



Imagine Durant: Thought Leaders Dialogue Harvest Report

Tascha Bond
Harvest Storyweaver

April 17-19, 2015



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Imagine Durant Thought Leaders**Gary Batton**

Choctaw Nation

Tammy Cross

Kopper Kettle co-owner

James Dalton

Bryan County Emergency Management

Ahmad El-Katib

Small Business Development Center

Nancy Ferris

Museum Curator

Kara Hendrickson

Imagine Durant Executive Director

Wayne Jones

Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Lenzie Knight

Theorem

Greg Massey

First United Bank

Duane Meredith

Durant Independent School District

Tiffany Newton

Graphic Design Artist

Larry Peck

Cardinal Glass

Greg Phillips

State Farm Insurance/Boys & Girls Club

Jerry Polson

Prayer Warrior

Emily Redman

District Attorney

Stuart Rustin

Rustin Concrete

Jenny Sanchez

Cherokee Communications

Sarah Sherrer

City of Durant

Brenda Shipman

Kopper Kettle co-owner

Sara Jane Smallwood

Choctaw Nation

Kyle Stafford

Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Luke Willman

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Blake Wright

Taco Casa owner

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Integral City Team Leader

Integral City Meshworks Inc.

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Harvest Storyweaver

Imagine Durant Convenes a Dialogue

“We cannot do this alone. It is going to take the community.”

Participant

On April 17-19, 2015, *Imagine Durant* along with the Integral City team convened a dialogue where community thought leaders met to exchange and brainstorm possibilities for the future of Durant.

Those present pulled inspiration from their surroundings at the historical Three Valley Museum, located in downtown Durant. Twenty-four Durant thought leaders and community members from a wide variety of organizations, businesses and industries took time from their family and friends to share their stories, hopes, concerns, and visions for the city of Durant, Oklahoma.

The thought leaders for the initial *Imagine Durant* dialogue were chosen from the four voices of the community (Citizens, Civil Society, City Managers and Business) based on their experiences, background and diversity. However, over the course of the weekend the group expressed the importance of acquiring input and feedback from the community as a whole. As a group, they were challenged on relevant topics concerning Durant as they worked to develop answers to the biggest questions on the minds of their fellow community members.

“This is the kind of work that belongs to the community and it can’t happen unless the life of the community runs through it.”

Marilyn Hamilton
Integral City Team Leader

“We thank you so much for this occasion. Pray you will guide our thoughts in what Durant can be. We pray you will initialize in our brain ideas and thoughts that perhaps we may have never had before. Take us somewhere we have never been.”

Jerry Polson
Prayer Warrior

How to Have a Successful Dialogue

- Listen compassionately
- Honor and respect each person’s contribution
- Speak from own experience
- Avoid criticism and persuasion
- Be aware of how often and how long you speak
- Seek to understand and learn
- Make sure everyone has a chance to talk

This dialogue provided a unique opportunity for open and honest discussion free of personal agendas, where all were encouraged to speak freely as citizens. The setting promoted an environment where each person could reflect, share perspectives, tap into individual wisdom and creativity and address the key issues affecting Durant.

Chief Gary Batton of the Choctaw Nation welcomed the group by sharing his excitement of the opportunities to be had in Durant. He referred to initial conversations that occurred over two years ago among key business leaders in regards to the future of Durant. The creation of *Imagine Durant* transpired from the desire to move Durant forward.

Chief Batton shared the story of how the Choctaw Nation, who in 1847, was able to scrape together \$170 to send to Ireland which helped feed starving people during the Great Potato Famine. When word reached them about the plight of the Irish, the familiarity of the stories opened wounds that had just started to heal. Wounds that were created through the journey, which came to be known as the Trail of Tears. According to a recent article in the Daily Oklahoman, Chief Batton said it was the tribe's way of saying, "Your story is our story." This is one example of how the Choctaw Nation continues to work with others to provide opportunities of progression and growth.

"We love this community. We are going to grow in spite of ourselves. We have to make sure that growth is very strategic and focused."

Chief Gary Batton
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Day 1: We Begin Our Story

Story is sacred food

The dialogue began with reflections among participants over an evening meal where they each shared stories of their personal connection with the community. Their affection for the small town atmosphere that has grown tremendously over the past 20 years was evident. One told of how he attended college at Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SE) over 30 years ago and fell in love with the town and the people. "It reminds me of Mayberry."¹

A long-term resident also shared his deep appreciation for the great care, concern and generosity he received from the community when his family was faced with a grave situation. His experience is an example of faith and community combined,

¹ Mayberry was the fictitious community setting of the 1960s *Andy Griffith Show*.

which truly embodies the spirit of Durant. “The outpouring from the community, the people you know and see. It is a close-knit community and it is extremely valuable. It is a benefit from living in a small town.”

Another participant provided an example of the spirit of the community through an experience her husband had while training for a marathon. After a recent training session he stopped at McDonalds to rest on the curb. His breathing haggard, his appearance disheveled from the long run he was approached by a gentleman who thought he was homeless and offered him food and a card from his church. “Although we may not have everything we need, the people who are here are invested and care about the community.”

While many participants were born and raised in Durant, two had actually moved to Durant from huge cities – one from the Middle East and the other South America. Several participants had left Durant to seek opportunities but found their way back “home”. One participant couldn’t wait to get out, seeking opportunities in a larger metropolitan city that offered a faster pace of life complete with a thriving career as an attorney. However, he felt the quality of life offered to his family was not ideal. He and his wife were working and being successful in work but not worried about keeping up in the big city “rat race”. This feeling spurred them to move back to Durant. He has now found that he has time to give back and be involved in the community.

“I discovered my passion for kids and I volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club. We are on the very edge of really making a difference.”

Greg Phillips

State Farm Insurance/Boys & Girls Club

“Giving back doesn’t have to be in large ostentatious ways. It can be in encouragement, listening, and a small gesture sometimes. You never know what a person might need.”

Participant

Participants shared experiences of a community that has seen tremendous growth over the past 20 years (an increase in population of 32% since 1990). In 2004, Durant was ranked as the fastest growing rural city in Oklahoma, having the fastest growth rate outside of the [Oklahoma City](#) and [Tulsa](#) metropolitan areas. Several participants moved from smaller, rural areas and considered Durant a bigger city with many opportunities. “I lived an hour from Wal-Mart. I thought of Durant as a big city. There is a college and stop lights.”

While many recognize the progression of the community, several participants are not life-long residents of Durant and did not experience the growth as it occurred. Moreover they came with “big city lenses” when moving here, and at first seemed to see a small city with few amenities. Excited to tour his new community, one participant was taken back that it took only 15 minutes to see the whole city. Although proud of the growth that has occurred over the past few years, he sees great potential, His desire to see additional new businesses in Durant was echoed by the group.

One participant in particular experienced a culture shock with her move to Durant. “I wondered how such a small place could exist.” But it was the small, close-knit community mentality that provided a necessity when she needed it most. As a college student in a new country, her resources were limited. She often found herself hungry. It was the local church groups that provided hot meals on the campus of SE each week that allowed her to have two ‘feast days’ a week. She expressed her appreciation for those who were meeting the needs of students. This appreciation has fueled her desire to volunteer and give back to a community that has given her so much.

“The community I grew up in disappeared in size because of growth. But the service I saw in Durant kept me here. That service, faith based - giving to others - is what I think of when I think of Durant.”

Participant

The variety of stories shared indicates that Durant is a small city that places value on family, education, and the power of community. In the words of Emily Redman, District Attorney, “I love the fact that our community is growing and we have all these connections that provide the sense of knowing everyone. But the reality is that we are really growing fast.”

“I recently had someone from Dallas visit Durant. I took them to Roadhouse to eat but I knew so many people in the restaurant that we were often interrupted. He asked if that got on my nerves but I told him that is why I live here.”

Greg Massey
First United Bank

“This community has been fantastic to me. It’s where I’ve raised my family. It’s where I want to be.”

James Dalton
Bryan County Emergency Management

"I started a business on Main Street with my best friend. It's the heart of our city. We have people come in and say it feels like coming into a friend's home. We want more stores downtown that make people feel that way."

Brenda Shipman
Co-owner Kopper Kettle

Day 2: We Ask Good Questions

"What is next? What is the strategy? We have to create a vision together."

Participant

On Day 2, in the following morning, a panel of four participants offered an overview of a few key issues facing city growth and infrastructure, economy, community vibrancy and diversity of Durant.

Sarah Sherrer, Assistant City Manager, spoke of the various infrastructure responsibilities of the city, which include water treatment and delivery systems, numerous buildings and facilities, parks and other services. All infrastructures must be created and maintained on a limited budget. At this time, the main focus is on water including alternative water resources. Sarah explained that there must be redundancy in the water delivery system in order to eliminate the threat to the main water sources. In order to bring new business and people to Durant the process has to begin now.

Ahmed El-Katib, originally from Amman, Jordan, now Manager of the Oklahoma Small Business Development Center provided information in regards to the economic factors of Durant. He projected the growth of the Durant population to reach 25,277, suggesting that people will be staying in Durant for years to come. The increase in population will drive the need for additional grocery stores, clothing stores and department stores according to the GAP analysis². This simple tool helps identify the gap between the current situation and the future state that the city wants to reach, along with the tasks needed to close this gap. (Further economic data was supplied by Durant Industrial Authority as a handout for participants – see Appendix A.)

Lenzie Knight of Theorem is an active volunteer in the community, serving on a variety of organizational boards. She offered insight into the community vibrancy in

² Details are available from Oklahoma, Small Business Development Center, Southeastern University

Durant. With over 48 non-profit organizations³, the people in the community work to meet the needs of others but often work is short lived due to lack of long term planning. An example was provided with the revitalization of downtown Main Street. Street corners were landscaped with amazing plants and custom benches were strategically placed to create a vibrant downtown area. However, lack of upkeep has left overgrown weeds that aren't attractive to residents or visitors. Durant has wonderful energy, volunteers and a giving mentality but individual organizations often operate on their own path. According to Lenzie, the community needs to work together to grow and learn rather than each make mistakes independently.

Tiffany Newton came to Durant from Bogotá, Columbia. She gave a sobering look at diversity in Durant. She spoke of those in the community who feel invisible and as if they are not important because they are foreigners. She told of an Asian couple that drove through Durant and fell in love with the community. They decided to open a business and buy a home and although they are trying to fit in they feel as if there is no support from the community. Tiffany discussed the impact that culture can have on the community by learning from each other. "We already have diversity here but if we don't nurture it they will disappear and places like Sherman will take advantage of it." She recommended classes for those who are trying to learn English so they can become better residents.

"We need to be thoughtful about serving all populations."

Participant

Although information shared was intended to energize participants, it also solidified the need for visioning and planning as Durant continues to grow and progress.

"Deterrents to growth in our community are that in 2001 we had a Master Plan. We already did that. And here we are in 2015 and we still band aid patch problems."

Stuart Rustin

Rustin Concrete

Rotating through a series of small groups, participants turned their attention toward the following questions:

- **What do we imagine for Durant's future?**

³ The list available at Chamber of Commerce or online here
<http://www.taxexemptworld.com/organizations/durant-ok-oklahoma.asp>

- **What are your biggest hopes and concerns for the future?**
- **How are we preparing for resilience?**
- **What examples can you identify as signs of progress?**

"It is going to take some time and a lot of work. But the spark has started and I am excited about it."

Duane Meredith
Durant Independent School District



Participants could eagerly visualize a healthy economy and community 50 years from now. However, they drew on the realization that action must take place in the present day in order for an imagined future to come to be achieved.

The imagined future of Durant was broken into overlapping but unified ideas:

A healthy environment

- Creating trails for walking and cycling that encompass and link the city
- Utilizing Durant's natural environment, e.g. park land, lakes for wellbeing infrastructure
- Connecting the dots: City to Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SE); Main Street corridor; Lake Texoma to Durant; Choctaw to Durant
- Promoting the city as a the safe town that it is

A diverse, thriving economy

- Developing and training qualified applicants for the job market; matching the needs of current and future employers
- Extending the landing strip at local airport to allow for and attract visitors; also capitalizing on the strong aviation program at SE
- Improving sufficient transportation systems and infrastructure such as streets, sidewalks and neighborhood walkability
- Creating and growing a city planning division and spot zoning that creates a plan and follows through to implement it
- Creating diversity in business opportunities including manufacturing, tourism and the arts
- Educating citizens on the tax base, e.g. where and how the city obtains and utilizes funding

A community built around people

- Creating a drug free economy through education, mentoring, positive youth, programs and sports and higher paying jobs
- Attracting young families and retirees
- Encouraging people to take ownership and fix complaints, e.g. adopt a street corner, clean up community
- Investing in children
- Converting of rental properties to homeowners
- Increasing and creating diversity in housing
- Reinvesting in the school system with new elementary school
- Creating activities for young people
- Instilling and promoting community pride
- Continuing to be mindful of socioeconomic and class segregation and enabling changes for integration

"I love this town. I want to see it succeed. I want to see it grow. I hope it never grows so much that it loses the charm that drew me to it."

Wayne Jones

Southeastern Oklahoma State University

"Expose real issues of the community. Gather useful data and make sense of it. Follow through with the action plan. Then communicate beyond silos."

Participant

Participants' fears about Durant's future primarily arose from concerns regarding what is perceived as the lack of strategic planning over the course of many years.



Those fears were categorized as follows:

Strategic Planning Concerns

- Lack of information about organization chart or who is in charge in city departments
- “Fix it” mentality stemming from lack of strategic planning
- Unattractive community due to poorly maintained roads, sidewalks and home maintenance
- Strategies to attract new commerce that are not aligned with a city vision
- Lack of well-maintained existing infrastructure
- Lack of reliable resources to address many of the concerns listed above

Economic Concerns

- Negative economic impact with potential with Texas gaming coming into being
- Cost of living, e.g. sales tax
- Loss of revenue from building permits fee structure, i.e. reconsider importance of ‘impact fees’

Social Concerns

- Overlooking foreign students, university community, minorities and little children
- Insufficient adult education and literacy programs, including an English as a Second Language (ESL) program
- High poverty percentages, i.e. how do you have such low unemployment but high poverty?
- Dependence on generational welfare
- Apparent Jekyll and Hyde pretense about hidden issues that are really darker and troubling (e.g. what police see firsthand)
- Community that is hungry and requires so many food based resources
- Lack of housing for elderly and senior citizens

“We are in a transition from a small country town to small urban town. There is no strategic planning. We need the right people at the table otherwise there will always be a fix it mentality and not a plan.”

Participant

“I am excited that our community has chosen to be proactive and having a plan as opposed to being reactive.”

Blake Wright
Taco Casa owner

“What we have done is worthwhile and very good. But I want to be the cautious optimist rather than the perfectionist. We need reality things so we can make it better tomorrow. Things as simple as pulling the weeds from the sidewalk.”

Larry Peck
Cardinal Glass

Participants identified several communities with engaging activities that could serve as models of success during the planning phases of *Imagine Durant*.

Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area Project 3 is a 10-year planning public works and redevelopment project funded by a voter-approved sales tax. Over the course of the project new developments will include convention centers, public park, biking and walking trails, water park, modern streetcar transit, and sidewalks to name a few.

Watters Creek in Allen, TX offers shopping, dining, music and kids activities. It is situated in a beautiful, soothing natural environment and was described as an ideal place where people go and relax.

The **Farmers Market at Chestnut Square in McKinney, TX** offers a mix of old fashioned candy, ice cream, craft items and undeniable variety of farm fresh produce and products.

Sherman Town Center provides a model of outdoor shopping, dining and entertainment. Many Durant residents travel south on Highway 75 to take advantage of these amenities.

Although fear can sometimes overshadow hope, participants identified aspects of wellbeing of Durant. Living, learning, working and relating as a community contributed to a sense of wholeness and belonging to many involved in the dialogue. The overall thoughts centered on the sense of community in Durant, as well as the passion to help others. There is a sense of pride in the community that is undeniable.

"I try to find the good in things. I see the problems and internalize them and it bothers me. It comes out in tears. I feel very encouraged that others feel the same as me and want to do something about it."

Jenny Sanchez
Cherokee Communications

"The fact we are starting in the spring is significant. Hope springs eternal. There will be hot humid days ahead, cold days, maybe even some dying days ahead. But there is hope and that is refreshing."

Luke Willman
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

How are we creating our future today?

After lunch, on the second day, participants formed three mixed groups to discuss several possible realities for the city. The Integral City Team consultants working in parallel, brought "fresh eyes" to the challenge. Each group prepared a Blog post and Tweet with Hashtag for the future of Durant 2065: the darkest possible scenario, the status quo and the ideal future.

Dark Days Ahead

Blog: Durant experienced a dark downward spiral as the community recognized the 30th anniversary of legalized gambling in Texas. In recognition of the anniversary, the former student body of SE set fire to the last remaining building on campus. The fire soon spread to the surrounding neighborhoods due to the lack of water available to the last city funded fire track. Durant was in disrepair due to the diminished tax base and the end of welfare and charity. Social unrest grew as a result of increased drug use and political corruptness, all which resulted in jail overflow. As a result, the population dropped significantly, parks and neighborhoods were abandoned and the hospital closed.

Tweet: Casino Closed on 30th Anniversary Texas Gambling. SE Closed permanently. City Tax Base eliminated. Extreme Fire Risk.

#??imagedurant??

**Status Quo**

Blog: City infrastructure in Durant continued to be an issue. The city found it was lacking in everything and continued to put band-aides on problems, which resulted in loss of potential economic growth. Durant continued to be a bright spot in southeastern Oklahoma and is an ideal location for highway and rail transportation. However, it appears as if the city simply can't put it all together. City government and citizens continue to have the mentality that 'it has never been done that way before' and 'it is good enough' and because of it Durant is still thought of as a little town with a little town mentality.

Tweet: We've never done it that way before. **#statusquosucks**

Durant Leads the Way

Blog: Durant is recognized as the “Best Place to Live in the World” for the tenth year in a row because of its intergenerational connections and caring citizens. Older adults continuously work with young people in a well-planned community where the past is honored yet the future is bright. The city is bustling with transportation of all types. However, it has become a walkable community where citizens can be seen walking and biking on any given day. Healthy lifestyles are the norm in Durant. The local arts district is vibrant and thriving with activities for all ages. It is because of the activities that crime and drug use is nonexistent. The strong, integrated educational system in Durant produces citizens who are educated and involved. It is because of this involvement that people feel connected. Their voices create a sense of community so much so that everyone accepts each other and diversity no longer exists. The well maintained roads lead to beautifully cared for homes, exemplifying private ownership throughout the city. Leadership is consistent, collaborative and is the main component of a city that is progressive.

Tweet: Durant OK wins Best Place in the World to live, 10th year in row.
#whywouldyouliveanywhereelse



The Stars Aligned in Durant (Integral City Fresh Eyes)

Blog: In 2015 a gritty town called Durant made a choice to commit to its future. Nestled in the sweet spot of beautiful southeast Oklahoma at the confluence of river, rail, recreation and air, the past 50 years have been a shining success for Durant – a town that never stopped placing value on family, education and the power of community. Starting with the expansion of

the glass factory in 2020, fueled by a world-class skills and training program at the local SE University, and anchored by the new investment by the Choctaw Nation in 2025, this community is a vibrant example of a modern city that never forgot its past. Durant boasts a startling cultural and historical diversity. On any given Saturday at the Dixon Market Square in downtown you will find a refreshing mix of artisans, educators, families and visitors enjoying the unique local vendors, stopping to listen to music or talk. Many have come to discover the magic of this amazing town that found its identity and shared its values with the world. Many more will come. Many have stayed. It is an experience not to be missed!!

Tweet: 9:04am @TripAdvisor This Year's #bestpulbicmarket in US is @ Dixon Market Square in Durant OK #durantrocks.ok @2.47pm Retweets 6,314,069

“There is validity in all of these futures and this is both hopeful and scary. There was a lot of love in what was said and fear of what was said. And all of it is possible.”

Participant

“Status quo is scarier than the dark side. The dark side has some things that we can’t control or help. But status quo, to step back and do nothing and achieve what you can get is just sad.”

Greg Massey
First United Bank

“Downtown is working to provide supplemental things to attract people. Music at Roma’s, cooking classes at Kopper Kettle, and the Artwalk to name a few. Each business is partnered with a business. This is a sign of progress.”

Sara Jane Smallwood
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The final stages of dialogue allowed participants to identify signs of hope and progress already visible throughout Durant. These indicators are broken into three categories that include cultural/social, economic and signs of infrastructural progress.

Cultural/Social

- Artwalk held downtown the first Saturday of each month
- SE creates community through tailgating

- New high school shows the city is investing in education
- Frequency of health conscious activities – 5k runs, biking, crossfit, company wellness programs, vote to fund for community fitness facility
- Willingness for self-evaluation
- Willingness to dedicate time
- Boys and Girls Club
- Imagine Durant
- Entrepreneurial spirit with small businesses
- Chamber willing to take on new organizations by providing mentoring efforts with the addition of Durant Young Professional's and Imagine Durant
- Regional food bank
- Increased medical services including the OSU medical residency program
- Recycling center with sorting staff
- Vocational trade schools
- Choctaw protection of water rights
- University offers business programs, competitive aviation degree, masters on-line and articulation agreements with other institutions
- Public transportation collaboration and growth

Economic

- Public transit offered to residents
- Choctaw Casino and Resort expansion is a sign of growth and progress
- Liquor by the drink enables Durant to attract more restaurants
- Strong banking systems
- Promise Zone emphasizes small business development and economic opportunity
- Economic job growth
- New businesses have registered
- Diverse downtown area
- Uniqueness and variety due to locally owned family businesses

Infrastructure

- Addition of data lines and fiber optics
- Water tower pressure for fire suppression
- Main Street improvements
- Multi-sports complex
- SE has completed over \$60 million in improvements over 10 years
- Increased hotel capacity
- New fire station, police station and city library
- New housing developments
- Airport improvements

- Highway 70 bypass to reduce the wear and tear on Main and Mulberry and 1st and Main
- Splash park
- Three railways converge in Durant

“SE is special, Durant is special. It is amazing to visit with alumni from other states and to be able to sit down and talk about the changes being made. We’ve seen Durant change.”

Kyle Stafford
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

“I love our school system and we have some of the best schools around. I was on the school board when we built the new high school. It was a difficult process but it happened because the community got behind it.”

Tammy Cross
Kopper Kettle co-owner

Day 3: We take the next step together

“It really makes me feel good because we thought we were in it by ourselves but we have a whole community.”

Participant

On Day 3, participants wrapped up the dialogue by reflecting on burning questions, offers, commitments, thoughts and insights discovered throughout the process.

There was an overwhelming agreement that Durant places value on family, education and community. However, due to the lack of strategic planning in regards to economic development and infrastructure the city has not appeared to reach its potential.

Imagine Durant is a community-based initiative for creating a unified vision and the strategies to implement it. This is a desired vision of all participants.

A number of participants exhibited **optimism for the visioning process of *Imagine Durant*** and are refueled to tackle the challenges identified. The hesitation came from concerns that stemmed from previous attempts to move Durant forward. Those attempts included grandiose ideas that never reached fruition due to lack of follow-through. Participants also expressed a desire to see progress occur.

Participants agreed that in order for Durant to move forward **additional partners must be identified**. These partners include business and organizational partners as

well as citizenry. Dialogue centered on opportunities to inform the public about *Imagine Durant*.

Educating key partners and citizens about the vision of *Imagine Durant* is necessary to move forward.

Much of the dialogue centered on **including all of the community in the process** of improving Durant. Community pride and unity were recognized as key behaviors necessary for citizens at all levels. Participants were also advised that science shows that in order to change a system – **only 10-15% of the population needs to change. This reframed expectations and possibilities for engaging key partners.**

What avenues can be created to keep people aware and involved with the community? is a question for future discussions. This involvement must include the investing of time, treasure and talent.

The development of a strategic planning process as an outcome of Imagine Durant might be the basis for future conversations.

Participants inquired about how to raise money for seed capital for a project such as *Imagine Durant*. Echoed throughout discussions was the **need for funding that would bring to fruition the Durant imagined**. Who or what are the wider connections to funding sources outside the city and the Choctaw Nation was a question brought up more than once throughout the dialogue. Additional queries as to the right organizational structure (non-profit, or other) were also brought forth.

“What a great resource our people are. We want to continue to focus on people. We would really benefit from pulling in people who are not community leaders. How do we make people invested?”

Emily Redman
District Attorney

“I have carried the Imagine Durant donation card around in my purse since the Chamber banquet. I pull it out every now and then but I haven’t filled it out yet because I didn’t know enough about it. [But after this dialogue I will fill it out with a donation.]

Jenny Sanchez
Cherokee Communications

"I knew I couldn't miss the opportunity to come back to Durant and be a part of something so important to our community. Thank you all for being a part of this process as we build our future."

Kara Hendrickson
Imagine Durant

Inviting Personal Response-Ability

"Take risks, step out, and be heard. Be the voice."

Participant

The visioning process ignited a flame within participants. As the dialogue concluded, they offered to champion the cause and volunteer their time and resources in taking the first step towards an imagined Durant. However, they realize they cannot do it alone and identified what they need in order to reach the intended goal. (In fact at time of writing one person was so successful in offering to lead grass roots efforts, they could not take on any more projects.)

"I can educate the public regarding the revenue sources of the city and how they are spent."

Sarah Sherrer
Assistant City Manager

"I can help communicate our vision to the community. In order to do so I will need promotional materials about Imagine Durant."

Emily Redman
District Attorney

"In order to keep the money in Durant's economy I can utilize the economic gardening concept⁴. I need the right people to listen and act on the concept."

Ahmad El-Katib
Oklahoma Small Business Development Center

⁴ Economic gardening is an economic development model that embraces the fundamental idea that entrepreneurs drive economies. The model seeks to create jobs by supporting existing companies in a community.
<http://www.kauffman.org/what-we-do/resources/policy/economic-gardening>

"I can personally offer help with communications, especially with leveraging social media. SE Athletics can provide volunteers, especially during the University's academic year."

Luke Willman
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

"Share communication and time commitment skills are what I can offer. I need more avenues of communication besides the newspaper."

Tiffany Newton
Graphic Designer

"I can offer my time and also serve on civic boards. I need the ability to motivate others and let them know their gifts and talents are needed for success."

Nancy Farris
Three Valley Museum



Kara Hendrickson & Nancy Ferris

Participants also made a list of key items necessary to move toward the next step of *Imagine Durant*. They Include:

- Leverage social media as a communication tool
- Continue to speak positively and use the hashtag #imaginedurant on Facebook, Twitter, etc. whenever appropriate
- Continue the conversation and spread the spark; participate in grassroots efforts
- Identify opportunities and apply each of the talents present to current issues the city is facing
- Tell the story of *Imagine Durant* to five people and encourage them to tell five other people to spread the word
- Start to solve the problem of Main Street flowerbeds
- Ask other stakeholders for their perspective on what is Durant's status and future.
- Bring construction resources to the process
- Continue participation
- Solidify *Imagine Durant's* organizational structure and begin to seek out grants, funding and other partnerships that will sustain the vision and goals

The *Imagine Durant* visioning process, with this dialogue, is the first of many conversations on Durant's future. The objective is to create a catalyst for that vision. The safe and open forum for ongoing dialogue is created to reach individuals from all sectors across the community. A dialogue with the public is scheduled on June 13, 2015. Policy makers will meet in September, 2015.

Story is
 sacred food
 a sacred pride
 in community
 in personal generosity
 I'm a live one
 serving, giving
 the spirit of home
 in my heart
 to the promise of Durant
 to the promise of being here
 where I choose to be
 to grow
 with our family of well-being
 standing out
 (out of our own way)
 we are live ones
 embracing the village story
 on our shoulders
 our sacred food

Sacred Food

Harvested by Beth Sanders



APPENDIX A: Durant Industrial Authority Economic FAQ

**LOCATION**

County	Bryan
Nearest Major City	Dallas, TX
Distance to Nearest Major City	95 miles
City Size in Square Miles	26.76
County Size in Square Miles	943

POPULATION 2013

Durant	16,425
Bryan County	44,244
County Population Percent Change (2010-2013)	4.3%
Bryan County Population Per Mile	46.9
Median Age (Durant)	31
Median Age (Bryan County)	35

(Source: US Census Bureau, City-Data.com)

INCOME (Bryan County)

2008-2012 Median Household Income	\$37,883
2012 Per Capita Income In Past 12 Months	\$19,887
2009 Bryan County Average Wage	\$31,818

RETAIL SALES GROWTH

*FY 2008	\$10,606,568.00
*FY 2009	\$13,256,866.00
Percentage Increase	23.5%

*(Year-to-Date Comparisons: July 1 - May 30 based on 1% Sales Tax Figures)

CLIMATE

Average January Temperature:	42F
July High Temperature	93F
Annual Rainfall	43.70"
Annual Snowfall	2.8"
Annual Flying Days	347
Humidity	70%

POLICE/FIRE PROTECTION

Police Department Personnel	
City: Full-Time Officers	40
Reserve Officers	17
County: Full-Time Deputies	13
Reserve Deputies	13
Jail: Central	
Fire Stations:	3
Full-Time Firefighters	33
1 Chief 1 Deputy Chief 1 Fire Marshall	
Fire Insurance Rating	4
DISPATCH: 24 HOURS	
ENHANCED 911 EMERGENCY SERVICES	

September 2014

DISTANCE TO MAJOR CITIES

Atlanta, GA	795	Memphis, TN	445
Chicago, IL	838	New Orleans, LA	570
Dallas, TX	94	New York, NY	1,516
Denver, CO	777	Oklahoma City, OK	150
Detroit, MI	1,070	San Francisco, CA	1,737
Houston, TX	332	St. Louis, MO	537
Kansas City, KS	405	Seattle, WA	2,112
Tulsa, OK	164	Los Angeles, CA	1,437
Washington, DC	1,321	Mexico (Laredo, TX)	524

TRANSPORTATION**DURANT REGIONAL EAKER FIELD AIRPORT**

Newly constructed 7,800 sq. ft. terminal building
Aircraft maintenance, tie-down and hangar
5,000 ft. lighted concrete runway
Navigation guild
Plane rental
Flight training
24-hour fuel, pilot lounge

COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS

Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport	98 miles
Dallas Love Field Airport	95 miles
Will Rogers International Airport (Oklahoma City)	150 miles
Tulsa International Airport	172 miles

BUS SERVICE, SORTS**& TAPS PUBLIC TRANSIT**

Greyhound Bus Lines; Public Transit serves all ages and income groups.

RAIL

Kiamichi Railroad, Kansas City Southern, Union Pacific,
Burlington Northern Santa Fe
Amtrak (north/south) Passenger train between Dallas, TX
and Oklahoma City, OK (45 miles away)

INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS

I-35 (north/south) 50 miles west
Connects Canada with Mexico
I-40 (east/west) 118 miles north
Connects Greensboro, NC to Los Angeles, CA
I-20 (east/west) 100 miles south
Connects Florence, SC to Pecos, TX
I-45 (north/south) 95 miles south
Connects Dallas, TX to Houston, TX

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	6500
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	900
PRC/Alorica	510
Medical Center of Southeastern Oklahoma	615
Durant Big Lots Distribution Center	500
Durant Public Schools	476
Wal-Mart Super Center	431
Indian Nation Wholesale	286
Cardinal Glass FG	262
First United Bank	247
Eagle Suspensions	180
Roll Offs	93
Rustin Concrete	80
GAMCO/Bohrick	71
Texoma Manufacturing, LLC.	64
First Texoma National Bank	49
Sports City Café	55
The Tile Shop	40
Nichol's Dollar Saver	25

UTILITIES**Electric**

Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company
Southeastern Electric Cooperative

Natural Gas

Oklahoma Natural Gas Company

LP Gas

Blackburn Propane Luke Brothers
Russell's Rural Fuel Inc. Cyclone LP Gas
McGraw Propane Trammell's LP Gas Co.

Telephone

AT&T Fiber Service: Yes Digital Service: Yes

Water Supply

Supplier - City of Durant
Primary Source - Blue River
Secondary Source - Lake Durant
Capacity of Plant: 10 MGD
Storage Capacity -
Ground - 2.7 MG Elevated - 4.25 MG

Waste Water

Durant has an activated sludge plant using sequencing batch reactors designed to operate under non-steady conditions with anaerobic digestion. The city's wastewater treatment plant is currently operating at approximately 67% of hydraulic capacity.
Authority: City Utility Authority
Design Capacity: 3.55 MGD
Present Load: 2.37 MGD

BRYAN COUNTY LABOR FORCE

Labor Force	7/2014	20,166
Number Employed	7/2014	19,297
Number Unemployed	7/2014	869
Unemployment Rate	7/201	4.3%

DURANT LABOR FORCE EDUCATION LEVELS

Level of Education	Percent Adult Workers
High School	26.7%
Associates Degree	29.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	24.9%

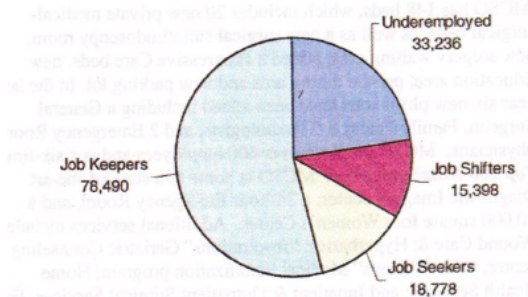
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

	Bryan County	Oklahoma	United States
May 2014	4.5%	4.6%	6.3%
June 2014	4.6%	4.5%	6.1%
July 2014	4.3%	4.6%	6.2%

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL TRIVIA

Daytime Population Change Due to Commuting is + 32.5%

Workers Who Work and Live In This City - 73.2%

Availability of Labor in South Central Oklahoma Labor Force Area**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT:**

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