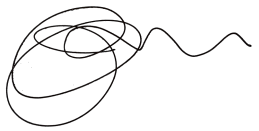

adaptokc
adapting for a healthy future

Adopted by the Planning Commission **6/11/2020**  Janis Powers, Chair

Received by the City Council **7/7/2020** David Holt David Holt, Mayor

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Photo of Myriad Botanical Gardens water feature, Office of James Burnett (2012)

Executive Summary

Less than a century ago, the longest environmental disaster in the history of the United States left indelible scars on Oklahoma. The Dust Bowl was a decade-long convergence of economic, ecological, and social factors: a disproportionately large agricultural economy; technological advances like mechanized plowing and harvesting; misguided public policy related to westward expansion; severe drought, extreme heat, and ceaseless wind; mass migration; bank failures and business closures; starvation and poverty; topsoil erosion and poor land management practices; and water scarcity.

Millions of acres of farmland were rendered virtually useless and nearly half a million Americans were displaced. But a proportionate response came as across the country people were enlisted in a peacetime war against environmental degradation, mounting hundreds of public works projects including drainage, erosion control, fire, disaster response, development and construction of infrastructure from rural fire roads to urban parks, and a "shelter belt" of nearly 220 million trees planted to reduce the landscape-scouring winds.

It is both these hardships and the resolve to meet them that shaped Oklahoma City's first sustainability plan, adapt**okc**. For present day Oklahoma City, now the country's 27th most populous city, the Oklahoma of the 1930s echoes as a stark reminder of the inseparability of our livelihoods, our environment, and ourselves. adapt**okc** recognizes our need - and ability - to leverage scarce resources, create new partnerships, and use new tools and technologies to meet our needs and deliver a more equitable community not just for today's residents but for generations to come.

The purpose of adapt**okc** is to strengthen our community in the face of economic, environmental, and social challenges. By identifying our risks as well as our opportunities, we can adapt to the complex and cascading threats to our livelihoods and well-being.

Three principles are at the core of adapt**okc**:

- **Position Oklahoma City to lead by example as a steward of public resources.** We must demonstrate approaches to natural resources and conservation to effectively manage risk. While some concepts may seem new, many have been proven over time in our peer cities. We can serve the public good by demonstrating practical and efficient ways to meet needs that will reduce long-term operations and maintenance costs.
- **Adapt our infrastructure, services, and communities to Oklahoma City's changing climate.** We are already experiencing the effects of climate change and, even in the most optimistic scenarios, our climate will continue to change well into the future. Our "new normal" will be anything but. To ensure our resilience, we need to plan and design for instability.
- **Identify how to use technological innovations to our advantage.** Emerging technologies can help us streamline processes and respond proactively to the needs of our residents. From renewable energy to driverless vehicles, we have opportunities to chart new territory that can yield social, economic, and environmental dividends for all Oklahoma City residents.

adapt**okc** investigates four critical areas: how we generate and consume electricity; how vulnerable our infrastructure and natural resources are to a changing climate; how our transportation choices impact the air we breathe; and how our waste affects us all long after it has been discarded.

Some of the significant risks facing Oklahoma City include:

- Increase in temperature marked by drier, hotter summers
- Increase in the cost of and demand for electricity
- Increase of inundating rainfall events and associated flooding
- Increase in the operating and maintenance costs of infrastructure and assets
- Increase in cultural, linguistic, and age-related challenges to public service delivery

To address these risks, adapt**okc** proposes to:

- Reduce electricity costs with increased efficiency and renewable energy use
- Mitigate heat through development requirements and more natural urban environments
- Reduce emissions that threaten our health and economy
- Protect and conserve our water resources
- Enhance our equitable approach to disaster recovery and response
- Strengthen our infrastructure against extreme weather and increasing costs

“Never let yesterday use up too much of today.”

- Will Rogers