DOWNTOWN WICHITA ACTION PLAN: BUILDING THE FUTURE OF WICHITA'S CORE

By Emily Barnwell

The Partnership's strategic priority of Quality of Place is laying the foundation for the next era of growth and innovation in Wichita's urban core. Collaborating with Sasaki, a renowned global urban planning and design firm, the Quality of Place Team is helping launch the Downtown Wichita Action Plan (Action Plan).

This ambitious plan will build upon downtown's momentum generated over the past 15 years and set the stage for even greater transformation over the next decade. The goals for the plan include building strong connections between downtown destinations, cultivating strong neighborhood identities, amplifying cultural assets, and encouraging strategic, high-caliber urban infill development.

Why it Matters

Downtown Wichita is more than just the center of the city, it's the heartbeat of the community. A thriving downtown attracts talent and businesses, spurs innovation and serves as a gathering place where people come together. The Action Plan is an opportunity to help shape the future of this vital space, showcasing this central asset in our community while ensuring it reflects the distinct spirit of Wichita and its residents.



Downtown Wichita Executive Director Heather Schroeder presents to the Talent Community Engagement Committee.


Downtown Wichita hosted community engagement events, Drop-In With Downtown.

Downtown Wichita Action Plan

Sasaki and Downtown Wichita, an affiliate of the Partnership, will work together to engage the greater Wichita community in a number of public workshops. Based on community input, they'll assemble the Action Plan, a 10-year roadmap for the continued revitalization and transformation of the city's core. Some of the project goals include:

- Downtown Identity: Highlighting cultural assets and creating unique spaces that showcase what makes Wichita special.
- Strengthening Connections: Enhancing connectivity across districts, neighborhoods and the Arkansas River.
- Inspiring Growth: Identifying new and current development opportunities while coordinating with current city plans and initiatives, such as wayfinding and two-way street conversions
- Collaboration: Bringing community voices together to shape our downtown.



The Action Plan includes three key phases:

Phase 1: Immerse: Immerse will span from January through April 2025. During this phase, the team will develop a strong baseline understanding of downtown Wichita's current conditions, opportunities and challenges, combining high-tech mapping and data analysis with on-the-ground observation and close listening to stakeholders.

Phase 2: Ideate & Iterate**:** The project team will develop an urban design framework, outlining the "big ideas" from community input that will guide downtown development for the next 10 years.

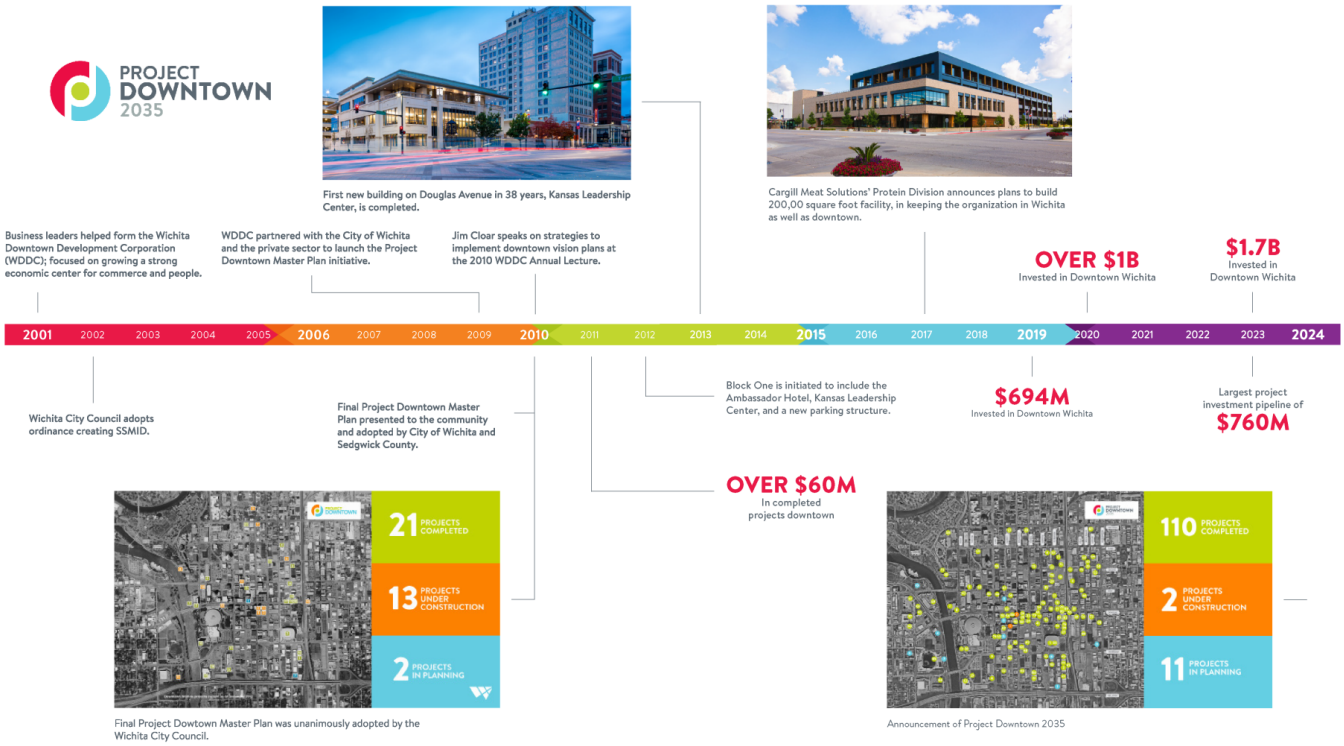
Phase 3: Align & Act**:** The project team will help Downtown Wichita identify ways to implement the action plan and accelerate meaningful change, including public and private financing tools and policy recommendations.



Legacy of Success

The 2010 Project Downtown master plan sparked a wave of energy and investment in downtown Wichita. It drove $1.7 billion in public and private investment and a pipeline of projects totaling more than $760 million. This forward-thinking plan established downtown as a hub of activity, from new residential and office spaces to hospitality projects and the burgeoning biomedical corridor.





Project Partner

Sasaki's extensive expertise in designing thriving, people-centered urban spaces makes the firm an ideal partner for the project. In the last few years, Sasaki and their project partners for the Downtown Action Plan have worked in Chattanooga, Detroit, Evansville, Kansas City, Little Rock, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia and Raleigh, strategizing how each community can leverage its unique downtown growth opportunities. This work includes creating spaces and connections that inspire community pride, walkability and investment.

Get Involved

The success of the Action Plan depends greatly on community engagement. Wichita residents are invited to share their vision for downtown at upcoming public meetings, workshops and other engagement opportunities.

The first of three community Open House events will occur on Tuesday, March 4 from 5-8 p.m. at WAVE. For additional event details and opportunities to participate in the planning effort, click here.


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