Cargill to Build New Innovation Center in Downtown Wichita

WICHITA, Kan. - 5/25/2010 - Cargill announced plans to build a new $14.7 million facility on Wichita Street between 1st and 2nd streets in Downtown Wichita. The facility will house research, development, culinary, laboratory, pilot plant and distribution capabilities.

"Cargill's commitment to Wichita and especially to Downtown Wichita with this cutting-edge facility is exciting," said Mayor Carl Brewer. "When a leading, global company like Cargill makes an announcement and investment in Wichita, we know it's another step toward our goal of becoming a city of distinction. Building upon their downtown campus, they are greatly contributing to making our downtown a regional center."

The facility will house 65 people in the downtown area close to Cargill's U.S. meat business, headquartered at 151 North Main Street. The two-story facility is expected to be complete in June of 2011.

"The Cargill team has been great to work with throughout this process. They have, from the beginning, been committed to exploring avenues in design that demonstrate key urban principles from the emerging downtown master plan," said Jeff Fluhr, president of Wichita Downtown Development Corporation. "They have also been a lead private sector partner in the development of a blueprint for Downtown and have provided important support and input."

One of the largest employers in downtown Wichita, Cargill donated $25,000 toward the development of the downtown master plan.

"We are excited to move forward and invest in downtown Wichita through this new facility," said Scott Eilert, Cargill vice president and director of meat technology development. "So many groups and people, including Mayor Brewer, have made this project a reality and we're glad to be part of the new efforts in downtown."

The downtown master planning team will incorporate the Cargill Innovation Center into the draft plan. The next step in the downtown planning process will be the presentation of the draft plan at a public meeting scheduled for Monday, June 14th. Following public input to the draft plan, the final plan will be presented in September.

"This project is building upon more than $100 million in ongoing downtown development activities ranging from riverfront improvements to renovating historic buildings to residential and more," Fluhr said. "Cargill is a very important component of that momentum."

The downtown master plan will utilize economic research to maximize opportunity for private sector investment and return on investment of public dollars. Community input will shape the vision for downtown. Research shows thriving downtowns help regions retain and recruit people and businesses.

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