Civic Tech Forum – KCMO City Council Candidates

Digital Divide

Over the last few years, we have seen an increased focus on the digital divide--the lack of access to computers, Internet connectivity and other digital tools that are increasingly necessary for full participation in civic life and the modern economy.

What do you think the city's role is in bridging the digital divide? What goals do you believe Kansas City should set in bridging the digital divide, and what strategies should we adopt to achieve those goals?

The city should be the connector in our community's quest to bridge the digital divide. By that I mean that the city should be the one to bring together the libraries, school districts, private companies, foundations and non-profits to discuss ways to solve this problem. I think the goal should be nothing less than full elimination of the digital divide. We need to eliminate the digital redlining that is happening with neighborhoods east of Troost and we need to eliminate the statistic that 25% of Kansas City households do not have Internet at home. We can do this by encouraging private companies and non-profits to work better together to focus on these under-served areas.

Open Data

In the past couple years, Kansas City has established an open data policy and launched data.kcmo.org to make city data more accessible and usable. This is important because it enables citizens to do things like monitor 311 requests online, look up property records through GIS, and even create new applications to make the city work better, such as what the Code for America brigade does in its "civic hacking" meetups.

Have you ever used Kansas City's open data portal? Do you support an ongoing commitment to open access to city data? What are the biggest opportunities that a philosophy of open data offers, and what are some of the risks? What approaches do you support to manage those opportunities and risks?

Yes and Yes. I believe the biggest opportunity that a philosophy of open date offers in the sense of transparency that helps the city build a sense of trust with the residents. One risk that I can think of is that some citizens might mistakenly interpret some of the information without incorporating it within the larger context of the overall category. The opportunity I mentioned will continue to be there as the city puts more info on data.kcmo.org. The risk can be managed by the city by making sure that individuals looking at the data can easily understand how to interpret the data and how it fits into the overall picture of the operation of the city.

Economic Development

Traditionally, economic development has been defined by real estate development and the ability to attract and retain large employers. Technology is changing the nature of work and jobs in some ways that we understand and others that we don't fully grasp yet. The ability to freelance and do "project work" is increasing, large employees don't offer the long-term stability they once did, machines are able

to do more jobs once done by people, and the technology skills needed to find jobs change more quickly than the educational system can adapt.

How do you think the city's economic development toolkit needs to change in order to compete in the current economic environment?

I would like to see a shift in some of the incentives available to allow those options to better serve the changing aspect of the workplace as it is being impacted by technology. Some of this should also happen at the state-level (the city could definitely help lobby for the state-level changes) to better help attract server farms, robotic manufacturing, bioscience industries, etc to Kansas City and Missouri.

Smart City

The city announced a groundbreaking "smart city" partnership with Cisco early last year, but details are still being worked out and specific information has been scarce. The idea behind "Smart Cities" is that data collected from digital devices--whether electronic sensors and cameras managed by the cities or the mobile phones and wearable devices that citizens purchase--can benefit the entire community in areas like public safety, traffic management, health care, and energy efficiency. Specific examples may range from red light cameras to street lights that dim when they can sense that no one is around.

How proactive do you think the city should be in developing these sorts of solutions? How would you balance the priority of the city to support the common good with the preferences of individuals who may not want to participate or worry about their privacy?

I think the city should be very proactive in developing these sorts of solutions to help us stay in the forefront of cities using technology to help improve the life of residents. I am very excited about the "smart city" partnership with Cisco. I believe opportunities like working with Cisco only helps elevate Kansas City's reputation both nationally and internationally, especially in the tech sector. I do understand that some people might not want to participate in the data collection due to concerns about privacy or for other reasons. In those cases where the data is being collected from individuals' smart phones or other devices, I believe there should be a very easy to understand opt-in requirement. That will allow individuals to easily decide if they want to participate.

Sharing Economy

There is a phenomenon sometimes called the "sharing economy" or the "collaborative economy" that encompasses car services like Uber and Lyft (which recently caused some controversy in their entry into the KC market), lodging companies like Airbnb, coworking spaces, community gardens and other activities that blur the line between personal and commercial. Municipal regulations and tax codes often aren't set up to deal with these sorts of services.

How should the city treat deal with these emerging business models in a way that is friendly to innovation and also respects the need to protect the public and fund city services? Which collaborative economy activities, if any, do you participate in (e.g., do you use Airbnb when you travel?)?

On one hand, I realize the city needs to protect the public. On the other hand, some of these business models represent an entirely new way of doing things and the city should not be heavy handed in imposing regulations or fees that might make it too difficult for an individual or small business to operate these business models in the city. I think the city needs to keep an open-mind and be willing to be creative in coming up with oversight requirements for these new business models. The good news is that other cities are dealing with these same issues, sometimes before Kansas City. That gives KC officials an opportunity to see, both good and bad, what other cities have done. In this category, I have primarily used Uber.

The Playbook

KC Digital Drive's charter document is [the Playbook](#) that resulted from the Mayors' Bistate Innovations Team recommendations in 2012, which has been [updated and released in digital form](#).

Have you had a chance to review the Playbook? Where do you think we've seen the most progress and where do you see the greatest opportunities?

I have looked through the Playbook, but I realize I need to review it further to learn more about all the great work KC Digital Drive is doing in our community. I think we have seen the most progress in support for tech start-ups (e.g. incubators, co-working spaces, organizations providing resources, etc). The greatest opportunity should be the focus on closing the digital divide.

Personal Tech Adoption

We all have to find balance in how much we choose to incorporate technology into our personal lives.

How do you decide when to absorb new technology tools into your life and work? What social media channels are you most active on? What are your favorite tech tools that you've recently started to use?

I enjoy learning about new technology, but I typically like to allow that technology to reach a critical mass of users or receive a strong, first-hand recommendation below I decide to absorb a new technology. I am most active on Facebook and Twitter. I have really enjoyed using Apple Pay. On the work front, I have started using Yesware, which is an email tracking and sales toolkit that one can use inside their inbox.