

INDEPENDENCE PLAZA

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: January 23, 1999

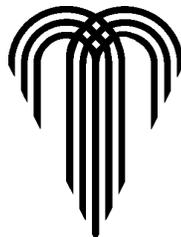


**Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council
Old Northeast, Inc.**

Historic Northeast Restoration Corporation

**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 / 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.



Independence Plaza residents study facts about 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 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 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 are contained in the FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan, Appendix A, "General Neighborhood Descriptions/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.



Independence Plaza residents vote for their neighborhood type

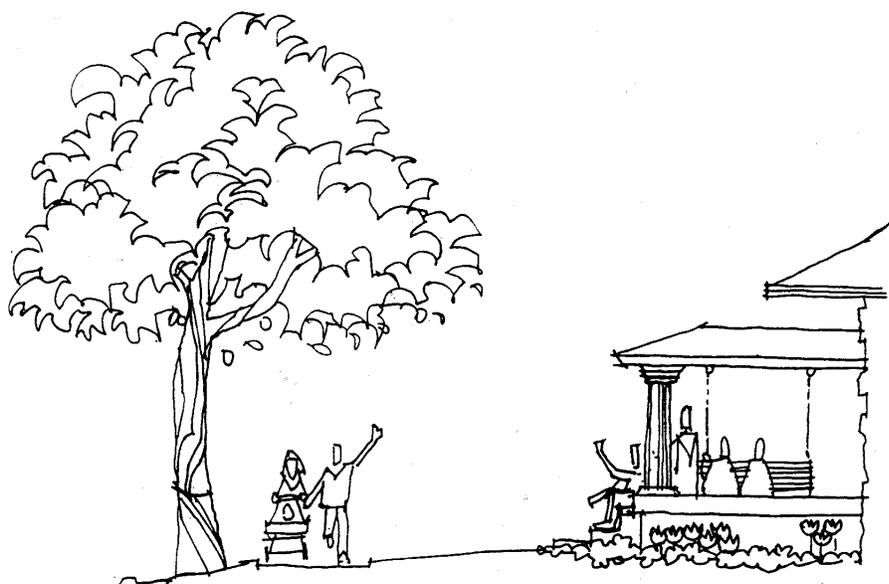
THE INDEPENDENCE PLAZA PERSPECTIVE



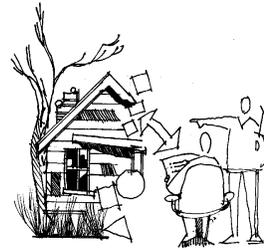
Members of the Independence Plaza neighborhood came together on Saturday, January 23, 1999 for a neighborhood assessment workshop. The workshop was an opportunity for individuals to look at the place where they live and work as an interconnected community. The participants engaged in a neighborhood mapping exercise, they listed obstacles and assets and they voted on their neighborhood type.

The group was clear about what they enjoy about their neighborhood. They like the small town feel, the beautiful historic homes and the easy accessibility. They were also clear on what elements need to be in place to make their neighborhood more livable. They would like to get more residents involved in making improvements. They would like a cleaner neighborhood with less crime.

Most of the participants identified their neighborhood as a Stabilization area. Stabilization areas have strong assets such as affordable homes, existing infrastructure, a diverse population and long time family owned businesses. Challenges to a stabilization area include reducing disinvestment and population loss, a high percentage of rental properties, and the maintenance of older structures.

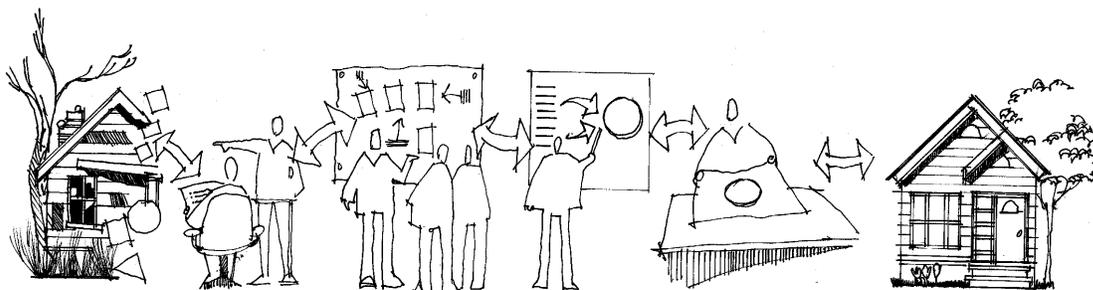


THE INDEPENDENCE PLAZA PERSPECTIVE

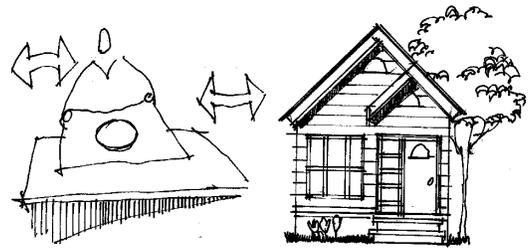


Independence Plaza has already had some impressive accomplishments in stabilizing their neighborhood. Residents and partners have come together for a streetscape project along Independence Boulevard. There are new homes along Benton Boulevard and other areas. Residents throughout the neighborhood have completed major home renovations. There is new playground equipment in Prospect Plaza Park, residents have adopted Harmony Park as a neighborhood park and Independence Plaza Park is scheduled for improvements.

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 lists of assets, obstacles and ideas for improvement that Independence Plaza residents named during the workshop. The last page contains a list of frequently used City services.



PRIORITIES



Achieve a Cleaner Neighborhood

Reducing the amount of trash in the neighborhood is a good first step in building a sense of pride and establishing that the neighborhood is a healthy, enjoyable place to live. Actions toward this goal could be:

- Initiate a clean neighborhood campaign that involves residents and businesses.
- Partner residents, businesses and City services for an overall neighborhood clean-up.
- Follow-up with a long term strategy for keeping the neighborhood clean through regular clean-up efforts and education of residents and businesses.

Combat Prostitution

Residents felt that the illegal activity, particularly along Independence Boulevard, is harmful to the overall life of the community. Residents have worked hard over the years to deal with this problem. More action is necessary:

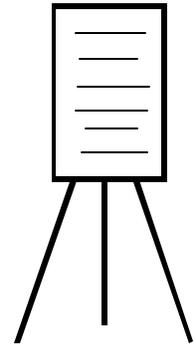
- Raise resident awareness and encourage a zero tolerance attitude for the problem.
- Support a continued creative dialogue and action to confront the problem.
- Challenge the negative image and unbalanced media coverage that characterizes Independence Boulevard as a zone of illegal activity.

Promote Continued Development

The neighborhood has made strong headway in redeveloping parts of the community. It is vital to sustain this effort:

- Streamline the process of redeveloping vacant and abandoned properties through partnership with area Community Development Corporations, City Government and Land Trust. Seek new partners for investment in the community.
- Focus on 9th Street as an area of concentrated redevelopment activity.
- Partner with agencies such as the Northeast Chamber of Commerce to develop a marketing strategy for the neighborhood.

CHART NOTES



The Independence Plaza Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from Independence Boulevard to I-70 and from Brooklyn Avenue to Benton Boulevard. Also included was a proposed annex area from Independence Boulevard to 9th Street and from The Paseo to Brooklyn Boulevard.

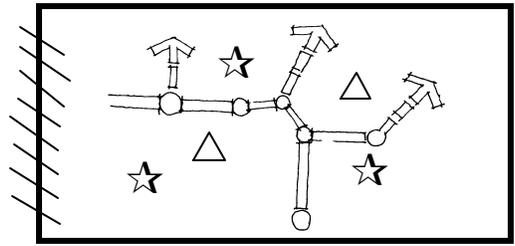
STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

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



Independence Plaza residents mark their neighborhood maps



Landmarks

- Post Office
- Entry marker to Independence Plaza
- Old Home Telephone building
- Old Peery Home (N.W. Corner)
- Osage burial ground (6th and Park)
- Horse drawn fire station (6th and Prospect)
- Speedy's (9th & Prospect)
- Passantino Brother's Funeral Home

Activity Centers

- Post Office
- St. Aloysius
- Independence Boulevard Christian Church
- Wesley Church
- Immanuel Lutheran Church
- All churches
- Harmony Park
- Prospect Plaza Park
- Independence Plaza Park

Edge or Barrier

- Independence Boulevard

Paths

- Independence Boulevard
- Paseo Boulevard
- 12th Street
- 13th Street
- Gladstone Boulevard
- Prospect (between 9th -12th)
- Chestnut (truck traffic)

District

- Independence Plaza Neighborhood

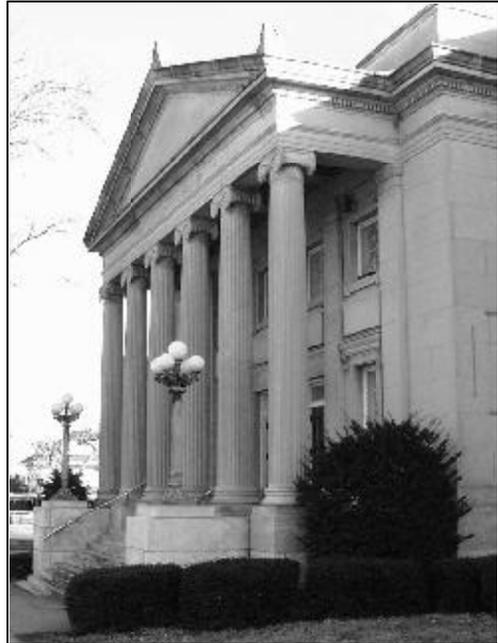
Features

- Post Office
- Entry marker to Independence Plaza
- Old Home Telephone building
- Historic homes near Independence Boulevard Christian Church
- 600 block of Brooklyn (new homes)
- 600 block of Garfield (Newhouse shelter)
- New homes at 10th & Benton
- Central Bank at Independence and Park
- 12th Street Heritage (12th & Euclid)
- Harmony Park
- Prospect Plaza Park
- Independence Plaza Park

INDEPENDENCE PLAZA IMAGES



Children playing in Harmony Park



Activity Center: Independence Boulevard Christian Church



Landmark: Entry marker to Independence Plaza



Frank and Friend

INDEPENDENCE PLAZA IMAGES



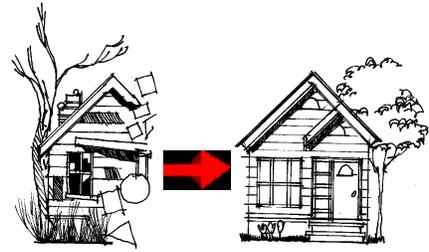
Feature: Old Home Telephone building



Youth in Prospect Plaza Park



Activity Center: St. Aloysius Catholic Church



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STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These issues stop residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of “fixes” that participants said they would like to see in Independence Plaza:

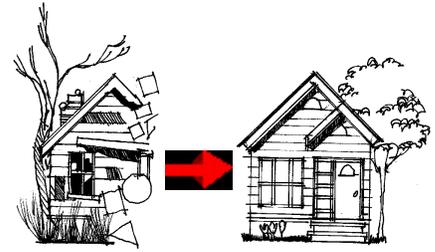
- Stop deterioration of any more buildings.
- Install more and better streetlights.
- Fix curbs and sidewalks (especially where broken).
- Install new blacktops for streets and alleys.
- Fix crime.
- Re-open bowling alleys.
- Make narrow streets alternate one ways.
- Establish more places for youth! Give them things to do.
- Improve parking for businesses, in front of businesses.
- Make it a good place to raise young kids.
- Build parking lots for Independence Avenue businesses.
- Place more refuse barrels on Prospect and Independence Avenue.
- Eliminate the “luncheon” traffic (prostitution).



Unpaved alley in neighborhood



Vacant land on 9th Street



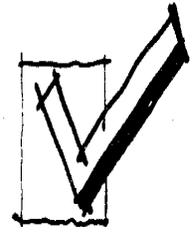
- Set up recycling containers, especially for tires.
- Fix bulky item pickup, help people get items to bins.
- Close 13th Street between Kansas and Agnes.
- Close 13th Street between Illinois and Benton (to eliminate traffic in order to lower crime).
- Change the citywide perception/presumption that the Northeast is a bad place.
- Fix negative media coverage.
- Receive more funding from city government for business development.
- Fix 9th Street (everything about it). The wreck and ruin belie what Independence Plaza is about.
- Advertise the good things, like the developments, to improve perceptions.
- Remove abandoned vehicles.
- Enlarge City tow lot to accommodate more vehicles.
- Improve strategies for dealing with boarded up properties.
- Make absentee and slum landlords more accountable for their properties.



Dumped tires near 8th and Prospect



Boarded up building on 9th Street



STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Residents 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.

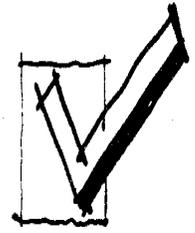
- Great location (central)
- Small community
- Small town feeling in a big city
- The unique character of diverse property
- Affordable homes
- Older housing stock
- Historic character
- 30-40 new homes built recently
- Rising property values
- Many rehabs
- Skilled residents
- Henry Rizzo, a very responsive and knowledgeable person in the neighborhood
- Well-connected network of residents
- Young families moving in with children
- Committed core group of residents
- Strong Neighborhood Association
- Buffalo Soldier lived in neighborhood
- Diverse ethnic composition
- Ethnic businesses
- Long-time family-owned businesses



Passantino Brother's Funeral Home



Mrs. Williams, neighborhood resident



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- Over 65 thriving businesses
 - Good access to highways
 - Never a dull moment
 - Paseo Intersection Plan
 - Paseo Corridor: Drug-free, Crime-free Corridor
 - Responsive councilpersons
 - A multitude of church programs serving residents in the neighborhood, like a GED program
 - Family connections to church
 - Churches that show support - Independence Boulevard Christian Church and St. Aloysius Church
 - Independence Plaza Park upgrade
 - 2 Community Development Corporations: Old Northeast and 12th Street Heritage
 - Model Block area
 - Community Action Network
 - Community Action Network, Community Action Team, and Probation and Corrections officers
 - Parks
 - Museums
 - Cliff Drive
 - Independence Avenue as a Special Review District
 - Don Bosco Center
 - Clymer Center
 - Partnership with Homes Associations and businesses
 - Quick service from Fire Department and M.A.S.T.
 - Bi-lingual newsletters
 - Old Northeast Newsletter
 - Charter school started



Seventh Street, one of the graceful residential streets in Independence Plaza



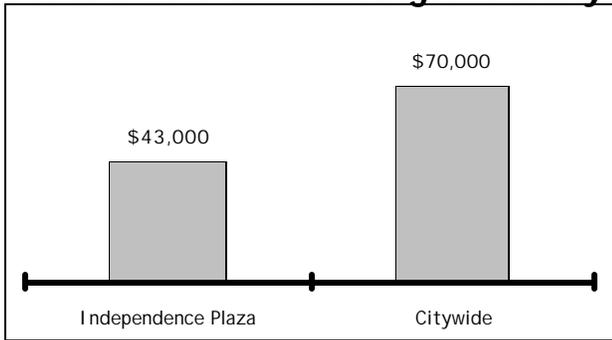
Anthony Linville at Frankie's



STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

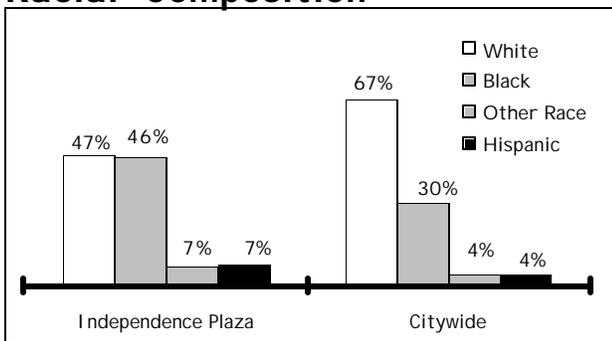
The information presented at the Independence Plaza neighborhood assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census, and from 1998 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts that participants said were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

Median Value of Single Family Homes



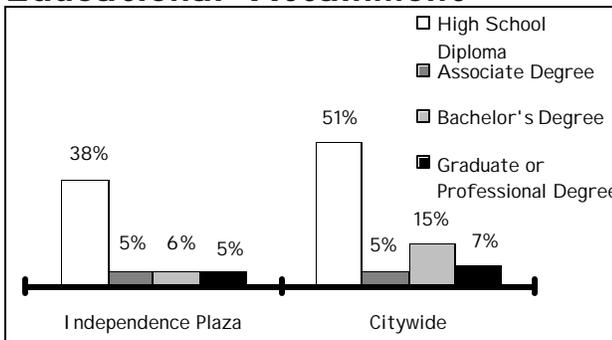
A few homes in the neighborhood have sold for more than \$100,000.

Racial Composition



Black/White/Hispanic populations are probably much more even now than in 1990.

Educational Attainment



The percentage of highly educated people (5%) is similar to the city as a whole (7%).



STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

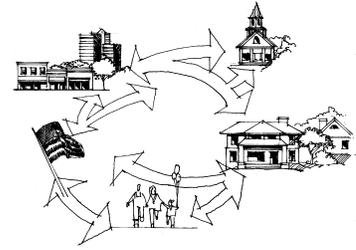
Those who attended the assessment were asked to vote on the neighborhood type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was **Stabilization**.

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

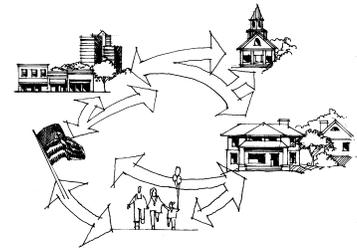
Participants talked about specific actions the community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. This is a list of all the ideas mentioned by workshop participants.

Things **We** can do by ourselves:

- Neighborhood Association can form a committee to get the word out regarding trash pick-up.
- Pick up the trash.
- More block clean-ups through the building blocks program. These clean-ups could use CCAP (Community Corrections and Parole) workers.
- Businesses come together and sign a restraining order against the prostitutes.
- Residents more vigilant in reporting code violations.
- Neighbors attend housing court meetings to increase awareness of code violations and fines.
- Neighborhood Association needs to testify in housing court.
- The neighborhood can market itself better through the use of programs such as "Night Out Against Crime."
- Neighbors to drive media image of the community.



Participants vote on their priorities



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

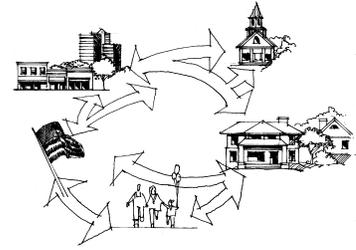
- Do a marketing plan with the media, Northeast Chamber of Commerce and businesses.
- Businesses can take more responsibility for picking up trash in their area.
- Partner with the City to coordinate bulky trash pick-ups and prevent illegal dumping.
- More partnerships with the City and businesses to work on the prostitution problem and better use resources such as "John T.V."
- Improve the communication between residents and businesses to address the trash problem more effectively.
- Work more closely with Land Trust. Invite a Land Trust representative to attend a neighborhood meeting. Work with Land Trust on the issue of conveying a clear title at the time of purchase.



Kim Phuoc, business owner on Independence Avenue



Mayfair Cleaners, longtime area business



Things the **City** should do:

- Some police officers do well in confronting the prostitution problem, others do not. All officers need to do their job.
- Plant trees that beautify the neighborhood but don't grow so large that they damage the sidewalks.
- Empty trash barrels along main thoroughfares more often.
- Better follow up of the Litter Getter Program.
- Inform businesses of their responsibility for keeping their property clear of trash.
- Clear vacant lots of trash and bulky items.
- Provide more dumpsters during Clean Sweep.
- Strengthen enforcement against landlords who allow trash to build up on their rental properties.
- Stricter enforcement of laws against prostitution by municipal judges.
- Better enforcement of housing court fines.
- Stricter enforcement of code violations.
- Better street lighting along 9th Street and in the neighborhood in general.
- Better management of the MCI (Municipal Correctional Institution) and CCAP workers in neighborhood clean-ups.
- Continuation of "John T.V."



Independence Plaza Park



Trash on vacant lot



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Independence Plaza Neighborhood Assessment Participants:

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Judy Archer | Stan Clark | Russell Murray |
| Chris Aukuhad | Susan Decker | Charlie Passantino |
| Bobbi Baker | Janell Durmody | Joe Spinello |
| Rodney Bland | Lee A. Lambert | Myrtle Stephens |
| Robert Brooks | Sue Lambert | Jennifer Stone |
| Dave Charnecki | Joseph A. Morales | H. David Whalen |
| Patricia Ann Charnecki | Mary Morales | Augusta Wilbon |

Acknowledgements:

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver II, *Mayor*
Robert L. Collins, *City Manager*

City Council

| | |
|---|--|
| The Honorable Ed Ford <i>First District-at-Large</i> | The Honorable Evert Asjes III <i>Fourth District-at-Large</i> |
| The Honorable Teresa Loar <i>First District</i> | The Honorable Aggie Stackhaus <i>Fourth District</i> |
| The Honorable Jim Glover <i>Second District-at-Large</i> | The Honorable Ken Bacchus <i>Fifth District-at-Large</i> |
| The Honorable Paul Danaher <i>Second District</i> | The Honorable Kelvin Simmons <i>Fifth District</i> |
| The Honorable Mary Williams-Neal <i>Third District</i> | The Honorable George Blackwood <i>Sixth District-at-Large</i> |
| | The Honorable Judith Swope <i>Sixth District</i> |

City Planning and Development Department

Vicki Noteis, AIA, *Director*
Diane Charity, Sharon Cheers, Suzy Latare, Evalin McLain, Holly Mehl, John Pajor,
Neighborhood Assessment Team

City Support

Nanci Regan, *Neighborhood and Community Services*
Anita Coleman, *Action Center*