**JENNIFER KAKERT REPORT**



**CASCADE STRATEGIES – JULY 2020**

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BIOGRAPHY

Name: Jennifer Renee Fleck Kakert

Birth: March 31, 1967

Residence: 12344 71st Avenue

Blue Grass, IA 52726

Family: Husband, Tom Kakert; Two children, Jack and Caitlin

Education: Bachelor’s in Accounting, University of Iowa

MBA, University of California – Berkeley

Military: None

Professional Experience: Owner of the Vault Beauty Lounge & Urban Retreat

Political Experience: None

TIMELINE

March 31, 1967 Born in St. Louis

1989 Graduated from the University of Iowa

1994 Became CPA in California

2001 Earned MBA from the University of California-Berkeley

2003 Purchased home in Blue Grass, Iowa

2003 Began working for HON Company

c. 2008 Began service on Scott County Kids Empowerment Board

2014 Began working for Financial District Properties

MOLINE TAXES

* **Jennifer Kakert is the CFO of Financial District Properties, a position that she says she has held since September 2014** 
  + On her LinkedIn page, Jennifer Kakert identifies herself as the chief financial officer of Financial District Properties. According to her profile, Jennifer Kakert assumed the role of CFO in September 2014.[[1]](#footnote-1)

* + According to her statement of economic interest, as filed with the Iowa State Legislature, Jennifer Kakert identifies herself as CFO of Financial District Properties Management, LLC.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* **On her campaign website, Jennifer Kakert touts her role as the Chief Financial Officer for Financial District Properties**
  + According to the Jennifer Kakert for Iowa House website, “Hello! If you don’t know me yet, I’m Jennifer Kakert. I’m running to represent you in the Iowa House here in District 92. I’ve believed from an early age, hard work is the key to success. I am a proud small business owner of a day spa located in downtown Davenport, with my business partner Nasreen Khan. I serve as the Vice Chair and a board member for Scott County Kids - Early Childhood Iowa, and the Treasurer and a board member for Habitat for Humanity Quad Cities. I’m also the Chief Financial Officer for Financial District Properties and serve on the Downtown Davenport Partnership Board of Directors. At the core of my professional work, it’s a desire to make our community and main streets more prosperous. I know there are too many hard working Iowans out there who are an opportunity away from changing their life forever. If elected, I will work across the aisle to ensure our community brings more good jobs with good benefits to our community, and ensure this continues to be a great place to live for families. Times are tough - especially during COVID-19. Hard-working Iowans have been laid off by no fault of their own. With me as your representative, I'll work to get Iowans back to work, and the relief they need.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
* **Jennifer Kakert said of Financial District Properties principal** **Rodney Blackwell’s prior CFO, “The CFO working for Mr. Blackwell wasn’t the most conscientious for making sure the bills were paid”**
  + In an Aug. 17, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “With Cedar Valley TechWorks scheduled to take shape in earnest over the next 12 months or so, nothing will delay work, the project's developer says.

“That includes a flurry of litigation involving that developer, Davenport-based Financial District Properties LLC, and its principal Rodney Blackwell.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

* + According to the same article, “Carver never paid his share of the property taxes owed on the building, Kakert said.

“She also noted Blackwell has sued Henderson, his former CFO, over alleged financial improprieties.

“‘The CFO working for Mr. Blackwell wasn’t the most conscientious for making sure the bills were paid,’ Kakert said. ‘We’ve gotten a number of things cleaned up and are in a strong position, and I think these individuals have their own axes to grind, and it’s unfortunate that they’re casting these unfounded allegations and harming a project that could do so much good.’”[[5]](#footnote-5)

* **According to the Rock Island Treasurer, Financial District Properties owes more than $130,000 in overdue (delinquent) property taxes in the county, as of July 27, 2020** 
  + According to the Rock Island County Treasurer, Financial District Properties of 201 N. Harrison St. Suite 402, Davenport, IA owes the following property taxes for Tax Year 2019, for its Kone Centre properties, as of July 27, 2020.[[6]](#footnote-6) [[7]](#footnote-7)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Parcel** | **Due Date** | **Tax Due** | **Penalty Due** | **Total Due** |
| 08-32-237-001 | 06/17/2020 | $113,561.19 | $3,783.23 | $129,890.91 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 06/17/2020 | $7,137.25 | $237.77 | $8,163.57 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 06/17/2020 | $4,198.37 | $139.87 | $4,802.09 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 06/17/2020 | $5,876.38 | $195.77 | $6,721.39 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 06/17/2020 | $1,805.31 | $60.14 | $2,064.91 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 06/17/2020 | $1,175.50 | $39.16 | $1,344.54 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 06/17/2020 | $1,016.88 | $33.88 | $1,163.12 |

* **According to the Rock Island Treasurer, from 2016 to 2019, Financial District Properties has been late paying its property taxes in Rock Island County at least 98 times** 
  + According to the Rock Island County Treasurer, Financial District Properties of 201 N. Harrison St. Suite 402, Davenport, IA made the following property tax payments for the Kone Center properties.[[8]](#footnote-8) [[9]](#footnote-9)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Parcel** | **Tax Payment** | **Tax Billed** | **Due Date** | **Date Paid** |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2018-1 | $124,685.47 | 06/05/2019 | 09/06/2019 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2018-2 | $124,685.47 | 08/05/2019 | 09/06/2019 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2018-3 | $124,685.47 | 09/05/2019 | 10/15/2019 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2017-1 | $122,230.14 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2017-2 | $122,230.14 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2017-3 | $122,230.14 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2017-4 | $122,230.14 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2016-1 | $122,289.91 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2016-2 | $122,289.91 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2016-3 | $122,289.91 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2016-4 | $122,289.91 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2015-1 | $120,035.36 | 06/09/2016 | 08/03/2016 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2015-2 | $120,035.36 | 08/09/2016 | 10/07/2016 |
| 08-32-237-001 | 2015-3 | $120,035.36 | 09/09/2016 | 10/07/2016 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2018-1 | $7,836.44 | 06/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2018-2 | $7,836.44 | 08/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2018-3 | $7,836.44 | 09/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2017-1 | $7,682.12 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2017-2 | $7,682.12 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2017-3 | $7,682.12 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2017-4 | $7,682.12 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2016-1 | $7,685.87 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2016-2 | $7,685.87 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2016-3 | $7,685.87 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2016-4 | $7,685.87 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2015-1 | $7,544.17 | 06/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2015-2 | $7,544.17 | 08/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-002 | 2015-3 | $7,544.17 | 09/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2018-1 | $4,609.64 | 06/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2018-2 | $4,609.64 | 08/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2018-3 | $4,609.64 | 09/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2017-1 | $4,518.86 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2017-2 | $4,518.86 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2017-3 | $4,518.86 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2017-4 | $4,518.86 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2016-1 | $4,521.07 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2016-2 | $4,521.07 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2016-3 | $4,521.07 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2016-4 | $4,521.07 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2015-1 | $4,437.73 | 06/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2015-2 | $4,437.73 | 08/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-003 | 2015-3 | $4,437.73 | 09/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2018-1 | $6,452.03 | 06/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2018-2 | $6,452.03 | 08/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2018-3 | $6,452.03 | 09/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2017-1 | $6,324.97 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2017-2 | $6,324.97 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2017-3 | $6,324.97 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2017-4 | $6,324.97 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2016-1 | $6,328.06 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2016-2 | $6,328.06 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2016-3 | $6,328.06 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2016-4 | $6,328.06 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2015-1 | $5,002.09 | 06/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2015-2 | $5,002.09 | 08/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-005 | 2015-3 | $5,002.09 | 09/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2018-1 | $1,982.17 | 06/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2018-2 | $1,982.17 | 08/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2018-3 | $1,982.17 | 09/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2017-1 | $1,943.14 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2017-2 | $1,943.14 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2017-3 | $1,943.14 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2017-4 | $1,943.14 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2016-1 | $1,944.09 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2016-2 | $1,944.09 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2016-3 | $1,944.09 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2016-4 | $1,944.09 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2015-1 | $1,908.25 | 06/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2015-2 | $1,908.25 | 08/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-006 | 2015-3 | $1,908.25 | 09/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2018-1 | $1,290.67 | 06/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2018-2 | $1,290.67 | 08/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2018-3 | $1,290.67 | 09/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2017-1 | $1,265.26 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2017-2 | $1,265.26 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2017-3 | $1,265.26 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2017-4 | $1,265.26 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2016-1 | $1,265.89 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2016-2 | $1,265.89 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2016-3 | $1,265.89 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2016-4 | $1,265.89 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2015-1 | $1,242.57 | 06/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2015-2 | $1,242.57 | 08/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-007 | 2015-3 | $1,242.57 | 09/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2018-1 | $1,116.47 | 06/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2018-2 | $1,116.47 | 08/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2018-3 | $1,116.47 | 09/05/2019 | 11/05/2019 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2017-1 | $1,094.47 | 06/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2017-2 | $1,094.47 | 08/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2017-3 | $1,094.47 | 09/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2017-4 | $1,094.47 | 11/07/2018 | 12/11/2018 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2016-1 | $1,095.01 | 06/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2016-2 | $1,095.01 | 08/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2016-3 | $1,095.01 | 09/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2016-4 | $1,095.01 | 11/08/2017 | 12/27/2017 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2015-1 | $1,074.82 | 06/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2015-2 | $1,074.82 | 08/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |
| 08-32-237-008 | 2015-3 | $1,074.82 | 09/09/2016 | 11/08/2016 |

MOLINE LOAN

* **In 2012, Moline city leaders granted Rodney Blackwell a multi-million dollar loan to complete the KONE project; After five years, about two and a half floors were empty, and only two out of the seven condos were occupied and no restaurant. And Blackwell with Financial District Properties still hadn’t paid the loan in full**

* + According to a June 20, 2017, WQAD report, “The Kone development project was a symbol of new hope, hope for jobs and opportunity for the city of Moline. That’s why city leaders say they granted developer, Rodney Blackwell, a multi-million dollar loan to complete the KONE project.

“The plan for the site was originally to house the Kone headquarters, have a floor for condominiums, and have a public restaurant.

“Fast forward five years and about two and a half floors are empty, and only two out of the seven condos are occupied and no restaurant. And Blackwell with Financial District Properties still hasn't paid the loan in full.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

* **In June 2017, FDP owed Moline $3.4 million, money that was originally due back in September 2016**
  + According to a June 20, 2017, WQAD report, “FDP still owes Moline $3.4M. The money was originally due back in September 2016. That deadline was extended to the end of June 2017, and now it’s being extended again with some added stipulations.

“If the money isn’t in my August 22, 2017, Blackwell owes an additional $200,000 in late fees.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

* **In June 2017, the Moline City Council voted to provide a two-month extension on the balloon payment owed to the city by Financial District Properties HQO LLC** 
  + In a June 21, 2017, article, the *Quad-City Times* reported, “Financing for the Dolan Commons LLC development in the 2700 block of Avenue of the Cities in Moline has been secured by the city.

“During Tuesday’s City Council meeting, aldermen voted to execute an assignment pledge and security agreement of property tax and sales tax rebate payments that instead of being paid to the developer will be paid to Northwest Bank & Trust, which has granted the loan.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

* + According to the same article, “In other business, the city council voted to provide a two-month extension on the balloon payment owed to the city by Financial District Properties HQO LLC.

“In September 2016, Financial District Properties was given an extension to make the final payment of its loan to the city to June 30. The balance of the loan is $3,398,631.40.

“Rodney Blackwell, owner of the development company, requested an extension until Aug. 22, Forsythe said.

“Financial District Properties will pay the balance of the loan from sale of the property of Unit 100 of the Kone Centre Condominiums. There is a signed purchase agreement for the sale of the property. The closing, however, will not occur before June 30.

“Forsythe said once the sale is complete, Blackwell will pay off the loan by the city.

“If the payment in full is not made on or before Aug. 22, the city will add an additional $200,000 to the balance of the loan then due and payable.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

* **Financial District Properties paid off the loan the day before the extended deadline**
  + In an Aug. 22, 2017, article, WQAD reported, “Financial District Properties’ (FDP) Rodney Blackwell has paid off the loan he owes to the city for the Kone Towers, on the city’s riverfront.

“Blackwell was in the process of selling the new Kone Tower two months ago to an out ‘out of state purchaser,’ according to city Planning and Development Director Ray Forsythe, but Blackwell still owed more than $2.3 million to the city.

“In a written statement Monday, August 21st, Forsythe said the city received the $2.4 million payment from FDP, but he does not know who bought the new tower. According to their website, FDP has owned the building since 2010. In June, Heritage Church bought the old Kone Tower on the east side of I-74, that Blackwell also owned.

“Wednesday, August 23, Blackwell told WQAD News 8 that the new tower is full with employees from Kone and Infosys Limited. In the written statement released Monday, Forsythe also credited Blackwell with the development. Forsythe said the results of the building were positive despite the Great Recession of the late 2000s.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

TECHWORKS

* **FDP WTC LLC owes Black Hawk County more than $325,000 in overdue, unpaid property taxes, as of July 28, 2020, for its TechWorks property in Waterloo, Iowa; FDP WTC LLC lists the same address as Financial District Properties, and the address of the unpaid taxes matches the company’s TechWorks development**
  + According to the Iowa State County Treasurers Association, FDP WTC LLC of 201 N. Harrison Street No. 402 Davenport, IA owes $325,400 in property taxes in Black Hawk County for its property at 250 Westfield Ave, as of July 28, 2020. The taxes were due on April 1, 2020.[[15]](#footnote-15)

***Editor’s Note:*** *Past property tax payments on this parcel have been made by Rodney Blackwell, FDP WTC, Financial District Properties KP and Financial District Properties WF.[[16]](#footnote-16)*

* + In a Jan. 2, 2019, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “It may be dishing up Mexican cuisine, but the newly opened Blue Iguana is striving to be distinctly Waterloo.

“The restaurant, which opened in December on the main floor of the Courtyard by Marriott hotel at 250 Westfield Ave., is the first dining establishment on the Cedar Valley TechWorks campus at the edge of downtown.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

* + According to the Financial District Properties LinkedIn page, which identifies Jennifer Kakert as one of its “People,” the business is located at 201 N. Harrison Street, Suite 402, Davenport, IA 52801.[[18]](#footnote-18)

* **In 2015, the Iowa Economic Development Board in Des Moines approved the maximum amount of $12 million for the TechWorks Campus Reinvestment District plan submitted by the City of Waterloo;** **TechWorks was being developed by Rodney Blackwell and his Davenport-based Financial District Properties**
  + In a Feb. 4, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “State approval of the Cedar Valley TechWorks project -- in the form of financing and incentives -- has been described as the last major obstacle to bridging the development’s vision to reality.

“Now, that obstacle is gone.

“On Tuesday, the Iowa Economic Development Board in Des Moines approved the maximum amount of $12 million for the TechWorks Campus Reinvestment District plan submitted by the City of Waterloo.

“TechWorks, first publicly proposed by community leaders in April 2003, is a high-tech ag-based product development and manufacturing complex proposed for location on a portion of John Deere’s former Westfield Avenue site.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

* + According to the same article, “Ryan Cos. Inc., based in Minneapolis and Cedar Rapids, which has handled other large projects for TechWorks developer Rodney Blackwell and his Davenport-based Financial District Properties, is the contractor for TechWorks. Ryan also was project manager for The Isle Casino Hotel Waterloo when it was built in 2006-07.”[[20]](#footnote-20)
* **In September 2015, Waterloo City Council members voted unanimously to authorize the sale of $17.25 million in general obligation bonds to help create a new 180-room Courtyard by Marriott hotel, restaurant, conference and training center in the vacant Tech 2 building; Financial District Properties also had secured $6.8 million in state historic tax credits and a $13 million bank loan to complete the Tech 2 project**
  + In a Sept. 10, 2015, article, the *Quad City Times* reported, “Financing plans for a build-out at the Cedar Valley TechWorks cleared a major hurdle this week.

“Waterloo City Council members voted unanimously Tuesday to authorize the sale of $17.25 million in general obligation bonds to help create a new 180-room Courtyard by Marriott hotel, restaurant, conference and training center in the vacant Tech 2 building.

“The city is still evaluating the bond market and interest rates to determine when to hit the bond market.

“‘As soon as we feel comfortable the project is moving forward, we can sell the bonds,’ Mayor Buck Clark said.

“The lack of a public petition calling for a referendum cleared the way for the sale to move ahead when the time is right. A petition forcing an election would have been required by this week's hearing.

“A development agreement approved in January 2012 called for the city to provide $12.75 million in bond funds for the overall development, with those bonds expected to be paid off with future property taxes generated at the campus. About $3.5 million for site improvements has been issued to date.

“The remaining $9.25 million would help complete a financing package for the Tech 2 project being developed by Financial District Properties, a firm headed by Quad-City developer Rodney Blackwell.

“An amended agreement approved in June adds another $8 million in city bonds for the project to replace historic tax credits that were not awarded. Those bonds are expected to be repaid with the increased sales and hotel/motel tax created in the district.

“Financial District Properties also has secured $6.8 million in state historic tax credits and a $13 million bank loan to complete the Tech 2 project.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

***Editor’s Note:*** *The following debt research shows context of the circumstances under which TechWorks was receiving government assistance. The circumstances of the litigation likely occurred before Jennifer Kakert was CFO of the company.*

* **Several lawsuits filed against Blackwell late in 2014 raised some concern among local officials that TechWorks would move forward. The suits alleged Blackwell had not repaid more than $1.1 million in loans**
  + In a Feb. 22, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “The redevelopment mosaic that is Cedar Valley TechWorks is starting to come together, its chief developer says.

“Planners say their project took a giant step forward when the Iowa Economic Development Board in Des Moines approved the maximum amount of $12 million for the TechWorks Campus Reinvestment District plan submitted by the city of Waterloo.

“TechWorks, first publicly proposed by community leaders in April 2003, is a high-tech ag-based product development and manufacturing complex proposed on a portion of John Deere’s former Westfield Avenue site.

“IEDA support was the last major obstacle holding the project up, said Bettendorf resident Rodney Blackwell, 49, who signed up as TechWorks’ developer in January 2012.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

* + According to the same article, “‘We have been well underway on the entire project for the past year doing site improvements,’ Blackwell said. ‘Now that the final funding has been secured we are looking forward to finishing the rest of the project.’

“Several lawsuits filed against Blackwell late in 2014 raised some concern among local officials that TechWorks would move forward. The suits allege Blackwell had not repaid more than $1.1 million in loans.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

* **Blackwell was accused of owing $871,152.27 in unpaid loans to FDP-owned Carver Blackwell Piehl Motors, and in another lawsuit, Blackwell was accused of not paying back a loan plus interest that totaled $323,375.74**
  + In a Feb. 22, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “Blackwell is accused of owing $871,152.27 in unpaid loans to FDP-owned Carver Blackwell Piehl Motors Inc., with whom he is an officer and shareholder, according to a lawsuit the company filed against Blackwell on Dec. 5 in Scott County District Court.

“In another lawsuit filed Nov. 25, Roy Carver of Muscatine accused Blackwell of not paying him back a loan plus interest that totaled $323,375.74.

“‘We do not believe that it will have any impact on the project,’ Blackwell said.

“Blackwell said the opening of the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum on the TechWorks campus was a ‘true catalyst’ for the overall project.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

* **Jennifer Kakert said of Rodney Blackwell’s prior CFO, “The CFO working for Mr. Blackwell wasn’t the most conscientious for making sure the bills were paid”**
  + In an Aug. 17, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “With Cedar Valley TechWorks scheduled to take shape in earnest over the next 12 months or so, nothing will delay work, the project's developer says.

“That includes a flurry of litigation involving that developer, Davenport-based Financial District Properties LLC, and its principal Rodney Blackwell.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

* + According to the same article, “Carver never paid his share of the property taxes owed on the building, Kakert said.

“She also noted Blackwell has sued Henderson, his former CFO, over alleged financial improprieties.

“‘The CFO working for Mr. Blackwell wasn’t the most conscientious for making sure the bills were paid,’ Kakert said. ‘We’ve gotten a number of things cleaned up and are in a strong position, and I think these individuals have their own axes to grind, and it’s unfortunate that they’re casting these unfounded allegations and harming a project that could do so much good.’”[[26]](#footnote-26)

* **In June 2015, a Kansas City, Mo., developer claimed he was owed a 20 percent share of any profits from the Cedar Valley TechWorks project; Jennifer Kakert said that the developer was also filing a similar action against FDP’s Machinery Row redevelopment project in Racine, Wisconsin**
  + In a June 22, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “A Kansas City, Mo., developer claims he is owed a 20 percent share of any profits from the Cedar Valley TechWorks project.

“Michael Knight filed a petition Thursday in Black Hawk District Court alleging TechWorks developer Rodney Blackwell of Bettendorf and Blackwell's Davenport-based company, Financial District Properties LLC, have not delivered on promises concerning Blackwell ventures, including TechWorks.

“Blackwell is committing $50 million to the $75 million TechWorks project -- the heart of which is a business-class hotel and conference center planned for a 2016opening -- in downtown Waterloo. Knight claims he is part of the development partnership.

“Knight also is filing a similar action against FDP’s Machinery Row redevelopment project in Racine, Wis., according to Blackwell spokeswoman Jennifer Kakert, FDP’s chief financial officer.

“Knight alleges he and Blackwell have been partners in various real estate projects since October 2012.

“Knight alleges he provided services for the TechWorks project in exchange for ‘20 percent of developer fees, when paid, and 20 percent of any earnings from the completed project, on a quarterly basis,’ according to court documents.

“Kakert said Blackwell’s only dealings with Knight were a couple of proposed projects in Kansas City. The bid for one was rejected, and another fell apart and led to Blackwell filing fraud charges against Knight and other partners in the venture, Kakert said.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

* **In mid-July 2015, Carver Holdings petitioned Black Hawk District Court to foreclose on the property, claiming FDP OC, which owned the building, owed it $949,955, plus interest and legal costs. The mortgage was assigned to Carver Holdings on June 25, the company said in its original court filing**
  + In a Nov. 26, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “A clouded piece of the downtown Waterloo mosaic appeared to take a small step toward clarity with settlement of a lawsuit between developers in a dispute over the former home of The Courier at 501 Commercial St.

“Plaintiff Carver Holdings has reached an agreement with defendant FDP OC and Rodney Blackwell.

“Blackwell is the principal with Financial District Properties based in Davenport, which is developing the Cedar Valley TechWorks project in downtown Waterloo.

“A voluntary dismissal with prejudice was filed Nov. 17 in Black Hawk County District Court, ending claims against all parties.

“‘I would take that eventually and get him off the bank note,’ Roy Carver said Wednesday, when asked about the settlement. ‘So, it would be under my control.’

“The Courier moved out of the building and into the former Waterloo Industries headquarters building at 100 E. Fourth St. in December 2011. In 2012, Lee Enterprises, The Courier's Davenport-based corporate parent, sold the Commercial Street building to Blackwell and Carver.

“Blackwell and Carver each assumed a 35 percent interest in the property and paid accompanying expenses, and Cedar Valley TechWorks got a 30 percent interest, according to court documents.

“Blackwell, meanwhile, has spent $400,000 over the last three years paying utility bills and taxes ‘for a basically vacant building,’ his assistant, Jennifer Kakert said last summer. ‘He’s paid for design plans to be done, a lot of developmental expenses to be done on that project.’

“In mid-July, Carver Holdings petitioned Black Hawk District Court to foreclose on the property, claiming FDP OC, which owns the building, owed it $949,955, plus interest and legal costs. The mortgage was assigned to Carver Holdings on June 25, the company said in its original court filing.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

* **The lawsuit settled in November 2015**
  + In a Nov. 26, 2015, article, the *Waterloo Courier* reported, “A clouded piece of the downtown Waterloo mosaic appeared to take a small step toward clarity with settlement of a lawsuit between developers in a dispute over the former home of The Courier at 501 Commercial St.

“Plaintiff Carver Holdings has reached an agreement with defendant FDP OC and Rodney Blackwell.

“Blackwell is the principal with Financial District Properties based in Davenport, which is developing the Cedar Valley TechWorks project in downtown Waterloo.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

RACINE

* **Jennifer Kakert is the CFO of Financial District Properties, a position that she says she has held since September 2014** 
  + On her LinkedIn page, Jennifer Kakert identifies herself as the chief financial officer of Financial District Properties. According to her profile, Jennifer Kakert assumed the role of CFO in September 2014.[[30]](#footnote-30)

* + According to her statement of economic interest, as filed with the Iowa State Legislature, Jennifer Kakert identifies herself as CFO of Financial District Properties Management, LLC.[[31]](#footnote-31)

* **In 2015, Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. announced a grant to the City of Racine to help with environmental remediation in the two Machinery Row buildings**
  + In an April 1, 2015, the *Journal Times* reported, “Another piece of the Machinery Row financing puzzle has fallen into place thanks to a $1 million Idle Industrial Sites Grant announced Tuesday for the huge redevelopment project.

“The Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. announced the grant to the City of Racine to help with environmental remediation in the two Machinery Row buildings along the Root River.

“The $1 million grant will help pay to remove Transite, a building material that contains asbestos, and lead paint from both buildings. The developer would be responsible for the rest of those costs.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

* **Machinery Row was an estimated $65 million or more redevelopment plan by Davenport, Iowa-based Financial District Properties to transform 20 acres of idle industrial property along the Root River into a mixed-used development that will include commercial, retail and residential space**
  + In an April 1, 2015, article, the *Journal Times* reported, “WEDC spokesman Mark Maley said Racine received the maximum available in the program that helps spur redevelopment of abandoned properties in Wisconsin.

“Machinery Row is an estimated $65 million or more redevelopment plan by Davenport, Iowa-based Financial District Properties to transform 20 acres of idle industrial property along the Root River into a mixed-used development that will include commercial, retail and residential space.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

* **Jennifer Kakert, CFO of Financial District Properties, called the grant “yet another step forward in our goal to create a catalytic project that will provide the people of Racine a lasting economic impact”**
  + In an April 1, 2015, article, the *Journal Times* reported, “Mayor John Dickert said the grant will allow the project to move forward quickly. ‘We are excited that the state and WEDC have the same vision as we do for the Machinery Row site,’ he said.

“Jennifer Kakert, CFO of FDP, called the grant ‘yet another step forward in our goal to create a catalytic project that will provide the people of Racine a lasting economic impact.’”[[34]](#footnote-34)

* **In about December 2014, Financial District Properties asked the City and Racine Development Authority for a $4.5 million loan because the company did not have its own financing to buy the buildings**
  + In a Dec. 29, 2019, article, the *Journal Times* reported, “The Machinery Row site sits empty now. In 2014, it held the possibility of being the largest redevelopment project in Racine’s history.

“Here’s a brief rundown of the site’s history.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

* + According to the same article, “Former Racine Mayor John Dickert announced Machinery Row in a June 10, 2014, press conference at the Azarian Marina site, 725 Water St.

“Shortly after its announcement, Rodney Blackwell of Financial District Properties of Davenport, Iowa, met with city officials and Vandewalle and Associates Inc. — hired in 2012 to market and promote the redevelopment of the area — to inspect properties in the development area.

“FDP hoped to convert the larger of the two buildings into 160 to 180 market-rate, loft apartments, with some of the building to be leased to commercial tenants.

“In about December 2014, FDP asked the City and RDA for a $4.5 million loan because the company did not have its own financing to buy the buildings.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

* **In December 2016, Racine Mayor John Dickert’s** **office announced that FDP had defaulted on the loan, and on Feb. 9, 2017, the City Council voted unanimously to authorize the city to take ownership of FDP’s property**
  + In a Dec. 29, 2019, article, the *Journal Times* reported, “On Sept. 6, 2016, Alderman Sandy Weidner said at a City Council meeting that she learned that the 10% holdbacks for the escrow account were taken from the sellers by FDP, and the FDP’s interest payments for the $4.5 million loan were being paid back using the holdback money.

“On Dec. 16, 2016, Dickert’s office announced that FDP had defaulted on the loan, and on Feb. 9, 2017, during a City Council meeting, the City Council voted unanimously to authorize the city to take ownership of FDP’s property.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

* + In a Feb. 9, 2017, article, the *Milwaukee Business Journal* reported, “The latest movement in the project comes after Blackwell’s development group was late repaying a loan from the city. The city loaned $4.5 million to Blackwell’s development group to buy the land. When the company missed deadlines on that loan, the city on Dec. 16 sent him a letter saying he must either give the city ownership of the land, or move ahead with its redevelopment.

“Dickert said the letter spurred Blackwell to search for other developers to take over, and that is how Gorman became involved. The company has been looking at the site for about a month now. Gorman has done three projects in the downtown Racine area already, Dickert noted.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

* **In February 2017, Wisconsin developer Gorman & Co. Inc. was looking to take over the “long-stalled Machinery Row project” after Rodney Blackwell was never able to bring it to fruition**
  + In a Feb. 9, 2017, article, the *Milwaukee Business Journal* reported, “Wisconsin developer Gorman & Co. Inc. is looking to take over the long-stalled Machinery Row project in Racine, and have construction work well underway by summer 2018.

“The Oregon, Wis., company would take over the project from Rodney Blackwell, of Iowa-based Financial District Properties. Blackwell and Racine officials in summer 2014 announced a $65 million plan to redevelop the 20-acre, vacant industrial site on the Root River at Water Street. It was a signature project for the community, but Blackwell was never able to bring it to fruition.”[[39]](#footnote-39)

* **Financial District Properties secured a $9 million state historic tax credit award in 2015 to finance work on the buildings, but those were set to expire in the summer of 2018, leaving the new company a small window to complete the project**
  + In a March 31, 2017, article, the *Milwaukee Business Journal* reported, “Racine recently ended a multi-year partnership with Rodney Blackwell, managing principal of Iowa-based Financial District Properties, after he failed to get a project started at Machinery Row. Wisconsin developer Gorman & Co Inc. is in the midst of a 60-day review of the site to decide whether it will step in.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

* + According to the same article, “Financial District Properties secured a $9 million state historic tax credit award in 2015 to finance work on the buildings, but those could expire in summer 2018. That means Racine, and potentially Gorman & Co., are on a short clock to get construction started.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

* **In December 2019, the Machinery Row site still sat empty**

* + In a Dec. 29, 2019, article, the *Journal Times* reported, “The Machinery Row site sits empty now. In 2014, it held the possibility of being the largest redevelopment project in Racine’s history.

“Here’s a brief rundown of the site’s history:

“Former Racine Mayor John Dickert announced Machinery Row in a June 10, 2014, press conference at the Azarian Marina site, 725 Water St.

“Shortly after its announcement, Rodney Blackwell of Financial District Properties of Davenport, Iowa, met with city officials and Vandewalle and Associates Inc. — hired in 2012 to market and promote the redevelopment of the area — to inspect properties in the development area.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

* **Jennifer Kakert has given money to Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and the DSCC**
  + According to the Federal Election Commission, Jennifer Kakert of Financial District Properties in Iowa has made the following federal campaign contributions.[[43]](#footnote-43)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Donor** | **Recipient** | **Date** | **Amount** |
| Kakert, Jennifer | Barack Obama | 11/01/2008 | $250 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | Hillary Clinton | Various 2016 | $1,366 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | DSCC | 05/16/2017 | $333 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | DSCC | 04/30/2019 | $250 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | Joe Biden | 04/16/2020 | $350 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | Rita Hart | 04/16/2020 | $250 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | Theresa Greenfield | 04/17/2020 | $250 |
| Kakert, Jennifer | DSCC | 05/06/2020 | $250 |

1. Jennifer Kakert LinkedIn Profile, Accessed July 22, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Statement of Economic Interest: Jennifer Kakert, Iowa State Legislature, April 1, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. About Me, Jennifer Kakert for Iowa House website, Accessed July 27, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jim Offner, “Developer: Legal fight won’t slow TechWorks,” *Waterloo Courier*, Aug. 17, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Jim Offner, “Developer: Legal fight won’t slow TechWorks,” *Waterloo Courier*, Aug. 17, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Property Tax Inquiry: Kone, Rock Island County Treasurer, Accessed July 27, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Property Tax Inquiry: Kone, Rock Island County Treasurer, Accessed July 27, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Property Tax Inquiry: Kone, Rock Island County Treasurer, Accessed July 27, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Paying Your Real Estate Tax Rock Island Treasurer’s Office website (2015-2019), as accessed through Archive.org, July 27, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. “Local developer, Rodney Blackwell, asks for second extension to pay back City of Moline $3.4M,” WQAD, June 20, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “Local developer, Rodney Blackwell, asks for second extension to pay back City of Moline $3.4M,” WQAD, June 20, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Thomas Geyer, “Moline council advances Dolan project,” *Quad-City Times*, June 21, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Thomas Geyer, “Moline council advances Dolan project,” *Quad-City Times*, June 21, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jonathan Ketz, “Blackwell pays Moline $2.4 million owed on KONE Building,” WQAD, Aug. 22, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Parcel Number Search: 891323378016, Iowa State County Treasurers Association, July 28, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Parcel Number Search: 891323378016, Iowa State County Treasurers Association, July 28, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tim Jamison, “Mexican-themed Blue Iguana opens on TechWorks campus,” *Waterloo Courier*, Jan. 2, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/financial-district-properties/about/> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Jim Offner, “Cedar Valley TechWorks wins $12 million in state financing,” *Waterloo Courier*, Feb. 4, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jim Offner, “Cedar Valley TechWorks wins $12 million in state financing,” *Waterloo Courier*, Feb. 4, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Tim Jamison, “Waterloo council OKs bonds for Blackwell project,” *Quad-City Times*, Sept. 10, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Jim Offner, “TechWorks developer: Project’s building pace should accelerate,” *Waterloo Courier*, Feb. 22, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Jim Offner, “TechWorks developer: Project’s building pace should accelerate,” *Waterloo Courier*, Feb. 22, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Jim Offner, “TechWorks developer: Project’s building pace should accelerate,” *Waterloo Courier*, Feb. 22, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Jim Offner, “Developer: Legal fight won’t slow TechWorks,” *Waterloo Courier*, Aug. 17, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Jim Offner, “Developer: Legal fight won’t slow TechWorks,” *Waterloo Courier*, Aug. 17, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Jim Offner, “Fraud alleged in petition filed against TechWorks developer,” Waterloo Courier, June 22, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Jim Offner, “Developers settle suit over former Courier building,” *Waterloo Courier*, Nov. 26, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Jim Offner, “Developers settle suit over former Courier building,” *Waterloo Courier*, Nov. 26, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Jennifer Kakert LinkedIn Profile, Accessed July 22, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Statement of Economic Interest: Jennifer Kakert, Iowa State Legislature, April 1, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Michael Burke, “Machinery Row lands $1 million grant,” *Journal Times*, April 1, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Michael Burke, “Machinery Row lands $1 million grant,” *Journal Times*, April 1, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Michael Burke, “Machinery Row lands $1 million grant,” *Journal Times*, April 1, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Alyssa Mauk, “The history of the Machinery Row project,” *Journal Times*, Dec. 29, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
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39. Sean Ryan, “Gorman to take over Machinery Row development in Racine,” *Milwaukee Business Journal*, Feb. 9, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
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41. Sean Ryan, “Saving a generation of buildings: Machinery Row,” *Milwaukee Business Journal*, March 31, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Alyssa Mauk, “The history of the Machinery Row project,” *Journal Times*, Dec. 29, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Individual Contributions: Kakert, Federal Election Commission, accessed July 8, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)