

September 25, 1988

# **NATIONAL NOTEBOOK: Kansas City, Mo.; A Revival for The West Side**

By JILIAN MINCER

**LEAD:** WHEN the Department of Housing and Urban Development labeled this city's West Side as "no longer viable" in 1972, residents refused to let their historic neighborhood die.

**WHEN** the Department of Housing and Urban Development labeled this city's West Side as "no longer viable" in 1972, residents refused to let their historic neighborhood die.

The predominantly Hispanic community created the West Side Housing Organization in 1976 to revive its residential base. This fall the nonprofit development agency will build the first new apartments in the district in almost 70 years. It already has renovated 130 houses and two apartment buildings, repaired 840 homes and built 22 new ones. The latest project, the \$1 million Signal Hill development, will include 15 town houses for moderate-income families. Financing is expected to come from the city; Boatmen's First National Bank of Kansas City, the state's Housing Development Corporation, which provides loans for low- and middle-income housing, and the National Equity Fund, a nonprofit community development agency.

The 10 two-bedroom apartments will have 1,450 square feet of space and rent for about \$366 a month; the five three-bedroom apartments will have 1,550 square feet and rent for \$405 a month.

At the same time, the West Side Housing Organization plans to renovate the 70-year-old Nottingham Apartments, the largest residential structure in the neighborhood.

Plans call for 48 apartments for low-income residents and 2,500 square feet of commercial space.

"The community historically has had a racial mix and an economic mix," said Gerald M. Shechter, the group's executive director. "Our perspective has been to maintain that mix."

In the 1870's, Germans, English, Irish and Scandinavians settled in the area to be close to jobs at the

meat-packing factories and rail yards nearby. About 1910 the Mexican Revolution brought a wave of new immigrants to the area.

But in the 50's many residents left for the suburbs and in the '60s an interstate highway was built, dividing the community, reducing access and reducing its desirability for commercial businesses.

The 80's have brought new hope. But as young professionals and developers are attracted to the area, which lies among the bluffs and hills above the Kansas River Valley adjacent to downtown, the battle to preserve the old while building the new will become more difficult.

Moreover, some residents fear that a proposal by the city's Planned Industrial Expansion Authority calling for 350,000 square feet of office space on a 3.5-acre site in the area could damage the already fragmented community.

"We feel it's going to send a signal to other developers who will come in and build more high rises," Mr. Shechter said.

- [Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#)
- [Home](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [XML](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Work for Us](#)
- [Back to Top](#)