
Greater Wichita Partnership
PRINTED WEBSITE REPORT

BEYOND THE HR SILO: FRAMING TALENT AND THE 'WICHITA MEGAPHONE'

For business and civic leaders, the takeaway from the 2026 Choose Wichita Summit is unambiguous: talent attraction and retention is a core economic imperative and a primary driver of corporate growth.

As regional dynamics shift, a baseline truth emerges — communities do not become magnetic by accident. Winning the modern talent war requires deliberate executive intentionality, systemic strategy and collaborative leadership. To ensure our businesses remain competitive, leaders must look beyond traditional corporate silos and view community advancement as structural capital.



Patience Fairbrother,
Development Counsellors International (DCI)

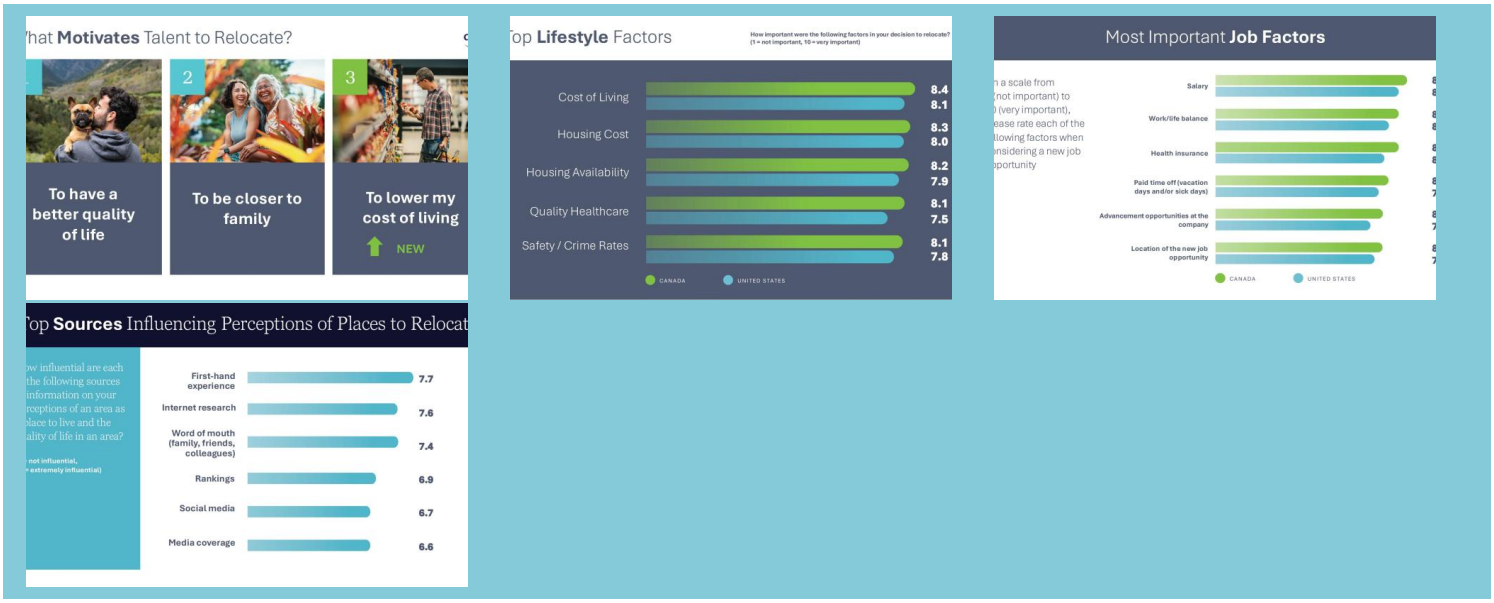
Navigating the Talent Wars

"Places winning the talent wars are the ones with the most passionate advocates," said Patience Fairbrother, Senior Vice President of Talent Attraction with Development Counsellors International (DCI). In the recent publication of Talent Wars, they look at the path to purchase for relocation, with the focus on the US and Canada.

According to projections from Lightcast, the United States faces an imminent shortfall of roughly 6 million workers by the end of the decade. While technological disruptions like AI accelerate, their lowest adoption rates reside precisely where our labor needs expand most rapidly, such as healthcare.

Executive teams cannot rely on automation alone. Winning organizations must balance internal workforce development — the long-term "slow cooker" — with aggressive regional talent attraction — the "microwave" — to fill immediate pipelines.





Data tracking over 2,000 working-age individuals reveals a critical shift in what drives relocation today:

- **Financial Flight to Quality:** Relocating professionals seek hard data regarding housing costs, regional affordability, healthcare and infrastructure safety. Wichita holds a distinct competitive edge on these operational metrics.
- **"Career Insurance" Mandate:** Data indicates that 44% of workers' core skills will change completely within the next five years. Top-tier talent actively seeks markets that support continuous upskilling. Businesses that invest in learning infrastructure secure a massive advantage in retention.
- **Compressed Decision Window:** Relocation is increasingly fast-paced and digital-first. Two-thirds of relocating individuals pull the trigger within six months of initial consideration, heavily prioritizing similar-sized markets or familiar geographic regions.





The Megaphone Effect: The Executive Action Plan

Visit Wichita's Vice President of Marketing, Jaimie Garnett and James Kellerman, Social Media & Digital Content Manager shared the clear ROI of unified regional effort via the Travel Blog Exchange (TBEX) conference case study. By mobilizing community-wide resources, Visit Wichita scaled their annual influencer outreach from a baseline of six creators per year to 130 dominant content creators in four days.

National media and external talent routinely describe our region as "a city that has been hiding in plain sight." Market perceptions are entirely fixable, but only if the business community acts in concert as a collective megaphone rather than seeking an unnecessary rebrand.

3 Things You Can Do Today to Change the Story:

All of us can be a Wichita champion. Do these three micro-actions to help shift the story:

1. **Update your Google Business Profile:** Add just one sentence about Wichita to your company's description.
2. **Share a TBEX post:** Drop a real Wichita fact on your personal or company social feed.
3. **Be a digital neighbor:** Answer just one Wichita-related question on Reddit or Quora.



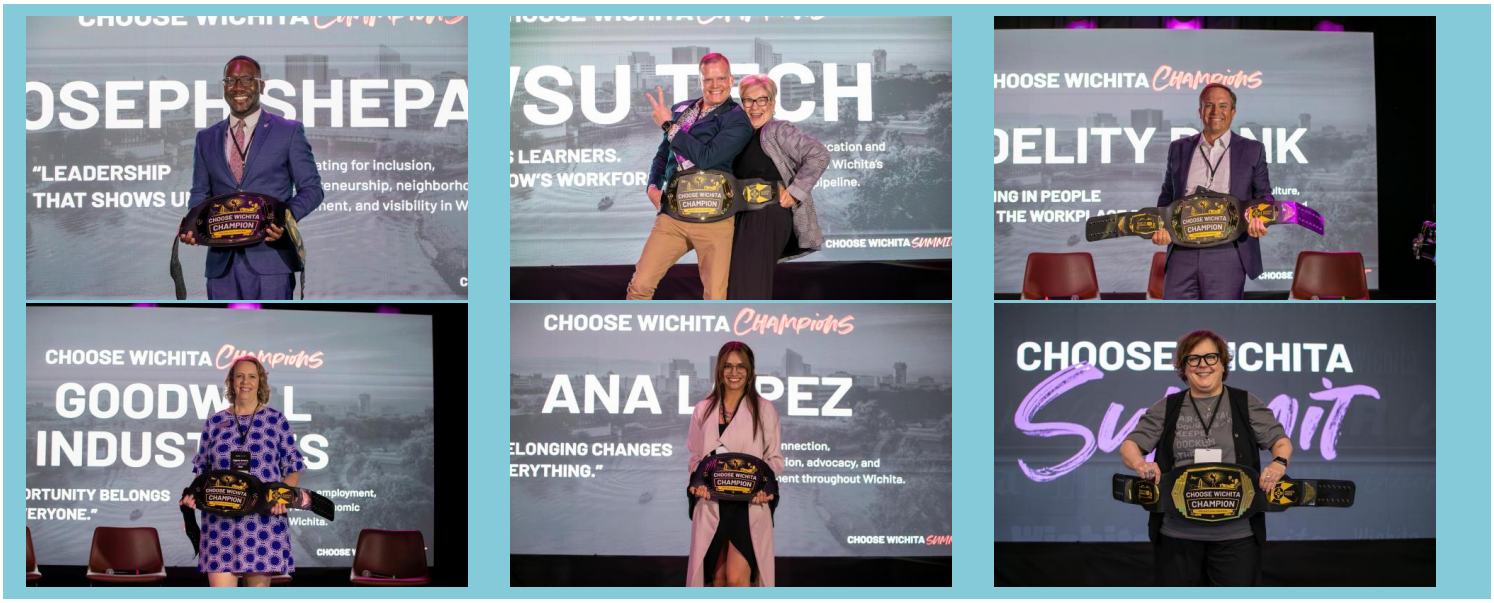
Left to Right: Michelle Moe Witt, Martin Pringle Law Firm; Dr. LaShonda Porter, Fidelity Bank; John Buckley, Textron Aviation; and Evan Barton, Campus Tulsa.

Cultivating Cultures of High Retention

During the Retention is the New Recruitment Panel — moderated by Michelle Moe Witt, Attorney with Martin Pringle Law Firm — leaders from diverse sectors aligned on a central truth: local talent acquisition is fundamentally wasted capital if our organizations fail to retain that talent long-term.

Corporate retention is directly tethered to a candidate's perception of opportunity, regional connectivity, and personal belonging. To build high-retention corporate ecosystems, executives must internalize three operational perspectives:

- **Strategic Onboarding and Engagement:** Evan Barton, Marketing Manager for Early Career Programs at Campus Tulsa, noted that early professional loyalty is won or lost in the initial organizational culture. Barton shared, "Culture made me stay where I'm at," proving that when corporate leaders systematically push for active engagement from day one, incoming talent leans in and roots down.
- **Unlocking the Veteran Pipeline:** John Buckley, Senior Manager of Military Programs at Textron Aviation, emphasized the high-value opportunity present within Kansas's military alumni. To retain transitioning service members, corporate leadership must implement clear upward pathways that align with the rigorous organizational values and trust native to military service. Buckley advised expanding specialized Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to structurally integrate veterans into the private sector.
- **Human-Centric Ecosystems:** Dr. LaShonda Porter, Director of Inclusive Engagement Strategies at Fidelity Bank, challenged the C-suite to treat workplace culture as an evolving asset requiring active equity and continuous corporate care. Porter highlighted the strategic value of empathetic frameworks, stating the mandate is **"**To be human and to human well." Ultimately, driving regional competitiveness requires proactive organizational equity: "Inclusion is an action, equity is a choice, and diversity is a fact."



Recognizing the 2026 Choose Wichita Champions

In alignment with these values of vision, connectivity and cultural investment, the summit paused to honor the organizations and individuals actively driving regional talent retention and community pride.

Congratulations to the 2026 Choose Wichita Champions, who exemplify the executive leadership necessary to advance our region:

- Joseph Shepard, Council Member, City of Wichita
- WSU Tech
- Fidelity Bank
- Goodwill Industries
- Angela Green, Mom's Blog and community advocate
- Ana Lopez, City of Wichita
- Tami Bradley, Senior Advisor for Greater Wichita Partnership





Macro-Infrastructure: Downtown Wichita 2035

Just as a business needs an exceptional internal culture to thrive, it also needs a local urban core with vitality. Heather Schroeder, Executive Director of Downtown Wichita, delivered a look at the upcoming Downtown Wichita Action Plan, which establishes the development framework for the next decade (2026–2035).

Building upon the momentum of $2 billion in private and public capital invested since 2010, the next-generation plan focuses on transforming our urban core into a full-service, high-connectivity neighborhood designed to drive organic collisions and a shared sense of place.

For business owners, the key tactical initiatives of this master plan represent critical talent-recruitment infrastructure:

- **Accelerated urban housing density** to accommodate an incoming workforce.
- **The spatial redesign of Douglas Avenue** and active commercial development along the riverfront.
- **The deployment of dedicated downtown transit shuttles** to optimize workforce mobility.

Raffaele G. Fazio, President & Chief Operating Officer, Chase Koch Family Office, LLC, joined Heather to seek feedback about the open space that will be developed as part of the Movement Musick activation and improvement efforts in downtown Wichita.



A Corporate Directive: 5 Immediate Steps

To shift Wichita from the "back half of the pack" to a premier destination for top-tier talent, the executive community must deploy the newly debuted next-generation Choose Wichita brand asset toolkit — including the new Wichita regional workforce attraction video. Greater Wichita Partnership's Executive Vice President of Strategic Communications, Cynthia Wentworth, has made these enterprise-level tools and shareable media assets available immediately at ChooseWichita.com.

Incorporate these five strategic actions into your business's operations today:

1. **Systemize the Corporate Narrative:** Integrate the updated Choose Wichita marketing assets directly into your corporate recruiting, talent pipelines, and onboarding materials. Research shows that 76% of candidates consult relocation marketing materials during their process.
2. **Publish Regional Wins:** Utilize executive communications channels — both corporate feeds and personal leadership platforms — to champion regional growth, industrial wins, and infrastructure advancements.
3. **Address Candidate Pain Points Directly:** Reframe your executive compensation conversations by proactively leading with Wichita's core structural advantages: short commutes, relative financial liquidity, and low cost of living.
4. **Deploy Digital Amplification:** Instruct your marketing and communications teams to update the organization's Google Business Profiles with regional identifiers, engage in localized public QA platforms like Reddit, and amplify factual community data.
5. **Act as the Regional Welcome Wagon:** Invest in structural systems that plug newly relocated corporate families directly into civic organizations, board leadership opportunities, volunteering, and regional cultural networks.

Workforce optimization and macro-economic development cannot be executed in isolation. Our corporate growth paths are fundamentally bound to our regional infrastructure and our collective narrative. Let us execute with precision to amplify the distinct, competitive, and unmatched uniqueness of the Wichita region.

Choose Wichita | Not A Pitch, A Pulse



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