WKU Center for Research and Development

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For the past ten years, the old Bowling Green Mall has quietly transformed into a hub of applied research and small business development.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham looks at how WKU has revitalized the former shopping center.

Western Kentucky University is not a traditional research university but it’s certainly outgrown the comprehensive university mold. The Center for Research and Development is a big part of the reason why.

“People wonder what we do out here, they drive by the old mall, still called the old mall by the old timers in Bowling Green.”

The fountain is still there but most everything else has changed.

“We’d love for them to think of it as the Center for Research and Development.”

The research includes what’s being done here at the NOVA Center. The largest scanning electron microscope available in North America.

“It’s an extraordinary way of doing non-destructive testing of machine parts and we are talking of course to GM as to how they can utilize that in the future.”

The Center also includes the Institute for Combustion Science and Environmental Technology, or ICSET, which has been here since the beginning.

“ICSET has been one of the jewels in the crown of this university for many many years.”

The Center’s Small Business Accelerator is home to seventeen businesses including Hitcents.

“Hitcents was a company that was started by a couple of students at Western and went on to succeed in the world of web development and internet commerce.”

Another success story is Pure Power Technologies, where engineers are developing engine components for cleaner running vehicles and equipment.

“This business, right now, services 12 ½ million in annual revenue with a growth potential of 100 million per year.”

Later this year Pure Power will expand to a 13 thousand square foot facility. And the development doesn’t stop there.

“If you have anything to do with new business ventures, you need to come see us.”

WKU’s Small Business Development Center is now housed inside the Center for Research and Development.

“Small companies that want to start up, need a place to work, have access to conference rooms, a lobby, a reception area, a professional office environment.”

The common area of the Center is currently filled with art work created by WKU’s Art Department. The exhibit runs through June 24th including weekends.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.