

A Rebirth: Downtown Kansas City, Kansas



Downtown Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) has made great strides in economic and image improvement in hope that the neighborhood can once again become a dominate marketplace and thriving cultural hub. A strong partnership between community stakeholders and LISC resulted in a Quality of Life Plan focused on physical redevelopment, increasing economic activity and strengthening Downtown's positive image. This update highlights projects that have moved from planning into action over the last three years.



A Banner Day. New street banners help set the tone for rebirth in Downtown KCK.



5th Street East Townhomes. These new townhomes expand quality housing options in Strawberry Hill.

PLAN – Secure a neighborhood-compatible residential market by creating a healthy mix of housing choices.

ACTION – City Vision Ministries completed five new townhomes in Strawberry Hill, the first phase of nearly 100 new townhomes and condominiums planned for development over the next several years. Located minutes from the River Market, Sprint Center and the Power & Light District, these homes are an attractive option for young professionals and encourage diversity in the income levels of residents, creating a more stable economic environment.

PLAN – Revitalize the commercial corridor and attract strong, new businesses.

ACTION – The Downtown Shareholders helped create and launch a Self Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID). Designated dollars from SSMID property owners will pay for services above and beyond those provided by the city, including sidewalk washing, litter removal and landscaping. Storefronts along the commercial corridor will receive a facelift from a Façade Improvement Program. A cleaner, well-maintained Downtown makes the area more marketable to businesses and leads directly to economic vitality, as evidenced by five new businesses in the area.

PLAN – Beautify and secure the neighborhood through new investments, cleanups and artistic enhancements in the commercial corridor.

ACTION – A State Farm grant supported new street pole banners for Minnesota Avenue to help strengthen community connection as well as add a festive appeal to Downtown. A partnership with Wyandotte Serves Wyandotte Works and the Metropolitan Crime Commission mobilized 30+ court-ordered community service workers to remove over one ton of litter through the “Adopt Downtown KCK” clean-up program.

PLAN – Increase exposure to the commercial corridor utilizing local art galleries.

ACTION – Monthly art walks between the area’s art galleries highlight the work of local artists and increase traffic in the commercial corridor. The “Follow the Dotte” art walks attract visitors and help improve the overall perception of Downtown KCK as a safe place for community activities. An arts committee continues to meet monthly to discuss more ways to promote public art in the area.

OTHER RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Completed a Retail Market Analysis to establish benchmarks for redevelopment activities. Resulting recommendations were incorporated into the Downtown KCK Master Plan approved in 2007.
- Five new locally-owned businesses, including a bakery and commercial offices, utilize an additional 25,360 square feet of commercial space and added 23 new jobs.
- A code enforcement taskforce was implemented to help businesses and tenants comply with codes violations and unify storefronts.
- The Tour of Kansas City Bike Race brought more than 1,000 athletes through the area, and provided exposure to the positive changes occurring Downtown. The race is expected to return to the neighborhood annually.
- The Minnesota Avenue Arch was installed in June 2007 to beautify public space.

PRIORITIES FOR 2009:

- Continue quality housing development in Strawberry Hill.
- Initiate the development of the Children’s Center Campus which will offer holistic education to children from low-income families.
- Starting in 2009, a green-jacket brigade will be charged with keeping Downtown clean and safe. The “Green Team” will alert police to suspicious activity, give directions to visitors and aid city sanitation crews.
- Identify and renovate a commercial structure into a multi-family residential building that offers 75 affordable units to low-income families.
- Commence the development of a commercial building on the 500 block of Minnesota. The establishment will include office and retail space.



Art for Everyone. “Follow the Dotte” art walks attract young and old alike to the commercial corridor.

NeighborhoodsNOW lead agencies for Downtown KCK are:

City Vision Ministries —
www.cityvisionkck.org

Downtown Shareholders —
www.downtownkck.org

Information:

For more information on how you can invest in Downtown KCK, contact Damon Broadus, Greater Kansas City LISC program officer for Downtown KCK, **816-753-0055 ext. 13** or dbroadus@lisc.org.

To download the Downtown KCK Quality of Life Plan, go to www.lisc.org/kansascity.