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Wichita State News

Wichita State Creating a Major Downtown Presence to Focus on Public Service

Additional information: *Wichita State News*, March 31, 2015.
<http://www.wichita.edu/thisis/stories/story.asp?si=2786> (Accessed March 19, 2016.)



Wichita State News



Photo: Courtesy

WSU announces plans for a major commitment to downtown Wichita with the creation of WSU Old Town, a complex of facilities and services located in the popular entertainment district.

Wichita State creating a major downtown presence to focus on public service

Tuesday, March 31, 2015



Wichita State University has announced plans for a major commitment to downtown Wichita with the creation of WSU Old Town, a complex of facilities and services located in the popular entertainment district.

The initiative will involve the relocation of some prominent WSU units focused on health care and outreach to Wichita businesses and the larger community. The relocated units include:

- KMWU Wichita Public Radio
- Center for Management Development
- Center for Economic Development and Business Research
- Center for Community Support and Research

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Some units will begin occupying space in Old Town later this year and the rest in 2017, when Airbus Americas moves its Wichita engineering center to the new WSU Innovation Campus. The Airbus move was announced last week. The new WSU facilities will be located at 121 N. Mead, 213 N. Mead and 238 N. Mead.

WSU President John Bardo said Old Town is a natural fit with the university's mission to be an essential economic driver for Wichita and the state of Kansas.

"We're excited about the vitality in downtown Wichita and the changes that have occurred over the last several years with the construction of Intrust Bank Arena and the Kansas Leadership Center, along with the planned renovation of Union Station," Bardo said. "Old Town is the heart of the action, and we are taking Airbus' move as an opportunity to occupy prime real estate."

Bardo said some university departments moving to Old Town are already downtown, but in space not suitable for expansion or public events. The university plans to generate substantial activity in all three buildings, with numerous educational sessions and public events -- especially in a large activity space that will be created in the 238 N. Mead property.

WSU is estimating about 200 faculty and staff will work in Old Town, while 300 students will be involved in classes or clinical work there and more than 15,000 visitors will attend educational sessions, meetings or community activities in the WSU facilities.

Tony Vizzini, senior vice president and provost, said WSU Old Town is about more than finding a great location for WSU programs.

"It is about creating opportunities for creative collisions to occur outside of the confines of our campus," Vizzini said. "It is about immersing ourselves in the very vibrant community we call our partner; it is about having a front porch where the neighbors feel comfortable sitting and watching the kids play on the lawn."

Jeff Fluhr, president of the Wichita Downtown Development Corp., welcomed the expansion of Wichita State University in downtown Wichita as an important step in his organization's development efforts.

"Strengthening connectivity and collaboration with the university benefits all involved, and having additional WSU faculty, staff and students in the city center will result in enhanced energy and vibrancy in Old Town," Fluhr said. "We certainly look forward to seeing more black and yellow in downtown!"

Jason Van Sickle, president of the Old Town Association, echoed Fluhr's sentiments.

"We are excited to welcome WSU as one of the newest and largest employers to choose Old Town," Van Sickle said. "Our close proximity to the university's main campus will be convenient for WSU employees, while our central location with access to many area amenities will benefit those who visit these offices. This is great news for Old Town and downtown, because WSU will be moving some of its community-focused organizations to these new offices, and that will act as an economic stimulus by bringing more people to the area."

Go to <http://www.wichita.edu/j/?3697> for renderings of the WSU Old Town facilities.

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