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VOL. 103 NO. 36

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By ANISSA DURHAM, WORD IN BLACK

NATION

Popular Obesity Medication Gets a Price Cut | A13

By DEBORAH BAILEY, WORD IN BLACK

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NORTH TULSA NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN IS UNDERWAY

The City of Tulsa in late July awarded \$2 million to spur the development of new housing, retail, and office space in north Tulsa. The Tulsa Development Authority (TDA) will use the money to finalize the legal process necessary to begin the development of seventy acres of largely vacant land in north Tulsa.

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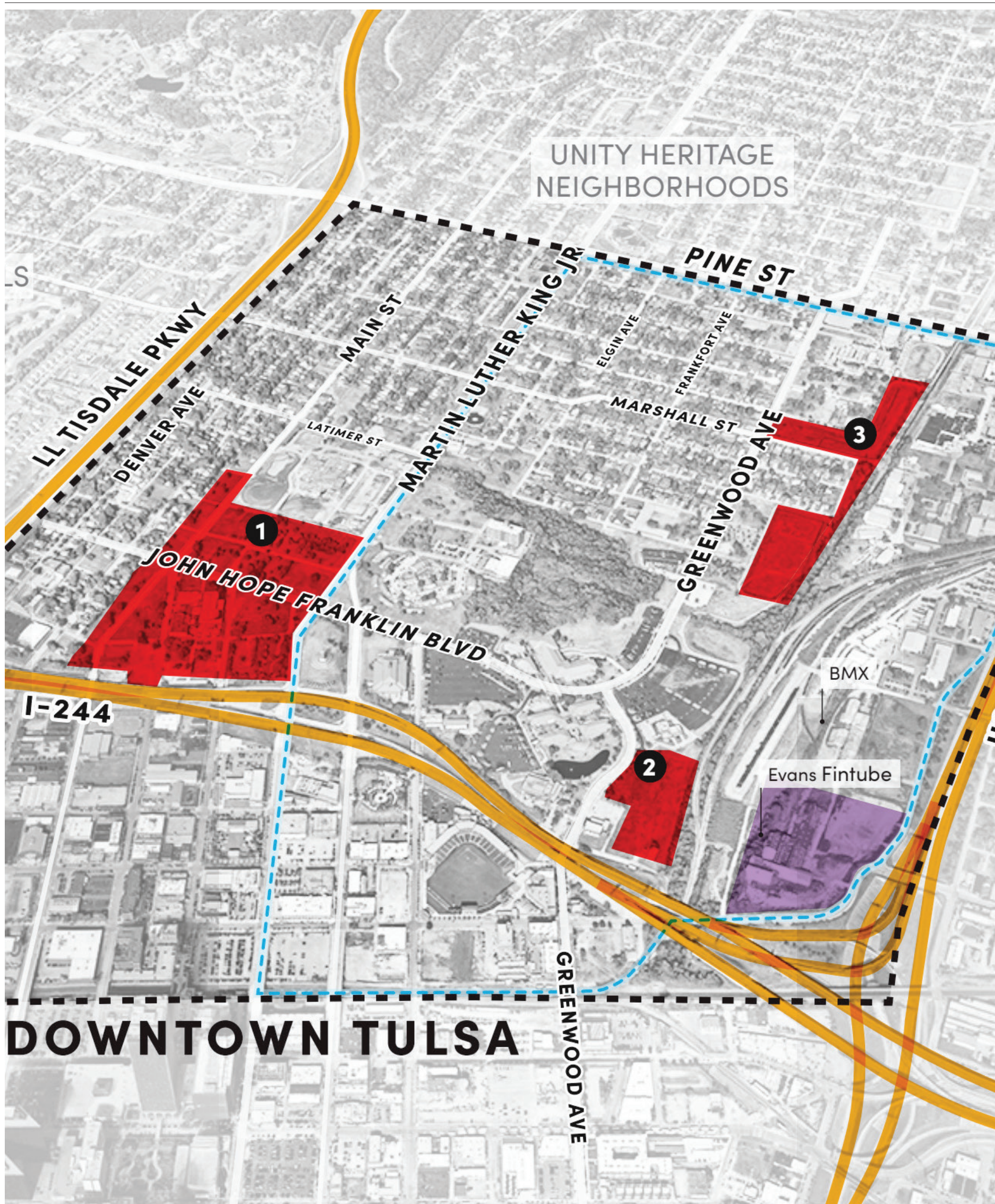
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Kirkpatrick Heights & Greenwood Master Plan: Design Guidelines created as part of Our Legacy, Our Community - Kirkpatrick Heights / Greenwood Site Master Plan to ensure that future development of the three publicly owned sites located within the larger community study area create a place for people to live, enjoy nature, recreate, and work.

Neighborhood Revitalization

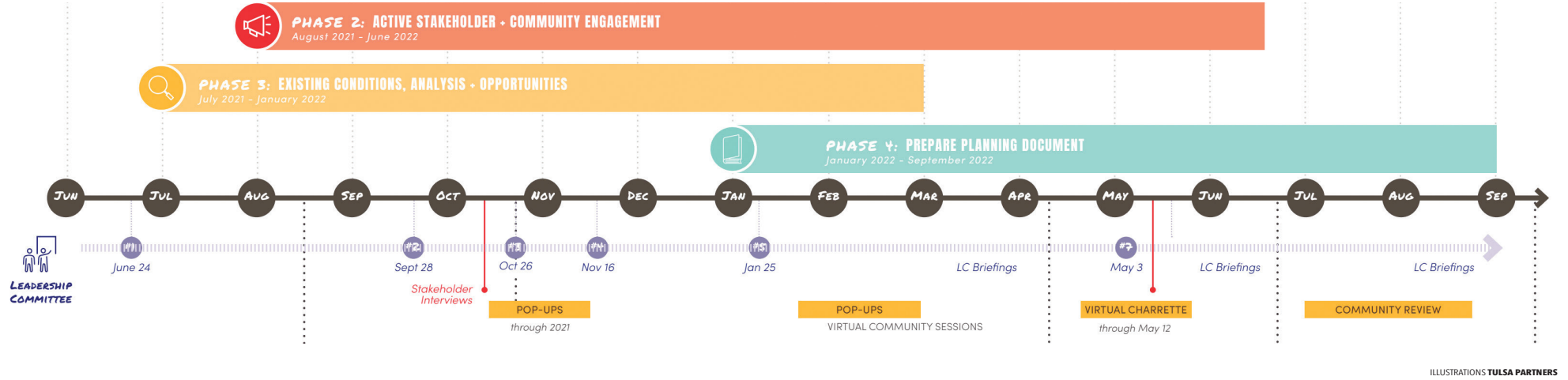
North Tulsa Neighborhood Revitalization Plan *Is Underway*

John Neal
The Oklahoma Eagle

Part One In a Three Part Series

The City of Tulsa in late July awarded \$2 million to spur the development of new housing, retail, and office space in north Tulsa. The Tulsa Development Authority (TDA) will use the money to finalize the legal process necessary to begin the development of seventy acres of largely vacant land in north Tulsa. The area designated for revitalization lies within The Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan study area which is bordered by Pine Street to the north, US Highway 75 to the east, the rail line to the south (Archer Street), and LL Tisdale Parkway to the west.

Cont. A3, Neighborhood Revitalization



Neighborhood Revitalization

Initial Development to include 300 residential units and multiple thousands of sq. ft. of retail and office space

From A2

The specific tract pinpointed for mixed-use development is forty-five (45) acres located between Kirkpatrick Heights and MLK Jr. Boulevard, north of I-244.

The Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood initiative is one of the largest development endeavors launched in North Tulsa in decades. It could potentially transform the vitality of the Greenwood District and several adjacent neighborhoods. This is the first in a series of articles by The Oklahoma Eagle describing the proposed improvements and the challenges that have delayed the revitalization effort.

The private sector will undertake the development, following the Master Plan. The community envisioned in the Plan—dubbed the Core—will combine residential and commercial uses. It will deploy “smart growth” principles to create a walkable, livable community with open space and other amenities. Two other smaller tracts will be developed for recreational use and community space honoring historic Greenwood.

The revitalization plan was sixteen months in preparation. Members of the north Tulsa community participated extensively in discussions about it. The Leadership Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Lana Turner-Addison, a founding member of

In all phases, residential units will proceed first to support retail development.

the North Tulsa Economic Development Initiative and Ashley Philippsen, Executive Director of Impact Tulsa, led those discussions.

However, having been approved by the City Council in December 2022, the three sites remain unchanged, and no improvements are forecasted for a full two years following adoption.

This is the first in a series of articles by The Oklahoma Eagle describing the proposed improvements, the challenges they have faced, and the ongoing delays in the revitalization effort.

The Core development

The largest portion of the three tracts designated for development will add up to 1,000 new residential units and thousands of commercial use space north of I-244 in the Greenwood area. The project will proceed in phases over ten years.

The first development phase will occur in the Core, adjacent to Kirkpatrick Heights. The Concept Plan calls for two- and three-story townhomes to be built southwest of Emerson Elementary and abutting the Heights Historic District.

Proceeding east and south, residential housing transitions to a mixture of residential and commercial uses north of John Hope Franklin Boulevard. The first phase will have approximately 300 residential units and multiple thousands of

square feet of retail and office space. The first phase also contemplates a “civic/theater.”

The second phase, north of I-244, adds more retail and office space and another 240 residential units. Mixed-use becomes more prevalent, with office or commercial space on the ground floor and two to three stories of residential units above, ranging in size from 900 to 1,200 square feet.

The final phase to be built in the last half of the ten years will abut MLK Jr. Boulevard. The same mixed-use development pattern will continue, adding duplexes, cottage homes, and apartments. Retail and restaurants are also conceptualized along the boulevard.

In all phases, residential units will proceed first to support retail development. When complete, the Core will have 750-1,000 residential units, 400,000 square feet of retail space, and 120,000 square feet of office space. The parks, open, and community spaces contribute to a “live and play” environment within the mixed-use district.

Two additional parcels will undergo redevelopment. One is an 18.5-acre Osage Trail stormwater detention area that the plan describes as “The Green Stitch.” The site extends from Oklahoma Street through B.S. Roberts Park. In addition to preserving two large stormwater basins, the balance of the site will be parks and open space.

Cont. A6, Neighborhood Revitalization

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Site 1: The Core

The Core is intended to rebuild a vibrant and resilient mixed-use community that honors the Black Wall Street spirit and legacy of Greenwood, establishing a new residential community, and creating spaces that nurture the culture of creativity and diversity of talent found in North Tulsa.

The 45-acre site will become the heart of a walkable mixed-use destination with residential, retail, commercial, office/innovation, and civic uses. High-quality green buildings are designed to inspire a new generation, grow local talent, and establish a new community of creatives and innovators from business to fashion, design, technology, and multimedia, incrementally nurturing a creative/maker culture and providing flexible workspaces that will amplify the character of the district. New buildings with elements such as art, flexible floor plans, and landscaping, when coupled with branding and placemaking elements, will have a sense of place and

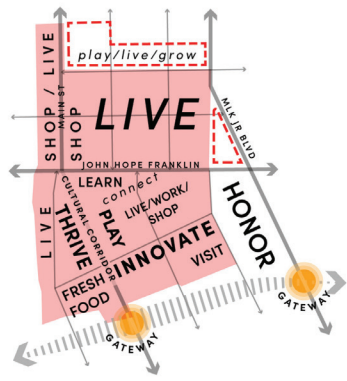


FIGURE 9: SITE 1 FRAMEWORK

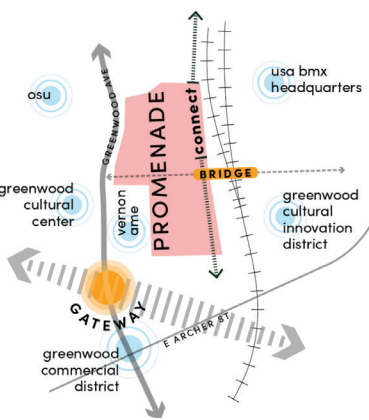
promote a local character and flavor that is uniquely Kirkpatrick Heights / Greenwood. New industries can provide unique products and experiences such as marketplaces with small manufacturers who can offer locally made goods and host community events that can draw people to the district.

Site 2: Greenwood Plaza

“Black Wall Street as Promenade”

Site 2 is reimagined as a community hub that builds off the legacy of historic Black Wall Street, the cultural institutions found along the corridor—shops and businesses that are part of the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, Greenwood Cultural Center, Vernon AME, Greenwood Rising—and responds to community needs for a place to gather and celebrate.

The site will be rebuilt as a multi-functional community space that honors the past with streets that are traced and redesigned as promenades through open, flexible green spaces that brings people together for a variety of year-round activities from Juneteenth to smaller seasonal



Site 3: The Green Stitch - Stormwater Resiliency Park

“A Park that Tells a Story”

Site 3 engineered stormwater detention basins will be rebuilt as “A Park that Tells a Story” providing a space for memory and healing, as well as opportunities for recreation, reflection, and wellness.

Two conceptual approaches were considered for Site 3. The Green Stitch-Stormwater Resiliency Park with plans for a new Rudall Library being built adjacent to BS Roberts Park, the option shown here shows more activity on the southern portion of the site to reflect adjacent uses. The northern portion of the site is designed into a community memorial that will tell the story of the site’s past while offering space for gathering and remembrance. The southern portion of the site will be redesigned as a public park focused on active recreation and youth programming, both areas will continue to serve the stormwater management function. It is recommended during the design development phases more engineering studies of stormwater capture and compatibility with the proposed land uses are considered and those more advanced design concepts are presented to stakeholders for

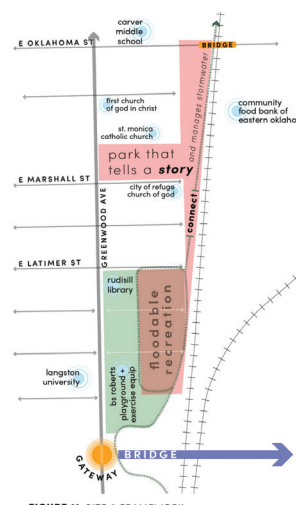
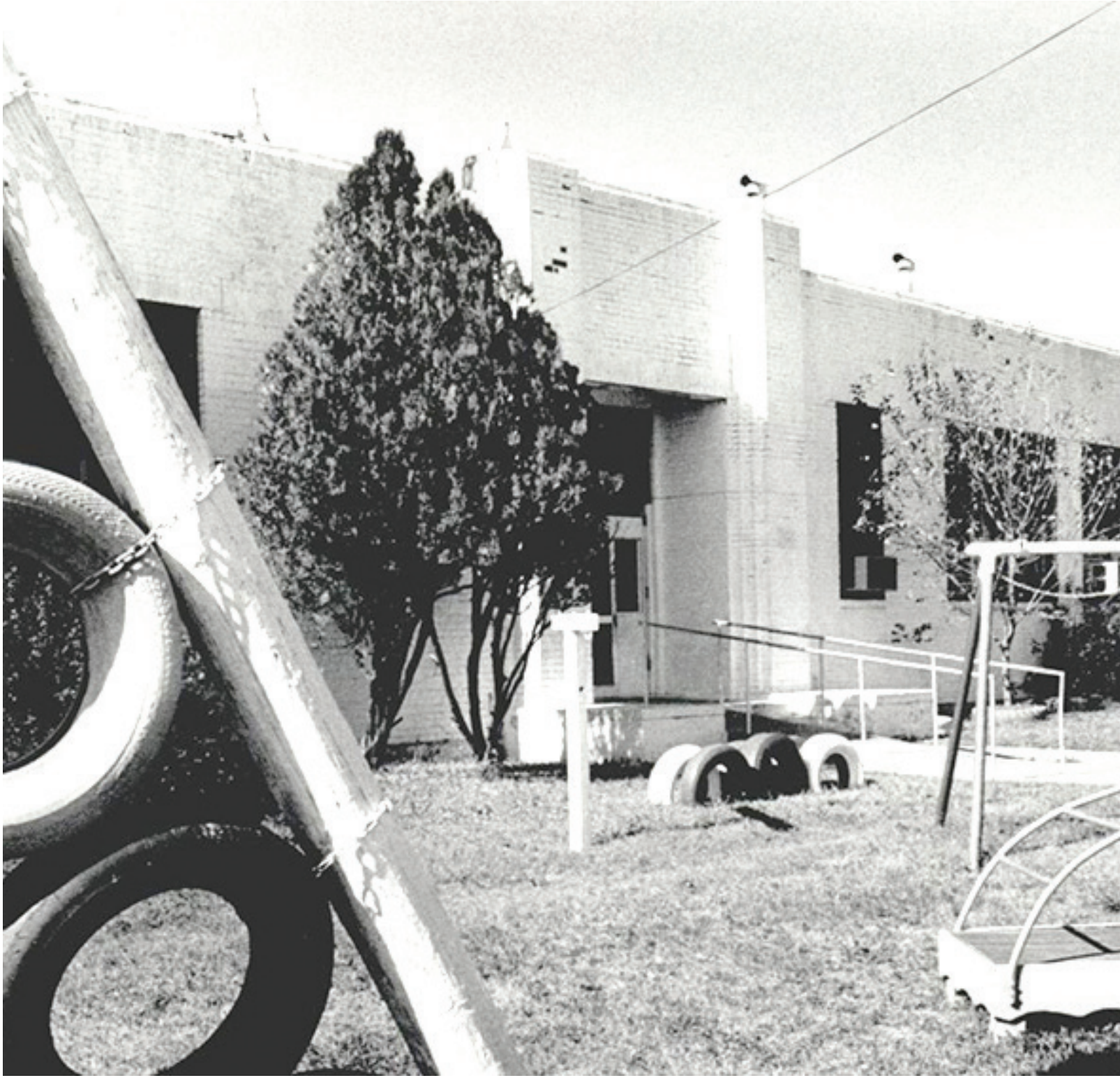


FIGURE 11: SITE 3 FRAMEWORK



Tatums: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

By LARRY O'DELL, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



Lee Tatum and his wife, Mary, applied for a post office designation in 1895, beginning the town of Tatums in Indian Territory. Located in Carter County four miles northeast of Ratliff City, the town is one of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing. In addition to running the post office, the Tatums operated a small grocery in one corner of their house. Henry Taylor owned the community's largest home and offered overnight accommodations for travelers. In addition to his postal duties, Lee Tatum was appointed a U.S. marshal. Tatums residents soon established a church and school.

A hotel was built in 1899, a blacksmith shop in 1900, a cotton gin and sawmill in 1910, and a motor garage in 1918. Oil wells were drilled in the area in the 1920s, bringing wealth to several of Tatums's farmers and landowners. The Julius Rosenwald Fund helped build a brick school in 1925-26, and the WPA built another in 1936. Tatums's Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 94001519), was completed in 1919. In 1927 Norman Studios filmed a silent movie, Black Gold, in Tatums and enlisted Marshal L. B. Tatums to play a role. Although a copy of the film cannot be found

and probably no longer exists, the script and camera are preserved at the Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage in California. Like most rural towns, Tatums experienced the crippling effects of the Great Depression, and many residents migrated to urban areas. The first federal census, made in 1970, found that Tatums had 133 residents, a number that grew to 281 in 1980. At the end of the twentieth century the population stood at 172, and the town awaited economic revival. The 2010 census counted 151 residents. In April 2020 the census counted 115 residents.

THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma's history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

TATUMS'S HEADSTART CENTER, 1983 (2012.201.B1275.0777, by P. Howell, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

Featured Last Week



Monroe Nichols and Karen Keith Advance in Mayoral Primary



Politics: Tulsa County Election Results Aug. 27



In Oklahoma Eviction Court, it's Women with Children First

The Oklahoma Eagle

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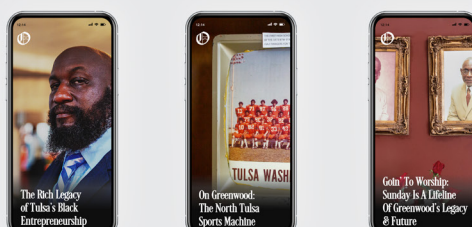
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IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR TULSA COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF
THE ESTATE OF:

RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE,
Deceased.
CASE NO. PB-2020-251

JUDGE KURT G. GLASSCO

NOTICE OF HEARING FIRST AND FINAL ACCOUNTING, PETITION FOR DECREE OF DISTRIBUTION, APPROVAL OF ATTORNEY FEES, COSTS AND EXPENSES, AND DISCHARGE OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES

NOTICE is hereby given that JOHN P. TOLENTINO and MARGARET COONFIELD, the duly appointed and qualified Personal Representatives of the Estate of RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE, Deceased, have filed the First and Final Accounting, Petition for Decree of Distribution, Approval of Attorney Fees, Costs and Expenses, and Discharge of Personal Representatives. A hearing has been fixed by the Judge of the Court for the 25th day of September 2024, at 10:00 o'clock A.M. in Courtroom 701, of the Tulsa County Courthouse, 500 South Denver Ave., Tulsa, Oklahoma, and all persons interested in the Estate of RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE are notified to appear and show cause, if any they have, why the First and Final Accounting, Petition for Decree of Distribution, Approval of Attorney Fees, Costs and Expenses, and Discharge of Personal Representatives should not be settled and allowed, the Estate distributed, the attorney fees, costs, and expenses approved, and the Personal Representatives discharged.

DATED this 29th day of July 2024.

By: /S/ KURT G. GLASSCO
JUDGE OF DISTRICT COURT

Prepared by:

James O. Goodwin, OBA 3458
Attorney for Petitioners
GOODWIN & GOODWIN
P.O. Box 3267
Tulsa, OK 74101-3267
Telephone: (918) 582-9181
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Neighborhood Revitalization

A renewed vision for North Tulsa, creating a framework for redevelopment

From A3

The other, the smallest parcel, is Greenwood Plaza, located at the Juneteenth Festival and within the same block as the Vernon AME Church. The plan visualizes a more permanent event space, such as an amphitheater.

Development visualization

The Tulsa Development Authority gained control over these lands in 2018. PartnerTulsa, with the help of the Leadership Committee, and community input developed the 95-page Master Plan. The Plan describes its product as “A Renewed Vision for North Tulsa.” The vision aims are stated in the Plan introduction.

“A renewed Vision for North Tulsa defines the community’s aspirations and creates a framework for redevelopment of three publicly-owned sites within the context of the larger Kirkpatrick Heights / Greenwood neighborhoods.

One [key tenant] ensures the social and economic benefits of redevelopment are experienced by Black Tulsans, by descendants of the Race Massacre, and by future generations and their heirs.

It will honor the legacy of Greenwood and Black Wall Street as it was, through sharing and learning from the past to support the generations of today and inspire the generations of tomorrow.”

The Master Plan characterizes the Core as “intended to rebuild a vibrant and resilient mixed-use community that honors the Black Wall Street spirit and legacy of Greenwood. High-quality green buildings are designed to inspire a new generation, grow local talent, and establish a new community of creatives and innovators.”

High expectations

The Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan received the American Planning Association’s 2023 National Planning Award for Advancing Diversity and Social Change. PartnerTulsa accepted the award. But Jonathon Butler, Senior Vice President of Community Development, promptly credited the 1,000 north Tulsans who participated in the planning process and national planning and design firm WRT.

Garlen Capita, WRT’s Urban Designer and Professional-in-Charge, stated, “This initiative has the potential to repair historical



ILLUSTRATION TULSA PARTNERS

inequities and build on the momentum of local advocates to develop a plan that creates avenues for equitable investment and build generational wealth.”

PartnerTulsa attributed much of the success to the City of Tulsa and “the 40 community meetings and events, connecting with 1,000 residents, and 16 months of community-led planning.”

North Tulsa participants gave high praise and expressed similar high expectations for the project and its speedy implementation. The planning and design team that led the stakeholder participation frequently surveyed north Tulsans.

One question asked participants, “What would a successful outcome in the first 1-2 years look like to you?” Answers reflected rapid fulfillment of expectations, including “affordable and accessible housing,” “outdoor theater and grocery store,” “local retail businesses,” and “amphitheater.”

While all these features and amenities are approved concepts in the Master Plan, none will come to fruition “in the first 1-2 years.”

In the following article in this series, The Oklahoma Eagle will examine the project’s challenges. The Eagle will then provide PartnerTulsa with an opportunity to

discuss these issues and provide an update on project implementation.

This is the first article in a three part series The Oklahoma Eagle is publishing about the Kirkpatrick Heights/Greenwood Master Plan. John Neal, who reported the series, is an Eagle staff contributor. A native Oklahoman and former city planner, Neal has a passion for making neighborhoods work better. Part Two in the series will address challenges in the implementation of the Master Plan.

JOHN NEAL, the author, is a former resident of Sand Springs. He is well versed in urban renewal, its uses and abuse, as a former city manager in Oklahoma and departmental consultant for the city of El Paso, Texas. In 2008, he was that city’s planning director when the city won multiple awards for its planning accomplishments. He is now retired and resides in Austin, Texas.



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ABOVE **Expectant mother** receiving prenatal care from her physician.
PHOTO **ADOBE IMAGES**

LEFT **Expectant mother** holding sonogram during an appointment with her physician.
PHOTO **ADOBE IMAGES**

Family Planning Funds

U.S. Supreme Court *Rejects* Oklahoma's Attempt to Restore Federal Family Planning Funds

Paul Monies
Oklahoma Watch

Oklahoma will have to use state money for family planning services at county health clinics after it lost an emergency bid to restore \$4.5 million in federal grants because of the state's refusal to publicize an abortion referral hotline upon request.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday afternoon rejected an emergency application by the state to restore the federal grant. As is typical in emergency applications, the court rejected it without comment, although Justices Neil Gorsuch, Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito would have granted the relief.

Oklahoma argued the federal government was unduly punishing the state when it discontinued the grant in 2023. The state said it could no longer publicize an abortion referral hotline after Oklahoma's trigger law made abortion illegal in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision in June 2022.

The family planning grants cover pregnancy testing, cancer screenings, contraceptives, reproductive health counseling and other services. The program helps 25,000 Oklahomans per year and is especially important at county health departments in rural areas. Oklahoma has been receiving Title X family planning grants from the federal government for more than 50 years.

With the emergency application to restore federal funding over, the case returns to the federal district court in Oklahoma City on other issues surrounding abortion and federal family planning grants.

Attorney General Genter Drummond's spokeswoman Leslie Berger said in an email that the attorney general was disappointed in the decision but pleased that three justices would have restored the funding.

"We will be exploring our options moving forward," Berger wrote.

Earlier this year, the state lost its bids for an injunction at the federal district and appellate court levels, leading to the

emergency application before the U.S. Supreme Court. As well as its own attorneys, the attorney general's office contracted with attorneys from Spencer Fane LLP in Oklahoma City and Titus Hillis Reynolds Love PC in Tulsa to help with the lawsuit. The attorney general's office did not immediately have an estimate on how much it is paying the outside attorneys.

Abortion referrals and Title X rules have varied depending on which party controls the White House. Congress weighs in from time to time with additional requirements in annual spending bills. Since 2000, the regulations have ranged from providing counseling and referrals for abortion to forbidding referrals and now allowing referrals only if requested by clients.

Although other states have banned abortion since the Dobbs decision in 2022, they have continued to follow federal rules to get Title X family planning grants. Oklahoma and Tennessee have been the only states to see their funding discontinued because they refused to include an abortion

hotline referral upon request. Last week, a federal appellate court in Ohio ruled against Tennessee in its bid to restore \$7 million in federal grant funding for family planning.

Oklahoma continues to provide family planning services at county health departments using appropriated money from the Legislature. But health officials said they prefer to tap federal funds rather than go to the Republican-controlled Legislature each year to ask for appropriations for family planning services, which can be politically fraught debates.

Separately, Oklahoma lawmakers this year put \$18 million into the state's Choosing Childbirth program, which provides money to mostly religious nonprofit crisis pregnancy centers that counsel against abortion. That funding represents a six-fold increase from previous years.

PAUL MONIES has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2017 and covers state agencies and public health. Contact him at (571) 319-3289 or pmonies@oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter @pmonies.



ABOVE Jones Hall on Langston University's main campus was closed Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2024, owing to air-conditioning and electrical issues.

PHOTO SASHA NDISABIYE

LEFT Langston University students at the main campus in Langston, Okla.

PHOTO LANGSTON UNIVERSITY.EDU

Langston

Langston students, faculty *frustrated* as infrastructure issues push classes online

Sasha Ndisabiye
NonDoc

LANGSTON — Since the fall semester started Aug. 5, multiple buildings on the Langston University campus have been closed because of several infrastructure issues, such as broken air-conditioning units, newly found asbestos, water outages and a burned-out mechanical motor component in the campus boiler system.

The stressful situation has left professors frustrated that they must revert back to the “Zoom University” online learning model they thought they’d mostly left behind in the pandemic. Students are annoyed, too, and a recent announcement that Langston received \$3.5 million this summer to fix “deferred maintenance” issues has only added confusion about why campus buildings remain offline heading into the fifth week of the new school year.

“It’s frustrating, because trying to find classroom space right now is almost impossible as it is,” said Mick Howard, an English professor who has taught at Langston for a decade. “We just want to do our jobs. We want to be with students. Everybody’s burned out on Zoom as it is from COVID. The students are burned out on Zoom, and it’s hard to engage.”

New Langston University President Ruth Ray Jackson confronted concerns about the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning issues during her State of the University address Aug. 29 at the semester’s opening convocation.

“Like many institutions in Oklahoma and throughout the country, the deferred maintenance needs of our campuses far outpace the revenue or appropriations allowed to address those needs,” Jackson said. “We’re working to find sustainable solutions that fit within the parameters of our procurement and policy outlines.”

The Oklahoma Legislature acknowledged the deferred maintenance needs across the higher education system this session, designating \$157.5 million for lingering building and infrastructure needs at more than two dozen Oklahoma institutions. The new fiscal year began July 1.

Langston — founded in 1897 as Oklahoma’s only historically Black college or university — is

“
We just want to do our jobs. We want to be with students. Everybody’s burned out on Zoom as it is from COVID. The students are burned out on Zoom, and it’s hard to engage.”

Mick Howard, English professor, Langston University

receiving \$3.5 million of that money, Jackson told the campus community.

But according to Jackson, up to \$2.5 million of Langston’s deferred maintenance allocation will be used to install a new roof on the former News 9 headquarters donated to Langston’s journalism program in 2022. That leaves about \$1 million for deferred building projects on Langston’s main campus in Logan County. The university comprises most of the town of Langston, one of Oklahoma’s original all-Black municipalities.

While Langston students are often unsure how university appropriations are allocated, some 2024-2025 enrollees believe the funding dedicated to rebuild the OKC campus roof should have been allocated toward repairing air-conditioning units on the main campus, which currently lacks enough functional buildings to hold classes that were supposed to be in-person.

“I heard people talking about [Jackson] having \$2.5 million to go to the roof on the OKC campus instead of the AC,” said Langston junior Sade Bass. “That’s a problem. That money needs to go toward the AC.”

Howard, who also serves as director of the university’s writing center, expressed his frustration about the maintenance issues while also stating the problems are “not largely Langston’s fault.”

“There has always been maintenance issues, but the effects of this are probably the biggest since I’ve been here,” Howard said. “We’re struggling to keep up. We are an older university that has not had enough funds to adequately maintain, so we have to put band aids on things.”

Langston students: Distance learning ‘sucks’

Sanford Hall, one of the oldest and largest buildings on Langston’s campus, must undergo additional repairs before the HVAC system can be replaced because inspectors recently discovered asbestos — a heat-resistant mineral fiber formerly used in construction materials.

Asbestos exposure can only occur if

“asbestos-containing” materials are disturbed and particles are released into the air, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Heavy or reoccurring exposure can increase the risk of developing lung cancer.

Asked about the asbestos and other issues on campus, assistant director of communications Jett Turner provided a lengthy statement, which can be found below in its entirety.

“As long as asbestos is undisturbed it is safe, and the asbestos within Sanford Hall has not been disturbed,” Turner said. “In order to install a new chiller within the building, the asbestos will need to be safely removed. The abatement of the asbestos is part of the plan Langston University has to replace the chiller.”

As the university waits to renovate its new OKC building, Sanford Hall has housed Langston’s broadcast journalism program — a hands-on degree plan with print, radio and TV news media components.

Broadcast journalism student Jasilyn Spivey said returning to remote classes and the inability to access equipment in Sanford Hall has negatively impacted student studies and morale this semester.

“Even today, my professor was talking about wanting us to get back on campus so we can take the test that we need to,” Spivey said Thursday. “So, it’s making it hard for my major to go out and create certain things. We need equipment, and we don’t have equipment because no professors are on campus.”

As one of the few Langston students with access to the OKC campus’ news station, Spivey said she understands why \$2.5 million of the deferred maintenance allocation will go toward replacing its roof.

“I’ve seen it before. The roof needs to be fixed,” Spivey said. “There’s water leaking through the (second-story) floors to the first floor, and that’s an issue in itself. So, I do understand, and it’s expensive to get those things fixed.”

Spivey said she often finds herself explaining her perspective on the situation to other Langston students. But even as she tries to help her peers understand the university’s challenging situation, Spivey

Cont. A11, Langston

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY is a public land-grant historically black university in Langston, Oklahoma. It is the only historically black college in the state and the westernmost four-year public HBCU in the United States. The main campus in Langston is a rural setting 10 miles east of Guthrie.

Cannabis Hearing

Oklahomans lend voices ahead of DEA cannabis hearing

Kevin Eagleson
NonDoc

WASHINGTON — More than three months after President Joe Biden called for a relaxation of cannabis restrictions, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration announced a hearing would be held by the end of the year on rescheduling cannabis from a Schedule I substance under the Controlled Substances Act to a less restrictive Schedule III drug, similar to Tylenol with codeine or testosterone.

Dozens of Oklahomans have already submitted public comments supporting the proposed rescheduling, with some going as far as to call for legalization.

“Reclassifying marijuana is a necessary step that will move the needle in our ongoing efforts to reform and modernize U.S. drug policy, and I urge you to pass this new rule and push back against this nation’s archaic laws against cannabis possession,” Cameron Foral of Oklahoma City wrote.

Set for 9 a.m. Monday, Dec. 2, the DEA

cannabis hearing is open to the public. Individuals with a desire to participate must submit a written request by Sept. 30.

According to the DEA, Schedule I drugs have no medicinal use and the highest potential for abuse. As a Schedule I drug, cannabis is classified with drugs like heroin, LSD and ecstasy, among others.

Schedule III drugs are those designated to have a moderate to low risk of physical and psychological dependence. Schedule III drugs include ketamine, codeine and testosterone, among others.

Oklahoma AG Gentner Drummond supports hearing

In June, before the announcement of the Dec. 2 date, Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond signed onto a letter from other state attorneys general voicing support for the hearing.

“Considering the public impacts of the proposed rule, a public hearing is in the public interest, and therefore in the interest

of our states,” the letter states. “Reclassifying any drug from Schedule I to Schedule III is a significant change. Especially considering how politically fraught the topics of marijuana use and legalization have become, a dramatic change in the classification of marijuana should not be done lightly or without sufficient public input. DEA should hold a public hearing on the proposed rule.”

According to a Pew Research poll from March, 57 percent of voters believe cannabis should be legal for recreational and medicinal use.

While the general public may appear supportive of rescheduling or legalizing cannabis, those in the transportation industry are concerned about challenges it could impose on drug-testing requirements.

“Rescheduling marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III poses significant potential consequences to federally required workplace drug testing programs that have not been considered or addressed in this proposed rulemaking. While [the Department of Transportation] and Coast Guard regulations

specifically require testing for marijuana regardless of its [Controlled Substances Act] Schedule designation, those regulatory frameworks rest on the Department of Health and Human Services’ authority to establish scientific standards including drug metabolite levels and certification of laboratories to conduct specimen testing,” Caitlyn Stewart, vice president of regulatory affairs for the American Waterways Operators, wrote in a July statement. “This critical interplay between DHHS, DOT and the Coast Guard means that rescheduling marijuana to Schedule III without express new authority for DHHS to continue setting scientific standards for marijuana as a Schedule III controlled substance could jeopardize, and possibly eliminate, the authority of DOT and the Coast Guard to continue requiring marijuana testing for transportation workers.”

In June, before the publication of the letter by the American Waterways Operators, Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg testified in a House Committee on Transportation and

Cont. A11, Cannabis Hearing



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Homelessness

Some worry SCOTUS ruling *could embolden cities* to criminalize homelessness

Matt Patterson
NonDoc

Like most big cities across the country, Oklahoma City is grappling with homeless encampments that some consider eyesores and crime magnets in need of elimination either through programs that reduce homelessness or law enforcement sweeps that can send homeless people to jail. Thanks to a new U.S. Supreme Court ruling, local municipalities have more options than ever, and some believe that will only exacerbate the problem.

The U.S. Supreme Court's 6-3 decision in *Grants Pass v. Johnson* stems from a case originally filed in 2018. Grants Pass, Oregon, is a city of about 40,000 people in the southwest part of the state. The Oregon Law Center filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of Debra Blake, who had been issued citations for violating municipal ordinances against sleeping outside, and others who had faced criminal trespassing penalties. In the case's path to the U.S. Supreme Court, judges found that arresting or citing homeless people violated the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eighth Amendment since the City of Grants Pass lacked a homeless shelter.

But the 6-3 SCOTUS decision released June 28 affirms that municipal governments have broad authority to craft laws that can sometimes make homeless people face criminal punishment in the form of citations and jail time. In the majority opinion, Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that, "The Constitution's Eighth Amendment serves many important functions, but it does not authorize federal judges to wrest those rights and responsibilities from the American people and in their place dictate this nation's homelessness policy."

"Homelessness is complex. Its causes are many," Gorsuch wrote. "So may be the

Homelessness is complex. Its causes are many,... So may be the public policy responses required to address it. At bottom, the question this case presents is whether the Eighth Amendment grants federal judges primary responsibility for assessing those causes and devising those responses. It does not

Neil Gorsuch, Associate Justice, Supreme Court of the United States. Grants Pass v. Johnson majority opinion.

public policy responses required to address it. At bottom, the question this case presents is whether the Eighth Amendment grants federal judges primary responsibility for assessing those causes and devising those responses. It does not."

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Sonya Sotomayor wrote that the ruling would almost certainly worsen America's unhoused problem by causing a "destabilizing cascade of harm." Sotomayor quoted a "heartbreaking message" from Blake, who died while the case was pending.

"I have been repeatedly told by Grants Pass police that I must 'move along' and that there is nowhere in Grants Pass that I can legally sit or rest," Blake was quoted as saying. "I have been repeatedly awakened by Grants Pass police while sleeping and told that I need to get up and move. I have been told by Grants Pass police that I should leave town. Because I have no choice but to live outside and have no place else to go, I have gotten tickets, fines and have been criminally prosecuted for being homeless."

'It's a tough conversation'

In some cases, fallout from the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Grants Pass v. Johnson* has been swift. Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered local governments in his state to clean up homeless encampments or risk losing state funding for other projects and programs.

"No more excuses," Newsom tweeted July 25 about his controversial order. "We've provided the time. We've provided the funds. Now it's time for locals to do their job."

But even before the SCOTUS made its ruling, local municipalities in Oklahoma had been willing to test the limits of the U.S. Constitution. In January, a new Shawnee ordinance made it illegal to sit or lie on sidewalks in a downtown portion of the city. Violations can result in a

ticket.

Like many cities its size, Shawnee has a shortage of affordable housing, and capacity concerns at the 30-bed limited-access shelter operated by The Salvation Army has left local leaders surveying available properties for another emergency shelter. But even that limited shelter in Shawnee provides more resources than are available in communities like Edmond, which has no homeless shelter and has seen some unhoused people arrested repeatedly like the plaintiffs in the Oregon lawsuit.

On the state level, Oklahoma housing advocates have seen a mixed bag of policies pass over the last two years. In 2023, the Legislature created the state's new Housing Stability Program, which is aimed at providing development funding for affordable single and multi-unit family housing. The statewide program is now taking applications from builders, who can receive zero-interest loans to develop projects and increase the state's housing supply. The loans must be repaid within two years to avoid interest charges.

But this year, lawmakers passed and Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt signed Senate Bill 1854, which made unauthorized camping on public lands a misdemeanor if repeat offenders who are camping do not accept services offered to them. Violators could face fines or jail time.

Following the bill's signing, Stitt said Oklahoma would not become a place where homeless encampments are allowed to flourish.

"We're not going to allow tent cities, and we're not going to allow the homeless to camp out like we're seeing in other states," Stitt said.

Stitt did acknowledge the complexities of the problem, however.

"It's a tough conversation," Stitt said. "It's a big conversation. There's substance in abuse. There's mental illness. There's people in certain

Cont. A10, Homelessness

Homelessness

Encampment bans, and statutory actions, only address symptoms, not the problem

From A9

situations that need help. We also have to look at the rights of businesses and private property owners and community safety.”

Some organizations fighting headwinds

In OKC, the city is in the middle of a two-year project to house 500 of its most chronically homeless residents through its Key to Home program.

In its latest point-in-time count earlier this year, the city had 1,838 unhoused residents. And in many places, the encampments that serve as their homes are hard to miss.

For organizations that serve as resource centers for those on the streets, there is fear the latest Supreme Court ruling could encourage further municipal or state punishments for transient people, ultimately making the work of social service groups more difficult, said Meghan Mueller, the new executive director of the Homeless Alliance.

“I think we have a lot of people who are working cohesively and in a collaborative way to do what we’ve been doing, which is to connect people with affordable housing. Supreme Court ruling or no Supreme Court ruling, that’s what we do,” Mueller said. “I think any time there could be additional barriers rulings like this could pose, whether that’s criminal charges or citations, that is a huge concern.”

The OKC City Council has tried to curb some aspects of homelessness in recent years, including a panhandling rule that was struck down by the federal 10th Circuit of Appeals in 2020 because the city failed to prove that panhandling created a danger to the public. Even when in place, the ordinance was mostly unenforced.

More recently, three OKC City Council members, Ward 1’s Bradley Carter, Ward 4’s Todd Stone and Ward 8’s Mark Stonecipher, introduced an ordinance in 2022 that would have banned homeless encampments on public property, including city, county, state and federal land. The ordinance was deferred indefinitely when it met with opposition from other council members.

Stone said that, in the wake of the new Supreme Court decision, it is not his intent to punish those who are unhoused.

“I don’t want to make homelessness a crime,” Stone said. “But what we need to figure out is, I’ve got tons of areas where businesses are contacting me nonstop trying to get help with issues they are facing. I’ve seen businesses have to close down because of some of the issues of people hanging out there doing bad things like harassing clients and customers, different things like that. And it’s like, OK, somehow we’ve got to be able to hold people accountable for when they’re creating big issues for other people.”

Stone said the city’s Key to Home program has been a good start.

“I think it’s definitely getting there,” Stone said. “I think everyone wants things fixed the next day, and that can’t happen, but that’s still what people want. But it does look like it has been successful, so I’m glad to see that. I would like to see a continuation and expansion of it. But I don’t think homeless people need to be locked up in jail, and I’m sure the people who run jails don’t want them there either. It just adds to the problems they have.”

That’s what groups like the Homeless Alliance and Mental Health Association Oklahoma fear in the long term. Both have homeless outreach teams that feed into the Key to Home program. MHAO director of OKC operations Kelly Dyer Fry said in a statement that organizations working to curb homelessness do not need added problems through municipal ordinances that criminalize the existence of the unhoused.

“Communities across the country are sorely lacking in low-barrier shelters and program funding to assist the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable individuals who do not have a safe place to call home,” Dyer Fry said. “We are in the throes of an affordable housing crisis, especially for individuals who have limited income, and criminal justice charges too often disqualify individuals from options that are available. Punitive regulations are not the answer to homelessness, housing is. Introducing more fines on our unhoused individuals only perpetuates poverty and pushes them further away from stability, and it ultimately costs taxpayers more money to arrest and jail people than to provide strategic, humane and long-term solutions.”

Rep. Forrest Bennett (D-OKC) serves on the House Municipal Government Committee. He said he understands why there is a desire to remove homeless encampments from cities, but he encouraged people to look at the issue more broadly.

“I think there is probably merit on both sides of the argument, but I see this issue from a wider lens. I mean, the fact that we’re having a discussion about whether a city government can (enforce criminal penalties to remove the unhoused), which is what that case was all



PHOTO: ADOBE IMAGES

“
We want to look at how zoning is impacting the development of affordable housing and what effects that some of the exclusionary zoning laws that we have now impact the construction of affordable housing.

Rep. Forrest Bennett, (D-OKC)

about, and the recent legislation passed here in Oklahoma was about whether it should be legal. I think it does a disservice to our constituents because we know that when people are unhoused in a community, it’s costly. The bottom line in a literal sense is that it costs more money to just pass laws to criminalize those who experience homelessness than it would to solve the underlying causes of it.”

Rising rent, home prices make housing harder to obtain

Oklahoma finds itself in the early stages of what some fear will become a housing crisis similar in scale to those faced by other cities. The average rent in OKC for a 700 square-foot apartment is about \$900, according to apartments.com. That remains below the national average of about \$1,500, but the city’s average rental rate experienced a significant increase in 2023.

Similarly, home prices have risen in recent years in line with national trends. Homes in OKC cost an average of \$237,000, according to Zillow.

As the Housing Sustainability Program has moved forward over the last year to spur construction of individual and multi-family housing, Bennett said he and other legislators have also been examining what they can do to grease the wheels and make affordable developments easier.

“We want to look at how zoning is impacting the development of affordable housing and what effects that some of the exclusionary zoning laws that we have now impact the construction of affordable housing,” Bennett said. “I think the bottom line is that good housing policy can have a positive impact on issues like those who are experiencing homelessness face. But I think housing is just one piece of the pie. If we’re orienting ourselves to optimizing everything, then we need to look at housing, but also education, health care and workforce development.”

Still, to some, the public policy struggle seems like two steps forward and one step back, or worse. Mueller said there are a lot of things that groups like the Homeless Alliance must overcome to serve their clients. The SCOTUS decision and the fear of new, stricter municipal laws can be demoralizing.

“It’s disappointing and disheartening that the SCOTUS decision came shortly after

Oklahoma passed a ban on camping on state property,” she said. “I think that’s what it means that nonprofits are facing an uphill battle. I think the last few years most people have seen it as a human issue, and it was losing some of the stigma it faced.

“But I feel like the SCOTUS decision is a step back.”

“There will be something happening to address it’

In many cases, Bennett said it’s easier to criminalize issues connected to homelessness than to focus on underlying causes, something he fears will be more common after *Grants Pass vs. Johnson*.

“In some cases, there may be existing municipal statutes that, because of the clarity this Supreme Court case brings, will make law enforcement officials say, ‘OK, yeah, we can be a little more aggressive with this’ and start clearing camps by arresting people,” Bennett said. “That may make people feel better about what they see on the streets, but it’s just moving people around. It doesn’t address any of the causes.”

In the future, Stone said it’s likely the OKC City Council will revisit how to address encampments again following the SCOTUS ruling. He said those who complain about encampments are generally compassionate toward those experiencing homelessness, but he said they also fear for their safety and in, some cases, their businesses.

“I think probably, eventually, yes, there will be something happening to address it,” Stone said. “For me, it’s important that we have some way of dealing with these super problematic areas. As I said, I get calls on this on almost a daily basis. There are businesses that have people destroying their places of work or they have people defecating on their front door. They have to go out and clean all of that up. We have to make sure we have the tools to handle those cases. And if those people need help, then we need to get them help.”

MATT PATTERSON has spent 20 years in Oklahoma journalism covering a variety of topics for The Oklahoman, The Edmond Sun and Lawton Constitution. He joined NonDoc in 2019. Email story tips and ideas to matt@nondoc.com.

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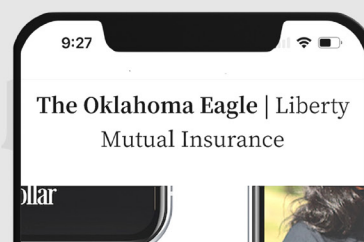
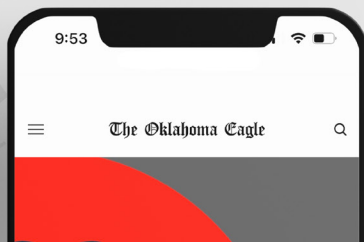




PHOTO LANGSTON.EDU

Langston University is Oklahoma's only HBCU (Historically Black College and University). The university has six academic schools offering a variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Langston

Obstacles *inherited* by Jackson, a priority

From A8

said it's undeniable that students have been disappointed with how school has started this semester.

"It sucks. It gives COVID (vibes), that's the issue," Spivey said. "It [is] like we're back in — well, for me — back in high school, and we were just online. And it's kind of hard."

Turner, the assistant communications director, said Langston has made some repairs and has entered a competitive-bidding process to obtain new HVAC systems for the Logan County campus.

"To align with our state procurement guidelines, purchases at that scale require a competitive-bid process to ensure best value," Turner said. "Due to sustained extreme temperatures experienced this summer in Oklahoma and nationwide, HVAC systems had to work harder than usual, causing failures. This issue is not isolated to Langston University, other

institutions are experiencing the same challenges. Because of this, we are all vying for the same resources and vendors."

Langston students, professors tired of Zoom-U

On Sept. 3, Langston University shifted all operations and classes online because of a waterline break in Guthrie, which caused a campus-wide water outage. That same morning, "a motor in a mechanical component within Jones Hall burned itself out," which caused smoke to spread through multiple buildings via the interconnected boiler system, Turner said.

"As a precaution, the university closed several buildings to ensure the safety of students and employees while the team identified the cause and repairs were made," Turner said. "Classes in the buildings affected and employees officed within those buildings have shifted to remote operations for the time being. Langston University is working with OG&E to remedy the issue."

During her State of the University address, Jackson urged the Langston community to maintain hope. She ended her speech with presidential priorities for the future — a plan she calls "The P's."

"Our priorities are people, programs, processes, public relations, partnerships, and performance — all grounded in our work purpose," Jackson said. "I'm proud that these priorities signify the progress we are making together, and the priorities will serve as a framework for the future, guiding our decision making and evaluation of progress."

After former Langston University President Kent Smith announced his retirement from higher education in April 2023, Jackson served as interim president for 10 months before her official swearing in as the university's 17th president in April.

While elected officials and university leaders have expressed excitement for her tenure, Jackson has inherited a collection of obstacles and opportunities, not the least

of which is a controversial letter from U.S. agriculture and education departments proclaiming massive, historic underfunding of Oklahoma's only HBCU.

"We are aware that there is still work to be done," Jackson said in her speech. "Make no mistake, the budget is lean, but it will allow us to have a sense of actual costs and plan for future growth. Despite the lean budget, two of our greatest priorities will be related to personnel and facilities."

A land-grant institution, Langston University is governed by the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical Colleges, which is scheduled to meet at 10 a.m., Friday, Sept. 13, at Oklahoma State University's Student Union, Council Room 412.

SASHA NDISABIYE graduated from Langston University in May 2024 with a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism and a minor in sociology. She is completing a NonDoc editorial internship in the summer of 2024.

Cannabis Hearing



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Rescheduling *marijuana* could reduce federal penalties

From A8

Infrastructure hearing on the implications of rescheduling cannabis.

"Our understanding of the rescheduling of marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III is that it would not alter DOT's marijuana testing requirements with respect to the regulated community," Buttigieg said. "For private individuals who are performing safety-sensitive functions, subject to drug testing, marijuana is identified by name, not by reference to one of those classes. So even if it was in its classification, we do not believe that would have a direct impact on that authority."

Rescheduling the drug could reduce federal penalties for trafficking and introduce new regulatory challenges, but it would not ease the restrictions cannabis companies face when working with banks.

SAFER Banking act could provide clarity

On April 30, the American Bankers Association published a statement in response to the announcement of a potential DEA cannabis hearing.

"While ABA takes no position on the legalization of cannabis, it's important for policymakers to know that any potential decision to reclassify cannabis has no bearing on the legal issues around banking it. Cannabis would still be largely illegal under federal law, and that is a line many banks in this country will not cross," wrote Rob Nichols, ABA president and CEO. "The solution is the bipartisan SAFER Banking Act, which would allow banks to provide services to the cannabis industry in those states where it's not legal. Passing that legislation in Congress would address the ongoing legal limbo around cannabis banking, while enhancing public safety, tax

collection and transparency."

In 2023, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) introduced the SAFER Banking Act, or the latest version of the Secure and Fair Enforcement Regulation Banking Act. The bill would provide protections to federally regulated financial institutions that serve state-sanctioned cannabis businesses. In December 2023, the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs held a hearing on the bill. As a similar version did in 2021, the bill stalled.

Since cannabis is federally illegal, individuals in the cannabis industry are often forced to carry large amounts of cash and find legal and creative ways to pay their employees and taxes.

"I go through my LLC. I can pay my employees through the LLC, but I've got to give cash to my [accountants] that pay it for me," said David Walker, owner of Great Barrier Reefer, a dispensary in Oklahoma City.

Walker said the process is not only tedious and time-consuming but also unnerving.

"If I'm driving around when I see my CPAs with \$18,000 or \$22,000 on average from payroll and taxes, I'm literally sitting there going, 'Gosh, if I get in an accident or something happens and someone gets my bag, I'm literally out of business. I can't recover from this,'" Walker said. "I have three kids, I do everything for my family, wife, my whole business relies on that. Most people that try to rob my business know we can't use banks because banks don't want us, so they know we're piled up with cash. That's the scariest part."

The DEA cannabis hearing is set to take place at the DEA Museum and Visitors Center in Arlington, Virginia.

KEVIN EAGLESON is a University of Oklahoma Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication student participating in the Gaylord News program in 2024.

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(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

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Church Services 11:00 a.m.

Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

Rudisill Regional Library
1520 N Hartford Ave.
Tulsa OK 74106
(918) 409-4899

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons

Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

"The Righteous Are As Bold As A Lion." - Prov.28:1a

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Ph: (918) 425-2077

Pastor Rick Bruner

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Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

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Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

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POPULAR OBESITY MEDICATION GETS A PRICE CUT | A13

A welcomed first step for American families struggling to access these drugs, said President Biden.



HOW BIDEN-HARRIS' \$179M INVESTMENT COULD IMPACT BLACK STUDENTS | A15

The new funding promises to help states, school districts, and communities.

GoFundMe Isn't Health Care. Americans Are Begging for Help Anyway



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Research shows that most crowdfunding donors give donations to people in need — usually someone experiencing a hardship or financial challenge. But recent data highlights the growing disparity in the crowdfunding space.

GoFundMe

Crowdfunding platforms are often used to alleviate medical expenses.

But for Black folks, using them can be a double-edged sword.

Medical Expenses vs. Financial Realities

Anissa Durham
Word In Black

Daric L. Cottingham has to make a choice: pay her rent or continue gender-affirming care. Soon, she'll run out of hormone replacement therapy.

Laid off seven months ago, the 28-year-old Black trans woman has seen her gender transition hit a roadblock as medical bills pile up. With no job and limited insurance coverage, she's turned to crowdfunding platforms like GoFundMe to cover the costs of gender-affirming care.

"I knew that I would rather ask for help," the Los Angeles-based media professional says. "But that bootstrap mentality in our country makes the whole process of asking for help feel embarrassing, a bit dehumanizing and degrading — I had to put my pride and ego aside. I can't continue to pursue my gender affirming care if I'm not around."

Cottingham is not alone. Roughly one-third of all GoFundMe campaigns are dedicated to covering medical costs, a stark reflection of the U.S.'s broken healthcare system. But it begs the question: Is this system broken, or is it working exactly as intended?

Crowdfunding for Survival

Gender-affirming health care coverage varies by state, with some insurance plans using exclusionary language like "sex reassignment surgery" to deny coverage to a trans person. And for Cottingham, certain cosmetic surgeries or procedures weren't covered by her previous health insurance plan.

Like many others caught between medical needs and financial realities, along with GoFundMe, Cottingham also uses PayPal, CashApp, Venmo, Kickstarter, and Zelle to raise funds that pay for food, housing, and medical expenses.

But the process is far from simple.

Crowdfunding platforms take a cut, with platform processing fees ranging from roughly 3% to 7%, and platforms like GoFundMe and GoGetFunding take an additional \$0.30 cents per donation. As a result, individuals like Cottingham need to calculate how much will be deducted from their donations plus how much money they need to receive.

"It's a catch-22 kind of thing. The fees are terrible," Cottingham says. "But you have to use these crowdfunding platforms because they add credibility to what you're crowdfunding for."

Is it Really a Broken System?

Cont. A14, GoFundMe

Obesity

Popular Obesity Medication Gets a Price Cut

"This is a welcome first step for American families struggling to access these drugs, said President Biden.

Deborah Bailey
Word In Black

Eli Lilly pharmaceuticals has announced a significant price reduction for the lowest dose of Zepbound, one of its high demand medications approved for weight loss. The announcement came Aug. 29, as the rate of obesity is skyrocketing in America. Most insurance companies still refuse to cover obesity medications.

Under Lilly's discounted price plan, patients who pay for Zepbound out of pocket can now obtain a four-week supply of the 2.5 mg single-dose vial for \$399 (\$99.75 per vial). A four-week supply of the 5 mg dose has been reduced to \$549 (\$137.25 per vial). The monthly list price for Zepbound was previously \$1059, regardless of the dose.

"This is a welcome first step for American families struggling to access these drugs," said President Joseph Biden in a statement responding to the price reduction. "But it is critical that drug companies lower their prices across the board," Biden added.

Health advocates and physicians' groups warn patients that the price reduction for Zepbound only applies to the two "starter" doses of the drug. Patients must pay for the drug out of pocket and persons opting for the lower cost drugs, will need to opt out of Eli Lilly's coupon program available to lower the cost for other weight loss medications.

To receive the discounted price, patients must have a prescription and use LillyDirect, the pharmaceutical firm's telehealth platform. The medications will come packaged in single dose vials that must be used with a syringe. Vials with the auto-injector pen are also available for a higher price.

Patrik Jonsson, executive vice president of Eli Lilly and Co., said the price reduction gives patients living with obesity options. In a statement announcing the Zepbound price reduction, Jonsson said the new program gives patients options.

"Despite obesity being recognized as a serious chronic illness with long-term consequences, it's often misclassified as a lifestyle choice, resulting in many employers and the federal government excluding medications

Cont. A14, Obesity



Daric L. Cottingham, 28-year-old Black trans woman has seen her gender transition hit a roadblock as medical bills pile up.

PHOTO COTTINGHAM

GoFundMe

8% of Adults in the U.S. have Medical Debt



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A13

The popularity of crowdfunding platforms to help with medical bills speaks to a larger problem about the American health care system. “Medical debt, in some sense, is a symptom of a broken system,” Neale Mahoney, professor of economics at Stanford University, says. “The price of health care is very high in the U.S.”

Overall, about 8% of adults in the U.S. have medical debt. But Black Americans are more likely to have medical debt — at nearly twice the rate of white Americans.

The main reason people get medical debt, Mahoney explains, is when an individual loses or does not have access to health insurance coverage, and they have a health care shock. And, depending on the state, medical debt from a patient can be sold to debt collectors for pennies on the dollar.

In a recent study Mahoney co-authored, researchers found no effect of medical debt relief on someone’s mental health. Which means the stress, anxiety, and depression that is often associated with medical debt isn’t alleviated when a debt is forgiven.

“What was disappointing about the study is that when you wait so long to

provide people relief, it doesn’t make a big difference,” he says. “People have already become scarred because of the debt collection process. So, addressing the problem at that point is too little, too late. And that’s discouraging.”

Although insurance can be challenging to obtain, as it’s often dependent on employment, Mahoney says it has been shown to significantly improve access to preventative care, reduce financial distress, and improve health care outcomes. But even still, where does that leave folks with insurance and medical debt — or without insurance and scraping by to pay medical bills?

“I think there’s no easy fix,” he says.

Mahoney says ultimately, health care services need to be cheaper, there needs to be an expansion of health insurance, and hospitals need to provide the financial assistance they’re required to by law. Otherwise, patients who experience a health crisis, have a chronic illness, or need regular health care services will constantly be left to use crowdfunding platforms to pay for medical expenses.

“It does speak to the strength of our communities and the compassion we feel for people who are suffering with medical

“
I think it speaks to this huge failure of our health care system.”

Neale Mahoney, professor of economics at Stanford University.

debt. Nobody chooses to get medical debt,” Mahoney says. “On the other hand, I think it speaks to this huge failure of our health care system. It’s the role of government to pick people up when they’re down. We’re letting way too many people fall through the cracks when it comes to the cost of health care. And I see this as emblematic of our broken health care system.”

Our reporting continues to show how the health care system has perpetuated disparities and discrimination. However, others question whether it was meant to do anything else.

“Everyone would say that the system is broken, I would say that the system is working exactly as it was intended to,” Cottingham says. “The health care system is known to prey on people’s time of need to pad companies’ pockets. Unfortunately, medical care is not about the well-being of the patient.”

The Vulnerabilities of Crowdfunding

It doesn’t take long to scroll through GoFundMe to find a campaign to help

Cont. A15, GoFundMe

CROWDFUNDING is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising money from a large number of people, typically via the internet. Crowdfunding is a form of crowdsourcing and alternative finance. In 2015, over US\$34 billion was raised worldwide by crowdfunding.

Obesity

Obesity: Too often classified as a LIFESTYLE CHOICE

From A13

like Zepbound from insurance coverage,” said Jonsson.

U.S. Representative Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-FLA) is a sponsor of congressional legislation to expand Medicare coverage for obesity treatments. Cherfilus-McCormick and Karry Buchson, M.D. (R-IN) are bi-partisan co-sponsors of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (T.R.O.A.) H.R. 4818 & D. 2407. If passed, T.R.O.A. would potentially extend obesity treatment access to more than 67.2 million recipients nationwide, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

“Every person living with obesity deserves access to comprehensive care to improve their health and wellbeing, just as they would receive for any other chronic disease,” Cherfilus-McCormick stated at a Congressional Briefing on Obesity held last month.

Forty percent of Americans are now classified as obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control with half of all Black Americans meeting obesity guidelines. Obesity is related to many chronic diseases and conditions including type II diabetes, heart diseases and certain cancers, including breast cancer according to the World Health Organization.

Obesity has been classified as a chronic disease for more than a decade. The American Medical Association voted to classify obesity as a disease in 2013 to focus on prevention and treatment and to end a history of bias and discrimination both from the public as well as the medical profession itself.

Reporting on this story is through the support of a journalism fellowship from the Gerontology Society of America, The Journalists’ Network on Generations, and the Commonwealth Fund.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

GoFundMe

Understanding your rights and decisions about disclosure

From A14

with medical expenses from a cancer diagnosis. But regardless of the type of medical fundraiser, Monica Bryant, the chief operating officer and co-founder of Triage Cancer, a national nonprofit organization that provides free education on legal and practical issues that can arise after a cancer diagnosis, says there's a downside not spoken about enough.

"One of the challenges is around disclosure and privacy. Crowdfunding campaigns are typically public, that means a person's medical information is out there for the world to see," Bryant says. "That can become challenging for people in the future."

Bryant says public crowdfunding can make it difficult to get a job because a potential employer has access to public medical information. The Americans with Disabilities Act provides legal protections with respect to discrimination, she says, but it can be difficult to prove discrimination from a potential employer viewing public medical information.

It's not just about employment. Bryant says people don't always think about the ramifications of receiving donated funds. For example, if an individual is receiving Medicaid, SNAP benefits, housing assistance, or federal student aid, getting an influx of money from a crowdfunding campaign can jeopardize those benefits.

"Depending on the state they were in, they might lose that Medicaid," she says.

And in a social context, when it comes to dating, someone may already have someone's medical information prior to meeting. While Bryant emphasizes that it's a personal decision to disclose, she tells all her clients to think ahead before sharing private information.

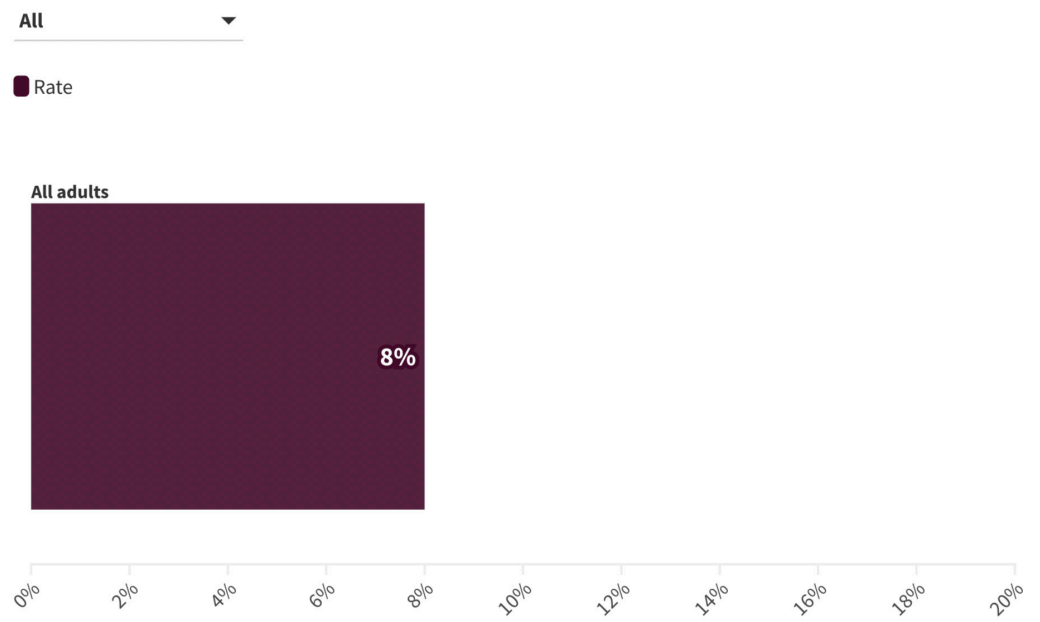
"It's not so much that there are overt dangers with sharing," she says. "It's about making sure people understand they have rights and decisions to make around disclosure."

Transparency Is a Double-Edge Sword

Research shows that most crowdfunding donors

One of the challenges is around disclosure and privacy. Crowdfunding campaigns are typically public, that means a person's medical information is out there for the world to see.

In 2021, only 8% of adults in the U.S. have medical debt but Black adults are still more likely to have medical debt



Source: [Repub Link](#), [KFF Health System Tracker](#) • *Estimate is statistically different from estimate for all other adults (p<0.05).
Graphic by Anissa Durham

give donations to people in need — usually someone experiencing a hardship or financial challenge. But recent data highlights the growing disparity in the crowdfunding space.

In 2023, researchers found that white men are significantly overrepresented in highly successful medical crowdfunding campaigns. Overall, Black people, and Black women are significantly underrepresented. Black women's campaigns represented only 0.6% of successful medical campaigns.

Cottingham, an award-winning journalist, was already established in her career when she publicly came out as transgender. With a fluctuating job market, she's had a difficult time trying to land her next full-time gig. And some have suggested she use social media platforms to document her transition to pay bills.

"I don't think marginalized people should have to fall on a sword to survive or bear our souls to the world to finally be seen as human and deserving of things," she says. "So that part of crowdfunding, for me, it's really hard."

Part of the challenge to get donations for Cottingham's gender affirming care, is the relatability of the experience. Oftentimes, she says, people will donate to causes that they can empathize with or are familiar with. For example, requesting money for rent after losing a job is a relatable experience. However, with only about 1% of the adult population identifying as transgender, it can be seen as

more of a niche experience.

Since being so vocal and public about her transition, Cottingham says she often gets words of support online. But these acknowledgments don't often translate into financial support. "I've noticed that in my crowdfunding, people wish me well, but their own beliefs are anti-trans, and they support from the sidelines."

With racial bias and transgender bias against her, Cottingham can't help but feel pressured to explain why she needs the money. She tries to be as transparent as possible but is concerned about how much information she discloses about her body. "I hate that I have to let people know what I would like to do to my body," she says. "It's a very vulnerable thing to do."

As a result, Cottingham continues to job hunt and crowdfund simultaneously. Doing both is time consuming, as she continues to be in survival mode. And she is candid about the toll it has taken on her mental health.

"Not a lot of people believe in trans rights and that we deserve the medical care that we require," she says. "My mental health is in shambles. I constantly feel dehumanized."

ANISSA DURHAM is the health data journalist for Word In Black. She reports on healthcare inequities and mental health in the Black community.

Black Student Investment

How Biden-Harris' \$179 Million Investment Could Impact Black Students

The new funding promises to help states, school districts, and communities continue to develop and implement evidence-based literacy interventions for students nationwide.

Quintessa Williams
Word In Black

The U.S. Department of Education is awarding \$179 million in grants to states that support evidence-based programs to accelerate academic achievement, building on the Biden-Harris Administration's goal to improve academic achievement nationwide.

The total includes \$149 million in new Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD) awards — the largest number of awards ever for this program — and nearly \$30 million in Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) awards.

Nationwide Impact on Black K-12 Students

Biden-Harris' investment in supporting academic acceleration is a significant step toward potentially improving educational outcomes for Black K-12 students nationwide. This funding focuses on literacy development and the enhancement of state assessment systems, both critical areas where Black students — historically underserved — have faced significant disparities.

With \$149 million allocated to the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) program, Black students could benefit from improved access to high-quality literacy resources. Given that systemic inequities often result in lower literacy rates among Black students, these funds could empower states and school districts to offer targeted support, helping bridge the literacy gap and promote

educational equity.

Additionally, the nearly \$30 million in Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) could help create more equitable assessment systems. Black students often face challenges with traditional standardized tests that may not accurately reflect their abilities or provide timely feedback. These new assessment models could offer real-time insights, allowing teachers and parents to better understand and support each student's academic journey.

Where Will The Grant Funding Be Allocated?

Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD) — \$149 Million

The CLSD grants are designed to advance evidence-based literacy practices. The Biden-Harris Administration has awarded over \$149 million to 23 state educational agencies.

These funds will help students reach critical literacy milestones — including ensuring that students are reading at grade level by third grade, a key indicator of future academic success. They will also help ensure that every student, particularly those from underserved communities, has access to high-quality literacy instruction and materials.

Additionally, the grants will help fund partnerships between K-12 schools and local universities to provide targeted literacy interventions, early care, and educational support. They will also underwrite tailored support for schools, districts, and early education programs to implement evidence-based literacy instruction, promoting long-term academic achievement.

Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) — \$30 Million

The CGSA grants are focused on developing and implementing high-quality, innovative assessments. Nearly \$30 million has been awarded to 10 state educational agencies to help states design more instructional, personalized, and relevant assessments to students' learning processes, developing assessments tailored to the needs of students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

The grants will also allow states to improve how assessment data is used, making it more practical for teachers, parents, and students to guide academic progress. They will also help create assessment systems that align with state academic standards and focus on measuring high-order thinking skills, ensuring equity and inclusion in the assessment process.

Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona announced the grants as part of the Ed Department's Back to School Bus Tour. Neera Tanden, one of President Biden's domestic policy advisors, joined Cardona at the event.

"Literacy is a critical foundation for every student's success in school and beyond," Cardona said. "The new funding announced today will help states, school districts, and communities continue to develop and implement evidence-based literacy interventions," helping to "raise the bar for student academic success, giving every student the best opportunities to succeed," he added.

We contacted the Department of Education for comment and are waiting to hear back.



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Events

SEPTEMBER

Sep. 6 - Oct. 26

The Original Black Wall Street Merchant Marketplace is open in the Greenwood Business District, 122 N. Greenwood Ave., on Saturdays from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. In addition to vendors, live music, line dancing classes, yoga classes, sound body and soul meditation and sound bath sessions, and free health care screenings will be offered. For more information, visit www.theoriginalbwsmarketplace.com or send an email to hello@tulsacountyliving.com.

Sep. 7 - Oct. 19

Cheyenne-Roger Mills County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, 101 S. L. L. Males Ave., will be hosting “Voices and Votes: Democracy in America” exhibition. From the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street, the exhibition explores the complex history of the nation, including The Revolution, Civil Rights, Suffrage, Elections, Protests, and the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens. The project is touring the state. For more information, visit www.okhumanities.org or call (580) 497-3318.

Sep. 7

A Taste of Nigeria Festival will be held at the Historic Big10 Ballroom, 1624 E. Apache St., 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at <https://atontulsa2024.eventbrite.com/>.

Sep. 12

American Bank of Oklahoma and Tulsa Tech are presenting “Getting Credit Ready: How to positively build credit and get loan ready.” The program is scheduled to be held at Tulsa Tech Peoria Campus, 3850 N. Peoria Ave., 6 p.m. – 7 p.m. Refreshments will be provided. Additional community partners sponsoring the program are Apex Title and Closing Services, Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, and Greenwood Women’s Business Center. For more information, call (918) 371-7300.

Black Broadway Tulsa has announced its debut production of “A Raisin in the Sun,” opening at the Maya Angelou Theater at Central Performing Arts High School, Sept. 20-29. David Harris, a local veteran actor and director, is the play’s director.

Hansberry

‘A Raisin In The Sun’ To Be Performed By New Theater Company

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

The First Play Produced by Black Broadway Tulsa

Black Broadway Tulsa has announced its debut production of “A Raisin in the Sun,” opening at the Maya Angelou Theater at Central Performing Arts High School, Sept. 20-29. David Harris, a local veteran actor and director, is the play’s director.

A winner of the New York Critics Circle as “Best Play of the Year,” the play was first produced for Broadway by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959. Since its first premier, the productions of the play have won countless awards, including a Pulitzer Prize for Drama Winner in 2011 and a Tony Award for Best Play in 2012.

The award-winning play highlights a Black family’s search for success and the American dream.

“This production promises to deliver a fresh and poignant perspective on this classic American play,” said Harris.

Local actors will be reprising the roles of the heralded play.

The cast features some of Tulsa’s premier Black performers, including Kimberly Manning, Christian Stubblefield, Obum Ukabam, and

Nicole Billups, who stars as Mama.

“This show is both universal and generational,” says Billups.

“Never give up on your family. Perfect or imperfect, you have to love people where they are at. Bringing Mama to life has stretched me the most, but it’s been a deeply rewarding experience. I hope people see the hope and love that shine through, even in the midst of challenges.”

Well-known actors Sean Combs, Ruby Dee, Louis Gossett Jr., Sanaa Lathan, Audra McDonald, Sidney Poitier, and Phylicia Rashad among others have appeared in Broadway, movie, and television productions.

The founder of Black Broadway Tulsa is Obum Ukabam, a member of the City of Tulsa Arts Commission. A local director and actor, he recently directed Theatre North’s “Once on this Island” and appeared in “Top Dog Underdog.”

“We are excited to launch Black Broadway Tulsa with “A Raisin in the Sun” and “Waiting to be Invited,” said Ukabam.

Cont. A18, Hansberry

Chambers

U.S. Black Chambers Inc. Participates In White House Briefing On The State Of Black Business



Ron Busby Sr. is president and CEO of the U. S. Black Chambers Inc.

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Greenwood Women’s Business Center Representative Attended

The U. S. Black Chambers Inc. (USBC) and over 75 national leaders from the organization visited the White House for a “State of Black Business” briefing. The event was a highlight of the USBC National Conference and 15th Anniversary Celebration, July 17-20.

The White House Office of Public Engagement hosted the meeting. Donna Jackson, program director of the Greenwood Women’s Business Center, attended the meeting.

“We met with White House officials from various federal agencies. The Biden Administration representatives shared their

unwavering commitment to advancing racial equity and supporting the Black business community,” said Jackson.

Key topics covered during the briefing included the following:

Advancing Racial Equity: Senior officials outlined the Administration’s ongoing efforts to address systemic inequalities and promote inclusivity within the economic landscape.

Support for Black Businesses: The discussion emphasized the importance of fostering an environment where Black-owned businesses can thrive, highlighting initiatives aimed at providing increased access to capital, resources, and opportunities.

Policy Updates: Attendees were briefed on the latest policies and programs designed to support minority-owned enterprises, ensuring

Cont. A18, Chambers

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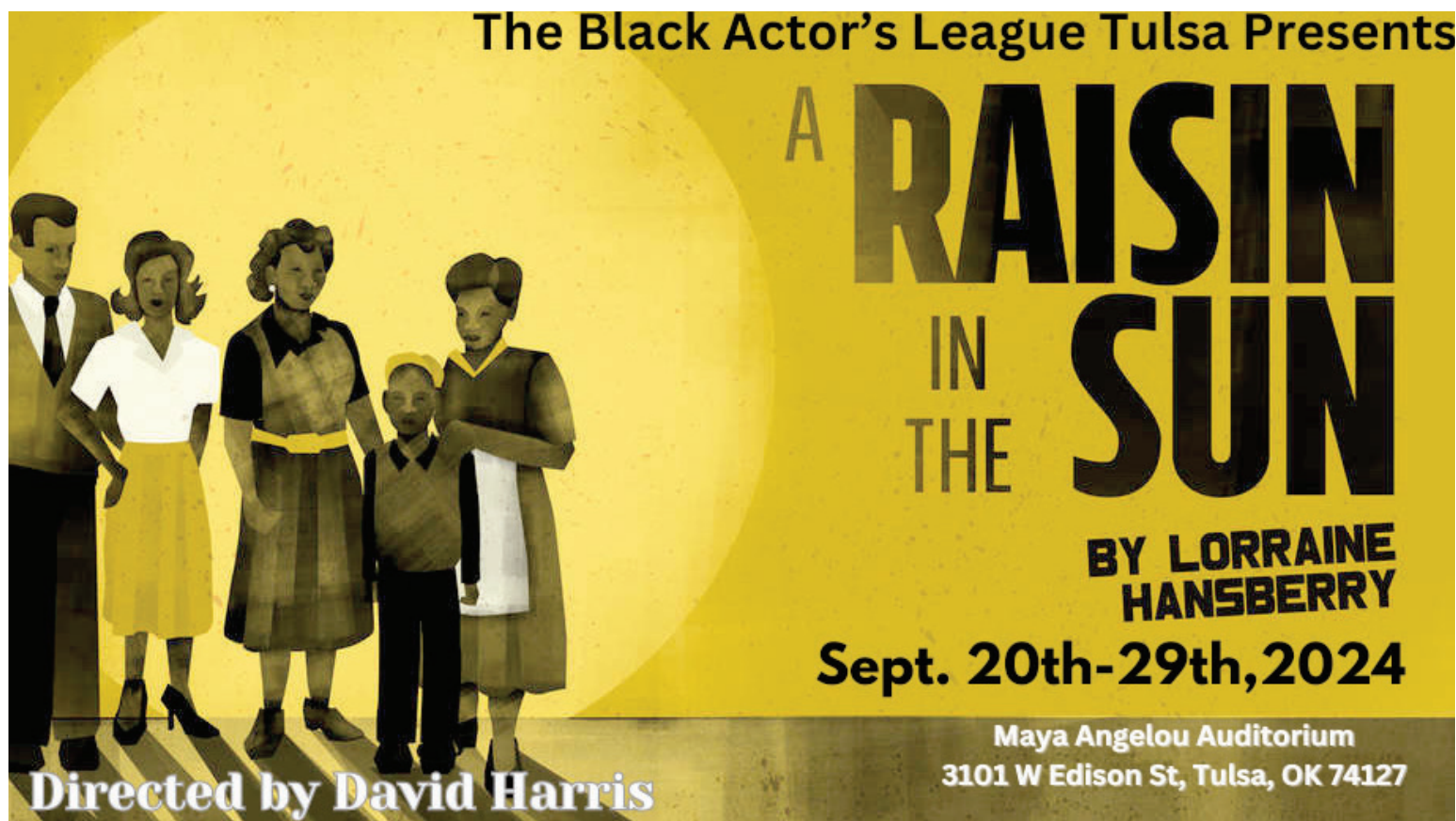
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“A Raisin in the Sun” play has been the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for drama, Tony Award for “Best Play,” and a New York Critics Circle award as “Best Play of the Year.” The play was the first by an African American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize and the first play by a Black woman to be produced on Broadway.

Hansberry

Bringing the brilliance of Broadway to Tulsa

From A17

“These productions embody our commitment to offering high-quality theater that showcases the exceptional talent within our community, particularly those who often don’t receive the

opportunities they deserve. By creating more opportunities and ensuring fair compensation, we’re bringing overlooked talent to the forefront.”

In addition to sponsoring plays, Black Broadway Tulsa plans to take a group of students and community members to experience Broadway in New York. This initiative underscores the company’s commitment to providing life-changing opportunities for aspiring artists and elevating the cultural landscape of Tulsa.

The mission of Black Broadway Tulsa is to bring the brilliance of Broadway and the richness of Black theatrical excellence to Tulsa while elevating the stage with diverse talent and powerful storytelling.

Following “A Raisin in the Sun,” Black Broadway Tulsa will debut its second production, “Waiting to be Invited,” on Oct. 3.

For tickets or more information, visit www.blackbroadway.org.

Black Broadway Tulsa

Black Broadway Tulsa is dedicated to delivering accessible, high-quality theater in North Tulsa, Black Broadway Tulsa invites all Tulsans to experience these compelling stories and the remarkable talent behind them. The Maya Angelou Theater at Central Performing Arts High School is the perfect venue to launch this exciting new chapter in Tulsa’s arts scene.

Chambers

GWBC: Supporting diverse women entrepreneurs

From A17



Donna Jackson is program director of the Greenwood Women’s Business Center

they are equipped to contribute significantly to the nation’s economy.

Ron Busby Sr., president and CEO of the U. S. Black Chambers Inc., said the briefing underscored the vital role Black businesses play in the economy and the importance of government collaborations in driving meaningful change.

“We are encouraged by the Administration’s dedication to fostering an inclusive economic environment where Black businesses can flourish,” said Busby.

White House officials and other government representatives attending the meeting were Taylor Wright, senior advisor for Public Engagement; Steve Benjamin, assistant to the President, senior advisor to the President and director of Public Engagement; Neera Tanden, advisor to Domestic Policy to the President; Kylie Patterson, deputy assistant to the President; Jared Bernstein, chair of the Council of Economic Advisers; Jackie Robinson-Burnette, associate administrator, Office of Government

Contracting & Business Development, U.S. Small Business Administration; Janis Bowdler, counselor to the Secretary (Racial Equity), U.S. Department of Treasury; and Eric Morrissette, acting undersecretary of Commerce for Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Greenwood Women’s Business Center

The Greenwood Women’s Business Center supports diverse women entrepreneurs in their journey across all business life cycles – from start-up to maturity – with information, tools, and resources designed to escalate their visions. GBC provides technical assistance, shared services, and counseling services (in person and virtually) to help women business owners navigate the myriad of opportunities available that enable their firms to grow, hire employees, and be leaders in their communities. This center is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. For more information, see <https://usblackchambers.org/greenwoodwbc/>.

Events

Sep. 12

John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation 15th Annual National Symposium to host Part 4 – Afro-Indigenous Intersections, Past and Present: Through the Lens of Women at the University of Tulsa – Lorton Performance Center, 550 S. Gary Pl., Reception, 5:15 p.m.; Program, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Guest speaker will be Dr. Tiya Miles, Michael Garvey Professor of History and Radcliffe Alumnae Professor at Harvard University. To register, visit <https://www.jhfnational-symposium.org/>. The event is free and open to the public.

Sep. 12

Sisserou’s Restaurant, 107 N. Boulder Ave., is hosting Live Music Night featuring the Cynthia Simmons Trio. For reservations, call (918) 576-6800 or make a reservation at Sisserou’s Reservations.

Sep. 13

Tulsa Area United Way Day of Caring. To volunteer, visit Tulsa Area United Way Volunteer.

Sep. 14

Dia De La Herencia Hispana – Hispanic Heritage Day is to be held at 1801 S. Garnett Rd., 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free admission. Sponsors are Global District and the Tulsa Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit Hispanic Heritage Day.

Sep. 15 - 22

Pàrla Citywide Creative Festival sponsored by the J’Parlé Artist Group, Inc.

Sep. 17

Gilcrease Museum and Circle Cinema are co-hosting a screening of Thomas Allen Harris’ “Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People” at Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., 7 p.m. For more information, call (918) 585-3456.

Sep. 18

918 Day Family Fun Fest is to be held at Northridge Shopping Center, 5057 N. Peoria Ave., 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. For more information, visit Northridge Plaza.

Sep. 18

The University of Tulsa is hosting DEI Week, Sept. 16-20. Former Tulsan Dara Starr Tucker will perform at the Lorton Performance Center, Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. She is a celebrated artist renowned for her powerful blend of music and social commentary. For more information, visit DEI Week: Live Breakdown with Dara Starr Tucker.

DEI Week Planned At The University of Tulsa, Sept. 16-20

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Singer-Songwriter Dara Starr Returns Home

Black Broadway Tulsa has announced its debut production of “A Raisin in the Sun,” opening at the Maya Angelou Theater at Central Performing Arts High School, Sept. 20-29. David Harris, a local veteran actor and director, is the play’s director.

A winner of the New York Critics Circle as “Best Play of the Year,” the play was first produced for Broadway by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959. Since its first premier, the productions of the play have won countless awards, including a Pulitzer Prize for Drama Winner in 2011 and a Tony Award for Best Play in 2012.

The award-winning play highlights a Black family’s search for success and the American dream.

“This production promises to deliver a fresh and poignant perspective on this classic American play,” said Harris.

Local actors will be reprising the roles of the heralded play.

The cast features some of Tulsa’s premier Black performers, including Kimberly Manning, Christian Stubblefield, Obum Ukabam, and Nicole Billups, who stars as Mama.

“This show is both universal and generational,” says Billups.

“Never give up on your family. Perfect or imperfect, you have to love people where they are at. Bringing Mama to life has stretched me the most, but it’s been a deeply rewarding experience. I hope people see the hope and love that shine through, even in the midst of challenges.”

Well-known actors Sean Combs, Ruby Dee, Louis Gossett Jr., Sanaa Lathan, Audra McDonald, Sidney Poitier, and Phylicia Rashad among others have appeared in Broadway, movie, and television productions.

The founder of Black Broadway Tulsa is Obum Ukabam, a member of the City of Tulsa Arts Commission. A local director and actor, he recently directed Theatre North’s “Once on this Island” and appeared in “Top Dog Underdog.”

“We are excited to launch Black Broadway Tulsa with “A Raisin in the Sun” and “Waiting to be Invited,” said Ukabam.



Dara Starr Tucker, a native Tulsan, is a singer, songwriter, social commentator, and satirist.