EP2: A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN WICHITA'S QUALITY OF PLACE

By Emily Barnwell

In March, Adventure Playscape at Exploration Place officially opened to the public, an exciting milestone that represents far more than a new playground along the Arkansas River.

The six-acre playscape is the centerpiece of EP2, Exploration Place's campus expansion initiative designed to enhance riverfront connectivity, expand family-friendly amenities and elevate Wichita's quality of place.

For the Wichita region, this project reflects a strategic investment in the kind of community that attracts and retains talent, welcomes visitors and supports long-term economic growth.



Quality of Place is Economic Development

Across the country, competitive regions understand that economic development extends beyond jobs and capital investment. Companies evaluating new markets consider workforce readiness, infrastructure and operating costs, but they also look closely at community vibrancy and livability.

EP2 strengthens Wichita's quality of life.

The Adventure Playscape features 10 themed zones inspired by the region's identity, including aviation elements that honor Wichita's legacy as the Air Capital of the World, prairie-inspired landscapes, interactive water features, and inclusive spaces designed for children of all abilities. The result is a destination that encourages exploration, learning and connection.

Located along the Arkansas River, the playscape builds on an already dynamic campus that includes a nationally recognized science and discovery center and a 1,500-seat outdoor amphitheater. Together, these amenities enhance Wichita's riverfront activation and create a year-round gathering place for families and visitors.

EP leaders estimate the expanded campus could attract more than one million visitors annually.





Driving Visitor Appeal and Regional Momentum

Tourism and visitor activity generate a measurable economic impact for a region. Increased foot traffic supports local restaurants, retail, hotels and cultural attractions. It reinforces Wichita's brand as a destination and strengthens the case for additional private investment.

The Adventure Playscape joins a growing portfolio of distinctive regional assets, including:

- **Tanganyika Wildlife Park** offers immersive wildlife encounters.
- **Sedgwick County Zoo is** consistently ranked among the nation's top zoos.
- **Botanica, The Wichita Gardens,** features curated gardens and seasonal exhibits.
- **Keeper of the Plains** is an iconic public art installation honoring Indigenous heritage.
- **Old Cowtown Museum** brings 19th-century Wichita to life.

Collectively, these destinations tell a compelling story about Wichita's identity and visitor appeal. EP2 builds on that momentum while reinforcing the region's commitment to thoughtful, forward-looking investment.


Textron Aviation Flight Adventure


Sunflower Meadow

Supporting Talent Attraction and Retention

For employers across the 10-county region, quality of place directly influences talent attraction and retention. Families considering relocation want access to engaging outdoor spaces, educational amenities and safe, inclusive gathering areas. EP2 contributes to that ecosystem.

The playscape's design reflects Wichita's character while signaling to current and prospective residents that this region prioritizes community experience. It creates a space where children learn through play, families connect and visitors encounter a city that invests in its future.

A Signal of Alignment and Long-Term Vision

Projects like EP2 do not happen by accident. They reflect collaboration among nonprofit leaders, private donors, public partners and community stakeholders who share a vision for Wichita's growth.

The Partnership often speaks about the importance of alignment in driving regional competitiveness. EP2 is a tangible example. It enhances livability while strengthening economic fundamentals.

As Wichita continues to compete nationally and globally, investments in quality of place remain essential. They shape how the region is perceived, how it attracts talent and how it sustains momentum.