


Amid the pain, an incredible transformation is taking place in downtown Oklahoma City

Business writer Steve Lackmeyer contemplates future development as he takes in the view of downtown from the 40th floor of Devon Energy Center.

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Standing on the 40th floor of the new Devon Energy Center Monday, I had already been mesmerized by a view of the project itself when I stopped to gaze out on the new Interstate 40, the Skydance pedestrian bridge and the Myriad Gardens.

I had traversed through one minefield after another, thanks to Project 180, just to get to this place. The street closures are bad enough. A walk through the pitted, muddy crosswalks and sidewalks while being soaked by the rain was quite another story.

It was hellish getting to this destination, but oh, what a destination it is.

I share the frustration of many downtown workers who wish the construction would just stop for a while. The traffic headaches, the unexpected detours and all those curbside parking spots taken up by construction workers can make any reasonable person a bit cranky.

More than a decade has passed since I first compared downtown's first wave of transformation, via the original Metropolitan Area Projects, to the online game "Sim City." Now we're playing OKC Sim City 2011, and it's a far more advanced scenario than ever before.

So much is going on at once: Continental Resources is finalizing an incentive deal with the city that will result in a new corporate headquarters downtown with several hundred employees sharing in these headaches. SandRidge Energy Inc. is on a growth pattern similar to that of Continental, with construction of a new mid-rise likely in the next few years as development continues on its \$100 million SandRidge Commons development.

And then there's Devon Energy Center. We've all gotten accustomed to seeing the 50-story tower on almost any horizon in the city. It's a headquarters that will be unrivaled in the state, with amenities matching just about any Fortune 500 company in the country. Amid all this painful change, some incredible transformations are taking place.

I wish every one could share the view from the 40th floor. Sure, plenty have discovered the sheer joy of visiting the rebuilt gardens. But not everyone can share the view I took in of the instantly iconic Skydance bridge, of how the new highway will enhance visibility of the Oklahoma River, or the development opportunities that await the city in years

ahead in the area dubbed “Core to Shore.”

The pain at this moment is intense. But trust me, from the 40th floor, the payoff is within sight and will be well worth the wait.



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