

A Community Vision for St. Francis Xavier School

June 3, 2013



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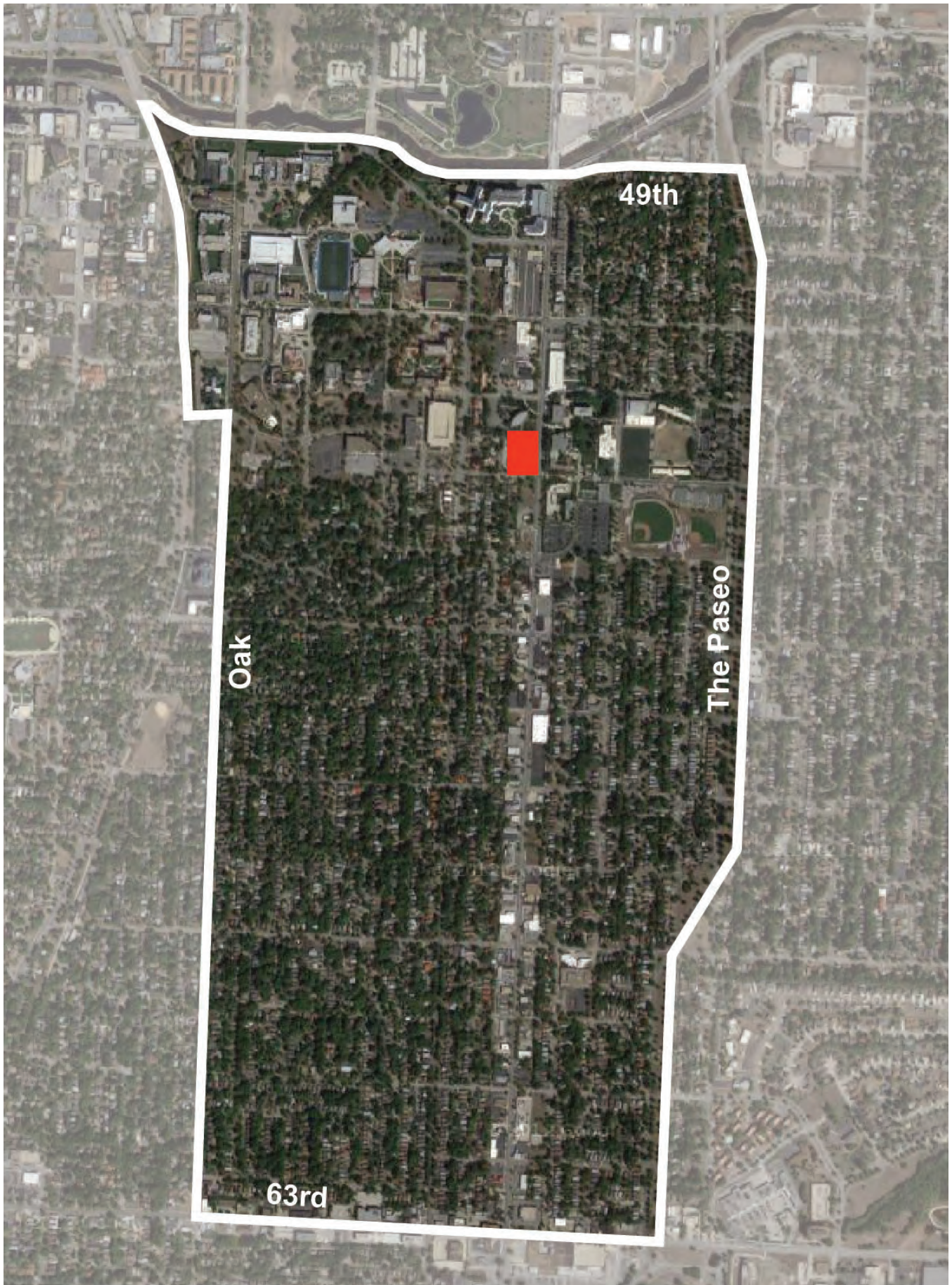
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Aerial image and white boundary around the community area of study, 49/63 Neighborhood Coalition. The red rectangle shows the location of St. Francis Xavier School.

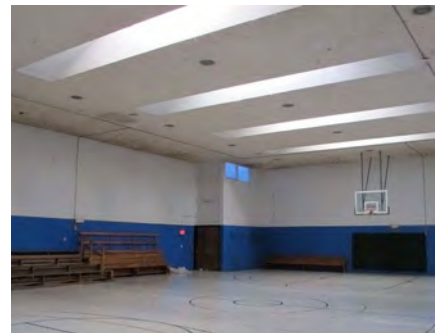
A Building and a Legacy

History

1910 was the start of nearly 100 years of history for St. Francis Xavier School. A Catholic center of education that would see generations of families move through its programs. In 1922, construction was completed on a new brick school building at 53rd and Troost. This new location allowed the student population to grow to a total of 550 students. In 1957, design for another new building for the growing school was commissioned. In 1962, construction was complete on what is now the historic St. Francis Xavier School building, a Kansas City landmark. The first class graduated from the new school building in 1963. As time went on, the face of the neighborhood changed dramatically with many families moving to the suburbs, and enrollment at the St. Francis Xavier School declined. Recruitment in the neighborhoods to the east and south brought a student population that was rich with diversity in both ethnicity and religious background. Lay teachers began to replace the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Scholarships were provided to children from lower incomes, and tuition swaps were arranged between students and teachers of St. Francis Xavier School and Rockhurst University, across the street. Eventually the costs of operation outweighed the income and the Diocese had to close the doors of the school. The school has been closed since 2003, yet the legacy of this school lives on for thousands of neighbors, parishioners, and past parents, teachers, and students of St. Francis Xavier School.

Current Conditions

The St. Francis Xavier School is a great example of 20th century design, and still stands as an important Kansas City landmark that is a true testament to the era in which it was built. Modern in its day, the design boldly expresses its structure as form and architecture. The school, strategically sited as a complement to its neighbor St. Francis Xavier church, creates a friendly urban composition along Troost Avenue. The architect positioned rooms around outdoor spaces reducing the mass of the building, and the scale is right for children. A round volume welcomes children into the front lobby and softens the building's relationship with the homes along the west. While the building has aged poorly, its structure appears to be in sound condition. The building needs extensive renovation, including modifications and upgrades for compliance with current codes and standards for operation. However, this building is not beyond repair, and seems suitable for a number of uses, including a school.



Top to bottom: 1) Cafeteria/Parish Hall, 2) Gymnasium
3) Typical classroom, 4) Balcony on second floor
(Photographs of St. Francis Xavier School taken December 2012)

Features

This school building was an excellent learning environment for its students. With 14 classrooms, a kindergarten, library, music room and offices, the main level was carefully designed around a center courtyard so that every room received daylight and views to the exterior. The convent on the upper level provided secure access, privacy, and community space for the nuns living at the school. Balconies and porches offer outdoor space and views to the neighborhood, as well as connection to the courtyard and playground below. A cafeteria/Parish Hall provides a large flexible room flooded with daylight, while a large gymnasium, down the hall, accommodates larger crowds and provides recreational facilities. The thoughtfulness of the design is seen throughout the building. The St. Francis Xavier School holds an important place in the history of Kansas City and for the residents and stakeholders of this neighborhood.



Top left: View east across courtyard and Troost to Rockhurst University from upper floor; Top right: View north on Troost from balcony outside classrooms (above cafeteria); Bottom panorama: View of classroom and office organization around the central courtyard

A Community Conversation

This engagement process was designed to bring together many members of a community including residents, institutions, Parish members, and the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph to determine the most compelling and mutually beneficial ideas for the St. Francis Xavier School based on the wider needs of the community.

The owner of the St. Francis Xavier School building is the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph. Following were their focusing statements for the future use of the school:

1. Recognize the needs of St. Francis Xavier Parish with respect to the need for a kitchen and hall.
2. Recognize the need for space for the Diocesan sponsored UMKC Campus Ministry (FOCUS missionaries).
3. Recognize the necessity of the desired projects to be self-funding/self-sustaining. The Diocese cannot subsidize any operation at the facility.
4. Recognize that the Bishop makes the final decision regarding proposals.

As the community considered their aspirations, assets, and opportunities the conversation began to focus around some key common values: **Preservation, Connecting Neighbors, and Increasing Health and Knowledge**. These values are the overarching framework of the Community Conversation and provide direction for the Site Opportunities conversation.

Community Value: Preservation

Residents are proud of the architectural character of their neighborhoods. One young homeowner described 49/63 as an area with “quality neighborhoods that need love and new investment.” The community also sees its diversity of people in terms of race, income, and faith as an asset. Kansas City’s iconic 20th century housing types exist here, including great examples of the Craftsman Bungalow, the American Four Square, Renaissance Revival, and Shirtwaist. The central location in the city and proximity to two stable institutions of higher learning, in juxtaposition to the many under utilized properties along Troost point toward untapped development potential.

While the community would like to preserve the great houses of the area, there is also a need for infill development of both single and multi-family housing, to provide affordable options for the diverse population of the area. Design and performance guidelines for these structures and their landscapes are seen as critical to preserving the integrity of the architectural fabric and appropriate density of the neighborhood. Mixed use development is considered desirable along Troost to stimulate a 24-hour community, with commercial focus in key high traffic nodes.



Photos from Community Workshop held at Rockhurst Community Center, January 26, 2013



Community Value: Connecting Neighbors

Many community members voiced their aspiration for a safer place to live through increased population, civic involvement, and sense of personal responsibility. The desire expressed to work together to achieve common goals is a defining moment for this group of individuals, business owners, Diocese, Parish, and institution leaders.

The physical environment can serve to help or hinder this spirit of cooperation. Considering the four basic principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) can form a basis of safety guidelines for neighborhoods:



1. Natural surveillance: Lighting and clear sightlines to “see and be seen”
2. Natural access control: Direct the flow of pedestrian traffic and reduce opportunities for crime
3. Territorial reinforcement: Distinguish public areas from private ones with a sense of proprietorship
4. Maintenance: One nuisance leads to others; develop a plan to preserve and enhance property



Part of attracting more people to invest in the area involves providing a variety of affordable housing options, as well as increased mobility options, and job opportunities. Stimulating new job opportunities could entail small business incentives, access to financing, and attracting new retail and professional service providers. Safe and convenient right-of-way for walking and biking are key to increasing connectivity to nearby City amenities. The community expressed a need for increased east-west connections, especially to Paseo, with the coming Kauffman School. The community noted that new policies for vacant parcel management could increase green space and benefit the public realm while increasing connectivity with appropriate maintenance and succession plans. A new community meeting space was also noted as a specific need in bringing together the diverse community.



The Southtown Council has been working to institute a Community Improvement District (CID) on Troost. The focus of the CID will be to bring higher levels of safety and cleanliness to the public realm - “eyes on the street” - and establish a new area identity.

Photos from 49/63 neighborhoods, March 2013.

Site Opportunity: Neighborhood Services and Civic Space

Community-identified uses that fit a neighborhood services theme include: a restaurant, community garden in the courtyard of the School, a farmers' market, fitness center, community meeting space, community policing office (Community Action Network hub), a day program for the elderly, and an after-school program for children (or additional space for Operation Breakthrough). The community conversation also referenced design of a safe mid-block crossing. There are likely additional synergies with Rockhurst's identified community needs that could be shared in the School.

Site Opportunity: Housing

The group briefly discussed the possibility of using the existing building for apartments, including housing for assisted living. Parking was listed as a concern and other proximate properties were discussed as being potentially more appropriate for new housing. A boutique hotel was also discussed as an appropriate conceptual use of the site, especially one specifically designed for the purpose of personal spiritual renewal.

Site Opportunity: Entrepreneurship

The community proffered that the school could be a tech startup village or business incubator that utilizes Google fiber and proximity to the two universities. In general, office space seemed to be a compatible use for the building. Artists' studios and the potential to use the building for event space or a rentable commercial kitchen were also discussed.



Photo of St. Francis Xavier School, looking northeast (December 2012)

Emerging Ideas

Many of the uses that the community offered for the St. Francis Xavier School could coexist compatibly together and align with the focusing statements of the Diocese and educational mission of the Bishop Helmsing Institute to advance their students in their spiritual life through education, prayer, and social action. The solution to determining the most appropriate combination of uses may reside in the question:

Which combination of uses results in a new composition that is greater for its community than the sum of its parts?

During the six-month process of completing this assessment, FOCUS Missionaries' need for space has changed, however one use of the St. Francis Xavier School site is a still a given: Parish community space including a kitchen. Careful programming can allow for multiple community gathering uses in the spaces that the Parish uses. In addition to those uses, several community ideas rise to the top as the most compelling revenue-generating uses to include in the repurposing of the St. Francis Xavier School. The questions or criteria used to select these ideas are:

- Does it have the potential to be financially self-sustaining or growth-oriented?
- Does it relate to all three values of the overarching community framework and have significant community buy-in?
 - Preservation
 - Connecting neighbors
 - Increasing health and knowledge
- Does it have the potential to catalyze new investment in the four types of capital: human, social, financial, and physical capital?

1. School

An excellent primary school creates a foundation of learning based on nurturing the whole person and instilling curiosity, an exploratory spirit, and a love of learning. The central urban location of the St. Francis Xavier School allows for easy access to some of the City's greatest learning opportunities: Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the Kauffman Performing Arts Center, as well as the libraries, fitness centers, and teaching resources of UMKC and Rockhurst. The building design is well-suited for this use, as it was constructed as a school and provides appropriately scaled spaces with abundant natural light for young students. Providing this new neighborhood education opportunity, paired with the new Kauffman School, could encourage more families with young children to invest in a home and/or business in the area. This use could also host after-school programs and summer camps for a wider age range. Gardens could be cultivated as part of the curriculum, with fresh food made on site for the children's meals (perhaps even as part of the curriculum). Summer programs



Example imagery of education programs in Harlem and Minneapolis.

could sell the produce at farmers' markets. A resident artist or Catholic missionary could be an exciting addition to the teaching staff and studio or apartment space could be accommodated on the upper floor of the building.

2. Early Childhood Development Center and Family Counseling

Providing affordable, safe, and nurturing environments for the youngest members of our community allows families to handle additional social and financial responsibilities with increased capacity and peace of mind. A center run by child development professionals for Infant - Kindergarten ages could be a place where elderly community members also take part in the administration of the facility and some programs with the children. An all-ages environment provides meaningful social interaction and work for many members of the community. Gardening or cooking classes could complement the curriculum, and fresh food could be prepared on site for the children. The local Catholic Charities could also provide their professional Family Services such as *Counseling Solutions* to assist community members in need of additional support and guidance.

3. Culinary Center

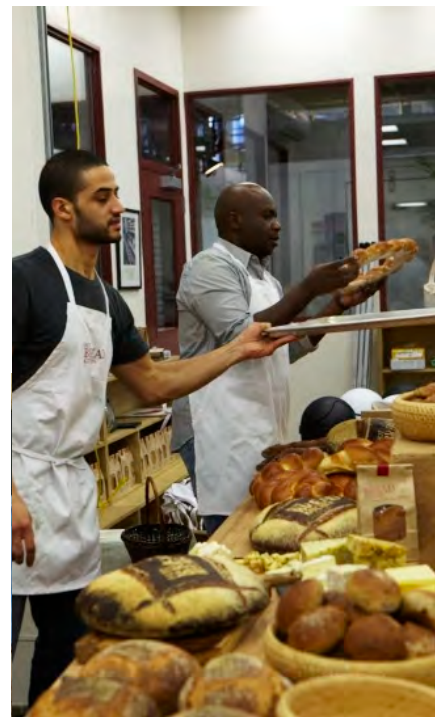
This use could transform the building into a new City destination for those interested in health and food. The culinary education offered at this facility would also be demonstrated in a classroom restaurant open for all meals. Growing some food on site would be a part of the main curriculum, and could include greenhouses for all-season growing. This could be a pick-up point for Community Supported Agriculture subscriptions (CSAs), and more casual cooking classes for all skill-levels could be offered on weekends for modest fees. This could be a new site for a new Morning Glory cafe to serve our most vulnerable neighbors through the local Catholic Charities partnership.

4. Business/non-profit incubator

The implementation of Google Fiber could result in a new boom of technology-based startup businesses. An adaptive reuse of this building could include flexible office space available for rent to new or small businesses and non-profits. The business incubator is an affordable model that capitalizes on the cooperation of a number of small businesses to share costs on common resources. Quite often this cooperation results in building new partnerships and collaborative endeavors. With proximity to the emerging great thinkers of our region at UMKC and Rockhurst, this could be one of the new innovation hubs of Kansas City.

5. Workforce training classes/Adult education/University outreach

Classes and clinics of many varieties could be handled in this building, and this idea could be combined with the business incubator or considered as one of the many community functions to be programmed in flexible spaces. Through partnership with organizations such as New Reflections East, the Missouri Career Center, University of Missouri Extension, the Missouri Department of Economic



Example imagery from programs in Nashville, Minneapolis, and Portland.



Development, the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City, and the Catholic Charities of Kansas City - St. Joseph Catholic Social Ministry Association classes on tax preparation, business, entrepreneurship, computer skills, and job training for all ages could be offered.

6. Event space

The St. Francis Xavier School is an iconic modern design with terraces, balconies, and skylights that connect indoors and outdoors and introduce daylight into nearly every space. Its beauty and proximity to the Church make it ideal for regular Parish gatherings and other Catholic celebrations potentially including weddings. It could also be programmed to rent for wider community events including graduation celebrations, neighborhood movie nights, health and recreation opportunities, and theater and visual arts events.



7. Garden and summer market

Depending on the other uses in the building, it may be beneficial to include gardening opportunities on the site. This garden could be divided into family plots for membership-based Parish and community gardening, or maintained as part of a site-based curriculum (school, childcare, or culinary center). The harvests could be sold on site or taken to nearby farmers' market locations. Having this opportunity on site could teach gardening and business skills to all ages as well as create new social opportunities for neighbors to connect. A greenhouse or hoop house could expand the programming idea to continue the growing season year-round.



Example imagery of programs in Minneapolis and Springfield, MA

Putting the Pieces Together



The following are three options to provoke discussion about how compatible uses may be combined through diligent scheduling of the spaces in the St. Francis Xavier School building:

Menu A:



GROUND FLOOR

- Parish community space
- Rentable event space



FIRST FLOOR

- Culinary Center
- Garden and summer market



SECOND FLOOR

- Catholic student offices and meeting space
- Restaurant space for Culinary Center

Menu B:



GROUND FLOOR

- Parish community space
- CAN or CID office



FIRST FLOOR

- Charter school
- OR
- Early Childhood Development Center



SECOND FLOOR

- Catholic student offices and meeting space
- Teachers' offices and kitchen

Menu C:



GROUND FLOOR

- Parish community space
- Rentable event space



FIRST FLOOR

- Business incubator offices
- Catholic student offices and meeting space
- Garden and summer market



SECOND FLOOR

- Business incubator meeting space and kitchen
- Workforce training classes

Precedents

CATHOLIC CULINARY CENTERS

Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, Culinary Arts program

This five-week training in basic food service was developed by Catholic Charities to prepare refugees for entry-level employment in the food service industry.

Lexington Catholic High School Culinary Club

The mission of this student organization is to learn sustainable cooking skills in order to share good food with each other and the greater community. *(This could also be a central program of UMKC and Rockhurst.)*

During their first semester, the culinary club collaborated with the art club to provide meals for the “Streets to a Home” Catholic Action Center (CAC) project. In the second semester, they provided meals for the art club and CAC community project whose fundraiser was the “Empty Bowls” event.

(St. Francis Xavier School could be a central culinary learning kitchen for the Diocesan High Schools)

CATHOLIC WORKFORCE TRAINING

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Cleveland

Fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), this diocesan organization provides a comprehensive employment program that offers a variety of workforce development education and employment and training services to individuals, employers, businesses, government and community based organizations. The goal of Employment & Training Services is to inspire self-sufficiency by igniting the power of employment principals so that job seekers achieve economic independence and businesses achieve economic development.

The program is based on a system of continuum service that strengthens the capacity of individuals to:

- Secure Employment
- Re-Enter The Workforce
- Remain Employed

CATHOLIC BUSINESS INCUBATOR

Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD): Economic Development Program

CCHD was established in 1969 to provide funding for groups of poor and low-income people who are empowered to address the root causes of poverty in their communities. CCHD has provided nearly 900 economic development grants and over 20 million dollars to self-help businesses and organizations led by poor persons. 25% percent of the annual diocesan CCHD collection stays within the dioceses and is used to fund efforts that empower individuals and better the community.

US Conference of Catholic Bishops established a grant program out of the CCHD with Community Development, Economic Development and Strategic National grants to support organizations led by low-income individuals as they work to break the cycle of poverty and improve their communities.

Next Steps

1. Establishing the Decision Makers

In order to properly move forward with the redevelopment of this property, a clear hierarchy of decision makers must be decided upon first. The property is owned by the Diocese and as the head of the Diocese it is evident that the Bishop will have the final say as to which users will eventually be tenants. The Bishop, however, is not directly involved in the Steering Committee that has guided this community engagement process. Thus, the Bishop's representative(s) need to clarify the role of the members of the Steering Committee, and at which points during the overall development process approval is needed from those not directly engaged in the process. There may also need to be consultants (real estate brokers, engineers, architects, feasibility analysts, etc.) who will be charged with fulfilling specific duties. Establishing who will manage these advisors will be critical.

2. Engaging the Development Process

Property redevelopment is an iterative process. New data will inform decisions, which will require refining or redefining previous assumptions. In this case, since the property is already defined, those charged with seeking a new tenant/user will initially focus on the process of "marketing" the site. How this is done and who is the target market will depend upon several factors. First and foremost, the Steering Committee must determine if there is a priority ranking of the proposed potential uses denoted above. This should be done recognizing that there will likely be more than one primary user of the site, in addition to the specific parish and UMKC student uses that the Diocese has defined.

Based upon priority ranking of proposed uses a preliminary feasibility study should be undertaken for these possible uses. Typically, this can be done quickly with the assistance of a third party real estate advisor focused on the field of interest. In this case, however, since the uses are fairly varied it may be useful to focus only on the highest potential uses first, and then if necessary move to the feasibility of supporting projects. This initial feasibility should address issues of typical square footage rents, parking demands, space needs (i.e., kitchen access), and broad-based market demand.

As the initial feasibility for the preferred uses is determined, the Steering Committee, along with possible input from its outside advisors, will need to start crafting a list of potential tenants and/or developers for the preferred proposed uses. This may require research into entities both within the Kansas City area and beyond. If such a use is specialized, this may require counsel beyond the immediate development team.

Once these groups are identified, the team will need to begin reaching out to these firms. Again, having the correct members of the team to both speak to these users and properly vet them may require outside counsel. The Diocese's Finance and Management Office may undertake this role in whole or in part. Based on these findings of interested parties, the process will evolve into more detailed discovery and negotiation.



Photos of St. Francis Xavier School, under construction and in use during its early years.

3. Due Diligence

As it becomes clearer which direction the Diocese and the Steering Committee are willing to pursue, the full process of discovery or due diligence will need to be undertaken. This will potentially cover a broad array of investigative processes. Based upon the tenant(s) being evaluated, the following areas are among those that may need review:

- Financial feasibility of use (rent rates, market demand, terms, etc.)
- Financial capacity of tenant
- Architectural feasibility
- Constructability
- Mixed used compatibility factors (hours of operation, overlap of service needs)
- Zoning
- Accessibility
- Parking requirements
- Hours of operation
- Utility demands

A more refined picture will begin to materialize for the long term viability of the proposed use(s). This evaluation either will lead to a pursuit of a more finalized negotiation or a readdressing of this process for another potential use.

This can be a labor intensive, time consuming process, and as such, this must be recognized up front so as to assure that the “right thing” is done with the property, and not necessarily what is most convenient. The highest and best use for this site, as defined and redefined by the stakeholders, has been discussed. Now the tough decisions must be made and the future of the former St. Francis Xavier School site secured for generations to come.



Photo of St. Francis Xavier School hallway - the light at the end of the tunnel.

Appendix

The information contained in this appendix was offered to the community for consideration in their workshop conversation on January 26, 2013.

Mission Statements of Community Members:

49/63 Neighborhood Coalition's vision is to be a community of diverse neighborhoods where boundaries are not barriers. Our community members are informed, responsible, empowered people who work with each other to keep our neighborhoods attractive and safe. The Coalition's mission is to support our neighborhoods by providing information to educate, resources to empower, and infrastructure to connect.

UMKC's mission is to lead in life and health sciences; to deepen and expand strength in the visual and performing arts; to develop a professional workforce and collaborate in urban issues and education; and to create a vibrant learning and campus life experience.

Rockhurst University exists to transform lives by creating a learning community centered on excellence in undergraduate liberal education and graduate education. Rockhurst is Catholic and Jesuit, involved in the life and growth of the city and the region, and committed to the service of the contemporary world.

St. Francis Xavier Parish is a Roman Catholic, Jesuit community of faith called together by God to experience Jesus Christ in His Word, in the sacraments, and in each other.

Joined in Baptism and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we strengthen our faith through prayer and worship, spiritual formation, intellectual rigor, diversity of membership, hospitality and fellowship, and concern for social justice.

Guided by the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, we strive to use our many gifts for the greater glory of God.

Planning Initiatives Impacting the Area:

Troost Corridor Action Plan (Southtown Council, 2003)

Most recently adopted plan expressing the Vision and goals of the community for development along Troost.

Midtown/Plaza Area Plan (KCMO with Gould Evans, ongoing)

This area includes 31st to 55th and Paseo to State Line.

Area plans provide a single, comprehensive plan for an area of the City and provides policies to guide public decisions on land use, infrastructure, public services and zoning.

The Midtown/Plaza Area Plan will:

- Recommend guidelines and strategies related to development, housing, neighborhoods, economic development, transportation, capital improvements, open spaces and urban design.
- Serve as the "plan of record" for the area and will be fully integrated with other adopted plans resulting in a single, coordinated policy for the area.
- Build on the foundation of previous planning efforts in the area.

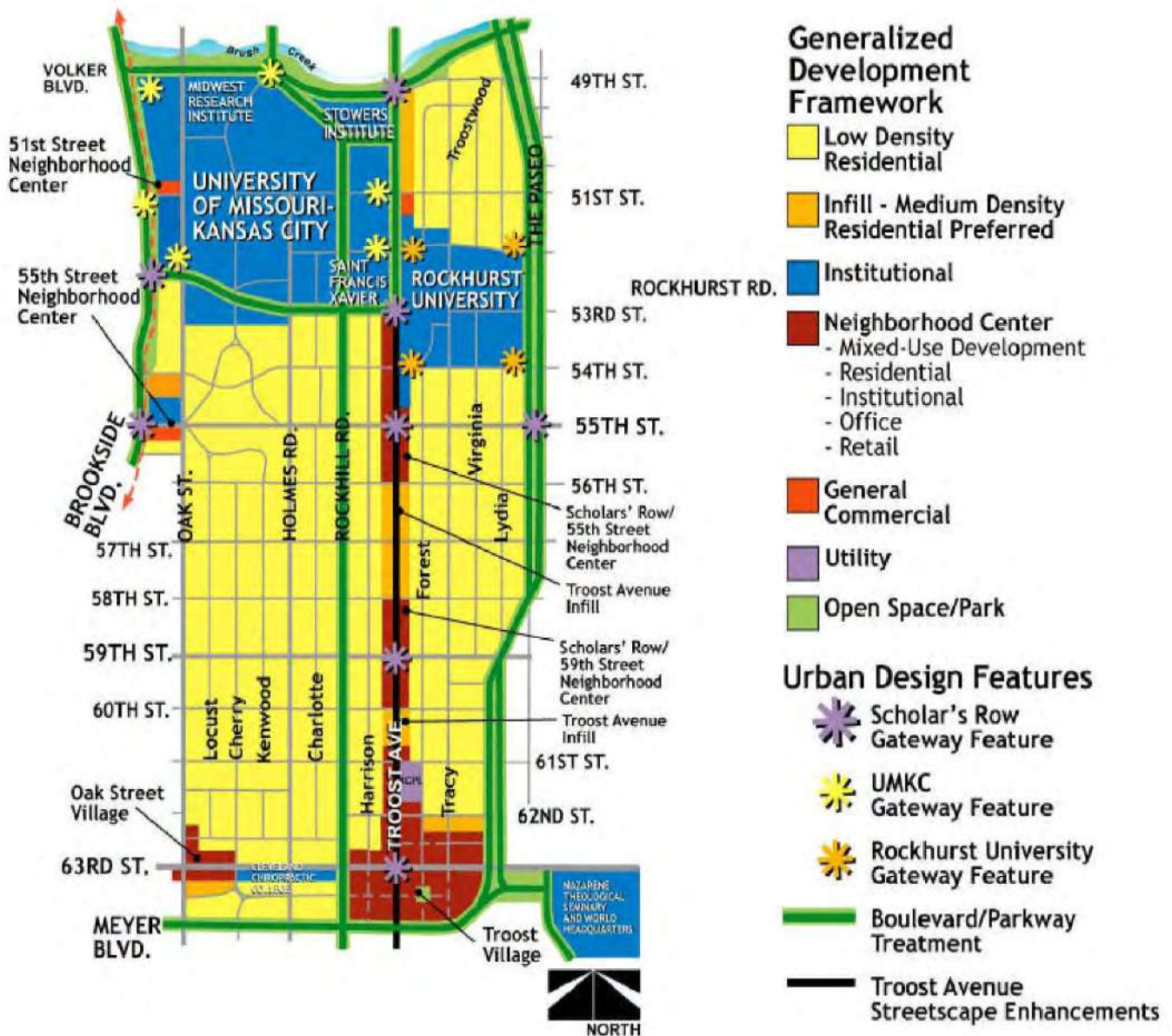
Creating Sustainable Places, Troost Corridor Plan (MARC with Collins Noteis & Associates, ongoing)

Planning work is just beginning. The project will develop conceptual plans for key intersections along the corridor. The work will assess the impact of the plans on economic development, social equity, and the environment.

Rockhurst and UMKC have recently updated their Campus Master Plans and implemented major capital improvements and building campaigns including the recently opened Rockhurst mixed use parking garage on Troost, and the Henry W. Bloch Executive Hall for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, currently under construction.

Land Use and development principles of Troost Corridor Action Plan (2003)

As seen in the land use map below, the St. Francis Xavier school site is shown as institutional on the map because at the time the plan was created, it was functioning as a school. Around the site, and more generally along Troost, the plan calls for higher intensity mixed use activity centers connected by medium density residential development. Off of Troost, the focus is on the existing single-family neighborhood character.



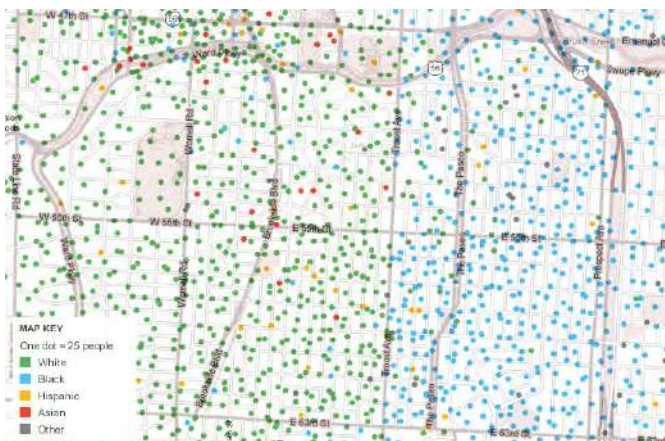
Troost Corridor Action Plan Land Use map

The seven development principles in the Troost Corridor Action Plan were:

1. Preserve and Enhance the Corridor's Diverse Character
2. Preserve 'Gems' & Seek Infill Opportunities
3. Preserve established neighborhoods by focusing redevelopment on Troost
4. Promote Private Property Enhancements (landscaping, façade improvements)
5. Create a distinctive sense of place for the Troost Corridor
6. Focus activity at neighborhood centers (55th St., 59th St.)
7. Seek neighborhood-oriented businesses & services

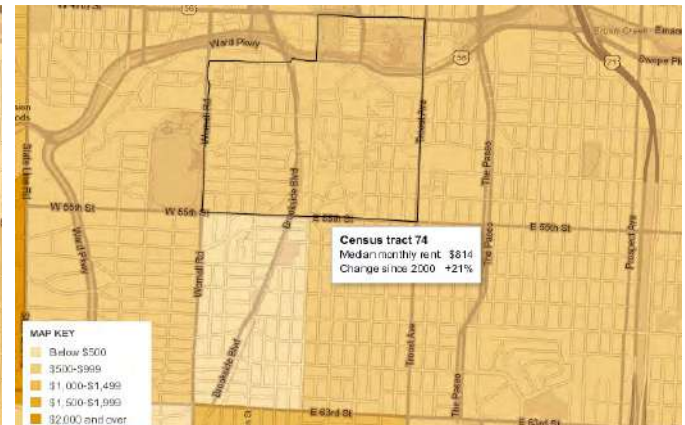
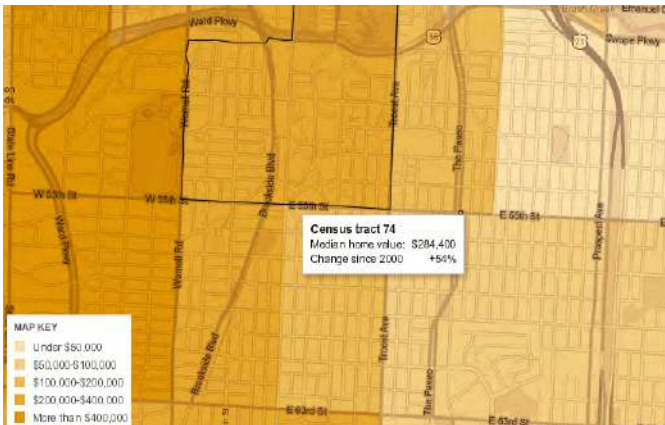
Race and Income

Consider how to cross old dividing lines (race on the left below) and encourage mixed income neighborhoods (income on the right below).



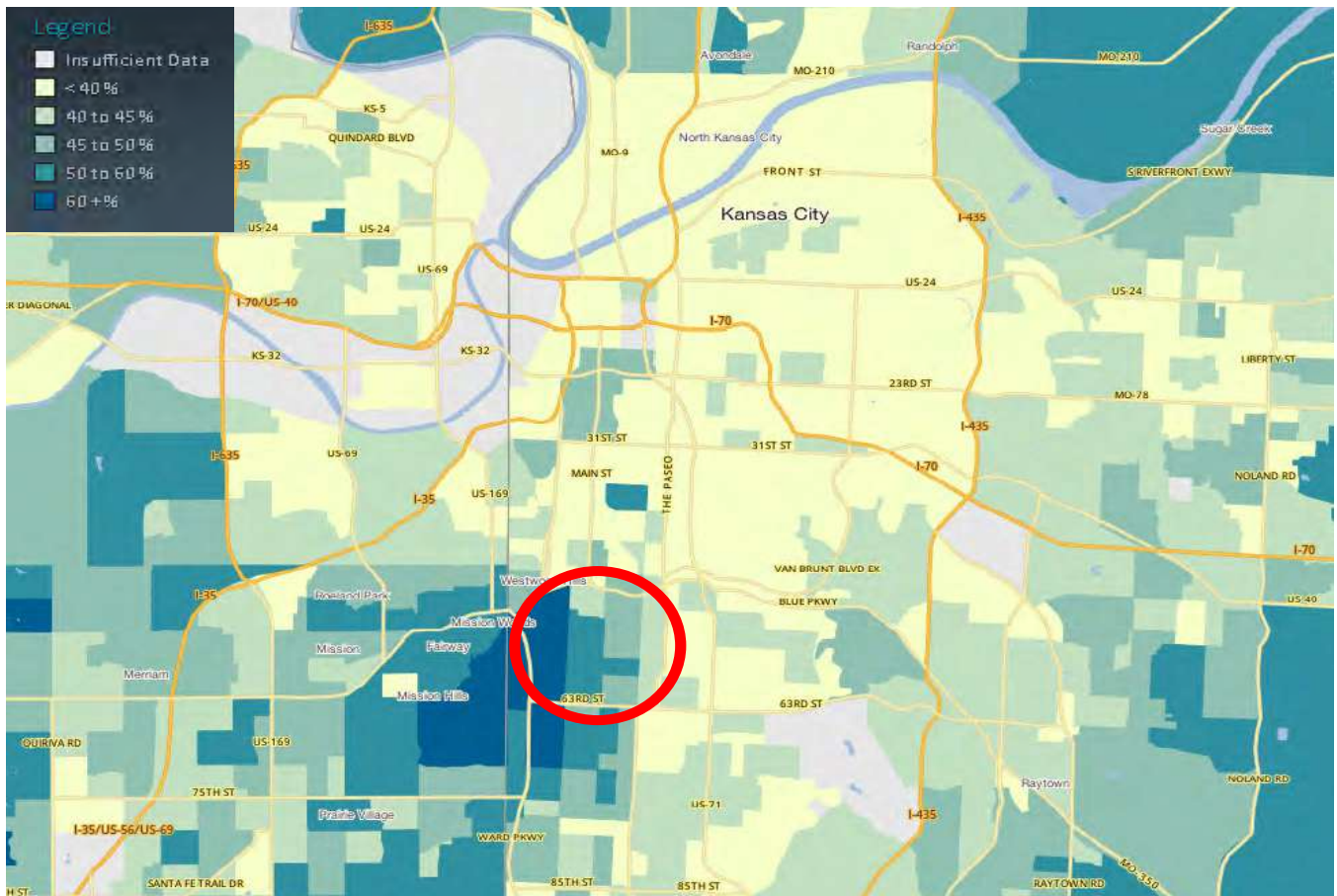
Home Value and Average Rents

As we think about potential uses in this area, it is important to consider what the market can support. The average prices of housing units in the area are on the left below, and average rents, appearing much more equal throughout, on the right below. The Crestwood Historic District has some of the highest property values in the area.



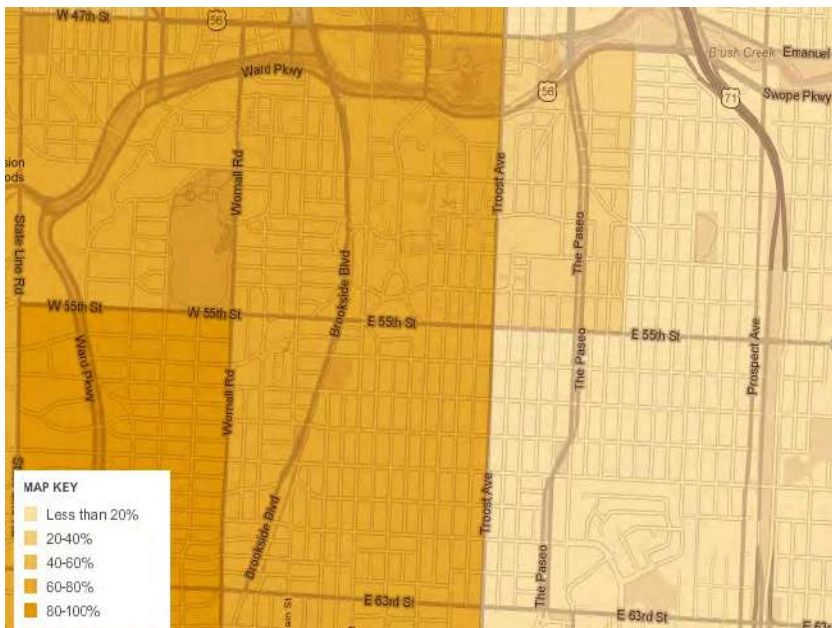
Housing and Transportation index

Demographic trends are shifting nationwide, families are decreasing in size and there are more seniors and singles. An increase in smaller homes that are conveniently located to services and amenities is increasing. The consumer groups include young professionals, empty nesters, families who seek walkable communities, and other young people either young graduates or first time job seekers. At the same time, transportation preferences are changing. Recently people under the age of 30 account for 14% of vehicle miles travelled, down from 21% fifteen years ago. Less teens are interested in getting their drivers' licenses (50% in 1978, now 30%) and technology use on transit is on the rise. The map below shows the combination of housing and transportation costs. Darker colors show a more expensive combined index. The neighborhoods of 49/63 are shown to have a fairly expensive index. The community was encouraged to consider some possible causes of this.



Education

The map below shows educational attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher (darker colors = higher percentages of attainment). Given the educational inequity in this area, the community was asked to consider how life long learning might be better encouraged. Preliminary data from ongoing planning initiatives show that the age of the population is predominantly in the mid-30's to mid-40's range.



The community also considered the condition of public right-of-way, pedestrian connectivity, bicycle connectivity, and safety issues. A future Metrogreen pedestrian trail is planned to travel north-south in this area, as is a bikeway connected to the KC bike network.

