NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2020

TULSA REGIONAL CHAMBER

THE CHAMBER REPORT

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

CHAMBER OF THE YEAR
2005 • 2008 • 2010 • 2020

TO BE CONTINUED...

Mike Neal
President & CEO

As we wrap up what has most certainly been the most unusual and challenging year in modern history, I want to thank each of you – our Chamber members, business leaders, elected officials and regional partners – for all you have done, and continue to do, to ensure our communities will survive the COVID-19 pandemic and thrive in the years ahead. Ours has always been a resilient region, and that resilience will serve us well yet again as we move into 2021.

Despite our challenges, we have much for which to be grateful. As you will see in the pages that follow, much was accomplished this year across each of the Chamber's strategic initiatives – economic development, regional tourism, government affairs and community development – to support the business community during this critical time.

In spite of everything, optimism is still well-founded. As the pandemic has continued, Tulsa's unique virtues – our low costs of living and doing business, high quality of life, central location, educational and training institutions, and eager workforce – have attracted the attention of businesses and talent alike looking to trade big city hassles for a more manageable and satisfying way of life.

If this year has taught us anything, it is that predicting the future is a highly imprecise science. However, if I had to make a few predictions for what the months and years ahead may bring, I would wager that we, as a region, will fare far better than most.

I'm confident this will be true because we will make it true. We will continue to invest in our workers and in our businesses. We will continue to collaborate to solve thorny issues. We will continue to create art, and music, and a way of life that others can only envy. In a word, we will continue.

Of course, we need every one of you in order to be successful. Your contributions of time, energy, expertise and financial resources are absolutely essential. The work we do at the Chamber could not happen without your continued investment in us, and we never take you for granted.

Again, thank you for being our partners in regional economic prosperity. As you reflect on your own accomplishments this year, please be reminded that all of us at the Chamber stand alongside you and are always eager to help in any way we can. Do not hesitate to let me or any member of our staff know how we can further assist you.

Today and every day, our partnership with each of you is very much to be continued…

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MEMBERSHIP & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Allison Walden
Senior Vice President
Resource Development

With more than 2,150 member organizations representing 178,000 employees, the Tulsa Regional Chamber supports area businesses of all shapes and sizes. As a membership organization, the needs of our members are our top priority. We had to drastically rethink our resources, programs and events this year to come up with new ways of providing value to our members.

Shortly after the pandemic began, members of the resource development team personally reached out to every Chamber member to learn how we could best support them. Based on feedback gleaned from these calls, as well as additional surveying of the region's business community, the Chamber launched its virtual Business Support Series of conference calls and webinars to share timely information, expertise and know-how. Area leaders and experts offered insights on topics ranging from leadership and business operations to relief assistance and human resources. More than 800 people benefited from this event series during the peak of the economic crisis.

In July, the Chamber partnered with Tulsa County to source and distribute free personal protective equipment (PPE) for area small businesses and nonprofits. This partnership was able to distribute 2,550 kits to nearly 2,000 area companies at a time when these vital supplies were difficult to find and essential for safely reopening.

I've been amazed at the resilience of our small businesses and how they've managed to pivot their operations in the face of extreme adversity. More than 600 people tuned in to our virtual Tulsa Small Business Summit in the fall, which equipped attendees with strategies and tools to move their businesses, organizations and teams forward. We also recognized some of the region's small business leaders for the great impact they have on the community during our annual Small Business Awards presentation.

The pandemic required the Chamber itself to find new funding solutions, and we continue to be amazed by the generosity of our members during this very challenging time. We owe a special thank you to the nearly 40 companies that provided gifts of more than $80,000 to support our mission in the early weeks of the pandemic. These gifts helped ensure our ability to continue providing valuable services and resources to our members. In addition, our annual Resource Campaign achieved 83% of an ambitious goal thanks to the 227 companies that purchased sponsorships. We also achieved the annual retention goals that we set pre-pandemic – we'll end the year retaining 86% of our members from 2019, an unexpected achievement that speaks to the loyalty of our members.

We thank each and every one of our members for your generous support. Our work would not be possible without your partnership, and we look forward to being your partner in prosperity in the year ahead.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Elizabeth Osburn
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs

The Chamber's government affairs team is a force multiplier for our members. So many companies do not have the staff or capacity to engage in sustained, long-term advocacy. Our team is able to manage key relationships and champion policies on your behalf, allowing you to focus on your company's operations and growth. During such a tumultuous year, these services were more imperative than ever.

Since March, our team has been in near constant contact with local, state and federal leaders. These open lines of communication not only allow us to have the most up-to-date information to share with Chamber members, but also enable us to persuasively advocate for relief measures essential to business survival and recovery.

Through it all, we also maintained our schedule of events that provide opportunities for learning and engagement. We conducted an entirely virtual OneVoice legislative process, gathering hundreds of individuals in task forces and at the OneVoice summit to compile our 2021 legislative agenda. The OneVoice agenda guides the unified state and federal advocacy efforts of dozens of northeast Oklahoma organizations committed to a more prosperous future for our region. While this advocacy may have looked different than during a normal year, it has been just as effective.

In addition to helping the business community navigate the pandemic, our team celebrated a number of key long-term policy wins. The passage of State Question 802 to expand Medicaid in Oklahoma will make our state more competitive for capital investment from companies considering a relocation or expansion. Our advocacy also helped protect several key economic development incentives used to attract significant new employers to our region, and we continue to see federal support for major infrastructure projects, such as the Gilcrease Expressway and Tulsa's levee system.

The Chamber's government affairs team had long anticipated 2020 would be a busy political year, but we had no idea what was truly in store. This year has shown why the business community has a keen interest in public affairs – in times of crisis, it's absolutely essential. As our region recovers, we will continue helping Chamber members partner with policymakers who share our commitment to northeast Oklahoma's economic prosperity.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Justin McLaughlin
Executive Vice President and COO
Interim Senior Vice President, Economic Development

Northeast Oklahoma's businesses showed perseverance and innovation throughout what has been the most difficult year many of us have ever faced. In support of this resilience, the Chamber's business retention and workforce development efforts have never been more critical. We focused on doing everything we could for existing businesses, shifting our strategy to provide the resources and support necessary to retain as many jobs and workers as possible.

The Chamber partnered with Mayor G.T. Bynum and the City of Tulsa on the Mayor's Economic Recovery Advisory Committee, convening key partners to address issues ranging from unemployment to supply chain opportunities brought about by COVID-19. Building on the committee's recommendations, we launched a study of dislocated workers to better understand which skill sets are available in the talent pipeline and what will be needed to compete in the future job market. We recognize how the pandemic has exacerbated wealth gaps and created deeper disparities throughout the region, which is why the study places an intentional focus on collecting a variety of perspectives to ensure our resiliency strategies are as inclusive as possible.

Even during these challenging times, northeast Oklahoma had several major economic development wins. In February, American Airlines announced a $550 million capital investment at its Tulsa maintenance base – the largest single capital investment in city history. Despite a turbulent business climate, American recently affirmed plans to move forward with the investment. Years of work by the Chamber's economic development team also culminated this year when Milo's Tea Company, Amazon and Sofidel each opened facilities and added thousands of jobs to the region's payroll. Additionally, Muncie Power Products broke ground on its manufacturing plant at the Peoria-Mohawk Business Park, and the Chamber's long-term partnership with Whirlpool continued as the company opened a $55 million, state-of-the-art distribution center.

While our main focus this year was to support existing business, Tulsa gained national attention as a finalist for the next Tesla Gigafactory. Although we didn't land the project, the publicity put Tulsa on the map as a legitimate contender for major economic development projects moving forward. We are already capitalizing on this momentum as economic development projects pick up in the coming year.

This year also marks the end of the latest Tulsa's Future five-year strategic plan. Tulsa's Future continues to be the gold standard of regional collaboration for economic prosperity, and our success during the past five years would not have been possible without the support of more than 200 private investors and regional and tribal partners. Since 2016, Tulsa's Future has supported the creation of more than 16,000 jobs and more than $1.9 billion in capital investment in northeast Oklahoma. As we look to the year ahead, we are focused on positioning northeast Oklahoma for a rapid recovery. Fundraising is underway for Tulsa's Future: Road to Recovery, a one-year, $3 million campaign and strategic work plan that will address today's urgent needs for recovery and stabilization while paving the way for a longer-term, five-year plan to launch in 2022.

While 2021 will undoubtedly bring continued uncertainty, we remain steadfast in our pursuit of economic prosperity. I continue to be optimistic for our region's future and am confident Tulsa's best days lie on the road ahead.

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REGIONAL TOURISM

Ray Hoyt
Senior Vice President
Regional Tourism

In 2020, the Tulsa Regional Tourism team got creative in the face of crisis to safely hold 77 events – 56 of those during a pandemic! – and generate more than $145 million in total economic impact.

We relocated a record-breaking 10 events from other communities to Tulsa in-year. Leveraging funds from private investors in our Momentum campaign, we also retained eight major events. In 2021, we plan to use Momentum funds in support of 11 events that are projected to have a combined economic impact of $117 million – that's a return on investment of 131:1!

We secured $1.4 million in CARES Act funding from Tulsa County to assist our industry's recovery. With those funds, we launched some of the most successful programs in our organization's history.

The first such program is the Tulsa Safely Pandemic Partnership of more than 195 businesses that followed the CDC and Tulsa Health Department's guidelines for reopening. With a directory of participating businesses, stickers on the front doors of partner locations, blog posts detailing how to experience Tulsa safely, and a robust digital marketing campaign, Tulsa Safely has anchored much of the regional tourism industry throughout the pandemic. We project the marketing campaign will reach more than 50 million potential travelers within an eight-hour drive radius when all is said and done. The team's work not only drove millions of people to consider their next trip to Tulsa, but also aided in elevating Tulsa as a top travel destination.

Other Tulsa County CARES-funded projects provided assistance to our region's film and music industries, which are integral to northeast Oklahoma's cultural scene and make Tulsa a vibrant destination for both locals and visitors.

Through Play Tulsa Music, we supported more than 700 live music performances at 33 Tulsa County music venues and facilitated more than $150,000 of income for area musicians. The Tulsa County Film Recovery Program awarded $90,000 to five film projects, which resulted in 320 jobs for local film professionals, 1,169 workdays for local film crew members and 2,389 booked room nights at Tulsa County hotels.

We continue to sell the future and keep our pipeline full. During the past six months alone, we announced Sundance Film Festival's selection of Circle Cinema as a satellite screening location next year, IRONMAN's selection of Tulsa as their North American Championship in 2021, and the NCAA's selection of Tulsa to host the Division 1 Wrestling Championships in 2023. With these exciting events in store for Tulsa, the future is full of hope.

In 2020, Tulsa Regional Tourism remained focused on creating and seizing opportunities and building and leveraging strong partnerships in order to position our industry for a quick recovery. I can say with confidence that those plans were successful, and I look forward to bringing more visitors back to Tulsa safely in 2021.

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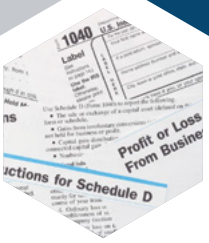

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Kuma Roberts
Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Among the multitude of challenges our nation faced in 2020, issues of race, privilege and power took center stage. The need to reckon with these issues in our own community feels particularly urgent as we approach the centennial anniversary of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. I've fielded questions from hundreds of business leaders who want to know how their companies can or should respond, as well as the role of the business community in ensuring a more equitable Tulsa.

The Chamber helps answer these questions primarily through Mosaic, our coalition of companies and nonprofit partners committed to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). In 2020, Mosaic hosted several forums, training sessions and community conversations with a particular focus on equity. From more than 40 presentations at individual businesses and nonprofits to a virtual implicit bias training attended by more than 600 people, Mosaic is proud to be your company's partner in creating a more inclusive workplace and more equitable community.

To further the Chamber's commitment to DEI, our Board of Directors also adopted a framework for considering significant decisions with a race equity lens. By utilizing this equity lens, our staff, leadership, board members, volunteers and members can all contribute to advancing inclusion and the creation of equitable outcomes that help all northeast Oklahomans thrive.

The Chamber is determined to increase economic opportunity, particularly for those who have been excluded from progress in the past. We will continue to engage the business community to listen, to learn and to create a better future for our region.

Andrea Pemberton
Executive Director of TYPROS

TYPROS is relentlessly focused on making Tulsa a great place for young people to live, work and play. While the pandemic certainly altered our plans for 2020, we quickly pivoted to continue delivering on our purpose: connecting people, developing leaders and building community in Tulsa.

This year taught us to be creative in how we foster connections between people, as the overwhelming majority of our events took place virtually. Despite the need to maintain physical distance, we hosted more than 60 events that strengthened the social connections between young Tulsans. Our virtual Boomtown Awards was the largest such event, during which we recognized several leaders who helped our community "ride the wave" of 2020.

We also continued to develop young talent, both to aid in their pursuit of professional goals and their stature as significant voices in our community. Our 918 Vote campaign gave TYPROS volunteers a front-row seat in civic leadership. These volunteers helped register more than 1,400 new voters and partnered with the League of Women Voters to host the only livestreamed virtual candidate forum ahead of Tulsa's mayoral primary.

The need for community was as critical as ever this year. Through the TYPROS Foundation, we awarded 10 micro-grants to projects that directly met community needs as a result of the pandemic. We also announced the foundation's 2021 placemaking grantees, all of whom are young Tulsans of color. This renewed energy towards diversity and equity is also apparent in TYPROS' 2021 leadership team, the most diverse in our organization's 15-year history.

Tulsa has always been a home for dreamers, and TYPROS equips and empowers young talent with skills and resources to make their dreams a reality. As we strive to build an inclusive community where all young Tulsans can thrive, we're excited to help unlock the potential of Tulsa's next generation of business and civic leaders.

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COVID-19 WORKPLACE GUIDELINES

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Stay home if you are sick.

COVID-19 symptoms include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and loss of taste or smell.

Wash your hands often.

Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

Wear a mask.

Cloth face coverings can slow the spread of the virus. Face covers should fit snugly against the side of the face, include multiple layers of fabric, and be able to be laundered and machine dried.

Clean and disinfect.

Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces, such as keyboards, telephones, light switches, drawers, cabinets, handrails and doorknobs, as well as shared equipment, such as printers and copiers.

Keep your distance.

Keeping six feet between you and others is one of the best ways to avoid exposure and slow the spread of the virus.

Avoid touching your face.

Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

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Northeast Oklahoma's business community has displayed unwavering courage in the face of adversity. We'll celebrate this courage and the resilience of our region during the inauguration of Rose Washington, CEO of TEDC Creative Capital, as our 2021 board chair. In addition to Washington's inaugural address, the event will feature reflections from outgoing Chair Roger Ramseyer of Cox Communications and the presentation of awards to several outstanding Chamber partners.

Register @ tulsachamber.com/events