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Reconnecting the Westside

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Community Engagement Lead

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Eric Bunch

4th District Councilman, In-District

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Crispin Rea

4th District Councilman, At Large

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Nicolás Bosonetto

City Engineer

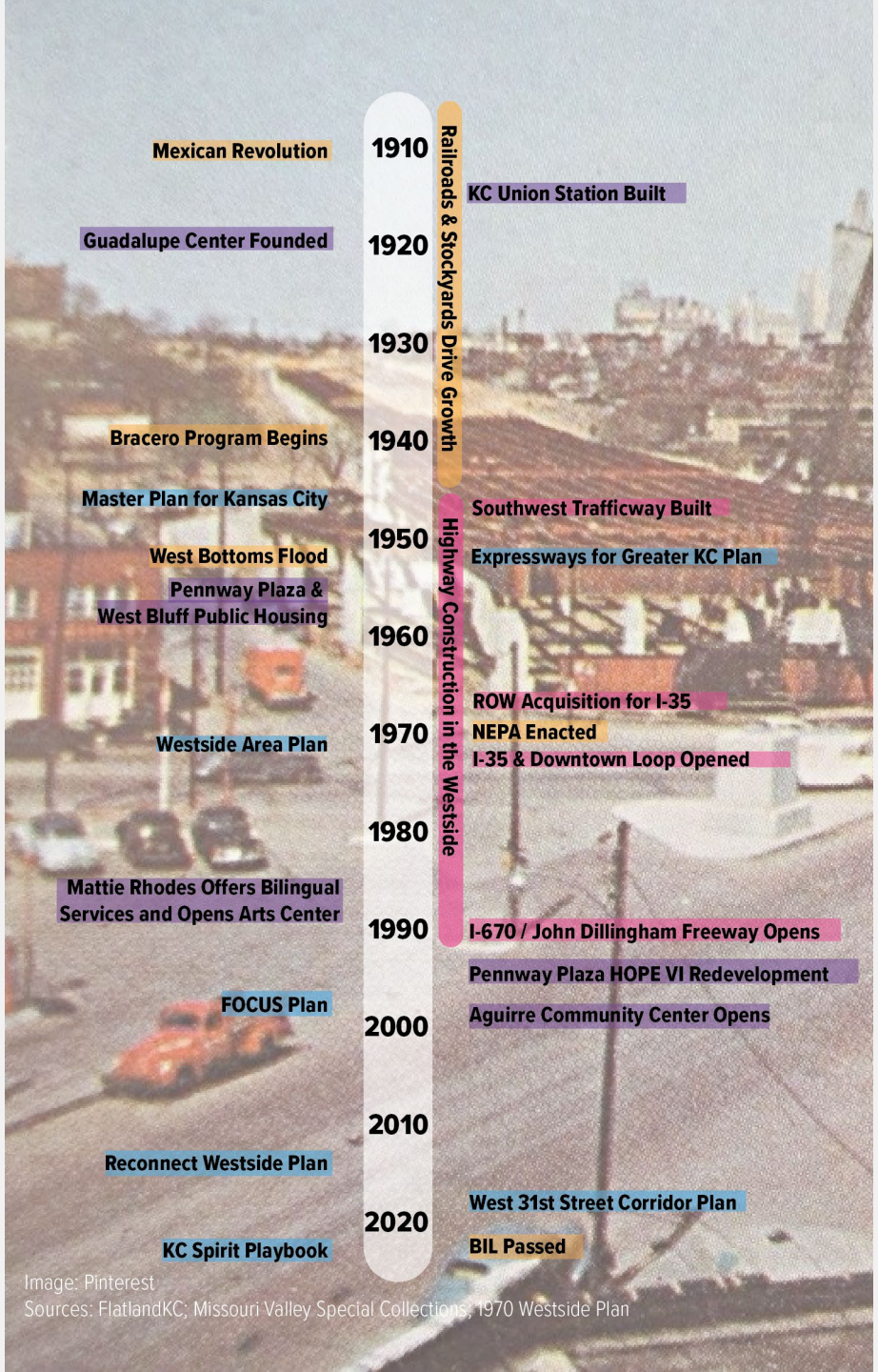


Image: Pinterest
Sources: FlatlandKC; Missouri Valley Special Collections; 1970 Westside Plan

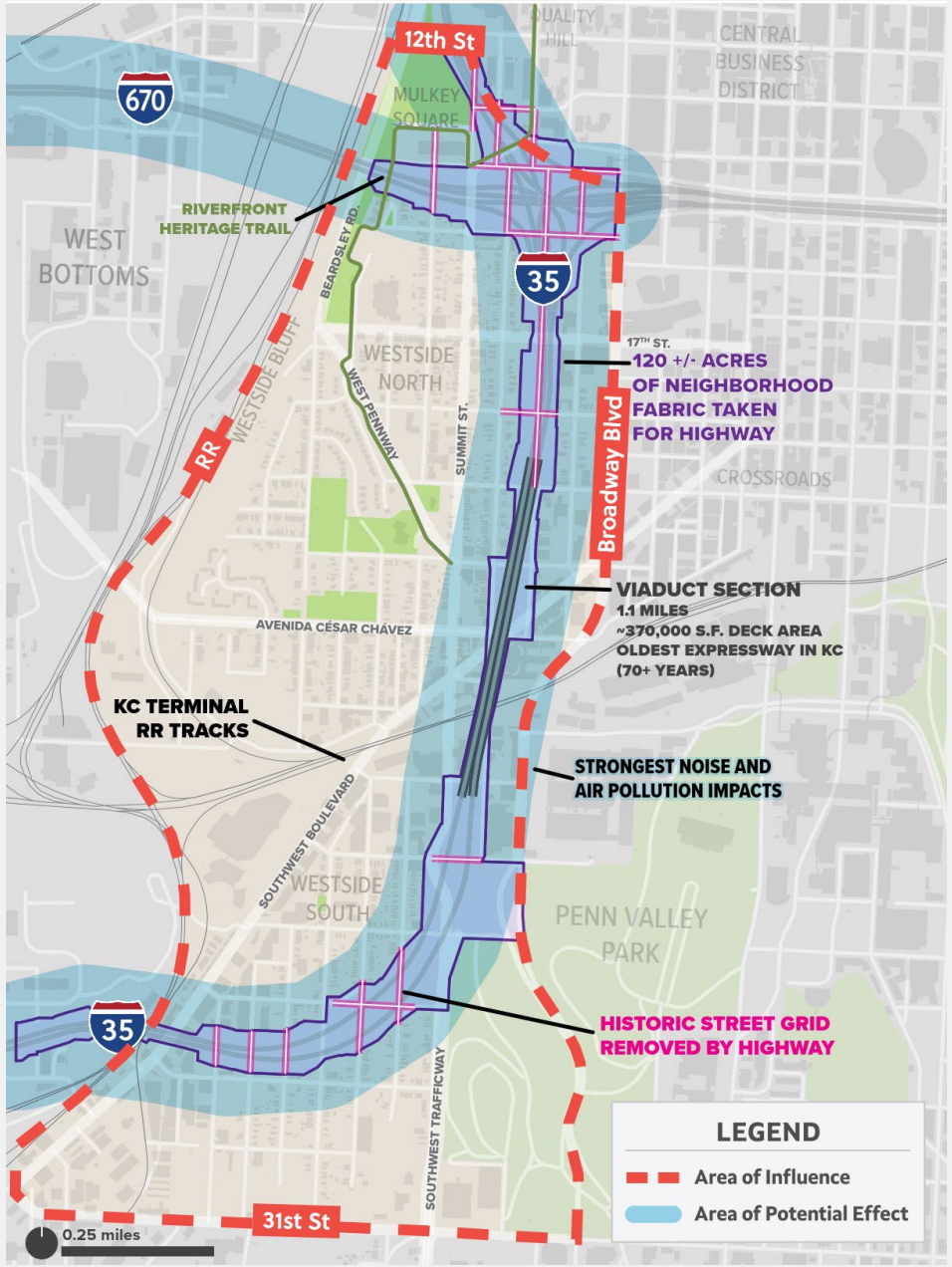
Brief History of Westside

- Growth and immigration in early 1900s
- Highway Construction 1950s-1970s
- Highways were typically built through minority/low-income neighborhoods

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Impacts of Highway

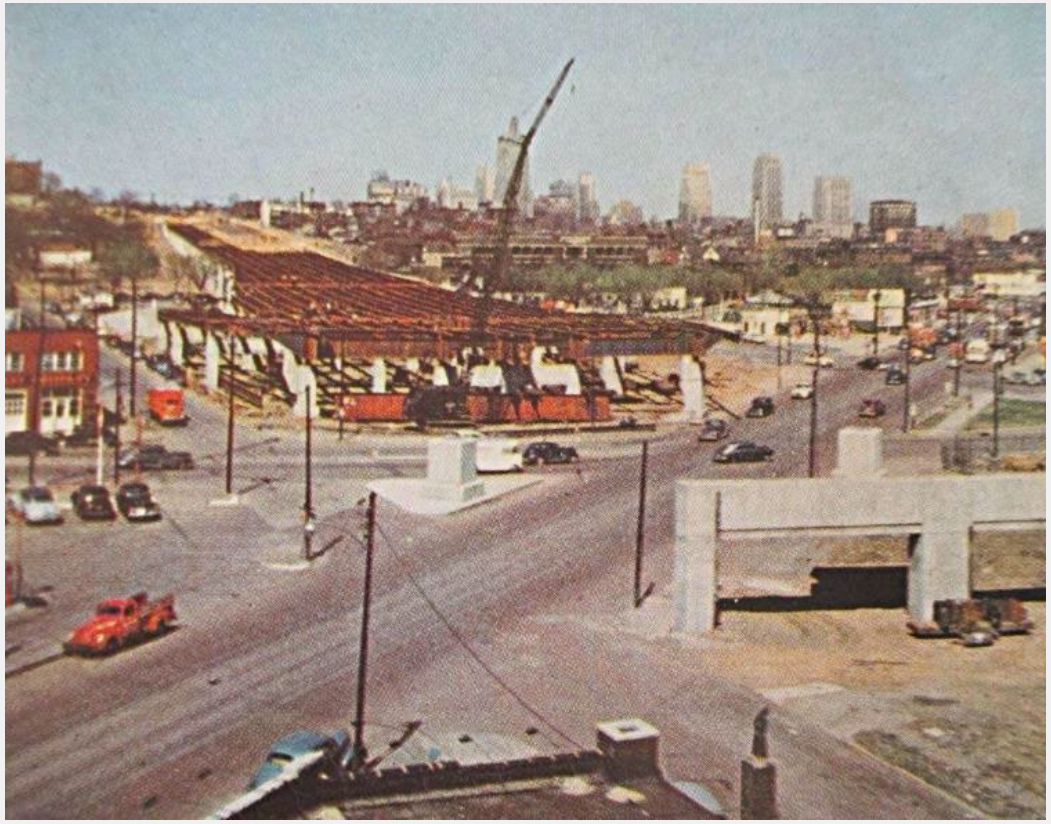
- Displacement of residents
- Pollution
  - Air Pollution
  - Noise Pollution
  - Light Pollution
- Negatively affects health of residents
- Bisects Westside
- Limits access and mobility
- Visually unattractive
- Separates Westside from the city



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I-35 Needs

- Current Viaduct is 70+ years old
- Built when Harry Truman was president – before Federal-Aid Highway Act
- Decision on major reinvestment in corridor will soon be necessary

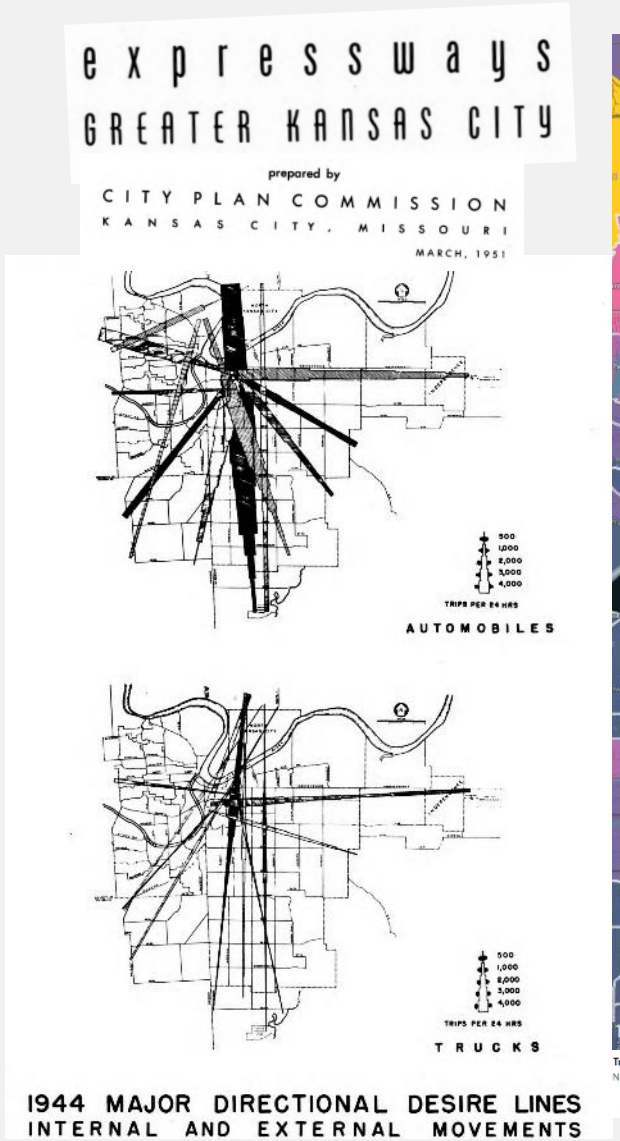


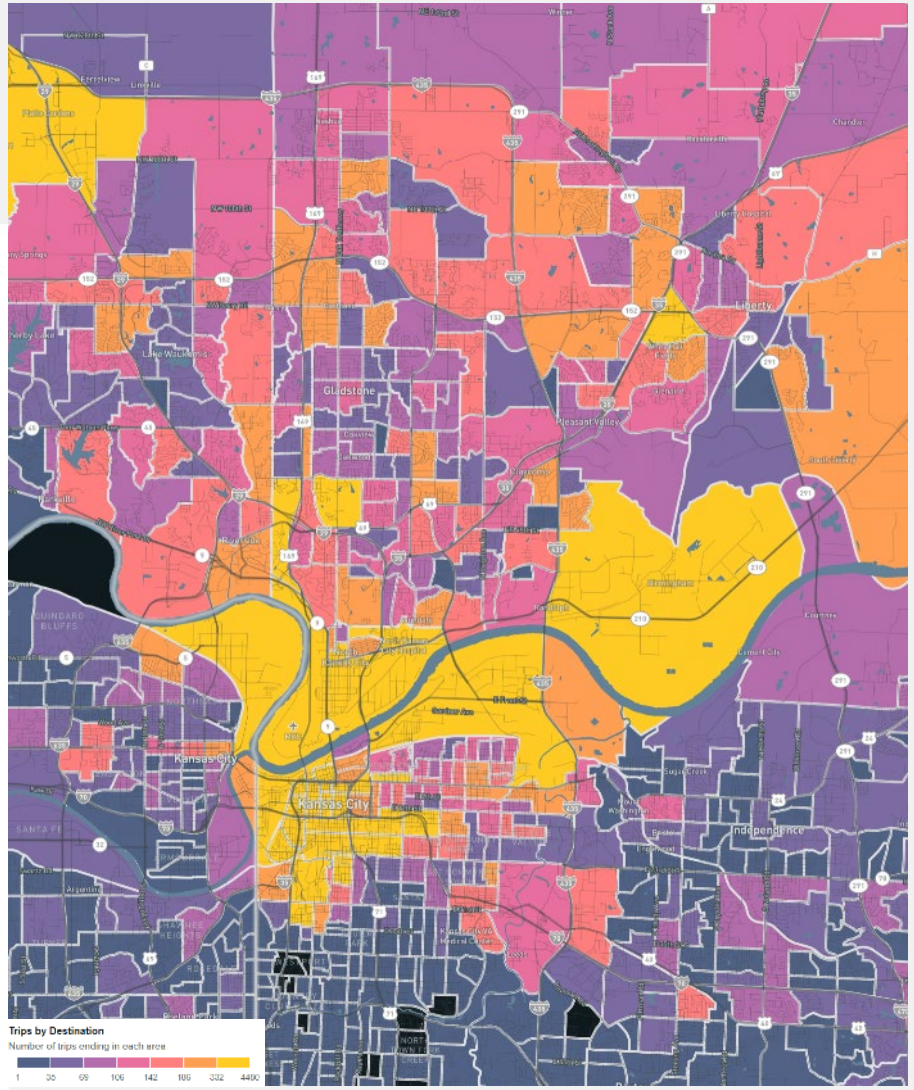


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Regional Mobility Trends

- Historic highway system planned for monocentric (downtown) mobility
- Today only **25-30%** of traffic on I-35 North is headed to the Greater Downtown Area





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Opportunities

- Reconnect Westside to the city
- Beautification
- Activate Public Space
- Green space
- Reduce pollution
- Environmental quality
- Improve health outcomes



EMILY CURIEL ecuriel@kcstar.com

Melissa Medrano, a dancer from Los Bailadores de Kansas City, performs a traditional folklórico dance as at First Fridays Under the Bridge in August.

KC highway underpass teems with Latino life on First Fridays



EMILY CURIEL ecuriel@kcstar.com

"Last year we wanted this community to be a part of what's taking place socially and economically across the Crossroads," says Pedro Zamora, executive director for Hispanic Economic Development Corp.

BY J.M. BANKS
jbanks@kcstar.com

First Fridays Under the Bridge greets your senses with an explosion of Hispanic culture, all at once.

The scent of street tacos fills the air as dancers adorned in colorful dresses prepare for a performance. Latin music blasts from the DJ booth as patrons talk excitedly, walking through the rows of vendors lining the pillars below the Interstate 35 bridge. The overpass creates a massive canopy protecting them from the harsh summer sun.

The vendors are the main event, and they sell everything: clothing, sandals, bags, ceramic goods, jewelry and face painting, to name just a few. Every First Friday from April to September, the site is home to a revolving door of local food trucks, many of them newly started ventures, still working to build a base and happy to share their tacos, burgers, burritos, quesadillas, tortillas and more with new customers.

SEE EVENT, 5A

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Reconnecting the Westside Grant

USDOT Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

- Focused on mitigating harm of past infrastructure investments that divided and displaced communities
- Authorized by Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
- Authorizes Capital Construction and **Community Planning Grants** (this Award)

Transportation- and Infrastructure-Related Barriers

- I-35, I-670 and connection to Central Business District
- Beardsley Road and connection to the Westside Bluff
- Internal Barriers (arterial streets, railroads, topography, water)

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Reconnecting Communities Grant

- $1 Million Grant awarded in March 2023
- One of 45 communities to receive the grant
- Plan for the future of the aging I-35 viaduct, which has passed its projected life span.
- Design connections between the Westside community and the Central Business District.
- Create design solutions for Beardsley Road to connect the Westside with economic and residential development in the West Bottoms. Currently, Beardsley Road is a dark and hazardous two-lane road.



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Project Schedule

Set-up
Fall 2024

Project Goals
Winter 2025 – Spring 2025

Existing Conditions
Winter 2025 – Spring 2025

Community Summits
Spring 2025 – Fall 2025

Initial Alternatives
Spring 2025 – Summer 2025

Refined Alternatives
Summer 2025 – Winter 2026

Final Report
Winter 2026

Sign up for Updates:

www.ReconnectWestside.com

contact@ReconnectWestside.com

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