

# Incubating New Businesses along Central Avenue



La Placita pop-up market, in Bethany Park, started in 2014 as monthly event. In 2015 it was bi-weekly and In 2016 it will operate as a weekly event. (photo by Matt Kleinmann)

### CONTEXT:

Central Avenue is historically one of the original, east/west connecting streets of Wyandotte County. It has a unique character with its unique placement in the landscape. As a result, it contains residual small, triangular parcels of land that have become pocket parks. Central Avenue also is noted in the community for its small, 19th century storefront, brick buildings that have been adapted and reused by many business owners for over one hundred years. In the past decade, the area between 10th and 18th along Central Avenue has seen a resurgence of activity headed by the Latino Community and with support from the Central Avenue Betterment Association

(CABA). Locally owned-businesses such as Carniceria El Torito 2 (there are other Torito stores in KCMO) and El Rio Bravo Supermarket (recently under new management) have provided strong, public amenities to the local community with healthy food options. Although many buildings are now occupied through efforts to re-build this area, a strong Central Avenue District identity is not fully formed and some buildings remain empty—this creates an opportunity to consciously form a needed identity, or ‘brand,’ that is supported by CABA. “La Placita” is the Central Avenue Betterment Association (CABA) Initiative designed to invigorate new activities and

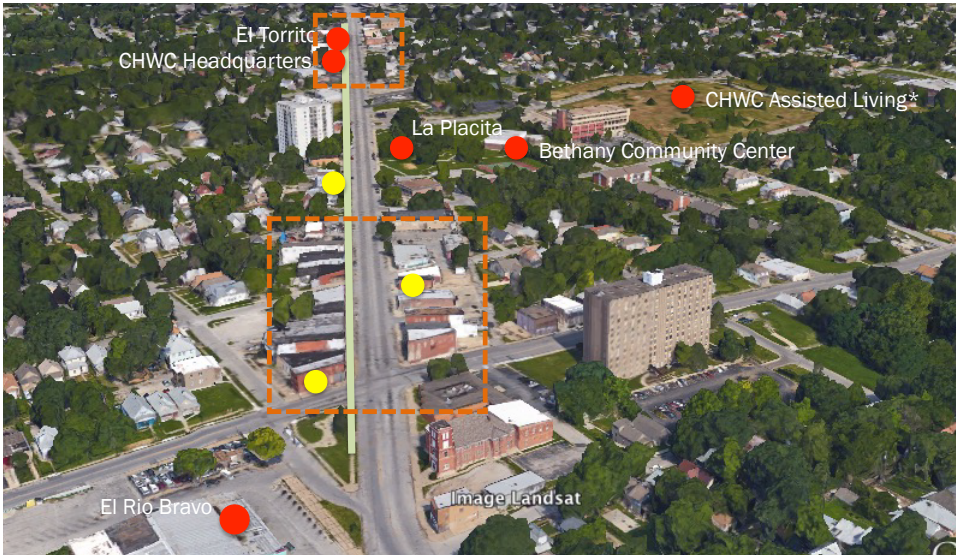
revitalize this area of the Central Avenue Corridor. This effort has been successful in bringing people and revenue from outside of the community. Because of the successful impact this has had, CABA will increase the frequency of events so that it will occur weekly in 2016. **COMMUNITY NEEDS** La Placita has allowed this District to advertise and reach out to those that live outside of this community. La Placita has been able to provide a ‘pop-up’ market to small businesses that previously were not able to sell food and goods. As some of these vendors become more established, it is hoped that they will choose to stay in the ‘Central Avenue District,’



Bonfire Incubator Space on Johnson Drive, in Merriam.



Off the Grid at Proxy in Hayes Valley, California



Anchor businesses along Central Avenue define the district. (image by Culin Thompson)

occupy empty buildings and choose to build new infill buildings on empty lots. In order to support such a transition, it is suggested that “business incubators” and several infill, higher density projects be built. Throughout the metropolitan Kansas City area, many “incubator” maker spaces have been developed in recent years. A business incubator can “nurture collaboration using shared resources, knowledge and ideas to cultivate opportunities...(where they) engage a diverse group of creative, socially conscious entrepreneurs giving opportunity for production, community outreach and education.” These sorts of models demonstrate how it may be

possible to transition a ‘pop up’ market to a ‘bricks and mortar’ location. **NEXT STEPS** Exhibit the work in various venues and seek community feedback. What information needs to be developed to further support collaborative efforts and fulfill the vision for the “District”? What empty lots can be built out with new infill retail at the ground level? How can the “District” become more stable and dense with development?

### PROJECT FACTS

Timeline: August 2015-Present

### PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

- Rabia Bajwa
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- Shannon Criss, Professor

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Central Avenue Betterment Association (CABA)
- Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Marty Thoennes, CABA
- Edgar Galicia, CABA