

THE GREEN IMPACT ZONE OF MISSOURI: AN ANALYSIS
OF PLACE-BASED INVESTMENT

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THE GREEN IMPACT ZONE OF MISSOURI: AN ANALYSIS OF
PLACE-BASED INVESTMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Green Impact Zone of Missouri operated in Kansas City, Missouri from 2009 until 2014 as a national model for place-based investment. Missouri Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II is credited with pioneering the initiative, which was overseen for five years by the Kansas City metropolitan-area regional planning organization, the Mid-America Regional Council. During those five years, the Green Impact Zone directed about \$166 million dollars into a 150-square block area from 39th Street to 51st Street, including Troost and Prospect avenues as well as Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard. The money came largely from federal funding made available in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and went towards neighborhood infrastructure and investments in human capital, with an emphasis on environmental sustainability. The Green Impact Zone was designed to be highly visible, and it benefited to this end from public support from then-President Barack Obama and other White House personnel. When the initiative ultimately shut down in 2014 due to a lack of funding, it did so quietly, receiving much less fanfare in its final days than it did in its early days. The reputation of the Green Impact Zone is unclear at the present moment;

although it was successful in raising significant investment in an area that badly needed it, it missed out on major sources of funding. Revitalization of these neighborhoods is a gradual process, and it remains to be seen how much the areas will change in the years following the Green Impact Zone's efforts.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled “The Green Impact Zone of Missouri: An Analysis of Place-Based Investment,” presented by Kevin Wickman, candidate for the Master of Science degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Lastly, to Grace Fourman I'd like to propose a toast. I finally did it!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I moved to Kansas City in 2011, I already had been introduced to The Green Impact Zone of Missouri, an experimental initiative that began in 2009 with boundaries that stopped only a few blocks from where I had chosen to live. My introduction came through headlines such as “Kansas City’s Green Impact Zone – A Vision for 21st Century Urban Renewal” (Buffa, 2009), which seemed to promise a revolutionary model of urban renewal that would transform a 150-square-block area of Kansas City from struggling to sustainable. The goal of this initiative was to invest heavily in neighborhood infrastructure (public transportation, sidewalk and road renovations, neighborhood community centers, home weatherization, and so forth) and to bring the emerging “green” economy to an area of central Kansas City that had suffered decades of disinvestment.

None of this would have seemed possible before President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA or Recovery Act) on February 17, 2009. One of the signature programs of Obama’s first term in office, this act was a \$787-billion-dollar economic stimulus package. A significant portion of the money allotted to this act was destined for so-called “shovel-ready” projects, with an emphasis placed on sustainably minded, community-focused projects. The Green Impact Zone of Missouri was designed to reflect that type of focus, taking on the type of projects that the Recovery Act favored.

Congressman Emmanuel Cleaver II of Missouri’s Fifth District oversaw the creation of the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, a non-profit organization that could apply for, receive,

and distribute funding that was available through the Recovery Act. His experience had taught him that even in a mid-size metropolis such as Kansas City, when investments get spread around evenly across the city, there is little measurable effect. In contrast with this way of doing things, his vision was to create an organization that would operate in a relatively small part of the city. With a smaller footprint, resources could go farther, and the Congressman believed that this concentration of resources would yield more significant results than if the same resources were sprinkled across the city or metropolitan region.

As the headlines indicated, the Green Impact Zone of Missouri was well received by locals and national figures alike. Perhaps the highest profile endorsement of the initiative came from President Obama himself, who mentioned the Green Impact Zone in his speech on using sustainability as a tool for job creation and economic development, given at Smith Electric Vehicles in Kansas City, Missouri on July 8 2010 (White House, 2010b). Early in the initiative's existence, the program was regularly praised by White House personnel, such as White House Office of Urban Affairs Director Adolfo Carron, Jr. and Federal Transit administration Deputy Administrator Therese McMillan. In the eyes of many in Kansas City and likely many beyond, the Green Impact Zone was as much the work of President Obama as it was of Congressman Emmanuel Cleaver II.

Introduction to the Green Impact Zone

In February 2009, Congressman Cleaver announced his idea of the Green Impact Zone, a 150-square-block area in Kansas City, Missouri's east side. This area, as shown in Figure 1, is bounded by Troost Avenue to the west, Prospect and Swope avenues on the east,

39th Street to the north, and 51st Street to the south, and covers parts of five neighborhoods:
Historic Manheim Park, 49-63/Troostwood, Ivanhoe, Blue Hills, and Town Fork Creek.

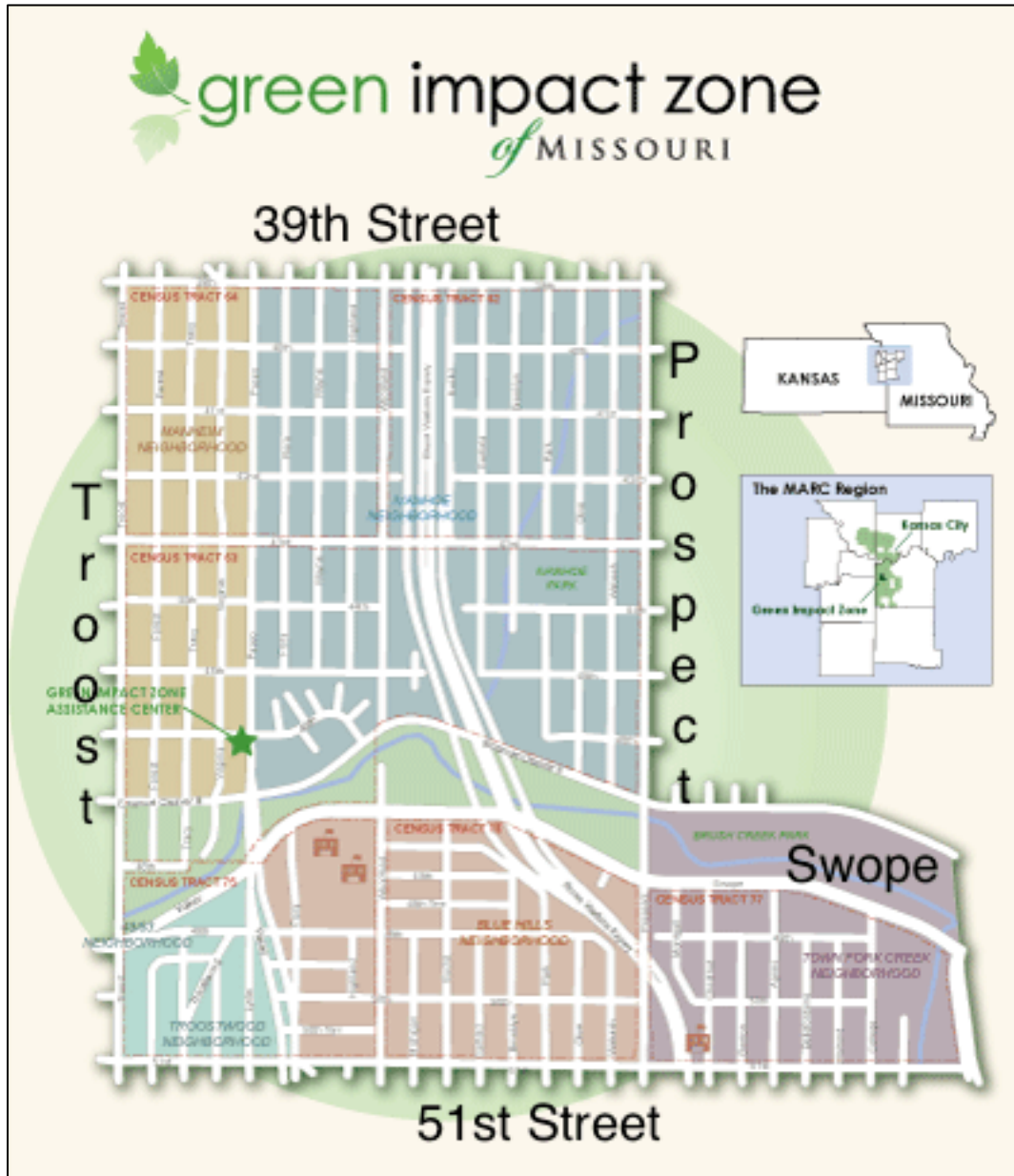


Figure 1. Green Impact Zone Neighborhood Map. Green Impact Zone neighborhoods by map color: Historic Manheim Park in Orange, 49-63/Troostwood in Sky Blue, Ivanhoe in Blue, Blue Hills in Brick Red, and Town Fork Creek in Purple. Source: Adapted From Green Impact Zone of Missouri. (2013b, May). *Lessons learned from outreach and engagement practices from the Green Impact Zone Initiative*. [Green Impact Zone & EnergyworksKC white paper].

This location, which is roughly at the center of Kansas City, Missouri, is home to a complicated history: while it shows the scars of decades of disinvestment and racial segregation, it was once home to some of the most glamorous streets and boulevards in Kansas City's rich history. For nearly 100 years, located less than one mile west of Troost Avenue (the western boundary of the Green Impact Zone) the Country Club Plaza has existed as a historical landmark and upscale shopping center and residential neighborhood. While a century has hardly diminished the appeal of the Country Club Plaza, over time the neighborhoods east of Troost have experienced a steady decline in investment. Today, despite their history and such close proximity, Troost Avenue and the neighborhoods to its east bear little resemblance to the Country Club Plaza and its surrounding neighborhoods. Perhaps the only similarity that history has not been able to erode is Brush Creek: Ignorant of all dividing lines, Brush Creek runs through the center of the Country Club Plaza district and the Green Impact Zone, physical proof and a symbolic reminder of how closely related these two areas actually are.

Looking inside of the area known as the Green Impact Zone, one finds that the present-day geography remains as complicated as its history. Before going any further, it should be established now that despite 150 square blocks being a relatively small area for such a high-profile project, it is large enough to allow for a lot of variability across the Green Impact Zone. Although most of this thesis discusses the Green Impact Zone as if it were a homogenous area, there are noticeable differences across the 150 square blocks. That being said, the Green Impact Zone area could be characterized overall as mostly low income, with a concentrated minority population, and lacking in many amenities usually present in thriving

neighborhoods, such as many available jobs, well-maintained infrastructure, and convenient access to public transportation. This is an area that, relative to the city as a whole, has higher-than-average rates of crime, especially violent crime. While each of these neighborhoods had its challenges, they had strengths that made them appealing for an experiment such as the Green Impact Zone. Cleaver recognized the neighborhoods for their strong leadership with an active grassroots community. Rather than move elsewhere, most of the residents are invested in their community and have a strong desire to see their neighborhood grow.

The reasons that Congressman Cleaver settled on this 150 square-block, five-neighborhood area on Kansas City, Missouri's east side are not entirely clear. One could speculate that because the Green Impact Zone was, by its nature, supposed to be an area of the city that was in need of the sizable investment that Cleaver was planning, he eliminated the more affluent parts of the city. Beyond limiting his search for potential locations to distressed parts of the city, Cleaver was likely interested in putting the Green Impact Zone in an area where he thought it could be successful. For a grassroots, community-based project like this one, success would inevitably rely heavily on strong community leadership and an active network of residents, which these neighborhoods had. He may have shown preference for a part of the city that would be more visible to all residents, hoping that if the project area was seen on a regular basis, it would likely increase its chances of being successful, because generating awareness across the city would be a requirement before local investment could be relied upon. Also, Cleaver likely was interested in capitalizing on an area that already had some forward momentum, because individual projects are less likely to receive attention than a series of related, complementary investments.

Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the full scope of the Green Impact Zone initiative and to evaluate the Green Impact Zone model as a national prototype for place-based urban stimulus. To do this, the thesis examines the philosophical and historical precedents on which the Green Impact Zone was based, the history of Kansas City with special attention given to the area that would become the Green Impact Zone, and the complete history of the Green Impact Zone.

Primary source data for the thesis came largely from regular, periodically published progress reports from the Green Impact Zone. Other primary source documents included websites, local newspaper and magazine coverage, and personal interviews conducted by the author during the first half of 2016. Interviewees were assured anonymity in exchange for greater honesty and transparency in their answers. Their relationships to the Green Impact Zone varied widely, from residents living in the area, to area organizers, politicians, and even members of the Green Impact Zone initiative itself. Secondary sources, including books and journal articles, helped to put these primary sources into context and provide a greater historical and philosophical perspective on the Green Impact Zone.

Introduction to the Green Impact Zone Model

I became familiar with the inner workings of the Green Impact Zone when, in 2012, I began a student internship with the Zone. This was an opportunity to put into practice my studies in University of Missouri-Kansas City's Department of Geosciences with an organization that was doing community work near my home. The Green Impact Zone's combination of environmental awareness, place-based development strategies, and socially

progressive policies made it a natural fit for the type of initiatives that I hoped a Masters in Urban Geography would lead me to. It was not until the Green Impact Zone initiative ended in 2014 that I decided the history of this unique experiment needed to be documented, and the model that the Green Impact Zone was promoting needed to be evaluated.

Even though the Green Impact Zone had officially closed its doors when I started work on this thesis, I knew that attempting to label it a success or a failure would be premature, because it would take years before many of the effects of the initiative could be measured. It would be much more valuable, then, for this thesis to focus on the process of creating and operating the Green Impact Zone and to examine more closely what the experience of the Green Impact Zone was like for those who went through it. In the spirit of the Green Impact Zone, which always aimed to put the neighborhood residents at the center of everything it undertook, I thought this thesis should also put the spotlight on the people who made the Green Impact Zone possible. That is why over the course of 2016 I corresponded with people who engaged with the Green Impact Zone at all levels: residents of the neighborhoods, neighborhood leaders, Green Impact Zone employees, people holding elected office in Kansas City, and private-sector leaders working within the boundaries of the Green Impact Zone. Although I contacted 20 people to ask their opinions, I was only able to engage with 12 of them. They spoke with me on a variety of topics pertaining to the Green Impact Zone's formation, model, successes and failures, and the legacy of the Green Impact Zone.

Through these discussions and the other work of this thesis, my perceptions of the Green Impact Zone changed. The model that was once heralded as a revolutionary new

approach to community development started to seem like less of a departure from other programs as it was being developed and implemented. In many ways, the Green Impact Zone looked like a new attempt at a well-established model of place-based development. The Green Impact Zone model, like effective place-based models of the past, takes a holistic approach to changing the fortunes of a neighborhood by simultaneously addressing multiple causes of disinvestment. From the Green Impact Zone’s website: “Successful community redevelopment requires that the multiple causes of disinvestment be tackled simultaneously. Investment in the physical infrastructure of the community cannot bring about transformation without also investing in the human fabric of the community” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016c, para. 4).

If there was anything revolutionary about the Green Impact Zone model, it was the number of different people and organizations that were represented throughout the process. In many ways, the Green Impact Zone’s history begins in the Oval Office with President Obama’s vision for a place-based, urban-neighborhood-focused economic recovery. Then, the leadership that Congressman Emmanuel Cleaver II showed in anticipating the opportunity that was being afforded in this critical “federal moment” allowed neighborhood leaders to participate in the shaping of the Green Impact Zone’s goals, values, and initiatives from a very early stage. Residents were engaged early in this process too, which ensured that the Green Impact Zone represented the interests and concerns of the residents from day one, something that few federal-, state-, or even city-initiated programs can claim. The Green Impact Zone continued to show a commitment to putting the residents’ needs first throughout the process, going to great lengths to make sure that anyone living inside its boundaries knew

what work was being done and that anyone who wanted to have his or her voice heard had an opportunity to participate. The history of the initiative also shows that the Zone's leaders took this input seriously and were willing to change their priorities so that they matched the changing interests that the residents expressed.

Thesis Organization

Chapter 2, titled Literature Review, surveys the literature required for an evaluation of the Green Impact Zone, which includes the discussion in urban policy over people vs. place-based development, the history of federal urban policy in America (especially as it relates to concentrated poverty, racial segregation, and place-based approaches to tackling these problems), and the intersection of geographical theory and social justice. Chapter 3, titled A History of Inequality in Kansas City, examines the historical context of racial segregation and spatial discrimination in Kansas City. This history of unjust policies led to the neighborhood conditions that the Green Impact Zone was designed to counter. Chapter 4 is called The Green Impact Zone of Missouri and is a historical documentation of Green Impact Zone's timeline, including its formation, sources of funding, programs, and investments. It gives the reader the opportunity to see the complete history of the Green Impact Zone and compares the goals that the Green Impact Zone began with to the actual accomplishments of the initiative. Chapter 5, called Reflections on the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, is inspired by conversations and interviews with individuals who participated in the Green Impact Zone. Much of this chapter is composed of direct quotes from these conversations, and the rest is a summarizing or rephrasing of thoughts shared during these conversations. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter about the totality of the Green

Impact Zone. It summarizes the major findings of the thesis and suggests additional research that could be done on the topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1933, President of the United States of America Franklin D. Roosevelt spent his first 100 days in office producing a record number of bills for Congress to review. The New Deal, Roosevelt's comprehensive plan to pull America out of the Great Depression, cost about \$50 billion in federal expenditures from 1933 to 1940 (Powell, 2009).

When Barack Obama took office on January 20, 2009, the United States of America was in the biggest economic crisis since Roosevelt had been president. Three weeks after his inauguration, Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Referred to as the "New New Deal" by presidential historian Michael Grunwald, the ARRA had a lot in common with the legislation from Roosevelt's time in office (Grunwald, 2012).

In an interview with David Plotz, Grunwald stated,

The Obama team thought a lot about the New Deal while they were putting the stimulus together, but times have changed since the New Deal...Christina Romer, the Depression scholar who led Obama's Council of Economic Advisers (2008-2009), kept reminding colleagues that the Roosevelt administration hired four million Americans in the winter of 1934. (Plotz, 2012, para. 8)

The Obama administration understood how unworkable a number like that is to achieve today. A project such as the Hoover Dam, which employed roughly 5,000 Americans in the 1930s, today would only employ "a few hundred workers with heavy equipment" (Plotz, 2012, para. 8).

The President elected to direct the money (now estimated to be about \$831 billion over the period of 2009-2019) towards purportedly "shovel ready projects," or, in other words, a project that was ready to begin within 90 days of funding approval (Congressional

Budget Office, 2012, p. 1). This approach matched the administration’s goal to “leverage investments by focusing resources in targeted places and drawing on the compounding effect of well-coordinated action” (White House, 2009, para. 3).

In other words, the White House’s strategy for generating employment and economic recovery was based on the value of timely, effective place-based investment. The Green Impact Zone of Missouri was created out of this commitment to place-based solutions. The footprint of the Green Impact Zone was parts of five distressed inner-city Kansas City neighborhoods that make up the 150-square-block area from 39th Street to the north, 51st Street to the south, Troost Avenue to the west, and Prospect Avenue and Swope Parkway to the east. This initiative was created as a direct response to the announcement of the ARRA and was framed by proponents as “Kansas City, Missouri’s community plan for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” (“Green Impact Zone of Missouri: Kansas City, Missouri’s Community Plan for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009,” n.d.). Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, II (D-MO, Fifth District), who is credited with initiating the idea of the Green Impact Zone, hoped that it would come to be known as “the Obama administration’s Poster Child as a stimulus on steroids” (“Green Impact Zone of Missouri: Kansas City, Missouri’s Community Plan,” n.d.).

Concentrated Poverty, People, and Place

In popular American culture, there is an accepted image of the blighted central city surrounded by wealthy, white suburbs. This simplistic image is problematic, but it also has value. The makeup of central cities and their nearby suburbs are constantly changing, especially recently. More Americans are choosing to live in central cities than in recent

decades: according to 2013 Census Data summarized in *USA Today*, “The nation’s metro areas grew by about 2.3 million to 269.9 million people” and “About three in four metro areas gained population between 2012 and 2013—of 381, only 92 lost population” (Toppo & Overberg, 2014 para. 13-14). According to William H. Frey, Senior Fellow of Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institute, for each of the last three years, cities with populations exceeding 250,000 grew at rates exceeding 1 percent—far higher than their average annual rate of 0.49 percent over the 2000-2010 decade. He also pointed out that when comparing the cities to their suburbs, the previous decades’ trend of greater growth in the suburbs has recently reversed. In 2012-2013, 19 of the 51 major metropolitan areas showed faster growth in the primary city than in the suburbs (Frey, 2014).

Although the overall makeup of American downtowns may be changing, the image of a blighted area surrounded by affluence may still be an accurate portrait of where many poor Americans live. According to Alan Berube, Carey Nadeau, and Elizabeth Kneebone (2011),

After declining in the 1990s, the population in extreme-poverty neighborhoods—where at least 40% of individuals live below the poverty line—rose by one-third from 2000 to 2005-09. By the end of the period, 10.5% of poor people nationwide lived in such neighborhoods, up from 9.1% in 2000, but still well below the 14.1% rate in 1990. (para. 3)

In Kansas City, the number of people living in extreme poverty tracts increased from 16,450 in 2005 to 52,030 in 2009; according to the same paper, the 2009 concentrated poverty rate in Kansas City’s city limits was 20.5% (Berube et al., 2011).¹ Concentrated poverty is not limited to urban centers either:

¹ Extreme-Poverty Tracts are defined as census tracts with poverty rates of 40% and over. Concentrated Poverty Rate is defined as the share of the poor population living in extreme poverty tracts. Source: Brookings Institution analysis of 2005-09 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

The population in extreme-poverty neighborhoods rose more than twice as fast in suburbs as in cities from 2000 to 2005-09. The same is true of poor residents in extreme-poverty tracts, who increased by 41% in suburbs, compared to 17% in cities. However, poor people in cities remain more than four times as likely to live in concentrated poverty as their suburban counterparts. (Berube et al., 2011)

Kansas City area suburbs didn't suffer from much poverty during the study years; only one census tract in the suburbs was an extreme poverty tract compared to 28 in the Kansas City city limits, and the concentrated poverty rate was only 1.5% in the suburbs between 2005 and 2009 (Berube et al., 2011).

Having established that poverty is unevenly distributed across communities in the United States, it might seem logical that the most direct way to assist residents living in these areas is to assist these areas themselves. Not so, say many in the field of community development, who argue against these place-based programs in favor of assistance going directly to those individuals in need, who then are free or even encouraged to relocate to more middle-class parts of the city. The debate between place-based and people-based income redistribution is considered to be one of the oldest debates within community development (Crane & Manville, 2008).

Although elements of this debate likely go back further, the first scholar to use the phrase "place prosperity vs. people prosperity" was Louis Winnick, a housing economist with the Ford Foundation. In his paper, "Place Prosperity vs. People Prosperity: Welfare Considerations in the Geographic Redistribution of Economic Activity," Winnick (1966) compared the strengths and weaknesses of place-based with people-based policies. He saw a necessary dichotomy "between the ideal of improving the welfare of deserving people as individuals, *regardless of where they live*, and the ideal of improving the welfare of *groups*

of deserving people defined by their spatial proximity in ‘places’” (italics in original) (Winnick, as cited in Bolton, 1992, p. 187). These differing ideologies yield different redistribution mechanisms; the people-based policies utilize direct transfer of payments. This method also allows recipients the freedom to move without losing aid. Place-based policies, on the other hand, invest in an area’s infrastructure using grants, subsidies, or expenditures in human capital (Bolton, 1992). Winnick (1966) ultimately came down against place-based policies, calling them “at best... clumsy, expensive, and often inequitable devices” (p. 280). Put simply, Winnick believed that because places are hardly ever homogeneous, investing in a place will result in some of the money going to individuals who are less deserving.

The criticism of place-based policies remains very similar even today. The most well-known “anti-place-based” scholar of the last decade is Edward Glaeser, a Harvard economist, who argues against investing money in cities such as New Orleans and Buffalo (2005, 2007). In the case of New Orleans, he argues that the federal government should be insuring the people who live somewhere, and not the place itself. So, rather than spending \$200 billion on infrastructure, he would rather see residents receive \$200,000 each to either rebuild or relocate. New Orleans, according to Glaeser, has been declining and its people have been mired in poverty for decades; its port and pipelines cannot support the workforce of a large city, and \$200 billion is unlikely to change that. His view on Buffalo’s future is similarly grim: too much money, argues Glaeser, has already been spent on Buffalo, New York, and the median family income in 2007 was less than 60% of the nationwide figure of \$55,000. He argues that Buffalo once benefited from its proximity to water and to New York City, but these advantages are no longer valuable enough to keep the city afloat. Changing technology,

declining human capital, and an unwelcoming climate have also contributed to Buffalo's decline.

According to Randall Crane and Michael Manville, urban planning professors at UCLA, Glaeser's arguments against the use of place-based programs fall into three main categories: targeting, coverage, and mobility (Crane & Manville, 2008). Problems of *targeting* are problems in which "place-oriented strategies invest resources [with] no guarantee that the resources actually reach distressed people" (p. 4). In other words, he argues that resources often end up going to non-poor residents. *Coverage* deals with "what proportion of the poor or unemployed is helped by the intervention?" Crane and Manville summarize this argument by explaining that it is quite likely that targeting one neighborhood comes at the expense of another neighborhood that may be home to many equally poor residents. The third concept, *mobility*, states that rewarding people for staying in an impoverished area is a contradiction. Glaeser sees place-based policies as promoting a situation in which someone receives aid for remaining somewhere "that does not serve his or her interests." This line of reasoning leads to the criticism that "at its worst, a place-based policy encourages people to stay when they might be better off going" (Crane & Manville, 2008, p. 4).

Evaluating the values of place-based and people-based policies becomes more difficult when considering "the dual nature of community economic development" write Crane and Manville (2008, p. 2). Most people understand that individuals' well-being is partially attributable to the well-being of their neighborhood. Treating an individual's lack of "adequate private resources such as food, job skills, jobs, inexpensive transportation,

affordable housing, or adequate income” is most directly done through direct transfer payments to said individual. If the only goal of a policy is to provide resources to an ailing individual or household, well executed people-based programs provide more return on investments (Crane & Manville, 2008, p. 2).

Place, however, plays a large role in why generations of people are trapped in poverty. According to Crane and Manville (2008), “lack of [individual] resources may be the main problem of low-income persons, but it is not their only problem. Their neighborhoods also tend to lack resources, as evidenced by neglected infrastructure, underperforming schools, and insufficient police protection” (p. 2). They continue,

Thus a second broad category of community development challenges is characterized by spatial market failures, where specific places experience underinvestment and inadequate provision of spatial public goods, including safety, education, transit, community identity, political networks, and the spatial externalities of geographically linked housing and labor markets. (Crane & Manville, 2008, p. 2)

These considerations force policymakers and urban theorists to consider the possibility that there are two somewhat separate, albeit complementary, issues concurrently holding people in poverty. Direct transfers, or in other words, people-based policies, could represent a comprehensive solution “if the individual recipients simply move to places with better public services. But not all individuals will want or be able to do this” (Crane & Manville, 2008, p. 3).

Outside of the great work of Crane and Manville, many others have constructed arguments that favor place-based policies based on “second best” and “public-goods” arguments. Second-best situations are premised around the notion that place-based aid is the best available way to provide assistance because the ideal option is infeasible. If we are

comparing two policies of providing aid to people in poverty, it is often easier and cheaper to give aid to people in a specific area than it is to attempt to identify every individual who qualifies for aid. Next, a public good is a non-excludable and non-rivalrous good, meaning that it is not possible to prevent people from access to this good (non-excludable), nor will one person's use of the good hinder another's use of the good (non-rivalrous). Public-goods arguments, therefore, argue that effective place-based programs invest in infrastructure that everyone has access to, which will benefit a larger population than individual aid would (Crane & Manville, 2008, pp. 5-6).

Although both the second-best and public-goods arguments are valid, there are more nuanced cases to be made for place-based policies as well. Roger Bolton (1992), an Emeritus Professor of Economics at Williams College, recognized that “a sense of community in a specific geographical setting... represents valuable capital” (p. 188). He drew directly from earlier works by Gordon L. Clark (Clark & Gertler, 1983), economic and environmental geographer at Oxford University, that argued against forms of aid that “forced people to migrate by putting them into situations where they have no real choice but to move” (Bolton, 1992, p. 192). When we invest in a place, we are helping to preserve and even promote a sense of community. This sense of community, in turn, drives people to commit time and money to maintaining and improving their community. Policies that promote sense of place should be encouraged, and policies that undermine community ties should be avoided.

The National Research Council et al. (2002) oversaw a study called *Community and Quality of Life: Data Needs for Informed Decision Making*, with the purpose of identifying indicators of livability in a given place and developing ways of using data to measure these

indicators. In the chapter titled “The Importance of Place and Connectedness,” they discuss how community can arise, the complicated relationship between place and space, and why a place benefits from a strong sense of community:

On the other hand, in many places a strong sense of community *does* develop. Often it arises from people’s convictions about what the place is *not* and where it is not, as well as what it *is* (Allen et al., 1998, p. 82). This is an example of a more general principle that aspects of the unique and specific character of a place do not depend solely on the internal history of that place but also on the relations between that place and other places. The character of a place results from “a distinct *mixture* [italics in original] of wider and more local social relations,” so that an understanding of sense of place “can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond” (Massey, 1993, p. 68). . . . A strong sense of community, often considered an essential part of a sense of place, is a form of social capital and sometimes an important positive element in livability (Bolton, 1992). (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2002, pp. 66-67)

Without referencing Roger Bolton or Gordon L. Clark, the late John O. Calmore, a law professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, also argued against policies that result in the fragmentation of existing communities. Somewhat surprisingly, Calmore was writing to express his displeasure towards seemingly liberal policies designed to encourage racial integration. He wrote that policies that use aid to encourage relocation “fail to see the importance of maintaining a centralized black community” (Calmore, 1992, p. 1494). He favored “spatial equality,” which “focuses on opportunity and circumstances within black communities and demands that both be improved, enriched, and equalized” (Calmore 1992, p. 1495). Calmore’s essay recognized the same value in a sense of place that Bolton argued for, and Calmore concluded that by policymakers overlooking the value of place-based programs, some Americans (mostly minorities) have inadequate access to a neighborhood that can provide them a sense of community.

One can hear the similarities between the statements made by Calmore and Bolton, and the earlier observations made by Crane and Manville that not all individuals will be able to, nor will they want to, move to a location simply because it offers superior services and facilities. This point, which is critical to understanding the value of effective place-based policies (including the Green Impact Zone of Missouri), was perhaps made best by the late Edward Soja, a geographer who for many years was an urban planning professor at the University of California at Los Angeles. In his recent work *Seeking Spatial Justice* (2010) (a book which features prominently throughout this thesis), Soja acknowledges the terrible role that segregation has played in the creation and continuation of injustice, but he then writes, “again, as with all forms of locational discrimination, the issue is complicated by the interplay of endogenous and exogenous influences and by the complex relations between *geographies of choice and geographies of privilege*” (Italics are Soja’s) (Soja, 2010, p. 55).

He expounds:

Not all examples of residential segregation are entirely unjust. To some degree, residential segregation can be voluntary and beneficial, with people of similar background choosing to live together for many different purposes, from creating identity and community to eating preferred food and obtaining other forms of nourishment and cultural sustenance to helping new arrivals to find jobs and housing. Segregation becomes a problem, however, when it is rigidly imposed from above as a form of subjugation and control . . . or when it emerges less intentionally as an oppressive by-product of unregulated “freedoms” of choice operating within persistent spatial structures of advantage. (Soja, 2010, p. 55)

He concludes his remarks on this topic:

Rather than being inherently characterized as good or bad, they need to be seen contextually as arising from underlying spatial structures and structurings of locational advantage and disadvantage. It is the task of theoretically informed spatial practice to bring these structures of privilege, whether based on race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, disability, or any other form of hierarchical control and

domination, more clearly and cogently to the surface, to greater public awareness. (Soja, 2010, pp. 55-56)

In no way do I intend to downplay the disastrous effects of racial segregation in Kansas City or elsewhere. However, people should not be so determined to acknowledge the harm of segregation that they dismiss outright the potential value of voluntary residential-association with people like themselves. When a place-based initiative (such as the Green Impact Zone) is at its best, it is operating with a thorough understanding of the desires and feelings of the residents it represents. Often, one of the first (and most important) steps in addressing concentrated poverty is capitalizing on residents' emotional investment in the fate of their community. Furthermore, only place-based initiatives, not people-based initiatives, are equipped to bring these discriminatory structures of privilege to greater public awareness. These points, arguably, represent the greatest weakness of relying entirely on people-based policies; people-based policies have not shown an acute understanding of the power of identity and community. At worst, direct transfers such as housing vouchers offer recipients two undesirable outcomes—displacement or disenfranchisement (or perhaps both)—and too often, even good people-based programs do nothing to capitalize on and promote the transformative potential of community.

Federal Urban Policy

Although the history of Federal urban policy does not often contain the most effective examples of either people- or place-based policies, it does address the deteriorated conditions of American cities and the conditions that necessitate the debate between people- and place-based policies. Throughout the last 50 years, American presidents have adopted policies that

vacillated between endorsements of people-based urban policies, place-based urban policies, and virtually complete neglect of urban centers.

In the wake of riots in Los Angeles and Chicago (in 1965 and 1966, respectively), and before riots in Newark (in 1967), President Lyndon Johnson in 1966 formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders with the purpose of understanding what could be done to reduce the risk of future rioting. This Commission produced one report, in which it identified segregation, ghettos, and feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness as “prime components of the ‘explosive mixture’” (United States, National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 10). The Commission declared that the only acceptable course of action was one that “combines ghetto enrichment with programs designed to encourage integration of substantial numbers of Negroes into the society outside the ghetto” (United States, National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 19).

In response to this report and the rioting in major cities, Johnson strengthened the Department of Housing and Urban Development by giving it the authority to prosecute discriminatory housing practices as identified in the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (also known as the Fair Housing Act). The Fair Housing Act, along with The Model Cities Program (1966-1974), constituted the majority of Johnson’s federal urban policy (Schechter, 2011, p. 1). They “sought to make over blighted urban neighborhoods by directing funds to demonstration projects” using “federal partnerships, primarily with community groups” (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 5). By focusing too much on the perceived deterioration of minority areas of cities, these programs failed to comprise a comprehensive urban policy.

The Nixon and Ford administrations foretold the urban policy that would exist throughout the 1980s and up through today. Their administrations downplayed the role that federal policy plays in the success or failure of cities, arguing that the problems in cities simply cannot be solved by Washington. Urban policy focusing on central cities was abandoned in favor of policies that spread urban grants over a much broader area, including the suburbs. “Eventually, Nixon abandoned any specifically urban approach to policymaking for a ‘national growth’ strategy” (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 5). According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD.gov, 2014),

on August 22, 1974, President Gerald R. Ford signed a law creating one of HUD’s hallmark programs – the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 merged seven individual competitive grant programs into a block grant providing local communities the flexibility to decide for themselves how best to meet their own community development needs. (para. 1)

Although this program has been very successful, investing \$144 billion to activities such as providing community resources and low-cost housing, this money was not limited to urban communities, nor was it limited to distressed communities.

President Jimmy Carter saw declining cities and regions as a critical issue, and he worked to pioneer the nation’s first comprehensive urban agenda. Conservative Congressional resistance to Carter’s policies made its implementation difficult. The *Urban America in the Eighties* report for the Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties declared that “government should not squander resources in a futile attempt to counter the market’s strain toward efficiency by promoting economic development and growth in distressed central cities” (Eisinger, 1985, p. 14). The report advocated the removal of all federal place-based programs, including “economic development, community development,

public facilities investment, housing, transportation, and development planning” (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 6). What legislation Carter was able to push through, however, ended up looking similar to the Johnson administration’s urban initiatives: money directly channeled to urban areas experiencing the most distress.

When President Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, he did for cities what the conservatives had been trying to make Carter do: nothing that would require federal investment of tax dollars. Referred to as “benign neglect,” this federal policy of removing aid while simultaneously providing extensive tax breaks to private investment was the beginning of a neoliberal urban policy that has dominated federal government policies ever since. Under Reagan, direct aid to cities dropped from 28% to 17% and categorical grants were cut by 25% (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 6). Aside from working to cut spending, Reagan’s central urban policy was the creation of Enterprise Zones (EZs). Based on the belief that poverty can be alleviated by attracting more private enterprise to a distressed area, EZs are place-based policies that offer major subsidies to any business that locates in a designated area. EZs have been criticized since their introduction for guaranteeing that “the most certain gains accrue to those least in need, while the least certain gains accrue to those most in need” (Crane & Manville, 2008, p. 4).

After cities had suffered eight years of benign neglect from the Reagan administration, George H.W. Bush became president in 1989 and changed little regarding urban policy. In 1992 when the Rodney King Riots broke out in Los Angeles, there was hope that Bush would be forced to develop and promote a more proactive urban agenda. On

November 1, 1992, *The Houston Chronicle* ran a piece titled “Post-riot Urban Aid Agenda Forgotten on Campaign Trail,” which described the hopefulness with this compelling quote:

For one fleeting moment, it was as if a window had flown wide open after being frozen shut for years. Political leaders dusted off the hoary notion of an urban agenda. The nightly news bristled with tales from the inner city. Many Americans hoped that, somehow, the stubborn dilemmas of crime and poverty that so dehumanize urban life would be tackled with a renewed public will. (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 8)

Despite an attempt by Congress and HUD Secretary Jack Kemp to capitalize on the groundswell of popular support for a new urban agenda, Bush vetoed the urban policy legislation when it reached his desk (Tax Fairness and Economic Growth Act of 1992, H.R. 4210, 102nd Congress, 1992).

The Clinton administration (1993-2001) represented a departure, albeit a small one, from the previous dozen years of Reagan’s and Bush’s benign neglect. One incremental change was Clinton’s decision to transition from Enterprise Zones to “empowerment zones” and “enterprise communities.” These represented a skillful overlapping of “social service block grants with tax breaks for economic development” (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 7). A comparison of the amount of federal aid given to cities reinforces Clinton’s reputation for the status-quo: “federal aid to cities dropped from 17.5% of city general revenue in 1977 to 5.0% in 1990, but had increased only incrementally by 2000 to 5.4%” (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 8). The incremental gains that had been won during the Clinton years were quickly erased when George W. Bush took office in 2001. Bush cut funding for Community Development Block Grants by about 7% and even attempted to eliminate them entirely. Like presidents Reagan through Clinton, George W. Bush promoted market solutions as the centerpiece to his federal urban-policy program (Moroz & Petro, 2009, p. 8).

Federal urban policy was reformed under President Barack Obama and was not based on prevailing models of urban rehabilitation or benign neglect. Rather than justifying urban investment as a stopgap against urban conflagration, Obama's policies viewed cities as drivers of our national economy. Urban expenditure, therefore, was not an emergency measure but a measured investment: "the economic health and social vitality of our urban communities are critically important to the prosperity and quality of life for Americans" (*Executive Order 13503: Establishment of the White House Office of Urban Affairs*, 2009, Section 1). This commitment to American cities had been a hallmark of the Obama administration since the first weeks of his presidency.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed into law on February 17, 2009, and two days after that, Obama established the White House Office of Urban Affairs. Later that year, the Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities was created within HUD, and the Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities was created as a stand-alone task force. With so much money being made available through the ARRA, the roles of the Office of Urban Affairs, Office of Sustainable Housing, and Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities were to make sure that money was being spent on high-impact projects that would balance growth with social and environmental equity. The Obama administration made a priority of promoting place-based investments as examples of high-impact projects. According to a 2010 memorandum,

effective place-based policies can influence how rural and metropolitan areas develop, how well they function as places to live, work, operate a business, preserve heritage, and more. Such policies also leverage investments by focusing resources in targeted places and drawing on the compounding effect of cooperative effort. (White House, 2010a, para. 1).

Geography and Social Justice

The word “justice” appears in nearly all of the works discussed in this section. Although the word is used to convey a fairly consistent set of principles, the exact meaning of the word likely differs from source to source. In fact, one of the most active dialogues in the fields of geography and social justice is about the definition and usage of the word justice. Because it is not the purpose of this paper to make normative statements pertaining to justice or social justice, and because this paper does not require an exact definition of the word justice, the works in this section will not be evaluated in an attempt to understand exactly what that word means in each of them.

To establish a general principle of justice for this paper, we may turn to Edward Soja’s *Seeking Spatial Justice*. He explains that social justice “expands beyond the boundaries of the law to discuss general principles of fairness and democracy, and the rights and responsibilities attached to being a member of a particular social group, whether or not they are legally defined as such” (Soja, 2010, p. 74).

Even though the Green Impact Zone did not use the word “justice” in any of its literature, it certainly was focused on promoting values such as democracy, citizenship, and fundamental human rights. The Green Impact Zone of Missouri, in a sense, is an example of an organization that translated the theoretical principles of geography and social justice into practice.

David M. Smith’s (1973), *The Geography of Social Well-Being in the United States: An Introduction to Territorial Social Indicators*, is perhaps the first notable work by a

modern geographer to provide a geographic understanding of social problems such as poverty, health care delivery, environmental quality, and quality of life. The work is

considered to come from the Chicago school of human ecologists in that it is basically concerned with describing the spatial pattern found in the U.S. for a number of factors thought to have significant bearing on the level of well-being. (Girt, 1974, para. 2)

The short book uses statistical methods to explore spatial patterns of factors thought to have an effect on the well-being of a given place.

In 1977, Coates, Johnston, and Knox published the first major text on “the empirical measurement, description, and interpretation of the geographical patterning of social injustice and inequality” (Soja, 2010, p. 82). In this work, the authors described the dearth of publications applying geographical techniques to inequality: “Unfortunately, geographers have traditionally ignored social problems such as [inequality] almost completely” (Coates et al., 1977, p. 5). This book comes from the quantitative analysis school of geographic thought and seeks to outline a toolkit for quantifying inequality at the international, intra-national, and intra-urban levels. The authors’ emphasis on empiricism is clear when they write that their goal is to help geographers “to establish the extent to which these inequalities are dependent upon locational considerations and reflected in spatial patterns” (Coates et al., 1977, pp. 5-6).

The most notable authors to have expanded the quantitative approach to urban justice are the sociologists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. In *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, they wrote that their

fundamental argument is that racial segregation – and its characteristic institutional form, the black ghetto – are the key structural factors responsible for the perpetuation of black poverty in the United States. Residential segregation is the principal

organizational feature of American society that is responsible for the creation of the urban underclass. (Massey & Denton, 1993, p. 9)

This book is credited with popularizing the term “hypersegregation,” which occurs when “a group is so segregated that its members have little chance of contact with outsiders ... in the case of residential locations, hypersegregation means that the members of different groups are extremely unlikely to live together” (Parrillo, 2008, p. 436). To qualify as hypersegregated, a group must rank very highly on at least four of five segregation indices at once. These five indices, which Massey and Denton created by consolidating 20 existing segregation measures, are: evenness, exposure, concentration, centralization, and clustering (Massey & Denton, 1993, p. 74)². As of 2010, Kansas City remained one of 21 hypersegregated metropolitan areas in the United States (Massey & Tannen, 2015).

The greatest contributions to the field of geographical social justice come from radical and critical geographers. Critical geography is the application of critical theory to geographical study. Despite diverse epistemological, ontological, and methodological approaches, critical geography can be characterized as (among other things): rooted in Marxist theory; a rejection of empiricism in favor of social theory; focused on emancipatory politics and social change; committed to social justice; and giving attention to space as a critical tool (Gregory et al., 2009, pp. 123-127). An attempt to define the field of radical geography is more difficult than defining critical geography. Often, critical theory would fall under the larger umbrella of radical thought, but in the field of geography, it is a bit more

² *Evenness* refers to the distribution of groups across neighborhoods according to their proportion in a given city. *Exposure* refers to the probability that members of a group will have any form of interaction with other groups. *Concentration* refers to how much space a minority group occupies. *Centralization* refers to how close to the center of an urban area a group lives. *Clustering* refers to the extent to which a group lives in contiguous or adjoining neighborhoods (Parrillo, 2008, p. 464).

complicated because the self-declared group of critical geographers pre-dates self-declared radical geographers, and many current works in the field of radical geography draw heavily on works by self-declared critical geographers. If we take the description of the journal *Antipode*, the seminal publication in the field of radical geography, to be a fair assessment of the field, it can be described as “Marxist/socialist/ anarchist/anti-racist/feminist/queer/green analysis of geographical issues and whose intent is to engender the development of a new and better society” (Antipode Foundation, n.d.). For the purposes of this paper, these two fields can be considered interchangeable.

Both fields, especially with regard to their works on urban justice, would draw significant inspiration from pioneering French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre. His 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville (The Right to the City)*, “was packed with powerful ideas about the consequential geography of urban life and the need for those most negatively affected by the urban condition to take greater control over the social production of urbanized space” (Soja, 2010, p. 6). Lefebvre envisioned the right to the city as a simultaneous right to access and decision making:

It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of the center, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the “marginal” and even for the “privileged”). (Lefebvre, 2000, p. 34)

David Harvey, who has referenced Lefebvre and *The Right to the City* throughout his career, explained the slogan as,

far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our

cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (Harvey, 2008, p. 23)

Five years after Lefebvre published *Le Droit à la ville*, Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* defined and then redefined the field of social justice geography. In the first section, titled "Liberal Formulations," Harvey showed how individual city functions such as markets for land, labor, and housing naturally favor the wealthy and powerful. The alternative to inequitable geographies and regressive investments was "territorial justice," which Harvey defined as "just distribution of social resources justly arrived at."³ He believed that this would be achieved by adopting a policy that, in the words of Edward Soja, allocated resources to create "positive (socially beneficial) spillover or multiplier effects from the locational or spatial pattern of public and private investments and where special attention is given to redress unusual environmental problems" (Soja, 2010, pp. 85-86). Soja explained that "this approach steers the search for justice toward access to the positive effects emanating from the urban economy, akin to the right to the city idea, and toward fundamental questions of environmental justice and social democracy" (Soja, 2010, pp. 85-86).

The second section of Harvey's *Social Justice* boldly changed gears and introduced his "socialist formulations" to the discussion. Harvey grew discouraged about the chances that capitalism could be reformed to accommodate the policies proposed in "liberal formulations" and was drawn towards Marxist thought. Like his previous section, Harvey

³ The term "regressive investments" here uses the definition of the word regressive as it is used in the term "regressive tax." A regressive tax is a tax that takes a larger percentage of income from low-income earners than from high-income earners. The Social Security tax, with its cap on what one must pay, is regressive.

again showed how a city naturally functions unjustly and yields unjust outcomes, this time providing no policy recommendations. Intellectuals, said Harvey, must lead the resistance:

This immediate task is nothing more nor less than the self-conscious and aware construction of a new paradigm for the social geographic thought through a deep and profound critique of our existing analytical constructs... our task is to mobilize our powers of thought to formulate concepts and categories, theories and arguments, which we can apply to the task of bringing about a humanizing social change. (Harvey, 1973, p. 145)

In one essay in the “socialist formulations” section, “Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary theory in geography and the problem of ghetto formation,” Harvey called for “nothing less than a wholesale rejection of the way human geographers both studied cities and thought about solving urban social problems” (Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011, p. 235).

Harvey has supervised many doctoral students who have made major contributions to the field of human geography, including Neil Smith (*Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, 1984; *Democracy, States, and the Struggle for Global Justice*, 2008) and Erik Swyngedouw (*La Crisis del Abastecimiento de Agua en Guayaquil*, 1995; *Liquid Power: Contested Hydro-Modernities in Twentieth-Century Spain*, 2015). His work has directly inspired many, including Andy Merrifield (*The Urbanization of Injustice*, 1997; *Magical Marxism: Subversive Politics and the Imagination*, 2011), Susan Fainstein (*Urban Political Movements: The Search for Power by Minority Groups in American Cities*, 1974; *The Just City*, 2010), Doreen Massey (*Spatial Division of Labor*, 1984; *Space, Place, and Gender*, 1994), and Edward Soja. A discussion of each of these authors’ contributions is impossible for this thesis, but no overview of the literature of social justice and geography would be complete without their mention. Edward Soja has been especially active in this field and recently wrote the invaluable *Seeking Spatial Justice*.

Seeking Spatial Justice regularly refers to both *The Right to the City* and *Social Justice and the City*. Soja wrote,

Distributional inequalities arise with regard to all basic needs of urban life, ranging from such vital public services as education, mass transit, police and crime prevention, to more privatized provisioning of adequate food, housing, and employment. The end result is an often self-perpetuating interweaving of spatial injustices that, at least after passing a certain level of tolerance, can be seen as a fundamental violation of urban-based civil rights and legal or constitutional guarantees of equality and justice (Soja, 2010, p. 47).

He was essentially describing what Harvey termed territorial injustice. Soja went on to explain that this uneven distribution can only be addressed if it is recognized as socially constructed and “therefore open to being changed through concerted social action” (Soja, 2010, p. 48). Soja, like Harvey, argues that the campaign for a just city must begin with scholars, students, activists, grassroots organizations, and labor unions.

Some, such as the urban planner Susan Fainstein, believe that Harvey’s and Soja’s reliance on revolutionary social movements makes success too improbable. Fainstein is one of the founders of the “Just City Movement,” which argues that public policy and development must incorporate democracy, diversity, and equity as their ultimate goals. David Harvey wrote that the idea of the Just City

delimits its scope to acting within the existing capitalist regime of rights and freedoms and is thus constrained to mitigating the worst outcomes at the margins of an unjust system....Fainstein’s emphasis on the discursive and inspirational role of the Just City avoids the necessity for outright conflict and struggle. (Harvey & Potter, 2009, p. 46)

Fainstein responded to these criticisms by writing:

my analysis is limited to what appears feasible within the present context of capitalist urbanization in wealthy, formally democratic, Western countries. As such it is susceptible to criticism for being too weak to deal with the injustices inherent in capitalism. (Fainstein, 2010, p. 5)

Soja appeared to be a bit more sympathetic to the Just City, calling it “a parallel discourse to spatial justice and the right to the city.” He, somewhat dismissively, wrote,

this discourse is preeminently normative, reflecting the strong utopian tradition among planning theorists. . . the intrinsic appeal of its underspatialized concept of justice has attracted many geographers and others who prefer not to emphasize a more forceful form of spatial explanation. As such, it has captured increasing attention in contemporary theoretical and practical debates on spatial justice and the right to the city. (Soja, 2010, p. 29)

The above conflict over how to make effective action feasible is perhaps the most difficult challenge for urban justice theorists, and it divides them into two theoretical positions: “(1) It is impossible to work within [global capitalism] and achieve a modicum of justice. (2) The pressure for nonreformist reforms can lead to incremental changes in the system that place it on a path toward justice” (Fainstein, 2010, p. 170). David Harvey is a believer in the first position, while Susan Fainstein believes in the second. Although one cannot believe in both viewpoints as equally correct, they are both valuable and should be viewed as complementary; the efforts of one group do not undo the efforts of the other; they strengthen each other’s demands for reform. Interestingly, there are two Los Angeles community groups – the Right to the City Alliance and the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy – that Fainstein and Soja both cite in their 2010 books as good examples of effective reformers, and both authors believe that their own views are shared by these groups.⁴ Whether these groups believe in the first paradigm or the second is on some level irrelevant; how effectively they move cities closer to justice is what truly matters.

⁴ For Fainstein’s assessment see *The Just City* page 170, and for Soja’s see *Seeking Spatial Justice* page 138.

Before an evaluation of how effective the Kansas City-based initiative The Green Impact Zone was at moving its surrounding city towards justice, it is necessary to understand the long history of injustices in Kansas City that precipitated the formation of The Green Impact Zone.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORY OF INEQUALITY IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Geographers understand that every place on earth is unique. From a physical perspective, this statement is undeniable; each point in space has a unique location, different from that of every other point in space. It is often overlooked that from a cultural perspective, every place, however large or small, also has a unique character that distinguishes it from every other place. Understanding what makes a given place unique is not only a job for geographers; it is also a requirement for effective leaders of place-based programs such as the Green Impact Zone. In order to evaluate the Green Impact Zone model, we must attempt to understand the historical and present-day geography that makes these 150 square blocks unique.

Although all places are unique, Tobler's first law of geography teaches us that "everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things" (Tobler, 1970, p. 236). This section is not limited to a history of the small area that would one day be labeled as the Green Impact Zone. Instead, it focuses on the interconnectedness of this small section of Kansas City, Missouri, with the city as a whole.

Special attention is paid to the processes that led to extreme racial segregation and disinvestment that have been common throughout the history of Kansas City; those processes directly led to the creation of The Green Impact Zone of Missouri. Despite a rich and unique urban history, Kansas City is disappointingly underrepresented in geographical studies. This section, therefore, draws heavily from the works of the historian Sherry Lamb Schirmer and the sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham, two researchers who are responsible for the two major

works on the social and geographical history of Kansas City. Any modern investigation on the racial geography of Kansas City must start with them.

Kansas City's Early Development Prior to the Parks and Boulevard System

Kansas City sits at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers. This location also placed Kansas City at the origin of the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails; the area became known as the last major trading and supply stop before travelers headed west in the early 1800s. According to Tom Sims, Committee Chair of the Native Sons and Daughters of Greater Kansas City:

Gabriel Prudhomme, a French-Canadian fur trapper and trader, patented 271 acres of land on the south bank of the Missouri River in Jackson County, Missouri for \$340. It originally had been part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803...The Prudhomme land would ultimately be auctioned off in 1838 as part of his estate and would be purchased by a group of men led by William Sublett for \$4220. The intended use of the land and surroundings was for a business settlement and warehouses. There were 14 members in this group, the Kansas Town Company. The initial order of business was to name the site the "Town of Kansas" after the local tribe of Indians and its proximity to the Kansas River. By early 1839, the site was surveyed, platted, and the first parcel of land was offered for sale. (Sims, n.d., para. 3)

In 1867, the consortium of Charles E. Kearney, Robert T. Van Horn, and Kersey Coates convinced the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad to build a cutoff at Cameron, Missouri that would extend to Kansas City and cross the Missouri River there, beating the competing offer from nearby Leavenworth, Kansas. The tracks spanned the river on the Hannibal Bridge, which opened in July 1869 and solidified Kansas City's position as the preeminent commercial and industrial center of the region by connecting the booming City of Chicago with Texas. The value of the Hannibal Bridge to Kansas City's early development was immense; the population of KC grew from a paltry 4,418 in 1860, to 32,260 in 1870, 55,785 in 1880, and an impressive 132,716 in 1890 (United States Census Bureau, 2016).

The population of Kansas City would continue to swell well into the middle of the twentieth century. It is difficult to compare the decennial censuses of Kansas City's population because the city has repeatedly expanded its area through annexations and in recent years has even divested itself of some small parcels (see Figure 2) ("Annexations History," 2013). The city's relative importance in the nation's urban hierarchy peaked in 1930, when it ranked 19th in population among all U.S. cities; its population was 399,746 in an area of 58.6 square miles (compared to more than 318 square miles today) (United States Census Bureau, 1998).

Because the city expanded by an average of 200 new residents per day during the 1880s, housing and real estate in Kansas City was in great demand. Social historian Sherry Lamb Schirmer described an 1880s Kansas City plagued by speculators, where "properties sometimes changed hands two to three times in a day," and houses and apartment blocks were built by "building contractors, carpenters, and men with more ambition than construction skills" (Schirmer, 2002, p. 13).

Another plague on housing in Kansas City was the proliferation of slums and shantytowns. Clusters of these improvised houses were found in many parts of the city, and troubled homeowners because of their tendency to be situated in those open plots nearest middle and upper-class neighborhoods. Many of the shantytown dwellers worked in the homes of the upper class, and proximity to their place of employment was desirable. As Sherry Lamb Schirmer discussed at length, wealthy homeowners believed that living so close to the lowest-class inhabitants of Kansas City put their social status in jeopardy. Schirmer documented that through the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the elite of

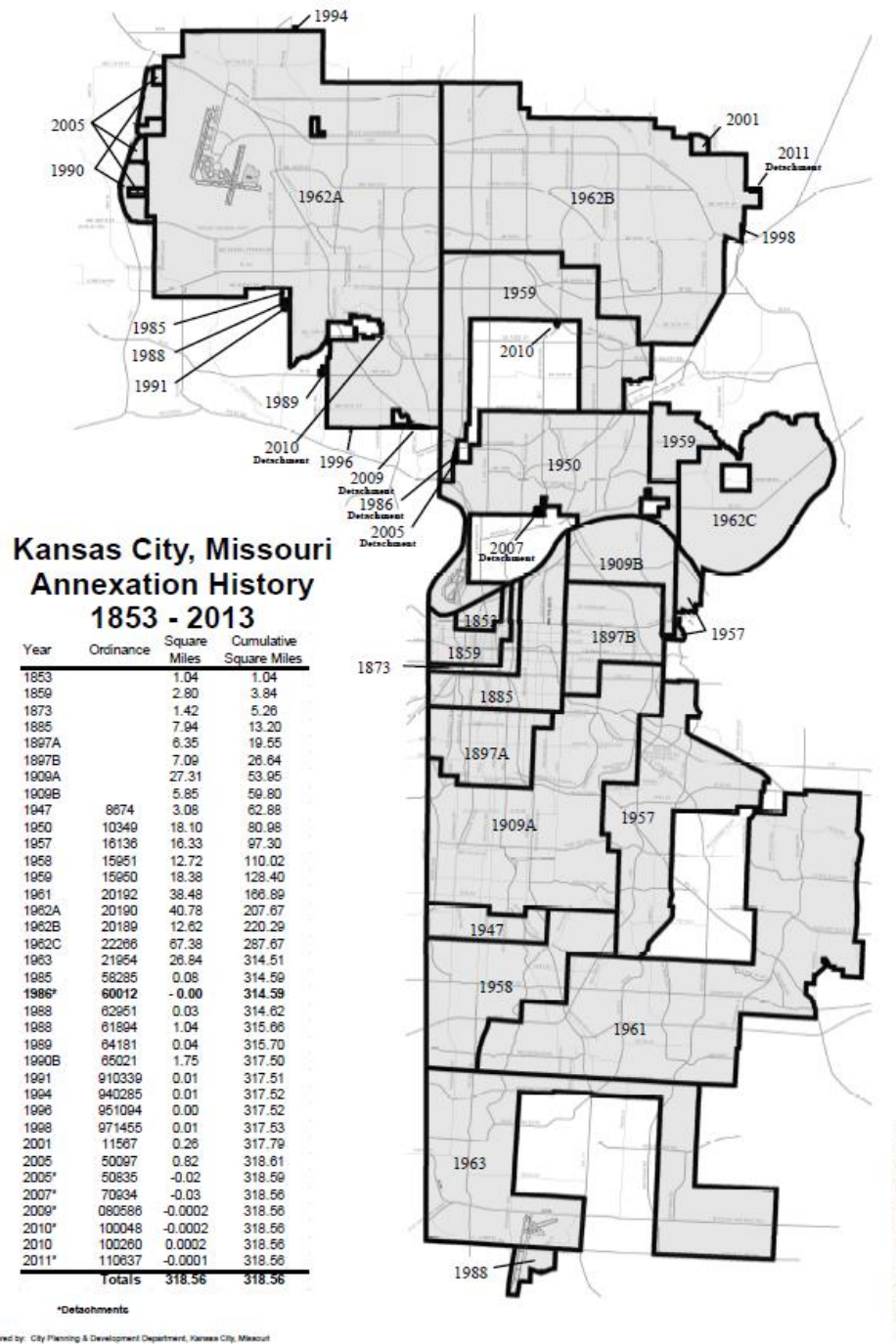


Figure 2. Kansas City, Missouri Annexation History 1853-2013. Source: Annexations History, Opendata KC, 2013.

Kansas City occupied a given neighborhood only briefly before feeling the need to flee to a new site offering relief from infringement. This process was unpleasant, and it became clear that many would pay top dollar for a noble home in a neighborhood that held out the promise of maintaining its high character for generations.

In response to this growing desire for stable, high-end real estate, two subdivisions were platted in 1886 on what was then beyond the eastern edge of Kansas City. Two adjacent neighborhoods, Hyde Park and Kenwood, located originally between Kansas City and the town of Westport, pioneered two techniques that would become common practice for Kansas City developers looking to protect their subdivisions from the blighting effects of the urban poor. The first innovation was the inclusion of “deed restrictions that required high standards of quality in home construction and placement” (Schirmer, 2002, p. 15). By including provisions that dictated the type of home that could be constructed within the subdivision, deeds prevented small, low-quality homes from being built among the larger, finer homes of the subdivisions.

The second innovation came not from a developer but from George Kessler, a young landscape architect who had apprenticed briefly with noted American landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmstead. Olmstead, popularly considered the father of American landscape architecture, is most famously remembered as the man who designed Central Park in New York City. George Kessler, who had recently moved to Kansas City to open an office, was hired in 1887 to provide landscape character to the upcoming Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods. The land slated for construction of these neighborhoods lay adjacent to a small hollow entangled with vegetation, and this fact troubled developers. As noted

previously, similar valleys and ravines throughout the city became home to hundreds of informal shacks. With this in mind, Kessler, “transformed [the hollow] into the median of a rambling roadway,” thus preserving the beauty of the ravine while removing the threat of shanty town encroachment (Schirmer, 2002, p. 15). Today, that roadway is Gillham Road, a major north/south thoroughfare in central Kansas City. The southernmost stretch of Gillham Road, where it runs adjacent to what were previously known as the Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods and is now known as the Hyde Park neighborhood, is bordered on either side by the spacious Gillham Park. The immediate successes of Hyde Park and Kenwood inspired the city to experiment with these urban-development concepts on a much grander scale and to later annex the area in 1897.

On the strength of Gillham Park’s elegant solution to the problem of blight, George Kessler was asked to design a citywide system of parks and boulevards. The Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners believed that the lack of access to parks and natural beauty was detrimental, to resident’s moral and physical health, and they hired Kessler to transform Kansas City into a “City Beautiful.” Kessler’s final plan was completed in 1893, extensively carried out by 1915, and featured a network of graceful boulevards that connected parks, both new and old. The lots fronting these ambling boulevards promised to attract the most discerning of home buyers, and Kessler imagined that his plan would give “a permanent residence character to certain sections of the city, and will determine and fix for a long time to come, if not permanently, the best and most valuable residence property” (Schirmer, 2002, p. 16). He further envisioned that middle-class neighborhoods would form a buffer around the wealthy boulevard properties, while unwanted shops, businesses, and the poor of Kansas

City would locate in more distant parts of the city. In essence, Kessler planned land uses in the absence of zoning laws (which are first implemented in New York City in 1916).

Kessler did not simply hope that slums would stay far away from his boulevards. The creation of many of the parks had the effect of evicting lower-income, often African-American, families. The construction of The Paseo, which sits in the center of what would become The Green Impact Zone, required the eviction and bulldozing of hundreds of modest houses occupied by African Americans. The site for another major civic project, the construction of Kansas City's Union Station, was just a few blocks south of downtown and conveniently displaced a large settlement of black and white squatters (Schirmer, 2002). These actions are emblematic of what would prove to be an ongoing struggle over control of the character of residential spaces in Kansas City.

The Great Migration, J.C. Nichols, and Race Restrictive Covenants

Prior to 1900, Kansas City was overwhelmingly integrated. In 1880, blacks could be found in all eight wards, each of them containing about 10% to 20% of the total black population (Gotham, 2002). Despite the existence of a few black enclaves, mostly on the north and northeast side of the city, there is no evidence to support a claim that these enclaves existed because of discrimination (Gotham, 2002; Schirmer, 2002).

Things would begin to change fairly quickly after the turn of the century. Kansas City was a major destination for Southern blacks moving north during the Great Migration, and a burgeoning black population found it increasingly difficult to integrate.⁵ According to the

⁵ The Great Migration is the term used to describe the movement of millions of Americans from the American South to the American North from 1910 to 1970. This movement began in response to demand for cheap labor needed in factories in cities across the increasingly industrialized north. As a result of The Great Migration, the

U.S. Census Bureau, the city's Black population increased from 17,567 in 1900 to 23,566 in 1910 (34.1% increase), to 30,719 in 1920 (30.4%) and 38,574 by 1930 (25%). The isolation index⁶ shows that as both black and white populations grew throughout the first three decades of the 20th century, they grew increasingly isolated from one another. Isolation indices within Kansas City wards grew from 13.2% in 1900, to 21.7% in 1910, increasing to 23.7% in 1920 and 31.6% in 1930 (Massey & Denton, 1993). In one neighborhood on the northeast side, Lincoln-Coles (now known as the Vine Street Economic Development District), the black population tripled from 1900 to 1920, transforming an area that was once 25% black to 75% black. Lincoln-Coles emerged from the Great Migration as Kansas City's first segregated black ghetto (Schirmer, 2002).⁷

Two widely cited housing analyses, *Report on Housing* (Johnson, Stillman, & Stutsman, 1912) and *Social Prospectus of Kansas City* (1913) were produced by the Kansas City's Board of Public Welfare, the first such Board in the nation. These publications were

proportion of blacks living in the South dropped from 90% in 1910 to 53% in 1970 (Tolnay, Adelman, & Crowder, 2002).

⁶ An isolation index is a measure of exposure, which is defined by Massey and Denton as "the degree of potential contact, or possibility of interaction, between minority and majority group members" (Massey & Denton, 1993, p. 287). For more information and to learn how to calculate isolation, see Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 1993.

⁷ According to Harold Rose, author of *The Black Ghetto: A Spatial Behavioral Perspective* (1971), a black ghetto is a social area primarily made up of persons of a single race and possessing similar subcultural characteristics. From a practical standpoint, he defines a black ghetto as any census tract in which the population equals or exceeds 50% black. Ghetto core neighborhoods are represented by census tracts whose population is 75% or more black, with ghetto fringe neighborhoods having 50 to 74% of their population identified as black. Zones contiguous to the ghetto core and fringe, if they contain a black population that constitutes 30% or more of the total population within their domain, are thought to represent neighborhoods in transition. Thus the ghetto is essentially made up of neighborhoods in which blacks constitute a clear majority and have generally assumed dominance over local social institutions; neighborhoods in which dominance is incipient and change continues at a rather rapid pace; and neighborhoods in which blacks do not yet constitute the dominant population, but are found in large enough numbers to hasten the future outmigration of white population.

nothing more than pseudo-scientific racism. They blamed the conditions of the ghettos entirely on their black residents, calling them “steeped in crime, with lost virtue, and without purpose and without hope” (“Social Prospectus of Kansas City, Missouri,” 1913, p. 93). By publishing these reports, the city was reinforcing racist stereotypes and giving whites spurious reasons to justify their segregation.

There is a simultaneous ascribing of social values to race and race to social values evident in the above reports. This process is described in detail in Kevin Fox Gotham’s *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development*. This concept is given the name *racialization* and is described by Gotham as:

The way in which racial categories sort people, society distributes resources along racial lines, and state policy shapes and is shaped by the racial contours of society. Central to the concept of racialization is the idea that race has an emergent and variable quality rather than a fixed or immutable group characteristic. Racial groups are socially and politically constructed and exist as the outcome of diverse historical practices (e.g., programmatic organization of social policy, modes of political participation, etc.) that are continually subject to challenge over definition and meaning. (Gotham, 2002, p. 11)

Associating skin color with certain behaviors was undoubtedly not new to Kansas City, but the degree to which these stereotypes had become institutionalized was novel. Furthermore, as evidenced by the housing analyses, white Kansas Citians not only identified black Kansas Citians with certain undesirable qualities, but declared sections of their city as black and therefore as problematic. This linking of social conditions, race, and space, shows how space itself can become racialized. Linking place, race, and behavior together allowed whites to blame the wretched conditions in parts of the city on the simple fact of someone being black (Gotham, 2002, pp. 36-37).

Whites in Kansas City were desperately trying to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods or relocate to somewhere else that could. The success of the Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods inspired a young real estate developer by the name of J.C. Nichols to attempt to build the most prestigious subdivision in Kansas City. As a developer, Nichols had had relative success developing on the Kansas side of Kansas City and had begun buying land on what was then the southern edge of Kansas City, Missouri. Before his first Missouri development had begun in 1910, he already owned over 1,000 acres of land in the large area annexed to Kansas City in 1909 (Worley, 1990).

Nichols admired the work that Kessler had done as a planner for the Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhoods decades earlier, and so when Nichols began the work of developing his own land, he hired George Kessler to plan his first subdivision, Bismark Place (near 51st and Main streets), which would later become part of the Country Club District south of Brush Creek (Gilligan, 2014). Kessler's plan once again "protected" (i.e., segregated) the perimeter of the developments by constructing a buffer of green spaces. To preserve the racial makeup of the homeowners in his neighborhoods, J.C. Nichols carried the racial deed restrictions inherited when he took over Bismark Place from its original developer (Morton, 2016). Unlike the deed restrictions used in Hyde Park, however, these stated that "none of the lots hereby restricted may be conveyed to, used, owned, nor occupied by Negroes as owners or tenants" (Gotham, 2002, p. 625). All the common restrictions such as size and cost of homes still applied, but now homeowners had an additional guarantee that their home would retain its high value.

Race-restrictive covenants, as these restrictions are known, made it possible to reorganize the city into segregated neighborhoods and keep it that way. For those in the real estate industry, segregated neighborhoods were seen as a requirement for stable property values and real estate profit (Gotham, 2002). For aspiring residents, these homes were imagined to be, as J.C. Nichols himself advertised, in the “most protected and highest class region in or near Kansas City” (Gotham, 2002, p. 42). So successful were racially restrictive covenants that by 1920 the widely held view was that “it was unethical for real estate firms and land developers to not restrict” (Gotham, 2002, p. 37).

The legality of race-restrictive covenants was upheld in the courts until 1948 when *Shelley v. Kraemer* ruled them unenforceable. This U.S. Supreme Court decision did not have the dramatic effect that many expected. For example, from 1948 through 1960, there were actually more race-restrictive covenants recorded in the Kansas City area than from 1900 to 1948 (Gotham, 2002, p. 40).

Not everyone, however, was able to move to a new home. Some of those who stayed in contested neighborhoods used anonymous death threats and arson to remove black residents from predominantly white neighborhoods (Schirmer, 2002). Even areas where whites and blacks had coexisted peacefully for nearly a decade could become the site of racially motivated bombings, as was the case in 1910. The eastern side of the Vine Street corridor, in the area of Montgall Avenue and 25th Street, where a heterogeneous mix of white, black, skilled blue-collar, and white-collar workers lived, experienced six dynamite explosions in two years (Schirmer, 2002). It appears that no one was killed as a result of the bombings, and no arrest was made for two years. When the police finally did arrest someone,

it was “a black man who, police claimed, had aimed to reduce property values in the area on behalf of prospective black buyers” (Schirmer, 2002, p. 74). The bombs did significant damage to the homes, and the explosions and arrest and sentencing of a black man scarred the psyches of black residents in the neighborhood.

Urban Renewal and Public Housing

Many northern cities experienced a major increase in the population of blacks during the years from 1915 to 1930. This time, part of the years known as the “Great Migration,” was the basis for the formation of exclusionary real estate ideologies that associated the presence of blacks with declining property values and neighborhood instability (Gotham, 2002, p. 34). The National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) championed segregative housing practices through its textbooks, pamphlets, and periodicals, even amending its code of ethics to read “a Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood... members of any race or nationality... whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood” (Gotham, 2002, p. 35). The Housing Act of 1934, an important component of New Deal legislation, was enacted to salvage the home-building and finance industries. This act created the Federal Housing Administration, lowered home down-payments from 30% to less than 10%, established minimum standards for construction, and eliminated lending institutions’ risk in mortgage financing by providing mortgage insurance. When combined with a heavy dose of bigoted anti-black rhetoric coming from the FHA and local real estate industries, the Housing Act of 1934 was responsible for a large number of residents leaving the city for houses in the suburbs.

In Kansas City, these policies contributed to the decline of the central business district. In the 10-year period after 1935, the assessed value of the central business district sank 6% while the city as a whole lost only 0.5% in assessed value. Economic trends aside, the Kansas City elite were already displeased with the frustrating traffic, decreasing population and drab appearance of downtown residential areas (Gotham, 2002). The solution to these problems was complicated. No private developer had the organizational, financial or legal capacity to acquire enough downtown land to make large-scale renewal possible. One solution that was promoted by The National Association of Real Estate Boards was for the federal government to pass legislation to help make private renewal easier and more profitable. Significant lobbying on the part of the NAREB ensured that large-scale clearance of slum areas and the consequential reconstruction was delegated to the private sector.

Yet another housing act was enacted by the federal government in 1937, followed by others in 1949 and in 1954. According to Gotham,

The Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 represented the culmination of real estate industry lobbying efforts to curtail the production of public housing, create local redevelopment authorities with broad powers of eminent domain, and provide generous public subsidies for private redevelopment. (Gotham, 2001, p. 297)

To execute the downtown slum-clearance project, Kansas City's elected officials, in accordance with federal guidelines, created the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority (LCRA) in 1953. Although funding came primarily from the federal level, local authorities were allowed to allocate funding with great autonomy. Therefore, it was the City of Kansas City's job to appoint members to the LCRA. When the staff was finalized, it was unsurprisingly "composed of leaders from the private sector" (Gotham, 2001, p. 298). From the creation of the LCRA to the end of the 1960s, \$80 million went to financing

redevelopment and renewal, and two-thirds of that money came from the federal government (Gotham 2002, p. 78).

Eighteen urban renewal projects took place in Kansas City, Missouri, between 1953 and 1969, totaling 5,130.3 acres of land and demolishing 4,415 homes, 1,783 of which were owned by blacks (Gotham, 2002). Meanwhile, Kansas City was lauded by local newspapers, given national awards, and visited by mayors, planners, and officials from over one dozen major municipalities throughout the country.

Not everyone was as pleased with the results of the downtown renewal. The first four projects undertaken (Northside, Attucks, South Humboldt, and Eastside) removed a reported 1,899 homes to make room for parking lots, freeway loops, and “to clear predominantly black neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown” (Gotham, 2002, p. 80). Displaced Kansas Citians, especially blacks who were still banned from purchasing many homes, relied on the Housing Authority of Kansas City, Missouri (HAKC) to place them in public housing, which was formally segregated by race until 1964. All of the public housing developments built by HAKC in the 1950s and 1960s were built within six miles of each other, with Independence Avenue functioning as the color line: all white units were found north of Independence Avenue, black units south of Independence and east of Troost Avenue (Gotham, 2001).

Even those that weren't forced to relocate were often negatively affected. Many businesses located in disrupted neighborhoods were forced to close down because they lacked the clientele that they depended on. Families that remained in neighborhoods near downtown urban renewal were forced to watch as homes and businesses alike were destroyed

and stable neighborhoods were broken. Few residents in this area ever saw their neighborhoods recover (Gotham, 2002).

Ultimately, the same string of “slum removal” efforts that received awards from *Look Magazine* and the American Institute of Architects, and garnered *Kansas City Star* headlines such as “A Dream City without Slums,” (1952) and “City Faces Great Era” (1958) received another, more damning recognition, in 1973 (Gotham, 2002). After multiple investigations, the Department of Housing and Urban Development publicly declared the LCRA guilty of discriminatory relocation activities. LCRA had violated the 1964 and 1968 Civil Rights Acts and “contributed to the development and perpetuation of racial housing patterns [and] has and will concentrate large segments of the population by racial...characteristics” (Gotham, 2002, p. 83).

Compared to race-restrictive covenants and earlier forms of spatial segregation, urban renewal was far more pernicious. Whereas covenants disallowed blacks from owning homes in certain neighborhoods, renewal destroyed the neighborhoods they inhabited. Although two of the original goals of urban renewal were to eliminate substandard housing and reduce segregation, the legacy of urban renewal throughout this nation is more akin to “slum-shifting” or even “negro removal” (Gotham, 2002, p. 88). In Kansas City, this period forcibly drew most of the tacit lines upon which the city is still divided racially today.

School Segregation and the Troost Wall

In 1955, when *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* ruled segregated schools unconstitutional, Kansas City had been operating such schools for nearly a century. In order to comply with the expectations set in place by *Brown v. Board*, the Kansas City Missouri

School District (KCMSD) drew school attendance zones that directed all students from a given neighborhood to attend a specific school. These neighborhood attendance zones may have arguably been in compliance with the letter of the law, but because they were drawn on very explicit racial lines and perpetuated a school system that was almost entirely segregated, they were certainly not in compliance with the spirit of the law. The north/south boundaries used by KCMSD shifted occasionally throughout the 1950s to the 1970s, but only one east/west boundary was ever used: Troost Avenue.

In 1954, the year before *Brown v. Board*, Kansas City schools were fully segregated, and therefore the only high school with any black students was the all-black high school, Lincoln, at Woodland Avenue and 21st Street. By 1957, every high school in Kansas City had seen at least one black student enroll, but only at Lincoln and Central, at 3221 Indiana Avenue, was more than 2.6% of the student body made up by black students. Lincoln, which is about a half-mile east of Troost, had shown no signs of integration by 1975. All the other high schools, which were at one time explicitly all-white schools, accepted increasing numbers of African-American students. Undeniably, the schools east of Troost experienced a much higher rate of enrollment by black students than schools situated west of Troost. In 1964, Paseo High School, at 4747 Flora Avenue, was 50.2% black, which is nearly a perfect split between black and non-black students. No other school that year, however, could claim any similar level of integration. The other five Kansas City high schools that year, in percentage of their student body identified as black, were 8.5%, .5%, 99.9%, 99.6%, and 3.0%. By 1975, all three high schools east of Troost and the once explicitly all-black school, Lincoln, were more than 97.5% black. The two remaining high schools west of Troost,

Westport and Southwest, had student populations of 47.6% and 12%, respectively, who identified as black (see Figure 3) (Gotham, 2002).

Such a dramatic shift in the demographics of schools was made possible by an equally dramatic shift in the racial identity of Kansas City's southeast corridor. Racial turnover had been occurring incrementally in Kansas City for decades, but beginning in the 1950s, this turnover became very rapid. Table 2 shows population change as a total as well as for each race in the 16-square-mile area referred to here as Kansas City Southeast of the Central Business District (CBD). The boundaries for this section are 12th Street to the north, Gregory Boulevard to the south, Troost Avenue to the west, and Blue River, Interstate 70, and Cleveland Avenue to the east.

As Gotham points out, racial transition is well documented in urban geography, going all the way back to Robert Park and Ernst Burgess' landmark theory on "invasion" and "succession." During the 1920s, these two Chicago School geographers developed a theory in which a lower-status group of in-migrants "invades" the territory of a higher-status group, and the latter group vacates the area by relocating further from the city center, allowing the invading group to "succeed" it. Although these studies and many others account for more inevitable forms of racial transition, the rapid turnover in this area of Kansas City was not inevitable and cannot be accounted for by racial-ethnic transition models alone. Instead, this transition is best understood as a result of real estate professionals' use of racialized propaganda and blockbusting.

Table 1

Kansas City, Missouri School District Enrollment by High School 1945-1975

School Year	High Schools West of Troost Avenue						High Schools East of Troost Avenue					
	Westport		Southwest		Lincoln		Central		Paseo		Southeast	
	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black
1954-55	1461	0	2031	0	1100	100	1604	0	1657	0	1575	0
1955-56	1543	2.3	2042	0.01	738	99.7	1748	11.2	1665	1.6	1752	0
1956-57	1780	2.6	2074	0.1	743	99.8	1779	17	1709	2.4	1800	0
1957-58	1622	2.5	2123	0	945	100	1836	28.2	1756	2.6	1900	0.1
1958-59	1643	2.4	2141	0	954	100	1873	42.4	1710	4	1884	0.5
1959-60	1713	2.6	1923	0	973	100	1667	70.5	1859	6.6	1896	1.3
1960-61	1684	2.5	1772	0.1	827	100	1522	90.2	1893	9.7	1883	1.7
1961-62	1812	3	1941	0	898	100	1945	97.2	1888	16.3	1777	2.6
1962-63	1791	4	2035	0	1002	100	2138	99	1746	23.3	1656	5.9
1963-64	1806	5.9	2247	0.2	1109	99.8	2272	99.1	1629	36.4	1766	8.4
1964-65	1967	8.5	2371	0.5	1075	99.9	2518	99.6	1648	50.2	1770	3
1965-66	1862	10.9	2469	0.7	1121	99.9	2648	99.4	1597	62.4	1781	22.2
1966-67	1884	14	2469	0.6	1124	99.9	2427	99.1	1655	70.2	1767	25.2
1967-68	1882	26.7	2388	0.3	1357	99.9	2353	99.9	1920	78.1	1706	33.2
1968-69	1958	26.5	2404	0.5	1397	100	2224	99.8	1497	88	1630	42.9
1969-70	1815	30.5	2429	0.5	1362	100	2369	99.9	1534	97.8	1403	59.3
1970-71	1766	38	2387	0.8	1323	100	2115	99.9	1545	99.4	1463	79.6
1971-72	1628	41.1	2406	1.6	1465	100	2416	100	1788	99.7	1647	92.2
1972-73	1541	45.8	2265	2.8	1247	100	2128	100	1403	99.9	1894	96.5
1973-74	1625	45.7	2280	6.6	1324	100	2295	100	1490	99.8	2291	97.9
1974-75	1361	47.6	2017	12	1312	99.9	2204	100	1466	99.9	2114	97.7

Note. From *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development*, by K. F. Gotham, p. 106. Copyright 2003 by State University of New York Press.

Table 2

Total and Racial Population Change in Kansas City, Missouri Southeast of the CBD 1950-1970

	1950	1960	1970	Total change 1950-1970
Total Population Southeast of CBD	169,047	163,119	137,665	-31,382
White Population	126,229	88,986	33,804	-92,425
Percentage White	74.7%	54.4%	24.6%	
Black Population	41,348	73,788	102,741	+61,933
Percentage Black	24.4%	45.2%	74.6%	

Note. From *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development*, by K. F. Gotham, p. 95. Copyright 2003 by State University of New York Press.

Profit-seeking real estate agents convinced whites living east of Troost that their homes would become less valuable if a neighboring house were occupied by a black family. Whites, hoping to sell their houses before the supposed drop in value, made “panic sales” to real estate agents. After one house had been put up for sale, the block was referred to as “busted,” and it became much easier to scare the remaining white homeowners on the block into selling their houses to the real estate agent. White homeowners typically took whatever money they could get from a real estate agent, who then turned around and sold the house at full value or even a higher price (the difference called the “color tax”) to incoming black families. This process of blockbusting was a major factor in the sudden racial turnover of Southeast Kansas City.

With the racial transition also came a major decrease in financial and government investment, resulting in a deteriorating housing stock and poverty-stricken residents. The

Metropolitan Planning Commission (1971) produced a study estimating that over half of the metropolitan area's "inner city area" had "substandard" housing.⁸ Later, Kansas City's City Development Department (1973 p. 34) found that 20.3% of all the families living in the Heart of the City North were below the poverty level, as compared to 8.8% for Kansas City, Missouri.⁹ The Development Department's planning report also showed (Plate 10) that in most blocks in that area the predominant structural condition of housing was "deteriorating" or "dilapidated".¹⁰

By all accounts, these tendencies towards segregation along Troost Avenue continued into the 1990s. Black invasion and succession continued to be contained to the parts of the city east of Troost and continued southward; in 1990 the census data showed that every neighborhood that was at least half black was located east of Troost (Gotham, 2002). An examination of 2010 census data by census tract yielded similar findings: all census tracts in the city that are at least 50% black are located entirely or mostly east of Troost Avenue. While the census tract with the highest percentage of black residents with at least 10 residents living in tract (tract 57, 93.64%) was not in the Green Impact Zone, the tract with the second highest percentage of black residents was in the Green Impact Zone: tract 78.02

⁸In the United States, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are local government organizations legally charged with coordinating short- and long-range transportation planning for all urbanized areas in the country with more than 50,000 residents. MPOs exist in numerous forms but generally operate as a function of regional councils of government (COGs) or as a subdivision of state departments of transportation (DOTs). Although a few regions around the country established MPOs as early as the 1950s, it was not until the early 1970s that federal transportation laws demanded the creation of regional entities to carry out metropolitan transportation planning (Sanchez, 2006).

⁹ Heart of the City North was defined as bounded by I-70 on the north, I-70 and the Blue River on the east, Brush Creek on the south, and Troost Avenue on the west.

¹⁰ Deteriorating is defined as needing one major repair or a number of minor ones. Dilapidated is defined as requiring two or more major repairs and as a shelter is unsafe.

with 93.56%. See Table 3 and Figure 3 for more details about the majority black census tracts in Kansas City.

The 150-square-block area that is The Green Impact Zone of Missouri is completely contained within Kansas City's southeast corridor. The Green Impact Zone's challenge was to address a long history of discrimination and disinvestment by utilizing a place-based approach to urban equity.

Table 3

Kansas City, Missouri Census Tracts with at Least 50% Black Population

Census Tract	Percent Black
37	89.68%
38	91.47%
52	79.53%
53	76.54%
54	90.25%
55	91.76%
56.01	88.56%
56.02	93.55%
57	93.64%
58.01	91.27%
60	91.53%
61	92.17%
63	85.86%
76	90.43%
77	93.29%
78.02	93.56%
79	89.54%
80	93.35%
81	82.73%
87	86.89%
88	90.51%
89	91.12%
90	87.26%
95	65.66%
96	68.00%
97	63.82%
102.01	54.76%
129.03	57.65%
129.04	53.38%
129.06	56.67%
130.03	65.37%
131	55.52%
132.03	61.38%
132.08	73.72%
132.1	68.27%
154	70.62%
160	66.90%
161	88.61%
162	81.47%
164	57.29%
165	89.07%
166	90.63%
169	87.33%
171	92.04%
172	55.91%
174	59.64%

Note. From 2010 Census/ACS Detailed Census Tract Data.

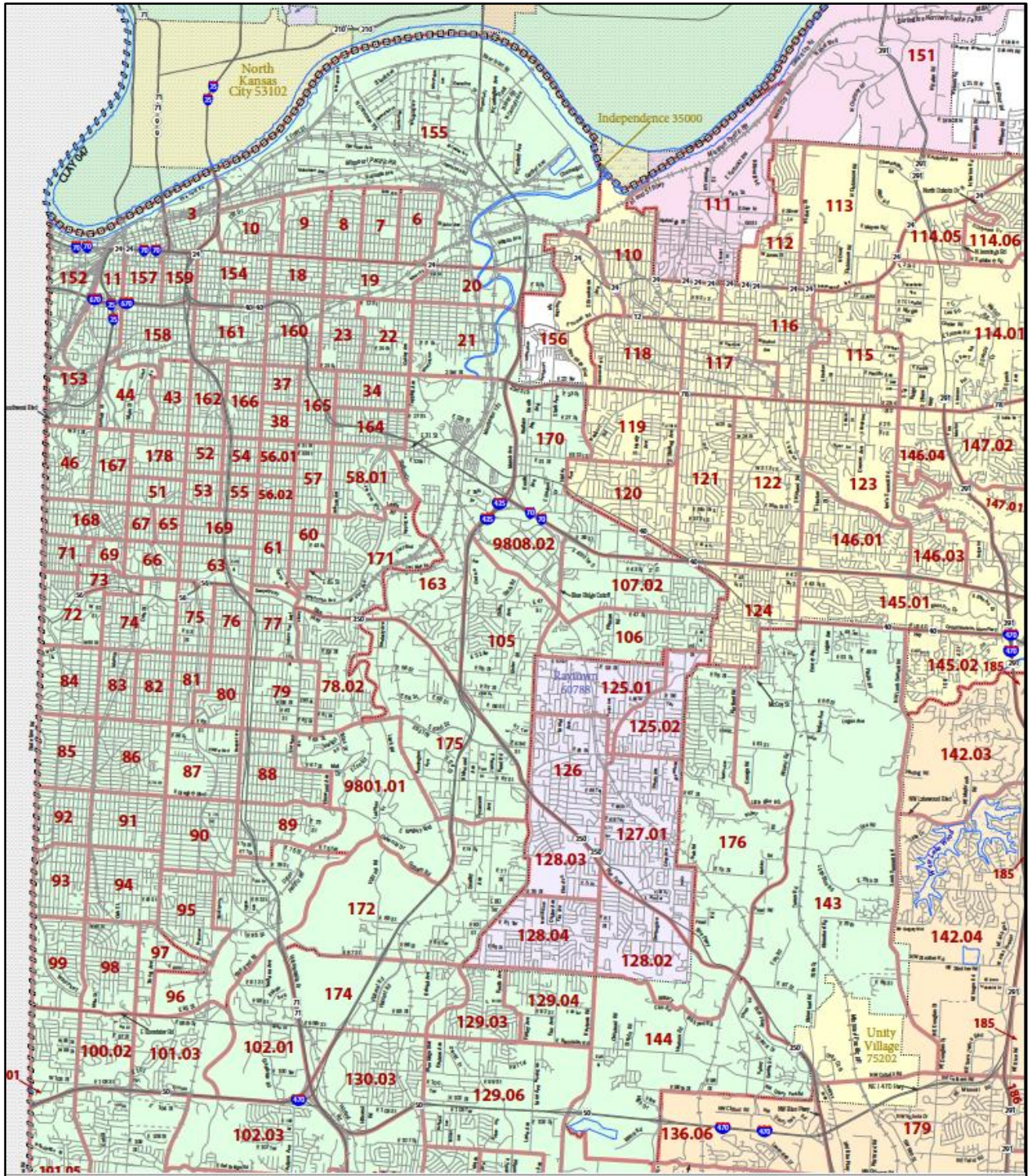


Figure 3. 2010 Census Tract Reference Map: Jackson County, Missouri. Source: Opendata KC, 2014.

CHAPTER 4

THE GREEN IMPACT ZONE OF MISSOURI

The Green Impact Zone is a 150-square-block area in the urban core of Kansas City, Mo., that serves as a national model of place-based investment, demonstrating how a distressed community can be transformed through intense, focused coordination of programs and resources. (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2010b, para. 1)

The Creation of the Green Impact Zone

The Green Impact Zone of Missouri was created out of a combination of need and opportunity. Kansas City, Missouri, like much of the nation, was suffering from a slate of problems in 2009. Across the United States, jobs were scarce and home foreclosures were plentiful. Industry and financial institutions were at risk of collapse. The urban core of Kansas City, Missouri, had suffered decades of disinvestment, and neighborhoods were overrun with joblessness and the poverty, crime, and degraded housing conditions that followed. Urban problems are rarely if ever felt by all residents equally, and in Kansas City the neighborhoods east of Troost Avenue suffered the most; Table 4 compares demographic data for all of Kansas City to that of the urban core and for just a select part of the urban core known as the Green Impact Zone.

An opportunity to address this need came with the creation of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This \$787 billion job-creation bill promised to put Americans to work in doing what needed to be done across the country. According to Section 3 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009),

“The purposes of this act include the following: (1) To preserve and create jobs and promote economic recovery. (2) To assist those most impacted by the recession. (3) To provide investments to increase economic efficiency by spurring technological advances in science and health. (4) To invest in transportation, environmental protection, and other infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits.”

Table 4

Demographic Data for All of Kansas City, the Kansas City Urban Core, and the Green Impact Zone

	Kansas City	Urban Core	Green Impact Zone
Total Population	441,545	187,304	8,374
Black, Non-Hispanic Population	31.01%	53.55%	89.28%
Hispanic Population	6.96%	11.30%	2.03%
White, Non-Hispanic Population	57.63%	30.25%	6.50%
Other Race or Multiracial	4.43%	4.91%	2.20%
Single Parent Households	11.91%	16.04%	24.64%
Persons in Rental Units	36.50%	48.61%	47.94%
Population in Poverty	14.31%	24.89%	30.66%
Median Household Income	\$40,149	\$26,762	\$22,387
Per Capita Income	\$20,777	\$15,351	\$12,239
Households with < \$10K	11.51%	19.73%	26.27%
Households with \$10-20K	13.14%	18.58%	21.82%
Households with \$20-30K	15.04%	18.01%	16.04%
Households with \$30-40K	13.97%	10.54%	9.52%
Households with > \$60K	27.06%	14.66%	10.40%

Note. From Green Impact Zone of Missouri. (2010a, February). *Preliminary baseline data report.*

Specifically, the act would stimulate the economy by creating jobs while investing in “shovel ready projects” in the places that were most affected by the recession. Among the countless local governments, community groups, and companies that sought recovery money was the Green Impact Zone of Missouri.

Congressman Emmanuel Cleaver II of Missouri’s Fifth District is credited as having the initial vision of the Green Impact Zone of Missouri as early as February of 2009. Cleaver cautioned that too often, federal dollars fail to live up to their potential because they get stretched in too many directions. He described the drawback of sharing resources over a large area: “we would have a speck here and a speck there, and afterwards, the taxpayers would question what happened to their money” (Bozorg, 2010, p. 43). The alternative, which he

advocated for, was to target as many of the federal stimulus dollars as possible towards “one of the toughest parts of the city. *The Kansas City Star* labeled one of the tracts [actually ZIP code 64130], the murder factory” (Bozorg, 2010, p. 43).¹¹

The area, bounded by Troost Avenue to the west, Prospect and Swope avenues on the east, 39th Street to the north, and 51st Street to the south, covers parts of five neighborhoods: Historic Manheim Park, 49-63/Troostwood, Ivanhoe, Blue Hills, and Town Fork Creek. Although it was clear that the area that Cleaver had in mind faced major challenges, he argued for its significant potential as well. Both of these qualities are described in Table 5.

Other factors that may have contributed to these specific boundaries include: likelihood of support from council representatives for the area, Cleaver’s familiarity with redevelopment of the area from his history of engagement with the Brush Creek Corridor that cuts through the Green Impact Zone, and the pre-existing plans for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along Troost Avenue and new pedestrian bridge over Brush Creek on Troost Avenue (Bozorg, 2010).

¹¹ For the award winning articles that coined the term “murder factory,” see the three-part series from Tony Rizzo published in the *Kansas City Star*: “Murder Factory, Part 1: 64130, The ZIP Code of Notoriety in Missouri,” *Kansas City Star*, January 24, 2009, A1; “Murder Factory, Part 2: 64130, Decades of blight leave ZIP code 64130 reeling in violence,” *Kansas City Star* January 26, 2009, A4; “Murder Factory, Part 3: KC needs to fight back and “close” the factory,” *Kansas City Star* January 28, 2009, B7. Parts 2 and 3 are available from the Kansas City Star website for a fee.

Table 5

Challenges and Potential of the Site Selected for the Green Impact Zone

Challenges	Potential
37.3% poverty rate	Five strong neighborhood associations.
55% of population has high school education or less.	Five Community Development Corporations (CDCs) ¹²
41% of the housing stock built before 1940	In the area between the Zone and the Country Club Plaza homes range in value between \$500,000 - \$1 million dollars ¹³
\$22,712 median income	Active civic leaders and organizations
53% renters	
One grocery store; limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables	
More than 1,000 vacant lots and many abandoned homes and commercial buildings	

Note: From Green Impact Zone of Missouri. (2013b, p. 4)

Cleaver also had an innovative idea that would simultaneously provide invaluable support and structure to the Green Impact Zone, while granting its residents access to invaluable expertise and to a wide array of partnerships. His idea was to place oversight of the Green Impact Zone of Missouri within Kansas City’s highly respected regional planning organization, the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC). Although some believed that it

¹² A community development corporation is a non-profit organization that is locally based and works to improve the quality of life in poor communities. The CDC may function like a private developer, but it is governed by the community.

¹³ The Country Club Plaza, built in 1922, is often considered to be the earliest automobile oriented regional shopping center and thus the prototype for the postwar American shopping mall

was risky to relinquish his oversight to another body, his decision proved to be a defining moment for the Green Impact Zone.

Positioning the Green Impact Zone within MARC:

provided the proper transparent, reputable, apolitical support and structure needed to springboard the initiative. MARC also provided administrative support such as payroll, grant administration and human resources. MARC, as the Zone's oversight body, also provides connections to a cadre of partners who have been invaluable in constructing a program focused on community transformation. (Green Impact Zone, 2013b, p. 2)

For MARC, supporting the Green Impact Zone was a responsibility and an opportunity. The missions of the Green Impact Zone and MARC are complementary, but the strengths of MARC and the strengths of the Green Impact Zone were different. MARC excels at administrative tasks and federal grant writing, while the Green Impact Zone's grassroots structure allowed greater levels of outreach and engagement. Even though the efforts of the Green Impact Zone were to be focused on a very small part of the metropolitan area MARC oversees, it must have been clear to MARC that any initiative that benefits one part of its region benefits the whole region. Furthermore, it is likely that MARC had the foresight to see that a combined initiative was more likely to receive federal funding than either initiative would individually. Ultimately, federal dollars awarded to the joint efforts of MARC and the Green Impact Zone also were used in projects outside of the Green Impact Zone.

The role of the city of Kansas City, Missouri, cannot be overlooked. City Hall funded the project at \$1.5 million in the first year, which would "provide for a core staff and office space and support a number of neighborhood programs in the zone" (Green Impact Zone,

2009, p. 1). The City's commitment to the Green Impact Zone program signaled a strong network of partners and helped propel the initiative to a very promising beginning.

After MARC had agreed to take on the Green Impact Zone, the latter's organization quickly began to take shape. A string of meetings with community leaders, local government personnel, and select business owners took place between March and September of 2009. The task of these meetings was to ensure that these partners had a voice in the direction of the initiative during this early stage. Whereas MARC is an organization with a regional focus that depends on rotating city and county officials as well as a permanent staff, the Green Impact Zone was created with a highly participatory philosophy. Therefore, engaging residents of the Zone at the earliest possible stage was essential to the success of this initiative. They met to discuss the "vision and mission statements, define policies and determine actions to address priority activities" (Green Impact Zone, 2009, p. 1). The Green Impact Zone was building relationships – relationships that are critical to the success of a grassroots organization – and showing everyone that the Zone's partners would be very supportive of this initiative.

In these early stages, MARC relied heavily upon the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, Brush Creek Community Partners, and Blue Hills Community Services. These three bodies – a neighborhood association, a community advocacy group, and , a community development corporation (CDC), respectively – had paid staff members and the resources to quickly bring together and organize the rest of the community (Bozorg, 2010). This group of three neighborhood organizations grew into the 10 neighborhood partners and nine other partners

(see Table 6) that would remain as the major partners until the end of the Green Impact Zone in 2014.

Table 6

Green Impact Zone Partners

Neighborhood Partners	Other Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49/63 Neighborhood Association • Blue Hills Community Services • Blue Hills Neighborhood Association • Brush Creek Community Partners • Historic Manheim Park Council • Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council • Neighborhood Housing Services • Swope Community Builders • Town Fork Creek Neighborhood Association • Troostwood Neighborhood Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Kansas City, Missouri • Full Employment Council • Kansas City Area Transportation Authority • Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission • Kansas City Police Department • Kansas City Power and Light Company • Metropolitan Energy Center • Missouri Gas Energy • University of Missouri, Kansas City

Note. From *Spatializing Social Equity through Place-based Policies*, by L. Bozorg, 2010 p. 50. Copyright 2010 by Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Through the collaboration of MARC, Emmanuel Cleaver, and the aforementioned partners, the identity of the Green Impact Zone started to become clear.

The Green Impact Zone Model

The next task was to turn these initial meetings into an operational place-based initiative worthy of receiving competitive American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars. The cadre of public officials and neighborhood partners formed the backbone of the Green Impact Zone and worked to attract additional talent and resources in the following months.

Individuals associated with the Green Impact Zone at this time were divided into eight committees and were tasked with developing goals and strategies for obtaining specific types of Recovery Act grants. These committees were the following:

- Coordinating Council
- Employment and Training Committee
- Energy Efficiency Committee
- Housing and Weatherization Committee
- Infrastructure Committee
- Neighborhood Leadership Committee
- Public Safety Committee
- Youth Programs

This exploratory version of the Green Impact Zone was also responsible for creating the official Green Impact Zone vision, guiding principles, and strategies. These core values reflect the highly participatory and sustainable approach that the Green Impact Zone would promote throughout its existence:

Vision: The Green Impact Zone Vision is to develop a sustainable community; one that is environmentally, economically, and socially stronger tomorrow than it is today ...using a comprehensive green strategy...coordinated programs and innovative delivery mechanisms...and intense resident engagement...to more rapidly push community change, build community capacity, and make the Green Impact Zone a place where people want to live, work, and play.

Guiding Principles: The work will be inclusive, with resident participation and representation, community accountability and transparency; The work will be effective, building organizational and community capacity; The work will be efficient, leveraging resources, strategically using resources and fiscally accounting for resources; The work will complement and enhance existing neighborhood goals and activities; The work will cross-pollinate ideas, programs, and people; The work will be evidence-based, using information and data to evaluate the effectiveness of

activities; The work will be targeted so that each block sees significant improvements to lives, homes, and community assets.

Strategies: The zone, in year one, will engage the community in a conversation about what the elements should be in such a sustainability strategy. This discussion will be based on the collection of a wealth of information about the community aided by such institutions as the University of Missouri at Kansas City and the University of Kansas. However, the most critical element of this process is the engagement of the community in a discussion of the kind of neighborhood residents want and what needs to be done to create and sustain that neighborhood. (Bozorg, 2010, p. 51)

A short time after these summer visioning sessions, a valuable connection with PolicyLink was forged. PolicyLink is a national research and advocacy institute that focuses on equitable development. Initially, PolicyLink provided MARC with a \$15,000 grant which financed capacity building for each of the individual neighborhood associations. Subsequent involvement from PolicyLink focused on providing the Green Impact Zone guidance and identifying best practices from around the country (Bozorg, 2010).

The final step before successfully getting the Green Impact Zone off the ground was the hiring of a full-time staff. Because of the types of programs that Cleaver, MARC, and the existing partners had established, the need for full-time staff members was apparent.

According to a 2013 Green Impact Zone white paper:

A full-time staff with a wide experience base is essential for a place-based initiative to have the depth and acceptance in the community required for success. While residents helped craft the vision for the zone and are building their capacity to take on leadership roles, they can't do it all by themselves as volunteers. A full-time staff armed with the experience, education and passion to transform communities is integral in tracking, managing and moving neighborhood initiatives forward. Staff has the ability to manage cross-sector partnerships, mitigate community challenges and provide technical assistance to community partners. (Green Impact Zone, 2013b, p. 2)

The funding for staff members officially came from Kansas City, Missouri, in the form of a \$1.5 million contract. The City, however, received the money from the

discretionary fund for public works managed by Councilwoman Cindy Circo of Kansas City's Fifth District. Part of this contract was the requirement that the Green Impact Zone staff produce a progress report every 45 days.

The first hire was former Assistant City Manager Anita Maltbia for the role of Director of the Green Impact Zone of Missouri. Six more staff members were hired under the combined leadership of MARC and Maltbia: an assistant director, an office administrator, and four community ombudsmen (Bozorg, 2010). The Director and Assistant Director were responsible for developing techniques for achieving organizational goals, while the role of each community ombudsman was to work directly with a specific neighborhood and be its contact person. The ombudsmen were expected to become experts on their neighborhood. One case study illustrates the value of this position very well: on the day the first recipient of a home weatherization grant (a program that is discussed in greater detail later) was scheduled to have her home weatherized, a miscommunication between homeowner and contractor led to the project being delayed. The Green Impact Zone was informed that if the homeowner was not prepared for weatherization within 24 hours, she would not receive any service.

The ombudsman assigned to the neighborhood where the homeowner lived had a year-long history of interacting with the neighborhood association's block captains, volunteers and paid staff. The ombudsman knew the personalities and organizational roles of those involved, and therefore knew who to call on to get things done. The ombudsman was able to use his relationship with the homeowner and association staff person to get the situation resolved quickly.... The homeowner, zone ombudsman and contractor met...[and] resolved the miscommunication and in less than 24 hours the work was back on track (Green Impact Zone, 2013b, p. 11).

After the initial wave of hiring was complete, Congressman Cleaver announced the creation of the Green Impact Zone in a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 1 2009.

Cleaver was joined by many high ranking federal officials: White House Office of Urban Affairs Director Adolfo Carron, Jr., Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, and Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary John Porcari were in attendance. In the announcement, the “zone was framed as a national model for targeted investments, seeking to demonstrate how 150 square blocks of the urban core might be transformed through sustainable reinvestment” (Green Impact Zone, 2013b, p. 4).

Specifically, the model to which Emanuel Cleaver was referring is known as the Green Impact Zone Neighborhood Revitalization Model. It was touted by the Green Impact Zone as a model that can be replicated in neighborhoods across the nation and as representing a model for a comprehensive urban-renewal strategy.

In practice, this model starts with “convening a core team of leaders from neighborhood associations and community development organizations, as well as nonprofit, private and civic partners” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b, para. 1). The model consists of three key elements: scale, people and place, and both sides of the equation (communities and outside organizations).

Scale, according the Green Impact Zone, means “work must be done on a scale large enough to change the market in the community, with a focus on specific projects that can act as catalysts for further development” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b, para. 2). As a key element, scale favors large, visible projects over smaller investments that may attract less attention. The Green Impact Zone’s accomplishments, which are outlined in the next section, reveal a desire and an ability to grab headlines by attracting major investments in large-scale projects. Often called “catalytic projects” or “catalytic investments,” the Green Impact Zone

model is based on the idea that investments at this size are sufficient to attract continued resources from other investors (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2014, pp. 1-2).

In order to successfully revitalize neighborhoods, it is necessary to simultaneously target the “multiple causes of disinvestment” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b, para. 3). In the Neighborhood Revitalization Model, it is required that investments are targeted towards the “physical infrastructure” and the “human fabric”; therefore, people and place (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b, para. 3). Although the previous element, scale, argues for the value of major catalytic investments, it is also essential to ensure that resources are channeled towards residences directly. Investments in the human fabric of the neighborhoods typically took the form of job-skills training, leadership workshops, and community events. The construction of community centers and community job incubators are examples of investments that contribute to both the improvement of the physical infrastructure and the human fabric of the Green Impact Zone.

The Green Impact Zone often acted as a bridge between the communities themselves and outside organizations. It is not possible to rely solely on resources available within the community; it is also necessary to attract “people and organizations who have the necessary resources and expertise to help achieve long-term, sustainable change” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b, para. 4).

An in-depth evaluation of the Green Impact Zone model was submitted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology master’s student Leila Borzog in June of 2010. Her thesis, titled *Spatializing Social Equity through Place-Based Policies: Lessons from the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, in Kansas City, MO*, is about the early portion of the Green

Impact Zone's history. In 2009 and 2010, the time that Bozorg was writing her thesis, the initiative had undertaken very few major projects, and therefore could not be evaluated on much more than goals and statements made by those directly and indirectly involved.

Bozorg (2010) characterized the major strengths of the Green Impact Zone's model as "political will and commitment to equity, a strong coalition-building process, a regional-local organizational structure, attention to the intersection of social and spatial concerns, and the creation of linkages across scales and capacities" (p. 59). This praise is mostly directed towards the areas of need that the Green Impact Zone chose to target and the manner in which the Green Impact Zone utilized its own staff and its partners.

When the Green Impact Zone selected its priorities for neighborhood transformation, it relied heavily on input from neighborhood leaders and other neighborhood representatives. This bottom-up organizational structure is central to the Green Impact Zone's goal of building neighborhood capacity because it trains residents to envision their ideal neighborhood. In a Green Impact Zone promotional video, Director Anita Maltbia stated, "The strongest outcome that we could possibly realize is that we have helped to build capacity within the neighborhoods that leads to sustainability" (Mid-America Regional Council, 2016, n.p.). Engaging the community like this also means the changes that take place in the community are changes that the residents have prioritized and the neighborhoods are moving towards that shared vision of an ideal neighborhood.

From the White House to MARC and Cleaver to Council Members Circo and Riley, Bozorg commends all the people who made resources available to start the Green Impact Zone. It required strong wills and perseverance to take one a project such as this and make

sure it successfully got off the ground. These organizers also deserve recognition for attracting strong support for the initiative in a short period of time. The combination of Cleaver and MARC's reputation with the neighborhood partners' network of supporters led to a very diverse and productive support structure (Bozorg, 2010).

With a staff and an office funded, a model developed, vision codified, and a wide platform of support from the neighborhood in place, the Green Impact Zone was ready to begin the process of comprehensive neighborhood change in Kansas City, Missouri. A series of catalytic investments would garner major headlines, and constant energy would be invested into the human fabric of these communities.¹⁴ By the time it was all over, however, the critics were louder than ever, and even some of those involved felt that they failed to live up to the expectations.

The Green Impact Zone Accomplishments

The Green Impact Zone operated from the announcement in September 2009 until a lack of funding forced them to close on January 24, 2014. In the four-plus years that the Green Impact Zone operated, an investment of \$4.2 million from Kansas City, Missouri generated \$166 million in public and private grants. This money funded numerous projects focused across eight priorities for neighborhood transformation: housing, weatherization, employment and training, public safety and community service, energy and water

¹⁴ National and local articles about the Green Impact Zone include *The Kansas City Star's Plan Aims to Reverse Urban Core's Decline* (Hendricks, 2012), Greenforall.com's *What a Recovery Fueled Green Impact Zone Can Do for a Troubled City* (Grady, n.d.), The Brookings Institution's *Design Snapshot – Kansas City's Green Impact Zone: Targeting ARRA for Neighborhood Uplift* (Muro & Rahman, 2009), and *The Atlantic's Turning Mean Streets into Green Streets* (Merkelson, 2010).

conservation, urban gardening and food, infrastructure, and youth. These eight priorities can be grouped into three strategy areas: Neighborhoods, Economy, and Infrastructure.

Neighborhoods

Bancroft Elementary School was built in 1904 at 4300 Tracy, putting it right in the heart of today's Historic Manheim Park neighborhood. In 1999 Bancroft shut its doors, leaving a gaping hole in an already declining neighborhood. The plan for a Bancroft Elementary renovation dated back to 2008 when a series of meetings between residents and representatives from architectural firm BNIM started exploring ways to revitalize Manheim Park. Together, they identified the school as a potential catalytic project, one that could provide needed housing and a variety of community services as well. According to one architect at BNIM,

Schools are designed and built to be the center of a community, and when they go dark it's a sign that the neighborhood is in serious decline ... Manheim Park, in their collaborative dialogue of discovery ... identified a perfect place for urban acupuncture. (Hendricks, 2014, para. 18).

Less than a year after these exploratory meetings Emanuel Cleaver II announced the creation of the Green Impact Zone.

In early 2011, the Green Impact Zone hosted representatives from the Make It Right Foundation, an organization founded by actor Brad Pitt to build "safe, Cradle to Cradle inspired homes" in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (Make it Right, 2016a). The term "cradle to cradle" describes a manufacturing process that uses materials that can easily be recycled or "down-cycled" and turned into other useful products, thus extending the life of the materials used in the manufacturing process.

According to press releases and statements made by the Green Impact Zone, Brad Pitt's organization was very excited about the work that the Green Impact Zone was doing and was looking for ways to get involved. A Green Impact Zone press release (2012b) stated that "after numerous tours and meetings with Green Impact Zone staff and neighborhood leaders, the foundation focused on the Bancroft School building" (p. 1). Together with partners Dalmark Development Group of Kansas City, Missouri, Neighborhood Housing Services of Kansas City, Inc., BNIM Architects, the Historic Manheim Park Neighborhood Association, and MARC, the project became a reality.

The project would create 50 rent-controlled one-, two-, and three-bedroom units intended for "youth transitioning out of foster care, veterans and low-income families;" 29 in the remodeled school building and 21 in new townhomes to be constructed on the school grounds (Make It Right, 2016b, para. 3) (see Figure 4). The design also called for the school to house a community center boasting "an auditorium, gymnasium, locker rooms, technology lab, job training center, medical clinic, grocery store and other retail space, along with community gardens, a playground, walking trail and police foot patrol office" (Cadena, 2012, para. 5). Like all construction by Make It Right, the Bancroft School redevelopment would be LEED Platinum certified. The proposed design by BNIM won a Social Economic Environmental Design (SEED) award, which recognizes excellence in public-interest design. The Bancroft project was one of six SEED honorees selected from among 45 submissions from 14 countries (Green Impact Zone, 2012b). The Green Impact Zone also worked with community organizations to create a workforce development plan to provide training and

skill development for area residents, employment opportunities on the Bancroft project itself, and capacity building for community organizations (BNIM Architecture, 2012).



Figure 4. *New Townhomes Designed by BNIM*. Source: Thebancroftschool.com, 2016.

The project would cost a total of \$14 million. Along with the Make It Right Foundation’s donation of \$2.3 million, \$1.4 million came from federal and state low-income housing tax credits, \$3 million in federal and state historic preservation tax credits, and \$676,000 in Affordable Housing Assistance Program tax credits. When crews broke ground at 4300 Tracy, Cleaver called it “a momentous day for the Green Impact Zone, the Manheim neighborhood and all of Kansas City,” (Cadena, 2012, para. 10) and Anita Maltbia said,

The Bancroft project is an excellent example of what can happen when needs identified by a community are paired with resources that are willing to strategically invest in them. The Green Impact Zone joins the Historic Manheim Park neighborhood in its appreciation of the many partners who have come forward to not

only develop much needed housing but to also bolster the hope of many for the revitalization of the central core of Kansas City. (Cadena, 2012, para. 15)

The success of the Bancroft School redevelopment (and the involvement of leading man Brad Pitt) garnered national headlines, further bolstering the hope for Kansas City's central core. So much attention was being given to the Manheim Park neighborhood that the Green Impact Zone was worried that outside investors would begin to buy up many tracts of land and hold them until property values climbed high enough to resell them at a tidy profit. To this end, the Green Impact Zone met with the Land Trust and Land Bank of Jackson County, two related government organizations that were "established by state law to sell properties that have failed to sell on the courthouse steps to satisfy unpaid taxes" (Land Trust of Jackson County, 2016, para. 1). These meetings were used by the Green Impact Zone to formally

request that the commission consider community goals when transferring properties in and around the zone to new owners. As more national and local attention is focused on the zone...there are concerns about speculators snapping up Land Trust properties purely for financial gain, without understanding community revitalization goals. (Green Impact Zone, 2012a, p. 2)

Community revitalization goals were centered on the Bancroft School renovation project as a catalyst. The 2012 Manheim Park Development Strategy publication identifies the Bancroft School as the center of a two-square-block area called the Bancroft Activity Center (see Figure 5). The authors explain that the Bancroft Activity Center:

focuses on the Bancroft School redevelopment, the 43rd Street/Troost Avenue Intersection, and the immediately adjacent blocks. This focused concept applies the design principles of the Green Impact Zone and Neighborhood Concepts while incorporating existing building and site conditions, ownership information, known development opportunities, and existing City projects to develop tailored strategies for development and infrastructure. The Bancroft Activity Center concept is an important tool for on-the-ground implementation of the Neighborhood Concept Plan

in one particular location, but it also provides a blue-print for future priority development areas throughout the Green Impact Zone. (BNIM, 2012, p. 11)

The plan called for a combination of renovations and new constructions to take place on the 4300 block of Tracy, the block that faces the new Bancroft School building. A variety of densities and styles of homes were called for. This area was to serve as a model block with the belief that focusing resources in one area of the neighborhood would “create a critical



Figure 5. Renovated Bancroft School Building. Source: Thebancroftschool.com, 2016.

mass of redevelopment that can anchor other infill development throughout the neighborhood” (BNIM, 2012, p. 16). The Bancroft Activity Center Concept also called for an expansion of green space throughout the neighborhood, an emphasis on walkability and bike-ability, access to public transportation, and an increase in mixed-use renovations along the Troost and 43rd Street corridors.

The Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council took on a similar, albeit smaller and less recognized, project involving a blighted school located centrally in its neighborhood. Horace Mann School was located at 39th Street and U.S. Highway 71 (Bruce R. Watkins Drive), and was built before 1900. A nonprofit Christian school then bought and used the property until 1991, when the building was vacated permanently and was subject to vandalism and numerous fires afterward. In 2007 the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, led by Margaret May, began talks with the development company Prairie Dog. Their talks centered on plans to redevelop the school into apartments for seniors. However, disagreements between the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council and Prairie Dog drove the two parties to court, and in 2008 a judge ruled in favor of Ivanhoe's plans to construct senior apartments. Over the next few years, the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council focused on generating the necessary funding until December of 2011, when the old Horace Mann School building caught fire. The fire was severe, and damage was extensive enough to make the building unusable. In 2012 the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, and housing consultant APD announced "plans for a catalyst project along 39th Street.... The 39th Street Gateway would include mixed-income, multi-phased development – including duplexes, senior cottages, and single-family homes – on the former Horace Mann School site" (Green Impact Zone, 2012e, p. 7).

As of June 2016, the Horace Mann School demolition and phases I and II of redevelopment were completed. Phase I included the construction of an Aldi grocery store at 39th and Prospect and the construction of seven duplexes begun in 2013 and was completed by the end of 2015 (Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Greater Kansas City [LISC],

2014). Phase II includes 12 one-story cottages for low-income seniors age 55 or older. Phase III is to focus on acquisition/rehab of vacant abandoned houses and grant-funded home repairs for low-income residents throughout the project area. Phase IV includes construction of mixed-use buildings along 39th Street from Euclid to Brooklyn, with commercial businesses/social services available on the ground floor and residential housing on the upper floors.

The Town Fork Creek and Blue Hills neighborhood associations celebrated the grand opening of the new Mary L. Kelly Community Center on September 17, 2013 (see Figure 6). This facility will perform many functions, including: café, gymnasium, dance studio, computer lab, GED classes and office space for both the Town Fork Creek and Blue Hills neighborhood associations (Green Impact Zone, 2013a). Two businesses began to meet the demands of operating the Mary L. Kelly Center: a catering business and a transportation business. The catering business was created to fill the need for students to be fed during their after-school and summer programs, and the transportation business was formed with the purpose of getting neighborhood children to their activities at the Mary L. Kelly Center. Both businesses have begun to expand. The catering business employs over 20 people and now serves events at the Center and beyond. The transportation business operates a fleet of 22 busses and now serves Hogan Preparatory Academy's student bussing needs (Economic Development Corporation KC, 2016).



Figure 6. Exterior of the Mary L. Kelly Community Center. Source: KCtechschool.com, 2016.

Area residents are able to earn the right to use the facility by assisting the center in one of their many programs. This method, known as Time Banking, encourages a greater level of investment in the success of the center without requiring any financial commitment. The program’s residents can “focus on community outreach, such as the care of the elderly, business development help and home repair” (Time banking, 2016, para 2).

The \$2 million investment in the project came from philanthropists Joe and Jeanne Brandmeyer, founders and former owners of Enturia Inc., an antiseptic company. They chose to name the center after longtime resident and community activist Mary L. Kelly. The Upper Room, a Kansas City non-profit focused on providing out-of-school education programs to low-income families, owns the building. Daily operation is managed by neighborhood leaders and community volunteers. The Mary Kelly Center is the anchor in a “larger initiative to revitalize the economically depressed Blue Hills and [Town Fork Creek]

neighborhoods to improve housing and increase employment opportunities and overall quality of life for residents” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2013a, para. 4).

Economy

On the southern edge of the Green Impact Zone, between Town Fork Creek and 49-63/Troostwood is the Blue Hills neighborhood. During the 1960s this neighborhood shifted from majority Caucasian to 90% African American and is still so today. Blue Hills was hurt badly by high numbers of foreclosures, especially in response to the predatory lending practices that had become more frequent by 2006 and continued until the recession in 2008.

Despite these challenges, the Blue Hills neighborhood is a place with hopeful residents. It is home to not-for-profit Community Development Corporation Blue Hills Community Services (BHCS) and the active Blue Hills Neighborhood Association, making the Blue Hills neighborhood one of the most organized and productive in all of Kansas City. Additionally, the presence of Swope Community Builders and Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance and the fact that Blue Hills is within one of the Local Initiative Support Corporation’s *NeighborhoodsNOW* target areas make this neighborhood even stronger.¹⁵

Blue Hills Community Services saw an opportunity, acquired the four-acre site at 50th and Prospect in 2007 and began working with neighborhood residents, community service organizations, city officials and city staff to create a development plan that would begin to reverse the negative trends impacting the Prospect Corridor and create a statement of reinvestment within the urban core of Kansas City. (Blue Hills Community Services, 2016, para. 1)

¹⁵ *NeighborhoodsNOW* is a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization program from LISC of Greater Kansas City, a local branch of the national organization Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). LISC is one of the largest organizations in the United States designed to provide support to projects revitalizing local communities.

In 2009, Blue Hills, in partnership with LISC’s *NeighborhoodsNOW* staff members, identified economic development and jobs as one of the most pressing issues facing the community. They created a plan to encourage new businesses to locate on Prospect Avenue by creating an adult-workforce training program by the end of 2012. This plan would work in conjunction with an “entrepreneurship program for green companies...that open businesses on Prospect” (Local Initiative Support Corporation, 2009, p. 4).

In 2012 the Green Impact Zone and Blue Hills Community Services announced a \$3.1 million plan to redevelop an over-14,000-square-foot building at 5008 Prospect Avenue as a sustainable business incubator. The selection of the Prospect site was strategic for several reasons. Prospect was, at one time, one of Kansas City’s most thriving commercial corridors, and Blue Hills has long prioritized programs that would restore Prospect’s status as a business hub. The section of Prospect between 49th and 51st, where the incubator is located, is highly visible because of its proximity to Bruce R. Watkins Drive (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Exterior of the 5008 Prospect Business Incubator. Source: “5008: A Great Prospect,” Blue Hills Community Services, 2016.

“In 2006, Greater Kansas City LISC provided the original loan to acquire the building and land at 5008 Prospect. However, before BHCS could move forward with development plans, the economic downturn of 2007 happened” (LISC, 2009, p. 4). Construction at 5008 Prospect Avenue began in August 2012 and was completed in April 2013 (Blue Hills Community Services, 2016) with \$3.1 million in financing from the City of Kansas City’s EnergyWorksKC grant, which was made possible by the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Additional funding was provided by the Community Development Block Grant program, an acquisition and predevelopment loan from Greater Kansas City LISC, and philanthropic support from community partners.

The site is owned by Blue Hills Community Services and offers 7,900 square feet of office space. It operates as a multi-tenant facility, specifically serving small business construction contractors with office space, training and resources to grow their business, and networking with experienced professionals. There is plenty of additional space to provide neighborhood groups with a community meeting space.

The incubator is also meant to foster sustainability. A major focus of the training resources is on how to operate a construction company more sustainably, and by 2015 the contractor incubator assisted nine businesses, with one slot open (Alonzo, 2015). The 5008 Prospect building itself was awarded the LEED Gold standard for its numerous sustainable features including: daylight harvesting technology, occupancy-sensing lighting controls, Energy Star heating and cooling and appliances, a 60% rainwater run-off retention with a 6,500-gallon rain cistern, solar panels, and electric-vehicle charging stations (Blue Hills

Community Services, 2016). These many sustainable features are expected to reduce the cost of operating the facility and keep rent low for small business tenants.

As noted previously, this business incubator is seen as a big step towards a revitalization of the Blue Hills Neighborhood and the Prospect corridor specifically.

According to LISC:

The building will serve as a catalyst for revitalization along the Prospect Corridor and will launch development that will move south connecting two tax increment financial districts. It will be essential to the neighborhood by providing job creation and career development opportunities for low-income residents, training and business development for neighborhood contractors, and community development programs and services. (Mid-America Regional Council, 2009, p. 2)

This incubator also serves as a command center of sorts for the many different revitalization projects going on throughout the community, especially on Blue Hills' northeast-side Wabash Village Urban Renewal Area. As early as 2003, Blue Hills Neighborhood Association was making plans to turn around this largely vacant area of its neighborhood by building "single-family homes, town homes and duplexes, building a new charter school, and reusing the Francis Willard School as senior housing" (LISC, 2006, p. 5). These plans are being carried out, and much of the work is being done by the very contractors that occupy 5008 Prospect. The new 5008 incubator is located within this Wabash Village Initiative, and it therefore "will allow Blue Hills Community Services to fulfill its mission from within the targeted impact area and expand service opportunities with the [5008 business incubator] and additional space for complementary service-based organizations" (Blue Hills Community Services, 2013, p. 4).

Infrastructure

One of the first grants for which MARC and the Green Impact Zone applied was in 2009 for funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. This grant application sought \$88.761 million of the \$48.1 billion that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 set aside for transportation investments. Of the \$88 million that MARC applied for, \$26.20 million was targeted for the Green Impact Zone. Although the majority of the funding would be spent outside of the Green Impact Zone, MARC described the purpose of the grant as a tool to connect the central city to resources throughout the region:

The regional application aims to demonstrate how focused investments in our urban core through the Green Impact Zone and supporting transportation connections will lead to revitalized neighborhoods and expanded economic opportunity regionwide, ultimately providing a national model of place-based, interdisciplinary planning and coordination. (Mid-America Regional Council, 2009, p. 2)

If awarded, the \$26.2 million would fund a “multifaceted investment strategy around sustainability, public safety, stabilization, housing conditions, access to jobs and services and economic vitality” (Mid-America Regional Council, 2009, p. 3). Specifically, the money would be dispersed according to Table 7. The application also showed that if awarded TIGER funding, \$6.4 million dollars would be added from local sources to assist with the Sidewalks/Streetscape/ Transit Improvements and construction/design projects involving Troost Bridge, which borders the Green Impact Zone.

Table 7

Green Impact Zone TIGER Investments

Green Impact Zone TIGER Investments (millions)	
Sidewalks / Streetscape / Transit Improvements	\$8.10
Street Rehabilitation	\$6.00
Traffic Signal Upgrades	\$2.20
Traffic Signal Interconnect	\$1.90
Troost Bridge Replacement	\$8.00
TOTAL	\$26.20

Note. From *Kansas City Regional TIGER Grant Application*, by Mid-America Regional Council, 2009, p. 3.

After reviewing the application, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded MARC a \$50 million TIGER grant. Although the total funding was less than requested, the amount slated for improvements within the Green Impact Zone remained at \$26.20 million. This federal commitment to fully funding the projects within the Green Impact Zone signaled a belief in the potential of this model.

The Green Impact Zone’s improvements implemented many of the necessary elements of a successful network of hybrid-electric rapid commuter buses. Crumbling sidewalks, curbs, and driveways dissuaded residents from walking throughout the zone and endangered pedestrians. More than 11 miles of new sidewalks and walkways now lead to 18 updated transit stops featuring brand new amenities including “shelters, benches, real-time signs, bus pull-outs and pads, and solar lighting” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016c,

para. 4). These improvements take place along the city’s highest ridership corridor, including the Green Impact Zone (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b).

Those driving in the Zone benefit from the 22.9 miles of streets and curbs that were resurfaced and rebuilt with TIGER money. Traffic filters through the Zone more efficiently due to the implementation of 12 new traffic signals and 14.1 miles of signal interconnection to facilitate traffic flow (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2014).

The final project to be completed with TIGER dollars was the Troost Avenue vehicular/pedestrian bridge (see Figure 8). Troost’s original bridge over Brush Creek was built as part of the Federal Highway Act of 1956. This badly deteriorated, poured-cement overpass had very narrow margins for pedestrians and was an example of the car-centric designs of that era. Its replacement, constructed by HNTB with artistic support from the architectural firm El Dorado, Inc. and lighting designer Derek Porter Studio, was built with the motto “it’s more than just a bridge.” This motto’s meaning is twofold. In addition to the construction of a bridge, the HNTB-led project called for an array of improvements to the surrounding site, including

1,200 feet of intersection improvements at both Troost Avenue and Volker Boulevard; channel improvements; a new pedestrian bridge over Brush Creek; and construction of nearly 3,000 feet of a 10-foot-wide concrete multiuse path, reflecting pools and rain gardens that create an urban “river walk” along Brush Creek. (Feuerborn, 2012, p. 1)

The channel improvements were especially overdue, having been stalled due to lack of funding since the study following the fatal flooding of Brush Creek in 1977 (Feuerborn, 2012).



Figure 8. Troost Avenue Bridge at 48th Street Crossing over Brush Creek. Source: El Dorado website, eldo.us, 2012).

Although Troost Avenue and the new bridge run north and south, this project was presented as an opportunity to build a much needed “bridge” between the neighborhoods east and west of Troost. Given that Troost has long been considered Kansas City’s most infamous racial and economic dividing line, the Green Impact Zone and its partners used the construction of Troost Bridge as a symbol for connecting communities on either side of Troost, even though it did not really do so. The completion of the project was celebrated at the “Meet Me at the Bridge” street festival on May 5, 2012. The Green Impact Zone’s website described the setting: “the setting of this event on Kansas City’s racial and economic dividing line symbolizes how communities can come together to improve their quality of life

with bridged understanding, cooperation and focused intent to transform neighborhoods into sustainable places” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2012d, para. 4).

The materials and design also invoked a spirit of bringing people together.

By enhancing the barrier that separates cars from people, the team was able to break down the barrier between people and the surrounding site. To that end, the architects lined the perimeter of the bridge with 10-foot-tall, five-ply laminated glass panels—held in place by embedded stainless steel hardware and compression clamp plates—enclosing an 8-foot-wide poured-in-place sidewalk on the western edge, and a 10-foot-wide walkway on the east. Animating the experience, convex reflective stainless steel panels are affixed at ground level to heavy concrete dividing walls that separate these pedestrian zones from the central traffic lanes and create a fun-house mirror effect, which bus passengers see reflected in the glass panels from their elevated seats. Embedded linear LEDs provide pedestrian lighting—their effect amplified by the glass and steel panels at night. (Troost Bridge: El Dorado, 2013, para. 2)

Another early Green Impact Zone project was the Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program (LIWAP). Weatherization, according to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program,

[d]iffers in many ways from what is commonly called “weatherizing your home.” The latter involves low-cost improvements like adding weather-stripping to doors and windows to save energy. These measures made up the services WAP provided in its early years and are likely responsible for the program's name. Today, WAP's weatherization services consist of cost-effective energy efficiency measures for existing residential and multifamily housing with low-income residents. Under this definition, it includes a wide variety of energy efficiency measures that encompass the building envelope, its heating and cooling systems, its electrical system, and electricity consuming appliance (Energy.gov, n.d., para. 5)

For the purposes of weatherizing homes in the Green Impact Zone, \$4.2 million in federal stimulus was awarded to MARC and the Green Impact Zone through the Missouri Department of Energy in 2009. This money funded the Green Impact Zone’s Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program, the purpose of which was to provide homeowners with long-term savings on energy bills while simultaneously reducing the carbon footprint of the

neighborhood. Additionally, the newly created jobs as energy auditors, construction workers, and related laborers, and customer service representatives were to be filled by residents of the Zone.

A household was required to fill out an application in order to be considered for weatherization assistance. In order to qualify, a household needed to have an annual income below the maximum annual income allowed based on the number of people in the household, for example, a household of four, to qualify, would have a maximum income of \$47,100. If a household's income qualified, an auditor would visit the home to perform a full inspection to determine what changes and renovations were needed and what would be covered by the program. After the audit, the weatherization work was ordered and performed by the contractors. All work was subject to a second audit and quality check to ensure the resident received the necessary work.

A program that began with the promise to weatherize every home in the Green Impact Zone in one year fell very short of that goal. That promise, made by Congressman Cleaver, was made with a combination of misunderstandings and assumptions. The LIWAP was delayed months because it lacked the information required to determine a prevailing wage, a requirement for all public works projects under the Davis-Bacon Act.¹⁶ Also, Cleaver's plan to target Missouri Department of Energy dollars to the Green Impact Zone alone was determined to be impossible under current law. That funding was required to be spent across

¹⁶ The Davis-Bacon Act requires contractors for federal or federally assisted construction projects to pay production workers no less than prevailing wages and benefits. The Department of Labor, which administers the Act, defines "prevailing wage rate" as (a) The rate of wages paid in the area in which the work is to be performed, to the majority of those employed in that classification in construction in the area similar to the proposed undertaking; (b) In the event that there is not a majority paid at the same rate, then the rate paid to the greater number; *Provided*, Such greater number constitutes 30% of those employed; or (c) in the event that less than 30% of those so employed receive the same rate, then the average rate.

the entire city, which limited what could be spent on homes in such a small area of Kansas City. Beyond all these delays and bureaucratic hurdles, it was eventually discovered that many of the homes in the Green Impact Zone were not eligible to receive LIWAP services. Per ARRA regulations, if a home had been a recipient of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development after September 30, 1994, it was disqualified from weatherization programs (Reames, 2016).

Significant delays resulted from these numerous obstacles, leading the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to reduce MARC's funding from \$4.5 million to \$2.7 million. A few months later (September 2011), while the Missouri DNR continued to doubt MARC's competency in this matter, it terminated its contract with MARC entirely, citing "production and oversight issues" (Helling, 2011). The City of Kansas City was given the contract and much of the unspent grant money. However, the transferred stimulus money needed to be spent less than six months after being transferred to the City or it would be lost.

Of the homes in the Green Impact Zone that would have benefited from weatherization (1,000 or more homes), only a fraction of them were weatherized. The exact number of homes that received treatment, however, is contested. According to the infographic released by the Green Impact Zone in its final days, "329+" homes were weatherized. In an article published by *The Kansas City Star* after the Green Impact Zone closed its doors, Rick Montgomery (2014) wrote that fewer than 200 homes received weatherization treatment, and that the LIWAP cost a total of \$2.7 million.

In 2009 Kansas City Power and Light (KCP&L), the city's electrical company, was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy through the American Recovery and

Reinvestment Act for the purpose of creating a “smart grid demonstration area” covering all of the Green Impact Zone and beyond. The full demonstration area was to serve 19,960 individuals in 11,265 homes, with the Green Impact Zone accounting for 8,374 of the total individuals (42%) and 2,897 (26%) of the homes. The project cost a total of \$48 million, with \$24 million coming from the federal grant and another \$24 million matching investment by KCP&L and partners (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2012c).

Starting with a state of the art “SmartSubstation,” the Green Impact Zone Smart Grid Demonstration project is the first “end-to-end SmartGrid” in Kansas City. “Smart” is used here to describe the ability of the system to provide energy more efficiently than a standard grid while also providing real-time feedback about each home’s energy use. The term end-to-end signifies that all of the old system has been removed and a new “smart” system has been fully constructed.¹⁷ An end-to-end smart grid is the most efficient way of providing energy in Kansas City. This grid is also valuable because it can “accommodate new sources of renewable and distributed energy supply” as it becomes available (KCP&L SmartGrid Pilot and Energy Optimizer Program, 2010, p. 4). To capitalize on the grid’s ability to provide real-time feedback, homes were equipped with “smart meters.” These in-home devices track and record all energy usage for a household, providing customers with the tools to manage their usage and therefore reduce their electrical bills. This system results in money saved on monthly energy bills and reduces the carbon footprint of each home, while educating zone residents about the value of reducing their energy usage (KCP&L SmartGrid Pilot and Energy Optimizer Program, 2010).

¹⁷ Energy is generated from SmartGeneration and through a SmartSubstation it travels through SmartDistribution to SmartEndUse (“KCP&L SmartGrid Pilot and Energy Optimizer Program,” 2010, p. 4).

Another major piece of the SmartGrid Demonstration project is the SmartGrid Innovation Park. Emphasizing the “demonstration” in SmartGrid Demonstration, this educational park is located at 4724 Tracy Avenue in the Ivanhoe Neighborhood. According to the Green Impact Zone’s blog:

The SmartGrid Innovation Park contains a walking path and sitting plaza that surround a large, sophisticated lithium ion battery and a solar panel array — both of which help the grid meet the energy needs of people who live and work within the SmartGrid Demonstration Area. It also houses an electric vehicle charging station and an information kiosk. The park is open seven days a week and admission is free. (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2012c, para. 4).

In October 2011, a related project was completed. The Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, located at 4747 Flora Ave in the Blue Hills Neighborhood, is the site of the largest solar energy system in the entire metro area. Not only will this 100kW system generate power for the school, it will also allow students and teachers to learn about the way solar power works. In total, 14,000 smart meters were provided free of charge to homes and businesses in the Green Impact Zone Smart Grid Demonstration area.

Human Capital

Major construction projects such as the ones described above often get the most attention from those outside the community, but for Zone residents who are struggling, direct training and assistance is necessary. The Green Impact Zone offered a variety of programs that invested in the men, women, and children living in the Zone because it was understood that the only way to transform the future of this community was through the residents. According to the Green Impact Zone website, “Successful community redevelopment requires that the multiple causes of disinvestment be tackled simultaneously. Investment in the physical infrastructure of the community cannot bring about transformation without also

investing in the human fabric of the community” (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016b, para 3).

When the Green Impact Zone began, it was estimated that there was up to 50% unemployment in some parts of it. Unemployment and underemployment had led to 37% of residents living in poverty and a median household income of \$22,712 (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2014). Because finding jobs for residents was such a critical part of the effort to transform this community, many of the programs the Green Impact Zone offered focused on employment. The largest of such programs was the Essential Employability Skills (EES) Workshops.

With partners Metropolitan Community Colleges, the Full Employment Council, and local businesses, the Green Impact Zone developed the curriculum for the Essential Employability Skills workshops.¹⁸ First offered in 2011, this curriculum was presented as a weeklong series of workshops that taught fundamental skills necessary for employment in any field. Topics included: proper business appearance, resume-writing skills, computer literacy, interviewing skills, and professional attitude and work ethic. The EES program’s focus on these skills, sometimes referred to as “soft skills,” is intentionally complementary to

¹⁸ The Full Employment Council, according to its website (2014), was created through the efforts of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and the counties of Jackson, Cass, Clay, Platte, and Ray. In 1984, a study recommended the consolidation of all federally-funded employment and training programs into one organization. Toward that end, in October of 1986, the Urban Employment Network, the Kansas City National Alliance of Businesses, the City of Kansas City, Missouri Private Industry Council Administration (PICA), and the Full Employment Council (FEC) were merged into one entity. The reorganized FEC serves as the one-stop operator and fiscal agent for the combined federal job-training efforts (Full Employment Council, 2014)

other “hard skills” programs offered by organizations such as the Full Employment Council and Institute for Workforce Innovation.¹⁹

One such “hard skills” program that was directly affiliated with the Green Impact Zone’s EES program was the Metropolitan Energy Center’s (MEC) courses on environmental remediation and abatement. Completion of MEC’s five-week intensive course was directly followed by enrollment in the one-week EES program, providing participants with the knowledge and training to get hired in a job that offered a career path in the field of environmental remediation. The Green Impact Zone offered a total of eight Essential Employability Skills Workshops that resulted in a total of 133 graduates.

Another job placement program that the Green Impact Zone developed was the hosting of the Job Fair Tent at the annual event of Convoy of Hope at Swope Park. The Convoy of Hope is an international faith-based program based in Springfield, Missouri, that provides food, clothing, and health services for at-risk families. The Green Impact Zone identified a strategic overlap between those attending the Convoy of Hope events in Kansas City and the Green Impact Zone residents for whom it sought to provide career services. The job-fair tent at the Convoy of Hope was developed to capitalize on this complementarity. Visitors to the tent sat one-on-one with human resources professionals to develop a professional resume; they were provided a mock-interview experience, were signed up for an e-mail account if needed, submitted online applications for employment, and finished by

¹⁹ The Institute for Workforce Innovation is a workforce training organization based in Kansas City’s Metropolitan Community College network. According to MCC’s website (2016 para. 4), “for workers, the Institute offers short-term training, certificate programs, job placement services, professional development and personal development... For businesses, the Institute offers an array of consulting services from assessment, recruitment, quality management, database solutions, and customized training, boasting the area’s only OSHA Training Institute Education Center”.

meeting with representatives from local businesses that were actively seeking to hire participants.

Another important piece of long-lasting grassroots community transformation is building community capacity, which involves finding potential leaders in the community and training them to fulfill their potential. The Green Impact Zone used the same curriculum developed by the Mid-America Regional Council with the city of Kansas City to offer a free slate of leadership training courses. Residents could take one or more of these courses and would receive a certificate for each two-hour session completed. Two hundred seventy-five residents enrolled in at least one class, and 59 completed all five. The Green Impact Zone credits this program for finding and developing some of the most effective community volunteers, and the neighborhood associations benefited as well.

Other programs included the NEXUS summer youth programs that were designed to encourage teenagers to explore career and entrepreneurship opportunities in fields of environmental protection and energy. The students were required to attend classroom sessions and field trips designed to expose them to professionals working in those fields. The Green Impact Zone also hosted multiple Citizens' Police Academies. Hosted twice, each session was a series of classes and field trips held on seven consecutive Saturdays. This program had been offered regularly by the Kansas City Police Department for some time, but was offered only at the Regional Police Academy building (located at 6885 NE Pleasant Valley Road, over 13 miles to the northeast), which made it very unlikely that any Zone resident would attend. The Green Impact Zone successfully negotiated with the Kansas City Police Department to host the academy in the Zone in the summer of 2012. The Citizens'

Police Academy, “operates on the premise that informed, educated residents will be more supportive of police officers and promote safety in their communities” (Citizens’ Police Academy course ..., 2012).

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON THE GREEN IMPACT ZONE OF MISSOURI

When the Green Impact Zone of Missouri was announced in March of 2009, it was heralded by many across the nation as an excellent example of the Federal government's place-based strategy for urban reinvestment. High profile support came from the White House in an August 2009 memo and continued when Anita Maltbia, Director of the Green Impact Zone, attended the January 2010 State of the Union Address as a guest of the First Lady. The nationwide recognition of the Green Impact Zone led to it being commonly referred to as a "national model," as in March 2010 when Federal Transit Administration Deputy Administrator Therese McMillan said: "This project has become a national model of how a federal investment will assist a community in an economic decline and transform the same 150 square blocks into a thriving, sustainable neighborhood" (Federal Transit Administration, 2010, "Livability lives in the Midwest" section).

Before long, the national narrative about the Green Impact Zone began to change. Following well-documented challenges surrounding the home weatherization program in 2010 and 2011, one Kansas City weekly reflected that "The Green Impact Zone was suddenly being reframed as a story of unfulfilled potential" (Bender, 2013, p. 3). By the time the Green Impact Zone closed its doors in 2014, the promising future had given way to what most national critics considered a lost opportunity. In a *Time* magazine article, David Von Drehle pointed out what he thought were examples of money being spent on the wrong projects in the Green Impact Zone: "ARRA has left the Green Impact Zone ready for the day when poor and working class Kansas Citians start driving electric cars. But it doesn't seem to

have done much to generate the jobs they need to pay for new low-carbon buggies” (von Drehle, 2014, para. 8).

Somewhere between the early supporters’ lofty aspirations and the critics’ derisive retrospectives is the reality of the Green Impact Zone of Missouri. The initiative could have gone more smoothly, could have been executed more efficiently, and Congressman Cleaver was right when he said that those in charge “left tens of millions of federal dollars on the table.” On the other hand, hundreds of millions of federal dollars were successfully leveraged for the Green Impact Zone neighborhoods, and many public/private partnerships were established under the leadership of the Green Impact Zone. Partnerships between neighborhoods also blossomed during the Zone’s lifetime: Sandra Hayes, a past president of the Historic Manheim Park Association, was quoted in the *Kansas City Star* saying, “If the Green Impact Zone hadn’t happened, these five neighborhoods would never have worked in concert the way we have for a common good...I don’t see any reason for that to fall apart” (Montgomery, 2014, para. 13).

A fair evaluation of the Green Impact Zone must take into account that changing the trajectory of any area, but especially an area with decades of disinvestment, takes time. To judge ultimate success or failure at this point, seven to eight years after the Green Impact Zone was conceived, is still premature. One sentiment that many involved in the Zone shared was a belief that it took decades of disinvestment for these neighborhoods to become what they were, and it will take decades of strategic investment for this area to see its full potential. What follows is not an attempt to label the initiative a success or failure, but an opportunity for those who were deeply involved in the Green Impact Zone to reflect on their

personal experiences with the initiative. Regardless of how the reputation of the Green Impact Zone changes over time, the honest assessments of those involved should be used by future place-based initiatives as a learning opportunity.

Correspondence with personnel involved with the zone was conducted during the first half of 2016. The respondents were promised they would remain anonymous to ensure that they could speak openly about their experiences without repercussions. The first round of questionnaires went to people with a range of different experiences with the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, including residents living in the area, area organizers, politicians, and members of the Green Impact Zone initiative. Those who responded to the first round of questionnaires recommended new people who should be contacted. This method, sometimes referred to as the “snowball sampling” method, helped ensure that enough people were contacted and that those who were contacted represented a range of Green Impact Zone partners. In total, 27 individuals were contacted using this method, and 13 of them provided responses.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) was an 11-question survey; the questions ranged from the general, about grass-roots community development, to the specifics about the Green Impact Zone of Missouri. The questions were designed to obtain the opinions of the respondents on a variety of topics such as: place-based investment vs. people-based investment; minority neighborhoods; community engagement and resident involvement in the fate of an area; and an assessment of the Green Impact Zone’s goals, successes, failures, and legacy. The questionnaire ended with a request for the respondent to recommend other people to be contacted.

People vs. Place

At the center of the Green Impact Zone model is a belief that investing time, money, and energy into the built environment and neighborhood residents is a powerful way of transforming a place. Place-based investment is not universally supported as a model of community development, but it did have strong support from the Federal government during the years the Green Impact Zone was in operation. Those, such as Barack Obama, who favor place-based investment over direct payments to individuals in poverty tend to argue that investing in a place is more likely to have longer-term and larger-scale impacts on the neighborhood and its residents.

From discussions with respondents about the goals and effectiveness of place-based investment I came to appreciate that their experiences left them with favorable opinions of the Green Impact Zone model. Everyone expressed a belief that resources will have a greater impact on the long-term health and well-being of an area if they are pooled together and invested in large-scale projects, such as those overseen in the Green Impact Zone. Multiple respondents argued that place-based investment was more equipped to tackle the many interrelated issues that face American urban poverty and disinvestment. One respondent that averred for this belief stated,

Place-based initiatives attempt to address all of the many dimensions of community decay as an interrelated whole. You cannot fix housing if the people living in the housing do not have jobs so they have an income to maintain them. It is hard to stay healthy if the neighborhood does not encourage folks to exercise by providing sidewalks and parks and the neighborhood is safe. It is not enough to address one dimension; you really have to address all of the dimensions at once. Of course, this is very difficult in terms of resources, complexity, and the time it [takes] to gain success. (RESPONDENT #12, 2016)

During its existence, the Green Impact Zone operated as a facilitator between the local community and sources of funding, such as grants and private businesses. No major redevelopment project was executed by the Green Impact Zone without the close partnership of neighborhood organizations and community development corporations. The Green Impact Zone boundaries were chosen because of the active and able neighborhood organizations in the area, and from the beginning it was clear that the fate of the Green Impact Zone initiative was closely connected to its ability to work with these groups. Respondents were unanimously in support of a model that emphasizes local groups, and typically cited their intimate knowledge of the neighborhood, ability to generate involvement and feedback, and the fact that they had the long-term interests of the neighborhood in mind more than any other person or group would have. One individual described the ideal model as one in which

money should be channeled to existing neighborhood organizations that have grown out of the neighborhoods; these organizations should have a plan and the capacity to apply the funding (and be accountable) in ways that result in re-development, sustainability of the neighborhood, including working with the residents, building capacity, and ensuring long-term growth/sustainability. (RESPONDENT #9, 2016)

These groups benefited from the relationship with increased funding, new learning experiences, and increasing their profile within the community. On the other hand, the Green Impact Zone model required lots of citizen engagement and feedback in order to be successful, and the local groups were able to provide that.

Community Engagement

From the inception of the Green Impact Zone, the unwavering central tenet of the model was community engagement. Speaking generally about creating lasting change in a community, one respondent wrote that residents

have to be at the center of any initiative focused on their community. First, they have insights about the neighborhood that no one else has. They have to be at the center of redevelopment efforts or they will not in the end benefit from the redevelopment. Their role is to review plans and participate in the programming. It is about creating a community. (RESPONDENT #11, 2016)

This response was not unique, either; everyone agreed that residents are the most important piece of sustainable redevelopment of a neighborhood. The timeline of resident-driven community development was laid out by another respondent, who wrote,

Residents are the centerpiece in re-developing their neighborhoods. Initially their voice is necessary to articulate the challenges of the past from their perspective and provide input on their hopes and visions for the future. Resident involvement is paramount to crafting strategy to meet development goals as well as being involved in sustaining gains from an initiative. When an initiative or program is over the resident must still “own” the vision and the change. (RESPONDENT #4, 2016)

When asked about how involved residents were in the Green Impact Zone’s decision-making process, everyone believed that residents were very involved. This level of engagement represents an enormous victory for the Green Impact Zone and the potential of the Green Impact Zone model, because anything less than very high levels of involvement would have rendered the initiative a failure by its own standards. Before paid staff were even hired, residents and neighborhood leaders met to identify the needs of the neighborhood, which grew into the focus areas of the Green Impact Zone. After staff were hired, residents and leaders of the neighborhood organizations continued to be involved, identifying priorities, setting goals, and participating in initiatives. In fact, the input from the neighborhood was taken so seriously that one respondent suggested they were able to change the very nature of the organization: “Residents actually decided what the main issues the Zone should focus on. Because of the residents’ voice the Green Impact Zone evolved from a

more environmentally focused initiative to one that focused on primarily quality of life goals” (RESPONDENT #4, 2016).

The emphasis on community engagement continues to provide dividends for the neighborhood, even though the Green Impact Zone office closed on January 24, 2014. According to responses, residents continue to show an increased interest in the fate of their neighborhood when compared to the years leading up to the Green Impact Zone. Looking beyond the boundaries of the Green Impact Zone, one respondent wrote, “This engagement helped in building community capacity, demonstrating the value of the work to city leaders,” (RESPONDENT #9, 2016), suggesting that the community engagement model may have proven itself to leaders beyond the Green Impact Zone.

Predominantly Minority Neighborhoods

The area that became the Green Impact Zone has been shaped by a history of segregation and discrimination. As a result, the Green Impact Zone was an initiative that dealt with neighborhoods that were predominantly African American. Unique challenges and opportunities result from working in these conditions, and through the correspondence people were asked to discuss their experiences with a community development initiative such as the Green Impact Zone in neighborhoods with a history of segregation and disinvestment. Respondents acknowledged that some disadvantages of a homogenous neighborhood included a lack of “perspectives and potentially access to different resources. [Diversity] also provides residents of the neighborhood with a picture of the larger region and how to work with folks with different perspectives” (RESPONDENT #12, 2016). Most respondents, however, saw many advantages to operating with residents that share “a strong cultural

connection and are therefore more likely to buy in to a community-wide effort”

(RESPONDENT #4, 2016). A cultural connection among residents was cited by another respondent, who wrote:

In the case of the Green Impact Zone, the value of the neighborhoods being predominately minority is that the residents and neighborhood associations could relate to one another. There was still a high level of diversity within these minority neighborhoods as it relates to perspective, education, and income level, but not having to navigate the dynamics of racial diversity helped the focus be on quality of life issues. In this situation, the neighborhoods were predominately African Americans, which lends to a strong cultural connection. (RESPONDENT #2, 2016)

Green Impact Zone Model: Goals and Mission

The above discussions are based on a series of general questions that, although they were relevant to understanding the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, were not specifically about the Zone. Respondents were then asked specific questions about the Green Impact Zone. These questions were designed to give those interviewed a chance to say, in their own words, what the Green Impact Zone’s successes and failures were and what the legacy of the initiative should be. Also, they were encouraged to make suggestions for future institutions that might consider using the Green Impact Zone’s model.

For many on the outside of the Green Impact Zone, the goals and mission were not easily defined, nor did they always seem consistent. Based on the responses from those who worked with the Zone, however, there does seem to be a clear understanding of what the initiative was trying to do and why. The responses to the question, “What do you think were the goals of the Green Impact Zone, and how well did the Green Impact Zone accomplish these goals?” bear out this observation. It is not much of a surprise that all of the answers to this question acknowledged the place-based nature of the Green Impact Zone, usually with

the responses explicitly using the term “place-based.” More surprising is the frequency of answers that mentioned that the goal was something like to catalyze foundational projects which have the potential to change the market dynamics of the community. Respondents also emphasized the focus that the Zone placed on increasing the capacity of neighborhood organizations to make positive change. Many felt that as a result of these efforts, the attitude of the residents changed from one of hopelessness to one of possibility. Others said that it changed the dialogue of how to accomplish change by involving an entire community (RESPONDENT #10, 2016, RESPONDENT #6, 2016).

Some responses were not as celebratory. The respondents who weren’t as impressed with the Green Impact Zone didn’t have anything bad to say about the process or the model, but they believed the promise of the zone was never realized. These respondents could see that everyone involved with the Green Impact Zone worked hard and had good intentions, but thought “it accomplished a number of individual projects, but did not accomplish its goal of transforming the community and its residents through a multi-dimensional place-based strategy” (RESPONDENT #8, 2016).

Green Impact Zone Model: Encouraging Investment

From a small investment by the city of Kansas City (of \$4.2 million) and a few partners, more than 166 million dollars in federal grants and private investments were either facilitated by the Green Impact Zone concept or came about as a result of zone partnerships (Green Impact Zone of Missouri, 2016a). No amount of money, however, would guarantee that the zone was a success. Without the benefit of factors such as time, leadership, and community participation, investments can have less impact on the quality of life of the

residents than expected. To explore these questions, the interviewees were asked, “How effective was the Green Impact Zone at leveraging public investment in the community to encourage long-term improvements in neighborhood quality of life characteristics such as housing, employment opportunity, or resident health? Please explain your answer.” Their responses show that even those closest to the Green Impact Zone cannot say with certainty what kind of long-term impact they expect from the short-lived initiative.

It shouldn't be difficult to imagine how an introduction of over \$166 million could change the trajectory of a relatively small part of Kansas City such as the Green Impact Zone; increased assistance, up-to-date infrastructure, and valuable education/training are only some of the things that Green Impact Zone leveraged investments went towards. Investments, however, rarely come without strings attached, and the money that went towards the zone was no different. At least \$100 million came from federal funding, mainly through the ARRA, which was to be used on specific projects (Green Impact Zone, 2016a). The Green Impact Zone of Missouri, it seems, pursued nearly every opportunity for federal funding, not all of which had the potential to significantly benefit the residents. Stated one respondent:

The Green Impact Zone leveraged a considerable amount of public investment, mainly through the federal stimulus program. However, much of the money came targeted to specific federal priorities that did not necessarily match with the needs and desires of the zone. For example, the zone drew over \$25 million in DOE money matched by a similar amount of private money for the Smart Electrical Grid. However, this had little impact on the community's priorities. (RESPONDENT #12, 2016)

Surprisingly, some of the least expensive investments were the most popular; according to the responses provided, job and leadership training for residents, and capacity development for neighborhood groups showed the largest early returns and had the greatest

chance to change the neighborhood's future. These answers usually came from individuals who described the Green Impact Zone as a "facilitator of relationships." This role was to "bring attention to the zone, increase the capacity of community members and give them hope in the possible, focus some federal resources to improve physical conditions," or to "bring partners and developers to the table; identify unique resources that partners could secure; bring national people (Brad Pitt) and resources to the table" (RESPONDENT #13, 2016). Those who favored the facilitator view also argued, "It was never a goal [of the Green Impact Zone] to raise all the funds to change the whole community" (RESPONDENT #5, 2016).

Although the total dollar amount leveraged on behalf of the community seems like a lot, the long-term impact of the money may disappoint. A lot of money in a short time may be less impactful than if that money were spread out over a longer period, especially if it can be spent more strategically that way. Also, in the opinion of one respondent, "I don't believe the Green Impact Zone existed long enough to truly see long-term quality of life improvements. The foundation was set with the programs and connections to opportunity but it's difficult to quantify them as there weren't long-term tracking mechanisms in place" (RESPONDENT #4, 2016). Another respondent lamented that some of the most important issues facing the community went woefully under-invested "There were limited funds secured for housing renovation/development and more was needed in education and workforce development" (RESPONDENT #1, 2016). Because so much of the money was earmarked, and because there was no long-term tracking mechanism, it is unlikely that the

money went as far as it could have, and that the impact of these investments will ever be fully understood.

Green Impact Zone Model: Why Isn't It Still in Operation?

Changing the trajectory of a neighborhood cannot be done overnight, or even in a few years. It took decades of neglect for Historic Manheim Park, Ivanhoe, Troostwood, Blue Hills, and Town Fork Creek to get to where they were, and it will take many years and significant effort to restore these areas. The Green Impact Zone of Missouri was successful at bringing money and attention to these neighborhoods and had the support of the city and the residents. Why, then, isn't the Green Impact Zone still in operation? Respondents were asked to give some insight; specifically, they were asked to answer the question, "The Green Impact Zone initiative was awarded millions of dollars and yet it closed its doors after about 5 years. Why do you think the Green Impact Zone was stopped/defunded, and what could it have done differently to still be in operation today?"

The first answer to this question, while true, isn't satisfying: the Green Impact Zone was never intended to last longer than a few years. Although it may be true that the zone was conceived as a mechanism for attracting federal stimulus opportunities, simply saying that the zone was not supposed to last forever misses the point of the question and does not tell the complete story. It does not tell the complete story because the end date was always flexible, up to those willing and able to fund such an initiative. As one respondent wrote, "Based on my understanding the Green Impact Zone was designed to last for 2 years to maximize the Federal Stimulus funding opportunities. Due to the amount of progress, it was funded beyond the original timeline" (RESPONDENT #7, 2016). Two years turned into five,

and there is no reason that extending that timeline further could not have happened. In fact, one respondent even provided a vision of the Green Impact Zone as a longer endeavor:

I think the Zone would still be in operation today if it was designed as a 10-year initiative. This would have made provisions for plenty of time to determine a successful model and assist the neighborhoods and residents through a “maintenance phase” to sustain the programs that were birthed through the initiative. It also would have allowed for more time to identify long-term fundraising and partnerships. (RESPONDENT #4, 2016)

The question, then, is why wasn't the zone extended beyond its five-year existence, should it have been extended, and what could it have done differently?

Based on information gleaned from conversations with people close to the Green Impact Zone, the primary reason the zone no longer exists is that funding was discontinued. An important distinction needs to be made between the money that the Green Impact Zone was able to leverage on behalf of the neighborhoods and the money that went to paying the initiative's operational costs (office space, staff salaries, and so forth). As discussed previously, the Green Impact Zone's operational costs were paid directly by the city of Kansas City or by using funding available to its elected officials. From the zone's inception, the strategy of Kansas City was to fund the Green Impact Zone's staff in full to begin, but to gradually decrease the amount of funding it received from the city. According to someone close to the Green Impact Zone,

The principal reason that funding did not continue to support the staff was because it came from the city. They could not sustain nor justify politically that level of funding to a single community. Although everyone agrees that decline that occurred over decades will take a long time to correct, they do not have the political will to sustain the investment for that period of time. (RESPONDENT #11, 2016)

That person went on to explain that the millions of dollars that the Green Impact Zone was awarded through grants could not be used to pay for expenses such as office space or staff salaries.

Green Impact Zone Model: Legacy

The Green Impact Zone of Missouri may have been focused on a relatively small area, but it took on big challenges and had lofty aspirations. A project with a high-profile launch filled with confident rhetoric must either live up to the goals it publicly set for itself or risk being criticized for underachieving. Although the closing of the Green Impact Zone was met with mixed emotions from journalists, few comments appeared in these articles from the people who were involved in the day-to-day operations of the initiative. Neighborhood leaders, Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) staff, active residents, and Green Impact Zone staff were asked to answer the question, “What do you consider the legacy of the Green Impact Zone?” Their answers to this question provide the context for this section.

For some respondents, the Green Impact Zone model is a powerful way to help urban neighborhoods chip away at feelings of powerlessness and to reverse the effects of decades of disinvestment. Specifically, by using a holistic approach that targets a wide range of the effects of poverty and segregation, the Green Impact Zone model focuses on the “trajectory of change” for neighborhoods. Mapping a trajectory of change requires that community participation be regarded as the most important job of a place-based development organization and requires the organization to take a long-term approach to redevelopment and reorganizing a community. By simultaneously investing in the physical infrastructure of a place and the leadership and organizational capacity of the residents in that place, this

model creates momentum for growth and trains the people who will take up the challenge of continuing to build a thriving community. This is reflected in a statement from one respondent:

The legacy of the Green Impact Zone is the comprehensive model with emphasis on the trajectory of change. The trajectory of change is what takes time to evolve because it deals with the intrinsic growth of residents involved. Emphasizing the role of empowering individuals to address their own issues along with the necessity of people with resources being educated about what it really takes to revitalize a community is critical. (RESPONDENT #4, 2016)

The emphasis on increasing neighborhood capacity has also helped boost the effectiveness of the area's neighborhood associations. Training and funding was given to these groups throughout the duration of the Green Impact Zone, which has allowed all of the organizations previously lacking non-profit status to receive it. This status, along with some new community spaces that were provided by funding leveraged by the Green Impact Zone, will give these associations the infrastructure needed to continue the work done by the Green Impact Zone. The Green Impact Zone worked with these groups all together from the earliest stages of the initiative. By bringing these neighborhood associations to the table together, the Green Impact Zone established a relationship among these groups that has endured even after the closing of the initiative. Many respondents praised the Green Impact Zone for fostering a strong connection between residents and neighborhood leaders:

The Green Impact Zone made a mark in the neighborhood. It increased awareness among residents of the need for change and actually showed residents how to do things to bring about change. A great deal of emphasis was placed on capacity building and providing residents with the skills needed to bring about change. Overall, I believe that the community received great benefit from the Green Impact Zone. (RESPONDENT #9, 2016).

Another respondent wrote, “The zone left the community much better organized than it had found it” (RESPONDENT #11, 2016).

One defining feature of the Green Impact Zone was its paid staff. The number of Green Impact Zone staff members varied from four to six throughout the initiative’s lifetime and included a Director, Assistant Director, Administrative Office Coordinator, and other specialists. Part of the cost of operating the Green Impact Zone was also the staff’s relationship with MARC. Using MARC as the parent organization of the Green Impact Zone increased their operational capacity and allowed them to focus on neighborhood issues. One respondent praised the Green Impact Zone staff, writing,

The Zone also demonstrated the need for a team of professional staff with a wide range of experiences to be employed in executing the revitalization. MARC employed high performing staff who could both plan and implement. The staff was able to relate to the residents as well as navigate conversations and partnerships with elected officials, corporations, and private enterprise representatives. This is a rare skill set, but MARC was able to attract staff that met the criteria. (RESPONDENT #4, 2016)

This enthusiasm wasn’t shared by everyone, however:

If we had the opportunity to start over, I think a longer-term effect and impact could have been achieved, if the money had flowed through the existing neighborhood organizations—those with the capacity to receive/administer/be accountable for the funding. Instead of forming a separate organization with relatively high paid staff, leasing expensive office space, purchasing furniture and equipment, and all of the other things that accompanied the Green Zone’s level of autonomy, the money could have been spent more efficiently and to greater long-term effect if it had flowed through the existing not-for-profit neighborhood organizations. Congressman Cleaver and/or the City could have been the overseer and provided assistance in making sure that the established organizations worked together to achieve desired results.

In actuality, at the start, the established neighborhood organizations worked together with the assigned MARC staff person, Dean Katerndahl, [Government Innovations Forum Director], and held a number of meetings with residents to establish the framework for the Zone, set goals, and identify priorities—this was done over a number of months before the Green Zone staff was hired. These neighborhood organizations could have continued working together with Dean Katerndahl’s

assistance, to implement the plan and ensure continued resident involvement and the achievement of outcomes. The dollars would have gone much farther and the neighborhood organizations would have been able to apply for grant money to continue moving forward, increasing their capacity to perform more effectively—in retrospect, this should actually have been a requirement. I do not believe that the Green Zone was organized in a manner to apply for, receive, and administer grants—all of this was done by MARC—thus, the way the Green Zone was set up from the start, actually led to its short-term existence. (RESPONDENT #9, 2016)

Differences of opinions about the value of the Green Impact Zone staff echo the disagreements from critics about the value of the Green Impact Zone as a whole. Evaluating the achievements of the Green Impact Zone, even now, must be a preliminary endeavor, and discussing the model and the process can and should continue. The opinions of those closest to the Green Impact Zone could potentially be biased, but their experience of going through the daily operations of the initiative gives them a unique and valuable perspective for anyone considering applying the Green Impact Zone model in another location. By the time the projects discussed herein are all completed and the effects of the Green Impact Zone are more fully quantifiable, the memories of those who helped create the Green Impact Zone may have faded.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

When the Green Impact Zone of Missouri was announced to significant fanfare, it was touted as a national model for neighborhood revitalization through place-based investment. It intended to tackle the diverse challenges facing five neighborhoods in central Kansas City, Missouri. During its five-year existence, the Green Impact Zone helped leverage major investments within its boundaries and succeeded in changing the narrative for many of the residents living in the five neighborhoods.

Among many Kansas Citians, however, the reputation of the Green Impact Zone remains in question. In conversation and online, many residents of Kansas City expressed regret that money was wasted on a project that they feel failed to fix anything. Articles written about the closing of the Green Impact Zone cast the initiative as a worthy, but dysfunctional attempt at lasting change. They pointed to missteps and failed promises, and asked their readers to consider how much things have really improved since the opening of the Green Impact Zone (von Drehle, 2014).

This thesis began as an attempt to document the history of the Green Impact Zone and to determine whether the Green Impact Zone model is one worth implementing around the nation. The thesis succeeded in collecting and documenting the history of the initiative and should be a comprehensive source for the Green Impact Zone's accomplishments, shortcomings, and many first-hand experiences with the place-based experiment. The scope and timing of this thesis makes it impossible to clearly and definitively evaluate the strength of the Green Impact Zone model. Even now, more than seven years after the announcement

of the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, attempting to determine the ultimate value of the initiative would be premature. The nature of neighborhood change, especially sustainable, long-term neighborhood change, is gradual. Although many people understand that the Green Impact Zone neighborhoods declined over the course of decades, they oftentimes still lack the patience and political will to commit the time and energy it would take to reverse the effects of such disinvestment.

This conflict between the ways that we view neighborhood decline and neighborhood revitalization differently is telling. Many may view the process (period of time, history) of neighborhood decline as a sort of “natural process,” that Kansas City as a whole has reached some sort of equilibrium by allowing some areas of the city to thrive while others decline. They would then view the Green Impact Zone, with all the attention and resources that were directed towards it, as a sort of government “intervention” against natural market forces. We cannot allow this way of viewing things to continue. The chapter on the history of Kansas City has shown that there is nothing “natural” or “inevitable” about urban processes that produce a city where such extreme racial and economic disparity can exist across the street from each other. Overt racism has played a role, as have subtler forces such as the racialization of neighborhoods, or real-estate professionals’ leveraging of racial stereotypes for financial gain. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Kansas City’s public school system, local real estate developers, and elected officials, among others, all contributed to exclusionary policies that allowed for institutionalized segregation.

Geographers such as Soja and Harvey and the philosopher Lefebvre have taught that individual city functions such as markets for land, labor, and housing will tend to favor the

wealthy and powerful. Soja believed that the most direct path to a just city is through policies that allocate resources towards “positive (socially beneficial) spillover or multiplier effects from the locational or spatial pattern of public and private investments and where special attention is given to redress unusual environmental problems” (Soja, 2010, pp. 85-86). Soja explained, “this approach steers the search for justice toward access to the positive effects emanating from the urban economy, akin to the right to the city idea, and toward fundamental questions of environmental justice and social democracy” (Soja, 2010, pp. 85-86).

The Green Impact Zone fits the approach for urban justice that Soja encouraged. Place-based investment can be very successful when it creates a sort of “neighborhood momentum”; this is what Soja meant when he wrote about the “spillover and multiplier effects.” The dollars invested in a place-based program such as the Green Impact Zone can go further because they are invested in public goods (infrastructure that everyone has access to) and because they make it more likely that other public and private institutions will increase their investments in the community.

What Soja or Harvey or Lefebvre do not mention, and what makes substantive neighborhood change difficult, is the long timeline that it requires. In one sense, this thesis (and the Green Impact Zone effort as a whole) is a recognition of how strongly the history of a place shapes that place’s present, and how much effort it takes to unleash its future from its past. The histories of Historic Manheim Park, 49-63/Troostwood, Ivanhoe, Blue Hills, and Town Fork Creek have not, however, blocked them from reaching what they are today: proud neighborhoods with strong leadership and lots of positive momentum. If the work that the

Green Impact Zone began—the work of bringing people together and giving them a reason to believe that change is possible—had ended with the termination of the Green Impact Zone, this momentum would have been lost. Instead, just the opposite has happened; since the closure of the Green Impact Zone, two new initiatives have picked up the torch.

The Urban Neighborhood Initiative (UNI) and the Kansas City Catalytic Urban Redevelopment (KC-CUR) are both place-based, community-development initiatives whose geographic target areas at least partially overlap that of the Green Impact Zone. According to its website,

The Urban Neighborhood Initiative—one of the Chamber's Big 5 ideas—is a nonprofit organization established to revitalize neighborhoods in a target area in Kansas City's urban core, focusing on health and safety, education and prosperity for generations to come. Formed as a partnership between the United Way of Greater Kansas City and the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, UNI works with [10 as of 2017] neighborhood organizations, residents and through collaborative relationships with business, industry, government and community organizations. Our initiative focus area is from 22nd Street to 52nd Street and from Troost to 71 Highway, in Kansas City, Missouri. (Urban Neighborhood Initiative, 2016, para. 1)

The other initiative, KC-CUR, is a combination of Greater Kansas City LISC (Local Initiative Support Corporation) in partnership with the city of Kansas City, Missouri, Urban Neighborhood Initiative, Mid-America Regional Council, and the Kansas City District Council of the Urban Land Institute. Its goal is “to galvanize civic and corporate interests around socio-economic redevelopment and community building in Kansas City’s urban core east of Troost Avenue” (LISC, 2016, para. 1).

KC-CUR intends to implement transformative neighborhood revitalization within the UNI area, specifically near Prospect, Troost, Ivanhoe and Wendell Phillips neighborhoods (KC-CUR Report Release, 2016). Although the literature about these initiatives mentions the

Green Impact Zone only in passing, the similarities of these programs to the Green Impact Zone, such as in their missions, models, and the areas they serve, are noticeable. The KC-CUR homepage even states, “The Kansas City Catalytic Urban Redevelopment (KC-CUR) initiative is focused on an implementation strategy in the UNI footprint on Kansas City’s east side, building upon the momentum that is escalating east of Troost.” There is little doubt that the Green Impact Zone is a large part of that momentum that Kansas City’s east side is beginning to witness. I tried repeatedly to make contact with representatives of either of these organizations but was unable to do so. I hope that the work of comparing the Green Impact Zone to UNI and KC-CUR is picked up by someone else, either in the media or in academia. Going forward, it will be important to the story of the Green Impact Zone to understand how it is perceived by other place-based programs that follow it.

There are many other major opportunities to continue the work that I began with this thesis, either by extending the timeline beyond when this thesis was written, by using any variety of more data-driven research methods to track the value of the Green Impact Zone, or by connecting the work that the Green Impact Zone did to other place-based urban initiatives around the country or even elsewhere in the world. Other than connecting the work by the Green Impact Zone and UCI or KC-CUR, some specific suggestions as to what work still needs to be done related to the topic of this thesis are:

(1) Continue to watch how the Green Impact Zone neighborhoods change over time, both as a result of the Green Impact Zone programs and otherwise. There are many valuable ways of evaluating neighborhood change, but some that might be especially worthwhile for this area would be to look at changes in housing prices and rates of homeownership. Other

data that might be valuable to assess would be socioeconomic and demographic changes, especially in income levels, education, median age, or racial makeup. Also, it will be essential to evaluate if the investments in public infrastructure continue and if interest from private developers increases. At the time of writing, new market rate and subsidized housing continues to appear in the neighborhoods, and it will be important to see how much and how long this trend continues.

(2) Compare the work done by the Green Impact Zone to other proven place-based groups around the country with a deep case study approach to multiple place-based initiatives. This comparison should focus on what all of these groups have had in common and how they have differed. Special consideration should be made to compare the historical and current geographies of these places, the strengths and weaknesses of a given model, as well as the greatest obstacles to progress, funding levels and sources, scales of operation, and timelines.

(3) Continue to follow up with residents and track the usage patterns of the programs and facilities that the Green Impact Zone initiative made possible. The chapter in this thesis titled “The Green Impact Zone of Missouri” outlines the accomplishments of the Green Impact Zone, many of which are programs or facilities that remain in place even with the closing of the Green Impact Zone Initiative in 2014. It is important to understanding the ongoing legacy of the Green Impact Zone to see what type of effect these accomplishments have on the neighborhood as time goes on, and to see if those that take advantage of these programs or facilities know the role the Green Impact Zone played in making these opportunities possible.

(4) Barack Obama's second presidential term (2013-2017) is over at the time of this writing, and with his departure from office, the level of federal support and investment for place-based programs and American urban programs in general may diminish. There is an opportunity to track how changes at the federal level affect how place-based programs provide resources to neighborhoods.

As I stated before, this thesis began as an attempt to document the history of the Green Impact Zone, but it means so much more to me than that. This is a chance to tell an important story about a moment in history when Kansas City, and the United States of America, had the will to not just talk about but creatively address the problems facing our inner cities. The characters in this story are the dedicated, sacrificing, and talented people who made the Green Impact Zone possible, and the loyal, resilient, and visionary residents of the Green Impact Zone who make their neighborhood a better place every day. I cannot affirm, definitively, whether the Green Impact Zone lived up to its expectations, or even its potential, and I cannot predict what the future looks like for the residents of Historic Manheim Park, 49-63/Troostwood, Ivanhoe, Blue Hills, and Town Fork Creek, and the rest of Kansas City's core area, but I can state that after the time I've spent with the people who live, work, and play in these neighborhoods, I know they are in good hands.

APPENDIX

Dear _____,

My name is Kevin Wickman, I am a Master's Student in the University of Missouri – Kansas City's Department of Geosciences, and am nearing completion of my master's thesis titled *The Green Impact Zone of Missouri: An Analysis of Place-Based Investment*. My thesis will document the history and accomplishments of the Green Impact Zone, as well as be a reflection on the challenges of creating permanent change in historically underserved communities. Every attempt has been made throughout my thesis to be objective despite the fact that I am a past intern at the Green Impact Zone and a strong supporter of the Green Impact Zone initiative.

I am asking you for a favor. On the next page of this document, you will find an eleven-question survey; the questions range from the general, about grass-roots community development, to the specific about the Green Impact Zone of Missouri. If you would please answer these eleven questions as fully and as honestly as possible, I would be very, very grateful. You can write your answers to these questions directly in this document or in a separate document. I understand that finding the time to complete this request may be difficult, but without your answers to these questions I will not be able to move forward with my thesis. It is very important that all respondents complete and return this survey.

All of your answers will be entirely anonymous: any comments used in my thesis will be unattributed, and I will destroy any record of your answers upon completion of my thesis. I hope that you will accept these assurances and will feel comfortable being honest and complete in your answers to these questions.

If you have any apprehension about answering these questions, please let me know. If you would rather contact me by phone, my number is 630-430-9096. I would be happy to meet with you in person or work to accommodate you in any way.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Wickman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Kevin Wickman
M.S. in Environmental and Urban Geosciences Candidate
University of Missouri Kansas City
Department of Geosciences

The Green Impact Zone of Missouri operated in Kansas City, Missouri from 2009 until 2014 as a national model for place-based investment. Missouri Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II is credited with pioneering the initiative, which was overseen for 5 years by Kansas City metropolitan-area regional planning organization the Mid-America Regional Council. During those 5 years, the Green Impact Zone directed about \$166 million dollars into a 150-square-block area from 39th Street to 51st Street and included Troost and Prospect avenues and as well Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard. The money came largely from federal funding made available in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and went towards neighborhood infrastructure and investments in human capital, with an emphasis on environmental sustainability. The initiative ultimately shut down in 2014 due to a lack of funding.

First, I would like to ask you a few general questions on community development and neighborhood revitalization:

1. What is the difference between place-based and people-based initiatives?
2. What role do residents play in re-developing their neighborhoods?
3. What do you believe is more effective: channeling funding to official neighborhood organizations that represent communities in need or directly to individuals in need? Please explain your answer.
4. What is the value of a predominantly minority neighborhood?

Next, I want to ask some more specific questions about the Green Impact Zone of Missouri, a place-based initiative that was active in Kansas City's urban core from 2009 to 2014:

5. What do you think were the goals of the Green Impact Zone, and how well did the Green Impact Zone accomplish these goals?

6. In your opinion, how involved were the residents of the Green Impact Zone in the Green Impact Zone's decision-making? How did this influence the value of the Green Impact Zone?

7. How effective was the Green Impact Zone at leveraging public investment in the community to encourage long-term improvements in neighborhood quality-of-life characteristics such as housing, employment opportunity, or resident health? Please explain your answer.

8. The Green Impact Zone initiative was awarded many millions of dollars and yet it shut down after about 5 years. Why do you think the Green Impact Zone was stopped/defunded, and what could it have done differently to still be in operation today?

9. What do you consider the legacy of the Green Impact Zone? Please explain your comments.

10. Are there any other comments you would like to add about your experience with the Green Impact Zone, during its operation or afterward?

11. Can you recommend anyone else to which I should send this survey? If so, please provide contact information.

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