

Urban Design

Introduction

The City's image is heavily influenced by the existing natural and built environments. These environments create a character that helps dictate how residents and visitors to the area will perceive and experience the City. With a strong fabric of urban and natural elements a more positive impression is cast to visitors and greater pride is felt by residents.

Guiding Principles

- Reinforce and enhance unique district and neighborhood identities.
 - Recognize and celebrate the cultural diversity of neighborhoods throughout the City.
 - Rediscover, reconnect to and celebrate the City's cultural and historic roots through preservation and enhancement historic districts, buildings, structures and sites.
- Improve the appearance of key "image" streets.
 - Design enhancements will acknowledge and balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users.
- Strengthen the image of the City within and outside its borders through enhancement of the natural and built environments.
 - Create an environment that will attract and retain businesses, residents and visitors.



Organizing Elements

The urban design framework is intended to provide a guide for organizing these elements and understanding their impact on the surrounding area. The following organizing elements are based in part on elements identified in *The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch:

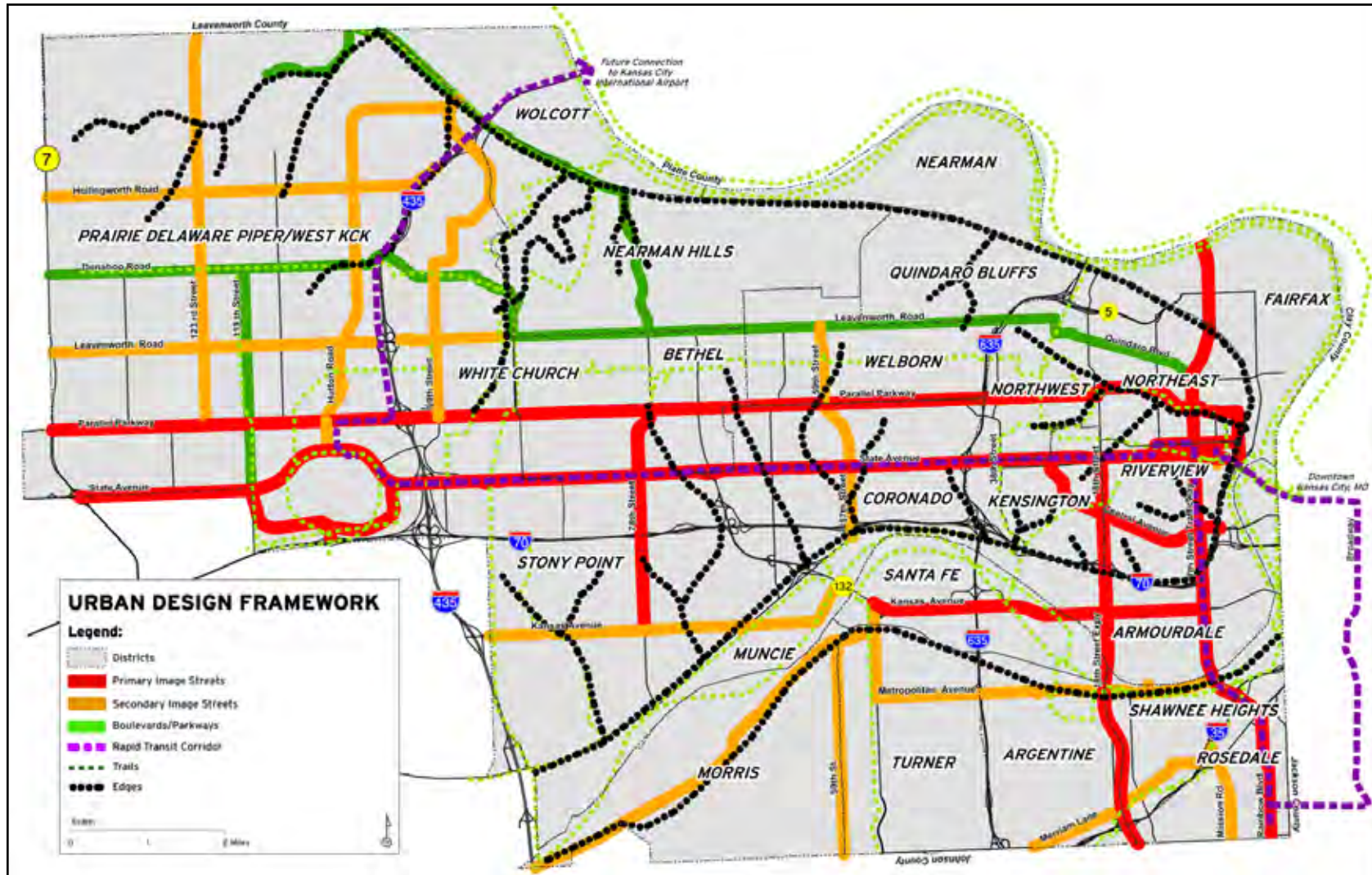
- Districts
- Pathways
 - Primary Image Streets
 - Secondary Image Streets
 - Boulevards/Parkways
 - Rapid Transit Corridors
 - Trails
- Edges

City-Wide Master Plan

Urban Design Framework

Exhibit 3: Urban Design Framework

The Urban Design Framework Map (see below) and recommendations (described on the following pages) are intended to serve as a guide and strategy for identifying and prioritizing urban design improvements throughout the City.



Key Elements

Districts

Districts create large references as people travel through or to these areas. Thematic unity helps distinguish one area from another. Opportunities within these areas include provisions for improved signage and urban design elements to reinforce and enhance the district's identity and character. Additional opportunities include provisions for improved and enhanced connections to other districts, nodes and surrounding neighborhoods. These connections should balance the needs of vehicles, including transit, as well as bicycles and pedestrians.

Identified Districts

For planning purposes, the following districts are identified to delineate areas based upon size, scale, density and character of development. These district boundaries and names may be modified over time due to changing characteristics or at the request of individual neighborhoods. The italicized districts currently have detailed district/area plans. The Plan Influences section includes a summary of each of these plans.

- *Downtown Core*
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Kensington
- Riverview
- Fairfax
- Nearman
- Wolcott
- Bethel
- Welborn
- Quindaro Bluffs
- *Armourdale*
- Coronado
- *Rosedale*
- Argentine
- Shawnee Heights
- Santa Fe
- Turner
- Morris
- Muncie
- White Church
- Stony Point
- Nearman Hills
- *Prairie Delaware Piper/West KCK*





District Recommendations

- Work with individual neighborhood and homes associations as well as local businesses within each district to tailor future urban design enhancements to reinforce and enhance each district's unique character and sense of place.
- Encouraging community anchors including businesses, schools and churches to work with their surrounding neighborhoods on area improvements and activities.
- Use infill development and new development to reinforce a district's established theme. All development should fit within the existing character, scale and style of adjacent neighborhoods. Work with developers, property owners and new residents to identify or refine district themes within new or emerging areas.
- As funding becomes available, area plans should be completed for all districts. These plans will build on the Master Plan as a framework but will include more detailed recommendations tailored to each district. At a minimum, these area plans should include the following elements:
 - Vision, goals, objectives and policies.
 - Recommended strategic updates to the Master Plan including suggested Land Use Plan Map modifications. Future land use categories and definitions will remain consistent with the adopted Master Plan.
 - Urban design recommendations.
 - Parks, open space and trail recommendations.
 - Basic infrastructure needs and priorities.
 - Multi-modal transportation recommendations.
 - Action plan for implementation.
- As funding becomes available, update completed area plans every 5 to 10 years or when warranted by changing conditions or special circumstances.

Pathways

Cities and neighborhoods are connected through a network of major and minor circulation routes by which people use to move from place to place. Paths are not limited to moving people through areas, they are also the primary way people experience an area. Paths can be either defined and cohesive, or paths can be a hodgepodge of elements that lack cohesiveness.

Pathway Types

- Primary Image Streets
- Secondary Image Streets
- Rapid Transit Corridors
- Trails

Primary Image Streets

The following streets are used by a majority of visitors, residents and workers within the City. These are high visibility streets that provide the first and final impressions of the City. Therefore, urban design improvements along these pathways tend to provide the greatest impact.

- Parallel Parkway
- State Avenue
- Central Avenue
- Kansas Avenue (Kansas/Missouri State Line to K-132)
- 7th Street Trafficway
- 18th Street Expressway
- Rainbow Boulevard
- 78th Street (K-32/Kaw Drive to Parallel Parkway)

Recommendations

- Work with Business West to study the removal of key medians along State Avenue between College Parkway and 82nd Street.
- Commission corridor plans to identify specific urban design and streetscape themes for each street. Funding needs to be in place to develop the corridor plans and implement some of the primary action items. Area plans will note design variations through individual districts.
- These streets should incorporate wide sidewalks (a minimum of 10-foot wide with a 5-foot minimum landscaping zone between the walk and the back of the curb) on both sides of the street to accommodate comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connections as well as retail businesses and outdoor cafes.
- Major gateways and/or public art should be incorporated at major intersections and districts.
- Street trees and planters should be utilized to provide a pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing environment. Tree species should have an open canopy and be limbed up to a reasonable height to ensure appropriate visibility to businesses.
- Site furnishings including benches, movable planters, wayfinding and interpretive signage, bike racks and litter receptacles should be located at all major intersections and transit stops. Site furnishings should be designed as a family of elements reflecting the character of the district. Durable materials, such as stainless steel or powder coated metal should be used. The furnishings should be well crafted and be designed to stand the test of time.
- Decorative banners should be incorporated on the street lights. The design of the banners should highlight each district's identity.
- Pedestrian lighting will be provided to illuminate retail and mixed-use areas, trails, park frontages, public plazas, courtyards and activity areas. Pedestrian lighting fixture styles should reflect the character of the district in which they are placed.





Primary Image Street Recommendations (Continued)

- When practical, the City will work with Kansas City Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to place utilities underground as streets are widened and/or improved.
- Consolidate redundant driveways and promote shared access between adjacent businesses to promote a continuous street edge.

Secondary Image Streets

These following streets are used to connect neighborhoods to parks, schools and businesses. These streets provide reinforce perceptions of the individual neighborhoods within a district.

- Mission Road
- Merriam Lane
- Metropolitan Avenue
- 57th Street (I-70 to Parallel Parkway)
- 59th Street (Johnson County Line to Inland Drive) and (Parallel Parkway to Leavenworth Road)
- 99th Street (Parallel Parkway to I-435)
- Inland Drive
- Holliday Drive
- Kansas Avenue (K-132 to I-435)
- Hutton Road
- 123rd Street (Parallel Parkway to Leavenworth County Line)
- Leavenworth Road (91st Street to K-7)
- Hollingsworth Road

Recommendations

- These streets should incorporate sidewalks on both sides of the street (a minimum of 8-foot wide with a 5-foot minimum landscaping zone between the walk and the back of the curb) to accommodate comfortable pedestrian connections.
- Minor “neighborhood” gateways should be incorporated at major intersections.
- Decorative banners should be incorporated on the street lights. The design of the banners should highlight neighborhood identity.
- Basic site furnishings at major intersections and transit stops including benches, bike racks and trash receptacles.
- Pedestrian lighting will be provided to illuminate neighborhood-retail areas, trails, park frontages, and activity areas. Pedestrian lighting fixture styles should reflect the character of the neighborhood in which they are placed.

Boulevards/Parkways

These following streets are intended to provide a park-like or rural setting.

- Quindaro Boulevard
- Leavenworth Road (I-635 to 91st Street)
- Wolcott Drive
- Donahoo Road (Wyandotte County Lake Park to K-7)
- 119th Street (State Avenue to Donahoo Road)

Boulevards/Parkways Recommendations

- Work with the Leavenworth Road Association to develop a standard that maintains a rural character along the corridor. Particular attention should be shown to the narrowness of the right-of-way in the Christ the King Church area.
- These roadways should utilize engineered swales to assist with stormwater run-off. The 5-foot minimum swale “zone” shall be landscaped with native plant materials. A trail should be provided on at least one side of the road behind the swale (a minimum of 10-foot wide) to accommodate comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- These streets may incorporate a 10-foot minimum landscape median with trees, public art and other plant massings.
- Decorative banners should be incorporated on the street lights. The design of the banners should highlight neighborhood identity.
- Site furnishings including benches, wayfinding signage, bike racks, litter receptacles, should be located at all major intersections and trail heads.
- Pedestrian lighting will be provided to illuminate the trail(s), park frontages, and activity areas.

Rapid Transit Corridors

Mass Transit is an essential component of the Green City by encouraging alternative modes of transportation. The following corridors will be planned to support future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and potentially a fixed Light Rail Transit (LRT) or other fixed guideway transit technologies intended to connect residents to employment areas, regional retail areas and other major destinations.

- State Avenue (7th Street Trafficway to Hutton Road)
- I-70 (Downtown Kansas City, Kansas to Downtown Kansas City, Missouri)
- 7th Street Trafficway (State Avenue to I-35)
- Rainbow Boulevard (I-35 to Johnson County Line)
- West 39th Avenue (Connection to Kansas City, Missouri)





Rapid Transit Corridor Recommendations

- Coordinate Rapid Transit planning with future State Avenue planning.
- Proactively work with property owners, businesses and residents to plan for future rapid transit improvements including provisions for future transit stops, dedicated lanes, signal preemption and to mitigate potential impacts to local traffic and parking.
- Encourage Transit Oriented Development (TOD) by supporting higher densities and a mix of uses that include retail businesses, services, offices and residences clustered adjacent to or near planned transit stops.
- Work with the Kansas City Area Transit Authority (KCATA) and the City of Kansas City, Missouri to plan for connections to Downtown Kansas City, Missouri and/or other rapid transit routes.

Trails

A system of multi-use pedestrian and bicycle trails should be provided throughout the City to balance transportation and recreation needs. The basic function of pedestrian and bicycle trails is to provide a safe avenue for pedestrians and cyclists to travel from one destination to another by separating motorized traffic from the pedestrian. Trails are an essential component of the Green City by encouraging walking or cycling as an alternative mode of transportation while developing a sense of community.



Trail Recommendations

- The City will be interconnected through a series of trails to link local and regional destinations (See also Parks, Trails and Open Space Section).
- All new trails shall be at least 10 feet wide and will include enhanced pedestrian amenities including wayfinding and interpretive signage, benches, litter receptacles and generous landscaping.
- All trails will be illuminated with pedestrian lights with a consistent spacing.
- All sidewalks and trails should meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

EDGES

Edges define the physical, visual and psychological limits of an area. Areas with clearly defined edges are easily recognized and well known. However, when edges are not clearly defined, an area can lack cohesiveness and identity. Some edges are strong, such as the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, while others are not as apparent and taper off, blending into another district. Edges help to define where one area ends and another begins. Edges can be better defined through aesthetic improvements such as gateway features, urban design elements, landscape and provisions for safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections along and across these areas.

Recommendations

- Preserve greenways along major streams and creeks.
- Enhance the Missouri and Kansas River corridors.
- Promote cluster development along the Missouri River Bluffs to preserve key view sheds, open space and trail connections.
- Develop portholes along the River Corridors to allow safe and convenient public access to the rivers.
- Proactively work with the Army Corps of Engineers to plan for and build additional boat ramps along the rivers.
- Incorporate generous landscape and public art along the major interstate and highway corridors.
- Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle crossings of interstates, highways, arterial roads, railroads, rivers, major creeks and streams.
- Work with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) to plan for landscape and decorative hardscape enhancements along interstates and highways. These enhancements may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Plant massings
 - Enhanced bridge treatments, retaining walls, noise walls, etc.
 - Regional gateways
 - Public art
 - Decorative lighting
 - Civic signage program to identify districts, historic/educational sites, and major attractions



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