

# ADDRESSING RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN AMERICA:

A United Nations Sustainable  
Development Goals Audit of US  
Black Communities

**Kansas City,  
Missouri**

Jessia Avila, Jiner Fan, Aliya-Begum Jessa, Caroline Zhang

Advisor: Dr. Linda J. Mann

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### **Mayor's Commission on Reparations:**

Terri E. Barnes, Chairwoman  
Dionne King, Commissioner  
Kelly Hearn, Commissioner  
Linwood Tauheed, Commissioner

### **KC Reparations Coalition**

Janay Reliford, President  
Mickey Dean Advisor to the Mayor's Commission  
Rev. Ester Holzendorf, Advisor to the Mayor's Commission

### **Reale Justice Network**

Justice Gatson, Advisor to the Mayor's Commission

### **Equity Office, City of Kansas City Missouri**

LaDonna McCullough, Chief Equity Officer  
Eric Goodman, Assistant to the Chief Equity Officer.

### **Contributors**

Damon Daniel, President, Ad Hoc Group Against Crime  
Justice Gatson, Founder, Reale Justice  
Terrell Jolly, Jolly & Associates  
D. Rashaan Gilmore, Founder, President & CEO, BlaqOut  
Imije Ninaz, Founder, Nafasi TransCare Collective  
Hakima Tafunzi Payne, co-founder and chief executive officer of Uzazi Village  
Matthew Robinson, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Missouri-Kansas City  
Neal Wilson, Associate Director of the Center for Economic Information



## **I. Introduction**

Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) Capstone course, "Addressing Racial Inequalities in America: A United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Audit of US Black Communities," was designed to measure the wellbeing of the Afro-descendent population in Detroit, Michigan and Kansas City, Missouri. The Capstone project worked alongside Black community organizations and members to understand their lived experiences, to deeply explore the impact of historical racial harms, and to gather disaggregated data relevant to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The SDG targets and indicators were used as a unit of measure to analyze and shed light on structural patterns of inequality that threaten the wellness and sustainability of Black communities in Detroit and Kansas City.

## **II. Methodology and Conceptual Framework**

The research methodology for the Capstone project utilized a review of extant literature, anthropological-like research methodologies including archival research and field work to develop an ethnohistory of the Black Community. This was followed by an impact analysis framed within the SDGs. Finally, a policy analysis was performed to examine state and local legislative mechanisms with an exploration of possible avenues for reparative policy making.

**Ethnohistory.** Ethnohistory denotes the study of a specific population within a community. To develop a comprehensive ethnohistory, a review of extant peer-reviewed literature was performed. In addition, several books were recommended by the Kansas City Black community that the capstone team worked with. These books were read and closely analyzed to respond to the UN SDG framing utilized for the impact study. The ethnohistory provided context for the SDG analysis that examined the long-term consequences of historical harms, as made apparent by current trends in the areas under evaluation. The report for Kansas City specifically examined the systemic inequality on health, education, economic development, housing, climate, and criminal justice as a result of race-based discrimination.

Researchers met weekly with the Mayor's Commission on Reparations, the KC Reparations Coalition, and the Office of the City Manager's Equity Office from January to April 2024, resulting in extensive field work. Framed within cultural humility and Indigenous listening, community engagement was at the forefront of the work. These local partners directed and guided the research team by identifying key members of the Black community, advocacy groups, and service organizations. This resulted in deep engagement with Black community leaders and organizations, including three town hall listening sessions, and three days of Black history tours. This field experience resulted in the first part of the report.

**Community Engagement.** Pre-visit community engagement was integral to the project, as it enabled the team to build trust and rapport ahead of the town hall listening sessions. Because the Black community in Kansas City has been systematically exploited and surveilled, communication can be rightfully difficult to initiate. As such, the students relied heavily on the connections of the Mayor's Commission on Reparations and the KC Reparations Coalition and their reputation as trusted community members to gain access to leaders and organizations. Additionally, for organizations and people found through the students' research, the students

aimed to establish contact through any connection from within the Mayor’s Commission on Reparations, and if there was no connection, students then engaged without a liaison.

The purpose of these interactions was to build trust and rapport with community members. These connections also served to help the students gain a deeper understanding of issues facing the Black community. This understanding not only informed the pre-visit research, but also augmented the qualitative data collection during the visit. Lastly, these interactions led to more community connections which also heightened engagement for the town hall listening sessions.

The timeline of our community engagement proceeded as follows. The students established community outreach email templates, followed by an outreach process with the list of community organizations sent out via Kansas City community liaisons. The student team agreed to finish the outreach before *Feb 5th, 2024* EOB. Once the student received responses from organizations, they began to schedule one-on-one meetings with organizations based on their thematic research areas. This process greatly informed the research on local community concerns, expertise, and further laid the groundwork for establishing relationships leading up to the March town hall listening sessions. Those one-on-one meetings took place between *Feb 14th to March 6th, 2024*.

**Impact analysis.** The ethnohistory was followed by an impact analysis. In line with the UN SDG evaluation set out five years ago by *In the Red*, which demonstrated that international frameworks such as the UN SDGs have the potential to demonstrate how racism, inequality, and discrimination decimate the lives of people of color in the USA.<sup>1</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, stands in the legacy of people of color and marginalized communities calling for an agenda of sustainable development firmly rooted in diversity, equity, and justice. The resulting SDGs, accompanied by 169 targets, articulate globally agreed upon standards for living, with recommendations for realizing those standards. Put in the USA context, the SDGs provide a framework for evaluating the progress of American cities against an international standard. Like the study completed five years before this report, this paper assesses these cities against the SDGs and is rooted in the “Leave No One Behind” SDG agenda which has localized accountability for eradicating inequality, racism, and discrimination at the city level.

Using the UN SDG framework, the impact analysis explored the wellness and sustainability of the Black community within Kansas City, Missouri. Further, the Capstone sought to democratize data collection in Kansas City by centering the community’s expertise and autonomy throughout the entire process. The democratizing of data was essential to this study as public datasets often report on the general population, obscuring economic, educational, and health inequity as experienced by marginalized groups. Often Black community organizations are already deeply engaged in assessing the wellness of their community by analyzing criminal justice, housing, access to healthcare and more. This was true in Kansas City. This data was utilized alongside public data sets to provide a more holistic understanding of the Black experience in Kansas City.

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<sup>1</sup>Lynch, A., H. Bond, J. Sachs, SDSN, and Howard University. 2021. *In The Red: The US Failure to Deliver on a Promise of Racial Equality*. SDSN.  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dadc6c4073ce72706cd29c6/t/6095554a571d4d08a6edc4d3/1620399440334/In+The+Red-The+US+Failure+to+Deliver+on+a+Promise+of+Racial+Equality-2.pdf>.

Finally, a policy analysis examined the legislative mechanisms that existed within the city of Kansas City to better understand the potential pathways for reparative policymaking. This was performed by analyzing historical laws that may be a deterrent to reparative policymaking. Extant laws were also examined to better understand the potential to build on laws aimed to redress for historical Afrocentric harms that may pave the way for next steps in city-specific reparations. Reparations for this study were modeled after the goals and ideals set forth in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a document detailing 30 distinct rights that all individuals possess. These include the right to equality, right to free speech, right to health and education, freedom from discrimination, and the right to personal security.<sup>2</sup> Further, according to the UDHR, the state has an obligation to provide remedies and reparations for any gross or serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.<sup>3</sup> This report served as a basis for policymakers in Kansas City to draw from to make a case for reparations for Black Kansas City residents.

Ultimately the Capstone sought to link national discussions on inequity and anti-Black racism to global discourse on basic human rights. The SDG analysis feeds into broader analyses on the state of human rights for Black Americans in the USA and adds to the legacy of calls from racial justice leaders on reparations. The SDG evaluation presented another tool for evidencing the need for redress for contemporary harms which can be traced to their historical roots. This report built on a long history of racial justice leaders calling for awareness of the racism and inequality in their myriad representations embedded within the fabric of American systems and structures. Findings demonstrated a history of consistent and constant disinvestment and discrimination in Kansas City. Further, the Capstone report demonstrated that over time, this lack of investment in a community resulted in less infrastructure to support a healthy and vibrant community.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948.

<sup>3</sup>United Nations, *General Assembly Resolution 60/147 Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*, March 21, 2006, (UN Doc A/RES/60/147).

<sup>4</sup>“The People’s Glossary for Building a Community-Controlled Housing Movement in the Bay Area and Beyond,” *The People’s Land Trust*, accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.bayareaclt.org/housing-preservation-glossary>.

### III. Ethnohistory

The following historical analysis explores the policies and practices of the city of Kansas City during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ethnohistory begins with a brief discussion on the early beginnings of the state, indigenous settlements, and the practice of enslavement. This is followed by a brief discussion of the migration of enslaved peoples to the state. The ethnohistory then examines the historical discrimination and disinvestment in the Black community by the Kansas City government in the following areas, demonstrating the systematic failure of city leaders to provide for the health and wellbeing of the Black community :

- Housing
- Climate/Environment
- Health
- Criminal Legal System
- Education
- Economic Inequality

The purposeful actions by the Kansas City government to disinvest in the above outlined areas demonstrates a systematic and legally sanctioned removal of resources for these communities. These findings demonstrate the failure of Kansas City leaders to uphold the social contract between government and community, upon which the SDGs rest. Therefore, this section demonstrates the need and obligation of Kansas City to remedy the wrongs incurred by Kansas City's Black communities.

#### Early Years

Kansas City began as a riverfront settlement for the Indigenous community of the Clovis people and later was inhabited by Indian Americans fleeing European colonists.<sup>5</sup> The region then saw an influx of more Native Americans and French traders and explorers, attracted by the fur trade after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.<sup>6</sup> Some of these early explorers were accompanied by enslaved Africans who provided translation, negotiation, and navigation support.<sup>7</sup> While racial discrimination and subjugation based on race was well reported during this period, it differed from the increasingly complex race relations that arrived with the Great Overland Migration, beginning in the late 1820s.<sup>8</sup>

After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Americans surged West in search of land and opportunity, many bringing enslaved peoples. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the quest for freedom began, as African Americans, Newly freed African Americans also migrated across the Missouri River, forming the roots of the Black community residing in Kansas City today. Enslaved and newly freed people contributed significantly to infrastructure, building roads and courthouses and, in doing so, contesting the bounds of slave-based identities and associated assumptions. Black residents

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<sup>5</sup>Long-Middleton, Mathew, "The History Of The Native Peoples Of The Kansas City Region," NPR, 14 February 2014. <https://www.kcur.org/show/central-standard/2014-02-14/the-history-of-the-native-peoples-of-the-kansas-city-region>

<sup>6</sup>KC Yesterday. The Founding & Early Days of Kansas City," <https://kcyesterday.com/articles/founding-early-years-kansas-city>

<sup>7</sup> Wilson Moore, Shirley Ann, "Sweet Freedom's Plains: African Americans on the Overland Trails 1841-1869," *National Parks Service*, January 31, 2012, <http://nps.history.com/publications/transportation/sweet-freedoms-plains.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson More, "Sweet Freedom's Plains."

like Hiram Young and Emily Fisher, moved West with their slave owners and, through manumission and self-purchase, secured freedom and promptly built prosperous businesses catering to all, regardless of race or origin. In some cases, these new Black business owners employed white and Black people, including enslaved people, side-by-side with equal wages.<sup>9</sup> In these ways, westward expansion hinted at burgeoning negotiations around reconfiguring race-based power relations. In another marker of growing concern for an increasingly empowered Black community, in 1847, Missouri legislated against the education of slaves and free Blacks. Black leaders were quick to respond, forging ahead with innovative solutions like a floating school on the Mississippi River by freedman John Berry Meacham.<sup>10</sup>

Before the American Civil War (1861-1865), proslavery and antislavery groups clashed while fighting for control of Kansas leadership, with the latter winning after the constitutional convention and elections held in 1859. In January 1861, Kansas became a free state and a member of the Union.<sup>11</sup> However, Missouri, being a border state between the Confederacy in the South and the Union in the North, faced conflicting ideals regarding slavery. This conflict culminated in the 1864 Battle of Westport along Kansas City's borders, where many Black lives were lost<sup>12</sup>. These seeds of early contestation and race-based power struggles, and the often violent outcomes of dissent, foreshadowed later battles for control over power, resources, and identity in the city.

### **Housing: Urban development and racial segregation**

Over the years, diversity increased in the region. The African American population rose from 16 to 27 percent between 1980 and 2010, with the number expected to surpass 40 percent by 2040.<sup>13</sup> However, their plight remains largely unchanged because urban development has exacerbated the segregation of Black communities. Redlining, racial covenants, and blockbusting physically decimated Black neighborhoods and forced Black people into the poorest and most overcrowded areas.<sup>14</sup> The real estate developments by J.C. Nichols from 1920 to the 1940s incorporated restrictive covenants such as the 1949 Housing Act that prohibited the sale of properties to Black people, reflecting systemic racism within the real estate industry. This practice was not confined to Kansas City but extended to cities like Santa Fe, New Mexico, where real estate agents directed Black homebuyers to previously all-white neighborhoods, resulting in a loss of equity and property value for Black homeowners. Later, urban renewal projects between 1950 to 1960 were focused on creating “a city without slums.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson Moore, “Sweet Freedom's Plains.”

<sup>10</sup> “Missouri's Civil Rights Stories: The Floating Freedom School,” Library of Congress, Missouri, <https://www.visitmo.com/articles/missouris-civil-rights-stories-the-floating-freedom-school>.

<sup>11</sup>History.com Editors, "Bleeding Kansas," History, 27 October 2009, <https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/bleeding-kansas>

<sup>12</sup>KC Yesterday.

<sup>13</sup>An equity profile of the Kansas City Region Summary - National equity atlas. Accessed February 3, 2024. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Summary\\_Kansas\\_City\\_Nov2013\\_FINAL.pdf](https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Summary_Kansas_City_Nov2013_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>14</sup>Kevin Fox Gotham, "Urban Space, Restrictive Covenants and the Origins of Racial Residential Segregation in a US City, 1900-1950, International Journal of Urban & Regional Research 24, no. 3 (2000), 616-633

<sup>15</sup> Kevin Fox Gotham, “A City Without Slums: Urban Renewal, Public Housing, and Downtown Revitalization in Kansas City, Missouri,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 60, no. 1 (2001), 285-316.

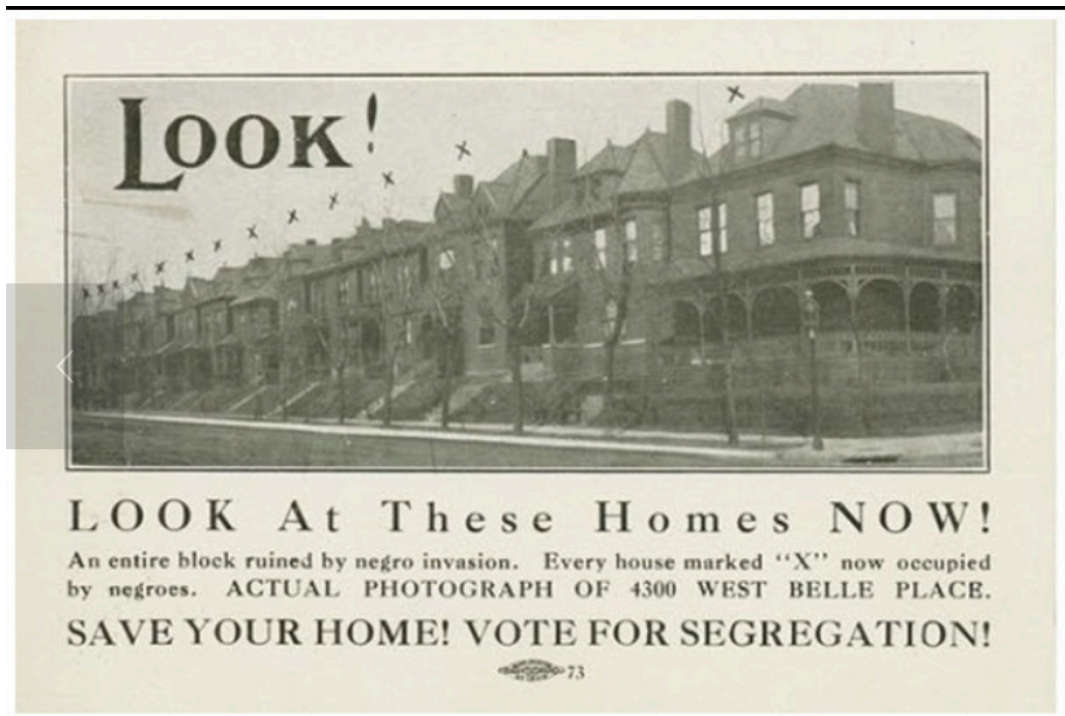


Image 1: Racialized blockbusting practices in Kansas City.<sup>16</sup>

Troost Avenue is famously known for being the ‘racial dividing line’ between white and Black residents, affecting property value in these regions even into the 21st century.<sup>17</sup> In the early 1800s, the region east of Troost Avenue was a 365-acre slave plantation.<sup>18</sup> In 1923, the City Council passed zoning regulations to force the Black population to remain east of Troost.<sup>19</sup> By the mid 1900s, racially restrictive development, racial covenants, and blockbusting promoted by JC Nichols and his peers forced Black people east of Troost.<sup>20</sup> The area of Church Hill, between 8th and 12th street, Holmes, and Troost Avenue was the “core of Kansas City’s Black community.”<sup>21</sup> The Black community built homes, schools, and churches here, despite systematic and deliberate segregation from other areas of commerce.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center (reproduced by <https://www.epi.org/publication/making-ferguson/>) and the Kansas City Public Library, as cited by González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021. “Racial/Ethnic Segregation and Urban Inequality in Kansas City, Missouri: A Divided City.” *City & Community* 20 (4): 346–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1535684121990799>.

<sup>17</sup>Johnson, Michelle Tyrene. 2018. “Past Housing Discrimination Contributed to the Wealth Gap Between Blacks and Whites in Kansas City.” *KCUR- Kansas City News and NPR*, August 17, 2018.

<sup>18</sup>“TROOST HISTORY | Pray on Troost.”; González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021. “Racial/Ethnic Segregation and Urban Inequality in Kansas City, Missouri: A Divided City.” *City & Community* 20 (4): 346–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1535684121990799>.

<sup>19</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021.

<sup>20</sup>“TROOST HISTORY | Pray on Troost.”

<sup>21</sup>“Dissecting the Troost Divide and Racial Segregation in Kansas City.” 2020. July 2, 2020. <https://martincitytelegaph.com/2020/06/30/dissecting-the-troost-divide-and-racial-segregation-in-kansas-city/>.

<sup>22</sup>“Dissecting the Troost Divide and Racial Segregation in Kansas City.” 2020.



The 1955 *Brown v. Board of Education* case desegregated schools but reemphasized Kansas City's racial segregation.<sup>23</sup> The Kansas City School Board manipulated school attendance boundaries, creating "attendance zones that happened to be all-white or all-black" that centered around Troost Avenue, reifying the street's racial boundaries.<sup>24</sup> Contemporary racial and socioeconomic inequalities east of Troost are a direct result of the real estate devaluation, segregation, and disinvestment on the east side of Troost Avenue.<sup>25</sup> Today, Troost is described as a powerful social and conceptual barrier, conspicuous for its deficient urban development. It is common to see undeveloped, empty lots plots on all four corners of an intersection. The buildings that used to stand on them were pulled down and now the land is used as parking lots or it is simply abandoned.<sup>26</sup>

As is discussed in this paper, Troost Avenue's dividing line is reflective of the contemporary inequalities between Black and white Kansas Citians, including health outcomes and access, housing prices and quality, and environmental cleanliness.



Image 2: Historic postcard depicting Troost Avenue<sup>27</sup>

In the same period, Kansas City's Black community and organizations showcased remarkable resilience and self-sufficiency by investing in local parks, establishing medical practices, and constructing homes and businesses. Cultural touchstones and commercial hubs became the foundation for resiliency as African American rights and opportunities were restricted. The Mutual Aid Societies and Benevolent Associations provided crucial support for Black communities by offering financial assistance, health services, and social aid. The establishment

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>"TROOST HISTORY | Pray on Troost."

<sup>26</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021, pp. 365.

<sup>27</sup>"Troost Ave. North From Linwood and Troost." n.d. CardCow.Com.

<https://www.cardcow.com/812282/kansas-city-missouri-troost-ave-north-from-linwood/>.

of Black-owned Savings and Loan Associations in this period was a direct response to exclusion from mainstream financial institutions and facilitated home ownership and business development with access to credit and mortgages. Major civil rights organizations such as The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)<sup>28</sup> and the Urban League<sup>29</sup> boasted constituency and influence beyond the bounds of real estate. With a mission to empower Black and other disadvantaged individuals to achieve economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights, Urban League played a vital role in Kansas City. Key initiatives included youth empowerment, economic development, access to healthcare, and civil rights. They provided youth with high-quality education and the necessary skills for economic independence. Additionally, the Urban League supported adults in attaining economic self-sufficiency through job opportunities, entrepreneurship programs, and wealth creation initiatives. Today, the Urban League continues to advocate for and facilitate access to quality, affordable healthcare for all. Together, these actions contribute to the Urban League's overarching goal of fostering economic empowerment and equality for underserved communities.<sup>30</sup>

Black organizations in Kansas City laid the groundwork for later legal and legislative victories that directly impacted real estate practices, including challenges to restrictive covenants and discrimination. The landmark 1948 Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which the NAACP Legal Defense Fund argued, struck down the enforceability of racially restrictive covenants, opening up new opportunities for Black home-ownership and real estate development.

## **Environment**

Pioneered by August Meyer, The City Beautiful movement emerged in post-Reconstruction Missouri and called for a city's growth to be assessed not only by an increase in its population, but also by the health and wellbeing of those people. Signifying a backlash to rising industrialization and urbanization, the movement brought environmental issues to light, such as sewage problems in the Brush Creek area in 1977,<sup>31</sup> further highlighting racial disparities in urban infrastructure and environmental justice. Brush Creek, like many urban areas predominantly inhabited by minorities, experienced systematic neglect in infrastructure, particularly in sewage systems crucial for public health and environmental safety<sup>32</sup>. This neglect is a stark illustration of environmental injustice, where minority communities disproportionately bear the burden of environmental hazards and inadequate municipal services. Such conditions not only pose direct health risks but also degrade quality of life, perpetuating cycles of poverty and illness. Additionally, these neighborhoods often lack the political and economic power necessary to secure better infrastructure, further entrenching disparities. Incidents like the sewage problems in Brush Creek not only highlight the failures in urban infrastructure but also raise awareness and mobilize efforts towards more equitable urban planning and resource allocation, aiming to address these deep-seated inequities.

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<sup>28</sup>NAACP, accessed March 27, 2024, <https://naacpkc.org/>

<sup>29</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City, statements, Accessed March 27, 2024 <https://www.ulkc.org/>.

<sup>30</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City, Missions, accessed April 14, 2024 <https://www.ulkc.org/our-mission#:~:text=What%20we%20do%3A,and%20wealth%20creation.>

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District, 1981, Brush Creek and Tributaries, Missouri and Kansas: Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement. Appendix E- Public involvement program and public views and comments, September 1981, Kansas City, MO, 62 p.

<sup>32</sup> Hales, J.E. (1978) 'The Kansas City Flash Flood of 12 september 1977', Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, 59(6), pp. 706–710. doi:10.1175/1520-0477-59.6.706.



## Health

In June 1903, the most devastating flood in Kansas City's recorded history sharpened the dearth of public hospitalization for African Americans.<sup>33</sup> Since the Municipal Hospital only had a few beds designated for non-whites, a Black doctor named Thomas C. Unthank delivered medical care for hundreds of Black families who had been injured and displaced by the emergency in a large auditorium.<sup>34</sup> This overwhelming need and blatant deprivation compelled Dr. Unthank and other Black doctors to advance calls for a Black public hospital that would provide treatment and continued medical training.<sup>35</sup> Dr. Jackson, a local white physician known internationally, epitomized the resistance that Black doctors faced when he stated in conversation with Dr. Unthank and other Black doctors, "To be frank with you gentlemen, I do not believe that a colored man has the capacity to learn surgery."<sup>36</sup> It was only after the newly erected, white-only General Hospital No. 1 opened in 1908 that the city gave Dr. Unthank and his colleagues "the old building, now 35 years old, inadequate, antiquated, dingy, dirty, and unsightly" under white doctors' supervision.<sup>37</sup> A Kansas Citian article published on December 11, 1923 revealed the fire hazards and multiple needed repairs of the building, but it took a fire that risked the lives of 60 Black patients and caused \$30,000 in losses for city officials to approve a new Black hospital, General Hospital No. 2, in 1928.<sup>38</sup> In the 1920s, medical and public health professionals launched a "campaign to eliminate apprentice-trained Native, immigrant, and Black midwives and develop medical programs," culminating in the Sheppard-Towner Act.<sup>39</sup> Enacted by Congress in 1921, this law precipitated the decline in Black midwives because it imposed stricter guidelines and qualification requirements through federally-funded training programs.<sup>40</sup> This compelled Black midwives who were unable to attend classes or obtain certification to stop their practice or to restrict their care to women in urban peripheries or rural communities.<sup>41</sup>

A report conducted by a Black doctor, W.J. Thompkins in 1926 and delivered to Dr. John Lavan, who was Health Commissioner of Child Hygiene and Communicable Diseases, underscored the deplorable reality and the city administration's egregious disregard:

...three-fourths of Kansas City's population, including three-fourths of the officials of the city, know nothing of the Negro's health problem...For the past two years the neighborhoods inhabited by Negroes have had no sanitary inspection or health supervision; for inspection would have shown long ere this the conditions herein enumerated...you would find in the Negro neighborhoods, the dirtiest portions of Kansas City, the nastiest, the filthiest—you would find excrement and conglomeration of slime,

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<sup>33</sup>Samuel U. Rodgers, "Kansas City General Hospital No. 2: A Historical Summary," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 54, no. 5 (1962): 525.

<sup>34</sup>Katie Dayani, "Children's Mercy Kansas City Archives Display Featuring the Wheatley-Provident Model Ward and General Hospital No 2" (Children's Mercy Hospital, March 15, 2024).

<sup>35</sup>Rodgers, "Kansas City General Hospital No. 2: A Historical Summary." 526.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 526.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 527.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 528.

<sup>39</sup>Catherine Hoffman and Vicky Diaz-Camacho, "Birthing Battle | The Struggle for Equity in Maternal Health Care: How Midwifery (Racially) Evolved," *Flatland* (blog), July 15, 2020, <https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/birthing-battle-the-struggle-for-equity-in-maternal-health-care/>.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

that can breed only pain, anguish, disease, and crime... There are neighborhoods, each of which is a mile square, inhabited by Negroes, in which a bath-tub can not be found. There are also districts of from 2500 to 3000 inhabitants, in which street-cleaning and the collection of garbage are almost unknown, and where there does not exist a modern toilet.<sup>42</sup>

The north-south segregation line traced Michigan Avenue between 26th and 27th Streets and geographically demarcated these deep contrasts in health conditions.<sup>43</sup> When the city initially chose to build General Hospital No. 2 along the east side of Michigan Avenue, the Linwood Improvement Association contested the decision.<sup>44</sup> The city submitted to the neighboring white community's fear of Black expansion and property depreciation by selecting a site at 22nd Street and Kenwood Avenue instead.<sup>45</sup> Upon its completion, the *Kansas City Call* declared in an article on February 28, 1930 that General Hospital No. 2 "was the most modern public hospital in the country" with eight floors of "the latest and best equipment available."<sup>46</sup> Due to General Hospital No. 2's proximity to General Hospital No. 1, the white doctors of the latter would steal supplies and instruments.<sup>47</sup> This material extraction from the Black community, however, also took a political form. Tom Pendergast's machine politics abused the fact that over 95 percent of the municipal government's Black employees worked at General Hospital No. 2 to gain Black votes.<sup>48</sup>

While Black doctors could complete their post-graduate residencies in General Hospital No. 2, the absence of speciality training programs meant that Black patients could only receive specialized care from white doctors who were willing and available.<sup>49</sup> Prevailing medical practice perpetuated a system that was not only exclusionary and discriminatory but routinized the neglect of Black patients. W. Montague Cobb's 1946 Report of the Health Specialist for Kansas City, Missouri documented 17.19 deaths per 1000 Black individuals in 1944, a mortality rate that was 42.5 percent higher than white Kansas Citizens.<sup>50</sup>

After World War II, many Black veterans who served in the Army medical and nurse corps returned to General Hospital No. 2 as resident physicians.<sup>51</sup> The ongoing "lack of sufficient and appropriate medical equipment and supplies" coupled with the "shortage of hospital staff" culminated in protests against these substandard conditions in January 1947.<sup>52</sup> The city agreed to

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<sup>42</sup>W.J. Thompkins, "W.J. Thompkins 1926 Report to Dr. John Lavan, Health Commissioner of Child Hygiene and Communicable Diseases, Kansas City, Missouri," 1926. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup>"KC Black History: The End of Kansas City's Segregated Hospital System | Kansas City Public Library," Kansas City Public Library, n.d., <https://kclibrary.org/news/2022-02/kc-black-history-end-kansas-city%E2%80%99s-segregated-hospital-system>.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Rodgers, "Kansas City General Hospital No. 2: A Historical Summary." 528.

<sup>47</sup>Dayani, "Children's Mercy Kansas City Archives Display Featuring the Wheatley-Provident Model Ward and General Hospital No 2."

<sup>48</sup>Rodgers, "Kansas City General Hospital No. 2: A Historical Summary." 530.

<sup>49</sup>"KC Black History: The End of Kansas City's Segregated Hospital System | Kansas City Public Library."

<sup>50</sup>W. Montague Cobb, "Community Relations Project of The National Urban League: Report of the Health Specialist for Kansas City, Missouri," 1946. 5.

<sup>51</sup>Rodgers, "Kansas City General Hospital No. 2: A Historical Summary." 534

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 534.

improve conditions, and a few months later General Hospital No. 2 was on track to qualify as an American Medical Association approved teaching hospital.<sup>53</sup> In November 1957, City Council passed Resolution No. 22046 to fully integrate all city hospitals but the decision was driven by economic imperative.<sup>54</sup> Prior to this unification, Black patients could only receive care at General Hospital No. 2, the Kansas City Municipal Tuberculosis Hospital, and Wheatley Provident Hospital.<sup>55</sup> The Emma W. Robinson “free” and “no color line” bed at Children’s Mercy Hospital was an exception; it used private funds to circumvent laws that prohibited openly treating Black children.<sup>56</sup> Wheatley Provident Hospital, founded by Dr. J.E. Perry in 1916, was the only private, nonprofit hospital that serviced Black Kansas Citizens and housed the first Black pediatric ward in the United States until its closure in 1972.<sup>57</sup> Enduring mistrust of integration among the Black community and intergenerational affection for Wheatley Provident Hospital prompted the opening of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Hospital in 1972, but it closed ten years later.<sup>58</sup>

### **Criminal Legal System & Public Safety**

Kansas City is “the only major city that lacks control over its own police department.”<sup>59</sup> Although the police department’s ‘official history’ page cites local mob boss Pendergast as the rationale for state control, the true origin of state control is a racist relic of the Confederacy.<sup>60</sup> When the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) was established in 1874, Missouri Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson was pushing the state to join the Confederacy and secede from the Union.<sup>61</sup> Jackson initiated state control of the police, appointing other secessionists including Basil W. Duke, a confederate general and member of the white supremacist militia, the Minutemen. Jackson’s plan was to leverage state control over local police departments to distribute munitions from local Arsenals to Confederate soldiers.<sup>62</sup> Although this plan was unsuccessful, after the Civil War, Missouri supported the continuance of state control to “limit civil rights gains during the reconstruction era.”<sup>63</sup> This tactic follows in the racist legacy of police departments being used to “control freed slaves and prevent unionization efforts among workers.”<sup>64</sup> Local control was won back in 1932 after a court challenge cited that “it is unconstitutional to give any one municipal body the power of unlimited spending of funds the responsibility of raising which rests upon another body.”<sup>65</sup> This win was short-lived: corruption

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<sup>53</sup>“KC Black History: The End of Kansas City’s Segregated Hospital System | Kansas City Public Library.”

<sup>54</sup>Rodgers, “Kansas City General Hospital No. 2: A Historical Summary.” 534

<sup>55</sup>Cobb, “Community Relations Project of The National Urban League: Report of the Health Specialist for Kansas City, Missouri.” 20.

<sup>56</sup>Dayani, “Children’s Mercy Kansas City Archives Display Featuring the Wheatley-Provident Model Ward and General Hospital No 2.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Josh Merchant, “When Did Kansas City Police Come Under State Control? The Answer Dates Back to the Civil War.” *KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, January 3, 2023.

<https://www.kcur.org/news/2023-01-03/when-did-kansas-city-police-come-under-state-control-the-answer-dates-back-to-the-civil-war>.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

and repression by KCPD influenced Pendergast and his allies, leading to a return of KCPD to state control.<sup>66</sup>

The debate over state control was revived in 1968 after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., which led to the police murders of five Black men.<sup>67</sup> The Mayor's Commission on Civil Disorders stated that local control was necessary to bring "greater awareness and sensitivity to local problems than has been shown under state control... There would seem little reason Kansas Citizens could not better understand their local needs than can state legislators and officials, and have control over the policing of their own community."<sup>68</sup> The state's emphasis on obtaining and retaining control over the Kansas City Police has always been about maintaining control over Black communities.

## Education

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the educational landscape began with the establishment of the first free school for white children in 1851, followed by the growth of numerous log schools in the 1870s.<sup>69</sup> Over the years, legislation and policies, such as Kansas's first compulsory school attendance law in 1874 and mandates for special education services in 1969, aimed at improving educational access and quality.<sup>70</sup> By the 1980s and 1990s, the focus expanded to support non-English speakers and economically disadvantaged students. In 1992, a performance accreditation system was adopted based on student achievement standards, reflecting a shift towards accountability in education. The early 2000s saw initiatives to reevaluate school finance and organization, focusing on equity.<sup>71</sup>

However, the education system has a long history of racial disparity in both the student and teacher population, creating a large economic gap between Black and white Kansas Citizens.<sup>72</sup> In 1935, Archie Cole's High School was established in Kansas City specifically for Black students. This institution offered vocational training in skilled trades. Kansas City's schools faced legal segregation until the mid-20th century, and even after the pivotal *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954, institutions like Archie Cole's High School saw cycles of resegregation.<sup>73</sup>

Another critical case for Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS), was a lawsuit in 1977 over segregation impact.<sup>74</sup> The district faced significant challenges, including the creation of magnet schools and various educational programs that failed to close the achievement gap or increase integration.<sup>75</sup> In 2000, KCPS lost its accreditation due to non-compliance with Missouri's

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Josh Merchant, 2023.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Martinez, S., & Snider, L. A. (2001). History of Kansas Education. Kansas State Department of Education.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Richardson, Patrick, "Educational inequality creates economic inequality in Kansas," The Sentinel, 20 June 2022. <https://sentinelksmo.org/educational-inequality-creates-economic-inequality-in-kansas/>.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Ciotti, *MONEY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE Lessons from the Kansas City Desegregation Experiment*, No. 298 (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 1998), 4, <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa-298.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> L.A. Times Archives. "Kansas City Schools Lose Accreditation." Los Angeles Times, May 4, 2000.

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-may-04-mn-26560-story.html>.

performance standards and faced similar challenges in 2011.<sup>76</sup>As the 12th largest district in Missouri, the impact was felt by over 14,000 students. After regaining provisional accreditation in 2014, KCPS achieved full accreditation on January 11, 2022.<sup>77</sup>

These cases reflect broader societal struggles with race and education in urban settings and show the deep-rooted challenges in achieving lasting integration.<sup>78</sup> Systemic issues such as the school-to-prison pipeline have also persisted. The presence of police in schools contributed to the disproportionate criminalization of students, exacerbating underlying societal problems. Moreover, children in Kansas City faced food insecurity in schools due to family financial struggles and limited access to stable support services, highlighting broader socioeconomic disparities.

Further exasperating the education outcomes of Black families in Kansas City has been the consistent lower economic status compared to white families. Economic wellbeing affects access to educational resources as well as student performance and the allocation of school funding. This economic disparity is reflected in the availability of highly qualified teachers, showing a significant racial gap. Data shows that only 38 percent of Black students are taught by highly qualified teachers compared to white students.<sup>79</sup> This discrepancy played a critical role in the achievement gaps observed and points to systemic barriers within the education system that prevent equitable educational opportunities.<sup>80</sup>

Moreover, the underrepresentation of Black students in advanced academic programs highlights ongoing inequalities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions that address both the symptoms and root causes of educational disparities. These systemic issues are compounded by economic factors that restrict opportunities for Black students from the outset. Following is a discussion on the historical impact of lower socioeconomic wellness within the Black community.

### **The Role of Black Community Organizations**

The history of Black community organizations in Kansas City, Missouri is deeply rooted in the struggle for civil rights, social justice, and Black empowerment. The mid-20th century marked a crucial period in the history of Black community organizations in Kansas City, as the civil rights movement gained momentum across the United States. Local organizations spearheaded efforts to combat racial segregation, police brutality, and discrimination. These organizations organized protests, boycotts, and legal challenges to dismantle Jim Crow laws and to secure equal rights for Black residents in housing, education, and employment. Alongside activism for civil rights, Black community organizations in Kansas City also focused on preserving Black culture, heritage, and history. Institutions like the Black Archives of Mid-America and the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center played instrumental roles in collecting, documenting, and

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<sup>76</sup> Sulzberger, A. G. “Kansas City, Mo., School District Loses Its Accreditation.” *The New York Times*, September 21, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/us/kansas-city-mo-school-district-loses-its-accreditation.html>.

<sup>77</sup> “Continuing the Promise: KCPS Earns Full Accreditation.” KCPS News Details. Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://www.kcpublicschools.org/kcps-news/kcps-news-board-page/~board/kcps-news/post/continuing-the-promise-kcpsearnsfull-accreditation#:~:text=After%20years%20of%20hard%20work,Mark%20Bedell>.

<sup>78</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City. (2019). *2019 State of Black Kansas City: Urban Education*.

<sup>79</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City. (2019). *2019 State of Black Kansas City: Urban Education*.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

showcasing the contributions of Black individuals to the city's cultural landscape.<sup>81</sup> They organized exhibitions, lectures, and educational programs to celebrate Black achievements and to raise awareness about the challenges faced by the community.

For Kansas City's Black queer community, bars were central culture spaces to connect with each other, learn about resources, access safe spaces, and be free. In the late 1990s and early 2000s,



Black queer people were excluded from the white gay bars like the Dixie Belle, which required Black people to show “four to five pieces of identification for entry” and had a quota on the number of Black patrons at one time.<sup>82</sup> As presented by Montalvo (2023), Soakie’s and Tootsie’s were “unofficial” Black queer bars that had balls, huge performances, and were spaces of queer, Black joy. Tootsie’s and Soakie’s were destroyed during a wave of urban renewal that gentrified downtown Kansas City through “government-sponsored beautification projects.”<sup>83</sup> Black community organizations in Kansas City, Missouri reflect a legacy of resilience, activism, and collective empowerment in the face of racial discrimination. They have served as catalysts for social change, cultural preservation, and community development, and will continue to do so.

Image 3: Archival Poster for Gay Bar in Kansas City.<sup>84</sup>

## Summary

This ethnohistory demonstrates the pervasive, systematic, and racist policies that segregated and impoverished Kansas City's Black communities. While Kansas City has proven to be resilient by growing to become the biggest city in Missouri, wide racial gaps in income and healthcare access hindered its potential in continuous developments. Due to systematic discrimination toward Black communities and racial disparities in policymaking, there are both vertical and horizontal structural barriers for Black communities to access necessary resources and to achieve their full potential. These policies were either explicitly advanced by the city of Kansas City's government or the government was culpable for the success of said acts. In order to fill in those gaps, Black communities and organizations have stepped up to provide alternative solutions to address and mitigate the harms toward their communities.

Black communities were targeted for destruction and divestment from every angle, through every aspect of their lives including housing, food, education, health, and the physical environment. The impacts of these policies and decisions are not isolated to the past: they are deeply, tangibly felt today. These historical harms are still impactful to Black Kansas City residents through

<sup>81</sup> Site visit, March 13, 2024, Kansas City, MO

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Montalvo, Nasir, 2023, “The Erasure and (Sexual) Subjugation of Black Queer Kansas Citizens; a Brief Historical Look.” *Kansas City Defender*. November 7, 2023, <https://kansascitydefender.com/lgbtqia2/the-erasure-and-sexual-subjugation-of-black-queer-kansas-citians-a-brief-historical-look/>.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

generations as evidenced in the next section, Priority Sustainable Development Goals. This section examines the vestiges of the historical harms explored in the Ethnohistory. Moreover, racist policymaking did not disappear after urban renewal: policies that target Black communities are pervasive today, not always explicitly, but often in more surreptitious, implicit forms, with similarly devastating effects on Black Kansas Citians.

#### IV. Priority Sustainable Development Goals

The following section provides an overview of the contemporary state of the Kansas City Black community under the six key issue areas: health, education, climate, economic development, housing, and the criminal legal system. Using the UN SDGs, this section evaluates Kansas City’s adherence to the UN’s standards for human rights in these areas. The six key issue areas correspond to the following SDGs:

Key Issue Area	Sustainable Development Goal
Health	3: Good Health and Wellbeing
Education	4: Quality Education
Economic Development	8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Housing	11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Climate	13: Climate Action
Criminal Legal System	16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions



#### Good Health and Well-Being

“When racism is present, health cannot exist.”<sup>85</sup> This line initiates the 2022-2027 Kansas City Community Health Improvement Plan, which positions racism as the “main cause of health inequity” in a city with a “long history of devaluing and divesting.”<sup>86</sup> In 2021, Missouri ranked second to last in public health spending at \$6.08 per capita, and negative health outcomes among the Black community have been enduring concomitants.<sup>87</sup> Using white residents’ outcomes as a 100-point benchmark, the Urban League of Greater Kansas City reported that the 2022 health sub-index for Black residents was 78.41 percent.<sup>88</sup> Since 2006, the health sub-index for Black

<sup>85</sup>Missouri Health Commission City of Kansas City, “2022-2027 Kansas City Community Health Improvement Plan (KC-CHIP)” (Health Commission’s KC-CHIP Planning Committee, 2021), <https://www.kcmo.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/6700/637571825259646357>.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 1.

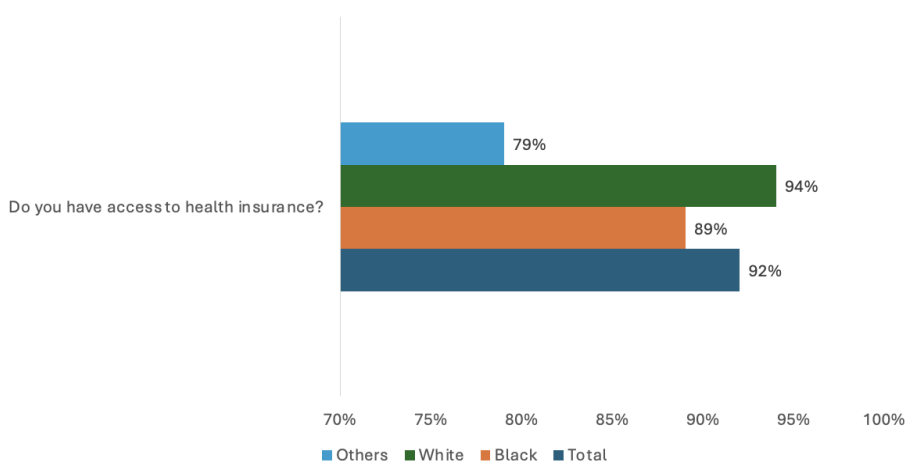
<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>88</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City, *2023 State of Black Kansas City: From Redlining to Chalk Lines: The Costs of Economic Injustice* (Gwendolyn Grant, 2023). 20.

Kansas Citians has fluctuated between 75 and 83 percent, and this relatively fixed measure indicates that Black residents historically and currently do not have full equality with white residents in the area of health.<sup>89</sup> Key variables driving this contrast included age-adjusted death rate, life expectancy at birth, fetal death rate, and overweight or obese adults, all of which demonstrate poorer results for Black Kansas Citians.<sup>90</sup>

### *Life Expectancy*

The intergenerational lack of access to high quality medical care coupled with lower insurance coverage, and a paucity of preventative services have widened health disparities between Black and non-Black populations in Kansas City.<sup>91</sup> In 2019, the 93% white residents of zip code 64113 enjoyed the highest life expectancy in the city at 86.3 years, while the 86% Black residents of zip code 64128 had the lowest life expectancy at 68.1 years.<sup>92</sup> These structural inequalities hold across other indicators like health insurance access. As demonstrated in Figure 1, Black residents have lower access to health insurance than white residents in Kansas City.



Source: American Community Survey

Figure 1: Health insurance access by race in Kansas City, Missouri<sup>93</sup>

### *Infant and Maternal Health*

Systemic racism and structural inequalities have reduced life chances for Black residents in Kansas City even before birth. Between 2020 and 2022, the preterm birth rate for the Black population was at 15.5 percent, which was about 1.5 times higher than the rate among all other babies by race and ethnicity.<sup>94</sup> The infant mortality rate among babies born to Black parents in

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>91</sup>Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Section for Epidemiology and Public Health Practice, “Health Equity Series: African American Health Disparities in Missouri” (Missouri Foundation for Health, April 2013), <https://mffh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/13AfrAmDisparities.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup>City of Kansas City, “2022-2027 Kansas City Community Health Improvement Plan (KC-CHIP).”

<sup>93</sup>US Census Bureau. 2023.

<sup>94</sup>“2023 March Of Dimes Report Card For Missouri,” March of Dimes | PeriStats, 2023,



Missouri was 11.2 deaths per 1,000 live births from 2019 to 2021; this is 1.9 times higher than the rate for the state, and 2.24 times higher than the rate for babies born to white parents in Missouri.<sup>95</sup> In the majority-Black zip code 64128, where 31.2 percent of residents live in poverty and 60 percent of rental housing received healthy homes violations in 2023, “the maternal mortality rate is 250 and [the] infant mortality rate is 12.”<sup>96</sup> In zip code 64114, where 77.6 percent of residents are white, there is no reported infant mortality, and the maternal mortality rate is two deaths.<sup>97</sup> These stark differences give salience to the lethal effects of social determinants and racial inequities.

In Kansas City, pregnancy and the birth experience for Black mothers is particularly laden with trauma and blatant discrimination. When Izula Jade experienced an ectopic pregnancy that ruptured her fallopian tube, doctors preceded the ultrasound with a drug test and delayed emergency care, leaving her to bleed internally for over five hours.<sup>98</sup> Izula Jade shared the following on Black motherhood and systemic racism in healthcare: “They [medical personnel] do not listen to our voices. They don’t think that we know our bodies. They don’t trust us to have humanity.”<sup>99</sup> When Teairra Cummings unexpectedly went into labor, doctors also drug tested her and attempted to take her son away soon after his birth.<sup>100</sup> Upon leaving the hospital against staff’s orders, Kansas City police surrounded her parent’s home, where she had been staying to attend a family funeral.<sup>101</sup> Doctors or nurses “are protected by a federal law passed in 1974 that [requires] health professionals to report reasonably suspected child abuse,” but its discriminatory application means that mothers of color are more likely to lose their newborn children to Child Protective Services.<sup>102</sup> Hakima Tafunzi Payne, co-founder and chief executive officer of Uzazi Village, affirmed that these experiences happen “all the damn time.”<sup>103</sup> With an Afro-centric doula program, Uzazi Village’s community-based and culturally congruent care has ameliorated key outcomes for mothers and infants. At the municipal and state level, Uzazi Village reported statistically significant differences in premature birth and low birthweight for Black infants between 2012 and 2022.<sup>104</sup>

### *Causes of Death*

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<https://www.marchofdimers.org/peristats/reports/missouri/report-card>.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Urban League of Greater Kansas City, *2023 State of Black Kansas City: From Redlining to Chalk Lines: The Costs of Economic Injustice*. 147.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>98</sup> Catherine Hoffman and Vicky Diaz-Camacho, “Birthing Battle | Labor Pains: A Mother’s Story,” *Flatland* (blog), July 22, 2020, <https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/birthing-battle-labor-pains/>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Catherine Hoffman and Vicky Diaz-Camacho, “Birthing Battle | Helping Hands: Integrating Midwives and Doulas Can Protect Communities of Color,” *Flatland* (blog), July 29, 2020, <https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/birthing-battle-helping-hands/>.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid..

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ria Hegde et al., “The Role of Culturally Congruent Community-Based Doula Services in Improving Key Birth Outcomes in Kansas City,” 2022, <https://uzazivillage.org/research-projects/>.

These unequal health outcomes even manifest at the end of life. Table 1 shows higher rates for Black residents across all causes of death compared to white residents in 2021. That year, about 32 Black and 17 white individuals per 100,000 residents of Missouri died from kidney disease, underscoring a death rate almost twice as high for Blacks.<sup>105</sup> Standard medical practice perpetuated this inequity until 2020, when Kansas City physicians eliminated race-based qualifiers for diagnosing kidney disease, putting a patient on dialysis, or qualifying a patient for a kidney transplant.<sup>106</sup> For decades, the previous criteria overestimated Black patients' kidney function, and thus, constructed a higher threshold for accessing treatment—despite the fact that the burden of kidney disease is more acute among the Black community.<sup>107</sup>

Title:		Missouri Resident Deaths				
Data selected in addition to rows and columns below:		Single Year(s): 2021; Ethnicity: Not Hispanic or Latino;				
Race:	White	White	Black or African-American	Black or African-American	All Races	All Races
Statistics:	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
Cause						
Cancer	11,558	165.09	1,334	185.88	13,010	165.64
Diabetes	1,540	22.63	291	41.85	1,850	24.24
Heart disease	13,605	199.51	1,793	260.08	15,539	204.39
Stroke	2,691	39.39	404	61.11	3,129	41.12
Kidney disease	1,278	18.86	220	32.16	1,516	20.01
Homicide	209	4.48	477	62.66	695	12.65
COVID-19	6,542	97.07	881	126.88	7,523	99.45
Total	37,423	547.03	5,400	770.63	43,262	567.52
Rate:	Death rates are annualized per 100,000 residents and are age adjusted to the U.S. 2000 standard population.					
Source:	Department of Health & Senior Services - Missouri Public Health Information Management System - Death Missouri					

Table 1: Causes of death in Missouri by race<sup>108</sup>

### Black Physicians

These detrimental outcomes have been compounded by the dearth of Black physicians in the healthcare system. U.S. Census Bureau survey data revealed that 2.8 percent of U.S. physicians in 1940 were Black men, while in 2018, Black men and women represented 2.6 and 2.8 percent of U.S. physicians, respectively.<sup>109</sup> Systemic racism coupled with widespread exclusion from intergenerational wealth and social capital have enabled the static proportion of Black physicians at the national level.<sup>110</sup> Dr. Katherine B. Richardson's words in an early 20<sup>th</sup> century publication of the *Kansas City Mercy Messenger* reverberate a reality largely unchanged today:

Our white medical students go to Harvard and other colleges. Then they work for a year or two as internes in a good hospital...but how shall a negro do this? To some schools

<sup>105</sup>“Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services: Death MICA,” 2021, <https://healthapps.dhss.mo.gov/MoPhims/QueryBuilder?qbc=DM&q=1&m=1>.

<sup>106</sup> Jr, J. Duncan Moore. “Kansas City Physicians Ditch Rules Treating White People’s Kidney Disease More Seriously.” *The Beacon*, December 28, 2023. <http://kcbeacon.org/stories/2023/12/28/kansas-city-physicians-kidney-disease-more-seriously/>.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>“Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services: Death MICA,” 2021, <https://healthapps.dhss.mo.gov/MoPhims/QueryBuilder?qbc=DM&q=1&m=1>.

<sup>109</sup>Enrique Rivero, “Proportion of Black Physicians in U.S. Has Changed Little in 120 Years, UCLA Research Finds,” *UCLA Newsroom*, April 19, 2021, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/proportion-black-physicians-little-change>.

<sup>110</sup>Estuardo Garcia, “The Mission Vision Project KC Fuels the Black Physician Pathway from Kindergarten through Medical School,” *Health Forward Foundation*, March 8, 2023, <https://healthforward.org/story/the-mission-vision-project-kc-fuels-the-black-physician-pathway-from-kindergarten-through-medical-school/>.

surely he may go, a few of them to Harvard, and the measure of his welcome is his ability to obliterate himself and keep his colored hands away from everything that gives skill to white ones.<sup>111</sup>

Health providers' bias and the financial disincentives built within healthcare reimbursement structures also repeatedly deny Black patients access to life-saving care, like regular cancer screenings.<sup>112</sup>

### *Race and Place as Determinants of Health*

Figure 2 depicts how deeply entrenched segregation along Troost Avenue has spatially distributed environmental and health risks to areas where Black Kansas Citians reside. To the east of Troost, Black residents face a high score for hazard proximity and land uses that may pose health risks, which include the presence of treatment storage, disposal facilities, traffic volume, and walkability.<sup>113</sup> Highway 71, in particular, cuts through historically segregated Black neighborhoods.<sup>114</sup> Comparing both maps shows a clear relationship between elevated exposure to unsafe environmental and infrastructural conditions and heightened risks for pediatric asthma, and this overlap is concentrated in predominantly Black communities. The shading on both maps illustrates that the white majority areas to the west of Troost are immune from these effects, and thus white Kansas Citians consistently benefit from historic residential segregation.<sup>115</sup>

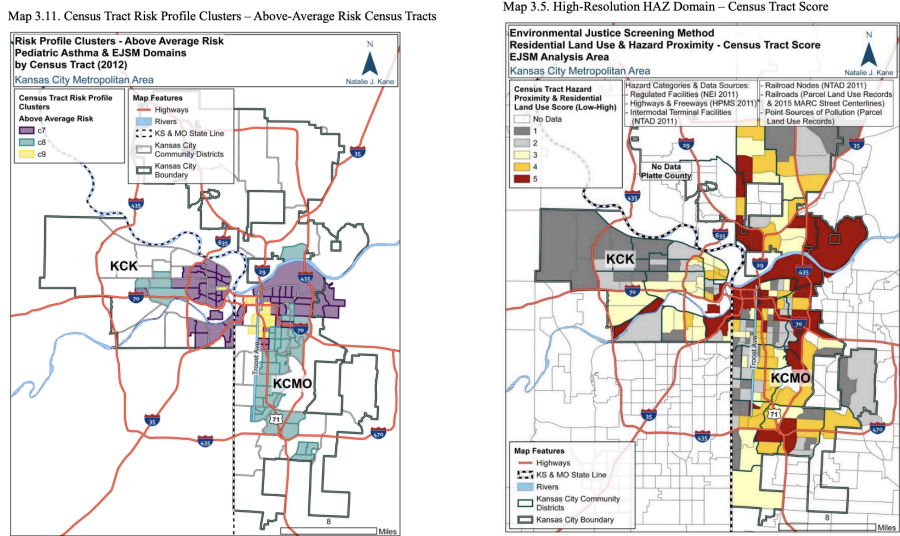


Figure 2: Asthma risk and hazard proximity in Kansas City, Missouri<sup>116</sup>

<sup>111</sup>Dayani, “Children’s Mercy Kansas City Archives Display Featuring the Wheatley-Provident Model Ward and General Hospital No 2.”

<sup>112</sup>Garcia, “The Mission Vision Project KC Fuels the Black Physician Pathway from Kindergarten through Medical School.”

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>116</sup>Natalie June Kane, “An Interdisciplinary Health Disparities Research and Intervention Strategy Applied to the

In 2023, bus riders on Kansas City’s zero-fare transit program “reported better health, better access to healthy food, saving money, and easier commutes to work,”<sup>117</sup> but existing routes have prioritized mobility to downtown at the expense of matching residences with job locations. The process of identifying a sustainable funding source for the zero-fare transit program may also introduce inequities. Mid-America Regional Council’s Transit Zero Fare Impact Analysis emphasized that sales taxes will likely result in a “slight transfer of revenues from higher income households to lower income riders” and “reduced service frequencies or coverage...[will reduce access] to jobs, education, healthcare, and other opportunities.”<sup>118</sup>

In Kansas City, systemic racism and residential segregation influence life expectancy, causes of death, exposure to environmental health risks, and access to zero-fare transit programs. Discrimination in healthcare has also routinized Black mothers’ experience of pregnancy and birth trauma, family separation, and infant mortality. While culturally congruent care, offered through Afro-centric doulas and Black physicians, can help to navigate structural inequalities in health systems, these resources remain undervalued and underfunded.



### Quality Education

The educational sector in Kansas City is marred by pronounced disparities. Literacy and numeracy rates are lower among Black students, reflecting historical segregation and resource allocation issues.<sup>119</sup> Data from the U.S. News & World Report (See Figure 3) shows that within Kansas City Public Schools, Black or African American students represent 52.2 percent of the student body. This is contrasted with 10.7 percent of students who are white.

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Problem of Pediatric Asthma in Kansas City” (Kansas City, MO, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2020), <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/73307>.

<sup>117</sup>Suzanne King, “Fare-Free Buses Might Be Good for Kansas Citians’ Health,” *The Beacon*, December 15, 2023, <http://kcbeacon.org/stories/2023/12/15/people-who-ride-kcata-fare-free-buses-healthier-researchers-say/>.

<sup>118</sup>“Transit Zero Fare Impact Analysis” (Kansas City, MO: Mid-America Regional Council, 2022). 8.

<sup>119</sup>Gotham, K. F. (2002). *Missed opportunities, enduring legacies: School segregation and desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri*.

### Enrollment by Diversity

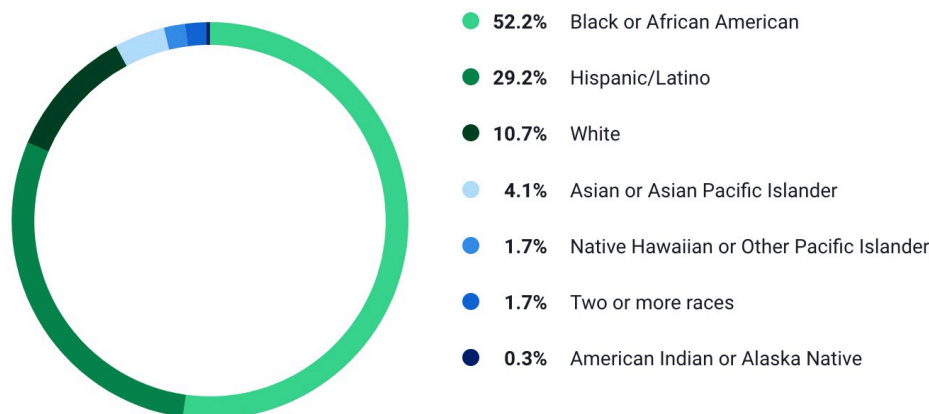


Figure 3: Students at Kansas City Public Schools<sup>120</sup>

### *Literacy, Completion, and Equality*

The completion rates for different education levels also vary, with Black students showing lower completion rates, influenced by factors like school mobility and socio-economic status.<sup>121</sup> The city faces challenges in providing sufficient childcare places for children under three, which is crucial for early development.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, there is a notable shortage of qualified teachers in schools serving predominantly Black communities, affecting education quality.<sup>123</sup>

### *Degree Attainment*

Continuing to explore the educational environment, it is clear that racial segregation is still a significant issue and negatively affects educational outcomes in Kansas City. The academic achievements of Black and white students in Kansas City Public Schools show substantial differences. For instance, the gap in ACT scores is notable, with Black students having an average score of 14.4 compared to 22.8 for white students.<sup>124</sup> Further, according to the data (see Figure 4), 11.6 percent of Black females and 13.4 percent of Black males lack a high school diploma, compared to 5.4 percent of white females and 5.8 percent of white males in the area (see Figure 4). This gap widens at the college level (see Figure 5), where only 20.3 percent of Black females and 17.4 percent of Black males have a bachelor's degree or higher. This contrasts sharply with white females at 38.2 percent and white males at 38.9 percent, indicating a significant disparity in higher educational attainment between Black and white communities. These disparities affect Black students' opportunities for employment, further compounding the challenges faced by these students in achieving economic stability and success. These educational disparities are not just academic numbers; they reflect a deeper, systemic problem

<sup>120</sup> U.S. News & World Report. (2022). Kansas City Public Schools Overview. Retrieved April 10, 2024, from <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/missouri/districts/kansas-city-107736>.

<sup>121</sup> Moran, P. W. (2005). Too little, too late: The elusive goal of school desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri, and the role of the federal government

<sup>122</sup> Denice, P., DeArmond, M., & Carr, M. (2021). When schools open: Student mobility and racial sorting across new charter schools in Kansas City, Missouri

<sup>123</sup> Sansone, V. A., Sparks, C. S., & Cano-McCutcheon, P. (2020). Metro and non-metro variation in postsecondary enrollment: The role of race, ethnicity, and residential location in Texas.

<sup>124</sup> Urban League of Greater Kansas City. (2019). 2019 State of Black Kansas City: Urban Education.

that extends beyond the classroom. The data indicates that despite efforts to address inequalities, significant gaps remain.

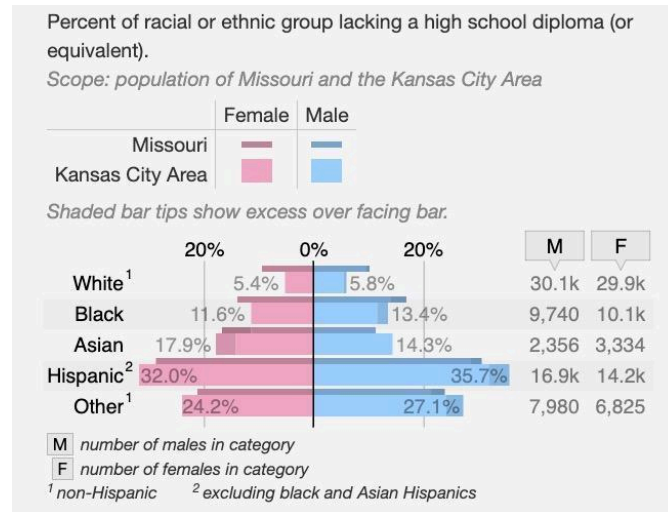


Figure 4: Lacking High School Diploma by Race.<sup>125</sup>

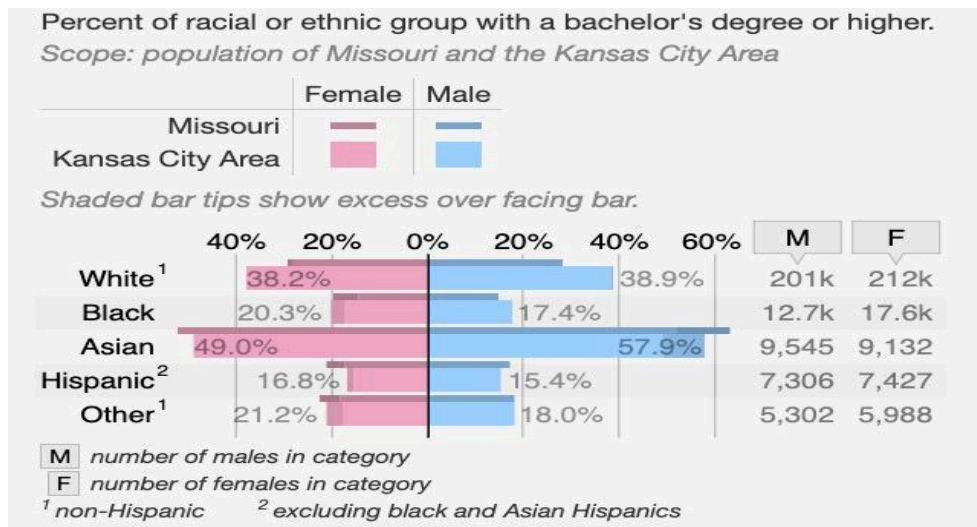


Figure 5: College Graduates by Race<sup>126</sup>

### *Access to Advanced Learning, Digital Resources, and Fair Discipline*

Educational advancement and resource allocation across Kansas City schools also reveal concerning trends, especially for Black students and other students of color. There is an evident gap in access to advanced placement courses, with white students more frequently enrolled than

<sup>125</sup> Demographic Statistical Atlas of the United States. (n.d.). Educational Attainment in the Kansas City Area (Metro Area). Retrieved from

<https://statisticalatlas.com/metro-area/Missouri/Kansas-City/Educational-Attainment>.

<sup>126</sup> Demographic Statistical Atlas of the United States. (n.d.). Educational Attainment in the Kansas City Area (Metro Area). Retrieved from <https://statisticalatlas.com/metro-area/Missouri/Kansas-City/Educational-Attainment>.

their Black and Hispanic counterparts. This inequity in access to college preparatory courses can lead to disparities in college admission and readiness (see Figure 6).

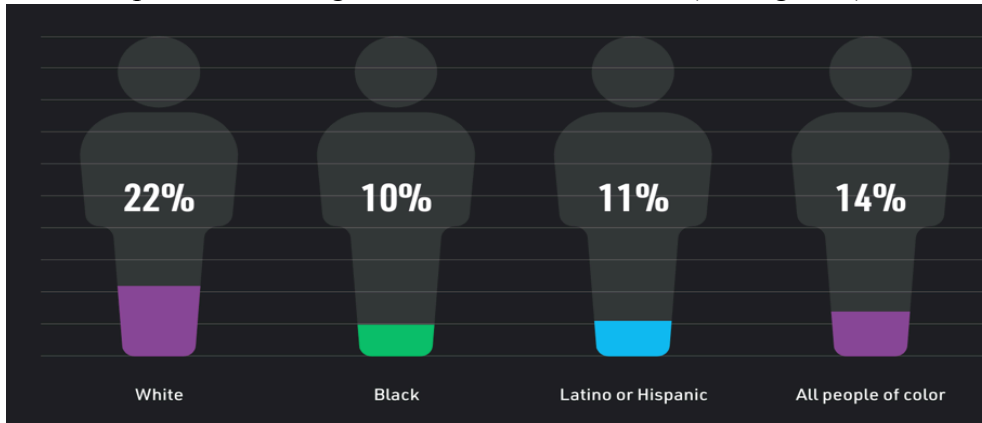


Figure 6: Access to advanced courses<sup>127</sup>

The availability of digital tools at home also demonstrates a divide; white households are more likely to have a computer and internet access compared to households of students of color, which can affect the quality of learning and homework completion (see Figure 7).

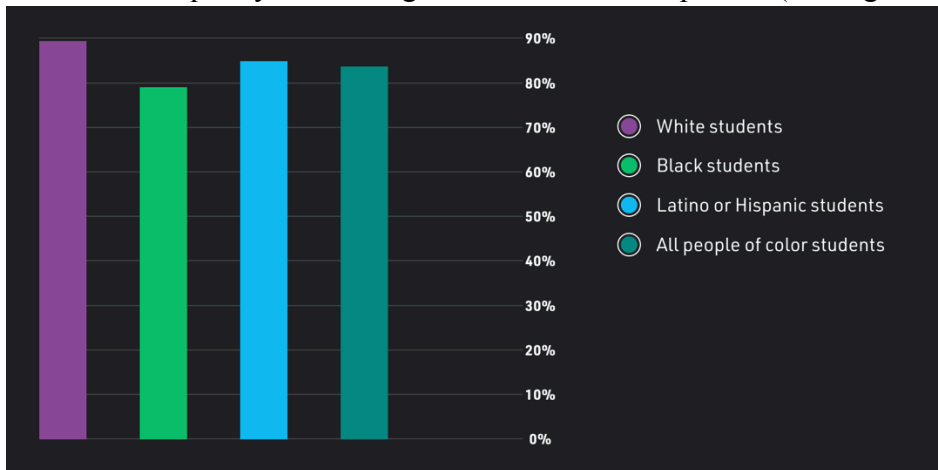


Figure 7: Digital tools at home<sup>128</sup>

Furthermore, discrepancies in school discipline practices contribute to these disparities. Data reveals that Black students are disproportionately affected by out-of-school suspensions, often at 4 times the rate of white students, indicating potential biases in disciplinary actions (see Figure 8). This difference in treatment can have long-term impacts on the educational trajectories of Black students.

<sup>127</sup> Our America. (2021). Education Equity Report - Kansas City. ABC. Retrieved April 10, 2024, from <https://ouramericaabc.com/equity-report/kansas-city/education>

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.



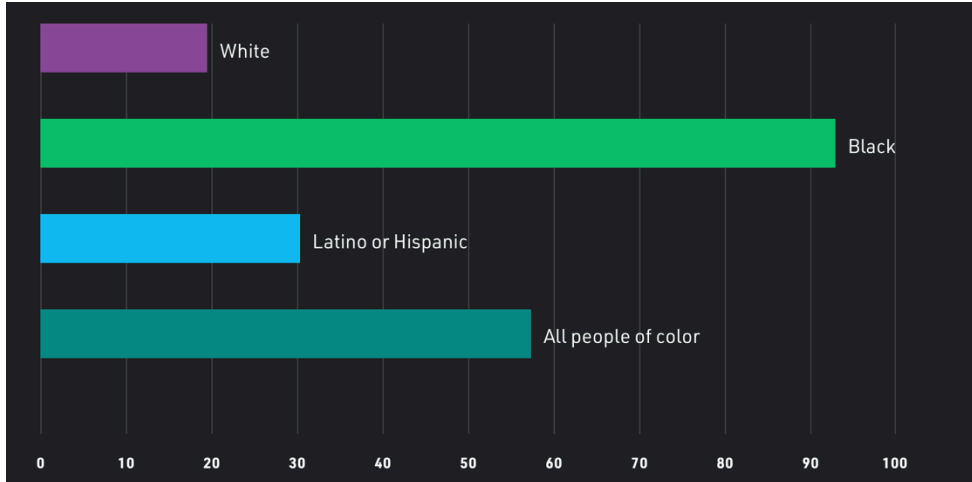


Figure 8: Days missed to discipline<sup>129</sup>

### *Teacher Quality and Critical Infrastructure*

Teacher qualifications also varied across schools, with a notable deficit of teachers meeting minimum required qualifications in schools that predominantly serve Black communities. This disparity directly affected the quality of education delivered. Finally, the physical state of educational facilities remains a pressing issue. Schools that are not child, disability, and gender-sensitive have failed to provide safe and inclusive learning environments, which was a significant hurdle in fostering effective education for all students.

The data collected on education was substantiated by in-depth interviews performed in March 2024 with local academics and researchers. An interview with Dr. Kevin Bullard provided concrete examples of the educational disparities faced by the Black community in Kansas City.<sup>130</sup> Dr. Bullard discussed the development of Afro-centered schools as a response to these disparities. These schools were created to provide a culturally relevant curriculum and to foster a supportive environment that acknowledges and values the students' heritage.

The challenges faced by these schools, such as funding cuts, political opposition, and negative media portrayal, reflect broader systemic issues in Kansas City's educational landscape. Despite the success of Afro-centered schools in improving student engagement and performance, they often struggled with sustainability due to these external pressures. Dr. Bullard underscored that Afro-centered schools in Kansas City were not only about academic achievement but also about instilling a sense of pride and identity in students. The closure and restructuring of these schools due to financial and political challenges have had a significant impact on the community, leading to a loss of educational continuity and community trust.

Housing conditions also emerged as a critical factor influencing educational access and quality. Dr. Neal Wilson, an alumnus of University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), discussed the use of housing data in research that directly led to an understanding of educational environments.<sup>131</sup> The connection between housing and education points to broader socio-economic factors that

<sup>129</sup>Our America. (2021). Education Equity Report - Kansas City. ABC. Retrieved April 10, 2024, from <https://ouramericaabc.com/equity-report/kansas-city/education>

<sup>130</sup>Kevin Bullard, Interview with Kevin Bullard, March 15, 2024.

<sup>131</sup>Interview with Dr. Linwood Tauheed, Neal Wilson, and Matthew Robinson.



ultimately affect Black students' educational opportunities. Matthew Robinson's dissertation research at UMKC further supported Dr. Wilson's research, highlighting that disparities in living conditions are reflected in educational inequities.<sup>132</sup> Robinson's research examined reparations and their potential role to remedy the harms and impact experienced by Black Kansas Citizens. Dr. Linwood Tauheed emphasized the presence of 15 different school districts within the city's boundaries. This multiplicity of districts leads to a fragmented approach to education policy, impacting funding, resources and the quality of education offered to Black communities versus other racial groups.

The disparities outlined in this section demonstrated that educational gaps are compounded by socioeconomic factors and higher mobility rates which can disrupt academic continuity. The challenges extend to early childhood, with a shortage of childcare places for children under three — a critical age for cognitive and social development<sup>133</sup>. Moreover, such disparities can have long-term effects on employment opportunities and income levels, contributing to wider socioeconomic divides.

#### *Kansas City Public Schools District and the Role of Policymaking*

Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) is one of 15 districts in the city of Kansas City, Missouri, and is the 12th largest district in Missouri.<sup>134</sup> KCPS is headquartered at 2901 Troost Avenue, and it is responsible for educating 14,435 PK-12 students. All students in the district qualify for free meals, and 23 percent of students receive ELL (i.e, English Language Learner) services.

In 1977, a group of students and the district, then called "Kansas City, Missouri School District," (KCMSD) sued the state of Missouri to address the impacts of segregation and white flight from the district.<sup>135</sup> The case spanned the course of 18 years and was ultimately decided in 1995 by the Supreme Court. During that 18-year period, however, a number of court-ordered remedies were implemented. "In June 1985, the District Court issued its first remedial order and established as its goal the 'elimination of all vestiges of state imposed segregation.'"<sup>136</sup> The court-ordered remedies included the creation of magnet schools and "programs to expand educational opportunities for all KCMSD students: full-day kindergarten; expanded summer school; before- and after-school tutoring; and an early childhood development program."<sup>137</sup> Despite these remedies, however, test scores in the newly created magnet schools did not increase, the Black-white student success gap did not diminish, and there was less, not more, integration.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Caudill, D. (2024) Kansas governor wants \$56 million to combat a shortage of child care and early education, KCUR. Available at: <https://www.kcur.org/2024-01-15/kansas-governor-wants-56-million-to-combat-a-shortage-of-child-care-and-early-education> (Accessed: 03 May 2024).

<sup>134</sup>"About Us." Kansas City Public Schools Education Foundation - About Us. Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://kcpfsfoundation.org/about>.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Ciotti, *MONEY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE Lessons from the Kansas City Desegregation Experiment*, No. 298 (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 1998), 4, <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa-298.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 515 U.S. 70, 74 (1995).

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ciotti, *MONEY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE Lessons from the Kansas City Desegregation Experiment*, 1.

All of these factors culminated in KCPS becoming the first public school district in the nation to lose its accreditation status on May 1, 2000 after it failed all of Missouri’s performance standards. This loss of accreditation triggered a two-year evaluation period where KCPS had to improve student test scores, graduation rates, and other measures.<sup>139</sup> Whatever improvements it achieved during this period were not enough, however, because KCPS lost accreditation again in 2011 when the district only met 3 of the 14 performance standards set by the Missouri State Board of Education, which was down from the 4 standards it had met in the year prior.<sup>140</sup> After receiving provisional accreditation status in 2014, KCPS saw significant improvements, and on Tuesday, January 11, 2022, KCPS received full accreditation from the Missouri State Board of Education, effective immediately.<sup>141</sup>

Regarding the role of policymaking, KCPS presents an interesting case study. The remedies involved several tiers of the judicial branch, ranging from local district courts all the way up to the Supreme Court, and state-level governance bodies like the Missouri State Board of Education. Article IX, §2(a) of the Missouri State Constitution establishes that “[t]he supervision of instruction in the public schools shall be vested in a state board of education, consisting of eight lay members appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the senate...”<sup>142</sup> and this provision vested the power to remove accreditation status for an entire majority Black school district, in the hands of eight people.



### **Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Black workers are more likely to work at what are known as “poverty-level wages”— working full time and year-round would still earn less than the federal poverty line. As inequality has increased, the region’s middle class has shrunk and poverty and working poverty have grown.<sup>143</sup> One out of four Black individuals live below the poverty level, which is more than triple the rates of white Americans. Controlling for education, racial and gender gaps persist in the region’s labor market. At every education level, people of color have higher unemployment and lower wages than whites, and women have lower wages than their male counterparts (white males earn \$30 per hour on average while average hourly wages for white women, women of color, and men of color are between \$21 to \$26).<sup>144</sup>

Although businesses owned by Black women tend to be significantly smaller on average than other businesses identified by race and gender, research shows that these microbusinesses

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<sup>139</sup> L.A. Times Archives. “Kansas City Schools Lose Accreditation.” Los Angeles Times, May 4, 2000. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-may-04-mn-26560-story.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Sulzberger, A. G. “Kansas City, Mo., School District Loses Its Accreditation.” The New York Times, September 21, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/us/kansas-city-mo-school-district-loses-its-accreditation.html>.

<sup>141</sup> “Continuing the Promise: KCPS Earns Full Accreditation.” KCPS News Details. Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://www.kcpublicschools.org/kcps-news/kcps-news-board-page/~board/kcps-news/post/continuing-the-promise-kcpsearnsfull-accreditation#:~:text=After%20years%20of%20hard%20work,Mark%20Bedell>.

<sup>142</sup> Missouri Constitution, art. IX, sec. 2(a)

<sup>143</sup>\*Defined as working full-time for an income below 150 percent of the poverty level.

<sup>144</sup>An equity profile of the Kansas City Region Summary - National equity atlas. Accessed February 3, 2024. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Summary\\_Kansas\\_City\\_Nov2013\\_FINAL.pdf](https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Summary_Kansas_City_Nov2013_FINAL.pdf).

provide valuable contributions to local economies. There is also an increase in entrepreneurial activity, which is positively associated with faster local economic growth and improvements in the tax base.<sup>145</sup> It is worth noting that Black women are the only women business owners with a higher share of business ownership than their male counterparts.

People of color are driving Kansas City's population growth and their ability to thrive is central to the region's economic growth and success. By 2040, 42 percent of Kansas City's population is projected to be people of color, with the Black community making up half of the colored population.<sup>146</sup> While the region demonstrates overall economic strength and potential, there are still wide racial gaps in income, health, and opportunity. Declining wages, a shrinking middle class, and rising inequality are all factors placing Kansas City's economic future at risk. The fact that the unemployment rate of Kansas City is below average signals persistently higher levels of joblessness for the Black community. The Black community experiences far less upward economic mobility compared to white Americans, even if they were not born into poverty. Blacks in Kansas City struggle to achieve economic self-reliance. The median net worth of Black households is only \$17,600 compared to \$171,000 for white households.<sup>147</sup>

Black median household income is only 54 percent of white median household income, and the percentage of Black households in poverty (24.67 percent) is substantially higher than the percentage of white households in poverty (7.97 percent).<sup>148</sup> Black children born into families in the bottom income level are twice as likely as white children to stay in the bottom income level in adulthood.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, the wealthiest Black children are just as likely to remain among the top income families as they are to fall to the bottom as adults, whereas it is rare for rich white children to become impoverished as adults.<sup>150</sup>

However, the concerns over the vitality of economic and business development in Kansas City have been prominent among local communities. During the second listening session of the town hall, there were comments regarding the historical impact of harms toward the economic inequality of Black communities. In one case, a resident stated that her grandma's grocery store was not able to persevere where the transfer of land ownership and property was not protected by law. This had implications for initial capital accumulation that for Black families precluded passing down generational wealth to another. This observation helps with understanding the architecture of microeconomics at a household level, showcasing how a Black family is often set on an unequal footing compared to others (particularly in comparison to white wealthy Kansas Citians).<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>Black women - Kansas City fed. Accessed February 2, 2024.

<https://www.kansascityfed.org/documents/301/community-BlackWomenBusinessesReport.pdf>.

<sup>146</sup>An equity profile of the Kansas City Region Summary - National equity atlas. Accessed February 3, 2024.

[https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Summary\\_Kansas\\_City\\_Nov2013\\_FINAL.pdf](https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/Summary_Kansas_City_Nov2013_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>147</sup> Kriston McIntosh et al., "Examining the Black-White Wealth Gap," Brookings, February 27, 2020,

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/>.

<sup>148</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City, "Urban Education: Still Separate and Unequal - 2019 State of Black Kansas City" (Urban League of Greater Kansas City, 2019),

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59c3f63f49fc2b9eb12a6663/t/5d8d739af8f69c0524180f42/1569551275926/USOBK2019.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>McIntosh et al., "Examining the Black-White Wealth Gap."



## Sustainable Cities & Communities

Kansas City has consistently been rated as one of the most hyper-segregated cities in the USA, since as early as 1910.<sup>152</sup> Redlining, racial covenants, and systemic disinvestment have contributed to a city that is suffering from evictions, a declining housing stock, vacant and substandard homes, and speculation by large real estate investment firms. Policies directly perpetuated by the city of Kansas City both in the recent past and in the present have contributed to a disproportionate, devastating impact on housing for Black communities. Black families have been systematically prevented from homeownership and the ability to build intergenerational wealth. Housing justice is absolutely paramount to reparations for Black Kansas Citians, particularly because of the city's neglect and racialized housing policies.

The following section explores the contemporary impacts of redlining and racist housing policies perpetuated by Kansas City. First, the case is made that redlining directly contributed to tangible, quantifiable poor outcomes for the Black community in Kansas City today. These impacts include racial segregation, poverty, housing values, evictions rates, and housing quality.

### *Contemporary Impacts of Redlining*

As previously discussed, redlining was a practice introduced by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) to provide opportunities for investment in White communities while stripping opportunities for home loans and community investment from Black and racially homogenous areas. The HOLC assigned grades to neighborhoods that indicated the risk of lending in these areas: "Neighborhoods were assigned one of four grades and corresponding colors: A (green) for 'best,' B (blue) for 'still desirable,' C (yellow) for 'definitely declining,' and D (red) for 'hazardous.'"<sup>153</sup> In Kansas City, Troost Avenue was a physical and conceptual dividing line between white and Black residents, as well as A- and D-graded areas. The area east of Troost, where Black people were forced to live, contains 17 out of the 20 D-graded neighborhoods, whereas the west side contains only the remaining three D-graded areas.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Johnson, Michelle Tyrene. 2018. "Past Housing Discrimination Contributed to the Wealth Gap Between Blacks and Whites in Kansas City." *KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, August 17, 2018. <https://www.kcur.org/community/2018-08-10/past-housing-discrimination-contributed-to-wealth-gap-betwe-en-blacks-and-whites-in-kansas-city>.

<sup>153</sup>Roshanak Mehdipanah, Katelyn R. McVay, Amy J. Schulz, "Historic Redlining Practices and Contemporary Determinants of Health in the Detroit Metropolitan Area", *American Journal of Public Health* 113, no. S1 (January 1, 2023): pp. S49-S50, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.307162>.

<sup>154</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021. "Racial/Ethnic Segregation and Urban Inequality in Kansas City, Missouri: A Divided City." *City & Community* 20 (4): 346–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1535684121990799>.

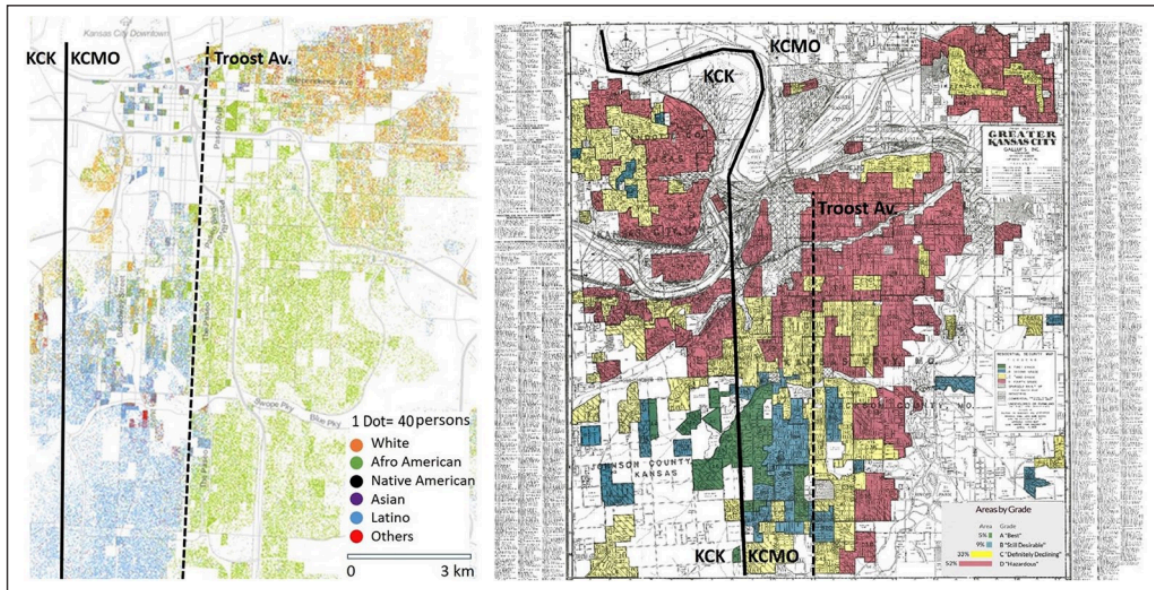


Figure 9: Map of present-day segregation in Kansas City (left) and historic redlining (right)<sup>155</sup>

Nationwide empirical research demonstrated that redlining led to disinvestment, segregation, decreased homeownership, and therefore depressed generational wealth accumulation.<sup>156</sup> Research has also connected redlining with a host of economic, social, and spatial outcomes including “credit scores and disinvestment, foreclosures, violence, physical factors like excess heat, and health including preterm birth and mental health.”<sup>157</sup>

Research by Gonzalez-Perez claims that Kansas City’s defining urban process “was the suburbanization of the white population and the Black population’s concentration in ghettos,” that has direct, clear, contemporary impacts.<sup>158</sup> Today, white and Black Kansas Citians are still racially segregated by Troost Avenue, and the disinvestment that was a product of HOLC grades is reflected in a multitude of outcomes. Black and non-white groups are far more likely to live in areas with a high concentration of other minority groups. While 84 percent of Black residents live among an over-average concentration of minorities, only 42 percent of white residents live with an over-average concentration of minorities.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, over 63 percent of the population in previously D-graded neighborhoods is non-White, compared to only 10 percent of the population in A-graded neighborhoods.<sup>160</sup>

Areas that were D-graded have higher poverty levels, higher numbers of renters, and lower housing values. Today, over 25 percent of residents in previously D-graded areas live in poverty, compared to a citywide average of 20 percent.<sup>161</sup> In contrast, A-graded areas have about 4

<sup>155</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021

<sup>156</sup>Mehdipanah et al, 2023.

<sup>157</sup>Mehdipanah et al, 2023, 50.

<sup>158</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.



percent of their population under the poverty line.<sup>162</sup> Average home values in previously D-graded areas are more than \$363,000 less than in A-graded areas.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, 53 percent of residents in D-graded areas are renters, compared to 15 percent of residents in A-graded areas.<sup>164</sup> Across the city, Black people’s mean income (\$33,400) is half of white people’s (\$62,000), and Black people are over-represented among those with the lowest average incomes.<sup>165</sup>

### *Evictions & Housing Quality*

Kansas City’s declining housing stock and poor quality are disproportionately felt by the Black community. Evictions are particularly impactful, as they disrupt families from community ties and impact the ability to gain and retain stable housing in the future.

#### **EVICTIONS FILED VS. BLACK POPULATION (1999-2016)**

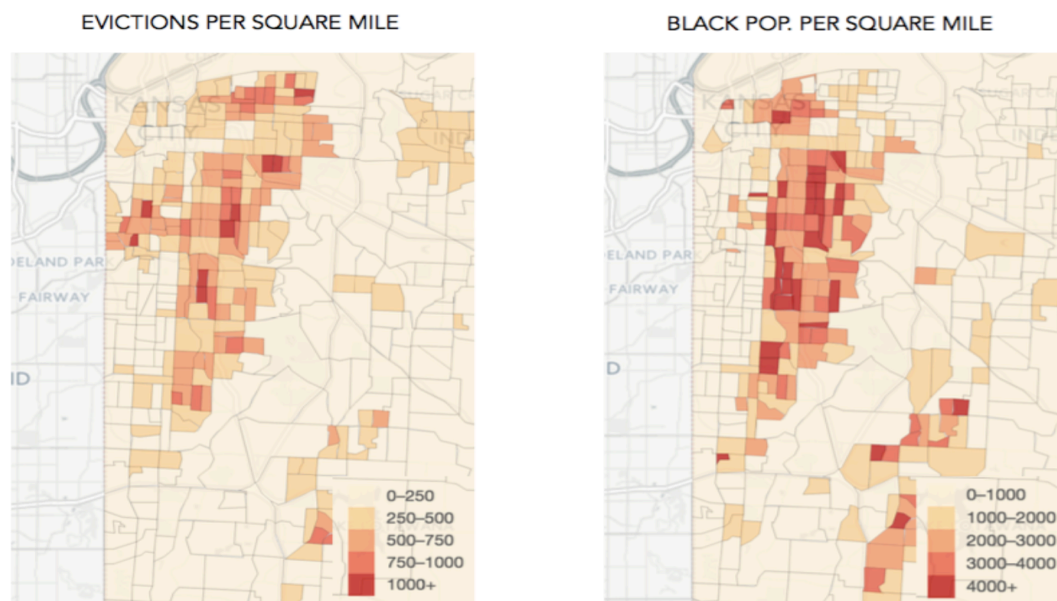


Figure 10: Evictions per square mile compared (left) to Black population per square mile (right) (1996-2016)<sup>166</sup>

Over the past 18 years, 42 evictions have been filed every day on average in Jackson County.<sup>167</sup> Kansas City’s eviction rate was about four in 100, double the national average.<sup>168</sup> These cases disproportionately impact Black, low-income areas east of Troost avenue.<sup>169</sup> The census tracts with the highest number of evictions (800 or more per year) have majority non-white populations

<sup>162</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid.

<sup>166</sup>“Kansas City Eviction Project.”

<sup>167</sup>“Kansas City Eviction Project.” n.d. *Kansas City Eviction Project*. <https://www.evictionkc.org/home>.

<sup>168</sup>Shelly, Barbara. 2022. “When Home Is Where the Hazards Are: Healthy, Affordable Housing Remains Scarce in KC.” *The Beacon*, December 2, 2022. <https://kcbeacon.org/stories/2021/07/05/housing-in-kansas-city-making-some-sick/>.

<sup>169</sup>“Kansas City Eviction Project”; González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021.

and mean income below \$30,000.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, five out of the six census tracts with more than 1,000 evictions per year were located east of Troost.<sup>171</sup> In comparison, areas with the highest white populations also had the fewest eviction filings.<sup>172</sup> Jackson County is an eviction hotspot, where “landlords continue to disproportionately file evictions in Jackson County’s majority non-White neighborhoods.”<sup>173</sup> Empirical research on Kansas City has found that a household’s race is the strongest predictor of whether that family will be evicted, and a neighborhood’s racial composition is the strongest predictor of neighborhood eviction filings.<sup>174</sup> Lastly, amidst Kansas City’s out-of-state investment boom, analysis has shown that outside LLCs are “more likely to evict tenants and more likely to receive reports of unhealthy housing conditions than local owners.”<sup>175</sup>

The quality of the rental stock also contributes to evictions. Reports suggest that “landlords often find reasons to evict renters who make demand or withhold rent in attempts to get problems corrected. And tenants with an eviction on their record frequently have to settle for even worse conditions.”<sup>176</sup> Common issues include “rats, mice, bed bugs, cockroaches,” and other “terrible health threats.”<sup>177</sup> When comparing maps of Troost Avenue, east of Troost has a higher percentage of renters, a higher rental cost burden (a rental rate more than 30 percent of income), and more housing problems.<sup>178</sup> These problems include cost burden, overcrowding, and a lack of plumbing. The manager of environmental health at the Kansas City Department of Health has stated, “Tell me where you live, and I’ll tell you how healthy you will live your life,” articulating the stark reality for Black Kansas Citians, particularly those who live east of Troost in historically redlined neighborhoods.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>“Kansas City Eviction Project.”

<sup>174</sup>Hye-Sung Han, “What explains variation in neighborhood evictions? Investigation of neighborhood characteristics and federal rental assistance: A case study of Kansas City, Missouri,” *Journal of Urban Affairs*, (May 2023).

<sup>175</sup>Eric Adler & Kevin Hardy, “Land grab remakes Kansas City’s east side, upending neighborhoods, Star investigation finds,” *The Kansas City Star*, June 19, 2023, <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article255861026.html>

<sup>176</sup>Shelly, Barbara. 2022.

<sup>177</sup>Gina Chiala (Executive Director and Staff Attorney at Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom), as quoted in and Freedom in Shelly, Barbara. 2022.

<sup>178</sup>“Kansas City Region Housing Data Hub” n.d.

[https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ff430550582544d587b764bd4601810e/page/Investor-Owned-DS/?views=Income\\_Tract](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ff430550582544d587b764bd4601810e/page/Investor-Owned-DS/?views=Income_Tract).

<sup>179</sup>Shelly, Barbara. 2022.

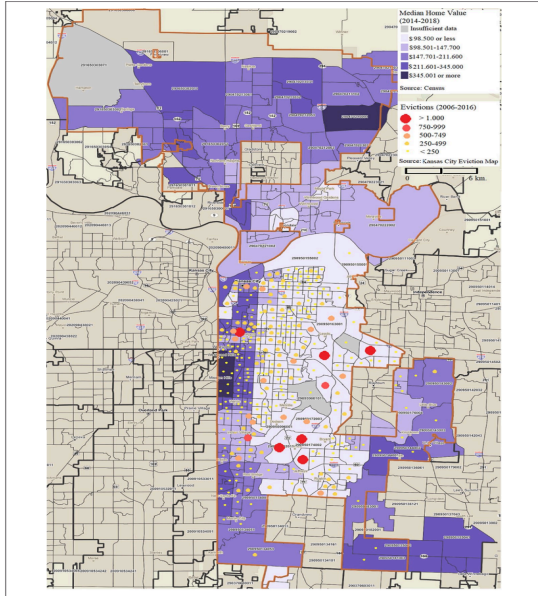


Figure 11: Map of evictions (2006-2016) and the mean value of housing (2014-2019) per census block group.<sup>180</sup>

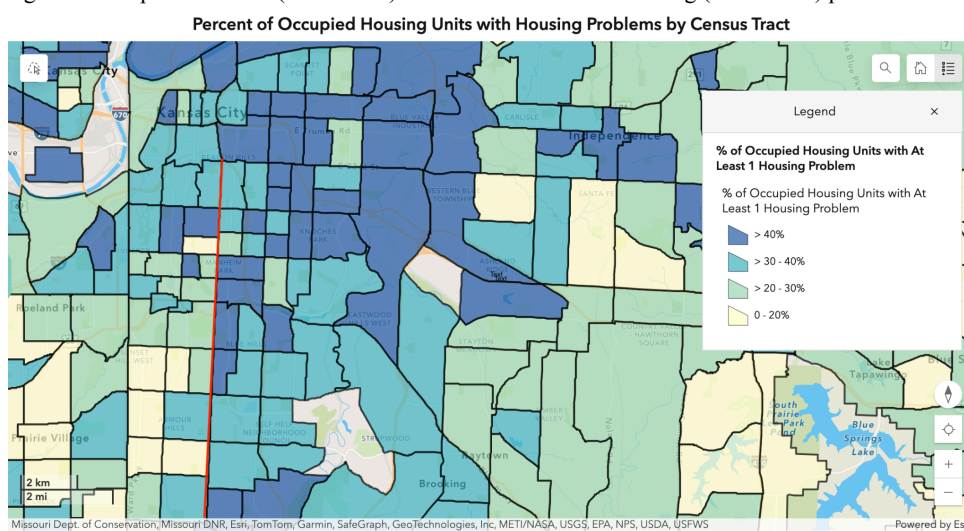


Figure 12: Number of housing units with at least one housing problem<sup>181</sup>

Until recently, Kansas City allowed for income-based discrimination in renting, particularly affecting residents who receive social security, disability, child support, and housing vouchers.<sup>182</sup> Landlords could also discriminate based on criminal history, evictions, credit score, and rent to

<sup>180</sup>Troost Avenue is located where the housing values transition from deep purple to light purple. González-Pérez, Jesús M. 2021.

<sup>181</sup>The darker shaded areas that represent a larger proportion of units with a problem are typically located east of Troost Avenue (represented in red). “Kansas City Region Housing Data Hub” n.d. [https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ff430550582544d587b764bd4601810e/page/Investor-Owned-DS/?views=Income\\_Tract](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ff430550582544d587b764bd4601810e/page/Investor-Owned-DS/?views=Income_Tract).

<sup>182</sup>Alyssa Jackson. 2024. “‘We’re Just Asking For Equity’: KCMO Council Passes Ordinance to Protect Renters From Income Discrimination.” KSHB 41 Kansas City News. January 26, 2024. <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/your-voice/were-just-asking-for-equity-kcmo-council-passes-ordinance-to-protect-renters-from-income-discrimination>.



income ratio.<sup>183</sup> Black women with children “make up the largest share of voucher holders in Missouri.”<sup>184</sup> Therefore, income discrimination is race- and gender-based discrimination: “There is no difference between source of income discrimination and racial discrimination.”<sup>185</sup> 145 Black women protested the city ordinance that allowed this policy, leading to its repeal.<sup>186</sup> The policy demonstrates the sometimes unintended racist effects of Kansas City’s discriminatory housing policy.

### *Housing Supply & Real Estate Investment*

Population decline, coupled with the financial crash of 2008 contributed to a foreclosure crisis in Kansas City. As a result, hundreds of homes now lay vacant and dilapidated. The lack of adequate and affordable housing has only been exacerbated by the “rise of large investors” that “make it harder for first-time homebuyers to compete against cash offers.”<sup>187</sup> Real estate investors have capitalized on the tough-to-sell housing stock in a “massive land grab” that represents “property turnover perhaps unseen since the development of the suburbs, the neighborhood upheaval brought on by the construction of the US 71 and midcentury white flight.”<sup>188</sup> The human toll of this investment is not evenly racially distributed. Data analyzed by the *Kansas City Star* shows that the areas east of Troost - “created by racist housing policies” - have become “an active hunting ground for investors and speculators from across the Kansas City region, all 50 states, and at least a dozen countries as far off as Australia and Ukraine.”<sup>189</sup>

#### **WHITE POPULATION CHANGE BY CENSUS TRACTS, 2010-2020**

This map shows where, over the last decade, the percentage of white residents has increased (blue) across Kansas City, particularly east of Troost Avenue, and where the percentage has decreased (red). Click on each census tract to see the change.

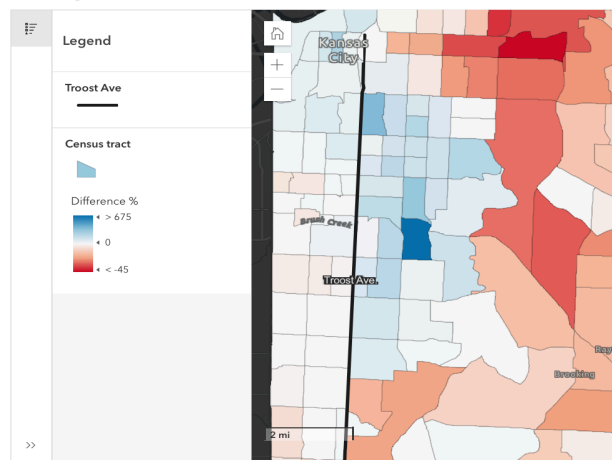


Figure 13: Over a decade, areas east of Troost have increased in white population<sup>190</sup>

<sup>183</sup>Ibid.

<sup>184</sup>Ryan S. 2023. ““Modern Day Redlining”:145+ Black Women Demand Kansas City End Discriminatory Housing Practices.” *Kansas City Defender*. December 11, 2023. <https://kansascitydefender.com/housing/kansas-city-black-women-fight-housing-discrimination/>.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid.

<sup>187</sup>“Kansas City Region Housing Data Hub.”

<sup>188</sup>Eric Adler & Kevin Hardy, 2023.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.

Rising home prices have pushed out Black residents from neighborhoods that have been historically Black for decades. In two neighborhoods east of Troost, median rental prices have skyrocketed by 114 percent and 118 percent, respectively, in the last 10 years.<sup>191</sup> Simultaneously, the proportion of white residents just east of Troost has doubled and tripled.<sup>192</sup>

In neighborhoods that are primarily Black, less than 50 percent of homes are owner-occupied, compared to neighborhoods that are predominantly white, where over 85 percent of homes are owner-occupied.<sup>193</sup> Private equity firms, investors, and LLCs own the majority of homes in Black areas east of Troost. In one example, Eartha Ersery and her husband, a Black couple east of Troost, have owned their home for decades.<sup>194</sup> When they moved in, the majority of their neighbors were homeowners. By 2023, 25 percent of the properties around Ersery are owned by LLCs based outside of Kansas City; “just a few blocks away from Ersery are homes owned by LLCs out of England, Canada, and Australia. Six homes nearby belong to an LLC in Kiev, Ukraine.”<sup>195</sup> Almost 14,000 homes are now owned by about 30 companies. These firms’ practices provide them “‘pricing power,’ or a greater ability to control and raise rents.”<sup>196</sup>

Home prices are leaping up all throughout Jackson County, Missouri, and Johnson County, Kansas. In the past seven years in Jackson County, the average home sale price has increased by 49%, up to \$258,000.<sup>197</sup> The impact in the east side is that low-income residents are being out-competed by outside investors like CSMA Blt LLC, a subsidiary of Cerberus Capital Management. Cerberus is a \$55 billion dollar private equity firm that now owns 540 rental properties in Kansas City alone.<sup>198</sup> Cerberus is also a huge contributor to evictions, filing over 1,000 evictions.<sup>199</sup> These investment firms slap paint on decaying buildings, leaving renters to deal with massive structural problems or leave. Moreover, since most companies are based out of state, they often have incorrect and incomplete information, and force tenants to deal with issues themselves. Out-of-state investors are not the only negligent landlords: the city owns thousands of vacant lots, more than 90% of which are “overgrown with weeds” and a danger to neighbors.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Ibid.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>Eric Adler & Kevin Hardy, 2023.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid.

<sup>196</sup>“Kansas City Region Housing Data Hub.”

<sup>197</sup>Eric Adler & Kevin Hardy, 2023.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

## OUTSIDE OWNERSHIP

Properties in neighborhoods east of Troost Avenue, such as Ivanhoe, increasingly are owned by individuals and companies who do not live there. Some owners are even from outside the country. This is a stark contrast to neighborhoods west of Troost, like Wornall Homestead or Armour Hills, where most single-family homes are owned by the people who occupy them. Click on the parcels to see the name and address of the owners.

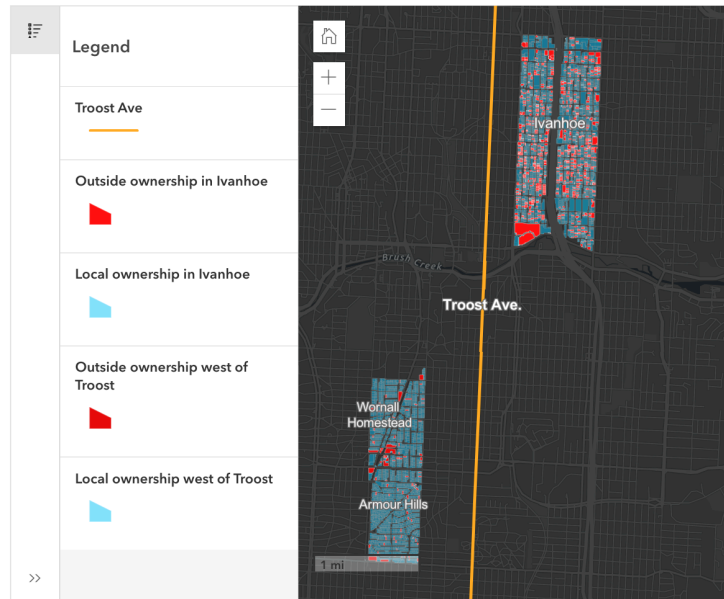


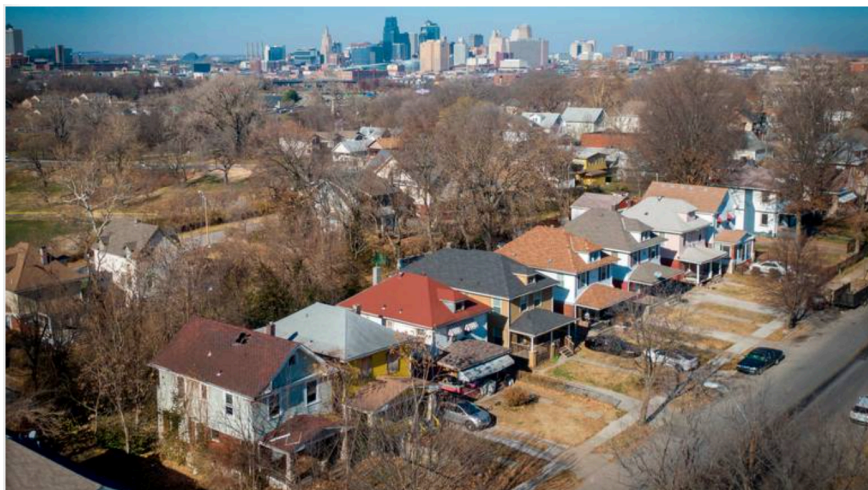
Figure 14: Neighborhoods and Outside Investors East and West of Troost Ave<sup>201</sup>

Housing advocates and Black residents are calling this epidemic what it is: exploitation. Poor Black people are forced out of their own neighborhoods that they were initially forced into by racist housing policies. Not only are rental prices increasing, but housing values are increasing, to the detriment of Black residents who have lived in neighborhoods east of Troost for generations.<sup>202</sup> Joy Stamps, an east side resident says, “houses have increased to \$150,000, \$250,000, \$300,000...People who are only making \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year can’t afford \$4,000 in property tax. What are they going to have to do? They’re going to have to sell and look for something in a different area.”<sup>203</sup> While residents might make income off this sale, it is displacing them from community, history, and forcing them to give up their home and equity for uncertain prospects and no guarantee of the ability to retain intergenerational wealth elsewhere.

<sup>201</sup>Eric Adler & Kevin Hardy, 2023. *The red blocks indicate neighborhoods that are mainly owned by outside investors on the east and west sides of Troost Avenue.*

<sup>202</sup>Ibid.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid.



Records show a string of seven properties along Brooklyn Avenue at 27th Street are held by owners from, left to right, Atlanta, Georgia (empty lot); The Land Bank of Kansas City; Loman, Idaho; owner-occupied; Broken Arrow, Oklahoma; a Kansas City resident living elsewhere; a Kansas City LLC. Tammy Ljungblad [tjungblad@kcstar.com](mailto:tjungblad@kcstar.com)

Image 4: Visualization of a city block in which only one property is an owner-occupied home by a Kansas City resident<sup>204</sup>

Kansas City owns hundreds of vacant lots and dilapidated homes that are structurally dangerous, a hub for criminal activity, and could be utilized by local residents to increase homeownership wealth and reduce the homeless population. When private equity firms buy abandoned properties and slap paint on the walls to then sell or rent at high prices, these practices price out locals and their shoddy work contributes to health issues and evictions.<sup>205</sup> On the other hand, some local residents are taking advantage of a city ordinance to rehabilitate abandoned homes and rent them at or below market rate to ensure that Black residents can remain in their historic communities instead of being pushed outside the margins of Kansas City.

The Abandoned Housing Act allows neighborhood associations to sue property owners for vacant, abandoned homes.<sup>206</sup> Possession of the property is granted to the association, allowing the group to rehabilitate it to hold it or sell it. The major drawback of this policy is that neighborhood associations must have the capital to pay for pricey renovations.<sup>207</sup> Associations can partner with rehabilitation companies who have the capital and expertise to perform this renovation. Terrell Jolly is one Kansas City resident who utilizes the Abandoned Homes Act to acquire abandoned properties, rehabilitate them, and rent at market rate to enable residents who could not otherwise afford a home to remain in their community.<sup>208</sup> Neighborhood associations retain a portion of any profits from the property. Jolly discusses how, through his program, he can teach families who would otherwise be unable to afford a beautiful, large home how to care for a property and save money so they have the tools to be able to invest in homeownership in the future.<sup>209</sup> This program is not easy for him, however: Jolly has been denied loans, has had to

<sup>204</sup>Eric Adler & Kevin Hardy, 2023.

<sup>205</sup>“Kansas City Region Housing Data Hub.”

<sup>206</sup>Kevin Hardy & Mike Hendricks, “Nonprofit rebuilding KC’s east side one block at a time,” *The Kansas City Star*, December 14, 2021.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid.

<sup>209</sup>Terrell Jolly (Jolly & Associates), in discussion with the author, February 26, 2024.

risk his own home as collateral, and has been denied purchase by the Kansas City Land Bank. Smaller investments such as these, in partnership with local neighborhood associations can be “more transformative than larger developments,” because of their dedication to quality renovations and commitment to affordability and long-term financial literacy.<sup>210</sup>

### *Kansas City Land Bank*

The Kansas City Land Bank (KCLB) was initially created to manage the city’s store of foreclosed homes, with the aim of generating housing wealth for the community.<sup>211</sup> Despite an ambitious \$1 sale program and hundreds of sales in the years immediately after its inception, the KCLB has largely failed to fulfill its mission. Most of KCLB’s properties lie east of Troost, and while its goal was to revitalize predominantly Black neighborhoods, it has instead contributed to gentrification.<sup>212</sup>

In 2021, KCLB sold less than two dozen properties. Moreover, at one meeting alone they rejected 31 out of 33 purchase offers “without explanation beyond the rote recitation that they were deemed insufficient.”<sup>213</sup> Rashid Junaid and other residents of Foxtown wanted to buy four vacant lots and turn them into a park. Despite having the funding and backing from a local foundation and non-profit organization, KCLB refused to sell. The land sits empty, collecting trash.<sup>214</sup> In another example, a Black resident on the east side wanted to purchase a lot next to her home where she had been picking up trash for years. She proposed to add a garden and build a firepit and rest area. She was refused by KCLB - their reasoning: “we have too many gardens.”<sup>215</sup> Records show that the property on that lot had been abandoned since 2007, demolished in 2014, and now sits empty.<sup>216</sup> KCLB received over 500 complaints in just six months in 2021 for trash, overgrown weeds, and other issues.<sup>217</sup> While the city spends over \$1 million per year to maintain these properties, it often falls on neighbors to pick up trash and clean around these sites.<sup>218</sup>

KCLB does sell a few properties each year, but does not track the outcome of these investments, such as whether they are owner-occupied, if they have been flipped, or if the buyer has paid taxes on the property.<sup>219</sup> KCLB has been accused of being “more interested in maximizing the sales price it gets for properties than working with neighborhood organizations to find the best use for them.”<sup>220</sup> While KCLB waits for out of state, wealthy investors, it has “no urgency” to transfer ownership to people who will take care of the property or vacant land.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>Kevin Hardy & Mike Hendricks, 2021.

<sup>211</sup>Mike Hendricks, “‘They’re trapping us in blight’: Kansas City Land Bank has failed, east side residents say,” *The Kansas City*

*Star*, March 16, 2023, <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article255830461.html>

<sup>212</sup>Ibid.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid.

<sup>219</sup>Ibid.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid.

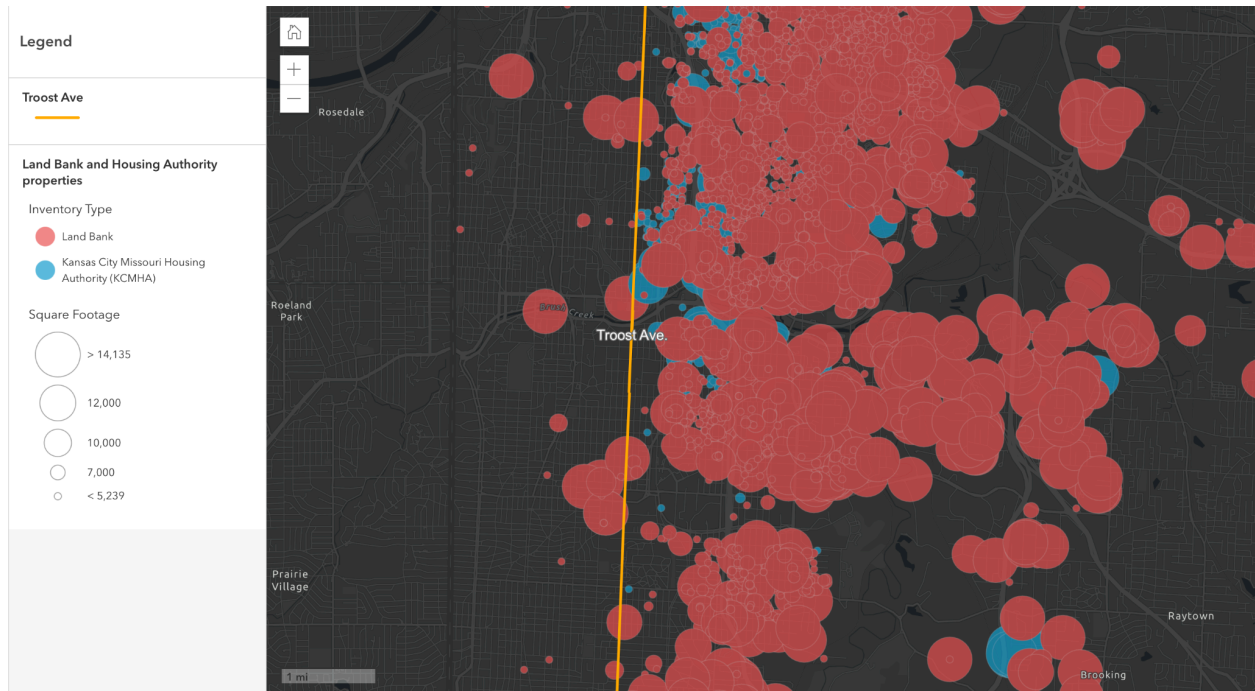


Figure 15: Map of properties owned by KCLB and Kansas City Housing Authority<sup>222</sup>



## Climate Action

### *Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Changing Emissions Patterns*

In Kansas City, like many urban areas worldwide, the issue of greenhouse gas emissions looms large on the environmental agenda. The city's emissions, primarily driven by transportation, industry, and energy consumption, contribute to global climate change. Kansas City is generating a nearly 18 tons carbon footprint per person, more than three times the world average.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>222</sup>Mike Hendricks, 2023. *The far majority of properties are located in historically Black neighborhoods on the east of Troost Ave.*

<sup>223</sup> Climate Action. Kansas City Missouri Government. <https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-manager-s-office/office-of-environmental-quality/climate-action>.



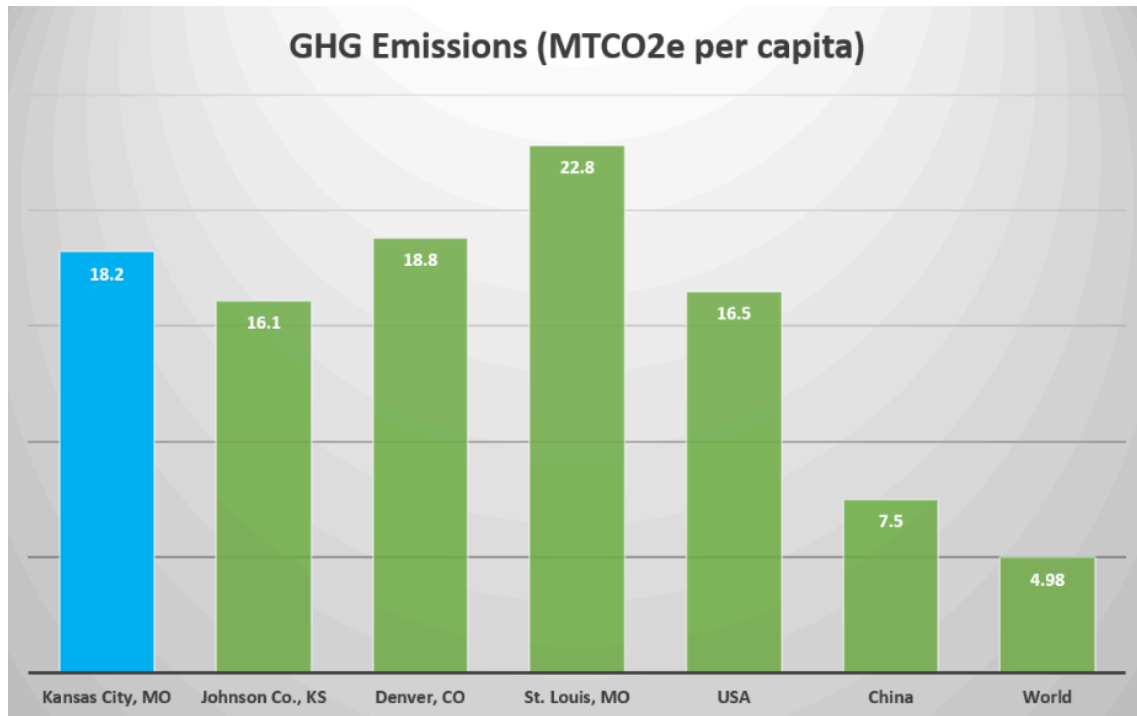


Figure 16: GHG Emissions in Kansas City<sup>224</sup>

This disparity is rooted in the spatial and infrastructural inequalities that are prevalent in Kansas City. On a per capita basis, white households consume the most energy.<sup>225</sup> Energy use intensity (EUI), which is the energy consumed per unit of living area, measures the relative energy efficiency of households. Low EUI values indicate high energy efficiency. Empirical studies have shown a positive correlation between EUI and the percentage of minorities in a neighborhood, especially when incomes decline.<sup>226</sup> A study of Kansas City found that EUI for heating (the largest component of U.S. household energy use) was highest in most African American neighborhoods and lowest in white neighborhoods. These conditions not only lead to increased energy consumption and higher costs, but also reflect broader energy inefficiencies that disproportionately burden these communities. Perhaps this is contrary to most people's intuition that minorities consume less energy. But the truth is that Black individuals typically live in relatively older houses. These homes are often poorly insulated. And the heating systems are usually less energy efficient. In order to keep the house warm, especially during the cold season, residents have to increase their energy consumption, which generates more per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

<sup>224</sup>Government Operations GHG Inventory Data | Open Data KC | [data.kcmo.org](https://data.kcmo.org).  
[https://data.kcmo.org/Candidates-for-Deletion/Government-Operations-GHG-Inventory-Data/ac2c-75ia/about\\_data](https://data.kcmo.org/Candidates-for-Deletion/Government-Operations-GHG-Inventory-Data/ac2c-75ia/about_data). Published December 8, 2015.

<sup>225</sup>Reames TG. Targeting energy justice: Exploring spatial, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in urban residential heating energy efficiency. *Energy Policy*. 2016;97:549-558. doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2016.07.048

<sup>226</sup>Bednar D, Reames TG, Keoleian GA. The intersection of energy and justice: Modeling the spatial, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic patterns of urban residential heating consumption and efficiency in Detroit, Michigan. *Energy and Buildings*. 2017;143:25-34. doi:10.1016/j.enbuild.2017.03.028

### *Control of Invasive Species*

Invasive species control is a less discussed but critical aspect of climate action, and is a result of climate change, which affects urban biodiversity and, in turn, community health and resilience. One of the biggest invasive species problems in Kansas City now is the *Sericea lespedeza*. It is an extremely aggressive invasive plant that spreads rapidly in fields and takes over native species such as warm season grasses and pasture hay. Kansas City's temperatures would not have been suitable for *Sericea lespedeza*, but excessive greenhouse gas emissions and warmer temperatures have facilitated this plant's invasion of local ecosystems.

### *Strengthen adaptive capacity to climate related-disasters*

Warmer temperatures have a serious impact on vulnerable populations and communities of color. In hotter conditions, the risk of heat stress and heat stroke increases, especially for communities with minorities. They often do not have good home cooling systems. Climate change has also brought significant increases in precipitation. Over the past half century, the amount of rainfall on the rainiest day of the year has increased by about 15%<sup>227</sup>. This means that rainfall events are more difficult to predict. Because of this change in rainfall, the likelihood of flooding increases. However, minority communities often do not have well-developed urban drainage systems or adequate flood plans. This can significantly increase their risk of exposure to natural disasters. Figure 16 shows the distribution of flooding in Kansas City. Sections in blue are typically more prone to flooding. This fits with the map of Kansas City's racial neighborhoods.

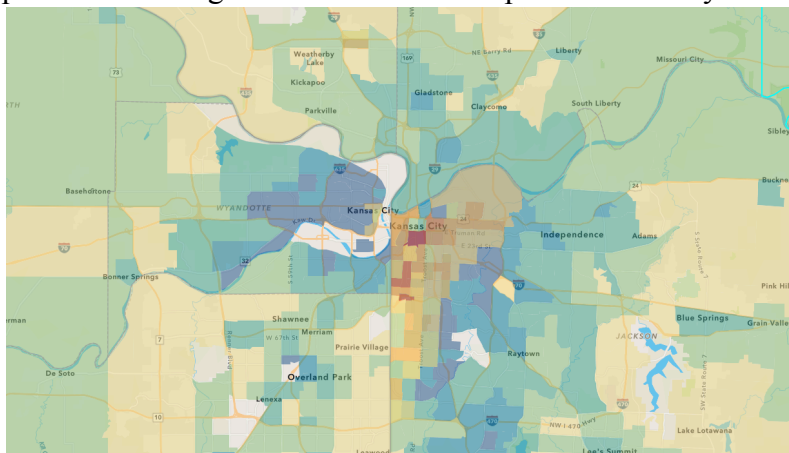


Figure 17: Distribution of Flooding in Kansas City<sup>228</sup>

<sup>227</sup>Capital-Journal THT. Eastern Kansas will see dangerously high temperatures by 2053, a new climate study predicts. Topeka Capital-Journal. <https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/state/2022/08/21/eastern-kansas-become-part-extreme-heat-belt-2053-climate-study-says/10349632002/>. Published August 21, 2022.

<sup>228</sup>GCoM. Climate Risk & Vulnerability Assessment.; 2019. <https://www.marc.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Climate-Risk-and-Vulnerability-Assessment.pdf>.



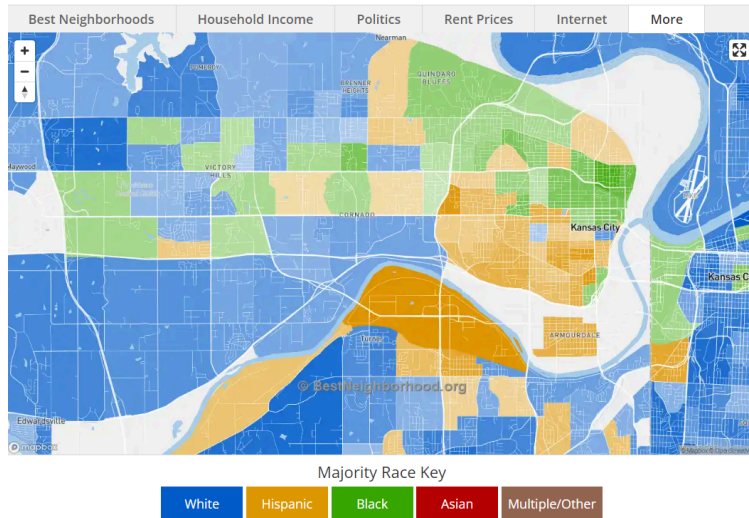


Figure 18: Distribution of Races in Kansas City<sup>229</sup>

The area in green in Figure 17 is predominantly populated by Black Kansas Citians and corresponds exactly to the flood-prone area in Figure 16.

*Strengthen adaptive capacity to climate related-disasters*

To address this issue, local governments have taken a number of steps. On August 17, 2006, the Mayor and City Council of Kansas City, Missouri, adopted a resolution committing to take action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions along with more than 300 local governments in the U.S. and 770 globally. The City Council tasked the City Manager and Chief Environmental Officer with working alongside the community to develop the City's first Climate Protection Plan. As a result of the efforts associated with the plan, Kansas City was able to reduce city-operated GHG emissions by 26 percent from 2005 levels and community-wide emissions by 24 percent from 2005 levels by 2020.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>229</sup> Race, Diversity, and Ethnicity in Kansas City, KS. Best Neighborhood. <https://bestneighborhood.org/race-in-kansas-city-ks/>.

<sup>230</sup> Climate Action. Kansas City Missouri Government. <https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-manager-s-office/office-of-environmental-quality/climate-action>.

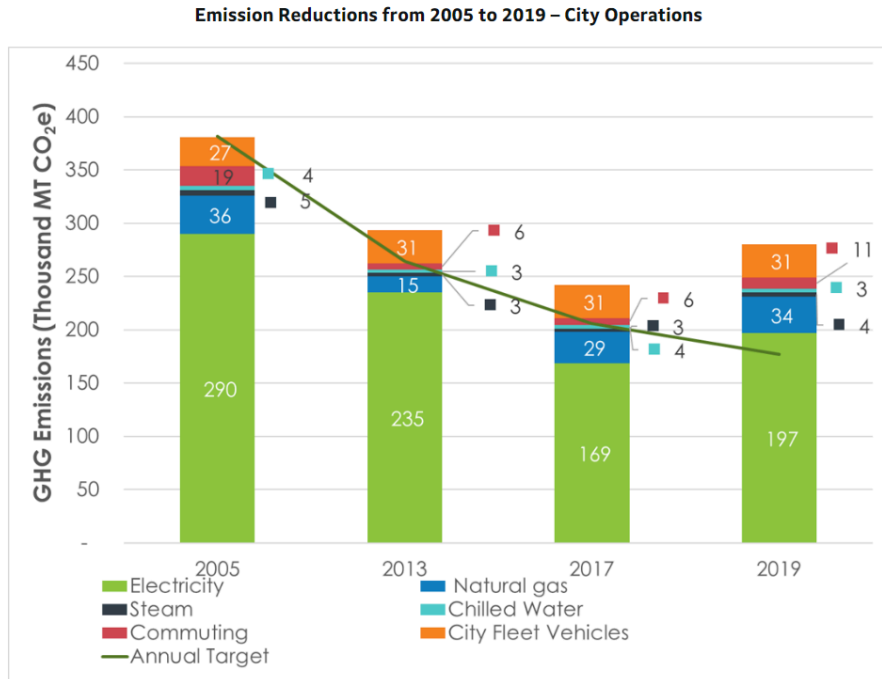


Figure 19: Emission Reductions from 2005 to 2019 – City Operation<sup>231</sup>

At the same time, much has been done to strengthen adaptive capacity, address systemic inequalities, and ensure that marginalized communities have equitable access to resources, information and support networks. This includes investing in resilient infrastructure for vulnerable communities, providing targeted disaster preparedness outreach and education, and promoting community-led initiatives that enable residents to participate in decision-making processes. These measures will not only reduce emissions, but also improve the livability and resilience of communities most in need of climate justice.



### Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

#### *Police Murders*

The Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) has been criticized for its racism and protection—under qualified immunity laws—of police officers who have murdered innocent Black civilians. Black people are disproportionately stopped by police. According to the Missouri Attorney General, in 2018 Black people were 91 percent more likely to be stopped by police than white people.<sup>232</sup> This number is only increasing, as just one year earlier Black people were 85 percent more likely to be stopped.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>231</sup>Climate Action. Kansas City Missouri Government.

<https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-manager-s-office/office-of-environmental-quality/climate-action>.

<sup>232</sup>“State of Black KC | a Leading Report on Race & White Supremacy — Ulkc.” n.d. Ulkc.

<https://www.ulkc.org/2019-black-kc>.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid.

The tragic case of Ryan Stokes garnered national attention for the horrific use of violence by police officers resulting in the murder of a young man. Ryan Stokes was shot and killed 10 years ago after an incident where someone accused Stokes of stealing a phone.<sup>234</sup> An officer shot Stokes in the back while his hands were raised, thinking he was holding a gun; he was holding his keys and a phone.<sup>235</sup> The officers involved never faced criminal charges. The Supreme Court refused to hear the case, and the cops were cleared by a grand jury under qualified immunity.<sup>236</sup> Kansas City residents organize to this day to provide support for Stokes' family, advocate for accountability from the officers, and promote city control of the KCPD.<sup>237</sup>



Image 5: Photograph Ryan Stokes, murdered by KCPD in 2013<sup>238</sup>

More recently, 16-year old Ralph Yarl was shot in the head and arm by a white Kansas City resident when he went to the wrong house to pick up his siblings.<sup>239</sup> Thankfully, Yarl survived the attack. This traumatic incident highlights the racism embedded in Kansas City. The District Attorney agreed that the shooting had a “racial component.”<sup>240</sup> President Biden commented on the case, stating, “No parent should have to worry that their kid will be shot after ringing the

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<sup>234</sup>Joe Hennessy. 2023. “Ten Years Later, Family Revisits the Shooting Death of Ryan Stokes by Kansas City Police.” <https://www.kctv5.com>, August 4, 2023.  
<https://www.kctv5.com/2023/08/04/ten-years-later-family-revisits-shooting-death-ryan-stokes-by-kansas-city-police/>.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid.

<sup>236</sup>Ibid.

<sup>237</sup>Kansas City Reparations Commission & Coalition Members, in discussion with the author, March 2024.

<sup>238</sup>Joe Hennessy. 2023.

<sup>239</sup>City Journal. 2023. “On Race and Crime, a Counterfactual Narrative | City Journal.” May 5, 2023.  
<https://www.city-journal.org/article/on-race-and-crime-a-counterfactual-narrative>.

<sup>240</sup>City Journal. 2023.

wrong doorbell.”<sup>241</sup> Even Kansas City Mayor Lucas stated that the shooting was conducted by someone who “clearly, clearly fears Black people,” and that “existing while Black,” can get you shot by a white person.”<sup>242</sup>

The Black transgender community faces disproportionate violence from police officers and community members alike. In 2019, Kansas City Police officers brutally assaulted Brianna BB Hill, “slamming [her] onto the sidewalk, kneeling on her in the face, torso, and ribs, and forcing her cuffed hands above her head.”<sup>243</sup> The officers plead guilty to this degree assault. Merriquer Jenson, Founder and Executive Director of Transformations KC, said of KCPD, “There is a much larger system in place with the KCPD not listening to Black and Latino community members...These situations show a pattern...We see that not only do the police not take it seriously, and not want to actually listen to the concerns - if anything, the [queer] community’s kind of gaslit.”<sup>244</sup>

Stories such as these are numerous. Many Black-led, anti-violence organizations report starting out of sheer need: police officers don’t do their jobs, and communities are left to pick up the pieces. Transformations KC was established in the wake of the murders of two trans women, Dionte Greene in 2014 and Tamara Dominguez in 2015.<sup>245</sup> The Ad Hoc Group Against Crime began after police refused to investigate the case of nine missing Black women.<sup>246</sup> These are only a few organizations that have aimed to reduce violence towards and within the Kansas City Black community because of both the brutality and neglect of KCPD.

#### *Racism within the Police Force*

Black KCPD officers “live with a target on their backs,” as they are harassed and disciplined by white officers.<sup>247</sup> There is even a term coined by the KCPD to illustrate the process of pushing Black cops out of the service: ‘papered out.’<sup>248</sup> In 2009, the Department of Justice investigated racial bias in the KCPD because the number of Black officers was “lower than expected.”<sup>249</sup> KCPD has 11.6 percent Black officers, about 1 percent less than in 1998. The results of this report were never released or discussed.<sup>250</sup>

The *Kansas City Current* conducted its own investigation and interviewed 25 current and former KPCD officers.<sup>251</sup> The officers they interviewed stated white officers would “make derogatory

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<sup>241</sup>Ibid.

<sup>242</sup>Ibid.

<sup>243</sup>Mansaray, Mili. 2023. “Trans Women of Color and the KCPD’s Rocky, Violent History.” *The Beacon*, May 5, 2023. <https://kcbeacon.org/stories/2023/05/05/kansas-city-trans-women-of-color/>.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid.

<sup>246</sup>Damon Daniel, (President, Ad Hoc Group Against Crime), in discussion with the authors, February 28, 2024.

<sup>247</sup>Calacal, Celisa. 2022. “Missouri Forced Kansas City to Increase KCPD Spending. Locals Say It’s Time to End State Control.”

*KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, November 14, 2022.

<https://www.kcur.org/politics-elections-and-government/2022-11-14/kcpd-police-amendment-4-state-local-control-missouri-constitution>.

<sup>248</sup>Calacal, Celisa. 2022.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid.

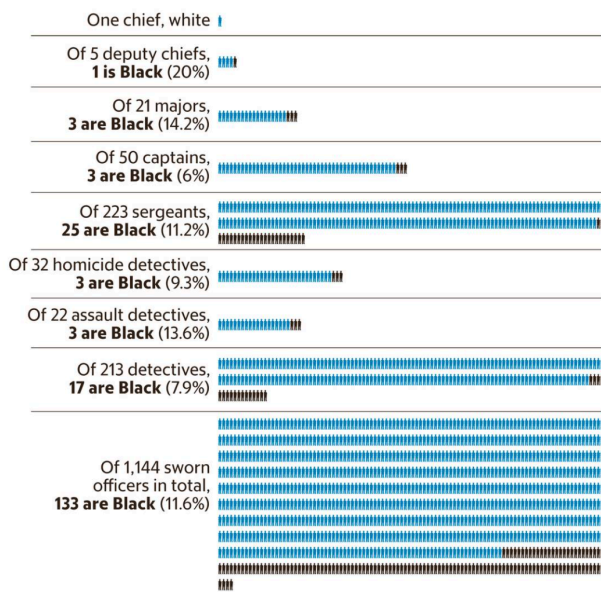
<sup>250</sup>Ibid.

<sup>251</sup>Calacal, Celisa. 2022.

comments or use racial slurs against them with impunity.<sup>252</sup> The investigation identified 18 officers that quit the force because of racist treatment.<sup>253</sup>

### KCPD's lack of diversity in upper ranks

Nearly 30% of Kansas City residents are Black. But less than 12% of officers in the Kansas City Police Department are Black. The lack of diversity is seen through the upper leadership ranks of the KCPD, according to police data from February 2022.



Source: Kansas City Police Department, as of Feb. 28, 2022

LUKE NOZICKA, GLENN E.RICE AND NEIL NAKAHODO, THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Figure 20: Underrepresentation of Black officers in KCPD<sup>258</sup>

practices that are unjustifiable given the non-serious, nonviolent nature of the vast majority of incidents that police respond to...it is an approach that criminalizes and oppresses people of color, especially Black people.<sup>259</sup> In 2018, KCPD made almost 11,000 arrests, 78 percent of which were for non-violent, non-serious offenses.<sup>260</sup> The majority of those arrested were Black and Brown people.<sup>261</sup>

### State Control of the KCPD

<sup>252</sup>Ibid.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid.

<sup>254</sup>Ryan S, 2022. "ANOTHER HISTORIC WIN: After Years of Community Demands, White Supremacist KCPD Police Chief Forced Out." *Kansas City Defender*. May 12, 2022. <https://kansascitydefender.com/kansas-city/another-historic-win-after-years-of-community-demands-white-supremacist-kcpd-police-chief-forced-out/>.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid.

<sup>256</sup>"What Policing Costs: Kansas City, MO," n.d., *The Vera Institute of Justice*, <https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities/kansas-city-mo>.

<sup>257</sup>Ibid.

<sup>258</sup>Ibid.

<sup>259</sup>"What Policing Costs: Kansas City, MO."

<sup>260</sup>Ibid.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid.

For about four years from 2017-2022, Rick Smith, a known white supremacist, was the leader of the KCPD. Smith had an "infamous" reputation as being a "protector of white supremacy, and a perfect example of the terrorist, mob-like operations of police departments across the country."<sup>254</sup> Following local pressure, Smith was forced to resign, but his very promotion indicates the pervasive racism prevalent within the police department.<sup>255</sup>

### The Cost of Policing

Kansas City spends 43 percent of its budget on policing.<sup>256</sup> As of 2020, the city spent over \$261 million on its police force.<sup>257</sup> Over-policing is making Black communities less safe: higher budgets allow "police departments to increase force size, militarize equipment, and sustain high arrest rates -

The fight for local control of the Kansas City Police Department has been an effort by Black people, particularly Black women and mothers, to keep their communities safe. Currently, the KCPD is controlled by a governing Board of Police Commissioners. Four of these members are directly appointed by the state, and the fifth is always the city Mayor.<sup>262</sup> State control of the KCPD allows the state to dictate the police budget and priorities with absolutely no input from Black or any local communities. In 2022, Missouri passed constitutional Amendment 4 that increased KCPD's allocation from 20 percent to 25 percent of the city budget.<sup>263</sup> 61 percent of voters in Jackson County voted against the amendment, while 63 percent of voters in Missouri's majority white population voted for the amendment, ensuring its passage.<sup>264</sup> The ramifications of this amendment were that in 2022, the minimum spending requirement on KCPD rose from \$154 million to \$193 million.<sup>265</sup> It is notable that the state of Missouri does not fund any aspect of the KCPD, despite dictating its funding requirements; KCPD is fully funded by the Kansas City budget and taxpayers.<sup>266</sup> Gwen Grant, CEO of the Urban League of Greater Kansas City, called this policy "21st century colonialism...It is a form of taxation without representation."<sup>267</sup> It is notable that this constitutional amendment was put forth in the wake of the tragic murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, as Black communities and activists were calling for the defunding of police departments.<sup>268</sup> Missouri tacitly exerted its authority to guarantee that one of the Blackest cities in the state must increase the size and scope of its police department that originated in and continues to uphold white supremacy.

In 2021, Grant filed a lawsuit against the Board of Police Commissioners, alleging that it is illegal for the state to dictate local spending and taxation without a public vote.<sup>269</sup> Grant also stated that state control is racialized, as Black Kansas Citians are the ones who are most affected by this policy.<sup>270</sup> More recently, in March 2024, three Black women filed a federal lawsuit alleging that state control of the police "Keep[s] Black people enslaved."<sup>271</sup> The three women include Narene Cosby, the mother of Ryan Stokes, who was killed by police in 2013; Dr. Barbara Johnson who is an educator "whose son was jailed after a traffic stop,"; and, Dr. Nicole Prince, whose family home was raided as a child because the police got the wrong address.<sup>272</sup> The lawsuit contends that state control is "an effort to keep slavery legal and Black people in chains,"

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<sup>262</sup>Lowe, Peggy. 2024. "Black Women Sue Missouri to End State Control of Kansas City Police." *KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, March 12, 2024. <https://www.kcur.org/news/2024-03-12/black-women-sue-missouri-to-end-state-control-of-kansas-city-police>.

<sup>263</sup>Merchant, Josh. 2022. "Missouri Votes to Increase KC's Police Budget Despite Local Voters' Wishes." *The Beacon*, November 9, 2022. <https://kcbeacon.org/stories/2022/11/09/election-2022-amendment-4-kcpd-results/>.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid.

<sup>271</sup>Peggy Lowe, 2024. "Black Women Sue Missouri to End State Control of Kansas City Police." *KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, March 12, 2024. <https://www.kcur.org/news/2024-03-12/black-women-sue-missouri-to-end-state-control-of-kansas-city-police>.

<sup>272</sup>Ibid.

and that the original bill for state control was passed “with the direct knowledge and awareness that the law would be used to further discriminate against Black people by keeping them enslaved.”<sup>273</sup>

Local control of the KCPD would not guarantee better outcomes for Black Kansas Citizens. Local police departments across the US perpetuate racism no matter how many leaders or officers of color are on the force, and despite local control of the police. That being said, state control of local police departments has been a tactic utilized by the state of Missouri to uphold control of the state’s Black populations. In March 2024, the state House of Representatives voted 109-36 to approve the placement of St. Louis’ police department under a state board, despite a ballot measure that established local control of the St. Louis police in 2012.<sup>274</sup> The majority of the votes in favor of this measure were Republicans. All 36 votes against were Democrats. Despite arguments by the state that state control “take[s] the politics out of policing,” these excuses ring false.<sup>275</sup> St. Louis reported the “lowest crime rates in a decade,” this year: crime went down under local control.<sup>276</sup> Regardless of outcomes, all communities—but especially Black communities, given the racist legacy of policing in this country and in the state of Missouri—deserve agency in determining how they are governed and the role of their own local police departments.

#### *Incarceration Rates & Prison Conditions*

In the state of Missouri, Black people are disproportionately impacted by incarceration. Black people make up only 12 percent of the state population but 39 percent of the jail population.<sup>277</sup> In contrast, white people are underrepresented in jail, making up 81% of the state population but 55 percent of the jail population.<sup>278</sup> The statewide incarceration rate of Black people has increased 64 percent since 1990.<sup>279</sup> In Jackson County, the jail admission rate for Black residents is 462 per 100,000, compared to only 98 per 100,000 for white residents.<sup>280</sup>

The rate of incarcerated women is growing exponentially, “outpacing the growth for men.”<sup>281</sup> Women face unique challenges and vulnerabilities of incarceration, and these effects are only magnified for Black women, including trauma, sexual violence, motherhood, and mental health needs.<sup>282</sup> Most incarcerated women—80% in jails and 56% in prisons—are mothers to children under 18 years old.<sup>283</sup> Incarceration can severely disrupt an entire family and community, as most

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<sup>273</sup>Ibid.

<sup>274</sup>Kellogg, Sarah. 2024. “Missouri House Passes Bill Placing St. Louis Police Department Under State Board.” *STLPR*, March 28, 2024. <https://www.stlpr.org/government-politics-issues/2024-03-28/missouri-house-passes-bill-placing-st-louis-police-department-under-state-board>.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid.

<sup>276</sup>Ibid.

<sup>277</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO,” August 21, 2023, *The Vera Institute of Justice*, [https://trends.vera.org/state/MO/county/jackson\\_county](https://trends.vera.org/state/MO/county/jackson_county).

<sup>278</sup>Ibid.

<sup>279</sup>Ibid.

<sup>280</sup>US Census Bureau. 2023.

<sup>281</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO.”

<sup>282</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO.”

<sup>283</sup>Operation Liberation KC, n.d. [https://www.instagram.com/opliberation\\_kc](https://www.instagram.com/opliberation_kc).



of these women are their family’s primary breadwinners and caretakers.<sup>284</sup> Many are incarcerated simply because they are unable to afford bail.<sup>285</sup> For the queer and trans communities, police violence, incarceration rates, and violence during incarceration are even worse: trans women of color are over four times more likely than cisgender people to become the victim of a violent crime.<sup>286</sup>

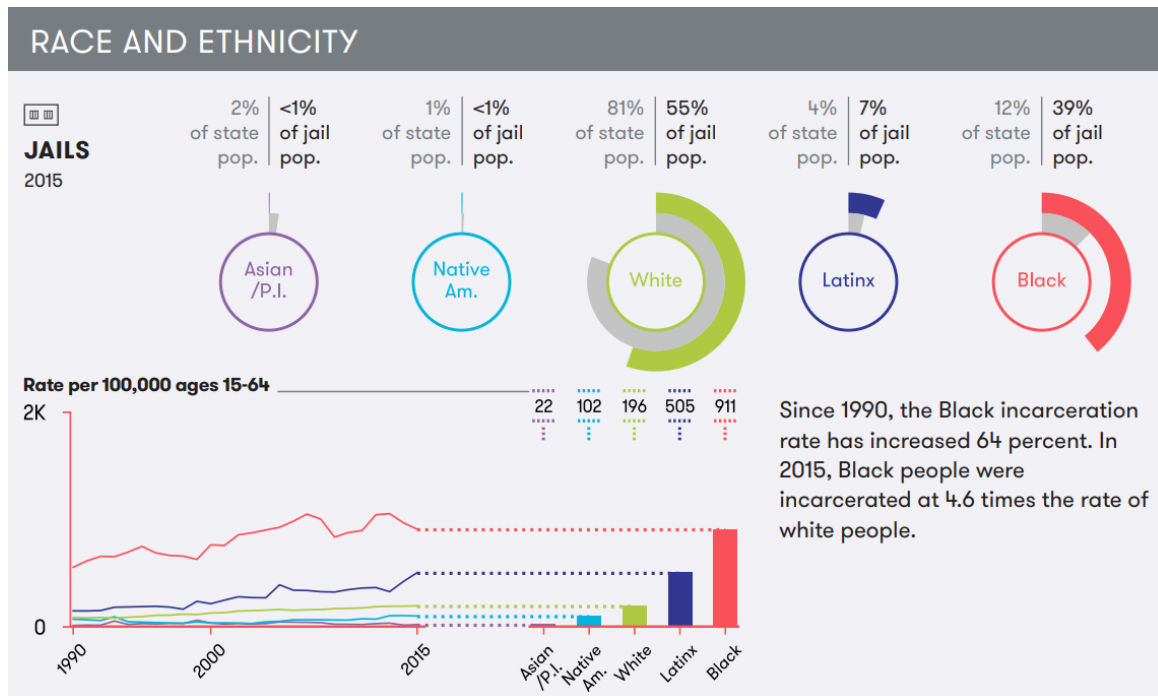


Figure 21: Missouri jail incarceration rates by race/ethnicity<sup>287</sup>

In Jackson County, the number of incarcerated people per 100,000 residents spiked in the 1980s and has increased overall.<sup>288</sup> Black people are arrested at a rate 2.92 times higher than that of white people.<sup>289</sup> Black people are particularly arrested for non-violent, low-level offenses that involve a high level of officer discretion, including drug possession and disorderly conduct.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>284</sup>Ibid.

<sup>285</sup>Ibid.

<sup>286</sup>Mansaray, Mili. 2023. Justice Gatson (Founderr, Reale Justice) and Imije Ninaz (Founder, Nafasi TransCare Collective), in discussion with the authors, April 1, 2024.

<sup>287</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO.”

<sup>288</sup>Ibid.

<sup>289</sup>“What Policing Costs: Kansas City, MO.”

<sup>290</sup>Ibid.



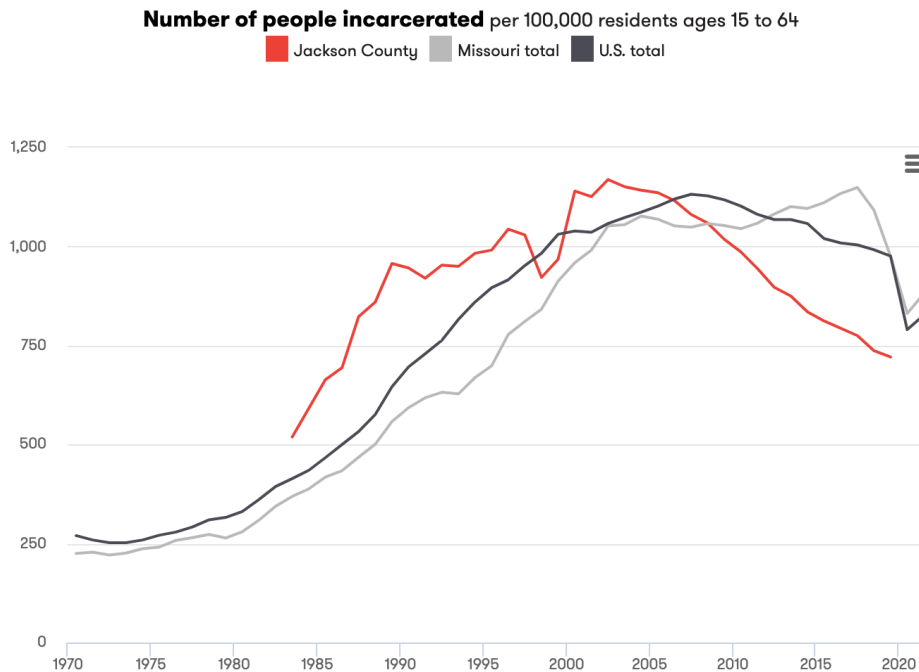


Figure 22: Incarceration rate per 100,000 in Jackson County, the state of Missouri, and the US<sup>291</sup>

The conditions in Jackson County jails are “living hell” for those incarcerated there as the KCPD continues to “wage its decades long war against Black, Brown, and low-income people.”<sup>292</sup> Jackson County jail was known for “nightmarish” conditions where “HELP” signs are plastered to the windows.<sup>293</sup> In 2023 alone, 134 people died in Missouri prisons.<sup>294</sup> Despite claims that many of these deaths were due to drug overdose, this excuse is often used as a cover for misconduct.<sup>295</sup>

In state prisons, a recent report by Solitary Watch showed that people who are incarcerated in Missouri and Kansas prisons are placed in solitary confinement at higher rates than the national average.<sup>296</sup> Nationally, 6 to 7 percent of people incarcerated are in solitary confinement on any given day, but in Missouri this figure was 11.9 percent, or 3,356 out of 28,172 people incarcerated.<sup>297</sup> Solitary confinement has been shown to “cause severe psychological damage,

<sup>291</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO.”

<sup>292</sup>Amaia Cook, Dylan Pyles, & Black Rainbow. 2022. “How Kansas City’s Cash Bail System Is Destroying Black Wealth.”*Kansas City Defender*. June 7, 2022. <https://kansascitydefender.com/kansas-city/how-kansas-citys-cash-bail-system-is-destroying-black-wealth/>.

<sup>293</sup>Amaia Cook et al, 2022.

<sup>294</sup>Katie Moore, January 5, 2024, “134 people died in Missouri prisons last year. ‘No one wants to address the problem,’” *The Kansas City Star*; <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/crime/134-people-died-in-missouri-prisons-last-year-no-one-wants-to-address-the-problem/ar-AA1mvqAb>.

<sup>295</sup>Katie Moore, 2024.

<sup>296</sup>Katie Moore & Luke Nozicka, May 30, 2023, “‘Moral blight’: Prisons in MO, KS, use solitary more than national average, report says,” *The Kansas City Star*; <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article275748501.html>.

<sup>297</sup>*Ibid.*

anxiety and hallucinations, among other health issues,” including suicidal ideation.<sup>298</sup> Not only are Black and Brown people disproportionately incarcerated, they are also disproportionately placed in restrictive housing, which is “designed to break you mentally, physically, spiritually.”<sup>299</sup>

### *Pretrial Detention & Cash Bail*

Kansas City does not have its own jails; the city rented beds in Jackson County jail until 2019, and since then has outsourced beds to the Vernon and Johnson County jails. It is notable that this creates a financial incentive for other counties to house incarcerated people.<sup>300</sup>

The majority of people held in municipal jail are nonviolent, low-level offenders that have violated city codes, such as theft, vandalism, loitering, and drug paraphernalia. Only one third of people in Kansas City’s municipal courts have been arrested for a violent offense.<sup>301</sup> The majority of these people are Black: about 60 percent of the city’s jail prison populations are Black, despite Black residents making up less than 30 percent of the population.<sup>302</sup>

Amaia Cook, a member of the Mayor’s Alternatives to Incarceration Commission, states that incarceration can derail a person’s life, even when people are held pre-trial, before conviction: “People lose jobs, and they lose their homes and apartments and vehicles by spending time in jail.”<sup>303</sup> A study conducted in 2018 by the University of Missouri-Kansas City, found that after just three days in jail, 1 in 6 people lost their jobs.<sup>304</sup> This number increased to 50 percent after three days in jail.<sup>305</sup> One third of incarcerated people also report greater housing instability following incarceration.<sup>306</sup> Sarah Staudt of the Prison Policy Initiative explained, “Imagine if you were snatched out of your life, without the opportunity to prepare for it, for three or four days. There would be major consequences in your life. And of course, those consequences are more extreme for people who are right on the edge to begin with.”<sup>307</sup>

Pretrial detention and the cash bail system are stealing Black wealth. Cash bail is “a way for the system to profit off people who are arrested at higher rates and subjected to higher bail amounts.”<sup>308</sup> In Jackson County alone, the number of people held in pretrial detention has doubled since 1970.<sup>309</sup> Black people make up two-thirds of this population, despite being about 24 percent of the Jackson County population.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>298</sup>Ibid.

<sup>299</sup>Katie Moore & Luke Nozicka, 2023.

<sup>300</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO.”

<sup>301</sup>Ibid.

<sup>302</sup>“What Policing Costs: Kansas City, MO.”

<sup>303</sup>Josh Merchant, September 28, 2023, “Does Kansas City overuse jails? A new commission will look for better solutions than incarceration,” *The Kansas City Beacon*, <https://www.kcur.org/news/2023-09-28/does-kansas-city-overuse-jails-a-new-commission-will-look-for-better-solutions-than-incarceration>.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid.

<sup>305</sup>Ibid.

<sup>306</sup>Ibid.

<sup>307</sup>Ibid.

<sup>308</sup>Amaia Cook et al, 2022.

<sup>309</sup>“Incarceration Trends: Jackson County, MO.”

<sup>310</sup>Ibid.

### *Local Activism & Campaigns*

Local activism around prison abolition and decarceration has successfully won multiple campaigns to push alternatives to policing and incarceration. The Mayor’s Alternatives to Incarceration Commission collectively voted against adding new jail beds or a new jail in Kansas City.<sup>311</sup> Testimony from community members urged the Commission to “rethink plans to build a new jail, favoring community-based solutions over punitive measures.”<sup>312</sup> Instead of promoting incarceration, the City Council agreed to fund Decarcerate KC’s REACH platform for pre-arrest diversion programs.<sup>313</sup> REACH stands for Responding with Empathetic Alternatives and Community Help, and the program was allocated \$1.26 million from the city budget to provide greater access to mental health, housing, and other resources to prevent arrest.<sup>314</sup>

### *Gun Violence & Public Safety*

Homicides and gun violence have increased in the past decades, as youth ages 18-24 have made up the largest share of homicide suspects. Activists say the “communities that have been subjected to a severe lack of economic investment and resources,” will not only perpetuate, but become victims of violence.<sup>315</sup> Increased gun violence in Black communities in Kansas City has been traced to racialized public policy, including redlining, poverty, and generational trauma.<sup>316</sup> Although Black people make up about one quarter of the Kansas City population, they represent over 60 percent of homicide victims.<sup>317</sup>

### **Summary**

The analysis of these six key issue areas demonstrates how historical harms that have been perpetuated against Kansas City’s Black community have evolved and persisted into the present day. Black Kansas Citians not only fare worse than white residents for education, health, economics, and housing; Black communities also fall far below human rights standards for quality living and wellbeing. This disparity is a result of intentional, systemic, and pernicious public policy choices by the Kansas City government and other public officials and institutions. Reparations policies for these historical and contemporary harms should come directly from impacted communities, be holistic and sustainable in nature, and ensure the agency and dignity of the people who have been and are harmed.

## **V. Remaining Sustainable Development Goals**

The following section provides an overview of the remaining SDGs, analyzing how Kansas City’s Black communities fare compared to the SDG criteria.

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<sup>311</sup>Ryan S, 2023, “A Paradigm Shift: Decarcerate KC Galvanizes Kansas City to Consider Innovative Alternatives to Incarceration.” *Kansas City Defender*. July 24, 2023.  
<https://kansascitydefender.com/justice/paradigm-shift-decarcerate-kc-galvanizes-kc/>.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid.

<sup>313</sup>Holl, Lynn. 2024. “Kansas City’s \$2.3 Billion Budget Passes With \$1.26 Million Allocated Towards an Alternative to Policing.” *Kansas City Defender*. April 10, 2024.  
<https://kansascitydefender.com/politics/kansas-citys-2-3-billion-budget-passes-with-1-26-million-allocated-towards-an-alternative-to-policing/>.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid.

<sup>315</sup>Bill Lukitsch, “Leaders seek collaboration in 2024 after record KC homicides,” *The Kansas City Star*, January 12, 2024.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid.

<sup>317</sup>City Journal. 2023.



Figure 23: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals<sup>318</sup>



### No Poverty

In Jackson County, about 11 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. This figure is far more stark for the Black community.<sup>319</sup> While only 8 percent of white residents live in poverty, 27 percent of Black residents live in poverty.<sup>320</sup> Unemployment is also greater for the Black community at 5 percent of the population compared to 2 percent of the white population.<sup>321</sup> Child poverty rates are greater in the Black community: 13 percent of Black children live in poverty while only 5 percent of white children in poverty.<sup>322</sup>



### Zero Hunger

In 2021, an estimated 19 percent of residents in Jackson County were food insecure, which means that these individuals not only lacked consistent access to adequate amounts of food but also faced a deprivation of healthy, nutritious options.<sup>323</sup> As such, food insecurity is associated with negative health outcomes like obesity. Figure 23 shades the prevalence of obesity as a

<sup>318</sup>“Guidelines for the Use of the SDG Logo, Including the Colour Wheel and 17 Icons.” n.d.

<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/guidelines-use-sdg-logo-including-colour-wheel-and-17-icons>.

<sup>319</sup>US Census Bureau. 2023.

<sup>320</sup>Ibid.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid.

<sup>322</sup>US Census Bureau. 2023.

<sup>323</sup>Giavanna Franklin, “Food Insecurity in Kansas City, MO,” ArcGIS StoryMaps, December 9, 2022, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cfbac04435074c5090e0b5cd259daf3d>.

proportion of census tract population in Kansas City.<sup>324</sup> The deeper tones, which indicate that obesity affects between 44.9 to 49.4 percent of residents, are directly to the east of Troost Avenue. Black Kansas Citians have disproportionately higher obesity rates than their white counterparts. In 2021, 78 percent of respondents to a survey administered by Harvesters, a Kansas City food bank, shared that they purchased “the cheapest available food, regardless of its nutritional value” when money was limited.<sup>325</sup> Naomi Jamal, a family physician who serves as Chief Quality Officer at Swope Health, affirmed that “we have created a system...where

unhealthy, processed food is oftentimes more accessible and cheaper and more affordable than the healthier foods that we’re trying to give our patients.”<sup>326</sup> Jamal added that food insecurity is not the result of individual failure or wrongdoing but rather the product of several policies,<sup>327</sup> and these disparate impacts are often spatialized along the racially segregated Troost Avenue.

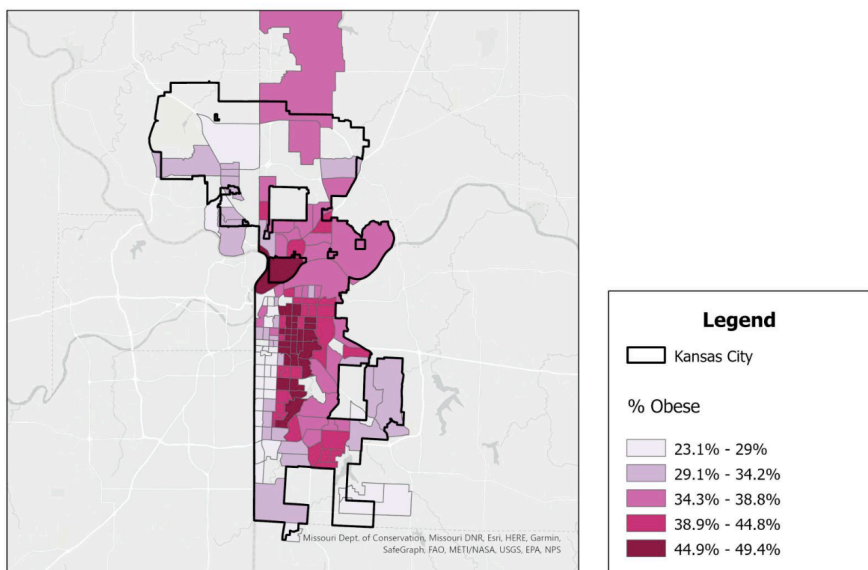


Figure 24: Obesity rate in Kansas City, Missouri<sup>328</sup>



## Gender Equality

In the U.S., 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime,<sup>329</sup> on average, almost 500 women are raped or sexually assaulted each day in the U.S.<sup>330</sup> Approximately, 78.5 percent of 2012 Kansas rape offenders were known by their victims.<sup>331</sup> Nearly 1 in 2 female victims of sexual violence reported perpetration by an

<sup>324</sup>Ibid.

<sup>325</sup>Cami Koons and Cody Boston, “Food Fight: How Kansas City Struggles to Feed Its Families,” *Flatland* (blog), December 16, 2021, <https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/food-fight-how-kansas-city-struggles-to-feed-its-families/>.

<sup>326</sup>Ibid.

<sup>327</sup>Ibid.

<sup>328</sup>Giavanna Franklin, “Food Insecurity in Kansas City, MO,” ArcGIS StoryMaps, December 9, 2022, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cfbac04435074c5090e0b5cd259daf3d>.

<sup>329</sup>Statistics | Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV). Accessed April 25, 2024. <https://www.kcsdv.org/learn-more/statistics/>.

<sup>330</sup>The Facts on Reproductive Health and Violence Against Women. Accessed April 29, 2024.

[https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Maternal\\_Health/Reproductive\\_Health\\_FS.pdf](https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Maternal_Health/Reproductive_Health_FS.pdf).

<sup>331</sup>Statistics | Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV). Accessed April 25, 2024.

acquaintance.<sup>332</sup> Women were significantly more likely than men to experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner and report at least one impact related to experiencing these or other forms of violent behavior in the relationship (e.g., psychological aggression, being made to penetrate someone else, sexual coercion).<sup>333</sup> About 98 percent of female rape victims reported only male perpetrators.<sup>334</sup> Female victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking were significantly more likely than male victims to experience fear, concern for safety, need for medical care, injury, need for housing services, and having missed at least one day of work or school.

As for 2022, abortion is ruled illegal in Missouri, with the exception of medical emergencies.<sup>335</sup> 15 percent of young women who experienced forced sex report having an STD as compared with just 7 percent of young women who have not experienced forced sex.<sup>336</sup> 40 percent of pregnant women who have been exposed to abuse report that their pregnancy was unintended compared to just 8 percent of non-abused women.<sup>337</sup> A study of 474 adolescent mothers on public assistance found that 51 percent, and two in three of those who experienced domestic violence at the hands of their boyfriends, experienced some form of birth control sabotage by a dating partner.<sup>338</sup>

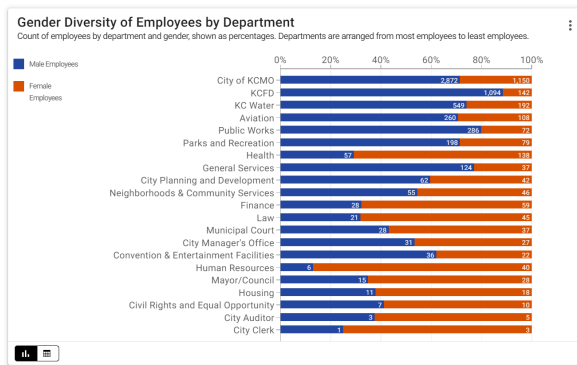


Figure 25: Kansas City, Missouri employment by gender<sup>339</sup>

<https://www.kcsdv.org/learn-more/statistics/>.

<sup>332</sup>Ibid.

<sup>333</sup>Ibid.

<sup>334</sup>The national intimate partner and sexual violence ... - CDC. Accessed April 25, 2024.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>.

<sup>335</sup>Parenthood, Planned. "Abortion in Missouri." Comprehensive Health of Planned Parenthood Great Plains.

Accessed April 25,

2024. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-comprehensive-health-great-plains/abortion-information/one-day-visit>.

<sup>336</sup>"Statistics." Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV). Accessed April 25, 2024.

<https://www.kcsdv.org/learn-more/statistics/#poverty2>.

<sup>337</sup>The Facts on Reproductive Health and Violence Against Women. Accessed April 25, 2024.

[https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Maternal\\_Health/Reproductive\\_Health\\_FS.pdf](https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Maternal_Health/Reproductive_Health_FS.pdf).

<sup>338</sup>"Statistics." Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCSDV). Accessed April 25, 2024.

<https://www.kcsdv.org/learn-more/statistics/#poverty2>.

<sup>339</sup>"City of KCMO Employee Demographics." KC Moniker. Accessed April 29, 2024.

<https://data.kcmo.org/stories/s/City-of-KCMO-Employee-Demographics/ar49-3jbj/>.

Over the last three years, Kansas City, Missouri has received a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Equality Index for support of the LGBTQ+ community. Imije Ninaz, a Kansas City native and founder of the Nafasi TransCare Collective, contested these findings, sharing that the city has been inflated as a progressive “safe haven”<sup>340</sup> while survival sex work and homelessness remain high among Black trans individuals. Lethal violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people also belie the Kansas City government’s claims of a “welcoming, inclusive, and safe place for everyone, including our transgender and LGBTQ+ community.”<sup>341</sup> In December 2023, a few weeks before the City Council amended the Hate Crime Ordinance to include gender identity as a protected class, a 40-year-old Black trans woman was murdered in a Kansas City suburb and later misgendered and dead named in local news outlets.<sup>342</sup>

Since this intersectional inequality has deeply embodied and varied consequences, Rashaan Gilmore, founder and president of BlaqOut, began community-led, participatory research among Kansas City’s Black queer community. It resulted in a comprehensive needs assessment that situated healthcare access as the number one concern among 18-34 year-olds surveyed.<sup>343</sup> Among the 227 Black queer respondents, 87.1 percent affirmed that they had heard about Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), but only 11.5 percent had ever been on PrEP, and 1.4 percent had stayed on it for a year to prevent contraction of HIV.<sup>344</sup> BlaqOut’s decision not to publish the findings of the comprehensive needs assessment is a testament to an extractive and competitive healthcare culture and the enduring risk of being co-opted to access federal funding.<sup>345</sup>



### Clean Water and Sanitation

Kansas City has both a separate and combined sewer system, but the latter is concentrated in the oldest parts of the city.<sup>346</sup> This means that stormwater and sewage combine into one pipe and are released into creeks, streams, or rivers when the pressure exceeds the system’s capacity. After several violations of the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated Kansas City in 2010 to decrease the volume and frequency of waste overflows into local waterways by replacing its 150-year-old sewer system.<sup>347</sup> Brush Creek, a tributary of the Blue

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<sup>340</sup>“Kansas City Declares Itself a LGBTQ+ Sanctuary City.” AP News, May 12, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/lgbtq-sanctuary-city-gender-affirming-care-f253f23b9eefe9ede53d98c7b36f7310>.

<sup>341</sup>Ibid.

<sup>342</sup>Lana Leonard, “Kansas City Council Just Enacted a Hate Crime Ordinance Alleged to Help Protect LGBTQ People in Their Community,” *Glaad*, January 18, 2024, <https://glaad.org/kansas-city-council-just-enacted-a-hate-crime-ordinance-alleged-to-help-protect-lgbtq-people-in-their-community/>.

<sup>343</sup>“D. Rashaan Gilmore.” *BioNexus KC*, February 22, 2023. [https://bionexuskc.org/video\\_blog/d-rashaan-gilmore/](https://bionexuskc.org/video_blog/d-rashaan-gilmore/).

<sup>344</sup>Rashaan Gilmore, Blaqout visit on March 15, 2024

<sup>345</sup>Rashaan Gilmore, Blaqout visit on March 15, 2024

<sup>346</sup>Lisa Rodriguez, “Kansas City Water Customers Are Paying To Finally Update A 100-Year-Old Sewer System,” *KCUR - Kansas City news and NPR*, November 18, 2019, <https://www.kcur.org/science-environment/2019-11-18/kansas-city-water-customers-are-paying-to-finally-update-a-100-year-old-sewer-system>.

<sup>347</sup>Ibid.



River, has been a salient site of political maneuvering, socioeconomic differences, and environmental degradation. In the 1930s, Pendergast’s Ready-Mixed Concrete Company paved Brush Creek under the facade of flood prevention, but devastating floods in 1977 and 1993 sharpened how a “healthy creek [turned] into more of a polluted drainage ditch full of E.coli.”<sup>348</sup> By the 1990s, Brush Creek had the nickname “flush creek” because of ongoing sewage flows and fecal bacteria levels that were 10 to 15 times higher than EPA recommended levels.<sup>349</sup> The allocation of amenities has also been unequally divided between the more affluent west and the eastern portion of the creek. Gondolas are positioned along the Plaza, while trash, debris, and sludge drift on the shallow water toward the east.<sup>350</sup> When it is a particularly hot day, it is not rare to “see thousands of dead fish, regularly killed each year because of the heat and slow-moving currents.”<sup>351</sup> The Missouri Department of Natural Resources even designated the eastern portion of Brush Creek, where it reaches Kansas City’s combined sewer district, as an unclassified body of water—meaning that this part is unprotected under the Clean Water Act, deprived of a monitoring system, and ineligible for federal financial assistance.<sup>352</sup>



## Affordable and Clean Energy

### *Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology*

On average, low-income households pay 7.2 percent of their household income for utilities, more than three times the amount paid by higher-income households (2.3%).<sup>353</sup> This comparison highlights the growing energy challenges faced by the city's most vulnerable populations. For Black households, Kansas City ranks fourth among cities with the greatest energy burden.<sup>354</sup> This is not just a number but represents a persistent inequality where Black households spend a significant portion of their income on energy costs.

In addition to personal energy use, problems associated with industrial production plagued Black communities. Because land costs were relatively low in Black neighborhoods, factory owners preferred to locate their factories around Black neighborhoods in order to reduce land rent.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>348</sup>Karla Deel, “Brush Creek, a Kansas City Pipe Dream,” *SqueezeBoxCity* (blog), June 25, 2015, <http://www.squeezeboxcity.com/brush-creek/>.

<sup>349</sup>Savannah Hawley-Bates, “Brush Creek Is Stinky, Dirty and Poorly Maintained. Can Kansas City Turn It into an Attraction?,” *KCUR - Kansas City news and NPR*, August 17, 2023, <https://www.kcur.org/news/2023-08-17/brush-creek-is-stinky-dirty-and-poorly-maintained-can-kansas-city-turn-it-into-an-attraction>.

<sup>350</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>351</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup>Deel, “Brush Creek, a Kansas City Pipe Dream.”

<sup>353</sup>Report: “Energy burden” on Low-Income, African American, & Latino House. <https://www.aceee.org/press/2016/04/report-energy-burden-low-income>

<sup>354</sup>Report: ‘energy burden’ on low-income, African American, & latino house (2016) ACEEE. Available at: <https://www.aceee.org/press/2016/04/report-energy-burden-low-income> (Accessed: 03 May 2024).

<sup>355</sup>Kansas City among nation’s worst in ‘energy burden’ on low-income families. *The Kansas City Star*. <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article72943387.html>.

These factories' huge demand for energy creates pressure on the electricity supply in the area and leads to an unstable supply for surrounding Black residents. The natural environment of the Black community is also severely damaged by the pollutant emissions from the factories.

### *Increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy production*

Increasing energy efficiency investments can help improve energy affordability for all U.S. households, renters and homeowners alike, which is especially important for Black residents, whose energy burdens are more than three times higher. Reducing energy waste through increased energy efficiency creates more comfortable homes, healthier and more prosperous neighborhoods, and is the fastest and most cost-effective way to reduce the dangerous carbon emissions that fuel climate change.

A shift to cleaner sources of energy, such as solar and wind, would reduce dependence on fossil fuels, thereby reducing their impact on air pollution. At the same time, clean energy technologies such as solar panels and energy-efficient appliances can help reduce energy costs for households and businesses. This is particularly beneficial for low-income Black families who spend a disproportionate amount of their income on energy bills. By embracing clean energy solutions, Black communities can save money on utility expenses and allocate resources to other essential needs such as education, healthcare, and housing.

Kansas City is making huge strides to increase its use of renewable and clean energy. Wind resources grew from generating <1 percent of the state's electricity in 2005 to more than 40 percent today.<sup>356</sup>

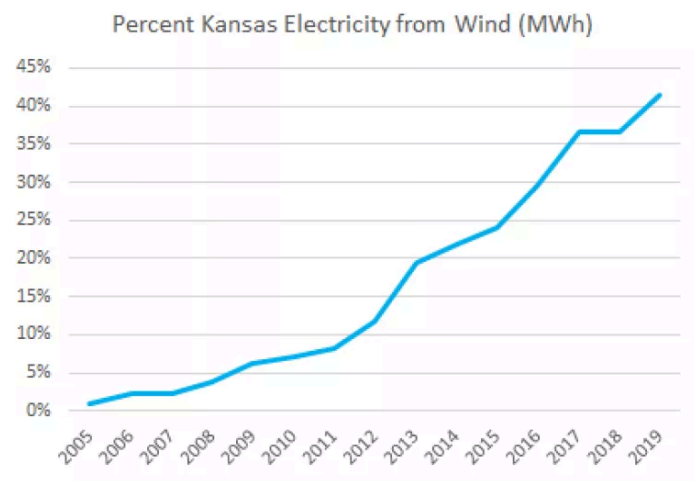


Figure 26: Percent of Electricity from Wind (U.S. Energy Information Administration)<sup>357</sup>

Also, the Kansas City Board of Public Utilities (BPU) actively works on diverse energy generation capacity, increasingly turning to renewable energy sources such as wind, hydropower, landfill gas and solar energy. Today, BPU generates 48 percent of its energy from carbon-free

<sup>356</sup> The Kansas Energy Story—and opportunity. <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/gabrielle-habeeb/kansas-energy-story-and-opportunity>. Published March 15, 2023.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

renewables, exceeding the Kansas Renewable Energy Standard goal of 20 percent and helping BPU become one of the “greenest” utilities in the nation.<sup>358</sup>

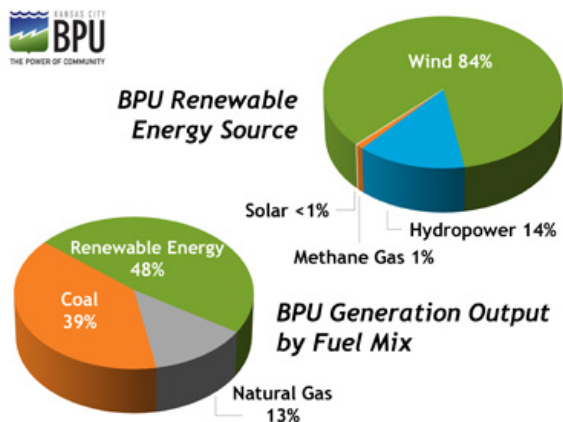


Figure 27: Energy usage proportion in BPU<sup>359</sup>



### Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure

In evaluating Kansas City, Missouri on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, several key factors come to light. Firstly, there has been a notable increase in outstanding small business commercial and industrial loan balances, marking the first year-over-year increase since the first quarter of 2021.<sup>360</sup> Despite this positive trend, new lending has experienced a decline, with a significant drop of 18.1 percent from the same period in 2022.<sup>361</sup> However, the city has seen a rise in new tech sector startups, contributing to job creation. In 2022 alone, these startups generated 1,767 new jobs, with an average of 1,278 new jobs annually from 2018 to 2022.<sup>362</sup> The growing number of startup firms, totaling 9,008 in 2022, demonstrates a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. Moreover, the “We Create Jobs” report highlights the significant role of first-time employers with fewer than 20 employees, who created 19,771 jobs in 2022 alone.<sup>363</sup> Over the period of 2018 to 2022, these startups consistently contributed an average of 17,089 new jobs per

<sup>358</sup>Renewable Energy is a Win-Win for Kansas City, Kansas.  
<https://www.bpu.com/About/MediaNewsReleases/RenewableEnergyisaWin-WinforKansasCity,Kansas.aspx>.

<sup>359</sup>Ibid.

<sup>360</sup>Dustyn DeSpain, Assistant Vice President, and Financial Analyst Lauren Bennett. “Small Business Lending Demand Continues to Decline.” Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, December 20, 2023.  
<https://www.kansascityfed.org/surveys/small-business-lending-survey/small-business-lending-demand-continues-to-decline-december-2023/>.

<sup>361</sup>Ibid.

<sup>362</sup>David Cawthon, KCSourcelink. “KC Is Creating Jobs like Never before; Here’s What’s behind the Surge (Hint: It’s Small Biz Hiring).” Startland News, March 14, 2024.  
<https://www.startlandnews.com/2024/03/we-create-jobs-kcsourcelink/#:~:text=There%20were%209%2C008%20startups%20firms,up%20from%208%2C197%20in%202021.>

<sup>363</sup>Ibid.

year,<sup>364</sup> showcasing their substantial impact on employment. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and small businesses, as emphasized by Michael Carmona of KCSOURCELINK and the UMKC Innovation Center. By enhancing access to resources and support, Kansas City aims to cultivate stronger businesses and drive economic growth.



### Reduced Inequality

Inequality is pervasive in Kansas City. The racial poverty gap between white and Black people is a 16 percent difference, compared to an 11 percent difference in cities across the country.<sup>365</sup> The poverty rate for Black residents of Jackson County is 27 percent, compared to 11 percent for white residents.<sup>366</sup> Research by the city of Kansas City shows that Black residents have the highest poverty rates among races.<sup>367</sup> The unemployment rate for Black residents of Jackson County is 5 percent, compared to 2 percent for white residents.<sup>368</sup> Additionally, the child poverty rate is 13 percent for Black residents and 6 percent for white residents.<sup>369</sup> Research also shows that Black residents have significantly lower homeownership rates. In Missouri as a whole, the median white income is \$58,000 compared to \$36,000 for Black people.<sup>370</sup> In 2021, Kansas City ranked 61 on the income inequality index measured by the Gini coefficient, down seven places from 2018 census data at a score of 0.469.<sup>371</sup> Moreover, Kansas City was ranked 205th on the racial segregation index, with a score of 48 compared to a city average of 35 across the nation.<sup>372</sup>



### Responsible Consumption and Production

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<sup>364</sup> David Cawthon, KCSOURCELINK. “KC Is Creating Jobs like Never before; Here’s What’s behind the Surge (Hint: It’s Small Biz Hiring).” Startland News, March 14, 2024.  
<https://www.startlandnews.com/2024/03/we-create-jobs-kcsourcelink/#:~:text=There%20were%209%2C008%20startups%20firms,up%20from%208%2C197%20in%202021.>

<sup>365</sup> “Measuring Inclusion in America’s Cities.” *Urban Institute*, April 25, 2018.  
[https://apps.urban.org/features/inclusion/index.html?city=kansas\\_city\\_MO](https://apps.urban.org/features/inclusion/index.html?city=kansas_city_MO).

<sup>366</sup> US Census Bureau. 2023.

<sup>367</sup> “Poverty Rate in Kansas City, MO.” 2024. City-Data.Com. March 15, 2024.  
<https://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Kansas-City-Missouri.html>.

<sup>368</sup> US Census Bureau. 2023.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> “Poverty Rate in Kansas City, MO.”

<sup>371</sup> “Income in US Cities Is Most Unevenly Distributed in a Decade.” *City Monitor*, March 23, 2023.  
<https://citymonitor.ai/community/neighbourhoods/us-income-inequality-cities-revealed>.

<sup>372</sup> “Measuring Inclusion in America’s Cities.”

In the average year, the Kansas City metro area generates about 296,000 tons of food waste from residential and commercial sources.<sup>373</sup> The 2018 Missouri Statewide Waste Composition Study stated that of the 760,417 tons of municipal solid waste landfilled in Missouri that year, 15 percent was food waste. In 2021, Missouri Organic Recycling, the largest composting operation in the Kansas City metro area, composted approximately 19,500 tons of food waste.<sup>374</sup> For food service—which includes any place that prepares meals outside the home: restaurants, school and hospital cafeterias, catering operations—this number is 20 percent at the national level, but is higher in Kansas and Missouri at 30 percent.<sup>375</sup> At the lowest level is retail, such as grocery stores and manufacturing, which are at about 7 percent nationally but an average of 8 percent in Missouri and Kansas.<sup>376</sup>

Kansas City is specifically advancing sustainable consumption and production through several initiatives across intergovernmental agencies, task forces, and nongovernmental organizations. Together, they have implemented the 2008 climate change protection plan,<sup>377</sup> the Green and Sustainable Procurement Policy,<sup>378</sup> the Urban Forest Master Plan,<sup>379</sup> and a free downtown Streetcar. The city has also made progress on energy efficiency by installing the 60 - 25 kW solar panel on the rooftops of 58 city buildings.<sup>380</sup> Additionally, through its participation in the Renewables Direct program, Kansas City is able to procure energy for municipal operations through renewable sources. At the same time, the City Council has implemented an efficient and strict recycling program, where it serves to educate and encourage residents' participation in waste management and recycling programs.



### Life Below Water

When Pendergast's Ready-Mixed Concrete Company "laid concrete eight to 10 inches thick and 70 feet wide across the bottom of Brush Creek" in 1935, it "endangered over 40 species of fish ranging from golden redhorse, longear sunfish, northern hog sucker, to the Ozark minnow."<sup>381</sup> The natural ecology of the Missouri River has also been gravely affected by construction,

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<sup>373</sup>The Mid-America Regional Council, "Kansas City Regional Food Loss & Waste Reduction Action Plan" (Kansas City, MO: The Mid-America Regional Council, October 2023), <https://www.marc.org/document/food-waste-action-plan>.

<sup>374</sup> Food waste action plan - Kansas City. Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://www.marc.org/document/food-waste-action-plan>.

<sup>375</sup> "Food Waste Monitor." ReFED. Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?view=overview&year=2019>.

<sup>376</sup> "Food Waste Monitor." ReFED. Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?view=overview&year=2019>.

<sup>377</sup> 2008 Climate Protection Plan, Kansas City, Official website, Accessed April 25, 2024

<sup>378</sup> Sustainability | City of Kansas City | official website. Accessed April 25, 2024.

<https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-manager-s-office/office-of-environmental-quality/sustainability-1186>.

<sup>379</sup> Urban Forest Master Plan, City of Kansas City, Official website, Accessed April 25, 2024

<sup>380</sup> Sustainability | City of Kansas City | official website. Accessed April 25, 2024.

<https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-manager-s-office/office-of-environmental-quality/sustainability-1186>.

<sup>381</sup> Deel, "Brush Creek, a Kansas City Pipe Dream."

damming, and shortening, and the concomitant pollution has reduced commercial fishing harvests by up to 80 percent.<sup>382</sup> The loss of wildlife habitat coupled with the presence of fish tumors and other deformities is evidenced by two examples. In 2007, Bayer CropScience dumped 342 pounds of cancer-causing chemicals into the Missouri River, and two years later, Tyson Fresh Meats received a \$2 million fine for deliberately releasing animal waste into the Missouri River.<sup>383</sup> Industrial and commercial interests have continually superseded the destruction of fish and wildlife populations in Kansas City.



### **Life on Land**

Missouri is at risk of losing its biodiversity and grassland; while the state used to have about 15 million acres of grassland, only 1 percent currently remains, threatening animal populations.<sup>384</sup> The state is engaging in conservation efforts from restoring animal habitats, encouraging fish-friendly streams, caring for grasslands, and planting trees.<sup>385</sup> Kansas City is home to over 221 distributed throughout the city.<sup>386</sup> The city is known for its green space, “abundant trees, and miles of urban hiking,” in close proximity to wildlife conservation areas.<sup>387</sup>



### **Partnerships to Achieve the Goals**

In 2022-2023, Kansas City allocated \$1.3 billion in their city budget.<sup>388</sup> Of that figure, \$542 million went to KCPD, the fire department, and municipal courts.<sup>389</sup> Although Kansas City is required by law to allocate at least 25 percent of the city budget to police, the city exceeded that figure.<sup>390</sup> In the 2023-2024 budget, the city increased their allocation to KCPD by \$36 million.<sup>391</sup> Other funding priorities for the city government included \$40 million towards historic street

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<sup>382</sup>April Jones, “Kansas City, Missouri Water Quality Report,” Epic Water Filters USA, n.d., <https://www.epicwaterfilters.com/blogs/news/kansas-city-missouri-water-quality-report>.

<sup>383</sup>Ibid.

<sup>384</sup>*The Nature Conservancy*. 2023. “Missouri Biodiversity Protection,” January 31, 2023. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/missouri/stories-in-missouri/missouri-biodiversity-protection/>.

<sup>385</sup>Ibid.

<sup>386</sup>Ibid.

<sup>387</sup>Eason, Haines. 2023. “Around Kansas City, You Can Get Close to Nature at These Wildlife Refuges and Conservation Areas.” *KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, November 18, 2023. <https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2023-11-18/kansas-city-parks-nature-wildlife-refuge-conservation-area-hiking-trails-missouri-kansas>.

<sup>388</sup>Celise Calacal, 2023. “Despite Funding Dispute, Kansas City Police Get More Money in Proposed Budget.” *KCUR - Kansas City News and NPR*, February 10, 2023. <https://www.kcur.org/news/2023-02-10/despite-funding-dispute-kansas-city-police-get-more-money-in-proposed-budget>.

<sup>389</sup>Ibid.

<sup>390</sup>Ibid.

<sup>391</sup>Ibid.

resurfacing and infrastructure, \$12.5 million towards the Housing Trust Fund, increased litter cleanup, and \$1 million for tree canopy expansion.<sup>392</sup>

For corporations, Kansas City offers Tax Increment Financing (TIF) that “encourages the development of blighted, substandard, and economically underutilized areas.”<sup>393</sup> It allocates property taxes from new developments towards public infrastructure.<sup>394</sup>

## VI. Reparative Policymaking

The following is an outline of avenues of repair for the harms that have been outlined throughout this paper. These remedies represent both broad and specific approaches to the six key issue areas: health, education, economic development, housing, climate, and the criminal legal system. These suggestions were presented by Black communities through research and interviews. Often, Black communities are already actively promoting and advancing these policies without the institutional backing of the city government.

### *Health*

- Advocate for Missouri policymakers to cover doula services for mothers before, during, and after childbirth as a Medicaid benefit.<sup>395</sup>
  - Collect disaggregated data and monitor outcomes for the following indicators: cesarean sections, birth weights, breastfeeding rates, maternal and infant mortality, and postpartum depression.<sup>396</sup>
- Expand the state budget for community-based doula training to ensure that all Black mothers have access to trauma-informed care that reduces health inequities throughout pregnancy and during the birthing process.<sup>397</sup>
- Advance formal collaboration between the Missouri Community Doula Council and Missouri’s Medicaid agency to design policies and procedures for doula services reimbursement and required training components that value community-based and culturally-responsive knowledge.<sup>398</sup>
- Collaborate with lawmakers to formalize a type of community improvement district that removes, rather than increases, sales taxes in racially segregated neighborhoods for products like diapers, formula, feminine hygiene products, and healthy foods.<sup>399</sup>
- Invest in community-based programs like Mission Vision Project KC that focus on increasing and retaining Black student enrollment in medical programs through

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<sup>392</sup>Celise Calacal, 2023.

<sup>393</sup>“Tax Increment Financing Commission (TIF).” n.d. Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City. <https://edckc.com/agencies/tax-increment-financing-commission-tif/>.

<sup>394</sup>Ibid.

<sup>395</sup>Hegde et al., “The Role of Culturally Congruent Community-Based Doula Services in Improving Key Birth Outcomes in Kansas City.”

<sup>396</sup>Ibid.

<sup>397</sup>Ibid.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid.

<sup>399</sup>Urban League of Greater Kansas City, *2023 State of Black Kansas City: From Redlining to Chalk Lines: The Costs of Economic Injustice*. 149.



mentorship, board test preparation, residency planning, financial guidance, and networks of care.<sup>400</sup>

### *Education*

- Reinforce Afro-centered schools in Kansas City by securing funding and political support. These schools should continue to provide a culturally relevant curriculum and environments that celebrate and integrate the heritage of Black students.
- Address housing issues as they directly impact educational access and quality. Implement policies that ensure affordable, stable housing in areas close to high-quality schools to help mitigate educational disparities linked to socioeconomic status.
- Expand research on reparations and their potential in education to inform policies that could help rectify historical and ongoing inequities in school resources and funding.
- Diversify school types and management to reduce the fragmentation in the Kansas City education system. This could involve better coordination and resource sharing among the 15 different school districts to ensure all have equitable funding and access to quality education.
- Tackle the digital divide by ensuring all students, especially those from minority and low-income families, have access to computers and reliable internet at home. This could involve partnerships with tech companies and community programs to provide the necessary tools.
- Reform disciplinary practices to eliminate biases that disproportionately affect Black students. Training for teachers and administrators should focus on fair and equitable discipline methods.
- Improve teacher quality in schools serving predominantly Black communities by creating incentives for qualified teachers to work there and establishing robust support and training programs to enhance teaching practices.
- Upgrade school facilities to be inclusive, safe, and conducive to learning for all students, focusing on making them child, disability, and gender-sensitive.

### *Economic and Business Development*

- Increase capacity for providing training workshops for Black business owners on business development, marketing, and advertising.
- Protect community-based small-medium businesses from closure through grants and widened marketing channels.
- Economic development projects should also include land ownership and historical reparative measurements.

### *Housing*

- Invest in historically redlined communities by renovating and repairing homes, ensuring clean and beautiful public spaces and streets, promoting access to affordable healthcare, and protecting families from lead exposure.
- Promote local homeownership through KCLB
  - KCLB should provide complete transparency on spending and decisions with the public.

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<sup>400</sup>Garcia, “The Mission Vision Project KC Fuels the Black Physician Pathway from Kindergarten through Medical School.”

- KCLB should adhere to a mandate to sell and revitalize areas that were ‘blighted’ or redlined, including quotas on home sales.
- Include a requirement to buyers to not ‘flip’ the homes and reside for at least 5 years.
- Allocate significant grant funding to buyers to support the ability of families to take on these dilapidated homes. Grants should count positively towards KCLB’s assessment of buyer suitability.
- Lessen requirements for prospective sellers and eliminate application fees.
- City should renovate abandoned homes to provide shelter for unhoused Kansas Citians, under management of qualified non-profit organizations.

### *Climate Action*

- Implement targeted energy efficiency programs in neighborhoods with high energy use intensity (EUI), especially those with significant Black populations. These programs could include upgrading insulation, installing energy-efficient heating systems, and providing energy audits at no or low cost to residents.
- Develop and expand public transportation options to reduce reliance on personal vehicles, aiming to cut down the per capita greenhouse gas emissions in Kansas City. Prioritize electric buses and other low-emission vehicles in these improvements.
- Increase tree planting and green spaces in urban areas to help offset carbon emissions and reduce the urban heat island effect, particularly in neighborhoods prone to higher temperatures.
- Create incentives for homeowners and landlords to retrofit older buildings with energy-efficient technologies. This could include tax rebates, grants, or low-interest loans specifically aimed at improving the energy efficiency of housing in lower-income and minority neighborhoods.
- Educate the community about energy conservation through local workshops and school programs. This education should focus on simple, actionable strategies to reduce energy consumption at home and the long-term benefits of energy efficiency to the environment and personal finances.

### *Criminal Legal System*

- Reestablish city control of the KCPD to promote local agency over decision making and funding
  - The KCPD was established on April 15, 1874 and was brought under local control via a home rule ordinance in 1932
  - 7 years later, in 1939, the Missouri General Assembly passed and Governor Lloyd Stark signed House Bill 688 which repealed Chapter 38, Article 23 of 1929 RSMo §§ 7501-35, thereby granting state control of the police department
  - The actual language that grants state control of KCPD can be found in the Missouri Revisor of Statutes, Title VII (Cities, Towns and Villages), Chapter 84 (Police Departments in St. Louis and Kansas City), §84.030 (Police Commissioners, appointment – term of office – vacancies). This provision reads, in part: “the governor of the state of Missouri, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, shall appoint the four commissioners provided for in section 84.020...”

- One route to regaining local control of KCPD would be to amend or repeal this particular statute
- End the cash bail system to end unnecessary incarceration and retain wealth
- Investigate and fund alternatives to youth incarceration
- Invest in the REACH public safety program, which dedicates investment and resources into housing, health and mental health, jobs and education

### **Systemic Racism and the Role of Reparative Policymaking**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary provides four distinct definitions for the term “racism.” Racism is: “(1) a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; (2) behavior or attitudes that reflect and foster this belief [such as] racial discrimination or prejudice; (3) the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another; and (4) a political or social system founded on racism and designed to execute its principles.”<sup>401</sup> The Merriam-Webster dictionary did not always define racism in this way. In fact, the third definition was added thanks to the activism of Kennedy Mitchum, a woman from Missouri.<sup>402</sup> In the aftermath of the George Floyd murder and the rise of protests against police brutality, Mitchum wrote to the editor of Merriam-Webster and implored the dictionary to update its definition of racism to include the understanding that racism is systemic in nature.

The myriad harms detailed in this paper are the result and manifestation of centuries of systemic racism. This is not a trivial notion. When we discuss reparative policymaking, it is critical that we understand the nature of what we are trying to repair. The system itself is implicated, for it is the system that has both enabled and amplified these harms. In his book *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Richard Rothstein describes how systemic racism led to the disparities and harms that we see in places like Kansas City.

Our system of official segregation was not the result of a single law that consigned African Americans to designated neighborhoods. Rather, scores of racially explicit laws, regulations, and government practices combined to create a nationwide system of urban ghettos, surrounded by white suburbs. Private discrimination also played a role, but it would have been considerably less effective had it not been embraced and reinforced by government.<sup>403</sup>

We can see an example of this in the Missouri State Constitution. In 1945, Article IX, §1 of the Missouri State Constitution read: “[s]eparate schools shall be provided for white and colored children, except in cases otherwise provided for by law.”<sup>404</sup> There were also statutes in place that made it “unlawful for any colored child to attend any white school, or any white child to attend a colored school.”<sup>405</sup> From constitutions to statutes to government regulations and policies, racism

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<sup>401</sup> “Racism Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster. Accessed May 7, 2024.  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>.

<sup>402</sup> Hauser, Christine. “Merriam-Webster Revises ‘racism’ Entry after Missouri Woman Asks for Changes.” *The New York Times*, June 10, 2020.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/us/merriam-webster-racism-definition.html>.

<sup>403</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018), XII.

<sup>404</sup> Pauli Murray, *States’ Laws on Race and Color* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 251.

<sup>405</sup> Murray, *States’ Laws on Race and Color*, 252.

is embedded in our system. Reparative policymaking should be understood with the frame of systemic racism in mind. Truly effective reparative policies not only address and repair the harms caused by the system, they also address and fix the system itself.

### **Mapping the Legislative Landscape**

It is the system of laws, regulations, policies, and government practices that have created the harms that we see in Kansas City. Accordingly, it will take a new system of laws, regulations, policies, and government practices to begin repairing those harms. Legislative can be defined as “having the power to make laws.” As such, in order to effectively implement reparative policies in Kansas City, we must first understand the legislative landscape that is unique to Kansas City.

The American government is divided into three branches – the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. All three branches serve different roles but they all play a part in the policymaking process. The legislative branch is responsible for drafting and passing proposed laws, while the judicial branch is responsible for interpreting the meaning of those laws and applying them to individual cases.<sup>406</sup> While the judicial branch does not explicitly create laws in the same way that the legislative branch does, the rulings of courts have system-wide implications and can function as de facto laws.

As courts decide disputes in individual cases, they create an important by-product beyond peaceful settlements—that is, they develop rules for deciding future cases. The judicial decisions embodying these interpretations then become controlling for future cases, sometimes to the extent that they virtually supplant the legislative enactments themselves. In common-law systems, such decisions are called precedents, and they are rules and policies with just as much authority as a law passed by a legislature. Thus, law is made not only by legislatures but also by the courts.<sup>407</sup>

Thus, in a broad sense, there are two primary paths to policymaking – the legislative path and the judicial path. In order to effectively engage in reparative policymaking, it is critical to understand all policymaking paths. There might be times when it makes more sense to use a judicial strategy to implement reparative policies, and there might be times when it makes more sense to use a legislative strategy. Ultimately, what is important is recognizing that there are many tools in the proverbial toolbox, and the best strategy uses the right tool(s) at the right times. For more information about Kansas City’s legislative landscape, see Appendix I: Policy Environment.

### **Judicial Path**

One path for reparative policymaking is through the judiciary. The judiciary can be broken down into state courts and federal courts. These courts tend to operate separately,

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<sup>406</sup> “Branches of the U.S. Government.” USAGov. Accessed May 8, 2024.  
<https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government>.

<sup>407</sup> “Judicial Lawmaking.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Accessed May 8, 2024.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/court-law/Judicial-lawmaking#ref191256>.

though the boundary between the two is permeable. “[T]here is not an absolute division between the federal and state judicial systems. Sometimes, state courts decide questions of state law and federal courts decide questions of federal law. However, state courts can also hear many types of federal law claims, and there are circumstances in which federal courts apply state law.”<sup>408</sup> The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land with the power to review decisions from lower courts at both the state and federal level. Supreme Court decisions set precedent for all lower courts in the country, a legal principle known as vertical stare decisis.<sup>409</sup>

There have been some cases throughout the history of the United States where reparations were achieved through the courts. For example, in 1870 Henrietta Woods sued her former enslaver for \$20,000 in damages and lost wages, and 8 years later in 1878, Woods won her case and was awarded \$2,500.<sup>410</sup> Woods’ case was not unique, and in fact, there were numerous reparative lawsuits in the 1800s that were referred to as “freedom suits.”<sup>411</sup> Missouri, in particular, has a complicated history regarding these sorts of freedom suits, as highlighted by two cases: *Winnie v. Whitesides*, and the seminal Supreme Court case, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*.

*Winnie v. Whitesides* was decided in the Supreme Court of the State of Missouri, Missouri’s highest court, in 1824 and it established “Missouri’s long-standing precedent of ‘once free, always free’ in determining the outcome of slave freedom suits.”<sup>412</sup> In *Winnie*, a woman by the name of Winny was enslaved by Phoebe Whitesides. In 1795, Whitesides moved from Kentucky to the Indiana Territory. Whitesides brought Winny with her and held her as a slave in the new territory. Whitesides then moved to Missouri where she was sued by Winny. Winny availed herself of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, officially titled “An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North-West of the River Ohio.”

The 1787 Northwest Ordinance “chartered a government for the Northwest Territory, provided a method for admitting new states to the Union from the territory, and listed a bill of rights guaranteed in the territory.”<sup>413</sup> In particular, Article 6 of the ordinance provided that “[t]here shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted...”<sup>414</sup> Winny argued that she was a free woman by virtue of her time living in the free territory, and the court agreed, holding that “[w]e are clearly of opinion

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<sup>408</sup> Lampe, Joanna R., and Laura Deal. “Federal and State Courts: Structure and Interaction.” Congressional Research Service, August 2, 2023. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47641>.

<sup>409</sup> “Stare Decisis.” Legal Information Institute, December 2021. [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/stare\\_decisis](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/stare_decisis).

<sup>410</sup> Hudson, Jacqueline. “Henrietta Wood: The Enslaved Woman Who Sued for (and Won) Reparations.” National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, October 7, 2022. <https://freedomcenter.org/voice/henrietta-wood/>.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> “Missouri State Archives: Guide to African American History.” Missouri Digital Heritage. Accessed May 8, 2024. <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/africanamerican/guide/image600a>.

<sup>413</sup> “Northwest Ordinance (1787).” National Archives and Records Administration, May 10, 2022. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/northwest-ordinance#:~:text=The%20Northwest%20Ordinance%20chartered%20a,rights%20guaranteed%20in%20the%20territory>.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

that if, by a residence in Illinois, the plaintiff in error [Whitesides] lost her right to the property in the defendant [Winny], that right was not revived by a removal of the parties to Missouri.<sup>415</sup> This decision established the legal precedent of “once free, always free” and it triggered the golden age of freedom suits in Missouri from 1824 to 1844.<sup>416</sup> This golden age ended with the infamous *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision.

*Dred Scott v. Sandford* was a Supreme Court case decided in 1857 and it “ended the ability of slaves in Missouri to sue for their freedom based on residence in a free state or territory.”<sup>417</sup> The *Dred Scott* decision blatantly disregarded precedent and it is widely regarded by many legal scholars to be the worst decision ever rendered by the Supreme Court.<sup>418</sup> In fact, the decision was so controversial that it is often cited as one of the factors that led to the Civil War.<sup>419</sup>

In *Dred Scott*, an enslaved Black man named Dred Scott and his wife Harriet sued for their freedom in the St. Louis Circuit Court.<sup>420</sup> In 1836, Scott’s enslaver, an army major by the name of John Emerson, relocated to Fort Snelling, a military post in the territory then known as Upper Louisiana.<sup>421</sup> Emerson bought and enslaved Harriet while at Fort Snelling and Dred Scott and Harriet then married. Dred Scott, Harriet, and their two children Eliza and Lizzie, then lived in this free territory covered by the 1787 Northwest Ordinance until the year 1838 when Emerson relocated them all back to Missouri. Emerson eventually died and Dred Scott and his family attempted to purchase their freedom from Emerson’s widow who inherited his estate. She refused, however, and Dred Scott sued, arguing that they had gained their freedom because they lived in both a free territory and a free state.<sup>422</sup>

The Supreme Court of the State of Missouri denied his claim in 1852 despite the clearly established precedent of “once free, always free” and “what appeared to be a straightforward lawsuit between two private parties became an 11-year legal struggle that culminated in one of the most notorious decisions ever issued by the United States

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<sup>415</sup>Winny v. Whitesides, 1 Mo. 472, 475 (1824).

<sup>416</sup> Missouri Secretary of State - IT. “Before Dred Scott: Freedom Suits in Antebellum Missouri.” Missouri State Archives. Accessed May 8, 2024. [https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/beforedredscott/history\\_freedomsuits#:~:text=An%201807%20Missouri%20territorial%20statute,call%20them%20%22freedom%20suits.%22](https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/beforedredscott/history_freedomsuits#:~:text=An%201807%20Missouri%20territorial%20statute,call%20them%20%22freedom%20suits.%22)

<sup>417</sup> “Missouri State Archives: Guide to African American History.” Missouri Digital Heritage. Accessed May 8, 2024. <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/africanamerican/guide/image600a>.

<sup>418</sup> “Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857).” National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed May 8, 2024. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dred-scott-v-sandford>.

<sup>419</sup> Missouri Secretary of State - IT. “Before Dred Scott: Freedom Suits in Antebellum Missouri.” Missouri State Archives. Accessed May 8, 2024. [https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/beforedredscott/history\\_freedomsuits#:~:text=An%201807%20Missouri%20territorial%20statute,call%20them%20%22freedom%20suits.%22](https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/beforedredscott/history_freedomsuits#:~:text=An%201807%20Missouri%20territorial%20statute,call%20them%20%22freedom%20suits.%22)

<sup>420</sup> “Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857).” National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed May 8, 2024. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dred-scott-v-sandford>.

<sup>421</sup> Dred Scott v. Sandford, 60 U.S. 393 (1857).

<sup>422</sup> Missouri Secretary of State - IT. “Before Dred Scott: Freedom Suits in Antebellum Missouri.” Missouri State Archives. Accessed May 8, 2024. [https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/beforedredscott/history\\_freedomsuits#:~:text=An%201807%20Missouri%20territorial%20statute,call%20them%20%22freedom%20suits.%22](https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/aahi/beforedredscott/history_freedomsuits#:~:text=An%201807%20Missouri%20territorial%20statute,call%20them%20%22freedom%20suits.%22)

Supreme Court.”<sup>423</sup> The case made its way up to the Supreme Court which eventually ruled against Dred Scott. This infamous decision established that “enslaved people were not citizens of the United States and, therefore, could not expect any protection from the federal government or the courts.”<sup>424</sup> The *Dred Scott* decision “was overturned by the 13th and 14th amendments to the Constitution, which abolished slavery and declared all persons born in the United States to be citizens of the United States.”<sup>425</sup>

There are many notable lines from the *Dred Scott* decision. While discussing whether or not Black Americans were considered citizens, Chief Justice Taney wrote in his majority opinion:

[i]t is obvious that they were not even in the minds of the framers of the Constitution when they were conferring special rights and privileges upon the citizens of a State in every other part of the Union. Indeed, when we look to the condition of this race in the several States at the time, it is impossible to believe that these rights and privileges were intended to be extended to them.<sup>426</sup>

Another notable line discusses the limits of judicial power:

It is not the province of the court to decide upon the justice or injustice, the policy or impolicy, of these laws. The decision of that question belonged to the political or law-making power; to those who formed the sovereignty and framed the Constitution. The duty of the court is, to interpret the instrument they have framed, with the best lights we can obtain on the subject, and to administer it as we find it, according to its true intent and meaning when it was adopted.<sup>427</sup>

There are several lessons the reparations movement can draw from *Dred Scott*. First, it can take a long time for a judicial decision to lead to lasting policy changes; *Dred Scott* started at the Missouri state court level and took 11 years to make it to the Supreme Court, and even then the Court ruled against Dred Scott. Second, policy can be established via precedent, but courts sometimes ignore and even overturn precedent. Third, the courts themselves acknowledge their limited capacity to implement policy change, and as such, the legislative path for reparative policymaking can be more direct, quicker, and more effective depending on the circumstances.

### **Legislative Path**

Courts are limited in their ability to actively *create* policy. The judicial path should undoubtedly be considered and used when appropriate, but policy is ultimately the domain of the legislature. As such, when it comes to reparative policymaking, the legislative path is key. Kansas City has a unique legislative environment which grants its residents the ability to more directly influence the policymaking process.

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<sup>423</sup>“Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857).” National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed May 8, 2024. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dred-scott-v-sandford>.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Sandford, 60 U.S. at 411-412.

<sup>427</sup> Sandford, 60 U.S. at 405.



Article V, §501 of the Kansas City Charter establishes that “[t]he Mayor, all members of the Council, the City Manager and the City Manager's assistants, all department directors, and others authorized by the Council may introduce legislation before the Council.” Section 502 establishes that 7 votes are required to pass ordinances and adopt resolutions. However, that is not the only way that legislation can be passed in Kansas City. Article VII, §701 establishes the initiative process. An initiative at the local government level refers to a process by which residents can propose new laws, ordinances, or changes to existing laws directly to the local electorate for approval.<sup>428</sup> Section 701 states:

Any new ordinance or any ordinance to amend or repeal, in whole or in part, any existing ordinance, may be submitted to the Council by petition signed by electors of the City equal in number to at least five per cent (5%) of the total vote cast for candidates for the office of Mayor at the last preceding regular municipal election. Each petition paper shall contain the proposed ordinance in full and all papers for each petition shall be uniform in character.<sup>429</sup>

The Kansas City Charter also establishes referendum powers. A referendum at the local government level is a process through which citizens have the opportunity to vote on a specific issue, policy, or law that has been passed by the local government.<sup>430</sup> Article VII, §710 states in part:

Any ordinance passed by the Council, except ordinances with an accelerated effective date or emergency measures, shall be subject to referendum of the electors. If within forty (40) days after the passage of any such ordinance, and subject to the provisions as to notice required by section 503(b)(2) of this charter, a petition signed by electors equal in number to at least ten per cent (10%) of the total vote cast for candidates for the office of Mayor at the last preceding regular municipal election be filed with the City Clerk, requesting that the ordinance or any part thereof be repealed or submitted to a vote of the electors, it shall not take effect until the steps herein indicated have been taken.<sup>431</sup>

The last mayoral election was held on June 20, 2023. Incumbent Quinton Lucas defeated challenger Clay Chastain. In all, 41,166 people voted in the election.<sup>432</sup> Accordingly, in order to propose a new ordinance, to amend an ordinance, or to repeal an ordinance, via the initiative process established in Article VII, §701, a petition containing the full text of the ordinance must receive 2,059 signatures. In order to request that an ordinance, or any part of an ordinance, be repealed or submitted to a vote, a petition containing the text of the portion of the section of the ordinance that is to be repealed, must receive 4,117 signatures. These numbers are, necessarily, subject to change. The important takeaway, though, is that there are several different routes that can be used to pass reparative policies.

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<sup>428</sup>“Ballot Initiative.” Ballotpedia. Accessed May 8, 2024. [https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot\\_initiative](https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot_initiative).

<sup>429</sup> Kansas City Charter, Art. VII, §701.

<sup>430</sup>“Referendum.” Ballotpedia. Accessed May 8, 2024. <https://ballotpedia.org/Referendum>.

<sup>431</sup> Kansas City Charter, Art. VII, §710.

<sup>432</sup>“Mayoral Election in Kansas City, Missouri (2023).” Ballotpedia. Accessed May 8, 2024. [https://ballotpedia.org/Mayoral\\_election\\_in\\_Kansas\\_City,\\_Missouri\\_\(2023\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Mayoral_election_in_Kansas_City,_Missouri_(2023)).

In his book titled *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century*, Amos Wilson writes: “[t]o be organized is to be structured; to assume and operate according to a discernable pattern. Organizations systematically channel and distribute energy or force along definite pathways in order to achieve some definite outcome.”<sup>433</sup> There are numerous different organizations in Kansas City that are pushing the reparations movement forward and laying the groundwork for effective and sustainable repair. As such, having clearly defined pathways for these organizations to more directly engage with the policymaking process will only serve to amplify their work. Wilson expands upon the idea of organization and introduces the concept of social organizations and power networks.

A social organization is composed of two or more persons or groups of persons, each of whom, operating under centralized human control or direction, plays a more or less specialized role; each behaving as a component part of the organized whole and whose active output is channeled and coordinated in some special way in order to perform work and achieve definite outcomes... Since a social organization wields influence, brings about changes, i.e., *does work*, it may be said to express *power*. The dynamic pattern of social relations or interactions between the members of a social organization, provides the means by which it does its work or expresses its power. This may be said to represent a *power network*.<sup>434</sup>

Thus, while the actual reparative policy advanced will be specific to the particular situation and harm being addressed, a ubiquitous requirement for reparative policymaking is *power*, and more specifically, the power to pass policy. To the extent that these Kansas City organizations already coordinate, it would be helpful to explicitly form a power network in the sense that Wilson describes. The Kansas City Charter establishes that any resident can propose a law to be voted on so long as they get 2,059 signatures on a petition, or 5% of the 41,166 people that voted in last year’s mayoral election. If these organizations combined their contact lists and were able to reach that threshold, they will have gained the power to propose any and all reparative policies that they create. Following this logic, as the size of the power network grows, these organizations can also gain the power to pass said policies by mobilizing their base when the policy comes to a vote.

## Conclusion

This Capstone project was intended to measure the well-being of the Afro-descendent population in Kansas City, Missouri through the lens of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Through desk research, interviews, and thorough engagement with the local community, students developed an analysis of the historical harms that targeted Black communities for disinvestment, displacement, and violence. Throughlines were connected from historical policies, practices, and systems to present-day realities for Kansas City’s Black communities in six key issue areas: health, education, economic development, housing, environment, and the criminal legal system. The report demonstrated systematic disenfranchisement of Black communities perpetuated by the city of Kansas City, leading to poor health outcomes, poverty, and substandard education.

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<sup>433</sup> Wilson, Amos N. “Bases of Power: Organization and Ethnic Resources.” Essay. In *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century*, 36–37. New York, New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1998.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

These outcomes can be directly traced to policies of urban renewal, redlining, and racism towards Kansas City’s Black communities.

In other audit reports, cities may be given a ‘grade’ that indicates the extent to which they adhere to human rights standards for Black residents. Given the lack of disaggregated, quantitative data, this project relied heavily on first-person accounts and qualitative interviews to drive the research. Therefore, providing a grade to the city’s ‘score’ for human rights could be interpreted as subjective. However, as indicated by this analysis, Kansas City’s fulfillment of human rights standards along these 17 dimensions is poor. Both qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated that Black people fare worse than white people and other races on most indicators of wellbeing, and fare worse than baseline international standards of wellbeing.

The recommendations put forward are a starting point for communities to consider the many avenues for enriching Black communities and beginning to repair from both historic and contemporary harms. These recommendations were directly informed by the historic and contemporary policies that contributed to present-day inequalities. Moreover, these recommendations were informed by, and created in collaboration with, Black communities in Kansas City that are presently filling in the gaps left by racist and neglectful institutions.

### **Appendix I: Policy Environment**

Kansas City is a major city in Missouri spanning portions of Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte counties. The city's population was 508,090 as of 2020, according to the United States Census Bureau. The city of Kansas City utilizes a council-manager system. In this form of municipal government, an elected city council—which includes the mayor and serves as the city's primary legislative body—appoints a chief executive called a city manager to oversee day-to-day municipal operations and implement the council's policy and legislative initiatives.<sup>435</sup> The Mayor, Quinton Lucas, assumed office on August 1, 2019. He successfully ran for re-election on June 20, 2023, and his current term ends on July 31, 2027.

The establishing document of the federal government is the Constitution. Similarly, States have constitutions that outline the structure of government at the state level, the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the state, and other important foundational concepts. At the local government level, the founding documents are often called charters. “Municipal charters must be authorized by state law, which forty-four states do.”<sup>436</sup>

#### *Home Rule*

Article 1, §102 of the Kansas City Charter establishes that Kansas City has home rule powers. “Home Rule provisions often state that local powers are to be ‘liberally construed.’”<sup>437</sup> Though Home Rule varies widely from state to state, generally speaking, there are two concepts that are established by home rule: (1) local governments can take action on various different and important issues without having to go to the state for specific authorization, and (2) local

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<sup>435</sup>“Kansas City, Missouri,” Ballotpedia, n.d., <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/bhErl/1/>.

<sup>436</sup>Laurie Reynolds et al., *Cases and Materials on State and Local Government Law*, 9th Edition (West Academic Publishing, 2022). 116-117.

<sup>437</sup>Ibid.

government decisions concerning these important local issues are protected from displacement by state law.

## **Appendix II: Reparations Commission & Coalition**

The Mayor's Commission on Reparations is a product of the organizing efforts of several different organizations in Kansas City, namely the National Black United Front - Kansas City (NBUF-KC), and an organization whose work, in part, grew out of NBUF-KC,<sup>438</sup> the Kansas City Reparations Coalition (KCRC).<sup>439</sup> Mickey Dean, founder of KCRC,<sup>440</sup> traced the history of the Mayor's Commission on Reparations to three major events. The first major event was in June 2014 when Ta-Nehisi Coates published his seminal work, "The Case for Reparations" in *The Atlantic*.<sup>441</sup> According to Dean, this article really brought the conversation around reparations to the forefront again. The second boost was during the 2020 presidential election where several candidates said that they would not only support reparations, but that they would additionally support H.R. 40, a congressional bill that would establish a commission to study and develop reparations proposals.<sup>442</sup> The third event that really sparked the local reparations movement in Kansas City was the murder of George Floyd. "It was in the aftermath of [the murder of George Floyd] that we started a local reparations movement here in Kansas City and developed our Kansas City Reparations Coalition. We've really been trying to push this issue of reparations locally since that time and we're gradually having success. We're getting more and more people asking about reparations. We're getting more and more groups asking us to do presentations on reparations. So, we've got a ways to go, but the movement is taking off here locally."<sup>443</sup>

KCRC officially launched in November 2020 "as a grassroots community group dedicated to ensuring local reparations in Kansas City, Missouri."<sup>444</sup> In that same year, KCRC submitted the first reparations proposal to the City Council.<sup>445</sup> The efforts of KCRC coincided with S. 475, a congressional bill signed by President Biden on June 17, 2021 that declared Juneteenth National Independence Day as a legal public holiday.<sup>446</sup> Just a day later, Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas pledged reparations for Black residents of Kansas City by announcing that he was joining

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<sup>438</sup>Sanchez, Mary. "KC Reparations Commission Expects to Get More Time, Money." Flatland, January 24, 2024. <https://flatlandkc.org/news-issues/kc-reparations-commission-expects-to-get-more-time-money/>.

<sup>439</sup>KC Reparations Coalition. KC Reparations Coalition. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://kcreparationscoalition.com/>.

<sup>440</sup>Brooks, Lawrence. "Kansas City Officially Begins a 'transformative' Effort to Study Reparations for Black Residents." KCUR, May 24, 2023. <https://www.kcur.org/news/2023-05-24/kansas-city-officially-begins-a-transformative-effort-to-study-reparations-for-black-residents>.

<sup>441</sup>Mickey Dean. *What's Up Kansas City?* Youtube, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WARIP9RbvCY&t=74s>.

<sup>442</sup>Congress.gov. "H.R.40 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act." June 19, 2019. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/40>.

<sup>443</sup>Mickey Dean. *What's Up Kansas City?* Youtube, 2022. <https://youtu.be/WARIP9RbvCY?si=FZ3KFCV9PxTCuHZi&t=129>

<sup>444</sup>KC Reparations Coalition. KC Reparations Coalition. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://kcreparationscoalition.com/>.

<sup>445</sup>Brooks, Lawrence. "Kansas City Officially Begins a 'transformative' Effort to Study Reparations for Black Residents." KCUR, May 24, 2023.

<sup>446</sup>"Bill Signed: S. 475." *The White House*, June 17, 2021. Briefing Room. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/legislation/2021/06/17/bill-signed-s-475/#:~:text=On%20Thursday%2C%20June%2017%2C%202021,as%20a%20legal%20public%20holiday>.

Mayors Organized for Reparations and Equity (MORE), a national committee of 11 mayors “committed to paying reparations to Black residents in their community and modeling how future federal programs might work.”<sup>447</sup>

On October 27, 2022, Council Member Melissa Robinson sponsored a bill titled: “*Expressing apologies on behalf of the City of Kansas City and declaring the City’s intent to make amends for its participation in the sanctioning of the enslavement of Black people and any historical enforcement of segregation and accompanying discriminatory practices against Black citizens of Kansas City, encouraging others to join the City in this effort, and establishing a commission within ninety days to be known as the Mayor’s Commission on Reparations to advise the City regarding repatriation issues.*” The bill was referred to the Special Committee for Legal Review and was due back to the Council on November 1, 2022. The bill ultimately passed a vote in the City Council on January 12, 2023.<sup>448</sup>

On May 1, 2023, Mayor Quinton Lucas announced the appointment of the Mayor’s Commission on Reparations to study and make recommendations to the city on reparatory justice for past harm and discriminatory practices against Kansas City’s Black community. In announcing the Commission, Mayor Lucas said, “Building a better community for all requires our City to address past wrongs, ongoing patterns of discrimination, and tools by which we may create equal opportunity for all Kansas Citians. I thank the members of the Mayor’s Commission on Reparations for engaging in the important review and work essential in providing a template for City Council, Kansas City businesses, and our entire community for how we can support long-term equitable growth for all parts of Greater Kansas City.”<sup>449</sup>

The ordinance initially established a 17-member commission, but it was amended before passing and the final number was set to 13.<sup>450</sup> The 13 members are appointed by the Mayor and the ordinance establishes that: “[t]he Commission should include members who understand and are sensitive to the needs of the Black community.” The Commission meets the 4th Tuesday of each month and during the Commission’s regular meetings, Commissioners will discuss proposed solutions and provide space for public comments from any member of the public as well. Each commissioner serves on an impact area subcommittee and subcommittees meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.<sup>451</sup> The schedule for the subcommittees is as follows:

- Healthcare – 2nd Tuesday of each month
- Education – 2nd Wednesday of each month
- Housing – 3rd Tuesday of each month
- Economics – 2nd Tuesday of each month at 3 p.m.
- Criminal Justice - TBD

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<sup>447</sup>Martin, Jacob. “Mayor Lucas Joins Coalition to Bring Reparations to Black Kansas Citians.” The Pitch, June 21, 2021.

<https://www.thepitchkc.com/mayor-lucas-joins-coalition-to-bring-reparations-to-black-kansas-citians/>.

<sup>448</sup>Granicus, Inc. Kansas City - file #: 220966. Accessed February 2, 2024.

<https://clerk.kcmo.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5899573&GUID=DD38FE77-2A96-4BDF-A3A8-48F43E5ACD2F&Options=&Search=>.

<sup>449</sup>“Mayor’s Commission on Reparations,” City of Kansas City, n.d., <https://www.kcmo.gov/programs-initiatives/reparations>.

<sup>450</sup>Ibid.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid.

According to the Docket Memo submitted along with Ordinance 220966, the legislation was not included in the adopted budget, it is not supported by the general fund, and there was no specific funding source. Regarding funding, §3(D) of the ordinance establishes that: “*At the request of the Commission*, and subject to appropriation and the fiscal, budgetary, and civil service provisions of the Charter and all applicable rules regarding competitive selection, including the Standing Rules of Kansas City Boards and Commissions, the Mayor's Committee on Reparations may retain internal or external administrative support with appropriate expertise to assist the Commission in its development of the draft and final Kansas City Reparations Plans.”<sup>452</sup>

### *Kansas City Reparation Commission*

Size:

13 Members

Term Length:

18 Months (May 02, 2023 to Nov 02, 2024)

Point Person Contact Information:

816.513.3500

Alphia.Curry@kcmo.org

Member Roster:

Will Bowles

Aija Morris

Dr. Bridgette Jones

Kelli Hearn

Kenneth Ford

Terri Barnes

Frederick Fritz Riesmeyer

Linwood Tauheed

Cornell Ellis

Danise Hartsfield

Ryan Sorrell

Dionne King

Madison Lyman

### **Appendix III: Relevant Policies**

Excerpt from Ordinance No. 220966 Establishing the Mayor’s Commission on Reparations<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>452</sup>Granicus, Inc. Kansas City - file #: 220966. Accessed February 2, 2024.

<https://clerk.kcmo.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5899573&GUID=DD38FE77-2A96-4BDF-A3A8-48F43E5ACD2F&Options=&Search=&FullText=1>

<sup>453</sup>Melissa Robinson and Ryana Parks-Shaw, “ORDINANCE NO. 220966” (2023),

<https://kansascity.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5899573&GUID=DD38FE77-2A96-4BDF-A3A8-48F43E5ACD2F&FullText=1>.

Section 1. That the City of Kansas City apologizes and commits to make amends for its participation in the sanctioning of the enslavement of Black people and any historical enforcement of segregation and accompanying discriminatory practices against the Black citizens of Kansas City.

Section 2. That the City of Kansas City encourages other organizations and institutions in Kansas City, that have advanced and benefited from racial inequity to join the City in its apology and to develop their own procedures for reparatory justice.

Section 3. That the City of Kansas City establishes a commission to be known as the Mayor's Commission on Reparations to advise the City regarding reparation issues as follows:

- A. *Establishment.* There is hereby established a commission to be known as the Mayor's Commission on Reparations.
- B. *Purpose and Duties.* The Commission will study and develop reparations proposals for the City's review. Proposals should focus on five impact areas, including housing (homeownership and affordable housing), economic development, health, education, and criminal justice.
- C. *Commission Membership; Terms.* The Commission will be comprised of thirteen (13) members appointed by the Mayor. The Commission should include members who understand and are sensitive to the needs of the Black community. Commissioners shall be appointed for the duration of the Commission's existence. Any vacancy on the Commission will be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.
- D. *Staff Support.* At the request of the Commission, and subject to appropriation and the fiscal, budgetary, and civil service provisions of the Charter and all applicable rules regarding competitive selection, including the Standing Rules of Kansas City Boards and Commissions, the Mayor's Committee on Reparations may retain internal or external administrative support with appropriate expertise to assist the Commission in its development of the draft and final Kansas City Reparations Plans.
- E. *Reports.* The Commission will issue a preliminary report of its findings within one year of its inaugural meeting and a final report will be issued within six (6) months thereafter.

Section 4. That the Mayor's Commission on Reparations is to be established within ninety (90) days of the Effective Date of this Ordinance.