

Leaders identify 5 priority initiatives after visit to Richmond

In September 2006, nearly 60 community leaders from Wichita and the surrounding areas visited Richmond, Virginia. The purpose was to learn how this community had transformed itself as part of the “visioneering” process over the past 15 years.

As a result, the Wichita group identified five priority initiatives under the Visioneering Wichita umbrella. These are specific efforts they believe will jumpstart the region’s progress and prosperity. The priorities are:

Branding/Community Identity

The issue is that Wichita and the surrounding communities have a “self-image” problem. That is, we as a community do not actively champion ourselves – to each other or outside our geographic region. The goal is to engage the community in determining our new identity by identifying common stories and specific strategies for telling our stories.

Advanced Materials/Polymers Research and Manufacturing Park

With aviation manufacturing as a major industry, Wichita and the surrounding communities are a natural fit for the growing composites field. Composites are reinforced materials used in many new manufacturing processes – from automobiles to aviation to health care. The goal is that composites and polymers will help diversify the local economy, while also advancing the existing aviation cluster and developing high-paying jobs.

Downtown/Riverfront Development

Wichita has a tremendous natural resource, the Arkansas River, which runs through its downtown area. Building on the momentum of current developments, including Wichita’s WaterWalk, this area could become a recreational destination for the region, especially for young people and families. The goal is to attract businesses and develop activities that bring people downtown on a daily or weekly basis.

Education – Pre-kindergarten through High School

For Wichita and its surrounding communities to thrive and for businesses to successfully operate and grow, it is important that all children continue to have access to quality educational opportunities, including early childhood education and development from birth to kindergarten. The goal is to ensure businesses actively participate in the delivery of a quality education system – one that reaches children pre-K through high school.

Workforce Development

Increased technology, global competition and an aging workforce have provided significant challenges for employers in Wichita and south-central Kansas. New – and ongoing – training opportunities will be critical to keeping valued employees in place and recruiting a new and diverse workforce to the community. The goals are to recruit a new and diverse workforce, while retaining the highly skilled and experienced workers who already are here.

Participants

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