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TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER

# THE CHAMBER REPORT



## TULSA AT SXSW

13 BANDS REPRESENT TULSA AT THE 2019 SXSW MUSIC FESTIVAL

## ICONIC RENEWAL

REVIVING A TULSA ART DECO MASTERPIECE

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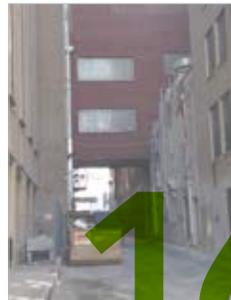
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2019 SXSW MUSIC FESTIVAL



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# TULSA AT SXSW

13 BANDS REPRESENT TULSA AT THE 2019 SXSW MUSIC FESTIVAL

For the fifth year in a row, dozens of local musicians traveled to Austin, Texas, to officially represent Tulsa at the 2019 South by Southwest (SXSW) Conference & Festivals. Thirteen bands performed at two events during SXSW, which combines conferences, festivals and exhibitions during a ten-day period for the world's largest gathering of creative professionals.

Tulsa's signature event at the festival was once again the Tulsa Music Showcase, held the evening of March 14 at Augustine on Rainey Street. Showcases are curated by SXSW in collaboration with record labels, management and PR firms, export offices, publishers, media outlets, lifestyle brands, and more. Tulsa was one of only four cities with an official showcase at the 2019 festival.

In addition to the Tulsa Music Showcase, seven bands performed the afternoon of March 14 for the fifth annual Tulsa Boom Factory, an official SXSW day party

that's in the past hosted such icons as Leon Russell and John Moreland.

Tulsa's presence at SXSW is coordinated annually by the Tulsa Office of Film, Music, Arts & Culture (Tulsa FMAC), an accredited film commission housed at the Tulsa Regional Chamber within Tulsa Regional Tourism.

"We are a top music city in the country, and it's our mission to promote the city as such," says Tulsa FMAC Director Abby Kurin. "South by Southwest is the premier international event for creativity, so it's essential that Tulsa is well represented. By sponsoring more than a dozen artists to attend the festival each year, we're not only promoting Tulsa music to festival attendees, we're promoting Tulsa music to the world."

Meet the 13 bands who represented Tulsa on an international stage at the 2019 SXSW festival.



## BRONCHO

INDIE, PUNK

Churning out thoughtful, nuanced music with an art school spirit and a punk rock heart since 2010, BRONCHO leans into their strengths for their fourth album, "Bad Behavior." Following the catchy, playful vibe of previous albums "Can't Get Past the Lips" (2011) and "Just Enough Hip to Be Woman" (2014), as well as the deliberate sonic intent of 2016's sludgy, moodier art piece "Double Vanity," the new record reveals BRONCHO's fly-on-the-crumbling-wall vision of society, complete with a reenergized, accessible sound and the charmingly sardonic, smiling-while-sneering delivery of singer and bandleader Ryan Lindsey.



## REPUBLICAN HAIR

### INDIE, NEW WAVE

Fronted by Oklahoma native Luke Dick, Republican Hair conjures the flamboyant musicality of The Cars, Devo, The Clash and The Talking Heads, as well as the dark satire of author Kurt Vonnegut and the wry observational wit of David Sedaris. Dick himself is an accomplished Nashville songwriter, having penned cuts for Eric Church, Miranda Lambert and Dierks Bentley. He also debuted the documentary "Red Dog" at this year's SXSW. Republican Hair will spend 2019 touring the U.S. and release a new album later in the year.



## CASII STEPHAN AND THE MIDNIGHT SUN

INDIE, SOUL, ROCK

A Tulsa-based, Minnesota-born singer-songwriter, Casii Stephan's voice draws comparisons to Florence Welch, Fiona Apple and Carole King. In 2016, she won an Independent Music Award for her song "I Like The Way." Stephan's latest single, "Letters," is a self-produced, devil-may-care response to the frustration of dating in the digital age.

## ROOTS OF THOUGHT

PSYCHEDELIC POP

Through word of mouth, a series of demos and relentless gigging, Roots of Thought gained a sizeable local following and reputation as a standout live performance. Their 2017 EP "Familiar Feelings" was followed by a 2018 single, "Powdered Donut." After a year of playing shows throughout the Midwest, the band is currently in studio working on a full-length album.



# BRANJAE

R&B, FUNK, SOUL

With a culmination of lyrical depth, theatrical energy and genre fluidity, Branjae's storytelling is as unique as the personas she embodies. Her powerhouse vocals and fearless performances have been likened to the rasp of Lauryn Hill meets the dynamism of Freddie Mercury. Branjae also co-fronts the local supergroup Count Tutu, and her singing, acting and dancing have entertained audiences in Atlanta, Chicago, the U.K. and more.





**ZUNIS**  
INDIE, PSYCHEDELIC ROCK

ZUNIS built a following in the Tulsa music scene by curating all-ages shows around the city. Their self-titled debut EP was nominated for album of the year in the Tulsa Voice's 2017 Best of Tulsa readers' choice awards. The band is now promoting a second EP, "Earth to Self," released in November.



**ELECTRIC BILLY CLUB**  
HARD ROCK

Beau Charron played guitar, pedal steel, mandolin and keys for Leon Russell from 2010 until Russell's passing in 2016. After reflecting on his time on the road, Charron recruited friends David Olson and Dustin Hoefling in 2018 to form a new power trio, Electric Billy Club. The group's hard grooves, hypnotic synths and self-examining lyrics are simultaneously fresh and timelessly relevant.



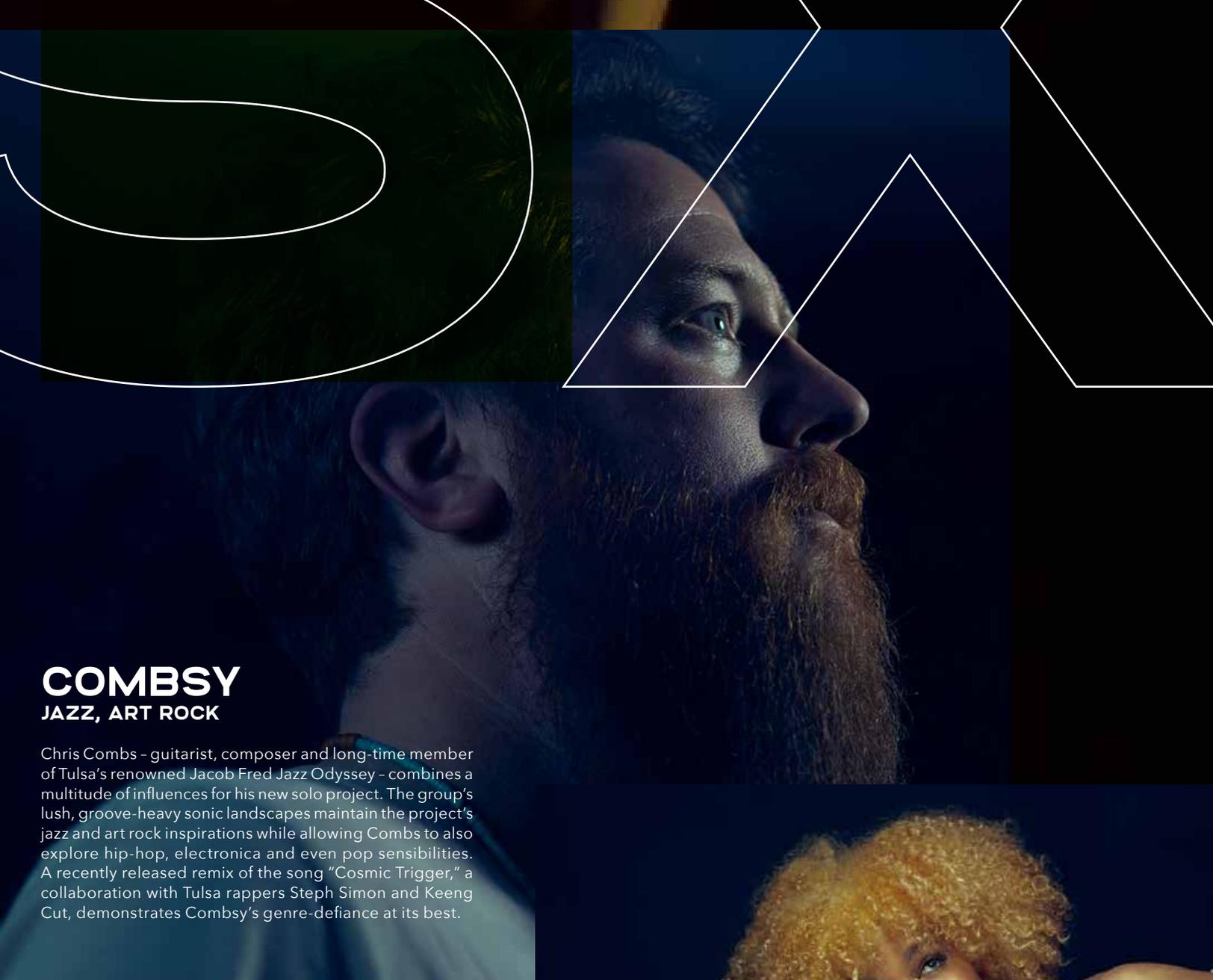
**HENNA ROSO**  
FUSION, NEO-SOUL

A band with a mission, Henna Roso is a musical collective dedicated to combating food insecurity by providing awareness and financial support to organizations that fight hunger. The band offers food drives at every show and donates 10 percent of their revenue to providing sustained support for hunger-related causes. Henna Roso hopes to take their mission international with the impending release of their debut album "Feed the Hungry."



**ERIC HIMAN**  
SINGER/SONGWRITER, ROCK

Singer-songwriter Eric Himan has toured in support of national acts as diverse as Ani DiFranco and the late Leon Russell. Himan has been featured in American Songwriter Magazine, the Huffington Post and Out Magazine, and his songs have been licensed by E!, MTV, VH1 and the Discovery Channel. "Another," the lead single off his latest album "CONTENDERS," was recently selected as a semi-finalist in the International Songwriters Competition.



## COMBSY

JAZZ, ART ROCK

Chris Combs - guitarist, composer and long-time member of Tulsa's renowned Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey - combines a multitude of influences for his new solo project. The group's lush, groove-heavy sonic landscapes maintain the project's jazz and art rock inspirations while allowing Combs to also explore hip-hop, electronica and even pop sensibilities. A recently released remix of the song "Cosmic Trigger," a collaboration with Tulsa rappers Steph Simon and Keeng Cut, demonstrates Combsy's genre-defiance at its best.



## NIGHTINGALE

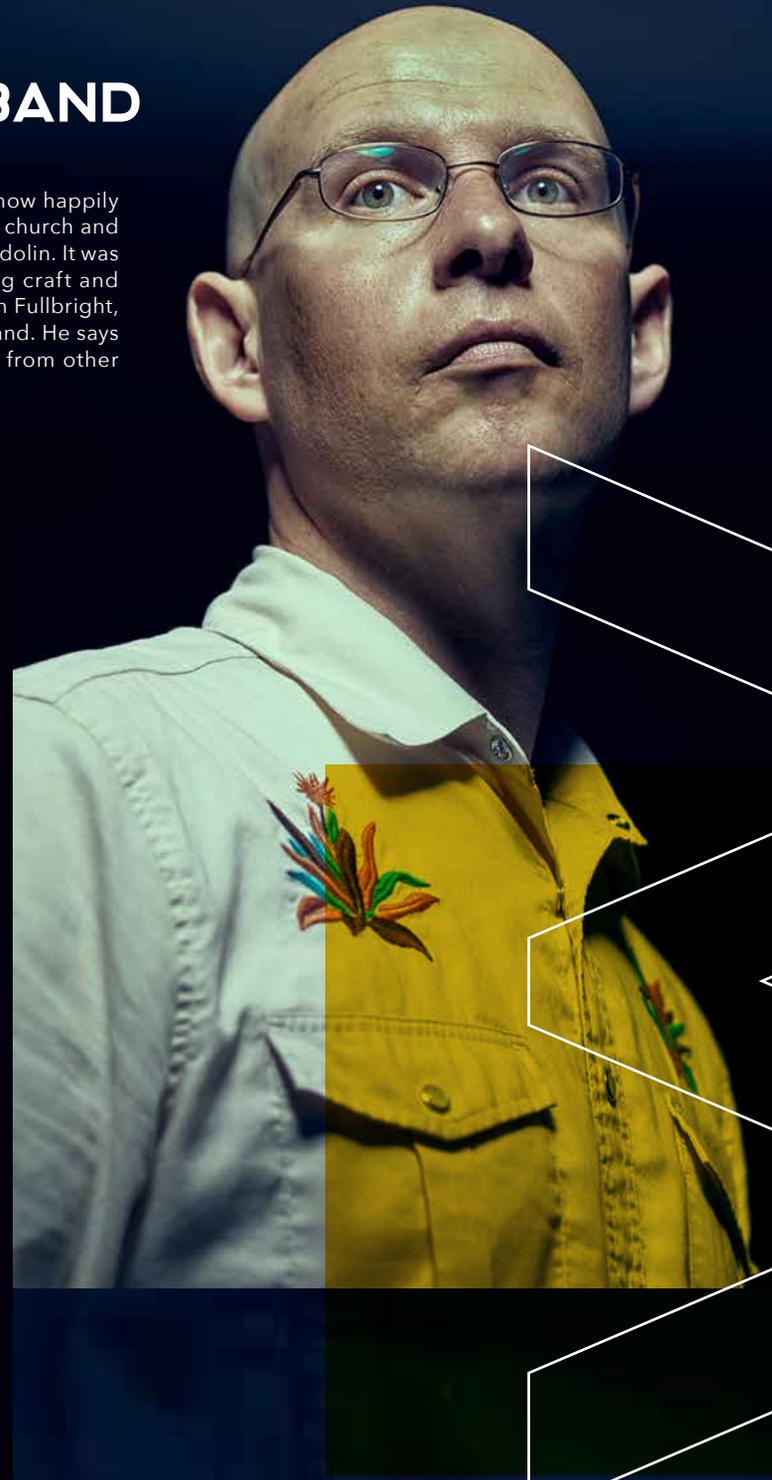
INDIE, SOUL, FOLK

Nightingale made a tenacious return to Tulsa's music scene in 2018 with a rejuvenated take on their signature blend of folk and soul. The band made a local name for themselves performing at the 2016 Hop Jam festival and have recently booked performances at MISfest, Easter Island Music and Camping Festival, and the OK Roots Global Bash. In February, Nightingale successfully crowdfunded their debut album, which is expected for release later this year.

# JARED TYLER BAND

## RED DIRT, AMERICANA

Although Tyler twice lived in Nashville, he's now happily rooted in Tulsa, where he grew up singing in church and where his grandfather taught him to play mandolin. It was also here that he developed his songwriting craft and performance chops alongside peers like John Fullbright, Parker Milsap, Stoney LaRue and John Moreland. He says Tulsa's "humble nature" is what separates it from other music enclaves.



# DIALTONE

## HIP-HOP

DIALTONE is more than just another aspiring rapper. In addition to his multiple recordings, videos and collaborations with other Tulsa artists, DIALTONE is a respected painter with multiple exhibitions to his credit. He's also a founding member of World Culture Music, a local collective of artists who produce Tulsa's largest annual hip-hop festival. DIALTONE's new album "Oasis" arrives later this year.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TULSA-AREA ARTISTS WHO PERFORMED AT SXSW AT [TULSAMUSIC.COM](http://TULSAMUSIC.COM).**



# ADVOCATING WITH ONEVOICE

## **ONEVOICE DAY AT THE CAPITOL BRINGS TOGETHER CHAMBER MEMBERS, ELECTED OFFICIALS**

**T**ulsa-area business leaders advocated for northeast Oklahoma's legislative priorities in record numbers during the Chamber-led OneVoice Day at the Capitol.

Chamber members, regional partners and representatives from organizations endorsing the OneVoice Regional Legislative Agenda filled legislator offices and made the case for issues of importance to the business community, including education funding, infrastructure investment, criminal justice reform and more.

Elected officials, cabinet members and agency directors also joined the group at several points throughout the March 4-5 trip to Oklahoma City.

Gov. Kevin Stitt addressed attendees twice, first at an evening reception and then the following afternoon at the Governor's Mansion. The governor stressed the importance of accountability and the need for business-driven reforms to state government.

Attendees also heard from legislative leaders, including Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat, House Majority Leader Jon Echols, Senate Minority Leader Kay Floyd and House Minority Leader Emily Virgin.

During the trip, Chamber staff caught up with several trip attendees to learn more about how OneVoice Day at the Capitol empowers their advocacy.

### **CHASE BEASELY**

**Government Affairs Manager  
American Airlines**

"Since the election of Gov. Stitt, there is this new vitality and energy that I have not seen. It really shows what leadership can bring to the table."

### **How does the OneVoice agenda support your advocacy at the Capitol?**

"The fact that we work together so closely and that we are unified on so many common issues makes all the difference. That consistent and clear voice is how you're able to get meaningful change done. It's not just companies like American Airlines. It's ONE Gas. It's Magellan. We're so thankful that we have a partner in the Tulsa Regional Chamber. They are able to bring these groups together in a consistent way to drive those messages home."



### SHERRY GAMBLE SMITH

*President and CEO*

*Black Wall Street Chamber of Commerce*

"I'm just happy that I'm here. I appreciate (Chamber President and CEO) Mike Neal. He keeps us engaged. I think it's important to have a chamber that keeps all of us engaged."

#### What was the most valuable experience you had at OneVoice Day at the Capitol?

"The networking was great. Being here and listening to the governor talk about the exciting things that are happening gives you a lot of hope for our state and our city. I'm really happy that I was invited and took the time to come."

#### What's it like participating in the OneVoice process?

"It's exciting. We get to be the voice. OneVoice: that means all of us together. We get to find out what's going on in our legislature. It gives us a chance to be a part of that voice."

### KATIE BEASELY

*TYPROS Street Cred chair*

"I got in on OneVoice on the final stages, and actually got to vote in that and be a part of it."

#### What's the most valuable thing about OneVoice Day at the Capitol?

"As a member of TYPROS, this is a really great opportunity for us to get to meet our legislators. We also get to learn from [area] CEOs and incredible people from the community who are here as well, and they are teaching us so much."

#### What's your takeaway from meeting with legislative leaders?

"The governor's got a new energy here, and it's cool to be a part of that. All these Tulsans that are newly elected and on the cabinet – I think they are here to work for us."

### JENNIFER JEZEK

*President, York Electronic Systems*

*Vice Chair for Regional Business and Education Advocacy, Tulsa Regional Chamber*

"The members are the voice. The Chamber staff are orchestrating the voice of our community. The decisions we make and put in that OneVoice agenda, that comes from people in the Tulsa region."

#### What's the most important experience you had at OneVoice Day at the Capitol?

"We're able to have face-to-face, casual

conversations with our representatives and get to know them better – especially this incoming freshman group – and have the time to have them get to know us and what the Chamber represents."

#### What do elected officials get out of the Chamber's trip?

"I think the first point is that they have recognition of who the Chamber is, what we're about, what we're representing and who to call when they need help. The biggest issue is being informed so that those legislators can help their community."

"There is a lot of conversation about Tulsa folks at the Capitol. We're coming here for the first time and experiencing friendships and long-term relationships that we have and voices that we trust and know are going to represent and advocate for our region."

### JAY FOLEY

*President and CEO*

*Cancer Treatment Center of America in Tulsa*

"They want to do good. We want to do good. Together I think we can do that."

#### Why was this advocacy trip valuable to you?

"It's so exciting to be out here with Tulsa leaders and legislators in order to find out how we can participate and collaborate with the state in such an exciting time."

#### What was your biggest takeaway?

"[Legislators'] hearts are in the right place. Just being able to get eyeball-to-eyeball, voice-to-voice contact, and we understand that we're all on the same page."

"Gov. Stitt has an exciting message. He's a big change agent within state government. I think that the partisanship is going away and it's exciting to think that we can move forward under this legislature and that Tulsa will be a part of that with their voice right here at the table."

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## NEW TULSANS INITIATIVE

For the past three decades, metro areas like Tulsa have become new gateway cities that receive rising numbers of immigrants and refugees. Like many of these cities, Tulsa's foreign-born population is the main driver of current population growth. From 2010 to 2015, more than 27% of Tulsa's population growth is attributed to immigrants, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

To prepare Tulsa's population to meet the workforce needs of area employers, a robust immigrant inclusion program is critical. According to data from New American Economy, 72% of immigrants in Tulsa are between the ages of 25-64, compared to 50% of U.S. native-born residents, making immigrants a large portion of the available workforce. Demonstrating a strong workforce to prospective businesses is key to growing Tulsa's population, and the immigrant community is a central source of that growth. A program focused on welcoming immigrants can further ensure prosperity for Tulsa by better connecting immigrants to career development opportunities.

To address the needs of Tulsa's immigrant population, the City of Tulsa launched the New Tulsans Initiative. As Tulsa grows and becomes a diverse, world-class city, the initiative will provide pathways for socially responsible immigrant integration and seek out opportunities that benefit both native-born and immigrant residents of Tulsa.

As part of the process of developing a New Tulsans Welcoming Plan, the Mayor's Office for Community Development and Policy convened stakeholders who have reviewed national best practices, assessed local strengths and challenges, and deliberated on ways that Tulsa can welcome immigrants. The plan is organized into five categories that are critical to building a welcoming Tulsa: civic engagement, economic development, education, health and public safety.

Here are five ways your organization can contribute to the success of the New Tulsans Welcoming Plan:

### 1. Civic Engagement

In addition to creating leadership opportunities for immigrant employees, it is equally important to look at who is



**There are 2,212 immigrant entrepreneurs in Tulsa, and immigrants are 76% more likely to start their own business.**

represented on boards and committees. Additionally, organizations can also provide support to employees eligible for naturalization or citizenship by connecting them with free citizenship workshops and low-cost legal services at YWCA Tulsa or Catholic Charities.

### 2. Economic Development

Research shows that immigrants are more likely to start their own businesses, providing more employment opportunities for the overall population. There are 2,212 immigrant entrepreneurs in Tulsa, and immigrants are 76% more likely to start their own business, according to New American Economy. By supporting an entrepreneurial ecosystem that is inclusive of immigrant business owners, Tulsa can increase its visibility as a city that welcomes the launch of new companies and encourages innovation.

Increase diversity within your company by posting open positions with organizations that serve the immigrant and refugee community, English language learner programs, and culturally specific organizations. YWCA Tulsa and Union Adult Learning Center employ staff who work with the immigrant and refugee community to obtain employment.

### 3. Education

In 2015, 26% of children living in the United States had at least one immigrant parent, according to the Migration Policy Institute. As Tulsa's public schools become more diverse, educators must consider the unique challenges their students and their immigrant families face.

Companies can offer an on-site English language class for employees by partnering with a local provider such as Tulsa Community College, Union Adult Learning Center or YWCA Tulsa.

### 4. Health

Companies can help ensure immigrant employees and their families have access to affordable and local health resources by providing a multilingual health and wellness directory and outreach services.

### 5. Public Safety

Help connect immigrants with multilingual resources to prepare for emergencies such as natural disasters. Companies can partner with the Disaster Resilience Network, a local nonprofit that provides multilingual resources for preparing for disasters.

Ultimately, the New Tulsans Welcoming Plan will allow Tulsa immigrants to bring their best to the city by providing fresh perspectives, starting businesses and contributing vibrant diversity that helps the region prosper.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NEW TULSANS INITIATIVE AND WELCOMING PLAN, VISIT [CITYOFTULSA.ORG/NEW-TULSANS](http://CITYOFTULSA.ORG/NEW-TULSANS).**



# THE EVOLUTION OF STREET CRED

## IMAGINING A MORE VIBRANT TULSA

On a Saturday at 6th and Peoria, parking can be scarce. People line up for brunch or head to a yoga class. They take their dogs to day care or catch some study time over a lavender latte. The Pearl District is a destination for shoppers, foodies and coffee enthusiasts.

This wasn't the case less than a decade ago. Despite its proximity to downtown, the Pearl District's potential remained largely untapped. It wasn't until 2013, with the opening of the Phoenix Café and Be Love yoga studio, that development in the Pearl started to take off.

Much credit for the revitalization of this area belongs to the Pearl District Association, a group of residents and business owners who worked to redevelop the neighborhood for the past 20 years. In 2011, TYPROS, the young professionals organization housed at the Tulsa Regional Chamber, helped showcase their efforts to a broader audience.

TYPROS' inaugural Street Cred brought pop-up shops and live entertainment to show Tulsans what it could be like to breathe new life into this under-appreciated area of town. While it was a community effort to bring the Pearl back to life, TYPROS played an important role in demonstrating the neighborhood's long-term vision.

### Tactical urbanism

Street Cred was the brainchild of Jonathan Belzley, a former TYPROS volunteer with a passion for urban renewal. He borrowed the idea from Team Better Block, a Dallas firm that reimagines underused urban areas to improve walkability and transportation options. Recognizing Tulsa's similar issues with walkability and public transportation, Belzley was immediately sold. He pitched the idea of Street Cred as a placemaking initiative to make Tulsa a city where young people want to live and work. In 2011, Street Cred: Polishing the Pearl became a reality.

"The Pearl District at 6th Street and Peoria was pretty low-hanging fruit," Belzley explains. "[TYPROS] gets a lot of credit for invigorating the redevelopment of the Pearl District, but I think we just gave a helpful nudge toward an inevitability. We were looking for a way for TYPROS to stop talking about things we wanted to see change and to roll up our sleeves and do it ourselves."

Belzley says that according to Team Better Block co-founder Jason Roberts, TYPROS was one of the first groups in the country at the

time to create a "tactical urbanism" project like Street Cred. While the event was not solely responsible for the Pearl District's growth and success, the event asked Tulsans to imagine what potential there was for the budding district.

After the Pearl District, Street Cred continued to elevate community conversations about urban development. Before This Machine bikes and Lime scooters arrived in Tulsa, Street Cred: 66 in 2016 showed how multimodal transportation could transform 11th street, an area brimming with new development along historic Route 66. In 2014, TYPROS tackled how downtown parking lots limit walkability and development efforts in what is now the Cathedral District.

"We loved having Street Cred in the Cathedral District," says Justin Carpenter, owner of Foolish Things Coffee Company at 10th and Main. "The event gave us the opportunity to paint a picture of potential development, not only for regular Tulsans, but investors as well. More than anything, Street Cred encouraged businesses and institutions in the neighborhood to work as a team to make our end of downtown better. It helped start conversations about what made our district unique and how we could work together to improve it."

### Taking a step back

In 2017, TYPROS took on what was possibly its biggest challenge yet: overcoming the physical barrier of downtown's Inner Dispersal Loop (IDL). Street Cred: Bridging the GAP tried to address not only physical barriers, but the socioeconomic and psychological barriers created by the IDL, particularly its impact on the Greenwood District.

"Street Cred is a catalyst for redevelopment, with the hope that it will create lasting impact on the physical space," says TYPROS Executive Director Maggie Hoey. "While Bridging the GAP spurred important conversations about racial equity and the physical infrastructure that has historically divided Tulsa, there was no possibility for lasting impact to the area itself."

Through conversations with north Tulsa community members, TYPROS learned a valuable lesson that prompted the organization to reassess the purpose of Street Cred. Though well-intentioned, the scope of Street Cred: Bridging the GAP had outgrown the original intentions of the initiative.



"We realized we need to better identify community partners and use our resources to promote projects that people in the community are passionate about," Hoey says. "Not to say people aren't passionate about the IDL barrier and racial inequity. That's just a bigger issue to tackle, and not one that Street Cred could take on in an impactful way."

Street Cred: Bridging the GAP highlighted the limitations of using a one-day event to tackle issues that required much deeper community involvement. In 2018, TYPROS decided to take a year off to reevaluate the purpose of Street Cred and how it could have the biggest impact for Tulsa.

### Street Cred: Tulsa Art Alley

Wanting to preserve the format of Street Cred, TYPROS leaders decided to focus on a smaller area and to look for a community partner. Since its beginnings, Street Cred had been most successful in showcasing development projects that already had invested partners. For 2019, the organization chose to partner with Tulsa Art Alley, an art initiative to transform a downtown alley into a creative oasis near the H.A. Chapman Green. Tulsa Art Alley

co-collaborators Libby Billings and Kelly Cook hope the transformed alley will encourage exploration on foot.

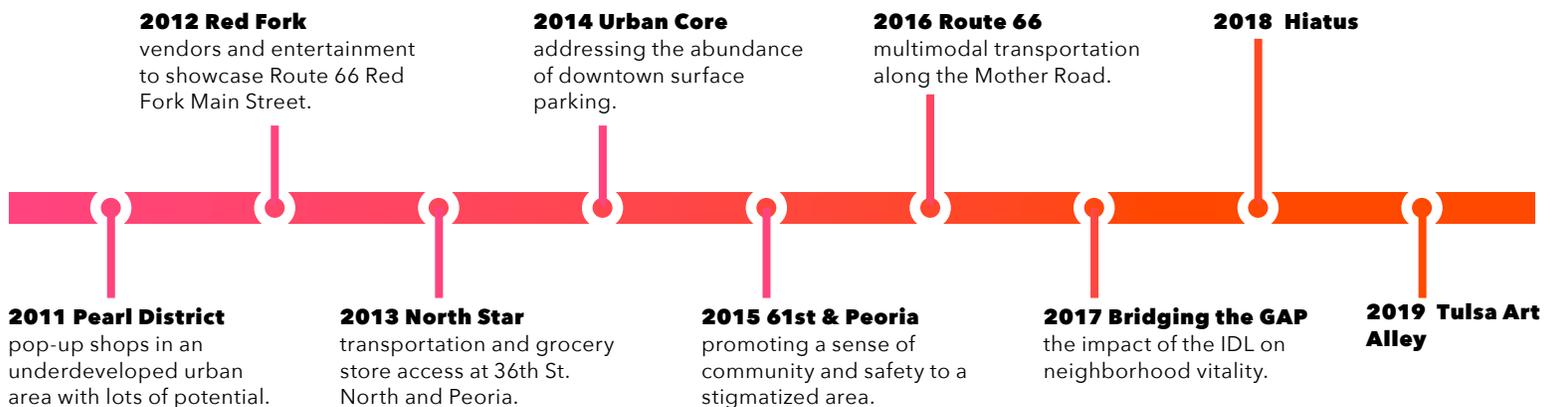
"By creating a collection of public art in an unexpected, underutilized place, we hope to encourage neighbors and visitors to explore parts of downtown that are a little off the beaten path," says Cook. "We hope that Tulsa Art Alley will encourage people to interact with downtown spaces in a new way, bring positive impact to nearby businesses, and show off Tulsa as a cool and creative place."

Tulsa Art Alley is also a 2018 TYPROS Foundation grant recipient. Each year, the TYPROS Foundation accepts public submissions for ideas that would make Tulsa a more desirable place for young people to live and work. Past grantees have included the Outsiders House Museum, the Tulsa Flag and the Black Wall St. mural. By partnering with Street Cred, Tulsa Art Alley has even more access to TYPROS' resources to help launch their project, and TYPROS has the benefit of community members who are passionate about and invested in the event.

"It's already been a game changer to have Tulsa Art Alley as a partner for Street Cred," says Hoey. "The project scope is small enough that we can do really cool things. Hopefully, some of the legwork will lead to permanent features for the project. Partnering with TYPROS Foundation grantees is definitely something we'll continue to explore for future Street Cred events."

Tulsa Art Alley did a community-wide call for muralists, performance artists, musicians and more. TYPROS volunteers have met regularly and collaborated with community members leading up to the April 27 event. Like Polishing the Pearl, Street Cred: Tulsa Art Alley will showcase all that is possible for the project and help kickstart the initiative.

"We were planning to execute the project without TYPROS' help, but having them as close collaborators has opened so many doors and sped up the process," says Billings. "Street Cred is serving as a launch for the project, allowing us to scale up our initial plans to show everything we could do with this space. We hope the alley inspires more creative projects like this in other parts of town."





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## ICONIC RENEWAL *REVIVING A TULSA ART DECO MASTERPIECE*

On May 1, a Tulsa icon will once again open its doors to Tulsans and visitors alike.

The Tulsa Club Building at 5th and Cincinnati went unused for nearly a quarter century. All but abandoned, the building fell into disrepair. Vandalism, multiple fires and neglect from an out-of-state landlord left its future uncertain. Intervention by the City of Tulsa forced a foreclosure and sheriff's sale of the building in 2013.

In the fall of 2015, Tulsa construction company Ross Group purchased the building for \$1.5 million. The following summer, the company announced a partnership with Promise Hotels and plans to renovate the building into a boutique hotel under Hilton's Curio Collection.

The building's legacy offers many reasons to celebrate its revival. The Art Deco masterpiece by one of Tulsa's most celebrated architects deserves acclaim as an architectural wonder. The \$36 million renovation, undertaken in painstaking detail, is a case study in the value of historic preservation.

For the Tulsa Regional Chamber, there's a third reason: the Tulsa Club Building housed the offices of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce from the late '20s through the early '50s.



### **Building on a legacy**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation explains the Tulsa Club's history:

*Founded in 1925, this organization emerged at a time when Tulsa became known as the "Oil Capital of the World." The discovery of countless oil reservoirs nearby during the first decade of the 20th century led to a historic economic boon for the city. Dozens of refineries sprang up throughout the area, which turned Tulsa into a major commercial center overnight. As such, the businesspeople of the city's prosperous petroleum industry decided to form an upscale social fraternity that could cater to their mutual interests. Christened as the "Tulsa Club," only the most prominent local oil barons could apply for membership.*

Not long after its founding, the club began to make plans to build a headquarters. Without enough money to complete the project on its own, the club formed a partnership with the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce to co-locate in a new building.

The partners selected Bruce Goff, a rising star among Tulsa architects, to design a new Tulsa icon.

"Bruce Goff was significant not just in Tulsa architecture, but in the field of architecture worldwide," says Amanda Decort, executive director of the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture. "We are especially lucky to have had Goff in Tulsa during his formative years. The Tulsa Building, which became known as the Tulsa Club, was Goff's first large design to be realized."

Goff designed a number of iconic Tulsa structures, most notably, in collaboration with then TU art department chair Adah Robinson, Boston Avenue Methodist Church. Goff would leave Tulsa for Chicago in 1934, but returned to Oklahoma 13 years later to teach at the University of Oklahoma.

"His influence resulted in the development of the American School of architecture," says Decort. "Because of Bruce Goff and Herb Greene, no longer was an aspiring architect's education based strictly in classical or Bauhaus teachings. The study of architecture in the 1950s and '60s emphasized creativity, individuality and organic design."

When the building opened in 1927, the Chamber occupied the second through fifth floors, while the club occupied the lobby and the sixth through 11th floors.

After the Chamber relocated to its own headquarters near 6th and Boston in the early 50s, the Tulsa Club occupied the entirety of the building through the early 1990s. However, oil busts and economic stagnation brought hard times for the club, which closed its doors in 1994.

## Preserving history

The club's closure prompted fears that the building would face the same fate as many Art Deco treasures before it. While dozens of Tulsa Art Deco icons have found new use as apartments, hotels and renovated offices, dozens more historic buildings did not survive. Federal subsidies in the 1950s and '60s disincentivized the preservation of pre-World War II construction. From the Bliss Hotel to the Orpheum Theater, many of Tulsa's most prized assets from the Oil Capital era were demolished.

To preserve as many remaining assets as possible, the Tulsa Preservation Commission applied to list the "Oil Capital District" on the National Register of Historic Places. Covering nearly 15 square blocks with 54 historically significant buildings, the district was added to the register in 2010. This distinction is more than symbolic - it allows for buildings contributing to the area's historic character to be eligible for historic tax credits.

"Historic tax credits make large-scale commercial historic renovations possible by leveling the playing field," says Decort. "Because it is simply more expensive and labor-intensive to renovate an old building downtown, it is also more challenging to finance those larger projects. But by doing so, we create jobs and living spaces for Tulsans."

The Federal Historic Tax Credit, administered by the National Park Service, allows up to 20% of the cost of qualified rehabilitation to be credited against federal income taxes. When combined with a matching state incentive, property owners can recoup up to 40% of the project's cost.

"The reuse of old buildings is a wonderful economic development tool for all of Tulsa," says Decort. "Through preservation, we can put derelict buildings back on the tax rolls and into productive use, which benefits all of Tulsa, as our schools and libraries need tax dollars to thrive."

According to the National Park Service, projects that leveraged the federal tax credit accounted for \$6.9 billion in private investment in fiscal year 2017. This investment, says Decort, locally creates "distinctive, memorable places by building on our architectural legacy - including hotels, restaurants and shopping opportunities for Tulsans and visitors."

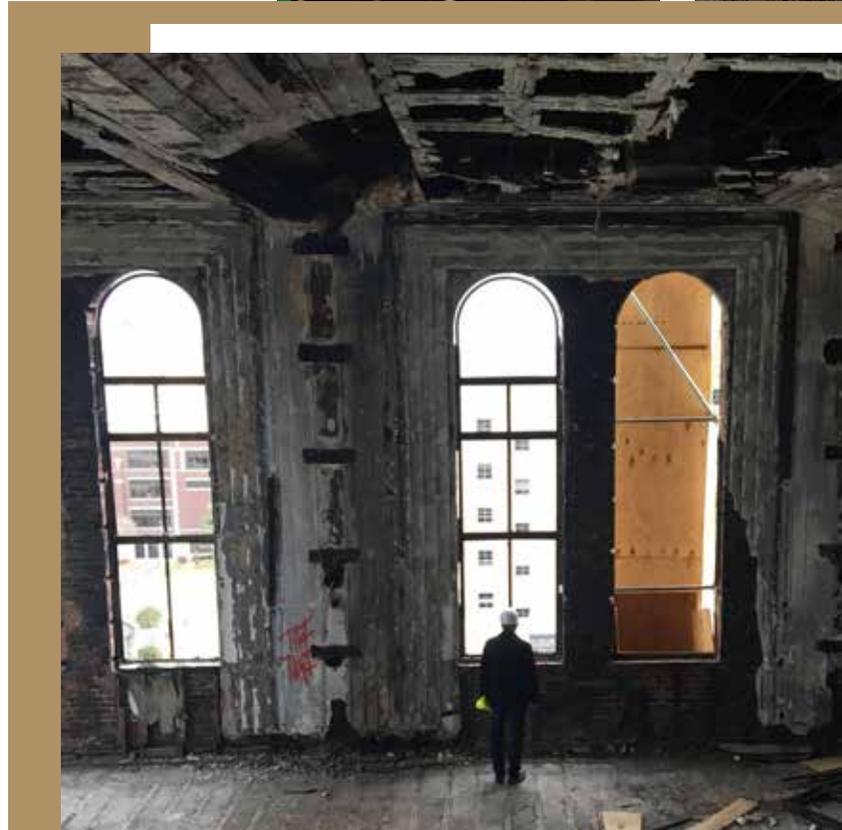
By combining a number of incentives that promote historic preservation, renovating the Tulsa Club Building became financially feasible.

"Investing in anything pertaining to Tulsa's historic past is paying tribute to what makes our city so grand, and being a part of that is something I personally take great pride in," says Kimberly Honea, vice president of sales and marketing for Promise Hotels. "The building is strong and beautiful, therefore it should be preserved and given another opportunity to host patrons visiting Tulsa and locals."

## Art Deco masterpiece

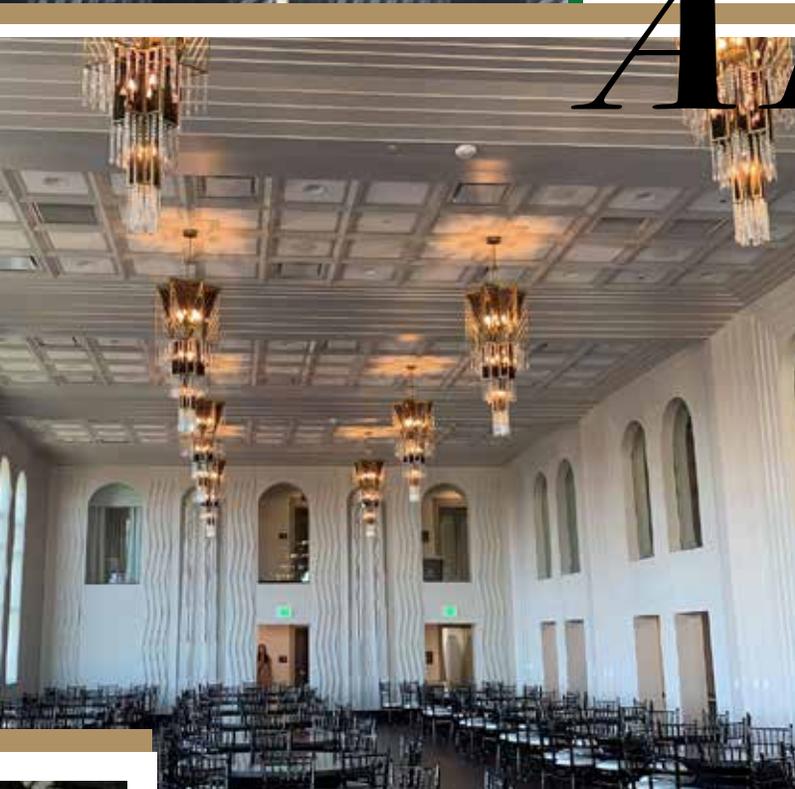
The renovation uncovered architectural features that make the Tulsa Club Building a masterpiece of Zigzag Art Deco, a style indicative of Tulsa's booming economy in the mid-1920s.

"The Art Deco influence of some of the interiors is still evident in strong geometrical shapes," says Decort. "The eighth-floor corridor's geometric form is definitely distinctive. The elaborate, organic mosaic tile fireplace in the former men's lounge on the eighth floor is not to be missed, should you have the great fortune to book that suite."



# BEFORE

# AFTER



Amanda Decort, Tulsa Foundation for Architecture

"One of the finest features that was uncovered was the original 1927 mosaic tilework that is located in our Petite Lounge Suite," adds Honea. "This tilework was constructed almost 100 years ago and will now greet our guests in our largest suite overlooking the eastern skies and the grand cathedrals next door."

The renovation also highlights the quality of materials used in the building's construction.

"The entire building was filled with terra cotta, which is an extremely rare item to use in today's construction of modern buildings," says Honea. "The building also revealed untouched marble and terrazzo flooring, which has all been preserved and reused in the aesthetics of our hotel."

One of the more stunning spaces is the grand ballroom, which will again host weddings, parties and events in the same space once patronized by Tulsa's original oil barons.

"Visitors should pay special attention to the ornate geometric plasterwork and chandeliers in the ballroom," adds Decort. "Much of the historic fabric of this grand space had been destroyed. The plaster ornamentation on the two-story walls and ceiling, and the striking Art Deco chandeliers, were painstakingly reconstructed in every detail."

Topping off the building is a rooftop event space with one-of-a-kind views of the city.

"The sky lounge terrace surrounding the ballroom is a feature that Tulsans have loved for generations," says Decort.

## Chamber connections

In a nod to the building's history, the Tulsa Club Hotel named their restaurant and lounge space Chamber and Commerce, respectively.

"The team and I want to pay tribute to as much of the Tulsa Club's past as we can," says Honea. "From the restaurant and bar names to the cocktail names to the names of our ballrooms, suites and artwork - you will find historic Tulsa Club pieces throughout the hotel."

The Tulsa Club Hotel's revival of an Art Deco icon is more than just an interesting historical anecdote - it's one chapter in a longer story about the importance of investment in the city's urban core.

At his inauguration in January, Chamber Chair David Stratton included downtown development as a strategic imperative for the organization in 2019. As additional renovations and new construction projects break ground, the Chamber has great partners in those who see the potential of Tulsa's iconic downtown.

"Having [the Chamber's] namesake incorporated into the hotel is ... a showcase of our partnership," says Honea. "The Tulsa Regional Chamber and our hotel work hand in-hand in making this city as great as we can."

Given these historical connections, the Chamber will celebrate the conclusion of its 25th annual Resource Campaign June 13 at the Tulsa Club Hotel. Throughout the 10-week campaign, dozens of volunteers sell sponsorships for the Chamber's programs, publications, events and more. These sponsorships account for roughly a third of the Chamber's annual budget.

This year's campaign is a significant milestone for the Chamber. Celebrating that milestone in the same space used for Chamber gatherings 90 years ago is a fitting tribute to the campaign's quarter-century history and a unique christening of this renewed Tulsa icon.

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# STATE SUPERINTENDENT JOY HOFMEISTER

Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister is a fellow Tulsan first elected in 2015. Since then, she has developed a long-term plan for the Department of Education, advocated for regionally competitive teacher pay, and implemented comprehensive academic standards, among other accomplishments.

Hofmeister is a former public school teacher and small business owner. For 15 years, she operated Kumon Math and Reading Centers of Tulsa, which use parent partnerships to support academic success for children.

Superintendent Hofmeister received overwhelming support from voters in November for a second term. She recently took time to answer several questions from the Chamber about how to most effectively advocate for education in Oklahoma.

**The Chamber-led OneVoice regional legislative coalition has long advocated for teacher retention and education funding. How does support from the business community help improve the quality of public education in Oklahoma?**

Tulsa Reading Partners is an excellent example of how the community rallies behind schools. Every week, volunteers from the business community devote countless hours working one-on-one with kids in low-income schools to help them master basic reading skills. We have already seen positive academic outcomes as children gain confidence and we work to shrink critical achievement gaps.

Tulsa's business community has shown great leadership in advocating for our children. Like the OneVoice coalition, many have engaged effectively with their legislators, indicating that public education is their priority and providing suggestions on how to stem Oklahoma's crippling teacher shortage. Tulsans understand that the success of kids - and ultimately the strength of our workforce - relies on quality teachers in our classrooms and high academic outcomes for our kids.

**What is the most productive or efficient way for voters to support teacher retention and education funding?**

Any discussion of public education needs to focus on addressing the whole child, whole school and whole community. Thanks to the generosity of many Tulsans committed to investing in our youngest learners and families, we are improving academic and social outcomes for kids. We are fortunate to have many foundations with a legacy of

support for exceptional programs in our community, including the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the Zarrow Families Foundation, among others. The world outside the classroom impacts the world inside the classroom; by meeting the needs of children where they are, we further opportunities for them to succeed in school and in life.

**What should Tulsa-area business leaders ask of their legislators as it pertains to education?**

To attract talented teachers and allow more individualized instruction, we must re-establish class size limits from the landmark House Bill 1017 that capped elementary classes at 20 students and limited secondary teachers to a total of 140 students. Eroded public education funding has had unintended negative consequences, including a reduced workforce and limited opportunities for professional development for educators. We should always work to innovate and improve efficiencies, but this cannot happen at the expense of meeting the basic needs of our students.

**You are among a group of Tulsans at the Capitol that includes Gov. Kevin Stitt, Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell and a number of appointed officials. How and in what ways do you see this representation as an advantage?**

Tulsans have long understood the impact of community investment and have proven their commitment to it in many ways. I am inspired by the spirit of collaboration in my hometown and believe it is a model from which the entire state can benefit. Not only do we have a vision for what can happen, we have created it and

seen it manifest in our day-to-day lives. Gov. Stitt and Lt. Gov. Pinnell illustrate that approach, as they both appreciate the importance of reaching out to stakeholders for partnership and input.

**Which states are role models for public education?**

As we shape the public school system for Oklahoma, we should look to the highest-performing states in the country. Massachusetts has valued education for decades, and that's reflected in a strong educator workforce and students who achieve academic success. Only two percent of Massachusetts' students drop out of high school, and their math and reading scores rank first nationally. We must not be afraid to set Massachusetts-level goals, and then commit to surpassing them.

I am most interested, however, in Oklahoma putting into action its own vision for strengthening public education. We are already moving that direction. Our eight-year strategic plan for education, Oklahoma Edge, is one of the most ambitious in the country. By investing in education, developing college and career skills early, focusing on trauma-informed instruction, and aligning early childhood education and learning foundations, we can remedy our unprecedented teacher shortage, increase the graduation rate, lift student outcomes and prepare our kids for a competitive workforce. The future of our state - and our children - rests in the quality of our educational system.





# VISIONARY INVESTMENT

## PEORIA-MOHAWK BUSINESS PARK SPURS DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH TULSA

In April 2016, Tulsa voters came together to invest in the city's future with the passage of Vision Tulsa. The \$884 million sales tax package included funds for public safety, streets and transportation, and economic development. Three years later, Tulsans have begun to see the transformative impact of these Vision projects. This transformation is especially apparent with the Peoria-Mohawk Business Park.

The park, located near North Peoria and Mohawk Boulevard, is the result of collaboration between the City of Tulsa and the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF). The foundation donated more than 120 acres for the business park, and the city included \$10 million for the park through Vision Tulsa funds. This public

investment will be used to prepare and enhance the park in an effort to position the site as the top industrial location in Tulsa.

"Tulsa is lucky to have support from private organizations like the George Kaiser Family Foundation," says Bill Murphy, vice president of economic development for the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "This business park is the first economic development partnership of its kind and an example of how strong collaboration can yield transformative results for a community."

GKFF began planning for the 117-acre business park in 2012. The foundation saw the park's potential as an engine of economic opportunity and set a goal for it to bring 1,000 jobs to north Tulsa.

After years of planning, the park is becoming a reality with the announcement of its first tenant. Muncie Power Products, a leading manufacturer of power take-offs and fluid power components for vocational trucks, announced in February an expansion of its Tulsa operations in the Peoria-Mohawk Business Park.

"We are proud and excited to be the first business located in the Peoria-Mohawk Business Park," says Ray Chambers, president and CEO of Muncie Power Products. "This new facility will allow us to better serve our customers and support market demand, while also providing the best possible working conditions for all of our employees."



**L-R: Oklahoma Rep. Regina Goodwin; Josh Miller, GKFF; Bill Murphy, Tulsa Regional Chamber; City Councilor Lori Decter Wright; City Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper; Ray Chambers, Muncie; Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum; Oklahoma Sen. Kevin Matthews; Kian Kamas, City of Tulsa.**

Muncie’s growing operations led to its decision to build the new facility, a \$50 million investment in north Tulsa. Since 2015, Muncie has added close to 100 jobs through the state’s Quality Jobs incentive. Construction on the 300,000-square-foot facility will begin in the last quarter of 2019 and will take nine to 12 months to complete. Once finished, Muncie’s new facility will employ around 240 people.

“Muncie Power Products’ move and expansion to Peoria-Mohawk represents a great first step in achieving the shared goal of increased economic opportunity in and for the north Tulsa community,” says Josh Miller, program officer for GKFF.

While Muncie is the first business to locate in the park, partners involved in the project are confident it’s the first of many.

“The park is an invaluable addition to our region, and we’re confident it will continue to attract high-quality jobs to Tulsa,” says Chamber

President and CEO Mike Neal. “We applaud the City of Tulsa and the George Kaiser Family Foundation for their leadership in the creation of this regional asset.”

Muncie’s expansion to the Peoria-Mohawk Business Park is an important economic development achievement for north Tulsa. Not only will the expansion create jobs, it will provide north Tulsa residents with access to jobs in their own community.

“[The project] marks an important milestone in realizing what voters approved in Vision Tulsa for the economic development of north Tulsa at the Peoria-Mohawk Business Park,” says Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum. “Muncie will be the first of many businesses to bring new and accessible jobs to north Tulsa - fostering more

economic opportunity and wealth creation for the community.”

Future improvements are already planned for the area around the park. The city’s bus rapid transit system, Aero, will launch this summer and run along Peoria from 56th Street North to 81st Street South. Aero will provide residents with accessible, efficient transportation. The Tulsa Housing Authority plans to renovate the nearby Comanche Park into a mixed-use, mixed-income community, with the goal to create a vibrant walkable community.

“Having an industrial park of that size in Tulsa will be an incredible selling point to employers,” says Murphy. “We look forward to the future development of the site and to see the future investment in north Tulsa.”



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# SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

## METHOD ARCHITECTURE



*Method Architecture is a seven-person architecture and interior design firm specializing in experiential and place-based projects. Method's typical projects include historic preservation, urban and mixed-use, education, hospitality, and high-end residential projects. We spoke with founder and owner Josh Kunkel to learn more about him and his business.*

### **When did you realize you wanted to be an architect?**

I actually realized a bit later in life. I had always wanted to be a meteorologist, but I took a drafting class in high school and was then hooked on being an architect. When I graduated, I applied and enrolled in Oklahoma State University's architecture program and never looked back.

### **When did you realize you wanted to own your own business?**

I have known since maybe high school that I would own my own business or be a principal at a firm. My dad is a small business owner, and I've seen the ups and downs, but I've also seen how good it feels to be going and doing your own thing.

### **How do you set yourself apart from your competitors?**

We create places where people feel they belong. All too often, much of the architecture that's created doesn't relate to the individual person. We accomplish this by listening and celebrating the diversity of viewpoints of each project team. We are a diverse firm, currently 80 percent female and 30 percent Hispanic. That's almost completely opposite of a typical architecture firm, and we love it.

### **How did you decide to locate your office in the Kendall Whittier District?**

It's all (former Kendall Whittier Executive Director) Ed Sharrer's fault! My family and I attended the KW Food Truck Festival a few years back, and it was the most perfect day. The crowd was the most diverse we had seen in Tulsa, and we loved it. We felt that we belonged there. I was currently working for someone else, but we decided that day that, if I were to open a firm, this would be where we would do it. So, two years later, we did.

### **Where do you draw inspiration from?**

I draw inspiration from reading, traveling and talking with other interesting people. I also draw inspiration from my wife and four kids. It's much different navigating the world with four little ones who are ages six and under. When we do travel, I always look to experience great places and figure out how I might bring them back to Tulsa. Reading helps me gain a wide perspective on ideas and new ways of doing things.

### **What has been the most challenging aspect of owning a business?**

Underestimating the constant and pressing need for cashflow. It's kind of like the surfer riding a wave: it's great when you are riding

on top, but you can easily fall over and crash into the rocks.

### **What has been the most rewarding aspect of owning a business?**

It's incredibly fulfilling! I was able to make a role shift to focus more on the things I am best at: identifying and sharing the vision, creating a best-in-the-industry culture, and building great relationships with clients who share our vision and values. It's extremely rewarding to work side by side with my talented team. They really are the best at what they do.

### **How do you stay innovative?**

An incredible thirst for knowledge. I'm constantly reading or listening to something. Physical books, audio books, blogs, podcasts, news articles, etc. Last year I read 21 books, and this year, with the addition of audio books, I am on track to read between 50-75. There are no new ideas, there are only new perspectives. I try to discover as many of these ideas and perspectives as it helps me be a better leader.

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January/February 2019

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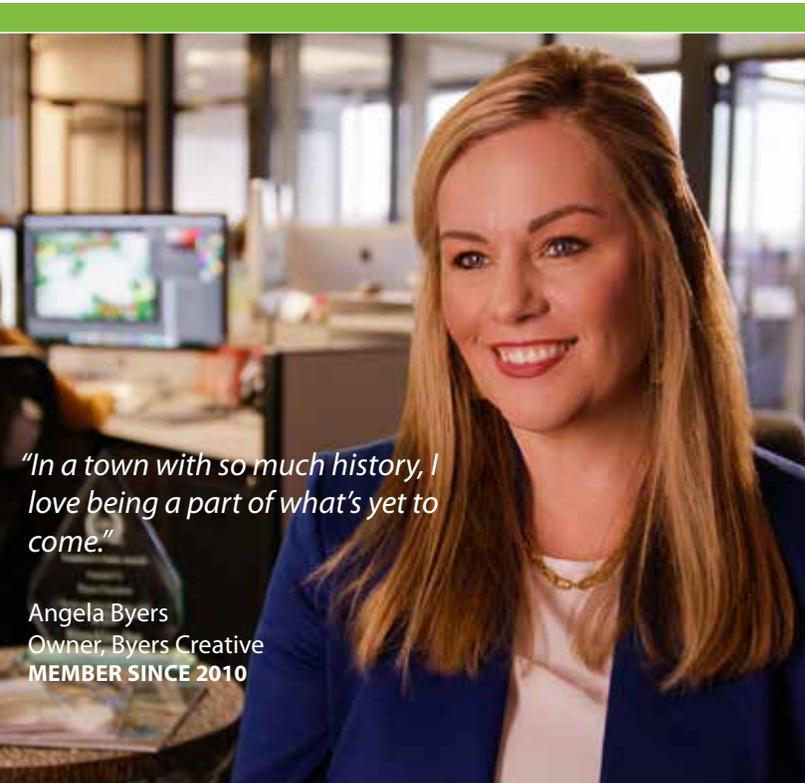
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