

WE Blueprint Unveiling

Mayor Sly James

March 27th, 2014

- **Thank you, Cici, for such a kind introduction and for hosting this event.**
- **And thank you all for joining me today.**
- **I'm sure I don't need to tell this crowd that March is Women's History Month.**
- **Without question, it's appropriate to celebrate and learn from the women in history who have pushed our nation, our state, and our community forward.**
- **But I wanted to take the opportunity to use my bully pulpit as Mayor to talk even more about the *future* of women's leadership in our community.**
- **You see, I'm almost three years into my first term and that means I've been to a heck of a lot of meetings around this region on city business.**
- **The topics vary from hour to hour. But**

unfortunately, there is one constant.

- **There just aren't very many women in those rooms. And when women are in the room, it's usually the same two or three.**
- **That's not good business and that doesn't reflect the community in which we live.**
- **I'm here to tell you that I will work to change that. It's a priority of mine.**
- **I'm also having my staff devote their time and skills to changing the way business gets done in local government.**
- **And I'm excited that we're the very first city in the nation to be doing so.**
- **The Women's Empowerment initiative, or WE for short, is my office's public/private partnership with the Central Exchange, Women's Foundation of Greater Kansas City, and UMKC's Women's Center.**
- **The goal of the initiative has been to examine the**

policies and processes of city government to see what we're doing right and where we need to improve.

- **I know most of you know Cici already, and she has been spearheading the WE initiative's outreach efforts for women-owned businesses to get their perspective on how our city's government can live up to the Chamber's Big 5 Goal of becoming the most entrepreneurial city in the country.**
- **Cici is basically a walking rolodex. If you need a name, she'll give you 20. Thank you for allowing us to tap into your network, Cici.**

Acknowledge Cici in the audience

- **Wendy Doyle is here and she's the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Greater Kansas City.**
- **She met with my staff a whole three weeks into her tenure as the head of the Women's Foundation to start laying the groundwork for this partnership and has never looked back.**

Have Wendy stand to be recognized

- **Wendy, thank you for that.**
- **On behalf of the Women's Foundation, Wendy commissioned and coordinated a robust, scientific research study of how our boards, commissions, and task forces operate.**
- **The research centered upon a survey of women currently serving, who have served and who may potentially serve on those boards and commissions.**
- **Dr. Brenda Bethman is the Director of UMKC's Women's Center.**
- **Dr. Bethman couldn't be with us today but she has been instrumental in helping us tap into a pipeline of future talent.**
- **Arzie Umali, the Assistant Director of the Women's Center is here today. Arzie, thank you for supporting the WE initiative.**

Arzie stands to be recognized

- **Thanks to the Women's Center, a new generation of women will view city government as a place where they can put their skills to good use.**
- **Next month, the Women's Center is hosting a panel discussion on career opportunities within city government.**
- **They'll hear from a deputy chief of the police department, the director of public works, an assistant city manager, and the deputy director of parks and recreation - all of whom are women.**
- **The most recent data available tells us that women make up about 29% of the city's workforce and 23% of positions at the department director level and above.**
- **When compared to the private sector, that isn't too bad.**
- **Eight out of 12 of my own staffmembers are women, four of which are directors.**

- **We also know that when men and women hold the same jobs, pay disparity isn't an issue at the City. Like I noted earlier, the issue is women climbing the ladder.**
- **And we heard from women business owners that the Justine Petersen microloan program gives them the support they need to turn their business idea into reality.**
- **But, under my watch, the City won't settle for good enough when it comes to anything - infrastructure, economic development, or women's leadership opportunities.**
- **While there are certainly some good stories from city government to tell about women's leadership, you can see from the blueprint behind me that we plan to build on those successes.**
- **We've learned from the Central Exchange's outreach that we have work to do to enhance our customers' experience when they apply for WBE certification.**
- **I don't know about you, but I'm ready to roll up**

my sleeves and get to work.

- **Troy Schulte, our City Manager, is here today.**
- **I want the presence of both of us to send a clear signal.**
- **Business as usual isn't good enough. Doing business with the City shouldn't be so painstaking that it takes women away from running their businesses.**
- **Without a doubt, we need to ensure firms are bonafide WBE's. Firms who try to get around the system negatively impact everyone.**
- **But there is a balance to be struck between serving as a paperwork impediment and a partner in prosperity.**
- **To that end, I'm looking forward to seeing Central Exchange certified as a WBENC regional partner organization.**
- **And I'm looking forward to the City's continued partnership with Central Exchange to improve the**

experiences of WBEs when they interface with local government.

- **Another factor the WE initiative has illuminated is the need to increase women serving on boards and commissions.**
- **Serving the city in that capacity is great way for women to lead, but the Women’s Foundation research revealed that a lot of women simply don’t realize those opportunities are out there and they don’t view their own experiences and skill sets as “leadership material.”**
- **The great thing about this research project is that it isn’t going to sit on a bookshelf somewhere and collect dust.**
- **The blueprint includes strategies to address some of the barriers the surveys illuminated.**
- **The Women’s Foundation is going to help us reach more potential female applicants to serve on boards and commissions.**
- **And we’re going to develop training for city**

boards and commissions to break down barriers for women that may include things like early morning or evening meeting times when childcare isn't readily accessible and ensuring safe parking options.

- **Because research tells us that those seemingly small details can make a tremendous impact on women's leadership.**
- **As I mentioned the UMKC's Women's Center is helping us reach a new generation of female talent.**
- **I haven't been shy about much since I took office in 2011.**
- **To that end, I've said many times that I want to bring young families to this cities.**
- **Frankly, our future depends on it.**
- **I spoke to 400 Park Hill High School students on Monday as I delivered the State of the City Address.**

- **I told them that they may only make up 5% of today's population, but they are 100% of our City's future.**
- **I can assure you that there were some bright young women in that group. A couple even shared the stage with me during our student town hall.**
- **As we recruit the next generation of Kansas Citians, we need to be strategic about showcasing careers in City government to them.**
- **Research tells us that the female perspective adds an important dimension to organizations because they are communicative, collaborative, task-driven, and goal-oriented.**
- **That is precisely the type of employee I want working for the residents of this city.**
- **We launched this initiative back in fall when we hosted Kristin Hetle, the United Nations' Director of Strategic Partnerships, as the keynote speaker at the Mayor's UN Dinner.**

- It seemed like the perfect setting and the perfect way to honor our guest speaker, considering the basis for this initiative is a very strategic partnership between my office and the three organizations I've spoken about this morning.
- As is the case when most anything new is tried, the CAVE men and women (that's Citizens Against Virtually Everything) came out asking why in the world a *man* would start a women's initiative.
- Well, it's because I have some commonsense.
- Women make up 51% of the population and are receiving higher levels of education at a faster pace than their male counterparts. We can use that to our advantage and it is good business to do so.
- And it's also because it's simply the right thing to do.
- You may have noticed that I'm a black man.
- I grew up during the Civil Rights movement and I

know a thing or two about discrimination and unequal opportunities.

- **That being said, I'm obviously not a woman and I won't pretend that I have a first-hand understanding of all of the issues women face.**
- **But I can promise you that I care and will continue to care.**
- **I can also promise you that I don't consider the issue of women's empowerment a box that we can check and move on to something else.**
- **The blueprint you see up here and in front of you is proof of that.**
- **These strategies and tactics will require sustained effort and leadership.**
- **I'm all in.**
- **Thank you for being here today and supporting this initiative.**
- **I'm happy to take a few questions.**

