



OCTOBER 2021 • OKCCHAMBER.COM

## OKLAHOMA CITY MAKES SIZABLE GAINS IN 2020 CENSUS, WILL BENEFIT FROM GROWTH

The United States Census Bureau in August released data from the 2020 U.S. Census revealing that the city of Oklahoma City was one of just 14 cities nationwide to add more than 100,000 people from 2010 to 2020.

Oklahoma City saw a 17.4% increase in its population from 579,999 residents to 681,054 residents over that time period, placing it as the 22nd-largest city in the U.S. Five of the 14 cities that gained more than 100,000 residents were from Texas: Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio. The others were spread out across the country, including Charlotte, N.C.; Columbus, Ohio; Denver; Jacksonville, Fla; Los Angeles; New York City; Phoenix; and Seattle.

The 2020 Census also showed that the U.S. had the slowest 10-year population growth rate since the Great Depression at 7.4%; however, Oklahoma is part of the fastest-growing region in the country – the South – which experienced a 10.2% change in population from 2010 to 2020.

The census also reported that five of the top six fastest-growing counties in Oklahoma were in the Greater Oklahoma City region. Canadian County led the pack with a percentage change of 33.6% since the last census, making Canadian County the 27th fastest-growing county in the US. Rounding out the top six counties in the state were McClain (20.7%), Logan (18.4%) Cleveland (15.6%), Tulsa (10.9%) and Oklahoma (10.8%). Oklahoma County accounted for 43% of total population growth for the region, increasing from 718,633 county residents in 2010 to 796,292 in 2020.

Greater Oklahoma City Chamber research economist Eric Long said several reasons factored into the

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 7*

## MAPS 4 PROJECTS READY TO BEGIN AFTER IMPLEMENTATION PLAN APPROVED

It has been nearly two years since the voters of Oklahoma City overwhelmingly approved MAPS 4, an ambitious, Chamber-backed initiative that includes 16 unique projects aimed at uniting Oklahoma City residents and continuing the transformation the city has enjoyed since the original MAPS initiative was passed almost 30 years ago.

A pay-as-you-go program funded by a temporary one-cent sales tax, MAPS 4 is expected to raise almost \$1 billion over eight years. More than 70% of MAPS 4

funding is dedicated to neighborhood and human needs. The remainder addresses quality of life and job-creating initiatives.

A major milestone for MAPS 4 was met in September when the City Council gave its approval to the MAPS 4 Implementation Plan, the roadmap or guiding document on how the city will implement or execute the program.

David Todd, the MAPS program manager for the City of Oklahoma City, said many groups and individuals have been involved in the planning process from the get-go; however, the MAPS office and program consultant ADG have been the primary entities in charge of the day-to-day responsibilities needed to get the program off the ground.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 8*



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# LEADERSHIP NOTES

OKLAHOMA CITY IS CONTINUING TO MAKE HEADLINES.

Our history books will look back at 2021 as a time when we made major leaps forward, particularly in our rise as a visitor destination. The new First Americans Museum is a world-class attraction that will bring visitors from around the world and, most importantly, help both our residents and our visitors understand the full story of Oklahoma's origins. When added to the new convention center and Omni Hotel, our potential only grows stronger.

In late September, the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce brought a group of more than 50 of their business and community leaders to Oklahoma City to learn about our region's continued growth, and they walked away inspired and impressed.

Next September, our city will host the International Economic Development Council for their annual conference. We are preparing now to host economic development leaders from around the country and know they will walk away with the same impression as the leaders from Wichita did last month. As we get closer to those events, I hope I can call on our membership for support and volunteers to ensure each of our visitors walks away with an outstanding experience.

There are more events, like the IEDC conference, that could bring recognition and visitor dollars to our city. Think about the events you attend and consider helping our CVB bring them to OKC. Our team will work closely with you to not only attract the event to OKC, but also to make sure they have an great experience here. These events are the perfect opportunity to bring industry and opinion leaders to our city. I look forward to working together to share all our city has to offer.



Roy H. Williams, CCE  
President & CEO

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## CALENDAR

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

### OCTOBER 20

Chamber Forum  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Vast  
333 W Sheridan Ave.  
[okcchamber.com/octoberforum](http://okcchamber.com/octoberforum)

### OCTOBER 22

Navy Birthday Ball  
6 to 9 p.m.  
Omni Oklahoma City,  
100 W Oklahoma City Blvd.  
[okcchamber.com/nbb](http://okcchamber.com/nbb)

### OCTOBER 26

Chamber Connection  
8:30 to 10 a.m.  
[okcchamber.com/connection](http://okcchamber.com/connection)

### NOVEMBER 1

State of the City  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Oklahoma City Convention  
Center  
100 Mick Cornett Dr.  
[okcchamber.com/soc](http://okcchamber.com/soc)

### NOVEMBER 5

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

### NOVEMBER 17

Chamber Forum  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Vast  
333 W Sheridan Ave.  
[okcchamber.com/novemberforum](http://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](http://okcchamber.com/soe)

### DECEMBER 3

Annual Meeting  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Oklahoma City Convention  
Center  
100 Mick Cornett Dr.  
[okcchamber.com/annual](http://okcchamber.com/annual)

### DECEMBER 10

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

# CHAMBER FORUM

## *Update on OKC's transit initiatives on tap for October Chamber Forum; retail topic for November's Forum*

Earlier this year, the Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma (RTA) 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 and commuter rail to the Oklahoma City metro. Four regional corridors were identified in the plan that would quickly and efficiently connect people to various "regional activity centers" across the metro.

During the Oct. 20 Chamber Forum, slated from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Vast, hear from a panel of local transportation officials discuss the latest news surrounding the regional transit initiatives for the OKC metro.

Serving on the panel will be former Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry, RTA chair; Marion Hutchison, RTA vice chair; and Jason Ferbrache, director/administrator for the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority.

Tickets for the October Chamber Forum are \$35 for Chamber members and \$55 for nonmembers. To register or learn more, visit [okcchamber.com/octoberforum](http://okcchamber.com/octoberforum).

It's not too early to purchase your tickets to the November Chamber Forum, which is set for Nov. 17 at Vast. The state of Oklahoma City's retail industry ahead of the holiday shopping season will be topic for the November forum with Jim Parrack, senior vice president at Price Edwards & Company; Daniel McCloud, owner of TRADE Supply Co.; and Cléo Rajon, executive director of the Independent Shopkeepers Association, serving as guest panelists.

If you would like to purchase tickets for the November Chamber Forum in advance, please visit [okcchamber.com/novemberforum](http://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.

## *Mayor Holt to provide State of the City address Nov. 1*

It is no secret that Oklahoma City, like similar communities across our great state and nation, has faced various challenges and obstacles throughout the last year and a half. And, not surprisingly, the people and businesses in Oklahoma City have met those challenges head on, helping to ensure the City's continued success and standing among its peers nationally.

On Monday, Nov. 1, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt will join business and community leaders at the Oklahoma City Convention Center for a unique opportunity to reflect on the past year and where the city is headed.

Tickets for this annual event are \$60 for Chamber members and \$100 for nonmembers. To register, visit [okcchamber.com/soc](http://okcchamber.com/soc). Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,500. Contact Suzette Ellison Jordan at [sellison@okcchamber.com](mailto:sellison@okcchamber.com) for table sponsor inquiries.

Doors will open at 11 a.m. for registration and networking. The wearing of masks is optional for



all attendees but is encouraged, especially during networking time.

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor The Professional Basketball Club, LLC - Oklahoma City Thunder and Host Sponsor Energy FC.

## *Officials to reflect on past and plan for tomorrow during Annual Meeting*

As the end of 2021 gets closer, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is already preparing for its Annual Meeting on Dec. 3 when Chamber officials, Chamber members, OKC business and community leaders, and other stakeholders come together for a time of reflection and to think about the future.

Join Chamber Chair Sean Trauschke and Chamber President and CEO Roy Williams as they celebrate the accomplishments in Oklahoma City over the past year and then take a look forward as they reveal the Chamber's goals for 2022.

Tickets for the Annual Meeting, which will be held at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, will be \$75 for Chamber members and \$125 for nonmembers.

To register or learn more, visit [okcchamber.com/annual](http://okcchamber.com/annual). Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,500. Please contact

Suzette Ellison Jordan at [sellison@okcchamber.com](mailto:sellison@okcchamber.com) for table sponsor inquiries.

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



## ECONOMIST BILL CONERLY TO HEADLINE STATE OF THE ECONOMY, NOV. 18

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.

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.



*Robert Dauffenbach, second from left, along with Mark Snead and Russell Evans, participate in a panel discussion during a previous State of the Economy event.*

Participants will include:

- 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, Inc.

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

Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor Arvest Bank.

## NOVEMBER ENLIGHTEN EVENT TO PROVIDE ATTENDEES WITH SALES TRAINING

Enlighten, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's virtual event that provides networking and practical resources to help boost your business performance, will hold its next event on Nov. 5 with guest speaker Tee Hicks from *The Oklahoman*. This free event will be held from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Zoom.

During her presentation, Hicks will provide attendees with sales training that will help them boost their revenues before years end.

Hicks has served as The Oklahoman's vice president of sales & market leader for the past three years. Prior to her joining The Oklahoman, she spent time in various sales positions, predominantly in the south and southwest parts of the U. S., including places such as Dallas, Denver, Las Vegas, Nev., and Montgomery, Ala., just to name a few.

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

Special thanks to Series Presenting Sponsor Cox Business.

## CENSUS DATA

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

Oklahoma City metro's growth. Leading the pack is job growth. According to Long, the Oklahoma City metro added more than 60,000 jobs over the past decade.

"Population follows jobs. That's the end of the story. Wherever there are jobs, people will move wherever those jobs are. So that is one reason why Oklahoma City has continued to expand in terms of population," Long said.

Efforts to diversify Oklahoma City's economy has also played a large role in adding so many new jobs to the region, with the aerospace sector leading the way, Long said. There are 291 firms in the Oklahoma City region that are tied to the aerospace sector, employing about 43,000 people, led by Tinker Air Force Base, the state's largest single-site employer with 26,000 employees.

The professional services sector has also grown over time as has the retail and hospitality sector, turning Oklahoma City into a destination retail haven for companies that are wanting to take advantage of the population gains within the Oklahoma City market.

Other reasons Long identified as to why people are moving to Oklahoma City include such things as migration of people from other metros across the country such as Dallas, Houston, L.A., Phoenix and Wichita, Kansas; job growth and population gains along the I-35 corridor; keeping more college graduates in the state; and an above-average birth rate, which is 9% above the national average.

Long said what is currently happening in Oklahoma mirrors what is occurring across the nation – population is growing mostly in metro areas. He said since 2010, the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metros accounted for nearly 70% of net population gains for the entire state. Without those two metros, the rest of the state experienced a net population loss of 43,000.

"Both Oklahoma City and Tulsa are seven counties in geographic size, but the Oklahoma City metro actually has 400,000 more people than the Tulsa metro, which equates to about another 200,000 workers. Oklahoma City also grew 1.6 times faster than Tulsa since 2010," said Long.

One consequence of the census is its impact on apportionment. Long said there is more than \$1.5 trillion in funding the federal government will dole out to states based on new census data collected every 10 years. A higher participation rate can translate into more federal funding for states.

New census figures also require redistricting for states, counties and cities to reflect population gains and losses. Although Oklahoma gained population over the last 10 years, it was not enough to earn an additional seat in Congress. The state currently has five congressional seats, and that is where it will remain. There will, however, be changes made at the state, county and city levels to reflect the new census data.

Mark VanLandingham, senior vice president of government relations and policy with the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, said because population shifted from rural Oklahoma to the metro areas, and the Oklahoma City metro area grew faster than Tulsa since 2010, central Oklahoma is likely going to gain additional representation at the state Capitol.

"We expect redistricting to provide central Oklahoma with an additional legislator in both the House and Senate," VanLandingham said. "The population shift into central Oklahoma should provide the OKC metro with more legislators who are likely to align with the interests and needs of central Oklahoma, which would be a positive outcome."

VanLandingham explained that state legislators drafted new legislative maps based on preliminary numbers they received prior to the official release of the census data. Now that the figures have been finalized, they will tweak the preliminary map accordingly. He said the population shifts in Oklahoma City will also mean new district lines for the Oklahoma City Public School District and for Oklahoma City's eight City Council wards. Oklahoma County will also have new district lines drawn.

"That is one of the most interesting things about redistricting. We'll have new lines, and everybody has to adjust. Somebody right now may not reside in a ward they will be drawn into after redistricting. So we don't yet know which potential candidates will be brought into the mix until we actually see where the new lines are," VanLandingham said.

“There were a lot of people who had input into the program, including all the stakeholders, potential operators, pre-designated operators, the MAPS 4 Citizen’s Advisory Board and City Council. It wasn’t done in a vacuum by any means,” Todd said.

During his presentation before the City Council in September, ADG’s Director of Program Management Jason Cotton echoed those comments, stating that the whole process was a team effort and that a major priority was to be aggressive with the schedule.

“I would say where we started in terms of our first trial run of this program to where we are today, there is a significant difference. And a lot of that is really related to us trying to be aggressive with the program and projects, and moving them forward just as quickly as one can,” Cotton said.

“This plan is very aggressive, and we feel like it is also balanced. Of the 16 projects, there will be 14 that will start prior to the end of 2022. That is something we are really proud about in terms of putting this plan together.”

A priority in the implementation plan is to start the human needs projects as soon as possible, which does not necessarily mean construction work, according to Todd. Other steps must be completed first on most projects before construction can commence and may include such tasks as establishing operator agreements, selecting an operator, selecting an architect to design a specific project and acquiring land.

Starting the neighborhood youth centers earlier than was originally planned was a priority for the citizen’s advisory board as were other community needs and projects such as addressing homelessness, improving mental health and addiction facilities and services, building a Diversion Hub and new Family Justice Center, restoring the Freedom Center, constructing the Clara Luper Civil Rights Center and completing the fifth MAPS Senior Health and Wellness Center.

One project placed at the front of the implementation plan was the new Fairgrounds Coliseum. The new coliseum, which will replace the aging Norick Arena, will allow the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds to continue its ability to attract local, state and national events.



photo credit: City of Oklahoma City

*One of the 16 projects as part of the MAPS 4 initiative is to build at least four new youth centers throughout the city. Above is a rendering of the future Douglas Recreation Center.*

Another high-profile project that is expected to begin soon with identifying an operator and selecting a building site is the 8,000-seat multipurpose stadium. The \$37 million stadium will host high school, college and professional sporting events, in particular soccer, as well as concerts and other similar events.

“Identifying an operator and the site selection process [for the stadium] will have to be deliberate and will take a while,” Todd said. “We are not there yet; all of that is still to be determined.”

A total of \$115 million in renovations and expansions of Paycom Center, one of the original MAPS projects and home of the NBA’s Oklahoma City Thunder, will be done through four separate phases beginning this fall and ending in 2028. Planned improvements include such projects as an expanded food court, main concourse and arena entrances, Loud City and technology upgrades, and other improvements.

Now that the MAPS 4 Implementation Plan has been approved, city officials and others tasked with actually implementing the plan can begin working on projects.

“We can actually get out there now and start doing some things so people can see some results,” Todd said. MAPS has never been a fast program; it’s deliberate, and it’s transparent with a lot of people participating. It takes a while to get projects started, but once we get started, we try to stay on the roadmap and knock them out.”

To view the MAPS 4 Implementation Plan in its entirety, please visit [okc.gov/government/maps-4](http://okc.gov/government/maps-4).

## OKC NOT HORSEING AROUND WHEN IT COMES TO ATTRACTING EQUINE EVENTS TO THE CITY

Although official attendance figures for 2021 Oklahoma State Fair have yet to be released, suffice it to say the State Fair's return after a one-year hiatus because of the pandemic can be deemed a success for the OKC Fairgrounds and, in turn, Oklahoma City's economy.

This comes after the OKC Fairgrounds experienced one of its best Augusts ever with 17 events that brought in more than 87,000 visitors – mostly from out of town. But, and more importantly, those 17 events generated about \$17 million in direct spending into the Oklahoma City economy, including the largest event, the American Quarter Horse Youth World Championship that was held July 28 to Aug. 7. The AQHYW drew more than 53,000 visitors, resulting in \$12.3 million in direct spending into the economy.

Officials at the Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau, a division of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber that promotes OKC as a first-class visitor destination, said they were not surprised by those recent statistics.

"As supporters of the hospitality industry here in Oklahoma City, the OKC Fairgrounds is instrumental to the CVB's success. And I think over the last year and half during the pandemic, it's really been underscored how vital they are to the hospitality community," said CVB President Zac Craig, who noted that \$200 million in direct spending in 2020 can be attributed to events held at the fairgrounds. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, visitors to the fairgrounds spent more than \$325 million.

Although there are numerous events held at the fairgrounds throughout the year, including car shows, home and garden shows, gun shows, various conventions and expos, the State Fair and other popular events, the biggest emphasis has been equine-related events.

"Maybe some of our readers may not be aware that several of our shows, such as the National Reining Horse Association Show, draw a sizable international audience. And so those folks certainly travel, and they stay for a

long length of stay right here in Oklahoma City," Craig said. "We are the absolute easiest place, from East Coast to West Coast, to come to a show if you have to drive there. And that is something we certainly tout when we go out and court new shows to Oklahoma City."

Tim O'Toole has personally seen what would amount to many large herds of horses rolling through the fairgrounds during his nearly 18 years as president and CEO of Oklahoma State Fair Inc., the entity charged with operating the OKC Fairgrounds. He credits the relationships they and other organizations have forged over time as well as the quality of facilities available at the fairgrounds that has led to Oklahoma City being referred to as the unofficial "Horse Show Capital of the World."

The OKC Fairgrounds boasts 430 acres and includes multiple buildings of various sizes, enough to hold other events simultaneously with the large equine events held in the Norick Arena and barn facilities.

"Oklahoma City has done an outstanding job of recruiting equine-related events over the year, and it starts with the cooperative leadership that has existed for many years between government, the citizens of Oklahoma City and the private business sector," O'Toole said.

O'Toole noted that since 2005, more than \$160 million worth of improvements have been made to the equine-livestock facilities and the overall infrastructure at the fairgrounds, thanks in large part to dedicated funds coming through the city's hotel-motel tax.

"The economic impact in the early 2000s was in the neighborhood of \$210 million to \$225 million a year; it is now pushing \$350 million a year. In addition, the events at the fairgrounds generate somewhere in the area of 150,000 to 175,000 hotel room nights a year," he said.

Shannon Palacios has seen just how much the equine shows and other events at the fairgrounds mean to Oklahoma City's economy, in particular the hotel industry. For the past 22 years, she has served as general manager at two Oklahoma City hotels, including 21 years at the Hilton Garden Inn at I-40 and Meridian and this past year at the Embassy Suites on Northwest Expressway. She said the duration of the shows is what really can make a difference.

"The one- or two-day events are always nice to see, but when you have an event that lasts for 10 days, as the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

## ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Reach the Chamber's engaged, active audience of community and business leaders through available advertising opportunities in 2022.

### VELOCITY NEWSLETTER

With a monthly distribution of more than 8,000 digital copies, the VeloCity newsletter communicates topics that are relevant to the business community. Single-placement ad rates start at \$375.

### 2022 PUBLIC POLICY GUIDE

The Public Policy Guide is the only publication in Oklahoma City that features photos and contact information for all state and area elected officials, including district maps. It also features a voting guide, Chamber PAC information and the Chamber's legislative agenda. Single-placement ad rates start at \$1,250.

### VELOCITYOKC.COM

This Chamber website drives the conversation in Oklahoma City about economic development, business advocacy, lifestyle and more. Advertisers will have the chance to get in front of an audience that wants to know what is going on in Oklahoma City. Leaderboard-sized banner ads are \$100 a month or \$1,000 for the year, and sponsored content is available for \$4,000.

For more information about advertising with the Chamber, contact Nate Fisher at 405-297-8936 or [nfisher@okcchamber.com](mailto:nfisher@okcchamber.com).



## FAIRGROUNDS IMPACT

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 9)

American Quarter Horse Youth World Championship did last August, it's great. It helps with housekeeping and with payroll. The length-of-stay events are what is really a life saver for us," Palacios said.

Construction of a new coliseum at the OKC Fairgrounds as part of MAPS 4 is expected to begin during the first half of 2022. The new coliseum will replace the aging Norick Arena, which has been hosting basketball tournaments, concerts and equestrian events for 54 years. Both Craig and O'Toole said the new arena will help continue Oklahoma City's reputation for hosting world-class equine events.

"If you look at some of the competitive cities that we are up against when we court these shows to Oklahoma City, they continuously improve their products. And we are grateful to the citizens of Oklahoma City for allowing us to do the same thing here with the new coliseum from MAPS 4," Craig said.



"I always think the best form of flattery is from your competition," O'Toole said, "and I know one of our competing cities, some of the leaders of that city have remarked that the initial improvements, the super barn we built on the property years ago, was a game changer in the equine world. It caused everyone to up their game. And most people believe this new coliseum will be the same thing. It will be a significant upgrade and improvement for the horse show world."

## OKC TAKING STEPS TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

Anyone that has driven in Oklahoma City in recent years has no doubt noticed what appears to be a significant increase in the city's homeless population. Whether it shows up as more panhandlers on street corners, more homeless camps popping up across the metro or more people sleeping under bridges or overpasses, homelessness is an epidemic that affects many people and impacts communities.

Last year, just before the pandemic hit, the City of Oklahoma City conducted its annual Point-in-Time Count of OKC's homeless population, and what it revealed was sobering. According to the survey, 1,573 people were experiencing homelessness, a jump of about 300 people from the 2019 count. There are many theories about why the sudden increase, but officials agree those figures may be much higher today.

Oklahoma City's approach to homelessness and what further steps are needed to help combat this pervasive problem has been a topic of debate and discussion for some time. In 2019, Mayor David Holt formed a task force to develop strategies to better approach homelessness within the community. That report was recently approved by the City Council and includes 24 different strategies across eight focus areas: advocacy; transition age youth services; transportation; emergency and temporary shelter; funding sources; affordable housing; preventing homelessness; and outreach, engagement and case management.

Approximately 70 stakeholders were surveyed to help create those strategies, including the smaller service providers and several homeless individuals. One recurring theme throughout the survey was the need for more affordable housing in Oklahoma City.

"While we have a very affordable housing market here in Oklahoma City, if you are a family of four living on \$26,000 a year or less, we do not have that kind of

housing available. And that drives our homeless numbers way more than mental illness, way more than substance abuse, way more than anything else," said Dan Straughan, executive director of the Homeless Alliance.

Jerod Shadid, program manager of homeless services for the City of Oklahoma City, who guided the study from start to finish, said, "We are top heavy with affordable housing in that we have a lot more purchase housing than we have rental housing here in Oklahoma City. Our goal with developing this study was to try to have strategies that would complement what is in MAPS 4 and not just basically do a repeat so that we can get more people off the street."



Of the 16 projects included in MAPS 4, several aim to reduce and eventually eliminate homelessness in Oklahoma City, including a \$50 million investment in true affordable housing. The investment is expected to leverage more than \$400 million in funding from other sources. MAPS 4 also includes \$40 million for two

new mental health crisis centers, a restoration center with detox and substance abuse services, and temporary housing for people experiencing mental illness and homelessness while transitioning out of a crisis center.

For business owners who are struggling with how to deal with the homeless population on a daily basis, especially when it involves homeless people damaging their property or disrupting business, the Oklahoma City Police Chief Wade Gourley has some tips.

He suggested covering electrical outlets around the business so transients will have a harder time charging their cell phones or other devices; installing bright lighting around the outside of the business to make it less conducive for sleeping; and replacing more grassy areas with gravel, which will make it more difficult for transients to erect tents.

"We want to drive those folks to homeless services that will get them help and off the streets. The less conducive we make it around businesses or under overpasses, things of that nature, then they may be less likely to continue that type of destructive behavior," Gourley said.

## NEW CITY TRAILS AND OTHER ENHANCEMENTS PROGRESSING



photo credit: City of Oklahoma City

If you are one of many Oklahoma City residents who enjoy using the city's trail system as a healthy way to get someplace or simply as a good way to exercise, you will be glad to know that the various citywide trails and bike lane improvements as part of the Better Streets, Safer City program are getting closer to completion or will start soon.

There are 13 different trails projects in Better Streets, Safer City, a program approved by voters in September 2017. Other projects included in the program – street resurfacing and enhancements, sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure – are also being paid for by sales taxes.

Eric Wenger, Oklahoma City public works director and city engineer, explained that trail improvements tied to Lake Hefner, Lake Overholser and the Oklahoma River trails have been essentially completed. Trail projects that are currently underway include improvements scheduled for Katy Trail, Deep Fork Trail and an extension at Lake Hefner. Workers will erect new wayfinding signage on the trails as well.

The Katy Trail runs north-south for seven miles along NE Grand Blvd between NW 58th St. and NE 10th before heading west along NE 4th to Lottie Ave. The Lake Hefner extension will be a new trail constructed on the northwest side of the lake, connecting Britton Road to Hefner Road. Those trails, along with many others across the city, will be the beneficiaries of new wayfinding signage the city recently approved. The signage will be installed on trails included in the Better Streets program. Wenger said some of the bases and support structures for the wayfinding signage is currently being constructed at Lake Hefner Trail.

“So if you were to ride that trail or if you are a user of that trail, you are going to start to see some concrete foundations poured for some of the new trail markers that are getting ready to go in,” he said.

One trail that is included in the trail masterplan of the Better Streets program but has yet to be started is the Deep Fork Trail, which will eventually connect the Katy Trail to the Grand Boulevard Trail near I-44 and Western. A more complicated trail to build and develop, the Deep Fork Trail is divided into five different phases that Wenger said will be paid for through multiple sources, including Better Streets funds, grant funds and general obligation bond funds. He expects some of the phases to open before others with total completion expected to occur sometime between 18 and 24 months.

“Deep Fork Trail is an expensive trail. It's new construction and has several pedestrian bridges to get across the tributaries that go into the Deep Fork. The plans for the different phases are nearing completion and are expected to bid in the next few months,” Wenger said.

Construction of the Lake Hefner connection that will connect the existing Lake Hefner Trail system with the existing trail across the street on the north side of Hefner Road has not started yet, according to Wenger. He noted that the design portion of that project is complete, but the City is still working on acquiring the right of way necessary to make the connection. He expects bids to go out in late 2021 or early in 2022.

Wenger believes the biggest single impact for trail users will be the wayfinding system mentioned earlier. New signage will have smart phone capability that will

allow trail users to track and find nearby locations when they are on the trail. The signage has yet to be erected on any existing trail, but Lake Hefner will be the first trail system in the city to see the technology integrated into the signage system, Wenger said. New mileage markers will also be installed on the trails.

“There is going to be just a lot of new construction that you are going to see on a lot of the existing trails, and that signage will be included on the new trails being constructed going forward,” Wenger said.

City officials are hopeful that all of the Better Streets tax projects will be complete or under construction in 2022. Other projects funded through the geo-bond portion of the Better Streets, Safer City program will continue, however. The street resurfacing projects and sidewalks will be the first to be completed. Trails will be finished next, followed by bike lanes. The last of the projects to be finished will be street enhancements due to their complexity, which include things like on-street parking, street restriping, trees and landscaping, lighting and other vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian amenities.



photo credit: City of Oklahoma City

## 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).

### CSL Plasma Services

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OKC OK 73103

### HeyDay Entertainment Bricktown

200 S. Oklahoma  
OKC OK 7310

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OKC OK 73103 - 2405

### City & State, LLC

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OKC OK 73104-1801

### Mollycoddled Hash Slinger

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OKC OK 73162

### UBreakiFix

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OKC OK 73112

### deadCenter Film

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OKC OK 73102

### KIHOMAC

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### Full Sail Capital, LLC

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OKC OK 73131

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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.

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**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.

**ADVISOR**

**Armstrong Logistics**  
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 4800 W. Point Blvd.  
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 www.armstronglogisticscompany.com

# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

## GREATER OKLAHOMA CITY HAS FIVE OUT OF THE TOP SIX FASTEST GROWTH COUNTIES IN THE STATE

### GREATER OKC 10-COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH (2010-2020)

County	2010 Population	2020 Population	Difference	% Change
<b>Canadian</b>	<b>115,541</b>	<b>154,405</b>	<b>38,864</b>	<b>33.60%</b>
<b>McClain</b>	<b>34,506</b>	<b>41,662</b>	<b>7,156</b>	<b>20.70%</b>
<b>Logan</b>	<b>41,848</b>	<b>49,555</b>	<b>7,707</b>	<b>18.40%</b>
Cleveland	255,755	295,528	39,773	15.60%
<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>718,633</b>	<b>796,292</b>	<b>77,659</b>	<b>10.80%</b>
<b>Payne</b>	<b>77,350</b>	<b>81,646</b>	<b>4,296</b>	<b>5.60%</b>
Grady	52,431	54,795	2,364	4.50%
Pottawatomie	69,442	72,454	3,012	4.30%
Kingfisher	15,034	15,184	150	1.00%
Lincoln	34,273	33,458	-815	-2.40%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census

- From 2010-2020, five counties from the Greater Oklahoma City Region were among the top six fastest-growing counties in Oklahoma. (Canadian, Logan, McClain, Cleveland, Oklahoma County)
- Canadian County is the fastest-growing county in Oklahoma and 27th-fastest in the nation.
- The Oklahoma City metro grew by more than 170,000 people over the last decade, growing by 14%.
- Out of the 40 metros larger than Oklahoma City, OKC is growing at a faster rate than two-thirds of them.
- Oklahoma City is now one of only 14 cities in the U.S. to add over 100,000 people since 2010.

*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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# → V E L O C I T Y ←

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