

Carol Marinovich and Her Legacy in KCK

KANSAS CITY, Kan. - Carol Marinovich was sworn in as Mayor of Kansas City, Kansas in April of 1995.

But this young woman, who grew up in the quaint, well-known Strawberry Hill neighborhood of KCK, had never imagined herself as a politician.

In fact, she decided in the 4th grade she was going to be a teacher. And that's exactly what she did. Marinovich taught in the KCK public school district for 23 years, first as a 2nd grade teacher, then working with kids with disabilities.

But something happened in her little neighborhood - away from the schools and school kids she loved - that got her attention. An issue arose in her neighborhood that she, along with her neighbors, had strong concerns about. People walking to and from the St. Mary's food kitchen were causing a scene in residents yards. Marinovich remembers some of the older neighbors not feeling comfortable sitting on their front porch anymore, in a neighborhood Marinovich lovingly says was a "sit on your front porch kind of neighborhood". It was something she wanted addressed. So she learned what to do. She researched local government. She coordinated the troops. Got the issue on the city council agenda. And got up and spoke.

"The governing body kind of gave us our five minutes and just sent us on our way. And I didn't feel they were empathetic to our need," said Marinovich.

She adds, careful with her words, "And that didn't make me very happy."

From there, her award winning political career took shape. Her home office clearly shows years of service. Awards and pictures filling every nook, cranny, and wall space. Stacked to the ceiling, the awards seem to parrot each other with a dozen showings of the words best, and excellence...and leadership.

Marinovich served on city council, then ran for mayor.

" Carol Marinovich and her Legacy in KCK" [41 Action News](http://www.kshb.com/dpp/about_us/community_affairs/profiles/carol-marinovich-and-her-legacy-in-kck#ixzz1z1mU8Oeu) 2012. 27 June 2012 <http://www.kshb.com/dpp/about_us/community_affairs/profiles/carol-marinovich-and-her-legacy-in-kck#ixzz1z1mU8Oeu>

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She was instrumental in the progressive and exhaustive project of consolidating governments to create the Unified Government of Wyandotte County.

Consolidation consumed Marinovich for months.

Told by insiders in Topeka the bill proposing consolidation would die in committee, Marinovich made simple phone calls. She had conversations. She was adamant and effectively forceful, all while maintaining her gentle, caring KCK nature.

Perhaps her most controversial move as mayor was the revitalization of the city's far west side and the Speedway. Nascar wanted to build a speedway and was considering KCK. Marinovich knew it was a huge opportunity. She'd read many accounts of major developments working, but perhaps just as many about them failing. She determined to have success with a giant speedway, the city would need to have retail and hotel growth to accompany the racetrack. "I didn't know how everything would work and ensure we get the development but it was just kind of at that point a gut level feeling. An opportunity like this doesn't come around every day," she said. Even with the extremely emotional pleas from landowners and homeowners living in the area during the Fall of 1997, the newly-created Unified Government of Wyandotte County voted unanimously to build.

The decision meant eminent domain, and Marinovich remembers some of the conversations. She remembers the emotions. Ultimately, families were moved.

The speedway was built, as was the Legends shopping center. Marinovich sees the current activity around the Speedway as a completion of the vision she and so many others had more than a decade ago.

Hotel space and office space were the final pieces to the puzzle they envisioned. Marinovich admits she isn't exactly fond of the "outlet" label the shopping area currently has, but says if it makes money she'll change her tune. Marinovich is retired now.

When asked if she is more busy now like so many retirees are, she said, simply and unapologetically, "No".

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She now has time to teach several classes at Donnelly College.

She used to garden to relieve stress while in office. Now, she gardens because she enjoys it.

Marinovich is enjoying a slower-paced life.

A small town girl, growing older in her beloved community, who never imagined she'd one day play such a huge role reshaping her city.

Note: Carole Marinovich is the featured speaker for the upcoming Women's Leadership Luncheon, hosted by the Kansas City Kansas School Foundation for Excellence. (<http://www.kcksffe.org/>)

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