A DECADE OF PROGRESS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PARTNERSHIP'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

By Emily Barnwell

On May 14, investors, community leaders and long-time collaborators gathered at the Ninth Floor Club in downtown Wichita to mark the Partnership's 10th anniversary. With a panoramic view of the city's evolving skyline, the setting reflected the day's theme, celebrating the progress of the past while looking boldly toward the future.



Ben Hutton, CEO of Hutton, Aaron Bastian, Co-Chair of the Partnership and Ryan Pearson, President of Conco Construction look over the construction site of the Wichita Biomedical Campus℠ in downtown Wichita.

A View from the Top

Partnership President Jeff Fluhr welcomed attendees and thanked the many individuals, past and present, who have contributed to the organization's success over the last decade.

He recalled the Partnership's launch on April 15, 2015. What began as a vision to realign Wichita's approach to economic development has since transformed into a regional force for growth, innovation and collaboration.

"Over the last decade, we've proven what's possible when a community comes together with a shared purpose and the courage to think boldly," said Fluhr.

During the presentation, Fluhr shared key impact statistics that reflect a decade of progress:

- $3.5 billion in capital investment.
- 14,225 new jobs created.

- $713 million in annual payroll.
- Nearly $10 billion in project prospect activity.

He also highlighted the powerful collaboration between the Partnership and Downtown Wichita, which has resulted in a combined $5.2 billion in total investment across the region.

Visual displays throughout the space showcased significant milestones over the last 10 years, from catalytic downtown projects to major wins in business attraction, talent retention and strategic planning.

“Thank you for your investment, your involvement and your continued support,” said Fluhr. “Because of you, we are accelerating economic growth, expanding our global reach, fostering innovation, strengthening our workforce and shaping a region with a distinct identity.”



Partnership President Jeff Fluhr welcomed attendees and shared key impacts.



Fluhr passed the mic over to the Partnership’s founding co-chairs, Jeff Turner and Charlie Chandler.

Leadership Reflects & Looks Ahead

Former Partnership Co-Chair Jeff Turner and current Co-Chair Charlie Chandler offered reflections on the organization’s founding and its expanding influence across the 10-county, south-central Kansas region.

“It’s amazing what you can get done when nobody cares who gets the credit,” said Turner. “That mindset, putting ego aside and working together, made the last decade's progress possible and must be our mode of operation going forward.”

Turner shared stories from the Partnership’s early days, including the group’s first meetings in a small room at the Ambassador Hotel. He recalled a memorable conversation.

“They said it was a waste of time. But if they had been around long enough to see the change, they’d understand,” he said. “That change doesn’t happen overnight, but it’s happening, and it’s because of the people in this room.”

Co-Chair Charlie Chandler echoed that sentiment, emphasizing the power of unity across the public and private sectors.

“This works,” said Chandler. “The like-mindedness, the mutual respect—it’s been incredible to see how much can be accomplished when everyone moves in the same direction. Over the past 10 years, it’s been a privilege to work alongside people I might not have otherwise, all driven by a shared love for this region and a desire to see it thrive.”

Chandler encouraged continued investment in the Partnership, pointing to development across the region.



Co-Chair Aaron Bastian closed the program with a personal reflection on returning to Wichita more than a decade ago and his journey with the Partnership.

“When I moved back, Wichita was in a period of uncertainty. I wanted to be part of something bigger, so I kept saying yes,” said Bastian. “Now, I’m beginning my fourth year as co-chair, and I can confidently say that progress is happening.”

Bastian highlighted the Partnership’s latest strategic plan and its core focus areas of jobs, talent and quality of place.

“We’re helping attract and retain jobs, ensuring businesses have the talent they need to grow, and supporting a vibrant downtown,” he said. “Downtown is everyone’s neighborhood. It’s the first-place newcomers experience—and it deserves our attention.”

Bastian pointed to the momentum around aerospace, space, MRO and the new biomedical campus as examples of catalytic investments shaping Wichita’s future.

“When I’m 70, I want to look back and say, ‘I was here when that was built.’ The biomedical campus may be the most significant investment of my lifetime. I hope I’m wrong, because that means even more transformative things are still ahead.”

His message to the audience was clear: Stay engaged. We must continue to invest in our community and actively work to position our region for success.

Former Co-Chair Jon Rolph reflected via video on the bold leadership that launched the Partnership and the continued need for courageous collaboration in the years to come.

“With courage and belief in community, we’ve created 10 years of sustained momentum,” Rolph said. “But momentum is fragile. When you rest, you lose it. We must continue to believe, fight, dream bigger and invest in a great future for Wichita.”


Former Co-Chair Jon Rolph reflected via video.


Co-Chair Aaron Bastian closed the program.

Get Involved

As the formal program concluded, guests stayed to mingle at a reception, surrounded by exhibits showcasing the milestones and momentum built over the past decade.

As the Partnership begins its next chapter, the team invites you to join it. Email Becca Newman at becca@greaterwichitapartnership.org to learn how you can help shape the future of the greater Wichita region.

A special thank you to the Ninth Floor Club for hosting the Partnership's 10th Anniversary Celebration.