



# Oklahoma Ad Valorem

# FORUM

## Director's Notes:

We enjoyed seeing many of the county assessors and deputies who attended the County Officers and Deputies meeting last week. The State Auditor and Inspector (SA&I) Jeff McMahan's fish fry at the Governor's mansion was really nice. A beautiful Oklahoma early fall evening, a nice view of the guardian statute against the setting sun, some great conversation and stories from all the county officers and deputies, lots of fish, and being waited on hand and foot by State Auditor and Inspector (SA&I) Ron Sosbee: Priceless. I'm still amazed that Jeff McMahan caught that many fish.

We had a good turnout at the CODA meeting and I thought our county assessors meeting was a good session. Lots of questions about the Windows Update, this years ratio study, the five year exemption program and the SBC settlement.

The CODA conference was on the second year anniversary of the September 11 bombing, and as I told the county assessor session, I was struck by how the time has passed and yet there are so many parallels between the way the human soul handles tragedies like the Oklahoma City bombing and the World Trade Center attack in New York City. Reflecting on the national observance of the anniversary, it makes us all think of the Oklahoma City bombing as if it were part of the same event. I think that this has made us all more appreciative of the sacrifice and unity in America that has helped us move past a terrible event toward the future.

We've again had good evaluations and suggestions on the Annual Conference. We finally registered 496, but we're counting the total at 500, since we had some guests and speakers who attended. Again, I don't think that we overdo it to remind everyone that the success of our efforts rests on the partnership of the County Assessors' Association, Center for Local Government Technology (CLGT), County Cooperative Extension, and State Auditor and Inspector (SA&I) and the Oklahoma Tax Commission Ad Valorem Division.

Our staff is looking forward to the County Assessors' Association Convention in late October and the Oklahoma Association of Tax Representative meetings.

Finally, we appreciate all the hard work of the county assessors and deputies this year. We all share a responsibility to make the ad valorem system better than it was when it was given to us. Efforts to constantly improve taxpayer service are extremely important and we appreciate the efforts of the members of the County Assessors' Association who've made that happen.

Jeff Spelman,  
CAE Director Ad Valorem Division

### A Look Ahead...

- October 7-10,  
Unit III, Mass Appraisal,  
Norman
- October 29-31,  
Assessor's Fall Meeting,  
OKC, Biltmore Hotel

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*P.S. "Location is everything— If you keel over some place you wouldn't want your kids to see, always make prior arrangements for a trusted friend to drag your body out five feet onto the street. "Local resident Run Over" is always a better headline than "County Official Collapses in Low-Life Dive. Embarrassing Film at 10."*

- Anwar Caddo

(Thanks to Joke Told By Charles Edwards and Evelyn Bradley )

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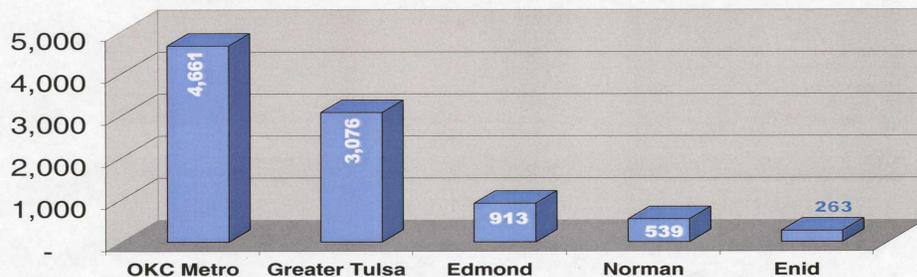
Oklahoma Home Sales, 2nd Qtr. 2003		
Sorted By Descending Number Of Homes Sold		
City/Region/Area	Homes Sold	Average Price
OKC Metro	4,661	\$118,022
Greater Tulsa	3,076	\$135,947
Edmond	913	\$179,547
Norman	539	\$122,967
Enid	263	\$82,554
Lawton	263	\$82,544
Bartlesville	231	\$106,176
NE Oklahoma	219	\$98,814
Shawnee	211	\$84,849
Muskogee	198	\$73,569
Stillwater	194	\$119,443
SE Oklahoma	140	\$75,928
Southern Okla.	131	\$92,054
Duncan	129	\$70,782
Ponca City	117	\$98,359
Ada	104	\$82,009
Weatherford	62	\$91,481
Cushing	56	\$65,793
Texoma	52	\$78,716
Altus	47	\$79,844
Woodward	40	\$73,362
<b>Total:</b>	<b>11,646</b>	

Source: Oklahoma Association Of Realtors

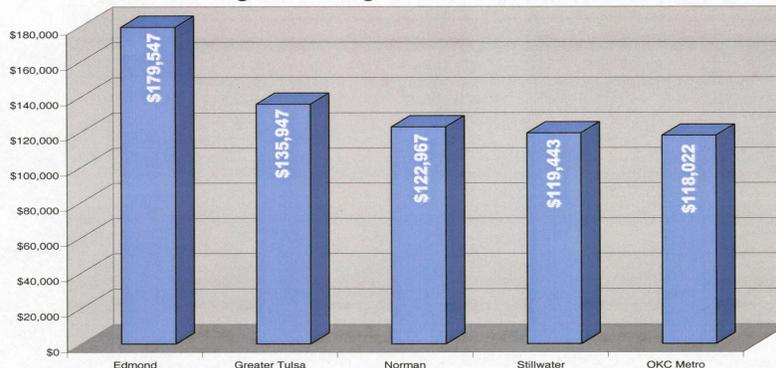
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Cities With Highest Sales Activity , 2nd Quarter 2003



Cities With Highest Average Sales Price, 2nd Quarter 2003





## NACo President Speaks up for Rural America

*(Excerpts from an article by Steve Towns appearing in the September issue of Government Technology Magazine)*

Karen Miller, National Association of Counties (NACo) newly elected president, is determined to serve as an advocate for rural communities giving them a stronger voice in federal funding decisions and other matters that affect the viability of small-town America.

Miller declared that “Rural America really doesn’t have a seat at the table when we’re discussing issues at the federal level. The plight of rural America is just not on people’s horizon, and we’re losing more and more communities. We’re losing our culture, and we’re losing our heritage.”

**Q:** Describe some of the challenges facing rural counties.

**A:** Economic development is really a key. Broadband is exceptionally important in that effort. To get businesses to invest in a community, there have to be basic services. They need technology that allows them to do business from there and communicate with their corporate offices. So those are some of the efforts I’m working on.

We’ve been working for a long time on elevating rural issues within our organization and nationally, but I think we can do better. One of the ways I think we can do better is through partnerships. I’m developing a partnership with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. We have a common vision: If you can keep businesses in a community, they’re going to sell more electricity. So it’s a win-win.

There are many good practices going on out there with counties and electric cooperatives, and other counties’ officials don’t even know that’s an option. They don’t even think about talking to their rural electric cooperatives.

During the last presidential election, rural America elected President Bush. So I think it’s an opportunity with a presidential election year coming up that we elevate the platform of these issues. But we need to get a coalition of people. We can’t as NACo, do it by ourselves. (We need to do it with partners. If we can speak with one voice, we can make a big difference in what will happen in the future.

**Q:** What are the keys to maintaining rural viability?

**A:** My dad is a commissioner in Scotland County, Mo. It’s a very, very rural county of 4,567 people. There may be one or two computers in the whole courthouse. As reasonably priced as computers are now, you can buy a computer and put it on a desk, but integration of those offices—they don’t have the professional technology skills to do that. We take it for granted in Boone County, and it is critically important to our day-to-day life. If our server goes down or we can’t get to our email, we think the world has stopped. But there are counties out there across America that don’t even operate in the same realm.

I bought my dad a computer for home, so he could have Internet access and we could communicate—but it’s a long distance phone call. He sold the computer, and I don’t blame him. He can’t afford to pay the long distance bill. We need to give access to everyone in America. Not just those who live in larger communities. That’s a real problem.

NACo developed a partnership to bring satellite broadband to rural courthouses, so they can then get people connected—and it’s at a very reasonable price. That’s the kind of thing we’re doing internally to try to bring this forward. We also need Congress to recognize that money needs to be put into these systems to have the private sector want to do this kind of investment in rural America.





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**Q:** Do rural counties need to take a different approach to technology?

**A:** I think they definitely will approach it differently. In Missouri, for example, every county clerk in the state has an Internet connection to the secretary of state. That may be the only computer in some courthouses when you get those very poor, rural counties.

Not every county is that lucky to have the state pay for one computer link to the statehouse. Missouri did it so election information immediately flows to the secretary of state so when you hold statewide elections, you know who got elected that night.

The state Legislature felt that was pretty important. They could recognize the value. They wanted to know if they were re-elected. So those are the kinds of things we need to do—find examples where there is value to the Congress and value to the administration.

**Q:** Do elected county leaders view technology as fundamental to government operations?

**A:** Absolutely. It's a critical part of the strategic plan for Boone County. Moving to imaging, allowing people to search online for copies of documents at the County Recorder's Office—we've been doing that for about two years now. But that's because we have very aggressive elected officials.

They're active, and they know how to reach out and solve the problems. That's why I said sometimes you have to take on the responsibility of reaching out on your own. But it's hard for a rural county to invest the money to send someone to a meeting when they can't even buy a computer to put on their desk.

**Q:** If you had to choose one accomplishment for the next year, what would it be?

**A:** I want to get a rural agenda in the presidential campaign platform. If you can get candidates to identify with rural issues when they're campaigning and say these are the things we believe rural America needs, it's pretty hard for them not to support rural initiatives if they become elected.

But the only way that can happen is through a coalition of rural organizations. It's not just NACo wanting this. It's all sectors of rural America recognizing that these things need to be protected or improved or changed for rural America to stay viable.

*(The NACo Web site is located at <http://www.naco.org>.)*





## “Mapping Minute” with Troy Frazier

### County Visits:

Since the Tulsa School, I have had eight counties call to schedule visits. These visits range from training new mappers to helping with software installation. The training includes basic MIMS, the MIMS plot program, ArcView, ArcEditor, and AutoCAD Map. Please continue to call if you want me to come out and help!

### Digital Soils:

NRCS (The same ones who are helping to get the 2003 color aerial photos) has digitized 21 counties so far. We were able to get eleven counties out by the Tulsa School. We gave another four out at the Fall CODA Conference. We hope to have the other six done as soon as possible.

These digital soils are released as ESRI shapefiles. Nine of the eleven counties given out in Tulsa were ESRI ArcView, ArcEditor, or ArcInfo counties.

We have to convert these soils from ESRI shapefile to MIMS and AutoCAD layers. Because of the size and complexity of the digitized soil shapes, the conversion includes breaking these large soil shapes into smaller ones.

The other two at the Tulsa School and the four at the Fall CODA Conference were MIMS counties. The three MIMS counties yet to be converted are Kay, Pittsburg, and Pottawatomie counties. The Three AutoCAD Map counties still to be done are Grant, Lincoln, and Marshall Counties.

**Remember:** *The universal answer—“It’s Still Bill Gates Fault!”*



## Receive The “Forum” By Email:

To receive the “Ad Valorem Forum” by email, please forward your email address to Cyndi Heath at [cheath@oktax.state.ok.us](mailto:cheath@oktax.state.ok.us).