

URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

ACTION AGENDA

LIVE UNITED



United Way of
Greater Kansas City
unitedwaykc.org

A PLAN FOR CONNECTING PEOPLE AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

The Urban Neighborhood Initiative is an unprecedented collaboration of business, civic, philanthropic, neighborhood and human services entities. One of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's "Big 5" ideas, the initiative is aimed at creating economic opportunity and establishing a more vibrant Kansas City region. Recognizing the interdependence of the region, this unique partnership is connecting the people and organizations that bring the passion, expertise and resources needed to get things done in order to make long-lasting changes in the urban neighborhoods of Greater Kansas City. Doing so will improve the community health and vibrancy of the entire region.

A PLAN FOR CONNECTING PEOPLE AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

The Urban Neighborhood Initiative (UNI) is one of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's "Big 5" ideas aimed at creating economic opportunity and establishing a more vibrant Kansas City region.

Under the leadership of Terry Dunn, president and CEO of JE Dunn Construction Group, Inc., and Brent Stewart, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Kansas City, UNI seeks to collaborate with interested residents in a specific geography on Kansas City's east side to improve the opportunities of its residents. Acknowledging the enormity of the opportunity, UNI seeks to employ a place-based strategy within a designated area east of Troost in Kansas City, Missouri, as its initial opportunity to effect meaningful and sustained change.

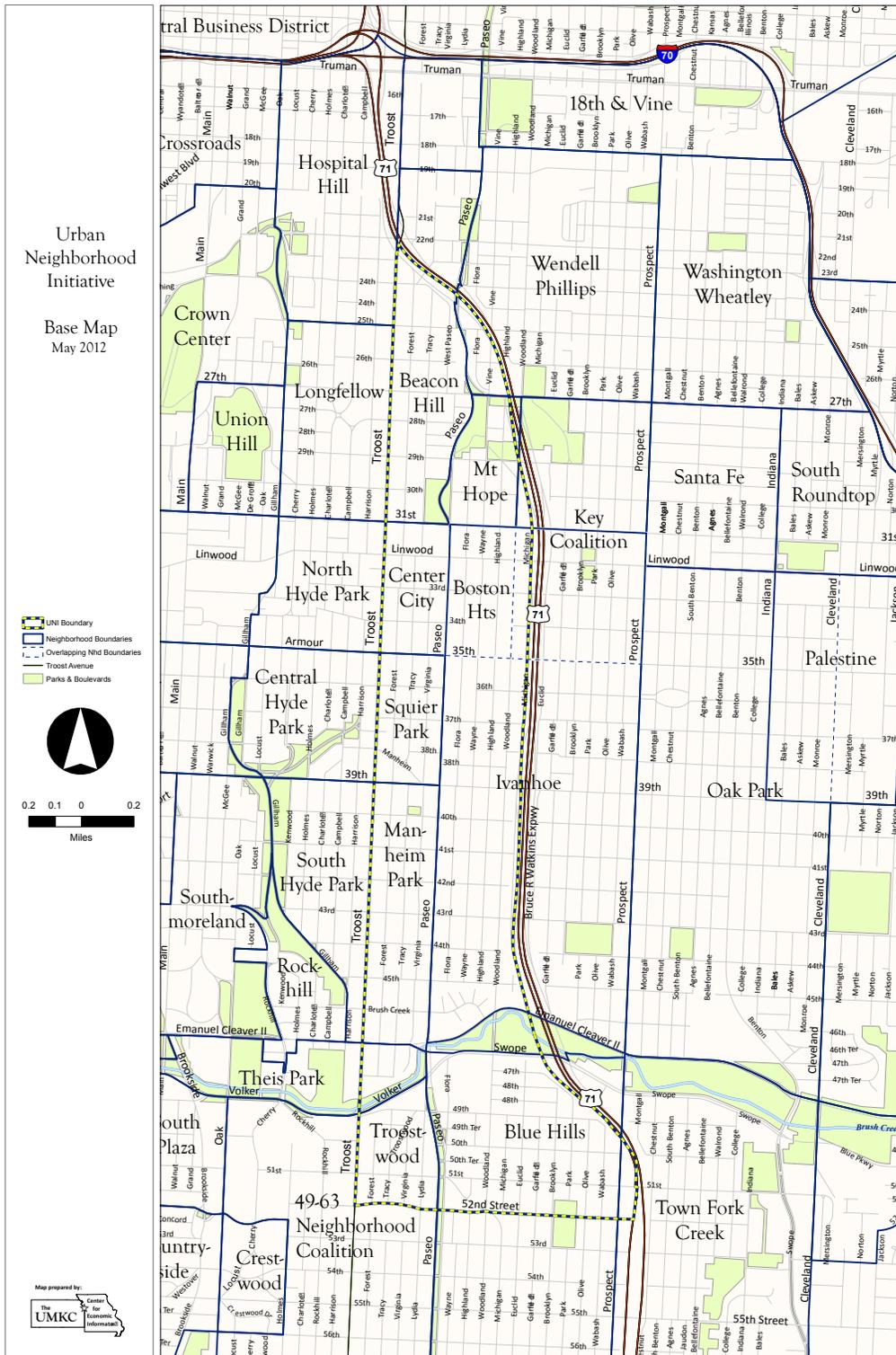
This initial effort involves three phases of work – research, planning and implementation. In the first phase, research included using qualitative and quantitative data, as well as a Letter of Interest process, to identify the specific geographic area in which to start this effort. The research phase was completed by the end of January 2012. The second phase, planning, included input from stakeholders in east side neighborhoods, identification of community assets and potential partners, and best practice research and models from other communities. This information, and the input from neighborhood partners, has helped to inform the development of this Action Agenda. The third phase, beginning in January 2013, will engage stakeholders and residents in the successful implementation of the Action Agenda.

The intent of UNI is to identify and demonstrate effective strategies in the initial neighborhoods, which can then be replicated to bring about improved community health in additional neighborhoods throughout the Greater Kansas City region.

United Way of Greater Kansas City served as the convening partner during the research and planning phases based on its track record for engaging the community, creating strategic partnerships and getting to results that matter.

TARGET AREA

Through a Letter of Interest process and data review, UNI has selected its initial neighborhood area on which it will focus its efforts. The selected neighborhood area is located in the “Troost Corridor,” east of Troost Avenue to 71 highway and between 22nd Street and 52nd Street in Kansas City, Missouri.



*Vision without action
is merely a dream.
Action without vision
just passes the time.
Vision with action can
change the world.*

- Joel Barker

AREAS OF EMPHASIS

The UNI leadership identified three areas of emphasis on which to focus its work. These areas are: **Prosperity, Health and Safety, and Education**. All three areas are essential for creating communities of opportunity and long-lasting results. Connecting People and Building Community means insuring that residents have access to those critical ingredients for success: economic opportunities, quality education, diverse housing choices, safe and healthy environments, as well as important services and amenities related to quality of life such as supermarkets, cultural centers, and parks.

PROSPERITY

Economic opportunity within the UNI targeted area is currently very limited. In fact, the area was chosen because of the significant needs of its residents, as demonstrated by median annual household income for those residing in the area of less than \$24,000. These needs will be strengthened by UNI's efforts, including encouraging businesses to locate in the area to provide jobs, strengthening the connection of residents to jobs, and restoring homes and vacant buildings.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A top priority of UNI is to support the development of safe and healthy neighborhoods. UNI will encourage partnerships among neighborhood groups, community-based organizations, and the police department to strategize on ways to increase the safety of the area's residents. Improving the community's health is also a major focus of UNI. Currently the targeted area is seen as a "food desert," lacking access to fresh produce and healthy foods for purchase. UNI will work with city, civic and neighborhood leadership to improve access to and educate about healthy food options.

EDUCATION

As with most low-income areas, the UNI target area faces a high dropout rate and low academic performance of the residents. Recognizing the link between economic opportunity and educational attainment, UNI will work with neighborhood and community groups to identify the area's greatest needs and strategize on ways to maximize the educational opportunities for area residents and to strengthen the local schools. Of particular interest are quality early and extended learning programs, internships and career building opportunities.



Learn from the people
Plan with the people
Begin with what they have
Build on what they know
When the task is accomplished
The people will remark
We have done it ourselves

- Lao-Tzu Tao Te Ching



PLANNING PROCESS

The Urban Neighborhood Initiative, seeking to listen to interested residents and community stakeholders representing the east side of Kansas City, Missouri, and the identified catchment area, engaged more than 700 residents in 16 community conversations. Participants were asked to share their ideas, dreams, hopes, and aspirations for future development east of Troost. The conversations were held throughout the catchment area with many of them hosted by UNI's Neighborhood Partners Group. The United Way of Greater Kansas City organized and facilitated the conversations with the support of both United Way staff and community volunteers.

These conversations engaged a wide range of individuals across age groups and income levels. This provided excellent input and feedback to the process from which common themes emerged from participants. These themes assisted in the identification of priorities for the future work of UNI.

In addition, UNI's Neighborhood Partners Group shared its action plans and priorities from across the catchment area. This information also served to inform the priorities seen in this Action Agenda.



ACTION AGENDA

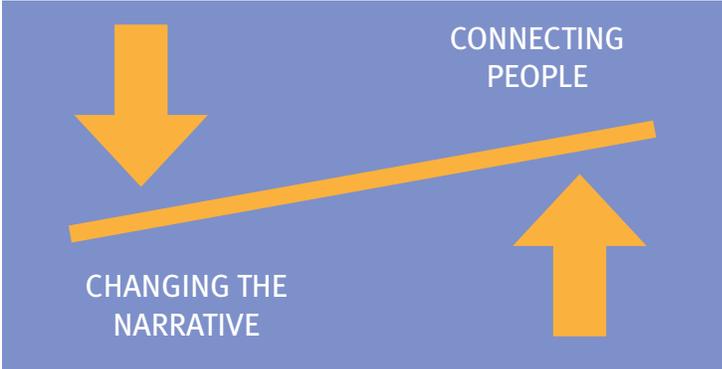
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

Key to the success of this initiative will be connecting people across the region and helping to change the narrative of the area. Accentuating the positives and telling the “real story” about the area and its people are critical steps to accomplishing this. It also will be important that a wide range of stakeholders recognize the interdependence of communities within the region. Paramount to this notion is the value of ensuring that all neighborhoods thrive, and that all residents have an economic stake and voice in the future growth of the region. Bringing people of the region together in support of this initiative will have a positive influence on the economic health of the entire region.

OVERARCHING FEATURES

CONNECTING PEOPLE & CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Essential to the success of this plan will be connecting people and changing the narrative through action on behalf of the targeted area. As such, both of these themes will be thoughtfully integrated throughout this action agenda and seen as a way of doing business to effect lasting change and building community.



SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Equally important to the success of UNI will be establishing a system of accountability and identification of resources, both human and financial, to advance the UNI action agenda. This will require the identification of both long- and short-term actions linked to desired outcomes and regular monitoring.

During the planning phase, neighborhood partners, community stakeholders and the UNI board identified priorities related to revitalizing the identified catchment area. This document outlines those priorities, actions, and strategies and groups them by the UNI areas of emphasis: **Prosperity, Health & Safety, and Education.**

PROSPERITY:

Promote economic development strategies that increase opportunities for low-income residents and working families.

ACTION ONE

STRATEGIES

1. Increase economic opportunity and decrease social disparities within the target area by:

- Creating more jobs for residents and opportunities for employment at livable wages in the area
- Identifying education and training opportunities for adults and career development and/or job opportunities for young adults
- Creating an access point for a comprehensive approach to asset-building supports and services

2. Establish more quality housing within the target area by:

- Attracting mixed income housing and mixed use development to the area
- Strengthening neighborhood restoration and redevelopment of housing and grounds (ex. steps, sidewalks) and infrastructure (ex. curbing, street lighting)

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Promote healthier neighborhoods which seek to improve the health needs of the people and the environment.

ACTION TWO

STRATEGIES

1. Support the development of clean and safe neighborhoods by:
 - Strengthening neighborhood engagement in fighting crime
 - Identifying and/or creating more safe places for recreation and exercise
2. Improve community health by identifying and developing more community resources through:
 - Establishing more healthy food options
 - Providing greater access to technology
 - Supporting the development of community gathering places

EDUCATION:

Promote stronger partnerships between schools, families and community organizations to improve developmental and academic success of those residing in the target area.

ACTION THREE

STRATEGIES

1. Improve the quality of educational opportunities within the target area with an emphasis on birth through career by:
 - Building the capacity of parents and community organizations to support school readiness and early learning
 - Promoting positive development opportunities for school-age children and youth
 - Preparing young people for post-secondary education and careers



MOVING FORWARD

It is clear from this process that Kansas City residents and community stakeholders have an understanding of the issues and challenges that have impacted the stagnant growth and economic development within the Troost Corridor catchment area. Although these same residents and community stakeholders share a sense of optimism that the challenges are not unretractable and with sufficient support and resources – both human and financial – there exists great potential for positive change to occur. However, positive change will not occur without a paradigm shift that views strong, healthy neighborhoods, and resident participation in the economic and social life of the community, as central to the economic competitiveness of the region.

In its report, *Shared Prosperity, Stronger Regions* (2005), PolicyLink identified several lessons that may help maximize efforts to build strong and inclusive cities and regions that have implications for the ultimate success of UNI:

- Build a belief system that is inclusive and broadly and deeply embraced by community leadership across sectors.
- Create a climate where positive change feels possible by nurturing board constituencies that can advocate for the ideas and innovations, where members are committed to learning together, reaching consensus, and making change happen.
- Work smarter with the resources at hand and create new ones. This will require cooperation across bureaucratic silos to systematically organize investments and programs to maximize impact.
- Foster diverse leadership, new capacities, and a supportive infrastructure. This will require the active involvement and collaboration of communities, foundations, and the public and private sectors. In addition, training, technical assistance, opportunities to network and learn from each other are all key to achieving positive and lasting change.

The Urban Neighborhood Initiative, Inc., a new not-for-profit organization, has been established to provide the ongoing leadership and hold the vision of the overall change effort. It will be the role of UNI, Inc. to keep the initiative on track and to make sure the capacity is there to support the goals of the initiative.

The planning phase of UNI revealed many assets to build upon within the Troost Corridor catchment area. However, one of the most important assets identified by those participating in the process was the resiliency and commitment of the people residing in the targeted neighborhoods. In spite of the many challenges and opportunities identified, there continues to exist a strong sense of possibility and hope for the future success of the area. As such, key to the ultimate success of the Urban Neighborhood Initiative will be the ongoing and active involvement of the community. In particular, those who reside in the area should be an integral part in implementing this [Action Agenda: A Plan for Connecting People and Building Community](#).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The leadership of the Urban Neighborhood Initiative would like to thank those who participated in this process of developing an Action Agenda for Kansas City, Missouri. The candid information and insights you provided have already served to inform the process of revitalization by beginning to connect people toward building community.

Thank you also to those who have partnered with us to identify ways UNI may add value to the outstanding work and commitment already being demonstrated in the identified catchment area.

We would like to express our appreciation to UMKC's Center for Economic Information for compiling and mapping the key community indicators for the Troost Corridor.

We are extremely grateful for the unified dedication to change shown by the leadership of the neighborhood associations. It is through their focused efforts during the planning process and joint commitment to this Action Agenda that we are where we are today.

Thank you to the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce for initiating this unprecedented collaboration to address the issues facing the urban core, to develop economic opportunities and create a more vibrant region.

In addition, we would like to thank United Way of Greater Kansas City's Board of Trustees for generously giving of their time and talent to provide the leadership and financial resources necessary during the planning phase and Action Agenda development.

Finally, we would like to thank the Federal Reserve Bank for its generous support in providing the venue for the October 4, 2012, symposium seeking community feedback on this Action Agenda.



For a Greater Kansas City

OCTOBER 2012



United Way of
Greater Kansas City
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