

# TOPEKA

DEFYING  
EXPECTATIONS

MANAGEMENT  
REPORT  
JANUARY



# FROM THE DESK OF MATT PIVARNIK

Community Leaders,

Given everything we've been through in the last few months, in terms of new projects and plans, tremendous wins and at times tenuous hurdles, I'd just like to start this Management Report off by saying:

Dear Partnership Team,  
You're all amazing.  
Keep up the great work!

The team is my motivation. They drive our success. They have the hearts of servants; but don't be mistaken, they are a team of BOSSES. I realize they aren't celebrated nearly as much as they should be, but I hope to change that in the future, because we are all accelerating together.

Won't you join us?



Greater Topeka Partnership  
Visit Topeka  
Forge



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Chamber

GO  
Topeka



## CHOOSE TOPEKA SURPASSES EXPECTATIONS (CONFIDENTIAL)

With just a month and a half into our talent relocation initiative, Choose Topeka's reach across the globe has far surpassed even aggressive projections. To date, over 3,000 submissions with resumes or questions along with over 1,000 calls have been received. Multiple employers have initiated the process to submit candidates, via emails and calls, and seven candidates have been submitted, committing \$47,500 in matching JEDO funds.

Topeka & Shawnee County businesses may submit candidates for consideration in the program through [ChooseTopeka.com](https://www.choosetopeka.com), under the employer guidelines for the program.

Businesses that would like to offer additional relocation perks (like discounts, free items, etc.) for up to sixty candidates in the incentive pilot can submit their perk to [ChooseTopeka@TopekaPartnership.com](mailto:ChooseTopeka@TopekaPartnership.com).

## ANIMAL HEALTH CORRIDOR ASSET MAP

Topeka has been chosen to be the first of three partners of the Great Plains Technology and Manufacturing Cluster Initiative supported by an SBA grant. K-State University's Technology Development Institute has been charged with finding ways to:

- Expand regional cluster planning and rural linkages
- Cultivate regional innovation ecosystem platforms
- Build cluster innovation networks within and beyond the region
- Forge public/private workforce and partnerships
- Accelerate innovation via technical assistance
- Support development and growth of new ventures

Phase 1 of the project will produce an asset map that will identify all assets in the animal health, ag tech and global food systems sectors between the greater Kansas City region and Manhattan, KS and further along the I-70 corridor. This asset map will then enable us to make introductions to resources that startups, businesses and other organizations need based on specific challenges. Secondly, an asset map will also enable us to perform a gap analysis to identify resources that are missing and that need to be built or found elsewhere to take full advantage of the animal health cluster.

## PARTNERSHIP ACCELERATES INTO 2020 AT ANNUAL MEETING

On January 16, business and community members came together at the Greater Topeka Partnership's 2020 Annual Meeting to celebrate Topeka & Shawnee County's 2019 accomplishments and hear about how we're accelerating our momentum in 2020. Partnership CEO Matt Pivarnik emceed the event and led with a message of optimism for the future and the new accelerated pace at which the community is pursuing opportunity. Former Chairs Council Chair Cody Foster and present Chair Keith Warta served as keynote speakers, leading the discussion on the many successes of the past year and the advancements taking place this year, respectively. Pivarnik, Foster and Warta also presented this year's Awards of Excellence.

To learn more, check out our [Annual Meeting Recap!](#)

## GO TOPEKA SITE SELECTOR VISITS

Off to a busy start in January, GO Topeka has hosted site visits with Project Choose and Project Bulldog, two unique companies that have taken an interest in locating in Topeka. Additionally, our team has already responded to five companies requesting information about the assets in Topeka. As companies from across the United States continue to take interest in our community, Choose Topeka will continue to be an extremely important program to help drive intentional population growth.

With the new year comes an opportunity for Topeka to take advantage of aerospace as a new target industry, given the assets in place at the Topeka Regional Airport. As shovel ready land in our commerce parks becomes limited in supply, utilizing this community asset will be key to our strategic growth.

## TOPEKA YOUTH COMMISSION REPRESENTS IN DC

During January 22- January 24, Bryce Liedtke, chair and founding member of the Topeka Youth Commission, accompanied Mayor Michelle De La Isla to the 88th Annual U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting in Washington, DC.

The United States Conference of Mayors is the official non-partisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are over 1,400 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

During the three-day gathering, Liedtke was able to lead a panel discussion on the importance of youth engagement in a community.

Liedtke advised the collective of mayors to “Bring that youth voice to the table...” so that they may feel invested in their community and choose to stay.

Check out what WDBJ7 had to say about the [wisdom dished out by this Topeka youth leader.](#)

## PARTNERSHIP 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

“Last year the Partnership made painstaking efforts to accelerate economic development and raise the quality of life in the community. But what does this amount to exactly? One could chalk it up to new businesses, new jobs, new entertainment options, new opportunities for all looking to work, live and play in Topeka. While it’s true all those items came about through the concerted efforts of our various initiatives, I believe all the successes of 2019 amounted to a major shift in how the world sees Topeka and how its community sees itself.

In 2019, we realized what was possible for Topeka. We began to lift the veil of pragmatism and negativity. We watched many of the seeds of yesteryear begin to sprout.”

- An excerpt from Matt Pivarnik’s opening letter of the 2019 Annual Report.

[Read the entire report.](#)

## VISIT TOPEKA RECRUITING FOR SALES MANAGER

Visit Topeka is currently accepting applications for the role of Sales Manager. The Sales Manager is responsible for promoting and selling Topeka as a preferred destination for conventions, meetings, sporting events and tourism groups on behalf of the Visit Topeka Sales Team.

For more information on this position, check out the [official job listing featured on HRPartnersKS.com](#).

## HOWEY AND SNEDEN NAMED PRESIDENT OF GO AND CHAMBER, RESPECTIVELY

The executive committees of the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce and GO Topeka, along with Matt Pivarnik, named Curtis Sneden and Molly Howey presidents of their respective organizations.

Sneden is recognized as a Chamber leader in many initiatives in the state of Kansas including the Chamber of Commerce Executives of Kansas, the METL coalition and the State Chamber Coalition. He is also a recent graduate of the US Chamber's Institute for Organization Management and is working with the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives on further industry certifications.

Howey is a Certified Economic Developer through the International Economic Development Council, serves on IEDC's International Board of Directors and led GO Topeka to become an IEDC Accredited Economic Development Organization.

Both Howey and Sneden continue to serve as SVPs of the Greater Topeka Partnership and on its executive leadership team.

## COALITION OF LOCAL CHAMBERS

The ad hoc coalition of 20-odd local chambers of commerce from across Kansas is finalizing its 2020 priorities. Workforce development tops the list. As the Coalition notes, "Leaders in education, business and government face no more pressing issue than attracting and developing the state's workforce. Meeting this challenge will require more attention, creativity and resources for higher education and career technical training and certification." The Coalition represents thousands of companies across the state.

## EVERGY PLAZA GRAND- OPENING DATE ANNOUNCED

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 29 at 10 a.m. for the grand opening of the Evergy Plaza. The official ribbon cutting will include entertainment, food trucks and the activation of the fountains and video board. The celebration begins with several days of grand opening events culminating with a major concert on Saturday night, May 2.

A soft opening is planned for March 14 in conjunction with the St. Patrick's Day Parade throughout downtown. Construction of the plaza is expected to be completed next month.

## TOPEKA MENTOR BREAKFAST

The Innovations & Entrepreneurship Mentor Committee (Tim Clothier, Chair) is the secret sauce behind the Wheelhouse Incubator program. Strong mentoring is on every top ten list of things businesses need to thrive; Topeka is no different.

The I&E Mentor Committee responded with an initiative to recruit additional business leaders to join in helping to jumpstart startup scalable business growth in Topeka through one to one mentor relationships. Committee members identified professionals from a wide range of professions and skillsets inviting them to the January 29 Mentor Breakfast. Over 30 prospective members attended this first-time event.

Mentoring program goals for 2021 include expanding mentoring beyond the Wheelhouse Incubator participants to include businesses new to Topeka from the PNP program. Also, being discussed is holding a bi-annual event that would bring national leaders in to speak on mentoring best practices.

If you are interested in learning more about the program or are interested in investing in Topeka's future through sponsorship, please contact Karen Christilles, 712 Innovations executive director, at [Karen.Christilles@TopekaPartnership.com](mailto:Karen.Christilles@TopekaPartnership.com) for more information.

## SMALL BUSINESS COUNCIL TO HOST 2020 FOCUS GROUP

As the number of small businesses continue to increase, the 2020 Small Business Council (SBC) is positioning itself to be a powerful advocate supporting the needs of the small business community. In order to assemble the tools needed to continue to grow a strong and supportive small businesses environment, the SBC will host a focus group on Wednesday, February 5. There will be three sessions held at the Chamber in the Board Room beginning at 9:30, 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Please click on this link for more information: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/W3B2HQ8](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/W3B2HQ8).



The 2020 Legislative session kicked-off on January 13. Lawmakers will grapple with issues around tax policy, Medicaid Expansion, transportation and abortion, among others. The Governor's Joint Tax Committee is proposing a number of changes, including a low-income food sales tax refund and measures designed to return more property tax dollars to local units of government. Leaders in the House and Senate, by contrast, are highly-focused on addressing disparities between the federal individual income tax deduction rules and the state deductions so as to avoid subjecting Kansans to an unintended tax increase.

## Welcome Breakfast

On Tuesday, January 14, the Chamber, along with several cohosting organizations, staged its traditional Welcome Legislators Breakfast in the Statehouse rotunda. This was the first full day of business for the legislature. Legislators and their staffs enjoyed breakfast provided by the Chamber's own 2 Chefs Catering and took the opportunity to chat with Chamber staff and board members as they geared-up for the coming session.

## Unemployment

The Kansas Department of Labor reported that the unemployment rate in Shawnee County slightly increased to 3.14% in December 2019 from the previous month; this represents an increase of 0.14 percentage points from the previous month (November 2019), but a decrease of 0.26 percentage points from the previous year (December 2018). Only once was the County's December unemployment rate lower than 3.14% between 1999 and 2019. Overall this shows the continuation of a record-low unemployment rate in the region. 92,411 people participated in the County's labor force, where 89,513 were employed, leaving 2,898 unemployed. Compared to last year, 1,690 additional people were employed, and 1,498 were added to the County's labor force. The State of Kansas' December unemployment rate was reported at 2.8%, while the US' was at 3.4%. Both Kansas and the US unemployment rate decreased compared to last year by 0.26 percentage points and 0.34 percentage points, respectively.

| Local Area Unemployment Statistics |                   |          |         |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|
| Region                             | Unemployment Rate |          |         |
|                                    | Dec - 19          | Dec - 18 | YOY Δ   |
| Shawnee                            | 3.14%             | 3.40%    | -0.26%  |
| Kansas                             | 2.87%             | 3.13%    | - 0.26% |
| USA                                | 3.40%             | 3.74%    | -0.34%  |

## Online Job Ads

As of January 2020, there are approximately 4,877 active online job-ads in the county; this represents 240 more available jobs than in the previous month. This is the highest number of active online job-ads for the past 12-months, showing how local employers continue to demand labor. The top five most requested jobs with a 4-year degree are:

- Social and Human Service Assistants
- Registered Nurses
- Medical and Health Services Managers
- Sales Management
- Management Analysts

## PINE RIDGE MANOR SELECTED AS EMPOWERMENT SITE

The THA Empowerment Center, a pilot program collaboration between GO Topeka's EMBD and the Topeka Housing Authority, has identified a site for the program. Pine Ridge Manor has been named as the base location for the new THA Empowerment Center.

By spring 2020, Pine Ridge Manor will be the hub for a small business incubator providing office space, equipment and other needs for six tenants. The goal is to take housing residents from public assistance to self-sufficiency using business ownership as the key driver.

## FORGE NAME CHANGE

As a part of its planning process for 2020, the Forge Leadership Team chose to officially transition from "Forge Young Professionals" to "Forge Young Talent." The name change was made to better reflect Topeka & Shawnee County's diverse young workforce.

## WHEELHOUSE INCUBATOR - NEXT COHORT BEGINS IN MARCH

Applications are now open – a \$100 Partnership discount is available for members for businesses recommended by a Greater Topeka Partnership member.

Designed for Topeka's scalable businesses, the program is a 12-week program for founders ready for growth. Through one-to-one mentorship, programming, education and networking opportunities, it provides the tools and connections owners need to kickstart business growth.

In November 2019, the first cohort of twelve founders graduated trained on an internationally tested cloud-based program GrowthWheel that facilitated their making decisions to take action on their 30.60.90-day growth plan.

The Spring Wheelhouse Incubation program runs from March 2 – May 21. Please contact 712 Innovations Executive Director at [Karen.Christilles@TopekaPartnership.com](mailto:Karen.Christilles@TopekaPartnership.com) for more information.



## METL COALITION

The METL Coalition (Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka, Lawrence) has also formulated its legislative priorities. The Coalition is focused on transportation, workforce development, economic development and Medicaid Expansion. Emblematic of the coalition's regional focus is its dual-priority to have Polk Quincy Viaduct and the expansion of the west leg of the South Lawrence Trafficway included in the next long-term transportation plan.

## LEADERSHIP GREATER TOPEKA PROGRAM UNDERWAY

While weather has been the biggest challenge to date, this year's class completed a successful retreat and first session of the 2020 program.

Highlights of the retreat include a team building session led by members of Washburn University Leadership Institute students. This collaboration provides the opportunity for young leaders to engage with other aspiring and established leadership. The class also began learning about key leadership concepts of adaptive leadership. Session 1 included time at the Statehouse to learn about State government from a lobbying and legislator perspective. We are grateful to Kari Presley, lobbyist with Kearney & Associates, Inc.; Patrick Vogelsberg, manager of government affairs for Kansas Gas; Brenda Dietrich, Kansas House of Representatives, District 52; Fred Patton, Kansas House of Representatives, District 50.

## STUDENTS VISIT DOWNTOWN & PARTNERSHIP

Over 70 students from the Washburn University Leadership Institute spent a recent Saturday visiting downtown and the Greater Topeka Partnership. Matt Pivarnik and Vince Frye spoke about Momentum 2022 and downtown redevelopment.

The students toured the Cyrus Hotel and ate lunch at the Pennant. They learned about Forge, the Topeka Youth Commission and the Everygy Plaza. They concluded their visit with a presentation on entrepreneurship at the Brew Bank. The Leadership Institute strives to refine leadership talents and skills and to connect Washburn students to the community.

## BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

BRE projects have been busy with three new projects coming in over the last month. Capital investment of all three projects totals \$42.4M and includes facility improvement expenditures and equipment purchases as well as an expected addition of 275 new full-time jobs with average wages between \$40,000 and \$56,000, depending on the individual project. Those projects will be presented to the GO Topeka Board to seek funding approval in February.

## 2020 VISITORS GUIDE ARRIVING IN FEBRUARY & MARCH

Visit Topeka's 2020 Visitors Guide is getting ready to hit the press, so to speak, in February and March. Want to learn about Topeka's global dining scene? How about the Capital City's most beloved cultural celebrations, like Fiesta Mexicana or India Fest? Curious about the history we've braided and the great new attractions we have to offer? Then be sure to [order your own very Topeka Visitors Guide](#) today!

## POLITICALLY SPEAKING

On January 27, the Topeka Chamber hosted its first session of Politically Speaking, an intimate forum in which Chamber members are invited to meet and interact with the members of the Shawnee County legislative delegation. The first session was anchored on the topic of tax policy and Senators Anthony Hensley, Vic Miller and Eric Rucker, in addition to Representatives Jim Gartner and Virgil Weigel all took part. Among other topics, the delegates gave their take on Governor Kelly's raft of tax proposals.

The next Politically Speaking will focus on Medicaid Expansion and will be held on Monday, February 17 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. The final installment will be March 9 with a focus on Transportation. Don't miss these opportunities to get up-close and personal with your elected leaders!

Thanks to AT&T for sponsoring Politically Speaking.

## MOMENTUM 2022 UPDATE

Work is underway to align all Greater Topeka Partnership organizations goals into MOMENTUM 2022s strategic plan.

### Objective Highlights

2.1.3 Identify and attract retailers that expand local options and improve quality of life

Quality of Place work group recently heard from the Topeka Oasis committee to learn about food deserts and a recent market study completed toward efforts for a grocery store in central Topeka. This meeting advanced Topeka Oasis' opportunity for greater collaboration with other organizations who are also working do address food insecurities in the community. The Community Resource Council has recently agreed to help the Topeka Oasis Group with administrative support.

1.2 Ensure That All Children are Ready for Kindergarten

In January a group of childcare professionals from the community met to discuss initial steps towards improvements to ensure Kindergarten readiness in Topeka/Shawnee County. The taskforce next steps will include the creation of report that better communicates the needs, barriers, challenges and opportunities of the community toward addressing the issues. This taskforce is lead by Reva Wywadis, Executive Director, Childcare Aware of Eastern Kansas and Gina Millsap, CEO, Topeka Shawnee County Public Library.

## KAUFFMAN FAST TRAC ADVANCING NEW BUSINESSES

Celebrating its twelfth year, the First Step Fast Trac has been a critical piece of the puzzle that establishes a foundation for small businesses in Shawnee County. The course program offers a solid framework for entrepreneurs beginning their journey to business ownership. The course provides guidance to doers, makers and dreamers seeking to turn a concept into a business. The Fast Trac program has guided 694 individuals closer to reaching their goal of owner. The next Fast Trac class will begin in March.

## SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH (STR) YEARLY REVIEW

2019 saw the opening of a full-service hotel in Downtown Topeka which changed the overall supply for the remainder of the year. While this could be viewed as a detriment to the market the opening was overshadowed by an increase in demand for the same period. December closed out 2019 with an increase in occupancy year over year and with minimal losses in average daily rate. While the year to date numbers reflect an almost flat occupancy number there were positives in the market. 2020's forecast at current shows flat to minimal growth and the competition for travelers is ever increasing. However, Visit Topeka along with the hotel partners will continue to focus on the task at hand and bring those travelers to our city and experience all that Topeka has to offer.

### STR December 2019

- o Occupancy- 39.9 up 2.4%
- o ADR- \$75.38 down .4%
- o RevPar- \$30.07 up 2.0%
- o Demand- 33,789 up 6.5%

### STR YTD December 2019

- o Occupancy- 55.5 down 1.6%
- o ADR- \$82.71 down 2.0%
- o RevPar- \$45.93 down 3.6%
- o Demand- 554,134 up 3.8%

**ADR**-Average Daily Rate, **RevPar**-Revenue Per Available Room, **Demand**-Total Rooms Occupied

## RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & MEMBERSHIP

The Resource Development Team is continuing to work on our Sponsorships in the Total Resource Campaign. We are currently looking for someone to join our Membership Team as our Membership Sales Manager. We are also working on our Ambassador Program and congratulate Mike Braum as our Ambassador of the Year.

Thank you to all of our sponsors at the Annual Meeting and we look forward to seeing everyone at our February Business Unwind.

### **Welcome New Members:**

Love's Travel Shop

### **Ribbon Cuttings for January:**

McDonald's on South Topeka Boulevard

Cambridge Kitchen & Bath

Jackson Hewitt Tax Services

## TRADESHOW ATTENDANCE

The Visit Topeka sales team attended the American Bus Association Conference in Omaha, NE, which is the most respected motor coach travel conference in the country that brings group tour planners and tourism professionals together.

Visit Topeka partnered with the Kansas state tourism department for a Kansas booth to promote travel to the state. A trivia game with iPads drew in tour planners as they attempted to make it on the leader board to win gift cards from the different Kansas communities. Visit Topeka had great exposure at the booth and also had 13 planned appointments with tour planners.

These appointments are fast paced and to the point, however, there were multiple other opportunities to visit with additional planners between functions. A majority of the meetings were with travel companies located in the Midwest and the planners were interested in overnight stays due to all the community has to offer. Overall, this was a great conference to participate in and Topeka will be seeing traffic from those planners.

## CHAMBER PRIORITIES

The Chamber Board of Directors formally adopted its legislative priorities in December and has delivered those to every member of the Shawnee County delegation. Top of the list is inclusion of the Polk Quincy Viaduct in the state's next long-term transportation plan.

Chamber leadership and other local officials had been participating in numerous events over the summer and fall to drive home to the Kansas Department of Transportation that the stretch of I-70 which curves through downtown Topeka simply has to be replaced in the near future. Other key priorities are Medicaid Expansion, funding for higher education coupled with a coherent statewide strategy to raise the number of Kansans ready to join the workforce and full support of the state Department of Commerce.



## JANUARY MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

|                                       |                                                                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Country Inn & Suites by Radisson      | American Cancer Society, Inc.                                  |
| Hyatt Place                           | Allen Rose Townhomes, LLC                                      |
| West Ridge Mall                       | JB Turner & Sons Roofing & Sheet Metal                         |
| Dickey's Barbecue Pit                 | Patton & Patton                                                |
| West Ridge Lanes & Family Fun Center  | Blind Tiger Brewery & Restaurant                               |
| El Centenario                         | Mechanical Contractors Association of Kansas                   |
| Heritage Bank                         | Parks For All Foundation                                       |
| The Foundry Event Center              | Tech Electronics, Inc.                                         |
| Capper Foundation                     | TDC Learning Centers, Inc                                      |
| Gage Center Bowl/ReKat Recreation Inc | Meridian Roofing Solutions                                     |
| Housing & Credit Counseling, Inc.     | Kansas Avenue Integrative Health Care                          |
| ICI Manufacturing                     | Vaerus Aviation, Inc                                           |
| jones huyett Partners                 | K1 REALTY, LLC                                                 |
| Mize Houser & Company P.A.            | Ricks Advanced Dermatology & Skin Surgery, PA                  |
| Topeka Public Schools, USD 501        | Cook & Associates, LLC                                         |
| Wal Mart #2131                        | Kansasland Tire (Wanamaker)                                    |
| CARSTAR Walt's Autobody               | Kansasland Tire (6th Avenue)                                   |
| Historic Harley-Davidson of Topeka    | Kansasland Tire (Westport Drive)                               |
| City of Topeka                        | Kansasland Tire (NW 25th Street)                               |
| Darrell's Service                     | First United Methodist Church                                  |
| Gray & Company                        | Stubbs, Tom and Lisa                                           |
| Madison Government Affairs            | Muckenthaler Incorporated                                      |
| Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc     | Iron Rail Brewing                                              |
| Michael Rack, DDS-General             | Agent, Yana Ross, Farm Bureau Financial Services and Insurance |
| Clayton Wealth Partners               | Board & Brush Topeka                                           |
| Capitol Strategies                    | Henry Helgeson Company                                         |
| Shawnee Heights USD 450               | Great Western Bank                                             |
|                                       | Paper June                                                     |
|                                       | Baking Traditions                                              |
|                                       | Res Tours                                                      |

## NEW DOWNTOWN BANNERS

New banners adorn the downtown light poles! The Downtown Business Improvement District Advisory Board commissioned the banners using the design of the new City flag. The flag banners will alternate poles with banners, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Capper Foundation that were paid for by the Capper Foundation.

Thanks to the City of Topeka Forestry Department for hanging the banners.

## PTAC

On January 31, we concluded the KS PTAC FY19. To date, KS PTAC Topeka Subcenter Clients have received over 140 Federal Contract Awards worth \$15.8M. Return on investment for JEDO for the Topeka Subcenter is \$236 for every \$1 invested.

KS PTAC Clients located in Shawnee County specifically received 47 of the contract awards total, worth \$6.2M.

Goal Stats FY19: All federal goals have been met, those goals were: 80 new clients; we added 90 new clients to Topeka Subcenter; 390 hours of client one-on-one counseling; and 10 sponsored procurement events.

The new KS PTAC Federal Fiscal Year begins February 1, 2020!

## FORGE CELEBRATES KANSAS DAY BY VOLUNTEERING

As a way to give back to their home state, Forge members headed out to the Kansas Historical Society to help celebrate Kansas Day.

Volunteers had fun helping facilitate special STEM activities, old time craft demonstrations, and passed out delicious food and snacks, for the school-aged children in attendance.

## MEDICAID EXPANSION

Prior to the commencement of the session, the governor had announced an agreement with certain Republican leaders over a compromise to expand Medicaid. The proposal would expand Medicaid but would also, among other details, seek to ensure Medicaid recipients had clear access to the state's workforce programs. The bill has already been heard in the Senate Public Health and Welfare committee, where the Topeka Chamber testified in support.

## BOARD GOVERNANCE

The advent of the new year sets into motion processes for all the Partnership boards of directors. Perhaps most important to the future is the setting-up of each board's nominating committee and initiating the process to select 2021 board members. The Partnership follows a rigorous process and calendar to ensure each board dedicates the requisite time and consideration to selection of the best possible future leaders and takes due account of diversity. Each board member also answers our auditor's call by pledging in writing to adhere to high ethical standards, separate their personal interests from those of the board they are serving and remain transparent as to any relationships they might have with each other or Partnership staff. These basic steps are key to ensuring all the entities within the Partnership are best-of-class.

## NATIONAL 'PLAN FOR VACATION' DAY

Visit Topeka encouraged people to take advantage of National Plan for Vacation Day that took place on January 28, always the last Tuesday in January. This is a day to help get Americans to commit to their time off for the rest of the year at the start of the year.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, “46% of American workers admit to not planning for vacation.” Our team participated in the national campaign and we encourage travelers to commit to their time off and experience Topeka along the way.

Visit our [Facebook page](#) for more information!

## 2020 INCLUDED PLANNING UNDERWAY

iINCLUDED's Leadership Team meet in January, developing planning for the coming year to kickoff the bi-monthly sessions. We're thrilled to have the leadership of the team, Kathleen Marker, YWCA; Jody Cope, Kansas National Guard; Angela Lewis, Shawnee County; Mynesha Spencer, Brown v. Board; and Cain Davis, DCC.

iINCLUDED's meetings in 2020 will be bi-monthly and will begin on February 12, 2020. Meetings will still be held on the second Wednesday of every other month, February, April, June, July, August, October and December. Meetings will be held at the Brown vs Board of Education National Historic Site. Please note, meetings will be over the lunch time, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

## FINANCE

The Finance Department has had a very busy but very exciting month. The new accounting system went live on January 2. The transition has been relatively smooth. Our consultants will remain on our account for a few more weeks as we work through our first month end close. Finance is still working to finish up the 2019 cash to accrual conversation which will facilitate the loading of prior year numbers into the system.

As with every January, Finance had w2s and 1099s to process. Additionally, it has a workers compensation review and a 401k compliance audit to complete as well.

February will bring some time to finally complete the 2020 budget to bring before the boards for re-view as well as the 2019 audit.

## PARTNERSHIP SEARCHES FOR HR SPECIALIST

The Partnership is accepting applications for the new position of HR Manager. The HR Manager will work closely with the Executive Leadership Team to execute HR programs across all stakeholder and partner organizations. Areas of focus will be team development, culture, celebration, appreciation, organization development, recruitment, onboarding, talent development, annual review process and HR administration. We have received close to 40 applications already and will be conducting interviews beginning the week of February 3 with an eye toward having this important role filled by the end of February.

Interested in applying for this position? [Check out the details here!](#)

## RIVERFRONT ADVISORY COUNCIL

On January 18, community members joined the Riverfront Advisory Council came together at the Greater Topeka Partnership to hear from guest presenter Staci Williams, grant writer and water quality specialist with ISG (Des Moines). Staci led a special presentation on the development of the Des Moines riverfront.

Guests learned about Williams' team's efforts to reconnect communities to their water resources, securing funds to reinvest in historic riverfronts, enhance recreational opportunities, and build support for water quality improvements and conservation.

The Riverfront Advisory Council currently working on strategic planning for 2020.

## VISIT TOPEKA PIPELINE

Currently, Visit Topeka has 57 leads in the pipeline for future business. Of these leads eight were in sports, 42 in conventions, and seven tour groups with an overall impact of \$13.6 million. Traditionally a slower period of the year Visit Topeka is noticing a payoff with the focus on the regional and smaller national convention focus with additions to the pipeline of a large regional fraternal gathering as well as regional sporting events.



## FORGE RECRUITING FOR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Forge, Topeka & Shawnee County's leading talent attraction and retention organization for young professionals, is seeking an executive director.

The organization is responsible for a large piece of the community's holistic economic development strategy, Momentum 2022. With strong support from the Forge Leadership Team and the Greater Topeka Partnership, the executive director deploys innovative strategies to assist the community in building and retaining a talent pipeline better than the rest! This work is transformative and will be a catalyst for moving Topeka to the next level.

Forge provides unique and engaging opportunities for young professionals to network among peers, serve as a resource to local companies interested in growing their workforce, and market the quality of life and unique experiences available in the community. Forge's dynamic volunteer leadership team consistently works to pursue new and innovative ways to help young talent experience everything Topeka & Shawnee County has to offer. The executive director works to identify strategies to help make our community the kind of place that talented young people wouldn't dream of leaving.

If building the talent pipeline of Topeka and Shawnee County and helping our community grow is something you or someone you know is passionate about, review the full job description and apply at <https://hrpks.catsone.com/careers/10387-General/jobs/12967297-Executive-Director>



## MILITARY RELATIONS COUNCIL

The Chamber's Military Relations Council will be holding its first quarterly Lunch and Learn on February 18 in the Partnership's 6th floor Community Room. The group will host a panel of local legislative officials who will speak to the group about legislative matters of importance to veterans in 2020.



## EVENTS

January is a time of new beginnings, which was the perfect time to welcome new Events Manager Rebecca Radziejewski to the team. She joins us with experience in theatre tech, journalism, and spent time working on events on cruise ships!

Our first weeks of the year were a sprint towards Annual Meeting, where nearly 800 attendees joined us at the Stormont Vail Events Center to celebrate our progress as a community and our goal to accelerate into even bigger wins together. Although the chicken and sirloin were amazing, our favorite duet of the luncheon was Cody Foster and Keith Warta sharing their insight on changes within the community.

Our monthly networking event, Business Unwind, was hosted by the Topeka Symphony at White Concert Hall on Washburn University's campus. A hundred or so of our members mingled while being serenaded by a harpist and later the Youth Symphony.

Looking ahead we are excited for one of our sweetest events, Chocolate After Dark, on Feb 22. This event blends all our favorite indulgences into one night of fun. The evening features 3 wineries, 1 brewery, bourbon tastings, and a few specialty vendors. We are especially excited for the custom menu catered by Engroff's Catering and dessert by Blue Moose. A musical ambience will be set by Stratton and Spring, an acoustic duo. Tickets are available at [visittopeka.com/rsvp](https://visittopeka.com/rsvp)!



# NEWS TO KNOW - SUGGESTED READS

## Editor's Briefing: A raider targets a KC company, but the community sleeps - *Kansas City Business Journal*

*The storyline drips with business drama. It has an activist shareholder swooping in from New York. It has a target that's worked to be a leader in its communities. And it has a threat to leaders of the company to change or face pressure to sell. The only thing this story doesn't have, apparently, is your interest. Elliott Management Corp. recently went public with its pressure campaign on Kansas City-based Evergy Inc. The activist made public a letter of its demands of the utility's executives. But it caused a small ripple on the Kansas City Business Journal's online traffic count. [Read more >](#)*

## Place Marketing: How One Midwestern City Is Transforming Its Brand - *Forbes*

*I recently did a webinar for the tourism and travel industry, and it got me thinking about how in the age of Instagram, every city has to compete like any other brand. Successful marketing requires creative crossover. [Read more >](#)*

## U.S. Population Makes Fewest Gains in Decades, Census Bureau Says - *The New York Times*

*Population growth in the United States crept along at its slowest pace in decades in 2019, stymied by a sharp decline in the number of new immigrants, fewer births and the graying of America, new estimates from the Census Bureau show. [Read more >](#)*

## Site Selection In 2020: The Squeeze Is On - *Bisnow*

*Attracting a relocating business to a particular place is tougher than ever in the current high-employment, incentive-skeptical climate. Yet in the face of such headwinds, economic development organizations have come up with some creative ideas to boost their site selection prospects. [Read more >](#)*



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## FEATURED EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

- 8 - Forge New Year's Resolution Kickoff
- 22 - Chocolate After Dark

### MARCH

- 26 - EmpowerHER Women's Conference

### APRIL

- 18 - 2020 Bridge2Bridge 5K Run & Walk

### MAY

- 12 - Small Business Conference & Partnership Business Expo

More details to come!

## CORPORATE EVENTS

### SCORE

Every Thursday  
712 Innovations

Topeka 1 Million Cups  
Beginning February 5  
9 - 10 a.m., Every Wednesday  
712 Innovations

iINCLUDED Meeting  
February 12 | 11:30 a.m.  
Brown v. Board Site

Downtown After Hours  
February 12 | 4:30 p.m.  
Fidelity Bank

Politically Speaking  
February 17 | 3:30 p.m.  
Kansas State Capitol

Business Unwind  
February 18 | 5 p.m.  
Planet Fitness



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