Dewey County
Listening Session Report

http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/oces/ocls/

December 9, 2002
The mission of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service is to disseminate information to the people of Oklahoma and encourage the adoption of research-based knowledge relating to agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community development.
Nineteen (19) individuals interested in a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities participated in the Dewey County Listening Session. The Listening Session was an effort to get a broad base of citizen input to identify local issues so a plan can be developed to create a better economic, environmental, and social situation for Dewey County. Participants from across the county provided input and identified, discussed, and defined their community’s needs and opportunities while building on the assets that presently exist.

The purpose of this report is to share publicly the process and the information that was collected from the Dewey County Listening Session. The report lists the needs and concerns of the county as identified during the open forum process. This report also will be used as a starting point for the upcoming Focus Forum, in which an assembled group of stakeholders will define, discuss, and begin to address the needs and concerns identified in the Listening Session. Many of the needs and concerns of Oklahoma can be addressed through partnerships with other groups and organizations. The report can be found on the Oklahoma Community Listening Session website at http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/oces/ocls/.

The Listening Session revolved around a single, key question: “Considering the next 3 to 5 years, what are the critical issues in your community and in Oklahoma that need to be addressed to realize a positive future for you, your family, and your community?” The needs and issues identified by participants reflect several broad areas of interest. Available data do not show that any one area is more significant than another, but they do show that all these issues are vitally important to the people of Dewey County.
The Listening Session Process

Listening Session participants were divided into small groups. Small group participants considered the guiding question (see below) and suggested issues that they felt were of most importance to their families and community. With the assistance of a group facilitator, each small group discussed its chosen issues, combined similar issues, and then voted to determine its top five issues.

Following the small group sessions, participants came together in a large group setting to discuss the results of the small group sessions. They combined similar and overlapping issues and voted to determine the top issues for the county.

“Considering the next 3 to 5 years, what are the critical issues in your community and in Oklahoma that need to be addressed to realize a positive future for you, your family, and your community?”
The following issues were discussed in one or more of the small group sessions.

- Increase taxes to pay for state services that are lacking
  - Provide accessible and affordable health care
  - Increase grant opportunities for rural Oklahoma
  - Create public transportation

- Emphasize youth and adult education
  - Basic living skills, character development, and work ethics
  - Focus on supportive groups for single parents, displaced homemakers, and displaced workers
  - Provide easier access to higher education for rural citizens

- Improve job opportunities
  - Create a program to provide incentives for high school graduates to stay/return to the area
  - Provide grants or funding for graduates to attend college in return for a specified amount of community service

- Keep small schools alive (rural, local)

- Protect property owner’s rights through legislation – protect property for the future; promote fair taxation for landowners

- Recruit and develop industry
  - Develop farm production for the purpose of creating job opportunities and retaining youth (raise per capita income)

- Create tourism and develop a Dewey County website

- Improve funding for schools

- Develop leadership for long-range plan of community development

- Eliminate drugs
Large Group Discussion

The large group addressed the ideas that were generated during the small group discussions. Those ideas were then used as the basis for defining the five issues of most importance to Dewey County.

- **Improve funding for schools; keep small (rural, local) schools alive**

- **Protect property owner’s rights through legislation**  
  - Protect property for the future  
  - Promote fair taxation for farmers (limit liabilities)

- **Develop leadership for long-range plan of community development**  
  - Improve or expand political base and relationship with legislators

- **Emphasize youth and adult education**  
  - Basic living skills, character development, and work ethics  
  - Focus on supportive groups for single parents, displaced homemakers, and displaced workers  
  - Provide easier access to higher education for rural citizens  
  - Eliminate drugs

- **Improve job opportunities**  
  - Create a program to provide incentives for high school graduates to stay/return to the area  
  - Provide grants or funding for graduates to attend college in return for a specified amount of community service  
  - Recruit and develop industry  
  - Develop farm production for the purpose of creating job opportunities and retaining youth

In the months following the Listening Session, Dewey County Extension Educators will invite community leaders and representatives from organizations and agencies to a *Focus Forum* to consider what the people are saying and to devise action plans for Dewey County. As Extension begins its long-range strategic planning process, the involvement of citizens in identifying needs and opportunities in the county and community will be extremely valuable. Through the upcoming *Focus Forums*, education and service providers will learn more about community concerns while forging new partnerships with other groups to address identified issues.
Facts About Dewey County

The intent of these data is to provide local perspective and context for discussion. Local circumstances can change the demographic and economic data; the following is the most up-to-date information that is currently available.¹

◆ History

Sparsely populated, the land of Dewey County is used for agriculture and cattle production, with some horse ranches and many oil and gas wells.

Part of the original Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation designated by the Treaty of 1867, Dewey County was opened to settlement by the Land Run of April 19, 1892. The county was named for Admiral George Dewey. Taloga, from an Indian word meaning “beautiful valley,” is the county seat.

The Canadian River flows from west to east across Dewey County, dividing the county in half. The North Canadian River flows across

Dewey County

- Located in the northwestern region
- County population is 4,743
- Labor force within 30 miles is 20,900

¹ County statistics from Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management, May 2000
the northeastern corner of the county. Thus, the construction of bridges was important to the growth of the county but did not occur until later years. The development of transportation in the county was slow; it began with the construction of the Wichita Falls and Northwestern Railroad (later known as the Katy) in 1910. The Katy followed the old Western or Dodge Cattle Trail, which cut through the county in the 1870s to the railhead at Dodge City.

People of note who have lived in Dewey County are former Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Pat Irwin, TV climatologist Gary England, and Prohibitionist Carrie Nation.

◆ **Industry**  
According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Dewey County had 713 farms (averaging 869 acres). Average gate receipts were $48,051 in 1997, and the county had seven farms with gate receipts in excess of $500,000. Agricultural production was divided between livestock (67 percent) and crops (33 percent). Contrasted with the 1992 Census of Agriculture, average gate receipts in 1997 decreased 6 percent, from $50,909 to $48,051; the average farm size increased 3 percent.

◆ **Profile**  
Dewey County is located in northwestern Oklahoma. The county is comprised of 1,008 square miles of level plains used primarily for crops and cattle. The average annual rainfall is 30.6 inches. Average temperatures range from 41.4 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 80.2 degrees Fahrenheit in July.

According to the 2000 census, the county seat, Taloga, had a population of 372 residents. The city is located 116 miles northwest of Oklahoma City.
Facts About Dewey County

◆ **Households**
Dewey County had 1,962 households in 2000. Statistics regarding those households are included in the table on the final page of this report.

◆ **Population Characteristics**
The population density of the county is 5.5 persons per square mile. The median age of the population is 43 years.

◆ **County Population - 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County population</td>
<td>4,743</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male population</td>
<td>2,309</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female population</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 years</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 years</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84 years</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000*

◆ **Poverty**
Poverty in Dewey County decreased by 28.4 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were 959 individuals living below the poverty level. This number decreased to 687 by 2000. The poverty level for family households with related children under 18 years of age decreased 30.5 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were
128 such families, but by the year 2000 the number had declined to 89 families. Poverty-level households headed by women having no husband present and with children under 18 years of age numbered 39 in 1990. By 2000 such households had declined to 21, a decrease of 46.2 percent.

◆ **Labor Force**
The Dewey County labor force numbered 1,898 in 2000, with 66.8 percent of males and 42.1 percent of females employed. The county recorded an average annual unemployment rate of 3 percent in 2000. The per capita personal income for the county in 2000 was $20,168.

◆ **Tourism and Points of Interest**
The major waterways in Dewey County are the Canadian and North Canadian rivers. Canton Lake, in the northeast corner of the county, provides opportunities for recreation and water sports.

The Dewey County Jailhouse Museum, in Taloga, and the Boswell Museum, in Leedey, offer exhibits of historical interest. The City of Leedey is a Project 2000 – Downtown Beautification Program participant and an Oklahoma Certified City.

◆ **Housing**
The county has 2,425 housing units, and 71 percent of these are occupied by owners. Statewide, 80.9 percent of housing units are occupied by owners. The median owner-occupied home value in the county is $38,000. Statewide, the median owner-occupied home value is $70,700. The median housing rental contract is $303 per month in Dewey County. Statewide, the median housing rental contract is $456 per month.
Facts About Dewey County

◆ Tax Structure
The average mill levy for ad valorem taxes in Dewey County is 72.77 mills. It generated $2,763,639 in 2001-2002. Also, Dewey County received $3,277,800 from the state for the county’s proceeds from the gas, diesel, and special fuel tax, as well as from the gross production tax and motor vehicle collections.

Dewey County collects sales tax at three levels: state, county, and local. The state sales tax rate is 4.5 percent; the county rate is 0.5 percent, generating $207,954 in 2001-2002. The local sales tax rate varies from city to city, as shown below.

Sales Tax Rates and Revenue, 2001-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Sales Tax Rate (%)</th>
<th>Revenue ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camargo</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>27,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leedey</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seiling</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>243,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taloga</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>92,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vici</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>102,860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


◆ Education
There are 79.8 percent of Dewey County residents over 25 years of age who are high school graduates, compared to 74.6 percent statewide. College graduates 25 years and older number 16.6 percent, compared to 17.8 percent statewide.
Facts About Dewey County

◆ **Primary Employers in the Area**
   
   There are no primary employers other than those businesses that constitute the normal infrastructure support of the area. The land is used primarily for cattle production, with some horse ranches. There are also many oil and gas wells in Dewey County.
## Facts About Dewey County

### County Demographics – 1990 vs. 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County population</td>
<td>5,551</td>
<td>4,743</td>
<td>-14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino population</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White population</td>
<td>5,182</td>
<td>4,371</td>
<td>-15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American population</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native population</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>-30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian population</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of all persons in the county</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force</td>
<td>2,308</td>
<td>1,898</td>
<td>-17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual unemployment rate</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County per capita income</td>
<td>15,867</td>
<td>20,168</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with related children under age 18</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>-30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - individuals</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>-28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a high school diploma</td>
<td>1,397</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of persons over age 25 with high school diploma</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a college degree</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent over age 25 with at least a Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - family household with own children under age 18</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>-25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - married couple family with own children under age 18</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>-25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - female householder, with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County housing units</td>
<td>2,733</td>
<td>2,425</td>
<td>-11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>-13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000
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