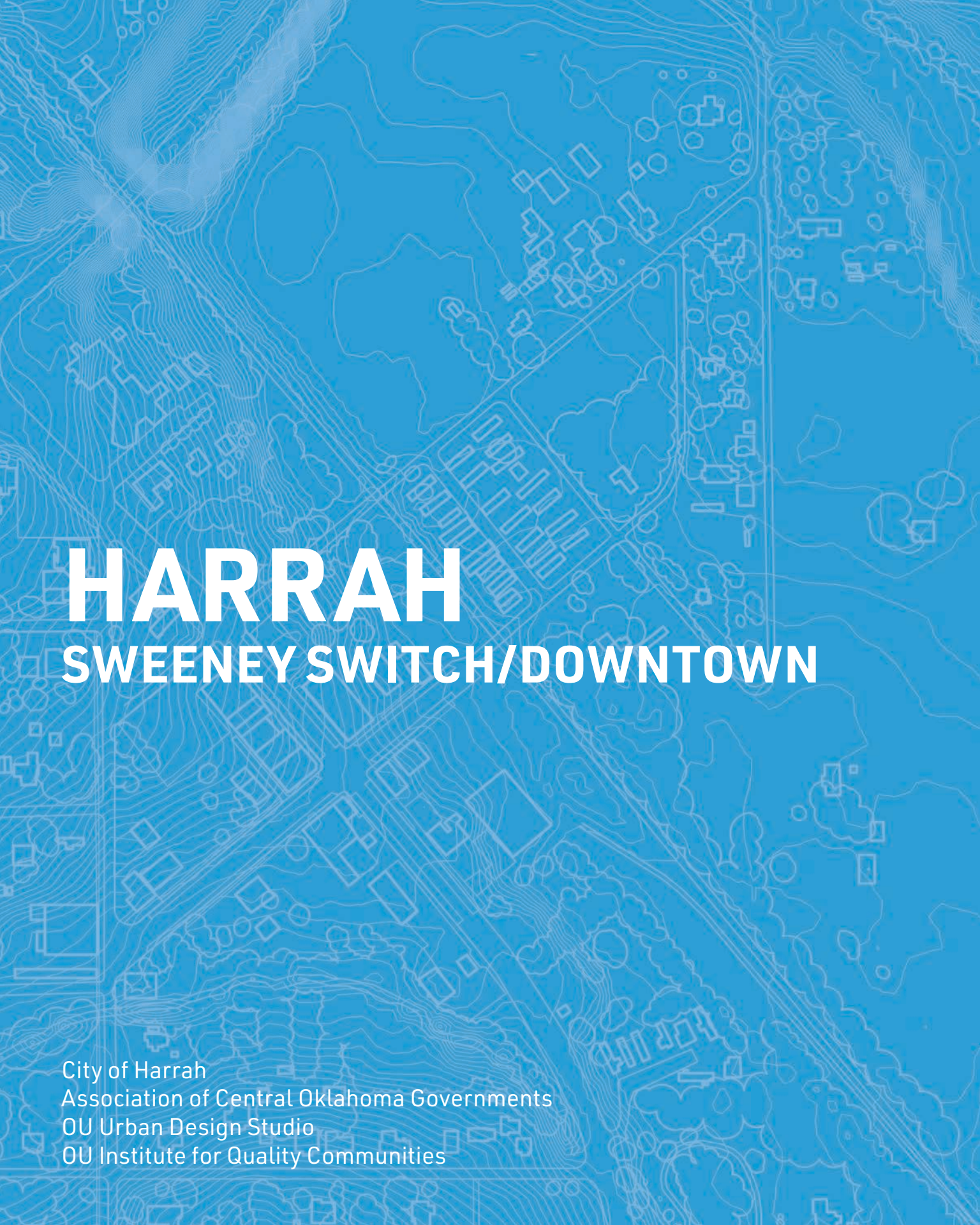


HARRAH
SWEENEY SWITCH/DOWNTOWN

City of Harrah
Association of Central Oklahoma Governments
OU Urban Design Studio
OU Institute for Quality Communities

CONTENTS

CERI: Community Economic Resiliency Initiative

In 2021, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) initiated the Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI) to offer municipalities the opportunity to develop plans that model strategic investment, sustainable economic recovery, and long-term resiliency in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACOG partnered with the University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC) and Oklahoma Main Street Center to collaborate in shaping the program and providing services to communities selected to participate in CERI. Through a competitive application process, three cities were selected.

This document compiles recommendations based on research and engagement carried out by the OU Institute for Quality Communities in response to these community-driven proposals.

El Reno: The City of El Reno sought a corridor study of Route 66 west of downtown El Reno, known as Sunset Drive. The IQC team conducted regular steering committee meetings, stakeholder interviews with local institutions, design workshops for the public and for high school students, and additional research. The process resulted in "three pillars" for Sunset Drive including safety, economic development, and public image. These goals were explored through proposals for new streetscapes and development patterns.

Guthrie: The City of Guthrie sought a plan for a new cultural and recreational area for "The Elbow," an area west of downtown that was previously an African American community before it was condemned after a century of flooding. The IQC team conducted extensive historical research and interviews. The process resulted in recommendations for cultural and recreational trails in the Elbow, as well as an augmented reality platform for experiencing the Elbow's history. Additional urban design recommendations are proposed to tie the recreational area to downtown Guthrie and beyond.

Harrah: The City of Harrah sought a plan for its downtown, known as "Sweeney Switch." The IQC team conducted monthly steering committee meetings and attended two local festivals to engage with residents, in addition to research and data collection. The process resulted in "five big moves" to advance Sweeney Switch, covering urban design, development, and parking strategies.

Executive Summary

The goal of the project is to provide a framework to transform downtown Harrah into a walkable destination branded as Sweeney Switch. Harrah may seem like a typical rural Oklahoma town, but its circumstances are changing rapidly. The new Kickapoo Turnpike is inducing rapid growth of development in large-lot residential subdivisions. Commercial development is sure to follow. The challenge is to avoid car dependent sprawl and funnel shops and businesses into a revitalized town center.

Community Engagement

The urban designers employed extensive and varied community engagement to empathize with citizens to ensure their visions for the future of Harrah are reflected in the final designs.

Community Engagement efforts included:

- Eight monthly stakeholder meetings with over 20 city officials, business owners, and community volunteers.
- Over 300 responses to visual preference surveys and visioning activities at Harrah Days and Christmas in the Park.
- A tactical urbanist experiment closing Tim Holt Drive and simulating a plaza during St. Patrick's Day celebrations.
- An interactive project website: sweeneyswitch.com

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

5 Big Moves


Remove downtown Harrah from the regulatory floodplain using natural barriers and compensatory storage.


Devise a parking strategy primarily using on-street angled parking.


Calm traffic and improve the streetscapes of Church Avenue, Main Street, and Tim Holt Drive.


Connect downtown with the parks, schools, and neighborhoods by expanding trails.


Encourage mixed-use downtown development of vacant lots and rehabilitation of older buildings.

Funding and Implementation

Through collaboration between residents, the public sector, the private sector, and non-profit organizations Harrah can revitalize the Sweeney Switch district.


Tulsa
URBAN DESIGN STUDIO


SHOP SMALL

Project Introduction

Sweeney Switch is an emerging destination for Harrah and Central Oklahoma.

How We Got Involved

This project originates with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which provides funding to state and local communities to offset impacts and burdens caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In conjunction with the State of Oklahoma Main Street program, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) has earmarked a portion of these funds to support towns through the crisis, build new capacity, and develop community leadership through a Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI.) ACOG engaged the Institute of Quality Communities (IQC) at the Gibbs College of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma to provide planning, urban design, and placemaking recommendations to three communities.

The project in Harrah has been conducted in parallel with projects in El Reno and Guthrie. The three cities submitted proposals in a competitive selection process. Likewise, IQC arranged a competitive selection process for faculty to lead the projects. Urban Design Studio Director Shawn Schaefer and Associate Professor of Architecture Dave Boeck were selected as Community Engagement Fellows to co-lead the Harrah project with their students. Professor Boeck is also an Urban Design Fellow with the Urban Design Studio.

It is not uncommon for grants like this one to have layers of administration and collaboration. However, the important thing to remember is that the primary community partner is the City of Harrah and its constituencies: residents, businesses, and institutions.

Project Context

Harrah may seem like a typical rural Oklahoma town, but its circumstances are changing rapidly. The recently constructed Kickapoo Turnpike on the west side of town extends Oklahoma City's outer loop of highways from Interstate 44 to Interstate 40. The new loop provides a bypass around Oklahoma City for intercity traffic, but more importantly, provides Harrah easy access to metropolitan employment with Tinker Air Force Base 15 minutes away, and the State Capitol, OU Health Sciences Campus, and Downtown Oklahoma City, only a twenty-minute drive.

Harrah's three new turnpike interchanges are likely to drive population growth to the east side of Oklahoma City, similar to new highways on the west side of Oklahoma City encouraging development of communities such as Mustang and Yukon. Harrah has added scores of new houses with approximately 25 percent of the city's housing stock built in the last ten years. Over 80 percent of the dwelling units are single-family detached homes on large lots in scattered subdivisions. The City of Harrah's Comprehensive Plan promotes this type of exurban pattern with much of the proposed residential development designated for rural estates. It also calls for commercial development at the highway interchanges and along major roads. This expansion of highways combined with isolated housing enclaves mean Harrah is likely to be car-dependent for the foreseeable future. Yet, the plan also envisions and recommends the revitalization of Downtown Harrah into a walkable district, known as Sweeney Switch. The existing downtown largely fronts Church Avenue, or State Highway 270. Main Street could easily be missed as a minor side street when driving through town. A few blocks of traditional storefronts with on-street parking and sidewalks surround the intersection of Church Avenue and Main Street before transitioning to a pattern of car-oriented development with setbacks and off-street parking.

This illustrative plan shows the context of the project.

State Theater located in Sweeney Switch

Grain Elevator on Church Avenue located in Sweeney Switch

Assets in Sweeney Switch

Sweeney Switch has a core of attractions common to small towns, including the Public Library, the Harrah Historical Center, and several small businesses, including a gym, a liquor store, and a cake shop. It also has a few unexpected attractions like a gorgeous community garden and a pocket park for the "Saturdays on Main" program. The Farmers' Market also sets up shop on Saturdays during the growing season. Heritage Park is within walking distance, as are multiple churches, and the public school campuses.

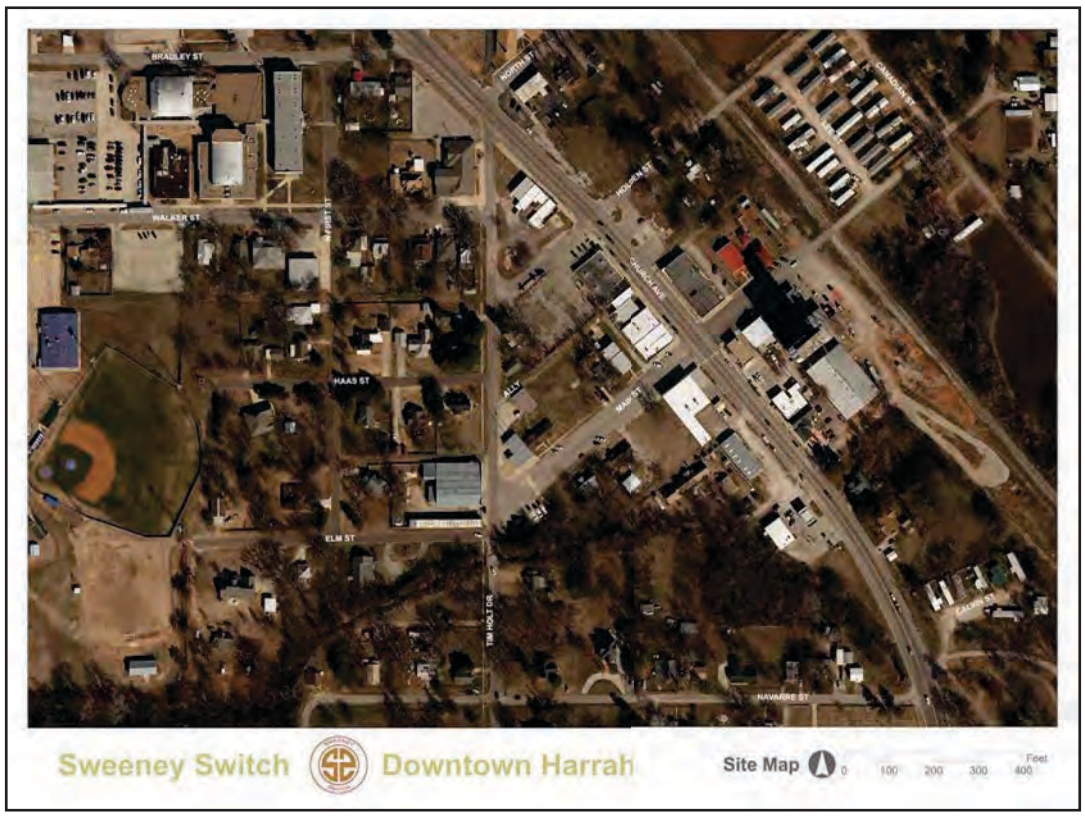
All of this activity is catching the attention of entrepreneurs. The proprietor of the popular roadside attraction, The Chicken Shack, located in Luther, Oklahoma has opened a new restaurant and entertainment venue in the old lumber yard at the end of Main Street. The new restaurant, called The Lumber Shack, is attracting scores of new visitors to Sweeney Switch, and is also catalyzing new business growth.

The city's desire to make a walkable district may be challenged by its status as a destination. With relatively few residences within walking distance, much of the new traffic will be visitors arriving in cars. Limited parking means the district may be overrun at times with drivers improvising parking along streets, vacant lots, and private parking lots. Both Church Avenue and Main Street pose interesting ways to improve the parking and streetscaping. From these streets you can see the grain elevator which is located off Main Street. This structure is the largest landmark in the city and is visually prominent. Another challenge, the majority of the district is in the floodplain of the adjacent creek. These challenges make for a unique design solution.

Project Goal

The goal will be to devise an urban design framework and downtown plan for Harrah.

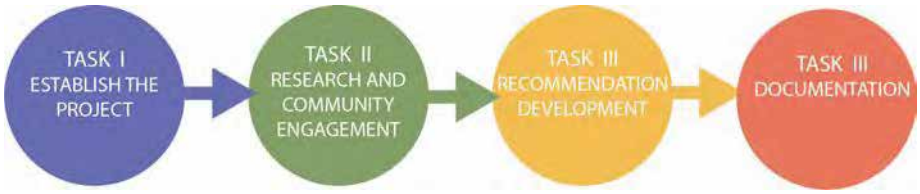
These maps show the city limits and fence-lines of the City of Harrah.



The Sweeney Switch district includes Church Avenue, Main Street, and Tim Holt Drive.
This area will be the majority of our focus for the project.

Project Scope and Process

The scope of the project is to create an urban design framework for Sweeney Switch and its context surrounding in Harrah. The Urban Design Studio uses a reciprocal engagement model and the community partners understand that this is an academic service-learning project for the benefit of the Urban Design students. A reciprocal engagement model provides something to both parties. The students are learning urban design knowledge, skills, and values. We hope to provide the community partners with useful technical assistance, capacity building, and decision-making support. ACOG and the City of Harrah are under no obligation to endorse, adopt, or implement the students' work products, but are welcome to do so if they so desire. The Studio will grant the community partners license to use the work with proper attribution. The University of Oklahoma assumes no liability for the use of the work products, which are for community planning and preliminary design purposes, and no substitute for the work of licensed, professional engineers and architects. For this project, the Urban Design Studio will follow a four-step process developed by the IQC.



Task I -ESTABLISH THE PROJECT

This has largely been completed by the instructors and IQC staff during the summer of 2021. The remaining three tasks are outlined below:

TASK II - RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Data has been collected and analyzed to understand design and planning challenges. Students reviewed existing plans and studies of Harrah, developed base maps and urban x-rays of the site, examined precedents of similar efforts, and prepared a summary presentation and report of the analysis. First, a stakeholder committee has been formed to meet monthly to guide the students. Students prepared agendas and meeting minutes for this group. This group was consulted on substantive matters and assisted the students with organizing the project. The Stakeholder group has been coordinated with Tracy Qualls, former Economic Development Director for the City of Harrah. Members included elected officials, business owners, local residents, and outside experts. IQC and ACOG representatives also participated. The students have also engaged with community institutions such as Harrah's Friends of the Park, the Main Street Community Garden, and others. Activities included setting up a booth at the Harrah Days parade and Christmas in the Park, creating a Photovoice exhibit, and setting up visual preference boards at the Lumber Shack.

Several hands-on activities have been designed by the students to allow participants to share visions for the future and react to design prototypes developed by the team. These include visual preference boards, listing "prouds" and "sorrys" for Harrah, and a vision board for Sweeney Switch. Lastly, the students launched a simple project website to share project progress and materials with the public : sweeneyswitch.com.

TASK III - RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT

This task largely consisted of design and planning activities based on the goals and visions learned from the community engagement efforts. The team developed its recommendations, drawings, models, or design interventions to share with the stakeholders and the community. Action items and implementation steps are identified, ranging from short-term, light, quick, and cost efficient steps to more long-term, resource-intensive initiatives. Implementation pathways, such as grants or fee generation, will also be identified.

TASK IV - DOCUMENTATION

The last phase of the project produced this summary document and public presentation for the use of the stakeholders. The document briefly describes the project and shows the results of each phase. It illustrates the completed urban design proposal and recommendations for implementation and future steps.

Project Schedule

Schedule

Urban Design Studio projects occur over a nine-month period spanning the fall and spring academic terms. The fall 2021 term focused on the research and engagement phases of the project. The spring 2022 term emphasized design, implementation, and delivering a final document. A bar chart schedule above provides a graphic overview of the timeline. The student design team hosted monthly project meetings in Harrah with the stakeholder committee. The meetings occurred on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 11:30 am. Each meeting is confirmed with an agenda approximately one week beforehand.

Project Meeting Schedule

August 28, 2021

September 18, 2021

October 16, 2021

November 13, 2021

December 4, 2021

February 12, 2022

March 5, 2022

April 9, 2022

May 7, 2022

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community engagement approach allowed the OU Urban Design Team to continuously receive information and feedback from community leaders, stakeholders, and local residents. The engagement strategy was based on a Community Outreach Pyramid and included these components:

> Steering Committee Meetings
> Community Events & Workshops
> Tactical Urbanism Event
> Preliminary Design Studies
> Design Feedback

Community Outreach Pyramid

The Community Outreach Pyramid summarizes the approach to community engagement across the project.

Steering Committee Meetings

As a part of the community engagement process, there were nine stakeholder meetings. The first stakeholder meeting on August 28 only attracted two stakeholders, but the group grew to over twenty as the project gained momentum.

September 18th Stakeholder Meeting

On September 18 the second stakeholder meeting was held at the Harrah Lumber Yard. Initial findings from our Community Engagement Event at the Harrah Days Parade were presented. The following goals were identified:

- Linking the park, and making a walkable area.
- Proposing urban design guidelines for downtown
- Redesign the bridge on Tim Holt Drive
- Streetscaping the primary streets; Main Street, Church Avenue, and Tim Holt Drive
- New development in the vacant or underutilized properties in the downtown area
- Hire a floodplain manager for the City
- Floodplain maps redrawn for downtown Harrah
- Study parking and add angled parking along Main Street and Church Avenue
- Consider a Tax Increment Finance District (TIF)

Student Jeremy Banes explaining the data gathered during Harrah Days at the September 18 meeting at the Lumber Shack

Student Roshita Taylor explaining the findings from Harrah Days and presenting the demographics summary during the October 16 meeting.

Student Roshita Taylor explaining the community engagement findings to the stakeholders during the November 13th meeting.

Entrance to Harrah's walking trail system.

October 16 Stakeholder Meeting

Venue: Harrah Chamber of Commerce

During this meeting multiple team members and outside experts discussed their skillsets and how those skillsets could be beneficial to Harrah. John Harrington from ACOG discussed the floodplain issue with the team and stakeholders. Roshita Taylor presented community engagement results from Harrah Days and a demographic analysis. David Boeck presented to the Stakeholders the meaning of Photovoice and how to use this tool during the project. ACOG discussed how Harrah could benefit from joining the Oklahoma Main Street program.

November 13 Stakeholder Meeting

Venue: Harrah Comfort Inn & Suites

During this meeting participants discussed floodplain management, school boundaries, and case study findings. Afterwards the team walked the extensive trails on the Harrah High School property to the west of Sweeney Switch.

February 12 Stakeholder Meeting

Venue: Lumber Shack

During this meeting the group discussed the findings that will decide the design for the future of Sweeney Switch. These findings are from community engagement events that the team had attended for example Harrah Days and Christmas in the Park. These designs were show cased at Harrah's St. Patrick's Day event.

Roshita describing the findings from community engagement events during the February 12th meeting.

Stakeholders in groups during the design workshop.

February 12 Stakeholder Meeting

Venue: Lumber Shack

During this meeting the group discussed the findings that will decide the design for the future of Sweeney Switch. These findings are from community engagement events that the team had attended; for example, Harrah Days and Christmas in the Park. These designs were showcased at Harrah's St. Patrick's Day event.

March 5th Stakeholder Meeting

Venue: Lumber Shack

During this meeting the urban design studio team showcased the preliminary designs that were shown during the St. Patrick's Day event. After showing the preliminary designs, the team held a design workshop to engage with the stakeholders.

Photovoice

The goal of the Photovoice project was to get youth, seniors, families, singles, business owners, city staff, commuters and developers, or anyone else who could provide engaged input into the process of creating linkages between downtown Harrah and all the places the people live, shop, work, and play.

Using cell phone cameras, the participants identify and report on the positive and negative elements of Harrah they have identified and would like to share with the urban design students group and other community member of Harrah. A conversation can begin with these elements and seek to improve both the positive and negative elements in the community.

The community was engaged for the photovoice project through various outlets, including the Sweeney Switch web page, utility bill mail-outs, and discussions at the stakeholders meeting in November. Unfortunately we did not get the response we hoped and only received a handful of images this way.

Website

The Sweeney Switch website served to keep everyone in the community informed with updates, agendas, and meeting minutes. We have also used this tool as an outlet for our photovoice project where the community can submit photos.

https://www.sweeneyswitch.com/

Community Events & Workshops

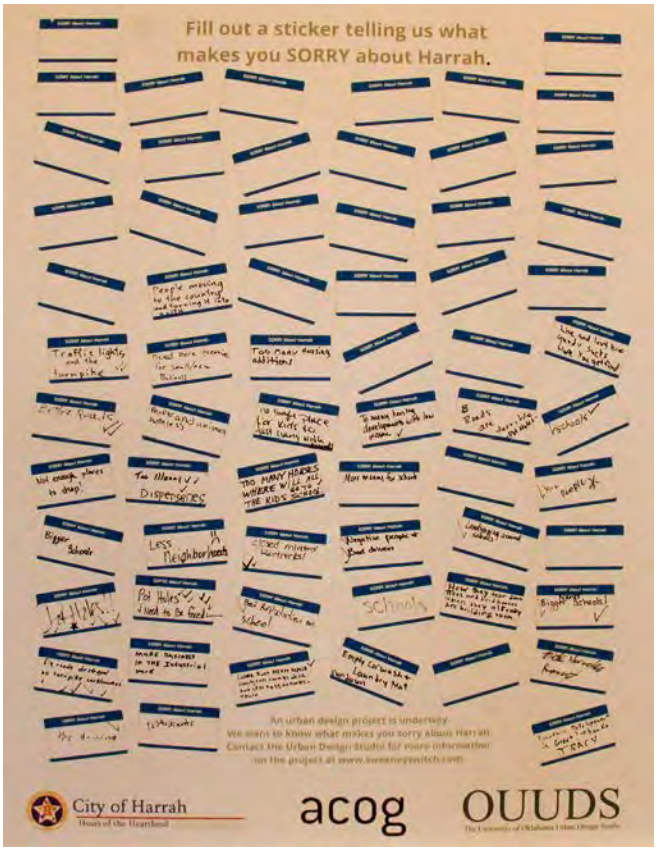
Harrah Days, Christmas in the Park, and St. Patrick's Day offered a great opportunity to implement activities to get resident feedback and priorities.

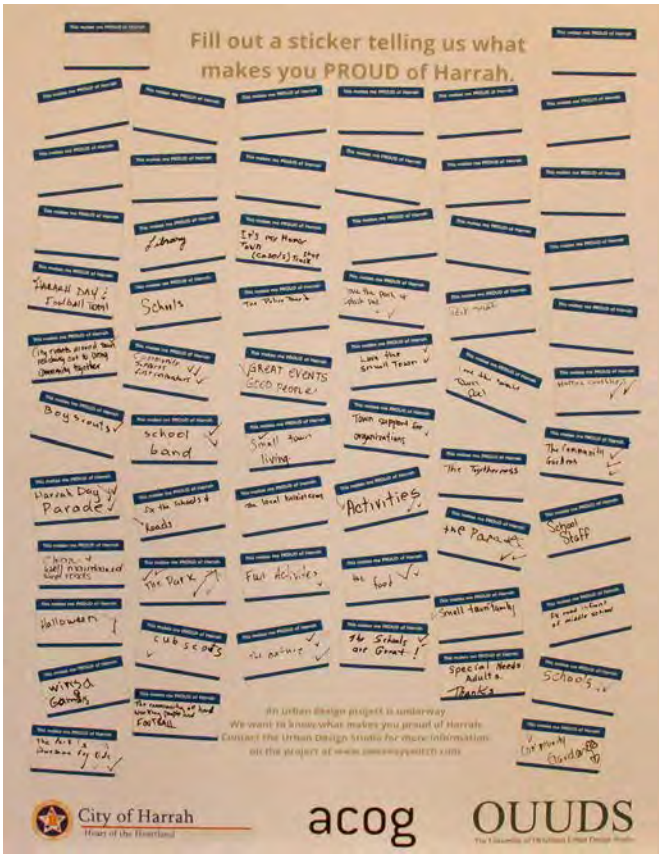
Harrah Days

On September 11 a community engagement event was held at Harrah Days. Over 270 participants wrote on the survey boards that were provided. The community members that participated were asked the following questions. Where they lived or work, What they were SORRY about Harrah, What they were PROUD about Harrah, and What is your VISION for the Sweeney Switch district.

Top 10 Findings
Based on 279 Responses

1. Sorry about poor street conditions & potholes
2. Pride for Heritage Park and the desire for more park improvements in Harrah
3. Pride for Harrah Days and other events
4. Desire for casual dining
5. Promote locally-owned businesses
6. Desire for upscale dining
7. Pride for school-related themes: faculty/staff, football team, band, etc.
8. Desire for more youth activities
9. Desire for movie theater and arts
10. Desire to preserve small-town atmosphere





"Sorry"

Community responses for what they were "Sorry" about related to road conditions, housing developments, and the schools.

"Proud"

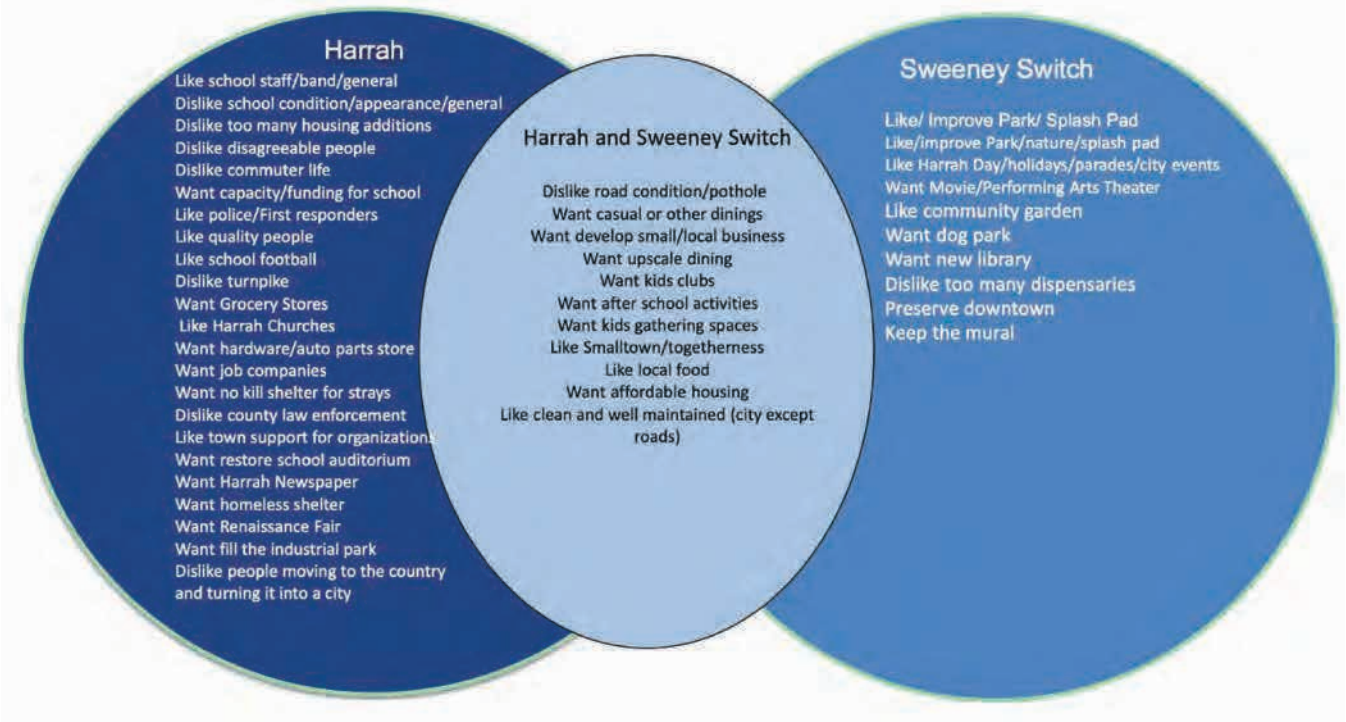
Community responses for what they were "Proud" about related to community activities and the schools.

"Vision"

Community responses for what they envisioned in Sweeney Switch related to community buildings and new businesses.

Harrah Days Venn Diagram

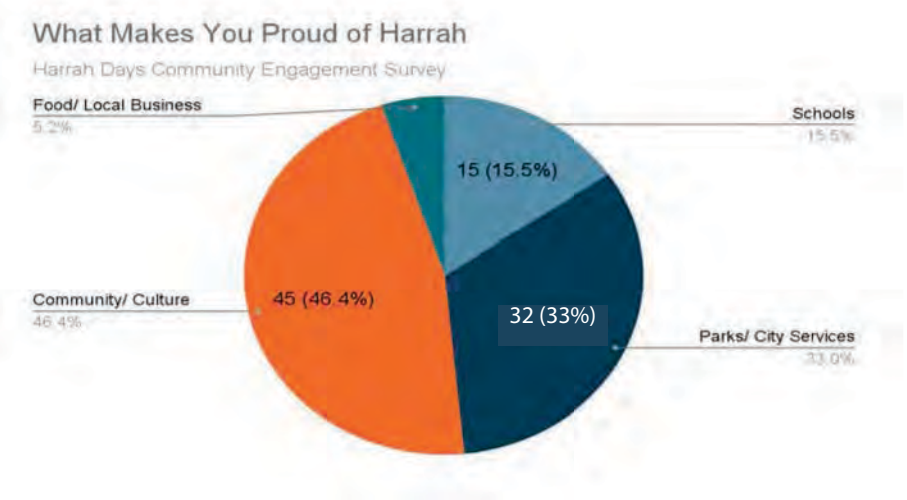
We arranged the comments collected during Harrah Days. The comments on the left were directed toward Harrah in general, and the comments on the right are specific to Sweeney Switch. Comments that apply to both appear in the overlap area.



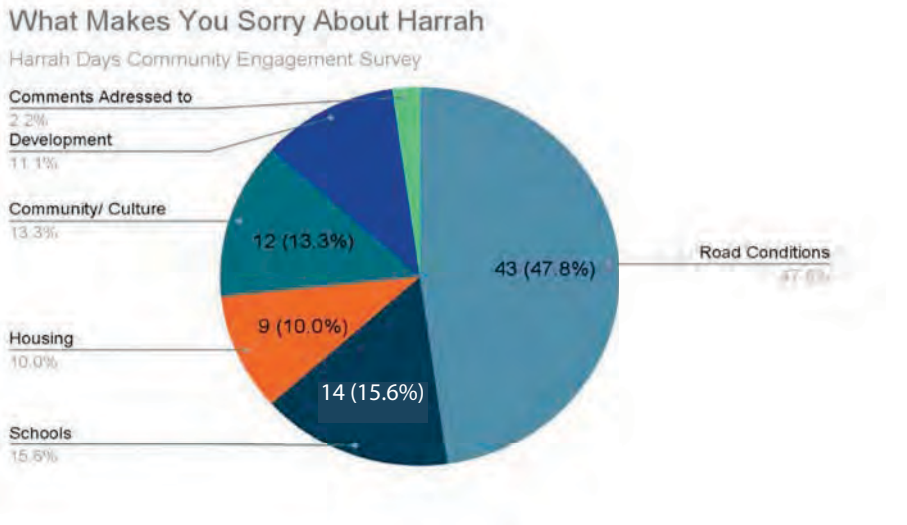
Sweeney Switch Comments

The community feedback was compiled from the previous Venn Diagram that applied to the Sweeney Switch District in Harrah. Using this information the team was able to focus on the key feedback that the community wanted to see in their downtown.

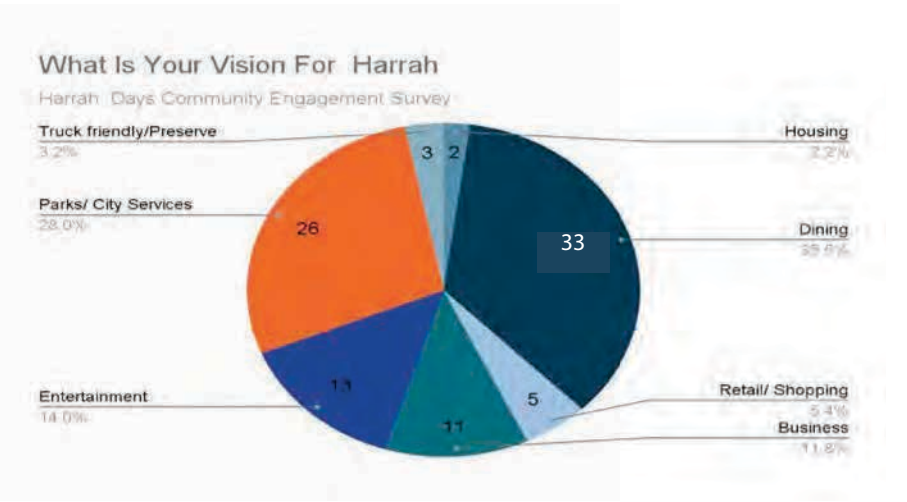
Some interesting findings were 46.4% percent of the community are "Proud" of the sense of community/culture in Harrah and that only 5.2% are "Proud" of the food/local business.



The community overwhelmingly agreed by 47.8% that road conditions made them "Sorry" about their community.



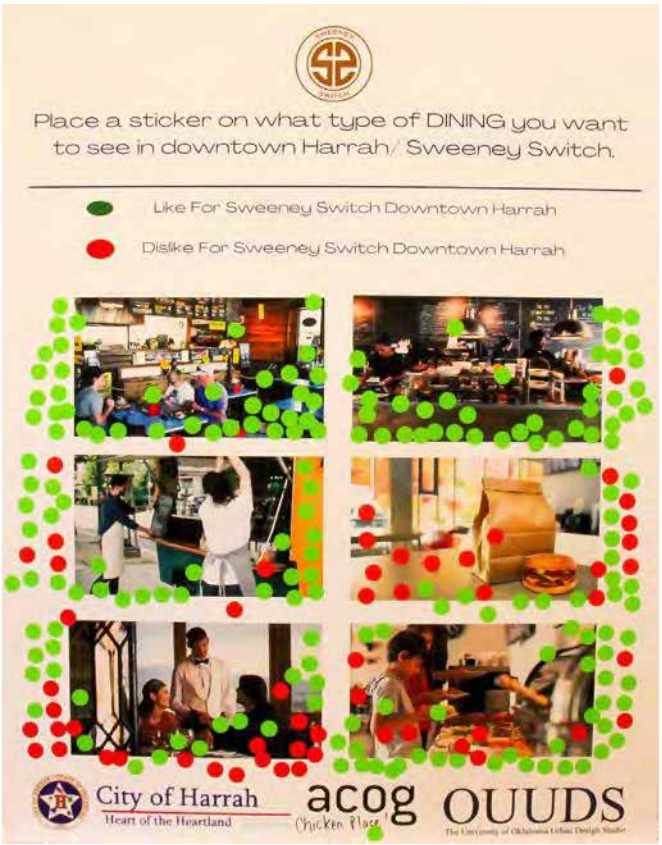
The vision that the community wants for the future of Sweeney Switch includes more dining options, parks/ city services, and business.



Christmas in the Park

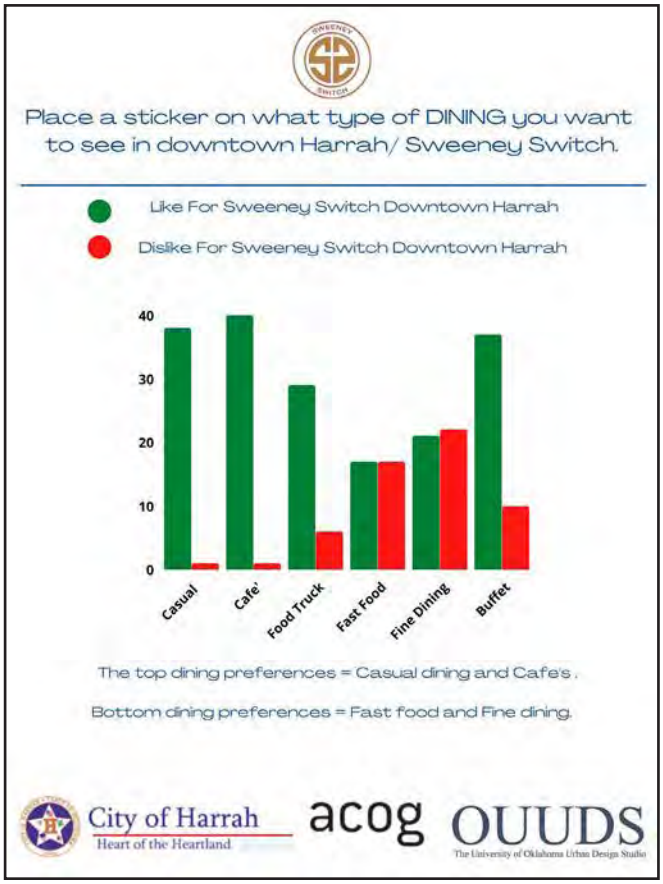
During Harrah's Christmas in the Park celebration the team conducted visual preference surveys for feedback in key areas.

Visual preference surveys consisted of a dining preference board, entertainment preference board, building facade and streetscaping board, and what the community thinks of Harrah in a few words. The community members indicated likes and dislikes on each survey. These surveys guided the design phase of Sweeney Switch.



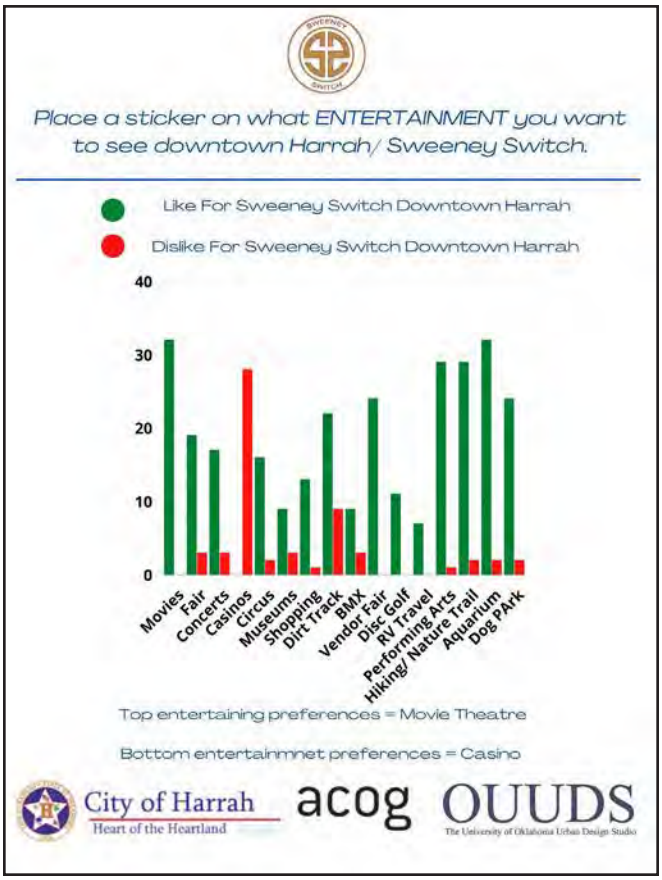
Dining Preference Survey

During Harrah Days, many residents expressed their desire for upscale dining through a dining preference board that asked what types of dining experiences they would like to see in Harrah. The options displayed were: casual dining, food trucks, fine dining, cafes, fast food, and buffets. The survey found that a majority of the community actually prefers a more casual dining experience over an upscale one.



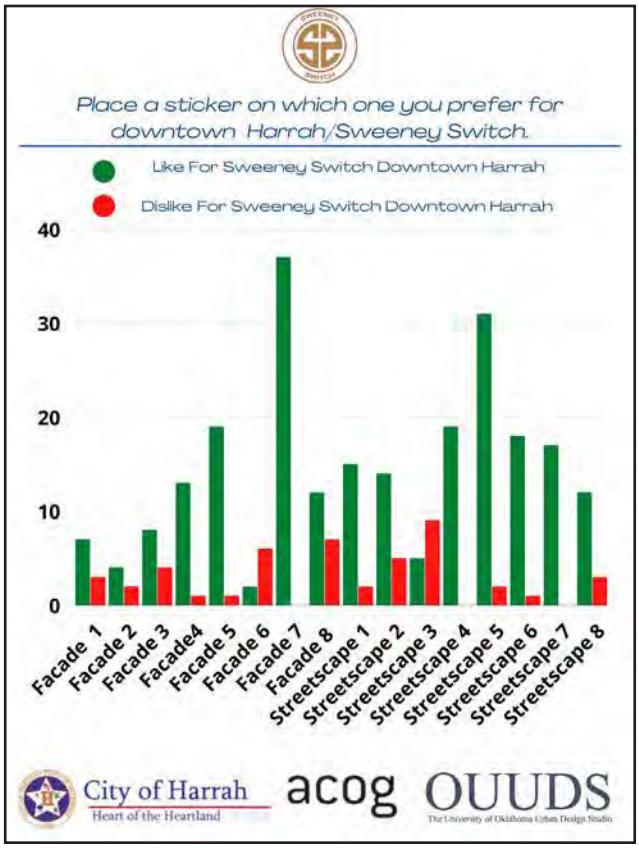
Entertainment Preference Survey

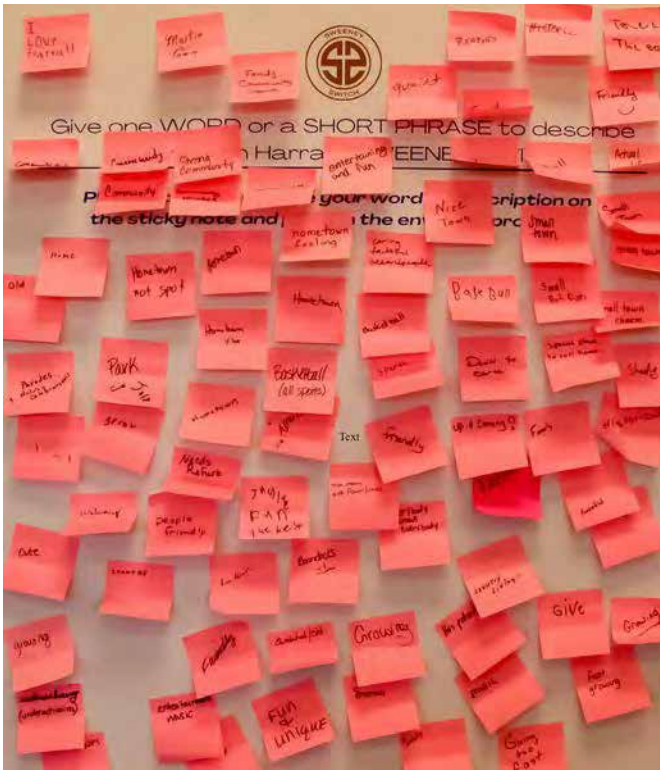
An entertainment survey showed that a movie theatre and aquarium were popular choices. Casino entertainment was notably unpopular.



Facade and Streetscaping Preference Survey

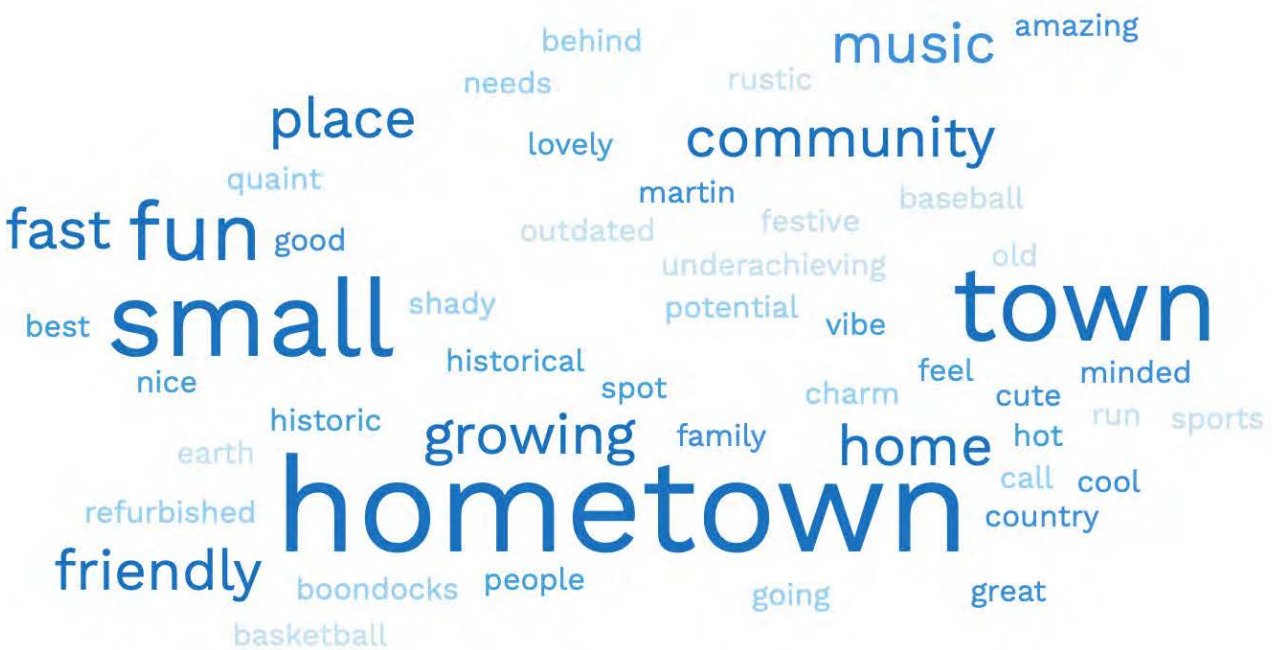
A facade and streetscape preference survey showed that community preferred traditional main street style buildings and a streetscape featuring street cafes with trees and other greenery.





Describe Harrah Survey

We asked the community to write a word or short phrase describing either Harrah or the Sweeney Switch district. The feedback was positive and consistent with the small town feeling found in other results. The word cloud displays the results. The most-mentioned words and concepts are displayed largest. By using a word cloud to depict the community feedback from Christmas in the Park we have a better visualization of what Harrah thinks of its own community. The top words from Christmas in the Park were; hometown, small, town, fun, growing, friendly, fast, community, music, and place. These positive and hopeful responses give a glimpse into the hopeful future of the Sweeney Switch district.



Tactical Urbanism

On St. Patrick's Day the Sweeney Switch district hosted a tactical urbanism event that simulated many of the design proposals made by stakeholders and the design team.

St. Patrick's Day

On March 17, 2022, Sweeney Switch hosted the First Annual St Patrick's Day Celebration. The event was organized by local businesses, community garden volunteers, high-school students, vendors, and the City of Harrah. They blocked off Main Street and Tim Holt Drive to create a plaza. The St. Patrick's Day celebration set up was a perfect example of how to provide a temporary public space. Picnic tables, hay seating, food trucks and a portable stage demonstrated the community's need for a more permanent plaza. During this community engagement event, the design team also shared their designs for Sweeney Switch. The designs featured a permanent plaza, as well as, downtown entrance gateways, on-street parking, new streetscaping for Church Avenue and Main Street. The designs also featured a berm and trail along the creek. A covered pedestrian bridge replaces the obsolete and deficient road bridge on Tim Holt Drive.

The Urban Design Studio team at the St. Patrick's Day celebration.

The community enjoying the temporary plaza for St. Patrick's Day.

Preliminary Design Studies

Multiple options were explored by stakeholders and urban designers to address the wants and needs identified during community engagement.

Sketching and Modeling Scenarios

The urban designers and stakeholders generated a variety of preliminary design site plans for Sweeney Switch. Option A shows improvements to parking on Church Avenue, a pedestrian bridge on Tim Holt Drive, a plaza, new development sites, and a walking trail that would coincide with the berm running along the creek. Option B took into consideration existing buildings, showed areas for new development, changes to parking, and a walking trail next to the creek. Option C had many of the same elements included in the other designs but has a connection from the trail near the creek to Main Street with development surrounding the connection. Option D included bump-outs along Church Avenue, courtyard housing, and areas for new development. These options helped spur stakeholder conversations at the design workshop on March 5, 2022.

Site Plan - Option A

Site Plan - Option B

Site Plan - Option C

Site Plan - Option D

Stakeholder Workshop

During its monthly meeting, stakeholders were broken into four groups to create their own site plans for Sweeney Switch. Once the groups finished brainstorming, they presented their ideas to each other. The first group identified vacant properties in the district and suggested future retail they would like to see in Sweeney Switch, such as a coffee shop, ice cream parlor, mercantile store, and multiple restaurants. The second group focused on streetscaping along Church Avenue with bump-outs, lighting, traffic calming, and a food truck park. The third group identified future development sites, district signage, and creekscaping. The fourth group looked at the different types of sites in the Sweeney Switch district such as community spaces, businesses, historical buildings, services, city-owned sites, parking, and residences. During this exercise, the use of back-in angled parking along Church Avenue was also suggested by a stakeholder. This exercise was useful to the urban design team in considering ideas that the community desired. The stakeholder site plans and the options created by the design team were combined to produce a synthesis of all of the ideas presented.

Group 1 - Stakeholder Site Plan

Group 2 - Stakeholder Site Plan

Group 3 - Stakeholder Site Plan

Group 4 - Stakeholder Site Plan

Community Feedback

Conceptual Design - Plaza

Approval: 16 Yes/ 1 No

Citizen Comments:
- Plaza -Not too modern looking, keep it rustic looking
- Like the bridge
- Like the welcome sign

Design Suggestions:
- Design plaza to fit a more rustic style
- Redevelopment of abandoned buildings
- Sweets shop in the old Blacksmith building
- Playground area next to Blacksmith building
- Pizza shop in old church

Conceptual Designs for the Plaza in Sweeney Switch

Conceptual Design - Re-purposed Buildings

Approval: 19 Yes/ 0 No

Citizen Comments:
- Make empty buildings a kid's museum
- Connecting back businesses to community garden
- Beautify backs of buildings

Design Suggestions:
- Incorporating art into coffee shop design
- Design walking trail connectivity
- Show mural design options for buildings

Conceptual Designs for the VFW building along Church Avenue

Conceptual Design - Church Avenue

Approval: 9 Yes/ 0 No

Citizen Comments:
- No apartments
- Keep the country vibes aesthetic
- Signage is key
- Flow and parking are key

Design Suggestions:
- Focus on Church, Tim Holt, and Main Street
- Mixed use infill redevelopment
- Will follow design guidelines created with community feedback

Conceptual Designs for building height along Church Avenue

URBAN RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

The team collected data and conducted field analysis to draw conclusions about the urban environment of Harrah.

> Topography & Drainage
> Demographics
> Geographic Analysis
> Urban X-Rays
> Downtown Case Studies
> Streetscape Case Studies
> Design Precedence & Inspiration

Topography and Drainage

The Sweeney Switch District is significantly situated in the floodplain designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Floodplain Location

The topography around Harrah consists of low rolling hills and level plains. Sweeney Switch is bounded by the North Canadian River to the north and east of the site. An unnamed creek runs along the south edge of downtown flowing from the southwest to the northeast before crossing Church Avenue and turning south into Heritage Park. The riverbank is at 1170 feet above mean sea level (MSL), and downtown Harrah is approximately twenty feet higher. The area east of Church Avenue is in the regulatory 100-year floodplain designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), as is a significant portion of the land south of Main Street[1]. Being included in the regulatory floodplain means that there is a one-percent chance of the property flooding each year and a 26% chance of it flooding over the course of a 30-year mortgage. According to the Flood Insurance Study completed in 1978 and revised in 2009, two large floods occurred on the North Canadian River in 1941 and 1948. No recent floods have been near the magnitude of these inundations[2]. Currently, there are no significant flood control measures in or near Harrah.

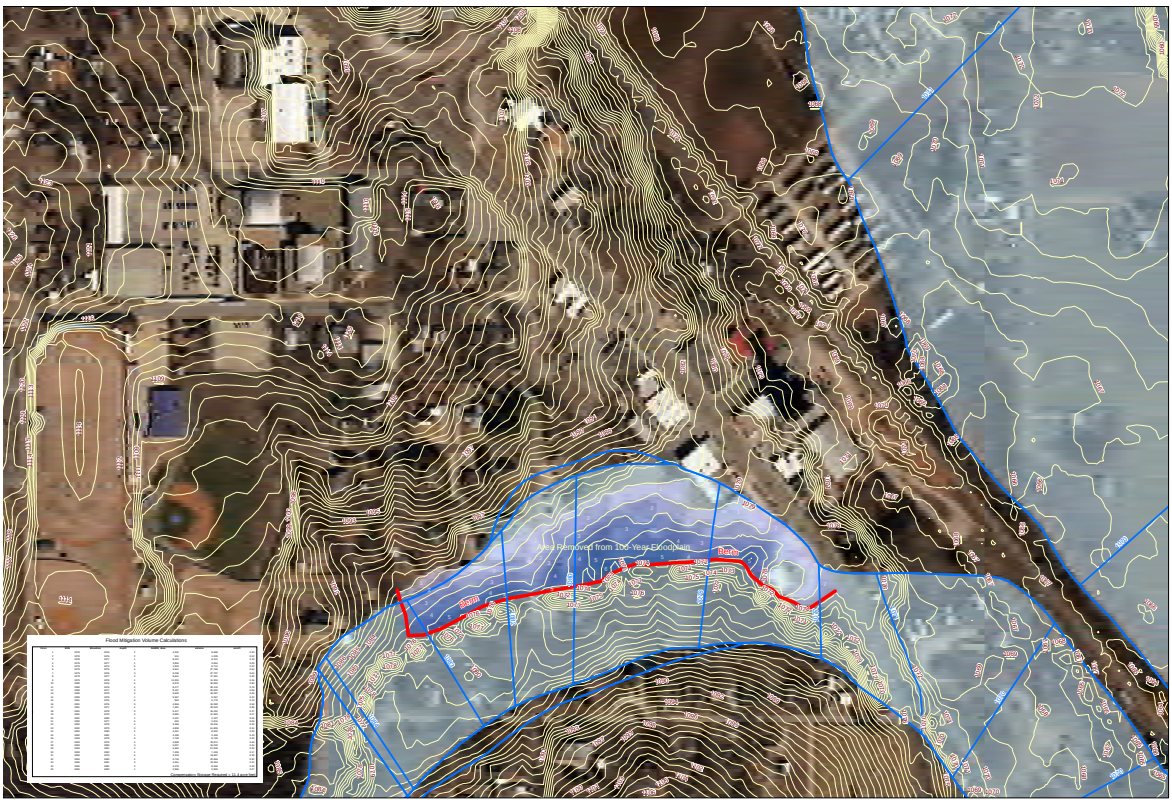
Impact of Floodplain on Development

Since some properties in Sweeney Switch are subject to flooding, a permit is required for construction in the floodplain. FEMA standards use the concept of encroachment, and development in the floodplain must not increase the flood hazard on other properties. Generally, this means you cannot dam or divert water flow or diminish the flood storage capacity on a property in such a way to increase flood levels elsewhere.
The FEMA requirements allow the construction of residential and non-residential structures with floor levels above the base flood elevation (BFE.) According to the FIRM map and the Flood Insurance Study, the properties in downtown Harrah are located between a BFE of 1077' and 1083' MSL. Floors can be supported on fill, walls, or piers if they do not create an encroachment, and flood water can flow through the site and under or around the structure. Non-residential structures can alternatively use flood-proofing instead of elevated floor levels. This means that walls must be watertight at least one foot above the BFE, structural components must resist hydrostatic and hydrodynamic loads, and utilities are protected from flood damage[3].

Options to Modify Floodplain

Removing the downtown properties in the regulatory floodplain would eliminate the need for floodplain permits, reduce the burden of flood-proofing the structures on the properties, and make the properties more desirable for development. Flood control will also exempt the properties from the National Flood Insurance Program, saving the owners thousands of dollars in insurance premiums.

Flood control to remove the properties from the floodplain would require a two-pronged approach. First, a berm or flood wall might be constructed on the north side of the creek running approximately 1,350' feet from Church Avenue to the corner of Elm Street and First Street. Second, a retention basin for compensatory flood storage might be constructed upstream to make up for the volume removed by the berm.



Sweeney Switch Downtown Harrah Flood Mitigation 0 100 200 300 400 Feet

A detailed topography survey does not exist for downtown Harrah, so an approximation was constructed using a digital elevation model from the United States Geologic Survey (USGS.) Preliminary calculations estimate that the retention basin A parcel of land owned by the Marshall family west of Sweeney Switch would be ideal in size and configuration for the basin. The Harrah Public School District also owns a large parcel further upstream that would also be suitable, but it would probably require greater excavation and grading. Would require approximately 11.4 acre feet of storage capacity. The City of Harrah would need to purchase properties or obtain an easement to proceed with the retention basin.

Additional easements may also be necessary for the berm or flood wall. These findings are preliminary to allow for the creation of conceptual design work. Detailed surveys, civil engineering, and regulatory approval must be done before proceeding with any construction, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Notes

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency. Flood Insurance Rate Map. Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. Panel 360 of 370. Map Number 40109C0360H. Revised December 18, 2009.

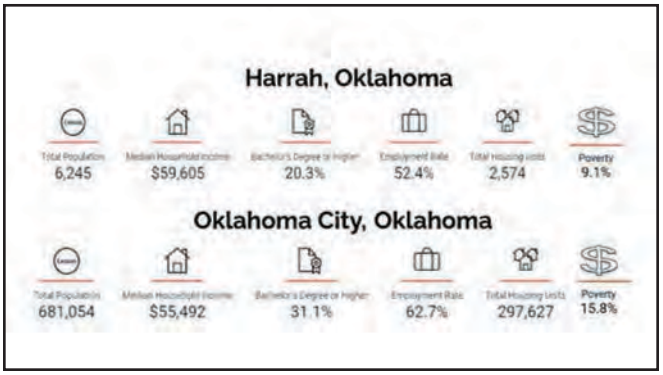
2. Federal Emergency Management Agency. Flood Insurance Study Number 40109CV001A. Oklahoma County, Oklahoma and Incorporated Areas. City of Harrah Community Number 400140. Volume 1 of 8. Page 39. Revised December 18, 2009.

3. Federal Emergency Management Agency. National Flood Insurance Program. Floodplain Management Requirements: A Study Guide and Desk Reference for Local Officials. FEMA 480. Unit 5: The NFIP Floodplain Management Requirements. February 2005.

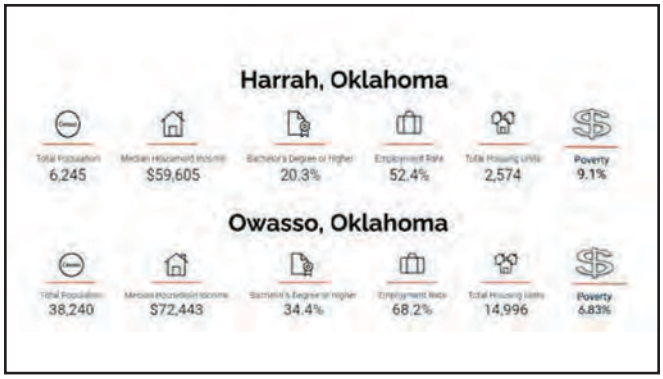
Demographics & Owasso Preview

Does Owasso offer a preview of Harrah's demographic future?

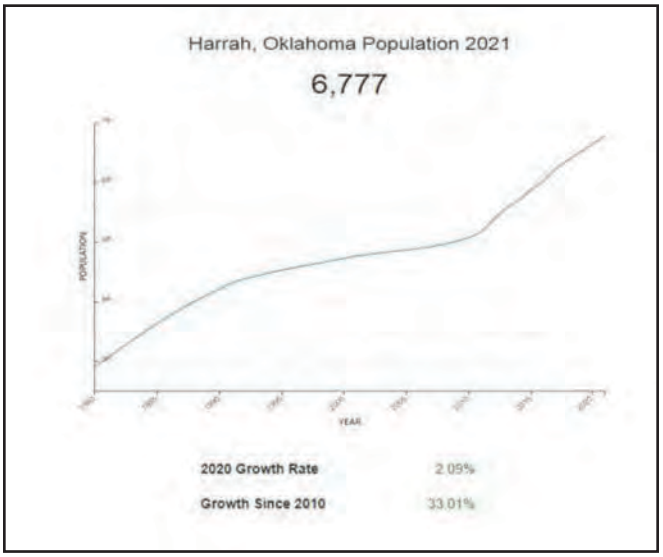
During one of the community engagement events, a resident of Harrah made a comparison to Owasso. Since 2010 Owasso has grown 29% and its growth rate is less than 1% in 2020. Harrah has a growth rate of 33% since 2010 with a growth rate of 2.1% in 2020. Both Harrah and Owasso have a small downtown and have experienced growth due to similar circumstances. Owasso had a comparable population 30 years ago when U.S. Highway 169 was built to access Tulsa. Owasso also has a similar employment dynamic with the Tulsa International Airport a 20 minute drive away just as Harrah is a 20 minute drive to Tinker Air Force Base. Owasso has tried to build up an authentic downtown area after its population boom with limited success. Harrah can take steps to create a thriving urban core now before dramatic population change occurs.



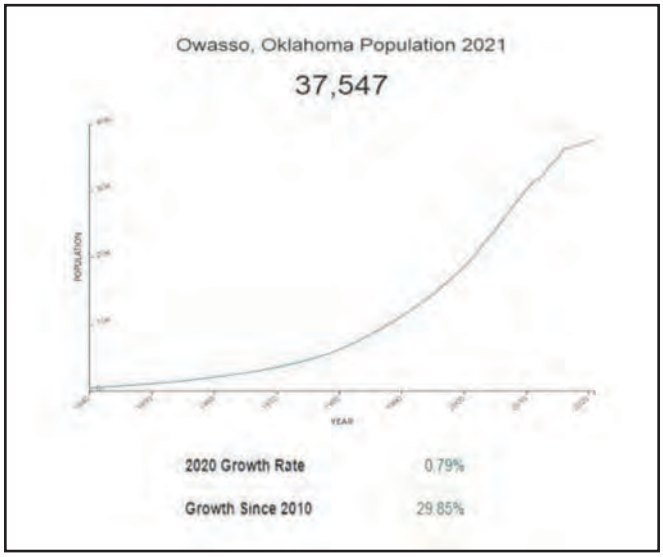
Compared to Oklahoma City, Harrah has a higher median income and lower college-educated population. Source: https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=1600000US4032750



Compared to Harrah, Owasso has a higher level of median income and population. Source: https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=1600000US4032750

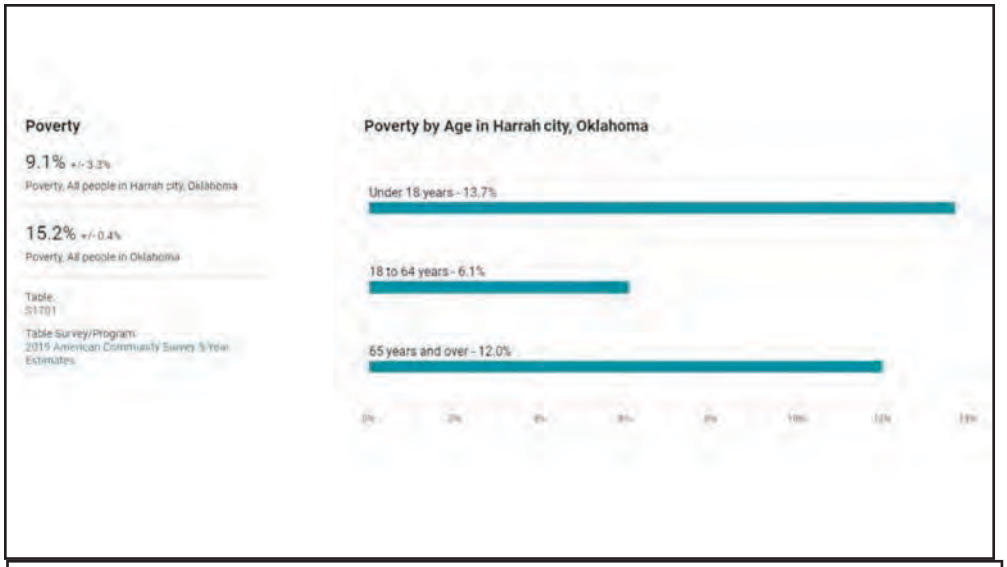


Harrah's population growth in 2010 is similar to Owasso's in 1980. Source: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/harrah-ok-population

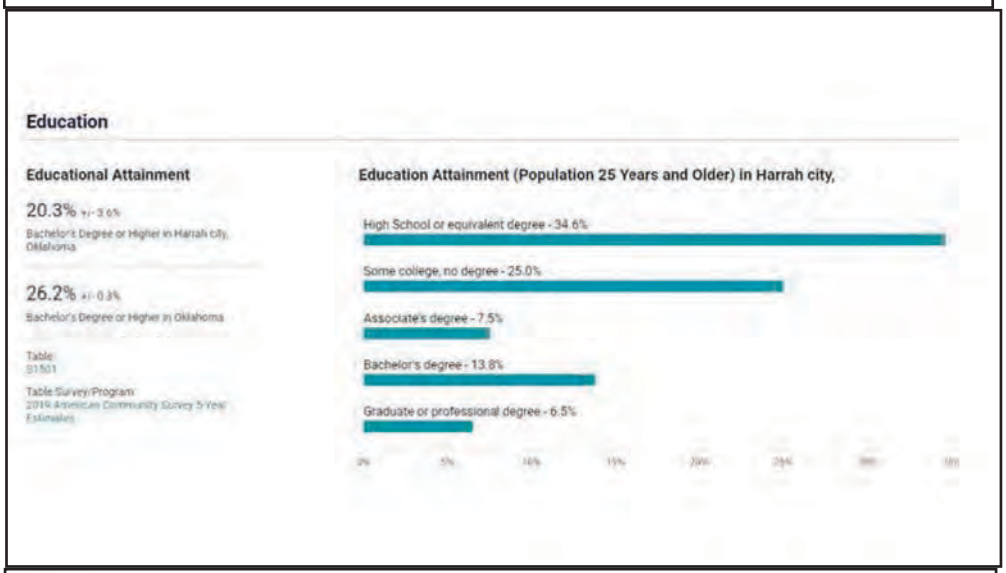


Owasso's population growth in 1980 is similar to the population growth Harrah is experiencing currently.
Source: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/owasso-ok-population

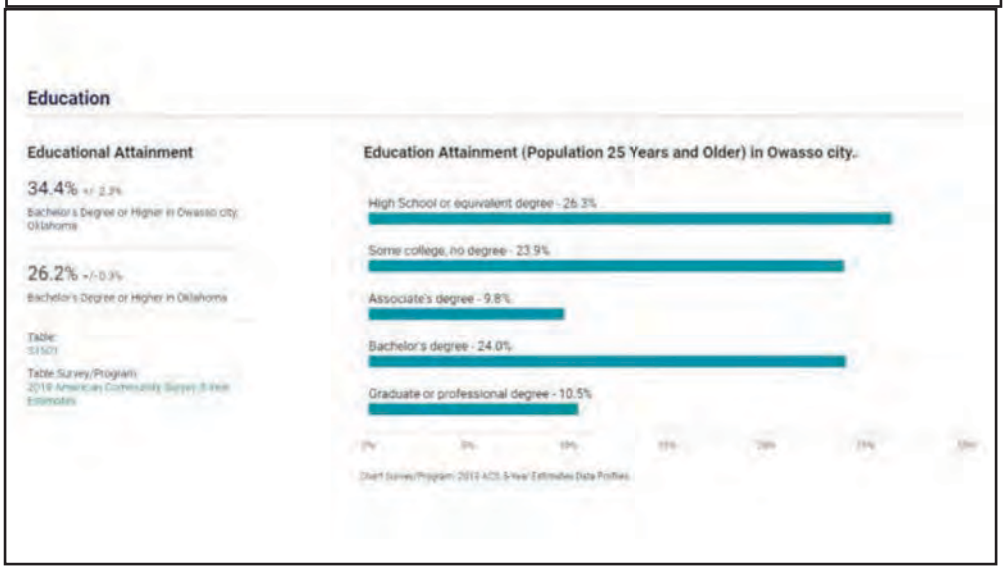
Poverty rate for Harrah shows that the youth and older adults are the majority of people living in poverty.
Source: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/harrah-ok



Lower educational attainment in Harrah has had little impact on employment and median income.
Source: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/harrah-ok



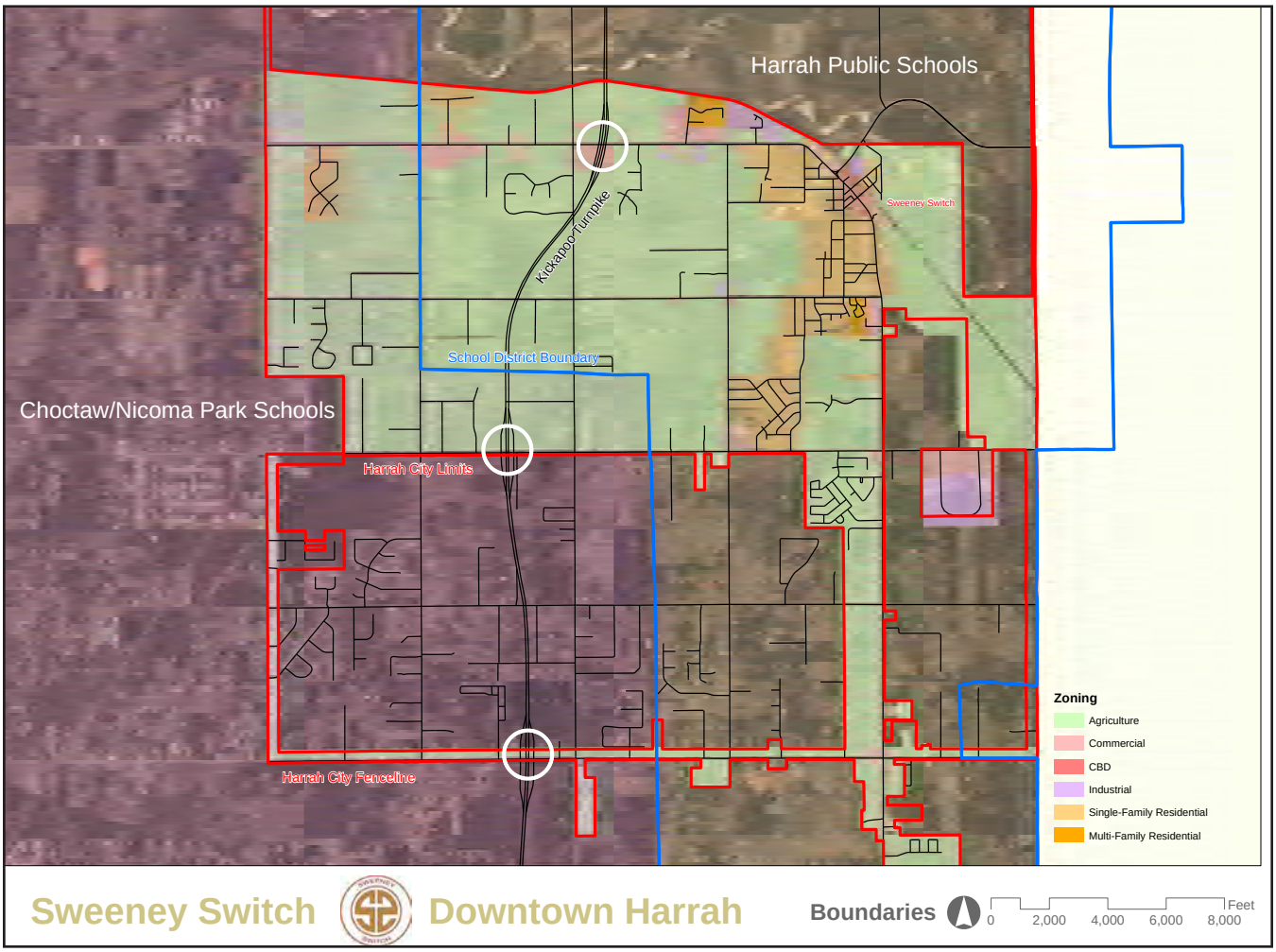
The educational attainment of Owasso shows that both cities have a similar educational profile.
Source: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/owasso-ok



Geographic Analysis

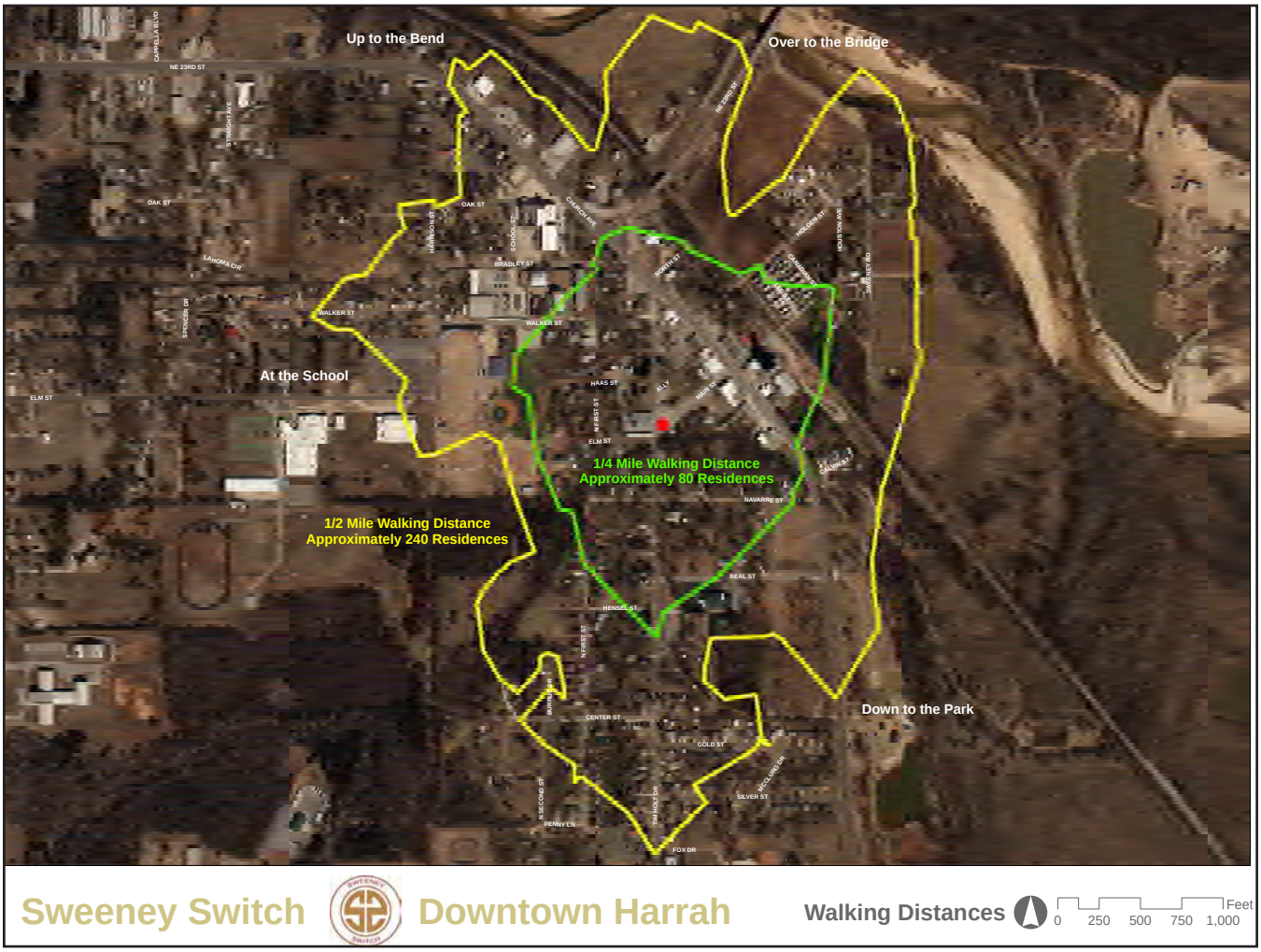
Boundaries

The boundaries of the City of Harrah overlap both Harrah Public Schools and Choctaw/Nicoma Park Schools. These boundaries could pose a problem if a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district is proposed at one of the Kickapoo Turnpike exits. The two southern Kickapoo Turnpike exits are least suitable since they are located in Choctaw/Nicoma Park Schools district. The northern exit would be most suitable.



Walking Distances

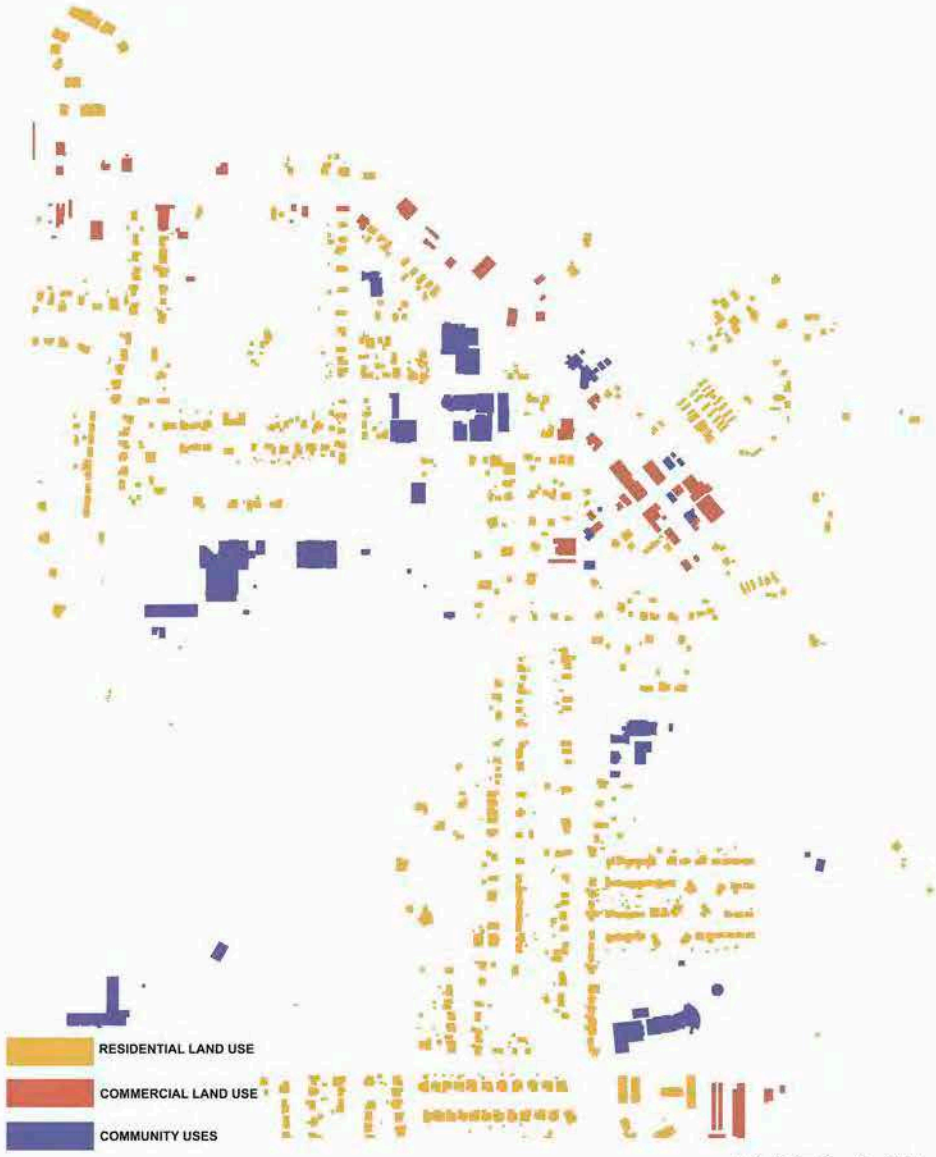
The average walking distances from parking vary in the Sweeney Switch district. With both 1/4 mile averaging at a 5 minute walk and 1/2 mile averaging at a 10 minute walk. These distance times are achievable for the average person.



Urban X-Rays

LAND USE

The land use in Harrah is defined by three types; residential, commercial, and community uses.



OUUDS
The University of Oklahoma Urban Design Studio

SWEENEY SWITCH

View looking south of Church Avenue.

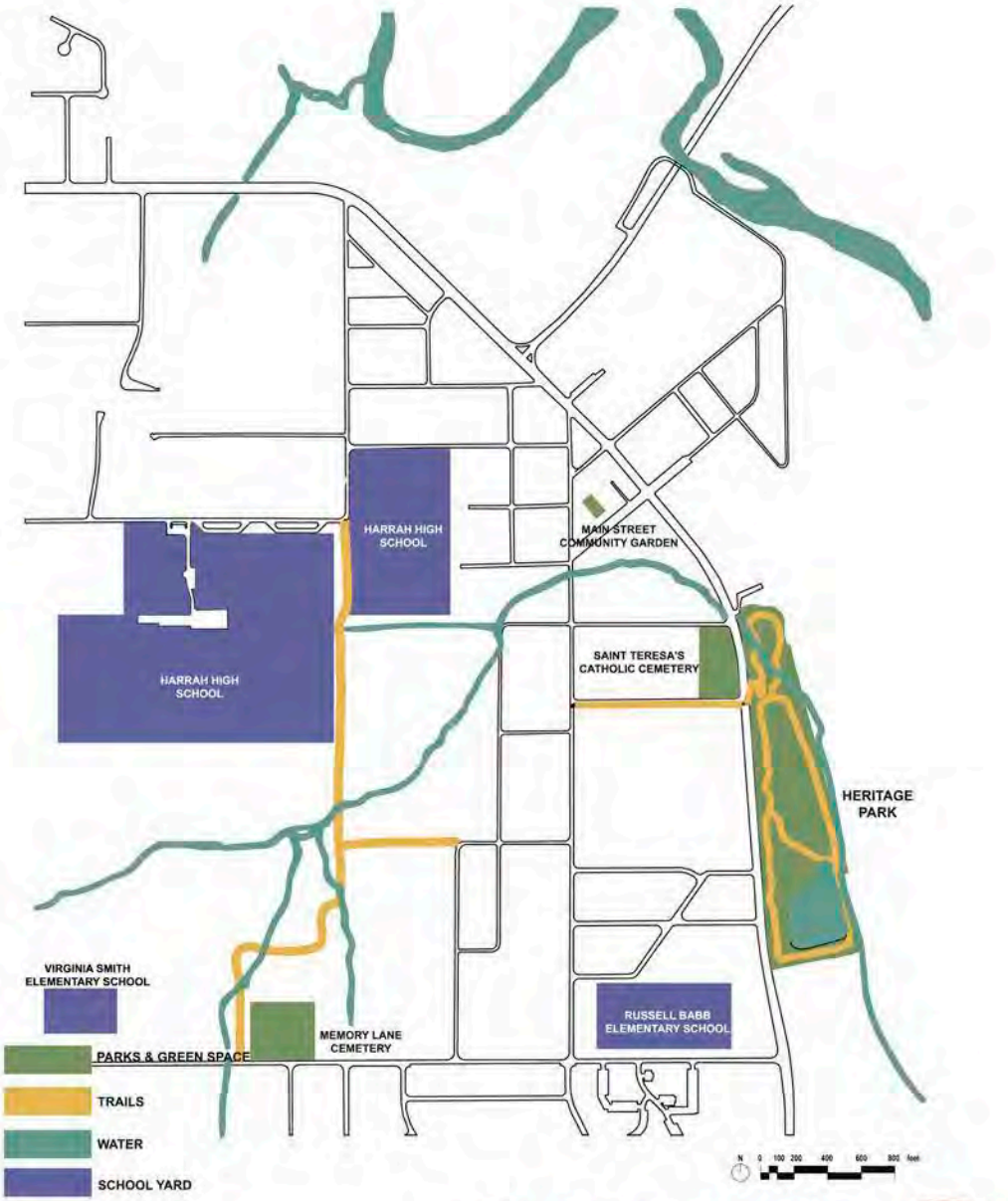
A residence located on Tim Holt Drive.

Front view of the old blacksmith building facing Tim Holt Drive.

Side view of the old blacksmith building located on Main Street.

PARKS AND GREEN SPACE

Harrah has many parks and green spaces in the project area. These spaces include parks, green spaces, trails, water, and school yards.



OUUDS

The University of Oklahoma Urban Design Studio

SWEENEY SWITCH

Community enjoying Harrah Day's at Heritage Park.

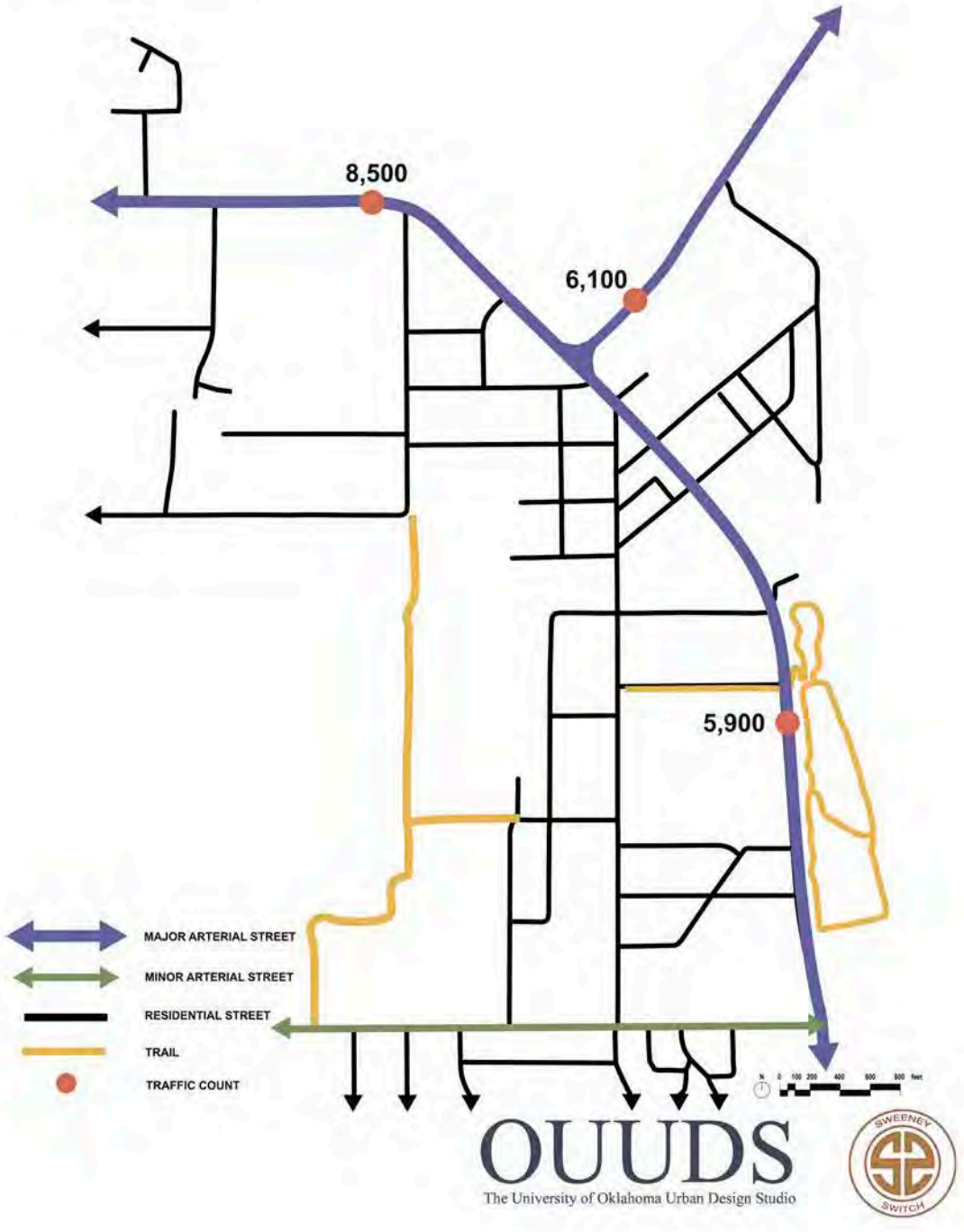
View of Community Garden located on Main Street.

Temporary pop-up market held during Christmas at the Park.

View of main trail that runs between Harrah High School to NE 10th Street.

CONNECTIVITY

In Harrah, Church Avenue is the major arterial street with Northeast 10th Street being a minor arterial street. These are some of the main corridors for traffic.



Wildlife sighting on the current trail system.

View of Church Avenue facing north.

View of Main Street looking East towards the railroad tracks.

Way-finding signage directing people towards the Community Garden located on Main Street.

LEGIBILITY ANALYSIS

A Legibility Analysis helps people understand the different landmarks, districts, nodes, paths, and edges in a community.

Harrah's beer garden located on Main Street.

Outdoor eating space in the courtyard of the Lumber Shack.

Tactical Urbanism on Main Street during St. Patrick's Day.

The grain elevator in Harrah is a prominent landmark of the Sweeney Switch district.

Downtown Case Studies

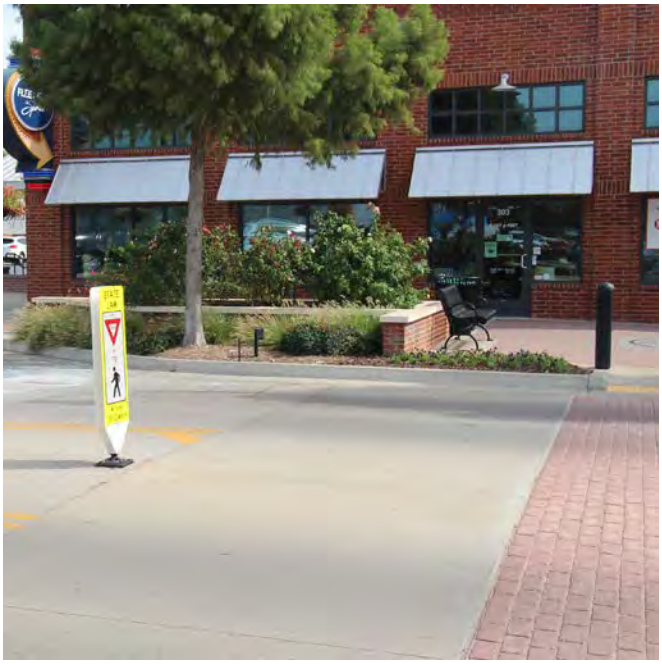
When looking for similar precedents the team researched peer communities.

Rose District - Broken Arrow

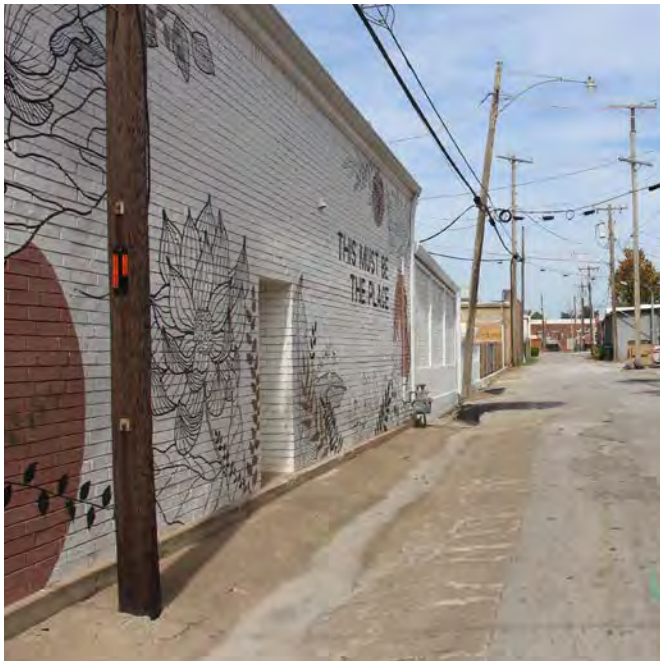
Like many traditional downtowns, Broken Arrow's downtown had been neglected for many decades. However, about 15 years ago redevelopment began. Rather than demolishing the district and starting new, Broken Arrow revitalized the old buildings and encouraged new development to preserve its traditional character. The Rose District has become an exemplar for traditional walkability, a pleasant streetscape, and traffic calming. The Rose District offers 770 parking stalls (including some EV charging stations). Of those, 511 are on-street parking which allows people to park close to shops and avoid unappealing huge parking lots.

Key Findings:

- Walkable district with trees, outdoor seating, and outdoor dining
- Streetscaping that slows traffic and provides on-street parking
- Interesting art and murals
- Branding, logos, and an updated website



A crosswalk in the Rose District that has pedestrian crossing sensors and signage.



An attractive mural that will draw in people to visit the site.

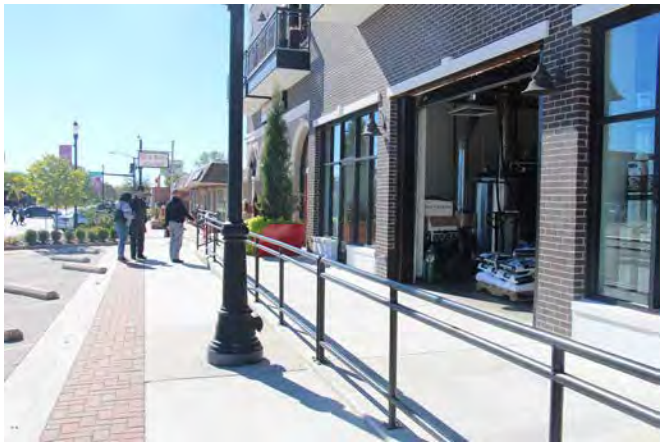
Redbud District - Owasso

Part of the challenge for Owasso is that only two buildings remain from its original downtown. Owasso tried to recreate a downtown in another location with mixed success. Noted points of interest were disjointed green spaces, single building projects that attempted to appear to be of different ages and developments, and how the streetscaping and walkability are hampered by very wide roads and high traffic speeds.

Key Findings:

- Poorly placed green spaces that are not inviting
- Inconsistent brick color facades and levels
- ADA compliant crosswalk, but the signal timing was too fast to cross safely
- Wide Main Street which encourages speeding
- Cell phone tower was an eye sore

Green space that looks unused.



A two tiered sidewalk that is similar to Harrah's.

Red River, New Mexico

Red River, New Mexico is a family-oriented tourist city that did not forbid franchise companies from establishing locations in the city. Instead, they used design requirements to enforce maintaining the desired character of the city.

Key Findings:

- Designed guidelines via amendments
- The design preservation of main street character
- Continue the character with existing construction, new construction, and modifications

New development in Red River, New Mexico. This new design is complementary with the existing facade style. Source: Google Earth

Round Top, Texas

Round Top, Texas is a quirky community located between Austin and Houston, Texas. This unique community plays off of re-purposed salvaged items in various buildings and public spaces. This design opportunity is similar to what the community of Harrah identified in visual preference surveys for Sweeney Switch.

Key Findings:

- Small town feeling by using salvaged items
- Nicely designed public spaces
- Branding of unique community

Green Space located in Round Top, Texas.
Source: https://www.austinmonthly.com/AM/September-2017/What-to-Do-in-Round-Top-Texas

A quirky cafe that has a fun and inviting atmosphere.
Source: https://www.atlantamagazine.com/homeandgarden/at-round-top-atlantans-discover-texass-mammoth-antiques-week/

Fredericksburg, Texas

Fredericksburg, Texas is located to the west of Austin, Texas. Being the perfect distance for a day trip from Austin this picturesque community is known for its German heritage. The facades of the downtown area of Fredericksburg follow a similar facade design which helps keep the visual cohesion of the town.

Key Findings:

- Development follows a similar facade style
- Fully developed lots
- Enjoyable streetscaping and sidewalks

Left: A landmark building located in the Fredericksburg city center. Source: https://truewestmagazine.com/article/fredericksburg-texas/

Above: View of street in Fredericksburg that shows multiple buildings following similar facade guidelines.
Source: https://truewestmagazine.com/article/fredericksburg-texas/

Street Design Case Studies

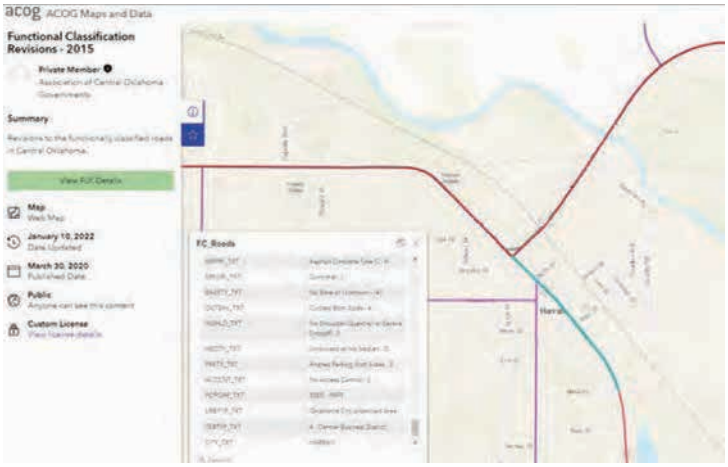
The need to modify state highway designs led to case studies found in nearby towns.

According to the functional classification of Church Avenue (SH-270) by the regional transportation planning produced by ACOG, angled parking is permitted on both sides.

Source: https://acog-maps-and-data-acog.hub.arcgis.com

Angled Parking on State Highways

Members of the stakeholder committee repeatedly expressed concern over parking needs in Sweeney Switch. The design team proposed angled parking along Church Avenue, but preliminary feedback suggested it might be difficult because Church Avenue is also Oklahoma State Highway 270. Other cities were identified that currently utilize angled parking on state highways for comparison. This information was compiled for the stakeholders of Sweeney Switch to share with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) if needed.



The City of Meeker has angled parking on both sides of U.S. Highway 62.

Approximate measurements of US-62:

- 80 ft Curb to Curb
- 90 ft Building Line to Building Line
- 2 - 15 ft Drive Lanes
- 1 - 16 ft Center Lane
- 2 - 17.5 ft Angled Parking Lanes

Meeker Main Street - Source; Google Earth

The City of Perkins has angled parking along both sides of U.S. Highway 177.

Approximate measurements of US-177:

- 70 ft Curb to Curb
- 90 ft Building Line to Building Line
- 2 x 16 ft Drive Lanes
- 2 x 17.5 ft Angled Parking Lanes

Perkins Main Street - Source: Google Earth

The City of Chelsea has angled parking along Oklahoma State Highway 28.

Approximate measurements of SH-28:

- 70 ft Curb to Curb
- 110 ft Building Line to Building Line
- 2 x 14 ft Drive Lanes
- 2 x 14.5 ft Angled Parking Lanes

Chelsea Main Street - Source: Google Earth

Design Precedence and Inspiration

When looking for inspiration for the design of the project, the students turned to multiple sources some being from personal experiences, local examples, and Internet sources like Pinterest. Pinterest is a visual, online platform used for curating images. This tool helped the team find inspirational examples to emulate and precedents to research further. The images collected included streetscaping, public spaces, and communities with similar districts.

Example of plaza design that engages citizens.
Source: https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/790422/autoridad-del-espacio-publico-la-oficina-publica-de-mexico-que-busca-redistribuir-la-experiencia-de-la-ciudad

Example of bench that could be used along the berm.
Source: https://www.firstinarchitecture.co.uk/landscaping-a-sloped-or-steep-site/

Example of outdoor restaurant similar to conceptual design of VFW building.
Source: https://www.aglobewelltravelled.com/2017/10/24/where-to-eat-good-food-in-cartagena/

Example of Bioswale which catches rainwater from the street.
Source: https://www.centralcoastlidi.org/landscape.php

Key Findings: Research & Engagement

1. **Planning for Turnpike:**
   The new Kickapoo Turnpike bisecting Harrah will induce development around its three exit ramps. Harrah should take a proactive approach to manage this growth. First, it should annex the land near the Reno Avenue and SE 29th Street ramps. Second, for a variety of reasons Harrah should direct growth to the NE 23rd Street / Highway 62 ramp. Highway 62 is a US Highway with a higher traffic count than the other two exits. It also connects downtown Harrah and downtown Choctaw directly to the turnpike. Lastly, the ramp is in the Harrah Public School District, while the other two ramps are in the Choctaw / Nicoma Park Public School District. The land along Highway 62 should be zoned for commercial and mixed used development. Land around the other two ramps should be zoned agricultural to discourage development. Finally, a tax increment finance (TIF) district should be created, including the ramp area, Highway 62, and downtown Harrah. Proceeds from the TIF should be largely directed into the improvements for Sweeney Switch and the public schools.

2. **Household Growth:**
   Harrah is a rapidly growing city with over 2,200 households. Less than 10 percent of households live within walking distance of downtown. The desire to make downtown a walkable district must acknowledge that without considerable effort to direct housing development downtown, most visitors will arrive by car. As a destination district, parking must be provided without destroying the downtown character.

3. **Parking Needs:**
   Public parking is needed to accommodate new growth. The Lumber Shack alone may generate the need for a minimum of 240 parking spaces per the Harrah Zoning Code. Main Street is wide enough to accommodate angled parking on both sides, while Church Avenue can accommodate angled parking on one side and parallel parking on the other.

4. **Connections to Parks and Schools:**
   Downtown Harrah should be connected to Heritage Park and the public-school campuses by expanding the growing trail system.

5. **Floodplain Removal:**
   Downtown lots and streets need to be removed from the 100-year regulatory floodplain through a combination of berms, flood walls, and compensatory storage.

6. **Slowing of Traffic:**
   The bridge on Tim Holt Drive is an opportunity to design a gateway to the district. To save funds and prevent downtown traffic from passing through residential areas, the new bridge could be designated solely for pedestrians and cyclists.

7. **Sweeney Switch Branding:**
   Develop an image and brand for the district.

8. **Updating Streetscaping:**
   Main Street and Church Avenue need updated and improved streetscaping, featuring parking, sidewalks, street furniture, and lighting.

9. **Architecture and Design:**
   Develop architectural design guidelines for rehabilitations and new buildings in the switch that complement the new streetscaping and define positive urban spaces. Emphasize the traditional, small-town character of Harrah. Provide grants for facade improvements and reuse of older buildings like the VFW Hall.

10. **Transform Harrah's Landmarks:**
    Strengthen landmarks in downtown. Transform the grain elevator to become a beacon by night and day. Build a new library, post office, firehouse, theater, and other civic anchors.

11. **Creation of Gateways:**
    Introduce gateway roundabouts on Church Avenue at each end of Downtown.

12. **Organization:**
    Nurture and grow the new Merchants' Association organization to attract and support local businesses, especially local food, and entertainment.

13. **Next Steps:**
    Expand municipal expertise by hiring a professional engineer, floodplain manager, and city planner.

RECOMMENDED BIG MOVES

Research and engagement resulted in 5 recommended "Big Moves" that are summarized here.

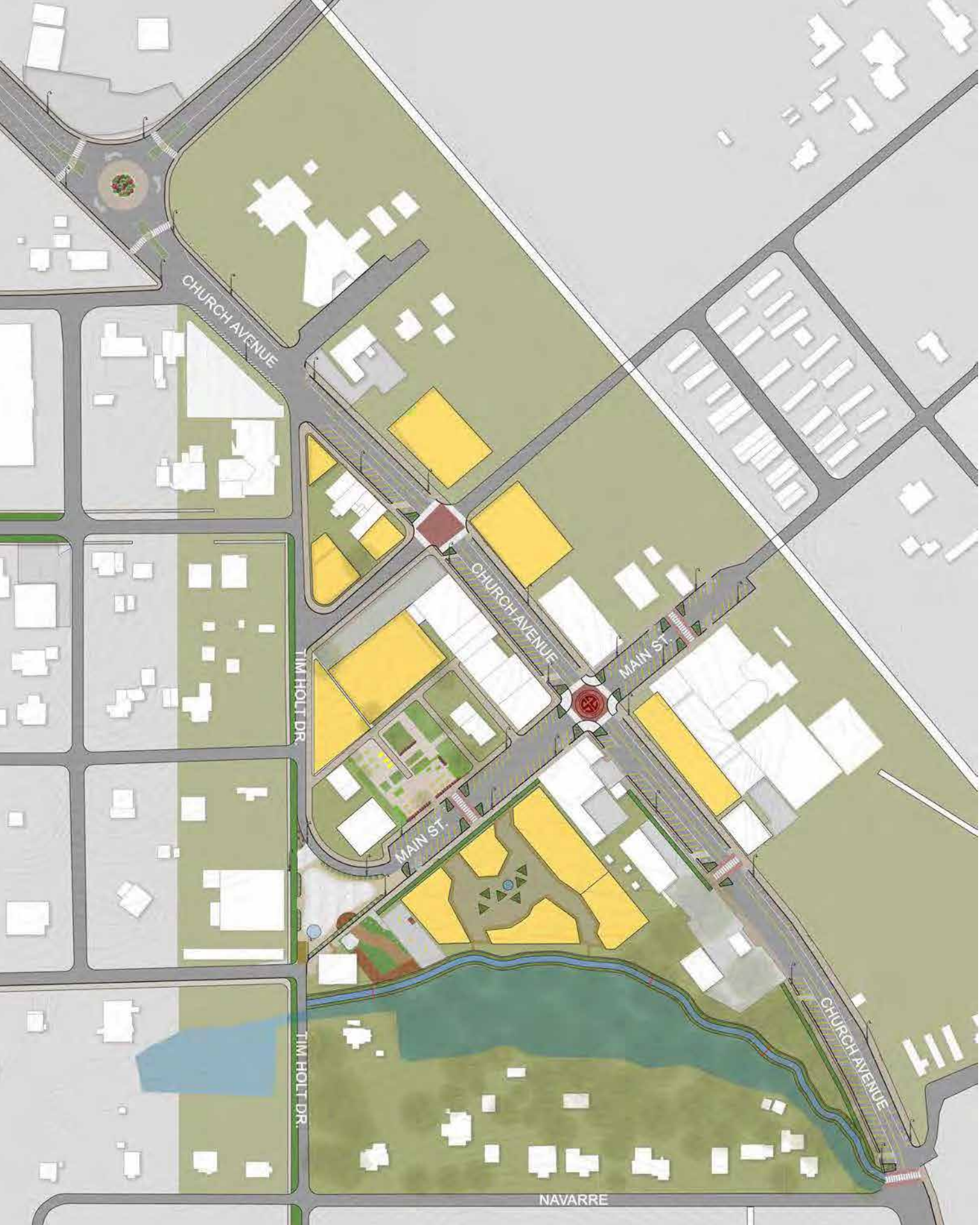

Remove Downtown from Floodplain


Implement a Parking Strategy


Improve Streetscapes


Connect and Complete Trails and Sidewalks


Encourage New Development

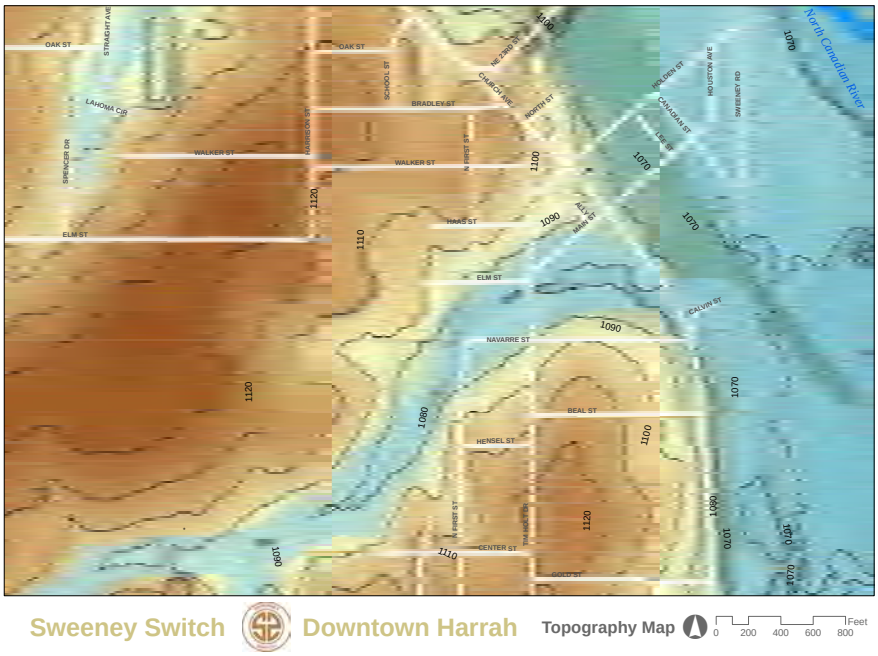

CHURCH AVENUE
CHURCH AVENUE
MAIN ST.
MAIN ST.
TIM HOLT DR.
TIM HOLT DR.
CHURCH AVENUE
NAVARRE

Remove Downtown from Floodplain

Removing the downtown properties from the regulatory floodplain will eliminate several issues the Sweeney Switch district currently faces. Improvements to properties would no longer need floodplain permits, reducing the burden of flood-proofing the structures and making the properties more desirable for development. Once flood mitigation is added to the district, it will also save the property owners thousands of dollars in insurance premiums. If done right, the flood mitigation can also become a unique feature and desirable asset not found in neighboring communities.

Topography

Topography map of site in Sweeney Switch. The orange shows higher ground verses the blue illustrates lower ground in the 100-year floodplain.



Berm

A five-foot high berm or flood wall constructed on the north side of the creek running from Church Avenue to the corner of Elm Street and First Street will remove Main Street and the land south of the street from the regulatory floodplain. The surface drain channel from Main Street and the buried pipe along Tim Holt Drive should continue to drain the area and will penetrate the berm. The penetrations will include back flow preventer's to keep flood waters from inundating the protected area. The flood mitigation improvements should be integrated into its surroundings with an 8' feet wide raised walkway connecting to the existing trails.

Conceptual design of the berm with walkway

Current view of the creek.

Compensatory Storage

The addition of the berm will remove eleven to twelve acre-feet of volume from the floodplain. This volume must be subtracted from adjacent areas to provide the needed floodwater capacity along the creek. This compensatory storage can take a variety of forms. Several properties may be suitable for adding storage capacity, including land on the south side of the creek or upstream. Both the berm and compensatory flood storage must be done concurrently. Without both the floodplain cannot be reduced in the downtown area.

Along the creek, rain gardens may be designed with weirs at every 2' feet elevation. Wetlands improve water quality, erosion control, flood abatement, recreation and aesthetic appeal. The trail along the berm can be designed to extend around the compensatory storage connecting with the existing trail on the school property, and creating a loop. These additions will add to the overall impact of Sweeney Switch and become an asset. These are conceptual recommendations that must be confirmed by a detailed surveying and engineering analysis of the area.

Flood mitigation concept for Sweeney Switch with each component listed.

QUICK MOVE

Educate Public on the Floodplain

When discussing removing the downtown from the floodplain a simple task would be to educate the population of Harrah about the benefits of this action.

Examples of different ways to educate would be the following:

- Have an open hearing showing the positives
- Show design concepts of the area
- Invite experts to the forum

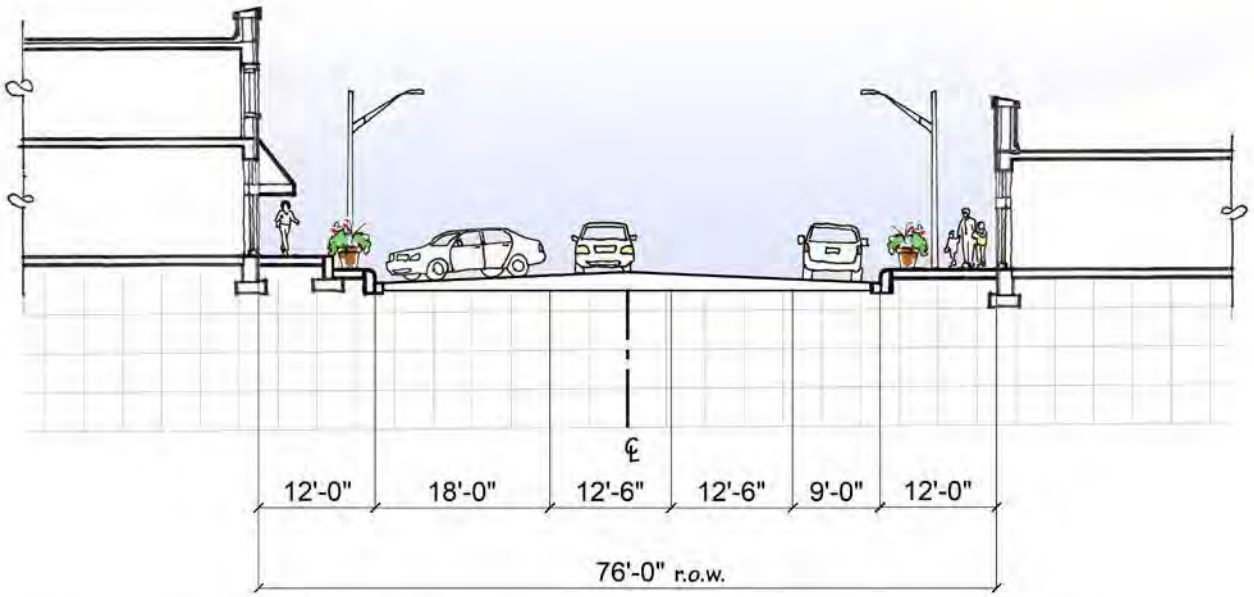
Implement a Parking Strategy

On-street parking

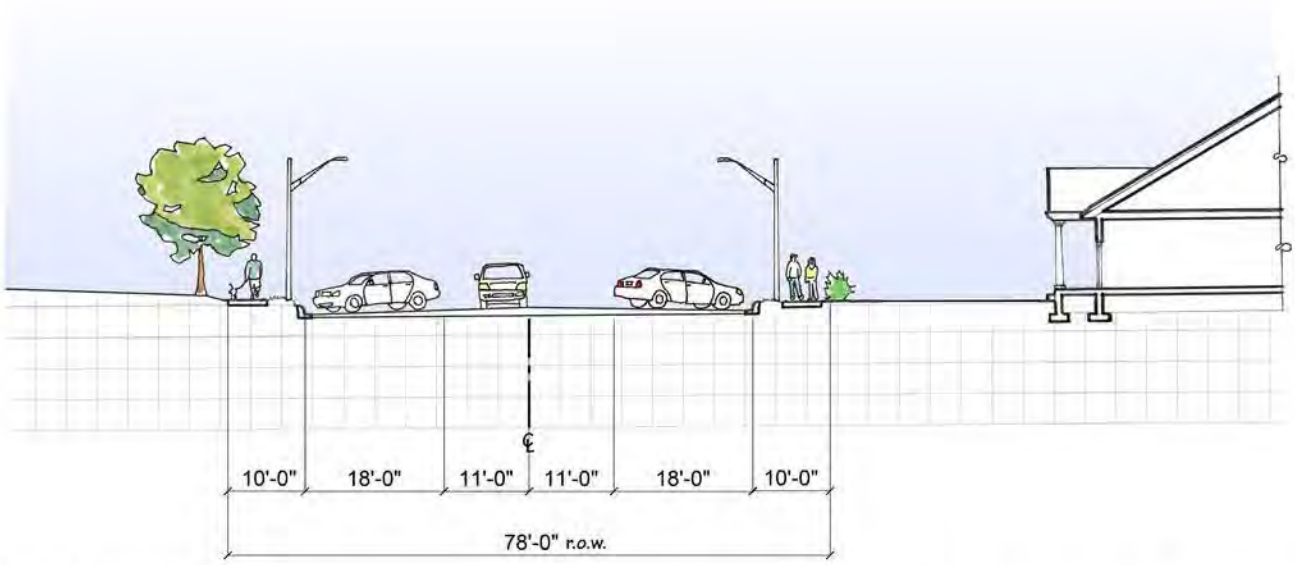
Parking was a top concern for the stakeholder group in Sweeney Switch. The urban design team researched alternatives to off-street parking lots to meet the every day needs of the district. The team focused on-street parking as the solution for the district's everyday needs. Instead of promoting the development of off-street parking lots which would remove properties available for future development and make the district less walkable. This solution requires the re-striping of Main Street and Church Avenue for maximum capacity. Along Church Avenue transforming the west side of the road to angled parking while keeping the east side parallel would add adequate parking. Within a ¼ mile of the district are an estimated 300 proposed on-street parking spots. Within a ½ mile radius of the district is 133 possible on-street parking spots. This solution has a combined 433 possible on-street parking spots available for the public to use daily. Adding angled parking will add an estimated 178 on-street parking spaces.

View of Church Avenue with both parallel and angled parking.

View of Main Street with reverse angled parking.



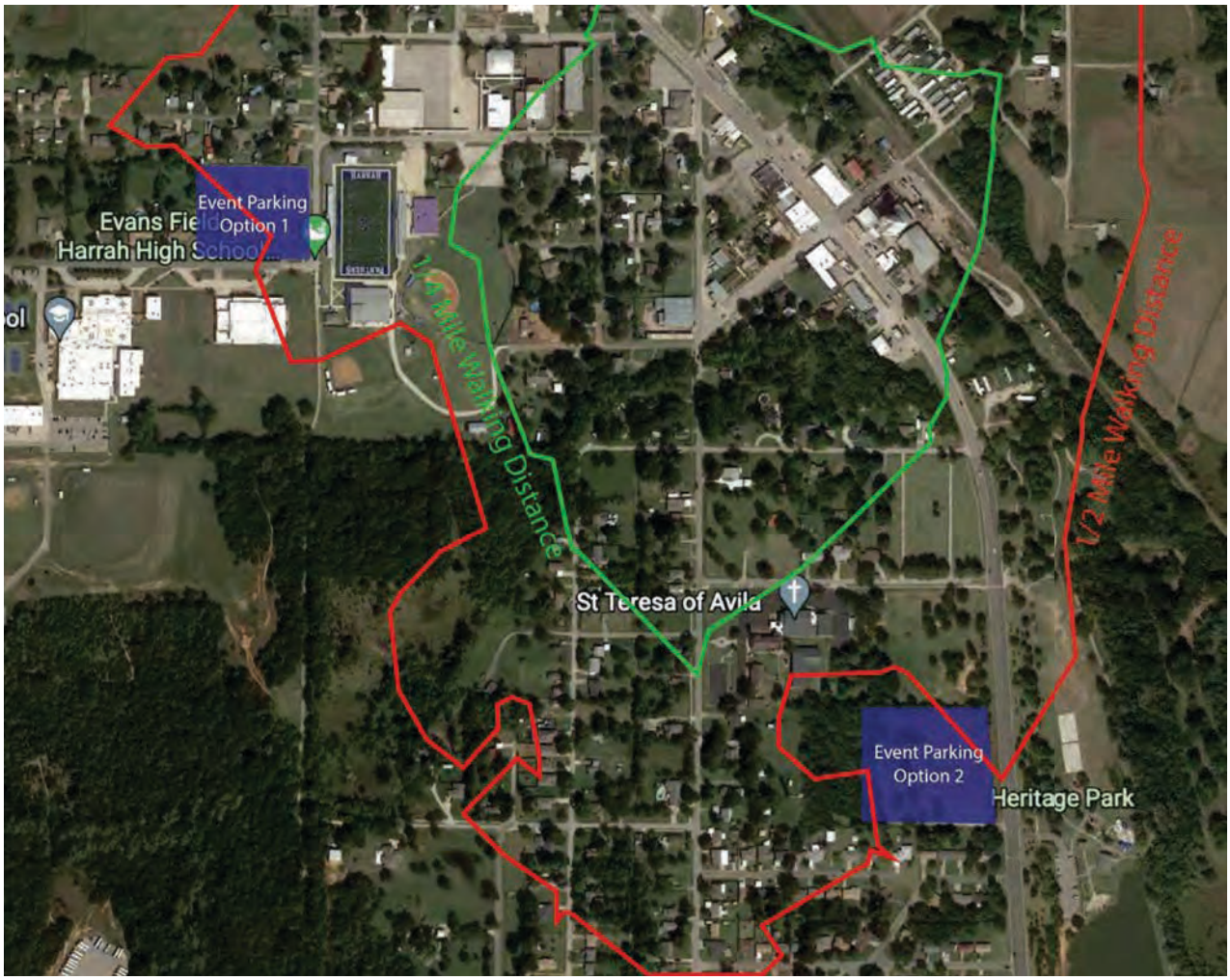
Street Section: Church Avenue
City of Harrah



Street Section: Main Street
City of Harrah

Event parking

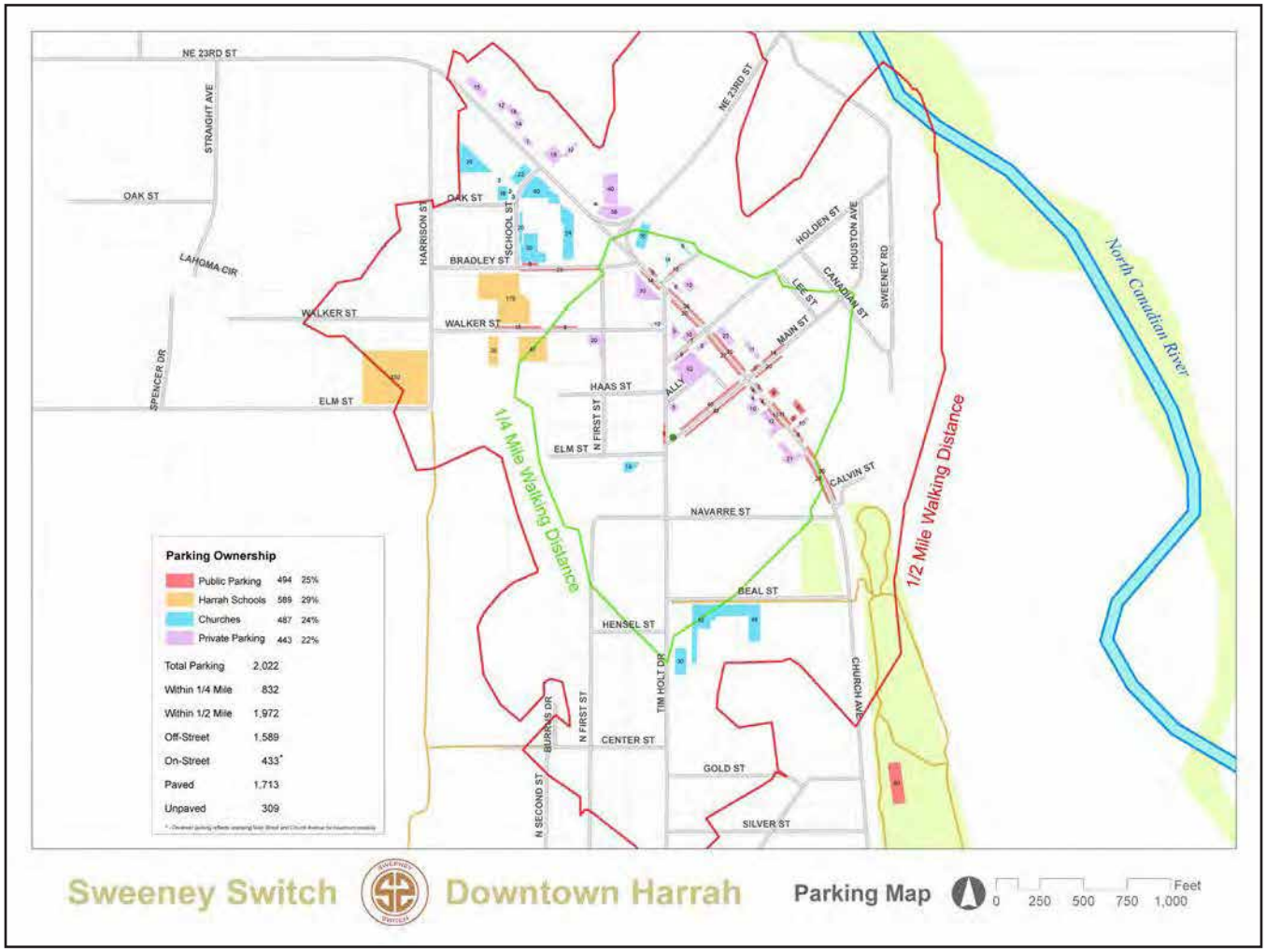
With Sweeney Switch being an event hub, event parking strategies are used for special events. The two locations selected as the best sites for event parking are at Harrah High School and at the city-owned overflow parking lot across the street from Heritage Park. These locations are within a ½ mile walking distance from the district. Both locations are convenient for walking and shuttling people with buses or golf carts. To achieve a successful event parking strategy, both sites need to be considered. The permission of Harrah Public Schools would be needed to utilize the High School parking lot. The city-owned lot will need improvements to the property to maximize the parking capacity. These improvements would include grading the property, paving, striping the parking lot, lights, sidewalk connections, signage, and promotion of the parking lot. To help pay for these improvements charging for parking would be a simple but effective way to gather capital for improvements.



The two event parking options are within a 1/2 mile walk. This distance is approximately a 10 minute walk to the Sweeney Switch district.

Parking Map

The total estimated available parking spaces in the district has a maximum capacity of 2,022 spaces. This estimate includes increased on-street parking on Church Avenue and Main Street.



Improve Streetscapes

When talking about streetscapes, safety, walkability, and comfort are the main considerations the design concepts. Safety can be achieved by encouraging reduced speeds on major roads in the area, adding crosswalks, and improving sidewalks. Walkability is increased by creating and connecting existing trails and sidewalks. Comfort is accomplished with street furniture, street lighting, ease of traveling between destinations, and landscaping to achieve cooler temperatures in warmer weather.

During field observations, community engagement events, and stakeholder meetings some opportunities involving streetscaping have been identified. Church Avenue, Main Street and Tim Holt Drive could use streetscape improvements. Some of the streetscaping suggestions include the following:

- A gateway sign on the corner of Church Avenue and Tim Holt Drive to welcome visitors
- A roundabout and gateway on Church Avenue coming off US- 62
- Improved parking along Church Avenue to maximize on-street parking
- Increased sidewalk coverage on Church Avenue, Main Street, and Tim Holt Drive
- Creating and connecting pedestrian and bicycle trails to the current trails
- Street crossing safety measures across Main Street, Church Avenue, and Tim Holt Drive
- Creating a permanent plaza with a fountain and seating at the corner of Main Street and Tim Holt Drive
- Developing a parking strategy on Church Avenue, Main Street, and Tim Holt Drive
- Increased street lighting on Church Avenue, Main Street, and Tim Holt Drive
- Enhanced street landscaping on Church Avenue, Main Street, and Tim Holt Drive

Gateway Signage

Gateway signage welcoming visitors to Sweeney Switch.

Design inspiration for Gateway signage.
Source: https://connectingsigns.com/monument-signs-features-benefits-tips-for-success/

Roundabout

Design Concept for proposed roundabout.

Elements

1 Roundabout needs to be wide enough for vehicles that travel on highways

2 Center of roundabout needs to be landscaped to signal entry to the Sweeney Switch district

3 Adding a pedestrian refuge median along the roundabout will allow pedestrians a safe way to cross the street.

Improved Parking

Birds-eye view of proposed improved parking along Church Avenue and Main Street.

Elements

1 Re-striping the west side of Church Avenue with angled parking to maximize on-street parking

2 Promoting reverse angled parking for a safer option of angled parking

Trails and Sidewalks

An example of a simple way-finding sign on a trail.
Source: https://www.pic-bois.com/produits/milieu-naturel/les-plaques-thematiques-44.html

An example of a more expensive way-finding sign on a trail.
Source: https://dotdash.com.au/projects/caboolture-to-wamuran-rail-trail/

Street Crossing Safety Measures

Crosswalk located on Main Street with landscaping.

Intersection of Main Street and Church Avenue with a Speed Table with brick paver's.

Birds-eye view of the district layout.

Elements

1. Speed Table along the intersection of Church Avenue and Main Street to slow down traffic
2. Adding crosswalks with bump-outs for reducing speed of vehicular traffic on Main Street and Church Avenue

Roundabout

Traffic entering Sweeney Switch on Church Avenue is moving too fast and traffic calming is needed. Fast moving traffic on five lane roads must transition to two lanes as Church Avenue passes through Sweeney Switch. Roundabouts are proposed where NE 23rd Street (US Highway 62) intersects Church Avenue to the north and at the intersection of Church Avenue (State Highway 270 or Harrah Road) and NE 10th Street to the south. The roundabouts slow traffic and provide gateways into Sweeney Switch and Heritage Park. The roundabouts are designed to permit passage of semi-tractor trailers with 53' trailers using mountable truck aprons. The roundabouts are also designed with pedestrians to cross the street with yield signs, crosswalks, and splitter islands. Landscaping and public art form a welcoming gateway for visitors.

Current conditions of the road leading into Sweeney Switch.
Source: Google Earth

Intersection of Church Avenue and Highway 62 where the proposed roundabout is located.
Source: Google Earth

View of roundabout design concept looking South.

Sweeney Switch Downtown Harrah **Site Plan of Roundabout**

Plaza

A plaza has been proposed along the intersection of Main Street and Tim Holt Drive. This plaza will be a prominent feature of the Sweeney Switch district, hosting a variety of concerts and community events. The plaza features a permanent stage, fountain, landscaping, and plenty of open space for a multi-use area. This area will also draw people down Main Street and create a node for the community to gather.

The plaza is also used as a traffic calming measure along Tim Holt Drive. Many residents voiced concern with speeding vehicular traffic along the road. By breaking up Tim Holt Drive into a plaza this causes drivers to slow down in the downtown area.

View of proposed Plaza at the intersection of Main Street and Tim Holt Drive.

The proposed plaza will feature a permanent stage and fountain.

Birds-eye view of the plaza layout.

Elements

1. Plaza
2. Stage
3. Fountain
4. Pedestrian Bridge
5. Playground
6. Berm with walkway

Streetscaping

Design concept of streetscaping along Main Street

Elements

1 Street lighting styles should fit with a cozy small town feeling

2 Benches along Main Street will add places for pedestrians to sit

Example of street light banner for the Sweeney Switch district

Design concept of streetscaping along Church Avenue

Elements

1 The addition of containers along Church Avenue will add a pop of color

2 Pairing benches and planters together create an inviting area to sit

QUICK MOVE

Add Planters to Street

For immediate impact, add self-watering planters to the streets. These will add a splash of color and ease in maintenance in the summer months. When adding uniform containers it creates a sense of harmony in the area they are located. These planters could also have a branding aspect with Sweeney Switch logos added to the containers.

Benefits of self-watering containers include the following:

- Retains Nutrients
- Saves Water
- Saves Time
- Encourages Healthy Root Growth
- Lack of Risk of Root-Rot

Connect and Complete Trails and Sidewalks

The urban design team recommends the connection of trails and sidewalks for better walkability in Harrah. The importance of connecting trails and sidewalks is of utmost importance when creating a walkable district. The most crucial destinations that will be connected are Heritage Park, the Sweeney Switch district, Harrah High School, Virgina Smith Elementary School, Russell Babb Elementary School, and Lions Park. These connections will promote a better used trail and sidewalk system in the City of Harrah. Some of the major street crossings in the area are Church Avenue, Main Street, and Northeast 10th Street.

This map show cases existing trails and sidewalks in Harrah and proposed additions to the system.

Ways to Promote Trail System

To better promote the existing trail system, they should be programmed and advertised. This programming can include trail clean up days, weekly group trail walks, 5K runs along the trail system, or rentable scooters for the community. These simple but effective programming will introduce the public with the trail system. To better advertise the trail system, wayfinding signage and trail maps are key. These key measures at promoting the trail system will make for a healthier and more active community.

Greenway Loop

The proposed development of trails and sidewalks in Harrah would create a greenway loop. This greenway loop would include the existing parks and proposed parks creating an enjoyable walk. The purpose of adding parks along the connected trails and sidewalks creates a destination that people will seek out. The green spaces included along this trail would be Heritage Park, the berm walkway, Main Street Community Garden, rain gardens, and Lions Park.

Performance stage at Heritage Park being used for a children's holiday concert.

Current conditions of the existing trail system in Harrah.

Bridge at Tim Holt

This option would serve as a gateway into the southern part of the district that would welcome people into Sweeney Switch. Another highlight to the transformation into a pedestrian bridge would be the added benefit of traffic calming measures along Tim Holt Drive. The closing of the bridge to vehicle traffic is needed to provide pedestrian safety in the district. This traffic calming measure is also needed to provide room for the proposed plaza in the intersection of Main Street and Tim Holt Drive. This would make the district and residential neighborhoods safer for all who live and walk near Tim Holt Drive.

The current view of the bridge on Tim Holt Drive.
Source: Google Earth

Design concept for pedestrian bridge on Tim Holt Drive.

QUICK MOVE

Start Weekly Trail Walks

To get the community support for extending the sidewalks and trail system start a weekly trail walk group. This group can utilize the existing trail and sidewalks in Harrah and get people excited to use the trail system.

Benefits of Trail Walks the following include:

- Enjoyable and Safe option of Transportation
- Promote and Healthy and Livable Community
- Help people of all ages incorporate exercise into their daily lives

Encourage New Development

New mixed-use development is encouraged in the Sweeney Switch district. This new development will help Sweeney Switch define and promote the downtown instead of seeing it be by-passed. The goal is to make Sweeney Switch a walkable shopping and entertainment district. Some ways to encourage new development is to rehabilitate existing buildings, promote infill development or build on vacant lots, and replace residential homes with new businesses.

Rehab Existing Buildings

Some existing buildings to rehabilitate are the following:

- Davidson Lumber Co rehabilitated into the Lumber Shack on Main St and Tim Holt Dr.
- Former blacksmith shop can possibly be turned into a Confectionery
- Elm Street Sovereign Grace Bible Church can possibly be turned into a Pizza Restaurant
- VFW can be rehabilitated into a Coffee Shop.

Before and After - Davidson Lumber Co. building which is now currently the Lumber Shack a popular food and entertainment venue.

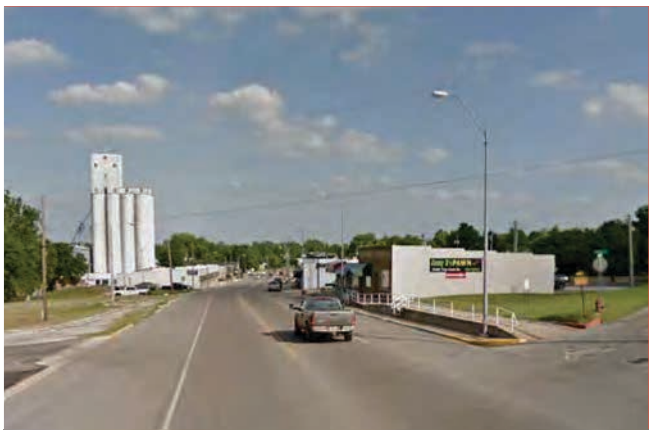
Before and After - The current state of the former blacksmith shop and a proposed Confectionery.

Before and After - The current state of the Sovereign Grace Bible Church and a proposed Pizza Restaurant.

Before and After - The current state of the VFW and a proposed Coffee Shop.

Build on Vacant Lots

Infill development on vacant lots in the downtown area along the following streets: Church St, Main St, Tim Holt Drive and Holden St behind the fitness center will maximize the space and allow commercial and mixed–use development to take place. This new development on vacant lots will add 12 new buildings with a total added 2.5 Acres of property to Sweeney Switch.



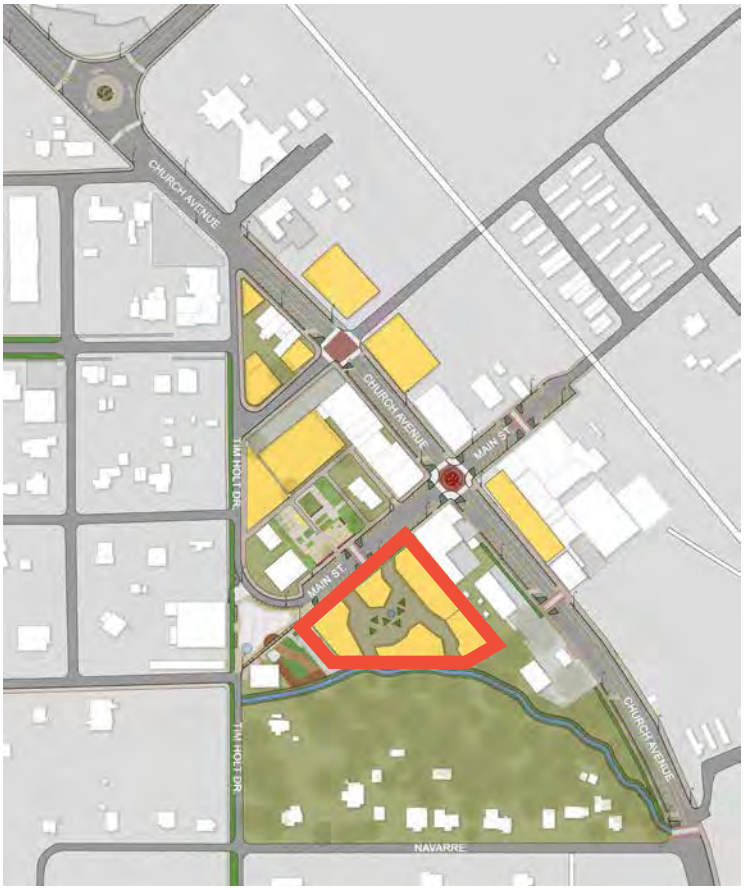
Before and After - View of Church Avenue looking south with added development.

Relocation

For the health and safety of the community, it is recommended to remove a handful of homes for the development of the berm. The addition of the berm will remove Sweeney Switch from the regulatory floodplain. There are two homes on Main Street that might be replaced with commercial or mixed-use development and two homes behind the Valero Gas Station on Church Avenue that might be replaced with commercial or mixed-use development. Two public buildings are also recommended to be moved from the district. The Fire Station and Police Station would be better suited in a joint Public Safety building in the south of town.

Relocate Handful of Residences

This map shows the locations of possible future development in the Sweeney Switch district.



Design Character

For rehabs or new development, a design character guideline for the Sweeney Switch district should be created. The creation of these guidelines could recommend: color palette, shade coverings, building styles, building heights, and building setbacks. The recommendations of these guidelines would help provide guidance along Church Avenue and Main Street.

Design Concept for infill development along Church Avenue

Elements

1 Maximum building height should be no taller than two-stories

2 Different building materials that are natural such as brick, stone, and wood should be encouraged

3 Buildings should be encouraged to be mixed-use with apartments on top of commercial space

Birds-eye view of proposed streetscape along Church Avenue and Main Street.

Elements

1 A new library along Church Avenue, with more space for materials and meeting spaces

2 Using a color palette promotes a cohesive and brighter space

Playground

Elements

1 Bright and cheerful murals on buildings add a playful element to the district

2 The rustic atmosphere of the Lumber Shack is a prominent design style in the district

3 Promoting family friendly play areas along new development will add a place for people to gather

QUICK MOVE

Promote Pop-up Events

For instant impact in the area, pop-up events such as vendor markets, food truck parks, and specialty events in vacant lots or on Main Street will add to the area. These events could help transition a food truck into building a brick-and-mortar location, or create exciting opportunity for the community.

Benefits of Pop-up Events include the following:

- Adds Specialty Events
- Connect on a Community Level
- Builds Excitement for the Area

Funding and Implementation

To achieve the goal of a walkable destination district, the two most important factors will be funding and implementation. Without these projects will struggle to succeed.

To make Sweeney Switch a successful district, funding and implementation are two important factors in achieving the goal of a walkable destination district. This section will discuss the 5 Big Moves and the short term and long term goals for funding. These different funding options range from private and public funds. The project types are discussed under the recommendations section. Funding source options are just suggestions of possible resources to fund proposed projects.

Remove Downtown from Floodplain			
Project Type	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Funding Source**
Survey/ Engineer Study	*		• City of Harrah
Education	*		• City of Harrah • Private
Land Acquisition/ Easement		*	• City of Harrah
Construction of Compensatory Storage and Berm		*	• Federal - FEMA Grant • State - OWRB • Local - City of Harrah (TIF, CIP, Municipal Bonds, Utility Fees)

Implement a Parking Strategy			
Project Type	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Funding Source**
Re-stripe Church Avenue	*		• City of Harrah
Event Parking Strategy	*		• City of Harrah • Private
Parking Meters/ Charge	*		• City of Harrah
City Lot Improvements (Paving, Striping, Lights, Sidewalks)	*	*	• City of Harrah
Improve Streetscapes			
Project Type	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Funding Source**
Planters	*		• Grants
Painted Crosswalks	*		• City of Harrah
Street Furniture	*	*	• City of Harrah
Events in Future Location of Plaza	*		• City of Harrah • Private
Speed Table and Brick Pavers		*	• City of Harrah
Street Landscaping		*	• City of Harrah • CIP • TIF
Roundabout		*	• City of Harrah • ODOT
Bioswale	*	*	• CIP • Community Garden
Compensatory Storage		*	• City of Harrah • Grants
Placemaking	*	*	• Project for Public Spaces Grant • AARP Grant • Land Legacy Grant

Connect and Complete Trails and Sidewalks			
Project Type	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Funding Source**
Trail Clean Up Days	*		• Keep Oklahoma Beautiful • Private • City of Harrah
Trail Walks	*		
Trail Furniture	*	*	• City of Harrah • NPS Grants • Audubon Society Grants • TIF • CIP
Scooters (Byrd and Lyft)	*		• City of Harrah
Way-finding Signage	*	*	• City of Harrah • Private
Easement/ Land Acquisition		*	• City of Harrah
Lighting		*	• City of Harrah
Encourage New Development			
Project Type	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Funding Source**
Relocation			
Buy-Out Property Owners		*	• City of Harrah
Swap-Out Property Owners		*	• City of Harrah
Move Homes from Property		*	• City of Harrah
Move out Police and Fire Station from Sweeney Switch		*	• City of Harrah
Infill/ Vacant			
Temporary Pop-Up Events	*		• City of Harrah • Private
Waive Permits and Fees for Properties	*		• City of Harrah
Rehabilitate			
Grants from City of Harrah	*		• City of Harrah

COLLABORATORS

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consists of people representing local government, business owners, local residents, and outside experts.

Samantha Barnes	*Harrah Disposal, Harrah History Center Museum*
Hon. Tom Barron	*Ward 2 Councilor, City of Harrah*
Barbara Beams	*Resident*
Paul Blessington	*Harrah Public Schools Superintendent*
Valerie Brewster	*For the Love of Dogs*
Cathey Byerley	*Harrah Main Street Community Garden*
Eddy Gochenour	*The Lumber Shack*
Wynn Gochenour	*The Lumber Shack*
John Harrington	*Water Resources Director, ACOG*
Kathy Helm-Fry	*Harrah History Center Museum*
Tammy Herzog	*President, Harrah Friends of the Park*
Jerry Janowiak	*Project Manager*
George Jacobs	*The Lumber Shack*
Cary Lacefield	*Family Care Center of Harrah*
Hon. Chris Lally	*Ward 3 Councilor, City of Harrah*
Bill Lisby	*Harrah Planning Commission*
Mark Maley	*The Lumber Shack*
Lewis Moore	*City Manager, City of Harrah*
Josh Nowakowsi	*N&R Feed and Supply*
Tracy Qualls	*Former Economic Development Director, City of Harrah*
Greg Schrempp	*Church Ave Spirits*
Hon. Cass Smith	*Vice Mayor and Ward 4 Councilor, City of Harrah*
Hon. Danny Trent	*Mayor, City of Harrah*
Hon. Paul Wiegert	*Ward 1 Councilor, City of Harrah*
Celeste Wolfe	*The Lumber Shack*

Consulting Team

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

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Shawn Schaefer	*Director, OU Urban Design Studio*
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Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG)

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John Sharp	*Deputy Director*
Christopher Bluth	*Community & Economic Development Manager*

Special Thanks

The OU Urban Design Studio team would like to thank ACOG, the IQC, and the stakeholders of Harrah.

Special thanks to the following:

Cathey Byerley and Tammy Herzog with Friends of the Park for providing the team with dedicated event space at Christmas at the Park and St. Patrick's Day.

Eddy Gouchenour, owner of the Lumber Shack for providing refreshments and meeting space.

Tracy Qualls, former Economic Development Director of Harrah for providing the team with meeting space and constant support throughout the project.

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