

# THE POINT

GREATER  
OKLAHOMA CITY  
CHAMBER



February 2020

[www.okcchamber.com](http://www.okcchamber.com)

## 2020 OKC economic forecast: continuing growth expected; softening possible

According to the Chamber's soon-to-be-released 2020 Economic Forecast, the Oklahoma City metro economy experienced a healthy year in 2019. Strong economic conditions at the national level helped to bring about a third consecutive year of positive job growth in the metro. Overall nonfarm annual job growth was 1.2 percent, or 7,900 jobs, in the Oklahoma City MSA.

The largest percentage year-over-year job gains were found in the construction (+8.3 percent), wholesale trade (+4.9 percent), scientific & technical services (+4.8 percent), and health services (+3.0 percent) sectors. Positive Oklahoma City metro job growth in 2020 is expected, but may soften to 0.5 percent, or approximately 2,900 jobs. While the Oklahoma

City metro economy is less dependent on the national economy and energy industry than the rest of the state, it is not wholly immune to the influence of either. A slowdown in activity could make the local economy vulnerable to national uncertainties that may arise, and to a sluggish energy sector.

### Value of construction projects

According to Dodge MarketLook, in 2019 the total construction value of tracked contract projects (residential, non-residential, and non-building infrastructure) in the Oklahoma City MSA was \$3.6 billion. That was 8 percent less than the prior year. The largest positive year over year gains were found in the hotel & motel, schools & colleges, hospital,

*Continued on page 10*

## Chamber's new lifestyle PR effort to begin in 2020



*Oklahoma City retailers, including Chamber members Traci Walton, Plenty Mercantile, and Rachael Gruntmeir; The Black Scintilla, met with members of the JPR team to discuss retail and shopping during JPR's OKC Immersion trip.*

The Chamber is embarking on a new and unique lifestyle public relations effort aimed at proliferating the message that OKC is a great place to live to a national audience.

“As talent recruitment becomes more of a driver of business success, we know people from other markets may not be aware of what it's truly like to live in OKC and all the potential benefits it brings to a prospective employee, not to mention their family,” said Cynthia Reid, senior vice president of marketing and communications at the Chamber. “This effort will help foster more positive perception as well as more top-of-mind awareness of our market, hopefully making it easier for our companies to recruit from elsewhere.”

*Continued on page 11*

# Turning Seconds into Years.



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## Leadership Notes

*The census is important to OKC*

Once a decade, America comes together to count every resident in the United States, creating national awareness of the importance of the census and its valuable statistics. This year, the census count will begin April 1.

Participating in the census is vital to our city because federal funds, grants and support to states, counties and communities are based on population totals and breakdowns by sex, age, race and other factors. Oklahoma City benefits the most when the census counts everyone.

But the 2020 Census is more than a population count. It's an opportunity to shape the future of our community.

You and your business can help. Consider including information about the census in correspondence with customers (emails, invoices, website banners); provide a link to the census on your website; provide computers or tablets that can be used to complete the 2020 Census; or provide internet access to those who do not currently have access so that they can complete the census online.

You can inspire others. Tell everyone—your friends and family, your neighbors and co-workers—that you will complete the census, and tell them why it's important that they respond too. Through your social media channels, your voice can make a difference.

Census results have an impact on planning and funding for health clinics and highways, fire departments and disaster response, education programs and college tuition assistance, and so much more. Encourage your friends, colleagues and neighbors to participate in this important event. Oklahoma City is counting on you!

Sincerely,

Roy H. Williams, CCE  
Chamber President & CEO



Roy H. Williams, CCE  
President & CEO

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## THE POINT!

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Photo: Steve Johnson/KFOR

## The Chamber works with local developers for OKC

A new mixed-use development, “The Half,” is coming to Oklahoma City. The project isn’t the only of its kind under way in the metro, but developers say its central location and unique vendors could entice locals and out-of-towners alike. The story behind the development is indicative of some of the ways the Chamber assists local developers in bringing new concepts to OKC.

According to developer Randy Hogan, the name reflects the location and intent behind the project. The name was chosen to indicate its central location in the metro, more specifically as a halfway destination between downtown Oklahoma City and Edmond. The 52-acre mixed-use development features restaurants, indoor and outdoor activities, corporate offices, water features, three ponds and hotel and apartment space.

“The CEO of American Fidelity reached out to us a couple of years ago,” said Hogan. “They really felt the need to create something that would be attractive for their employees and would help them recruit millennials and the younger generation. We also felt like it would create a new pocket in Oklahoma City, a new destination location like the East Wharf on Lake Hefner, which would also be a nice asset for Oklahoma City.”

Two or three years and more than 70 plans later, the development was laid out. “Once that happened, we knew we wanted to have two entertainment anchors as a starting point,” said Hogan.

“Flix Brew House, which the Chamber introduced us to at the International Council of Shopping Centers

(ICSC) trade show, is a great head start, because it has luxury seats, they brew their own beer, it’s a nine-screen theater, it’s really, really a cool concept,” he said.

The second corporate headquarters slated for The Half is an Oklahoma City mainstay, Dolese. “Dolese was in the market to try and figure out where they wanted to move and they also wanted to be in a project that was attractive to younger people,” said Hogan. “For them it was a big step to come out and be in a new suburban location and they think that will help them when they hire new people.”



Each year, the Chamber leads Oklahoma City’s presence at the ICSC RECon convention in Las Vegas, where meetings with developers, retailers and investors take place that can have repercussions for years to come.

The next piece of the puzzle was residential. “On the living piece, we’ve known Gary Brooks forever,” said Hogan. “We called him and asked if he’d like to meet. He hasn’t been looking at anything new, since he has a lot going on with the First National Center, but thanks to our relationship he said, ‘sure, why not?’

The second entertainment anchor also came through a Chamber recommendation. “The Chamber introduced us to Chicken N Pickle (a restaurant and pickle ball concept), which I happened to visit during a trip to Kansas City,” said Hogan. “They really liked the site, we just loved what they brought to the table and that checked the box. It’ll be their newest prototype and we’re really excited. They should open by the end of this year.”



Dolese’s new headquarters building is one of the anchor tenants of The Half development.

The final amenity for the corporate campus is adding a hotel, and the developer expects to announce that addition soon.

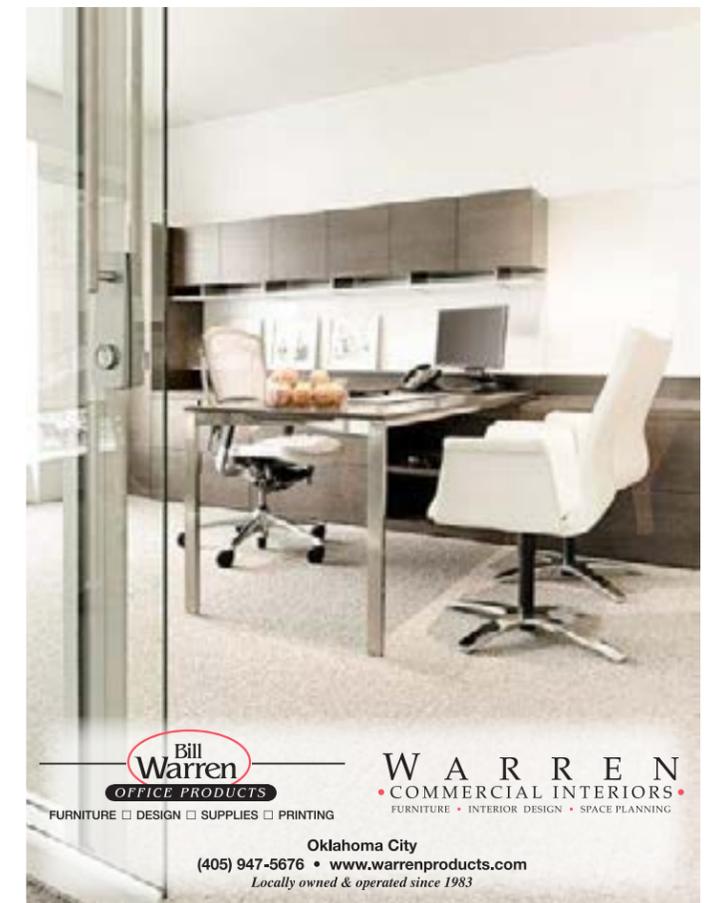
Working with Hogan is just an example of the many projects across the city where the Chamber is working with developers to bring new destination retailers to the area. Other examples include Chisholm Creek, where the Chamber assisted in attracting Cabelas, Top Golf and others; Penn Square, working with Container Store; and the OKC Outlets.

“We work very hard to provide information to clients considering our market that helps them decide they want to be in Oklahoma City,” explained Tammy Fate, the Chamber’s Senior Manager of Retail Development. “Once they begin looking seriously at the market and become interested in locations, we introduce them to

the developers. We have great partners in all of these developments who then work with these clients to make the real estate deal work for them and eventually bring these new amenities to the market.”

Alternatively, sometimes the project comes first to the developer, and the Chamber provides technical support and resources. “The Chamber has access to valuable data and resources that help demonstrate the market for a client,” Fate continued. “We are really here to be a support in any way that we can.”

“The assistance the Chamber provides really is important,” said Hogan. “We don’t have 50 employees or a marketing arm, per se. It’s hands-on. So to have the Chamber working with us is vital. ICSC [RECon] is a great example. The Chamber booth provides a meeting place and a means of introduction that’s extremely important. We’ve had really, really good success in those meetings. I really believe that, because the Chamber has a windshield where they see a lot of activity that we may not see, particularly for people from out-of-state having an interest in Oklahoma City, it really has a meaningful impact.”



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## CALENDAR

**Feb. 11**

**Member Orientation**  
8:30 to 10 a.m.  
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber 123 Park Ave.  
okcchamber.com/orientation2

**Feb. 19**

**Chamber Forum**  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Vast 333 W. Sheridan Ave.  
okcchamber.com/februaryforum

**Feb. 26**

**State of the City**  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Cox Convention Center  
1 Myriad Gardens  
okcchamber.com/soc

**Mar. 5**

**Chairman's Breakfast**  
8:00 to 9:30 a.m.  
Embassy Suites by Hilton OKC Northwest  
3233 NW Expressway  
okcchamber.com/chairmansgov

**Mar. 6**

**Enlighten**  
Noon to 1 p.m.  
Walker Terrace 1300 N. Walker Ave., Suite 300  
okcchamber.com/enlighten

**Mar. 10**

**Member Orientation**  
8:30 to 10 a.m.  
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber 123 Park Ave.  
okcchamber.com/orientation2

**Mar. 18**

**Chamber Forum**  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Vast 333 W. Sheridan Ave.  
okcchamber.com/marchforum

**Apr. 3**

**Enlighten**  
Noon to 1 p.m.  
Walker Terrace 1300 N. Walker Ave., Suite 300  
okcchamber.com/enlighten

## Mayor Holt to deliver annual State of the City address Feb. 26



Don't miss this opportunity to hear Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt reflect on his second year in office, including the recent MAPS 4 vote results, and project where the city is headed in the future. More than 1,500 of OKC's business leaders are expected to attend this event on Wednesday, Feb. 26, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Cox Convention Center, 1 Myriad Gardens. 2020 Chamber Chair Percy Kirk will highlight the Chamber's strategic objectives for the coming year.

Tickets are \$60 for Chamber members and \$100 for nonmembers. Table sponsorships seating 10 are available for \$1,500.

To register, visit [okcchamber.com/soc](http://okcchamber.com/soc).

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor The Professional Basketball Club, LLC - Oklahoma City Thunder and Signature Sponsors American Fidelity Assurance Company and Hobby Lobby.

## Chamber Forum series continues Feb. 19

Make plans now for the second Chamber Forum of 2020 when Oklahoma City Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Sean McDaniel will provide an overview of how implementation of the district's Pathway to Greatness plan has impacted classrooms, teachers and staff.

The forum will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 19, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the 50th floor of Vast, 333 W. Sheridan Ave. Tickets are \$35 for Chamber members and \$50 for nonmembers. Register online at [okcchamber.com/februaryforum](http://okcchamber.com/februaryforum).

The Chamber Forum series brings thought leaders together to discuss major initiatives, programs and current issues that impact Oklahoma City's business climate, economy and community.

Special thanks to Series Presenting Sponsor Cox Business and Series Corporate Sponsor ADG.

## Hear from Gov. Kevin Stitt at Chairman's Breakfast

Gov. Kevin Stitt will speak to guests at the upcoming Chairman's Breakfast on Thursday, March 5, from 8 to 9:30 a.m. at the Embassy Suites by Hilton OKC NW, 3233 NW Expressway. Gov. Stitt will discuss key issues facing Oklahoma businesses, recap his first year in office and outline major objectives for the 2020 legislative session.

Tickets are \$40 for Chamber members and \$60 for nonmembers. Tables of 10 are available for \$1,000. Register for the event online at [okcchamber.com/chairmansgov](http://okcchamber.com/chairmansgov). Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Cox Communications and Host Sponsor Embassy Suites by Hilton OKC NW.



## Register now for Chamber's annual D.C. legislative visit

Spots are now available for the Chamber's D.C. visit April 29-30, a two-day trip to our nation's capital to advocate for pro-business legislation.

Attendees are afforded briefings with Oklahoma's U.S. senators and congressmen, as well as a reception on Capitol Hill with federal officials and defense leaders. On the second day, sessions will cover specific topics of interest on issues critical to our community. Cost is \$800 per person and includes one night's lodging at The Dupont Circle Hotel and all affiliated events.

Decisions made in our nation's capital have a significant impact on our businesses and our community. From regulation and infrastructure development to investments in our nation's defense, Oklahoma City—and our companies—feel the consequences of choices made there.

Visit [okcchamber.com/dc](http://okcchamber.com/dc) to reserve your spot.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor American Fidelity Assurance Company.



# OKCPS update on Pathway to Greatness

The Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) recently completed the first full semester under the district's new 'Pathway to Greatness' plan.

The plan aimed to realign the district's resources to more equitably serve students, resulting in numerous "trade-ups" in the form of classes, services and programs students may not have previously had access to.

OKCPS officials say that the plan is providing better support for teachers and delivering more resources to students.

"This was radical change that upset the apple cart for thousands of people, so we know that there was and still is heartburn and anxiety, and people are upset," Superintendent Dr. Sean McDaniel said at a recent press conference. "But we believe that the end result—and we are starting to see some results now—is worth it. Because this is kid-focused."

For many kids in OKCPS, McDaniel said they are experiencing class types and resources previously unavailable to them.

"We have kids right now who are fourth graders who, in their entire lives, can say this: I have never been to a school until this year that had a full-time art class; I have

never been to a school until this year that had a full-time counselor; I have never been to a school until this year that said STEM is so important," McDaniel said.

McDaniel said the same concept of "trade ups"—made possible by P2G's reduction of elementary school campuses—applies to other support staff positions critical to student wellbeing.

"We've added social workers, we've added [12 full-time] nurses," he said. "We went from 24 percent of our 54 elementaries last year that had a full-time counselor to 100 percent of our 33 elementaries this year that have a full-time counselor."

But the district still faces some challenges, among them he identified areas needing additional focus during his Pathway to Greatness update:

- Transportation challenges with new and adjusted bus routes
- Class sizes in some schools
- Concerns about student behavior at certain schools
- Community anticipation for immediate P2G success

McDaniel said class sizes are also always a challenge at every district and that OKCPS is focused on the issue.

"We know that in some cases, while we're saying a goal of ours is to reduce elementary class size—and on average we did—we know there are people who are above average, who last year their class size was lower than it is this year," McDaniel said. "We still have class sizes that are too high, and we will continue to address that."

An unexpected surge in enrollment caused Taft Middle School to relocate its fifth graders to Linwood Elementary, which closed last year. Students in sixth through eighth grade remain in the original Taft building.

Linwood will stay as Taft's fifth-grade center for the 2020-21 school year after projections indicated similar enrollment numbers next year, McDaniel said.

F.D. Moon Middle School will make a similar move next year by hosting its fifth graders in the vacant Edwards Elementary. This will allow more space to complete MAPS renovations at the middle school.

Outside of closing and consolidating schools, the district redefined fifth grade as a middle school level.

This caused fear among some parents, who were reluctant to put their fifth-grade children in the same halls as teenagers.

Increasing bus driver pay is being considered to help bring in more drivers. Today, 14 of the 15 closed schools have been repurposed. Now OKCPS is in talks to lease the last school, Gatewood Elementary, to health care organization Variety Care.

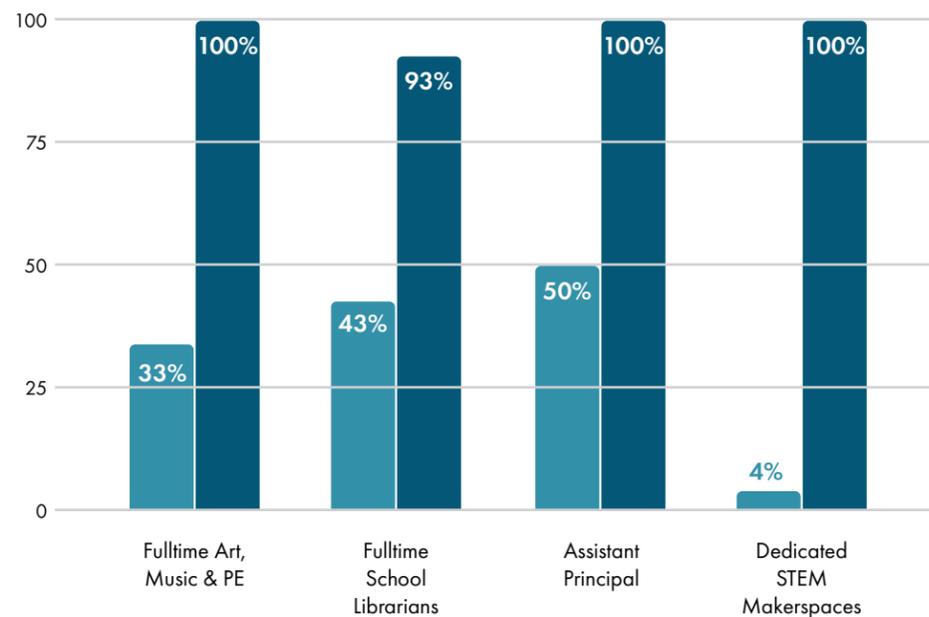
Earlier, OKCPS announced its former Green Pastures Elementary School in northeast Oklahoma City would become a film and television academy and film studio to meet the growing needs and economic development of the Oklahoma entertainment industry.

McDaniel refused any kind of credit he might receive for the successes of P2G and instead pointed to the leadership of the board members who give "hundreds of hours" without pay to see that a good education is provided for metro children.

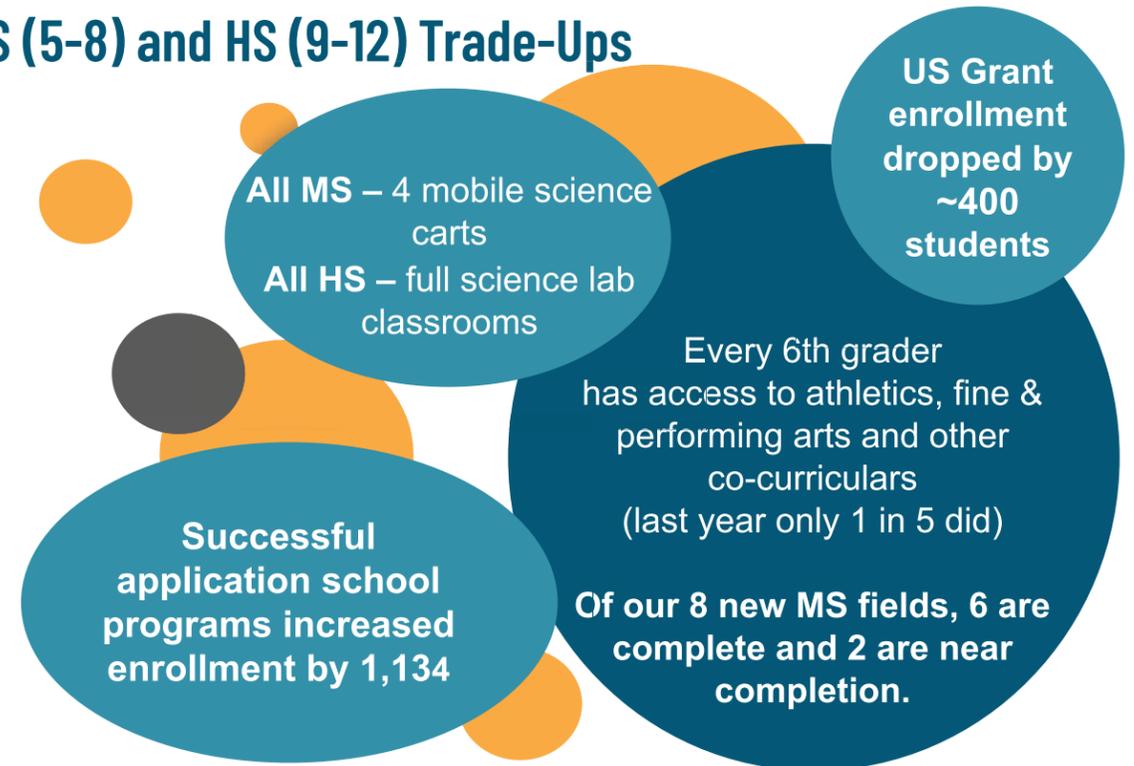
Superintendent McDaniel will provide insight into the Pathway to Greatness program at the February Chamber Forum. Event details and a registration link can be found on page 6.

## Increased Learning Opportunities

### Elementary Trade-Ups



### MS (5-8) and HS (9-12) Trade-Ups



## Increased Learning Opportunities

## Economic forecast (cont'd)

and amusement categories. The largest year-over-year construction value declines were in office & bank, libraries & museums, public buildings, and miscellaneous non-residential categories. For 2020, total construction value of contract projects is forecasted to increase by 2 percent with positive gains in both non-residential and residential. Decline is expected in non-building (bridges, water supply systems and other).

### Unemployment rates remain low

The Oklahoma City metro ended 2019 with an annual average unemployment rate for the year just above three percent (approximately 3.1 percent), with monthly unemployment rates ranging as low as 2.6 percent and as high 3.5 percent. Oklahoma City ranked among the lowest 25 unemployment rates for large metros (over 1 million population), and in April 2019 matched the lowest monthly unemployment rate the Oklahoma City metro had experienced in the past 20 years (2.6 percent). But, the state and Oklahoma City metro started to see a slight uptick in the number of company layoff announcements towards the end of the year.

### Short- and long-term population growth continues to be important

Area population growth helps to offset low unemployment and increase total labor force. When official 2019 U.S. Census population figures are released, it will show that the Oklahoma City metro population has grown to be just over 1.4 million.

For the past 15 years, population growth has been an impressive story for Oklahoma City. Since 2005, the Oklahoma City metro has grown by nearly a quarter million people. The average annual population growth rate from 2005 to 2019 was about 1.5 percent, double that of the nation. However, over the past three years there has been a slowing in year-over-year growth.

While the long term growth trends continue to be a positive, it reinforces the importance of economic development efforts to recruit new businesses and help existing companies grow. Population gains follow job growth.

As recognized over the past several years, national urbanization trends continue to benefit the two largest metros in the state. This is specifically seen in looking at how much of the state's economy and growth can be attributed to the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metros. Combined, the Oklahoma City and Tulsa MSAs now account for 68 percent of the state's GDP, 67 percent of personal income and 61 percent of total population (or \$7 out of every \$10 of goods and services, \$2 out of every \$3 of personal income and three out of every five people).

### Job growth from chamber-assisted companies

2019 brought about the end of the fourth year of the Chamber's five-year economic development program called Forward Oklahoma City V. The Forward campaign has provided longer term strategic planning to the region's economic development initiatives for nearly 25 years.

Since 2016, 20,048 jobs with payroll in excess of \$1 billion, and \$1.9 billion in capital investment has been announced by Chamber-assisted companies. As part of that program, overall metrics are tracked for Chamber-assisted companies in a number of different areas: new start-up companies assisted, job growth from existing companies as well as new to market firms, wages, capital investment, and growth in tax base.

In 2019, Chamber-assisted companies announced plans for the creation of 4,658 jobs with an annual average salary of \$69,561. In addition, those same companies announced more than \$963 million in capital investment. The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber ended 2019 with 95 active projects in its economic development pipeline. The pipeline tracks companies or projects that are potentially looking to relocate or expand in the Greater Oklahoma City region. The largest number of projects by facility type included manufacturing, office, distribution, aviation, and shared-services/call center.

The full 2020 Economic Forecast will be released on Feb. 13. Read the publication at that time at [OKCChamber.com/forecast](http://OKCChamber.com/forecast).

## Chamber's lifestyle public relations effort (cont'd)

As part of that project, representatives of an award-winning international hospitality, travel and luxury lifestyle public relations and social media agency, J Public Relations (JPR), recently visited Oklahoma City for an immersion trip. During their three-day visit, JPR and Chamber staff met with a number of Chamber members and community partners representing a variety of areas, including arts and culture, retail, outdoor recreation, food and restaurants, brewing and distilling, development, housing, communications, entrepreneurship, local districts and more.

The overall strategy involves JPR and Chamber staff working together to pitch and place stories through both traditional and new media about life in Oklahoma City, our residents, businesses, penchant for entrepreneurship and cooperation, and what kind of lifestyle OKC truly affords.

"It was such a pleasure to be introduced to the wonderful community of OKC and experience the deep-rooted Oklahoma Standard. We're excited to put together a strategic plan and begin telling the unique



*The Chamber's new public relations effort will place and pitch stories about the benefits and variety of living in Oklahoma City.*

stories behind the reinvention of OKC," said Kristin Moller, JPR Senior Vice President.

"Personally, this is something I've been interested in doing for a while, and with all the investments we've all made on making this a great place to live—and are continuing to make through MAPS 4—now is the perfect time to start telling the story of life in OKC in a way that's never really been done before," said Reid.

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www.oklahomaswim.com

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Oklahoma City, OK 73120  
www.theuniformshoppe.com

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Oklahoma City, OK 73109  
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www.woodlandtrailsapartments.com



## Show your love for OKC by joining the OKC Social Squad, signing up for email news updates

The Chamber has a few ways to engage with and show your love for OKC and the Chamber, not just during February, but throughout the entire year.

Whether you're a social media expert or just getting started growing your networks, you're probably looking for good, engaging content and subject matter about which to post—perhaps even Chamber- and OKC-related content. Get great content and links to share as well as show your love for the Chamber and Oklahoma City through the Chamber's OKC Social Squad program.

Now in its second year, the OKC Social Squad is a program that lets members get points and prizes for posting content and links that lead to certain stories on VeloCityOKC.com. It's great for those new to the world of social media who initially may not be sure what to post, as well as those with well-developed networks and followings.

The process is simple: just head to OKCSocialSquad.com, connect one or more of your social accounts, click "Posts to Share" on the top menu, and you're off. Social Squad members can use the suggested language for each post/link, or edit them to personal taste. The more clicks and interactions you generate, the more points you get, and the leaderboard updates almost instantly. OKC-related prizes are awarded monthly for the top point-getters, and along with posting for points, you can even earn many extra points by recruiting friends to join the OKC Social Squad. A new contest starts every month, making the program

great for social media experts as well as those who are just getting started growing their networks.

"I think the Social Squad is great for people who want to get into the world of social media, but may find the prospect of coming up with content and links a bit daunting," said Cynthia Reid, senior vice president of marketing and communications. "The program makes it easy to find good OKC-related links, and even suggests language you can use in your posts if you'd like."

### Stay informed

It's even easier to stay informed on what's going on in OKC and at the State Capitol with the VeloCityOKC weekly email digest, and The Business Advocate e-newsletter.

Every Monday, the VeloCityOKC weekly email recaps popular VeloCityOKC.com stories from the previous week you may have missed, in addition to keeping you up-to-date on Chamber events, member news and other content to keep you engaged in OKC and the Chamber. Similarly, signing up for The Business Advocate e-newsletter is a great way to keep up with the Chamber's lobbying efforts at the Capitol and to find out when your help is needed on an issue.

Sign up for the weekly VeloCityOKC email by going to VeloCityOKC.com and signing up at the bottom of the homepage, and for The Business Advocate at OKCBusinessAdvocate.com.

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# GRAND OPENINGS

Congratulations to Chamber members on their recent Grand Openings! To see the schedule of upcoming Grand Openings or subscribe to the Grand Openings calendar, visit [www.okcchamber.com/grandopenings](http://www.okcchamber.com/grandopenings).



**Viability, Inc**  
2000 N. Classen Blvd., N160  
Oklahoma City, OK 73106



**Oklahoma City Police Athletic League**  
3816 S. Robinson Ave.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73109

# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Oklahoma City ranks No. 1 among best cities for tech companies to expand

## Best Markets for Tech Expansion

Rank	City	Affordability Score	Overall Score
1	Oklahoma City	94.0	75.5
2	Kansas City	81.0	71.4
3	Jacksonville	44.0	66.2
4	Indianapolis	84.5	63.9
5	Cincinnati	84.5	62.9

Source: Zillow, LinkedIn, BLS 2019 & U.S. Census ACS 2019

For comprehensive Economic Indicators and Regional Data, visit [www.greateroklahomacity.com/economicindicators](http://www.greateroklahomacity.com/economicindicators) or contact Eric Long, Research Economist – 297-8976; [elong@okcchamber.com](mailto:elong@okcchamber.com)

- Zillow ranked Oklahoma City No. 1 out of 42 large metro areas nationwide for tech companies and start-ups to expand.
- The study focused on these five factors: housing affordability, market “hotness,” demographics & labor, tech availability, and livability.
- Oklahoma City, referred to as the “Silicon Prairie,” offered the best balance for all 5 categories.



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**LOOK INSIDE!**

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- 8 OKCPS Pathway to Greatness update
- 13 Join the OKC Social Squad, sign up for news updates

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