



Institutional and Cultural Development

Many cities across the country are beginning to understand the importance of institutional or cultural facilities and programming to the City's reputation and quality of life. The Community Center and the Riverside Public Library are amenities that have provided the residents of the City with opportunities to gather and interact. In fact, the Riverside Public Library was mentioned by several citizens in the Community Survey as being their favorite part of living in Riverside. Facilities like these provide character to the City and are opportunities to shape the ways citizens interact with each other and with the City government. The reputation and quality of life in Riverside could be further enhanced by expanding these institutional and cultural offerings.

COMMUNITY CENTER DEVELOPMENT

During the interviews some interesting ideas for possible cultural improvements were suggested and should be given additional thought. One common request was for an expansion of, or a new facility for, the Community Center. Some residents expressed a desire for a better facility for athletics and other activities for both children and adults. This could be done as an addition to the existing building or as a new structure in a redevelopment area that would catalyze future growth.

HISTORIC EXHIBIT

Another interesting idea centered on the thousands of ancient artifacts that have been uncovered in the City. These relics tell a fascinating story about the history of Riverside and are an important part of the character of the City. The corner of Vivion and Gateway roads is a heavily trafficked intersection and represents one of the most significant areas for noticeable improvement. The library's proximity to the intersection makes it a good candidate for an expansion on the east side of the building. This new wing could house many of the artifacts uncovered by archeologists digging into Riverside's many mound sites.

THE "BOSS" TOM MUSEUM

Riverside has a history of another kind that would also garner the interest of citizens and potential visitors from around the City and even the country. "Boss" Tom Pendergast had an extraordinary impact and legacy on the Kansas City metropolitan area. Pendergast's support of organized labor, strong-arm tactics, mob ties, civic influence and his proclivities for gambling transformed Kansas City. He ran Kansas City during the economically difficult 1930s and the City actually fared better than many of its contemporaries. However, his absolute power over the government and police force transformed the City into a wide-open vice City replete with saloons and mob hangouts. His story is arguably the most compelling of any Kansas City resident's and his national

reputation has drawn the attention of history buffs and other interested tourists from around the country. Riverside has a very strong tie to Pendergast and his historic race track. In its heyday, the Riverside Park Jockey Club was drawing crowds to Riverside on the interurban rail line. On Memorial Day 1935 the two-season track drew 17,000 spectators to watch the races.

There are still remnants of the race park in Riverside and there is a unique opportunity to capitalize on "Boss" Tom's ties to the City by creating a museum focusing on the life of one of Kansas City's most famous and glamorous characters. The City of Riverside could promote this museum and provide for its inception. While the museum would not likely ever be a direct money maker, its impact on the surrounding development, the perception of the City, and the number of visitors brought to town to feed local businesses would be significant.



The Riverside Library could hold some of the City's historic artifacts.



"Boss" Tom ran Kansas City in the 20's and 30's. His race track brought scores of visitors to Riverside.



This old concrete structure still flies the flagpoles from the original Riverside Park Jockey Club.