



Request for Proposals

The Midtown Community School Initiative is a grassroots organization working to provide better school options for the rapidly increasing number of families living in the Midtown neighborhoods of Kansas City, Missouri. With this Request for Proposals (RFP), the Midtown Community School Initiative is seeking teachers, administrators, state and national education management organizations, Kansas City Public Schools, current school leadership teams, and non-profit leaders who will respond with proposals that demonstrate the capacity to run a high-quality elementary school to serve families in Midtown. We are taking this approach of sending out a RFP because we believe a school truly belongs in relationship to its community, and the Midtown Community School Initiative is interested in partnering with school leaders who can bring that vision to reality, with the goal of opening a new elementary school for the 2015-2016 school year.

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Part 1: The Story

In the summer of 2013, a dedicated group of parents, educators, community leaders, and concerned citizens in Midtown Kansas City came together to form the Midtown Community School Initiative, a grassroots effort to open a new school to serve our Midtown neighborhoods. With more than 1,700 children under the age of five living in Midtown, we realized that the current school options could not support the growing number of families who want to raise their kids in Midtown.

What started as informal living room meetings quickly grew into a large movement of parents, educators, politicians, and activists working to improve education in our community. During the summer of 2013, a core leadership team began investigating current school options and dreaming of future opportunities, and the Initiative was organized as a means for that work. Initiative members shared the conviction that Midtown has a critical mass of young families who would stay in Kansas City if only there were better school options. We started with a Facebook group that grew to over 300 members by the end of the 2013 summer. We also conducted a survey that confirmed what we suspected: there are a lot of families committed to raising their children in Midtown. To date, 140 households have responded to the survey, and 98% of those surveyed said they would send their children to a quality community school if one existed. Additionally, 59% of those surveyed said they would like to be involved in the initiative, proving that our neighbors are willing to do the hard work of investigating educational opportunities for our children and creating opportunities where none exist.

In August 2013, the Initiative hosted its first community meeting to discuss a common vision for a new school. Over 80 people attended the meeting – mostly parents and other concerned citizens, but also local school board members, a city councilman, leaders in the charter school community, and members of the local media. The momentum demonstrated by the Initiative drew media coverage, with stories featured on KCTV5, KSHB-41, KCUR 89.3 FM, the Kansas City Star, and the Midtown KC Post. This was not just a movement for parents; the broader Kansas City community leaned in to see what this small group of parents might accomplish, and what they could do to help.

Since that time, the Initiative has begun the process of incorporating as a nonprofit organization in Missouri, which would serve the Initiative’s goals regardless of the path chosen to pursue a neighborhood school. Additionally, the Initiative has been meeting with school district representatives, charter school leaders, and other educators who have expressed their overwhelming support of a common vision for a Midtown community school. In light of this response, we realized there was an even greater opportunity for collaboration than we originally thought, and our core team discussed how we could best utilize our community’s collective support, respond to the demand for a new school, continue to engage school leaders, and begin a partnership with a leadership team whose vision and educational philosophy would best serve Midtown’s unique needs, demographics, and culture. This Request for Proposals is the outcome of those conversations, and the next stage in our pursuit of bringing a neighborhood school to Midtown.

“We love living in Midtown and, like others, would like to stay here. With the lack of school options right now we’ve considered the idea that we might have to eventually move. We are willing to donate our time and resources as they are needed in order to help find a way to get great, stable, safe, and reliable education in Midtown.” – Survey respondent

Part 2: Midtown Community Profile

COMMUNITY AT A GLANCE:

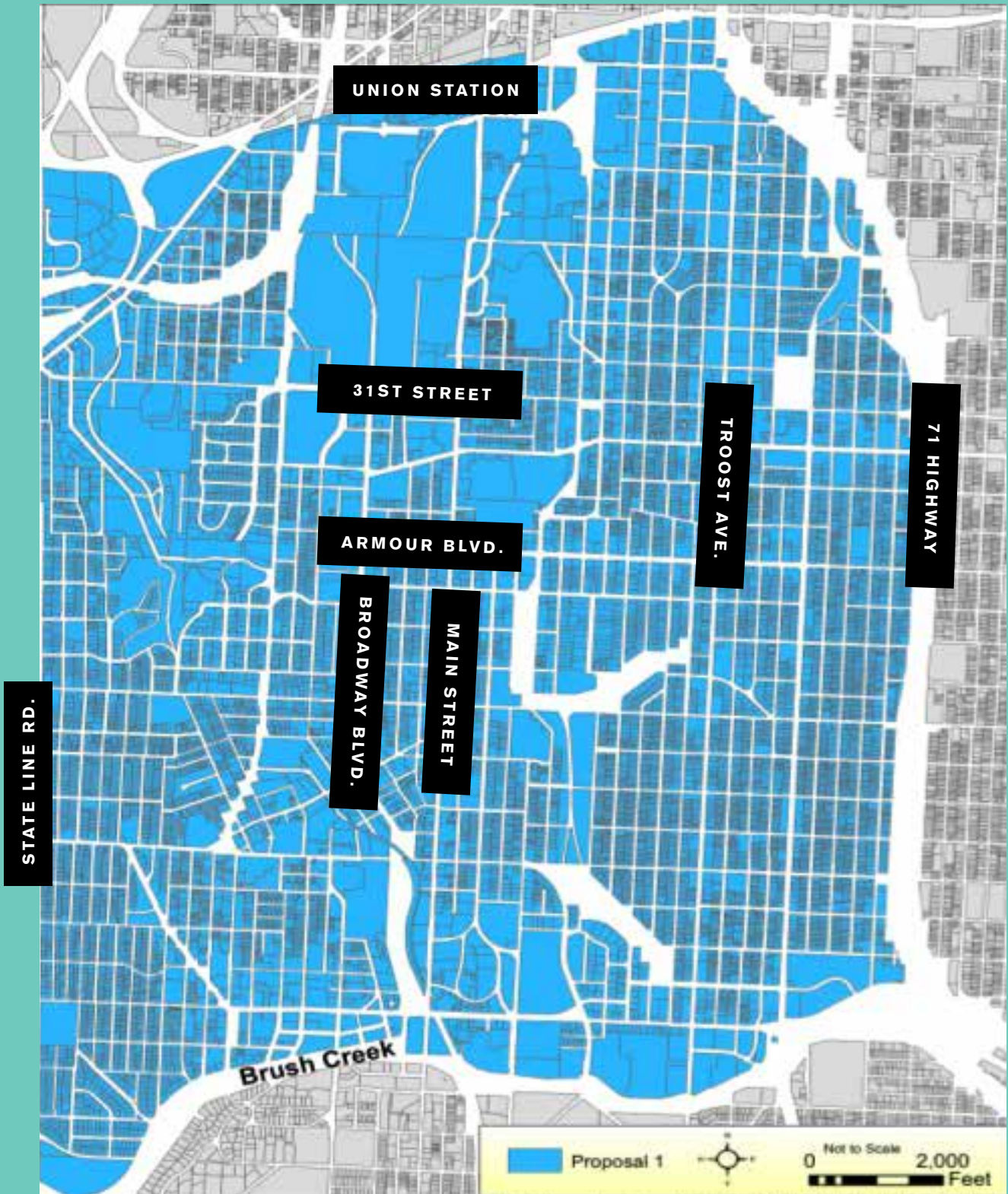
- According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are 4,555 residents under 18 and 1,764 under 5.
- The population is 59% white, 32% black, and 9% Hispanic/Other.
- Median household income of \$36,000 and a median family income of \$51,000.
- 40% of households have income of less than \$25,000 (compared to 26% for Jackson County and 25% for Missouri).
- Single-home sale prices range from \$75,000 to \$750,000 and above.

Midtown Kansas City is a diverse and vibrant community. Residents enjoy proximity to cultural centers and activities that are representative of the region, as well as the ability to walk, bike, and bus to many other areas of the city due to Midtown's central location. We like the front porch culture, the ease of getting to know our neighbors, and the collective support that extends beyond individual citizens. We like the affordable homes and the aesthetics of historical neighborhoods. We like the benefits of our diversity—racially, socio-economically, culturally, this is a diverse community.

But a viable community needs quality schools. Due to a lack of viable school options in our immediate area, there is an annual exodus of young, middle-class families leaving Midtown and moving across the state line or elsewhere for the sake of better public schools. Additionally, a large number of school-aged kids must be bussed or driven across town to their magnet, charter, or private schools. We know that this current situation not only impacts area schools, but also Midtown's opportunities for economic development, neighborhood stability, and growth as a community. We cannot be a truly sustainable community if a large number of our neighbors leave every year.

There is now a critical mass of young families in Midtown. A look at the data reveals a large number of families with kids under five currently live in Midtown. The 2010 Census shows 4,555 children under the age of 18 live in Midtown, and 39% of them are under the age of five. This disproportionate number of pre-school aged children testifies to a problem in Kansas City's recent history: when kids reach school age, families move to the suburbs. But another way to interpret this data is that there are currently a large number of pre-school aged children, and that number will soon be larger than the number of quality area schools that can accommodate all of them. Simply put, demand is quickly outpacing supply.

Current schools do not fully meet the needs of our community. The district schools in Midtown in their current manifestations don't offer the innovative, community-based approach we are seeking. With the district's instability, history, and loss of full accreditation, parents lack confidence in the district's ability to prepare our children for the future. Current charter schools are meeting some of the need, but many of the charters in Midtown strictly serve at-risk children rather than the entire community. Also, few charters offer preferential enrollment to certain geographic areas, which we view as essential to student success and community involvement. There are some nearby private schools, but with a median household income of \$36,000 and a median family income of \$51,000 in Midtown, paying private school tuition is not possible for the vast majority of us.



“Our first child is not yet born, due Jan 2014, but this is one of the main reasons we are thinking of leaving Hyde Park and moving to the suburbs, even this early on.” - Survey respondent

Part 3: The Vision

We are choosing a different approach for our community. Because every community is unique in its geography, history, demographics, and assets, we seek an educational model that fits with our unique place in Midtown. We don't believe that there is one educational model that will work for every community, no "one size fits all" solution, so we're looking beyond the usual approaches to opening a school. We want to consider both charter and district options because we believe quality public education should be free and available to all kids, and for a school to be successful it must belong to its community. This means that:

Our school should be a part our community. This community school will draw enrollment from the neighborhoods of Midtown so that kids attend the same school as their neighbors, and parents and community members can be more involved in the school. A high-quality community school will also help surrounding neighborhoods and businesses thrive. The geographic boundaries of Midtown are defined as Union Station on the north, Brush Creek on the south, State Line on the west and 71 Hwy on the east.

Our school should reflect the diversity of Midtown. Our neighborhoods are unique in that it's common for a \$300,000 home to be on the same block as a low-income apartment complex. Our neighbors are waiters and lawyers, university professors and college students, disabled veterans and corporate executives. Rather than seeking a school that accommodates one particular segment of society, the Initiative's goal is to build a community school that reflects the socio-economic, racial, and cultural diversity of our area, and that uses our diversity in a way that cultivates character and understanding in all of our children.

Our school should have a high standard of academic excellence and should value innovative teaching that prepares students for the future. We believe that academic excellence not only means high test scores, but also requires talented teachers who cultivate a love of learning, a capable and organized administration, and creative curriculum that pushes students to be 21st century learners. While test scores are an indication of academic success, scoring high on state tests does not always correlate to well-educated children. Even still, our hope would be to exceed state testing standards by the merits of a well-rounded and rigorous curriculum.

Our school should seek cultural partnerships with the community. Students should be enabled to use the surrounding community as an extension of the school campus. Within the boundaries of Midtown are art museums, history museums, parks and nature centers, galleries, colleges, theatres, nonprofits, and restaurants; just beyond the boundaries are universities, major medical centers, and many arts and cultural institutions. The common vision for our school would connect these cultural resources to the students in a manner that exposes them to the world around them, and creates a culture of community engagement and volunteerism among them.

Our school should support and promote parental involvement and administrative transparency. A community school would allow parents to be actively involved in their children's academic experience and would provide accountability to administration and staff. We would like to see the school's leadership team think beyond the typical PTA paradigm and instead envision and utilize parental involvement to its fullest potential.

“I love Kansas City and I love how it has been growing in the last 15 years; however, I don’t see how we can really be a national player without better schools. I explore the city on a weekly basis and it breaks my heart to see a boarded up school every ten blocks. Let’s do this!”
– Survey respondent

Part 4: The Proposal Outline

We invite you to join us in this common vision by responding to the Request for Proposals. The RFP submission should include the following information:

Section 1: Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be a stand-alone document that gives a succinct narrative overview of the proposal. It should be no longer than two pages and should include the following components:

- Mission, vision, educational philosophy, and culture
- Academic goals
- Grades served (first year and at full capacity)
- Five-year enrollment table that includes the number of students in each grade and total number of enrolled students
- Demonstrated capacity to open and manage a high-quality school, including brief explanation of how proposed school will drive success for community students

Section 2: Vision for Students

This section should address the following questions in as much detail as possible:

- Describe the culture you would create for students. How does such a culture contribute to their academic and social success?
- How will your school prepare students for high school and/or college?
- What are the critical components of quality, constructive instructional time?
- What are your goals for academic achievement? How will they be measured?
- How do you plan to incorporate art, science, and technology?
- How do you plan to instruct the students on civic engagement? How will it be incorporated into the curriculum or the student experience?
- How do you plan to instruct a diverse student body?
- How do you plan to incorporate diverse viewpoints into the curriculum?
- Please describe your plans to meet social, emotional, and physical health needs of students.
- How will you deal with behavior and safety concerns to ensure a quality learning environment?
- What extra-curricular activities would you offer to students?
- Provide a brief description of the proposed curricula, as well as explanations for how it has been effective with students similar to those the school expects to serve.

Section 3: Vision for Community

This section should address the following questions in as much detail as possible:

- Describe the role of community partnerships that will provide key academic or non-academic services, supports, or opportunities for students.
- How will such partnerships further the mission and vision of the school?
- How do you plan to engage parents? Is there a parental code of conduct/ agreement?
- How do you plan to engage volunteers and/or community supporters?
- Who will be responsible for managing and cultivating these partnerships?
- Describe your vision for establishing the school as a pillar in the community. How will the school give back to the community?
- How do you plan to use school facilities for the benefit of the community?

Section 4: Vision for Learning Environment

This section should address the following questions in as much detail as possible:

- What is your strategy for acquiring a school facility in Midtown?
- List your criteria for a constructive learning environment.
- In addition to classrooms, what spaces would you like to have as part of the school facilities (playground, library, gym, etc.)?
- How do you plan to fund a facility or capital improvements?

Section 5: Vision for Leadership

This section should address the following questions in as much detail as possible:

- Define the roles of each member of your team and attach résumés.
- Please highlight examples, experiences, or skills that indicate success with academic achievement and growth among comparable student populations.
- Describe how you plan on fulfilling these organizational needs: academic capacity, operational capacity, legal and financial expertise, parent and community support.
- What are your expectations for your teachers?
- What are your expectations for your principal?
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of your administrators.
- Describe your strategy for recruiting a high-quality faculty, staff and administration.
- What are your plans for professional development?
- How do you envision engaging your staff and faculty in participatory leadership?
- Describe how you envision your partnership with the Midtown Community School Initiative, both initially and in the coming years.

Part 5: The RFP Process and Timeline

This RFP will utilize a simple evaluation process that combines an accelerated application timeline with opportunities for community input and evaluation by the Midtown Community School Initiative's core team.

<i>October 7</i>	RFP Released to All Potential Applicants
<i>November 8</i>	Preliminary Proposals due
<i>November - December -</i>	Responses to preliminary proposals and requests for additional information sent
<i>December 6</i>	Revised Proposals due
Selection made January 2014	

Submission Instructions

Groups and individuals submitting proposals are asked to submit one electronic PDF copy of the proposal by 5 p.m. (Central) on November 8, 2013. Please send the proposal to midtowncommunityschool@gmail.com. You will receive confirmation that your proposal has been received within 24 hours.

Any questions before the November 8 deadline can be sent to midtowncommunityschool@gmail.com.

Format for Answering Questions

- Each proposal should include a section corresponding to each set of questions required. Full proposals should include a table of contents noting the page number on which each section and appendix begins.
- Proposals must be typed with at least 1-inch page margins and at least 11-point font.
- Appendix items should be clearly labeled at the top or bottom of each page.
- Please label each résumé with the individual's affiliation with the proposed school (e.g. founding school leader, principal, teacher, etc.).
- Spell out all acronyms the first time that they are mentioned in the proposal.
- Do not assume that we are familiar with all of the organizations, programs, service providers, curricula, etc. that you reference in the proposal; please provide brief descriptions either in the text or in a footnote.
- If citing any research, studies, or articles, please include full citations in a footnote or a separate references section.