

# Oklahoma Route 66 – Round 2 Approved Funding

**Applicant:**

*OK Department of Transportation/ OK RT 66 Centennial Commission*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$250,000.00

**Project Description:** This project aims to partner with the RT 66 Commission, the OK RT 66 Centennial Commission, and ODOT to install RT 66 thermoplastic shields in every community and district along the Mother Road, including Tulsa and OKC. The goal is to create a welcoming reminder for tourists visiting an authentic Route 66 community.

**Rt 66 Story:** The Oklahoma RT 66 Centennial Commission and ODOT are proposing a partnership with the OK RT 66 Commission to install two thermoplastic shields in each of the 42 communities and 8 districts of OKC and Tulsa along Route 66 for a total installation of 100 shields. This collaboration will enhance the connection to every community on the historic road and give travelers a visual cue of the iconic shield.

Signage and wayfinding on Route 66 is a challenge in every state, and this initiative aims to address that issue. The 21-foot by 8-foot black and white shields will be strategically placed on the historical alignments of Route 66, in cooperation with the cities. A unique feature of these thermoplastic shields is their customization with the community's name, and their design ensures they cannot be stolen, unlike traditional metal signs.

The shields will be positioned as close to city entrances as possible, subject to site requirements such as a speed limit under 35 mph. In cases where these conditions are not met, ODOT and city officials will determine appropriate alternative locations.

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**Applicant:**

*Town of Hydro*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$496,000.00

**Project Description:** This project will elevate Hydro as a must-stop destination by granting visitors an original Route 66 bridge and roadbed photo op, offering travelers a unique rural Oklahoma experience “feeding the cows” with a custom cow food vending machine and creating a functional space to host tour and bus group travelers.

**Rt 66 Story:** This project proposes interactive moments that celebrate Hydro’s unique town character and rural landscape. This experience creates a natural invitation for visitors to further explore the vibrant local business scene, historic attractions and rural America that Route 66 Travelers are seeking.

The highlight of this project will be located at the intersection of Route 66 and State Highway 58, with clear visibility from I-40. This location serves as the front door to Hydro. This prime real estate frontage, approximately 1.25 acres, will be donated by a local family specifically for this project.

The area will offer an interactive experience traveler may not be able to find anywhere else on Route 66. The highlight will be a decommissioned Route 66 bridge that was originally ‘born’ just 1 mile west of this location during the construction of Route 66. This impressive 27’x60’ structure is privately owned by a local family and is being donated for this project. The rehab and strategic placement of this bridge will allow visitors an opportunity to walk over, under and through this iconic piece. The Bridgeport Pony Bridge is impressive and a true icon on Route 66 located 15 miles east of Hydro and this project would allow visitors traveling west to see all angles of an original bridge identical to one of the many spans that make up the Bridgeport Pony Bridge. The placement of a neon Route 66 Shield and Hydro sign is designed to create a beautiful setting for Route 66 travelers.

Another unique aspect of this project is the decommissioned roadbed section of the original alignment of the Route 66 spur that led into Hydro. This spur crosses the west side of this acreage creating another great photo op. We plan to add signage at the bridge location as an information center for travelers, enticing them to travel the short ½ mile drive north into the Hydro commercial district to get their passport stamped and have a meal or shop.

Part of this project will include placement of billboards along both directions of I-40 encouraging Interstate travelers to exit and visit Hydro. Digital promotion would also include a better online presence, and use of QR codes, and digital guestbooks to be signed at various spots.

A portion of the funds requested in this grant will go toward making necessary upgrades to the nearly 100-year-old WPA building. The building is utilized throughout the year by the community and the Hydro Free Fair. The city would like to adapt the building to create a space to enter into the group tour market. These upgrades would create an inviting and desirable destination to host group tours. Meals could be catered in by local restaurants and private tours of the true hidden gem in our community...the fully restored 1920's Allan Herschell wooden horse carousel (the oldest in Oklahoma!). The WPA Building also plays a part in Hydro's largest tourist attraction, the Annual Hydro Free Fair, known for being Oklahoma's Oldest Free Fair (2024 will be the 117th year). In 2023, attendance numbers were a whopping 50,000 for the 3-day fair. Improvements to the building (roof, insulation, windows and restrooms) will be significant. The Town of Hydro has recently committed \$50,000 and the Hydro Fair Board has also pledged \$15,000 toward this structure.

As visitors leave our community and head west, they will have the opportunity for one more memory-making stop. Just west of the [original] Lucille's Gas Station, we will be installing a cow food vending machine. This idea was created by actual Route 66 travelers. A local rancher has had tourists pulling over next to his property along Route 66, trying to feed his cattle a wide variety of food. Think of feeding geese at a pond when you were a kid. Visitors will be able to pull off Route 66, ring a bell to call cows to the area and purchase handfuls of feed to toss into the pasture for the cattle to eat. This would be a unique experience with an actual cow herd along Route 66.

**Applicant:**  
City of Warr Acres

**Total Requested Funds**  
\$25,000.00

**Project Description:** Installation of a custom painted wind turbine blade with murals dedicated to Route 66 history and culture

**Rt 66 Story:** The goal is to display Route 66 history and culture as it relates to Warr Acres, but also the entire state. The city wants the mural to encompass a variety of perspectives. Sample photos of a project in Weatherford are provided for reference.

**Applicant:**  
City of Vinita

**Total Requested Funds**  
\$854,957.00

**Project Description:** Preserving and repurposing an iconic gull wing filling station to serve as a visitor center, guiding guests to attractions and businesses, as well as providing space for business and community development.

**Rt 66 Story:** For more than 40 years, travelers along Route 66 in Vinita received service with a smile and a friendly word at Oliver Woolman's Phillips 66 station. Stepping back to 1950, when the station was built, you can imagine a family piling out of their vehicle to stretch their legs and ask for recommendations on a place to buy a souvenir, favorite local dining spots, or what to see in the next town. It is this Route 66 experience the City of Vinita wants to recreate by rehabilitating one of the few remaining gull wing filling stations along Route 66. Funding from the Oklahoma Route 66 Grant Program, with additional local funds and in-kind resources, will allow us to preserve this piece of history while adding programming to promote economic development and business growth. Renovation would be completed in 2025 in time to celebrate the 75th birthday of the station and Route 66 Centennial.

The station, at 502 South Wilson Street, is largely untouched from its initial construction and in very good condition with a new roof, intact original windows, and doors. Rehabilitation (see concepts in attached file) will include use of appropriate materials to return the property to a useful space while preserving features of the property significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural value.

The station is located at the corner of South Wilson Street (Route 66) and Excelsior Avenue, just a few blocks from property purchased for hotel and other tourist-related developments. The fuel tanks have been removed meeting requirements by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission. The station has recently been used for traditional re-use, primarily car sales and detailing.

Vinita is literally a crossroads of travel located not only on Route 66 but also Jefferson Highway, U.S. Highways 60 and 69, and Interstate 44. In addition to historic highway enthusiasts, Vinita current attracts a significant number of travelers visiting Grand Lake O' the Cherokees and northeast Oklahoma. An explosive number of tourists will be visiting Vinita at the recently announced Three Ponies RV Park and Campground and American Heartland Theme Park developments.

The visitor center will draw and direct visitors through Vinita's business district. The center will connect visitors with Vinita attractions, as well as those in neighboring Route 66 towns such as Chelsea's underpass, the Blue Whale, the Ribbon Road, or Coleman Theater. Our location is central to many travel destinations in Oklahoma. Attracting visitors to the station where they can be directed to other destinations and businesses is expected to have a significant economic impact on Vinita and Oklahoma. Increased sales tax, length of stay, and return visits will produce a positive return on investment.

The iconic gull wing, originally designed to capture the eye of motorists, will again be used for this purpose with added neon. The station will feature an outdoor green space where travelers, and their four-legged friends, can take a break from the road. An interactive, permanent photo opportunity featuring the iconic Route 66 shield will also draw visitors into the station. The center will also feature information about, and likenesses of, two well-known men with ties to Vinita – Cyrus Avery and Will Rogers.

The visitor center will be utilized as offices of Vinita Main Street, Inc., an OK Main Street program approved by the OK Department of Commerce. Staff and volunteers will greet guests and coordinate educational and promotional activities. The service bay space will be utilized as a start-up/pop up store location and venue for training to assist in business development. The overhead garage doors will be replaced to have a functional indoor/outdoor space for community events such as hosting artists, car clubs, food trucks, farmers markets, motorcoach stops, and more.

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**Applicant:**

*Oklahoma Route 66 Association*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$123,276.92

**Project Description:** A statewide Route 66 Neon Sign Grant Program available to all of Oklahoma's Route 66 communities (with the first cohort of nine grantees representing seven communities) that provides resources to restore and preserve historic neon, bolster economic development by encouraging new neon signage, and increase the average number of overnight stays across Oklahoma's Route 66 footprint.

**Rt 66 Story:** Route 66 has always been a corridor of commerce - and neon signs have lit the way to encourage travelers to stop, experience each community, and contribute to the local economy. Over the years, neon has become an art form unto itself that draws its own crowd to admire the craftsmanship. As an organization dedicated to preservation and promotion of Route 66 throughout Oklahoma, we are always looking for resources to help restore vintage neon signs or support new signage along the road.

This is our opportunity to help bring a major resource to our rural communities that have never had this kind of support before. Even though the revitalization movement for Route 66 has been running strong for years now, the resources have not been available for many of our smaller communities to relight their old signs or add to the inventory of Oklahoma's neon garden. The documents attached to this application go into more detail regarding the ins-and-outs of the program; the success of Tulsa's neon grant program is clear and what has paved the way for our proposal. All communities are eligible but we give weight to communities that don't already have neon grant support for Route 66.

The first set of nine grantees represents seven communities on Route 66, including Edmond, Stroud, Davenport, Vinita, Sapulpa, Yukon, and Tulsa. In Edmond, the neon sign grantee is the Edmond Historical Museum. They will be constructing a new neon sign. By adding a neon sign to their exterior, the museum will gain a much-needed wayfinding marker to make them more visible to travelers and locals alike.

In Stroud, the grantee is the beloved Rock Cafe. They will be restoring their vintage neon sign. The Rock Cafe is an anchor business and attraction for Stroud; restoring their neon sign would be pivotal to their community which has only two other neon signs in town.

In Vinita, there are two grantees. The Western Motel will be replacing their plastic box sign for a neon sign reminiscent of the original. The Home of Hope is also replacing their faded painted sign for a neon one. Upgrading these two signs to neon will add to Vinita's neon landscape.

In Davenport, the grantee is the City of Davenport who will be creating a new neon sign to welcome travelers to their rural community. Davenport currently has no neon whatsoever.

In Sapulpa, there are two grantees. Gasoline Alley Classics, a quirky shop and historic landmark, is creating a new sign. Sami's Kitchen is also creating a new neon sign. Both of these signs support community-minded entrepreneurs on Sapulpa's 66 corridor.

In Yukon, there is one grantee. Grady's 66 Pub is creating a new neon sign. The addition of their neon sign will add to the existing neon landscape of Yukon.

Lastly, in Tulsa, there is one grantee, Decopolis. This grantee is creating a new neon sign at significant expense. While Tulsa is a larger community, this grant would be pivotal in catalyzing private investment since Decopolis will be moving to an area of Route 66 that has not yet seen economic revitalization. They will be a much-needed anchor business that also provides an expanded tourist asset on Route 66, the Art Deco Museum.

**Applicant:**

*Town of Wellston*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$792,506.00

**Project Description:** While traveling the historic Mother Road, the Wellston Route 66 Splash Pad and Majestic Buffalo statue will become a central gathering spot for tourists, visitors, and our community while exploring the history of the Town of Wellston, the official mid-way corridor of the Oklahoma Route 66.

**Rt 66 Story:** The Town of Wellston envisions creating a vibrant and inclusive gathering space through the development of the Wellston Route 66 Splash Pad. This Oklahoma Route 66 tourist destination would include a fun splash pad – Action Bay, Family Bay, and Toddler Bay that proudly displays the Wellston Route 66 Centennial logo. The Wellston Route 66 Splash Pad also includes a Pavilion, Trading Post, StoryBook Walk®, the history of Wellston encased in a weatherproof, well-lit, freestanding outdoor case, and a Majestic Buffalo statue, which is the iconic state animal. When the water splash pad is closed during the winter, the StoryBook Walk®, history of Wellston display, Pavilion, Trading Post, and Majestic Buffalo will offer year-round activities for travelers and families.

Our mission is to create a vibrant and inclusive community experience where people of all ages can come together, connect, and thrive. We are dedicated to fostering meaningful relationships for young and old along the Mother Road, improving the Route 66 experience, demonstrating our history, and enhancing the quality of life for our residents, surrounding communities, and Route 66 travelers. The Wellston Route 66 Splash Pad and Majestic Buffalo are easily accessible from Oklahoma Route 66 or the Turner Turnpike. Located on Route 66B, it is a convenient year-round family-friendly tourist destination.

**Applicant:**

*South Western Oklahoma Development Authority*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$179,310.44

**Project Description:** The SWODA Route 66 Business Revitalization Matching Incentive Program aims to encourage exterior revitalization of facades and signage in existing retail buildings along Route 66 in Beckham, Custer, or Washita Counties, promoting rehabilitation, reinvestment, and new development.

**Rt 66 Story:** Many mom-and-pop businesses faced disinvestment as traffic diverted from Route 66 to interstate 40 in western Oklahoma. Entire sections of Route 66 have disappeared over time, affecting local economies and communities. This project aims to incentivize reinvestment in retail businesses in communities along Route 66 in Beckham, Custer, and Washita counties. The incentives are intended to

promote historic preservation and to revitalize local economic activity through increased visitors and sales. Most of the buildings along Route 66 are privately owned so this 50/50 incentive creates a partnership with the State, the Community, and the business owner. Small mom-and-pop businesses created the communities along Route 66, the history of the road, and the window as to how travelers viewed or experienced the state during their journey. The partnership created by this incentive will help to re-create some of what has been lost.

The Route 66 Business Revitalization Matching Incentive Program actively sought projects from private business owners with the aim of enhancing exterior facades or signage, ultimately boosting visibility along the historic Route 66 corridor. We view the incentives as a local investment that will be returned to the State with every sale. The incentives and investments will contribute to the revitalization and rehabilitation of businesses that contribute to making Route 66 and our communities a distinctive and cherished place to reside and explore.

Project sites:

Indigo Bleu, Party Store, Butcher's	Weatherford
Paisley Jane Upscale Consignment	Weatherford
DJ's Rentals & Sales, Inc.	Elk City
Route 66 Café at the Market	Clinton
Inicio 66	Elk City
The Cup	Weatherford
Jerry's Restaurant	Weatherford
Prairie Sunshine, LLC	Clinton
The Vogue Boutique	Elk City
Total Home Interiors	Elk City
Country Dove, Inc.	Elk City
Devine C-Stores	Foss
Riverside Gardens LLC	Sayre

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**Applicant:**

*City of Stroud*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$999,600.00

**Project Description:** Stroud Historic Route 66 Business Neon Light Project is a unique opportunity for the state of Oklahoma to demonstrate the pride of a small rural town in Lincoln County with a neon light experience for everyone who travels Route 66.

**Rt 66 Story:** When the Stroud committee first met, several ideas were discussed. However, after interviewing previous Route 66 travelers from other states and simple FaceBook posts, one common theme emerged, "travelers down Route 66 expect neon." It is part of the tradition and it is part of the desired experience. Stroud has two of the most iconic Route 66 neon signs in the state of Oklahoma, the Skyliner Motel and the Rock Café.

The business community of Stroud, Oklahoma, has come together to create a unique neon light experience as everyone travels down historic Route 66. U.S. Route 66 travels through the Main Street of Stroud, Oklahoma. Beginning at N. 9th Avenue just as you enter Stroud one block from Highway 99 and ending on the West side of the city is approximately 5,500 feet or 15 blocks of historic businesses. A group of community volunteers has offered to every business in Stroud on Route 66 and all of the businesses visible from Route 66 to join in on the Stroud Historic Route 66 Business Neon Light Project.

The goal is to make each business neon sign special, and unique, and proudly represent the Stroud Route 66 business. The creativity of the business owners has been outstanding. Several of the artwork designs have been included for the Centennial Route 66 committee to enjoy. There are a total of 49 businesses that want to participate in the Stroud Historic Route 66 Business Neon Light Project.

It is important to clarify that each of the signs for the Stroud Historic Route 66 Business Neon Light Project are "neon" signs not LED. While LED offers a lot of variety, the Stroud committee is dedicated to the authenticity that neon offers to the Route 66 experience. Each neon sign will be installed with a sensor and a timer. All of the timers will be set for the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. During the timer hours, the sensors will automatically turn the neon lights on at dusk. The timer will turn the neon sign off at 1:00 a.m.

The sensors and timers will provide automated maintenance to ensure that the neon signs will light up Route 66 365 days a year. Each of the Stroud businesses will light up Route 66 regardless if the business is “open.” The neon sign provides an experience for the Route 66 travelers. We anticipate that individuals will not just drive down Stroud’s portion of Route 66 once, but just like when we were all kids in high school, they will turn around and drive back bringing back the era of cruising down Main Street.

It is the goal of the Stroud committee to provide an evening experience that will entice travelers to stay overnight in Stroud, Oklahoma. Four hotels in Stroud can accommodate the increase in travelers to the area – the Skyliner Motel, Sooner Motel, Cattle Country Lodge, and Hampton Inn & Suites. In addition, Route 66 travelers who stay overnight can enjoy a wonderful breakfast at one of the many locations before heading out on Route 66 to collect their next passport stamp.

Not only will the Stroud Historic Route 66 Business Neon Light Project provide an enjoyable driving experience but walking the 15-block experience will create an interactive experience for the community and visitors who are traveling down Route 66. It is expected that this neon experience will be something that travelers from across the country will come to enjoy. The Stroud committee is confident that this proposal will be an enhancement to the state’s travel and tourism. Especially, since Stroud was the primary sponsor for the official Travel OK US 66 Passport. Individuals and families can get their Oklahoma US 66 Passport stamped at the Rock Café before enjoying the evening neon lights experience.

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**Applicant:**

*Friends of the Oklahoma History Center*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$327,500.00

**Project Description:** The Route 66 Neon Park is a collaborative project to restore and display original Route 66 neon signs in an immersive, free outdoor exhibit that celebrates and educates visitors about the historical and cultural significance of Route 66 in Oklahoma.

**Rt 66 Story:** Oklahoma boasts the longest drivable stretch of Route 66 in the country, spanning over 400 miles. This historic route played a crucial role in shaping Oklahoma’s economic and social landscape. To preserve and share this story, the Friends of the Oklahoma History Center and the Oklahoma Historical Society are seeking funds to fully restore original signs from across Oklahoma’s historic Route 66 and present them in an immersive outdoor exhibit showcasing the iconic neon signage of Route 66. The Neon Park features ten original Route 66 neon signs and two mascots (Kip’s Big Boy and Shotgun Sam) that will be meticulously restored and displayed in a new park dedicated to celebrating the rich history of Route 66. The project will serve as an educational tool, a testament to Route 66’s history in Oklahoma, and an attraction for visitors traveling the route.

Preserving these historic neon signs is vital for several reasons. Neon signs are a vivid reminder of a time when Route 66 was a primary artery of American transportation, serving as a lifeline for small towns and fostering a unique roadside culture. The signs along Route 66 were not just advertisements; they were landmarks that guided travelers, offered respite, and created a sense of place and community. Each sign holds historical significance, telling the story of the local businesses, the people who ran them, and the travelers who visited them. By restoring and preserving these signs, we are safeguarding an integral part of Oklahoma’s heritage. This preservation work ensures that future generations can experience and appreciate the visual and cultural history of Route 66. Through a planned OHS endowment, the signs will receive regular upkeep and maintenance in perpetuity, ensuring that all preservation efforts are self-sustaining.

The Friends of the Oklahoma History Center is specifically seeking funds for the restoration of ten original neon signs and two mascots. The proposed park will be strategically located on Route 66, across from the State Capitol building, on the grounds of the Oklahoma History Center. As the state’s largest repository of artifacts, documents, and photographs related to Oklahoma history, and being a Smithsonian Affiliate, National Archives Affiliate, and an accredited museum through the American Alliance of Museums, the Oklahoma History Center is the ideal location for this project. It is also an official stop on the Oklahoma Route 66 Passport, making it a key destination for Route 66 travelers.

The park will feature ten iconic signs originally visible on Oklahoma’s stretch of Route 66 from 1939-2016, all fully restored with neon lighting. Through educational text, these operational and illuminated signs will

tell authentic stories of Route 66 through the real people and places that shaped Oklahoma's history. Each sign will be accompanied by educational text sharing Route 66's influence on Oklahoma communities.

To further immerse visitors in Route 66's vibrancy, the park will include a walkthrough path to experience the neon signs, an Airstream-style bandstand for public concerts and events, and a bathroom facility modeled after a 1950s Phillips 66 Gull Wing service station, against a backdrop of vintage billboards. Each element of the park is designed to evoke the nostalgia, mystique, and sense of adventure that Route 66 inspired.

Route 66 brought significant change, opportunity, and connectedness to the communities it traversed. One hundred years later, and it remains a symbol of adventure, opportunity, and freedom. By restoring and preserving these signs, we are ensuring that future generations can experience and appreciate the visual and cultural history of Route 66. The Neon Park is not merely about preserving physical objects; it is about keeping the stories and spirit of Route 66 alive, protecting our cultural heritage, and celebrating the vibrant history of Oklahoma for years to come.

**Applicant:**

*Town of Davenport*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$395,500.00

**Project Description:** Historic Route 66 gas station welcomes families in a new way.

**Rt 66 Story:** This original 1933 Texaco filling station has seen nearly one hundred years of families traveling on Route 66. Its uses have varied, adapting to the needs of the town. While the building has seen many changes, some things never left: the pressed tin ceiling of the awning, hewn stone walls, and most importantly, the desire to welcome weary travelers.

Davenport's story is weaved with changes and growth, but much like this old filling station, the town has always had open arms to those journeying across Route 66. By taking this historic building into the Centennial Celebration as a Welcome Center for travelers and tourists, we will prove that the Mother Road will always have a warm embrace for you.

**Applicant:**

*Route 66 Main Street*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$225,000.00

**Project Description:** To build an iconic 66 ft. dinosaur roadside attraction in Howard Park and ten smaller dinosaur attractions located along the 4.5 mile corridor to stimulate economic growth, increase tourism, and pay homage to our area's unique history as the place where Tulsa first struck oil.

**Rt 66 Story:** In 1918, the City of Tulsa acquired a 14-acre pecan grove at its southern border, adjacent to the Sapulpa Road that ran southwest out of town to Red Fork and beyond. The tract's western border was the Frisco Railroad tracks - also headed to Red Fork and Sapulpa. To the east, across the road, the pecan grove met by the mushrooming Texaco oil tank farm.

The newly minted Howard Park was named for Oklahoma City oilman Oscar Howard who helped develop the Red Fork and Glenn Pool oil fields discovered in 1901 and 1915, respectively, launching Tulsa as the "Oil Capital of the World." Howard sold the native pecan grove, also adjacent to the Red Fork oil field, to the city and donated funds to have it developed into a park. The popular pecan grove at the edge of the Oil Capital became a respite to both city dwellers for picnicking, ball games, and enjoying the natural setting, and motorists who employed it as a rest stop.

When Route 66 was commissioned in 1926, Sapulpa Road became part of the network making up the Route. And Howard Park would witness a century of travelers - tourists, commuters, commercial trucks, even cyclists and runners - that reflected the culture of each succeeding decade. Along the way, Howard Park witnessed the growth of the rail and petroleum industries, and the effect of the interstate highway.

Over its history, Howard Park has been redeveloped and improved to the benefit of both local residents and travelers. A paved parking area was developed during the Depression as a Public Works Administration

civic improvement project, further inviting motor traffic. And at various times, it hosted a wading pool and bathhouse, a greyhound race track, and one of Tulsa's first lighted youth baseball fields.

During the 1960s, the "super slab" RedFork Expressway, Interstate 244, was constructed through the western half of Howard Park, taking out the ballpark and other amenities. In the past decade, with the encouragement of Tulsa Route 66 Main Street, the City of Tulsa has taken new interest in the green space. The park has been kept maintained, although its grove has suffered damage over the past 100 years. City Parks installed a railroad-themed playground. Sidewalks were installed to connect the park to nearby neighborhoods and businesses. And Route 66 transportation-themed art was installed.

For several years, Tulsa Route 66 Main Street has helped maintain Howard Park, especially as part of Keep Oklahoma Beautiful's Great American Cleanup campaign, and we have begun the process of a formal adoption of the park. We also developed a Howard Park Master Plan calling for further improvements designed to immediately draw traffic to the site and to provide ongoing recreational and cultural opportunities for area residents.

The Howard Park Master Plan includes several phases, among these: a restoration of the historic native pecan grove, installation of a walking trail with interpretive markers offering visitors snippets of Route 66-related historical developments Howard Park has witnessed, an event pavilion, dog park and electric vehicle charging stations.

Tulsa Route 66 Main Street has identified funding opportunities for the amenities included in the Howard Park Master Plan except one - the centerpiece - the very thing that will get travelers off the "super slab!" The object of this grant request is a giant, friendly dinosaur stationed as a focal point in Howard Park that would welcome visitors to exit the interstate highway exposing them to transportation, oil, and Route 66 history.

Tying the whole corridor together are ten smaller dinosaurs, each to be uniquely, decoratively painted, to serve as smaller roadside attractions thematically tied to the 66-ft. dinosaur in the park.

**Applicant:**

*City of Catoosa, Rogers County*

**Total Requested Funds**

\$1,843,350.00

**Project Description:** What started as a beautiful gift from husband to wife, the Blue Whale quickly turned into a well-known landmark that has attracted hundreds of thousands of people from across the world to the Mother Road; with the revitalization and expansion plan, the City of Catoosa desires to expand this eternal landmark into something extraordinary that will help cherish the Mother Road as she deserves.

**Rt 66 Story:** Constructed by Hugh Davis in the early 1970s as a labor of love for his wife, Zelta, the Blue Whale has become a symbol of hospitality and community along this historic highway. What started as a gift quickly became something intriguing to the community and those traveling Route 66. After gaining attention, Davis opened the private swimming hole to the public, turning the Blue Whale of Catoosa into a popular destination in the 1970s and 80s. After closing due to Davis's poor health, the Catoosa Chamber of Commerce raised money to restore the area since the restoration. The City of Catoosa has since purchased the property and has spent thousands of dollars and hundreds of manhours in restoring the charming landmark to what it once was. This expansion process will take place in phases, beginning with the construction of a new visitor's center, restrooms, and improved parking areas which will increase traffic and revenue at the location. After this first phase, the plan will work to recreate the popularity of the past, by adding tourist attractions that will continue to bring people from all over the country, and the world, back to the simpler times of historic Route 66, while catering to the modern amenities to which people have grown accustomed. Neon signs and a Visitor's Center will bring nostalgia for Route 66 in its heyday while revitalizing the area around the whale will create the atmosphere that originally drew locals and visitors to the landmark. This renovation aligns seamlessly with the essence of Route 66, fostering tourism, community engagement, and a sense of pride in our state's vibrant cultural tapestry. Even though Tulsa was just named the capital of Route 66, the Blue Whale of Catoosa is one of the most iconic attractions and landmarks on Route 66.



**Applicant:***Church of the Living God/Tillman Watson Cemetery Association***Total Requested Funds**

\$100,000.00

**Project Description:** To address historic preservation and economic development through the revitalization of the only slave cemetery on Route 66 in Oklahoma; the Tillman Slave Cemetery, through clearing of the grounds, erecting a fence, adding plaques, producing a website and applying for the National Register of Historic Properties designation.

**Rt 66 Story:** On the shoulders of a local church congregation and community members in Luther, Oklahoma, the Tillman Cemetery; the only slave cemetery in the state of Oklahoma and possibly the only one located along the entire Route 66, has not thrived, but has certainly survived against immeasurable odds. Despite having the absolute minimum of resources with which to undertake this ongoing effort, four generations of family members of The Church of the Living God in Luther voluntarily cut the grass, pull weeds, re-erect headstones that are periodically vandalized, place flowers on the graves of forgotten souls, host fundraisers to erect partial fencing and generally maintain the upkeep of the grounds to the best of their ability. Donated for public use as a cemetery in 1941 by Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Wilson, the Tillman slave cemetery is located on five acres directly on Historic Route 66. While Oklahoma has endured numerous tornadoes, ice storms, and other natural disasters, the Tillman Slave Cemetery still stands.

We understand that memorialization keeps all of us connected to what is most significant about those who are no longer with us. Being “overlooked” in life is but one of the cruel indignities suffered by slaves during their lifetimes. This is our attempt to dignify, humanize and acknowledge those who have for too long been forgotten. It is imperative that we protect, stabilize and maintain the integrity of this slave cemetery and indeed all historic properties for a number of reasons. The blood, sweat and tears of both slaves and the church members involved in the unfunded, hands-on maintenance process undertaken by the members of the Church of the Living God over the years created a love and bond with this particular resting place that does not often exist in state-funded cemeteries. The Tillman Slave Cemetery is an eternal symbol of culture, pride and gratification for all Oklahoman's but particularly for the African American community in Luther, Oklahoma. Finally, as the only slave cemetery in Oklahoma, (and perhaps along the entire route of Route 66), it is an untapped, prime opportunity for a tourist attraction due to its inherent cultural value and historical significance.

Under the leadership of Senior Pastor Dwight Guy of the Church of the Living God in Luther, Oklahoma and with the consultation of Dr. Nancy Hope Alexander, we are requesting funding to hire a consultant to develop the application for recognition on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Properties, coordinate volunteers, build a fence surrounding the five acre property, create graded paths, conduct thorough historical research, construct informative plaques and ultimately raise awareness of this sacred property located on Route 66.

From Los Angeles to Chicago, Route 66 is recognized as one of the most culturally significant U.S. Highways in the country. Many have identified the themes of auto mobility and personal freedom. Nat King Cole's hit recording of “(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66” enabled listeners who had never been on the road to imagine the experience. Nostalgia, oral histories and the narratives of families and individuals are forever encapsulated in the history of the road. This is also the case for slave cemeteries. In 2006, geographer Arthur Krim completed the definitive geographic account of the road in “Route 66: Iconography of the American Highway”, an account of the road's construction, utilization as the primary transportation corridor to the West and subsequent evolution into an American cultural icon represented in literature, film, music and art. All along the route there are monuments and other historic sites that unpack the cultural texts.