

# Parks and Boulevard System Kansas City, Missouri

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

December 1–6, 2019



 **Urban Land  
Institute**  
Advisory Services Program



# Parks and Boulevard System Kansas City, Missouri

Providing a More Equitable Approach to  
Investing in Parks and Recreation

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

December 1–6, 2019



Urban Land Institute  
2001 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-4948  
[uli.org](http://uli.org)

# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2019 alone, more than 2,443 events were held in about 332 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](http://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

**COVER PHOTO:** Timothy Klingler/Unsplash

© 2020 by the Urban Land Institute

2001 L Street, NW | Suite 200 | Washington, DC 20036-4948

All rights reserved. Reproductions or use of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission of the copyright holder is prohibited.

# ULI Advisory Services

**THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES** program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives, a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 100 key community representatives, and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time. A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land

developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

## ULI Program Staff

### **Paul Bernard**

Executive Vice President, Advisory Services

### **Thomas W. Eitler**

Senior Vice President, Advisory Services

### **Deborah Kerson Bilek**

Vice President, Advisory Services

### **Paul Angelone**

Senior Director, Advisory Services

### **Lauren McKim Callaghan**

Director, Advisory Services

### **Jacqueline Canales**

Director, Advisory Services

### **Georgia Gempler**

Senior Associate, Advisory Services

### **James A. Mulligan**

Senior Editor

### **Laura Glassman, Publications Professionals LLC**

Manuscript Editor

### **Brandon Weil**

Art Director

### **Thomas Cameron**

Graphic Designer

### **Craig Chapman**

Senior Director, Publishing Operations





## Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the panel would like to thank the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department director Terry Rynard and Board of Parks and Recreation president Jack Holland for sponsoring this panel. We would also like to provide a special thank you for Mayor Quinton Lucas and the Board of Parks and Recreation commissioners Chris Goode, David Mecklenburg, Mary Williams-Neal, and Scott Wagner.

A tremendous amount of work went into putting this panel together. It would not have been possible without the extensive work by Roosevelt Lyons, Karmon Houston, Krista Morrison, and Esther Swanson. They also answered many questions from the panel throughout its weeklong visit.

Thank you to ULI Kansas City and leadership provided by Joy Crimmins. Finally, the panel would like to thank the more than 100 residents, business and community leaders, and representatives who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel over the week.

# Contents

2

**About 10 Minute Walk**

3

**ULI Panel and Project Staff**

4

**Project Background  
and Need**

13

**Key Observations and  
Recommendations**

19

**Equitable Planning and  
Development at KC Parks**

24

**Leveraging the Parks  
and Boulevard System to  
Address Inequality**

37

**Governance and Structure**

43

**Conclusion**

44

**Appendix: Recommendations  
and Responsible Entities**

48

**About the Panel**

# About 10 Minute Walk

**PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL** to the physical, social, environmental, and economic health of people and communities. Parks help expand the economy by attracting homebuyers, tourists, and highly talented workers. They protect the environment, provide space for the enjoyment of arts and nature, and make people healthier, happier, and more connected.

Despite these known benefits, research shows that one in three Americans—more than 100 million people—do not have a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. 10 Minute Walk is a movement dedicated to improving access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces in cities—large and small—throughout the United States. Led by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Urban Land Institute and with support from The JPB Foundation, 10 Minute Walk is working to create a world in which, by 2050, all people in U.S. cities live within a 10-minute walk of a park or green space. This partnership drives commitments from city leaders working to achieve this vision and transform their communities.

The 10 Minute Walk mission has been endorsed by nearly 300 U.S. mayors so far. ULI, TPL, and NRPA are working with partners in select cities on measurable policies and strategies

to advance the 10 Minute Walk vision. Success in this work will require the expertise, creativity, and close collaboration of public- and private-sector leaders. ULI has a powerful role to play in catalyzing its members, networks, and partners around a vision of a green, sustainable, connected, and resilient future for all people.

Learn more and connect with 10 Minute Walk at [10minutewalk.org](http://10minutewalk.org) and [uli.org/parks](http://uli.org/parks).





# ULI Panel and Project Staff

## Panel Chair

### **Carlton Brown**

Principal  
Direct Investment  
New York, New York

## Panel Members

### **David Abraham**

Lecturer/Research Scientist  
Rice University  
Houston, Texas

### **Karen Abrams**

Program Officer, Equitable Development  
The Heinz Endowments  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

### **Kate Humphrey**

Director of Development, Public-Private Partnerships Division  
Housing and Revitalization Department, City of Detroit  
Detroit, Michigan

### **Emeka Moneme**

Senior Vice President and Managing Director  
Menkiti Group  
Washington, D.C.

### **Bonnie Roy**

Partner  
SWT Design  
St. Louis, Missouri

### **Allison Schapker**

Director Capital Projects  
Fairmount Park Conservancy  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## Special Adviser

### **Diane Burnette**

Vice President, District Councils

## ULI Project Staff

### **Paul Angelone**

Senior Director, Advisory Services

### **Grace Hill**

Manager, Meetings and Events

### **Michaela Kadonoff**

Senior Associate, Meetings and Events

### **Diana Schoder**

Senior Associate, Content



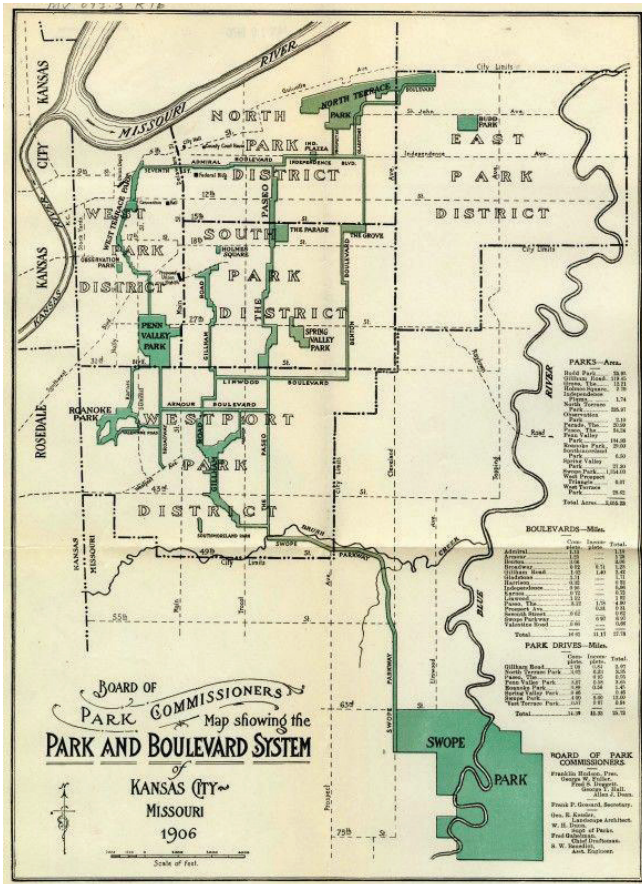
## Project Background and Need

**THE KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI,** Parks and Recreation Department (KC Parks) invited the panel to provide strategic advice on how to best leverage the park and boulevard system’s resources to ensure equitable planning and development of its parks and park facilities throughout the city.

Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO), is located at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers. These rivers, along with the Blue River, which runs through the eastern edge of KCMO, and their many tributaries, have helped shape the city’s geographic boundaries and historic development patterns. KCMO is Missouri’s most populous city, home to 491,918 people within the bi-state 14-county metropolitan region of 2,143,651. KCMO is primarily located within Jackson County, but the city also includes portions of Clay and Platte counties to the north of the Missouri River (the Northland) and a small portion of Cass County south of 155th Street.

The parks and boulevard system was designed by landscape architect George Kessler in 1892 to create a “city within a park.” By 1920 Kessler’s original plan was mostly built, and the city was 59.8 square miles with a population of about 324,400, resulting in 8.5 persons per park acre. Today, KCMO is about 318 square miles with just 2.4 persons per park acre. KC Parks currently maintains 221 parks, 12,242 acres of parkland, 178 miles of trails and bikeways, 29 lakes, hundreds of athletic fields and tennis courts, 106 playgrounds, and five public golf courses. In addition, KC Parks maintains 135 miles of parkways and boulevards with 48 fountains and 122 monuments and sculptures as well as 10 community centers and eight museums.

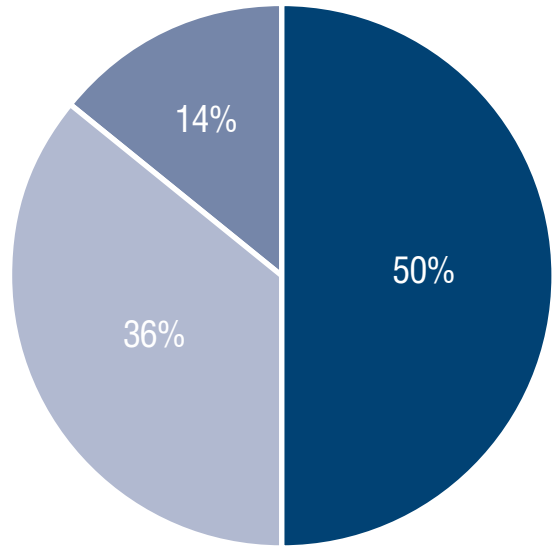




The George Kessler plan has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in community planning and development, and landscape architecture. This includes three parks—Kessler Park, Penn Valley Park, and the Parade—and seven citywide boulevards.

The metropolitan region is growing annually by about 0.8 percent, or 16,000, with about 50 percent of that growth from natural birth and the other 50 percent from in-migration. Johnson County (Overland Park, Kansas) saw the most growth within the region at 38 percent, followed by Clay County, Jackson County, and Platte County at 23 percent, 16 percent, and 11 percent, respectively. Wyandotte County (Kansas City, Kansas) had minimal to no growth, and Lafayette and Clinton counties lost population. The region's population has seen steady growth of 6.4 percent since 2010.

### Kansas City MSA Population Change by Source, 2017–2018

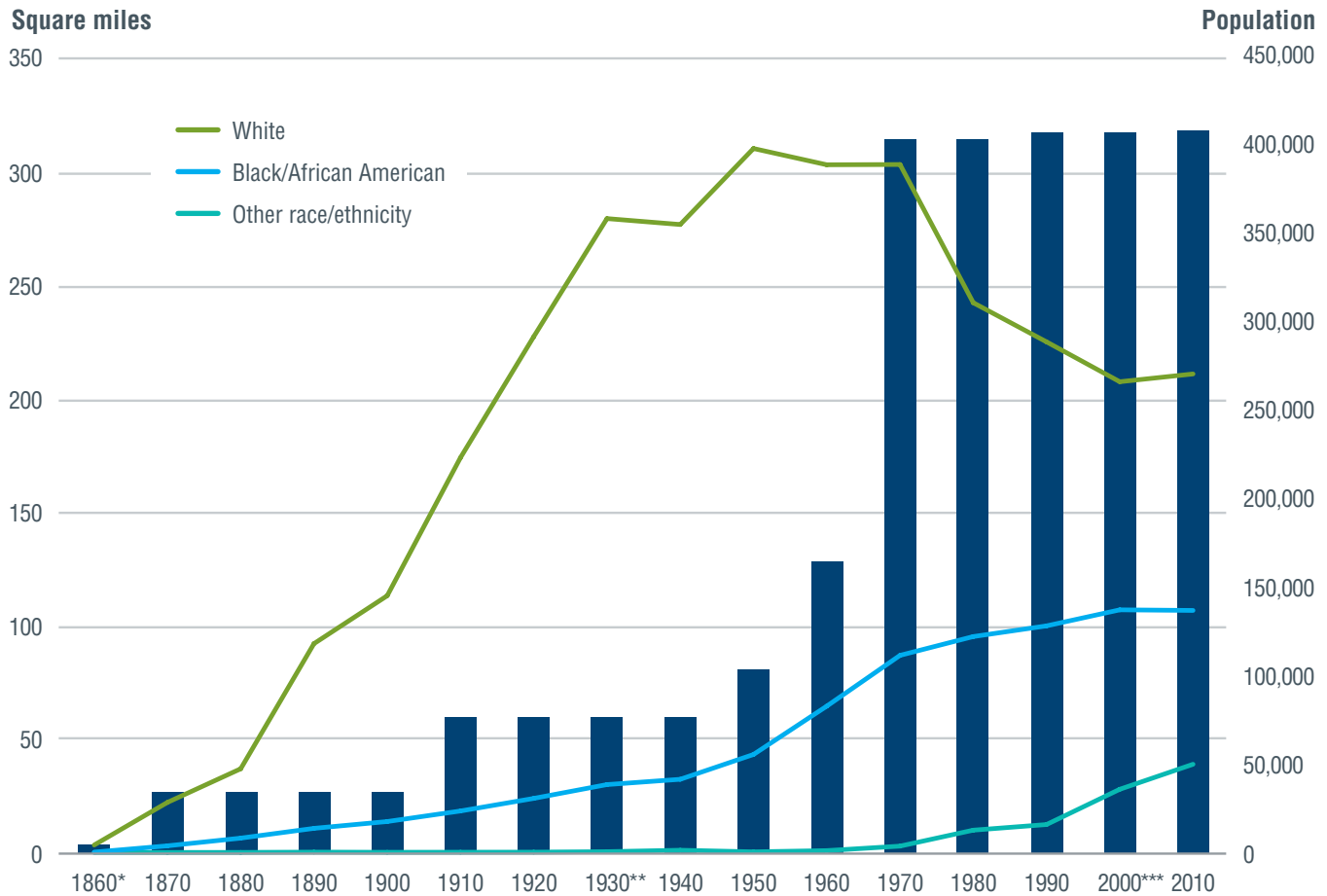


- Domestic migration
- International migration
- Natural growth

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; ULI.

KCMO is divided into six council districts, with each district represented by two council members, one in district and one at large. Two council districts lie entirely north of the Missouri River, and one straddles the river; the remaining three are entirely in the southern portion of the city. Although each council district contains multiple neighborhoods and areas that cross socioeconomic lines, differences exist from council district to council district in terms of density, market value, race and ethnicity, income, educational attainment, incidents of crime, and health outcomes.

## Kansas City, Missouri, Land Area and Population by Race



Sources: City Planning & Development Department; U.S. Census Bureau; ULI.

\* In 1860, there were 24 free blacks and 166 enslaved blacks.

\*\* In 1930, "Mexican" was listed in Other race.

\*\*\* The 2000 census changed how it tabulated race, which is reflected in the numbers by including white or black/African American alone. Two more races are included within "Other race."

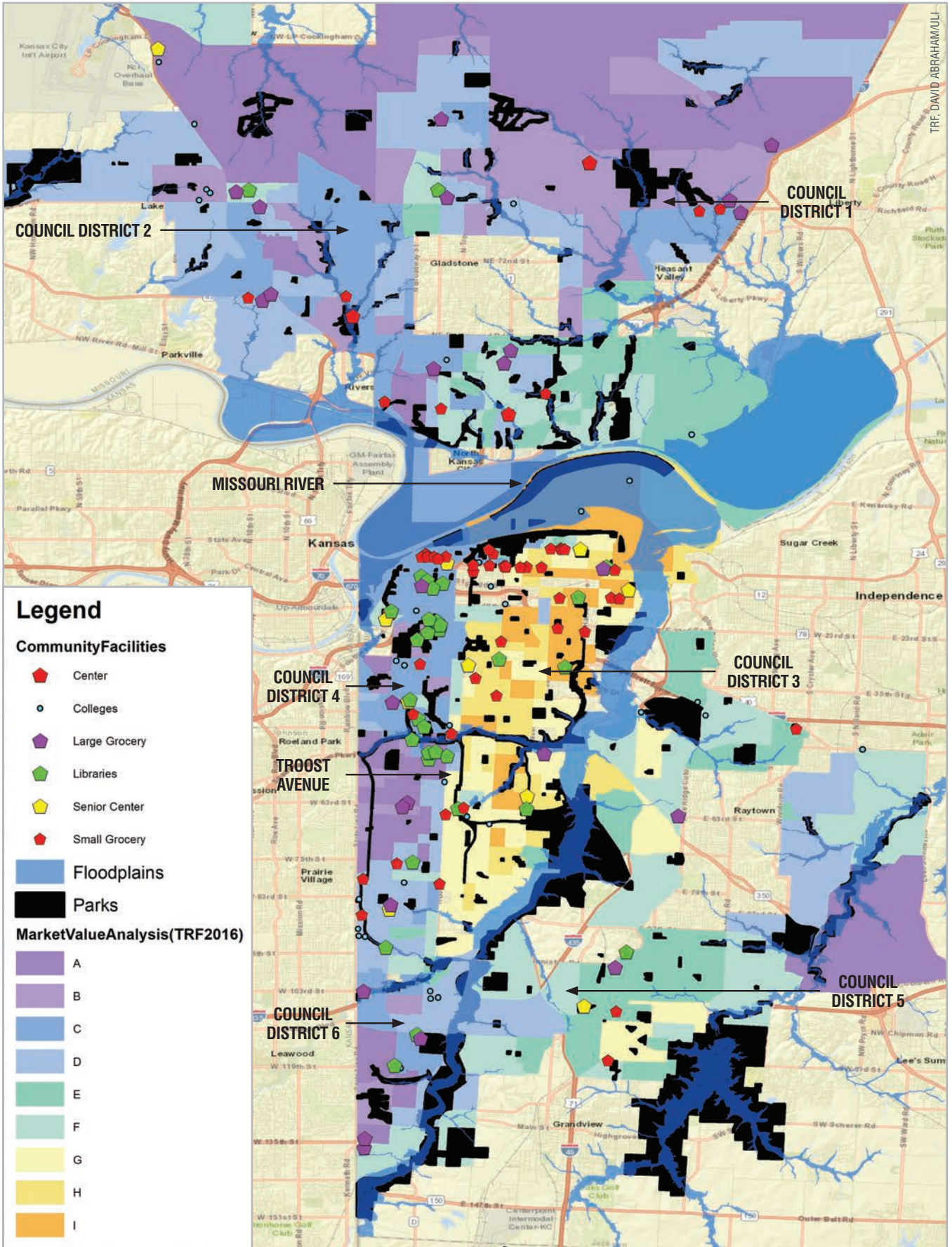
## Average Characteristics of Kansas City Market Types

Market type*	Median sales price	Owner occupied	Renters in single-family homes	Rental households	Subsidized households	Homes with violations	Homes with permits	Vacant homes	Distress sales
A	\$318,900	89%	97%	97	1%	3%	12%	2%	1%
B	\$294,847	74%	14%	310	1%	4%	20%	1%	2%
C	\$173,861	30%	30%	289	15%	13%	13%	3%	3%
D	\$154,520	80%	91%	138	2%	7%	5%	1%	3%
E	\$84,335	74%	96%	203	5%	14%	3%	4%	10%
F	\$93,351	42%	44%	162	21%	14%	4%	5%	12%
G	\$39,034	52%	89%	156	20%	23%	3%	12%	27%
H	\$18,962	50%	87%	163	20%	23%	2%	23%	47%
I	\$6,175	45%	82%	165	17%	19%	2%	24%	58%

Sources: TRF 2017; David Abraham; ULI.

\*The letters correspond with those in the legend of the map on the facing page.





### Legend

#### Community Facilities

- Center
- Colleges
- Large Grocery
- Libraries
- Senior Center
- Small Grocery

#### Floodplains

#### Parks

#### Market Value Analysis (TRF2016)

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H
- I

Map of the average characteristics of KCMO market types.

## The Panel's Assignment

Over the years, KCMO has pursued an aggressive annexation strategy that has not yielded the population growth to support the subsequent expansion of the parks infrastructure. According to the Trust for Public Land, KC Parks spends significantly more than other cities on operations and maintenance on a per capita basis. This, along with life-safety budget constraints and pension liabilities as well as the fiscal impact from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), is stretching the city's revenue base and general fund.

As growth within the city continues—largely north of the Missouri River, but with some significant redevelopment downtown—increased demands for green space and recreational amenities have come, but at the expense of investment in existing properties. As KCMO's and KC Parks' financial limitations are becoming increasingly clear, resource allocation decisions put equity issues into sharp relief.

Therefore, KC Parks asked the panel to address the following questions:

- What are the primary factors KC Parks should consider when aligning use of resources and mission?
- How should KC Parks incorporate community input in the design of facilities and open spaces to mitigate inequity?
- How can KC Parks balance newer growth areas of the city to the north with deferred maintenance of existing, older parks south of the Missouri River?
- How can KC Parks maximize its existing resources and partnerships to meet the needs of the community?
- Should KC Parks focus more attention on highest and best use of its land assets, even if this means disposal?
- How can KC Parks account for non-city-owned land being used for recreational purposes when planning for future city park space in underdeveloped parts of the city?
- What is the best strategy for developing resources necessary to fulfill the department's mission?

“We can't talk about parks without talking about race.”

—Interviewee

## The Need for Social Equity: The Two Kansas Cities

To answer the questions posed by KC Parks, the panel's first task was to examine the role the parks and boulevards system played in creating two KCMOs.

### Economic Opportunity

One KCMO is the city of new growth highlighted in ULI's *Emerging Trends in Real Estate® 2020* report's Stalwarts, Surprises, and Determined Competitors category. This is a grouping of a dozen markets that are attracting steady capital inflows from out-of-town investors with evidence of a solid transaction volume.

In KCMO's case, there has been nearly six consecutive years of rising office rents and tightening vacancies. *Emerging Trends* reported that transaction flows into KCMO were almost as high during the first six months of 2019, at 0.7 percent of the national volume with a moderate acceleration from the 2016–2018 capital inflow. The industrial market is the strongest sector with 240 million square feet of space at 95 percent occupancy and strong rents. But the market's previously mentioned rising office rents and tightening vacancies have also attracted investment to office. Greater Downtown KCMO and Country Club Plaza are seeing new residential multifamily construction, and suburban/greenfield areas are seeing new single-family home investment.

### Concentrated Poverty

The other KCMO is one of concentrated poverty, decreased life expectancy, and other inequitable outcomes that reflect systematic approaches specifically developed to target African Americans. In 1895 KCMO's municipal government approved a charter amendment granting the Board of Park Commissioners the power to condemn land for acquisition. During that same time, many African Americans who had settled in the area (attracted initially to the free state of Kansas after escaping slavery) arrived in KCMO for employment opportunities at the rail yards and packinghouses and as domestic laborers. They settled close to their employment centers, and as a result, inadvertently created “racial enclaves,” living generally among other African Americans. As these enclaves grew, white elites began to use their control of the parks and boulevard system to create buffers between their homes and African American communities to maintain their high property values for white homeowners.



Stalwarts, Surprises, and Determined Competitors: Sector and Local Outlook Scores

Overall rank	Office	Retail	Multifamily	Industrial	Hotels	Housing	Local outlook score*
25. Philadelphia	3.33	3.12	3.69	3.79	3.26	3.28	3.69
28. Washington, D.C.	3.11	3.29	3.64	3.70	3.50	3.58	3.78
35. Minneapolis–St. Paul	3.17	3.07	3.64	3.36	3.00	3.64	3.91
39. New York, other boroughs	2.88	3.17	3.70	3.72	2.65	3.00	3.65
46. Las Vegas	3.11	3.00	3.45	3.72	3.25	3.83	3.68
<b>47. Kansas City, MO</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>3.60</b>
52. Sacramento	3.17	2.77	3.73	3.57	3.10	3.69	3.47
57. Long Island	2.91	3.17	3.68	3.43	3.11	2.88	3.33
73. Westchester, NY/Fairfield, CT	2.47	2.75	3.25	3.15	2.85	2.91	3.23
74. Baltimore	2.56	2.48	3.24	3.67	2.77	2.94	3.00
75. Detroit	2.80	2.77	3.19	3.23	2.56	3.00	3.15
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.50</b>

Source: *Emerging Trends in Real Estate*® 2020 survey.

\*Average score of local market participants' opinions on strength of local economy, investor demand, capital availability, development, and redevelopment opportunities.

According to James R. Shortridge, author of *Kansas City and How It Grew, 1822–2011*:

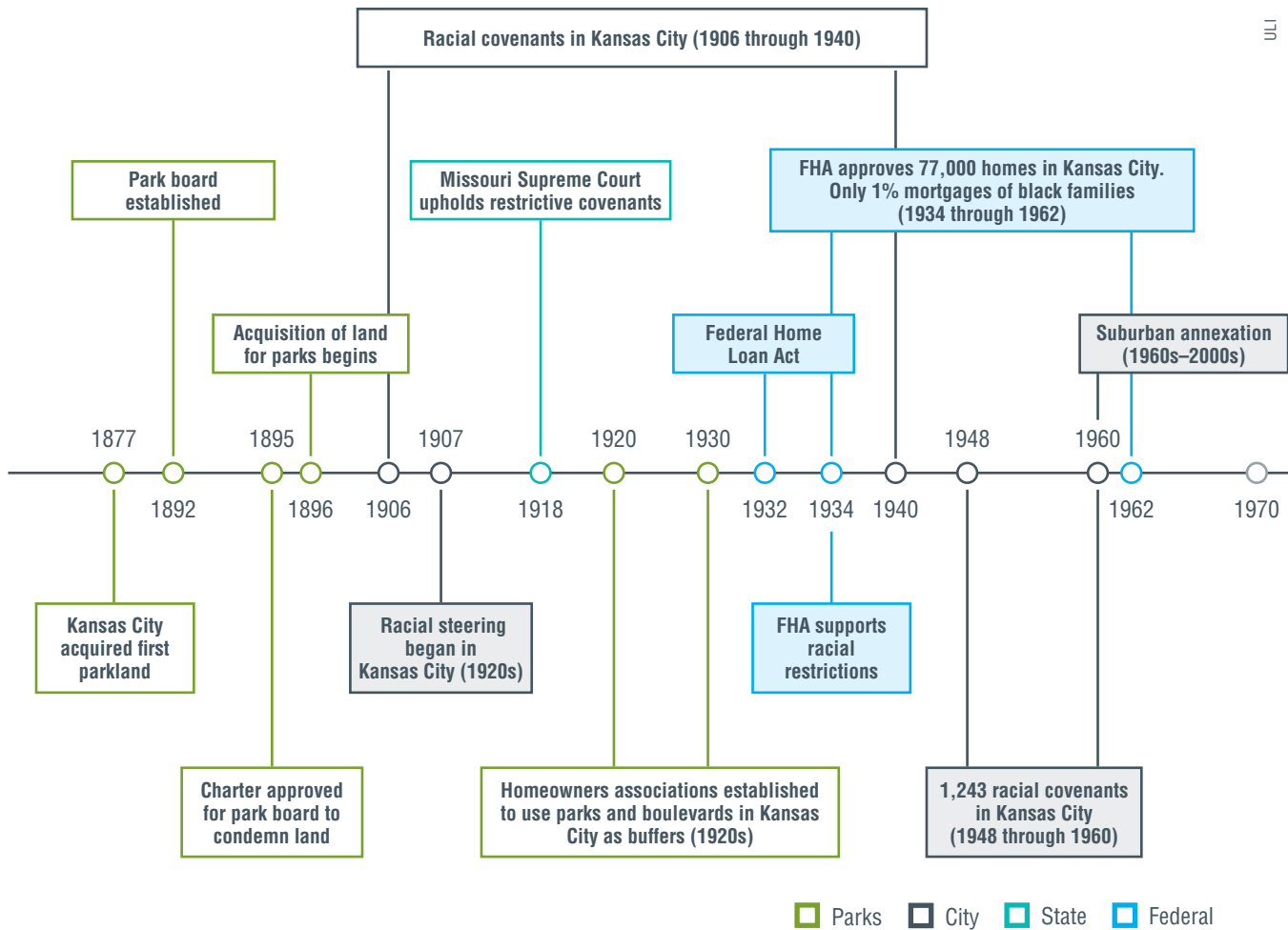
The parks and boulevards system proposal would not only retain property values by placing boulevards around elite areas, but it would also target blighted areas and curb the expansion of established racial enclaves. [The] Board of Park Commissioners placed parks and boulevards in these areas to stop the encroachment of surrounding slums and maintain preexisting racial enclaves.

Over the next 60 years, more sophisticated and targeted practices, such as annexation, racial steering, redlining, and restrictive covenants, as well as the judicial system, were used as tools to further segregate whites from low-wage working African Americans and restrict the movement of African American residents. During the 1960s and 1970s, KCMO's land area increased by 450 percent while its population

increased by only 25 percent. As white flight continued from the urban core, living conditions in black communities deteriorated, resulting in the following:

- overcrowding;
- squalid living conditions;
- “slum clearance” as a result of these neighborhood conditions, which amplified both conditions;
- underfunded segregated schools; and
- limited employment opportunities.

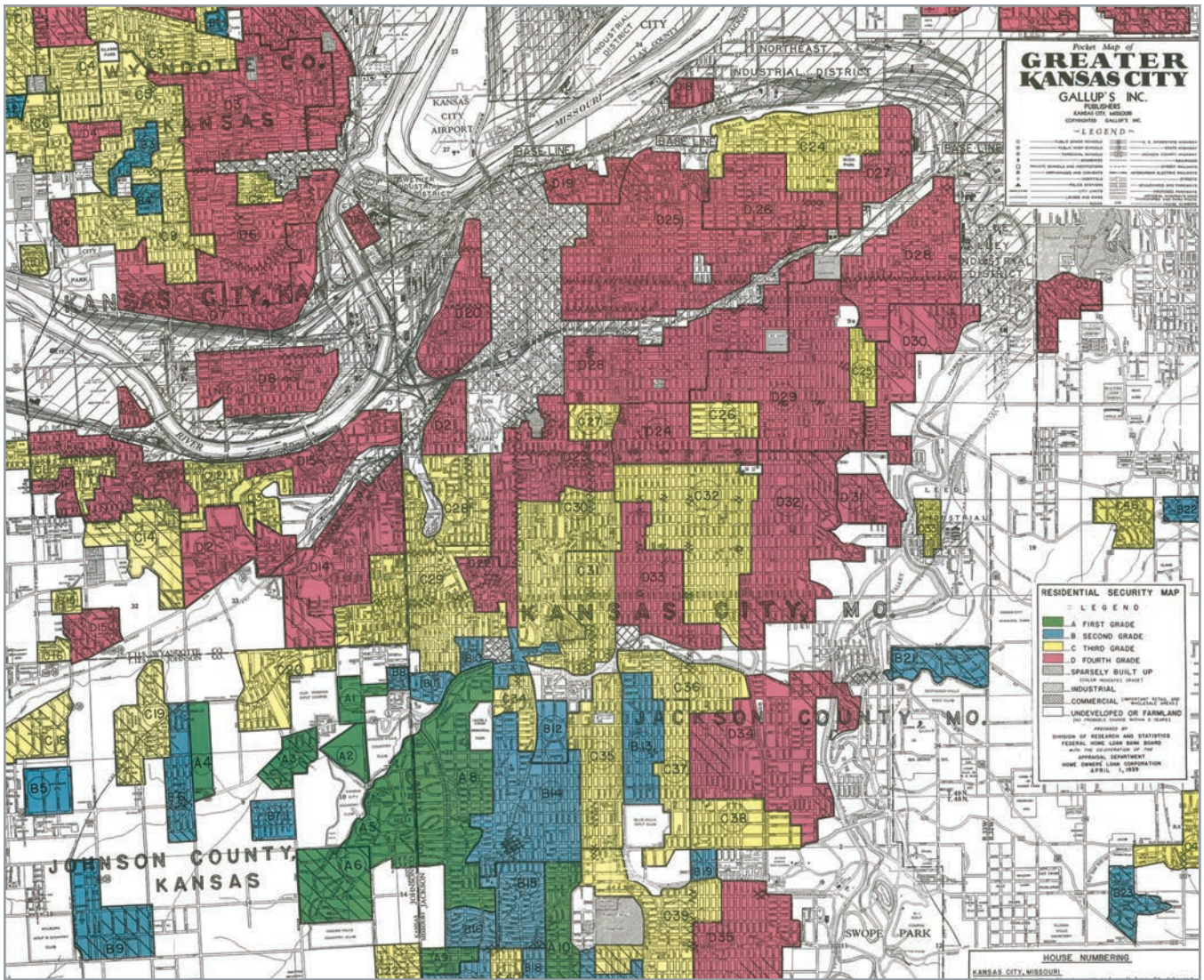
## Timeline of Land Use Policies That Contributed to Inequity in Parks System



*A variety of policy and legal decisions were made that have had lasting impacts to social equity within KCMO today.*

### Lasting Legacy

Fast forward more than 70 years, and the residual effects of these policies and practices on the lives of African Americans and other nonwhite residents mean little has changed. Although housing segregation tools used in the early to mid-1900s are no longer legal, their impact is still felt throughout KCMO. This is most evident along Troost Avenue, the Blue River, and the Missouri River. The legacy of this decision-making can be seen on the Kansas side of the border as well. This is one of the reasons why Wyandotte County has minimal to no growth, whereas Johnson County is rapidly growing, affecting the well-being of the entire region.



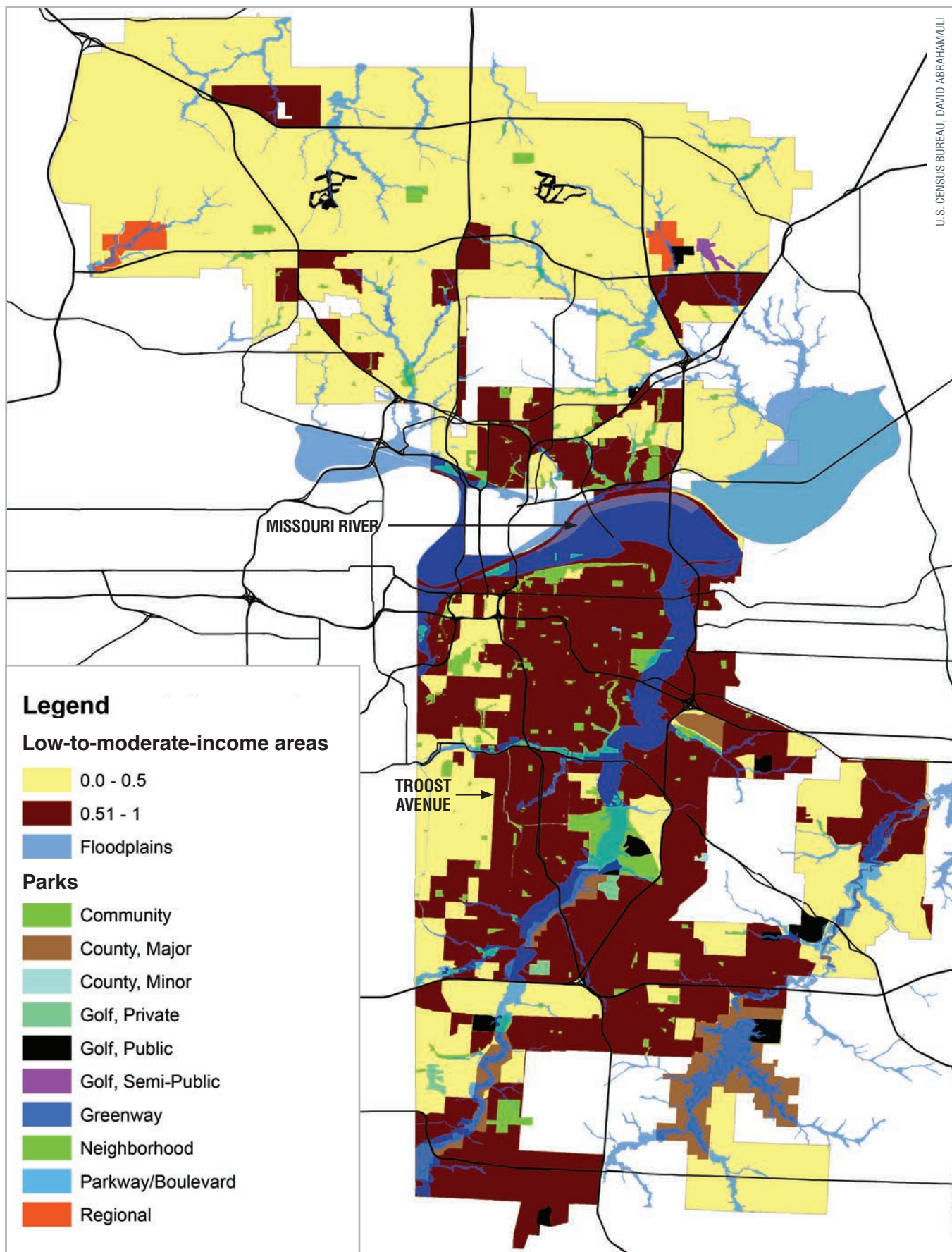
In the late 1930s, the U.S. government, through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, evaluated the riskiness of mortgages and classified them in four categories: Type A or Best (green), Type B or Still Desirable (blue), Type C or Definitely Declining (yellow), and Type D or Hazardous (red). White denotes business, industrial, institutional, or undeveloped properties. Often, those areas deemed most risky were predominantly African American, occupied by other communities of color, or ethnic neighborhoods. Less risky areas were typically more affluent white neighborhoods.

## Addressing ULI's Role in Racial Injustice

This is not just a regional issue but a national one. The company led by J.C. Nichols—chair of ULI's first product council—was one of the first developers in the country to build residential communities that prohibited sales to African Americans, Jewish people, and other ethnic groups through restrictive covenants in deeds and homeowners association bylaws. Other developers, such as the Kroh Bros. in Johnson County, Kansas, also built developments with such restrictive covenants. Developers around the country, many brought together by ULI to share their knowledge, implemented the same practices in their cities.

Today, ULI Kansas City acknowledges this history and accepts the challenge to address the systematic racial inequities perpetuated by these restrictive covenants used by Nichols and other leading developers in various communities and the role that ULI played as a convener in creating racial injustice. ULI Kansas City is working to hear all voices, identify solutions, and work for positive change that meets ULI's mission to create thriving, sustainable, and equitable communities. More broadly at ULI, the organization is working to identify the systemic elements of community planning, real estate development, and financing that have helped establish a legacy of racial inequities. Reports like this one are opportunities to have this discussion and present recommendations to address the systemic failures affecting our ability to build just and inclusive communities.





The map represents the two KCMOs. The darker the color, the more concentrated poverty exists within the neighborhood. This corresponds with the historical patterns of development.



# Key Observations and Recommendations

**THE VISION FOR THE PARKS AND BOULEVARD SYSTEM** was established at the turn of the century, and most assets in the city’s core were completed by 1920. It created a series of attractive passive landscapes, primarily mown lawns and trees that are relatively intense to maintain and fail to meet the recreational needs and preferences of the 21st-century community of users. KC Parks has a strong reputation for delivering well-maintained landscapes across the city, but its ability to deliver the programming needed most in diverse neighborhoods is lacking. Yet the system continues to grow larger and older with roughly the same level of municipal financial support.

ULI



To improve the vitality and experience for park users citywide, the system will require additional resources and new mechanisms for managing those resources. The parks “pie” will also need to get larger. In addition, a robust network of partners appears to be able to provide programs and services as part of their core mission who may have the resources and interest in using KC Parks as a platform for delivery.

*Diagram of the intersectionality of the issues discussed in this panel report.*



Through briefings, public receptions and interviews, background information, and expertise, the panel made key observations related to the following topics:

- Mission clarity and intragovernmental functional relationship;
- Shared public-sector vision;
- Expanding liabilities;
- Flat revenues;
- Public Improvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) funding;
- Development regulatory guidelines;
- Community engagement; and
- Partnerships.

These topics are introduced with key recommendations in this section and then further expanded throughout the report.

## Mission Clarity and Intragovernmental Functional Relationship

The governance and organizational structure of KC Parks limits the ability of the organization to develop a clear mission that can be effectively executed within the constraints of the organization's budget. Consequently, KC Parks is sometimes assigned responsibilities outside its mission and core competencies. The organizational assignments are often inconsistent with the four pillars of the KC Parks Strategic Plan:

- **Social Equity:** To improve equitable access through KC Parks planning, programming, and maintenance;
- **Health and Wellness:** To improve health and wellness through parks and recreation planning, programming, and maintenance;
- **Natural Resources Management:** To protect green space, connect people to nature, and engage residents in conservation practices; and
- **Organizational Sustainability:** Ensuring the benefits of KC Parks and its services are available to our community in perpetuity.

For example, some of those responsibilities handed to KC Parks, which it has no structural ability to accept, reject, or pass on to another organization, include street cleaning, operation of cultural institutions, and de facto stormwater management. Although the department of public works is responsible for maintaining over 6,000 miles of street lanes, KC Parks has to provide a street maintenance and cleaning organization for cleaning 135 miles of boulevards that also serve as arterial and secondary roads throughout the city. There is no mechanism for divesting some of the responsibilities to permit the department to be more focused on the critical mission for which it is most prepared.

## Shared Public-Sector Vision

KC Parks operates at the bottom of a volunteer and government administrative pyramid. At the top of the pyramid are the city manager, the mayor, and the City Council, and then further down the pyramid, the commissioners, before getting to the KC Parks director under whom the rest of the organization functions.

An effective organization requires a shared vision from the top of the pyramid to the bottom. Through the panel's limited set of interviews, it was not able to determine that a clearly defined shared vision and mission exists within KCMO. With one or two exceptions, interviewees agreed that "the department does not have enough resources to carry out the mission as currently defined and that something needs to change." Therefore an opportunity exists for both onboarding and orientation of new commissioners, council members, city manager's office, and mayor's office regarding the function, operations, mission, and objectives of parks and recreation. Certainty regarding a shared vision is a deficit that will hamper the effectiveness of KC Parks.



## Expanding Liabilities

KC Parks is accruing undocumented infrastructure liabilities that will become due as net capital investments mature over the next 20 years and prior maintenance obligations become current. Neither past or current capital projects have been structured with a reserve fund to cover escalating maintenance and replacement costs.

When the World War I Museum needed \$4 million for a new roof to protect the interior and the collections, neither KC Parks nor any other city agency could provide it. Ultimately the city had to provide half the payment, and the museum raised the balance. KC Parks and the city may not always be as fortunate as liabilities grow. Twenty-four million dollars will be becoming due for exterior maintenance of the World War I Museum. Other unquantified liabilities for repair of pools, replacement of roofs, replacement of mechanical systems, and major road and trail maintenance will become due while simple things like tree pruning are about 25 years behind schedule. Trees that should be pruned on a five-year schedule are on a 30-year pruning schedule.

Were these liabilities unfunded pension liabilities, they would be on the city's books and could possibly affect the city's credit rating. However, they are essentially hidden off balance sheet, obscuring the depth of the problem, absent serious analysis and changes in how new investments are underwritten, but a day of financial reckoning will come that is a citywide problem not just one for KC Parks.

## Flat Revenues

Sixty-one percent of KC Parks revenues come from the half-cent sales tax. Sales tax tends to grow in sync with metro population growth and spending. KCMO is not a high-growth metro, and because the city sits on the state line, some of the city's sales tax expansion occurs on the Kansas side of the state line. Consequently, revenue growth for KC Parks is restricted. Though revenues are flat, and could flatten more during any future recession, the rate of liability expansion is expected to increase. Although a need for other sources of revenues clearly exists, no structured and directed process appears to be in place for growing revenues.

## PIAC Funding

PIAC's primary function is to solicit input and make recommendations regarding the use of general funds for capital improvements. Though the idea of the process has merit, it has two fundamental drawbacks. First, the process should be more transparent to the public and to agencies. Second, though dividing the funds equally among districts on the surface is equal, it is not equitable because the districts all have varying degrees of need.

## Development Regulatory Guidelines

The regulatory guidelines that govern developer impact fees and zoning density today reinforce the redlining and racial covenants of the J.C. Nichols era, perpetuating racial and class segregation and disinvestment in the urban core. Developers are permitted to build private value-added recreation facilities for residents of communities within suburban areas and privately owned buildings in the urban core that are inaccessible to the wider public. From a statutory standpoint, the developers are permitted to treat those investments as payments in lieu of impact fees. The land swaps for more public land do not follow even the most basic guidelines the city has established. This contributes to the inequitable sharing of public benefits that KC Parks is chartered to provide. Although no one in KC Parks supports this methodology, KC Parks has no ability to change the system as currently structured.

Zoning guidelines in neither the urban core nor suburban areas encourage the development of multifamily mixed-income housing, which discourages the development of affordable and mixed-income communities. The lot sizes as zoned and subdivided and other bulk restrictions limit the ability of the development community to deliver mixed-income multifamily housing that is responsive to market forces.

The failure to create higher-density development zones around public park infrastructure has several negative impacts that contribute to limiting KCMO's competitive advantages against peer cities. Although KCMO, by land mass, has far more area dedicated to urban core public parks per capita than any of its peer cities, the KCMO zoning guidelines and development incentives do not support higher-density development around these underused park amenities.

Great cities have great public parks with moderate to high-density development bordering the parks. The technologically sophisticated millennials who are driving growth of the urban core across America value urban lifestyles accentuated by access to activated public parks. While KCMO has invested in creating urban core parks, it has not invested in zoning changes and development incentives to create vibrant mixed-income communities around these parks that would improve the quality of life for existing residents, attract new residents to the core, increase public safety by creating eyes on the park, and earn enough revenue to pay for the investment.

## Community Engagement

KC Parks has limited community infrastructure or process for the community to review, comment on, or approve any of the department's decisions about services to customers. The decision-making process appears opaque to the community based on what the panel heard in interviews. Services are delivered and third-party partnership agreements reached without any significant or quality community engagement.

When equity is a consideration, without the input-feedback loops and community engagement, third-party services delivered by intermediaries tend to reinforce longstanding KCMO class and racial divisions. Intermediaries who have been brought in, such as professional baseball and professional soccer, have tended to deliver services in ways that exclude residents of disinvested communities on public land. Even though the land was expressly intended to service residents immediately surrounding the park, the immediate residents are excluded from the benefits of these third-party providers.

Consequently, instead of serving local residents, “partners” are serving citizens from other, more distant and better-resourced communities while excluding nearby citizens because of income disparities. Moreover, the agreements have often left the city with unfunded maintenance mandates that, over the long term, will further reduce services to citizens. Building on growing efforts by KC Parks with more robust, true community engagement will enable KC Parks to build trust and create more equitable outcomes.



ALBERT YEE, FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

*Philadelphia Parks & Recreation partnered with the Fairmount Park Conservancy to activate and enliven eight acres of public space located along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The Oval park, pictured here, has community programming, events, and activities managed by the conservancy.*



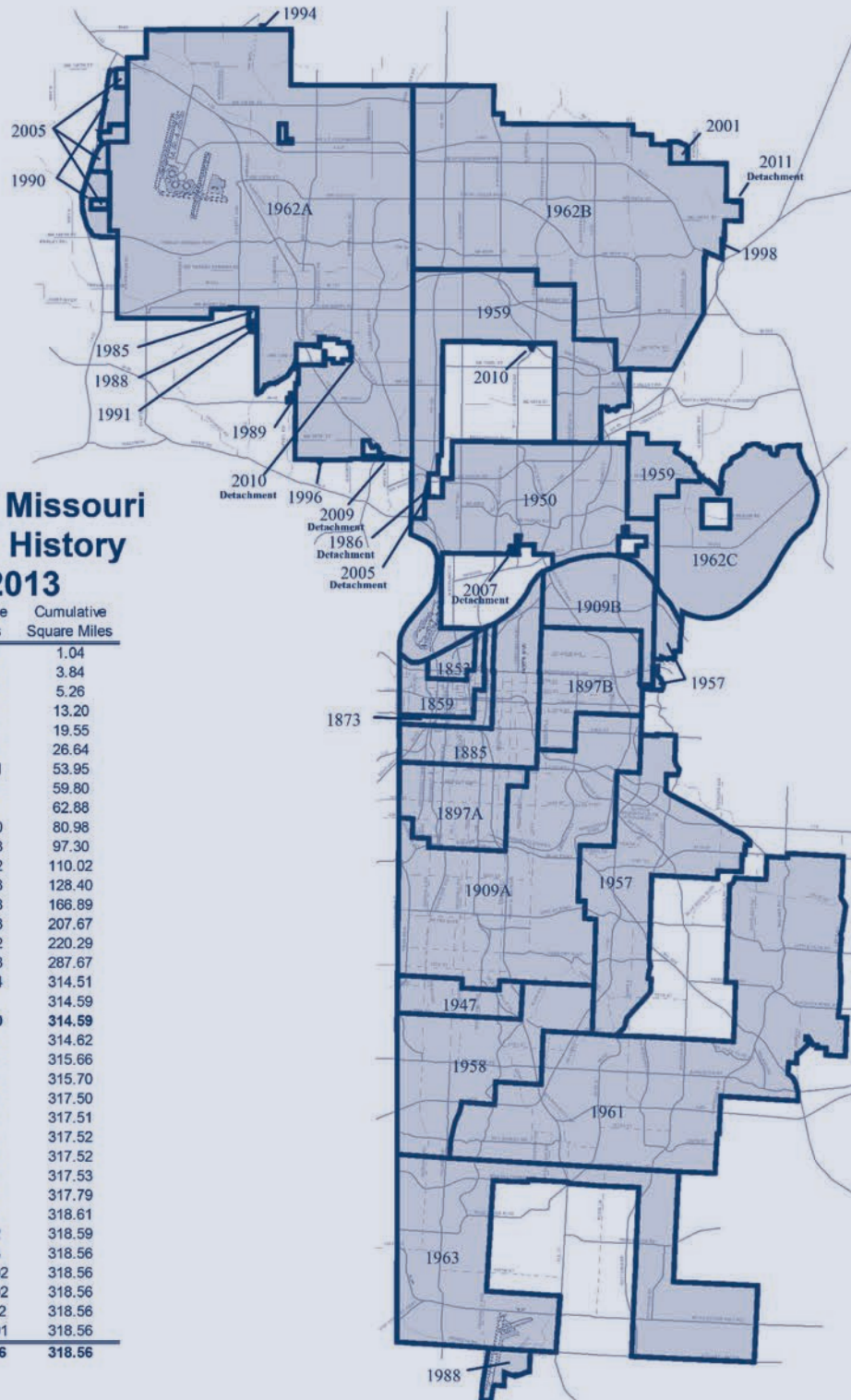
## Defining Geographic Terms

Throughout the report, the panel refers to the urban core and suburban areas. The panel defines the *urban core* as areas from the city's incorporation in 1853 until 1909. This largely matches the historic George Kessler park and boulevard system. The *suburban areas* are defined by the panel as within the borders of KCMO but annexed following World War II.

### Kansas City, Missouri Annexation History 1853 - 2013

Year	Ordinance	Square Miles	Cumulative Square Miles
1853		1.04	1.04
1859		2.80	3.84
1873		1.42	5.26
1885		7.94	13.20
1897A		6.35	19.55
1897B		7.09	26.64
1909A		27.31	53.95
1909B		5.85	59.80
1947	8674	3.08	62.88
1950	10349	18.10	80.98
1957	16136	16.33	97.30
1958	15951	12.72	110.02
1959	15950	18.38	128.40
1961	20192	38.48	166.89
1962A	20190	40.78	207.67
1962B	20189	12.62	220.29
1962C	22266	67.38	287.67
1963	21954	26.84	314.51
1985	58285	0.08	314.59
1986*	60012	-0.00	314.59
1988	62951	0.03	314.62
1988	61894	1.04	315.66
1989	64181	0.04	315.70
1990B	65021	1.75	317.50
1991	910339	0.01	317.51
1994	940285	0.01	317.52
1996	951094	0.00	317.52
1998	971455	0.01	317.53
2001	11567	0.26	317.79
2005	50097	0.82	318.61
2005*	50835	-0.02	318.59
2007*	70934	-0.03	318.56
2009*	080586	-0.0002	318.56
2010*	100048	-0.0002	318.56
2010	100260	0.0002	318.56
2011*	110637	-0.0001	318.56
<b>Totals</b>		<b>318.56</b>	<b>318.56</b>

\*Detachments



## Leverage Growing National Interest in KCMO

KC Parks should work more with national and global entities that are expanding or thinking of expanding their presence within KCMO. For example, Google announced that KCMO would be the first U.S. city to be included in its Arts and Culture platform. This initiative will promote 15 of the city's institutions, such as the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and the Kansas City Ballet. Another example is that Ford Mobility has selected KCMO to be one of its laboratories in developing transportation of the future. These global companies would be excellent partners for KC Parks to engage to continue to make the city a more livable and connected place.

## Partnerships

No city in the country can provide public benefits to its citizens exclusively through the use of public resources. There are just not that many public resources. Because about 75 percent of KCMO's financial resources are dedicated to life-safety (i.e., police and fire), few financial resources are left for everything else—including parks. Because the city has a large aging yet expanding base of park assets, with no large-scale public/private partnership support, KC Parks cannot deliver the level of maintenance and programming services necessary to improve the vitality and utilization of the parks and boulevard system.

Without a conservancy and network of friends organizations, KC Parks does not appear to have attracted broad-scale neighborhood community involvement or larger-scale local

cultural institution engagement with the park system. Though several parks have conservancies and organizations that support smaller initiatives like the Kansas City Rose Society and the Kansas City Cactus and Succulent Society, KC Parks is operating at a huge disadvantage when it comes to acquiring financial support from local and national corporate and philanthropic organizations. It has no overall conservancy for all parks. Only a few of the parks throughout the system have community-based friends of the parks, and KC Parks has limited ability to coordinate these existing friends networks in a unified way to support the park financially, through outreach, education, or programming. This limits KC Parks' capacity to raise money, to garner community support, and to provide a high-quality product for its customers—the residents of KCMO.





BONNIE ROY/ULL

## Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks

**AS DEFINED BY KC PARKS**, the department's mission is to improve the quality of life, health, and wellness of the community by improving socially equitable, community-driven programming and environmentally sound resource management. This mission provides a road map for repairing past harm and bringing social and health equity to communities subjected to racial segregation and housing discrimination of the past centuries. However, this mission must be supported by structural and institutional changes at KC Parks and its five-member board as well as the municipal partnerships that support its work.

A top-down approach to planning and development has not produced successful outcomes for residents living in historically African Americans communities, including Hispanic/Latino and other nonwhite residents. A change in planning and development processes, focusing on the people most harmed, is required to produce equitable social outcomes while recognizing that cultural differences show up and need to be recognized and respected. The panel believes that KC Parks must take the following actions that build upon already existing activities:

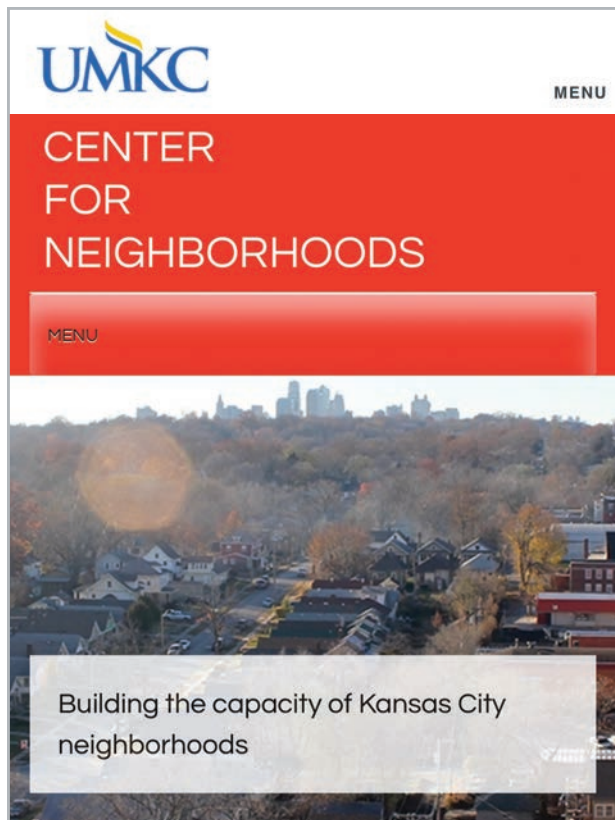
- Work with residents to create healthier neighborhoods by treating parks as health infrastructure.
- Work with residents to coordinate investments around indicators of need, not random allocation of things (that do not add value to existing or future assets).
- Better understand existing social equity activities happening in neighborhoods and citywide and help filter and incorporate them into KC Parks and other municipal partners' work.



## Defining Equitable Development

One of the most important things KC Parks can do is define what “equitable planning and development” means in the context of its work with KCMO’s residents and the parks and park assets they hold dear. Local institutions, such as the University of Missouri–Kansas City’s Center for Neighborhoods, have been critical community partners in many of the city’s underserved neighborhoods. The center just completed its seventh cohort across 10 neighborhoods, using an asset-based community development approach to building capacity with KCMO residents.

An example of how KC Parks can approach creating a shared vision for equitable development is through work conducted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 2016, two Pittsburgh nonprofits, Neighborhood Allies and Urban Innovation21, sought assistance from PolicyLink to craft a definition of equitable development for the Pittsburgh region. Over a one-year period, dozens of meetings were convened with community residents to create a shared definition of equitable development. This definition continues to be used throughout the region and has been adopted by Urban Redevelopment of Pittsburgh as it pursues its work to address structural and institutional racism within its organization at the same time.



*The University of Missouri–Kansas City’s Center for Neighborhoods can be a critical partner in enabling KC Parks to establish better relationships with city residents.*

### Equitable Development: The Path to an All-In Pittsburgh

PolicyLink

NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIES

URBAN INNOVATION 21



### Equitable Development: The Path to an All-In Pittsburgh

*Equitable Development: The Path to an All-in Pittsburgh* defines equitable development as

a positive development strategy that ensures everyone participates in and benefits from the region’s economic transformation—especially low-income residents, communities of color, immigrants, and others at risk of being left behind. It requires an intentional focus on eliminating racial inequities and barriers ... to assure that lower-wealth residents:

- live in healthy, safe, opportunity-rich neighborhoods that reflect their culture (and are not displaced from them);
- connect to economic and ownership opportunities; and
- have voice and influence in the decisions that shape their neighborhoods.



## Structural Change at KC Parks

Creating a shared vision for equitable development is not the only thing that KC Parks needs to do to better leverage the parks and boulevard system to address the city's inequities. KC Parks should establish working teams that correspond to the principles outlined in its Business Plan. These teams should include the following:

- Social Equity Working Team;
- Health and Wellness Working Team;
- National Resources Management (Conservation) Working Team; and
- Organizational Sustainability Working Team.

### Social Equity Working Team

This team's focus should be to improve equitable access through KC Parks planning, programming, and maintenance. If KC Parks is approaching equitable development with residents, issues of equity and justice must first be addressed internally. The Social Equity Working Team should conduct a social equity assessment and a procurement assessment.

### Cultural Competency Collective of Greater Kansas City

A potential partner for KC Parks would be the Cultural Competency Collective of Greater Kansas City.

**Mission:**

*Through leadership development, the Cultural Competency Collective fosters an inclusive learning community that leads to equity in services.*

**Vision:**

*Our vision is that everyone in the Kansas City region respects and values the diversity of all people.*



The goal of the social equity assessment is to better understand how KC Parks works with staff, in neighborhoods, and with community partners and other entities to address social equity issues, which should produce a road map for how to address challenges and capitalize on strengths. The procurement assessment will enable the team to have a better understanding whether all departments have Minority/Women Business Enterprise goals and whether those departments are held accountable for them. Finally, KC Parks staff should ensure that staff should know why KC Parks is pursuing these goals and be prepared to work in the communities it serves and understand why more time and resources may or may not be allocated for targeted populations.

KC Parks could build on other regional initiatives that have been embarked on recently that address racial inequities and injustices. Specifically, the panel learned about the Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) under Mayor Sly James and the efforts underway by the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC). Additional efforts and initiatives likely exist and should be included in KC Parks' work and any metrics developed.

**Recommendation:** Hire an outside consultant to facilitate training and assessments and to facilitate community convenings that create a shared definition of equitable planning and development throughout the neighborhoods so that access to KC Parks planning, programming, and maintenance can be addressed with community buy-in.

### Health and Wellness Working Team

This team's focus should be to improve health and wellness through KC Parks planning and maintenance efforts. This can be a collaborative effort with the KCMO Health Department (KCHD) in partnership with Health Forward Foundation and REACH Healthcare Foundation using the collective impact model. The KC Equity Network is one entity the panel learned about, but other groups likely exist as well.

**Recommendation:** Deepen partnership with Health Forward Foundation and KCHD with existing community organizations and residents to create a shared definition of what constitutes equitable health and wellness for recreation planning, programming, and maintenance.

## Natural Resource Management (Conservation) Working Team

This team's focus should be to protect green space, connect people to nature, mitigate climate change, and engage residents in conservation practices. It is essential to understand what conservation and environmental stewardship is to neighborhoods.

The Black Environmental Collective in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a group that focuses on the right of black communalities to live and grow in safe and clean neighborhoods that affirm black culture.

**Recommendation:** Seek out existing nonprofits working with community groups and residents on issues related to the environment and parks management (e.g., Bridging the Gap).



## Organizational Sustainability Working Team

This team's focus should be on ensuring the benefits of KC Parks and its services are available to KCMO communities in perpetuity, ensuring that an open platform is available to residents. Building more meaningful, useful relationships between KC Parks and residents will establish trust and enable a more sustainable organization.

Employees of KC Parks should work out of community centers or libraries to create an equitable planning and development framework by listening to and creating deep and trusted partnerships with community members with the goal to create neighborhood park networks. One of the employees should focus on health and the youth in close partnership with KCHD and the school districts. The other employee should focus on planning and development in close partnership with the City Planning and Development Department.

This would help ensure that what KC Parks staff are hearing from neighborhood residents is incorporated in KC Parks planning and development efforts. Key outcomes from this effort will enable the following.

- KC Parks will have a clear understanding of the diversity of community priorities in order to better partner with neighborhoods (cultural competency).
- Truly community-led and owned planning and development processes will ensure all voices are heard—not just the loudest.
- Developing true community engagement can create two-way education between community residents and KC Parks.
- Internal city collaboration with city planning and zoning will encourage higher-density and mixed-income infill housing around parks to bring housing and increasing market values near parks. In addition, added density would increase public safety by providing more “eyes on the park.”
- Establishment of an effective feedback loop between KC Parks and community residents will build trust.
- Stewardship of green spaces, pocket parks, neighborhood parks, and community centers will improve.
- Neighborhood park networks that promote efficiency in resource allocation as well as cost saving through resource sharing will be established.

## Lowest Life Expectancy, by Zip Code

Zip code	Life expectancy	Difference from the highest life-expectancy zip code	Nonwhite population
64127	70.9 years	-13.7 years	84.5%
64126	72.4 years	-14.0 years	77.4%
64128	69.1 years	-15.5 years	91.4%
64129	71.6 years	-12.9 years	57.5%
64130	69.9 years	-14.7 years	92.4%
64132	72.3 years	-14.1 years	86.0%

Sources: KC Parks, ULI briefing book.

**Recommendation:** Using business planning principles, KC Parks can focus on community engagement in the six neighborhoods that experience low health outcomes by piloting in the six zip codes with the worst life expectancy, which are Choice Neighborhoods and U.S. Housing and Urban Development Low to Moderate Income Tracts.



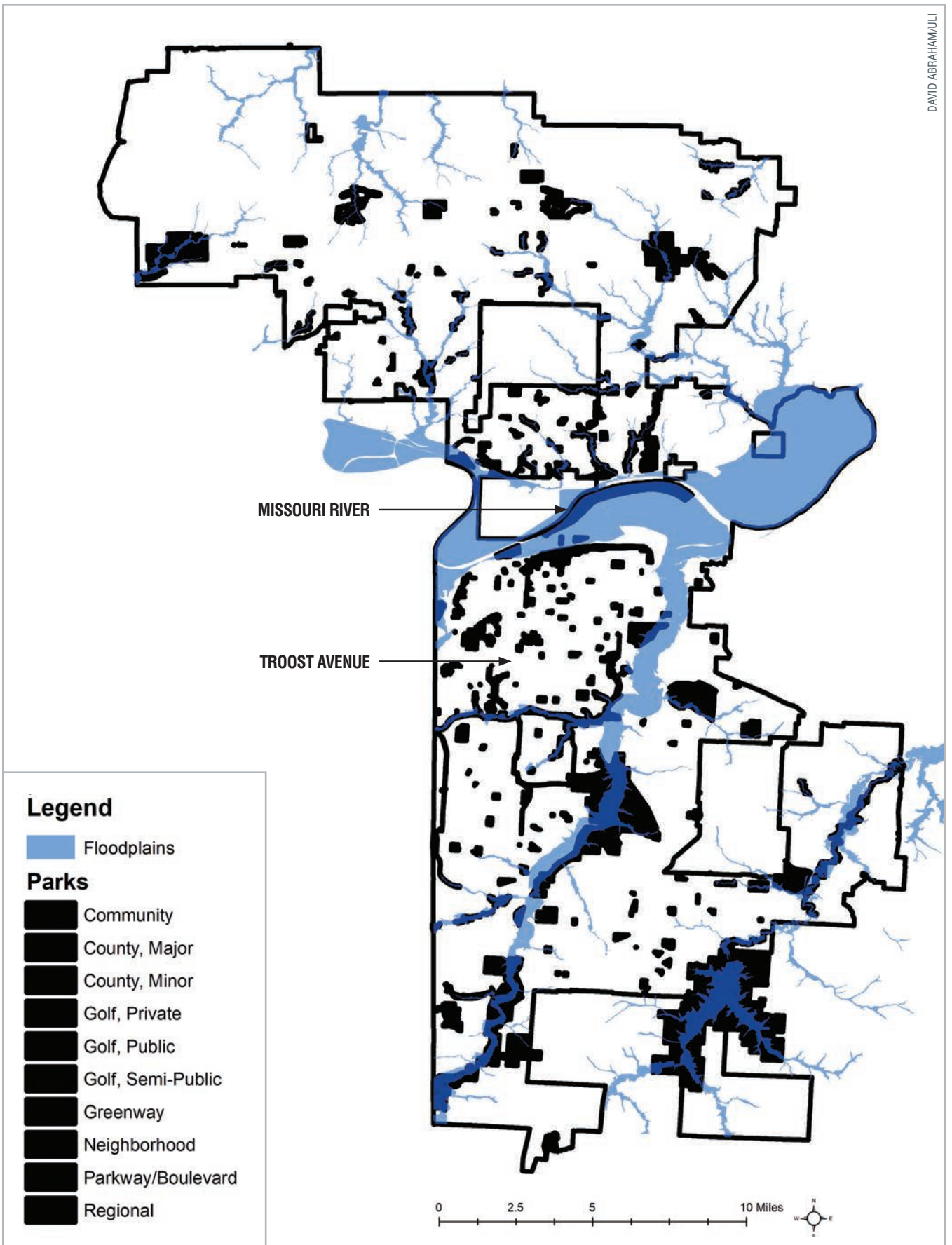
## Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality

**THIS SECTION PROVIDES BACKGROUND AND RECOMMENDATIONS** related to the financial constraints of KC Parks as well as how KC Parks can better maximize resources to improve coordinated development citywide that is more holistic and equitable than in the past.

The KC Parks fiscal year 2019/20 budget shows that while the half-cent sales tax for park facilities provides a stable source of funding, the tax is also used for other services (i.e., public safety). This puts constraints on KC Parks and hurts the public trust since the sales tax was sold as an idea to support the parks and boulevard system. The sales tax does not provide KC Parks with sufficient revenue to pay for operations and maintenance (about \$15 million annually) as well as deferred

maintenance (estimated at \$60 million). The general fund must therefore be used as a supplemental source. Finally, the panel found that the fee-for-service KC Park offerings do not pay for themselves because of the aggregate 28 percent cost recovery for field rentals, golf, concessions, and so on. Some of these areas cover their costs, but greater opportunity exists to revise objectives downward for net revenue to be generated.





KCMO's park assets located within the city's boundary.

Finally, tension exists between investing in facilities in support of new development in suburban areas and focusing limited resources to improve and maintain existing assets primarily in the urban core. The capital budget explicitly reinforces this policy by stating: “Funding decisions are based on . . . demographic growth patterns, with an additional effort made to complete projects begun in previous years. [Furthermore,] improvements outside of the central city have been targeted at key infrastructure links which experience substantial growth, and attention will continue to be given to meeting the developing needs of these areas.” This policy further exacerbates an already overstretched KC Parks and the historical inequities mentioned earlier in this report. Ultimately, budget priorities are a statement of community values.

## Opportunities for Maximizing Resources

The combination of needing to manage with limited resources and a commitment to financial sustainability and resiliency highlights the need to better coordinate the citywide capital improvement plan (CIP). The panel learned that KCMO’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has begun implementing citywide priority-based budgeting, which is a step in the right direction. This could be further enhanced with the establishment of a capital review team. Many cities have implemented a more collaborative process to ensure that more perspectives and voices are engaged. The panel recommends that the city structure and implement a similar process with the following objectives:

- Consistent with PIAC screening criteria;
- Consistent with priority-based budget (i.e., deferred maintenance);
- Foster cross-agency project identification, scoping, and funding; and
- Rigorous criteria for new projects.

This would enable KC Parks to better realign its capital budget with available capital funding and staff expertise as well as refocus to reduce operation and maintenance and create development and new revenue opportunities.



Objectives	
Consistency with PIAC criteria	Cross-agency project identification, scoping, and funding
Consistency with priority-based budgeting	Apply consistency and rigor to new project selection

Diagram of the panel’s proposed Capital Review Team.

## Realign the Capital Budget

Two of the best examples of how KC Parks’ responsibilities overlap with sister agencies’ are street maintenance and stormwater management. KC Parks is responsible for maintaining 135 miles of parkways, boulevards, streets, and roads, while the Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains 6,000 lane miles of roadway. The Capital Budget: Street Maintenance provides \$17 million to DPW, compared with only \$500,000 to KC Parks. The panel acknowledges that the historic and expanding parkways and boulevard system have different requirements, but overall maintenance might be better served by DPW and its larger capital budget. However, KC Parks might need to remain involved in maintenance and support of some key parkways and boulevards—like the Paseo, Ward Parkway, or Troost Avenue—within the urban core.

KC Parks owns and maintains a large inventory of open space—some of it in floodplains—and has the potential to augment the Water Services Department (Water)’s green infrastructure inventory and stormwater overflow control program. The Capital Budget: Green Stormwater Infrastructure line item provides \$31.8 million for Water’s Overflow Control Program and zero dollars for KC Parks. In addition, KC Parks should seek opportunities to colocate other municipal facilities and community amenities on parkland. This would be part of a broader policy of directing capital resources into and facilitating growth adjacent to existing infrastructure.



Another area for realignment would be for KC Parks to enter into partnership agreements with school districts and other facilities like YMCAs that have playground and other recreational assets available. These facilities could supplement those areas—particularly in the Northland and other suburban areas—that have fewer KC Parks facilities.

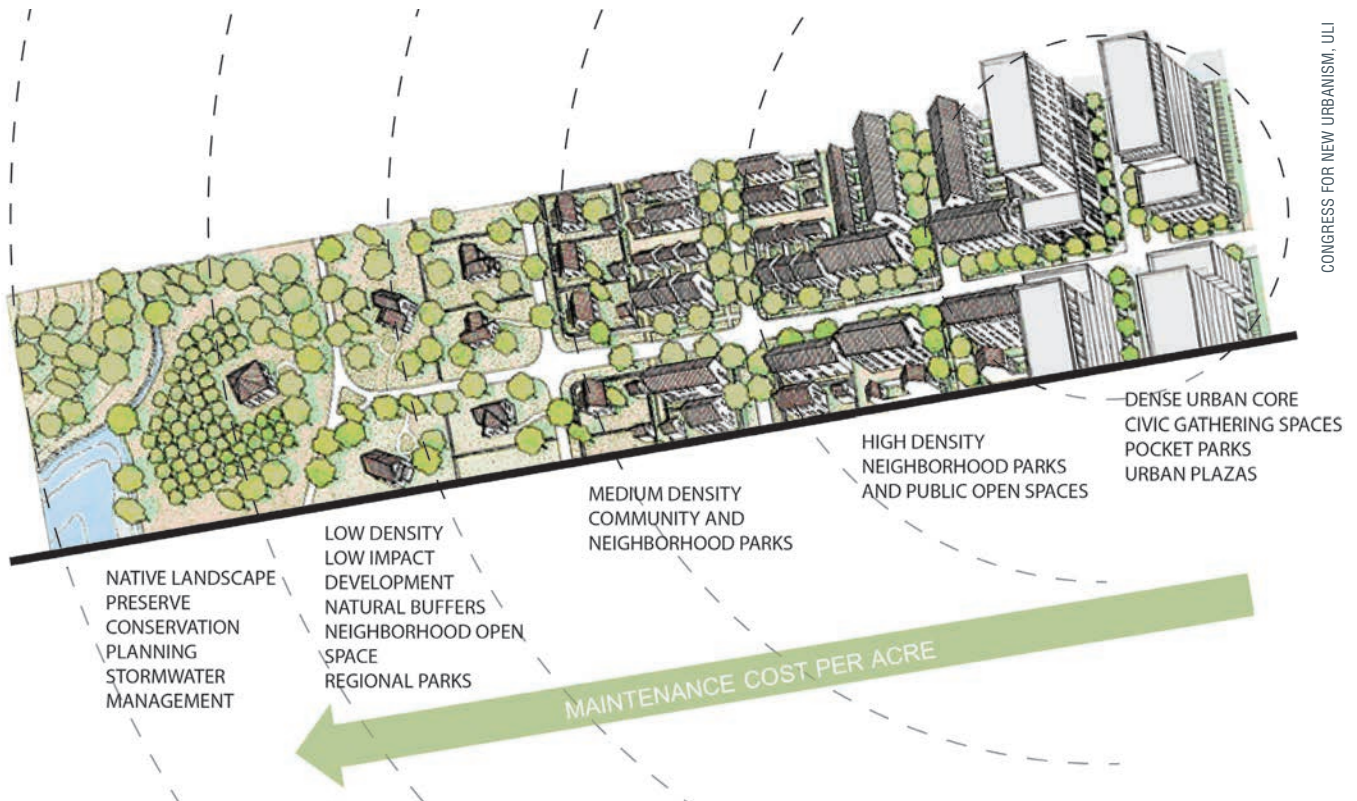
### Establish a Landscape Typology Manual

Lower-density areas with low levels of park use could explore a lower maintenance regime, compared to a higher-density area with many users and active programming that may require a more intensive maintenance regime. KC Parks should create a landscape typology manual with a spectrum of associated maintenance standards. This manual would help ensure that the public understands differences in how parkland is maintained. This should include the conservation of habitats for threatened and endangered species, the reduction of invasive species, and alternative landscaping such as forestry. In some cases, creating native or more natural landscapes requires additional training and maintenance until it is fully established. A good example of this type of manual is the July 2019 Denver Parks & Recreation *Landscape Typology Manual*.

### Develop a Consistent Process for Public Land Disposition

Given the need for voter approval and potential legal impediments to selling park holdings for nonpark uses, park-adjacent development should be a focus for leverage opportunities. In the urban core and higher-density areas, an evaluation should be conducted to confirm that park needs are being met before any public lands are declared to be surplus. Then, any such decisions should be complemented by adding new park capacity as needed or appropriate.

Selling assets provides revenues but is not a sustainable funding source for KC Parks or KCMO. Moreover, some of the underused parkland that may make the most sense to release from the park and boulevard system likely has limited market value. For those areas that have high market value, land leasing might be an option to retain public ownership of the land while gaining a stream of revenue.



CONGRESS FOR NEW URBANISM, ULI

Investments are more diffused the farther out they are along the park transect from dense urban core to low-density suburban areas.

## Implement a Screening Tool for PIAC Projects

PIAC's primary function is to solicit input and make recommendations regarding the use of general funds for capital improvements. However, the process for PIAC selection could be more transparent to the public and agencies, and address the inequities produced by the system.

Projects recommended by PIAC should adhere to the following requirements:

- Projects should have been included in a previous year's Needs/Condition Assessment.
- They should have been included in a previous year's CIP.
- New facilities must have significant matching funds from a private/nonprofit partner.

The Downtown Council of Kansas City (DTC) has a model that could be used in other portions of the city. The DTC's Infrastructure Committee has developed a process to screen and review applications requested from the city's PIAC process before submission for approval. This enables a coordinated and more transparent process for how PIAC funds can be used longer term and more strategically. The

"Governance and Structure" section of this report discusses how a proposed KC Parks conservancy could serve this role in coordination with KC Parks and the also proposed neighborhood park friends network.

## Require Publication of Fiscal Notes for All Capital Projects

The development of new infrastructure typically commits KC Parks to increased and ongoing maintenance, insurance, utility, and personnel costs, whereas major repairs or improvements can decrease future operating costs. These long-term financial implications must be considered when approving a capital project.

OMB prepares fiscal notes that calculate the multiple-year fiscal impacts of projects, but these notes are not published or made public. The panel recommends that the fiscal notes, presented by the finance director and prepared with the input of the KC Parks director, should be included in the capital budget and presented to the KC Council.

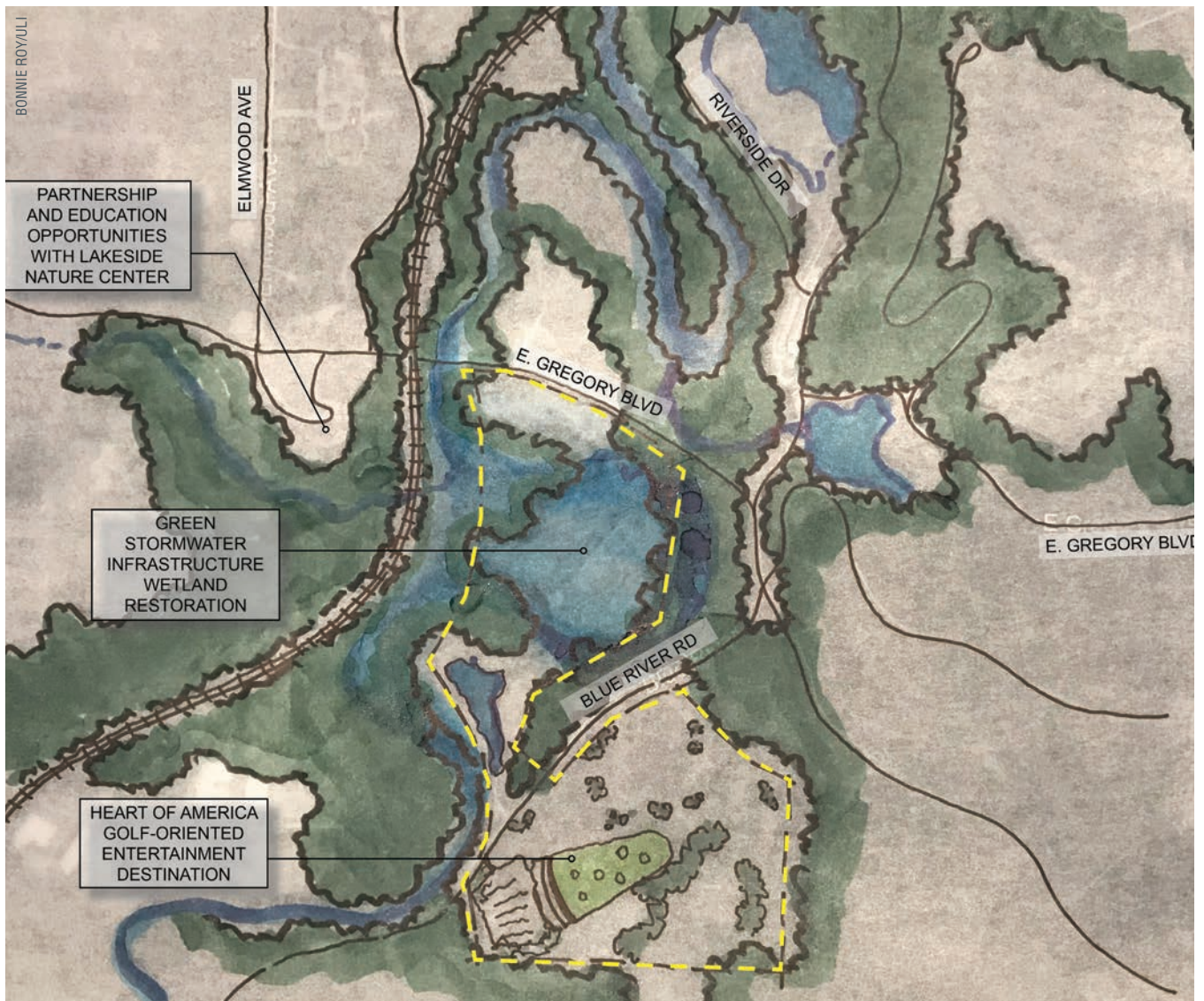
## Prioritizing Public Realm Investments and Impact

As KC Parks continues investments into the parks and boulevard system, the limited available resources must be maximized to enhance community resilience, support the local economy, and provide social spaces for people to gather and play. Parks and recreation spaces are critical to the social and civic infrastructure of communities, given their unique ability to bring together friends and family and to create a shared space for strangers and new neighbors to meet. Metrics and tools should be developed not only to select and prioritize projects and programs for funding that advance resilience, economics, and mobility, but also to measure how these programs affect equity and inclusion. Other communities face similar challenges and have approached this question in a variety of ways.

The Heinz Endowment, for example, adopted a vision statement for a just public realm and established an indicator framework to evaluate investments. The framework emphasizes equity, inclusion, and ownership as one of the core values and sets goals for Heinz investments in community parks, rights-of-way, plazas, and vacant land. Additional information about the *A Just Public Realm for Pittsburgh* report and metrics can be found here: [www.heinz.org/strategic-areas/learning/public-realm](http://www.heinz.org/strategic-areas/learning/public-realm).

Many other groups are adopting equity and inclusion tools to guide public realm investments. The Trust for Public Land, a partner in 10 Minute Walk, developed the online mapping/visualization tool ParkServe, which helps communities measure individuals' access to parks within a 10-minute walk of home. Reimagining the Civic Commons, which is working with four cities across the country to revitalize and connect public places such as parks, plazas, trails, and libraries, is measuring civic engagement and socioeconomic mixing to understand their impact. Minneapolis is also leading this work. In 2016, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board developed equity-based criteria for prioritizing capital investment and large rehabilitation projects.





The panel's proposed vision for a repurposed Heart of America Golf Course. The yellow dashed line represents the golf course's boundary.

## Restructure Golf Operations to Maximize Net Revenue

Golf operations should break even before considering recurring capital costs. Coverage is not uniform, with some facilities serving the same geographic market, which allows the possibility of closing up to two facilities especially since the number of rounds played across the KC Parks portfolio has remained constant over the past three years. The panel recommends that KC Parks should reposition the Heart of America Golf Course since it incurs about \$200,000 per year more in additional maintenance than Swope Memorial Golf Course because of flooding.

KC Parks should partner with DPW to redevelop a portion of the course as an overflow control program facility and reposition a portion of the course for a golf-oriented entertainment destination that could generate lease income. The First Tee program should be operated out of Swope Memorial.

The panel also recommends that either Shoal Creek Golf Course or Hodge Park Golf Course should close for redevelopment. Both courses are in the Northland and are connected by a cart-path tunnel that runs under Shoal Creek Parkway.



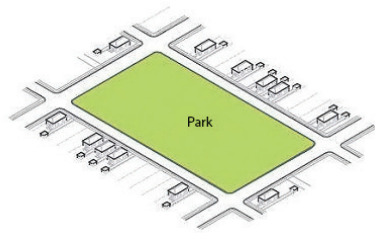


*Detroit's neighborhood framework plan identifying a vision for the Rogell Golf Course.*

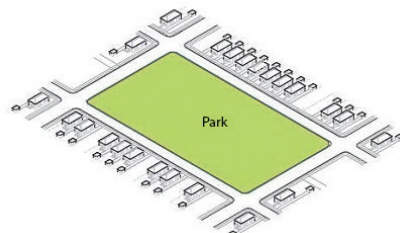
## Redeveloping a Detroit Golf Course

The Rogell Golf Course in Detroit was owned and operated by the city until 2007, when it was sold to a neighboring church in part to help with a budget crunch. Golf course operations ceased around 2012, and the property was poorly maintained and became overgrown. The city planning process identified the abandoned course as an opportunity site for recreation and green stormwater infrastructure and reacquired the property in 2018 using Community Development Block Grant funds specially allocated for disaster relief stemming from a large flooding event along the Rouge River in 2014.

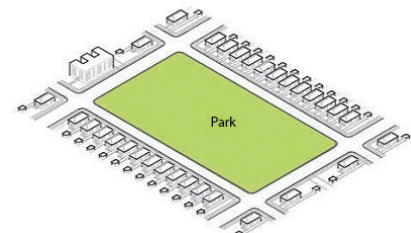
The city worked with a consultant team, city departments, including the Detroit Water and Sewage Department, and the community on a long-term vision for the site that includes new and restored wetlands, active and passive open space, and areas reserved for future development along the northern edge of the former golf course. The design includes new wetland areas specifically intended to handle stormwater from surrounding neighborhoods, where new storm sewers would be installed, removing that water from the combined sewer system.



1 Decline



3 Stabilization



5 Growth

*The 2017 Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan for Detroit created a matrix for identifying investment opportunities. One metric was the level of investment within a neighborhood and how to coordinate with other city departments such as the Housing and Revitalization Department and the Planning and Development Department.*

## Holistic Neighborhood Development and Investment Strategy

High-quality park space is one element in thriving, healthy neighborhoods, along with access to safe, clean, decent affordable housing, services, transit, and employment. Given limited resources (in parks as well as other arenas), KCMO should establish a citywide vision for where to encourage future residential growth, guided in part by where existing infrastructure is under capacity and new growth can be accommodated. The panel heard from many stakeholders that overall strategy for growth and spending is lacking—many decisions are made ad hoc and outside a cohesive framework. This is an opportunity for more coordination among area plans, capital improvement plans, and citywide departmental plans to make investments more impactful, rather than being too diffuse, leading to diluted effects.

In prioritizing investment in amenities and programming in neighborhood parks, the following factors should be considered:

- Neighborhood context with greatest potential for stabilization—leveraging park investment to make an impact on “tipping point” neighborhoods;
- Number of residents who will be served/affected within a 10-minute walk;
- Engaged and committed neighbors;
- Alignment with other public and private investment activity; and
- Potential for park to serve as foundation/attraction for other investment.

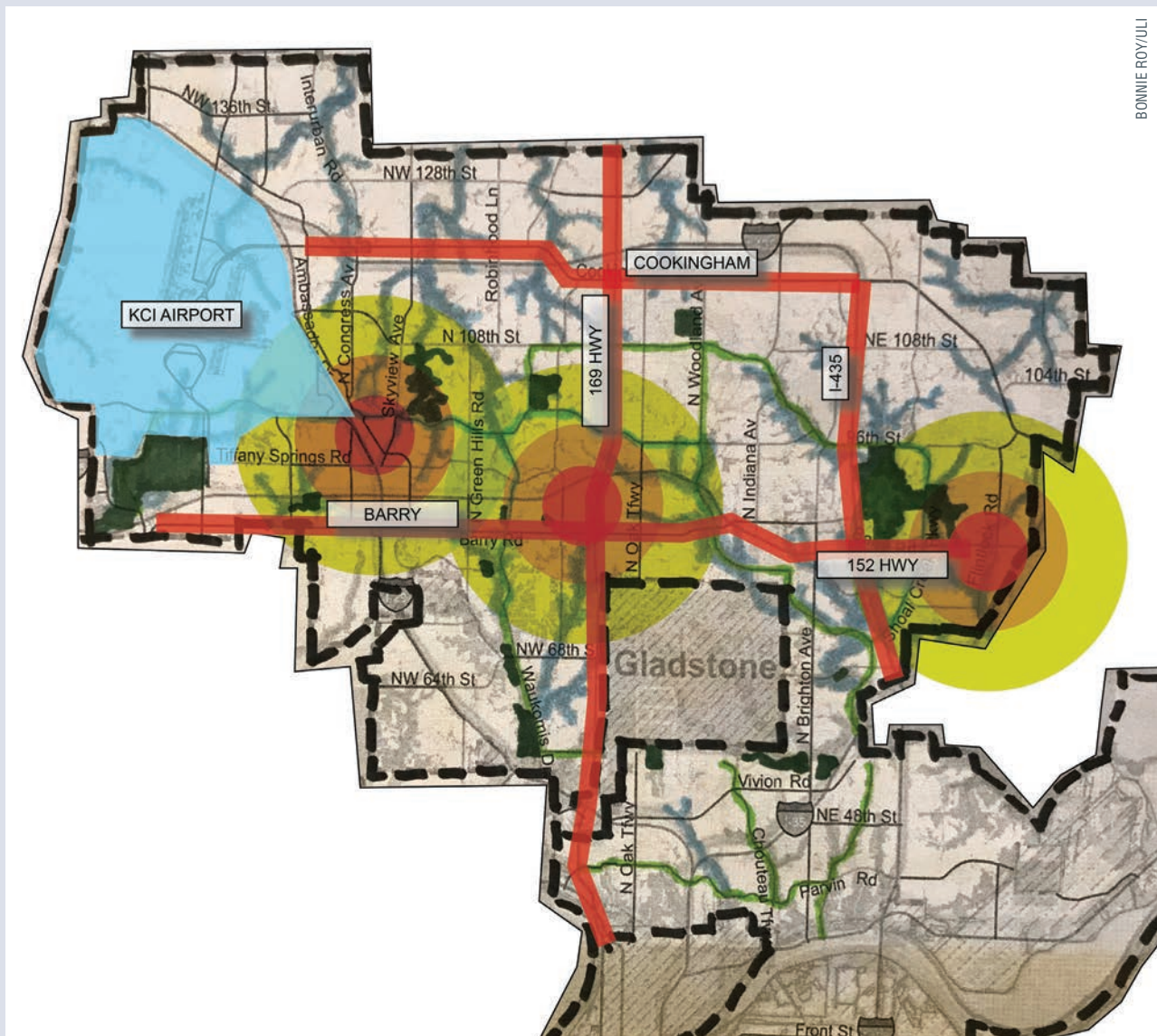
Finally, housing should be seen as a necessary and complementary use to neighborhood parks. This will increase public safety through bringing eyes on the park and creating active edges. The park will feel like a welcome contrast to surrounding development (rather than just another larger empty lot in areas of high vacancy). More use of parks will also decrease illegal dumping.

## KCMO Comprehensive Plan Update

The City and Planning Development Department is leading an effort to update the city's Comprehensive Plan, which was last adopted in 1997. The panel believes this is an opportunity to implement a more holistic neighborhood strategy to coordinate resources within both the urban core and the urbanizing suburban areas. New development should be concentrated around existing or proposed community activity centers and follow smart growth principles such as reducing sprawl; encouraging density (an industry standard for sustainable development is at least eight units per acre); preserving open space, farmland, and native landscapes; designing walkable and connected neighborhoods;

and creating a range of housing affordability options. This would ensure more equitable outcomes as well as maximize resources for KCMO by being based on more realistic growth projections.

To assist in this effort, the American Planning Association developed *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans*. Included within this guide are metrics for evaluating progress in achieving desired outcomes that include a score for level of achievement. Some of the principles and practices that could relate directly to KC Parks include "Livable Built Environment" (1), "Harmony with Nature" (2.2), "Interwoven Equity" (4.5), "Healthy Community" (5.4, 5.5), and "Responsible Regulation" (6.6).



BONNIE ROYULI

The panel's concept for coordinating suburban investment by concentrating new development around activity centers.



## Urban Core

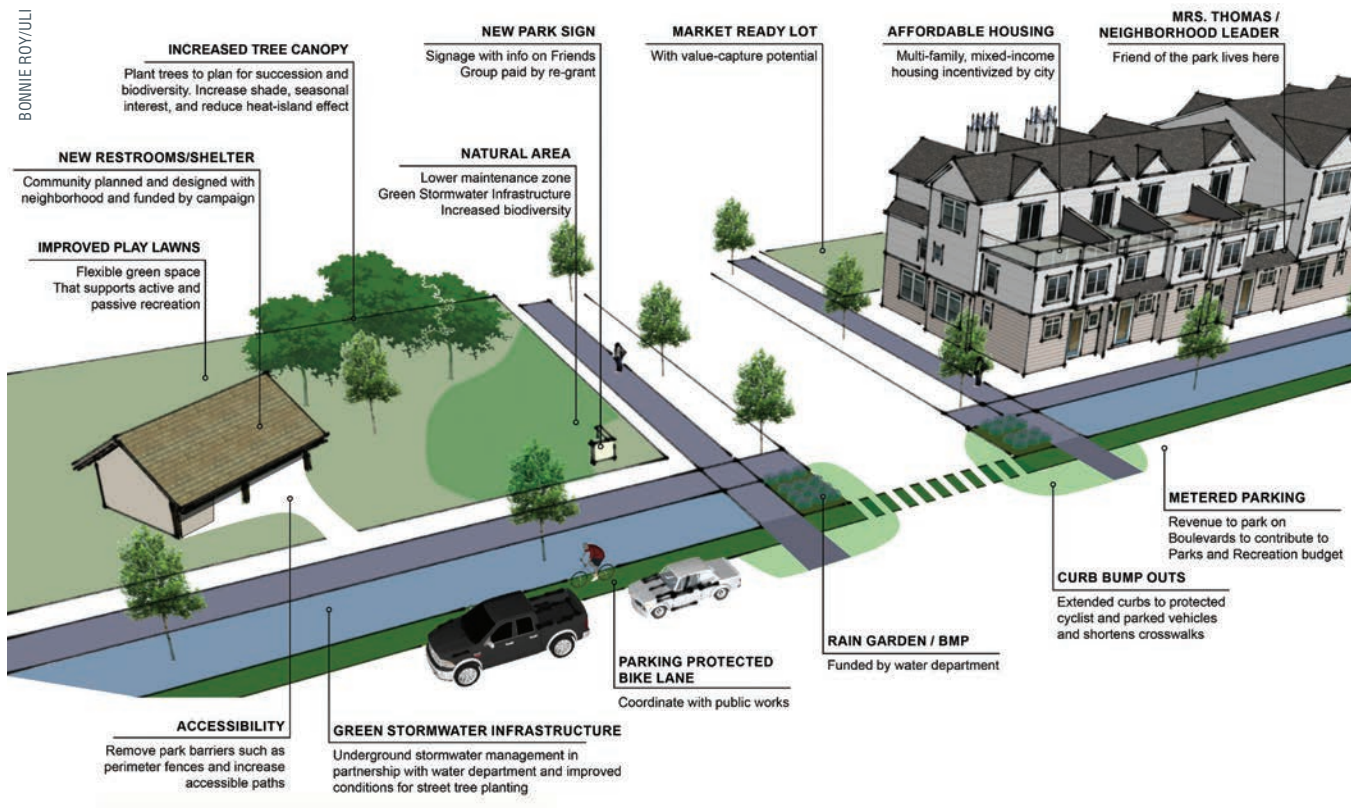
The panel identified two locations that could serve as examples of how parks can catalyze urban revitalization in both residential and commercial areas—parcels surrounding Ivanhoe Park and Lykins Square. The panel also identified two locations that could serve as examples that could be potentially made surplus to create new development opportunities and generate revenue for KC Parks—portions of Roanoke Park and the Plaza Tennis Courts. These sites were identified through the panel’s analysis of landownership around parks—beginning with those that may be targeted under the preceding criteria—to identify opportunities for infill or rehab with qualified community partners, community development corporations, churches, and land banks.

Members of KC Park’s Organizational Sustainability Working Team would be critical partners to identify opportunities. Community Development Finance Institutes (CDFIs) like LISC or Enterprise could help analyze market conditions and

feasibility of housing development in those locations. Then funding and partnerships should be pursued for mixed-income development on key park-adjacent sites. These sites could be aligned with areas targeted for minor home repair through KCMO’s Housing and Neighborhood Services Department as well as other community development corporations.

### Ivanhoe Park

Potential infill targets are located at 2305 and 2309 East 44th Street (97 feet of frontage, 0.21 acres, owned by KCMO Missouri Homesteading Authority and IvanHOME) and 2315 East 44th Street (45 feet of frontage, 0.1 acres, owned by Land Bank of Kansas City). Targeting these two vacant sites, all under the ownership of public agencies and a place-based nonprofit, will complete the street wall and fill in the gaps on one complete block fronting Ivanhoe Park. Development should be appropriately scaled for the neighborhood and be oriented toward the park using a mix of market-rate and affordable units.



*Ivanhoe Park. The panel envisioned a holistic investment strategy within parks to spur residential and commercial revitalization as well as build support for the park.*



## Lykins Square

The city-owned parcel on the north side of East Seventh Street could be targeted for investment paired with the targeted home repair program and coordinated with a local housing organization.



Lykins Square (left) and the city-owned parcel along East Seventh Street. Coordinated investment could occur in partnership with groups like the Westside Housing Organization that manage community building initiatives.

## Roanoke Park

A parcel of the park north of Karnes Boulevard could be assembled with the city-owned 3510 and 3526 Roanoke Road parcels. This creates an opportunity for an intergovernmental partnership between the agencies to create a complementary development vision for the site and recruit a qualified developer to redevelop the site. The KC Parks land could either remain a park space or might be more appropriate for decommissioning and disposition. This parcel could be appropriate for smaller-scale commercial development to complement uses across the street and create more of a gateway destination into Roanoke Park.



The yellow line represents a parcel that could be assembled with other city-owned land to spur commercial development.

## Plaza Tennis Center

Country Club Plaza is an area of KCMO that is seeing higher land value and therefore has the potential for larger-scale redevelopment. The panel learned that KC Parks is sometimes the owner of last resort for various facilities throughout the city, regardless of whether that serves the public's interest. This site might present an opportunity to shed this property for a high-density, mixed-use project that incorporates tennis—and other recreation—into the redevelopment. This development could be either a sale of the land or a ground lease.



The Union Market development in Washington, D.C.'s Northeast quadrant had a temporary tennis court built on top of the EDENS Development building for the city's professional tennis team. This roof is used for other temporary uses as well.

## Subdivisions and New Development

The panel heard from multiple Northland residents that they are not getting the same amount of resources and attention as the historic core and southern areas. This is in part because funding and resources intended to provide recreational opportunities for all KCMO residents are benefitting a few individual homeowners. KCMO has not consistently followed its own Zoning and Development Code that addresses parks, resulting in the dedication of land with limited recreational value and little, if any, public access. Further, these parcels add to the operational burden of KC Parks.

## KCMO Parkland Dedication Requirements

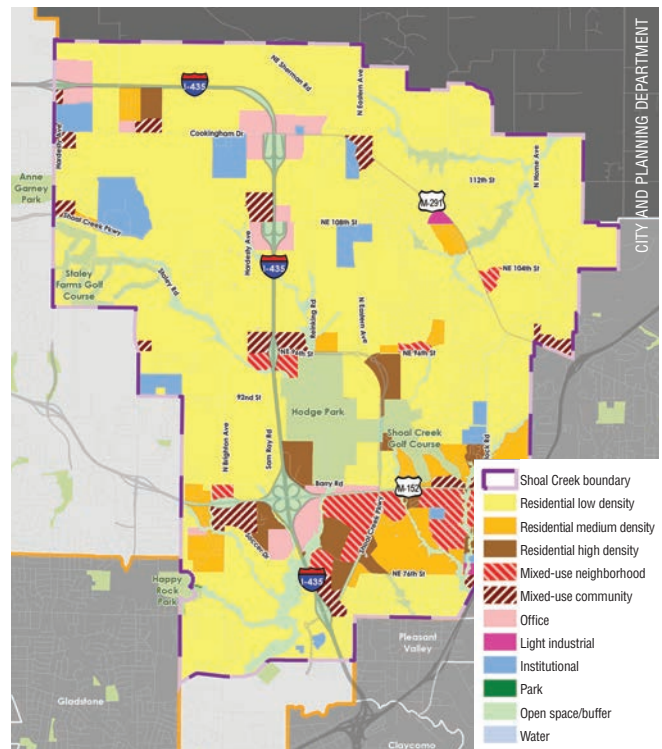
Section 88-408 of the Zoning and Development Code addresses parkland dedication, requiring developers of new residential units to dedicate land for park purposes, provide private recreational open space, and/or make a cash payment in lieu. The calculation is based on 0.006 acres per resident, and if the payment is in lieu, it is based on average land price for park acquisitions in the prior five years.

The code explicitly states the following related to park uses and new development:

- “The dedication of land for park uses must be at locations designated in the comprehensive plan, or the official parks plan adopted by the board of KC Parks commissioners, or as determined by the developer and the staff of the city planning and development and KC Parks departments.”
- “Land proposed to be dedicated for park and recreation use must be suitable for such use and receive the approval of the director of KC Parks and the city plan commission.”
- “Each park open space must have frontage on a public street as the city plan commission deems necessary to provide acceptable access to the open space from a public street, taking into account the amount of frontage reasonably required by the circumstances of the particular open space. This frontage may serve as a corridor from the public street to the main body of the park area as the city plan commission deems necessary to provide acceptable access to the open space from the public street. This corridor must have a gradient adequate for pedestrian or vehicle use.”

For example, the future land use envisioned in the Shoal Creek Valley Area Plan, adopted in 2017, appears to show only existing land designated as parks, without establishing a vision for the location of any future park facilities as development continues. The KC Parks Master Plan Update from 2015 also does not appear to provide guidance as to desired locations for park facilities. This lack of planning cedes control to private interests at the expense of KC Parks and KCMO residents.

The panel identified three parks from the 1990s that are owned and maintained by KC Parks but that do not appear to meet the standards established in the city code related to suitability, frontage, and access. They are connected to, and in practice indistinguishable from, areas designated as open space and buffers. The parks include the 1990 42-acre North Hampton Park, the 1998 14-acre Quailridge Park, and the 1999 32-acre Fishing River Greenway. The panel acknowledges that these open spaces do have value—especially for environmental benefit and stormwater management—but these “parks” should stay under the ownership of the developer or respective homeowners association.

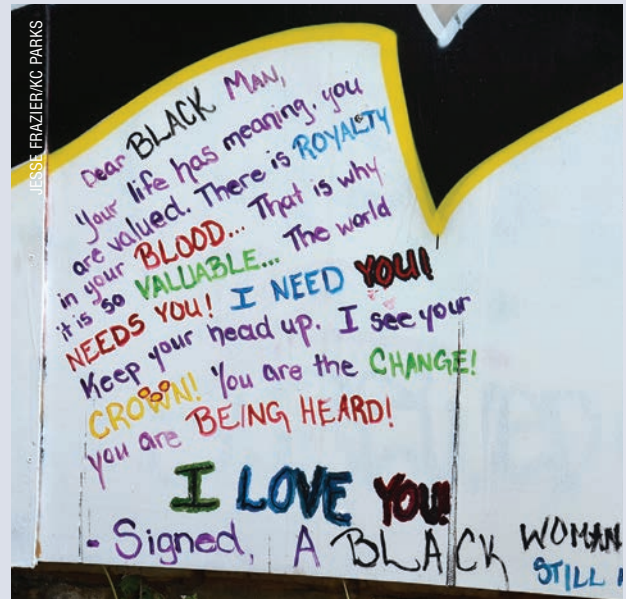


*The Shoal Creek Valley Future Land Use Plan.*



## Expression Walls in Mill Creek Park

Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Black Lives Matter protests began across KCMO. Some of the largest gathering places have been near the J.C. Nichols Memorial Fountain in Mill Creek Park, and they have resulted in some graffiti on the limestone walls. To help facilitate the parks' role as venues for freedom of speech—without the destruction of property—KC Parks has installed expression walls to “encourage people to draw, or write, or say whatever it is that’s in their heart, and hopefully give people one more way, one more outlet, how to express the pain they’re feeling,” says KC Parks director Terry Rynard.





Although some flexibility should be retained, KCMO should take a stronger position in these negotiations to ensure each development is providing bona fide park opportunities rather than further encumbering the park and boulevard system in return for limited public benefit. The provision of private recreational amenities to serve a single subdivision should not be permitted to substitute for contributing to the broader system. Those subdivision residents will also be able to use more regional facilities and trails (not to mention the parkways and boulevards under KC Parks' jurisdiction), even if they rely less on traditional neighborhood parks. The panel recommends that future payments-in-lieu should be unrestricted for use by KC Parks for the acquisition, development, or improvement of a public park wherever the greatest need exists, rather than being limited to a certain geography.



The locations of three parks provided to KC Parks as part of its dedication requirements.



North Hampton Park.



Quailridge Park.



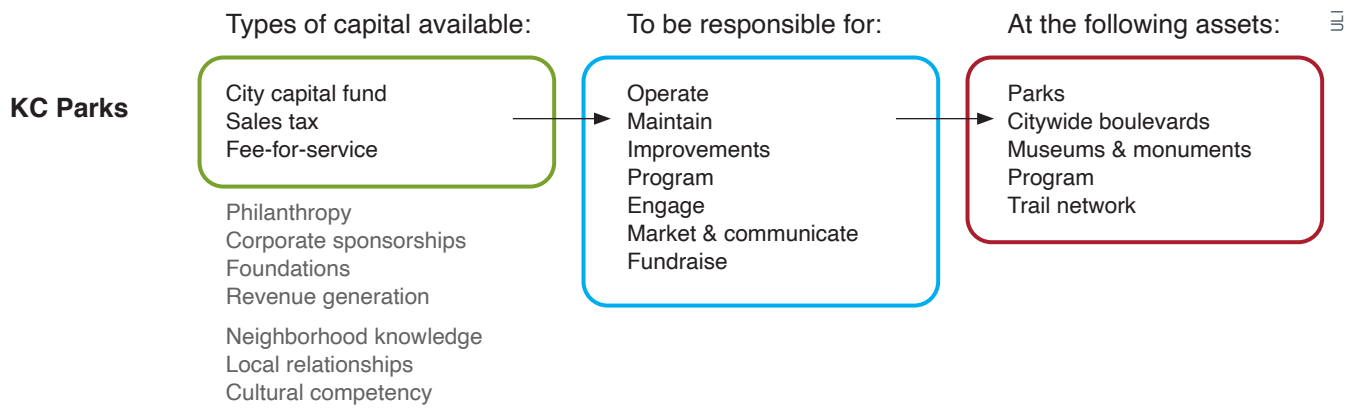
Fishing River Greenway.





## Governance and Structure

**TO MEET DESIRED EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES**, the processes and structures that organize the park and boulevard system will need to be reorganized. KC Parks currently has a very centralized model of responsibility, organization, and funding. As a result of the centralization, structural issues have developed around funding, park relevance, and community engagement.



The current structure of KC Parks.

Under the current system, the panel does not believe that KC Parks has the ability to achieve the following principles to center on the community in decision-making.

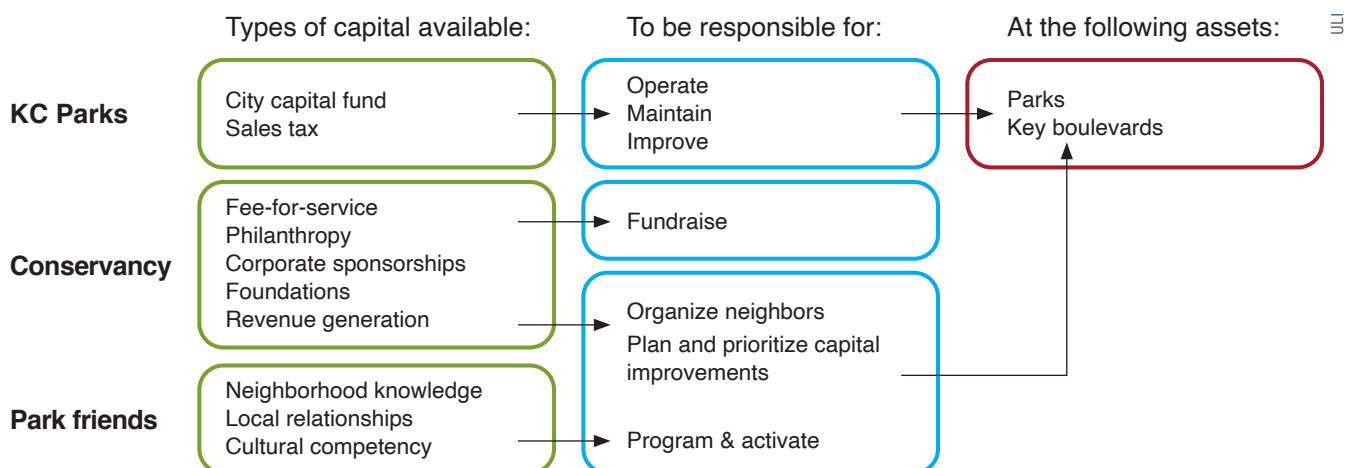
- Consider parks as critical civic infrastructure, platforms activated by programming, events, and engagement leading to more equitable and engaged communities. Examples include Civic Commons, Life X, Parks on Tap.
- Build upon and strengthen coordination of existing engagement for diversity, leadership, and participation. An example is the Citizen’s Planning Initiative.
- Create more equitable neighborhoods. Examples include St. Louis Greenline and Rebuild in Philadelphia.
- Convene and coordinate investment for maximum impact. Examples include Parkside Edge in Philadelphia, and the 11th Street Bridge Park and Douglass Community Land Trust in Washington, D.C.

The panel proposes that effectively engaging residents in their park system and achieving equitable outcomes will require the creation of new entities that can bring additional

financial and social capital to the park system such as a conservancy and neighborhood park friends network. When equitably governed and managed, a conservancy can both expand the resources available to the parks system and connect underserved communities to those resources through the neighborhood park friends network.

### Proposed Structure

Parks friends groups and a conservancy both bring new pools of capital to the city parks—just in different forms. Park friends groups exist to ensure that communities who may be disconnected from sources of financial or political capital are able to see meaningful investment in their public assets. Park friends gain agency in the city system in exchange for sharing their valuable knowledge and social capital within the communities served by a park. The conservancy and city gain meaningful guidance and ground-level partnership on the allocation of resources.



The panel’s proposed structure for KC Parks.



## The Conservancy

A conservancy is a nonprofit organization that exists to equitably champion and fund or provide other resources for parks and their communities outside the boundaries of the municipal system. A conservancy may do any or all of the following activities:

- Raise funds from philanthropic and corporate sources.
- Hold and manage endowments.
- Develop enterprise opportunities to yield additional revenue for parks.
- Convene partners around parks as a platform for civic engagement, resilience, and equitable neighborhoods.
- Provide relevant programs, activations, and events that connect residents to parks.
- Advocate for policies and resources to improve the public realm.
- Deliver supplemental maintenance.
- Lead and execute the capital planning process.
- Market and communicate the value of the parks system.
- Measure and monitor the effectiveness of the parks system.

A conservancy sits outside the city's governance structure and is less subject to changes wrought by elections, political turnover, and budget cycles. As such it has the ability to create a theory of change that exceeds normal political cycles and influence. With the passage of the recent sales tax and the generally higher-than-average sales tax, KC Parks should not expect significant additional support from the municipal revenue stream. It will be critical for the parks to build a case for support among corporations, individuals, and the philanthropic community. Even in cases where city agencies are able to accept outside monies, funders are often reluctant to directly support municipalities.

Truly transformative investments from the philanthropic community require strong alignment between a funder's priorities and the grantee's theory of change or case for support. Often these investments are products of several years of collaboration and cultivation, which is challenging for municipal staff to deliver. In addition, a conservancy's priorities are not constrained by the structure and timeline of a single city department. By positioning the park system as a critical piece of civic infrastructure and a platform for equitable development, the conservancy may organize across multiple areas of impact such as health, youth development, environment, or arts and culture and convene a wider range of mission-driven partnership and funding.

Conservancies are not constrained by municipal structures or regulations. Working in close partnership with the city, they may operate entrepreneurially and identify and develop new sources of investment that would otherwise be inaccessible to the park system. Examples from other cities include the following:

- In-park concessions (bike rental, yoga studio);
- Metered parking revenue on park roads and parkways;
- Catering venues;
- Long-term land leases;
- Events;
- Value capture from surrounding land appreciation; and
- Program fees.

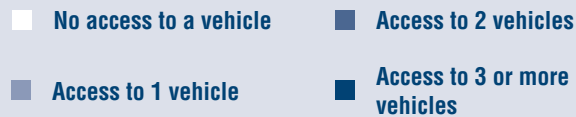
## The Neighborhood Parks Friends Network

Park friends already exist at many neighborhood parks. These friends are engaged neighbors who organize sports leagues, host cleanups, maintain gardens, and act as diligent eyes and ears on the park. Often, they work alone, operating in silos with little formal or informal support. However, through on-the-ground engagement and intentional capacity building, informal friends can be organized into park friends groups—a powerful partner to equitably and transparently connect the community with the park and with the city. Park friends bring their knowledge and social capital to provide guidance to the city and other partners in making decisions about investment, programs, and projects. A park friends group may do many of the following activities:

- Actively connect neighbors to the park and park friends group;
- Organize programs and events that increase the community's engagement with each other and the park;
- Collaboratively plan and prioritize investments in the park;
- Advise the city and partners on neighborhood issues and concerns relative to the park;
- Act as the park's spokesperson through a formal public engagement process, in media, and at events;
- Organize and hold at least one public meeting a year;
- Participate in education, training, and capacity-building activities; and
- Raise funds within the community for programming and activation.

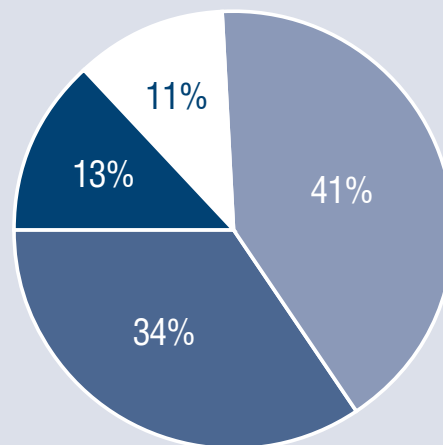
## Need for Mobility

The panel heard throughout the week that access to vehicles was not much of an issue in KCMO. However, this is not true. The KC Bike Plan indicates that nearly 11 percent of households do not have access to a vehicle, and 41 percent have access to only one vehicle. Increasing options such as walking, biking, and public transit access to parks and park facilities is critical.



Sources: KC Bike Plan; ULI.

Percentage of Kansas City Households with Access to Vehicles



The active cultivation and organization of friends groups provides city recognition of a broken feedback loop between park users and the city as a service provider. It also recognizes that neighborhoods have valuable experience and social capital that has not been successfully connected to the public realm. The formalization of a friends group provides critical individual support to neighbors who have been anchors within their communities through additional resources, training, and social connections. As trusted members of the community, these park friends provide not just valuable expertise to the city but can also be important partners as sites negotiate change. Finally, as individual neighborhood parks friends groups are organized and connected through education and trainings, and tours, they provide a powerful champion for parks citywide.

## Implementation

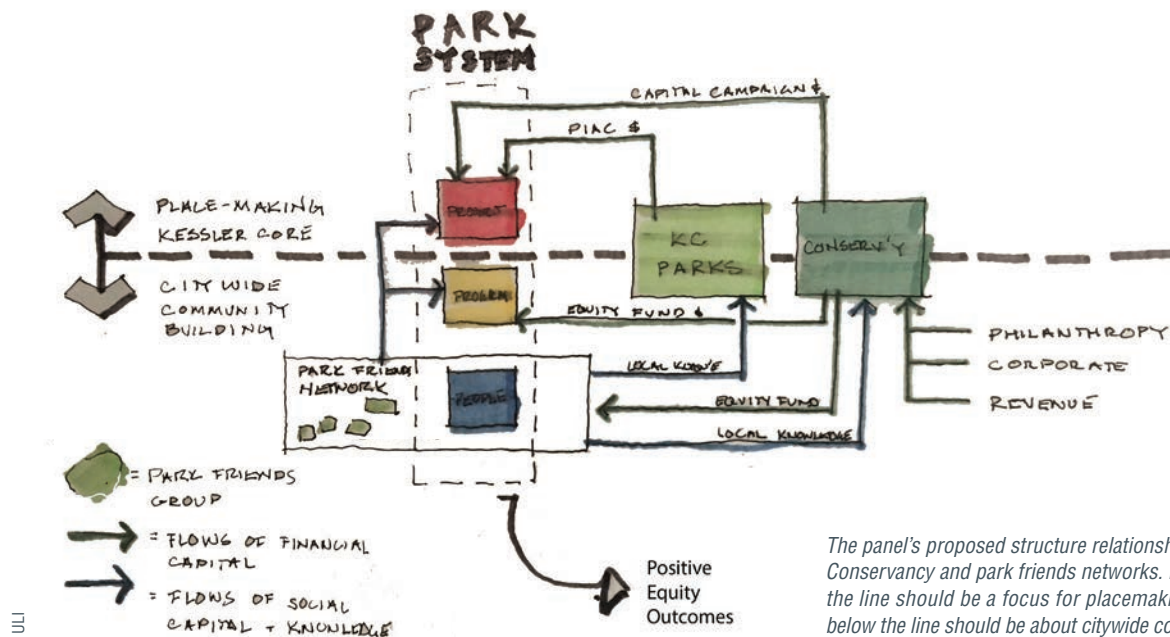
Establishing and fully leveraging the conservancy and neighborhood parks network will strengthen the parks and boulevard system by implementing the following recommendations.

### Separate Cultural Institutions from the Park System

Effective operations and curation of cultural institutions in the 21st century is a separate set of expertise from park operations and management. KCMO should form a museum council made up of the leaders of institutions and members tasked with managing new and proposed monuments and naming. The new council should be tasked with developing a five-year plan for separating the cultural institutions from the operating and management responsibilities of the parks and boulevard system.

### Separate Trail Maintenance and Completion of the MetroGreen Plan from the Park System

KC Parks is often burdened with nearly every project tied to open space or recreation. The panel believes that the MetroGreen Plan should still be implemented but could be done by other organizations. For mountain bike and hiking trails, KC Parks should leverage the organization and instructional knowledge of partners such as Urban Trail Co. by formalizing partnerships, setting network priorities, and investing in work through fee-for-services contracts in the near term. In the longer term, partners should be cultivated to develop a citywide trail conservancy responsible for signage, maintenance, and activation of the network. Cities such as Houston, Texas, have this type of conservancy. Then, the connective network of paved trails should be considered as part of KCMO's mobility system, and DPW should be made responsible for it.



The panel's proposed structure relationship for the KC Parks Conservancy and park friends networks. Everything above the line should be a focus for placemaking, and everything below the line should be about citywide community building.

**Establish a KC Parks Conservancy**

A conservancy should be formed for the parks and boulevard system that equitably builds community citywide through a network of neighborhood parks friends organizations while concentrating its placemaking functions in the historic core of the Kessler system. This would enable more resources to be directed to those areas with the highest need.

In the near term, the KC Parks conservancy should articulate a vision for how it will connect social capital, financial, and political resources with community knowledge and leadership across neighborhoods and be a model for equity. This will enable it to better identify placemaking functions to activate and program parks, convene planning and decision-making processes, and restore historic assets.

In the medium term, the conservancy should identify community-building functions and create an operating plan and memorandums of understanding with KC Parks. This will enable an administration network for park friends citywide to be created, build a citywide volunteer program, and create a communications and marketing program to develop awareness of KC Parks and partners.

Then, longer term, KC Parks should identify and develop revenue generation vehicles around parks and parkland in partnership with KC Parks and park friends groups.

**Build a Network of Park Friends Groups**

The newly established KC Parks conservancy should hire a community liaison who should be responsible to build 12 neighborhood park friends groups in three high-need neighborhoods over the next three years. Through the conservancy, capacity-building trainings, education, and resources should be developed for the park friends groups. Then, longer term, the neighborhood park friends group should be integrated into formal capital and planning processes; at least 50 percent of the citywide parks should be represented by a friends group. This should include large destination parks like Swope and Loose.

**Establish an Endowment Policy**

In recognition that KC Parks ability to secure funds for replacement and maintenance of park capital is limited, the conservancy should establish a maintenance policy for all projects to which it contributes.

**Improve the PIAC Process**

The conservancy and park friends groups should work to improve the PIAC process outcomes for all neighborhood parks. This can be done by the conservancy creating a scorecard that prioritizes equitable and sustainable capital investments in parks. The conservancy then can work with the neighborhood park groups network and KC Parks to identify and prioritize potential PIAC projects. In line with the



## Proposed Distributed Model of Responsibilities

Responsibilities	KC Parks	KC Parks conservancy	Park friends	Museum Council	Trail conservancy	Program partners
Routine maintenance and operations	L					
Extraordinary maintenance		L				
Set vision and priority for park	P	P	P			
Maintain museums and monuments				L		
Operate museums				L		
Maintain trails citywide					L	
Build trail network citywide					L	
Capital planning	L	C	P			
Program parks		C	P			P
Issue permits	L					
Activation and events		L				L
Develop revenue sources		L		L	L	
Raise philanthropic funds		L		L	L	
Convene public realm partners		L	L			
Advocate		C	L	L	L	
Local communication system			L			
Citywide communication system		L				

Source: ULI.

P = partner, L = lead, C = convener.

panel's recommendations regarding maximizing resources, the conservancy could raise matching funds for PIAC projects identified by the neighborhood parks friends network and scoring highly on the capital investment scorecard. Finally, the conservancy and neighborhood friends network could attend public meetings and lobby in support of park-related PIAC projects.

### Activate Parks

KC Parks can treat the parks and boulevard system as a platform for hardware that can be activated and programmed by a range of entities for whom program delivery is part of their core mission. In the near term, KC Parks should map current and potential programs and partners that may activate the park system and where co-investment may be

needed. Then after developing a program evaluation matrix, internal KC Parks funds could be reallocated toward contracting with program partners to support mission-driven service providers.

Longer term, the new KC Parks conservancy may develop internal replicable programs that can be operationalized throughout the neighborhood park friends network.

### Establish a Park Equity Fund

An equity fund should be established to facilitate the priorities and projects of the neighborhood park friends network and measure progress toward equitable park development. This new fund should be administered by the new KC Parks conservancy.



PHOTO: ANGELO M. DE LUCA

## Conclusion

**FUNDAMENTALLY, EQUITY IS A QUESTION OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION.** Many difficult financial decisions will need to be made in the near and longer terms to maximize investments and reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance needs. These decisions are further complicated by the unintended consequences of the park and boulevard system and KCMO's history of racial covenants, redlining, racial steering, urban renewal, and the interstate highway system, all of which have contributed to the establishment and continuation of housing segregation as well as other health and social inequities experienced today by the city's residents of color.

The interview process told the panel that a desire to address these inequities exists within the city. The panel knows that dealing with these challenges will not be done easily, quickly, or by KC Parks alone. This report provides recommendations and examples for ways to more equitably allocate resources.

Now is the time to lead in creating a new 21st-century vision for the parks and boulevard system. The panel fully believes that the system can be used to create a more equitable and restorative KCMO.



# Appendix: Recommendations and Responsible Entities

The following figure includes the primary recommendations by the panel and the responsible implementing entity.

## Implementation Steps

Section	Recommendation	Responsible group
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Work with residents to create healthier neighborhoods by treating parks as health infrastructure.	KC Parks
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Work with residents to coordinate investments around indicators of need, not random allocation of things (that do not add value to existing or future assets).	KC Parks
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Better understand existing social equity activities happening in neighborhoods and citywide and help filter and incorporate them into KC Parks and other municipal partners' work.	KC Parks
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Define what "equitable planning and development" means in the context of KC Parks' work with KCMO's residents, parks, and park assets to create a shared vision for equitable development.	KC Parks
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Establish working teams that correspond to the principles outlined in KC Parks' Business Plan. These teams should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Equity Working Team;</li> <li>• Health and Wellness Working Team;</li> <li>• National Resources Management (Conservation) Working Team; and</li> <li>• Organizational Sustainability Working Team.</li> </ul>	KC Parks
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Conduct a social equity assessment and a procurement assessment.	KC Parks Social Equity Working Team
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Hire an outside consultant to facilitate training and assessments and to facilitate community convenings that create a shared definition of equitable planning and development throughout the neighborhoods so that access to KC Parks planning, programming, and maintenance can be addressed with community buy-in.	KC Parks Social Equity Working Team and Consultant
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Deepen partnership with Health Forward Foundation and KCHD with existing community organizations and residents to create a shared definition of what constitutes equitable health and wellness for recreation planning, programming, and maintenance.	KC Parks Health and Wellness Working Team, Health Forward Foundation, KCHD
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Seek out existing nonprofits working with community groups and residents on issues related to the environment and parks management (e.g., Bridging the Gap).	KC Parks Natural Resource Management Working Team
Equitable Planning and Development at KC Parks	Using business planning principles, KC Parks can focus on community engagement in the six neighborhoods that experience low health outcomes by piloting in the six zip codes with the worst life expectancy, which are Choice Neighborhoods and U.S. Housing and Urban Development Low to Moderate Income Tracts.	KC Parks Organizational Sustainability Working Team



## Implementation Steps (cont.)

Section	Recommendation	Responsible group
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Structure and implement a collaborative process for the citywide capital improvement plan that is consistent with PIAC screening criteria; is consistent with priority-based budget; fosters cross-agency project identification, scoping, and funding; and has rigorous criteria for new projects.	KCMO
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Realign the capital budget to reduce overlapping responsibilities between KC Parks and its sister agencies.	Capital Budget Team (to be formed)
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Colocate other municipal facilities and community amenities on parkland to direct capital resources into and facilitate growth adjacent to existing infrastructure.	KC Parks
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Enter into partnership agreements with entities that have playground and other recreational assets available.	KC Parks
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Establish a landscape typology manual.	KC Parks
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Develop a consistent process for deaccessioning public land.	KCMO
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Require publication of fiscal notes for all capital projects.	OMB
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Restructure golf operations to maximize net revenue.	KC Parks; Department of Public Works
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	Target the areas around parks for investment and redevelopment, focusing on housing, small-scale commercial development, and other uses that would activate the park while catalyzing urban revitalization.	KC Parks Organizational Sustainability Working Team; CDFIs; Housing and Neighborhood Services Department

## Implementation Steps (cont.)

Section	Recommendation	Responsible group
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality	<p>Parks that do not meet the standards of suitability, frontage, and access outlined in the city code should stay under the ownership of the developer or respective homeowners association.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KCMO should take a stronger position in these negotiations to ensure each development is providing bona fide park opportunities rather than further encumbering the park and boulevard system in return for limited public benefit.</li> <li>• The provision of private recreational amenities to serve a single subdivision should not be permitted to substitute for contributing to the broader system.</li> <li>• Future payments-in-lieu should be unrestricted for use by KC Parks for the acquisition, development, or improvement of a public park wherever the greatest need exists, rather than being limited to a certain geography.</li> </ul>	Developer; Homeowners Association; KC Parks; City Planning & Development
Governance and Structure	Position parks as critical civic infrastructure, platforms activated by programming, events, and engagement leading to more equitable and engaged communities.	KC Parks; Conservancy (to be formed)
Governance and Structure	Build upon and strengthen coordination of existing engagement for diversity, leadership, and participation.	Existing neighborhood parks friends groups and a parks friends network (to be formed)
Governance and Structure	Convene and coordinate investment for maximum impact.	Conservancy; neighborhood parks friends network
Governance and Structure	Separate cultural institutions from the park system.	Museum Council (to be formed)
Governance and Structure	Separate trail maintenance and completion of the MetroGreen Plan from the park system.	Partners like Urban Trail Co.; Department of Public Works
Governance and Structure	Establish a trail conservancy.	Trail Conservancy (to be formed)

## Implementation Steps (cont.)

Section	Recommendation	Responsible group
Governance and Structure	<p>Establish a KC Parks Conservancy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate a vision for how it will connect social capital, financial, and political resources with community knowledge and leadership across neighborhoods and be a model for equity.</li> <li>• Identify community-building functions and create an operating plan and memorandums of understanding with KC Parks.</li> <li>• Identify and develop revenue generation vehicles around parks and parkland in partnership with KC Parks and park friends groups.</li> <li>• Develop capacity-building trainings, education, and resources for the park friends groups.</li> </ul>	Conservancy (to be formed)
Governance and Structure	<p>Build a network of park friends groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a community liaison who should be responsible to build 12 neighborhood park friends groups in three high-need neighborhoods over the next three years.</li> <li>• Become integrated into formal capital and planning processes.</li> </ul>	Conservancy (to be formed), Park friends network (to be formed), KC Parks
Governance and Structure	<p>Establish an endowment policy to ensure funds for replacement and maintenance of park capital.</p>	Conservancy (to be formed), KC Parks
Leveraging the Parks and Boulevard System to Address Inequality; Governance and Structure	<p>Improve the PIAC process and create a screening process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a scorecard that prioritizes equitable and sustainable capital investments in parks.</li> <li>• Identify and prioritize potential PIAC projects.</li> <li>• Raise matching funds for PIAC projects identified by the neighborhood parks friends network and scoring highly on the capital investment scorecard.</li> <li>• Attend public meetings and lobby in support of park-related PIAC projects.</li> </ul>	Conservancy (to be formed); Parks friends network (to be formed); KC Parks; PIAC
Governance and Structure	<p>Activate parks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map current and potential programs and partners that may activate the park system and where co-investment may be needed.</li> <li>• After developing a program evaluation matrix, reallocate internal KC Parks funds toward contracting with program partners to support mission-driven service providers.</li> <li>• Develop internal replicable programs that can be operationalized throughout the neighborhood park friends network.</li> </ul>	KC Parks, Conservancy (to be formed), Parks friends network (to be formed)
Governance and Structure	<p>Establish a park equity fund to facilitate the priorities and projects of the neighborhood park friends network and measure progress toward equitable park development.</p>	Conservancy (to be formed)

Source: ULI.



# About the Panel

## Carlton Brown

### Panel Chair

New York, New York

As a principal at Direct Invest, Brown focuses on developing strategies to bring capital markets to disinvested communities to invest in the development of sustainable restorative human settlements. He sees investment in sustainable human settlement as the most important strategy for stemming climate change, adapting to climate change, and creating resilient and equitable communities.

This strategy of sustainable restorative development addresses human social, economic, and cultural development while at the same time preserving environmental resources for future generations while returning a market rate of return for investors. Whereas many believe these are contradictory objectives, Brown's work has continuously pointed the way forward.

Before there was a U.S. Green Building Council with a focus on green housing, Brown was exploring these strategies in the development of low-carbon-footprint affordable housing in economically devastated communities of Brooklyn, New York, and developing mixed-income condominiums in Harlem that were heated and cooled by geothermal extraction and injection. This triple-bottom-line approach has continued to demonstrate that you can do good while doing well.

Brown is spearheading Direct Investment's initiative in helping community-based organizations mine value from their underused real estate assets via sustainable development strategies. The deployment of cost-effective sustainable development practices contributes to bringing value to all markets in which the firm is working. Brown has had a long-term focus for much of his career on developing strategies for creating sustainable restorative human settlement that heals the physical human fabric of communities.

He has been leading Direct Invest in its explorations of strategies to develop "closed loop" triple-bottom-line developments in the "developed northern hemisphere" and in rural sub-Saharan Africa. The closed-loop developments Direct Invest pursues address strategies for adapting to climate change, reducing climate impacts from human settlement, and creating communities in which all people can be self-actualized and share equitably in economic benefits.

## David Abraham

Houston, Texas

Abraham is a scholar of environmental planning and policy, specializing in sustainability planning and performance measurement. His research interests focus on developing sustainability strategies for the enhancement of living places. His research and professional experience include food insecurity planning, health and well-being impacts from the built environment, urban forestry sustainability strategies, resiliency and revitalization community planning, and community performance metrics. He has also had experience with developing consensus-building techniques for public participation/community involvement support for the identification and delineation of planning objectives.

He leads research in the Sustainability Solutions Lab. His work has been featured at workshops, keynote agendas, and conference proceedings throughout the United States and internationally in Ireland, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, and Portugal. Under Abraham's guidance, the research provides hands-on learning opportunities for students in various academic units at Rice University, including the Health Sciences Program, Department of Statistics, the Professional Science Master's Program, the Global Affairs Master's Program, and the Jones School of Business.

Abraham is a senior fellow with the American Leadership Forum. He also serves on the City of Houston Planning Commission, Airport Commission, and the OBO Contract Compliance Board.

## Karen Abrams

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Abrams is the Heinz Endowments' program officer for equitable development, a role that focuses on infusing equity into the foundation's redevelopment funding initiatives in the Pittsburgh region. Since joining the Endowments in 2017, her work has included development of a grant-making portfolio that supports sustainable investments in neighborhood-level projects, as well as city and region-wide initiatives.

She oversees the articulation and implementation of the foundation's vision for a public realm investment strategy. She advances the Endowments' aim of fostering vibrant public spaces throughout the Pittsburgh region where people of difference find themselves in proximity to one another—either anonymously or by intention. Her work considers spatial justice aspects of the public realm, as well as other essential elements including intentional consideration of programming, wellbeing, quality of aesthetics, and diverse participation in planning and use.

In helping advance the Endowments' aim of cultivating a more sustainable, diverse, and inclusive Pittsburgh region, Abrams collaborates with her Endowments grant-making colleagues in supporting the foundation's three strategic areas—creativity, learning, and sustainability—giving particular attention to the work of nonprofits that incorporate two or more of the areas.

Before coming to the Endowments, Abrams was the community and diversity affairs manager at the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) of Pittsburgh. Her responsibilities included ensuring that disaffected residents of Pittsburgh's historically African American neighborhoods were engaged in the decision-making processes of real estate and economic development activities that affected their lives. While at the URA, she initiated the African-American Neighborhoods of Choice research group to attract and retain newly arriving African American residents in Pittsburgh, as well as their Equity Working Group, which entrenched economic justice and inclusion principles into the agency's policies and practices.

A native of Harlem, Abrams holds two BAs from the University of Virginia, one in African and African American studies, and one in history, as well as an MS in sustainable systems from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. She was awarded a Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 2016.

## Kate Humphrey

Detroit, Michigan

Humphrey is the central region director of development in the city of Detroit's Housing and Revitalization Department, focused on leveraging public/private partnerships to promote the development of transformational housing in the city. The department is committed to providing every Detroiter with access to safe, decent, and affordable housing in thriving neighborhoods by making strategic investments and directing policy to drive inclusive growth.

In her role, she oversees the city's participation in mixed-use and residential projects, including both new construction and rehabilitation, in the greater downtown area and central neighborhoods. Humphrey works closely with private developers to connect them with public financing tools, entitlement approvals, and publicly owned land to enable catalytic projects.

Before joining the city of Detroit, she worked as a land use planner at Cooley LLP in Reston, Virginia, where she coordinated the efforts of multidisciplinary consultant teams, developers, and public-sector planning staff to manage zoning applications in the rapidly urbanizing suburbs of Washington, D.C.

Humphrey holds a master's of urban planning and graduate certificate in real estate development from the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan, and a BA from Colby College.

## Emeka Moneme

Washington, D.C.

Moneme serves as senior vice president and managing director of MG Capital for the Menkiti Group, an integrated real estate services company headquartered in the District of Columbia, founded in 2004 with a mission to transform lives, careers, and communities through real estate. The company is dedicated to enhancing the fabric of life in America's urban neighborhoods through the strategic development, management, and sale of residential and commercial property.

He brings his many years of experience as a leader across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors with a track record of leadership, innovation, and forging public/private partnerships. Moneme will use that experience to build out the company's investment and social impact platform.

Most recently, he served as deputy executive director of the Federal City Council, where he managed the transportation and infrastructure portfolio of the organization. Other notable public positions include serving as chief administrative officer for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), director of the DC Department of Transportation, as well as serving on the boards of the regional Transportation Planning Board and WMATA. In addition to these public roles, Moneme was trained as an urban planner and financial analyst. During his private career, he has managed financial and managing consulting teams for both public and private-sector clients on a wide range of management issues, major projects, and financings.

## Bonnie Roy

St. Louis, Missouri

Roy is a partner of SWT Design, a leading landscape architecture, planning, and urban design firm with offices in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Louisville. She has been with SWT Design for over 16 years beginning with an internship. She was elevated to partner in 2011 and leads many of the firm's operational, marketing, and design/planning efforts. As a registered landscape architect and certified planner, her passion for large-scale regional impacts is evident in her design and planning approach, especially her focus on engaging public stakeholder and citizen groups.

She holds a master's of urban design from Washington University—St. Louis and a bachelor's of landscape architecture from Ball State University, graduating both programs with honors. She is an active member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, American Planning Association, and Urban Land Institute. Roy is currently a co-chair of the ULI St. Louis Women's Leadership Initiative.

## Allison Schapker

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Schapker joined the Fairmount Park Conservancy in June 2018. As director of capital projects, she works with partners to deliver dynamic and inspiring projects in Philadelphia's parks and recreation spaces. Trained as an architect and landscape architect, Schapker brings over 15 years of experience working with mission-driven organizations to author a place-based vision that inspires investment and maximizes impact. She has worked on parks projects in Louisville, Baltimore, and London. Previously she led the planning and design of Lower Venice Island, a waterfront park and stormwater management site in Manayunk. Most recently she worked with Arizona State University on a transformation of the football stadium into a year-round Community Union.

She has a master's in architecture from the University of Cincinnati and is a member of the Urban Land Institute. Her interest is to connect infrastructure, ecology, and design with the people, programs, and finances that will sustain them.







Urban Land Institute  
2001 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-4948  
[uli.org](http://uli.org)