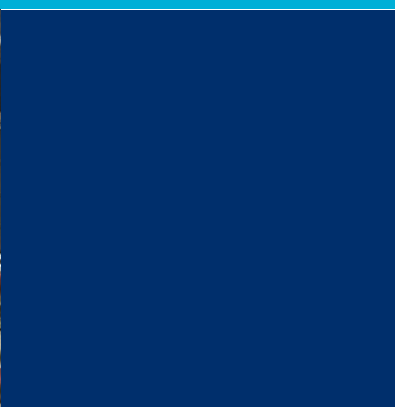
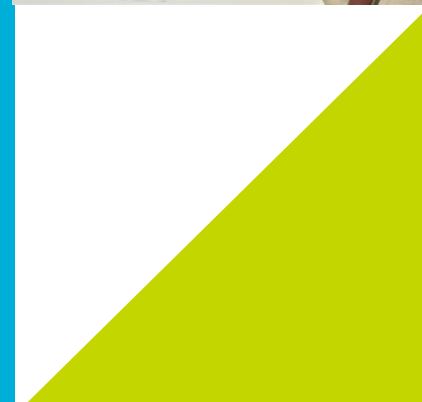
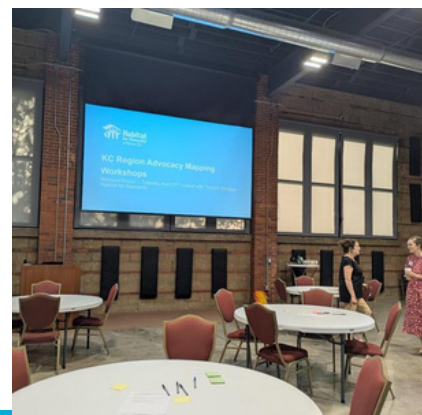


Strengthening the Kansas City Housing Advocacy Network

Building a stronger housing ecosystem in the Kansas City Region

This report summarizes work done to map the advocacy network in the Kansas City region, including key next steps for the system to better support quality housing across the continuum.



Executive Summary

Strengthening the Kansas City Housing Advocacy Network

Background: Habitat launched their advocacy programming in early 2025. Understanding the current advocacy network in the Kansas City region was a key early step identified in bringing together broader and more coordinated coalitions. This report summarizes the methodologies of mapping the advocacy network and key next steps for strengthening the Kansas City advocacy network to support quality housing across the continuum.

Purpose: Understand key features of the existing advocacy network and infrastructure and how to better cultivate and strengthen its work.

Key findings:

- Over half of the mapped advocacy organizations are non-profits.
- Service area does not equate to advocacy area.
- There is a lot of energy at the local level; there are very few organizations doing much advocacy in either state.
- Only 11% of advocacy organizations responded that housing advocacy is their most important role, and only 6% said the same for housing policy, which indicates that organizations have other roles that impact how quickly they take advocacy action.
- Advocacy organizations' most common activities were building or working in coalition and collecting client stories to share for advocacy purposes.
- Advocacy efforts are spread thin, and this influences how quickly our network is able to act.
- Efforts are reactive rather than proactive currently, and don't leave enough time for organizations that lack capacity to engage meaningfully.
- Individual organizations cannot be everything to all housing issue areas.

Recommendations and implementation:

1. Develop infrastructure to provide training and support to housing advocacy organizations
2. Clearly identify and build capacity of hubs
3. Streamline ways to share client stories for advocacy purposes
4. Dedicate time to further understanding the network and using data

The map, a dashboard: To access the network and its corresponding dashboard, please visit: https://app.visiblenetworklabs.com/vue/report_viewer.html?report_id=u90Py2i9nPPHUtCfkD6O

A note on network vocabulary: This report was developed within network science. Network science has its own terms of art. The report opens with a basic outline of how to understand these key terms.

Terms and definitions

Why Network Science?

Using network science lets us objectively assess the network and key roles within it. It also allows for a visual representation that each organization can explore and assess.

Key language to keep in mind when reading:

A network is a tool to accomplish service coordination, program functions, or in this case - advocacy.

Network value comes from intentional efforts that are coordinated across and among networked partners. We describe relationships and components of the network in the following way:

- Nodes - individual organizations (or people) that comprise the network.
- Ties - connections between nodes and the relationships and the systems that facilitate them.*
- Edges - boundaries where the network ends. Edges may represent potential intersections to other networks. **
- For the purposes of this report, we define network as: collaborations, between and across organizations, working at the intersections of issue areas to share infrastructure, leverage collective resources, and achieve greater impact.

Work done in the network:

Within a network, there is **mission work** – work that each node produces (i.e. building houses or serving the unhoused community), and **network work** – work that tends to the overall health, functionality or strength of the network (i.e. hosting a network 101 workshop, analyzing roles of an organization, or ongoing training and support for network partners).

Who or what makes up the advocacy network?

Over two-thirds of the larger KC Regional housing network responded that they participate in some form of housing advocacy. Throughout the report, **we refer to these individually as “advocacy organizations.”** We use the term **“advocacy network” when referring to the entire group**, knowing advocacy isn’t their only function. In total, between the Visible Network Labs survey and in-person workshops, we captured the work of 119 unique organizations. Originally, 99 organizations completed the survey. Through the workshops, we captured an additional 20 organizations. A full list of organizations can be found on page 12.

**VNL’s survey captured “Information sharing” as a tie, which causes the KC Housing Network look strongly interconnected. For critical evaluation and functionality of the housing advocacy network, we framed information sharing only as a relatively weak tie, or not a tie at all. Organizations should analyze the value of information-sharing only ties and if those ties bring unique value. A tie that is only drawn because two nodes occupy the same space at a table (without any other connection) may be a weak tie at best.*

***On the dashboards produced by VNL - “Edge” is used as the term for “ties” or connections*

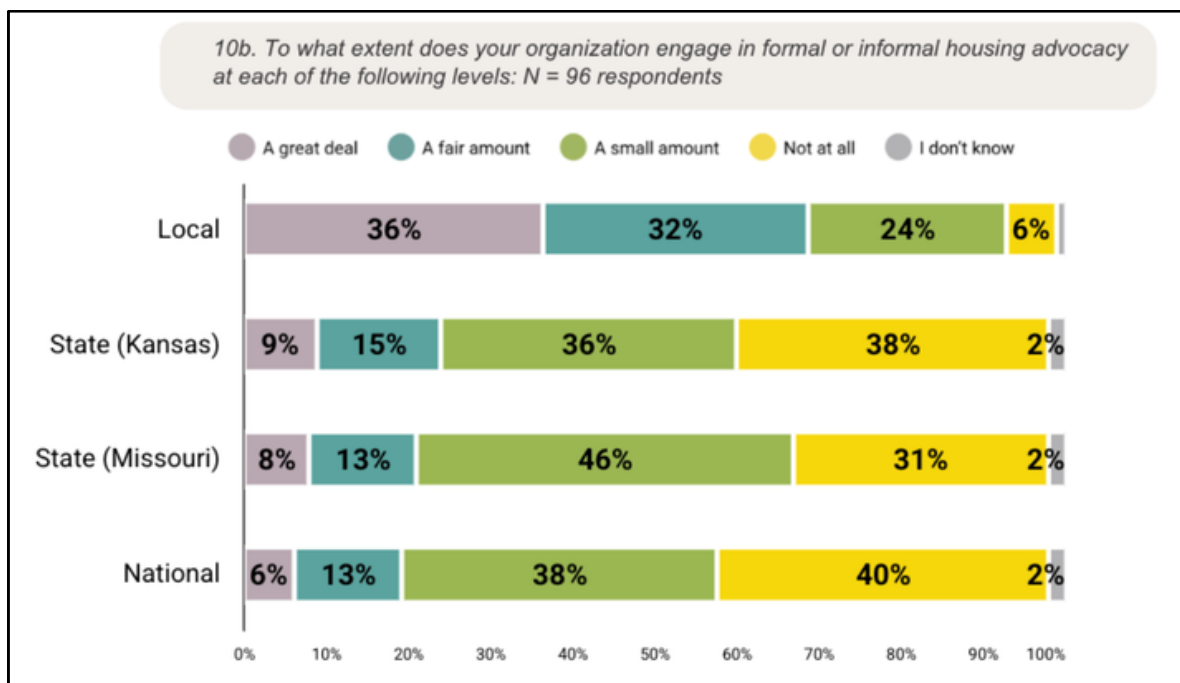
Initial survey

Takeaways from Survey

- Over half of the mapped advocacy organizations are non-profits.
- Service area does not equate to advocacy area.
- There is a lot of energy at the local level, there are very few organizations doing much advocacy in either state. This table is included as an example of a survey result below.
- Only 11% of advocacy organizations responded that housing advocacy is their most important role, and only 6% said the same for housing policy, which indicates that organizations have other roles that impact how quickly they take advocacy action.

The larger Kansas City housing network placed importance on meeting regularly and making decisions collectively. In contrast, the subset advocacy network placed higher importance on diverse stakeholders, sharing resources, and defining shared goals. These results indicate an understanding of intersecting organizational missions, but the need for a shared vision and clearer pathways for advocacy action.

Advocacy organizations' most common activities were building or working in coalition and collecting client stories to share for advocacy purposes. While this helps us understand who has information, it can only be effective if it is ready to share in an impactful way.



Workshops

We hosted three workshops: A Missouri-focused workshop at Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity, a Kansas-focused workshop at United Community Services of Johnson County, and a final workshop meant for broader stakeholders or organizations who crossed state lines at Habitat KC's Administrative Offices.

Topics presented were:

- An overview of network definitions and “Network 101”
- Overview of the RHP Survey and Housing Advocacy Network-specific results
- Interactive organizational review: advocacy activities of each organization and their partners, barriers and challenges to being effective, and reflections on current work.

Workshop Takeaways

The gaps in our region's housing needs indicate that current efforts of only educating both the general public and decision makers about our current housing challenges are not moving the needle. For the workshops, we focused on a smaller list of advocacy activities that we felt created new opportunity for momentum:

- Maintaining relationships with elected officials (e.g., legislative action days, legislative tours at your agency)
- Messaging campaigns (e.g., social media campaign on housing as a human right)
- Proposing and/or supporting new or revised housing policy (e.g., delivering testimony, hiring a lobbyist)
- Conducting and/or sharing housing research for public education
- Community organizing and/or advancing grassroots initiatives
- Voter engagement (forums, candidate surveys, registration drives)
- Organizing a Political Action Committee

This activity showed that many organizations have a relationship with at least one elected official at one level of government, but far fewer groups are leveraging these relationships, organizing people, engaging with voters, or working in tandem with policymakers.

In a brief brainstorm on barriers to advocacy, we identified that most organizations are primarily doing local advocacy at multiple points in the housing continuum, and with spare staff time. **Advocacy efforts are spread thin, and this influences how quickly our network is able to act.** A recurring theme emerged that current advocacy **efforts are reactive rather than proactive** currently and don't leave enough time for organizations who lack capacity to engage meaningfully.

The workshops also highlighted that individual organizations cannot be everything to all issue areas or participate in every advocacy activity. Most individuals in the room noted the tension of housing being such a broad topic, that they feel pulled in many different areas.

Implementation

Strategically positioning the housing advocacy network to effect long-term policy change is needed. A functional advocacy network will leverage collective knowledge in issue areas and have clear pathways to act quickly, while managing limited capacity.

To accomplish this, we recommend a few strategies:

1. Develop infrastructure to provide training and support to housing advocacy organizations

All three workshops highlighted a need for additional training on a variety of topics, but the most frequently shared were:

- Advocacy vs. Lobbying Workshops
- How to track lobbying
- How a bill becomes a law in both Kansas and Missouri (with all the details and pathways)
- Support for organizations to build their own policy priorities and advocacy strategy

When advocacy organizations share a baseline understanding of effective pathways for change, alongside an informed perspective of their role in a functional housing network – action can be harnessed quickly. Training should be offered in each of the areas above to any organization who is interested as well as how to advance shared policy priorities and strategies.

Another approach to add to the housing advocacy network toolbox is shared talking points. Throughout the workshops, organizations highlighted that knowing where to find messaging that has already been tested and vetted to take to their meetings with elected officials would increase their ability to advocate. To move forward effectively, advocacy hubs should create (or continue to create) this information and make it easily accessible.

Partner Resources

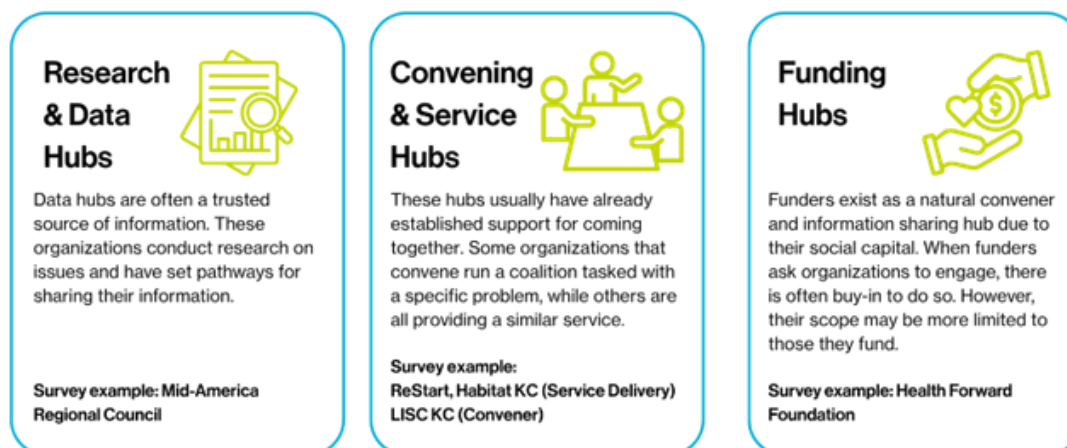
At the state level in Kansas, **KHAN** maintains an advocacy platform during legislative session that integrates bill tracking, shared messaging, and opportunities for action.

More information can be found at: votervoice.net/KHAN/home

Implementation

2. Clearly identify and build capacity of hubs

Hubs are an essential force in advocacy because of how quickly they can disseminate information. They are often seen as vetted and trusted partners in the community, which can support quick action. Partnership mapping quantitatively identified five hubs, evidenced by centrality scores (total partnerships, de-duplicated) greater than 54: LISC of Greater Kansas City, Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the Health Forward Foundation, Habitat for Humanity of Kansas City and ReStart. All five hubs have a regional footprint, serving both sides of the state line. No hub listed advocacy as a primary role of their organization – further emphasizing the diffused nature of current housing advocacy efforts. It is important to note that MARC and LISC are the convening organizations who facilitated the survey, potentially influencing their ultimate centrality.



Understanding their perceived role as hubs, allows each identified hub to better position themselves for housing advocacy or supportive actions. For example, knowing that MARC and LISC have strong data and convening power through the Regional Housing Partnership, these hubs are key players for effective development and sharing of research-informed talking points.

The in-person workshops identified an advocacy hub on the Kansas side - the Kansas Housing Advocacy Network (KHAN). While Empower Missouri is active in the housing space, they also stretch across other topic issues. They did not rise to the level of connection that KHAN does on the Kansas side, but should be incorporated within the housing advocacy framework as a potential hub. Their educational and strategic resources are developing more fully and are an asset to Missouri legislative processes.

Implementation

3. Streamline ways to share client stories for advocacy purposes

We know that most organizations are already collecting stories from clients they serve. For the housing advocacy network to be most effective, organizations must understand the best ways to leverage these stories for advocacy purposes. All stories have the potential to be used for a specific policy change or for broader education and awareness-building. To have the greatest advocacy impact, stories should be:

- In a format that can quickly be circulated, either as a hard copy or digitally
- Written in a strong, persuasive voice
- Clearly identify the problem, and how the problem could be solved
- Have language that could be quickly adapted to be tied to a specific policy or incorporated into testimony, with permission of the storyteller/client
- Empower those willing to share their stories in advocacy spaces including at hearings and meetings with elected officials

Sharing stories for advocacy purposes is distinctly different than how these same stories would be used for fundraising. Content should be aimed at how policymakers should be intervening to solve the problem, and less-about how an organization is solving it.

Because organizations are collecting these stories in focus areas that align with specific areas of the housing continuum, the larger network should be aware of who has these ready to go for advocacy in each area.



Ongoing effectiveness

To best steward capacity and resources, each of us should:

Intentionally play the “network roles” that an agency has natural strengths in. A network is strengthened by different players who act towards the health of the network overall. Roles are not static or assigned, and each advocacy organization may have different staff who contribute different strengths. Each organization should spend time internally identifying these roles both as an organization and within the organization. (Refer to page 12 for a network roles)

Individual organizations should focus their scope on what areas of housing continuum they can meaningfully lead, participate in, or passively support based on their services and mission alignment. This clarity will help all members of the network understand where true gaps are.

To start self-identifying strengths, examining capacity to participate, and gaining clarity on advocacy goals, each organization can begin by evaluating the following:

- If their organization is generating advocacy information and sharing a call to action with partners?
- Does their organization serve as experts across the diverse landscape of the housing continuum?
- If their organization is convening the edges of the network?
- If capacity is low, does the organization understand where they look to for information and what advocacy initiatives they want to be involved in as a participant.

Additionally, time should be dedicated to hone and identify clear pathways to network edges and issue area intersections. Networks that were identified through workshops that intersected most strongly with housing were: Business Community, Education, Healthcare, Local Government and Faith Community. Organizations should evaluate their proximity or connections to these intersecting issue areas and leverage opportunities to cross-share information in these spaces when convened.

Moving Forward

Habitat KC will keep this report and accompanying dashboard on our website. Additional information about the full network mapping effort can be found on the RHP's website here: <https://kcrhp.org/regional-housing-network-mapping/>

Habitat KC will share this report with each organization who either in the survey or workshop said they do some level of housing advocacy.

How organizations can use this information:

Each organization advocating for housing, even in the smallest of ways, is part of this network. Aligning around common priorities and strategies can make us stronger. To move forward, each organization is encouraged to take three steps within the next six months:

1. Clarify your role within the housing continuum, your policy priorities, and your organization's advocacy readiness in each area.
2. Participate in an advocacy training
3. Spend some time with the advocacy dashboard

Uncovering and clarifying the housing advocacy network is just the start of this work. When we advocate collectively, our reach is extended beyond what each organization could do on our own.

Impactful change will come from continued network cultivation, stewarding resources that already exist, and being clear and specific on the roles each of us play. This report should be used by individuals and organizations to understand how to meaningfully engage in the network, identify areas to expand advocacy coordination, identify skills to strengthen, and begin communicating policy goals in alignment. The greatest opportunity lies in recognizing that we don't have to do this work alone. The work will be most effective when the robust network that already exists is activated in new ways.

Thank you

Special thanks to:

This work would not have been possible without generous funding from the **Health Forward Foundation** and technical support from **Rachel Ohlhausen, Director of Program Partnerships at Jewish Family Services**.

Materials created by **Melinda Lewis, MSW**, for initial network workshops and trainings in the region between 2019-2021 supported this work.

We are grateful for the collaboration of the **Regional Housing Partnership** in aligning these efforts. Thank you to the **Visible Network Labs** team for their work and support on the initial survey and dashboard creation.

Finally, a huge thank you to all of the organizations that took time to complete the survey and participate in workshops. A full list of participants can be found in the following appendix.



Looking back

Housing access and stability are integral components to individual and community success. Kansas City's region is experiencing what most communities are across the country – a housing crisis at multiple points along the housing continuum. Many groups recognize this issue and different areas of the region are beginning to activate across different levels of policy solutions. Each area however, is not at the same level of activation or necessarily well connected.

Habitat for Humanity of Kansas City (Habitat KC) launched its advocacy work in early 2025. Early on, Habitat KC wanted to ensure the policy work undertaken was needed and we were using our expertise in effective ways. Some of this work started organically, but we also wanted to answer the questions of “who is already doing advocacy work at what level and at what capacity. From that, how could we partner better to amplify our impact?”

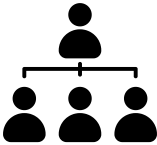
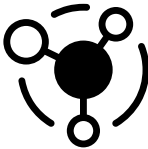
In late 2025, the Regional Housing Partnership (RHP) launched a survey facilitated by Visible Network Labs (VNL), to map the Kansas City's region housing network by documenting organizations involved in housing, their work, and who they partner with. Habitat KC strategically partnered with the RHP to include survey questions specific to housing advocacy. The survey results provided a baseline, and Habitat KC saw a need to build on these findings and facilitate broader conversations around how this existing network could be leveraged more effectively. To achieve this, Habitat KC hosted a series of workshops in April and May of 2026 that brought together both surveyed organizations and those that were not included in the initial mapping work. This report combines the findings from each effort, with an analysis on where we go from here.

The VNL survey initially provided data insights into the work of 99 organizations who said they are doing housing advocacy in the Kansas City region. We learned which organizations said they are doing advocacy, what advocacy activities they are doing, and the levels of government they are engaged with.

Appendix A: Network Roles

Roles within networks:

Network roles lend an important vocabulary to help us understand how we work with other organizations and how we work together within an organization. Spend time with your team walking through each role and identifying organizational and team member strengths.

	GUARDIAN <i>Organizational leaders, allowing staff the time to tend to network.</i>
	BRIDGE <i>Liaising at the edges of the network and intersecting issue areas.</i>
	MIRROR <i>Critical examination of functionality of clusters and network practices.</i>
	WEAVER <i>Assessing for network holes, skills or topic gaps, and strengthening ties.</i>
	COACH <i>Investing in skills to pursue strategic network connections.</i>
	BUFFER <i>Navigating tensions and turfs. This role is helpful for gathering stakeholders.</i>
	SCOUT <i>Identifying and investing in promising network weavers and nodes.</i>
	AMBASSADOR <i>Representing constituent needs and 'occupying' high importance spaces.</i>
	CHAMPION <i>'Selling' the coalition, project or network to would-be partners.</i>

Appendix B: Dashboard Labels

Organization	Map Label
AltCap	2
Arnold Development	7
Asset Funders Network	10
Avenue of Life	11
Better Housing Consortium (Kansas State University)	14
Bishop Sullivan Center	15
Bridgeside Strategies	20
Brinshore	21
Build WyCo	23
Central Bank of Kansas City	27
CHES, Inc.	29
Civic Council of Greater Kansas City	32
CJR Development	33
CoBuildKC	36
Community Builders of Kansas City	40
De Jong Architecture & Development	46
DRAW Architecture	49
Driven Development	51
Dromara Development LLC	52
Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City	56
El Centro Inc	59
Embrace Your Shine	60
Excelsior Springs, MO	65
Folks Capital	69
Forever Grace	70
Friends of JCDS	71

Organization	Map Label
Full Employment Council	73
Greater Kansas City Association of Real Estate Brokers (KCNAREB)	79
Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness	80
Guadalupe Center	83
Habitat for Humanity of Kansas City	85
Health Forward Foundation	89
Heart of America United Way	90
Hillcrest Transitional Housing	94
HopeBUILDERS Home Repair	99
Hoxie Collective	101
Hunt Midwest	103
Independence Housing Authority	104
IFF (CDFI)	106
Independence, MO	107
Jackson County Public Health	108
Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council	109
James M. Stacy Commercial and Investment Real Estate	112
Jewish Family Services	115
Jewish Vocational Services	116
Johnson County, KS	119
Johnson County, KS - Health and Environment	120

Appendix B: Dashboard Labels

Organization	Map Label
Johnson County, KS - Housing Services	121
Kansas City Design Center	126
Kansas City Regional Association of Realtors	127
Kansas City, MO - Health Department	129
Kansas City, MO - Housing & Community Development	130
Kansas City, MO - Land Bank	131
Kansas City, MO - Mayor's Office	132
Kansas City, MO Housing Authority	133
Kansas Housing Advocacy Network	135
Kansas Legal Services	137
KC MASS Services	140
KC Unidos Federal Credit Union	143
Kansas Housing Resource Corporation	144
Lansing, KS	154
Leavenworth, KS	158
Legal Aid of Western MO	161
Life Unlimited	165
LISC Greater Kansas City	166
Mattie Rhodes Center	171
Metropolitan Energy Center	176
Metropolitan Lutheran Ministry	177
Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)	180

Organization	Map Label
Mt. Carmel Redevelopment Corporation	185
Neighborhood Legal Support of Kansas City	188
Olsson Design	197
OurSpot KC	200
Parkville, MO	204
Phoenix Family Housing	205
Prairie Village, KS	209
Preserving US Inc.	210
ReStart	217
Riverstone Platform Partners	220
RK Contractors LLC	221
Rosedale Development Association	222
Shockey Consulting	226
Spring Hill, KS	232
Teachers Like Me	240
The Way Home	242
The Whole Person	243
Tikkun-KC	245
Truman Heartland Community Foundation	246
Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity	247
UMKC Center for Neighborhoods	252
Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS - Planning and Urban Design	255
United Community Services of Johnson County	256
US Bank - Mortgage	259

Appendix B: Dashboard Labels

Organization	Map Label
Veterans Community Project	260
Westside Housing Organization	262
Westwood, KS	264
Wyandot Behavioral Health Network	266
Wyandotte County Public Health	267
Wyandotte Economic Development Council	268
Civic Saint	271
Livable Neighborhoods of Kansas City, KS	272
MS Consulting, LLC	286
Jackson County COMBAT	287
CSH	288
Healing House	290
Evergy	292
United Believers Church	296
Next Door Real Estate	297
First Federal Bank of Kansas City	306
Rose Brooks Domestic Violence Shelter	307
Safehome	308

The Advocacy Dashboard can be found here:

https://app.visiblenetworklabs.com/vue/report_viewer.html?report_id=u90Py2i9nPPHUtCfkD6O

Additional organizations that participated in workshops but not the survey:

Country Club Christian Church
 Eastside Opportunity Ventures
 Good Faith Network
 House KC
 Safer and Simpler Missouri
 University Health
 Urban Neighborhood Initiative, Inc.