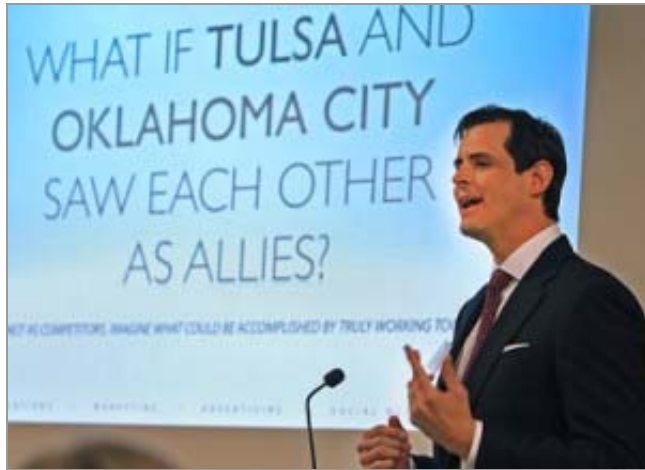


## Public relations expert promotes collaboration between OKC and Tulsa

by D. Ray Tuttle

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Renzi Stone, chairman and CEO of public relations firm Saxum, speaks to the Association of Women in Communications on Wednesday in Tulsa. (Photo by Rip Stell)

TULSA – The state’s two largest cities, which sit at opposite ends of the Turner Turnpike, have many differences, but share a lot in common, a public relations expert said.

Renzi Stone, chairman and CEO of public relations firm Saxum, talked about how a common vision for Tulsa and Oklahoma City could shape the state’s future on Wednesday while addressing the monthly meeting of the Association for Women in Communications at the Philbrook Museum in Tulsa.

Like Charles Dickens’ book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Stone described Oklahoma City and Tulsa as experiencing both good and bad times.

“I think Oklahoma City is experiencing the

best of times,” Stone said.

The economy, bolstered by a roaring energy sector, is a positive force for the state, Stone said.

“The energy business is taken for granted,” Stone said. “The exploration and production, the technology side, oil-field services – it is a pretty good business climate.”

During the question-and-answer session after his 20-minute speech, Stone said he was for a 98-mile economic development zone, which would be 10 miles on either side of the Turner Turnpike.

“We should be focusing our economic development dollars in that zone,” Stone said. “We should be doing everything we can to promote commerce between the two major economical powerhouses of the state.”

Stone suggested using social relationships and organizations like Leadership Oklahoma, among others, to foster a spirit of cooperation between the professional people of the state’s largest cities.

“Relationships, over time – this will not happen overnight, but might take a generation – but eventually will overcome any disagreements between us,” he said.

Another positive trend, Stone said, is a growing tide of talented people returning to Oklahoma.

He described the period of time from 1985 to 2000 as a talent drain on the state as people flocked to either coast.

“Now there is this trend of talented people coming back to the state,” Stone said. “People are flowing back to the state.”

He called on the professionals in the room to make an effort to recruit people to Oklahoma.

"We cannot afford to sit around and wait for the (Oklahoma) Department of Commerce to recruit, or Williams, or Chesapeake or the Oneoks to recruit people to Oklahoma," Stone said. "We have to be the ones. Contact your friends from high school, college, talk about what is good about Oklahoma. We have talented people – we do not have enough talented people."

Stone reviewed the positives about Oklahoma City – Bricktown and the canal, including water in the Oklahoma River; and the Oklahoma City Thunder.

"I cannot tell you the pride everyone feels having a successful NBA team in Oklahoma City," Stone said.

Tulsa, meanwhile, has the Arkansas River, its art deco heritage and the perception of being a city that thrives on culture with museums like the Philbrook and the Gilcrease Museum.

While Oklahoma City and Tulsa might have very different backgrounds, the flip side is that the cities have much in common.

"They should not be in competition," Stone said.

Stone attended Jenks High School in the Tulsa area, then played basketball at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Stone opened his PR firm in Oklahoma City in 2003. He grew the business from a one-person startup to more than 20 full-time employees in Oklahoma City with a satellite office in Tulsa that employs four people.

"I grew up in Tulsa and have my business in Oklahoma City," Stone said. "I love both cities for different reasons."

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