

Everything will fall apart if we don't get it together

By LISA HAYS

We in the Kansas City metropolitan area are a mix of individuals from different cities, counties and states.

For us, acting in concert is a little more complicated than for most metropolitan areas. However, if we choose to be, we're up for the challenge.

When traveling I've found the farther away I am from home, the more likely I am to say that I'm from Kansas City. It is a place that people recognize and are sometimes even knowledgeable about.

When traveling in Asia about 20 years ago I was asked where in the United States I lived. I said Kansas City.

The people I was working with had never heard of Kansas City. So, in a playful manner, I asked whether they were familiar with New York, Miami, Los Angeles and Seattle.

Yes! I told them that Kansas City is right in the middle of all of those, so it's a little bit like all of them. Correct?

No way. But the simplest way to conclude the conversation on a positive note? I thought so.

I know I'm not the only one who, when flying into Kansas City International Airport, has been informed by the flight attendant that we're about to land in Kansas. They simply aren't aware.

People who visit are often surprised by how much of the area they think of as "Kansas City" is in Missouri. Many think Kansas City is all in Kansas.

But many of us who live here act as if each of us resides on some unique island that is different from and has no reason to coordinate, cooperate and certainly not compromise with other local communities, counties and across the state line for the good of the metropolitan community. Can we please get over it?

Among other topics of great future significance to the metropolitan area (actually the entire world), vastly improving our individual and collective environmental sustainability is critical. Yet, daily in my business I hear, read and watch territorialism take over.

Working for the common good simply isn't good enough.

Folks, none of us are on an island. Kansas City is a laggard relative to other cities' sustainability initiatives. We're all in this together.

If we don't very soon act as one — including governments, not-for-profits, utilities, businesses and citizens — we will all be ensuring that future generations pay a huge price for our short-sightedness.

We must check egos at the door and come together on all facets of environmental sustainability — resource allocation, transportation, energy efficiency, renewable energy and recycling, to name a few.

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