

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The more things change, the more they stay the same

In January 1977, Chamber President Dick Molamphy told *The Sun Newspapers* the Chamber's "number one priority is to present a strong voice of business in all of our programs at all three levels – city, county and state." Your Board maintains that priority today, ensuring that your business voice is represented at all levels of government, with the addition of a strong federal agenda a number of years ago.

Dick was chosen to be the first professional leader of our Chamber in 1967. Ten years later, he was focused as ever on our original mission for our members and Overland Park – advocacy and economic development. "Our overall goal is good economic development – first, developing a good business element and secondly, the economic development of creating more jobs for its citizens, of maintaining an adequate tax base to finance the needed services for its citizens," he said. He further noted that our success will be the expansion of the highway network along College Boulevard, Antioch and Quivira.

Thirty years ago this central core of our business community was just beginning its expansion. The year 1975 saw the celebration of the opening of Corporate Woods, Oak Park Mall and Highway 69. The expansion of our local infrastructure was crucial to the efficient and safe transport of residents, workforce and products throughout our region. In the ensuing years, this network with its short commute times has been one of the cornerstones of our growth and one of the factors often cited in the numerous national rankings awarded our community. Infrastructure has been a top agenda item for the Chamber since our founding.



Tracey Osborne, CCE
Chamber President
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Dick Molamphy

Our cooperative efforts with our partners at the City of Overland Park, Kansas Department of Transportation, the Kansas Legislature, the business community and Overland Park's voters have made possible new interchanges along the U.S. Highway 69 and Interstate-435 corridors and created a long-term capital improvements program for our neighborhood streets and thoroughfares.

Under Mary Birch's leadership as president, we celebrated the opening of I-435 and Quivira's interchange and elevated our mission of job creation to a new level with a formal partnership with the City of Overland Park through the establishment of the Overland Park Chamber Economic Development Council as a public/private partnership.

In 1993 we broke new ground, becoming one of the first chambers of our size nationally to hire a full-time lobbyist to advocate on behalf of our members in Topeka.

The Chamber's role, then as now, is focused on ensuring the business climate and infrastructure exists to foster job growth and economic vitality. Expansion of local companies and attraction of new business expands opportunity for our citizens and keeps the tax base balanced. Without these opportunities and sustainable resources, the quality of life that has been the benchmark of our success will erode.

The growth of our still relatively young community has been extraordinary, propelling us to become both the second-largest city in the Kansas City metro, as well as the second-largest city in Kansas in less than 60 years. According to the *Sun* article, Overland Park's single family housing growth in the 70s led City Hall to anticipate issuance of 560 residential unit permits in 1977; Dick commented this would lead to a population increase of 1,000 for the year, which at that time boasted a population of 82,802. The growth rate is notable, as we anticipate an increase of just over 1,000 in population in 2017 over last year's base of 189,450. We issued 414 single family and 809 multi-family permits last year.

We look forward to the growth ahead and what the future brings to Overland Park. While the faces around the table have changed through the years, along with the technology and tools available, we remain committed to our original mission of advocacy and economic development that provides focus on prosperity.