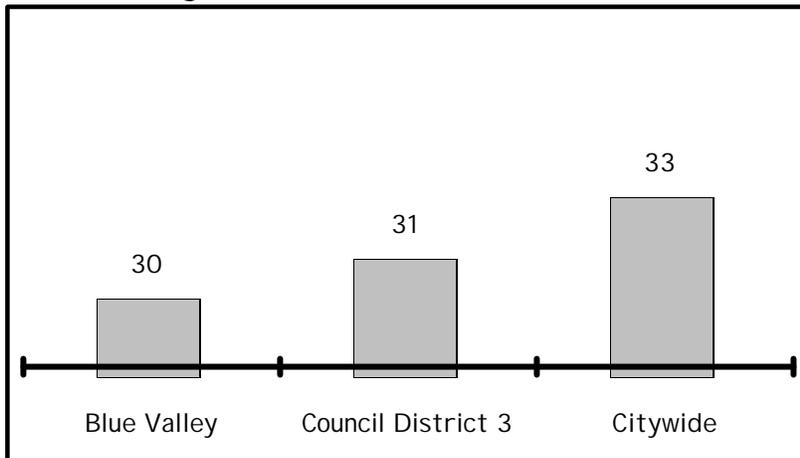


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STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

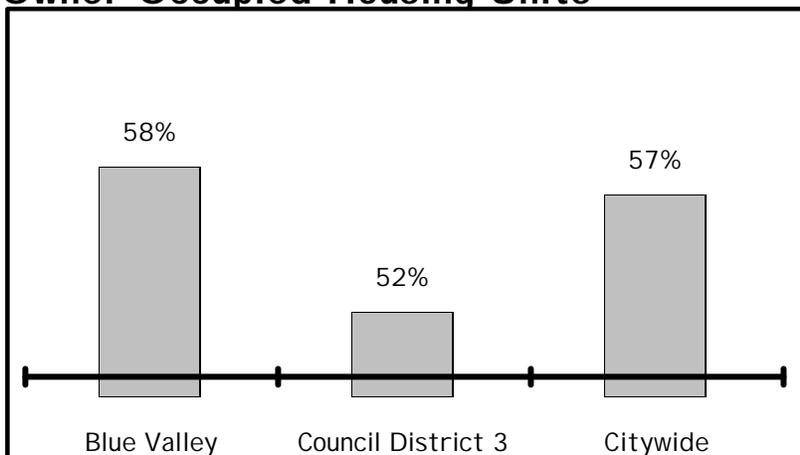
The information presented at the Blue Valley neighborhood assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census and from 1998 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts that participants said were surprising.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

Median Age



Neighbors are surprised that the median age in their neighborhood is 30; it seems young for the area (but it is based on 1990 U.S. Census).

Owner Occupied Housing Units

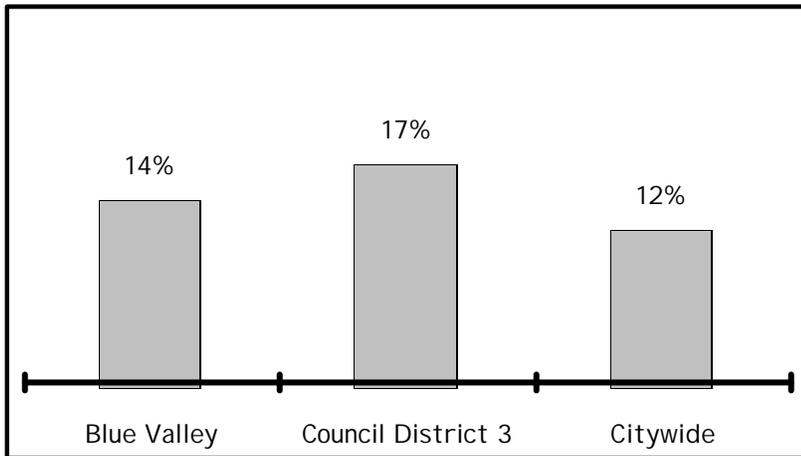


Residents believe that homeownership has decreased since 1990.



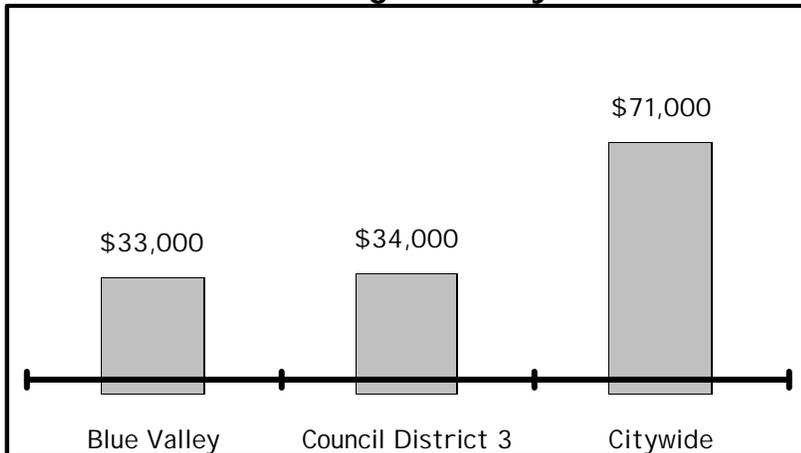
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Vacant Housing Units



Statistics verified the need for neighbors to testify in Housing Court about the houses that are abandoned and vacant.

Median Value of Single Family Homes



Neighbors felt the median value of the homes in Blue Valley was too expensive for young families to purchase. However, landlords can easily buy and rent them. Participants felt landlords often do not provide proper maintenance of their rental property. This contributes to the comparable low median value.



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 Redeveloping.

Redeveloping

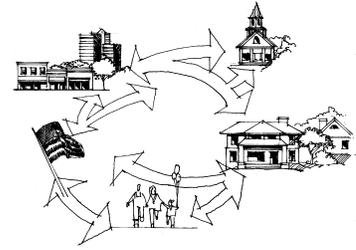
I have watched my neighborhood decline for many years now. No longer are the commercial areas as vibrant with activity as they used to be. Many residents, businesses and institutions have moved away. Many owners do not bother or cannot afford to maintain their property. The vacant houses and properties are really noticeable.

The area is already served by public improvements such as water, sewer, and roads and would be a good opportunity to attract new businesses or homes and some of the older homes and businesses could be rehabilitated. Better maintenance of public areas, roads, and sidewalks would help.

Problems are hard to fix through our neighborhood association, a call to the City, or neighbors getting together to help one another. It will take a strong commitment from the residents as well as others in the community to help strengthen this neighborhood, but it can be viable again.



Blue Valley children: a reason to strive for neighborhood viability



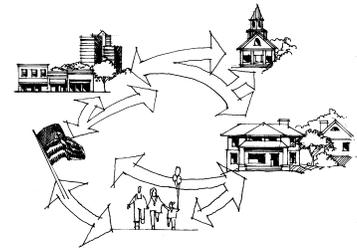
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STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

Blue Valley neighbors 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. 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 by ourselves:

- Form a block watch in each block to help with public safety concerns (such as suspicious drug activity)
- Maintain own property including curbs and sidewalks;
Residents need to apply through the petition process for new curbs and sidewalk improvements
- Become acquainted with newcomers in the neighborhood especially in the rental housing
- Teach children in the neighborhood the value of taking care of property
- Assist fellow residents with housing code complaints by attending Housing Court sessions and representing Blue Valley Neighborhood
- Call the Police to report illegal activity
- Increase participation in neighborhood events such as garage sales, clean-ups; youth events
- Take advantage of governmental systems and process, by writing letters to get the attention for their neighborhood concerns, such as code enforcement for homeowners; water services department for sewer repairs and cleaning catch basins



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

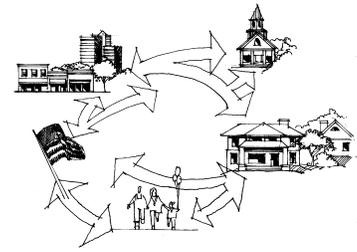
- Work with the Missouri Department of Family Services (DFS) who sponsors children's events that emphasize child and safety issues
- Participant in the annual "Night Out Against Crime" events that occur in August to address crime and other public safety issues
- Take advantage of UMB Bank's Home-buying classes to learn about the responsibility of homeownership. This would help residents to better care and maintain their property and will also help attract new homeowners to the area
- Encourage one another to attend free consumer credit counseling classes at St. Paul's School of Theology
- Partner with the Blue Valley Recreation Center on 18th and White, to allow the residents to use that facility to hold neighborhood and community meetings
- Discuss with the YMCA the possibility of a establishing a public swimming pool
- Become involved with the discussions and meetings concerning the proposed use of East High School, such as a charter school or a middle school
- Work with the Truman Road Corridor Association. Help them clean up in front of their (Truman Road) businesses
- Work with Minute Circle Center at 24th and Elmwood to develop youth programs and activities at the Minute Circle site



New Haz Mat fire station facility



Restored business building in Blue Valley Industrial Park



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Thinking about Truman Road

The boundaries of the Truman Road Corridor Study are from Truman Road and I-70 at Indiana , to I-435; the study includes both the north and south sides of the street.

Before the workshop concluded, residents took some time to consider ideas relative to the upcoming Truman Road Corridor Study. The success of the Corridor will depend upon enhancing the housing, services, retail businesses, and social activities along Truman Road. It should compliment residents' efforts to improve their neighborhood. Participants suggested the following:

- Attract restaurants (not fast-food) within walking distance on Truman Road
- Attract movie theatres/family entertainment
- Beautify and landscape along Truman Road; develop additional green space, parks along Blue River
- Refurbish parks in the area that are in poor condition; upgrade with running paths, bike trails, additional lighting
- Remodel the boarded up and unused buildings on Truman Road
- Replace some of the area with "mini-strip mall" (clothing, shoes, dry cleaners, deli, etc.) rather than so many used car lots
- Eliminate all of the junk cars and junk car yards/lots on Truman Road
- Consolidate all the used car lots to one particular location or area on Truman Road
- Revoke permits that allow 40 foot trailers to park in front of business, blocking traffic flow along Truman Road or create an exclusive lane on Truman Road where large commercial vehicles can safely pull-over out of traffic
- Clean up broken glass and other auto part fragments from Truman Road after accidents occur; either request police department or the tow truck companies to do this. Broken glass and auto part fragments create hazards for driving.
- Request the Police Department to step up patrol on Truman Road and Belmont where there is prostitution activity
- Create a "buffer" or some type of barrier from train tracks to reduce noise level from passing trains; noise is disturbing to the neighborhoods

Neighborhood Assessment Participants

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Sponsors and Contributors

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- Blue Valley Neighborhood Association
- Councilmember Mary Williams-Neal, Third District
- Councilmember Troy Nash, Third District-at-Large
- George Cooper, LI NC, Comprehensive Neighborhood Services (McCoy School Caring Communities)
- McCoy Elementary School and staff
- The Northeast News



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

City Council

The Honorable Ed Ford
First District-at-Large

The Honorable Teresa Loar
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