# CELEBRATING A DECADE OF PROGRESS: THE PARTNERSHIP'S 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By Emily Barnwell

For the past decade, the Partnership has been at the forefront of driving regional growth, fostering economic development and shaping a dynamic future for the 10-county south-central Kansas region. From launching major talent initiatives to strengthening the business ecosystem and enhancing the vibrancy of downtown, the Partnership has been a catalyst for progress. Below are some of the most significant milestones and achievements that have defined the organization's journey.

## Key Milestones & Achievements

### Economic Development

- **Business Attraction & Expansion:** The Partnership has successfully driven $3.5 billion in capital investment and worked with companies that have created 14,255 jobs with a total annual payroll of $713 million. The current project pipeline represents $9.7 billion in capital investment, 13,281 new jobs and $800 million in annual payroll.

- **Air Capital of the World Reception:** Established in 2019 at the Paris Air Show, this premier event has grown by 77% since the inaugural year, attracting more than 460 top aviation and aerospace leaders in 2024. It continues to position Wichita as a global leader in aviation, space and defense.

The Air Capital of the World reception, before the 2019 Paris Air Show, at Le Grand Salon, Shangri-La Hotel in Paris, France.

The Air Capital of the World reception, before the 2022 Farnborough International Airshow, at the Mandorin Oriental Hotel at Hyde Park in London, England.

The Air Capital of the World reception, before the 2024 Farnborough International Airshow, at the De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms in London, England.

- **Industry Diversification:** Played a pivotal role in expanding and diversifying the region's economy by attracting and supporting growth in advanced manufacturing, aerospace, aviation, cybersecurity, defense, energy production, healthcare, marketing and space. Leveraged regional assets/partners such as McConnell Air Force Base's expertise to boost cybersecurity and defense-related economic development.
- **Regional Growth Plan:** Launched the Regional Growth Plan, a multi-year plan that features seven target industry sectors with 13 niche sectors, five strategic pillars, 32 key initiatives and a regional framework to support implementation. The plan builds upon the research and foundation laid out in the Blueprint for Regional Economic Growth.

- **Air Capital Commitment & COVID-19 Task Force**: In response to economic disruptions from the 737 MAX grounding, the Partnership led initiatives to support the aviation industry. During the pandemic, it mobilized resources, connected businesses to funding and helped stabilize regional industries.
- **Supply Chain Receptions**: Hosted top industry players such as Blue Origin, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and SpaceX, strengthening Wichita's position in advanced manufacturing and aerospace supply chains and enhancing regional business connections**.**

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran, SpaceX President and Chief Operating Officer Gwynne Shotwell, and Greater Wichita Partnership President Jeff Fluhr at the reception for SpaceX in January 2023.

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran hosted Robert Lightfoot, the executive vice president of Lockheed Martin Space and his team on a tour of Wichita suppliers in November 2023.

Greater Wichita Partnership President Jeff Fluhr welcomes Northrop Grumman CEO Kathy Warden and her team to Wichita in February 2025.

- **Accelerate Wichita & Startup Ecosystem Growth**: Strengthened the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem through support and partnerships with groups like NXTUS.
- **Grant Acquisitions**: Helped secure transformational regional funding, including the Build Back Better Grant and Opportunity Wichita grants from Cargill, the Kansas Health Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## Talent

- **Talent Marketing Blueprint & Choose Wichita**—Working with Development Counsellors International (DCI), the Partnership created the Talent Marketing Blueprint. The blueprint identified target markets and industries, the greater Wichita region's unique selling points, and over 90 marketing strategies to aid in talent attraction and recruitment. It led to the launch of Choose Wichita, a marketing effort that positions the region as a top destination to live and work.

In 2020, the Partnership developed a one-stop resource on the Choose Wichita site to provide interns with valuable information on the best things to do while in Wichita.

Choose Wichita marketing materials were developed for HR and recruiting teams to use in their attraction and retention efforts.

In 2024, the Partnership hosted the first Choose Wichita Summit. It introduced attendees to the brand's resources and showcased the incredible opportunities in the city.

- **Talent Roadmap**: The Partnership and key community stakeholders partnered with Deloitte to develop the Talent Roadmap, a strategic initiative designed to position the region as a competitive hub for attracting, retaining and developing talent in innovative ways. The Talent Workshops and Talent Talks are direct results of the roadmap.
- **Talent Workshops & Talks**: Hosted four Talent Workshops (2023) and three Talent Talks (2024), tightening the feedback loop between industry and education.

The first Talent Workshop, hosted at USD 259's FutureReady Center, focused on manufacturing and brought together more than 100 local CEOs, HR and educational leaders in March 2023.

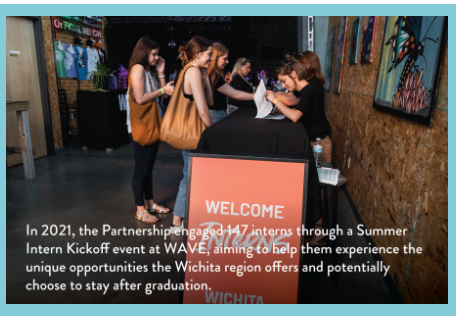
The last Talent Workshop of 2023, was in conjunction with the Ad Astra Technology Summit and FlagshipKansas.tech at Woolsey Hall on Wichita State University's Innovation Campus.

In August of 2024, the Talent Talk was held at Marcus Welcome Center on the WSU campus and dove into discussions on how employers can tap into the region's educational pathways.

- **Skills Navigator**: In 2024, launched the Skills Navigator, a dynamic platform dedicated to simplifying the upskilling journey, offering businesses and individuals a seamless pathway to identify, acquire and enhance their skills.
- **FutureReady Centers Support**: Contributed to the successful launch of Wichita's FutureReady Centers, enhancing workforce readiness in key industries including advanced manufacturing and healthcare.
- **"Get Trained, Get Paid" Campaign:** Introduced just before the COVID-19 pandemic, this initiative connected individuals with training programs and employment opportunities, bolstering workforce readiness.
- **Engagement of Young Professionals:** Implemented events and initiatives targeting young professionals, including intern-focused events during Riverfest, to attract and retain emerging talent.

In 2018, the Partnership kicked off its summer intern engagement efforts during Riverfest, co-hosted by W/A Community of Young Professionals.

Recruit Wichita was an event hosted in 2019 that explored culture, trends and tools to boldly attract talent to the region.



In 2021, the Partnership engaged 147 interns through a Summer Intern Kickoff event at WAVE, aiming to help them experience the unique opportunities the Wichita region offers and potentially choose to stay after graduation.

- **Launch of Talent Committees**: The Talent Roadmap Leadership Coalition (TRLC), the Talent Advisory Committee (TAC), and the Talent Community Engagement Committee (TCEC) were created to unite business leaders, educators, and community partners to implement strategic efforts that attract, retain, and develop talent.
- **Workforce Funding**: Helped secure nearly $30 million in workforce development funding, including a $10 million One Workforce Grant, $9.5 million in the City of Wichita ARPA funds and $1.9 million in Sedgwick County CARES funding.

## Downtown & Quality of Place Enhancements

- **Development:** Since 2010, over $1.7 billion has been invested in downtown Wichita, resulting in 110 completed projects, nine under construction and eight in planning. The development pipeline includes $760 million in residential, hotel, commercial and quality-of-place projects.
- **Emerging Healthcare Corridor**: Anchored by the future Wichita Biomedical Campus, this corridor is set to attract top talent, drive cutting-edge research and expand healthcare access. The Partnership has played a pivotal role in bringing regional stakeholders together, securing legislative support and fostering strategic investments to accelerate this vision.
- **Placemaking**: Spearheaded numerous placemaking initiatives to transform the urban core into a more vibrant, welcoming destination. Some of the projects include Alley Doors, Flowers on Douglas, Gallery Alley, The Blue Bench, Pop-Up Park, PARK(ing) Day, People First Design Project, Bigfoot Brian: The Winter Birdwatcher, Wichita Love Notes, Window Hearts and Pop-Up Mini Theater.

Opened to the public in 2020, the remodeled Naftzger Park has hosted many downtown-central events inviting people into the heart of the city.

Launched in 2017, Flowers on Douglas includes more than 200 meticulously crafted planter pots and hanging baskets adorning Wichita's bustling Douglas Avenue.

In 2022, the Front Porch project brought together six Wichita-based creatives and six local business owners to design outdoor extensions of their establishments.

- **Downtown Wichita Action Plan**: In collaboration with global urban planning firm Sasaki, Downtown Wichita launched the Downtown Wichita Action Plan in 2025. The 10-year plan is an ambitious, forward-thinking strategy designed to guide the next phase of downtown's growth.

- **Community Involvement:** Led the Downtown Clean-Up, an annual event that brings hundreds of volunteers together to enhance the heart of the city by painting, removing graffiti and collecting trash. Played a pivotal role in welcoming the NCAA Men's and Women's Championships through Fan Fest, art installations and other placemaking activities.

In 2023, close to 200 volunteers tackle everything from painting and landscaping to graffiti removal and trash pick-up at the Downtown Wichita Clean-Up event.

- **Marketing:** Developed and executed targeted marketing campaigns that align with Downtown Wichita's vision, including the launch of transit shelter posters, Possibility People, holiday banners and Window Wonderland.

- **Downtown Business Support Program:** Helped provide financial relief to local businesses during the pandemic, awarding 21 downtown businesses with $1,500 grants to help sustain operations and navigate economic challenges.

The Partnership remains committed to driving economic growth, fostering innovation and enhancing the region's vibrancy. With a strong foundation and a bold vision for the future, the team will continue to champion initiatives that attract talent, support businesses and create opportunities for all.