

The New Buck O'Neil Bridge

**More than a river crossing,
a community enhancement**

A report of the Joint Committee on Bridge Enhancements

January 2022-DISCUSSION DRAFT



MLB Hall of Famer, John "Buck" O'Neil



ED FORD
Northland Chamber
of Commerce



BILL DIETRICH
Downtown Council



JOSH BOEHM*
Downtown
Neighborhood Assoc.



TALYOR BROWN*
African-American
Artist Coalition



JARED CAMPBELL*
Downtown
Council



LYNN CARLTON
HOK



CHRIS CLINE
CONFLUENCE



KEMET COLEMAN*
Artist/Urbanist.
Innovator



DEREK HOETMER*
MCLV



ANN HOLIDAY
Downtown
Council



BOB KENDRICK
Negro Leagues
Baseball Museum



LAUREN KEPLER
JE DUNN



WES MINDER
Kansas City
Water Dept.



KIONA SINKS*
Negro Leagues
Baseball Museum



MATT STAUB*
River Market
Community Assoc.



JAMES WANG*
Kansas City
Parks & Rec



SABIN YANEZ
CFS ENGINEERS

Under the leadership of co-chairs former Councilman Ed Ford and Bill Dietrich, President and CEO of the Downtown Council, and with the support of MoDOT, a diverse group of community members were gathered to recommend improvements to the Buck O’Neil Bridge project. These recommendations are not unanimous but do represent concrete suggestions to better connect the project to the community both physically and emotionally while acknowledging the complexities of the Design Build process.

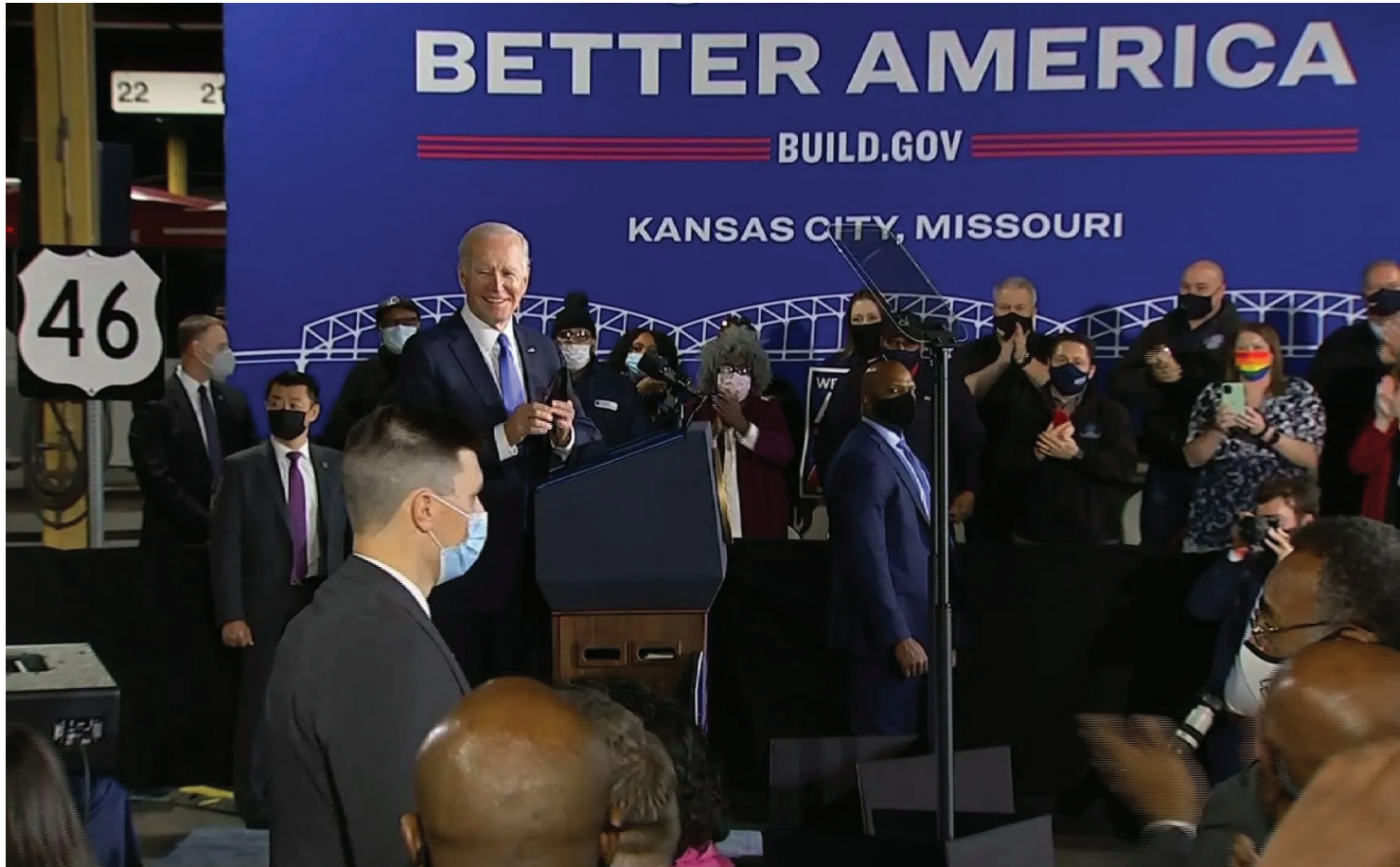
**Members of the Summer Working Group*

FOUR FOCUS AREAS

Since the summer of 2021, community leaders have met over a dozen times to build consensus around a set of recommendations to enhance the new Buck O'Neil Bridge and surrounding area. The members of the committee took the opportunity to view aesthetics in a new and different way. The recommendations being passed to MoDOT, the City, and community as a whole focus attention on four key areas:

- 1 Activating the Area;
- 2 Stairs & Sculptures;
- 3 Maximizing the Murals; and,
- 4 Improving Safety & Connections.

The group, representing the adjoining neighborhoods, community activists, the Negro Leagues Museum, and interests on both sides of the river saw enhancements to the new Bridge as potentially transformational in a way that cities and DOTs rarely have the opportunity to embrace. **With the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation, now is the time to engage with project partners and expand the impact of this generational investment beyond moving traffic to enriching the entire community.**



President Biden visited Kansas City shortly after the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation to talk about the power of infrastructure investments.

The new bridge and surrounding amenities can help tell the story of one of our city's greatest legends, Hall of Famer, World Champion, and founder of the Negro Leagues Museum, Buck O'Neil. No less than the President of the United States has visited Kansas City to praise Buck's name and urge us to see infrastructure investments beyond pavement and concrete - in front of an image of the old triple-arched bridge. Kansas City has a chance to swing for the fences on this project, and we should not hold back.

THE BIG PICTURE

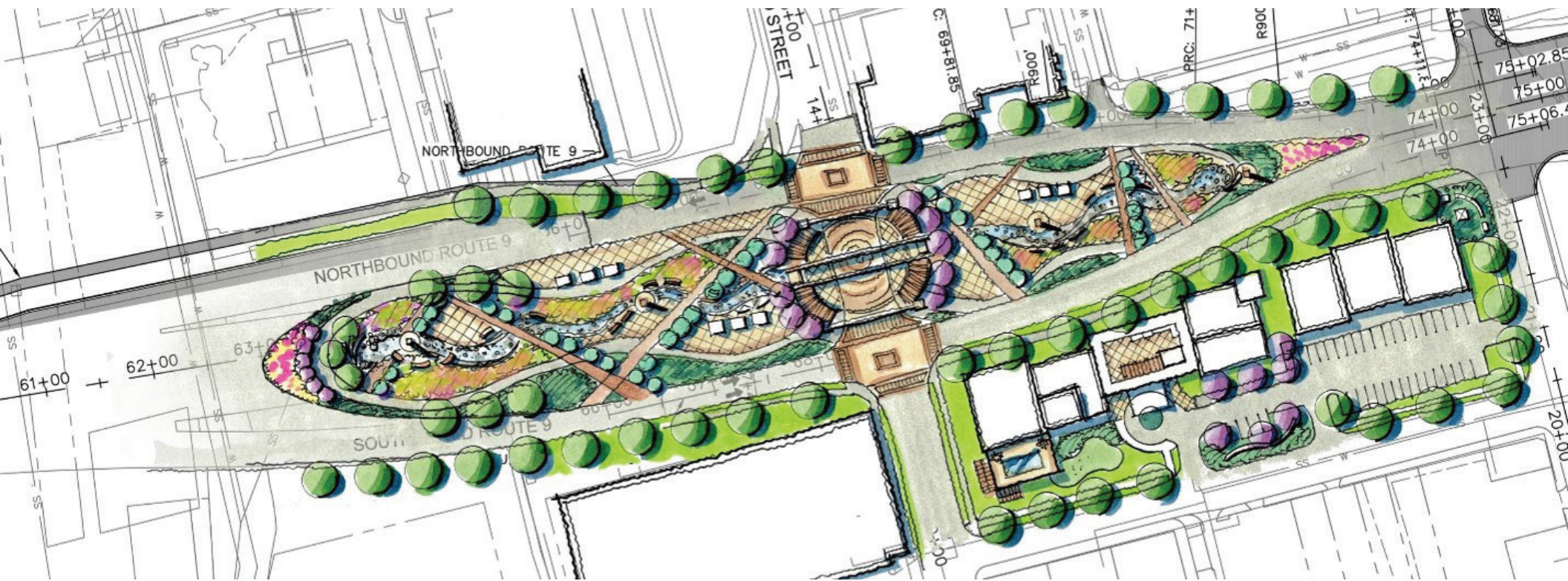
It is important to remember how the community arrived at the configuration of the new river crossing. The conversation began nearly five years ago, as the current bridge approached the end of its projected lifespan. The City of Kansas City, Missouri, the Missouri Department of Transportation and MARC collaborated on Beyond the Loop, a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study to examine possibilities to improve the relationship between transportation infrastructure and the communities it serves.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established the PEL process to provide a more efficient way of evaluating a full range of transportation concepts and identifying preferred improvements. This project began by asking stakeholders — residents, neighborhood groups, governments and transportation officials — to envision the future of the Buck O'Neil Bridge and North Loop of Kansas City.

The study assessed ideas suggested by the community and identified several feasible options for the future of the Bridge and corridor. It recommended short, medium, and long-term opportunities for improvements to safety and connectivity.



- 1. SHORT TERM:** The PEL process identified an immediate need for a new river crossing to replace the existing Buck O'Neil Bridge. The construction of the new bridge is underway currently and largely follows multiple community recommendations:
- ▶ The new bridge is split with a portion directly connecting to I-35 to improve traffic flow in the downtown loop.
 - ▶ This direct connection was projected to reduce the traffic entering downtown at 5th Street by nearly half.
 - ▶ To reduce the impact on commuters, the new bridge is being constructed while the old bridge continues to carry traffic limiting the time of full closure of the crossing.



2. MEDIUM TERM: A new bridge that isolates interstate-to-interstate traffic from downtown destined travel was projected to reduce traffic volumes on the Heart of America Bridge. This reduction in traffic yielded an opportunity for the city:

- ▶ Lower Missouri Highway 9 to grade as it passes through the River Market and Columbus Park. This removes a huge physical barrier between two of the city's oldest neighborhoods.
- ▶ Reconnect the street grid and restore Independence Avenue as a complete street running across the entire length of the River Market.
- ▶ A reconnected Independence Avenue and Highway 9 to provide opportunities for a future east/west streetcar connection and north/south streetcar connection across the river.
- ▶ The City completed a feasibility study for an at-grade and connected Highway 9 in February of 2021.



PEL STUDY LINK

3. LONG TERM: A new Buck O’Neil Bridge with a direct connection to I-35, combined with a reconnected Independence Avenue to accommodate local east/west traffic provides for an opportunity to remove I-70 on the northside of downtown.

- ▶ The public was asked about potential delays due to removal as part of the PEL and generally accepted the potential rush hour slow down.
- ▶ Full removal of the north loop portion of I-70 would free up 26.9 acres of downtown property valued at more than \$80 million.
- ▶ The Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel was convened and suggested there would be demand to develop up to 1.3 million square feet without incentives by 2028.

**A UNIQUE CASE FOR
A UNIQUE ASK**

MoDOT, the City and region came together to fund the new split bridge across the river. The funding package of \$225 million included \$60 million in Kansas City voter-approved GO Bond funding, \$40 million in regional surface transportation funding identified by MARC and reallocated with the approval of the region's communities, and the successful application for a \$25 million USDOT BUILD grant.

Nearly half of the cost of the new bridge is being provided by local dollars. The need for a new bridge was urgent. The local desire to have a direct connection to I-35 added cost, and the requirement to limit the time the bridge was closed all contributed to the region obligating local funds as good partners.

Sixty-eight percent of voters in Kansas City approved the \$60 million GO bond allocation to the new bridge. It was one of only a few named projects as part of a larger bond package. The residents of Kansas City went far above and beyond to overwhelmingly support a project not on the City's system at a time when federal and state budgets were strained.

One strategy to pay these game-changing enhancements to the new bridge project would be to seek to recoup the \$60 million in local investment made for the new bridge from the U.S. Department of Transportation. This is a significant and unique ask, but appropriate given the commitment the city made to the project when other funding mechanisms were not available.

1 ACTIVATING THE AREA

- A. GAME CHANGER: Retain the old bridge as a linear park
- B. SKATE PARK: Use the space under the overpasses to build a regional asset
- C. TELL BUCK'S STORY: Make the connections of equity across the riverfront



1 ACTIVATING THE AREA

A. GAME CHANGER

The Mayor and City Manager have committed to preserving portions of the existing Buck O'Neil Bridge. Preserving the structure as a linear park is inspired and contributes to Kansas City maintaining its place as a world-class city. Dynamic cities make big plans and execute those plans. Kansas City is no stranger to going big.

The effort underway, led by Councilman Bunch, to engage the expertise at the High Line Foundation comes at the right moment. Speed is critical. Saving the old bridge will require a considerable amount of engineering and planning work as well as negotiations with federal agencies and state partners for approvals and clearances.

It will take significant teamwork to save the old bridge, but the results would be monumental and an excellent way to honor Buck O'Neil and enhance the surrounding area.

Estimated cost to
preserve existing bridge
and conversion to a linear park
\$50 MILLION

DOWNTOWN KC 2030 PLAN LINK

1 ACTIVATING THE AREA

Saving the old bridge is estimated to cost over \$50 million. The development and community benefits far exceed the initial investment. A collective effort with community, state, and federal partners could make this transformational project a reality.



**Community generated vision for discussion
with engineering challenges let to be worked through.
Rendering by MCLV**
<https://www.mclv.co/projects/buck-oneil-bridge-kansas-city>

While progress is being made to repurpose the existing bridge, the committee recommends additional investments to activate the area.

1 ACTIVATING THE AREA

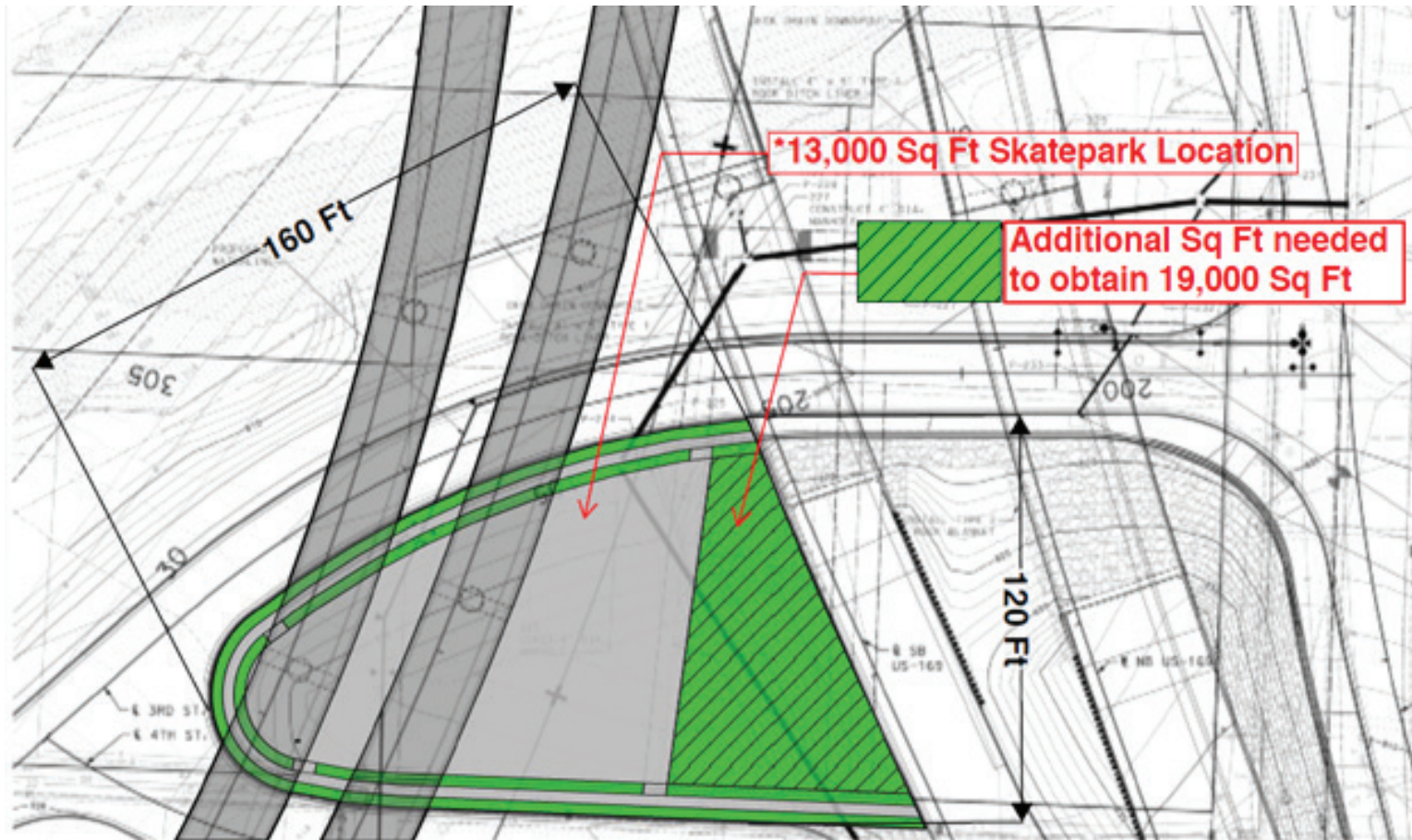
B. SKATE PARK

The Joint Committee on Bridge Enhancements worked with the founders of the Harrison Street DIY Skate Park in Columbus Park to recommend a new regional skate park under the new bridge. The group which calls itself MoKan Skates, writes the following in support of the idea:

“MoKan Skates was consulted in regards to this project. MoKan Skates, which includes members of the skateboarding community is an organization working to expand Kansas City's skate friendly public spaces for the enrichment of the skateboarding community.”

“MoKan Skates envisions the space under Buck O'Neil bridge as an ideal location for a skatepark for both practical and cultural reasons. Practical advantages of this location include extensive coverage from the elements, lighting for extended use, the opportunity to actively engage a space which is often susceptible to undesirable activities, and the ease of accessibility via human-powered transportation. A colorful history and cultural appreciation for skateparks under bridges exists throughout the world stemming from the practical advantages these spaces exhibit. It is our belief that a skatepark underneath the Buck O'Neil Bridge has great potential to positively impact the vibrancy of Kansas City by providing a safe space for users of all ages to enjoy.”

Estimated cost of Skate Park
\$500,000-\$750,000



Estimated Skatepark cost \$500,000-\$750,000 based on industry standard of \$35 per sq. ft. Additional cost savings could exist if city or bridge contractor prep the site.

“This location, unlike any other skatepark space in the metro, is primed for success because of its placement in the downtown area. A skateboard, bike, roller-skates, scooter, etc. are used to get from point a to b, and to travel through spaces. This would be the only skatepark in the metro where you can skate or bike, etc. to the park as opposed to having to drive there. This would be a park that would work seamlessly with its surrounding urban environment. This could be the new destination skatepark of the Kansas City Metro.”

► MoKan Skates

PRAIRIE VILLAGE, KS

10,000 sq ft



HARRISON STREET DYI, KCMO

14,000 sq ft



Examples of Kansas City area skateparks for reference.



PENN VALLEY, KCMO

17,000 sq ft



PLEASANT VALLEY, KCMO

27,000 sq ft



Matt Barton's **"COMMUNITY FORMS"** in the RiNo District of Denver Colorado is part art installation, part skate park, community gather place, and stormwater retention basin.

In partnership with FEMA and private developers, the project is a demonstration of creative stormwater solutions.

"Community Forms" is 100 x 30 feet but is a model for what could be accomplished at larger scale.

"Community Forms" asks everyone to think twice about the rigid definitions we have for community spaces.

PLAZA SKATEPARK, VANCOUVER, BC

26,000 sq ft



LOT 11, MIAMI, FL

38,000 sq ft



Examples of utilizing underpasses and lighting for skateparks for reference.

MoKan Skates CONTACTS FOR PROJECT FOLLOW UP:

Hunter Hendrix

hendrix.hunter@gmail.com

Ben Hlavacek

hlavacekben@gmail.com

Taylor Stelter

taylor.m.stelter@gmail.com



RALIS SKATEPARK, STOKHOLM, SE

30,000 sq ft



WJ SKATEPARK, EUGENE, OR

23,000 sq ft

1 ACTIVATING THE AREA

C. TELL BUCK'S STORY

Enhancements to the new bridge should tell the story of Buck O'Neil. Working with the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, there is an opportunity to use navigation signage throughout the space to share Buck's legacy to a new generation. This signage could walk visitors through Buck's story in a way that attracts people to the facility and encourages them to continue exploring. Along with the artwork highlighted later in this report, the use of the River Front Heritage Trail along the river to connect to the pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the bridge seem like a natural narrative fit.

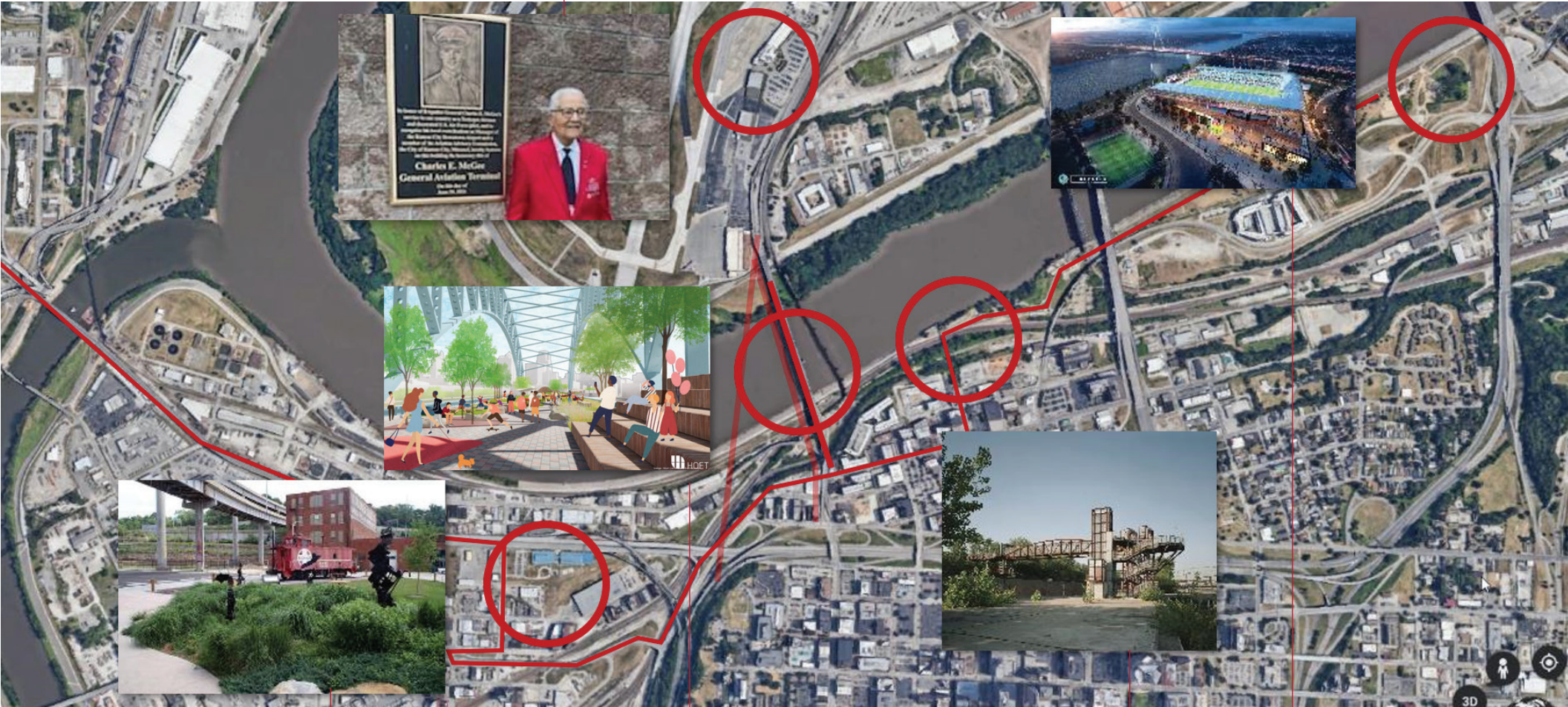
Like much of the work of the committee, an opportunity to expand beyond the bridge was identified. The River Front Heritage Trail could double as way to tell the city's continuing struggle for equity.

Signage and information honoring the legacy of Buck O'Neil and other stories of struggle and triumph could begin at the new National Women's Soccer League stadium to the east and continue west to the West Bottoms-with stops on both sides of the river. Using these informational signs to indicate the desired route for bikes and pedestrians would promote safety and encourage exploration. This enhancement to the River Front Heritage Trail complements the Downtown Council's Greenline KC Plan.

GREENLINE KC LINK

Estimated cost of narrative
wayfinding sigage
\$250,000

- ▶ North of the river, the general aviation terminal at the downtown airport is named for Brigadier General Charles E. McGee, a Tuskegee Airman. His story, and those of his fellow “Red Tails,” highlights the role of the first African-American aviators in the arm forces.



▶ In the West Bottoms, the Underground Railroad artwork could connect our community's role in the preservation and the liberation of African-American slaves.

▶ The new Buck O'Neil Bridge alongside a one-of-a-kind linear park could share the story and challenges we still face as we work toward racial equality.

▶ The Town of Kansas Bridge could help place the city in the context of the original residents, the Osage and Kaw people and highlight our ongoing struggle to recognize the upheaval the first settlers brought to the banks of the Missouri.

▶ On the far east, the first-of-its-kind purpose-built stadium for the KC Current soccer team could share the strides that have been and the distance still to go to achieve women parity in sport.



Sign pedestals commissioned for Monarch Manor Memorial Plaza on the site of the old Municipal Stadium (created by DRAW Architecture) could be used in this application. A metal screen image of Buck O'Neil was not used in the Memorial Plaza and is in the possession of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum (NLBM). The NLBM has offered the image to this project.

2 STAIRS & SCULPTURES

A. STAIR STRUCTURE: Provide an efficient way for pedestrians to access the bridge

B. SCULPTURE COMMISSIONS: Significant commissions would attract national attention



2 STAIRS & SCULPTURES

A. STAIR STRUCTURE

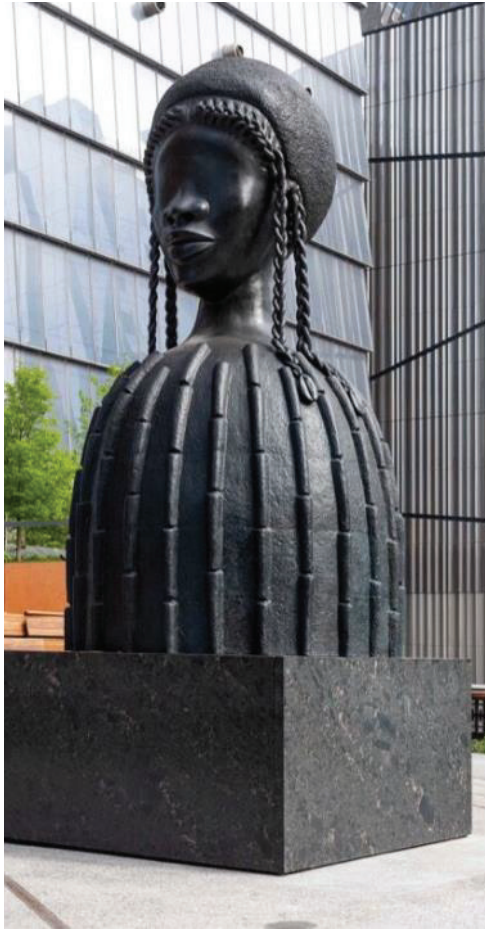
The committee proposes a stair structure be built to connect to the new bridge at the corner of 3rd Street and Broadway. The stairs would shorten the distance pedestrians would have to walk to reach the bridge crossing facility. It would augment the ramp facility on the south side of the river. Additionally, the stair provides an opportunity for artwork that could be seen from the River Market, increasing the attraction to the facility. Lighting could be used to enhance the structure and provide a measure of safety. The stair structure could be built as in conjunction with the linear park project connecting the old and new bridges.

A new stair structure on the southside, along with the bike/pedestrian ramp on the north side of the bridge provides two natural sculpture pedestal locations. The northside pedestal could raise a sculpture between the two bridge sections as part of the bike/ped ramp structure. The southern pedestal would serve as an attraction and give reason to climb the stairs to examine it more closely.

Estimated cost of stair structure
\$500,000

2 STAIRS & SCULPTURES

B. SCULPTURE COMMISSIONS



Simone Leigh, *Brick House*,
New York High Line



Kehinde Wiley, *Rumors of War*

There is a community expectation for artwork on the new bridge. Significant works of sculpture to memorialize Buck O'Neil on both sides of the river would enhance the bridge, draw people to his story, and serve as reminders of his legacy. The committee recommends a significant commission on the order of \$1 million for sculptures.

It is important that significant artwork be placed on **both sides** of the river as part of this commission. The artwork should reflect Buck O'Neil but does not have to be a literal interpretation. Capturing the spirit of a giant like Buck will be difficult, but worthy challenge.

Estimated cost of sculpture commission
\$1,000,000



*Ed Dwight, Jr. *Texas African American History Memorial*
Austin, Texas



*Ed Dwight, Jr. *Underground Railroad to Freedom Monument*
Ontario, Canada

The committee deliberately chose not to recommend a specific type of sculpture favoring an approach that leaves art to artists and encourages creativity.

While this project is not a One Percent for Art eligible project, the committee encourages MoDOT and the City to utilize the same process used to identify the artists at the new airport. A call for artists should come from the city's public art administrator and the Municipal Art Commission. A selection panel should review and select the artist(s).

Representatives from both sides of the river should be invited to participate as part of the selection panel.

*Born in Kansas City, Kansas in 1933, Dwight's father, Ed Dwight, Sr, played second base for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League.

3 MAXIMIZE THE MURALS



500 SQ. FT

3,800 SQ. FT

3 MAXIMIZE THE MURALS



ORIGINAL PROPOSED MURAL LOCATION

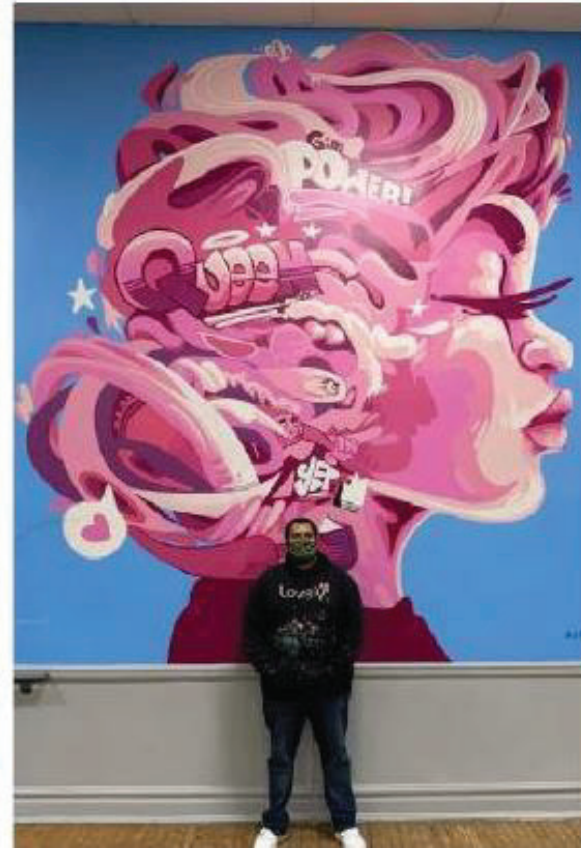
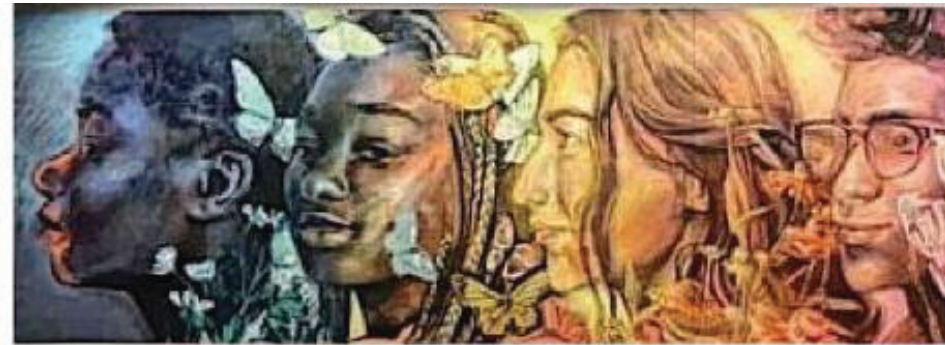
**SprayKC CONTACT
FOR PROJECT FOLLOW UP:**

Chris Haghirian
concertchris@gmail.com

Estimated cost of murals
TBD

Kansas City is in a mural renaissance and this project could be a tremendous opportunity to showcase local work in the medium. Public art in the form of large-scale murals should cover, protect and showcase large areas of the south landing. MoDOT has agreed to maximize the murals to increase their impact on the project.

The committee has reached out to SprayKC a Kansas City based non-profit who organizes, recruits artists, and executes mural commissions throughout the city.



SprayKC has a track record of excellence in mural art for both public and private commissions. At left is work on the Medical Professionals Building on the Plaza. At right are commissions at KC Girls Prepreatory School.



SprayKC recently completed multiple mural installations under I-670 in the West Bottoms.

- ▶ Along with Arts Tech, the Westport Center for the Arts, and Boys & Girls Club there is an opportunity to involve students in learning about both the art and business of mural work.

4 IMPROVING SAFETY & CONNECTIONS



4 IMPROVING SAFETY & CONNECTIONS



Micheal Kelley of BikeWalk KC is joined by City Manager Brian Platt and Mayor Lucas as he kicks off the city's Vision Zero initiative, an effort to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries on Kansas City streets by 2030.

MoDOT and the city should work to align the new O'Neil Bridge project with the city's Vision Zero initiative. Where the bridge connects with the city street grid, there are significant opportunities to improve safety. The 5th and Broadway intersection at the foot of the new bridge has potential for serious safety issues. Slip ramp(s)/free flow right turns can be dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

The committee urges all the project partners to make traffic control choices that value pedestrians' safety above speed throughout area.

Estimated cost of lights/trees/safety upgrades
\$250,000-\$500,000

4 IMPROVING SAFETY & CONNECTIONS

The new bridge configuration changes local traffic patterns in multiple ways. Much of the northbound rush hour traffic at 6th Street and Broadway will be diverted. Understanding traffic changes and adjusting the local street speeds and pedestrian connections will be critical to the overall safety of the new facility. The committee suggests a lower “Level of Service” is acceptable if there are fewer traffic related deaths and injuries throughout the area.

When possible, turning radius at corners and lane widths should be narrow and conform with River Market community plans. Efforts should be made to maximize pedestrian space throughout the project area. This area is an attractive “cut through” for truck traffic. Creative design solutions throughout the area may reduce the amount of truck traffic on the area’s neighborhood streets. Creative design can also assist in traffic and parking enforcement.

Thousands of residents live in the adjoining blocks of the new bridge facilities. Coordination with the city and neighborhood groups on parking, bicycle/pedestrian connections, tree canopy, and streetscaping will help better connect the bridge to the community.

4 IMPROVING SAFETY & CONNECTIONS

NORTHSIDE



The bicycle and pedestrian trail on the new bridge (red) will deliver users very close to the old TWA building. There may be a future opportunity to connect this facility with a levee river trail (white) in the future.

The north bicycle/pedestrian facility is an engineering challenge. There is very little room to safely get cyclists down to the surface roadway system. The proximity of the historic TWA building poses an additional obstacle.

Better connections and safety improvements on the northside of the river are possible and should be fully explored.

For instance, there is significant opportunity to connect this facility to the airport and a future levee trail system, while increasing its use and integrating it into North Kansas City's bike network.

The project is a chance to address ongoing challenges in the Harlem area improving safety and better utilizing this unique area.

4

RIVER MARKET IMPROVING SAFETY & CONNECTIONS

The River Market Community Improvement District completed an overall Streetscape and Amenities Plan to create a continuous framework and vision for future infrastructure investments. With stakeholder and public official input, the plan was adopted in 2018.

Using this excellent guide, the City and MoDOT should continue to work together to better integrate the new bridge design elements, streetscaping, and amenities with the River Market's adopted plan.



LITTER RECEPTACLE:
Victor Stanley: 24-gal. ES-135 (Black; w/ Dome Lid)



BIKE RACK:
Anova: Metro, Existing Fixture (Black)



PEDESTRIAN LIGHT FIXTURE:
Hood - Sternberg Lighting: Solana (Black)
Pole - AAL: PR4 14" Pole (Black)
Base - AAL: BC5 24" Int 2 Piece Base Cover (Black)



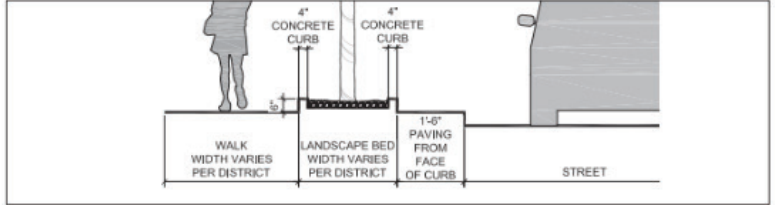
PROTOTYPICAL RIVER MARKET EAST AND WEST DISTRICT CROSS SECTION



PROTOTYPICAL RIVER MARKET EAST AND WEST DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE



DECORATIVE GRAVEL:
Sturgis Materials: 3/8" (Desert Cream; 3" Depth)



PLANTING BED:
4" Concrete Curb Edge (Gray)



STREET LIGHT FIXTURE:
Hood - Cobra -head on mounting arm
Pole - Black spun aluminum



SEATING ELEMENT:
Victor Stanley: 4' CR-10 with Mid-Rail (Black)



SPECIALTY PAVING:
4"x8" Endicott (Rose Blend)

15 **RIVER MARKET STREETScape & AMENITIES PLAN LINK**

Community generated vision for discussion
 with engineering challenges let to be worked through.
 Rendering by Confluence
<https://www.thinkconfluence.com/>



\$ ENHANCEMENTS BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY

- 1** Activating the Area
 - A. Old Bridge as Linear Park
est: \$50,000,000
 - B. New Skate Park
est: \$500,000-\$750,000
 - C. Storytelling Signage
est: \$250,000
- 2** Stairs & Sculptures;
 - A. Stair Structure
est: \$500,000
 - B. Sulpture Commissions
est: \$1,000,000
- 3** Maximizing the Murals
est: PENDING (MoDOT to cover)
- 4** Improving Safety & Connections
est: \$250,000-\$500,000
lights/trees/safety upgrades

TOTAL ENHANCEMENT REQUEST WITH OLD BRIDGE CONVERTED TO LINEAR PARK: \$52,500,000 - \$53,000,000

TOTAL ENHANCEMENT REQUEST WITHOUT OLD BRIDGE CONVERTED TO LINEAR PARK: \$2,250,000 - \$3,000,000

22