Civic Tech Forum Questionnaire
Responses by Jermaine Reed, City Councilmember 3rd District (red)

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?

Although the digital divide and digital inclusion have been discussed heavily over the last 3-4 years, it is an issue that has plagued our community since personal computers arrived in the homes and the World Wide Web was created in 1989.

Exclusion from access to computers and the Internet can be detrimental to the success of our children, youth and community. Those without access are disadvantaged and will face challenges

March 30, 2011, the Kansas City, region was chosen to be the launch sites for Google Fiber. This was an opportunity to introduce cutting edge technology. Although we have seen some successes - we have not begun to tap into the opportunity that this super high-speed Internet will offer our city.

The strategies that I would use are as follows:

- Provide shared access to the internet that could be used in public and residential settings
- Expand the installation of mesh - wifi - networks to Kansas City and the 3rd District / low-income undeserved populations (many of the public housing developments are within the 3rd district - we need to provide innovative ways of ensure access to those families)
- Implementing technology in early learning settings - before children go to kindergarten
- Working with the KC libraries to support funding for expanding access and training
- Supporting STEM- Science, technology, engineering and math programing in our schools
- Small business incubators with access to high-speed internet and digital literacy training

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?

I have used the City's open data portal and other data sources on the City's website on several occasions. In fact, I use it daily. There is a great deal of information available to my constituents. I often direct my constituents to the website to obtain information and data. The city has invested a considerable amount of money into being transparent. We use date to prioritize resources and direct our decision-making. The open data has a wealth of information – including the mapping, parcel information, real time snow removal status, council districts, park and recreation mapping and GIS information. Just recently, the city published the budget online, which allows people to engage in the budgeting process.

Some of the risks include of course providing too much information; however, we live a society that requests information – longs for information – demands information. We are a public entity and should make the information available and in a format for all to use.

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?

The toolkit needs to change to make it easier to obtain information and navigate through the process or creating a business. It needs to be done so in a manner that makes it easier for conduct business remotely – online. The number of information technology jobs is increasing and will continue to increase.

In addition, the structure should change so that when someone wants to create a business- they have a development specialist that can navigate the process for them. They should not have to go from one department to the next to determine how to move their business forward. The development specialist can assist them in navigating through city services and streamlining processes.

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?

Kansas City should be proactive in using technology to improve safety. Balancing priority vs. privacy will take discussion and planning; but the municipalities are expected to be "good-stewards" of taxpayers' money and our responsibilities including providing and improving basic services which include safe neighborhoods, conserving energy and wisely allocating resources in all areas. The Smart Cities initiative is in the newly proposed budget. The city will provide a small portion of the funding and regulate the type of information that will be shared, stored and obtained. Privacy is important to all. No one wants a situation where "Big Brother is Watching". The technology is important but with all technology there has to be safeguards. Initially, my push is that we focus on public safety and traffic management.

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?)?

The City has established a task force that is currently working with the Regulated Industries Department to develop best practices and compare these practices with other cities.

We have to continue to use innovative ways to make sure that collaborative economies thrive in our market. These practices promote competition and encourage entrepreneurship.

I use the Uber and Lyft apps when traveling – and with that being said, I am supportive of making sure that proper regulations are in place as we toward shard economies.

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 had a chance to review the playbook. The new Playbook 2.0 is an upgrade from the original Playbook. The original playbook provided a guideline for how the two mayors and their cities would respond to Google. The playbook highlight a plan of action and the new playbook provides a plan and highlight partners. I see the greatest opportunity for the "Digital Inclusion" section because of its importance in my community.

Google performed a study that states that:
70% - children in KC School District don't have internet access at home
17% - of Kansas Citians don't use the internet
44%- over 65
46% - African American
42% - make 25,000 year or less
53 - percent are women
64% - high school diploma or less

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 use technology conducting many daily activities. Technology keeps me on tract from scheduling to communication – to entertainment. I generally use Facebook and Twitter to communicate with my constituents, friends and family.

Although I support local entrepreneurs and taxi cab drivers, I recently started using the Uber app when traveling.