New Tools for Economic Development in Distressed Areas

Assessment Summary

July 18, 2008

Assessment conducted by The Bernard Consulting Group, Inc.
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BACKGROUND

In preparation for the July 21, 2008 meeting, The Bernard Consulting Group, Inc. (BCG) conducted a survey with meeting participants. Ten of twenty-six participants completed a survey.

Survey respondents were asked to identify new tools that would help achieve each of the five outcomes shown below:

1. Increased population and density.
2. Increased individual economic opportunities, including increasing individual income, employment and number of quality jobs.
3. Increased business activities and business profits.
4. Increased property values.
5. Safe and livable neighborhoods.

Associates of BCG analyzed the survey data and developed common theme headers for clusters of two or more similar comments. The common theme headers are for ease of reading only. All of the survey data is shown in the next section of this report.
Outcome 1: Increased population and density.

**Improve Public Safety**
- Well publicized improvements and innovations in public safety.
- Perhaps the reevaluation of police patrol techniques, with a return to "beat officers" would become a neighborhood resource. Crime MUST be brought down to attract anyone.
- The security of the individual and his property is the key to ALL economic development. If people and their property are not safe, or if there is a perception of danger, no one will choose to relocate. The area will be filled with only people that have nowhere else to go.
- Safe neighborhoods provided by massive police presence and portable/mobile (RVs?) police units that can be in the areas and dispatched quickly and moved quickly to areas needed.
- Secure private property from theft/safety

**Increase Availability of Housing**
- Density, as measured by households, will obviously increase with the revival of existing multi-family structures. Not a "new tool" but none the less important to the outcome.
- Include affordable component where possible in any development that has a housing component.
- Re-establish a City Housing Department, and/or a City Rehab Loan Corporation.
- Establish a homesteading program for reutilization of foreclosed homes and other vacant homes, allowing purchase for one dollar. In partnership with area lenders, investors and Land Trust.
- Development of low and moderate income housing mixed with some higher income residences.

**Use of TIF/Tax Abatement Incentives**
- Create a TIF overlay for distressed, inner-city neighborhoods, capturing the property taxes to create a fund to finance exterior minor home repair fund, to be administered by a City Housing Department.
- More housing opportunities for market rate housing (both rental and ownership). This will require the city to continue to offer public assistance through tax abatement and use of TIF dollars for housing where possible.
- Offer 10 year, 50% property tax abatement for residential rental properties for which the owner, (a) invests at least $5,000 in repair which abate blighting conditions, and (b) resides in the property or within one block of the property. This would help combat negligent absentee ownership problems.
- Waive tax for 1-3 years for residents relocating to inner city.
- The city government must be more friendly to development communities and encourage them to come to KC. KC is seen as a very unfriendly and difficult place to do business.
Create High Quality Schools

- KCMO Public Schools...but the answer is to get new blood involved in the school board. It's a very tough step to take, but our state should take it over and our business community needs to get active.
- Create local high quality "academies" or charter schools comparable to parochial schools or Johnson County Schools that are NOT controlled by the KC Public Schools. Allow KC Public students to go to Pembroke Hill and save $4,000 per student, or send them to the Catholic schools and save $14,000 per student. Currently anyone who has a young family, that does not have a lot of money, moves to Kansas or outside the KC school district to ensure education for their children. There is no real choice in public schools. Have neighborhood school boards with FULL control to admit/expel students.
- Possibly work with the Catholic Diocese to create schools, again, NOT controlled by the KC School District.
- Development of real schools that will truly improve basic skills, reading, and numeracy.

Focus on the Core of the Inner City

- It is important that any increased density occur in the core city, rather than at the periphery, which adds to expensive inefficient sprawl. One way to do this is to relax zoning rules in the core city with respect to height, density, set-backs, etc. For example, Boulder Colorado, a city with edges, did exactly this, and allows structures such as mother-in-law dwellings to be constructed on single family lots.
- City must be strategic and clear - developing specific areas block by block, announcing the intention, carrying it out, repeating this over and over until the City establishes a redevelopment trend that the private sector can see, measure and then purchase land in advance of. I would focus on key corridors that reconnect distressed neighborhoods to success, such as 18th street between the Crossroads and 18th and Vine. Then connect that Prospect. Then redevelop Prospect.
- More incentives for inner city development, as opposed to non-inner city

Ensure Access to Employment

- Employment centers. We must create jobs to attract population
- I am not sure whether this refers to all of municipal Kansas City or just distressed areas. If the former, I think what is most important is to improve the attractiveness of METRO Kansas City as a place to live and locate a business. Attracting some large corporations will be a vital element of this (see below), though the goal should be to do this without large subsidies. Instead, large businesses should see it in their interest to locate here due to location, workforce, infrastructure, low cost of living. For helping distressed areas, I think it might be more effective to focus on people rather than place. In other words, the residents of distressed areas are almost surely very low income and below-average education. They may lack access to good health care, child care, and transportation. Focusing on these challenges may do more to revitalize a neighborhood than focusing on location-specific improvements. Why large businesses are important: John Haltiwanger, a professor at the University of Maryland and a program manager at the U.S. Census Bureau, is probably the world expert on this subject. A 1996 paper by him and two co-authors (Steven Davis, John Haltiwanger, and Scott Schuh, “Small Business and Job Creation: Dissecting the Myth and Reassessing the Facts.” Small Business Economics) finds that the high rate of gross job creation by small manufacturing firms, which are due to firm expansions, is offset by their high gross rate of job destruction, which are due to layoffs and going out of business. As a consequence, large manufacturing firms have a higher net rate of job creation. For this
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reason and because of their larger base employment, medium and large firms also account for the majority of aggregate net job creation. Haltiwanger and his co-authors sometimes define “small” as having less than 100 employees. At other times they define it as having less than 500 employees. More recent data, which includes the service sector, is available on the Bureau of Labor Statistics website under “Business Employment Dynamics.” It shows that firms with 100 or more employees accounted for 55 percent of net job creation from mid 1992 through mid 2007. In addition medium and large firms tend to pay higher wages and benefits than small firms (Oi, Walter and Todd L. Idson, “Firm Size and Wages,” in Handbook of Labor Economics, 1999). The results described above establish that medium and large firms also offer higher job security.

Relax Zoning Rules

- City must concentrate on creating the density of "fuel" that will sustain dense development, such as: a) excellent basic services, b) fewer regulatory barriers to mix land uses, activity types and styles of housing, c) excellent public schools d) a wide variety of places to eat and shop f) high quality transit service - service so high you don't need to check a schedule.
- It is important that any increased density occur in the core city, rather than at the periphery, which adds to expensive inefficient sprawl. One way to do this is to relax zoning rules in the core city with respect to height, density, set-backs, etc. For example, Boulder Colorado, a city with edges, did exactly this, and allows structures such as mother-in-law dwellings to be constructed on single family lots.

Remaining comments

- The city must measure and report its success and failures at achieving its announced intentions.
- Reduce surrounding blight with aggressive plan to attract the development community.
- Availability of immediate health and special services that will make living in this community attractive to those with chronic illnesses and the elderly.
- Work with existing natural trends in population growth i.e. high Hispanic growth
- Development of neighborhood infrastructure including roads, bridges, and parks.

Outcome 2: Increased individual economic opportunities, including increasing individual income, employment and number of quality jobs.

Revamp Incentive Programs

- Allow parcel-discrete incentives such as tax abatement, rather than declaring large areas to be part of a TIF, PIEA or LCRA plan.
- Reform the TIF process so that it is not so slow, expensive. No small developer can afford it.
- Incentive developments should include a "first source" component. It should be designed in a positive fashion not a set aside requirement.
- I believe that making low-income, low-education residents better potential employees will be the most successful way to achieve this. While such a strategy will probably not yield quick results, the payoff is probably much better than focusing on increasing labor demand for such residents. Education and job training would be the cornerstone of such a strategy. Also possible would be a subsidy to help pay the wages of such employees.
(it would be critical to make sure that the subsidy was not the key reason for hiring; otherwise such employees would be fired as soon as the subsidy ran out). Other possible elements include better access to subsidized child care (allowing parents to work) and, perhaps, improved transportation links from distressed neighborhoods to jobs throughout the metro area (not just to jobs in municipal Kansas City).

**Provide Job Training**

- Invest in organizations that have the potential or conduct job training/skills development.
- How about making internet access more available AND training people how to use it?
- I believe that making low-income, low-education residents better potential employees will be the most successful way to achieve this. While such a strategy will probably not yield quick results, the payoff is probably much better than focusing on increasing labor demand for such residents. Education and job training would be the cornerstone of such a strategy. Also possible would be a subsidy to help pay the wages of such employees (it would be critical to make sure that the subsidy was not the key reason for hiring; otherwise such employees would be fired as soon as the subsidy ran out). Other possible elements include better access to subsidized child care (allowing parents to work) and, perhaps, improved transportation links from distressed neighborhoods to jobs throughout the metro area (not just to jobs in municipal Kansas City).

**Model Successful Developments in Other Parts of the Metro Area**

- "Quality jobs" develop from "Quality areas". Jobs are fairly available on the Plaza but not near as much at 42nd and Prospect. We can't price people out of the market place but perhaps we could build on the success of others such as Zona Rosa, The Plaza, etc. What makes them tick??
- At the same time, the City must provide affordable housing near successful, growing suburban job centers, such as I-29 and Barry Road. The return of wealth to the core cannot be allowed to push the poor to the next ring out and further amplify the trend of spreading decline. Private investment and homeowners leave in advance of that kind of trend, causing a perpetual loss. The new housing must be in successful areas and yet still be affordable to the poor. Encouraging or requiring a greater mix of types of housing in each new development, targeting say 15% as affordable, allows growth to work for you in creating opportunities for those who don't now have access to them, instead of isolating them from opportunities even further.

**Improve Safety**

- Massive police presence and portable/mobile (RVs?) police units that can be in the areas and dispatched quickly and moved quickly to areas needed.
- Secure private property from theft/safety.

**Develop “Quality” Areas**

- "Quality jobs" develop from "Quality areas". Jobs are fairly available on the Plaza but not near as much at 42nd and Prospect. We can't price people out of the market place but perhaps we could build on the success of others such as Zona Rosa, The Plaza, etc. What makes them tick??
- The City must create an environment attractive to wealthy, talented people to live in. It must allow itself to target the wealthy and bring them back to the core. Where the wealthy go, jobs follow.
Create High Quality Schools

- Create local "academies" or charter schools that are NOT controlled by the KC Public Schools. Actually provide for public education if that is the desired goal. Currently anyone who is thinking about a family, that does not have a lot of money, moves to Kansas or outside the KC school district to ensure education for their children. There is no real choice in public schools. Have a neighborhood school board with FULL control to admit/expel students.
- Possibly work with the Catholic Diocese to create schools, again, NOT controlled by the KC School District.

Become More Welcoming to Potential Businesses

- Employers like to locate where people live and where city government is welcoming and friendly and the city leadership and staff do not assume that corporations are not out to get a free ride.
- Attracting jobs is the only way realistically. This can't be accomplished by a city with a reputation for being hostile to development. Cutting the budget of the Economic Development Corporation does not bode well at a time when KC's unemployment is up to 5.5 %, and is higher than the national average. It is well and good to say we should end the practice of granting incentives to just move jobs from one state to another, but KC cannot unilaterally drop out of the competition. Only the Federal Government can impose a global solution.

Capitalize on the Jazz and Negro League Baseball Museum District

- Intensive development of the jazz and Negro Baseball League district including a Williamsburg like reconstruction of critical buildings that have been destroyed.
- Linking of the jazz district with the Crossroads through creative use of infrastructure and transport including the offering of regular shows using local performers, artists, and culinary experts.

Remaining comments

- Most important though, the City must figure out how to develop local employers whose business serves the world. It must create conditions conducive to creating the next Hallmark. It needs to growth this from within, so that it stays here even after it becomes successful.
- Perhaps we could divide the affected areas into divisions or zones for particular types of business activities. No, not "war zones" for prostitutes, etc., but rather one area for manufacturing, one for services, one for health care, etc.?? In other words, create niches.
- Identify corporations that offer decent wage WITH benefits and opportunities for career growth.
- Invest in agencies that provide small business/micro enterprise assistance.
- Cut city budget, wasteful city spending, turn over all city functions except water to "for profit" entities. Use the savings to eliminate the earnings tax (or cut in half) and fund police enforcement/rehabilitation/prosecutors/jails.
- Forget about "light rail".
- Training and development of providers of public health and safety services that can be utilized by elderly or persons with chronic illnesses attractive to the district.
Outcome 3: Increased business activities and business profits.

**Encourage Entrepreneurship in Individuals**
- Focus more effort on generating entrepreneurs and providing the environment that entrepreneurs find exciting and full of opportunity. I'm not talking about increasing business ownership. By entrepreneur, I mean someone whose product ideas are potentially disruptive to existing business practices - like Apple and Microsoft were to IBM, Sperry-Univac and Honeywell.
- Partner with Kauffman Foundation to develop parallel tracks for entrepreneurs.
- The City should create a public-private fund capable of picking the best 3 ideas from the conference and giving them start-up or "Angel Investor" funding to get them off the ground.
- City should sponsor a prize for ideas from students and professors at UMKC for revitalizing the City's economy. Or hold a conference once a year on urban redevelopment and invite papers from the Fed or anywhere, really, to keep the new ideas and so New Tools coming. This can't be a one-time effort.

**Offer Incentives to Businesses**
- Provide partnership incentives for businesses that might include assistance for fringe benefit packages for their workers that includes health insurance, job skill development, child care or other activities that will strengthen their work force. Assistance with insurance may be required.
- Offer incentives for technical assistance agencies that meet specific deliverables, i.e. business started, jobs created, other.
- Making available to potential business people, loans and credit, either directly or guaranteed by a governmental (city) unit. This program must be staffed by experienced lenders and done properly the first time. Otherwise, it's another deep, dark pit.
- EDC business and retention resources should be used with the existing businesses in an incentive development and in the immediate area outside the development. This would provide a visible demonstration of how development can bring added value to the existing business community. In addition, any job creation or benefits going to existing businesses outside the community would enhance tax revenues to the applicable taxing jurisdiction.

**Improve Quality of the Workforce Through Education**
- I think that in the long term, the key to attracting businesses here would be to improve the quality of our work force such that employers want to tap into it. One way on improving our workforce is to improve the education of people who would live here in any case. But I think we need to do a much better job of attracting highly educated workers to the Kansas City metro area. Doing so will disproportionally benefit municipal Kansas City.
- The City should join with St. Louis, Columbia and any other sites of University of Missouri campuses and lobby the state legislature for increased funding every year. Missouri has one the lowest per capita university expenditures in the nation. The state and the City cannot compete on a global scale without access to new ideas and talent. Great universities are talent and creativity magnets. We need one, but KCMO can't pay for it by itself.
- Create local high quality "academies" or charter schools comparable to parochial schools or Johnson County Schools that are NOT controlled by the KC Public Schools. Allow KC Public students to go to Pembroke Hill and save $4,000 per student, or send...
them to the Catholic schools and save $14,000 per student. Currently anyone who has a young family, that does not have a lot of money, moves to Kansas or outside the KC school district to ensure education for their children. There is no real choice in public schools. Have a neighborhood school boards with FULL control to admit / expel students.

- Possibly work with the Catholic Diocese to create schools, again, NOT controlled by the KC School District.

**Improve Safety**

- Safe neighborhoods provided by massive police presence and portable/mobile (RVs?) police units that can be in the areas and dispatched quickly and moved quickly to areas needed.
- Secure private property from theft/safety.
- The security of the individual and his property is the key to ALL economic development. If people and their property are not safe, or if there is a perception of danger, no one will choose to relocate. The area will be filled with only people that have nowhere else to go.

**Remaining comments**

- As for increasing business profits, lower taxes are always desirable. But under present circumstances, they are probably not feasible. I would think there is a bigger payoff to improving municipal services. Municipal Kansas City ought to be known as a place that works (in the sense of functions well). For example, permitting and inspections should be quick. Alternatively, snow removal should insure that workers can make it to their place of employment except after large storms.
- The quote says, "nothing happens 'til the sale is made" therefore, it would seem that we would be well served to try to establish retail centers such as the Citadel Plaza and others.
- Business profits won't exist at all without quality business in the first place. I suggest restrictions on the nature of business that will be allowed in certain places.
- Invest in agencies that provide small business/micro enterprise assistance.
- See that real (not asserted or imagined) expertise is delivered to small scale producers in terms of marketing, understanding and obtaining access to finances, and increased recognition of those exerting efforts in small business development.
- Provide support for assemblage of small parcels of land into those of adequate size for industrial or commercial operation.
- Get out of the way. It is not the job of government to increase business profits, and it wouldn't have the slightest idea of how to do it. That is the job of business. Reduce the turn-around time on building permits if you want to do something constructive.
Outcome 4: Increased property values.

Revamp Incentive Programs
- Follow the Independence model on the use of 353 Tax Abatement and TIF in combination with each other.
- Offer incentives to housing development entities that meet specific deliverables i.e. X number of first time homeowners.
- Offer incentives to homeowners that meet specific deliverables, i.e. home improvement investments.
- Continual upgrades to existing utilities and perhaps tax abatements for rehab work done on owner occupied properties. Not condos.
- Discussions about un-taxing retail sales purchases within a Black Heritage District should move forward.

Improve Safety
- Safe neighborhoods provided by massive police presence and portable/mobile (RVs?) police units that can be in the areas and dispatched quickly and moved quickly to areas needed.
- Secure private property from theft/safety with increase prosecution, treatment/rehabilitation, jail time for repeat offenders.
- Create "SAFE ZONES" where penalties for crimes have extreme penalties for repeat offenders. Minimum sentencing for property crimes/assault. Make it known that if you commit a crime in this area, the punishment will be extreme. Perhaps this can only be enforced by the police, but allow the police more flexibility/support.
- Safety

Create High Quality Schools
- Better schools
- Create local high quality "academies" or charter schools comparable to parochial schools or Johnson County Schools that are NOT controlled by the KC Public Schools. Allow KC Public students to go to Pembroke Hill and save $4,000 per student, or send them to the Catholic schools and save $14,000 per student. Currently anyone who has a young family, that does not have a lot of money, moves to Kansas or outside the KC school district to ensure education for their children. There is no real choice in public schools. Have a neighborhood school boards with FULL control to admit / expel students.
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Improve Basic City Services
- Do a good job with basic city services. This goal is otherwise way beyond the ability of city government. See answers above. Other than that, the connection between economic incentives, or "tools" is tangential. The school district is the biggest impediment.
- Continual upgrades to existing utilities and perhaps tax abatements for rehab work done on owner occupied properties. Not condos.
Property Values will Improve if the Other Outcomes are Achieved

- There is no reason to be concerned specifically about increased property values. This should occur due to previous suggestions. There is evidence, however, that a considerable amount of property in KCMO is now not on the tax rolls. User fees and charges should be used aggressively throughout KCMO, particularly where TIF have been granted.
- Property values will follow.

Remaining comments

- Limit the number and condition of non-owner occupied properties. Try to eliminate or at least, curtail the number of "slum lords" operating in KC.
- Where possible a modest housing component has demonstrated the ability to increase residential property values. A scheduled systematic codes enforcement program for the development area including the new construction over the life of the project would help maintain property values. At the end of a 15 to 30 year plus time horizon it would be unfortunate to discover blighting conditions because of costs savings accruing to development interests.
- Fund community and economic development agencies.
- Actually, a lot of recent economic research suggests that regulation and constraint of supply is the best way to raise property values. The point is that a vast land area with low regulation allows for very high housing supply elasticity. Clearly such a strategy would be foolish. Instead, increasing the productivity and quality of life of metro Kansas City and municipal Kansas City such that they attract highly educated workers and medium to large firms from throughout the nation is most important.

Outcome 5: Safe and livable neighborhoods.

Encourage Citizen Involvement in Reporting Crime

- Citizens must get involved and report and not tolerate drug dealing at the upper and low income levels. Police must work closely with residents and show them how they can get involved.
- If citizens suspect drug dealing they should band together with other neighbors and fight! City should provide funding to give citizens (through police dept) wireless security cameras and monitor the neighborhood and put signs up to let people know that they are on camera. This works. It worked in Union Hill (but all at the expense of a few home owners) and several police officers said that if more neighbors had been like us then KC’s crime rate would substantially reduce.
- Use of neighborhood policing mixed with citizen involvement and protection of those involved.

Improve Curb Appeal

- Improved visual quality of neighborhoods in all aspects.
- Lighting up dark areas in blighted neighborhoods?
- Strict enforcement of building codes?
Create High Quality Schools

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Include a Housing Component

- The City must have a strategy for breaking up concentrations of poverty by building or requiring developers to build affordable housing near successful suburban job centers.
- Again where feasible a housing component in concert with other existing programs could be a stimulus to improving our neighborhoods. By the way, a representative from the appropriate KCMO police division should be a member of the Housing Steering Committee.

Reduce Poverty

- Crime stems from impoverishment, especially impoverishment of hope that socially accepted behavior will produce the quality of life desired. Focusing on police is like putting a band aid over a severed artery. The city should embrace anti-poverty measures as a crime fighting measure. That means restoring hope. All of the above will help. Children don't start out hopeless; they have to learn it. How can we create a city where each child is valued, supported? We can start by supporting and valuing parents. Too often, cities view families with children, and residential development in general, as a cost to be avoided. But in the long-run, they are the most valuable residents a city has. Someone who grows up successfully in a city always has soft spot for that city. They are more likely to return after college. They are more likely to go to college in the first place. A place can be judged by how well it treats its kids. Schools need playground equipment. They need the involvement of the businesses that could hire them in the future. Kids need an environment in which they feel loved and accepted, not just at home but in the community and the City as a whole. A City that leaves people to fend for themselves gets what it deserves.
- Widely-shared economic prosperity is clearly important. As is good parenting and education of children and teenagers. A good policing strategy is also important.

Provide Support for Parents/Families

- Crime stems from impoverishment, especially impoverishment of hope that socially accepted behavior will produce the quality of life desired. Focusing on police is like putting a band aid over a severed artery. The city should embrace anti-poverty measures as a crime fighting measure. That means restoring hope. All of the above will help. Children don't start out hopeless; they have to learn it. How can we create a city where each child is valued, supported? We can start by supporting and valuing parents. Too often, cities view families with children, and residential development in general, as a cost to be avoided. But in the long-run, they are the most valuable residents a city has. Someone who grows up successfully in a city always has soft spot for that city. They are more likely to return after college. They are more likely to go to college in the
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- Widely-shared economic prosperity is clearly important. As is good parenting and education of children and teenagers. A good policing strategy is also important.

**Remaining comments**

- Partner with KCMO Police Department to establish parallel tracks on safety goals.
- Replicate the Westside CAN Center throughout the city.
- Establish neighborhood CIDs specifically in inner city.
- More police funding, more prosecutors and money for them, more rehabilitation opportunities for young/first time offenders, more jails for repeat offenders.
- Safe neighborhoods provided by massive police presence and portable/mobile (RVs?) police units that can be in the areas and dispatched quickly and moved quickly to areas needed.
- Secure private property from theft/safety - Create "SAFE ZONES" as described above.
- Increased use of in-residence detention rather than incarceration for first offenders or minor crimes.
- This is way beyond economic development tools. This is a function of the police department.
- To restore hope, the city needs a plan tied to action, much like it has for capital improvements. It needs a long-range plan for distressed communities that outlines goals and aspirations, developed in conjunction with each community. But it also needs a 5-year HIP plan - a Hope Improvement Plan, much like a CIP (Capital Improvements Plan). This is what can set expectations about what projects the City will actually do, that private sector folks can see and act in advance of the City's investment and so create a redevelopment trend that is largely privately funded, rather than the city having to do everything.
- Safety in neighborhoods is paramount to increasing property values and returning livability to the inner city. I suggested earlier that perhaps "beat officers" should be considered again for the neighborhoods, aka "the hood".
- Maybe reducing the population density in some areas?
- Answers to other outcomes is the starting place.