Ribbon Cutting Celebrates Completed Projects in Downtown Wichita's Block One

WICHITA, Kan. - 3/28/2013 - City, community and business leaders cut the ribbon today on three completed projects at Block One, a full city block of development in Downtown Wichita.

Completed projects include the Ambassador Hotel at Block One at 104 South Broadway; Urban Plaza at Block One, an urban plaza located directly south of the Ambassador; and the Block One Parking Garage on the southeast corner of Block One. The organizations in the block are using the term Block One for the city block bordered by Topeka Street on the east, Broadway Street on the west, Douglas Avenue on the north and William Street on the south.

"Today, we cut the ribbon for a city block that includes a building that sat empty for approximately twelve years," said Mayor Carl Brewer. "That building is now a great hotel in downtown Wichita welcoming guests. The City's commitment to the parking garage meant the hotel could move forward plus the Kansas Leadership Center's new headquarters."

More than $40 million is being invested by the private sector and the City of Wichita in Block One. The City spent $6.8 million to build the public parking garage at 360 East William Street. The garage opened this past December and has 270 parking spaces and 8,400 square feet of retail space facing William Street.

The City of Wichita also recently completed the Urban Plaza at Block One for $800 thousand which connects the Block One Parking Garage, the Ambassador Hotel, the Kansas Health Foundation expansion, the new offices for the Kansas Leadership Center and the Henry's Building. That project also redesigned the block's alley to make it pedestrian friendly, as well as suitable for vehicles. The Urban Plaza provides a seating area and also features new public art, a series of mosaics titled "Bravely Serene," by Murano Studios.

At 104 South Broadway, the 14-story Ambassador Hotel Wichita at Block One features 117 guest rooms and 12 suites. The building was originally built in 1926 housing Union National Bank. Paul Coury Properties created a contemporary boutique hotel that opened New Year's Day. The $23 million project is next to the Kansas Health Foundation's existing headquarters.

"As we work to recruit meetings, conventions and tourists to the Wichita area, it's important to have a variety of offerings, including a variety of great hotels offering excellent service," said Ken Vandruff, Go Wichita Director of Communications. "We welcome the Ambassador Hotel as an excellent addition with its contemporary look."

Directly east on Douglas Avenue, the Kansas Health Foundation is expanding its current offices to include an additional 36,000 square feet of meeting rooms and space for the Kansas Leadership Center's new statewide headquarters. Construction on this $9 million project began in 2012 and is expected to be completed this summer. It is the first new construction along Douglas Avenue in about 38 years.

"For months we've watched construction and cranes with walls going up and insides of buildings torn out," said Gary Schmitt, Chairman of Wichita Downtown Development Corporation. "It's great to see the progress in Downtown Wichita because nationally economically healthy regions have thriving downtowns. Today celebrates the work of many people and organizations working to create that exciting, vibrant development."

The other building in Block One is the former Henry's Building owned by Slawson Development. There are a number of development interests in the building.

The organizations represented in Block One decided to name the block and identify their locations through the use of a

common name. They worked with branding and advertising agency Sullivan Higdon & Sink to develop the Block One brand.

"It's exciting being part of Downtown Wichita's current and future growth," said Paul Coury, Chairman of Coury Properties for the Ambassador Hotel. "We like being part of the redevelopment of an entire city block and working with others to promote Wichita as the great place it is."

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