

Stephens County Listening Session Report

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



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OKLAHOMA

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.



Stephens County Listening Session

Twenty-eight (28) individuals interested in a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities participated in the Stephens 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 Stephens 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 Stephens 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 Stephens 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 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?

Small Group Discussions

The following issues were discussed in one or more of the small group sessions.

- Provide character development education for communities
- Promote family relationships
- Recruit businesses that provide quality entry-level jobs
- Increase funding of public education
- Provide funding for drug abuse prevention
 - Address methamphetamine labs
- Provide better programs for mentally ill
- Encourage healthy life styles
- Provide safe havens for children
 - Latchkey kids
 - Teach basic job and life skills (career guidance)
- Defibrillator access across Stephens County
- Require financial literacy in public schools
- Put 4-H in schools
- Address teen pregnancy
- Provide parenting classes
- More emphasis on retirement planning
- Provide financial aid for those taking prescription drugs
- Develop a youth center (activities)
- Increase community awareness and cooperation
- Promote church involvement
- More health care providers
- Break the welfare mentality
- Provide dental and medical services for domestically abused women
- Increase school support finance and activities and after-school programs

Small Group Discussions

- Develop plan to address substance abuse problems
 - Cigarette smoking
 - Underage drinking
 - Teach celibacy in school to avoid teen pregnancy
- Need affordable health programs
 - Reasonable health insurance premiums
 - Prescription drugs
- Teach family values/issues and unity
- Support federal and state farm programs
- Increase adult literacy programs, include English language
- More abstinence programs in middle and high school
- Incentives to improve health of population
- Address issue of cliques in school
- Bring back cockfighting
- Balanced state funding for all agencies; concern about use of taxes
- Increase in better paying jobs; more training and employment opportunities
- Preserve animal hunting and fishing rights and preserve wildlife conservation
- Decrease college tuition and offer tuition scholarships to freshmen with 3.5 grade point averages
- Increase transportation dollars for small bridges and maintenance
- Improve highway safety
- More and better after-school programs
- Increase community involvement and awareness of volunteer programs
- Give more tax incentives to new businesses and small businesses for 5-year period
- Maintain school funding

Small Group Discussions

- Concern about use of taxes
- Lower health insurance premiums
- Keep small schools open
- Increase salaries for teachers
- Preserve water resources and prevent selling water rights
- Help with low-income services
- Increase awareness of higher education and technical/vocational schools
- Increase after-school activities (nonsports) and provide more youth activities on weekends as deterrents to crime/drugs (place to hang out)
- Emphasize youth community services/leadership development for all high school youth
- Small community stability
 - Economics
 - School
- Youth financial/grants; youth get education beyond high school
- Economic development to increase jobs and higher wages (career opportunities)
- Equal opportunity for students for higher education in schools (scholarships/grants)
- Lack of drug education, tough on drugs, lack of rehabilitation (technical/vocational skills in prison systems)
- Increase awareness of youth organizations (Boy Scouts, 4-H, etc.)
- Increase speed limit on Highway 81, Duncan to Marlow
- Stabilize and diversify industry
- Encourage agricultural production as full-time career
- Funding for existing school activities

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 six issues of most importance to Stephens County.

- **More equal opportunity in high school for students to receive higher education**
 - Grants
 - Scholarships
 - Increase awareness and necessity for higher education and vocational schools

- **Increase after-school activities (other than sports) and provide youth activities on weekends as deterrents to crime and drugs (place to hang out)**

- **Provide funding for drug abuse prevention**
 - Address methamphetamine labs

- **Need affordable health programs, including health insurance premiums and prescription drugs**

- **Develop a plan to address substance abuse problem**
 - Cigarette smoking
 - Underage drinking/abstinence
 - Teen pregnancy/celebrity

- **Promote family relations – parenting education**

Large Group Discussion

In the months following the Listening Session, Stephens 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 Stephens 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 Stephens County

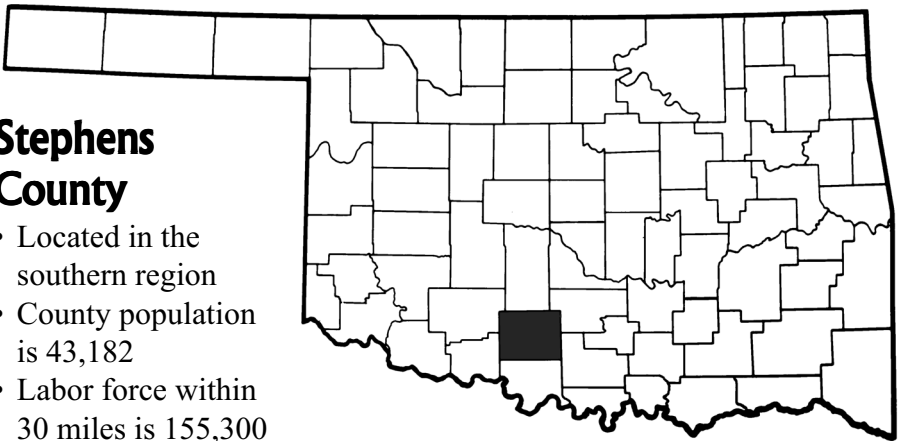
The intent of these data is to provide local perspective and context for discussion. Local circumstances can change the demographic and economic data; the following is the most up-to-date information that is currently available.¹

◆ History

Created at statehood from portions of Comanche County, Oklahoma Territory, and the Chickasaw Nation, Stephens County was named for John H. Stephens, a member of Congress from Texas and staunch advocate of Oklahoma statehood. The first permanent settler, Silas Fitzpatrick, sold his store in 1892 to William Duncan, for whom the county seat was named. In the late 1800s, Duncan was a stop on the historic Chisholm Trail, which was used to move cattle from Texas to railroads in Kansas. U.S. Highway 81 and State Highways 7, 29, and 53 serve the county. Duncan Municipal Airport, OKT Railroad, and Oklahoma Transportation-Jefferson Bus Lines provide additional transportation links.

Stephens County

- Located in the southern region
- County population is 43,182
- Labor force within 30 miles is 155,300



¹ County statistics from Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management, May 2000

Facts About Stephens County

◆ **Industry**

The economy is based on agriculture (wheat, peanuts, cotton, and cattle) and petroleum. Duncan, Marlow, and Comanche are the principal municipalities, and each offers a wide range of goods and services. Halliburton Oil Field Services began in Duncan and remains a major employer in the area.

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Stephens County had 1,165 farms (averaging 366 acres). Average gate receipts were \$20,848 in 1997, and the county had five farms with gate receipts in excess of \$500,000. Agricultural production was divided between livestock (87 percent) and crops (13 percent). Contrasted with the 1992 Census of Agriculture, average gate receipts in 1997 increased slightly, from \$20,658 to \$20,848; the average farm size decreased 5 percent.

◆ **Profile**

Stephens County is located in southern Oklahoma. The county is comprised of 891 square miles of agricultural land. 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, Duncan, had a population of 22,505 residents. The city is located 87 miles southwest of Oklahoma City.

◆ **Households**

Stephens County had 17,463 households in 2000. Statistics regarding those households are included in the table on the final page of this report.

Facts About Stephens County

◆ Population Characteristics

The population density of the county is 48.2 persons per square mile. The median age of the population is 36.9 years.

◆ County Population - 2000

	<i>2000</i>	<i>Percent</i>
County population	43,182	100
Male population	20,894	48.4
Female population	22,288	51.6
Under 5 years	2,707	6.3
5 to 9 years	2,766	6.4
10 to 14 years	3,123	7.2
15 to 19 years	3,138	7.3
20 to 24 years	2,245	5.2
25 to 34 years	4,438	10.3
35 to 44 years	6,415	14.9
45 to 54 years	5,950	13.8
55 to 59 years	2,357	5.5
60 to 64 years	2,061	4.8
65 to 74 years	4,253	9.8
75 to 84 years	2,709	6.3
85 years and over	1,020	2.4

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

◆ Poverty

Poverty in Stephens County increased by 17.1 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were 5,001 individuals living below the poverty level. This number increased to 6,194 by the year 2000. The poverty level for family households with related children under 18 years of age decreased 14.1 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were 1,150 such families, but by 2000 the number had declined to 988 families. Poverty-level households headed by women having no husband present and with children under 18 years of age numbered 464 in 1990. By 2000 such households had risen to 551, an increase of 18.8 percent.

Facts About Stephens County

◆ Labor Force

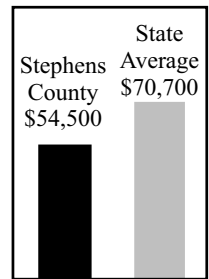
The Stephens County labor force numbered 18,130 in 2000, with 67.9 percent of males and 44.5 percent of females employed. The county recorded an average annual unemployment rate of 3.5 percent in 2000. The per capita personal income for the county in 2000 was \$20,862.

◆ Tourism and Points of Interest

The major waterways in Stephens County are Beaver, Little Beaver, and Mud creeks and tributaries to the Washita River. Duncan maintains 144 acres of parks and playgrounds and two public swimming pools. There are golf courses in Duncan (2), Marlow, and Comanche. Boating, fishing, camping facilities, and 4,000 acres of recreational lands are found at Clear Creek, Duncan, Humphreys, and Fuqua lakes. The Stephens County Memorial Museum and the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center in Duncan provide historical and cultural information.

◆ Housing

The county has 19,854 housing units, and 75.5 percent of these are occupied by owners. Statewide, 68.4 percent of housing units are occupied by owners. The median owner-occupied home value in the county is \$54,500. Statewide, the median owner-occupied home value is \$70,700. The median housing rental contract is \$391 per month in Stephens County. Statewide, the median housing rental contract is \$456 per month.



Owner-occupied home value

◆ Tax Structure

The average mill levy for ad valorem taxes in Stephens County is 81.08 mills. It generated \$13,048,912 in 2001-2002. Also, Stephens

Facts About Stephens County

County received \$4,947,699 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.

Stephens 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 \$418,999 in 2001-2002. The local sales tax rate varies from city to city, as shown below.

Sales Tax Rates and Revenue, 2001-2002

City	Sales Tax Rate (%)	Revenue (\$)
Comanche	3.00	143,710
Duncan	3.50	8,616,950
Loco	3.00	5,260
Marlow	3.50	1,206,413
Velma	3.00	180,436

Source: OTC State Payments to Local Governments FY 2001-2002 and "Oklahoma Ad Valorem Mill Levies, Fiscal Year 2002," by Notie H. Lansford, Jr., and Dondee Payne, Department of Agricultural Economics, July 2002, AE 02136

◆ Education

Stephens County is home to Oklahoma Missionary Baptist College, Institute, and Seminary, a private school. The Red River Technology Center is also located in the county. There are 77 percent of Stephens 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 Stephens County

◆ Primary Employers in the Area

Major Employers	Products/ Services	Number Employed	City/ Town
Halliburton Services	oil field equipment	1,675	Duncan
Duncan Public Schools	education services	435	Duncan
Duncan Regional Hospital	medical services	401	Duncan
Sooner Trailer Manufacturing Company	horse/stock trailers	300	Duncan
City of Duncan	government services	242	Duncan
Goodner's Supermarkets	retail grocery	200	Duncan
Jones Drilling Corporation	oil field services	200	Duncan
Comanche Public Schools	education services	145	Comanche
All Orthopedic Appliances	medical supplies	137	Marlow
Wal-Mart	retail store	128	Duncan
Marlow Public Schools	education services	124	Marlow
Mack Energy Company	oil field services	103	Duncan
Oklahoma Department of Transportation	highway maintenance	103	Duncan
Wal-Mart	retail store	80	Marlow
City of Marlow	government services	62	Marlow
BancFirst	financial services	40	Marlow
Adrian Paul Manufacturing	livestock scales and equipment	35	Comanche
Cable Meat Center	wholesale meats	35	Marlow
Central Tank Company, Inc.	manufacturing	31	Marlow
Martin's Foods	retail grocery	25	Marlow

Source: Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management, May 2000

Facts About Stephens County

◆ County Demographics – 1990 vs. 2000

	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>% Change</i>
County population	42,299	43,182	2.1
Hispanic/Latino population	943	1,709	81.2
White population	38,829	38,158	-1.7
Black or African American population	945	950	0.5
American Indian and Alaska Native population	1,720	2,123	23.4
Asian population	149	130	-12.8
Median age of all persons in the county	36.9	40.1	8.4
Labor force	18,611	18,130	-2.6
Average annual unemployment rate	4.92%	3.50%	----
County per capita income	14,298	20,862	45.9
Poverty - families with related children under age 18	1,150	988	-14.1
Poverty - families with female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present	464	551	18.8
Poverty - individuals	5,001	6,194	17.1
Persons over age 25 with a high school diploma	9,834	10,858	10.4
Percent of persons over age 25 with high school diploma	70.8%	77.0%	8.8
Persons over age 25 with a college degree	4,185	4,833	15.5
Percent over age 25 with at least a Bachelor's degree	14.7%	16.6%	12.9
Households - family household with own children under age 18	5,601	5,313	-5.1
Households - married couple family with own children under age 18	4,567	4,045	-11.4
Households - female householder, with own children under age 18, no husband present	850	967	13.8
County housing units	19,675	19,854	0.9
Owner-occupied housing units	12,526	13,192	5.3

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

Notes

Notes

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**Stephens County Extension Office
101 South 11th
Room 113
Duncan, OK 73533-4762
Phone: 580-255-0510
Fax: 580-255-0442**



**Division of Agricultural Sciences
and Natural Resources
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Oklahoma State University
139 Agricultural Hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-6019
Phone: 405-744-5398
Fax: 405-744-5339
www.dasnr.okstate.edu/oces/**