



Department of Planning + Urban Design

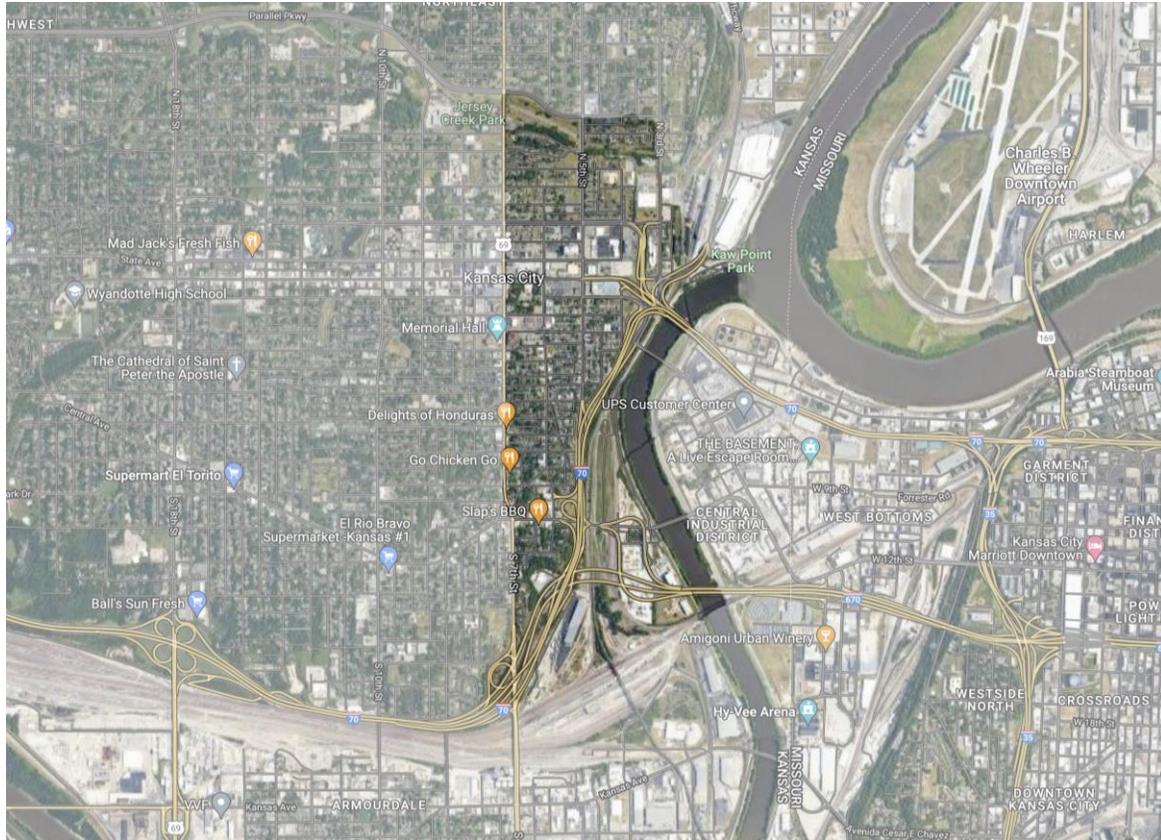
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Downtown KCK Industrial River Edge Vision Study

Kansas City Design Center (KCDC) Urban Design Studio 2022/2023



Preamble

Downtown Kansas City Kansas (KCK) has a unique geographical position that defines its Eastern edge. Its elevated bluff position above the Kansas River and the confluence with Missouri River commands a prominent topological presence grounded in expansive panoramic views to the East binding it visually with its Missouri counterpart. However, this prominence is simultaneously challenged by the interface with the infrastructure of I-70, which results in a tangle of on and off ramps that claim valuable territory that would otherwise allow the city to connect to the river and instead is a physical and psychological barrier. The impending realignment and reconstruction of the I-70 westbound off and on ramps will create a unique opportunity to rethink the interface with the city and create a better juxtaposition of the contesting ordering systems of highways, street patterns and topography and connect and extend usable public realm towards the river.

Project

The main purpose of the project is to examine in detail and propose alternatives for better intersection with and integration of the new interstate infrastructure into the related parts of the city and find the way in which the continuation of the street patterns and accessible public realm can be interwoven with the new construction and the negotiation of the challenging topography, ultimately creating a usable city territory that benefits its inhabitants. The larger context of the project will be bounded by the Kansas River to the East, Jersey Creek to the North, 7th Street Trafficway to the West, and I-670 to the South and at that scale, the project will focus on examining opportunities for reclaiming and redeveloping the industrial land and the riverfront between I-70 and I-670 bounded by the bluff and topographical shift to the West. Both scales of the design investigations will be based on and draw from the previous 2020/21 Kansas City Design Center (KCDC) vision study for the redevelopment of the industrial riverfront in Kansas City, Kansas. In doing so the project will center on pursuing the already established objectives of the activation of the riverfront, creation of the continuous public realm, overcoming the infrastructural separation from the rest of the city and exploring the modes of the mixed-use development.

The overarching goal of the project is to offer a tangible design vision for rethinking urban infrastructure and underutilized industrial land towards the creation of a more inclusive concept of mixed-use urban environment and a shared public realm where the identity of the place is derived from the experience of its constituting working parts and the juxtaposition of traditionally considered mutually exclusive land use opposites.

In developing and executing the project, the KCDC urban design studio will be collaborating directly with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas (UG) Planning and Urban Design Department both as the primary stakeholder and the client. Where applicable the department will provide technical guidance and shared expertise in gathering and processing data [such as GIS etc.] The project will be based on extensive community engagement through two (2) primary instances: the project advisory group who will provide expert guidance and input in the execution of the project goals; and the broader community engagement through the project stakeholder group, which will be selected in collaboration with the UG and engaged at appropriated times.

The project will be further based on thorough consideration and integration of the adopted plans, policies and on-going city initiatives that directly bear on the project study area and its related context. The plans include but are not limited to:

- goDotte Countywide Strategic Mobility Plan {2022}
- Northeast KCK Heritage Trail Plan [2022]
- Armourdale Master Plan [2021]
- Central Area Master Plan
- KCK Levee Betterments (HNTB)

KCDC will continuously consult and collaborate with the UG to incorporate any other relevant and current planning study and initiative to ensure comprehensiveness of the visioning project efforts.

Project Organization

The project will be organized in the following phases and deliverables:

Phase 1. Research and analysis

- This will be an abbreviated process based on the verification [and update if necessary] of the previously completed research and analytical materials for the 2020/21 project and the compilation of the ones critical for the generation of the current project; and,
- Collection, generation and organization of the pertinent traffic engineering and road infrastructure planning and construction data as they relate to the site subject to the project inquiry.

This phase of the project will be generated and presented through analytical mapping studies, data processing and visualization, photographic and video documentation, topographic and massing digital models, and urban scale drawings.

Phase 2. Conceptual urban vision plan generation

- Based on the findings in phase one and referencing related city plans and initiatives the KCDC urban design studio will generate an overall conceptual master plan for the larger project context area focusing in particular on the riverfront area and intersection with I-70 and I-670 infrastructures. The objective of the conceptual master plan would be to propose the assembly of the developable land, envision an overall programmatic and land use concept, test build up morphology and strategies for the connection and integration into the rest of the city. This will further allow for a greater, in depth three dimensional and functional explorations of the generative design ideas centering on urban space typologies, urban form development patterns and resilient infrastructure programming; and,
- Preliminary zoom in three-dimensional study of the intersection and interface between I-70 infrastructure and new on and off ramps and the related city parts focused on alternative scenarios and possibilities. The objective of the study would be to lessen the adverse impact of the new interstate ramps structures on the urban fabric and the potential public realm territory and seek the possibilities for the innovative solution that benefit the quality of urban space and its communal use.

This phase of the project will be generated and represented through conceptual mapping, generative master and vision plan drawings at a variety of scales and details, 3D digital and physical modeling, digital animations, and, where appropriate, 3D renderings.

Phase 3. Focused urban design investigations

- Based on the two (2) previous stages of the project, KCDC urban design studio, in collaboration with the project advisory group and community stakeholders, will select the preferred I-70 on and off configuration and positioning scenarios for in-depth study and strategic exploration of they key design ideas and the generation of the proof of concept towards their implementation. The design investigations will be focused on studying residual urban space patterns derived from the specific contextual circumstances and intersection between highway infrastructure installations and the bluff topography; opportunistic space programming born out of characteristics of the found place and the need for environmental mitigation and resilient installations; development of the innovative place and operational program specific large-scale urban furniture, and streetscape design. The design will be based on an in-depth precedents study across current cutting edge national and international practices [this study will be assembled and presented in a separate document] and related to the specific contextual circumstances of the project site to create a series of constructive and innovative ideas that can lead to the generation of a genuine and existentially inspiring and affirming public realm. The ultimate purpose of this project stage is to advance urban design ideas to the level implementation considerations and ground project in buildable reality.

This phase of the project will be generated through case studies, extensive design studies and urban design scenarios simulations, 3D digital and physical urban and architectural scale modeling, digital simulations, urban and architectural scale drawings.

Conclusion

As stated in developing the project, KCDC urban design studio will be interacting and collaborating with the project advisory and community stakeholder groups. The interaction will take place through group meetings, design charrettes, and public presentations that will be used to generate input, guidance and build consensus. These forms of input exchange will take place three times per semester. Additionally, the project work, given its academic base, will also be a subject to formal academic and professional reviews which will happen at separate times but will be open to advisory and stakeholder groups and other interested parties. At the end of the academic year in early May, the project will be presented to the general public in an open house and exhibition meeting.

Following its completion, the project will be assembled in a form of comprehensive publication [KCDC urban design studio book] that will document the process, findings, design propositions, and implementation recommendations. The publication will be produced by KCDC urban design studio graduates and interns through the summer of 2023, anticipating that the book publication date on or close to August 2023.