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.
Twenty-five (25) individuals interested in a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities participated in the Jefferson 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 Jefferson 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 Jefferson 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 web site 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 clustered around 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 Jefferson County.
The Listening Session Process

Listening Session participants were divided into small groups, usually not more than 12-15 participants. Small group participants considered the guiding question (see below) and suggested issues 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, combine similar and overlapping issues, and vote 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 five interest areas encompass the concerns, needs, and issues cited most frequently by Listening Session participants in their large group discussion:

- **Strengthen the economy**
  - Support and improve existing businesses, develop positive things, create jobs/industry, jobs for high school graduates and professionals
  - Improve tourism; housing; infrastructure; local appearance such as highways, shoulders, and four-lanes; maintain existing government

- **Education/schools**
  - Parenting skills/adult education
  - Better teacher pay
  - Maintain existing school systems
  - Improve quality school rating

- **Change of taxation**
  - Equal taxation, alternatives to property taxes, and broader tax base

- **Control drug abuse**
  - Reduce incarceration rate with increased treatment and counseling
  - Control over-the-counter drugs

- **Hospital**
  - Work to keep in good shape
  - Health care network
In addition to the interest areas identified in the large group discussion, the following are issues that were also discussed in the small breakout group sessions:

- **Strengthen the economy**
  - Support and improve existing businesses, develop positive things, create jobs/industry, jobs for high school graduates and professionals, teen jobs
  - Improve tourism; housing; infrastructure; local appearance such as highways, shoulders, and four-lanes; maintain existing government

- **Education/schools**
  - Parenting skills/adult education
  - Better teacher pay
  - Maintain existing school systems
  - Improve quality school rating

- **Change of taxation**
  - Equal taxation, alternatives to property taxes, and broader tax base

- **Control drug abuse**
  - Reduce incarceration rate with increased treatment and counseling
  - Control over-the-counter drugs

- **Hospital**
  - Work to keep in good shape
  - Health care network
Small Group Discussions

- Increase producer share of farm sales
- Rural communications technology

Other priorities identified by Jefferson County Listening Session participants include:

- Create youth activities
- Increase unique career opportunities
- Aging population
  - Health care
  - Transportation
  - Government subsidized medical/living
  - Emergency services
  - Youth medical
- Creating assisted living
- Increase community pride
- Cooperation between all communities
- Diversify land use
  - Manage hunting rights
  - Season to match Texas
  - Tying communities together
- Number of school superintendents across county
  - One county superintendent voted in
- Job training/retraining
  - Viable work force
Small Group Discussions

- Invest in county population
  - Entrepreneur attitude
  - Create county-wide educational foundation
- Promote communities (advertise)
- Quality childcare
  - With schools
- Better telecommunications
  - Internet
  - Cell phone/land lines
- Leadership in the community
  - Create and train community leaders and followers
- Widen highways
  - Safety and promote business
- Grasshopper control
- Increase adult education
- Improve appearance of chamber building
- Improve housing
- City infrastructure
- Support local merchants

In the months following the Listening Session, Jefferson 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 further define priority needs in Jefferson County. As Extension begins its long-range strategic planning process, the involvement of citizens in identifying needs and opportunities in the county
Small Group Discussions

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.
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. Please contact us if you see information that needs to be updated.

**History**

Named for President Thomas Jefferson, this county was created from a portion of Comanche County in Oklahoma Territory and the southwestern corner of the Chickasaw Nation. A marker on State Highway 70 in Waurika, the county seat, designates the 98th Meridian, the dividing line between Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory.

Waurika, meaning “camp of clear water,” was built at the junction of Beaver and Cow creeks, and is the site of Waurika Lake. Ringling was named for John Ringling, who built a railroad on this site to bring his circus to the area for its winter headquarters. Waurika is

**Jefferson County**

- Located in the southern region
- County population is 6,818
- Labor force within 30 miles is 62,100

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1. County statistics revised May, 2000, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management
Facts About Jefferson County

The site of the Jefferson County courthouse, built in 1894 by the Chickasaw Nation. Landmarks include the Rock Island Railroad Depot, built in 1912, and the Monument Hill Marker, honoring the Chisholm Trail and its trail drivers.

◆ Industry
Although an industrial base has been established, cattle, oil, and agriculture are still the leading sources of income. Annual events include the Waurika Volunteer Firemen Rattlesnake Hunt, the Waurika Art Show, and the Terral Melon Jubilee.

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Jefferson County had 499 farms (averaging 884 acres). Average gate receipts were $101,823 in 1997 and the county had 17 farms with gate receipts in excess of $500,000. Agricultural production was divided between livestock (91 percent) and crops (6 percent). Contrasted with the 1992 Census of Agriculture, average gate receipts increased 59 percent, and the average farm size increased 2 percent.

◆ Profile
Jefferson County is located in south-central Oklahoma, adjacent to the Texas border. The county is comprised of 773 square miles of level plains. The average annual rainfall is 45.8 inches. Average temperatures range from 42.4 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 80.6 degrees Fahrenheit in July.

According to the 2000 Census, the county seat of Waurika had a population of 1,988 residents. The city is located 112 miles south of Oklahoma City.

◆ Population Characteristics
The population density of the county is 9.2 persons per square mile. The median age of the population is 40.4 years of age.
Facts About Jefferson County

◆ 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>6,818</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Population</td>
<td>3,316</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Population</td>
<td>3,502</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 years</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 years</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84 years</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

◆ Households

Jefferson County had 2,716 households in 2000. Statistics regarding those households are presented in tabular form on the final page of this report.

◆ Poverty

The poverty status in Jefferson County decreased for individuals by 21.8 percent. In 1990, there were 1,584 individuals living below the poverty level. This number decreased to 1,239 by the year 2000. The poverty level for family households with related children under 18 years of age decreased 13.7 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990, there were 219 such families, but in 2000, the number decreased to 189 families. Female households with no husband present and with her own children under 18 years of age living below
the poverty level numbered 74 in 1990. These households declined 14.9 percent to 63 by the year 2000.

◆ **Labor Force**

   The Jefferson County labor force was 2,972 in 2000. Participation rate in the county labor force constituted 47.44 percent of males and 40.95 percent of females. The county recorded an average annual unemployment rate of 3.33 percent in 2000 and the per capita personal income for the county was $18,137 in 2000.

◆ **Housing**

   The county has 2,716 occupied housing units, and 74.2 percent of these are owner-occupied. Statewide, 68.4 percent of housing units are owner-occupied. The median owner-occupied home value in the county is $33,300. Statewide, the median owner-occupied home value is $70,700. The median housing rental contract is $261 per month and statewide, the median housing rental contract is $456 per month.

◆ **Tax Structure**

   The county tax rate in Jefferson County is 2 percent and generated $398,498 in Fiscal Year 2000 – 2001. The state sales tax rate is 4.5 percent and local sales tax for cities in the county varies. City sales tax rates and revenues for seven population centers are: in Addington, a 2 percent sales tax rate generates $2,320; in Cornish, a 2 percent sales tax rate generates $2,601; in Hastings, a 3 percent sales tax rate generates $12,156, in Ringling, a 2.5 percent sales tax rate
Facts About Jefferson County

generates $124,076; in Ryan, a 3 percent sales tax rate generates $77,549; in Terral, a 3 percent sales tax rate generates $30,678; and in Waurika, a 3 percent sales tax rate generates $299,194. The ad valorem average mill levy for Jefferson County is 77.85 mills, which generated $2,176,496 in 2001-2002. Also, Jefferson County received $1,384,801 from the state for the county’s proceeds from the gas, diesel, and special fuel tax; the gross production tax; and motor vehicle collections.


◆ Educational Facilities

In Jefferson County, 69.30 percent of persons over 25 years of age have a high school diploma and 10.6 percent are college graduates. Statewide high school graduates in the same age range total 74.6 percent and the percent of college graduates over 25 years of age is 17.8 percent.
# Facts About Jefferson County

## Primary Employers in the Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Employers</th>
<th>Products/Services</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>City/Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elliott’s Manufactured Homes</td>
<td>Mobile Homes</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Waurika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basco Leather Goods</td>
<td>Leather Goods</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Waurika</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Facts About Jefferson 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>7,010</td>
<td>6,818</td>
<td>-2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino population</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White population</td>
<td>6,340</td>
<td>5,941</td>
<td>-6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American population</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native population</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian population</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>327.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of all persons in the county</td>
<td>38.71</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force</td>
<td>2,852</td>
<td>2,972</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual unemployment rate</td>
<td>7.93%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County per capita income</td>
<td>12,613</td>
<td>18,137</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with related children under age 18</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - individuals</td>
<td>1,584</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>-21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a high school diploma</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>1,760</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of persons over age 25 with high school diploma</td>
<td>58.70%</td>
<td>69.30%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a college degree</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent over age 25 with at least a Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>10.60%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - family household with own children under age 18</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>-9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - married couple family with own children under age 18</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>-18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County housing units</td>
<td>3,522</td>
<td>3,373</td>
<td>-4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>2,087</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>-3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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