

# DOWNTOWN MUSKOGEE

## A Landscape of Hope

City of Muskogee  
OU College of Architecture  
OU Institute for Quality Communities  
OU-Tulsa Urban Design Studio





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown Muskogee is an important place at the heart of a region of more than 70,000 people. In recent years, a number of efforts have brought new life and activity to downtown Muskogee. A 2010 Oklahoma Main Street resource team visit led to ideas for wayfinding and the Depot District that have made substantial progress. Engagement efforts by the group Action in Muskogee created momentum for a number of projects citywide. An impressive network of bicycle trails and lanes is emerging, and a farmers market improves healthy options downtown. The Muskogee Little Theater now brings cultural life downtown. New restaurants and retail shops have opened in renovated historic buildings downtown. Gateway markers and wayfinding signs now mark the important locations of downtown.

With this substantial progress, city leaders saw the need for this comprehensive downtown plan to coordinate efforts and face future challenges. In summer 2016, the City of Muskogee sought to create a master plan of actions to continue the revitalization of downtown Muskogee. After contacting the University of Oklahoma College of Architecture's Urban Design Studio and Institute for Quality Communities, the City of Muskogee guided an effort spanning nearly a year with hundreds of contributors. This document is the result of that collaboration, titled Downtown Muskogee: A Landscape of Hope.

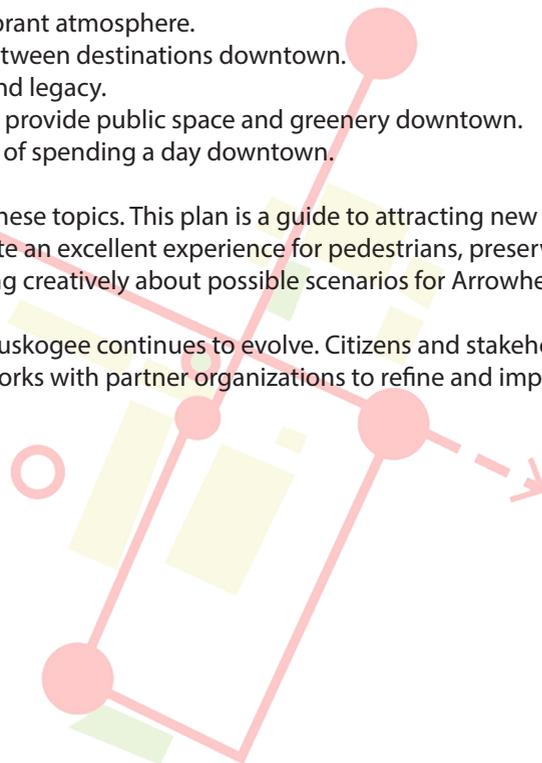
Feedback and insight from Muskogee residents has been incredibly important to this process and document. A stakeholder committee formed in August is made up of downtown leaders and public officials. The committee has held monthly public meetings to guide the OU College of Architecture design team. In addition, the design team visited Muskogee events like the Farmers Market to talk with residents, and a public meeting in November attracted more than 100 participants to provide input to this plan. An OU researcher on the concept of hope conducted a survey of nearly 400 residents to help the team structure a plan document that follows the language of hope.

Throughout this process, five key priorities emerged, and the design team focused on recommendations presented in this document in chapters based on the following topics:

- Increase activity downtown to create a more lively and vibrant atmosphere.
- Make better connections to enable walking and biking between destinations downtown.
- Save historic buildings to preserve Muskogee's heritage and legacy.
- Introduce green spaces that are active and well utilized to provide public space and greenery downtown.
- Revitalize Arrowhead Mall to complement the experience of spending a day downtown.

A variety of specific actions will be presented according to these topics. This plan is a guide to attracting new users to downtown, redesigning streets and public spaces to create an excellent experience for pedestrians, preserving Muskogee's high-opportunity historic buildings, and thinking creatively about possible scenarios for Arrowhead Mall.

There are many possibilities on the horizon as downtown Muskogee continues to evolve. Citizens and stakeholders should continue to stay engaged as the City of Muskogee works with partner organizations to refine and implement the concepts in this plan.





# LANDSCAPE OF HOPE

## The Psychology of Collective Hope

Collective hope is a motivational force centered on the future expectations we have for goal attainment (Snyder, 2000). In this context, hope is comprised of three main tenets: goals, pathways, and agency.

**Goals** represent the cornerstone of hope theory as the endpoint to planned behavior. Goals can exist in the short-term or long-term, but must be of sufficient value to motivate behavior. Behavior motivated by hope requires the goal to be potentially attainable, clearly articulated, and possess identifiable criteria for measured success. Motivated behavior requires the capacity to identify one or more viable pathways to goal attainment.

**Pathways** represent a mental road map allowing us to consider multiple strategies that will lead to the desired outcome. Viable pathways are within the community's capacity to pursue and are developed with a future orientation of successful goal attainment. In this manner, the hopeful community can identify potential barriers with workable solutions or possess the capacity to change to alternative pathways when needed. Hopeful communities will generate multiple pathways toward their goal pursuits. Comparatively, lower hope communities experience difficulty in managing barriers and in their ability to develop alternative pathways (Snyder, 2002).

**Agency** represents the goal-directed motivational thinking for hope theory. Agency refers to the capacity to exert mental energy (willpower) to the pursuit of pathway. Hopeful communities are able to exhibit self-control, regulating beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors during goal pursuits especially while experiencing stress and adversity (*Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006*).

## Purpose of Survey

The committee determined that assessing the collective hope for Muskogee would provide useful information in both the planning process especially as it related to gauging the capacity for downtown renovation as well as the collective will to pursue selected pathways. Four general questions guided the survey design process. (1) How is the collective hope of Muskogee associated to perceptions of the civic process? (2) Does collective hope predict support for downtown renovation? (3) Does collective hope predict both individual and community goal attainment? And (4) How is collective hope associated with the capacity to flourish?

## Data Collection Procedure

Data was primarily collected using an online survey. The survey was available in English and Spanish language. The survey was advertised using local media outlets, including an article in the Muskogee Phoenix newspaper, through email lists from the project steering committee, and using social media. A targeted ad campaign on Facebook reached over 7,000 individuals within ten miles of downtown. The survey was also promoted and administered at the Community Hope Visioning Session on November 15, 2016, held at the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center. Handheld electronic devices and paper copies were available to participants.

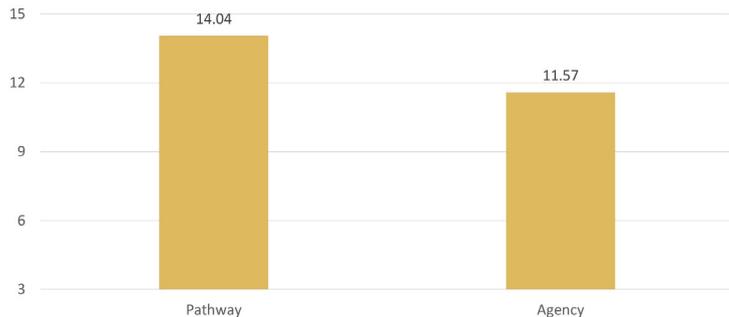
## Sample Demographics

A total of 404 completed surveys were available for data analyses. Results of the demographic questions showed that 94% of the respondents lived in Muskogee. 59.3% of the participants were female. Most of the participants were Caucasian (75.1%), followed by American Indian (16.9%), African American (4.7%) and Hispanic (2.3%). The average age of those completing the survey was 49.08 years (SD = 14.36) ranging from 18 years to 80 years.

## Survey Results

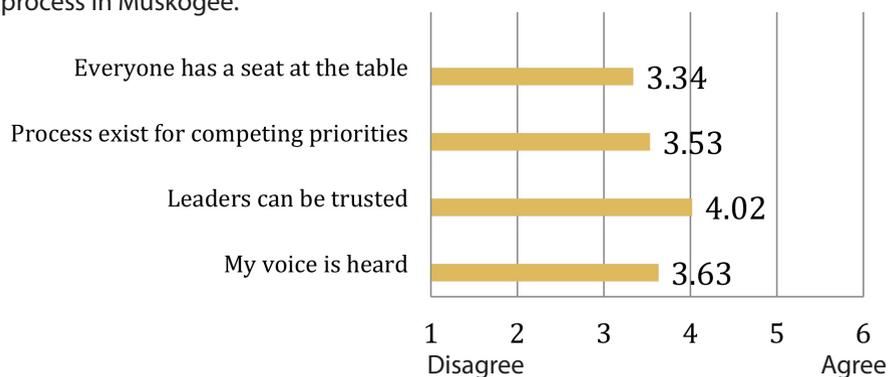
### Dimensions of Hope

Pathways scores were higher than agency, suggesting that city efforts should pay specific attention to incorporating activities that increase the mental energy (e.g., willpower) of the community.



### Civic Process Perceptions

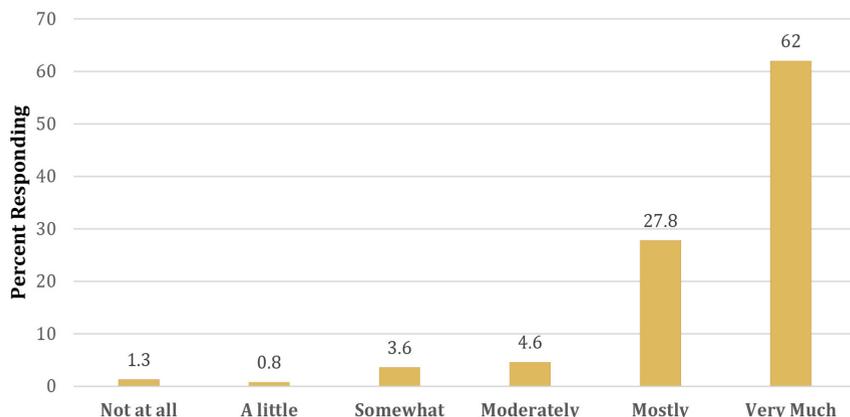
The graph shows the extent of agreement with the statements about the civic process in Muskogee.



### Support for Downtown Improvements

The participating community members strongly support a plan to improve downtown Muskogee.

**Generally speaking, I would support a plan that improves downtown Muskogee.**



## Collective Hope

- Collective hope had a strong positive relationship to achieving community goals ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .01$ )
- Collective hope had a moderate positive relationship to supporting plan to improve downtown Muskogee ( $r = .34$ ;  $p < .01$ )
- Collective hope had a small positive relationship with individual goal attainment ( $r = .25$ ;  $p < .01$ ) but a strong positive relationship with community goal attainment ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .01$ )
- Collective hope had a moderate positive relationship with the capacity to flourish ( $r = .45$ ;  $p < .01$ ) Furthermore, collective hope predicted the capacity to flourish above and beyond individual hope demonstrating the importance of social connectedness.

### Perceptions of Civic Process

- Positive perceptions of the civic process had a strong positive relationship to collective hope ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .01$ )
- Positive perceptions of the civic process had a strong positive relationship to achieving community goals ( $r = .66$ ;  $p < .01$ )
- Positive perceptions of the civic process had a small positive relationship to supporting plan to improve Downtown Muskogee ( $r = .26$ ;  $p < .01$ )
- Positive perceptions of the civic process had a moderate positive relationship to the capacity to flourish ( $r = .36$ ;  $p < .01$ )

# INCREASE ACTIVITY

There are many anchors in Downtown Muskogee that currently generate activity. Employment centers like the area between the Federal Building and City Hall, retail anchors like the Arrowhead Mall, and cultural attractions like the Muskogee Little Theater and Civic Center are drawing people and life to downtown.

Residents, city leaders, and business owners gathered during several community events to share their vision for the future of downtown Muskogee. Their shared goal is to create a downtown that is full of life and activity.

This section includes recommendations to improve the level of activity downtown. A downtown management organization will be essential to this effort. The plan concentrates on attracting several groups of people, correctly managing parking supply, and creating a pathway for implementation through a downtown grant program.

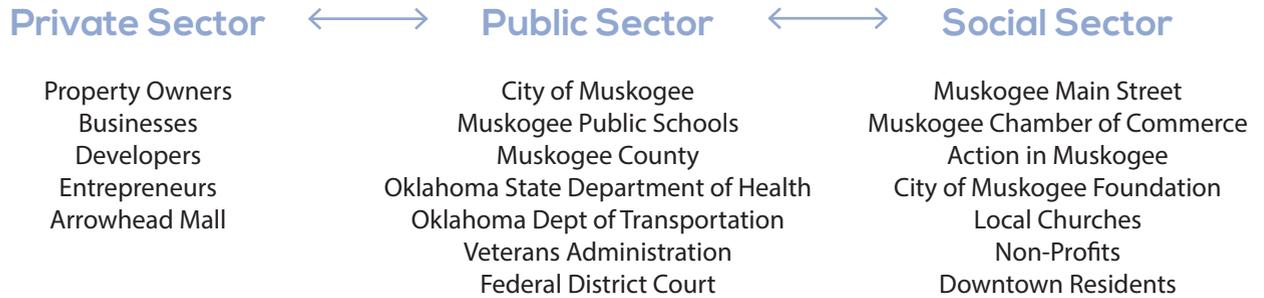
- **Attract People:** Downtown Muskogee can do more to attract several key groups to participate in activity downtown. The recommendations presented will help attract more residents, visitors, employers, and young people, downtown can expand its audience and be lively more often.
- **Manage Parking:** Many downtowns struggle with the perception of a parking problem. Large parking lots create barriers to the sense of activity along the sidewalk. Parking should be carefully managed so that there is not too much parking and so that parking does not disrupt the pedestrian experience.
- **Downtown Grant Program:** Some items throughout this plan will require financial assistance. Through a downtown grant program, existing and new businesses can get assistance in efforts to create more activity on sidewalks downtown.

These strategies are a way to enhance the perception and reality of an active and vibrant downtown Muskogee.



## Partners in Downtown Programming

Successful revitalization efforts integrate private, public, and social investments for economic development, infrastructure creation, and human capital growth. The City of Muskogee must work with the local partners from all three areas to increase downtown activity.



## Managing Downtown

The restructured Muskogee Main Street can provide leadership, management, and promotion to bring these partners together and implement key elements of the downtown plan. Downtown management organizations can be led and staffed by the municipality, the business community, or non-profit agencies. Funding for downtown management organizations may come from a Business Improvement District (BID) assessment, voluntary membership dues, revenues from events, or contract services.

## Existing Activity Generators Downtown



The Martin Luther King Center is a great attractor for people in the community.

Shopping and entertainment at Arrowhead Mall continue to be an important downtown offering.

Activity is increasing and several residential properties are along Broadway.

The Civic Center attracts people downtown by hosting large events, benefiting nearby businesses.

The employment zone in this area has a good synergy with the emerging Katy District businesses.

The Depot District is home to several activity attractors.



## Attract Visitors

Activities and programming can bring more visitors. Events and entertainment such as music, museums, theater, and movies on the lawn will draw people to downtown. Once there, restaurants, bars, galleries and shopping will give visitors a reason to stay and linger.

### Recommendations:

- All downtown entities should plan events together through Muskogee Main Street. If there are several events happening at the same time they should be coordinated to avoid competition or to create synergy.
- Create a paid position at Muskogee Main Street to keep a calendar, organize and promote events, and manage resources.
- Provide friendly foot and bike patrols downtown to promote perception of security.
- Incentivize downtown hotel development with tax abatement or by providing development sites.

## Attract Employers

While still a major employment center, downtown has lost its position as the hub for goods and services in the region. Much recent development has been focused along highway corridors and fringe areas. This trend should be reversed with policies to attract new businesses downtown.

### Recommendations:

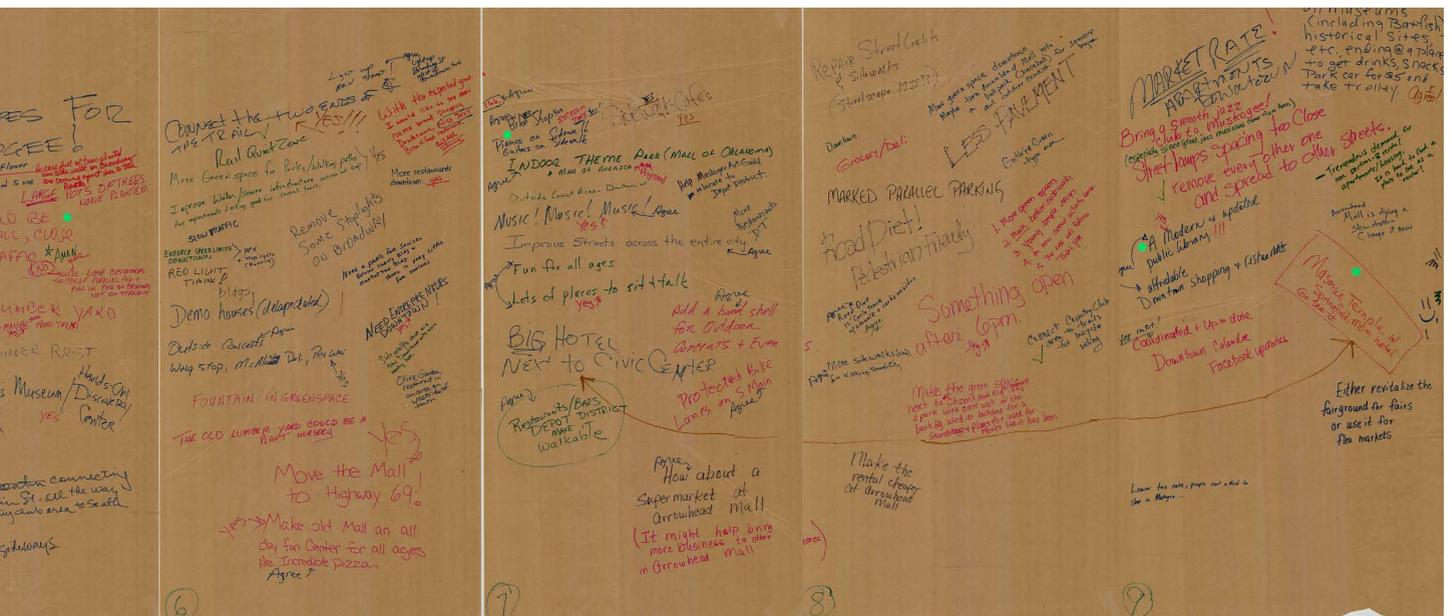
- Develop a downtown grant program to create incentives for businesses and retail.
- Create and promote a buy local program, such as Live Local, Love Local, perhaps with discounts or tax breaks for locally owned businesses.
- Market downtown commercial space.
- Change land use, transportation, and utility policies to discourage development of undeveloped land on the city fringe.

## Attract Youth

Young people are an important part of a vibrant downtown. Muskogee's youth need more options for recreational, educational, vocational, and social activities. This audience is especially important since a great downtown can improve their sense of attachment to the community.

### Recommendations:

- Work with Muskogee Public Schools to create a maker space or fab lab in downtown.
- Work with the local vocational and higher education institutions to hold classes and events downtown.
- Explore the possibility of a Children's Museum or Discovery Center.
- Provide rehearsal space for young musicians and studio space for young artists with appropriate mentoring.





# MANAGE PARKING

**Downtown Muskogee has an oversupply of parking. Parking management should seek to create a balance where parking areas are more fully utilized. There is no need for new parking.**

According to a mid-day occupancy count, there is just one corner of downtown Muskogee where daytime parking nears capacity. This area is concentrated around major employers like City Hall and the Federal Building. Most of downtown actually has an oversupply of parking. During the occupancy count, many public parking spaces were available on streets and in public off-street parking areas.

Parking lots can negatively impact the walkability and appearance of downtown. Where parking lots are next to the sidewalk, they should include attractive screening. Additionally, the overall amount of parking should be limited to just the right amount. If about 85% of parking is occupied, then the area has enough parking to accommodate visitors, but not so much that barren parking lots detract from the downtown experience.

## Recommendations:

- Share parking among multiple buildings and tenants through agreements between neighbors. For example, churches and office buildings make great neighbors for sharing parking, since churches are most busy on Sundays or evenings, while offices are busy during weekdays. Theaters and event centers are busy on weekends and nights, but they can provide office parking during the week.
- Discourage construction of off-street parking through regulations or taxes.
- Encourage development of buildings on existing parking areas.
- Promote temporary uses like the Downtown Farmer's market on parking areas.
- Encourage downtown employees to not park in on-street parking spaces.
- Enforce on-street parking time limits in areas of high demand along Main Street and Broadway Street.

**There is no shortage of empty parking spaces downtown, but many of them are restricted to a single user, or send ominous signals to would-be visitors.**



## Parking Occupancy

A mid-day parking occupancy count was conducted at 1:00 p.m. on a weekday. The map highlights areas where large parking lots had significant availability of parking.

90% of more than 2,500 parking spaces were available at Arrowhead Mall.

85% of more than 400 parking spaces in lots between Main and Third Street were available.

95% of more than 120 public parking spaces behind the Muskogee Hotel were available.

Nearly 100% of more than 500 parking spaces at the Civic Center were available.

Only 20% of parking spaces were available in the area around the Federal Building and City Hall.





# DOWNTOWN GRANT PROGRAM

**Jumpstarting downtown growth and private investment is key to attracting new businesses, residents, and visitors.**

## Implementation

The City of Muskogee Planning Department will administer the downtown grants program, working closely with the City of Muskogee Foundation, Muskogee Main Street, and the Muskogee Chamber of Commerce. The city has already applied for approximately \$500,000 funding from the foundation for next year. Capital improvements funding from the next sales tax package might also provide funds to be used for public improvements in the downtown area, such as sidewalks, utilities, and lighting, to leverage the grant-funded private improvements.

One way to promote downtown activity is to provide incentives to landholders, real estate developers, and small business owners to locate downtown, invest in improvements, and grow their businesses. Project stakeholders and city officials propose a comprehensive approach that will combine existing grants and incentives with new ones. These can be combined and tailored to individual projects ranging from small to large and simple to complex. The goal is to provide a variety of options from small do-it-yourself projects to large renovation and construction projects. At the beginning, seven types of grants will be available and described in the sections that follow.

## Upper Floor Grants

These grants provide incentives to property owners with multi-story buildings to develop housing or office space above their ground floor storefronts. This is especially important to address when tenants are changing or ground floor space is being renovated, so upper floor construction does not disturb or disrupt existing uses. The City of Muskogee already offers an incentive of \$4,500 for one bedroom units and \$7,500 for two bedroom units in the downtown area. However, the City offers \$25,000 per unit for detached single-family dwellings. This disparity should be eliminated and downtown upper floor units should also receive a \$25,000 per unit incentive.

A similar incentive may also be provided for upper floor office space based on net square footage. Doing so will likely make developer pro formas profitable and encourage them to add the necessary health and safety improvements such as elevators, fire protection systems, and better means of egress. These are considered the highest priority grants in the program because of their potential to attract and settle permanent residents and businesses.

## Business Incentive Grants

The business incentive grants provide start-up or expansion funding for sales tax producing businesses. These are limited to one grant per business per grant period and must be accompanied by a valid deed or lease for a downtown property, as well as a description of how the grant will be spent with projected impacts on sales tax collections and payroll or workforce size. The maximum amount per grant is \$50,000.

## Retail Assistance Grants

Retail assistance grants are designed to increase retail trade and improve the visitor experience, with the potential to have an immediate impact. Retail shop owners are eligible for grants from \$500 to \$3,000 to be used for items that improve the shopping and walking experience along the street. This might include street furniture, lighting, planters, or window dressings.



## Signage Grants

Another small grant program is for new building signage in accordance with standards developed by the City and Muskogee Main Street. Examples might include lighted or unlighted blade signs, window or wall signs, painted murals, and rooftop signs. The maximum award is \$5,000.

## Building Beautification Grants

These grants are for substantial improvements to the primary street-facing sides of an existing building. They may be used for removal of deteriorated or outdated finishes and assemblies, restoration of historic facades, or construction of new walls. All grant applications will include photographs, sketches, or drawings of the existing and proposed facades. The City's historic preservation planner will review historic buildings. Owners of old buildings with historic facades are encouraged to preserve them and may be eligible for additional resources such as state and federal tax credits. The maximum award is \$25,000 per street facing wall.

## Building Stabilization Grants

Stabilization Grants are the largest grants envisioned and are to be used to save substantial historic buildings from demolition or collapse. These are primarily intended for major construction projects to remedy structural issues, prevent the elements from entering the building, addressing fire code violations or installing essential new mechanical, electrical, or plumbing systems. The maximum award for these grants is \$100,000. Due to their large size, they are limited to a few per award cycle.

## Planning and Feasibility Grants

Sometimes what is needed are funds to determine the feasibility of a property to support a project, develop a budget, and identify needs. Planning and Feasibility Grants would provide up to \$10,000. Grant applicants would be required to show a letter of intent or contract with a licensed real estate consultant or design professional to be eligible for funding.

## Success Story: The Rose District, Broken Arrow

For years, Downtown Broken Arrow was hard to find. Buried inside miles of suburban development, Main Street was largely ignored unless you had to go to city hall or one of the downtown churches. All that changed following a plan done by the City of Broken Arrow Planning Department with Clarion Group about ten years ago. The City invested in major streetscape improvements that narrowed the street, calmed traffic, and attracted pedestrians. About the same time, Broken Arrow Public Schools invested in a downtown performing arts center, a weekly farmers' market opened and property owners started using historic tax credits to fix up old buildings.

In the last five years, more than 30 new businesses have opened. The City's \$5 million public investment in the streets has attracted \$25 million in private investment. Loft housing has attracted residents and new townhomes are on the way. The once sleepy downtown is now the hottest place to be in Northeast Oklahoma. The City and the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce have announced plans to double the size of the district starting with a new interactive fountain and public space.



Broken Arrow Main Street Before



Broken Arrow Main Street After



Street Festival in the Rose District

## Success Story: Courthouse Square, Enid

In August 1983, the City of Enid, the Enid Chamber of Commerce, and the Main Street Society of Enid joined forces in a mutual effort to try to modernize and revitalize their downtown district. This plan was given the name: the CBD Plan. The plan strengthens the marketability of the downtown district and addresses concerns with the growing functional needs of the community. The plan focuses on physical improvements to the streetscape by making sidewalk improvements, adding street furniture, and landscaping to the existing right-of-way. The plan starts with a vision that is directly correlated with a set of specific and quantifiable goals and objectives.

After an in-depth evaluation of the existing conditions, the City of Enid found pedestrian circulation and excessive parking to be problem areas. Off-street parking was underutilized and many of the amenities afforded to pedestrians were either in poor condition or nonexistent. Problems were also found in traffic circulation and around the paved areas at important intersections. The lighting was poor and many would not go downtown in the evenings due to poor visibility. Public signage was also found to be inadequate because they were neither clear nor systematic in their posting. Improvements included the re-establishment of the Courthouse Square as the central focal point of the downtown. The corners of the Square were designated as pedestrian gateways with budget friendly amenities and landscaping. The plan also provides a framework for marketing and promoting activities. Today, downtown Enid is thriving as a result of collaboration between the City of Enid, Main Street Enid, and partners.



First Fridays in Enid



Programming on Courthouse Square



View of Enid Courthouse Square

# MAKE BETTER CONNECTIONS

Downtown Muskogee has many recent successes and long-time destinations in locations throughout downtown. From the emerging Katy District and Depot District to Arrowhead Mall and the historic buildings of Broadway, people in Muskogee want safe, comfortable, beautiful options to navigate downtown.

During steering committee meetings and the public open house, Muskogee residents identified several priorities for street connections. Citizens feel that streets should provide comfortable and safe options for bicycles and pedestrians. People are open to road diets that result in fewer lanes of traffic and slower speeds. Finally, streets should be beautiful so that getting around downtown is a delight.

This section includes recommendations for improvements to access along streets downtown. The plan concentrates on a select network of streets that best connect existing and planned destinations.

- **Loop and Nodes:** Downtown Muskogee is a large place, and fixing every street would require significant resources. The loop and node concept identifies priority corridors totaling about 1.5 miles of city streets.
- **Main Street Road Diet:** As businesses develop along Main Street's Katy District, this street can go on a diet, reducing the number of lanes to provide more space for bicycles and parking. A roundabout can create an entrance to downtown and help drivers slow down as they approach.
- **Third Street:** This street connects cultural destinations in the Depot District with public buildings downtown and with Arrowhead Mall. The jog in the street at Okmulgee Avenue is an opportunity for placemaking.
- **Broadway Street:** The core of Muskogee's historic building stock follows this street. A reconfiguration of traffic patterns can help improve the function of the street.
- **Elgin Street:** A new plan for a public park along Elgin Street makes a nice entrance into downtown for users of the Centennial Trail.

These improvements to streets and connectivity downtown are a way to advance economic development by enhancing the experience of walking, biking, and accessing downtown.



# Muskogee's Street Design Principles

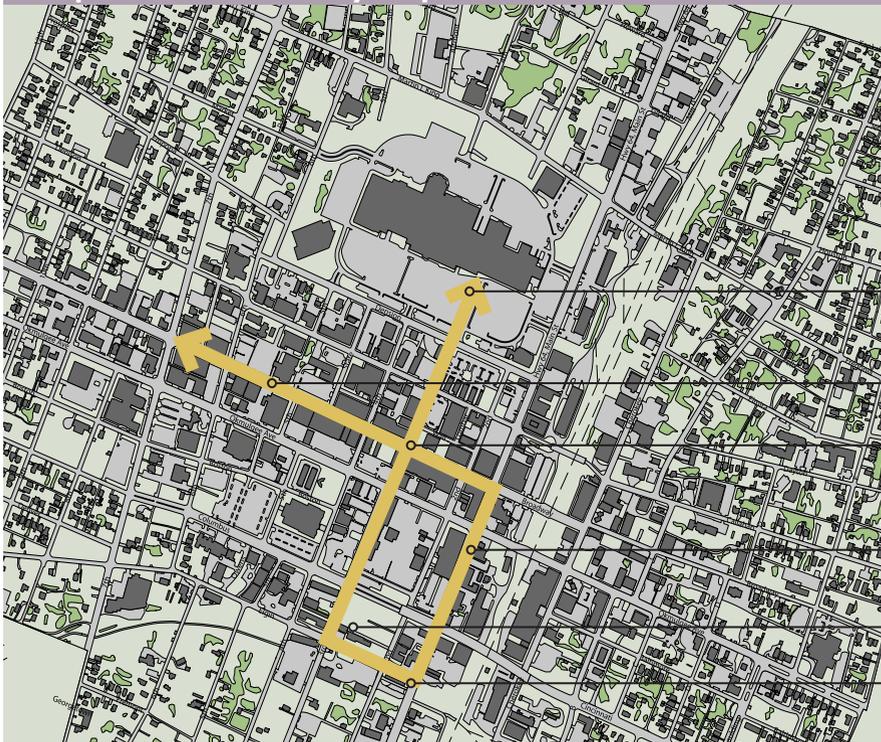


**Prioritize slow-moving traffic within downtown:** Street designs should clearly signal to drivers that they have entered an area where slow and deliberate driving is required. Slow speeds dramatically reduce odds of injury accidents and allow drivers to have more awareness of their surroundings, as shown in the vision cone diagram. Slower driving results in a safer, more comfortable street for all users. An ideal design speed is 20 mph.

**Manage the type of vehicles passing through downtown:** Many heavy trucks pass through downtown Muskogee because of a low bridge on US 64-69. This truck bypass route should be restored so that downtown streets do not need to conform to the large turning radii and lane width required by large freight vehicles. Keeping most heavy traffic out of downtown will allow the City to create streets that help development goals, with narrower lanes for shorter crossing distances and slower speeds.

**Enhance the experience of walking, biking, and accessing downtown:** The street network represents an experience for people visiting downtown. The design of the streetscape should prioritize safe and comfortable walking and biking. The design of the streetscape should include character elements that clearly identify the area as a special place: Downtown Muskogee.

## Map of Connectivity Improvements



The improvements shown on the map are explained in greater detail on the following pages.

- Create pleasing pedestrian access to Arrowhead Mall.
- Implement a road diet and change stop lights to stop signs on Broadway.
- Create a public space in the jog at 3rd and Okmulgee.
- Add new crosswalk to facilitate safe street crossing of Main Street.
- Construct park in Depot District.
- Construct a gateway roundabout to calm traffic at Main and Elgin.



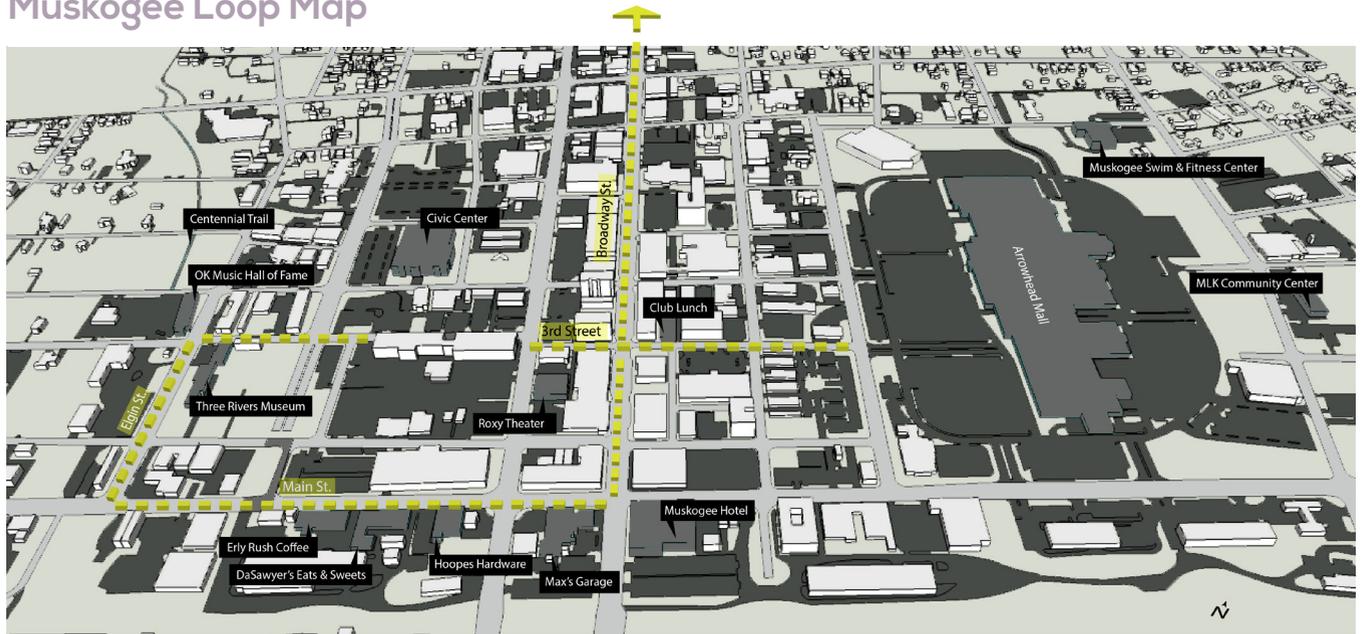
# LOOP AND NODES

A loop of lively and walkable streetscapes connects downtown’s districts. Prioritizing investments in safety, comfort, and interest along this loop helps focus efforts.

Creating visual and physical connections between districts promotes walkability and enhances the experience of the downtown area. The “Muskogee Loop” is a series of streets that form connections between activity nodes: Arrowhead Mall, the Depot District, the Katy District, and the historic downtown core along Broadway. The City of Muskogee can focus street improvement efforts along this corridor. Character districts might determine their own take on street furniture, landscaping, amenities, and street markings. Additionally, the downtown management organization can encourage businesses to strengthen their storefront aesthetic and activate their storefronts with café seating, outdoor sales displays, signage, and awnings.

The “Muskogee Loop” is an opportunity to promote local businesses, encourage walking and bicycling, and enhance the desire to spend a day visiting several of downtown Muskogee’s character districts.

## Muskogee Loop Map



## Roundabouts



Roundabout with Bike Lane



Roundabout Landmarks



Roundabout Sculptures/Vegetation

# "Muskogee Loop" Material Palette

## Bicycle Racks



Bicycle Parking

## Bicycle Lanes



Painted Bicycle Lane - Solid



Painted Bicycle Lane - Pattern

## Bioswales



Shrubs and Grasses

## Planters



Flower Container - Wood



Planter Rack - Cyclehoop

## Vegetation



Native Plants

## Street Awning



Traditional Open Wing Awning



Metal Awning - Flat

## Seating



Commercial Seating



Bench



Bench with Back



# MAIN STREET ROAD DIET

Main Street can afford to go on a diet as it is an increasingly important street for the walkability and economic development of downtown.

Main Street passes through the heart of downtown parallel to the railroad. Main Street also serves as US-64B. The street is an important traffic artery, carrying about 9,000 vehicles per day south of Okmulgee Avenue, and 14,000 vehicles per day north of Arrowhead Mall. This makes Main Street an important gateway, as evidenced by the new signage on the Columbus Avenue bridge.

Main Street is also an important economic development area. Many businesses have made the area a home and they fill the sidewalks with colorful sales displays, planter boxes, and seating. Additionally, the new businesses attract people from the nearby employment areas, who often jaywalk across the street.

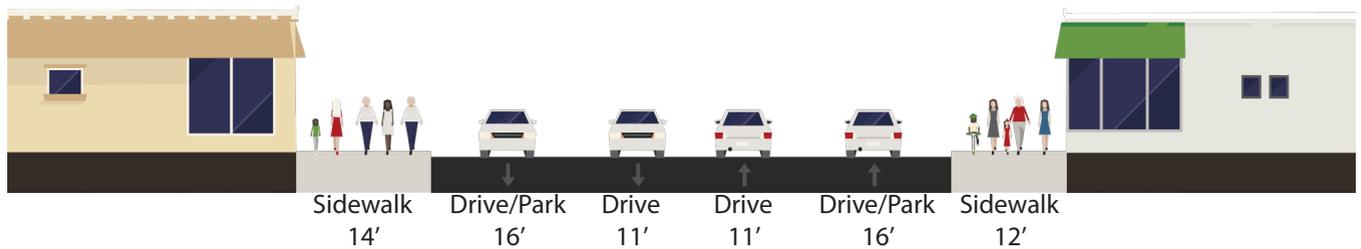
The design of the street should reflect Main Street's importance to development downtown, make crossing the street safer, enable further business growth, and encourage redevelopment of remaining historic buildings.

## **Recommendations:**

- Design a road diet for Main Street. The facing page shows a proposed road diet for Main Street to trade a couple of traffic lanes in exchange for accommodating more parking and a two-way bicycle path.
- Add a roundabout at Elgin and Main Street, to serve as a gateway to downtown and slow down traffic as it enters the area.
- Rebuild the sidewalk on the east side of the street through the Katy District, so that it can continue to be utilized for informal sales displays, signage, patio seating, decorations, and planters.
- Add a new mid-block pedestrian crossing between Okmulgee Avenue and the area where Columbus Avenue passes over Main, to allow people who work in the area to safely cross the street and access businesses.

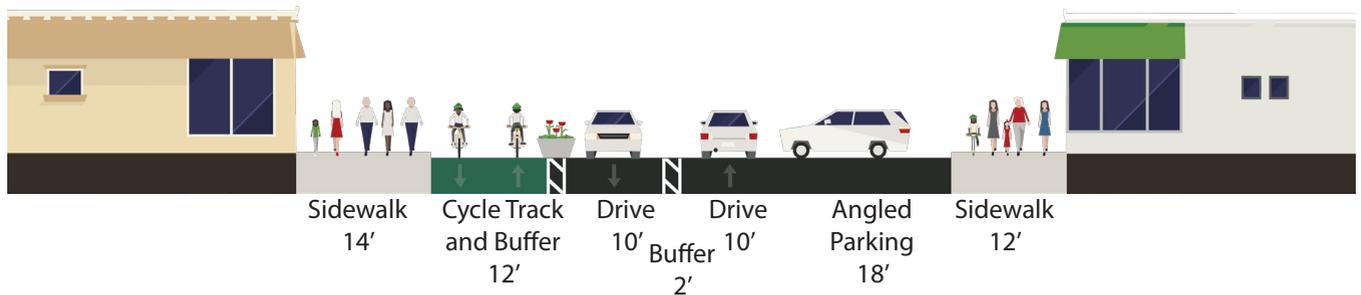
## Existing Main Street

The section of Main Street varies as it passes through downtown, but typically features an 80' right-of-way with a 54' curb-to-curb width. There are four drive lanes, and the extra-wide outside lane sometimes doubles as a parallel parking lane.



## Road Diet on Main Street

A road diet for Main Street means reducing the total number of through lanes so that the street can serve more functions, like including a safe facility for bicycles and angled parking for adjacent businesses on the east side of the street. Approaching busy intersections, parking might give way to make room for left turn lanes. The design shown here avoids expensive changes to the curbs on Main Street, and can be done with paint and planters.



## Two-Way Cycle Track Examples

Two-way cycle tracks can be simple projects completed with simple paint and flexible plastic posts or planters boxes, like this example in Denver.



Photo: Brittany Werges, 303 Magazine

Kokomo, Indiana has a two-way cycle track through downtown that is landscaped and elevated to the same level as the sidewalk.



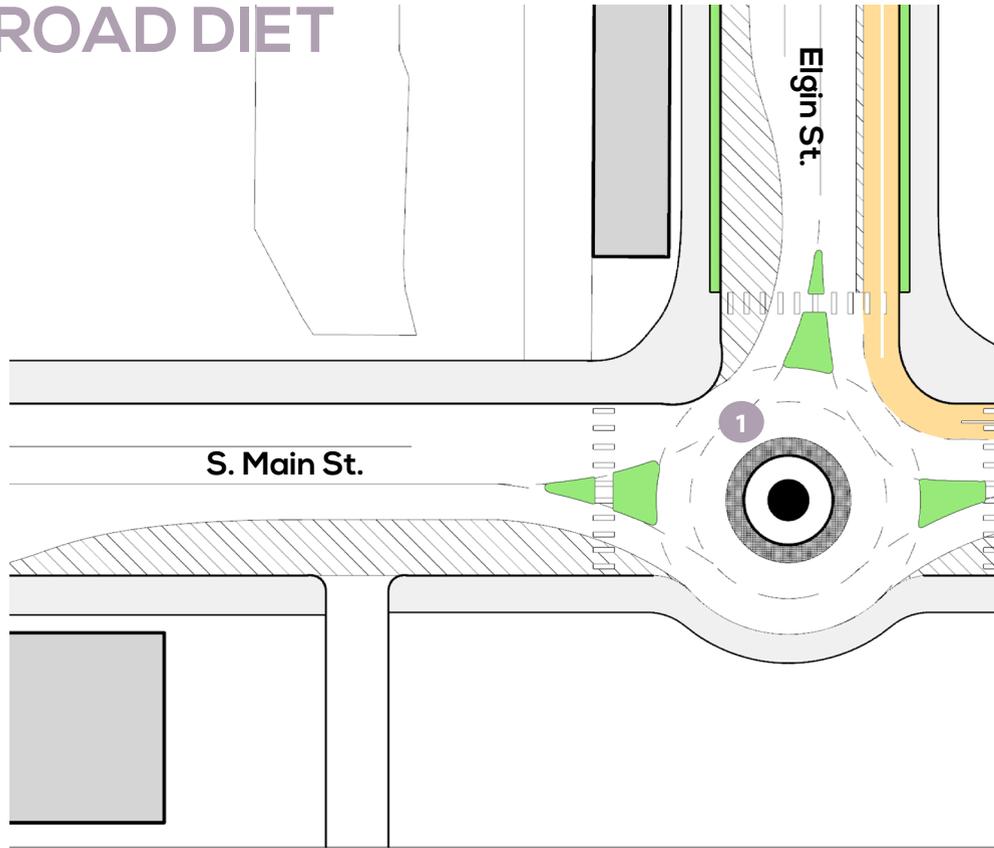
Photo: Aaron Renn, Urbanophile



# MAIN STREET ROAD DIET

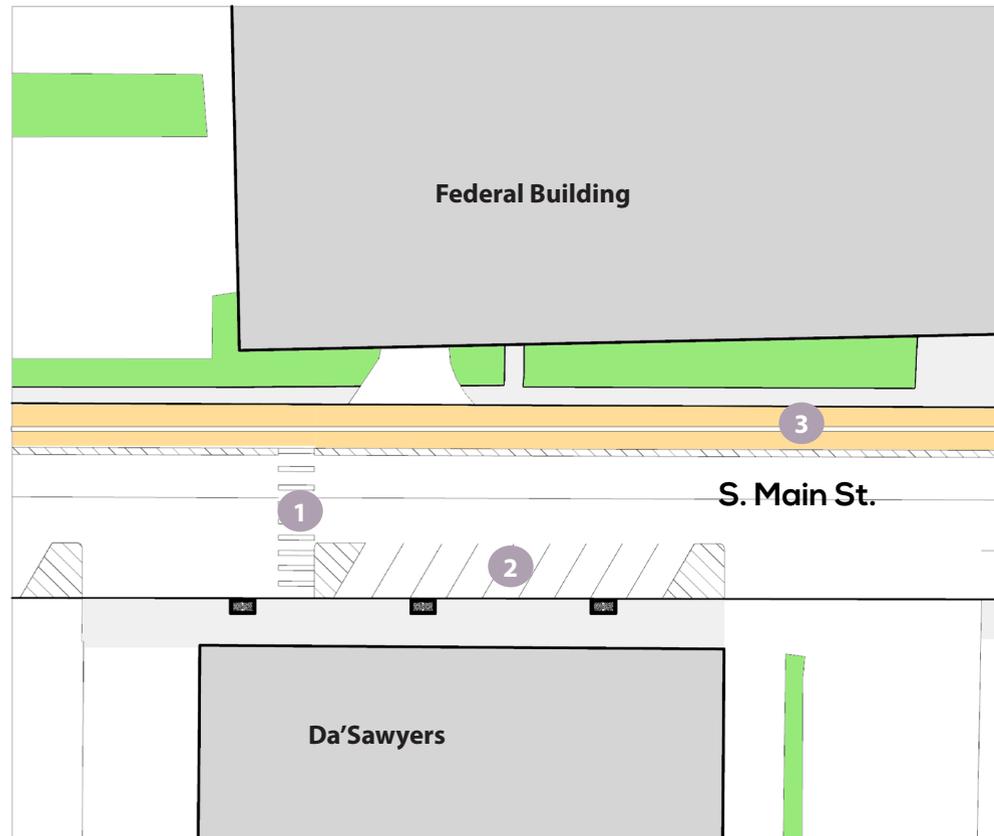
## Legend

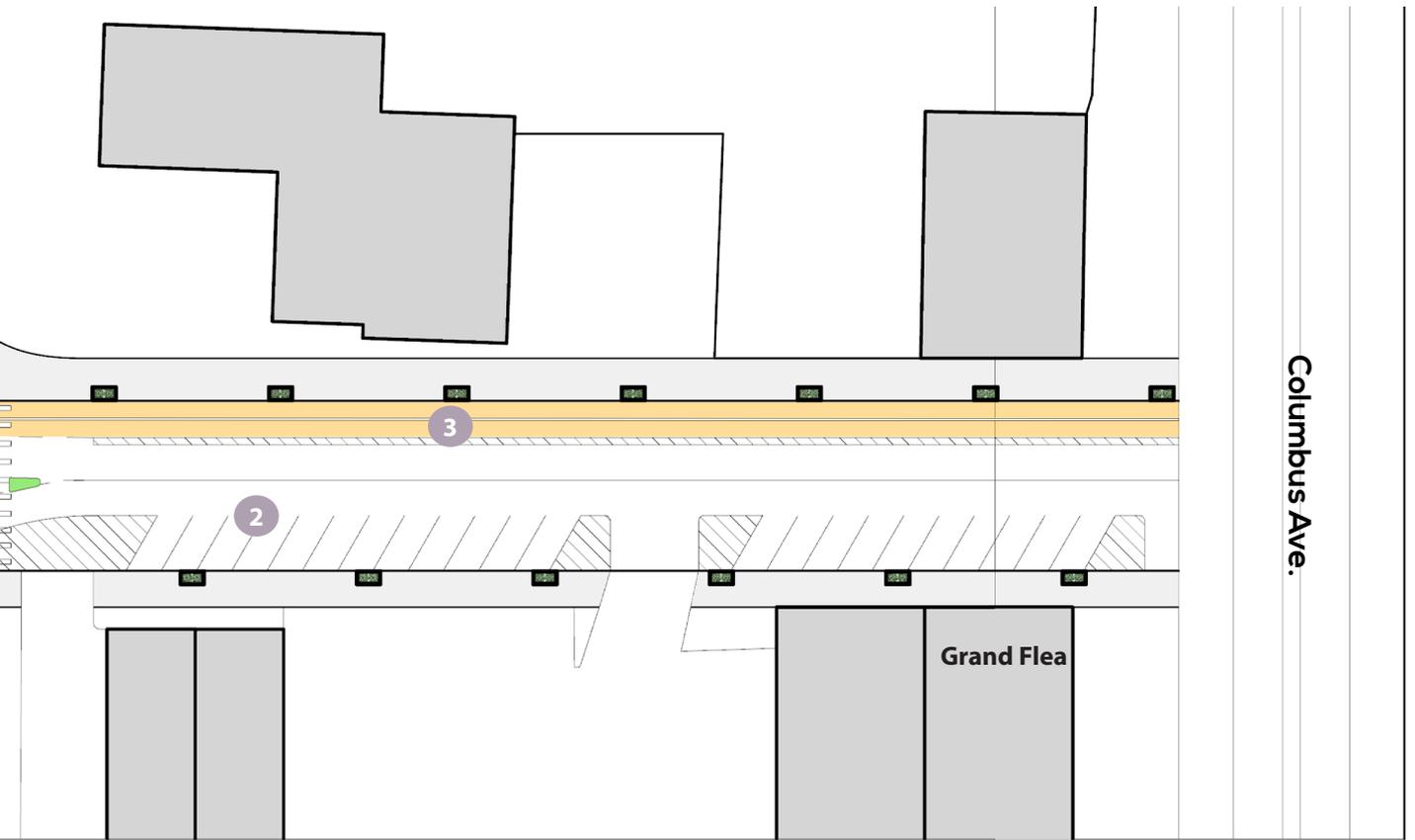
- 1 Roundabout to slow traffic and connect to Depot District
- 2 Reverse-Angle Parking to serve Katy District and Depot District
- 3 Two-Way Cycle Track to connect areas of downtown



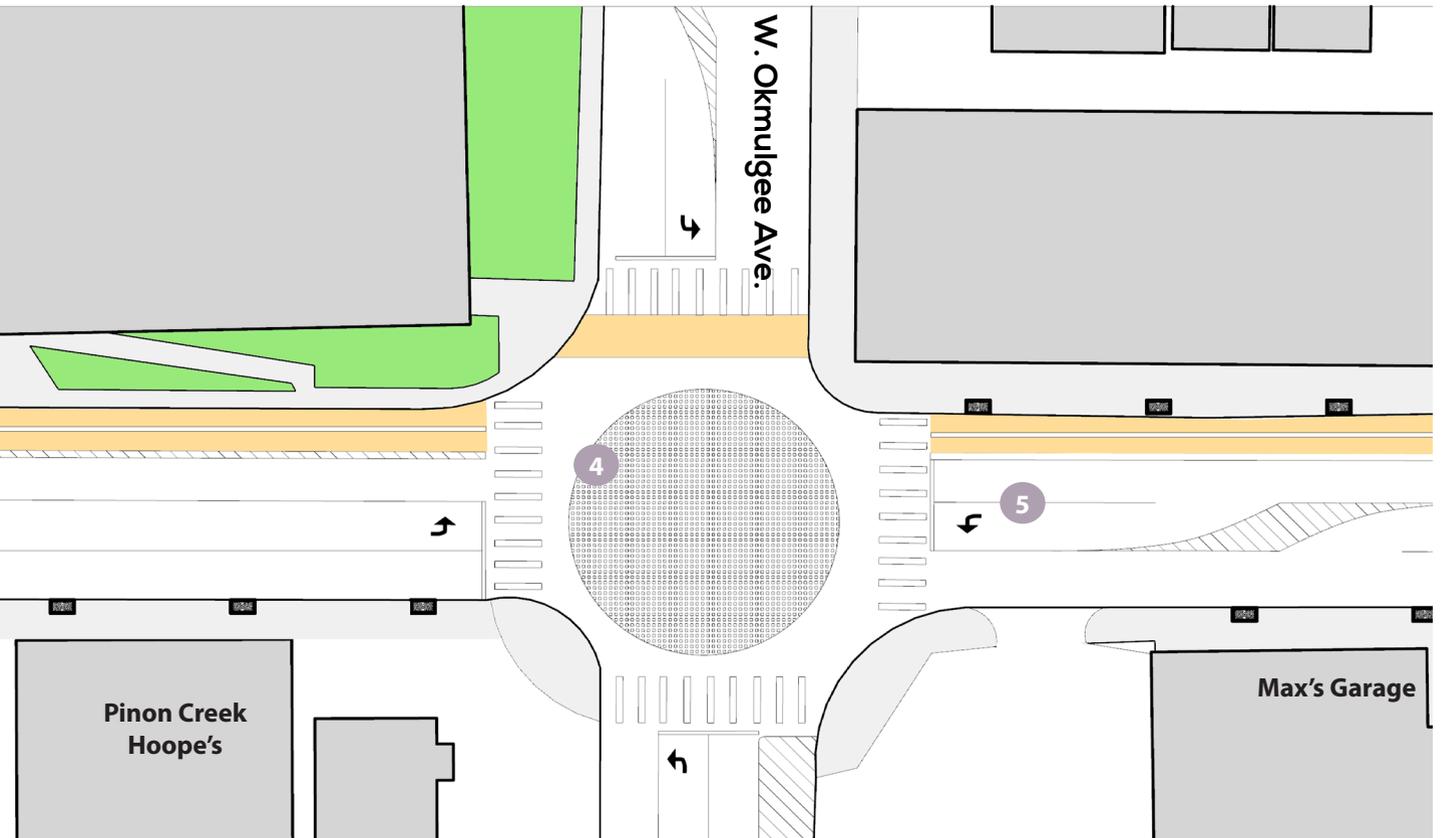
## Legend

- 1 Mid-Block Crosswalk to provide more ways to cross the street
- 2 Reverse-Angle Parking to serve the Katy District
- 3 Two-Way Cycle Track to connect areas of downtown
- 4 Marked Intersection to highlight important nodes
- 5 Left Turn Lanes to accommodate busier intersections





Columbus Ave.



W. Okmulgee Ave.

Pinon Creek  
Hoope's

Max's Garage



# THIRD STREET AND OKMULGEE

The intersection of Third Street and Okmulgee Avenue creates a disjointed connection that needs redesign to reflect its importance as a place along the loop.

The intersection at Third Street and Okmulgee Avenue is a fairly unique intersection because it has an offset alignment. The offset is an opportunity to create an interesting space that works better for both pedestrians and vehicles.

## Recommendations:

- Change Third Street from a one-way street to a two-way street with one lane of travel in each direction, with bike lanes in each direction. The bike lanes connect Arrowhead Mall to the Centennial Trailhead south of downtown.
- Create an at-grade public space that forms a civic plaza between the core of downtown and the Depot District, Civic Center, and City of Muskogee offices to the south.
- Reconfigure the intersection to accommodate a gentle curve that allows Third Street to move through the plaza and continue through the traffic light on Okmulgee Avenue. This will require the acquisition of a small piece of right-of-way from the adjacent parking lot. The impact should be minimal, since the lot is underutilized.
- Where Third Street passes through the plaza, add bollards to separate the space for pedestrians from the space for vehicles and cyclists. The cartway has been tapered to accommodate the difference in curbs widths for the sections of Third Street directly north and south of the intersection.
- Add street furniture, such as benches and tables, to allow seating areas in the plaza. The combination of a sculpture and a water feature created by a local artist provide the plaza with color and visual appeal, while adding subtle white noise to the area. This allows an enhanced atmosphere that will be pleasant and inviting for people passing through the plaza, as well as those seeking a place to rest, eat, or talk to neighbors while visiting downtown.
- Add landscaping to provide shade, add color and soften the hardscaped plaza with vegetation.
- Add inexpensive covered sheds to serve as open-air pavilions. The pavilions might hold a variety of events, including weddings, food truck events, festivals, and farmer's markets. The sheds also enclose the south side of the green between the Surety and Manhattan Buildings. The two linked spaces become an important node at the crossing of the downtown loop.

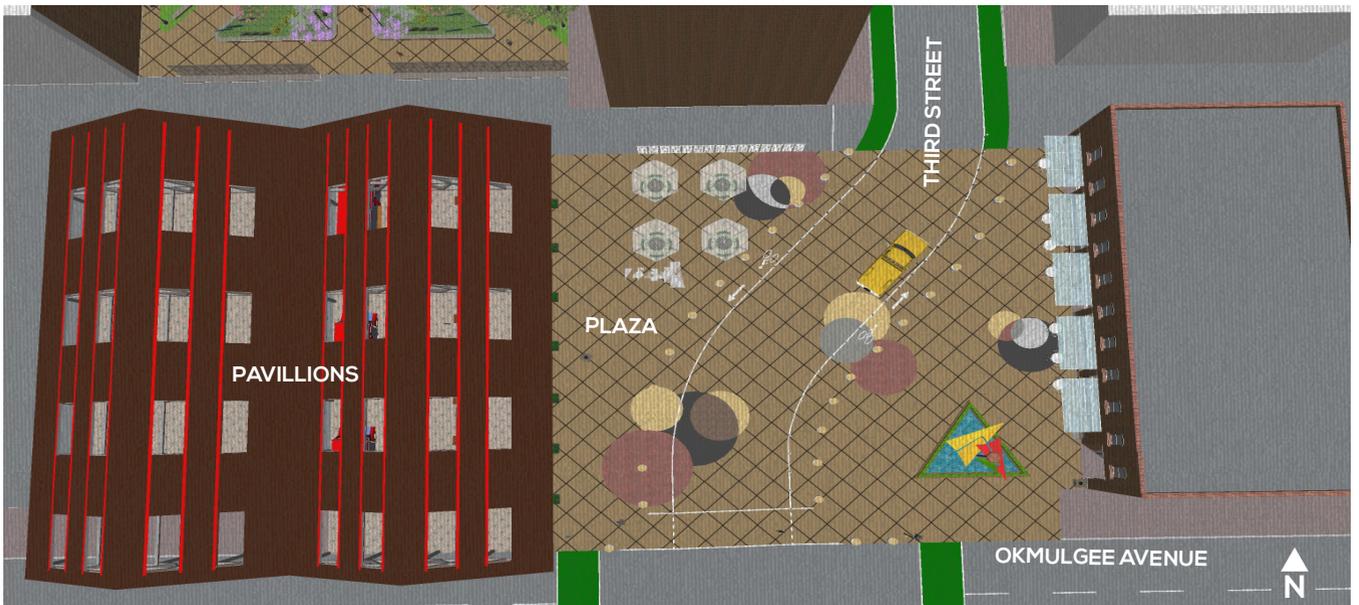
The plaza design shown here is similar to River Street in Batavia, Illinois. The design is modeled after “Shared Space” or “woonerf” concepts that slow traffic and allow maximum pedestrian access.



Photo: John Greenfield  
Streetsblog



A shared space plaza connects a two-way Third Street and bike lanes through the offset intersection at Okmulgee Avenue with a gentle curve, and provides attractive space for people in the heart of downtown. New pavilions provide event space and connect the plaza with the green space along Broadway.



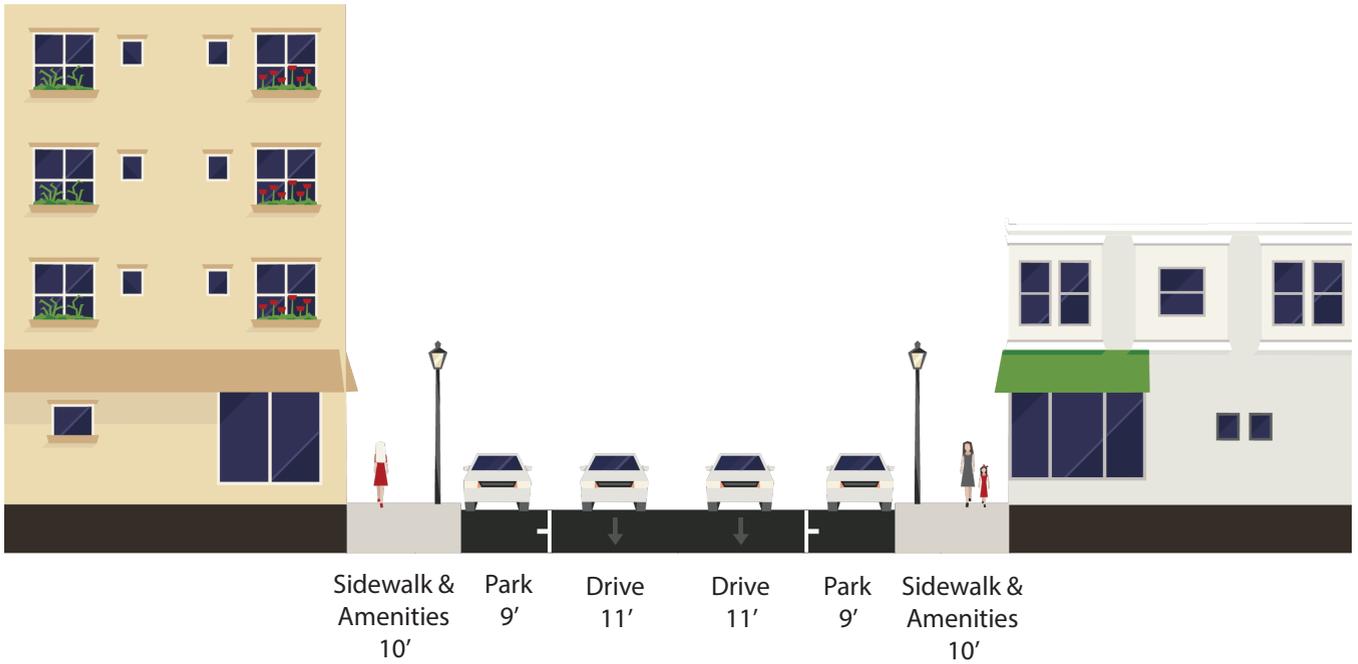
Plan View of Plaza at Third and Okmulgee



# THIRD STREET AND OKMULGEE

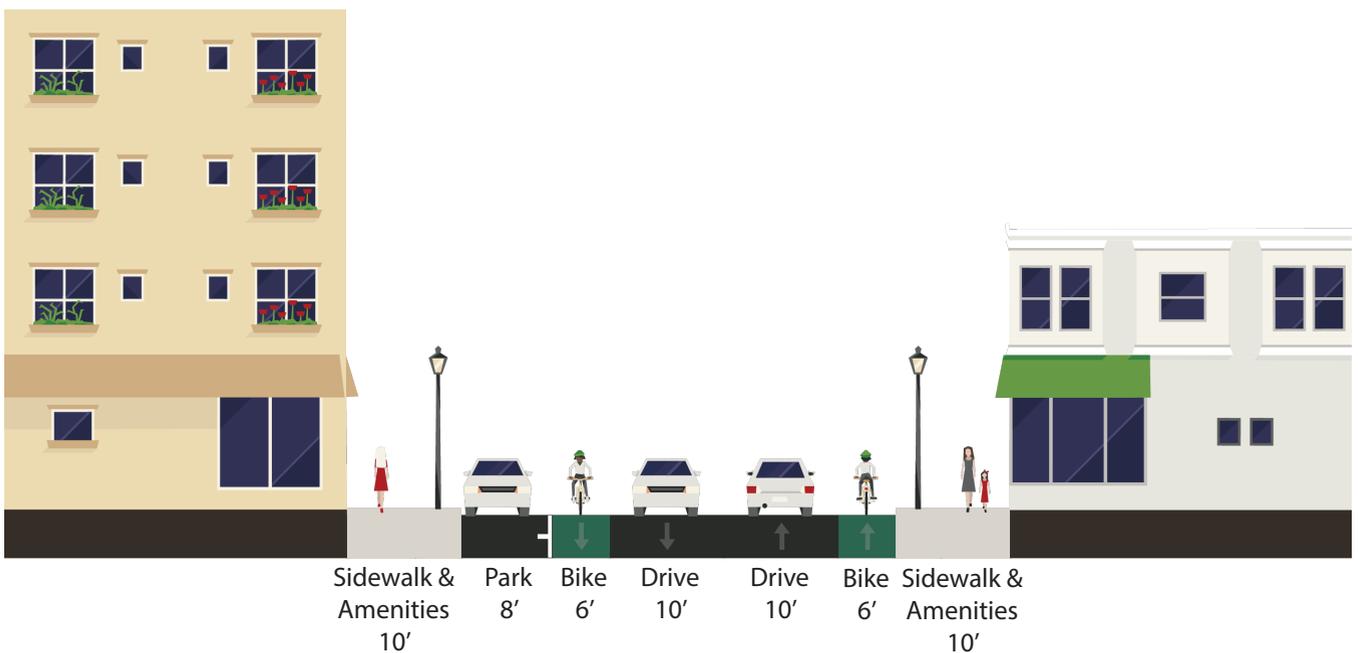
## Existing Third Street

Today, Third Street is a one-way street with two travel lanes and parallel parking on each side. The right-of-way is 60'.



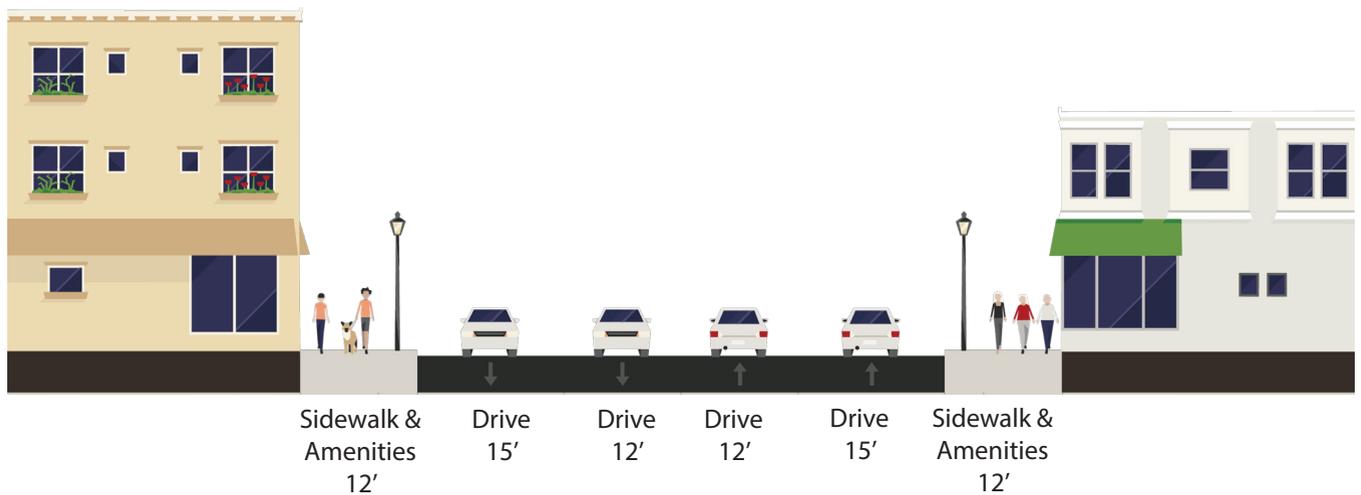
## Proposed Third Street

The proposed Third Street allows two-way travel and removes a few parallel parking spaces to make room for bike lanes.



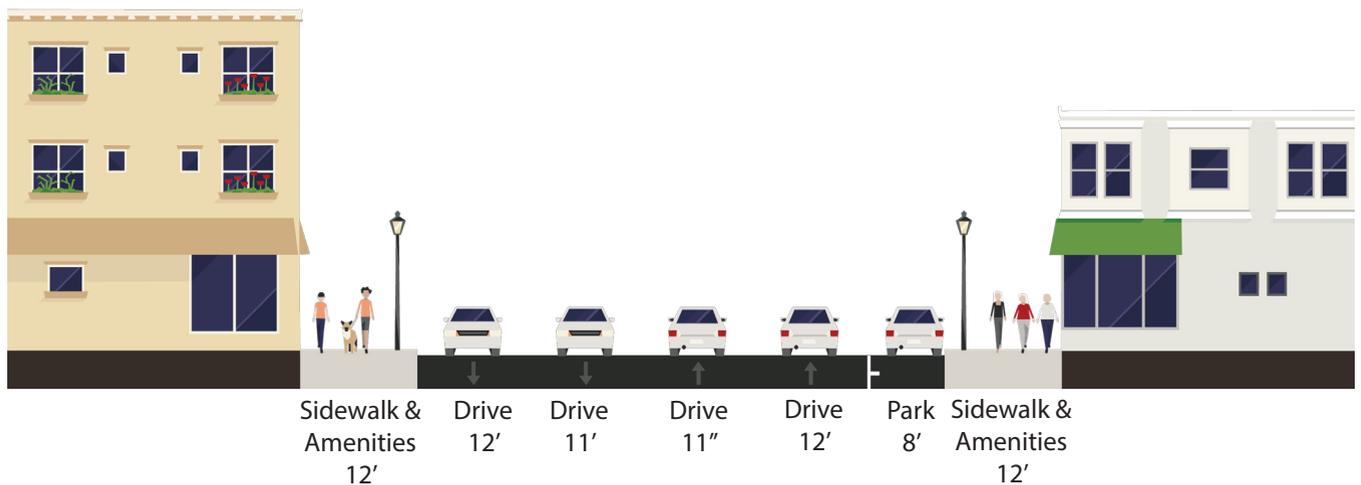
## Existing Okmulgee Avenue

Okmulgee Avenue is a two-way street with four wide travel lanes, making it a traffic artery through downtown. The outside lanes are especially wide, encouraging fast speeds in this area.



## Proposed Okmulgee Avenue

The proposed Okmulgee Avenue reduces the size of the outside lanes to create new parallel parking spaces along Okmulgee, providing more than enough parking spaces to replace those that are removed on Third for bike lanes.





# BROADWAY STREET

With its unmistakable wide lanes, Broadway Street presents itself as a great candidate for a road diet. A redesigned street will better serve vehicular traffic, as well as pedestrians and business owners in downtown within the existing right-of-way.

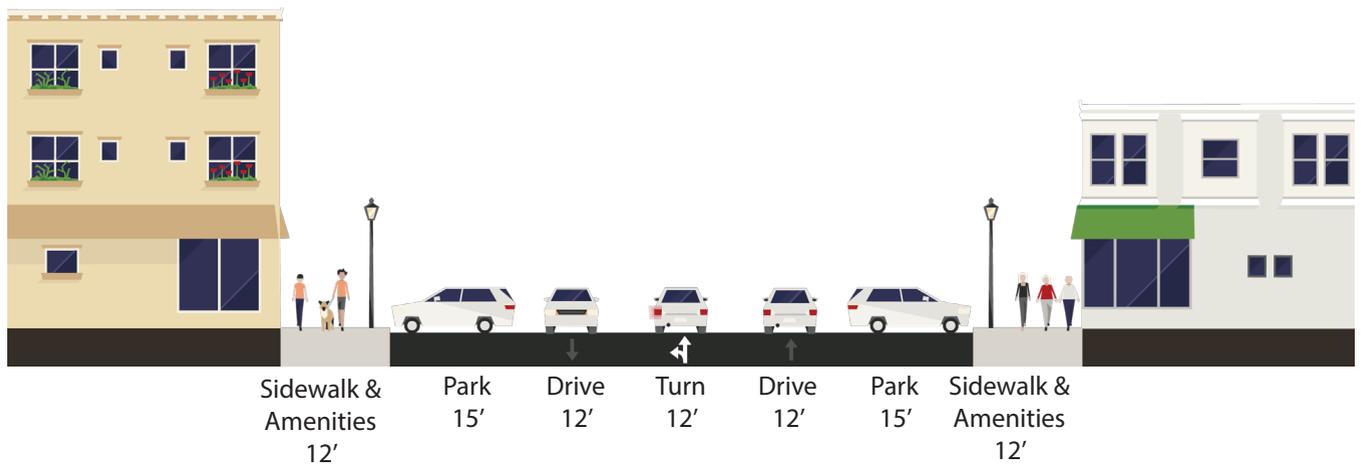
Broadway Street in downtown Muskogee exemplifies street design of decades past. However, because of its width, the street makes a great case for a road diet that will allow a repurposing of the current right-of-way.

## Recommendations:

- Reduce the number of lanes and the width of lanes on Broadway Street by restriping the street. The current 12' lanes encourage higher speeds and are uninviting to pedestrians. This creates space that can be repurposed into new zones for pedestrians and bicyclists, such as dedicated bike lanes or wider sidewalks.
- Repair sidewalks where tree grates remain without trees. Street trees are an inviting relief in cities, but they are often intrusive if not properly installed or the wrong species is used. Along Broadway Street, trees have been removed, but their grates and root systems remain in place. These have become hazards to pedestrians. The grates and remaining planting materials should be removed and repaved with plain concrete to create a smoother surface for pedestrians, especially for seniors and the disabled. The City of Muskogee is in the process of revising its ordinances to assume the burden of maintaining sidewalks downtown from the property owners. This will allow the City to efficiently replace damaged sidewalks with capital improvement funds. Downtown sidewalk improvements focusing on the loop should be included in the next municipal sales tax vote for funding capital improvements.
- Consider adding a median replacing the center turn lane if street trees are desirable in the future. There is plenty of room in the cartway and a median would not require a redesign of the street drainage or impact the existing curbs. Trees in the median would provide shade and reduce the perceived width of the street.
- Consider replacing angled parking with parallel parking to provide more space. Based on parking counts and aerial photography, parking availability does not appear to be a problem. A reconfiguration of the current parking into a parallel parking configuration along Broadway Street might enhance the atmosphere of the street.
- Remove traffic signals on Broadway and replace them with stop signs. With low traffic counts and very few curb cuts on both Broadway and its cross streets, there is no need for a center turn lane or traffic signals. Except for a few intersections on Main Street and Okmulgee Avenue, traffic signals are not needed in downtown. Stop signs create a better pedestrian environment, calm traffic, and move traffic more efficiently in low-volume intersections.
- Use crosswalks and other pedestrian amenities as opportunities to create urban features with colorful and innovative designs.
- Relocate some excess lighting from Broadway to other streets. Broadway may have twice the number of street lamps that it needs. This provides good night time illumination, but it also causes glare and is inefficient. Some of the lights could be relocated to darker streets, like Okmulgee Avenue, as future improvements take place.

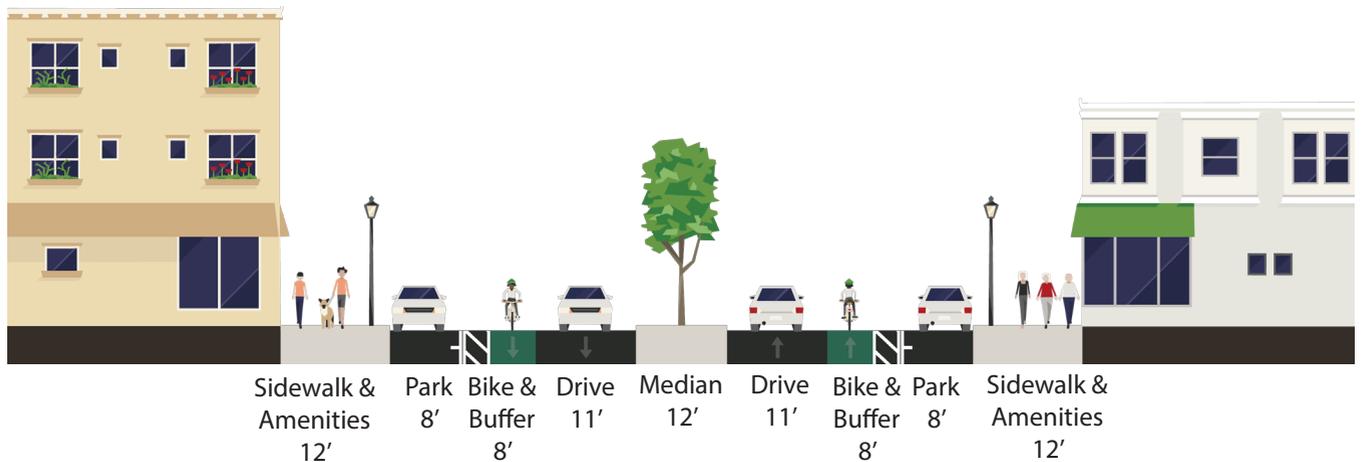
## Existing Broadway Street

Broadway Street is a 90' wide right-of-way with two directions of traffic, parking on both sides, and a center turn lane.



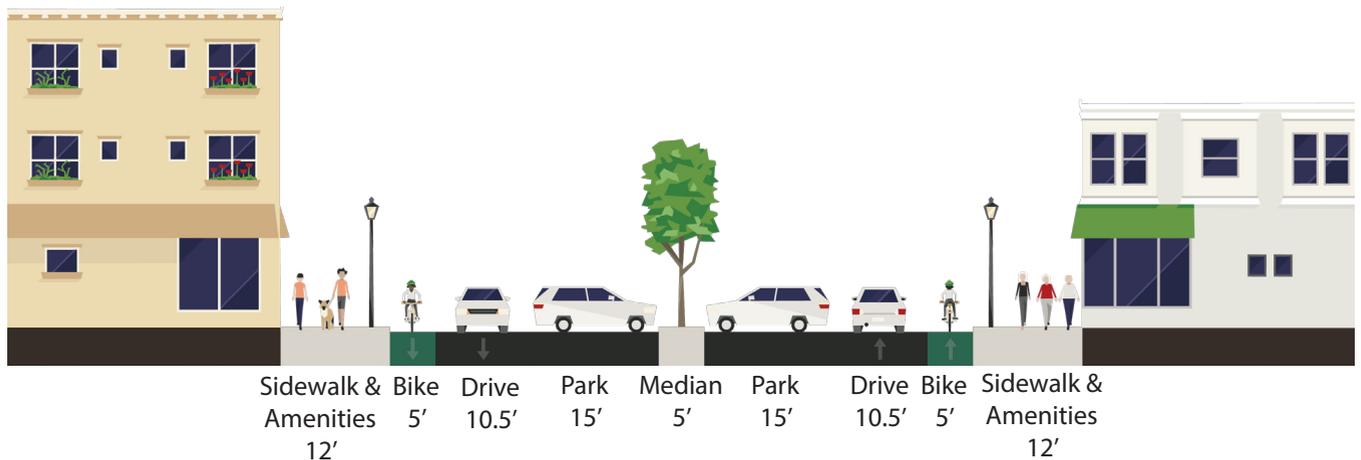
## Proposed Broadway Street with Parallel Parking

A conversion to parallel parking would allow the installation of buffered bicycle lanes and a generous median.



## Proposed Broadway Street with Angled Parking

A smaller median and standard bike lanes allow angled parking to be retained.





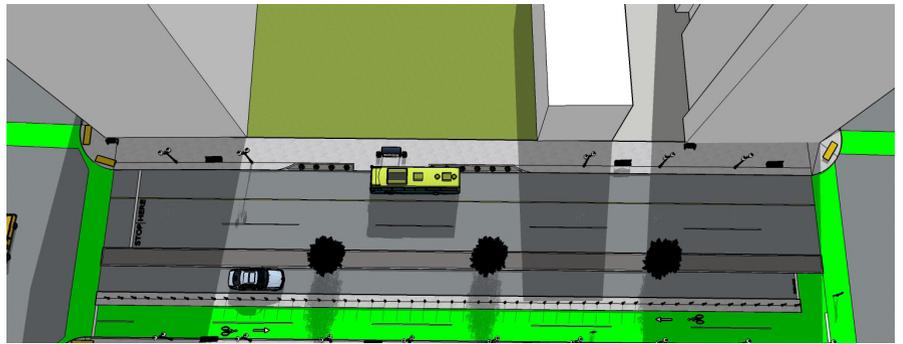
# BROADWAY STREET

Broadway Street might be a place to get creative with an innovative streetscape design that reflects the sense of place in Muskogee.

Students from Professor Greg Warren's class learn about Landscape Architecture for Urban Design. They independently developed six different schemes for Broadway that explored ways to calm traffic and provide an environment that is safer and more comfortable to walk in. Pedestrian environments like the one on Broadway are rare in our state and are often sought out as destinations by visitors.

These creative concepts show the many possibilities for a design of Broadway Street that truly reflects the culture and sense of place in Muskogee while providing a safer and more inviting public realm.

Protected bike lanes provide a safe environment for bicyclists while connecting to the Centennial Trail and the bikeways of the city.



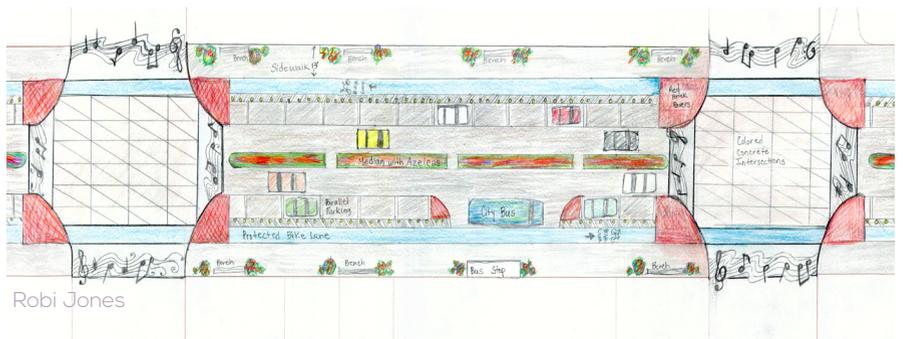
Kyle Clifton

Planting trees in the center median will provide shade and bring nature into downtown.

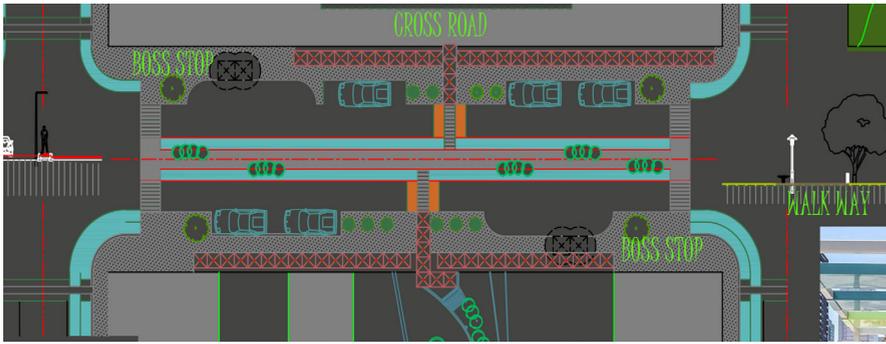


Sali Alharfouch

Creating musical note crosswalks ties Muskogee's musical heritage into the street design.



Robi Jones



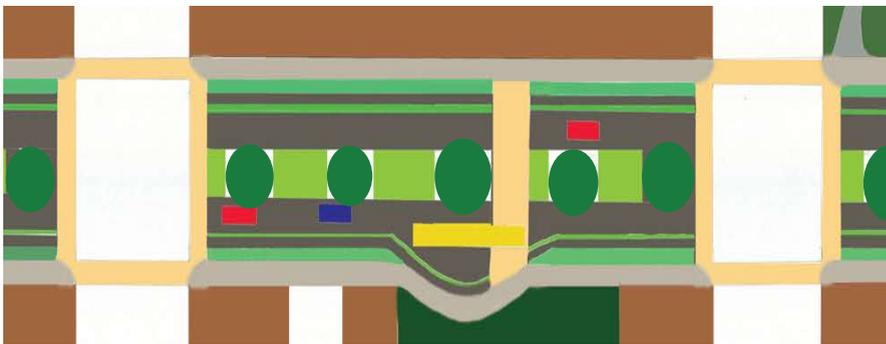
Maryam Moradian

Mid-block crossings allow pedestrians to cross the street between intersections. Here, a mid-block crossing connects shopping to the green space.



Robbie Wing

Improving existing sidewalk infrastructure is important for not only aesthetic appeal of the streetscape, but also for ADA accessibility.



Katie Ulrey

The use of nature and color helps beautify the current streetscape of Broadway Street in downtown.



This street in Petoskey, Michigan makes effective use of a median for landscaping and to create protected mid-block crosswalks.

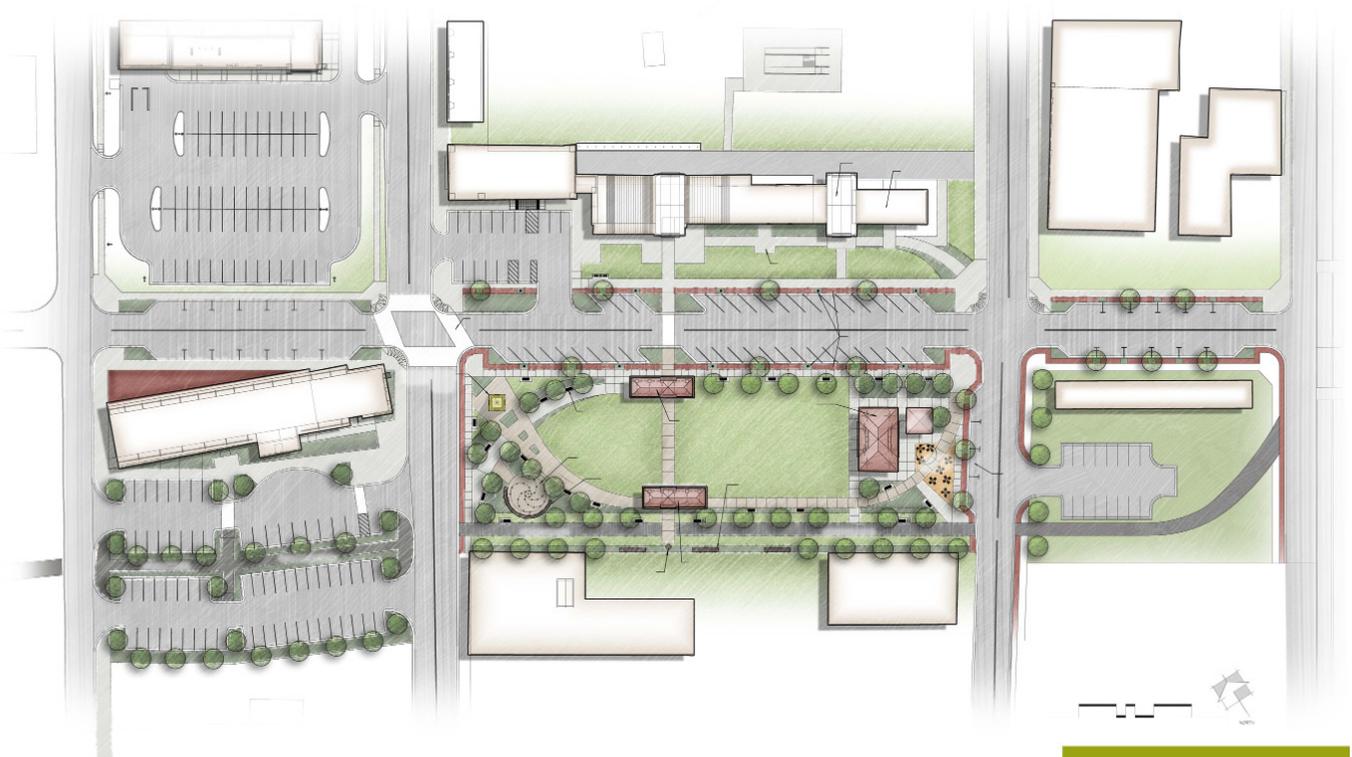


# ELGIN STREET - DEPOT DISTRICT

Arts and culture can be a strong driver of tourism and economic growth. Muskogee's museum, music, and theater scenes are ideal anchors.

The Depot District has its own plan created with the help of PDG - Planning Design Group. The plan describes a vision for the emerging cultural district surrounding the Muskogee Little Theater and the Music Hall of Fame, which includes a new park across the street from the Three Rivers Museum, an extension of the Centennial Trail to Main Street, a street design for Elgin Street, and new mixed-use development. This vision will anchor the southern end of the loop and become a destination for residents and visitors. This plan supports the existing Depot District Plan and strives to integrate it into the larger downtown context. The images presented below are excerpted from the plan created by PDG.

It is important the Depot District and other small districts like the Katy District are supported and encouraged to organize and grow. Muskogee Main Street should serve these areas, as well as Broadway and the downtown core area. Smaller units with memorable identities can focus on their strengths and characters without competing or splintering into isolated entities.



**PDG**  
PLANNING DESIGN GROUP

**MUSKOGEE**

DEPOT DISTRICT - SITE PLAN



DEPOT DISTRICT - ELGIN STREET LOOKING EAST



DEPOT DISTRICT - ELGIN STREET LOOKING WEST

# RESTORE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Downtown Muskogee has a range of architectural styles and typologies dating from before statehood to the present day. Like most settlements with a long history, the architecture of Downtown Muskogee is a palimpsest of many layers of building and rebuilding. There are excellent examples of buildings from the Territorial Era, the Classical Revival, the Mid-Century Modern Period, and Post-Modern Kitsch. Like many places, some of that built heritage has been lost to demolition and neglect.

A popular topic among Muskogee residents at the community visioning meeting and other site visits is the fascinating history of the city. For many people, Muskogee's historic buildings represent the legacy of past generations and the cultural heritage of the community. This underscores a need to save what is left of historic building stock. Examples from around the country show that historic preservation draws widespread support from citizens and pays economic development dividends.

This section provides information that will help Muskogee continue efforts to restore historic buildings and prevent further losses. The plan focuses on assessing the current situation and identifying the most important preservation opportunities.

- **National Register Properties:** Muskogee has a long list of buildings that have been celebrated with listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This listing is a success and opens the doors to many resources. This section provides an overview of Muskogee's inventory of important historic structures.
- **Challenges, Potentials, Successes:** Historic preservation is a challenging but important task. This section provides reflection on the way forward for Muskogee.
- **Pre-Statehood Commercial District:** A snapshot of this block reveals a lot about the challenges, potentials, and successes for historic buildings and restoration in Muskogee.
- **High Opportunity Buildings:** Several properties should be at the top of the list because of their scale, cultural importance, or strategic strengths.

Many resources for preservation are available at the local, state, and national level. These resources represent a pathway to preserve Muskogee's architectural heritage for future generations.

## Historic Building Priorities in Muskogee

This handful of priorities represents a way forward for Muskogee's historic preservation efforts. Within this list, many groups have responsibilities: Private property owners, developers, city departments, local non-profits, state agencies, and even federal programs all have a role to play in stabilizing and restoring historic buildings.

- Stabilize historic structures to protect them from the elements until a renovation plan can be established.
- Modernize services and utilities to historic buildings to support renovation.
- Meet modern building codes for safety and accessibility.
- Restore historic facades to their original condition where they have been covered or modified.
- Attract new commercial and residential tenants to secure the building's future.

## New Buildings and Historic Preservation

New buildings are not required to emphasize or replicate a single style or era, especially considering how difficult it is to capture the essence and craft of the historical periods. However, historic urban design can offer several desirable patterns that are worthy of continuing in new buildings:

- Historic buildings come right up to the sidewalk, forming the continuous street edge along Broadway which should be reinforced by new development.
- Historic buildings on a particular block might have a predominant building height or cornice line that can be incorporated into new building designs.
- Empty spaces and parking lots were often once developed as buildings, and new buildings of their own time can restore the urban fabric along blocks.

## Overview of Downtown Historic Buildings



Residential neighborhoods are filled with beautiful historic homes and apartment buildings in need of restoration.

Broadway Street is a core of historic buildings and represents high priority.

Cherokee Street and nearby blocks east of the railroad represent important preservation opportunities.

The Depot District has small structures in need of preservation as the area changes.

# NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES

Muskogee has an impressive stock of notable buildings.

National Register designation is important for preservation efforts. This page documents the impressive list of historic buildings in Muskogee, their notable architectural features, and their cultural legacies. This list demonstrates the importance of maintaining historic buildings in Muskogee.



## Central Baptist Church (Demolished 1985)

Constructed in 1908, this was the second oldest African American church in Muskogee. The structure had a single story, with a hipped roof, two two-story towers, and red brick cladding. The property was destroyed in 1985.

## Escoe Building (Demolished 1988)

This building housed the first black bank in Oklahoma, and was the only professional office building in Muskogee's African American community. The structure was two stories, brick, and had a flat roof. It was destroyed in 1988.

## FB Fite Home

This structure was built around 1906 with respect to the prominence of physician FB Fite. The home is 2.5 stories, composed of local limestone, and has a hipped roof with terra cotta tile. The front of the house has six unfluted columns and a large Palladian window.

## First Baptist Church

This church was built in 1903, and was the first Baptist church to serve Muskogee's non-white population. The architectural style is classified as Romanesque Revival with two asymmetrical towers, a steeply pitched gabled roof, and a multiple red brick façade.

## First Methodist Episcopal Church

This Classical Revival church was built in 1911 within a residential neighborhood in Muskogee. There is a temple-front principal façade, a bay window, and other classical decorative elements.

## Grant Foreman House

This house was the residence for Oklahoma historian, Grant Foreman. This structure is a two-story white-framed house with an enclosed front porch built approximately in 1898.

### **Manhattan Building**

This is an eight-story commercial building in downtown Muskogee built in 1911. It is reinforced with concrete and is clad in grey brick. The entrance has noticeable two-story columns.

### **Manual Training High School for Negroes**

This structure was the oldest black educational facility in Muskogee. Built in 1910, the school is two stories, brick, constructed with a Second Renaissance Revival style.

### **Masonic Temple**

Constructed in 1925, the Masonic Temple of Muskogee is located in a residential/commercial area, and services citizens throughout the vicinity. It is a prime example of Classical Revival architecture.

### **George Murphy Home**

The George Murphy Home was built in 1907 as a Spanish Colonial Revival residence for attorney, George Murphy. There are three stories with stucco wall cladding and a red tile hipped roof.

### **Muskogee County Courthouse**

This is a Renaissance Revival style judicial building constructed in 1928. It is three stories, rectangular, and comprised of stone blocks along the exterior with a rusticated ground floor.

### **Muskogee Municipal Building**

This multipurpose municipal building was constructed in 1931 as Muskogee's first-ever formal city hall. This Classical Revival structure has magnificent columns decorating the front façade and is draped with red brick.

### **AW Patterson Home**

The Patterson home was built in 1906 as a three-story Richardsonian Romanesque Style residence for prominent banker, AW Patterson. The house is finished with local limestone, pitched gently with a red tile hipped roof, and has multiple arches at entrance points.

### **Railway Exchange Building**

The Railway Exchange Building is an eight-story commercial structure located in downtown Muskogee. The first two levels are composed of white terra cotta ornamentation, while the higher stories are clad in red brick.

### **Andrew Robb House**

This house was built for community leader, Andrew Robb, approximately around 1905-1906 as a Queen Anne-style residence. It is a two-story structure covered in brick, has a wraparound porch, and a multi-plane roof.

### **Severs Hotel**

This ten-story building was constructed in 1912 in downtown Muskogee as the commercial district's focal point. Built as a Sullivanesque-style structure, the building is comprised of red brick cladding and terra cotta accents.

### **Smith's Drug Store**

Built in 1915, this property is a three-story, clipped gable, brick and stucco Tudor Revival style structure. The building includes a large oriel, a recessed balcony, and arched windows.

### **St. Philip's Episcopal Church**

St. Philip's Church served many of Muskogee's black residents throughout the mid-20th century. The building is a Tudor Revival with a steeply pitched roof and masonry exterior.

### **Surety Building**

This eight-story building is located in downtown, built in 1910 as a Sullivanesque structure. The building is clad in red brick, marble, and finished terra cotta.

### **AC Trumbo House**

This residence was built for civic leader and merchant AC Trumbo. The home is a 2.5-story geometric patterned Prairie-style structure with a stucco exterior, a low-pitched hipped roof, and cross gables in the front.

### **United States Post Office and Courthouse**

This Classical Revival style government building is located in downtown Muskogee, and provides numerous government functions for Muskogee County. This building was built between 1911 and 1915 with five stories clad in limestone.

### **VR Coss House**

This house was built for businessman VR Coss in the early 20th century with three stories. The home is clad in brick with a red tiled hipped roof.

### **Ward Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church**

This church is the oldest AME church in Muskogee that served black Muskogee residents. Built in 1904 as a staple for the black community, the church has painted brick exterior walls, a two-story square tower, and a gabled roof.

### **JC Welch Home**

Constructed in 1904, the Welch home was the residence for prominent garment manufacturer JC Welch. This three-story Colonial Revival style house has a hipped roof, and a two-story balustrade circular portico supported by four columns.



# CHALLENGES, POTENTIALS, SUCCESSES

Over the years Muskogee has had preservation successes, but there are still many challenges and promising buildings in need of restoration.

## Challenges

Not every building can be saved—physically, financially, or feasibly. Some buildings were poorly constructed, while some have weathered terribly. Other buildings may no longer be needed for their original purposes. However, today there are an incredible number of resources available to guide even the most challenging projects. Many people share their building restorations and rehabilitations with anyone who cares (or dares) to read. Next to baby pictures and vacation pictures, old building project pictures rank high on the list to share. Today, there is an organization or a website that addresses just about any type of building, from the original use to the rehabilitated use. In 2016, the National Preservation Act turned 50 years old. Never has there been so much information readily available for historic buildings.

Challenges continue, though. In Muskogee, there have been several demolitions—whether on purpose or simply by neglect. Two major, highly visible buildings are on the verge of collapsing. One of these is the former lumberyard on the east side of North Main Street between Denison Avenue and Court Street. Another endangered building is the significant structure with terra cotta decorative trim on the northeast corner of North Main Street and Callahan Street. Not only is this a large, three-story building on a prominent Main Street corner, it is also very visible from the viaduct south of the building. As people cross the railroad tracks on this viaduct and enter downtown Muskogee from the northeast, the collapsed rear of this building is visible.

Both buildings need to be stabilized and rehabilitated as they contribute to the architectural heritage of downtown Muskogee.

Preservation Oklahoma is the statewide non-profit organization that promotes historic preservation throughout the state. Each year, this organization unveils “Oklahoma’s Most Endangered Historic Places.” In the past couple of years, a couple of Muskogee houses have been nominated. One of these houses, The Alice Robertson Home, at 1109 Elgin Avenue in the Kendall Place Historical District, received a lot of publicity. In addition to architectural merit, this house had a historically important owner. “Miss Alice” was the first Oklahoma woman elected to Congress, serving from March 4, 1921, until March 3, 1923. Today, she is the one of only two women ever to represent Oklahoma in Congress. She was the first woman to preside over the U.S. House of Representatives beginning on June 20, 1921. Additionally, she was America’s first female postmaster (1905 to 1913) of a Class A post office. Her house and others in Muskogee are historic complements to the architecturally rich downtown.

For more links and resources related to historic preservation, see the reference page at the end of the section.

## Potentials

Located within Muskogee (the city) and Muskogee (the county) are many properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are several districts with historic designations: Kendall Place Historic Preservation District, Founder's Place Historic Preservation District, Muskogee Freight and Depot Historic District, Downtown Muskogee Historic District, Samuel L. Sadler Historic District, and The "Y" Historic District.

The Downtown Muskogee Historic District (between Denison, Columbus, Main, and 7th) is locally designated but not listed on the National Register. There are individual buildings within this district that are listed on the National Register for Historic Places. Some of these are rehabilitated and qualified for tax credits.

In 1983, a National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form was completed for the "Pre-Statehood Commercial District" for seven buildings that front the west side of Main Street between Broadway and Okmulgee Avenues. This is the largest grouping of commercial buildings in downtown Muskogee that is currently listed on the National Register.

In 1998, there was a survey of downtown Muskogee; however, no National Register district nomination was completed or submitted for review.

In 2017, there seems to be renewed interest in considering a National Register nomination for the downtown. Due to several demolitions and major alterations over the years, it is not determined at this time if a district is possible. The recommendation is to pursue this option as it not only provides historic designation for the buildings, but it also creates development opportunities using federal and state tax credits.

A major potential building for rehabilitation is the Muskogee Hotel at the northeast corner of Main Street and Broadway Street. This could be a mixed-used development of commercial spaces like retail or a restaurant with upper floor housing. Currently, the "Muskogee Hotel" sign is listed at the local level as a historic property. However, the hotel is just across the street from the locally-designated Downtown Muskogee Historic District. The recommendation is to consider listing this building at the local and national levels.

## Successes

There have been many historic preservation successes in downtown Muskogee over the past decade. Some of these successes, like the tax credit projects listed below, represent major investments in major buildings.

The following successes are some highlights among many more that are not listed:

### Tax Credit Projects

- Phoenix-Manhattan Building
- Severs Block Building
- Surety Building

### Other Recent Rehabilitation Projects

- Club Lunch rehabilitation in the McKibban Building
- McEntee's Jewelry sign restoration on the Surety Building
- Hooper's Hardware and Pinon Creek façade restorations

### Past Rehabilitation Projects

- Severs Building

### Nominations and Designations

There also have been successes with National Register nominations and designations for individual properties throughout Muskogee. Most of these new listings have been civic buildings and churches in the historic African-American neighborhoods of Muskogee. Credit should be given to city staff who understand the importance of these buildings for Muskogee's history.

### New Projects

- In 2010, Muskogee residents set out working on several projects that have made significant progress:
- New gateways have been constructed downtown in the Katy District and the Depot District.
  - The emerging museum district is doing well with the Three Rivers Museum and the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame & Museum.
  - The need for directional signage has been addressed.

More important projects since 2010 include:

- The new Muskogee Little Theater
- Martin Luther King Jr. Center
- Plans for Depot District park
- Expansion of the Centennial Trail

# PRE-STATEHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

A case study of this officially designated district reveals a snapshot about the challenges, potentials, and successes for historic preservation in Muskogee.

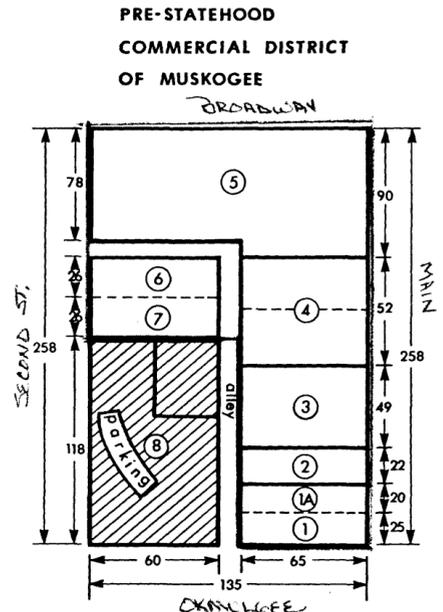
## Challenges, Potentials, and Successes in One Block

Due to extensive urban renewal projects as well as the mall development in downtown Muskogee, there are few blocks that are totally intact with historic structures. One of the most recognized blocks of buildings is on the west side of North Main Street between Okmulgee and Broadway Avenue. Over the past few years, the challenges, potentials, and successes of downtown Muskogee occurred in this one block, representing the need to continue to promote historic preservation.

Not commonly known, but officially designated, this block of buildings comprises the "Pre-Statehood Commercial District" of seven early Muskogee buildings. The map below from the 1983 nomination form shows a map of the district as it appeared at the time, with notes on how the seven buildings have fared since the designation.

## Block Map and Update

- 1 Challenge: Alley Brothers Slaughter House and Meat Market- Demolished since 2010 for a surface parking lot.
- 2 Success: General Merchandise Store- Recently rehabilitated for Brothers Rustic Original Style.
- 3 Potential to Success: The New York Store- Recently removed mansard from both storefronts, exposing transom areas of storefronts.
- 4 Potential to Success: Oxford Hotel and Bakery- Recently removed mansard from storefronts on two different facades, exposing transom areas of storefronts, tuckpointing underway on north part of building.
- 5 Success: Severs Block- Once listed on "Oklahoma's Most Endangered Places" list, a fire threatened a total demolition of this building. The façade was restored and the first floor commercial spaces were rehabilitated. A recent upper floor housing development using tax credits, created new units.



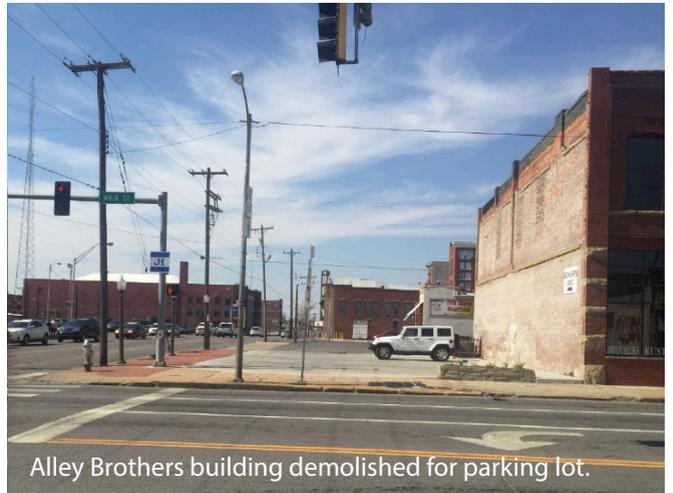
- 6 Challenge: Abstract and Insurance Office- Demolished for surface parking lot.
- 7 Challenge: Jewelry Store- Demolished for surface parking lot.

Then



View of Alley Brothers building, 2010

Now



Alley Brothers building demolished for parking lot.



View of Main Street Block, 2010.



Ongoing work to restore storefronts and brick.



Severs Block, 1982



Severs Block rehabilitated.





## Restore the Muskogee Hotel

The Muskogee Hotel represents an extremely high opportunity for success. The structure is located on the northeast corner of Main and Broadway, directly northeast of the Pre-Statehood Commercial District. The Muskogee Hotel is a four-story, flat-roofed commercial-style hotel. Some of the hotel's decorative elements include a stone cornice, belt course, and parapet. A major feature of this hotel, its sign, represents the Muskogee Hotel's impact on Muskogee's preservation efforts. Thorough rehabilitation is highly recommended for this property because of the ability to reconnect Muskogee's rich downtown history and the Pre-Statehood Commercial District to Muskogee's vision of a landscape of hope.



## Assess Opportunity in the Depot and Freight District

Although most of the historic structures in Muskogee are in good condition, there is an area of historic designation that exudes potential. The Muskogee Depot and Freight District, located near south downtown, is a distressed district filled with unique architecture and transportation features. There is high opportunity to create a vibrant area that coexists with downtown's core features and transitions well into Muskogee's southern neighborhoods.



# HIGH-OPPORTUNITY BUILDINGS

## Stabilize Northeast Corner, Main and Callahan

This building is located on a prominent corner and is rapidly deteriorating. It is in need of stabilization and rehabilitation.



## Remember the Small Structures

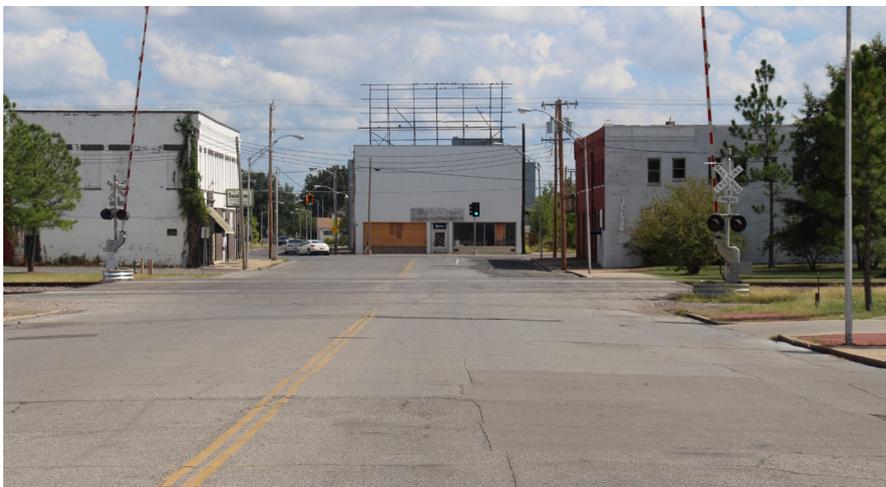
Small structures are often overlooked, but they can be simpler projects to take on and provide just the right amount of space for a small local business. These small structures are found throughout downtown and on the edges of downtown.





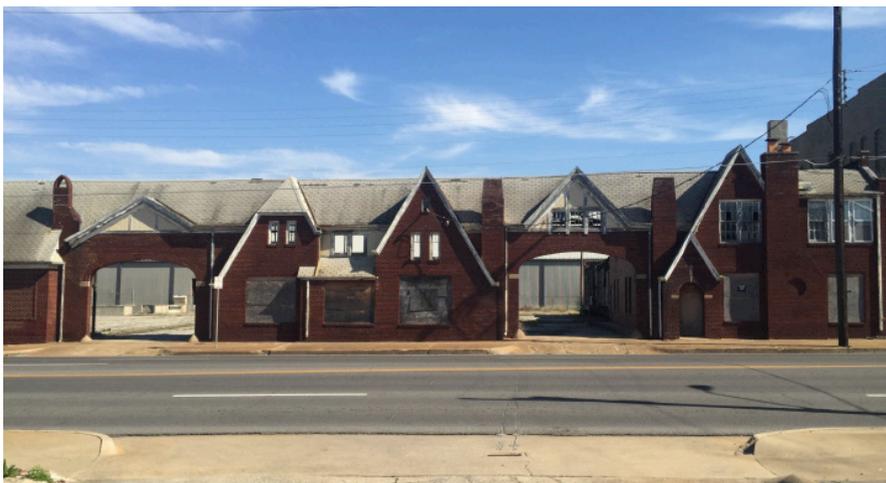
## Assess Opportunity Along Cherokee Street

The area immediately east of the railroad tracks has an impressive stock of remaining commercial and industrial structures which should be evaluated, especially concentrated along Cherokee Street.



## Rehabilitate Tweeterville Birdhouse/Weaver's Wood Building

This building at Broadway and Cherokee creates an interesting enclosed vista down Broadway Street and is a priority for rehabilitation.



## Stabilize Lumberyard Facade

The remaining facade for this building creates important sense of enclosure along Main Street and should be stabilized.



# RESOURCES FOR PRESERVATION

## Local Resources

### City of Muskogee Historic Preservation Commission

- Home Page: [http://www.muskogeeonline.org/departments/planning/historic\\_preservation.php](http://www.muskogeeonline.org/departments/planning/historic_preservation.php)

The City of Muskogee has an official preservation program with a review commission and dedicated staff person. Not all towns have such resources already established and readily available to assist citizens with their historic buildings.

### Muskogee Certified Local Government Program

- Local Program: [http://www.muskogeeonline.org/departments/planning/historic\\_preservation.php](http://www.muskogeeonline.org/departments/planning/historic_preservation.php)
- Statewide: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/factsheets/fs5clg.pdf>
- Local Contact: Tish Callahan, CLG Coordinator and Muskogee Historic Preservation Commission staff , (918) 684-6232 or [TCallahan@muskogeeonline.org](mailto:TCallahan@muskogeeonline.org)

Muskogee is fortunate to be one of only thirteen Certified Local Government (CLG) Programs in Oklahoma. CLGs are administered by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) at the Oklahoma Historical Society. The program leads to such creative preservation tools as the “Muskogee’s Colorful History” coloring book focusing on the architectural heritage of this prominent Oklahoma community.

### Local Museums and Organizations:

Local museums and historical societies have information (documents, photographs, maps, etc.) about Muskogee’s historic architecture and early citizens. These include the Five Civilized Tribes Museum, Three Rivers Museum, War Memorial Park and USS Batfish, Ataloa Lodge Museum, Main Street Muskogee, Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Muskogee County Genealogical Society, and Muskogee Public Library.

## Regional Resources

**Oklahoma Historical Society:** <http://www.okhistory.org/historycenter/>

### Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office

- Home Page: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/shpom.htm>
- Listing of Properties in Muskogee County: [http://nr\\_shpo.okstate.edu/allsites.htm](http://nr_shpo.okstate.edu/allsites.htm)

**Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.:** <http://www.preservationok.org/>

**Oklahoma Main Street Center/Department of Commerce:** <http://okcommerce.gov/community/main-street/>

## National Resources

**National Trust for Historic Preservation:** Home Page: <https://savingplaces.org/>

**Main Street America - National Main Street Center:** <http://www.mainstreet.org/>

## National Register & Tax Credits

### More information on the National Register of Historic Places

- National Register of Historic Places: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/factsheets/fs1nr.pdf>
- Historic District Designations: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/factsheets/fs6hd.pdf>
- Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/factsheets/fs11nr.pdf>

### More information about Investment Tax Credits for Rehabilitation:

- Investment Tax Credits for Rehabilitation: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/factsheets/fs3tax.pdf>
- Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/factsheets/fs14tax.pdf>

### More about National Register Designations for Muskogee Buildings

- Phoenix-Manhattan Building: [http://nr\\_shpo.okstate.edu/shpopic.asp?id=83002095](http://nr_shpo.okstate.edu/shpopic.asp?id=83002095)
- Surety Building: [http://nr\\_shpo.okstate.edu/shpopic.asp?id=86002156](http://nr_shpo.okstate.edu/shpopic.asp?id=86002156)
- Severs Building: [http://nr\\_shpo.okstate.edu/shpopic.asp?id=82003691](http://nr_shpo.okstate.edu/shpopic.asp?id=82003691)



# INTRODUCE GREEN SPACES

Downtown Muskogee has a lot of open spaces including vacant lots, underutilized parking areas, and wide rights-of-way for streets and railroads. Much of this space used to be occupied by buildings, but it is unrealistic to expect all of it to be rebuilt in the near future. Instead, strategies for re-greening some of this open space is needed to improve its value and make some of it desirable for civic uses.

In meetings with Muskogee citizens, many people expressed a desire for more public spaces to gather with neighbors. Citizens feel that these public spaces can contribute to the attractiveness of downtown and provide a venue for programming and events.

This section includes recommendations for green public spaces. The plan concentrates on redeveloping key locations and reducing the total amount of impervious surface downtown.

- **Broadway Green:** This vacant parcel of grass along Broadway could provide a signature public space for downtown Muskogee.
- **Depot District:** An existing plan for a new park in the Depot District will provide another excellent public space.
- **Reclaim Paved Areas:** Some parking lots and paved surfaces may no longer be needed. These areas can be reclaimed to help with stormwater management and reduce the heat island effect.

These strategies create excellent public spaces, but Muskogee should remember programming and management to ensure that the spaces are successful.



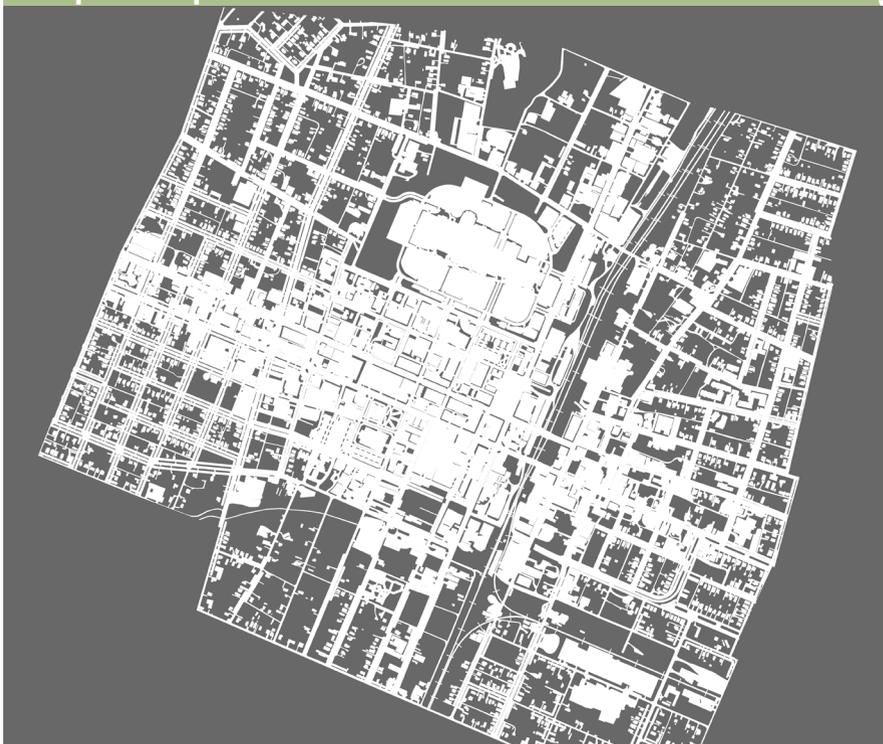
## Green Spaces Are Good for People

People who have exposure to natural environments are more resilient, recover from illnesses faster, and are better able to overcome barriers. Parks and greens are also places for recreation and socializing that can increase activity and attract even more visitors. Tulsa's Guthrie Green, featured in this section, is an excellent example of re-greening a site for programmed public space.

## Green Spaces are Good for the Environment

Areas paved with concrete and asphalt have a negative impact on the environment. They contribute to hotter temperatures in the summer and colder temperatures in the winter. Paved areas in downtown Muskogee create a heat island effect, releasing heat stored during the day during evening and night. Paved areas are also impervious, preventing absorption of rainwater into the soil, leading to faster flows and greater discharges of stormwater in sewers and streams. Stormwater runoff from paved surfaces is also more polluted with dirt and contaminants.

### Map of Impervious Surfaces in Downtown Muskogee



The core area of downtown is almost completely impervious surface consisting of building roofs, streets, parking lots, and other paved areas, leaving little room for nature.

# BROADWAY GREEN

Students planted a mailbox in the green space to collect citizen input. They asked people what they would like to see happen to the space. A few liked it the way it is now. Others enjoyed the movies screened there on summer nights and would appreciate some seating. Nearby residents wanted shade and a place to gather, socialize, and play games.



This green space in the heart of downtown Muskogee was created when buildings were demolished. It is centrally-located and one of the few empty spaces in the wall of facades along Broadway Street. The tall buildings on either side and buildings across Broadway create a strong sense of enclosure not found in other locations downtown. They also provide shade and protection from winds. Only the south side is open to a large surface parking lot. The floor of the space is covered with a turf lawn and has no other plantings or amenities. Nonetheless, the resulting green space has been a popular place to hold events such as Movies on the Lawn and Boo-nanza.

## Recommendations:

- Acquire the lots for civic use. Perhaps the current owner would consider donating them to the City or leasing them long-term to Muskogee Main Street. The City could include their purchase in a future capital improvements program.
- Before improvements are made to the land, the City or the owners should consider the installation of a vertical ground source heat pump system. A similar system provides heating and cooling to buildings adjacent to the Guthrie Green in Tulsa.
- Enclose the south side of the site to complete the public space. Enclosure can be created with substantial trees and plantings, a fence or wall, or buildings. The open pavilions shown in the illustration for Third Street and Okmulgee Avenue are an example.
- Involve youth and vocational groups in the design and construction of the green. Start with a temporary and inexpensive tactical urbanism event, perhaps coinciding with a musical concert or art intervention. A grant from the City of Muskogee Foundation could support such an effort.
- Design the green for a variety of users. Build a stage to support musical and performing acts in the green. Add a senior playground to provide a place for adults of all ages to stay physically fit and socialize. Maintain green space that is both relaxing and peaceful. Provide a sidewalk through the green that allows foot traffic to continue in a straight line from Third Street to Broadway Street.
- Program the green so it is always full of life. The space can host a variety of daily or weekly events like yoga, Zumba, food truck days, and farmers' market. The space can also host monthly events like concerts, specialty markets, and holiday celebrations. It can also be rented for weddings and parties.
- Designate a manager for the green. Promoting the green and coordinating events will require an enthusiastic staff person. Muskogee Main Street is an ideal entity to perform such a function.

## Success Story: Guthrie Green, Tulsa

The birth of the Guthrie Green in the last ten years in one of Downtown Tulsa's crowning achievements. In 2007, the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) acquired the square block between Brady & Cameron Streets and Boston Avenue & MLK Blvd in the heart of the Brady Arts District. The intent of this purchase was to provide a public gathering place in the heart of the district. Through a private donation from the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Guthrie Green opened to the public on September 7, 2012.

The green space has become an iconic place in downtown Tulsa and provides unique space programming through culinary, cultural, and children-oriented events. There are many positive aspects that can be seen through this space, but there are two that are crucial in its long term success.

The first aspect is the public-private partnership of the City of Tulsa with the GKFF. The GKFF put up the funding for the project, but the City of Tulsa provided utility support, programming, and promotion of the space. This was a critical relationship that not only got the project from being simply a vision to being shovel ready, but kept the space thriving every year.

The second aspect that Muskogee can learn from is the fact that the project was the vision of a private group, but the idea of the general public. Public engagement was critical in the launch of this space because the GKFF was adamant on it being a focal point of the district that all ages can use. From concerts to children's book readings, the Guthrie Green presents itself as a space with no boundaries. They wanted music, art, and a unique culinary experience to help drive the space, but wanted to ensure that no age or demographic group was left out.

**Tulsa's Guthrie Green was named one of America's Top Ten Places by the American Planning Association in 2016.**

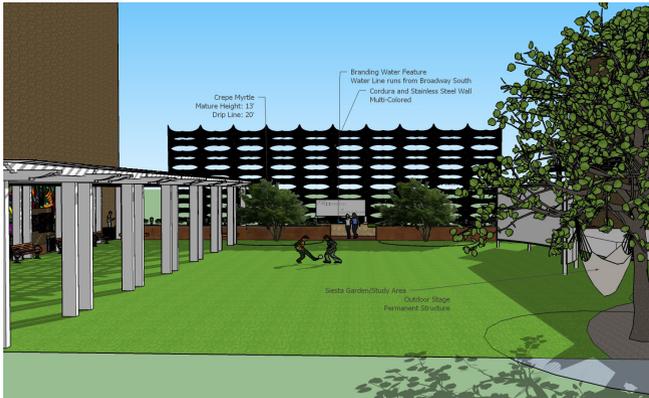


Tulsans enjoy Guthrie Green on a summer evening.



# BROADWAY GREEN

Students from Professor Greg Warren’s class learn about Landscape Architecture for Urban Design. They independently developed six different schemes for the Broadway Green that explored ways to create an urban green space that could be both a daily hub of activity and host special events. Plazas and green like these are being constructed in many nearby communities right now including Bixby and Jenks.



Kyle Clifton



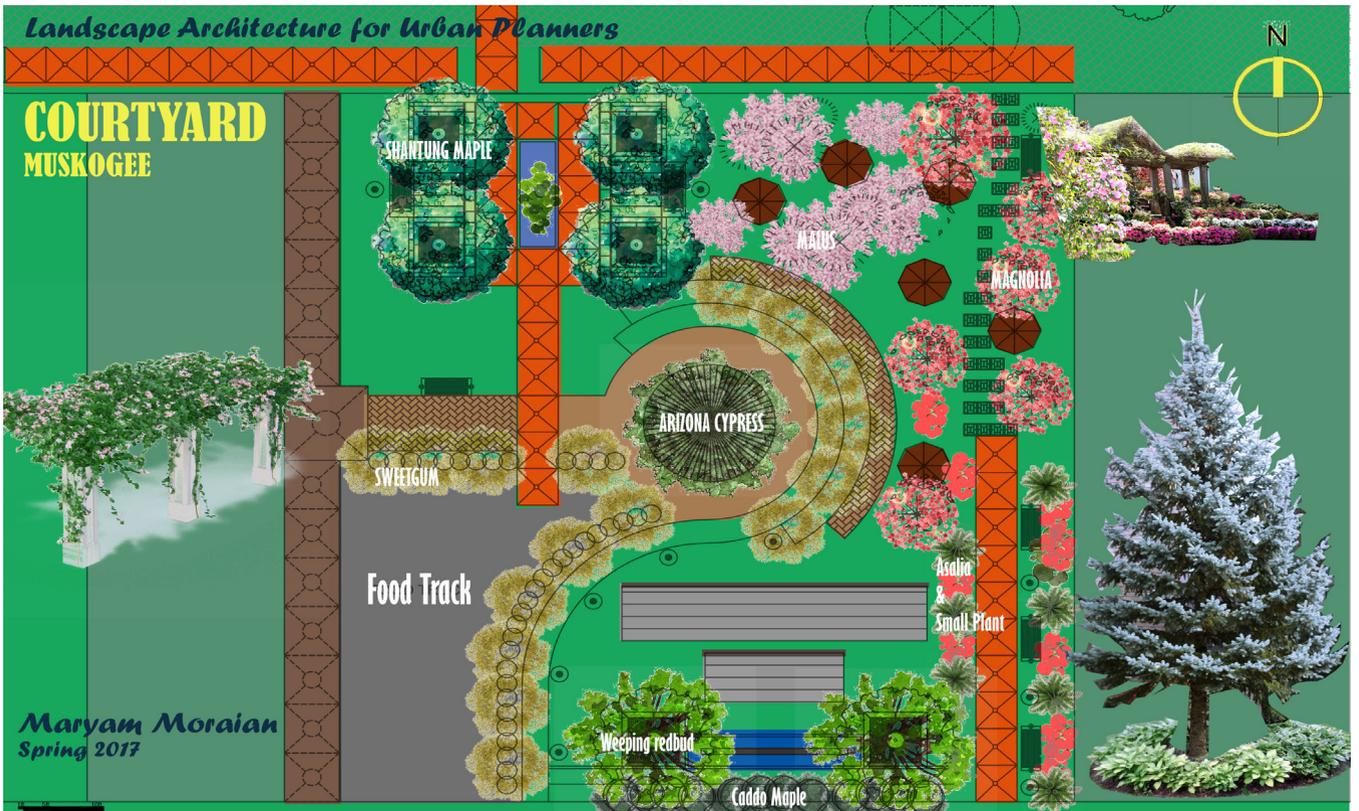
Sali Alharfouch



Robbie Wing



Katie Ulrey



Maryam Moradian

# BROADWAY GREEN



Plants for Butterflies,  
Bees, and  
Hummingbirds:

- Butterfly Bush
- Black-eyed susan
- Coneflower, purple
- Lantana
- Lavender
- Milkweed
- Parsley
- Phlox
- Zinnia



Azaleas

Pink Phlox

BROADWAY GREEN - PLANTING CONCEPT

Robi Jones

Playgrounds designed  
for the senior population  
provide opportunities  
for physical fitness as  
well as social interaction.



Wheelchair Accessible  
Water Fountain

Poured in Place Rubber Surface

BROADWAY GREEN - SENIOR PLAYGROUND AND STAGE

Robi Jones



# ENHANCE THE DEPOT DISTRICT

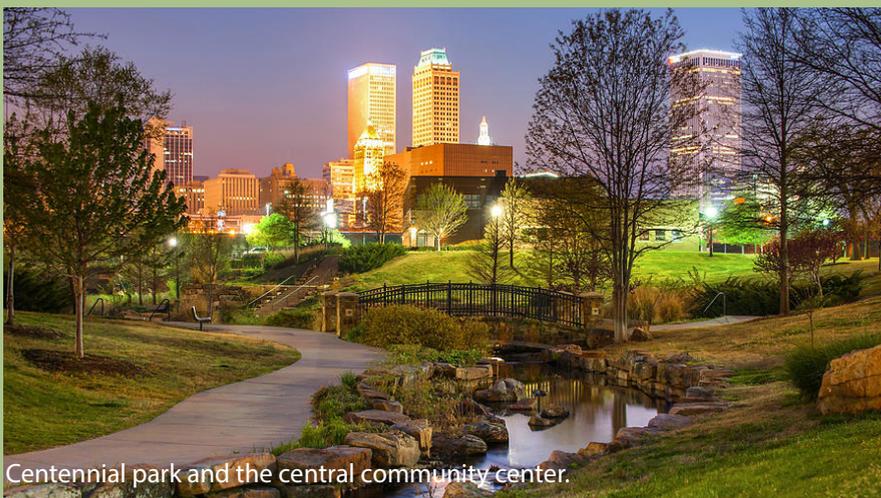
**A central downtown park is more than a neighborhood park, it is a public space for the entire city. The Depot District Park will be a great complement to the city's historic parks like Spaulding Park and Honor Heights Park.**

The centerpiece of the Depot District Plan designed by PDG is a new public park. The park covers a half block area south of the Three Rivers Museum and East of the Music Hall of Fame. The plan for the park is a large lawn surrounded by colorful plantings and walkways. Three open air pavillions echo the design of rail depots from a bygone era. The southern trailhead for the Centennial Trail is extended East along the southern border of the park under an allee of trees. A fountain and the relocated water tower occupy the western edge of the site. Amenities include seating areas and restrooms. This plan supports the construction of the park and the implementation of the Depot District Plan.

## Success Story: Centennial Park, Tulsa

Tulsa's Centennial Park is a nice example of the use of Tax Increment Financing or TIF to fund a major public improvement that has become an important civic space. A TIF District is a defined area where new tax increments are designated to remain in the district for a specific purpose for a given period of time. TIF funds come from sales taxes or property taxes, as long as the taxing entities agree to the arrangement. If a district produced \$1 of tax revenue last year before the TIF is enacted and then this year generates \$2 of revenue this year, \$1 will go to the taxing entities and the \$1 increment will stay in the district. One of the earliest examples of a TIF in Oklahoma, the Central Park TIF benefited from having a huge increment generator, a new home improvement store in the district.

The TIF generated the revenue for a complete makeover of the park, including a large water feature that is part of the Elm Creek flood management system and a new community center. The TIF also helped fund land acquisition for the Village at Central Park, a new urbanist, mixed use development. The park and the development around it have catalyzed other redevelopment in the Pearl District and the East Village.



Centennial park and the central community center.





DEPOT DISTRICT PARK - VIEW OF CENTENNIAL TRAIL EXTENSION



DEPOT DISTRICT PARK - LOOKING NORTHEAST

# RECLAIM PAVED AREAS

Portions of underutilized paved areas should be re-greened.

Too many vacant lots or underutilized parking lots make the downtown area seem empty and unattractive to visitors. Green spaces could provide a connection to nature and make the district more appealing. Properties near the Downtown Loop are especially important and are good candidates for redevelopment. However, until new buildings are feasible, these areas could host temporary uses, parks, and natural areas.

## Recommendations:

- Encourage property owners with large, unused paved areas to return some of the property to productive use or introduce landscaping. Consider implementing stormwater fees for paved areas in the city.
- Allow landscaping to be concentrated instead of distributed throughout parking lots. In downtown, suspend the landscaping provision in the zoning ordinance that requires no portion of a parking space shall be located more than fifty feet from a landscaped area or parking lot island and requiring all rows of parking spaces being terminated by a parking lot island or landscaped area. Concentrated areas of landscaping are easier to maintain and irrigate and make a bigger visual impact than isolated tree islands.
- Allow temporary uses on paved sites, including urban agriculture or community gardening, recreation activities, and pop-up commercial spaces. Experience shows that food trucks, temporary or pop-up retail, and tent markets increase foot traffic to established businesses and often evolve to become permanent themselves.
- Add games and sports, such as bocce, handball, hopscotch to existing pocket parks. Playgrounds for adults, especially for seniors and the disabled, are becoming increasingly popular. Places to relax with glider swings, hammocks and comfortable seating are also needed.
- Be careful with street trees and plantings that might interfere with sidewalks and pedestrians. Existing dead trees, root balls, and tree grates should be removed from sidewalks and the sidewalks repaved with smooth paving. Street trees should only be placed in areas where adequate space exists for tree roots and sidewalks. This would generally require much wider sidewalks than currently exist or the use of medians. Reclaimed paved areas could be a better alternative than street trees in the downtown area.



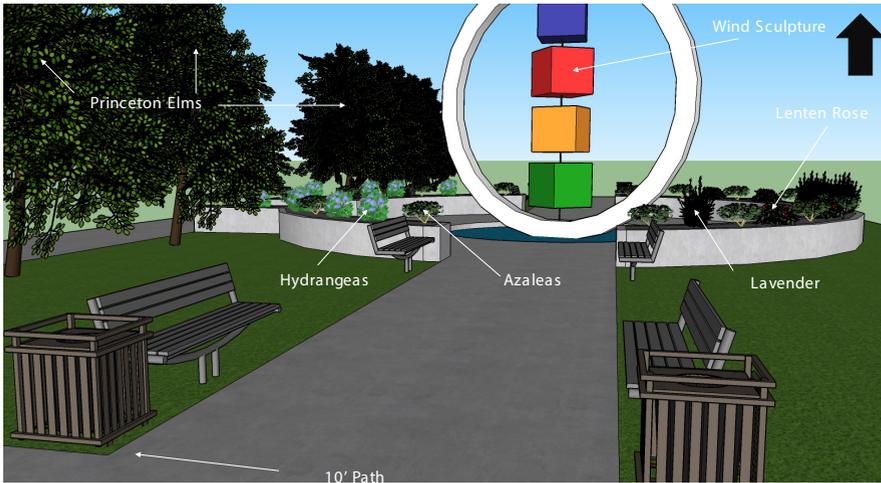
Third Street Greens - Sali Alharfouch



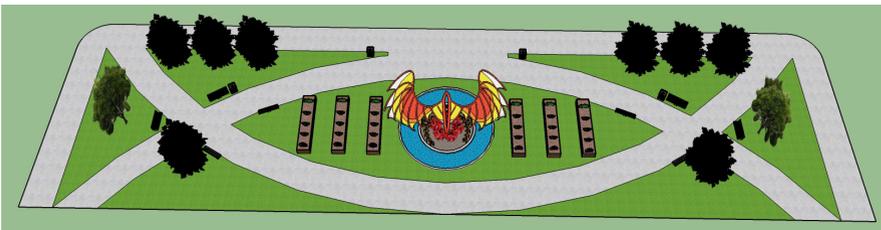
Adults swinging in urban playground.



Redevelopment of Pocket Park - Robi Jones



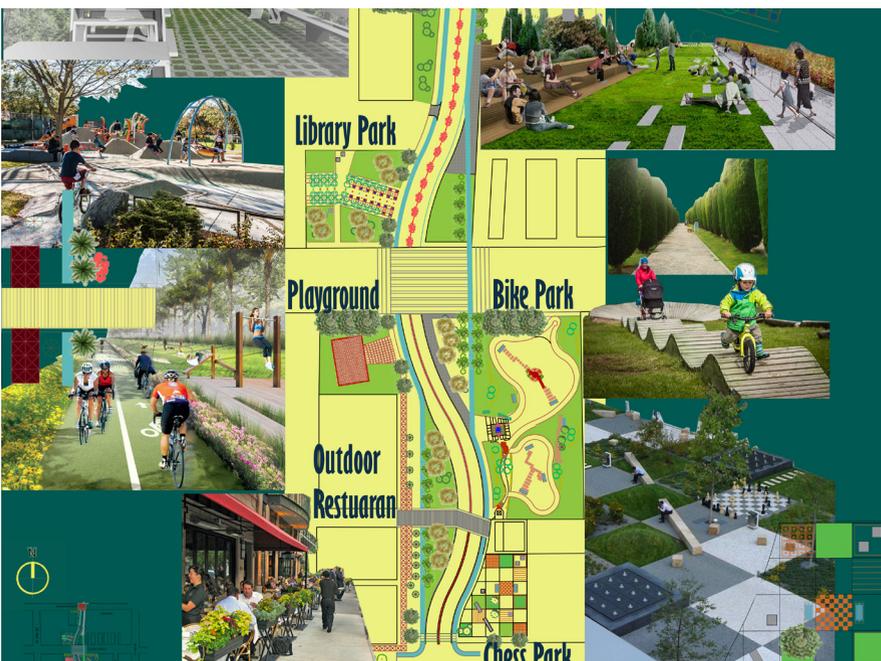
Public Art - Wind Sculpture  
Kyle Clifton



Public Art - The Phoenix  
Kyle Clifton



Activities in Pocket Park  
Robi Jones



Linear Park Concept  
Maryam Moradian



Urban Agriculture

# REVITALIZE ARROWHEAD MALL

Arrowhead Mall is a significant feature of downtown Muskogee's landscape. Few downtowns anywhere can say they have so much retail, including department stores. However, like many malls of this format around the nation, Arrowhead Mall may continue to struggle attracting and retaining conventional tenants. Additionally, the mall's suburban form is a stark contrast to the historic grid street network of the rest of downtown.

During steering committee meetings and the public open house, Muskogee residents had a lot to say about the mall. For example, many people suggested that the mall could house new uses, including civic uses like the post office, library, or city offices. Additionally, large areas of unoccupied parking could transform into additional development to connect the mall to downtown.

To address the mall, the design team wanted to open the door to many unique ideas and concepts. A design competition was created to allow four interdisciplinary student teams to generate revitalization schemes. The teams first visited the site of the project on February 1, and presented their schemes to a jury on March 1. The jury included local stakeholders, regional professionals, and jury chair Ellen Dunham-Jones, an expert on urban design for revitalizing suburban landscapes and co-author of *Retrofitting Suburbia*.

This section presents findings from each of the student teams participating in the competition, and highlights best practices and concepts that may be useful for the mall in the future.

- **Arrowhead Commons:** The winning design team carves out small portions of the building and creates a new public park connecting downtown with the heart of Arrowhead Mall.
- **A Day in Muskogee:** The honorable mention team focuses on creating an experience that makes people choose to spend their day in Muskogee.
- **Connect Muskogee:** A highlight of the team is creating a north-south street connection through the mall site to enhance connectivity.
- **Arrowhead District:** The team proposes major reconstruction of the mall site with new public spaces and buildings, and creates a well-defined north-south spine through the site.
- **Hybrid Mall Concept:** The planning team created this hybrid mall concept and list of best practices to reflect the best thoughts generated during the mall competition. Keep these ideas in mind during future efforts around the Arrowhead Mall.

The concepts in this section represent new ways of considering how Arrowhead Mall can play a role in the development of downtown Muskogee.

## Mall Design Scenarios

The planning team identified several physical design scenarios that are common in the redevelopment of large shopping malls from the same period as Arrowhead Mall.

Competition design teams were encouraged to think about all of these possible changes to the building and incorporate them into their thinking about how the site could evolve in the future.



**Addition** is the strategy of adding buildings or new physical structures on the site. This may be done to change the configuration of the overall site plan or to provide a connection to the edges of the site.



**Subtraction** is the strategy of eliminating portions of the building or physical structures. This may be done to reduce the total square footage or create new open spaces within the building's footprint.



**Inversion** is the strategy of turning a building 'inside out.' This might be done to add entrances to the outside of the building to create an open-air mall or create spaces with direct parking access.

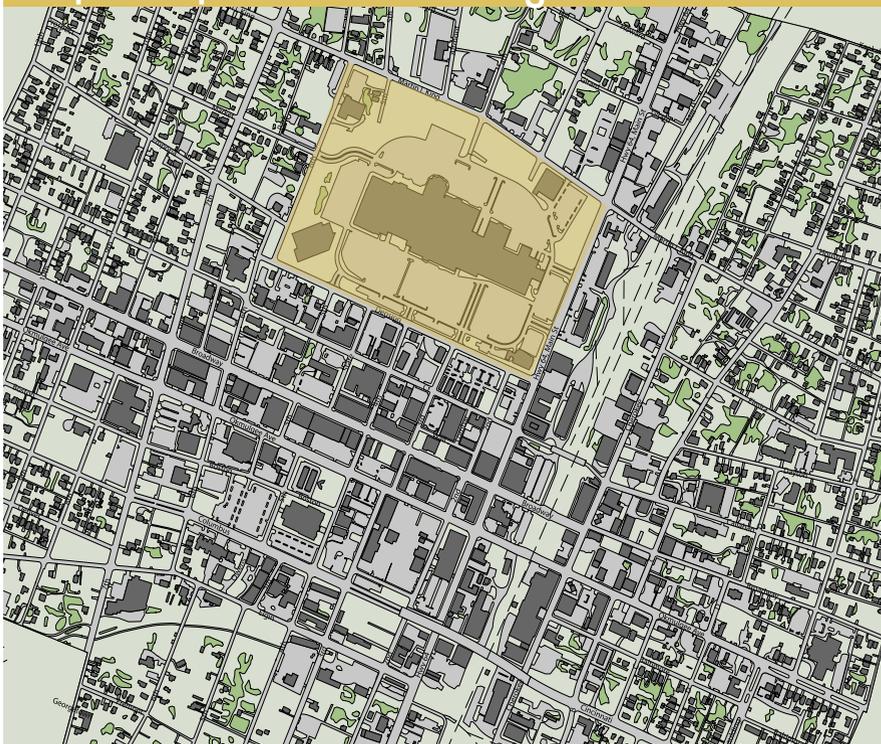


**Wrapping** is the strategy of enclosing or covering original surfaces of the building. This may be done to change the appearance quickly while providing the impression of a new structure.



**Framing** is the strategy of hiding or obscuring the original building with new structures or objects on the outside of the site. This might be done to create new parcels on the edges of the site.

## Map of Superblock Containing Arrowhead Mall



The superblock occupied by Arrowhead Mall accounts for a significant portion of downtown land. The superblock contrasts with and interrupts the fine-grained grid of downtown.

# ARROWHEAD COMMONS

## FIRST PLACE



## Re-greening, Re-occupying, and Re-connecting the Site

Arrowhead Commons cultivates community through the strategies of re-greening, re-occupying, and re-connecting. Re-greening refers to redeveloping large surface parking areas with natural parks and recreation areas. Re-occupying refers to adding mixed uses to the mall site, including residential apartments, a grocery store, and agroponic farms where food is produced on site. Finally, re-connecting refers to restoring the downtown fabric by creating smaller blocks between the mall and downtown. Through these strategies, the proposal fosters community activity, creates a bustling commercial corridor, and provides opportunities for people to live, work, and play in a walkable environment.



# A DAY IN MUSKOGEE

HONORABLE MENTION

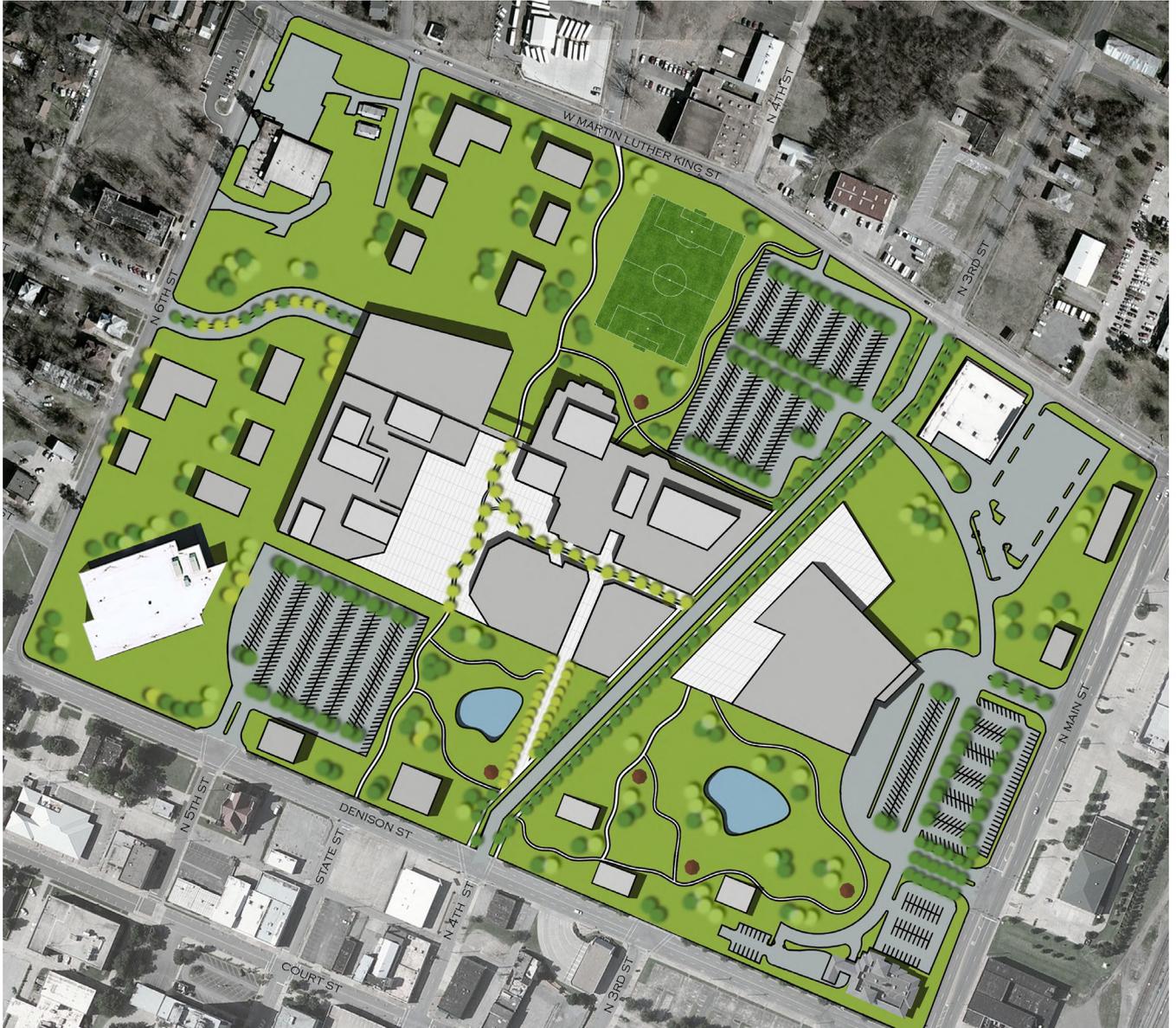


## Walk With Us Through the Arrowhead District...

Entering from the north side of the Arrowhead District, you are greeted by the community food market. Walking down the District, you pass by the library and see a large pavilion on a grass lawn with people enjoying the open air. At the heart of the District are retail stores intertwined with entertainment to enjoy your day. It doesn't matter where you are in the district, you always feel like you are shopping. The Arrowhead District provides a day for every age. Children can play safely in the splash pad while parents are eating or shopping nearby. Connecting from downtown Muskogee, the District opens up with an inviting view of the large park. The whole District is pedestrian and bicycle friendly. You can rent a bike and explore Downtown Muskogee on the Centennial Trail. As the day ends, the nightlife of the Arrowhead District begins. With a local restaurant and bar attached, the large park becomes a hub for concerts, festivals, and gatherings.



# CONNECT MUSKOGEE



## Connecting Muskogee with Third Street and More

“Connect Muskogee” creates the Arrowhead District. It revitalizes the area of the mall to bridge downtown and the surrounding communities by creating walkable, active, and social spaces, that provide life through important connections outside and within. The project features the subtraction of parking lots and excess parking areas, the addition of landscaping and buildings in strategic positions, pedestrian friendly paths, and the new Third Street. Through phasing, this project is capable of providing the necessary connections to reinvigorate downtown Muskogee and the city.

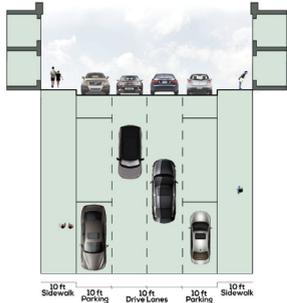


# ARROWHEAD DISTRICT

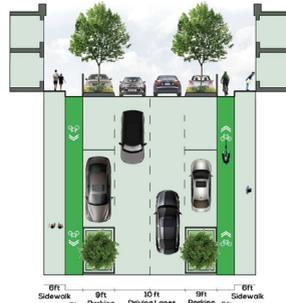


## The New Vibrant Heart of Downtown Muskogee

The concept aims to revitalize Downtown Muskogee by replacing the existing mall with smaller buildings and green space, establishing better connections to downtown, and improving walkability throughout downtown. The proposed design will include public space, retail, residential, as well as service and office space. The most important connector is 4th Street, which encourages cyclists and pedestrians to move through the central corridor plaza. This central plaza is the hub for all activity. Additionally, anchor stores and civic uses will be placed along 3rd Street to strengthen the flow. The concept provides a way to connect all the destinations of downtown, from the Little Theater to the farmers' market and Civic Center, to new buildings and public spaces on the mall site.



4th Street Existing Section



4th Street Proposed Section





# HYBRID MALL CONCEPT

**The Hybrid Mall concept integrates best practices and ideas from the competition into a single concept. With bold strategies, the mall could again become a vibrant anchor for downtown.**

The Arrowhead Mall has been a part of the downtown landscape since its construction as an urban renewal project in the 1980s. Like many similar properties around the country, the mall is struggling. It has lost one of its anchors and there are many vacancies of inline storefronts. Most days the mall's 2,500 parking spaces are below 25% utilization and some establishments, such as the movie theater, are running reduced hours.

The mall entered receivership in 2016 and its future is uncertain. The enclosed indoor shopping mall has fallen out of favor with many consumers and has difficulty competing with big boxes, warehouse retailers, and online shopping. A shrinking middle class has also reduced its primary target market. The City should be prepared for several possible scenarios for the mall- from retail to adaptive reuse- and consider the following strategic recommendations as the mall's future continues to unfold.

## Acquire Property Between Mall and Downtown

The most critical area of the mall site is the southern edge that meets downtown. This area is largely underutilized parking lots that create a barrier between the mall and downtown. The City should consider re-acquiring this portion of the site from the mall or its lender, perhaps at a discount, through its Urban Renewal Authority. A purchase could help all parties: the City to could gain control an important part of the property, the mall could pay some of its debt, and the lender could recover a portion of its liability- something that seems unlikely right now.

## Create a New Face for the Mall's Southern Edge

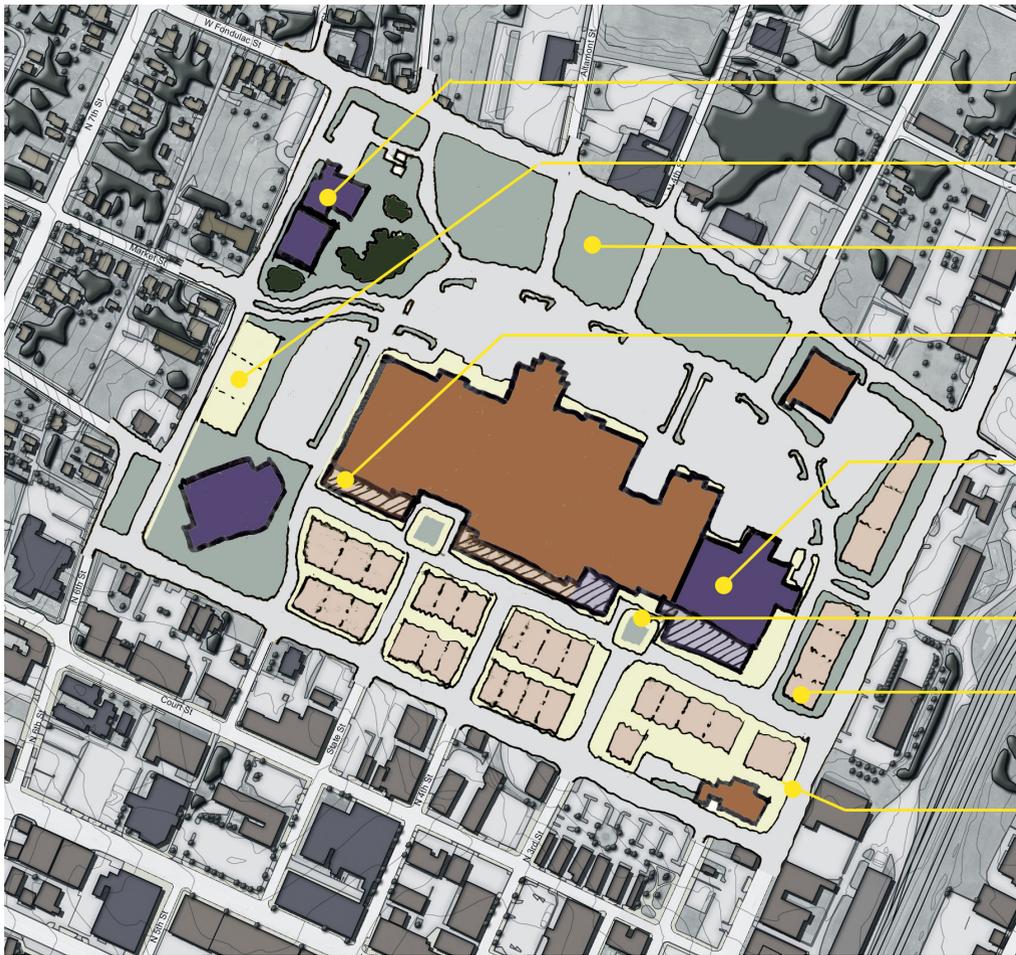
The southern face of the existing mall building could be wrapped with an arcade to break down the mass of the large building with rhythm and texture, improving the pedestrian experience. An alternate option involves putting storefronts along the edge. This would reorient storefronts from internal corridors to face the outdoor space.

## Utilize Property for Residential Redevelopment

The City could market the property to developers for redevelopment as market rate, multi-family residences. A recent study by the City's Economic Development Office shows very low vacancy rates in area apartment complexes, which may indicate a latent demand. Residential might be incorporated as part of mixed-use buildings with retail, and some residential-only building types would be appropriate on the west edge of the Arrowhead Mall property.

## Plat Property for Incremental Redevelopment

The City could also replat the land into blocks and lots on a traditional grid similar to the pattern found in downtown. The City could market these properties in phases to developers or even hold a lot draw. The City would need to install the new infrastructure, streets, and utilities on the site in phases to support this incremental redevelopment.



- Expanded recreation center and park
- New apartment housing along 6th Street
- Outparcels for future development
- Wraparound arcades or new storefronts on south side of mall
- Civic uses in anchor space, e.g. Municipal Services, Post Office, Library, Senior Center
- Entry plazas
- Mixed use buildings on street facing lots with alley access
- New urban blocks extending downtown street grid to the mall replace parking lots

## Create an Overlay District

With either of the two options described above, an overlay district of the land south of the mall could ensure the proper development standards. Overlay districts are valuable in the hybrid mall concept because they protect valuable land resources, provide design guidelines that could complement the downtown district, and address special problems. The overlay should use a form-based code. Form-based codes specify building form instead of use, often requiring structures to have zero setbacks, minimizing parking requirements, and promoting a variety of uses. The form-based overlay could help promote predominately local businesses and provide a variety of residential opportunities, from affordable to market-rate.

## Reconsider Use of Green Spaces North of Mall

Green spaces on the north side of the site should be maintained. In the future, they may allow for commercial development. Some of the space may be redeveloped for outdoor recreational facilities as part of the City's current plans to expand the recreation center on the northwest corner of the mall superblock. The expansion could provide facilities that could host tournaments and events. Such facilities would provide another attraction for downtown and could create hotel stays and increase sales tax revenue. Another possible use for this area is a community-scale solar energy project.

## Repurpose Large Vacant Anchors

Large vacant anchor spaces like Sears may never find a new traditional tenant, but they could be repurposed with new uses that would draw more customers to the mall. A grocery store is one example of a non-traditional mall tenant that might work in such a space. Alternatively, civic uses may be a good fit for the mall site, so consider relocating the library, post office, or city services.

## Success Story: Muskegon Mall, Muskegon, Michigan

The plan for the redevelopment of the Muskegon Mall in Muskegon, Michigan was a direct result of an underperforming mall. The Muskegon Mall was the focal point of shopping in the late 1980s, but as the nineties rolled around and the mall switched ownership, tenant vacancies increased and profitability fell. In December 2001, the Muskegon Mall permanently shut its doors. Its closing left a big hit in the retail opportunities in the downtown district.

It was at this point that the City of Muskegon decided to do something. They proposed a demolition of the mall site and a plan to redevelop the area. The City of Muskegon specifically targeted the area and helped develop a plan where the area was a high priority for redevelopment. They proposed a conversion of the mall site into an area of mixed uses including retail, office, entertainment, residential, and food establishments- all walkable from the current downtown district.

Today, the grid of downtown streets has been reconnected through the mall site. This enhanced vital connections and helped break down the physical barrier between downtown and outlying areas. It also helped promote a street and block format that allowed businesses to have street frontage on multiple lots. By creating a system of grids and creating lots on the land in between, potential businesses have a greater chance of landing street frontage property and are more likely to invest there.

The plan worked for the City of Muskegon. In fact, the number of commercial building permits doubled in one year and the commercial property values grew by almost 7% in the same time span. The growth in Muskegon was greater than even the county at large. In the end, the total investment to date on the old mall site is valued at over \$179 million.



View of Muskegon Mall (1976)



View of Muskegon Mall Today



Townhouse construction on former mall site

## Success Story: Eastgate Metroplex, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Not too long ago, Tulsa's Eastland Mall had lost an anchor tenant and was on the verge of closure. New management decided not to tear down the mall and redevelop the land, but rather convert the large complex into an employment center. The large anchor spaces, some with more than one floor, turned out to be suitable for open office use with the addition of windows and the necessary services. Large employers like Coca Cola, Alorica, and Enterprise Rental Car quickly leased space there, as did government agencies, the Social Security Administration, Workforce Oklahoma, and the Tulsa Health Department. The metroplex also has support services for workers and their families, including a daycare center, a health clinic, a fitness center, and two restaurants. Over 5,000 people are now employed at the mall, and the old movie theater is the only large tenant space still vacant. There are plans to turn it into a conference center.

There are still some challenges. The large surrounding parking lots are still too big for the parking demand, even with all of the new activity. Retail space on neighboring properties is empty, but the mall is 83% leased, solvent, and thriving thanks to a \$60 million investment from Philcrest Properties. It does not generate the sales tax revenue it once did, but its property tax assessment on 900,000 square feet of improvements and acres of land is being paid and the multiplier effect of all the jobs more than makes up for it.



# PRIORITIES: WAYPOWER AND WILLPOWER

Now is a hopeful time for Muskogee. It is time to act and build on the momentum of the planning effort and start down these paths right away.

This page identifies pathways and actions to be taken by city officials, business and property owners, and the public. Some of the actions are relatively simple and can be accomplished in the short term. Others are more costly, long-term propositions. It is important to have both. The downtown and its supporters need some more quick success stories to add to the growing list of accomplishments that include the Little Muskogee Theater, the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, the Muskogee Farmers' Market, the Downtown Gateways, and many building renovations and business start-ups. Likewise, downtown needs long-term strategies and programs to organize and sustain an effort that will take years to complete. To conclude the plan, this last section provides a list of priorities for the various actors in the short, medium, and long term.

## The City of Muskogee

### Short-Term Priorities

- Formally adopt the Downtown Muskogee Plan
- Expand Downtown Grant Program starting with small, visible grants
- Continue working with the City's economic development consultant
- Hold tours of successful and vacant downtown properties

### Medium-Term Priorities

- Revise ordinances and fund sidewalk repairs and remove old street trees
- Work with police to implement community policing in downtown
- Have economic development staff focus on downtown instead of suburban sites
- Build the Depot District Park

### Long-Term Priorities

- Focus infrastructure dollars from the capital improvements program on the downtown area
- Implement road diet starting with the Loop streets
- Negotiate land acquisition with Arrowhead Mall

## City of Muskogee Foundation

### Short-Term Priorities

- Fund the Downtown Grant Program

### Medium-Term Priorities

- Work with the schools to bring programs downtown, especially a maker space

### Long-Term Priorities

- Support special capital improvement projects

## Muskogee Main Street

### Short-Term Priorities

- Reorganize and reinvigorate the association
- Increase membership

### Medium-Term Priorities

- Collect higher dues
- Hire staff to promote and organize downtown events
- Hold tactical urbanism events for the Broadway Green and the Depot District Park

### Long-Term Priorities

- Support special capital improvement projects

## Business and Property Owners

### Short-Term Priorities

- Stabilize and save older buildings
- Provide favorable leases for start-up companies or studio space for artists and musicians
- Share parking
- Prevent employees from parking on-street

### Medium-Term Priorities

- Remove old facade coverings
- Develop housing on upper floors using grants and tax credits

### Long-Term Priorities

- Invest in properties, or sell to those who will
- Develop vacant parcels with new buildings, especially market rate housing and mixed uses

## Arrowhead Mall

### Short-Term Priorities

- Explore alternative uses for vacant spaces, including office space, civic uses, or grocery store
- Host temporary events in parking areas and vacant land

### Medium-Term Priorities

- Make a more pedestrian-friendly connection to downtown

### Long-Term Priorities

- Transform the mall property through revitalization, redevelopment, and re-greening

## What can the public do?

- Frequent the Farmer's Market
- Buy local and shop downtown
- Come downtown to eat and drink
- Do not drive as fast downtown; walk or cycle when possible
- Get involved with efforts to improve downtown



# CONTRIBUTORS

Special thanks to all contributors who made this project possible.

An additional thanks to more than 150 Muskogee citizens who came to public meetings and 400 Muskogee citizens who took the survey on Community Hope.

## Steering Committee

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Darla Bennett - Economic Development Coordinator, City of Muskogee  
Mayor Bob Coburn - City of Muskogee, Co-Chair, Action in Muskogee  
Rev. Marlon Coleman - Muskogee City Council Ward 4  
Frank Cooper - Manager, Arrowhead Mall  
Reggie Cotton - Deputy Chief, Muskogee Police Department  
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# Arrowhead Mall Design Competition

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Matt King - King Architectural Solutions  
Tim Presley - PDG Planning Design Group  
Cristan Robertson - Arrowhead Mall  
Johni Wardwell - City of Muskogee Foundation

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## Competition Sponsors

McKinley, Inc. - Arrowhead Mall  
Planning Design Group  
Firstar Bank  
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