



# 2021-2022 Local Public Policy Platform

**The Overland Park Chamber is the bold voice for business – the resource, advocate, convener and changemaker – that drives economic success forward in our city, county and state.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Chamber supports non-partisan elections and believes civility should be one of the cornerstones of our democratic process. We encourage candidates, their committees, and their parties to respect the intent of non-partisan elections.

We encourage regularly assessing the continued availability of the elements that contribute to our exceptional quality of life and we believe the optimal way to accomplish that assessment and preservation is through the efforts of a local government most close to the people.

We also recognize the value contributed by the strong history of partnerships between our local government and business community and pledge to work to continue and strengthen those relationships.

## **EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The Chamber has long supported our excellent K-12 public schools and post-secondary institutions as a critical element in developing and maintaining a high-quality workforce that fosters jobs and economic prosperity. We acknowledge that our schools face numerous challenges impacting student success and commit to work with our schools to ensure all students are well-prepared to succeed. We encourage proactive collaboration among our area's public schools and institutions of higher education and skilled trades training, businesses, and local government to provide innovative opportunities for workforce development and job skills training, including real-world exposure to various careers through internships and other meaningful opportunities.

The recent pandemic has shown a spotlight on the need to be prepared for different methods of delivering high-quality education to ensure our students achieve at the highest levels. The Chamber believes all students should have access to reliable high-speed internet connections and appropriate digital devices in order to have reliable access to various resources that support training and learning opportunities.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Chamber believes exceptional planning and development leads to positive and quality economic growth, job growth and job

retention that fosters strong property values and quality of life. Collaboration between the business community and the city, together with clear, consistent guidelines are essential for timely movement through the development process.

The Chamber supports providing necessary resources, including additional city staff, commensurate with demand for timely processing of requests for development review and permitting. Strengthening the relationship with the business community and customer service are keys to economic growth and development.

The Chamber recognizes the importance of both green field and redevelopment approaches to increase available office space and supports reevaluation of traditional parking ratios and solutions. We support innovative policies that assist Overland Park in competing in a global marketplace including targeted incentives to foster development of new Class A office space, encouraging redevelopment of existing aging commercial space, and promoting enhancements to our quality of life consistent with the principles of Forward OP, Vision Metcalf, and similar initiatives.

The Chamber supports the City of Overland Park's Comprehensive Plan Update in which the City will consider the plan's alignment with Forward OP and other community plans such as the Johnson County Housing Study, the Mid America Regional Council's Climate Action Plan as well as a comprehensive review of the City's infrastructure plan. We believe the process should include significant input from the community and carefully balance needs throughout the city while being mindful of budgetary impacts.

## **HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM**

The pandemic negatively impacted the hospitality and tourism industry and recovery for this industry has been especially slow. The Chamber supports loan and grant programs, based on need, to support economic recovery. Further, the Chamber supports workforce programs that assist with recruitment, training, and retention of workers within the industry.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Robust and reliable infrastructure is critical to the continued success of the City and County and the Chamber encourages ongoing evaluation and investment in the area's infrastructure.

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The Chamber supports the creation of an infrastructure advisory group in Overland Park and a process by which residents and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to assist City leaders in evaluating infrastructure needs throughout the City including, but not limited to, transportation, sanitation and communications.

The Chamber believes the advisory group should consider economic and environmental impacts of projects and conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis of proposals to ensure taxpayers are receiving the greatest possible return on their investment.

**Technology and Cyber Security** – The Chamber supports continued investment to improve the city’s technology infrastructure to make Overland Park a smart and connected city.

The Chamber also supports continued efforts, processes and other cyber security measures to protect public and publicly accessible computers and computer networks, programs and data from unauthorized access and damage.

## **PUBLIC WELFARE**

The Chamber supports continued emphasis on and investment in providing a superior level of professional services responsive to the safety and well-being needs of our residents and visitors, including police, fire and other first responder and co-responder services.

The Chamber supports continued participation in programs that foster and promote availability of and access to health care and mental health and other related services such as the Human Service Fund, the Alcohol Tax Fund, the Mental Health Co-Responder Program and the Intergovernmental Police Academy.

The Chamber supports the recommendations of the Mental Health Task Force and supports efforts to fully fund and implement the recommendations.

## **QUALITY OF LIFE**

A cornerstone of our success as a community has been the quality of life that is so important to those who live and work here. The Chamber supports maintaining the elements contributing to that quality of life including public education; public safety; parks, recreation, arts, culture, and entertainment; roads and transportation; housing; and access to health care and mental health services.

The Chamber supports the vision of Forward OP calling for our community to “lead as a forward-thinking, innovative and welcoming community.” We believe the Forward OP plan that resulted from significant citizen input and thoughtful strategic planning creates a roadmap for the continued growth and success of our community.

The Overland Park Farmers’ Market is a tremendous asset for our community providing opportunities to connect local agricultural producers with area residents. The Chamber believes Downtown Overland Park serves as a fitting location for this asset and we support ongoing efforts to expand and modernize the location to enhance the success of the market.

## **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Chamber encourages intentional, well-planned, and varied residential development, including necessary infrastructure and other support facilities, including single family neighborhoods and multi-family housing, with a focus on options that attract young professionals and families. We encourage exploring policies and programs that improves the availability of an appropriate mix, supply, and varied pricing of housing to attract, retain and better meet the needs and demands of our current and future workforce. Appropriate incentives and public/private partnerships that expedite this development should be considered.

The City of Overland Park has, for many years, maintained a balance between single-family homes and multi-family dwellings with single-family homes comprising approximately 60% of housing in the city. The Chamber supports this housing mix and encourages city leaders to maintain this ratio to offer housing that is attainable for people across the economic spectrum.

## **REGULATIONS**

The Chamber encourages a thorough review of regulations impacting the business community with an emphasis on reducing

regulatory burdens (for example, signage and sidewalk dining) that restrict businesses generally and as they recover from the economic impact of the pandemic. The Chamber further encourages the City and County to streamline the approval process for commercial development applications and proposals for acceptable deviations.

## **SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

The Chamber supports a regional sustainable growth strategy that over time achieves a balance among the environment, economic growth and quality of life. We support inclusive, broad-based planning processes such as Vision Metcalf, ForwardOP and the College and Metcalf Corridor Study as important means by which to achieve these goals. Environmental policies and regulations should not unnecessarily or unreasonably increase administrative burdens or become cost prohibitive to business.

## **TAXATION**

The Chamber recognizes and applauds city government, both elected officials and staff, for its careful and good stewardship of its tax revenues that has resulted in Overland Park having the lowest city mill levy of any Kansas first class city. We support maintaining a fiscally responsible, competitive and stable local tax structure that will continue to generate funds sufficient to provide those essential government services and amenities that are critical to business attraction, growth and retention, including the many quality of life offerings important to business and residents.

The Chamber supports the one-mill tax levy increase contemplated in the City’s 2022 budget. The Chamber supports tax increases only after careful consideration of the benefits and the impact to taxpayers. We believe the benefits of the increased revenue – implementation of the Mental Health Task Force Recommendations, additional police and fire resources and strengthened cyber security measures for the City – are critical needs for a growing community.

Even with the proposed mill levy increase, we believe Overland Park will maintain its competitive edge by continuing to offer great value by providing high-quality services yet still maintaining the lowest property tax mill levy in Johnson County.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

**Public transit** – Support local and regional options for serving workforce transportation needs, including public/private partnerships for getting people to and from home and work as well as a means for access to health care and other basic services. The Chamber recognizes public transit can improve safety and provide economic and environmental benefits for the community.

**Regional** – Support the implementation of the regional Connected KC 2050 Transportation Plan with emphasis on projects that enhance transportation routes within Overland Park and Johnson County.

**Strategic Planning** – Support efforts to strategically plan for existing and emerging transportation opportunities and needs, such as those posed by Autonomous, Connected, Electric and Shared Use Vehicles (ACES), that may significantly alter the safety, quality of life and economic vitality enjoyed locally and statewide.

**Comprehensive Transportation Funding** – Supports studying and advancing for consideration as appropriate, local, regional, and state funding mechanisms for adequately addressing existing and emerging transportation opportunities and needs, particularly those presenting demonstrable economic development benefits for the local and state economies.

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### **For more information:**

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