

# Edmond Oklahoma

## A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

February 19–24, 2023



**COVER:** Realizing downtown Edmond, Oklahoma's potential. *(ULI)*

© 2023 by the Urban Land Institute

2001 L Street, NW | Suite 200 | Washington, DC 20036-4948

All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of the whole or any part of the contents of this publication without written permission of the copyright holder is prohibited.

# Edmond Oklahoma

The New Edmond Downtown

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

February 19–24, 2023



2001 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-4948  
[uli.org](http://uli.org)

# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2022 alone, more than 2,800 events, both virtual and in person, were held in 320 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

# About ULI Advisory Services

**THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAM** is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day Advisory Services panel (ASP) is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's ASP assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this ASP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

## ULI Program Staff

### **Mary Beth Corrigan**

Executive Vice President, Global Leadership

### **Thomas W. Eitler**

Senior Vice President, Advisory Services

### **Kelsey Steffen**

Senior Director, Advisory Services

### **Lauren McKim Callaghan**

Director, Advisory Services

### **Barbra Gustis**

Director, Advisory Services and Key Leaders

### **David Zehr**

Manager, Advisory Services

### **Brittany Gilardian**

Senior Associate, Advisory Services and Global Leadership

### **James A. Mulligan**

Senior Editor

### **David James Rose**

Manuscript Editor

### **Brandon Weil**

Art Director

### **Kurt Wisthuff, Arc Group Ltd**

Graphic Designer

### **Craig Chapman**

Senior Director, Publishing Operations



W LEASING  
ICE / RETAIL  
5-388-5766



## Acknowledgments

This panel is the result of multiple individuals and organizations participating collectively toward achieving transformational change for Edmond. The Advisory Services program would like to thank the city of Edmond team—Jane Robertson, Janet Yowell, Megan Thurston, Scot Rigby, and Randy Entz—for providing the panel with thorough briefing materials and their hospitality. Thank you also for including Michelle McBeath for her local expertise and assisting the panel team. The Advisory Services team would also like to thank the stakeholders and members of ULI Oklahoma who shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights with the panel.



# Contents

2

**ULI Panel and Project Staff**

16

**Development Program**

3

**Executive Summary**

20

**Transportation, Planning,  
and Design**

5

**Background and  
Panel Assignment**

27

**Downtown Anchor  
and Implementation**

7

**Market and  
Development Trends**

29

**Conclusion**

9

**Housing Attainability**

31

**About the Panel**

13

**Strategic Vision**

# ULI Panel and Project Staff

## Panel Chair

### **John Walsh**

President and Founder  
TIG Real Estate Services Inc.  
Addison, Texas

## Panel Members

### **John Batey**

Senior Vice President, Operations and Development  
Wilmington Housing Authority  
Winnabow, North Carolina

### **Geoff Koski**

President and Owner  
KB Advisory Group  
Atlanta, Georgia

### **William G. Lashbrook III**

Consultant  
Hopewell, New Jersey

### **Brent Martin**

Managing Partner  
LandDesign  
Boulder, Colorado

### **Ann Chambers Taylor**

Director of Engagement  
Central Houston Inc.  
Houston, Texas

### **Tamela Thornton**

Executive Director  
ULI Dallas–Fort Worth  
Dallas, Texas

### **Ross Tilghman**

Tilghman Group  
Seattle, Washington

## ULI Project Staff

### **Tom Eitler**

Senior Vice President, Advisory Services

### **Barbra Gustis**

Director, Advisory Services and Key Leaders

### **David Zehr**

Manager, Advisory Services

## Intern

### **Matt Brandon**

MBA Candidate, Class of 2023  
Darden School of Business  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia





## Executive Summary

**THE ULI ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS** were asked to consider several questions regarding the study area involving five key elements. These are infill and redevelopment, local economic health, mobility, housing, real estate market and problem properties, and the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO). The panel addressed these questions by providing a number of observations and recommendations.

The report includes the development of better communication tools between the city and the university and adding multimodal connection corridors between the study area and other parts of the area around UCO to different gateways to the campus. The panel's recommendations include a strong walking and biking connection from UCO to the location of the new City Hall complex, which will act as a strong connection to the entire downtown area.

In response, the panel also identifies ways in which the University of Central Oklahoma could be better connected to the city, especially the study area. This area measures roughly one square mile and is proximate to downtown, the UCO campus, and south of Second Street including the Stephenson Park district.

In addition, the panel provides a model to improve communication, collaboration, and cooperation by recommending that a permanent advisory group be established to work together to seek ways to create value for the university's faculty, staff, and student body while bringing value to the city's residents and businesses through a more symbiotic approach to development.

Though not the city center geographically, the study area has sound underlying attributes to become the heart of Edmond once again for commerce and social activities. The panel presents in this report techniques that when implemented are expected to allow the study area to become a catalyst to connect the better elements of the historic past with what will be the Edmond of the

future. The panel anticipates that the vision for the study area, as the city center of the future, should include a dependable implementation plan if the vision is to be achieved.

The report includes immediate, medium-term, and long-term actions that will increase the probability of a successful outcome. The panel's implementation recommendations include plans to take full advantage of those attributes by establishing processes and guidelines to ensure that the vision will lead to making a place that attracts people to enjoy positive social, lifestyle, and economic results—results that are anticipated to appeal to residents in every square mile of the city and to those who live in the region surrounding Edmond. Social and commercial activity are results that will be borne from these efforts, adding to the already strong pride of those who call Edmond home.

The report also recommends processes to streamline the processes to make private development to be more quickly accomplished, thus becoming more lucrative to satisfy the needs of the city, its stakeholders, and the development community. Processes are recommended to make the permitting period shorter and the quality of development higher, and to ensure that design standards are understood and administered consistently. These recommendations are expected to result in economic efficiencies. In the view of the panel, the need for revisions is an immediate need that provides near-term value with better long-term results.

Importantly, the panel took an in-depth look into the catalytic potential of a new City Hall facility. The panel agreed that the City Hall design and investment will likely determine the velocity and quality of the future developments in the study area. The design, orientation, accessibility, scale, connectivity, and availability of high-quality community space associated with the new facility are, in the panel's opinion, of such importance that several recommendations are provided in the report. Based on the questions, the panel is confident that the sponsor recognizes the importance of this facility.

This report contains the panel's thoughts regarding the study area. It is the panel's consensus view that the sponsor should allow for improvement of all modes of transportation and connection, provide a platform for activation of public and private land, and support the processes that will allow for flexibility (within guardrails) yet maintain a focus on the goal of making Edmond an even better place to live.





## Background and Panel Assignment

**EDMOND BEGAN AS A BOOMTOWN** soon after the 1889 Land Rush. Its proximity to Oklahoma City made it a natural area to develop as the population of Oklahoma grew during the second half of the 20th century. The nearly 100,000 residents at the time of this report affirm that growth has continued in the first quarter of the 2000s. Projections indicate that the rate of growth will likely continue, which will continue to provide opportunities and challenges for Edmond's government and leadership.

The panel has made recommendations in this report to help Edmond manage the pattern of growth that is anticipated in the projections with the intent to provide some guidelines that can be followed to enhance the opportunities that the future holds to keep Edmond healthy and prosperous.

### Assignment

The city of Edmond and the University of Central Oklahoma asked ULI to convene an Advisory Services panel to consider how the university campus might be better connected to the city. Specifically, the sponsor identified the following questions for the panel to address:

### Infill and Redevelopment

- What are five specific actions that the city should do (and/or redo) to catalyze infill, redevelopment, and densification in and around the downtown core?

### Local Economic Health

- What would a healthy tenant mix for the downtown district comprise?
- How should the city encourage a business mix downtown that will attract and retain career-track employment opportunities and what are the recommendations to encourage changes to the scale of the built environment to accommodate those types of organizations?

- Is class A office space still a viable need in a community such as Edmond, and if so, how much and what other types of office are desirable in the post-pandemic urban environment?

## Mobility

- What are concepts that will facilitate a better transition of Broadway (State Highway 77) and Second Street (State Highway 66) from a highway/major arterial to the pedestrian-oriented downtown district?
- What concepts should Edmond consider as the possible “end of the line” stop for the regional transit (commuter rail) likely to come online in the next six to eight years?
- What are recommendations for improving mobility between the downtown area and campus and the Stephenson Park area? Note: Broadway is carrying less through-traffic than five years ago, and the desire is to continue to reduce the impact of vehicle traffic in the downtown core, which will likely mean other north–south connections will become important—Boulevard being a major one.

## Housing

- The housing study is likely to show that certain types of housing stock and a range of price points are significantly underrepresented in the urban area. What are recommendations for how the city can take an active role in meeting those needs?
- In an area that has seen increased property values like downtown and its surrounding environs, what are steps that the city can take to encourage the existing affordable housing stock to remain? Should it? If not, what are best practices for the city to ensure that transition happens gracefully over time?

## Real Estate Market and Problem Properties

- What are some best practices that the city should implement to encourage the redevelopment of underdeveloped/underperforming properties in and around downtown? What should it avoid?
- What are recommended practices for the city to actively support or take part in the assembly of land in high-value areas where it has been difficult to accomplish or in areas where the cost of property is creating “issues” for private development?

## University of Central Oklahoma

- UCO leadership has expressed interest in having a “campus corner,” but neither the city nor the university has had success in causing this to happen. What can the city do to partner with UCO to help this become a reality?

## Study Area

The study area of this report is focused on an approximately one-square-mile area that includes areas in proximity to downtown, the UCO campus, and south of Second Street, including the Stephenson Park district that are part of the city of Edmond. The panel has been engaged to prepare this report to consider the substance and process of redeveloping the properties in and around the study area to provide an economic, social, and lifestyle direction that will provide sustainable and long-term value to the entire Edmond community.

## Area Context

The demographics of Edmond indicate that its affluent and above-average-income households are drawn to the city by the public school system, high-quality housing, excellent public services, and accessibility. As with any community of this size, not every household is of the same size, lifestyle, or economic status.

With high-quality local retail centers, most shopping needs of the city’s residents are fulfilled by local merchants. Restaurants are numerous, but, according to the panel’s research, they lack some of the entrepreneurial qualities and thematic offerings of restaurants in Oklahoma City. The panel recognized and responded to this need in its findings.

Most historical development in Edmond has been greenfield development, with new streets and utilities for development being provided and paid for by the development community. The congestion experienced in Edmond as a result of local traffic patterns may be frustrating, but reflects similar patterns experienced in other equal-sized communities. The area in and around the study area faces even more challenges than the majority of the city, including through-traffic not traveling to the area, aging infrastructure, obsolete building stock, a bisecting major rail line, perceived parking issues, misaligned codes and zoning for smooth redevelopment, and a lack of a unified vision for the future of land and buildings downtown.





## Market and Development Trends

**LIKE THE REST OF THE UNITED STATES**, the Oklahoma City (OKC) region is undergoing societal shifts in which new patterns of demographics, transportation, communication, and lifestyles are leading to transformative change in economies and communities. Many of these factors have a tremendous impact on the potential for ongoing successful redevelopment of the study area.

### Population Growth

The market “speaks with its feet,” and Edmond has established itself as a preferred location for both residential and commercial expansion within the OKC region. Whereas Edmond’s population represents just under 10 percent of the OKC metropolitan region’s population, the city has attracted nearly 15 percent of the region’s population growth in the last three years, pointing to Edmond’s increasing regional market share.

In the next 30 years, Edmond could add another 40,000 residents, which equates to permanently adding into Edmond the entire population of Bartlesville, which is the 13th-largest city in Oklahoma. Accommodating housing for this population growth requires new thinking. In particular, the city of Edmond must plan wisely for the current and future housing demand, which should drive additional demand for commercial real estate.

### “Sticky” Pandemic Trends

The global COVID-19 pandemic may be waning, but its impact on U.S. real estate markets continues. Homebuyers and renters have reset their priorities, with a shifting emphasis on suburban growth and working from home. The pandemic and other longer-term trends have also modified the market for commercial real estate, particularly office and retail space.

Edmond has generally been the beneficiary of pandemic trends, prompting growth in both the study area and the surrounding neighborhood areas. However, the post-pandemic era has left the nation with higher interest rates and decreasing housing affordability. Appropriately priced homes available for purchase

and rent have become increasingly difficult to obtain in Edmond, especially for households earning below the area median income.

Edmond's historic core is uniquely positioned to provide additional housing stock at a wide range of prices and rents, including those attainable to those essential workers who serve all of Edmond's citizens.

## Smaller, Nontraditional Households Are Ascending

In the United States today, households are trending smaller than they were in the 20th century, which profoundly affects housing and consumer demand. These smaller households are often choosing low maintenance, convenience, and high-quality public amenities instead of larger homes on acreage in a high-quality school system. This results in demand for a diverse range of housing types. In today's marketplace, multifamily units, multigenerational housing, accessory dwelling units, and so forth are all viable options for many households across the income spectrum.

Detached single-family housing represents more than three-fourths of Edmond's homes. Conversely, nearly two-thirds of local households are composed of only one or two people. Around the country, these smaller households are often becoming more amenable to various housing choices—particularly smaller homes, townhouses, and multifamily units. As Edmond's population swells, the market will continue to seek a range of housing choices. The study area is a prime location to allow the market to provide the supply to match the changing local housing demand.

Currently, residents in the study area represent about 10 percent of the overall Edmond population. Looking forward, the East Edmond 2050 Plan provides a preferred scenario in which the city is likely to grow at an average of roughly 1,300 residents annually for the next decade. If the study area were to capture growth at its current share of the population, this projection would imply that the study area would grow by fewer than 200 residents by 2033. However, in the current pipeline of development there are up to about 750 new residential units in the planned and proposed stages.

Therefore, in this scenario, the study area is already exceeding its fair share of growth due to changing preferences in the marketplace. However, even greater pent-up demand almost certainly exists, meaning the study area can capture an even greater level of growth if additional enhancements are made.

In fact, because of the current market positioning and the upside potential that is latent in the study area, pursuing additional catalytic public- and private-sector projects can “grow the pie” in Edmond. That is, the study area can attract growth that otherwise would have gone to other locations such as the Chisholm Creek area or the Midtown District in OKC, thereby providing additional opportunities and support for the local tax base that would not have otherwise occurred in Edmond, except for the catalytic enhancements within the study area discussed later in the report.

Based on the assumption of the study area both capturing a greater share of the expected growth and an acceleration of the overall growth patterns, the study area could add up to 2,500 new residents in the next decade. This expectation will occur only with the inclusion of the types of catalytic projects. That amount of residential growth will create additional support for more retail options and sales tax collections both inside and outside the study area.

Assuming this level of residential growth in the study area over the next decade, the study area could also support about 50,000 square feet of new or repositioned retail space if programmed and curated properly. Moreover, this amount of new vibrancy in the area along with, and partly because of, a properly executed city hall redevelopment could induce demand for new corporate office space.

Over time, growth of up to 50,000 square feet in a combination of new, modern office space within new purpose-built buildings and in repositioned historical buildings could occur. In addition, a recent market study pointed to the potential of a new boutique hotel in the study area of roughly 50 rooms.

With the proper development execution, marketing, and ongoing operations, the study area can continue to exceed the rate of growth that is occurring throughout the city and become a true regional draw, bringing additional community members and visitors who can add to the vibrancy of Edmond while at the same time enhancing the opportunities to grow the sales tax base.





## Housing Attainability

**THE PANEL HAS DETERMINED** that the community has a unique opportunity to expand the range of housing opportunities in its growing and vibrant downtown district. As the area containing the bulk of the community's existing stock of naturally occurring affordable housing, the downtown district is well suited to support the inclusion of higher-density, mixed-income, mixed-use development that can provide housing options to a broader range of Edmond households. The vibrancy and diversity fostered by providing a broader range of housing options in the downtown district will allow Edmond to continue evolving into the type of community the panel has heard the city wants to be.

There is corroborated evidence of high demand for all types of housing, but in the downtown district developers are currently building only market-rate units at the higher end of the price-point spectrum. Parallel to trends throughout the United States, viable housing options for essential workers, defined as those paraprofessional, entry-level, retail, restaurant, and service-sector workers, whose presence in Edmond's workforce is critical to the local economy, are simply not available under the current for-sale or rental configuration in the downtown district.

Under these conditions, these workers are often forced to commute into Edmond from as far away as 30 to 40 miles, intensifying pressure on the region's transportation system and increasing traffic congestion on Edmond's main roads. The panel

believes the city needs to actively pursue and endorse these missing housing typologies in the downtown district to enhance the community's overall revenue, vitality, and quality of life.

The panel recognizes downtown Edmond as an ideal location for housing for essential workers, since existing income levels in the district support the need. As well, the smaller lots present throughout downtown will facilitate a greater variety of housing development typologies and more dwelling units per acre without the costly, time-consuming, and politically fraught process of lot subdivision.

A basic demographic aspect of any community is population. While the U.S. Census and accompanying American Community Survey (ACS) data can provide the panel with data for Edmond in

this regard, that data by itself does not tell the entire story of how many people are present in Edmond on any given day. To answer this question, we must look at both population and the dynamic of the daytime commuter.

By their very nature, wealthy cities such as Edmond tend to create a large daytime commuter dynamic centered on the community's need for essential workers and a lack of essential worker housing. Using standard data and modeling practices from the census and ACS to show net commuter numbers, the following chart illustrates the growth in daytime population in Edmond that occurs because of workers commuting into the community daily. It accounts for the number of workers who live inside Edmond and work in Edmond; live outside Edmond and work in Edmond;

————— Edmond, OK —————

Total Population (B01003)	95,334
Total Workers Working in the Area (B08604) (+)	43,535
Total Workers Living in Area (B08008) (-)	18,367
<b>Total Commuter-Adjusted Population</b>	<b>120,502</b>
Net Number of Commuters into Edmond	25,168
Percentage of Total Population	26.40%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey data.

and live in Edmond and work outside Edmond. The net positive number (“Net Number of Commuters into Edmond, OK”) indicates the quantitative demand on Edmond’s services and infrastructure beyond what its residents use by living in Edmond. The positive number is also a strong indicator of there being significant demand for more housing within Edmond’s city limits, primarily to accommodate those commuting into Edmond for jobs located in the city, but who live outside its boundaries.

Note that the 2020 U.S. Census and the 2021 ACS data includes commuting workers only. Commuter students associated with UCO or any other educational institutions are not included in the survey data since they are not in the labor force, and thus not captured in the census and ACS in labor force numbers. The city should work with UCO to collect information on the number of students who commute into Edmond. This number would help better plan for and quantify the potential demand for housing by students within the city limits.

Therefore, excluding students, one in every five people present in Edmond during the day is not a resident of the city. Because intercity mass transit options are severely limited, this additional vehicular traffic places a strain on the city’s roadway network. This pushes trip count numbers artificially higher than they otherwise may be if essential workers were housed locally, made shorter trips on arterial routes, or used local mass transit. Providing attainable housing for both this group and students within an exciting downtown improves economic development, community resilience, and traffic congestion.

## COMMUTING PATTERNS AND HOUSING ATTAINABILITY

For illustration purposes, note the following commuter worker data is for other wealthy communities that have deeper housing affordability problems.

### Jackson, WY

Total Population (B01003)	10,728
Total Workers Working in the Area (B08604) (+)	11,561
Total Workers Living in Area (B08008) (-)	5,789
<b>Total Commuter-Adjusted Population</b>	<b>16,500</b>
Net Number of Commuters into Jackson	5,772
Percentage of Total Population	53.80%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey data.

The largest community within Teton County—**Jackson, Wyoming**—is an extremely wealthy enclave located along the Snake River in western Wyoming. With a per-capita income of \$252,000, Teton County has, at times, been the wealthiest county in the United States. Because the topography of the county (and Jackson in particular) severely restricts the availability of developable land, a chronic shortage of housing has materialized in the community. As of 2022, the median sales price of a single-family home in Teton County was \$4.5 million, according to Jackson Hole Sotheby's International Realty.

As a result of the dire housing affordability situation in Jackson, one of every three individuals present in Jackson during the day is not a resident of the town. This feeds a grim scenario in which a town of 10,000 is also home to the busiest section of highway in the entire state of Wyoming (WY Highway 22), according to the July 2022 *WYDOT Monthly Automatic Traffic Recorder Report*. As a result of workers commuting to and from affordable communities across the state line in Idaho, more traffic moves through Jackson than through the largest city in the state, Cheyenne.

### Santa Fe, NM

Total Population (B01003)	88,196
Total Workers Working in the Area (B08604) (+)	54,181
Total Workers Living in Area (B08008) (-)	34,791
<b>Total Commuter-Adjusted Population</b>	<b>107,586</b>
Net Number of Commuters into Santa Fe	19,390
Percentage of Total Population	21.99%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey data.

The community of **Santa Fe, New Mexico**, is much more like Edmond than Jackson, and is exhibiting a similar pattern of commuter movements.

The median home price in Santa Fe reached \$608,000 as of January 2023, and rose by 14 percent since 2021 during the pandemic, according to the Santa Fe Association of Realtors.

## Achieving Attainability

Several relatively quick fixes exist to address the housing affordability issue in downtown Edmond that involve minimal to no regulatory changes or financial incentives. For example, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and duplexes exist as currently permitted methods of providing essential worker housing options for infill development and increasing the resident population in the downtown area. Additional development guidelines could be provided within a downtown overlay district ordinance that would allow for triplexes and quads in appropriate scenarios.

The city could adopt a proactive, customer-friendly approach to infill development that would facilitate essential worker housing while retaining adequate development controls through the issuance of preapproved plan sets for higher-density residential development involving nontraditional single-family, detached housing, sometimes grouped within pattern books. Other viable configurations could include townhouses, rowhouses, and other housing types that increase residential choices while retaining fee-simple landownership. Examples where this has been implemented are in Bastrop, Texas, with its “Authentic Bastrop Pattern Book” (<https://www.cityofbastrop.org/upload/page/0107/docs/B3%20PATTERN%20BOOK%20-%20Compressed.pdf>) and Norfolk, Virginia, with its “Missing Middle Pattern Book” (<https://www.norfolk.gov/DocumentCenter/View/66555/MissingMiddlePatternBook>).

The panel heard from multiple business owners, representing both large and small employers, that supported the concept that Edmond’s lack of housing options is negatively affecting their business operations. Entry-level service and retail sector employees are less reliable when they reside outside the community. Recruiting entry- to mid-level employees is a challenge especially related to the lack of housing options, and some employers have had to resort to cash reimbursements for gas and travel expenses to retain employees.

A lack of housing options in Edmond also fosters longer-term, cyclical problems for the community. Younger adults who were raised in Edmond often lack a clear path for staying in the community if they wish to do so, commonly known as brain drain. Because of the community’s heavy focus on detached,



TOM GATLIN, COURTESY OF SMITH GEE STUDIO

*Kirkpatrick Park in Nashville, Tennessee, demonstrates new-build townhouse typology.*

single-family housing and a limited supply of largely unaffordable rental housing options, many of Edmond’s young adults make a rational decision to move away to the core city (Oklahoma City) or elsewhere to begin and/or build their professional careers. This removes individuals in their prime wage-earning years from the local economy and creates an ongoing cycle of “youth flight” from the community that serves to bleed the area of what could become Edmond’s most visible and vocal advocates. Providing adequate, affordable rental housing options, along with “starter homes” that are sized appropriately for younger households, would serve to reverse this trend.

While the panel feels that Edmond’s lack of housing options is approaching a critical state, the group feels there is no need (at this time) for subsidized housing (i.e., Section 8 or public housing). These tools are aimed at extremely low-income households (i.e., households at or below 30 percent of area median income [AMI]), and Edmond’s demographics do not support a need for such a product.

Attainable housing, however, is produced from a broad spectrum of financing sources and applied to an equally broad spectrum of income levels. As a result, many opportunities exist to create mixed-income, tax-credit developments that could integrate essential worker housing (60 to 120 percent of AMI) into larger, market-rate developments in the downtown area.





## Strategic Vision

**DURING PANEL INTERVIEWS**, residents expressed passion and enthusiasm for Edmond. There also was an undercurrent of skepticism about whether this exercise would result in another study with more good ideas that ultimately gathered dust. Edmond is ready to turn the page, with a clearly defined common purpose, alignment around an inspiring destination, and a compelling story that everyone can rally around.

Ultimately, Edmond's leaders will decide the aspirations and destination they will pursue. Fortunately, other communities of similar size, affluence, and comparable relationship to a much larger metropolitan area provide examples that can offer helpful comparisons and guidelines. Each is roughly the same distance as Edmond from Oklahoma City, and each has found its own ways to meet similar challenges.

For example, Sugar Land, Texas, and The Woodlands, Texas, outside Houston, and Alpharetta, Georgia, outside Atlanta, are affluent communities with sought-after schools, a high quality of life, with other key similarities to Edmond that provide models that can be applied to Edmond. Pueblo, Colorado, a community of almost identical size, offers examples of public finance tools

that could be deployed in Edmond. Other communities can be explored through the Institute's extensive library of reports and studies at [ULI.org](https://www.uli.org).

### The I-35 Corridor or the Central Core?

In this report, the panel recommends that rather than choosing either the central core or the I-35 corridor as an area of focus, it urges Edmond to embrace and enhance both the I-35 corridor and the central downtown core simultaneously. This effort should include the University of Central Oklahoma campus, a revitalized Main Street Square, and the historic downtown along with the activities and growth that continue organically along and across I-35. Each of these centers can increase the velocity

of commerce, serving different and important audiences with different and valuable experiences. Maximizing the opportunities of each of these key areas will lift the economic tide of Edmond, generating additional revenue to fund important projects along with their maintenance.

This is just one example of a common theme across all the panel's recommendations—namely, the untapped potential for collaboration, unleashing the strength of alignment, which may require reaching across silos and forging new partnerships. The strength of a cohesive, collaborative approach to maximize the value and enrich the lives of residents and visitors to this study area offers too much upside for Edmond to ignore.

## Raw Materials to Fuel Edmond's Economic Engine

Edmond has much to appreciate. The panel identified abundant raw materials to build and fuel an exciting future for generations to come.

**Historic fabric worthy of celebration:** Historic features such as the Old North Main Tower, the 1901 Edmond Ice Company, the Historic Armory Building, and others in key areas can become even more of a focal point when connected by attractive corridors.

**A trail system to green spaces and recreation:** With Fink Park, Hafer Park, and Arcadia Lake serving as “building blocks,” Edmond is ready for these attractions to be stitched together into a bike-friendly circuit that can be safely traveled from the historic downtown, across the University of Central Oklahoma campus to these signature parks, and back to a brewery or bistro. Cycle 66 is a signature bicycling tour and growing regional attraction.

**Sip, stroll, and shop:** The future of shopping continues to be bifurcated into convenience shopping dominated by powerful national brands, or experiential, unique, and hyperlocal retail. Edmond is well positioned with both: national retailers are clustered on major arteries, and local, artisan, and maker spaces are found in the historic core. The seasonal Vibes Thursday night arts activation generates measurable economic impact for local merchants as well as provides a memorable and unique experience for shoppers. One local participant reported that the sales generated by Vibes was “like having an added Saturday in my month.” When placemaking strategies are coordinated, marketed, and fully implemented, local retailers and bar and café operators should experience many more months of “extra Saturdays.”

**Arts and cultural offerings:** A vibrant visual and performing arts scene can deliver real economic impact. The panel encourages more engagement with the University of Central Oklahoma's arts and cultural offerings, shining a brighter light on the opportunities on campus as well as bringing more students out into the community to participate in the local arts scene.

**School Spirit—University of Central Oklahoma:** A student population brings vitality, energy, and spending power to a community. Creating a stronger tie between the thousands of students and the city around them can spur economic growth. As those students graduate, launch careers, and start families, they can add to Edmond's productive, upwardly mobile workforce. Give Edmond residents more reasons to go on campus by marketing and celebrating their own hometown school.

**Youth sports and family-friendly activities:** Edmond is a haven for growing families whose children participate heavily in youth sports. Enhancing and improving playing fields and facilities to host tournaments could capture hotel stays, and additional sales revenues that are currently lost to other cities better equipped to host youth soccer, basketball, and other tournaments. The Edmond Aquatic Center—a partnership among the city of Edmond, Edmond Schools, and the YMCA—is a shining, splashing example of the shared success that the ULI panel urges Edmond to deploy in many more areas among a variety of strategic partners.

## Be Intentional about Alignment

Reaching the full potential of Edmond as a great place to grow and tapping the full potential of these raw materials will not happen by default. Cities are never done, as even places with ample funding and a deep bench of staff expertise require continual maintenance, upkeep, and renovation to remain relevant. Every city is either managing decline or fostering a brighter future. Although the panel had the opportunity to meet over 100 residents who are passionately committed to their hometown, we heard a common thread among all of them: Edmond is at an inflection point.

The good news is that Edmond is not alone in facing a pivot point that a global pandemic and societal upheavals have brought to cities and towns of every size. Specifically, for Edmond, this inflection point creates the opportunity to reexamine assumptions about how people here will live, work, play, shop, and learn. The upheavals of the past three years have challenged long-held ideas, and offer the opportunity to engage with new partners and forge tighter communities.



Some examples of assumptions that community members are beginning to question include the following:

- White-collar employees living in Edmond would continue to commute Monday to Friday to work in an office in Oklahoma City.
- University of Central Oklahoma enrollment would continue to hover around 17,000 or continue to grow, and the international student population would add cultural enrichment and vibrancy.
- University students attending a “commuter school” will not become tightly woven into the fabric of the community.
- After raising a family in Edmond, residents would continue to thrive as they grow older and continue to feel connected to this community.
- When children leave the nest, they could find their own place in Edmond to put down roots and start their families nearby.

As ULI has done in Edmond, Advisory Services panels conducted in communities around the world also have reexamined long-held assumptions, and those panelists and sponsors invariably discovered that new opportunities emerged. Some opportunities will take time to visualize, strategize, build collaborative teams, identify funding sources, and implement.

Ultimately, what holds a community together is a shared sense of purpose and a story that everyone can adopt and amplify. For Edmond, this requires an intentional approach to collaboration, alignment around the shared purpose of the community, and a defined body who hold themselves accountable for producing results. This body would engage a chief storyteller and programming specialist/Main Street manager—the evangelist and glue who manages the brand, messaging, and activation of Edmond’s emerging “Main Street Square” as its vital heartbeat of the greater downtown area.



## Development Program

**THE ONGOING TRANSFORMATION OF THE EDMOND STUDY AREA** will require coordinated municipal actions based on clearly documented processes and standard guidelines that are easy to understand and consistently applied. The goal is to ensure consistent, objective, and timely implementation of standards with guidance, leading to compatible development without stifling the creativity that defines a vibrant core. Development to date has been defined by individual creativity and opportunistic use of public tools. While what has been delivered has been largely positive, the public processes have not been smooth.

The role of the municipal partner in the redevelopment process primarily is to make it clear to private investors and the current residents and businesses that their decisions will be fact-based, predictable, and timely. Once the guidelines have been established, it becomes much easier for implementation, and for ideas like business improvement districts or other planning structures to be effective.

### Structural Process Improvements

The panel made several process-focused recommendations to help ensure consistent and timely implementation.

#### Study Area Overlay Zone

The panel recommends that the city implement a study area overlay zoning code to codify design standards and site plan

approval processes that could eventually lead to a form-based code. This process needs to be completed as soon as possible and can be managed by the Central Edmond Urban District Board.

The overlay structure is based on an assessment of the “form” or building first to make sure that its design is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and then address use. A form-based structure allows for expedited entitlements and accelerated approvals. Zoning, land use, and permitting rules will be modified and documented based on the form. Some specific form-based regulations may add cost or discourage less impactful projects, but the format facilitates a thoughtful, process-oriented evaluation of a development proposal.

To the extent that changes are needed to address unanticipated market opportunities or challenges (such as the “streateries”

response during COVID), the form-based code structure allows for flexibility to test temporary policies or ideas (e.g., sidewalk cafés and patios) prior to full implementation.

Development projects by their nature are unique, but developers and their capital partners want to know what to expect from each step of their interaction with approving entities. The overlay standard is grounded in fostering predictability. Once the overlay is in place, all city development disciplines—planning, engineering, permitting—need to be aligned to execute in a cohesive and expedient manner.

It is important to note that, as part of the overlay implementation, there may be documented guidelines for the Downtown Core subdistrict that are different than those in the more residentially focused Downtown West and Stephenson Park subdistricts. The panel also acknowledges that there are surrounding neighborhoods adjacent to the study area that may benefit from the same treatment and redevelopment guidelines established by the overlay but were not specifically targeted during this Advisory Services effort. The panel recommends consideration of expansion of the Central Edmond Urban District (CEUD) influence area and use of processes recommended by this panel going forward to facilitate continuity of the development vision in the future as surrounding neighborhoods grow.

### Comprehensive Stormwater Management and Infrastructure Planning

As the district is developed and densified, the city will need to address aging infrastructure that may be affected by desired private investments. Some efforts have been made with Stephenson Park stormwater management work, but similar planning should be applied to the area north of Second Street. Opportunities are also in place to plan for burying utilities and incorporating new technology and transportation modes (e.g., broadband infrastructure, electric vehicles, bicycles/scooters).

### Finance

Numerous options exist for financing infrastructure and other public improvements within the study area. The city has created a structure for tax increment financing (TIF) for investments by the public sector into private projects that provide economic value. The existing TIF district was formed in 2020 and will continue to create increment for several years into the future. Under the city TIF plan, \$45 million is available to finance public improvements and the panel recommends that 100 percent of these funds be used as seed money and/or “local matching funds” to be leveraged against other public and private sources (e.g., Economic Development Administration grants, private

foundations, etc.) to create a robust capital improvement program (CIP) aimed specifically at the study area.

### Management

The public improvements needed in the study area will require a coordinated CIP that will take several years to plan and implement. To effectuate this, the panel recommends that the city of Edmond explore the creation of a Main Street program in the study area. The Oklahoma Main Street Program will provide training, technical assistance, and resources to the city to establish a position of Main Street manager/coordinator. The role of this position is to manage the creation of the public improvements in the study area, negotiate and memorialize public/private partnerships, assemble capital stacks and funding commitments, execute a design development process inclusive of public input, and coordinate the CIP with public works where appropriate.

### Historic Preservation

The downtown district of the study area contains a handful of structures on the National Register of Historic Places, along with numerous others eligible for listing. This inventory represents an invaluable and irreplaceable asset to the community, which can be used to assist with the financing of property improvements using historic tax credits and the state of Oklahoma’s historic preservation grant program. The proposed Main Street program manager/coordinator role would take a lead role in managing and curating downtown’s historic property, with the possibility moving toward a historic district comprising a cluster of historic properties and identified with appropriate signage and wayfinding materials.

### Edmond Study Area BID

Recently, an initiative sought to create a BID in the study area to supplement public services and better manage day-to-day operations of the public realm. While the initiative ended prior to the BID being formally created, the impetus for additional study area place management remains. Furthermore, many stakeholders are supportive of the idea of a BID supporting place management but were uncomfortable in providing support to the recent effort.

This panel strongly believes in the effectiveness of BIDs and acknowledges many examples of success nearby in Oklahoma City. Therefore, the panel encourages the continued conversations regarding the proper role of additional study area management and the scope of geography that may be included, since the panel believes that it will be a key element helping the study area to continue to flourish.



However, a more measured approach to implementing a full-time place management mechanism may be warranted for three reasons. First, the panel's experiences have shown that some districts that are composed of mostly small local property owners leasing space to small local tenants can be a challenge for a BID, particularly in its nascent stages. Many successful BIDs have large, often corporate, property owners anchoring the district and delivering an outsized portion of the monetary support, taking some of the burden to sustain the organization off the smaller property owners.

In addition, in this panel's observation, BIDs are typically most effective in maintaining and programming an already established district.

Finally, a step may be available that can provide a path to a BID while providing place management in the interim. The Main Street America program works to strengthen communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns. This may provide the essential management functions that are needed while also serving as the organizational structure to continue to explore the necessity of a BID. Unlike a BID, a Main Street program would likely be funded by the city of Edmond and other nonprofit organizations. Over time, as the tax revenue in the study area expands and the property owners can identify its benefits, the Main Street organization may grow into a BID.

## Physical Improvements

In addition to implementing process recommendations, the panel believes that several physical improvements will facilitate the redevelopment of downtown.

### City Hall Redevelopment

The City Hall redevelopment can be a catalyst for surrounding private investment, but on its own a municipal building is not an attraction that supports activity throughout the day and into the evening. Because municipal buildings are activated only during weekday working hours, City Hall's massing should be complementary to optimizing redevelopment opportunities for surrounding sites.

Any public buildings should set a community development standard for materials, design style options, scale, and historical aesthetic. Other uses, such as a public green or plaza, should be incorporated to encourage a stronger connection to UCO and establish clear linkages to the professional services or small businesses elsewhere in the downtown core.

## Parking

It is important for parking to be available, but in a vibrant district not all customers can be accommodated immediately on site or on the street. Parking should be available within a reasonable three- to four-block walking distance, positioned to allow for use throughout the day by different tenant types. The study area is relatively compact and walkable, but efforts should focus on activating alleyways and streetfronts with infill retail or other cultural assets. The 2020 Downtown Edmond Parking Plan identified opportunities to look at different ways to tailor how parking is used in the district to facilitate traffic flows and maintain turnover. There could be an opportunity to create defined employee and student parking areas, or to consider minimal fees for long-term parking (over three hours) in certain areas.

## Subdistrict Connectivity/Wayfinding

Development to date has been opportunistic and incremental, resulting in a series of small projects that, while individually interesting, are too small in scale to create a sustainable, vibrant area. They also are not clearly connected to each other in any meaningful, organized way. Projects that drive foot traffic throughout the week are necessary. Those projects that might be more targeted to specific submarkets (e.g., students, families, visitors) should be encouraged, too. As with any implementation, the effective use of signs is critical. Creative signage both reinforces the mix of uses in the area as well as provides clear path direction for both drivers and pedestrians.

- **UCO to the historic district:** The connection between the university and the historic district must be more clearly defined to encourage any connection to the student population and activities on campus. Edmond is a college town, with two institutions of higher education that should be seen as assets to the city. There could be an opportunity to use arts and green spaces—e.g., a children's museum, a small black-box theater, etc.—to link the retail and restaurants on Broadway to the Mitchell Hall Theater, the performing arts space on campus. While the university has mentioned a "campus corner," it could be a better means of connectivity to create an activated corridor along Main Street that is a more sustainable link between civic and community-focused uses. Main Street redevelopment allows for more campus-centric tenants such as student-oriented retail, bars, and sandwich shops to transition to retail and entertainment uses that are more attractive to a broader community of singles, families, and visitors.

- **Stephenson Park District to municipal core:** Stephenson Park has been described as a “game-changer” for the study area. The challenge will be to activate the undeveloped blocks from the park, across Second Street to the core and ensure a strong neighborhood connection to the existing residences to the south. This may be as simple as improving the sidewalks and adding uses like bike parking stations or a district directory near the corner of Second and Littler.
- **Westside to historic core:** There needs to be a specific plan to cross the rail line and encourage continued new investment and redevelopment. Current projects will slowly be “starved” if there are no safe circulation options, and current residents will remain disconnected from activities in the district. Finding a way to slow the traffic coming out of the Second Street underpass improves the safety of pedestrians coming from the residential areas. In addition, there is a need for planned green space or pocket parks to soften the connections across the rail line and into existing neighborhoods.

## Housing

Commercial and retail development will fail without a strong, diverse (e.g., age, income, interests) residential population in the study area. Without a variety of housing types and price points, there are few places for young singles and young families to live in Edmond.

While historically the exclusivity of Edmond has been a draw, the key to sustainability is creating a district that can compete with the new mixed-use development activity in Oklahoma City. Every person who is forced to live outside of Edmond or who leaves Edmond to spend discretionary dollars in other communities generates a negative impact on the community at large and the sales tax base.

The city cannot lose the opportunity to use its ability to provide direct support for starter homes or establish a minimum 20 percent unit count requirement for essential employee housing on municipally owned parcels that are currently owned or will be on land made available by the City Hall plan, or in projects that request or receive municipal incentives. Edmond has private capital and seasoned investors; providing them with opportunities to leverage their resources while filling a clear need is a good use of public funds.

## Transportation

The panel recognizes that Edmond is a car-based community. Reducing the city’s dependence on cars will have the additive effect of making infill and more dense development viable and attractive. Emphasizing existing alternative modes of transportation (such as the Citylink public transit system) and supporting emerging car-alternative transportation options (such as walking and biking) directly supports Edmond’s housing goals.

However, in the study area, mixing modes of transportation can be difficult given the traffic volumes and speed on Second and Broadway. Unless there are dedicated lanes for bicycles or scooters or widened sidewalks and safer pedestrian intersections for walking, adding these alternative modes to the current road infrastructure negligently increases the likelihood of death or serious injury to people using the mobility network outside motor vehicles.

- **Pedestrian-focused streets:** Use Littler more effectively to separate bike and pedestrian activity from automobiles and incorporate pedestrian safety improvements to help walkability.
- **Broadway enhancement:** For many coming from the south, the Broadway corridor, with its collection of vape shops, quick-service restaurants, and auto repair facilities, is incompatible with the image the panel believes the city should be trying to establish in the district. We think it is important to extend the traffic-calming program on Broadway throughout the study area and look at other ways to use public resources for street enhancements and other public improvements such as facade improvements for storefronts that lead into the district.
- **Trails to connect key destinations:** Planning to supply alternative ways to navigate the district is an important tool for multimodal community accessibility, as well as supporting economic development, local businesses, health, safety, and access to community amenities like parks.



## Transportation, Planning, and Design

**SEVERAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS** are recommended to support the variety of housing and commercial civic development envisioned for downtown Edmond. Together, these improvements to access, circulation, transit, and parking will enhance residents' and visitors' enjoyment of downtown and will provide infrastructure fundamental to creating a stronger platform for infill and new development.

### **Pedestrian/Bicycle/Multimodal**

In seeking a more walkable, accessible downtown, the panel endorses Edmond's already strong plans to use shared walking/biking trails to connect downtown with nearby neighborhoods, parks, the UCO campus, and Arcadia Lake. The prime element of the walking/biking network would be a trail starting at the existing loop around the retention pond at W. Hurd/Fretz Avenue, running southeast through downtown to Fink Park, and continuing to Arcadia Lake. Roughly six miles long, this trail would connect numerous important destinations including westside neighborhoods, the commercial core, the new City Hall, UCO's Mitchell Hall theater, Fink Park, Hafer Park, the Spring Creek Trail, and Lake Arcadia.

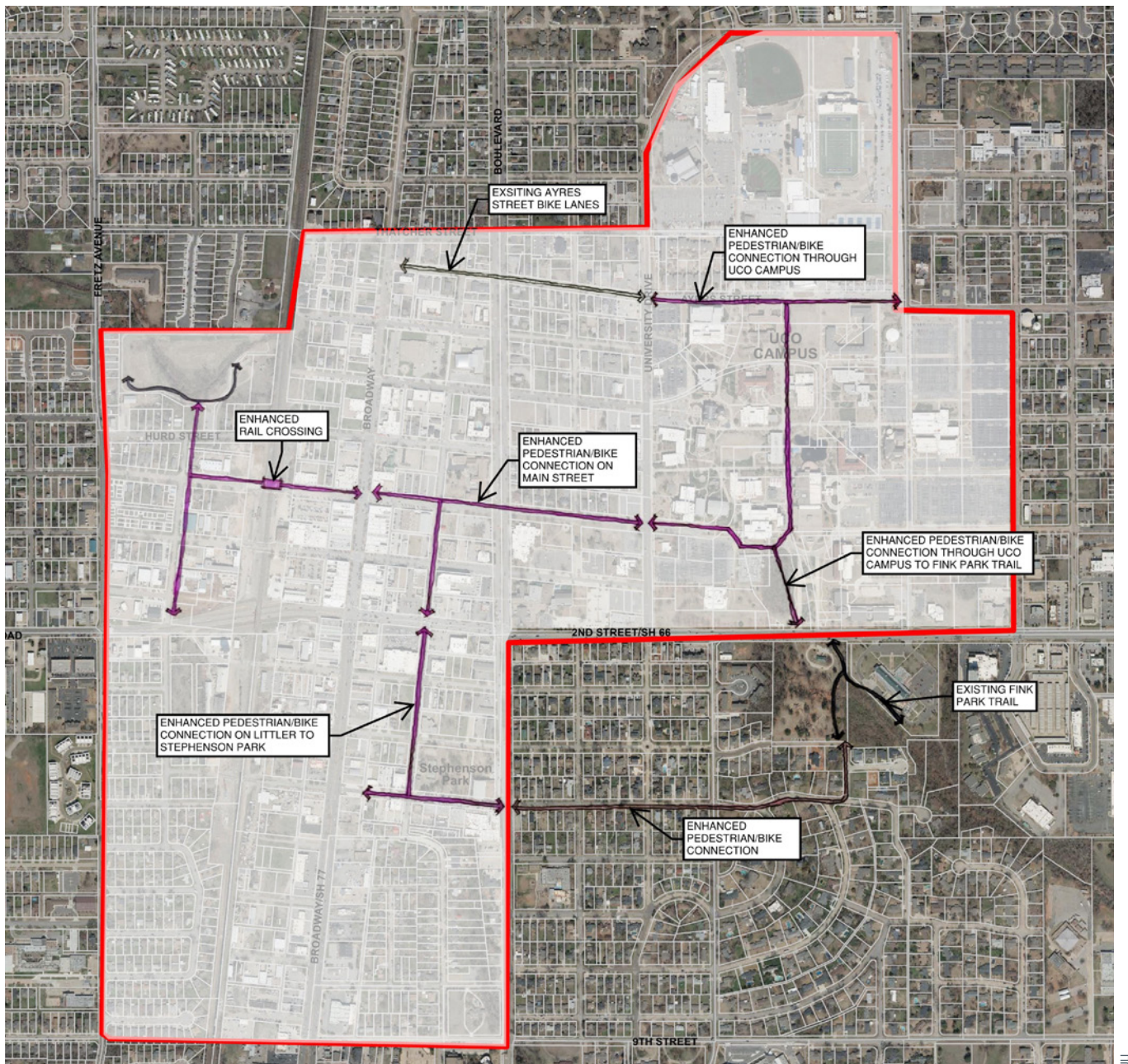
The city has already completed many segments of this trail through Fink Park and on to Arcadia Lake, and the Long-Range Mobility Plan anticipates filling in currently missing segments.

The panel recommends additional shared paths to connect Stephenson Park to this trail and up Littler to downtown. Existing bike lanes on Ayres would continue to provide a northside connection to downtown. A shared walking/biking path through the UCO campus linking these trails is also recommended, if possible, rather than using University Drive as the bike route.

Upgrades to sidewalks, curb ramps, and crossings are recommended throughout the study area and adjoining residential neighborhoods to provide safe, accessible routes to walk to nearby schools, churches, and businesses. These upgrades would address deferred maintenance, substandard widths, and crosswalks needing better visibility.

The panel recommends retaining the Citylink bus transfer hub at the current Festival Market site and making this the preferred location for any future commuter rail station. This location provides





Enhanced rail crossings, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian connections will greatly improve the experience for those who traverse Edmond not in a car.

better pedestrian access to transit from westside neighborhoods and the downtown core than an alternative site south of Edmond Road/Second Street where the bus maintenance facility is located. Easy walking access to transit is critical to its success. To reduce conflicts with future transit operations, the panel also recommends consideration of relocating the farmers market in consultation with the appropriate stakeholders and public.

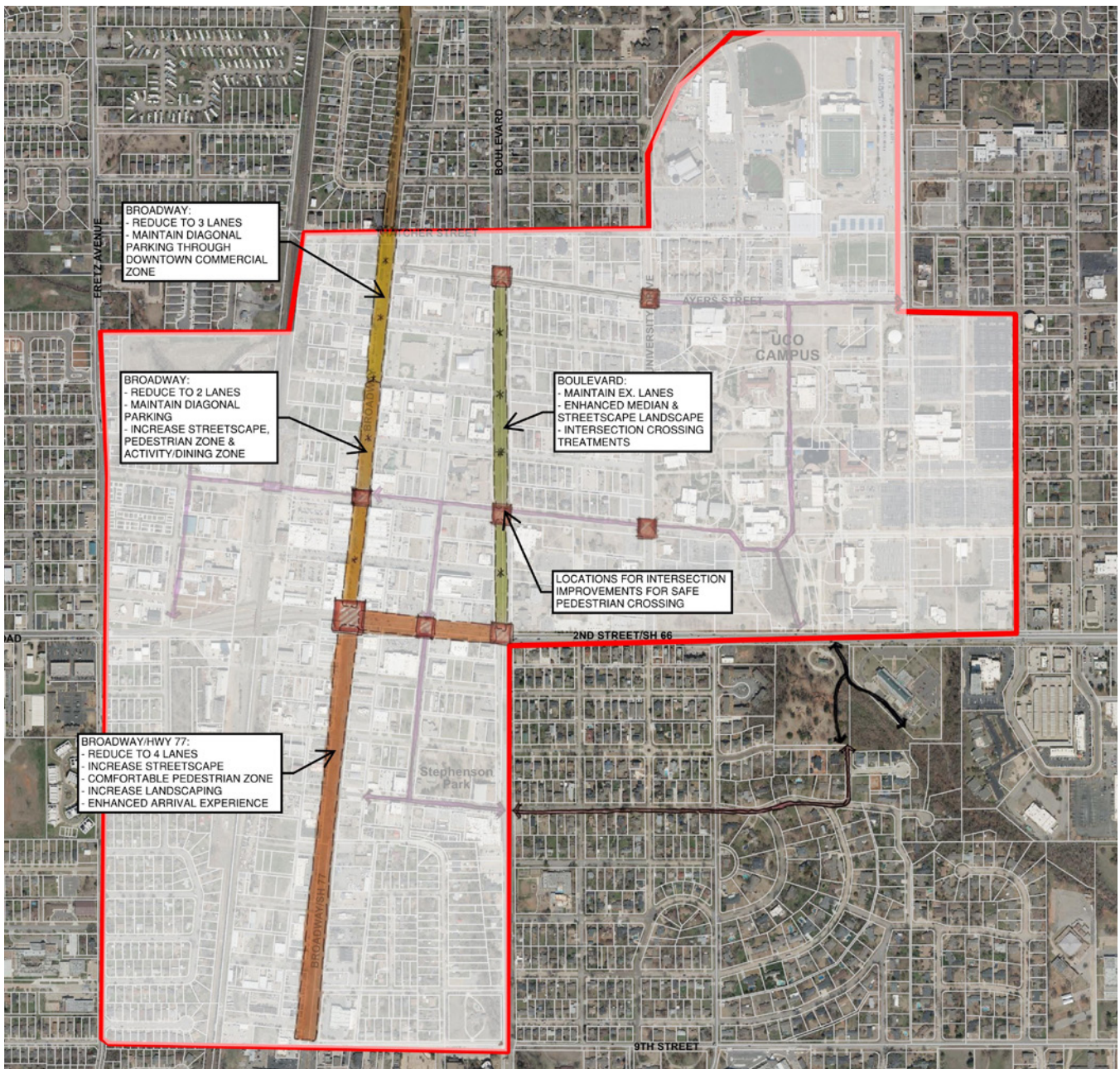
## Traffic and Street Improvements

Local streets and U.S. highways 66 and 77 were laid out long before I-35 was built and as a result retain more lanes than their

traffic volumes require. The panel recommends resizing the key streets and highways serving downtown to better balance their volume as well as through- and local-access functions. The city has already considered several options for downtown in its Downtown Broadway Corridor–Conceptual Visioning effort. The panel’s recommendations build on that effort:

- **Broadway between Second and Campbell:** Make this four-block-long segment a two-lane roadway with angled parking, consistent with Option B of the Visioning assessment. It provides more than adequate capacity for the 8,000 vehicles per day now using the street, retains





*Investing in streetscapes to create an inviting and hospitable environment for pedestrians not only improves safety and health, but also can catalyze retail and housing demand.*

parking, and creates wider sidewalks by moving the curbs out. This gives pedestrians more comfortable walking space, allows for sidewalk cafés along building faces instead of “streateries” in converted parking spaces, and offers opportunities for better landscaping and shorter crossings of Broadway.

- **Create transition zones on Broadway south and north of the core area:** On the south end, convert the existing six-lane section of Broadway south of Second to four lanes

plus a turn lane at intersections. This narrower street would have capacity for over 30,000 vehicles per day, more than the 27,000 currently using it. The curb-to-curb width would reduce from its present 77 feet to no more than 60 feet. The planted median should be enhanced with better landscaping to create a more welcoming approach to the downtown core. Fewer lanes and richer landscaping would help slow traffic and signal a transition from the outer city limits to the downtown core while also creating space for better sidewalks.

North of Campbell, a three-lane street would amply serve the commercial and residential uses up to Danforth. With a center turn lane and a travel lane in each direction, safety could be increased by reducing rear-end collision potential and decreasing pedestrian crossing distance. Travel speeds would tend to drop to safer levels.

- **Boulevard:** While this street has been identified as a daunting and dangerous street for pedestrians, respecting its boulevard design is the key to improving safety along the street. Specific improvements should include the following:
  - A new traffic signal at Main and Boulevard, with an emphasis on facilitating pedestrian crossings through favorable walk-light timing.
  - Raised islands or small planters in the center of other intersections at First, Hurd, Campbell, and Edwards to define traffic paths and reduce the appearance of intersection size and to slow turning vehicles.
  - Significantly enhanced landscaping with native trees, shrubs, and flowers in the median.

One of the bigger traffic management challenges is how to handle the segment of Second Street between Broadway and University. This is US-77, a federal highway, and its four-lane section with left-turn lanes requires pedestrians to cross 68 feet of pavement. It features wide curb radii, and lots of traffic throughout the day. In 2022, about 31,000 daily vehicles traveled on Second past Littler, which implies hourly volumes ranging from about 1,500 to 3,100 hourly vehicles through the workday. Although traffic signals and crosswalks exist at each intersection, residents see the street as a barrier to walking, effectively separating the parts of downtown north and south of Second Street.

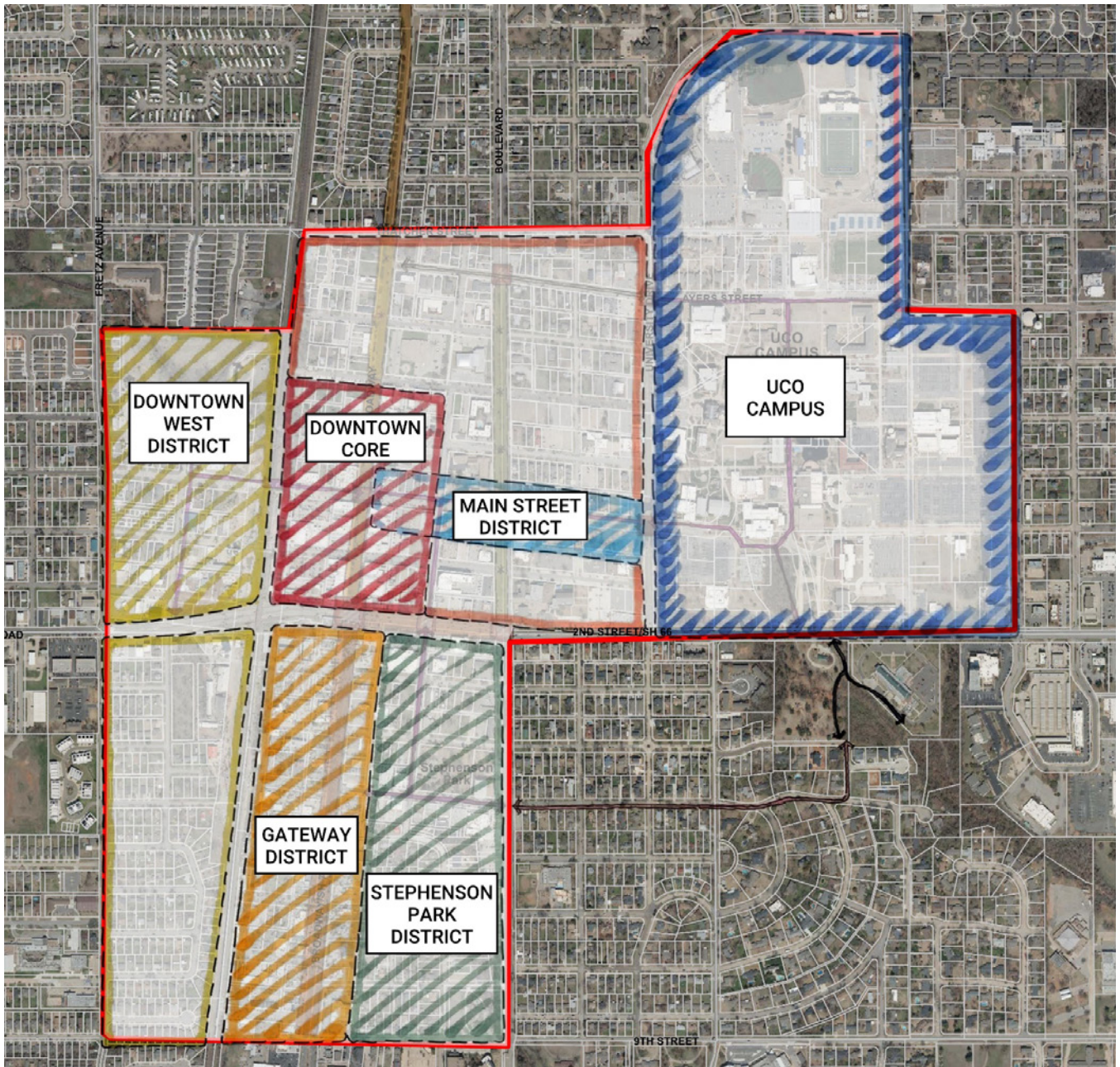
For its traffic volume, the street is appropriately sized. But for any downtown, its volume is too high, and its pedestrian conditions are too daunting. And for downtown Edmond, it is an impediment to achieving its vision for a walkable, vibrant, and family-friendly downtown. To address this imbalance, the panel recommends a series of actions:

- Work with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to explore transferring jurisdiction for the road from the state to the city. That transfer would necessitate shifting the US-77 designation to another route. That highway designation may currently influence the volume of traffic now traveling this corridor.
- Examine the origins and destinations of drivers now using the street to understand how decommissioning

the highway might affect their travel patterns. It is likely that much of the traffic begins and ends within the city of Edmond since Second Street serves downtown, UCO, and large amounts of retail east of the study area. Answers to questions about those traffic patterns can be gained through real-time data collection using cellphone use and through computer traffic modeling.

- If the city can eventually take charge of Second Street and also of Broadway south of Second, and if traffic monitoring and modeling show that about one-third of current traffic is essentially through-traffic to I-35, the city could investigate reducing the width of the street. It is likely that a three-lane section could well serve downtown traffic and pedestrians. Narrowing the street from its current 60 feet to about 36 to 38 feet would significantly improve pedestrian conditions and would result in some traffic shifting to other routes for access to I-35, such as East 15th Street and East 33rd Street. A three-lane street could easily carry up to 18,000 daily vehicles, meaning that about 12,000 to 13,000 vehicles would need to shift to those other streets. That is a manageable shift, especially if the through-traffic is about one-third of the total. The goal is to improve the quality of the street to meet downtown's access and circulation needs, rather than to accommodate all future through-traffic volumes.
- An eventual reconfiguration of the Second Street and Broadway intersection could then be determined once the city controls both streets. It is too soon to say what an appropriate configuration would be. But the intersection should be held to a high standard of design to fulfill its gateway role and to help knit the core and south development areas together.
- Upgrades to alleys are needed throughout the downtown district to achieve consistent pavement quality, provide proper drainage, and make them fully functional and attractive for service and parking access as well as for backdoor business access and activities attracting pedestrians. Alley upgrades could be accomplished along with utility upgrades, including electrical, fiber, and drainage that are frequently located in alleys. A coordinated alley improvement program would do much to ease the burden on individual development projects that are currently shouldering expensive reconstruction requests where poor public alley conditions exist.





*Focusing development on specific zones eliminates the likelihood of development efforts being spread too thin.*

## Development Focus Zones

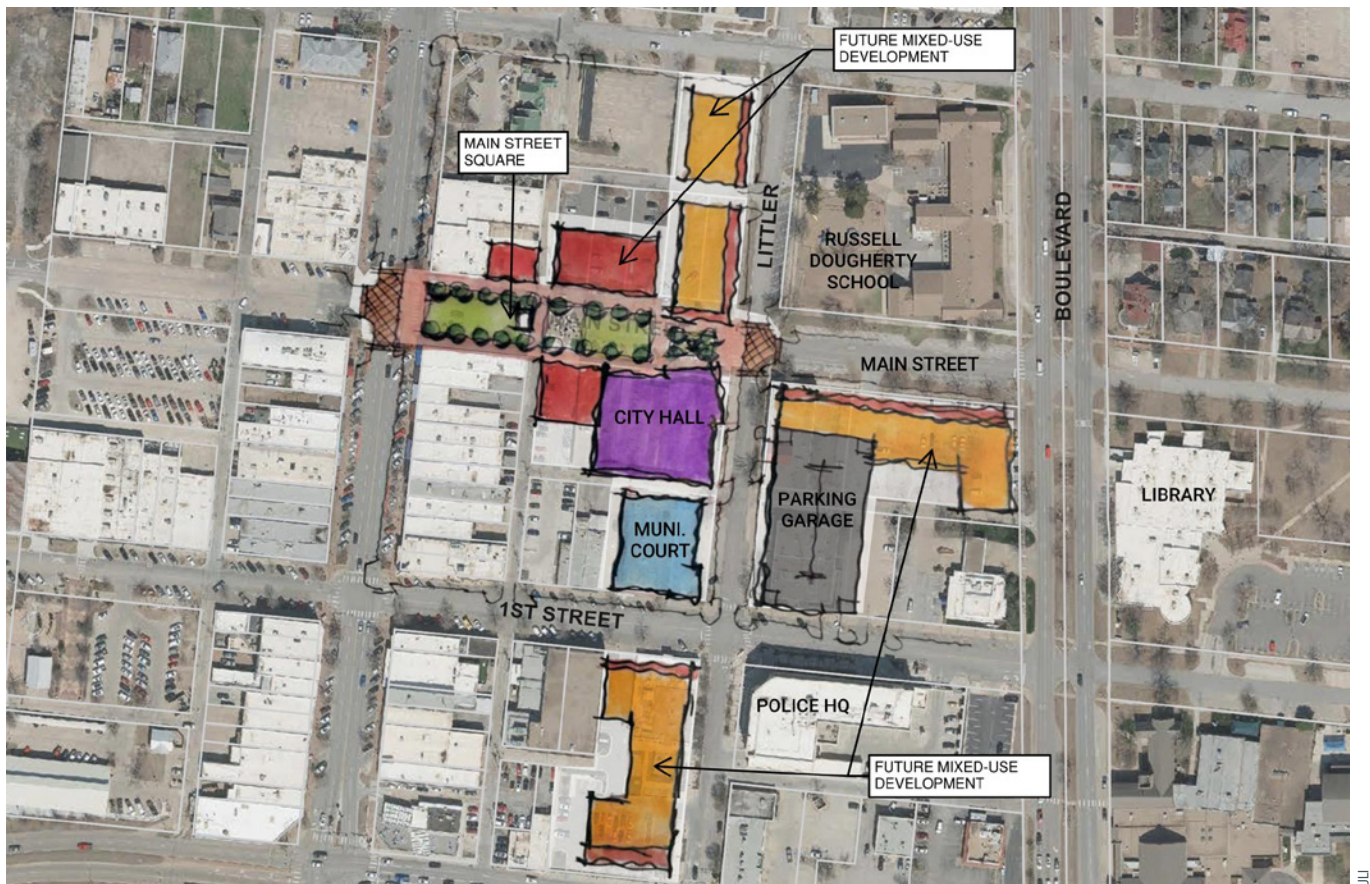
This transportation framework supports development in key zones in and around the commercial core, providing them with the necessary access and service infrastructure and linking them conveniently for their residents and customers.

The city's endeavor to build a new City Hall and Municipal Court is more than creating a new place for residents to do their business with the city or a fresh and collaborative space for staff

to work. This is an opportunity to build the heart of this community that will span generations. The panel believes that this is an opportunity to be bold, intentional, and thoughtful regarding the impact this can have to create a place for all of Edmond.

With the location of City Hall in the core of downtown, it can truly become the heart of the community and spark new life into downtown. This spark not only has the potential to create new development that will bring new residents, businesses, and entertainment to downtown, but it will bring a physical and





*Development potential of City Hall and Main Street Square.*

emotional center to the community. The result will be a place that Edmond's residents will behold and show their community pride. But to realize its greatest potential, the panel recommends the following to create a place for community to grow:

- **Main Street Square:** A multifunction public open space on Main Street between Broadway and Littler, lying at the midpoint of the downtown district, provides a much-needed place for the community to gather. With the connection to Broadway, the square is a place that can offer respite for retail customers to linger a bit longer, families to let their kids eat ice cream and play, and a dedicated space for events, concerts, and festivals. That dedicated space can be used more frequently without affecting parking and vehicular access to the businesses along Broadway.
- **Close Main Street and retain Littler:** Low traffic volumes on Main Street between Broadway and Littler allow for its closure since those volumes can easily be absorbed elsewhere. Necessary local access for parking, service, and delivery to existing buildings can be maintained via surrounding streets and existing alleys.
- **City Hall presence:** The panel strongly believes that City Hall should have a presence and prominence like no other building in downtown. Using massing, architectural character, and urban design techniques, City Hall should anchor Main Street Square and downtown with its entrance and activated frontage along the square. This is a building that will last for generations; the city must make the most of this opportunity to be bold.
- **Parking garage:** The parking garage should be located so that it minimizes its frontage along Main Street. Access should be from Littler and/or First Street to allow for activated uses to front Main Street. Consideration should be given to the size of the garage since a smaller garage that is sized to serve the primary civic uses may be sufficient. By using shared parking strategies, the peak use of the garage by the city buildings will occur during typical weekday hours, evenings, and weekends. This, along with available on-street parking in the area, should be considered in the overall sizing of the parking garage.

## PRECEDENT CASE STUDIES

### Fishers, Indiana

In many ways, Fishers and Edmond have many similarities: similar distance to the major city (urban center), a community of choice for families (schools, youth sports, lifestyle), a major highway through the downtown, and pressure for new development. In 2012, the then-town, now city, engaged to create the framework for a new downtown (the Nickel Plate District) that built off their existing municipal complex with a City Hall, police headquarters, fire headquarters, and a library. The desire was to create a vibrant and diverse downtown that would be a place for the Fishers community to gather, live, work, and play. An overall district master plan and form-based code were eventually created to guide future development.

Today, the district is just what they set out to create—a vibrant and diverse place with new multifamily residential uses, retail space, restaurants, a brewery, and offices. The catalyst to this success was twofold, both completed by 2014; a new mixed-use development on city-owned property in front of City Hall and city-funded infrastructure improvements east of the municipal complex to set the stage for future development.

### Valparaiso, Indiana

Valparaiso is a bedroom community of Chicago located in northwestern Indiana, near South Bend. It is a historically small town with a main street core that served many surrounding small communities and a small private university. Mounting pressure from people discovering Valparaiso as a better alternative to living in Chicago or the immediate suburbs prompted the city to look at providing more opportunities for residents and local businesses in downtown.

Starting in 2010, they repurposed an existing parking lot and vacant parcel to Central Park Plaza. At about 1.3 acres, Central Park Plaza provides a flexible lawn, an interactive fountain, and a stage/pavilion that can accommodate significant performances and concerts. This open space serves as a place for everyday use to ticketed special events.

Shortly after completion of the plaza, the William E. Urschel Pavilion was erected as a multifunctional, covered, open-air space. In the winter months, it serves as an ice-skating rink for recreational skating, figure skating, and hockey. Outside of winter, it is the location of the farmers market and various fairs and festivals. These public amenities have created a draw back to downtown, sparking a renewal of restaurants and retail within the entire district.

- **Farmers Market and Transit Center:** With the potential arrival of RTA commuter rail services to downtown Edmond, the panel recommends that the city evaluate the feasibility of relocating the farmers market from Festival Marketplace to Main Street Square to allow for the RTA station and Transit Center to remain. This evaluation should occur in partnership with RTA and other community stakeholders to surface all relevant facts, assumptions, constraints, and opportunities. The panel recognizes that this location provides a more convenient and central location for the Citylink System and commuter rail riders to the core of downtown and eliminates the need to cross Second Street to access public transit.
- **New development opportunities:** The completion of a new City Hall and Municipal Court will provide tremendous opportunity for new development in the surrounding blocks on both private and city-owned property. With a significant number of properties owned by the city, an opportunity exists to curate those developments to provide a mix of uses (residential, retail, restaurant, hotel, and office) to set the tone for further downtown development. Parcels along Main Street and on the square should be considered priorities to build the sense of place and tell Edmond's exciting story.





## Downtown Anchor and Implementation

**DURING ITS DISCUSSIONS**, the panel concluded that a key anchor for downtown within the Main Street Square is essential to elevating the efforts highlighted within this report. The panel believes that Edmond has an opportunity to create downtown economic revitalization with substantial revenue gains. The creation of Main Street Square can be the catalytic anchor and a center of social and lifestyle activity for the entire community. By connecting the square through thoughtful pedestrian links to a larger cohesive area for later overlay and providing a city-upgraded stormwater, utility, and hardscape within it, the city of Edmond will create a canvas to grow private capital investment.

Several key features exist to realize Edmond's vision for the future:

### The Anchoring Core

Main Street Square can serve as a central commercial, pedestrian, and civic node. It can be where people come and discover exciting ways to spend money at local storefronts, engaging branding and placemaking, and social activity such as talking to neighbors. This compliments the idea of the new City Hall nearby, a point of central civic identity and sense of place.

### The Connections

Accessing these nodes of activity requires thinking like a pedestrian. Pedestrian mobility overlays are what will allow Edmond's residents and visitors alike to access all that downtown has to offer and connects to. These attractions include Boulevard, the University of Central Oklahoma, West Trails, and parks to the east and Stephenson Park to the south. These overlays should consider design standards best practices and infrastructure (such as connecting stormwater and utilities).

## The Needed Networks

The city must define its roles to execute on ambitious ideas. This includes outlining what is needed, determining whether these roles are new or existing, and identifying those roles that need to be corrected using clearly defined, measured targets. With roles in place, the city and its partners can refine the development process. This can include streamlined permitting and civil engineering. As well, this may include identifying a Main Street manager as a professional who can stabilize consistent execution of city service, build trust with owners and operators, and implement programming such as events. Finally, attention must be given to prioritizing constructing the network between the city and the University of Central Oklahoma.

## Implementation

With 750 units planned or underway in the planning area, over 2,500 new downtown residents can be expected with the strong Edmond schools acting as a significant draw, even if there are no children to enroll. These new residents, plus the enhanced street activity emanating from the connected districts, will deliver foot traffic to support expanded retail and restaurant sales.

An Edmond as an experience and a lifestyle destination that attracts others from beyond its borders will capture revenues now being captured in other locales. As destination visits by cars increase, selective pay parking options, tailored to support local tenants and workers, may be considered to capture even more external visitor revenue.

Overall, the panel believes that Edmond should easily exceed the \$500 million in expected revenues from when the TIF was approved. Value capture from this increased foot traffic–supported revenues should cast the planning area as a serious component of city revenue growth.

There are lots of ways to measure healthy cities. Executing daily roles and delivering on promised services are both requirements. Cities that are growing do see rising revenues to service these needs. It can be tempting to view this as a measure of success.

Successful cities do not coast into a future they accept. They work to build a framework that supports new investment for value-enhancing growth, constantly renewing activity that builds positive community identity and involvement.





## Conclusion

**EDMOND HAS AN OPPORTUNITY** to establish its future through a renewed downtown that will serve its residents and create a platform to grow a more diversified residential base. This includes resident essential workers who align with today's demographics. Third-party developers and business operators can use these economic resources to build lifestyle-enhancing opportunities and experiences, including bringing revenues from outside the city. Success in the core will have a positive catalytic result in the rest of the community.

Edmond can achieve all these goals while still reaping the benefits of improved performance in its schools, high-quality residential growth, and targeted commercial development outside the center core. These choices are not mutually exclusive.

The broader possibilities are readily apparent and it is for the city's taking to expand the current vision for Edmond. In making Edmond a growing place with an ever-improving quality of life for all to enjoy, the possibilities for Edmond's future are nearly limitless.



---

## Next Steps

---

In summarizing the goals and providing the guidelines to success, the panel believes the city should develop a plan to accomplish the following:

### Short term:

- Analyze existing staff needs and realign or create newly defined staff positions.
- Create an effective multimodal plan to provide intentional communication with and between targeted audiences.

### Medium term:

- Remain focused on activity downtown, including aligning development and business targets with a larger vision.
- Improve the processes to ease the process for private risk development and investment.

### Long term:

- Establish a bold vision that aligns the process, the capital, and the community needs and lifestyle values of Edmond.
- Establish an executable plan that applies public resources in a manner that encourages private capital to work toward public-realm results by inducing and encouraging the private sector to develop in a system that follows the vision.

# About the Panel

## John M. Walsh III

Panel Chair  
Addison, Texas

Walsh is the chief executive officer and a founder of TIG, a real estate holding company established to advise, manage, operate, lease, and develop real estate investments for institutions, individuals, corporations, and companies.

Since its founding, TIG has grown its managed portfolio and leased portfolio from 1.8 million square feet to 14.1 million square feet in Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Memphis. In that time, TIG has developed over 2 million square feet and has been instrumental in the acquisition of over 10 million square feet on behalf of its clients.

Before starting TIG, Walsh spent 17 years with Trammell Crow Company in various leasing, development, and senior management roles. During his tenure as development partner for the northwest Dallas area market at Trammell Crow, he developed almost 5 million square feet of industrial, office, and service center space.

A Dallas native, Walsh has served as chairman, director, and trustee of various business, civic, and charitable organizations including Trammell Crow Employees Profit Sharing Trust, Valwood Improvement Authority, Carrollton Zoning Ordinance Board, Texas Commerce Bank, Farmers Branch Business Chamber of Commerce, Valwood Park Federal Credit Union, the North Texas District Council of ULI, and Sky Ranch Youth Camp.

Walsh is a member of the Texas State Bar, with a law degree from Texas Tech University School of Law. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Texas, Arlington.

## John R. Batey

Winnabow, North Carolina

JBatey has served as senior vice president of operations and development of the Wilmington (North Carolina) Housing Authority since July 2022. Prior to this appointment, Batey served as the director of housing and neighborhood development for the Wyoming Community Development Authority since October 2016, a role in which he directly administered the state of Wyoming's

low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program, in addition to all the state's major formula grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Batey has over 20 years of experience in the areas of community and economic development, affordable housing, urban planning, state/local government administration, and high-level policy analysis. His professional experience prior to Wyoming includes executive-level positions with the town of Parker, Colorado, and the Pueblo (Colorado) Urban Renewal Authority. He has also served with the State of Colorado Governor's Office, the Palm Beach County (Florida) Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Broward County (Florida) Housing Finance and Community Development Division.

Batey received his bachelor of arts degree in political science from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He also holds a master of arts degree in political science (with a minor in public administration) and a PhD in comparative studies, both from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Batey is a longstanding member of the Urban Land Institute, where he has served on the Redevelopment and Reuse Product Council since 2013. He is a certified planner with the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and is also certified as a housing development finance professional with the National Development Council. A native of southern Colorado, Batey now resides in Leland, North Carolina, with his wife and two children.

## Geoff Koski

Atlanta, Georgia

Koski leads KB Advisory Group, a 10-person Atlanta-based real estate and economic development consulting firm. He has 20 years of experience researching, analyzing, and reporting on real estate and community development trends across the United States.

His expertise facilitates clients' wide-ranging real estate and economic development advisory needs. His work focuses on identifying real estate development opportunities and their economic impacts in the context of a variety of land uses and locations, ranging from large area master plans to site-specific visions including residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects.

Koski often assists public- and private-sector clients in maximizing the value of their real estate and development opportunities, including helping Georgia cities create and use tax allocation districts (TADs), the state's version of tax increment financing. His teams complete dozens of assignments annually that lead to crucial development implementation strategies and tactics for cities, counties, community improvement districts, and private developers throughout the U.S. Southeast.

Koski is a leading local expert on the supply and demand of housing and real estate in the Atlanta region. He is frequently cited in the press and at professional events as a prominent subject matter specialist and participates as the market analyst on ULI Advisory Services panels throughout the nation. His professional affiliations include a full ULI membership and a spot on ULI Atlanta's Advisory Board and Livable Community Council. He is an alumnus of ULI Atlanta's Center for Leadership (2016) as well as the Atlanta Regional Commission's Regional Leadership Institute (2021). In addition, Koski is a former board chair of the Atlanta chapter of the Congress for the New Urbanism and former commissioner for the city of Decatur, Georgia, Historic Preservation Commission.

## William G. (Bill) Lashbrook III

Hopewell, New Jersey

In 2020, Lashbrook retired from PNC Bank, completing a 47-year banking career with the last 35 years in commercial real estate. He began his career in 1973 at the Bank of New York. After 12 years there as a corporate lender, Lashbrook moved to commercial real estate lending. In 1993, he joined MidLantic Bank as the real estate credit officer and retained that role after that bank's merger with PNC in 1997.

After joining PNC, Lashbrook held various roles, including providing customers with debt and equity capital for real estate investment, acquisition integration, internal bank risk management, and regulatory risk capital reporting for commercial real estate. In 2018, he led industry groups that successfully corrected, via congressional statute, a 2015 U.S. regulatory capital scheme that affected all U.S. banks. That regulation mismatched a capital surcharge requirement relative to the actual risk period on bank commercial real estate (CRE) development lending, increasing industry costs. The statute aligned the CRE surcharge with existing bank management and regulatory risk examination practices, freeing up billions of industry capital to support other types of lending.

Lashbrook has been a ULI member since 1998. In 2004, he arranged ULI's first sustainability discussion at the 2004 Fall Meeting. Titled "It's Green and It Works," this panel session played to a full house. He went on to become a founding member of ULI's Climate, Land Use, and Energy committee, a predecessor to the ULI Center for Sustainability and Economic Performance.

He has served on 10 Advisory Services panels, including the Institute's first panel focused on sustainability factors in Biloxi, Mississippi, in 2008 and was a member of ULI's "After Sandy" advisory panel that highlighted the need for resilience planning for the coastal areas of New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. In July 2019, Lashbrook was a member of the ULI panel advising property owners and District agencies on the implementation of Washington, D.C.'s energy efficiency and sustainability statute.

Also at ULI, he has been an active member and leader in product councils, first in Urban Development Mixed Use Councils, then an early member of the Responsible Property Investing Council, and later he cofounded the Redevelopment Reuse Product Council. Lashbrook is a governing trustee of ULI, a ULI Foundation governor, and on the board of ULI's Women's Leadership Initiative. In 2018, he completed a two-year term as an executive committee member of ULI Americas. Lashbrook graduated from Duke University in 1973 with a BA in political science and economics. He received an MBA from Seton Hall University in 1976.

## Brent Martin

Boulder, Colorado

Martin is a partner in LandDesign's Boulder office and is responsible for managing all office operations and directing design projects from conceptual planning through construction documents. With more than 25 years of experience, he has worked on a broad range of projects from large-scale master planning to small site design.

Martin's expertise lies in master-planned communities and mixed-use development, setting the vision to tell the story of place and ensuring the delivery of that vision through implementation. With his foundational knowledge in landscape architecture, Martin balances the responsibilities of land stewardship with creating enduring places that generate value for his clients and the community. He believes that working with the land grounds the panel's places in nature, while understanding what resonates with people creates connection to both place and community.



Within each of his projects, Martin works to tell a story that is authentic to the place and the community that lives, works, and plays within it. He attended Ball State University, where he received his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture, and is licensed in Colorado, Utah, and Washington. He has worked in nearly every office of LandDesign, which has informed his diverse skill set, and commitment to mentorship within his own office and beyond. He moved west to open the Boulder office of LandDesign in 2017, after nearly a decade in the D.C. office.

## Ann Chambers Taylor

Houston, Texas

Taylor guides the vision, direction, and execution of organization brands, communications, marketing, and public affairs initiatives. She recently joined the executive leadership team of Central Houston Inc., responsible for brand alignment and engagement with stakeholders for the four affiliated organizations, including Downtown Houston Management District, Downtown Redevelopment Authority, and Downtown Houston Civic Improvement Inc., its charitable organization.

Prior to joining Central Houston, Taylor was a consultant to Rice Management Company (RMC), steward of Rice University's \$8 billion endowment. She served as the marketing and communications strategy lead for Ion District, a 16-acre innovation district in Midtown, Houston, with RMC as owner/developer.

Taylor was senior vice president for Midway, where she created the brand, public relations, and community engagement to launch East River, a 150-acre urban waterfront redevelopment project less than one mile from downtown Houston. While at Midway, she also sourced and managed creative agencies in New York City, Charleston, Chicago, and Houston to develop brand architecture, identity, messaging, and data-driven marketing campaigns.

Taylor was the executive director of ULI Houston and San Antonio, winning grants for collaborative research with the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University on resilient suburban development. She directed a statewide advisory program and report, *Building a Healthier Texas*, and a Women's Leadership Initiative grant for all-female UrbanPlan training teams. A ULI technical assistance panel originated the Downtown Living Initiative tax incentive program, which Houston City Council doubled to spur the development of more than 5,000 new housing units in downtown. Taylor served as a spokeswoman, author, and local liaison on other initiatives and expert panels, including downtown park development, affordable housing, and disaster recovery

following Hurricane Ike. She is on the board of the Astrodome Conservancy, an organization inspired by the national ULI Advisory Services panel on repurposing the Astrodome.

A graduate of Rice University, Taylor is married to an architect and cofounded Truly Home, a 501(c)3 organization, with him to advocate for the development of sustainable, storm-resilient, affordable housing in Houston's historic Fifth Ward.

## Tamela Thornton

Houston, Texas

Thornton is the executive director of ULI Dallas–Fort Worth. She leads the 1,400-member council's business and policy strategy, providing commercial real estate thought leadership to the market. Formerly, she was a partner with ESmith Legacy Holdings LLC, a real estate solutions firm, managing E Smith Communities, which focused on the acquisition and development of catalytic assets to help change the trajectory of urban communities.

Thornton has over 30 years of industry experience, including retail development, brokerage, and market/financial feasibility analysis. Her skillset evolved from work with Starbucks Coffee Company and PepsiCo/YUM Brands, as well as economic impact and financial feasibility consulting for public agencies and private developers. She has extensive knowledge of many domestic cities, as well as international markets in Asia, South Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Thornton holds bachelor's and master's degrees in regional science from the University of Pennsylvania. She is on the advisory boards of the Trust for Public Land (North Texas Area), the Dallas Zoo, and the Heritage Giving Circle.

## Ross Tilghman

Seattle, Washington

A transportation planning consultant with his own practice, the Tilghman Group, Tilghman creates transportation plans for a wide variety of land uses to fit their environmental, historical, and cultural settings. He has 37 years of experience, including serving as executive director of a downtown business improvement district.

Tilghman develops circulation and parking solutions for parks, zoos, recreation areas, special event facilities, mixed-use projects, downtowns, and historic districts. His approach emphasizes

Careful observation of how people use transportation, abiding respect for the setting, and a clear understanding of the client's objectives. Services include transportation master plans, parking management plans, parking revenue projections, and development strategies for governmental, not-for-profit, and private-sector clients facing land use challenges. He also serves as an expert witness on contested land use/transportation projects in Washington state.

Tilghman is a full member of the Urban Land Institute, regularly participating on advisory panels for communities across the country and serving on ULI's Suburban Development and Redevelopment Council. He served five years on the Seattle Design Commission, including one year as chair, reviewing public projects for design excellence. He recently completed 12 years of volunteer service on an advisory board to Seattle Parks and Recreation as treasurer and then president for a local rowing and sailing center.

Tilghman received his BA in history from Washington University in St. Louis and his MA in geography from the University of Washington.



2001 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-4948  
[uli.org](http://uli.org)