

ict21 INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

By Emily Younger

A longstanding vision to revitalize a blight-ridden entrance into the City of Wichita is now a reality, a reality brothers Marty and Ron Cornejo have been piecing together for nearly a decade.

“If people knew what we went through to get it to this point they would be amazed,” said Marty Cornejo.

Marty, who is a long-time businessman and Wichita native, is referring to the 130-acre, multi-million dollar development called ICT21 Industrial District located on 21st Street just west of I-135. The development, envisioned in 2013, now supports the largest Class A industrial campus in the city, a significant change from what many used to refer to as an eyesore.

“Everybody ignored this property. Developers, real estate groups, they ignored it,” Marty explained.

The Derby Oil Co. refinery operated on the site from the 1920s to the 1990s before it was demolished in 2007. The area sat vacant and desolate for years, being overcome with weeds, trees and trash.

“This property was a forest. There were so many trees it took us months to clear them. Then, we would run into more underground surprises,” explained Marty.

Many of those surprises revolved around ground contamination.

“What happened over the years is there were just big holes and ponds. As rainwater kept coming in, it would just infiltrate into the ground and migrate,” Marty said.

The Cornejo brothers worked with regulatory and government agencies for approximately five years to iron out environmental issues. It took another three years to develop the land into the industrial park it is today.



Envisioned in 2013, Wichita's most blighted industrial property now supports the largest Class A industrial campus in the city.

Partnership's Build It and They Will Come Notion Comes to Fruition

While Marty and his brother had the vision to revitalize the former refinery site, he said the Greater Wichita Partnership's involvement in reviving the city's speculative warehouse incentive program played a pivotal role in the district's success.

"I must give credit to Jeff Fluhr and Andrew Nave with the Partnership. We told them about this property, and they said, 'There is no heavy industrial property within city limits, zero. If someone could get this thing turned into heavy industrial or warehousing, it would be a homerun,'" he said.

ICT21 scored its first tenant in August of 2022 when Pennsylvania-based JTM Foods announced it would use its largest, 195,000-square-foot warehouse to produce its worldwide snack pies.

"We courted JTM with the help of the Partnership. They wanted to come to Wichita to be in the center of the United States so they could spread pies out further. When they came and found out about the space and the workforce around us that pretty much did it for them," Marty explained.

JTM Foods is slated to begin producing pies out of its ICT21 location in September.

Case New Holland Industrial, a world-class equipment and services company, moved into one of the property's 180,000-square-foot warehouses in March of 2023.

Construction on a third 180,000-square-foot warehouse will be completed by the end of May. Marty said it's already garnering a lot of interest.

In addition to the industrial buildings, the Cornejo brothers recently sold about 20 acres of the ICT21 property to Love's Travel Stop. The convenience store company is planning to develop the site just east of the warehouses into a filling station including a semi-truck repair and wash, restaurant, electric vehicle charging station, RV hook ups and dog exercise area.

"This is the transformation we have been working so hard for," Marty said. "It was a team effort. Thankfully, those we worked with believed in it."

When asked why Marty believed in the project, he pointed to his multigenerational family in Wichita.

"I will be honest. I have two out of three sons living here. I have grandchildren here. I love Wichita. Anything I can do to make it better I do," he said.



Construction on a third 180,000-square-foot warehouse will be completed by the end of May. To learn more or contact ICT 21 Industrial District for availability, visit ict21.com.