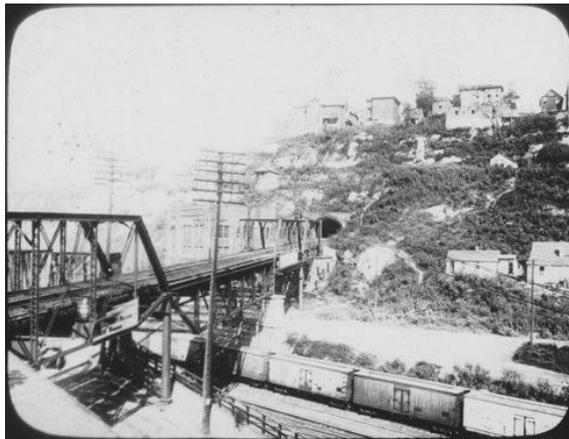


# Re-Imagining the Historic 8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel as a Portal for Cyclists and Pedestrians in Kansas City, MO

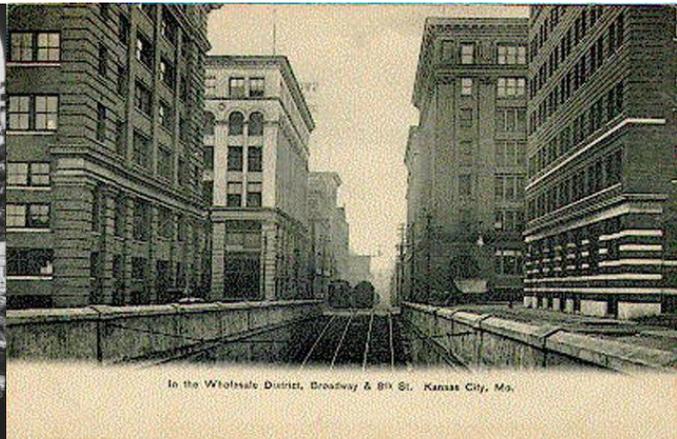
*Written by Braden Anderson with contributions from Kevin Wickman, Mike Konovalske, Andy Thies and JC Franco. Illustrations by Paul Mackender.*

## Background

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MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri



MVSC, Kansas City Public Library

*8<sup>th</sup> Street viaduct looking northeast toward Downtown*

*8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel entrance at 8<sup>th</sup> St. and Broadway looking East*

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1950s, **Kansas City's 8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel served as a portal for streetcar passengers** between the city's booming Downtown and lower industrial and nightlife district, the West Bottoms. Downtown Kansas City sits on a bluff that towers over two-hundred feet above the Bottoms. As the city connected itself with electric transit in the late 1800s, the need for a tunnel became apparent in order to bridge this difficult terrain.

The resulting structure included an 810-foot tunnel starting at 8<sup>th</sup> and Broadway in the heart of the city's Garment District and emerged out the side of the westward

facing bluff. A viaduct of roughly the same length then carried passengers down into the West Bottoms.

Upon the closure of Kansas City’s streetcar system in the 1950s, the tunnel has remained unused and has since been buried at the entrance. The bulk of the tunnel still remains intact beneath the streets of western Downtown Kansas City. Though the viaduct has long since been demolished, the point of emergence is still visible from the I-35 and aerial imagery.

## The Idea

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On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, Atlas Lens proposed a re-imagination of the abandoned 8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel. The showcase, called Show and Tell, featured ideas regarding the future of the West Bottoms from local designers, artists, and urban planners.

The proposal, while not intended to incorporate any economic or feasibility criteria, outlines ways by which the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel could be re-imagined for use as a bicycle and pedestrian-only thoroughfare between Downtown and the West Bottoms.

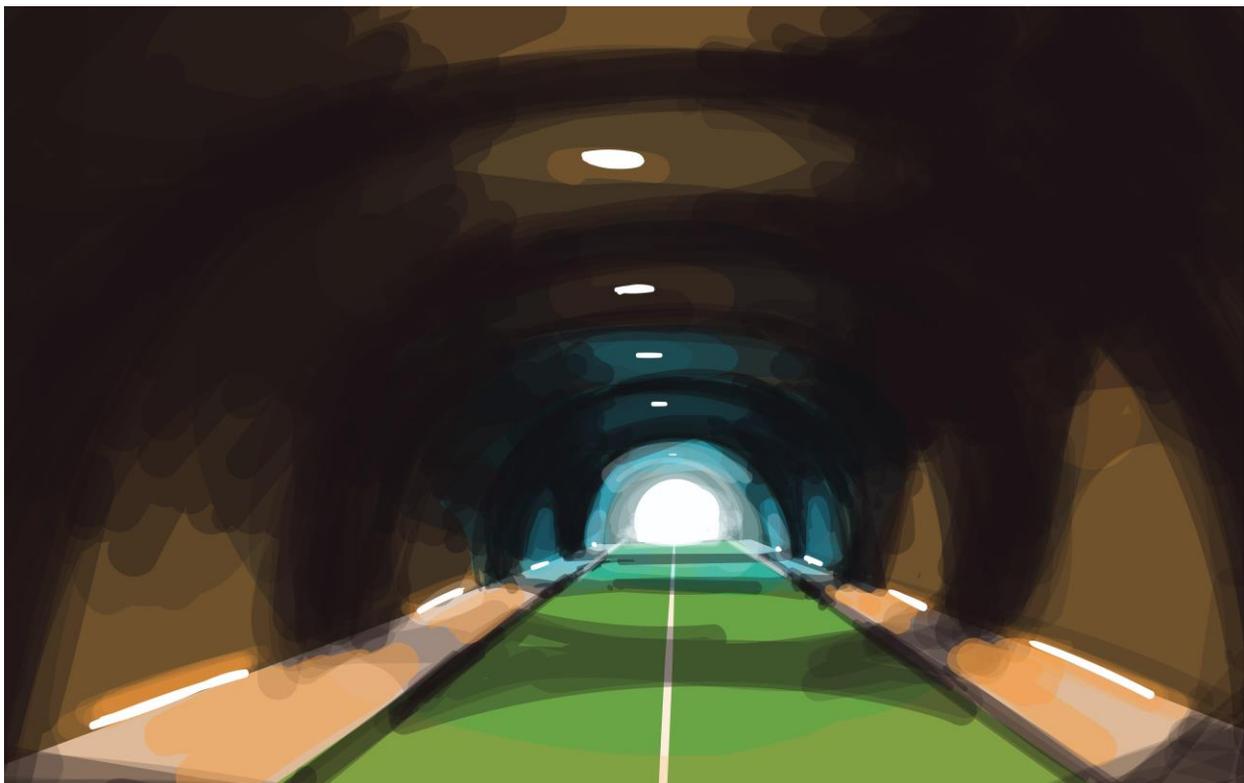
What?	Why?	Concerns
New tunnel will run along the same path as the historic tunnel and viaduct	The West Bottoms and Downtown are poorly connected with just two direct arteries. New tunnel will provide visible “portal” between districts.	Existing community assets must be protected including pedestrian zone west of Broadway along 8th St.
Exclusive to pedestrians and bicycles	Riding a bike or walking between Downtown and the West Bottoms is currently very dangerous and indirect.	Without emanating bike/ped connections, this tunnel cannot succeed as a true “gateway”
Will incorporate illuminated public art within tunnel itself	Tunnel would be the first piece of bike/ped infrastructure in Kansas City with the ability to draw national interest.	Tunnel must encourage movement in order to deter obstructive loitering.
Will utilize viaduct as wide, open, elevated greenway	Tunnel and viaduct system will allow the sense of place even on a transportation artery.	Construction of viaduct may be challenging given current road heights of adjacent freeways.
Viaduct will join street level in West Bottoms at a public plaza filled with daily vendors and community spaces	Plaza will contribute to current efforts to redevelop the West Bottoms into a community for people.	As West Bottoms transitions from industry to neighborhood, existing community assets must be kept from alienation.

## Renderings

*Proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel entrance at 8<sup>th</sup> St. and Broadway looking west preserves existing pedestrian area and bikeshare station*



*Inside proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Street Tunnel including central cycle track and peripheral sidewalks. Lights illuminate the path.*



*Proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Street viaduct protrudes from the bluff. Path will be wider than tunnel and incorporate greenery. Rendering looks northeast.*



*Public plaza will provide the terminus for the proposed tunnel/ viaduct system, creating community hub within West Bottoms.*

