



# PILLARS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

**2020–2021 REVIEW**



**AIA**  
Kansas City



## 2021 PILLARS CLASS

Jake Brannon - Gould Evans

Ashlee Deck - ACI Boland

Andrew Fabin - RMTA

Trevor Freeman - Pulse Design Group

Harriet Grindel - SFS Architecture

Mackenzie Koepke - New Horizons LLC

Michael Kopper - Turner Construction

Annie Merrill - HOK

Tim Ockinga - JE Dunn

Kevin Pearson - Smith and Boucher

Chris Penland - Studio Build

Dan Pierce - GLMV Architecture

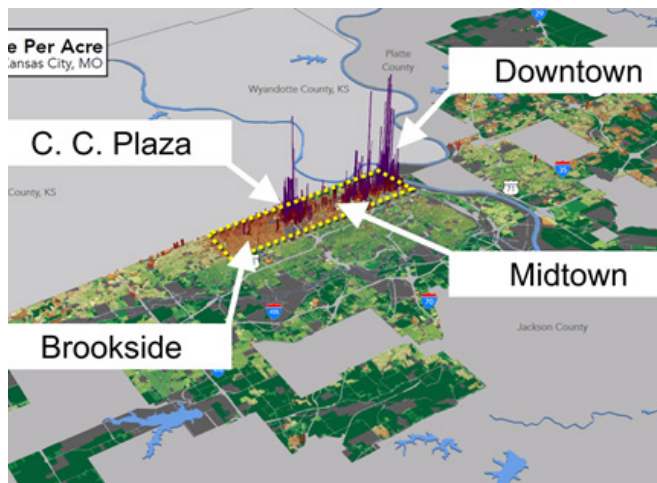
Jessica Reed-Shultz - Finkle + Williams Architects

Mike Schwaller - Helix Architecture + Design

Allison Wonder - The Clark Enersen Partners

## ABOUT PILLARS

The Pillars Leadership Training Program of the American Institute of Architects Kansas City prepares a representative cross section of the chapter's emerging leaders and individuals from the building community for their role in shaping the future of both the architectural profession and the greater Kansas City metropolitan area. The training program includes active participation in programs and exposure to community leaders and issues. Each class spends their time exploring core issues that affect our profession and the region within which we practice. Through discussions with leaders and colleagues, dialogue among themselves, tours and research the group will be able to understand and present to the AIA as a whole how we can make a positive change within our community. The AIA Kansas City Pillars program is a nationally recognized program for its originality and depth and has inspired similar AIA leadership studies in other US cities. The program continues to raise the bar of what young professionals want out of their profession and how we as professionals can make an impact on our built environment.



Value per acre shown in three dimensions (source: Urban3)



Aerial rendering of KCI (source: SOM)

## JANUARY SESSION - INFRASTRUCTURE

From Kansas City's founding in 1850, its urban fabric has been molded by its transportation networks. Streets and neighborhoods that were once centered around pedestrians and public transit eventually gave way to multi-lane highways, surface parking lots and urban sprawl. In this sense, Kansas City is no different than most communities in the United States. In the past 70 years, the physical size of Kansas City has quadrupled while the population has remained relatively stable. Put another way, every resident of Kansas City is on the hook for maintaining four times as much of the city as their predecessors. This sprawl has been the driving force behind two major advancements to Kansas City's public transportation infrastructure.

In January 2021, \$174 million in federal funding was secured to extend the KC Streetcar south on Main Street. This project extends the rail 3.6 miles south on Main Street, adding 16 stops, and connecting the Downtown line to Midtown, Westport, the Art Museum District, the Plaza, and UMKC. Current schedules estimate construction beginning by early 2022 and the opening of the extension system in 2025. This project is a partnership between the city of Kansas City, Missouri, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, and the Kansas City Streetcar Authority.

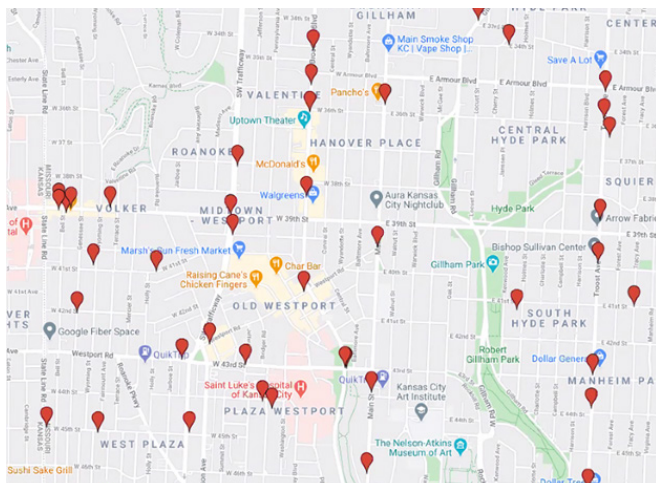
Construction of a new single-terminal at Kansas City International Airport was overwhelmingly approved in 2019.

The 1 million square foot terminal is the largest infrastructure project in Kansas City history. The project will be completed in March 2023, about four years after construction began.

The possibilities are nearly endless with a single-terminal. For travelers, it means no more shuttling from one terminal to another to make connections between airlines—all with the same convenience for which the current airport is known.

Dennis Strait, Principal at Gould Evans, started our presentations for the day. Dennis explained the history of how Kansas City became what it is today in terms of land use and transportation. He touched on the impossibility of the expectation of today's resident being responsible for four times their predecessor in infrastructure maintenance and outlined the steps needed to move forward to rectify the current situation. In resolving the infrastructure issue through many changes in zoning and tax policies to encourage productive development the current affordable housing issue this city is currently experiencing begins to be resolved as well.

Kevin Klinkenberg, Executive Director, Midtown KC, next echoed the dilemma outlined by Dennis with emphasis on Midtown and the streetcar. The average value per acre in Midtown is six times more valuable than other neighborhoods in the city; it produces an incredible value for the city. The urban core population is about half of what it was at its peak



Midtown grocers in the 1950s (source: Kevin Klinkenberg)



Construction camera live image during our session (source: Justin Meyer)

## JANUARY SESSION - INFRASTRUCTURE

in the 1950s. The streetcar system is what made the population we had reached in the 1950s work. The streetcar is part of the DNA that made development successful back then. It cannot be underestimated how important free fares are to making this system work today to create a frictionless situation for people to get into utilizing this system.

Cindy Moses, Regional Engineer for the Kansas City Region of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), followed up with a walkthrough on the process of obtaining the \$174 million in federal funding received to extend the streetcar south to UMKC and add six additional vehicles to the system. She also discussed the build grant that was just awarded to go north from the River Market to Berkley Riverfront Park and the study just ordered by the city of North Kansas City to explore continuing to extend the streetcar north.

Keith Novorr, owner of Michael's Clothing, next discussed the experience of being a business along the streetcar route and the process leading up to that. Keith explained the Transportation Department District (7-8 blocks on either side of the rail lines), the additional 1% sales tax, and the 5% real estate tax that the local community of the streetcar paid to create what we have today. This financing model is what allowed the streetcar transit fee to be free and as previously

noted, what has led to its success. Keith was not an initial proponent for the streetcar development in front of his business but now advocates that when rail lines are put in, economic development will follow. He says the streetcar has dramatically increased his foot traffic into the store by nearly 70%.

Justin Meyer, Deputy Director of Aviation at the Kansas City Aviation Department, led our last presentation of the day. He explained the strong need the community has for the new single-terminal KCI Airport and has had since less than a month after the existing KCI Airport's opening in 1972 when the FAA began enforcing passenger screening. Needless to say, the existing KCI was designed without consideration of modern day airport security screening, and has been ill equipped to best serve its travelers ever since. The other burden of the existing KCI Airport is not often experienced by Kansas City residents, but by passengers just connecting flights here, and that is changing terminals and going through security again to board your connecting flight. This hinderance has caused airlines to throttle back connections via MCI due to this poor guest experience. The new nearly 1 million square foot, 39-gate, single-terminal KCI Airport resolves all of these issues and more and is currently on time and on budget to open in March 2023.