

# LEEDS-DUNBAR

## Neighborhood Assessment Report

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Neighborhood Workshop Date: May 20, 2000



**Councilwoman Mary Williams-Neal, Third District**

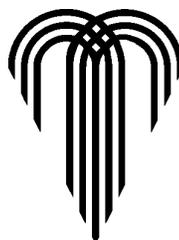
**Councilman Troy Nash, Third District At-large**

**FOCUS Kansas City**

**City Planning and Development Department**

**City of Kansas City, Missouri**

City of Fountains



Heart of the Nation

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>AGENCY OR CITY DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
<b>City Services</b>	<b>Action Center</b>	<b>513-1313</b>
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/](http://www.kcmo.org/focus/)**, or
- e-mail **[focus@kcmo.org](mailto: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



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**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.



Resident signs in at the Leeds-Dunbar workshop

# NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE

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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 "typed", 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 review their workbooks

# THE LEEDSDUNBAR PERSPECTIVE

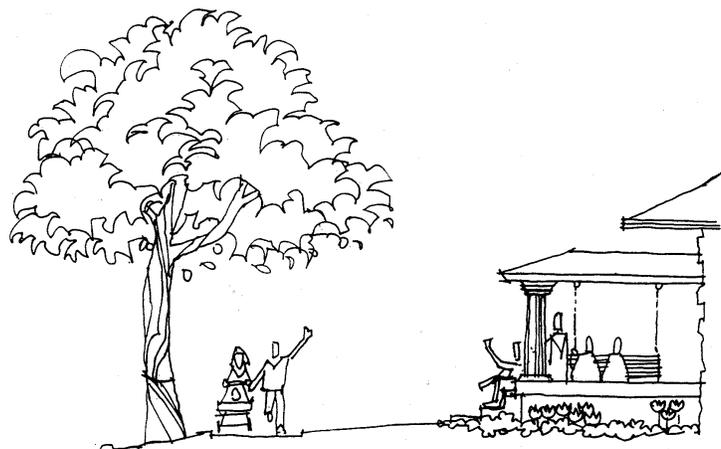
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Residents of the Leeds-Dunbar neighborhood gathered at the Teenage Parent Center on May 20, 2000 to participate in a FOCUS Neighborhood Assessment workshop. They arrived prepared to have a collective conversation about the place where they live, work and socialize. Participants engaged in a neighborhood mapping exercise, identified the assets and challenges in their community and voted on their Neighborhood Type. They brainstormed effective community building strategies and celebrated their rich heritage.

The Leeds-Dunbar boundaries create a “tear drop” shape, as they are 31<sup>st</sup> Street on the North, 39<sup>th</sup> Street on the South, Stadium Drive on the East and Van Brunt Boulevard on the West. Residents expressed that the shape of a teardrop is a poignant description in light of the struggles and challenges the neighborhood has endured throughout Kansas City’s history.

Leeds-Dunbar possesses a very distinct history. Named in honor of the famous 19<sup>th</sup> Century African-American poet and author, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, this “small suburb” was built specifically for Kansas City’s African-American citizens in 1934, around the time of the Great Depression. In the beginning, folks were very proud to make the area their home. However, as the neighborhood was neglected and forgotten for so many years, the most effective means residents had of explaining where they lived finally became to say they lived near the Leeds automotive plant...thus, the name Leeds-Dunbar.





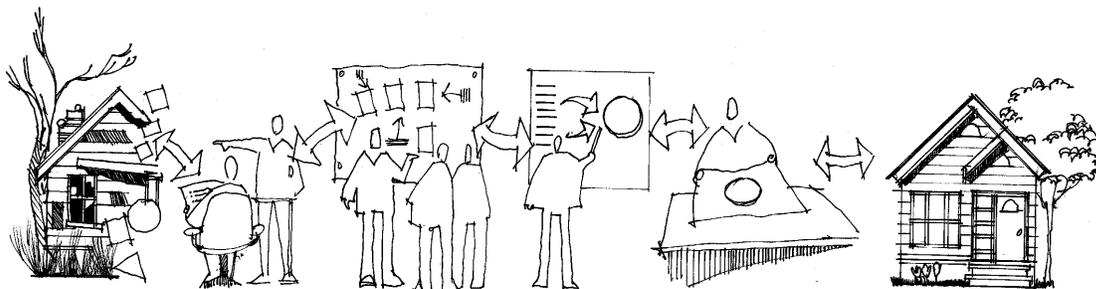
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During the late '60's Model Cities Era, Leeds-Dunbar was one of Kansas City's first neighborhoods to receive federal funding that involved the community on a very intensive level. Streets were finally paved, and the (now closed) Dunbar Community Center and the Dunbar Gardens public housing complex were constructed. 1976 saw the demolition of over 40 dilapidated buildings. Implementation of the first Codes Enforcement and Property Maintenance Demonstration Program also began at that time.

Twenty-four years later, much of the land that was cleared remains undeveloped. However, residents are optimistic about the future. They look forward to the development of new housing and seeing infrastructure improvements such as re-paved streets and new sewers/catch basins throughout the neighborhood.

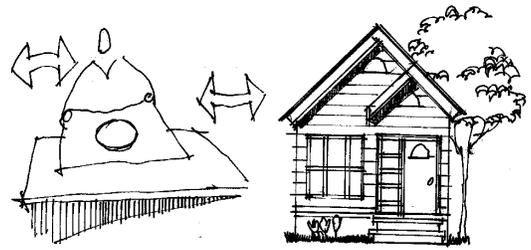
Residents are focused on improving relations with area businesses and industries. Specifically, they would like to eliminate illegal dumping and increase cooperation between commercial and residential stakeholders. They also mentioned dilemmas with some businesses and organizations, such as illegal dumping, respect for resident's property, etc.

The Leeds-Dunbar neighborhood is on the move. Recently, they collaborated with the City Codes Administration Department to remove several notorious illegal dumping sites, and they are currently working on an area redevelopment plan with City officials. Residents say, "Watch out, we're up and coming!"



# PRIORITIES

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The residents of the Leeds-Dunbar neighborhood cited the following issues as their priorities:

## **Encourage Residents and Businesses to Participate in Neighborhood and Community Events and Projects**

Participants would like more residents to get involved in the neighborhood association. They would also like to see businesses take an active role in the community by:

- Participating in community clean-ups
- Donating goods and services to the neighborhood
- Encouraging customers to respect the property of the residents

## **Address Property Maintenance Issues with Land Trust and Other Property Owners**

The residents expressed concerns about properties that are not maintained. They believe the following activities could bring about some needed changes:

- Increase maintenance of Land Trust properties
- Allow residents to purchase land from Land Trust for a small fee; residents are willing to keep the property looking nice
- Inform property owners needing assistance of available low income property maintenance program

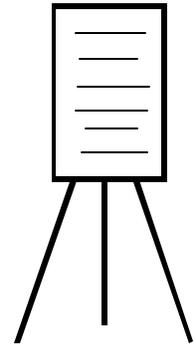
## **Maintain and Improve City Services**

The residents would like to see the City:

- Mow overgrown grass, weeds, and brush
- Trim tree branches that hang over streets
- Demolish houses that have become eyesores in the community
- Prohibit illegal dumping on vacant lots

# CHART NOTES

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The Leeds-Dunbar Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from 31<sup>st</sup> to 37<sup>th</sup> Street and Van Brunt/Stadium Drive.

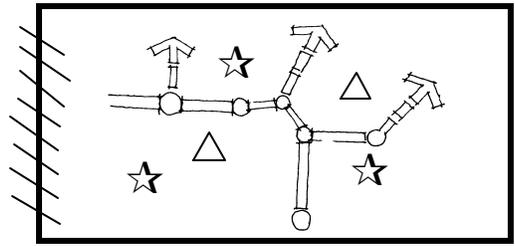
## Neighborhood Slogans

Residents of the Leeds-Dunbar neighborhood brainstormed ideas for a slogan that best described their neighborhood. They chose a slogan they felt distinguishes them from other neighborhoods:

### **Leeds-Dunbar: Gateway to Sports!**

Other suggested slogans:

- Family Community
- Diamond in the Rough
- We Are Together
- Community Care
- We Are a Voice Leading the Way!



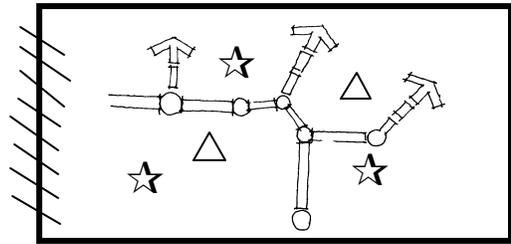
## STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

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



Louis White, City Codes Enforcement Officer, discusses with residents the progress he has made toward resolving code violations in the Leeds-Dunbar neighborhoods



## Landmarks

- Vacant land formerly Holy Temple Housing Complex
- Veteran's Hospital
- McDonald's on 31<sup>st</sup> Street
- Osco Drug on Stadium Drive
- Dunbar Community Center
- Liberty Park - 35<sup>th</sup> Street & Stadium Drive
- Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church
- The former Leeds automotive plant
- Cryogenics Laboratory
- Teenage Parent Center at 5419 E. 36th Street

## Paths

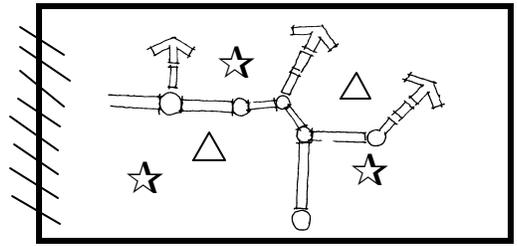
- 35<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> Street
- Stadium Drive
- Leeds Trafficway
- Van Brunt Boulevard

## Activity Centers

- The Teenage Parent Center
- Liberty Park
- Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church
- Dunbar Gardens Housing Complex



Residents felt that McDonald's is a landmark in the community.



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## Districts

- Dunbar Gardens Housing Complex
- Fast food establishments on Stadium Drive and Van Brunt Boulevard

## Features

- Dunbar Community Center
- Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church
- Van Brunt Boulevard bordering the neighborhood's west side

## Edge or Barrier

- Junk yards along Stadium Drive



Some of the fast food establishments off Van Brunt

# LEEDS-DUNBAR IMAGES

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**Landmark and Activity Center:**  
The Teenage Parent Center



**Path:**  
Van Brunt Boulevard



**Landmark and Feature:**  
The (now closed) Dunbar  
Community Center

# LEEDS-DUNBAR IMAGES

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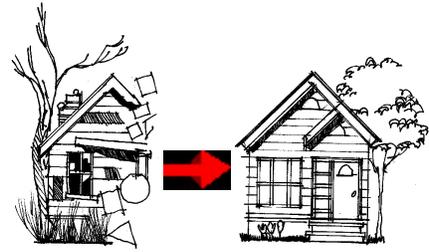
**Landmark and Activity Center:**  
Liberty Park



**Landmark, Activity Center and Feature:** The Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church



**Landmark:** The Former  
Leeds automotive plant



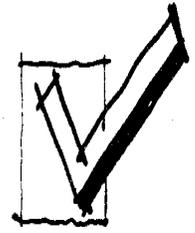
## STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

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 Leeds Dunbar neighborhoods:

- Demolish dilapidated houses located on the 3600 block of White Street.
- Demolish dilapidated house located at the corner of 36<sup>th</sup> & Topping and 3706 Drury.
- Eliminate illegal dumping throughout the neighborhoods and close illegal junkyard operations.
- Cut grass, weeds brush, and trim trees throughout the community.
- Install a “Dunbar Community” marker on the corner of 34<sup>th</sup> & Van Brunt.
- Remove trash and debris directly behind Osco Drugs at 31<sup>st</sup> & Stadium Drive. It is a haven for vermin.
- Improve visual image of the Leeds and Dunbar communities.
- Build new infill housing throughout the neighborhood.
- Request that the ATA (Area Transportation Authority) implement a flexible schedule for bus stops in the neighborhood.
- Create a productive use for old tires that have been abandoned throughout the city.
- Prohibit school bus drivers from speeding on the north end of Freemont when they are late. Children are playing and someone may be injured.
- Maintain the properties owned by Land Trust.



Workshop participants discussed the issues they would like to see addressed.



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## 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 increases the livability of the neighborhood.

- Access to highway and main streets, i.e. I-435 and I-70, Van Brunt Boulevard and Stadium Drive
- Quiet neighborhood
- A strong community spirit
- Green space/wildlife
- Vacant land prime for development
- We know who are neighbors are. They are people who have lived in the community for a long time.
- Churches that bring a sense of togetherness
- The history of neighborhoods: Leeds was platted in 1912, and Dunbar is the oldest African-American neighborhood (1934) in Kansas City, MO.
- Lack of crime
- Blue River improvements
- Veteran's Administration hospital
- The City's Boulevard system that surrounds the community
- Teenage Parent Center (old Dunbar School)
- Dunbar Community Council
- Longtime committed residents
- Former Leed's automotive plant is a potential asset
- Area businesses
- Potential for industrial/manufacturing growth



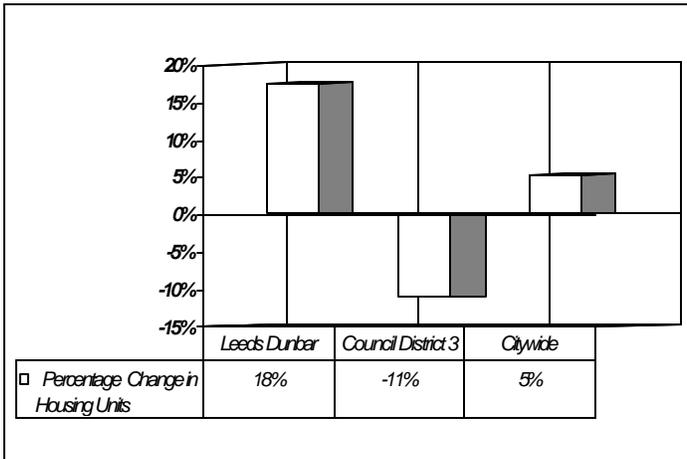
Veteran's  
Administration hospital



## STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

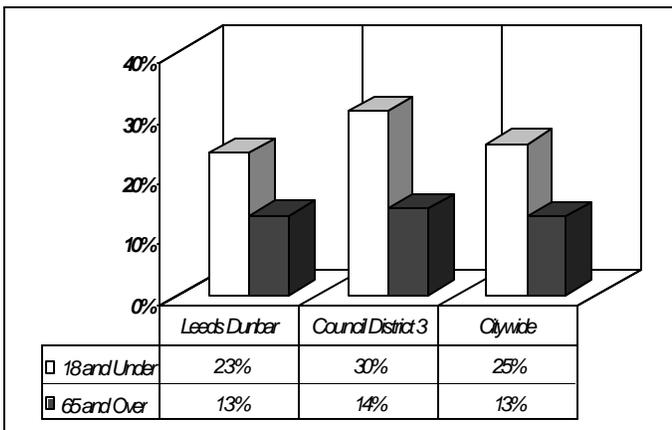
The data presented at the Leeds Dunbar Neighborhood Assessment was from the 1990 U.S. Census, and from 1999 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts the participants said were surprising or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

### Change in Number of Housing Units 1980-1990



Participants felt that the increase in housing units is due to Boulevard Village Apartments near Osco Drugs.

### Age Distribution



Participants believe that the elderly population has increased and the younger population has decreased. They perceive that the numbers reported in 1990 Census have reversed.



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## STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

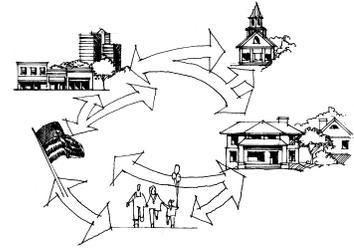
Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the neighborhood type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was Redeveloping.

### Redeveloping

I have watched my neighborhood decline for many years now. The commercial areas are not as vibrant with activity as they used to be. Many residents, businesses and institutions have moved away. Many of the homes and businesses have fallen in disrepair and vacant and/or boarded up homes and buildings are noticeable throughout the neighborhood.

Basic infrastructure, such as streets, water/sewer service and sidewalks, has fallen in disrepair. There are parts of the neighborhood that are inadequately served by infrastructure. There is potential for major redevelopment, perhaps by assembling vacant lots concentrated in the area and by improving the existing infrastructure. Some existing homes and businesses could be rehabilitated as part of the redeveloping area, but some will have to be demolished and cleared to make way for new homes and businesses.

Few committed residents remain in the neighborhood. With significant changes, as well as a strong commitment from the residents and others in the community, this neighborhood will once again become viable.



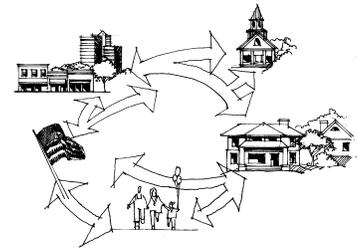
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## STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

Workshop participants talked about specific actions the community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. Following 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**:

- Invite newly established businesses to participate in Dunbar Community Council activities
- Encourage all businesses to make a positive contribution to the area
- Get involved and support Dunbar Neighborhood Council
- Report neighborhood problems when they first begin
- Explore the history of the area and possibly apply for appropriate historic preservation status
- Develop a vision for the community and work to create ideas to bring in tax dollars to support it
- Invite a speaker from Economic Development Corporation to speak at a neighborhood meeting
- Work with neighbors and their visitors to alleviate double parking problems
- Encourage others not to park on the grass by: First simply, gently tell the offender. Try the "one-on-one" approach. If that is not effective, contact the Neighborhood Preservation office to report violators.
- Continue to submit PIAC requests for specific basic infrastructure improvements
- Familiarize ourselves with The Blue River Urban Renewal Plan
- Think broadly about the future of the community



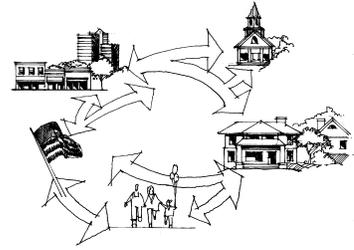
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Things we can do with a **Partner**:

- Partner with Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance and other community based organizations to develop/obtain grants to improve the neighborhood
- Work with businesses to address maintenance of retail establishments such as cleaner parking lots
- Junkyards should install fencing that will enhance the appearance of their business.
- Collaborate with Langley Recycling to bring resolution to the concerns residents have about their customers who park on the resident's sidewalks
- Request assistance from General Motors to redevelop the entire Leeds Dunbar Neighborhood
- Work with Habitat for Humanity to look into the possibility of developing new housing
- Partner with Langley Recycling to recycle old tires as playground material
- Collaborate with the KC Housing Authority to include Dunbar Gardens residents in neighborhood activities



Participants desire to work with Langley Recycling as a potential partner.



Things the **City** should do:

- Identify alternative funding sources to pay for sidewalks and curbs
- Include neighborhood representation on the Land Trust Board
- Investigate ways to build homes on lots that are not the required standard size
- Install a storm drain on the south west corner of 36<sup>th</sup> & Freemont to prevent flooding
- Remove the environmentally dangerous junk car at 5625 E. 36<sup>th</sup> Terrace
- Upgrade the appearance of Stadium Drive

The following items were submitted after the neighborhood assessment:

Demolish the following houses:

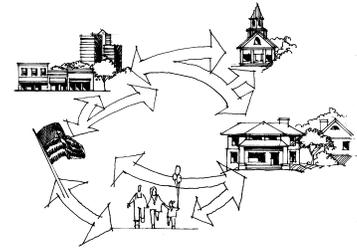
- 3600 White
- 3604 White
- 3606 White
- 3612 White
- 3610 White
- 3706 Drury
- Located at the corner of 36<sup>th</sup> & Topping

Eliminate illegal dumping at:

- 34<sup>th</sup> & Drury
- 34<sup>th</sup> Street, between Oakley & Hardesty
- 37<sup>th</sup> & Bellaire
- 36<sup>th</sup> & Oakley
- 34<sup>th</sup> & Stadium Drive
- Close illegal junkyard operations at 3300 Oakley, 34<sup>th</sup> & Lawndale, and 3620 Bellaire



Trash and illegal dumping is a problem mentioned by many workshop participants



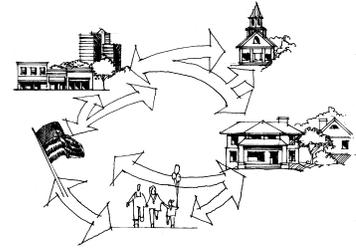
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Cut grass, weeds, brush, and trim trees at the following locations:

- The hill on the southeast side in Liberty Park (35<sup>th</sup> & Stadium Drive)
- All trees hanging over the streets and utility lines
- 3400 block of Drury
- 3300 and 3400 blocks of Hardesty
- 3500, 3600, 3700, 3800 blocks of Colorado
- The west side of 36<sup>th</sup> & Oakley
- 35<sup>th</sup> to 39<sup>th</sup> & Van Brunt on the east side
- 34<sup>th</sup> & Stadium Drive
- 35<sup>th</sup> Street from Oakley to Stadium Drive
- 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> on Drury



The vacant house at 37<sup>th</sup> & Drury attracts dumping and need to be torn down.



Things the **City** should do, cont'd.

Other issues:

- Construct a new Dunbar Community Center for the residents
- Conduct a traffic study of all the intersections within the neighborhood
- Install curb cuts so that the disabled can use the sidewalks throughout the neighborhood
- Repair the lights in Liberty Park (35<sup>th</sup> & Stadium Drive)
- Remove trash and construct a concrete barrier at the entrance of 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> and Drury, behind the Teenage Parent Center
- Provide a City neighborhood planner to assist with the completion of a Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan
- Resurface 35<sup>th</sup> Street from Oakley to Stadium Drive
- Paint Dunbar Community Center immediately, and maintain regularly
- Open dead end street at 37<sup>th</sup> & Topping
- Remove the old Rock Island railroad crossing (located at Stadium Drive and Raytown Rd., east of the old GM plant) to reduce the use of Stadium Drive by commercial vehicles
- Eliminate the odor emanating from the sewer on the corner of 35<sup>th</sup> and Stadium Drive across from Langley's Recycling

## **Leeds-Dunbar Neighborhood Assessment Participants**

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Brenda Adams

Marvin Bredemeier

Norma Bredemeier

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Rosemary Calmers

John W. Fields

Mattie Fields

Mamie Hughes

Rev. Deree Johnson

Richard Montoya

Tom Randolph Jr.

Tom Randolph Sr.

Sammie L. Randolph

Quinthella Randolph

Rita Reese

Ruthy Sanders

Prentes Thompson

## **Contributors and Project Participants**

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The following persons and organizations were involved in the planning and presentation of the neighborhood assessment workshop; a special thanks to them for their contributions.

- Leeds-Dunbar Neighborhood Council
- Mrs. Francis Coefield, Principal of the Teenage Parent Center

## **Getting Involved**

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To find out more about the Leeds-Dunbar Neighborhood Council, contact President Thomas Randolph Jr. at 816-861-2994.



# Acknowledgements

## City Council

The Honorable Ed Ford  
*First District-at-Large*

The Honorable Teresa Loar  
*First District*

The Honorable Bonnie Sue Cooper  
*Second District-at-Large*

The Honorable Paul Danaher  
*Second District*

The Honorable Troy Nash  
*Third District-at-Large*

The Honorable Mary Williams-Neal  
*Third District*

The Honorable Evert Asjes III  
*Fourth District-at-Large*

The Honorable Jim Rowland  
*Fourth District*

The Honorable Becky Nace  
*Fifth District-at-Large*

The Honorable Kelvin Simmons  
*Fifth District*

The Honorable Alvin Brooks  
*Sixth District-at-Large*

The Honorable Charles A. Eddy  
*Sixth District*

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- Diane Charity, Jermine Alberty, Sharon Cheers, Willie Mae Conway, Suzy Latare, John Pajor, Robert Charles Rutherford II, *Neighborhood Assessment Team*

## City Support

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- Greg Brady, *Environmental Management Department, Manager of Environmental Investigation*
- Officer Mitchell Branch, *Kansas City Police Department*
- Sgt. Michelle Berry, *Kansas City Police Department*
- Louis White, *Neighborhood Preservation Division, Codes Enforcement Officer*
- Lynn Jameson, *Third District Planner*