

June 8, 2023

Mayor Darrell Davis  
Members, Edmond City Council  
20 South Littler  
Edmond, Oklahoma 73034

RE: A Great Place to Grow

Dear Mayor Davis and City Council Members,

Thank you for your service to Edmond, one of Oklahoma's most thriving communities. Like you, we have served Edmond. As former mayors, we have deep concerns about recent decisions and attitudes of the City Manager and his top staff.

The loss of Uncommon Ground, the most amazing park proposed in Edmond in the last five decades, along with the dismissal of concerns by citizens on the proposed city services building at a cost of over 44 million dollars, the disconcerted road construction, the calloused disregard of Edmond organizations like UR Special, and many other wayward decisions, give us pause. That is a very nice and polite way of saying "things are not going well."

As former mayors and community leaders, we served Edmond. We worked for decades to promote our great city as the top town in which to raise a family, as acknowledged by Family Circle, CNN Money and many others. Why has Edmond ranked at the top? Our schools continually rate among the best in Oklahoma year after year, so of course, that is a reason why parents choose to live in Edmond.

Look beyond the quality schools. We have a safe town and value our public safety as shown by citizen support of the Public Safety Center in 2011. We support senior citizens and have taken action to support senior meal programs and activities. We support families as shown by the city support of Liberty Fest – one of the top 10 festivals in the nation celebrating July 4<sup>th</sup>. We, as leaders, facilitated the partnership between Edmond and two other parties to complete the swimming pool complex at Mitch Park. We support green space – as evidenced by Edmond's support of the Edmond Land Conservancy and our many public parks.

Is this letter *only* about the loss of Uncommon Ground, a destination park that would have showcased Edmond's support for arts and families' enjoyment? No. This letter is about a wrong direction. A direction that does not value our most vulnerable citizens like at-risk children. A direction that does not consult and listen to input from citizens on traffic, on public expenditures like the City Complex, on modification of city ordinances for funding of community organizations and city parks, on a direction that does not value real input on economic development. A direction that lacks transparency. A direction that does not value Edmond's quality of life – a quality of life that cities and towns all over America seek to emulate.

Edmond City Council, you are responsible for our city manager. You are also responsible for setting the navigational course for our great city by supporting great projects and by holding top

city management accountable. Edmond is a city that values public safety, quality of life and education, that values citizens both young and old, and that values those intangible assets that make us great. Edmond has a storied history of public support for our high quality of life. In the past we have been “that city” that other towns aspire to be. Council, we call on you to navigate back to that vision and to hold accountable those who do not share it.

The Edmond City Manager and Directors need to remember that in choosing to be employees of this great city, they have also chosen a life of service. Our city staff must listen to what our citizens value and will sacrifice to improve. For many of us, sacrifice means giving up our egos to keep Edmond a great place to grow. If the city’s current top management cannot do this, it is the Mayor and Council’s responsibility to find individuals who can.

We, as former mayors, stand ready to help. We know that together, we can navigate back to what has always made Edmond a great place to grow.

Sincerely,

Patrice Douglas, former mayor  
Saundra Naifeh, former mayor  
Dan O’Neil, former mayor  
Elizabeth Waner, former mayor

cc: City Manager Scot Rigby  
Randal Shadid, former mayor