Noble County
Listening Session Report

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

November 14, 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.
Twenty-five (25) individuals interested in a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities participated in the Noble 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 Noble 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 Noble 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 Noble 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.

- Improve access and affordability of senior health care, both in home health and nursing homes
- Citizen involvement
  - Increase communication between community and legislators
  - Make public officials more accessible
  - Concerns for cuts in state budgets for all agencies
  - Keep school-to-work program
  - Enforce term limits for state and federal government positions
- Increase parental involvement, responsibility, and accountability
  - More parent involvement with their children
  - Increase involvement of people in community needs
  - Work to reduce crime
  - Increase citizens’ willingness to stand up for morality issues
- Improve health benefits
  - Affordability
  - Health care for children and adults
  - Control health insurance costs and insurance for the poor
- Restructure education
  - Look at administrative costs
  - Funding formulas
  - Lack of funding
  - Increase quality
  - Keep local schools, especially rural schools
  - More local control (guidance)
  - More volunteerism in schools
- Stimulate economic growth in Noble County and Oklahoma
  - Increase retail sales
  - Get people to come into town and spend money
  - Offer support and incentives for small businesses
Small Group Discussions

- Expand local job market
  - More jobs above minimum wage

- Citizenship involvement
  - Voter education
  - Promote voting
  - Participation at local level
  - Education about ballots and information on ballots
  - Collaborate among organizations

- Health care
  - Equal access to health care
  - Better long-term health care (nursing homes, adult day care)
  - Identify mental health needs
  - Early childhood development
  - More programs and support for parenting education
  - Support groups

- Education/public schools
  - Improve financial expenditures for schools
  - More local control (guidance)
  - More volunteerism in schools
  - More economical approach for continuing education (post-high school)
  - Communicate local ideas to legislature (with guidance to legislature)
  - More control of school funds

- Local and rural development
  - Invite new businesses to area to bring more employment opportunities
  - Advertise, encourage, and create tourism
  - More government funding in agriculture (family farm)
  - Create community advertisement board
  - Sell Oklahoma to local citizens
Small Group Discussions

- Generate more money for citizens and communities for the state
- Identify and promote community strengths (senior housing)
- Equalize taxation
- More availability of utilities to rural areas (availability of water)
- Incentives to keep young people in Oklahoma

- Industrial/economic development
  - Job opportunities to keep people here
  - Promote community assets
  - City/county surveys

- Education
  - Funding (budget cuts)
  - Legislation/mandates without funding or sufficient funding

- Illegal drug/crime problems
  - Methamphetamine labs
  - Drug education/funding
  - Stiffer penalties
  - Increased jail needs/funding

- Future of agriculture
  - Keep merchants here
  - Availability of agricultural dealers and machinery parts
  - Continued education of producers

- Strengthen the family unit
  - Morals
  - Family skills training
  - Parenting
  - Finance skills
  - Parental involvement
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 Noble County.

- **Local and rural economic growth**
  - Invite more retail and industrial businesses to area to bring more employment opportunities beyond minimum wage jobs
  - Support and incentives for small businesses
  - Advertise, encourage, and create tourism
  - Increase retail sales
  - Increase government funding in agriculture (family farm)
  - Create community advertisement board
  - Promote community assets through city and county survey
  - Sell Oklahoma to local citizens
  - Generate more dollars for citizens and communities
  - Identify and promote community strengths (senior housing)
  - Equalize taxation
  - More availability of utilities to rural areas (availability of water)
  - Incentives to keep young adults in Oklahoma

- **Restructure education**
  - Examine administrative costs
  - Funding formulas
  - Lack of funding
  - Increase quality
  - Keep local schools, especially rural schools
  - More local control (guidance)
  - More volunteerism in schools
  - Eliminate unfunded mandates

- **Mental and physical health care**
  - Affordable and equal access to health care
  - Better intermediate and long-term health care (nursing homes, adult day care)
  - Identify mental health needs
  - More programs about early childhood development
  - Support for parenting education
Large Group Discussion

- Support groups
- Control costs and provide insurance for poor

➢ Citizenship involvement
- Increase communication between community and legislators
  o Make public officials more accessible
  o Concerns for cuts in state budgets for all agencies
  o Keep school-to-work program
  o Enforce term limits for state and federal government positions
- Voter education
  o Promote voting
  o Voter participation at local level
  o Education about ballots and information on ballots
  o Collaboration among organizations
- Encourage youth and have more positive youth activities

➢ Increase parental involvement, responsibility, and accountability
- More parent involvement with their children
- Increase involvement of people in community needs
- Work to reduce crime
- Increase citizens’ willingness to stand up for morality issues
- Increase financial skills

In the months following the Listening Session, Noble 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 Noble 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.
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**

First known as County “P,” the area was part of the original Cherokee Outlet and was opened for settlement by the land run of September 16, 1893. The county was named for John W. Noble, U. S. Secretary of the Interior.

In 1881 the Otoe-Missouria Indians moved to their reservation, part of which is in Noble County. During the early days, the tribe leased land to the famed 101 Ranch. The town of Marland, in northern Noble County, was named for E. W. Marland, oilman and governor of Oklahoma in the 1930s.

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

The main source of income in Noble County is derived from agriculture, and the county remains primarily rural. Agricultural industry is also an important part of the county’s economy. Charles Machine Works, Inc., the world’s largest manufacturer of service line trenchers, is Noble County’s principal employer. It is located in Perry, the county seat.

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Noble County had 739 farms (averaging 559 acres). Average gate receipts were $53,690 in 1997, and the county had 10 farms with gate receipts in excess of $500,000. Agricultural production was divided between livestock (55 percent) and crops (45 percent). Contrasted with the 1992 Census of Agriculture, average gate receipts in 1997 increased 14 percent, from $47,054 to $53,690; the average farm size increased slightly, from 555 acres in 1992 to 559 acres in 1997.

Profile

Noble County is located in northern Oklahoma. The county is comprised of 742 square miles of agricultural land on level plains and some rolling hills. The average annual rainfall is 33.8 inches. Average temperatures range from 40.6 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 80.7 degrees Fahrenheit in July.

According to the 2000 census, the county seat, Perry, had a population of 5,230 residents. The city is located 63 miles north of Oklahoma City.

Households

Noble County had 4,504 households in 2000. Statistics regarding those households are included in the table on the final page of this report.
Facts About Noble County

◆ Population Characteristics
The population density of the county is 30.5 persons per square mile. The median age of the population is 38.3 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>11,411</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male population</td>
<td>5,630</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female population</td>
<td>5,781</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>1,361</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 years</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 years</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84 years</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

◆ Poverty
Poverty in Noble County decreased by 21.6 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were 1,815 individuals living below the poverty level. This number decreased to 1,423 by the year 2000. The poverty level for family households with related children under 18 years of age decreased 16.1 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 there were 279 such families, but by 2000 the number had declined to 234 families. Poverty-level households headed by women having no husband present and with children under 18 years of age numbered 125 in 1990. By 2000 such households had declined to 81, a decrease of 35.2 percent.
Facts About Noble County

◆ Labor Force
The Noble County labor force numbered 5,747 in 2000, with 69.2 percent of males and 48.4 percent of females employed. The county recorded an average annual unemployment rate of 2 percent in 2000. The per capita personal income for the county in 2000 was $21,836.

◆ Tourism and Points of Interest
The major waterways in Noble County are the Arkansas River, Black Bear and Red Rock creeks, Salt Fork of the Arkansas River, and some tributaries to the Cimarron River.

Also located in Noble County are the Cherokee Strip Museum and Henry S. Johnston Library, in Perry. Billings is home to the Renfrow-Miller Museum and the Henry Bellmon Library and Museum. Sooner Lake, Lake McMurtry, and Lake Perry provide water sports and other recreational opportunities in Noble County.

◆ Housing
The county has 5,082 housing units, and 88.6 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 $54,400. Statewide, the median owner-occupied home value is $70,700. The median housing rental contract is $388 per month in Noble County. Statewide, the median housing rental contract is $456 per month.

◆ Tax Structure
The average mill levy for ad valorem taxes in Noble County is 77.16 mills. It generated $8,641,771 in 2001-2002. Also, Noble County
received $2,008,738 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.

Noble County collects sales tax at three levels: state, county, and local. The state sales tax rate is 4.5 percent; the county rate is 0.25 percent, generating $155,107 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>Billings</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>164,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marland</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>15,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>77,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>167,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Rock</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>30,608</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


◆ **Education**

There are 81.5 percent of Noble 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 15.8 percent, compared to 17.8 percent statewide.
## Facts About Noble 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>Charles Machine Works, Inc.</td>
<td>trenchers</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billings Fairchild Center</td>
<td>nursing home</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Billings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Transportation</td>
<td>government services</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry Public Schools</td>
<td>education services</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Perry</td>
<td>government services</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier Public Schools</td>
<td>education services</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Red Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble County</td>
<td>government services</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>medical services</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart</td>
<td>retail store</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rush Metals</td>
<td>powder metal</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Billings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison Public Schools</td>
<td>education services</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Morrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Bank of Perry</td>
<td>financial services</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Bank and Trust</td>
<td>financial services</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. B. Johnston</td>
<td>grain elevator</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Billings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billings Public Schools</td>
<td>education services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Billings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Information Management, May 2000*
## Facts About Noble 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>11,045</td>
<td>11,411</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino population</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White population</td>
<td>9,828</td>
<td>9,864</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>-10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native population</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>-7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian population</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of all persons in</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the county</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force</td>
<td>5,364</td>
<td>5,747</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual unemployment</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County per capita income</td>
<td>14,489</td>
<td>21,836</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children under age 18</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>-16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - families with female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>householder with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>-35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty - individuals</td>
<td>1,815</td>
<td>1,423</td>
<td>-21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high school diploma</td>
<td>2,764</td>
<td>3,065</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of persons over age 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with high school diploma</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons over age 25 with a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college degree</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent over age 25 with at least a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - family household with own children under age 18</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - married couple family with own children under age 18</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>-5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households - female householder, with own children under age 18, no husband present</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County housing units</td>
<td>4,894</td>
<td>5,082</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>3,169</td>
<td>3,391</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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