



What I Know

KIM PEARMAN-GILLMAN

McKinstry Partner and University District Board Past Chair

The many people in my life—from family to coworkers at Avista, Itron and McKinstry as well as the many community collaborators on initiatives I've been privileged to support—have helped shape my attitudes, my abilities and my passion for life-long learning. These experiences, as well as my belief in the inherent good of people and what the “party of the willing” can accomplish together, have informed and formed me.

My parents were both first-generation college students and taught me to work hard, respect others and to value education. My brothers taught me about competition and entrepreneurship. My husband has taught me the value of caring and sacrifice, and my three daughters continue to teach me so much—especially how lucky I am to be their mom.

I grew up in small-town Georgia. Then, in the middle of my junior year in high school, my family moved to the Jersey Shore. I gained new perspectives and discovered a love of adventure. I've lived in Georgia, New Jersey, Texas, Washington, Colorado, Connecticut, New Jersey and Washington. We moved to Spokane in 1989 looking for a community that was welcoming of newcomers who wanted to get involved. A place where we could grow our family and join with others to make a difference. We haven't been let down. Some 28 years later we can easily say we love this place.

Along the way, I've learned a thing or two about our community:

I've learned that community development and economic development are equally important. One doesn't work without the other. Each year I lead the Leadership Spokane community and economic development day bus tour. And each year, I'm inspired by the “best class ever”—55+ Spokaneites who are our aspiring future leaders—who are giving of their time to learn about our community, how it operates and how they can make it better.

I'm equally impressed with the great organizations and people who are out there doing the hard work to move us forward, and those who work to protect those less fortunate. I've witnessed first-hand how anyone who wants to make a difference can get involved. It takes initiative, perseverance and a belief that you can help and then it takes the dedication to show up, get involved and work collaboratively with

others to be a creative force for good.

A good example of economic development and community development impacting each other is the collaborative and disciplined development of the University District Master Plan originally conceived and put into place through community engagement processes spanning 2003–2004 of which I was honored to co-chair. Through intentional, collaborative problem solving, a previously underdeveloped part of Spokane's core has been and continues undergoing a much-needed transformation. The University District Gateway Bridge, originally envisioned in that planning process, has broken ground and will be completed by 2018. It will provide a connection between our number one economic driver, healthcare, to the two medical schools, the nursing school, the college of pharmacy and all the other university offerings at GU, EWU, WSU, UW, Whitworth and SCC. We have a world-class educational system—six institutions of higher education that would be the envy of other economic developers—all in one place. Educating students, and the research they bring to bear on real world issues, will cumulatively attract companies that want access to that talent; and in return they will create professionals who will solve complex community issues. It is a beautiful ecosystem that we can use to drive both community and economic development. The University District is all about creating that sense of place that will attract people to Spokane.

Another thing I have learned is that we can and should hold our collective selves accountable. To be intentional and not settle for less than we are capable of is a positive agenda we are worthy of and our collective will can inspire us all. We must raise our sights up and know we can accomplish tough things. For years, we've heard that Spokane doesn't deserve a new bold bridge; that all we need is a cheap bridge because the thinking has been that's good enough for Spokane. But that simply isn't what is needed here. We needed to believe in our community's future and place greater value on what could be accomplished by being bold and not giving in to mediocrity. One of my favorite quotes is from Goethe who said, “Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.”

It's a great time to get involved in our community and help make it all we want it to be. **S**