



WORKSHOP SERIES
St. John the Evangelist
2910 Strong Ave.
Kansas City, Kan.
Oct. 26, 2008

Translated from Spanish to English

We were told that the physical size of Kansas City should not be increased; that we should stop building new neighborhoods farther away from the Kansas City's urban center. Instead, we should look to rehabilitate, repurpose and reinvest in older neighborhoods and structures. How do you feel about this?

- It's a good idea. Reinvestment in older neighborhoods will help improve unemployment problems. When new homes are built away from the older neighborhoods, employment opportunities are created away from the central areas, which increases unemployment, and people move away from the older neighborhoods.
- The government needs to help the older communities more. Most new construction is being done away from the older communities and government helps newer communities but neglects the older communities.
- Government programs to help rehab houses in the older areas are restrictive to the point that people can't qualify for help. This keeps the level of investment in the older communities at a low level.
- In Wyandotte County we pay higher taxes than communities like Lenexa, Overland Park and elsewhere, but the level of services and help in maintaining our communities is lower.
- Taxes collected here should remain here to benefit the people who live here.
- Many people want to improve their homes, but the inspectors come and stop progress because the people are not following code regulations. This discourages people. They are afraid to make investment because government regulations make it so people can't complete their improvements.

Participants said that we should create mixed-use areas that combine housing, commercial/retail and employment centers. Would you live in a mixed-use neighborhood? Why or why not?

- Most of us live in Wyandotte County, but all the grocery stores are in Johnson County. So we spend most of our money in Johnson County. It would be better if we could spend our money in the communities in which we live.
- It is better for people to be able to live close to certain types of businesses such as pharmacies. Quick access to certain services is important. We spend a lot on gas to get to services we need.

We were told that builders should build energy efficient "universal design" homes. This means that homes should be built on one level, and that they should have wide doors and other amenities to accommodate people who have a hard time getting around and may need assistance of a walker or wheelchair. Is this an appealing product for you and your family? Why or why not?

- Yes.
- There is a woman who is in a wheelchair; she can't get into her home because the doors are too narrow.
- If homes are on one level and they have wide doors, ramps to get in and out, then people who are disabled can live at home longer. These things do not make it so people who are not disabled cannot live there. Both able-bodied and disabled can live there. Families can stay together and older members are not as much a burden on the family.



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- It is important to have a basement for storage and to go to during storms.

We were also told that neighborhoods should include efficient public transit (this may include buses, light rail, etc.), sidewalks, and access to other ways of getting around. How important is access to transportation to you?

- Some people would use public transportation if it were available. We are dependent on cars because there is a lack of buses and other forms of public transportation.
- It is important for the environment to use public transportation rather than private cars.
- We have cars because there isn't public transportation.
- Where we come from, Mexico, there is public transportation that is more frequent and is cheaper. We don't understand why public transportation is not available here.

How do you respond to the following statements: Government should establish tax policies that encourage investment in older neighborhoods. Government should establish regulations that discourage sprawl and encourage private sector investment in older neighborhoods. Government should make infrastructure investments in older neighborhoods.

- These are great policies.
- It depends on the type of incentives governments provide. Some are more fair and effective than others.
- Government should encourage private investment in older neighborhoods because it provides jobs and improves the quality level.
- Government should help with materials and the people can provide the labor.
- The schools in the older neighborhoods, especially in Latino neighborhoods are in poor condition. My wife works in one of the schools that has no air conditioning and is in poor condition. There seems to be little investment by the government.
- The government rakes our taxes but make all its investments in other locations.
- It sounds like we are whining. We need to help ourselves.

It has been suggested that those mixed-use neighborhoods we spoke about earlier should be located near major transportation corridors. Would living near a major transportation corridor be attractive to you? Why?

- Yes.
- Living near major roads is good and bad. There is more traffic, more accidents, more noise, more pollution. But there is also more activity and opportunity, more jobs. Life is more active.
- Mobility is important for access to jobs and the places you need to go.
- It is better when there are efficient transport options. If we are talking only about roads, it's not attractive.

With the rising cost of gas and increasing concern about pollution and climate change, it has been suggested that people are ready to support policies that encourage: transitioning to alternative-fuel-powered vehicles, investing in public transit, walking and cycling. How do you feel about these proposed changes in how we get around?

- It's important to me to have sidewalks on both sides of the street. It makes walking more feasible and safer for children.



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- I have interest in using alternative fuels to run my car. Today, alternative energy driven cars are very expensive, but when they become cheaper to buy I will buy one.
- Large cars with poor mileage are cheaper to buy. Cars like Toyota are more desirable but are more expensive. Many people drive the bigger cars because they can't afford more efficient cars.

What role does government play in providing transportation services to the public?

- The government should provide public transport options to the people.
- Public transport has to be affordable or people won't use it. The government needs to subsidize the cost.

Some people think that in order for there to be an effective and efficient transportation system in the Kansas City region, we must create an authority vested with the power and political will to create and implement plans and make investments across jurisdictional boundaries. How do you feel about this idea?

- This is a good idea.
- Coordination of services and taxes is very important. For example, I can take a bus from Johnson County to downtown, but I can't get from downtown to Independence. The systems are not coordinated.
- I lived in Los Angeles and there is one authority that controls all public transportation. I could go anywhere I wanted to go. It's all one system, so I could get from one city to another without problem. I can't do that here.
- They need to do a study to determine what the needs are and how different lines can be connected.

Participants at the Kickoff event told us that local governments should take a leadership role in creating a "green" culture. This means that policies and regulations should be established to help us become more environmentally friendly. Is being friendly to the environment important to you? Why or why not?

- The government needs to lead and coordinate programs like recycling. This makes it cost-effective and work for the people.

There is a belief that it is better for the environment and for us as consumers to get our food from local producers. To accomplish this, it is being proposed that government and local community organizations encourage local food production, community gardens and urban farming. How do you feel about this?

- This is a good policy. Food that comes from local producers is fresher and can be less expensive.
- Fruit that comes from Chile and other countries has a transportation cost and is not fresh.
- Some food cannot be grown near and must be brought from other locations.
- I like my bananas, and I will buy them.

A lot of what we throw away is packaging for products we buy and use. Would you be willing to pay a deposit that could be redeemed when the empty container is returned to the store or some other location? Why or why not?

- Why not?
- There is a recycling program where we can reuse packaging.
- In Mexico soda is still sold in glass bottles and we pay a deposit.



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It's been suggested that citizens and community-based organizations should play an active role in helping some of these ideas come to fruition. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

- We have responsibility for this.
- The government and the people share this responsibility.