SUSTAINABLE PLACES POLICY COMMITTEE
September 13, 2019 Meeting Summary

Members Present
Commissioner Jim Walters, Unified Government, Co-Chair
Brian Alferman, Johnson County
Jon Birkel, Hunt Midwest
Mary Cyr, Downtown Overland Park Partnership
Michael Frisch, UMKC
James Joerke, BTG
Doug Johnson, City of Overland Park
Michael Park, City of Lee’s Summit
Kelly Woodward, City of Gardner

Online Participants
Allison Smith, KDOT

MARC Staff Present
Karen Clawson, Beth Dawson, Tom Jacobs, Marlene Nagel, Lauren Palmer, Martin Rivarola, Alex Rotenberry, Patrick Trouba, Jermain Whitmore – MARC staff

Welcome and Introductions – Commissioner Jim Walters welcomed those present and asked for self-introductions.

Approval of July 2019 Meeting summary – James Joerke made a motion, seconded by Michael Frisch, to approve the July meeting summary. The motion carried.

Regional Housing Summit
Lauren Palmer gave a recap on the Regional Housing Summit. The event was hosted by the First Suburbs Coalition, which was formed in 2002 and represents inner ring suburbs that are predominantly landlocked or have aging housing stock that developed just after WWII. The coalition has work groups comprised of elected officials, local government staff and private sector partners. The coalition decided to devote this entire year to issues around affordable housing. The goal of the summit was to focus on housing affordability and economic development challenges in first-tier suburbs, opportunities to build and maintain workforce housing, and best practice solutions for regional implementation. Some of the outcomes include:

- Developing a shared understanding of regional workforce housing challenges.
- Identifying potential solutions through discussion and participant engagement.
- Establishing next steps to advance workforce housing solutions.

Interest in homeownership is waning due to various factors – poor credit, tougher to get a mortgage (down payment), high debt burden; which is an issue for suburban communities. Suburbs house ¾ of the millennials, but millennials are increasingly trending toward choosing to rent, which could have potential implications for economic prosperity such as:

1. Still greatest personal wealth generator
2. Impact to neighborhood character – home maintenance, community engagement, neighborhood stabilization
3. Increasing trend of investor-owned properties who are buying up entire street blocks to wait for the market to grow and turn a profit. In KC, up to 14% of single home purchases last year were by investors – creating more competition for first-time homebuyers, predatory eviction practices to hike up rents, reluctance to invest in upkeep.
Workforce Housing focuses on housing associated with an income range. As defined by ULI, workforce housing is affordable to people earning 60-120% of the area median income. Income ranges are adjusted for family size and can be flexible, depending on the local real estate and labor market. Affordable Housing focuses on how much a household spends on housing. As defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, housing is affordable when 30% or less of a household’s income is spent on housing. According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, households should spend less than 45% of income on housing and transportation. Every community in our region needs nurses, police officers, child care workers, retail workers, many other critical job functions – these are the income levels we’re talking about when we say workforce housing. Discussions at the summit were focused around Workforce Housing, as it is relevant to the older suburbs in the region and of interest to communities participating in the National League of Cities. A pre-summit survey was conducted, and with over 100 responses, it was discovered that a good portion of the responses viewed Workforce Housing as a high priority. The survey also identified several barriers to expanding Workforce Housing, which are:

1. High cost of infill or redevelopment
2. Concern of negative impacts on community character
3. Competition for resources with other priorities
4. Infrastructure limitations and costs
5. Lack of knowledge about how to affect change
6. Development requirements
7. Inadequate land for development

The State of the Nation's Housing 2018, issued by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, identified that there are some national trends in housing. Incomes are not increasing as quickly as housing costs and nearly 1/3 of all US households paid more than 30% of income for housing in 2016. Most Americans live in suburbs and the suburban growth rates are outpacing large cities. The census shows that city growth dips below suburban growth. The American Community Survey completed in 2017 regarding Housing Affordability showed that Kansas City is not facing a housing crisis like some communities – Austin, Atlanta, Seattle; which provides us the opportunity to be more proactive. Challenges are diverse across the region and the state line, and there seems to be less dialogue around issues of quality and livability for affordable properties.

A key theme from the summit was understanding that across the region there are diverse housing challenges, and the solutions will be localized. The consultant, TIP Strategies, evaluated the participating suburban communities based on community characteristics of income, home value, rent and vacancy rates. Communities were then assigned to cohorts with common themes, and TIP reviewed potential actions and implications for each cohort. TIP will synthesize the results of its analysis and the summit into a best practice guide that will be completed by October 31, 2019.

Cohort 1 – Potential Actions and Implications
- Lack of affordable housing
- Higher than median income indicates an opportunity to increase income diversity.
- Increase access to workforce home ownership and rental housing.
- Low vacancy rate may indicate a competitive housing market.

Cohort 2 – Potential Actions and Implications
- Glut of affordable housing
- Opportunity to rehabilitate, repair, and maintain existing workforce ownership and rental housing.
- With lower than median income, focus on access to higher-wage jobs
- Low vacancy rate may indicate a competitive housing market
- High vacancy rate may indicate comparatively greater housing availability.

Cohort 3 – Potential Actions and Implications
- Higher than median income indicates an opportunity to increase income diversity.
- Focus efforts on increasing access to workforce owned housing.
• Increase access to rental housing.
• Low vacancy rate may indicate a competitive housing market.

Cohort 4 – Potential Actions and Implications
• With higher than median income, focus on income diversity (Mission, KS)
• With lower than median income, focus on access to higher-wage jobs (Raytown, MO; Roeland Park, KS)
• Opportunity to rehabilitate, repair, and maintain existing workforce ownership housing
• Increase access to workforce rental housing
• Low vacancy rate may indicate a competitive housing market

Cohort 5 – Potential Actions and Implications
• With lower than median income, increase access to higher-wage jobs
• Increase access to workforce ownership housing
• Opportunity to rehabilitate, repair, and maintain existing workforce rental housing
• High vacancy rate may indicate comparatively greater housing availability

As a result, there were a few different strategies that were developed such as promote the sharing of knowledge, preserve existing housing, increase the amount of housing available, increase access to and availability of financing; and lastly, enact regulatory changes. The summit achieved the objective of convening stakeholders and improving collective understanding of regional challenges and opportunities for workforce housing. A more complete process is needed now that goes beyond convening to yield a policy plan and implementation strategies for recommendations identified through the pilot project. The work will focus on infill and redevelopment housing in urban and suburban areas rather than ex-urban and rural greenfields. Next steps include:

1. Continue activities to convene stakeholders to share information and best practices
2. Compile documentation of housing studies and effective strategies that have been completed throughout the region as a regional resource.
3. Develop a regional affordable housing marketing and communication toolkit that provides elected officials and staff with the language, images and data to talk about housing needs in their communities.
4. Establish housing prototypes.
5. Overlay energy efficiency and transportation accessibility as outcomes that promote housing affordability and support other desired community objectives like air quality.
6. Actively explore funding and cooperative implementation of regional strategies such as land banking and housing prototyping.
7. Facilitate regional legislative advocacy to preserve and expand housing programs on both state and federal level.

Committee Discussion:
• One of the committee members suggested working with the Incremental Development Alliance, which focuses on a building capacity among small developers.
• Another committee member commented that reducing transportation costs could help affordability in some areas.
• Someone remarked that there needs to be discussion about areas of housing density and what is closer to employment centers. Rigid housing standards have made it difficult to address these issues, and in turn cause developers to increase their costs to meet the standards.
• It was recommended to look at different studies to identify and eliminate barriers.
• It was noted that the economy is moving toward a mixed culture, and there should be a focus on disparities between cultures. Need flexibility, as affordability may vary depending on the area.
Planning Sustainable Places Story Map
Patrick Trouba gave an overview of the Planning Sustainable Places Story Map to the committee and showed the many ways to navigate it. The map can be found at: https://marc-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=0a958d0637c14704b267d92d16104e54

Regional Transportation Plan 2050
Martin Rivarola reported on the Regional Transportation Plan 2050 to the committee. The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is responsible for developing and maintaining a metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) to guide federal investments and serve as a blueprint for managing the region’s transportation system. Adoption of the next plan will be due by June of 2020. MARC is now working to develop the regional transportation plan for 2050, “RTP2050”. The MTP must include financially constrained regionally significant projects.

As a major next step towards completion of this plan, MARC’s planning and policy committees will prioritize submitted projects over the Fall of 2019. We will also work concurrently with our various regional partners toward development of RTP2050 policies and strategies, land use, population and employment forecasts, update of the programming policy statement, and continuing community engagement activities. The next steps in this process, which include:

- Planning/Policy Committee Project Prioritization Workshop (Open House) October 17.
- Public Engagement in October/November
- Planning Committees in November/December
- Recommendations to TTPC/Board in January/February

RTP 2050 identifies needs and budgets federal transportation funds that the metro area expects to receive over the next three decades. RTP 2050 contains:

- Vision: a long-term vision for the region’s transportation system.
- Goals and strategies: what we want to achieve by the year 2050 and how we plan to do it.
- Proposed regional transportation projects,
- Reasonably expected regional transportation investments to help accomplish goals.

Once adopted, updated policies/goals and strategies identified in the MTP will guide transportation investments in our region in future years. For more information, please see: www.marc.org/2050

Committee Discussion:
- A committee member asked how the Rock Island KD Trail project is coming along, and Mr. Rivarola responded that he isn’t sure, but heard they are moving forward while responding to legal issues.
- One of the committee members inquired why is the timeline so far out to 2050, and Mr. Rivarola answered that it is required by the government to plan no less than 20 years and update every 5 years.

Economic Value Atlas Presentation
Last fall a tool was developed by the Brookings Institution and Portland Metro called the Economic Value Atlas. In Portland the civic, business and government entities were becoming increasingly aware of the fact that they had shared challenges and the language to address economic opportunity was converging. This in turn creates an opening for new approaches to regional development such as establishing regional objectives, developing tools to situate objectives in place, and reform policy frameworks. As discussions progressed, the following objectives emerged as Phase 1:

- Build regional consensus around shared economic values
- Translate regional values into quantifiable criteria
- Connect metropolitan performance to neighborhood conditions
- Enable simultaneous comparison of multiple performance measures
The resulting pilot yielded a tool that utilized a regional vision to determine values to work toward that are responsive to local taste. The groups built consensus around shared high level values in 3 areas: business, people, and place; for which specific spatial data was selected. This tool will help in promoting data-driven decision making by providing consistent measures, transparent benchmarking, and metro-to-local knowledge. The EVA Task Force & Technical Work Group then developed goals, values, and indicators over a sample area to test out the tool. The results of this revealed that it was by design the site would remain current as it is compatible with data and values updates and built on open access principles and public data. It relies strictly on public sources like the Census Bureau (Including American Community Survey and Economic Surveys), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (including LEHD), etc. Additionally, in-house data will be utilized as needed, which include Transportation Access Sheds (employment and trade), Development-Related Land Use Sources, InfoUSA via ESRI Business Analyst (strictly for focus industrial clusters), and Other Spatial Data (ex: priority industrial areas, workforce development entities, Opportunity Zones).

The EVA has helped Portland to start modernizing their regional strategies. They have already developed specific actions in regard to regional implementation. Their Housing Measure Implementation will serve as possible guidance to counties for where affordable housing could make sense given existing affordability levels and nearby workforce. The 2020 Transportation Measure will indicate economic conditions among corridors under consideration as part of the package of projects advanced to voters (e.g. types of industries/workers served, and observed mobility/access constraints). Regional Flexible Funds will help refine the existing economic measures that currently focus mostly on freight mobility and environmental justice. Their 2023 Regional Transportation Plan will exhibit orientation of different areas of the region to pinpoint what transportation investments could make sense locally and regionally. Land/Growth Management will give contextual info on regional/community economic conditions and trends, demand-side of growth decisions. They have also established ideas to address what sites or policies which can be tested to set a new path forward such as revisiting industrial and employment land policies & zoning. Additionally, building and leveraging new tools for site readiness and brownfields redevelopment, as well as working with partners to form economic areas of focus. The next steps for EVA would be to expand partnerships to continue improving continued data and software innovation, developing an implementation buffet, and new forums to address future of regionalism.

Planning Sustainable Places is in the process of testing EVA in its applications. Currently our selection criteria can be broken into three categories: subjective, spatial and those requiring documentation. Half of our selection criteria is subjective and requires evaluation of a written response. Utilizing the EVA would transition all but two of the subjective questions, as over 95% of an application score would be known by the applicant before submission and offers the potential of improved process encouraging better applications. MARC has received the code and now has it running locally. The next step will be to update with local geographies and test data with it.

Committee Discussion:

- A committee member questioned what will happen to the work done 2 years ago and that process, and Ms. Dawson remarked that it doesn’t really need to change, just add in spatial elements. This would make it clear to applicants on where the stand throughout the process.
- It was asked if this will look into past participation, and Ms. Dawson responded that it will. Both funded and unfunded.
- There was inquiry into when this would be ready and Ms. Dawson answered that it should be ready around February 2020, but will try to bring something in November for the committee to look at.
- Someone asked if there will be a buffer of inclusion for spatial analysts, and Ms. Dawson commented that it depends on the tract that is being addressed, which they will take a closer look depending on the plans.
- One committee member questioned if this will add a layer of complexity or simplify, and Ms. Dawson replied that it should reduce the application fill out time and help them find areas where they are more
Committee Member sharing.
Jon Birkel –
• Opened The Vue in Downtown Overland Park at 80th & Metcalf. At the moment, it is mixed use and there are 2 bedrooms available, but working to develop around the area as it wasn’t a requirement for developers. The city would have to incentivize affordable housing for this area.

Kelly Woodard –
• Received approval to construct a 588-apartment housing development. They will be market rate 1&2-bedroom apartments. Some buildings will be 2-story and some 3-story.

Tom Jacobs –
• Working on a climate grant and got accepted for technical assistance. He invited the committee to sit in and participate.

2020 Committee Workplan
Marlene Nagel informed the committee of some of the workplan items on the horizon.
• Follow-up with committee members regarding attendance
• Look at energy efficient affordable housing, retail, Climate Resilience, Wayfinding Plan, PSP, Long Range Transportation Plan, Green Infrastructure, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and City involvement

Other Business
There was no further business to discuss.

The next meeting of the committee is November 8, 2019. The meeting was adjourned.