

**South  
Kansas City  
Alliance**

# **2012 Strategic Plan**

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The South Kansas City Alliance has developed the following strategic plan to both launch the organization and guide it through its first year of operation.

This process and report was facilitated and prepared by Gunnar H. Hand, AICP, President of MOCK Studio, LLC.

**Final Report**

# SOUTH KANSAS CITY ALLIANCE FINAL REPORT



## Participants

Over the course of five meetings beginning in January 2012 and ending on March 5, 2012, the South Kansas City Alliance has developed the following strategic plan to both launch the organization and guide it through its first year of operation. There has been a total of 37 people participating in some or all of these meetings with an average meeting attendance 20 members representing five economic development agencies, two social service providers, one school district, 13 neighborhood organizations, and one government group.

This planning process represents a diverse coalition of community activists and organizations whose networks and expertise span a vast geographic and professional area. The specific community groups represented at the these strategic planning meetings include but is not limited to:

- Martin City Community Improvement District
- Three Trails Village Community Improvement District
- Southtown Council
- Waldo Business Association
- Brookside Business Association
- South Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
- City of Kansas City, Missouri
- Hickman Mills School District
- Center Planning and Development Council
- Community Assistance Council
- Southern Communities Coalition
- Kansas City Neighborhood Advisory Council
- Republican Women of Greater Kansas City
- Fairwood Homes Associations
- Armour Hills Homes Association
- Ruskin Heights Homeowners Association
- West Bannister Homeowners Association
- Royal Oaks Homeowners Association
- Oakdale Homeowners Association
- Linden Hills Homeowners Association
- Unity Ridge Homeowners Association
- Stratford Estates Homeowners Association
- Terrace Lake Gardens Homeowners Association
- Overhill Block Club

# Process

The strategic planning process followed a general outline to develop goals, priorities, projects and mission for the South Kansas City Alliance. This process was undertaken to quickly assess the group's core members, their skill sets, and interest in creating a new coalition organization to represent South Kansas City.

The goal of this overall strategic planning process was to brainstorm ideas to generate a wish list then narrow this down to a focused, practical mission to support the most immediate and sustainable impact.

## Understanding Skills and Interests

During introductions at all strategic planning events, the group was given time to introduce themselves and explain what they think they could contribute to this process as well as the nascent organization. When assigning immediate tasks and developing future projects, SKCA should take stock of this bank of skill sets in order to play to its strengths regardless of the proposal (i.e. those skilled in communications can assist in the development of an outreach strategy for SKCA and/or an outreach campaign for a specific project). Those skills and specific interests included:

- Institutional knowledge of city government
- Experience in economic, community and neighborhood development
- Understanding of sustainability best practices (economic, environmental and social)
- Promotion of employment growth
- Entrepreneurship
- Quality of life improvements including walkability, provision of social services, commercial revitalization and retail development.

The working group is willing to provide time, energy, organizational skills, motivation, hope, coordination, networking, partnerships, engagement strategies, commitment, communications, information, history, fundraising, and business acumen in support of the South Kansas City Alliance.

## Outlining SKCA Goals

The working group identified several key areas that they would like the SKCA to work on. These topic areas or goals include:

- Advancing Sustainable Economic Development
- Effecting Quality Development
- Implementing Enforceable Planning Documents
- Neighborhood Beautification
- Strengthen Neighborhood Associations
- Revitalize Existing Neighborhoods
- Expand, Support and Connect New Businesses to People
- Secure Fair-share of Government Services
- Influence/Leverage the Government Decision Making Process
- Fostering a Sense of Cooperation Amongst Neighborhoods, Business and School Districts
- Promoting a Positive Perception of South Kansas City
- Developing an Effective Communication Strategy
- Increase Access to Health Services



## Envisioning an Ideal SKCA

The working group was asked to list the characteristics of the South Kansas City Alliance as they see it in 5-10 years from now. Each member was to ask themselves how do we want the South Kansas City Alliance to be perceived in the region?

These characteristics include:

- Formidable
- Alliance
- Diversity

- Viable
- Funded
- Visionary
- Effective
- Relevant
- Comprehensive
- Proactive
- Influential
- Respected
- Flexible
- Informed
- Cohesive
- Positive
- Responsive
- Responsible
- Approachable
- Sensible
- United
- Democratic

From this list of characteristics, the group began to develop an identity. Based on input from several participants and then edited down by the Executive Committee, the following draft mission statement has been sent to the Bylaws Committee for final review:

**The South Kansas City Alliance is a coalition of neighborhood organizations, civic institutions, non-profits and business interests dedicated to a unified vision for south Kansas City. Through sustainable economic development, building quality communities, and creating a safe, healthy environment, we work to make South Kansas City a better place to live, work and play.**

Moving forward the identity of the organization will evolve with its projects, membership and time. However, it is imperative that we encapsulate our identity through the creation of internal structure via the bylaws, which outlines governance, ethics and procedures, as well as our outward perception through a finalized mission statement, brand, name and tag line.

## Brainstorming Activities

The participants identified a list of specific projects that they would be interested in or that they thought the South Kansas City Alliance should focus on. The projects brainstormed include:

- Attend outreach events
- Advocate for adopting Area Plans as City Ordinances
- Develop an outreach strategy, including materials, newsletter, traditional and social media
- Develop a website to be a one-stop shop for South Kansas City
- Host a candidates forum (local, State and federal)
- Host an issues forum (rail transit)
- Advocate for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the Community Assistance Council
- Develop a network list
- Develop a Capital Improvements Plan for South Kansas City
- Tree planting project
- Participate and influence the South Line Alternatives Analysis (AA)
- Blue River Corridor Trail Gap
- Bannister Mall redevelopment
- Bannister Federal Complex redevelopment
- Blue River revitalization
- Targeted City Funds (i.e. Green Impact Zone in south KC)
- Longview Aquatics Center development
- Update and develop new community plans

After analyzing all the stated goals and proposed projects, there were three strategic initiatives that rose to the top. A strategic initiative is one project that meets most if not all of the groups stated goals. Those three strategic initiatives are:

1. Blue River Trail Gap;
2. South Line Commuter Corridor Alternatives Analysis; and,
3. Bannister Mall redevelopment.

These three projects represent the biggest bang for our collective buck. Again, it is important in the first year of the organization to have as much exposure and success in order to build its reputation and credibility. These projects have long-term impacts for not just south Kansas City but the region, and they are a good mix between immediate needs, ongoing planning studies, and long-term development opportunities.

## Establishing Committees

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To date, the SKCA has developed an Executive Committee, Bylaws Committee, and Communications Committee as its standing committees.

In addition to these standing committees, there are several working committees that have been formed around specific project areas including the Transportation Committee, Economic Development Committee, Neighborhood Committee, and the Government Affairs Committee.

# Next Steps & Recommendations

After the Strategic Planning process, the SKCA must begin its work. The Committees have been assigned members, and those Committees have been charged to identify their leadership, make a list of projects, and present them back to the group at the next meeting. Based on the varied backgrounds and interests of the groups as well as the overlapping nature of many of the projects, the first few months of this as with any organization will and should be fluid. Frank conversations about what projects to pursue and why you should pursue them must be had at the larger working group level so that everyone remains involved in the many projects. This will also maintain a level of buy-in by all participating members, and ideally grow the membership as real work translates into real projects that people can volunteer all or in part for.

In terms of structure, the next few months will be crucial. This is the test run of the organization and you should all remain adaptable. As the bylaws are being written, they should take heed of what is happening on the Committee level and codify a structure that works for everyone. The governance structure of an organization should open up avenues for success, but it can very easily become an unnecessary bureaucracy.

Leadership, by the Chair of the overall working group, the Committees, and by each individual members is crucial in the formative months of the South Kansas City Alliance. Now that you have identified your core values and various projects that you can choose from, you must begin to work together and bring your communities together for the greater good of South Kansas City.

Below are a list of tasks discussed during the process for each Committee to accomplish in the first year of the SKCA:

## **Executive Committee**

1. Develop a long-term strategy for the organization
2. Manage individual committees to ensure each project aims at organization mission
3. Promote SKCA at business, community and governments events

## **Bylaws Committee**

1. Complete bylaws, including governance structure, policy procedures, and final mission statement
2. Develop an ongoing process to review bylaws and adjust organization structure during first year of operations

## **Communications Committee**

1. Finalize branding of SKCA with logo and tag line
2. Develop website with outreach materials, about us page, projects descriptions, and comprehensive SKC information
3. Develop email list and a means to send out communications (i.e. Constant Contact)

## **Transportation Committee**

1. Participate in the South Line Alternative Analysis
2. Advocate for the funding and construction of the Blue River Trail Gap just north of Minor Park
3. Develop an education and outreach event in South Kansas City for the South Line AA

## **Economic Development Committee**

1. Engage stakeholders in the Bannister Mall redevelopment project in an outreach event

## **Neighborhoods Committee**

1. Work with the local community to develop and/or update a new city plan

## **Government Affairs Committee**

1. Host a meet your Council members event for South Kansas City Council
2. Host a candidates forum for the November 2012 elections

## **Proposed Mission Statement**

The South Kansas City Alliance is a coalition of neighborhood organizations, civic institutions, non-profits and business interests dedicated to a unified vision for south Kansas City. Through sustainable economic development, building quality communities, and creating a safe, healthy environment, we work to make South Kansas City a better place to live, work and play.