



April 18, 2006

Dear Members of the Planning Group for The Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity:

It has truly been the privilege of the staff of Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change to have interviewed each of you. We are grateful for the time and thoughtfulness that you dedicated to the interview process.

In preparation for our meeting on April 25th, we are sending you a report of the interviews that we conducted with each of the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity Planning Group members. **Please review the report in advance of the meeting.** We also hope that you will have reviewed the two publications that we forwarded in March: *Structural Racism and Community Building* and *Time to Get It Right: A Strategy for Higher Education in Kansas City*. We ask that you pay particular attention to the report on the interviews, because soliciting your feedback will be an agenda item at the planning meeting on April 25th.

Along with the report, please find:

- Directions to Diastole
- The meeting agenda
- The list of Planning Group members
- Information about the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change and our staff.

Please reply to this message so we are sure that you have received it.

We have planned a full day of interesting and intensive work. Please wear comfortable clothes. Breakfast and lunch will be served. Please send any feedback or questions you may have to Gretchen at gretchens@aspenroundtable.org. All of us look forward to meeting you next Tuesday.

Sincerely,

The Staff of the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (*Andrea Anderson, Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Anne Kubisch, Keith Lawrence, and Gretchen Susi*)

The Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity

Report on Interviews with Planning Group Members

Draft Date, April 19th, 2006

Introduction

In Kansas City, as in the majority of American cities, the route that awaits many young people—and especially youth of color—bears more resemblance to an obstacle course than a clear and supportive pathway through early life that will prepare them to grow, learn, and fulfill their potential. The Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity is a new initiative being set into motion in order to change the opportunity landscape in Kansas City so that it offers more and better opportunities and produces positive outcomes for children and youth.

The following report is an effort to represent the collective voice of the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity Planning Group (hereafter, the Planning Group) members based on the interviews we conducted. We see it as the first step toward a strategic plan for the KCRT. We hope that you will recognize your ideas, observations and concerns on these pages.* If there are other issues that you would like to include, please let us know.

We begin with a few words on the evolution and mission of the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity. We then present the findings from the interviews, and then conclude with some observations about the key themes and some recommendations for moving forward.

Roots of the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity

The Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity is a direct response to the recommendations made in *Time to Get It Right: A Strategy for Higher Education in Kansas City*. It is a part of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation's effort to

* There are some Planning Group members who will not be able to attend the meeting of the Planning Group on April 25th, but who were interviewed for this report. Also, we were not able to schedule interviews with *all* Planning Group members before the report was completed. Those interviews conducted later will be included in the final draft of the report, which will be distributed at the Planning Group meeting on April 25, 2006.

create a strong urban education strategy—from preschool to graduate school—to ensure that the diverse population of Kansas City has access and opportunities in the new economy.

A core element of the KCRT strategy is a concerted effort to address the role that race plays in efforts to improve the education and employment systems in Kansas City. Both research and experience suggest that racial dynamics must be acknowledged and addressed in order for equitable policies and practices to be put into place. Otherwise, the structured and systemic nature of racial dynamics will continue to undermine efforts of those of good will, and promising initiatives will address only part of the equity agenda.

Effecting change of this magnitude is, undeniably, a tremendous undertaking. But the power of influential actors in civil society to set a new agenda of opportunity and equity for a community is undeniable. As noted scholars of urban reform—particularly education reform—have noted,

Bringing about systemic education reform is like kicking a stone uphill: A swift swing of a strong leg is enough to get it going, but keeping it going may call for something else entirely. Our analysis suggests that a necessary, if not fully sufficient, condition is the development of local civic capacity, including an ability to frame issues so that they present a series of winnable challenges, an informal pattern of accommodation and cooperation among a range of stakeholders, and sufficient formal authority to make local elected leaders credible and reliable bargaining partners. These are conditions that emerge from a history of collective efforts; they cannot be instantaneously injected or fashioned out of whole cloth.¹

Our conclusions from the interview process indicate that Kansas City is uniquely positioned to bring all of these elements together. Echoing this are the words of one Planning Group member, “I think Kansas City has the right heart and resources to be a real model in accelerating upward mobility. It is a matter of strategic focus, communication, commitment and good management.”

¹ Stone, Clarence N., Henig, Jeffrey R., Jones, Bryan D., Pierannuzi, Carol. *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas.

A Collective Vision for Kansas City's Urban Core

We asked Planning Group members to describe their organization or institution's vision for Kansas City.

Planning Group members responded that they would like to see Kansas City be **one of the best cities in the world in which to be a child, get an education, raise a family, pursue a career, enjoy life, and meet its challenges.** Other members of the group expressed a vision of a Kansas City that is **truly democratic**, where all are informed and motivated to express their voices.

Others noted that they would like to see Kansas City have **solid policies and well-carried out practices that support the development of all young people**, and be a place where children and their families are safe and secure enough to explore all of their possible horizons.

Many described a vision of a **high-quality and vibrant educational environment** in which teachers and students are treated with the respect and supportiveness. Similarly, the ideal of a Kansas City having an overall **culture of learning**, where education takes place not just in classrooms, but where love of learning rings through the streets and within the gathering places and homes of all Kansas Citians. In this atmosphere, young people would not have to watch their elders struggle with overly difficult circumstances, but would instead be surrounded by role models who themselves have been afforded the opportunity to reach their potential.

The vision of other Planning Group members focused on a **vibrant labor market that allows employees and employers alike to prosper and innovate.**

All children would understand that education is deeply relevant to their lives and futures.

Planning Group members also envision a Kansas City where **person's race is no more or less likely to determine the quality of his or her experience of life.** In this Kansas City, people of color would not lag behind their white counterparts in the crucial areas of health, education or wealth.

And finally, Planning Group members envision a Kansas City where **holistic thinking would be the norm**, and in which Kansas Citians would operate with full understanding of how best to care for themselves and their families and friends, as well as how to best honor the interconnected nature of the human condition.

Great cities are measured . . . by the upward mobility that they provide for their citizens and businesses.

The Racial Mood in Kansas City

The interviews asked for Planning Group members' views on the racial "mood" and openness to addressing racial equity questions in Kansas City today.

Often when race is discussed people are just quiet and hope the conversation dies off.

If the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity is to be a collective agent for change, Planning Group members recognize that it will be essential to **talk openly and honestly** about the role of race as it affects education and employment in Kansas City. According to our interviews, there is work to be done on this front.

The racial mood in Kansas City depends on what color you are.

As one Planning Group member put it, "The racial mood in Kansas City depends on what color you are." Everyone reported, however, that the issue of race relations in Kansas City must be dealt with. Respondents spoke of entrenched separation, isolation, division and lack of interaction—though segregation is no longer enforced by laws, Kansas City remains a largely segregated city.

According to the Planning Group's perspectives, the **lack of trust** between groups remains a significant barrier to progress. Some also remarked upon the **cultural insensitivity that characterizes certain social policies**, making them ineffective and even exacerbating current difficulties.

There were also several remarks about the phenomenon of "**Kansas City Nice**," pervasive politeness prominent in Kansas City that allows people to deny of the true state of affairs, and which makes honest and often painful discussions more difficult to conduct. The veneer of niceness is just that, however—a veneer—and according to the Group, simply cannot cover the elephant in the room—the racial and socioeconomic inequities that plague Kansas City.

Further, in discussions of race and disadvantage, **Blacks and Hispanics end up being lumped together even though there are important distinctions between Black and Latino experiences**. If the racial mood in Kansas City is to be improved, Planning Group members understand that it will **be important to be more sensitive** to the specifics of each experience.

Easily seen, but not easily talked about.

"East of Troost..."

While the effects of racism may not be easily spoken of or acted upon, they are deeply felt by all, and especially by those of color. **Hopelessness, apathy, resentment resulting from lack of**

progress are, according to the Group, all too obvious in Kansas City's urban core.

Mobilizing Leadership Around Education & Employment in Kansas City’s Urban Core

Below is a summary of responses to the question of whether members of the Planning Group believe that Kansas City’s leadership will go the extra mile to make progress on racial equity aspects of education and employment.

Most members expressed **hopefulness due to increased awareness of and even openness to talking about the role that race plays in education and employment reform efforts.** Some members attributed this to, among other things, the Urban League’s work around the *Afraid of the Dark: What Whites and Blacks Need to Know About Each Other* reading groups.

At the same time, **there exists a sentiment of fatigue** held by some members of the group since other efforts have attempted to address these very issues over the years. These efforts have exacted the time and energy of those who participated in them, but lost momentum and, according to some, ended up ringing of false promise. A number of Planning Group members also noted that it is not unusual within Kansas City’s general power structure for important **decision-making and/or discussion of key issues to be carried out without the presence of a single African American or Latino person.**

We will have to be careful because there have been a million efforts and not many have worked.

With that caveat on the table, the majority of responses to the question of mobilization of leadership were hopeful.

There is solid recognition that the future of the city depends on increasing equity and opportunity.

The group reported a sense of obligation and even a sense of eagerness to engage in honest dialogue on the issues.

A number of Planning Group members also noted that **civic pride in Kansas City is particularly high**, and that if astutely tapped into, this civic pride can be a real asset to the type of work upon which the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity is embarking.

There is enough heart in Kansas City that if this work is properly managed and led, we can make significant progress.

One of the challenges that Planning Group members believe the Kansas City Roundtable should be prepared to face around mobilization is the willingness of some people to be helpful without really engaging. **Thus people of all races tend to prefer to “write a check” to support relevant efforts rather than rolling up their sleeves to work.** But it takes much more than money to make change in communities. It was also noted that political leaders—again, of all races—are often overly concerned with solidifying political power than with on-the-ground realities. Several others noted that **often Kansas Citian’s civic engagement tends to revolve around areas that are far less contentious than**

education and employment systems and outcomes.

On a very practical level, one person noted that the very **hectic day-to-day schedules** of leaders must be taken into consideration.

There is currently more willingness to put race into the civic conversation and there is more overt and wide-spread recognition that racial equity questions are significant sources of problems for the metro area, but there is not a high degree of resolve or energy to sustain them.

And finally, several Planning Group members noted that the **framing of the issues** will be particularly important when it comes to the ability to mobilize leadership. Centering the initiative on children and on education, they put forth, has potential to gather traction in ways that framing it as an issue of racial equity or justice may not.

What *Would* More Equitable Education and Employment Systems Look Like?

Below is the collection of the Planning Group’s responses to the question, “What do you imagine that education and employment systems would look like if they produced more racially equitable outcomes for Kansas City students?”

Education

- There would be significant investment and public will around early education.
- Children would be well-prepared before going to school and schools would not be playing an impossible game of catch-up.
- All levels of government would support education at appropriate and suitable levels.
- All educational experiences would be high quality and rigorous.
- There would be more free and honest conversation—in private and public settings—about the role played by race in education.
- There would not only be high expectations for students, but expectations would be operationalized.
- There would be political will around achievement in urban core school districts and around the need for supporting education in general.
- People would flock to Kansas City Schools instead of fleeing them.
- There would not be tracking.
- Teachers would be treated as professionals and would be compensated as such.
- There would be more Black and Brown teachers.
- Teachers would be free to teach and not have to be disciplinarians.
- The KCMO School District would not be isolated as it is now.
- Schools would not be segregated.
- The value of education would be more apparent to young people.
- The curricula of elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges/universities would be aligned.
- Middle and high school students would be on college campuses and feel a sense of familiarity with such settings.
- Higher education would be affordable.
- There would be more people of color in universities.

- Kansas City would guarantee every student coming out of the school system with good grades an opportunity to go to college or a good job. There would be hope built into the educational process so that students could see that there is more available to them than low-paying work.
- There would be increased opportunities for internships and exposure to fulfilling and gainful careers.
- Young women would be more informed about the opportunities open to them, more aware of the realities of sexual activity, and less likely to become pregnant before they are ready. (a.k.a, “Fewer babies having babies.”)
- The urban core school districts would mirror suburban schools in graduation rates and in the numbers of students going on to premiere institutions.
- Children would see no limits to what they can achieve.
- The workforce would be representative of the city’s racial breakdown.
- When the CEOs and other leadership of Kansas City were convened, it would not be a homogenous group of white men and a few white women.
- The life issues present in the urban core would be understood, recognized, and taken into consideration. Supports—for example day care—would be readily available.

Place and Planning

Employment

- Neighborhoods would be integrated by race and by income.
- Equity considerations would be present at the conception of an effort or initiative, and would not be add-ons to other big issues.
- There would be more productive ways to deal with the state line that divides the city.
- Tax structures would not move high performing companies out of the urban core and into suburban and exurban areas, and there would be political will to address this and similar structural issues.
- There would be more free and honest conversation—in private and public settings—about the role played by race in employment.
- There would be a commitment to hire minorities at all levels and an integration of the job market at all levels.
- The KCMO school district would not be relied upon as a source for jobs, but would be completely focused on learning and

preparing students to reach their potentials.

Challenges and Difficulties Confronted in Working Towards Racial Equity

All Planning Group members were asked to describe some of the challenges and difficulties that they have confronted in their efforts to promote racial equity in Kansas City—particularly as related to education and employment. The Group’s responses fell into the following categories, though they are not ranked in a particular order:

- Mistrust
- Leadership styles (gaps in leadership or weaknesses in leadership)
- The complicated and intertwined nature of race and poverty
- Cultural misunderstanding and lack of communication across the color line
- Contentious atmosphere of the KCMO school district
- Isolation from opportunities
- High mobility of poor families
- Lack of affordability of higher education
- Resistance to equity-oriented policies

More detail on some of these categories follows.

Mistrust

A significant number of Planning Group members mentioned an **atmosphere of mistrust as a real challenge and barrier to progress**. Hard feelings, cynicism, and being sold out were mentioned in the interviews several times. Others noted that while there is

public discussion about opportunity, real circumstances lead people of color to mistrust it, and to believe that there is a glass ceiling that will prevent them from achieving their potential.

“Kansas City Nice,” as mentioned in the section on racial mood, was also put forth by some as a contributing element to mistrust between people of color and whites.

...too little authentic engagement across the color line.

Leadership Challenges

It was noted by a number of Planning Group members that **key leaders have a tendency to be complacent about the status quo and that there is not enough effort to include people of color in important community decision-making processes**. Others noted that Kansas City leaders from a variety of sectors **have difficulty sustaining efforts that are focused on education and employment** in the urban core, while they do seem able to sustain high levels of activity around less challenging areas like cultural institutions and events. On a similar note, a planning group member put forth that while many educators and other leaders believe that equality and integration are important in *theory*, they tend not to take action to make equity and integration a *reality*.

A few members also noted that leaders tend to focus on **bread-and-butter issues rather than system or structural change**. One also mentioned that they

perceive a **divide-and-conquer rather than a consensus building mentality.**

Another challenge observed by some Planning Group members is the difficulty of deciding where to focus efforts and money in an environment of scarce resources.

The complicated and intertwined nature of race and poverty

Several of the Planning Group members mentioned that the **intertwined nature of race and poverty complicates this work.** While they did not offer solutions, they felt it was important to recognize that it tends to be overwhelming, often results in unfocused efforts, and may scare off others who could potentially lend their assistance.

Cultural misunderstandings and lack of communication across the color line

Planning Group members mentioned in their interviews the ways in which **segregation and lack of authentic engagement across the color line leads to cultural misunderstanding and insensitivity.** Some also mentioned the deficit model from which decision-makers at all levels tend to operate, adding that a more asset-oriented model would increase the likelihood of yielding more positive results.

Other Planning Group members pointed to the **perception among some whites that people of color operate from a culture of ‘victimization.’** The interviews also indicated, however, that some people of color interpret this as

trivialization of the real challenges and difficulties they face.

Cultural misunderstanding and insensitivity is also evidenced in what a few Planning Group members referred to as **‘the bootstrap mentality’**—the belief among some of those who have achieved certain class positions that they have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, so why shouldn’t others be able to do the same. This type of discourse tends to diminish the structural barriers that make it harder for people of color to break through obstacles and achieve success.

Contentious atmosphere of the Kansas City, Missouri School District

The **contentious atmosphere of the KCMO school district** was also brought up in several interviews, as was the high turnover rate of staff and superintendents. One person who mentioned this noted that it tends to scare off those who might have goodwill, but who do not have the energy to enter an unpredictable environment. On the flip side of this perspective, one Planning Group member lamented the fact that the KCMO school district has been consistently isolated and saddled with low expectations to the point where it is extremely difficult for it to rise above its reputation.

Isolation from opportunities

In addition to the aforementioned challenges and difficulties, Planning Group members pointed out the **extent to which urban core residents are isolated from employment opportunities, in particular by the**

movement of jobs out of the city combined with the absence of adequate public transportation. As one person put it, “There are jobs that people cannot get to and jobs where people cannot afford to live. If you are a young man in the urban core and there is a job in Johnson County you often can’t get there. And you can’t buy a house there because you have to have a big down payment and there are high property taxes.”

Potential Contributions of the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity

Each Planning Group participant was asked about what would be helpful to them in their work to promote racial equity. Everyone was also asked to name some realistic goals for the Kansas City Roundtable. Their points are listed below:

Devise an Action Plan

Devise an action plan with the range of very specific benchmarks (very-short term, short term, medium, long term, very long term, etc.)*

Decide upon clear focus.

Unless there is a clear action plan that can be implemented, I question the value of this exercise.

Activities specific to school settings and educational policies

Align curricula and creating seamless transition between levels of education.

* A significant majority of Planning Group members identified a specific action plan as both an important outcome of the Kansas City Roundtable, and as necessary to its potential success.

Increase students' familiarity with higher education.

Let's bring 7th and 8th graders on campuses.

Improve teacher education.

Increase public interest and will for support of education.

Increase higher education venues (for example with more off-campus classes in community centers, churches, etc.).

Increase supportiveness to the KCMO school district in order to avoid high-turnover of leadership.

Trust, Connection & Communication

Increase connection, communication, common understanding, collaboration between, and alignment of relevant initiatives.

Broaden leadership and decision-making.

Build and sustain trust.

Learning and Leadership Development

Establish formal venues for learning the skills to confront barriers to progress presented by legacies of racism (possibly a leadership academy around racial equity, employment and education)

Provide venues for dialogue, honest assessment.

We need to be an aggressive change-making group, not defenders of the status quo.

Problem-solve with increased attention to systemic and structural dynamics.

Increase opportunities for inclusion and for direct involvement across color- and class lines.

Bring board members of organizations and institutions to the table. Help them to understand what specifically they can do as board members to be effective forces for positive change.

Create a political strategy.

Policy Orientation

Focus on and promoting policies and/or policy changes that are conducive to equitable outcomes (including not just education and employment policies, but housing and transportation policies).

Bring regional policy issues into the work.

Commitment

Nurture commitment and endurance.

Establish a formal body to manage an action plan.

Produce letters of commitment from each participating organization or institution.

Awareness and Will Around Racial Equity

Frame the purpose and goals of the group for maximum effectiveness. Promote awareness of the roles that stereotypes and representations play in the production and reproduction of color lines and inequities.

Cultivate a critical mass of understanding about the roles of race in education and employment systems.

Cultivate a critical mass of supporters dedicated to: Improving the racial-equity oriented outcomes of the education and employment systems; and championing excellence in all of Kansas City's places of learning and work.

Build interest in and support for equity-oriented initiatives, particularly the Institute for Urban Education.

Increase awareness about the negative consequences of disparities between groups, and of failing to address them.

Increase awareness among urban core residents of the range of institutions and services available to them, especially university resources.

Create a political strategy.

What Will Need To Happen?

In tandem with asking each Planning Group member put forth what they hope can result from the Kansas City Roundtable and what they think could be some realistic goals for it, each was also asked to elaborate on what they think will be required to make the aspirations a reality.

As mentioned in the previous section, Planning Group members strongly indicated the need for a **specific plan with short and long-term benchmarks to guide the work and measure progress**. Several also put forth that staff and an **organizational home** for the effort will be important.

I do not want to see lots of flip charts but nothing accomplished.

A number of Planning Group members also re-emphasized the need to find the most astute ways of **framing** the issues in order to maximize support and participation. Related to framing, it was also noted that **buy-in and the embrace of the community**, especially at level of civic and business leadership, will be essential.

A least two planning group members made the point that they would like careful **data-driven decision-making**, as well as honest assessment of the capacities around the table.

We need the ability to listen to what may be painful.

Nearly everyone indicated the need for **commitment, tenacity, and persistence** required to realize the potential of the Kansas City Roundtable. As one person noted, “I wish we could find a way to inject patience.” Further, a number of people made it clear that operating in **good faith and with humility and positive attitudes** will be another essential element.

We will need commitment to action and to stay with the effort through the bumps.

Challenges the Effort Should Be Prepared To Face, a Preliminary List

One of the last questions posed to the Planning Group members asked them to articulate what they believe an effort like the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity should be prepared to face. The group's responses were as follows:

Planning Group members acknowledged that it **may be difficult to sustain interest and momentum** on such a large set of complicated issues among a group of such busy people. As one person noted, "It can be easy to get derailed and distracted." One person noted that it will be **important not to set expectations too high or too low.**

We will have to face that there is apathy about the fact that we've tried this before. There is also a sentiment that there isn't a genuine interest on the part of the majority to do this.

Among some of the other challenges mentioned by Planning Group members were the following:

Resentment around perceptions of uneven commitment or participation

Perceptions that the effort is just another group of people talking with no obvious results

Lack of understanding about why the group is focusing on the issues of education, employment and racial equity and the bootstrap notion

There may be a lack of understanding because white people often do not understand the privileges they enjoy.

State line creating jurisdictional headaches

Uneven leadership at the state government level and reluctance to take real leadership roles

Turnover of leadership at the school district level

"Kansas City Nice"

Entrenched stereotypes

Perception that the plan is not 'owned' by all

State debt and eroding capacities on state and federal levels

Inadequate public transportation systems

Poor representation in the media

Urban/suburban tensions and other place-oriented challenges, for instance residential segregation

In Conclusion

As we put forth in the introduction to this report, the civic leadership of Kansas City clearly has the potential to confront the City's complicated racial dynamics. There are, of course, many challenges to anticipate. Careful preparation and focus will be essential. It will also be crucial for the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity to clear about common interests. The wisdom of the phrase, "eyes on the prize," is of great relevance in this instance. One of the first tasks that an effort like the Kansas City Roundtable must undertake is to articulate and clearly account for the commonalities and differences of interest of all group members. Another crucial task is to develop the fortitude to remain dedicated to the initiative's overarching ideals and goals.

The next task is to draft a plan for moving forward. As one Planning Group member noted, "You only start once." To start on the right foot, this collective endeavor will require dedication, but also a significant degree of flexibility to weather the inevitable challenges. In closing, the words of Clarence Stone and his colleagues again are on point, particularly because they echo the sentiments expressed by so many of the Planning Group members:

Successful action calls for a marathon, not a sprint. Marathoners engage in careful preparation and lengthy training before moving to the starting line. Marathoners set an ambitious goal, but break down the overall course into many shorter segments and discipline themselves to maintain a sustainable pace. Similarly, to prepare for a radical improvement in social investment in our youth, we can settle in for the long run without shaving down our goals; we can accept small advances without limiting ourselves to baby steps.

Based on the interviews with Planning Group members, Kansas City is ready to embark on this challenge.

The Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity

Planning Group Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, April 25th, 2006

Diastole
University of Missouri, Kansas City

9:00 – 9:30 Welcome and Opening Remarks
Laura McKnight, President, The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
(Breakfast will be served)

Session One
9:30 – 10:30 Introductions and Review of Agenda

Session Two
10:30 – 12:30 Review and Discussion of Report on the Interviews with Planning Group Members

This session will begin with the staff of the Aspen Institute presenting the report prepared for the Planning Group meeting. We will discuss the content of the report in as much detail as possible, and will identify those aspects and sections of the report that Planning Group Members believe to be most relevant to the Kansas City Roundtable work plan.

12:30 – 1:15 Lunch

Session Three
1:15 – 3:15 Discussion of Preliminary Strategy for Moving Forward with the Access and Opportunity Agenda

Based on the elements of the report identified in the previous session, we will create a preliminary strategy for moving forward with the Kansas City Roundtable Meeting in June. We expect that this session will consist of both discussion and small group work. Please come prepared to discuss two or three strategies or action steps that will advance this agenda over the near term and longer term.

3:15 – 3:30

Break

Session Four

3:30 – 4:45

Preparing for the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity

During this session we will discuss what further groundwork the Planning Group believes will be important to accomplish in order for the Kansas City Roundtable meeting in June to be successful. If the group believes it will be helpful, subcommittees or working groups can be established.

4:45 – 5:15

Closing Thoughts

During this closing session, each Planning Group member will be asked to reflect on the day's work and to offer final suggestions, cautions, concerns and hope for this long-term work on which the Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity is embarking.

Kansas City Roundtable on Access and Opportunity

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*(Jason Stuart Dalen, JD,
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will be attending on Ms. Scott's behalf).*

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Background on the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change's Project on Structural Racism and Community Building

The basic premise of the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change's Project on Structural Racism and Community Building is that current strategies to rebuild communities and promote prosperity in cities and regions need to be grounded in a more useful analysis of race. There is strong evidence that race presents barriers on many levels to the achievement of socio-economic development goals. Perhaps the most obvious barriers are the historical metropolitan processes and policies that concentrate the nonwhite urban poor in a few pockets of chronic disadvantage. Astute studies conducted over the past two decades have mapped racial outcome disparities in urban settings and it is clear that urban political economies do not operate in ways that are race-neutral. African Americans, Latinos and other racial minorities are placed at a disadvantage in disproportionate numbers by these systems.

Less obvious are the ways in which the nation's historical legacy of racial stratification operates in the current period to undermine the prevailing paradigm of local economic development and healthy democratic processes. From its inception, America has defined race in a way that privileges "whiteness" in every dimension of life. The notion of who qualifies for membership in this group has evolved since slavery, but those still excluded from it bear a crippling burden of negative stereotyping by the majority, as well as other, more active forms of social marginalization.

All this means that race and racism amount to far more than a problem of interpersonal relationships; they are active generators of the economic, physical and other problems of place that the community revitalization field now seeks to address in comprehensive ways. With this in mind, the Aspen Roundtable on Community Change has set out to work with community stakeholders to develop a new operational paradigm that uses a "structural" understanding of race as its basic building block.

This interest in race does not arise out of abstract theoretical analysis, but from the expressed concerns of many in the community revitalization field itself. Race presents a variety of daily challenges to initiatives that emphasize collaboration among a range of stakeholders in and outside poor communities. More important than just the cultural sensitivity issue in these relationships, is the matter of power and agency. These include inter-group power issues, such the inequities inherent in funder-community dynamics or the tensions evident in high-immigration communities where African Americans fear a loss of influence to recent arrivals from Asia, Latin American Africa and the Caribbean. Perhaps more significant for community revitalization leaders are the power and agency issues that have their roots in the systemic barriers that deny opportunity to constituents

of color. These include lack of access to capital and adequate public education, racial profiling by the criminal justice system, the denial of adequate community resources for child care and development, environmental racism, and many other inequities.

In responding to this call for a race-centered analysis, the Roundtable does not dismiss other legitimate approaches to urban inequality, such as class or gender. We are aware of the benefits of those vantage points, but believe that since racial inequality has been an underinvestigated factor, it needs to be front and center at this time. Our society has never been more prosperous than it is at present, and yet the gap in racial outcomes remains intractable and virtually neglected by our governing institutions.



Roundtable on Community Change

Staff Biographies

Andrea Anderson has been a Research Associate at the Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families at The Aspen Institute since 1998. While at the Roundtable, she has focused on work related to the Roundtable's evaluation and measurement initiatives. Over the past three years, she has been primarily responsible for developing training tools about the theory of change approach to evaluation, and has given a number of seminars on this approach in the context of complex community initiatives. Before joining the Roundtable, Andrea was a Senior Analyst in the Housing, Income Security and Employment area of Abt Associates Inc., where she contributed to the development of a theory of change-based evaluation design for both the Annie E. Casey Foundation-sponsored Jobs Initiative and the Empowerment Zone/ Enterprise Community program. She has a Ph.D. in Evaluation and Planning from Cornell University.

Karen Fulbright-Anderson is a Co-Director of the Roundtable on Community Change at the Aspen Institute. The 21 members of the Roundtable are leaders in the field of community revitalization and social policy, representing the policy, funding, academic and practitioner communities. The members meet regularly to distill lessons that are being learned by the current generation of comprehensive, community-building initiatives and to work on cross-cutting problems facing the field. Karen directs a number of Roundtable projects on topics such as evaluation, structural racism, youth development, and public and private sector engagement in community change. She was the lead author on the Roundtable's 2004 working paper and its 2005 publication *Structural Racism and Youth Development: Issues, Challenges and Implications*. She is co-editor of two Roundtable books, *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Volume 2: Theory, Measurement and Analysis*, and *Community Change: Theories, Practice and Evidence* (forthcoming 2006). She is the co-author of the Roundtable's 2004 publication *Structural Racism and Community Building*, and *Voices from the Field II*, a Roundtable book on lessons learned about comprehensive community initiatives across the country titled. Karen also serves an Aspen Institute-wide function as the Chair of Policy Programs. Prior to joining the Roundtable, she was the Director of Research for the Vera Institute of Justice. Karen also worked in the philanthropic sector, at the Ford Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund, developing and implementing youth development funding strategies focused on young people in high poverty communities. She has been an Assistant Professor and Visiting Professor, respectively, at the New School for Social Research and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has written several papers, and conducted research and program evaluations in the areas of youth development, community development, and community change. Karen earned a master of city

planning degree and a doctorate degree in Urban Studies and Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has been a faculty member at The New School for Social Research and a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is currently on the board of trustees for the Institute for Community Peace and YouthBuild, USA, a member of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Youth Board, the DYCD Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, and the MIT School of Architecture and Planning Visiting Committee, and an advisor to the William Penn Foundation's Youth Violence Prevention Initiative.

Anne Kubisch is the Co-Director of the Roundtable on Community Change at The Aspen Institute. The 21 members of the Roundtable are leaders in the field of community revitalization and social policy, representing the policy, funding, academic and practitioner communities. The members meet regularly to distill lessons that are being learned by the current generation of comprehensive, community-building initiatives and to work on cross-cutting problems facing the field. Anne directs a number of Roundtable projects on topics such as evaluation, structural racism, and public and private sector engagement in community change. She was the lead author on the Roundtable's two books on lessons learned about comprehensive community initiatives across the country (titled *Voices from the Field I* and *II*) and has co-edited two books on new approaches to evaluating community initiatives. She is the co-author of the Roundtable's 2004 publication *Structural Racism and Community Building*, and has written numerous papers and articles about various aspects of community building and community change. Prior to directing the Roundtable, Anne spent 10 years at the Ford Foundation, initially working on Latin American programs, then as Representative in Nigeria, and finally as Deputy Director of the Urban Poverty Program. She has a Master's Degree in Public and International Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University.

Keith Lawrence is a Research Associate at the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (formerly the Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives), where he has been a leading contributor to its work on structural racism and its significance to community building. Before joining Aspen full-time in 1999, he worked at the New York City Housing Authority, and as a part-time consultant and researcher for various foundation sponsored projects. Prior to this, Keith taught at the elementary and high school levels in New York City and the Caribbean, and worked as an organizer for the NY Public Interest Research Group. He holds a Ph.D in International Politics and Masters in Urban Planning from the City University of New York.

Gretchen Susi is a Research Associate at the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change. Her research has focused on the social production of housing, particularly public housing, the role of grassroots alliances in producing supportive environments, and on the challenges presented to such efforts by current social formations, particularly race and class. She has also worked on research related to the psycho-physiological affects of stress and the role of social capital in community change. She holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Psychology from the City University of New York Graduate Center.

**Directions to Diastole
2501 Holmes Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64108
Tel (816) 235-8855
Fax (816) 471-1857**

Please note that if you need to contact us on the day of the meeting you can use the telephone number above.

South on I-29/71 (or coming from the north)

Follow I-29 South until it becomes I-35 South. Follow directions for traveling south on I-35.

South on I-35 (or coming from the north)

Follow signs for I-70 West and I-35 South; exit at Oak Street; stay in right hand lane and follow street to the right onto Oak (you will loop around). Continue on Oak (S). Oak becomes Gillham. Turn left (E) on 26th Street. Go two blocks and turn left (N) on Holmes Street. Diastole is located on the right (E) side of the street, just before the 25th Street intersection.

North on I-35

Exit Southwest Boulevard/Mission Road; keep left and follow Southwest Blvd. to 31st Street; turn right (E) on 31st Street. Go several blocks (past Broadway and Main) to Holmes; go left (N) on Holmes. Diastole is located on the right (E) side of the street, just before the 25th Street intersection.

West on I-70 (or coming from the east - i.e. Missouri)

Exit I-70 from right lane to downtown 13th Street exit. Turn left (S) on Charlotte. At 26th Street, turn right (W) and another right (N) onto Holmes Street. Diastole is located on the right (E) side of the street, just before the 25th Street intersection.

East on I-70 (or coming from the west - i.e. Kansas)

Take I-70 east to 11th Street exit. Remain in left lane of exit ramp. Take first left (S) turn his turns onto Charlotte Street. At 26th Street, turn right (W) and another right onto Holmes Street (N). Diastole is located on the right (E) side of the street, just before the 25th Street intersection.

North on 71 highway (or coming from the south)

Take 71 highway and exit on 22nd Street. Go left (W) on 22nd Street to Charlotte Street; go left (S) on Charlotte to 26th Street; go right (W) on 26th Street to Holmes Street; go right (N) on Holmes. Diastole is located on the right (E) side of the street, just before the 25th Street intersection.

From the University of Missouri-Kansas City main campus

Go north on Rockhill Road/Gillham to 26th Street. Turn right (E) on 26th Street; go left (N) on Holmes Street. Diastole is located on the right (E) side of the street, just before the 25th Street intersection.

Limited off-street parking is available. The entrance to the parking area is located just south of 25th Street, on the right (E) side of the street. Follow signs. Additional parking available on Holmes, 25th, and Charlotte streets.