

City of Muskogee
Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map
Neighborhood/Ward Meeting Summary

August 5, 2010

The second public meeting held with Muskogee residents was a Neighborhood/Ward Meeting that was held at the Public Library on August 5, 2010. Approximately 20 residents attended and participated in the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to review the need for, and the benefits of, an updated Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. In addition, there was a review of the planning process as well as a discussion regarding upcoming events, meetings, and opportunities to participate in the process.

The focus of the meeting was to conduct a workshop with attendees to identify issues, opportunities and strengths within their own neighborhood or ward. The intent of the meeting was to build upon the input received at the previous Community Workshop held in June. That meeting allowed for more city-wide issues and opportunities to be identified, while the intent of this meeting was to allow for more detailed discussion at the Ward/Neighborhood level.

The following is a summary of the results from the four (4) questions that were used to facilitate the workshop.

Question 1: Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting your ward or neighborhood.

The following is a summary of the main issues and concerns that were raised by those in attendance in each neighborhood/ward:

Ward One (east of Main Street, north of Okmulgee Avenue): Attendees from Ward One identified the following as issues and concerns:

Ordinance and Code Enforcement Issues

Attendees from Ward One would like to see the City improve its enforcement of codes and ordinances. Specific issues included unkept front lawns, burnt and blighted homes, vacant homes, and dead vehicles parked on streets and front yards.

Transportation and Circulation Issues

Attendees from Ward One identified a number of issues with transportation and circulation. Specific issues included a “dip” in the road at the intersection of Chestnut Street and Hayes Street, sink holes, the poor condition of all streets especially Gibson Street, and the poor circulation of frontage roads along Shawnee Avenue intersecting with York Street, and Old Shawnee Street.

Infrastructure Issues

Attendees identified issues related to the neighborhood's lack of street lights, and poor water pressure.

Appearance Issues

Attendees from Ward One would like to see the overall appearance of the City, as well as their own neighborhood improved. Specific issues included the condition of flags, trash on streets, recent tree trimming has ruined trees over power lines, and several parking lots are unsightly.

Other issues included the need to remove pit-bulls, the foul odors from the industrial areas, the presence of a continuous garage sale on North Country Club Road, the condition of the stockyard property, and the need to attract a quality grocery store.

Ward Two (east of Main Street, south of Okmulgee Avenue): Attendees from Ward Two identified the following issues or concerns in their neighborhood:

Ordinance and Code Enforcement Issues

Attendees from Ward Two would like to see the City improve its enforcement of codes and ordinances in their neighborhood. Specific issues included dilapidated structures, rundown homes, cars in yards, the noise from the speedway, weeds and litter, and unkept grass on the west end of Turner Street.

Economic Development Issues

Attendees from Ward Two wanted the City to improve the economy and number of quality businesses within their neighborhood. A specific desire was to attract a new quality grocery store.

Transportation and Circulation Issues

Attendees in Ward Two identified a number of issues with transportation and circulation. Specific issues included traffic control around Grant Foreman School, the lack of sidewalks, the need to widen York Street south of Hancock Street, the intersection of South Cherokee and Peak Boulevard needs to be widened, too many dead end streets, and the need for improved street surfaces.

Infrastructure Issues

Attendees in Ward Two identified issues related to infrastructure including the need to fix stormwater issues (especially on Georgia Street, east of York Street), the lack of appropriately sized utilities, and the need to ensure that existing roads can support current and future zoning.

Parks and Recreation Issues

Parks and recreation issues included the need for more sports practice areas on the east side of the City, the ad hoc development that occurs just outside of the City limits, and the need to require new parks and/or recreation areas as part of new housing developments.

Ward Three (west of Main Street, south of Okmulgee Avenue): Attendees from Ward Three identified the following as issues or concerns confronting their neighborhood:

Ordinance and Code Enforcement Issues

Attendees from Ward Three would like to see the City improve its enforcement of codes and ordinances. Specific issues included run down homes, drug houses, vacant homes, front yards that need to be maintained, old cars that have out-of-date tags, grass clippings in the street after mowing the yard, and cars parked in the yard. Another issue provided was that there is an ongoing problem of animals coming from the creek into residential neighborhoods.

Appearance and Image Issues

Overall the neighborhood is unattractive and has a poor image. Specific issues included a poor curb appeal, an unattractive appearance of residential areas; issues with drugs, crime and safety, and that historic homes are being neglected.

Economic Development Issues

Attendees from Ward Three wanted the City to improve the number of quality businesses within their neighborhood. Specific issues included the need to attract a new quality grocery store, and the need to improve the appearance of business facades and properties.

Transportation and Circulation Issues

Attendees in this neighborhood identified a number of issues related to transportation. Specific issues included traffic moving through the City, railroad noise, traffic on Okmulgee Avenue, speeding through residential areas and the lack of speed limit signs, traffic issues at the 40th Street signal, people in motorized wheelchairs driving on the streets, and the need for better bus service including additional routes.

Infrastructure Issues

Attendees identified infrastructure issues dealing with a lack of sidewalks, and water flooding in residential areas.

Ward Four (west of Main Street, north of Okmulgee Avenue): Attendees from Ward Four identified the following as issues or concerns:

Ordinance and Code Enforcement Issues

Attendees from Ward Four would like to see the City improve its enforcement of City codes and ordinances. Specific issues included tall weeds and grass, homes that need to be demolished, absentee property owners, empty homes falling down, the need for historic preservation, and the need for slumlord strategies.

Appearance and Image Issues

Overall the neighborhood is unattractive and has a poor image. Specific issues included trash dumped on the side of streets, gang signs that need removing, lack of proper care given to Honor Heights Park (not enough done to make it a destination), and the need for neighborhood schools.

Transportation and Circulation Issues

Attendees this neighborhood identified a number of issues with transportation. Specific issues included traffic, weeds growing over sidewalks which cause pedestrians to walk on the streets, and roads are in serious need of repair.

Infrastructure Issues

Attendees identified the following issues related to infrastructure: lack of sidewalks, poor street conditions, street lights not working, old water lines need replacing, and flooding in residential areas.

Other issues noted included the need for more museums, and more housing in the range of \$100,000 to \$200,000 in the west end of the City.

Question 2: List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.

According to those in attendance, the most important issues discussed were the City's aging infrastructure (including streets, sidewalks, and sewers); the lack of effective code enforcement; the poor sense of community; and the need to improve economic development. The following is a summary of the most important issues identified by attendees from each ward:

- Ward One Top Issues: A lack of code enforcement; the need for slumlord strategies; a lack of quality grocery stores; use of drugs; the poor condition of roads and infrastructure including sidewalks, streets, and sewers; foul odors from industrial uses; the lack of historic preservation; poor zoning ordinances; no sense of community; the poor appearance of malls and Highway 69; and a lack of neighborhood amenities.

- Ward Two Top Issues: A lack of sidewalks; the poor condition of roads and infrastructure including sidewalks, streets, and sewers; traffic near Grant Foreman Elementary School; property issues including burnt homes, weeds, and disrepair; a lack of code enforcement; the need for more economic development; the condition of commercial centers; a lack of sports facilities on the eastside of the City; and the lack of a shopping venue on the southside of the City.
- Ward Three Top Issues: The noise from the speedway; the poor condition of streets; homes are in need of maintenance; a lack of sidewalks; a lack of code enforcement; no sense of community; no quality grocery store; high crime; the need for new businesses; vacant buildings; speeding in residential areas; and flooding.
- Ward Four Top Issues: A lack of consistent code enforcement; poor current zoning and development standards; poor pedestrian/bicycle circulation; roads, sidewalks, and infrastructure in poor condition; a lack of preservation efforts for historic homes; the need for more economic development; graffiti; and there is no sense of community.

Question 3: Identify three (3) specific projects or actions that you would like to see undertaken in your Ward/Neighborhood.

Attendees identified several projects or actions that should be completed in their Ward/Neighborhood including the following:

- Ward One: Residents in attendance from Ward One identified the following projects:
 - Clean up debris/junk; improve code enforcement; end crime and drugs; secure pit bulls; attract a quality grocery store; repave Gibson Street; remove the foul odors from the industrial area; extend Gibson Street to the westside of the City; clean up and beautify the commercial uses and motels along Shawnee Avenue; build a larger indoor building at Civitan Park; address noise complaints; improve code enforcement; address zoning; support downtown development; and improve transportation.
- Ward Two: Residents in attendance from Ward Two identified the following projects:
 - Improve traffic control around Grant Foreman, and from Hancock through Highway 69; repair streets and install new storm drains; improve code enforcement; construct community gardens; install sidewalks; widen York Street south of Hancock; repave Hilltop Avenue; develop an entertainment district near the Music Hall of Fame; and widen the intersection of South Cherokee and Peak Boulevard.
- Ward Three: Residents in attendance from Ward Three identified the following projects:
 - Remove vehicles that no longer run from front yards and along roads (i.e. Main Street); attract a quality grocery store; maintain the bike trails; increase police presence; improve people's yards; enforce speeding in residential areas; eliminate flooding; review City staff performance; construct sidewalks; and attract quality restaurants.

- Ward Four: Residents in attendance from Ward Four identified the following projects:
 - Enact a new zoning ordinance; require landlord registration; allow citizens to give citations for code enforcement; maintain Honor Heights Park; install infrastructure moving west; remove gang signs; require owner-occupancy of single-family homes in historic districts; develop downtown; preserve and assist in keeping historic homes; replace sidewalks; maintain front yards; pick up trash from right-of-ways and streets.

Question 4: What are the primary strengths and assets of your Ward/Neighborhood?

At the conclusion of the meeting, those in attendance were asked to focus upon the strengths of their neighborhood. The following are the primary strengths and assets for each of the wards as identified by those in attendance:

- Ward One Strengths: Access to the Arkansas River; proximity to the Turnpike; Civitan Park; and the School for the Blind.
- Ward Two Strengths: Hilldale School District; businesses; grocery store; a nice part of town (although one attendee noted the area was stable; and another stated it was rundown); proximity to major streets; the new park; and the low crime rate.
- Ward Three Strengths: Access to the hospital; Love-Hatbox Sports Complex; churches; the Civic Center; Country Music Hall of Fame; proximity to Highway 69; clean front yards; part of Historic Muskogee (Old Town) and walking trails.
- Ward Four Strengths: Historic properties; areas of beautiful homes; Founders Place and Kendall Place; Honor Heights Park; large trees; and Downtown.