



DECEMBER 2021 • OKCCHAMBER.COM

NEW PROGRAM IN OKC AIMS TO FOCUS ON DEVELOPING IDEAS, CREATING MORE STARTUPS

A new program aimed at stimulating entrepreneurial thinking and action is coming to Oklahoma City, and Greater Oklahoma City Chamber officials believe it will equip everyday people with the resources they need to solve problems affecting Oklahoma City residents as well as people around the country and world.

Created by Builders + Backers in partnership with Heartland Forward, a nonpartisan 501c3 organization based in northwest Arkansas, and funded by the Walton Foundation, the Community Growth Program and Tool Kit will use four program pillars to equip what they call “builders” to accelerate the entrepreneurial thinking needed to help communities like Oklahoma City thrive.

PARTNERSHIP PRESENTING OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN OKC’S BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Over the past year, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and the Oklahoma City Urban League of Oklahoma City have partnered to create a stronger dialogue and engagement of the Oklahoma City business community around issues of social justice and anti-racism.

The first year of the partnership began with an event series to create a business community conversation about

Builders are essentially people who think they may have an idea to solve a certain problem but may not have the financial backing to test that idea. The Community Growth Program provides \$5,000 Pebble Grants to these builders in order for them to move forward with their ideas. This is accomplished through the Idea Accelerator, a 90-day, cohort-based Builder Bootcamp that teaches participants how to put their ideas into action and then test them. The goal for the bootcamps is to encourage and empower more people to start a business in the near future based on their ideas, said Evan Fay, program manager for innovation and entrepreneurship at the Chamber.

“After going through the Idea Accelerator, those builders feel like they know how to go through the process of thinking, ‘I may be on to something. I need to test this a little bit more,’ or ‘Okay, I am on to something. Let me start a business.’ It’s kind of counterintuitive in a good way,” Fay said.

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diversity, equity and inclusion. That work was followed with the launch of Inclusion at Work, a coalition that brings together the leaders and managers of diversity programs in companies across the region to identify areas of collaboration and partnership.

According to Jabar Shumate, vice president of community convening and social justice at the Urban League, some of the topics covered throughout the Inclusion at Work program include building out measurement and accountability tools, resources to improve climate, recruiting and retaining diverse talent, training and leadership development, and employee resource groups.

In this second year of the partnership, the work is expanding. “The Oklahoma City business community

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Nursing at OU Health means I pick a schedule that works for me.



Safia Franks, RN
Cardiology

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Nursing at OU Health means you have flexibility in your schedule through innovative programs – created by nurses and made for nurses. We are dedicated to creating and fostering a strong culture of collaboration and patients-first mentality in our hospitals and clinics. We know that when you put the patients first, everything else falls into place.

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- OU Health Travel at Home Position
- OU Health Education Accelerator Program

Apply today by visiting OUHealth.com/Nursing. Job opportunities are available in all areas of adult and pediatric care, oncology and more, in hospital and clinical care settings, including OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center, Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health, OU Health Edmond Medical Center and OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center.

As an integrated academic health system, interested nurses can practice at OU Health and seek a faculty appointment at the OU Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing.



LEADERSHIP NOTES

OKC SAW DRAMATIC GROWTH DURING MAPS ERA

I was recently asked to make a presentation about how Oklahoma City has changed during the MAPS era. Some of the numbers may surprise you.

To make comparisons easier, we went back to 1990 and looked at the three decades that followed. During this time, our metro added nearly a half a million people. Our annual growth rate was 1.4 times faster than the nation.

As population and jobs are inextricably linked, we also saw total employment grow by more than 330,000 during the same period. Our personal income grew by \$55 billion, and our per capita income now exceeds \$50,000. This is one area where we still lag behind the U.S. and something we can continue to work to improve.

One surprise? Our cost of living actually dropped relative to the U.S. during the period. In 1990, we were 6% below the national average, and now we are 14% below the national average, which helps to counterbalance income levels. We have dramatically changed this city and improved our quality of life without sacrificing the lower cost of living that gives our citizens more choices about how they spend.

These numbers don't tell the whole story, however. The biggest changes are in something that can't be measured – our attitude about the future, the opportunity we are offering our young people and the satisfaction we all have in living here.

I am so encouraged that we remain on that trajectory of growth. We are continuing to invest in critical quality of life infrastructure – whether that is a coliseum or a mental health facility, a senior wellness center or a diversion hub. We are making this a better place for every person that lives here, and that is continuing to attract more people who see the advantages of our city.



Roy H. Williams, CCE
Chamber President & CEO



Roy H. Williams, CCE
President & CEO



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STORY OF THE MONTH**

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DOES THE ALLURE
OF MORE NON-
TRADITIONAL SPORTS"**

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UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

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

DECEMBER 3

Annual Meeting
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Oklahoma City Convention
Center
100 Mick Cornett Dr.
okcchamber.com/annual

DECEMBER 10

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

JANUARY 19

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

JANUARY 26

Legislative Kickoff
8 to 9:30 a.m.
National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St.
okcchamber.com/legislativekickoff

FEBRUARY 16

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



Diversion programs topic of January Forum; season tickets packages available

Hope and anticipation abound for 2022, and already the New Year is getting on the right foot with many quality Chamber events scheduled. One of the most popular events that the Chamber hosts is the monthly Chamber Forum series, which brings thought leaders together to discuss major initiatives, programs and current issues that impact Oklahoma City's business climate, economy and community.

For those who attended the Chamber forums in 2021, they were treated to a variety of relevant and timely topics with the business community in mind, including criminal justice reform, entrepreneurship, the manufacturing industry, economic development strategies, second-chance hiring, First Americans Museum, homelessness, OKC transit initiatives and retail.

The Chamber will continue its successful monthly Chamber Forum series at Vast on Jan. 19 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. with a panel discussion about diversion programs in Oklahoma City that are making a difference. Hear from representatives of diversion programs on the work they do within the justice system and how diversion helps low-level, nonviolent offenders return to productive lives within our community. Participating in the panel will be:

- Damon Britton, Executive Director, Diversion Hub
- The Honorable Kenneth M. Stoner, District Judge, Oklahoma County
- Timothy Tardibono, Executive Director, Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council

The cost to attend the Jan. 19 Chamber Forum is \$40 for Chamber members and \$50 for nonmembers. Discounted full-season and half-season packages can also be purchased for \$350 and \$175, respectively. The full-season package consists of 10 tickets, while the half-season package includes five tickets.

To register for the January Chamber Forum, visit okcchamber.com/januaryforum. If you prefer to purchase either a full-season or half-season ticket package, you can do so by emailing register@okcchamber.com or calling 405-297-8921.

Special thanks to Series Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.

How to position your business for success in 2022 topic of final Enlighten event for 2021

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's final Enlighten event for 2021 will be Friday, Dec. 10, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Zoom. Scaling-up growth expert Stacy Eads, CEO of Stacy Eads LLC Business Coaching and Consulting, will provide actionable advice for how to position your business for success in the new year.

Attendees of her Enlighten training will learn the 4 Decisions® methodology that more than 80,000 leaders have used to scale profitably, including how to:

- Attract and keep the right PEOPLE
- Create a truly differentiated STRATEGY
- Drive flawless and consistent EXECUTION
- Have plenty of CASH to fund growth and weather the storms

Eads is in high demand to coach CEOs, train teams and speak at events. She has coached more than 150 key executives in several countries as the Scaling Up

Issues impacting businesses to be heard during Legislative Kickoff Jan. 26

Oklahoma's next legislative session is about two months away when state lawmakers convene at the state Capitol on Feb. 7, 2022. It marks the second regular session for the 58th Legislature, and already state lawmakers have been preparing for the session this fall with various interim studies as well as meeting in special session to approve a new redistricting plan. When legislators begin the session in February, no doubt there will be various bills impacting business and industry.

On Jan. 26, 2022, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will host its Legislative Kickoff where Chamber



Global Training Partner for both the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) and Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO).

For those interested in registering for this free online event, please visit okcchamber.com/enlighten. Registration is open to both Chamber members and nonmembers.

Enlighten provides networking and practical resources to help boost your business performance.

Special thanks to Series Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.

members will hear from a panel of area legislators and will get an opportunity to make their voices heard on issues impacting the business community. Participating on the panel will be:

- Greg Treat, Senate President Pro Tempore
- Kay Floyd, Senate Democratic Leader
- Jon Echols, House Majority Floor Leader
- Cyndi Munson, House Democratic Minority Caucus Chair

The Legislative Kickoff will be held at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Registration and networking start at 7:30 a.m.

Tickets for Legislative Kickoff are \$50 for Chamber members and \$75 for nonmembers. To register, visit okcchamber.com/legislativekickoff. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,000. Contact Suzette Ellison Jordan at sellison@okcchamber.com for table sponsor inquiries.

OKCONNECT TO HELP BUSINESS LEADERS ENGAGE WITH OKC LEADERSHIP; APPLY NOW FOR SPRING CLASS

The COVID crisis of the last two years has created a difficult environment for new business leaders to engage and create lasting connections in our community.

OKConnect, a special partnership program between Leadership Oklahoma City and the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, is an ideal way to help new executives and managers engage with Oklahoma City leadership.

The program includes four sessions to help top-level executives and senior managers discover how to get involved in our community. They'll get behind-the-scenes insight into the city – from the City's earliest beginnings to the area's current growth and success.

Topics on the agenda for the spring class include:

- An examination of Oklahoma City's population and demographics
- A panel discussion on project development and economic inclusion

- A glimpse into the challenges and opportunities of Oklahoma's common education system
- And insight into arts and culture of Oklahoma City from representatives of our region's best artistic organizations.

The group will meet on the last Wednesday of the month in January, February, March and April, from noon to 5 p.m. The program is limited to 60 participants to help create deeper connections and more productive networking.

OKConnect is geared toward newcomers to the community or a manager with a new or expanded role that requires community awareness and involvement, and preference will be given to those who are newer to Oklahoma City or their management role. Applications are now open and will be accepted until Friday, Jan. 14, with class members being notified by Wednesday, Jan. 19.

To apply for the program, visit okcchamber.com/okconnect. For more information, contact Kaylee McDaniel Cale at kmcdaniel@okcchamber.com or 405-297-8955.

 **FEED THE CHILDREN**
NO HUNGER HOLIDAYS

GIVING Feels GOOD

feedthechildren.org



HEARTLAND

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

One of the program's stipulations is that if you have already formed a company, then you are too far along to participate in the program.

"We want people who are literally trying to build a better mouse trap – everyday people who want to ideate and create and then equip them with the skills they need to say, 'You know, I could be an entrepreneur one day or I could become an entrepreneur next week,'" Fay said.

Ten people will be going through the Idea Accelerator during its first iteration, which is scheduled to begin in late March. Applications for the first Oklahoma City cohort are already being accepted by Heartland Forward at buildersandbackers.com/idea-accelerator. The deadline to apply is Dec. 12.

"We'll partner with churches, with neighborhood nonprofits, with universities, with all types of organizations because there are no boundaries drawn around who could be a good fit for this program," Fay said.

"The Community Growth Program has already been piloted in Oxford, Mississippi, and Tulsa and was extremely successful," Fay said. "There is a tremendous opportunity for a lot of different people from a lot of backgrounds and creeds to build, and hopefully this program will increase the diversity of people who have the agency and opportunity to build a company, have an opportunity to create jobs, et cetera."

The Chamber and the Inasmuch Foundation have contributed equally to bring the Community Growth Program and its Idea Accelerator to Oklahoma City. With 10 people accepted for each cohort, that means Heartland Forward, with its \$5,000 Pebble Grants, will provide a total of \$50,000 to Oklahoma City Builders.

"Heartland Forward and Builders + Backers have run this program in two communities, so they know what the determinants for success are among the Builders selected for each cohort. The Chamber and the Inasmuch Foundation will weigh into the selection process in some way, alongside other entrepreneurial support organizations, so we'll have a chance to select a cohort of Builders who can make a transformational impact on our city. This is an incredible opportunity," Fay said.

INCLUSION

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

and city leadership have been very supportive of moving the needle in inclusive economic development. There was opportunity in the midst of COVID because this global pandemic allowed for a larger spotlight to shine on where there were gaps that existed in Oklahoma City in terms of the business community," Shumate said, noting about 41% of Black-owned businesses were shuttered across the U.S. during the pandemic.

Shumate said COVID 19 actually helped the Urban League and Chamber understand the gaps that exist, setting out guideposts on what we need to do to strengthen some of Oklahoma City's small and minority businesses.

"I believe we have seen overwhelming success because so many other organizations during the pandemic have taken a more critical look at their workforce, what trends are in the growth of Oklahoma City and assessed what to do next" Shumate said.

Part of the work is an executive-led diversity, equity and inclusion roundtable where more than two dozen CEOs and company executives are investing their time and talent to look at three areas: building strong minority supply chain networks in Oklahoma City, designing a longitudinal data system, or dashboard, that will evaluate where OKC is moving the needle in terms of understanding and tracking those aforementioned gaps, and development of leadership and mentorship initiatives.

"Across the board, cities that have advanced themselves have not grown without having an eye toward diversity, equity and inclusion because it does create the kind of environment that you can recruit, retain and attract the very best talent," Shumate said.

Inclusion at Work is a group that meets six times a year. If you are leading diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at your organization you are welcome to join. For more information, contact Kaylee McDaniel Cale at kmcdaniel@okcchamber.com or 405-297-8955.

DOWNTOWN IN DECEMBER EVENTS PLENTIFUL DURING THE HOLIDAYS; HOLIDAY POP-UP SHOPS RETURN



Local retailers are once again “popping up” in Midtown near downtown Oklahoma City as part of Holiday Pop-up Shops from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays through Dec. 19. The Independent Shopkeepers Association puts on the annual Holiday Pop-Up Shops event to promote shopping local and encouraging visitors to purchase holiday gifts from local shops.

Nearly two dozen shops will display their products each week in iconic geodesic domes on the corner of NW 10th and Hudson in the Midtown District. The Holiday Pop-Up Shops affords customers the opportunity to shop in a more relaxing and stress-free environment, while also supporting their local businesses. Shoppers will discover a variety of gifts from clothing and accessories to home goods and children’s toys. Holiday treats like hot chocolate will be available to enjoy, along with live music and visits from Santa Claus. And if you still do not have your Christmas Tree purchased, a tree lot is even on site for your convenience.

To learn more about the Holiday Pop-Up Shops event or to see a list of participating retailers, please visit okcpopup.com.

DOWNTOWN IN DECEMBER TRADITIONS

The area around downtown Oklahoma City is looking festive once again this year as Downtown in December celebrates its 20th anniversary, including more than 30 events and attractions.

The city’s 10-block polar playground attracts nearly half a million visitors each year. Returning in 2021 are popular events such as snow tubing at the Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark, the Saints Santa Run and Lights on Broadway, plus more. Many of the events are free. Learn more at downtownindecember.com.

SAINTS SANTA RUN

If you ever had a lifelong dream of running a marathon in a Santa suit, or any other holiday-themed costume, here is your chance. On Saturday, Dec. 4, SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital in Midtown will host the 2021 Saints Santa Run. This event, which returns as an in-person event after going virtual in 2020, is a fun, active and healthy way to celebrate the holiday season with friends, family and maybe even your co-workers. You can choose between a 5K run/walk and a 1K run/walk or both. Kiddos ages 8 and under can participate in the Kids’ Dash. Runners of the four-legged variety are also welcome!

LYRIC’S ‘A CHRISTMAS CAROL’

Lyric Theatre will present its production of “A Christmas Carol” outdoors through Dec. 23 at the historic Harn Homestead, where it will be reimaged as the Victorian Era setting for Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, magical spirits and a host of unforgettable characters. Patrons will follow Charles Dickens’ timeless tale of transformation and redemption, as they are guided from scene to scene at the homestead. Learn more at lyrictheatreokc.com.



LIGHTS ON BROADWAY

Cruise down historic Automobile Alley for the district’s holiday open house and this year’s stunning light display with the 6th annual Lights on Broadway event. On Saturdays from 4 to 8 p.m. through Dec. 11, various retail shops and restaurants will feature buzz-worthy holiday displays in addition to family-friendly activities,

special promotions and giveaways. There will be complimentary carriage rides, sidewalk artists and other entertainment, bright and colorful holiday décor, special promotions and much more.

OKLAHOMA CITY BALLET'S 'THE NUTCRACKER'

Artistic Director Robert Mills' beautiful staging of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" will warm your heart and fill you with the spirit of the holidays. An OKC favorite now in its 50th year, this joyous production awaits you and yours this holiday season at the Civic Center Musical Hall. Performances are Dec. 11-12 and Dec. 17-19. To purchase tickets, visit okcballet.org.

Other Downtown in December events include the Devon Ice Rink at the Myriad Botanical Gardens at the corner of Robinson and Sheridan avenues; A Dog Day in December at the Midtown Mutts Dog Park on Dec. 2; OKC Philharmonic's "The Christmas Show" Dec. 3-4; Opening Night New Year celebration on New Year's Eve; and many more.

A great way to get around to all of the Downtown in December events is by riding on Oklahoma City's Streetcars, which are free on the weekends through the holiday season, thanks to EMBARK. In addition, people can ride the streetcars for free any time after parking in one of EMBARK's five public garages. Each parking receipt is valid for two people to ride free for 24 hours.

CHAMBER'S STAND TALL, SHOP SMALL FOR OKC CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is relaunching its "Stand Tall, Shop Small for OKC" campaign. The Chamber wants residents to make sure to support the local shops and restaurants that help make Oklahoma City the community we all love, especially during the holiday shopping season.

"When spent locally, the impact of every dollar is magnified," said Chamber President & CEO Roy Williams. "Those dollars stay in the community and help employ our family, friends and neighbors. They also provide the funding for critical city services."

It has been estimated that for every dollar spent at a locally owned business, 67 cents stays in the community. City services in Oklahoma City are funded by sales tax which makes local spending vital to Oklahoma City's continued growth.

Potentially delayed deliveries because of worldwide supply chain issues is another reason to shop local, according to Chamber officials. Shopping local not only lets you give unique gifts you can't find anywhere else, but it also guarantees you will have your gifts when you need them. If you still prefer online shopping, many local



shops now offer great selections of local items on their websites.

The Chamber will promote its Stand Tall, Shop Small for OKC campaign on its social media accounts, which can be found on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. People are encouraged to get downloadable social media assets and signage at VeloCityOKC.com/shopsmall, use the #ShopSmallForOKC hashtag and follow OKC's local districts' social media accounts as well to keep up with their activities. A complete list of the districts, their top things to do and their attractions can be found at visitokc.com/about-okc/okc-districts.

"We have seen encouraging signs that retail is bouncing back in a big way in Oklahoma City, but it is important to remember that retail was hit harder than anyone by the pandemic," said Williams. "Small businesses still need community support and shopping local for your holiday gifts is a great way to positively impact Oklahoma City."

FORWARD OKLAHOMA CITY PROGRAM STILL MAKING DIFFERENCE FOR OKC 25 YEARS LATER



A program established in Oklahoma City more than 25 years ago to grow Oklahoma City's economy, improve its business climate and create a more-desirable quality of life is still accomplishing its intended purpose of repositioning OKC as one of the top economic development site locations in the nation.

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber created Forward OKC in 1995 to grow quality jobs, increase capital investment, retain existing business and improve per capita income. Since that time, hundreds of Oklahoma City businesses and organizations have invested in Forward OKC to help continue Oklahoma City's rise as an economic destination by expanding its economy and increasing employment, investment and income.

The original iteration of Forward OKC was a five-year proposition, but with the success the program experienced early on, Chamber officials continued to evolve the program every five years. It is currently in its sixth five-year cycle and is now referred to as Forward OKC VI.

The focus of Forward OKC VI, which runs from 2021-2025, is focused on growth and diversification, innovation and talent, advocating for business, and supporting community initiatives.

"Forward Oklahoma City was really designed to focus on our long-term vision for Oklahoma City's growth. The five-year cycles give us the ability to adjust and evolve as the city changes and opportunities are presented," said Jeff Seymour, the Chamber's executive vice president for economic development.

Seymour said one example of how Forward OKC gave the organization the ability to pivot on an important project is the partnership with the Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City. Growing wages and creating wealth for everyone in region is one of the program's top goals. "Forward Oklahoma City is giving us the ability to bring in a partner and begin working on minority business supply chains, enhancing workplace

diversity programs and more." This is just one of several partnerships that are helping to grow new businesses.

Another success in 2021 is the launch of the gBETA pre-accelerator program in Oklahoma City in September to help accelerate the growth of startup companies. This was another partnership that included Forward Oklahoma City, American Fidelity Assurance Company, Inasmuch Foundation, Love's Travel Stops and Country Stores, Oklahoma State University, Square Deal Capital and the University of Oklahoma OU and OSU.

Another partnership brought Cultivating Coders in the region, a program that works with underserved populations to encourage students and adults to learn software development. The initial program in Oklahoma City worked with Millwood High School students to become coders.

Other accomplishments of Forward Oklahoma City in 2021 included helping companies announce nearly 3,800 jobs in the region, bringing an additional \$165 million in payroll and \$293 million in capital investment. And the program was key to the Chamber achieving all of its legislative priorities during the 2021 session.

"This program is about making strategic investments, whether that is in our innovation platforms, strategic government relations programs, or standing up a new program based on a best practice from another community," he said. "As we have faced new challenges in 2021, Forward OKC gave us the tools to go in and make some very strategic investments to continue to enhance our long-term capabilities."

There are still opportunities to invest in Forward Oklahoma City VI and its programs. To learn more, reach out to Jeff Seymour at 405-297-8991 or jseymour@okcchamber.com.



**OKC'S NEW BUS RAPID
TRANSIT SYSTEM GETS A
NAME; SERVICE TO
BEGIN IN LATE 2023**

rendering courtesy Skyline Ink



Oklahoma City's planned bus rapid transit system, which is expected to begin service in late 2023, now has a name.

The Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority Board of Trustees recently approved "RAPID" as the new name for EMBARK's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The BRT also has a new logo and other conceptual elements for the nine vehicles and raised platforms planned for the route, which will run 9.5 miles each way with 30 stops between the city's northwest side, Midtown and downtown via Northwest Expressway and Classen Blvd. The route could potentially include two park-and-ride locations. Each vehicle will run on compressed natural gas and will feature upgraded seating and other amenities.

According to Jesse Rush, EMBARK assistant director of operations and the BRT project manager, the project has gone quite well.

"We are getting close to wrapping up the design of the project with a recent 95% submittal of the design drawings. We have issued [purchase orders] for the purchase, delivery and testing of our nine New Flyer CNG 40-foot BRT buses," he said. Delivery of the first vehicle is expected in April or May 2022, Rush added.

"EMBARK's vision is to deliver world-class transportation to our region. RAPID helps us move closer to that vision by creating connections where people can move more freely," said Jason Ferbrache, EMBARK Administrator in a recent EMBARK press release announcing the new name. "Stakeholders shared that the brand should be inviting, progressive, and sleek – that's what we delivered."

Funding for the \$28.9 million project comes from local and federal sources, including \$14.4 million from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation's BUILD discretionary grant program. Funding from Oklahoma City's Better Streets, Safer City program and general obligation bonds will pay for the remaining balance.

BRT is a high-quality system similar to rail transit in that delivers fast, comfortable and cost-effective services. RAPID will provide access for many Oklahoma City-area residents access to downtown, healthcare facilities such as SSM St. Anthony Hospital in Midtown and Integris Baptist Medical Center, and shopping and entertainment venues, including Penn Square Mall. In addition, RAPID is expected to attract real estate investments along the planned route.

Figures provided by EMBARK show that the planned route will come within a half mile of more than 40,000 Oklahoma City residents and approximately 91,000 jobs, which represents about 23% of the city's total employment base.

Each vehicle will feature wider doors and level boarding, with both buses and stations adhering to Americans with Disabilities Act rules and guidelines. The system will also use advanced technologies to ensure fast, safe and on-time service, including intelligent traffic light systems that hold green lights longer, and will be able to track the location of each vehicle in real time. BRT stations will be equipped with seating, lighting, shelter and real-time bus arrival displays as well as off-board ticket vending.

To learn more about RAPID, visit embark.com/brt.

DOD GRANT FOR OSU AIMS TO INCREASE MORE ENGINEERS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

awarded Oklahoma State University's College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology (CEAT) a \$6 million grant to develop education programs in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) for economically disadvantaged or underrepresented students is so important.

College officials said the DoD will administer the \$6 million grant over the next four years as part of its National Defense Education Program. The goal is to produce more engineers in Oklahoma and to create pathways to innovation. OSU will be working with Oklahoma City Public Schools, Mid-Del Public Schools and Millwood and other schools across the state to help kindergarten through 12th grade students understand they can have meaningful and exciting STEM careers.

“If you look at Oklahoma City Public Schools, Mid-Del and Millwood, approximately 80% of their students of people of color or Hispanic, and are economically disadvantaged,” said CEAT Dean Dr. Paul Tikalsky. “Very few engineers come from these 55,000 students right in the center of our state's largest city. That seems crazy. We can maybe by tenfold increase the number of engineers that are generated from these three school districts through this grant.”

Building a pipeline of STEM students will be the key to increasing the number of engineers in the state, Tikalsky said, but the key will be not just getting kids excited about STEM but to get them to actually use STEM every day and to think about how engineers think.

“We want to actually make sure they know how to use math and use science to understand the world around them, to recognize good statistics from terrible statistics and to understand when people talk about our DNA, or whatever it happens to be, that they have the tools and curiosity to go figure out solutions to next generation challenges. That's the key for us to create any engineer because they are people that ask the question – what is it, how does it work and can I make it better?” Tikalsky said.

“There aren't a bunch of kids who can't get into engineering school in Oklahoma; there are just not enough prepared to apply. You do have to have a certain ACT and understand math and science, but you don't have to be perfect. You have to like it and be curious. That's what we are trying to do here is to get kids' skill levels high enough so that they can excel at the next level,” he said.



A shot from inside OSU DISCOVERY with a view of downtown OKC in the distance. OSU Discovery will serve as the hub for OSU's College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology STEM education initiatives. (Photo courtesy OSU)

If you have lived in Oklahoma City for any period of time, you probably are well aware of the importance Tinker Air Force Base is to the community. As the state's largest single-site employer with a workforce of around 26,000 people, Tinker continues to generate a huge economic impact to the region. In addition to Tinker, there are also numerous aerospace contractors and sub-contractors throughout the metro providing services to Tinker and other federal agencies as well as many other aviation and aerospace companies producing goods and services for the commercial market.

Business owners and leaders will tell you that having a knowledgeable and skilled workforce is imperative in order for their businesses to succeed, regardless of the type of business or industry sector they are in. And aerospace is no different. That is why the recent announcement that the U.S. Department of Defense

OSU DISCOVERY, which is located in the heart of the Oklahoma City Innovation District, will serve as the official hub for the college's STEM education initiatives. Several public and private entities, including Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Mint Turbine, Skydweller Aero, Devon Energy, Baker Hughes, AT&T, Tinker AFB and others, are partnering with OSU in this initiative.

"All of those entities want to help these K through 12 kids and figure out what they can do to help. We'll have more companies jumping on board in that same way. The \$6 million is probably going to create another couple of million (dollars) for the industry to help us," Tikalsky said.

One way industry partners are going to assist OSU throughout the duration of the grant is by providing expertise to participating teachers and K-12 students in the form of younger engineers.

"Those companies are full of 25-year-old engineers. If they can come and say, 'Listen, I graduated from college

two years ago and make \$100,000 a year, and I'm an engineer and was sitting in the same chair you were five years ago, and I had no idea that this was my life.' "When they see that, some kids will say, 'Really? You just came from this chair and went there?' "That's what we really want to excite them about. It's not just about money but also solving problems for NASA or perhaps our next generation of security issues for oil and gas or clean energy," Tikalsky said.

Activities surrounding the grant have already begun at OSU, including recently hiring a new program director, Dr. Jovette Dew, who is already meeting with officials from such places as the Oklahoma City Black Chamber of Commerce, Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City and the Latino Development Agency in Oklahoma City. The program will fully kick off by next summer with weeklong camps planned for up to 2,000 kids.

ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Reach the Chamber's engaged, active audience of community and business leaders through available advertising opportunities in 2022.

VELOCITY NEWSLETTER

With a monthly distribution of 7,000 digital copies, the VeloCity newsletter communicates topics that are relevant to the business community. Single-placement ad rates start at \$375.

2022 WELCOME GUIDE

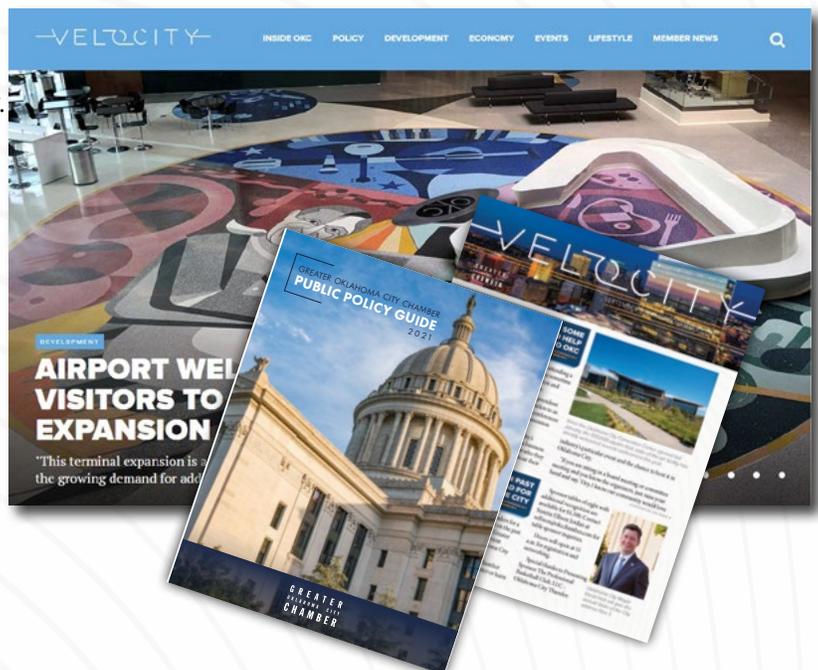
This guide directly targets new or soon-to-be new Oklahoma City residents with information about housing, utilities, weather, education, culture and moving resources. Ad rates start at \$1,250.

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For more information about advertising with the Chamber, contact Nate Fisher at 405-297-8936 or nfisher@okcchamber.com.



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.

PARTNER+

Fleske Commercial Group
Investments - Real Estate
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 600 NW 23rd St.
 P.O. Box 722760
 Norman, OK 73070-9093
 www.fleskeholding.net

ADVISOR

Council on American-Islamic Relations, Oklahoma Chapter
Nonprofit / Service Agencies
 Mr. Adam Soltani.....(405) 415-6851
 3000 United Founders Blvd., Suite 226
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112-4290
 www.cairoklahoma.com

EMERGING LEADER

Benjamin Lee Bison
Meat - Wholesale / Retail
 Ms. Jessi Deardorf.....(405) 831-1174
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 3737 E. Hefner Road
 Oklahoma City, OK 73131-6110
 www.buysomebison.com

EMERGING LEADER

The Ellison, Oklahoma City, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel
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 Ms. Carrie M. Parker.....(405) 463-0055
 6201 N. Western Ave.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73118
 www.ellisonhotel.com

EMERGING LEADER

The Old Spaghetti Factory
Restaurants
 Mr. Joshua Ray.....(405) 669-4400
 1 S. Mickey Mantle Drive
 Oklahoma City, OK 73104-2432
 www.osf.com

ASSOCIATE

Cross Timbers Brewery Company
Breweries
 Mr. Michael Hood.....(855) 523-3763
 1900 Linwood Blvd., Suite 100B
 Oklahoma City, OK 73106-2628
 www.crosstimbersbrewing.com

CORE

Aloft Oklahoma City Quail Springs
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 13111 Highland Park Blvd.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73120
 www.aloftquailsprings.com

CORE

Daily Living Centers
Adult Day Health Care
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 3000 N. Rockwell Ave.
 Bethany, OK 73008-4649
 www.dailylivingcenters.org

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Espire Dental
Dentists
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 12448 St. Andrews Drive
 7800 E. Union Ave., Suite 930
 Denver, CO 80237-3359
 www.espiredental.com

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Legion Cyber Solutions, LLC
Cyber Security Services
 Mr. Michael Leonard.....(737) 787-6904
 11304 NW 98th St.
 Yukon, OK 73099-4026

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Lively Beerworks
Breweries
 Mr. Patrick Lively.....(405) 594-8100
 815 SW 2nd St.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73109-1103
 www.livelybeerworks.com

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 Mr. Alan Goldfarb.....(405) 286-4300
 9104 N. Kelley Ave.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73131-2418
 www.ameripriseadvisors.com/team/marks-associates

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Restaurants
 Mr. Michael O'Hara.....(405) 463-0055
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 Oklahoma City, OK 73118
 www.milook.com

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Northeast Regional Health and Wellness Campus
Health Services
 Dr. Patrick McGough.....(405) 427-8651
 2600 NE 63rd St.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73111
 www.occhd.org

CORE

Oklahoma Real Estate Commercial Advisors
Real Estate - Commercial
 Mr. Wesley Johnson.....(405) 445-7528
 1125 W. State Highway 152, Suite 101C
 Mustang, OK 73064-2354
 www.okreca.com

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 Norman, OK 73070-9093
 www.ponedllc.com

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RIHC - Robinson Industrial & Heavy Contracting
Construction Companies
 Mr. Paul Findlay.....(405) 449-9555
 2309 S. Kelly Ave., Suite 150
 Edmond, OK 73013-0024
 www.robinsonihc.com

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Touchstone Management, LLC
Property Management
 Ms. Marissa Brooks.....(405) 701-0038
 600 NW 23rd St.
 P.O. Box 722760
 Norman, OK 73070-9093
 www.touchstonemanagement.net

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Unwind Cafe LLC
Restaurants
 Mr. Kefren Arjona.....(405) 768-4770
 427 NW 23rd St.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73103-1507
 www.unwind.cafe

CORE

West Health Clinic
Health Services
 Dr. Patrick McGough.....(405) 419-4150
 4330 NW 10th St.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73107
 www.occhd.org

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.

SENIOR PARTNER++

Oklahoma City Community College
Schools - Universities & Colleges
 Mr. Erick Worrell.....(405) 682-7502
 7777 S. May Ave.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73159-4444
 www.occc.edu

GRADY COUNTY RANKS NO. 2 FOR TOP SMALL COUNTIES IN THE US FOR TALENT ATTRACTION

TOP 10 SMALL COUNTIES (2021)

County	Primary City	2020 Rank	2021 Rank	Change
Reeves County, TX	Pecos, TX	1	1	No change
Grady County, OK	Chickasha, OK	816	2	814
Winkler County, TX	Kermit, TX	6	3	3
Clark County, MO	Kahoka, MO	12	4	8
Jackson County, GA	Jefferson, GA	30	5	25
Calhoun County, AR	Hampton, AR	32	6	26
Goochland County, VA	Goochland, VA	10	7	3
Burke County, GA	Waynesboro, GA	3	8	-5
Lafayette County, MS	Oxford, MS	25	9	16
Valencia County, NM	Los Lunas, NM	528	10	518

- The Emsi Talent Attraction Scorecard ranked every small county (5k-99k pop.) in the U.S. on talent attraction.
- Grady County, a county in Greater OKC, was propelled 814 spots to No. 2 for talent attraction due to a 118% increase in migration.
- Grady County contains the fast-growing “Tri-City” communities of Newcastle, Tuttle and Blanchard.
- The talent attraction index score is based on:
 - Overall & skilled job growth
 - Educational attainment
 - Regional competitiveness
 - Annual job openings per capita
 - Migration

Source: Emsi Burning Glass Labor Market Analytics, Talent Attraction Scorecard, 2021

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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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