

A New Beginning

OKLAHOMA COUNTY MASTER PLAN

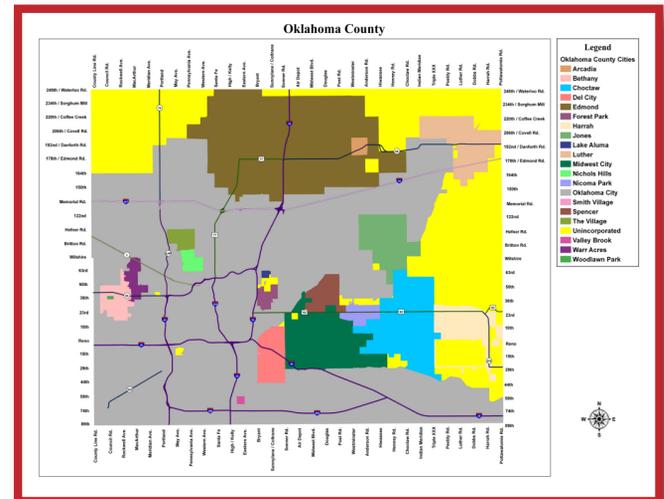
Oklahoma County History

From early history to present day, the State of Oklahoma has had a very colorful story. Prior to Statehood in 1907, the passage of the Organic Act of May 2, 1890 created Oklahoma Territory and allowed the Organization of Government in the central areas. Almost three million acres were opened to settlement by homestead, and seven counties were formed from the Unassigned Lands and the Panhandle. The governor was authorized to apportion the members of the Legislature among the counties and was also empowered to appoint county officers. Oklahoma County was one of the first seven counties in Oklahoma organized under the Organic Act. It was designated County Number 2 until voters renamed it Oklahoma County.

In June of 1890, Governor George W. Steele, the first territorial governor of Oklahoma, ordered a census taken of the territory. At that time, the counties of Oklahoma Territory were Logan, Oklahoma, Cleveland, Canadian, Kingfisher, Payne, and Beaver (the Panhandle region). The 1890 Census index contains 18,753 records for heads-of-household in the seven counties.

Located in the State's geographic center, Oklahoma County has a total area of 720 square miles. The 2000 US Census reported 171,849 families resided in Oklahoma County with a population of 660,448. In 2005, the County's population was estimated at 681,837. The County seat and capital is Oklahoma City. Oklahoma County is the most populous and diverse county in the state.

Oklahoma County has a constitutional form of government composed of eight elected officials. There are three County Commissioners forming the Board of County Commissioners and administering county government. Other officials are the Assessor, County Clerk, Court Clerk, Sheriff, and Treasurer.



Master Plans: What Are They Good For....

A master plan is long range in scope and serves as a physical development guide, a policy determinant, and an educational tool.

- **Physical Development Guide:** A master plan enables the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners an avenue to make decisions in determining appropriate land uses for the unincorporated parts of Oklahoma County.
- **Policy Determinant:** The master plan enables the Oklahoma County Planning Commission to make decisions about specific development matters based on the data and information in the plan.
- **Educational Tool:** A master plan has educational value for citizens, developers, and elected officials. The plan offers factual information about the community and insight into future trends in the community.

Public Meetings and Process Overview

Essential to any master planning project is creating a formal process for citizen participation throughout the general phases of plan making, data acquisition and analysis, the consideration of different development alternatives, drafting goals/objectives statements, and receiving feedback from citizens in order to have their primary concerns and desires addressed in the formal document. Oklahoma County's public survey effort (distributed April 2005 to 500 randomly selected Oklahoma County households) is a complement to three public meetings. Together they can be used to focus the efforts of county planning staff and consultants engaged in drafting the master plan.

Three public meetings were held in the three separate commissioner districts across Oklahoma County. Notification of the meetings was accomplished through local newspapers, flyers, and the County's website. Commission districts, meeting dates and meeting locations included:

- District One, Luther Community Center, Tuesday, July 12, 2005
- District Two, Del City-City Hall, Tuesday, July 19, 2005
- District Three, Deer Creek Middle School, Tuesday, August 12, 2005

The two hour meetings included approximately 25-30 minutes of information presented about Oklahoma County's master planning effort (timing, process), information about some key issues facing Oklahoma County and some general demographic, housing, income and land development trends occurring in the county. The remaining portion of the meetings involved hearing from citizens regarding their concerns about growth and development in the county.

Central to the meetings was leading attendees through a nominal group technique process designed to identify citizen priorities and concerns to be addressed in Oklahoma County's new Master Plan. The nominal group technique is a well-known and relatively simple way to lead citizens through a process of collaborative decision-making. Briefly, it entails having individuals voice their concerns in a structured format, then having individuals meet in small groups and finally a large group to collectively identify and rank the concerns they have about land development trends in the county.

The true importance of this process is two-fold. First, citizens have a chance to speak freely about their concerns with their neighbors; second, citizens get a chance to hear from county officials about some state laws, fiscal limitations and jurisdictional issues that complicate true comprehensive planning in Oklahoma. Having a common understanding about some of the challenges and opportunities facing Oklahoma County is essential to having a productive meeting where constructive and feasible citizen sponsored visions for the future are forged.

Planning Area Unincorporated Oklahoma County

Oklahoma County is divided into three county districts: District 1, District 2, and District 3. Of the 720 total square miles that comprise Oklahoma County, 578 square miles are located within incorporated cities; 142 square miles are unincorporated. There are scattered unincorporated areas within the three County Districts; relatively small parcels surrounded by incorporated lands.

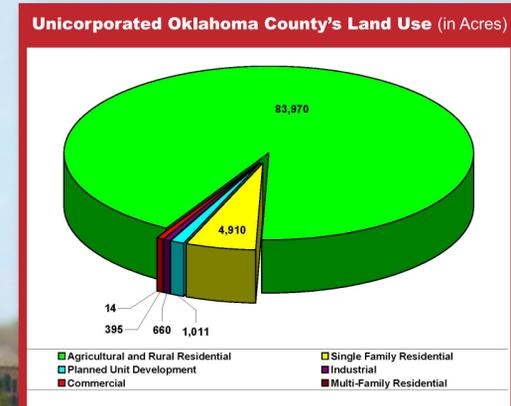
Geographically speaking, the unincorporated areas of Oklahoma County can be separated into three specific areas. These areas will be used through out the Plan:

- I. Northeast Oklahoma County is primarily composed of District 1
- II. Southeast Oklahoma County is primarily composed of District 2
- III. Northwest Oklahoma County is primarily composed of District 3

The physical environment of the planning areas offer both opportunities and constraints for future development. A good understanding of the physical environment will help County planners, developers, and policy makers seize opportunities and alleviate constraints through proper planning.

Land Uses

Land uses are classified into six general categories in Oklahoma County: Agricultural and Rural Residential, Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Planned Unit Development, Industrial, and Commercial. Agricultural and Rural Residential land currently comprises nearly 93% of the entire 142 square miles that make up unincorporated Oklahoma County. A large portion of land that has been underutilized for Agricultural and Rural Residential purposes directly correlates with the population trends in unincorporated Oklahoma County. The population of unincorporated Oklahoma County has increased slowly over the last 30 years compared to neighboring cities. Over the last five to ten years population has started to increase at a quicker pace and is one of the many reasons spurring the Oklahoma County Master Plan Revision.



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