



**WORKSHOP SERIES**  
Johnson County Library  
9875 W. 87<sup>th</sup> St.  
Overland Park, Kan.  
Nov. 12, 2008

### **Facilitator introduction**

**Overarching question that we are going to be dealing with is that the region will grow about 500,000 people within the next several years. How can we accommodate this kind of growth?**

**The information that came out of the kickoff event suggests that the physical size of the region should not increase, and we should rehabilitate the older neighborhoods. How do you feel about that as approaching construction in KC metro area?**

- As long as housing is built by non-owner occupiers, they will not look at the long-term costs. When you have cheap land, it's less expensive to move farther south; you have an economic disinterest to rehabilitate. You have to put roads in place and services to get you to inexpensive houses.

**So services will expand at a cost less than redevelopment in the city.**

- [There are] economic incentives to do it the wrong way.

**Do the rest of you see it that way?**

[There need to be] economic incentives for the cities as well as the developers. Why else would they continue to annex south so they can tax more building and space so the city wants to grow? The cities like to get bigger and a bigger tax space. If it were a losing proposition, they wouldn't do it.

- I have talked to too many people who don't want to move so far away, but that was the property they could afford, but now they don't like to pay the gas prices
- Most bang for the buck because they are out in the county and the land is subsidized.
- I don't know about the incentives, but it is true.
- I don't know what you are defining about the KC region, but assume is the eight counties of MARC. There are numerous areas that are giving free land because they are screaming for new residents. The best place to put them is in western Kansas, and don't put them on top of the crowded existing metro area. Give them free land in the western counties in Kansas, if they will build. If I am looking like adding 500,000, let's send them to the counties that want them.

**Let's assume that we aren't able to make them go to western Kansas. In terms of this idea of moving farther out, how do you feel about the idea of restricting the size of area to which they can spread out? Steps that would make it a disincentive to sprawl and invest in the original area? Is it desirable for the metro?**

- It is already done. The city core is rebuilding and recycling old buildings and using them in a new way. That is really cool. It is not sustainable to tear down the buildings and malls. I like the incentive side rather than the disincentive side.

**Not punishment but actual cost.**



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- We moved here from Albuquerque, N.M., and what they came up with is to use impact fees to reduce sprawl. It was a financial disincentive to move out.
- Are we working and assuming that the downtown people are working downtown. Are they out there in the country where the jobs are?
- Very few people look for where the jobs are. They want a good safe place with good schools.
- Olathe is living and working in Olathe, they are getting what they want.
- I have always chosen places on where I worked. I used to live in downtown River Market area, and my impression that no one wants to live there and there are no grocery stores where everyone lives. I see very few reasons to live in downtown area.
- Little urban centers where you live, eat, shop, work. When we look at the conversation so far, we say redevelop the downtown. We originally said to redevelop the older areas in the cities. I like the idea of the disincentive to live downtown. We need to incentivize shopping areas. If you have to commute, it doesn't matter where you live.
- Everything started with land; you couldn't put commercial in residential areas.

**Don't just think of downtown KC – think about all the other areas as well.**

- Follow the street line and every eight or 10 blocks there is another little commercial development. That was allowed because the developer could do what they wanted. Then they ripped out the trolley line and they were still nice places.

**Some said we should create mixed-use development, housing, commercial, retail and employment centers. Would you live in that area if you have the mixed use and why do you like that?**

- To walk to the store and library and everything easily.
- Just being able to walk to the store; you don't get that in Johnson County. Depends on the area you are intending on redeveloping. Let's redevelop low-income and high-crime areas and make them better. I still wouldn't like to move there.
- Some areas are some social problems, but there are some areas that are good for redevelopment. You have to fix one situation, and don't want to invest in this area if it has other problems.

**When we say reinvigorate older areas, do you think of the KCMO proper?**

- More of Prairie Village, 18<sup>th</sup> and Troost. Reinvigorating as a community and a mixed-use makes the community more open.
- Some areas you are only sociable to the local and people you know.
- The Plaza where the trolley line was used to be a social area. It had all the things you needed in a regional mall. It was a place for everything and now it is only for the upscale people.
- Mixed-use would include a free-trade zone. Jamaica's use of free trade and KC Smart and if they get their way, they are funding this meeting, the free-trade zone would cause all the cities and counties – and if we create a mixed-use neighborhood and change the zoning. It will become the free-trade zone



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because of underground storage and highways and airports and entire hub for NASCAR. All connected to the mixed-use neighborhood. People need to understand what is happening in Jamaica and will become the only source of income and living. That will happen. You will live in a free-trade zone.

**For the purpose of this discussion, we will use a common definition, a combination of housing and commercial. We are talking about centers and numerous developments.**

- About the one in Leawood they are building. Zona Rosa is one. Lee Summit is Longview.

**Examples like that, but not in the heart of downtown KC.**

**We heard that the builders should build universal homes and the criteria behind that. Residential building that might go on in the future; do you find that kind of housing appealing?**

- Not necessarily. I feel that as soon as they grow up, I feel the more appeal to other housing. I see this as using more land.
- I am totally about accommodating people with disabilities, but this is less sustainable.
- One level could be on multiple levels if you use elevators.
- We are missing around here, [I realize that what we're missing around here is] rehabilitating downtown and [to] have [more] multilevel buildings. Make them attractive to families and have the schools be part of the mixed-use areas.

**We shouldn't think of this design as a single family ranch?**

- Correct.
- The market will never accept the universal design. And a lot of people don't want to have the same thing produced like a cookie cutter. A marketplace needs to have variety. I don't think that is something that the government should promote. Promote something that will help other disabilities and challenges, like blindness.
- I don't think it is cost-effective to have a universal design. Should be for retirement centers and multiple levels. Not good for single-family home and not good for reselling.
- The market won't accept the universal homes, but they could have universal housing standards. Looks different, but sustainable houses and builders should want to do this and won't be as expensive. Subsidies and taxes taken away.
- We are really not talking about building a new city. Isn't more energy efficient to use existing houses than building new ones? Johnson County is tearing down one-story houses and building multi-story houses.
- Golf courses: [We have so many them. Why not use some of these areas for parks or in-community green spaces?]



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**We heard people say that neighborhoods should include good public transit. Sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. How important is this to you?**

- Very much.
- I agree wholeheartedly, as long as it is energy efficient.
- No one will use that; it will take too long.
- I like to commute on bicycle and all these things are very important.

**Would this affect where you live?**

- [Definitely.] Taxes and polls ... affect transportation. [Where I live] most certainly affects my access to transportation.

**My question though would it affect your choice of where you live?**

- In Washington, D.C., there is an excellent transportation, buses and subways. 100,000 people use metro everyday and they live both in the city and outside.
- Metro D.C.'s [transit system is one of the easiest to use] in the country.
- It doesn't affect me when something is subsidized, and you need to move people around [in a way] that is attractive and sustainable, it is part of my tax load. I don't see that public transportation will get anywhere if we have to increase the amount [that people pay]. I am not offended in other cities where we don't have cars. We can't get anywhere without a car right now. I can't afford an hour walk there and back.

**Does it affect where you choose to live? Would you choose a neighborhood because it has sidewalks?**

- If things were the same otherwise, then yes.
- I like sidewalks, and able to get off the street.
- It is not a deciding factor but goes in the positive column. It is just like everything else. I want electricity but not the power plant in my backyard. Not in my backyard.

**The mixed-use neighborhoods, they would be located around the major transportation corridors. Would you want to live near a major transportation corridor?**

- Absolutely not, don't want to live by a NASCAR corridor.
- Other cities, they built the transportation after the communities. But they have become major mixed-use areas and people are able to easily maneuver. They don't have to use cars as much. Transportation after development. Original development came first and then they put in roads and train systems to move around. European countries and Japan – they have critical mass. To be efficient they need to have critical density/mass and our city doesn't have that.



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**Do you think public transportation would generate density?**

- We have density in Johnson County, and people have to wait an hour [for a bus].
- Every city where they put in the light rail, the density has [increased]. After you have the additional starter [line], [density increases].
- In Phoenix, I purchased my home near public transportation and light rail.
- You have to have a central corridor. The greater cities have it, and everyone goes there. It is a draw.

**Moving to this idea of connecting people and the erratic cost of gas and concern about pollution, people are ready to put policies in place for public transit. Are you transitioning to alternative ways of travel?**

- The Federal Economic Bailout was a \$20 tax credit to people who choose to use cycling. That is a carrot approach to get people to use other transportation.
- Third-world countries get around by bicycling because people are losing their jobs and can't afford groceries. [I don't want to] live in a third-world cesspool.
- Alternative transportation – too old to ride bicycles – there are some places too hard to use the bicycle and they need to fix this areas.
- With the cameras [that are used to monitor traffic,] the government could pay for [other things like lanes for slow-moving traffic or public transit].

**How do you feel about alternative fuel vehicles?**

- We have to be more efficient. I would like to see use of a variety of alternative fuel vehicles throughout the world. We have to be more efficient. We don't have any choice.

**In terms of transportation services, what is the role of government?**

- Their role should do not use taxpayer dollars that are already paid for.
- Subsidies are generally good.
- The planning of the corridor is what it needs to be. It should be an input system that the public has input, but the major corridors have to be government chosen.
- J.C. Nichols put in all the trolley lines.
- He was the government at that time.

**Do you think the government should be the lead player? Like the light rail issue.**

- Maybe others know why the light rail failed, but one analysis I saw was because it needed to be a regional approach. There needs to be consensus. That is appropriate – the government's duty to choose hubs and corridors. It shouldn't be KCMO that decides on light rail. It needs to be regional cooperation.



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**Should a regional authority develop that approach?**

- That's what MARC is. The transportation system is done like that.

**JOCO and WYCO and KCK run their own. There is no regional transportation like you would think of. This is done county by county. Is this the way to go?**

- MARC is in a better position to take that on.
- Prioritize nationally and regionally – not just little areas competing for the money

**Something else we heard is that the local government should take the initiative in creating a “green culture,” meaning it would take a proactive role in developing programs and services that are friendly to the environment. What do you think of this?**

- I would say that being environmentally friendly is extremely important to me and that the government should take a major part. Students and people making decisions are older and not following the trends. KC region could make better decisions.
- There are some older people that believe green is good.
- I believe that government should take a role. I want them to take a bigger role, but it has to be tempered with sustainability and some economic feasibility. That said, there is so much we can do. There are some places that have decided to become green and found that their trash is down 50 percent in the last two months. That is how we need to approach it.
- The powers of children have a big influence on their parents.
- I taught school, but I don't wait and put all the eggs in the basket of the kids growing up.
- Green and environmentally friendly means different things to different people. Both kinds of people – recycling or changing a light bulb – it all helps, and both people think they are going green. But we have to [develop] the bigger picture. We did a carbon footprint. People said they won't do anything that doesn't pay back in three months. They are not getting this. We need better definitions and better handles.
- [Businesses need to plan for being green. They need to build strategies into their business plans, like recycling or energy efficiency.]

**Do you see a role for government to help?**

- Yes, but more of a cap in trade – you [have to] make your own choices [as well].
- Environmental Committee for Prairie Village – we feel things need to be done soon. We go to the city government, and then they will make changes like working with Deffenbaugh and changing laws. Citizens also need to push [the adoption of eco-friendly practices]. A lot of people won't make the changes until they have economic [incentive to do so].
- Don't want the government to dictate too much, but there's no problem with building codes and pushing us to more green. I think building [keeping their doors open] to the public are missing a big



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opportunity [because they] don't have an operating investment (air conditioning) ... All kinds of incentives: Lenexa has TIFs – they won't consider a TIF unless you choose environmentally friendly.

- Most governments still are pro-business to build their tax base. [They] changed codes to make them more efficient and builders complained even though payback is within five years. They are not giving the businesses [incentives to be] environmentally friendly. We have one Earth and one environment, and we are eating up so many resources it is amazing. [Governments need to] work with businesses to help save and give incentives and make them do that.
- European countries discourage driving automobiles. Gasoline prices are around \$8 a [gallon]. Most of that is taxed and helps to build public transportation. They are now funding from the gasoline prices – that works.
- [Public transit is and should be a priority for environmental reasons, but they need to develop safety and security as a foundation of the public transit system.]

**We also heard that government and local community organizations should encourage local farming and urban gardens. How do you feel about the role of government and local organizations in encouraging these things?**

- That is one thing the government can do is make it legal to grow vegetables in your backyard, hang clothes in backyard; promote local food through zoning
- Clotheslines become a problem with city or neighborhood associations.
- They forced Leawood to [choose] other roofing materials. They changed the rules in the middle of the game. They had policies; [they shouldn't do that] in the middle of the system. We could use clotheslines and Victory Gardens.

**Do you have a garden at home?**

- Yes.
- I have a garden in my yard, but it isn't possible to raise all the food I consume in my backyard. It's not possible to have all the fresh food we want grown in the city.

**Do you make a choice not to buy products from other countries?**

- I would do that if I knew it was sustainable in the long run. I would if I knew it could be year round, but I don't look at it that much.
- Single biggest decision-maker is the price and freshness of the product. Example of lettuce \$10 – if had to be in greenhouses the biggest part of the year, the cost would be much more. Mass produced food is still economic.
- Mass produced food is not subsidized and the government is paying something to [produce] it cheaply.
- [I don't know] how many of my neighbors think of it, but how many people are going that way. They are a small number, but growing faster.



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**Do you consider the packaging of your food?**

- Yes.

**Should we do more to reduce packaging?**

- I already do and pay deposit on glass bottles.
- There are some places that have the consumer grades on packaging.
- Packages are so large to prevent theft.

**Is it good economic policy to look to government to put restrictions on businesses to be more environmentally friendly?**

- I think so. Mostly [by] doing tax breaks ...
- I think it is a good economic development [practice] – [in the] long term, if we grow 500,000, we will have more demands [on our resources, such as] air and water. We need to find more companies [that will] be environmentally friendly. We need to incent them in the long run and save our community.
- “Seek out” – if they want to come here, put a limit and foundation on what they will do.

**Do you agree or disagree that citizens should take a role in making some of these things happen?**

- I think that is a good idea. The church I attend, the congregation picks up [recycling] and doesn't expect the city to do it for them.
- I think people think it should come from their neighbors.
- I don't believe that a lot of elected officials represent our citizens as well as they think they do. [We need to form a] consensus ... about those who want to participate and [have] more buy-in ...
- Community gardens – citizens have to have a role in this.
- Some citizens ... choose to be disruptive – [there's] exception to every rule.
- About the private [citizen], I am not going to [be able to] get a grant; my [duty is to] clean up [my own life]. There should be an incentive to those people, and [in] how[ever] many years they will do it for themselves.
- Bag trash and leave on trail.
- Something like that is great on a small scale and privately run business – [on] a much larger scale [we would need] good incentives.

**Of the topics we talk about, and what you see on the PowerPoint, which of these rises to the top (should be brought up during the April 22 conversation)?**

- Creation of central transportation [authority].
- Transitioning to alternative fuels.
- That is happening already, and that is why I picked the third one.



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- I think the top encompasses the bottom one.
- I want some more chicken-and-egg discussions.
- I would say I think the mixed-use neighborhoods should be discussed first.
- If you take out the word “universal,” it would make more sense (two more people agreed).
- Green jobs and economic culture would include all of this.
- What is the definition of green culture?
- Sustainability.
- All of that stuff, but [we] need to think of economic viability, green jobs will create green culture.