

# Become a Community for All Ages

*A checklist to help you become age friendly*

**KC** Communities  
for All Ages

September 2014

Does your city or county need tools to help it become a Community for All Ages? This checklist is designed to be used together with *Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities* as a way to raise awareness, plan actions and assess your city for age friendliness.

The first suburbs of Kansas City, established nearly 60 years ago, have done exactly what they were intended to do — provide homes and services for families that raised the generation of Americans we now call the baby boomers. But, as the baby boomers have aged, and the oldest of the generation known as the millennials (young adults born between 1982 and 2004, now age 10 to 32) have come into adulthood, it is time to reevaluate the role that the suburbs play in housing and serving the American population.

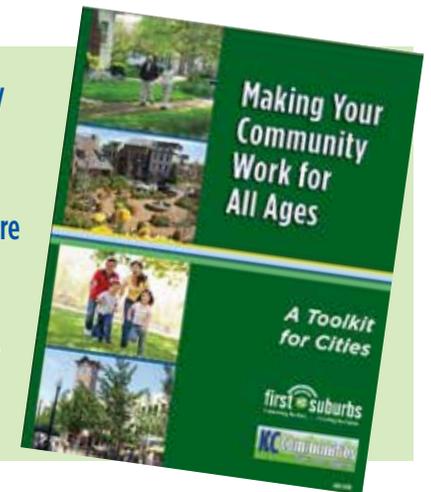


**Kansas City's first suburbs can evolve in response to new trends and needs as communities for all ages.**

A community for all ages seeks to meet the needs and interests of the very old, the very young and everyone in between. A key driver for this work is the rapidly changing older adult demographics.

The post-war population swell known as the baby boom is paving the way for the next “baby boomlet,” the generation known as the millennials that followed the smaller Generation X (ages 33 to 53) population. Today, the oldest baby boomers are in their late 60s. By 2030, one

*Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities* provides detailed information on steps that communities can take to become more age friendly. The toolkit is available at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org), or contact Cathy Boyer-Shesol at [cboyer@marc.org](mailto:cboyer@marc.org) or 816/701-8246 to get a printed copy.



in five Americans — or 72,774,000 million — will be older than 65, while researchers estimate there will be 76 million millennials in the U.S. at that time.

In the Greater Kansas City area, more than 416,000 residents will be 65 or older in 2030, while approximately 633,000 millennials will live here. Historically, the needs and interests of older adults have been seen as vastly different from younger generations and those of families with young children.



**Today, research shows that communities that are adapting to meet the needs of its older adult citizens raise the quality of life in ways that also appeal across the age spectrum.**

**Ample evidence supports the idea that consumer demand for healthy communities — walkable, vibrant places designed around transit and green spaces — has never been higher.** Numerous studies show that demand for compact, mixed-use, transit-accessible development far outstrips current supply. Walkable communities are in such high demand, in fact, that homes in such areas bring from 40 to 100 percent higher sales and lease prices than those in more traditional, automobile-oriented communities.

Consumer demand for healthy communities is particularly prominent among millennials, who are increasingly seeking alternatives to the automobile-centered land-use patterns of the generations before them.



**Integrating health into planning and development policy can become an economic development strategy — a tool to attract a skilled workforce and to build an innovative and sustainable economic base.\*** Evidence shows a connection between highly-connected residents and the resilience of their community. Policies and programs that support keeping people in their homes and connected to their networks and communities allows residents of all ages to feel safe and comfortable. This connectedness contributes to a sense of well-being, as well as the ability to respond to unforeseen problems.

\* Source: Eitler, Thomas W., Edward T. McMahon, and Theodore C. Thoerig. *Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2013.

## **The Kansas City region is taking on the challenge of creating communities for all ages** by developing this checklist to be used alongside *Making Your Community*

*Work for All Ages: A Toolkit for Cities*. The toolkit was designed to help local government officials consider measures to improve the quality of life and opportunities for healthy living for older adult residents in the Kansas City region's older suburbs, as well as address the needs and interests of residents of all ages.

This draft checklist was developed by KC Communities for All Ages and the First Suburbs Coalition for use by officials and staff of the region's First Suburbs' communities. Based on the Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities, which is being used by hundreds of communities around the U.S., it identifies policy and program options in six categories that city leaders can implement to be considered a community for all ages. Although piloted by First Suburbs cities, all cities will find the policy and program options valuable as they adapt to changing community demographics.



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# How to use this checklist

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Communities throughout the nation face dramatic demographic changes — doubling of the older adult population over the next 20 years, fewer families with children, more millennials and more people of color. In response, communities are beginning to plan for these changes, and conversations focus on how the demographic shifts will impact communities and what actions communities should take to prepare for the future. The Communities for All Ages Program and the First Suburbs Coalition have developed this checklist to help communities evaluate current conditions to answer these questions. Below are some ways you can use the checklist to help your community build a community for all ages.

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## To raise awareness

Use the checklist to build community awareness of the changing demographics of U.S. communities.



Before a community can develop strategy or take actions to build a multi-generational community, it's best to build awareness of the expected demographic changes and why it's important to address them. This information needs to be shared with not only civic, business and public leaders, but the broader community as well. Following are some suggested steps that will help your community spark a conversation about communities for all ages and build community understanding for action:

1. Determine who will convene the conversation.
  - The local jurisdiction can serve as the convener, OR
  - A third party may serve as the convener of the conversation. This might be a local business, social service agency or other community organization.
  - It is important for the convener of the conversation to have knowledge and connections to the community.
  - If the convener is not the local government, be sure to include elected officials and city staff. They will have important information about the city and be interested to hear the discussion.
2. Define specific goals for the conversation. What is the purpose of the conversation? To provide information so residents are more informed about changes in the city's makeup? To lay the groundwork for future planning? Also decide what, if anything, will happen after the discussion is completed — participants will want to know what's next.
3. Gather data and information.
  - Get the most up-to-date demographic data for your jurisdiction from:
    - Your local planning department.
    - Mid-America Regional Council — [www.marc.org/Data-Economy](http://www.marc.org/Data-Economy).
    - U.S. Census Bureau — <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.
  - Access additional background information from organizations such as the American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute, AARP, Journal of Aging and Social Policy, and the National Association of Realtors. Here are some good examples:
    - *Investing in Place: Two Generation's View on the Future of Communities* [www.planning.org/policy/polls/investing/pdf/pollinvestingreport.pdf](http://www.planning.org/policy/polls/investing/pdf/pollinvestingreport.pdf).

- *Multigenerational Planning: Using Smart Growth and Universal Design to Link the Needs of Children and the Aging Population* [www.planning.org/research/family/briefingpapers/pdf/multigenerational.pdf](http://www.planning.org/research/family/briefingpapers/pdf/multigenerational.pdf).
  - Make sure you have the most up-to-date version of the checklist from [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org).
  - Use *Making Your Community Work for All Ages – A Toolkit for Cities*, July 2013, available from [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org).
  - Provide a facilitator to lead the community discussion. This individual will keep the meeting on track and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.
4. Identify and convene a group including:
    - Elected officials and city staff. Be sure to include planning, parks and recreation, public works, transportation, communication and administration staff.
    - Community partners: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, businesses such as developers, remodelers, real estate professionals.
    - Residents: diverse, multi-generational resident representation.
  5. Provide a clear ending to the conversation and direction if participants want to know or do more.
  6. Share your feedback with other cities through MARC’s KC Communities for All Ages and First Suburbs Coalition ([cboyer@marc.org](mailto:cboyer@marc.org)).

## To plan action



By considering the checklist’s policies and actions whenever a city is setting goals and priorities, or when a city is developing or revising its plans (such as a comprehensive plan), it can position itself to be a community for all ages. Here are some suggested steps a city can take:

1. Develop a clear description of how the checklist can supplement other planning or prioritization processes.
2. Gather data and information.
  - Up-to-date demographic data for city and region. (See sources above.)
  - Existing plans (comprehensive plan, parks and recreation master plan, transportation plan, etc.).
  - City policies.
  - *Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities*. (See source above.)
3. Identify and convene a group including:
  - Elected officials and city staff: Be sure to include planning, parks and recreation, public works, transportation, communication and administration staff.
  - Community partners: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, businesses such as developers, remodelers, real estate professionals.
  - Residents: diverse, multi-generational resident representation.
4. Document in meeting notes how the checklist was used. Note specific examples if the checklist and toolkit caused the group to reconsider or adjust priorities, proposed policies or actions for the city.
5. Share your feedback with other cities through MARC’s KC Communities for All Ages and First Suburbs Coalition ([cboyer@marc.org](mailto:cboyer@marc.org)).

## To assess your city



As communities engage in this work, they will want to track whether city policies and actions increasingly reflect those outlined in the checklist, and the impacts policies and actions are having on housing, transportation, outdoor spaces and buildings, social and civic participation and the availability of services. A city could consider these steps:

1. Identify staff or consultant resources dedicated to tracking and measuring progress.
2. Decide on the time intervals for making the assessment; for example, every two years, or every time a specific plan is updated.
3. Determine the extent to which plans have been updated and implemented. For example: comprehensive plan, parks and recreation master plan, transportation plan or Communities for All Ages Action Plan.
4. Measure, to the extent possible, the return on investment, or the benefits (tangible and intangible) that result from using the checklist to periodically gauge progress.
5. Involve stakeholders and the public in the assessment.
6. Document the findings and report them to the community.
7. Share your feedback with other cities through MARC's KC Communities for All Ages and First Suburbs Coalition (cboyer@marc.org).

**T**he checklist includes both policy development (Policy) and implementation (Actions) criteria.

It was tested by four pilot communities during the spring of 2014 — Gladstone and Raytown, Missouri, and Prairie Village and Mission, Kansas. The testing process has helped in the refinement of the checklist.

There is now regional discussion about criteria and steps toward a Communities for All Ages recognition program and possible certification, based on the foundational work of these four pilot communities.

A workbook version of this checklist, with space for recording your information and progress, will be available in August 2014 at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org).

This checklist will be revised as necessary. Visit [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org) for the latest version.



# 1

## Public outdoor spaces and buildings



(See *Making Your Community Work for All Ages – A Toolkit for Cities*, Chapter 2)

### Locate, design and construct public facilities to allow for connectivity with neighborhoods and other destinations, and enable maximum use and benefit by residents, visitors and employees of all ages.

Cities are responsible for the location, design and construction of parks, trails, community centers, city halls and other public facilities and spaces. Most communities have assessed these facilities to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and some have taken steps to make improvements beyond the minimums established by ADA.

Physical limitations and mobility needs must be considered when designing and creating both outdoor spaces and buildings. Residents with physical limitations are more comfortable, safe and active when communities consider and address their needs in the design of public buildings and spaces. The following policies and actions provide guidance on maximizing physical accessibility to public spaces for all levels of ability and age.

#### Policy

**1-A** The city develops and implements age-friendly policies that consider the needs of persons of all ages in the siting, design and development of public spaces. Examples include: parks and other outdoor spaces, walkways, outdoor seating, streetscapes and buildings.

**1-B** The city plans and constructs bike and pedestrian facilities to maximize use and safety for all users. Examples include: width, surface material and expected use. The city may use the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Highway Safety Manual standards or other recognized standards for bicycle and pedestrian facility design.

**1-C** The city designs and builds its public buildings to meet the needs of residents of all ages. Examples include: easy-to-read signage and accessible elevators, ramps, railings and stairs, and non-slip floors.

**1-D** The city prioritizes safety in parks and neighborhoods. Examples include: providing good street lighting, trimmed trees and bushes and other appropriate safety measures.

**1-E** The city involves residents of varying ages and abilities in planning for the siting and design of public outdoor spaces and buildings.

#### Action

**1-F** The city provides seating areas in public outdoor spaces and outside public buildings in recognition that residents have different levels of mobility and stamina.

**1-G** Stairways on public property, including within park facilities, are designed and constructed to maximize safety. Examples include: railings and painted or taped stair tips to distinguish each step.

**1-H** The city provides ample parking and drop-off areas near the entrances to public facilities that meets mobility and accessibility needs of all citizens. (ADA requirements are an expected minimum, the composition of the community and the expected use of a facility may dictate additional spaces to improve resident experience at public facilities.)

**1-I** The city considers the mobility needs and stamina of all citizens in accessing city services and provides flexible customer arrangements. Examples include: separate waiting lines and seating if the wait is long, special queues and service counters and online and mail-in access.

**1-J** The city encourages walkability in downtown areas.

To record your progress, a workbook version of the checklist will be available at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org) in August 2014.

# 2

## Housing and commercial development



*(See Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities, Chapter 3)*

### Provide age-friendly housing options.

Studies document that older citizens wish to “age in place.” Buyers and renters of all ages are becoming wary of the costs of commuting long distances. Communities that provide a range of age-friendly housing options will retain their older adult residents and provide an attractive alternative for all ages looking for housing.

Cities have a role in the siting and design of housing and commercial development through their planning and regulatory processes. Through these processes, cities can impact how well development meets the needs of all populations.

#### Policy

**2-A** The city conducts an audit of its development codes to ensure that a range of housing options are allowed, particularly in places connected to public transit, employment centers and community services.

**2-B** The city has in place policies to allow for and encourage a range of housing options, including accessory and shared dwellings that meet the needs of all ages and generations.

**2-C** The city evaluates and streamlines its building code review processes to be consistent with adopted plans and policies, including those that reduce costs and provide housing in a range of cost points.

**2-D** The city has in place policies that encourage developers to include features in new or restored housing stock that meets the different mobility needs of as many people as possible. Cities may refer to universal design, enabling design, visitability features or other design elements.

**2-E** The city evaluates its zoning and building code review processes to ensure that the siting and design of commercial properties consider the needs of users of all ages.

#### Action

**2-F** The city uses its property maintenance enforcement to support neighborhood quality and, as appropriate, assists property owners in identifying resources to maintain their homes.

**2-G** The city and its partners make information available about housing options within the city that meet different mobility and dependence levels.

**2-H** The city has a property tax relief program for homeowners with a fixed income who meet defined criteria (if allowed under state law).

**2-I** The city and its partners offer residents information about assessing and protecting their property to strengthen crime prevention.

To record your progress, a workbook version of the checklist will be available at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org) in August 2014.

# 3

## Transportation and mobility



(See *Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities, Chapter 4*)

### Ensure that the community transportation system meets the needs of all users.

Healthy, vibrant communities provide multiple, accessible transportation options that contribute to the independence of all residents. Young adults, baby boomers and all ages increasingly seek and choose communities where they can walk, bike or access transit to get to school, work, services and entertainment.

There are many resources available to help a city meet this criterion, including guidelines and checklists provided by the National Complete Streets Coalition ([www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets)), U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Bikeability Checklist ([www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/bikeability/](http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/bikeability/)); Bicycle Friendly America ([www.bikeleague.org/bfa](http://www.bikeleague.org/bfa)); and Walk-Friendly Communities. ([www.walkfriendly.org/](http://www.walkfriendly.org/)). These guidelines help communities ensure that the transportation system meets the needs of all users. Cities can work proactively with local transit operators to plan and implement transit services to address the needs of their residents and workforce.

#### Policy

- 3-A** The city addresses multiple transportation modes in its comprehensive plan.
- 3-B** The city has adopted a Complete Streets resolution or comparable policy and is taking steps to implement the policy.
- 3-C** The city — with or without a transit partner — works to ensure public transportation stops and stations have infrastructure that meets the needs of all ages and abilities. Examples include: shelter with lighting, benches and curb cuts.
- 3-D** The city and its partners review and consider adoption of older driver and pedestrian safety provisions in the region's long-range safety plan. The city may use *Toward Zero Deaths 2013–2017*, or other recognized standards as guidance.

#### Action

- 3-E** The city works with partners, including transportation providers, to develop and implement strategies to support independence of non-drivers and those with additional needs for assistance in using transportation options.
- 3-F** The city and its partners provide resource information on where residents can find transportation options.
- 3-G** The city constructs pedestrian facilities to allow for safe travel to transit stops and stations from neighborhoods and other locations.
- 3-H** The city and its partners provide resource information for determining older driver competency and the supports available for transitioning from driver to passenger.
- 3-I** The city has considered application for or has achieved the Walk-Friendly Community designation from the Pedestrian Bicycle Information Center. ([www.walkfriendly.org](http://www.walkfriendly.org))
- 3-J** The city has considered application for or has achieved the Bicycle Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclists. ([www.bikeleague.org/bfa](http://www.bikeleague.org/bfa))

To record your progress, a workbook version of the checklist will be available at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org) in August 2014.

# 4

## Social inclusion, communication and participation



*(See Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities, Chapters 2 and 5)*

### Include all residents in developing community activities and adapt communication strategies for multiple audiences.

By leveraging the knowledge, skills and abilities of all residents and including them in decision-making, communities create a competitive advantage for themselves. Cities will benefit when residents of all ages are an integral part of a community and the cities are knowledgeable about their diverse needs.

Meaningful participation in affordable community activities helps residents to develop relationships, maintain good health and have a sense of belonging. Cities obtain input from all residents to develop community activities that will engage residents and meet their needs.

#### Policy

**4-A** The city and its partners understand the demographic makeup of residents, engages with the community and then designs programming, including recreational opportunities, that respects the needs and interests of diverse populations.

**4-B** The city has a comprehensive communication plan with marketing and outreach strategies and tools that include diverse public imagery, depicting all ages, cultures and abilities.

**4-C** The city communications plan requires that information about accessibility of facilities and transportation options is included when publishing information about city activities and events.

#### Action

**4-D** The city communication plan includes strategies to work with partners to inform people at risk of social isolation about community activities and events.

**4-E** The city partners with community organizations to develop and implement opportunities for utilizing and showcasing the skills and contributions of all ages, cultures and abilities.

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# 5

## Civic participation and employment



*(See Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities, Chapter 5)*

### Provide opportunities for residents to be involved and keep all residents informed of city affairs and of employment and volunteer opportunities and other ways to be engaged.

With increased levels of involvement in community affairs and civic life, citizens are well positioned to build connections and support communities for all ages.

Cities will benefit from welcoming residents to be employed or become involved in city affairs. Input and participation from residents of all ages will strengthen the city's programs and services.

#### Policy

**5-A** The city has a policy in place to encourage civic participation by all age groups in the community.

**5-E** The city and its partners encourage local businesses to adopt flexible employment practices to meet the needs of citizens of all ages.

#### Action

**5-B** The city maintains and promotes a list of volunteer and employment opportunities within city government and offers an easy means to apply, including drop in, mail, on line and telephone.

**5-F** The city and its partners develop an outreach plan to ensure residents of all ages are included in community and civic conversations.

**5-C** The city provides flexible options for volunteers of all ages and abilities, including training, recognition and guidance.

**5-G** The city ensures that meeting locations are accessible to all residents and meet the communication needs and challenges of diverse populations.

**5-D** The city encourages stakeholders, community organizations and nonprofits serving its community to work with volunteers of all ages, cultures and abilities, using best practices and guidelines for volunteer engagement and management promoted by organizations such as the Shepherd Center's Coming of Age, the United Way of Greater Kansas City, United Way of Wyandotte County and Nonprofit Connect.

To record your progress, a workbook version of the checklist will be available at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org) in August 2014.

# 6

## Community and health services



*(See Making Your Community Work for All Ages — A Toolkit for Cities, Chapter 6)*

### Offer a range of community and health services that address the needs of all ages.

Many residents desire easy access to a range of health and social services. Communities that address the community and health services needs of residents can generate value from both a real estate and a community health perspective.

Local governments may offer a range of direct services at their public facilities or work with private for-profit or nonprofit providers to deliver services using city facilities. In some cases, communities identify health needs and encourage private providers to locate programs and services in the city.

### Policy

**6-A** Applicable city plans recognize the need for health care services that are accessible to all residents and served by transportation options.

### Action

**6-B** The city, in partnership with area health care organizations, makes arrangements to offer health services at community facilities. Examples include: hearing tests, hearing aid cleaning, flu shots, blood pressure checks, etc.

**6-C** The city, in partnership with the local public health department, publicizes plans and services to improve the rate of immunizations among city residents.

**6-D** The city has educated personnel to ensure those who work with the public are knowledgeable about specialized needs for citizens of different ages and abilities. Personnel are also trained in applicable reporting requirements of abuse or neglect, regardless of age.

**6-E** The city promotes and enables the location of full-service grocery stores and retail establishments to expand the availability of healthy food options.

**6-F** The city works with local ambulance providers to ensure city demographic information is incorporated into planning for services.

**6-G** The city, in partnership with area health care organizations, has developed and implemented education programs about healthy choices and preventive services, including the benefit of smoking cessation.

**6-H** The city encourages healthy eating by providing information to residents about programs such as home-delivered meals, food banks or other resources.

**6-I** The city encourages healthy eating and community participation by supporting community gardens and other initiatives that promote healthy eating.

**6-J** The city and its partners provide referrals to those residents identified as needing more intensive services.

To record your progress, a workbook version of the checklist will be available at [www.kccfaa.org](http://www.kccfaa.org) in August 2014.

The Mid-America Regional Council's Creating Sustainable Places initiative offers a wealth of resources to planners, developers and city officials interested in moving their communities forward. From data and reference materials to interactive websites, these tools can help communities make better decisions about how they grow and develop.



### Envision Tomorrow

Envision Tomorrow is a powerful software tool that allows users to simulate and compare land-use and development choices. By creating scenarios at multiple levels and adding well-researched data and local market information, planners can use the tool to place a wide range of economic, environmental, transportation, housing and cost information in the hands of decision-makers and communities.



### Sustainability Indicators

MARC collects a wealth of data on our region's population, employment, income, transportation, air quality and education levels to help communities identify critical needs, initiate action and measure their progress over time. These data sets are available through an indicators website, which tracks the region's progress towards becoming more sustainable.



### Natural Resources Inventory

The Natural Resources Inventory is a detailed and valuable tool for development decisions, giving municipalities and private developers a detailed inventory of what is on the ground, from vegetation and topographical features, to roadways and structures. This data will help communities conserve or restore natural resources during the development process.



### Sustainable Code Framework

The Sustainable Code Framework will help local governments evolve their codes and ordinances to accommodate a changing vision for their communities. With this online resource library of building codes and ordinances tied to local examples, communities now have a toolkit at their fingertips when looking to affect positive change in their communities without getting held back by outdated or incomplete policies



### Visualization Tools

New visualization tools include both a reference library and technical assistance to help communities build a vision and analyze potential options for future development. By combining photos of local development with the power of digital image manipulation, city officials and developers will be able to create, refine and clearly communicate their vision for development and redevelopment in their communities.



For more information on the tools available from Creating Sustainable places, contact Dean Katerndahl at 816-701-8243 or [deank@marc.org](mailto:deank@marc.org).



KC Communities for All Ages is an initiative of the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), with major funding from the Pfizer Foundation and in partnership with Grantmakers In Aging, with local funding from the Jewish Heritage Foundation and the WJ Brace Charitable Trust, Bank of America, Trustee. KCC has joined with the First Suburbs to lead the development of practical tools for cities in the Kansas City region.

Mid-America Regional Council | 600 Broadway, Suite 200 | Kansas City, MO 64105  
[www.marc.org](http://www.marc.org)