

# Reimagine Downtown

## Transforming Downtown Shawnee



Shawnee Chamber of Commerce

OU College of Architecture

OU Institute for Quality Communities

OU Regional and City Planning

OU Landscape Architecture



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# Acknowledgements

The Shawnee Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed by the University of Oklahoma Regional and City Planning Studio and funded by the Shawnee Chamber of Commerce. The team would like to thank the citizens of Shawnee and the following people for their contribution to the development of this document.

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## *Special Thanks*

Thanks are extended to the Shawnee Industrial Authority, the Past Chairmans Council, the Chamber executive committee and staff, and the Ford family for assisting in bringing citizens together for this good cause. Thanks to all who participated in the public meetings and to the staff of the First Baptist Church, particularly Pastor Ray Miller, for providing accommodation for our public meetings. We also thank the students and staff of Oklahoma Baptist University and St. Gregory's University for their valuable input on this project.



# Introduction



Our mission is to reinvigorate Shawnee's historic downtown through a targeted list of achievable and long-lasting economic and urban design initiatives that will stimulate long-term investment and once again create a destination district in the heart of the community.

## Project Goals

- Bring key community stakeholders together to help revitalize downtown Shawnee.
- Build upon the momentum of previous downtown plans.
- Give specific recommendations for civic leaders to follow.
- Propose strategies for both short-term and long-term success in revitalizing downtown.

## The Heart of Oklahoma

Shawnee's location in the "heart" of Oklahoma has long been an important factor in its success. Beginning after the Civil War, the Shawnee area was settled by the relocated Citizen Potawatomi, Sac and Fox, Kickapoo, and Absentee Shawnee tribes. As cattle trails and railroads began to pass through Indian Territory and present-day downtown Shawnee, settlement in the area quickly followed. Following the opening of Indian Territory to settlers, Henry Beard claimed the first quarter section of Shawnee in 1892.

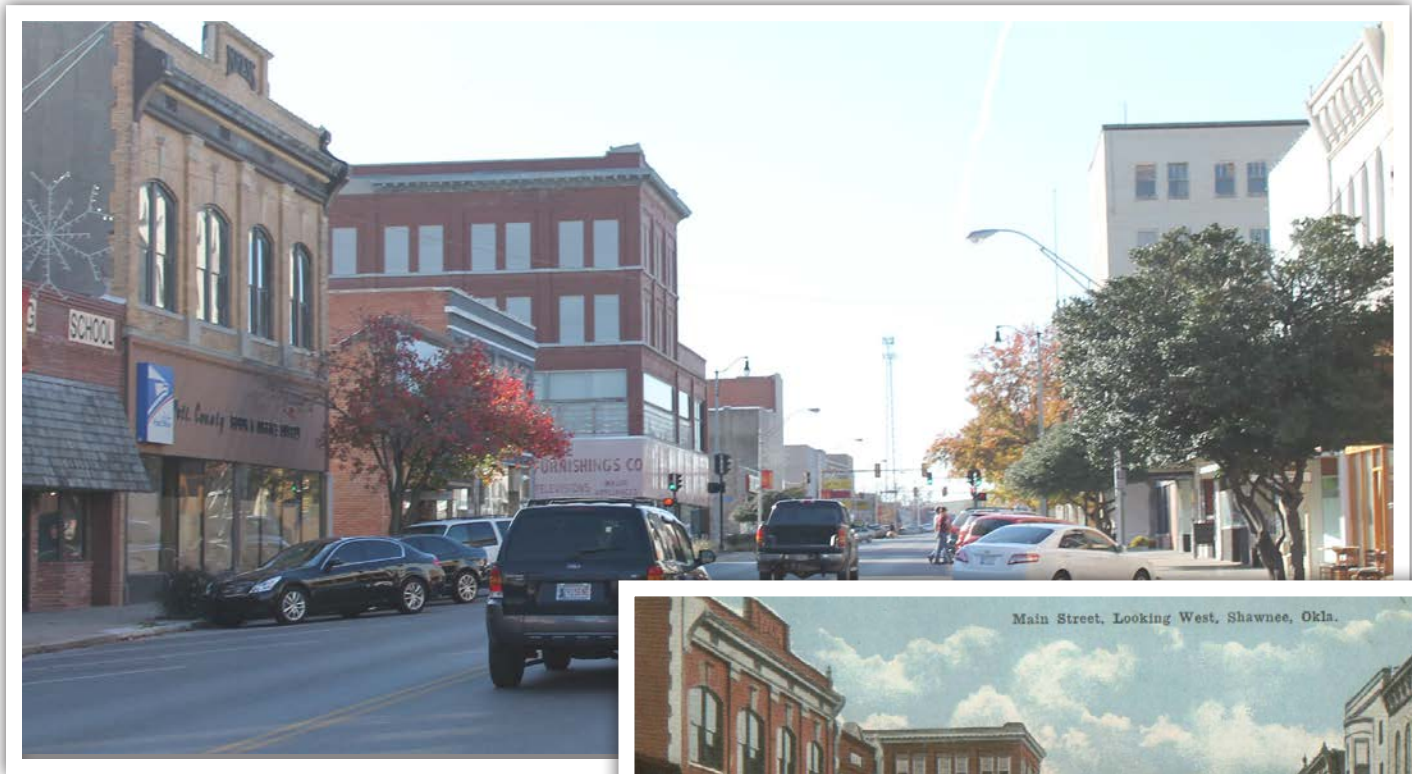
By the close of the nineteenth century, the railroads helped Shawnee grow at a rate similar to its neighbor to the west, Oklahoma City. Agriculture, especially cotton, dominated the Shawnee economy. Mills and other businesses servicing the cotton industry quickly sprang up.

This commercial activity was focused around Main Street. Retailers, factories, hotels, cotton gins, convention halls, opera houses, and banks could be found throughout the downtown area. The

businesses were served by a streetcar system that also connected to the newly established Oklahoma Baptist University.

Through the mid-1900s, downtown served as the retail hub for Shawnee's defense industry and manufacturing based economy. In the later part of the 20th Century, however, many downtown businesses relocated to the north along Interstate 40 and the newly constructed Shawnee Mall, meaning many people no longer had a reason to go downtown.

While the retailers of the past are unlikely to return to their old locations, downtown Shawnee maintains great potential as a destination for both residents and visitors alike. Despite losses to time, fire, and Oklahoma weather, Shawnee boasts a remarkable collection of some of the oldest historical structures in the state which gives it a charm and character other cities surely envy. Combined with residents' immense civic pride and a desire for downtown to thrive, downtown Shawnee has a solid foundation to equal or surpass its former self.

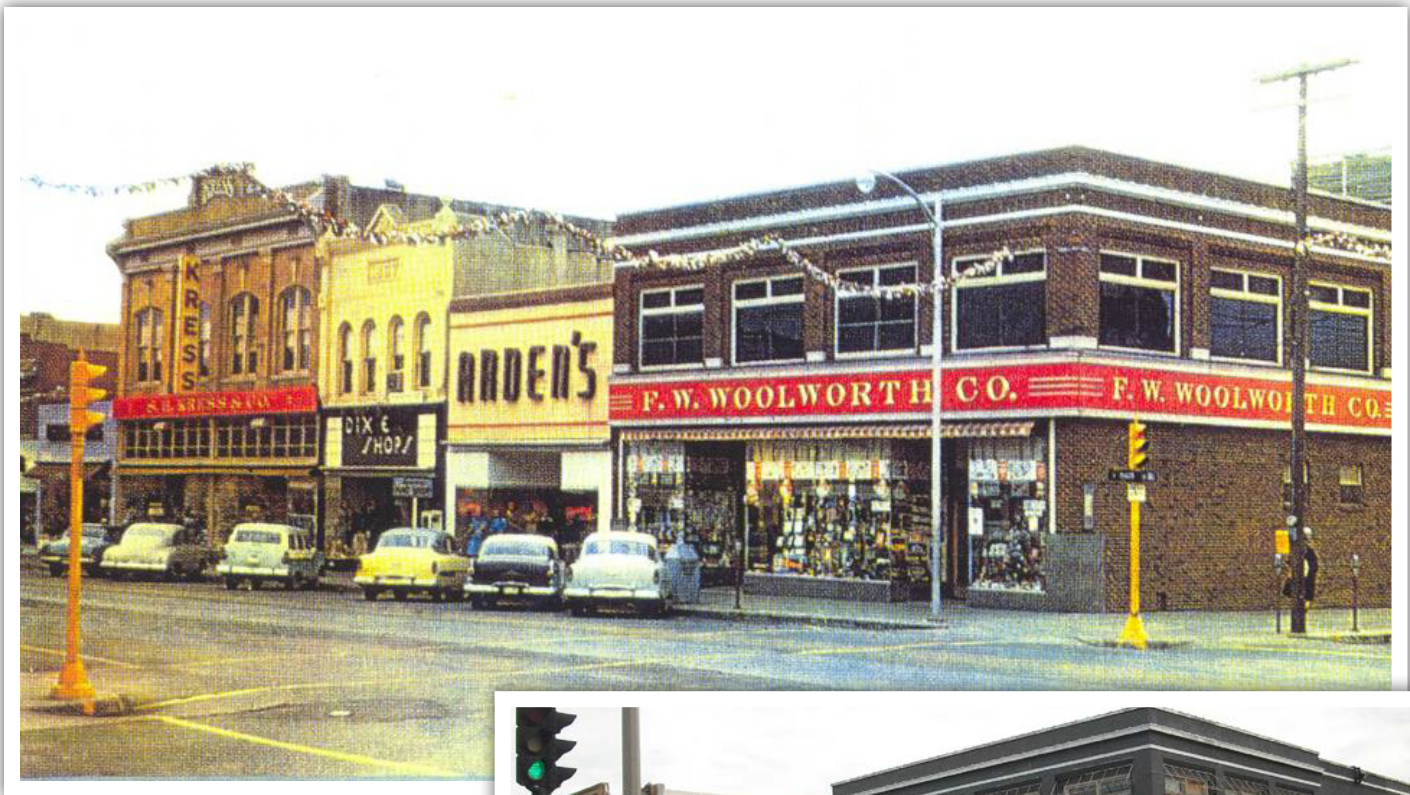


*Main Street in Shawnee today (above) still boasts many original historic buildings (illustrated at right). Pottawatomie County Genealogy Club.*





*Built in 1907, the Mammoth Department Store Building at Main and Bell Streets (top) looks remarkably similar to when it first opened at Oklahoma statehood (illustration at bottom). Pottawatomie County Genealogy Club.*



*While Woolworth's and Kress are long gone, new streetscaping at Main and Bell Streets continues to make downtown an attractive place for residents. Pottawatomie County Genealogy Club.*



## Reimagining Downtown

As part of OU President David L. Boren's initiative to increase community outreach through the University, each year students and faculty of the College of Architecture, along with the Institute for Quality Communities, partner with an Oklahoma community to develop comprehensive plans for land use and economic development. This fall, we have worked to develop a downtown revitalization plan for Shawnee.

Students, faculty, and staff of the University of Oklahoma College of Architecture have prepared this plan to guide current and future civic leaders of Shawnee to build upon current momentum and fully realize the potential of this great city's "reimagined" downtown.

To create and sustain momentum for improvements downtown, we have organized our plan with "stepping stones" in mind. The

process for achieving our recommendations can be followed step-by-step. Short-term improvements that are lighter, quicker, and cheaper should be emphasized so that the residents can see an immediate impact, which will build excitement and support for more long-term objectives.

Over the past few decades, a variety of plans have been commissioned and presented to help the city revitalize its downtown. Some of these plans, most notably the 2001 streetscape plan, have been implemented with noticeable results.

We hope that the enthusiasm and new ideas generated by this plan can help Shawnee continue to move forward with its progress downtown.

# Recommendations

Five key recommendations are critical to the future of downtown Shawnee. Each recommendation features several strategies that can guide progress. Each strategy has specific actions, or “stepping stones,” that can be implemented by community leaders.

1. Develop an organizational structure to guide progress downtown.
2. Pursue and provide guidance for financing options.
3. Attract more people to downtown from Shawnee and the region.
4. Enliven public spaces, including streets, parks, and plazas, with design strategies.
5. Improve access and connectivity to downtown from key gateways.

# Develop an organizational structure to guide progress downtown.



The success of various organizations working toward improvement in downtown Shawnee is undeniable. However, when a large number of events, businesses, and people exist within a small area like downtown Shawnee, some confusion and dissension are sure

to arise. There is a need for coherent, centralized coordination of the different groups, and a clear champion for downtown. For this reason, Shawnee should establish an organization with a downtown focus, comprised of a group of local stakeholders.

**These strategies will help the newly created organization find its place in Shawnee.**

- Launch a new organization to manage downtown.
- Become a self-sufficient organization.

**The organization should pursue the following tasks:**

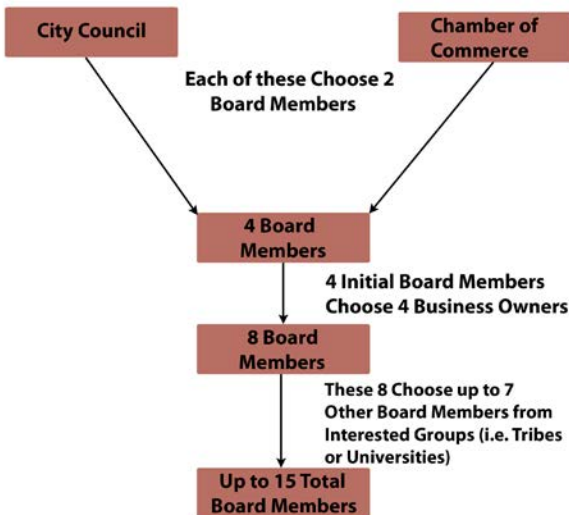
- Create an immediate action plan.
- Coordinate and organize downtown events.
- Create a marketing scheme for downtown events, business, and tourism.
- Provide education to business and property owners about available grants and programs.

# Strategy: Launch a new organization to manage downtown.

## Step 1: Board of Directors

The organization's Board of Directors should include 15 members from the below mentioned groups. The board members will be responsible for working with the organization's director to facilitate economic development downtown. Board members will be selected so that the groups funding the organization will have their choice of board members. The organization's board members will be selected in the following manner:

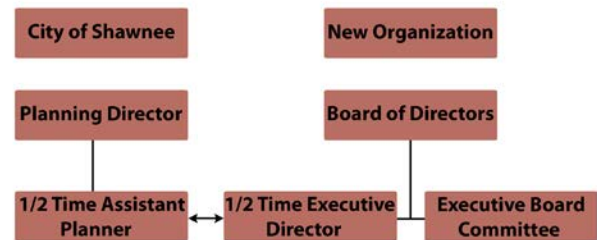
- City council will select 2 people
  - 1 elected official (likely from downtown ward)
  - 1 staff member
- Chamber of Commerce board will select 2 people from its board
- 4 business owners will be selected by the 4 City and Chamber members
- Those 8 will select 7 more people from other groups likely including but not limited to:
  - Local Native American Tribes
  - Oklahoma Baptist University
  - St. Gregory's University
  - Churches located downtown
  - The Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - Shawnee Public Schools
  - University and High School Student Groups



The 15 members will then select, within the Organization's board, an executive committee. A chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer will be selected to act as the leadership group of the board. These 4 board members will have more contact with the director and will help to make decisions related to the organization. Board members will only be able to serve for 3 years maximum. This keeps the ideas fresh and keeps from one person taking over the group.

## Step 2: Phased Implementation of Leadership

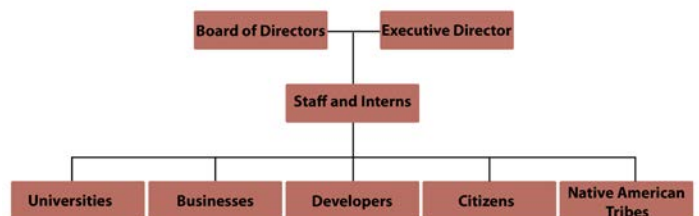
The downtown Shawnee management organization will start out as an extension of the City of Shawnee's Planning Department. The City employs an assistant city planner who will be able to allocate 25% - 50% of their time to working on the economic development of downtown. The organization will function in a limited capacity during its inception. The city planner/organization director will work with the organization's Board of Directors and Executive Committee to develop a business and marketing plan for downtown.



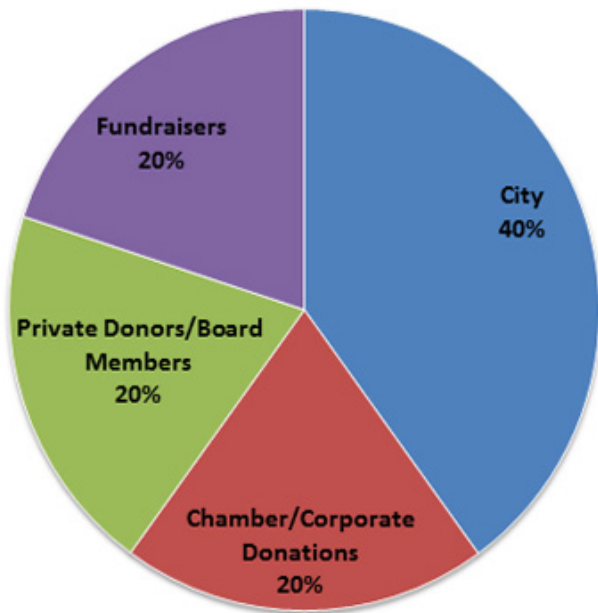
## Step 3: Fully Independent Organization

Once the organization is established, a full-time executive director will be hired to manage downtown. The organization's Board of Directors will be in charge of hiring the full time director when it is necessary. One or two assistants may be hired at part time or full time to help the director with an increased work load that is to be expected. Interns may also be utilized to assist with the work. An internship program should be started at both of the local universities. Interns can be utilized for cheaper labor, which also gives the students valuable experience that will help them in their careers. These interns may want to stay in Shawnee after graduation as well.

The organization will be responsible for facilitating cooperation between the different entities of the city, including the City of Shawnee, the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown business owners, and other groups within the city.



## Strategy: Become a self-sufficient organization.



### Funding Sources

The organization is designed to be a separate, non-profit agency that will work with public and private partners to help facilitate economic development in downtown Shawnee. Since the organization will be a non-profit, it will need funding sources. Our recommendation is that the agency be funded through a variety of sources, including the City, the Chamber of Commerce, private donors, and fundraisers. The division of funds is shown in the above chart.

### Business Improvement District

Shawnee could create a Business Improvement District (BID) for the downtown area which would charge the downtown businesses a monthly or yearly fee to help pay for the services of the organization. If the district starts to thrive, the funding burden can gradually be lifted off the city and other sources. A BID is an option for sustainable financing that can be used as the organization has been established with a track record of success.

### Hotel Occupancy Tax

The City of Shawnee has a lodging tax that is collected from hotels in the city. The city's lodging tax is currently 5%, which is lower than most cities in the Oklahoma City Metro area. An increase in the lodging tax would be a great way to help fund the downtown organization. The city should state that the increased amount collected will be used specifically for downtown revitalization endeavors. A portion of the funds would be used for the operating expenses of the organization.

### 501(c)3 Status

The board and director will seek 501(c)3 status as a non-profit organization. By gaining this designation, the organization will be able to receive and award grant money to businesses within the city. Private foundation grants and donations often require that the money is given to an organization with 501(c)3 status. Another advantage of non-profit designation is that the organization will not have to pay federal corporate income tax, which can save 15% - 30% on income taxes annually.

### Success Story: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Northwest Oklahoma City's Plaza District is currently a booming arts, shopping, and entertainment district. But only 15 years ago it was in severe decline, with crime and disrepair threatening to destroy the historic fabric of the area.

The Plaza District Association formed a 501(c)3 organization in 1997 to work toward revitalizing the area. The organization initially utilized City of Oklahoma funds to cover their operating expenses, but has since gained independence through corporate sponsorship, donations and fundraising events, and a hearty and enthusiastic volunteer network.

Today, the Plaza has a \$110,000 annual budget, serves over 8,000 people each year, and has organized a volunteer force of 200 community members.



## Strategy: Pursue the following organizational tasks.

### Create an “Immediate Action” plan for the new organization.

Immediate signs of progress will help showcase the organization as an active participant in the success of downtown and to solidify its role in the revitalization of downtown. Implement this list of cheap or free ideas as soon as the organization has been established.

### Expand holiday decorating and lighting.

This has historically been a very successful program during the Christmas holiday and around Halloween. Decorating downtown for more annual holidays will secure the image of downtown as a holiday destination.

### Organize a “Sidewalk Sale” day.

A sidewalk sale will encourage business owners to get outside and personally connect with residents and shoppers in downtown. For more information see page 25.

### Organize a Fun Run downtown.

A small 5k or run will help bring an active lifestyle to Shawnee and get people to experience downtown outside of their vehicles.

### Schedule volunteer cleanup days.

Shawnee possesses a strong volunteer spirit and it needs to be utilized. Volunteer days for painting facades, minimal repair work, gardening and landscape projects, and cleaning of facades, sidewalks, streets or parks would be a wonderful way to encourage community members to venture downtown and to help beautify and revitalize downtown with minimal use of funds.

## Coordinate and Organize Downtown Events.

### Throw a fundraising event.

A fundraising event helps gather funds for salary and operations of the new organization. This will help to wean the organization from outside funding. The organization should aim for two fundraisers per year.

### Coordinate other groups.

The organization works with various other groups who are currently hosting events in downtown to create a clear focus



*Volunteer clean-up days.*

for downtown activities. This would include the publication of a calendar of events for downtown activities, events, and opportunities.

Additionally, the organization would act as a central contact for potential new events and help interested parties establish and host new events in the downtown area. This includes providing guidance for event planning processes like permitting and supplies.

## Create a marketing scheme for downtown events, business, and tourism.

### Cooperate with Convention & Visitors Bureau downtown division.

The organization should work in cooperation with the CVB's downtown division or take over the downtown marketing operations from the CVB.

### Utilize social media and online publications.

The organization should utilize social media. Additionally, it should develop and maintain an active website that serves as an online location for the downtown events calendar. A newsletter or e-newsletter can also keep people informed about events, activities and any news regarding downtown.

### Develop a specific logo and branding for downtown.

Downtown Shawnee needs a consistent branding and marketing message that can be utilized on signage, publications, and other marketing efforts.

### Provide education to business and property owners about the available grants and programs.

### Hold workshops about completing grant applications and low interest loans.

The organization should hold workshops for business and property owners to learn about applying for available local, state, and federal grants. These workshops may focus either on a particular grant program or simply serve as a basic crash course in seeking available funds like low interest and small business loans.

### Continually update a source of information for financial resources.

The organization should create and update a “Resources” page on its website and in its newsletter publications to keep citizens informed of funding prospects and aware of opportunities.

### Administer the City of Shawnee façade grant program.

The organization will help educate business owners about the façade grant’s availability and then accept applications for the grant. The organization’s board of directors will vote to choose the recipients of the grant funds.

Though funding for the grant program is currently furnished entirely by the City of Shawnee, the organization should consider teaming with the City once it is financially independent to provide even greater funding opportunities to area business owners.

The organization may also use its volunteer days to help stretch funds from the façade grant by creating opportunities for free labor and community service to university student groups, high school volunteers, business owners, and any other interested volunteers. Activities like painting or clean-up are relatively easy for volunteers to assist with, and this involvement will help bring people downtown, create excitement for downtown improvement projects, and establish a feeling of ownership in the development and success of downtown.

### Success Story: Shawnee, Oklahoma

The City of Shawnee Façade Grant Program awards grants of up to \$5,000 in matching funds to downtown businesses to help promote pride in the downtown area and its existing buildings. The images below show the business located at the intersection of Main and Bell Streets before and after money from the façade grant program helped pay for the removal of non-original wood lattice panels and awnings, and to repaint the building. For a relatively small amount of money, the building looks as good as new, and is a prime example of the success of the facade grant program.





# Pursue and provide guidance for financing options.



No plan for downtown can be successful without solutions for how to finance the necessary improvements. Thankfully, there are achievable ways to finance improvements both in the short term and in the long term. Project financing strategies directly impact the momentum of new improvements to downtown. In the short term, quick inflows of outside cash help deliver the small successes that

keep people excited for their reimagined downtown. Once residents see these small successes, local business owners will be ready to make a collective investment in Downtown Shawnee. In the long term, Downtown Shawnee can be self-sufficient through the formation of a business improvement district (BID).

## **These strategies will help Shawnee fund improvements to downtown.**

- Build and sustain momentum through easy and inexpensive financing methods.
- Utilize current civic financing mechanisms in new ways.
- Ultimately become self-sufficient through the creation of a business improvement district (BID).

# Strategy: Build and sustain momentum through easy & inexpensive financing methods.

## Stepping Stones

### Use the new downtown organization as a one-stop shop for grants and tax credits.

Grants and tax credits are some of the best ways to fund the small but meaningful improvements that will spur even more improvement downtown. One need not look any further for a success story than the historic buildings downtown that have taken advantage of the current façade improvement program. A noticeable improvement to the look and feel of downtown can occur almost overnight. Best of all, a portion of the funds for these projects comes from the state and federal governments, meaning Shawnee doesn't have to provide the money.

Some of the grants available to Shawnee include:

- State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits

- Community Development Block Grants
- Low Interest Federal Home Loans
- Low Income Housing Grants
- Oklahoma Quality Jobs Program

An exhaustive listing of grants, tax credits, and other programs can be found in the appendices of this plan.

Though many economic development officials in Shawnee know about these grants, without a unifying clearinghouse organization, current and potential downtown business owners likely are not aware of many of them. Therefore, the recommended Reimagine Downtown organization should function as a one-stop shop for disseminating information on grant opportunities and helping business owners apply for them.

### Raise funds through fundraisers and sponsorships.

Another key function of the proposed downtown management organization will be to implement fundraising ac-

tivities for downtown improvements. Fundraisers through direct marketing and events such as galas, raffles, and commemorative product sales will help increase buy-in from property and business owners by letting them make small contributions. Proceeds can be directed to physical improvements, downtown events, and the downtown management organization's administrative costs. Most importantly, aggressive fundraising by the downtown management organization shows a level of commitment to downtown's success worthy of fiscal contributions from the City of Shawnee.

Downtown sponsorship is a wonderful public relations asset for high-profile local entities, such as big employers, banks, medical facilities, major retailers, and tribal governments. The downtown management organization should pitch the marketing and publicity benefits to potential benefactors. Altogether, \$15,000-25,000 in annual private donations should be sought to complement other funding sources.

## Success Story: Enid, Oklahoma

Enid, OK has successfully utilized numerous grants and tax credits for both downtown and citywide economic development. As a partner with both local business and state and federal entities, the city focuses on relationship building with entrepreneurs. Some of the grants offered by the city include:



- The Grow Enid Loan Fund, a revolving line of credit for new business and business expansions
- Start with Enid Program, a program that pairs entrepreneurs with local economic development entities who offer financing and business development opportunities
- Downtown Grant Program, annual \$5,000 grants given to businesses looking to locate or expand in downtown

Enid also maintains a downtown BID and offers TIF incentives for qualifying businesses.

## Success Story: Altus, Oklahoma

Altus, OK raises money for its downtown through creative fundraising that also helps instill pride in their community. Funds from these product sales go toward the downtown management organization.

- "I Heart Altus" T-Shirts priced from \$12-15 each.
- Altus High School commemorative Christmas ornaments priced at \$10 each.
- Personalized bricks to be used in streetscape projects priced from \$30-75 each.
- Event sponsorships priced between \$250-500 per event
- General memberships ranging from \$15-500 a year.

# Strategy: Utilize current civic financing mechanisms in new ways to support downtown.

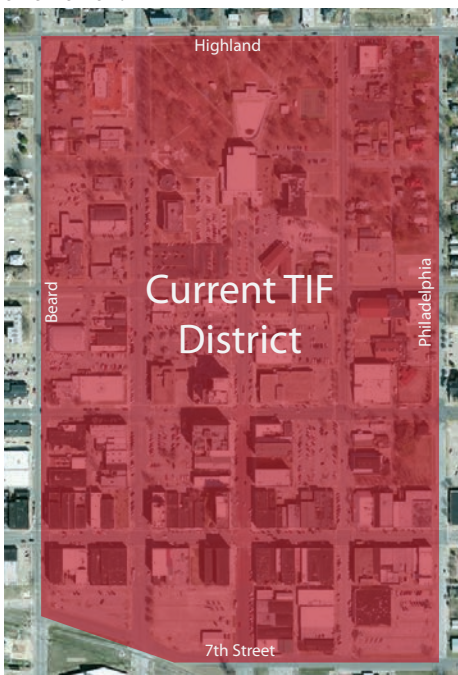
## Stepping Stones

### Create a second TIF District for further streetscapes.

Downtown Shawnee currently has a tax-increment financing (TIF) district. In a TIF district, increases in property tax collection in an area (the increment) are used for civic improvements in the district. The boundaries of Shawnee's TIF district are shown in the map below.

TIF revenues are currently solely obligated for streetscaping and intersection improvements within the district. TIF District revenue can potentially be used to support the proposed downtown management organization's administration costs.

Previous civic leadership indicated support for a second TIF district encompassing Main Street to the east and west of the current TIF district. Shawnee should pursue a second TIF district bounded by Kickapoo, Farral, 9th Street, and the railroad tracks. The funds should be used for further streetscaping along Main Street to its gateways, as well as along Beard and Farrall.



### Reevaluate tax valuations downtown.

According to the 2002 staff report proposing the current TIF district, it came to light that due to the low volume of property transactions in downtown, the assessed value of properties in the district was approximately 1/6 of their actual value. One property worth an estimated \$720,000 in the heart of downtown was assessed at only \$130,000. This represents significant loss of property tax revenue due to poor assessments.

More accurately assessing property values will not only bring in money for the city and other entities, but will also encourage property owners who are not managing their properties productively to sell them or develop them into revenue-generating properties.

### Dedicate a fixed amount in the budget for downtown improvements.

In recent history, the City of Shawnee dedicated a set amount in the budget for downtown management efforts. Due to the challenges of previous downtown revitalization efforts, those funds, which totaled about \$50,000, evaporated. We recommend that the city dedicate

\$50,000-75,000 annually toward downtown improvements, with money supporting both the organization's administration costs and popular programs such as the façade grant program.

### Bring the existing lodging tax to comparable levels of other municipalities in the greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area

Shawnee currently levies a 5% tax on rented hotel rooms, with proceeds going to the Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote tourism. This tax yields annual revenues of \$475,000. The current 5% rate is low compared to other cities in the region, who charge on average an 8% tax. The city should increase the tax to this level, with new revenue dedicated to downtown improvements. A 1% increase in the lodging tax will result in an additional \$95,000 in revenue, so the city could annually capture \$285,000 for downtown improvements. Downtown's impressive inventory of historical buildings gives it potential as a tourism destination, so the lodging tax is a logical funding source for downtown improvements.

#### Success Story: El Reno, Oklahoma

El Reno restored its historic downtown through public-private partnerships that Shawnee can easily duplicate.

- Property owners restoring their buildings to their original designs with paint schemes approved by the Main Street design committee can cover half of paint costs courtesy of Gemini Industries. 49 properties have taken advantage of this paint incentive program.
- MidFirst Bank offers a low-interest loan program for downtown business owners. Six business owners have improved their building facades through this program.

El Reno's commitment to its downtown has resulted in over \$4 million in private investment into the construction and rehabilitation of downtown structures, including the construction of the new \$1.2 million Canadian State Bank (now known as Bank of Commerce).

# Strategy: Become self-sufficient through the creation of a Business Improvement District.

## Stepping Stones

### Pursue the strategies for building short term momentum

Business Improvement Districts require a long term commitment from both the city and from downtown property owners. Before a BID can be implemented, it is advisable that the short term solutions, discussed in the previous strategies, be in place to increase stakeholder buy-in for the BID. The short term solutions help build momentum and excitement for further downtown improvements. If downtown momentum is lost, it becomes very difficult to bring it back. These long term solutions require successful short term strategies.

### Ultimately Become Self-Sufficient by Implementing a BID downtown.

An improvement district is a special district created to make improvements, typically to infrastructure, in a given area. It is also called a self-taxing district, because the property owners agree among themselves to pay into the district, in return for agreed-upon services. BIDs can range in size from just a few neighboring businesses to the entire downtown area. Creation of a BID for downtown Shawnee is critical for the long term viability of downtown, as it will not only provide a steady revenue stream, but also instill a sense of accomplishment and commitment among the business owners paying for the BID. Additionally, the BID will

discourage negligent property owners from sitting on non-revenue producing properties.

What will the money collected from the BID fund? Ultimately it is up to business owners and the downtown management organization. We recommend the following priorities for BID revenue:

- Maintenance of Streetscape
- Promoting Public Safety through Bike Patrol Police Officers
- Marketing and Fundraising
- Creation and Promotion of Special Events
- Downtown Management Organization Administration

Once a BID is established, it will take time to fully implement it at a level of full funding. We recommend a 3 year phased funding transition from city funding toward BID funding. This will avoid any sudden decline in revenue at the outset of the BID. Here is an example of a potential phased funding scenario:

- In Year One of the BID, the city will still fund the downtown management organization at the full level of previous years.
- The next year, Year Two, this funding will drop by one-third (1/3), with BID revenue expected to make up for the difference. Year Three will see a funding decrease of two-thirds (2/3) from the original amount directed to downtown.
- At the end of Year Three, city funding can cease, and the downtown management organization will be entirely self-sufficient.

## Success Story: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Downtown Stillwater, OK, once faced many of the same problems as Shawnee, including high vacancies and competition from new developments on the edge of town. In 2007 a BID was established over 33 ½ blocks in downtown. In just two years, this award-nominated BID had:

- Revamped marketing and branding for downtown
- Facilitated \$106,779.67 in exterior improvements
- Overseen at least 5 new events in downtown
- Allocated funding for maintenance of streetscape landscaping
- Purchased bike racks, trash cans, benches and street signs
- Implemented a sales tax rebate program for new businesses
- Attracted 8 new businesses, including a Louie's Bar and Grill



Reimagine Downtown

# Attract more people to downtown from Shawnee and the region.



The presence of other people goes a long way toward our enjoyment of downtown. They make the street feel safer, with “eyes on the street.” They support the businesses as customers. They utilize the public spaces that we are proud of and even provide us with entertainment through people-watching.

Several groups of people can be drawn into downtown Shawnee, including locals and people from other towns and cities. We must start locally, making downtown a place that serves the neighborhoods and college campuses of Shawnee, while keeping tourism and outside visitors in mind.

## The following strategies will help Shawnee focus on attracting people downtown.

- Provide affordable residential options downtown.
- Improve retail offerings downtown.
- Develop community activities and events throughout the year.
- Eliminate the perception of poor safety.

# Strategy: Provide affordable residential options downtown.

Residential uses generate downtown activity by providing a base of population that is in downtown at all times. There is opportunity to increase residential use in upper floors, in large historic buildings, and on vacant infill sites.

## Stepping Stones

### Hold a tour of vacant upper floors downtown.

Increase awareness of the availability of upper floors in downtown buildings for private housing development. People who are interested in downtown housing can view vacant upper floors in buildings with property owners who are open to the idea. El Reno, OK has been successful in this effort (see Success Story inset).

### Success Story: El Reno, Oklahoma

In El Reno, the downtown management organization held an Upper Story Tour event for people to tour vacant upper floors in downtown. The event included property owners and community members interested in downtown spaces. After the tour, 5 of the 15 vacant upper floors were renovated into housing and offices. The interest continued to spread in the community, and today there are over 100 upper floor residential units in downtown El Reno.

The local community development department and the downtown management organization continue to work closely with property owners to find solutions to develop housing in upper floors.

### Convert underutilized historic buildings to residential units.

Seek assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office, including Investment Tax Credits for funding. Redeveloping historic buildings as residential uses can offer unique affordable housing options for young adults and seniors that desire to live downtown. Two buildings make excellent candidates for such a project.

- Shawnee Board of Education: North Union Avenue
- Federal National Bank Building: 24 East Main Street

The Board of Education building is an excellent candidate for a public-private redevelopment partnership.

### Develop infill housing on vacant lots.

Two types of development concepts are

recommended for downtown—Cottage Courts and Mixed-Use Residential. Three opportunity sites have been identified for infill development. The Request for Proposal process (RFP) should be used to identify private developers with successful infill development experience and/or experience with developing cottage courts, and mixed-use residential development.

#### Cottage Court Concept

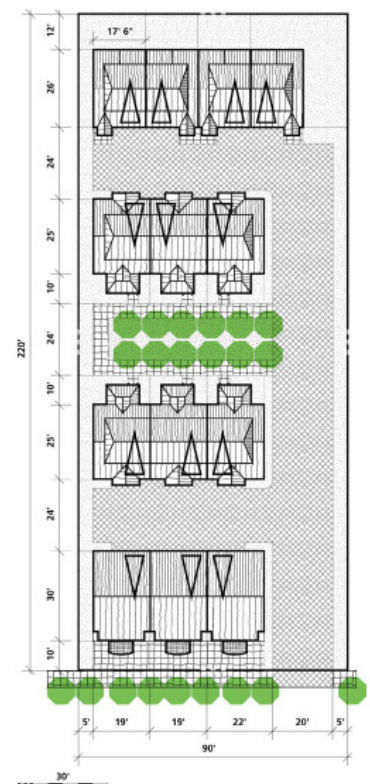
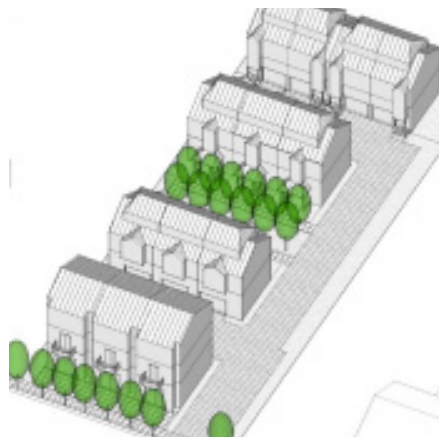
A cottage court is a group of small houses centered on a common open space or courtyard. This will require a rezoning of the site to allow this type of development. Another option would be to create a special zoning category for this type of development, which has been done in other cities. Two opportunity sites have been identified for infill housing based on the Cottage Court Concept.

### Opportunity Site 1

- Southeast corner of 9th Street and Oklahoma Avenue.
- Vacant lot (approx. 155'x255')

The recommended housing types for this site are townhomes or flats arranged in a cottage court style.

Source: City of Portland Multidwelling Zone  
Prototypes: Courtyard Townhouses

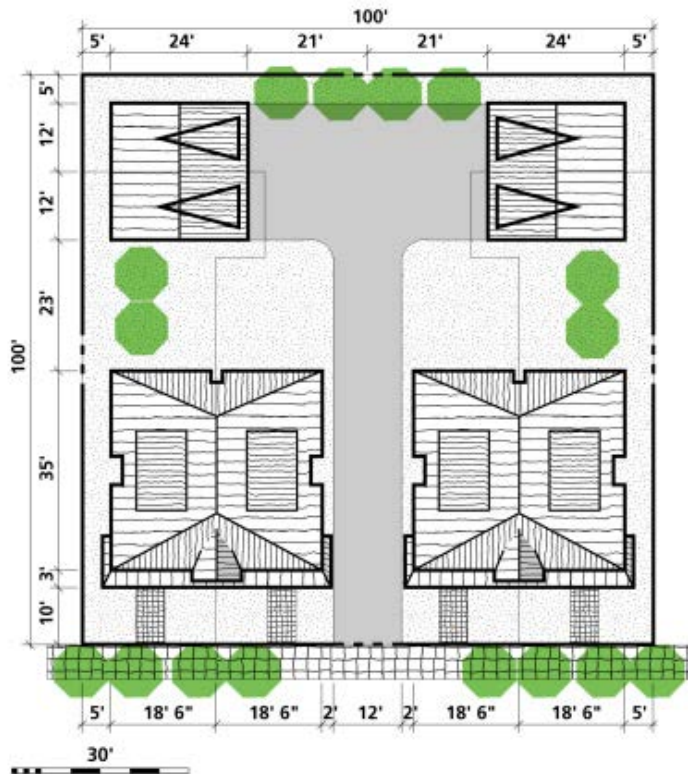


**Opportunity Site 2**

- Southwest corner of 9th Street and Philadelphia Avenue
- Vacant lot (approx 135'x180')

The recommended housing type for this site is rowhouses. The existing alley in the middle of the block can be used as rear access to the proposed development.

Source: City of Portland Multidwelling Zone  
 Prototypes: Contextual Rowhouses



*Mixed-Use Residential Concept*

This concept is the same as developing residential above retail, except in this case the entire project will be a new development to include both retail and residential uses. One opportunity site has been identified for infill housing based on the mixed-use residential concept.



**Opportunity Site 3**

- 13 East Main Street
- Vacant Lot

The recommended development for this site is mixed-use with retail on the first floor and residential on the upper floors to fit in with the Main Street character.

## Strategy: Improve retail conditions downtown.

Downtown Shawnee has a sizable community of existing retail businesses. However, it is important to work to improve the image of downtown as a destination for quality local shopping. Storefronts must be adequately maintained, a culture of supporting local businesses should be cultivated, and it should be easier to locate space downtown for new businesses.

### Stepping Stones

#### Businesses improve storefronts and add protruding signage.

The exterior appearance of many downtown business could be improved to benefit the look of downtown and the performance of the business.

Protruding signage allows pedestrians on the same side of the street to see what businesses are further down the road. It shows that they should keep walking to experience more businesses. In downtown Shawnee it is difficult to see that more businesses may be down the street if you keep walking, because there is no signage visible from the sidewalk.

The quality of a façade communicates the quality of the business inside. Shawnee has a successful façade renovation program that should continue to provide assistance to building owners. Further assistance, such as advice from a professional retail consultant, could help shop owners improve the look of their storefront with simple improvements to the window displays and signage.

#### Promote local shopping with Keep It Local OK.

Shawnee must cultivate an atmosphere of supporting locally owned businesses in all parts of the city. Keep It Local OK is an organization that has an established model for encouraging people to visit



*Protruding signage and clean, transparent storefronts.*

local businesses in Oklahoma. Participating businesses sell annual Keep It Local OK cards that offer discounts at all Keep It Local businesses in the state. Several communities throughout central Oklahoma currently participate.

Shawnee could benefit from having several businesses join this network because it helps increase awareness of which businesses are local. A community that strongly supports local business is a great place for an aspiring entrepreneur.

#### Market downtown commercial space through the new downtown organization.

One challenge for a new business owner is finding an appropriate location. The downtown Shawnee organization should provide a central information source for all available properties in downtown Shawnee. A knowledgeable organization can better match entrepreneurs with the right spaces downtown.

Additionally, the abundance of small, single-story historic buildings makes Shawnee ideal for independent businesses. These smaller buildings should be a focus of historic preservation efforts because they are relatively easy to renovate and repurpose.

#### Success Story: Oakland, Maryland

Wal-Mart was ready to develop in Oakland, MD in 2001, threatening to hurt the competitiveness of downtown retailers. The downtown management organization approached the local Wal-Mart leadership team to forge a helpful relationship.

Wal-Mart management agreed to insert double-sided flyers into customers' bags. One side of the flyer contained a Wal-Mart promotion, and the other side was an advertisement for downtown events.



## Strategy: Develop community events as crowd builders and business opportunities.

Shawnee already has many great downtown events. Events are a very effective tool to attract people downtown. Downtown events ensure that downtown is lively and active when these visitors come. Events also provide a boost to the customer base of downtown businesses.

Shawnee should continue to focus on its strong annual events while adding small monthly or weekly events that attract local residents to spend time and money downtown. The business community must stay open during events to benefit from them.

### Stepping Stones

#### Coordinate event-planning groups under the downtown management organization.

Several different groups are engaged in planning events for downtown Shawnee. A downtown management organization could coordinate all groups that want to hold an event in downtown Shawnee by providing professional help with:

- Fundraising
- Obtaining permits
- Managing a pool of volunteers
- Advertising to the community

Local groups would keep control of their events, but central oversight would help bring all event-planning groups together.

#### Support events with special retail and restaurant hours.

The downtown community can do more to leverage the potential of crowds that come to attend special events. Downtown businesses should stay open during events. The presence of open businesses will contribute to the event, and the presence of event crowds will benefit the businesses.



*A deal night at a restaurant generates heavy traffic for neighboring businesses.*

This is especially important during recurring events like the new First Friday in the 400 block of Main Street. This event provides a guarantee to Shawnee residents that there will be activities downtown at least one night each month. Businesses that take advantage of these crowds will have greater certainty because they can anticipate that event nights will be good for business.

#### Attract one new weekly dining special.

In similar fledgling urban districts, many restaurants are attracting long lines of customers on slow nights like Tuesday or Wednesday with special discounts. Iguana Lounge, located in Oklahoma City's Automobile Alley offers small one-dollar street tacos on Tuesday nights. Downtown Norman's Abner Ale House has Burger Night on Wednesdays, with

a three-dollar burger and fries deal. At both restaurants, the long wait times for a table give patrons time to walk down the street and shop at nearby local businesses.

This type of event would be especially useful for attracting more of Shawnee's college population into downtown each week. A weekly recurring event builds a crowd of people who are used to navigating to and within downtown frequently. One downtown restaurant or pub should step forward to add a similar event to help increase the audience for downtown as a whole.

## Strategy: Eliminate the perception of poor safety.

There is a perception of poor safety in downtown Shawnee for many residents. This is partly due to a homeless population of approximately 15-20 street homeless at any given time.

A combination of improved public safety features and homeless services will make downtown Shawnee feel safe and family-friendly in the short term. In the future housing and work programs could take Shawnee's small homeless population off the downtown sidewalks.

### Stepping Stones

#### Move forward with the rest of this plan.

Every action item in this plan will help with the public perception of the safety and homelessness problem. More crowds of shoppers and diners on the sidewalks will help keep eyes on the street to make potential problems less threatening.

#### Reinstate the bike patrol as a police or volunteer program.

Shawnee's police department has all the necessary equipment for a bike patrol program. This program should be reinstated to provide a visible security presence in the downtown area.

A bike or pedestrian patrol officer is the appropriate choice for downtown law enforcement. An officer traveling at bike speeds can notice more details of what is happening in the urban public space and have better contact with pedestrians. Bike patrol officers can handle loitering issues, monitor parking areas, and even welcome visitors or give directions.

A bike patrol may be staffed by police officers. If funding is stretched, there is potential for the program to be staffed without full police salaries. A volunteer or



*Bicycle patrolmen in downtown Guthrie, OK.*

minimum-wage position could be used. A pedestrian or bike patrol program could provide an opportunity for seniors, retirees, or high school students to volunteer or earn a little extra money while staying physically active.

#### Coordinate local agencies to improve the delivery of homeless services.

All organizations and entities that provide services to the homeless should communicate to use their resources effectively. Valuable services would include:

- Immediate assessments for the newly homeless
- Rental assistance program
- Counseling for people who are leaving hospitals, mental health facilities, and prisons to prevent them from becoming homeless.

#### Success Story: Norman, Oklahoma

East Main Place is a non-profit in Norman that follows the housing first model to help individuals who are homeless. Housing first models place the homeless in subsidized housing while simultaneously giving them support and resources once they are settled in their new homes.

East Main Place provides transitional housing for the homeless for up to 12 months. 90% of East Main Place residents are employed within 90-120 days of residency. After getting employment, residents are required to pay a monthly rent of \$150.

Accountability and structure are critical case management services. East Main Place has found that once the basic need for shelter is met, individuals can make progress on underlying causes of their homelessness.

# Enliven public spaces, including streets and park spaces.



Successful public space in downtown will promote social interaction, community character, and user accessibility. Public space includes streets, parks, and plazas. The design of each space should focus on what activities could best attract users. They should utilize both landscape and streetscape, and ensure

the ability for all users to access the space. The space must be responsive to the surrounding context and create an unique space for the community. With a professional design, these spaces have the potential to attract more users to the downtown area.

## Four conceptual ideas could bring more life and activity to Shawnee's public spaces.

- Bring activity to downtown sidewalks.
- Improve the park across from the library.
- Create a dining-oriented pocket park south of Ritz Theater.
- Create a parklet seating area in the 400 block of Main Street.

## Strategy: Bring activity to downtown sidewalks.

A major distinction between downtown and a suburban strip mall is the presence of people enjoying the atmosphere of the street life. People travel to downtown because they would like to see an active, vibrant place. Currently, popular downtown Shawnee activities like shopping and dining are only taking place inside, leaving the street deserted. These activities can be drawn out into the sidewalk to act as an announcement for events in the neighborhood.

### Stepping Stones

#### Make outdoor dining a priority year-round.

Outdoor dining was the most popular activity that residents of Shawnee noted they would like to see in downtown. Dining at café tables on the sidewalk is an activity that allows people to stay in the public space and enjoy the surroundings of downtown. Sidewalks on Main and Bell Streets are wide enough for outdoor dining to be set up. Café tables can be quite inexpensive for a business to purchase. Several downtown Shawnee

restaurants are full at peak times, and could benefit by having additional seating just outside.

Outdoor dining is gaining popularity in central Oklahoma. Several restaurants in the region have shown that it can be used year-round during both hot and cold weather. Shade umbrellas and fans help during all but the hottest days of summer. In the winter, gas heaters and even blankets are provided for customers who want to sit outside.

#### Encourage retailers to put displays on the sidewalk.

Some retailers in urban settings like downtown Shawnee choose to display sale items on the sidewalk to act as a billboard for the shop. Like outdoor dining, the presence of a retail display will draw pedestrians down the sidewalk to check a business out. A simple sandwich board may also serve as a retail display to attract interest from pedestrians.

When the shop is empty inside, the storekeeper should sit or stand outside to greet people who are passing by and

looking at the merchandise. The storekeeper can add to the active street life that makes the downtown shopping trip unique and attractive.

#### Success Story: Brookings, South Dakota

Brookings' downtown management organization wanted to encourage outdoor dining to add to the character and life of downtown. They created a grant and loan program to help pay for sidewalk café items like tables, chairs, umbrellas, fencing, and heaters. A restaurant can apply for a grant to pay 25% of the total project cost, up to \$500. An additional revolving loan fund covers the other 75% of the project cost until the business pays the loan back.

The organization also provided an informational packet to all downtown restaurants. The packet included a grant application, descriptions of the elements and layout of a sidewalk dining area, and instructions for how to apply for all relevant permits.



*Outdoor dining and retail displays in Stillwater, Oklahoma.*

## Strategy: Improve the park across from the library.

The public park on the southeast corner of Main and Philadelphia is directly across from the library but currently only serves as a place of rest. This park is in a prime location and is clearly visible, which makes it very important to the character of downtown.

Currently, this park lacks activities to attract a wide range of desired users. To increase the attractiveness of the park and to better serve the community, it is important that improvements are made here.

### Stepping Stones

#### **Purchase the vacant lot east of the park to make more room for park activities.**

There is a vacant lot adjacent to this park that can be used to expand the space available (see map). Extra space will allow room for more activities in the park. Additional activities might include an imaginative play area for children or an outdoor learning space that can be utilized by the library. The library could program events in this space to ensure use and reduce loitering.

#### **Seek a professional to redesign the park.**

The park's highly visible location makes it an important feature downtown. Consider hiring a professional landscape architect or architect to design the park to better interact with the surrounding built environment

#### **Include an interactive water feature.**

Consider building a splash pad because water is a great way to attract people, especially children, to a park space in the summertime.



*Map of park and vacant lot near the Shawnee Public Library.*



## Strategy: Create a dining-oriented pocket park south of the Hornbeck Theater.

The vacant space to the south of the Hornbeck Theater is currently unused which gives a designer an empty palette to work with to create a “pocket park”. The neighbors of the space include the theater, a pub, and shopping. The space is perfectly located as a gathering spot for entertainment activities downtown.

### Stepping Stones

#### Develop outdoor dining and entertainment activities in the pocket park.

The empty lot has potential use at any-time of the day, but it is suggested that improvements be made that focus on the night-life of the downtown area. The lot’s great location could support the “dinner and a movie” entertainment atmosphere for all ages.

#### Seek entertainment businesses to occupy the building and the pocket park.

Currently, the open space is sandwiched between the historic Hornbeck Theatre and a mixed-use building that is occupied by Bell St. Brickhouse Saloon, Memory Lane Antique and Collectibles retail store, and the recently closed Groove Bakery and Pizza Shop. The buildings adjacent to the lot should seek restaurant or pub tenants that can make use of this new outdoor dining area.



*The renderings above show a potential pocket park adjacent to the Hornbeck Theater. To increase the level of activity in a pocket park, new doors and windows can be added to the first floor of adjacent buildings (not shown in rendering).*

## Strategy: Improve the 400 Block of East Main Street.

The 400 block of East Main Street is mostly lined with underutilized buildings in poor condition and unmaintained streetscape. If travelers enter the downtown area from the east, this area creates an undesirable first impression.

Recently, some business owners and volunteers are working to improve this block. Buildings are being improved, businesses opened, and the new “First Friday” activity has been started as a monthly arts event. The area will need public support to expand and stay successful.

### Stepping Stones

#### Promote supportive business related to the creative atmosphere of this block.

The public can promote additional creative and artistic business development on this block. Many programs that support downtown development, including the façade grant, are only available west of Philadelphia Street. Small historic buildings like the ones east of Philadelphia offer great opportunities for startup businesses. Public support of those efforts can help speed the process.

#### Extend downtown streetscape improvements to this block.

Similar to the façade grant, the upcoming streetscape improvements to Main Street will only take place west of Philadelphia. (See the suggestion for an expanded tax increment finance district in the finance section for information about extending streetscapes on page 19.)

#### Create parklets to serve the businesses and events.

A parklet would be another improvement to the 400 block streetscape. A parklet is a small piece of infrastructure that extends the pedestrian area of the sidewalk into the street.

This type of space could be used as a place of rest, outdoor dining, or for other creative uses related to the businesses in this area. Some parklets take the form of a portable wooden deck, while others are permanent concrete extensions of the sidewalk.







# Improve access and connectivity to downtown from key gateways.



Improved accessibility and connectivity will make it easier for citizens and visitors to visit the downtown area. The quality of a travel experience can determine the route that an individual will take. To impact route choices, improvements should concentrate on travel time, comfort, and safety.

However, the needs of the community adjacent to travel routes must remain a consideration. Downtown needs to be accessible by main routes that bring customers and visitors. Creating intuitive awareness of the location of downtown from various points in the city will help attract more people to the area.

## Shawnee can improve access to downtown with the following strategies.

- Redirect Highway 270 Business route to Main Street.
- Focus on wayfinding from major downtown gateways.
- Focus on pedestrian-scale wayfinding to destinations within downtown.

# Strategy: Redirect Highway 270 Business route to Main Street.

To increase accessibility and connectivity to the downtown area, a portion of the Highway 270 Business route should be redirected.

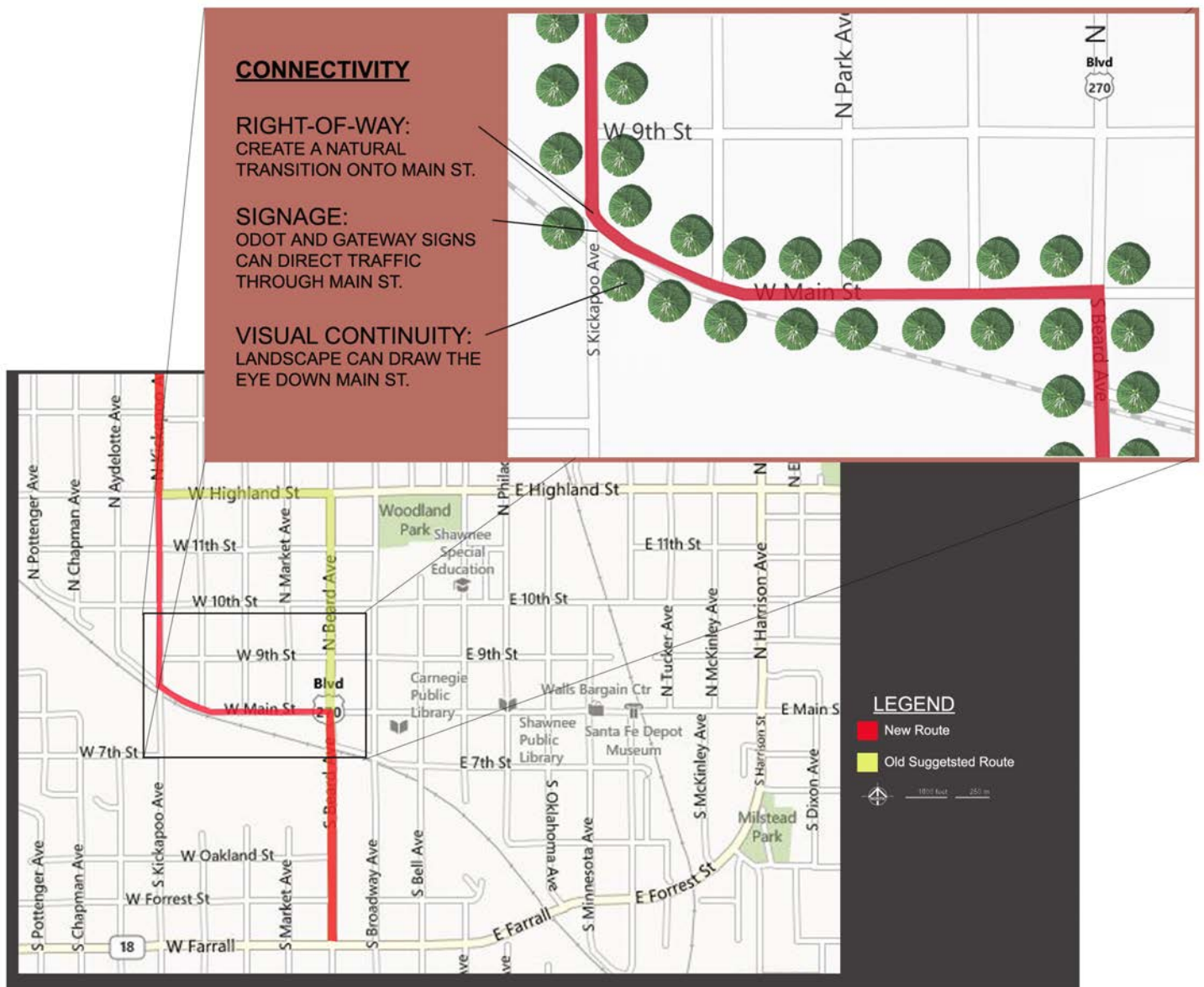
The route currently runs on Kickapoo, Highland, and Beard. The new proposed route will continue on Kickapoo Street past Highland, transition into Main Street and then connect to Beard south of Main Street (as shown in the diagram below).

The new route will decrease slow-downs at intersections with stop signs along Highland and North Beard. It will also decrease cut-through traffic through residential areas on Kickapoo Avenue south of Main Street.

Most importantly, the new route will direct people onto Main Street for good views of downtown that encourage them to stop and visit downtown Shawnee.

**Corridor Improvements**

- Resurface South Kickapoo Street from Kickapoo Spur to West Main Street.
- Improve the intersection of North Kickapoo Street and West Main Street.
- Create visual connectivity using streetscape elements.
- Replace signage and gateway markers to mark the new route.



## Strategy: Emphasize downtown gateways.

Wayfinding and gateway signage can increase the ability to find downtown. Travelers coming into Shawnee may not know where downtown is located. These travelers may easily drive past it without realizing that they have done so.

Today, there are no prominent markers, structures, or streetscape at the gateways of downtown directing interest towards the core. A well-designed gateway and streetscape can create a positive perception of the downtown area and advertise downtown's location to people who are passing through town.



### Stepping Stones

#### Mark downtown's primary gateways to let visitors know they have arrived.

On Main Street, there are two primary gateway locations that can signify to travelers that they have made it downtown. Markers on Beard and Minnesota where they meet Main Street will include traffic coming from all areas. These gateways will bring attention and definition to the core while creating a distinct sense of place.

#### Build prominent gateway markers on Kickapoo, Harrison, and Farrall.

Shawnee's main north-south arterials, Kickapoo and Harrison, are major gateways to the city. Traffic counts by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation show about 15,000 vehicles per day on Harrison Street near downtown. This includes traffic coming from Interstate 40 and State Highway 18, so there is potential to capture interest from local, regional, and national traffic.

Kickapoo and Harrison have four secondary gateways to the downtown area that need directional signage. Signage



Top: Primary and Secondary gateway locations near downtown.  
Bottom: Example of a downtown primary gateway marker.

should direct drivers on Kickapoo and Harrison to points of interest in downtown like Woodland Park and Bell Street.

There is also a secondary gateway from the south at Beard and Farrall. Traffic generators from the southern part of Shawnee include the Potawatomi Nation and Tecumseh. Farrall should have directional signage similar to Kickapoo and Harrison.

#### Ensure that highway signage includes downtown.

The eastern and western boundaries are important routes as well. From the east, US Highway 177 carries a large amount of traffic and is a major travel route from Oklahoma City to downtown Shawnee. State Highway 3E is a moderately traveled route.

Downtown must be included on the exit signs for Highway 270 Business on Highway 177 to leading to downtown.

## Strategy: Install pedestrian-scale signage within downtown.

Once people get out of their cars and begin to move around downtown, it will be important to direct them to downtown's attractions.

Pedestrian scale wayfinding is different than highway and arterial road gateway markers. It offers directions on a more fine-grained level to specific destinations within downtown.

### Success Story: Shawnee, Oklahoma

As part of this plan, the Shawnee Studio team was able to locate a donor for Shawnee's first pedestrian-scale wayfinding sign downtown. Pelco Products is a national leader in traffic and utility products. They are also a locally based business headquartered in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Shawnee's first pedestrian-scale signage will include:

- Hornbeck Theater
- Hotel Aldridge
- Community Center
- County Courthouse
- Woodland Park
- Public Library
- Santa Fe Depot Museum
- Ritz Theater
- Shawnee Milling Company





# Implementation

All plans feature general strategies. This plan goes beyond general strategy to provide “stepping stones.” Stepping stones are specific actions that can be taken by civic leaders, the new downtown organization, business owners, and property owners to improve downtown beginning immediately. Some stepping stones can be accomplished by the end of the year. Others will be ongoing long-term projects.

Implementation should begin immediately to take advantage of the momentum generated by the planning process. Many stepping stones can be completed quickly and with limited resources throughout the first year. Others will take more time and extend into future years.

# Implementation

Now

Future

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- Improve business storefronts and add protruding signage - 22
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- Support events with special retail and restaurant hours - 23
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# Appendices

The appendices contain information, maps, and analysis collected by the team in the process of preparing the plan. They provide a better understanding of the background information that led to the contents of the plan.

1. Review of Previous Studies
2. Community Involvement
3. Parking
4. Grants and Programs
5. 3D Modeling
6. Land Uses
7. Building Conditions
8. Streetscape Conditions
9. Public Access



# Review of Previous Studies & Plans

## City of Shawnee Zoning Code, Adopted in 1989

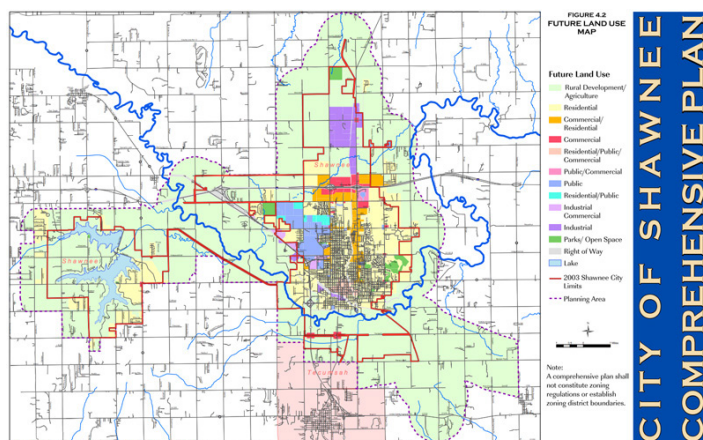
The existing zoning code has the basic straight zoning categories— residential, commercial, and industrial. The only current zoning category that is relevant to downtown is Central Business District (C-4). Within this zone, there are no bulk requirements, which are important for maintaining long-term consistency with traditional downtown development. There is also a “direct location restriction”, requiring requests for rezoning to C-4 to abut or be adjacent to an existing C-4 zoning district.

## Comprehensive Plan of Shawnee

The following items were discussed in the Comprehensive Plan for Shawnee, completed in 2005:

### Key Land Use Goals:

- A variety of dynamic and diverse residential areas that meet the needs of Shawnee residents.
- A thriving downtown that represents the unique character of Shawnee, exists to meet the needs of its residents and also attract others to the area.
- Respect and understanding of the major amenities that impact the physical, economic and cultural fabric of the City, as well as an effort to build upon these assets.
- High-quality development that promotes sensible development patterns, respects the small town and surrounding rural image of the area, does not overburden public services and infrastructure, and is appropriate to achieve an efficient, diverse and balanced pattern of land uses



Future Land Use Map, 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

## Housing and Neighborhood Goals

- The desired housing has high curb appeal, a dynamic character with the ability to walk and bike to nearby events and active areas of employment and recreation.
- Downtown housing for students, young adults, seniors, and live-work users by suggesting density incentives and other new ordinances.
- Affordable housing through pre-fabricated housing and rehabilitation of quality historic homes and buildings
- Coordinate to reduce construction and development costs with assistance in land acquisition, infrastructure costs, and pre-construction loans.

Promote alternative design including zero-lot line development, reduced setbacks, reduced lot size, mixed-use, and cluster housing, to increase residential density.

### Funding and Partners for Housing

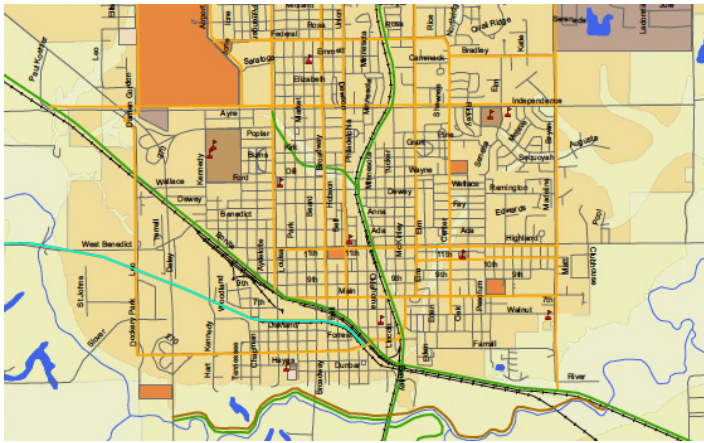
- Community Development Block Grant
- HOME Investment Partnership
- Section 202 Supportive Housing for Elderly
- Section 811 Supportive Housing for the Disabled
- Youthbuild
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program

## Transportation Goals

- Expand non-vehicular transportation with strong support for multimodal transportation including walking, biking, and public transit.
- Coordinate land use and transportation.
- Enhance roadway efficiency, including taking care of visual clutter, signage, and wayfinding issues.
- Interest in a public transportation route to Oklahoma City.
- Increased thoroughfare capacity through the grid system.

## Image and Design Goals

- A need for a new image with an enhanced appearance and better maintenance and reinvestment.
- Present Shawnee as a small town atmosphere with a diverse dynamic character.
- Well-maintained surroundings that are the direct result of pride in ownership and active community involvement.
- A sense of arrival by forming an edge with preserved open space.
- Public displays on sidewalks encourage pedestrian activity.



*Proposed on-street and rail right-of-way trails in 2007.*

## Downtown Shawnee Agenda 2000

### Downtown Shawnee Today

The agenda was outlined with the participation from the local business sector, the City government and members of the community. Two surveys were conducted to establish the perception of local residents. These were a survey of owners and managers of businesses and telephone survey of residents in the downtown trade area. The survey covered topics in the following areas:

- Use of Downtown (the number of times residents visited the downtown)
- Purpose of trips
- Shopping area of choice
- Downtown characteristics
- Downtown Improvements

### Downtown Shawnee Tomorrow

**Meetings with focus groups to define the vision for downtown suggested the following market opportunities:**

- Retail Market Opportunities: By 2007 the downtown should have the potential of supporting approximately between 21,000 and 37,000 net square feet of additional retail space.
- Office Market Opportunities: Between 2000 and 2007 the downtown should be able to support 35,000-50,000 additional office space.
- Housing Market Opportunities: Introduction of more quality market rate housing which included loft housing, affordable senior housing and medium density housing (townhouse units).

### Recommended Strategies

A framework was developed to embrace the creation of an Arts and Entertainment District and Office and Institutional District. As part of the recommendation the economic orientation for the downtown was to focus on:

- Housing
- Antiques
- Strengthen Downtown Anchors and create additional ones, including the Aldridge, the Ritz, the Sears Building, Masonic building, Woodland Park, Farmers market and the Federal National bank Building)
- Entrances/Gateways

### Course of Action

The duty of both the public and private sector is to plan and implement together to achieve a partnership for success. The city government is tasked to implement property improvements, traffic and parking, public safety and beautification to improve the business climate of the downtown. The responsibility of the private sector is to build up business recruitment, retention, real estate, marketing and investor incentives.

## Trails Plan (Draft)

Goal: Create trails to connect residential to retail, natural, and cultural (historic downtown) destinations. Includes detailed plans for trails along railroad rights-of-way and streets.

### Funding Opportunities for Trails

- Park Land Dedication Funds - The city of Fayetteville, AR created a Park Land Dedication Ordinance, adopted in 1981, it was developed as a way to fund park land to Fayetteville citizens as the population increases. The concept behind the Park Land Dedication Ordinance is to require developers to make a reasonable dedication of land for public park facilities, or to make an equivalent monetary dedication in lieu of land for all new residential developments. This type of ordinance could also include dedication based on land and money to establish a greenway system. Included in the appendix is a copy of this ordinance.
- Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Tax (HMR) – The city of Fayetteville, Arkansas also established by a popular vote of the citizens in 1995 to enact a HMR tax. The two percent tax on all hotel, motel and restaurant expenditures in the city is split evenly between the Parks Development Fund and the Chamber of Commerce Advertising and Promotions Commission. The one percent dedicated to the Parks and Recreation Division may only be used for the purchase of property, the development of new recreational facilities and for promoting the parks and recreation system. A similar tax could be established to fund a trails program. Included in the appendix is a copy of this ordinance.
- Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds may be used for either the construction of bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways, or nonconstruction projects (such as maps, brochures, and public service announcements) related to safe bicycle use and walking. TEA-21 added “the modification of public sidewalks to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act” as an activity that is specifically eligible for the use of these funds. 23 USC Section 217 (a)
- Local residential and business support.

# Community Involvement

## Public Meeting

On Monday, September 24, the team conducted a public meeting to gain perspective about what the citizens of Shawnee wanted to see in their downtown. The meeting was held at the First Baptist Church on Union Street in downtown. The meeting had a great turnout with over 85 people in attendance.

In order to keep the meeting focused and on track, the team designed a series of stations that would help to inspire the people of Shawnee. The stations were specifically developed to get the meeting attendees thinking about what they would consider bringing to downtown and what areas of downtown they thought should be addressed first. Citizens were able to move at their own pace to each of the stations.



*Shawnee residents of all ages give input.*

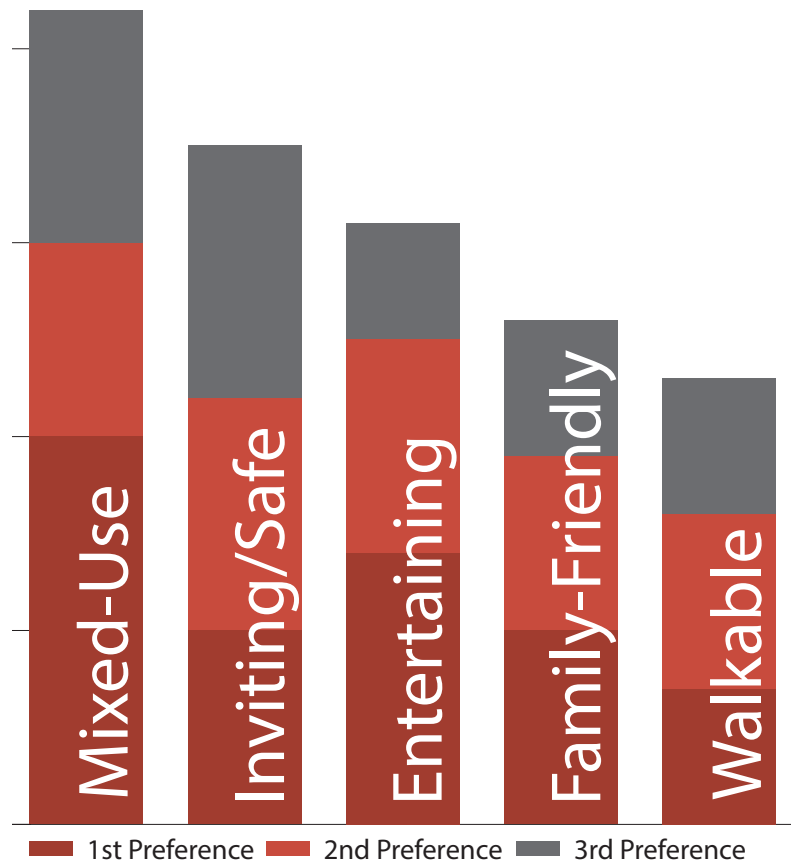
## Meeting Stations

### “My Dream for Shawnee is...”

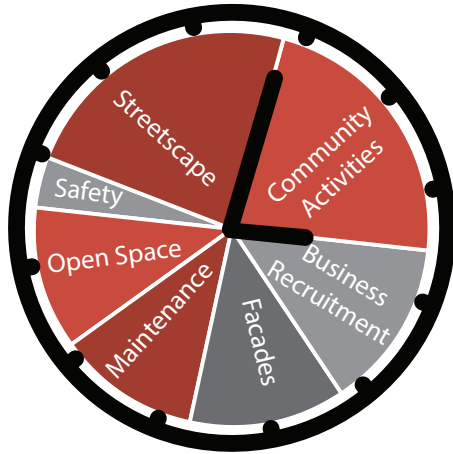
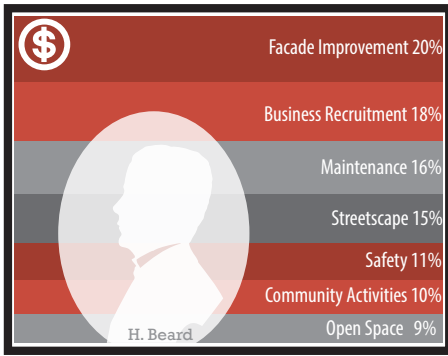
In this station, the team asked the citizens what dreams they had for Downtown Shawnee. Dreams were written on sticky notes and then placed on a large bulletin board. Participants were also able to see what others wrote down. This either inspired them to write their own idea down or vote for other ideas already posted. This station gave us an overall idea of what the people of Shawnee want to see with the redevelopment.

### “What Resources Would You Spend on Downtown Revitalization Projects?”

This station focused on the resources, including money and volunteer time,



*Preferences for downtown.*



Priorities for money and time resources.

that the citizens of Shawnee would be willing to allocate to downtown projects. Citizens were asked about a variety of downtown improvement areas they would give money to through donations, taxes, or volunteer time.

The participants were given ten “units”

of money to split between the improvement categories. Each bill was used to represent 10% of the money they would give to projects. 10 units of volunteer time were also given to the citizens.

### “What Do You Do Downtown?”

The team wanted to know when and why people come to downtown Shawnee so that we can bring more of the programs, stores, and attractions that people want to see to the downtown area. Participants were asked to vote on a series of questions that helped the team learn about what activities bring people to Downtown Shawnee. This station also helped determine the frequency of downtown visits. The team found that most participants come downtown for work. Fewer participants come downtown for shopping, recreation, eating, and socializing.

### “Where Do You Live and Work?”

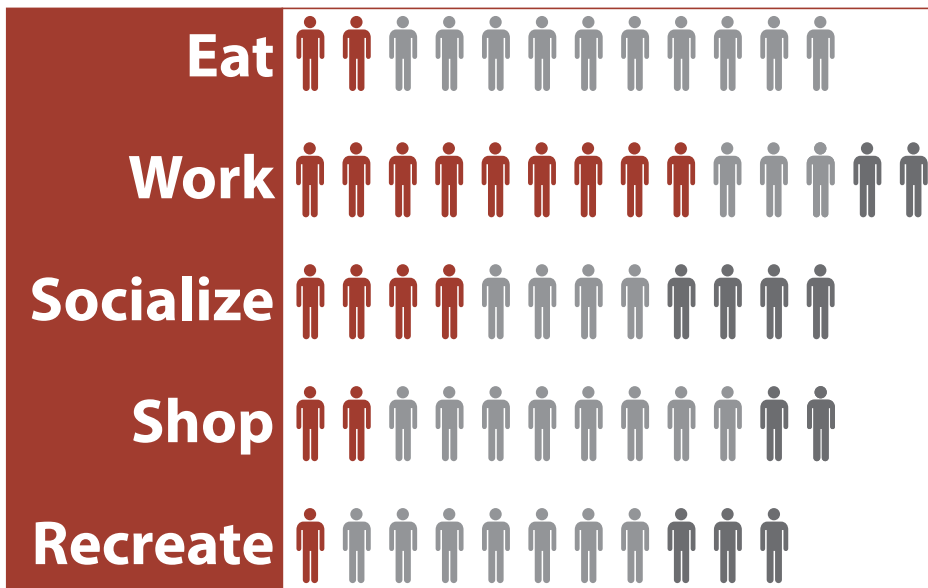
At this station the team asked participants to a pushpin in the area where they live and where they work. This gave the team a good idea of who attended the meeting. It was important to know if the participants live and work in the downtown area or if they are from outside downtown.

### “What Is the Condition of Downtown?”

Another map allowed citizens to indicate which locations the Downtown Shawnee Study Area they would like to see addressed with improvements first. Different colored pins indicated locations that participants perceive as “good condition” and “bad condition” in the study area. Using this data, the team learned which areas need concentrated improvements, and which areas are doing well already. Areas with some redevelopment interest now that were identified on the map will be much easier to work with than unpopular areas.

### “What Activities Would You Like to See Downtown?”

The final station asked the citizens to vote on a variety of activities that could potentially happen in Downtown Shawnee. Citizens were given five dot stickers to vote on any of the pictures that depicted the activities. Some of the scenes were of a dog park, a woman shopping with her daughter, a film festival, street art, outdoor restaurant seating, and sidewalk games. Participants were also encouraged to write comments under each of the activities if they had an idea similar to the photo but with different details.



Legend: All the time (red), Occasionally (grey), Never (white)

Responses to “What Do You Do Downtown?”

- Outdoor Seating**  
Sidewalk Dining, Patios, Benches
- Activity**  
Festivals, Events, Daily Life
- Shopping**  
Unique, Upscale, Local
- Art and Creativity**  
Murals, Street Art, Music, Galleries

Desired activities downtown.

## Continued Involvement & Social Media Presence

All of the data collected at the public meeting was summarized in an easy to read document and emailed to participants. A mini-documentary was also produced reviewing the meeting. The team created a website and Facebook page to keep the citizens informed about the project. Due to the short time frame of the project, the team used social media to give updates about the project and ask for input on aspects of the plan.

## City Hall Meeting

An additional meeting was held in city hall with many of the downtown stakeholders. Many were in favor of having a downtown management group or a Business Improvement District (BID) to coordinate the businesses downtown. Another popular suggestion was changing some of the connection streets to run through downtown, instead of around downtown. By getting more people to experience downtown, the chances of someone stopping increases dramatically.

Money was also a popular topic. There is already a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district downtown and funds from this have been used to pay for streetscape improvements. TIF funds could possibly be leveraged for storefront redevelopment. There is a matching program from the city, where they will match up to \$2,500 for downtown facade improvement. This adds up to \$5,000 per business, with their initial \$2,500 investment. Shawnee receives \$400,000 to \$450,000 per year in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Some of these funds can be allocated toward helping the homeless.

## College Campus Meetings

At Oklahoma Baptist University and St. Gregory's, meetings were held with the Vice President of OBU, Randy Smith, and the Dean of Students for St. Gregory's, Joshua Clary. Both gave tours of the campus and explained the living arrangements, student groups, and volun-

teer opportunities that each school has. Both schools do a lot of volunteering and were excited at the idea of helping out small business owners and the city to improve the downtown area. Both colleges would like to see some incentives, i.e. coupons for restaurants and shops, to bring students downtown to for activities.

# Parking

**2,317 Public Spaces**

**801 in Use\***

**35% Occupancy**

*\*Lunch Hour 10/24/12*

Parking was a concern expressed by a small number of people in Shawnee.

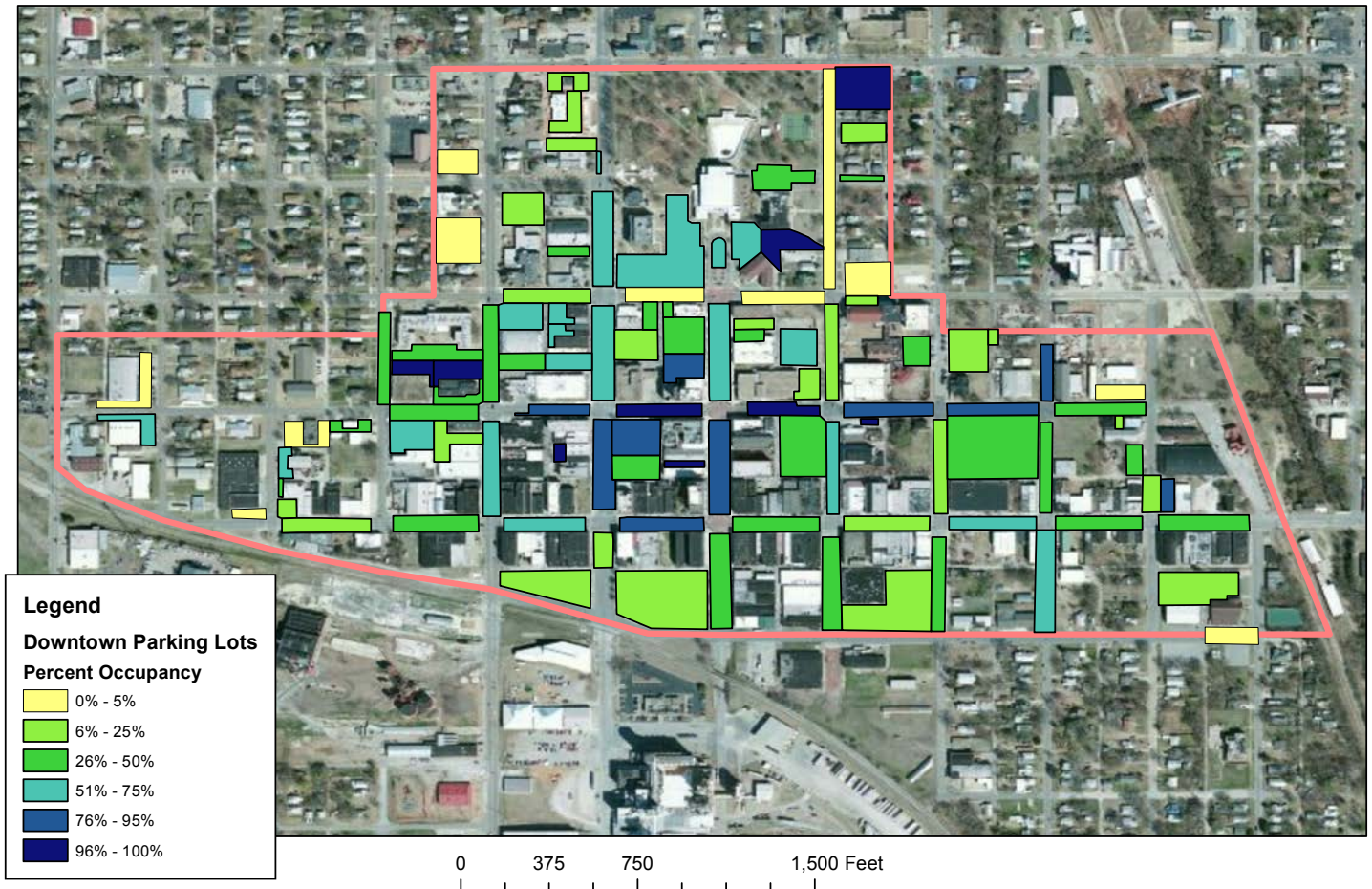
We found that there is little evidence to support a parking shortage in downtown Shawnee. Parking is often available as close or closer to building entrances than at big box stores, as shown by the walking distance map on the following page. There is no need for additional parking capacity at this time.

## Continued Success With Parking

- Business owners and downtown workers should not park in on-street parking.
- Enforce the 2-hour limit for on-street parking spaces.
- Improve wayfinding to off-street public parking areas.
- Install better lighting and security for public parking areas.

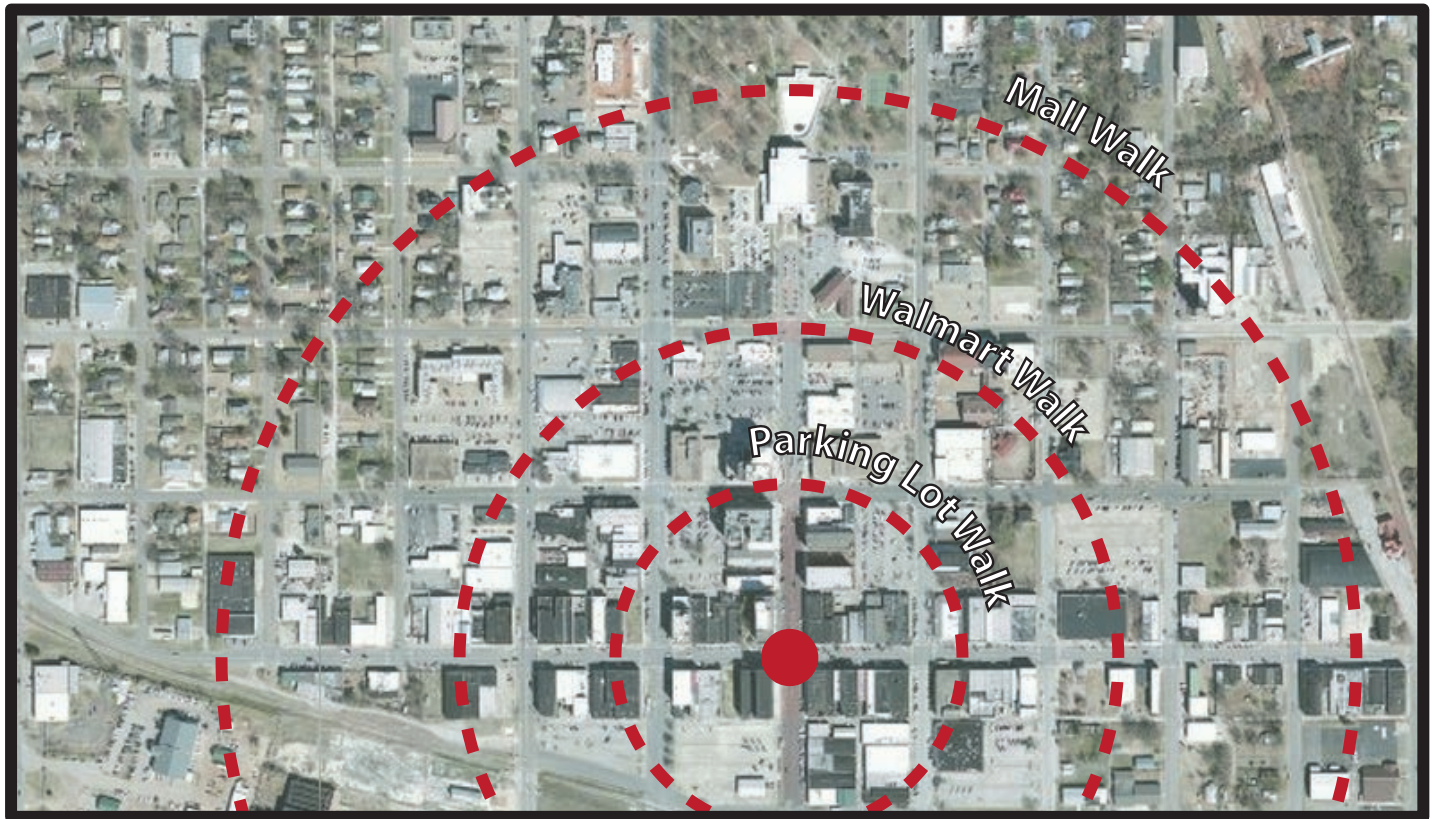
## Parking Occupancy

This map shows levels of parking occupancy between 11:45 AM and 1:30 PM on both public and private parking areas. Many large off-street public lots have very high parking availability.



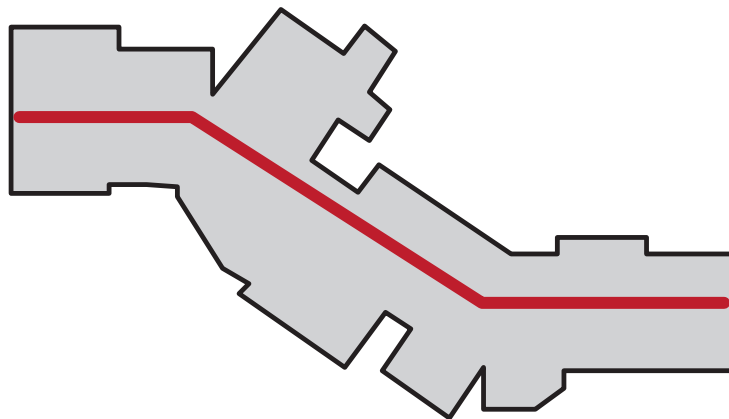
# Walking Distances

This diagram compares walking distances in downtown to other distances in Shawnee that are commonly walked. It shows that there is a very high quantity of parking spaces within 1,600 feet of Main and Bell Streets. This distance is approximately a 5-7 minute walk.



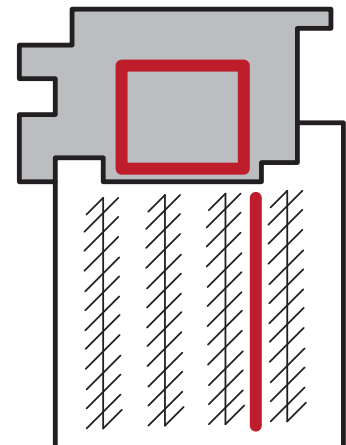
## Shawnee Mall

A one-way walk from one end of the mall to the other is **1,600 feet**.



## Shawnee Walmart

A typical walk around the local Walmart Supercenter is **1,000 feet**. The parking lot is **500 feet**.



# Vacant Buildings

Many buildings in downtown Shawnee are vacant or underutilized. Some of these are owned by absentee owners while others are owned locally. Shawnee may be able to make it more difficult for local or absentee owners to let buildings remain empty or underutilized through the strategies below. Most strategies involve increasing the time and money costs of letting a building sit vacant without tenants or business operations.

## Vacant Commercial Building Regulations

### Within 10-30 days of vacancy

- Have all entries secured
- Cannot board up (or to other common building methods) windows and doors unless permit acquired

### Register with the City as a vacant property

- Nominal registration fee (\$150-\$250)
- Registration lasts only 6-8 months

### Require Insurance

- Maintain and provide proof of 'Liability Insurance' coverage
- Establish a healthy minimum coverage amount

### Require Consistent Maintenance

- Post a sign with the Name, Address, and Telephone number of the current owner or agent in a conspicuous location
- Keep the premises clean
- Maintain structure
- Keep exits lit from dusk to dawn
- Must be up to standards permitting the allowance of adequate police and fire emergency responses, as well as city assessing
- If deemed below standard, the owner must provide a detailed plan of compliance

### Building Security Standards

- Building doors, windows and openings may be secured with plywood for the first 6 months
- After 6 months, all plywood must be removed and replaced with commercial-grade steel security panels or, alternatively, replace the plywood with secure doors, glazed windows and an operable 24-hour burglar alarm system

## Community Land Banking

Various communities are becoming proactive in their approach to addressing vacant properties. In such cases the city land bank can acquire distressed properties (at market value), improve and resell them to a capable buyer.

## Adequately Assessing Properties

It is pivotal that properties be re-assessed on a bi-annually basis. With the adequate due assessing of properties, it allows cities to better account for emerging businesses and areas. Along with the increased tax revenue generated from an improved property, adequate assessing also provides a measure to force adjacent unused buildings to regularly maintain their properties, as to not thwart further improvement in the district. Additionally, it is also essential that cities adopt strict property tax values for vacant buildings, while also sufficiently enforcing any violations present. Without such appraisals, owning an unused building without intention to improve standard may not be financially burdensome.

It is also possible for municipalities to assess vacant properties for the services of the city provided to them. This method is implemented to ensure such landowners pay their relative share of burden for municipalities (fire, police, public works, inspections, etc.). An escalating system, which financial penalties sharply rise, can also be adopted to address repeat and/or prolonged attention.



# Grant and Finance Programs

All kinds of grants, tax credits, and other economic development opportunities are available for both the downtown management organization as well as downtown business owners. The downtown management organization can let business owners know about grant opportunities and help them fill out applications.

## Existing Local, State, Federal Programs

### Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation

Citizen Potawatomi Nation  
Located in Shawnee, the CPCDC offers business development and financial assistance, including low interest and collateral loans to Native American tribal members, not just CPN members.

### Community Development Block Grants

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development  
Shawnee currently utilizes CDBG funding for promotion of affordable housing. Block grants are available for projects that benefit low- to moderate-income residents and help reduce or eliminate blight.

### Historic Preservation Tax Credits

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service  
(Managed by the Oklahoma Historical Society)  
20% federal tax credits are available for rehabilitation of certified historical structures. A matching 20% state tax credit is available as well. The State Historic Preservation Office helps develop

and guide applicant plans. Communities that enforce historic preservation zoning ordinances are eligible to take on certain SHPO functions and receive matching funding for development of their historic preservation programs through the Certified Local Governments Program.

### HOME Investment Partnerships Program

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development  
Considered the single most significant housing exclusive grant through the federal government. Provides grants to cities in conjunction with non-profits to create affordable housing through grants, direct loans, loan guarantees, down payment and closing cost assistance, and rental assistance in the form of security deposits. Gives access to technical assistance and a line of credit municipalities can draw against to jumpstart projects.

### The National Trust Community Investment Corporation

A subsidiary of The National Trust for Historic Preservation  
This program is for rehabilitating small scale projects with large community impact. Based on historic preservation, the program pulls together various funding mechanisms to complete projects. The NTCIC uses historic tax credits and New Market Tax Credits as a way to fund the rehabilitation of historic properties.

### HUBZone Program

U.S. Small Business Administration  
Small businesses located in a historically-underutilized business zone can receive substantial federal contracting preference after achieving HUBZone certification. Since Pottawatomie County is entirely within the footprint of Native

American tribal governments, the entire county is considered a HUBZone.

### Low Income Housing Tax Credit

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development  
Developers of qualifying low-income residential projects receive dollar-for-dollar credits that can be sold to private investors to raise capital for new developments without leverage. The lower cost of capital is then used to make rental units cheaper. Proven method of increasing the housing stock on infill lots in Shawnee.

### New Markets Tax Credit

U.S. Department of the Treasury  
Investors developing in qualifying low-income census tracts can receive annual tax credits of 5-6% annually for seven years. Downtown Shawnee is entirely within qualifying census tract 5002.

### Oklahoma Enterprise Zone

Oklahoma Department of Commerce  
Allows business owners who locate in qualifying census tracts to receive double the Investment/New Jobs Tax Credit. Downtown census tract 5002 qualifies. Also allows cities to exempt businesses from ad valorem taxation for a longer period.

### Oklahoma Quality Jobs Program

Oklahoma Department of Commerce  
Provides quarterly cash payments of up to 5% of new taxable payroll for up to ten years. Focused on manufacturing jobs, but other sectors may qualify.

### Our Town Grant Program

National Endowment for the Arts  
Local Arts organizations can apply for

creative public space art projects that improve the livability of their communities. Grants from \$25,000-200,000 are available. Requires a partnership between the city and a non-profit arts organization. Perfect for the burgeoning arts district on East Main.

### **Section 202 Supportive Housing for Elderly**

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development  
Finances construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition of structures to support housing for very-low income persons 62 and older through no-interest capital advances. Do not have to be repaid so long as project serves the target group for at least 40 years. Emphasizes housing that allows residents to live semi-independently and provides rent subsidies to make the units affordable to the elderly.

### **Youthbuild**

Youthbuild U.S.A.  
Provides at-risk and low-income youth with professional and social skills as they help build affordable housing units in their communities. Helps bring youth downtown in addition to increasing the housing stock downtown.

More incentives can be found online at [okcommerce.gov/incentives](http://okcommerce.gov/incentives).

### **Potential New Local Programs**

The Downtown Management Organization can also easily create its own grant programs for local businesses, using similar cities as inspiration. Partnerships with other entities, such as the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the state CareerTech system, may make these programs more feasible.

### **Business Incubators**

State-approved business incubators, usually run through the CareerTech system, allow resident businesses to avoid state income tax liabilities for ten years, in addition to paying below market rent and having access to technical assistance. Could be developed downtown in coordi-

ination with Gordon Cooper Technology Center.

### **Downtown Grant Program**

This program offered by the Enid Regional Development Alliance offers \$5,000 grants to businesses that bring people downtown outside of workweek business hours. Funds can be spent on direct expenses of the business.

### **Grow Enid Loan Program**

A partnership between local financial institutions and the Enid Regional Development Alliance to provide access to capital for new and expanding businesses in Garfield County. Lowers equity requirements for new businesses and reduces risk for the lender, creating a win-win situation.

### **Main Street Business Development Loan Fund**

A revolving loan fund to assist downtown businesses was formed in Iowa by the Iowa Foundation for Microenterprise and Community Vitality. With funding from the National Historic Preservation Trust National Trust Loan fund, the Iowa Department of Economic Development, and Main Street Iowa, along with technical assistance from the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance, microloans of \$5,000-10,000 were made to qualifying businesses in the state.

### **Main Street Mortgage Loan Program**

Cities in Iowa have partnered with member institutions of the Federal Home Loan Bank system to obtain low interest loans which are then distributed to qualifying community development projects. Renovations of upper floor commercial and residential space as well as new construction on infill lots were priorities for funding. Interest rates were held to 1.35 basis points above the cost of funds.

### **Start with Enid Program**

A partnership between the City of Enid, Autry Technology Center, and multiple economic development agencies that offers a package of benefits for start-up and expanding businesses. Provides free

3 months of utilities, free training from Autry Technology Center, reduced cost chamber of commerce membership, free downtown management organization membership, and a free Enid Young Professionals membership.

### **TIF-like Partnership for Business Development / Property Tax Abatement**

A public-private partnership where the city agrees to forego a portion of property tax revenue, which is used to fund start-up costs of new businesses.

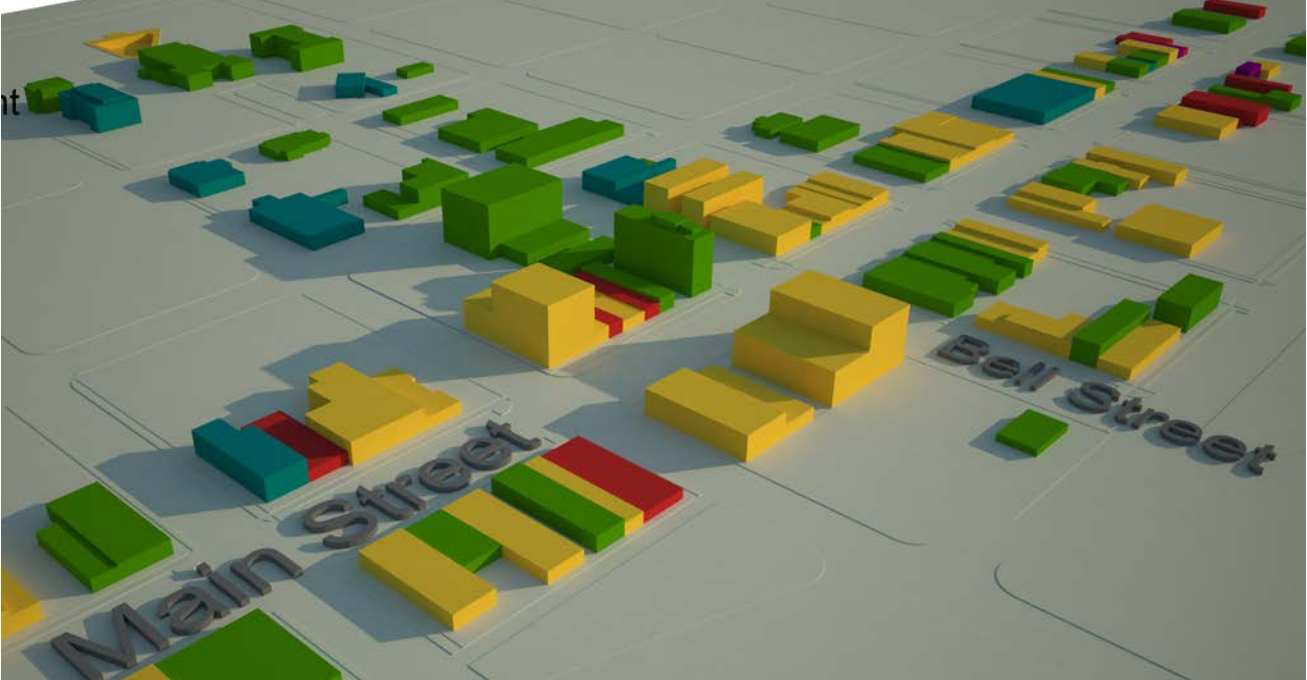
### **Utility Assistance Program**

Enid will pay the first three months' worth of utility bills for qualifying new employees who are relocating from at least 50 miles away. Utility activation fees are also waived.



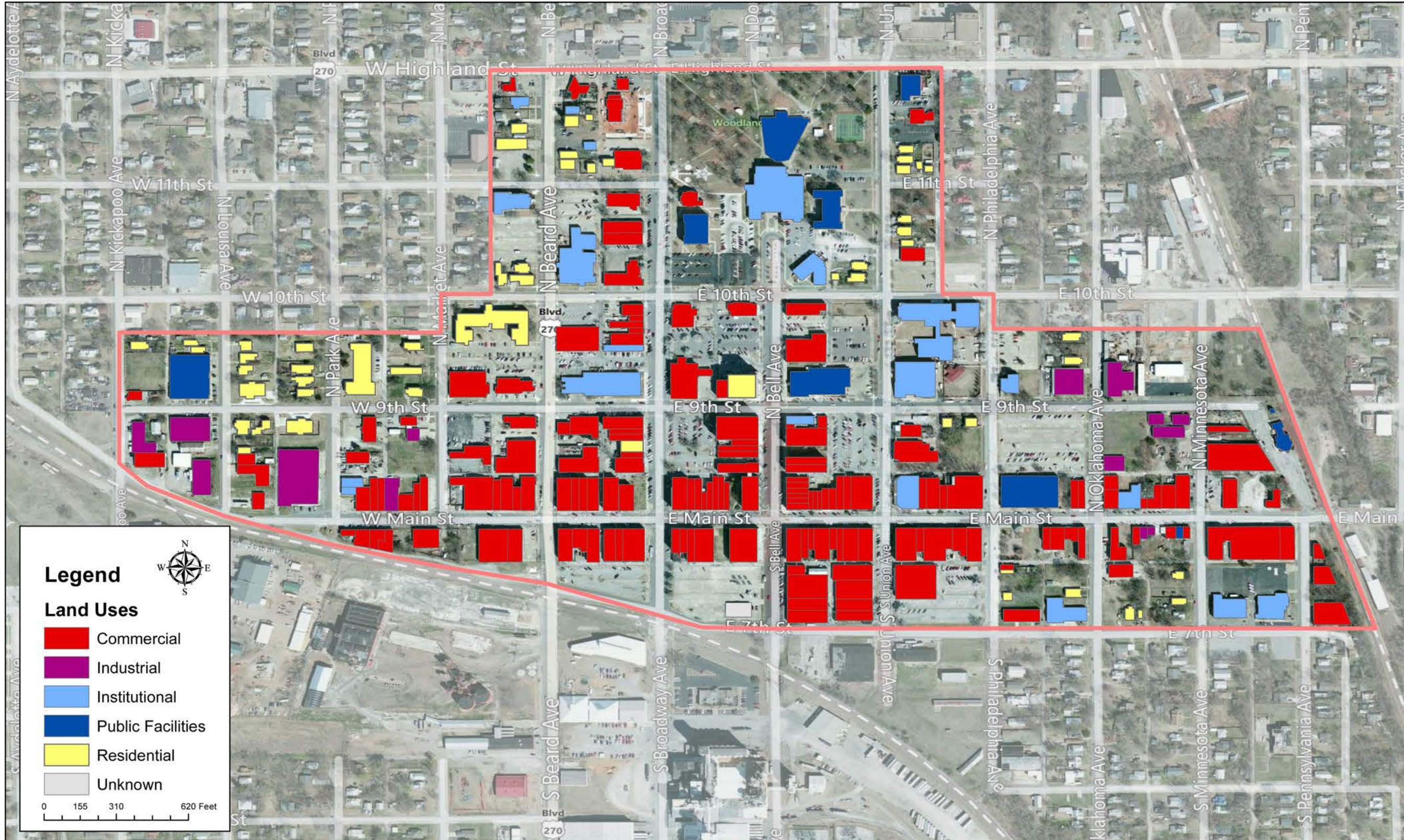
# 3D Modeling

3D computer models were built as part of the analysis process. 3D models help visualize downtown in new ways and test ideas about the built environment of downtown in physical space. 3D models can identify things that are unnoticed on a map or in person. Several digital files have been provided to the Shawnee Chamber of Commerce.



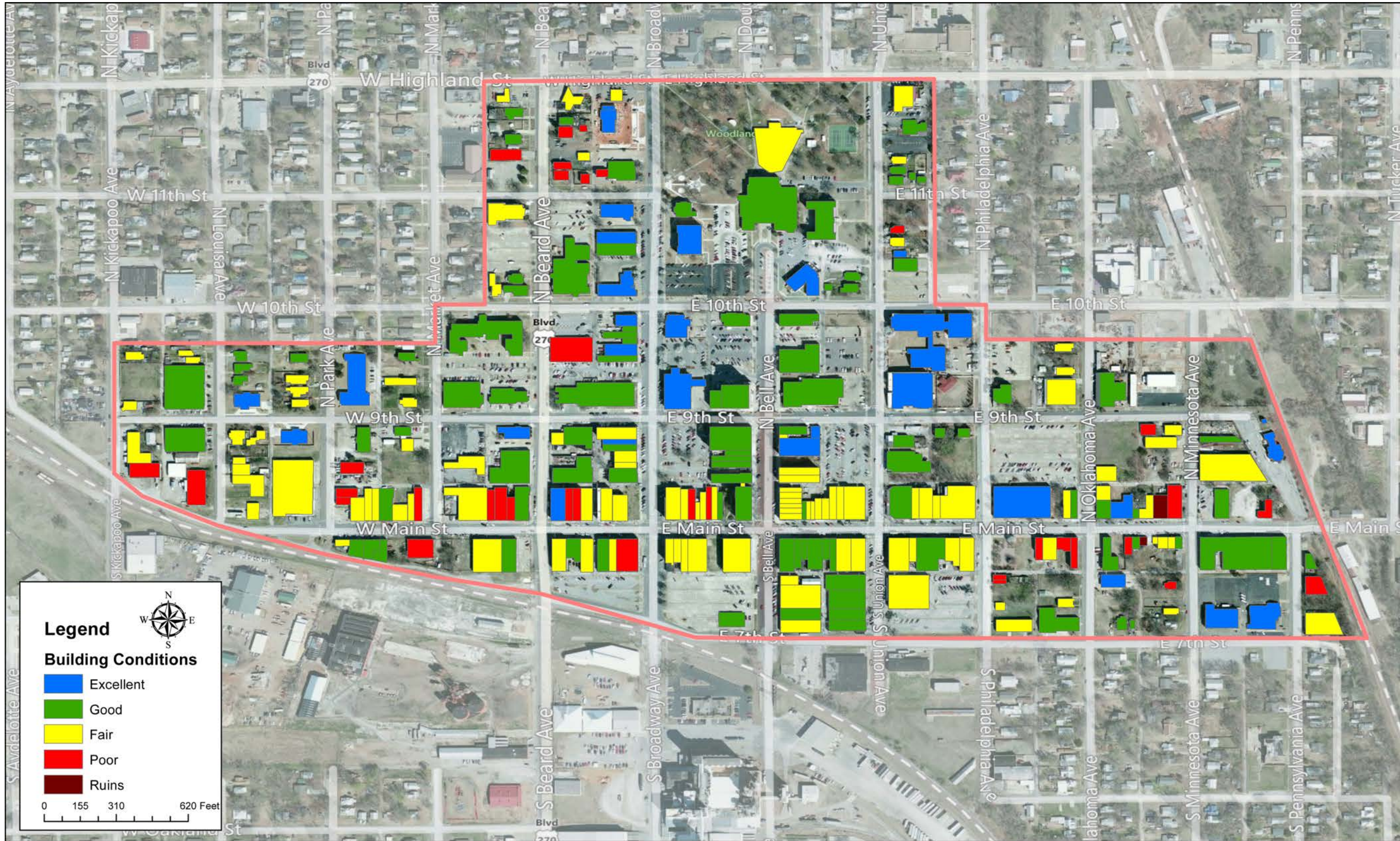
# Land Uses

Residential land uses, including houses and apartments, incorporate 20.5% of buildings. Residential buildings are mostly in the northwest of the study area. Commercial land use represents all types of wholesale, retail, and service activities. This is the primary land use type with 62.3% of all buildings. The major concentration of commercial land use is along East Main Street and North Bell Avenue. Institutional land use includes schools, town halls, police stations, and other government related entities. Institutional land use is the third highest land use type at 8.1% and is consistently located in the north and east portions of downtown. Industrial land use incorporates manufacturing, refining, assembly, storage, mills, and plants that make up 5.1% of all buildings. Public facilities are scattered along the outer edge of downtown and represent 2.6% of land uses.



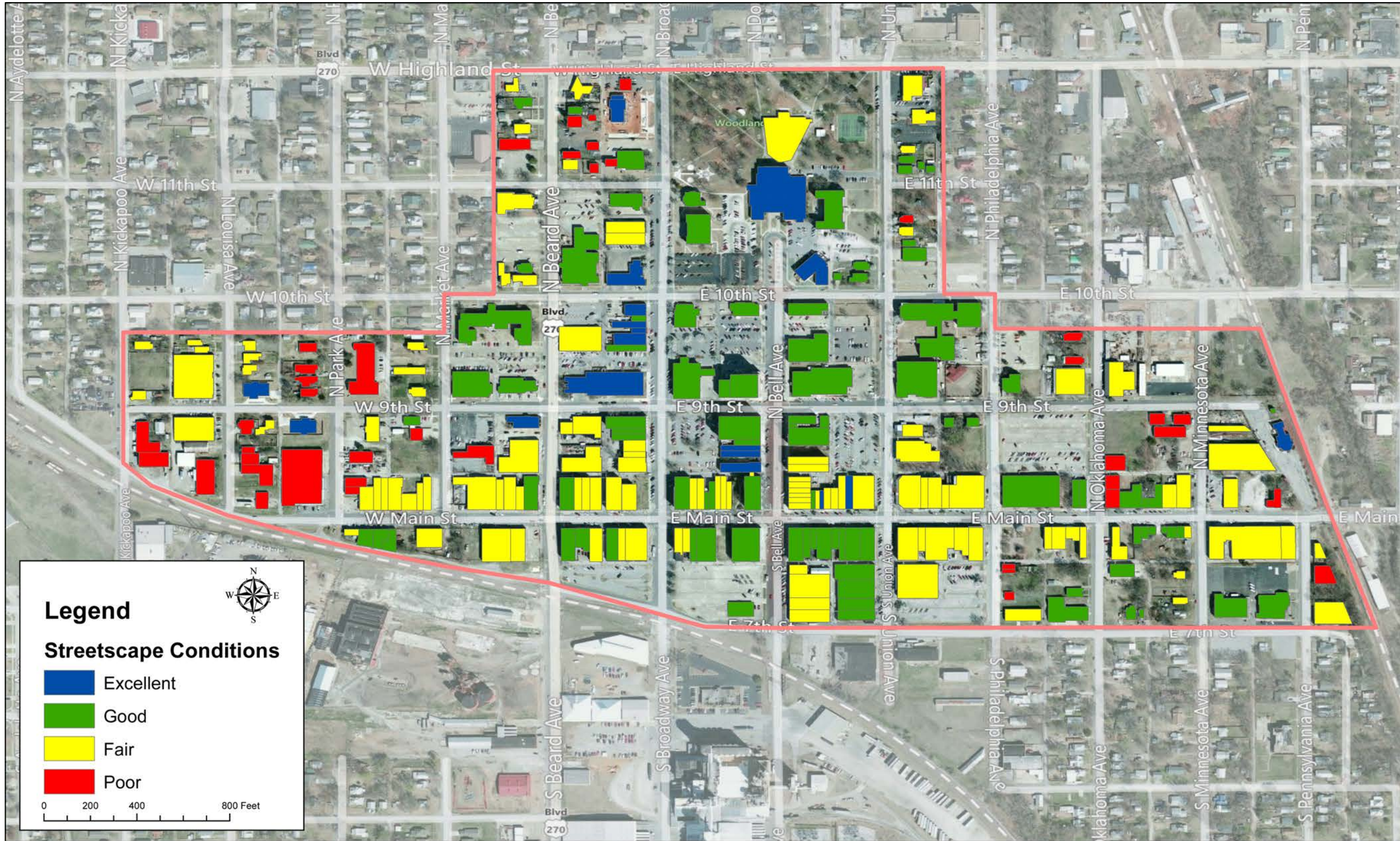
# Building Conditions

Building conditions were classified at five different levels: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, and Ruins. The overwhelming majority of buildings rated were either 'Good' or 'Fair', combining to produce 75.8% of total buildings classified. A total of 29 buildings were rated 'Excellent', most of which are institutional or commercial land use type. The 35 locations deemed 'Poor' are mostly commercial and are located along Main Street. Two buildings in the south-east section of downtown were classified as "Ruins", or structures that have fallen into a state of partial or complete disrepair.



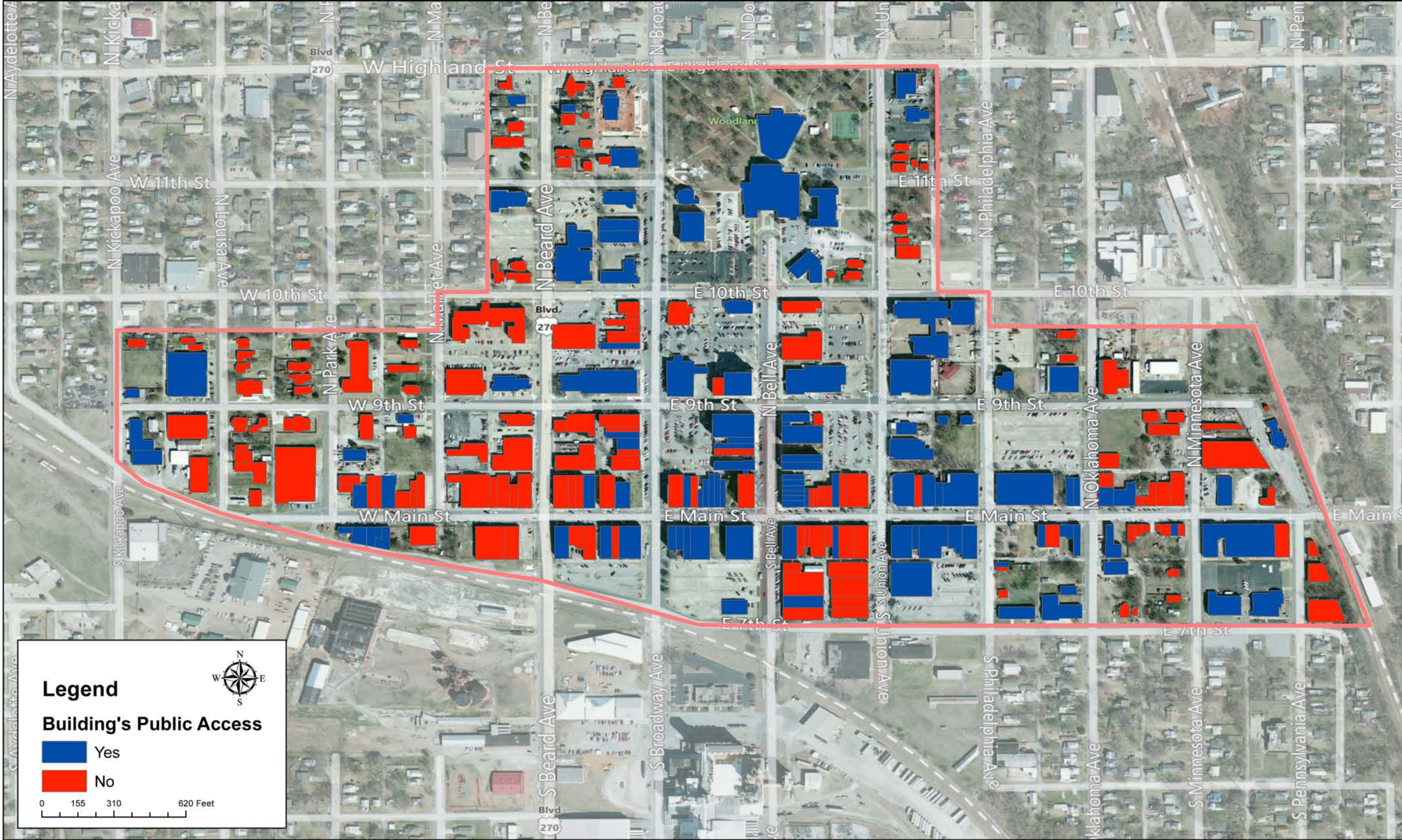
# Streetscape Conditions

Streetscape conditions were rated based on a scale including: Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor. Streetscape condition is very closely correlated with property condition in this study. 'Good' and 'Fair' contribute 78% of all conditions and are scattered evenly throughout the downtown area. Located on the far east, west, and north are the primary concentrations of 'Poor' street conditions. 'Excellent' conditions are most present centrally in the downtown, associated closely with institutional land use types.



# Public Access

Public access refers to how many buildings provide public access and do not. Using intuition and the amount of visual access, team members deemed each building either 'Yes', accessible to foot traffic, or 'No', not accessible to foot traffic. The data is based on the interpretation of the team during a site visit. According to the data, 42.5% of buildings in Shawnee's downtown appear to be accessible for pedestrians. An isolated study on Main Street, which is the primary commercial corridor, indicates 48.6% pedestrian access. Primarily this is due to incompatible frontage and the appearance of vacancies.







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