

Written by Emily Younger

Partnership President Jeff Fluhr highlighted the transformation of Downtown Wichita and the revitalization efforts to spur economic growth at the Henry's Society inaugural gathering on April 6.

The kick-off event celebrated the rich history and resurgence of 124 S. Broadway, the former Henry's Clothing Company building now home to WSU Tech's National Institute of Culinary and Hospitality Education (NICHE).

"What a momentous day for the City of Wichita, WSU Tech, the Henry's Society and the downtown core," said Fluhr in his opening remarks. "The transformation of the Henry's building signifies the completion of Block One, an effort started more than a decade ago, to reenergize the very block of downtown buildings we are standing in today."

Henry's, a family-owned clothing retailer known for its high-quality merchandise, operated inside 124 S. Broadway from 1948 to 1984. The building was vacant until the spring of 2023 when WSU Tech in partnership with Douglas Market Development opened NICHE, a state-of-the-art culinary institute in the heart of downtown.



"Tonight, we gather to commemorate the revival of a cherished landmark - a building that holds a special place in the hearts of many Wichitans. Henry's, as it was fondly known, once welcomed visitors with open arms and unforgettable experiences. And tonight, we stand awestruck by the incredible transformation this magnificent structure has undergone," said WSU Tech President Dr. Sheree Utash.

In addition to the educational programming, NICHE will feature a rooftop-event venue, the Cargill Culinary Theatre on the mezzanine level, a public food hall, the Envision Bistro and an authentic ramen restaurant.

WSU Tech Foundation Executive Director Courtney Sendall called the renovation project a symbol of progress and possibility. Fluhr echoed that sentiment.

"This is vibrancy. This is new, young talent visiting and living in the downtown core. This is economic development at work. The increase in students downtown means an increase in the need for retail, restaurants, and recreation. This is a win for WSU Tech and everyone in the region who can experience it," Fluhr said.

Following a brief overview of NICHE and the academic opportunities, Sendall welcomed attendees to join the newly formed Henry's Society, a group dedicated to honoring Wichita's history while embracing the new energy NICHE is bringing downtown.

NICHE is scheduled to open to the public following the grand opening planned for late spring or early summer of 2023.


NICHE
Courtesy of WSU Tech Foundation