



# WOW!

## Kansas City A Masterpiece in the Making

by TYLER DAVIDSON

**A**LTHOUGH IT MAY HAVE THE CENTRAL U.S. location, affordable prices and good airlift, Kansas City has not been known as a destination with first-tier entertainment options and splashy off-site attractions.

All that's changing, however, due to a massive cash infusion that is set to put this western Missouri metro on the meetings map beyond being a one-size-fits-all destination more in tune with massive SMERF groups than corporate meetings seeking a little splash in between sessions.

Like its famous sauce-heavy style of barbecue—Kansas City boasts more than 100 BBQ joints and lays claim to being the barbecue capital of the nation—hope is springing eternal in K.C., with major tourism infrastructure developments ready to open on the near horizon.

"In another eight to nine months we will be a brand-new destination," says Alton Hagen, general manager of Agenda: Kansas City ([www.agenda-kansascity.com](http://www.agenda-kansascity.com)), a full-service DMC that has been in operation for 18 years. "We are having a tremendous renaissance here in Kansas City. The catalyst is the completion and opening of the Kansas City Power & Light District."

The nine-block, \$850 million entertainment and retail district, which is set to open in stages this fall and be fully completed in March, will be the crown jewel of a \$2 billion urban renaissance that will bring a new \$300 million Performing Arts Center, scores of restaurants and nightclubs, and the \$250

million Sprint Center Arena to downtown, along with a \$200 million convention center expansion.

"All of this is in downtown, within two to three blocks of the convention center," Hagen says.

Besides the Power & Light District, Kansas City's existing facilities offer plenty of bang, such as Union Station, a working railroad station dating to 1914 and which was totally refurbished eight years ago; The Nelson Atkins Museum, which is wrapping up a \$50 million upgrade that is expanding its meeting and event space; and the National World War I Museum, which features a variety of venues for group sizes ranging from 40 to 200 guests.

For high-octane thrills, the Kansas Speedway, about 20 minutes from downtown, offers NASCAR racing and the Richard Petty Driving School.

The Crossroads District, an area stretching about five blocks between downtown and midtown, features a number of boutique restaurants and art galleries in refurbished historic buildings. Of particu-



### GiftShop

#### Arthur Bryant's

• A local legend in the art of spicy barbecue joints, Arthur Bryant's was founded in the 1920s by Arthur's older brother Charlie. Since it's near Municipal Stadium, you may see a ballplayer or two digging into some ribs. According to the restaurant, noted author Calvin Trillin declared in *Playboy* magazine that "the single best restaurant



Arthur Bryant's

in the world is Arthur Bryant's Barbecue at 18th & Brooklyn in Kansas City." [www.arthurbryantsbbq.com](http://www.arthurbryantsbbq.com)

#### Gates & Sons Bar-B-Q

• This family-owned restaurant is a Kansas City institution, having opened its doors in 1946 and growing from a single storefront at 19th & Vine to offering five restaurants throughout the K.C. metropolitan area today. Sauces and rubs can also be pur-

