



**STATE OF THE CITY**  
**MAYOR CORY BOX**  
**09.22.2021**

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**(video intro)**

Thank you, Josh, and thank you all for the opportunity to address you today. I want to begin recognizing some in this room that have done a lot for our city over the years and who have provided me mentorship in my new role.

First and most important.... My wife Samantha Box a rare combination of beauty, brains, humility and kindness. She's been my website designer, speech editor, project manager, content editor, campaign manager, cheer leader, prayer warrior, you name it.

Mayor Sharp  
Mayor Dunkerley  
Mayor Wedman  
Mayor Lee  
Mayor Vreeland  
Charlotte & Keith Montgomery and a host of others.....

It's been a pleasure working with and alongside you all these last four years and I think you for your contributions to our great city.

As we kick off today, let's talk about some numbers, specifically our Jenks numbers.

The new Census data shows we have nearly 26,000 citizens – an increase of 50% from ten years ago, making Jenks, once again, the fastest-growing city in the state.

We are also home to the state's number one school district with Jenks Public Schools. We're also served by a growing and strong school district with Bixby Schools serving our residents in south Jenks.

We've been named a Tree City USA city, having planted more than 300 trees across Jenks this year, which beautifies and enhances our community. Two years ago, we were recognized as a Purple Heart City, a tribute to all our veterans who have been wounded in the line of duty.

And for two consecutive years, we've been voted Oklahoma Magazine's Best of the Best small town; something we can all be extremely proud of.

Our staff and council work hard to be good stewards of the public's money. That has been reflected by our bonds which have been given a double A 2 rating.

We are here for the residents and businesses of Jenks. We work to ensure Jenks is THE best city in Oklahoma to buy a home; raise a family; and start a business.

Recently, Kimberly-Clark completed a \$120 million investment in their Jenks facility that added 50 full-time jobs. The expansion also added new business capabilities and 270,000 square feet to their existing space. For those who don't know, Jenks produces Kleenex and Scott bath tissue – all things that were in hot demand the past 18 months...all things I know some of you probably hoarded last year. 😊

We're grateful for the partnership between Jenks and Kimberly-Clark and believe this expansion highlights our growing strength and reputation as a business-friendly community.

Jenks is experiencing economic growth across the board.

At Highway 75 and Main Street, we're starting to see a lot of action.

Casey's Convenience Store recently opened their second Jenks location, making it easier for our residents and visitors to get gas, snacks and, of course, their famous pizza.

Under construction right now is an expansion of Woodland West Pet Resort. Dr. Clark and his team are growing the footprint of their animal boarding, adding many new rooms and options for Jenks pets.

In addition to the new rooms, the facility will also be adding more options for older animals when they're staying there.

A Jenks business owner who runs a pediatric therapy clinic has decided to move her business to this area as well. As her business has grown, so has her need for space as she looks to build a new 6,000 square foot facility.

We're also seeing increased investment from Gateway First Bank. Gateway Mortgage opened their headquarters here in 2016, bringing 250 employees to our Highway 75 entrance.

Now, they're building a bank on Main Street and 75 as part of their Gateway First Bank endeavor. We're excited to see Gateways' continued investment in Jenks as well as the continued development of that vital corridor. The bank is just a few weeks away from grand opening.

Next door to Gateway, we're close to welcoming another hotel to Jenks. The Three S Hotel Group is set to open the new Candlewood Suites, welcoming guests from all over. The hotel will offer a variety of retail amenities, a restaurant, and a rooftop bar. We know that visitors and residents alike will take advantage of all the benefits this new Candlewood offers.

Village on Main continues to rise. Duane and Rob Phillips have transformed our Main Street/Arkansas River entrance with First Oklahoma Bank and residential developments there.

Now, they're almost finished with a retail space that will include two great concepts that we've seen flourish in Oklahoma City.

Hatch, a "next-level brunch destination," will bring more dining options to us. People rave about their hashbrowns, omelets and tacos. As someone who has lived and worked in three Latin American countries, I can tell you that nothing beats a good carne guisada with cheese taco for breakfast.

Sidecar Barley and Wine Bar will also occupy space at Village on Main. This second-story, rooftop bar will be a prime spot to spend

evenings in Jenks... especially on July 4th with our best-in-the-region fireworks display.

If you talk to Duane and Rob, they'll let you know they're not finished with Village on Main, and we look forward to seeing more and continued development there.

Jenks is the home to some great coffee.

We have Mojo's Mercantile on A Street that offers an intimate setting and friendly service. If you're looking for a quiet place to read or have a private discussion over coffee, Mojo's is definitely a great spot.

We have Starbucks on Elm Street with one of the busiest drive-thru lanes in the area.

We've recently had Gypsy Coffee join us at Village on Main, bringing its eclectic energy, great coffee, and delicious food to all of us.

Soon, we'll welcome another great addition: Dutch Brothers Coffee will locate off of Elm St., just north of the entrance to Veterans Park. We look forward to having this unique and popular brand in our city.

Earlier this year, Jenks welcomed its first craft brewery – The Cape Brewing Company. JC and his team have provided a great space for friends to gather, visitors to drop-in, and for beer lovers to try the latest concoctions that JC and his team have come up with.

The Cape was part of the massive overhaul Josh McFarland and his team at Red Dog Construction performed at the Melody Lane Shopping Center.

Prior to the overhaul, the property was underwhelming, ignored and, frankly, a bit of an eye sore.

The cosmetic improvements made to the center have been game-changing for that part of Main Street.

You'll also see that with the next project they took on – turning Mike Sharp's old gas station into a robust, mix use shopping center complete with restaurants and office space.

In addition to welcoming Barracuda Staffing's home office to Melody Court, we'll see some more dining options including Which Wich Superior Sandwiches and a new gelato and specialty coffee shop called Paciugo.

The 15,000-square-foot development is already fully leased, and we couldn't be more thankful to Josh and Red Dog for revitalizing this part of Main Street.

If you haven't noticed, take a look to the north of Melody Court and you'll see Melody Plaza, the home of Jenks Tag Agency, has also received a much-needed face lift thanks to the Red Dog team.

Reinvestments in key areas of town such as the Melody District are vital to the future of our city. I'm excited to see progress and know that more improvements are on the way. For his tireless efforts to revitalize undervalued assets in Jenks, Josh McFarland was presented a Key to the City earlier this year. I thank

Councilor Kaye Lynn for the idea and effort in recognizing Mr. McFarland in this way.

The past year has been the strongest ever for sales tax - a testament to the city's strong retail and restaurants.

In fact, receipts from August 2021 set a new all-time record. For the first time in city history, sales tax collections exceeded \$1 million. May, June, July, August, and September were the top five monthly collections of all-time.

That's a statement.

Our residents and visitors know we have great restaurants, entertainment, one-of-a-kind stores and experiences. This council looks forward to adding even more new and exciting dining options for all of us to enjoy.

Over in our planning department, our staff has been working hard on our uniform development ordinance or UDO for short. It may not be the sexiest thing to talk about today, but it's vitally important if we are to grow responsibly.

What started as part of a redo for our decades-old comprehensive plan, the UDO will spell out, in plain language, how development happens in Jenks.

It will be clear and easy to understand for residents, developers and businesses looking to locate here. It won't be bogged down with overly technical and legal jargon that only Marcae understands. It will be written in straightforward language with

illustrations demonstrating necessary criteria whenever appropriate.

I thank our staff for their hard work on this important document and look forward to seeing the final product sometime in November.

Our building inspections team was busy last year, processing 224 new home residential permits worth nearly \$75 million dollars and another 418 permits for other residential uses. On the commercial side, they processed 31 new commercial construction permits worth a combined \$19 million dollars. Needless to say they have been as busy as ever.

Let's talk about Public Safety.

Our police department continues to do a top-rate job keeping us all safe. We have 25 sworn officers who are joined by another 10 reserve officers.

Our officers are dedicated to providing the best service, having completed more than 2,100 hours of training last year, with 88 of those hours dedicated to specific mental health training.

As the state continues to work through the ramifications of the McGirt Supreme Court decision, our department has expanded its partnership with the Muscogee Nation, with all officers being cross deputized with the tribal police.



Our department is also plugged into the community. They participated in over 25 events including Hallow Marine, Boom Fest and The Special Olympics Torch Run.

We also have the first drone program in the country that combined police and fire departments as one team. We currently have 8 FAA certified drone operators and 8 drones – including two with infrared night vision capability.

These drones are useful for public safety. They help with search and rescue operations, man hunts, building searches, and can ferry supplies for water rescues.

Our fire department is another point of distinction for us. We are proud to report that last year, Chief Ostrum and his team performed more than 1,300 hours of truck, equipment and station inspection and maintenance – making sure all of their equipment is in top working order.

They were equally dedicated to training, logging more than 4,500 total hours of earned training time.

Jenks Fire responded to more than 1,200 calls – 827 of them being emergency medical incidents and 456 fire incidents.

But they perform services beyond emergency calls.

I know Councilor Murray can speak to this – our fire department performed almost 100 hours of car seat installation training to make sure any Jenks resident can have their child or grandchild's car seat properly installed – an important step in keeping our families safe.

Who here has a pet at home?

Our Animal Welfare department continues to grow and increase their presence. Last year, 15 animals were adopted from our animal shelter and 106 were transferred to rescue and rehab facilities.

But I would like to share a quick story about our very own Fred Reid, our animal welfare officer...

Last November, Fred was called to assist with a SWAT event. An armed and suicidal subject was barricaded inside their home. The subject had assaulted family members and was known to be armed and dangerous.

Fred went above and beyond the call of duty, helping assist with the removal of two aggressive dogs which in turn made possible the safe removal of the subject. For his work, Fred was recognized with a Meritorious Conduct Award.

People like Fred are part of what makes our city great. We're grateful for his work that day and every other day he works to help Jenks and our four legged friends.

Speaking of hard work, does anyone remember our winter storm earlier this year? Our Public Works team sure does.

In February alone, they spent 109 hours shoveling and treating sidewalks, 22 hours on sewer issues, 591 hours plowing and treating roads, 194 hours on frozen meters and water leaks.

In addition to their winter storm response and other specific projects, Public Works was busy around the city. In the last fiscal year, they maintained nearly 500 miles of road, spent 486 hours filling potholes, maintaining sewer lines, replacing stop signs, and maintaining our parks and green spaces.

Our public works team is often overlooked, but I can assure you, they are some of the hardest workers in our city and they keep Jenks moving.

We have also continued to invest in infrastructure.

Council recently contracted with a firm to perform several essential upgrades to our wastewater treatment plant. Phase 1 will allow us to begin addressing the tremendous growth our city has experienced and will position us to handle much of the coming expansion in our economic base.

Last year, Jenks residents overwhelmingly voted to support investments in our city's key traffic corridors.

71% of voters approved a \$21 million dollar bond issue that will widen Elm Street from 111<sup>th</sup> to 131<sup>st</sup> Streets to five lanes and extend pedestrian access along the roadway.

The project is long overdue, and you guys made that very clear. Like the Main Street widening approved several years ago, the quality of life and economic development in our city depends on ease of travel. Whether it's going to work, coming home, or visiting Jenks, we need to ensure that our most-traveled roads can safely accommodate increasing traffic.

The bond package also included funding to engineer the widening of Elwood Ave. from 91<sup>st</sup> to 96<sup>th</sup> Streets and from 111<sup>th</sup> to 121<sup>st</sup> St.

As we experienced during the construction of 111<sup>th</sup> and Elwood, that street is an important artery for our residents as they make their way around the city.

Funding the engineering for this project is a vital step in continuing to invest in our critical infrastructure needs.

The bond also provided funds to complete the upgrades we're making on Main Street.

We made tremendous improvements from Highway 75 to Elm Street and now we can finish the job all the way to our downtown.

I would once again like to thank the voters of Jenks for their investment in our community and our future. I would also like to thank the business community for their support of these efforts and of that campaign.

Earlier this year, prompted by our own Councilor Kaye Lynn, several city councilors were joined by city and Chamber staff to visit the capitol to address the poor condition of the Highway 75/Main Street interchange. Also in that meeting were Reps. Lonnie Sims, Sheila Dills, and Sen. Cody Rogers.

We had productive conversations with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation regarding needed improvements to the interchange. As we work to get the project added to ODOT's eight-year plan, we asked for action to take place in the interim.

Shortly after our meeting, ODOT came out and patched the on- and off-ramps and added stop signs at the bridge to improve traffic flow and address safety concerns. We look forward to continuing the work with ODOT and ask for support from business and community leaders in this room to keep the pressure on them to advance the project timeline.

We continue to implement projects approved by voters in the Vision for Jenks campaign. The B Street sidewalk project Phase 1, which added sidewalks from Elm to 5<sup>th</sup> Street, was completed in October 2020. Last month, we completed the second and final phase, connecting Riverwalk to Elm St.

This connection will not only improve walkability in our community but will also keep our children safer as they walk to and from school.

In addition to this sidewalk project, we worked to improve our trail system.

The residents of Churchill Park, Juniper Ridge, and South Creek were provided a new trail system with nearly 2 miles of new walking trails. At Veterans Park, we connected the trail loop, completing the three-quarter mile trail that circles around the pond and our new splash pad.

These projects are the product of a lot of hard work from our team, including our engineering department and City Engineer Chris Cloyde.

We can't talk about our local economy without talking about our very own Oklahoma Aquarium.

The Aquarium is a vital part of Jenks' economic story, bringing in more than 300,000 plus visitors last year.

Think about that – even with a global pandemic, our team managed to safely attract, educate, and entertain more than 300,000 visitors.

That's a testament to the quality of our team.

The fact that we have that many visitors also speaks to the quality of our exhibits: 9,000 fish, 60 amphibians, 3 endangered species, 100 reptiles and 16 well-fed bull sharks.

And those 16 bulls, by the way, mean the Oklahoma Aquarium has the largest collection of bull sharks in the world. Of all the facilities across the globe, YOUR Jenks' Oklahoma Aquarium is the one and only facility to have that many animals living and thriving in captivity.

This coming year, we have some exciting developments at the Aquarium.

We'll be unveiling the new and improved Amazing Invertebrate gallery, featuring four different species of jellyfish and hundreds of clown fish. This immersive exhibit will draw in children – and, yes, adults. My wife knows I'm an aquarium junky, so I can't wait to see it finished.

To Kenny and his team, thank you for your hard work in creating a unique and exciting attraction for our residents and visitors. We are extremely proud of our Aquarium.

I could end there but let's highlight a few projects you may not know about.

The most frequently asked question I get is about the Simon Outlet Mall.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, Simon hit pause on all new construction projects – including our mall.

We've stayed in contact with them and have, in the last several months, been in frequent communication with their team.

What I can tell you is this: this project will be completed.

It's not a matter of if.

It's a matter of when.

There has been a lot activity behind the scenes with the development team and we know this project is coming to our community.

But Simon isn't the only project we're excited about.

Between the Aquarium and the Holiday Inn, along the Arkansas River, is a piece of land prime for a unique attraction.

And that's what we have in store.

We are proud to announce a new and exciting development coming to our community.

Construction is set to begin in early 2022 for Inspiration Food Hall.

It's a culinary entertainment experience featuring a wide array of local and invited culinary artisans, craft brews, creative tasty libations, full-service farm-to-table venues and great views overlooking the river

Inspiration Food Hall is a culinary entertainment and social gathering place.

We couldn't be more excited about this development and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with the development team as they work to make this vision a reality.

Something else we're excited to announce - and this is also a very frequently asked question – is the future of the library property, located right across the railroad tracks on Main St.

Just a few weeks ago, the city closed the deal and is now the proud owner of this 4-acre-plus piece of property, located in the heart of our community.

This is the biggest piece of developable land in our downtown since Jenks was founded over 100 years ago.

With this purchase, we control our destiny.

In the coming weeks, our team will release a request for proposal that will seek out the best ideas for this property from developers,



architects and experts from across the nation. We want this new development to be a gem for our community.

Our vision for this property is for it to be a lively, walkable, highly attractive lifestyle center that is known throughout the region for the quality shops, businesses and restaurants that will locate there.

This land is a vital part of Jenks' future and we're going to do everything we can to make sure it's done right and that it's something we can all be proud of.

Jenks is an economic engine and we're in drive. More than ever, this council is focused on economic development, and we are only moving forward.

We've long been known as the best place to live and raise kids.

While still focusing on that, we're now equally as dedicated to making Jenks the best place to operate a business and serve the community.

We have residents. We have great schools. We have the infrastructure.

We want the message to be clear: Jenks is open for business.

Thank you all for your hard work.