

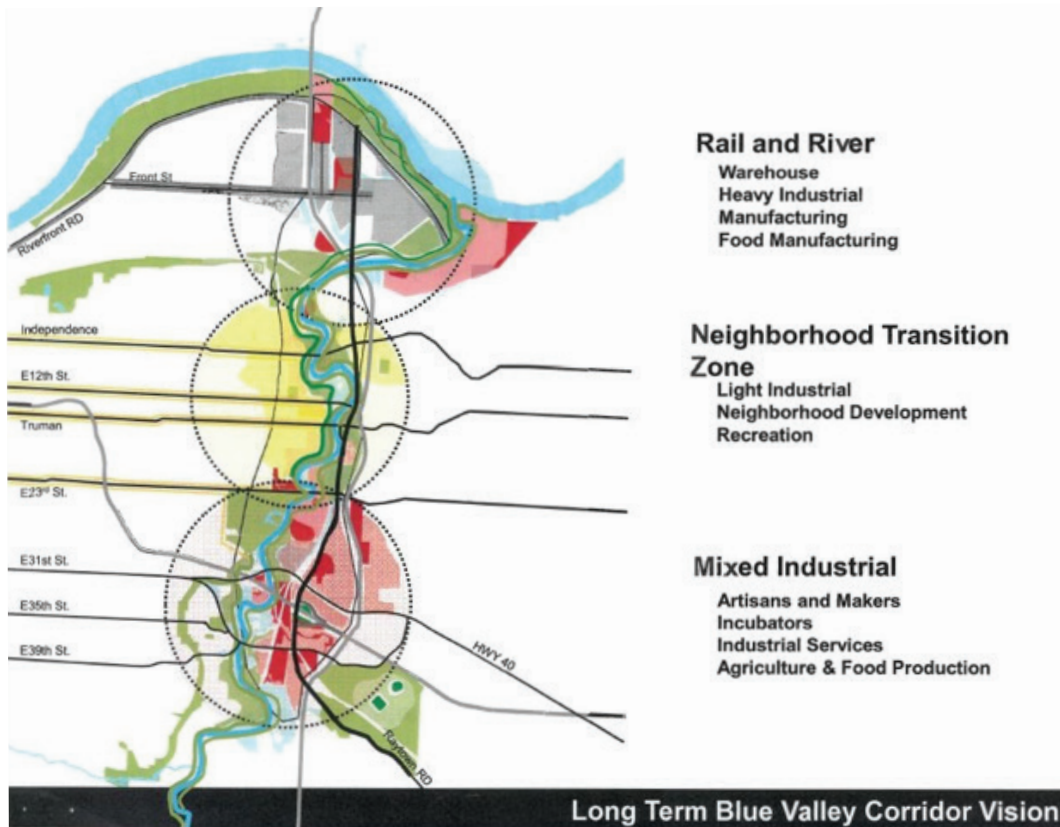
# BLUE RIVER VALLEY ECONOMIC STRATEGY

## BACKGROUND

Once home to major employers like Armco Steel and General Motors, the Blue Valley Industrial Corridor (BVIC) used to be a thriving blue collar jobs center for Kansas City. The departure of several major employers began a period of steep decline for the BVIC. With changes in the industrial market, much of the building product along the corridor is obsolete and there are few sites currently suitable for new development. In recent years, momentum and market conditions have begun to cause reexamination of the BVIC. The corridor possesses excellent transportation assets, a high capacity for all utilities, citizen support for industrial activity in the area, and most importantly, access to available workforce. The Blue River Valley economic strategy seeks to reposition the corridor to once again become an economic asset for Kansas City.

**THE CORRIDOR ITSELF IS 4,600 ACRES, AND IS VIEWED AS THREE DISTINCT AREAS:**

1. **NORTH**
  - **Long Term Vision:** Heavy industry coupled with intermodal capabilities that tie in the rail lines and the river.
2. **CENTRAL**
  - **Long Term Vision:** Neighborhood coexisting with smaller industrial operations. Enhanced eco system and recreational amenities.
3. **SOUTH**
  - **Long Term Vision:** Mixed industrial. Southern end of the study area has the most development potential and in many cases simply requires road infrastructure to unlock potential.



# BLUE RIVER VALLEY ECONOMIC STRATEGY

## 4 PILLARS OF THE STRATEGY

The aim of the strategy is to facilitate the long term redevelopment of the Blue River Valley industrial corridor with the purpose of reclaiming its previous role in the community a source of quality employment. The strategy contains four major themes:

### 1. TARGETED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

- **Optimize Land Use:** Several of the highest potential sites are economically underutilized. There may be room for the public sector to assemble and clean land to deliver to developers. Converting underused sites into viable businesses will also play a key role to improving perception and removing blight.
- **Infrastructure:** The strategy identifies more than \$120 million of infrastructure needs over the next generation. Some projects are significant items like the reconstruction of Front Street and the extension of Manchester Trafficway, and other items are basic streetscape improvements. With the passage of GO Bonds in 2017, Kansas City has additional funds available for infrastructure but other funding sources need to be identified. New infrastructure to unlock potential development sites is crucial.

### 2. REDUCE COSTS AND MINIMIZE DEVELOPMENT RISK

- **Cost Control:** This effort will be over the course of the next generation so it is imperative that investment is targeted, consistent, and produces positive return on investment when possible.
- **Opportunity Zone:** To mitigate costs and spur development, the creation of a special incentive zone may be necessary to offset market disadvantages currently realized by the area. Incentives that could be considered include transferable abatement credits, administrative approval for Enhanced Enterprise Zone tax abatement program, free priority permitting, redirection of the 1% earnings tax to be coupled with the federal work opportunity tax credit for the purpose of hiring certain populations, elimination or reduction of the franchise utility tax, brownfield grants, and more.

### 3. MARKETING AND BRANDING

- **Marketing:** A concerted marketing effort will need to be present to change the area's perception, build momentum, and advertise investment opportunities.
- **Changing Perception:** Building green assets, a more robust and connected eco system including a "storm water park", improved lighting, and basic streetscape improvements can help change perception.

### 4. BUILD INDUSTRY

- **Clusters:** Potential industry clusters include waste to product, food manufacturing, metal manufacturing, high power users, animal health, and more.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The strategy has support from EDC of Kansas City, local industrial associations, the state of Missouri, local members of Congress, neighboring municipalities, and the City of Kansas City, Missouri. A Blue River Valley development entity and a dedicated staff member will be committed to carrying out the strategy. A long term funding commitment to infrastructure, the overcoming of negative perception, and the ability to assemble viable sites for development may be the most important items for success.

*Short term actions could include some or all of the following:*

1. **Completion of the Blue Valley trail**
2. **Creation of "urban eco" pilot project with Conservation Alliance**
3. **Creation of a storm water park**
4. **Creation of a community improvement district (CID)**
5. **Completion of environmental and engineering studies**
6. **Formation and capitalization of an industrial land bank**
7. **Development of a marketing campaign**
8. **Submittal of a series of short term infrastructure and street scape requests to PIAC and the Public Works department of the City of Kansas City**
9. **Creation of an opportunity zone of incentives**