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STUDY EXAMINES OKC'S ECONOMIC RESILIENCY; CITES BARRIERS FOR SOME

In a study by consulting firm EY for the Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City, researchers examined the city's economic resiliency or capacity to emerge from the pandemic with a stronger, growing economy and to experience fewer, if any, adverse effects from future disruptions, whether natural or economic.

According to a draft of the Oklahoma City Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Study executive summary, a more resilient economy in Oklahoma City is one that "features a diversity of growing industry clusters, support for startups and small businesses, and equitable access to opportunities for all people in Oklahoma City."

In developing the study, EY worked with several stakeholder groups to better understand the number and variety of tools and programs currently available in OKC's economic development ecosystem, as well as existing needs and opportunities. Many of those same stakeholders cited several barriers to economic inclusion and resiliency while trying to accomplish or fulfill their business goals or objectives, including culture, skills, social mobility and communication barriers.

EY compared Oklahoma City to 19 peer cities by using 20 different benchmarks. What they found was that OKC typically fell somewhere in the middle of the pack for a majority of those benchmarks, including median household income (ninth), share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher (15th) and adults below the poverty level (10th), and number of minority-owned businesses (ninth). The city did not fare as well in other benchmark categories such as entrepreneurship and innovation, for example, though venture capital is showing strong growth.

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LANDING 2022 IEDC ANNUAL MEETING A HUGE WIN FOR OKC

The Oklahoma City Convention Center is quickly approaching its first birthday, and it has already landed a major economic development conference for 2022 that Chamber officials say could be a springboard to more large meetings at the state-of-the-art convention center.

The International Economic Development Council, considered as the premiere industry association for economic developers around the world, selected Oklahoma City as the site for its 2022 annual conference

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Greater Oklahoma City Chamber President Roy Williams speaks to attendees during the 2021 International Economic Development Council Annual Conference held last month in Nashville, Tenn.



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



Safia Franks, RN
Cardiology

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- OU Health Education Accelerator Program

Apply today by visiting OUHealth.com/Nursing. Job opportunities are available in all areas of adult and pediatric care, oncology and more, in hospital and clinical care settings, including OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center, Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health, OU Health Edmond Medical Center and OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center.

As an integrated academic health system, interested nurses can practice at OU Health and seek a faculty appointment at the OU Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing.



LEADERSHIP NOTES

OKC'S GROWTH REFLECTS COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS AND INVESTMENT

The recent news about the Census and Oklahoma City's growth prompted our team to take a longer look back at Oklahoma City's growth since the original passage of MAPS. As we look back 30 years of the MAPS era of Oklahoma City, the transformation is dramatic.

The biggest change is that the Oklahoma City MSA has added nearly half a million people. The metro has 50% more residents now than it did in 1993. Our population during that period grew at an average of 1.5% which is 1.4 times faster than the nation.

When your population is growing, it is likely that employment was growing too. And that is absolutely the case, with total employment in the metro up by more than 330,000 over the same period.

With that growth in employment, we also added \$55 billion in total personal income since 1990, and per capita income now exceeds \$50,000. That number is still lower than the nation – an area where we want to continue to make up ground. Our economy is bigger than ever before, with a gross metropolitan product that now exceeds \$80 billion annually.

The truly amazing fact when looking at all this growth is that our cost of living remains low – at 14% below the nation, even lower than 1990 when it was 6% below the nation.

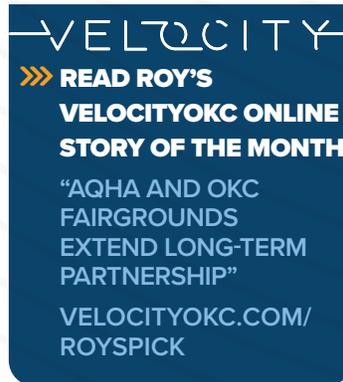
We see every day the benefits of our collective investment in the city, but sometimes, it is nice to see the numbers that back up that story and show our trajectory for the future.



Roy H. Williams, CCE
Chamber President & CEO



Roy H. Williams, CCE
President & CEO



VELOCITY
READ ROY'S VELOCITYOKC ONLINE STORY OF THE MONTH
 "AQHA AND OKC FAIRGROUNDS EXTEND LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP"
VELOCITYOKC.COM/ROYSPICK

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UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR

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

NOVEMBER 5

Enlighten
11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/enlighten

NOVEMBER 17

Chamber Forum
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Vast
333 W Sheridan Ave.
okcchamber.com/novemberforum

NOVEMBER 18

State of the Economy
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St.
okcchamber.com/soe

DECEMBER 3

Annual Meeting
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Oklahoma City
Convention Center
100 Mick Cornett Dr.
okcchamber.com/annual

DECEMBER 9

State of the Aerospace Industry
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
The Petroleum Club
100 N. Broadway, Suite 3400
okcchamber.com/aero

DECEMBER 10

Enlighten
11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
okcchamber.com/enlighten2

JANUARY 26

Legislative kickoff
8 to 9:30 a.m.
National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St.
okcchamber.com/legislativekickoff



Chamber's State of the Economy event to feature national speaker and local panel

Join keynote speaker Dr. Bill Conerly, a business-focused economist with more than 30 years of experience connecting the dots between the economy and business decisions, on Nov. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum for the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's State of the Economy event.

Conerly is an online contributor to Forbes and the author of "The Flexible Stance: Thriving in a Boom/Bust Economy." He also wrote "Businomics," a book about economics for business leaders. He is co-author of "Thinking Economics," a multi-media high school economics curriculum used in 34 states.

In his keynote presentation, Conerly will examine your company's opportunities and risks in the evolving business cycle. Attendees will hear the outlook for major sectors of the economy and will learn how to keep their business ready for expansion while protecting against recession. Business leaders will walk away knowing how the economy will impact their companies--and how to develop plans that will be resilient in any situation.

In addition to Conerly's remarks, the event will also include a panel discussion from regional economists on the issues that are particularly important to our state. Participating in the panel will be:

- Robert Dauffenbach, Ph.D., Senior Associate Dean for Economic Development and Impact, and Director of Center for Economic and Management Research at the University of Oklahoma
- Russell Evans, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, and Executive Director of the Steven C. Agee Economic Research & Policy Institute at Oklahoma City University's Meinders School of Business
- Mark Snead, Ph.D., Economist and President of RegionTrack

Tickets are \$50 for Chamber members and \$75 for nonmembers. To register or learn more, visit okcchamber.com/soe. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,500. Please contact Suzette Ellison Jordan at sellison@okcchamber.com for table sponsor inquiries.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Arvest Bank.

November Forum to focus on health of OKC retail ahead of holidays

Thanksgiving may be just a few weeks away, but many local retailers are already getting into the Christmas spirit as they prepare for yet another holiday shopping season. Last fall, Oklahoma City businesses were still reeling from the pandemic, but many have since rebounded and are trying to limit any other ill-effects the lingering pandemic may throw their way.

The current state of Oklahoma City's retail industry, especially as it heads into the holiday shopping season, will be examined during a panel discussion as part of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's upcoming forum Nov. 17 at Vast. Industry representatives from various retail entities and organizations will provide their individual thoughts, ideas and insights regarding OKC's retail sector. Participants will include:

- Daniel McLoud, Owner, TRADE Supply Co.
- Shane McWhorter, General Manager, Washington Prime Group
- Jim Parrack, Senior Vice President, Price Edwards & Company
- Cléo Rajon, Executive Director, Independent Shopkeepers Association

Tickets for the November Chamber Forum, which runs from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., are \$35 for Chamber

Sales training topic for Nov. 5 Enlighten; register early for December event featuring scaling-up growth expert

Sales and marketing expert Tee Hicks will provide valuable sales training to help businesses boost their revenues before years end during the Chamber's Enlighten Series Friday, Nov. 5. This free, virtual event will be held from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Hicks has served as *The Oklahoman's* vice president of sales & market leader for the past three years. She previously spent time in various sales positions in places such as Dallas, Denver, Las Vegas, Nev., and Montgomery, Ala., just to name a few.

For more information or to register, visit okcchamber.com/enlighten.

The final Enlighten event for 2021 will be Friday, Dec. 10, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Scaling-up growth expert Stacy Eads will provide actionable advice for how to



members and \$55 for nonmembers. To register or learn more, visit okcchamber.com/novemberforum.

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

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

position your business for success in 2022. For those interested in attending this free, virtual event, register early by visiting okcchamber.com/enlighten2.

Enlighten provides networking and practical resources to help boost your business performance.

Special thanks to Series Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.



ANNUAL MEETING TIME TO REFLECT ON THE PAST, LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

The future of work is changing on an individual, organizational and societal level. At the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's Annual Meeting Dec. 3, attendees will hear from keynote speaker Gerarda Van Kirk, Accenture global future of work lead, as she unpacks how evolving human expectations and the acceleration of digital capabilities call for new talent and organization strategies.

During this event, Chamber officials and their members, as well as other OKC business and community leaders, and other stakeholders, will come together to reimagine the nature of work and discuss how Oklahoma City can remain competitive in its ability to attract and retain the best workforce.

Chamber Chair Sean Trauschke of OGE Energy Corp. will celebrate the accomplishments in Oklahoma City

over the past year and look forward as he reveals the Chamber's goals for 2022.

Tickets for the Annual Meeting, which will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, are \$75 for Chamber members and \$125 for nonmembers.



Sean Trauschke

To register or learn more, visit okcchamber.com/annual. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,500. Please contact Suzette Ellison Jordan at sellison@okcchamber.com for table sponsor inquiries.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Bank of Oklahoma and Host Sponsor Cox Communications.

ANNUAL CHAMBER EVENT TO FOCUS ON OKC'S AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

The aerospace industry keeps soaring above the clouds and above Oklahoma City's economic landscape as it continues its ascent as one of the top business sectors in the region. This dynamic and impactful industry has an \$11.6 billion impact to the local economy and employs roughly 43,000 people.

Deepen your understanding of the breadth of the aerospace industry in the Oklahoma City region during the State of the Aerospace Industry event scheduled for December 9 at the Petroleum Club of Oklahoma City, 100 N. Broadway, Suite 3400. The event kicks off at 11:30 a.m. and runs through 1 p.m.

Steve Parker, vice president and general manager of bombers and fighters at Boeing Defense, Space & Security, will serve as one of the featured speakers. He will discuss the future of Boeing in central Oklahoma



and its investment in the regional community. Additional speakers will be announced soon.

Tickets for State of the Aerospace are \$40 for Chamber members and \$60 for nonmembers. To register, visit okcchamber.com/aero. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$750. Contact Suzette Ellison Jordan at sellison@okcchamber.com for table sponsor inquiries.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor The Boeing Company and Host Sponsor Oklahoma City Community College.

Cathy O'Connor, president of the Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City, said during the pandemic, a lot of data came out from different studies and reports about how more women- and minority-owned business were being impacted by the pandemic than other types of businesses.

“We really wanted to see where Oklahoma City stood with that data and with that issue, and wanted to figure out where Oklahoma City was within that landscape. How well are we doing or how poorly? And then look at what women- and minority-owned businesses are encountering that are making it more difficult for them to succeed here,” O'Connor said.

One piece of data that came out of the study showed Black people make up 13% of the city's population but own only 2% of businesses. Minority-owned businesses also have fewer employees, lower sales and smaller revenues than businesses owned by whites. O'Connor was not particularly surprised by that data, however.

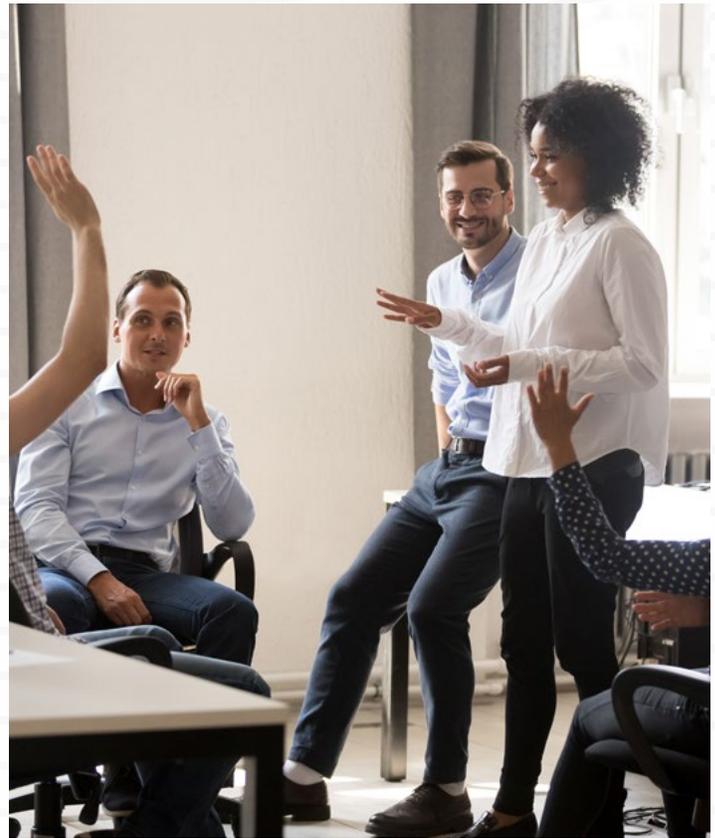
“I do think that having the data is really important, at least as a starting point,” she said.

Once all of the aforementioned factors and other data were gathered, researchers then concentrated on organizations, initiatives and programs focused on three primary topics:

- Innovation and entrepreneurial support
- Inclusive access to capital
- Comprehensive placed-based revitalization

In addition to some economic development tools the city, state and other partners have at their disposal to help create a more resilient economy, including tax increment financing (TIFs), MAPS funds, Strategic Investment Program, Quality Jobs Program, tax credits and block grants, EY identified a variety of “conceptual recommendations” aimed at making those existing programs more robust, able to fill gaps and increase inclusivity. However, developing those concepts may require additional funding from the city, the study said.

The study also provides a listing of financial tools the Alliance, the City of Oklahoma City and other partners could use to improve access to capital for specific



purposes and for specific people groups. One of those recommendations is what the authors referred to as the “OKC Resiliency Fund,” which could provide flexible financing to small and mid-size businesses, thereby fostering a more inclusive economy and reducing or even totally eliminating some of the barriers entrepreneurs of color have faced in recent past.

“One of the big things is developing new incentives or targeting our strategic investment program to certain areas of town and certain kinds of companies in the future. Those are some things we can begin to do now and begin to work on,” O'Connor said.

Placed-based investments – meaning those investments made to address the needs of marginalized communities – are also strategies the study recommended to accelerate economic growth, provide more support for small business and enhance equity outcomes.

Oklahoma City has a great opportunity to become a world leader in entrepreneurship, the study concluded, and should consider developing programs and initiatives that provide direct support to small business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs and real estate developers with a focus on providing service to historically disadvantaged populations.

of what we want to talk about in 2022 ties into that larger theme,” Seymour said.

CVB President Zac Craig stressed the importance of attending IEDC annual conferences, especially the 2021 event in Nashville, where Chamber and CVB staff got the chance to visit with not only IEDC leadership but also with the more than 1,200 attendees that consisted of economic developers, national chambers of commerce and national and international industry thought leaders.

“To put the spotlight on Oklahoma City with that caliber of an audience and showcase to them what we distinctly do best that many people can’t duplicate, it’s really going to be an incredible week of activity here in Oklahoma City,” Craig said.

How Oklahoma City defines its own future and how it collaborates together with numerous stakeholders are two attributes that are attractive to organizations like IEDC, Craig said.

“The way we do business here and collaborate together so that Oklahoma City rises up, it’s like no other city. And that is very attractive to that audience,” he said.

One thing that really impressed Seymour about IEDC was they approached OKC first regarding hosting the 2021 event, which he says speaks volumes of the hard work that has gone into transforming the city into a convention and tourism destination. He said IEDC leadership specifically mentioned the tremendous investments the city and its resident have recently made in the convention center, the Omni Hotel, Scissortail Park and the First Americans Museum, just to name a few.

“Approaching us to host the 2022 event is an even higher-caliber accomplishment than us bidding on it,” Seymour commented. “That, in and of itself, is a huge win.”

Craig echoed those same sentiments.

“Here is the exciting thing: we’re not looking back. With MAPS 4 and so many other wonderful new assets on the horizon, not only for visitors but also for our residents, the trajectory of our city is true north. I can’t be more thrilled about the future of Oklahoma City,” he said.

Sept. 18-21. The announcement came after a long courtship between IEDC and the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber; Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau, a division of the OKC Chamber; and additional partners, including the City of Oklahoma City and other public-private entities statewide.

During this year’s IEDC annual conference held last month in Nashville, Chamber and CVB officials met with both IEDC officials and meeting attendees.

“A lot of our mission there was to be engaged with the leadership of the organization but also the general attendees to make sure they knew Oklahoma City was coming up and to tell our story and outlay our plans for the 2022 event,” said Jeff Seymour, the Chamber’s executive vice president of economic development.

Past IEDC annual conferences have been held in other large metros, including Atlanta and Toronto, Canada. The 2023 conference is planned for Dallas. To be selected among those peer cities signals that Oklahoma City is a high-caliber community and economic development destination.

“This is an opportunity for not only Oklahoma City but the Oklahoma City region – and really our partners statewide – to tell Oklahoma’s story through the auspices of a conference,” Seymour said.

One of the requirements Oklahoma City had to fulfill as part of the application process to serve as an IEDC host city was to develop a theme for the event. The theme, “Turn Disruption into Innovation and Opportunity,” was one the Chamber, CVB and their partners readily agreed was Oklahoma’s story.

“If you think back historically where our state has been – the tribal nations turning their own disruptions into opportunities here, statehood – these components here that work together, and the same around our sub-themes as well, which are economic reinvention, disaster and resiliency, and community innovation, all with the lens of being more diverse and inclusive in our efforts. A lot

“This is an opportunity for not only Oklahoma City but the Oklahoma City region – and really our partners statewide – to tell Oklahoma’s story through the auspices of a conference.”

- Jeff Seymour, executive vice president of economic development for the Greater OKC Chamber

MARKED PROGRESS BEING MADE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS AT DETENTION CENTER, ANNUAL REPORT SHOWS



It is no secret that the Oklahoma County Detention Center, or Oklahoma County Jail, has had some challenges and obstacles to overcome in recent years that have garnered state and national attention, in particular issues related to overcrowding and living conditions for inmates.

According to their fiscal year 2020-21 Annual Report, the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC), the entity created in November 2017 to oversee the detention facility, noted marked improvements in many areas of concern, although more work remains.

Arguably the most pressing issue over the years has been the detention center's surging population that has topped more than 2,000 on several occasions, including a one-day high of 2,617 detainees in 2004. More recently in 2017, the center experienced a one-day detainee population of 2,237. That's certainly not ideal, especially for a facility originally built to hold up to 1,200 detainees. And that doesn't even count the number of staff working at the facility on any given day. However, those population numbers have been trending downward, the report said, to an average of approximately 1,700 detainees on any given day in FY21, which included an average of about 218 Department of Corrections detainees.

The reductions in the detainee population can be traced to CJAC's numerous partnering organizations and agencies working tirelessly on the front lines to reduce the jail population by diverting individuals into various treatment and accountability programs. This falls in line with one of CJAC's goals in FY2022 to increase the fairness and effectiveness of the county justice system.

"For the third year in a row, we have seen jail populations consistently lower than any time in the last two decades. We are moving in the right direction, but there's still more work to accomplish," said CJAC Executive Director Timothy Tardibono. "Oklahoma County is blessed with several partner agencies that are helping hundreds of people into diversion and treatment programs which improves public safety."

The annual report detailed many positive changes that the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority (Trust Authority) has made in recent years to improve conditions inside the detention facility, while at the same time trying to deal with the effects of COVID-19 on detainees and employees. Detention and correctional facilities continue to be one of the epicenters of COVID transmission locally, statewide and national, the report said. More than 3,600 detainees and staff received COVID vaccinations throughout FY2021, which helped reduce COVID cases sharply at the facility.

Besides numerous and sorely needed infrastructure improvements to key systems such as water, HVAC, sewer and new jail locks and doors, the annual report noted various other improvements implemented throughout the jail complex, including cell renovations, more pest control and sanitation services, increased starting pay and staff training hours for staff. Additional improvements are planned during FY2022.

In addition to recent or future improvements, the Trust Authority also has several goals that it hopes to accomplish in FY2022 that will further advance their mission of "providing protection through efficient and effective services and intervention leading to less victimization, and more personal growth and development." Perhaps one of the most important goals is eliminating the practice of triple celling, which has become more prevalent as jail populations increase. This will help reduce inmate assaults and damage to cells.

"Triple celling has been a long-term problem at the jail. Having a lower jail population means that the Trust can accomplish this goal this year. They are right to make this issue a top priority," said Tardibono.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Another goal high on the Trust Authority's list is improving safety and security throughout the facility by addressing assaults on staff and inmates, enhancing proactive and preventative procedures to decrease use of force and promoting the well-being of staff and detainees. Other goals include developing a more efficient intake, release and walk-through process; increasing staffing levels, improve retention and job satisfaction by establishing an employee advisory committee and provide inmates opportunities to participate in life-changing programs that will help them become better people than when they arrived.

CJAC members are hopeful that proposals made by FSB Architects + Engineers, a local architectural-

engineering firm they hired during FY2021 to study and make recommendations for the facility, will address many of the on-going issues that have plagued the facility. FSB is set to present their final study during CJAC's November 2021 meeting where they are expected to recommend three options for the detention center: build a new one, renovate the existing one or construct an annex.

The reductions in the detainee population can be traced to CJAC's numerous partnering organizations and agencies working tirelessly on the front lines to reduce the jail population.

"At our last meeting, CJAC members really wanted FSB to focus on the new, better building option. We know renovations are costly and still leave us with an old, overused, poorly designed building. A new, better building will drastically improve the care that can be provided for medical care, mental health care and substance abuse addiction. The current building creates numerous, costly, dangerous

barriers to addressing those major issues," Tardibono said.



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OKC'S AEROSPACE TRAJECTORY STILL ON TARGET THANKS IN PART TO STATE'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Aviation and aerospace continues its ascent as one of the top industries in the state of Oklahoma, adding more companies and more jobs to this extremely important ecosystem that has quickly become the state's second largest industry behind energy in total annual economic activity. However, the \$11.6 billion annual impact aerospace has in the regional economy is destined to become even larger as more aerospace companies enter the market or plan to expand operations in OKC. United Dynamics is one of those companies. Other companies have also made the move or expanded to Oklahoma City over the last several years, including drone manufacturer Kratos Defense & Security Solutions and Skydweller Aero, just to name a few.

But all of the aerospace and defense entities that call Oklahoma City home, including Tinker AFB and its 26,000 employees, may not have fared so well if not for the state's post-secondary institutions and CareerTech system.

The state's two public research universities, the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University, have been very active in this space for several years and have recently developed a working relationship where they sometimes refer to themselves as "competimates," each bringing its own unique strengths and expertise to the table. In addition, the two schools have on-going working relationships with other state and local entities to grow the industry in the Oklahoma City region, including the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber.

OSU has long been involved in research of unmanned or autonomous systems, mainly the air variety; however, they have recently expanded their Unmanned Systems Research Institute to include other autonomous projects, including the electrification of manned aircraft and other experiential research and learning opportunities for faculty and students as part of USRI.

"We started last year talking about how we could expand our role and rebrand USRI primarily because we started doing a lot of work in the last couple of years you can't really classify as unmanned systems," USRI Director Dr. Jamey Jacob said during a recent aerospace event.

With the recent addition of the Oklahoma Aerospace Institute for Research and Education as part of OSU Discovery in Oklahoma City, more programs and course offerings will be available to even more students across the OKC region. OSU Discovery is located in the heart of the OKC Innovation District. Now with USRI and OAIRE, OSU can now better connect assets from the research side with assets from the education side.

"These two institutes allow us to bring some of these umbrella centers in, such as inSPACE, which is our NASA program where we have educators at every NASA center across the country wearing that OSU badge and working with students with the STEM piece and being able to connect that back to the research side," Jacob said.

The University of Oklahoma recently formed its own institute – the Oklahoma Aerospace and Defense Innovation Institute – aimed at growing the university's capabilities to address challenges in aerospace, defense and national security. Cliff Wojtalewicz was hired in July as OADII's new operations manager after spending the last five years at Purdue University. He said OADII will focus on several key areas that will bring OU and the aerospace and defense sector to the next level: radar innovations, modernization and sustainment, advanced technologies and international security policy.

"We are going to augment OADII's capabilities with other advanced technologies such as quantum computing, artificial intelligence and machine learning, the types of things that are going to bring to bear these large problems the aerospace and defense sector has," Wojtalewicz said.

Ryan Goertzen, vice president of workforce development at AAR Corp., a maintenance, repair and overhaul company at Oklahoma City's Will Rogers World Airport, is like most aviation or aerospace leaders in the OKC region and across the state who believe aviation education in Oklahoma is second to none.

"There is no place like Oklahoma educationally speaking from the post-secondary level and with the CareerTech system. When you look at AAR, we have facilities across the country, and I deal with a lot of economic development folks and education folks, and it is always great to be in the state of Oklahoma and because of the network we have and the uniqueness that we have with the different educational providers in Oklahoma," Goertzen said.

OUTLOOK FOR HOLIDAY SHOPPING LOOKS PROMISING, CHALLENGES STILL REMAIN

If you haven't already noticed, signs of the coming holidays are popping up throughout the metro. From the opening of Christmas-themed specialty retailers to holiday decorations starting to appear across the metro, it truly is beginning to look a whole lot like Christmas.

As of this writing, there are about 50 shopping days left until Christmas, and for some retailers, that period can sometimes mean the difference between staying open or closing for good since a large portion of their yearly sales typically come during the holidays. But if Oklahoma City's sales tax collections are any indication, 2021 could end up being the gift that just keeps on giving for Oklahoma City retailers, both large and small.

According to Oklahoma City's October report on tax collections from retail sales, the city brought in about \$24.8 million, which is 12.8% above the projection and 17.3% above the same month in 2020. That continued a trend of six consecutive months that saw sales tax collections outperform projections.

"Sales wise, the retail sector has bounced back much quicker than expected. A lot of retailers in 2021, from what I am seeing in the data, have had their best year ever so far," said Cléo Rajon, executive director of the Independent Shopkeepers Association, an organization representing local independent shopkeepers.

"In 2019 before the pandemic, [retailers] were experiencing pretty huge growth and then 2020 happened and then everything stopped for a while. But

we are now seeing them get back to pre-COVID levels, which the main concern was it was going to take many years to get there. So that is really encouraging," she said.

Another encouraging sign that OKC's retail industry is returning to some sense of normalcy is the number of new shops entering the Oklahoma City market. Over the last couple of weeks, announcements that several retail establishments have either opened or will be opening soon have been made, including Texas-based restaurant, entertainment and bar concept Truck Yard that is planned for Lower Bricktown near the entrance to the

Land Run Monument, and Capitol Co-op, a bike, boards and coffee shop, which recently opened for business in the Capitol Hill District.

"Along with other recent projects such as the redevelopment of Yale Theater, the bike shop will serve as a catalyst for even more development in the Capitol Hill District, which has been economically challenged for several decades. In fact, we are already beginning to see activation in the Capitol

Hill District, which is very exciting to see," commented Tammy Fate, senior manager of retail development and recruitment at the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber.

"Truck Yard will serve as a connector between the Bricktown Canal and the Boathouse District," Fate said. Capitol Co-op is currently operating from a temporary location at the corner of Commerce and S. Robinson and will move to a permanent location at 2420 S. Robinson by Black Friday.

Although sales have been better throughout the retail sector this year, it does not mean retailers are exempt from challenges still plaguing other sectors in our economy, namely staffing problems and shipping backlogs.

"We are seeing all of these shipping backlogs, and for



Christmas shoppers fill the sidewalks in Oklahoma City's Automobile Alley during a past December evening.

years shopping online for Christmas has been touted as the most convenient way to do it. But I think now that there is no guarantee on shipping timelines and when it comes to just getting your gift on time, shopping local is once again proven to be the most convenient when you can go there in person and be sure you that have your gift ready for Christmas,” Rajon said.

Fate echoed those thoughts but stressed that the quality of customer service a business can provide its customers can make a big difference.

“Everybody is struggling to get their product, but regardless of where you are trying to get it from, if you can provide concierge-type customer service long term, it’s going to be better for your brand,” Fate said.

Fate has had numerous conversations recently with officials representing the shopping center sector who seemed to have a very positive outlook on the holiday season thus far.

“I have talked to the folks at the Outlet Mall, Classen Curve, Penn Square Mall and Quail Springs Mall, and right now everybody seems happy with the overall success we’re seeing in the marketplace,” she said.



For the last six consecutive months, Oklahoma City saw sales tax collections outperform earlier projections.

If there was one piece of advice Rajon would give to people heading into the Christmas shopping season, it would be shop early and shop local.

“We need to keep this mindset of supporting local because we want to make sure next year when we go shopping for Christmas, these little shops are still around. There needs to be a constant push and support for these local shops,” she said.

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.

The Old Spaghetti Factory

1 Mickey Mantle Drive
OKC, OK 73104

Mary Eddy’s Kitchen & Lounge

900 W. Main St.
OKC, OK 73106



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Businesses who join the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber are part of the largest coalition of businesses in the state and make the Chamber's work in the community possible. Each member level is identified on the listing below.

ADVISOR

ROI Real Estate, LLC

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Mr. James Riter(405) 358-3311
1900 NW Expressway, Suite 520
Oklahoma City, OK 73118-1805
www.okcommercialrealestate.com

ASSOCIATE

City & State, LLC

Restaurants
Mr. Basil Rayan(405) 317-4729
19 NE 6th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-1801
www.cityandstateokc.com

ASSOCIATE

Monster Tree Service of Greater Oklahoma City

Tree Services
Ms. Rachael Moore(405) 873-8733
7801 Highway 105
P.O. Box 1428
Guthrie, OK 73044-1428
www.monstertreeservice.com/greater-oklahoma-city

ASSOCIATE

UBreakiFix

Telecommunications Services
Mr. Travis Summers(405) 407-7450
6308 N. May Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-4246
www.ubreakifix.com

CORE

CSL Plasma Services

Blood Banks & Centers
Ms. Johnnie K. Phares(405) 521-9204
716 NW 23rd St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73103-1418
www.csplasma.com

CORE

EightTwenty Oklahoma LLC

Renewable Energy
Mr. Tony Capucille(405) 256-2087
1825 N. Walnut Ave.
4 NE 10th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-1402
www.eighttwenty.com

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Foundations Direct Care

Health Services
Dr. Emily McLaurin, MD(405) 563-7200
525 NW 11th St., Suite 110
Oklahoma City, OK 73103-2405
foundationsdpc.com

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405 Magazine

Advertising Agencies
Mr. Jordan Regas(405) 842-2266
1613 N. Broadway Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73103-4610
www.405magazine.com

CORE

Holiday Inn Express and Suites Oklahoma City Downtown-Bricktown

Hotels & Motels
Ms. Ericka Dolbrus(405) 778-8100
101 E. Main St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73104-2407
www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/oklahoma-city/okcbk/hoteldetail

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New Song Church

Churches
Mr. Tonderai Bassoppo-Moyo(405) 254-8816
3601 S. Broadway, Suite 1400
Edmond, OK 73013-4141
www.newsongpeople.com

CORE

Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice

Nonprofit / Service Agencies
Ms. Sara Jane DelMonte(405) 254-5189
720 W. Wilshire Blvd., Suite 101-A
Oklahoma City, OK 73116
www.occjok.org

CORE

Skeletons Museum of Osteology Museums

Mr. Josh Villemarette(405) 794-9300
10301 S. Sunnylane Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73160-9220
www.skullunlimited.com

CORE

StellaNova

Restaurants
Ms. Kelli Lay(405) 232-2100
901 NW 63rd St., Suite 101
P.O. Box 18608
Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0608
www.stellanova.com

CORE

Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City, Inc.

Associations / Membership Organizations
Dr. Valerie Thompson(405) 424-5243
3900 N. Martin Luther King Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73111-5220
www.urbanleagueokc.org

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PARTNER+

Association of Oklahoma General Contractors

Associations / Membership Organizations
Mr. Robert Stem(405) 763-5200
636 NE 41st St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
www.webuildoklahoma.com

OKLAHOMA CITY METRO RANKS NO. 6 NATIONALLY FOR OVERALL HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Metro	Overall Housing Affordability	Price for a 2k square foot home
Cleveland-Elyria, OH	1	\$213,696
Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN	2	\$257,679
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	3	\$260,975
St. Louis, MO-IL	4	\$282,018
Buffalo-Cheektowaga, NY	5	\$283,832
Oklahoma City, OK	6	\$288,927
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	7	\$294,673
Rochester, NY	8	\$305,362
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	9	\$313,947
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	10	\$325,376

Source: Porch.com 2021. A rank of 1 is most favorable.

- Among U.S. metros with more than 1 million population, Oklahoma City ranked 6th for the least expensive homes among the largest metros.
- The Porch.com determined overall housing affordability by examining the extent to which middle-income households face substantial housing challenges.
- One of the key indicators that housing experts consider when evaluating affordability in the market is the share of households spending at least 30% of their income on housing.

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



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LOOK INSIDE!

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