

## **Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Held for the Newly Renovated City Central Building**

The newly renovated City Central building in downtown Ponca City held a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony last Friday, attended by an estimated 150 people. City Central is a six story, multi-tenant office building owned by the Ponca City Development Authority (PCDA) and renovated with a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The brief ceremony held in the building's lobby featured remarks by Mayor Homer Nicholson and Cornell Wesley, the EDA's Oklahoma representative. Nicholson gave a history of the building including a summary of how the building was donated to the City and PCDA. He said that the city was concerned that the building would become "mothballed" and unused, creating a blight in the downtown area. Renovating the building and using it to diversify the local economy was a far better outcome, the Mayor said.

Wesley stressed the desire of the EDA to work with communities such as Ponca City to enhance economic progress. He noted that the building was one of the first projects he reviewed, upon coming to Oklahoma four years ago. The transformation from what he saw prior to the project and the newly renovated building was remarkable. He noted that he works on a lot of projects and he understands the challenges and the amount of work necessary to complete a project on the scale of City Central. He thanked the Mayor, the City and PCDA for their partnership and said he would welcome the chance to work together again on other projects.

PCDA Chair Natalie Fraser also spoke to the crowd, providing the first official welcome. Senator Bill Coleman, Representative Ken Luttrell and the members of the City Commission were also in attendance and introduced. Senator Jim Inhofe and Senator James Lankford, who were instrumental in PCDA getting the \$1.275 million federal grant, were represented by Ryan Sproule and Tanner Roberts.

A portion of the program also included recognition by PCDA Executive Director David Myers of people who were instrumental in the success of the project. Among those thanked were Rhonda Skrapke, Chris Henderson and the City of Ponca City, the Ponca City Chamber of Commerce, Project Architect Perry Schauvliege, project contractor Kyler Construction as well as the PCDA staff. Myers also thanked the current tenants of the building for their patience during construction.

The Ponca City Chamber of Commerce held the official ribbon cutting. Mayor Nicholson and Wesley cut the ribbon with Coleman, Luttrell and members of the PCDA Board of Trustees and City Commission holding the ceremonial ribbon. Chamber Chair Eric Pietz presented PCDA with their official first dollar,” a chamber tradition.

Those in attendance were provided tours of the building. The “Link,” a shared work center located in the first floor hosted the ceremonies. The “Summit,” Conference Center, a large business and event center in the building’s lower level was the site of a post ceremony reception. Offices for lease above the ground floor were also the subject of several tours.

City Central was originally opened as a bank building in 1975. The building changed ownerships several times and had fallen into poor condition in recent years. It was donated to PCDA in December of 2016 and the former owner also provided an additional donation of \$200,000 to help begin the refurbishments. Mayor Nicholson, in his remarks, noted that the grant from EDA made the entire refurbishment project viable. The actual construction on the renovations began in the spring of 2018 and was completed April 26<sup>th</sup> of this year.

Fraser invited anyone interested in learning more about City Central to contact the PCDA office, now located in the newly renovated building, at 580.765.7070. [www.goponca.com](http://www.goponca.com)

(Picture Caption: Members of the PCDA Board of Trustees, the City Commission, Ponca City Chamber of Commerce, Senator Bill Coleman and Representative Ken Luttrell join Mayor Homer Nicholson and Cornell Wesley of the U.S. Department of Commerce as they cut the ribbon for the newly renovated City central building in downtown Ponca City.)

