# MARTIN CITY AREA

## Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: May 20, 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 - Forging Our Comprehensive Urban Strategy



## **FOCUS KANSAS CITY**

## 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.

The Martin City Area neighborhood 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.



Martin City Area neighborhood assessment participants listen to the day's agenda



## 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.



Chet Neumann, Assistant Superindentent with the Grandview School District, and two Martin City Area workshop participants meet at the workshop

## THE MARTIN CITY AREA PERSPECTIVE



For the purposes of this Neighborhood Assessment, the boundaries of the Martin City Area were defined as Blue Ridge Boulevard on the north, the City limits on the south, State Line on the west, and the Kansas City/Grandview city limits on the east (see the map on the inside cover or between pages 8 and 9). One has only to mention the name - Martin City - and certain images come to mind: barbecue restaurants, the railroad, the Martin City Melodrama, and lots of open space, to name a few.

This area of Kansas City is a dynamic community faced with unique challenges and opportunities, especially in the areas of transportation and development (both commercial and residential). Multiple surrounding municipalities, a high volume of truck and automobile traffic, the re-direction of Highway 150, the upcoming widening of Holmes Road, the Union Pacific railroad, residential development, and the large amounts of undeveloped land are some of the existing realities in the Martin City Area. The upcoming study for improvements to 135th Street, the possibility of new commercial development, the potential changes at Richards-Gebaur Airport, and the City's updating of the area land use plan are factors that will impact the future functions and uses of the Martin City Area.

Martin City has long been a hub for transportation, commercial and social activity. Originally platted as Tilden Township in 1887, then founded as Martin City in 1895, this community has seen its share of initiatives, changes and upheavals, and at the same time has held fast to its rich history. The new Martin City Post Office houses many old photographs of some of the originators in the area: the first two doctors (father and daughter), Jess and Jim (who opened Jess & Jim's Steakhouse), and a photo of Martin City "half blown away" by the 1957 tornado. That event is one that many area residents remember well, having experienced it firsthand. Although no building in Martin City was untouched by the force of the tornado, a few original structures remain. The building that once housed the Martin City Bank - now occupied by the Potter's Obsession - still stands, as does what was the Martin City Baptist Church, now the Martin City Melodrama and Vaudeville Company. At least two historic homes also remain: a beautiful red brick house near the intersection of 135th Street and Locust, and a renovated railroad house just one block east, now home to Rooms That Bloom.



While residents appreciate their proximity to the many amenities both in their community and in the surrounding metropolitan area, the small town atmosphere is part of what they treasure about Martin City. The legacy of family-owned businesses and the generations of families choosing to live in Martin City are local traditions. The newly renovated Martin City Elementary School is a feature that will support families, in that children will be able to attend one neighborhood school from kindergarten through eighth grade. The school recently received an honor as the only school in the Grandview school district to be included in the Top Ten list of schools for the Missouri Assessment Program exams.

The Martin City Business and Community Association is an active organization, having coordinated Fall Festivals and the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, applied for PLAC (Public Improvements Advisory Committee) funds, and received a grant for the purchase of planters, to be installed along 135<sup>th</sup> Street. Participants at the Martin City Area Neighborhood Assessment saw more opportunity for involvement with this organization that is positively impacting their community.

The Martin City Area is growing and changing, as it has from its beginning. Residents know that preservation of, and connection to, their history is what will balance the things to come in the future. The purpose of this report is to help clarify residents' goals and identify resources. The following page contains the residents' priorities and their suggested improvement strategies. The report also contains the lists of assets, challenges and ideas for improvement that Martin City Area residents named during the workshop. Finally, a directory of frequently used City and agency services is on the inside back cover.





## PRIORITIES

Residents of the Martin City Area named the following as their priority issues:

## Improve 135<sup>th</sup> Street

Martin City Area residents recognize the value that an attractive, accessible main thoroughfare adds to any community, and they want to be sure that 135<sup>th</sup> Street is an asset to their area. They had these suggestions:

- Work with Sassan Mahobian and the S K Design Group on the study for the improvement of 135<sup>th</sup> Street, so that the charm of the neighborhood is preserved, perhaps including benches, decorative street lights, and cobblestones
- Continue the beautification efforts in the area, such as a fountain somewhere along 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Explore the idea of a marker to distinguish residential, commercial and industrial areas in Martin City

## Manage the High Volume of Traffic

Heavy trucks are a relatively large percentage of the vehicles travelling along Martin City roads, especially 135<sup>th</sup> Street, Holmes and Oak Street. Automobile traffic on those same streets is also a challenge. Residents don't expect this traffic to be eliminated, but they do want to see it managed in a way that preserves the condition of the roads, and increases both the smooth flow of traffic and the safety of those in automobiles. They suggested the following:

- Install a stop light at Wornall and 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Install a temporary traffic signal at 147<sup>th</sup> Street and Holmes to manage the traffic problems caused by the construction related to the re-direction of Highway 150
- Connect Oak Street and 137<sup>th</sup> Street to create another exit for the cement trucks, thus reducing the number exiting onto 135<sup>th</sup> Street

**TREE TO BE SELLE TO SELLE TO** 

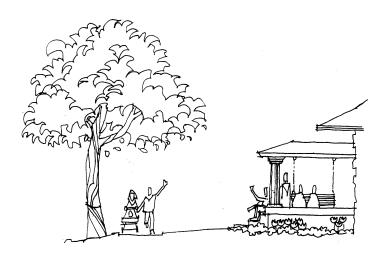


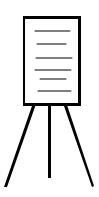
## PRIORITIES, CONT'D

## Continue to Work on Neighborhood Livability

Martin City neighbors cherish the relative quiet of the area and the quaintness of their neighborhoods. However, there are some challenges to the quality of life in the area; workshop participants proposed these solutions:

- Make PI AC requests for infrastructure needs, such as curbs and sidewalks along Locust, sidewalks in front of Martin City Elementary School, and area drainage problems
- Work to reduce speeding on Locust, perhaps with speed bumps and neighborhood markers
- Work with developers, MODOT, and the City to encourage them to keep the consistency of the "quaintness" of the Martin City Area
- Follow up with the City about the installation of the street lights
- Get more involved with the Martin City Business and Community Association





## CHART NOTES

The Martin City Area neighborhood assessment covered the area from Blue Ridge Boulevard to the southern city limits, and from State Line to the Grandview/Kansas City city limit.

## Neighborhood Slogans

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

The selected slogan:

## Kansas City's Original Village - Where People Wave

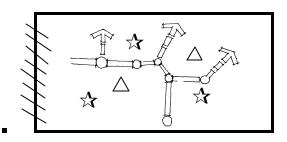
Other suggested slogans:

- Freedom
- Individuality
- The Best of Both Worlds
- More Than Barbecue
- Character

- Respect for Your Neighbors
- Kansas City's Original Village
- The Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore
- Unique Characteristics
- Close Enough But Far Enough Away
- Where People Wave



A workshop participant votes on the neighborhod slogan



## 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

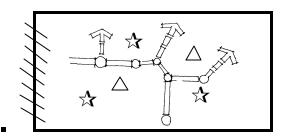
**Districts** — areas of recognizable character

**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



The new Martin City Post Office on 135<sup>th</sup> Street, an area landmark



#### Landmarks

- Cow on top of Jess 'n Jim's
- Old bank building across from Jess 'n Jim's
- Suburban Lawn and Garden barn (135<sup>th</sup> and State Line)
- Red brick home at 135<sup>th</sup> and Locust (13414 Locust)
- Martin City Post Office
- Driving range on Holmes
- Smokestack Barbecue
- Martin City Elementary School

#### **Paths**

- 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Union Pacific railroad
- Bike paths in the Blue River Parkway

## **Activity Centers**

- Volleyball Beach
- Quick Trip
- Saddle 'n Sirloin Club
- Martin City Elementary School
- Martin City Melodrama (currently in an historic building)
- Greenspace at Martin City Baptist Church

#### **Districts**

 Central business district on 135<sup>th</sup> Street

## **Edges or Barriers**

- Railroad tracks
- Traffic at Holmes and 135<sup>th</sup> Street, Blue Ridge Boulevard and Holmes, and Blue Ridge Boulevard and Wornall

#### **Features**

- Jess 'n Jim's
- Old residential neighborhoods
- Little Blue River area
- Martin City Business and Community Association
- Driving range on Holmes

## Martin City Area Images



**Landmark:** The cow atop Jess and Jim's restaurant



**Path and Barrier:** The Union Pacific railroad that goes through Martin City



**Path and Feature:** The Blue River Parkway provides recreation opportunities for hikers and bikers

## MARTIN CITY AREA IMAGES



**Landmark**: The red brick house at 13414 Locust



Activity Center:
The large green space to the west of Martin City
Baptist Church



**Landmark:** Martin City Elementary School



## STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These issues can inhibit residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of "fixes" that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Martin City Area.

- Control the heavy traffic in the area; it is very difficult to turn off of or onto Wornall, 135<sup>th</sup> Street, and State Line, and there is serious congestion at 135<sup>th</sup> and Holmes
- Keep the cement trucks off of 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Improve the condition of 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Connect Oak Street and 137<sup>th</sup> Street in order to provide cement trucks another way out of their property other than busy 135<sup>th</sup> Street

- Widen Holmes and Wornall to facilitate smoother flow of traffic
- Encourage the City and utility companies to communicate more effectively about street cuts so that newly paved streets aren't torn up
- Discourage the use of incentives (i.e. tax abatements) for any new businesses coming into Martin City; this area is prime for development and should not require incentives



Two cement trucks at the intersection of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Oak



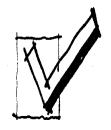
#### If I Could Fix One Thing, cont'd.

- Control the noise from Union Pacific Railroad and the automobile traffic on 135<sup>th</sup> Street; perhaps the trains can go underground, or over Holmes
- Eliminate speeding on Locust which is a quiet residential street that children cross to get to school
- I nstall curbs and sidewalks on Locust
- Install a sidewalk on the south side of 133<sup>rd</sup> Street in front of Martin City Elementary School, from Locust west to at least Walnut

- Improve the drainage on the west side of Wornall from 133<sup>rd</sup> Street to Blue Ridge Boulevard; water runs down the middle of the street, and in winter this is very dangerous when it freezes
- Eliminate illegal dumping on 139<sup>th</sup> Street
- Improve the ATA bus service into the area so residents without cars have access to jobs
- Prevent people from parking in the Martin City Elementary parking lot at night and on weekends; install a gate to prohibit parking, and provide security patrol



I llegal dumping along 139<sup>th</sup> Street, along the Little Blue River



## STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

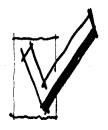
Workshop participants identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. These qualities include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other feature that adds value to the neighborhood.

- Martin City Business and Community Association
- Except for the noise from the passing trains, it's relatively quiet
- The Woodbridge Neighborhood Association
- Long-term residents
- Wonderful neighbors
- Small town atmosphere

- Unpretentious area, but still a part of Kansas City
- The FOCUS Neighborhood Assessment
- Jerry Smith Farm
- Saeger Woods
- Little Blue River Parkway
- The ball park on Holmes (south of Ozanam Home for Boys)



The ball park on Holmes, part of the Blue River Parkway system



My Neighborhood's Assets, cont'd.

- The reputation of teachers in the Grandview School District, and the school district in general
- Mixed community economic and racial diversity
- Great restaurants
- Good people who live here

- Martin City Melodrama
- Ozanam Home for Boys
- Kansas City, MO Police Department (tremendous cooperation with the management at Cloverleaf Apartments)
- People wave to each other

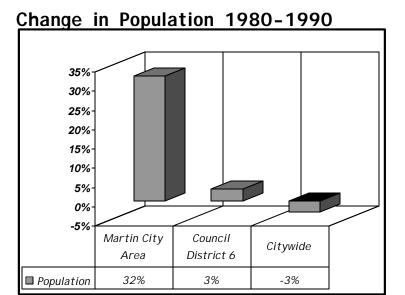


Martin City Melodrama, one of the area's assets

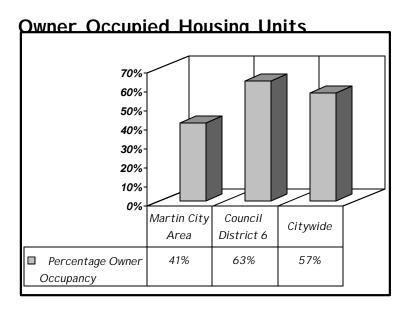


## STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

The data presented at the Martin City Area 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.)



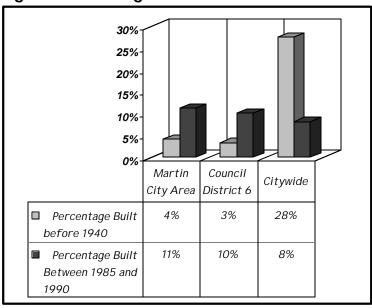
Participants stated that the increase in population is due to the recent residential developments, for example along Wornall Road.



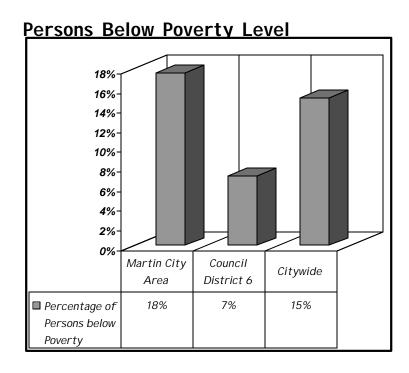
Neighbors felt the percentage of owner occuped housing could be as high as 50%.



#### Age of Housing Units



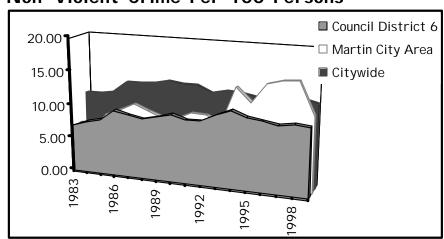
Participants stated that the low percentage of homes built before 1940 may be due to homes being destroyed during the 1957 tornado, although more businesses than homes were destroyed at that time.



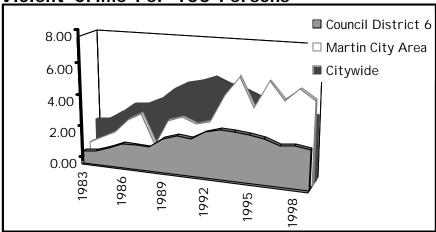
Residents felt that the percentage of persons living below the poverty level may be due to several apartment complexes in the area.



#### Non-Violent Crime Per 100 Persons







An officer from the South Patrol Division of the Kansas City, MO Police Department stated that the spikes in crime represented on the charts can be misleading; since the crime rate is already low, one or two incidents can give the impression of a sharp increase.

Residents expressed that the Martin City Area is generally safe and has a low crime rate.

18 Martin City Area



## STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

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

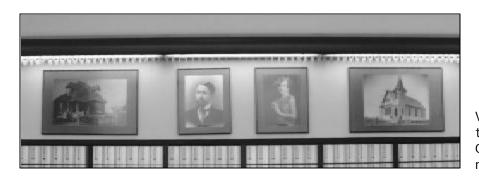
#### Conservation

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.

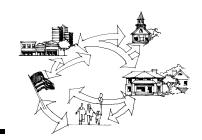
Tree-lined streets, historic structures or qualities, public art and/or other amenities characterize the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Most of the houses are occupied. Little demolition has occurred here and vacant land is scarce.

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.





Vintage photographs in the Martin City Post Office tell some of the rich history of the area

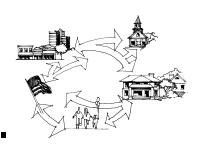


## STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

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 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**:

- Work with Sassan Mahobian and the S K Design Group on the study for the improvement of 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Encourage the Martin City Business and Community Association to expand into the community and increase the community's involvement
- Fill out PIAC request for infrastructure needs
- Explore the idea of a marker to distinguish residential, commercial and industrial areas in Martin City
- Advocate to maintain the charm of the neighborhood, perhaps including benches, decorative street lights, cobblestones – generally support the walkability of the area
- Work with the 6<sup>th</sup> District PIAC representatives on a request for funding for sidewalks along Locust in front of Martin City Elementary School
- Get more involved with the Martin City Business and Community Association
- Complete a PLAC request for funds to address the drainage problem at 147<sup>th</sup> Street and Holmes
- Continue the beautification efforts in the area, such as a fountain somewhere along 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Form a neighborhood association

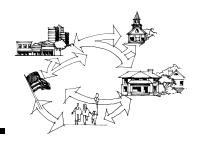


#### Things we can do with a **Partner**:

- Work with the Martin City Business and Community Association to establish markers for the Martin City area
- Work with S K Design on the 135<sup>th</sup> Street improvement study
- Work with developers, MODOT, the City to encourage them to keep the consistency of the "quaintness" of the Martin City Area, such as walkability



Citizens want to have input into the study and design for the improvements along 135<sup>th</sup> Street in Martin City



## Things the **City** should do:

- Ensure that there is citizen input for the study for improvements to 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Be accountable for the problems related to deferred maintenance of infrastructure in the city
- Install a stop light at Wornall and 135<sup>th</sup> Street
- Approve PLAC funding for the drainage improvements needed at 147<sup>th</sup> Street and Holmes
- Install the street lights that residents voted on
- Install a temporary traffic signal at 147<sup>th</sup> Street and Holmes to manage the traffic problems caused by the construction related to the re-direction of Highway 150
- Update the Area Plan for Martin City and the surrounding communities
- City Planning Department should consider all factors when planning for the area
   residents, businesses, infrastructure
- Address the abandoned house at 132<sup>nd</sup> and Cherry, just east of Martin City Baptist Church



The intersection of 135th and Wornall; residents would like to see a traffic signal here

## Martin City Area Neighborhood Assessment Participants

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Officer Mark Stinson
Glenn York
Virginia Young
Wilbur Young

#### **Sponsors and Contributors**

- Martin City Business and Community Association
- Martin City Elementary School

#### Getting Involved

To find out more about the Martin City Area Business and Community Association, contact President David VanNoy at 918-1358 or Carol Fredrickson at the Martin City Commerce Bank branch at 234-2654. For information about the Martin City Elementary School, contact Chester Neumann, Assistant Superintendent of the Grandview School District, at 316-5035.

For information about neighborhood organization, contact the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance at 753-8600 or the City's Neighborhood and Community Services Department at 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

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- Stephen Euler, Code Enforcement Officer, Neighborhood and Community Services Department
- Mike Graf, PIAC Representative
- Graham Smith, Sixth District Planner, City Planning and Development Department