



# MANAGEMENT REPORT

JANUARY 2021

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# FROM THE DESK OF MATT PIVARNIK

Community Leaders,

Welcome to 2021. I want to start off by applauding each and every one of you for banding together and staying strong during the previous year. We are never without hardships, but I'm proud of the fact that while some communities may have lost their footing recently, Topeka - for the most part - has never lost its momentum. Yes, tremendous strides have been taken, even in 2020. But there is still much work to do, and that is why I want to keep a forward focused attitude moving into, not only 2021, but the next years to come.

Let's make sure we tend to the next twenty-three months, but look beyond 2022 as we plan for the next page of our community's further growth and development.

"The best way to predict your future is to create it."

- **Abraham Lincoln**

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## TOPEKA WINS 2021 BEST CITIES FOR NEW HOMEBUYERS AWARD

In late January, Topeka was named as the recipient of the 2021 Insurify's Best Cities for New Homebuyers Award in Kansas. Cities were evaluated on real estate demand, employment levels, public school enrollment, and driver and pedestrian safety.

"Finding the right community to call home is everything – especially when looking for your first home. From its easily accessible amenities to positive drivers scores, and multiple other benefits, the Topeka community has so much to offer people who are starting this incredibly pivotal part of their lives," says Barbara Stapleton, vice president of business retention and talent initiatives, GO Topeka. "Topeka is strategically recruiting new talent with initiatives such as Choose Topeka, and this title only goes to further exemplify Topeka's existing benefits."

For more information on this analysis and the full list of 2021 Best Cities for New Homebuyers, visit: <https://insurify.com/insights/best-cities-for-new-homebuyers-awards-2021/>

## PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF FUND

In late December 2020, the Greater Topeka Partnership announced the creation of its Small Business Relief Fund, an ongoing funding effort directed at area small businesses facing unanticipated hardships. It was also announced that Lewis Toyota will be the first to donate to this fund, pledging \$25,000 in relief. Topeka & Shawnee County small businesses will be able to apply to receive relief funds in early 2021.

"Because we know that unforeseen hardships don't only occur during a pandemic, we've created this opportunity for our community to help provide sustained relief for our small businesses," said Glenda Washington, chief equity and opportunity officer and director of the Women and Minority Business Development program, Greater Topeka Partnership and GO Topeka, respectively.

## PIVARNIK CELEBRATES 5-YEAR WORK ANNIVERSARY

January marked CEO Matt Pivarnik's five year anniversary with the Greater Topeka Partnership. Pivarnik, a Tulsa, Oklahoma native, previously served as the executive vice president and COO for the Tulsa's Future Economic Development Organization, Tulsa Regional Chamber, Visit Tulsa, Tulsa's Young Professionals, Tulsa Sports Commission, Tulsa Film and Music Commission and the Tulsa Small Business Connection.

"This anniversary marks so much more than starting a new job in Topeka. It represents the anniversary of my family joining this community. This leadership position has allowed me to meet amazing people and participate in the growing momentum we've seen in Topeka," said Pivarnik. "This community is filled with great people – change makers, innovators, entrepreneurs and just all-around good and decent people. I'm so proud to have been able to call Topeka home these past five years, and I'm overjoyed to be leading the wonderful team at the Greater Topeka Partnership, who continue to significantly impact economic development in Topeka & Shawnee County."

## PLUG AND PLAY ANIMAL HEALTH ACCELERATOR

After the successful launch of the first Plug and Play cohort in October of last year, GO Topeka has continued to build relationships with many of the startups to understand what their expansion strategies look like over the next few years. Some of them have indicated an interest in Topeka as a location and introductions to regional resources have been made. We are now getting ready for the start of the next full cohort of 2021 which will launch at the end of March. A list of potential new startups will be presented to the founding corporate partners on February 15, followed by selection day in late March.

## 'A SEAT AT THE TABLE' CONTINUES THE CONVERSATION

All over the Country communities are hosting weekly and monthly conversations about racial equity and inclusion to better understand the role that the citizens play in healing their communities. Studies have shown that once barriers are removed, communities can eliminate the disparities that hinder our growth as a community.

Last fall, Greater Topeka Partnership's Chief Equity and Opportunity officer invited seven groups of eight began meeting to host A Seat at the Table. Each of the groups met virtually at least four times.

The platform used allowed participants an opportunity to learn, contribute and understand their role in building a more inclusive community. They were guided by a Host and Facilitator with the goal to openly discuss stereotypes, social justice issues, microaggressions and biases, privilege, poverty, criminalization and much more. The reoccurring theme was, if we intend to induce change and make a positive impact within our community, it is necessary to have these conversations on all levels.

In 2021, The Greater Topeka Partnership's Equity and Opportunity Officer, along with the Center for Peace and Justice, will host a second series of these conversations under the umbrella of A Seat at the Table. The Second Series will begin the week of February 22. If you or your business or organizations would like to Host a Seat at the Table, please contact Glenda Washington, 785-246-6205 or email [Glenda.Washington@Topekpartnership.com](mailto:Glenda.Washington@Topekpartnership.com).

## JEDO AIDS EMPLOYERS ABILITY TO PROVIDE WORKFORCE TRANSPORTATION

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) board approved a \$100,000 transportation services incentive at its quarterly meeting on December 9, 2020. Originally a recommendation from the Workforce Transportation Taskforce, the purpose of this incentive is to aid employers in the creation of added workforce transportation options.

"The transportation needs of our workforce are definitely diverse," said Molly Howey, president of GO Topeka, an organization with the Greater Topeka Partnership. "More and more we're seeing the need for alternative commuting options, employee shuttles and more."

Howey continued, "With this incentive JEDO, will be able to provide a 100 percent match in funding starting at just \$1,000. Because funding is matched, employers that choose to participate will be able to stand up a resource quickly, ensuring that no gap in coverage need occur."

## RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS UPDATE

The Total Resource Campaign Volunteer Committee celebrated their success in December with a virtual celebration catered by our members Dickey's Bar B Que and Nothing Bundt Cakes. A toast was made by our chair Martha Piland with beverages from Devlin's. We are already laying the groundwork for our 2022 Total Resource Sponsorship Campaign and can't wait for the results!

The Resource Development Team was busy with cleaning up our data as well as planning for 2021. We sent out a member survey for feedback asking what we can do for our members and how can we better serve them. The team prepared data for our Executive Leadership Team to have when they meet with our members, and we are excited to continue to develop relationships with all our members.

The Events Team worked hard on planning our Economic Outlook Conference virtually and our reverse Miracle on Kansas Avenue parade which you can read about in her report.

### Partnership Membership

In December, we welcomed the following four new businesses into the Partnership:

- Lily Grace
- Top Teer
- Haus Property Partners
- O'Shea Strengths Coaching

The membership team has been out and about checking in on our members and visiting with perspective members over the busy holiday season.

## DOWNTOWN TOPEKA BLAZES TRAIL IN JANUARY

Downtown Topeka, Inc. (DTI) hit the ground running in January of 2021. The creation of the downtown master plan, TIF district and completion of a market study have helped create excitement about the vision and potential for future development and redevelopment in downtown. This month, our team in partnership with the City of Topeka and community leaders hosted a national developer for a site visit; code name Project View. Project View is targeting downtown for new mixed use development that would be unique to Topeka. The momentum that has been building in downtown is being noticed and we are excited to usher in new projects that continue to move the needle forward.

## SMALL BUSINESS COUNCIL UPDATE

The Topeka Small Business Council (TSBC) provides small businesses with program opportunities designed to promote and enhance small business development and to build relationships with local community and business leaders. The 2021 Slate of officers are listed below.

### Executive Committee (One year terms)

- Amber Beckley, Chair
- Kathleen Urbom, Chair Elect
- Beth Ann Branden, Immediate Past Chair
- Debra Harris, Secretary

### Committee Chairs (One year terms)

- Tobias Harvey, Marketing
- Angel McGhee, Membership
- Karl Klein & Spencer Duncan, Legislative Affairs
- Jim Davis, Programs
- **OPEN** - Small Bus. & Entrep. Dev.

The Small Business Council meets on the third Thursday of every month. Executive Committee – 11:30-12:00 (Noon). Future meeting dates are Feb 18, March 18, April 22, May 20, June 17, August 19, Sept.16, October 21, November 18 and December 16.

## FORGE YOUNG TALENT UPDATE

Forge is pleased to announce that Del-Metrius Herron, realtor with Keller Williams Realtor Partners, LLC, has assumed the role of Forge Chair. The Topeka community is extremely lucky to have Del-Metrius in this volunteer leadership role for the organization! The 2021 Chair-Elect position is slated to be filled in February.

To remain cautious, Forge continued to hold all January committee (herd) and board meetings virtually. To learn more about the seven Herds, and view the upcoming meeting schedule, please look here.

Amidst the throes of the pandemic, the Forge herds are hard at work outlining their strategic objectives, while also planning events, educational workshops, social networking opportunities, and much more for this year! Further details will be announced via the Forge eNews in the coming weeks, so be on the lookout for information regarding a leadership podcast series, a social media campaign highlighting cultural experiences, and an essential worker gift card giveaway, just to name a few!

For more information about Forge, or how to become a member or sponsor, please contact Kelli Maydew, Executive Director, at [Kelli.Maydew@TopekaPartnership.com](mailto:Kelli.Maydew@TopekaPartnership.com).



## BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) is comprised of growing existing businesses and supporting their expansion in our community. It is relationship based and requires consistent, long-term interactions with businesses and other professionals in the community in order to compete successfully. It requires the physical presence of all areas of our team members within the Partnership, so we have ensured that, along with investor relations and BRE meetings, as an organization, we will partner to broaden our reach and support in the community.

While the industry standard for managing economic development projects is a single point of contact (GO Topeka) responsible for communication, assembling experts and bringing appropriate resources to projects, it's critical to have the support of the entire Partnership team to broaden our reach with BRE in the Topeka and Shawnee County community.

GO Topeka's expertise is lead generation, economic development, project management and incentive program administration. Project generation is dependent upon industry knowledge and personal relationships.



## TOPEKA YOUTH COMMISSION

The Topeka Youth Commission has been very busy in January. The Topeka Youth-Led Granting Initiative Committee met and held interviews with eight applicants to determine funding for the 2021 Stay785 Youth Grant. The Commission is very excited to announce in the near future the select youth chosen to execute their projects with our funding in conjunction with the Topeka Community Foundation. The Social Media Committee is looking into doing a self love and spots for Valentine's Day series for the month of February on the TYC's social media accounts. The Involvement Committee will be working on a couple projects in the next few months, including bringing awareness to human trafficking in Topeka and getting youth voices involved in educational decisions. The group is looking into volunteering events and a few members have also joined Civics Unplugged. The Government Committee has been working on getting prepped for another meeting for the TCYC. We are in the process of selecting new topics to discuss. We were also introduced to the Wichita Mayor's Youth Council Vote16 project, which would create a grassroots effort in changing the voting age for school board elections in the state of Kansas to 16 years old. Community Involvement is working on a few smaller events right now for people in Topeka to partake in. We will announce them soon, as well as our big summer event.



## VISIT TOPEKA SALES UPDATE

The Visit Topeka sales staff is optimistic in starting 2021 with several clients signing contracts, putting together calendars, and showing enthusiasm for the coming year.

In January on the sports side of sales we saw several events become definite with the addition of the 2021 Perfect Game Midwest calendar along with Mid-America Youth baseball. These two entities will bring over 25 event weekends to Topeka and with them hundreds of kids playing at Lake Shawnee and Washburn University.

As for convention sales, the Kansas Muzzleloaders have signed agreements for 2022 and 2023 and the Great Dane National Specialty Show will be coming in 2024. The Great Dane National Specialty was here in 2018 and brought over 1,000 dogs to the city and more than 2,000 room nights.

In all the sales department turned 23 leads definite for 4,440 room nights and \$2.84M in direct spending for the community. Moving forward the team has 43 leads in the pipeline representing over 23,000 rooms and \$13.2M in spending.

## CHOOSE TOPEKA UPDATE

To date the Choose Topeka program has seen:

- Over 4,700 submissions with resumes or questions
- Over 1,900 calls (from candidates & employers)
- 25 employer candidates accepted, equaling \$151,250 in matching JEDO funds committed
- Over 175 remote worker submissions
- 11 remote workers in the pipeline, equaling \$82,500 in encumbered incentives
- \$233,750 in total committed funds from the employer matching funds and remote worker options

### **Choose Topeka 2020 Media Coverage**

According to our PR partner, Violet PR, in 2020 Choose Topeka received 30 pieces of coverage, 4.25M in estimated coverage views and 46,726 social shares.

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce has presented its legislative agenda to the Shawnee County delegation. Key priorities are: leading through the recovery; driving to completion of the Polk/Quincy Viaduct; Medicaid Expansion; getting Kansans ready to work and growing the state's capacity in the area of economic development. Thus far, the Chamber has testified in favor of Senate Bill 24, which prohibits municipalities from restricting an energy customer's use of a public utility based upon the source of energy to be delivered to such customer. It also collaborated with the METL Coalition to testify in support of: HB 2097, which decouples the Kansas Industrial Training (KIT) and Kansas Industrial Retraining (KIR) workforce training programs from the High-Performance Incentive Program (HPIP), thus streamlining the state's suite of economic development programs; and HB 2101, which would extend the University Engineering Initiative Act for another ten years.

## KS PTAC UPDATE

This month the Topeka PTAC Subcenter:

- Guided 94 new small businesses through the process of becoming registered to do businesses in the federal market space. Exceeded goal of 80.
- Held 565 hours' worth of one-on-one counseling sessions with existing and new small businesses. Exceeded goal of 519.
- We have held nine virtual training sessions introducing businesses to federal contracting and requirements to be successful. Exceeded goal of six.
- Assisted KS PTAC Clients across the state with obtaining 1,316 new Federal Contract Awards worth \$210.5M.
  - o These contracts have been awarded between 2/01/2020 and 2/21/2021.
  - o Topeka Subcenter service area was awarded 183 of the contract awards worth \$20.5M.
    - Shawnee County received 35 contract awards worth \$2.9M
  - o Also continuing to providing coverage for the JCCC Subcenter as there is a vacant KS PTAC position.
    - JCCC Subcenter service area was awarded 1133 of the contract awards worth \$188.9M.

## STR DESTINATION REPORT & TRAVEL STATISTICS

Hotel statistics as reported in STR's Destination Report have continued to slow down following an active late summer and early fall. December 2020 room demand was down about 10 percent from 2019 – a nice break in the trend of 20 percent or more in October and December. Room supply has reached pre-pandemic levels and has held for several months now. Topeka's occupancy rate was down nearly 4 percentage points for the month. Revenue is still down considerably thanks in part to a declining ADR. ADR for December was an estimated \$68.42 (down from \$76.24 in 2019) placing monthly hotel revenue at an estimated \$2,018,508 (down about 20 percent from 2019).

Transient Guest Tax (TGT) ended the fourth quarter with \$451,616.85 in revenue. This is down 30 percent from 2019 which ended the year at \$647,199.63. Topeka outpaced state-wide collections which ended down about 39 percent at \$29,922,596.42.

Group business for Topeka has slowed considerably and we are continuing to see Q1 cancellations and postponements. While Visit Topeka anticipates business to remain slow, we are seeing planned group business remain in the pipeline for the second and third quarters of this year.

## POVERTY IN SHAWNEE COUNTY

The U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program provides annual estimates of income and poverty statistics for all school districts, counties, and states. The latest data reported from the SAIPE program was for 2019 and it shows that 9.8% (or 16,817) people in the county lived in poverty. This is a significant decrease from 2018, where 13.9% (or 24,062) people in the county lived in poverty. The 2019 data shows that there are 7,000 fewer people living in poverty in Shawnee County, compared to 2018.

The poverty rate for the State of Kansas is estimated at 11.3%, where the median rate of all 105 counties in the state is 11.7%. This means that while Shawnee County is the third most populated county in the state, its poverty rate is relatively low compared to other counties.

Since 2020 was a challenging year for so many families in the county and across the U.S., we do expect that our poverty rate could drastically increase in the next report. As of November 2020, more than 8,700 households received "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program" (SNAP) benefits, and more than 7,000 workers received unemployment benefits in the middle of January 2021.

While it is encouraging to see a decrease in the overall level of poverty in the county, we must consider that lower income families have not yet recovered from the economic crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially since we don't yet have the SAIPE data for 2020.

Data Sources: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe.html>



## BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Interest continues to grow from companies in the animal health and life sciences industry that are looking at potential relocations or expansions in Shawnee County.

We are also working with the Kansas Department of Commerce to market the assets we have for the aviation industry. Potential for new investment at Forbes Field is a strong opportunity.

Industrial and commercial developers are taking notice of what we have in Shawnee County, as well. GO Topeka is actively engaged with a number of developers who are assisting in our business attraction efforts.

## METL LEGISLATIVE FORUMS

The METL Coalition is staging ZOOM forums for the delegations representing each of their communities (Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka and Lawrence). These will be concise ZOOM sessions at which chamber leaders from each host community will present METL's legislative agenda, field questions and hear from the legislators as to progress or challenges on those agenda items.

## SHAWNEE COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT DATA

The Kansas Department of Labor reported the final unemployment data for 2020. As of December 2020, Shawnee County had a 4.1% unemployment rate, this represents a significant decrease of 1 percentage points from the previous month (November 2020), where the unemployment rate in the county was 5.1%. While the unemployment rate remains higher than desired, we are seeing a significant drop from its peak-level in April 2020, where more than 12% of the labor force was unemployed.

In total, there are 3,749 people out of work in the county, and while this number is decreasing over time, we are seeing a contraction in the labor force; the labor force is the pool of available workers. This could indicate that some of those workers are feeling discourage, and they are living the labor force for various reasons.

The second and third quarter of 2020 were extremely challenging for most households and businesses, and the preliminary 2020Q3 data shows a 5% contraction in the number of jobs in Shawnee County and Kansas. At the same time, the average wage increased to \$48,026 per year; this represents a 4% increase compared to last year.

Overall, the local labor market is slowly improving, but there is a lot more work that needs to be done in order to have a full recovery.

## LEADERSHIP GREATER TOPEKA UPDATE

The 2021 LGT Program has been rescheduled with new dates. The program is set to begin in April of 2021 due to COVID-19.

LGT is in their 3rd year of a Transformational grant through the Kansas Leadership Center designed to offer 60 opportunities for community and Partnership staff to build on their capacity to lead through adaptive leadership training.

In the last month, LGT took part in a state wide initiative called Kansas Beats the Virus and facilitated 10 virtual project sessions with area organizations and community leaders. One project example is Kansas LULAC Senior Center members putting together goody bags with a message of appreciation to area health care works.

The 2021 Chairs for LGT Advisory board include: Advisory Chair: Eric Gropitch, Washburn University; 2021 Incoming Chair: Debbie Davis, Better Homes and Garden Real Estate; 2021 Selection Chair: Lance Royer, Stone and Story Real Estate Group, LLC; 2021 Planning Chair: Bo Turney, Irigonegaray, Turney, & Revenaugh, LLP; and 2021 Alumni Chair: Yvonne Etzel, Blue Cross Blue Shield Kansas.

## EXECUTIVE IMMERSION SERVICES UPDATE

Our current executive going through the Executive Immersion Services (EIS) process is Elizabeth Easter, President of INTRUST Bank. Originally from Lawrence, Kansas, she is being introduced to leadership throughout the community designed to help her build a strong network or relations to support both her personal and professional success.

If you are aware of new CEOs into the community, we invite you to contact **Michelle Stubblefield@TopekaPartnership.com**. The Executive Immersion Services have proven to be a strong attraction and retention component for companies.

## MOMENTUM 2022

Time was spent this month one-on-one with City Council and County Commissioners to share community survey findings. A final report of recommendation will be presented to the Chairs Council in February.

Planning is underway to finalize a timeline to carry planning efforts forward toward the implementation of the next community strategy for 2023-2027.

Be sure to save the date - Investor 2021 Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 4, 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. at The Brownstone.

## TOPEKA'S WALMART DISTRIBUTION CENTER CONSTRUCTION

The construction of the Topeka Walmart distribution center continues to make major progress. The largest of Walmart's Kansas distribution centers, the facility contains more than 1.8 million square feet with a 35' clear stacking height. This investment will create 300 full-time jobs over the next five years with competitive salaries. The new center is expected to have an economic impact of \$635 million over the next 10 years.

Learn more about the progress in this [KSNT article](#).

## FORGE 101

Next month, Forge will be hosting a "Forge 101" quarterly orientation for both new members, as well as anyone curious about the organization or would like to learn more about our mission and vision. This will be held virtually, and registration details will be posted to the Forge Facebook page soon! It will be held virtually over the noon hour, so plan to join us while you grab lunch!



## CONGRESSIONAL FORUM WITH SENATOR MORAN

On January 31, 2021, the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce hosted United State Senator Jerry Moran for a special hybrid forum. The Senator discussed upcoming COVID relief legislation, as well as, his work on the Senate Banking Committee. He fielded questions regarding the importance of making sure new companies are able to access COVID relief programs, Presidential executive orders, higher education, innovation and infrastructure. Owing to social distancing restrictions, the number of people in attendance at the breakfast meeting was strictly limited and included sponsors and chamber leaders. Roughly 25 of the Partnership's other directors were invited to join the forum via ZOOM. The Chamber is planning similar forums for newly elected Senator Roger Marshall and Jake LaTurner, the Second District's newest Congressional Representative.

## RIVERFRONT ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

In January, the Riverfront Advisory Council met to report on the progress made by each of its committees. The Council's committees are: Education & Environment; Funding & Finance, Development; Government, Management & Partnerships; and Access, Activities & Equity. Committee members reported on their first meetings, the development of their priorities and the first steps they're taking to execute any immediate action items.

At these early stages, many of the committees are looking at community partnerships and further involvement from interested individuals. If you have an interest in any of these committees or have further questions, please contact [Jensen.Simons@topekapartnership.com](mailto:Jensen.Simons@topekapartnership.com).

## VISITORS GUIDE 2021

Visit Topeka and marketing/communications staff continued its work on the 2021 Visitors Guide into the new year and have made great strides on the production and logistics of the piece. Visit Topeka has selected Walworth out of Missouri as our printer this year. This decision was made based on previous experience, pricing and the ability to meet our printing deadlines. No local or in-state printers submitted a competitive bid.

Visit Topeka is also working with TARC on a distribution program for our visitor inquiries – a move that will help produce significant savings in postage and create a partnership with a wonderful organization.

Look forward to viewing this guide at the end of winter 2021.

## PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The City of Topeka Planning & Development Department, in cooperation with Downtown Topeka, Inc. (DTI), is excited to share the long-awaited draft of the Downtown Master Plan for public review!

The Plan is market-based building upon DTI's 2019 Market Strategy by creating a series of nine (9) District Plans. Each district contains further recommendations and illustrations to guide potential physical development, land use, street circulation, and design. With a resurgence of private/public improvements in the last decade unlike any in the past 30 years, the Downtown Master Plan is intended to accelerate this momentum and begin answering the question "what does the next generation of Downtown development look like"?

There are four different ways to view and interact with the draft Plan:

- View entire **Draft Document**
- View a high level overview of each district plan in the **Summary Presentation**
- Within the Summary Presentation, click on the district's 3-d image to view interactive StoryMaps for each district so you can easily scroll through that specific district and leave questions/comments
- **Take a brief 4-question survey** as a way for you to help set priorities for the next 10 years

All public input should be collected by March 1, 2020 in time to present to the Topeka Planning Commission.

Questions? Contact [dwarner@topeka.org](mailto:dwarner@topeka.org)

## PARTNERSHIP TEAM DEVELOPMENT

The Partnership is pursuing a robust human resources strategy in 2021 which targets development of the Partnership team members. A Talent Development Action Plan (TDAP) has been rolled-out so each teammate spends time focusing on their personal professional aspirations and sharing those with their managers. Managers and the ELT are committed to helping each teammate align their time and efforts around accumulating the training and experiences necessary to prepare them to reach their goals and/or to pursue advancement within the Greater Topeka Partnership.

## FINANCE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

The start of 2021 has been exciting for the Finance team. January 1 anniversaries our first full year in the new accounting system. All things considered, the maiden year was a success. Most of January has been spent wrapping up 2020. The finance team started the year off by compiling our 1099s from the new system for the first time. Work is currently underway to develop and gather all of the required documentation for the 2020 audit. Most of which is being developing for the first time from the new system as we go. The team had its first audit call with our audit partners at BT&Co in mid-January to set the 2020 audit timeline. In addition to the annual financials audit, the first of the year brings with it the organizations annual workers compensation and 401K audits as well.

Keeping with the sentiment of new systems in January, with the help from our partners at Mize CPAs, we transitioned over to a new payroll processing system. We are grateful for the tremendous effort Christy Bogner and her team put in to ensure a smooth transition. The new platform will provide additional features that we will be able to grow into. Additionally, late last year the Finance and Resource Development teams began looking at new CRM platforms that would better suit our needs. After a long discovery process, the team has chosen to move forward with Salesforce as our new CRM platform. Salesforce provides all of the capability that the organization is looking for and seamlessly integrates with our new accounting system. This upgrade is long overdue and will give our organization the tools it needs to effectively interact with our investors, members, volunteers, and the community as a whole, as well as provide synergy with resource development activities and the financial system which will provide crucial information for decision making. We are extremely excited to begin this project and can't wait to unveil it in July.

## BOARD NOMINATIONS

As the Partnership's various boards of directors commence their year, they are each appointing nominating committees. These all-important committees are appointed near the first of the year so they can stay on track to meet during April and May and perform their all-important task of presenting slates of 2022 directors for election in June. The Partnership's nominating process is designed to enable each board to take the time necessary to identify upcoming talent gaps on the board and focus on increasing diversity.