

NEWS



Policy Wins page 3



Our Mission

The mission of Greater Kansas City LISC is to attract, coordinate and provide resources to assist in transforming targeted neighborhoods into healthy, sustainable communities in partnership with their residents.

We will accomplish this by:

- > Working with neighborhood residents to create and implement Quality of Life Plans to meet their economic, safety, housing and educational needs.
- > Establishing partnerships, collaborations and strategic alliances to bring financial resources, policies and programs to achieve community improvement objectives.
- > Measuring progress and communicating results so that stakeholders can benchmark and share successful strategies and tactics.

501(c)3 Statement

Local Initiatives Support Corporation is a tax exempt 501(c)3 non-profit organization aimed at improving communities within our urban core. As such, your donation is tax-deductible and greatly appreciated.

Contact

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Terri Mueller at 816-753-0055 ext. 19 or by email at tmueller@lisc.org

A Safe Investment

June 12 marked the one year anniversary of the Kansas City, Kansas Downtown Improvement District (KCK DID), and downtown businesses and residents had much to celebrate. In one year's time, significant progress has taken place; from cleaner streets and sidewalks to a more secure and consumer-friendly Downtown commercial corridor.

The clear changes that have occurred speak to the determination of local business owners to take part in the revitalization of Downtown KCK. By voting for the Improvement District designation, businesses and property owners within the area agreed to a self-tax that funds a security team and a cleaning crew, both called "Ambassadors." A year in, their contribution and the work of the Ambassadors is changing the face of the neighborhood.

"Downtown has become a place where you have to look for blight, whereas before you could find it on any corner," said Ed Linnebur, executive director of the Downtown Shareholders, which is the organization that manages the Ambassadors.

Added Linnebur, "Overwhelmingly, people are coming out of their offices at lunch to eat at local restaurants, visit our farmers market, and participate in Downtown events. Foot traffic has really grown in our district." The picture of a more vibrant and secure Downtown that Linnebur describes translates into numbers like this: 146 tons of trash was picked up (think 19 elephants-worth) and 18,110 service calls were responded to in the program's first year.

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**Fostering livable,
safe and healthy
environments**

Safe Investment continued from cover



LISC Lends a Hand

Greater Kansas City LISC was instrumental in getting KCK DID and the Ambassador program off the ground, granting \$40,000 in 2009, and \$55,000 in 2010 to the Downtown Shareholders who manage the program.

On Patrol (cover): The Ambassadors' recognizable green vest has become a familiar and reassuring presence in Downtown.

A Helping Hand (left): A Safety Ambassador helps a June Fest attendee with directions. The Ambassadors made their first appearance at the 2009 June Fest, just one year ago.

As impressive as those numbers are, it has been the Ambassadors' willingness to go above and beyond for residents, business owners and visitors that has won over many in the downtown KCK community.

"On more than one occasion I've seen an Ambassador not only tell people where they could find what they were looking for, but go so far as to escort them there," commented Lynn Kuluva, a Downtown business owner.

Linda Wolford with the Kansas City Kansas Public Library agrees. "We love the Ambassadors. Being an urban-core library, there are security issues."

Linda tells the story of a recent incident in which a man threw a cell phone at another patron while the library security guard was on a 15 minute break. A Safety Ambassador who happened to be at the library saw what happened and escorted the man out of the building. After learning that the library guard took his break at the same time each day, a Safety Ambassador now comes by to keep an eye on things while the security guard isn't there.

"We call for things that seem minor and they come by and patrol the area," added Wolford. "It really does make a difference. We don't want to bother the police for smaller things."

While it is "smaller" safety issues that the Ambassadors tackle on a day-to-day basis, for Brotherhood Bank Vice

President Steve Hale, those small things add up to a big difference. "The Safety Ambassador program has had an extremely positive impact for our customers and for our employees," said Hale. "Kansas City, Kan., has had a stigma about being unsafe and these men and women have done so much to erase that stigma."

Jim Seuferling, a manager at CVS pharmacy in Downtown has also seen the impact. "Since the program started, I've seen a decrease in vandalism, vagrancy, and theft in our store," he said, adding, "They are a presence; that alone helps a lot."

For many businesses and organizations that participate in KCK DID, the extra money they contribute which funds the Ambassadors is more than offset by the positive changes the program has produced.

"The value they have brought to this community and this bank is really pronounced. In one year there has been a definite improvement in the cleanliness and safety of the downtown area. You could almost do before and after pictures," said Hale.

As a nonprofit organization, the library did not have to participate in the self-tax; however Linda Wolford says she is glad they did. "I'm pleased we decided to take part. It is worth every dime." ●

"Without LISC's involvement, we would be no where close to the goals that we have hit. LISC's support made it possible to leverage funds raised in the district to bring the services we needed to the scale required. "

Ed Linnebur

Downtown Shareholders, Executive Director

Policy Wins Accelerate Revitalization

The path from disinvested neighborhood to sustainable community is not without its share of obstacles. Innovative policy initiatives can break down the barriers to revitalization, just as irresponsible policy can magnify a bump in the road into a brick wall, leaving neighborhoods behind.

This is why since 2006 Greater Kansas City LISC has worked in partnership with lawmakers, businesses, nonprofits and residents to achieve policy changes that benefit our target neighborhoods, as well as neighborhoods across Kansas and Missouri.

The results of this collaboration have far surpassed our expectations. Nearly \$2.7 million in state and federal funding has been secured to support community organizing, crime and safety, and economic development initiatives, and 13 pieces of legislation in both Kansas and Missouri have been successfully initiated and passed.

Here are a few examples of recent legislation in Kansas which LISC and its Policy Networks were instrumental in passing and what they mean to the community:

Senate Bill 382 – Expansion of the Housing Loan Deposit Program

What it does: Makes available \$60 million in loans to qualified builders/developers in Kansas by expanding the eligibility criteria of the 2008 Housing Loan Deposit Program to both single- and multi-family dwellings.

What it means: More affordable housing available to more Kansans.

Senate Bill 430 – Reinstatement of the Historic Tax Credit

What it does: Corrects the 2009 budget bill that unintentionally resulted in a 70% cut to the Historic Tax Credit program. The too-drastic cap on tax credit redemptions halted shovel-ready projects and jeopardized new investment into urban neighborhoods. Senate Bill 430 removes the cap and implements the intended 10% reduction.

What it means: Projects to restore or repurpose historic buildings can move forward again, creating local jobs and improving urban-core infrastructure.

Senate Bill 561 – Modifies Abandoned Housing Act

What it does: Makes minor changes to the existing Abandoned Housing Act, allowing not-for-profit organizations to be able to act more quickly to rehabilitate vacant and abandoned property.

What it means: Less red tape and legal fees that can drain the resources of not-for-profit organizations that work to rehabilitate vacant properties. Properties are repaired and brought back to productive use more quickly, improving neighborhood safety, appearance and property value. ●

To learn more about LISC's Policy Networks, visit our website at www.lisc.org/kansascity

From Blighted to Beautiful

An abandoned building at a highly visible corner in Scarritt Renaissance (a NeighborhoodsNOW target area) has been transformed from a blank wall persistently hit with graffiti to a piece of community art through the work of muralist Joe Faus.

The mural project was a resident-led initiative with NeighborhoodsNOW Community Organizer Danilo Aguilar serving as coordinator. A grant from UMB Bank provided the funding for the mural and 20 UMB volunteers along with residents cleaned the area, mowed the grass and placed potted plants in front of the mural to deter graffiti vandals.

Depicted in the mural are people from many different nationalities, which mirrors the diversity in the neighborhood. "Residents are taking ownership of the mural and appreciating that it represents everyone in the area," said Aguilar. "They are taking pride that things are changing for the better in their neighborhood. That pride will give us the momentum to keep building."



Before



After

DID YOU KNOW?

Since 1981, Greater Kansas City LISC has invested over \$129 million, which has leveraged over \$605 million in total development.

Creating:

5,858 new and rehabbed homes and apartments

5,151 minor home repairs

1,399,975 square feet of retail and commercial facilities

892,435 square feet of community facilities and sports fields

LISC
Greater Kansas City
3535 Broadway, Suite 200
Kansas City, MO 64111
816-753-0055
www.lisc.org/kansascity

Featuring...



Funder Spotlight: Kansas City Board of Public Utilities


The steady progress and visible improvements made in Downtown Kansas City, Kan. since NeighborhoodsNOW began in 2006 would simply not have been possible without community funders like BPU. Their commitment to NeighborhoodsNOW has hastened revitalization in the downtown area, making it safer, cleaner and more economically vibrant.

“The successful revitalization of Downtown KCK, with its new residential, retail, educational, and cultural opportunities, has re-energized this critical area in our community,” said Don Gray, BPU Executive Director. “The commitment of resources we’ve made in the downtown core helps ensure every corner of Wyandotte County experiences the investment and growth that it needs to be successful.” ●



“LISC is extremely grateful for BPU’s support of NeighborhoodsNOW. Not only are they committed funders, but they also lend their time and leadership by making (BPU board member) Loretta Colombel available to serve on the Greater Kansas City LISC Local Advisory Board.”

Julie Porter
Greater Kansas City LISC
Executive Director

A photograph of a modern, white metal archway structure spanning a street in downtown Kansas City. The archway features several circular cutouts with silhouettes of people. In the background, there are modern buildings and trees under a clear blue sky.

Downtown KCK welcomes visitors with its modern arch and the new Children's Campus of Kansas City. Local funders like BPU are helping to make all of Downtown as inviting as its entrance.