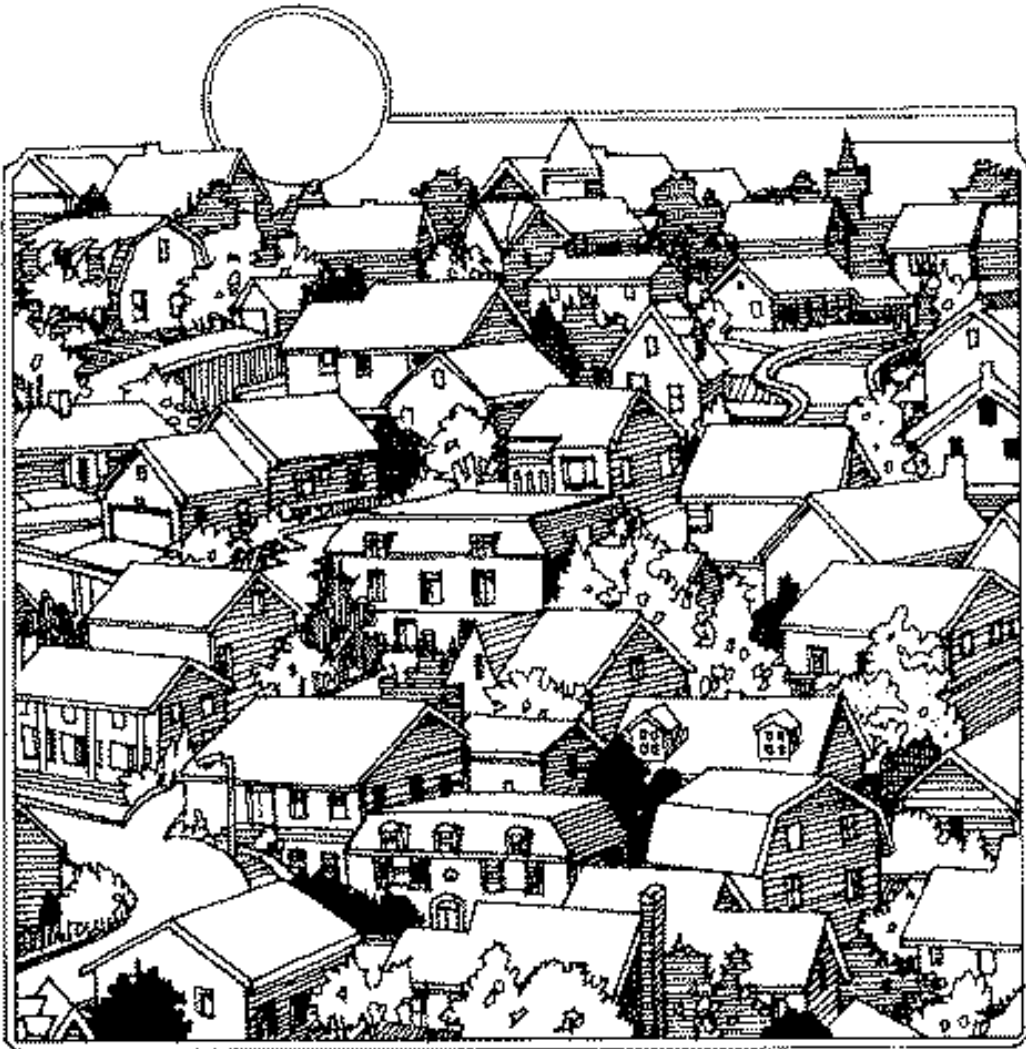


# SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS TASK FORCE REPORT



Approved December 1995  
By the  
Kansas City Consensus Board of Directors

## Consensus

“We put the *public* in public policy”

**2nd Edition - 2002**

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# Executive Summary

## **The Charge**

1. How can we involve people where they live and sustain that involvement to create safe neighborhoods?
2. What menu of tools and models can neighbors use to meet their needs, and how can they become more proactive in putting them into use?
3. What initiatives need to be undertaken in Greater Kansas City to create a metro-wide approach to empowering neighborhoods?

## **Background**

From abandoned neighborhoods to those just emerging from fertile farmlands, residents decry the lost art of neighboring. While neighboring once was taken for granted, today, it is eroding. Individuals, institutions and organizations that once established, monitored, and modified community standards have abdicated responsibility. Seeking respite from our struggle, recognition for our efforts, we turn to our neighbors only to discover they too are exhausted, they too seek solace, they too thought someone else was responsible for maintaining the sense of community that sustains and restores us.

Neighborhoods can be a remarkable resource for us as human beings and for the larger community. As Americans, we have inherited generations of memories and hopes connected to where we live, and a tradition of valuing neighborliness. Life happens on a human scale in neighborhoods. We can grasp the threats and opportunities facing us, and when we take action, we can see the results. A neighborhood is where one person can make a difference, and where leaders are generated.

More than 100 Consensus members and community leaders met in four roundtable sessions to select the issue for the tenth Consensus task force. Participants reviews issues drawn from the COMPASS report, added their own ideas and set priorities. They recommended that the task force study ways to

create safe neighborhoods. They stressed that safety was less a matter of crime patrols and streetlights and much more a matter of social interaction. What we heard was that safe neighborhoods depend on residents who know one another and watch out for one another.

Consensus' tenth task force used a three-step process to study the topic. First, findings were made based on the information gathered and testimony from experts. Second, conclusions were developed based on the findings. Lastly, recommendations were generated which outline specific steps that need to be taken in the community.

The Safe Neighborhoods Task Force represents a distinct effort to better the neighborhoods of the Greater Kansas City area for several reasons:

- It stresses solutions generated by, rather than imposed on, neighborhoods.
- It relies on collaboration rather than confrontation.
- It builds on proven principles.
- It is pertinent to the entire metropolitan area.
- It builds on our strengths.
- It gets us past the old battle between city and suburb.

This task force also is unique because it looked for connections among three major elements that affect neighborhoods: People, Places and Policies. Here's what the three include:

- **People.** The role of individuals in neighborhoods and how neighborhood leadership is generated.
- **Places.** The impact of the built environment on social interaction and the strength of the social fabric in neighborhoods.
- **Policies.** Government policies that have an impact on neighborhoods, and the methods for strengthening the role of neighborhoods in decision making.

## Fact-finding

### People

The institution of neighboring has been with us for thousands of years. Two of the Ten Commandments deal with how we should treat our neighbors, exhorting us to not bear false witness and not covet that which is our neighbors'. (Evidently the one about coveting didn't take, because "keeping up with the Jones" was a common American description of our relationship with the folks next door.)

Popular culture, too, reflects our fascination with the institution of neighboring. Perhaps the most widely known example is Lucy and Ricky Ricardo and Fred and Ethel Mertz. Then there were the Bunkers and the Jeffersons, and most recently the hapless Tim Taylor and Wilson, the wise man across the fence.

So what does it mean to be a neighbor? What is the essence of the institution? On the one hand, it's a business relationship. What your neighbor does affects your safety, your property values, and if they own a dog, the amount of sleep you get at night. On the other hand, the relationship contains the possibility of friendship. Luck has something to do with it, along with a person's willingness to treat others the way he or she would like to be treated.

The task force found much to appreciate in the American history of small towns and neighborhoods. It also found elements like segregation that were – and are – evidence of what has divided us from one another. Task force members spoke warmly about the neighborhoods in which they spent their childhood. One member told of growing up in a small town where each individual had a place. From the town drunk to the mayor (who was sometimes the same person), people were known and valued for who they were. Task force members, no matter what their race or ethnicity, were touched by the same kinds of people and places. Perhaps most of all, they benefited from an environment that was personal rather than impersonal.

Neighboring begins with an individual commitment to get involved. Action happens when individuals take responsibility for the neighborhood. After studying communities across the country, Partners for Livable Places

concluded that the most important element of a livable place is people and that *"a place-based people strategy is the only effective way to make changes for the better."*

A glance at the city council elections in almost any part of the metro area is evidence that neighborhoods produce leaders. Neighborhoods are a natural source of political leaders because both are geographically based, and both neighborhoods and political campaigns depend on getting citizens to take action. Neighborhoods are a natural school for all kinds of community leaders because the natural progression allows people to start small and take on more responsibility as they gain confidence and experience.

Without strong grassroots leadership, neighborhoods may find themselves on the receiving end of ineffective cut-and-paste programs. The Partners for Livable Places found that *"[T]he attempt at replication often plants the seeds of a program in soil that can't support it. Successful local efforts grow out of local needs, local visions and local leadership. They can be inspirations to other communities, but while the concept and the approach travel well enough, the specific program details may not."*

More neighborhood groups have formed because of crime and fear of crime than any other factor. There's a break-in, or a neighbor's car is stolen, or the park across the street attracts drug dealers, and the natural response is to want to do something about it. Once action has been taken to deal with that one incident or problem, however, it may be hard to keep the group together unless crime prevention becomes an ongoing effort or unless the neighborhood group takes on other kinds of projects.

Crime constantly comes out at the top of citizens' lists of most important issues. The emerging wisdom is that crime is a failure of community, and that direct and indirect citizen involvement is most likely to improve a neighborhood.

Both the fear of crime and crime itself appear to be lower in those neighborhoods with relatively higher social cohesion. For example, many offenses, like muggings, vandalism and even break-ins, can be curtailed by a web of

mutual recognition among neighbors. Crime, including gang activity, signals that social institutions in the neighborhood have begun to break down. Community policing is also being instituted elsewhere in the metro area, such as in Kansas City, Kansas.

The concept of community policing can be considered a return to the old method of assigning police officers to beats, where they become part of the neighborhood. It echoes research that shows that social control is least effective when imposed by outside forces. Community controls are strengthened most when informal community-level networks are voluntarily tied to external bureaucracies and other resources, and when they increase client and neighborhood control and break down bureaucratic barriers.

One key to growing successful local programs is communication between and among neighborhoods. Unfortunately, because there are so many neighborhoods in the metro area and their leadership changes constantly, keeping up to date can be an exercise in futility. What often is lost is the chance for neighborhood leaders, on a regular basis, to communicate, compare notes and collaborate.

Neighborhood leaders say they want the opportunity to learn from one another, and that they are starved for the chance to exchange information. Technology, through community computer networks, offers the possibility of increasing communication and the shared base of knowledge.

## Places

The connection between people and the places they hold dear can be a powerful force for change. What our neighborhoods look like determines the strength of this connection to a greater extent than many realize. In some neighborhoods, front porches look out onto the street and sidewalks allow people to walk safely from place to place. In other neighborhoods, houses turn their backs to the street and their faces to the fenced back yard. In these neighborhoods, people who want to connect with their neighbors or their neighborhood must overcome barriers in the way the place is designed.

As in so many other areas, the issue of the physical design of neighborhoods has gotten entangled with the ongoing urban-versus-suburban argument. Society's view of what neighborhoods should look like has become polarized. Many have quit searching for other options, and rely instead on old assumptions about what consumers want. Do people living in postwar urban and suburban areas really want neighborhoods designed to isolate them, or is that the only option available? What possibilities exist to increase the beauty and neighborliness of all our neighborhoods?

Before Europeans came to America, Native Americans had created dwellings and villages that adapted to and celebrated nature and created a sense of community. Then, Europeans brought the grid plan with them and superimposed that onto America. They kept a connection with nature, building front porches and sidewalks, and shopping that was decentralized so that people could walk to it. With the grid design, even outsiders could find their way through most neighborhoods, and residents had many options for getting from one place to another.

After World War II, our reliance on automobiles disconnected Americans from traditional design principles. Neighborhoods were no longer laid out on easy-to-follow grids, but become subdivisions with curving streets and cul-de-sacs (planners call this the "dead worm" design) that could be nearly impossible for an outsider to navigate. Front porches and sidewalks all but disappeared. Giant shopping malls catered to people who wanted to drive rather than walk.

In the race for low-density development, Greater Kansas City is out in front with some of the lowest housing density in the nation. The result is a close approximation of the American ideal, sardonically described by urban planner Robert Freilich as "*a rural lifestyle supported by a job which earns an urban income 5 minutes away from the city with no traffic.*" The cost of low-density development is paid for in increased cost per capita for municipal services, public safety, utilities and transportation infrastructure.

The society we have built around the automobile also has implications for who we are

as human beings. For example, a recent comparison study of 10 year olds in a small town in Vermont and a new suburb of Orange County showed that the Vermont kids had three times the mobility (distance and places they could get to on their own) of the California kids, while the Orange County kids watched four times as much TV as their counterparts in Vermont.

The difference between tradition and nostalgia is that traditions are rooted in timeless impulses. Traditions are strong enough to evolve over time, or to be transported from one place to another, because they possess certain formal, cultural and personal principles. Nostalgia seeks the security of the past forms without those inherent principles.

While some elements of the traditional American town have been lost forever, there are principles that express fundamental characteristics of place and culture, which architect Peter Calthorpe believes should be preserved. These include:

- walkable streets that lead to close and useful destinations, and fronted by porches, balconies and entries.
- diversity of use and users, with connections among uses that are walkable, close and direct.
- a center that integrates commercial, recreational and civic life.

If we could start from scratch, what would neighborhoods look like? What physical design would make our neighborhoods more safe, more neighborly and more attractive? We may have a sense that something is missing, but we don't have a picture of the missing piece. We have a limited menu of options for neighborhood design.

A new way of looking at neighborhoods is to view them as complex living organisms rather than simple machines. This is the view of the ecological model, which incorporates the idea of sustainable communities. An ecological model recognizes complexity and encourages diversity, interdependence and sustainability. The ecological model has implications for economies of scale of delivery of public services and the policies that shape them.

Proponents of the ecological model say that the alternative to sprawl is simple and

timely: neighborhoods of housing, parks and schools placed within walking distance of shops, civic services, jobs and transit -- a modern version of the traditional town.

## Policies

The institution with the biggest impact on neighborhoods is city government. City government determines the location of streetlights, the level of maintenance of the physical infrastructure and the role of neighborhoods in decision making. While neighborhoods can lay claim to some city resources, access depends on knowing how to negotiate the system or enlisting someone who can help them get what they need. It's no wonder that neighborhoods and city government become, if not adversarial, then at least mutually befuddled.

The root of many problems that afflict neighborhood / government relations is the undefined role of neighborhoods in civic life. Like councilmanic districts, neighborhoods find themselves in direct competition with other neighborhoods for city attention, resources and funding. Unlike councilmanic districts, neighborhoods rarely have an officially recognized means for agreeing upon priorities. Decisions, neighborhood leaders say, are made case-by-case rather than according to some comprehensive plan or rational process.

While this is true within cities, it is especially true when more than one jurisdiction is involved. As always, the state line and the number of separate jurisdictions within the metro area are an obstacle to metro-wide coordination. So, while neighborhoods in Independence may face similar issues as those in Kansas City, Kansas, the odds that they will work together are pretty slim. While some organizations reach out to neighborhoods in more than one jurisdiction, there is no permanent, stable means to bring metro-area neighborhoods together.

In 1993, the Brookings Institution released a study that was the result of examining neighborhood organizations throughout the nation. The five cities in which the Brookings Institution found exemplary systems are Birmingham, Dayton, Portland, San Antonio and St. Paul. Each of the five cities developed their neighborhood policies / practices in the mid

1970's. Before that, neighborhood group members *"always had to stand on the outside of the public policy process, knocking on the door and trying to get in."*

Today the Brookings Institution found, the groups are *"organized in every neighborhood of the city; they have regular two-way channels to and from city hall; they have comparatively extensive support staff, training opportunities, technical assistance and neighborhood offices; and they are empowered to act on behalf of the residents (and local businesses) in their neighborhood."*

The Brookings Institution found that to build effective programs, a community must meet three conditions:

1. Exclusive powers must be turned over to the citizen participation structure.
2. A city administrator must create sanctions and rewards for city hall administrators who interact with neighborhood groups.
3. Citizen participation systems must be citywide.

Researchers also identified several other structural features that will increase effectiveness, like control over some significant discretionary dollars, short terms of office for volunteer leaders, money for newsletters, prohibitions from involvement in partisan politics, etc.

## **Conclusions**

After defining, discussing, and debating the problems of neighborhoods, the task force divided its conclusions into the three main elements of people, places, and policies. The following is a brief synopsis of the conclusions.

### **People**

- Empowered neighborhoods should be nurtured as a resource. Often untapped, this resource provides leadership, energy, and simple human decency.
- Neighbors in cities and suburbs are more alike than different. Even though problems vary in cities and suburbs, each wants safe and attractive surroundings.
- Neighbors should seek out ways to make a

difference. One person can make an impression in a neighborhood if the willingness and resources are present.

- With training, local neighborhoods can be the most effective in the country. A neighborhood is as effective as the people in it, which necessitates training and development skills.
- Institutions should support neighborhoods. The governmental, private, and religious sectors need to examine their impact, or lack thereof, on neighborhoods in the communities they are involved with.
- Diversity is an important element in creating a well-rounded neighborhood. Learning from others offers an educational opportunity for families that can not always be learned in a classroom.
- Technology should be used to improve communication. Internal and external communication needs to be heightened in order to share successes and failures of other communities. New technology should be utilized in order to create a tool for increasing the capacity of neighborhoods.

### **Places**

- Neighborhoods should reflect American design traditions. There are three elements of traditional American towns – walkable streets fronted by porches, diversity of use and users, and a center that integrates neighborhood life. These elements should remain the framework around which neighborhoods are designed.
- New options for neighborhood design should be explored. Alternatives in the way neighborhoods are designed should reflect cultural changes in resources, technology, knowledge and attitudes. These changes, combined with traditional American towns, could provide the best neighborhood environment.
- The safety triangle, which is a strategic alliance of at least three places within walking distance of one another, provides a safety zone for neighborhoods. These places could include schools, community centers, homes, churches, libraries, or parks and can be used for locations of social interaction.
- Deciding what we want and do not want to live by should be considered by individual neighborhoods. NIMBYs - the "not in my backyard" syndrome - need to be examined when dealing with undesirable places such as landfills,

adult entertainment establishments and liquor stores.

## **Policies**

- Within cities, the role of neighborhoods should be strengthened. When brought into decision making, organized neighborhoods have a great deal to offer to citizens, government, and the broader community. Increasing the roles of neighborhoods would allow for expanded outcomes.
- Neighborhoods and city hall should collaborate. When neighborhoods and leaders approach their city government, it should be as a partner and a resource. Problem solving can become a combined effort with input from neighborhoods, citizens and government alike.
- Staff is necessary to leverage the work of neighbors. One staff member can leverage the work of scores of volunteers who might otherwise be unable to reach their objectives. An investment of staff, and in increasing the skill level of current staff at city halls or at independent organizations, is an investment in healthy neighborhoods.
- Neighborhoods should collaborate with other neighborhoods. Without citywide structures for neighborhood participation, neighborhoods lose many of the opportunities to work with one another. Neighborhoods should seek alliances with each other, public agencies, professional and charitable organizations, commercial investors, employers and service providers.
- Services to neighborhoods should be decentralized. Decentralizing services, putting them into neighborhoods, reintroduces a key element of the traditional neighborhood support system and forms one corner of the safety triangle mentioned earlier.

## **Recommendations**

### **One. Establish a Metro-Wide Council of Neighborhoods**

A council, consisting of neighborhood leaders throughout the entire metropolitan area, should be established in order to institute formal communications between neighborhoods, local governments and elected officials. The council would also develop standard operating principles that would govern the roles and responsibilities for

neighborhoods as well as putting the principles in place.

### **Two. Establish a Clearinghouse for Neighborhood Leadership**

A clearinghouse for neighborhood leadership should be established to provide technical assistance, training and accreditation for neighborhood leaders. The clearinghouse would work with neighborhood associations throughout the metropolitan area to develop and adopt some standard practices to increase neighborhood effectiveness.

The practices will be recommended by the clearinghouse, in collaboration with neighborhood leaders, and would address how officers are elected, their terms, how meetings are conducted and how the neighborhood collaborates with other neighborhoods and institutions.

### **Three. Educate Municipalities about Neighborhoods.**

As local municipalities need to be aware of the importance of strong neighborhoods, a program should be established to help educate municipalities in this area. The program should help city governments learn how, specifically, to involve neighborhoods and what city government can do to strengthen neighborhoods and the working relationship with city hall.

### **Four. Increase Linkages among Neighborhoods.**

Neighborhood leaders need access to information from other neighborhoods, but the large number of neighborhood associations in the metro area make communications difficult. Communications and other systems should be put in place to increase the linkages among neighborhoods. This could be accomplished by creating computer bulletin boards, establishing sister cities, focusing on common issues between neighborhoods, and holding an annual neighborhood convention.

### **Five. Produce a Neighborhood Campaign.**

In order to raise the profile of neighborhood organizations in Greater Kansas City, a collaborative should be formed that would include

various organizations that already work in neighborhoods. These organizations could include private businesses, educational facilities, and religious institutions that all hold a stake in the success of their communities.

### **Six. Create Options for Neighborhood Design.**

Physical layout of neighborhoods is extremely important of the success of community involvement. Various organizations, such as the American Institute of Architects and the American Planning Association identify options for the design of local neighborhoods that encourage social interactions and sustainability. These groups should identify the barriers that inhibit neighborhood involvement and recommend steps to overcome those barriers.

### ***About the Consensus Safe Neighborhoods Task Force***

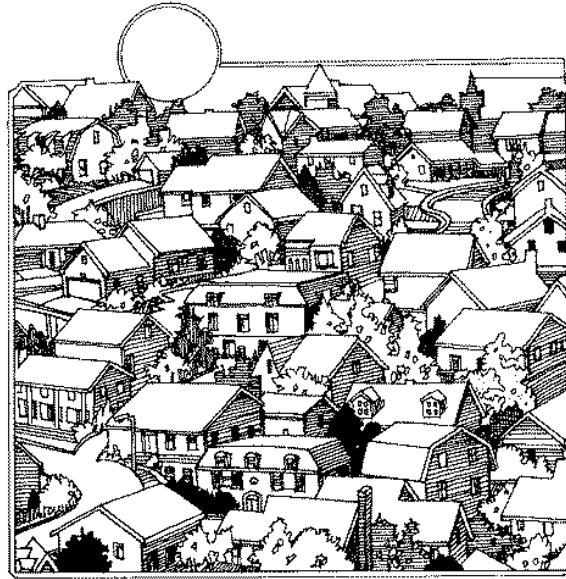
Safe Neighborhoods Task Force volunteers met every other week for about eight months. The task force is especially proud that

its members truly represent the diversity of the metro area, including strong participation from the Northland and Johnson County, groups that often are underrepresented in discussions about neighborhoods. This task force report represents the consensus of the group, although individual members may disagree with one point or another.

The Safe Neighborhoods Advisory Committee consisted of 18 persons whose work intersects with the issue of neighborhood involvement. The task force is grateful for the assistance provided by the Advisory Committee. The task force was also fortunate to have the chance to learn from other local experts who contributed their time and expertise. Their appearance before the task force provided important information.

Richard Farnan, HNTB Corporation, served as Chairperson and Ken Bayer, Business Temporary Services, served as Vice Chairperson of the task force. Writing of the report was done primarily by Consensus program director Jennifer Wilding, who also did research and provided general staff support for the task force.

## **Safe Neighborhoods Task Force Report**



Approved December 1995  
By the  
Kansas City Consensus Board of Directors

## **INTRODUCTION**

From abandoned neighborhoods to those just emerging from fertile farmlands, residents decry the lost art of neighboring. While neighboring was once taken for granted, today, it is eroding. Individuals, institutions and organizations that once established, monitored and modified community standards have abdicated responsibility. Seeking respite from our struggle, recognition for our efforts, we turn to our neighbors only to discover they are too exhausted, they too seek solace, they too thought someone else was responsible for maintaining a sense of community that sustains and restores us.

Neighborhoods can be remarkable resources for us as human beings and for the larger community. As Americans, we have inherited generations of memories and hopes connected to where we live, and a tradition of valuing neighborliness. Life happens on a human scale in neighborhoods. We can grasp the threats and opportunities facing us, and when we take action, we can see the results. A neighborhood is where one person can make a difference, and where leaders are generated.

## ***The Safe Neighborhoods Task Force Supports the Vision of the Child Opportunity Capital***

From 1990 to 1992, Kansas City Consensus sponsored the COMPASS project. COMPASS worked with thousands of citizens to produce a vision and goals that could unite a divided metropolitan area. Volunteers listened to people talk about the community's strengths and needs, and their personal values and visions for the future. The COMPASS Steering Committee convened town meetings at which citizens set priorities, and work teams studied the top priorities. They found that the common thread was our community's children.

The result was the vision of Greater Kansas City as the *Child Opportunity Capital*, where the quality of our children's future is the measure of our success. The vision statement said that Greater Kansas City would be a place where children have a personal vision of what they can accomplish in life, parents are advocates for their children, and "every neighborhood nurtures the souls of the people who live there, providing a secure community where children are safe to explore, where neighborliness prevails, where there is physical beauty and a feeling of connectedness."

The project also produced five goals, aimed at strengthening families, neighborhoods, jobs, education and working across all boundaries. [*For the full text of the vision and goals, see Appendix A.*] Goal Two reads:

**Our community will empower neighborhoods.** Just one person can have a profound effect on a neighborhood. When neighbors unite almost anything as possible if they are supported by the larger community. Therefore, neighbors on every block in every neighborhood will have what they need to create a wholesome environment, with safe streets, good homes and attractive surroundings.

The project painted a picture of what neighborhoods could be.

*Imagine a neighborhood where children can play without fear, where what color you are or what color you're wearing makes no difference at all, where grown-ups watch to make sure every child is safe. This is the kind of place where children learn to explore, to be curious, to trust. To some children, this kind of neighborhood is beyond their imagination.*

Consensus has worked since the close of the COMPASS project in 1992 to put the vision and goals into action. [*For more information about Consensus activities, see Appendix B.*] In 1993, we brought Consensus members and community leaders together to select the issue for the next Consensus task force.

## ***About Consensus Task Forces***

Consensus believes that citizens can and should have a say in decisions that affect their lives. Since the organization began in 1984, we have brought citizens together in task forces to identify, study and recommend action on issues.

Consensus task forces have produced specific, measurable results on nine issues, among them urban redevelopment, bi-state funding for culture and recreation, child care, cooperation among school districts, race relations, solid waste management, voting by mail and public funding for higher education. Laws have been changed, programs improved or put in place, and citizens educated as a result of Consensus task forces.

Task forces use a model that begins with information gathering and ends with producing specific recommendations for action. First, the task force members make findings. They read information and hear from experts in the field. Second, the task force develops conclusions based on the findings. Conclusions are value judgments that express how the task force believes the issue should be approached. Third, the task force generates recommendations. The recommendations are the specific steps that need to be taken in the community.

The Safe Neighborhoods Task Force was composed of regular citizens who care about neighborhoods and who were willing to devote the time and energy to learning about the issue. They were supported by professional staff, and drew upon the knowledge of people who are at the forefront of the issues in Greater Kansas City. *[To learn who served on the Safe Neighborhoods Task Force and who spoke to the task force, see Appendix C.]*

After the task force finishes its work, Consensus commits to spend 12 months working to put the recommendations into action.

## ***How the Issue of Safe Neighborhoods Was Selected***

More than 100 Consensus members and community leaders met in four roundtable sessions to select the issue for the tenth Consensus task force. Participants reviewed issues drawn from the COMPASS report, added their own ideas and set priorities. They recommended that the task force study ways to create safe neighborhoods. They stressed that safety was less a matter of crime patrols and streetlights and much more a matter of social interaction. What we heard was that safe neighborhoods depend on residents who know one another and watch out for one another.

## ***The Charge to the Kansas City Consensus Safe Neighborhoods Task Force***

1. How can we involve people where they live and sustain that involvement to create safe neighborhoods?
2. What menu of tools and models can neighbors use to meet their needs, and how can they become more proactive in putting them into use?
3. What initiatives need to be undertaken in Greater Kansas City to create a metro-wide approach to empowering neighborhoods?

## ***What Defines the Task Force Approach***

The Kansas City Consensus Safe Neighborhoods Task Force is distinct for several reasons:

- ***It stresses solutions generated by, rather than imposed on, neighborhoods.*** Cookie-cutter solutions don't work. Solutions that work start by building infrastructure, then get neighborhoods working together to decide what needs to be done and how to do it. One neighborhood can benefit by learning how another neighborhood handled a problem, but when neighbors generate their own solutions, they have ownership and a stake in what happens. Those solutions, then, are more likely to succeed.
- ***It relies on collaboration rather than confrontation.*** In the past, neighbors often have come together as opponents, reacting to crime or proposed development or the latest NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) project. There always will be conflict and opposing views. However, neighborhood action is more effective in the long term when it does more than fight a common foe. People react and oppose when they feel powerless to create. The task force approach is to incorporate neighborhoods into the legitimate leadership of this community, with specific rights and duties that generate positive action rather than negation reaction.
- ***It builds on proven principles.*** Rather than offer a laundry list of how-to tips, the task force looked at the underlying principles that determine how leaders lead and neighborhoods organize and metro areas create empowered neighborhoods. These principles allow us to create policies and programs for our unique community, and can be used by policy makers and neighborhood activist to spark their own ideas.
- ***It is pertinent to the entire metropolitan area.*** Usually, neighborhood issues are considered specific to the urban core. The charge to the task force, however, taps into the universal human need to feel attached to the community and responds to a specific, program-oriented need targeted by experts from urban and suburban communities.
- ***It builds on our strengths.*** Greater Kansas City is blessed with some incredible neighborhood leaders and with organizations that are at the forefront of issues related to neighborhoods, families and safety. We have learned a great deal from organizations like Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils, Project Neighbor-H.O.O.D., the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance and Local Investment Support Corporations, along with the individuals who devote their time and energy to improving their neighborhoods. You will see their work cited throughout this report. The goal of the task force is to build on what we have and add what's missing to take the metro area to the next level of neighborhood action. [*To learn more about organizations that serve neighborhoods in Greater Kansas City, see Appendix D.*]
- ***It gets us past the old battle between city and suburb.*** While we recognize that cities and suburbs are distinct from one another, we do not see those distinctions as a *call to arms*. The task force was composed of neighborhood leaders and concerned citizens from urban and suburban communities who were eager to work together. Out of that dialogue emerged recommendations that build on the strengths of both.

## ***People, Places and Policies Are the Framework***

This task force also is unique because it looked for connections among three major elements that affect neighborhoods: People, Places and Policies. Here's what the three include:

- **People.** The role of individuals in neighborhoods and how neighborhood leadership is generated.

- **Places.** The impact of the built environment on social interaction and the strength of the social fabric in neighborhoods.
- **Policies.** Government policies that have an impact on neighborhoods, and the methods for strengthening the role of neighborhoods in decision making.

## ***What Defines a Neighborhood***

In a way, neighborhoods are for metro area residents what the traditional town is to New Englanders -- the fundamental building block of society.

Researchers at the Brookings Institution traced the rise of neighborhoods in America:

*Neighborhood groups have been an important factor in American political life since the turn of the century. They gained recognition first through the settlement house movement and later in civic clubs and neighborhoods improvement associations, in the community organizing of Saul Alinsky, in urban renewal committees of the 1950s, and in poverty programs of the 1960s, in the organizing projects of the “new left”, and finally in what has been called the “new populism” of the 1970s. Many see this last wave of neighborhood activity as a direct expression of and reaction to the strident calls for participatory democracy made during the late 1960s. This is when the key organizational forms that energized the strong democratic communities were initiated.*

What does that building block -- THE NEIGHBORHOOD -- include? How do we define it? The task force used the definition developed by the comprehensive planning project called FOCUS Kansas City:

***The neighborhood is “an area of a community with characteristics that distinguish it from other areas and that may include distinct ethnic or economic characteristics, housing types, schools, or boundaries defined by physical barriers or natural features.”***

For example, Kansas City, Missouri has 240 distinct geographic neighborhoods and some 515 organized and registered neighborhood groups, homes associations or block clubs.

The task force questioned whether to use the word “neighborhood” at all. They were concerned that the word “neighborhood” might be meaningless to suburban residents, who are more accustomed to the concept of subdivisions. While the task force stuck with the term “neighborhood” because of it is traditional in American life, we recognize that it may not speak to everyone equally.

# PEOPLE -- FACT FINDING

*I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.*

*Thomas Jefferson*

## **Neighborhoods Are Where Community Begins**

If as a young person you ever whacked a baseball through a neighbor's window or backed the family car over a neighbor's mailbox, you surely know that it is in neighborhoods where we begin to take responsibility for our actions. By the same token, if a neighbor has ever shoveled snow off your sidewalk or brought in your mail when you were out of town, you know that neighborhoods depend on people caring for one another. In neighborhoods, human beings learn to live in social space. In neighborhoods, people find role models and friends, and learn the power of small gestures and everyday courtesies. These behaviors and attitudes are hallmarks of a sense of community.

John Gardner, a founder of Common Cause, says that it is in communities that individuals develop identity and a sense of belonging:

*It is in communities that values are generated and regenerated. With the disintegration of communities comes disintegration of shared values -- and leadership of the sort we seek and respect is made very much more difficult. It is community and culture that hold the individual in a framework of values; when the framework disintegrates, individual value systems disintegrate.*

Without a sense of community, Gardner says, individuals experience "a loss of meaning, a sense of powerlessness. They lose the conviction that they can influence the events of their lives or the life of the community (non-community) in which they live."

Neighborhoods offer the means within which people can build or rebuild a sense of community.

## **"Hidey Ho, Good Neighbor!"**

The institution of neighboring has been with us for thousands of years. Two of the Ten Commandments deal with how we should treat our neighbors, exhorting us to not bear false witness and not covet that which is our neighbors'. (Evidently the one about coveting didn't take, because "keeping up with the Jones" was a common American description of our relationship with the folks next door.)

Popular culture, too, reflects our fascination with the institution of neighboring. Perhaps the most widely known example is Lucy and Ricky Ricardo and Fred and Ethel Mertz. Then there were the Bunkers and the Jeffersons, and most recently the hapless Tim Taylor and Wilson, the wise man across the fence.

So what does it mean to be a neighbor? What is the essence of the institution? On the one hand, it's a business relationship. What your neighbor does affects your safety, your property values, and if they own a dog, the amount of sleep you get at night. On the other hand, the relationship contains the possibility of

friendship. Luck has something to do with it, along with a person's willingness to treat others the way he or she would like to be treated.

Social scientist Constance Perin compares the institution to that of the family. You don't get to choose your parents, and similarly, while you choose your neighborhood, who your neighbors are is left up to chance.

*From the neighborhood, a territory in the natural world, flow social connections as unchosen as those supplied by blood and marriage. Vows taken in the neighborhood social contract are as binding: "Love thy neighbor." "Keep up with the mowing and painting." "Take in the trash cans." "Don't park here." Sharing territory confers consubstantiality: that is, in sharing common ground, people believe themselves to share common substance, analogous to [kin].*

As Mary Williams-Neal says, "What makes a good neighborhood is people being good neighbors." Williams-Neal, former director of property management for Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance, is currently a Kansas City Councilwoman.

*[To learn about John Gardner's "Conditions that Make Community Real", see Appendix G, the People Appendix.]*

## **Types of Neighborhoods Vary Based on Three Elements of Interaction**

Three elements of interaction can be used to differentiate types of neighborhoods, from homogeneous neighborhoods, like a suburb or housing project, that has little interaction with the larger community, to a neighborhood with strong ties within its boundaries and between neighborhood and the outside world. The three elements of interaction include:

1. **Degree of Identity:** How much do people feel they belong to and share a common destiny, a sense of neighborhood consciousness?
2. **Degree of Interaction:** How often and with what number of neighbors do people visit and interact in one year?
3. **Nature of Outside Linkages:** What channels exist between residents and outside groups or those who bring outside news into the neighborhood?

## **Sorting Out The Past**

The task force found much to appreciate in the American history of small towns and neighborhoods. It also found elements like segregation that were -- and are -- evidence of what has divided us from one another. A challenge to the task force has been to give life to the positive elements while acknowledging and moving beyond what is painful from the past.

Task force members spoke warmly about the neighborhoods in which they spent their childhood. One member told of growing up in a small town where each individual had a place. From the town drunk to the mayor (who was sometimes the same person), people were known and valued for who they were. Another member talked about the ladies on his block who had a sixth sense about when he'd gotten into mischief. First the neighbor ladies scolded him, then they talked to his mother who scolded him again. Task force

members, no matter what their race or ethnicity, were touched by the same kinds of people and places. Perhaps most of all, they benefited from an environment that was personal rather than impersonal.

And the memories also could be painful. Almost all members of the task force grew up in neighborhoods that were segregated, if not by law, then by fact. Jewish people lived among Jewish people, African-Americans among African-Americans, Caucasians among Caucasians. Laws and practices like redlining and restrictive covenants determined who lived where.

Today many people, including members of the task force, believe the ideal neighborhood should include many different people - people different in age, race, income and lifestyle. They find a richness of experience in these neighborhoods that doesn't exist in homogenous neighborhoods. Differences, though, can be a barrier to understanding if they are not explored and managed. Until that is done, neighbors will fall back on formal, impersonal methods of interaction rather than the person-to-person approach.

For example, one study examined immigrant neighborhoods at the turn of the century, where people in ethnically diverse neighborhoods didn't share -- or didn't assume they shared -- the same values. The study found that neighbors were less likely to interact or take action, like scolding a neighbor's child, when they weren't sure what values they had in common. Differences in income also affect how neighbors interact. Other research shows, for poor people, neighbors are more important because they have fewer alternatives for support. Neighboring is a function of need. Wealthier persons talk with more of their neighbors, but poor persons have neighbor relationships with more intensity.

Whether remembered with fondness or fear, the neighborhoods in which we spend our childhood do much to shape who we become and thus have a tremendous impact on society.

## ***Families in Neighborhoods***

In the early Middle Ages, when communities were threatened by the crime of the highwaymen, Thomas Hobbes wrote the *Leviathan* to explore the idea of civil arrangements that govern how people live together. Beth Noble, professor of education at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, told the task force that the violence of that period was similar to our own. *"The neighborhood is, therefore, a space which is sacred,"* she said. *"The civil relations we have with each other are based on various agreements we hold about families and children . . . The easiest way to tell if a neighborhood is a good place for children and families is the visible presence of children and of families and individuals walking the streets."*

As sociologist Constance Perin points out, "neighboring" waxes and wanes throughout the life cycle. She says that friendships of mothers and children on the block are cherished signs of a strong sense of neighborhood. *"When mothers take turns greeting children after school and children rotate sleep-overs, they epitomize the difference between belonging and not belonging to a neighborhood: trust is strong enough to support bridges between households."*

The task force used a broad definition of "family," one that was created by the Coalition for Positive Family Relationships, which defines a family as "two or more individuals who affiliate to address one another's needs."

How families experience the neighborhood is affected by how they view life and where they see themselves fitting into the larger world.

*[To find out more about the combination of factors that affect families in neighborhoods, see Appendix G, the People Appendix.]*

## ***The Impact of Home Owners and Renters on Neighborhoods***

Although mortgage interest is one of the few major income tax deductions remaining to the average American, and owning a home is the centerpiece of the American Dream, home ownership is far from universal.

Suburban communities have the advantage over the urban core on this issue. Home ownership rates are 40 percent higher in the suburbs than in the core. The core's housing vacancy rate grew 41 percent over the last decade to 14.5 percent, more than twice that of the suburbs, which is 6.3 percent. One out of six urban-core housing units is vacant compared with about one in 16 suburban units.

A low rate of home ownership has consequences for neighborhoods. Home ownership creates a personal stake in the neighborhood, and is a powerful motivator for people to take action to protect their interests. Neighborhoods with a high rate of owners are more stable, which is important because the more transient the population, the weaker the social fabric and higher the crime rate.

The standard response to a decline in home ownership is to offer housing incentives, most of which are based on income. However, a report on the urban core produced by the Mid-America Regional Council cited Oliver Byrum, writing in *Old Problems in New Times*, who says that housing incentives "*should not be tied to income because the goal is not to reduce the income profile of the neighborhood, but to strengthen a neighborhood in the metropolitan marketplace before self-fulfilling prophecies of decline begin, and serious investment gaps begin to feed the downward spiral.*"

Along with increasing the number of homeowners, there are options for increasing neighborhood stability. One alternative is to change the role of renters in the neighborhood. Renters, many of whom are single people, report feeling like outsiders in neighborhoods and in neighborhood organizations, and say they are sometimes looked down upon and excluded by home owners. But, like home owners, renters want to live in a safe, secure and attractive neighborhood. While their financial stake is less, renters do have a stake in the neighborhood. Renters can be a resource for the neighborhood, but only if they are welcomed into its activities.

Landlords too can play a positive role in the neighborhood. While some landlords clearly do not care about how they affect a neighborhood, there are others who screen tenants and keep the property clean and well-maintained. People in some neighborhoods go out of their way to encourage that kind of landlord. For example, a neighborhood in Independence, Missouri, publicly recognizes landlords who contribute to the neighborhood.

Other landlords go beyond just providing a place to live for their tenants. Mickey Golston founded the Midtown Managers Association Against Crime to make her tenants feel safe and cared for. "*I want to bring our community back to where people have values,*" she told the *Kansas City Star*. The organization includes about 35 managers of apartment buildings, about half of whom offer publicly assisted housing. Managers have encouraged tenants to join literacy programs and helped tenants with drug problems get into rehab programs. They have even raised money for scholarships. Landlords like Golston help create a feeling of neighborhood within an apartment building.

## ***Neighbors Working Together To Take Action***

Neighboring begins with an individual commitment to get involved. Action happens when individuals take responsibility for the neighborhood. After studying communities across the country, Partners for Livable Places concluded that the most important element of a livable place is people and that "*a place-based people strategy is the only effective way to make changes for the better.*"

So how does this happen? The Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils has built an international reputation on its ability to build relationships within the 42 neighborhoods that comprise Independence, Missouri. People who are active in the Independence Plan take personal responsibility for their neighborhood. The Valley View neighborhood is one example.

It began with a group of Valley View neighborhood ladies who started meeting occasionally for breakfast. Later they decided to do more. They started the “We Care” program, the goal of which was to visit neighbors to check in and be sure they were okay. One afternoon the We Care ladies knocked on the door of a woman none of them knew. The woman mentioned that her birthday was that weekend, and that she hadn’t celebrated her birthday since her husband died three years prior. On Saturday, the ladies came back, this time with a card and cake and a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday”. That woman was so touched by the kindness that she joined We Care and eventually become the leader of the project.

Steve Zahner, program coordinator for the Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils, cites a Gallop poll showing that two out of three people will get involved if:

- The right person ask them.
- The cause or task is meaningful.
- They know exactly what’s expected of them.
- They have a support system of people who will help them succeed.

What keeps people from getting involved? Lack of time is a big barrier, the task force heard, and the perception that neighborhood involvement can be frustrating. There are neighborhoods where the same group of people have used the organization as their own personal fiefdoms for years, shutting out new people or those with different ideas. We also heard about neighborhoods where people wanted to make a difference, but they lacked the skills -- in relating to others, running a meeting, or negotiating the political system -- that would have let them succeed.

However, when people follow the example of the Valley View neighbor ladies, or the thousand of other folks who act in the common good, they get the chance to combat the sense of powerlessness that afflicts so many people, and they see that they make a difference.

## ***Locating Resources***

Resources exist for neighborhoods that want to organize, or that need information on how to run a meeting or how to incorporate, and the like. Where to go for that information depends on the location of the neighborhood, since most programs are geographically based. In general though, the best place to start is the local City Hall, in the neighborhood development department or with the city staff person who works with neighborhood.

## ***Focusing on Strengths Rather than Needs***

Mike Eichler is president of the Consensus Organizing Institute in Boston, and has spent years as an organizer in Pittsburgh and for the Local Investment Support Corporation. Consensus organizing is built on the idea that focusing on intangibles, like building human capacity, produces tangible results.

Consensus organizing works to achieve three results:

1. Leadership development within the community.
2. Support in the wider community by building on self-interest of the neighborhood and businesses.

### 3. Development of a sustainable relationship between the neighborhood and its outside supporters.

The best way to do that, Eichler says, is by identifying strengths rather than needs.

*In the past, neighborhoods got resources based on their ability to demonstrate need. If you showed how lousy your community was, you'd get money to improve it. You still have people in the neighborhood who believe their job is to tell you how bad they have it. People in low-income neighborhoods have seldom seen resources come in based on their strengths. They're not used to telling people, "We have strengths." Neighborhoods get our money because they identify an opportunity. It begins to sink in that you can get resources by acting differently -- by coming up with strength and building on it. That's how middle-income communities get resources every day. In low-income communities they have been trained to say, "It's terrible here, now you need to help us." No middle-class person respects that. No business person respects that . . . Neighborhoods make connections to the greater community through respect. The connection is extremely powerful and it's what improves the community.*

The Valley View example also shows us that, in neighborhoods, the path from subject to participant to leader can be quite short.

*For tips on organizing a neighborhood, produced by the Neighborhood Conservation program of the City of Overland Park, Kansas, see Appendix G, the People Appendix.*

*To learn the process used in the 18th and Quindaro neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas, see Appendix G, the People Appendix.*

## **Leadership, Action and Confidence Reinforce One Another**

A glance at the city council elections in almost any part of the metro area is evidence that neighborhoods produce leaders. Neighborhoods are a natural source of political leaders because both are geographically based, and both neighborhoods and political campaigns depend on getting citizens to take action. Neighborhoods are a natural school for all kinds of community leaders because the natural progression allows people to start small and take on more responsibility as they gain confidence and experience.

Dave Olson, director of Leadership Training, Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance, told the task force that as individuals we rarely think of ourselves as leaders. *"But leaders are just people who have followers. That's it. The big deal is in the relationship between the leader and the follower. The relationship should move from 'I do things for you' to 'We do things together.' That helps people be independent and work with others."*

Strong leadership gives a neighborhood confidence. Neighborhood confidence is the conviction on the part of residents and others in touch with the neighborhood that change will not come at a rate or in ways that prevent neighborhood social norms from controlling events.

Without strong grassroots leadership, neighborhoods may find themselves on the receiving end of ineffective cut-and-paste programs. The Partners for Livable Places found that *"[T]he attempt at replication often plants the seeds of a program in soil that can't support it. Successful local efforts grow out of local needs, local visions and local leadership. They can be inspirations to other communities, but while the concept and the approach travel well enough, the specific program details may not."*

Growing successful local programs means that the local community must support leadership, and that the leaders must have the chance to learn and practice the skills necessary to lead.

To learn about the Partners for Livable Places' three part approach for generating local leadership, see Appendix G, the People Appendix.

To learn what John Gardner says are the five essential skills for community leaders, see Appendix G, the People Appendix.

## **Communication Makes More Effective Neighborhoods**

One key to growing successful local programs is communication between and among neighborhoods. Unfortunately, because there are so many neighborhoods in the metro area and their leadership changes constantly, keeping up to date can be an exercise in futility. What often is lost is the chance for neighborhood leaders, on a regular basis, to communicate, compare notes and collaborate.

Neighborhood leaders say they want the opportunity to learn from one another, and that they are starved for the chance to exchange information. Technology, through community computer networks, offers the possibility of increasing communication and the shared base of knowledge.

The best known of the community networks is Free-Net, which began in Cleveland, Ohio, and has grown into a network of 20 existing Free-Nets, with another 60 in the process of being established. These Free-Nets comprise the National Public Telecomputing Network, a non-profit organization that helps develop free public-access community systems and integrate them into a common network.

An article in *Communications of the ACM* offered a look at the community network.

*Community networks, some with user populations in the tens of thousands, are intended to advance social goals such as building community awareness, encourage involvement in local decision making or develop economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities. They are intended to provide 'one-stop shopping' using community-oriented discussions, questions-and-answer forums, electronic access to government employees and information, access to social services, e-mail, and in many cases, Internet access . . . The most important aspect of . . . community networks, however, is their immense potential for participation.*

Community networks promote participation because they're rooted in the local community, because anyone who consumes information also has the potential to produce it, because they are unrestricted and low-cost or free. Community networks are readily accessible from a variety of public as well as private locations, like libraries, schools, community centers, and neighborhood coffeehouses, laundromats, and shopping malls.

While there are many local bulletin boards and access points for the Internet, the service that seems most equivalent to a Greater Kansas City community network is the new Metropolitan Automated Guide and Information Center [M.A.G.I.C.], a collaborative effort of the Sunflower Free Network, the Metropolitan Community Colleges and the Kansas City Metropolitan Library and Information Network. The service, which went on-line in May 1995, offers cheap access to the Internet as well as local information, and is accessible from public libraries.

## **Safety and Community**

*"Anonymity is the oxygen of crime"*

*William H Whyte*

More neighborhood groups have formed because of crime and fear of crime than any other factor. There's a break-in, or a neighbor's car is stolen, or the park across the street attracts drug dealers, and the natural response is to want to do something about it. Once action has been taken to deal with that one incident or problem, however, it may be hard to keep the group together unless crime prevention becomes an ongoing effort or unless the neighborhood group takes on other kinds of projects.

Crime constantly come out at the top of citizens' lists of most important issues. The emerging wisdom is that crime is a failure of community, and that direct and indirect citizen involvement is most likely to improve a neighborhood.

How neighborhoods are designed also can have an impact on safety, although it may be more accurate to say that physical design has an impact on interaction, which in turn has an impact on safety.

## ***Physical Design and Neighborhood Safety***

There are three main models for physical design of safe neighborhoods. The three models share a common theme: the need for individual and group territoriality or sense of place. That involves three conditions: shared responsibility, willingness to act on perceived threat, and the expectation by potential offenders that they will be noticed if they intrude.

- **The Urban Village Model** identifies social breakdown as a primary cause of crime, defining it as the breakdown in the mechanism that fosters personal relationships, cooperation, recognition and morale. The model related physical design to social mechanisms of recognition, neighboring and mutual protection.
- **The Urban Fortress Model** places sole reliance on security buildings and areas. Studies have shown, however, that rather than making residents feel more secure, the presence of guards or extensive protection equipment actually makes people more anxious. It is a constant reminder of potential danger, and encourages residents to believe that they have no means to prevent themselves from becoming a victim.

**The Defensible Space Model** promotes the idea that physical design can affect the ability of residents to monitor and control their own environment by restricting access to vehicles on through streets. It has been criticized for its potential to make the defensible space an inaccessible fortress within the neighborhood.

## ***Three Crime Prevention Models***

*“He who findeth a good neighbor findeth a precious thing.*

*When on your home falls unforeseen distress.*

*Half-clothed come neighbors, kinsmen stay to dress.”*

*Hesiod, 8th Century BC, from Works and Days*

When citizens fight crime, they generally use one of three basic models, which are driven by different forces.

1. **Citizens protect themselves through a variety of self-precautions**, like buying guns, but most often by restricting their own behavior to reduce their odds of being a victim. This response is directly tied to fear of crime. A majority of central city residents restrict their own movements, while far fewer suburban and rural residents do this.
2. **Citizens take precautions to protect their households against home invasions through some kind of access control** via physical barriers like lights and timers or alarms. The security measures appear linked not so much to fear as to owner/renter status. Home owners, regardless of where they live, create a more secure environment to live in than do renters.
3. **Citizens engage in anti-crime activities aimed at increasing the overall security of some territory.** (e.g. their neighborhood). This is nearly always a collective effort involving others, and ranges from informal surveillance, citizen patrols and escort programs to projects directed at the presumed root causes of crime, like jobs and recreation programs for youth. These activities rarely have anything to do with fear, since fear's effect is a restricting one. Rather, this form of citizen self-help appears directly linked to citizen's concerns about the general quality of life in their neighborhoods and to their willingness to voluntarily give some time to improve the neighborhood.

The fear of crime is only partly related to local crime rates and seems to have a good deal to do with the presence or absence of 'signs of incivilities' in a neighborhood. Most persons form their fears, concerns and other perceptions about local crime not through the media or even exclusively through direct experience with victimization, but through 'vicarious victimization,' that is, hearing about others who have been the victims of crime.

Both the fear of crime and crime itself appear to be lower in those neighborhoods with relatively higher social cohesion. For example, many offenses, like muggings, vandalism and even break-ins, can be curtailed by a web of mutual recognition among neighbors. Making connections with people on the street can begin to include people in neighborhood life. Recognition and respect can change behavior; excluding others condones and encourages aberrant behavior. Task force member Maureen O'Hare, an organizer within the Broadway/Gillham neighborhood, told the task force, "*Most of the people on the street don't have anyone who cares. Part of what we do is get to know the names of the people on the street, and talk to them like human beings. I even receive mail from the penitentiary from people the Broadway/Gillham neighborhood helped put away, telling us where there are drug houses.*"

## **Do Citizen-based Efforts Work?**

There is an ongoing debate about whether citizen-based crime prevention efforts actually have an impact on the crime rate. While there is disagreement, for example, about whether a neighborhood crime patrol reduces the number of break-ins, there is general agreement that these efforts fulfill an important goal: Making neighbors feel and act as if they are in control of their environment.

It is also important to recognize that different communities favor different approaches to fighting crime. One researcher notes:

*It . . . appears that opportunity-reduction citizen groups are more welcome and successful in more affluent, less family-centered, and less minority-dominated communities. In lower income, minority communities there often is more acceptance of and success with community crime prevention that addresses the causes of crime -- for example, through employment of minority youth.*

Studies of specific anti-crime tactics also show that they don't work unless they're built upon the foundation of a process that brings neighbors together. Again, people often assume that what worked in one community can be taken off the shelf and deployed in another. Social scientist Paul J. Lavrakas found that, *"What, at cursory inspection, may appear to be a successful anti-crime strategy or program is often only the final visible stage of a much more complex process. When a program seemed to succeed in reducing crime, it was probably something much larger than the specific anti-crime strategy that changed in the community to bring about the crime reduction."*

## **Safety Depends Upon Social Institutions Controlled by the Community**

Crime, including gang activity, signals that social institutions in the neighborhood have begun to break down. Social scientist John M. Hagedorn cites an experience in Milwaukee of creating multi-disciplinary teams of human service workers, moving them into neighborhoods, and creating neighborhood councils to increase accountability.

*In cities like Milwaukee it is not the absence of working people that define underclass neighborhoods, but more the absence of effective social institutions. Without community controlled institutions, conventional values will have diminished appeal, neighborhoods will segment, solidarity will weaken, and working residents will continue to flee. The research on Milwaukee is consistent with the basic tenet of social disorganization theory, that the lack of effective institutions is related to crime and delinquency.*

The breakdown of effective institutions also includes the family, which many believe shares the blame for a rise of youth gangs and an increase in violence. While gangs have long been associated with neighborhoods, they first began to become disruptive to their communities in the 1960's, due to the influence of drugs, corrupting prison experiences and the failure of community-based programs. Social scientists correctly predicted that as urban neighborhoods became more disorganized, they would produce powerful pressures for violent behavior among the young in these areas.

One side effect of this rise in gang violence is the impact it has on young people who do not belong to gangs. More young people than ever are carrying guns, and a recent National Institute of Justice study found that the reason they give most often is "self-protection in a hostile and violent world". In addition, young people who don't belong to gangs find that adults have trouble distinguishing them from their dangerous counterparts. They are burdened by a stereotype that says all young people, and young men in particular, should be viewed with caution.

## **Community Policing Brings One Institution Back To The Neighborhood**

Kansas City, Missouri, is at the forefront of the community policing movement, which redefines the role of police officers and citizens in fighting crime. Community policing is also being instituted elsewhere in the metro area, such as in Kansas City, Kansas. Community policing is one attempt to move social institutions back into neighborhoods and to increase the accountability of residents for their own safety.

Wendy Kaminer, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly*, offered a description of community policing:

*Community policing entails a move from the concept of policing as reactive, incident-oriented law enforcement to a hybrid of enforcement and community service work aimed at crime prevention. It envisions the demilitarization of*

*police departments, a shifting of authority down through management to the ranks, so that cops on the street will have more discretion and can go beyond making arrests to analyzing and solving underlying problems. It asserts that crime control includes crime prevention, which requires an understanding of a community's character and its social-service needs.*

The concept of community policing can be considered a return to the old method of assigning police officers to beats, where they become part of the neighborhood. It echoes research that shows that social control is least effective when imposed by outside forces. Community controls are strengthened most when informal community-level networks are voluntarily tied to external bureaucracies and other resources, and when they increase client and neighborhood control and break down bureaucratic barriers.

It used to be that people took for granted that they were responsible for their own safety. Then, as America became more populous and more urbanized, the institution of the police developed and grew into an established part of government bureaucracy. Citizens gave up responsibility, with the exception of incidences of vigilantism, and increasingly relied on the police for their safety.

Policing evolved over time. Beat cops gave way to officers in patrol cars who responded to 9-1-1 calls. Incident-oriented policing took officers out of the community and reduced their ability to prevent crime, which, in most neighborhoods, is local: the offenders live near their victims. When officers know a community, they can watch for the elements that give rise to opportunity crimes, like back alleys or buildings that draw drug users.

Community policing also builds bridges between residents and police officers. Maureen O'Hare told the task force that *"the police have a different perspective on the [Broadway/Gillham] neighborhood because of community policing. Before, they thought anyone who would live in a neighborhood was a volunteer victim. Now they know who we are and they understand why we live here."*

Major Greg Mills of the Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department, says community policing is a shift for officers, who are used to working through the hierarchy to get problems solved. *"We're asking police officers to work autonomously to handle problems."* This is especially effective when officers work in partnership with neighbors. For example, Kansas City, Missouri police officers Markus Smith and Darren Ivey supported neighbors who wanted to clean up the 5600 block of Lydia, which neighbors called "the worst block in the city." The block once had more than a dozen known drug dealers. Neighbors tried to organize themselves, but were stopped by drug dealers, who slashed the tires of residents they suspected of calling the police. Then community officers arrived and suggested that residents spend time on their front porches. One resident told *The Kansas City Star*, *"When we knew they were backing us, that's when I came out. You felt you could go out of your house and feel free."* Residents started turning in names of dealers, including relatives of neighbors. The officers used the names to check for pending arrest warrants. In October 1994, the next to the last dealer was arrested.

## **PEOPLE -- CONCLUSIONS**

### **EMPOWERED NEIGHBORHOODS SHOULD BE NURTURED AS A RESOURCE**

Greater Kansas City is held together by a web of relationships. At the base of this web are the relationships among the more than 1 million neighbors who live in the metro area. Neighbors, be they

renters or homeowners, have a vested interest in their neighborhood. They represent a resource to this community -- an often untapped resource -- for leadership, energy and simple human decency.

The metropolitan area has much to gain from encouraging neighborhood involvement. Neighbors offer an inexhaustible supply of leadership. Neighborhood organizations, when viewed as a resource rather than a nuisance or threat, offer new ideas and legions of people willing to roll up their sleeves and get the job done.

Empowering neighborhoods to address their own problems from within will be more successful and supportable over time than solutions imposed from the outside. Only people with the most at stake in the neighborhood -- the people who live or own property there -- will provide the intensity and longevity of commitment required.

The task force examined what empowered neighborhoods offer to the metro area, and the values upon which they draw.

**A Healthy Neighborhood Requires Less Medicine.** The greatest strengths of an empowered neighborhood are . . .

- a strong voice of ownership which demands accountability to individuals and the whole metro area.
- wisdom -- sharing of ideas and examples with others -- and inspiration.
- a community -- a home-ownership.
- stability and safety, leading among other things to economic viability.
- self-sufficiency, which frees metro resources for neighborhoods in crisis.
- the ability to break down barriers among individuals and metro communities.

**Ten Values at Work in Empowered Neighborhoods**

- selflessness / mutual concern
- diversity
- family values -- defined as relationship with and a respect for children
- a sense of responsibility and respect
- collaboration
- social interaction
- commitment to getting things done
- fun
- commitment to learning
- courage and leadership

## **NEIGHBORS IN CITIES AND SUBURBS ARE MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT**

Neighbors in the urban core and in the suburbs say that they want the same things for their neighborhoods. They want to be safe, to feel 'at home', to live in attractive surroundings. Urban and suburban residents, however, have cut themselves off from one another by more than just geography. We have, at times, descended into finger pointing and name calling. It is true that there are marked differences between the circumstances at work in the urban core and the suburbs. (For that matter, there are also differences between neighborhoods within the urban core and within the suburbs). The differences matter, but not as much as the commonalities.

## **NEIGHBORS SHOULD SEEK OUT WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

There is a natural progression that begins the first time a resident sees how he or she is connected to the neighborhood. For some, it starts with the willingness to be a good neighbor and may end with showing leadership in the neighborhood or even as a representative of the neighborhood in the larger community. Each one of us should look at the impact that we have on our neighbors and our neighborhood to see where we could make a difference. The important thing is to take a step, no matter how small, that increases the amount of energy devoted to the neighborhood.

It's also important that each of us appreciate what we contribute already, and value whatever role allows us to do the most good. For example, people who are great at organizing block parties and welcoming newcomers shouldn't feel compelled to run for neighborhood president if that's not where their interest lies.

### **Be A Good Neighbor**

What does it mean to be a good neighbor? The task force identified 10 characteristics of a good neighbor. A good neighbor is:

- considerate
- compassionate
- communicates with others
- trustworthy
- watchful
- shares information and resources
- asks for help and offers help
- respects property and other people
- welcomes newcomers
- is concerned for the community

*Which of these characteristics do you show to your neighbors? Are there other ways to be a good neighbor?*

### **Be a Participant in Your Neighborhood**

One person can make a difference in a neighborhood, if he or she is only willing to get involved. There are benefits to that involvement and there are barriers. The task force believes that the benefits far outweigh the costs of overcoming barriers that keep people isolated and inactive.

The task force identified **six main benefits to neighborhood involvement**. They are:

- establishing relationships
- knowing what is going on and getting new perspectives on problems
- knowing what resources are available to increase property values
- getting things done and having control over the outcome
- developing a sense of unity
- getting to know how the system does / does not work, and developing skills as an advocate for the neighborhood

There are attitudes at work that keep us from getting involved in the neighborhood. The task force identified **seven attitudes that are barriers to neighborhood involvement**. They include:

- indifference or apathy
- lack of willingness to take the initiative
- fear of crime and the unknown

- lack of the belief that one person can make a difference
- pessimism
- isolation and being comfortable with anonymity
- lack of altruism

*Are any of these attitudinal barriers familiar to you? Which of the benefits of involvement would be most important to you? What skills and abilities could you provide your neighborhood if you were willing to get involved?*

### **Be a Leader**

Neighborhoods are a natural training ground for community leaders. Leadership skills that people develop here are powerful tools for other areas of life. Neighborhood leadership is as simple as agreeing to take responsibility for one activity or many, be it a block watch or a homes tour or a neighborhood clean-up.

Neighborhood leaders also can serve their neighborhood by creating ties with groups outside the neighborhood. Neighborhood leaders can: represent the neighborhood perspective on a civic, foundation or agency board; seek information or start collaborative programs with other neighborhoods; seek funding, training, materials or volunteer resources from a company; and many more opportunities.

*What skills would you want to strengthen to feel comfortable leading a group? What do you have to gain from taking on a leadership roll? What other groups could you be working with to the benefit of your neighborhood?*

## **WITH TRAINING, LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS CAN BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE IN THE COUNTRY**

A neighborhood is as effective as the people in it. Every neighborhood has strengths by virtue of the strengths of its residents. And every neighborhood, like every person, can grow through training and skills development. Greater Kansas City already can boast some of the nation's best neighborhood leaders and neighborhood development programs. A missing element however, is training and development that is widely available to many neighborhood organizations.

Existing resources don't come close to meeting the need. There are possibilities for new resources if others, like corporations and for-profit training programs step in to provide assistance. By making high-quality training and development available within neighborhood organizations, Greater Kansas City has the opportunity to create the most skilled, professional and effective neighborhood leadership in the nation, and to do it on the large scale.

Neighborhood organizations also must take responsibility. It is understandable, given the chronic lack of time and the urgency of needs in neighborhoods, that building human capacity doesn't often become a priority. Instead, neighbors spend more energy assessing the strengths and needs of their streets, sidewalks and buildings than of their people. In the long run, though, neighborhoods will gain more from teaching neighbors how to run productive meetings or navigate the system at City Hall. Neighborhoods should look at what skills current residents could teach other residents. Where skills aren't available within the neighborhood, neighborhood groups should be proactive in seeking them out from city staff, local companies and other neighborhood organizations.

Two kinds of skills are especially in demand.

- 1) Human relations skills like conflict mediation and group management
- 2) Technical skills like setting priorities and working with the media.

Determining the core competencies that neighborhood leaders and members need, and making training available on a widespread basis, will measurably improve the ability of neighborhoods to be resources to the metro area.

## **INSTITUTIONS SHOULD SUPPORT NEIGHBORS AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

The government, business, educational and religious institutions should examine the impact that they have on our community's neighbors. How do these institutions support or damage relationships among neighbors. How do they support or damage our neighborhoods? What needs could they meet in collaboration with neighborhood organizations? How could they benefit from this collaboration?

Let's look at one possibility. The task force identified barriers to neighborhood involvement that are structural rather than the result of individual attitudes. The biggest barrier, we found, was the lack of time. People are stretched between work and family; they struggle to add anything to their full schedules. Some institutions have taken steps to help employees carve out time for community involvement. For example, there are organizations that give employees personal hours that they can use for volunteer activities. Some companies also reward employees who are active in civic life with special attention or funds for the groups in which they are involved. Where such programs don't exist at all, organizations should work with employees to find creative ways to encourage neighborhood involvement. By doing so, companies build the skills and leadership capability of their work force at little cost to themselves.

Another possibility would address another barrier to neighborhood involvement -- the lack of places to bring people together. Free meeting space is in short supply in many neighborhoods, and neighborhood groups rarely can afford to pay for a meeting place. Businesses, places of worship, schools and other institutions can have a major impact on the neighborhood by offering the use of a conference room, basement or classroom.

*Action begins with one person's willingness to take a chance. Institutions are nothing more than groups of people. Where could you make a difference?*

## **STRENGTHENING DIFFERENCES AMONG NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS**

The task force views neighborhoods the same way they would view a traditional town, where ages, incomes, lifestyles and occupations make for a rich mosaic of human life. We want neighborhoods in which young and old have the chance to learn from one another, and where neighbors take responsibility for nurturing all the children who live there. We also want neighborhoods where neighbors include a mix of jobs and income levels and skills, and where differences are celebrated, rather than drive us apart. While traditional American towns often were limited by race, this is where the task force's picture of modern neighborhoods differs from the traditional picture. We believe that, beyond having a right to live anywhere they want to live, people benefit from neighborhoods in which racial and ethnic diversity is valued.

## **TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE USED TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION**

Two elements that build community are good internal communication and links with the outside world. These elements can be very difficult for neighborhoods to achieve. Neighborhood activists say they want the chance to share information and collaborate with others, but the logistics can be a nightmare. FOCUS already identified the need for a yearly neighborhood congress at which best practices would be shared. The task force supports that idea, and also sees the need for information sharing that could happen every day across the metropolitan area.



# PLACES -- FACT FINDING

*“We shape our dwellings and thereafter our dwellings shape our lives forever.”*

*Winston Churchill*

The connection between people and the places they hold dear can be a powerful force for change. According to the Partners for Livable Places:

*It is our sense of place -- our sense of ‘ownership’ of some specific place, even if our ownership (or the place itself) is only symbolic -- that triggers much of what we do in our communities. Parents work to improve the schools their children attend, to clean up the parks their children play in. Neighborhood groups work to keep crime off ‘their’ streets. Many of the triggers for action like those occur from ‘place’, from people’s love of place, from their sense of place, from their willingness to fight for their place, to preserve it, or to improve it.*

What our neighborhoods look like determines the strength of this connection to a greater extent than many realize. In some neighborhoods, front porches look out onto the street and sidewalks allow people to walk safely from place to place. In other neighborhoods, houses turn their backs to the street and their faces to the fenced back yard. In these neighborhoods, people who want to connect with their neighbors or their neighborhood must overcome barriers in the way the place is designed.

As in so many other areas, the issue of the physical design of neighborhoods has gotten entangled with the ongoing urban-versus-suburban argument. Society’s view of what neighborhoods should look like has become polarized. Many have quit searching for other options, and rely instead on old assumptions about what consumers want. Do people living in postwar urban and suburban areas really want neighborhoods designed to isolate them, or is that the only option available? What possibilities exist to increase the beauty and neighborliness of all our neighborhoods?

Assumptions also affect how people view the physical health of neighborhoods in the urban core versus the suburbs. Neighborhoods evolve over time. **Neighborhoods throughout the metropolitan area can be categorized as emerging, stable, endangered and abandoned.** There are emerging and stable neighborhoods in the urban core, and endangered and abandoned neighborhoods in the suburbs. Often, the real needs and strengths of the metro area’s neighborhoods are masked faulty assumptions.

*To learn more about how these four types of neighborhoods are defined, see Appendix G, the Places Appendix.*

Neighborhood design evolved over the years in response to a variety of changes in society. Society, in turn, changed because of the way our communities changed.

## ***Neighborhood Design and the Forces that Shaped America***

Before Europeans came to America, Native Americans had created dwellings and villages that adapted to and celebrated nature and created a sense of community. Then, Europeans brought the grid plan with them and superimposed that onto America. They kept a connection with nature, building front porches and sidewalks, and shopping that was decentralized so that people could walk to it. With the grid design, even

outsiders could find their way through most neighborhoods, and residents had many options for getting from one place to another.

After World War II, our reliance on automobiles disconnected Americans from traditional design principles. Neighborhoods were no longer laid out on easy-to-follow grids, but become subdivisions with curving streets and cul-de-sacs (planners call this the “dead worm” design) that could be nearly impossible for an outsider to navigate. Front porches and sidewalks all but disappeared. Giant shopping malls catered to people who wanted to drive rather than walk.

*“The United States has created a way of life that is the most dysfunctional on the planet, and other countries envy us for it,”* architect Bob Berkebile told the task force. For example, he said, we have the most miles of highway per capita. *“The car is the single largest source of pollution on the planet, and we’ve built an infrastructure to support it that we can’t afford to maintain.”* Recent figures show that the typical suburban home now has 2.3 cars and generates 12 auto trips per day. For the last forty years, increasingly lower density development patterns have pushed up the number of vehicle miles traveled three times faster than the growth of the population.

In the race for low-density development, Greater Kansas City is out in front with some of the lowest housing density in the nation. The result is a close approximation of the American ideal, sardonically described by urban planner Robert Freilich as *“a rural lifestyle supported by a job which earns an urban income 5 minutes away from the city with no traffic.”* The cost of low-density development is paid for in increased cost per capita for municipal services, public safety, utilities and transportation infrastructure.

In fact, at a recent conference on Alternatives to Sprawl at the Brookings Institution, a report from the Bank of America stated that sprawl in California has created “enormous social, environmental and economic costs, which until now have been hidden, ignored or quietly borne by society . . . Businesses suffer from higher costs, a loss of worker productivity, and underutilized investments in older communities.” At least one growing city, however, has put the brakes on sprawl. More than 20 years ago planners for the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area designed an area of 325 square miles -- covering 24 municipalities and parts of three counties -- to receive virtually all population growth. While the population is expected to grow some 77 percent between now and the year 2049, planners remain committed to increasing residential land use to just 6 percent and, rather than building edge cities, to concentrating job growth downtown.

The society we have built around the automobile also has implications for who we are as human beings. For example, a recent comparison study of 10 year olds in a small town in Vermont and a new suburb of Orange County showed that the Vermont kids had three times the mobility (distance and places they could get to on their own) of the California kids, while the Orange County kids watched four times as much TV as their counterparts in Vermont.

## ***Traditional American Design Principles Are Rooted in Timeless Impulses***

It’s easy to tell the difference between neighborhoods that express traditional design principles and those that sink into nostalgia. Adhering to traditional design principles can produce neighborhoods that look different than in the past, but where the daily life of the residents expresses enduring values. Nostalgia produces “Ye Olde Neighborhood,” with some of the look but little of the feel of the kinds of neighborhoods Americans cherish.

The difference between tradition and nostalgia is that traditions are rooted in timeless impulses. Traditions are strong enough to evolve over time, or to be transported from one place to another, because they possess

certain formal, cultural and personal principles. Nostalgia seeks the security of the past forms without those inherent principles.

While some elements of the traditional American town have been lost forever, there are principles that express fundamental characteristics of place and culture, which architect Peter Calthorpe believes should be preserved. These include:

- walkable streets that lead to close and useful destinations, and fronted by porches, balconies and entries.
- diversity of use and users, with connections among uses that are walkable, close and direct.
- a center that integrates commercial, recreational and civic life.

### ***Walkable Streets: Pedestrians and Porches***

As one task force member said, “*It’s hard to be a neighbor from the front seat of your car*”. Neighborhoods without sidewalks, neighborhoods designed for vehicular rather than foot traffic, make it hard to establish connections. Again, from Peter Calthorpe:

*Pedestrians are the catalyst which makes the essential qualities of communities meaningful. They create the place and the time for casual encounters and the practical integration of diverse places and people. Without the pedestrian, a community’s common ground . . . becomes a useless obstruction to the car. Pedestrians are the lost measure of a community, they set the scale for both center and edge or our neighborhoods. Without the pedestrian, an area’s focus can be easily lost.*

People who want to get outside and walk around can overcome some of the obstacles in their path. For example, residents in an Overland Park suburb use a bike trail that runs behind their houses as a sort of community walkway. Architect Bob Berkebile says, “Suburbs can be enhanced by adding opportunities for interaction, like shared playgrounds, gardens and trails. The more options, the more you’ll find people with the windows open or out on the street talking to neighbors.”

The traditional method of keeping in touch with neighbors is to sit on the front porch and talk to passersby. Architect Vincent Scully, Jr., calls the front porch “the most genial architectural environment ever created in the United States”. Front porches, however, were a casualty of post World War II design, which shrunk the porch to a minuscule slab of concrete in favor of a larger, more secluded back yard.

If there is any doubt that things like front porches matter to people, what happened in San Luis Obispo should settle the question. The San Luis Obispo Environmental Task Force proposed guidelines for new development that included mandatory front porches. “For this, (the architect and chairman) was called ‘the most radical environmentalist in the world’ by the executive director of the local chamber of commerce . . .,” *Metropolis* magazine reported. Mayor Peg Pinard viewed the porches as a way to get people to start talking again. “Developers”, she said, “don’t have to live with the effect of their developments.” While the city council reduced the porches to a “suggestion”, they did vote 5-0 to institute “neighborhood interaction” as a stated goal of all new development.

Could a pro-porch movement sweep the metro area? Maybe. The idea that neighborhoods should promote interaction was proposed by civic leaders who took part in FOCUS Kansas City. The Civic perspective group reported that, “the salvation of neighborhoods is our city’s salvation. Neighborhoods can provide the intimacy, the connectedness that the city lacks . . . We want neighborhoods built and rebuilt in ways that will promote connectedness and neighborliness.”

*To find out more about FOCUS Kansas City and its 14 policy principles, see Appendix F, the Places Appendix.*

### ***Diversity of Use and Users***

Physical diversity is generated by a mixture of land uses, a concentration of uses (not just residential uses), a mixture of new and old buildings, and short blocks (which increase the number of paths which cross each other). New evidence supports sociologist Jane Jacob's thesis regarding postwar urban and suburban development. She proposed that postwar development's lack of physical diversity discouraged people from taking responsibility for the prosaic job of looking after their streets. Homogeneity emphasizes insularity and invites criminal behavior, Jacobs theorized.

E. P. Fowler, an environmental sociologist, studied whether physical diversity in the city influences both casual contact among street users and crime. Fowler also tested the link between casual contact and crime. *"(Jacobs') thesis was that a lack of diversity, denoted by long blocks, segregated and deconcentrated land use, and buildings constructed all at one time, frustrate contact among neighbors, healthy socialization of children, and natural instincts to help a stranger or restrain a wrongdoer."*

Fowler's study supported the idea that physical diversity encourages effective neighborhood management, and that physical homogeneity discourages it:

*Physical homogeneity discourages certain kinds of desirable social behavior, then; but we do not seek it out, without being fully conscious of its impact on us. Thus, it would be a mistake to blame a coterie of planners or of profit-minded developers for imposing the (homogeneity) form on us. We must become more conscious of the value system which produced that . . . form and take responsibility for it; only then can we have a clearer vision of what kind of cities we want.*

### ***A Center That Integrates Neighborhood Life***

Social interaction depends on a common area, which is synonymous with democratic ideals and American community life. A common area allows neighbors to be interdependent, to meet for the purpose of taking action for the good of the neighborhood, and serves to integrate businesses into the life of the neighborhood.

A neighborhood common area also speaks to what Ray Oldenberg says is a universal need for a "third place" away from home -- the "first place" -- and away from the place a work -- the "second place." Third places are characterized by their location on "neutral ground," a "leveling" tendency where social and economic standing (as well as physical characteristics) of the participants are greatly diminished, and as a place where "conversation is the main activity".

A neighborhood's "third place" or common area could be a community center, park, the corner store, church basement, cafe or tavern. Whatever the location, it is neutral and promotes neighborhood "ownership" and is within walking distance of the entire neighborhood.

## ***New Models Incorporate Traditional Elements***

If we could start from scratch, what would neighborhoods look like? What physical design would make our neighborhoods more safe, more neighborly and more attractive? We may have a sense that something is missing, but we don't have a picture of the missing piece. We have a limited menu of options for neighborhood design. We simply don't know what is possible.

Architect Bob Berkebile cites Buckminster Fuller, who said you can't make significant change by force but by making what you're trying to change obsolete. *"Developers give us what they think we want,"* Berkebile said. *"Banks and developers tend to fear change, and need to be shown examples of change that have been successful. They want reassurance."* Consumers also want reassurance. People who buy homes are making perhaps the largest investment they will make in their lifetime. Without proven alternatives, they are drawn toward what is familiar.

But the physical form of neighborhoods is not the result of free choice, market wisdom or our collective will, according to Calthorpe:

*In reality, our patterns of growth are as much a result of public policy and subsidies, outdated regulations, environmental forces, technology and simple inertia as they are a result of the invisible hand of Adam Smith. These forces are like postulates from which the formulas of our communities are derived. Change one and a new geometry emerges; change several and a new set of alternatives to the way we live and the places we inhabit becomes possible.*

To do this requires changing many of the ordinances and laws that keep neighborhood design outdated. Many zoning ordinances facilitate segmented, decentralized suburban growth and make it impossible to incorporate traditional elements of the American town. Architect Alex Krieger remarks that “few ordinances tolerate (much less encourage) the concentration of uses, the multiplicity of scales, the redundancy of streets, and the hierarchical fabric of public spaces which characterize the towns of our memory and our travels.” This contrasts with developments built after World War II, many of which were built using the same principles of efficiency that were used to build army bases.

## ***The Ecological Model Is a Return to American Design Traditions***

A new way of looking at neighborhoods is to view them as complex living organisms rather than simple machines. This is the view of the ecological model, which incorporates the idea of sustainable communities. An ecological model recognizes complexity and encourages diversity, interdependence and sustainability. The ecological model has implications for economies of scale of delivery of public services and the policies that shape them.

Proponents of the ecological model say that the alternative to sprawl is simple and timely: neighborhoods of housing, parks and schools placed within walking distance of shops, civic services, jobs and transit -- a modern version of the traditional town. At a regional scale, a network of mixed-use neighborhoods could create order and balance inner-city development with suburban investments by organizing growth around an expanding transit system and setting urban limits and greenbelts.

*To learn about architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk’s seven design principles for the ecological model, see Appendix F, the Places Appendix.*

Other options for neighborhood design move beyond the traditional American town. In the case of a development on Winslow Island, outside of Seattle, Washington the model is closer to an earlier tradition, that of the Native American village. Winslow Island offers 30 units of housing to 75-80 persons. The units are clustered together and are smaller and more efficient than average. Cars are separate from houses. People park in a central lot, and use carts to transport items to their homes. There’s a common house, with a kitchen, and the average family eats there with its neighbors every night. The community shares a garden and a forest. Every adult watches out for all the kids, each person has the obligation to serve the community in some way, and all community decisions are made by consensus.

## ***The Pattonsburg Experiment***

The great flood of 1993 nearly took the town of Pattonsburg with it. It also brought an opportunity to the northwest Missouri town on the Grand River to build a new town away from the river and make it an environmental model for the nation. Pattonsburg has become an experiment in creating sustainable communities, led by a team of more than 20 experts in sustainable development assembled by Kansas

City's Bob Berkebile. In October 1994, the President's Council on Sustainable Development named Pattonsburg one of 18 community case studies.

After the flood, which decimated Pattonsburg, many residents decided to build on a hill two miles north of town. More than 140 of the remaining 200 households are expected to leave the old town for the new. Some will build new homes and others will move the old ones. The move will be financed with \$11.5 million in federal money, although more than \$3 million must be found to build a new school and a senior citizen's center.

The relocation of Pattonsburg is considered historic because it would become the first new town planned entirely with principles of sustainable development in mind. The concept is that a community, to be sustainable, "must have a good economy, be inhabited by citizens who take part in its decisions and also use the land, air and water as wisely and efficiently as possible."

A team of experts is working with Pattonsburg citizens to design the new town. The proposal includes city blocks aligned for best exposure to winter sun while trees are placed to offer summer shade and muffle noise; a system of natural ponds and streams that would purify runoff water from lawns and streets (stream habitat would remain); biking and hiking paths that snake toward the river and the old town; greenways linking the senior citizens center to the school; a lifetime learning center - a school for children and adults that would include day care and electronic communication work stations. The team's mixed-use town center is within a five minute walk for residents.

## **PLACES -- CONCLUSION**

### **NEIGHBORHOODS SHOULD REFLECT AMERICAN DESIGN TRADITIONS**

There are some elements of design that are so important to us as Americans that we want to bring them with us into the future. These traditions speak to values that have lasted throughout generations, and that transcend racial / ethnic and socio-economic boundaries. When Americans cut ourselves off from these traditions, we lose something of ourselves as a people. The three traditional elements of American towns -- walkable streets fronted by porches, diversity of use and users and a center that integrates neighborhood life -- should be the framework around which neighborhoods are designed.

### **NEW OPTION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN**

The debate about the design of communities is often posed as urban vs. suburban. By framing the issue as an argument for or against, we lose the opportunity to look at what benefits each model has to offer, and, most importantly, forget the option of creating something new. To create a new model requires listening to people to find out what matters most to them, and finding creative ways of meeting their needs. We won't know what people want unless we ask them, and we won't be able to identify viable alternatives unless we make a conscious effort to shift a paradigm that has been in place since the end of World War II.

Things have changed since the '50s when the suburb of Levittown generated a model for new development that still is in place today. Some 45 years ago, developers made assumptions about what people want from their neighborhoods. It is time to test those assumptions. Alternatives in the way neighborhoods are designed should reflect changes in resources, technology, knowledge and attitudes. These alternatives also should include the key design principles of traditional American towns, traditions that are powerful enough to evolve with time and changing circumstances.

## **THE SAFETY TRIANGLE**

Neighborhoods require a strategic alliance of at least three places within walking distance of one another. This triangle of places forms a safety zone, provides social contact among neighbors and “ownership” of these common spaces. The strategic alliances can include churches, schools, businesses and government managed spaces like parks.

Some places in neighborhoods are traditional locations for social interaction, and should be included within the triangle of places. These places include schools and pre-schools, community centers, homes, churches and synagogues, libraries and parks. Other places are nostalgic, meaning that they have failed to evolve over time. Nostalgic places used to function as community anchors but no longer serve that purpose due to technological or societal changes.

## **WHAT WE WANT CLOSE BY**

Neighborhoods can be helped or hurt by other kinds of places. Some, like the places where people traditionally go to interact with one another, neighbors want within walking distance.

Other places neighbors want in the next county, if not the next state. These places call forth the response “Not In My Back Yard!” (NIMBYs). The task force agreed that the NIMBY you know about before you move in is better than the one that’s put in after you’re settled. The NIMBYs that task force members classified as the worst are: landfills, adult entertainment, liquor stores or bars (unless it is the neighborhood hangout), group homes / halfway houses / prisons, subsidized housing, undesirable businesses with lots of traffic or nighttime activity like an airport or factory, and huge power lines. Interestingly, a school-age person who served on the task force added the neighborhood park to the list of NIMBYs, saying that the park in her neighborhood frightens her because its a hangout for people doing bad things.

Somewhere between a NIMBY and a neighborhood school are other places, which the task force agreed should be relatively close by, but not necessarily within walking distance. These places included a church, police stations, post office, health center, neighborhood clinic, fire station and shopping center or mall.

## POLICIES -- FACT FINDING

The institution with the biggest impact on neighborhoods is city government. City government determines the location of street lights, the level of maintenance of the physical infrastructure and the role of neighborhoods in decision making. While neighborhoods can lay claim to some city resources, access depends on knowing how to negotiate the system or enlisting someone who can help them get what they need.

It's no wonder that neighborhoods and city government become, if not adversarial, then at least mutually befuddled. Neighbors report incomprehensible regulations and staff members who refuse to take ownership of problems. They also report staff members overwhelmed by the sheer number of tasks they must accomplish, and who are themselves caught in a labyrinth of red tape.

Trying to get government agencies together to solve a neighborhood problem can produce results that are almost comical. An article in *The Atlantic Monthly* cites interagency cooperation as the most difficult of all the problems that community police officers must deal with; while officers can bring problems to the attention of other city agencies, the system is not always prepared to respond. In his book *Neighborhood Services*, John Mudd calls it the "rat problem":

*If a rat is found in an apartment, it is a housing inspection responsibility;  
If it runs into a restaurant, the health department has jurisdiction;  
If it goes outside and then dies in an alley, public works takes over.  
A police officer who takes a public complaint about rats seriously will go crazy  
trying to figure out what agency in the city has responsibility for rat control  
and then inducing it to kill the rat.*

Sometimes though, neighborhoods and city government make a great team. In Overland Park, for example, the city took responsibility for organizing neighborhoods around the old downtown. The staff person for the Neighborhood Conservation Program brings a new neighborhood on-line about every six months, and provides support until the neighborhood can function on its own. In Independence, city-wide committees within the Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils work with city officials to address issues like safety and health, among others. In fact, neighbors in Independence have volunteered their time to handle tasks that otherwise would have fallen to city staff, if they were performed at all.

The root of many problems that afflict neighborhood / government relations is the undefined role of neighborhoods in civic life. Some see neighborhoods as part of a para-political system, like church or school. As Matthew Creson points out in *Neighborhood Politics*:

*Like any para-political system, the neighborhood can sometimes be a direct participant in the political process, and it performs internal functions that seem to imitate those of the political system itself. Unlike other groups, however, it is set up on the same terms as the political system itself. Membership comes as an adjunct to a geographic location . . . The necessary qualifications for being a neighbor are about as indiscriminate and inclusive as the requirements for citizenship.*

Like councilmanic districts, neighborhoods find themselves in direct competition with other neighborhoods for city attention, resources and funding. Unlike councilmanic districts, neighborhoods rarely have an officially-recognized means for agreeing upon priorities. Decisions, neighborhood leaders say, are made case-by-case rather than according to some comprehensive plan or rational process.

While this is true within cities, it is especially true when more than one jurisdiction is involved. As always, the state line and the number of separate jurisdictions within the metro area are an obstacle to metro-wide coordination. So, while neighborhoods in Independence may face similar issues as those in Kansas City,

Kansas, the odds that they will work together are pretty slim. While some organizations reach out to neighborhoods in more than one jurisdiction, there is no permanent, stable means to bring metro-area neighborhoods together.

Neighborhood leaders and city officials can end up in an unproductive tug-of-war, or they can work together as partners. The outcome depends on whether there is a structured, sensible means to bring neighborhoods into the decision making process.

## ***Five Cities Are Models for Incorporating Neighborhoods into Decision Making***

In 1993, the Brookings Institution released a study that was the result of examining neighborhood organizations throughout the nation. This section of the report draws almost entirely from that study because its data and the principles it suggests are by far the most valuable information the task force found on the topic. The book, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*, contains the stories of five cities that have incorporated neighborhood organizations into decision making in a systematic and meaningful way:

*Neighborhood associations are common in American cities, but rarely are they found in each and every neighborhood, taken seriously, and institutionalized into a city's policy making process. Once a city-wide system is established and the neighborhood associations are given resources, authority, and significant autonomy, the stage has been set for a fundamental change in city politics.*

The five cities in which the Brookings Institution found that kind of system are Birmingham, Dayton, Portland, San Antonio and St. Paul.

### **Birmingham, Alabama**

Birmingham has a three-tiered system in which neighborhood officers in more than 95 neighborhoods are elected every two years at the polls. The neighborhood associations form the base of the system. Broader "communities" encompass several neighborhoods apiece, and a city-wide Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) is composed of representatives from each of these communities. Each association communicates with all households in its neighborhood through a monthly newsletter, decides how its community development block grant allocations will be used, and works with community resource staff to find solutions to neighborhood concerns. This structure was the first to bring blacks and whites in the city together to work toward a common vision.

### **Dayton, Ohio**

Dayton's system includes seven Priority Boards whose members are elected by precinct by mail ballot. Each Priority Board area is divided into neighborhoods, which overlap the precinct boundaries. The system is seen explicitly as a two-way communication channel between government and citizens. Citizens make themselves heard through leadership training, a monthly council meeting of each board and reps of major city agencies, annual neighborhood needs statements, and a wide range of neighborhood-oriented planning initiatives, and self-help programs. In return, the city communicates its plans and progress to all the neighborhoods through a Policy Board staff based in a neighborhood office, and makes its case for needed change on a wide range of matters.

### **Portland, Oregon**

Portland uses a city-wide system of autonomous neighborhood associations, with seven District Coalition Boards pulling together more than ninety neighborhood representatives. Each board hires its own staff and works out of its own office, and is under contract with the city to provide “citizen participation service” to its own community. The system consciously balances the coalition advocacy, annual neighborhood needs reports, crime prevention teams, and individual neighborhood issues with a wide range of city-wide participation in initiatives, like Budget Advisory Committees, comprehensive neighborhood-based planning, self-help grants, etc assistance and a citizen mediation program.

### **St. Paul, Minnesota**

St. Paul is divided into 17 District Councils, each of which is elected by residents of the council area. Every council has a city-paid community organizer and neighborhood office, but virtually all other efforts come from volunteers or additional funds raised by the council itself. The District Councils have substantial powers, including jurisdiction over zoning, authority over the distribution of various goods and services, and substantial influence over capital expenditures. A city-wide Capital Improvement Budget Committee, composed solely of neighborhood representatives, is responsible for the initiation and priority ranking of most capital development projects in the city. Community centers, crime prevention efforts, an early notification system for all major city agencies, and a district newspaper in virtually every council area help to make the system one of the most coherent and comprehensive in the nation.

### **San Antonio, Texas**

Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), is structured along parish boundaries of the Catholic church in the Hispanic sections of the city. Parallel but much weaker organization exist in the remainder of the city, competing with independent neighborhood organizations. City-wide conventions and “actions” (demonstrations, meetings and confrontation with public officials) of several hundred to several thousand people characterize COPS activity. The city initiates fewer programs in support of the neighborhood groups than do the other four cities, but over the course of 20 years, COPS has provided the Hispanic community, which had virtually no clout at city hall, with an organization that arguably has more political power than any other single community group in the nation.

Each of the five cities developed their neighborhood policies / practices in the mid 1970’s. Before that, neighborhood group members *“always had to stand on the outside of the public policy process, knocking on the door and trying to get in.”* Today the Brookings Institution found, the groups are *“organized in every neighborhood of the city; they have regular two-way channels to and from city hall; they have comparatively extensive support staff, training opportunities, technical assistance and neighborhood offices; and they are empowered to act on behalf of the residents (and local businesses) in their neighborhood.”*

*To learn how the Brookings Institution selected these five cities, see Appendix G, the Policies Appendix.*

## **Three Conditions for Effective Programs**

The Brookings Institution found that to build effective programs, a community must meet three conditions:

1. Exclusive powers must be turned over to the citizen participation structure.
2. A city administrator must create sanctions and rewards for city hall administrators who interact with neighborhood groups.
3. Citizen participation systems must be city-wide.

Researchers also identified several other structural features that will increase effectiveness, like control over some significant discretionary dollars, short terms of office for volunteer leaders, money for newsletters, prohibitions from involvement in partisan politics, etc.

# **POLICIES -- CONCLUSIONS**

## **WITHIN CITIES, THE ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOODS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED**

The role of neighborhoods in decision making is somewhat different within each of the cities that make up Greater Kansas City. It's fair to say, however, that rarely do neighborhoods have exclusive powers, particularly over funding, or for city administrators to be judged on their ability to work with neighborhoods, or for neighborhood organizations to be active city-wide. These principles, when applied in cities here, could have a major impact on the role of neighborhoods in civic life.

Neighborhoods in the metro area, with the exception of those in Independence, function more or less on their own. They are not part of a larger system that incorporates them into public decision making within their community. Their roles are undefined, and the organizations and city departments that work with neighborhoods are consistently underfunded and understaffed.

When brought into decision making, organized neighborhoods have a great deal to offer to citizens, government, and the broader community. Resources allocated to neighborhoods are leveraged by thousands of volunteers who have a stake in the neighborhood. Neighborhood involvement builds the capacity of citizens to take part in democratic life.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS AND CITY HALL SHOULD COLLABORATE**

When neighborhood leaders approach their city government, it should be as a partner and a resource. Often, however, they go to city government only when they have a problem that they expect to be solved. It is no wonder then that neighborhood groups are sometimes considered a nuisance. Neighborhood organizations have the responsibility to generate solutions and to identify resources within the neighborhood that can be used to help solve a problem. Even if a particular idea doesn't work, making the effort can go a long way to build relationships within government. And neighborhood leaders have the responsibility to treat city staff and city officials the way they would like to be treated themselves.

When city government works with neighborhoods, it also should be as a partner in the spirit of collaboration. City staff should take equitable ownership of neighborhood problems, and work with neighborhood groups to get them solved by guiding the group through the maze of rules, regulations and departments. City employees, too, have the responsibility to treat neighborhood leaders with respect, as valued customers.

When neighborhoods and city government work together, neighborhoods are a resource for problem-solving. Here's how that partnership might look:

Neighborhoods utilize the political system. They are accountable and empowered. The structure generates enthusiasm for working in the political process, as evidenced by increased voter involvement and trust in government.

Neighborhood representatives attend city council meetings and council members or staff attend neighborhood meetings.

The process of getting things done at City Hall is easier and more user-friendly. Government provides a liaison or ombudsman to work with neighborhoods. Communication and follow-up between neighborhoods and city staff are exemplary.

Planning is bottom up, not top down. Government responds to articulated needs rather than perceptions or pressure, and neighborhood leaders are accountable for helping to make choices about priorities. There is less need for control by elected officials; citizens recapture a sense of control over their own destiny.

## **STAFF IS NECESSARY TO LEVERAGE THE WORK OF NEIGHBORS**

One staff person can leverage the work of scores of volunteers who might otherwise be unable to reach their objectives. Unfortunately, though, staff persons who work with neighborhoods often are stretched to the breaking point, overburdened by the critical needs of the people they serve and chronically short of resources. An investment in increased staff, and in increasing the skill level of current staff at City Hall or at independent organizations, is an investment in healthy neighborhoods. This is particularly important if staff are asked to take on new responsibilities to bring neighborhoods into decision making.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS SHOULD COLLABORATE WITH OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS**

Without city-wide structures for neighborhood participation, neighborhoods lose many of the opportunities to work with one another. Consistently, the task force heard from neighborhood leaders and from its own members that neighborhoods want the chance to learn from and work with one another. Today, that is all but impossible in most jurisdictions.

In addition, the way that most systems are structured has the effect of pitting neighborhoods against one another in the tug of war for government resources. When neighborhood leaders don't have the chance to view the city as a whole and to help set city-wide priorities, they can't be expected to feel ownership of decisions that directly affect the quality of life where they live.

Neighborhoods should look at possibilities for collaborating with other neighborhoods. They should seek alliances with each other, and with public agencies, professional and charitable organizations, and commercial investors, employers and service providers.

## **SERVICES TO NEIGHBORHOODS SHOULD BE DECENTRALIZED**

One reason that neighborhoods fall into decline is that social structures have collapsed, and institutions that once kept the neighborhood together have left. Decentralizing services, putting them into neighborhoods, reintroduces a key element of the traditional neighborhood support system and forms one corner of the safety triangle mentioned earlier.

Economies of scale in the delivery of public services should be reconsidered from a neighborhood perspective. Community policing is one example. A service was put back into neighborhoods and, as a result, the energy of neighborhood residents is being used to work with police and increase public safety. An empowered neighborhood, vital and committed, may best and most cost-effectively deliver some services. Many services, both public and charitable, could best be distributed at the neighborhood level.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS of the Safe Neighborhoods Task Force**

After a task force report is released, Kansas City Consensus devotes at least one year to implementation. Consensus generally doesn't implement task force recommendations itself. Rather, Consensus relies on other groups that work within the field. The rationale for this is that it provides an essential balance. Consensus is more effective if its power comes mainly from its ability to produce sensible, innovative recommendations. Through its previous nine task forces, Consensus has been the catalyst for establishing new programs and modifying existing ones, and passing or modifying legislation.

Consensus released its last task force report before it began the COMPASS project in 1990. Since then, both Consensus and the community have changed. In particular, Greater Kansas City has become more collaborative and more interested in working across boundaries, and Consensus has carved out a niche as a neutral convener of groups with shared goals. Whereas in the past Consensus task forces identified one organization to which it would hand off a recommendation, today it is more appropriate to think in terms of encouraging collaboration among several groups.

This must be balanced with the fact that it's not enough to make vague statements about what should happen. Being specific about who should do what is important. It reflects the thoroughness of the task force's work, and it brings the recommendations into the real world. Therefore, the task force has, for each recommendation, named groups that it believes would be important members of collaborative efforts, both because those efforts would fit within the groups' missions and because the task force trusts the groups to deliver.

The groups we have mentioned do not constitute an exhaustive list of every qualified organization or every group that might be interested in being involved. The task force has left plenty of space for others to jump in with energy, resources and the willingness to take action.

The recommendations are designed to address the main themes related to People, Places and Policies.

## ***ONE ... ESTABLISH A METRO-WIDE COUNCIL OF NEIGHBORHOODS***

A metro-wide council of neighborhoods should be established. The council will be the starting point for systematic change in the way neighborhoods function in the metro area. In the beginning, the council should be housed within an organization like Mid-America Regional Council, the Center for Management Assistance or the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance.

The council should include no more than 30 neighborhood leaders, who, as a group, represent the metropolitan area. Council representatives should be selected by presidents of neighborhood organizations within each jurisdiction. Representatives should set up a formal means of communicating between themselves and that city's elected officials and city staff. Staff time should be made available to each representative.

The initial responsibilities of the metro-wide council would be to:

- develop a picture of how neighborhoods should function in order to have a meaningful, ongoing role in decision making. The council should visit cities identified by the Brookings Institution, or bring representatives from those cities here. The council should adapt the principles used in other cities to the unique circumstances of our metro area.

- develop standard operating principles that would govern the roles and responsibilities for neighborhoods. The system would be adapted to the current structure within different jurisdictions, but the principles would remain the same.
- oversee the process of putting those principles in place. Each jurisdiction will handle this differently, but the overall goal should be collaboration, between neighborhood leaders and elected officials and leaders from the business, philanthropic, professional and other communities that will be vital in empowering neighborhoods.

Eventually, the metro-wide council of neighborhoods would be housed at a clearinghouse for neighborhood leadership.

## ***TWO ... ESTABLISH A CLEARINGHOUSE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP***

A clearinghouse for neighborhood leadership should be established to provide technical assistance, training and accreditation for neighborhood leaders. The training should reach enough people each year to have a noticeable impact on how neighborhoods function. The clearinghouse also should offer a skills bank, where a neighborhood residents can volunteer to provide training and skills development for people in other neighborhoods, and, eventually, it should house the metro-wide council of neighborhoods.

The clearinghouse should work with neighborhood associations throughout the metropolitan area to develop and adopt some standard practices to increase neighborhood effectiveness. The practice will be recommended by the clearinghouse, in collaboration with neighborhood leaders, and would address how officers are elected, their terms, how meetings are conducted, how the neighborhood collaborates with other neighborhoods and institutions, and the like.

## ***THREE ... EDUCATE MUNICIPALITIES ABOUT NEIGHBORHOODS***

A local foundation should fund a project to help educate municipalities about the importance of strong neighborhoods. The program should come with “carrots” to influence city government. It should help city governments learn how, specifically, to involve neighborhoods and what city government can do to strengthen neighborhoods and the working relationship with City Hall. The program also would cover how to help organize neighborhoods.

As part of this effort, policies that shape how public services are delivered to neighborhoods should be evaluated using the ecological model. When viewed from the neighborhood perspective, it will be clear that policies should favor decentralization. When appropriate, services and institutions should be moved into neighborhoods, and neighborhood organizations should assist in the delivery of services to the neighborhood. For example, FOCUS recommends that some city functions, like code and zoning enforcement, could be assigned to neighborhood volunteers. The city’s role, then, would be to coordinate training and implementation of the programs.

## ***FOUR ... INCREASE LINKAGES AMONG NEIGHBORHOODS***

Neighborhood leaders need access to information from other neighborhoods, but the large number of neighborhood associations in the metro area make communication difficult. Communications and other systems need to be put in place to increase the linkages among neighborhoods.

The task's force offers several recommendations on how this could be accomplished:

### **Technology Centers**

Computer bulletin boards can be a great way for neighborhood residents to share information. The main difficulty appears to be providing access to computers and modems. To allow for frequent communication, technology centers with link-ups on a neighborhood computer network should be provided, which could be modeled on the Free-Net system available in other cities. With storefronts in neighborhoods and malls, the centers also would provide resources like flip charts, and provide access to the neighborhood computer network.

### **Sister Neighborhoods**

Organizations that serve neighborhoods, like the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance or Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils, along with city staff who work with neighborhoods, should set up informal sister neighborhood relationships among neighborhoods that are dealing with similar circumstances, or mentor relationships between a long-established neighborhood and a newer one.

### **Annual Neighborhood Convention**

Business leaders who took part in FOCUS suggested, and the task force agrees, that an annual "neighborhood convention" should be funded by the Convention and Visitors Bureau to provide a learning exchange for neighborhood groups. The convention should be open to neighborhoods from throughout the metropolitan area.

### **Common Issues Rather than Competition**

City staff should work with neighborhood leaders to identify common issues that affect neighborhoods throughout the city. Funds should be pooled to allow neighborhoods to work together to address common issues rather than compete against one another for resources.

## ***FIVE ... PRODUCE A NEIGHBORING CAMPAIGN***

It is time to raise the profile of neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations in Greater Kansas City. To do so, a collaborative should be formed that would include organizations that already work in neighborhoods, along with businesses, educational and religious institutions. The purpose of the collaborative would be to produce a neighborhood involvement campaign.

The neighborhood involvement campaign would raise awareness about what people can accomplish in their neighborhoods, and encourage neighbors to take action by being good neighbors, participating in the neighborhood organization, or becoming a leader in the neighborhood. It would also encourage companies and other institutions to make neighborhood service a priority, and to provide resources to neighborhood groups.

### **Redefining the Roles of Renters**

The campaign also should reach out to responsible renters, who are an untapped resource for neighborhoods. The percentage of renters, often single people, is growing throughout the metropolitan area. These people report feeling excluded from neighborhood life, and even looked down on by some

home owners. Redefining the role of renters should be part of the neighboring campaign. In addition, the leaders of neighborhood organizations should examine the role of renters in their organizations. They should talk to people who rent and find out whether they have felt excluded and what role they would see for themselves if they were sought out as members.

### **Book of Success Stories**

Often, people don't get involved in neighborhoods because they don't believe that one person can make a difference. As part of the neighborhood involvement campaign, Kansas City Consensus should take responsibility for producing a book of neighborhood success stories that can inspire individuals to get involved. Consensus should work with the collaborative, and with groups of writers, artists and neighbors to gather stories about why people live where they live, and what they have accomplished in the neighborhood along with profiles of neighborhood heroes.

## ***SIX ... CREATE OPTIONS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN***

The local chapters of the American Institute of Architects and the American Planning Association should, in collaboration with builders and bankers, identify options for the design of local neighborhoods that encourage social interaction and sustainability. The group should identify barriers to putting those designs in place, such as outdated zoning ordinances, and work with city governments to overcome these barriers.

Along the same lines, the task force supports a recommendation of FOCUS, which proposes creating neighborhood plans for physical development using broad citizen involvement. The plans would include measures that would: establish design standards; repair and rehab; create elements of community through physical form; design defensible neighborhoods; give neighborhoods their own identities; connect neighborhood focal points and gathering places; design pedestrian-friendly urban forms; design neighborhoods to be inclusive of, and sensitive to, the needs of lower income residents, women and families.

### **Building in Common Space**

As part of this effort, city government should identify, or work with neighborhoods to identify, existing public buildings that can serve as meeting places, and should make the list available to neighborhood residents. Government also should identify funding that could help neighborhoods establish a common area where one doesn't exist, like Community Development Block Grants for social rather than physical infrastructure. Developers should build a neighborhood center into any new development, and all neighborhood centers, whether part of new or old developments, should be accessible to disabled persons.

### **Neighborhoods Should Identify Three Places for the Triangle of Interaction**

Social interaction in neighborhoods depends on neighbors meeting one another as they walk around the neighborhood. To encourage this, as part of its physical planning process, each neighborhood should identify three destination points that would form a triangle of interaction. For example, a neighborhood might identify a park, a grocery store and a church as the points of the triangle. That neighborhood then should work with the owners of the grocery store and pastor of the church to see how they could help encourage neighbors to use the location as a meeting point. Neighbors should also look at how they use the park as a destination point when they want to jog or walk the dog, and see if the park could be made to serve other purposes.

# APPENDIX A: The Community's Vision & Goals Created Through COMPASS

Through Kansas City Consensus's COMPASS project, thousands of citizens helped create a vision that could unite the metropolitan community. From 1990 through 1992, COMPASS volunteers led by Richard C. Green, Utilicorp United, Inc., met with members of more than 100 groups to brainstorm about the strengths and needs of the community and their own values and vision of the future. Through six town meetings, a long list of needs was narrowed to a handful, which were studied by local citizens. From this information, the COMPASS Steering Committee drew the vision and five related goals.

## The Community's Vision

*Greater Kansas City: The Child Opportunity Capital, where the quality of our children's future is the measure of our success.*

### **Greater Kansas City will be a place where . . .**

*. . . every child has a personal vision of what he or she can accomplish in life, and where that child's parents, school, neighborhood and metropolitan community encourages the potential in each child.*

*. . . every parent is an advocate for his or her child, providing the tools -- values, education, personal development -- that the child needs to become a healthy, productive child.*

*. . . every neighborhood nurtures the souls of the people who live there, providing a secure community where children are safe to explore, where neighborliness prevails, where there is physical beauty and a feeling of connectedness.*

*. . . the entire metropolitan area joins together to support every child and every parent as they strive to reach their full potential. To do this, we will reach toward a vision of excellence in our homes, neighborhoods, jobs, education, and in our dealings with one another as individuals and communities.*

## The Community's Goals

### **Goal One: Our community will support its families.**

As a parent cradles a child, a family requires the loving support of its community to thrive. In this community, that means that all families can create safe home environments that sustain and stimulate their children, that family members are healthy and have good homes.

### **Goal Two: Our community will empower neighborhoods.**

In this community, neighbors on every block in every neighborhood will have what they need to create wholesome environments, with safe streets, good homes and attractive surroundings.

### **Goal Three: Our citizens will be ready for tomorrow's jobs.**

Greater Kansas City will show the nation how to prepare for and attract the high-quality jobs of tomorrow. This community will establish a business environment that creates jobs which assure every full-time worker of medical benefits and wages high enough for a family to feel secure, and will provide every person with high-quality job training that she or he needs to provide a better life for the family.

### **Goal Four: Our children's schools will help them reach excellence.**

This community will make sure that all children receive an education that provides an unshakable self-confidence, skills that serve them well into the next century, and a thirst for learning that they carry with them the rest of their lives.

### **Goal Five: We will work together across all boundaries to reach our vision.**

This community will create a sense of metropolitan citizenship that has as its hallmark an appreciation of other individuals and other communities. We will reach across the boundaries of race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender to show our respect for the dignity of each unique individual and his or her role in reaching our vision. We will reach across the boundaries of geography to create a community for all children, while respecting the heritage and strengths that each brings to the whole.



# APPENDIX B: Consensus Activities

## Kansas City Consensus's activities fall into two main areas:

- 1) Task Force studies and implementation of these studies
- 2) Collaborative projects

Both task force studies and collaborative projects are designed to move the community toward the vision of becoming the *Child Opportunity Capital*. The activities in the 1995-96 program year include:

## Task Forces and Implementation

- ***Safe neighborhoods Task Force Implementation Committee.*** Consensus will spend one year working with other groups to take action on the task force recommendations.
- ***Metro Community Vision Resource Task Force.*** The charge of this task force is to determine the financial, human and programmatic resources necessary to make the vision of the *Child Opportunity Capital* a reality.

## Collaborative Projects

- ***Bridges Across the Heartland AmeriCorp.*** Bridges is a \$600,000 federal AmeriCorps program that includes a coalition of 11 service agencies and more than 50 AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps is the national service movement initiated by President Clinton and passed by Congress in September 1993. It involves mainly college-age young people in a “domestic Peace Corps” to meet critical needs in the areas of education, public safety, human and environmental needs. The Bridges program was developed by the 90 member Greater Kansas City Partners for National and Community Service convened by Consensus.
- ***The Partners Project.*** Funded by the Kauffman Foundation, the Partners Project will pull together a team of interns that will provide much needed services to the Greater Kansas City Partners for National and Community Service. The interns will include graduate and undergraduate students, and will complete jobs, like research or program development, that aren't generally feasible for volunteers to perform and for which there is not enough staff time.
- ***The Promise Project.*** This four year partnership with the Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri , Inc., is in its second year. Its mission is to develop partnerships between young people and adults that give youth a voice in decision making in the community. At the end of a four year partnership, a free standing, not-for-profit institute will be established to provide advocacy and training for youth / adult partnerships; the first four years of the project are devoted to research and development of the products the institute will offer.
- ***Kids Voting.*** This one-year project, a joint effort with the Learning Exchange, will bring the Kids Voting program to the state of Missouri. Kids Voting gives kids the chance to participate in their own elections, set up at the same place and with the same issues and candidates as the elections in which their parents vote. The national Kids Voting program already is licensed in Kansas.

## Members of the 1995 - 96 Kansas City Consensus Board of Directors

Consensus has a 40 person board selected to represent the diversity of the metro area, including young people.

**President . . .** Clyde McQueen, Full Employment Council

**1st Vice President . . .** Pete Fullerton, Platte County Economic Development Council

**2nd Vice President . . .** Nancy Milgram, Milco

**Secretary . . .** Fawn Fleming, Kansas City Business Journal

**Treasurer . . .** Roger Hille, Center for Management Assistance

**Directors**

Al Babich, Northland Career Center

Ingrid Backus

Lutrecia T. S. Church, Marion Merrell Dow

Robert M. Clark, Rockhurst College

Elaine Crider, Payless Cashways, Inc.

Twyla Dell, Foresight Institute

Chris Elders, student

Linda Evans, Midwest Research Institute

Richard Farnan, HNTB Corporation

Sally Gallion, Farmland Industries

Chris Hill, student

Dean Katerndahl, City of Kansas City, Kansas

Brenda Kelly, Park Hill School District

Robert Larsen, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Sally Magana, Westport Middle School

Bill Mann

Jack Mayer, Hallmark Cards, Inc.

Mary Kay McPhee

Lavert A. Murray, City of Kansas City, Kansas

John R. Phillips, Blackwell Sanders Matheny

Amy Pollack, Menninger Kansas City

Barbara Long Quirk, Truman Medical Center East

Jennifer Rowe, AmeriCorp Member

Phil Scaglia, Labor-Management Council

Cynthia Weber-Scherb, H&R Block

Mike Slusher, The Learning Exchange

Leslie Stelzer

Fr. Robert H. Stewart, Holy Family Catholic Church

Bill Taylor, William Taylor and Associates

David P. Thomas, Sprint

Mae Tseng, Children's Mercy Hospital

Teresa Tulipana, Morris Elementary School

Ana Valdez, Coalition for Positive Family Relationships

David White, Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Iona White, Boatmen's First National Bank

# APPENDIX C: Task Force Members & Resource Persons

## Active Members of the Safe Neighborhoods Task Force

Safe Neighborhoods Task Force volunteers met every other week for about eight months. The task force is especially proud that its members truly represent the diversity of the metro area, including strong participation from the Northland and Johnson County, groups that often are underrepresented in discussions about neighborhoods. This task force report represents the consensus of the group, although individual members may disagree with one point or another. This list includes persons who attended 40 percent or more of the task force meetings.

**Chairman . . .** Richard Farnan, HNTB Corporation

**Vice Chairman . . .** Ken Bayer, Business Temporary Services

## Members

### *Fairway KS*

Kay McCrary

### *Kansas City KS*

Margaret Jenkins

David Muhammad

Ana Valdez

Wendy Wilson

### *Leavenworth KS*

Lawrence Schumake

### *Midtown, KCMO*

Heather Brosz

Edward Browne

Patricia Gallagher

Vince LaTona

Corrine McCall

Maureen O'Hare

Doug Rushing

Lisa Wijnands

### *Northland, KCMO*

Anne Alexander

Ginger Bohachick

Sharen Hunt

### *Northeast, KCMO*

Becky Miles

Terry Seals

### *Overland Park KS*

Lynn Ferguson

Karen Ferrier

Susan Lago

### *Prarie Village KS*

DeAnn Ryno

Mai Tseng

### *South, KCMO*

Evelyn Gorten

Cassie McLin

Mel McLin

Ron Woody

**Staff support . . .** Jennifer Wilding, Midtown, KCMO

## Members of the Safe Neighborhoods Advisory Committee

The task force is grateful for the help and advice provided by members of the Safe Neighborhoods Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee included people whose work intersects with the issue of neighborhood involvement, and was drawn from throughout the metropolitan area.

Dr. John Amadio, Independence Health Department

Keith Brown, Project Neighbor H.O.O.D.

Janet Eischen, Central Avenue Betterment Association

Alex Ellison, Kansas City Missouri School Board

SuEllen Fried, STOP Violence Coalition

Dean Katerndahl, City of Kansas City Kansas

Richard Gist, Johnson County Community College

Carol Gustafson, Village Presbyterian Church

Pat Henley, Cler-Mont Elementary School

Rick Malsick, YouthNet  
Dave Olson, Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance  
Nanci Regan, City of Kansas City Missouri  
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Caryll Schultz, Commerce Bank of Kansas City  
Pat Tennyson, Parents as Teachers  
Mary Kay Vaughn, City of Kansas City Missouri  
Officer Jim Weaver, Overland Park Police Department  
Steve Zahner, Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils

#### Resource Persons

The task force was fortunate to have the chance to learn from local experts who contributed their time and expertise. Their appearances before the task force provided important information; it should not be assumed, though, that resource persons would endorse every element of this report.

Bob Berkebile, Berkebile Nelson Immenschuh McDowell Architects  
Dona Boley, Police Commissioner, Kansas City Missouri  
Barney Brown, Caring Communities Program  
Keith Brown, Project Neighbor H.O.O.D.  
Tim Decker, LINC  
John Fiero, Hispanic Economic Development Corporation  
Chris Johnson, Youth Leadership Program participant  
The Hon. Rob Larsen, U.S. Magistrate Judge  
Michael Lee, Block Brother, Boys and Girls Clubs  
Rick Malsick, Youth Net  
Major Greg Mills, Kansas City Missouri Police Department  
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Beth Noble, University of Missouri - Kansas City  
Dave Olson, Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance  
Michaela Robles, Alta Vista High School  
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Cliff Sargeon, Ad Hoc Group Against Crime  
Nathan Smith, Boys and Girls Clubs  
Brian Tucker, Block Brother, Boys and Girls Clubs  
Karen Wulfkuhle, United Community Services of Johnson County  
Steve Zahner, Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils

## **APPENDIX D: Neighborhood or Neighborhood-based Organizations**

The following is a sampling of agencies and programs in the metropolitan area designed to strengthen neighborhoods. It is not by any means a complete list of every resource available. For neighbors in search of resources, the first stop should be the local City Hall, many of which have departments devoted to serving neighborhoods.

### **Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils (IPNC)**

Celebrating its 25th year in 1996, the Independence Plan for Neighborhood Councils was cited in the April 1995 National League of Cities *Issues & Answers* Magazine as an example of effective neighborhood empowerment. IPNC has received attention nationally and internationally for the structure it uses.

IPNC was established in 1971 as an original concept for neighboring. It divided Independence, Missouri, into 42 neighborhoods. Each neighborhood is responsible for electing its own leaders, setting its goals, raising money, writing and distributing its newsletter, and recruiting members. Neighborhoods of Independence take on more than 1,000 projects each year. The most unusual feature of IPNC is the networking that happens among the 42 neighborhoods by their representatives on each of 20 city-wide committees. Of the twenty committees, ten work directly with city government and ten deal with cultural life. The president and executive vice-president from each of the 42 neighborhoods and 20 city-wide committees serve on the Council of Presidents, which is guided by a 23 member executive committee.

Since its founding, IPNC has served as a model for neighboring worldwide. It responded to requests for information from more than 3900 communities in the U.S. and 68 other nations during its first 20 years of operation. In 1981/82 Independence, Missouri was recognized as an All-America City in large part because of the work of IPNC.

The IPNC credo is **“You don’t have to move to live in a better neighborhood.”** IPNC is guided by 29 basic beliefs. A sample includes:

- It’s amazing how much you can get done when you don’t care who gets the credit.
- Community building comes from cooperation, not confrontation.
- Win / Win situations can happen when people reason together, considering other’s viewpoints and situations.
- Community togetherness comes from seeing the whole picture.
- Without neighborliness, there is only loneliness and despair.
- Neighborliness cannot be forced but must be an option open to all to choose when and where they will.
- Our real success is not measured by what we do ourselves, but rather by how many others we help to be successful.

### **Kansas City Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC)**

Kansas City has one of about 35 LISC programs throughout the U.S. The mission of LISC is to assist Community Development Corporations (CDC’s) in transforming distressed neighborhoods into healthy communities. It is the nation’s largest private non-profit community development intermediary, and provides technical and financial know-how and financing.

The Kansas City LISC is one of 10 U.S. cities to participate in a program called Community Building Initiative (CBI), which focuses on building the social and physical fabric of targeted neighborhoods. Through CBI, local Community Development Corporations and neighborhood residents invest in human capital through developing skills and knowledge of residents, and social capital through building on the strengths and depth of relationships among neighbors. The objectives of CBI are to develop interdependency through:

- Organizing block collaboratives in targeted neighborhoods with the primary goal of rebuilding neighborhoods.
- Training to build leadership competence and knowledge of strategies and tools to address opportunities and problems on the block and in the community.
- Developing plans of action to address problems and pursue opportunities.
- Accessing tools and resources to carry out a block plan.
- Connecting emerging block leaders in existing neighborhood associations to pursue broader community agendas.

### **Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance (KCNA)**

KCNA is an independent, not-for-profit corporation formed in 1979 to serve urban, low and moderate income areas built before 1940. It was created by The Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, which is composed of CEOs from the 100 largest corporations.

The goal of KCNA is to help make neighborhoods safe, strong, stable and attractive places where people are proud to live. It does this by:

- Increasing production of housing in existing neighborhoods.
- Serving as a resource to neighborhoods or coalitions of neighborhoods.
- Increasing private, public and personal investment in neighborhoods.
- Serving as a resource to Community Development Corporations.

KCNA programs include:

- ***Homeworks:*** A collaborative effort of KCNA and the Neighborhood Housing Service, which educates families about what they need to do to purchase a home with affordable payments. As part of this program, area mortgage lenders review, design and implement mortgage loan programs that fit the needs of potential buyers.
- ***Renovation, Rehabilitation & Construction of affordable rental housing:*** KCNA owns and manages some 220 rental homes or apartments.
- ***Leadership Training:*** A nine-month curriculum for 20 neighborhood leaders per session is based on Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*
- ***Roundtable:*** A monthly potluck meeting of volunteer neighborhood leaders who meet to share ideas, advice and resources.
- ***Newsletter Center:*** A central resource where neighborhood groups learn how to use computer desktop publishing, then produce and copy newsletters and fliers at little or no cost.
- ***Neighborhood Self Help Grants:*** A collaborative effort of KCNA and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation which provides about \$85,000 per year for awards up to \$4000. The dollars go to neighborhood groups for innovative volunteer programs.

### **Livable Neighborhoods Task Force**

The Kansas City, Kansas City Council convened the ad hoc Livable Neighborhoods Task Force as a means for citizens to help find ways that neighborhood residents and local government could work together to build better neighborhoods. A permanent task force was put in place in the fall of 1994, and since then the task force has met monthly to identify problems in the community and work on possible solutions. The Livable Neighborhoods Task Force has concluded that it should concentrate on a few issues that pose the greatest threat to the livability of neighborhoods, including tax-delinquent property, crime and drugs, and property code enforcement.

The task force has made several recommendations to City Council and County Commissioners. They include requests to improve the Action Center's ability to assist by upgrading the city's computer system; conduct code enforcement blitzes; help neighborhood groups with clean-up efforts; establish a quick response trash team; pass legislation to establish a land bank to deal with vacant, tax delinquent lots; promote neighborhood groups; and draft and support an ordinance to license landlords.

### **Project Neighbor H.O.O.D. (PNH)**

Project Neighbor H.O.O.D. is an example of social services delivered at the neighborhood level. PNH was established in 1992 with the receipt of a five-year, \$3 million “Fighting Back” grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The mission of Project Neighbor H.O.O.D. is to prevent substance abuse and reduce the current use of alcohol and illegal drugs in the urban core of Kansas City, Missouri.

PNH believes this is possible only through a community-wide movement that links business and community leaders, agency and service providers, and neighborhood and families. It seeks to overcome an approach that in the past has been fragmented, inaccessible, and non-responsive to the needs of those living in the urban core, and by promoting cooperative efforts of those who deal with substance abuse and abusers. PNH seeks to affect treatment, public policy and public awareness.

PNH links existing services with members of the community who need them. To do this, PNH employs community mobilizers. The mobilizers are members of the community who have been trained in the area of substance abuse and have offices in community centers, churches, apartments and other accessible locations. They provide education, a listening ear and a link between services and substance abusers.

One of PNH’s most high-profile initiatives has been in the area of community policing. In a handful of Kansas City neighborhoods, two community / beat police officers, a city codes inspector and a neighborhood mobilizers occupy “Community Action Network” centers and work with residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

### **City of Overland Park Neighborhood Conservation Program**

The Neighborhood Conservation Program is operated by the City of Overland Park under the direction of the Planning and Research Department. Its major focus is on providing guidance to residents of selected neighborhoods in developing a self-help conservation program for their neighborhood. The program operates in neighborhoods that are experiencing a deterioration in property maintenance, typically in the area around the old downtown.

The goals of the Neighborhood Conservation Program include helping neighborhoods set up and run their organizations, encouraging property maintenance, stabilizing property values, encouraging neighborhood interaction and a sense of pride, and fostering a positive working relationship between the City and neighborhoods.

# APPENDIX E: People Appendix

## ***E-1 Conditions that Make Community Real***

John Gardner's work on community was cited by several local neighborhood leaders, who use it as their framework. Gardner says that the conditions that make community real are:

1. **Wholeness Incorporating Diversity.** Vital communities face and resolve differences and make provision for different groups to work together.
2. **A Shared Culture.** The community provides opportunities to express values in relevant action. The community affirms itself and builds morale through ceremonies that honor the symbols of shared identity and enable members to rededicate themselves to shared goals.
3. **Good Internal Communication.** People believe that they can have their say. Each segment of the community understands what the others need and want. Rather than depend on the media alone, leaders create an information sharing network among a wide variety of institutions and organizations. Maximum use is made of institutions that serve as neutral conveners.
4. **Caring, Trust and Teamwork.** Members deal with one another humanely, respect one another and value the integrity of each person. There is the feeling that when the team wins, everybody wins. However, a community can be too tightly knit, suppressing dissent and constraining the creativity of its members.
5. **Group Maintenance and Government.** There are institutional provisions for group maintenance or governing, like a board of directors, administration or student government.
6. **Participation and the Sharing of Leadership Tasks.** Community involves the participation of mature and responsible individuals, and is not bought at the price of the individual's mindless submission to the group. The community balances individuality and group obligations.
7. **Development of Young People.** Boys and girls learn to take some responsibility for the well being of any group they are in, the first step toward responsible community participation. Every organization serving the community finds ways of involving young people.
8. **Links with the Outside World.** The community balances the tension between the need for the community to draw boundaries to protect its integrity, and the need to have fruitful links with the larger communities of which it is a part.

## ***E-2 A Combination of Factors Determines the Strength of Neighborhood Networks***

Social scientists suggest that a combination of factors within the neighborhood determine whether it will be a supportive or non-supportive social network:

- The family's perception of itself and the outer world as positive or negative will affect the willingness to form networks within the neighborhood.
- The family's perception of its needs, and the needs of neighborhood members, and the probability of meeting those needs within the neighborhood will affect the willingness to form networks within the neighborhood.
- The degree of stress the family and neighbors are under as well as their ability to deal effectively with stress will affect the development of supportive networks.

Several elements affect the tone of relationships within neighborhoods.

- **Privacy.** It is only in this century that our society has stressed family privacy and autonomy from wider norms. "Earlier," Peric says, "*outsiders were likely to have been an audience in the family's life - observing how its members fulfilled their duties and exercised their rights with one another.*"

- Families had servants or took in boarders, and in Colonial America, children were “put out” to live with other families for their education or an apprenticeship.
- **Time.** Research shows that the amount of social interaction and the amount of time children spend playing and relating to each other are critical to having supportive neighborhoods for families. These factors would directly affect the time spent in human relationships. From a study by Brown and Swick:
 

*An adequate amount of time is a requisite for cognitive and social stimulation, providing and receiving support, and active participation in a neighborhood network . . . The availability of more time will increase the probability of participation in supportive networks and thus reduce the family’s isolation and reduce stress, which are the primary causes of family instability.*
- **Risk Factors.** One indicator of the health of families is whether their children use alcohol or other drugs. Risk and protective factors related to substance abuse problems among youth have been identified for four key systems: family, school, peers and community.
 

*Community Risk factors include:* economic and social deprivation; low neighborhood achievement and community disorganization; lack of employment opportunities and youth involvement; easy availability of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs and community norms and laws favorable to misuse.

*Community Protective factors include:* norms and public policies which support non-use among youth; access to resources (housing, health care, child care, job training, employment and recreation); supportive networks and social bonds; involve youth in community service.

### ***E-3 Taking the First Steps to Get Organized***

Here are some basic steps to follow to get started. Most are excerpted from “A Self -Help Manual for Neighborhood Organizations,” produced by the Neighborhood Conservation Program of the City of Overland Park, Kansas.

- **Talk to your neighbors.** Find out whether people are interested in getting organized and what issues interest them enough that they would be willing to get involved.
- **Gather information.** Call your city hall to find out whether there is a department or a staff person assigned to neighborhood organizations. Find out whether there already is a neighborhood organization where you live, and if so, the name and phone number of the president. Ask about other organizations or city departments that might be able to help you get started.
- **If an organization does not already exist, or is dormant, form a steering committee of people who have a vested interest in the neighborhood.** The steering committee should have 16-25 members, and should include representation from residents, landowners of rental properties, businesses, schools and churches in the neighborhood. At the first meeting, you might discuss each person’s idea of problems and needs of the neighborhood along with the positive aspect of the neighborhood. Determine the boundaries of the neighborhood if they don’t already exist. Then, you might choose a temporary chairperson and plan a larger meeting to announce the formation of your group to everyone in the neighborhood.
- **Hold the first neighborhood meeting.** Arrange for the use of a church basement, school classroom or community room at the local shopping mall. Prepare fliers that state the time, date, place and purpose of the meeting, and hand-deliver the fliers throughout the neighborhood. Check with the principal of the local elementary school, if it is neighborhood-based, to see if children can bring the fliers home with them. Personally invite elected officials and city staff from various departments, as well as school administrators and area clergy.

*(Note: At the meeting, arrange chairs so people can see each other, and try to have snacks. Post a map of the neighborhood with area of concern clearly marked. Follow a prepared agenda and give everyone a chance to speak. Work with the group to set ground rules: i.e., time limitations, disagree respectfully, etc. If possible, have a flip chart and record comments so that people can see that their voice was heard. End*

*the meeting by forming committees which will assess neighborhood needs and establish goals and objectives.)*

- **Conduct a neighborhood definition survey.** It helps to understand how people who live there relate to neighborhood organizations and to each other. Each neighborhood is unique and has its own personality. To have total citizen input and to evaluate the residents' opinions, surveys must be designed, distributed, collected and assessed.

Here's a suggested format for a neighborhood definition survey from the City of Overland Park:

1. Does your neighborhood have a special name?
2. What are the physical boundaries of your neighborhood?
3. Is your neighborhood significantly different from the neighborhoods that surround it? (e.g. housing style, appearance, condition, ethnicity of residents, amount of interaction between residents, etc.)
4. Where do residents in your neighborhood gather to discuss issues? (e.g. back fences, schools, churches, neighborhood bar or coffee shop, particular residences, etc.)
5. Does your neighborhood conduct organized activities such as neighborhood clean-up days, garage sales, block parties, holiday parties, etc.?
6. What do you view as the most positive aspects of your neighborhood?
7. Are there aspects of your neighborhood that should be improved?
8. Briefly discuss your opinion of the neighborhood services provided by City Hall, such as communication, street cleaning, zoning enforcement, property codes enforcement, etc.
9. What are the key issues (problems, concerns) affecting your entire neighborhood?

The task force adds a 10th Question . . .

10. What skills and abilities can you offer to the neighborhood? What would you be interested in accomplishing by working with your neighbors?

In addition to the survey of residents, you may want to develop a land use survey, using various city maps available through your local city government.

Now it's time to develop a list of goals and objectives for the neighborhood group, and set priorities among them. **A goal is a generalized statement about what you wish to achieve in your neighborhood at some undefined time in the future.** A goal might be, "Develop and maintain clean and blight-free housing."

**An objective is a specific, measurable task within a given time frame which partially attempts to accomplish a stated goal.** An objective might be, "Have committee members talk to property owners who have property codes violations."

After this, a neighborhood group would want to develop bylaws, perhaps incorporate as a not-for-profit organization, and file for tax-exempt status. In addition, you'll want to start a database of volunteers and set up a communication system among them. At this point, be sure to have elected officers who can meet as an executive committee and make headway outside of the larger neighborhood meetings, and don't stop working to bring resources into the neighborhood to help keep the momentum going.

## ***E-4 Creating a Community that Supports Leadership***

The larger community is the soil into which neighborhood leaders are planted. Fertile soil can increase the number and quality of neighborhood leaders. After its national study of community activism, the Partners for Livable Places proposed a 3-part approach for local leadership:

- **Depersonalize Leadership ...** “Depersonalizing leadership ensures that the good idea, the strategic opportunity, is part of a common agenda rather than an extension of the personality of one person. It allows a good idea to have many parents; it allows for adoption without difficulty:”
- **Institutionalizing Leadership . . .** “Institutionalizing leadership . . . involves planning for a leader’s fatigue, retirement and eventual death.” PLP says that implies a process for training and developing new leaders, who become a sort of “farm team” while they develop their skills.
- **Creating a Culture for Leadership . . .** “For leadership to thrive, a community must create a climate for leadership, a culture in which saluting those who have done some extraordinary things for their communities and bidding them farewell when they step down is the norm.

## ***E-5 Effective Leaders Have Learned Certain Skills***

What makes an effective leader? Half the battle is won when a person makes the commitment to be a leader. After that, John Gardner proposes the following five skills for community leaders:

- **Agreement Building** - having skills in conflict resolution, mediation and coalition-building, along with the ability to build trust, plus the judgment and political skill to deal with multiple constituencies.
- **Networking** - creating or recreating the linkages necessary to get things done.
- **Exercising Nonjurisdictional Power** - using the power of the media and public opinion with ideas, concerns, etc.
- **Institution Building** - having a sense of where the whole system should be going and the ability to institutionalize the problem solving that will get it there.
- **Flexibility** - being able to think ahead and make changes as necessary to reach a goal.

# APPENDIX F – Places Appendix

## ***F-1 Four Distinctions for Classifying Neighborhoods***

The Safe Neighborhoods Task Force has adopted the four classifications used by FOCUS Kansas City which allow for accurate distinctions to be drawn between and among neighborhoods throughout the metro area. The FOCUS plan used Planning Analysis Areas based on the needs and actions of sectors. Any one of the four area types may be found in any part of the city, whether urban or suburban, old or new. The classification system implies the level of need in each type of area, which helps identify the public and private actions needed to make each type of area “healthy.” The area types are:

**Developing** - These areas are developing throughout the city where there are major expanses of land that have never been developed. They are areas that contain new development that has occurred from 1980 until the present and where future development is market driven. For the city, these areas contribute new development that meets the market need for housing, commercial and industrial development.

**Conservation** - These areas are located throughout the city, potentially in any area built before 1930. They are areas that contain any age and type of development that is good quality with a strong market. For the city, these areas contribute good quality development for all markets. They also contribute significantly to the City’s tax base. The actions needed are to keep these areas stable and to predict any negative trends in the early stages and reverse them so that problems don’t develop.

**Stabilization** - These areas are located throughout the city, potentially in any area built before 1980. They are areas that contain any age and type of development that is having problems - with rehabilitation needs, stagnant property values, increasing vacancies or a weakening market. These problems can range from relatively minor to severe. For the city, these areas contribute a variety of housing, commercial space and industrial space at a variety of cost levels. Often the area’s problems are minor and these areas provide an acceptable level of quality development. The actions needed involve addressing the problems that exist -- stabilizing where feasible or significantly upgrading where necessary. If problems are severe, some level of demolition may be needed.

**Redeveloping** - These areas are located in parts of the urban core in particular, and are possible in any part of the city. They are areas that contain extremely severe problems -- the existing fabric of the area is generally gone and the need is to redevelop the area. For the city, these areas can contribute, when redeveloped, close-in development that meets the market for new construction and takes advantage of existing infrastructure. These areas provide a revitalized market wherever they are located. The actions needed are demolishing most remaining structures (except those that may be generally sound or historically significant), building new structures and creating a new fabric for the area.

## ***F-2 Kansas City, Missouri, Targets Neighborhoods As a Priority***

FOCUS stands for *Forging Our Comprehensive Urban Strategy*. Through FOCUS, the Mayor and City Council of Kansas City, Missouri, began in September of 1992 to work with about 1,000 citizens to design Kansas City’s future. The project, led by a steering committee of 24 citizens, produced a community driven, fact-based policy framework to guide the city’s public policy discussions into the next century. Prior to FOCUS, Kansas City had never undertaken a strategic plan for the entire city and had not completed a city wide comprehensive plan since 1947.

The FOCUS Phase I report outlined the policy framework, designed to serve as a “reference manual” for the City Council. Phase II, the comprehensive plan, will include specific strategies and plans for implementing the policy guidelines outlined in Phase I.

In Phase I, FOCUS created a strategic policy plan that included data collection and assessment, public input and policy formation. FOCUS convened 12 perspective groups that included representatives of more than 850 community organizations. Each group answered the same 62 questions. The perspective groups targeted neighborhood vitality as one of the three major spending priorities.

FOCUS chose **14 policy principles** based on ideas generated in perspective groups. They include:

- reaffirm and revitalize the urban core
- advance and encourage quality suburban development
- plan for a well designed city framework
- strengthen neighborhoods
- ensure environmental stewardship
- create a secure city
- respect diversity
- advance education, culture and the arts
- develop jobs for the future
- create opportunity
- create a better future for our young people
- target financial investments strategically
- build government through a strong partnership with citizens
- build metropolitan leadership and regional cooperation

The FOCUS policy statement on neighborhoods told what the City of Kansas City, Missouri, was ready to do to strengthen neighborhoods. Much of that had to do with the built environment. To ensure that Kansas City’s neighborhoods remain strong as the building blocks of the city, the City shall:

1. emphasize housing policies that support the conservation and upgrading of our neighborhoods, and the design of neighborhoods with a sense of community.
2. improve ways to address housing rehabilitation and neighborhood development and cohesiveness.
3. work to create urban villages in neighborhoods, and to identify ways to strengthen neighborhood self-reliance.
4. identify criteria for setting neighborhood priorities, and identifying neighborhood issues and ways to address them.

**The intent of the neighborhood policy was threefold:**

The **first intent** was to use neighborhood plans to establish neighborhoods as urban villages with a sense of community and with pedestrian paths and amenities, street lights and sidewalks, trees and green space, nearby services, ties to neighborhood-based businesses, and active, involved residents.

The **second intent** was to develop new ways for schools, places of worship, community centers, police stations and other public building to cooperate with, and get involved with, their surrounding neighborhoods.

The **third intent** was to work with neighborhoods to find ways to improve their self-reliance, authority and strength through training and information, and through allocating resources to them and defining ways to provide City services through neighborhood based organizations and community development corporations.

### ***F-3. Seven Design Principles Govern the Ecological Model of Design***

Two leading practitioners of the ecological model are Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. Their design principles recognize that healthy communities are complex organic systems. The towns they have designed are built around seven design principles, including:

- The master plan, which follows the pattern typical of American towns with a center that radiates an interconnected street network. The plan concentrates commercial activity in the town center, and distributes civic spaces and buildings throughout the neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are planned on a 1/4 mile radius -- a five-minute walk from the edge to the center.
- A street network with short blocks. Pedestrian networks with paths through squares and parks, plus pedestrian alleys and sidewalks.
- Street sections, the intention of which is to make a place where pedestrians feel comfortable as well as to provide for car travel.
- A regulating plan which reflects the principle of integration of uses.
- Public buildings and squares that are designed to be settings for informal social activity and recreation as well as larger civic gatherings.
- Building codes that encourage variety while ensuring harmony of design.

For example, Duany and Plater-Zyberk encourage neighborhoods where people of different incomes live together. They integrate affordable housing in small quantities throughout the neighborhood rather than creating large tracts of single-income housing. They do this by interspersing houses of different sizes but similar appearance, providing apartments over stores and encouraging garage apartments and small cottages behind single-family homes to serve as rental units.

## **APPENDIX G – Policies Appendix**

### **How the Brookings Institution Selected the Five Cities**

In determining which cities have effective neighborhood participation, the Brookings Institution analyzed the breadth and depth of participation. It defined the breadth of participation as the extent to which an opportunity is offered to every community member to participate in every stage of the policy making process. It defined the depth as the extent to which the citizens who choose to participate have the opportunity to determine the final policy outcome by means of the participation process.

The Brookings Institution found that four elements set the cities apart from others they studied:

- The motivation to make participation work.
- The design of the system, including participation based on small neighborhoods, a city-wide system, and major political innovations, was present at the outset rather than added piecemeal.
- A political balance that assures that while neighborhoods are at the center of debate on many of the city's most controversial issues, they are not captured by partisan politics.
- The ability to reach a plateau of participation before running into a problem.

### **Brookings ask three questions about each city: is participation possible, does government respond and does participation empower?**

#### **Is participation possible?**

They found that while the same number or percent of people were involved in the five cities as in some of the others that were studied, that the five cities were most likely to have strong participation. "Even though they fall short in getting more people to become active in the political world and getting more low-income people involved, neighborhood associations do nurture face-to-face participation. This participation, channeled into neighborhood-based activity, changes the balance of power in the city."

#### **Does government respond?**

Neighborhoods have more influence on issues of direct concern to their individual communities and less influence on city-wide politics. City officials respond because they know the neighborhood associations are trusted by neighborhood residents. "Rank and file citizens have a very high opinion of the neighborhood associations, whether they have participated in them or not."

Cities with high participation achieved high levels of trust in local government. Researchers said that another important finding was that increases in knowledge about local government and neighborhood associations are positively related to increasing levels of face-to-face activity. "Learning is at the core of attitudinal change, and participation theorists are correct in their suggestion that intensive political experiences add to one's knowledge of the system . . . Community participants learn how to get things accomplished."

#### **Does participation empower?**

Researchers said the most striking finding of the study of the impact of citizen participation on individuals is its effect on the sense of community:

*There is a strong and positive relationship between level of participation and sense of community. SES (socio-economic status) does not effect this relationship; at each level of participation low-income residents tended to have as high a sense of community as those in the middle- and high-SES groups. Participation in a neighborhood association was also strongly related to a high level of sense of community. Other forms of participation were not as strongly linked to a positive attitude or sense of community.*

The Brookings Institution found that even in cities with strong, city-wide neighborhood participation, low-income people were still far less likely to participate than middle- and high-income residents.

*For advocates . . . who believe that neighborhood associations controlled by the residents themselves would prove to be an inviting forum for low-income participation, the data collected for the five cities provide little comfort. Despite their openness and autonomy, it may be unrealistic to assume that neighborhood associations will overcome the class*

*bias in American society. . . The daily burdens of low-income people are powerful forces that make them feel inadequate, apathetic or alienated; such attitudes are not easily ameliorated by easier opportunities to become involved in politics.*

The study also found, however, that participation within a city-wide structure has an impact on the skills of low-income people. “Low-SES people who engage in face-to-face political acts do not see their capacities enhanced very much; but when such people participate in the context of a city-wide participation structure, efficacy and knowledge improve substantially.”

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