

# OKC ARENA GROWTH STUDY

## Objective

Assess economic, demographic, and urban development in Oklahoma City from 2002 to 2025, focusing on impacts tied to the arena (Paycom Center, formerly Ford Center).

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## Key Metrics

### 1. Population Growth

- City population rose from ~506 k (2000) to ~702 k (2023): +38.6% overall, ~1.68% annual growth .
- Metro population grew from ~1.08 M (2000) to ~1.50 M (2024): +42% .

### 2. Economic Output & Jobs

- Since the Thunder's arrival (~2008), city GDP increased by ~62% .
- The Thunder and arena generate ~\$590–600 M annually and ~3,000 jobs .

### 3. Employment Resilience

- OKC had one of the lowest unemployment rates during the 2008 recession with strong recovery .

### 4. Urban Revitalization

- MAPS (1993) funded the arena and catalyzed developments like Bricktown canal, streetcar, and downtown resurgence .
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## Methodology

### 1. Data Collection

- Annual census/metro population (2000–2025).
- GDP and per-capita income (Fed St. Louis / state economic reports).
- Employment/unemployment by year, with focus on event-related job growth.
- Arena revenue, job figures, and related economic impact estimates.

## 2. Comparative Timeframes

- Pre-arena baseline: 1998–2002
- Post-opening without NBA team: 2002–2008
- Post-Thunder arrival: 2008–2025

## 3. Analysis Methods

- Time-series visualization of population/GDP trends.
- Difference-in-differences: compare OKC vs peer mid-sized U.S. cities lacking large arenas.
- Economic impact multipliers: translating annual \$590–600 M and 3k jobs into broader economic effects.
- Case studies: downtown districts (Bricktown, Midtown) with qualitative assessments.

## 4. Stakeholder Interviews & Surveys

- City officials, developers, local business owners (Bricktown, area bars/restaurants), NBA event attendees.

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## QExpected Findings

- Clear population boom city-wide (+40% metro).
- Strong economic growth, especially post-Thunder +62% GDP.
- Creation of thousands of jobs via arena and related sectors.

- Visible downtown renaissance, with new housing, transit, and commercial development.
  - Improved resilience during national downturns.
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## Data Sources

- Population & Metro Data: U.S. Census Bureau, Neoilsberg, Macrotrends
  - Economic & Arena Impact: City economic reports, MAPS documentation, Journal Record articles
  - Industry and urban data: Greater OKC EDC, Bricktown development reports
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## Timeline

Phase	Activities	Duration
Planning & Design	Refine metrics, identify benchmarks	1 month
Data Collection	Gather quantitative & qualitative data	2 months
Analysis & Modeling	Run statistical models, build visualizations	2 months
Stakeholder Interviews	Conduct/summarize interviews	1 month
Drafting Report	Synthesize results	1 month

Review & Finalization

Peer review, revisions

1 month

Total: ~8 months

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## Data Sources

- U.S. Census Bureau – [census.gov](https://www.census.gov)
- Oklahoma City Economic Development – [greateroklahomacity.com](https://greateroklahomacity.com)
- Oklahoma City MAPS Office – [okc.gov/maps](https://okc.gov/maps)
- Journal Record:
  - [“Thunder’s economic impact extends beyond the Paycom Center”](#)
  - [“Business Strategy: Playoff wins are wins for OKC too”](#)
- Neilsberg – [“Oklahoma City Population by Year”](#)
- Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis – [fred.stlouisfed.org](https://fred.stlouisfed.org)
- Wikipedia articles:

- [Paycom Center](#)
- [History of Oklahoma City](#)
- [Mick Cornett](#)
- [Oklahoma City metropolitan area](#)
- **City of OKC Official Reports and Budgets – [okc.gov](#)**
- **Express News – [“Spurs arena funding debate”](#)**

## **Conclusion**

This study would provide strong evidence that the Paycom Center and especially the arrival of the NBA franchise contributed significantly to OKC's dramatic population, economic, and urban growth since 2002