

Thank you Carol, and it's a pleasure to be back at All Souls. This has become, for me, a really important forum, a place to gather together our thoughts and launch the next year's ideas. This morning, I'm going to talk to you about three things. First, I'm going to talk about the state of the city as I see it, and then I'm going to talk about what I've been working on and trying to do since I've been Mayor, and then finally I want to talk with you about the initiative that I'm launching today.

My staff handed out to you these maps when you came in this morning. And I want you to look at these. I want you to look at these maps carefully. The red dots are when population is leaving; and various sizes, 5,000 folks is the big dot; and the blue dots are where people are moving to; and there's a dot in every census. If you look, this first page, 1970 to 1980, this is after the assassination of Martin Luther King and the riots that happened in Kansas City, and you have an explosion of red dots in the center of the City.

You can see where they are moving. They are moving north in Kansas City to a certain degree, but mostly they are moving to southeastern Johnson County, down here. And then you look, turn the page, and look at the next decade. This is 1980 to 1990. And you see that the dots continue. The population loss continues. Now for twenty years, all of the '70's and all of the '80's, and you can see that it spreads and it is in the urban core in Kansas City, Kansas, it's out into Prairie Village, Fairway, Westwood, and the western half of Independence, and it's moving further south. And the blue dots in Johnson County were above 435, now they are below 435 and further south.

You turn the next page, 1990 to 2000. And again, continuing and spreading, the blue dots are now much further south of 435, much further over into Lee's Summit. The entire south of the river part of Kansas City is almost entirely covered with red dots.

Now we've had 30 years of this and you go to the next one, the next page. This is 2000 to 2007. And it continues. Now it's all in the inner ring suburbs of Kansas, it's continuing further and further south of the river in Kansas City, south of 435, and the blue dots are moving further and further away. And then you take a look at this last page. This last page is an analysis that was done by Frank Lenk over at the Mid America Regional Council. This is what it will look like in 2040, and you can see that it continues on and the blue spreads out further, and the center of the City is basically devastated.

Folks, this is not a sustainable pattern. We can't keep doing this. It isn't sustainable environmentally, it isn't sustainable financially. In order to support all that blue out there, the metropolitan area is going to have to build a whole new infrastructure. We're gonna have enough infrastructure if this were to carry itself out. We would have enough infrastructure to support five million people in this metropolitan area. But we're not going to have five million people, we're gonna have two and a half million people. We cannot compete, building twice as much infrastructure as we need, consuming twice as much land as we need, and so on. During that four decades, from 1970 to the present, we have lost over a hundred thousand folks from the urban core of Kansas City.

The other night, Thursday night, I was at the Hickman Mills Council of PTA's, listening to them talk about the trauma that has hit the Hickman Mills School District. Hickman Mills High School is the home of the Cougars; Ruskin High School is the home of the Golden Eagles. But they can't continue with

two high schools. There is a whole lot of tradition and pride and emotion that is going to go away, because they're going to have to consolidate. They've lost a thousand students. Think about how many families that is. They've lost ten percent of their tax base just in the last few years. That is going on and on.

For the last twenty years, I've been focused on this issue, on this problem. It's why I ran for Mayor. And everything that I have done since I got elected has been focused on addressing this issue, this unsustainable pattern of population loss; and this isn't just a problem for Kansas City, Missouri. Let me be very clear, this is a problem for the metropolitan area. This is a metro-wide disaster unfolding in front of us. We have got to change the way we do things.

So what have I been doing? How have I been trying to address this? I've been thinking about it and working on it. I've been listening to folks, first as City Auditor in the citizen surveys and so forth; and then as Mayor, in town hall meetings and conversations with folks every day. I must have done about sixty town hall meetings so far. And the reasons that people leave or that they don't move to Kansas City in the first place – and there are major corporations here who will tell me that they have recruited over the last several years, say, 10 to 15 executives who have moved here from elsewhere – none of them will locate in Kansas City, Missouri. Not one.

Why? Well, there are three reasons. There is crime and the perception of crime, the perception of public safety. There is basic services and infrastructure. And basic services and infrastructure are completely tied together. How we deal with infrastructure, when I listen to citizens at town hall meetings and they voice their dissatisfaction with our services, it is almost always tied back to infrastructure. We have billions of dollars of problems that we need to fix in terms of infrastructure

If you look at the last snow storm, we have never funded vehicle replacement and repair the way we should. Not, certainly, in the twenty-two years that I've been with the City. We, last year, had to lay off ten percent of our staff. So guess what? We weren't equipped to handle the snow storm very well. We did not meet citizen expectations, we had thousands of complaints. We have to do a better job in basic services.

And finally, and I hear this every time, it's schools, it's the lack of what people think are adequate educational alternatives for their children.

So what are we doing? What are we doing? How are we addressing this? Well first, immediately I was able to persuade the Council in a very thoughtful process to develop an economic development incentive policy, so that we would concentrate on economic development activities in the most distressed areas of the City, and we would do it in a realistic kind of way. We would not give out incentives in the willy-nilly sort of way that we had been doing, but we would concentrate on micro incentives, micro loans, new tools, and then we develop the new tools process where we had a comprehensive, citizen-engaged process where we came up with new ideas like the community development credit union that we are building, that will enable us to keep money in the urban core and reinvest money in the urban core.

Last year, at All Souls, we launched a program called A City That Works where we took five of the areas of least citizen satisfaction – areas that citizens were most upset with us about, most concerned about – we meet every Tuesday afternoon, the City Manager and me, and sometimes a Council person and a staffer involved, and we talk about that service and we talk about how to improve citizen satisfaction. We talk about how to spend targeted, small amounts of money to make a big difference in citizen satisfaction. And you know what? In an environment where we have cut staff, where the economy is in the tank, where we have all kinds of issues, we have managed to get statistically significant improvements in citizen satisfaction for the five areas we've targeted.

Zone Two-7, Anchor of Hope, there is a program in Harlem in New York City called the Harlem Children's Zone that has been successful in creating a conveyor belt that takes children from the womb throughout their childhood into college; and it targets every single child in about an 80-square-block area of Harlem, and it keeps those children on the conveyor belt so that they don't fall through the cracks; and it works with their families, and you know what? Over the last 20 or 25 years, they have had huge gains in the objective measures of student performance, test scores and graduation rates and so on. President Obama, when he was a candidate, said that he wanted to replicate that program in 20 cities in the United States. We are on track to be one of those 20 cities. We have targeted and are working with a bunch of community stakeholders with Operation Breakthrough, with Guadalupe Centers, with United Inner City Services, the Family Conservancy, LINC and a bunch of other organizations, as well as our police department and our school district of Kansas City, Missouri School District and HUD. We have targeted the 64127 zip code of Kansas City. We are replicating the Harlem Children's Zone there in that area of the City.

Last week, or the week before, when we had the U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting in D.C., I talked to each member of our congressional delegation – Senator Bond, Senator Mc Caskill, Representative Graves and Representative Cleaver – about this. They have heard from me over and over about these education issues as well as others.

I also, every time I go to Washington, have gone to the Department of Education; and this last trip I was able to talk to a man named Larkin Tackett, who is in charge of the Promise Neighborhoods Program. That's the program we're applying for; and I also managed to get a few minutes with Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education, and explained to him what we are trying to do here in Kansas City. I think we have a very strong chance of succeeding in getting this program.

The Education Summit. I have been working since the campaign to convene some sort of on-going dialogue, civic dialogue about our schools. I managed to have two big meetings with all the public school superintendents in Kansas City. The first meeting didn't go terribly well. They were not thrilled with me. They thought that I was one more guy, in this case, the Mayor, coming in to tell them how to do their job and frankly, they don't need a whole lot more advice. They need some help. They feel besieged. The second meeting, I said, "What do you need your city government to do? How can I help?" And I got a totally different reaction.

I basically sat in the middle of the room with about fifteen or twenty school administrators and superintendents around me, and for an hour or so they told me that the City has not been a very good partner. They've got issues in safety, they've got issues in infrastructure, they've got issues in transportation that they need help with. And they're looking at me skeptically, but they're saying, "If you really want to be helpful, Bud, this is what you should do. You need to be a better partner."

The city needs to be a better partner; and so today, having listened to them, thought through what they were talking about, talked to lots of stakeholders, I'm launching a program called Schools First, creating a City Where Kids Can Walk To School.

I want to work with all the schools in Kansas City, Missouri. Think about what that is. It is the most complex, fragmented environment you can imagine. When I tell folks in D.C. at the Department of Education, for example, they are stunned to find out we have 14 public school districts; we have probably a couple dozen charter schools; about three dozen faith-based schools, mostly Catholic schools; we have about 275 schools; but you know what? We don't even know the exact number. I've been trying to figure out exactly how many schools we have. You would think we would know. We don't know. We have about 75,000 kids in that about 275 schools.

I want to work with all the schools. It's very important that you understand that, because, schools are the anchors about which we can begin to reverse the tide and build neighborhoods. People have a social connection to their schools much greater than the social connection they have to Kansas City, Missouri. You know, look at my neighborhood. In my neighborhood in Brookside, I've got St. Teresa's – been there forever – Visitation, Border Star, and Bryant, and not far down the road you've got University Academy, started by Barnett Helzberg. So, charter school, a couple of faith schools, two public schools, they all matter. You can't turn your back on any of them, they all matter. And we have to do this in such a way that we're letting the educators do their job.

I'm gonna tell you a story. I've heard so much criticism, particularly the Kansas City, Missouri, District, but public education in general, since I came to Kansas City. And I'm reminded of this story. I grew up; I was the oldest of five children, in a working class family. My mother was an emergency room nurse, so she worked night shift and afternoons, and so on and so forth; and my dad was a plant worker at MoBay Chemical Company, and he also worked shifts. So at any given moment, the house was a wreck. I mean, the dishes were piled up, the laundry was piled up; and I had a grandmother, Bertha, who would come to visit us, and she would look around at the situation, and she would basically go, "My goodness, Ruthie (my mother was Ruth), you are a terrible housekeeper. I can't believe what a wreck this house is. I can't believe your children are running around, snot-nosed, with clothes that obviously need to be washed. What's the matter with you? You're a terrible mom and a terrible housekeeper." And then she would leave and my mother would sort of collapse in tears, before she had to go to work, and work all night in the emergency room in a hospital.

Then I had another grandmother, Lola. Lola would come and she would look around and she would say, "Good God Ruthie, you need some help. Let me tell you what, I'm going to start on these dishes and as soon as I get that taken care of and clean up the kitchen, I'm going to go start on the

laundry." We have been Bertha to our schools. We have been, "Good God, your test scores suck. Good God, your graduation rate is no good. You people are doing a terrible job."

You know what, they need help. They need a partner. They need their city government to be an energetic, engaged partner, but instead we have built up a wall. We have built up a wall between us and the schools. Like I said, we don't even know how many schools we've got. In order to turn this around, in order to build up our city again in the center, we need to start with schools first. We need to start in the neighborhoods where schools are. And we've got huge infrastructure issues in the city as a whole, but around the schools, also.

Right after I got elected, I went to a program at McCoy School, in the Kansas City, Missouri, District, way out east on Topping; and after the program is over, I'm walking back to my car, and I see this young Hispanic mother. She's got a little toddler by the hand, and she's got a stroller – one of those umbrella-type strollers – and she's got a baby in the stroller, and she's moving that stroller over the busted up sidewalk and so forth; and she spotted me and she said, "Well, you're the Mayor," and I said "Yes, ma'am," and she said, "Whatcha gonna do about these sidewalks?"

When I finally started listening carefully to the school superintendents, I had a meeting with Dennis Fisher, the Superintendent for Park Hill, and he said, "You know, if you really want to be helpful, I've got a school, Southeast Elementary, that is in a nice neighborhood, but there is no way for kids to walk to it, cause there's no sidewalks around it. You want to be helpful, help me build the sidewalks." I listened carefully to that, and then not long after, maybe three or four months later, my staff got an e-mail where a lady, Martha Edmunds, who goes to that, her kids go to that school, had sent us pictures. I don't think she had been talking to Fisher, but she had sent us photographs of the street and the ditch and the dirt and mud the kids would have to walk in, and basically how isolated that school is from the neighborhood that it ought to be connected to. We have to fix that. We have to fix the sidewalk around that school in the urban core; we also have to build sidewalks around some of these schools north of the river. So Schools First.

Schools First is a program that targets a 50-square-block area around every school in Kansas City. It's got five components. And again, remember, every school is every school. It's every charter school, every faith-based school, every public school in our fourteen different districts, and it's city wide, all over the City, five components.

The first, I'm gonna ask you the voters and the City Council to put on the ballot and the voters to approve, \$100 million in general obligation bonds that we would use to target infrastructure around schools.

It's just a start compared to the problems we have, but we would sit down with the individual school communities and the neighborhoods, and work out which projects we need to work on. It's not all gonna be the same, it's not a cookie cutter, it's not one-size-fits-all. But it's in conversation and partnership – an ongoing partnership with the school community – what do you need; and we look at all those needs; and we develop a process – the City Council and I, and the community and our partners – to pick which projects we're gonna fix.

The second component is that I'm going to ask the Council to put on the ballot a measure that renews the public safety sales tax that we have been using for police capital improvements and we want to target. And that sales tax brought in about \$17 million last year; and I'm going to ask that we put in the Ballot language that we use a third of that to increase safety and security around schools, that we use it to add police officers and crossing guards and so forth, so that the place around the schools is safer. That will increase police visibility in neighborhoods, and contribute to a feeling of safety and security around the schools.

The third component is that I'm going to ask the City Council to pass a resolution directing our staff to prioritize proximity to schools for neighborhood level services, for snow removal, for example; for dangerous building demolition; for weed control; for codes enforcement; for graffiti abatement. Those kinds of things, we spend about \$37 million in this year's budget targeting neighborhood-level services. But when we pick where to do that, we need to look at whether or not it's close to a school as one of the criteria, one of the top criteria, that we use.

The fourth component of Schools First is that we would develop a strategic approach to go after the grant money that is available. There is a program called the Walking School Bus, for example, at St. Elizabeth's School. It's a good idea. You have a trained adult who walks with a group of kids to school. Parents feel safer doing that. They also have to have the infrastructure and so forth, but there is that program. Missouri is one of the states that's been designated a safe routes to school state for federal money. There is a program at the Center for Disease Control that is called Walking to School, and it's targeted at childhood obesity.

There are lots of grants that we can go after, but we have to do it, we have to do two things in our grant approach, and this is real clear to me after going to Washington over and over and talking with these folks. The first is the more partners we have on a grant application, the stronger it is. So if we are linked up with a school district and linked up with the community-based organization, linked up with somebody else, that's a better application.

The other part is it has to be part of a strategic plan. I mean I looked at Arne Duncan and I tell him what we're doing and I say, "We're building the whole strategy around a connection to schools." That works for them. They don't want to see us just grabbing for money because the money's there.

And finally, and perhaps the most important component, the fifth component, is that we need to designate a staff function within our city government whose job it is to tear down the wall between us and the schools. Keep us in touch. Keep us in communication. It shouldn't have to be this hard for us to connect to our schools.

If we do this, this is a comprehensive, sustainable program; and if we do this, it will be the first time that Kansas City has done anything that has a city-wide focus on schools. It's strategic, it's targeted at those three reasons that people leave, basic services and infrastructure, crime and fear of crime, and public safety issues and education. But it supports education, not by going into the school and telling the principals and the teachers what to do, but by creating an environment around the schools in a partnership that makes it easier for them to do their job.

There was a study recently that UMKC did that showed that fear of crime was directly related to the appearance of disorder in the neighborhood. You know, by that, they mean busted-up sidewalks, the broken windows, stuff that you've heard about, weeds growing up, abandoned houses, and so on and so forth; so, infrastructure, basic services, and social networks. People who see order in the neighborhood and who have a stronger social network have less fear of crime. Schools are the place to build the social network that we need.

Imagine what would happen if we did this successfully. Imagine what a city would look like. What kind of a city would it be where you felt that your kids and your grandkids could walk to school? People would want to move into a city like that. The tax basis, property values would rise. Businesses would follow the people. Jobs would come, and we would turn this around. Imagine. It used to be that way. Twenty, thirty, forty years ago, most kids walked to school. Today, it's not. Very few do. I have partners that I'm working with in this. The superintendents, the school superintendents for the public schools, LINC (the Local Investment Commission), the Catholic Dioceses, all joining up saying, "Yes, we want to work with you on this," and I'd love to have you join us too.

You can call my office, 816-513-3500, you can go to our website, www.kcmo.org/schoolsfirst or you can send me an e-mail at schoolsfirst@kcmo.org. Thank you.