

TABLE of EXPERTS

The Future of Kansas City

AMERICA'S NEW MAIN STREETS



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MODERATOR

Bill Dietrich
PRESIDENT & CEO
Downtown Council
of Kansas City

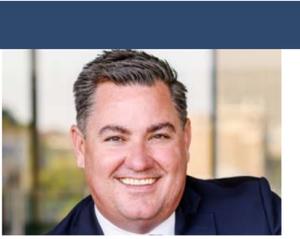
Bill Dietrich has served as president and CEO of the Downtown Council of Kansas City, Missouri (DTC) since June 2002. He has played a leading role in implementing Downtown's revitalization strategy. Dietrich developed the DTC into an effective urban management group implementing a wide range of revitalization strategies. Initiatives under the DTC's umbrella include the development and management of multiple Community Improvement Districts delivering \$4.5 million annually of public space maintenance, landscaping, safety, development and marketing services.



PANELISTS

Sean Craven
VICE PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR
OF OFFICE BROKERAGE
AREA Real Estate

Sean Craven joined AREA Real Estate Advisors in January of 2009, having interned for the company prior to graduating from The University of Kansas. Although primarily focused on commercial office, Craven has transacted deals across all industry sectors. He has over a decade of experience assisting clients in project leasing, tenant representation, sales, investment sales and acquisitions, and development site selection. He enjoys projects beyond the typical brokerage role, including repositioning assets for success in the modern office environment.



Brian Hoban
CHIEF COMMERCIAL BANKING
OFFICER
Country Club Bank

Brian Hoban is chief commercial banking officer at Country Club Bank, where he oversees strategic planning, business development and sales focused on growing commercial lending. A graduate of Rockhurst University with a degree in accounting, Hoban is a well-known Kansas City area market leader with more than 30 years of banking experience, primarily in commercial and industrial lending, sales and relationship management. He has been involved in numerous charitable and civic activities in the Kansas City area.



Doug Stone
ATTORNEY
Lewis Rice LLC

Doug Stone provides developers and municipalities with legal advice and strategic insight on conventional real estate projects and projects seeking public investment through property tax relief, tax increment financing, special taxing districts and other tools. He was instrumental in structuring and implementing the two special districts that financed the downtown streetcar and the Main Street extension. Stone serves on the Greater KC Chamber's Business Leadership Council and is a director and Legislative Chair of the Missouri Economic Development Finance Association.

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GETTY IMAGES

The *Kansas City Business Journal* recently held a panel discussion about economic development and positioning the metro area for continued growth. Bill Dietrich, president and CEO of Downtown Council of Kansas City, moderated the discussion, which followed an American City Business Journals' Future of Cities virtual event featuring Richard Florida, an economist, urban studies theorist and best-selling author.

Bill Dietrich of Downtown Council of Kansas City:

Downtown Council spent the last two years creating a 10-year strategic plan for Downtown. It was a grassroots, community effort involving all the 22 neighborhoods in the greater downtown area. Richard Florida's conversation with the American Cities Business Journals folks recently touched on many of the themes identified in our strategic planning process. He spoke about a balance between livability, affordability, and development and new investment.

We all thought the pandemic was over when the Delta variant receded. In the wake of the Omicron variant, we realized that the new normal may be more about figuring out how to live with COVID-19 rather than getting over it.

Richard Florida states COVID-19 initiated a "great unmooring." The rise of remote working is the greatest new trend he's seen in the workforce since the Industrial Age. The creative class — the next



Richard Florida

generation of workers — is making location decisions based on the quality of their experiences. They're making choices based on quality of life, affordability and how rich an area is in arts, culture, entertainment and sports.

So the question is, how do we reinvent our Downtown and our city coming out of the pandemic?

The core function of the downtown area has changed from industry to office, and now it's changing from solely office to a mixed-use environment. Richard calls the office market pre-COVID one of the last vestiges of the Industrial Age. We used to stack people in factories, and then we offshored the factories. Next we stacked people in office buildings, and now we're evolving



DOWNTOWN COUNCIL OF KC - SUBMITTED
Bill Dietrich

and building new mixed-use environments.

Howard Schultz, founder of Starbucks, equated success of Starbucks to the concept of the creation of a third place. There's where you work, there's where you live, and then there's where you experience — a third place where you have creative collision density that generates new ideas. That's what downtowns and cities are becoming.

They're no longer solely business districts. Instead, they are what Richard calls central social districts that encompass art, culture, sports, restaurants, creative experiences, connectivity and innovation.

My first question for all of you, based on your areas of expertise, do you agree with Richard Florida's vision for where we're going?

Doug Stone of Lewis Rice: Yes, I certainly think the experience we see in our own downtown reflects that direction. In 1992, when I was looking to leave the East Coast for a family-friendly metro area, we fell in love with Kansas City, although Downtown itself was a ghost town then. Now, with the investments made in Downtown, we see a growing community. We still have some pieces or services that we need to fill in. But there's just a different feel when you live, work and play in the same place.

Although we are starting to return to our offices, I had not worked regularly in my office since March 2020. I missed the energy, camaraderie and thought-sharing that take place when we are together. I'd lost that connectivity.

It's the human condition to seek out connectivity. Downtown is where we are focusing those efforts. We're not quite there yet, but is a city ever finished? I don't

think there is a point that a city is finished. Life evolves.

Dietrich: It is often said that cities are either evolving, changing, investing and growing, or they are losing their competitive edge, regressing into decay. You don't have the choice to stay the same. Brian, what do you think?

Brian Hoban of Country Club Bank:

I agree. I break it down into two segments of the population. One consists of individuals who work in service-related industries, such as law practices, architectural firms and ad agencies. They are drawn to those more urban environments.

The other segment is people who work in other industries. That's manufacturing, distribution, transportation and logistics. Those businesses are generally located outside of the urban core. Because of geography and convenience, those people are drawn to other areas.

Dietrich: Sean, what are your thoughts?

Sean Craven of AREA Real Estate Advisors:

As a city, it's always important to continue improving the environment and the culture, but it's more important now than ever. Employers want employees back in the office. They want to attract talent. But how do you do that today? Many people have spent the last two-plus years working from home. That's a lifestyle change. Having a great environment that invites people to the city, back to their office, is critical.

About 35% of employees are back in the office in Kansas City, which is higher than some cities I've seen nationally.

As we help companies plan for their space needs, we often hear: How do we get people back in the office without forcing them back? It's sort of the-carrot-or-the-stick conversation.

We've seen some companies hire salespeople or software people who are 100% remote and often not even based in Kansas City. These companies are struggling with how to recruit and onboard new people working from home most of the time. How do you get those people to embrace your culture as a company and build relationships with colleagues?

Many companies based in Downtown that we work with understand they need to update their space. We're not going back to the old way of working. There is

a flight to quality, but also a flight to a quality location that serves the needs of the employees from an amenities standpoint.

Companies with a dispersed workforce have to consider where those employees are going to stay when they come to town once a month or once a week every year. Can they stay at a hotel that's right next to the office and be able to enjoy Downtown? Or are they going to stay in the suburbs? Downtown is perfectly positioned to capitalize on companies that are going toward that more progressive model.

Dietrich: Yesterday, Richard Florida said people are patronizing restaurants and packing entertainment and sporting venues, and yet only about 30% of workers nationally are going into the office. Why are we comfortable being among 80,000 people in a stadium but we are hesitant to populate our offices?

Stone: Some types of work allow you to easily work from home. I'm not compelled to go to the office. Working from home gives me a different life balance. I can avoid my commute time, and I can work when I need to.

On the other hand, I find my "work day" can last 14 hours because I am blending work time and personal time together. It's a very different way of working.

While it is much more flexible, on the other hand, we crave human connection. I am more isolated when working remotely. I think we're going to see more and more people going back to the office for that human connection.

At Lewis Rice, we have not pushed people to come back to the office. We have a modified schedule. Some people don't want to come back unless everyone is masked, and many people don't want to wear masks. Managers have to balance that.

Dietrich: How many of us knew what Zoom or Google Meets was before COVID? And now, it's this tool we use every day. It gives us a lot more flexibility. And yet, as Doug said, something's lost. You don't get those conversations 15 minutes before and after meetings where creativity and innovation happen and opportunities are identified. Sean, what are your thoughts?

Craven: Companies are no longer just competing for talent with the

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next company down the street. They're now also competing with the home office.

So, when you're trying to recruit employees or just bring them back into the office, are you nervous about losing great people? Are you nervous about potentially losing that really talented person who says: "You know what? I don't want to be in the office five days a week. I've enjoyed working from home. I'll come in when I want." Are you willing to offer that type of balance? We're just now starting to identify trends globally, but the more forward-thinking companies right now are very focused on work-life balance and flexibility.

When people are in the office, how do they interact, even if it's just for two days a week or one week out of the month? We're seeing more flexible floor plans, fewer fixed desks and more investment in the space itself in

terms of the quality of the amenities and the break areas. The look and feel might incorporate elements of residential or hospitality, sort of mimicking what employees had at home.

It's interesting. We're really on the front end of this. One of the reasons people haven't come back to the office as quickly as they have to restaurants and sporting events is because employers themselves aren't exactly sure what this needs to look like moving forward. We've spent these last two years trying to figure out how to work during a pandemic, and we are just now at a point where companies are making those decisions because it's a total shift in the business model.

Dietrich: That's a really good point. Downtown Council is tracking how major and midsize employers are handling reentering the workplace, and their strategies are all different.

Hoban: I was with a custom



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Doug Stone

manufacturer last week who has designers, sales professionals, welders and shop workers. They are 100% in the office. And the camaraderie and internal relationships created have contributed to a number of successes for that organization. Their leadership sees the benefit of everyone being together.

However, when I talk to other clients, many tell me their associates are more efficient working remotely. Employees have fewer distractions. But that works with individuals who are trained and competent, with employees who know what their goals are.

With remote work, the mentor-mentee and the old-fashioned internal training relationships that are created can suffer.

Stone: That is definitely a downside, especially for younger employees. A friend's son, a star student who attended a top-notch university, got a fantastic job in San Francisco when he graduated. He moved to San Francisco but couldn't go into the office. He never got any training or mentoring. Without that interaction, it was just too difficult and unsatisfying. He quit that job and came back to Kansas City to reconsider options.

Dietrich: Sean, you are doing some amazing things at Lightwell. What strategies are you using to attract workers back? How is the office environment changing?

Craven: Many companies are working now to reinvent themselves as fast as they can to hire talented people. They're not just thinking about the current generation. They are planning and thinking about what Gen Z and kids who

are freshmen in college right now will want when they enter the workforce.

Employers are making decisions largely based on the environment within their office space as well as the outside environment. What are the other retail options and amenities in the building? Are they Downtown or in a walkable neighborhood? Are they located where that college student today will want to live when they look for a job? Those are the types of considerations going through their minds.

All of this is resulting in a flight to quality. The cost of real estate is de minimis compared to the importance of talent.

Piggybacking on Doug's point, it's super hard to onboard a young person into a professional environment. They're not only learning how to operate within your system, they're learning how to operate as a business person. They need to be around other people who are professionals and can mentor them, and it doesn't work on Zoom.

So, if you go to a hybrid model, are there great solutions that enhance collaboration in the office with mentors and peers, while also providing flexibility to work remotely? That's a delicate balance that works for some companies but certainly not all.

Dietrich: There seems to be this interesting generational choice or shift developing. Young people need to be in that collision density environment where they are making business contacts with people and mentors who can help them with their careers. But people who are more established in their careers have those networks established and therefore more flexibility in their work environments.

Brian, how is Country Club Bank helping businesses navigate this emerging environment? How are you helping small and midsize companies with their lending needs and transitional growth?

Hoban: It starts with physically being out on Main Street — seeing business owners, touring their businesses, sitting down and talking to them about their plans and goals, understanding the issues that they're managing and helping them look forward.

Traditionally in our industry, looking backwards is the trend. But looking forward has been so important with the pandemic because the situation evolved so quickly.

We've been blown away to see how resilient and innovative small and midsize businesses have been in Kansas City. They have risen to the challenge to meet the changes in the current business climate.

We've seen many businesses thrive in the face of what it looked like in the spring of 2020 and reinvent themselves to go to market differently and more efficiently.

We have 21 offices in the Kansas City area. We have a number of commercial bankers who are driven to be trusted advisors, to know and understand the business issues that their clients are facing. That helps us be better partners.

There are all sorts of banking products that we could talk about. But really, understanding business owners and what they want to do with their business is at the heart of what we do.

Dietrich: Doug, as we emerge into this new normal, it seems that we have to be intentional and thoughtful in our recovery efforts. To create sustainable development, we are going to need every tool in our toolbox. Can you talk a little bit about the current attitude at City Hall toward local development incentives?

Stone: Cities are a reflection of the elected officials then in office. But elected officials have limited terms of office, and as our elected officials change, so can a city's priorities.

In Kansas City, there's a sense that a good portion of city council members think incentives have been too loosely provided. Obviously, there are competing interests. Property tax jurisdictions rely on their property tax revenue, of course. But it is not as clear to me that these projects would occur absent the public investment, and therefore in my view, development assistance is not necessarily diverting funds that would otherwise go to the property tax jurisdictions.

We are seeing a clash between the perception that incentives are giveaways and the reality that they can be essential to feasibility. In the Midwest, we don't have the rental rates that you see on the coasts. But we do have very similar construction costs. That creates additional challenges for development.

Dietrich: Great workforces and affordability are our strengths.

Stone: That's right. But COVID



COUNTRY CLUB BANK - SUBMITTED

Brian Hoban

and its economic ripple effects have created even more of a challenge. For example, many developers trying to put pencil to paper to create a pro forma have to repeatedly update their construction costs because of supply chain issues and costs of goods. Costs are skyrocketing well beyond the revenue side of the development equation.

But again, there are competing interests in this arena. In Kansas City, the City Council recently adopted a number of ordinances that created some caps on development assistance for many types of projects. I think it will hinder the progress we're making. That's not to say that there aren't projects occurring. There are always projects being proposed that aren't requesting incentives. However, I am concerned that we're going to see fewer larger-scale private development, infill or rehab projects that carry extraordinary costs, or projects employing innovation that adds to cost without equivalent financial return.

One would hope that our local political leaders retain maximum flexibility to address projects as they are proposed, and that they embrace the view, as you mentioned earlier, that if you're not moving forward, you're at risk of dying, and you are certainly not competing successfully.

Dietrich: Do you think our state and city are trending toward being more strategic and intentional about the use of incentives to accomplish those types of policy goals?

Stone: Developers are certainly thinking strategically. I'm not sure that municipalities are thinking that way quite yet beyond a general

backlash against public investment in private projects. Although it could certainly be argued that the recent Kansas City ordinances limiting incentives were an attempt to be strategic in the crafting of exceptions to the limitations. Yet, I continue to suspect that many municipalities view developments as a bonus, not a necessity. That makes it more difficult to convince elected officials that there is a justification for public investment in these projects.

We may not see a material drop in building permits, but we will see a shift in the types of projects being built. We may not get the unique and interesting projects most neighborhoods and downtowns want. We need to ask ourselves how we can assist and obtain those cutting-edge and forward-thinking projects that might otherwise go to other metro areas, or even other cities in our metro area.

Dietrich: Sean, what do you think

that future office looks like? What are some of the amenities that employers are looking for?

Craven: The current generation of office space we have today is probably not going to meet the needs of employers moving forward. The amenity package in a building has immediately become more important.

Lightwell is a great example. We probably overbuilt the conference amenities and hospitality lounge. We designed that before COVID. Now we are reaping some benefits from that, because companies are planning for times when they may need to have all-hands-on-deck meetings, more spaces that can enhance collaboration when they bring groups together.

It's important for new projects to think about how these businesses are going to operate and amenitize in that way, and it's probably

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gearing toward more large gathering spaces and residential-style amenities within the building. Those are resonating really well with companies coming out of the pandemic. They don't necessarily need to pay for it within their space anymore, but they need those options onsite.

And again, location is hugely important. Are you located near your current employee base as well as your future employee base? Are there entertainment and restaurant options outside your front door? It goes back to providing a better work-life balance.

Dietrich: Chris Leinberger from the Brookings Institution talks about young families and the 15-minute neighborhood — the concept that having everything available within your neighborhood, such as a coffee shop, day care, grocery store and transit, makes neighborhoods more diverse, sustainable and resilient. **What are you working on that helps those critical businesses populate the neighborhoods and creates these walkable urban and urban-suburban spaces?**

Hoban: We agree and are supporting development in those areas, whether it's downtown Lee's Summit, downtown North Kansas City, downtown Shawnee, downtown Overland Park or downtown Kansas City. All of these beautiful, vibrant, eclectic, walkable and livable communities are incredibly important.

We're an advocate for our clients, and partner together for positive impact in our hometown. From clients like the YMCA helping thousands of families in our community to Port KC revitalizing the riverfront, as a community bank headquartered here, we support and see daily the influence they have in these neighborhoods.

As I mentioned earlier, we have seen many businesses thrive through innovation. Many of the companies that we do business with have innovated and found a way to connect with their clients in a different manner, including through social media and online retail. They are doing things differently from your typical, old-fashioned storefront business where you walk in and grab a number. They have had to be deliberate about their business and they deliver value.

Dietrich: Let's talk about the folks who live in these new



AREA REAL ESTATE - SUBMITTED

Sean Craven

neighborhoods. Downtown has the most diverse collection of neighborhoods in our region — 51% of folks who live in greater Downtown are not majority culture. In addition, most of the 32,000 residents of downtown Kansas City are millennials or younger.

From your perspective Sean, how is the office environment that you're working on going to change to accommodate this new workforce? Do you see that more youthful trend as well in what you're doing?

Craven: We do, particularly Downtown. We are currently working with a tech firm based in California that will be moving to Kansas City. They looked at suburban options, they looked at demographics, and they looked at where their potential talent would be coming from for their brand-new workforce here.

They chose Downtown for a lot of the reasons, including the ability to tap into a younger, more diverse talent pool.

More important, they want it to be somewhere where they can enhance their company culture. Your identity is largely based on where you are located and inside the walls of your office.

Moving forward, we will probably see less of that commodity office space we find mostly in the suburbs — where you park in a large parking lot and walk into a building. It's not as fun or interesting as walking by your favorite coffee shop or breakfast spot on the way into work. That doesn't mean there's not a place for it. There certainly is. But more and more, how you identify as a company is going to be communicated in the style of space that you choose.

A company can't survive with only young people or only with a more senior workforce. It needs that diversity now more than ever. So, how do you accommodate both? Again, we are just now starting to establish those trends globally. I don't think anybody has the answer to that. Every company is going to be a little bit different.

But we'll probably learn a lot more about how people want to work during the next 12 months, because frankly, employers are ready to get a good amount of their employees to the office, and the way we work has totally changed. What they have today probably isn't exciting enough to bring people back to them without cracking the whip.

I've heard that as many as two million people are ready to give their two weeks' notice when their employers demand they return to the office. They are ready to find something else that provides that work-life balance.

Dietrich: During the past 15 years, the greater Kansas City community has come up with strategies to make the urban core more attractive to employees and residents, including the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, T-Mobile Center and soon a waterfront stadium for the Kansas City Current women's professional soccer club. We're doing a great job creating those amenities that this new innovative, entrepreneurial, talented workforce wants.

Providing that great cultural experience has proven to be a successful strategy.

Richard Florida talks about catalytic projects that change the way people view their urban areas. A great local example of a catalytic project is the Kansas City Streetcar. Doug, you played a major role in helping that \$100 million investment come to fruition. Five years later, this project has generated over \$3.5 billion in follow-along investment in mixed-use development.

It has been so successful we're expanding the line south and talking about continued future expansions both north over the Missouri River and an initial east-west line.

Right now, we're also looking at building a four-block park over the I-670 South Loop. A similar project in Dallas, Klyde Warren Park, has generated billions in new value and about \$87.5 million dollars in new tax revenue every year from all the activities around that park.

Doug, how do you think these catalytic projects affect the local incentive calculus?

Stone: The investment that's occurring along the southern extension of Kansas City's streetcar is amazing. Clearly, the future certainty that's generated by rail (as opposed to bus lines that are much less permanent) generates more investment in proximity to the rail line.

We could talk about whether the streetcar is a financial incentive for someone to build there. While the streetcar adds value to nearby real estate, that is not the same as a municipal incentive for any particular project. We need to keep in mind that the basis of the local funding for the streetcar line is a transportation development district that established a value-capture model. The property owners along the line are paying special assessments, and shoppers within the boundary of the district pay an additional dedicated sales tax. Development projects that result in significant increases in value therefore also carry an increased special assessment, so the streetcar is no substitute for municipal financial support of a particular project that might still be needed.

Former Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes used to talk about Kansas City being River-Crown-Plaza — three distinct pockets of development without much linking them in between. The streetcar is creating the demand to fill that gap along the route.

Another interesting question to me, Bill, is what does it do to our sense of self and how we will come to change the way we view ourselves in that midtown corridor once the streetcar extension is completed and we have a rail connection from the river to UMKC?

When we worked on the initial downtown line, I can't tell you how many times I heard from people who were very skeptical of the project. Many of those same people are now its loudest supporters because they came to understand what it does and what it can do.

Although the streetcar creates development opportunity, we can't lose sight of the fact that the streetcar is an investment as well in public transit. Kansas City is a very car-centric town. Many people in Kansas City would say public transportation isn't for them. But based on my experience riding the streetcar, this predisposition is changing, and I am hopeful that acceptance of public transportation

as being for everyone will continue to grow, especially when we add east-west routes.

But this raises a question about the elements of future development projects. We had a couple of projects recently before City Hall on Main Street along the extension line. One was criticized because it provided too much parking along the line and another was criticized because it didn't provide enough parking for today's demand.

Many lenders still assert that you have to have 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit. In Kansas City, you only have to have 1 per dwelling unit by code, and along the streetcar line, you get reductions in the amount of parking, which is great for five or so years from now. But what about today when people still have two cars?

There's a tension between still meeting market demand today and our aspirations for the future.

Dietrich: That's a great segue to our last question: What two or three things should we be focusing on in the next five years?

Hoban: Continuing to make Kansas City a very attractive place to live, work and play is going to help us attract the very best talent. We work closely with clients like Visit KC, helping Kansas City gain exposure to increase visitors to our city. We need to continue to attract visitors and increase our exposure. Kansas City has so many great assets that need to be shared.

I met last week with a young man who grew up here. He works in private equity and has lived in Chicago and London. He moved back to Kansas City because of the opportunity to raise a family in this community.

He and his wife are excited about the streetcar extension from the Country Club Plaza to the Brookside area where they live. They have one car, and his wife works Downtown. Riding on the streetcar is going to be a normal way of life for them. And they love that feel of Kansas City.

Our number one priority has to be continuing that investment in the city that will help us attract employers who want the best talent. We have many thriving businesses in Kansas City that need talent. I met with another business owner recently who has 400 openings.

At Country Club Bank, we're dedicated to building our hometown. Supporting local businesses that make a direct impact on the community and those they serve is at the core of what we do.

The need to attract talent is real. It's all about talent and technology for us at Country Club Bank in the future. How does our city continue to build these incredibly thriving neighborhoods that make people want to move from London back to Kansas City?

Dietrich: That's a great point, and how do we do that in a way that maintains our affordability and benefits our residents and citizens who live in these neighborhoods today? Helping them participate in that wealth creation is such a great opportunity for us moving forward. Sean, what two or three things can we be doing in the next five years to accelerate and expand this renaissance?

Craven: Continuing to connect neighborhoods — whether it's with public transit or a deck over I-670 — is massively impactful.

Kansas City's ability to maintain a large block of historic buildings also stands out as a strength and impresses national developers we work with. Many other cities have not been able to do this during development booms. Those buildings typically get demolished in favor of larger projects.

We have a block of historic buildings that adds an architectural component to Kansas City that is unique. We need to continue to find ways to save those buildings and repurpose them in a meaningful manner.

We have seen companies move entirely to or open additional offices in Kansas City, mostly from the West Coast. They tell us they will continue to grow and bring jobs here if we can prove there's talent here.

If we get one or two of those more sizable companies to move to Kansas City and they're able to attract talent, the floodgates will open. If you get those, and they prove out the ability to hire talent here, others will follow.

Dietrich: Doug, we'll give you the last word. In addition to the streetcar expansion, what do you think our city and region should be focusing on in the next five years?

Stone: We could work on public spaces. Public spaces create a sense of place, and with a sense of place comes a sense of belonging. In the middle of downtown Detroit is a spot called Campus Martius Park. In the summer, they bring in sand, and it's like a small beach. In the winter, they convert the area to an ice-skating rink. It's surrounded

by office buildings. I was there at lunchtime, and it was absolutely packed.

While Barney Allis Plaza can be an expensive project, in my view, it has the potential to be repositioned as a public square for all manner of civic and community purposes.

We've talked about capping I-670 and creating a park. There's some talk about repurposing the Buck O'Neil Bridge to create something like New York's High Line. Projects like these could be game changers for Downtown and provide the neighborhood connectivity we need.

But these types of public projects require public support, both financial and otherwise. Elected officials have a habit of wanting to get re-elected. That's only natural. When public officials make decisions on how to invest public resources, they are receptive and responsive to the sentiments of the community that are expressed.

I grew up on the East Coast, and I've traveled to a lot of cities

that have invested in ballparks downtown. They have been extremely positive catalysts.

At Wrigley Field in Chicago, the game takes place in a neighborhood. The same is true of Fenway Park in Boston. It's quite amazing to witness what happens along the streets before and after games.

Dietrich: Multiple unique investments in an urban area feed off of each other. An event venue, a performing arts center, a streetcar line, a convention hotel, an entertainment district, a downtown ballpark — there's a synergy between these assets. They are catalytic and spark more investment, development, additional amenities and leveraged community benefit for our citizens.

Downtown has a lot to offer. But ultimately, the Kansas City Royals needs to make the best site decision for it to ensure its long-term success in Kansas City. I think everyone in our community wants

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