

From: ["Bill Pearson"](#)
 To: ["Kaley Dorsey" <Kaley.Dorsey@townsquaremedia.com>](#)
["Dakota Woods" <Dakota.Woods@townsquaremedia.com>](#)
 CC: ["Dr. Ratliff, CEO" <krista@thefista.com>](#)
 Date: 8/20/2026 4:11:01 PM
 Subject: Lawton Plaza/FISTA article

Kaley,

I am writing regarding your recent article about Central Plaza and FISTA Innovation Park. We welcome fair, accurate reporting, and understand that redevelopment can involve different perspectives. However, several statements and characterizations in the article are inaccurate, misleading, or presented without important context. Please see comments below.

"There hasn't been any construction done on the plaza."

This is false. Central Plaza has undergone significant construction and reinvestment, including more than \$20 million in improvements. These include roof and skylight replacement and repairs, upgraded exterior lighting, new LED parking-lot lighting, retail tenant buildouts, new HVAC units, parking-lot drainage improvements, STEM facilities, anechoic testing facilities, and other major upgrades. Central Plaza is actively being transformed from a declining traditional mall into a mixed-use destination.

"The only advancements...have been for the benefit of FISTA."

This is also false and misleading. Property-wide investments—including the roof, skylights, exterior lighting, parking-lot lighting, drainage repairs, HVAC systems, facility surfacing and insulation, and retail-store remodels—benefit Central Plaza as a whole. FISTA's presence also brings employees, students, industry partners, events, visitors, and economic activity that support the property and its businesses.

The portrayal of retail as simply disappearing is misleading.

Retail has been intentionally relocated and clustered to increase density, visibility, shared traffic, and customer convenience. Central Plaza currently includes seven active restaurants, with additional restaurants anticipated, as well as remaining retail and commercial businesses.

The \$10 million anechoic chamber investment is inaccurately described as "two sound-proof rooms."

These are specialized RF and electromagnetic testing facilities supporting radar, antenna, communications, aviation, and defense technologies. They provide a regional capability intended to attract companies, programs, investment, and highly skilled jobs to Lawton.

Claims that the mall rarely sees visitors or that the parking lot is empty are unsupported and misleading.

Central Plaza now serves a broader population than traditional mall shoppers, including restaurant and retail customers, employees, students, educators, industry partners, event attendees, and business visitors. The parking lot has also been substantially improved with new LED lighting throughout.

Unrealized early entertainment concepts should not be treated as evidence that redevelopment has not occurred.

Not every initial concept has been developed, but millions of dollars have been invested in the property, substantial redevelopment has taken place, and additional work is continuing.

Central Plaza and FISTA are repeatedly treated as interchangeable.

They are not the same. Central Plaza is the broader mixed-use property, while FISTA Innovation Park is a major component of its redevelopment—alongside restaurants, retail, commercial businesses, education, and other uses.

The suggestion that Central Plaza may be "engulfed by the FISTA" is slanted and inflammatory.

FISTA is not engulfing Central Plaza. It is reactivating previously underutilized space, attracting employers and investment, and creating additional daily traffic that supports the broader property.

The conclusion about "what we won't benefit from in the future" is unsupported.

The community is already benefiting through jobs, STEM education, workforce development, infrastructure investment, defense-industry growth, new business activity, and continued redevelopment.

Describing Central Plaza as a "half-deserted wasteland, half-government-contract hub" is materially incomplete and unnecessarily negative.

The property currently includes seven operating restaurants, retail and commercial businesses, STEM education, workforce programming, technology and testing facilities, employers, events, and continued private- and public-sector investment.

Our community needs constructive, accurate coverage that recognizes both the challenges and the progress taking place. Central Plaza is a large collection of stores, restaurants, and businesses serving southwest Oklahoma, and it welcomes hundreds of visitors every day. Retail districts succeed when residents, businesses, property owners, institutions, and media work together to encourage visitation and build positive awareness—not when the area is characterized as a dead facility or wasteland.

The significant investment in the FISTA Youth and Science Institute will further strengthen Central Plaza's future. The institute will bring engaging, hands-on STEM activities and educational experiences to the plaza, creating additional reasons for families, students, educators, and visitors to come to the property. This increased activity is expected to substantially increase foot traffic for retail tenants and restaurants while supporting the broader redevelopment effort.

We respectfully ask that you review these facts and consider publishing a correction, clarification, or follow-up story that presents Central Plaza and FISTA in their proper context. The goal is not to avoid legitimate scrutiny, but to ensure that public discussion is based on accurate information and reflects the substantial work and investment already underway.



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