



DOWNTOWN WICHITA

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

NAETZGER PARK



DOWNTOWN WICHITA

MISSION

COMMERCE AND CULTURE AT THE CORE

Downtown Wichita is a private 501(c)(3) non-profit that amplifies the energy, capital and growth of downtown by empowering residents, visitors and businesses to explore the possibilities of our city's core.

Founded in 2002, our mission is to cultivate opportunities that revitalize and enhance Wichita's urban core. We collaborate with stakeholders to stimulate investment and interest in downtown.

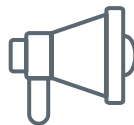
Downtown Wichita provides collaborative leadership to strengthen downtown as:

- ▶ The heart of the city for all citizens.
- ▶ An active and prosperous place for businesses and employees.
- ▶ A center for artistic and cultural experiences.
- ▶ A vibrant urban environment for residents, workers and visitors.

The organization works to achieve this mission through three key areas of focus:



*Developing
Downtown*



*Marketing
the District*



*Enhancing
Vibrancy*



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

From new programs that bring people together to the launch of long-term initiatives shaping our city's future, 2025 has been all about positive momentum.

One of our most significant milestones was finalizing the Downtown Wichita Action Plan (Action Plan), a roadmap for downtown development over the next decade. More than 1,000 Wichitans helped shape this plan through open houses, walking tours and stakeholder roundtables. Together, we identified key priorities, such as expanding connectivity within the district and activating the Arkansas River as a true community destination. In 2026, we shift to implementation of this community vision.

2025 also marked the successful pilot of our Clean Team program, which demonstrated that maintaining a clean, inviting downtown has a meaningful impact on the public's experience. Thanks to the pilot program's success, the Wichita City Council approved funding for a full-time Clean Team program in 2026. This investment, funded by property owners in the Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District, will add additional staff, new equipment and a visible commitment to the kind of environment residents, businesses and visitors desire – and deserve.

We also saw more people experiencing downtown through Downtown Wichita programs such as Bouncing Through Downtown, First Friday Fest and holiday promotions. These initiatives, along with seasonal volunteer clean-up events and a new public art installation we commissioned for Gallery Alley, sparked increased activity across the district. Together, they helped downtown feel alive year-round.

At the same time, significant development continues in and around the Wichita Biomedical CampusSM. From new housing options to additional businesses relocating to the core, we are witnessing a wave of investment and innovation throughout the center of our district.

I'm incredibly proud of the progress we've made and even more excited about what's ahead in 2026. Thank you to our partners, board members and community champions who help make this work possible. Together, we're not just building a stronger downtown, we're building the heart of our city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Surmeier". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

Joe Surmeier
Downtown Wichita Chair

MEET THE TEAM



HEATHER SCHROEDER

Executive Director



EMILY BARNWELL

Public Relations Manager



AMARA KNIEP

Business Engagement Specialist



TARYN SARGENT

Social Media Manager



CYNTHIA WENTWORTH

Executive Vice President
of Strategic Communications



ISSAC VILLELA

Project Graphic Designer



NICOLE SWAYNE

Office Manager



DEAN MEFFORD

Senior Public Space Ambassador,
Downtown Clean Team



ANNA LAURIN

Director of Creative Operations



STEVE KOGUT

Public Space Ambassador,
Downtown Clean Team



2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Professional Engineering
Consultants, P.A.

Sam Chandler, Vice Chair
INTRUST Bank, N.A.

Mark Schmelzle, Treasurer
Allen, Gibbs & Houlik, L.C.

**Natalie Gosch, Immediate
Past Chair***
Cargill

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Meritrust Credit Union

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Jessie Hartke
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Tom Johnson
NAI Martens

Joe Tigert*
RT Financial

Cindy Claycomb*
Downtown Property Owner

Andrea Hattan
The Hive

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Cablecom, Inc.

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Garvey Center

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Old Town Association

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United Way of the Plains

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Wichita Regional
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Maggie Ballard
Wichita City Council, District VI

Dalton Glasscock
Wichita City Council, District IV

Stacey Olden
Orpheum Performing
Arts Centre, Ltd.

Susie Santo
Visit Wichita

Ryan Baty
Sedgwick County Commission

Brandon Johnson
Wichita City Council, District I

Shelly Prichard
Wichita Foundation

Scott Wadle
Wichita-Sedgwick County
Metropolitan Area
Planning Department

Jeff Fluhr
Greater Wichita Partnership

Joe Johnson, Emeritus*
Schaefer Architecture

**Denotes Past Chair*

2025 SSMID ADVISORY BOARD

BOARD MEMBERS

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Old Town Association

Joe Johnson, Chair
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Mark Schmelzle
Allen, Gibbs & Houlik, L.C.

Joe Surmeier
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Consultants, P.A.

Natalie Gosch
Cargill

DEVELOPING DOWNTOWN



Wichita Biomedical CampusSM



DOWNTOWN WICHITA ACTION PLAN

The Downtown Wichita Action Plan (Action Plan), to be released for adoption in 2026, builds on the success of the 2010 Project Downtown master plan. Project Downtown helped drive 15 years of development and created the foundation for the next decade of progress, catalyzing \$2 billion of investment in the core.

PROJECT DOWNTOWN IMPACT

119

COMPLETED PROJECTS
IN 15 YEARS



6.3 MILLION

SQUARE FEET
TRANSFORMED



1,935

NEW HOUSING
UNITS ADDED



1,350

NEW HOTEL
ROOMS OPENED



5,600

NEW GARAGE
PARKING SPACES
CONSTRUCTED



20

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS
UNDER CONSTRUCTION
OR IN THE PIPELINE



Downtown Wichita Action Plan Open House #1

PHASE 1 IMMERSE

JAN. 2025



**PROJECT
KICKOFF**

MARCH 4



**OPEN HOUSE #1
AT WAVE**

MARCH 11



**POP-UP
AT NCAA MARCH
MADNESS FAN FEST**

PHASE 2 IDEATE & ITERATE

JUNE 1



**POP-UP
AT RIVERFEST**

2026-2035 ACTION PLAN

From January to October 2025, more than 1,000 Wichitans engaged in the community-led process through open houses, pop-ups, and 50+ stakeholder meetings, ensuring broad input throughout the planning process. The resulting feedback created a clear vision and Action Plan for the next decade. It outlines four goals, 18 strategies, and 100+ specific actions, along with priorities for Downtown Wichita and toolkits for public and private partners.

STUDY AREA

The Action Plan study area spans roughly 1.5 square miles (960 acres), bounded by Seneca Street, Murdock Avenue, Washington Avenue and Kellogg Avenue. That's about the size of 725 Kansas City Chiefs football fields and includes much of Wichita's traditional downtown – from the Arkansas River to Old Town, the Arena District and key civic, commercial and cultural assets.





Downtown Wichita Action Plan Open House #2

**PHASE 3
ALIGN & ACT**

2026

JUNE 3



OPEN HOUSE #2
AT SCOTTISH RITE

AUG. 27



OPEN HOUSE #3
AT DOWNTOWN
WICHITA

SEPT. 24



POP-UP
AT DOWNTOWN
YMCA

SPRING 2026



**REPORT
PUBLICATION**

4 MAJOR GOALS



CONNECTED

Downtown Wichita will be a connected place where people can easily navigate to shopping, dining, and cultural attractions by foot, bike, car or transit.



RIVERFRONT

Downtown Wichita will embrace the Arkansas River as the city's central gathering place for recreation, entertainment and the enjoyment of nature.



WELL-DESIGNED

Downtown Wichita will feature well-designed buildings, streets, and public spaces that create a safe, attractive and welcoming environment.



FULL SERVICE

Downtown Wichita will evolve as a dense, mixed-use urban center to unlock new opportunities for living, working, shopping and entertainment.

MARKETING DOWNTOWN



MARKETING METHODS



164,311

NEWSLETTERS DISTRIBUTED



23,591

SMS DISTRIBUTED



47.36%

EMAIL OPEN RATE



568

SMS SUBSCRIBERS

SOCIAL MEDIA

 **Downtown Wichita**
@DowntownWichita X.com

Rain or shine, our volunteers showed up today to help make downtown Wichita shine even brighter! 🌧️💪 Huge thanks to everyone who made a big impact during the Downtown Wichita Clean-Up. Your dedication to our city is truly inspiring!

#DowntownWichita @CityofWichita



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 **Downtown Wichita**
April 4, 2025 · 🌐

Ready to shake off winter and soak up the season? It's time to get outside and get festive in [#DowntownWichita!](#)

From tulip fields and outdoor flicks to local markets and community vibes—April is packed with ways to celebrate spring in the heart of the city.

- 📍 **Old Town Farm & Art Market:** Opening Day – April 5
- 🌸 **Botanica Tulip Festival** – April 5, 12 & 19
- 🏟️ **Wichita Wind Surge:** First Home Game – April 8
- 🎬 **Exploration Place RiverFlix Outdoor Movies** – Launches April 18
- 🌿 **Downtown Wichita Clean-Up** – April 26 & MORE!

Start planning your festive adventures at <https://bit.ly/4lgHPUT>.



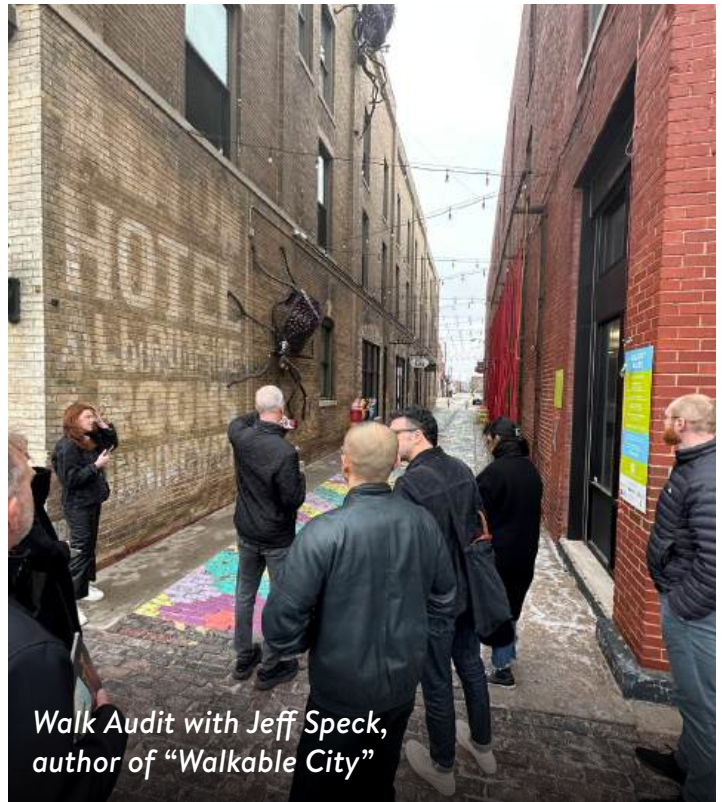


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Downtown Wichita prioritized community outreach over the past year, engaging in 25 presentations and speaking engagements across 52 weeks. While the content ranged from the Action Plan process to highlighting downtown development progress and events, the message was clear: Downtown is growing, and everyone is invited to be a part of it.



*Downtown Wichita Action Plan
Open House #3*



*Walk Audit with Jeff Speck,
author of "Walkable City"*



SPONSORSHIP OF EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Downtown Wichita supports the people, places and ideas that energize the city center, because downtown is everyone's neighborhood. In 2025, the organization provided financial support for three community events that brought people together and kept the district vibrant. Based on this pilot program success, Downtown Wichita's board approved funding to expand sponsorship opportunities in 2026.



Dragging Douglas

A Celebration of Women's Sports

Presented by:  Private Wealth Management
The Barry Group

June 4 Jackie Stiles	June 5 Jordon Larson
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Naftzger Park
5 pm - 9 pm
wichita.gov/celebrate

Park & Recreation | BURNS & MCDONNELL | Eric & Debbie Schellstein | ATHLETES UNLIMITED | WICHITA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT | WICHITA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | Current Member: Brandon Johnson | WICHITA

ENHANCING VIBRANCY



First Friday Fest: Chalk Art Contest



DOWNTOWN CLEAN-UP: SPRING & FALL

Our team successfully rebooted the Downtown Clean-Up on April 26, 2025, collaborating with city staff on supplies and projects to make a visible impact across the district.

New in 2025, we launched a Fall Clean-Up event on a weekday in September to increase corporate participation. Partnering with city forestry staff and Downtown Rotary, volunteers made a strong seasonal impact on the district's appearance, planting 48 mums and seven trees and repainting the ground mural in Gallery Alley.



260
TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
IN 2025





BOUNCING THROUGH DOWNTOWN: ART & BASKETBALL

This basketball-themed project transformed vacant downtown storefronts into vibrant, sports-inspired art displays. Funded by a grant from the City’s division of Arts and Cultural Services, three local artists created temporary installations using recycled basketballs. Each piece celebrated Wichita’s role as a host city for the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament. In addition, Downtown Wichita and the artists led a hands-on crafting workshop during the city’s Fan Fest in Naftzger Park and hosted a public walking tour featuring the artists and their window displays.



\$25,000
ARTS GRANT



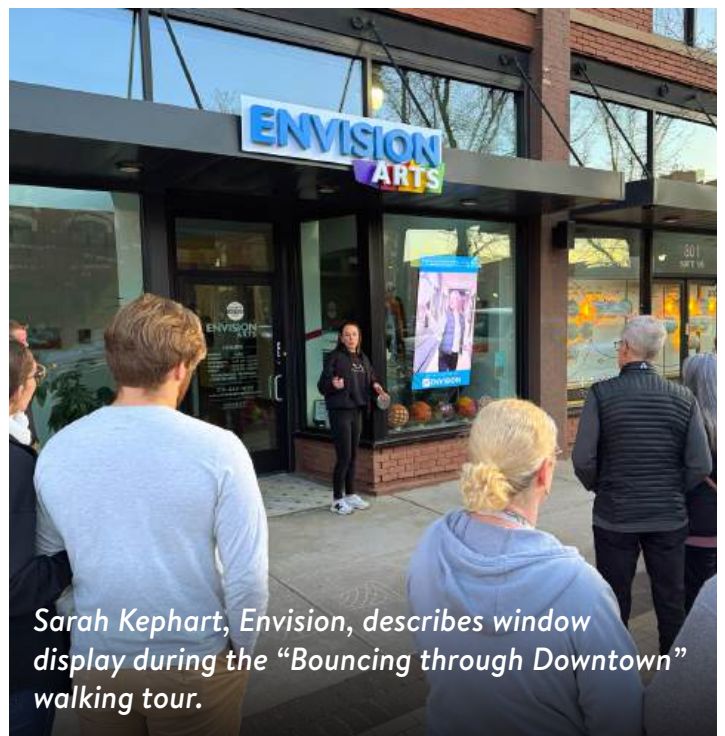
3 STOREFRONTS



150
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



17,000
TOTAL AUDIENCE



Sarah Kephart, Envision, describes window display during the “Bouncing through Downtown” walking tour.

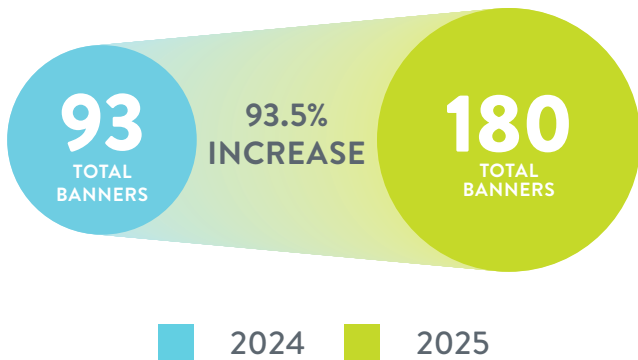
HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

Downtown Wichita expanded its holiday promotions by installing 87 new street pole banners, bringing the total to 180 banners displayed along Douglas Avenue, Main Street and throughout Old Town. These festive streetscape enhancements were complemented by the second annual Window Wonderland contest, which continued to grow in both participation and visibility. The contest invited downtown businesses to transform their storefronts into creative holiday displays, and the public voted for their favorite.

WINDOW WONDERLAND CONTEST



HOLIDAY BANNERS



34

WINDOW PARTICIPANTS



3,000+

PUBLIC VOTES



FIRST FRIDAY FEST

Downtown Wichita coordinated with Visit Wichita during the TBEX conference, Oct. 3-5, to enhance First Friday with additional programming.

SUNSET SOUNDS

Music filled downtown as local musicians performed throughout the district.

DOUGLAS AVENUE CHALK ART CONTEST

The sidewalks transformed into works of art as local artists brought the theme of “Heartland Stories” to life in chalk.

GALLERY ALLEY ART UNVEILING

Attendees viewed the newly refreshed alley, complete with a vibrant new sculpture Downtown commissioned from local artist Mike Miller.



FLOWERS ON DOUGLAS

Flowers on Douglas continued to brighten the corridor with annual planters and hanging baskets. The program is sponsored by Downtown Wichita with support from community donations.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION



\$60K
COMMUNITY
CONTRIBUTIONS

\$120K
SSMID
CONTRIBUTIONS

PLANTING BREAKDOWN



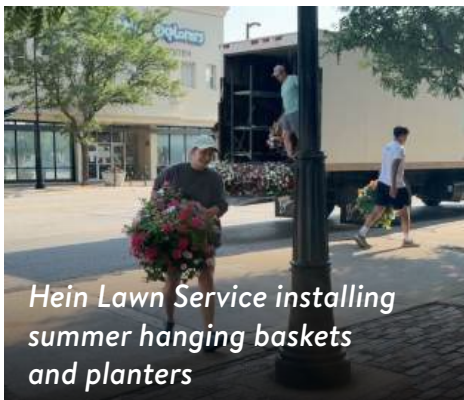
126
HANGING BASKETS



108
PLANTERS



12,000
TOTAL PLANTS



Hein Lawn Service installing summer hanging baskets and planters





CLEAN TEAM PILOT PROGRAM

Launched in May 2025 with funding from Fidelity Bank, the Clean Team pilot program deployed two part-time Public Space Ambassadors for outdoor maintenance six days a week. Strong early results prompted the SSMID and the city council to approve funding for a full-time program in 2026.

CLEAN TEAM PILOT PROGRAM IMPACT



2,748

BLOCKS MAINTAINED



21,120

GALLONS OF TRASH PICKED UP



1,344

HOURS WORKED



OLD TOWN PLANTING EFFORTS

Downtown Wichita organized a volunteer day with the Sedgwick County Department of Corrections to plant flowers and bulbs on Mosley Street and Old Town Plaza, remove weeds, and pick up litter, refreshing public spaces across Old Town.

505 E. DOUGLAS AVENUE WICHITA, KS 67202

316.264.6005

DOWNTOWNWICHITA.ORG