

CITYSCAPE

JANUARY 2019 | ISSUE 11 | AN UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS MOVING OKC FORWARD

City requests feedback for potential MAPS 4 projects

For more than 20 years, the City of Oklahoma City has used the power of a penny to transform the community into a better place to live, work and play through the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) program. Now, the people of Oklahoma City once again have the opportunity to help write the next chapter in OKC's transformative temporary one-cent sales tax program.

"This is an interesting day in the history of our city and in the history of the Chamber's interactions with our city," said Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt during a presentation about the MAPS 4 call for ideas at the Chamber's recent Leadership Summit. "We only get this opportunity every 10 years or so. This is an exciting opportunity in front of us."

Holt and the members of City Council are inviting everyone to submit ideas for a potential MAPS 4 at ideas4maps.com. The City is requesting that the ideas be transformational, specific things that will propel Oklahoma City forward.

"As we consider how best to continue investing in our future, we want to have an inclusive conversation, and we want every voice to be heard," said Mayor Holt. "It is time to talk about MAPS 4. It is time to dream big again."

You can also submit your ideas on social media using the hashtag #ideas4maps or by mailing a letter to Mayor David Holt, Attn: MAPS 4, 200 N Walker Ave. 3rd floor, Oklahoma City, OK 73102.

"MAPS has changed our city forever, and we have the opportunity, perhaps even the obligation, to continue building a city that our kids will want to call home," said Mayor Holt. "We have the opportunity to continue our city's momentum and ensure that it is felt by all. And

because of the powerful idea called MAPS, we can do it without raising taxes."

The Better Streets, Safer City temporary 1-cent sales tax that is helping to fund nearly \$800 million in street repairs expires at the end of March 2020. To adopt a potential MAPS 4 plan and not increase Oklahoma City's sales tax rate, voters would have to consider a package in late 2019.

A new MAPS program would leave the current Oklahoma City sales tax rate of 4.125 percent unchanged. Including state sales tax, the overall sales tax rate in most of OKC is 8.625 percent (8.975 percent in Canadian County and 8.875 percent in Cleveland County because of county sales taxes).

The genesis of MAPS began in the late 1980s, when civic leaders were jolted by an airline's choice of another city for a maintenance hub because its employees didn't want to live in Oklahoma City. In response, residents chose to make OKC a better place to live.

Watch Mayor Holt's kickoff video at ideas4maps.com for more guidance, background and inspiration.

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Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt



New project launched to improve mental health of OKCPS students

The OKC Schools Compact, a group that seeks to create and stimulate ownership of OKCPS and its outcomes, launched a new program that will focus on the mental health outcomes of students in the Oklahoma City Public School District. The initiative, called Embrace OKC, seeks to place evidence-based social and emotional learning programs in the schools that need them the most.



A project of the OKC Schools Compact

“Addressing the mental health of Oklahoma City Public School District’s students is foundational to the district’s future success,” said Debby Hampton, president and CEO of United Way of Central Oklahoma and co-chair, with Oklahoma Department of Mental

Health and Substance Abuse Services Commissioner Terri White, of the Embrace OKC task force. “When students are dealing with trauma, violence exposure, substance use or other mental health issues, they are statistically more likely to be absent, have poorer grades or drop out of school. Embrace OKC seeks to address adverse childhood experiences in an evidence-based way, and by doing so, we hope to create a healthier district overall.”

The initial work began with an effort to collect data to establish a benchmark of the overall emotional health of the district. In fall 2017, all students in the sixth, eighth, 10th and 12th grades took the Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment (OPNA), an anonymous survey administered statewide by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Information from OPNA can help identify early signs of substance use and mental health patterns, capture the risk level for problem behaviors and provide data for planning the selection of evidence-based practices. In OKCPS, more than 7,000 students from 55 school sites responded to the survey, an 80 percent participation rate overall.

After the survey data was collected and analyzed by a third party agency that works with 23 other states, a planning team with representatives from Oklahoma City Public Schools, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the United Way of Central Oklahoma began meeting to identify priorities and develop recommendations. Their goal was to develop a comprehensive mental health plan with the understanding that addiction and other behavioral disorders are driven by the presence of risk factors in one or more domains – individual, peer, family, school or community.

The strategies behind Embrace OKC aim to reduce risk across all domains. The initial survey showed that Embrace OKC and OKCPS should create prevention and intervention services that focus on three areas of risk.

- High Risk Behavior – involvement in behaviors that are counter to the community’s values, safety of the community or healthy attachment/relationships
- Psychological Stress – student responses are scored on a scale that indicates level of psychological distress and potential need for treatment
- Substance abuse – survey indicated that alcohol is number one drug of choice

Using the data, the team identified three tiers of programming and services that should be implemented to help match students to prevention and treatment based on need. All students are included in Tier 1, which includes universal prevention strategies that will help prevent mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. Tier 2 intervention strategies are for those students showing early signs of mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders; Tier 3 strategies are for those students with treatment needs. The group also identified evidence-based programs to implement within schools, with a focus on community and family interventions.

According to Commissioner White in her presentation to the school board about Embrace OKC, it is important to not only reduce risk, but also build on protection. In addition to areas of need, the survey also showed areas where the district can build on existing strong protective factors. There were several areas where the district showed a higher level of protection than the rest of the state; the district’s students were more likely to believe in a moral order, see opportunities for positive social involvement and see rewards for positive social involvement in school. White said that these data points represent opportunities to leverage what is going well in OKCPS.

The OKC Schools Compact formed in 2015 and consists of Oklahoma City Public Schools, the Foundation for Oklahoma City Public Schools, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, the United Way of Central Oklahoma and the City of Oklahoma City. The Compact also works to improve literacy in the district through its Read OKC program.

Omni Hotel breaks ground in Oklahoma City

The region's hospitality industry continued to gain momentum with the Oct. 1 groundbreaking of Oklahoma City's Omni Hotel, which will serve as the headquarter hotel for the MAPS 3 Convention Center. Representatives from Omni Hotels & Resorts and the Oklahoma City community were on hand to celebrate the event.

The 605-room hotel will be built just north of the new convention center, near the MAPS 3 Scissortail Park and the Chesapeake Energy Arena. It will also be served by the Oklahoma City Streetcar, which opened in December. The design calls for 50,000 square feet of ballroom and meeting room space to complement the space that will be available in the convention center. Omni Hotels & Resorts also place a high priority on culinary creativity. The hotel will host seven restaurants, including a steakhouse, a coffee shop, a burger bar and a rooftop poolside bar. The hotel is expected to be complete in 2021.

Rather than building what Omni refers to as "big-box hotels," Omni focuses on providing luxury in a manner that is reflective of the natural surroundings and unique cultural flavor of the cities in which they are located.

"You will know you are in Oklahoma City when you step into this hotel," Peter Strebel, president of Omni Hotels & Resorts, said.

The hotel project alone is expected to create more than 3,000 jobs and more than \$370 million in economic activity, and when finished the hotel is projected to have an annual economic impact of \$137 million. But beyond the financial impact, this project "will redefine Oklahoma City for residents and tourists alike," Strebel said.

The groundbreaking of a new headquarter hotel for the convention center signifies Oklahoma City's growth as a visitor and events destination. At the event, Mayor David Holt said that while people knew we needed a new convention center and headquarter hotel 25 years ago, they probably would not have anticipated that Oklahoma City could regularly fill a hotel with more than 600 rooms.

"As we created a city that people want to visit, we have created that demand and then some," Holt said. "This hotel will meet a critical need of a city of our size."

The City of Oklahoma City and Omni entered negotiations in September 2016 after Omni's proposal was chosen because of its greater developer contribution and lower public participation costs. Cathy O'Connor, president and CEO of The Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City, remarked that the negotiation process was made more meaningful and successful because of

Omni's culture of professionalism and civility and the shared vision about what this hotel could be.

"Today is the culmination of three years of hard work to create this public-private partnership," O'Connor said at the groundbreaking.

Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau President Mike Carrier agreed that Omni Hotels & Resorts consistently showed an enthusiasm and desire to be in Oklahoma City, which was reflected during the negotiations and development plans. And when compared to the experience of planning a new headquarter hotel in another city, Oklahoma City's process had its advantages.

"In Oklahoma City, it's done easier and better, with a lot fewer problems and a lot more camaraderie," Carrier said.

Robert Rowling, owner and chairman of TRT Holdings Inc., the parent company of Omni Hotels & Resorts, remarked that his company owed it to Oklahoma City residents to deliver on their investment. Rowling also said that the presence of an Omni Hotel in a city typically leads to increased success in the hospitality industry.

"When we open this, it will be beyond your expectations," Rowling said. "It will change the face and trajectory of your city."



Officials gathered to break ground on Oklahoma City's Omni Hotel, which will serve as the headquarter hotel for the Oklahoma City MAPS 3 Convention Center.

Learn more about how OKC is improving its streets and infrastructure

The City of Oklahoma City maintains more than 3,500 miles of roadways within the city limits. Recently the editorial staff of CityScape sat down with Shannon Cox with the City's Public Works Department to learn more about how the City invests in its infrastructure and improves the quality of its roads each year.



CityScape: In 2017, residents of Oklahoma City approved \$1.2 billion in community investments. What did that mean for the streets of Oklahoma City?

Cox: The 2017 bond program passed for \$967 million, with \$491 million allocated to street improvements. Alongside the bond program, a 27-month temporary penny sales tax was approved that will generate \$240 million of revenue for streets, sidewalks and trails. It's all part of our Better Streets, Safer City program.

How is that money being invested in Oklahoma City's infrastructure?

Improvements include street resurfacing, streetscapes, sidewalks, trails and bicycle infrastructure. Find interactive maps and more at okc.gov/BetterSafer.

What progress is being made?

Each year, Public Works completes about \$100 million in bond projects, and over the next three years we will work to complete the \$240 million in additional sales tax projects as well.

What process is in place to insure community input and oversight on these projects?

Both the bond and sales tax programs (Better Streets, Safer City) have resident advisory boards which were established to oversee the programs. The bond projects are reviewed by the Bond Advisory Committee, which includes residents representing areas across the City. The sales tax projects are overseen by the Community and Neighborhood Enhancement Advisory Board, which also includes residents from each of the City's Council Wards and at-large members. The committee and board meet regularly to review projects including budget, scope and progress, and also make recommendations on the expenditure of funds for both programs for City Council consideration and approval.

How does the City determine where to make street improvements?

The City uses several criteria to determine locations for improvements. Criteria includes the pavement condition index (PCI), average daily traffic (ADT) and the maintenance cost for the area. PCI is a score/rating between 0-100, and each City street is measured and a value is determined.

The scale is used to determine the type of improvements needed:

- 86-100: Good (no work needed)
- 71-85: Satisfactory (overlay)
- 51-70: Fair (mill/overlay)
- 31-50: Poor (mill/overlay, reconstruction)
- 0-30: Very Poor (reconstruction)

You can find PCI scores at data.okc.gov.

Beyond street improvements, what other work is being done to improve Oklahoma City's infrastructure?

Other bond projects include drainage, bridges, traffic control, parks, libraries, police, fire and transit-related projects. The City also has a

Water Utilities Trust that oversees and makes improvements to the City's water and wastewater systems. The City's MAPS 3 program is also making improvements to infrastructure including additional trails and sidewalks, and also the addition of a modern streetcar to the transit system. See more at okc.gov/MAPS3.

What do you wish more people knew about Oklahoma City's infrastructure investments?

It takes several years to complete bond projects as we expend roughly \$100 million annually. It also takes a significant amount of time for projects to go through the design process, right-of-way process, utility relocation and finally construction.

How can people find out if the City is planning on street improvements in their community?

All of the planned City projects except for those related to water and wastewater improvements have been mapped, and additional information is available on the City's website at www.okc.gov/pw. The link under "Project Updates" includes an interactive map, and there is also a list of Better Streets Safer City projects available at okc.gov/bettersafer.



OKC Streetcar debuts in December 2018

The Oklahoma City Streetcar, a voter-approved project funded by the MAPS 3 program, celebrated its grand opening in December 2018 after 21 months of construction and testing. The OKC Streetcar, which covers 5.1 miles with two routes throughout downtown Oklahoma City, represents a new era in local public transit.

The OKC Streetcar's two lines link Bricktown with the central business district, Automobile Alley, Midtown, Chesapeake Energy Arena, Myriad Botanical Gardens and the future MAPS 3 Scissortail Park and the downtown convention center, which are both under construction. EMBARK will operate the OKC Streetcar as part of the City's public transit system.

In addition to better connecting downtown employees and residents to other parts of the district, the streetcar offers transportation to more than 10 million visitors of downtown attractions and 1.2 million visitors of downtown events annually. The streetcar also launched with free fares for riders through the month of January. According to EMBARK estimates from early January, at least 75,000 people have already enjoyed OKC's newest transit option.

While operations just began, the tangible impact of the OKC Streetcar is already being felt in Oklahoma City. The project is considered to be an important economic development tool for future investment in downtown Oklahoma City. The streetcar sets the stage for future regional transit discussions throughout all of central Oklahoma, improves the overall walkability of downtown and encourages links to a number of different districts. According to a recently released

investment impact analysis, the OKC Streetcar also positively impacts the economic development of the region.

The report, which was conducted by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and RegionTrack with input from EMBARK, the City of Oklahoma City and the Alliance for Economic Development, examines the three-block impact zone surrounding the streetcar route to better understand how construction of the fixed-route system affected investment patterns and population growth.

"There can be a number of ways to measure the success of a streetcar including usage and ridership, improved access to downtown amenities, quality of life and enhanced visitor perception of our community," said Roy H. Williams, president and CEO of the Chamber. "It is also vital to understand the investment and economic development that takes place along the route."

Within the three-block impact zone around the streetcar route, there has been more than \$1.6 billion in public and private investment since 2011, the year the streetcar route was announced. In that same time frame, the area within the three-block impact zone of the streetcar route has gained about 5,700 jobs (16 percent increase from 2011-2015), a 1.54 million square feet net increase of office space, 21 residential developments with 1,860 new housing units and seven new hotels with 833 hotel rooms.

"While we recognize there are many reasons companies and individuals make investment decisions, it is undeniable that the



streetcar has had a positive impact on downtown investment decisions and will continue to do so in the future,” Williams added. “Businesses and developers see the short- and long-term benefits of being located in close proximity to this incredible downtown asset. Tracking that investment over time will be a valuable tool for future development.”

Streetcar safety tips

While downtown drivers and pedestrians have already interacted with the streetcars thanks to many hours of safety training and testing, there are some safety considerations to take into account when traveling near the route. The following tips were compiled by EMBARK and used here with permission to help ensure that Oklahoma City is streetcar safe.

- Be prepared to stop. Streetcars travel at or below the posted speed limits and make frequent stops.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Streetcars are extremely quiet and there are no fences or barriers that separate you and the streetcar.
- Listen for warnings. Streetcars use bells and warning horns to alert you of their presence.
- Don't dart in front of a streetcar. They can't make abrupt stops or move off the tracks to avoid obstacles. A streetcar traveling at 20 miles per hour takes almost 60 feet to stop.
- Follow your own traffic signals. Streetcars have their own traffic signals that are not intended for motorists, cyclists or pedestrians.

EMBARK also created a set of safety reminders for motorists, since streetcars run along a designated path that impacts parking and driving downtown.

- Don't overtake and/or pass any streetcar, even if it isn't moving.
- Park your entire vehicle within the white lines to avoid bumps, scrapes or damage to your mirrors.
- Watch for approaching streetcars before turning.
- Look before you open your car door to see if a streetcar or cyclist is approaching.
- Never stop, idle or park your vehicle in the streetcar's path or in bike lanes. This applies to all vehicles, including delivery and service vehicles.

Read the full list of safety tips, including specific guidance for pedestrians and cyclists, at www.okcstreetcar.com/safety.



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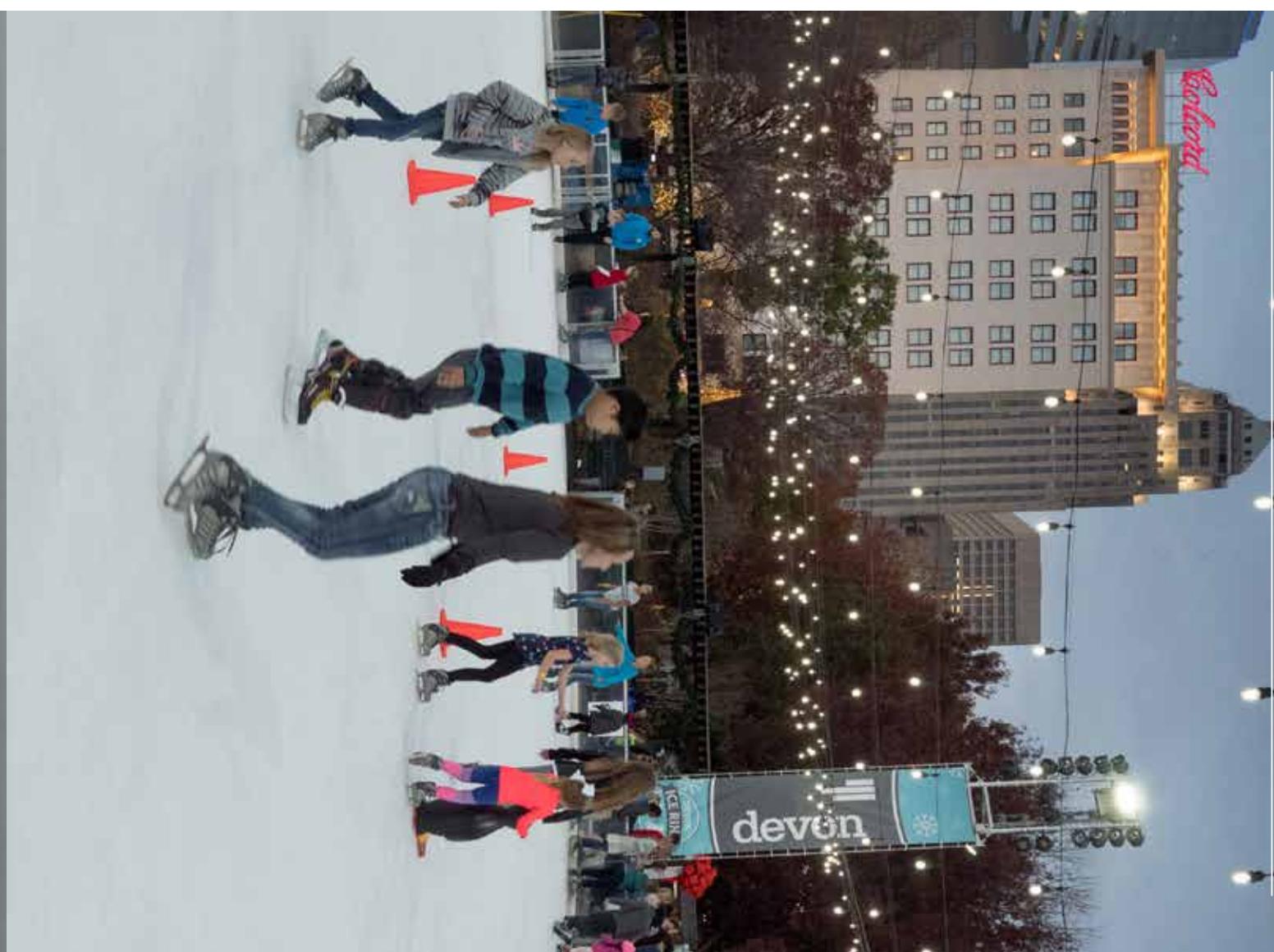
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On the cover: Residents enjoy ice skating
in Myriad Gardens, one of many
events that took place during
Downtown in December.

CITYSCAPE



Q&A on Oklahoma
City's street
investments

OKC residents asked
to submit ideas for
potential MAPS 4
projects

Omni Hotel breaks
ground in Oklahoma
City