

# SMARTbrief

Sedgwick County commissioners approved a special taxing district to pay for improvements on downtown Wichita's riverfront, including a renovated or redone stadium for baseball. The **West Bank** district stretches along the river from **Maple to Second Street**, including **Lawrence-Dumont Stadium** and the location of the city's new downtown library. It also stretches into a part of **Delano to Seneca**. The city wants to use \$45 million in public funds from a TIF district and STAR bonds, which capture sales tax revenue, to help build a multisport stadium, parking facilities and mixed-use commercial development.

A new **Lawrence-Dumont Stadium** isn't the only project helped by the recent creation of a tax increment financing district to develop the west bank of the Arkansas River. The creation of that district is a vote of confidence for other projects as well, such as Kansas City based **EPC Real Estate LLC**. The Sedgwick County Commission voted in favor of the creation of the TIF district, marking the final necessary approval in that process. The company is pitching a \$40 million project that would include residential, office commercial and hospitality on a **Delano** site generally located between Douglas and Second Street along McLean.

Wichita inked an agreement for a developer to build 176 high-end apartments and 15,000 square feet of retail space on the site of a failed development in the **College Hill** area. **Uptown Landing LLC**, the successful bidder in the request for proposals process started last fall, will pay \$300,000 for 4.6 acres at the corner of **Douglas and Rutan** and has agreed to spend a minimum of \$25 million to develop its project. In 2006, the city spent \$7 million to acquire and prepare the site for a development that fell apart during the recession, and only a handful of condo units were built.



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The average person may not be familiar with **SportsEvents** magazine, but for people in the sporting events industry, it's a go-to publication. That's why **Wichita Sports Forum** general manager **Brian Hargrove** says it's huge to be named to the magazine's 2017 list of the top 10 multiuse facilities nationally. Hargrove says the Wichita Sports Forum is the only facility in the heart of the Midwest to make the list, so he thinks it showcases that the Midwest has something to offer, too. Hargrove says that's significant since the Midwest in general and Wichita in particular could be easier to get to for people from some markets.



Construction is underway on **Westar Energy's** service center in north-east Wichita. The \$20 million facility on 19 acres is being constructed at **4025 N. Toben** as part of the **Webb Business Park** near **40th Street North and Webb Road**. The facility will house Westar's local line crews and other field employees who work to maintain power lines and related equipment and offices. The service center is expected to be operational in the spring of 2018. Much of Westar's operational functions now housed at **1900 E. Central** will be relocated. The utility employs more than 500 people in Wichita.



**Meritrust Credit Union** announced that it has reached an agreement to buy the current headquarters building of **Cargill Inc.'s** Wichita based protein business. That will fill a potential vacancy at **151 N. Main** once Cargill moves to its new headquarters building in **Old Town**, being built on the former site of the **Wichita Eagle**. Meritrust says in a press release that the building will house its administrative departments and offices for mortgage services, wealth management advisors and small business services. Meritrust expects to move from its current administrative offices, **8710 E. 32nd North**, to the new downtown location in 2019.



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A local development group is moving forward with plans to expand the **Twin Lakes Shopping Center**. The developers plan to construct an 8,000 square foot building between **Pizza Hut** and **Wendy's** in the Twin Lakes Shopping Center, which is near **21st Street North and Amidon**. A franchise of **Huddle House** restaurant will occupy roughly 3,350 square feet on one end of the strip center, while a law office will encompass about 1,500 square feet. **Craig Simon**, with **Landmark Commercial Real Estate**, and **Nathan Farha**, with **NAI Martens**, brokered the deal. Anticipated construction starts in July, with a projected opening in late November or December.

More tenant space is coming to the **North Maize Road** corridor near **Menards**. **Conco Inc.** has pulled a commercial building permit valued at \$572,000 to construct a multitenant building at **3520 N. Maize**. The building will have 7,000 to 8,000 square feet of commercial space. The building will be part of **Schellenberg Development's Fox Ridge Plaza**. The commercial building will be in front of the **SunStone Apartments** complex at **3540 N. Maize**. The shell of the commercial building is expected to be completed this fall. This is another commercial addition to a growing stretch of Maize Road in northwest Wichita.

**Marcus Lemonis**, the chairman and CEO of **Camping World** who purchased **Gander Mountain** out of bankruptcy and star of CNBC's "The Profit," says he's been looking for Wichita sites for a Camping World RV store for a year. He's interested in keeping Gander Mountain at the **Water-Walk** development along the Arkansas River, but only if he can use empty land there to showcase Camping World's RVs and only if he can negotiate a cheaper lease. Lemonis says if he can get the rent reduction and have a place for his RVs, he could open a combined Gander Mountain and Camping World by fall.

**Fuzzy's Taco Shop** franchisee **Trace Welch**, who has two of the restaurants in **Denver**, plans to open two or three Fuzzy's sites in Wichita with a local partner who prefers not to be named. The first Fuzzy's will be at **306 N. Rock Road**. The restaurant is taking the former **Pho Hot Bistro** and **Signatures Fine Jewelry** spaces. Welch says it has a fun atmosphere with lots of neon, music and a bar in the middle of the restaurant. Fuzzy's serves Baha-style Mexican food with burritos, tacos, Colorado green chili, white queso and "butt-burning sauce." Guests order at a counter and wait to be called to pick up their food.

