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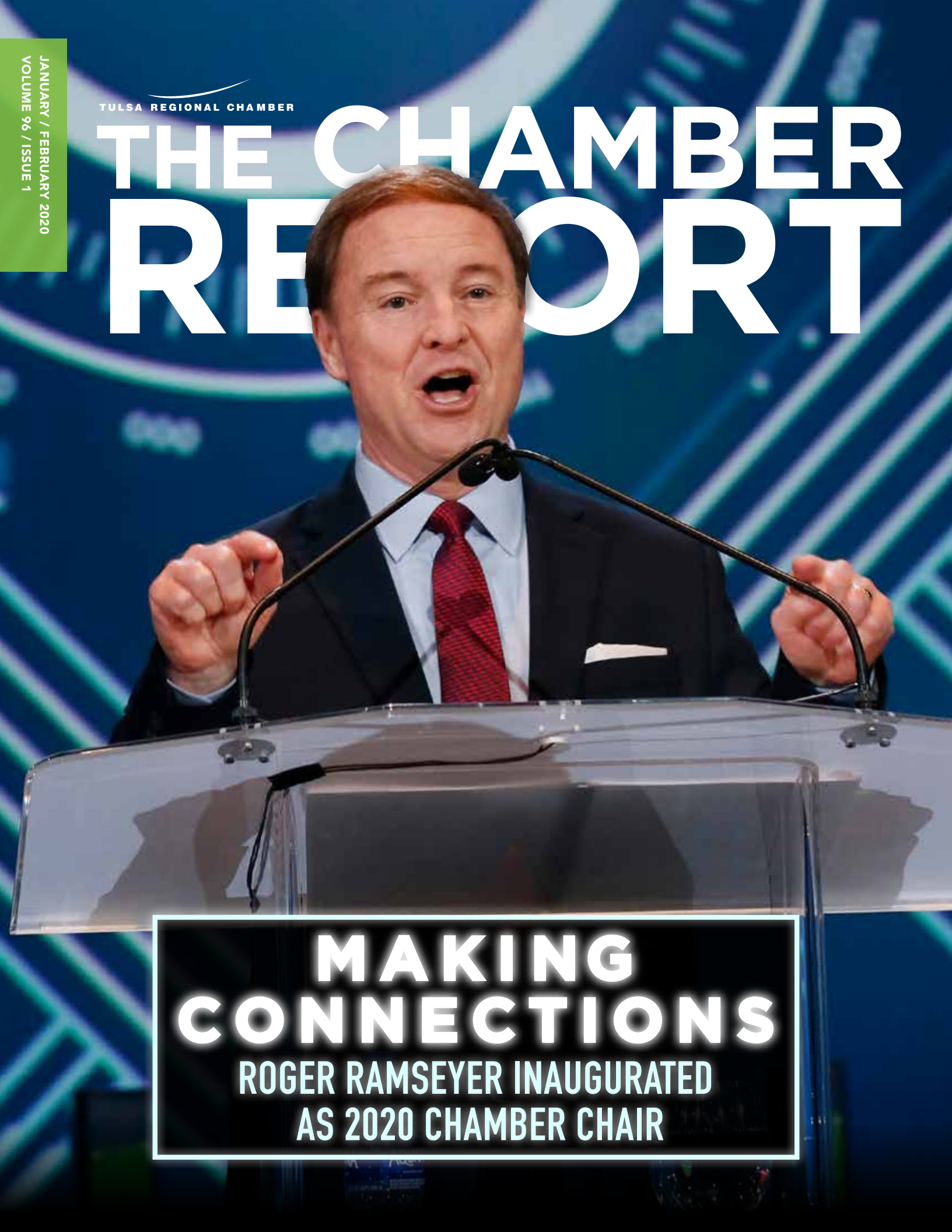
TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER

THE CHAMBER REPORT



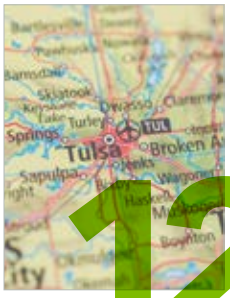
MAKING CONNECTIONS

ROGER RAMSEYER INAUGURATED AS 2020 CHAMBER CHAIR

CONTENTS

04 MAKING CONNECTIONS
Roger Ramseyer inaugurated as 2020 Chamber chair

11 MODERNIZE HOW OKLAHOMA DOES BUSINESS
Chamber President and CEO Mike Neal shares outlook for 2020 legislative session

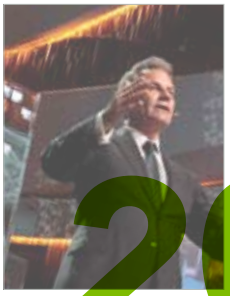


12 LEVELING UP
2020 census is the Tulsa region's chance to surpass 1 million residents

14 ALL ACCESS
Board of Advisors

16 ONE-ON-ONEVOICE
Oklahoma Speaker of the House Charles McCall

18 MOSAIC 5
Men Advocating Real Change



20 INNOVATION IN ACTION
An interview with Richard Florida

22 FILMED IN TULSA
Tulsa's film industry makes a major impact

25 SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT
Cirrus Payroll

26 NEW MEMBERS

27 MEMBER ANNIVERSARY MILESTONES

ON THE COVER: In his inaugural speech as 2020 Chamber chair, Roger Ramseyer of Cox Communications stressed the need for strengthened connections between the Tulsa region and the rest of the world. Read on to learn more about how Ramseyer believes connectivity will shape the future of northeast Oklahoma.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Business Behind the Scenes
March 10 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
First Place Tower, 41st floor

Monthly Capitol Luncheon
March 25 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Oklahoma Capitol, Governor's Blue Room

Legislative Briefing Breakfast
March 27 | 8-9:30 a.m.
DoubleTree by Hilton – Tulsa Downtown

Monthly Capitol Luncheon
April 22 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Oklahoma Capitol, Governor's Blue Room

Member LEAP
May 6 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Central Library

Monthly Capitol Luncheon
May 19 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Oklahoma Capitol, Governor's Blue Room

OneVoice Washington D.C. Fly-In
June 2-4
Washington, D.C.

Legislative Briefing Breakfast
June 12 | 8-9:30 a.m.
Hyatt Regency Tulsa

Summer Golf Classic
June 22
Tulsa Country Club

State of Education
July 7 | 12-1:30 p.m.
Renaissance Hotel & Convention Center

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MAKING CONNECTIONS

ROGER RAMSEYER INAUGURATED AS 2020 CHAMBER CHAIR

Roger Ramseyer is in the business of connecting people.

As vice president and Tulsa market leader for Cox Communications, Ramseyer is deeply invested in how Tulsans connect to one another, as well as to the rest of the world.

With his inaugural speech as the Tulsa Regional Chamber's 2020 chair, Ramseyer outlined the importance of strengthening key connections and making new ones.

"My day job is based on technology that connects people and things," Ramseyer told a record crowd of 1,500 attendees at the Chamber's Annual Meeting in January. "So, my efforts as Chamber chair this year will be executed with a theme of 'connectivity.'"

Ramseyer succeeds 2019 Chair David Stratton of BOK Financial. Both come from industries that rely on technological advancements to drive innovation.

"As a leader in a technology business, I have a keen appreciation for the importance of innovation," said Ramseyer. "Innovation drives impact. We must continue to innovate and evolve to ensure sustained growth and long-term economic prosperity in Tulsa."

Ramseyer illustrated this point with an example from the Chamber's 2018 Intercity Visit to Columbus, Ohio.

"In 1905, the city of Columbus led the nation in – of all things – buggy manufacturing," Ramseyer said. "But by 1920, only 15 years later, most buggy manufacturers had gone out of business thanks to the advent of the automobile."

Ramseyer admonished Chamber members and partners to consider which industries will "creatively destruct or evolve, and what new creations will enhance our economic prosperity."

"Two hundred years ago, cities located adjacent to rivers prospered," said Ramseyer. "Then, cities connected by railroads enjoyed economic growth. In the last century, cities with superior air service gained economic advantage. Many contend that the most prosperous cities of the future will be those in which businesses and educational institutions can connect to the rest of the world through technology and leverage core strengths in developing industries such as cyber security and smart city technology."

Ramseyer outlined five points of connection that present opportunities for Tulsa to grow and prosper: diversity, business resources, education, direct flights and regional branding. Improving the Tulsa region's interconnectivity, as well as its connections outside the state, will determine its success in the decades to come.

"Tulsa has what it takes to innovate and lead," said Ramseyer. "To borrow a phrase from the broadcasting business, Tulsa is ready for prime time."

> WE CAN AND MUST DO MORE TO ENSURE THAT ALL FEEL WELCOME IN THE WORKPLACE

CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER

Ramseyer's first connectivity point focused on the bonds between people in the Tulsa community.

"My predecessor made diversity one of his focus areas last year, and rightly so, said Ramseyer. "Without a doubt, we've made progress, both as a Chamber and as a community.

In considering the Chamber's commitment to diversity, Ramseyer pointed to its Board of Directors.

"The 2020 Chamber board will build upon David's focus in this area as we seek to reflect the increasingly diverse nature of our community," said Ramseyer. "Of our incoming 2020 board members, 50% are women."

Ramseyer also pressed for a sustained focus on inclusion and equity. A recent diversity and inclusion workshop hosted by Hilti and attended by dozens of Tulsa-area leaders – including Mayor G.T. Bynum – highlights the business community's commitment to continued improvement.

"All in attendance learned much that we hope will enhance the success of our respective businesses, but we can and must do more to ensure that all feel welcome in the workplace," said Ramseyer. "We must do this not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is critical to attracting and retaining the workforce we all need to ensure our businesses succeed.

Looking to the future, Ramseyer noted that 2021 will be an important litmus test for community cohesion.

"We have an incredible opportunity to come together and 'connect' as one community to memorialize and educate our fellow Tulsans – and our nation – about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre," said Ramseyer. "As we prepare to mark the centennial of that tragic event in our city's history, work remains to fully understand and address the long-term impact, and I pledge the Chamber's full support to the effort."

Another essential connectivity point is that between area businesses and the resources they need to thrive.

"The Chamber has fantastic programming and resources that help educate business owners and entrepreneurs on issues and strategies that can help impact their profitability," said Ramseyer. "In 2020, the Chamber will market many of our small business educational programs in a new way so that even more area businesses can

take advantage of them. Since many economists believe that as much as 85 percent of our job growth will come from small business, the more the Chamber can support and advocate for the small business economic engine in our community, the more we will all prosper."

Increasingly, the face of business and work itself is changing. Technology enables a more flexible workforce that can connect with employers in new and innovative ways. Through programs such as the George Kaiser Family Foundation's Tulsa Remote, Tulsa has seen an influx of talented people who might not have considered moving to the city even a few years ago.

"I have met several of the Tulsa Remote program transplants, and let me tell you, these are bright and interesting people who will contribute much to our economy, diversity, and quality of life," said Ramseyer.

In addition to importing talent, Ramseyer also stressed the importance of connecting today's students with tomorrow's employers.

"As in many other parts of our country, Tulsa's unemployment rate is incredibly low," said Ramseyer. "That's great, but it also means we must prioritize workforce development."

Ramseyer pointed to an initiative between Tulsa Community College and OSU-Tulsa, the recently announced Linked Degree partnership, that provides for a seamless experience as students work toward a bachelor's degree.

"Our community currently lacks more than 19,000 individuals with a four-year degree to keep Tulsa's economic engine running," said Ramseyer. "These degree holders are needed to sustain our growing economy and enhance our economic prosperity."

Workforce development doesn't just mean focusing on those who may enter the workforce soon – it also means supporting K-12 education.

"Because of the critical importance of K-12 education, the Chamber's government affairs team will encourage the Legislature to pass Senate Bill 362, authored by Tulsa Republican Senator Gary Stanislawski," said Ramseyer. "This legislation would change the weights of the state's school funding formula … Our schools have unique challenges that are very different from those that existed decades ago when the school funding formula was last updated."

With these efforts, the Chamber and its partners aim to strengthen the interconnectivity of the community that makes northeast Oklahoma an appealing place to live and do business.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER PLACES

Two of Ramseyer's key points focused on better connecting Tulsans to people in other cities. The first is a continuation of the Chamber's multi-year effort to increase the number of direct flights to and from Tulsa International Airport.

CONNECTING WITH ROGER

Roger moved to Tulsa in 2016, having previously served as managing director of government and global public affairs for INVISTA and Koch Industries in Wichita, Kansas. Before that, he worked for Bank IV and NationsBank – now Bank of America – for 12 years, where he served as corporate spokesman and senior vice president of corporate marketing.

A longtime community advocate in the cities in which he has lived, Roger has held leadership roles in a variety of civic, religious and educational organizations. He is actively involved with many Tulsa nonprofits and charities. In addition to his work with the Chamber, he is a trustee of the Tulsa Community College Foundation, for which he chaired the 2019 Tulsa Community College Vision Dinner. Roger is also a member of the Rotary Club of Tulsa, where he is a Paul Harris fellow.

He earned his degree in business from the University of Kansas and an MBA from the University of Texas at Austin. He and his wife, Terri, have two children, both of whom are graduates of Oklahoma State University. Roger and Terri are members of Life Church South Tulsa. In his spare time, Roger loves to break a good sweat outdoors, whether it's working on lawn and landscape projects at his home, or being dragged along the trails at Turkey Mountain by his dog, Piper.

"The Chamber will continue partnering, supporting and encouraging more direct flights, and I'm very optimistic that the efforts of Tulsa Airport CEO Alexis Higgins and all who are working hard to attract more direct flights will result in even more exciting announcements soon," said Ramseyer. "It's also worth noting that, beyond connecting us to the rest of the world, our airport also serves as a calling card for our region. Our airport is the first and last impression fliers have of our community."

With 90 local companies signing the "Fly Tulsa" corporate travel pledge, airlines have rewarded the region with more flight options. Within the past year, American Airlines added nonstop service to LAX; Allegiant added seasonal service to Destin, Las Vegas and Nashville; and Southwest Airlines will add service to Baltimore beginning June 7.

While outbound travel certainly benefits Tulsa-area businesses, the region must also do more to convince people to travel here.

"We all regularly see television commercials that air locally encouraging Tulsans to visit other communities, such as Branson, Bentonville, Wichita and other locations," said Ramseyer. "Don't get me wrong; these are all great destinations, but we also need to promote Tulsa in those communities."

In the high point of his speech, Ramseyer debuted a new marketing campaign based on the connectivity point of regional branding.

"I have asked the Chamber to produce a new commercial promoting Tulsa and highlighting our appeal as a regional tourism destination," Ramseyer said. "I am hoping we will see some additional out-of-state license plates at Gathering Place, at Tulsa restaurants, and at local shopping centers during Spring Break and this summer as a result."

> **"WE HAVE A TERRIFIC STORY TO TELL, AND WE MUST CONNECT WITH THOSE WHO MAY NOT YET KNOW HOW GREAT OUR COMMUNITY IS!"**

Annual Meeting attendees were the first to see the new "Tulsa Inspires" TV commercial, which began airing that afternoon in several adjacent states. The Tulsa Inspires brand is used by Tulsa Regional

PARTNERS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

SID MCANNALLY, ONE GAS
Economic Development Partner of the Year

McAnnally served as the Chamber's vice chair of economic development in both 2017 and 2018, and as vice chair for Tulsa's Future in 2019. In that capacity, he provided invaluable leadership on the Tulsa's Future IV strategic plan. This involved re-engaging key investors and stakeholders in a more focused program of work to begin in 2021. Additionally, he spent countless hours working one-on-one with members of the Steering Committee, the Investor Council, Advisory Council and staff to draft a new organizational structure that will serve the initiative and the Chamber for years to come. Martie Oyler of ONE Gas accepted the award on McAnnally's behalf.

WENDY DRUMMOND, DRUMMOND COMMUNICATIONS
KIRK HAYES, ARVEST BANK
Regional Tourism Partners of the Year

Drummond and Hayes served as co-chairs for the fundraising phase of Momentum, a strategy for private investment to recruit and retain top-tier events and entertainment industries to the Tulsa region. With the support of their campaign cabinet, they successfully raised more than $8 million dollars, far surpassing the campaign goal, and helped ensure the funds are available to continue building on the region's success and brand as a top-tier destination.

GORDY GUEST, CYNTERGY
Government Affairs Partner of the Year

Guest played an integral part in advancing the exciting development of downtown Tulsa, and in ensuring the passage of capital improvement packages. He served as steering committee chair for the 2019 Improve Our Tulsa campaign, which Tulsa voters passed by historic margins in November. As campaign chair, Guest worked to ensure the priorities of Chamber members were represented in the package, including progress for the Arena District Master Plan. He has also played an integral role on the Downtown Coordinating Council, working to secure long-term change for a new downtown organization for the city.

HANNIBAL JOHNSON
Community Development Partner of the Year

Johnson shared his extensive expertise on the subject of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre as Chamber leadership sought to better understand that event's historical context. With his assistance, the Chamber confronted its own failings from nearly 99 years ago and donated minutes from 1921 board meetings to the Greenwood Cultural Center, thereby helping ensure the most complete set of historical facts as possible. Johnson's wise counsel guided that process of introspection and helped the Chamber better understand its responsibilities to all citizens, then and now.

CHEROKEE NATION
Regional Partner of the Year

In early 2019, Cherokee Nation Career Services assisted Sofidel America with several career fairs as the company began hiring for its new Rogers County Tissue Paper production facility. In late spring, Cherokee Nation Businesses worked with Chamber officials and Milo's Tea representatives to help solidify the company's commitment to a new $60 million Owasso-area plant.

SEN. ROGER THOMPSON
Legislative Partner of the Year

During his tenure in the Oklahoma Senate, Sen. Thompson has championed many OneVoice legislative priorities. In 2019, he authored Senate Bill 695, which was critical to the Macy's Distribution Center in Tulsa County – one of northeast Oklahoma's biggest job creators in recent years. Sen. Thompson also championed measures critical to the tourism industry in our state, including a bill to attract high-impact film productions to Oklahoma.

DAVID STRATTON
Chairman's Award

As Chamber chair during 2019, Stratton helped drive the Chamber's two key performance measures: job creation and hotel room nights. Tulsa's Future, the Chamber-led public-private regional economic development partnership, helped create more than 2,600 jobs. Since it began in 2005, Tulsa's Future has supported the creation of 69,249 jobs in northeast Oklahoma. For fiscal year 2018-19, Tulsa Regional Tourism booked more than 217,000 room nights – well in excess of its 175,000 goal – and supported tourism events with a total economic impact of $308 million.

Tourism, the destination marketing organization housed at the Chamber, to promote the region as a destination for leisure travel, sports, conventions and events.

"We must expeditiously increase the visibility of Tulsa in nearby states and, in so doing, continue to boost tourism and bring more out-of-state dollars into our community," said Ramseyer. "We have a terrific story to tell, and we must connect with those who may not yet know how great our community is!"

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Like the residents of northeast Oklahoma, Ramseyer's connectivity points themselves are interconnected.

"The great thing about connectivity points is this: they build on one another, and before you know it, we've built something truly remarkable," he said.

As Ramseyer leads the Chamber's Board of Directors in 2020, making connections will be more than just a theme for his speech – it will be a core focus of the organization.

"We have all chosen Tulsa as our gathering place in which to pursue our professional passions and raise our families," Ramseyer said in closing. "I invite you to join me, the Chamber board and staff in building and strengthening all of our connectivity points as we all work together to enhance our economic prosperity and quality of life in this great community."

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MODERNIZE HOW OKLAHOMA DOES BUSINESS

Chamber President and CEO Mike Neal shares outlook for 2020 legislative session

Businesses must constantly adapt to changes in technology, consumer preferences and market conditions. As our 2020 board chair Roger Ramseyer recounted during his inaugural speech in January, the city of Columbus, Ohio, was known as the buggy capital of the world at the dawn of the 20th century. But within just two decades, buggy manufacturers were driven out of business entirely by the advent of the automobile.

State governments must also adapt to these kinds of changes to compete at a top-10 level. From demographic shifts to technological advancements to increasingly complex federal regulations, legislators must modernize funding and services to address the current realities facing Oklahoma residents and businesses.

As Oklahoma's legislative session gets underway, legislators have several opportunities for modernization in key areas, including education, economic development and health care. The Chamber's OneVoice Regional Legislative Agenda outlines many of these opportunities. The agenda's business-driven priorities were developed with the input of more than 400 northeast Oklahomans from hundreds of Chamber member companies and dozens of regional partner communities, and the 75 organizations endorsing the agenda make up the largest coalition of its kind in the state.

Education remains a top OneVoice priority in 2020. Lawmakers can continue the previous two years' momentum of investments in the classroom by modernizing the state funding formula for common education.

Most weighted figures in the funding formula haven't been updated in more than 30 years. The Oklahoma Department of Education reports that 60% of Oklahoma children enrolled in public schools are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This factor, among many others, must be taken into account when determining state funding for each district.

Tulsa Sen. Gary Stanislawski has put forward SB 362, which would update the funding formula to reflect current student populations. For example, Tulsa Public Schools alone would receive an additional $20 million from the state. Legislators should also increase the appropriation to offset any budget reduction to other school districts. Modernizing the formula will ensure district allocations more accurately reflect the actual cost of education.

In the area of economic development, entrepreneurs increasingly rely on venture capital to turn startup innovation into high-growth companies. However, Oklahoma ranks 47th for venture capital expenditures. Arkansas, Kansas and New Mexico each offer a tax incentive for such investments – that incentive isn't available in our state.

Ahead of this session, we worked with Bristow Sen. James Leewright to develop the Quality Startups incentive. The program would offer a 60% tax deduction on investments to qualified, in-state companies. This incentive encourages investment in entrepreneurship and technology ventures and will attract out-of-state dollars into Oklahoma coffers.

Incentivizing this angel investment will support entrepreneurs with the capital they need to build sustainable, successful companies in Oklahoma.

For health care, there is no greater opportunity facing Oklahoma than the full expansion of Medicaid eligibility. This long-standing OneVoice priority is the most effective and efficient way to improve the health of Oklahomans and ensure the vitality of the state's $12.5 billion health care industry, which employs more residents in primary jobs than any other industry. Increasing coverage will decrease Oklahoma's high rate of uninsured workers and help maintain an effective and productive workforce.

Oklahoma is one of only 14 states that has not accepted federal funds to expand Medicaid eligibility. Our state stands to receive more than $1 billion annually from the federal government by expanding Medicaid, which would provide insurance to an additional 200,000 people.

There are many paths lawmakers may take to get there, but the destination is clear.

The last two legislative sessions showed voters that positive change is possible, and a stronger Oklahoma can start at the Capitol. As our elected leaders work to improve the lives of Oklahomans, we at the Tulsa Regional Chamber along with our regional partners encourage them to continue their trend of success and modernize how Oklahoma does business.

TO READ THE FULL ONEVOICE AGENDA, VISIT TULSACHAMBER.COM.

LEVELING UP

2020 census is the Tulsa region's chance to surpass 1 million residents

by Jarrel Wade

The Tulsa region has teetered on the edge of a million residents for a decade. Crossing the million-person threshold is a point of pride to claim status among major metropolitan areas like Kansas City, Denver and Orlando, to name a few.

The 2020 census, which begins arriving on doorsteps in March, is the area's chance to join a new tier of peer communities. To do so will require participation from the entire community. If successful, Tulsa's ability to attract new businesses and bid for major events will level up in a big way.

"Event organizers occasionally ask whether Tulsa has a million people," says Ray Hoyt, the Chamber's senior vice president of regional tourism. "I've always had to explain that, for all intents and purposes, we're at 1 million, even if technically just under."

The Chamber's regional tourism team sells Tulsa as a destination for events, conventions and sports tournaments. Competition for major events is almost always between Tulsa and larger cities.

"Tulsa is punching well above its weight right now," Hoyt says. "To be in that top tier of cities that gets to claim 1 million people, we'd like to be able to check that box without explanation."

RISING THROUGH THE RANKS

The 2010 census figured the Tulsa metropolitan statistical area (MSA) at 937,478 people. Updated estimates in 2018 edged Tulsa even further up at 993,797. Currently, 53 MSAs in the nation have more than a million people. Tulsa's MSA ranks 55 behind Fresno, California, which has just 603 more people.

In business attraction, site selectors hired to find the best locations for corporate expansions look at an enormous amount of data before making recommendations to their clients. According to Chris Schwinden, senior vice president of Dallas-based Site Selection Group, two key data points for Tulsa are its workforce and cost of living,

"We sometimes use a tier system in our preliminary analysis where we only score markets against other like-sized ones," Schwinden says. "For example, we want to make sure we're not comparing Atlanta or Dallas/Fort Worth against Joplin. We then pick markets that make sense for in-depth analysis."

When compared against other MSAs with fewer than 1 million people, Tulsa performs well on available labor and moderately on labor costs, according to Schwinden. However, when calculated against regions with more than 1 million, the outcome flips.

"So now we're comparing (Tulsa) against other big markets," Schwinden says. "Its labor availability score goes way down, but (Tulsa's) labor cost score is much more favorable because we're comparing it against really big and expensive markets. In short, it can cut both ways."

An accurate, complete census count has benefits beyond just rising in the ranks of other MSAs. A more accurate count will maximize the federal funding for local and state programs that directly benefit the regional economy.

"The census is the basis of apportionment for everything from seats in Congress to federal aid for local services and infrastructure," says Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum. "Funding for highways, school lunch programs, Medicare and Medicaid, and other crucial projects and programs worth $600 billion a year are based on census data."

A COMPLETE COUNT

To become a million-person community, Tulsa is seeking out under-reported populations to achieve the best possible count. The Tulsa Regional Complete Count Committee (CCC) formed in April 2019 and represents a number of demographics and diverse organizations to promote participation in the census.

"Our goal is simple: to get the highest, most accurate count we can get for the 2020 census in the Tulsa metropolitan area," says Kyle Ofori, City of Tulsa director of community partnerships and chairman of the Tulsa Regional CCC. "Everyone counts in the census regardless of age, background or citizenship."

Ofori urges community leaders to share census information far and wide.

"We share some of this information on our social media pages, as does the U.S. Census Bureau," Ofori says. "We also have flyers in English, Spanish and other languages, so it would really help to get the word out through any organization or company with a large reach."

Brian Kurtz, executive director of Tulsa's Downtown Coordinating Council, says census participation is important to developers who rely on population data to secure the best possible financing.

"I experienced this in Pittsburgh," Kurtz says. "There was a downtown neighborhood that built and occupied 2,500 (housing) units in a few years."

Kurtz hopes a similar bump is reflected in Tulsa's 2020 census data.

"What I'm focused on in the 2020 census is getting as much engagement in downtown Tulsa as possible," says Kurtz. "This is our chance to show what type of growth we've had. There's no other way to track the tremendous growth we've had downtown in the last decade."

The entire Tulsa region stands to gain a great deal from the results of the 2020 census. It will take the support of every household, neighborhood and community to level up the population over 1 million.

TAKING THE 2020 CENSUS

By April 1, every home will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. There are three options for responding: online, by phone, or by mail.

The 2020 census is the first time residents will be able to respond online, including on a cell phone. The census should be filled out counting every person living at the home most of the time or presumed to be living at the home on April 1.

To learn more about the 2020 census from the Community Service Council, visit csctulsa.org/tulsa2020.

TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER | ALL ACCESS

BOARD OF ADVISORS

All Access is an inside look at different Chamber programs and resources available to member companies and their employees. The Chamber offers several money-saving and promotional opportunities, all to help members gain increased exposure, credibility and access to information.

Through an investment above and beyond their annual dues, members of the Chamber's Board of Advisors help drive the organization's strategic direction. These members gain exclusive access to Chamber leadership, elected officials, signature events, marketing opportunities and resources. They represent the top 15% of the Chamber's membership and a broad cross-section of the regional business community, including small family-owned companies alongside international corporations.

Members can invest at the bronze, silver or gold level, each of which offers a different set of benefits. When combined with sponsorships of Chamber events and programs, a Board of Advisors-level investment is the preeminent way to gain visibility among the region's leading businesses.

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OKLAHOMA SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE CHARLES MCCALL

Charles McCall has served as speaker since the 2017 legislative session and is the first Republican speaker from southeastern Oklahoma. He is CEO and board chairman of AmeriState Bank in Atoka, and he was first elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 2012. He was previously mayor of Atoka from 2005 to 2012, and he served as chairman of the Atoka City Industrial Development Authority, as chairman of the Lake Atoka Reservation Association and as vice chairman of the McGee Creek Authority.

With Oklahoma's 2020 legislative session underway, legislators have high expectations to continue a streak of successful sessions. Speaker McCall helps shape the agenda for the 101-member Oklahoma House of Representatives, which began the session with more than 1,300 bills filed.

What are your goals for 2020?
Because the speaker of the house works for the duly elected members of the House, the House's goals come from the membership at large. The goals I get to help set as part of the House leadership team truly do reflect the collective will of the majority of the body. The members of the House decide the goals, and as leadership, we help them achieve those goals.

This year, the central goal is to build on the progress of the past three years. Since 2017, Oklahoma has made historic investments in education and transformational improvements to government. We have changed the tenor at the Capitol from pessimism to optimism. There is a very positive and collaborative spirit at the Capitol now, and we're going to maintain that.

From a policy perspective, 2020's goals are continued improvements in education, government accountability and quality of life. Those are broad goals that cover a lot of ground.

This year, education goals include smaller class sizes in public K-12 schools and pushing new approaches to improve outcomes in common and higher education. We're also interested in a renewed focus on the CareerTech system to help fill skills-based jobs employers want and need.

With government accountability, priorities include more structural changes to state agencies and improved oversight of those agencies from all branches of government and citizens alike. Saving more money to prepare for future economic downturns also needs to remain a priority. The $200 million savings fund deposit made last year is already proving its worth. Deposits like that should be the new normal. The state has about $1 billion in savings, but realistically it needs between $3 and $4 billion in savings to be fully prepared for the next inevitable economic slump. When I joined other state leaders to visit the financial ratings agencies on Wall Street last year, the savings fund deposit received big accolades, and the state credit outlook was upgraded shortly thereafter. We are committed to this more responsible savings approach because we know the cyclical nature of the Oklahoma energy economy requires it.

In the quality of life area, health care will be a big focus, as will continued safe improvements to the criminal justice system. A cost of living adjustment for government retirees is long overdue to improve – or in some cases, simply maintain – quality of life for tens of thousands of retired Oklahomans who served our state. Our constituents are very interested in increased digital privacy protections and other personal liberty protections, so we'll be pursuing those, as well.

How does an election year affect the Oklahoma Legislature?
House members run for election every two years. We are the body closest to the people because we're on the doorstep listening to them and working to earn their vote more often. Election years make us even closer to the people. A lot of the legislation considered in election years addresses constituent needs and issues in the members' districts.

Election years tend to be very focused. Representatives know what their constituents want, and they focus on getting those issues addressed so they can go home and campaign on the accomplishments. In a lot of cases, a representative may have started working on an issue in a non-election year and is able to finish it in an election year. Most issues take more than one year to accomplish, and elections give representatives the chance to discuss what they have done in the past two years and pitch plans for the future.

After two consecutive years of teacher pay raises, what do you hope to accomplish in education this year?
Reducing class sizes is a big priority. Class sizes can be reduced with a modest appropriation increase that should be possible even with the tighter budget the state faces this year. After reducing class sizes, continued teacher compensation improvements are of interest to the House. We are exploring targeted raises for tenured teachers and others if the budget allows.

We're also interested in making it easier for out-of-state teachers to work in Oklahoma through licensing reciprocity for educators. Along those same lines, we are looking at ways to make it more attractive for retired or soon-to-retire teachers to return to teaching or continue teaching a while longer. Dedicated, career educators can provide a one-of-a-kind benefit to our students.

What can the Legislature do this year to support economic development?
It takes a multifaceted approach to grow an economy. Oklahoma is checking a lot of the right boxes from the programming angle of economic development. There is a whole host of programs helping recruit and retain businesses, from the Quality Jobs program to local incentive opportunities.

Looking at it from another angle, lowering the cost of doing business has to be a focus, too. Oklahoma is attractive to businesses because of low property tax rates and an improved legal climate, but it still has too many regulations and a noncompetitive state corporate income tax rate. A gradual corporate income tax rate decrease and regulatory reductions are initiatives that the House should move forward to build a more competitive business environment in Oklahoma.

THE MOSAIC 5

ACTION ITEMS TO CELEBRATE DIVERSITY, CHAMPION EQUITY AND CULTIVATE INCLUSION

MEN ADVOCATING REAL CHANGE

In December, the Chamber partnered with Hilti to bring an immersive 1.5-day diversity and inclusion training to Tulsa. The Men Advocating Real Change (MARC) Leaders Workshop was held at Hilti's Tulsa offices and attended by dozens of Tulsa-area executives and Chamber board members.

The Leaders Workshop develops inclusive leadership skills and trains executives to be more thoughtful, intentional and aware. MARC was developed by Catalyst, a global nonprofit that works with some of the world's most influential CEOs and leads companies to build organizations that work for women and underrepresented populations.

Hilti North America COO Karl Neumaier invited Chamber staff and others to participate in a Leaders Workshop at the company's Plano office in April. This training laid the groundwork for the Tulsa session.

"We thought this would be a valuable program to bring to Tulsa because we know that the majority of our leaders within area organizations are men," says Kuma Roberts, vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion at the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "Bringing male leaders together to discuss gender equity and racial inclusiveness in the workplace is an important exercise for our business community."

Here are five key takeaways from the workshop:

VULNERABILITY

The workshop drew 43 attendees representing industries such as manufacturing, oil and gas, aerospace, health care, and professional services. Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum was also present for both days. Attendees were encouraged to be vulnerable and honest throughout challenging conversations. The MARC facilitators were impressed not only by the stature of people in the room, but also their engagement with the issues discussed.

COMPANY CULTURE

Attendees were motivated to accelerate progress in the representation of women and people of color across all levels of their companies. The training focused on necessary steps to make inclusion a priority in the day-to-day of an organization, and on ensuring attention is paid to gender equity and opportunity. With an emphasis on measurability, the workshop highlighted the value of reframing engagement in retention and development strategies.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

The training helped raise awareness of the challenges that workplace systems create for women and people of color. Attendees were challenged to seek out more frequent conversations with a greater diversity of people at the companies; maintain curiosity and be engaged in discussions that deal with issues affecting women and racial minorities; develop a reading list of books that offer further chances to learn about Tulsa's complicated history on race and difference; and to be more attentive to the needs of underserved/underrepresented groups.

PARTNERSHIP

Neumaier began the workshop by stating the goal of Tulsa ultimately becoming a "MARC city" where every business leader and employee understands the value of diversity, equity and inclusion. The Chamber offers a number of ways for businesses to partner together on this goal, including Mosaic and the annual State of Inclusion event.

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES

As graduates of the Leaders Workshop, all attendees are now part of the MARC Leaders Cohort. Membership in the cohort grants access to an extensive collection of Catalyst and MARC research materials, as well as a network of peers who have gone through the same training.

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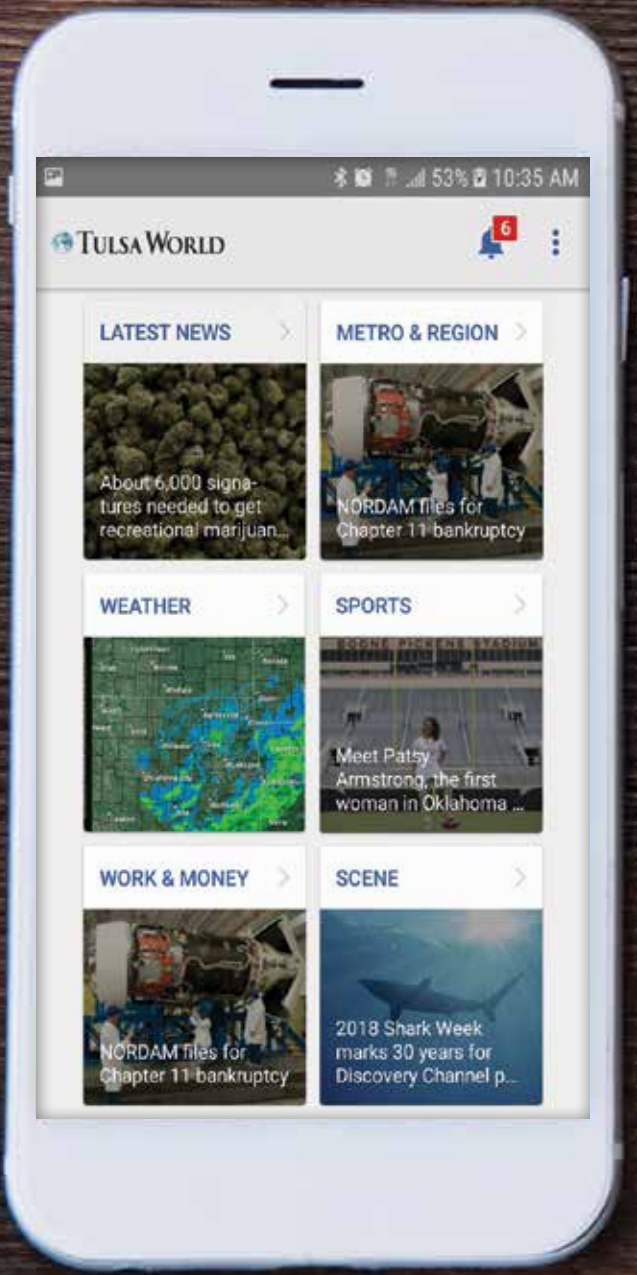

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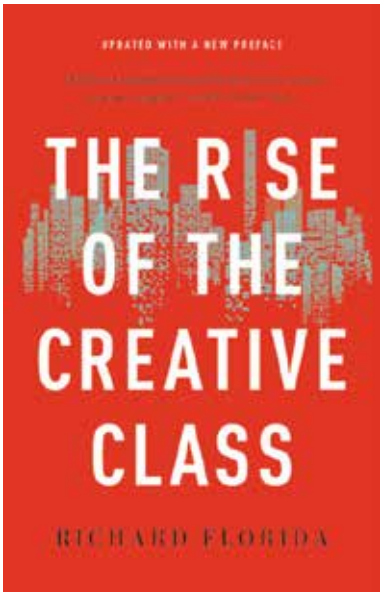
INNOVATION IN ACTION

An interview with Richard Florida

by Taylor Costley



Richard Florida is one of the world's leading urban studies theorists and futurists. His award-winning book "The Rise of the Creative Class" introduced influential concepts that continue to shape the economic development strategies of cities and regions nearly two decades after its publication.

Florida is a professor at the University of Toronto's School of Cities and Rotman School of Management, as well as a distinguished fellow at New York University and Florida International University. He is also a co-founder and editor-at-large for CityLab, a Bloomberg Media website. Additionally, he's a founder of the Creative Class Group, a global advisory firm of researchers, academics, and business strategists who work with companies and regions to achieve growth and prosperity.

In April, Florida will be the keynote speaker at the Tulsa's Future Annual Meeting, which highlights the achievements of the Chamber-led regional economic development partnership supported by public and private investors. This year's event will also unveil the next five-year strategic plan for Tulsa's Future that begins in 2021.

We spoke with Florida to discuss current trends in economic development, how Tulsa compares to other cities, and how to ensure growth and success moving forward.

RICHARD FLORIDA PRESENTS AT THE MOSCOW URBAN FORUM, 2018.

CREATIVECLASS.COM

What factors do you think will determine which cities will be most economically viable in the next 20-30 years?

I believe it still comes back to the 4 Ts of economic development that I wrote about in "The Rise of the Creative Class." They all interrelate to one another and continue to dictate how cities compete for investment.

The first is talent; how to attract and retain the best and brightest workers. This means providing housing, transportation, and amenities, as well as a strong, diversified local economy. In Tulsa, more than 127,000 residents make up the Creative Class.

The second is technology. This means hosting top tier research – whether in the private, public or academic sectors – that stimulates innovation and company formation. Tulsa, on average, captures $11 million in venture capital annually.

The third is tolerance of all people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or nationality. A tolerant culture is a culture that is open to new ideas. It also opens its arms to the smartest and most ambitious people, no matter who they are.

The fourth T, which I've been focusing on more recently, is territorial assets (also known as quality of place). These are deeply rooted institutions or natural or man-made features that make a place attractive. Universities are the most obvious one, but so are longstanding companies and civic organizations, as well as natural amenities, like access to great green spaces and public spaces like Gathering Place.

You've mentioned that attracting and retaining people is as important to economic development efforts as attracting and retaining businesses. What are some things Tulsa could do to strengthen its position as a place to attract and retain talent?

A few things. First, it is important to continue to invest in Tulsa's quality of place and downtown core. Urban environments, like Tulsa's downtown core, are increasingly important for the sparking of new ideas and innovation. They become valuable for companies because of the convenience and creative friction they afford. Chance encounters between colleagues from different companies can lead to new business partnerships and ideas.

Second, Tulsa must continue to support the development and work of organizations that connect residents together. Organizations like TYPROS are essential for helping to develop relationships and new leaders for the region, as well as ensuring talent becomes "sticky" and engaged in the community.

What communities have economic development strategies well-poised to compete in the coming decades, and where do you think Tulsa compares to those communities?

Tulsa has all of the community assets of a Denver, Austin, Nashville, or even in-state rival Oklahoma City – all smaller cities that are successfully competing for talent and investment. The key for Tulsa is to continue to make investments in its creative ecosystem, building off of its innovative and entrepreneurial legacy: developing support and a pipeline for startup firms; building onramps for talent to fully participate in the growing economy; supporting inclusive placemaking; and promoting the community's story to the world.

What are two or three of Tulsa's strongest assets?

First, I continue to be impressed by the engagement of Tulsa's business and philanthropic communities. For effective city building to "stick" in communities, you need an engaged, multi-sector approach.

Second, Tulsa is lucky to have a large collection of colleges and universities, for its size, that are connected to the regional economy and producing a plethora of graduates. The key for Tulsa's future is keeping those graduates in Tulsa.

Finally, Tulsa has a downtown core that is steeped in history and a community of investors, both public and private, that have committed to ensuring Tulsa's placemaking efforts are second to none.

FILMED IN TULSA

Tulsa's film industry makes a major impact

by Chris Rogers

Northeast Oklahoma's profile as a film location has steadily risen in the last several years. From increased interest in "The Outsiders" to the star-studded production of "August: Osage County," the Tulsa region is building momentum.

Yet there's one production in particular that's garnered the lion's share of national attention – all without even shooting a single frame of film.

"Killers of the Flower Moon."

Based on the New York Times bestseller by the same name, the story is a uniquely Oklahoma one. It investigates dozens of mysterious deaths of Osage people in the 1920s and details the efforts of the then-nascent FBI to apprehend those responsible. With acclaimed director Martin Scorsese behind the camera and Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert DeNiro in leading roles, "Killers of the Flower Moon" has Oklahoma, and the Tulsa region especially, in the national spotlight.

While the production ultimately decided to film in and around Pawhuska, there was no guarantee the story's actual location would be used to represent it on screen. Filmmakers evaluate a complex list of factors to make these location decisions, including the availability of local talent, community partners and incentives.

This is where film commissions come into play. These offices help attract a production to their community and, once successful, ensure the production has access to local resources.

Tulsa's accredited film commission, the Tulsa Office of Film, Music, Arts & Culture (Tulsa FMAC) moved from City Hall to the Tulsa Regional Chamber's tourism division in 2014. Since its founding, the office has been led by Abby Kurin, a passionate proponent of Tulsa's creative community. Tulsa FMAC is the only accredited city film commission in Oklahoma, operating alongside the Oklahoma Film + Music Office (OF+MO) and the Cherokee Nation Film Office.

For fiscal year 2017-18, Tulsa FMAC assisted 20 productions. For the next 12-month period, that number jumped to 32. This continued growth validates what Kurin has championed for years: Tulsa is a destination for filmmakers.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

As Tulsa FMAC's executive director, Kurin works with directors, producers and location scouts to ensure a smooth production.

"No project is the same, and no request we receive is the same; each project is unique with its own scope," says Kurin.

Some productions make contact during an initial phase of location scouting, while others have a strong sense of what they want and rely on Tulsa FMAC to make connections.

"To provide the best level of service to filmmakers, we help link them with everything that Tulsa can provide," says Kurin. "We can help them connect to hotel partners, help locate film crew, secure support services such as caterers and soundstages, and find filming locations."

> "[TULSA FMAC] FOUGHT FOR OUR FILM TO SHOOT IN TULSA, AND ULTIMATELY THAT RELATIONSHIP MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN OUR DECISION."

Kurin is also proactive about recruiting these filmmakers to Tulsa.

"To reach wider audiences, we ensure we have a strong presence at national industry events such as South by Southwest, as well as major film festivals such as Sundance," says Kurin. "Filmmakers want to know what resources are on hand in a given city, and if we're not there talking about Tulsa, nobody is. Through our presence at these various events, we go into larger markets to talk about what's available in Tulsa, to strengthen in-person connections and build relationships."

Last year, Tulsa FMAC organized a relationship-building event of its own, partnering with OF+MO in October to host the first-ever Oklahoma Film Familiarization Tour. The tour brought executives from Disney, Amblin Entertainment, NBC Universal and HBO to Oklahoma to showcase the state's production opportunities.

"This is our area of expertise; we're selling Tulsa every day," says Kurin. "We curated the guests' experiences and showcased not just what Tulsa has to offer, but what our film scene has to offer. Often we just need to get people to Tulsa. When they come here, they see the magic. They either don't want to leave, or they're inspired to come back."

Such was the case with "Minari," a film shot in Tulsa last summer. The film's executive producer, Josh Bachove, was familiar with Tulsa FMAC from a scouting trip for a different project. When deciding on a location for "Minari," the support and the connections he knew would be found in Tulsa played a deciding role.

"I had never filmed in Tulsa before, and our 'Minari' team was deciding between Oklahoma City and Tulsa," says

STILL FROM THE FILM "MINARI"

Bachove. "[Tulsa FMAC] fought for our film to shoot in Tulsa, and ultimately that relationship made a big difference in our decision."

"Minari" swept the top prizes at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, winning both the Audience Award and the Grand Jury Prize, and will debut in theaters later this year. It's a boost to future attraction efforts to have a critically acclaimed production speak so highly of the community.

"Abby went above and beyond to make our experience in Tulsa a great one," says Bachove. "She introduced me to local vendors and crews and connected me with key resources. We knew that through Tulsa FMAC, we could find exactly what we needed, and our time here was very positive. We will look at Tulsa again for future projects."

MAKING AN IMPACT

The region's film industry is about more than just reputation – it creates jobs and a measurable economic impact. Productions can last anywhere from six weeks to three months and provide revenue for hotels, restaurants, caterers and more. The bigger the budget, studio backing and name recognition of a film's cast, the bigger its economic impact stands to be.

With the star power of DiCaprio and Scorsese, the might of Paramount Pictures, and a budget rumored at more than $225 million, "Killers of the Flower Moon" will have the biggest economic impact of any film shot in Oklahoma.

OF+MO compares early estimates of the production's anticipated impact to that of other major-studio productions. For example, The Albuquerque Journal reported that Twentieth Century Fox's "Independence Day: Resurgence" had a $44 million economic impact on New Mexico from 158 days of shooting. The production hired more than 5,750 locals who were paid collectively more than $19.4 million in wages. OF+MO expects "Killers of the Flower Moon" could similarly employ thousands of local crew and extras and spend millions on local labor, lodging, transportation and food.

In the same way Oklahoma offers incentives to attract this kind of economic impact from major corporate expansions or capital investment, the state also offers incentives to attract film productions. The Oklahoma Film Enhancement Rebate Program offers a cash rebate for qualifying expenses to productions filming in the state. The rebate is available on a first-come, first-served basis with no per-project cap. Productions must have a minimum budget of $50,000 and spend at least $25,000 in Oklahoma.

In 2019, the Chamber successfully advocated for an increase in the film enhancement rebate, from $4 million available per fiscal year to $8 million. In addition, legislators modified the Governor's Quick Action Closing Fund, allowing it be spent to lure high-impact productions to the state. Both incentives were used to close the deal with "Killers of the Flower Moon."

Kurin says this resonates with filmmakers nationwide and strengthens the capacity to attract more projects, which in turn increases the economic impact of Oklahoma-based productions. To further that impact, last year Tulsa FMAC launched the Tulsa Creativity Database, an online database showcasing Tulsa's creative industries.

"Our city is the only city in the nation with this extensive of a database at the city level," says Kurin. "Tulsa is the creative hub of Oklahoma, and we wanted a user-friendly and powerful tool to showcase that."

Through the Tulsa Creativity Database, social media, local events and appearances at national events, Tulsa FMAC bolsters the image and caliber of the region's creative community.

> "WE PUT OUT THE WORD THAT NO MATTER THE SIZE OF YOUR PROJECT, TULSA WANTS TO HELP, AND WE'RE HUNGRY FOR IT."

"We're creating strong relationships not only with projects coming here from out of state, but also with production companies here in Oklahoma," says Kurin. "We put out the word that no matter the size of your project, Tulsa wants to help, and we're hungry for it."

FORGING AHEAD

Kurin describes each movie filmed locally as a "moving postcard" that helps sell Tulsa to a wider audience.

"Tulsa FMAC promotes that these projects happened in Tulsa," Kurin says. "From an industry standpoint, that's how we get the word out."

Coming off a record year for productions assisted, there's much more work to look forward to. Tulsa filmmaker Sterlin Harjo has partnered with Academy Award-winning director Taika Waititi on a television pilot for FX. Harjo is nationally regarded as an important Native American voice in cinema.

"We've enjoyed working with Sterlin, who is a native Oklahoman as well as a great advocate for Tulsa-based filming," says Kurin.

She's encouraged by the number of people from Tulsa who want to return here to create their project, as well as the people who make their decisions after visiting for the first time.

"Tulsa inspires so many people to come here and film, we're excited to see where we are today and to look forward to where we'll be in five years," says Kurin. "We're continually growing, and it's a collaborative effort. When incentive meets advocacy meets resources, we all win."

FILMING OF "SICK GIRL"

SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

CIRRUS PAYROLL

Cirrus Payroll is a full-service payroll provider for small businesses. The company was founded in 2012 and has grown its presence nationwide. We spoke with Tyler Winn, Cirrus' president and founder, to learn more about him and his business.

Tell us about yourself and Cirrus Payroll.
I'm a Tulsa native, born and raised here by my wonderful parents. I'm raising my family here as well. My wife Monica and I have been married for five years now, and we have two beautiful sons, Wesley (three years old) and Elliot (six months).

Cirrus Payroll has been in business since 2012. We make it easy for the small business owner to outsource all the risk and complexity of payroll processing and payroll tax compliance. Since day one, we've been laser-focused on the small business owner. Most of our clients have fewer than 25 employees. We love serving that segment of the market.

We're a local payroll service – most of our clients are in the state of Oklahoma – but we have a national presence as well, processing payroll in more than 40 states. I'm a CPA who only offers payroll (no accounting or tax), and that's rare. A lot of other CPAs around the country have seen what we're doing and have decided to partner with us to process payroll for their clients.

When did you know you were ready to start your own business?
I've had entrepreneurial leanings since my teenage years. I was reading books on business and economics even back then. In college, I started an online book exchange business for students to buy and sell textbooks from each other, rather than going through the campus bookstore (I could have been the next Amazon…oh well). After college, I knew it was time to take the leap into business ownership. I was dreading going to work Monday through Friday, but on Saturdays, I was jumping out of bed to work on side gigs I had taken. It was an itch I just had to scratch.

What advice would you give to young professionals thinking about starting their own business?
If you want to grow a business, you have to grow as a person. Business growth presents a constant stream of new challenges that you can't overcome if you remain the same person you were yesterday. To meet these challenges and succeed, you must perpetually strengthen your mindset and learn new ideas. Invest in yourself. Read books. Listen to podcasts. Go to conferences. Spend time with people who are smarter and more successful than you. If you commit to being a lifelong learner, success will be a byproduct.

How do you set yourself apart from your competitors?
Hiring and retaining great employees. Nothing sets you apart like the quality of your team. I see some of our larger competitors experiencing high employee turnover. Every time they lose an employee, that knowledge and experience walks out the door. On the flip side, the longer I retain my amazing team members, the stronger we become. For that reason, employee happiness is a top priority for me. I enjoy getting creative to show my appreciation. For example, my employees work from home. Because that's their "office," I pay for a house cleaning service to clean their homes every two weeks.

Tulsa was recently ranked as one of the best cities to start a business. Why do you think Tulsa is a great place for entrepreneurs?
Tulsa somehow provides this unique mix of big-city opportunity with small-town community. It's a big enough place to cast a wide net over a lot of potential customers, but small enough that reputation matters. If you do business with integrity, people will notice and want to do business with you. We've been in business for eight years, and always doing the right thing for our customers and employees has helped us build incredible momentum.

Where do you hope to see Cirrus Payroll in five years?
We have a good thing going. Small business payroll is what we do best, and I have no plans to try and expand into a ton of other related services or go after bigger fish. I'm a big believer in specialization and staying in your lane. I see us doing the same things we're doing now, but with more clients and an expanded team! We'll continue to improve the quality of our service over time.

You enjoy visiting different coffee shops around Tulsa – what's your favorite?
My favorite place to work right now is DoubleShot's new location on Boulder Avenue. The space is beautiful with tons of natural light. I get there every Monday morning when they open at 7 a.m. to plan out my week with a cup of coffee and a sausage roll. It's a peaceful place to think and get work done.

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