

Pottawatomie County Listening Session Report

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



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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.



Pottawatomie County Listening Session

Eighty-three (83) individuals interested in a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities participated in the Pottawatomie 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 Pottawatomie 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 Pottawatomie 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 Pottawatomie 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?

Large Group Discussion

The following six interest areas encompass the concerns, needs, and issues cited most frequently by Listening Session participants in the large group discussion:

- **Look at better methods for funding education**
 - Make school district bonding 50/50 instead of 60/40
 - Remove 10 percent bonding cap
 - Investigate ways for additional funding
 - Improve funding for common education
 - Increase value of teachers
 - Career guidance/Technology Center
 - Lottery
- **Improve infrastructure**
 - Jail, water, sewer, public school, courthouse, public facilities
 - Expand water treatment plant
 - Improve roads and bridges
 - More signage around schools
 - Install traffic speed signs on county roads
 - Rural 911
 - Improve phone system in St. Louis area
- **Improve public safety**
 - To deal with crime
 - To increase access to county-wide 911 and health care
 - Roadside dumping needs to be decreased and fines increased
 - Improve roads and streets with signs posted, develop study for better flow of traffic
 - Better cooperation between departments, make fine fit crime
 - Property and personal protection, fire, police, drug task force, bio-terrorism
 - Establish visibility of law
 - Increase number of officials with appropriate education
 - Increase efforts to rule out substance abuse, meth labs

Large Group Discussion

- **Improve environment**
 - Clean trash from rivers
 - Clean up trash from roadsides
 - Leave wildflowers on roadside until they go to seed
 - Trim trees from highways
 - Control stray animals, rural issues

- **Increase economic resources/industry by building a strong job base**
 - Attract business so community members can work locally
 - Retention of existing business
 - Better educate workforce, recruit jobs, computer education, Technology Center, adult education

- **Improve public education/K-12**
 - Parent involvement
 - Identify K-3 at-risk youth
 - Higher test scores
 - Produce quality students
 - Lower drop out rates
 - Target early childhood education

Small Group Discussions

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:

- Develop infrastructure in rural areas: improve county roads, rural 911 system, install traffic speed signs on county roads, improve phone system in St. Louis area
- Improve environment: clean trash from rivers, clean up trash from roadsides, leave wildflowers on roadside until they go to seed, trim trees from highways, control stray animals
- Ensure quality education in most efficient manner
- Provide quality health care at affordable rates
- Economic development: revamp workers' comp, positive support for employees
- More responsible law enforcement: hot checks, employee theft, better law enforcement
- Economic development: better educated work force, recruit jobs, computer education, Technology Center, adult education
- Promote better environment through recycling/meth lab clean up, clean up illegal dumping
- Improve roads and bridges
- More signage around schools
- Develop additional sources of venture capital
- Focus on rural issues: sustain agriculture
- Improve infrastructure: jail, water, sewer, public school, courthouse, public facilities, and expand water treatment plant
- Improve public safety: to deal with crime, to increase access to county-wide 911 and health care, roadside dumping needs to be decreased and fines increased, improve roads and streets with signs posted, develop study for better flow of traffic
- Maintain education programs and extend learning opportunities for young children in schools
- Improve social services: expand drug, alcohol, and mental health treatment, increase homeless shelters, increase awareness of adult abuse and neglect

Small Group Discussions

- Look at better methods for funding education, including: make school district bonding 50/50 instead of 60/40, remove 10 percent bonding cap
- Keep industries/recruit new ones, industry in small towns, all business is important
- Public transportation: older people unable to drive, people need to be able to get where they need to go
- Small business: initiative/growth, bring business into school, tax incentives/tax breaks
- Develop more sources of rural water: huge impact on community, creates industry, increases property value, increases population
- Improve public education/K-12: parent involvement, identify K-3 at-risk youth, higher test scores, produce quality students, lower drop out rates
- Widespread involvement within community
- Expansion of health care services
- Funding for education to include career guidance and Technology Center
- Property and personal protection: fire/police/ drug task force, bio-terrorism
- Economic stability and growth: jobs/business retention
- Increase level of funding for education: respect/value our teachers
- Re-establish family values: promote values/family based community programs
- Promote awareness of aging population: economic/health care issues
- Improve community resources available to youth: appropriate activities for youth to participate in recreation
- Increase economic resources/industry by building a strong job base: attract business so community members can work locally
- Provide adequate health care: affordable long term care and prescription drugs, enforce current laws and rules (nursing homes)

Small Group Discussions

- Educational funding: lottery
- Access to affordable health care
- Affordable health insurance
- Restructure business insurance expenses
- Reform workers' comp
- Stop meth manufacturing: related to toxins, effects on families
- Improve public safety: establish greater visibility of law enforcement, increase officers with appropriate education, better cooperation between departments, increase efforts to control substance abuse, make fine fit crime
- Improve water quality for all citizens: improve access of drinkable water, enforce existing water quality laws, improve water treatment facilities
- Develop economic opportunities for small communities in Pottawatomie County: small business development support and incentive programs
- Prioritizing the needs of educational funding: investigate ways to better utilize current funding, target early childhood education
- Develop opportunities for kids to focus on values, ethics, community service
- Do anything and everything to improve the quality of life for Pottawatomie County citizens: coordinate public and private services

In the months following the Listening Session, Pottawatomie 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 Pottawatomie 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.

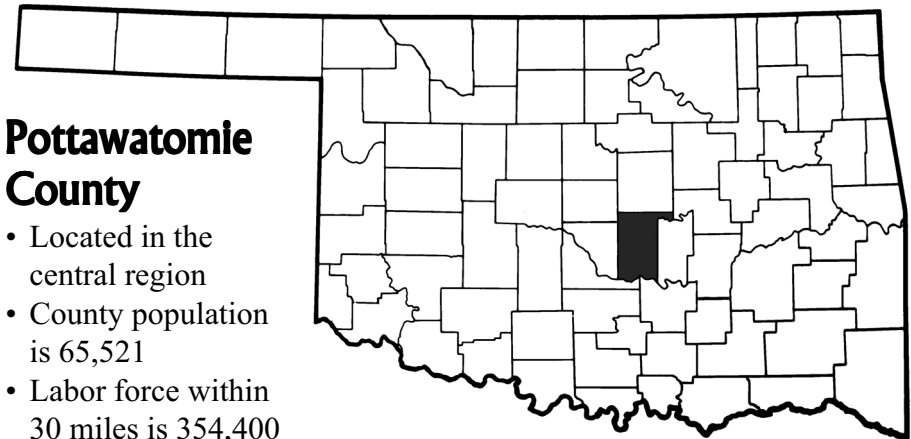
Facts About Pottawatomie County

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

◆ History

Settled by Seminole, Creek, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Absentee Shawnee, Kickapoo, and Sac and Fox Indian tribes, this area was opened to white settlement in the Land Run of September 22, 1891, and was designated County “B.” The county name was changed by vote in 1892 to honor the Pottawatomie Tribe and means “people of the place of fire.”

Tecumseh was originally the county seat, but soon lost to the fast-growing community of Shawnee, which also was proposed for the state capitol. City fathers even went so far as to build a “governor’s mansion.”



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

Facts About Pottawatomie County

History comes to life in annual celebrations such as “Frontier Days” in Tecumseh and the Heritage Fest in Shawnee. The historic Santa Fe Depot, built in 1903, still stands in Shawnee, along with other early structures. Pottawatomie County is the site of the Shawnee Indian Reservation and has 63 “ghost towns.”

Offices of the Absentee Shawnee, Potawatomi, and Sac and Fox tribes are located in the county.

◆ **Industry**

The oil and railroad industries were vital to the development of some Pottawatomie County towns and the decline of others, but agriculture has remained a mainstay of the county’s economy.

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Pottawatomie County had 1,148 farms (averaging 232 acres). Average gate receipts were \$22,790 in 1997 and the county had five farms with gate receipts in excess of \$500,000. Agricultural production was divided between livestock (86 percent) and crops (14 percent). Contrasted with the 1992 Census of Agriculture, average gate receipts increased 71 percent and the average farm size decreased 8 percent.

◆ **Profile**

Pottawatomie County is located in central Oklahoma. The county is comprised of 793 square miles of level plains. The average annual rainfall is 47.1 inches. Average temperatures range from 42 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 80.8 degrees Fahrenheit in July.

According to the 2000 Census, the county seat of Shawnee had a population of 28,692 residents. The city is located 37 miles east of Oklahoma City, south of Interstate 40.

Facts About Pottawatomie County

◆ County Population - 2000

	<i>2000</i>	<i>Percent</i>
County Population	65,521	100%
Male Population	31,640	48.3%
Female Population	33,881	51.7%
<i>Under 5 years</i>	4,454	6.8%
<i>5 to 9 years</i>	4,642	7.1%
<i>10 to 14 years</i>	4,711	7.2%
<i>15 to 19 years</i>	5,544	8.5%
<i>20 to 24 years</i>	4,886	7.5%
<i>25 to 34 years</i>	8,026	12.2%
<i>35 to 44 years</i>	9,605	14.7%
<i>45 to 54 years</i>	8,439	12.9%
<i>55 to 59 years</i>	3,374	5.1%
<i>60 to 64 years</i>	2,826	4.3%
<i>65 to 74 years</i>	4,911	7.5%
<i>75 to 84 years</i>	2,946	4.5%
<i>85 years and over</i>	1,157	1.8%

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

◆ Population Characteristics

The population density of the county is 74.6 persons per square mile. The median age of the population is 35.5 years of age.

◆ Households

Pottawatomie County had 24,540 households in 2000. Statistics regarding those households are presented in tabular form on the final page of this report.

◆ Poverty

The poverty status in Pottawatomie County decreased for individuals by 6.5 percent. In 1990, there were 9,759 individuals living below the poverty level. This number decreased to 9,121 by the year 2000. The poverty level for family households with related children under 18 years of age decreased 6.5 percent between 1990 and 2000. In

Facts About Pottawatomie County

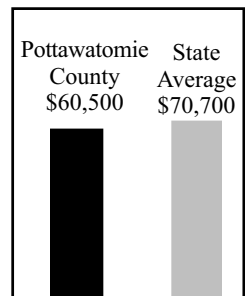
1990, there were 1,630 such families, but in 2000 the number declined to 1,524 families. Female households with no husband present and with her own children under 18 years of age living below the poverty level numbered 787 in 1990. These households increased 6.4 percent to 837 by the year 2000.

◆ Labor Force

The Pottawatomie County labor force was 28,940 in 2000. Participation rate in the county labor force constituted 68.48 percent of males and 50.77 percent of females. The county recorded an average annual unemployment rate of 3.38 percent in 2000 and the per capita personal income for the county was \$18,888 in 2000.

◆ Housing

The county has 24,540 housing units, and 72.1 percent of these are occupied by owners. Statewide, 68.7 percent of housing units are occupied by owners. The median owner-occupied home value in the county is \$60,500, and statewide, the median owner-occupied home value is \$70,700. The median housing rental contract is \$431 per month in Pottawatomie County. Statewide, the median housing rental contract is \$456 per month.



Owner-occupied home value.

◆ Tourism and Points of Interest

The major waterways in Pottawatomie County are the North Canadian River, Canadian River, Little River, and minor tributaries to the Deep Fork River. The major lakes are Shawnee Twin Lakes and the Wes Watkins Reservoir. Also located in Pottawatomie County are the Townsend's Antique Auto Museum, Santa Fe Depot Museum,

Facts About Pottawatomie County

St. Gregory's Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art, St. Gregory's Abbey, Oklahoma Baptist University, W.P. Wood Planetarium and Science Museum, OBU Raley Chapel, Tecumseh Historical Museum, and Tecumseh Faces of Freedom Memorial.

◆ Tax Structure

The county tax rate in Pottawatomie County is 1 percent and generated \$4,760,199 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 Asher, a 4 percent sales tax rate generates \$92,624; in Earlsboro, a 2 percent sales tax rate generates \$79,165; in Maud, a 4 percent sales tax rate generates \$156,178; in McCloud, a 4 percent sales tax rate generates \$476,301; in Shawnee, a 3 percent sales tax rate generates \$12,061,740; in Tecumseh, a 3 percent sales tax rate generates \$786,361; and in Wanette, a 2 percent sales tax rate generates \$18,126. The ad valorem average mill levy for Pottawatomie County is 90.16 mills, which generated \$19,601,201 in 2001-2002. Also, Pottawatomie County received \$3,130,396 from the state for the county's proceeds from the gas, diesel, and special fuel tax; the gross production tax; and motor vehicle collections.

Source: OTC State Payments to Local Governments FY 2000-2001 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

The county is home to Oklahoma Baptist University and St. Gregory's University, both private 4-year colleges, as well as the Gordon Cooper Technology Center. In Pottawatomie County, 79.3 percent of persons over 25 years of age have a high school diploma and 15.5 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 Pottawatomie County

◆ Primary Employers in the Area

Major Employers	Products/ Services	Number Employed	City/ Town
Unity Health Services, North & South Campus	Health Services	691	Shawnee
Wolverine Tube	Copper Pipe	500	Shawnee
Exxon-Mobil Chemical Co.	Plastic Film	490	Shawnee
Central Plastics Co.	Oil/Gas Products	450	Shawnee
Eaton Corp.	Hydraulic Motors	425	Shawnee
TDK Ferrites	Magnets	400	Shawnee
Shawnee Milling	Feed/Flour /Mixes	215	Shawnee
Uponor Aldyl Co	Fittings	157	Shawnee
Al-Ko Kober	Axles	140	Shawnee
Castle Glass	Glass Spacers	80	Shawnee
Unit Liner	Plastic Membranes	60	Shawnee
Belshe Trailer Industries	Commercial Trailers	40	Tecumseh

Facts About Pottawatomie County

◆ County Demographics – 1990 vs. 2000

	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>% Change</i>
County population	58,760	65,521	11.5%
Hispanic/Latino population	990	1,544	56.0%
White population	49,931	52,336	4.8%
Black or African American population	1,326	1,893	42.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native population	6,848	7,337	7.1%
Asian population	314	395	25.8%
Median age of all persons in the county	33.37	35.5	6.4%
Labor force	26,572	28,940	8.9%
Average annual unemployment rate	6.18%	3.38%	—
County per capita income	13,854	18,888	36.3%
Poverty - families with related children under age 18	1,630	1,524	-6.5%
Poverty - families with female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present	787	837	6.4%
Poverty - individuals	9,759	9,121	-6.5%
Persons over age 25 with a high school diploma	12,128	14,653	20.8%
Percent of persons over age 25 with a high school diploma	70.30%	79.30%	12.8%
Persons over age 25 with a college degree	4,467	6,367	42.5%
Percent over age 25 with at least a Bachelor's Degree	12.20%	15.50%	27.0%
Households - family household with own children under age 18	7,687	8,033	4.5%
Households - married couple family with own children under age 18	6,047	5,744	-5.0%
Households - female householder with own children under age 18, no husband present	1,346	1,732	28.7%
County housing units	24,528	27,302	11.3%
Owner-occupied housing units	16,105	17,697	9.9%

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





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