



Penny stocks might be the secret to becoming rich overnight...



Stocks soar—but some wealthy citizens are preparing for the “End of America.” Here’s why...



Have a \$500k portfolio? Ken Fisher, a 27-year Forbes columnist, has a retirement guide for you!

Advertorials by **SmarterLifestyles™**



midwest voices

KansasCity.com
THE STAR.

WHO'S WHO

ABOUT

CONTACT

KC's urban core suddenly a hot topic

1 year, 2 months ago



Yael T. Abouhalkah

Yael T. Abouhalkah

Kansas City’s urban core — the big chunk of the city that’s hardest hit by violent crime, poverty, poor schools, abandoned houses, boarded-up businesses, and crumbling sidewalks and water lines — is suddenly getting plenty of attention.

It’s about time.

Because that part of the city also is home to tens of thousands of law-abiding, tax-paying residents. It’s home to amenities such as the Kansas City Zoo, Starlight Theatre and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. If this historic part of the community continues to wither, other parts of the city and the metropolitan area will suffer in the future.

Now city officials, the business community and black leadership groups are advancing ideas to deal with intractable problems.

Four that deserve attention:

- Furthest along is the Police Department’s \$57 million plan to bulldoze houses in a four-block area from 26th to 27th streets and Brooklyn to Prospect avenues, relocate homeowners, then build the East Patrol station and a modern crime lab.

This sound idea will wipe out some blight and help the department operate more efficiently. Best of all, the project is already funded, mostly from the public safety sales tax that voters renewed in 2011.

- City Manager Troy Schulte said last week in his budget message for 2012–13 that he wants to boost spending to knock down more dangerous buildings, mow more abandoned lots and expand the city’s minor home repair program. “The longer that we wait to resolve these problems,” he said, “the worse they will become and encourage even more blight and population loss in the urban core.” He’s right to highlight these issues.

However, his funding source for the proposed solutions is problematic and may not be embraced by voters. Schulte recommends reinstating the emergency portion of the extremely regressive residential utility tax by up to 3 percent, raising \$13.5 million a year.

- One of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce’s “Big 5” ideas to improve the entire region is “The Urban Core Neighborhood Initiative.”

It’s encouraging to see chamber president Jim Heeter, his staff and chamber leadership engaged in this issue. It’s also positive that leaders expect to announce in a few weeks the specific geographical part of the core that will be the first one targeted for help.

However, exactly how that’s going to be done — and how this region’s leading corporate citizens will funnel dollars into helping improve the fortunes of inner-city businesses — are not at all clear yet. Another challenge will be getting divergent neighborhood groups, nonprofit foundations, churches and city officials to really collaborate on this project.

- The Urban Summit — a group of ministers, elected officials and others who have looked

Sign in with Facebook

Use your Facebook account to sign into Midwest Voices. It’s easy and helps us keep the spammer out.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Yael T. Abouhalkah

Lewis Diuguid

E. Thomas McClanahan

Miriam Pepper

Barb Shelly



KANSAS CITY STAR

Strong candidates run for area school boards

Seeding a start at river development

at issues affecting black residents for years — has suggested an initiative petition to ask voters to help rehabilitate houses and take other actions to fight blight.

But details on the plan remain sketchy. An eighth-cent tax that's been discussed would raise \$8 million a year, hardly a substantial sum given the problems confronted in the core. Plus, voters may not embrace a tax to provide what are supposed to be basic City Hall expenses.

Now for a reality check.

Spending money on a few new houses, some new infrastructure and a dash of economic development won't really improve living conditions in the urban core.

What needs to happen are BIG plans that are coordinated among businesses, elected officials and neighborhood groups and that are sustained for years.

Public and private funds will have to be targeted at the right programs far better than they have in the past. What this city has been doing simply has not worked, wasting millions.

Kansas Citians need to embrace good ways to improve the future of the core, which could help reduce blight and restrict it from spreading into other parts of the city and metro area. Choosing the right priorities will be the key to success.

Reach Yael T. Abouhalkah at 816-234-4887 or email him at abouhalkah@kcstar.com. He appears on "Ruckus" at 7 tonight on KCPT, Channel 19.



Comments

No comments have been posted. Perhaps you'd like to be the first?

 **with Facebook to comment.**

Let ex-offenders clear the first job hurdle

Improve grain elevator safety

A con game in Kansas swipes budget integrity

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Fair: Tom Sullivan snags a victory. Foul: Corn prices on the rise again

Prop P: We have heard it all before

Democracy requires shared sacrifice by all

Cyprus-like scenario is already happening here

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER

Board needs to make its case on shoring up police, firefighters fund

Nondiscrimination: Let's match what we say with what we do

Evaluating teachers not state lawmakers' job

WICHITA EAGLE

Eagle editorial: Higher ed taking hit

Davis Merritt: Case pits drug companies against public good

Opinion Line (March 28)

EMPORIA GAZETTE

DES MOINES REGISTER

Iowa View: A bipartisan case for defending Israel

Another View: A bull market for investors; a bear market for workers

The Register's editorial: California case deals with fundamental right

SPRINGFIELD (ILLINOIS) STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Kathleen Parker: Dissecting Hillary

Bernard Schoenburg: Gaps remain in campaign finance reporting rules

Katie Packer Gage: Illinois law must outlaw stalking, not encourage it

OKLAHOMA CITY OKLAHOMAN

Horse slaughter debate moves ahead

Oklahoma City school district needs regular bond issue plan

Without money, Gold Dome's future is bleak

[News](#) [Business](#) [Sports](#) [Entertainment](#) [Living](#) [Shopping](#) [Classifieds](#) [Jobs](#) [Cars](#) [Homes](#)
[About kansascity.com](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Copyright](#)