

Local companies work to sustain urban life

by Gabby Christensen

Supporting urban living is a high priority for various local businesses.

Arun Agarwal, CEO at White Lotus Group, said the company strives to support urban living through creating spaces where diverse people with all different types of character and tastes feel welcome.

"From a building design perspective, we think of multi-functional apartments and/or condos with lots of natural light, floor plans that optimize space and we know how important it is to have walkable amenities nearby," Agarwal said. "Many urban living developments include the revitalization of a historic building, and this is true with many of our projects as well. We love being able to offer residents unique design features that play off of the historic nature of the space, while also adding in new amenities such as a fitness center, game room or outdoor lounge area."

Agarwal said urban redevelopment and diversity in Omaha will not only become

more and more apparent when it comes to how and where people are living, but it will also trickle into the office environments as well, continuing to create creative pockets



Agarwal
of redevelopment.



O'Brien
"By supporting urban living, we can all help to attract and retain talent while creating a place where we all want to live, work and play," he said.

Brian Anderson, senior vice president of commercial real estate at American

National Bank, said the bank works with developers in the midtown and downtown area to provide construction financing.

"We are currently working with Bluestone Development on the Bos Apartments project," he said. "This apartment complex on Saddle Creek will continue the development of the urban core, which adds to the overall density and vibrancy of the older neighborhoods."

According to Anderson, the goal is to bring new customers and new families into the heart of the city, energizing and sustaining the vitality of the urban community.

"This branch, and investment in the Saddle Creek neighborhood, reinforces our commitment to, and celebration of, our community roots and our long time desire to serve banking and professional needs on Saddle Creek," Anderson said.

Anderson said urban centers deserve banking support.

"In addition to our service to busi-

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nesses, not-for-profits, health care and education partners, professionals, and real estate developers, we work closely with clients such as Holy Name Housing Corporation to finance affordable urban housing," Anderson said.

Recently, he said the bank worked with Heartland Family Services to help finance renovation, which includes a residential housing and treatment program that provides long-term substance abuse and mental health assistance for women with children.

"Through these partnerships, we are supporting their efforts so these essential social service organizations can deliver much needed programming services for public housing residents in support of urban living," Anderson said.

Tim O'Brien, director of economic development and external relations at OPPD, said urban living is a big part of bringing people, especially young workers, to the area.

"We are constantly working to maintain reliable electric service to power those things," O'Brien said. "Take downtown Omaha, a mix of residential living, restaurants, shops, nightlife and history. We've got more than 200 underground vaults serving 1,900 customers in that area. It's a multi-layered system, requiring continual inspections and maintenance to keep power flowing."

As much as OPPD has invested in the infrastructure, he said the organization has

also invested in the workforce needed to sustain urban business growth.

"A large number of our employees volunteer in various organizations and on boards devoted to community betterment," O'Brien said.

He said OPPD also partners with local nonprofits and is committed to the Legacy program, offering internships and jobs to young people from diverse and challenged backgrounds.

Additionally, he said OPPD supports urban living by offering products and services for people for urbanites, such as the Community Solar program, which allows environmentally-conscious customers who cannot attach solar panels or who cannot afford to attach panels, another way to obtain solar energy.

"By supporting urban life, we are supporting the entire state," O'Brien said. "The economic benefits trickle down, contributing to keeping taxes and utility costs low."

