

» Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance

If community development is in part about residents taking control of and improving their environment, residents of Kansas City in Missouri and Kansas now have a tool: CityScope. Developed by the **Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance (KCNA)**, the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), and city officials, CityScope is a comprehensive survey of housing, grounds, and infrastructure conditions of Kansas City's neighborhoods.

Blue Hills, an early CityScope user, is an urban core neighborhood affected by community disinvestments resulting in high crime, low home-ownership rates, and dilapidated housing stock. In the early 1990s, KCNA initiated a five-point improvement plan: *Build hope* through crime reduction and community policing; *Build capacity* through resident engagement and leadership training; *Build the market* for new home ownership through financial literacy training; *Build the houses* with a strategic housing rehabilitation program; and *Build the industries* using quality local contractors and developing banking relationships.

Neighborhood leaders wanted to measure success and demonstrate the changes they had been making. "You can always tell a story," says Ed Linnebur, Director of Neighborhood Impact at KCNA. "But we also wanted more." Linnebur created an inventory tracking system based on input and recommendations from neighborhood groups. "I went to the final users first, because if they didn't find the inventory useful, there was no point in doing it," he says.

CityScope helped KCNA target resources through data-driven priorities. Since KCNA's entry into Blue Hills, property appraisals have risen 40%, violent crime has declined by 49% and private home-improvement lending is up 33% —all surpassing citywide benchmarks. KCNA trained over 15,000 families in home ownership, resulting in 6,000 new homeowners: a 40% success rate. Also, 1,400 new savings accounts were established by low- and moderate-income people.

KCNA adapted the Blue Hills approach and CityScope to new areas. To improve the city's practice of issuing personal-property code violations, a team trained by KCNA and UMKC mapped baseline data on 87,000 residential properties using a GIS system. Combined with crime statistics, unemployment data, HMDA records, and property values, this data-driven



For over eight years, Heron has supported KCNA's community development efforts, including engaging residents who are trained in assessing and improving conditions in their neighborhoods.

tool can be used to identify properties for improvement and to leverage City resources to go after the worst code violators.

"It goes beyond feeling that you're doing good work. It's about demonstrating results," says Richard Moore, Chairman of the Board of KCNA and President of Commerce Mortgage Corporation.

CityScope is now available to the entire Kansas City metropolitan area. The government uses the tool for effective deployment of funds and staff. The training provided by KCNA to municipal staff, community leaders and non-profit organizations reinforces the critical role of individual households in improving communities, demonstrates investment opportunities in low-income communities, and provides data on the quality of outcomes.

"We are proud to be partners with KCNA in developing CityScope. It is a powerful tool for neighborhood revitalization," says Martha W. Gilliland, Chancellor of the University of Missouri.

For maximum results and strategic decision-making, KCNA will collect CityScope data for at least ten years. KCNA is working with other cities and is developing a complementary survey system that will capture quality-of-life measures.

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ORGANIZATION MISSION:
To build the capacity of Kansas City's neighborhoods to become safe, strong, stable, and attractive places where people are proud to live

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION:
Community development corporation

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE:
Metro Kansas City

POPULATION SERVED:
Total metro pop.: 18MM;
KCNA's client population: 50-80% of area median income (1990 Census and KCNA data)

YEAR FOUNDED:
1979

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES:
Affordable housing; financial literacy; community organizing and mapping

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
Gloria M. Eurotas

STAFF SIZE:
21 FTE

ANNUAL BUDGET:
\$15MM

CURRENT HERON SUPPORT:
\$100,000 general support grant