



INVEST NORTHEAST

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MISSION & INTRODUCTION 1

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A black and white photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, several cars are visible on the road. The middle ground shows a mix of commercial and residential buildings, including a large multi-story building on the left and a smaller building with a sign that says "McDonald's". The background features a hillside with trees and a church steeple. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

MISSION STATEMENT *Invest Northeast is a collaborative effort focused on implementation of sustainable strategies that improve infrastructure and stimulate responsible economic development within the Historic Northeast communities of Kansas City.*

1.2 BACKGROUND



Historic Northeast And Independence Avenue

The Historic Northeast District of Kansas City established itself as a prominent urban community in the late 1890’s, largely as a result of Kansas City’s ambitious Parks and Boulevard System stimulating investment throughout the district. Independence Avenue emerged as the primary commercial and cultural corridor for the district, acquiring a thriving public rail transportation system by 1900. A strong presence of industry and manufacturing, supported by the Kansas City Southern Rail Line extending east from downtown, allowed the Independence Avenue Corridor and its surrounding neighborhoods to grow in commercial and residential density through the first half of the 20th Century.

A Shift In Transportation Trends

By the 1950’s, automobile-centric transportation rendered the Independence Avenue Streetcar Line obsolete and the 1960’s construction of the Interstate System through downtown Kansas City had lasting impacts on industry built around the Kansas City Southern Rail Line. A decentralized trucking industry soon replaced rail systems as a preferred method of shipping and job opportunities declined in the Historic Northeast District. By the 1970’s and 1980’s, the density of commercial uses along Independence Avenue had been greatly reduced and many residential properties in surrounding communities had fallen into disrepair.



Renewed Optimism

Today, the Historic Northeast and Independence Avenue are positioned to once again play an increasingly vital role in Kansas City’s downtown community. Affordable housing and business properties have attracted a lively multicultural community, contributing an ethnic vibrancy to the corridor and its surrounding communities. While density remains a challenge for the district, viable residential and commercial properties are over 90% occupied, indicating a market opportunity for new development on both fronts. Public transportation remains a critical component for Independence Avenue—its bus system is one of the highest used in Kansas City and the corridor has been shortlisted as a possible next phase for Kansas City’s new Streetcar System. The Historic Northeast possesses historically significant architecture and its Parks and Boulevards are still largely in tact. Pro-active stakeholder groups and several Neighborhood Associations have partnered with recent municipal planning studies to capitalize on a renewed sense of momentum for the Independence Avenue corridor.

NorthEast Alliance Together And Planning Sustainable Places Grant

In 2011, agencies serving the interests of Historic Northeast residents began meeting on a regular basis to explore collaborations and opportunities to bring additional resources to the area. Over the course of 2012, this group was formalized into NorthEast Alliance Together (NEAT). This group has been

meeting for more than two years and is working with business owners, property owners, city staff, elected officials and private developers to improve the sustainability of the Historic Northeast and implement the recommendations of prior planning efforts.

When the MARC Planning Sustainable Places grant opportunity arose, NEAT enlisted Mattie Rhodes Center, a community-oriented nonprofit, as a collaborative partner to act as the fiscal agent for the grant. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Hardesty Renaissance EDC, and the City of Kansas City, Missouri committed matching funds for the grant application, and in October of 2012, Mattie Rhodes Center, on behalf of NEAT, received the grant. Led by NEAT, this collaborative stakeholder group identified the MARC Planning Sustainable Places grant as an opportunity to catalyze responsible economic development activities in support of their overall mission. NEAT’s grant application included a multi-faceted strategy for this purpose:

- 1) Complete an updated Real Estate Market Analysis for the Historic Northeast District, focusing primarily on the Independence Avenue Corridor;
- 2) Complete a Transportation System Priority Improvements analysis that anticipates future trends in public and private transportation along Independence Avenue and prioritizes sustainable infrastructural upgrades that might incentivize new development opportunities;



- 3) Create a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District study that, when implemented, would serve as a tool to preserve historically significant structures and create unified qualitative standards for new renovation and development projects; and
- 4) Identify the potential Hardesty Renaissance EDC adaptive re-use development as a major catalyst project case study, exploring detailed feasibility scenarios for an 18-acre brownfield site located near the intersection of Hardesty Avenue and Independence Avenue.

Invest Northeast

In March of 2013, a multi-disciplinary team, led by el dorado inc and consisting of KEM Studio, Pat Jordan & Associates, Vireo, TranSystems, Development Initiatives, Alembic, and Jack & Jakes was selected to assist NEAT and its partners with achieving the goals outlined by the grant application. In collaboration with NEAT and Mattie Rhodes Center, the team immediately titled the project Invest Northeast and established the following mission for the team and stakeholders alike:

Invest Northeast is a collaborative effort focused on implementation of sustainable strategies that improve infrastructure and stimulate responsible economic development within the Historic Northeast communities of Kansas City.

1.3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Invest Northeast is not intended as an urban planning document, rather the project represents a set of responsive and responsible economic development analyses and strategies based on community input and resultant recommendations from previous planning efforts. As such, a high emphasis was placed on assessing and analyzing previous planning documents prior to generating specific sub-reports pertaining to four major areas of study identified in the MARC Planning Sustainable Places grant: 1) Real Estate Market Analysis; 2) Transportation System Priority Improvements; 3) Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District, and 4) Hardesty Renaissance Planning and Feasibility Study. Throughout the Invest Northeast process, targeted community outreach efforts allowed the Historic Northeast communities to remain informed of the project’s progress and strategic stakeholder engagement cultivated implementation committees for each area of study.

Assessment And Analysis Of Previous Planning Efforts

Numerous planning initiatives and efforts have recently been conducted in and around the Historic Northeast District of Kansas City. These planning documents include the Truman Plaza Area Plan; the St. John Corridor Infrastructure & Land Use Plan; the Independence Avenue Corridor Plan, the LISC Quality of Life Plan - Scarritt Renaissance; the Paseo Gateway: Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan; the Kansas City Design Center Independence Avenue Urban Vision Study; the Independence Avenue East & West Special Review Districts; and Mayor’s New Tools. Several of these plans solicited comprehensive community input and each plan offers valuable insight, analysis, and recommendations. The Invest Northeast team created a comprehensive “Previous Plans Assessment” document at the onset of the project. This document, included in this report, was circulated to all team members and stakeholders and served to inform the efforts of each consultant contributing towards the goals of Invest Northeast.

Community Outreach And Stakeholder Engagement

From the start, Invest Northeast necessitated a light touch with regards to community outreach. Saturated by an abundance of recent planning initiatives, the overriding feedback from the Historic Northeast community resulted in a singular message: “We don’t want another plan, we want action.” In collaboration



INVEST NORTHEAST AMBASSADOR MEETING

with KEM Studio and Pat Jordan & Associates, el dorado inc branded Invest Northeast as collaborative set of strategies setting the stage for the implementation of sustainable design principles and responsible economic development opportunities within the communities surrounding the Independence Avenue Corridor. With community input already well documented by prior planning efforts, Invest Northeast focused its community engagement efforts on targeted community outreach, providing multi-lingual informational project pamphlets to selected community ambassadors for widespread distribution and attending several community events, including the Historic Northeast Taste and Tour fundraising event wherein the Invest Northeast team provided a project presentation update for the greater Historic Northeast community.

In response to the overarching sentiment of community feedback, Invest Northeast facilitated subcommittees comprised of community stakeholders to serve as implementation “champions” for each area of study. Staff from the City of Kansas City, Missouri served as the implementation committee for the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay and several core members from NEAT, including a former mayor of Kansas City, served as the implementation committee for the Real Estate Market Analysis and the Transportation System Priority Improvements. Members of Hardesty Renaissance, EDC formed the implementation committee for the Hardesty Renaissance

Planning and Feasibility Study. These implementation committees are intimately familiar with the content of each report, positioned to lead implementation efforts in the near future as additional resources, grants, and/or economic development opportunities present themselves.

Cross-Disciplinary Observations And Recommendations

Within this Invest Northeast report, each sub-report provides its own executive summary, its own set of recommendations / “next steps,” its own analysis, and its own conclusions. It is important to note, however, that the consultants generating each sub-report did not work in isolation from one another. Rather, Invest Northeast hosted bi-monthly, sometimes weekly, team meetings to promote a collaborative approach to achieving project goals and objectives. Though the content sub-result can be read as a stand-alone document, the cross-disciplinary overlap amongst team consultants and stakeholders yielded consistent observations.

> Economic stimulus opportunities through nodal development along Independence Avenue

After careful analysis of the Kansas City Design Center Independence Avenue Urban Vision study, and throughout the development of the Real Estate Market Analysis, Transportation System Priority Improvements, and Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District, the attention to nodes along Independence Avenue became an important focus for the Invest Northeast team. The Real Estate Market Analysis revealed a high percentage of commercial property occupation along the corridor, especially at the established intersections of Prospect and Benton. The Transportation System Priority Improvements anticipates a continued emphasis on nodes in terms of Public Transportation, also identifying Prospect and Hardesty as possible stops for an eventual Next Rail phase of the Independence Avenue Streetcar System. The Transportation System Priority Improvements analysis also identified Van Brunt as a possible node of focus, anticipating an on-street bike facility connection along Van Brunt, connecting an on-street bike facility along 9th Street and an existing bike route along Gladstone Boulevard and Cliff Drive. With potential “bookend” catalyst projects at The Paseo and Hardesty Avenue, the continued allocation of resources to established nodes

along Independence Avenue will create opportunities to develop additional small commercial / retail facilities and mixed-use housing opportunities for residents and business owners alike. Over time, and with increased density at established nodes, infill development along Independence Avenue will begin to connect with new commercial and residential efforts at key intersections.

> Multi Modal strategies for the Historic Northeast District beyond Independence Avenue

Anticipating the Next Rail phase of the Independence Avenue Streetcar System, the Transportation System Priority Improvements identified the right of way for Independence Avenue as not capable of hosting bike lanes and proposed a new bike facility three blocks south of the Independence Avenue, along 9th Street, and then potentially along Van Brunt connecting 9th Street to Kessler Park along Gladstone Boulevard and Cliff Drive. This proposal was consistent with the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District’s intent to provide development guidance for communities surrounding Independence Avenue, comprising the Historic Northeast District. By diversifying corridors for multi-modal transportation, a bike and pedestrian system could serve to define the parameters of the district, creating a loop from downtown and connecting pedestrians with new recreational facilities along 9th Street, historically significant architecture in the Historic Northeast neighborhood, and the natural beauty of Kessler Park. While Independence Avenue remains a primary focus for economic development opportunities, establishing a pedestrian connection to the authentic character of the Historic Northeast District will serve to create an increased sense of community engagement and pride, as well as promoting an increased civic patronage from Kansas Citians living and working outside the district. These ideas are strongly supported by neighborhood preservation and development standards identified within the proposed Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District.

> Addressing infrastructural obstacles along Independence Avenue

Prioritizing infrastructural improvements to address the challenges identified by multiple Invest Northeast sub-

reports will serve to leverage economic opportunities along Independence Avenue. In addition to sidewalk and streetscape improvements along Independence Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods, larger infrastructure improvement projects are also important to target. Proposed improvements at the intersection of Benton and Independence Avenue are critical for the nodal development strategies addressed above. Reconstructing the Independence Avenue rail underpass to allow greater vertical clearance near the intersection of Hardesty Avenue will increase the feasibility of the Hardesty Renaissance catalyst project and, from a transportation improvement perspective, promote Independence Avenue as an attractive candidate for Next Rail, allowing the possibility for Streetcar expansion to downtown Independence, Missouri.

> *Grassroots Advocacy*

The Historic Northeast District is comprised of active Neighborhood Associations, community advocacy organizations, and stakeholder groups. As the district and the Independence Avenue corridor gain momentum, successful economic development strategies will hinge a great deal on grassroots advocacy. Support for major catalyst projects at the intersections of The Paseo and Hardesty Avenue is critical for economic development along the Independence Avenue corridor. Realization of the Paseo Gateway project could increase residential density at the west end of the corridor and create a stronger vehicular and pedestrian connection to downtown. The proposed use of Hardesty Renaissance development would create jobs through local foods initiatives, reinforcing the Historic Northeast as an emerging ethnic culinary destination for the greater metropolitan area of Kansas City. Grassroots support for already proposed infrastructural upgrades, such as the redesign of the intersection at Benton and Independence, will promote new commercial and mixed-use development at key nodes along Independence Avenue.

> *Maintaining active partnerships and committee support for implementation strategies*

Revitalization opportunities for the Historic Northeast and Independence Avenue have great potential. Revitalization will require diligent and sustained efforts by municipal partners, stakeholder groups, and focused implementation committees.

Within each area of focus, Invest Northeast provides tools and recommendations for next steps towards implementation strategies. To aid with economic development, ranging from developer driven projects to tenant improvement efforts, the Real Estate Market Analysis identifies tax abatement opportunities within the Historic Northeast and agencies that can assist with these efforts. The Transportation System Priority Improvements identifies a range of transportation and infrastructural improvement opportunities, offers strategic implementation tools, and prioritizes implementation strategies based on feasibility considerations and other existing economic development activities along the Independence Avenue. The Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District process has cultivated a strong partnership between NEAT and the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and is well positioned for implementation. The Hardesty Renaissance Planning and Feasibility Study has provided Hardesty Renaissance, EDC with a detailed market analysis and pro-forma for the potential of a local foods initiative catalyst development near the intersection of Hardesty Avenue and Independence Avenue.

Conclusion

As a strategic Urban Design report, Invest Northeast provides the Historic Northeast Community of Kansas City and its stakeholders a multi-faceted tool for the redevelopment of the Independence Avenue Corridor and its surrounding neighborhoods. As this culturally diverse and historically significant district of Kansas City regains momentum, development opportunities should be carefully considered alongside sustainable transportation initiatives and the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District outlined by this report. **The success of strategies outlined by Invest Northeast will depend greatly on sustained advocacy by designated implementation committees for each initiative included in the report.** Invest Northeast should anchor the work of each committee as a tool to identify continued grant support, funding mechanisms, and tax abatement opportunities. Invest Northeast should also serve as a tool to incentivize responsible new development that is fully integrated into the values and vision of the Historic Northeast Community.

1.4 PLAN ORGANIZATION



The plan focuses on implementation within the following four scopes:

Real Estate Market Analysis

The Invest Northeast market analysis reviews the impact of potential transit-oriented design development along the corridor and identifies development infill and rehab locations within the corridor based on transit patterns and maximized growth opportunities. With respect to both a general market analysis and residential market analysis, the team identifies existing and future development constraints to redevelopment and makes recommendations on proactive development opportunities.

Transportation System Priority Improvements

To complete a transportation analysis for Invest Northeast, our team relies on our knowledge of the existing plans and our familiarity with the transportation network in the area. This scope includes a survey of the Study Area, identification of any system gaps, barriers and overall improvement needs, and a list of prioritized projects with an implementation plan that will result in successfully completed projects.

Neighborhood Conservation Overlay

A neighborhood conservation overlay establishes special land use and design regulations, standards, and/or procedures for development to ensure that the rich historic, cultural, and multi-ethnic character of the area is preserved and property values are enhanced. These regulations utilize transit-oriented design elements to enhance the walkability and pedestrian experience, improve connectivity, and facilitate and increase pedestrian and public transit uses along neighborhood corridors.

Hardesty Renaissance Planning and Feasibility Study

Invest Northeast works to identify the available infrastructure necessary to operate a successful regional food hub that lends support to overall site development. The team draws on past development criteria utilized for food hubs throughout the country to test the feasibility of an anchor property that benefits underserved residents, regional small- and mid-sized farms, visitors, and businesses all within one location.

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