WDDC Announces Westar Energy Downtown Development Internship at the Design & Innovation Center

WICHITA, Kan. - 3/7/2012 - Westar Energy has committed $10,000 toward the formation of the Westar Energy Downtown Development Internship program at the Wichita Downtown Development Corporation's Design & Innovation Center. The Design & Innovation Center provides key resources in the development of Downtown Wichita.

According to Wichita Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC) President Jeff Fluhr, Westar's generous contribution matches grant funds recently received from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation allocated to engaging architecture, landscape architecture and community planning students in the downtown planning and implementation process.

"We thank Westar for its commitment to the future of the region, Downtown and the young emerging professionals of Kansas," Fluhr said. "We are excited about tapping into the talent of college students who will help us creatively shape downtown and our quality of place through design."

The initial phase will provide for a full-time summer internship for an upper level college student in architecture or landscape architecture for this summer. The application process will be announced soon, and WDDC will work with universities in Kansas to promote the Westar internship. The second phase will feature ongoing connections to architecture, landscape architecture and planning classes in various downtown projects.

"With these resources, we'll be able to provide tangible design concepts as we explore them with developers and investors in downtown Wichita," Fluhr said. "We want to continue to enhance the development resources of the Design & Innovation Center. This capability will be a tremendous asset in illustrating the concepts we discuss."

"Westar is committed to Wichita's downtown and providing bright students an opportunity to bring fresh ideas to make downtown an attractive, vibrant place where people want to live and work," said Jim Ludwig, Westar's executive vice president, public affairs and consumer services.

This is the second Knight Foundation grant received by the WDDC. The Knight Foundation provided initial funding for the WDDC in 2011 to implement the Design & Innovation Center, a one-stop resource for Downtown Wichita development.

"As college students graduate and consider the location of their career, we want to be sure they are connected to and know what's going on in Kansas' largest city as we move forward," Fluhr said.

Westar Energy, Inc. (NYSE: WR) is the largest consolidated electric utility in Kansas, providing electric service to more than 687,000 customers in the state. Westar Energy has about 7,100 megawatts of electric generation resources and operates and coordinates more than 34,000 miles of electric distribution and transmission lines.

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