

## Reinventing Oklahoma City

When you think about it, the I-40 cross town relocation, the reinvention of the Oklahoma River, MAPS for Kids and \$60/bbl oil all present Oklahoma City with one of those “Golden Moments”. Not since the boom days of the 1950’s has Oklahoma had such a confluence of favorable social, civic and economic events. Whether you are a multi-generation Oklahoma family or a first generation immigrant; if you are in tune with Oklahoma City, you know its about what you WANT to be, not what you HAVE to be. We are still capable of reinventing our lives here in Oklahoma.

Ever since the implementation of busing in the 1970’s Oklahomans have been fleeing the central core of Oklahoma City for the quality schools in the suburbs. We built the roads to allow fast traffic throughout the metro and drained the downtown and central area of the city. We called it progress or change or suburbanization or racism. Regardless of the epithet, the attractor for families moving was *good schools*. Now, 30 years hence, it seems like we have learned how to live together, with respect and fondness for our differences in culture. We are literally and mentally rebuilding Oklahoma City Schools. Oklahoma City has been blessed with an attitude of tolerance engendered in great part by city, state, federal and many private employers that are such a great part of our economy. After the Murrah Bombing we recognized that just as we all suffered together, we could all live together.

*Those roads travel both ways.*

Oklahoma City pleasantly surprised itself with the original MAPS by discovering that we could efficiently create a viable downtown entertainment district. That clued us in that we could build downtown and the same roads we used to flee downtown could bring us back for a good time – or more. Those who have chosen to live in the city’s core have also discovered that the convenience and amenities of the city’s center are great.

The Grove Area East of Byers and South of I-40 and west of I-35 and North of the river is a great example of an opportunity to reinvent the city. It is 15 acres of abandoned housing which has been mostly consolidated by a few investors. It is ideal for a corporate campus or a multifamily housing complex. It could be a specialty shopping district. The thing is, it’s there – consolidated, undeveloped and waiting to be filled with ideas.

Race relations in Oklahoma City are good, but very promising areas of African-American Oklahoma City remain undeveloped. Areas are now ripe for the development that skipped them from the 70’s up to now. If you drive up Kelly from NE 23<sup>rd</sup> to I-44, you are in the country (beautiful country, I might add) *and* within 2 miles of the Capitol. NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street between the Governor’s Mansion and I-35 is as bypassed as any strip of small town Oklahoma. The NE corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Martin Luther King is not a Retail Power Center like you would expect, but 18 acres of woodland. This is a huge opportunity for those that own property in this area.

Lets talk about Highways – I-40 is the northernmost all season highway in the US. From Wilmington, Delaware to Los Angeles it carries the trade of the Sunbelt and the vast quantities of imports that we buy. I-35 connects Not Norman to Guthrie, but Monterrey to Winnipeg. I-44 does not just go to Tulsa – it goes to Chicago, Detroit, Windsor, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec. The confluence of these “Mississippi Rivers” of truck trade is...undeveloped. The area between the river and NE 4<sup>th</sup> street and east of downtown is bypassed by development. Whatever the forces were that created these situations, they are changing. What will fill these opportunities is *big ideas* that make sense.

Lets look at some of the Haves and Needs of our city:

### **Haves**

- Great civic attitude from our elected officials to individuals in the city's service departments (you can't get anything done without that, folks)
- Nationwide recognition that OKC is a great place to relocate
- First rate traffic flow in the metro
- Undeveloped River Vistas
- Vast open or underutilized spaces within 2 miles of the Capitol and Downtown
- Cutting Edge Biological Research in the Core
- Major Medical complex in the Core
- Downtown office space – more available and affordable than most cities
- Bricktown Entertainment complex
- Elegant housing in Heritage Hills and Mesta Park and affordable quaint housing throughout the N 20's and 30's streets.
- Well developed appreciation for all of the arts and a high quality statewide arts education system – we understand aesthetics.
- Progressive individuals with means to purchase and redevelop bypassed areas

### **Needs**

- MAPS for Kids multi-ethnic downtown Charter School K-12 for ambitious children in the city. This will be our main attractor for progressive families to the City's core.
- Downtown river vista multifamily housing, especially condos for purchase by residents.
- More diverse retail in the city's Core – we need more artsy, unique and boutique themes.
- Full Service + drive through pickup Grocery in the City's core
- Transportation hubs at key intersections coordinated with the N-S and E-W Train interchanges. With regional transportation coordination, our switching capabilities could be one of the nation's key crossovers
- Buy the 230 miles of prairie right of way between Ft Supply, OK and Kit Carson, CO and improve the Northwest Passage as an Interstate or toll road that connects Oklahoma DIRECTLY with Denver . Denver would then be an easy and reliable, 500 mile, 8 hour day trip from Oklahoma City by truck.

Oklahoma City is doing a lot of things right. The ideas that will fill our empty spaces are being created right now. You can sit back and enjoy the ride, or take part in the reinventing of Oklahoma City – either way, you will enjoy the result.