

CITYSCAPE

SEPTEMBER 2018 | ISSUE 10 | AN UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS MOVING OKC FORWARD

Oklahoma City sees economic and retail growth in first half of 2018

Oklahoma City continues to draw investment from major companies thanks to its strong business climate, low cost of doing business and continued investment in quality-of-life projects. In May, Amazon announced its first Oklahoma fulfillment center would be located in Oklahoma City.

The company plans to build a 600,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility that will employ more than 1,500 people. The facility will be located near Will Rogers World Airport in the Lariat Landing development on S Portland Avenue.

“A facility bringing more than 1,500 new jobs is a monumental announcement,” said Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt. “This is a great day for Oklahoma City, and we’re thrilled to welcome Amazon’s investment in our community.

“I’m also thrilled to see this facility plant its flag in south OKC,” Holt continued. “It’s good for the whole city and we look forward to the catalyst we know this project will be for its immediate surroundings in south OKC.”

The center will receive and fulfill customer orders. Employees at the fulfillment center will pick, pack and ship small items to customers such as books, household items and toys. Oklahoma City is also home to an Amazon sorting center, which sorts packaged customer orders by ZIP code to allow for faster delivery.

Continued on page 6



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Get to know OKCPS's new superintendent

On July 1, longtime Oklahoma educator Dr. Sean McDaniel joined the Oklahoma City Public School District as superintendent. McDaniel comes to the role after serving as superintendent of Mustang Public Schools, a suburban school district of 11,000 students. McDaniel was recently named Oklahoma Superintendent of the Year by the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration. He has 33 years of experience in education, 17 of those as a district superintendent.



Recently members of the CityScape editorial team sat down with McDaniel to learn more about his goals for OKCPS. Read on to hear his perspective on the district.

CityScape: When you think of the future of the district, what is the most encouraging thing to you?

McDaniel: The most encouraging things to me are the talented employees serving the district and the incredible support that OKCPS receives from outside of the district by way of PTAs, booster clubs, civic groups, the Chamber, the Foundation, the United Way, Fields and Futures, and a host of other groups and individuals. People genuinely care about OKCPS kids and teachers and are willing to step in and step up in any way they can to help.

What do you consider to be the district's biggest challenges and how do you plan to meet those challenges?

OKCPS has a number of challenges that must be addressed immediately. Included on that list would be the removal of obstacles that would prevent any student from accessing opportunities that would lead to a successful school experience as well as a successful life after high school. We begin to meet these challenges by talking about all kids first and by developing practices and policies that ensure equity across the district. That would include the distribution of resources, the staffing of schools, the setting of high expectations for all, and the execution of evidence-based plans that lead to success. Additional challenges would include declining enrollment, low performance on district and state tests, and high turnover in the superintendent's office.

The district has undergone several transition periods in the last 15 years. How do you plan to provide stability to the district?

I will provide stability in a number of ways. First, stability comes with longevity. I will be here for the long term. Secondly, stability comes with follow through. If I say I will do something, I have to follow through and that goes for everyone in the district from the Board to the employees to the students and families. When I follow through, I build trust, and trust will get things done once it is established. Everyone has a stake in stability - not just the superintendent.

If there was one thing that you wish more people knew about OKCPS, what would it be?

Coming from someone who lives in OKC and who has watched OKCPS from a distance for three decades, I would say that the "one thing" would be that I wished people knew how passionate and excited people are about our schools. Unfortunately, people outside of the district are the ones who own the OKCPS narrative. We need to own our own narrative and while we certainly have challenges that must be faced and overcome, we also have many, many fantastic things going on and some wonderfully talented and supportive individuals and groups amongst us. We need to talk about the goodness of OKCPS more often.

How do you plan to be innovative with resources in the midst of a tight budget environment?

I have begun the process of taking stock of our habits and practices, our programs and personnel. Additionally, I will continue to elicit input from staff and the community in order to find creative ways to meet student and family needs and to provide teachers and schools with support. As a district, we also need to identify additional funding

Continued on page 6

OKC's bikewalkokc plan to increase opportunity for active lifestyles

Oklahoma City is a draw for new residents, with a growth rate that doesn't appear to be slowing down. To help meet the needs of more people living in a growing urban environment, the City of Oklahoma City recently adopted bikewalkokc, OKC's first comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian master plan.

"The lifestyle of everybody driving every trip they take doesn't work well in a dense urban environment," said John Tankard, associate planner with the City of Oklahoma City. "Making sure that people have alternatives that are safe – things like public transit, sidewalks, bike lanes and trails – are important."

When the City updated and adopted its comprehensive master plan in 2015 called planokc, 14 of the 21 transportation initiatives were directly related to increasing opportunities for active transportation – which refers to any human-powered means of getting around. The City's master plan also calls for a more efficient method of development, focusing on reinvesting in Oklahoma City's existing neighborhoods.

"Our development priorities lead to more people living in an urban environment, and a good pedestrian network is crucial for making sure that works," Tankard said.

But before Tankard's team could focus on providing more infrastructure for active transportation, they first needed to identify why people don't currently walk or use a bicycle as a main means of transportation. While the desire to have more walkable communities has gained momentum, Oklahoma City was built in a way that reflects a dependence on automobiles as a primary means of transportation. Some destinations, districts and recreational resources may not be accessible by anything other than an automobile.

Oklahoma City residents who responded to a survey during the planning process also indicated that dangerous interactions with automobiles and a lack of infrastructure kept pedestrians and cyclists from feeling comfortable on the road.

"Our city council has the priority to have a transportation system that works for everybody," Tankard said. "Residents have been saying that

they want to walk and bike more, and they want public transit that is useful and dignified. We've got these different sets of infrastructure that need to fit together."

Based on resident feedback and an analysis of the needs of different communities throughout Oklahoma City, the plan focuses on four main goals: improving the safety of walking and cycling in Oklahoma City; increasing the number of people who bike and walk; better neighborhood connections to jobs, transit centers, schools, parks and retail centers; and removing barriers to walking and cycling.

To meet these goals, bikewalkokc focuses on expanding the city's existing bicycle network with integral projects like completing the Grand Boulevard Linear Park, a belt-line trail around central Oklahoma City, and improving specific crosstown corridors so that there will be one east-to-west and one north-to-south route to connect residents to other parts of the city.

The plan identifies priority areas that represent the best opportunities to create walkable areas. New and improved sidewalks in these areas will increase the ability to get to nearby destinations safely and comfortably. In addition, the comprehensive plan calls for neighborhood greenways, 102 miles of new multi-use trails and bicycle and pedestrian bridges to

address the barriers of highways, rivers and railroads.

While the plan was just approved in May, the ongoing infrastructure funding approved by Oklahoma City residents allows work to begin on some projects immediately. As the plan comes to fruition, Tankard hopes that more people adopt an active transportation lifestyle, no matter in what area of Oklahoma City they live.

"Both planokc and bikewalkokc don't shy away from the fact that we have all different types of lifestyle opportunities in the city," Tankard said. "You could live in the highest urban development in the state, or you could live in a pastoral rural community, all within our city limits. It's a unique situation and it's in our best interest to preserve and enhance that."

“Our development priorities lead to more people living in an urban environment, and a good pedestrian network is crucial for making sure that works.”

- John Tankard, Associate Planner, City of Oklahoma City



More MAPS 3 projects make significant headway



With the recent groundbreaking of the MAPS 3 Convention Center, all of Oklahoma City's MAPS 3 projects are either in progress or complete. Read on for significant updates about the program.

Downtown Convention Center

On Friday, June 15, Oklahoma City officials broke ground on the MAPS 3 Convention Center, launching a new era for the MAPS 3 projects and Oklahoma City's Core-to-Shore redevelopment. This state-of-the-art, \$288 million project is expected to be complete in 2020.

The building will be located east of Scissortail Park along Robinson Boulevard between SW 4th and SW 7th streets. Like the park and many other important landmarks downtown, it will be served by the MAPS 3 OKC Streetcar.

The convention center's sleek and modern design features sweeping downtown views and materials designed for energy efficiency and resiliency against the weather. A 200,000-square-foot exhibit hall and about 45,000 square feet of meeting spaces will allow multiple events to take place simultaneously. The design also calls for a 30,000-square-foot ballroom, 10,000 square feet of pre-function space and a 4,000-square-foot balcony overlooking the MAPS 3 Scissortail Park.

The MAPS 3 Convention Center's total project budget of \$288 million, including land acquisition and other related expenses, is the biggest in City history for a single project. The construction contract is \$168.2 million, \$20 million under budget.

MAPS 3 Senior Health and Wellness Centers

Mayor David Holt and other civic leaders opened the second of four MAPS 3 senior wellness centers on May 4. The 39,000-square foot facility, located at 4021 S Walker Ave., is operated by NorthCare and is next door to Capitol Hill High School. It has a fitness center for members age 50 and up and a medical clinic open to everyone. The center is named for former longtime Ward 4 Councilman Pete White.

The debt-free \$10.5 million center has a heated indoor fitness pool, a fully equipped exercise room, a café with computers, a billiards room, an art room with a kiln, a demonstration kitchen and a large outdoor patio.

The hybrid fitness pool has four lanes for swimming laps, plus an area for water aerobics and similar activities.

The fitness center has new weight machines, treadmills, elliptical machines, bikes and a walking track. Six new tennis courts will be shared with the high school.



The center's medical clinic offers primary care and behavioral health services through NorthCare and Variety Care, and physical therapy services. It has 12 exam rooms, a pharmacy and a separate entrance and waiting room for students.

The first MAPS 3 Senior Health & Wellness Center opened last year at 11501 N Rockwell Ave. and is operated by Healthy Living and Fitness. The City is negotiating with Langston University for the operation of the third center in a to-be-determined location on the northeast side. A fourth center will follow.

Oklahoma City Streetcar

The Oklahoma City Streetcar, which has been under construction since early 2017, reached an important milestone in June when it began on-street testing on the Bricktown loop. Testing the streetcars confirms the tracks were built according to plans and specifications. Testing includes clearances with stops and adjoining signs, signals, poles and more. The electrical and signaling systems will also be tested, along with the operation of the streetcars themselves to ensure readiness for passenger safety.



Each streetcar must have at least 310 miles of testing before certification to carry passengers, and streetcar testing will be ongoing until the scheduled start of service late this year. Testing will begin along the Downtown Loop when construction is completed on that track in late summer.

A safety campaign is also underway to educate drivers, pedestrians and cyclists how to safely interact with the streetcar once rail service begins. The campaign will continue when streetcar operations begin. Learn how to remain streetcar safe at www.embarkok.com.

Scissortail Park

Construction is under way on the upper section of the MAPS 3 Scissortail Park, and in July, officials unveiled the park's logo. The new branding was produced by local creative firm StapleGun. Scissortail Park Foundation also announced The Social Order Dining

Collective as the operator for the Park's new cafe. The 40-acre upper section of the park opens next year, with the 30-acre lower section of the park scheduled to be finished in 2021.



Oklahoma City adds jobs, retail to economy

continued from page 1

Oklahoma City's retail sector, which plays a critical role in funding the city's core services, has also experienced growth in 2018. According to its most recent sales tax report, the City of Oklahoma City has enjoyed 15 consecutive months of increased sales tax revenue compared to the same months the previous year. In July, sales tax collections were up 21.5 percent compared to the same month in 2017. Sales tax collections fund the City's core services, public safety, infrastructure improvements and quality-of-life projects.

Adding to that success is the addition of several new names to the Oklahoma City retail scene, including:

- Flix Brewhouse, a first-run movie theater that also incorporates a fully functioning microbrewery, locating at a new development at Broadway Extension and Britton Road
- Life Time Fitness at Quail Springs Mall, an athletic resort with gym equipment, studio classes, a pool, spa services and more
- Hopdoddy Burger Bar, a burger-and-brews concept restaurant coming to Chisholm Creek
- Costco, a membership warehouse club, plans to build a 150,000-square-foot store at Western Avenue and the John Kilpatrick Turnpike.



Sales tax collections fund the City of Oklahoma City's core services, public safety, infrastructure improvements and quality-of-life projects.

Most recently, Oklahoma City was named as the first Oklahoma location for The Container Store, a retailer that sells storage and organization products. The store will be located on N Pennsylvania Avenue near Penn Square Mall and will employ more than 50 people. The store is set to open in September.

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continued from page 3

sources while at the same time spending our money wisely and in a manner that brings a premium return on our investment.

What are your primary goals for your first year? For the next five years?

Four personal objectives that I have as an educator have always been to attend to relationships, to keep my focus on student success, to communicate effectively, and to insist on collaboration. It is also important to me to hold myself accountable and to develop a culture of accountability; not as a punitive measure but as a set of agreements with follow through. Specifically, in OKCPS, we need

a focus on the academic expectations that exist in all schools, we need the equitable distribution of resources across the district, we need to review and revise the organizational structure so that we are service oriented, and we need to have a conversation about results, academic and otherwise. On the personnel side, we need to recruit, train and retain effective teachers. I am certain that OKCPS has our fair share of quality teachers but we need one in every classroom. We need to recruit, train and retain outstanding leaders to head our schools. Again, we have outstanding ones, but we need outstanding ones in every position, in every school.

Will Rogers World Airport continues to soar

New airlines, nonstop flights and continued investment set Oklahoma City's airport up for a successful year

Oklahoma City's Will Rogers World Airport is continuing its growth as it provides increased travel options for Oklahoma City residents. In 2018, Oklahoma City launched several new nonstop flights, including four nonstop flights to new destinations. Most recently, Southwest Airlines announced that it will be expanding its Oklahoma City service with a new nonstop flight to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) from Will Rogers World Airport beginning Nov. 4, 2018.

"Attracting business or visitors to our market requires excellent air service," said Roy Williams, president and CEO of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber. "With our growing aerospace defense sector in particular, nonstop service to Washington Reagan has long been a demand we hear from our companies. And with the new convention center underway, shoring up our nonstop routes will make us even more successful in attracting meetings. Our service to major markets continues to improve and I anticipate this route being heavily supported by business travelers."

American Airlines also recently launched two new nonstop flights to Philadelphia, which will increase Oklahoma City's connecting options to the northeast and for transatlantic travel. Philadelphia is the second destination American has added to the Oklahoma City market in the last three months; in April, the carrier began nonstop service to Phoenix.

Low-fare carrier Frontier Airlines, which began service in Oklahoma City in November 2017, launched a nonstop flight to San Diego in April. Frontier also offers nonstop service to Denver and Orlando, and they will add seasonal nonstop service to San Antonio in August 2018. Frontier is one of the youngest fleets of commercial aircraft in the industry, and with nearly 200 new planes on order, the company is looking to expand. Will Rogers World Airport also welcomed a new carrier, Via Air, and its nonstop flight to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in January. The airport now serves 30 nonstop airports with an average of 72 daily departures.

Will Rogers World Airport is also investing in its amenities, with recent parking upgrades that allow customers to pay at kiosks or in credit-card-only exit lanes. The airport's terminal expansion project, which will add four new airline gates, a centralized security checkpoint and more circulation space, is expected to go out for bid in September or October 2018.



Officials gathered to launch two new American Airlines nonstop flights to Philadelphia.

In addition to new flights and locations, a designated 1,000 acres located at Will Rogers World Airport is growing as a multi-use, multi-industry business development. Known as Lariat Landing, the development complements the airport's core mission of operating a first-class transportation facility.

Two major projects at Lariat Landing are nearing completion. A grand opening of the new SkyWest Airlines maintenance hangar is being planned for late September. The 135,000-square-foot facility will serve as a regional maintenance facility

for the airline's Bombardier CRJ and Embraer 175 (E175) aircraft. The company plans to hire approximately 100 mechanics.

Construction is nearly complete on FedEx's 96,000-square-foot ground distribution and customer service facility. The facility includes customer service and sort operations, parking for vans and tractor-trailers and areas to perform minor repairs to its fleet of vehicles.

And most recently, Amazon announced plans to open its first fulfillment center in Oklahoma in Lariat Landing. The 600,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art center will create more than 1,500 jobs. (See page 1 for more.)

"There is a dynamic relationship between the airport and the Oklahoma City community," says Mark Kranenburg, director of airports. "As our community grows, so does air service. Air service then becomes a catalyst for developing business, attracting conventions, developing tourism, basically, growing our economy. The stronger our airport, the stronger our community."

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Q&A with OKCPS
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