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PLATINUM SPONSORS: Quality Hill Condominiums and Apartments, Renewal by Anderson, Sturges Word Communications, The Pitch, The Urban Living Center

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Experience Downtown Living



MICHAEL & JAYNE MARTIN'S life together Downtown used to involve an occasional drink while sitting by open windows in the Western Auto building overlooking the red brick buildings of the historic Crossroads Arts District. The Cashew, an upscale lounge tucked into the narrow rows of real estate and creative agencies, was at the top of the Martin's list of nearby bars and hangouts.

With the arrival last year of their son, Tag, the couple still has a variety of options for entertainment Downtown, all within a stroller's roll away.

"With Tag, we're not able to get out as much as we like to, but now that it's nice outside, we'll probably put him in the stroller and do it more often," Jayne said. "You can just walk out your door and pop into Union Station or Liberty Memorial or walk to the Power & Light District."

"Anyone considering Downtown needs to look at the different properties to see which ones fit their personalities versus the ones that are hot or popular," Jayne said. "If amenities are more important, then they need to look into that rather than one they naturally gravitate towards."

Since 2004, the Martins have lived in the urban core while working in jobs in other parts of the city. Jayne works in the development department for the Kansas City Chiefs while Michael is a Visual Market Manager for Banana Republic. The two have lived in other urban communities, but said Kansas City has promise for the Midwest.

"Jayne and I lived in the New York and San Francisco areas and we were never able to afford to live in the city," Michael said. "When we moved to Kansas City, we were adamant about living in the heart of everything."

On Saturday nights, steady crowds move through intersections at 13th and Grand, breaking up the streaming headlights from waiting traffic. These bodies flashing through the car beams signify more than just the new commotion around Sprint Center and Power & Light District for **SHOMARI BENTON**. The Downtown-dweller considers all of the motion an evidence, of sorts, that a new movement is underway in Kansas City.

"It's nice to feel like you're a part of a something big and Kansas City is not by any means the exception to the rule," Benton said. "You see what's happening here and it's already happening or is about to happen in most major cities in the US."

Benton has lived in a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house for nearly two years. The mixed income dwellings are near the heart of Kansas City's Downtown, just blocks from the 18th and Vine Jazz District, the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Children's Mercy Hospital, and the Power & Light District. He said the urban renewal trend is what convinced him to make his own investment in the Downtown area.

Houses in Beacon Hill are near the city's center. Benton said the convenient location allows him quick access to his office at Husch Blackwell and other parts of Kansas City, including Westport, Midtown, the Crossroads Arts District and the County Club Plaza. Some of those destinations are close enough to reach on his bicycle. But, perhaps most important to him, living Downtown offers an alternative to life in the suburbs and commuting.

BOB & BONNIE HOLLAND are now part of the small inventory of faces the shop owners recognize. The familiarity between grocery buyers and sellers has a nostalgic feel to it that they remember from a much simpler time in Kansas City. After living near the River Market for two years, they've been welcomed into the community of loft and condo dwellers who shop and are entertained here.

But just five years ago, the couple was living an opposite life 30 minutes from the city's heart, and committed to a typical suburban existence. Life in the suburbs was a tremendous challenge for Bob, who uses a wheelchair.

Like most people who live in the suburbs, the Hollands had to drive wherever they wanted to go. Ordinary stop and go trips were an extremely time consuming process that involved loading and unloading Bob's wheelchair into their cargo van.

The much heralded revitalization of Kansas City attracted the Hollands to the city's urban core. Downtown life in Wallstreet Tower offered Bob a convenience the suburbs never could. "Here, everything you do is in walking distance," said Bob, who retired from Aquila in 2001. "The library, restaurants, the symphony, Sprint Center. We use almost all of those things about once a week."

In and around Wallstreet Tower, Bob and Bonnie discovered a burgeoning, cosmopolitan city revived with life and gaining momentum seemingly by the minute. And, while the excitement had returned to the city streets, the Hollands also found that the City Market and other places were more than just architectural remnants of pieces of historical eras that had passed by.

"Our community has a small town feeling – the old market feeling – which is a wonderful part about Kansas City that no matter how big it gets, you want to keep," Bonnie said. "Like San Francisco Bay has its wharf, this is the part of the city that no one can ever take away."

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