

# VELOCITY

AUGUST 2022 • OKCCHAMBER.COM

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CHAMBER

## TEXAS ROBOTICS COMPANY A STEP CLOSER TO INCENTIVE FUNDING FOR OKC EXPANSION

The Oklahoma City Council recently gave approval for an Austin, Texas-based robotics manufacturer to continue its quest to seek funding from an OKC business incentive program to expand its operations to Oklahoma City and serve both commercial and military customers more efficiently and effectively throughout the state and region, including Tinker Air Force Base.

Wilder Systems, Inc., is requesting incentive funds from OKC's Strategic Investment Program (SIP),

## OKC PREPARES TO HOST INFLUENTIAL INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Officials are preparing to host the International Economic Development Council's annual meeting and conference, which brings together economic developers and corporate real estate executives from all over the globe for training, presentations, networking and more – and gives the host city a chance to showcase their city and state to an influential group of attendees when it comes to facilitating business expansion and job creation.

With a theme of "Turning Disruption into Innovation and Opportunity," the conference, set for September 18-21 at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, expects to

which is designed to provide qualifying companies with cash payments if they meet certain annual payroll or employment thresholds. Wilder Systems aims to lower costs by building its marquee product, the Agile Manufacturing Robot, locally.

Wilder Systems designed the Agile Manufacturing Robot (AMR) to automate military and commercial aircraft manufacturing tasks, which have been historically performed manually or with very expensive equipment. The robotic system can perform various tasks with little to no manpower, including washing aircraft, drilling and defastening – applications the company has been testing at Tinker since January 2022.

In addition to Oklahoma City's proximity to Tinker and other Air Force bases, company officials

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 9*

welcome more than 1,000 professionals and their families from all over the world and promises to show off some of the assets and qualities that have propelled Oklahoma City's growth. While every community had to deal with massive disruption due to the effects of the coronavirus, Oklahoma City's demonstrated ability to recover from difficulties and come out stronger makes our city an apropos location for the conference.

"In Oklahoma City, we've experienced disruptions to our economy in ways that would be very difficult for some communities to recover from. It's a testament to our spirit, our people and the Oklahoma standard that we've been able to continue to move forward and come together to create success out of those difficulties," said Chamber President and CEO Roy Williams. "We look forward to showing off OKC's best to this influential group while they're here to learn and network together."

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 7*



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



Safia Franks, RN  
Cardiology

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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

## INVESTMENTS IN OURSELVES VIA VISITOR ECONOMY COMING TO FRUITION

The pandemic affected nearly every industry sector worldwide. While some are obviously still struggling, one that is on the rebound locally is our visitor economy. And the benefits our economy is deriving from this activity are due to the investments we've made over the years that are attracting people and economic activity in this increasingly important sector.

Tourism is generally considered a "pure" economic development activity because it brings money into the community that stays and gets recirculated and reinvested here, while relatively few services are necessary to be provided versus that of a resident.

While the latest numbers are still being analyzed, we know that hotel tax collections received in fiscal year 2022 totaled more than \$6 million, a 20.7% increase over projections, on the strength of 391,560 total room nights from definite bookings through 188 serviced events. The 2021 fiscal year report showed estimated direct spending of \$259 million from visitors, including equine events that generated more than \$127 million. That's a lot of economic activity, and the fiscal year that just ended promises an even bigger tally. The money that is injected into our economy via our visitor sector represents wages, jobs, growth, quality of life amenities and enhanced services for our community.

How did we get here?

The simple fact is we create a place people want to visit when we invest in ourselves in ways that make OKC a great place to live, work and play. Along with community spirit and working together, the benefits of this approach have been key and a major driver of our success over the last 25-plus years, and with planned investments in Okana, the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds and more, that success will continue to grow.



Roy H. Williams, CCE  
Chamber President & CEO



Roy H. Williams, CCE  
President & CEO



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## CONTENTS

5

Garrett, McDaniel highlight Chamber's State of the Schools event

10

Chamber work to fuel business expansion vital to city's continued growth

8

Nearly 300 interns attend InternOKC, strengthening workforce pipeline

12

Convergence aims to connect entities, industries to spur innovation

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## CALENDAR

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

### AUGUST 9

Chamber Connection  
3 to 4:30 p.m.  
RACK59 Data Center  
7725 W. Reno Ave., Suite 304

### AUGUST 10

State of the Schools  
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
National Cowboy Hall of Fame &  
Western Heritage Museum  
1700 NE 63rd St.  
[okcchamber.com/schools](http://okcchamber.com/schools)

### AUGUST 17

Chamber Forum  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Vast  
333 W Sheridan Ave.  
[okcchamber.com/augustforum](http://okcchamber.com/augustforum)

### SEPTEMBER 15

OKConnect  
Noon to 5 p.m.  
Location TBD  
[okcchamber.com/okconnect](http://okcchamber.com/okconnect)

### SEPTEMBER 21

Chamber Forum  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Vast  
333 W Sheridan Ave.  
[okcchamber.com/septemberforum](http://okcchamber.com/septemberforum)

# CHAMBER FORUM

## *The recovery of OKC's visitor economy in the spotlight during August Chamber Forum*

Oklahoma City has seen a significant uptick in the number of out-of-town visitors to our city over the last year or so as things continue to trend upward following months of upheaval and challenges created by the pandemic. But with things now returning to some normalcy, Oklahoma City's visitor economy is booming, and the prospect for continued growth abounds.

On August 17 during the Chamber's August Forum, attendees will hear about the recovery of Oklahoma City's visitor economy and learn more about the exciting events taking place across the city from a panel comprised of some of OKC's leading tourism and events officials. Serving on the panel will be:

- Zac Craig, President, Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Craig Cress, Chief Executive Officer, USA Softball
- Harshil Patel, Vice President, Champion Hotels & Development
- Kari Watkins, President & CEO, Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

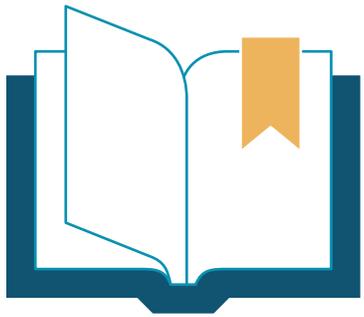
The cost to attend the August Forum is \$40 for Chamber members, \$50 for nonmembers. To register for the August Forum, please visit [okcchamber.com/augustforum](http://okcchamber.com/augustforum).

## SEPTEMBER FORUM

Anyone interested in purchasing their tickets in advance for the Sept. 21 Chamber Forum, which will focus on national economic development trends, and will feature economic developers from outside of Oklahoma City who will provide a unique perspective on the topic. Register by visiting [okcchamber.com/septemberforum](http://okcchamber.com/septemberforum). Visit the events page on the Chamber website for up-to-date information on this and other events the Chamber hosts throughout the year.

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

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



# STATE OF THE SCHOOLS



Oklahoma City Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Sean McDaniel, left, and Higher Education Chancellor Allison Garrett will be the featured speakers during the State of the Schools event Aug. 10 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

## CHAMBER EVENT TO EXAMINE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN OKC, OFFER GLIMPSES OF WHAT'S AHEAD

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will present the 2022 State of the Schools, with featured guests Higher Education Chancellor Allison Garrett and Oklahoma City Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Sean McDaniel, on Wednesday, Aug. 10, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

Garrett, chief executive officer for the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and the first woman to hold the position of chancellor in Oklahoma, will provide an overview of higher education in the state, including recent budget and legislative issues, the impact and recovery from COVID-19, and the vision for encouraging more graduates with in-demand degrees in STEM, health care and education.

McDaniel will deliver an update on the district, including the progress on Pathway to Greatness and EmbraceOKC, share highlights from the past year and discuss the impact the upcoming bond issue will have on the district's future.

The event will also feature a panel with McDaniel and other area superintendents as they discuss what is needed

to help all students reach their potential, how Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds will be utilized, and how area districts are working to improve the mental health of their students, teachers and staff. Joining McDaniel on the panel will be:

- Dr. Rick Cobb, Superintendent, Mid-Del Public Schools
- Dr. Angela Grunewald, Superintendent, Edmond Public Schools
- Dr. Robert Romines, Superintendent, Moore Public Schools

Individual tickets are \$60 for Chamber members and \$85 for nonmembers. To register or learn more, visit [okcchamber.com/schools](http://okcchamber.com/schools). Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,500. Contact Suzette Ellison Jordan at [sellison@okcchamber.com](mailto:sellison@okcchamber.com) for table sponsor inquiries.

The Chamber and American Fidelity Assurance Company invite attendees to bring school supplies to the event, which will be distributed through the Boys and Girls Clubs of Oklahoma County. Supplies can also be dropped off at the Chamber office prior to the event.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and Host Sponsor Cox Communications, and School Supply/Centerpiece Sponsor American Fidelity Assurance Company.



## NEW BUSINESS LEADERS CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REGION THROUGH OKCONNECT EVENT



OKConnect, an exclusive, high-level orientation program created by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and Leadership OKC, will be returning to Oklahoma City this fall. The Program is designed for newcomers to the community, or for a business leader with a new or expanded role, which requires community awareness and involvement.

Co-chaired by Jim Roth, dean and professor of law at the Oklahoma City University School of Law, and Meg Salyer, owner of Broadway Realty and former Ward 6 Council member, OKConnect includes four sessions from noon to 5 p.m. over a three-month period beginning in September. The program helps top-level executives and senior managers discover how to get involved in the community. Participants will get behind-the-scenes insight into the city – from the city’s earliest beginnings to the area’s current growth and success.

In the first session on Sept. 15, participants will learn about the founding of OKC as well as the state’s and region’s political history. In addition, they will also

receive an overview of the demographics of OKC and how these factors have shaped our city, and more.

On Oct. 6, participants will hear about the city’s plan to sustain economic growth, while on Oct. 27, they will hear how innovation, as well as public and private partnerships and investments, are making a difference in OKC’s educational outcomes. During the program’s fourth and final session on Nov. 17, participants will learn how to stay engaged in the community and hear what is on the horizon for the metro from OKC Mayor David Holt.

Cost to attend OKConnect is \$500 for Chamber members and \$600 for nonmembers. The deadline to complete the online application is Sept. 2. To apply for this program or to learn more, visit [okcchamber.com/okconnect](http://okcchamber.com/okconnect).

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While the conference is being held in Oklahoma City, support to execute the event has come from every corner of the state. Beyond an outstanding statewide response to sponsoring the conference, partners from all over Oklahoma have been important contributors on the various planning committees to ensure a first-class event. This extends to programming where ground-breaking economic development initiatives are happening in both urban and rural Oklahoma. Statewide involvement has helped the programming of the conference appeal to communities of all sizes nationwide

“We’ve had great support for the IEDC conference from so many of our economic development partners and other forward-thinking companies and firms from all over the state,” said Sean Trauschke, Chamber chair. “It really goes to show everyone understands what a great opportunity this is to show off OKC’s readiness to support economic growth and expansion.”

Kent Shortridge, vice chair of economic development, and Bill Lance, vice chair of partnership development, for the Chamber, are serving as co-chairs of the OKC Host Committee.

Along with educational sessions, professional development, certification exams and networking, the conference program includes tours of historic OKC districts and neighborhoods like The Paseo, the Plaza District, Capitol Hill, Midtown, NE 23rd/EastPoint and the Innovation District to show how redevelopment and progress have taken place in core areas alongside the transformation of downtown. Tours will also be offered of the National Weather Center and Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth and Innovation Lab at the University of Oklahoma, Tinker Air Force Base and the FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center for a look at OKC’s aerospace cluster and the redevelopment of the former GM facility into an aerospace hub, as well as a focus on MAPS projects and other urban redevelopments such as the Skirvin and Colcord hotels and the First National Center, alongside new developments like the Devon Tower.

Any and all Oklahomans with ties to economic or community development, or corporate real estate/site location functions are encouraged to register to not just

expand their professional network, but also learn about the latest trends, legal issues and others relevant to the field to help make the conference a success.

If you are interested in attending, sponsoring or exhibiting, learn more at [iedconferences.org/OKC](http://iedconferences.org/OKC).

Special thanks to all our current IEDC sponsors that have graciously provided valuable support to help Oklahoma host this event:

- Ada Jobs Foundation
- Ardmore Development Authority
- Arvest Bank
- BancFirst
- Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce
- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Citizen Potawatomi Nation
- Downtown OKC Partnership
- Delaware Resource Group
- Duncan Area Economic Development
- Enid Regional Development Alliance
- Greater Oklahoma City Chamber
- Lawton-Fort Sill Economic Development Corporation
- MidAmerica Industrial Park
- Muskogee City County Port Authority
- Norman Economic Development Coalition
- Oklahoma Business Roundtable, Inc.
- OCAST
- Oklahoma Gas & Electric Company Foundation, Inc.
- Oklahoma Department of Commerce
- One Gas, Inc.
- University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute
- Ponca City Development Authority
- AEP-Public Service Company of Oklahoma
- Resource Development Group
- Saxum
- Shawnee Forward, Inc.
- Tulsa Regional Chamber
- Tulsa Economic Development Corporation

## NEARLY 300 INTERNS ATTEND INTERNOKC EVENT, WORKFORCE PIPELINE STRENGTHENED

Nearly 300 young professionals from 35 companies from across the metro came together in person this summer for InternOKC, a program of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber designed to help interns develop the soft skills they need for today's workplace.

Created in 2006, InternOKC is a way for students to discover the benefits of living and working in Greater Oklahoma City, while also fostering peer networking and providing resources to help interns transition from college students to young professionals. Sessions typically include programming from industry trainers with topics that cover personal behavior and habits, building relationships and networking, as well as developing a mindset that fosters problem solving.



*Nearly 300 young professionals from approximately 35 companies met in Oklahoma City this summer for the Chamber's InternOKC program.*

The program also provides insight into living and working in Oklahoma City, as many interns live outside the market.

Interns also have an opportunity to earn a micro-credential, which they can use to beef up their résumés. Participating companies, in turn, get interns with some enhanced soft skills, qualities deemed very desirable among employers.

Each of the three sessions during this summer's InternOKC program focused on different topics related to the three core competencies. The topics included:

- Learn how adopting the right habits and practices will have an impact on your career development.



*Interns gather in the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City as part of InternOKC 2022.*

- How to navigate and form relationships that build your career and make positive differences in those around you.
- Build a mindset and perspective that builds resiliency, solves problems and makes a positive impact on your career and on others.

Lee Copeland, director of talent and business growth for the Chamber, said some companies have become more intentional in their training programs for interns, and that it is an ongoing effort to offer an experience that would be a complementary resource for their interns.

“In many ways, how we help companies equip interns is evolving,” Copeland said. “We want to continue to try to stay on the cutting edge on what we’re offering. We want to try to continue to have InternOKC be a high value add for regional employers.”

Copeland said the Chamber has already begun preparing for InternOKC in 2023. Communicating earlier and more often to companies about the program will be one of his top priorities leading up to next summer's event.

“We want to make sure that we’re listening and engaging with all our stakeholders, and we are looking for feedback and input to help drive their participation,” Copeland said.

Feedback from the interns who participated in InternOKC this summer has so far been largely positive and encouraging. Interns said they really appreciated the networking opportunities to meet other young interns, the interaction with the volunteer table hosts, and hearing all of the insights about Oklahoma City, especially if they resided somewhere outside of Oklahoma City.



Photo: U.S. Air National Guard/Senior Airman Ryan Mancuso

## ROBOTICS (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

said they believe OKC is at the epicenter for aircraft manufacturing, which will help them more easily serve clients in nearby aviation and aerospace hubs such as Tulsa, Okla.; Amarillo, Texas; Hot Springs, Ark.; and Wichita, Kan.

Once approved for the incentive funding, Wilder Systems would immediately begin the process of locating part of its operations in Oklahoma City, where it expects to create five to seven positions by the end of 2022 and an additional 25-30 jobs targeted for 2023. Yearly salaries will vary from \$35,000 to \$50,000 for technicians and \$80,000 to \$120,000 for senior engineers, with a focus on hiring veterans. New engineer graduates can expect to receive salaries ranging between \$50,000 and \$70,000 a year. Wilder Systems plans to partner with local two-year colleges and career technology centers to train and/or upskill new technicians.

“The aviation and aerospace sector is a huge economic engine in our state, especially right here in Oklahoma City where we have Tinker Air Force Base, the FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center and many large government contractors like Boeing and Northrop Grumman, not to mention many more small-to-medium sized businesses engaged in the maintenance, repair and overhaul of aircraft. The addition of Wilder Systems to our community of aviation-minded companies will undoubtedly help solidify and strengthen Oklahoma City’s position as a ‘go-to’ city for aviation manufacturing and services,” said Roy Williams, president and CEO of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber.

Wilder Systems CEO Will Wilder said, “We are extremely excited to be partnering with Oklahomans to strengthen the local and regional aerospace industry with advanced manufacturing technology like the Agile Manufacturing Robot. Oklahoma has welcomed us with open arms, from first customers at Tinker, to state and local government, to early-stage investors at Plains Ventures, Cortado Ventures and Echo Investment Capital. We see a bright future in Oklahoma City.”

To learn more about Wilder Systems, visit [wsrobots.com](http://wsrobots.com).

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## CHAMBER WORK TO FUEL BUSINESS EXPANSION VITAL TO CITY'S CONTINUED GROWTH



*From 2016 to 2020 more than 400 new projects or expansions were announced and over 23,000 new jobs created in the local metro area.*

Oklahoma City has grown significantly over the last decade, so much so that we are now the 20th largest city in the U.S. An accomplishment like that doesn't come by accident, but rather through hard work, know-how and determination – and a little luck sometimes – in order to attract newcomers and new business to the region.

The Chamber's Economic Development staff is on a constant mission to grow existing industries, recruit new companies and develop an active entrepreneurial environment, with the goal of creating quality jobs and a diverse economy for the region; in other words, bring new investment to the city. Those efforts have led to positive results, especially during the most recent reporting period from 2016 to 2020 when more than 400 new projects or expansions were announced and over 23,000 new jobs created, with average salaries more than \$5,000 higher than mean annual wages for the local metro area.

"If local companies are planning to expand or if they have some barriers to growth, our team can help connect them with resources to resolve issues or help with their expansion projects," said Jeff Seymour, the Chamber's executive vice president of economic development.

The team also works with local developers and existing destination retailers to bring new destination retail to the community. Businesses like Costco and Chicken N Pickle bring new investment into the community by attracting shoppers from and outside the Oklahoma City limits.

Research is key to supporting economic growth, and the Chamber has a research team dedicated to providing data assistance or information for recruiting new businesses from outside the state, helping existing

industry or to providing support to Chamber members when they need some data or information.

To keep abreast of which companies are looking to

***"If local companies are planning to expand or if they have some barriers to growth, our team can help connect them with resources to resolve issues or help with their expansion projects."***

*Jeff Seymour, Executive Vice President of Economic Development*

relocate or expand to other states or cities, the Chamber team relies on the work of their research team, as well as site location consultants, the local real estate community, and a variety of other partners, including the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. The team leads the Greater Oklahoma City Partnership, a multitalented team of economic development specialists in our 10-county region to respond to these opportunities – providing the data they need as well as information on available real estate, talent pipelines, incentives, and more.

The current project pipeline is strong, and the has 97 projects in the pipeline. The team is in active communication with each project, trying to help those companies as they make a critical decision about where to locate, one which hinges on a customized set of decision factors.

"Whether it is a new company looking at Oklahoma City or an existing company thinking about expanding, we will not land all of those projects simply because there are so many factors that we have no control over, such as market conditions or a company's strategic direction," said Kim Wilmes, vice president of economic development programs at the Chamber. She explained that the Chamber focuses its recruiting efforts mainly on

aerospace, manufacturing, bioscience, and headquarter and back-office operations.

“We focus our marketing and sales efforts there because we have a competitive advantage already. We have an existing cluster and industry expertise. Also, those are the industries that typically pay higher-than-average wages and they are the jobs we want here to grow the economy,” she said.

One of the biggest hurdles or challenges Wilmes and the rest of the Economic Development team consistently face is finding enough available, ready-to-go properties within Oklahoma City’s city limits to meet the needs of companies they are trying to entice to relocate or expand into OKC. At 620 square miles, Oklahoma City is one of the largest cities in the nation. But, despite all of that space, there is a lack of property inventory specific to employers. To help eliminate or reduce that hurdle, Wilmes said, more investment is needed from the city and state, as well as from other resources, including ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. And we need to ensure that land set aside by the city for employers isn’t rezoned or repurposed for other uses.

“The communities that are winning are the ones that have shovel-ready or pad-ready sites, and we just don’t have that many. It is costly to do and involves some risk, so it is understandable,” Wilmes said.

Recruiting can be a labor-intensive and time-consuming proposition for any economic development organization, and the Chamber is no different. To be on the short list of locations for a company looking to relocate or expand their operations, the Chamber will spend a lot of time communicating directly with business executives and the site consultants they hire. Consultants are also important partners, since they work for multiple companies and can bring multiple projects to the table.

Conferences and trade shows are excellent venues to meet consultants face to face. By attending these events throughout the year, Chamber staff are able to develop relationships that could potentially lead to projects being directed their way. Most of these events are located in places such as Dallas, Chicago, New York and Atlanta, where the team will also conduct call trips.

Twice a year, the Chamber also hosts an event in Dallas with the Greater Oklahoma City Partnership, to continue nurturing relationships with site location consultants and other decision makers in the area.

“We’ll host a reception and have about 20 consultants there. We include all of our regional economic development partners as well as our utility and infrastructure partners, like OG&E and ONG,” Wilmes said.

In addition, the Economic Development team attends several other industry or association trade shows to reach out to company executives. For example, in June team members led a delegation to BIO 2022 in San Diego, along with members of the Oklahoma Bioscience Association. There are several aerospace-related trade shows the team attends, as well as a manufacturing logistics show and an electric vehicle and battery show. The team also attends several of the Innovating Commerce Serving Communities (ICSC) conferences and even chairs the Red River Conference, as well as the Urban Land Institute conferences.

The availability of talent is the other barrier many companies have when considering and expansion and the Chamber is working closely with educational institutions to better align curriculum or training to meet industry needs. Wilmes specifically mentioned Onward OKC, a new compact making it easy for businesses to create a prepared workforce by leveraging the combined resources of five CareerTech districts.

“What we are trying to do here is make sure that we get more people into the available talent pool,” she said. “What our staff has been doing in partnership with our educational institutions as well as with nonprofit partners throughout the region have been game changers in helping us recruit companies to come here.”



*The Chamber focuses its recruiting efforts mainly on aerospace, manufacturing, bioscience, and headquarter and back-office operations.*



Work has begun on the exciting Convergence development in Oklahoma City's Innovation District.

## CONVERGENCE DEVELOPMENT AIMS TO CONNECT ENTITIES, INDUSTRIES TO SPUR INNOVATION

Work has begun on the exciting Convergence development in the Innovation District, which will contribute to not only the physical fabric of the area but also help create connections between different industry sectors in ways that will spur even more innovation and entrepreneurship.

Plans for the first stage of the development call for four main elements, all centered around the existing Beacon of Hope landmark: an office tower along with a retail component, the MAPS 4 Innovation Hall and a Hilton Curio-affiliated 107-room Stiles Hotel. Stiles Park, OKC's first park, will also be reinvigorated and renovated with an open-air amphitheater and green space. Site-clearing and other initial work has already begun, with an anticipated opening date of summer 2024.

Speaking to a sold-out Chamber Forum audience last month, developer Mark Beffort remarked on the project's serendipitous location in the Innovation District and its central location between both OU- and OSU-related facilities as well as disparate industry sectors and various

government entities involved in economic development and entrepreneurial support.

"We felt that was a critical element to get both of those universities connecting together, collaborating together. And we strategically located the [MAPS 4] Innovation Hall," he said. "So not only do we have a city facility that's geared purely around promoting new technology in and within Oklahoma City, we also have the Department of Commerce who recruits jobs and new companies into the state wrapped by the two major universities, all working together. So all we're trying to do is provide a place to ensure all these things can come together and happen."

Along with subterranean parking to avoid impeding connections between people from surrounding areas and leading-edge infrastructure, the office tower will be comprised of 211,000 square feet of space (expandable to 220,000 if conditions warrant), including 50,000 square feet of lab space, supporting life science, but also aviation- and aerospace-related office functions. Biotech firm Wheeler Labs is slated to be a primary tenant.

Plans also call for a coworking element called "The Hive," intended to be an environment where cross-industrial and cross-functional collaboration can occur, whether people are involved in biotech, aerospace, business recruitment or other nearby entities. The MAPS 4 Innovation Hall, meanwhile, will house programming,

a café, conference rooms and co-working space to further encourage interaction and education on startup resources and other elements critical to startup support.

Speaking on the Forum's panel, Innovation District CEO Katy Boren mentioned the project's benefits to the district are what is needed to facilitate more innovation and entrepreneurial activity.

"Their very intentional selection of the word 'Convergence' is really so appropriate. It's the right word to use for what we're trying to accomplish, realizing all of the elements of an innovation district: putting people in proximity, ideas in proximity, in different industries, public and private entities, in an intentional way," she said. "So that building is really going to kick off the core of the innovation district and make it the center of gravity for all things collaboration and innovation and entrepreneurship-related in Oklahoma City."

In addition to the startup support and entrepreneurial elements, intentional efforts are being made to connect with the surrounding neighborhoods and provide opportunities for workforce development and participation in the benefits of the innovation economy. EightTwenty's Sandino Thompson remarked on efforts to engage with residents and break down barriers.

"We really have a very coordinated effort to engage with the community and to figure out how we break down these walls of 'town and gown.' When you start thinking about academic areas or innovation districts in other cities, we're trying to break those down. We're doing it with MAPS elements around connectivity, and how we make the area more walkable and a little bit better connected to the surrounding neighborhoods," he said. "We're doing it with the education – there is part of the TIF budget particularly set aside for education programs, supporting both the public school system with Career Tech and other supportive education opportunities. So, a lot of the jobs that we're going to create, particularly in bio manufacturing, are not jobs that require four-year or advanced degrees. Some will, but a lot of the jobs are in [advanced] manufacturing, and so certification programs [will provide] opportunity. So we want to make sure that folks in the community know about that and can access it. And particularly with the Innovation Hall, we see the opportunity to bring them into that space and allow that space to be that dual benefit for the community there as well."

## 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 [okchamber.com/grandopenings](http://okchamber.com/grandopenings).

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# 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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# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

## OKLAHOMA RANKS NO. 1 AS THE MOST DRONE-FRIENDLY STATE IN THE US

STATE	RANK	OVER-ALL SCORE -100	AIRSPACE LEASE LAW (30)	AVIGATION EASEMENT LAW (25)	TASK FORCE OR PROGRAM OFFICE (20)	LAW VESTING LAND-OWNERS WITH AIR RIGHTS (10)	SAND BOX -10	JOBS ESTIMATE (5)
OKLAHOMA	1	74	30	0	20	10	10	4
NORTH DAKOTA	2	70	25	0	30	10	10	5
ARKANSAS	2	70	30	25	0	10	0	5
ARIZONA	4	68	10	25	20	10	0	3
MINNESOTA	5	66	10	25	20	10	0	1
NORTH CAROLINA	6	58	0	25	20	10	0	3
GEORGIA	6	58	10	25	10	10	0	3
NEW JERSEY	6	58	0	25	20	10	0	3
NEVADA	9	57	0	25	20	10	0	2
MONTANA	9	57	0	25	20	10	0	2

SOURCE: SMARTASSET, JUNE 2022

The Mercatus Center at George Mason University ranked Oklahoma No. 1 in a study of all 50 states in their readiness for drone commerce.

The study analyzed six different factors. Those included:

- Airspace lease laws (30 pts)
- Avigation easement laws (25 pts)
- Task force or program office (20 pts)

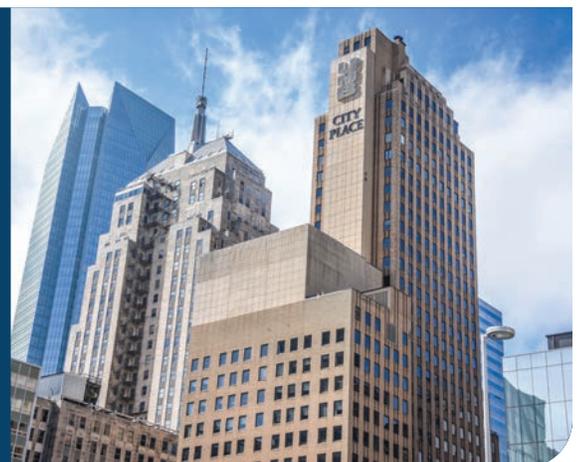
- Law vesting landowners with air rights (10 pts)
- Sandbox (a designated place to test new technologies) (10 points)
- Jobs estimate (5 points)

All of these factors combined make Oklahoma the most drone-friendly state in the country.

For comprehensive Economic Indicators and regional data, please visit your Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Economic Development Division at [greateroklahomacity.com](http://greateroklahomacity.com) or contact Eric Long, Research Economist at 405-297-8976 or email him at [elong@okcchamber.com](mailto:elong@okcchamber.com).

### DID YOU KNOW?

Get regional demographic data, consumer expenditure information, labor force data for the Greater Oklahoma City Region and more at [greateroklahomacity.com](http://greateroklahomacity.com).



# → V E L O C I T Y ←

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## LOOK INSIDE!

- 4** Recovery of visitor economy spotlighted during August Forum
- 6** OKConnect to provide new managers with insights into OKC
- 11** Chamber work to fuel business expansion vital to city's continued growth
- 12** Convergence aims to connect entities, industries to spur innovation

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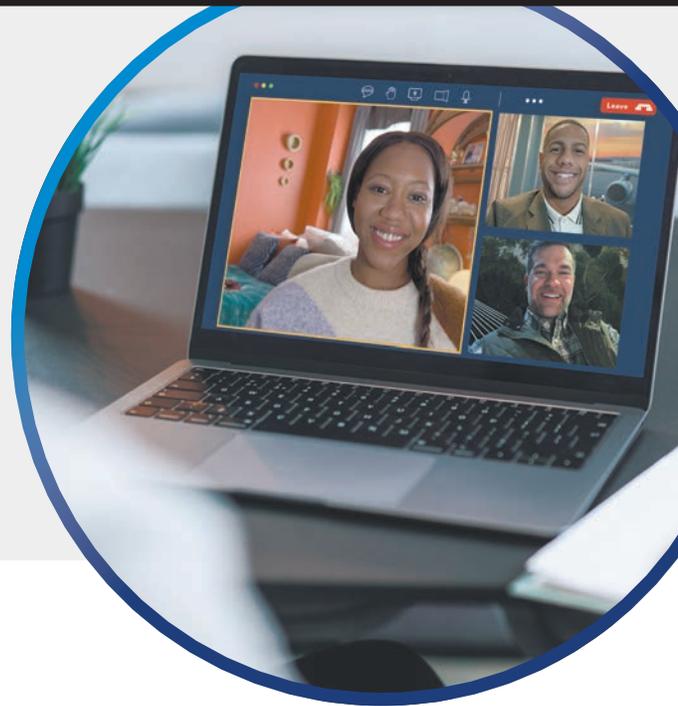


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