ATLAS of Downtown Muskogee

Created by the OU Institute for Quality Communities and the OU Urban Design Studio

February 1, 2017
Maps in this section are made primarily with data from the United States Census Bureau, including Tigerline Shapefiles, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 Decennial Census Summary Files, 2014 Five Year Data from the American Community Survey, and Long-Range Economic Household Data from the 2009 Economic Census. Additional data from the City of Muskogee GIS Department and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation Traffic Counts.
Muskogee’s overall population has change little since World War II, hovering around 35,000 to 40,000 persons. However, the city limits and the developed area have increased during this period leading to lower population densities less than 900 persons per square mile.

Despite its central location, the downtown area has lost population. Few people now live in Downtown Muskogee. The latest census data shows a little over 700 residents. Around 300 are incarcerated in the county jail. Of the remaining 400 about 225 live in the Surety and Manhattan Buildings in affordable senior housing.

Relatively dense residential clusters exist east and west of downtown, but population is relatively sparse directly north and south of downtown.
Muskogee has a diverse population. While 28% of the population in the State of Oklahoma belong to one or more minority group, 44% of Muskogee’s population are minority. The African-American population makes up 16% of the population, concentrated mainly on the west side of Union Pacific Railroad line, interestingly, many live in the sparsely populated areas north and south of downtown. The Native-American population makes up 15% of the population. They are more widely distributed and are more likely to live on the outskirts of town. The Hispanic population is 7% of the population and live east of the UP Railroad in older neighborhoods near downtown. The Asian population is less than 2%. Another 5% of the population identify with more than one group.
Over a quarter of Muskogee’s population live in poverty. Median household income is around $34,000, more than $14,000 less than the Oklahoma median. Neighborhoods surrounding downtown are particularly poor with some having more than three times the national poverty rate. Housing in these neighborhoods is older, generally built before 1960. Many structures are rent houses and apartment blocks scattered throughout the area.
EMPLOYMENT

Downtown is a major employment center. Its 4,714 jobs represent 21% of Muskogee’s total employment. This number may be inflated by the headquarters effect with some major employers reporting jobs not located on site.

Public sector jobs make up 40% of downtown’s employment. Downtown’s two major employers, the Veterans Administration Regional Office and the City of Muskogee are public sector employers, as are the Federal Courts, Muskogee County, and Muskogee Public Schools.

The vast majority of workers commute into Muskogee for their jobs. This is especially true for downtown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inflow/Outflow Job Counts (Primary Jobs)</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed in the Selection Area</td>
<td>22,835 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside</td>
<td>15,091 66.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed and Living in the Selection Area</td>
<td>7,744 33.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living in the Selection Area</td>
<td>14,543 100.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside</td>
<td>6,799 46.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living and Employed in the Selection Area</td>
<td>7,744 53.2%</td>
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<th>Inflow/Outflow Job Counts (Primary Jobs)</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed in the Selection Area</td>
<td>4,714 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside</td>
<td>4,693 99.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employed and Living in the Selection Area</td>
<td>21 0.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living in the Selection Area</td>
<td>235 100.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside</td>
<td>214 91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living and Employed in the Selection Area</td>
<td>21 8.9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Educational attainment in Muskogee slightly lags the rest of Oklahoma, however, levels of education vary widely by geographic area. Census block groups near downtown have fewer students that attended college. Inner city neighborhoods south and east of downtown have more than 40% of the population that did not complete high school. Areas east of York Street and in the city’s northwest quadrant have higher concentrations of college graduates and professionals.

Muskogee is home to Bacone College and has branch campuses of Connors State College and Northeastern State University, but downtown is not home to any higher education institutions.

Muskogee Public Schools central services are located in downtown. The Sadler Arts Academy is located just north of downtown.
Muskogee has eight full-service supermarkets and three other food outlets selling fresh fruits and vegetables, all located on busy streets with traffic counts above 25,000 vehicles per day. Ninety-nine percent of Muskogee citizens live within four miles of one of these grocers providing good access to fresh food for anyone with access to an automobile. However, only 20% live within a half-mile walk of one of the stores. Many of those without access to a car live outside an even greater one mile walking radius. The city’s four bus routes do provide an alternative but long headways and the need to transfer make it cumbersome for shoppers, especially for those transporting perishable items.

Downtown has few food choices with no grocery stores and only a few restaurants, most open mainly during lunch time. Fresh foods can be purchased from the Downtown Farmers’ Market twice per week during the growing seasons.
URBAN X-RAYS

TOPOGRAPHY
BLOCKS
PLANIMETRY
MOBILITY
LEGIBILITY

Maps in this section are made primarily with data from the City of Muskogee GIS Department
Muskogee lies in the Claremore Cuesta Plains geomorphic province. Cuestas are hills or ridges with a gentle slope on one side and a steep slope on the other side. The Claremore Cuestas are resistant Permian and Pennsylvanian sandstones, shales, and limestones dipping gently westward. Honor Heights is a good local example lying one mile west of Downtown Muskogee.

Downtown Muskogee is relatively flat with little grade change. Elevations generally range from 590’ mean sea level to 614’ mean sea level. The exception are the small hills on the northwest corner of downtown which rise 50’ or 60’ above the surrounding terrain. The 40’ high ridge west of the Arrowhead Mall along 6th Street is a particularly prominent feature, its grade made steeper due to earthwork and grading during the mall construction.

The urban soils in the downtown area are poor and compacted. Historic soils are Dennis-Bates-Taloka-Parsons Mollisols and Alfisols typical of the tallgrass prairie region.

Drainage is generally good with no floodplains in the downtown area.
Downtown consists of a series of interlocking grids generally parallel and perpendicular to the Union Pacific railroad. The grids are rotated approximately 30 degrees from cardinal north. The downtown core lies west of the rail line. Unlike many railroad towns, Muskogee's downtown grid is regular but not uniform. This results in some streets, including Broadway, having a terminated vista. The neighborhoods further west have more uniform block sizes.

Most blocks are 2 to 4 acres in size and rectangular in shape. The blocks south of downtown are elongated in the north-south direction. The Arrowhead Mall superblock is another significant departure from the norm.

The railroad forms a barrier with few streets crossing it. Except for that, east-west streets tend to be more continuous than north-south streets.
Mass / Void analysis reveals a fine grain texture of building footprints. Commercial buildings in the downtown core have larger footprints than the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The street walls along Broadway Street are largely intact, but few other streets retain their spatial continuity. Significant linear voids exist along the current and former rail lines.

The Arrowhead Mall megastructure is a major disruption to the urban fabric on the north side of downtown. It is surrounded by a large annular void of parking and undeveloped outparcels of land. Parking lots also create significant voids on the south side of downtown near the Civic Center and Municipal Complex.

Combining building footprints, streets, parking lots and other paved areas show that the downtown area is almost completely covered by impervious surface. It is likely this paved area is negatively impacting stormwater management and creating a heat-island effect.

The predominant ecological matrix is paving. Natural grassland corridors exist along the Union Pacific Railroad line and the Centennial Trail.
Mass / Void

0  750  1,500  3,000 Feet
There are six street types in Downtown Muskogee.

The main arterial streets or trafficways are Main Street and Okmulgee Avenue, both are designated business routes by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. Okmulgee Avenue has a 24 hour traffic count of 12,318 vehicles per day. North Main Street carries 16,418 vehicles per day and South Main Street carries 10,612 vehicles per day. Both have four lanes with limited on-street parking. Columbus Avenue is an elevated bypass allowing traffic to crossover the railroad if Okmulgee and Broadway crossings are blocked.

The other streets in the downtown core are designated commercial streets with two or three lanes and on-street parking and sidewalks. Broadway is the prime example. It is wider than most and carries around 9,000 vehicles per day. The other downtown streets carry fewer than 5,000 vehicles per day. A few are designated one-way.

Some of the perimeter streets are designated collector streets, including Elgin Avenue, 7th Street, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

The streets surrounding the downtown area are generally two-lane residential streets. Some on the east side carry limited industrial traffic.

There are a few alleys, including the Wall Street which is sort of a hybrid alley/street.

Several on-street bikeways connect to the Centennial Trail.
Mobility and Access
Downtown is divided into several recognizable districts including Arrowhead Mall, the Broadway Corridor, the Depot District, the Katy District / Main Street, Cherokee District, the Civic Center, and the Okmulgee Avenue Corridor Extension.

Railroad right-of-ways form edges on the east and south sides of downtown.

Downtown landmarks include Severs Building, Federal Courthouse, Masonic Temple, Public Library, Roxy Theatre, Midland Valley Depot, and Teeterville Bird Cage Company. The Bird Cage company and the VA Medical Center on Honor Heights terminate the vistas of each end of Broadway.

Main Street and Okmulgee Street are the most significant vehicular paths. The Centennial Trail and 7th Street are bikeways.
DOWNTOWN MUSKOGEE

Downtown Muskogee
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Aerial Photography includes drone photography shot on June 17, 2017 and airborne imagery shot on October 21, 2017 by Shawn Schaefer.
Looking South to the Depot District

Looking West towards Federal Courthouse

Looking North with Green Space in Foreground

Looking East down Broadway
AERIAL PHOTOS

Arrowhead Mall from the North

Arrowhead Mall from the East

Downtown from the East

Depot District from the Southeast