

Jeff Around Town – March 11, 2025

Koterba: Jeff Slobotski, you currently work for Paul G. Smith & Associates in Real Estate Development, and for those of you who have not been in Omaha very long, you may not know the name Jeff Slobotski. You've been around for a while. You were founder at Silicon Prairie News, a digital media events company doing all sorts of things, including Big Omaha, celebrating investors, entrepreneurs, near and far, and I think of you, Jeff, as sort of an entrepreneur's entrepreneur. If something is happening in the entrepreneurial community in Omaha, there's a good chance that you have, in some way, been a part of it or have mentored someone. Is that fair to say?

Slobotski: Sure, no, that's kind. Thanks, Jeff. I do. I think it comes with age, right? I've been in that space for quite a while and really become fascinated by just what our city and community has in its own backyard that we're not aware of, when it comes to entrepreneurship. And I often say, too, entrepreneurship doesn't necessarily have to even be a high-tech, high-growth company. It could be a coffee shop that opens up two or three different locations, but it's, again, somebody that's thinking out of the box and working in a non-traditional fashion and manner to make the city better.

Koterba: And you're an Omaha guy originally?

Slobotski: Yeah, born and raised. Born and raised. So, grew up around 90th and Maple, and then when I was high school age, moved out to the Millard area, university at UNO, finance and banking major, and stuck here. I love it.

Koterba: You've been written up in Time, Forbes, Wired, Fast Company, Featured, CNN, New York Times. Seth Godin has given you a shout-out, and you could live anywhere. You are here in Omaha. Why?

Slobotski: Yeah, I love this city, and I know it sounds maybe cliché, but just continually inspired by just the creativity and the unique people and the stories that are here in our own backyard. I don't know, you know, you can get to both coasts pretty easy with flights, right? Now, west, east coast, west coast, and there's something about it. It's a big, small town, right? I feel like it's kind of half a degree of separation in terms of anything that you might want to do or create or push forward here, and so why not, right? Why not make a mark on this city for the time that we're here?

Koterba: I felt that way doing the different things I've done, playing in bands, drawing cartoons, now working in radio, and I have often felt like I, at one time when I was younger, I wanted to move to New York. Great place, full of great energy, but I realized I could probably just do one thing there because you're so busy trying to also survive, right? And I feel like Omaha allows a person to thrive in whatever their chosen career path is and maybe to do multiple things.

Slobotski: Yeah, no, you're spot-on. Like, you can have your day job, right? Whatever it is, your day passion, and kind of work on that, but in the off hours when you're done, you clock out, you know, you go into something else. There's just, I mean, a ton of things you can get involved in, right? Like, okay, you're a foodie, get involved in all the amazing restaurants that are here. Oh, you're into art. All right, cool, well...

Koterba: Or all of those things.

Slobotski: Or all the things in one day, in one evening.

Koterba: What are you excited about right now, and what do you see in the near future for Omaha?

Slobotski: You know, I'm biased. I'm working on a project with Paul and Annette Smith, Paul G. Smith and Associates, called Millwork Commons, kind of north of the baseball stadium, and, you know, what we're doing there is really creating a physical manifestation of, you know, the entrepreneurs, the creatives, the artists, the foodies, right, that are in our city. Cities go through cycles, but now I feel like there's a kind of resurgence of the artists, the musicians, the creatives that are starting to kind of bubble up again.

Koterba: Yeah.

Slobotski: So, I can't put my finger on it, but...

Koterba: I think you're right about that. I've sensed that too. Yeah, these cycles. Yeah, we were kind of in a little bit of a lull, and now it's, like, exploding.

Slobotski: Yes.

Koterba: Like, more than ever.

Slobotski: Yes, and it's not just in one vertical, right? So, yeah, there's some tech companies that are coming up and starting to make a name for themselves outside the area. Restaurants, too, right? Starting to get written up, you know, and publications outside of Omaha, you know, and again, the art scene, too. I think it's starting to kind of... a new generation or resurgence within that community.

Koterba: Awesome.

Slobotski: Yeah.

Koterba: Jeff Sloboski, thanks so very much for joining me on Jeff Around Town.