Country Club Plaza, Park Central and Research Park

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: August 22, 2000

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

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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 these neighborhoods 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.

The Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes neighborhoods conducted their 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 neighborhoods.

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. Each Neighborhood Type suggests what actions are required for an area to become or stay healthy. These four Types (assigned the colors Blue, Orange, Purple and Green in the Neighborhood Assessment workshop) are:

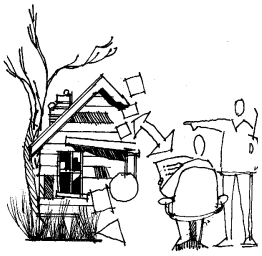
Developing Conservation Stabilization Redeveloping

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.

Rockhill Homes' "Row Houses" were built in the early 1900's by William Rockhill Nelson, first publisher of the Kansas City Star

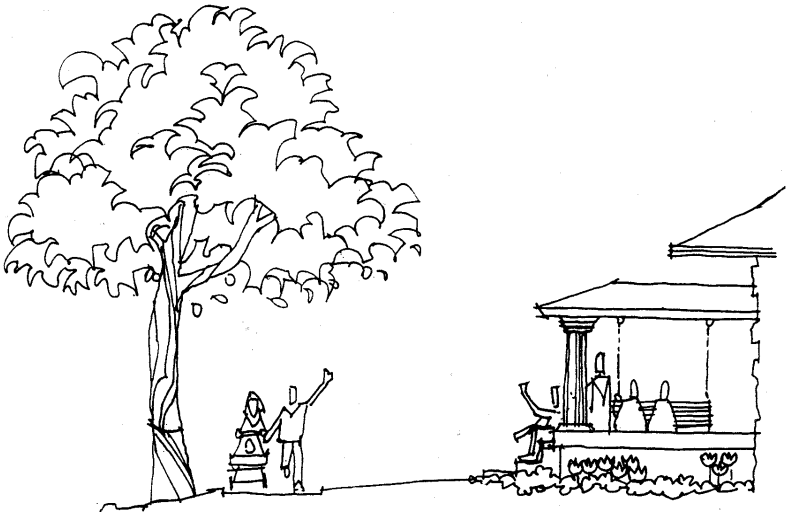
THE COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA, PARK CENTRAL, RESEARCH PARK AND ROCKHILL HOMES PERSPECTIVE

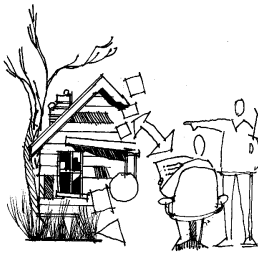


The Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes neighborhoods located in the 4th Council District, are a part of the unique concentration of historic, cultural and architectural structures, that include the Country Club Plaza and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, as well as some of the most desirable residential real estate in the city.

This community represents the current trend in neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment. They are surrounded by a flurry of private and public projects which include proposed renovations of the Nelson-Atkins Museum and the Plaza Library, the new Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation & Memorial Gardens, Stowers Institute for Medical Research, Brush Creek redevelopment improvements, the soon to be constructed Discovery Center, construction of Gates Plaza, and the Plaza East Redevelopment plan. These developments are helping to drive a renewed interest in the amenities of the Country Club Plaza, Park Central and Research Park neighborhoods and for living in the Rockhill Homes residential area.

The Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Neighborhood Assessment workshop was held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, on Tuesday, August 22, 2000. The workshop brought people together in an important community building discussion. Workshop participants discussed their concerns about their neighborhood and identified some creative ways to work as an interconnected community.

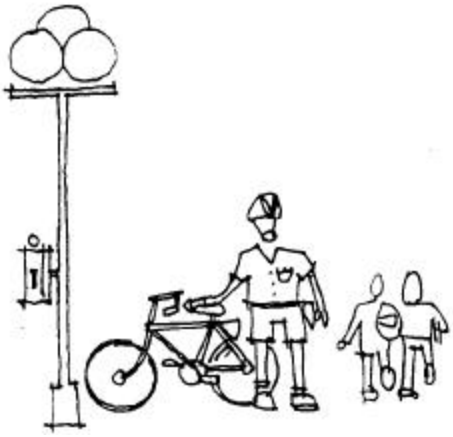




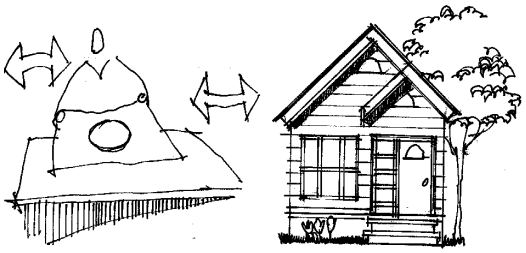
The residents and business owners are concerned about the future of the Country Club Plaza District under the ownership of Highwoods Properties, Inc., a North Carolina company. In particular, they are interested in meeting with the Highwoods company to discuss plans for the Plaza and the impact those plans will have on the neighborhood. Another concern for this community is the aging stormwater sewer systems that overflow in heavy rains. Most notable are the 1977 and 1998 flash floods that contributed to the loss of life and destruction of property along Brush Creek.

At the workshop participants described their area as a Conservation neighborhood. They enjoy the ambience of the Country Club Plaza, the well-maintained dwellings in Rockhill Homes and South Plaza neighborhoods, Volker, Theis and Southmoreland Parks. They appreciate the improvements to Brush Creek, Paseo and Volker Boulevards, the quality of new developments such as Stowers Institute for Medical Research, and the upcoming renovations of the Nelson Art Museum. At the same time, there is a need for more affordable housing in the area, the replacement of aging infrastructure systems, street improvements for Main Street, and a more cohesive feeling among homeowners, institutions and the commercial districts.

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



PRIORITIES



The following themes were the result of the workshop participant's ideas concerning the ways to enhance the Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes neighborhoods, and the surrounding area.

Promote Capital Improvements in the Area

With the flurry of public projects (mentioned in this report) impacting the Country Club Plaza, Research Park, Central Park and Rockhill Homes neighborhoods, the residents would like to see the following:

- Improve Main Street with a modern public transit system, such as light rail; include other amenities such as landscaping, commercial building renovations, pedestrian walkways, and public art.
- Replace aging infrastructure systems such as storm sewers and complete the Brush Creek improvements east of the Plaza.

Further Partnership with Brush Creek Community Partners

The residents and business owners recognize the importance of working together. Residents would like to have more interactions with Brush Creek Community Partners on neighborhood issues such as:

- Replacing housing stock (houses were demolished in the area to make room for public projects such as the site of the Kauffman Foundation) with more affordable housing opportunities in the area. (The new Jefferson on the Plaza multi-family apartment development is geared toward market rate housing.)
- Inviting surrounding businesses to join the neighborhood homes association or attend those meetings in order to work more effectively on common concerns such as capital improvements, improvements to Main Street, traffic regulations, and other economic development projects.

CHART NOTES

The Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from 47th Street (Brush Creek Boulevard/Emanuel Cleaver, Jr. Boulevard) to 49th Street (Volker Boulevard) and from Jefferson Street to Paseo Boulevard.

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

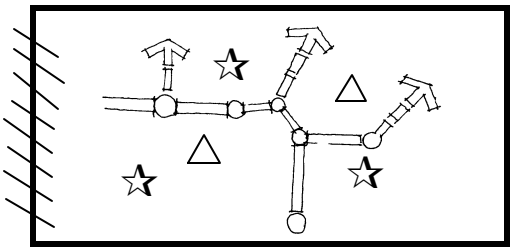
The selected slogan:

A River Runs Through It - The Cultural Corridor

Other suggested slogans:

- The Cultural Corridor
- It's the Plaza! You Gotta Drive Here
- Something Old, Something New
- A River Runs Through It

A view of Brush Creek as it runs from the Country Club Plaza District (looking west) through Research Park area

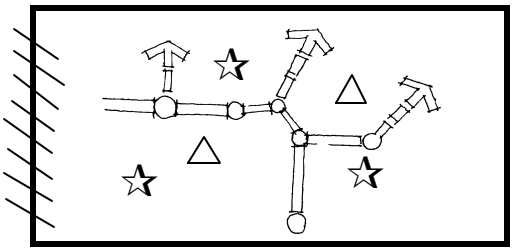


STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

Workshop participants identified how they experience their neighborhood, and considered those things they want to protect, preserve or enhance. 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

Multi-family residences in the Country Club Plaza district overlook Brush Creek



Landmarks

- The Country Club Plaza
- Mill Creek Park
- Volker Park
- Frank Theis Park
- Southmoreland Park
- The Nelson Atkins Museum
- The Bruce R. Watkins Drive
- Kemper Museum
- Brush Creek
- Halls building
- Woolf Brothers building
- The Peanut sports bar
- The Clock Tower
- The Plaza shops
- JC Nichols Fountains
- Giralda Tower

Paths

- Rockhill Road
- Oak Street
- 47th Street/Brush Creek/Emanuel Cleaver, Jr. Boulevard
- The Paseo Boulevard
- Bruce R. Watkins Drive

Activity Centers

- The Country Club Plaza
- Mill Creek Park
- Southmoreland Park
- Volker Park
- The Nelson-Atkins Museum
- The Plaza shops
- The Plaza Library

Districts

- The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)
- The Rockhill Homes Historic District
- The Country Club Plaza

Edges or Barriers

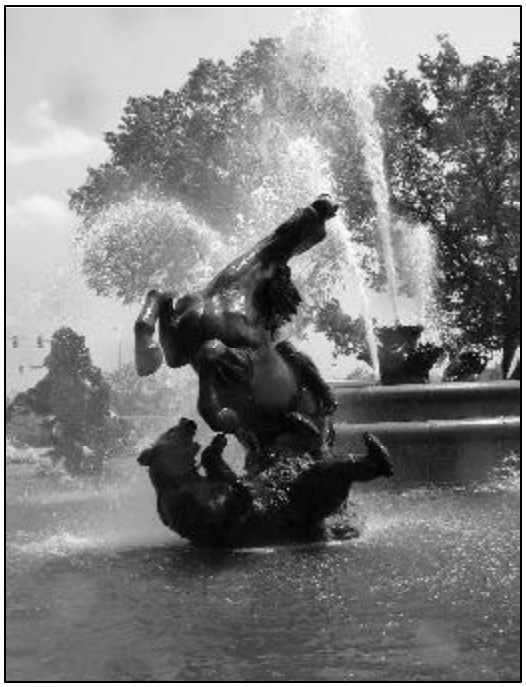
- The intersections of 47th & Main and Main & Volker are impossible for pedestrian to cross

Features

- The new Jefferson on the Plaza residences
- Bloc Cancer Survivors Park
- Twin Oaks buildings
- Winstead's resturant
- The Board of Trade building
- The Patty Catlin Brous Center (Planned Parenthood Midtown Center)
- The Kauffman Legacy Park
- Muriel and Ewing Kauffman Memorial Gardens
- Stowers Institute for Medical Research
- Midwest Research Institute (MRI)

Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Images

Landmarks and Features:
The Giralda Tower and fountains are symbols of the Country Club Plaza

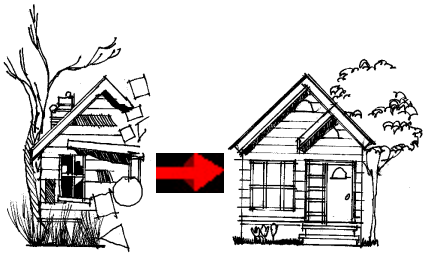


The Kauffman Foundation Memorial Garden opened in Spring of 2000

Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Images

Landmark: Stowers Institute for Medical Research (the former Menorah Hospital site) overlooks Brush Creek

Feature: The entry marker for Rockhill Homes speaks to its history



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 Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes neighborhoods.

- Restore two-way traffic on each side of Brush Creek on Ward Parkway
- Create a continuous pedestrian path along Brush Creek
- Connect paths along Brush Creek to the Trolley Track Trail in Brookside
- Continue 47th as a boulevard over to Paseo and restrict truck traffic from its use
- Alert drivers to intersections by clearly marking the cross walks
- Reinstate community policing in Volker Park
- Develop more affordable housing
- Discourage the expansion of the Quick Trip at 43rd and Main Street by not allowing its re-zoning
- Establish grocery stores that fit the size and style of other businesses in the area

Construction crews install underground cable and new streetlighting in the Country Club Plaza area

STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Workshop participants identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. These qualities include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other feature that enhances livability in the neighborhood.

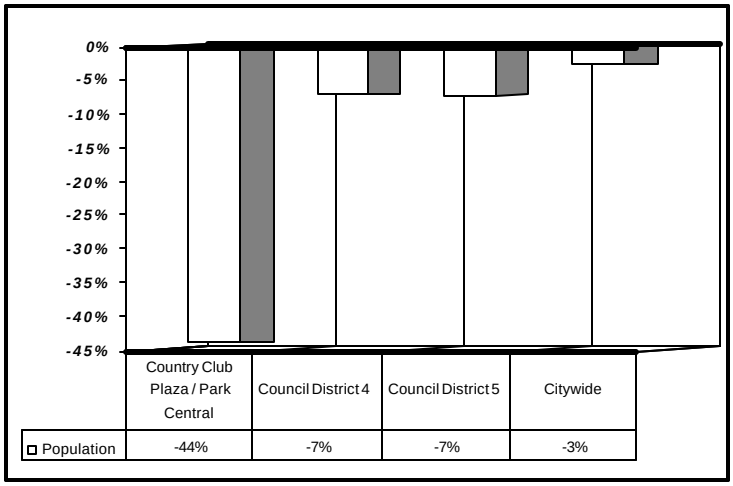
- Viable local economy
- Educational institutions such as UMKC, Kansas City Art Institute, and Paseo Academy of the Arts
- Many shopping, food, religious, and entertainment opportunities in the neighborhood
- Country Club Plaza and Research Park are beautiful neighborhoods
- Residents feel like an important part of the whole city
- Many parks and parkways in the area including Loose Park, Southmoreland , Volker, Theis Parks, as well as Brush Creek
- It's an eclectic neighborhood
- Convenience to many amenities, and proximity to other parts of the city
- Economic and cultural diversity
- Access to public transportation including the Trolley
- Strong, active neighborhood associations
- It's a pedestrian friendly neighborhood

Staff enjoy LatteLand, a business on the Country Club Plaza

STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

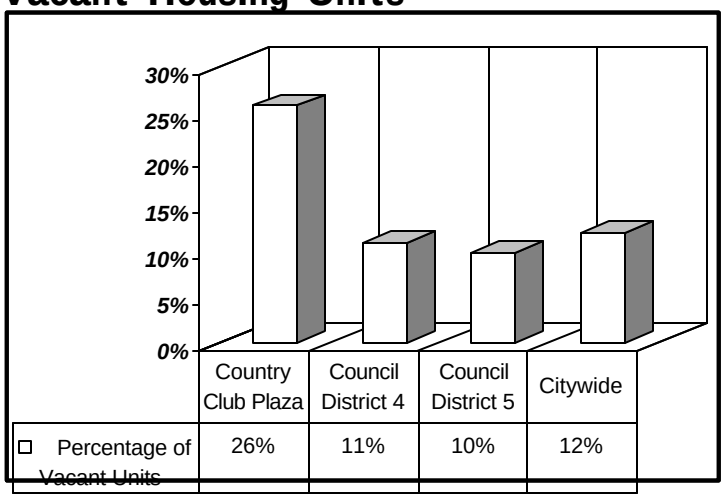
The data presented at the Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Neighborhood Assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census, and from 1999 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below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

Change in Population 1980-1990



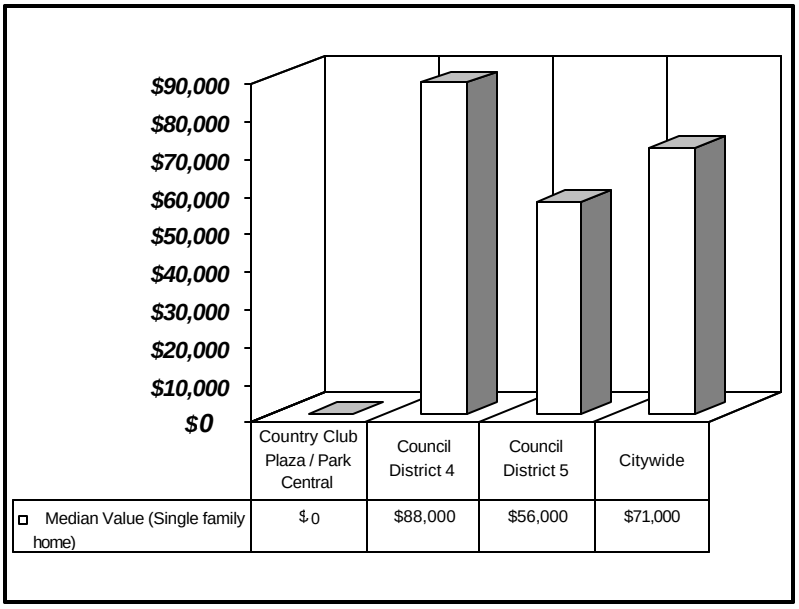
Residents attribute the 44% population loss between 1980-1990 to recent economic redevelopment of the area that has not included the replacement of demolished housing.

Vacant Housing Units



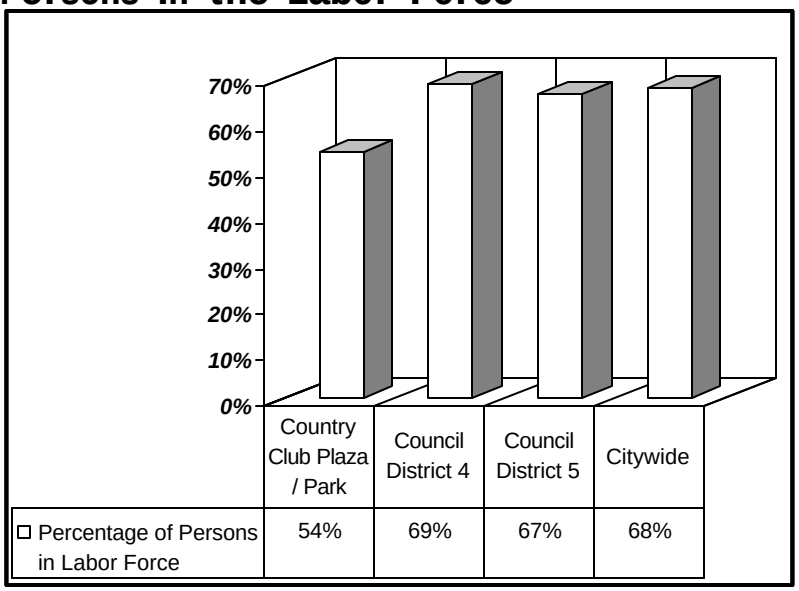
Participants thought that the rate of vacant housing is actually much lower due to the recent development of the Jefferson on the Plaza residence and the Sailors Project.

Median Value of Single Family Homes



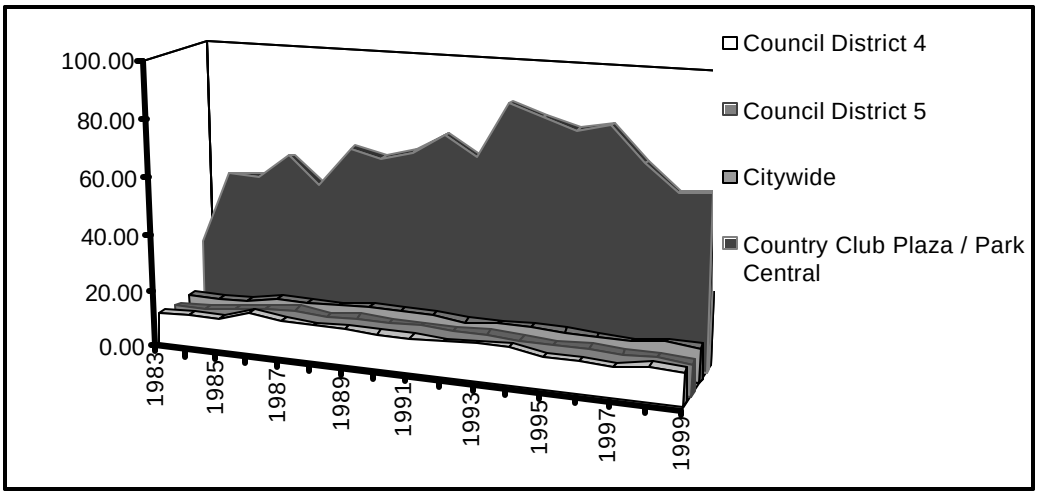
Though the median value of single family housing in the Country Club Plaza, etc. area reflects $0, residents of Rockhill Homes commented that the median value of homes in their area are appraised from $200,000 to $1,000,000.

Persons in the Labor Force

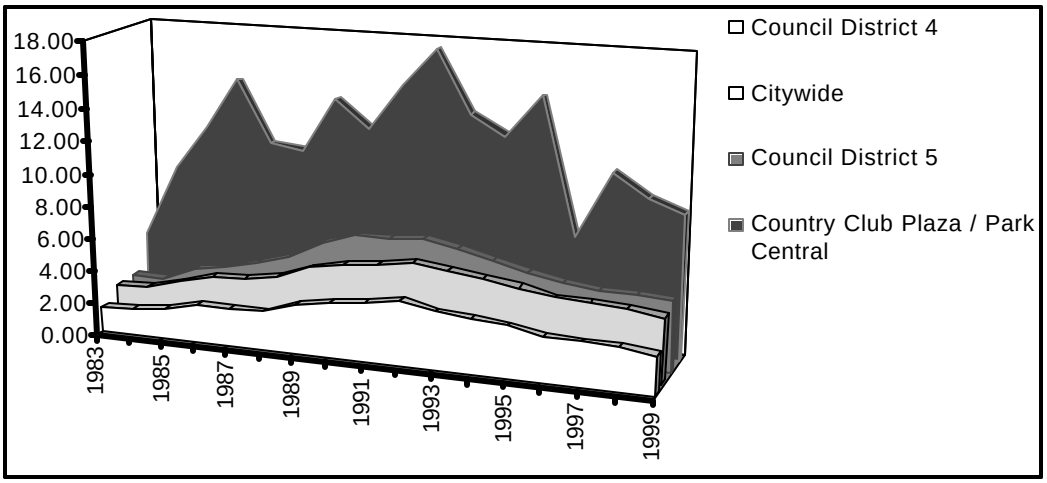


Participants felt that the low percentage of persons in the labor force was due to the high number of retired residents in the neighborhood apartments.

Violent Crime Per 100 Persons



Violent Crime Per 100 Persons



Residents expressed that the crime rates seemed high. One theory may be the area is comprised of both residential and commercial districts, including the Historic Westport Entertainment District which has higher crime rates than the rest of the neighborhood. Overall, residents feel safe in their community.

STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the Neighborhood Type that best described their neighborhoods. The majority chose Conservation.

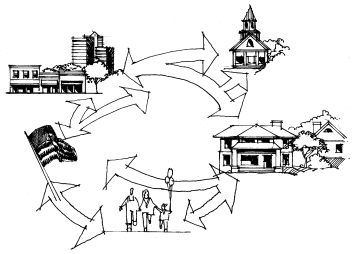
Conservation

My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Established businesses and institutions are located in the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide many opportunities near my home.

Tree-lined streets, historic structures or qualities, public art and/or other amenities characterize the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Most of the houses are occupied. Little demolition has occurred here and vacant land is scarce.

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

One of the well-maintained homes in the Rockhill Homes neighborhood



STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

Neighbors talked about specific actions their community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the Assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. Below is a list of ideas mentioned by workshop participants. They voted on the actions that they most want implemented to make their neighborhood better.

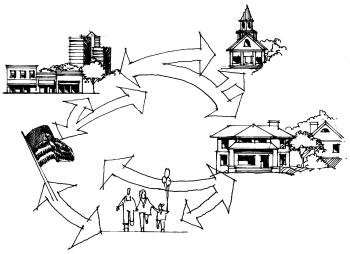
Things we can do **Ourselves**:

- Maintain the exterior appearance of our homes and businesses
- Attend neighborhood meetings such as Brush Creek Partners, MainCor, Westport Crime Prevention, and South Plaza Neighborhood
- Promote and support local businesses

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

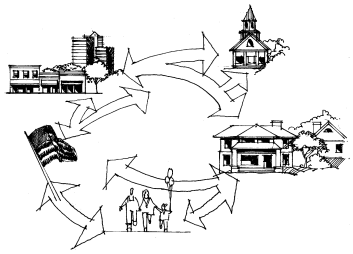
- Participate in meetings with Brush Creek Community Partners (BCCP)
- Stay informed about UMKC's neighborhood master plans and other developments affecting the area, such as the proposed development of an Arts Center

Participants commented that Planned Parenthood provides needed health services in the community



Things the **City** should do:

- Enforce penalties on property and nuisance code violations
- Improve enforcement of traffic laws in the neighborhoods
- Plant new trees and trim existing ones on public property
- Address flooding problems and improve storm sewer drainage
- Fulfill promise that 47th Street from Main Street to the Paseo remains a Boulevard
- Re-route truck traffic to Volker
- Build recreational paths for bicycles that connects with the Trolley Trail
- Improve policing by patrolling on bicycles, especially in area parks



Thinking About Main Street

After the workshop, Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes residents took some time to consider ideas relative to the upcoming Main Street Corridor Study, keeping in mind that the success of the study will depend upon the housing, services, retail, and social activities there. The Main Street Corridor should compliment the residents' efforts to improve the neighborhood. Residents would like to see the following:

- No more "Glover Plans" (referring to the Midtown Marketplace development at Linwood and Main)
- Create mixed–use residential/businesses such as Pryde's in Westport, where the businesse occupies the street level of the building and the business owner lives in the upper level of the building
- Promote an urban environment with work, play and residential amenities
- Use street tiles (markers in the sidewalks) to identify the street names
- Use transit to link "nodes" and get people out of their cars
- Use the H& R Block headquarters as a model for streetscape design
- Identify and give incentives to rehabilitate older buildings for reuse as opposed to tearing down/demolishing buildings
- Replicate and keep good building clusters such as the Wild Oats market, Muddy River and House of Hezekiah businesses at 43rd and Main
- Incorporate pedestrian friendly amenities such as walkways, recreational paths or trails and fountains when designing Main Street corridor
- Improve and enhance businesses cluster and intersections such as 39th and Main, 40th and Main and 47th (Brush Creek) and Main
- Integrate light rail with public and auto transportation and connect with neighborhood nodes
- Restrict City funding that helped Osco Walgreen compete to put each other out of business
- Restrict the number of check cashing and fast food businesses on Main Street
- Create designs and plans that would gradually change the density of businesses around "nodes"

Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Neighborhood Assessment Participants

Clark Greenlee
Donna Kerr
Janet Miller
Jim Rowland
Jeff Schmidt
Cindy Weinstein
Gail Williams

Sponsors and Contributors

- Councilmember Jim Rowland, Fourth District
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church
- Rockhill Homes Association

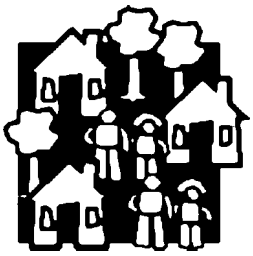
Getting Involved

To become involved in your neighborhood contact: Carol Grimaldi with Brush Creek Partners, at (816) 523-2991, The Plaza Merchants Association at (816) 753-0100, Tim Knight with Westport Crime Prevention Commission at (816) 756-3577, or Janet Miller with Rockhill Homes Association at (816) 931-6110. Also check out the City's website at www.kcmo.org.

The Country Club Plaza, Park Central, Research Park and Rockhill Homes Association neighborhoods are located within the 4th City Council District. You may contact your Councilmembers and the Mayor's Neighborhood Advocate at the numbers listed below:

- The Honorable Evert Asjes III (4th District-at-Large): (816) 513-1616
- The Honorable Jim Rowland (4th District): (816) 513-1617
- Donovan Mouton, Mayor's Neighborhood Advodate: (816) 513-3500

For more information about neighborhood organization, contact the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance at (816) 753-8600 or the City's Neighborhood and Community Services Department at (816) 513-3200.



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*
- Denise Phillips, *FOCUS Manager*
- Diane Charity, Jermine Alberty, Sharon Cheers, Willie Mae Conway, Lindsey Cook, Suzy Latare, John Pajor, Robert Rutherford, Julie Xiong, *Neighborhood Assessment Team*

City Support

- The Honorable Jim Rowland, *Councilmember, Fourth District*
- Graham Smith, *City Planning and Development, Long-range Planner*