



Kelly Scanlon:

Welcome to Banking on KC. I'm your host, Kelly Scanlon. Thank you for joining us. Our guest on this episode is Kansas City mayor Quinton Lucas. He's here to talk with us about some of the exciting things going on in Kansas City and his vision for 2020. Welcome to the show, Mayor.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

It's great to be with you.

Kelly Scanlon:

You ended 2019 with several major announcements including free public transportation and the establishment of a Tenant's Bill of Rights. Let's talk about those and let's start with the free public transportation. What transportation exactly does that include?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

That would include, right now we actually already have free streetcar transportation as anybody who gets downtown would know, but this means that this now will include free bus transportation throughout Kansas City, Missouri. The goal was really simple and it relates to the fact that a lot of hardworking people need just a little bit more help, that extra \$1,000 a year, that extra \$1.50 per bus ride that they could have if they don't actually have to pay a fare. The way that we saw it working was the fact that every year Kansas City pays about \$60 million through a sales tax to help support the buses. What we don't actually receive that much money from fares. And so we realized that if we actually already have a mass transit sales tax, if we can help a lot of people, then maybe if we can just find a \$5 million budget gap from a \$1.7 billion city budget, then we think it's worthwhile to help people in Kansas City.

Kelly Scanlon:

How is this being rolled out? Does it connect with any other areas in the Metro? Talk to us about it.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

I was just with KCK Mayor CEO, David Alvey, and he was talking to me about the fact that we need to make sure we're working together on how the system would look and so while we won't be able to roll out zero fare transit in the entire region this year, we think that we will be

able to make sure that those who start in KC, MO, will be able to ride for free until the end of their route, whether that's in Kansas, Lee's Summit, Independence, anywhere else, and we also think that as the years go on, we've been looking for more grants from the Federal Transit Authority and so many others to make sure that we can actually fund this and bid out a system region-wide that is zero fare, that's truly equitable and it's putting money back in the pockets of hardworking Kansas Citians.

Kelly Scanlon:

Yeah, the Tenant's Bill of Rights package is another initiative that you campaigned on and that I know is very important to you. It's moving forward, having been passed by the full council and I think that the new rules are going to take effect in June?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

Correct.

Kelly Scanlon:

Okay, so in June. What exactly is included? What does a package entail?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

You know, a lot of what I've been able to do so far, address things in life that I think were perhaps tough for me growing up and tough for a lot of people and that we want to see some sort of change on. I was raised by a single mother and we caught the bus everywhere. Another thing about our lives, and I was homeless part of my upbringing, was that too much of it was in substandard housing, exposure to all types of things like lead paint, utilities that didn't work, et cetera. So really at its core, the Tenant's Bill of Rights is about giving people some remedy where they think they have been wronged in landlord tenant issues, where current laws are being broken, and frankly a hotline that they can call and say, "You know, our heat hasn't worked for a month and a half in the winter. But we're poor folks and don't know our recourse." How do we make sure there's an opportunity for them?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

For me, this isn't about changing Landlord-Tenant Law. Really in so many ways, it's actually about just making sure folks know the rights that they have and have a way to avail themselves of those rights. It's not enough that we can say, don't pay your rent, then end up in court and fight about it later. That's not the way we want to do these things. We want to be proactive and the Tenant's Bill of Rights is a key step in Kansas City making sure it does that.

Kelly Scanlon:

What do you think the long-range impact on Kansas City is going to be as a result of this?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

I think what this will recognize is the fact that this is a place where we want quality, stable, affordable housing. We want housing of all types in Kansas City, Missouri, frankly, and I think what we're recognizing is that you need to grow your population in all types of different ways. It can't just be through gentrification. It can't just be in having old, established neighborhoods,

they are some of the best in this entire region. We've got those too, it can't just be new housing developments in the North land. We need to make sure that we have opportunities for those who are working class to live in Kansas City, to grow their families, to grow their businesses, to become investors in banks and all those sorts of things right here in Kansas City. And for me, this is our commitment to that and it's an important part of what we're trying to do.

Kelly Scanlon:

Yeah. You brought up investors and what would you say then to the people, because there has been opposition to this. Very organized opposition as a matter of fact. So what would you say to the people, especially landlords and investors who have concerns about whether they're going to be able to screen potential tenants and perhaps now they'll look elsewhere at what they consider less risky investments. What would you say to them?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

I think first of all, any landlord who is a responsible landlord has absolutely nothing to fear, right? Are you the type of person who if the heat breaks in your apartment, you make sure it's fixed within a few days or within a week? And every responsible landlord I know, and I know lots of people who own homes and have extra properties for investment, who would say, "Oh my gosh, something's wrong. Well, we'll either try to fix it immediately, we'll find someone who does." That is the lion's share of landlords in our community, and those are the types of folks we're working with.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

The folks that we have some qualms with are those who are taking advantage of tenants, those who are often abusive landlords and frankly those who are often out of town, out of state, out of country landlords. I was visiting with our Senator, Josh Hawley, the other day and we're from different sides of the political aisle, but we agree on this issue, that folks should get what they're promised. Folks should be treated well. And so for us the Tenant's Bill of Rights is about basically enshrining that idea of fairness in those sorts of things. It's not about taking away anything from anyone. It's certainly not about being more punitive to good hardworking as well. And I think we'll be fine on the long run.

Kelly Scanlon:

In 2017, Kansas City earned a really impressive distinction. We were the first city in the country to be named as a UNESCO Creative City of Music. What does that designation mean for Kansas City? How do some of your initiatives, as you were just talking about the Tenants Rights Package and the development of the East side, help to achieve the objectives of that designation?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

You know, we have always been an exciting, interesting dynamic place, but maybe because we're Midwesterners we don't always share it.

Kelly Scanlon:

Yes.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

We're fairly humble. Nobody actually puts in a song, 'If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere.' But we need to do more of that. And the UNESCO designation is a big part of that. It was about us cherishing our cultural heritage and music in performance in the arts more broadly. Alvin Ailey dance trips, so many others that are key to the cultural fabric of this community. And I think when you compare us to cities of our signs, we blow many out of the water. In our cultural institutions, in our businesses, in our sports, and so I think this has just put one step of us making sure we recognize that. And there's one thing that I think has been an advantage of some of the policies that I've pushed since being mayor. I think it's gotten other cities to take notice of the Kansas City story. "Wow, that's the city with a zero fare transit. That's the city with Tenants' Rights. That's the city with the Superbowl team. That's the city with so many other positives." We need to take note of Kansas City right now and I've been so proud to have us really in some ways punch above our weight in recent years as part of that, and I think we'll continue to do that over the years ahead.

Kelly Scanlon:

Yeah, what you say is so true. I travel for some boards nationally and when I tell people what is here in Kansas City, they are just blown away. "Really? That's in Kansas City?" So, you're point on right there. Another issue that you're seeking budget approval for is public safety funding. Talk to us about how that funding is to be used.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

Public safety is fundamental to what we do. Just like providing water, picking up trash, and it is something that has been a significant challenge in Kansas City. I look at all of the success we've had from music to the arts, culture, sports, business, we have a significant challenge and that is violent crime. And so every year there is this question of, well how do we actually fix it? One of the ways to fix it is by adequately funding your police department. There is a battle all the time as to, do you need more officers or do you need other services longterm? And I usually say that moderation is the best approach, in the food that I eat and everything else. And I think moderation is important here in the sense that, yes, we do have a need to have patrol officers that can help us investigate and solve crime, but we also [inaudible 00:08:50] our public safety budget and that's why we've allocated money for more mental health services. Hundreds of thousands of dollars more to make sure that we're addressing those issues longterm, because you can't just fix the problem by having more officers. And I think every police officer would tell you that.

Kelly Scanlon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

They don't want to be the ones that are necessarily solving every mental health crisis. We need folks, social workers, so many others, they're going to be a part of it. We need to work with our safety net institutions, Truman Medical Centers, Swope Health Services, a lot of the hospitals in the urban core to say, "All right, there are folks that are coming to the ER all the time where they're presenting more with substance abuse issues or mental health issues. How do we address them somewhere that's not the ER, not as expensive, and certainly not the Jackson County jail."

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

And so that's been a big part of how we're looking at in a way, change our budget. We'll never cut our budget necessarily because that's just not what government does. Employment grows, all of that, but what we need to do is be more responsible, be more pinpointed to what it is we're trying to do long-term. And so I think that's a balance of having more officers but perhaps not hiring the same number of officers we've had in years past. But it's also making sure that we're funding, I think, other important wraparound services that address our long-term public safety issue.

Kelly Scanlon:

And if I remember correctly, there's dollars in there for victims families as well.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

That's correct. We have two new areas of funding that I think are going to be particularly important, more dollars for victims families and more dollars for witness protection programs. So much of what challenges us in violent crime is that we have to find people who are willing to talk. And it's scary often to talk, particularly if you live in a neighborhood that is plagued by violent crime. We hope with our witness protection, witness relocation funds, we're able to get more people that are going to go on the record so we can solve more crimes. So there's very small minority of people that are terrorizing our communities with gun violence are caught, are brought to justice and are off the streets.

Kelly Scanlon:

Many of our listeners are business owners and entrepreneurs and Kansas City has for several years now been building an ecosystem that can support the city as America's most entrepreneurial city. How do you plan to continue working towards that goal?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

There are a few different areas I think, one of which does relate to the economic development border war. One of the things that has confounded me the most, and I'll admit my background is an interesting one, but grew up on the East Side, was homeless part of time, moved around a lot but was sent to the Barstow School, which is about 115th in state line. For those of you who are golfers, it's across the street from Hallbrook Country Club. There was a good Country Club Bank right down the street and what I learned from that experience was how close we all are, how small this region really is. The border war was I think, devastating economically to our community because we're just giving away so much of our tax base to move things across the state line back and forth. To be beyond that, I think is the first step of several and saying, how do we make this region dynamic and interesting?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

When you think of the cities, the IT cities that people are talking about, Denver, Nashville, Austin, Indianapolis, they're in one state. We can't redraw a map. We can't do the Kansas-Nebraska compromise, anything of that sort of stuff. But what we can do is actually look at how do we work as one region? How do we actually operate as a place that is recognizing that we need to grow together? So I think that's key. From the local government, just quit and [inaudible 00:12:11], what do we need to do? We need to make Kansas City business more efficient. And

by Kansas City business, I mean the business of City Hall. It can't be hard to get permits. It can't be hard to do economic development here. We need to be more nimble to what economic development is too. It's not just kind of a 1980's approach to real estate tax breaks. It is what types of businesses are here. How do we actually stimulate business and give more tax incentives and credits to those that are growing jobs in our community? That's the sort of work that I think we need to redefine, and that's the work that my office is doing now, but we have a lot more work left to do.

Kelly Scanlon:

Achieving goals like these, we've talked about so many things today, but achieving them requires core cooperation. It requires collaboration. So, who are your partners regionally and nationally, as well as within the Kansas City community who are working with you on the initiatives we've been discussing today?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

I've been very involved already in my six months as Mayor in the US Conference of Mayors. That is a vital group where a number of folks ranging from large cities to smaller towns are sharing with us their ways to come up with good answers for the future of our communities. Eric Garcetti, the Mayor of Los Angeles, is someone who I've enjoyed building a friendship with. Eric Suarez, the mayor of Miami, very similar. Eric Garcetti's from a much bigger city. Miami's actually fairly close in size to us, and so I've enjoyed that relationship. But frankly, here in the Kansas City area, there've been some key stakeholders that I think had been helpful. Mayor Michael Copeland of Olathe, outstanding man, outstanding leader. For two decades he's been a leader in Olathe and frankly he has from the time I got elected, extended the hand of friendship out to Kansas City, Missouri and to me.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

I think our governors have been very helpful. Governor Mike Parson, we come from different political perspectives, but he's someone who anytime I've picked up the phone has been there and has been willing to help and work with Kansas City. So those are folks that I think in the public sector I've worked with, but in the private sector there are tons. Mark Thompson of VIST Bank. There are a number of others that have said, "Hey, what can we do for you?" From grabbing lunch to giving ideas, to sharing concerns they've had, in a positive way. That's I think, how we get things done. Not yelling at each other or not having these strong disagreements. I'm not Mark Funkhouser, for those who remember him, I'm somebody who says, even if we start from disagreement, how do we work together to succeed for the best of the region?

Kelly Scanlon:

Dialogue is always a good thing.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kelly Scanlon:

Absolutely, if you're talking, you're making progress. From where we sit right here in the first quarter of 2020, what excites you most about Kansas City, its future and why?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

I think we are finally getting it. And by getting it I say I think we're all realizing we're one region. You don't have some of the parochialism that perhaps we had in the past. When I travel around the region and I went to church at Overland Park just last Sunday, I get around a lot. People are saying, "Hey, how do we work together to do economic development? How do we all work together to make the city safer even if you're from one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in our region, not close to violent crime?" And I think everybody is saying it's time for us to be dynamic. We got tired at a certain point of our young people, our bright young people, leaving our city a lot. I think we've gotten tired of looking at some of our great talent that's in the Kansas City, Missouri school district, Kancy Kansas public schools, and saying, why aren't we creating enough opportunities for them in the workforce?

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

And we're all saying, whether it's building opportunities for that college kid that's thinking about either coming back to Kansas City or going further afield, or it's building an opportunity for that 17 year old who's in high school and saying is there a future for me in Kansas City? We're finally saying, yeah, let's come up with a way to work together to create more opportunities for them. And I think that's what's most exciting. I think when you look at us, when you look at the Midwestern, midsize city, we're different than the coastal cities and that's a positive. We're the sort of place where somebody can find an outstanding job, can succeed, can build on their great investment in a home and in a community and can have what is an amazing city and an amazing set of cultural opportunities. We get that now. And that's the Kansas City I'm excited to lead.

Kelly Scanlon:

Yeah, and you can feel it. You really can in so many ways. Everything that you just said, there is just a feeling in the air and there is, I think, a stronger sense of collaboration as well. Mayor Lucas, thank you so much for joining us today and for your commitment to Kansas City to making it a better place to live, work and play.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

You know, I love this town. I'm from here, I went away to school and I remember when some friends were asking me, "Why don't you practice law in New York City like all the rest of us?" I said, "You know what, Kansas City is dynamic, it's exceptional. Look at what I'm doing in 10 years and you'll be jealous." And 10 years later, I'm Mayor and 10 years later I have loved looking at what Kansas City's all about.

Kelly Scanlon:

Well, thank you for your leadership.

Mayor Quinton Lucas:

Thank you.

Joe Close:

This is Joe Close, President of Country Club Bank. As Kansas City looks to 2020 and beyond, it's a time of continued growth and opportunity. There will be new challenges to meet, neighbors to lend a hand to and victories to celebrate. We share Mayor Lucas' passion for Kansas City's future, it's new leaders, it's future business owners and homeowners, because this is our hometown, all of us, just like at the Chief's victory parade, all mixed into one mass. That's a special connection and it spans generations. We're invested, not because it's good business, because it's the right thing to do. We care about our neighbors and our community. We care about our future. Together we design it, we build it, and we own it collectively. A special thanks to Mayor Lucas for joining us for this episode and sharing his vision for 2020 and beyond. Thanks for tuning in. We're banking on you KC. Country Club Bank, Member FDIC.