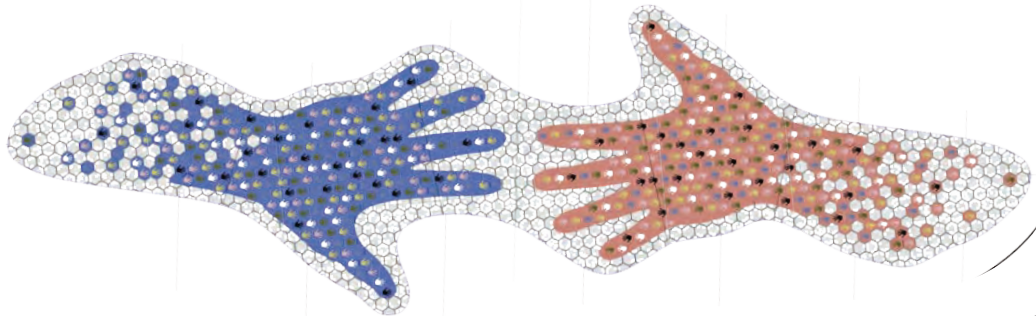


# The Handprint Project and The Revitalization of Lykins Square Park

*The revitalization of Lykins Square Park is key component to the revitalization of the Lykins Neighborhood. The Handprint Plaza Community Arts Installation is the galvanizing focus of the Park and daily asset for the neighborhood families.*



**The Redevelopment of Lykins.** Lykins is an easy 2½ mile drive east of downtown KC. On three major bus lines to downtown, the Lykins Neighborhood is a promising but challenged area that holds excellent potential for providing affordable housing for the many workers required for the KC's expanding Downtown, Crossroads and River Market areas. With 20% of its parcels vacant or abandoned, the neighborhood association has ambitiously taken on the role of Master Developer of its own revitalization, starting with the focused redevelopment of a 9 square block area of 200 parcels surrounding Lykins Square Park and gradually growing to encompass the entire neighborhood. After 3 years, The Neighborhood Association now controls over 90 parcels and both rehabbing and new construction are underway with 17 Developers and Rehabbers..

**Lykins Square Park.** The Lykins Square Park is one of highest-crime areas in the Lykins Neighborhood and its revitalization is essential to the creation of a safe, healthy urban core green space. While there are many Lykins families with great interest in using the park, they have mostly avoided it because of its attraction for criminal activities. The recreational facilities in the park are subpar for use by anyone other than very young children. As a result, middle and high schoolers and families to go elsewhere for recreation or do not have a healthy level of recreation in their lives.



*Lykins Square Park was one of a handful of neighborhood parks designed by George Kessler, the architect of Kansas City's Parks and Boulevards system.*

The Neighborhood in 2020 completed a community project to redesign the Master Plan for Lykins Square Park. The non-profit design group Eco-Abet chose the Lykins Park project for its June 2019 charette. In the months before the charette, the Neighborhood Association held four focus groups with diverse gatherings of residents and Parks staff. Those groups identified several components that were important to them. After the Charette---With the assistance of Plaid Landscape Architects---the charette ideas were distilled into a Master Plan that represented the input of the neighborhood, the architects and designers, and Kansas City Parks and Recreation. The plan was then approved by the neighborhood and adopted by the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Board.

The major components of Phase 1 of the park plan are:

- The Promenade and Handprint Plaza
- New walking paths around the park
- Leveling the soccer fields (they are currently not playable); soccer kids now go to other neighborhoods to practice and play
- Planting of shade trees
- Building of two event spaces for neighborhood events, along with grills, seating and trash receptacles



*Promenade is a pedestrian connection for Norton Ave, the Handprint Plaza at the center.*

### **The Promenade and Handprint Project.**

The Walking Promenade connects Norton as it is interrupted by the park. The neighborhood would like to use it for urban farmers' markets and artisan fairs as well as other events. The Promenade will have two event spaces at either end and a 60 ft Plaza where the two Norton extensions, which are slightly parallel, connect.

**The Handprint Project and Plaza is the focal point of the Park.** Lykins is an incredibly diverse neighborhood with not only American born residents, but people from Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. The cultures of these families can be seen in the stores and churches up and down Independence Avenue, 9th and 12th St. There are over 17 languages spoken at Whittier Elementary school. The neighborhood cherishes its multi-cultural fabric and wanted a community art installation in the plaza that celebrates it.

The solution that evolved would feature the handprints of children in the neighborhood. A task force from the neighborhood, including a representative from Whittier Elementary, working with nationally known--and KC based--community artists Julia Cole and Leigh Rosser, generated the concept of utilizing handprint tiles to create the larger illustration of two hands of different colors reaching

towards each other. The hands are in the center of the Plaza and are 40' long.

Cole + Rosser will create the porcelain tiles and a small team of neighborhood volunteers, in collaboration with teachers at Whittier, will work with the children at the school to put their handprints and initials on each tile. The tiles will then be cured and fired and will be installed in the plaza during a community event and celebration. We expect that the work with the school and installation will occur in September and October, 2021.

In addition to the Handprint tiles, the neighborhood chose the word, "Community" that will appear on background tiles in the many languages of the neighborhood. The word represents how the residents feel about Lykins and their neighbors. It is quite reflective of the vibrancy, acceptance and celebration that abounds in the many cultures in Lykins.

