

# CITYSCAPE

December 2014 | Issue 3 | An update on the progress moving OKC forward

## MAPS FOR KIDS REACHES MILESTONE

Oklahoma City's MAPS for Kids reached a major milestone in September when the John W. Rex Charter Elementary School (JRCES) opened in downtown Oklahoma City. The elementary school, which currently serves approximately 300 students from throughout Oklahoma City, was partially funded through the MAPS for Kids program, a voter-approved penny sales tax that funded construction, transportation and technology projects that benefit Oklahoma City's public school students.

"When Oklahoma City residents passed MAPS for Kids in November 2001, they made a clear statement that quality education is Oklahoma City's highest priority," said former Oklahoma City mayor Kirk Humphreys, who was in office during the MAPS for Kids vote. "While MAPS for Kids has delivered the bricks and mortar necessary for academic success, the true test will be the results in the classroom. As we continue to work together, we can achieve our goal of offering a quality education for every child in our city."

JRCES is Oklahoma City's first charter elementary school, and its downtown location places students within easy access to governmental, legal and cultural resources that will shape their education. Students at the elementary school will learn from a rigorous curriculum that focuses on science, technology, engineering, math and the arts.

"At John W. Rex Charter Elementary School, we've created an innovative community of quality education regardless of race, culture or income," said Joe Pierce, head of school at JRCES. "Our diverse student body benefits by having daily interaction with the downtown arts, civic and business community who support and engage in our curriculum. It's win-win for everyone."

Six schools are still under construction as part of the MAPS for Kids initiative. Phase two of Classen School of Advanced Studies construction is complete and was approved on Sept. 23 by the



*Above: City and school officials participate in the John Rex Elementary grand opening.*



*Left: JRCES, pictured, is Oklahoma City's first charter elementary school.*

Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area Public Schools Trust, the governing body of MAPS for Kids. Roosevelt Middle School is substantially complete and scheduled for its final acceptance this month. Webster and Taft middle schools and Columbus at Jackson Elementary School are nearing completion, and the final plans for the Emerson Alternative School Renovation and Health Clinic are being bid.

The MAPS for Kids funds invested \$470 million into the infrastructure of Oklahoma City's public school districts and \$52 million for technology projects. The program also provided \$9 million for bus fleet replacement. MAPS for Kids also provides funding to the 23 other public school districts that serve Oklahoma City students. By the conclusion of the program, more than 400 projects totaling \$153 million will have benefited these 23 suburban school districts.



# Q&A WITH ROBERT NEU, OKCPS SUPERINTENDENT

For Robert Neu, the first 100 school days as the new superintendent of Oklahoma City Public Schools were the most critical. Neu joined the district in April 2014 with the task of leading Oklahoma City's youngest residents on a path of educational attainment. As Neu focuses on the challenges inherent with any large district, the following Q&A illustrates Neu's priorities for his first year with OKCPS.

**Q:** As you learn more about the District, what has been most encouraging to you about the future of OKCPS?

**A:** I am so impressed and grateful for the infectious enthusiasm I have experienced among students, parents, staff, community members and supporters. The residents of Oklahoma City have shown tremendous support of our schools and laid the foundation for future success.

**Q:** What are your primary goals for your first year as OKCPS superintendent?

**A:** On my first official day as superintendent, I launched the "Neu Move – 100 Day Transition Plan". It outlines strategies that will help me gain a better understanding of the people, partners and community who support our District. It is a starting point for the work we must do together. My goal is to ensure student success by improving teacher and principal support; foster a culture of transparency and accountability; and authentically engage our parents in their child's education.

**Q:** What are the greatest challenges facing the district?

**A:** It's important that I implement the 100 Day Transition Plan to gain a thorough understanding of OKCPS and the OKC community. Like any urban school district in the United States, we have our challenges, but I believe we are uniquely positioned with great opportunities to overcome the challenges.

**Q:** In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges facing the students?

**A:** Ninety-two percent of our students are living in poverty as indicated by the federal free and reduced lunch designation. If a student's basic nutrition and health needs are not being met, it creates tremendous challenges in their educational pursuits.

**Q:** What do you see for the future of Oklahoma City Public Schools?

**A:** Our students deserve a world class education. I want to see all students eager to learn and engaged in their education. I want teachers, principals, parents and the community working collaboratively to ensure student success to produce proud OKCPS graduates!

**Q:** How do you envision the business community helping OKCPS reach its goals?

**A:** There is no silver bullet or magic dust that will bring immediate academic improvement to our schools. It takes hard work. That includes a rigorous and aligned curriculum, a system of intervention and support, developing the "whole" child, parent engagement, and strong community support. Every child needs a caring adult who knows them by name, strength and need and knows their hopes and dreams.



*Robert Neu, OKCPS superintendent, reads to a Pre-K class at Prairie Queen Elementary School.*

# GETTING HERE & THERE

In order to attract business, visitors and residents, cities must provide quality airport services and travel options. In recent years, Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City has made a number of investments in its facilities to increase services. The airport has also seen an increase in the number of new airlines and nonstop destinations, adding additional opportunities for travelers.

Since 2001, more than \$264 million has been invested in infrastructure and passenger facilities, with another \$92 million planned for 2015. In response to the growth in activity, airport administrators this year announced a terminal expansion. The expansion design will extend the terminal building to the east adding three new gates, with the capability to add another six as demand merits. The plan will also centralize the security checkpoint improving the screening process. A new airport rental car facility currently under construction will accommodate over 900 rental cars and is expected to open in the fall of 2015.

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber works with the City of Oklahoma City to bring more city offerings for travelers. Today, Will Rogers World Airport offers service on six major airlines to 21 nonstop destinations, with the recent addition of nonstop service to Charlotte, N.C. and Seattle, Wash.

## COMPLETED PROJECTS:

### Airfield Improvements

*Ongoing since 2001*

Includes new taxiways and the expansion, rehabilitation and technical upgrades to existing runways and taxiways.

### Aircraft and Rescue Firefighting Station

*Completed in 2002*

State-of-the-art fire station designed for response specific to aircraft emergencies, firefighting and rescue.

### Terminal Expansion and Renovation

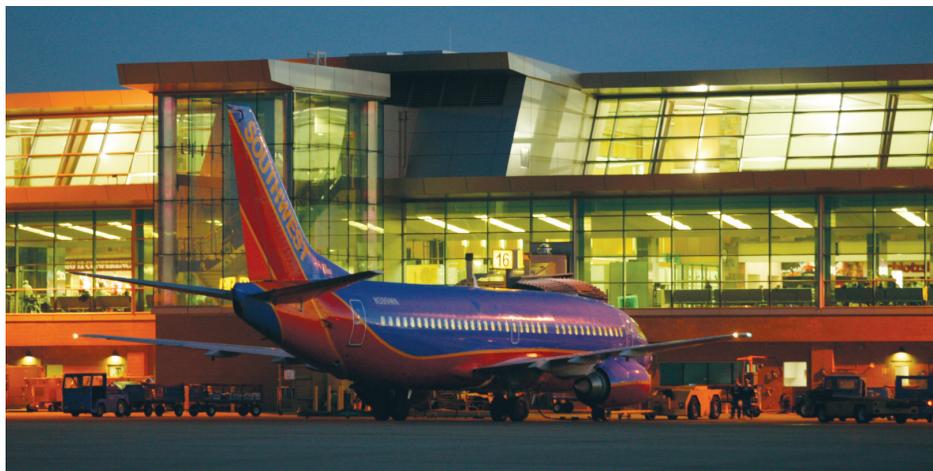
*Phase 1 completed in 2006, Phase 2 in progress*

Doubled the size of the terminal building improving the ticketing lobby, baggage claim and gate areas; widened arrival and departure roadways; added a ground transportation plaza and plaza garden. Additional expansion plans are in progress.

### Terminal Drive and Meridian Avenue Landscaping Project

*Completed in 2007*

Landscaping of the roadway from Airport Road to Terminal Drive with thousands of native trees and shrubs, hundreds of ornamental grasses, and installation of esplanade lighting.



### Fuel Storage Facility

*Completed in 2007*

Construction of an above-ground fuel storage facility that is larger, more secure and environmentally friendly. This facility stores and dispenses the fuel for aircraft operating at Will Rogers World Airport.

### General Aviation Terminal at AAR

*Completed in 2010*

A 6,000-square-foot corporate and general aviation terminal facility designed to provide customers with a modern business terminal capable of handling more than 10,000 flight operations annually.

### CCTV project

*Completed in 2010*

A completely new CCTV system that covers the terminal proper and adjoining facilities, increasing the overall safety and security of the area.

### 5-story parking garage and Garage A&B updates

*Completed in 2013*

The 5-story garage added nearly 3,000 garage parking spaces. The Garage A&B updates upgraded lighting, installed new expansion joints and replaced aging stairs.

# MAPS 3 PROJECTS: WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S COMING

**T**he passage of the MAPS 3 ballot, which will fund eight community projects for residents to enjoy throughout Oklahoma City, has experienced incredible progress in the past year.

Here is a look at the recent progress made on each project and the date you can expect to enjoy them.

“ In the big picture sense, we are on schedule, on budget and moving on all eight projects. We are also collecting sales tax revenue that is 5 percent higher than what we projected. The Mayor has charged the MAPS 3 Citizens Advisory Board with the task of building a big league city, and the transformative projects that are a part of MAPS 3 are well on their way to doing just that. ”

*Tom McDaniel, president of American Fidelity Foundation and chairman of the MAPS 3 Citizens Advisory Board*



## Sidewalks

MAPS 3 will fund more than \$18 million worth of sidewalks that will improve accessibility, safety and quality of life.

**What's New:** Projects 1 and 2 of the first phase of construction are complete. The Oklahoma City Council approved an additional \$9 million for sidewalks and the consultant selection is complete for the first half of that addition.

**What's Coming:** Project 3 of the first phase and project 2 of the second phase are under construction. Project 1 of phase three is in design.

**Date you can visit:** Several sidewalks are already complete. You can visit the first completed sidewalk on the west side of Western Avenue between Hefner and Britton Roads.

## Downtown Public Park

The Downtown Public Park will encompass 70 acres of outdoor space in the heart of Oklahoma City and will offer residents a place to enjoy concerts, festivals and the outdoors.

**What's New:** The Oklahoma City Council approved a master plan and the project is now being designed.

**What's coming:** The site for the park is being acquired, and the utility relocations are being planned.

**Date you can visit:** The first phase of construction is scheduled to be complete in mid-2016.



## Modern Streetcar/Transit

This rail-based streetcar system will jump start the modernization of Oklahoma City's public transit system.

**What's new:** The City Council approved a consultant-recommended route framework, and the preliminary engineering design is underway. Selection of the streetcar vehicle is underway.

**What's coming:** The route is being engineered and construction will begin in early 2016.

**Date you can visit:** The first phase of construction is scheduled to be complete in 2017.



## Senior Health and Wellness Centers

These geographically-distributed centers will reflect the needs of the surrounding communities while encouraging healthy and active lifestyles for Oklahoma City's senior citizens.

**What's new:** Operating partner agreements have advanced and design is underway for the first two centers.

**What's coming:** Construction on both centers is scheduled to begin in spring 2015. The first two centers will be located near the intersections of Rockwell Avenue and Hefner Road in northwest Oklahoma City and Southwest 36th Street and Walker Avenue in southwest Oklahoma City.

**Date you can visit:** The first senior health and wellness center is scheduled to be open in mid-2016.



## Oklahoma River Improvements

The 11-acre Riversport Rapids Whitewater Rafting and Kayaking Center will offer rafting, kayaking and canoeing for all skill levels. Improvements to the racecourse will continue to build Oklahoma River's reputation as an international paddle sport venue.

**What's new:** Ground was broken in October on The Rapids. Racecourse starting and lane-marking systems have been installed, and the lighting systems are in use.

**What's coming:** Construction of phase 2 racecourse improvements is underway, and construction on the whitewater rafting and kayak center will continue through 2015.

**Date you can visit:** Construction on the whitewater rafting and kayak center is scheduled to open in the spring of 2016.



# RETAIL PAYS DIVIDENDS TO CITY SERVICES

From community redevelopment to an increased quality of life, the advancement of Oklahoma City's retail offerings plays a critical role in furthering economic growth. The City of Oklahoma City not only works to bring high-end and destination retail options to Oklahoma City, but it also is committed to redeveloping neighborhoods in Oklahoma City that are underserved in terms of retail and services.

With steady job growth and one of the nation's lowest unemployment rates, Oklahoma City continues to be a focal point for national retailers seeking expansion, which improves the quality of life found in the area and allows Oklahoma City to become a draw for destination retail. Von Maur opened at Quail Springs Mall in October 2014. Top Golf and Cabela's are in the process of constructing and opening Oklahoma City locations along Memorial Road.

While retail development plays an important role in the renaissance of communities across Oklahoma City, the recruitment of national retailers also plays an important role in the improved quality of life of the area.

Many of Oklahoma City's neighborhoods have experienced the benefits of an increased retail presence. A more recent example of this is the upcoming redevelopment of Oklahoma City's NE 23rd

corridor. In March, Uptown Market, which is operated by the owners of Buy For Less, announced that it would open a grocery store in the King's Crossing area. Not only does this provide a critical service to the community, but it also is expected to draw new development and assist in rebuilding the area.

Oklahoma City's retail growth among local vendors and national entities alike has allowed sales to grow by more than 45 percent in the past 10 years. With an increase in sales comes an increase in sales tax revenue, which directly funds many of the city services that citizens depend on each day. From FY 2003-04 to FY 2013-14,

overall sales tax collections grew by \$128.5 million. On taxable sales in Oklahoma City, 4.5 percent is collected for the state and 3.875 percent goes to the City. Almost half of the City's sales tax revenue is distributed to the City's general fund, which pays for police, fire and parks departments, street maintenance, planning, code enforcement and general government functions. Almost 20 percent of the sales tax collection is evenly split between the fire and police

departments for funding additional officers and costs. The rest of the sales tax collection is distributed between MAPS 3 and the Oklahoma City Zoo.



*From FY 2003-04 to FY 2013-14, Oklahoma City's overall sales tax collections grew by \$128.5 million.*



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# MAPS 3 PROJECTS: CONTINUED

## Oklahoma State Fairgrounds Improvements

Improvements will replace aging public event buildings with a new expo center that residents can utilize year round.

**What's new:** Construction on phase one of parking and site improvements is completed. Construction of the MAPS 3-funded expo center began in October.

**What's coming:** Once complete, residents will be able to enjoy the largest event space in Oklahoma City during events throughout the year.

**Date you can go visit:** The expo center construction is scheduled to be complete in the spring of 2016.



## Oklahoma City Trails

The expansion of Oklahoma City's network of trails is ideal for promoting a healthier lifestyle. The proposed expansion will connect Lake Hefner with the Oklahoma River, Lake Overholser with the West River/Lake Overholser Trail, the Grand Boulevard Trail with the Earlywine Trail and will create a loop around Lake Stanley Draper.

**What's new:** Construction on the West River Trail is underway.

**What's coming:** City council has approved the alignment for the I-44 Trail.

**Date you can go visit:** The West River Trail is scheduled to open in the spring of 2015.



## Convention Center

By replacing the aging convention facility and increasing capacity, Oklahoma City will improve its ability to attract larger conventions and will increase the economic impact of the hospitality industry on the Oklahoma City economy.

**What's new:** Consultants are in the process of completing conceptual design. Conceptual plan was approved by the City Council in November.

**What's coming:** The site of the convention center has been chosen. Land acquisition is underway.

**Date you can go visit:** Construction is scheduled to be complete near the end of 2018.



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Q&A with  
OKCPS  
Superintendent  
Robert Neu

City Retail Pays  
Dividends

MAPS 3 Update

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