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SEPTEMBER 2020

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PRESSING FORWARD WITH POSITIVITY

As we usher in the official start of fall, I pause for a moment to reflect on the words of Oscar Wilde who observed that, "All at once summer collapsed into autumn." Doesn't that feel especially true this year?

I recently heard someone describe 2020 as being trapped in a "time warp," and I must admit I could definitely relate. So if you, like me, are looking for glimpses of positive affirmations, friendly faces and hometown determination, you never have to look any further than the next issue of the Mission Magazine.

I am amazed at how every issue reaffirms my confidence in our community. There are always moments of pride, examples of selfless service and opportunities for personal growth all flowing along in the endless current of kindness, creativity and community that makes Mission so unique.

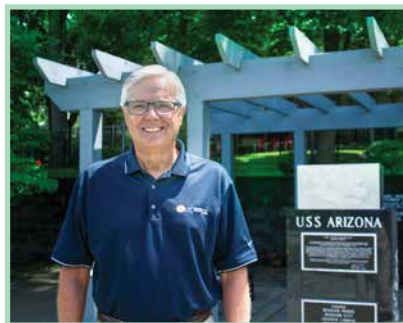
Earlier this month, we introduced a rebranding/logo for the city reflective of the authenticity and interconnectedness of our community and capturing the essence of what makes Mission unique. Similarly, each issue of the Mission Magazine is carefully developed to provide that snapshot of our diversity, charm, character and the things that keep us out of the ordinary. The September issue doesn't disappoint.

Chef Lalo Alvarez believes that "doing things the hard way creates success." The story of how his restaurant came to be highlights the perseverance and dedication it's taken to get him to this point. He credits much of his success to listening to people who are positive, and if the lines outside The Corner

Lalo's Kitchen on evenings and weekends are any indication, he's definitely on the right track.

On the cover:

Mission Police Officer Jay Fleer.
Photo by Denise Elam.



Lalo's passion for food is equally matched by Officer Jay Fleer's passion for public service. In these times when the national spotlight is shining on the law enforcement community, it is encouraging to share the story of one of our own who exemplifies what it means to be a positive influence both personally and professionally. His enthusiasm and energy seem boundless, whether he's campaigning for breast cancer awareness, challenging our youth to make good choices or interacting with market-goers on his bicycle.

When we talk with the regional experts at BikeWalkKC about the resurgence of interest in biking over the past several months, we are reminded of the efforts Mission has made to promote multi-modal transportation. The new bike lanes on Lamar are the most recent example of the investments targeted for bikers. It is incremental investments with a long-term vision that pay dividends now and into the future.

And finally, those long-term investments in Mission by the Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City (DSG) are paying off for the families they serve with the addition of a new Lifelong Learning Campus soon to be under construction just south of Johnson Drive at Dearborn. Having provided services for individuals throughout the metro area for decades, the DSG was attracted to Mission's sense of community many years ago and has chosen to stay. We are proud to continue to support their efforts.

As we step into the last quarter of 2020, I hope you will join me in seeking out the positive and sharing stories of the great things happening right here in our hometown.

Ron

-Ron Appletoft, Mayor



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Mission

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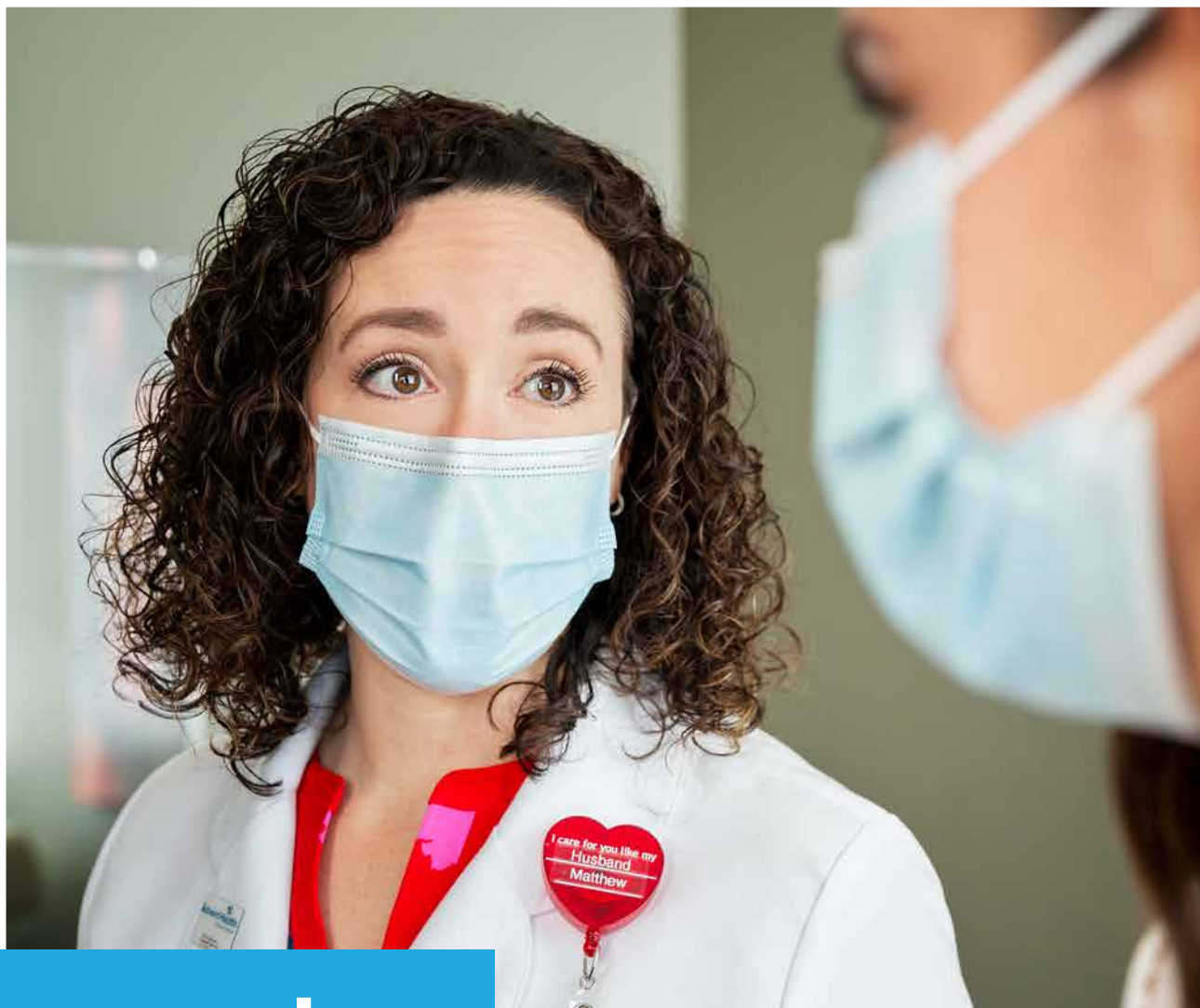
PUBLISHERS.....	David Small
EDITOR	Denise Elam
ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE	Angie Riffel
GRAPHIC DESIGNER	Megan Seymour
EDITORIAL BOARD.....	Stoney Bogan
	Cathy Casey
	Kristin Inman
	Kathy Lockard
	Mark Raduziner
	Laura Smith

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The Kansas City Chiefs recognized Officer Fleer as a Hometown Hero at Arrowhead Stadium last fall.



'Taking Care of People'

Mission Police Officer Jay Fleer on a 29-year career of service

by Denise Elam

A hushed whisper fell across the room at Brian's Bakery and Eatery in Mission last May.

The children running and playing in the bakery stopped in their tracks. Even parents mingling amongst themselves at the Cookie With A Cop event quieted to listen as Mission Police Officer Jay Fleer recounted his strange encounter with an owl.

"There were probably 20 kids running around all crazy, I think it was back on the last day of school," Jay recalled. "As I started to tell the owl story, I looked around and all these kids who had been running around like their hair was on fire suddenly sat down and were silent."

Jay said in total, around 50 people were listening intently to his story about the fine feathered friend he discovered in the middle of the road late one night while on patrol.

"It was just so much fun to know that at that moment, so many people really wanted to be around and hear what I had to say," he said.

Jay considers himself a storyteller. His 29-year career as a patrol officer has given him plenty of material.

"Everybody loves a good story," he said. "Even a bad story, told well, is something people want to hear."



Mission police officers can wear pink badges in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



In fact, Jay uses his own stories to help guide students at Rushton and Highlands Elementary Schools through the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program (D.A.R.E.). As a D.A.R.E. instructional

officer, Jay teaches the D.A.R.E. America curriculum, a 10-week program designed for sixth-grade students. Most are familiar with the program, Jay said, but might not realize how much it has evolved throughout the years.

"It started out as truly a program to combat drug abuse and it was very myopic," he said. "It evolved and changed (throughout the years) into lessons to help young people learn how to make safe and responsible decisions."

Jay speaks to kindergarten through fifth-grade students as well, with a curriculum he designed himself.

"Each classroom gets three visits with a curriculum I created for those grades," he said. "We talk about police officers, the equipment we carry and the roles that we play on our first visit. On the second visit, we talk about reporting emergencies."

Jay compares reporting emergencies to telling vs. tattling, a lesson he hopes is relatable to his students. A lot of his examples are taken from personal experience.

"And then the third week we talk about bullying and conflict resolution," he said. "The bullying story is a personal story about me when I was in the fourth grade. So these kids will sit there and listen to me and say, 'Wait a minute, Officer Fleer was bullied and here's how he dealt with it and it worked.' It

"I HOPE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND, AND I THINK MOST PEOPLE DO, THAT THE MAJORITY OF POLICE OFFICERS — WE SHOW UP FOR WORK AND OUR GOAL IS TO TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE."

-Officer Jay Fleer

makes it relevant and personal."

Aside from teaching students how to make healthy and responsible decisions, Jay believes the program fosters positive relationships between police and the community they serve.

"If I'm standing at the front of Hy-Vee and one of my kids is in the checkout line with their parents, they're very excited to see me. They come running over to me and introduce me to their parents," he said. "These relationships build on each other; it starts with having a positive relationship with these kids who maybe otherwise would never have the ability to have a conversation with a police officer or have a personal relationship (with one)."

One of his favorite memories as a D.A.R.E. officer resulted from a conversation he overheard between a student and their parents.

"I heard a student assure his parents that, 'This is Officer Fleer. We love him,'" Jay said. "Since then, I've fostered a good

relationship with his parents that maybe wouldn't have happened (before)."

Jay said the most memorable event in his career was when the Kansas City Chiefs recognized him as a Hometown Hero at Arrowhead Stadium last fall.

"I got goosebumps when I realized that 80,000 people were cheering for me," he said.

Jay was honored by the Chiefs due to his commitment to community and his response to an active shooter situation near Highlands Elementary in early 2019. He and the responding officers quickly

contained the situation, later receiving the Mission Police Department's Gold Medal of Honor for their heroic efforts.

"As a response to that, when we had Highlands graduation later that spring, the students had made a video expressing their appreciation for police officers ... which was very touching," he said. "To know how much safer it made them feel to see me greeting them in the mornings was heartwarming."

Apart from his work in the schools, Jay keeps busy the remainder of the year as a patrol officer in Mission, where he enjoys getting to know the residents he serves.

"We know the people in our community," he said. "When I was first brought into policing, a takeaway from the sheriff who hired me was that our most important job is to take care of people. His actions demonstrated his belief in that and I have really tried to keep that in the front of my mind throughout my career."

Recently, he joined the Real Men Wear Pink campaign to raise awareness for breast cancer and the American Cancer Society.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month last October, the Mission Police Department was allowed to wear pink badges. Jay took his support a step further, posting photos of the badge and of cancer survivors each day onto his social media feeds.

"Every day in October of last year, I honored somebody who was a survivor or posted in memory of somebody who died of breast cancer," he said.

He was inspired to join the cause after witnessing cancer's effects firsthand.

"One of our officers, his wife was at that time battling breast cancer," he said. "It seemed a way to demonstrate support of that officer and for his family."

Due to its impact on both men and women worldwide, Jay said he wanted to raise awareness for how treatable and survivable the cancer can be if detected early.

"Statistically, our underrepresented population has a higher mortality rate from breast cancer and it may be because they can't afford to get the exams or treatment; that's where the fundraising part comes into it to provide low cost and free mammograms for people who need it," he said.

Local chapters of The American Cancer Society also provide free transportation to and from medical appointments for patients who otherwise may not be able to get there. A portion of fundraising for the Real Men Wear Pink campaign goes toward continuing this accessibility for patients.



Officer Fleer with students outside of Highlands Elementary School in Mission. Photo by Denise Elam.

Jay's social media posts caught the eye of the American Cancer Society. He was nominated as a distinguished community representative for the Real Men Wear Pink campaign and plans to take part again this year.

"I didn't realize until I started doing this how many people breast cancer touched that I know personally," he said.

When he's not working as an officer, breast cancer awareness advocate and father, Jay can be found volunteering with Mission's Family Adoption Program, KC Physical Activity Plan Infrastructure Committee and working as a MARC Vision Zero Traffic Safety Summit presenter.

"My favorite part of my job, not just as an officer but as a human, is that I'm taking care of people in my community," he said. "I hope people understand, and I think most people do, that the majority of police officers — we show up for work and our goal is to take care of people ... nobody is more furious about a 'bad cop' than a good cop."

And as for that owl story? Jay said you'll have to stop by the next community outreach event to hear it for yourself.

"If you come to one of our events, I promise if there are kids there, they're gonna ask to hear it," he said. "It's one of those stories that, as a storyteller, I don't want to sell it short by giving you too much of a summary. What you need to do is experience the narrative."



Officer Fleer can often be found on his bike at Mission Market



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PLANNING PAYS OFF

Mission's Bicycle Master Plan
aids insurgence of cyclists

By Denise Elam

For safe street advocates at BikeWalkKC, everything is connected.

According to the Kansas City nonprofit, creating safer streets for pedestrians will in turn foster safe spots for families to spend time together on walks, more room for bicyclists to ride and more controlled streets. This will lead to a snowball effect of positive change.

"What we hope to see as a result of these safer streets is a culture of active living," said Liz Harris, Marketing and Events Coordinator at BikeWalkKC. "So that means neighbors are getting out and meeting each other face to face because they are all traveling on the same streets. It means that communities are healthy and connected and we see lower rates of disease and illness."

Safer streets also equal less food insecurities, as those without means of transportation can walk to grocery stores and purchase fresh produce.

"All of these concepts are kind of connected in the idea of a safe and connected system of streets," she said.

BikeWalkKC works with municipalities across the five county metro area, advocating for sidewalks, trails, crosswalks and bike lines while also providing youth and adult education in area school districts.





BikeWalkKC, the City of Mission and The Bar partnered in 2018 for a "Give a Bike - Take a Bike" community event. The City plans to host another event in 2021.

The nonprofit has been working with Mission City leaders since its inception in 2010.

"Mission has been a partner from the very beginning," said Karen Campbell, the director

of development and communications at BikeWalk KC. "The City has been really forward thinking in their planning and also the beauty of a municipality like Mission is their council members have remained committed to further progress; we've seen a lot of recent expansion and growth of improvements to the roadways and crosswalks."

That forward thinking came in handy amidst stay-at-home orders this March. As many businesses were closing their doors, many residents were strapping on their bike helmets.

"I'm sure you heard about packed trails, crowded sidewalks and all these things," Liz said. "From BikeWalkKC's perspective, obviously this is a good problem to have but it can be a big problem in the middle of a pandemic."

Karen said Mission has been working on bikeways as part of their Bicycle Master Plan. BikeWalkKC's consulting firm assists City planners to help create safer, more efficient streets for pedestrians.

"Mission did a major overhaul of Johnson Drive about six years ago, where they put in speed humps and

"The City has been really forward thinking in their planning and also the beauty of a municipality like Mission is their commissioners have remained committed to further progress; we've seen a lot of recent expansion and growth of improvements to the roadways and crosswalks."

-Karen Campbell, BikeWalkKC

lowered the speed limit," she said.

"This was an effort to make it more comfortable for people of all modes of transportation but also to attract people to come, stay and shop in those businesses

rather than zooming through Johnson Drive on their way to the highway or Shawnee Mission Parkway. We know there are ongoing discussions about ways to further improve safety in that area."

According to research done by the League of American Bicyclists, people who bike and walk to shops tend to spend more time shopping and go more frequently, particularly with ease of sidewalk access.

"That's demonstrated over and over again around the country and I think we're seeing that on Johnson Drive," Karen said.

The creation of bike lanes on Lamar Avenue also aids the City in slowing cars and possibly reducing the rates of pedestrian-involved accidents.

"Interestingly, related to Covid, the data that we're seeing around the Kansas City metro is that while traffic is down significantly, the rate of injury and fatality crashes is up because there are fewer cars on the road and people feel like they can drive faster," Karen said.

An additional advantage to the work Mission had already put into road infrastructure during the pandemic was ease of sidewalk usage for restaurants



Mission's Sustainability Commission purchased and dedicated a bike repair station along the Rock Creek Trail in downtown Mission to better serve the biking community.

and businesses. Sandhills Brewing, for instance, opened a sidewalk cafe, allowing their business to remain open amidst the uncertainty.

"Their taproom was too small to have people come inside, so they could only sell beer to go – which impacted their sales and employees," Liz said. "But when they opened the sidewalk cafe, with bike racks installed on their sidewalk, they were able to welcome more customers and still keep their staff and customers safe by having them outside."

Liz said construction on Johnson Drive helped make

they will raise awareness for safe streets in schools this fall. Virtual walking and biking clubs, along with virtual classes on helmet fitting and safe starting and stopping procedures are all possibilities.

"Our bike share system has been exploding ...we're hearing from bike shops that they are sold out and overwhelmed," Karen said. "It's great that people are interested in biking and pursuing that. We're seeing more and more people remembering that they had a bike and the joys of riding when they were kids."

Sandhills' sidewalk cafe a success.

"Sandhills is also one of our newest brewery partners on our Tour de Bier event (this year, a self-guided tour of brewing in KC), so we're able to send riders all over the city to Sandhills because Johnson Drive feels safer to ride on than it used to," she said. "The bike fix-it station at The Market site across the street is also a help."

As the pandemic continues, BikeWalkKC is restructuring its educational methods, offering virtual bike maintenance events and rethinking the way



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From bicycle helmets to cell phones to medical devices, plastics have revolutionized our modern world several times over. But it's also important to consider what happens after we toss them in the trash. Some quick plastic facts, courtesy of National Geographic:



- Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years.
- Production increased from 2.3 million tons in 1950 to 448 million tons by 2015. That is expected to double by 2050.
- Every year, about 8 million tons of plastic waste escapes into the ocean from coastal nations. That's the equivalent of setting five garbage bags full of trash on every foot of coastline all over the world.
- Plastics contain additives that make them more durable. But these additives can add to the lifespan of the products if they become litter, with some estimates ranging to at least 400 years to break down.
- Plastic waste leads to the death of millions of animals each year.

Remember to avoid littering and dispose of your plastic properly and securely. Many plastics can be recycled in your curbside bin, though be sure to keep plastic bags out of your curbside recycling – take those to the Mission Hy-Vee or any other grocery store in the area. Remember to place items loose in your recycling bin and do not bag them. Recycling companies often can find it difficult to locate buyers for recycled plastic, meaning it can still end up in the landfill. So your best option is to consider alternatives such as avoiding single-use plastics, reusing what you have, choosing glass or going without altogether when you can!

* Article provided by Mission Sustainability Commission

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Community Development,
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First Wednesday every month, 6:30 p.m.
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Fall is here — leaves will start falling, grass still needs mowing, and yard waste disposal can become top of mind. Options for dealing with yard waste include:

- Mulching leaves, grass clippings, and branches reduces yard waste, helps soil to retain moisture and adds nitrogen (to fertilize).
- If you prefer to bag your leaves and yard waste, Mission residents may place up to 10 setouts each week throughout the year in paper bags. Yard waste can also be set out in separate 32-gallon containers, properly labeled "Yard Waste" or "YW."

We do ask that you please keep leaves out of the streets and storm drains as they can clog up the drains or cause future flooding.

Stickers for additional bundles or compost bags are available at City Hall or the Community Center for \$1.50 each. For more information, please call Neighborhood Services at 913-676-8360 or email nfanska@missionks.org.

For other healthy yard and environmental tips please visit Johnson County Extension Office, KSU website, they offer great tips on lawn care and reducing yard waste generation.



tomorrow together

2040 mission comprehensive plan

Would you like to have a say in what the future of our community looks like in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years or beyond? Pre-COVID-19 Mission engaged Confluence, a planning consulting firm, to work with a steering committee of nine citizens and business owners on a year-long effort to update the City's comprehensive land use plan (comp plan). The process will include:

- Review of existing plans to determine relevance
- Analysis of population and emerging trends
- Analysis of housing development and emerging trends (new home construction, multi-family housing, accessory dwelling units, and affordable housing)
- Analysis of commercial development and emerging trends
- Analysis of existing land use classifications and zoning
- Analysis of the transportation network for opportunities to support multimodal (things other than cars) forms of transportation
- Analysis of broadband infrastructure to determine opportunities to support future residential and commercial development

Kansas statutes require cities to develop a comprehensive plan for development within their boundaries, and to make regular updates to the plan. A comprehensive plan should include surveys and studies of past and present conditions and trends relating to land use, population and building intensity, public facilities, transportation and transportation facilities, economic conditions, natural resources, and any other element deemed necessary.

Mission has long maintained an active, professional land use planning and zoning program including comprehensive plans dating back to 1968. The most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2007, with the last significant update of that plan occurring in 2011.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING 101

- 1 — Focus Future Development & Public Investment
- 2 — Encourage Strong Economic Base
- 3 — Serve as Information Management Tool
- 4 — Analyze Existing Conditions
- 5 — Evolve as Community Changes
- 6 — Establish Goals
- 7 — Guide and Recommend
- 8 — Encourage Community Engagement
- 9 — Identify and Build upon Community Character

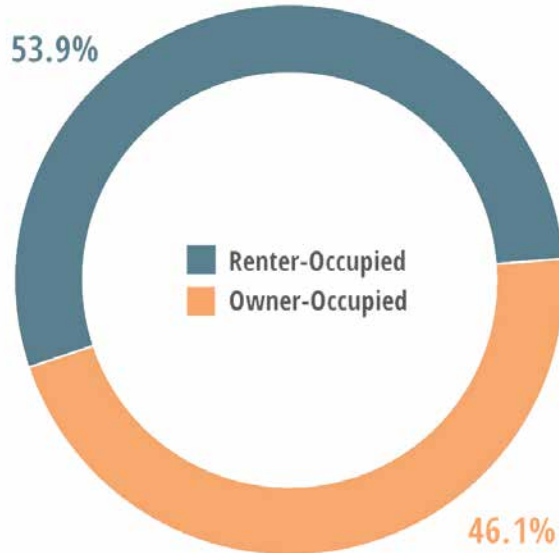
But our City, like many others, is changing. And because of changing demographics and emerging trends, it is time to do a global review and update of the comp plan. The comp plan becomes much more than a zoning map, it is a vision plan, a communication tool and a guidebook for a community's shared goals. The success of this effort depends on strong community engagement. We want to hear about the things that are important to YOU!

"Tomorrow Together" is the theme for our work on the comp plan, and things kicked off with a virtual public workshop on Oct. 1. Confluence introduced a website created to allow the public to explore our community in new and interesting ways. There is a map of the City where you can place "informational" pins on a particular location stating

what you like (or don't like) about that place. You can also give ideas for enhancing an area or ask a question about something you have always been curious about. The site includes a visual preference survey with ideas for particular types of development and styles of architecture that you can vote on. And, there will be a city budget where you can spend your tax dollars on things that are important to you.

Beginning on October 1, the website will be accessible through the City's webpage and will be active throughout the month of October. The website will be reactivated again over the course of the plan update for additional stakeholder engagement activities, and there will also be future workshops for more personal, one-on-one interaction.

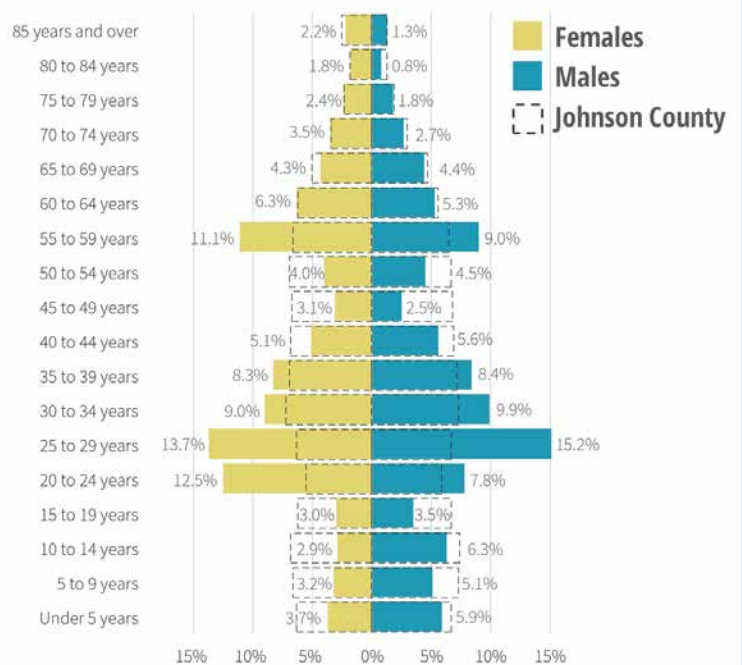
Housing Tenure & Household Sizes (2018): Mission, KS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018

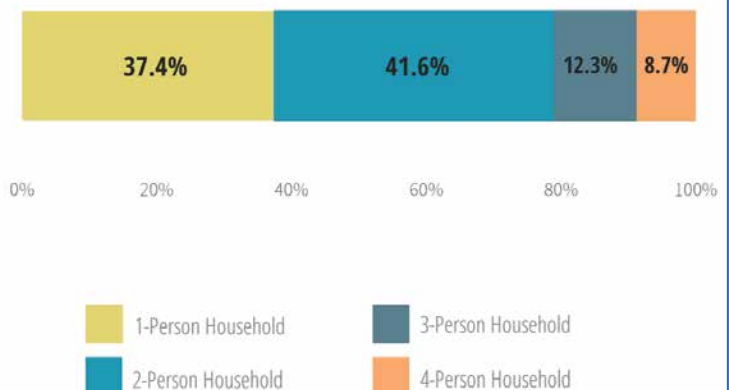
For more information on how to participate in this plan update please contact:
Kaityln Service
City Planner
kservice@missionks.org
913.676.8366

Age by Sex (2018): Mission, KS & Johnson County



We look forward to working with you in the months ahead to begin building a better Mission for Tomorrow, Together.

Household Sizes (2018): Mission, KS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018



Market coordinators Kate Deacon and Carrie Dickerson.

MARKET COORDINATORS GET CREATIVE

The Mission Market officially wrapped up its 6th season last month. Thanks to COVID-19 it was challenging at best. Our vendors and patrons deserve a huge "shout out" for sticking with us in these unique times, but we'd like to tell you about the market's best kept secret.

We're confident market regulars will agree, but we think our Market Coordinators are the BEST! As we close out the 2020 year, we want to recognize Carrie Dickerson (2015-2020) and Kate Deacon (2018-2020) who dedicate countless hours and oodles of creativity to keep the market fun, fresh and relevant - even in a pandemic!

Both are Mission residents living in Countryside and they make it a family affair as their children are growing up at the market, often walking or biking to and from the market Thursday evenings for dinner or snacks.

Carrie's oldest daughter recently filmed a short video to promote the "Bring Your Own Baby Pool event" and briefly worked alongside former vendor Kathy Fullerton of The Beachery. Kate's son's guitar

skills came in handy one week as he filled in for a musician who had to cancel.

In addition to helping to maintain a family friendly atmosphere, they have visited vendor farms on weekends and attended market open house events. Their smiling, familiar faces greet market patrons and show the vendors they know Mission really cares about them.

Thanks you two, we appreciate you!



Drawing by Bernie Lee, Art From Architecture

Mission's New Look Revealed

As part of our 2020 planning, the City embarked on a rebranding and communication update. After much research and community conversation, the new look is here!

We'll be pairing this new brand with elevated methods of communications and outreach so you're sure to be informed and up to date.



Stay tuned for more ways to engage in the coming weeks!

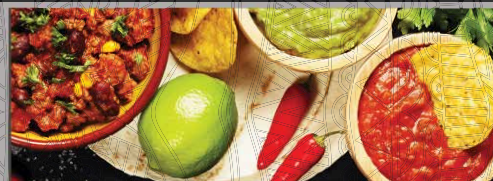
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Sept. 25 - Oct. 11, 2020
www.one.bidpal.net/celebrateresilience

about the event

Join The Mission Project for a unique virtual event in celebration of our program participants and their resilience throughout this pandemic.

This free, virtual event will feature videos from our participants, a robust auction collection, raffle prizes, a "virtual toast," and more! The auction opens at 8:00am on September 25th and will run through October 11th.

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Mission Bulletin Board

Mission's 2020 Holiday Adoption program will look very different because of COVID-19, but there will be plenty of opportunities for you to participate.

Please visit the City's website at www.missionks.org for information on how you can be a part of this amazing program that brightens the holidays for many in our community!



Check out a full slate of classes and programs offered by the Mission Parks &

Recreation Department. Search for "2020 Fall Activity Guide" at www.missionks.org. Both virtual and in-person activities are available.



Parks, Recreation and Tree Commissioner Mary Funk recently organized a clean up of the bioswale at Broadmoor Park. Fellow PRT members Jacque Gameson and Karin Capron helped with the 12 man-hours of work, and Public Works Crew Leader Jeff Mull loaded and hauled off two truckloads of vegetation. To assist with park clean up or to Adopt-A-Park, please contact Penn Almoney, Director of Parks and Recreation, at 913-722-8210.



HELPING WITH HARVESTERS

The City of Mission is pleased to partner once again with Harvesters for our final mobile food distribution event of 2020.

DATE & TIME:

SATURDAY, OCT. 31, 2020 | 7:30 A.M.

LOCATION:

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For more information or to volunteer:
Suzie Gibbs | suziegibbs1@gmail.com | 913-671-8564
For other mobile events throughout the metro,
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THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE!



Mission Police Chief Ben Hadley retired in late August. If you want to join us in wishing the Chief all the best in his retirement, you may send a card to:



Ben Hadley, % Dan Madden,
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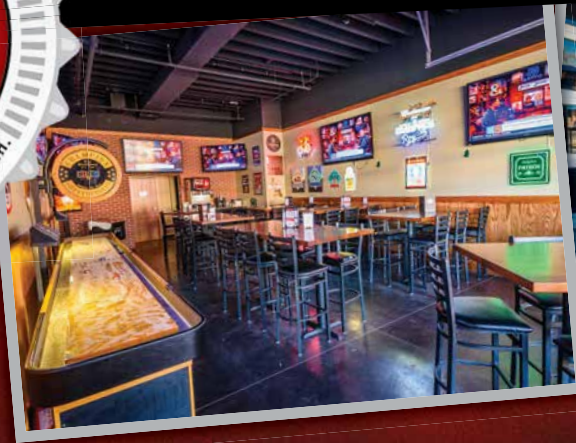
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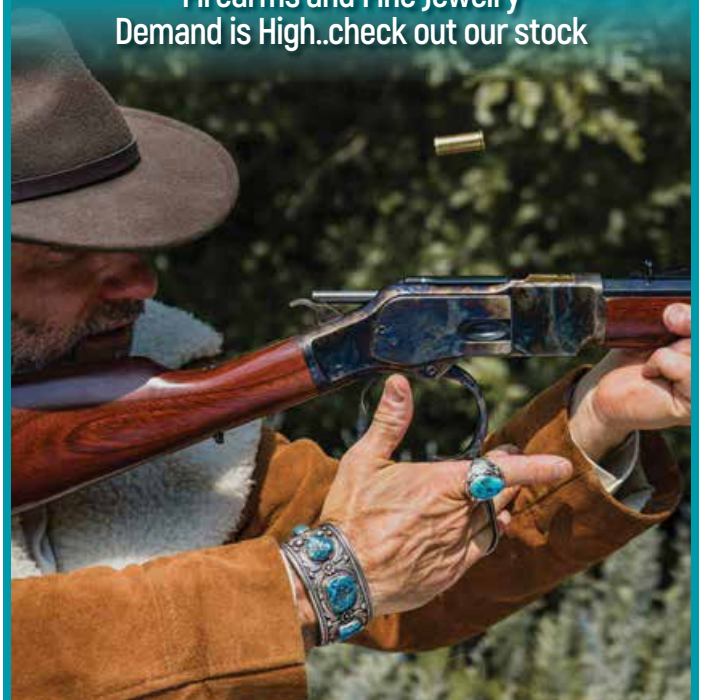
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SERVING CUSTOMERS AND MAKING FRIENDS

The Corner Lalo's Kitchen serves made-from-scratch,
authentic Mexican food

Photos & story by Denise Elam



Lalo in front of his restaurant located at 5038 Lamar Ave in Mission.

KITCHEN



As the morning sun rises over Mission, Lalo Alvarez has already been in the kitchen for two hours, prepping food.

One might expect that from a chef who owns his own restaurant, The Corner Lalo's Kitchen. But at six in the morning, Lalo hasn't even stepped foot in his restaurant. Instead, he makes the drive to a nearby hospital to work a second job as a cook.

"Right now my wife's home in the morning, so when I work at my other job, she helps me at the restaurant," he said. "Basically, I don't have a day off. When I'm off at the hospital on Saturday and Monday, I work a double shift here at my restaurant."

At the hospital, Lalo prepares meals from 4 a.m. until around 1:30 in the afternoon before heading home to shower. He stops to pick up fresh ingredients at a local market, arriving at The Corner Lalo's Kitchen at around 2:30 p.m. The days and nights are long and often run together, but to Lalo, it's so worth it.

"Sometimes I'm here (at Lalo's) until one in the morning because we prep tamales," he said. "We have to make sure they are cooking right away. You have to be patient. I stay here to cut meat and vegetables because we don't have (a lot of) help. It's me, my wife and another cook who started a month ago."

Lalo said getting home at 2 a.m. from one job and waking up at 4 a.m. to start the other can be exhausting.

"I say, 'Oh my God, I'm tired. But I cooked good food today,'" he said.

The Corner Lalo's Kitchen specializes in authentic Mexican cuisine, with freshly-prepared street tacos, tortas, burritos, sopes and more. The restaurant is Lalo's dream come true, opening in December of 2019.

"We make everything here, no matter if it takes a lot of time," he explained, noting that salsas and sauces are also made in-house. "It's worth it because you can see the happy reaction from people who eat them."

Lalo prides himself on his family-run business: his daughter and wife pitch in frequently to help with day-to-day operations.

"I have worked all my life doing these types of jobs," he said. "I love cooking. I love what I do. It's amazing. I opened my own restaurant because I want to see the faces of customers light up when they like what I do and how I cook."

He was greatly inspired to pursue fresh food and ingredients after working in an Italian restaurant several years ago.

"Everything was fresh — the Alfredo sauce, garlic and vegetables. This was important for me to learn how to start cooking," he said. "I worked in a Mexican restaurant once and they cooked everything in a big batch. It didn't have much flavor and didn't have the kind of heart you can put into the food (from scratch)."

According to Lalo, this attitude of "doing things the hard way" creates success.

"Every time you cook, no matter what you're cooking, you're making magic because you have the seasonings in your hands," he affirmed. "When you have that kind of power in your hands, whatever you're cooking tastes good because you make it taste good. And

that's how I learned it."

Lalo ventured into the restaurant industry after leaving Mexico in 1996. Not wanting to be stuck in a career as a carpenter, he decided to give cooking a try.

But opening the restaurant was not easy, he said. The financial burden of maintaining a business, especially during a worldwide pandemic, took a toll. In the beginning, he and his wife used supplies like mixing bowls and frying pans straight from their own kitchen.

"We didn't have the money to buy equipment (in the beginning)," he said. "When you're hungry for success, you have to use whatever equipment is available."

In fact, when he first opened, people told him he wasn't cut out for the job.

"A lot of people told me, 'Lalo, you're not going to make it over there.' I said, 'How do you know? Did you already have a restaurant over there?'" he laughed. "I listen to the people who are positive. I'm very happy because my family supports me a lot."

With help from his family and many community members, Lalo completely transformed the interior of his restaurant, waxed the floors and added a window into the kitchen, allowing customers to watch as food is being prepared.

When the pandemic hit just three months after the restaurant opened, Lalo wanted to cry — not because of the hardships, but because of the response he received from the community. Many stopped by to show their support.

"They said, 'Lalo, I want you to stay open and I want to support you guys,'" he said. "I love Mission. Everybody is so friendly. It's indescribable how nice this place is."

Despite the support, business was still slow in the beginning. Two weeks passed with Lalo selling just one order per day. To make ends meet, he partnered with a delivery service but could not push food out fast enough while maintaining its made-from-scratch quality.

The delivery service promised food within 10 minutes but with multiple orders and a parking lot full of eager delivery drivers, Lalo couldn't keep up. Not to mention the delivery service took a huge portion of his profit. Cinco de Mayo was "a nightmare."

"We had almost 60 drivers waiting for food outside," he said, explaining that he had received 75 orders at once. "Everybody was mad, asking why it took so long. But this is fresh food. Not fast food."

Lalo ended up shutting off the phone orders that day, working non-stop to try to keep up with the demand. But in the end, a lot of food was wasted.

"We were crazy



Lalo with fresh Pozole, a traditional Mexican soup topped with cabbage, onions and cilantro. Photo courtesy of The Corner Lalo's Kitchen.



patio to give customers a chance to enjoy food while following social distancing orders.

"Thanks to our customers, we're still open," he said. "It's hard but we're not stopping ... this pandemic is not going to stop me."

Lalo looks forward to doing what he loves for a long time and even has a few plans up his sleeve for the restaurant's one year anniversary this December. "I know a good Mariachi band," he hinted.

At the end of the day, money doesn't matter to Lalo. As long as he can make someone happy with his cooking, that's all he needs.

"It's more important than a million dollars to me because I'm making customers and I'm making friends," he said. "You should make people feel that this is your house. Not just a restaurant where you pay for a meal and go home ... money comes and goes. Nice people are hard to find. And that's what I've got. My customers are my friends. They're my people."

I SAY,
'OH MY GOD,
I'M TIRED.
BUT I COOKED
GOOD FOOD
TODAY.'

-Lalo Alvarez



Three steak tacos topped with onions and cilantro with a side of lime and salsa.

busy," he said. "We threw away a lot of food ... I was so disappointed ... I lost a lot of money."

Frustrated, he nixed the delivery service and set up a curbside pickup system. Customers could call in an order and pay using Venmo, a mobile payment app. He also invested in a new point of sale system, giving customers a more accurate estimated wait time.

Lalo recently added an outdoor dining

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SUPPORTING LIFELONG LEARNING

Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City expands in Mission

by Denise Elam

In the basement of a church in Kansas City in 1974, a group of parents came together in support of one another. The parents had one thing in common: they loved someone with Down Syndrome.

The group eventually became known as the Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City (DSG), a non-profit whose mission is to provide support and resources for individuals with Down Syndrome and their families.

"Our roots are pretty humble — they were just parents trying to do what was right for their kids," said Jason Drummond, Ed.D, CEO of the DSG. "Relatively speaking, there was no support in the metro area so they said, 'Hey, what if we get together and just support each other?'"

Thirty-six years later, the DSG is located in Mission and "expanding like crazy," according to Jason.

"Mission has been an incredible community for us," he said. "We have a lot of families and individuals with Down Syndrome who are adults living in and around the Mission area. The City administrators, City Council, police and the fire departments have just embraced our community and we're really fortunate to have those relationships with the City of Mission."

DSG provides communities with information and education to broaden awareness and foster positive attitudes regarding people with Down Syndrome, a genetic disorder causing physical growth delays, mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and characteristic facial features.

The guild has relationships with 22 hospital systems throughout the KC metro area. Once a hospital learns a baby with Down Syndrome will be born, they ask permission to contact the DSG to provide support.

"We have a program where we go to the hospital and deliver a baby basket to these families with a bunch of resources," Jason said. "We walk them through what the next little bit of time will look like. It's been a really beautiful thing because as you might imagine, there's a lot of emotions involved when parents find out."

Jason said a gifted team at DSG will then guide the families through their first several weeks and months of raising a child with Down Syndrome.

"It's really rewarding to watch," he said.



Thousands of people attended the 2019 KC Step Up Walk at Arrowhead Stadium. Photo courtesy of DSG.



Much of the guild's work historically has been focused on education and support. A few years ago, the DSG evaluated ways in which they could dive deeper to meet more families' needs.

"We found this little niche of helping build skills for individuals with Down Syndrome to be able to live on their own and work independently and be fully contributing members into their communities," he said.

This desire to provide lifelong support to people with Down Syndrome led the guild to invest in a building right next door to their current office on Dearborn Street.

"What we imagine is a lifelong learning campus where that can be kind of the hub of support and programs and activities — service lines for people and families with Down Syndrome," he said.

The organization purchased the building in July of 2019 and anticipate moving in later this year, around December. Jason said the campus is an extension to their current facility.

"We just launched an adult day program Aug. 3 in our current space," he said. "Next door to us will be the Lifelong Learning Campus."

The vision behind the Lifelong Learning Campus is simple: individuals participate in the adult program at the original facility, gaining valuable life skills before walking next door to put those skills to work at the new campus. The new facility allows the DSG to support those with Down Syndrome from birth to late adulthood, with services tailored to each stage of life.

"We invite the community to be a part of helping people with Down Syndrome to fully integrate," he said.

The multi-functional Lifelong Learning Campus is expected to take up 11,000 square feet and be equipped to foster community, develop and deploy innovative service and embrace the full potential of people with Down Syndrome, according to the DSG's website. That includes increased access, capacity and continuity of services, improving the likelihood of positive outcomes for families served by DSG.

The campus offers a space for people of all ages with Down Syndrome to receive therapeutic services, gain employment and independent living skills, be creative, use technology, make friends and work together. Jason hopes the coffee shop built inside the new facility will provide those with Down Syndrome a chance to interact with the community.

The guild also provides support to several Down Syndrome community groups throughout the state of Missouri. Jason said the DSG is in the process of reimagining its services due to Covid-19 regulations.

"One of the things Covid has done is accelerated our virtual strategies, so we're piloting programs right now in speech and language development and we're doing that in a virtual setting," he said. "We can serve anybody, anywhere with those programs."

Despite the difficulties, Jason said he's proud of his adaptive team. He feels fortunate that DSG is in a spot to be weathering the storm, though they have had some financial setbacks.

"On the fundraising standpoint, we've had to cancel two of our main fundraising events that are basically our

**"MISSION HAS
BEEN AN
INCREDIBLE
COMMUNITY
FOR US."**

—Jason Drummond, CEO of the Down
Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City

Attendees enjoy pony rides at DSG's annual fundraising festival, the KC Step Up Walk, in 2019. Photo courtesy of the DSG.



A volunteer reads to a participant during a 2019 DSG winter-themed multi-sensory learning event geared toward children ages 7 to 11 with Down Syndrome. The event included a variety of sensory experiences. Photo courtesy of DSG.

lifeblood," he said, noting that 95% of the organization's revenue comes in through philanthropy. "At times where people are really struggling, we're fortunate to be in a spot where we can withstand it for a little while."

The DSG's major event, the 25th annual KC Step Up Walk at Arrowhead Stadium, is set to continue as planned Oct. 24 at 10 a.m. This organization is optimistic that people will be able to gather in person for the walk, though that decision is still up in the air due to the pandemic. Virtual participation will be available to those who may not feel comfortable meeting in person.

"The KC Walk is a day of celebration of those with Down Syndrome and their families," said Amy Stoll, Vice President of Philanthropy at DSG. "It's very much family-centered with lunch and a carnival/festival type atmosphere."

This year, in an effort to promote health and fitness, the DSG is also hosting a #StepUpChallenge.

"The virtual #StepUpChallenge is your family's opportunity to step up for Down Syndrome — through whatever activity you enjoy most, from any location," she said.

A hike in the mountains, a walk through the neighborhood — both are viable options for the challenge, which costs \$10 to enter or \$25 for entry and a T-Shirt. Registration for the Step Up Walk at Arrowhead

Stadium is \$25 per person ages 13 and up; \$15 for guests ages 3-12; and guests 2 years of age and younger are free. The registration price includes a Step Up Walk t-shirt, lunch and entertainment.

"It's a marvelous day, a big celebration of people with Down Syndrome," Jason said. "On any given year, there's between 8,000 and 10,000 people that come to that, celebrating families with children or relatives with Down Syndrome."

To sign up for the walk or #StepUpChallenge, visit www.kcdsg.org.

A rendering of the 11,000-square-foot Lifelong Learning Campus courtesy of DSG.



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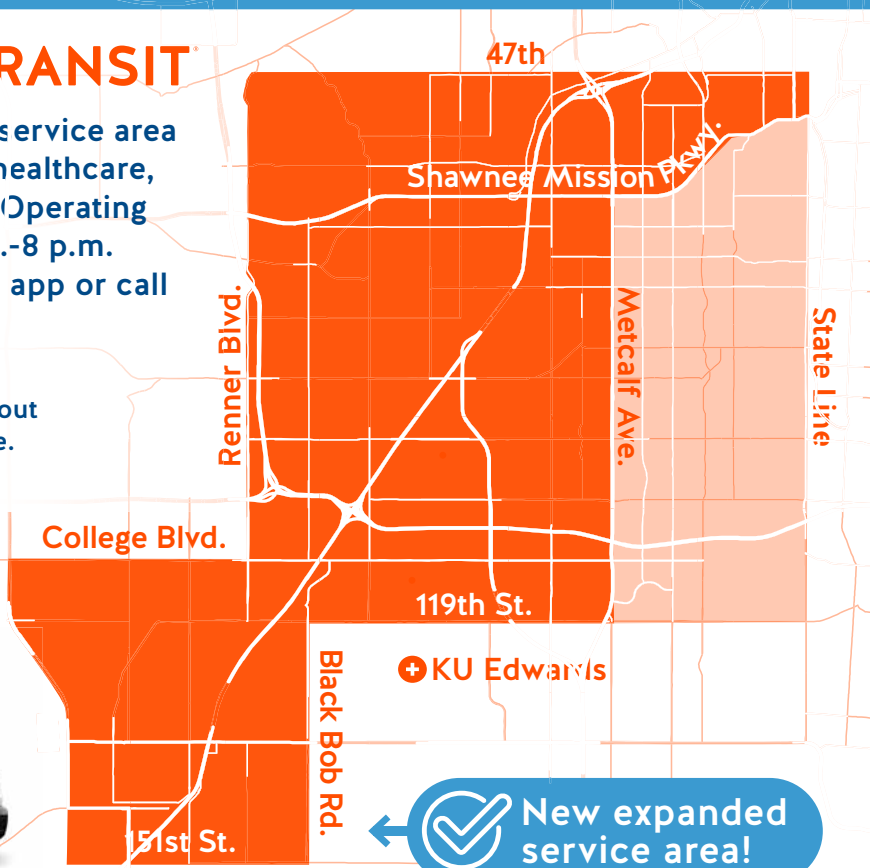
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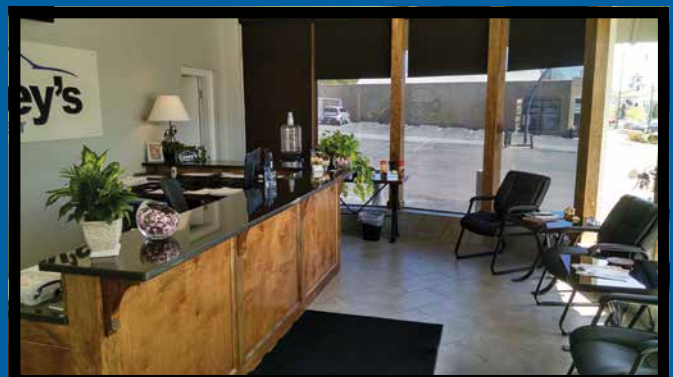
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