

# LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

2022 Q4



# Women of Impact





## Amber Sellers City Commissioner - Lawrence

There's a word Amber Sellers uses in describing herself that perfectly sums up what makes her such an effective and strong civic leader – connector. Rather than focusing on the differences among people, organizations or situations, she finds the commonalities that can serve as catalysts in bringing those entities together and working collectively to solve problems and make the lives better for all in the community. According to her, "making an impact is when we use our collective voices and labor to pull from our experiences and history to empower change of action, thought, or behavior without centering ourselves in the process." It's no wonder she refuses to single out a single mentor in her life, but claims dozens of women leaders who have helped shape the civic leader she is today.

### IN HER OWN WORDS: YOUR MENTOR/ ROLE MODEL

While the question asks who "was" my mentor/role model, I have been blessed to be surrounded by many individuals who have been instrumental in my journey and have earned this designation. First and foremost would be my parents for instilling a heart of service, a relentless spirit to always ask 'why not,' and a passion to seek justice in all that I do. I have been fortunate to meet many women who continue to impart knowledge and sage advice to me throughout my life. I call these women my kitchen cabinet squad - they are Schautna

James-Boyd, Janine Colter, Marcia Manter, Mary Murphy, Brooklyne Roulette-Mosley, and Denise Ballard...to name a few!

### KNOW ABOUT YOU

I'm a connector by nature - I look for commonalities between divergent situations. I truly believe success comes from recognizing the value of relationships. While discourse can be organic or manufactured, if we don't work as a collective to solve difficult challenges, we will fail. I approach

each situation with a desire to cultivate potential, whether it be an individual or a strategy. I live to uncover what life ought to be like, not what it is.

### MAKING AN IMPACT

It's the power of Sankofa - an African word from the Akan tribe in Ghana that means, "go back to the past and bring forward that which is useful." We all have a spirit of service built innately within us. Making an impact is when we use our collective voices and labor to pull from our experiences and history to empower change of action, thought, or behavior without centering ourselves in the process.

The biggest decision I made that I also felt could be impactful was running for local office. This was an organic journey 20 years in the making. While I had grown up seeing Black women and men representing my community on the local and state level, I struggled to see that same leadership in other communities I've lived in. When I finally made the decision to run for office, it was less about me doing a "thing," but rather elevating the importance of leadership that is representative of the community, unapologetically. Leadership should not be measured by popularity, performative behavior, or one's affluence - it should be measured by character, skillset, and ability to serve the collective.

### LIKE TO SEE CHANGE

I would love for us to challenge what success looks like for everyone in our community as it relates to housing/homeownership. △



## Diane Stoddard Assistant City Manager

Diane Stoddard claims little to no credit for any accomplishments she's achieved as assistant city manager of the City of Lawrence. She's quick to credit the support and cooperation she's had the pleasure of receiving and working with throughout the years, especially during most challenging times. What she loves most about her job is that those collaborations have enabled her to have a positive impact on a number of city projects and services that are lasting in the community and positively affect people's daily lives. If only there could be greater civility in the discourse of public affairs, her position as a civic leader would be perfect, she says.

### IN HER OWN WORDS: YOUR MENTOR/ROLE MODEL

My parents have been strong role models for me and I have been extremely fortunate in my career to have had many mentors who have helped me along the way and supported my professional growth.

### KNOW ABOUT YOU

Nothing I have ever done has been due to my individual work- I have enjoyed the support and cooperation of a team of colleagues, especially during the most challenging times.

### MAKING AN IMPACT

My job working in city government for many years has enabled me to impact a number of projects and services that are lasting in the community and positively affect people's daily lives. It has been an honor to be able to do this work at the direction of elected officials, the City Manager, and in conjunction with a strong team of professionals.

### LIKE TO SEE CHANGE

Greater civility in our public affairs. △





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