



## CHAPTER 7

# From the Past, A Future

*"Liberty trains for liberty. Responsibility is the first step in responsibility."*

— William Du Bois  
From The Legacy of John Brown

**E**ven before its induction into the National Register, Santa Fe Place was recognized by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1978, Santa Fe Place was cited as a National Strategy Area. This designation opened the way for \$48 million in government and private grants and loans.

The NSA funds targeted specific areas:

- Rehabilitating almost 600 deteriorating single-family houses and more than 700 apartments;
- Providing rental assistance over a period of 20 years for residents of 310 new and rehabilitated units;
- Rebuilding curbs and sidewalks, and

replacing regular street lights with new sodium vapor lights in both residential and commercial areas;

- Clearing the block northeast of 31st and Montgall and building new subsidized duplexes, and constructing several large family homes and duplexes on vacant lots;
- Relocating the 248 persons and five businesses and churches displaced during the rehabilitation;
- Developing a new .7-acre park at 30th and Walrond with a basketball court, drinking fountain and picnic shelter.

A major achievement of Santa Fe's commercial revitalization was the Linwood Shopping Center.

The Center replaced the abandoned St. Joseph's Hospital, a huge eyesore at Prospect and Linwood. The \$6.5 million dollar project encompassed 80,000 square feet of retail space in new buildings, as well as the renovation of an apartment building for office space. Since its completion, the Center has remained fully leased with 20 tenants.

This much-needed commercial development has shown hefty profits for the businesses which have located there. Santa Fe Place was obviously a great place to do business. Within three years of its completion, most stores doubled and then tripled their sales projections. The Center is home for a diverse assortment of businesses: large grocery

store, automotive service center, pharmacy, shoe store, card/florist shop, book store, home furnishing rental, beauty shop, hat shop, and two fast food franchises.

The Community Development Corporation, a private, not-for-profit group, sponsored and co-developed the Center. CDC, which would continue to work in Santa Fe Place and in other minority neighborhoods on other commercial and housing projects, had the stated goal of revitalizing "the community by improving housing and unemployment while supporting minority business development." CDC is completing construction on additional retail space across the street from the Center. Called Linwood Square, this new 58,000 square-foot shopping area will add another strong commercial presence to the area.

The revitalization of Prospect continued when, on July 30, 1988, the Kansas City Public Library opened its new branch at the northwest corner of 31st and Prospect. Santa Fe Place had always supported a strong educational presence in the community and was one of the prime movers to establish the library in the area. The new \$1.7 million library was named for Lucile H. Bluford. For many years, Bluford had been a leader of the community and Editor and Publisher of *The Call*, a minority-owned weekly newspaper.

The year 1988 also brought the completion of the eagerly awaited Justin Place apartments. Located near 31st and Montgall, the complex provided housing for low- and moderate-income fami-

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*The Linwood Shopping Center was a major achievement of Santa Fe Place commercial revitalization.*



lies. Three new buildings, six renovated apartment buildings, and nine townhouses made up the 80-unit complex, with four units designed for handicapped residents. Some apartments rented at \$295-360 per month. Townhouses and other apartments were offered at market prices. All prospective residents were screened, a process which included credit and police security checks and visits to the applicants' previous homes.

Rosemary Lowe, President of the Santa Fe Council, expressed approval of the project's geo-

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*In 1988, the Kansas City Public Library opened its new branch at 31st Street and Prospect. The library was named for Lucile H. Bluford, a leader of the community and publisher of The Call.*

graphic closeness to Santa Fe Place. "We wanted quality people with high standards and morals who would enjoy living in a nice, quiet neighborhood. So far it has worked out beautifully."

Even before Justin Place was completed there was a paid waiting list. This fact dramatically emphasized the great demand for new housing in the black community.

The nationally acclaimed developer, McCormick Baron & Associates, planned Justin Place. McCormick Baron, which had begun redevelopment of downtown's Quality Hill in the early 1980s, had a long history of successfully reclaiming urban areas which had proven too difficult for other developers.

Santa Fe leaders worked closely with both the Community Development Corporation and McCormick Baron. This kind of partnership formed the pattern for all subsequent development projects and major renovation within Santa Fe Place. With an eye to maintaining a strong neighborhood identity, Santa Fe Place residents were determined to collaborate on anything which affected the character of the community. The foremost objective was this: all new and revamped structures had to conform to the time-honored ambience of the historic neighborhood.

By the late 1980s, Santa Fe Place had established a leadership role among other neighborhood organizations. Recognized for its stability, Santa Fe had demonstrated that stability corresponded directly to its residents' resolve to protect

and preserve their neighborhood. Other communities could learn a great deal from Santa Fe Place, even cities as far away as Omaha, Nebraska.

In 1988, the Community Development Block Grant Program sponsored the Sister City Program, an exchange program between Santa Fe Place and a black inner city neighborhood in Omaha called Prospect Hill. Representatives of Santa Fe and Prospect visited each others' cities and shared ideas about the revitalization of old neighborhoods. In each city, guest participants met the mayor and received the keys to the city.

Santa Fe Council furthered its efforts to strengthen Kansas City's inner city by creating, along with other neighborhood and minority groups, Neighborhoods United. This coalition comprised three neighborhood associations and several community organizations including United Minority Media Association and Genesis School. In celebration of this partnership, Neighborhoods United sponsored a concert with Ruby Dee at the Folly Theater on October 21, 1990.

Always anxious to strengthen its contributions to the neighborhood, officers of the Santa Fe Council attended a Leadership Retreat sponsored by the Neighborhood Alliance. Committed to rebuilding the city's core neighborhoods, the Alliance serves as a clearinghouse, especially helping neighborhood groups sift through the ins and outs of government loan programs. At the two-day retreat, Santa Fe Place leaders took stock of the neighborhood's strengths and opportunities. It was a time to look back at past

accomplishments and to map out future goals.

No matter how valued its historic significance, no community can long hope for a bright future without the support and commitment of young people. Without the influx of young generations — people willing to raise families within its boundaries — an old neighborhood, if it survives, is little more than a memorial park.

Fortunately, 40 years of growing and nourishing a neighborhood produced, for Santa Fe Place, more than a stagnant showplace. It produced a legacy.

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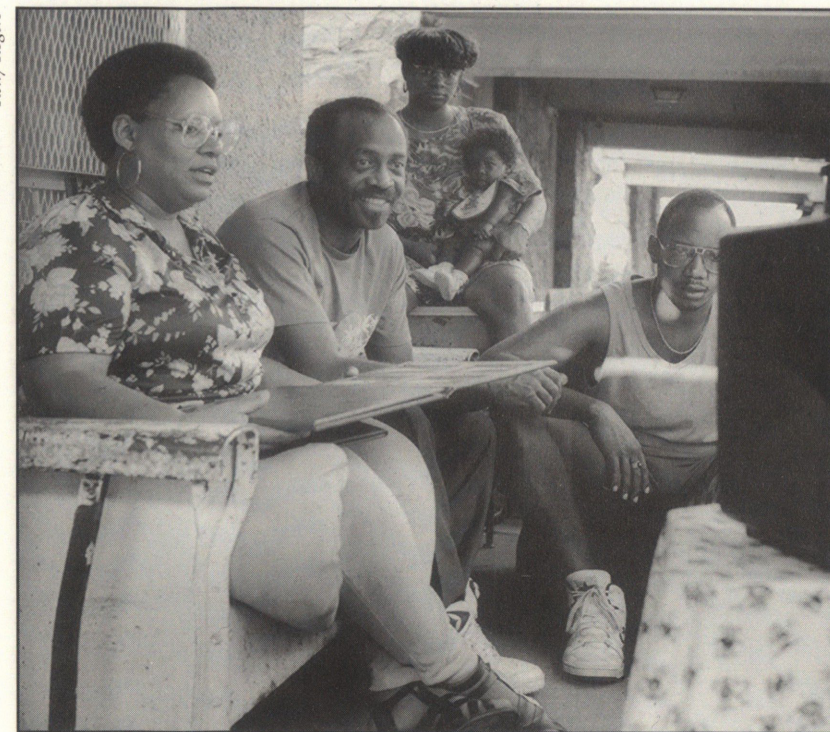


*Revitalization of Santa Fe Place included the Justin Place apartments. This complex provides housing for low- and moderate-income families.*



A few young families were always attracted to Santa Fe Place because of its rich history. This number increased in 1984 when Historic Kansas City Foundation, a development agency under the City Department of Housing and Community Development, renovated several Santa Fe houses. The houses were then sold to young couples.

The influx of young people created the impetus



(From left to right) Sheiliad Snow, Starling Beason, Sarita Howard and Michael Howard, like to gather on Santa Fe's wide porches, just as they have for three generations.

for a new neighborhood organization which focused on the concerns and interests of young residents. This was the start of Santa Fe NOW.

In October, 1984, Santa Fe NOW was incorporated. The group's articles of incorporation announced a commitment to protect property values and to maintain certain property standards and adherence to property codes. Finding community-based financial resources was also high on the group's objectives. To further strengthen the neighborhood, Santa Fe NOW recognized the need to promote home ownership and to assure the availability of low-cost supplies for the upkeep of homes.

Santa Fe NOW was very aware of the skepticism which most people attached to housing "east of Troost." That section of the city was generally dismissed as blighted. To overcome this perception, Santa Fe NOW determined to oversee construction and renovation within the neighborhood. In keeping with its goals, Santa Fe NOW supported the construction of four infill housing units on Victor and Lockridge Streets.

Both the Santa Fe Council and Santa Fe NOW recognized that a carefully controlled and well-designed complex like Justin Place would provide dramatic evidence of the area's diversity and its first-class living standards. Justin Place coincided with the neighborhood's desire to attract more newcomers. Indeed, the number of young families who were resisting the migration of the black middle class to the suburbs was growing.

"Young homeowners are coming back," said

one of the leaders of Santa Fe NOW. "Santa Fe is going through a renaissance."

In 1982, Charles Chappelle moved his young family into Santa Fe Place. The Chappelles paid \$40,000 for their three-story, limestone shirtwaist home. Within four years its appraised value had risen by \$8,000.

Certainly, cost-for-value posed a significant inducement to settle in Santa Fe Place. But there were other, equally significant benefits. For most young people, Santa Fe was closer to their jobs. They avoided the traffic congestion of the suburbs. There was also the community spirit of neighbors sharing their enthusiasm for remodeling their homes.

"The future is bright," said Mr. Chappelle. "I know a lot of people who are moving back to the inner city. They feel the same way as we do. They like the older homes; they like the history."

In fact, some of the new families are part of Santa Fe Place's history. Some young people are second and third generation residents who grew up in Santa Fe. Their parents, or their grandparents, were pioneers.

The signs of renovation and renewed commitment to Santa Fe Place are everywhere: fresh paint, new decks, roofs and garages, replacements for beveled glass and brass fittings, carefully planned gardens.

Concern for the randomness of crime is still apparent, as it is all over the city. But as one neighbor says, "Santa Fe Place is an oasis. It doesn't fit the mold of the inner city. Everybody here looks out for each other. There's a feeling of

family and belonging."

"I was very anxious to move into the area," Kathryn Smith remembers. In 1949, when she was a young woman, she and her family bought their first home in Santa Fe. "It meant having our own home. I was young then and did not have sense enough to be afraid of anything. I just wanted to get on with my life. I had a month-old baby. My daughter was the first black baby on Lockridge and everyone came by to see her. When we bought this home in Santa Fe, we had great plans for the future."



Carmen Fielder is one of many young people living in Santa Fe.



Santa Fe Place owes its long life and its bright future to the contributions of its residents, past and present, young and old.

Without the conscientious planning and meticulous, skillful construction during the first quarter



The influx of children and young families keeps the neighborhood alive. Here, left to right, Mikal Beason, Shamarr Fonville and Gary Robinson gather together to play in the neighborhood.

of the twentieth century, Santa Fe's rich architectural heritage would not exist. For generations, people have been drawn to the beauty of the neighborhood. Santa Fe Place is the only early black middle class neighborhood in Kansas City which still maintains most of its original architectural integrity.

Without the courage of families like the Millers and the vision of leaders like Willard Shelton, Santa Fe's promise for continued prosperity would have faded long ago. The magnitude of their contribution to their people and to the community-at-large has won national praise. The lasting value of that contribution has inspired young people for almost half a century.

Martin Luther King, Jr. promised black Americans: *"If you will protest courageously, and yet with dignity and Christian love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, 'There lived a great people — a black people — who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization.'"* These words could have been spoken for Santa Fe Place.

Courage, dignity and good will were the guiding principles that forged a lasting foundation for the next half century. They made a fitting legacy from a sturdy and dedicated people, pioneers "who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization" in Kansas City, when they journeyed to the top of the hill that is Santa Fe Place.



## APPENDIX I

# Architecture of Santa Fe Place

The importance of architecture in Santa Fe Place cannot be overemphasized. The high quality of construction and the varied sizes of the homes, from grand mansion to modest bungalow, play a vital part in the pride which residents have in their neighborhood. Generation after generation has recognized and celebrated a unifying neighborhood identity which is based in large part on the physical environment of Santa Fe Place.

And, too, the aesthetic beauty of the architecture and its nationally acknowledged historic significance provide a clear focus for the continued life of the community and for its preservation.

Santa Fe's homes and apartment buildings were constructed mainly between 1900 and 1925. The initial plan for the development called for an urban neighborhood — strictly residential and strictly single-family. Most houses were designed as two-and-a-half story structures, with a few one

and some one-and-a-half stories.

Housing construction peaked twice: 1907-1910 and 1921. The Benton Apartments were built between these two peak periods, from 1915 to 1920. In 1925, Santa Fe Place had 411 single-family homes and 240 apartment units. Another apartment building phase occurred in the 1960s. Adhering to the area's long-established architectural traditions, construction and renovation still continue.

Despite these recent additions, the original plat, laid out in 1897, remains unaltered. The character of the early development also remains, largely, the same; architectural changes, missing original structures, and non-conforming additions are rare. The early requirement of setting all buildings 30 feet from the curb is still observed.

It is both this historic continuity and the architectural cohesiveness that make Santa Fe Place a unique community within greater Kansas City.