

Urban Farming and Food Production: Farm to Table Movement

September 26, 2013

As consumers we often times only see the end result or final product never the process, time, and effort it takes to get there. There are many individuals and groups behind the scenes that often times get little recognition but continue to do great work to enhance their communities not for the monetary value but to fuel their passion and teach new healthy habits in hopes to leave the world in a better state. This session, the Pillars looked at Urban Farming and Food Production – learning the value in local food production, distribution and consumption none of which is possible without growth, funding, and community support.

To kick off the discussion, we started at “the farm.” We met with Katherine Kelly the Executive Director of Cultivate KC at Juniper Gardens Training Farm. She shared with us her extensive history in the farming industry as well as that of Juniper Gardens an outstanding program right in Kansas City’s backyard. She spoke of how the community garden has helped local and migrant farmers improve their craft and yield more yearly production and profit. Also mentioning how the garden has impacted its more immediate community by teaching local residents and children the importance of healthy eating and the economic benefits of growing your own crops.

We then moved on to “the table” where we had lunch at The Farmhouse on Delaware Street a local restaurant owned by Chef Michael Foust who works with 37 farmers who supply his restaurant with a wide array of produce. It was a great dining experience and the food was delicious! Chef Michael expressed his appreciation of us dining at The Farmhouse and hopes that more people become aware of and take advantage of the great produces growing right here in Kansas City in support of our local farmers. During our time at The Farmhouse we were joined by panelist Nicolas Garcia of Anti-Hero Farm. Garcia has found great success in his urban farm which exclusively supplies The Westside Local with “green leafies” (lettuces, kale, spinach, sorrel, etc.) His vibrant personality and expansive knowledge made for great conversation as he spoke of ways in which Architects could engage and be beneficial to urban farms.

The group finished up the day at The Roasterie where we took a tour to learn about the production, packaging, and distribution of Kansas City’s own Roasterie Coffee. Our tour guide Norman Killmon a Master Roaster has been with company from the beginning and spoke very fondly of owner Danny O’Neill and the company’s humble beginnings. The Roasterie prides itself in getting the best of the best coffee beans from around the world at a fair price by partnering with farmers at origin, in mutually beneficial direct trade relationships. The Roasterie has an excellent facility equipped with a cafe, event space, and factory where they use a convection air-roasting method to ensure superior consistency and a tastier, smoother cup coffee.

As our session came to a conclusion we realized the importance of seeing a product through to production, distribution, and consumption. The care at which each process is executed makes a huge difference in the final product and its longevity; it’s the fine attention to detail the consumer will appreciate and keep them coming back for more. What are ways in which you can start supporting your local communities, entrepreneurs, and urban farmers?



Enjoying a local lunch at the Framhouse restaurant while visiting with Nicolas Garcia. Katherine Kelly leading the group in a tour of the Juniper Gardens Training Farm.

[Cultivate KC; Juniper Gardens Training Farm](#)

> **Katherine Kelly**, Executive Director

[The Farmhouse Restaurant](#)

> **Michael Foust**, Owner/Chef

[Anti-Hero Farm](#)

> **Nicolas Garcia**, Owner/Urban Farmer

[The Roasterie; air-roasted coffee](#)

> **Norman Killmon**, Master Roaster



The Roasterie Icon: symbolizes the air roasted coffee. The Pillars group on the Cultivate KC Juniper Gardens Training Facility.

Moving Around the Metro

October 24, 2013

Last month our Pillars group explored Urban Farming and Food Production and the Farm to Table Movement within the Kansas City Area. In our October Session we held to the local theme and explored Personal, Local and Regional Mass Transit with a focus on its past, present and future in Kansas City. We learned about the planning, operation and management of transportation systems and how the design of public transit can benefit and shape our city and region.

The session began with “personal transportation” at the General Motors Fairfax Assembly Plant where the Buick LaCrosse and Chevrolet Malibu are produced. After donning our very stylish protective kevlar sleeves and safety glasses we proceeded into the sheet metal area of the plant where we saw their massive automated sheet metal press and robotic welders in a scene right out of Star Wars. The winding assembly line infrastructure was ever present around us and overhead as machines and autoworkers assembled the vehicles. The tour was only able to take us through a small portion of the sprawling 85 acre building where a car rolls off the assembly line every 58 seconds.

We next traveled to the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority for “local mass transit” where we met Mark Huffer, the General Manager and CEO of the KCATA. Mark spoke to us about the importance of public transportation and its impact on the areas it serves including how the future Street Car routes will encourage new development and reinvigorate neighborhoods that currently have limited access to public transportation. In their control room we were given a demonstration of the bus dispatch and tracking system which allows the KCATA to view the location of all of their busses in real time and see if they are on schedule and on route. Elsewhere in the facility we saw their driver training simulators, service garage and body shop and employee gym. In ongoing efforts to improve their service and keep costs down the KCATA is in the process of converting their fleet to natural gas, exploring options for expanded MAX service and has implemented a wellness/health program for their employees that has helped to keep their insurance cost low. Throughout our tour Mark pointed out how not to design a facility such as theirs and offered more appropriate solutions than those in place in their facility.

To wrap up our session we moved on to Union Station for more “local mass transit” and “regional mass transit”. We first met with the George Guastello, II the President and CEO of Union Station. George began our discussion on the Beaux Arts architecture of the station and how it came into being while showing us a new exhibit of the original drawings and photographs taken during its construction. In its heyday Union Station was one of the busiest train stations in the United States but fell into disrepair and eventually closed in the 1980’s. Thanks to a bi-state initiative the station was restored/renovated and reopened in 1999 housing Amtrak service, Science City and multiple restaurants and businesses. Union Station still struggled for many years to become financially solvent until it repositioned itself as a hub for civic organizations and activities, it now houses tenants such as the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and it 100% leased.



Evan, Justin and Phil sporting their very stylish Kevlar sleeves safety glasses at the GM Fairfax Assembly Plant.

[General Motors Fairfax Assembly Plant](#)

> **Plant Tour Guide**

[Kansas City Area Transit Authority](#)

> **Mark Huffer**, KCATA General Manager & CEO

[Union Station](#)

> **George M. Guastello II**, Union Station Pres. & CEO

[Transform KC Exhibit](#)

> **Ashley Z. Hand**, TransFormKC Co-Chair

> **Gunnar Hand**, BNIM



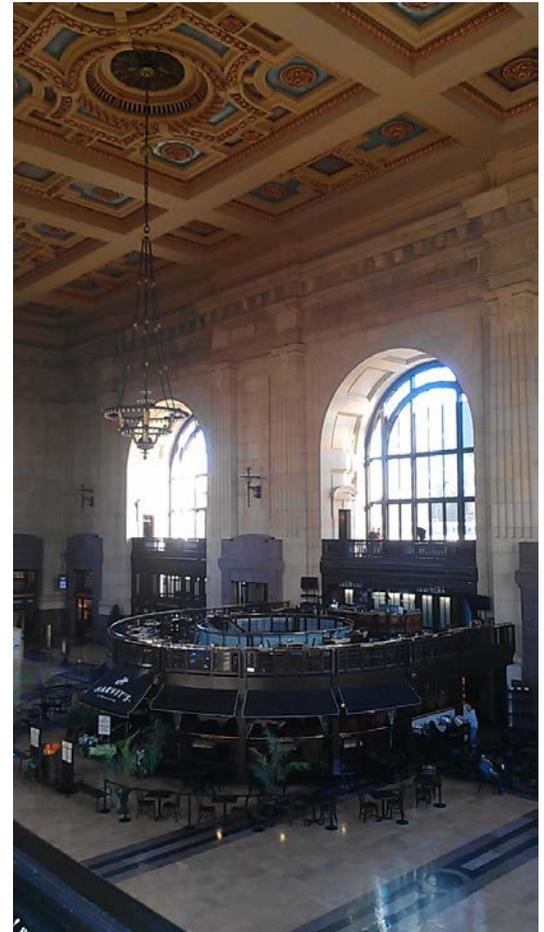
At the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority service garage learning about the KCATA's plans to convert their bus fleet to natural gas.

Moving Around the Metro

October 24, 2013

We finished the day with Ashley Hand and her husband Gunnar speaking to us about the TransForm KC exhibit Reimagining KC with Sustainable Transit that was on display in the East Hall of Union Station for the month of October. Exhibition was the result of an international call for ideas intended to inspire and create a public discussion on regional transit. While the entries were all very compelling the organization and display was thought provoking in and of itself, creating a transit system that mimicked the current and proposed systems in Kansas City that you travel through as you view the submissions.

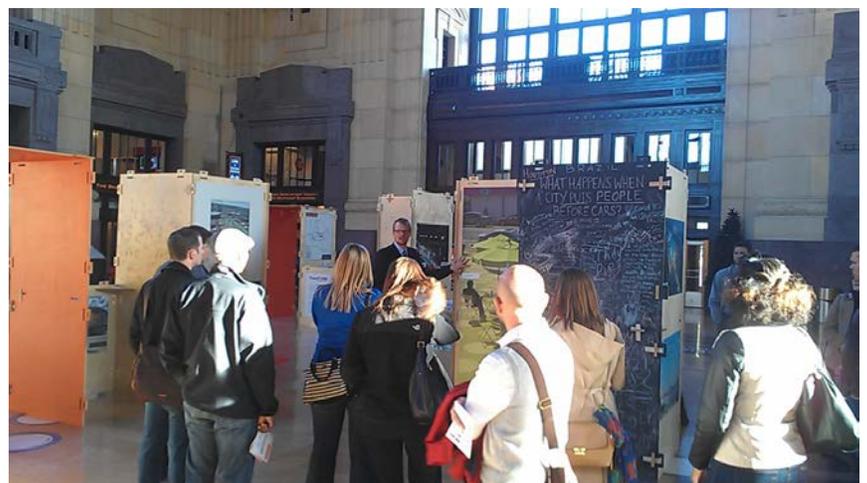
We came away from our session with a better understanding of how Kansas City's transit systems have come to be, where they are heading in the future and the impacts they can have on our city and region. More importantly we all understand the impact we can have on the future of our city by becoming involved in the discussions of our public transit systems and applying our particular knowledge and design skills to shape its future.



Harvey's at Union Station repurposed the original ticket booth in the East Hall as a restaurant and bar.



The entry to the TransFormKC Exhibit / Transit Map.



Gunnar Hand speaks to us about the selection process for entries to be included and the concept behind the design of the TransFormKC Exhibit.

Small, Medium and Large: Technology and Business in Kansas City

November 21, 2013

The recent implementation of Google Fiber has put the spot light on technological advancement with-in the Kansas City Metro. Not only providing a bandwidth catalyst for upstart innovation companies in the KC Start-up Village Fiberhood, but also highlighting existing organizations that embrace the challenges and quick-pace of the ever changing technologies in their established industries.

Technology in KC Panel Discussion

Our afternoon began at the AIA KC offices with a panel discussion that included local start-up business owners. Each panelist represented a newly established software company located in Kansas City, two of them were members of the KC Start-up Village, taking advantage of the first installation of the high-speed Google fiber internet service. Two of them also had design and engineering backgrounds that helped them inform and develop their unique software ideas.

They each described the repetitious side of software development and it's similarities to other design problems. Define the problem, code-it, break-it, learn, experiment, fail-again, learn...and fix-it. They also spoke of the unique collaboration opportunities that open source coding provides for each of them to quickly build a product. Going as far as to say that computer programming is the epitome of collaboration, due to the close-knit on-line community and sharing of programming code.

The panelists also spoke of how there seems to be more "oxygen" here in the "Silicone Prairie" than the coasts. They feel like there is more support for innovation and entrepreneurial up-starts. However, cautioned that every city has an entrepreneurial program and that Kansas City needs to differentiate itself from other national and regional cities with better access to capital investment and continue to highlight the metro areas higher-education support for up-start initiatives.

Each of the panelists recognized the catalyst of Google fiber and potential for other small fiber hoods to diversify and stabilize the nation's regional economies. Rather than maintaining regional strongholds, such as Silicon Valley for computer development, or Wall Street for financial markets, the speed of exchanging information makes it easier to work from anywhere. This diversification helps to create smaller bubbles, that when they burst, have a reduced impact on other pieces of the local economies, such as restaurants and housing. Avoiding boom and bust periods allows for a more consistent rate of growth to be maintained both locally and nation-wide.

Tour of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

The second stop on our technology and business session brought us to the large organization of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. There we toured the Federal Reserve Money museum to observe how technology is used in regulation of the nation's banks. The Federal Reserve network of 12 regional banks and smaller branch banks provides a variety of services for the US economy; including financial loan and banking services for private banks, fiscal and monetary policy, bank regulation, and the one we all came to see...money processing, exchange and re-circulation.

Technology in KC Panel Discussion

- > **Stephen Hardy**, Mindmixer
- > **Stuart Ludlow**, RFP 365
- > **Neil Anderson**, Pscurity

Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

- > **Julie Williams**, Tour Guide
- > **Jason Brown**, Economist

Zahner Sheet Metal

- > **Gary Davis**, Marketing Director



An idea flow chart for the innovative mindmixer team.
"Citizens are better when citizens are involved".

Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (continued)

Automated vehicles with the names “Heuy, Duie and Louie” cart “crates of cash” that have reached the end of their usable life to a processing room that is on display. There the notes are sorted and any bill that does not meet the Reserve’s standards is shredded by automated shredder. The shredding of the bills can be hard to watch while the now scrap paper is sucked up a clear tube and packaged into souvenir “bags o’ cash” for tour participants to take home.

The tour also included a view of the history of US coin and paper currency, including a rare \$100,000 dollar bill featuring Woodrow Wilson. Printing and anti-counterfeit technologies are cleverly displayed in hands-on kiosks. Interestingly the battle of protecting our currency created a very collectable coin. During WWII the Hawaiian quarter was minted with a brown stamp and the word Hawaii stamped on it, so that if Japan were to invade the islands the currency would be easily traceable.

The Federal Reserve Banks not only provide banking regulation and cash re-circulation services; they also provide analytics and analysis of the complexities of the regional economy. Jason Bown, a local Economist with the bank described some of the measures and metrics the Federal Reserve monitors to supervise, support and regulate the regional economies. He described how unemployment figures were improving not necessarily because the economy was on an up-tick, but that there is a trend of less citizens staying in the labor force, instead either retiring or not actively looking for work. He also shared the Missouri economy was up, with housing and other construction related jobs leading the way, while Kansas construction was showing a downtrend due to large road and civil projects wrapping up in 2013.

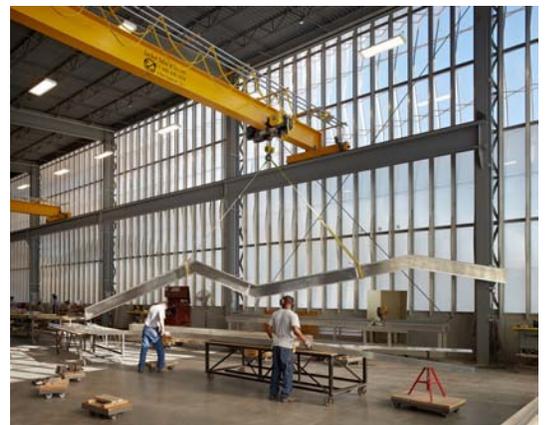
Tour of Zahner Sheet Metal

Our session wrapped up at the mid-sized A. Zahner metal fabrication. Our tour guide, Gary Davis, showed off the industrial metal working equipment and computer aided design that allows A. Zahner to make any Architectural dream-scape into reality. Zahner embraces technology to experiment with their methods and materials to support innovation and create never before seen metal and glass products. They see experimentation as part of their business model. Their innovation attracts clientele that support the pushing of the envelope. In fact, during our tour a gleaming polished aluminum mock-up for was on display for an Architectural review later that day.

Zahner utilizes both traditional hand craftsmanship and digital fabrication methods in their fabrication process. Each panel is laid-out virtually utilizing three-dimensional Building Information Modeling software and Digital Definition that is constantly coordinated with the model provided by the Architect and/or Engineer to provide a transparent construction process. Full-size mock-ups are then fabricated to coordinate fabrication techniques and to provide an opportunity for designer/owner input. Once the mock-up is approved, extensive shop drawings are produced for each piece. On the production floor, raw materials of sheet aluminum, copper, stainless steel, etc. are fabricated utilizing hydraulic breaks, computerized punches and water-jet technologies. The end result is a high-end product delivered with reduced construction errors, leaner construction and high-tech craftsmanship.



“The Money Museum at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is a unique experience offering a free, up-close look of the nation’s financial system in action.”



A. Zahner’s new world class fabrication shop addition which allows for easy maneuvering of large objects. They favor unitized construction for ease of installation once on the jobsite. So many of their project are international as much work that can be done in a controlled environment the better.

Developing Kansas City - How do we get to 2050

December 19, 2013

The fourth session of our Pillars experience is themed around the future development of Kansas City's built environment. Through our learning experiences we realized that it not only takes money, but a community of involved citizens to create meaningful structures that support the culture of Kansas City. Common themes that threaded each of the stops on our session were the support for innovation and entrepreneurialism, as well as shingling the spotlight on the arts to help the revitalization of our areas neighborhoods.

Port Authority of Kansas City Missouri – Tour of Berkley Riverfront Park

Joe Perry and Marissa Cleaver Wamble greeted us at the Berkley Riverfront Park, which the Port Authority of Kansas City owns and operates. Recently the Port Authority announced plans to move forward with the development of the area into a mixed-use village of offices, residential and retail spaces designed to draw people to the waterfront. The updated master plan takes into account existing steam and water service tunnels, placing the investment into the beauty of the development, rather than relocation of infrastructure. The plan calls for an urban scale similar to the plaza or cross-roads area, creating a new neighborhood and cultural destination for Kansas Citians to re-connect to the River.

The mixed-use development is the exclamation point to the work the Port Authority has already done reclaiming the riverfront with the Berkley River Front Park, Riverfront Heritage Trail, and the Town of Kansas Pedestrian Bridge connecting the River Market to the water. Joe led us on a guided tour of the Heritage trail, crossing under the impressive vertical lift engineering of the ASB railroad bridge, through vegetation and habitat reclamation areas, and up to the pedestrian bridge. There we learned several interesting historical facts about the port, the river and the early settlements on the river. Did you know that Kansas City Missouri was originally named Possum Trot? That the river has been engineered to self-scour to a depth of only 12'-0", or that barge traffic stopped on the Missouri River in 2006.

We concluded our tour by standing at the elevated site of a future memorial to former Mayor Richard L. Berkley. The site has been placed to capture framed views of city hall to the South and the river to the North. Mayor Berkley is known for the documentation of his career and personal life through photography. An art installation is planned to capture his memory with a mural of photographs.

Majestic Restaurant Historical Presentation

Jordan Carver, the manager of The Majestic Restaurant gave a brief historical summary of the Fitzpatrick Saloon Building's storied past as a speak-easy, brothel, Haberdashery men's clothiers, and several restaurants. The Majestic is open seven days a week for fine dining, specializing dry-aged steaks and live jazz.



We had a guided walking tour of the Berkley Riverfront park. They have installed new user friendly wayfinding signage along the pathways. It has been very well received in the community. Below: A sneak peak of long range development plans for the Kansas City riverfront area in the works.

[Port Authority of Kansas City Missouri](#)

- > **Joe Perry**, VP of Real Estate
- > **Marissa Cleaver Wamble**, VP Corp. Comm.
- > **Branden Leay Criman**, Deputy Port Director

[Majestic Restaurant](#)

- > **Jordan Carver**, Manager

[UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance](#)

- > **Dean Witte**, Dean

[Economic Development Corporation](#)

- > **Pete Fullerton**, CEO

[Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce](#)

- > **Scott Hall**, VP Strategic Initiatives



Developing Kansas City - How do we get to 2050

December 19, 2013

Plans for Future Downtown Campus for the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance

Building on the momentum from the recent opening of The Kuaffman Performing Arts Center, Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity for the Kansas City Ballet and other arts and entertainment revival projects downtown, the UMKC Conservatory plans to consolidate their classroom, office, rehearsal and performance spaces to a single downtown location in the near future. Their current spaces are currently scattered around four different sites, which does not promote an established sense of place or identity for the school. A portion of the funding for the new school has already been pledged to begin the construction process, however additional funds are currently being raised to meet the project goal.

After briefly touching on the Conservatory's mission to consolidate to a downtown campus, Dean Witte went on to present an enlightening presentation on the importance of cultural identity in our 21st Century economy and how the countries education system should rise to the challenge. Dean Witte utilized several engaging videos to build the argument to invest more into the arts education of students, including a TED talk lecture by Sir Ken Robinson titled "Do Schools Kill Creativity" <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcdGpL4U>> and an excerpt from former Presidential Candidate Mike Huckabee. Huckabee's open-minded quotes describe how keeping arts in our schools makes for overall better students by crossing right and left brain thought processes. Music education creates recognition of tonal qualities which assists in learning a foreign language, art classes help spatial thinking in geometry. Thinking of students in terms of computers, it creates operating systems rather than data bases. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpnoYOQ55I8>>

Dean Witte also shared economic data recently released that has measured art and entertainment as a sector in the nations GDP for the first time, measuring in at \$500 billion. This sizable piece of the GDP pie is larger than the Travel and Tourism sector for the nation. This first time economic indicator pointed out that every city promotes tourism, but very few promote their arts and culture. <<http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/arts-economic-prosperity-iv>>

Each video, quote and website pointed to the fact that creative education courses in music, literature and the arts help to make great people. Those great people make "culture." Those great people see the world not just through the eyes of reading, writing and arithmetic, but through the eyes of their culture.



The Pillars class on the pedestrian bridge that connects the Berkley Riverfront park the the river market area.



Developing Kansas City - How do we get to 2050

December 19, 2013

Economic Development Corporation and KC Chamber of Commerce

Our last stop of the afternoon was a brisk walk to the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City offices located in the Town Pavilion building downtown. From the 17th floor many of the projects that the EDC help to develop are visible, including Lyric Opera Administration and Production Center and Roast-erie Headquarters Expansion. The EDC is a non-profit agency that manages statutory redevelopment agencies and serves as a link to Kansas City Missouri's economic development community.

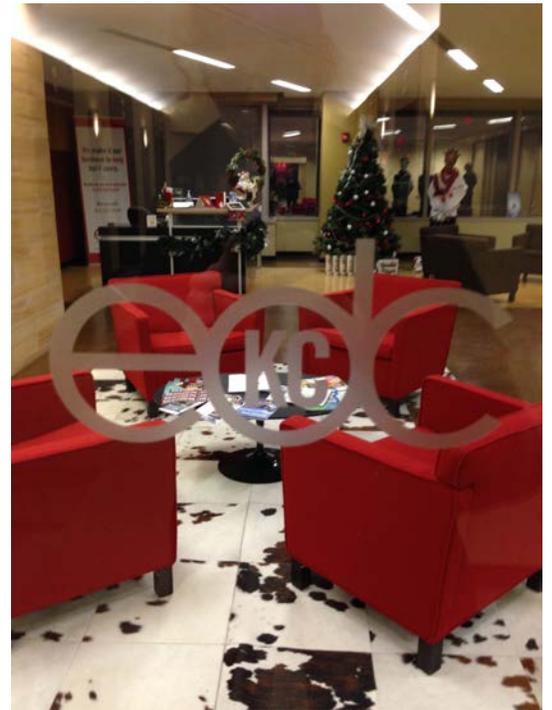
Traditionally, the EDC provides business solutions to new or relocating businesses, such as economic development data, site-selection assistance and incentive programs. The EDC also manages Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plans, and Land Clearance Redevelopment Author (LRCA) plans, as well as four other business and enterprise entities. However, recently the EDC has embraced the KC Start-up culture and has added support for entrepreneurial start-ups with the Launch KC program. <launchkc.org> The focus of the EDC is also shifting from bricks and mortar business development to more people and community development through their involvement in the AdvanceKC program. <www.advancekc.org>

Scott Hall with the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce shared their mission of the Big 5 < www.big5kc.com> initiatives to boost the Kansas City Area economy and make KC one of the best places to work as well as live. The Big 5 not only focuses on economic opportunities, but social and community issues to improve the quality of life of each citizen, in turn elevating the local commerce, retaining local businesses and attracting new jobs. The Big 5 include;

1. Revitalizing our Urban Neighborhoods through the Urban Neighborhood Initiative
2. Making Kansas City "America's Most Entrepreneurial City"
3. Moving UMKC's World-Class Arts Programs to a New Downtown Location
4. Growing Kansas City's Medical Research, from Discovery to Cure.
5. Hosting the Global Symposium on Innovation in Animal Health



Dean Peter Witte's love of art's education lead to a very powerful discussion on the future. It begins with our next generation; the children and how can we best prepare them for the world of the unknown. We must show them the importance of the arts in respect to the world. The arts cross over any cultural barriers.



A warm reception for the Pillars group at the EDC in conjunction with the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce.

Entrepreneurs are critical to the long term health and prosperity of our economy. Businesses such as Kansas City based Hallmark Cards is a great example of how a business started with an entrepreneurial spirit has grown into a corporation known world wide. Success like that of Hallmark Cards does not happen over night. Many are birthed with a single vision yet developed and nurtured over generations. Although not all desire to become a big corporation one thing remains same; innovation, passion, and special attention to the consumer are keeping small businesses in the Kansas City area not only alive but thriving. In this session we discover the past, present, and future of Gram & Dun - Bread and Butter Concepts, Posty Cards, and Hallmark Cards. With each of these companies at a different phase on the business/entrepreneurial spectrum it was a great opportunity for us to engage in all aspect of this topic. One thing is for certain the entrepreneurial task of growing yet staying true to the original idea and vision of a business is what can make or break its success.

To kick off the discussion the group started with lunch at Gram & Dun on the Country Club Plaza. Gram & Dun is one of five restaurants that are apart of the Bread & Butter Concepts established by Alan Gaylin. The core idea of the Bread & Butter Concept is as follows...

“Bread & Butter Concepts is about surrounding you with the things you expect from an ultimate host. In each of our restaurants you’ll find yourself in a relaxing environment that remains energetic and exciting-a place you’ll want to bring friends, where you’ll feel welcome. We’ll tend to your needs while you enjoy the company of friends. Each of our establishments will immerse you in a feeling of comfort and belonging.”

Everything that Alan’s Bread & Butter Concept stands for is what our group experienced at his establishment. The staff and environment was warm and welcoming; even with our large party and the coincidental fact that it was Restaurant Week we were still able to hold intimate conversations and feel at home in our little niche of the restaurant. Our waiter was fantastic paying very close attention to detail and each patrons needs. After getting settled in the Manager Jeremiah came over to greet us and give us more insight into Gram & Dun. He expressed how happy he was to be apart of the Gram & Dun staff and how many of our favorite eateries in the Kansas City area are apart of Alan’s Bread & Butter Concepts including BRGR, Urban Table, Taco Republic, & Taco Republic Truck. The wide range of food selections offered between each restaurant as well as the wide range of dining classifications from fine dining to casual dining really ates to the strength of the Bread & Butter Concept as a whole. The staff is excited and engaging with the diners which I believe keeps people coming back. That and the delicious food of course! This group of restaurants have shown tremendous growth over just a few years and hopes to keep the momentum going adding at least two new restaurants per year. It’s all about finding a great location, enthusiastic staff, and continuing to give diners an unforgettable experience.

We then moved on to meet with Erick Jessee, President of Posty Cards at their newly renovated facility not far from downtown Kansas City. Not only were we going to learn about Posty Cards as business but we got the added bonus of touring their new facility which became Certified LEED Platinum in 2012.

In the early years founder Carl ‘Posty’ Postlethwaite met a few obstacles when the nations efforts put into World War II required newsprint rationing; and



Enjoying a meal during restaurant week at Bread and Butter Concepts fine dining restaurant Gram & Dun on the Plaza. Comfort foods were a plenty during lunch while we enjoyed hearing about the history or how Bread and Butter Concepts came to be.



*Gram & Dun - Bread & Butter Concepts
> Jeremiah , Manager*



We were given a tour of the Posty Cards LEED Certified headquarters by the president Erick Jessee. It is great to see a company take such pride in their environmental leadership.



*Posty Cards: Business Greeting Cards & Calendars
> Erick L. Jessee, President*

without that of course he was out of business. Some years later he found himself back in the printing business and Posty Cards as we know it today was born. Not all entrepreneurial efforts are as successful the first time around. It takes perseverance, hard work ethic, and not to mention good timing. There are a lot of greeting card companies but what makes Posty Cards unique is that they focus on providing business professional greeting cards to companies at large quantities. Although always looking for opportunities to expand their company Erick expressed that Posty Cards is enjoying the success of the niche in the greeting card world they've created. The original vision wasn't focused on the need to expand at a fast rate but to continually make quality business greeting cards and that is what they plan to do.

As professionals in the design field we couldn't ignore the fact that we were in one of few Certified LEED Platinum buildings in our area; the highest level of environmental sustainability. The renovation of their new facility is well done and a great example of sustainability in design. Some of the buildings sustainable features include solar photovoltaic panels, solar heated water, natural lighting, rain water reclamation for irrigation and flushing toilets, and a water retention basin for storm water management just to name a few. Posty Card's commitment to sustainability doesn't end there it is carried over into their production and final products with the use of minimum energy consumption, FSC certified paper, soy ink, and various other recyclable materials. Even their marketing materials and catalogs are printed on FSC certified paper. Posty Cards is looking towards the future and continuing to push the envelope and set the standards high in all aspects of their business.

Finishing up the day the group headed over to the headquarters of Hallmark Cards at Crown Plaza where we met with Ben Cohara, Strategic Alliance Director - Digital. After a short introduction we took a tour of their expansive campus which includes Crown Plaza and several hotels in the immediate area. They also have an art gallery, media center, and materials library just to name a few of the many amenities. When you think of greeting cards their name is one of the first to pop into your head. Hallmark Cards is a brand known around the world but it too started from meager beginnings and has grown over the years due to its focus on innovation and making everyday a memory not just the holidays. Started in 1910 by 18 year old J.C. Hall with just a shoe-box full of cards, Hallmarks history gives hope and encouragement to entrepreneurs around the world. It has become a family business with many of the Hall descendants keeping the vision alive and moving forward. With technology becoming a major aspect of our everyday lives Hallmark has found innovative ways to remain relevant in the industry and expand their product line. Years ago there were no such things as "eCards or musical greeting cards." Business is all about growing with your consumer and the changing times. Hallmark has been extremely successful with that over the years, which is evident most recently with the opening of their flagship "HMK" store on the Country Club Plaza. Stay tuned because Hallmark's ideas for innovating the greeting card market are endless.

As the group concluded its session we realized that there is no set path to becoming a successful entrepreneur. As with anything there are many obstacles and set backs along the way. However if anyone doubts that it is still possible in this day, age, and economy to have a successful business or take a chance on an entrepreneurial venture these thriving companies should definitely give you



Getting a tour of the Posty Cards manufacturing plant and their green practices. The daylighting on the floor makes for a very pleasant work environment.



A tour through a Pillar in the Kansas City community Hallmark Cards. They are working on innovative ways to stay ahead of technology in this changing market.



Hallmark Cards: Greetings Cards, Ecards, and Gifts > Ben Cohara, Strategic Alliance Director - Digital

Challenges facing the Kansas City Education System

February 27, 2014

Education has been a topic at the forefront of our community narrative in recent years due to the loss of the Kansas City, Missouri School District's accreditation. In the midst of the heated debates that surround the district, charter schools are standing out as innovators in community outreach, character building and of course education. We started out asking the question, "Can these schools effect change in our struggling school district?"; and quickly realized that the mission of the charter schools goes well beyond basic education.

Crossroads Academy of Kansas City

We started our day at the Crossroads Academy of Kansas City which opened its doors to grades K-5 in 2012 in the heart of Downtown Kansas City. Dean Johnson, the Executive Director of the Crossroads Academy, spoke with us about the school and allowed us to observe active classrooms during our visit. The school draws from the entire KCMO School District but gives preference to students who live in or whose parents work in the Greater Downtown area from the Missouri River to Linwood and between State Line and Woodland. The Crossroad Academy, like all charter schools in Missouri, is not a part of the district it draws its students from and is independently accredited. The school is unique in that it views the entire Downtown as an extension of its campus, making use of Cultural, Civic and Community amenities that are otherwise underutilized. The school's library is the Kansas City Central Library, their playground is Barney Allis Plaza and their performances take place at the Quality Hill Playhouse. The school prides itself on excellence in education, diversity and engagement with the urban core.

Ewing Marion Kauffman School

Next we visited the Ewing Marion Kauffman School, a charter school that takes a very different approach to education than the Crossroads Academy. Hannah Lofthus (Chief Academic Officer & Founding Principal) and Jacqueline Erickson (Talent Recruiter) took us through the school and showed us what makes them different from other schools. The Kauffman School is a college preparatory school founded in 2011 which currently serves urban youth grades 5-8 with an addition underway that will allow them to take the students through 12th grade. Like the Crossroads Academy the school draws from the KCMO school district but gives preference to some of the most economically challenged zip codes in the city. The school is rigorous with students attending classes from 7:45am to 5:00pm along with a longer school year than typical public schools. The staff focusses on constant engagement and maximizing time with students, students are escorted to and from class for efficiency and teachers use verbal and visual cues to direct the students' attention. Along with the common core subjects students are taught character to help them achieve their goals and succeed in a college environment. The teachers also receive extensive professional development training and coaching to insure their effectiveness.



Astutely listening to Dean Johnson speak in a kindergarden classroom at the Crossroads Academy of Kansas City.

[Crossroads Academy of Kansas City](#)

> **Dean Johnson**, Executive Director

[Ewing Marion Kauffman School](#)

> **Hannah Lofthus**, Cheif Academic Officer

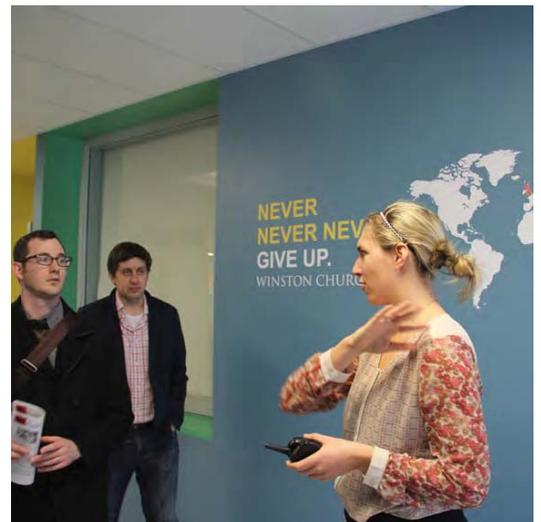
> **Jacqueline Erickson**, Talent Recruiter

[Kansas City Ballet](#)

> **Linda Martin**, Community Education Director

[Internation School of Professional Bartending](#)

> **Beth Merrill**, Owner/Director



Jacqueline Erickson tells us about what makes the Kauffman School unique.

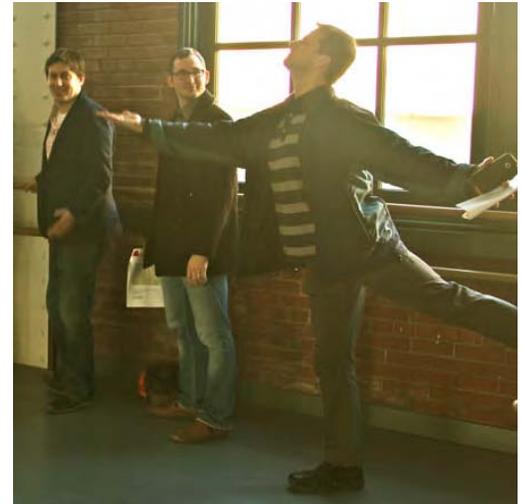
Challenges facing the Kansas City Education System (continued)

February 27, 2014



Kansas City Ballet

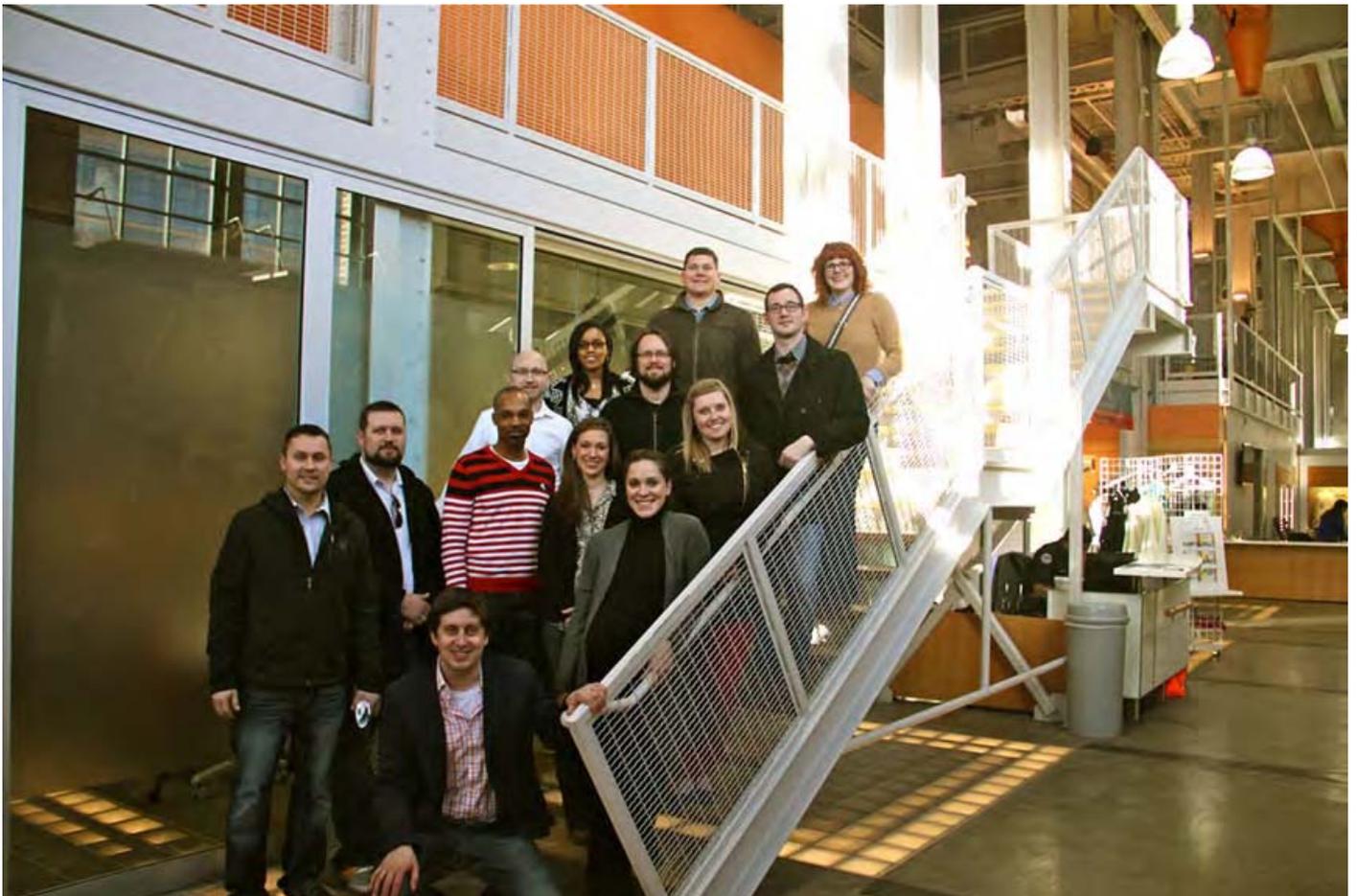
We then moved on to the Kansas City Ballet's Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity where Linda Martin (Community Education Director) gave us a tour of their facility which resides in the renovated Union Station Power House. Aside from being home to the Kansas City Ballet's professional company there are also classes for all ages as well as yoga and pilates. We learned about the sprung floors in the studios which help to prevent the dancers from becoming injured and saw the ballet bars that have travelled with the ballet throughout its history. In the costume department we saw many familiar costumes from standard performances and got to see a pair of pointe shoes no longer usable after only one performance. There was also a tie in with our first stop of the day, the 3rd graders from the Crossroads Academy have dance classes at the Bolender Center.



Nick shows off his mastery of ballet.

International School of Professional Bartending

We ended our session at the International School of Professional Bartending where Beth Merrill taught us some of the basics of bartending and how to make Bloody Marys & Mojitos.



The group at the Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity, Nick is off trying to get an audition for the professional company.

Fabrication: Learning by Doing

March 24, 2014

Session seven proved to be a bit of a departure from all previous sessions as the aim of the organizing crewmembers was to allow the group to stay put for the entire session. We settled in for the day's proceedings at Hammerspace Workshop... a community fabrication shop in Brookside (or better-described at hammerspacebobby.com, "a curious dimension where tools and devices are brought forth at the exact moment they are needed").

Since our time as architects, engineers and general contractors, is spent planning and designing a set of instructions for others to build from, this session turned the tables and focused on the topic of fabrication...the craft of dreaming up an idea and making the idea reality with our own hands.

As a warm-up to our session of making things, the group learned about the formation and existence of Hammerspace Workshop from founder Dave Dalton (he was the dude in the awesome red jumpsuit). In interesting fashion, Dave described his life of artistry and creation through a series of tales (beginning from childhood) centered upon his need to constantly design, test, and build. He spoke to the group in terms such as "master" and "apprentice"- words not commonly referenced in our contemporary minds. Nonetheless, Dave's energy and passion for tinkering with the world around him is very evident in the environment he has created with Hammerspace. It is definitely a place where people come to create but also to learn from others who have skills and resources to share for the greater benefit of reclaiming a sense of craft in everyday life... yeah, just like back in the olden-days.

The warm-up continued with a presentation by Phil Schafer of Sike Style Designs. The discussion included a summary of Phil's background and training as a graphic designer as well as his various and current artistic undertakings. His flat vector style has enabled his involvement in projects including promotions, music packaging, logo design, apparel design, mural creation as well as countless other collaborations. In detail, he discussed his process for mural formation. He included background on specific works, both public and private, as well as specific techniques utilized that really allow for his graphic and media aesthetic to evoke a common style to encompass his library of work.

Our session discussion was topped off by a food-focused dialogue led by Aaron Prater, a chef and professor of culinary arts at Johnson County Community College. The emphasis on simplicity began as he treated us to a great club sandwich and continued with a discourse on contemporary cuisine, "flavor of the week" diets and food preparation theories. His appreciation for food as a basis for health and as a social experience was clearly outlined by way of continued exploration of food and drink combinations, great books about artistic food philosophies, and, even more, stuff that is just plain good.

As for our daily group activity... it was all about making stuff with our hands. The group was broken down into teams of two and we were given a basic "pinewood derby" car kit as a starting point. The mandate was to be creative and to make our constructs to be fast. After a brief introduction to the tool palette at Hammerspace from Dave, the group was off to the races... well almost. Everyone also needed to sift through the boxes of various junk drawer contents that were brought in as a way to make each team's project, well, umm, special...



Intensity of Creation

[Hammerspace](#)

> **Dave Dalton**, Founder

[Sike Style Designs](#)

> **Phil Schafer**, Artist

[JCCC](#)

> **Aaron Prater**, Chef/Professor



Off to the Races

Fabrication: Learning by Doing

March 24, 2014



After an hour or so of dust flying, wood cutting, saws-a-sawing and paint spraying, it was extremely evident that all concepts were well underway (some more than others, of course). And then a twist... Our fearless leader, pinewood derby judge and overall MC for the day, Tiffany Shepherd announced that it was time to trade our projects to another group. In return, we would be receiving their project (groan...). The setback did seem to chip away at team moral, but the "life ain't fair" lesson forced all teams to turn it up a notch in order to meet the 4 pm completion deadline.

Upon the completion of car fabrication, the teams were ready to complete on the track of doom that Brian and Evan had been working on. As well, there also existed a collection of shiny new trophies that had been hand-hewn (from the community junk drawer) by one Tiffany Shepherd. We all knew, in fact, that it was definitely go time.

In tournament style, our creations were pitted in struggle until true champions were determined in categories such as speed, style, creativity, looks, paint job, and craft. Tears were shed, but more importantly, victories were gained. We created with our hands. We responded to adversity. We went to Bier Station to enjoy happy hour and a warm spring day...



The Constructs & the Awards

The History of Crime: Kansas City's Dark Side

April 24, 2014



The purpose of our April Pillars session was aimed at exploring the history of crime in Kansas City. Undoubtedly, if one is to look at the history of any great city, dark happenings could be found at numerous points in time. Even so, such are the events that have served to shape our city/cities into the places that we know and love in contemporary society. Hence... our exploration of Kansas City's dark side....

Our day began with lunch at 75th Street Brewery and from there we braved the torrential downpour and settled in for the first part of our session at the KCPD Metro Patrol Station at 7601 Prospect. The presentation was led by Detective Herb Robinson, head of the Gang Unit for the Kansas City Missouri Police Department. He provided an in-depth discussion of the history of gang activity in KC and summarized the law-enforcement strategies that the KCPD has developed and implemented over time in order to stifle our city's gang culture. Robinson noted that KC's contemporary gang problem began around 1987 when Los Angeles gang affiliates took root in KC and largely focused on drug trafficking. In 1991, Chicago gang branches also formed in KC with the same intent. As a result, in 1993 the KCPD Gang Unit was formed in effort to establish a proactive citywide gang plan of action. Robinson went on to explain how the majority on KC gangs today are "hybrid gangs". They have a loose hierarchy, have a small number of members, are extremely fluid, and are largely rooted in neighborhood locations (cut up by blocks). Additional discussion centered upon gang symbolism, colors, naming conventions, recruiting tactics, intimidation, initiation rituals, and crimes of choice as well as numerous other forms of gang ideologies.

Part two of our day's session was led by Special Agent Carlos Dallis of the US Secret Service. Agent Dallis gave our group a detailed account of his own personal journey into the US Secret Service. He grew up in Cleveland, OH, and went on to attend college at the University of Northern Iowa. He spent three years with the KCMO Police department and then served as a School resource officer in the KCMO school district. He joined the US Secret Service in 2006 and has since been involved in numerous investigations involving credit card fraud, wire fraud, bank fraud and counterfeit money. As well, Agent Dallas has also been involved in numerous protective assignments for the President and Vice President of the United States, as well as visiting foreign heads of state.

We topped of the day's session activities with a bus ride through our fair city's gangster past on the Kansas City Gangster Tour. Our tour guide, "Johnny Holiday"; hosted a 90-minute account that involved "Boss" Tom Pendergast's humble Irish beginnings to his rise to be one of the most powerful figures in KC history, Pendergast's involvement in Harry Truman's political career, and numerous other historical facts and stories of KC's speakeasy, gambling hall, kickback and turf war existence though Prohibition and Great Depression era America.



The Group With Johnny Holiday

[KCMO Police Department](#)

> **Detective Herb Robinson**, Gang Unit

[US Secret Service](#)

> **Special Agent Carlos Dallis**

[Kansas City Gangster Tour](#)

> **Johnny Holiday**, Tour Guide



Re-Enactment of Johnny Lazia's Demise

Wild Card - The Arts, Tarot Cards and Animals Oh My!!!

May 22, 2014



What do penguins at the zoo, starlight theatre, a taro reader, beer and tater tots have in common...nothing and that's how we wanted it! Our final session of the 2013-2014 class was planned from day one to be a bit sporadic and somewhat neurotic wild card of a session. We thought it was important to do something outside of our comfort zone to help open our minds, bust phobias, inspire and broaden our perspectives outside of our architectural existence.

An Introspective Lunch on the Starlight patio

Our day started out on the East Patio of Starlight Theatre, taking in the spring sunshine and listening to the house band perform a sound-check preparing for the evenings Blue Star Awards. The Blue Star Awards recognizes the achievement of young high school musical theatre students, similar to the Tony Awards of Broadway.

We were all anxiously anticipating our fortunes to be told by the clairvoyant representative from the Psychic Connection of Kansas City. However, due to circumstances outside of their control, the card reading would have to be rescheduled. So we extended our sun-bathing and did some pencil sketching after lunch.

Backstage Tour of Starlight

After the sunburns set-in it was time for our tour of Starlight Theatre. Justin White, the Director of Operations & Theatre Plant, gave us backstage passes to the areas of the complex rarely seen by fans. We toured the 1950's era green-room just off to the side of Stage Left, complete with signatures of past performers. Saw the dressing room of Robert Plant, viewed the rehearsal spaces, wooden dance pavilion, workshop and storage facilities. We even got to stand Center Stage and get the feel of looking back at 8,000 fans.

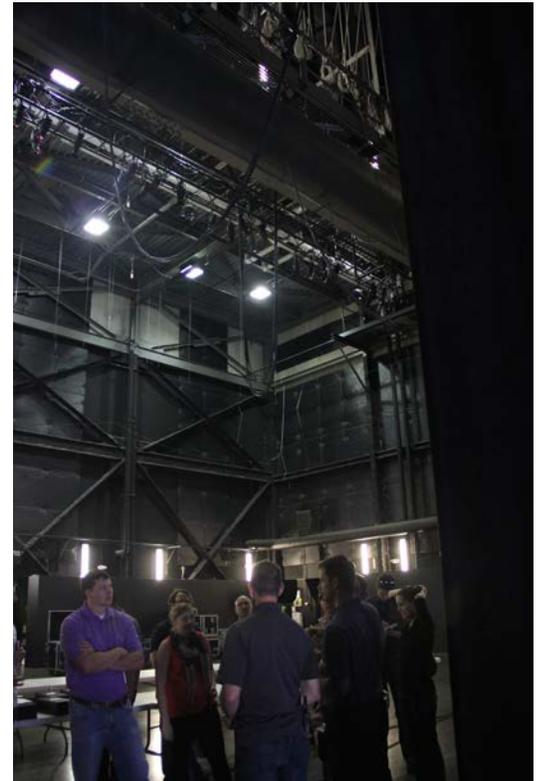
We also listened to stories of the back lot set-ups and antics from a few of the large concert tours, like Arcade Fires (13) thirteen semi-trucks and (8) eight tour busses. Celebrity tip - if you would ever like to meet one of the performers you should head to the Zoo or the golf courses at Swope Park to serendipitously run-into your favorite celebrity while they are filling time before the show.

Behind the Scenes of Happy Feet

Our first stop was with Nikita at his lair of the LEED Silver Polar bear exhibit. The observation area utilizes a green roof and light colored pavement to reduce the heat-island effect, effectively helping keep Nikita's 140,000 gallon polar environment a cool 65 degrees.

After visiting Nikita, we ventured down the porous concrete path to the site of the future Orangutan Exhibit. Michael shared the vision of the project and discussed the challenges of the site and animals. The goal for the new project is to create a larger outdoor space for the Orangutans that is similar to their natural habitat. This will also give opportunities for better viewing of the popular animals from several vantage points.

We then headed over to the new Helzberg Penguin Plaza to spend some time with the 50+ new members of the Kansas City Zoo, as well as check out the



Back stage at Starlight Theatre.

[Starlight Theatre](#)

> **Justin White**, Director of Operations

[Kansas City Zoo](#)

> **Michael Gillaspie**, Director of Sustainability



On stage at Starlight Theatre.

Behind the Scenes of Happy Feet (continued)

The new building has a goal of LEED Gold, accomplished through sustainable material selection and a 64 panel solar array. Speaking of solar, the lighting of the building has been programmed to simulate the solar patterns of Antarctica. We utilized our backstage access to see the “behind-the-tank” operations of feeding, caring and conditioning the water for the penguins. A two story pump room keeps the salt water clean and temperature regulated for our tuxedo wearing buddies. Prior to the noise of the pump room, our extended tour of the penguin experience paused at the tranquil underwater viewing area watching the penguins gracefully feed and play below the surface of the water.

Pit Stop for Bier

Following our backstage experiences we were ready for some after partying. We made a quick pit-stop at the new Waldo brewery and beer garden Kansas City Bier Company, before wrapping up our afternoon in heart of Waldo snacking on “Turbo Tots” at Lew’s. Kansas City Bier Company is a new local microbrewery, with a pub atmosphere, great t-shirts and other swag merchandise, fit for any bier lover.



Exploring the Penguin exhibit pump room.



Cale supervises as Kyle fine tunes his excavation and loading skills in the Bier Company's Bier Garden.