MUSKOGEE
COMPREHENSIVE
HOUSING ANALYSIS

City of Muskogee
Muskogee Housing Authority
OU Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture
OU Institute for Quality Communities
OU-Tulsa Urban Design Studio
INTRODUCTION

This section provides a summary of the findings of this report along with the underlying purpose, processes, and methodologies.

- Executive Summary
- Developers' Brief
- Project Team
- Process & Scope
- Community Engagement
- Data & Analysis
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Muskogee Comprehensive Housing Analysis consists of two primary segments. First, the Assessment of the Housing Ecosystem details the results of the significant data collection and community outreach efforts which generated an understanding of housing issues in Muskogee. Second, Projections + Strategies outlines the findings and recommendations that are based on the results of the Assessment.

General Findings

1. Muskogee’s housing market is improving and offers opportunity in certain market segments.
2. Muskogee has assets that could present a strong branding and marketing message.
3. Muskogee is geographically positioned as an edge city of the Tulsa metro.
4. Muskogee’s deteriorating housing stock destabilizes the market and offers inadequate choices for residents.
5. Muskogee has a high portion of cost-burdened households and an undersupply of housing for the very poor.
6. The development industry perceives risk in constructing or renovating housing in Muskogee.
7. Muskogee’s stable population, large land area, and low density makes it difficult to keep up with infrastructure needs.
8. Muskogee has challenges with its image, both internally and externally, which affect perceptions about the community and people’s behavior.

Strategies and Prototypes

The project team recommends a strategy that encourages a diversified blend of housing prototypes concentrated in specific neighborhood areas that exhibit high potential:

For prototype categories and sites, the project team recommends a set of policies and programs for the public sector to implement in support of preferred development patterns in these areas.

- Assemble suitable sites for development (landbank)
- Support the preparation of surveys to determine development suitability
- Partner with developers through agreements to develop publicly-held land
- Improve public amenities and infrastructure with an emphasis on prototype sites
- Waive fees for development in prototype sites
- Provide capital or assist with financing for qualified projects
- Diversify housing units across market segments
- Develop branding and messaging promoting Muskogee as a place to live
- Create incentives for potential residents directly or through participation of employers
Finally, the project team recommends a set of citywide initiatives that are not limited to the prototype sites, which broadly address issues related to housing that came up through the course of this study.

- Focus on preferred development areas with established amenities and infrastructure
- Stabilize at-risk housing to preserve older stock homes
- Take a street-by-street approach to revitalization
- Create landlord certification and incentive programs
- Upgrade the availability and currency of public GIS data
- Empower neighborhood associations
- Pursue targeted zoning code adjustments to enable a greater variety of housing types
- Improve the aesthetic appearance of key corridors in Muskogee

While many initiatives rely on the leadership of the public sector, Muskogee's homeowners and residents can also take action, as people in many other distressed neighborhoods have done. "Do-it-yourself" or DIY approaches that can help improve neighborhoods include:

- Adopt and maintain vacant lots next to your home
- Look after vacant homes in your neighborhood with simple exterior maintenance
- Light up dark streets with porch lights or carriage lights
- Use your personal network to attract new neighbors to move to the area
- Repair homes and assist neighbors with repairs
- Strengthen neighborhood organization efforts and in-person events
- Meet and get to know your neighbors

Through collaboration between residents, the public sector, non-profit organizations, and the development industry, Muskogee can improve its supply of adequate housing.
DEVELOPERS' BRIEF

Muskogee’s housing market is improving and offers opportunities for residential development. Projections in this report indicate a need for 1,606 new housing units and 2,150 replacement housing units over the next ten years with the potential under favorable conditions to absorb 3,756 total units.

Muskogee is geographically positioned as an edge city of the Tulsa Metropolitan Area. It has excellent highway connections to metropolitan destinations. Broken Arrow is a 30-minute commute and Downtown Tulsa is a 50-minute commute via the Muskogee Turnpike. US Highway 62 leads to the Port of Muskogee, Ft. Gibson, and Tahlequah to the east, while US Highway 69 connects to Wagoner and Pryor to the north. Currently, 7,622 people that work in the Tulsa Metropolitan Area live in Muskogee, which represents a 1.7% penetration rate of the metropolitan employment base. Muskogee will need to add 360 new housing units just to maintain the same penetration rate over the next ten years.

The City of Muskogee is also a regional job center with 23,744 jobs clustered in manufacturing, health care, primary education, and government service. Muskogee’s employment rate is increasing modestly at a rate of 0.3% per year with anticipated job growth of 649 jobs over the next ten years. Currently, 64% of people that work in Muskogee commute there. That is roughly 10% higher than the number that commuted a decade ago. While it is not unusual for a job center like Muskogee to have more than 50% of jobs filled by commuters, the city wants to increase its capture rate of inbound commuters by 5% in the next ten years. When combined with anticipated job growth, the increased capture rate generates demand for another 1,246 housing units.

In order to attract new employers and residents the city is investing millions in quality of life improvements, including the Muskogee Little Theater, the Love-Hatbox Field Sports Complex, the Centennial Trail, and the Depot Green. Voters in October 2019 passed a $110 million bond package for the Muskogee Public Schools.

Like many older cities in Oklahoma, Muskogee’s housing stock is aging and deteriorating. Over 60% of the housing stock is more than 50 years old. Obsolete and derelict single-family units are being demolished three times faster than new units are being built. Almost no new market-rate multi-family units have been built in the city in the last thirty years. While overall housing vacancy rates are high, many apartment complexes surveyed reported no vacancy. In the single-family home market moderate- and middle-income homes are down to a three-month sales inventory. Obviously, Muskogee’s deteriorating housing stock destabilizes the market and offers inadequate choices for residents. Muskogee needs to build 215 units every year to replace obsolete, derelict, and unsellable units.

Overall, Muskogee has set a target to build 1,606 new housing units by 2030. The target for owner-occupied home construction is 883 and the target for rental housing is 723 units. The targets reflect the current breakdown of housing tenure in the city. The city also seeks to reduce its vacancy rates of housing units and lots. Keeping up with its replacement needs would require 2,150 renovations or additional new units: 850 single-family homes and 1,300...
apartments. The potential demand indicated by growth and replacement represents the equivalent of almost 25% of total available housing units.

Given that housing construction activities over the last few decades have not come close to the potential demand, the real estate development and housing industry must perceive barriers and risks to developing in Muskogee. The City of Muskogee is committed to working with developers, employers, and residents to discover the barriers to new housing construction and mitigate the risks in order to achieve its goals. The recommendations included in this report have been developed in consultation with local and regional housing industry representatives. They include a wide range of possible programs and incentives, including assistance to developers with due diligence, site acquisition, regulatory compliance, infrastructure needs, and access to capital.

This study also identifies six target prototype categories and locations for focused investment. These include several market segments. First, monthly inventories of homes for sale in the $80,000 to $200,000 range are particularly low. These are moderate income single-family homes with three or four bedrooms and 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 baths. Second, there is need for moderate- to high-rent apartments in the $800 to $1000 per month range. Thirdly, there is a significant need for workforce and low-income housing. Approximately 1/3 of new housing units should be affordable. Mixed income projects eligible for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are a feasible option. Alternative affordable building types to be considered include single-room occupancy units, ancillary dwelling units, and cottage home or tiny home developments. Finally, Muskogee has a growing vulnerable population of elderly, disabled, and veterans that need accessible dwelling units. The city promotes universal design construction standards with twenty percent of new units fully accessible.
PROJECT TEAM

Steering Committee
The steering committee consisted of people representing local government, the housing industry, and local employers. The committee participated in meetings every other week through the duration of the project to guide progress, provide feedback, and answer questions for the project team.

Gary Garvin (Chair) Assistant City Manager, City of Muskogee
Mike Miller City Manager, City of Muskogee
Blake Farris Executive Director, Muskogee Housing Authority
Tish Callahan Planning Director, City of Muskogee
Dan Hurd Assistant Planning Director, City of Muskogee
Erik Puckett Superintendent, Hilldale Public Schools
Dr. Jarod Mendenhall Superintendent, Muskogee Public Schools
Mac Keeling Realtor, ERA C.S. Raper and Son
Lindsey Holloway Builder, Cimarron Contractors
Brian Kirk Realtor, Coldwell Banker Select
Mark Luttrull Pioneer Abstract Company
Michele Keeling St. Francis Hospital
Doug Walton Muskogee County Health Department

Consulting Team
The consulting team consisted of faculty and graduate students from the Institute for Quality Communities, and the Urban Design Studio, two programs of the University of Oklahoma Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture.

Shawn Schaefer, Project Manager Director, OU Urban Design Studio
Shane Hampton, Data Analysis Lead Director, OU Institute for Quality Communities
Michael Birkes, Community Engagement Lead Community Health and Environmental Design Coordinator
Sherry Smith, Project Coordinator Graduate Research Assistant, Master of Urban Design Student
Joel Hensley, Data Analyst Master of Urban Design Student
Tristan Fox, Multi-Family Housing Specialist Master of Urban Design Student
The City of Muskogee and the Muskogee Housing Authority sought a study and plan for the supply and demand of Single-Family and Multi-Family Housing in the City of Muskogee. This study has been developed as a guide to housing policy and redevelopment in the city. The study has been carried out with local partners by the University of Oklahoma Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture, including the OU-Tulsa Urban Design Studio and OU Institute for Quality Communities.

**Phase I: Data Collection and Analysis to Determine Current Housing Supply**

- Collect data about the supply and condition of Muskogee’s current housing stock, including, but not limited to: type, tenure, vacancy, value, quality, age, and condition.
- Examine existing demographics, including, but not limited to: population, employment status, age distribution, education, household characteristics, commuting patterns, housing turnover and migration patterns.
- Document percentage of rent burdened households, families living below the 80% and 50% level of average median income.
- Descriptive data from this effort is presented as maps, charts, graphics, and text discussions.

**Phase II: Community Outreach and Engagement to Identify Market Trends**

- Reach a variety of housing constituencies to look for trends for future housing demand.
- Conduct a windshield survey of Muskogee to become familiar with Muskogee’s neighborhoods and housing stock and photograph housing types.
- Catalog major multi-family housing complexes, including LIHTC and Section 8 properties.
- Identify and interview realtors, homebuilders, apartment managers, landlords and other directly involved in the provision of housing.
- Investigate partnerships with major employers, like the Veterans Administration, Georgia-Pacific, and St. Francis Health Care through interviews.
- Examine the impact or need for Historic Preservation Guidelines.
- Conduct two or three focus groups to meet with homeowners, renters, and other housing consumers.
- Compare with data from Phase I and triangulate with local, state, and national trends.

**Phase III: Projections of Market Demand and Recommendations**

- Synthesize the analysis of the previous two phases to develop conclusions for the City of Muskogee and the Housing Authority about the types, size, price, and quantity of housing needed in the next five-, ten-, and fifteen-year horizons.
- Identify which of these demands will need incentives, subsidies, code revisions, or other policy changes in order to be met.
- Develop overview of potential assistance programs from local, state, national, and private sources.
- Develop draft study for review in September.
- Deliver final report in electronic format and ten printed and bound copies to the City of Muskogee.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Scheduled Interviews

19 individuals from a variety of local businesses, non-profit organizations, employers and city officials were interviewed over a two-month period. Interviews generally started by understanding the individual's connection to housing in the City of Muskogee. A general outline of interview process is as follows:

- What is your agency's connection to housing in Muskogee?
- What data and/or information does your agency have as it relates to housing?
- What is your impression of the primary issues facing the City of Muskogee concerning housing.
- Finally, what outcomes would your agency like to see come from this study?

Generally, interviews lasted approximately one hour, however, some lasted longer due to input that elicited further questions and elaboration.

Interview Participants

ACME Engineering
Steve Dennis - HR Manager

daltile
Joseph Fuller - HR Manager
Craig McNeill - Senior HR Generalist

ERA CS Raper & Sons
Shawn Raper - Owner - Realtor Associate

Georgia-Pacific Consumer Products
Tom Strother - Public Affairs Manager
Jerry Keeley - HR Manager

Cimco Group
Lindsey Holloway - President

Lynco Properties
Gary Goss - President

Muskogee (Fireproof) Hotel Owners
Greg Armstrong, P.E. - Vice President of Holloway, Updike and Bellen, Inc.
John Burns - Owner/Partner of Cook Consulting

Martin Design Architects, LLC
Mike Martin - Architect

Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa
Stacey Bayles - Director of Association Issues

Muskogee County Assessor
Ron Dean - County Assessor
Anthony Jones - Chief Appraiser

Muskogee County Health Department
Doug Walton - TSET Healthy Living Program Coordinator

Tulsa Property Group Leasing and Management, Inc.
Luke Westerfield - Managing Broker
Nathan Garrett - Managing Member

Capital Homes
David E. Charney - Owner

Louie Slape Construction, Inc.
Louie Slape - President

Muskogee Housing Authority
Blake Farris - Executive Director

Muskogee Police Department
Mike Brawley - Records Supervisor
Reggie Cotton - Deputy Chief

City of Muskogee
Tish Callahan - Planning Director
Dan Hurd - Building Official
Jimmy Wood - GIS Specialist

Muskogee Public Schools
Jarod Mendenhall - Superintendent

Saint Francis Hospital
Michele Keeling - Administrator, Saint Francis Hospital
Muskogee and Vice President, Saint Francis Health System

Urban Renewal Authority
Darrell Russell - Chairman
Focus Groups

During this same period, two focus groups were held to gain insight and comments. The first focus group targeted commuters. The second focus group targeted homeowners in Muskogee. A third focus group targeting renters in Muskogee was scheduled and individuals committed to attend. However, no one attended the focus group meeting.

The focus groups were supplemented by an interview with Saint Francis staff that did provide input on the subject of ownership, rental, and commuters.

Street Interviews

Finally, the team conducted street interviews to supplement the scheduled interviews and focus groups. These interviews were conducted as discussions about Muskogee and captured a variety of perspectives on living and working in Muskogee.

A focus group in progress.
DATA & ANALYSIS

Local Data

Steering committee members and other local contacts provided assistance in gathering relevant data from local sources.

- The City of Muskogee provided geographic data on zoning, buildings, utilities, and other relevant geography in addition to building permits, code violations, demolition activity, and crime statistics.
- The Muskogee County Assessor provided an export of current data from its parcel records database, which included information about the age, condition, value, and characteristics of existing residential properties.
- Realtors provided recent data from the MLS on housing sales.
- The 2015 Muskogee County Housing Needs Assessment documented housing conditions.

State and National Data

Much of the data on people and households comes from the US Census Bureau and other federal authorities.

- The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (2012-2017) are the most recent estimates for housing, population, and income characteristics. These estimates are used wherever possible. Note that as a survey reaching only a sample of the population, all data from this source does have a margin of error.
- The US Census Bureau’s Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data provides information about local employment dynamics and commuting through the year 2015.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides quarterly employment reports and documents job openings and labor turnover through surveys.
- Data from the State of Oklahoma includes information about school districts and designated Opportunity Zones.
This section summarizes the current conditions and trends of factors related to the housing market in Muskogee, based on data analysis, interviews, and focus groups carried out by the project team. The discussions in this section form the basis of the projection model and strategies in the final section.

- Housing Stock & Market
- People & Preferences
- Development Context
HOUSING STOCK & HOUSING MARKET

KEY DISCUSSIONS

› Muskogee has an aging housing stock that is not being renewed at a replacement rate.

› Muskogee has a high vacancy rate, but many vacant homes are in poor condition or not suitable to people in the market for homes.

› The for-sale housing market in Muskogee shows signs of stabilization and improvement.

› The multi-family rental housing market is tight.
HOUSING STOCK

Housing Units and Occupancy

Muskogee has an overall housing supply of approximately 18,000 units (2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates) or approximately 2.12 housing units per capita. Of these units, an estimated 17% are vacant by Census estimates. Muskogee has a higher vacancy rate than selected peer cities and the statewide average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Housing Stock and Occupancy</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Units (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>17,993</td>
<td>16,870</td>
<td>9,792</td>
<td>21,801</td>
<td>11,573</td>
<td>13,654</td>
<td>1,712,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Units Per Capita (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Housing Units (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>15,015</td>
<td>14,792</td>
<td>8,738</td>
<td>19,358</td>
<td>9,798</td>
<td>11,908</td>
<td>1,468,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy Rate (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy Rate (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 15,000 occupied housing units in Muskogee, approximately 8,500 (57%) are owner-occupied and 6,500 (43%) are renter-occupied. Muskogee has a higher than average share of renter-occupied housing, particularly compared to Bartlesville, Enid, and Ponca City. Muskogee’s share of renter-occupied housing is most comparable to Shawnee. Among owner-occupied households, about 44% own their home free and clear with no mortgage, approximately equal to the state average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renter and Owner Occupancy</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Occupied Housing Units (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>8,534</td>
<td>9,617</td>
<td>5,041</td>
<td>11,863</td>
<td>6,217</td>
<td>6,691</td>
<td>964,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Occupied Units Owner-Occupied</td>
<td>56.84%</td>
<td>65.01%</td>
<td>57.69%</td>
<td>61.28%</td>
<td>63.45%</td>
<td>56.19%</td>
<td>65.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Occupied With Mortgage (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>4,796</td>
<td>5,443</td>
<td>2,899</td>
<td>5,547</td>
<td>2,984</td>
<td>3,619</td>
<td>540,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied Without Mortgage (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>3,738</td>
<td>4,174</td>
<td>2,142</td>
<td>6,316</td>
<td>3,233</td>
<td>3,072</td>
<td>423,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Owner-Occupied Units Owned Free and Clear</td>
<td>43.80%</td>
<td>43.40%</td>
<td>42.49%</td>
<td>53.24%</td>
<td>52.00%</td>
<td>45.91%</td>
<td>43.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-Occupied Housing Units (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>6,481</td>
<td>5,175</td>
<td>3,697</td>
<td>7,495</td>
<td>3,581</td>
<td>5,217</td>
<td>504,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Occupied Units Renter-Occupied</td>
<td>43.16%</td>
<td>34.99%</td>
<td>42.31%</td>
<td>38.72%</td>
<td>36.55%</td>
<td>43.81%</td>
<td>34.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map of Rental Occupancy

Map of Vacancy Rate
According to the Muskogee County Assessor data, the dominant housing type in Muskogee is single-family homes, consisting of nearly 87% of all residential parcels in the City of Muskogee. About 9% of residential parcels are vacant, as shown in the map below. A fraction of parcels are used for Muskogee's multi-family properties.
Residential Character Areas

Muskogee has neighborhoods from a variety of time periods and styles.
Age and Condition of Housing

Based on US Census Bureau data, Muskogee housing structures have median year of construction of 1970. By this data source, Muskogee has a slightly older housing stock compared to the statewide average, but is generally comparable to the selected peer cities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Housing Units and Vacancy</th>
<th>Muskogee Median Year Structure Built (2017 ACS)</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Muskogee County Assessor data may reveal a more nuanced picture of the age of housing structures in Muskogee. Among records with an actual or estimated year of construction in assessor records, the median year built was 1960 and the average was 1962. Multi-family structures are slightly newer on average, with a median year of construction of 1983 and an average of 1976.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map of Median Year Built</th>
<th>Median Year Structure Built</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age and Condition of Residential Structures (Muskogee County Assessor Data)</th>
<th>Single-Family Structures</th>
<th>Multi-Family Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Structures Recorded</td>
<td>15,588</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Year Built</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Year Built</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Poor or Very Poor Condition</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Below Average Condition (Poor, Very Poor, and Fair)</td>
<td>15.50%</td>
<td>14.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Muskogee County Assessor also classified 16,600 residential properties according to condition. About 930 (5.6%) of the properties are in poor or very poor condition and about 2,500 housing structures were below average condition (ranked very poor, poor, or fair).

Older properties are somewhat more likely to be in below average condition and newer properties are somewhat more likely to be above average condition.

**Age and Occupancy of Housing**

Generally, older housing units in Oklahoma have higher vacancy rates than newer construction. The disparity in occupancy for older and newer homes is especially strong in Muskogee, where the vacancy rate among units built before 2000 is 17% (near the community-wide average), while the vacancy rate among units built since 2000 is 11%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vacancy Rates of Newer Homes</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units Built Since 2000 (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>1,466</td>
<td>1,769</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2,031</td>
<td>322,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum Rate for Post-2000 Construction (Est)</td>
<td>10.78%</td>
<td>13.17%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>7.71%</td>
<td>7.29%</td>
<td>6.99%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units Built Before 2000 (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>16,527</td>
<td>15,101</td>
<td>9,155</td>
<td>20,102</td>
<td>11,244</td>
<td>11,623</td>
<td>1,390,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum Rate for Pre-2000 Construction (Est)</td>
<td>17.06%</td>
<td>12.22%</td>
<td>10.52%</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>15.57%</td>
<td>13.80%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Vacuum Rate (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Derelict, Unsafe, and Vacant Violations

The map below shows code violations for derelict, unsafe, or vacant structures that have been reported over the last ten years. Minor violations like uncut grass, abandoned property (usually vehicles), and trash are much more common than derelict structures.

Structures that receive a "derelict" violation are the structures that are most imminently facing condemnation and demolition. Structures that receive an "unsafe" violation are likely to become derelict without intervention. These violations have been dispersed throughout much of Muskogee.

After the intervention of the City of Muskogee’s demolition program, it is estimated that there are approximately 100 derelict houses remaining, and about 150 unsafe or unfit structures that may become derelict. Many of these unsafe homes still have residents living in them.

For the purposes of this study, a Census figure recording housing units without complete plumbing facilities (1,855 units as of the 2017 American Community Survey) has been used as a proxy for identifying the number of uninhabitable housing units in Muskogee.

Map of Derelict, Unsafe, and Vacant Structure Code Violations
Demolitions

The City of Muskogee actively seeks to demolish unsafe and derelict housing structures at a rate of about 90 per year. In the past decade, 950 structures have been demolished by the City. Demolitions are occurring three times faster than new units are being constructed in Muskogee.

There are pros and cons to the decision to demolish housing structures. While this effort can remove dangerous and derelict structures from the housing supply, it may reduce the number of older homes available to renovate. This can have an outsized impact, particularly in areas which may harbor potential in their historic character.

At-Risk Structures

As of July 2019, there are approximately 856 structures that are defined as at-risk and if not maintained could deteriorate to a state of unfit and derelict.
HOUSING MARKET

Building Activity

Building activity in Muskogee has been low. 304 permits for single-family housing units have been issued in the City of Muskogee over the past decade, or about 30 per year. About 1/3 of the units built during this decade were subsidized housing units. Most market-rate permits were issued in the east part of town and outskirts of the City, and most subsidized units were clustered in the west part of the city near 24th Street West.

It would take about 443 years at the current permit rate to replace all of the single-family housing units in Muskogee.

Map of Single-Family Building Permit Activity 2009-2018

Legend
Building Permits Issued for New Single-Family Housing Units from 2009 - 2018

- Market Rate Units
- Subsidized Units

Building Permits
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Map of Single-Family Building Permit Activity 2009-2018

MUSKOGEE COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING ANALYSIS
Building Activity in Context

Based on US Census Bureau Data, Muskogee’s building activity has been significantly lower than the statewide average in the last several decades. About 8.7% of Muskogee’s occupied housing stock has been constructed since 2000. Bartlesville and Shawnee have seen higher rates of building activity, and Shawnee has nearly twice the proportion of its housing units built in the last two decades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Activity Since 2000</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Occupied Units Built Since 2000 (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>1,096</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>209,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-Occupied Units Built Since 2000 (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>76,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Occupied Units Built Since 2000</td>
<td>1,308</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>1,889</td>
<td>286,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Occupied Units Built Since 2000</td>
<td>8.71%</td>
<td>10.38%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>8.10%</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
<td>15.86%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multi-Family and Rental Housing in Muskogee

Multi-family and rental housing is an important component of a successful housing market. Just a few examples of groups that may prefer renting for short-term or long-term periods include people who are just moving into the community and in the market for housing, younger people who are starting out their careers, people who would like to reduce maintenance effort and expenses, and people whose incomes are too low to save large sums for down payments. Muskogee also has industrial employees, traveling employees, and short-term employees that need quality multi-family housing options.

An analysis of Muskogee’s large multi-family properties showed that these properties experience extremely low vacancy rates, with only a handful of vacant units. This trend was true of apartment complexes across the spectrum of rent budgets.

In addition to the limited vacancy, there is limited variety in Muskogee’s rental housing market.

Ultimately, people may be experiencing difficulty in finding a suitable unit for rent in Muskogee at this time.
Character of Multi-Family Housing
For-Sale Housing Market Indicators

Muskogee County has generally improving performance indicators for for-sale housing market. The metrics do not indicate that Muskogee County is a hot suburban market like Rogers County, but Muskogee County compares to Washington County and compares favorably to Cherokee County.

### Regional For-Sale Market Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>Rogers</th>
<th>Cherokee</th>
<th>Creek</th>
<th>Tulsa MSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Months Supply of Inventory May 2019</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months Supply of Inventory May 2018</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>14.64</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average List Price May 2019</td>
<td>$130,371</td>
<td>$137,477</td>
<td>$217,731</td>
<td>$103,975</td>
<td>$135,482</td>
<td>$185,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average List Price May 2018</td>
<td>$110,480</td>
<td>$108,801</td>
<td>$201,520</td>
<td>$107,494</td>
<td>$164,610</td>
<td>$186,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Days on Market May 2019</td>
<td>47.61</td>
<td>37.71</td>
<td>40.33</td>
<td>59.62</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>38.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Days on Market May 2018</td>
<td>43.45</td>
<td>34.54</td>
<td>45.57</td>
<td>56.41</td>
<td>46.83</td>
<td>43.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Inventory May 2019</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>5,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Per Month Average Last 12 Months</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The closed versus listed ratio was 52.8% in May 2019, up from the previous year at 46.2%. The trend in this metric forecasts a continuing decrease in the Months Supply of Inventory (MSI) in the Muskogee market. Data compiled from the Greater Tulsa Association of REALTORS®.
Muskogee County’s Months Supply of Inventory (MSI) has been generally declining since 2015, and approaching the 6-month threshold that indicates a balanced market. As values decrease below the 6-month threshold, data suggests a need for more housing on the market. MSI in Muskogee is declining at a faster rate than the Tulsa metropolitan area as a whole. High-volume properties with a low MSI include 3-bedroom properties in the range of $60,000-$200,000.

Viewing recent MLS activity is useful, but does not capture a picture of housing types that may be underrepresented in the market but in demand among the pool of potential buyers.
Density of MLS Activity in Muskogee

Census block groups in Muskogee County with higher median home values are found in the northern part of the county along the Arkansas River, and the highest home values are concentrated in the northeast corner of Muskogee.

Most MLS home listings are concentrated on the east side of Muskogee, with other pockets scattered on the west and south.
PEOPLE + PREFERENCES

KEY DISCUSSIONS

› Muskogee’s population has remained flat for several decades, but some areas of the city have experienced significant decline in population while others have added housing.

› Muskogee is well-positioned as both a job center and edge city with 100,000 jobs in a 45-minute commuting shed.

› A greater share of workers are finding housing elsewhere and commuting into Muskogee.

› Muskogee has a high share of cost-burdened and rent-burdened households.

› Muskogee has some challenges and assets for quality of life.
Population & Moving Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca City</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>38,139</td>
<td>36,398</td>
<td>21,888</td>
<td>50,809</td>
<td>24,579</td>
<td>30,974</td>
<td>3,896,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Change Since 2010</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>-3.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Area (Square Miles)</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>44.67</td>
<td>69,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Density (Per Sq Mi)</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>2,907</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>1,254</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca City</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% that Moved to Current Unit Since 2015 (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Owner-Occupied that Moved In Since 2015</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Renter-Occupied that Moved In Since 2015</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% that Moved to Current Unit Since 2010 (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Owner-Occupied that Moved In Since 2010</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Renter-Occupied that Moved In Since 2010</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population Declines

While Muskogee’s population has remained mostly unchanged over several decades, parts of the city that generally fall along the Main Street axis have experienced sharp losses in population, leaving many neighborhoods with vacant lots, abandoned, and derelict homes.
Employment Within Commuting Distances

With a high number of jobs within a 15-minute drive and a dramatic increase in the number of jobs when driving up to 45-minutes, Muskogee most closely represents Shawnee. The two cities function like edge cities that have their own significant job concentration but are also near enough for a commute to the edges of nearby metropolitan areas.

The share of these jobs that fall in the high-earning category of over $3,333 per month is average in Muskogee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca City</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs within 15-minute drive</td>
<td>26,201</td>
<td>20,353</td>
<td>225,212</td>
<td>23,667</td>
<td>12,137</td>
<td>18,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs within 30-minute drive</td>
<td>32,452</td>
<td>23,476</td>
<td>524,459</td>
<td>26,665</td>
<td>17,069</td>
<td>28,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs within 45-minute drive</td>
<td>100,159</td>
<td>31,635</td>
<td>607,501</td>
<td>30,182</td>
<td>19,953</td>
<td>169,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs within 45-minute drive with earnings greater than $3,333/month</td>
<td>37,080</td>
<td>13,034</td>
<td>228,529</td>
<td>11,278</td>
<td>6,888</td>
<td>66,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Jobs within 45-minute drive with earnings greater than $3,333/month</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bartlesville is slightly out of the range of capturing the edge of Tulsa’s job centers within 45-minutes, and Enid and Ponca City are quite isolated from other nearby job centers.
Muskogee’s 45-minute drive time includes southeast portions of the Tulsa metro, Tahlequah, and other outlying communities. The edge city nature of Muskogee suggests a potential dual role as a job center and bedroom community, and a need to analyze the proportion of people who are commuting to and from Muskogee.
Inbound Commuters: Muskogee as a Job Center

63.6% of jobs (15,098) in Muskogee are held by people who commute from outside. Among jobs earning greater than $3,333/month, 66.6% of the workers (5,802) commute from outside.

Muskogee has a significantly higher rate of inbound commuters compared to Bartlesville (50.4%), Enid (44.3%), and Ponca City (52.4%), and a lower rate of inbound commuters compared to Shawnee (71%). Del City is a significant outlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inbound Commuters</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca City</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of All Workers Employed in Area and Living Outside</td>
<td>63.60%</td>
<td>50.40%</td>
<td>89.60%</td>
<td>44.30%</td>
<td>52.40%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Workers earning greater than $3,333/mo living outside</td>
<td>66.60%</td>
<td>48.80%</td>
<td>93.30%</td>
<td>49.80%</td>
<td>58.20%</td>
<td>71.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between 2002 and 2015, Muskogee had a steady increase in the share of workers employed in Muskogee who commute from elsewhere. In 2002, only 54.3% commuted from elsewhere, compared to two thirds today. The trend holds true across all age groups, but generally younger workers with jobs in Muskogee are more likely to live outside of Muskogee.

If Muskogee captured inbound commuters as residents at the average rate of the five cities (54.53%), approximately equal to Muskogee's capture rate in 2002, it would have 2,150 more workers employed in Muskogee who also live in Muskogee. Among higher earners over $3,333/month the peer average is a 57.13% capture rate, and about 820 more would live in Muskogee.

Outbound Commuters: Muskogee as an Edge City

46.9% of resident workers in Muskogee (7,622) live in Muskogee and commute elsewhere for jobs. Among workers who earn more than $3,333/month, 43.4% live in Muskogee and commute elsewhere (2,231).

Muskogee has a lower rate of residents commuting elsewhere compared to Shawnee and Ponca City. It has a higher rate of residents commuting elsewhere compared to Bartlesville and Enid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outbound Commuters</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca City</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Resident Workers Living in Area and Working Elsewhere</td>
<td>46.90%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Resident Workers Earning Greater than $3,333 Elsewhere</td>
<td>43.40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>97.50%</td>
<td>41.70%</td>
<td>62.90%</td>
<td>63.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of residents commuting out of Muskogee for jobs in other communities also increased since 2002. If Muskogee captured residents employed elsewhere until it reached the average of the five cities, it would have about 340 more residents who work elsewhere or about 420 more high-earning residents who work elsewhere.
INCOME AND AFFORDABILITY

Median Income

Muskogee County has areas of higher median income primarily around the outskirts of the City of Muskogee and Fort Gibson in the northeast part of the county. Muskogee County's low income populations are concentrated in the core areas of the City of Muskogee.

Many federal housing programs utilize Area Median Income thresholds to determine guidelines for affordable housing efforts. Two common thresholds are 50% of AMI and 80% of AMI. The City of Muskogee has many block groups where greater 40-70% of the households are below 50% of the Area Median Income, with the highest concentrations in the central and north-central parts of the city.
Cost Burden for Owner-Occupied Households

If an owner-occupied household spends greater than 30% of its income in the past 12 months on housing costs, the household is considered to be cost-burdened. Muskogee has a slightly higher than average share of owner-occupied households experiencing cost burdens. This is true of homes that still have a mortgage and homes owned free and clear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Households with Mortgage Burdened by Housing Costs (2017 ACS)</th>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Bartlesville</th>
<th>Del City</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Ponca City</th>
<th>Shawnee</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Households without Mortgage Burdened by Housing Costs (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of All Owner-Occupied Households Burdened by Housing Costs (2017 ACS)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rent Burden for Renter-Occupied Households

If a renter-occupied household spends greater than 30% of its income in the past 12 months on gross rent, the household is considered to be rent-burdened. Additionally, households spending greater than 50% of income in the past 12 months on gross rent are considered severely rent-burdened. Among the peer set of communities, Muskogee has the highest proportion of households that are rent-burdened and a very significant proportion of households that experiences severe rent burden.

In Muskogee County, rent-burdened households are most prevalent in certain block groups north of downtown Muskogee.
HOUSEHOLD INCOME ESTIMATES USING HUD AMI RATES FOR MUSKOGEE COUNTY

High 21%
Moderate 9%
Middle 12%
Low 22%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME ESTIMATES USING 2017 ACS CENSUS FOR CITY OF MUSKOGEE

High 30%
Very Low 14%
Low 12%

City of Muskogee
Household Median Incomes: ACS 2017 5-Year Aggregates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>HUD AMI</th>
<th>Households using HUD</th>
<th>15,015 Percent</th>
<th>$36,276 Census M</th>
<th>Households using Census</th>
<th>15,015 Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Low</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>$16,470</td>
<td>3,276</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>$10,863</td>
<td>2,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>$27,450</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>$18,138</td>
<td>2,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>$43,920</td>
<td>2,330</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>$29,021</td>
<td>1,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>$54,900</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>$36,276</td>
<td>1,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>120%</td>
<td>$65,880</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>$43,531</td>
<td>2,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Greater than $74,999</td>
<td>3,151</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>$43,531</td>
<td>Greater than $60,000</td>
<td>4,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMPARISON OF HOUSING COSTS

Median Gross Rents

Owner Costs (Mortgaged Units)

$1,515

RENT BURDEN COMPARISON

Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income
Rent Burdened Housing
2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

1/3 of Households in Muskogee are Burdened by Housing Costs
QUALITY OF LIFE CONSIDERATIONS

School Quality and Housing

The quality of local schools was cited as a major decision factor in residential location decisions, particularly for families with children. The city limits of Muskogee primarily served by Muskogee School District and Hilldale School District.

In addition to the influence of school quality on residential location decisions, more and more research is revealing the close connection between health and the built environment, particularly the housing we live in. Poor housing can have negative impacts on children’s emotional and behavioral health. In a research study by the MacArthur Foundation1 key findings were presented:

- “Poor housing quality is the most consistent and strongest predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in low-income children and youth among the five housing characteristics studied (quality, stability, ownership, and receiving a housing subsidy).”
- “Residential stability also is important for children’s well-being.”
- “Much of the association between poor quality and unstable housing and children’s well-being operates through parental stress and parenting behaviors.”
- “Children exposed to homes with leaking roofs, broken windows, rodents, non-functioning heaters or stoves, peeling paint, exposed wiring, or unsafe or unclean environments experience greater emotional and behavioral problems.”
- “Housing quality also was related to school performance for older children, with adolescents in poorer quality homes showing lower reading and math skills in standardized achievement test.”

Most of Muskogee’s largest employers have indicated difficulty getting people they recruit to live in Muskogee. These employers, along with realtors and developers, have said their recruits, or clients, research the city online to determine if Muskogee will be a fit for their family. These stakeholders cite the school’s online grade as one of the number one reasons people give for choosing not to live in Muskogee. The Muskogee Public School District serves all of Muskogee’s downtown area and most of the city.

Sadler Arts Academy has a higher report card grade, for the grade levels it serves, than any other schools in the area; including Union and Broken Arrow. Unlike some magnet schools, Sadler Arts Academy does not have a requirement to accept (or offer a chance of acceptance to) a percentage of children within the neighborhood it resides.

It is the observation of the management at the City of Muskogee that the state’s scorecard does reflect the high quality of education provided by both Hilldale and Muskogee Public School systems. The actual education Muskogee students receive far outpaces both the state’s grade and the negative false narrative the scorecard helps advance.

Both Hilldale and Muskogee have recently passed major bond issues, showing the community’s support for education and investing in our future. MPS’s recently approved bond issue totals $110 million and will result in a total overhaul and improvement of every school. We are confident that at some point the image of the schools will catch up to the already existing reality: students in Muskogee have access to top notch education.

1. Poor Quality Housing is Tied to Children’s Emotional and Behavioral Problems by Rebecca Levine Coley, et. al., at MacArthur Foundation. September 2013.
MUSKOGEE COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING ANALYSIS

Legend

- Public Schools
- One-half Mile Walking Distance to Schools

Schools

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

PORTER SCHOOL DISTRICT
MUSKOGEE SCHOOL DISTRICT
FT. GIBSON SCHOOL DISTRICT
HILLDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
One-half Mile Walking Distance to Schools
Quality of Life Amenities

Growing Downtown

Much progress has been made in downtown Muskogee in the past few years, including the Katy District and Depot District. These areas have new attractions, shops, and restaurants for people to enjoy. The 2017 Downtown Muskogee Plan continues to guide efforts.

Strong History

Muskogee is one of Oklahoma’s oldest communities, and its historic structures and neighborhoods are a big asset for many people looking for a place to live with interesting character. This aspect of Muskogee is endangered by the neglect and demolition of historic housing and commercial structures. Historic Preservation efforts will be essential to maintaining a strong asset in Muskogee.

Regional Employment Base

As mentioned in previous sections, Muskogee has a strong employment base. Muskogee’s concentration of employers and access to transportation networks can continue to support this growth. Quality housing options are essential to attracting workers who can fill these positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Dept. of Veterans Affairs</td>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center</td>
<td>Medical Facility</td>
<td>1240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Francis Medical Center</td>
<td>Medical Facility</td>
<td>922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia-Pacific</td>
<td>Paper Products</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskogee Public Schools</td>
<td>School District</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Muskogee</td>
<td>City Government</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dal-Tile</td>
<td>Porcelain Tile</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Compelling Message for Muskogee

Muskogee has a compelling message for prospective residents, which includes a rich set of cultural amenities and events. Focusing on Muskogee’s lifestyle opportunities might be a great approach for attracting residents.

The city (made famous by Merle Haggard’s song, Okie From Muskogee) is home to Oklahoma’s Music Hall of Fame. This is located in Muskogee’s Depot District, a growing historical district that also houses the Muskogee Little Theater, the Three Rivers Museum, a row of antique shops, quaint coffee shops and popular pubs.

Love Hatbox Field is a sports and recreation complex housing many baseball and softball fields, a water park, many soccer fields and football fields, an old airport that Amelia Earhart once landed at, a dance hall and is the starting point of the Centennial Trail, a bicycle and pedestrian trail. The Centennial Trail merges with the Robison Park Trail. These trails meander around and throughout the town, connecting these interesting places and amenities.

Not far from Hatbox Field is Honor Heights Park. Honor Heights is best known for its annual Azalea Festival. However, this is only a small part of its local attraction. This beautifully landscaped park feels like a secluded wilderness. There are four ponds of varying sizes, four trails (one of which is a dirt path that meanders through the woods for those who like to experience nature in greater depth), a splash pad, a playground, a butterfly garden with a pavilion, fields, and covered shelters to hold events. A number of organized runs take place in the park. The park has a steep hill that makes it a favorite for locals to train for runs.

At the top of the Honor Heights Park hillside is Muskogee’s VA Hospital. The hospital is a large draw for the city and can be seen from many places in the city.

Also nearby is The Castle of Muskogee, an attraction that draws people from many states. These people primarily come for The Castle’s Renaissance Festival in May and Renaissance Weekend Retreats throughout the year. The Castle also hosts events for Independence Day, Halloween, Christmas, and a Zombie Run in September.

Adding to Muskogee’s adventurous opportunities, the Port to Fort Adventure Run takes place each July. This race has it all, biking (on- and off-road), paddling, swimming, and running. Participants can choose between 10 miles and 20 miles, and many people choose to attend as spectators enjoying food trucks.

Muskogee has a lot to offer for foodies. In addition to local restaurants and a brewery, the Farmer’s Market is held at the Civic Center, in downtown, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The first Saturday of each month is the most important Farmer’s Market day. Locals have craft fairs, bike rides, walks and food. Of course there are fruits and vegetables, but visitors will also find organic meats, local honey and cheese, and food trucks.
DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

KEY DISCUSSIONS

› Developers are hesitant to move forward with projects due to perceived risk and other factors.

› Infrastructure upgrades are needed to improve the suitability of development areas.

› Zoning codes may limit the ability of property owners and developers to pursue a variety of modern housing typologies.

› Aspects of historic preservation ordinances can be improved to streamline development and rehabilitation.
Private Sector Sentiment and Activity

Development of housing within the City of Muskogee has been small and sporadic over the past decade. Population growth is extremely small, thus making developers unwilling to undertake a large development. The number built each year is approximately 30 and are usually custom built. Newest and largest single-family development has occurred in the Cobblestone development south of the city and in the Hilldale school district. Some development has also occurred in Ft. Gibson and usually in one to two units at a time.

Very little multi-family housing has been developed within the past decades. In conversations with employers, it was noted that generally new workers coming to and new to Muskogee often end up moving into multi-family developments in Broken Arrow and Tulsa. Once there, these individuals develop friendships and relationships that make moving back to Muskogee in the future problematic.

Developers generally perceive risk in housing development in Muskogee, and in some cases there are shovel-ready projects that a developer is unwilling to begin on due to perceived risk and other factors. Some developers noted that the costs of new construction often exceed the market rate for housing in Muskogee. Some developers noted the cost of materials and availability of labor can be impacted by the region’s proximity to the housing market in Tulsa.

Public Sector Support and Barriers

The City of Muskogee and City of Muskogee Foundation implemented a Housing Incentive Program to encourage development within the original townsite a few years ago. Major areas within this part of the City have seen significant clearance and demolition of homes, leaving isolated houses within blocks, or blocks that are completely empty. Cleared areas have utilities and street access, however, they’re old and condition is suspect. Streets have no curb, gutter or sidewalks and storm water is handled by roadside swales. Ultimately, few new houses were developed as a result of the Housing Incentive Program.

The Muskogee Housing Authority has constructed a number of subsidized, for-sale housing units.

The City of Muskogee’s comprehensive plan has been recently updated (2013) along with a complete update to the zoning code. However, the residential component of the zoning code may not offer adequate flexibility for new types of housing typologies that fall within the “missing middle” between single-family homes and large commercial apartment complexes. For example, most residential zoning categories require a minimum lot width of 60 feet and minimum lot size of 7,200 square feet. Many established city lots that could make attractive infill sites do not meet these two minimum requirements, introducing a complication for redevelopment.

Many communities are reevaluating zoning codes to allow for a streamlined development process encouraging new housing types. For example, many of the latest innovations in residential zoning include:

- Providing for small-lot single-family homes, sometimes with shared access on split lots
- Providing for cottage court communities, with small homes clustered around shared common space
- Allowing for more areas where housing types other than single-family homes are permitted by right
Historic Preservation Ordinances

Data from previous sections has shown that Muskogee has an aging housing stock, which is reflective of the fact that Muskogee has a longer and more significant history than many peers in Oklahoma. Aging housing is both a challenge and opportunity: Many older homes fall into disrepair, but the availability of historic properties and neighborhoods where historic homes are being renovated is a very attractive characteristic for many homebuyers. Clear preservation ordinances should enable homebuyers to see a clear path toward restoring historic homes and building on vacant lots in historic areas.

Local, state, and national preservation regulations are intended to preserve character and maintain integrity of historic places. They can introduce limitations or create an additional layer of complexity in development and redevelopment projects, but they can also unlock incentives and allow neighborhoods to maintain strong values.

Muskogee has 7 designated historic districts and over 60 designated historic structures. Districts like Founders’ Place and Kendall Place are largely dominated by historic housing stock, and the Downtown Muskogee and Muskogee Depot and Freight districts also have potential for further housing development.

- Founders’ Place Historic District (Local Designation 1987) is a residential area between Okmulgee Street and MLK Street, between N 12th Street and 17th Street.
- Kendall Place Historic District (National Register 2005) is a residential district roughly bounded by Elgin Street, S. 14th Street, S 16th Street, Okmulgee Avenue, Boston Street Alley, and S 11th Street.
- Downtown Muskogee Historic District (Local Designation 2008) is a largely commercial district covering downtown between Columbus Street, Denison Street, Main Street, and S 7th Street.
- Muskogee Depot and Freight Historic District (National Register 2006) is a largely commercial-industrial district between Columbus Street and the abandoned railroad tracks.
- The “Y” Historic District (Local Designation 2014) is an area along MLK Street from N 24th to N 20th Street.
- Samuel L Sadler Historic District (Local Designation 2012) is a school at Girard and Altamont Streets.
- Bacone College Historic District (National Register 2014)

Comparative Review of Preservation Ordinances

The research team conducted a comparative review of historic district ordinances in Enid, Okmulgee, Norman, and Muskogee, summarized in the table on the following page. The ordinances have the same general outline. These ordinances all create commissions to regulate and oversee designated historic districts, with a primary routine function to approve or deny Certificates of Appropriateness when applicants in the districts seek to make certain changes to property.
Generally, Muskogee has a less prescriptive and specific ordinances than the other communities. Norman’s ordinance has some of the most stringent features. For example, in Norman adjacent property owners must be notified of the proposed changes. Additionally, in Norman the historic district commission does not have final approval. Instead, the item must continue to get city council approval.

Ordinances in the peer communities feature some characteristics worth considering for Muskogee’s ordinances. For example, in Enid and Norman the ordinance defines “ordinary maintenance and repair” and excepts these changes from the Certificate of Appropriateness requirement. In Enid, certain types of changes to property are eligible for staff approval, and are not required to go before the historic district commission, if the staff determines they meet the conditions in the ordinance. All three communities include in the ordinance their attitude toward new construction in historic districts, but Muskogee does not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muskogee</th>
<th>Enid</th>
<th>Norman</th>
<th>Okmulgee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Types</td>
<td>Commercial and residential districts</td>
<td>Primarily residential districts</td>
<td>Commercial and residential districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval Authority</td>
<td>Historic Commission approval; Rejected applications may appeal to City Council</td>
<td>Routine changes (paint, fence, driveway, roof, etc) eligible for staff approval if they meet specific requirements</td>
<td>Historic District Commission and City Council approval required; some changes eligible for staff approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptions to Certificate of Appropriateness Requirement</td>
<td>No exceptions defined</td>
<td>Defines exception for “ordinary maintenance and repair”</td>
<td>Defines “Ordinary maintenance and repair” and lists scenarios that do not require Certificate of Appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Toward New Construction</td>
<td>No description provided</td>
<td>Specifies new construction is not intended to be limited to a period or style</td>
<td>Specifies that new and infill construction is not intended to be limited to a period or style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Criteria</td>
<td>Defers to Secretary of Interior’s Standards</td>
<td>Specifies characteristics that will be evaluated for each district, like the massing of buildings and roofs, positioning of doors, porches, and windows, etc.</td>
<td>Historic District Commission separately maintains “Preservation Guidelines” that guide decisions, and include detailed expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notifications</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Requires notification of adjacent property owners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROJECTIONS + STRATEGIES

This section summarizes projections and targets for housing production as well as strategies for implementation.

- Key Findings
- Demand Model
- Strategies
- Urban Prototypes
- Suburban Prototypes
- Tactics for Success
- Citywide Initiatives
- DIY Muskogee
KEY FINDINGS

The key findings emerged from the analysis of data, interviews and focus groups, and discussions with the steering committee that have been discussed in previous sections. Key findings, presented here alongside quotes from interviews and focus groups, represent challenges and opportunities for Muskogee’s housing market. They set the stage for the projections of housing demand and strategies that will be discussed in this section.

Muskogee’s housing market is improving and offers opportunity in certain market segments.

- For-sale housing market indicators are improving, and there is a particular need for more supply of starter homes and middle-income units.
- Multi-family housing construction has been low, and there is a need for some additional supply of new, middle-income multifamily units.

Muskogee is geographically positioned as an edge city of the Tulsa metro.

- Commuting distance of the Tulsa metro area’s job opportunities
- Many major employers that attract commuters from surrounding areas
- Well-connected to commuter and freight transportation for continued economic development

Muskogee has assets that could present a strong branding and marketing message.

- Affordable cost of living, good jobs, improving schools, and proximity to the Tulsa metro area
- Growing downtown with events and attractions with historic residential neighborhoods
- Potential appeal to workers with jobs in Muskogee and the Tulsa region, veterans, and retirees

Muskogee’s aging housing stock destabilizes the market and offers inadequate choices for residents.

- Housing units are not being built or renovated at a replacement rate.
- Derelict structures, violations, and abandonment destabilize neighborhoods, particularly the core of the city.
- The vacancy rate on paper is high, but the supply of housing that meets the needs and preferences of certain market segments is limited.
Muskogee has a high portion of cost-burdened households and an undersupply of housing for the very poor.

- Aging public housing with deferred maintenance
- People who need Housing Choice vouchers and public housing experience lengthy wait lists.
- Inadequate supply of units that accept vouchers
- A high percentage of households are burdened by the cost of their rent or mortgage.

Muskogee's stable population, large land area, and low density makes it difficult to keep up with infrastructure needs.

- While the city's past commitment to infrastructure has lagged, city leaders and citizens have answered the call to address the backlog of maintenance with for $45 million in water and sewer upgrades underway and a newly implemented tax that will triple the street budget beginning in 2020.
- Public transportation is limited, creating challenges for access from housing to healthcare, jobs, and food.

The development industry perceives risk in constructing or renovating housing in Muskogee.

- Low housing prices for existing homes mean that it is difficult to construct a new home with a competitive price.
- The proximity to the Tulsa development market drives up the cost and limits availability of materials and labor.
- Zoning may not encompass the range of housing variety that is currently in demand for many market segments.

Muskogee has challenges with its image, both internally and externally, that affect perceptions about the community and people's attitudes and behavior.

- School district performance is a critical decision factor for families with children
- Perception of higher crime rates, poorly maintained properties, and low expectations for quality
- Key corridors and parts of town are littered and lack well-kept properties.
A demand model gazes into the future and tries to predict the need for housing in the City of Muskogee later. The model presented here does not differentiate between different types of housing units, it only tries to predicate an overall demand. The model is based on *A Housing Gap Analysis for Lander County, Nevada* by Thomas R. Harris and Brian Bonnenfant at the University Center for Economic Development at the University of Nevada, Reno.¹ It has been enhanced in three ways. First, it has been expanded to include additional factors for determining demand recommended in a white paper developed for the National Council of Housing Market Analysts entitled *Recommended Practices for Determining Demand* by John Prior, Bob Rogers, Tad Scepaniak and Scott Allen.² Second, it has been extended to predict housing demand for the next ten years. It is a waterfall model. The predicted housing gap in Year 1 is based on current data like the Lander, Nevada study. First year data is fed into the second year, second year data into the third year, and so forth through the tenth year. The housing demand calculation for each year is cumulative and reflects the total demand for housing through that year. Third, the number of housing units in need of replacement has been added to the total housing gap. This number reflects the need for replacing units lost to age and obsolescence and does not represent new demand due to job growth, increased capture rate, or increased penetration rate.

Several variables are adjusted by entering rates of change into the model based on market conditions. These assumptions allow the model to simulate various future market conditions. As with any model, users should be cautious to not rely on it as an absolute predictor of future results. It was not developed by the researchers as a guaranteed method for estimating demand, rather it is to be used to test various scenarios. When it is used to predict market demand its assumptions should reflect targets or goals where policies and practices are changed to adjust market conditions. The assumptions should also be regularly updated to reflect changes to policies and programs, as well as external market forces that may affect its outcomes. In other words, the model can be used to track changes to city policy and programs and to see if actual outcomes match predicted outcomes.

The model is in spreadsheet form. The calculation of the housing need consists of 26 entries. Some entries are reference data; other entries are the result of simple arithmetic operations. As mentioned above the first year uses current data and the future years use data modified by nine assumptions. The next section describes the basic calculation for Year 1.

---


Employees
The first entry consists of the number of employees working in the City of Muskogee. Year 1 data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau 2015 Longitudinal Economic and Household Data. The city had a total of 23,744 employees in 2015, the most current year available.

Employment Capture Rate
The employment capture rate is the percentage of employees that work in the City of Muskogee that also live in the city. The current rate of 36.4% comes from the U.S. Census Bureau 2015 Longitudinal Economic and Household Data.

Employment Penetration of Metro Job Market
This entry reflects the number of people that work in the Tulsa Metropolitan Area but live in the City of Muskogee. It also comes from the U.S. Census Bureau 2015 Longitudinal Economic and Household Data. The current number is 7,622 Muskogee residents that work in the Tulsa Metropolitan Area.

Employment Vacancy Rate
In any job market there are always some level of open positions due to turnover, retirement, or job creation. The model uses 4% as the employment vacancy rate based on data from the 2019 Job Opening and Labor Turnover Survey from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Vacant Jobs
The number of vacant jobs is the product of the total number of jobs times the employment vacancy rate or 950 jobs in Year 1.

Employment Estimate
The employment estimate of the number of jobs for people living in the City of Muskogee is the sum of the product of total number of employees times the employment capture rate plus the employment penetration of the Tulsa metropolitan job market plus the number of vacant jobs. The Year 1 total is 17,215 jobs.

Population
The total population of the City of Muskogee from the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau. The estimated population is 38,139.

Population per Employee
This entry is calculated by dividing the total population by the employment estimate, which results in 2.22 people per employee.

Population in Group Quarters
This is the number of people living in group quarters like jails, prisons, nursing homes, dormitories, or other similar housing. According to the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau there are 1,331 people in the City of Muskogee living in group quarters.

Market Penetration of Metro Housing Market
This entry is obtained by dividing the employment penetration of the metropolitan job market (people living in Muskogee that work in the Tulsa Metro,) by the total number of employees in the Tulsa Metropolitan Area as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau 2015 Longitudinal Economic and Household Data. The current penetration rate is 1.7%.

Population from the Metropolitan Housing Market Penetration
The product of the employment penetration of the Tulsa Metropolitan Area job market times the population per employee or 16,921 people in Year 1.

The Population to Be Housed
The population to be housed is a complex sum obtained from many of the calculations above. First, the total number of employees is multiplied by the employment capture rate and added to the number of vacant jobs. This calculation is then multiplied by the population per employee. Finally, the population of people from Metropolitan Housing Penetration is added and the number of people in group quarters is subtracted. The result in Year 1 is 36,885.

Average Household Size
The average number of people making up a household from the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau or 2.45 people.

Number of Households
The number of households in the City of Muskogee from the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau or 15,015 households.

Households per Housing Unit
A ratio obtained by dividing the number of housing units by the number of households. This entry is affected by the housing vacancy rate and the number of households living in each housing unit.

Preliminary Housing Demand
A crude estimate of housing demand obtained by dividing the population to be housed by the number of households per housing unit times the average household size. This estimate includes the vacancy rate, which exceeds the rate of an efficient housing market, thus the preliminary demand needs to be adjusted to account for vacancy rate
before a final demand can be determined.

**Vacancies**
The number of vacant housing units.

**Actual Vacancy Rate**
This entry contains the percentage of vacant housing units form the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau or 16.6%.

**Efficient Vacancy Rate**
An efficient housing market still has some vacancies, so buyers have a selection of housing to choose from. A 5% vacancy rate was used for this model.

**Demand with Vacancy Rate**
This entry for demand for housing includes a correction for vacant units. It is calculated by subtracting the efficient vacancy rate from the actual vacancy rate and multiplying the difference with the preliminary housing demand calculated earlier. The corrected demand is the preliminary demand minus the surplus vacant units.

**Housing Stock**
The number of total housing units available in the City of Muskogee according to the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau or 17,993 housing units.

**Uninhabitable Units**
Some housing units are considered uninhabitable. There are many ways to make that determination. For the purposes of this model, the number of housing units without adequate plumbing are considered uninhabitable. The data is from the 2017 American Community Survey estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau or 1,855 units.

**Available Housing Units**
Available housing units are the total number of housing units minus uninhabitable units.

**Housing in Pipeline**
The housing in the pipeline is the number of housing units under construction. Year 1 uses three times the ten-year average of building permits from the City of Muskogee permitting office or 93 new houses in the pipeline. Three years were used to bring the total from 2017 to 2019.

**Housing Demolished**
The City of Muskogee has demolished 94 homes per year on average over the last ten years, Year 1 uses three times the ten-year average or 282. Three years were used to bring the total from 2017 to 2019.

**Housing Gap**
The housing gap or overall demand is calculated by subtracting the demand with vacancy rate correction from the available housing units, then adding the number of housing units in the pipeline and subtracting the number of housing units demolished.

**Housing in Need of Replacement**
The number of housing units needed to replace units lost due to age and obsolescence.

**Projected Housing Need**
The sum of the housing gap and the number of housing units in need of replacement.

**Assumptions**
*The cumulative need for Years 2 through 10 is based on the results of Year 1, with a series of cascading adjustments made based on the following assumptions. The rates pass through the table in a waterfall effect to create the cumulative predictions. Note that the assumptions in the model can and should be modified as necessary for different scenarios.*

**Job Growth**
The number of employees is increased or decreased based on job growth in Muskogee. The scenario shown in this analysis assumes a modest .30% annual growth in employment. This is consistent with the average growth reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Employment Reports for the last ten years. This is a conservative assumption, but could be affected by future economic conditions, for instance a recession.

**Building Permits**
The current rate of building permits in Muskogee is 31. This number was assumed for the baseline number of housing units in the pipeline each year. This is a steady state assumption.

**Demolitions**
The current rate of demolitions in Muskogee is 94. this number was used as the baseline number of housing units demolished each year. This is a steady state assumption.

**Change in Employment Capture Rate**
The change in employment capture rate increases or decreases the number of employees living in Muskogee. For the last ten years Muskogee’s capture rate has been decreasing from 45% to 36.4%. The model presented in the analysis assumes a .5% annual increase in capture rate, which is a significant turnaround from historic trends. To achieve the results shown in the model, significant
incentives for new housing development and efforts to attract and capture commuters will be necessary. This is an aggressive assumption.

**Change in Employment Penetration**
The change of employment penetration increases or decreases the number of people employed in Tulsa that commute from Muskogee. The rate assumed in this analysis is .5% per year. Any increase of this magnitude will only keep Muskogee at a 1.7% penetration rate of the Tulsa Metropolitan Area employment market. This result is due to the expansion of the job market increasing faster than the assumed value. This is a conservation assumption.

**Uninhabitable Units Renovated**
This number reflects the number of uninhabitable units repaired or upgraded to become inhabitable again. This analysis assumes 10 units per year being renovated. This is a conservative assumption.

**Absorption Rate of Vacant Units**
The absorption rate of vacant units decreases the number of vacant units by assuming people occupy the vacant units or the units become uninhabitable. This analysis assumes a 5% absorption rate. Efforts will be required to upgrade units and market them to reduce vacancy. This is an aggressive assumption.

**Maximum Ratio of Households per Housing Units**
This is a cap to prevent the ratio from exceeding state average rates of .87. This is a conservative assumption with modest effect.

**Annual Replacement of Existing Housing Units**
Muskogee has 8,543 owner-occupied housing units. Based on a 100-year lifespan, replacing 1% of these each year requires 85 new units. Muskogee has 6,481 renter-occupied housing units. Based on a 50-year lifespan, replacing 2% of these each year requires 130 new units. The total annual replacement of existing housing units is assumed to be 215 per year.
## DEMAND MODEL DEMONSTRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>23,744</td>
<td>23,815</td>
<td>23,887</td>
<td>23,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Capture Rate</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Penetration of Metro Job Market</td>
<td>7,622</td>
<td>7,660</td>
<td>7,698</td>
<td>7,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Vacancy Rate</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Jobs</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Estimate</td>
<td>17,215</td>
<td>17,401</td>
<td>17,587</td>
<td>17,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>38,139</td>
<td>38,629</td>
<td>39,044</td>
<td>39,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per Employee</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in Group Quarters</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>1,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Penetration of Metro Housing Market</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population from Metropolitan Housing Market</td>
<td>16,921</td>
<td>17,005</td>
<td>17,056</td>
<td>17,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population to be Housed</td>
<td>36,885</td>
<td>37,281</td>
<td>37,603</td>
<td>38,007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Households</td>
<td>15,015</td>
<td>15,055</td>
<td>15,232</td>
<td>15,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households per Housing Unit</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary Housing Demand</td>
<td>18,041</td>
<td>18,141</td>
<td>18,039</td>
<td>18,014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacancies</td>
<td>2,978</td>
<td>2,829</td>
<td>2,688</td>
<td>2,553</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actual Vacancy Rate</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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### Basic Assumptions

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Based on the assumptions utilized in this demonstration, Muskogee would have a need for 1,606 new housing units and 2,150 replacement housing units over the next ten years, with the potential under favorable conditions to absorb 3,700 units.

This model does not reflect segmentation of the market into home types or price ranges.
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*Based on Assumptions Noted*
Conclusions

The housing cycle replacement rate for Muskogee over ten years is 2,150 housing units. Muskogee has not met its replacement target since the 1970’s. Achieving the replacement rate is a reasonable goal given the low-level of housing construction starts in the last three decades, but it falls short of the more ambitious goals of increasing the city’s population, raising tax revenue, and improving the fiscal sustainability of the city. Conventional developers have not shown much interest in restoration of existing housing stock or scattered site redevelopment of vacant lots. Thus, the City of Muskogee will need to continue and expand providing incentives to meet replacement targets.

The demand for 1,606 new units will result if the model’s assumptions are manipulated as indicated. Some of the variables used in the demand model are directly linked to housing, including absorption of vacant units and increasing building permits with incentives to developers. The strategies that follow aim to change these variables. Other variables aim to attract new residents and generate demand by recapturing commuters that work in Muskogee and live elsewhere or penetrate the Tulsa Metropolitan Housing market as a source of housing for people working there. These variables probably cannot be addressed by housing policy or programs alone. They require comprehensive and integrated programs to improve quality of life in Muskogee. These programs need to improve schools and public K-12 education, expand higher education opportunities, attract or grow businesses, revitalize downtown with more activities, and change perceptions and preconceptions about Muskogee that persist, despite evidence to the contrary.

There are several market segments that Muskogee should target for new development.

- First, monthly inventories of homes for sale in the $80,000 to $200,000 range are low. These are moderate income single-family homes with three or four bedrooms and 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 baths.
- Second, there is need for higher rent apartments in the $800 to $1000 per month range.
- Thirdly, there is a significant need for workforce and low-income housing. Approximately 1/3 of new housing units should be affordable. Mixed income projects eligible for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are a feasible option. Alternative affordable building types to be considered include single-room occupancy units, ancillary dwelling units, and cottage home or tiny home developments.
- Finally, Muskogee has a growing vulnerable population of elderly, disabled, and veterans that need accessible dwelling units. The city should adopt universal design construction standards with twenty percent of new units fully accessible.
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STRATEGIES

Housing Prototypes

Muskogee needs strategies for housing redevelopment and specific prototype projects to test the strategies and encourage growth. The strategies consist of tactics, policies, and programs that enable the prototype projects to succeed. The prototypes fall into six categories: Restoration and Infill of Existing Neighborhoods, Suburban Single-Family Construction, Urban Single-Family Construction, Urban Multi-Family Construction, and Exurban Development. While, each area focuses on a specific type of development, nothing in these recommendations should preclude mixing types of housing units or other uses if appropriate for a specific development project.

Prototype Sites

Not all areas of the city can be addressed initially or equally. The large physical size of Muskogee and its extensive housing needs require a geographical focus for each prototype. Discussions with potential developers indicate that there should be a nexus between the housing development and other positive attributes in the neighborhood that will make the new housing desirable to potential renters or purchasers. A focus on housing in downtown and the original town site fits this requirement. The city is in danger of losing its historic character and many more irreplaceable structures if it does not focus on the core area. The city has also recently completed a downtown plan and invested significantly in the revitalization of the downtown area. Sites have been identified in the downtown area for the three urban prototypes that take advantage of the development nexus in each location. Even though they are on different sides of downtown, the sites should function together to encourage interest and reinvestment in downtown generally.

The three suburban prototypes also identify with their own development nexuses. Specific boundaries for these prototype areas have not be identified in this study. The city should conduct a public process to clearly demarcate the boundaries for each prototype area that will be eligible for development incentives. These areas do not need to be the same size or shape but should not exceed 10% to 15% of the city’s total area.

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1. Exurban Development is an extreme form of suburban development in rural areas with little infrastructure. It often takes the form of widely scattered, large-lot housing development.
Map showing urban housing prototypes and target sites.
Founder's Place is one of Muskogee's Historic Districts. It is in the process of applying to be included on the National Register of Historic Places. The 28-block neighborhood is located west of downtown bounded by Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard on the north, 12th Street on the east, Okmulgee Avenue on the south, and 17th Street on the west. It is a short and pleasant walk to downtown. Development of the area began in the late 1800's with many large and historically significant homes. There are also many charming smaller homes and quite a few duplexes, small apartment buildings, and auxiliary dwelling units. One block is devoted to Beckman Park, an attractive green space with large trees, but few other amenities. The neighborhood has a very active Homeowner's Association registered as a non-profit corporation. Homeowners pay dues and the organization has a forward-looking strategic plan.

Like much of the city, Founder's Place has seen a fair amount of deterioration. While some homes have been meticulously restored, others need renovation. There are also dozens of empty lots available for infill development. This area needs a coordinated approach to assist existing owners to fix and improve their homes, while also attracting new development for new families. A few of the larger homes may be appropriate for multi-family conversion into two or three flats, but most of the infill would likely be single-family houses. As a historic district, proper guidelines need to ensure that restorations and infill preserve the character of the neighborhood. Repairs and upgrades that can be made without a certificate of appropriateness from the city should be clearly defined, as well as items that can be approved by planning staff. Guidelines for new construction should also be developed for the new infill homes. The standards should be specific with clear evaluation criteria that respond to local character, materials, and scale. The Founder's Place Homeowner's Association is already in the process of developing these standards.
Notes on Reforming Historic Preservation Ordinances

Based on the comparative review of historic preservation ordinances in peer communities, the following actions are recommended to improve and simplify the process of restoring historic housing or building housing in designated historic areas.

**Define “ordinary maintenance and repair” actions and exempt the changes from the Certificate of Appropriateness requirement.**

The Certificate of Appropriateness requirement could be perceived as a barrier to ordinary maintenance or repair of structures. A category of actions might include any work meant to repair or maintain a structure without changes in materials, design, or appearance of the exterior. Additionally, painting and roofing might be included in this category.

**Create a category of actions eligible for staff approval if they meet defined conditions.**

Some routine actions could bypass the Historic Commission and receive a Certificate of Appropriateness directly from city staff. For example, the ordinance could identify re-roofing, fence, driveway, accessory building, or door and window standards that are automatically eligible for approval.

**Define an attitude toward new construction in historic districts.**

While this attitude may vary from one district to another, it is helpful for the ordinance to state an attitude toward new construction in historic overlay areas. The ordinance may state that new construction and infill should use similar massing or materials, or how buildings should relate to their neighbors, or whether modern design is encouraged.

**Consider providing more specificity about evaluation criteria.**

The standards and characteristics which the Historic Commission will evaluate should be clearly outlined in the ordinance. While Muskogee’s ordinance currently defers to the Secretary of the Interior’s standards, these standards do not always cover local preferences or how to handle new and non-historic structures.
The area near Sadler Arts Academy is recommended for new single-family housing development. The Sadler Arts Academy is a highly regarded K-8 Magnet School that would be a natural attraction for families with children moving to Muskogee. The school received a grade of A from the Oklahoma Board of Education in 2019. No other Muskogee Public School scored higher than C. It is also noteworthy that no Hilldale or Ft. Gibson School scored higher than a B. Furthermore, the Sadler Arts Academy is also scheduled to receive $10 Million in upgrades and additions from the school bond issue approved in October 2019. Part of the school improvement package is for a Manual Training School Alumni Center, which acknowledges the important role this school and the neighborhood has for the African-American community in Muskogee. The historic nature of the neighborhood is another desirable feature that should be embraced.

Located on the north side of downtown, the area near Sadler and the adjacent Capital Hill neighborhood is within walking distance of downtown. There are several recreational attractions nearby, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, Elliott Park, the Muskogee Swim and Fitness Center, and the trailhead for the Centennial Multi-Use Trail. There are also several churches and childcare centers in the neighborhood. There is considerable vacant or underutilized land in the vicinity on all sides of the school. The Muskogee Public Schools owns considerable land adjacent to the school and across the street, which is used for school bus storage. There are large parcels available on the north and west sides of the Arrowhead Mall property. There are several blocks to the east of the school with very few houses remaining. There are more houses remaining in Capital Hill, but there are still many parcels available for development.

Muskogee Public Schools could play a crucial part in the development of this prototype. They already have done much to invest in Sadler Arts Academy and have earmarked more money for further improvements. They could also be a source of development land if they could make school properties available. Relocating the bus transportation center would be a significant step. Perhaps, the City of Muskogee has an alternate site it could offer for this function. The schools could also enhance the area by including an admission quota for qualified students living near Sadler Arts Academy.
The area surrounding Sadler Arts Academy and Capital Hill has an abundance of vacant land that is already served by basic infrastructure. There is also land held by the public in this area that could be offered as part of a public-private partnership to incentivize development of new single-family housing neighborhoods.
Urban Multi-Family Construction: Depot District and Katy District

Downtown Muskogee also has many older buildings that are suitable for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. The Katy District has seen a fair amount of reinvestment along Main Street, as has the east end of Broadway Street. Hence, the intersection of Main Street and Broadway Street is a particularly important node. The venerable Muskogee Hotel is a linchpin on the corner. Across from the popular Max’s Garage Night Spot, it is in dire condition, but with incredible potential. The owners of the five-story structure have plans for redevelopment but lack the necessary funding and resources. It may be a difficult political position to select one project for favored treatment, but this one could be an important catalyst for the district, and it is not likely to be funded without significant subsidy. Another important building is the old Tweeterville Birdhouse Company storefront. Located one block east of the Muskogee Hotel it terminates the vista of Broadway and connects the west side of the railroad tracks to the east side of town, another area with several neglected but wonderful old buildings. It has a large billboard on the roof that could become a landmark. The building is probably more suited for another entertainment venue but should be included in plans for this area.

Proposals for upper floor residential have been proposed above Hoopes Hardware and in the Severs Building as well. These should be encouraged to proceed with incentives identified in the Downtown Plan. Additional buildings along Main Street also appear suitable for upper floor housing. Several parking lots in this could also be sites for future infill projects, if the rehabilitations prove successful. The city and the Veterans Administration control much of the parking and should be persuaded that redevelopment is a higher priority than convenient car storage for commuters.

An important consideration in this district is street improvements in the form of a road diet and better pedestrian infrastructure. The Downtown Plan also identifies a public space along Broadway in the vacant lot between the Surety Building and the Manhattan Building known as Hunt’s Green Space. The space is already used for some public events and could become another attraction with design improvements and enhanced management and programming.
Another nexus for development is on the south side of downtown. Named for its three old railroad depots, the Depot District has a host of cultural attractions and has seen perhaps the most redevelopment activity of any area downtown. The newly completed Muskogee Little Theater is the anchor of the district and will soon be joined by the Depot Green. Within walking distance is the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, the Three Rivers Museum, the Muskogee Civic Center, the Muskogee Brewing Company at Fire Station One, and shopping in the Katy District. The area also has a trailhead to the 7-mile Centennial Multi-Use Trail and is part of the Muskogee Loop in the downtown plan. This area is well-suited for construction of new Multi-Family Housing, perhaps with some ground floor commercial space in a mixed-use configuration. At least one multi-family loft project has been proposed and there are several vacant sites or parking lots suitable for development.


Photograph of the Depot District
Suburban Single-Family Construction: Country Club Corridor and Turnpike Entrance

While the City of Muskogee prefers urban redevelopment, it recognizes the opportunity for suburban subdivision development on open land. Suburban single-family construction should focus on an area in northeast Muskogee near Country Club Road. This area has a multi-faceted nexus for development that makes it desirable for moderate to upper income single-family neighborhoods.

First, it offers excellent access. It is near the access ramp for the Muskogee Turnpike at Shawnee Bypass – US Highway 62. This ramp is the closest within city limits to Tulsa and Broken Arrow and is therefore a convenience for commuters traveling to the metropolitan area for work. Highway 62 is itself another commuter route leading to the Port of Muskogee, Ft. Gibson, and Tahlequah to the east. It connects to US Highway 69 to the west.

It is also near one of Muskogee’s most desirable addresses, namely the Muskogee Golf Club. Several attractive and stable neighborhoods are already in the area. The location is close to shopping and dining on the Shawnee Bypass with more commercial redevelopment currently happening at the York Street intersection. Finally, it is near education institutions, including NSU-Muskogee, Connors State College, Bacone College, the Indian Capital Technology Campus, and the Muskogee High School, which make it attractive to parents with teenage children, young adults, and teachers or staff working at the schools. The Muskogee Public Schools plans to build a new athletic complex and football stadium adjacent to the High School if its bond election succeeds in October 2019.

New subdivisions of homes in this area should be walkable with sidewalks and connected street networks. Focus group participants voiced a desire for gated developments with security features.
Another nexus for suburban development is Hatbox Field. The former airport on the west side of town is now a regional park hosting concerts, events and activities. It has recreational fields, a dance hall, baseball diamonds, and a water park at the Love Hatbox Field Sports Complex. The next phase of the master plan includes an amphitheater, an event arena, hangar rehabilitations, playgrounds, and even a lake. The site also connects to the Centennial Multi-Use Trail.

The St. Francis Muskogee Hospital is right next door to Hatbox Field and as one of the city’s major employers, is a natural magnet for workforce housing. Another major hospital, the Jack Montgomery VA Medical Center is about one-half mile north and would also be a walkable destination. Pershing Elementary School and the 7th and 8th Grade Academy are located about a mile west. In addition, the immediate area has convenient shops and restaurants.

There is ample land available near Hatbox Field that would be suitable for multi-family apartment or townhouse development. Several apartment complexes are located nearby with low vacancy rates, indicating robust demand for multi-family housing. The Muskogee Housing Authority has numerous units nearby, as well. A mixed-income development in this prototype might involve a partnership between MHA and private developers.
Exurban Development: South Muskogee and Peak Boulevard

Another suburban area that has seen moderate growth is located on the south side of the city near Peak Boulevard. This type of growth is exurban in nature with developers looking for larger lot sizes, fewer restrictions, and showing less concern for walkability and connection to nearby amenities. For these reasons, some of the developers in this area have elected to build on sites in unincorporated Muskogee County. Like the Country Club Corridor, the area has easy highway access to Peak Boulevard and the Muskogee Turnpike for commuters. It is also located in the Hilldale School District, providing developers an alternative to building in the Muskogee Public School District.

The nexus for development in this prototype area is an abundance of open land, which might lead to lower lot costs for new development. Infrastructure presents more of a challenge since the development pattern is less dense and more spread out. The city may consider relaxing development standards in this area to make lots more competitive with adjacent development in the county. Curbs and sidewalks might not be required. Developers might also be encouraged to develop projects off-the-city-grid. They could receive credits for providing infrastructure that meets city standards of health, safety, and welfare but do not connect to city systems or require city maintenance. Examples could include private water wells and septic tanks for sewage treatment.
TACTICS FOR SUCCESS

Each of the six prototypes and their sites have unique challenges and concerns, but many of the development issues are shared. A multi-pronged approach is required to address the development issues for all these prototypes to succeed. The prototype areas will need several policies or programs working together to lower the risk for investors and attract new residents. Not every policy or program will be appropriate for every project, but they should be available and applied as necessary.

1. **Site Acquisition Assistance**

Scattered site redevelopment in existing neighborhoods present difficulties for housing developers, particularly for single-family new construction. Developers prefer contiguous sites where they can control construction activities, install utility lines, and where they do not need to worry about the effect of existing homes on their new product. Acquiring contiguous lots can also be a problem with holdout landowners wanting higher than market rates for their land. Developers often focus on blocks of land, but we think it is more important to focus on streets so that new housing will look across the street at new or improved housing and not be an isolated enclave. To this end, the City of Muskogee has already begun a land banking program to facilitate site aggregation. Large landowners including Muskogee Public Schools and the Arrowhead Mall could also be approached to sell their properties, which are already large parcels.

2. **Preparatory Surveys and Investigations**

The city should also conduct civil engineering surveys and investigations to share with potential developers. Since the prototype areas currently have some developed properties, it is likely that water and sewer infrastructure is already available. The developers need to know its location, condition, and capacity in order to estimate project construction costs. If infrastructure is deficient, the city should work with the developer to make upgrades in a public-private partnership.

3. **Development Agreements**

After acquisition and surveying, lots could be distributed to developers at a discounted rate with the provision that construction begins in a timely fashion. This program is likely to have significant impact on development viability, since improved lots can cost between $20,000 and $40,000 in the region.

4. **Public Improvements**

The City of Muskogee should also commit to make improvements to streets, parks, and amenities in the prototype areas. In fact, this has already begun with public investment in the Martin Luther King Jr. Center near Sadler Arts Academy, the Little Muskogee Theater in the Depot District, the planned Depot District Park, and a variety of wayfinding and streetscape improvements in the Katy District. Beckman Park and Elliott Park could be added to this list. Street and sidewalk improvements are needed in all the prototype areas, but Main Street seems to be a priority. The city should make these areas of high priority in the Capital Improvement Plan and include them in the next capital improvement funding initiative.

5. **Waived Fees**

Permit fees could be waived in the prototype areas. This may not be a significant amount of money, but it signals to the development community the eagerness of Muskogee to welcome them.
Many developers have indicated they need ways to improve their development pro forma to make these projects profitable. A stack of capital should be made available to developers to improve their positions for construction funding, and in the case of rental housing, operational funding as well. In exchange, developers would agree to financial transparency to ensure reasonable risks and returns on investment. Tools available to the city include tax abatement and tax increment financing. The latter would be suitable for the Katy and Depot District areas, which show promise for generating a substantial increment as redevelop proceeds. Historic preservation tax credits from the state would be useful for adaptive reuse and restoration projects. Low-Income Housing Tax Credits from the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency may also be utilized for mixed-income rental projects. Low interest financing through the Multi-Family Bond program is another option. The city could also provide financing or participate in equity through the Urban Renewal Authority. Local partners including the Muskogee Port Authority, the Muskogee Community Foundation, or a private Community Development Investment Fund might become other sources of equity. The city should consider appointing a housing development officer in the City Manager Office or Economic Development Office to manage the capital opportunities and work with developers to structure deals.

The housing in the prototypes should target middle income market segments, but also include some affordable housing. A minimum of 20% of units would be required to receive state tax credits or participate in the similar programs like the state HOME Investment Partnership. Affordable housing might take the form of ancillary housing units (granny flats or garage apartments) in single family neighborhoods or efficiency units in apartment developments.

While many of the previous tactics focus on housing supply and attracting development, it is also important to address the demand side of the housing equation. The city’s branding efforts should be completely overhauled with new messaging and media. Marketing Muskogee as a livable place with good employment, low crime, improving schools, and things to do should take priority over tourism efforts. Advertise and promote Muskogee properties in the Tulsa media and realtor markets.

Relocation incentives should be used including down payment assistance, credit counseling, and urban homesteading opportunities. The city might be able to persuade major employers to offer a housing allowance to employees relocating to the city or offer rent guarantees for units in new multi-family developments.
While the prototypes discussed previously provide a focus, the housing issues in the City of Muskogee are more widespread. The city may institute policies and practices on a citywide basis to broadly address housing issues. Several such practices are enumerated here:

1. **Preferred Development Areas**

   The prototype developments express the city’s desire as outlined in its Comprehensive Plan to focus on the redevelopment of the original townsite, Hatbox Field, and the Country Club area to build on a nexus between new housing in walkable locations with attractions, both existing and proposed, for new residents.

2. **Housing Stabilization**

   The city needs a housing stabilization program for uninhabitable, derelict, and at-risk structures. Nearly 1,000 units throughout the city have been demolished in the last ten years and another are designated as at-risk by the code enforcement office. Many at-risk homes are occupied. Properly repaired and maintained, they are a source of affordable housing. They also have historic significance, either as examples of historic architecture or as part of the neighborhood pattern of development. Every effort should be made to avoid demolition except in extreme cases. The city should reinstate and expand its program to provide grants to homeowners for rehabilitation and redevelopment. It should also seek funds to expand the program to include rental properties. Likewise, the city should continue to work with non-profit groups to clean-up and repair housing for elderly, disabled, and poor homeowners.

3. **Street-by-Street Approach**

   The Comprehensive Plan recommends a block-by-block approach for neighborhood redevelopment, we prefer a street-by-street approach. The street is the primary public space which defines the character of the neighborhood. As housing projects spread from the prototype areas or emerge spontaneously in other areas, the emphasis should be on addressing both sides of the street. Streets with many vacant lots may benefit from having houses physically moved from areas where blocks have been busted and very few houses remain.

4. **Landlord Certification and Incentives**

   The city should create a voluntary landlord certification program to incentivize minimum property standards for rental properties. Certified landlords might receive a tax abatement and the ability to promote their properties as inspected and certified. Landlords that provide more accessible units for persons with disabilities would receive a greater benefit.

5. **Data Capabilities**

   Working with the County Assessor, the city should create a GIS database with web interface showing assessor data, zoning, and city utilities on a planimetric base map. This capability will help developers with site selection and due diligence research.
The city should empower Neighborhood and Homeowners’ Associations by registering community organizations and providing them with resources and training. Encourage them to develop their own neighborhood standards and pathways to raise expectations of residents.

The city should consider changes to its zoning ordinance that would allow subdividing larger homes, smaller minimal lot sizes without obtained special permissions, and allowing 2-, 3- or 4-unit multi-family projects in single-family zoned area. The ordinance could include ways to encourage new housing types like lofts or rowhouses.

Clean-up entrances to town and enforce commercial property code violations. Review signage standards. Consider gateway and corridor improvements in the next Capital Improvement initiative.

Changes to the zoning code could make it easier to develop innovative housing types. In Fayetteville, Arkansas, recent zoning changes have made it simpler to construct clustered housing developments, middle-density housing like duplexes or townhouses, and small-lot homes. South Street Cottages, pictured below, is a development made possible by these changes.
DO-IT-YOURSELF MUSKOGEE

Some of Muskogee’s housing challenges can be addressed by government initiatives and incentives. New investment by homebuilders and apartment developers will also play a part, but there are many things residents and homeowners can do on their own. Many of the ideas listed below come from Kimberley Kinder’s Book: *DIY Detroit.*

1. Adopt Lots

Residents should be encouraged to adopt vacant lots adjacent to their homes. If possible, they should buy the lots and expand their homestead. Even if they cannot afford to buy the lots, they should be encouraged to adopt them and put them to use as vegetable gardens, plant trees, and recreation areas.

2. Care for Vacant Homes

Neighbors should be encouraged to clean-up vacant properties in their neighborhood by mowing the grass, cleaning up trash, and recycling abandoned property. The vacant properties should be made to appear lived in by planting flowers, parking cars in the driveway, and burning porch lights.

3. Light Up the Night

Residents should install and regularly use porch and carriage lights. Solar powered lights can be installed where electricity is not available. They can also be used for vacant properties with no power.

4. Attract New Residents

Homeowners should use their networks to market homes and lots in their neighborhood to family, friends, and co-workers. As resident realtors they are the best advertising for these properties. Some may also become landlords themselves by buying and leasing properties.

5. Make Home Improvements

Homeowners and landlords should fix up their properties and help neighbors in need to repair their own homes. Residents should learn building trades and pass them on to newcomers and youth in the neighborhood.

6. Get Organized

Residents should start clubs and strengthen neighborhood associations. Hold block parties and potluck dinners. Emphasize personal social contact; do not rely on social media. Start an exchange to share tools and building materials. Conduct neighborhood research by making maps and conducting surveys.

DIY Capital Hill:
All of the mature trees planted in this green space at the top of Capital Hill were planted by a woman who is now 94. The city mows the green space, but then sometimes leave a wide edge that isn't mowed and there is grass that grows on the edge of the street. The neighborhood folks clean up the mowing, edge the green space and clear the grass growing on the edge of the road.