

# **Action Plan for the Vernon Senior Citizen's Housing & Community Center**

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## Background/ Context

The following is an action plan to develop senior housing and a senior's community center for the Vernon Senior Citizen's Center, Inc. The corporation of the Vernon Senior Citizen's Center is a subsidiary corporation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Reverend John Richard Bryant, the Bishop of the Fifth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, established a Nehemiah Ministry for the fifth district in March of 2002 to address the resource development needs of local churches and related church institutions. As the Senior Development Specialist for the Nehemiah Ministry I negotiated a letter of agreement during the month of June 2002 with the Board of Directors of the Vernon Senior Citizens Center to act as the development consultant to develop the senior housing and a related community center.

The attendant development issues are inclusive of the undertaking of a feasibility study, and should the study prove a need for the project, land assemblage, the development and execution of a fund development strategy, land assemblage, cost determination (predevelopment and development (hard and soft)), implementation, construction and post-construction activities are the steps that must be executed to complete this project. This project is planned to be situated in the residential district of Kansas City, Kansas known as the Quindaro neighborhood. It is a heavily blighted area with census tracts with extreme poverty (40% or greater) as a significant economic and social characteristic. Over 50% of the census tracts in this area contain this characteristic. The political environment is one with a new combined city-county government that continues to workout its governance issues. The political environment related to the Quindaro neighborhood is one of a low development priority on the part of the local government, yet the neighbors desire prioritized attention. The neighborhood has a flat-lined commercial infrastructure, and is absent of any significant retail anchors.

The local community description follows: As mentioned before, over 50% of the census tracts are categorized as being census tracts of extreme poverty (40% or greater). Concomitant to this economic characteristic are the social characteristics of high crime related to illegal drug solicitation, frequent murders and a high incidence of unemployment. The demographic profile also indicates a high incidence of single-headed households, (18.2% or 10,246 of 55,500 Kansas City, Kansas households) which are primarily headed by single mothers along with a population of senior citizen households (12,272 or 22.9% of Kansas City, Kansas households) in the city and Quindaro neighborhood.

## Situational Analysis

The condition of the Quindaro neighborhood is a result of an economic downturn that occurred in the 1980s from which it never recovered. The loss of jobs, the rise of crime, the infiltration of illegal drugs and prostitution is the downward spiral through which the Quindaro neighborhood fell. The state of Kansas is primarily a rural state and Wyandotte County, in which Kansas City, Kansas is situated in a primarily rural county. Kansas City, Missouri, which is the across-the-river neighbor, is the economic engine of the Kansas City Metropolitan area. This successfully competing city serves as an economic draw from Kansas City, Kansas and the Quindaro neighborhood. As in most urban areas, the heart of the black community is not a prioritized area for social or physical development by the local government. Citizens have successfully advocated for resources for the area, but they have been limited and insufficient. The critical mass of development that is needed to make both cosmetic and material changes has not been obtained. It is both a physically and socially blighted area that begs for anchors of development to begin the redevelopment process. Census data for and Wyandotte county indicates negative growth in population of -2.6% from 1990 to 2000.

The Vernon Senior Citizens Center board of directors would prefer to exclude the use of HUD money. They believe that residential restrictions by HUD would disqualify certain senior persons from living in the development. Contingent upon a positive outcome of the feasibility study, which is a justified need for senior housing and a community center, a multi-faceted resource development strategy would need to be developed that includes solicitation of individuals, public and private foundations and local government whose funding priorities includes senior citizen issues.

The challenges are multiple to building a senior citizens housing facility with an accompanying senior activities center:

- (1) the area does not possess nearby retail infrastructure,
  - (2) it is an area of high crime,
  - (3) highly marginal public transportation,
  - (4) poor to non-existent organizational capacity in the neighborhood,
  - (5) no nearby major medical facility (how close is KU medical center?).
- To answer these challenges the following are the related objectives that must be completed:

- needs assessment
- the undertaking of a feasibility study (should the study prove a need for the project)
- land assemblage
- the development and execution of a fund development strategy
- cost determination (predevelopment and development (hard and soft))
- implementation,
- construction
- post-construction activities

But the first step is the most important step which is the feasibility study, which must answer the question, is there a real need for senior housing and should the project be

located in the Quindaro housing? A part of the feasibility study must include a locational analysis which will point toward indications about if the community can support or offer amenities to the potential senior development resident.

The circumstance of being a blighted community is a function of the community's disconnectedness and disorganization. Disconnectedness is the community not being able to originate any exchange relationships with public and or private resources from which it derives value and resources. Relative to low income populations, this disconnectedness points to not having established relationships with those in position to facilitate resource identification and access. This is further complicated by the community not having the capacity to access resources, which is an indication of the community's organizational capacity or the lack thereof. This disconnectedness is often incorrectly identified as discrimination which is accompanied by a hyper-suspicious attitude which in itself serves only to inhibit connectedness.

Most lower-income communities, who have blight as an existing context, also suffer from a lack of organization. There aren't any neighborhood organizations or other community entities organized for the betterment of the community. Leadership has not surfaced that has either a theoretical or practical understanding of community building principles thereby the community is disorganized within and without. Completion of a needs assessment will provide a comprehensive picture of the ramifications and interventions required to support and sustain a senior housing and community center.

### Needs Assessment

What are the needs of senior citizens in Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County? Is housing a significant component of the needs matrix for senior citizens? What type of housing best meets the needs of senior citizens in Kansas City, Kansas? What has the senior population identified as a salient menu of needs? What are the unidentified needs that other information points to? Does this project meet the components of the theory of sustainability within the socio-economic context of Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County? Prior to the completion of a project feasibility study, a focused needs assessment must be completed to understand both the stated and unstated needs of the senior population of Kansas City, Kansas in the Quindaro neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods. The needs assessment has two topics that it must address: (1) the needs of senior citizens, with a special focus on housing needs, (2) connected to a feasibility study, it must address itself to the components of sustainability: environmental soundness, social justice and economic viability. With this in mind the following is the framework for the needs assessment instrument.

- Design a questionnaire that can be used for a survey instrument as well as a guide for questions in focus groups.
- The focus groups should include, service providers to seniors, senior citizens, those who produce housing for seniors and local elected officials, and community leaders.
- The senior cohort needs to be representative of the population found in Wyandotte County.

With the help of housing developers, local officials in community development and planning and an Accountant an assessment of sustainability needs to be completed that addresses the issues of environmental soundness, social justice and economic viability. With the above being answered a feasibility study can then be undertaken to determine if the desire to build senior citizen housing in the Quindaro neighborhood is in fact a viable project.

### Target Community

### Plan of Action

Needs Assessment  
Feasibility Study

### SWOT Analysis

### Other Issues