

Mission accomplished: 69Express opens this month!

The success of Overland Park and Johnson County is often attributed to deliberate planning for the future.

That is certainly the case, as more than 20 years of collaboration, advocacy and planning culminate in the opening of [69Express](#) this month.

With this momentous occasion, commuters will enjoy safer and more efficient travel along this vital corridor. According to Chamber President Tracey Osborne Oltjen, executing the project was critical to Overland Park's continued success. "As our community continues to grow to the south and as businesses follow the residents, U.S. 69 needs to be equipped to serve the community into the future. This project accomplishes that and positions us well for continued prosperity."

Chamber and city leaders worked for years to advocate for the project with state and federal transportation officials, including coordinating a visit to Overland Park by U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao to discuss the need for federal engagement.

"We value our role as a community connector," said Osborne Oltjen. "The Chamber takes very seriously our role in bringing strategic partners together to plan for the future needs of our community, and the opening of 69 Express is yet another example of how our work helps shape the community's future."

More information on how to get a KTAG or pay Kansas tolls is available at [DriveKS.com](#).



Public Open House

Learn how the express lanes work, set up your DriveKS account and get a KTAG.

February 11

5:00-7:00 p.m. (come anytime)

Tomahawk Ridge Community Center
11902 Lowell Avenue

[See Details](#)

Micro grant supports small business growth

The Overland Park Chamber has launched a micro-grant program to support small business growth in Overland Park.

Applications for the grant remain open until mid-March. Funding is provided through the Economic Development Council (EDC) and the Chamber's Opportunity NOW initiative. Limited funding is available.

Preference will be given to businesses that can demonstrate a financial or in-kind match, best business practices, and align request with reasonable/sustainable company growth.

For more information, [click here](#).

Small business owners may apply for up to \$3,000 for projects related to the following:

- Staff development
- Paid internships
- Business improvements (repairs, updates, paint, awnings, signage, professional services)
- Technology upgrades (hardware, software, connectivity, point of sale systems)
- Equipment
- Commercialization
- Proof of concept

Chamber Board

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Chamber staff

Tracey Osborne Oltjen, CCE, IOM, President & CEO

Celia Byers, Senior Director of Programming &
Partnerships

Courtney Cavlovic, Workforce Development
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David Dyer, Membership Director

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Izzy Hagen, Director of Marketing

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Imani Lemon, Economic Development Coordinator

Katie Lindgren, Economic Development Director

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Libbey Tucker, CECd, Senior Vice President of
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Wil Ullmann, Public Policy Coordinator

Kevin Walker, CCE, IOM, Executive Vice President
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Serenity Wallace, Executive Assistant

Andrew Weisberg, Director of Talent

Tracey Osborne Oltjen, CCE
Chamber President
[@traceylosborne](#)



Building a welcoming OP

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Our team has established a meaningful tradition to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Each year, we serve at one of our member non-profit organizations, then join regional leaders at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy & Scholarship Awards Dinner, which is sponsored by the Olathe, Overland Park, and Leawood NAACP. This year, our service took

place at TurnStyles Thrift on 87th Street, the flagship thrift store operated by [Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas](#). There, we worked together to refresh and organize the racks of clothing after a bustling weekend, making it easier for customers to find what they need and supporting the store's mission to help those in need.

Our organization has been proud to host a table at the NAACP dinner for many years. This year was particularly special, as Overland Park Mayor Skoog was honored with the Legacy Award for his steadfast commitment to improving the lives of all Overland Park residents. In their announcement, the NAACP recognized Mayor Skoog's leadership, noting that his efforts have fostered economic growth, strengthened community ties, and enhanced the overall quality of life for everyone in Overland Park.

The NAACP typically announces its honorees ahead of time. This year, I was genuinely surprised when my name was called for an occasionally presented honor: the Hero of Diversity Award. When our team reached out to Henry Lyons, President of the NAACP, for more information, he explained, "This award was established to give recognition to members in the metro area who make society a better place to live. These are people who don't get media attention, nor do they seek it,



Overland Park Mayor Curt Skoog received the 2026 Legacy Award and Chamber President Tracey Osborne Oltjen received the 2026 Hero of Diversity Award.

(continued on page 6)

Upcoming events

Wednesday Wake-up

Wednesday, February 11 – 8:00-9:00 a.m.

[Evexia Health & Performance](#), 11116 Antioch Road

Make connections and foster lasting business relationships while enjoying coffee and a light breakfast.

This event is a great opportunity to learn how Evexia can support your strength, recovery and long-term health – inside and outside the gym. Evexia delivers expert personal training, structured coaching and real accountability – combining strength, nutrition and recovery to help you train smarter and feel your best.

Free for Chamber members.

[Register](#)



OP After Hours

Thursday, February 19 – 4:30-6:30 p.m.

[AdventHealth Sports Park at Bluhawk](#),
16210 Shawnee Drive

Join us for drinks, appetizers and networking at the metro's premier sports and entertainment complex, which hosts amateur and youth sports and tournaments, as well as family and community-oriented entertainment and events.

[Register](#)



Small Business Council: Playbook to Gain Value from a Membership Organization

Thursday, February 26 – 8:30-10:00 a.m.

Overland Park Chamber, 9001 West 110th Street

Learn how to maximize your membership in professional, civic and philanthropic organizations from leaders who know how to build a network rather than a contact list.

Moderated by Rebecca Gubbels, [Enterprise Center in Johnson County](#)

Speakers:

- Marc Shaffer, Searcy Financial
- [Jennifer Cairns](#), [The Arts and Recreation Foundation of Overland Park](#)
- [David Dyer](#), Overland Park Chamber of Commerce

[Register](#)



EDC Business Honors Luncheon

Wednesday, February 11 – 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

[Johnson County Community College](#),
12345 College Boulevard

Join us as we recognize the businesses and visionaries who elevate our community and strengthen our economy.

This year's honorees:

Nova Award:

- [Arise Homes](#)
- [Ascentist Healthcare](#)
- [NVisionKC](#)
- Integrated Controls and Engineering

Hall of Honor Award:

- [Varnum, Armstrong, Deeter LLC](#)
- Jewish Community Center Campus

Commercial Development Award:

- Kiddie Academy
- Galleria 115
- Stone Manor on 79th

Ben Craig Award:

- [Kristy Stallings](#), [City of Overland Park](#)

Registration required by February 3.

[Register](#)

Sponsors: [ALLO Business](#), [Asset Acquisitions Inc.](#),
[Harmon Construction](#), [Hunt Midwest](#)



Member Orientation

Thursday, February 26 – 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Overland Park Chamber, 9001 West 110th Street

During this informal orientation, new members or new employees at Chamber member companies will meet Chamber staff, connect with other Chamber member newbies and learn about valuable resources available to you and your business.

[Register](#)



Mayor's State of the City

Tuesday, March 10 – 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Overland Park Convention Center,
6000 College Boulevard

Join us to hear Mayor Skoog present his annual State of the City Address, followed by a reception with beverages and hors d'oeuvres.

[Register](#)



Presenting Sponsor



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Welcome to the Chamber!

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS

AppleOne Employment Services

LaTiffany Kinglsey, Branch Manager
7500 College Boulevard, Suite 554
Overland Park KS 66211
(913) 383-2275
www.appleone.com
Employment Agencies & Services

Center for Practical Bioethics

Abby Gast-Watterson,
Development and Events Coordinator
13725 Metcalf Avenue, Suite 427
Overland Park KS 66223
(816) 221-1100
center@practicalbioethics.org
www.practicalbioethics.org
Charitable Organizations, Health Care

Chamberlain University

Tona Leiker, Executive Dean - Academic Operations
6130 Sprint Parkway, Suite 300
Overland Park KS 66211
(913) 374-2914
TLeiker@chamberlain.edu
www.chamberlain.edu
Colleges and Universities, Schools - Colleges & Universities

Cougar Painting

Amy Frederick, Owner
7131 West 135th Street, #1011
Overland Park KS 66223
(913) 212-8514
amy@cougarpaintingllc.com
www.cougarpaintingkc.com
Painting Contractor

Dave J. Harris, LLC

Dave Harris
2521 North Main Street, Unit 1, #172
Las Cruces NM 88001
(575) 800-7133
dave@davejharris.com
www.daveconnects.com
Business Consultants, Educational Consulting

MadCap Fire

support@madcapfire.com
www.madcapfire.com
Building Materials, Home Decor
Referred by Webster Jorgensen, Demand Stack

Merwadj Sustainable Procurement LLC

Eman Eladawy, Co-Founder | CEO
8101 College Boulevard
Overland Park KS 66210
(949) 444-1878
info@merwadj.com
www.merwadj.com
Building Materials

Patagonia Tree Service LLC

Alyssa Acuna, CEO
(913) 437-8587
patagoniatreekc@gmail.com
www.patagoniatreekc.com
Landscaping & Lawn Services, Tree Care

Security Benefit –

New EDC Investor and Corporate Sponsor!

Jessica Wadel, Director,
Learning & Development
10975 Grandview Drive
Overland Park KS 66210
jessica.wadel@securitybenefit.com
www.securitybenefit.com
Financial Planning Consultants & Services, Retirement Planning Services

Western & Southern Life

John Bacon, Agency Manager
8500 West 110th Street, Suite 155
Overland Park KS 66210
(913) 373-5499
www.wsllife.com
Financial Services, Insurance

Refer a potential Chamber member to Dave at ddyer@opchamber.org and receive a credit when they join!

World Cup resources

As we prepare to welcome international visitors, here are some helpful resources:

- **Overland Park World Cup Hub**
Event planning, permitting, accommodations, transportation and rental licensing. www.opkansas.org/newsroom/ops-world-cup-hub/
- **ConnectKC26**
Regional transportation plan at www.kansascityfwc26.com
- **Johnson County United**
Events, regional transportation and merchandise
www.johnsoncountyunited.com

Thanks for reinvesting!

MEMBER RENEWALS

50+ Years

AdventHealth
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T-Mobile

40-49 Years

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Overland Park Racquet Club

20-39 Years

Blue Valley Recreation Commission
CommunityAmerica Credit Union
Dana F. Cole & Company, LLP
Delta Dental of Kansas
Dentons US LLP
Grandma's Office Catering
Hilton Garden Inn Overland Park
Hyatt Place Kansas City/Overland Park/Convention Center
Olsson
Saint Luke's Health System
United Community Services

10-19 Years

Academy Bank
Blue Valley Insurance Agency, Inc.
Corner Bakery Cafe-Corbin Park
Fogel-Anderson Construction Co.
Harmon Construction, Inc.
Newmark Zimmer
Oades Brothers Tire & Auto
Savage & Browning LLC
Talk of the Town Grill & Bar-Leawood
The Club at Indian Creek
Westlake Ace Hardware - 151st Street
Westlake Ace Hardware - 87th Street

5-9 Years

Game Show Battle Rooms
Hampton Inn & Suites Overland Park South
KC Power Partners
Maciel Wealth Management
Metcalf 108
Red Door Woodfired Grill
Swartz + Associates, Inc.
Urban Air Adventure Park

1-4 Years

Bedford Camera & Video
Body Fit Training
BRR Architecture
Christian Weld Consulting
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VIVE Brand Co LLC
Walmart-119th & Metcalf
Walmart-77th & Frontage Road
Westlake Ace Hardware - College & Antioch

We want to meet your summer interns

Summer in OP is back for 2026.

This summer, the Chamber is once again bringing together interns and employers for networking, professional development and community-building opportunities.

If your company plans to host interns, [complete this short form](#) to express interest in the program.

2026 Pricing:

Opportunity NOW Investor: \$100 per intern

Chamber member: \$150 per intern

Non-member: \$185 per intern

Optional Welcome Basket: \$20 per intern – filled with local goodies to welcome them to Overland Park.

To learn more, [click here](#), or contact Courtney at ccavlovic@opchamber.org or (913) 766-7611.

LOP class kicks off

Members of our 2026 Leadership Overland Park (LOP) class have begun their class year.

In their opening retreat, class members participated in exercises to get to know each other and to discuss Overland Park's strengths and challenges.

Class sessions in February will focus on health and social issues and education.

Thank you to our **2026 LOP Presenting Sponsor:**



Serenity Wallace joins Chamber team

We are pleased to introduce a new member to our Chamber team – Serenity Wallace joins the Chamber staff as Executive Assistant.

Serenity is an operations and administrative thought partner with more than seven years experience supporting mission-driven organizations across nonprofit, scientific, and community-focused spaces. Serenity has closely collaborated with executive teams, orchestrated large-scale events, and designed operational frameworks that allow teams to work at their best. She is deeply motivated by work that centers people, equity, and long-term impact, and brings a solutions-oriented approach grounded in the belief that effective systems and thoughtful operations make meaningful work possible.



Serenity Wallace

“Strong, connected communities are built through shared support and collaboration, and I am excited to be part of a Chamber that champions that kind of collective progress,” Serenity said.

You can reach Serenity at (913) 766-7606 or swallace@opchamber.org.

Skills-first approach to revolutionize workforce

Interested in expanding your talent pipelines, reducing time-to-hire and increasing employee retention and satisfaction?

Join our next cohort of [Talent Reimagined](#) – a skills-first workforce approach designed to help your organization implement change management.

For details, contact Andrew at aweisberg@opchamber.org.

Supporting AP Career Kickstart courses

The Chamber has partnered with the U.S. Chamber and College Board to support the new [AP Career Kickstart](#) classes rolling out in the 2026-27 school year.

The new AP courses are designed to help K-12 students build professional skills as they pursue in-demand careers.

The first course offerings will be cybersecurity and business/personal finance. The Chamber has developed several exciting ways for businesses to engage with early pipeline talent.

To learn more, contact Andrew at aweisberg@opchamber.org.

KU Edwards serves students, workforce, community

CORPORATE SPONSOR SPOT-LIGHT

KU Edwards Campus (KUEC) provides academic programs that meet the needs of students and businesses, making it a key resource for the community.

Since opening in Overland Park in 1993 with 10 degree programs, the KU Edwards Campus has been an integral part of the Overland Park community. Today, it offers a range of in-demand academic programs and remains focused on its mission to educate students to meet area workforce needs while creating opportunities for upward mobility for graduates.

KU's [School of Professional Studies](#) is located at the Edwards Campus and offers programs, research activities, and learning initiatives designed for transfer students and adult learners. These include individuals completing their bachelor's degrees as well as those pursuing graduate degrees or certificates for career advancement. Academic offerings continue to evolve in response to business and industry needs. Current degrees include IT, cybersecurity, engineering management, health sciences, biotechnology, ASLD, organizational communications,

project management, criminal justice, nutrition, and more.

To support today's learners, courses are offered online, in person, and in hybrid formats, providing flexibility for full- or part-time professionals balancing multiple responsibilities. Students benefit from academic support, scholarship opportunities, advising, and professional connections.

The Edwards Campus stays ahead of evolving workforce demands by maintaining close relationships with regional business leaders, helping employers access skilled, KU-educated talent. Graduates leave the campus prepared to succeed in the workplace.

In addition to its academic offerings, KUEC serves the greater Kansas City community in many other ways. The campus welcomed more than 33,000 visitors in the past year, hosting 630 events in its conference center, auditorium, classrooms, and outdoor quad. These events include speaker events, [Sciflix](#) Friday night movies, professional development and training events, AP testing for area school districts, and the [Rock Chalk Run](#) 5k/10k fundraiser supporting student scholarships.

For more information, visit www.edwardscampus.ku.edu.



This year's [Rock Chalk Run](#) is October 4, 2026.

President's message continued . . .

or will you hear people talking about them a lot, but they are the ones who deserve recognition. We have been working with Tracey for many years and have grown to know her as one of the area's unsung heroes and treats everyone with fairness."

It was both humbling and an honor to be recognized alongside Mayor Skoog and the other distinguished honorees. I am proud to accept this award on behalf of the Chamber's leadership, dedicated staff, and countless volunteers who, for nearly sixty years, have worked to create a community where everyone can prosper and feel welcome. Our community vision, ForwardOP, reaffirms our commitment to being an innovative, forward-thinking, and welcoming community and the Chamber incorporates these values into our planning each year.

This fall, the Chamber conducted a community poll of Overland Park voters to gauge quality of life and policy views. The results were overwhelmingly positive: 87% of Overland Park voters, across the political spectrum, agreed that Overland Park is a welcoming community.

No community is perfect, and every day brings new challenges in our ongoing effort to ensure that everyone in our community can thrive. Yet, it is essential to remember that valuing and respecting one another and welcoming everyone at the table forms a solid foundation for the work that lies ahead.



Henry Lyons, president of the NAACP Representing Olathe, Overland Park and Leawood, presented the 2026 Hero of Diversity Award to Overland Park Chamber President Tracey Osborne Oltjen at this year's Martin Luther King Legacy & Scholarship Awards Committee Dinner.

This newsletter is distributed by the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce, 9001 West 110th Street, Overland Park, KS 66210.
(913) 491-3600 | Fax: (913) 491-0393

opcc@opchamber.org | www.opchamber.org



City Council President Melissa Cheatham and Chamber President Tracey Osborne Oltjen joined owners Taylor, Keaton and Connor Dorman and their team to celebrate the re-opening of [Jack Stack Barbecue](#), 7171 West 95th Street, after a major refresh.

Congratulations to the Dormans and everyone at Jack Stack on keeping your fourth-generation business up to date and thank you for your continued investments in our community!



On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Chamber staff members gave back to the community by volunteering at TurnStyles Thrift Store, which helps fund 25+ programs run by [Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas](#). The team also enjoyed lunch together at [Zarda Bar-B-Q](#).

Low-cost health insurance for members

The Chamber offers additional value for your membership – cost-effective, high-quality health insurance solutions for your team, which also helps you attract and maintain employees.

The Chamber offers to your employees and their families a health insurance plan through the Chamber of Commerce Executives of Kansas. [Chamber Solutions](#) is for qualified member businesses with 2-100 employees in Kansas.

Local brokers are encouraged to offer the plan and should contact Tim Shrout, Gallagher Benefit Services at (816) 507-3249 or Tim.shrout@ajg.com. Or, connect your local broker with Tim.

Driving Economic Success

Building Permits – December 2025

	New Commercial	Institutional, Schools, etc.	Other Commercial	Total
	1	0	39	40
Square Feet	2,079	-	14,264	16,400
Value	\$394,45	-	\$27,214,506	\$27,594,300

– City of Overland Park

Unemployment – November 2025

Overland Park	3.2%
Johnson County	3.1%
KC Metro MSA	3.4%
State of Kansas	3.1%

(These percentages are not seasonally adjusted)

– Kansas Labor Information Center (KLIC)

– U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



The Chamber's Small Business Council recently presented a program in which experienced tech entrepreneurs shared real-life stories of failure and how they learned from missteps.

More than 80 attendees, including [Shawnee Mission School District](#) students, participated in Q&A. Takeaways included discussions on time management, product versus distribution, hiring and mindset.

Our thanks to:

Moderator: Grace Ahn, [NvisionKC](#)

Hosts: Adam Fichman and [Lifted Logic](#)

[Read more](#)

Affordable meeting space at the Chamber office

The Chamber Foundation Building in Corporate Woods offers a variety of meeting space rental options. Whether you're planning an event, a training session or a one-on-one interview, we have the perfect space for your needs.

For details, contact Hannah at hmelton@opchamber.org or [click here](#).

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Security Benefit –
new 2026 Sponsor!

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Edwards Campus

To add your name to this list,
contact Tracey Osborne Oltjen
at (913) 491-3600 or
tosborne@opchamber.org.

Recent Events

MEMBERS CONNECTING WITH MEMBERS



Members enjoyed networking at last month's **Wednesday Wake-up** hosted by [The Golden Scoop](#).



[BHC](#) hosted last month's **Young Professionals Mix & Mingle**.



Thank you to our Young Professionals sponsors:

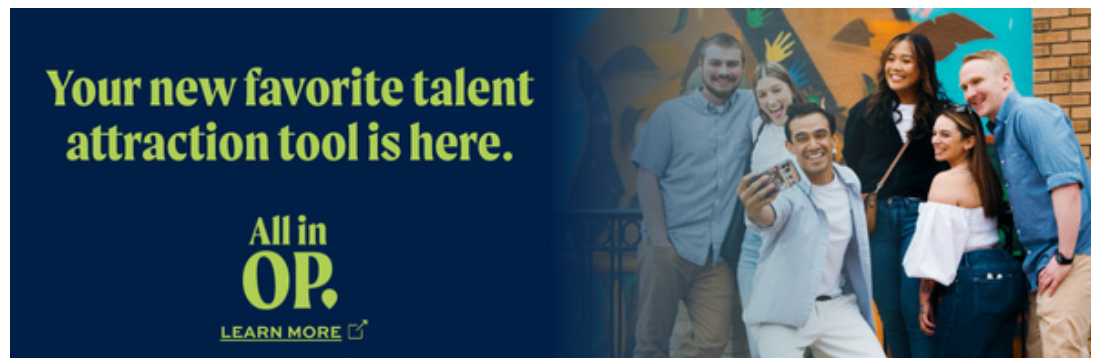
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All in OP showcases our community



All in Overland Park is your ultimate resource to showcase everything Overland Park has to offer.

Whether you're hiring, investing, welcoming new employees, or just bragging on our city, it's all in one place and it's designed to help you show potential talent and partners why Overland Park is the place to be.

[Sign up](#) to receive "All Week in OP," your weekly mix of things to do and things to know. Get the scoop on what's happening across our city from jobs to events, new places to check out, local favorites, and more straight to your inbox.

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