

Riverfront memorial to tell submarine's story

Project to honor USS Oklahoma City

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The Oklahoman USA TODAY NETWORK



Local Oklahoma City officials ceremonially break ground on the site of a future memorial to the USS Oklahoma City, a fast attack submarine that was decommissioned in 2022. PROVIDED BY CITY OF OKLAHOMA CITY

Officials have broken ground on a memorial to the USS Oklahoma City, a fast attack submarine that was decommissioned in 2022. Construction on the memorial recently began along the banks of the Oklahoma River. Once completed, it will include a plaza, service memorial walls, narrative history panels and a temporary replica of the submarine sail, which is the protrusion from the top of a submarine that houses observation equipment.

“This submarine is about defending

our nation and protecting our freedoms,” Councilman Mark Stonecipher said to the audience, which included veterans who served on the USS Oklahoma City. Stonecipher was present for the decommissioning of the submarine in 2022.

Former Mayor Ron Norick was also on hand. Norick commissioned the submarine in 1988.

The Los Angeles-class fast attack, nuclear-powered submarine was commissioned July 9, 1988, and declared out of service Feb. 10, 2022. At 361-feet long and displacing more than 6,900 tons, the USS Oklahoma City supported various missions, including antisubmarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike warfare and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

Like other ships in the class, it was named after an American city.



The USS Oklahoma City plaza at Wiley Post Park will include the submarine's mast and a dive plane.
RENDERING BY BECK DESIGN

The sub's home port was Guam, and the motto is "The Sooner, The Better." It was the first submarine to upgrade from traditional paper navigation to an all-electronic navigation suite, marking the first significant shift in U.S. Navy navigation practices since the introduction of GPS in the 1990s.

The USS Oklahoma City Park Association, a nonprofit association, is raising funds to bring the original submarine sail and dive planes from the USS Oklahoma City (SSN-723).

The association is also trying to secure components of a separate ship, a cruiser named USS Oklahoma City, such as the ship's bell, screw and ceremonial cannon, for long-term display.

"This will make it a learning facility for our young people to understand how important the Navy is to a landlocked state," said Greg Slavonic, a retired U.S. Navy admiral who has been appointed to several positions in state government after he left the military.



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Once installed, this would be the second memorial dedicated to a U.S. Navy submarine in Oklahoma.

The USS Batfish, a World War II-era submarine that saw combat in the Pacific, was put on display in Muskogee. Flooding in 2019 caused the Batfish to be closed to visitors, and the museum has been waiting on approval from the federal government to relocate it to another location nearby. FEMA, the agency that needs to approve the move, has not responded to questions from The Oklahoman about the status of the move.