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Jaime Oppenheimer/The Wichita Eagle

Michael Elzufon of Real Development stands downtown in front of the company's Wichita Executive Centre, formerly the SC Telcom building.

Downtown buildings' face-lifts set to start

BY BILL WILSON
The Wichita Eagle

The face of the Minnesota Guys' downtown Wichita portfolio will begin changing in two weeks.

Work on the facade of six buildings owned by Real Development will "hit the streets" around April 1, chief executive Michael Elzufon said.

It's a \$3 million first step in a two-year remake of the company's downtown Wichita holdings.

"Two years down the road, we're shooting for iconic. Progressive. Strong. Urban. A very upbeat, with-the-times environment. A live, work and play environment," Elzufon said.

The centerpiece of the project is work at the old SC Telcom building at 125 N. Market and Sutton Place at 209 E. William, both slated for completion by midsummer.

"A complete overhaul," Elzufon said.

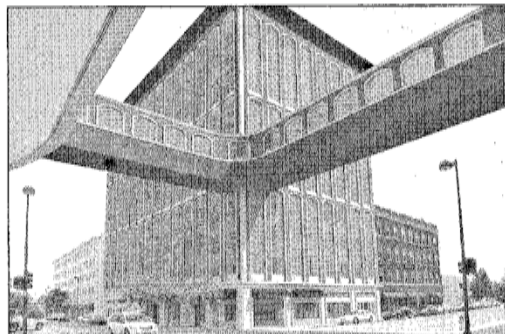
The SC Telcom building, rebranded as Wichita Executive Centre, will include a new streetscape and a new facade up to the eighth floor on the east-side elevation, Elzufon said.

"We're really reintroducing the entire building as if it were new," he said. "The insides we're gutting out completely to reposition it as a Class A office building. Externally, we want it to stand out as one of the iconic architectural features in the downtown skyline."

Sutton is receiving a spring and summer face-lift, with new frontage, streetscape and renovated skywalks due by late in the year.

What Elzufon calls the "historic collection" — the Farmers and Bankers building on First Street, the Orpheum office building and the

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Courtesy Illustration

Real Development plans a two-year remake of its downtown Wichita holdings, including Sutton Place, 209 E. William. This part of the project is slated for completion by midsummer.

DOWNTOWN

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Petroleum building on Broadway, and the Landmark building on Market — will be restored.

"A total remake, through a cleaning and a restoration," Elzufon said.

Each will receive new streetscaping, signage and storefronts, along with a thorough window weatherization program.

The biggest restoration is the Petroleum Building, Elzufon said, approaching \$450,000.

"Same theme," he said.

"We're going to paint the whole thing and replace all the windows in the east elevation facing the arena."

In late summer, facade work and a parking garage project will begin on the Bitting and Exchange Place buildings, linking them with Real Development's Kress Building.

The 16-month renovation of those buildings begins with the first round of residential units

available by spring 2010, Elzufon said.

"We want to change the face of the downtown skyline," Elzufon said.

A fresh look downtown is good news for the city's commercial brokers as they bring prospects in, said new downtown development president Jeff Fluhr and Steve Martens, president of Grubb & Ellis /Martens Commercial Group.

"It really refreshes the skyline," Fluhr said. "It's just huge from the walkability standpoint. You basically end up with a new building out of that work."

"There are so many components involved in a prospect looking for a building, but certainly the appearance of downtown, the overall characteristics, are important in doing a deal," Martens said.

Elzufon promises more projects as 2009 wears on.

"If you think what we're doing is cool, wait until you see what we've got coming in part two," he said.

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SIX BUILDINGS TO BE RENOVATED

The Minnesota Guys are beginning facade renovations on six of their 11 downtown Wichita properties.

- Farmers and Bankers Building, 200 E. First St.
- Landmark Square, 212 N. Market
- Orpheum Office Building, 200 N. Broadway
- Petroleum Building, 221 E. Broadway
- Sutton Place, 209 E. William
- Wichita Executive Centre (formerly the SC Telcom building), 125 N. Market