



Tulsa Metro Chamber

2011 ISSUES PLATFORM

1. Regionalism

Regional cooperation between governmental bodies is a key component in addressing large, complex problems, and ensuring the actions of one municipality or county do not adversely affect their neighbors. Many of the problems elected officials now face cannot be confined to the political boundaries; economic development, tourism, public safety, pollution management, transportation infrastructure construction, and land planning all require governmental entities to work together to meet the needs of their unique, and often overlapping or shared, communities.

Regional organizations in Louisville, Kentucky, and Indianapolis, Indiana, have taken great strides forward in economic development, the efficient use of resources and tax dollars, and enhancing the quality of life for their residents. Locally, the Tulsa region has received immeasurable benefits through increased planning and leveraging of resources within the Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG), the Vision 2025 community development plan, and the *OneVoice* regional legislative agenda. These are programs, initiatives, and governmental structures that should be learned from, duplicated when appropriate, and altered where needed to meet the needs of the Tulsa region.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber strongly believes that regional partnerships need to not only be increased, but actively sought after; and that barriers to regional cooperation at both local and state levels should be removed. Our partners in this initiative will be proactively working toward the formation of a regional body in the long-term, and removal of the duplication of services in the short-term.

2. City Charter

The City Charter represents an intentionally-constructed document, approved by the citizens of Tulsa, which should serve as a guiding principle for our elected officials. The City of Tulsa, therefore, functions best when all elected parties are abiding by the parameters set forth in the City Charter and seek to fulfill their obligations accordingly.

Because of this, the Tulsa Metro Chamber strongly believes that the City Charter is to be respected, adhered to, and turned to for guidance by Tulsa's elected officials. Changes to the City Charter, if they are needed, should be done through the formal Charter revision process and include the full consent of Tulsa's voters. Our partners in this initiative will support the City Charter and its guidelines, adhere to the parameters it

establishes, and seek to alter the Charter only through appropriate means and when significant need is demonstrated.

3. Education Issues

A strong education system is key to a healthy, productive workforce. The increased international competition for both talent and opportunity, combined with dramatic technological advancements, requires that we prepare our students for unanticipated jobs, in unknown locations. These realities require an education system predicated upon the development of complex thinking skills; a firm foundation in math, science and reading skills; and a college preparatory curriculum that provides every student with the tools necessary to succeed in post-secondary education.

In order to meet these goals, the Tulsa Public School district must be both supported and encouraged by the private sector and the City of Tulsa. Challenging decisions including school consolidation, performance-based pay, regular student assessments and longitudinal data, and bolstered educational attainment standards all require community partners and collaborators to ensure success. We also must seek to support innovation and discovery in our classrooms through proven charter school models that meet the needs of all students, and seek to strengthen our city's overall educational pipeline.

Education remains a top priority for the Tulsa Metro Chamber. Our partners in this initiative will share this passion, and will both support TPS in its current reform efforts as well as seek to find opportunities for collaboration and mutually-beneficial endeavors between the City of Tulsa, Tulsa's educational organizations, our generous philanthropic community, and the private sector.

4. Support for "The Next Vision Package"

Ensuring the continual growth of our community requires shared investments in its infrastructure, educational institutions, public spaces, and attractions. The passage of Vision 2025 marked the first step in collaboratively focusing municipal and county resources to accomplish significant advancements in a short period of time. Its accomplishments, including the BOK Center; OU-Tulsa, OSU-Tulsa, NSU-Broken Arrow, Langston-Tulsa, and TCC-Southeast; the Oklahoma Aquarium; regional community centers; the Morton Health Clinic; and numerous infrastructure improvements continue to be seen as hallmarks of our community, and points of pride for our citizens.

The first Vision 2025 funding source will begin to become available in 2017, and every effort needs to be made to reinvest in a second round of critical community improvements. Planning for this initiative must begin in earnest within the next one to two years, and should reconvene a group of committed regional partners representing all area stakeholders.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber strongly believes that this is the greatest tool available in moving our region forward. Our partners in this initiative will share this vision, and commit to making every possible effort in ensuring the successful creation, passage, and implementation of the “Next Vision Package.”

5. Neighborhood Associations and Infill Development

Successful cities must actively work to strike a mutually-beneficial balance between neighborhood preservation and new growth. This is especially true for Tulsa, where land use has become increasingly segregated under the past 30 years of zoning codes and restrictions. This segregation has often led to a lack of access to resources, increased distances from neighborhoods to places of employment, and “suburban sprawl” that decreases urban economies of scale and reduces mass transit options.

While separate spaces for residential, commercial and industrial uses is often desired, the recent PLANiTULSA initiative demonstrated both public support and increased need for mixed use spaces and increased density within Tulsa’s urban core. To accommodate this, Tulsa must work toward developing mixed-use zoning code regulations that permits work/living spaces, neighborhood grocery stores and other commercial outlets, and facilitates ease of access. While preservation of Tulsa’s historic neighborhoods and structures is paramount, this also requires a transition from residence-only neighborhoods to multi-purpose building that intentionally preserves the character of the area.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber is willing to work toward a model of shared use which accommodates both the need for safe neighborhoods and the preservation of historic areas; while also providing its residents with retail possibilities, increasing walkability, and creating distinct centers of urban density. Our partners in this initiative will share these broad goals, and be willing to work toward developing new standards for infill and urban development that responsibly meets the needs of both homeowners and Tulsa’s development community.

6. Intermodal Facilities and Transportation

As energy costs continue to rise, developing new modes of transportation for residents, goods, and services will be a key component of a thriving region. Northeast Oklahoma is fortunate to have several modes of transportation coalesced in one location: the Tulsa Port of Catoosa, the Tulsa International Airport, commercial rail, and our network of interstates and highways.

To take full advantage of these resources, the Tulsa region must seek to ensure their long-term feasibility and create an interconnected system that leverages the strengths of each mode of transportation. Key to this initiative will be intermodal facilities linking

the Tulsa Port of Catoosa with the Tulsa International Airport, area highways, and rail lines; the creation of public/private partnerships (possibly through toll bridges and similar tools) to maintain and expand our existing infrastructure; the strengthening of mass transit options, including public bus routes and taxi services; and investment in new modes of transportation including light and passenger rail.

Many of these projects are too large in scale to be managed by any one governmental body or locality. The realization of these goals will require concerted efforts by municipalities, counties, state and federal government, and business organizations. The Tulsa Metro Chamber stands committed to these efforts, and will work to build regional consensus and strategic partnerships in ensuring their completion. Our partners in this initiative will share this commitment, be willing to dedicate resources and/or secure funding, and work with other regional partners to ensure individual projects are strategically implemented.

7. River Development

The Arkansas River is the Tulsa region's greatest natural resource, and a comprehensive river development initiative has the potential to significantly benefit all of our communities. The framework for this development has been laid out in the Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan, completed in August 2004, and identifies both infrastructure improvements and the creation of public spaces along 42 miles of the Arkansas River corridor.

The implementation of this framework should be a top priority of the Tulsa region. With a lack of access to federal funding for the foreseeable future, we must immediately begin to build public-private partnerships that leverage our individual strengths, adopt a regional approach, and ensure buy-in from all governmental organizations and regional communities. This public-private coalition should include state, municipal and county governments and authorities; Chambers of Commerce and other representatives of the business community; and community foundations. All partners should be willing to actively engage in, and contribute to, this effort.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber views this as a top priority for the Tulsa region, and an issue where Tulsa's citizens demand action. Our partners in this initiative will strongly support a public/private partnership as the vehicle for river development, and will seek any and all means to expedite the acquisition of funding sources, the completion of environmental feasibility studies and design work, and the beginning of physical construction.

8. Renewal of the “Fix Our Streets” Package

When voters overwhelmingly approved the “Fix Our Streets” package in 2008, they clearly voiced their disapproval with the existing state of our streets infrastructure — and their willingness to do something about it.

Much of the support the “Fix Our Streets” package enjoyed was directly tied to expectations that it was only a first step: that two, possibly three packages would follow in its footsteps. The initial 15-year plan, overlooked in favor of the final 5-year package, clearly identified the immense number of critical roads projects we still need to address in dramatically raising Tulsa’s overall Pavement Condition Index (PCI). Rather than viewing the “Fix Our Streets” package as a one-time band-aid, it must be viewed as the first step in a long-term maintenance strategy — one that will ensure our road conditions never again reach such a state of disrepair.

In addition to repairing our current infrastructure, the next “Fix Our Streets” package should give consideration to future transportation needs—particularly areas where increased transit options could enhance economic development, mobility and access, and environmental quality efforts in the Tulsa region. We should not miss a powerful opportunity to prepare our transportation infrastructure to face the increased demands and higher energy costs we will undoubtedly face in the future. Efforts should take into account the Tulsa Regional Transportation System Plan, currently being developed by the Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG); as well as PLANiTULSA, the development plan created by Tulsa’s citizens and area stakeholders.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber firmly believes that our ability to recruit top companies, employers, and talent is directly tied to the state of our infrastructure. Our city’s long-term health also relies upon a well-maintained infrastructure that doesn’t inhibit its residents. Our partners in this initiative will work to immediately begin planning for “Fix Our Streets II,” identifying the next wave of projects and ensuring they both target high-need projects and are equally distributed across Tulsa. They will also recognize the importance of a strong public buy-in and outreach process to ensure voter support, and will keep this focus throughout all stages of development.

9. Downtown Revitalization

A vibrant downtown acts as the hub of innovation, activity, and growth for a region. It is an irreplaceable component in effective transportation policy and infrastructure, meaningful historic preservation, a diverse community of entrepreneurship, the attraction a young and talented workforce, and in defining the identity of our city. Tulsa’s strength and vitality can be directly measured by the strength of its downtown: we grow when our downtown is growing; we become stagnant when our downtown is weak.

The recent construction of the BOK Center and the ONEOK Drillers Stadium have ushered in an era of downtown revitalization, a boom in small business growth and property ownership, the rehabilitation of several historic buildings, the hosting of world-class events and conferences, and a growth in visitors from both within the state of Oklahoma and around the world. This momentum must be built upon through concerted planning and efforts on the part of Tulsa's city government, private partners in the community, and outside resources.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber and its member businesses are strong proponents of continued downtown revitalization. Our partners in this initiative will recognize the importance of a strong downtown, and will seek creative avenues for continued growth (through both public and private investments).

10. Coordinated Efforts on the Convention and Visitors Bureau

Attracting visitors to Tulsa – either in small tourism groups or in larger conventions – is a key part of our city's economic development and tax revenue strategies. This is especially important when considering Tulsa's dependence on sales tax for General Fund revenue, and the surges in sales tax revenue visitors create. The Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) plays a key role in marketing Tulsa on an international level, and bidding for large-scale events. Continued support for the CVB is therefore vital to the success of our region.

National examples and recent studies highlight the value and efficacy of chamber/city partnerships in managing a convention and visitors bureau. For years, the City of Tulsa – through its Economic Development Commission – has partnered with the Tulsa Metro Chamber to manage the Convention and Visitors Bureau ("VisitTulsa"). This partnership has been invaluable: the Tulsa Metro Chamber, as the lead business organization in the Tulsa region, has an unparalleled capacity to bring regional stakeholders to the table, coordinate with regional businesses, and partner with other organizations in ensuring a comprehensive approach to large- and small-scale events.

The City of Tulsa and the Tulsa Metro Chamber have recently taken important steps to clearly define expectations, establish measureable goals and objectives, and work together to ensure the success of Tulsa's CVB efforts. The Tulsa Metro Chamber believes that continued coordination between the Chamber and City of Tulsa is crucial, and the existing model represents the strongest configuration for Tulsa's CVB. Our partners in this initiative will share this vision, and work to strengthen both the City's and Chamber's partnership as well as the CVB's institutional capacity.

11. Diversity and Inclusion

A key factor in attracting and retaining strong businesses and talented individuals is offering a high quality of life to all of Tulsa's citizens. Economic data proves that

successful states and economic regions welcome a diversity of individuals, talents and insights. Experts have repeatedly cited inclusivity and a thriving, diverse population as critical components in attracting young professionals, retaining the best local talent, and being considered as a preferred destination for businesses, conventions and events, and tourists.

Tulsa's history makes this priority all the more urgent for our city, as we seek to overcome our historic racial and ethnic divides. Efforts to increase diversity and inclusion must also include recent conversations of sexual orientation and inclusion in the workplace; the damaging effects of immigration policy at both a state and local level to our Hispanic communities; and continued outreach to minority businesses. A comprehensive approach that addresses all of these concerns must be a part of our efforts as a community. A diverse population is vital to ensuring our region's long-term success, growth, and development.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber strongly supports efforts that create an inclusive and diverse community, and work to improve the social and economic climate of our region. We also recognize the importance of self-improvement, and strive to ensure our own organization mirrors these principles. Our partners in this initiative will strongly support public diversity and inclusion initiatives, will stand against policies that further divide our community, and will proactively seek out opportunities to improve these efforts in Tulsa.