TRANSFORMING DOWNTOWN WICHITA INTO A VIBRANT URBAN ENVIRONMENT

By Emily Younger Barnwell

Flowers on Douglas is a cornerstone of downtown Wichita, a beautification project that has resulted in transformational change.

“From the initial days, where we encountered few citizens, to today's vibrant street scenes resembling a video game with cyclists, dog walkers, and various activities, the transformation is remarkable,” explained Cindy Carnahan.

Carnahan, the president of The Carnahan Group at Reece Nichols SCK, is the visionary behind the project, earning her the official title of Sheriff of Flowers on Douglas.

“My journey as the Sheriff began with a simple observation during an evening stroll after a music theater performance in 2017. Downtown Wichita seemed to have lost its luster, and I couldn't shake the feeling that something needed to be done,” she said.

A conversation with Partnership President Jeff Fluhr sparked an idea. He shared the City of Wichita had recently acquired more than 100 pots, and he suggested utilizing them creatively.

Carnahan embraced the challenge, embarking on a mission to bring a renewed vibrancy back to downtown. She quickly enlisted the help of Hein Lawn and Landscaping and a group of volunteer master gardeners led by Hugh Nix. Together, they initiated fundraising efforts for the project and curated flower combinations suitable for various locations along Douglas Avenue. Before long, all the pots were adorned with beautiful, lush flowers and greenery.

Today, the initiative has expanded to include 123 planter pots and 122 hanging baskets, filled with trailing vinca. The first planting on March 28, featuring pansies and cabbage, initiates the annual cycle which includes approximately 172 flats of flowers planted twice a year. The next planting of summer annuals will take place in early June.

“Visitors now witness a meticulously cared-for street,” Carnahan emphasized. “When you drive by the flowers seem to shout that Wichitans care deeply about their city.”

Why it Matters

Beautification projects like Flowers on Douglas not only enhance a city's aesthetics but also help to drive sales, tourism and

community engagement.

Research shows consumers are drawn to attractive environments, and aesthetically pleasing landscapes can elevate the value of products and properties.

This is especially vital for Wichita's quality of life, economic growth and initiatives aimed at retaining and attracting talent, as outlined in the Partnership's Talent Roadmap.

Additionally, Flowers on Douglas exemplifies a community committed to its surroundings. It sends a clear message to residents and visitors that Wichita is a dynamic, thriving urban environment where individuals can live, work and play.

A Continued Effort

To ensure the ongoing success of Flowers on Douglas and maintain the level of planting and maintenance necessary to achieve the desired visual impact, continued financial support is crucial.

Carnahan envisions the addition of winter hanging baskets with brightly colored elements. To turn this vision into a reality, an additional $40,000 and the support of a designer and volunteers are needed.

Downtown Wichita continues to support the efforts to keep this vital project healthy and invites others to do the same. Click here to leverage funding to guarantee the quality and longevity of this initiative.