



2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Acknowledgements



City Council

- Yoli Vazquez, Mayor (Ward 4)
- Doug Dow, Vice-Mayor (Ward 3)
- Karen Hudson, At-Large
- Joe Mankin, Ward 1
- Jeremy Johnson, Ward 2

Planning Commission

- Dale Rex
- Adam Crabtree
- Daniel Bonar
- Brandy Kaeshoefer
- Shari Powell

Ada Advisory Committee

- Yoli Vazquez, Mayor
- Karen Hudson, City Council
- Adam Crabtree, Planning Commission
- Dale Rex, Planning Commission
- Carol Ervin, Grow Ada
- Bridgette Jones, Grow Ada
- Victor Bolen, Pontotoc County
- Josh Davis, Chickasaw Nation
- Wendell Godwin, East Central University
- Preston Draper, East Central University
- Chase Sanders, Developer
- Margaret Barton, Real Estate Agent
- Sara Jane Johnson, Real Estate Agent

- Sarah Frye, Ada Homeless Services
- Wendi Zachary, Ada Housing Authority
- Tommy Eaton, City Manager
- Angie Stout, Assistant City Manager

Additional City of Ada Staff

- Melissa Jones, Interim Community Development Director
- Frank Stout, City Attorney
- Michael Wicker, City Engineer
- Lisa Bratcher, Public Information Director
- Lexie Baker, Planning and Zoning Coordinator
- Nick Thurman, Assistant City Attorney

Wallace Design Collective

- Alec Bass, Principal
- Colton Wayman, Planner
- Purvi Patel, Planner
- Justin DeBruin, Planner
- Chris Chiodini, Economic Development
- Kiel Kondrick, Planning Assistant
- Austin Fessler, GIS

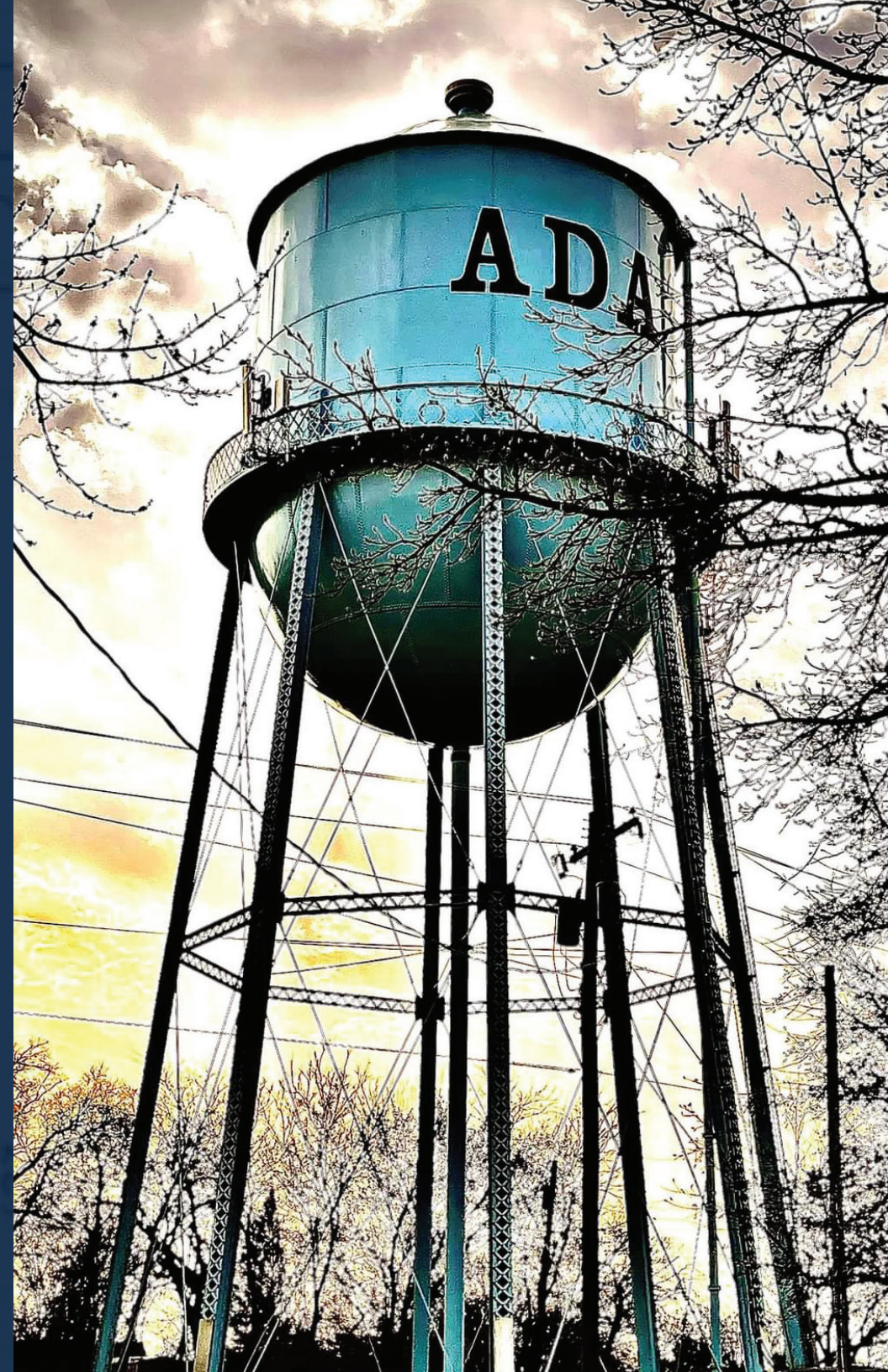


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01 COMMUNITY PROFILE

Introduction

Cities are dynamic, ever-changing entities shaped by shifting demographics and market trends. These factors act as the engines driving Ada's evolution over time. Strategic planning ensures that Ada maintains a sense of control and flexibility amidst the natural ebb and flow of a changing community.

A Comprehensive Plan provides the essential framework for Ada to define and achieve its development goals. It empowers the City to establish future land-use patterns, identify the desired community character, pinpoint areas for improvement, and develop actionable strategies. This Plan serves as the guide for key implementation tools, including zoning and subdivision regulations, capital infrastructure priorities, and economic development initiatives.

Authority and Purpose

The authority to establish and maintain a comprehensive plan is granted to the City by the State of Oklahoma, providing the legal foundation to promote orderly development while protecting the health, safety, and welfare of Ada's residents.

Purposes of the Ada Comprehensive Plan include:

- Identifying key opportunities for growth management and modernization.
- Preserving the integrity of existing neighborhoods and business districts.
- Ensuring that growth today does not compromise the resources of tomorrow.

A Vision for the Future

Without a roadmap for the future, the City risks making reactive decisions regarding new development and redevelopment. It is vital that planning efforts consider community desires with the technical realities of infrastructure and orderly growth.

This plan was developed through a collaborative community process, ensuring that the resulting policies and recommendations reflect the collective voice of Ada's citizens. It serves as a consistent vision for the future, guiding policy decisions and providing the strategies necessary to revitalize our existing assets while building a foundation for new opportunities.

This Comprehensive Plan is a living document designed to evolve alongside the community. Rather than serving as a static mandate, it provides a flexible framework that remains intentionally adaptable. To ensure the City stays responsive to new opportunities, any element of this plan may be amended if a petitioner demonstrates to the City Council that a proposed change offers a superior vision or outcome for a shared future.

Resilience and Progress: The History of Ada

The story of Ada is one of strategic location, natural abundance, and resilience. Historically located within the boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation, and remaining within the Chickasaw Nation's treaty territory today, the settlement was named after Ada Reed, the daughter of an early postmaster. Its true transformation began in the late 1800s and early 1900s when three major railroads intersected, turning a small frontier stop into a vital shipping center for livestock and agriculture.

In 1909, the establishment of East Central State Normal School (now East Central University) anchored Ada as an intellectual and cultural capital. Unlike many Oklahoma "boomtowns," Ada built a stable economy on diverse foundations:

- **Manufacturing:** The abundance of limestone and silica sand led to the rise of the Oklahoma Portland Cement Company and the Hazel-Atlas Glass Plant.
- **Natural Resources:** The discovery of the Fitts Oil Pool in the 1930s provided economic insulation during the Great Depression, funding much of the historic architecture seen downtown today.

In the modern era, Ada has evolved into a sophisticated regional hub. The city serves as the headquarters for the Chickasaw Nation, a partnership that has become a primary driver of regional healthcare, technology, and economic development.

Today, Ada balances its deep historical roots with a forward-looking identity, maintaining its small-town character while serving as a regional leader in education, governance, and industry.



Geographic Context

Located in the rolling hills of south-central Oklahoma, Ada serves as the county seat of Pontotoc County. Ada exerts an economic and cultural influence that extends far beyond city limits, acting as a primary center for healthcare, retail, and higher education for surrounding rural communities.

Ada occupies a strategic position approximately 85 miles southeast of Oklahoma City and 120 miles southwest of Tulsa. This location allows the city to maintain a distinct, independent identity while remaining connected to Oklahoma's major metropolitan markets via State Highways 1, 3, and 19.

The city's regional significance is further anchored by two major pillars:

- **East Central University (ECU):** Drawing students and faculty from across the state and providing a skilled workforce for regional industries.
- **The Chickasaw Nation:** With its headquarters in Ada, the Nation is a premier driver of regional economic development, tourism, and tribal governance.

By serving as an urban area for the surrounding agricultural and industrial landscape, Ada continues to be the heartbeat of south-central Oklahoma's economy.



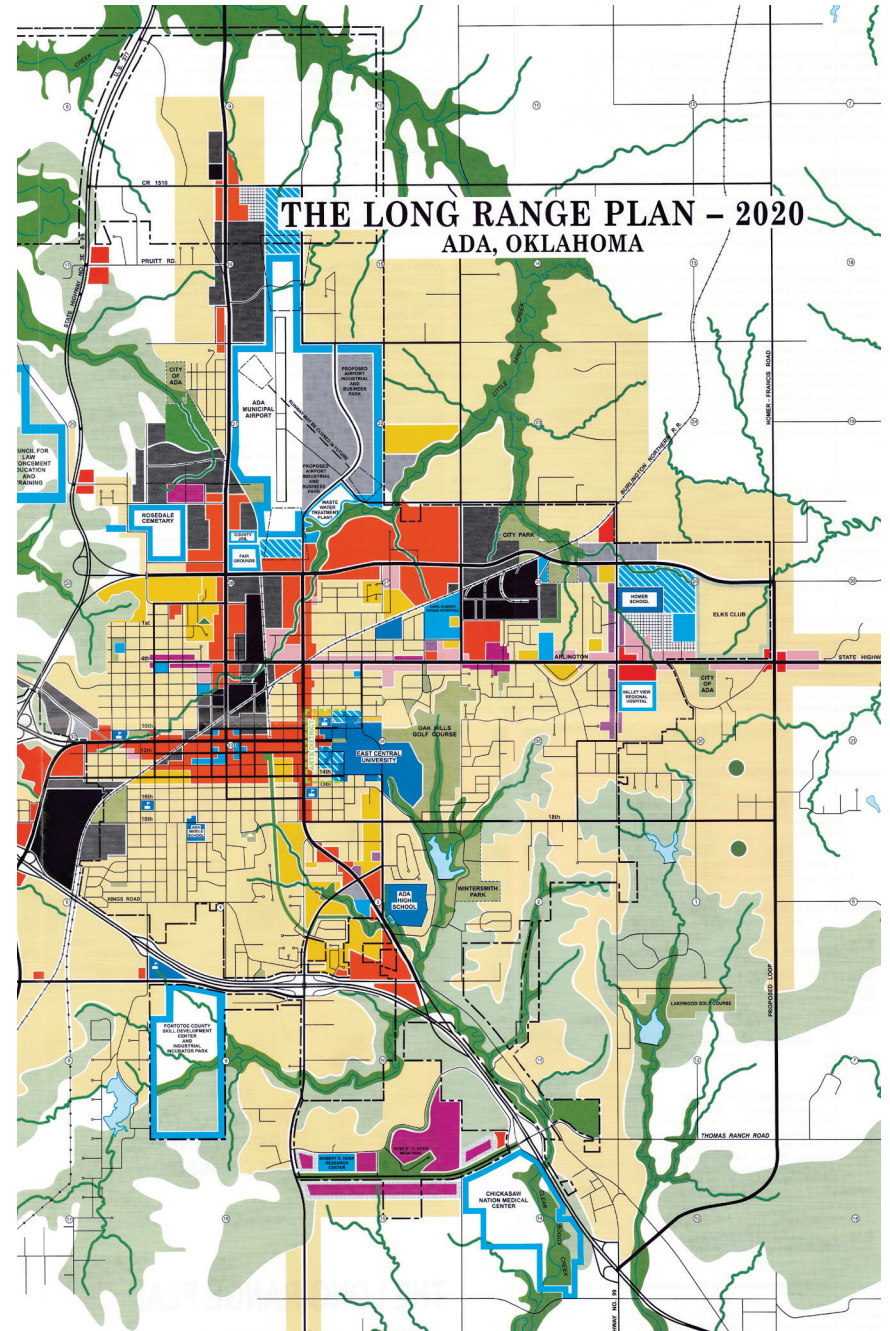
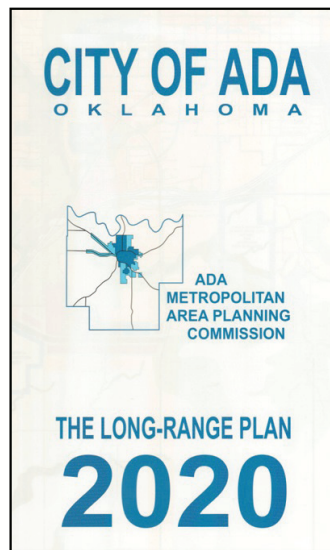
Existing Plans and Codes

Ada has a long-standing tradition of planning, with its previous comprehensive plan serving as a foundation for decades of growth. Over the years, specialized plans and studies have been developed by the City and other regional partners to address the evolving needs of the community.

These past plans lay the essential groundwork for this planning effort. To ensure a cohesive vision, the Plan integrates the insights and data from these existing documents.

Long Range Plan 2020

The Long-Range Plan – 2020 was adopted in 2010 as an update to the Long-Range-Plan – 2010. The Long-Range Plan – 2020 addresses critical land use and infrastructure challenges to better guide the city's future growth. The primary concerns highlighted in the plan include a lack of retail development, development hurdles due to topography, and the need for updated utility master plans for water and sewer systems.



Ada Zoning Code (Chapter 58, Article III)

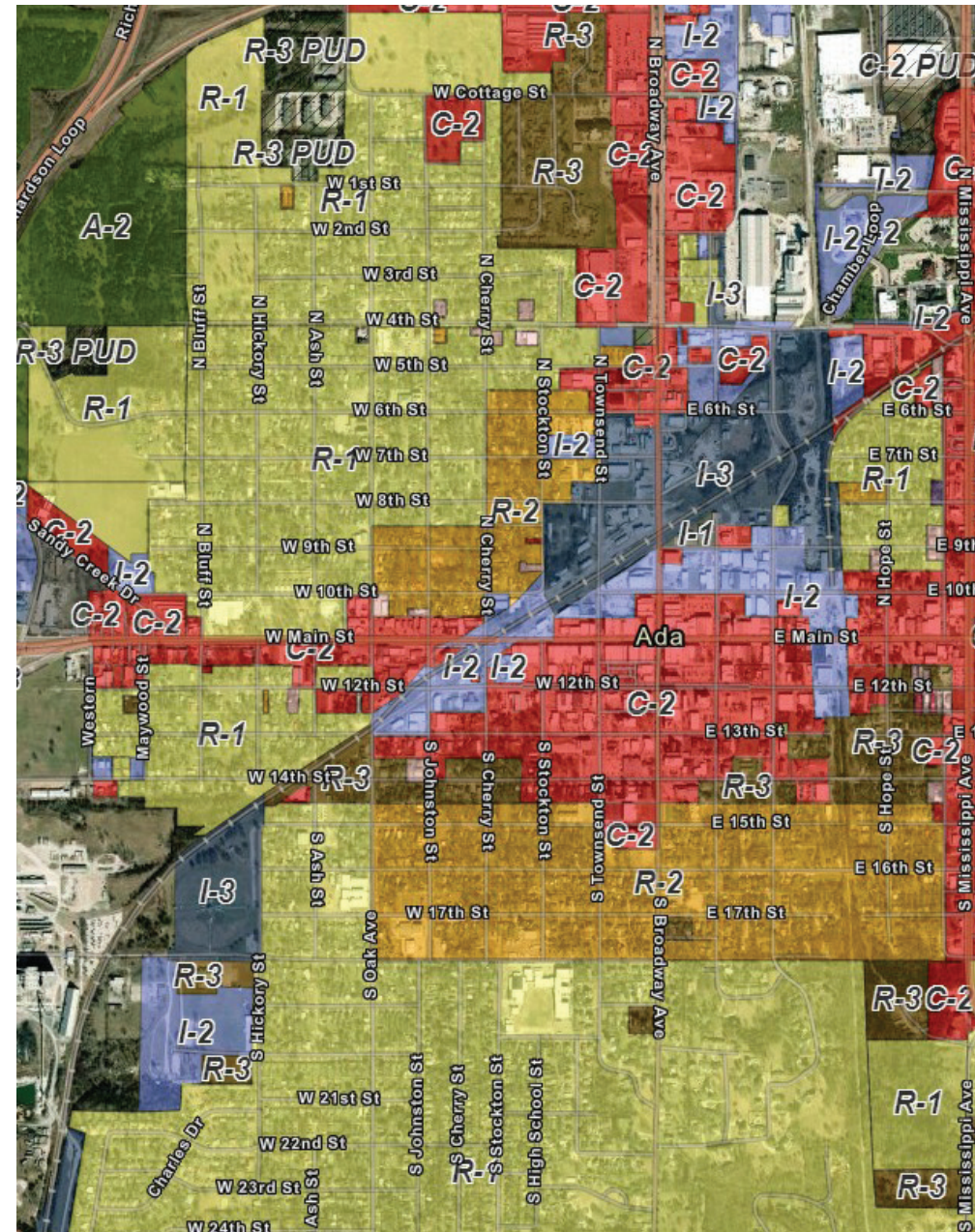
The Ada Zoning Code serves as the primary legal document for regulating land use activity within the city. Its primary purpose is to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community by ensuring orderly growth and protecting property values.

The zoning code establishes the legal framework regulating land use, development intensity, and building standards within the city. It defines zoning districts (such as residential, commercial, and industrial), specifies permitted and conditional uses, and sets requirements for lot size, setbacks, building height, and density. The code also includes provisions for nonconforming uses and administrative processes such as permitting and enforcement. Its overall purpose is to protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring orderly and compatible development patterns.

Ada Subdivision Regulations (Chapter 58, Article IV)

The Ada Subdivision Regulations establish the legal framework and technical standards for dividing land into smaller lots for sale or development. Their purpose is to make sure that as new neighborhoods and business parks are created, they are supported by appropriate infrastructure, including properly aligned streets, water and sewer extensions, and storm drainage systems.

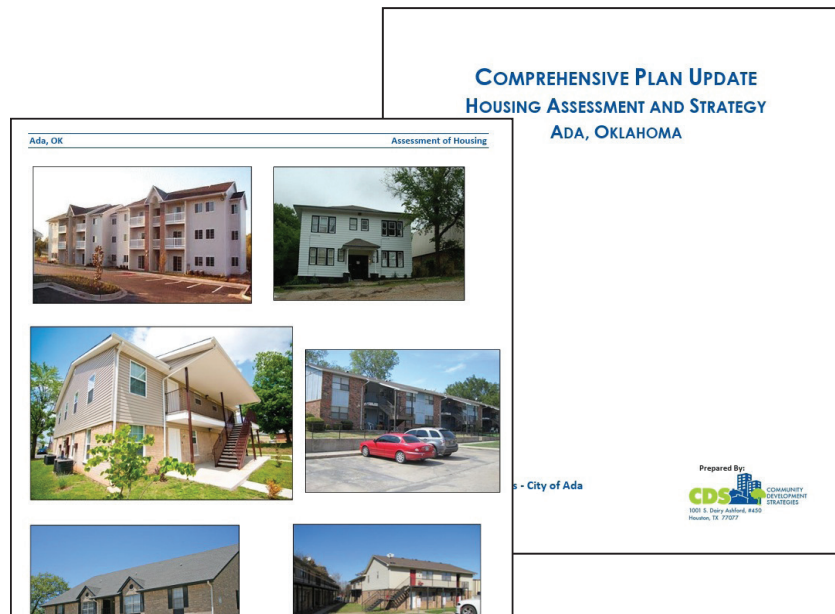
The subdivision regulations govern how land is divided and developed into lots, streets, and public infrastructure. They establish standards for platting, street layout, utilities, drainage, and public improvements to ensure new development aligns with the city's long range growth plans. These regulations require developers to provide adequate infrastructure and coordinate with city systems before approval. In essence, they serve as an implementation tool that translates planning policies into physical development patterns.



Housing Assessment and Strategy

The Ada Housing Assessment and Strategy document is a component of the AdvancingAda Neighborhood Plans and it evaluates Ada's housing market conditions, including supply, demand, affordability, and demographic trends. The study provides a data-driven analysis of local market forces, identifying where the existing housing stock fails to meet the needs of residents. The assessment highlights a particular "missing middle" gap, where rising rents and home prices have outpaced local wages, leaving many middle and lower-income households with limited options.

The assessment serves as a strategic gameplan for city leaders to revitalize older neighborhoods and encourage new, varied development options. Key recommendations include infill strategies, using vacant or underutilized lots within existing infrastructure, and updating zoning regulations to allow for diverse housing options like duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family units.



AdvancingAda Neighborhood Plans

The AdvancingAda Neighborhood Plans, adopted in 2025, represent a targeted expansion of the City of Ada's long-range planning, specifically designed to revitalize four historic areas: East of Mississippi, Hammond Heights, Northwest & Original Ada, and Southwest Neighborhoods. This effort came in conjunction with the Housing Assessment and Strategy. By focusing on these specific districts, many of which were established following World War II, the plan aims to respect the historic nature of these areas while modernizing growth based on demand. This will make sure the city's oldest neighborhoods remain competitive and thriving.

These plans move away from broad city-wide generalities to address hyper-local issues like sidewalk gaps, street lighting, and historic preservation. By focusing on infill development, building on vacant lots within established areas, these plans aim to strengthen the social fabric of existing neighborhoods and maximize the use of current infrastructure.



Oklahoma Public Transit Policy Plan

The Oklahoma Public Transit Policy Plan is the state's first comprehensive long-range strategy dedicated to the coordination and funding of public transportation. Developed by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Oklahoma Transit Association, the plan was mandated by House Bill 1365 to modernize a fragmented system of urban, rural, and tribal transit providers. For the City of Ada, this plan is a framework for sustaining and expanding Call-A-Ride Public Transit, the region's primary demand-response provider. The state plan facilitates better regional connectivity and assists with securing state and federal grants. Specifically, it supports mobility management initiatives in Pontotoc County, with a goal to better coordinate with other service providers, such as Chickasaw Nation's transit and SoonerRide, so residents can efficiently reach medical appointments, employment hubs, and East Central University.

South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization Long-Range Transportation Plan

The South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization Long-Range Transportation Plan is intended to guide regional transportation investments for a ten-county region that includes Ada and Pontotoc County. The plan provides short and long term strategies, over a twenty-plus year period, for an integrated, multimodal transportation system. For a regional hub like Ada, the plan focuses on balancing the needs of high-volume freight with local quality of life. Ultimately, the plan serves as both a policy guide and an implementation tool, prioritizing projects and funding strategies that enhance safety, connectivity, infrastructure preservation, and regional economic vitality over a planning horizon of at least 20 years.



East Central University Strategic Plan

This institutional blueprint outlines the physical evolution of the ECU campus to meet modern educational and athletic needs. The 2025–2030 plan prioritizes technological integration in classrooms, student housing upgrades, and campus safety. A key component involves the “town and gown” relationship, ensuring that campus entrances and pedestrian pathways harmonize with the City of Ada’s surrounding streetscapes to create a seamless transition between the university and the downtown business district.

Emerging directly from ECU planning efforts, East Central University’s new nursing and STEM facility represents a significant investment in Ada’s future. The \$37 million project will provide modern learning spaces for ECU’s School of Nursing while expanding opportunities to educate and train more nurses for the region. By strengthening the local health-care workforce, supporting good-paying jobs, and attracting students and professionals to the area, the new facility can contribute to Ada’s long-term economic growth and quality of life. It also reinforces the university’s role as a key economic and educational anchor for the community.

Projections provided by ECU anticipate an 18.4% increase in student enrollment, projecting growth from 3,377 in 2024 to 4,000 by 2030. Student populations are often underrepresented in standard demographic assessments which provides a significant opportunity for planning for the future of both the City of Ada and ECU. As both communities continue to grow, there is a strategic opportunity for collaborative planning to ensure sustainable, harmonious growth for everyone in the City of Ada.

Pontotoc Technology Center Development Plans

Serving as the area’s public career and technology education institution, Pontotoc Technology Center (PTC) provides vital

workforce training and career development for both high school students and adult learners. PTC is actively expanding their campus to meet growing regional workforce demands. Recent development milestones include a \$4.5 million federally funded facility expansion to enhance classroom space and accessibility, alongside a state-of-the-art Healthcare Wing featuring a specialized trauma and air evacuation training pad for nursing and firefighter programs. The City of Ada should continue to work closely with PTC to ensure city services are available for future development plans. This coordination will maximize local educational access, support critical emergency services, and enhance the overall economic vitality of the community.



Demographics

Evaluating Ada’s demographics is essential to understanding the city’s unique physical and social context. By analyzing historical and current data, the City can identify the core values and needs that will shape its future.

Demographic trends directly impact every aspect of this plan, from land-use patterns and tax revenue to the specific demand for infrastructure and public services. A clear understanding of these shifts allows Ada to accommodate growth with greater efficiency and precision.

Methodology

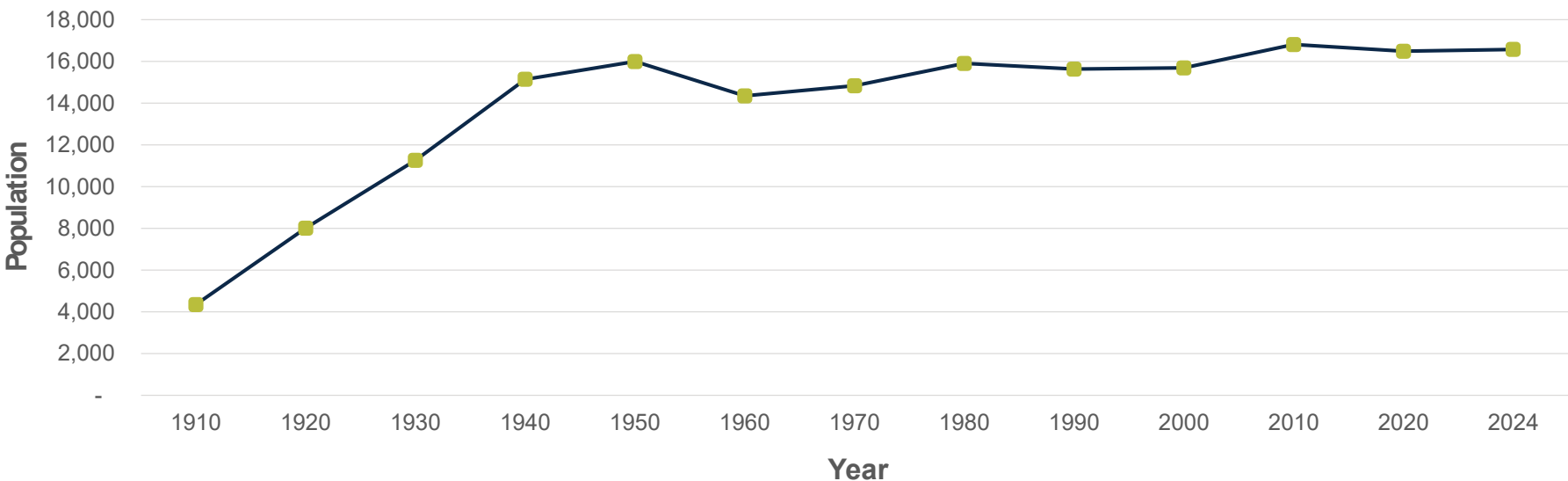
To ensure accuracy and relevance, this plan relies on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. While the decennial census provides a comprehensive population count every 10 years, the plan also utilizes the American Community Survey (ACS).

The ACS offers multi-year estimates that, while based on a smaller sample size, provide a more frequent and recent snapshot of Ada’s evolving social and economic conditions between major census cycles. Combining these sources allows for a planning process grounded in both historical precision and current trends.

Population Trends

Ada experienced its most aggressive expansion in the early 20th century. Between 1910 and 1950, the population nearly quadrupled, growing from 4,349 to 15,995. This era established the foundational urban footprint that the city occupies today.

Following a period of mid-century fluctuation, the city entered a phase of sustained stability. For the past 40 years, the population has remained steady, consistently hovering between 15,600 and 16,800 residents. After reaching a historic high of 16,810 in 2010, the 2024 population is estimated at 16,575.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate

Race and Ethnicity

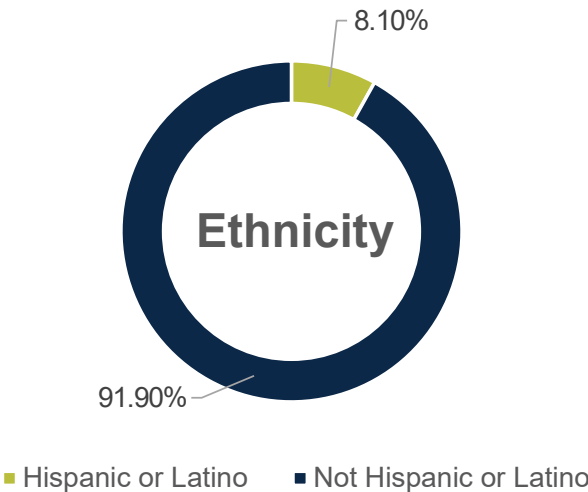
Understanding the racial and ethnic composition of Ada is vital to defining the community’s identity. While often grouped together, race typically refers to physical characteristics and ancestry, while ethnicity refers to shared cultural traits, such as language and heritage.

In Ada, the demographic profile is uniquely shaped by the City’s history as a center for the Chickasaw Nation and the community’s role as a regional educational hub. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the primary racial classifications include White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Pacific Islander. Ethnicity is tracked separately, with Hispanic or Latino representing the most prominent ethnic group in the region.

According to recent U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2020-2024 estimates, Ada continues to be a racially diverse community, with a demographic profile significantly influenced by its status as a tribal headquarters. The largest racial group is White (72.2%), followed by a substantial American Indian and Alaska Native population at 26.9%. Residents identifying as Some Other Race make up 6.4% of the community, while the Black or African American and Asian populations represent 7.2% and 1.9%, respectively. In terms of ethnicity, approximately 8.1% of Ada residents identify as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). Because the U.S. Census allows individuals to select multiple racial categories to reflect their full heritage, these percentages represent the total for each group and naturally sum to more than 100%.

Race	Percentage
White	72.2%
Black or African American	7.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	26.9%
Asian	1.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
Some Other Race	6.4%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate

Age and Sex

Age and sex trends are vital indicators of a community's future needs, signaling the required scale for services such as hospitals, parks, schools, and community centers. These metrics also help determine the most desirable land uses; for example, a city with a high concentration of young adults and families may prioritize “starter” housing and family-centric amenities.

Based on ACS 2024 estimates, Ada possesses a uniquely young demographic profile compared to state and national averages. The median age in Ada is 32.3 years, notably lower than the Oklahoma median of 37.0. Key characteristics of this distribution include:

- A significant portion of the population falls within the 20 to 24-year-old cohort. This is driven largely by the presence of East Central University, creating a steady demand for rental housing, walkable entertainment districts, and entry-level professional opportunities.
- Approximately 28.4% of Ada's residents are under the age of 20. This robust youth population highlights a continued need for high-quality primary education and diverse recreational facilities.
- The population is slightly majority female (52.0%). Trends show that while the sex ratio is relatively balanced in younger age groups, it shifts significantly in the senior cohorts, where females outnumber males, a common trend that informs the delivery of specialized senior healthcare and social services.

Unlike many rural Oklahoma communities that are “top-heavy” with aging populations, Ada's “bottom-heavy” demographic profile suggests a vibrant, working-age community.

Age Range	Population Estimate	Percentage
Under 5 years	1,251	7.5%
5 to 9 years	1,322	8.0%
10 to 14 years	1,094	6.6%
15 to 19 years	1,047	6.3%
20 to 24 years	1,604	9.7%
25 to 34 years	2,630	15.9%
35 to 44 years	2,049	12.4%
45 to 54 years	1,685	10.2%
55 to 59 years	585	3.5%
60 to 64 years	977	5.9%
65 to 74 years	1,393	8.4%
75 to 84 years	584	3.5%
85 years and over	354	2.1%
Total	16,575	100.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate

Household Types

Household structures in Ada are categorized into two primary groups: Family Households (two or more related individuals) and Nonfamily Households (individuals living alone or with unrelated roommates). These classifications are critical for determining the types of housing and public services, such as childcare, parks, or transit options, that the City should prioritize.

According to recent ACS estimates, Ada's household composition reflects its unique status as both a regional employment center and a university town:

- Approximately 56% of Ada's households are family-oriented. This indicates a steady demand for traditional single-family residential areas and family-focused infrastructure; however, the Housing Assessment Strategy Report shows the need for more choices and price points in the housing market.
- Nearly 44% of households fall into the nonfamily category. This higher-than-average percentage is largely driven by the student population at East Central University and young professionals.

Housing Tenure

Housing tenure, whether a home is owned or rented, is a key indicator of community stability and market demand. In Ada, approximately 55% of housing units are renter-occupied, which is notably higher than the Oklahoma state average of roughly 34%.

While high rental rates are common in university and tribal hub cities, they present unique challenges and opportunities for the City. While homeownership is often associated with long-term neighborhood investment and property upkeep, a robust rental market is essential for Ada's workforce and student population. The goal of this Plan is to balance these dynamics by encouraging high-quality rental developments while creating

Approximately 55% of housing units are renter-occupied

**Median Household Income:
\$53,507**

**Median Home Value:
\$169,300**

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate

pathways for increased homeownership to ensure long-term neighborhood stability.

Median Household Income

Median household income serves as a vital benchmark for assessing Ada's economic health, representing the exact midpoint of local earnings where half of the households earn more and half earn less. Unlike an average, which can be distorted by extreme highs or lows, the median provides a more accurate reflection of the typical resident's financial experience. According to the latest ACS estimates, the median household income in Ada is \$53,507.

Understanding these income levels is essential for long-range planning because it directly influences housing affordability and service demand. By identifying what the typical workforce can realistically afford, the City can better align its housing stock—both for sale and for rent—with the needs of its residents. Furthermore, these economic metrics help the City establish strategic goals for business attraction and wage growth, ensuring that Ada remains a competitive and sustainable community.

Median Home Value

Median home value is a vital metric for assessing housing affordability and identifying strategic areas for reinvestment, particularly as the City plans for future population growth. According to ACS 2024 estimates, Ada's median home value is \$169,300, which remains notably more affordable than the Oklahoma state median of \$222,100.

Maintaining this competitive pricing is a key advantage for Ada, allowing the City to attract new residents and a diverse workforce while providing a high quality of life at a lower cost of entry than the state average.

Age of Housing

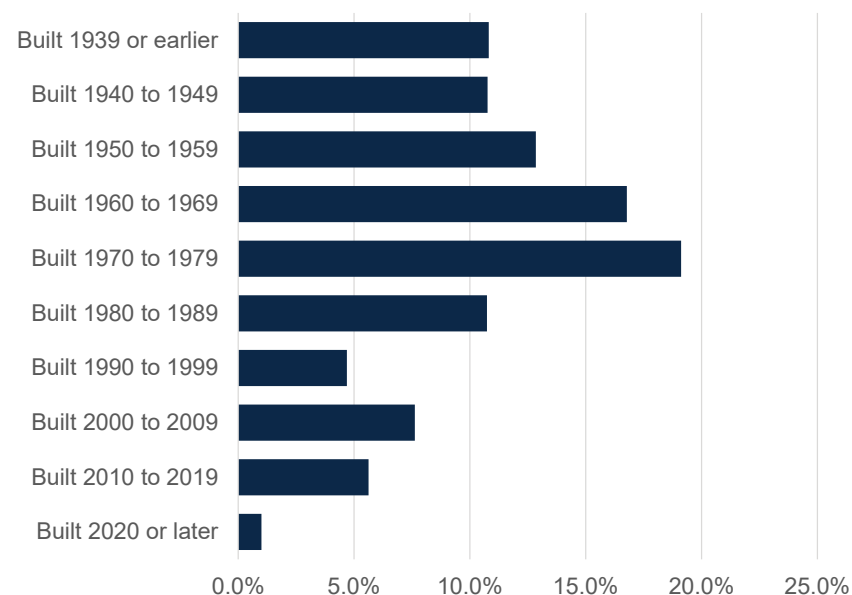
The age of a community's housing stock is a primary indicator of where infill development, rehabilitation, or large-scale redevelopment may be necessary. For the City of Ada, the housing profile reflects a deeply established community with a significant historic foundation.

According to ACS 2024 5-year estimates, the majority of Ada's housing units, nearly 36%, were constructed between 1960 and 1979. This era of peak development defines the character of many of the city's core residential neighborhoods. Furthermore, over 21% of the city's homes were built in 1949 or earlier, underscoring the importance of historic preservation and the potential need for modern infrastructure upgrades in older districts.

The relatively low percentage of homes built since 2020 (1.0%) highlights a critical opportunity for this plan. While our historic and mid-century homes provide essential character, there is a clear demand for new, diverse housing types to accommodate a growing workforce.



Age of Housing in Ada, OK



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate

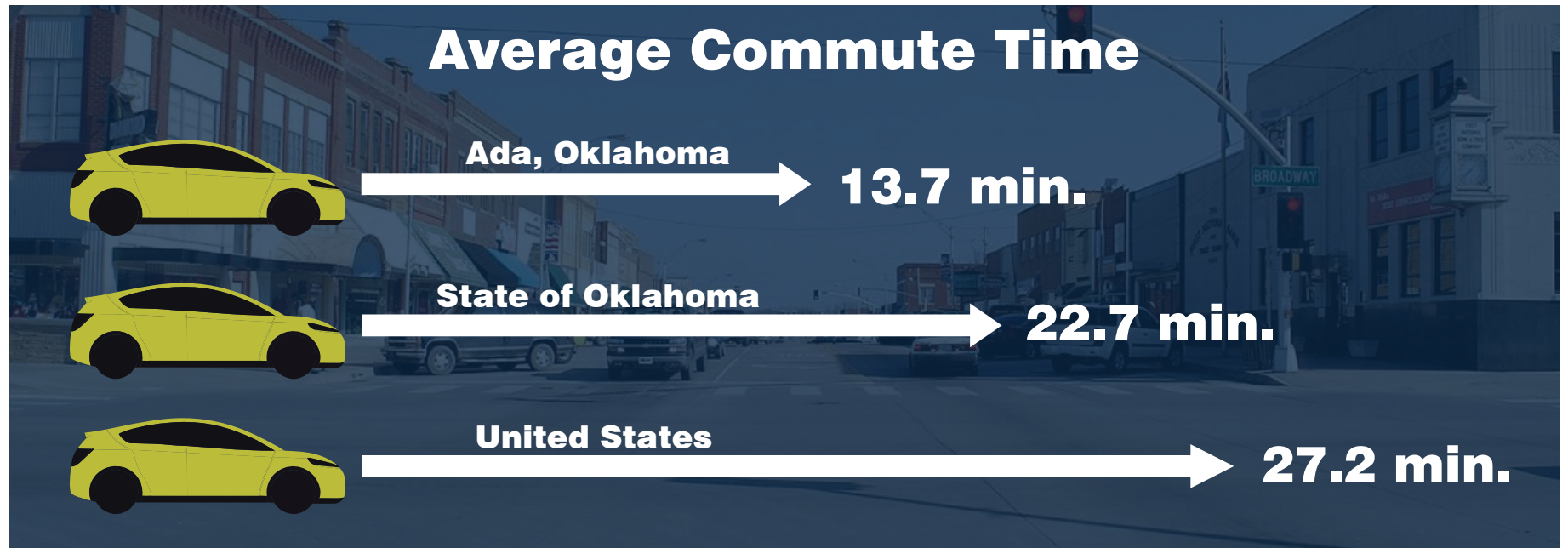
Commute Time

Average commute time measures the typical duration of a resident's travel from home to their place of employment. This metric is a vital indicator of a community's economic self-sufficiency and the health of its local job market. A shorter average commute generally suggests that a significant portion of the workforce finds employment within the city or the immediate surrounding area. Conversely, a longer commute often indicates a lack of local professional opportunities, forcing residents to travel to distant employment centers.

Based on ACS 2024 estimates, the average commute time is remarkably low at approximately 13.7 minutes. This is significantly shorter than both the Oklahoma state average of 22.7 minutes and the national average of 27.2 minutes. Such a concise travel

time reflects Ada's role as a primary employment hub for south-central Oklahoma, anchored by major institutional employers like East Central University, the Chickasaw Nation, and the EPA Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Center.

The high percentage of residents who both live and work in Ada, with over 70% of workers spending less than 15 minutes behind the wheel, underscores the city's strength as a "15-minute community." This efficiency not only enhances the quality of life for residents by reducing time spent in traffic but also suggests a high level of economic "capture," where local wages are more likely to be spent back into the local economy. As the City grows, maintaining these low commute times through integrated land-use and transportation planning will be essential to preserving Ada's unique competitive advantage.



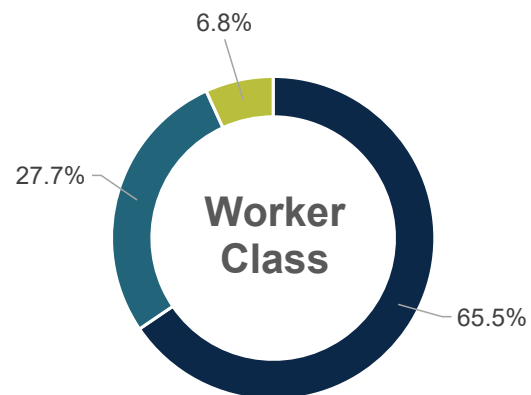
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate

Worker Class

The “class of worker” defines the economic sectors where Ada’s workforce is employed. This data offers insight into the stability of the local economy and the relationship between public institutions and private enterprise.

According to recent 2024 ACS estimates, Ada’s workforce is distributed across several key categories:

- **Employee of Private Company Workers:** This is the largest segment of the workforce, comprising approximately 65.5% of employees. These individuals work for private, incorporated businesses ranging from small local shops to major industrial employers.
- **Government Workers:** Approximately 27.7% of Ada’s workforce is employed by public entities. This higher-than-average percentage reflects Ada’s role as a regional institutional hub, supported by East Central University, the



- Employee of private company workers
- Local, state, and federal government workers
- Self-employed workers

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 Estimate



City of Ada, Pontotoc County, and various state and federal agencies like the EPA.

- **Self-Employed Workers:** About 6.8% of residents operate unincorporated businesses. This group represents Ada’s entrepreneurial spirit and the small-business owners who contribute to the city’s unique character.

The strong presence of both government and private-sector jobs provides a balanced economic foundation, ensuring that the community is not overly dependent on a single industry. This diversity is a key strength to protect and expand.

Worker Occupation

To better understand the skill sets and economic drivers of the community, Ada’s workforce is categorized into five primary occupational groups defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These categories reflect the functional roles residents perform, providing a snapshot of the local labor market’s strengths.

According to recent ACS estimates, Ada’s occupational distribution is as follows:

- **Management, Business, Science, and Arts:** Comprising 35.7% of the workforce, this is Ada’s largest occupational group. This high percentage is a direct reflection of the city’s role as a regional center for higher education, healthcare, and tribal governance.
- **Service Occupations:** Approximately 19.9% of residents work in service-related fields, supporting the city’s robust retail, hospitality, and public safety sectors.
- **Sales and Office:** Making up 22.9% of the workforce, these residents drive the administrative and commercial operations of the city’s business districts.
- **Production, Transportation, and Material Moving:** Accounting for 11.7% of workers, this group highlights

Ada’s enduring industrial and manufacturing base.

- **Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance:** Representing 9.8% of the workforce, these occupations are essential to the physical growth and infrastructure maintenance of the community.

This diverse occupational mix is a significant asset for Ada. The high concentration of professional and technical roles, driven largely by East Central University and the Chickasaw Nation, positions Ada as a “knowledge center” for south-central Oklahoma, while the steady presence of production and construction roles ensures a balanced and resilient economy.

