



GREATER
OKLAHOMA CITY
CHAMBER

MAR. 2023 • OKCCHAMBER.COM

CHAMBER SEEKS TO PROTECT, EXPAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

A House bill that would have required a public vote in order for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to be established for a project in a city or county failed to be passed by a House committee and is likely dead for the session.

The bill, House Bill 1379, died after failing to receive a second on a do-pass motion in the House General Government Committee Feb. 28. Your Chamber was opposed to this bill and worked with other municipalities and business entities to defeat the legislation. The bill is just one of many that the Chamber

is either opposing or supporting during the 2023 legislative session, particularly those that address critical economic development tools used by the Chamber and other economic development organizations.

If HB 1379 had advanced through the legislative process and became law, it would have potentially crippled many economic development efforts throughout the state.

Tax Increment Financing is an important economic development tool used by municipalities to capture property tax revenues within a designated geographic area, which are then used to make improvements within that district for things such as infrastructure, all with the aim of spurring future development. Municipalities will sometimes designate an area as a TIF district with the purpose of revitalizing a blighted area. TIFs are critical

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“ELEVATE YOUR IMPACT” AT THE CHAMBER’S ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENT

With the constant stream of projects, the endless lists of tasks to complete and busyness of life, it’s easy to move professional development down the list of priorities. But taking time to sharpen your skills and learn something new is a great opportunity to reset and return to your desk with more purpose. By attending this conference, the potential of your impact on your colleagues, company and industry will be elevated.



This investment of time at Elevate is an investment in the future of your company. With motivational speakers, breakout sessions and networking opportunities

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LEADERSHIP NOTES



CHRISTY GILLENWATER
President & CEO

OKLAHOMA CITY PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

As I write this note today, I am just shy of two months here in Oklahoma City and what an amazing introduction this time has been to this very special place. I was attracted to this organization and this community because of everything you have done here – your spirit of collaboration, your relentless execution and your results. You inspired me to take the leap and join you.

And Oklahoma City has not disappointed. Everything I had expected is here in abundance. Perhaps somewhat unexpected is how thoroughly the nature of the people here is what makes all this

success possible. The engaging nature of everyone I meet is Oklahoma City’s secret weapon. It is so interesting to see how you use this engagement with each other to work around a problem, how traditional business rivals greet each other as friends, and how you put your hand out to strangers and encourage them. The inspiration I received from afar was just a glimpse of the magic this city has to offer.

At the beginning of this journey, I could not be more excited about what we are accomplishing as a community. Potential lies around every corner, and on my tour of learning and listening, each day is more convincing than the last that this connected place offers something unique and very special.

Thank you for the welcome. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your patience as I work through meeting our members and our partners and learning everything about our region and our work here. I look forward to our work together.

»»» READ CHRISTY’S VELOCITYOKC ONLINE STORY OF THE MONTH

“Boiling Point Media makes virtual production in OKC a reality”

VELOCITYOKC.COM/CHRISTYSPICK



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UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

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

MARCH 10

State Spotlight
8 to 9:30 a.m.
Meinders Conference Center
Oklahoma Christian University
2501 E. Memorial Rd.
okcchamber.com/statespotlight

MARCH 22

Chamber Forum
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
The Petroleum Club
100 N. Broadway, 35th Floor
okcchamber.com/marchforum

MARCH 28

Chamber Connection
3 to 4:30 p.m.
OKC Chamber Offices
123 Park Ave., Second Floor
Conference Room

APRIL 19

Chamber Forum
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
The Petroleum Club
100 N. Broadway, 34th Floor
okcchamber.com/aprilforum

APRIL 25

Chamber Connection
8:30 to 10 a.m.
OKC Chamber Offices
123 Park Ave., Second Floor
Conference Room

MAY 2

Elevate
8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Oklahoma City Convention Center
100 Mick Cornett Dr.
okceleivate.com



ACCESS Oklahoma turnpike plan topic of March Chamber Forum

CHAMBER FORUM

The March Chamber Forum will focus on ACCESS Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's \$5 billion highway infrastructure plan designed to improve access to communities across the state.

Event attendees will hear from a panel of state and local officials as they discuss the positive impacts of ACCESS Oklahoma (Advancing and Connecting Communities and Economies Safely Statewide) and how the 15-year, long-range plan identifies and addresses ongoing infrastructure needs throughout Oklahoma's turnpike system. Participating in the panel discussion will be:

- Tim Gatz, Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation & Oklahoma Department of Transportation Executive Director.
- John Sharp, Deputy Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments.

The March Chamber Forum will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Petroleum Club Downtown OKC, which is located on the 35th floor in BancFirst Tower.

The cost to attend the Chamber Forum is \$45 for Chamber members and \$55 for nonmembers. To register for the Forum, visit okcchamber.com/marchforum.

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.

Visit the events page on the Chamber website for up-to-date information on this and other events the Chamber hosts throughout the year.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Cox Communications and Corporate Sponsor ADG | Blatt.

GOV. STITT TO HEADLINE CHAMBER'S STATE SPOTLIGHT EVENT MARCH 10

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt will give an overview of his 2023 legislative priorities during a conversation as part of the Chamber's State Spotlight breakfast March 10.

Joining Gov. Stitt on the program will be Oklahoma Secretary of Science and Innovation Elizabeth Pollard and Oklahoma Department of Commerce Executive Director Brent Kising as they discuss business development, commerce, workforce and entrepreneurship in central Oklahoma. Kent Shortridge, the Chamber's vice chair of economic development, will moderate the discussion.

The State Spotlight will take place from 8 to 9:30 a.m. at the Meinders Conference Center on the campus of Oklahoma Christian University, which is located at 2501 E. Memorial Rd. in north Oklahoma City. Doors open at 7:30 a.m. with networking opportunities, followed by the program and breakfast at 8 a.m.

Tickets for the State Spotlight are \$50 for Chamber members and \$75 for nonmembers. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,100. To purchase your tickets, visit okcchamber.com/statespotlight. If you would like to purchase a sponsor table or have additional questions, email register@okcchamber.com.

The Chamber would like to thank Presenting Sponsor Cox Communications and Host Sponsor CVS Health.



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CHAMBER CONNECTION

Upcoming Event

Tuesday, March 28 | 3 to 4:30 p.m.
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber | 123 Park Ave.
Second floor conference room

No cost to attend!

Want to find out more about your company's investment in the Chamber? Attend Chamber Connection March 28 and learn more about the Chamber's key initiatives while also meeting other members. You will walk away with a better understanding of the Chamber's role in Oklahoma City's business community, including:

- Economic development efforts
- Government relations activities
- Community involvement programs
- Involvement opportunities

To register, email **Suzette Ellison Jordan** at sellison@okcchamber.com.



throughout the day, Elevate is designed to help your company provide professional development options and networking opportunities to its employees—without having to send people out of the market or breaking your employee education budget.

Elevate will take place on Tuesday, May 2, at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, with registration for the event and a continental breakfast beginning at 8 a.m. After a welcome session, attendees will choose two breakout sessions before lunch and the mainstage luncheon keynote by Emeka Nnaka, an Oklahoman with a powerful story of resilience.

Two more afternoon breakout sessions will occur, followed by the finale keynote presentation from Dale Wilsher, an expert on professional development who helps individuals and organizations realize their purpose to the fullest potential. The day will conclude with a closing reception to connect with other professionals, exhibitor booths from Chamber members and a drink ticket for all attendees.

The breakout sessions will include tracks that will allow the attendee to customize the experience to match his or her professional development needs. The breakout session tracks include:

- **Elevate Your Influence:** geared toward people of all experience levels who want to grow as leaders.
- **Elevate Your Sales:** geared toward people who are in sales.
- **Elevate Your Team:** geared toward people who manage others.

- **Elevate Your Business:** business development tips for small business owners, location managers and entrepreneurs.
- **Elevate Your Future:** geared toward college students, interns and new professionals.
- **Elevate Your Mindset:** sessions to help both employees and managers boost their mental wellbeing and stress management skills.

During one of the morning breakout sessions, keynote speaker Dale Wilsher will speak on how you can use your distinct, authentic personality as a strength. Using the DISC personality test, Dale will help attendees learn how to develop those strengths to lead and communicate more effectively.

Elevate is open to everyone, but Chamber members get a discounted conference registration for \$250 per person or \$200 per person for groups of three or more within the same company. Registration includes breakfast, lunch, all keynote speakers, four breakout sessions, morning and afternoon refreshments, and a pass to the Elevate closing reception. Chamber members that are nonprofit organizations will also receive a discounted rate of \$200 per person or \$160 per person for groups of three or more within the same organization.



ELEVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES WITH SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES

- **Boost Package:** Give your employees access to Elevate professional training with a Boost Package, which includes 10 conference passes and sponsorship recognition on the event signage, screens and program. This package is \$2,500 and there are only 40 sponsorships available.
- **UPLIFT10 Sponsor:** Perfect for the company who wants to take advantage of this professional

development opportunity for its employees while co-branding as an Elevate sponsor, Uplift10 Sponsors receive 10 conference passes in addition to sponsorship recognition during the event and an exhibitor table. This package is \$3,000 are there are only 10 sponsorships available.

- **UPLIFT20 Sponsor:** Receive all the benefits of the Uplift10 Sponsor, plus 10 additional Elevate conference passes (20 total). This package is \$4,000 are there are only 5 sponsorships available.

To purchase tickets or view more information, visit okcelebrate.com. For sponsorship inquiries, email sellison@okcchamber.com.

MEET THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER: EMEKA NNAKA

Emeka Nnaka is uniquely qualified to present life, its challenges and its opportunities from the perspective of someone who found strength through tremendous adversity. During the Elevate luncheon, Emeka will share his personal story of how he overcame adversity and found purpose after being paralyzed from the chest

down. He talks about how he lifted himself out of a dark place and became an inspiration to many. Attendees will leave encouraged and empowered to face the challenges in their lives with renewed strength and purpose.



ABOUT EMEKA NNAKA

Emeka Nnaka has addressed audiences across the Midwest U.S. including schools, professional groups and corporate events. Emeka has been featured on NPR's "All Things Considered," where he discussed the Americans

with Disabilities Act on its 25th anniversary for a national audience. As a speaker, coach and advocate, Emeka inspires others to find hope, take action in their lives and live beyond the labels of their circumstances.

Special thanks to Aspiration Sponsor OG&E.

VOTE NO ON SQ 820 MARCH 7

Expanding access to marijuana will not help our workforce. Studies show that increased prevalence of marijuana leads to greater absenteeism, increased workplace injuries and lower educational attainment. None of that is good for our state's economy and a key reason why your Greater Oklahoma City Chamber has joined the coalition "Protect Our Kids NO 820" in their effort to defeat State Question 820 on March 7.

Led by former Governor Frank Keating and former Secretary of Health and longtime Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Terri White, this coalition is actively getting the word out to vote NO on March 7. For more information, visit their website www.No820.org or engage in their social media campaign at www.facebook.com/NoSQ820.

State Question 820 does much more than legalize marijuana. It prevents our cities from restricting where marijuana can be smoked or used, and prohibits our courts from considering marijuana usage in family matters like custody and visitation. Additionally, it infringes on private property rights by forcing landlords

to permit use of this federally banned narcotic on their property.

State Question 820 is on the ballot on March 7 and is the only thing on the ballot for more than 98% of voters. Turnout is what will matter. Please help our effort by communicating to your employees the importance of voting on this state question on March 7.

**VOTE
NO**
SQ 820



The Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City is just one recent example of how establishing a TIF district can benefit a city.

economic development tools that are used in urban and rural parts of Oklahoma.

Mark VanLandingham, senior vice president of government relations and policy for the Chamber, said keeping the state's laws on TIF districts intact was one of the main legislative priorities this session for the Chamber and was pleased to see HB 1379 fail to advance out of committee.

“The City of Oklahoma City has strategically used TIFs as an economic development tool to facilitate the reopening of the Skirvin Hotel in 2006, the construction of Devon's World Headquarters, the redevelopment of the First National Center and the construction of the First Americans Museum, and other monumental projects over the years. Taking the decision of whether to create TIF districts out of the hands of the City Council would have been a major setback.”

The City of Oklahoma City currently operates 15 TIF districts across the city. A TIF district established for the renovations to the Skirvin sparked additional development and tourism around downtown. The development of 180 acres throughout downtown, known as Project 180, came as a result of a TIF for the Devon project. And without the assistance from a TIF district established for the iconic First National Center, transformation of the now 92-year-old structure into a more modern hotel and apartment tower may never have come to fruition.

Another Chamber economic development priority this session is to increase the annual cap as part of the Filmed in Oklahoma Act of 2021. The law created an enhanced rebate program designed to lure more filmmakers to the state. The program currently has a \$30 million cap; however, state and local officials would like to see the cap raised.

Rep. Scott Fetgatter introduced House Bill 1362 this session that, if passed and signed by the governor, would raise the film incentive cap by an additional \$50 million. Another part of HB 1362 would decrease the percentage of rebates for film projects from a maximum of 38% to 30%, which would provide more projects an opportunity to receive incentive funding, especially if the cap is raised to \$80 million. HB 1362 was heard and passed out of the House Rules Committee Feb. 28 and will now go to the full House for consideration.

Leading the charge to raise the cap are the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and its newly opened Oklahoma City Film & Creative Industries Office, the Oklahoma Film and Music Office and film industry officials throughout the state.

According to the Oklahoma Film and Music Office website, in fiscal year 2022, the first year the state began offering incentives under the program, the state received 77 applications for various film projects. Of those 77 applications, 22 were approved for incentive funding. So far in FY 2023, which ends June 30, 2023, the state film office has already received 116 applications. Unfortunately, many of those productions will not receive incentive funding because even more companies are now competing for the same pot of money – hence, the need to raise the cap.

VanLandingham said there is little debate of whether Oklahoma should increase its footprint in the film industry. It has already been demonstrated what kind of economic impact the film industry can have on the state and the communities where those films or TV shows have been shot. The film production companies that receive incentive funding create thousands of jobs across the state and pump millions of dollars into the Oklahoma economy for things such as hotel stays, retail purchases, dry cleaning, catering, set construction, travel, studio rentals and much more.

Another pressing priority for the Chamber during the 2023 legislative session is raising the cap of the



If passed and signed by the governor, House Bill 1362 would raise the film incentive cap by an additional \$50 million.

Oklahoma Tourism Development Act, which is designed to generate growth within the state’s tourism industry by providing limited sales tax rebates for projects where at least 25% of that site’s revenue comes from out-of-state visitors.

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is working with the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the Tulsa Regional Chamber and other economic development organizations to raise the cap to \$30 million from its current \$15 million cap so that more tourism projects can be developed not only in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, but all areas of the state.

“This incentive is important to Oklahoma City, but also offers substantial opportunity for development in rural Oklahoma, which is important to everyone,” VanLandingham said.

Tourism has become Oklahoma’s third-largest industry and continues to grow rapidly. In 2021, a record-breaking \$10.1 billion in direct visitor spending in Oklahoma was generated with \$748 million paid in state and local taxes that year. A recent report by Tourism Economics

found that visitors to Oklahoma City generated a total economic impact of \$3.8 billion in 2021. The industry generated nearly 31,600 jobs and contributed \$311 million in state and local taxes.

The Oklahoma Tourism Development Act has been a critical financing component for several projects in Oklahoma City, VanLandingham said, including the First National Center, 21C Hotel and the OAK development in northwest OKC.

The measures introduced in each chamber to increase the cap – Senate Bill 394 by Sen. Bill Coleman and House Bill 2866 by Rep. Kevin Wallace – both passed out of their respective committees and are moving through the legislative process.

Your Chamber supports retaining and strengthening the state’s premier economic/community development programs which are critical in attracting new businesses to the state, assisting existing companies expand and encouraging investment in communities across the state. The following are other key programs the Chamber will seek to protect:

- Quality Jobs Act, 21st Century QJA, Small Employer QJA and the Prime Contractor QJA.
- Aerospace Engineer Tax Credit.
- Historical Building Rehabilitation Tax Credit.
- Cybersecurity/Software Engineer Tax Credit.
- Five-year Ad Valorem Abatement and Sales Tax Exemption for Manufacturing Facilities.
- Regional Home Office Insurance Premium Tax Credit.



The OAK development near Penn Square Mall is being built with assistance from the Oklahoma Tourism Development Act.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NEW MEXICAN CONSULATE – A Q&A WITH HEAD CONSUL EDURNE PINEDA

Last December, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt announced that a Mexican Consulate would be opening in Oklahoma City in 2023, which will provide consular services and assistance to Oklahoma’s growing Mexican community, whose population is estimated to be between 400,000 to 450,000. The Consulate will also promote economic, commercial, educational, cultural, tourism and community affairs relations between Mexican entities and Oklahoma stakeholders. VeloCity recently sat down with the Consulate’s head consul, Edurne Pineda, to discuss the coming Consulate in more detail and to learn more about her and her role with the Consulate.

Consul Pineda, I understand Mexico has many more consulates throughout the United States. Can you tell us a little more about that?

There are currently 50 Mexican consulates in the U.S., and Oklahoma City is going to be number 51. It’s the widest consular network in another country by one single country. Nobody has 52 consulates in another country; Mexico does, however, because we have a very large population of Mexican origin here in the U.S. and also because our economic, social and political relationships with the U.S. are very relevant to Mexico and the U.S.

Your official title is head consul. What is the difference between a head consul and consul general?

We have embassies, which are the political representatives, that are always based in the capital city of the other country. And then you have consulates which are there to provide consular services and assistance to our nationals and also promote economic trade and political relations at a local level. The Mexican government has 12 or 13 consulates general in the U.S., and the rest are career consulates. Many people address me as Consul General Pineda. But I am not going to be a consul general here in Oklahoma because this consulate is a career consulate. I believe we will eventually be a consulate general because the Mexican population here is growing.

In what ways will the Mexican Consulate assist the Mexican population in Oklahoma?

There are three main departments, and eventually a fourth one, I want to put together which are very important – the first three departments would be documentation, protection and community affairs.



**EDURNE PINEDA
HEAD CONSUL
MEXICAN CONSULATE**

Our consulate has nothing to do with immigration, so what we basically do within documentation is we issue around 30 different documents, all related to Mexico and with Mexico, such as passports, Consular I.D. cards, voting cards, powers of attorney and death certificates, as well as visas for American citizens who want to live in Mexico, and many others. Then we have the Protection Department, which is our legal area. We're not attorneys, but we give legal advice to our nationals. We're also going to be doing a lot of preventive work, where we are going to explain to them what to do and what not to do, and how to be better members of their communities. And then community affairs, where we are going to have a health program to educate and guide them to go to different health agencies to look after themselves and their families. We are also going to have financial education programs and guidance for Mexican families on how to navigate, in the best way possible, the educational system in the U.S. so they can help their kids. We're also going to do a lot of work with our different communities and community organizations.

Is there going to be any assistance from the Mexican Consulate to Oklahoma companies and businesses that may want to do business with Mexico?

We have a big backlog of consular services and consular assistance to our Mexican community. We are going to have to take care of that backlog first. Once we have all the staff we are supposed to have, then we're going to put together a department of trade and economic promotion. We're going to focus on trying to promote these relations and help American companies increase their exchange and their relations with their Mexican counterparts.

Where will the Mexican Consulate be located, and when do you expect the Consulate to begin operations?

The Consulate is going to be west of downtown Oklahoma City in an independent building that also offers enough parking space for our visitors. It's going to be right across Oklahoma City Boulevard so that it will have very good connectivity for Mexican nationals visiting us from other parts of the state because, again, we're going to be serving Mexicans in the entire state of Oklahoma, not just from Oklahoma City. We have to open on May 1 because I have made that promise everywhere. We already have our building, and [renovations] are in progress. It is looking great. We expect to have between 300 and 450 people coming

through that Consulate every single day. We expect to launch our website at the end of April.

Why did you become a diplomat? What was it that attracted you to that career field?

I love traveling, and I loved everything that had to do with international relations. I loved reading about politics and history, and so [a career as a diplomat] seemed to be very attractive to me. I ended up studying economy but never practiced as an economist. I worked for two or three years in our Treasury Department. I have always worked for the government of Mexico. You have to take an exam to be able to get into the Mexican Foreign Service. So I saw the information in the newspaper, and I said I'm going to give it a try. I gave it a try and passed. And that is when I began working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Edurne Pineda, left, greets Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt at his office during a recent visit.

What about your free time? Any hobbies you enjoy?

Even though I've lived here in the U.S. for so many years, I have always worked with Mexicans. I am very proud of being Mexican, and I hope I find a way to make connections between Mexico, the Mexican people, our culture and Oklahoma. That's what I would love to do. I love to work because I love my job, and it makes me feel safe. And I love to spend time with my children. I exercise whenever I can, which is not that frequent. And we have a dog, a rescue dog. She's the sweetest. I love walking my dog with my daughter. So those are my hobbies. I also love to travel. I try to organize one relevant international trip with my family every year. I believe that traveling is essential for human beings for a person's education and development.

'HOMETOWN HEROES' PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN CITY'S VISITOR ECONOMY



The economic impact of tourism in OKC cannot be overstated. That is why the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau, a division of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, values community members who take an active role in helping ensure OKC's visitor economy is thriving and expanding, and why the CVB annually recognizes certain individuals as "Hometown Heroes" for elevating Oklahoma City as a premier visitor destination.

According to the CVB website VisitOKC.com, Oklahoma City welcomes 21.4 million visitors annually. Those same out-of-town guests spend about \$2.3 billion during their stays here for things like food and beverage, retail, recreation and entertainment, lodging and transportation, which also generate about \$311 million in tax revenue for the city and state combined.

CVB President Zac Craig said the Hometown Heroes program has existed for many years, long before he arrived in early 2021. The CVB searches for individuals who are doing something very unique in their space, working over and above to recruit events to OKC, and strategically thinking about OKC's visitation economy.

The CVB also hosts an annual event where they publicly recognize those Hometown Heroes, he said. The 2021 recipients were honored with a reception at Oklahoma Contemporary; this year, however, will be different.

"I can't go into too much detail right now, but we are trying to elevate the 2023 event somewhat," he said. "We are looking at different options for an emcee and involving different sides of the community to ensure everybody knows, from a quality-of-life and economic

impact standpoint, just how important tourism is to Oklahoma City."

David Jackson is a 2021 Hometown Heroes honoree. As executive director for the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association, he knows firsthand about why attracting more visitors to OKC is important to the community and the businesses that operate here.

"Our Board of Directors and our staff take tremendous pride in providing activities for our secondary school students that helps them to not only enjoy their school experience but also learn valuable life lessons to take with them when they leave high school. We are very thankful for the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau for recognizing us and for the support they give to high school activities throughout the city."

The time and effort that Jackson and other Hometown Heroes, both past and present, have put in touting OKC have paid dividends for the community, especially as more quality meeting spaces and attractions have been added recently, such as the OKC Convention Center, Scissortail Park and the First Americans Museum.

Last year alone, the convention center hosted 149 events, drawing close to 200,000 visitors to OKC. And even more visitors are expected over the next couple of years as other attractions across the city are completed.

A Hometown Hero is any person or organization that has gone above and beyond to help advance and promote Oklahoma City as a premier visitor destination. They do not necessarily have to lead or manage an organization that is directly involved in OKC's hospitality or tourism industry, but may be someone who want others around their personal and professional circles to see what a great place Oklahoma City is to visit. Advocacy can come through a variety of ways, such as personal connections with professional and hobby-related organizations that may be looking for a place to hold their next regional or national meeting, church-affiliated or sports-related groups, social media circles and others.

The CVB is ready to help anyone who would like to approach their respective group or organization about meeting in Oklahoma City sometime in the future. They can visit the CVB website at VisitOKC.com for more information about what makes OKC such a great place to visit, or just contact the CVB directly where they will connect them with the convention sales and services team or sports business team.

OFFICIALS BELIEVE NEW SHRINE WILL DRAW MORE VISITORS TO OKC

On Feb. 17, Catholics and non-Catholics alike – some from other states and nations – came together to dedicate the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine. The ceremony marked the first time the general public has been allowed to enter the facility.

The shrine, which took about three years to build at a cost of more than \$40 million, honors the life of Father Stanley Rother, who was murdered by unknown assailants in Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, in 1981 where he served as a missionary priest until his death. The Catholic Church recognized Rother as the first U.S.-born martyr for the faith and subsequently beatified the Okarche, Okla., native in 2016.



Officials see the opening of the shrine, which is now the largest Catholic church in Oklahoma, as a much larger and much needed place to worship for Catholics across the Oklahoma City, especially for the metro's growing Hispanic population. They also expect the shrine to serve as a place of pilgrimage for Catholics across the U.S. and around the globe.

“A pilgrimage is simply when someone travels to a holy site to pray and to rededicate their life to God,” explained the shrine's executive director Leif Arvidson during a presentation last year before the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Commission. “We anticipate tens of thousands of people will come here to pray and learn about Blessed Stanley. These people will stay in local hotels, eat in local restaurants, and they will visit other local sites in our beautiful city.”

Arvidson noted that he previously worked at a shrine in a remote part of Wisconsin for 10 years before moving to OKC, and people would travel there from every single state in the nation as well as different countries. He



Catholics and non-Catholics alike came together to dedicate the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine Feb 17.

expects the same thing to happen in Oklahoma City with the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine.

Much like Arvidson, Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) President Zac Craig also believes the shrine could be a future pilgrimage destination. He recalled what Arvidson shared with him and the other commission members last year when he said he witnessed upwards of 75,000 people annually who came on pilgrimages to that Wisconsin shrine.

“How that translates to the crossroads of America right here in Oklahoma City, I'm not so sure. But I am excited to think about how this site will play a part in future conventions and other events for OKC,” Craig said.

The CVB, which is a division of the Chamber, began having conversations with the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City two years ago about how the CVB, the Archdiocese and the shrine could work hand in hand to help bring conventions to the city and create added value and economic impact for OKC.

“Whether it's a motorcoach group or an international guest from Mexico or Central America or elsewhere, I think there is great interest for this [shrine], and we are certainly going to promote it. And I really think people are going to gravitate towards this attraction when they come to Oklahoma City, for whatever reason, over the coming months,” Craig said.

The shrine should blend in well with other cultural assets across Oklahoma City, from the Oklahoma City National Memorial to the First Americans Museum.

“It's yet another diamond in the crown of Oklahoma City, especially as it relates to just an inspirational story that is so unique,” Craig said.

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.

ADVISOR

Oklahoma Families for Affordable Health Care
Political Organizations
 Ms. Ericka McPherson, Esq. (405) 714-3841
 3334 W. Main St., Suite 374
 Norman, OK 73072-4805
<https://www.okfahc.com>

CORE

Artisan Window Cleaning
Window Cleaning Services
 Mr. Jason Emery (405) 318-4086
 133 E. Madison
 P.O. Box 18387
 Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0387
www.artisanwindowcleaning.com

CORE

Compliance Solutions, Inc.
Accountants and Accounting Services
 Mr. Wes Johnson (214) 226-7813
 3208 NW 158th Terrace
 Edmond, OK 73013-6228
www.csilongwood.com

CORE

Synaptacode
Computer Software Developers
 Mr. Chris Lozano (405) 235-2217
 1111 N. Lee Ave., Suite 334
 Oklahoma City, OK 73103
www.synaptacode.com

EMERGING LEADER

Mom's Meals
Food Processors & Manufacturers
 Mr. Dan Baker (405) 407-7550
 6849 S. Rockwell Ave.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73169-4000
www.momsmeals.com

EMERGING LEADER

Care+ Pediatrics Urgent Care
Health Services
Healthcare Consultant
Occupational Health
 Mr. Max Drattell (405) 876-7876
 9480 N. May Ave.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73120-2712
www.carepluspediatrics.com

CORE

Greenlee Dental
Dentists
 Dr. Kimberly Greenlee (405) 849-4304
 6501 N. Classen Blvd., Suite C
 Oklahoma City, OK 73116-7309
greenleedental.com

CORE

T-Mobile for Business
Telecommunications Services
 Mr. Tom Mullins (877) 754-6367
 8525 Silver Crossing
 Oklahoma City, OK 73132-3380
www.t-mobile.com/business

ASSOCIATE

One Table Hospitality
Restaurants
 Ms. Abigail Webb (405) 200-9179
 P.O. Box 18575
 Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0575
onetablehospitality.com

CORE

Jackson Mechanical Service Inc.
Air Conditioning & Heating - Commercial
 Mr. Shelby Harris (405) 615-6046
 2600 N. Broadway Ave.
 P.O. Box 18824
 Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0824
www.jmsokc.com

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.

Boiling Point Media LED Virtual Production
 7801 N. Robinson Ave., Suite J-11
 Oklahoma City, OK 73116

Oklahoma City Rehabilitation Hospital
 10240 Broadway Ext.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73114

Love's Travel Stops, Store #205
 12225 N. Interstate 35
 Oklahoma City, OK 73131



ECONOMIC INDICATORS

OKC RANKS FIRST IN US FOR LOWEST COST OF LIVING AMONG LARGE CITIES

Where You Live Matters! C2ER 2022 Annual Average Price Report

CITY	COMPO-SITE INDEX	COFFEE	APART-MENT RENT	GASOLINE	DOCTOR VISIT	MEN'S HAIRCUT	MOVIE TICKET
OKLAHOMA CITY OK	84.0	\$4.72	\$860	\$3.36	\$111.16	\$15.80	\$9.00
MEMPHIS, TN	87.2	\$4.05	\$1,287	\$3.72	\$96.03	\$19.27	\$13.13
COLOMBUS, OH	89.7	\$5.76	\$1,200	\$3.77	\$118.38	\$20.21	\$10.97
EL PASO, TX	89.8	\$5.58	\$1,130	\$3.61	\$146.74	\$21.14	\$11.50
SAN ANTONIO, TX	92.1	\$4.07	\$1,388	\$3.43	\$123.35	\$25.11	\$11.28
INDIANAPOLIS, IN	92.5	\$4.75	\$1,325	\$3.65	\$97.22	\$18.83	\$10.20
ALBUQUERQUE, NM	92.9	\$5.52	\$1,215	\$3.81	\$114.36	\$30.61	\$11.37
NATIONAL AVERAGE	100.0	\$4.93	\$1,369	\$3.86	\$124.27	\$22.24	\$11.64

Focus on Cost of Living

Oklahoma City ranks No. 1 for lowest cost of living among all reporting large cities in the U.S. with populations of at least 500,000 people. The C2ER Annual Cost of Living Index for Oklahoma City in 2022 was 84.0, exactly 16 percentage points below the national average and about three percentage points better than second place Memphis, Tenn. Columbus, Ohio, was third in the rankings with a composite index of 89.7, nearly six percentage points higher than OKC.

Example: If you are earning \$70,000 after taxes in Chicago, the comparable income to achieve the same standard of living in Oklahoma City is \$48,820. If you moved from Chicago to Oklahoma City:

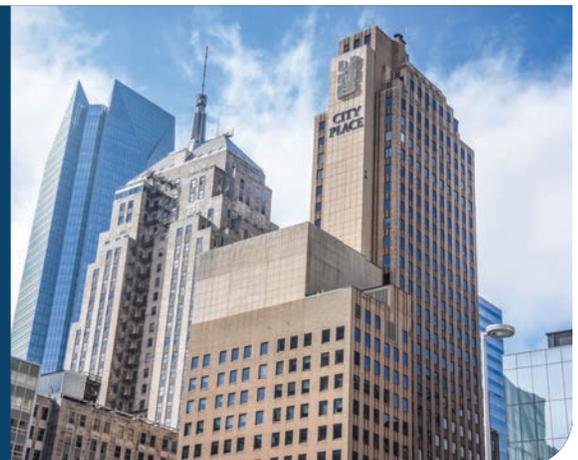
- Groceries will cost 14% less.
- Housing will cost 53% less.
- Utilities will cost 3% less.
- Transportation will cost 27% less.
- Health care will cost 11% less.

*Check out the Cost of Living Calculator at www.abetterlifeokc.com – *Living*

For comprehensive Economic Indicator and Regional Data, please visit your Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Economic Development Division at www.greateroklahomacity.com/economicindicators or contact Eric Long, Research Economist, at 405-297-8976; 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.



→ V E L O C I T Y ←

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LOOK INSIDE!

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G R E A T E R
O K L A H O M A C I T Y
C H A M B E R



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[FACEBOOK.COM/OKCCCHAMBER](https://facebook.com/OKCCCHAMBER)

ELEVATE

It's time to **elevate** your career with OKC's professional development conference!

Whether it is during one of the inspiring keynote remarks or during the applicable information shared during a breakout session, Elevate attendees will walk away from the event with new tools and motivation to take their career to the next level.

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

Oklahoma City Convention Center

Elevate yourself. Elevate your employees. Elevate your brand.

Learn more, purchase tickets or view sponsor opportunities at okcelevate.com