

THE POINT

April 2021

GREATER
OKLAHOMA CITY
CHAMBER



okcchamber.com

InternOKC returns in Summer 2021 with an all-new virtual format

InternOKC, the Chamber's popular professional development and networking series of events for summer interns, is returning in the summer of 2021 with an all-new virtual format. The six-session series will take place weekly from June 16 to July 28.

Participants will learn valuable tools to help the transition from college student to young professional and create relationships that can help launch their career. Sessions will include programming from industry trainers with topics that cover personal behavior and habits, building relationships and networking, and developing a mindset that fosters problem solving. New this year, the InternOKC experience will include a micro-badge credential that interns will receive only after attending all sessions.

"Enrolling your interns in InternOKC is an investment in your future workforce and the future of Oklahoma City," said Lee Copeland, director of talent and business growth for the Chamber. "Our



programming will introduce our region's brightest college students to Oklahoma City as a great place to start their careers and build their lives, and the virtual format allows a level of engagement for employers that we haven't been able to offer before."

Registration fee per intern is \$125 for Chamber member companies or \$200 for nonmembers. Enroll your summer interns by visiting abetterlifeokc.com/summerintern or contact Lee Copeland at lcopeland@okcchamber.com with questions.

City Council and School Board elections on April 6

Voters in Oklahoma City and in the Oklahoma City Public School District will have the chance to shape the future of their community by voting in important elections on April 6.

While the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber does not endorse candidates, the Chamber asked all candidates to complete a survey to better understand their positions on issues important to the organization. Learn more about each candidate and their responses below.

City of Oklahoma City

Voters in Wards 1 and 3 will vote on their city councilor. Candidates in the April 6 runoff, listed in the order in which they appear on the ballot, are Shay Varnell and Bradley Carter for Ward 1 and Jessica Martinez-Brooks and Barbara Young for Ward 3.

Shay Varnell is a small business owner who currently serves on the Traffic & Transportation Committee. On his campaign website, Varnell says, "My OKC values

Continued on page 6



We believe in bucket lists.



*Susan Laurence, Uterine Cancer Survivor
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Leadership Notes

Thank you for your insight

Throughout the pandemic, we have sent surveys to our members to understand your concerns and your status in reacting to this environment. Thank you. Your input has been invaluable as we make decisions about how best to support businesses.

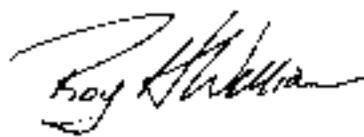
Our most recent survey was a strong reminder that businesses are feeling the effects of the pandemic in different ways, with the most common trait being the shared concern for employees and customers.

For those who answered the survey, more than 60% continue to have employees working remotely. We know that this experience could have long-term impacts on the workplace and the acceptance and use of remote work for many businesses. In fact, 40% of our companies are considering more flexibility and remote work in the future.

While vaccines are bringing hope to many for a return to normal, it is clear that many businesses remain in a “wait and see” attitude about a full return to the workplace. Almost 60% do not yet have a planned date for returning everyone to the office, waiting for the full implementation of vaccines and more indication that it is time to return.

The survey also brought some good news. Only 15% of those surveyed saw a reduction in hiring last year and 27% actually increased their hiring over what they had anticipated, while 57% saw the year play out as expected.

We are paying close attention to the rollout of the American Rescue Plan Act and the opportunities for businesses. As soon as we know more, we will share with you. Watch velocityokc.com and okcchamber.com for information. Thank you again for your insight as we work together for our city’s recovery.



Roy H. Williams, CCE
Chamber President & CEO



Roy H. Williams, CCE
President & CEO

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“OKC NAMED AMONG TOP 15 ‘BEST PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK AS A MOVIEMAKER IN 2021’”
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bringing improvements across the
city

UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

(Events are subject to change. Consult okcchamber.com/events for the most recent updates.)

April 9

Enlighten

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/enlighten

April 21

Chamber Forum

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/aprilforum

April 27

Creating a Culture of Inclusion

3:30 to 5 p.m.
okcchamber.com/diversity

May 7

Enlighten

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/enlighten2

May 12

State of Health

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/stateofhealth

May 19

Chamber Forum

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/mayforum

May 20

MegaLunch

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/megalunch

State of Health to feature Robin Farmanfarmaian as keynote speaker

At the upcoming State of Health virtual event, keynote speaker Robin Farmanfarmaian will cover how current health care businesses can keep up with the Amazons and Apples to create the future of the industry. Farmanfarmaian is a professional speaker and entrepreneur based in Silicon Valley who has been involved with more than 20 early-stage startups working on cutting-edge technology in health care, biotech, pharma, medical devices and digital health.

During her State of Health keynote, attendees will learn where some of the shifts are happening in healthcare delivery, patient experience, and healthcare consumer spending power and trends, and how this disruption provides opportunities for growing the healthcare industry in Oklahoma City.

The program will also include two panel discussions: one with the leaders of our region's four largest health care institutions and one with members of Oklahoma City's bioscience community. Individual tickets are \$25 for Chamber members and \$40 for nonmembers. Visit okcchamber.com/statehealth to register. Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor MidFirst Bank and Host Sponsor OU Health.

Developing a culture of allyship topic for April Creating a Culture of Inclusion Event

At the April Creating a Culture of Inclusion virtual event, attendees will have the opportunity to learn what it means to be an effective ally. Every organization has a group of stakeholders, executives, and staff who must foster effective communication through conflict, change and crisis. The April event will prepare those people to hold and encourage others to have the challenging conversations that lead to better collaboration and teamwork. Developing a company culture of allyship—which includes listening, speaking up, and taking responsibility for the short- and long-term organizational goals—is a must in the workplace.

Speaker Adam Soltani, executive director of CAIR Oklahoma, will help attendees explore how to assess organizational inclusiveness and determine next steps for change; how to take steps to change inequity in the workplace culture and environment through effective advocacy; and how to measure change, and set goals.

Individual tickets are \$25 for Chamber and Urban League members or \$40 for nonmembers. Register online at okcchamber.com/diversity. Special thanks to Presenting Sponsors AT&T Oklahoma, American Fidelity Assurance Company, Bank of America, The Boeing Company, The Chickasaw Nation and Devon Energy Corporation.

April, May Enlighten webinars provide networking, free resources for your business

As part of the Chamber's free monthly webinar series, the April and May Enlighten virtual events will provide networking opportunities and practical tips to help boost your business. On Friday, April 9, Michael Shellabarger, learning and development lead at Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores, will be sharing valuable insight and tips when it comes to best practices for maintaining healthy boundaries with your work and personal life. Visit okcchamber.com/enlighten to register.

On Friday, May 7, Enlighten will highlight important information for businesses beginning to reopen after a year of COVID-19 precautions. Barb Denny, CFO and vice president of operations for the Chamber, and Bev Wood, PHR, SHRM-CP, vice president of business continuity and crisis management for American Fidelity Assurance Corporation, will share the reopening plans for their companies and discuss any best practices or lessons learned when developing these plans. John D.



Veal, Jr., district director for the U.S. Small Business Administration's Oklahoma District Office will also highlight the aspects of the American Rescue Plan that will benefit businesses. Visit okcchamber.com/enlighten2 to register.

Both webinars will begin at 11:45 a.m. with an opportunity to network with other attendees using Zoom breakout rooms before the discussion takes place from noon to 1 p.m. Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.

April Forum to highlight growth and future of OKC manufacturing industry

Manufacturing remains an important economic sector in Oklahoma City, employing more than 34,000 people and accounting for 5% of the jobs in the metro. There are currently 1,285 payrolled manufacturing business establishments in Oklahoma City, and their wages are 17% higher than the average wage across other industries.

On Wednesday, April 21, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., the April Chamber Forum will cover all those details and more with its examination of Oklahoma City's manufacturing industry. Attendees of this virtual event will learn more about the challenges Oklahoma City manufacturing companies face, the opportunities for growth, and how the region plans on capitalizing on its strengths to grow the manufacturing industry. Confirmed panelists include Tim Frisby, managing partner of Critical Components; Mark Layton, factory manager of Nestle' Purina PetCare; and Jeff Seymour executive vice president of economic development of the Greater

Oklahoma City Chamber, with additional panelists to be announced.

The Chamber Forum will also include a small group networking session where attendees will be randomly sorted into Zoom breakout rooms. Use this opportunity to make new connections and introduce more people to your company's product or service.

Tickets for this event are \$15 for Chamber members and \$25 for nonmembers, and half-season packages with access to five Chamber Forums are still available for \$75. To purchase, visit okcchamber.com/aprilforum. Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.



Important election on April 6 (cont'd from page 1)

will allow me to bring a stable voice to the City Council. Using those values and common sense to make decisions is exactly what Oklahoma City needs.”

If elected to City Council, what will be your top priorities?

- To keep the promise that our City government made to the citizens of OKC in regards to MAPS4. There are a lot of great projects that we are all looking forward to seeing completed. My guess is with the rise in building costs that we have seen in the past year, several of these projects will be over budget and I would hate to see projects get cut or under-built.
- FIRST RESPONDERS: Support the OKCPD and OKCFD departments in a way that lets them do their job in a safe and efficient manner.
- Streets and bridges, this is all the people that I've knocked on their doors want to talk about. Try to provide the safest streets and bridges we can.

Bradley Carter is a business owner, 11-year resident of Ward 1 and serves on the boards of ministries working in partnerships to support local charities. His campaign website says, “As your voice on the City Council for Ward 1, Bradley will utilize his years of business experience, ministry outreach and wisdom gleaned from interacting with and serving neighbors in need to create a stronger future with opportunities for all.”

If elected to City Council, what will be your top priorities?

- Roads, infrastructure, transparency and responsive leadership!

Jessica Martinez-Brooks is a lifelong resident of Oklahoma City, an educator and a frequent community volunteer. Her campaign website says that she “believes that we need a local government that is efficient and responsive to the needs of the various neighborhoods and communities within our city.”

If elected to City Council, what will be your top priorities?

- Ensuring MAPS 4 projects and resources get implemented appropriately
- Infrastructure needs (Roads, bridges, utility expansion, public safety)

- Being responsive to Ward 3 residents and the issues impacting their neighborhoods

Barbara Young is a businesswoman, longtime Southwest Oklahoma City resident and community volunteer. Her campaign website says that she is running for Ward 3 “to give Southwest Oklahoma City the conservative voice it deserves.”

If elected to City Council, what will be your top priorities?

- My priorities as a council member include ensuring that the council keeps OKC open for business both for existing companies as well as for new businesses coming into our city by ensuring that no new job crushing regulations or taxes are approved and by looking for ways to draw back any negative things that may exist today; Also a priority is ensuring that tax dollars come back into Ward 3 for our citizens in the way of infrastructure improvements and additional amenities through development opportunities; and lastly by ensuring that our first responders are supported and funded properly to ensure Oklahoma City is a safe place to work, live and play.

For complete surveys from all four Oklahoma City Council candidates, go to velocityokc.com/citycouncil.

Oklahoma City Public Schools

Candidates on the ballot include Paula Lewis (incumbent) and Charles Henry, candidates for Board chairperson; Brett Hayes and Carole Thompson, candidates for the District 1 seat; and Lori Bowman and James McHenry, candidates to represent District 2.

The winners in this decisive election will join incumbent Meg McElhaney, the only person who filed to represent District 7 for a four-year term on the Oklahoma City Public School Board.

While the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber does not endorse candidates for any school board seat, the Chamber asked all candidates to complete a survey that would ascertain their stance on charter schools, the use of TIF funds and more. Learn more about each candidate and their responses below.

Paula Lewis is the current chairperson of the OKCPS school board. During Lewis' nearly four years as Board chair, the school board made important strides on

priorities that positively impacted the district, including superintendent stability, transparency and accountability, and addressing student mental health and wellness. Her campaign website says, “Having consistently addressed the issues that our children face both in and out of the classroom, we need Paula to continue her work as the Chair of the Board of Education to ensure OKCPS will continue to grow and move forward.”

If re-elected to the Oklahoma City School Board, what will be your priorities?

- If re-elected, I will continue to work towards Superintendent stability by fostering good board management and communication with the superintendent. I will continue to support transparency and accountability to stakeholders and community and support Embrace OKC. The district is currently addressing equity via policy and I want to be a voice to support conversations around implicit bias, systemic racism and why we need culturally responsive leadership as well as diversity of leaders. The end goal being to provide access to education for every student by removing barriers as an educated work force is good for our city. Teacher and staff support and training is also needed to hire and retain high quality teachers in every school, I will continue to champion improvements in how we care for and support OKCPS employees.

Charles Henry currently serves on the OKCPS school board representing District 1. According to his website, Henry is running “to make the school board accountable to the people and to create a successful learning environment that will benefit all OKCPS students in reaching their full potential.”

If elected to the Oklahoma City School Board, what will be your priorities?

- To create a safe learning environment and create a student code of conduct policy that supports teachers in managing their classrooms. If we cannot keep students from being disruptive in class none of the ideas to improve OKCPS schools will work. Parents need to be assured their children will be safe in school and teachers need to be able to focus on teaching instead of constant disciplinary issues. We will have a better process with in-school alternatives such as quality detention and in-school suspension programs that work.
- To close the performance gap between low-performing schools and higher-performing schools.

- To close the achievement gap between traditional public schools and the successful non-traditional public schools, charter and enterprise schools.
- To implement quality remediation courses to help OKCPS students graduate at the 12th-grade level or higher. A majority of the students in many schools are academically 2-3 grade levels behind.
- To create an Advisory Board consisting of OKCPS parents, teachers, and community workers that will hold the OKC School Board Members accountable to the OKC citizens they were elected to serve.
- To listen and address the issues and concerns from all groups and communities across OKC.
- To create partnerships with our state colleges to advance our science and math programs.
- To renew our commitment to provide special needs students a quality learning environment.

DISTRICT 1 AND 2 CANDIDATES

Carole Thompson and Brett Hayes will face off in the District 1 runoff.

Lori Bowman and James McHenry will face each other at the polls for the District 2 seat.

Each responded to the Chamber’s survey. For full details, as well as the full survey for Paula Lewis and Charles Henry, go to velocityokc.com/schoolboard.

Election Information

Early voting is 8 a.m. To 6 p.m. April 1-2 at your local county election board:

- Oklahoma County Election Board, 4201 N Lincoln Blvd., (405) 713-1515
- Cleveland County Election Board, 641 E Robinson Street (Suite 200) in Norman, (405) 366-0210
- Canadian County Election Board, 200 S Bickford Ave. In El Reno, (405) 422-2422

Regular voting is 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. April 6 at your usual polling location. Find your polling location on your voter ID card, or use the voter portal at oklahoma.gov/elections/ovp.

EMBARK bus and OKC Streetcar service will be free on Election Day to help get voters to the polls. Visit embarkok.com or okcstreetcar.com to plan your trip.

Healthcare industry jobs increased by 12% in the last decade

As the Chamber looks forward to the annual State of Health event next month, economist Eric Long provides a review of the region's healthcare sector and its importance to the region's economy.

"Healthcare continues to grow in importance to the Oklahoma City economy, and in fact represents 9% of total GDP for the metro and annually generates an estimated \$6.3 billion in direct output of goods and services," Long said. There are 4,126 payrollled healthcare business establishments in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

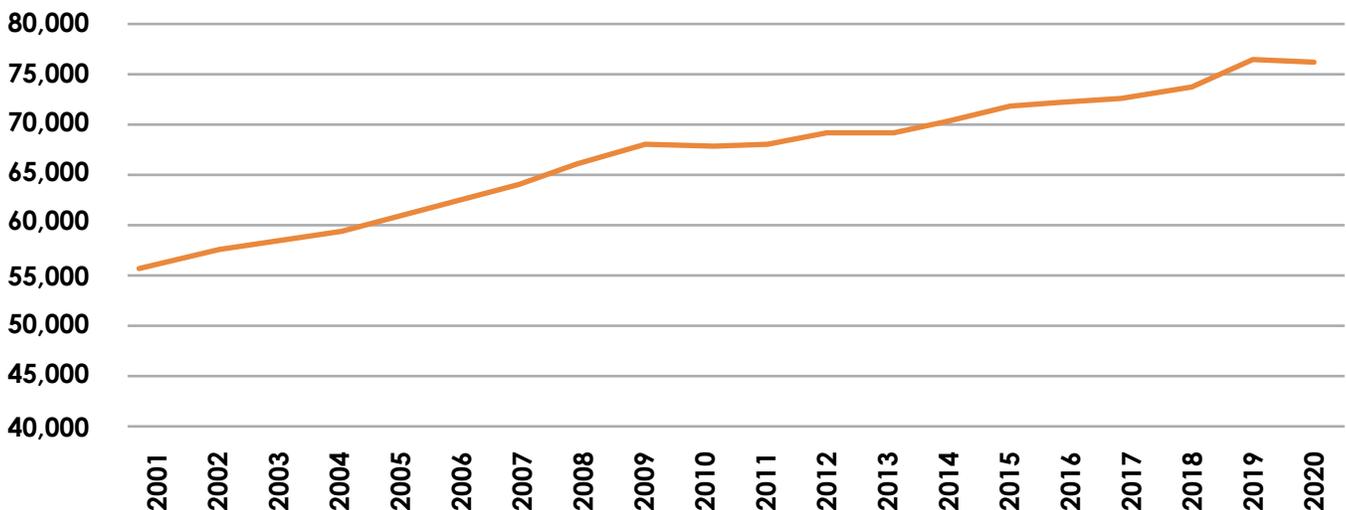
"Oklahoma City's healthcare sector continues to grow," explained Long. "There are more than 76,000 jobs in the sector, accounting for 11% of all jobs in the metro." Over the past decade the number of jobs in the healthcare industry has grown by 12.1%, or more than 8,200. This is a greater growth rate than the state of Oklahoma (+4% or 6,900 jobs) and slightly less than the nation (14% or 2.3 million jobs). The largest growth in jobs has occurred in general medical and surgical hospitals (+4,219 or +22%), offices of physicians (except mental health specialists) (+1,254 or +14%), freestanding ambulatory surgical and emergency centers (+1,111 or +172%), offices of dentists (+828 or +21%), and all other miscellaneous ambulatory and health care services (+648 or +523%).

"Another important aspect of Oklahoma City's healthcare economy is the higher wages paid in this sector," Long continued. "Wages in healthcare are significant, with average annual pay of \$57,311, which is 15% higher than the average compensation across all industries. Employees in Oklahoma City's healthcare cluster average \$7,300 more per year than others in the private sector. This highlights the growth opportunities available to those interested in a career in healthcare."

The five most common occupation titles employed in the Oklahoma City healthcare sector are registered nurses (10,720), nursing assistants (5,234), medical assistants (3,996), medical secretaries and administrative assistants (3,738), and licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (3,427).

"Another interesting fact about Oklahoma City's healthcare industry is the gender makeup of the employment," said Long. "Only 22% of those working in healthcare in our metro are male and 78% are female. If you look across all industries, there is a 51% to 49% male-to-female gender mix, making this sector very different." Looking at the ages employed in this sector, nearly 21%, or approximately 16,000, of those employed in the metro's healthcare sector are 55 or older, compared to 23% in that same age bracket across all industries.

Healthcare Industry Job Growth Oklahoma City MSA



Note: for this analysis, all data derived using the Harvard Cluster for Healthcare Local Services.

CVB and Homeland launch Modern Frontier beer program to highlight OKC craft brewers

The Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau (OKC CVB) partnered with Homeland to distribute an original, rotating Modern Frontier beer that will be sold in Homeland stores across the state.

Volume 1 of The Modern Frontier Beer has been available since March 17 to purchase in six-pack cans. The beverage style will rotate quarterly with a different Oklahoma City brewer producing each batch. Volume 1 features a spring lager by Anthem Brewing Company.

“We’re excited to work with Homeland stores and local brewers on this innovative partnership and look forward to Oklahomans enjoying these limited-edition beers as they rotate throughout the year,” said Zac Craig, president of the OKC CVB. “This project provides a special opportunity to shine a light on our rapidly growing craft beer scene while also highlighting Oklahoma City as The Modern Frontier.”

As Oklahoma’s largest locally owned grocery store, Homeland has partnered with the OKC CVB as a way



to support local breweries and the Oklahoma City community.

“At Homeland, we’re always looking for ways to connect with the communities we serve,” said Marc Jones, CEO and president of Homeland. “The Modern Frontier Beer program is an exciting way for us to provide a unique, great-tasting product that our customers will enjoy while also helping our local breweries build a following across our home state.”

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Meet the new president of the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau



Zac Craig, President, Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau

Zac Craig recently joined the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber as the new president of the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau. Editors of *The POINT!* recently interviewed Craig about his arrival in OKC and his plans for the Bureau.

Q. Tells us a little bit about yourself, your background and your career prior to this position.

A. I was born and raised in Shawnee, and Seminole, just east of the city, so I call this area home. For the last 20-plus years, I've worked in the hotel and resort business in a variety of markets. Most recently, I was the area director of sales and marketing for Omni hotels and resorts, based in Atlanta. And I had sales and marketing oversight for a territory that spanned across the Southeast. So that went from New Orleans to Northern Florida up through the Carolinas.

Q. What made OKC and this position attractive to you?

A. I have always been a big cheerleader for this destination. The fabric of this city has been, and will always be, a part of me. As I look back in time from all the successes that we've had—from the original MAPS projects, to the Thunder relocating here, to most recently the passage of MAPS 4—I've always been cheerleading for the destination. So, when this opportunity came up, to me, it was really a dream to be able to take on the lead role in the sales and marketing efforts to grow our visitor economy.

Q. What are your main goals for OKC's visitor economy as you take the helm of the CVB?

A. I think the overall goal is to extend our reach to a national audience. You know, we call ourselves "The Modern Frontier," and we call ourselves that because of not only the rich heritage of the destination, but also the progression of our city. As we look back over the last 30 years, we've put so many fantastic assets in place. Oklahoma City is really the only destination that you can go to and start your morning at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum and relive the tales of the American West, but then, later in the same day, if you dare, go down to the northern bank of the Oklahoma River and take on Class III or Class IV rapids at the Boathouse District and enjoy that experience. And so, such diverse assets and the potential experiences they bring throughout the city is what's really appealing, and what we need to continue to push to not only a regional audience, but also to a national audience.

Q. What do you think is most unique and exciting about OKC as a destination for tourist groups, conventioners, and clubs and organizations alike?

A. I think every one of those segments really has its individual answer, but to create a macro perspective that's maybe geared more toward the conventioner, we've got such a unique footprint for conventions where folks don't need to get on buses and travel to hotel rooms that look the same as every other destination that you go to. In Oklahoma City, you find a variety of hotel offerings that include wonderful historic hotels that we have throughout the city. In addition to that, we have such a strong and entrepreneurial business community.

One of the advantages of bringing a convention to Oklahoma City is that you get to learn from our local thought leaders. And with some of the things that the Chamber is involved in, like the Innovation District, folks will be able to get firsthand knowledge from the most experienced experts in different fields, whether it be energy, or aviation or bioscience, they can come and have dialogue and sidebar conversations with as they're enjoying a convention in our wonderful destination. I think that's something noteworthy and it needs to be pointed out.

Q. What are some of the tourism and convention assets we have to sell to potential visitors and visiting groups that locals may not be aware of?

A. I think first is the diversity of our neighborhood districts. And I think that's for our visitors, but also for our residents. The experiences you can have are great. You can spend an evening and enjoy wonderful, authentic Vietnamese cuisine in our Asian District, and on the same weekend, take the whole family to the Adventure District and enjoy all the wonderful assets that we have to offer a family in that area. There are so many of those opportunities that I personally can't wait to enjoy and explore and rediscover with my family, but also take those to the market.

I'm also currently living on the south side of the city, and I've enjoyed several authentic Mexican restaurants throughout the area, and I'm excited about the synergies that are going on in the Capitol Hill District, as well as the restaurant community on the south side of Oklahoma City in general. And I look forward to exploring that more as well.

And I'll share this with you—I'm really excited about this. A couple weeks ago, I got a chance to go behind the scenes and get a first look at the First Americans Museum, and it's going to be amazing. And it really is going to take you on the journey of the trials and tribulations of the 39 distinct tribal groups that call Oklahoma home today. I can't wait for the opening of that attraction later in the fall, and I look forward to taking that to market as well.

Q. What are you most excited about regarding OKC's future when it comes to our visitor economy?

First, we are laser focused on all of Oklahoma City, but certainly we have to underscore the importance of our beautiful brand new convention center and the ability

to open new doors with that asset. The combination of the convention center, along with what I like to call our "front yard" with Scissortail Park, and the streetcar with access to all of our downtown Oklahoma City neighborhoods, really creates an unparalleled experience for our conventioners. And we're really looking forward to taking that back to market as well as we recover from the pandemic.

Q. Tell us a little about "The Modern Frontier Beer" and what you are looking forward to doing with that project.

A. It's exciting. This was a unique opportunity for us to partner with Homeland grocery stores and for them to assist us statewide in this partnership, in creating our own individualized beer called The Modern Frontier to highlight all the great progressive offerings that Oklahoma City has to offer, as well as the emerging craft brewery scene right here in Oklahoma City. And this is such a value add for visitors, especially with the summertime approaching, to come in, enjoy all the great attractions that we have. and then also go down to one of these craft breweries and get a refreshing lager after a job well done exploring the town. And the launch edition spring lager brewed by Anthem Brewing is great, and there will be more to come as we help feature different OKC breweries.

Q. Anything else exciting coming down the line you would like our readers to know?

A. There's one thing that I'm just finding out about, and I'm very intrigued by it, and I think our readers would be interested in it if they don't already know, and that's the new shrine dedicated to Blessed Stanley Rother. If you aren't aware of it, it's a very intriguing story. The shrine was just topped out, and the first phase of that wonderful building is going to open up next summer. And it's a dedication to a life of good deeds by a priest that was from this area, originally from Okarche, that really served the country and the people of Guatemala and unfortunately perished due to his convictions. And so in honor of all he did, that shrine will open up next summer and we look forward to continued exposure of not only the shrine in itself, but also the fact that he is the first U.S.-born martyr to be beatified. It is really interesting and intriguing, and I just want to be sure our audience knows about that.



Better Streets, Safer City program makes progress

In addition to resurfaced trails, new bike lanes and sidewalks, drivers are also experiencing smoother trips on Oklahoma City streets these days, thanks to voter approval of a Chamber-led campaign in 2017 to make city roads better and safer.

According to City of Oklahoma City's 2020 annual report on the Better Streets, Safer City program, more than half, or about \$132 million, of the \$261 million in sales taxes collected for the program between Jan. 1, 2018, and March 31, 2020, has already been allocated to various construction and improvement projects thus far.

The temporary 1-cent sales tax portion of the program officially ended March 31, 2020, and was replaced April 1, 2020, with the MAPS 4 penny sales tax approved by voters on Dec. 10, 2019. Additional funding through 2027 is also being provided by bond sales tied to property tax collections.

The largest portion of the Better Streets, Safer City program's total funding—about \$168 million—is allocated to street resurfacing, while the rest has been divvied up among street enhancements, sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and trails.

"We appreciate the city's timely delivery of these resurfacing projects and look forward to more progress as some of the other elements emerge from the design phase. The projects in the 2015 Better Streets, Safer City program will improve so many areas that touch our lives on a daily basis," Chamber President and CEO Roy Williams said.

In a recent presentation to the Oklahoma City Council, Public Works Director Eric Wenger said a lot

of progress was made in 2020, including a tremendous amount of work that has already been completed.

"We are making allocations regularly, and work is being completed. The majority of the [sales-tax funded] street work will be finishing up this year, and we are very much into the design [phase] of the streetscapes and the bike lanes," Wenger said.

Street Resurfacing

Since construction first began on various resurfacing projects across the city, 362 lane miles encompassing 106 projects were completed by the end of 2020. The mileage includes both residential streets and arterial streets such as major thoroughfares handling most traffic but does not include interstate or state highways within city limits.

Sixty percent of the \$168 million, or \$101 million, goes to arterial resurfacing, while 40%, or \$67 million, goes to residential resurfacing. Projects may include such things as pavement repair, new asphalt, crack repairs, new wheelchair ramps, signal upgrades at intersections, as well as various other improvements.

Following three years of the program, city officials calculate more than 361,000 tons of asphalt have been used to resurface streets. Other accomplishments noted in the year-end report include:

- More than 193,000 linear feet of curb and gutter replacement.
- Improvements to 115 intersections for items such as traffic signals, street signage or crosswalks.
- Installation of over 1,800 ADA-compliant accessibility ramps.

Street Enhancements

About \$30 million is being allocated to street enhancements across the city that are designed to increase tourism, employment and economic development, improve connectivity and safety. Most of the streetscape projects may include, among other things, the following enhancements:

- On-street parking
- Restriping of streets
- Sidewalk construction
- Bicycle infrastructure and bike racks
- Trees and landscaping (includes maintenance)
- Various other amenities, including benches and public art

None of the street enhancements have been completed; however, a project at Northwest 10th and Vermont is nearly finished. Other locations are still in various stages of design, including the Paseo District, Automobile Alley, the Plaza District and the Oklahoma City Stockyards area.

Sidewalks

If you have been driving in and around various parts of Oklahoma City recently, chances are pretty good that you have noticed an increase of new sidewalks being built around town. In fact, a total of \$25 million worth of sidewalk construction has been allocated for the Better Streets, Safer City program, providing more opportunities for people to safely walk to places such as schools, parks, work and shops.

Sixty percent of sidewalk funding went to pedestrian priority areas with the remainder split among other priority projects. Projects under this category may include sidewalk construction, ADA-compliant ramps, crosswalks, bus stops and/or pedestrian crossing signals.

So far, workers have built new sidewalks, improving walkability and connectivity for 22 schools and 16 parks. Nearly 60 bus stops have also been constructed under the program.

Bicycle Infrastructure

Arguably, the most challenging and complicated projects under the Better Streets, Safer City program center around bicycle infrastructure. Many changes will have to be made with various lane reductions and on-street parking situations before many of these



projects can be completed, officials said. Nonetheless, 10 bicycle infrastructure projects are currently in the design stage, while one project to create a bike lane on General Pershing Boulevard between North May and Pennsylvania is already under construction.

The city plans to spend \$14 million of total program funding on updating bicycle infrastructure, plus additional dollars from grants and other sources.

Trails

A total of \$20 million of program funds will go toward the construction of two new trails, as well as several resurfacing and signage improvements on seven already-existing trails. Officials said the funds spent on resurfacing will ensure that those trails are in great condition for safe and comfortable cycling.

The two new trails—the Deep Fork trail and Lake Hefner connection—are currently under design and will add an additional 10 miles to Oklahoma City’s trail system when completed. The Lake Hefner connection will connect the existing trail system at Lake Hefner with an existing trail across the street on the north side of Hefner Road.

To learn more about the Better Streets, Safer City program or to view a more-detailed listing of each project, visit okc.gov/BetterSafer.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Businesses who join the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber are part of the largest coalition of businesses in the state and make the Chamber's work in the community possible. Each member level is identified on the listing below.

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Grocers - Wholesale
Mr. Louis Stinebaugh 518-3000
5600 S. Council Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73179
www.awginc.com

PARTNER+

Prairie Surf Media

Video Production
Ms. Rachel Cannon 252-0102
1 Myriad Gardens
Oklahoma City, OK 73102-9206
www.prairiesurf.com

ADVISOR

Future Point of View, LLC

Consultants
Ms. Annette White-Klososky . 641-7311
3856 S. Boulevard, Suite 100
5904 Lakewood Ridge Road
Edmond, OK 73013-8423
www.fpov.com

ASSOCIATE

Beyond Disinfectant

Sanitation Services
Mr. Tyler Holmes 653-9378
1804 Linwood Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73106-2626
www.beyonddisinfectant.com

CORE

Cheapest Auto Insurance

Insurance
Mr. Trae Hall 393-0202
6212 NW Expressway
6528 E. 101st St., Suite D1 Box 422
Tulsa, OK 74133-6754
www.Aautoandhomeinsurance.com/
oklahoma-city-ok/

CORE

Payne Insurance Agency

Insurance Agents, Brokers and Service
Mr. Brandon Payne 286-3600
2925 NW 156th St.
Edmond, OK 73013-2101
https://agents.farmers.com/ok/edmond/
brandon-payne

CORE

Scooter's Coffee

Restaurants
Mr. Tony Jungels 657-2008
16401 N. Western Ave.
Edmond, OK 73013
www.scooterscoffee.com

CORE

Treat's Solutions, LLC

Janitorial Supplies - Wholesale / Retail
Mr. Chris Peters 880-1621
6220 Melrose Lane
Oklahoma City, OK 73127-5532
www.treatsolutions.com

Member Upgrades

The following member companies increased their investment in the Chamber, demonstrating strong support of the Chamber's efforts to drive the region's economy. To increase your investment, contact the membership division of the Chamber at 405-297-8949 or membership@okcchamber.com.

EMERGING LEADER

Mason Realty Investors, LLC

Engineers - Consulting
Mr. Steve Mason 640-1328
1015 N. Broadway Ave., Suite 130
Oklahoma City, OK 73102-5849

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 okcchamber.com/grandopenings.

Peaceful Family Solutions

11 Burton Place
Edmond, OK 73013

BOK Financial Insurance

499 W. Sheridan Ave., Suite 2700
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

PureVida Water

3000 W. Memorial Road, Suite
123-714
Oklahoma City, OK 73120

Embassy Suites by Hilton OKC NW

3233 N.W. Expressway
Oklahoma City, OK 73112

The Foundation for Oklahoma City Public Schools

ReadOKC Little Free Library
300 SW 7th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73109

OU Physicians, Waterview Park

2607 SW 119th St., Suite B
Oklahoma City, OK 73170

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Oklahoma City Ranks #3 lowest cost of doing business among large metros

Cost of Doing Business - Cities Over 1 Million Population

| City | Overall Cost Rank | Energy Cost Rank | Tax Cost Rank | Office Rent Rank | Labor Cost Rank |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Buffalo, NY | 1 | 13 | 52 | 1 | 1 |
| Raleigh, NC | 2 | 2 | 23 | 17 | 6 |
| Oklahoma City, OK | 3 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 39 |
| Charlotte, NC | 4 | 3 | 24 | 26 | 9 |
| Louisville, KY | 5 | 16 | 30 | 3 | 19 |

Source: Moody's North American Business Cost Review, 2020. A rank of 1 is most favorable.

- The Moody's North American Business Cost Review analyzed 53 Metro areas over 1,000,000 people and ranked various costs associated with doing business.
- Oklahoma City was ranked as 3rd overall for the lowest cost of doing business, as well as 1st for lowest energy costs.
- Ranking 3rd for lowest tax costs, Oklahoma City has a tax structure that is both simple and effective while being business-friendly.
- While our labor costs rank around the middle of the pack, it's a necessary tradeoff for our low unemployment rate of 4.7%.

For comprehensive Economic Indicators and Regional Data, please visit your Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Economic Development Division at greateroklahomacity.com or contact Eric Long, Research Economist – 405-297-8976; elong@okcchamber.com



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