



FEBRUARY 2024 | OKCCCHAMBER.COM

GREATER  
OKLAHOMA CITY  
CHAMBER

## JOB GROWTH, INCOME RISE AND YOUNG TALENT FUEL OKLAHOMA CITY'S ECONOMIC MOMENTUM IN 2024

The momentum of a rebounding economy and the effects of pandemic-era supplemental income streams set the stage for 2024, according to an economic outlook report released by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber.

The annual study was completed by Russell Evans, partner and chief economist for Thorberg Collective, and Eric Long, research economist for the Chamber.

The forecast suggests that job growth in Oklahoma City will slow from its 2.4% pace of 2023 to 2% in the coming year. The study also noted the rise in self-



employment in the area, as the economy becomes more entrepreneurial.

Increases are also contemplated in the forecast for population and income. Population growth is predicted

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 12*

## CHARTING A BOLD COURSE: GREATER OKLAHOMA CITY CHAMBER'S 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

In the dynamic landscape of economic development, community engagement and regional progress, organizations play a pivotal role in shaping the future. The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's 2024 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive roadmap designed to propel the region forward. This ambitious plan includes many initiatives across economic development, visitor engagement, regional partnerships, public policy, talent and education, industry sectors, community issues and more.

Here is a look at the key highlights and objectives.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic development arm of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber aims to complete its strategic plan by spring 2024. The plan includes a targeted investment campaign to secure funding by December 2024. This initiative underscores the Chamber's commitment to fostering a robust economic environment.

### VISITOR DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber launched a strategic planning process for visitor development in January, with a goal of completion by summer. Programming goals will be identified and funding levels will be evaluated, providing a roadmap for enhancing the region's appeal to visitors.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 6*



## A New Noninvasive Treatment for Essential Tremor

OU Health is the first and only health system in Oklahoma to offer an incisionless treatment for patients with medical refractory essential tremor that can result in improvement in hand, head and body shaking as well as increased mobility through a same-day treatment. Called “Focused Ultrasound,” the new technology is for essential tremor patients who have not responded to medication, or who cannot take it.

Focused ultrasound for essential tremor is an FDA-approved, non-invasive procedure that’s transforming patient care. The procedure uses ultrasound waves to target the specific areas of the brain responsible for tremors. Guided by MRI, the soundwaves pass safely through the skull and soft tissues to focus heat on only the targeted area, providing relief from symptoms. With no surgical cuts or permanent implants necessary, there is minimal to no risk of infection, and the treatment is often performed on an outpatient basis. Many patients can expect to resume normal activities within days.

**OU Health is proud to be the first in Oklahoma to offer this revolutionary treatment.**

To make an appointment or for more information, visit us at [OUHealth.com/EssentialTremor](https://OUHealth.com/EssentialTremor)

OU Health Physicians — Neurosurgery Clinic  
1000 N Lincoln Blvd, Suite 4000  
Oklahoma City, OK 73104  
(405) 271-4912



# LEADERSHIP NOTES



**CHRISTY GILLENWATER**  
President & CEO

## SPEAK UP AND PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SHAPING PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS

As we approach the upcoming legislative session, we wanted to take a moment to emphasize the crucial role that your voice can play in shaping policies that directly impact our business community.

The legislative session is a pivotal time when decisions are made that can significantly influence the business landscape in our state. Your involvement in advocating for policies that promote economic growth and address the unique needs of our community is essential.

We are committed to representing the interests of our members and fostering a business-friendly environment. Our advocacy work plays a crucial role in ensuring that your concerns and priorities are heard by policymakers. We actively engage with legislators, government officials and other stakeholders to advocate for policies that support the growth and prosperity of our community. To learn more about the Chamber's 2024 priorities, check out our Public Policy Guide at [okcchamber.com](http://okcchamber.com).

Your participation in this process is vital. By sharing your insights, experiences and perspectives, you contribute to the formulation of policies that will shape the future of our community. Whether you are concerned about regulatory challenges, tax policies or other issues affecting your industry, your input is a powerful tool in influencing positive change.

Stay informed about the legislative agenda and reach out to your elected representatives to share your thoughts. Your engagement is not only an investment in the success of your business but also a commitment to the well-being of our broader community.

Thank you for your continued support of Greater Oklahoma City. We look forward to working together to ensure that your voice is heard at the Capitol.

### »» READ CHRISTY'S VELOCITYOKC ONLINE STORY OF THE MONTH

OKC ranked No. 1 for lowest cost of living among large cities

[VELOCITYOKC.COM/CHRISTYSPICK](http://VELOCITYOKC.COM/CHRISTYSPICK)



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## 2024 OFFICERS

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Chair

**SEAN TRAUSCHKE**  
OGE Energy Corp.  
Immediate Past Chair

**JOHN HART**  
Continental Resources  
Treasurer

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Dorchester Capital  
Vice Chair, Strategic Planning

**BOB FUNK, JR.**  
Prodigal  
Vice Chair, Education and Talent

**JUDY J. HATFIELD, CCIM**  
Equity Commercial Realty Advisors, LLC  
Vice Chair, Membership

**RHONDA HOOPER**  
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**BILL LANCE**  
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Vice Chair, Convention & Visitors Development

**TOM J. MCDANIEL**  
American Fidelity Foundation  
Vice Chair, MAPS Development

**JENNY LOVE MEYER**  
Love's Travel Stops  
Vice Chair, Marketing and Communications

**RICK MUNCRIEF**  
Devon Energy Corporation  
Vice Chair, Innovation and Bioscience

**J. LARRY NICHOLS**  
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Development / Forwards Oklahoma City

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BancFirst Corporation  
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Oklahoma Natural Gas Company  
Vice Chair, Military and Aerospace

**CHRISTY GILLENWATER**  
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber  
President & CEO

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## CALENDAR

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

### FEBRUARY 21

#### Chamber Forum

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Petroleum Club

100 N Broadway, 34th Floor

[okcchamber.com/februaryforum](http://okcchamber.com/februaryforum)

### MARCH 7

#### Meet & Mingle

Oklahoma State Fair, Inc.

Bennett Event Center

3101 Gordon Cooper St.

[okcchamber.com/meetandmingle](http://okcchamber.com/meetandmingle)

### MARCH 20

#### Chamber Forum

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Petroleum Club

100 N Broadway, 34th Floor

[okcchamber.com/marchforum](http://okcchamber.com/marchforum)

### APRIL 17

#### Chamber Forum

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Petroleum Club

100 N Broadway, 34th Floor

[okcchamber.com/aprilforum](http://okcchamber.com/aprilforum)

### MAY 2

#### Elevate

8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Oklahoma City Convention Center

100 Mick Cornett Dr.

[okcelebrate.com](http://okcelebrate.com)

### MAY 21

#### Chamber Connection

3 to 4:30 p.m.

Credit Union House

631 E. Hill St.



## *MAPS 4 transformational projects the subject of February Chamber Forum*

MAPS 4 continues the tradition of bringing monumental developments to our city, yet provides a new layer of importance as we address the human needs of our community. The legacy of MAPS has changed the physical landscape and heightened our national brand, and these latest projects will provide critical resources to some of the most vulnerable in Oklahoma City.

During the February Chamber Forum, attendees will hear the latest updates on MAPS 4's many initiatives, including the multipurpose stadium and Diversion Hub facility.

The forum will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Feb. 21, at the Petroleum Club Downtown Oklahoma City, 100 N. Broadway, 34th floor.

Participating on the panel will be:

- Jason Cotton, President and CEO, ADG Blatt
- Bob Funk, Jr., Senior Vice President of Strategic Planning & Corporate Development, Express Employment Professionals
- Teresa Rose, Chairperson, MAPS 4 Citizen Advisory Board
- Meagan Taylor, J.D., Executive Director, Oklahoma County Diversion Hub

The cost to attend the February Chamber Forum is \$45 for Chamber members and \$55 for nonmembers. To register, visit [okcchamber.com/februaryforum](http://okcchamber.com/februaryforum).

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 Silver Sponsor ADG | Blatt.

## ELEVATE YOURSELF, YOUR EMPLOYEES AND YOUR COMPANY AT THE CHAMBER'S ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENT

Invest in the future of your company by sending your company's managers and new employees to Elevate, a professional development conference and networking event to strengthen Oklahoma City's workforce. With motivational speakers, breakout sessions and networking opportunities throughout the day, Elevate is designed to help your company provide professional development options to its employees—without having to send them out of the market or breaking your employee education budget.

Elevate will take place on Thursday, May 2, at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, with registration and a continental breakfast beginning at 8 a.m. After an energizing welcome session, attendees will



choose two breakout sessions before lunch and the mainstage luncheon presentation. Two more afternoon breakout sessions will be followed by the final keynote presentation. The day will conclude with a closing reception to connect with other professionals, exhibitor booths from Chamber members and a free drink ticket for all attendees.

The breakout sessions include tracks that allow the attendee to customize their experience to match his or her professional development needs. Curated breakout sessions are geared toward college students and new professionals, individuals wanting to grow as leaders as well as supervisors and managers. Sessions are focused on improving practical skills, business growth, inclusion in the workplace, mental health and stress management, and more.

The Elevate experience 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 presentations, 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.

If you want to elevate your company's presence at the conference, there are plenty of sponsor opportunities that will bring your organization front and center throughout the day's activities. To learn more and find the right fit for your company, contact Suzette Ellison at [sellison@okcchamber.com](mailto:sellison@okcchamber.com).

To purchase tickets, become a sponsor or view additional information, visit [okcelebrate.com](http://okcelebrate.com).



*Keynote speaker Dale Wilsher shares her thoughts with the Elevate audience in 2023. This year's event will be held at the OKC Convention Center May 2.*

Focused efforts on key industry sectors like Military/Aerospace, Bioscience, Film & Creative and Hospitality demonstrate the Chamber's dedication to sector-specific growth and development. Specifically, we will support infrastructure development needed at Tinker Air Force Base, lobby to retain and expand programs at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, launch a bioscience organization and create expanded bio-industry tools to support industry needs.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

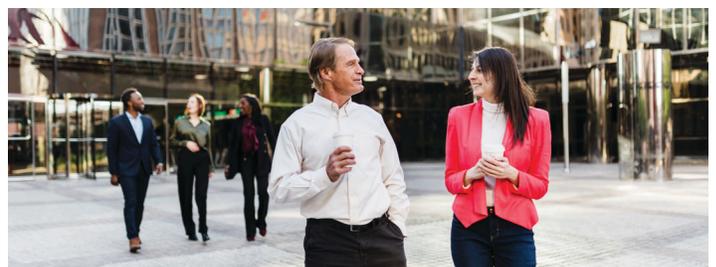
The 2024 Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of fostering collaboration and understanding. The plan outlines a commitment to evaluating engagement with local minority chambers, recognizing the importance of building mutually beneficial partnerships that promote inclusivity and diversity within the business community.

We will also host two corporate supplier forums. These forums are envisioned as platforms to educate community businesses on the significance of engaging with minority suppliers. This proactive approach aligns with the Chamber's broader mission of creating an environment where all businesses, regardless of size or background, can thrive and contribute to the region's overall success.

## COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND DEDICATION

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's 2024 Strategic Plan is a bold and comprehensive vision for the region's growth and prosperity. With a multifaceted approach encompassing economic development, community engagement and organizational excellence, the Chamber is well-positioned to lead the region into a thriving future.

The success of this plan relies on collaboration, innovation, and the dedication of the community and its partners. As the plan unfolds, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is poised to set new standards for regional development and excellence.



## REGIONAL AND STATE PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration is key, and the Chamber aims to assess strategic plans with regional and state partners to identify areas of alignment and mutual opportunities. This cooperative approach is vital for achieving shared goals and maximizing impact.

## PUBLIC POLICY STRATEGY

Expanding federal policy work is a key focus, with an emphasis on increased federal funding for regional stakeholders and federal policy outcomes to enhance the business community. The plan includes a revamped DC Fly-in format for broader leadership engagement and a strategic communications strategy for broader influence.



## IMAGE AND PERCEPTION

Utilizing perception audit research, economic and visitor development strategic plans, the Chamber aims to enhance branding, image and marketing. Identifying the budget required for implementation and assessing funding options ensures a strategic approach to promoting the region.

## TALENT AND EDUCATION

The Chamber plans to launch a branded talent program to create, retain and recruit a skilled workforce. Initiatives such as talent consortiums and engagement with educational institutions underscore the commitment to aligning workforce development with industry needs. It's critical to engage with educators at all levels to ensure we are meeting the needs of the workforce, now and in the future.

## VISIT OKC'S BOLD NEW BOOTH DRAWS CROWDS AT EVENT PLANNING CONFERENCE



Visit Oklahoma City's recent presence at a premier conference may lead to a surge in the number of national conventions held in Oklahoma City.

The team from Visit OKC, a division of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, attended Convening Leaders 2024 in San Diego, a conference organized by the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). The purpose was to connect with event planners and attract more conventions to Oklahoma City.

Visit OKC staff exposed our community's assets to thousands of other professionals within the business events industry, including hoteliers and destination marketing organizations, among others.

Shaun Yates, Visit OKC's new Vice President of Convention Sales and Services, said the event provided lots of educational and networking opportunities which can be very strategic for the Visit OKC team.

"Shows like this allow us to cast a wide net where we can meet and greet many planners and other specific clients in one location," Yates said.

One avenue Visit OKC used to meet that specific objective was investing in an impressive new booth that would draw people to its unique space. The booth's focal point – which reaches 15 feet high – is an image of the Oklahoma City skyline that includes the iconic Skydance Bridge over Interstate 40.

"The booth is a moniker of the 'Modern Frontier' and is fantastic for OKC in the sense of the old meeting the new. It has very clean colors, and it's eye-catching. Plus, it draws your attention," Yates said.

An exhibit booth's design is typically not the lone factor that will draw people's attention. A gimmick or some type of giveaway is oftentimes part of the mix. Visit OKC's booth was no exception.

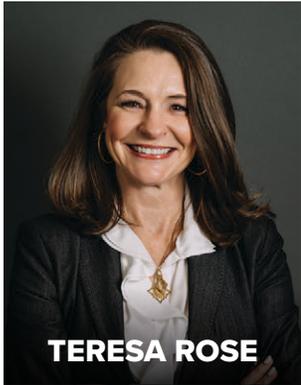
"To bring as many clients over to our booth, we sourced a vendor in San Diego to create these cute little bracelets for men and women that would be soldered onto their arms," Yates said. The promotion clearly worked as more than 400 people waited in line at the Visit OKC booth to snatch up one of these popular, sought-after bracelets.

"Not everyone standing in line for one of those bracelets had business with Oklahoma City but, because of the long lines, we had an opportunity for one-on-one time with every planner and hotelier who was in line to get a bracelet," said Yates.

Yates said out of the nearly 380 people that officially visited Oklahoma City's booth, the Visit OKC team captured 15 leads, with even more on the horizon.

Visit OKC hosted 110 site visits in all of 2023 with planners who had never visited OKC. That represents a 51% increase from 2022 when 73 planners made site visits to the city. Already, Oklahoma City has secured multiple citywide groups using the Oklahoma City Convention Center over the next three years, including everything from corporations to industry associations to tradeshows.

## A Q&A WITH THE CHAMBER'S NEW CHAIR, TERESA ROSE



TERESA ROSE

In December 2023, during the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's Annual Meeting, Teresa Rose was officially installed as the new Chamber Chair. VeloCity had an opportunity to sit down with Rose for a brief Q&A to get her thoughts on this new role with the Chamber.



**Congratulations on becoming Chamber Chair! Did you think this day would ever come?**

I've always been so honored to be at the table and be a part of the impact of this organization. I'm just really honored that I was asked and allowed to serve as the Chair. It's an important organization that I believe very strongly in, and I'm excited about what we can do in the next few years.

**When did it first hit you that you are now leading the Chamber in this capacity?**

I think the first January board meeting is when I thought to myself, "Okay, this is real." The staff and previous Chair, Sean Trauschke, began pulling me into conversations and issue briefings for several months prior to January. So I do feel prepared and ready for the work we will pursue over the next two years and beyond.



**You currently serve as Executive Director for the Communities Foundation of Oklahoma. Tell us more about that organization and the impact it has had on Oklahoma City.**

Communities Foundation of Oklahoma is an organization that works with individuals, families, nonprofits and businesses across the state to execute philanthropic goals. I have been a part of the nonprofit sector since volunteering in high school, and I understand the impact and the valuable partnerships and the role of the nonprofit community in addressing a lot of our most significant challenges.

**Why is serving as the Chamber Chair so important to you?**

I love Oklahoma City and want to see it continue to develop, evolve and be the best place to live in the world, and I believe the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber plays an important role in creating the best future for Oklahoma City. It's not the only organization that has a great impact and drives our city forward but, since its formation, the Chamber has been a key driver for our city, and I am honored to chair that effort.

**The Chamber has had many successes recently. Is there one that speaks to you personally or professionally?**

That's a really good question. I think the myriad of campaigns that the Chamber runs are so important, from the new downtown arena to all four MAPS initiatives as well as our engagement in supporting schools. Our work to move forward criminal justice reform has been critically important as well. I think we are a good entity to help drive that forward.

**If there's one sentiment that you would like to leave with our membership, as you embark on your first year as Chair, what would that be?**

I really want people to be proud of Oklahoma City and proud of the role the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber has had in creating the city we have today. I really want our membership to acknowledge that work and be proud of their role in making great things happen.



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

## CHAMBER'S STRATEGIC VISION FUELS ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY GROWTH

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's economic development efforts play a pivotal role in fostering growth and prosperity in the region. By attracting and retaining businesses, our economic development team strategically collaborates with various stakeholders to create an environment conducive for economic expansion.

Through targeted initiatives, the team works to attract new investments, support local businesses, develop the workforce and enhance the overall economic landscape of Oklahoma City. This includes implementing programs to stimulate job creation, facilitating infrastructure development and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- **JOBS – 4,365**
- **TOTAL PAYROLL – \$294 MILLION**
- **AVG. SALARY - \$67,355**
- **CAPITAL INVESTMENT - \$6.77 BILLION\***
- **CHAMBER-ASSISTED COMPANIES REPORTING EXPANSION – 130**

*\*\$5.56 BILLION FROM A SINGLE PROJECT*

By engaging in partnerships with government entities, educational institutions and the private sector, these efforts contribute to the success of the Greater Oklahoma City community.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, INCENTIVES: OKLAHOMA CITY REBATE PROGRAM SPARKS CINEMATIC BOOM

The Oklahoma City Film and Creative Industries Office is a pivotal resource for the burgeoning film industry. It markets Oklahoma City as an attractive destination for film and television production and actively supports the Oklahoma City Film Incentive Program, offering up to a 5% cash rebate for qualifying productions.

The office is a comprehensive hub, providing crucial services such as location scouting assistance, databases of local talent and crews, and acting as a one-stop concierge and ombudsman for the film industry. It also serves as a centralized clearinghouse for film industry workforce training programs.

With a toolbox that includes a detailed guide to the application process for the OKC Film Incentive Rebate, the Oklahoma City Film and Creative Industries Office is an invaluable catalyst for the region's thriving film community.

Three studio projects qualified for the rebate in 2023.

	QUALIFIED OKC SPEND	REBATE	IMPACT OF
PROJECT DIRT ROAD	\$42,600,000	\$1 MILLION	\$258,001,894 *
PROJECT URBAN	\$518,625	\$25,931	\$1,223,589
PROJECT DINO	\$675,055	\$33,753	\$1,549,884

*\*PROJECTED TOTAL*

## DRIVING SUCCESS THROUGH STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

The Membership team at the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber plays a crucial role in fostering and sustaining a vibrant business community. Committed to enhancing economic growth and development, this dynamic team is dedicated to recruiting new members, engaging existing ones and ensuring that businesses of all sizes benefit from the resources and opportunities offered by the Chamber.

Through strategic outreach initiatives, personalized communication and tailored membership programs, the team actively cultivates relationships with local businesses, advocating for their interests and contributing to a thriving business ecosystem. By connecting companies, facilitating collaboration and providing valuable resources, the Membership team plays a pivotal role in the Chamber's mission to promote economic prosperity and enhance the overall quality of life in the Greater Oklahoma City area.

### 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- 2,460 total members
- 94% membership renewal rate
- 175 new members
- 15 years - Average membership tenure
- 44 Grand Openings
- Eight Meet & Mingle networking events with 1,680 attendees
- Six Chamber Connection events for new member orientation
- 250 members with sponsorships
- Eight Board of Advisor Small Group Sessions covering the crucial business topics
- Six new member orientation events



## CHAMBER EVENTS DRIVE EXCELLENCE WITH EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's events play a pivotal role in fostering a thriving business community by offering members impactful information, essential networking opportunities and meaningful dialogue.

Through various annual events, such as the State of the Schools, State of Health, State of the Economy, State of the City and the Annual Meeting, the Chamber provides a platform for industry-best keynote speakers and subject matter experts to share insights. These events address critical issues ranging from education and healthcare to the economy and workforce development, giving attendees valuable perspectives on national and local trends.

Our monthly Chamber Forum series tackles major initiatives, programs and current issues impacting Oklahoma City. The Elevate professional development conference keeps employees informed, motivated and well-connected in an ever-evolving and competitive professional landscape.

Chamber events create opportunities for networking, learning and community involvement, reinforcing our commitment to the growth and success of local businesses.



## BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENT

Our Government Relations team engages with legislators, policymakers and government officials to promote legislation that aligns with the business community's needs and priorities. We provide legislators with information and insights about the potential business impact of proposed laws and regulations. They help educate lawmakers about the economic implications of various policies, ensuring that decisions are informed and well-understood.

During the 2023 legislative session, our successful advocacy efforts included:

- Helping defeat a bill that sought voters' approval for all tax increment finance districts (TIFs) within their entire jurisdiction. Such a law would have hindered municipalities or counties from generating development funds for public improvements within TIF areas.
- Helping preserve the use of eminent domain for vital economic development programs, including transformative initiatives like MAPS.
- Fighting to protect and expand incentive programs crucial for recruiting, retaining and expanding businesses in the region.
- Supporting a bill to raise the annual cap on the Tourism Development Act (TDA) from \$15 million to \$30 million.
- Supporting amendments to "The Filmed in Oklahoma Act," which adjusted the eligibility date for filmmakers to qualify for incentives. The retroactive alteration of the date played a crucial role in influencing a studio's choice to film significant scenes in Oklahoma City for a major motion picture.
- Supporting legislation to protect funding for the Heartland Flyer passenger rail service.

## SLAM DUNK DECISION: CHAMBER HELPS SECURE NEW DOWNTOWN ARENA



The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber spearheaded the effort to build a state-of-the-art downtown arena. The new arena, estimated to cost around \$900 million, not only ensures the Thunder's presence until 2050 and beyond but also provides a venue for major concerts, athletic competitions and other world-class events.



Both the arena and OKC's NBA franchise play pivotal roles in bolstering the local economy, contributing to an annual economic impact of nearly half a billion dollars. The proposal garnered widespread support, with an impressive 70% approval from Oklahoma City residents.

The new arena will be funded by a 72-month, one-cent sales tax that will start when the MAPS 4 tax ends and will not increase the sales tax rate. The arena will also be paid for with \$70 million in MAPS 4 funding and \$50 million from the Oklahoma City Thunder ownership group.

**70%** VOTER APPROVAL FOR ARENA PROPOSAL

## VISIT OKC TAKES TOURISM TO NEW HEIGHTS

In 2023, Visit Oklahoma City (Visit OKC) celebrated a series of remarkable achievements, showcasing the city's rising status as a vacation destination. The year began with the release of groundbreaking economic impact data, revealing that the city's visitor economy had reached unprecedented heights. A study by Tourism Economics reported a staggering annual economic impact of \$4.3 billion, generated by 23.2 million visitors in 2022. This marked a historic milestone for OKC, surpassing the \$4 billion mark for the first time and underscoring the pivotal role of tourism in the local economy.



The success continued with notable convention sales victories. Following a site visit and bid submission, Visit OKC's Convention Sales team secured the hosting rights for the prestigious 2028 American Farm Bureau National Convention. With an estimated attendance of 12,000 and 12,000 room nights, this event promises to be one of the largest citywide conventions in OKC's history.

The city also scored a major win as Nations Best Sports decided to relocate its show from Ft. Worth to OKC for the 2026-2027 seasons. This move is set to bring in over 7,100 room nights each year, reinforcing OKC's position as a premier destination for sports-related events.

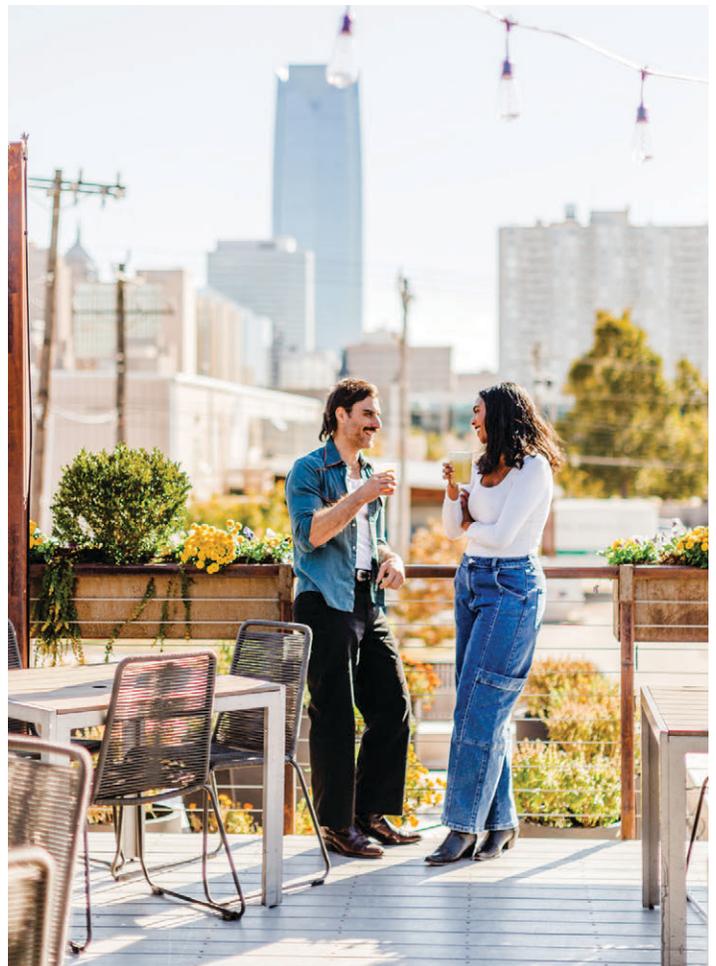
# \$4.3 BILLION ECONOMIC IMPACT



Visit OKC introduced its Mobile Visitor Center in 2023, a converted Ford Transit Van that roams high-traffic events and venues across the city. This dynamic resource provides destination and attraction information and is a catalyst for visitor engagement.

Acknowledging the need for continuous learning in the rapidly evolving hospitality industry, Visit OKC unveiled the OKC Insider Destination Training. This complimentary, on-demand training program is designed to equip tourism and hospitality workers with the latest destination information.

Visit OKC's new digital city guide features mobile-friendly content that hotel partners can utilize to promote destination information directly to visitors.





## RAPID SUCCESS: OKC'S FIRST BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Oklahoma City's first bus rapid transit (BRT) system is off to a stellar start. The system, named RAPID, began operating in Northwest Oklahoma City nearly two months ago.

The routes run from early morning to late at night seven days a week. The buses, which are powered by compressed natural gas to improve air quality, travel up and down Classen Boulevard and Northwest Expressway, starting from the downtown transit center and turning around at the Meridian Park and Ride facility on 63rd Street.

Assistant City Manager Jason Ferbrache, who also serves as director for EMBARK, the city's passenger transportation system, said the RAPID NW line has met or exceeded all expectations. Ridership has averaged anywhere from 1,000 to 1,200 trips per day, which makes it EMBARK's best-performing route.

"Having launched a new service and getting that kind of ridership is a really good start for us," he said, noting that real-time arrival information has typically been spot on.

"Occasionally, we'll have cellular interruptions and things that happen with technology, but we have been pleased with all of that. We have received virtually no complaints," he said.

To help deliver a BRT system that would work safely and more efficiently, the city has erected 32 platforms or stops along the route where riders can purchase fares in advance from a ticket kiosk. The platform is also level with the bus, which allows easier access for passengers, especially for those who have disabilities or who may be pushing a stroller or cart. The platform is also covered and lighted and includes seating as well as real-time bus arrival displays.

"The level boarding absolutely helps people in mobility devices. But also just from a customer standpoint, the level boarding is much easier than stepping up or down onto a bus, especially for people who may be rolling a shopping cart on and off the bus, or if they are traveling with their young child and they want to easily roll a stroller on and off the transit vehicle," Ferbrache said.

The city is in the planning stages to add two additional BRT lines in other parts of Oklahoma City. One is in northeast OKC which would terminate at the Adventure District and serve University of Oklahoma Health Sciences and the area around Northeast 23rd Street and Martin Luther King Boulevard. The other RAPID line is planned for the south side, which would serve the Capitol Hill area and ideally terminate at the Amazon facility near Southwest 89th Street and Portland Avenue. Those routes would be funded through MAPS 4.

"We are studying the corridors, trying to determine exactly where the next two BRTs will go in terms of streets," Ferbrache said. He expects the two lines will be operational sometime around 2028.

## DIVERSE DEVELOPMENTS DRIVING OKLAHOMA CITY'S RETAIL RESURGENCE

Oklahoma City is experiencing a surge in retail development projects, reshaping the city's landscape and offering a wide range of new experiences for residents and visitors alike.

The OAK development, located across from Penn Square Mall, is a 20-acre mix of retail, office space, a Hilton Lively Hotel, new-to-market restaurants and luxury residences. It's set to be completed later this year.

"The design of this masterplan development creates connectivity, placemaking and is an example of the types of places retailers gravitate. It's really important to have all these pieces fit together," said Tammy Fate, the Chamber's director of retail development and recruitment. "The people who are already shopping within that general corridor, can add the OAK to their trip while they're shopping."



The OAK retail development going up near Penn Square Mall is expected to be completed later this year. The 20-acre project will be a mix of retail, office space, a hotel, restaurants and residences.

The Half, a 95-acre mixed-use development in north OKC (part of the American Fidelity campus) continues to expand. Construction on Andretti Indoor Karting and Games and the eight-story Skyline Hotel will begin soon, while the 325-unit multifamily apartments are close to



Friends participate in a Pickleball match at Chicken N Pickle, one of the first tenants of The Half development in North OKC. Several more retail businesses are set to be built on the 95-acre mixed-use development in the near future.

being ready for occupancy. Several medical businesses and two new-to-market restaurants are also planned for the development. Flix Brewhouse, Chicken N Pickle and the new Dolese Bros. headquarters were some of the development's first tenants.

"You have a total of about 100 acres located off I-235 with over 100,000 cars per day. It's a prime location to attract new concepts. It also encompasses a major medical corridor, and it's halfway between Edmond and downtown Oklahoma City. That really creates a connection in a central place for people to gather," Fate said.

The \$400 million OKANA Resort and Indoor Waterpark just east of the First Americans Museum is quickly taking shape and changing the landscape on the east side of downtown. The resort's 11-story hotel recently had its topping-out ceremony, while work proceeds on the two-story indoor waterpark, 4.5-acre outdoor lagoon, conference center and other amenities. Several retail shops and restaurants will also be part of the mix. The resort is still on target to open in 2025.

Two planned developments that have seen quite a bit of publicity here of late are The Boardwalk at Bricktown and Sunset Amphitheater projects.

The Boardwalk at Bricktown is a mixed-use project that is planned for lower Bricktown that would include a 480-key Dream Hotel and a couple of residential towers, one of which could one day reach 1,907 feet in height, making it the tallest building in the United States. More than 100,000 square feet of commercial, retail and restaurant space would also be part of the mix.

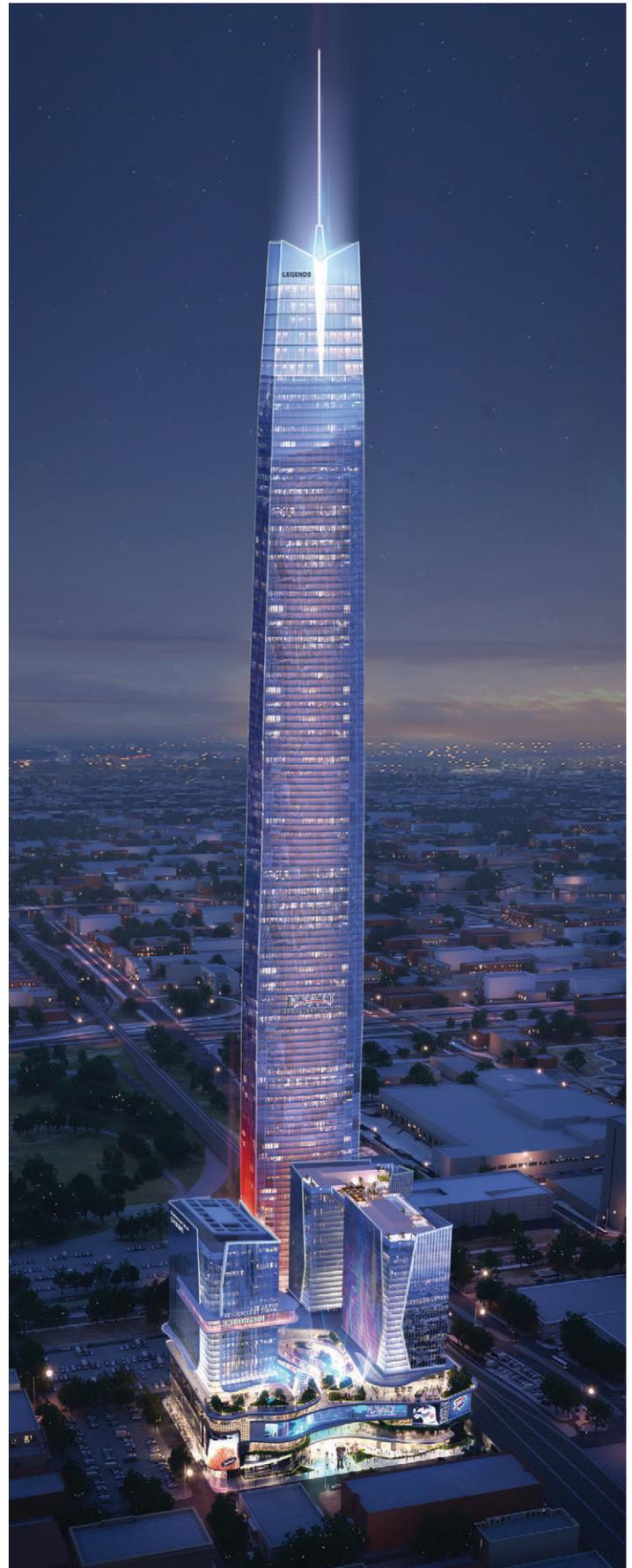
Construction on the 12,000-seat Sunset Amphitheater by Notes Live is expected to begin very soon with a completion date scheduled for summer 2025. The \$70 million project located in Mustang Creek Crossing east of John Kilpatrick Turnpike and north of Southwest 15th Street is expected to draw world-renown musical acts to OKC.

Chisholm Creek in far north OKC continues to expand and attract businesses. The most recent addition to that development is Ramsay's Kitchen from star chef and TV personality Gordon Ramsay. Spark and Dave's Hot Chicken will soon be opening there. Classen Curve, OKC Outlets, Penn Square Mall and Quail Springs Mall have already added or will soon add new retail establishments to their shopping lineup.

A great deal of attention has been spent in recent weeks on large retail and entertainment development projects planned for downtown OKC, including the new arena and The Broadway at Bricktown proposal. In addition, construction on other projects in and around the downtown area has either already started or will begin in a year or two. Those include:

- The Citizen Club, a private club inside the Citizens Building going up across the street from the OKC Memorial that will include a restaurant and other amenities.
- The Truck Yard in Lower Bricktown, an entertainment venue that will feature its own restaurant and bar, beer garden, food trucks, live music and more. Economic development officials believe the Truck Yard will be a catalyst to Bricktown and a connector to the Boathouse District.
- The new MAPS 4 multi-purpose stadium. The new entertainment and sports complex is one step closer to fruition following recent news that owners of the OKC Energy FC soccer team purchased property in Lower Bricktown and would like to donate it to the city for the stadium. Officials are confident that the stadium will be a catalyst to spur additional restaurants and retail in that part of Bricktown.

Another OKC retail development that also deserves a mention is Rose Creek Plaza at Northwest 164th and May, where a new Homeland grocery store has opened. There are several provisional concepts in the works for that development as well.



*A proposed skyscraper reaching 1,907 feet in height is included as one of four towers slated to be built as part of the new Boardwalk at Bricktown development near downtown OKC.*

to remain strong, with 1.2% growth this year. Per capita income is expected to grow by 4.7% this year to more than \$66,000.

Job growth is also expected this year, with an increase of nearly 14,000 jobs, being led by growth in health services and the trade sector. These two sectors will represent more than half of the expected gain in private payrolls. A predicted weakening of consumer spending will lead to flat employment in leisure and hospitality. Overall job growth in Oklahoma City has outpaced national growth since 2010. Nonfarm earnings have also been stronger than the U.S. average, with earnings averaging 4.6% a year, compared to 3.9% nationwide.

The forecast also recognized a decrease in job postings in the area – data that can be viewed as a proxy for future hiring intentions. The total number of job postings in December 2023 for the Oklahoma City metro was down by 19% compared to December 2022. Nationally, that number was down 31%, showing relative strength of the Oklahoma City metro.

Two alternative forecast models show a more modest growth expectation of between 0.3% and 0.7%, reflecting the local economy's vulnerability to national and global uncertainties.

A high concentration of young people in the metro should provide labor pool support for years to come. Quality of life improvement and job opportunities are critical to keeping this talent in the market.

## A LOOK BACK AT 2023

Oklahoma City's metro economy experienced year-over-year nonfarm job growth of 2.4% or a gain of 17,000 jobs. The largest percentage of growth was in education and health (6%), leisure and hospitality (4.8%), construction (3.2%), manufacturing (2.7%), government (2%), and mining/oil and gas (2%). Unemployment for the year was 2.9%, the fourth lowest rate since 1990. This rate is among the 20 lowest for metros of a million population or more. The total labor force, driven by population gains, was the largest in history at 752,000.

## REAL ESTATE OUTLOOK

The market saw rents in the industrial market grow in 2023 by 4.1%. The industrial market vacancy rate ended



the year at 5% and is expected to rise modestly in 2024. Another 4.1 million square feet of industrial construction is underway, with 88% pre-leased.

The office market experienced rent growth of 1.6% in 2023, with a vacancy rate of 10% at year-end, outperforming the national rate of just under 14%. There are nearly 700,000 square feet of office product under construction. Rates average \$19.54 per square foot across all property types.

Taxable retail sales in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area increased 2.7% in 2023 over 2022. This increase came on the heels of double-digit increases in 2021 (+13.6%) and 2022 (+11.6%) – the largest increases in at least 30 years. At approximately \$29.4 billion, the Oklahoma City metro accounts for 44% of the taxable retail sales for the state. Retail vacancies in the Oklahoma City market were up slightly to 8.9%, compared to 8.5% a year ago. Total retail square footage has grown to more than 50 million square feet.

Higher interest rates led to a slowdown in housing starts for the Oklahoma City metro, with 4,465 housing starts in 2022, the lowest since 2016, and notably lower than a pre-pandemic total of 5,366 in 2019. Like the nation, Oklahoma City area home sales and home price growth slowed in 2023. More than 22,800 closed sales were reported. Median home prices in 2023 rose 3.3% to \$249,000. Single-family home prices rose 2.0%, while townhouse-condo prices were up 5.2%.

The value of construction projects underway in the metro also saw a decline from 2022, with an 18% drop. The total construction value of tracked contract projects was \$4.4 billion. The largest gains were found in warehouses, manufacturing, miscellaneous nonresidential buildings and dormitories. The largest

declines were in hotels and motels, retail stores and restaurants, parking garages and amusement. Dodge, a construction data firm, forecasts an increase in 2024 of 12% with flat values in non-residential and a 10% increase in residential construction. They also expect a 37% increase in non-building infrastructure projects, such as bridges, water supply systems and others.

## STATEWIDE OUTLOOK

The forecast also provided an outlook for the state. Oklahoma regained its pre-pandemic value of goods and services produced by companies in the state reaching \$203 billion in 2023. The forecast predicts job

growth will slow statewide, with economic strength concentrated in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Oklahoma's population is predicted to grow by 1%, with stronger urban gains offsetting some rural population loss, in keeping with long-run patterns of urbanization across the U.S. Oklahoma is playing catchup relative to other states in terms of this trend. The metro areas accounted for 68% of the state's population and 73% of state personal income in 2022, with those trends expected to carry through the decade. Urbanization and location along the Interstate-35 corridor position Oklahoma City favorably for long-run prosperity.

## FILM FRIENDLY WORKSHOP INTENSIVE GIVES COMMUNITIES CRASH COURSE ON MOVIE MAKING

A recent Oklahoma Film Friendly Workshop Intensive, sponsored by the Oklahoma City Film and Creative Industries Office, is helping foster the growth of the local film industry. The event was held at the Canadian Valley Technology Center in Chickasha, a certified Film Friendly Community by the Oklahoma Film + Music Office (OF+MO). The designation means Chickasha has been actively participating in programs to help communities prepare for incoming film and television productions. The workshop played a crucial role in furthering this objective.

Led by seasoned film location professionals Chris Kucharski ("Reservation Dogs") and Alison Naifeh ("Stillwater") of Locations Unlimited, the workshop aimed to equip community and tribal leadership with comprehensive knowledge of the film production process. Jill Simpson, executive director of the Oklahoma City Film and Creative Industries Office, also spoke at the event.

"When it comes to film, Oklahoma is a land of opportunity right now," said Simpson. "There is a significant amount of interest from studios, and that opens a lot of doors for cities and towns across the state. It's not just Oklahoma City and Tulsa who can benefit. We want all our communities to succeed."

The workshop covered a wide range of topics, including pre-production, scouting, filming guidelines, economic impact, media and post-production. Attendees learned about the intricacies of the film, television and music ecosystem in Oklahoma. The event emphasized the significance of local support, highlighting the pivotal role played by local governments in facilitating a smooth collaboration with production teams.

Simpson stressed the importance of local support.

"Production teams don't just show up and start shooting. There is a tremendous amount of planning and collaboration that must take place first. Local governments play a big role in that."

The positive impact of Chickasha's film-friendly initiatives was evident last summer when a major studio film chose the city as a shooting location. The city council's approval of street closures for several weeks allowed production crews to recreate scenes, including those depicting the aftermath of a tornado. This experience highlighted the city's commitment to supporting the film and television production industry.

The workshop served as a forum for communities to ask questions, network, and glean information from experienced professionals who have direct experience in the film and television production industry. Representatives from Chambers of Commerce in various cities, including Norman, Clinton, El Reno, Pauls Valley, Guthrie, Chickasha, Shawnee and more attended the event.

According to Simpson, the Oklahoma City Film and Creative Industries Office is planning to host two Film Friendly workshops in Oklahoma City later this year.

# 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.

## ASSOCIATE

### Vital Care Infusion Services

*Pharmacies*  
Ms. Jessica Salfiti.....(405) 832-3510  
6501 Broadway Ext  
Suite 100  
Oklahoma City, OK 73116  
<https://vitalcareoklahomacity.com>

### Antique Mall 3 Strands Vintage

*Antiques*  
Ms. Cynthia Gardner.....(405) 227-7438  
4848 N.W. Expressway  
4610 Timber Ridge Road  
Tuttle, OK 73089-5603

### Home2 Suites Yukon

*Hotels & Motels*  
Mr. Scott Patel.....(405) 265-0999  
11510 W. I-40 Service Road  
Yukon, OK 73099-5170  
[www.hilton.com/en/locations/usa/oklahoma/yukon](http://www.hilton.com/en/locations/usa/oklahoma/yukon)

## ADVISOR

### Insight School of Oklahoma

*Educational Services*  
Dr. Jennifer Wilkinson.....(405) 517-3632  
1117 S. Douglas Blvd., Suite E  
Midwest City, OK 73130-5265  
<https://www.isokvirtual.net/>

## CORE

### American Lung Association in OKC

*Nonprofit / Service Agencies*  
Ms. Terri Bailey.....(405) 896-8725  
710 W. Wilshire Blvd., Suite 101  
Oklahoma City, OK 73116-7736  
[www.lungs.org](http://www.lungs.org)

### Bigger Better Movers of OKC

*Movers*  
*Transportation - Logistics*  
Mr. Daniel White.....(405) 595-9589  
928 NW 94th St.  
3000 W. Memorial Road, Suite 123-116  
Oklahoma City, OK 73120-6101  
[www.biggerbettermovers.com](http://www.biggerbettermovers.com)

### Creek Commercial Realty, LLC

*Real Estate - Commercial*  
Mr. Ethan Slavin.....(405) 510-0079  
600 NE 4th St., Suite 100  
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-6231  
[www.creekre.com](http://www.creekre.com)

### Sam's Club Supply Chain

*Retail*  
Ms. Kelsey Crider.....(405) 992-1198  
2400 S. Council Road, MDC 4965  
Oklahoma City, OK 73128

### ARCpoint Labs of Oklahoma City

*Laboratories - Testing*  
Mr. Scotty Patel.....(405) 724-2010  
2126 S. Meridian Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73108-1724  
[www.arcpointlabs.com/oklahoma-city](http://www.arcpointlabs.com/oklahoma-city)

### BOSS Business Ownership Simplified for Success

*Business Development*  
*Consultants*  
Mr. Michael Morrison.....(405) 919-9990  
3422 N.W. 135th St., Suite J  
Oklahoma City, OK 73120-4009  
[www.businessownershipsimplified.com](http://www.businessownershipsimplified.com)

### Days Inn

*Hotels & Motels*  
Mr. Ash Patel.....(405) 606-2222  
8217 S. I-35 Service Road  
Oklahoma City, OK 73149-2901

### ShinePro Services

*Automobile Repairing & Service*  
Mr. Kolton McDowell.....(405) 403-5106  
91 N. Council Road  
2151 W. SW. 89th St.  
Mustang, OK 73064-1251  
[shineproservicesok.com](http://shineproservicesok.com)

### Ayana Medical Services LLC

*Health Services*  
Mrs. Carolyn Bangurah.....(405) 445-9555  
600 N. Walker Ave., Suite 103  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102-3035  
<https://www.ayanamedservices.com/>

### Lai & Turner Law Firm PLLC

*Attorneys / Lawyers*  
Mr. Hung-Lin Lai.....(405) 326-4530  
2000 N. Classen Blvd., Suite 230  
Oklahoma City, OK 73106-6016  
[laiturnerlaw.com](http://laiturnerlaw.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 [okcchamber.com/grandopenings](http://okcchamber.com/grandopenings).

## 3 Strands Vintage Antique Mall

4848 NW Expressway  
Oklahoma City, OK 73132

## The Learning Experience Edmond

1288 E. 15th St.  
Edmond, OK 73013

## Ayana Medical Services LLC

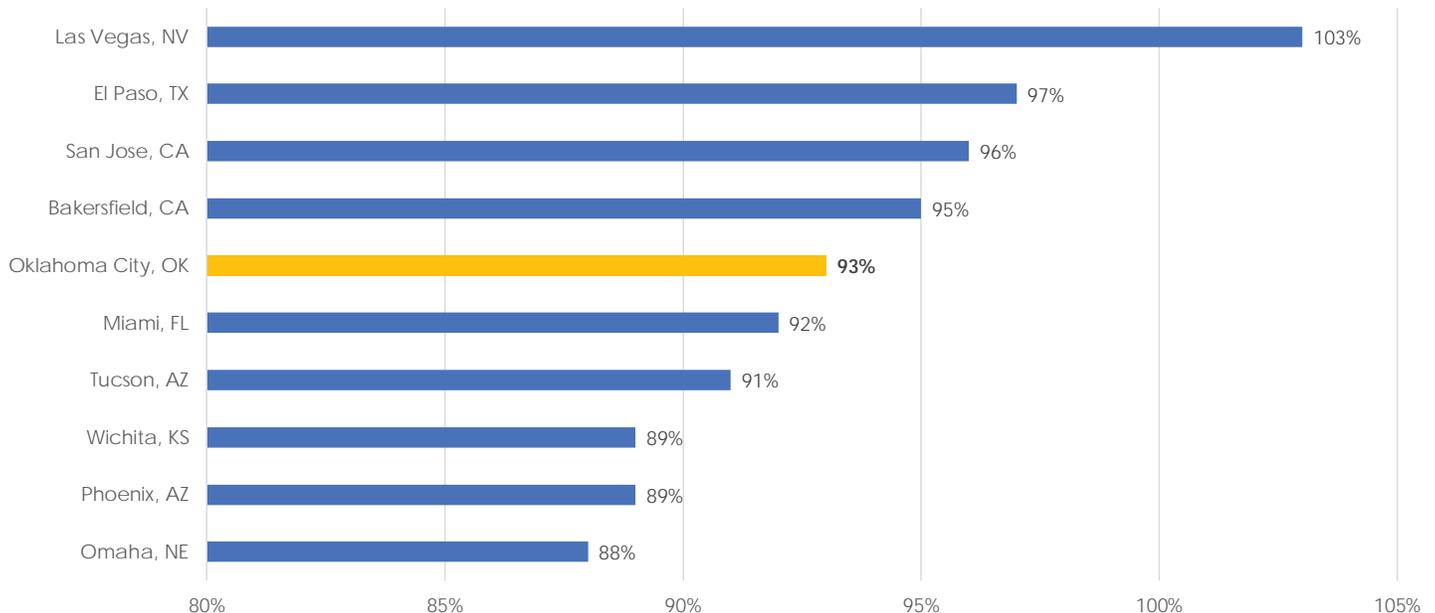
600 N. Walker Ave., Suite 103  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102



# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

## OKC 5TH IN NATION FOR DOWNTOWN FOOT-TRAFFIC RECOVERY

### Downtown Recovery Rankings (2023)



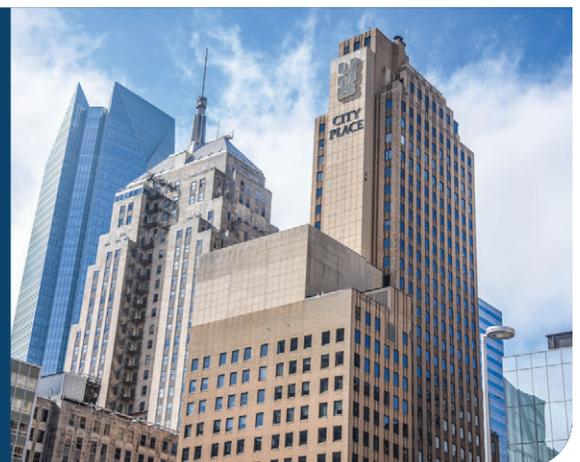
SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, SCHOOL OF CITIES, OCTOBER 2023.

- Downtown Oklahoma City is among just a few downtowns in a U.S. major city to make almost a full recovery since the pandemic.
- The recovery metrics from the University of Toronto are based on a sample of location-based mobility data derived from cell phones, comparing foot traffic from 2023 to 2019 (pre-COVID).
- Their study determined that downtown OKC saw a 93% recovery, ranking fifth on the survey.
- The study also noted that downtown OKC had a near transit ridership recovery.
- Downtown OKC has continued to see more people physically back in the office, more conventions and events taking place, and a variety of activities that are continuing to bring people downtown.

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

Periodicals  
**PAID**  
Oklahoma City, OK  
73102

## LOOK INSIDE!

- 5** 'Elevate' yourself, your employees and company at Chamber's annual professional development event
- 8** Q&A with new Chamber Chair Teresa Rose
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- 13** Film Friendly Workshop Intensive gives communities crash course on moviemaking

**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!

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