

Strengths and Challenges for Northeast Kansas City, Kansas

Participants at the January EconAvenue meeting were asked to select one of four groups (Entrepreneurship, Housing, Workforce, or Community Champions) and discuss the strengths of their community and the challenges their community is facing. The summarized responses are included below, by group.

Entrepreneurship		Housing	
Strengths	Challenges	Strengths	Challenges
Viable workforce	High cost of utilities	The people – Many people have lived in the neighborhoods for years and retaining population is crucial to the area’s sustainability.	Perception of crime.
Good infrastructure	Vacant lots	Churches – Provide social, cultural and moral support	People moving out of the neighborhoods.
Good community connections	Community communications could be better (budget discussion with unified govt.)	Strong history – Now have potential for a new narrative of success “starting with a clean slate.”	Lack of awareness & communication to larger public of existing resources.
Plenty of services ready to support construction, IT growth, etc.	Considered a “food desert” – lack of healthy foods	Schools – Schools are existing assets in some neighborhoods but not all.	Lack of grocery stores and gas stations.
Lots of brainpower and potential	Lack of doctors and dentists and other medical services	Vacant houses/land – Offer the potential, if rehabbed, for affordable housing.	Lack of transportation in some areas and lack of local control of transportation.
Opportunity for growth is present	Regulation for small business is great	Decent infrastructure – Again this applies to some neighborhoods but not to all.	Lack of information and data – Difficult to find ownership of abandoned homes.
Rich history that can build confidence	Community apathy	Transportation – For some neighborhoods but not all/inconsistent asset.	Lack of interest from county government – People felt they were low priority compared to attention given to the Legends area and Casinos.
Environment is ready for a breakthrough—something different	Unified government is not representing our community	Housing stock (when care for) is good.	Lack of government willingness to invest in the neighborhoods, especially when it comes to needs like grocery stores; Can’t get the ear of politicians.
Loyal businesses in the area (Thatcher and others)	Lack of angel investors and venture capital	Decreased crime rates.	Lack of private investment
FRB is here with Econ Ave.	Lack of access to capital—govt., banks	Existing small retail businesses provide amenities, services and identity	Lack of care and facilities for the homeless/Vets

Workforce		Community Champions	
Strengths	Challenges	Strengths	Challenges
The Kansas City, Kansas community college.	Lack of leadership	Access – The area is easy to get to from other places	Property taxes and appraisals are too high
Strong manufacturing	No groceries and lack of retail shopping areas	Development investments in Wyandotte County	Negative perception of the area in the media
Central location	The need for better schools	Infrastructure – Sidewalks, roads, bridges, etc. In good shape.	Lack of businesses
Training of the poor in the NE area	The need for better participation with PTSA	Rich heritage and history	Chronic and severe unemployment
Public Transportation	Lack work readiness	Lifelong/grassroots residents	No grocery store or shopping options
Attitude	Inconsistent focus on early childhood development	Crime on the decline in 66101	Recidivism rate
The school district is striving upwards	Local jobs for local residents	Sumner Academy academics are strong	Toxic waste, often referred to as the “sacrifice zone”
Cerner is moving to the area	Connectivity between clients and resources	Investors are coming into the area	Infant mortality rate
There has been greater community involvement	Lack of small businesses.	Section 3	Quality of health
The area has good infrastructure	Drug use - Failed drug test	Community Gardens	Lack of jobs for educated students causing braindrain
Donnelly College and work with different classes of communities	70% of Blacks and Latinos not graduating high school and the need STEM education	At least 133-137 neighborhood groups	Board of Public Utilities, Unified Government, Kansas Gas Service
Kansas speedway	Outsiders who come in to exploit the community negatively	Church communities are strong – They offer food pantries and many residents that have moved away come back for services	Educator Loan Forgiveness – Teachers teach for a few years in to get loans forgiven, and then move to other schools
Wifi expansion	Mismatch between employment opportunity and training opportunities		No funding for upgrades to existing homes.
Committees coming together through the Econ avenue project	An emphasis on standardized tests and with very little emphasis on critical thinking		Neighborhood reconstruction
Sumner Academy of Arts and Science ranks among the top high schools in the country by US news.	The lack of individualized education		Lack of community centers
	The disconnect between education and aspirations		Lack of entertainment and recreation options