

# **All things considered, Tulsa is a pretty good place to live**

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=3999#more-3999>

In the last weeks of 1981, I was sitting in an architectural firm in Montgomery (Cincinnati), Ohio, twiddling my thumbs with nothing to do. The recession was in full swing, the prime interest rate was 22 percent, and Jimmy Carter's Misery Index was off the charts. Architects, engineers, and builders were going out of business at a rapid rate. On December 31, I was handed my final paycheck and not long after that the firm closed its doors.

I spent the next six weeks looking for work in Ohio and my home state of Illinois, and got only one offer that was almost half of the already meager salary that I had been earning when I was laid off.

While visiting my parents, my mother told me that her next door neighbor had a grandson who was an engineer in Tulsa, and suggested I call him. I really wasn't thrilled with the idea of moving to Oklahoma, even for a job, but I was desperate. Besides, I needed to get enough time in working for an architect so that I could get a license and start my own business.

When I called him he enthusiastically told me, "there are a lot of jobs in Tulsa!" and suggested a few architects to contact.

After making a few appointments for job interviews, I drove out to Tulsa on a Sunday, arriving here at nighttime. As I was driving through Missouri I contemplated how miserable it was going living in Oklahoma and thought, why was I moving to the Dust Bowl? No matter, as soon as the interviews were over, I would head for Denver or Dallas.

The next morning I opened the curtains of my hotel room and was surprised to see trees (I'm not kidding.) Tulsa was not at all what I imagined (although I have been told that western Oklahoma is like Mars - a lot of red dirt and rocks.)

I called the office of then Coleman-Ervin and Associates (Now Coleman-Johnston-Clyma) to get directions to the office, and was told to take the Bottlesville exit when I reached downtown. No, I did not misspell Bartlesville. It really sounded like the secretary said Bottlesville. Now that just sounds normal.

During my interview with Bruce Ervin (who was a great guy and has since passed away), he asked me, "why are you coming to Tulsa?" When I said it was because of the recession, he gave me a puzzled look and said, "what recession?" Tulsa was still in an economic boom. I was offered a job that day, and worked there for several years.

Tulsa never did feel the impact of the recession like the rest of the nation, even with the small downturn it experienced later. It was during those first few years that I worked here that I realized was a gem Tulsa really was.

I am convinced that Tulsa is a city like no other city in the country. We have a diverse economy, and while we have some big industries (like American Airlines), we don't have any that would destroy the city economy if we lost them. We have a wide array of service jobs, filled with some of the smartest people on the planet. We've got world-class medical care here, with some of the best physicians in the world.

We're a city of churches, with some of the best church people you will find, and we're a family-oriented city.

When my wife and I moved to Tulsa, we had to leave all of our family behind, so we have encouraged our children to stay in Tulsa so when they have children, we can keep the family together. I've told them that they can be just about anything they want to be, right here in Tulsa.

There is an old fable (perhaps an Aesop's Fable) about a dog who had a large bone in his mouth. When he passed by a pond, he saw the reflection of what he thought was another dog with an even bigger bone. So he dropped his bone and lunged for the other dog's bone, only to lose what he had.

That is what Tulsa is about to do. The new city of Tulsa will not be the stable, family oriented, church oriented, economically strong city that Tulsans want it to be. We're about to leave the strong, successful base that we have to pursue the same course that most other cities chose some time ago, and when we do, we will get the same results that they have experienced - overregulation, high taxes, debt, unaffordable property values, and residents who vote with their feet leaving a city they can no longer afford to live in.

Tulsa can have the beautiful city it wants, including a vibrant downtown, but not with the comprehensive plan we are about to adopt. It's time to take another look. It's time for Tulsa to be a leader instead of a follower.

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Randy W. Bright, AIA, NCARB, is an architect who specializes in church and church-related projects. You may contact him at 918-582-3972, [rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net) or [www.churcharchitect.net](http://www.churcharchitect.net).

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