

# THE POINT

May 2021



okcchamber.com

## OKC retail market poised for a strong post-pandemic rebound

Just like in many communities across our state and nation, the pandemic has also taken its toll on Oklahoma City's retail industry over the past 12 months, even forcing many businesses to shut their doors for good. But as springtime rolls on and summer beckons, the industry seems to be making a rebound, especially as COVID numbers decrease, restrictions soften and more people get vaccinated.

Prior to the pandemic, sales tax collections were strong and Oklahoma City's economy was reaping the benefits. But throughout the pandemic's duration, especially when restrictions were at their highest, businesses large and small suffered. The retail industry was hit especially hard.

"[The pandemic] definitely had a huge impact on retail," said Tammy Fate, senior manager of retail development and recruitment

*Continued on page 11*



## Restart of Big 12 softball, baseball tourneys and WCWS is a grand slam for OKC

Several thousand college sports fans will be descending on Oklahoma City in May and June for the much-anticipated return of three popular athletic events that together have a huge economic impact for the Oklahoma City metro.

The Phillips 66 Big 12 softball and baseball championships will be played during the month of May, with the softball championship held at the USA Hall of Fame Stadium Complex, May 14-15, and the baseball championship, May 26-30, inside the Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark. Then from June 3-9, the NCAA Women's College World Series (WCWS) makes its return visit to Oklahoma City and the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex.

All three events were canceled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even in 2019, officials were forced to cancel all Saturday day games during the Big 12 softball tournament due to severe thunderstorms that rolled into the city. So, in essence, a full schedule of games has not been played in Oklahoma City since 2018.

The likelihood of more inclement weather in 2021 is a distinct possibility. That does not bother Sue Hollenbeck, however, who is the director of sports business at the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau. She said with the recent renovations to the softball complex, including a new upper deck, locker rooms and drainage system, the threat of cancellations has been greatly diminished.

*Continued on page 9*



# We believe in bucket lists.



*Susan Laurence, Uterine Cancer Survivor  
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# Leadership Notes

*Criminal justice reform requires patience, perseverance*

Oklahoma County’s journey of criminal justice reform began in late 2015 when the Chamber convened a task force to dig deep into our system to better understand where reform was possible and ultimately make significant strides in improving our county’s jail and detention center.

We have undoubtedly changed the system for the better and set the stage for continued transformation. The number of people being held has dropped from an average of more than 2,500 a day to 1,600 and falling. That drop has given the county room to make changes in operation, and in improving the facility.

Last year we made another leap forward with the establishment of the jail trust. Why was this so important? With the jail trust, the county was able to create greater transparency around jail operations. The decisions being made about the jail are now based on data and made in an open meeting. Is there more scrutiny? Yes – but that is exactly what is necessary.

The professional corrections managers tasked by the trust inherited years of mismanagement borne out of an overcrowded and dysfunctional system. Through the Criminal Justice Advisory Council, and now the Jail Trust, our community is more engaged and aware of how the system is operating and has more input into the changes we want to reflect our community’s values.

Calls to reverse this progress and return the management of the jail to the sheriff’s office will only slow the progress and put a cloak over the problems that exist. We need to keep working together to solve these problems out in the open – it is what our citizens deserve.

Roy H. Williams, CCE  
Chamber President & CEO



Roy H. Williams, CCE  
President & CEO

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**“Aerospace industry in OKC has added more than 6,600 jobs since 2015”**

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## THE POINT!

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### Editorial staff

Harve Allen, Nate Fisher,  
and Cynthia Reid

### Designer

Josh Vaughn

297-8900

thepoint@okcchamber.com

okcchamber.com

twitter.com/okcchamber

facebook.com/okcchamber

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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.)

**May 7**

### Enlighten

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/enlighten](http://okcchamber.com/enlighten)

**May 12**

### State of Health

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/statehealth](http://okcchamber.com/statehealth)

**May 19**

### Chamber Forum

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/mayforum](http://okcchamber.com/mayforum)

**May 20**

### MegaLunch

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/megalunch](http://okcchamber.com/megalunch)

**June 4**

### Enlighten

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/enlighten2](http://okcchamber.com/enlighten2)

**June 16**

### Chamber Forum

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/juneforum](http://okcchamber.com/juneforum)

**July 21**

### Chamber Forum

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
[okcchamber.com/julyforum](http://okcchamber.com/julyforum)

# state of Health

## Biotech entrepreneurship, health care industry topics at virtual State of Health event May 12

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's annual State of Health event scheduled for 11:30 a.m. May 12 will include two informative panel discussions featuring metro health care leaders on health and wellness trends, as well as entrepreneurs and researchers working to grow our biotech sector.

Keynote speaker Robin Farmanfarmaian will discuss where some of the shifts are happening in health care delivery, patient experience, and health care consumer spending power and trends, and how this disruption provides opportunities for growing the health care industry in Oklahoma City.



*Robin Farmanfarmaian*

Farmanfarmaian is a professional speaker and entrepreneur based in Silicon Valley, who has been involved with more than 20 early-stage startups working on cutting-edge technology in health care, biotech, pharma, medical devices and digital health.

### Hospital Leadership Panelists

**Jim Gebhart**, *President, Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City*

**Joe Hodges**, *Regional President, SSM Health Oklahoma*

**Timothy Pehrson**, *President and CEO, INTEGRIS Health*

**Chuck Spicer**, *President and CEO, OU Medicine, Inc.*

### Bioscience Panelists

**Paul DeAngelis, Ph.D.**, *Presidential Professor, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center*

**Christian Kanady**, *CEO, Echo Investment Capital, LLC*

**Dr. Jesse McCool**, *Founder and CEO, Wheeler Labs*

**Dr. Rodger McEver**, *Vice President of Research, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation*

The event runs from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Individual tickets are \$25 for Chamber members and \$40 for nonmembers. Sponsor ticket packages are also available online. Visit [okcchamber.com/statehealth](http://okcchamber.com/statehealth) to learn more.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor MidFirst Bank and Host Sponsor OU Health.

# Get tips for safe reopening at Enlighten May 7

If you are one of the many business owners whose business has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are unsure about the steps involved to safely reopen to customers, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is here to help. On Friday, May 7, beginning at 11:45 a.m., the Chamber will host its free virtual Enlighten event where you can learn more about the American Rescue Plan and the advantages it affords to businesses.

Featured speakers will share best practices as well as tips on how to safely reopen businesses while dealing with COVID-19 concerns. Lessons learned after more than a year of living with the virus will also be discussed.

Join us for both the practical information and great virtual networking Enlighten is known for.

## Speakers

**Vic Albert**, *Shareholder, Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, PC*



**Barb Denny**, *CFO and Vice President of Operations, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber*

**John Veal**, *District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration - Oklahoma District Office*

**Bev Wood, PHR, SHRM-CP**, *Vice President of Business Continuity and Crisis Management, American Fidelity Assurance Company*

For more information or to register, visit [okcchamber.com/enlighten](http://okcchamber.com/enlighten). Enlighten virtual events are free and available to both chamber members and nonmembers.

Special thanks to Series Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.

## Make a date for May 20: Meet many with MegaLunch

Looking for a fun and unique way to make business connections? Even virtually, MegaLunch gives Chamber members the opportunity to expand their networks and pitch their company's products and services in a 90-second "speed networking" format.

MegaLunch has always been one of the most popular Chamber networking events, and that remains true in a virtual format. Instead of tables, a computerized rotation schedule and Zoom breakout rooms will ensure you will meet many new prospects and get lots of practice at that elevator speech (call it the "digital discourse"). All that for \$15 – and you don't have to worry about spilling your iced tea on a potential new client!

Learn more at [okcchamber.com/megalunch](http://okcchamber.com/megalunch).

### MegaLunch Thursday, May 20:

**11:30 a.m.** – Welcome & instructions

**11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m.** – Breakout rotations



# InternOKC 2021: Setting up OKC's future talent for SUCCESS

Studies have shown that internships can play a pivotal role in helping college graduates land their first professional job, regardless of whether the internship is paid or unpaid. That is why programs such as InternOKC are so valuable to interns and the companies that hire them.

Created in 2006 by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber to recruit and retain young talent in Oklahoma City, InternOKC provides soft skills enhancement and professional development opportunities to the region's young professionals.

Lee Copeland, director of talent and business growth for the Chamber, said the six-session series, which was canceled in 2020 because of COVID, will be held as an online event for the first time this summer from June 16 through July 28 on the Socio virtual platform. Each session will last one hour from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

"This year's emphasis will be professional development opportunities for summer interns and to address the consistent soft skills gaps that exist for interns and entry-level talent entering the workforce," Copeland said.

The first session takes place on June 16 and June 23 and will focus on how personal behavior, habits and practices can impact career development. On June 30 and July 14, interns will learn how to build, maintain and navigate relationships to build networks and teams. And then, on July 21 and July 28, the focus will center on building a mindset that fosters problem solving and big-picture thinking.

J.D. Baker, who now serves as special assistant to Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt, is a former participant of InternOKC from 2017. He said the program provided him with the opportunity to meet fellow future Oklahoma City leaders and expanded his knowledge on what the city has to offer.

"My experience in the InternOKC program gave me new insights and laid the groundwork to new professional opportunities in my future," Baker said. "Even as a lifelong resident of Oklahoma City, the program fueled my excitement to invest in this city through networking and telling the story of how far OKC has come, dream on what it could be, and the role



*J.D. Baker, center, takes a selfie with fellow interns during the 2017 InternOKC event. He would later land a job in the mayor's office as a special assistant to Mayor David Holt.*

I could play to enhance this great American city."

The Chamber is partnering this year with the University of Central Oklahoma, who has agreed to issue a micro-credential in professional development to each participating intern who completes the program requirements. The interns can then, in turn, pin that micro-credential to their individual LinkedIn page to help them become more marketable to employers.

"The value to employers is that they are getting additional training to augment whatever they are doing for their summer interns. And then from the interns' perspective, there is this tangible accomplishment they achieve if they choose to do all of the follow-up work asked of them," Copeland said.

Employers interested in enrolling their interns for this summer's InternOKC program can do so by visiting [abetterlifeokc.com/summerintern](http://abetterlifeokc.com/summerintern). The registration fee per intern is \$125 for Chamber member companies or \$200 for nonmembers. Employers are encouraged to post their available internships on the Chamber website as well.

If you have questions or would like additional information about InternOKC, please contact Lee Copeland at [lcopeland@okcchamber.com](mailto:lcopeland@okcchamber.com).

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores, Inc.

# Chamber offers new programming geared toward the first year of membership

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber recently launched the Chamber Connection program, a multifaceted approach to introducing new members to the organization over a one-year period. Made up of in-person orientation meetings, a monthly email newsletter and a physical membership kit, Chamber Connection helps members learn more about the history, vision and mission of the Chamber while finding their place within the organization.

If you joined the Chamber within the last 18 months, look for the Chamber Connection email in your inbox once a month. This series of 12 emails will introduce you to the Chamber's senior-level staff members and give an overview of the departments that make up the organization. The monthly newsletter will also include the best tips for networking and promoting your business with the Chamber.

Member Orientation, the Chamber's longstanding event that explains the Chamber's key initiatives and allows networking with other members, has also been rebranded as a Chamber Connection event. It takes place every six weeks and is offered virtually at this time. You can register for this free online event at [okcchamber.com/connect](http://okcchamber.com/connect).

New members will also receive their Chamber Connection welcome kit in the mail, which includes their membership log-in information and their membership plaque.

"Our goal is for every member to feel connected to the work of the Chamber and the benefits of joining our organization," said Sunny Cearley, vice president of membership. "The Chamber Connection program will help us deepen our member engagement like never before."

## Learn about economic development strategies of tribal nations at next Chamber Forum

On Wednesday, May 19, virtual Chamber Forum attendees will hear from a panel of leaders involved with economic development for some of Oklahoma's tribal nations. They will discuss their strategies for growth, as well as highlight tribal nations' impact on the state's economy and overall job growth, among other topics.

### Panelists

#### **Jim Collard**

*Director of Planning and Economic Development  
Citizen Pottawatomie Nation*

#### **Jonna Kirschner**

*President of CNI Manufacturing  
Chickasaw Nation Industries, Inc. (CNI)*

#### **Bill Lance**

*Secretary of Commerce  
The Chickasaw Nation*

Chamber Forum events start at 11:45 a.m. and run until 1 p.m. From 11:45 to noon, attendees will be

# CHAMBER FORUM

able to engage in small-group networking at a virtual "table" courtesy of Zoom breakout rooms, so cameras are encouraged.

Tickets for Chamber members are \$15, and \$25 for non-members. Chamber Forum half-season ticket packages for five Chamber Forums are still available for \$75. Go to [okcchamber.com/mayforum](http://okcchamber.com/mayforum) to register and to learn more.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Cox Business and Corporate Sponsor ADG.

# Future of rapid transit in OKC metro one step closer following bill passage

Commuter rail service in the Oklahoma City metro is one step closer to becoming reality following passage of Chamber-supported legislation that grants limited tort liability protections for any future commercial operator of the rail line. The measure, Senate Bill 967, was recently signed by Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt and will become law on Nov. 1, 2021.

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber played a pivotal role in helping pass SB 967, which is a critical piece to any realistic hopes of introducing future commuter rail service in the Oklahoma City region. SB 967 was authored by Sen. Adam Pugh (R-Edmond) and Rep. Ryan Martinez (R-Edmond).

“It was a great win and great team work to get SB 967 approved 89-1 in the House and 45-0 in the Senate. There were a lot of people who pitched in to get this bill passed,” said Derek Sparks, senior manager for government relations at the Chamber. He noted the contributions of Sen. Pugh and Rep. Martinez; the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) board members, including its chairman, former Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry; Scott Martin, president and CEO for the Norman Chamber of Commerce; Mike Patterson, former state secretary of transportation and others.

“It all came together wonderfully, and the Chamber was honored to be part of the process,” Sparks said.

Henry echoed Sparks’ comments.

“This is a huge step forward because if we did not get this legislation passed, it is a pretty big roadblock for us to overcome. And the way this legislation was passed with the full support of the Legislature, it will be very impressive to BNSF Railway during our future negotiations,” Henry added.

During their April 21 meeting, the RTA unanimously approved the Transit System Plan that will serve as the guiding document for the next 10 to 25 years to eventually bring bus rapid transit, commuter rail and a light rail system to the OKC metro.

“The planning process to get us to the Transit System Plan has certainly been robust. The entire process was very efficient, and we got it completed in a short amount of time. It really does set us up for the next step, which is to get us to where we have a project or program of projects that can be reviewed and considered by the [Federal Transit Administration],” said RTA Interim Executive Director Jason Ferbrache.

Creating the vision and formulating the goals were the first steps in developing the Transit System Plan for the Central Oklahoma region, which also included determining the potential corridors for rapid transit. The RTA’s plan is to obtain federal grant funds from the FTA; however, it must first seek approval of the plan from the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) before proceeding any further.

If eventually approved by ACOG, the plan will then be included ACOG’s long-range regional plan as



required by the federal government for the project to be eligible for federal funding. ACOG played a major role in getting the cities of Oklahoma City, Edmond, Moore, Norman, Midwest City and Del City, as well as various other groups, together to develop a transit study.

Besides the FTA, there are other public entities or agencies that have played key roles throughout the planning process, including the Federal Highway Administration; Federal Railroad Administration; Oklahoma Department of Transportation; existing transit operators such as the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority, which operates EMBARK; CityLink Edmond; and the City of Norman.

Four regional corridors were identified in the plan that would quickly and efficiently transport people

to various “regional activity centers,” including educational institutions, commercial centers and entertainment areas.

The north/south corridor will connect Edmond to the north and Norman to the south; the east corridor connects downtown OKC to Tinker Air Force Base; the airport corridor will connect downtown OKC to Will Rogers World Airport; and the west corridor connects downtown OKC to the west towards Yukon. The Santa Fe Depot in downtown OKC will serve as the central hub for those connections. Officials said the approved plan can also be amended if future conditions, such as growth and development, warrant any modifications.

## OKC spring sports update (cont'd from page 1)

“Even if we do get rain this year, the new drainage system is so incredible that even if they did not get the tarp on the playing surface, it will still drain very quickly. If we had to postpone games for an hour or two, we could still play games on the main field,” Hollenbeck said.

Although COVID-19 numbers are down in the state and the venues are outside, Hollenbeck said fans can expect attendance for the Big 12 softball and baseball championships to be at 50% capacity with masks and social distancing required. Capacity for the WCWS now stands at 25%; however, capacity could increase depending on future COVID numbers.

“Even though we are going to be at 25% capacity, or maybe even 50%, we are still going to see a large amount of people come into town for the WCWS,” Hollenbeck said. “It has so many ripples that come from it, and so when you lose a big event like that as we did in 2020, it is a huge deal. Not having the WCWS last year was a big loss financially for the city,” she said.

Hollenbeck noted that, lumped together, the Big 12 softball and baseball championships and WCWS conservatively add about \$26 million to the Oklahoma City economy. The WCWS is by far the largest contributor at \$24 million when at full capacity.

Softball fans are some of the best fans in the world, according to Hollenbeck. Approximately 70% of all tickets sold to the 2019 WCWS were to people out of state, she said.

“They are the best tourists. So many of them stay in hotels downtown because they are familiar with that area and it is so walkable and easy to get around. They eat out and visit many of the attractions around the city and are always looking to explore and visit new attractions,” Hollenbeck said.

This will be the final year for the Big 12 Baseball Championships in Oklahoma City as it moves south of the Red River to Arlington, Texas, where it will have a three-year run inside the Texas Rangers’ new ballpark. The WCWS will remain in Oklahoma City, however, at least through 2035, which will allow for even more people, including returning visitors and first-time visitors, a chance to experience all of what Oklahoma City has to offer.

“We have shown consistently that we do an excellent job, and we have the people who want to support it and the community that wants to support it. We are very blessed with the Chesapeake Energy Arena, the Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark, the USA Softball Hall of Fame park. We have some excellent venues that we work with and we have a tradition of putting on really good events,” Hollenbeck said.

To purchase tickets for the Big 12 softball or baseball championships, visit the Big 12 at [Big12sports.com](http://Big12sports.com). WCWS tickets can be purchased by visiting [NCAA.org](http://NCAA.org) or going through the NCAA Ticket Exchange.

# 'POINT!' newsletter to become 'VeloCity'

Chamber newsletter will enjoy new name, format



*The Feb. 25, 1920 edition of "Oklahoma," the Chamber's early newsletter, had stories on railroad legislation, the Chamber's fundraising for road construction, an upcoming "trade excursion" trip to promote "O.C." businesses and more.*

Just after the Land Run in 1889, the Chamber (then called The Board of Trade) was organized to promote the community; advocate for rail connectivity and transportation infrastructure; implement public utilities such as electricity, water, gas and others; and bring new industry to OKC. By at least 1907, the Chamber began publishing a regular newsletter, simply called "OKLAHOMA," to keep members informed about issues pertinent to growing Oklahoma City's economy and increasing our quality of life. In 1989, the city's centennial year, the publication's title changed to "OKC Action." Concurrent with a move to the present Chamber offices at 123 Park Avenue, in 1994 the newsletter became "The POINT!," in reference to a then-new Chamber logo which featured an exclamation point in place of the



*The July 7, 1920 edition of "Oklahoma" featured a masthead featuring a "Do it for Oklahoma City" slogan and an inset on the importance of the Chamber.*

"I" in "Oklahoma" and a corresponding large green exclamation point sculpture that was located in front of the Chamber building in the pre-Project 180 days.

Meanwhile, VeloCityOKC.com was launched in July 2018 as a new Chamber digital news and advocacy vehicle, which features fresh stories and content for our members, as well as OKC residents in general, every business day.

In an effort to simplify and better align our communications offerings, The POINT! will become VeloCity in July of this year. Look for a new fresh design and visual style that connects these platforms.

Before being adopted for the website, you may remember VeloCity's first incarnation as "the digital magazine of Oklahoma City." Now the brand will come full circle and bring together the Chamber's main print and digital communications vehicles.

**OKLAHOMA** – circa 1907 – 1988

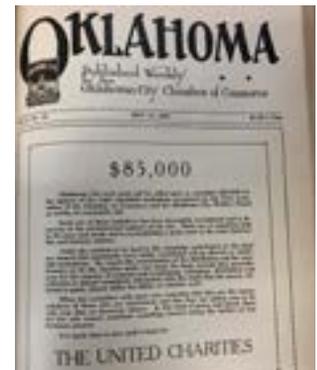
**OKC Action** – 1989 – 1993

**The Point!** – 1994 – Present

**VeloCity** – coming July 2021



*The Sept. 15, 1994 edition of "The POINT!" contained information about the sidewalk sculpture outside the then-new Chamber offices at 123 Park Ave., and our then-new logo.*



*100 years ago - May 11, 1921. The cover story was on a charity drive toward an \$85,000 goal for "The United Charities."*



*The May 4, 1989 edition of "OKC Action" celebrated the Chamber's 100th birthday.*

# Retail Update (cont'd from page 1)

at the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber. “Retailers had to reposition their strategy and creatively utilize omnichannel and technology to offset the lack of in-store traffic due to limitation and restrictions. The goal was to pivot, adapt and survive to the changing climate as quickly as possible to stay relevant.”

According to recent data provided to the Chamber by Dun and Bradstreet, the Oklahoma City metro experienced a 5% closure rate for businesses during the pandemic between March 2020 and January 2021 (across all business types). A typical closure rate is between 3-4% annually. Out of those businesses that closed, 93% were companies with fewer than 10 employees. Approximately 15% of all the closures were in either the retail trade or accommodation and food service sectors.

“The retail commercial districts took a really hard hit. Luckily, the district managers were able to help them prioritize, collaborate and create digital opportunities to showcase their product. Many unique ideas were born during COVID. In addition, the OKC Small Business Continuity Program helped many retailers stay afloat during this challenging time,” Fate said. The SBCP’s framework was developed in a partnership between the Greater OKC Chamber, the Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City, and the City.

The pandemic has also affected how the Chamber and others recruit businesses and developers to the Oklahoma City market. One national event the Chamber has attended for many years is the International Council of Shopping Center’s RECon conference. Typically held in May, this annual event in Las Vegas attracts developers, owners, brokers and retailers from across the nation; however, due to the pandemic, this year’s RECon was pushed back until December. Organizers expect the conference will return to its normal May time frame in 2022.

“This year, the format is going to change because it’s a little harder to get retailers to go to a show when it’s in the peak of their busy time of year between Thanksgiving and Christmas,” Fate said. “It is an opportunity for brokers to get together and touch base, and us from a city’s standpoint to push sites and get them out there in front of people. We have a massive presence at RECon.”

Despite the business closures the Oklahoma City metro experienced early in the pandemic, Oklahoma



City’s economy has steadily rebounded as people are getting more comfortable about going out in public, especially as COVID numbers continue to decrease and more people are getting vaccinated. The employment picture has also improved with March’s preliminary unemployment rate standing at 4.0%, ranked as the nation’s fourth-lowest unemployment rate among large metros (more than 1 million in population). Time will tell if unemployment can reach pre-pandemic levels when Oklahoma City’s unemployment rate was 2.7% in March 2020.

Fate is confident the Oklahoma City market will continue to improve and will be strong once again. Much of that belief rests on consumers.

“From a traditional economic development standpoint, there are a lot of companies looking here, which will really help increase the amount of spending that is available within the Oklahoma City market. Consumer confidence is key. Optimistically, I think retailers are encouraged that there is a lot of pent-up demand out there. People are still a little cautious, but we are seeing more traffic and people out and about, especially within the last month,” Fate said.



*Expansion of Amazon's fulfillment facility in OKC is a testament to the overall health of the metro's warehouse and distribution sector.*

## OKC's warehouse and distribution sector thriving, e-commerce playing pivotal role

If you have driven along Interstate-44 just south of Will Rogers World Airport recently, you cannot help but notice Amazon's new fulfillment center expansion going up just north of their current facility that opened in 2019. When it opens later this year, the new facility should nearly double Amazon's warehouse space here to 1.6 million square feet and add another 500 jobs to the Oklahoma City metro.

The fact that Amazon has chosen to expand in Oklahoma City is no doubt a testament to the overall growth and vitality of the warehouse and distribution sector in the Oklahoma City region.

The health of the Oklahoma City metro's warehouse and distribution sector is reflected in recent data published by labor market analytics firm Emsi that shows between 2010 and 2020, the number of jobs within the sector grew by 56% or 10,000 jobs. That growth rate even outpaced the state and nation, which saw jobs grow at a rate of 33% and 21%, respectively. If you compare Oklahoma City's job growth to the state and nation within the last five years (2015-2020), it is even more pronounced.

Jeff Seymour, executive vice president of economic

development at the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, believes some of that growth can be attributed to a rise in on-demand delivery services resulting from COVID-19; however other reasons may not be as obvious.

"E-commerce continues to drive some growth, but I also think as Oklahoma City continues to grow, it is serving more as a regional hub than it has in the past," he said, noting that the warehouse and distribution industry accounts for \$4.2 billion or 5.5% of total gross domestic product – the economy's total output of goods and services – for the Oklahoma City metro.

"Large distribution clusters like Kansas City and Dallas-Fort Worth in the center of the country typically have robust rail, air and highway infrastructure options. We have great transportation infrastructure here as well; however, we are not a mega-cluster like a Kansas City, a DFW or a Chicago. Just realizing our potential to be a regional multi-state hub is probably where we are positioned to best leverage our abilities right now," Seymour said.

Oklahoma City can do even more to maximize its niche to serve as a strong regional multi-state hub in the warehouse and distribution sector, according to Seymour.

**"Just realizing our potential to be a regional multi-state hub is probably where we are positioned to best leverage our abilities right now,"**

*~Jeff Seymour, executive vice president of economic development at the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber*

Ensuring the state has a readily available workforce with the necessary skills and talents is a key factor in the equation, especially for those companies that rely heavily on, or are making the transition to, more automation. Another is having the right location, land and properties available to those companies that can help them grow.

According to figures provided by CoStar, a third-party real estate listing service, there are more than 73 million square feet of warehouse and distribution commercial real estate inventory in the Oklahoma City market. With a vacancy rate of just 4%, it is not hard to see just how healthy the sector really is.

“The warehouse and distribution sector in Oklahoma City is very healthy. In fact, I would even term it as hot,” said Randy Lacey, SIOR, first vice president of CBRE, the world’s largest real estate and investment firm.

For 30 years, Lacey has worked as an industrial real estate broker and has seen firsthand how Oklahoma City’s warehouse and distribution sector has improved over several decades, dating back to the oil bust years when vacancy rates were approaching 18%. He echoed Seymour’s sentiments concerning the impact the pandemic has had on the market.

“E-commerce is one of the biggest driving forces in the market between fulfillment centers, last-mile facilities and sorting centers. That is all about warehouse space and has created a consistently low vacancy rate and kept the prices high. That is probably one of the biggest reasons why the industrial market is a preferred asset class and is so stable and predictable,” Lacey said.

Brett Price, SIOR, senior managing director at Newmark Robinson Park, which specializes in the leasing and sales of industrial properties in Oklahoma, described Oklahoma City’s industrial market as “tight.”

“You typically do not see a great deal of speculative industrial development in Oklahoma City. However, within the next 12 to 18 months, we expect to see quite a few developments kicking off,” Price said.

Even with just a 4% vacancy rate for the Oklahoma City metro, Lacey said companies are still looking to expand or relocate to the region.

“There is a really healthy market of companies that are considering Oklahoma City,” Lacey said. “For example, we are working with a national developer right now that is already looking hard at building some distribution



*Amazon will add another 500 jobs in OKC when opens its newest facility near Will Rogers World Airport.*

space here.”

“One of the reasons why the industrial market is so stable here is because it’s never over built. Developers just don’t go out and start building a bunch of space like they do in some other markets. The cap rates are also higher in Oklahoma City. In other words, the investors get a higher rate of return here than they do in some of these other markets. That is very attractive to an investor and why they put money into this market,” Lacey said.

Seymour explained that one of the Chamber’s primary goals from an economic development standpoint is for Oklahoma City is to have a well-diversified economy, and having a strong warehouse and distribution sector supports primary job growth. He pointed to recent efforts by the Chamber to lure companies from various industries to the Oklahoma City market. Of the approximately 70 projects the Chamber is currently working, about 10% are warehouse/distribution projects.

“[Warehouse and distribution] is our second highest category. Number one is manufacturing by far; the other is distribution. Manufacturing is huge, but they also usually have a distribution element to their operations. And number two is distribution. We consistently see a strong pipeline of warehouse projects of different categories,” Seymour 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.

## PARTNER+

### United Dynamics, Inc.

*Aerospace Industries*  
Mr. T. Glenn Davis..... (480) 544-5366  
41001 Wolverine Rd.  
Shawnee, OK 74804-9026  
www.united-dynamics.com

## ADVISOR

### CVTech

*Educational Services*  
Dr. Gayla Lutts..... (405) 262-2629  
6505 E. U.S. Highway 66  
El Reno, OK 73036-9411  
www.cvttech.edu

## EMERGING LEADER

### LIBERTY Dental Plan of Oklahoma, Inc.

*Dental Service Plans*  
Ms. Lisa Gifford..... (888) 273-2997  
340 Commerce, Suite 100  
Irvine, CA 92602  
www.libertydentalplan.com

## ASSOCIATE

### American Solutions for Business

*Advertising - Specialties*  
Mr. Larry Zavadil..... (800) 862-3690  
31 E. Minnesota Ave.  
Glenwood, MN 56334-1625  
www.americanbus.com

## ASSOCIATE

### David Allen Capital - Agency

*Investments*  
Mr. Ralph E. Nichols .... (918) 381-8739  
2809 NW 63rd St.  
P.O. Box 12104  
Oklahoma City, OK 73157-2104  
www.davidallencapital.com/101292671

## ASSOCIATE

### Mint Turbines LLC

*Aerospace Industries*  
Mr. Chris Van Denhede..... (918) 968-9561  
2915 N. Highway 99  
P.O. Box 460  
Stroud, OK 74079-0460  
www.mintturbines.com

## ASSOCIATE

### Woligo (dba) CamSolutions, LLC

*Insurance*  
Ms. Jennifer Dunn..... (405) 345-1241  
9000 Cameron Parkway  
Oklahoma City, OK 73114-3701  
www.woligonow.com

## CORE

### Guaranty Title

*Title Companies*  
Ms. Tiffany Golay..... (405) 261-4100  
1319 Classen Drive  
Oklahoma City, OK 73103-2412  
www.firsttitle.com

## CORE

### Hilton Garden Inn Midtown OKC

*Hotels & Motels*  
Ms. Valorie Willingham. (405) 607-4000  
2809 NW Expressway  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-7049

## CORE

### McRoof

*Roofing Contractors*  
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714 Enterprise Drive  
Edmond, OK 73013-3671  
www.mcroofrx.com

## CORE

### New York Life Insurance

*Insurance*  
Mr. Neil Sherman..... (405) 830-6561  
1818 W. Lindsey St., Suite C212  
Norman, OK 73069-4181

## CORE

### THN Insurance Solutions

*Insurance*  
Mr. Thuan H. Nguyen .. (405) 445-3268  
2423 N. Classen Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73106  
www.thninsurance.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).

### Green Springs Dispensary

2407 N. Council Road  
Oklahoma City, OK 73008

### Scooter's Coffee

7040 NW 122nd St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73142

### School of Rock

7200 N. May Ave., Suite D  
Oklahoma City, OK 73116

### The Brooks Clinic

6401 N.W. Expressway  
Oklahoma City, OK 73132



## Member Upgrades

The following member companies increased their investment in the Chamber, demonstrating strong support of the Chamber's efforts to drive the region's economy. To increase your investment, contact the membership division of the Chamber at 405-297-8949 or [membership@okcchamber.com](mailto:membership@okcchamber.com).

## ADVISOR

### Baker First Commercial Real Estate, Inc.

*Real Estate - Commercial*  
Mr. Rod N. Baker, CCIM..... (405) 947-7200  
2800 NW 36th St., Suite 200  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-7468  
www.bakerfirst.com

# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Oklahoma City ranks No. 3 for overall housing affordability

## Overall Housing Affordability – Metros Over 1 Million Population

Metro	Overall Housing Affordability	% of Severely Cost-Burdened Households, \$35,000-\$75,000/year
Louisville	1	2.16%
Indianapolis	2	2.28%
<b>Oklahoma City</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.39%</b>
Cleveland	4	2.55%
Buffalo	5	2.59%

Source: Urban Land Institute 2021 Home Attainability Index. A rank of 1 is most favorable.

- Among U.S. metros with over 1 million population, Oklahoma City ranked third for the lowest percentage of severely cost burdened middle-income households.
- Urban Land Institute determined overall housing affordability by examining the extent to which middle-income households face substantial housing challenges.
- Middle-income households who earned \$35,000 to \$75,000 and spent more than 50% of income on housing were considered “severely cost burdened.”

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



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[UnitedWayOKC.org](http://UnitedWayOKC.org)

- 6 InternOKC returns this summer
- 10 'Point' newsletter changing name, format
- 8 Rapid transit one step closer with bill passage
- 12 OKC warehouse and distribution cluster thriving amid pandemic

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