Background

Local and regional policy decisions affecting transportation, other infrastructure and corresponding land use are guided by regional and local visions for the future. The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, first published by the Mid-America Regional Council in 2011 and updated in 2014, reflects local plans and priorities with a vision of a region of vibrant and green communities and neighborhoods connected by multi-modal transportation corridors. The plan also recognizes the importance of incorporating the three elements of sustainable development – social equity, economic progress and environmental stewardship – into regional plans and policies.

REGIONAL LAND USE VISION

**VIBRANT** places provide easy access to jobs and services; offer housing, recreation, shopping and transportation choices; foster connections between neighbors and social engagement; and promote access to arts and culture. Vibrant places make efficient use of public and private assets and resources and are attractive to residents and businesses, not just today and tomorrow, but over the long haul.

**CONNECTED** places are linked by corridors that provide transportation choices, accommodating walking, biking and public transportation as well as the automobile. These corridors attract development and help connect residents to jobs and services.

**GREEN** places create real economic, social and environmental value for residents, businesses and communities. The conservation, restoration and addition of important green places create a positive impact on our natural world while creating places that promote healthy lifestyles and healthy residents.

In March 2015, the MARC Board of Directors approved formation of the **Sustainable Places Policy Committee** — a new policy-level forum that will continue the work of the four-year Creating Sustainable Places (CSP) initiative launched in 2010. Over the past year, CSP co-chairs Jan Marcason of Kansas City, Missouri, and Curt Skoog of Overland Park, Kansas, led efforts to develop a work plan for the new committee.

Under the guidance of this new leadership group, MARC will work with local communities to update and implement land-use strategies that support transportation, equity, environment and conservation principles. Throughout the CSP initiative, local government partners and other stakeholders expressed a strong interest in development alternatives that support higher densities, mixed uses and walkability, in response to changing demographics, shifting market preferences and fluctuating energy prices.
**Theory of Change**

The Sustainable Places Policy Committee will take a comprehensive look at how to integrate transportation, environment, housing, public health, economic development and other plans and policies in support of regional and local land use plans and objectives. The foundation of this work is incorporated into the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. The region is expected to continue to add population, households, and jobs in both suburban and urban core locations. While much of the growth will continue to occur in suburban locations, reinvestment in urban core and older suburban areas is expected to increase.

The regional vision is for a future land use pattern that offers equitable and healthy living and working environments and mobility choices for residents, protect the natural environment, and increase global economic competitiveness. The region is investing in improvements to both its public transit system and major roadway system. Future development is expected to be focused along major corridors and at major activity centers.

The committee will make recommendations to the MARC board on plans, policies and investments that support this vision. MARC’s work will involve organizing the community leadership to focus on creating sustainable places; engaging diverse interests and educate the community; using and refining technical tools to support planning and investments; and investing in and learning from the implementation of demonstration projects. The theory of change is consistent with the various elements of the RPSD and the comprehensive plans of numerous local governments across the metro area.

**Committee Composition**

The committee will be composed of local elected officials, economic and community development interests, equity organizations, environmental and transportation experts, and persons experienced in private development. Individuals who were active on the previous Creating Sustainable Places Committee and interested in continuing to participate may be asked to serve on the new committee. The committee will be co-chaired by two local elected officials.

**Initial Scope of Work**

Using the CSP model of organizing for success, developing new tools and demonstrating new models, the Sustainable Places Policy Committee will:

- Advance integrated regional policy initiatives related to infrastructure and land use development to implement the region’s adopted vision.
- Build consensus among local government and community leaders on effective approaches to achieve the vision, in part through multifaceted public outreach and education, and engagement with the development community.
- Facilitate the use of scenario, visualization, natural resource and economic pro forma tools to catalyze sustainable development decisions, and monitor key indicators to measure progress.
- Oversee the Planning Sustainable Places grant program and make funding recommendations to support planning and implementation projects across the region.

The committee will also update the regional land-use vision using a centers-and-corridors development strategy. This strategy focuses development and redevelopment energy around existing activity centers — the places where people live, work, shop, gather, learn and play — and the transportation corridors that connect them. Vibrant centers and corridors create new development opportunities, provide more lifestyle choices, make more efficient use of public and private assets, and help knit the region together.