

Uncertain Times

In September, the positive outlook of four Kansas City Entrepreneurs enthralled our Pillars class. They talked about their visions, their goals, and their accomplishments. Even the day held a beautiful blue sky and sun and warmth. The October meeting was quite different. Cold and rain cast a haze over the afternoon. With our conversation focused on banking practices before and after the events of October 2008, and a tour through the eerily quiet West Edge Project, we were left feeling uncertain about the current state of our city.

We understand that the first move in any journey is to understand where you are. And it is evident that we are on the climb out of this recession. US Bank talked us through the evidence that indicates money is starting to flow once again, that new businesses are starting, and that some businesses are starting to grow. They were clear that the lending market is much more stable today because of recent legislation. And they assured us that the number of new small business loans is on the rise and that they are actively seeking out opportunities to lend. These are all good signs in the financial industry.

Unfortunately, other areas of the economy are not seeing these signs yet. The unemployment rate has just leveled off in the past weeks. Several people that are employed are having to deal with pay freezes and pay cuts. Projects are on hold due to lack of financing. We experienced this first hand at the West Edge Project in the Plaza. We couldn't get over the silence of the construction site. The motionless tower cranes. The empty scaffolding. The materials waiting quietly to be installed. Ritchy Brown tried desperately to lift our spirits by asking us to envision and the splendor of the organic atrium and the infinity edge pool, but we were overcome by the deadness of the site.

At the end of a day full of sobering conversations we understand that our responsibility to move forward responsibly has never been greater.

Pillars would like to thank its hosts:

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