

# KC's Line Creek Forest

## Does the area master plan support preservation?

*Details of the Line Creek Area Master Plans from 2008 & 2011 relevant to this property.*

Over the past 42 years, the City of Kansas City Missouri and the Community has spent thousands of hours creating Line Creek Valley Area Plans. The 1976 Area Plan was revised in 2008 and then revised again in 2011. The 2008 Area Plan put a \$59,000,000 price tag on the public infrastructure improvements that would be necessary in the ~2,800 acre Line Creek Valley.

The 2011 Area Plan, focused only on development of the area, now purports to serve as both the vision and the framework for long-range public policy decisions and as the policy document for the area.

### **WOODLAND PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP ACCORDING TO THE LINE CREEK AREA MASTER PLAN**

- Over the last four decades, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people intimately familiar with the Valley contributed to the Area Plans and those plans were based upon the values and guiding principles identified by the Community during the planning process. There was an emphasis on environmental stewardship and natural resource protection throughout the process.
  - Citizens expressed a great deal of pride in their community, citing its convenient access to other parts of the city, its natural beauty and “local” feel. (p. 5)
  - Future development will emphasize stormwater detention and flood control/ mitigation approaches which **enhance environmental stewardship and natural resource preservation** according to the goals and objectives of the City’s Wet Weather Solutions Program. (p. 7)
  - Open Space/Buffer: Consists of private or public lands that are in some way either temporarily or permanently reserved from development ... This includes but is not limited to creeks and stream buffers, floodplains,

woodlands, severe slopes, and buffer zones around natural resources (areas difficult for development due to topography, hydrology, aged woodlands, archeological findings, etc. (p. 9)

- All new development should attempt to achieve harmony with the natural environment by **preserving existing, healthy, attractive plant materials of significant size**. (p. 14)
- **Retain the natural and visual character derived from topography, woodlands, streams, and riparian corridors**. Hills and natural slopes should be preserved and excessive cuts and fills should be avoided. (p. 16)
- Provide greenway corridors to preserve natural drainage areas, floodplains, slopes over 15% and wooded areas. (p. 16)
- Views of rivers and natural features should be preserved and integrated into developments. Complete removal of trees to create views is discouraged. (p. 16)
- Streets should follow natural contours to minimize the impact on the natural terrain. (p. 18)
- Plan and construct roadway projects that harmonize with natural systems by respecting topography and natural resources. Drainage facilities should be improved using “green infrastructure” and other Best Management Practices while enhancing visual quality of the public streetscape. (p. 43)
- Future development in the planning area should be designed to respect the natural environment and coexist in harmony with existing natural features. **Development planning should attempt to avoid engineering techniques, such as significant cut and fill to force-fit development into the environment**. Instead, natural physical features should be incorporated into the overall development design, with drainage areas and other natural features left in their natural state. (p. 63)
- The identification and preservation of traditional cultural sites in areas with development potential have become a priority to many residents and Native American groups in the area. **Given the likelihood of cultural**

**sites in the Line Creek Valley a cultural resources survey (106, Assessment Study) should be conducted and an archeological mitigation plan developed in accordance with federal laws.**

- When ground disturbing public infrastructure projects is not federally funded, the city should identify the presence of cultural resources and minimize the impact of the project on any resources that are present. Such survey(s) and mitigation plan(s) may need to occur prior to or concurrent with future development plan applications or preliminary engineering for public infrastructure improvements such as roadway projects. (p. 73)
- Each of the Area Plans recognized major challenges to development in the Valley: storm-water, unique terrain, steep slopes, rocky soils, wetlands, floodplains, cultural resources, mature woodlands, lack of adequate drainage structures, limited public street rights-of-way, and a disconnected or non-existent east to west road network which make it difficult to provide basic city infrastructure and therefore, developable parcels. **Even the Oct. 16 2018 Staff Report says of the property, “The site is heavily wooded with challenging topography.”**
- City of Kansas City Missouri City Development Dept. Planner Robert V. Hurst, the author of the 1976 Area Plan, foresaw that some developers may only see a lot of land to develop and advised, “This information (the Area Plan) assures the **cautious developer** the opportunity to evaluate potential development space as opposed to mere land area.” (underline added)
- The 2011 Area Plan dictates:
  - “That future development in the planning area should be designed to respect the natural environment and **coexist in harmony** with existing natural features.”
  - “That development planning should attempt to **avoid engineering techniques, such as significant cut and fill to force-fit development into the environment.** Instead, natural physical features should be incorporated into the overall development design, with drainage areas and other natural features left in their natural state.”

- “That all new development should **attempt to achieve harmony with the natural environment by preserving existing, healthy, attractive plant materials of significant size.**”
- **“And to retain the natural and visual character derived from topography, woodlands, streams, and riparian corridors. Hills and natural slopes should be preserved and excessive cuts and fills should be avoided.**
- The 2011 Area Plan also recommended that **“...a planning leadership group be formed, hereafter referred to as the Line Creek Area Plan Oversight Committee.** This community-based committee should include interested citizens, neighborhood organizations, business owners, agencies, and other community organizations. The Committee should be formed following the adoption of the Plan by the City Council, with citizens and community leaders taking the lead to form the Committee and determine its roles, responsibilities and functions.” **The Oversight Committee was never formed.** (see 2011 Area Plan, p. 71).
- **The 2011 Area Plan also recommended, “The creation of a Woodland Protection Ordinance that focuses on the benefits of maintaining woodland areas relating to potential energy savings, air quality, water quality, noise pollution mitigation, screening, preservation of natural habitat, conservation of an area’s natural aesthetics and economic benefits.”** Unfortunately, the **City of Kansas City has not yet created a Woodland Protection Ordinance.** If one had existed, it could have better instructed the City Plan Commission and the Board of Zoning Adjustment in this matter.
- Pg. 64 – “Given the likelihood of cultural sites in the Line Creek Valley **a cultural resources survey** (106, Assessment Study) **should be conducted** and an archeological mitigation plan developed in accordance with federal laws.”
- The 2011 Area Plan also recommended **“...that tree surveys should be requested with all development applications.** Applicants may voluntarily submit tree surveys and/or identify trees to be preserved with development. The tree surveys will identify trees to be preserved as well as mitigation measures for these trees over 10 inches in caliper that are to be removed by construction. Such mitigation may include planting a similar species of trees and should involve working with the City Forester. (see 2011 Area Plan, 64) **Applicant has never indicated that it has conducted a tree survey.**

- And page 16 said regarding environmental and stormwater management: “Provide greenway corridors to preserve natural drainage areas, floodplains, slopes over 15% and wooded areas.”
- Side note: Mid-America's Regional Council report on nature in KC: “Our region’s urban forest is a valuable resource; by responsibly maintaining and growing trees throughout Greater Kansas City, we can all enjoy the benefits of a healthy environment and a high quality of life.”



### LINE CREEK PARKWAY & TRAFFIC NEEDS ACCORDING TO THE LINE CREEK AREA MASTER PLAN

The master plan makes multiple references to the area as having an "excellent north to south arterial and collection street network" and in 5 places states that the area **lacks in east to west streets.**

- The Area Plan Steering Committee “recommended that opportunities exist, due to the constraints of the valley; floodplain, severe slopes, woodlands and the location of specimen trees, preservation of natural resources, rock, future rapid transit corridor, traffic study, and Native American artifacts, should be considered to study alternatives for a 4-lane divided Parkway **and preserve the valley.**” (page 51)
- “Encouragement of targeted mixed use/pedestrian friendly development that is designed to promote safety and provide an enhanced community feel.” (Pg. 5)

- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Guidelines*: “Provide pedestrian walkways/sidewalks which connect primary building entry to the street sidewalk **by the most direct route**” (Pg. 17)
- “Neighborhood trail connectors are conceptual alignments of 8-foot wide local connections from the citywide trails corridors (Trails KC) leading primarily to parks and greenways.” (Pg. 47)
- A map which includes a "Neighborhood Trail Connection" extending from the Line Creek Trail near 72nd and running northeast along the stream up to the corner of Coventry Ave. and 76th. (Pg. 48)

**Also noted in the Line Creek Area Master Plan:**

**The area already has plenty north-to-south roadways.**

This is mentioned on page 1 as quote “The area benefits from an excellent network of north to south arterial streets” and again on page 39. Additionally, Green Hills has recently been slated for additional improvements. On page 41, a guiding principle was adopted to “Coordinate roadway improvements projects”

**It is repeatedly mentioned in the Area Plan that the area is lacking in east to west connector roads.**

On page 18, the Site Planning Guidelines say to “Continue streets through to as many neighborhoods as possible and allow for future connections where topography permits. ... New developments should connect to streets in adjacent developments.”

Page 51 speaks directly to this location, stating that quote “Due to the challenging terrain, the existing east-west street network is limited and there are no existing east-west street connections between NW 68th Street and NW Barry Road. Future street connectivity will be enhanced by providing the extension of arterial roadways including NW 72nd Street, NW 76th Street, and NW 79th Street.”

It is also mentioned that “Citizens saw the preservation of existing and of creation of new east to west corridors as vital to the area.”

## **RECOMMENDATION TO STUDY ALTERNATIVES TO PARKWAY & PRESERVE THE VALLEY**

The Area Plan Steering Committee “recommended that opportunities exist, due to the constraints of the valley; floodplain, severe slopes, woodlands and the location of specimen trees, preservation of natural resources, rock, future rapid transit corridor, traffic study, and Native American artifacts, should be considered to study alternatives for a 4-lane divided Parkway **and preserve the valley.**” (page 51)

In order to provide a sustainable community and a unique sense of place, we should: **“Conduct an Alignment Study And Preliminary Engineering Design Study for the remaining phases of Green Hills Road and Line Creek Parkway to determine the most suitable and feasible opportunities to complete this corridor.”** (page 43)’

*Note regarding the Applicant’s/ developers traffic study, which states, “Additional access points to N. Coventry Avenue were evaluated, but due to the proposed initial building size, only one point is required for emergency access. Furthermore, the Park Hill School District desires to maintain a natural wooded setting with access limited to the Parkway.”*

## **ADDITIONAL RELEVANT NOTES FROM THE LINE CREEK AREA MASTER PLAN**

Pg. 5 – Guiding Principles: “Promote and incentivize development that ... **redevelops the areas existing underperforming properties.**”

Pg. 5 – Guiding Principles: “New development should be prioritized within infill areas or areas that are contiguous to existing development **to utilize existing infrastructure.**”

Pg. 51 – “must consider issues that play a significant role in its ultimate design ... (such as) Woodlands and the location of specimen trees. Slopes and topography”

(pertaining to the driveway leading from the school to the Parkway)

Pg. 13 – “Quality Places Guideline ... characteristics will be achieved by implementing ... development that preserves or creates open space, respects existing topography, and minimizes the impact of development on the natural environment.”

On page 13, The Quality Places Guideline states that quote “characteristics will be achieved by implementing ... New ... development (that) uses existing infrastructure effectively”

Pg. 16 – Environmental and Stormwater Management: “excessive cuts and fills should be avoided”

Pg. 51 – “The actual alignment of the roadways must consider issues such as slopes, floodplain, cultural resources, and mature woodland areas through the design and development application review process.”

This is especially vital because, the master plan says “Portions of the Plan Area lacks streets that are improved to City standard ... Such streets need to be improved to include street curbs and piped stormwater systems or improved with an alternative “green infrastructure” solutions approach with ribbon curbs and gentle ditches, swales, and channels. “ (page 59)