

# Keeping the Big 5 Alive

Scott Hall is the man behind KC Chamber's most important initiatives

STORY BY KATHRYN JONES | PHOTOS BY RANDY BRALEY

Last year, KC Chamber tapped Scott Hall as its new vice president for strategic initiatives, responsible for the advancement of the chamber's Big 5. Hall previously served as steering committee chair of the chamber's Centurions Leadership Program. He was vice chair for genKC on the chamber's board of directors for which he helped identify and develop each of the Big 5. He has more than a decade of experience in commercial real estate and economic development and most recently was an attorney at Lewis, Rice & Fingerish. Hall spoke candidly about the progress of the Big 5 in a recent interview with *KC Business* and revealed some big news: one of these five initiatives will soon be replaced with a brand-new strategy.

**KCB:** *What did you gain from your experience with the Centurions Leadership Program, and how did it groom you for your current role with the chamber?*

**HALL:** First, I made lifelong friendships with some of our area's most dynamic leaders, regardless of age, by being in the Centurions program. I plan to call on those leaders to help advance the Big 5. Second, the Centurions program takes a diverse group of people and opinions and formulates a cohesive plan around those different perspectives. In that way, it is like the Big 5, where the community provided input for nearly a year and the Big 5 were constructed based on that input. And finally, many people say that completing the Centurions program is like getting a master's degree in Kansas City, and I think that statement is pretty accurate. The education offered in the program enhanced my understanding of the community and will undoubtedly help me in my work on the Big 5.

**KCB:** *What did you learn from your experience with genKC? How did that prepare you for your new position?*

**HALL:** Like Centurions, genKC has great leaders, many of whom I consider close friends and will be called upon to help advance the Big 5. Also, the scope of genKC's mission to recruit and retain talent to our region is identical to that of the Big 5. We are competing every day against other areas for top talent, just as we are to be a beacon for the life sciences, an epicenter of entrepreneurship, a magnet for arts and culture, an example of urban revitalization and the world's hub for animal health. The stakes in these battles are increasingly important to our regional economy, and we won't win without a coordinated and collaborative regional effort. genKC was my introduction to approaching a regional problem with a regional mindset. That is same way we are going about the Big 5.



**KCB:** Please describe the progress of each of the Big 5 Initiatives.

**HALL:** I could go on for a long time about the progress, but instead, I will just highlight a few of the major milestones on each of the Big 5 to date:

**1 Urban Neighborhood Initiative:** The Urban Neighborhood Initiative is a long-term project, and we are early in its life cycle. That said, we've made great progress in its first two years. An initial target area was identified; the Urban Neighborhood Initiative Inc. (UNI) was created and Dianne Cleaver was hired as its executive director; partnerships were formed with a number of neighborhood and community organizations; and an action agenda focusing on health and safety, education and prosperity was developed. To advance those action agenda items, land at 27th & Troost was acquired for an urban grocery store; Rockhurst University opened the Prosperity Center for Financial

the project. A dynamic team at UMKC continues to work towards raising the remaining funds to initiate the move of these arts programs downtown. We are hopeful that this campus will build on the already astounding art assets in the Crossroads and downtown.

**3 Global Symposium on Innovation in Animal Health:** Focus group research found great support for continuing to expand two existing events: the KC Animal Health Corridor Homecoming and the KC Animal Health Investment Forum. In response to that research, the local animal health industry ramped up support for these events, and the 2013 iterations attained previously unreachable heights. As a result, the KC Chamber believes the vision set forth by the Big 5 to host a Global Symposium on Innovation in Animal Health was realized by the growth and evolution of the existing regional animal health events. We are

entrepreneurs at events, which included the iKC Innovation Conference, Maker Faire at Union Station and Entrepreneur Day at the K. Each of these events now stands alone as a way that area entrepreneurs are able to connect with each other and other entrepreneurial assets. Additionally, the Kauffman Foundation's 1 Million Cups program has now highlighted over 125 local startups at its weekly educational event. On the funding front, KCSourceLink led an effort that resulted in an additional \$2 million in microloan funds for the region and—matched by \$1 million of funding from some of Kansas City's largest corporations—KCSourceLink received \$1 million over five years from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration's University Center program. All of this progress is building the vibrancy of our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**5 Growing KC's Medical Research from Discovery to Cure:** There are three primary objectives in this initiative. The first was to assist the University of Kansas Cancer Center in its efforts to secure National Cancer Institute designation, the second was to leverage National Institute of Health funding by raising additional research funds, and the third was to explore the feasibility of funding for an institute for translational research. As most know, the University of Kansas Cancer Center successfully received initial designation as an NCI cancer center in July 2012. Frontiers: The Heartland Institute for Clinical and Translational Research has been instrumental in securing additional research funding for the University of Kansas Medical Center to, among other things, study Alzheimer's disease. And finally, the KC Chamber and various community partner organizations continue to collaborate on how an institute focusing on translational research can be developed and funded.

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Opportunity; a hiring fair was hosted with 20+ area employers and more than 900 jobseekers in attendance; and UNI received a \$5,000 grant from Arvest Bank to fund an engineering study related to the connectivity of UNI neighborhoods. In short, we are off to a strong start.

**2 Moving the KC Conservatory of Music and Dance Downtown:** Work to move UMKC arts facilities continues. Based on a site feasibility study, UMKC narrowed down the possible locations of a downtown arts campus, and the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation pledged a \$20 million matching gift toward

currently working to add a new initiative to the Big 5 that will succeed this one. I expect we will make an announcement on that soon.

**4 Making Kansas City America's Most Entrepreneurial City:** Kansas City is a growing entrepreneurial center. Since the announcement of the Big 5, an entrepreneurial community discovery, analysis, assessment and celebration process was undertaken. Results of these meetings revealed that area entrepreneurs weren't ideally connecting to area entrepreneurial resources. To remedy this, One Week KC hosted more than 1,000

**KCB:** *You're active with other KC organizations, including the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Union Station, The Children's Place and Coro Kansas City. Why is it especially important for young leaders like you to be active in the community?*

**HALL:** Our area's young professionals must be prepared to carry the civic torch and, like most other skills, great civic leadership does not come without training and practice. Young leaders should become active in the community because such involvement early in their career will help develop their civic leadership skills. That way, when they are leaders of their business organizations, they will be better prepared to advance their generation's important civic causes. On top all that, of course, I don't know many people who regret doing community work. It is incredibly fulfilling.

**KCB:** *What's the best career advice you've received that you would want to pass on to other rising stars in the community?*

**HALL:** Some of the best advice I received was to become active in charitable and civic organizations because it fosters professional development. Early in a career, it can take many years before one is given opportunities to demonstrate leadership. Those opportunities often come more quickly in the civic and charitable environment. So by joining a volunteer board or group, you can rise quickly to a position of leadership and demonstrate and sharpen your leadership skills. Every young professional should be seeking out these opportunities, and everyone supervising young professionals should encourage them to do so. **KCB**



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