First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

**Community Visited: Baldwin City** Date(s) Visited: A- 10/26/2017 (Thurs)

B- 10/26/2017

C- 10/26/2017

D- 10/26/2017

**Pre-visit web search: How easy was it to get information on the community you were visiting? Did it accurately reflect what you saw? Did you have difficulties obtaining information on the community through a web search?**

1. The City and Chamber Web sites are easy to find, navigate. The Chamber web site is very well done, lots of good info, events, and potential relocation. One thing I had trouble finding was medical facilities, especially important if looking to relocate there.
2. Baldwin’s website was easy to navigate. The only thing I missed was a link to the Rec Dept. website (especially if it is a city rec department) and monthly calendar of events pertaining to the city, not just city related meetings. After visiting, the website accurately reflected what I saw. If I were moving to the community, I would want additional information on housing, healthcare, schools that could be linked also. I did see this after I spent more time looking around on the Chamber’s website, after my visit.
3. The Chamber of Commerce and City Websites were very informative, much more so than expected.
4. Excellent web site, with good information about Tom Swan Park and I enjoyed The Connection Newsletter. I had to find restaurants through a Yelp search. I think it would be hard to someone moving to the community to find daycare options, rental house options
5. **The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted. The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)**
   1. Our drive through first impression, very nice community, clean, homes looked nice overall, well kept up, nicer older homes. Baker University, very attractive and unique buildings and campus. Downtown area nice and well kept up. Finding signs for locations of schools, medical facilities, parks etc., not easily found for a new visitor to town, however, I believe that could be true in most towns. Later in the day, as we continued to drive around, we did find some signs. Entrance signs on 56 Highway, a welcome sign coming in from the east, didn’t see one coming in from the west. (Might have been one??)
   2. Overall, this town is very clean and cares about the upkeep of the community. The yards and homes were clean and tidy as were most of the businesses. Since we came into Baldwin from the southeast, this entrance was not considered as welcoming as the entrance from the north (via a county road) or the main highway 56. Signs and landscaping were minimal. We came in from the south, via a sign on I-35 northbound. The initial sign was on the I-35 exit, but we did not see any other signage that indicated where to turn once we were off the highway. This entrance once arriving to Baldwin lacked adequate signage also.
   3. A little extra signage would be nice, well-kept homes, beautiful trees!
   4. Beautiful community, well-landscaped, small downtown, limited signage. Limited signage to tell us where to seek any medical treatment if necessary, could not find hotels, or where there was a hub of restaurants.

2. **Downtown Business Area**

**Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc. Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed. Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)**

1. Older buildings naturally, well kept up, nice sidewalks, and landscaping in places. Several brief visits in downtown merchants, very friendly people, Coffee at Daylight Expresso Café, good Java! Did Lunch at Dance Café, unique, good food, greeted immediately, very friendly, great price.
2. Several buildings had recently been remodeled or repainted. They were very attractive to the downtown area. Signs were easily found which identified the businesses and/or buildings in this area. Restaurant/Coffee Shops (2) – At both places of business they were very helpful. One coffee shop was extremely busy and they took the time to ask if assistance was needed. They both had a variety of merchandise which was displayed for sale also. I appreciated the diversity of the business and in the merchandise offered. Retail Gift Shop – This was a new shop in town in the past 2 months. The owner was very helpful and explained her business and classes, which were of interest to me. Restaurant- The restaurant was only open over the lunch hour. They offered a limited menu, but the meal was very good. Service over quantity is always important to me. Overall, I was impressed with the customer service which was offered in each business. Each business was diversified in their retail merchandise. Buildings were very clean and had lots of character inside and outside of the buildings. I spent more time in the businesses/shops in the downtown area. The retail areas off of 56 Highway are typical of many towns and were not visited for this reason. The downtown area offered a more relaxed atmosphere, which is the part I love about small towns.
3. A lot of character with the brick roads and well-kept downtown buildings. Loved that the Baker Campus was part of downtown. Found very few vacant building units which was a huge plus. Also, the Chamber of commerce was a wealth of knowledge and was located in the perfect spot downtown for visitors to find it. Good customer service all around, asked for information about their restaurants and stores, very friendly and willing to share.
4. Beautiful! Very well kept up to date, nice landscaping by the Master Gardeners. Baldwin does a good job of utilizing their spaces. The coffee shop also sold decorative items, and another sold jewelry and decorations. Both were warm, and busy! Staff were friendly and answered all of our questions. They seemed inviting for future stops, and indicated they enjoyed having out of town visitors.

**What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.) Comment on appealing landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?**

1. There were some benches downtown, trash receptacles, and some Wi-Fi available. Plenty of parking available downtown, well kept up, nice unique brick streets. Nice little pocket park attraction outside of Chamber Office with a variety of plants identified, very nice.
2. I did notice trash cans around the downtown businesses. If there was a public restroom, I didn’t notice any signs. I used restrooms in a restaurant which are always available. There were some benches placed in a garden, which was nice. I’m not sure public drinking fountains are important, unless I was at a park or sports facility. I did not check this out. Parking was accessible everywhere around town, close to businesses and public buildings. I didn’t notice any **no parking** signs, which are a concern in our town. We have a limit of 2 hours around the square.
3. No problems parking downtown, very walkable from downtown into the College Campus.
4. I did not notice any drinking fountains, but all business restrooms were available to the public. The trash receptacles downtown were useful after drinking coffee! Easy parking, everything is within walking distance downtown. We also walked around Baker University, which was exceptionally well maintained and landscaped. Parking was very simple.

1. **Other Retail Shopping Areas**

**Describe other retail shopping areas. Were the areas attractive and easy to access?**

1. My perception of downtown shopping, they had good variety of merchants, hometown owned which I liked. They are well kept up and easy to access. The remainder of the shopping was along 56 highway, grocery store, Taco Bell, Sonic, Pizza Hut, medical buildings etc. Also located a Hardware store after driving around awhile, nice to have in a small community. As a visitor I enjoyed the downtown area, and the friendly people.
2. The other retail areas I saw were on 56 Hwy. They were clean and accessible.
3. We spent most of our time downtown.
4. The strip mall areas are easy to find on the highway. They seem easy enough to access, but are not very attractive.

4. **Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

**Is there a defined area where manufacturing industries could easily locate/expand? If so, describe.**

1. The manufacturing facilities/park where not easy to find, or know where to look, and know what industries existed in Baldwin, had to ask.
2. The Chamber told about an Industrial area north of town. We couldn’t locate the specific business. There was no signage to indicate where it was located. We did not use Google Maps or any sort of locating services.
3. N/A
4. We only found the old depot, which is pretty awesome. The feed store is located near this area and certainly seems to carry a lot of items. The hardware store north of town appears to be new and has excellent parking areas.

5. **Health Care Services**

**Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services.**

1. Dental, mental health, chiropractic, and the Baldwin Medical Clinic available. Also the Family Center/LMH is available. Did not see an optometrist available. It appears for the size of the community, they have good medical care options available.
2. A local hospital is not available, but the nearest in approx. 20 miles away. I did not see an urgent care facility, but I’m not sure this is a factor for a community this size.
3. Appears that major hospital and emergency services are with Lawrence Memorial Hospital, which is just up the road.
4. No hospital, but there are medical care facilities.

**Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physicians, dentists, optometrists, public health and other healthcare providers.**

1. Facilities mentioned above seemed to be in good condition
2. I did notice there were two medical clinics, affiliated with two nearby hospitals. I didn’t take the time to see if these how they were staffed, what type of provider was available (doctor, nurse practitioner, P.A., etc.) or if the clinic was open every day. I did take note there were some ancillary services available at the clinic location on the north side of town.
3. Didn’t get a lot of time in the healthcare industry but appears they’ve got physicians and a clinic. The hospitals/specialists just 20 miles up the road.
4. Baldwin does have a dentist and chiropractor, optometrist and health care facilities. I did not see these facilities.

**What long-term care services, assisted living or nursing facilities exist in the community?**

1. I did not recognize availability of these.
2. Saw geriatric care buildings available in the area, but did not closely look to see what types of communities these were.
3. They do have an assisted living facility (Vintage Park), also have an Alzheimer’s and dementia care home.
4. Did not see.

6. **Housing**

**Give a brief description of the existing mix of housing stock. Does the local market have housing that would appeal to all income wages? What challenges do you see in regards to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)**

1. It appeared that the new housing developments were probably for individuals who preferred to live in Baldwin City, but commuted to locations like Lawrence and KC area for employment. The housing for Baldwin City, condition of dwellings and landscaping overall where well-kept and look good. As in all communities we did see some, few locations with older dwellings/trailer houses that were not attractive. In visiting and looking at information we could find, housing availability is very limited.
2. There didn’t appear to be a lot of housing available; either for sale or rent signs. I wasn’t sure where to begin looking if I was interested in the availability of housing. Although when we ate at a local restaurant, one of the nearby businesses had flyers up on the window.
3. Housing stock was well kept for the most part, appeared to be a shortage in supply, particularly for rental homes and move-in ready homes for sale under $150,000. Majority of homes for sale were able to be found on Zillow, but no efficient means of finding rental homes in the area.
4. Limited housing availability. The property management business downtown only had one business space and one single family home for rent. However, we did notice “for rent” signs scattered around town. Perhaps a more organized approach to the local housing market would help those who are looking to rent. We did see a gorgeous new home being built on the north east side of town. That whole area around the state fishing lake is awesome. However, I feel these homes might be more expensive than the average buyer would want to spend. I’m sure land is at a premium in Douglas County.

**What kind of rental properties did you observe for persons interested in building or simply living in the community prior to buying housing?**

1. Rental property very limited and potentially a need for Baldwin City.
2. I saw a few houses on the north side by the high school which had “for rent” signs. Other than that, there was a lack of where to begin the search.
3. Met the Property manager downtown and only 1 house and 1 apartment available. A collective effort at advertising available rental properties would make it much easier for someone to find a house available to rent in the area.
4. Limited rental property appears to be available. The business rental that is available downtown looked to be very nice.

7. **Schools**

**Do the following schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of temporary classrooms? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?**

1. We drove by and looked at all the schools, the properties are in very good condition and the facilities appear to be well maintained. They have a High School, Junior High, Intermediate Center, along with a Primary/Elementary School.
2. The public schools (K-12) seemed newer and well kept. The college is a lovely addition to this quaint town. I would hope that the community and the college work together in promoting each other and the use of buildings/grounds to the benefit both.
3. High School, Junior High, Intermediate, Primary. Schools looked new and well- kept even though they have some years on them. Love that their website explains academic awards received which would give me confidence in putting my children in this school system.
4. Excellent schools are available with excellent athletic facilities. High School is older, but appears safe and well kept. The elementary, primary and intermediate centers appear to be newer and of a great size for Baldwin. I liked the sidewalks around the school properties that make it easy to use as a walking trail for residents in the community. This is something that could be publicized.

**Were you able to find online information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?**

1. Information was available on line, as far as quality of educational system, I did not see.
2. Absolutely. KSDE website is readily available as is the local school district website.
3. Didn’t notice much on this other than the School District has a pretty thorough website.
4. The USD 348 website is easy to navigate, has a good appearance and is informative.
5. **Childcare**

**Were you able to determine if childcare was affordable and available?**

1. Plenty of childcare providers that can be found easily on line, if you go into Childcare providers for Baldwin City. Prices range from $10-$25 per hour. $25/hr. seems pricing to me, but it’s been several years, that I required childcare. Not sure what the market for this service is now.
2. Unknown. This was information which was lacking and where would you begin to search for it?
3. Rainbow Experience Preschool and Baldwin City Rec Summer Discovery Day’s
4. I could only find one daycare online, and it looks like the rec center offers summer programs to help with childcare.
5. **Faith/Religion**

**Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the churches represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of church-sponsored community services?**

1. There are several churches in Baldwin City, primarily Protestant and a Catholic Church. Those seen where well-kept, in good condition and appeared to be well maintained. Best resource for finding churches would be on the web, did not see evidence of sponsored community service.
2. A variety of denominations were available in this town. All buildings and grounds of the churches I did see, were well kept, clean and had plenty of parking available.
3. Many churches present but was not able to put a lot of focus on this considering the middle of the week we visited.
4. I saw several churches, and they were well kept. The chapel at Baker University was beautiful. I did see one church offered free meals once a week.
5. **Civic**

**Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community.**

1. I saw a sign in reference to a Rotary Club and a building for the Palmyra Masonic Lodge #23.
2. I saw a master gardener area, an art gallery of local artists.
3. Appears to be a community that takes economic development seriously. City has a Community Development Director, active Chamber of commerce, and Baldwin City EDC all working together to bring businesses, support current businesses, and improve the community. The fact that all 3 have funding and work together makes for a strong community alliance.
4. Master Gardeners have a flower garden next to the chamber that is labeled with plant names which is helpful to those interested in trying new plants. Rotary and Kiwanis signage was also noted. A business professional women’s organization sponsored one of the city entrance signs.
5. **Public Infrastructure**

**Comment in general on the streets, street signage, sidewalks, parking, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, and streetscapes in areas other than downtown.**

1. Public Infrastructure though out the town appeared good, along with lighting and parking. Baker University had a lack of sidewalks, so one would need to cross the street to another sidewalk.
2. The most noticeable was the downtown area. The locations on 56 Hwy were not memorable because they look like every other town. With a variety, hodgepodge of streets, lighting, and landscaping, etc. The focus seemed to more downtown, rather than 56 Hwy. What I did like was the trees were not butchered at the power lines, anywhere within the city limits.
3. Loved the brick sidewalks and walkable downtown. Could improve on signage or increase digital footprint to make the town a little easier to navigate.
4. Old brick streets have character and charm. The town has wonderful trees and I really like that they do not prune them back – it is good to see the tree branches cover the streets and sidewalks. Streets are well lit, and parking is accessible. Overall Baldwin landscapes very well, with a variety of plant materials. To walk from downtown to Baker University, there is only a sidewalk on one side of the street. More sidewalks would give more accessibility to downtown. I noted an overall lack of sidewalks or walking trails. If there are trails, they are not well signed.

**Comment on city/town hall (How were you received? Was there information about the town available?)**

1. Paid a visit to the Chamber of Commerce office. Jeannette is very friendly, energetic, shows a lot of pride for the community. Shared a lot of good info, very positive person. They also had a lot of good flyers and literature regarding activities and information. Jeannette is very up to date on the city and things going on, and promotes the activities and businesses.
2. Did not visit, but saw the building.
3. The chamber has a flyer board with a lot of information.
4. We visited the Chamber Office and were given a tour of the art display, which is a huge asset to the community. The director was extremely helpful and spent the time to answer our questions. She is knowledgeable, professional and friendly. Brochures about the town and annual events were shared with us. I particularly like the annual events because if I were moving to the area I would want to know that activities happen year round. It sounds as though the city does a good job of collaborating with the college. I appreciated hearing about the relationships that exist between the City/Chamber/Economic Development.

**Police/fire protection:**

1. Baldwin has as Police Department and a Volunteer Fire Department
2. Did not visit, but visible.
3. Police Department and Volunteer FD
4. Nice fire station

**Library:**

1. I did see a library while looking around the town, didn’t go in.
2. Did not visit.
3. Yes they have a library that is aesthetically pleasing from the outside. Did not make it inside for more details.
4. Well-kept library.

**City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sportsplex)**

1. They had some city parks that looked neat & kept up, along with a walking trail, and baseball fields, and a public golf course. Though we did not go out to Douglas Lake, it is very close by, and a place to go to kick back and relax. It was noted that they have free camping sites.
2. Visited a variety of parks. These were all well-kept and had a variety of exercise options. I did wonder whether that was a dedicated walking/biking trail.
3. N/A
4. City parks are limited, but what we saw were nice. I think these are areas that could have better signage on how to get there. We specifically drove around looking for these areas, and finally stumbled upon them, but it could have been easier.
5. **Recreation/Tourism**

**Is the community well-known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset?**

1. The Maple Leaf Festival the 3rd weekend of each October, and appears to be a large attraction with 1000’s of guest for this each year. Also, the next thing that caught my attention was the Kansas Belle Dinner Train/Midland Railway. Both can be well noted if visiting the town. These are both well recognized.
2. Well-known for Maple Leaf festival. There was a large sign to capture this event near the Chamber office.
3. Maple Leaf Festival is a huge event
4. Baldwin is proud of the Maple Leaf Festival and they have excellent signage for this event! They do such a good job of attracting 20-30,000 people to the event, it is amazing.

**Did you see any indication of significant events taking place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents?**

1. The two mentioned above would be worth a visit from someone not living in Baldwin City.
2. I did not see a listing of events posted in a central location. Although I did revisit the Chamber’s webpage and there seem to be a number of events that take place throughout the year that interest the local community and beyond. My only thought, what if you didn’t have internet options available. Where else would you find this information?
3. Yes, there are at least a couple events advertised each month: Maple Leaf Festival and Festival of Lights are a couple of them.
4. I would like to see more attention to the activities at Baker. When are the games, other community events? The recreation commission was easy to find, but is there a community gym, workout classes or other health/wellness initiatives?

**Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.**

1. There was not anything that caught my eye or I can remember.
2. Historical markers from the Santa Fe Trail, railroad depot museum and train rides were observed.
3. Brick roads
4. unknown

**Is there an obvious visitor’s center, chamber of commerce office, main street office, or other facility that serves the needs of visitors? Comment on the staff, facilities, signage, visibility, etc.**

1. The Chamber Office or City Office is easy to recognize & find downtown, signage is sufficient at these locations.
2. The Chamber office was a wealth of information. Thankfully, it opened not too long after we arrived in town; otherwise, I might have gone to the library or city offices. I appreciate that the city, private and public entities are working well together and not overlapping in what they focus on. I did wonder about a “mission statement” of the community.
3. Chamber of Commerce was in a great location and a very informative director. She was friendly and very interesting to visit with.
4. Previously covered

**Are there any restaurants, specialty shops or attractions that would bring you back to this community in the near future?**

1. Yes, a couple of quaint coffee shops with other amenities, I enjoyed seeing the Lumber Yard Art Center, a great feature for Baldwin and the Downtown area. Keeping the old Depot is great, so many small towns have torn these down, which could be used for many various things/businesses. Also a quilting supply store.
2. Many restaurants and/or specialty shops may beckon me to come back to Baldwin. Baldwin is surely a great day trip to spend some time in the fall or spring.
3. Honestly enjoyed the whole town and will likely stay a weekend at the bed and breakfast with my wife.
4. I would love to come to Baldwin City for the Maple Leaf Festival! I loved the chamber map that outlines everything going on that weekend, so I would feel comfortable finding my way around.
5. **Wrap-up**

**What are the most positive things you observed about the community?**

1. The overall well-kept and attractive appearances of the downtown area along with the largest majority of homes and yards. Though we were only able to meet a few, the friendliness of each person met that day.
2. Very clean, friendly community. Loved the college area. We went on a brisk walk to the historic campus chapel when we first arrived. The several local people with whom I talked with were very proud of their community and the businesses that are available here. That tells me that whatever you are doing to promote community is working; but, promotion is an ongoing detail and task.
3. Charming small town with character and perfectly setup for bigger city employees that want to live close to work but in a small town. Also could be a destination for visitors that appreciate character and history of small towns.
4. There is good cooperation between the City, Chamber and Community Development. They also work well with the college and collectively want the best for Baldwin City. I think it is very creative how businesses share their space – i.e. Dance Academy that is a restaurant and coffee shop that sells home décor. They take great pride in the beautification of the city – there were very few homes that were in poor condition.

**What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?**

1. The biggest concern for me was, it does not have a newspaper, not even a weekly addition. With Lawrence and Olathe/KC area nearby maybe that is a contributing factor with the marketability/viability of a having and maintaining a newspaper? Having some form of communication that a newspaper provides, especially on the local/community level is important. I’m not sure if Baker University has a journalism department, but possibly through them a small weekly paper could be developed, mainly on local updates and information. Growth for the community appears to be the bedroom community aspect, new housing looks great, and I would speculate that a lot of this is coming from families that live there, but actually work in Lawrence or the KC/Olathe area. That’s not all bad, but not sure there is any other incentives to locate in Baldwin. As nice as the community is, another small business/industry should always be in mind. That comes with the second concern, and one that is not new to small rural communities, and that is available and affordable housing, which appears to be an obstacle, along with the available workforce to support new business.
2. The biggest challenge to me, would be getting the community rallied behind the small businesses there. Lawrence is but a few miles away and sometimes it’s easier to spend your time and money where there are more options available for shopping, health care, etc.
3. Visitors don’t have a lot of options in regards to lodging, surprised there are not more hotels or Bed & Breakfasts. Potential residents don’t have a lot of employment opportunities and rental housing. A collective effort at advertising both may make it easier for people to find jobs and homes. Iola uses a website for both: [www.growiola.com](http://www.growiola.com)
4. Being a bedroom community to Lawrence, Ottawa and KC is a challenge. They don’t have a hospital, newspaper or much retail shopping because of that obstacle. But I also think people want to live in Baldwin and possibly work in those larger cities. It seems like a great place to raise a family.

**What will you remember most about this community six month from now (positive or negative)?**

1. The attractiveness of the community, a down to earth, friendly community and if I would ever have reason to relocate, and it would be in this area, Baldwin is a place I would be feel very comfortable in looking closer at for living.
2. This community is very proud of their town and they rightly should be. It is an area where I would recommend my friends and family to visit, for history, shopping and restaurants.
3. Feels like a charming bed/breakfast community that holds onto traditions and character. Would make for nice place to spend a weekend with my wife.
4. Friendly, wonderful trees, need more rental housing and there is a lack of sidewalks on both sides of the streets. Baldwin has a wonderful location in relationship to larger cities.

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Service

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