

Implementing ARRA

Design Snapshot

Kansas City's Green Impact Zone: Targeting ARRA for Neighborhood Uplift

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The [Green Impact Zone](#) is a 150-block area in Kansas City's urban core that has been devastated over the years by high rates of poverty and violence, high levels of unemployment and crime, and high concentrations of vacant and abandoned properties. For that reason, [Rep. Emanuel Cleaver](#) (D-Mo.), from Kansas City, conceived the idea—quickly endorsed by other local and regional leaders—of connecting a range of stimulus-funded programs over the next two years to target dollars to this one area to jump-start its economic recovery and community revitalization.

Kansas City's Green Impact Zone	
Purpose:	Target various stimulus funding opportunities to speed economic recovery in one distressed area and jumpstart long-term transformation
Lead entity:	Metropolitan planning organization
Partners:	Neighborhood organizations, local nonprofits, city council, city departments, electric utility, area university, and businesses
ARRA focus (selected):	Surface Transportation Program, Justice Assistance Program, Weatherization Assistance Program, Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
Scale:	Downtown-adjacent neighborhood of 150 blocks
Strategies:	Reflects a long-term regional vision; adopts multi-sectoral approaches; embraces integrated solutions; employs information management, data, and benchmarking
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The Green Impact Zone advances interconnected goal-setting to turn around every aspect of this one, central-city area of Kansas City, Missouri, to make it an attractive place to live and work. While historically underserved, the zone includes some substantial assets, including several strong neighborhood groups; community, cultural and health centers; and proximity to an important health sciences cluster and major roadways. To build on these assets and develop others, the zone is pursuing a multi-faceted strategy—motivated by stimulus funding opportunities—around enhancing the area's sustainability, public safety, stabilization, housing conditions, access to jobs and services, and economic vitality.

Some specific plans include weatherizing every home that needs it to save homeowners money; demolishing dangerous buildings; repaving streets; replacing a key neighborhood bridge; establishing a bus rapid transit system, providing a comprehensive job training and placement program, providing integrated community policing and neighborhood services, and expanding the capacity of neighborhood-based organizations. The zone strategy also involves

developing a sustainable strategy for the area, instituting a smart-grid project, and demonstrating how climate protection strategies can be implemented at the neighborhood level, benefiting both the neighborhood and the region. A key feature cutting across all these plans is training the jobless in the zone to do all the new work and connect with opportunities outside of the zone.

Plans for the Green Impact Zone connect different ARRA funding flows and leverage existing publically-funded projects in the area. To date, \$13 million in stimulus transportation funds have been allocated to upgrading a key area bridge, and zone stakeholders have submitted a joint application for \$3 million from the ARRA-funded [Justice Assistance Program](#) for community policing and other neighborhood-based services. Other ARRA funding that may be tapped into includes [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants](#) and the [Weatherization Assistance Program](#). Additionally, zone organizers plan to submit other grant applications that would include the zone, if not exclusively for it, through ARRA programs such as the [Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery](#), [Pathways out of Poverty](#), [smart grid funding](#), and [Nonprofit Capacity Building](#). To make these ARRA programs as effective as possible in realizing the vision for the zone, neighborhood outreach workers are working closely with each program to integrate them at the individual or home level. How much money will eventually flow to the targeted zone is still an unknown, but every effort is being made to identify and pursue funding opportunities.

The Green Impact Zone is by design a hugely collaborative, cross-institutional undertaking. Its multi-dimensional vision demands the engagement of various government agencies, community nonprofits, private-sector contractors and utilities, and other institutions. The city council in Kansas City unanimously passed a resolution to advance the Green Impact Zone initiative by partnering with the [Mid-America Regional Council \(MARC\)](#), the region's metropolitan planning organization, on operational and financing activities, as appropriate. For its part, MARC has taken the lead role in organizing participants and has convened weekly meetings since early March 2009 between city departments, six neighborhood groups from the zone, four community development organizations, Kansas City employment and energy nonprofits, and other organizations impacting the area.

Active involvement with nonprofits, business, and civic leadership is particularly crucial for ensuring that the Green Impact Zone projects are carried through on the ground. The neighborhood and community groups are vital to insure that residents support and participate in the new initiative and the employment and energy nonprofits are important for joining up the weatherization and job creation goals.

Also involved in the Green Impact Zone is the local electric utility, [Kansas City Power & Light](#), which plans to undertake the area's smart-grid project and look into alternative energy options for the zone's businesses and institutions. Further, the [University of Missouri-Kansas City \(UMKC\)](#) intends to provide demographic data about the zone and its neighborhoods so that the initiative may make informed investment decisions and track outcomes.

Indeed, evaluation and measuring impact is a key element of the Green Impact Zone initiative. UMKC data will be used to develop a baseline measurement of where the zone stands in terms of expressed goals, such as sustainability, employment growth, and improved housing conditions. Benchmarks for outcomes will be set so progress may be measured going forward.

The Implementing ARRA Series

America's current economic crisis is not only a national crisis. It is also a metropolitan crisis. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the progress of creative metropolitan leaders who are leveraging the myriad resources provided by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). To that end, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Implementing ARRA Series is tracking the implementation work of metropolitan leaders, assessing their progress and struggles, and extracting from the innovators' experiences ideas for short- and long-term federal policy reforms. Ultimately it is hoped the series will serve as a resource for best-practice exchange among regions and a source of ideas for designing the next generation of metro-friendly federal policies.

For More Information

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