

CHAPTER 1. LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Location

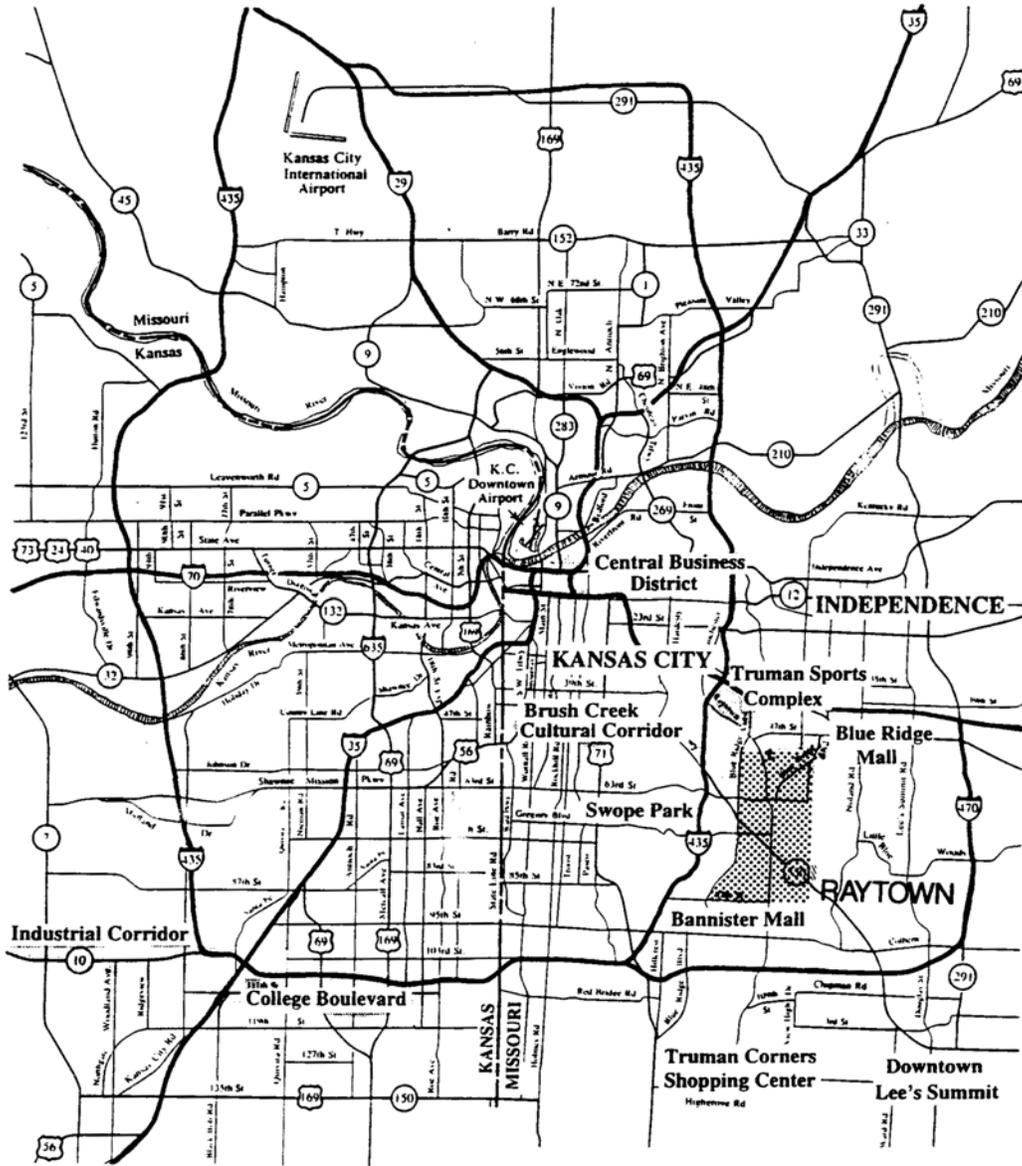
Raytown is located in central Jackson County, Missouri. More specifically, Raytown lies at the southeastern periphery of the Kansas City metropolitan urban core. As described in the Mid-America Regional Council's (MARC) report on the Urban Core (1993), the urban core consists of the Central Business District of Kansas City, Missouri and surrounding areas within Wyandotte and Johnson Counties in Kansas and Clay County in Missouri. (See Figure 1.)

Raytown covers an area of 6,415 acres, or approximately ten square miles. It is one of the few land-locked communities in the metropolitan area and is entirely surrounded by Kansas City, Missouri and Independence, Missouri.

The City of Raytown occupies a strategic location in the metropolitan area. The City is conveniently linked to major centers of employment, education, art, culture and recreation. The "heart" of Raytown is less than twenty minutes from the Central Business District in Kansas City, Missouri and approximately fifteen minutes from downtown Lee's Summit, Missouri. Downtown Raytown is less than ten minutes to either I-70 or I-435, which conveniently links the City to other growing employment centers in the region, such as the K-10 industrial corridor and College Boulevard, two of the fastest growing corridors in Kansas. Raytown is also located within fifteen minutes of Bannister Mall and Truman Corners Shopping Center, Blue Ridge Mall, and Independence Shopping Center.

M-350, commonly referred to as Blue Parkway, bisects Raytown. Blue Parkway connects the southwestern portion of the City to the Brush Creek Cultural Corridor in Kansas City, Missouri. Institutions such as the University of Missouri - Kansas City, Rockhurst College, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the Stowers Institute, and the Kansas City Art Institute are located along this Cultural Corridor. Other regional attractions along the Cultural Corridor include commercial areas such as the Country Club Plaza. M-350 also connects with I-435 that bypasses the Truman Sports Complex. South of Raytown, M-350 is linked to I-470 and is thereby, conveniently connected to Longview Lake and Park to the south, and Lake Jacomo and Jackson County Park to the east. Missouri Town and several golf courses are also located nearby. In addition, 63rd Street connects Central Raytown to Swope Park, which is one of the metropolitan region's largest parks. Swope Park has extensive recreational facilities, including the Kansas City Zoo and Starlight Theater.

FIGURE 1
Regional Context



History

Raytown is one of the older communities in the region. The land within Raytown was originally part of the vast territory inhabited by the Osage Indians. The migration of pioneers toward the western frontier of the continent brought many settlers to the area around Independence during the 1820s.

With the development of the Santa Fe and Oregon trails, a tiny trail stop was established eight miles south of Independence, Missouri. The stop was located within the boundaries of present day Raytown. The stop took on importance as the last stop to make repairs and purchase supplies before travelers headed west into the dry open plains.

The village was initially referred to as “Ray’s Town”, but by 1854 it was shortened to Raytown. Raytown was named after a blacksmith, William Ray, who moved from Ohio in 1848 and was among one of the earlier tradesman to set up shop at the junction of the Santa Fe Trail with other important trails (63rd Street and Raytown Road).

Raytown’s regional role was recognized as early as the 1850s when a successful petition to the County resulted in the construction of Raytown Road as another link between Independence and Raytown. This same road was extended from the Santa Fe Road to Kansas City in 1883, and two years later a road was opened to Lee Summit. Within the City of Raytown, the Santa Fe Trail essentially followed the path of Blue Ridge Boulevard and is currently highlighted by markers at various points along the trail.

The original railroad line through Raytown was built in the late 1880s as part of the Kansas City and Colorado Railroad. It was purchased by the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific Railroad shortly after the turn of the century. Currently, plans to reopen the tracks for freight trains are being considered.

Raytown grew rapidly following World War II, with the return of many veterans. The City also benefited from the general trend towards decentralization away from the center of the metropolitan area to the suburbs. Raytown was incorporated on July 17, 1950 and, since then, has incorporated additional land to total nearly ten square miles. In 2000, the City recorded a population of 30,388. The City of Raytown has been described as “a City of beautiful homes, excellent schools, of parks, and a progressive and affluent community,” in an earlier comprehensive plan (1970) prepared by the City.

Historic Sites

Raytown has a number of remnants (structures and sites) of its early history dating back to the 1850s. Probably the most notable buildings belonged to Archibald Rice and his wife, Sally, who is noted for her care of the ill during the cholera plague. The Rice farmhouse, popular among early pioneers, is one of the few that survived raids during the Civil War. A cabin belonging to

Local & Regional Context

Aunt Sophie, who served the family from 1850 to 1896, has since been reconstructed on the original site. Both the home (now referred to as the Rice-Tremonti House) and the cabin were placed on the National Register of Historic Sites in 1978, and were acquired by the City of Raytown on July 6, 2000.

Another historic site is the Jesse Barnes farm, also known as Cave Spring (8701 East Gregory Boulevard). Across the street was the site of the Jesse Barnes Inn located approximately at 72nd Terrace and Blue Ridge Boulevard. Both are recognized with historic markers.

The County Poor House, rented by the County in 1847, is another historic building that is no longer standing. The owner, George W. Rhoads, was a surveyor and Justice of the Peace for Independence. The Poor House was located at 10000 East 59th Street, which is the site of the current Raytown City Hall.

Of the early residents in Raytown, Alvan Brooking, a County Judge (1842-48) and State Senator (1850-54), was among the most prominent. As an active community member, Brooking assisted in the formation of the West Fork Baptist Church, as well as Round Grove School, and became a trustee of William Jewell College. Brooking Township is named after this Raytown resident.

Significant religious sites include the West Fork Baptist Church, which was built around 1842 (later renamed the First Baptist Church of Raytown). Located on a site east of 63rd Street and Raytown Road, this stone church was reportedly constructed by two grandsons of Daniel Morgan Boone. The Youngs Chapel, which was the first chapel built by the Blue Ridge Boulevard Methodist Church in 1859, was located at the current location of the United Methodist Church, at the intersection of Blue Ridge Boulevard and 50th Street and was razed in 1907.

Raytown's excellent school system also has a long history, though no original buildings are left standing. The Cassell School building was one of the earliest recorded buildings. It was erected in 1852 at the site previously occupied by the Chapel Elementary School (redeveloped in the 1980s).

Regional Role and Influences

Long-range forecasts from the Mid-America Regional Council's Research Data Center suggest that the eight-county metropolitan region grew by 8.5 percent between 1980 and 1990 and is projected to grow by 7.2 percent between 1990 and 2000 and by 5.1 percent between 2000 and 2010. The region includes Jackson, Cass, Johnson, Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Platte, Clay and Ray Counties. Johnson County is anticipated to attract the majority of projected growth in population and employment. Raytown, on the other hand, is similar to Jackson County, which experienced most of its population growth prior to 1970. Since 1970, however, the City has lost population (4.4 percent during 1970-80 and 3.9 percent during 1980-90).

Much of this trend has been attributed to the regional dispersion of people to locations away from the urban core. While Raytown captured the population migrating from the core during the 1950s to 1960s, Lee's Summit and Overland Park are projected to acquire a disproportionately large

share of the future growth in the region.

Regionally, the City of Raytown is dependent on its neighboring communities for some retail and wholesale needs. Raytown residents also tend to seek opportunities for entertainment, recreation and higher education elsewhere in the region. Activities that draw neighboring residents to Raytown are schools (since the School District boundaries extend beyond the City limits), medical facilities, and car dealerships located along M-350. Raytown Round-Up Days and the Barbecue Cook-Off are large events held in Raytown that also attract a large number of visitors to the City. Super Splash USA operated by the Parks Department attracts an estimated 73,500 neighboring residents each season.

Planning Implications

Raytown is one of the older communities in the metropolitan region with a history dating back to the 1830s. Its strategic location in the network of early trails in the region was one of the primary reasons the City was founded. Yet today, there is an entirely different regional traffic system that has allowed new developments in the region to move further west and south. The same decentralization away from the urban core, which originally benefited Raytown, is now leapfrogging over the City in the process draining Raytown of some of its residents and employment opportunities. It is imperative that Raytown reassess and establish its niche within the region to attract some of this new growth and bring new life into its economy.

Raytown has the option of enhancing its strengths in terms of its medical facilities, educational offerings, opportunities for active senior-citizens and its annual events. It could also take advantage and build upon other resources, such as its history and the potential for “specialty” shopping.

Raytown is almost built out and has limited opportunities for new large-scale construction. Following regional development trends, the City could choose to expand eastward and explore ways to incorporate this area. In this case, the Raytown Board of Aldermen could investigate and request a boundary change from the Kansas City Council and acquire land that is currently within the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

Local & Regional Context
