First Impressions 

**Team Report Form**

Community Visited: Long Island Date Visited: May 3, 2017 (Wed)

**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?**

These are the websites that spoke of Long Island, KS

<https://www.mapquest.com/us/ks/long-island-282028442> Mapquest entry

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Island,_Kansas> Wikipedia: Reports that Long Island schools were closed because of school consolidation in 1964

<http://kansas.hometownlocator.com/ks/phillips/long-island.cfm> Tells census data and location and says “Long Island Elementary” is a Middle school with 62 students (as of 2013-2014)

FaceBook “things to do in Long Island” shows the Hammond Hut and 2 events in May and June that are happening in Phillips County.

<https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Long-Island-Kansas/103439209688313/>

1. **The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.**

On entering the community, there are nice “Welcome To Long Island” signs, a sign for a church 5 miles away. Entering Long Island from the SW, the view of the iconic water tower paints a lovely picture of small town Kansas. A decaying house on the right detracts from the First Impression, but upon further examination, appears that it is being prepared for burning. We noticed a vacated railroad line on the west side of the road that we hoped was being prepared to be a biking/walking path. We saw Lion’s clubs signs. Our eyes were drawn the adorable cottage that was “Hammond Hut.” We admired the outdoor seating and thought how conducive that would be as a rest from a walking/biking trip on the trail. The town is very agricultural based, with Long Island Grain and even barnyard animals in town. Long Island has a nice appearance. We were entering days after an unseasonal snow storm and it was still neat and generally well-maintained. Near the water tower were a number of abandoned cars that detracted from the appearance of the town. We noticed a corner park with a picnic bench. It looked like a nice respite and an opportunity for development.

**The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)**

We noticed the Welcome to Long Island signs from every direction. We liked the “Past. Present. Future” tagline and admired the system of financing signs with memorial gifts. We noticed these on the community building too. We liked the “Phillips County 4-H Reminds you to Buckle Up” Signs which looked new. We saw a First National Bank sign from at least one direction.

1. **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.**

There is a historical looking (quaint) post office. We hoped it was still operational, but didn’t attempt to enter. A lovely new community building. While we were there the visiting library from North Central Kansas was outside the community building. A lovely electronic sign announced the hours of the library. First National Bank and Trust is a strong presence and the sidewalk in front of the bank was being replaced the day we visited. We saw that as additional evidence that the town takes care of its sidewalks.

We saw a Saddlery shop, a gas station and the Hammond Hut. The Hammond Hut was not open and we did not attempt to enter the Saddlery shop as we did not interpret it to be a retail operation.

**Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)**

We attempted to go into the City Hall, but it was closed. We went inside First National Bank to find out the things that we needed to learn. The staff was friendly and referred us to the local banker who was generous in giving us time to tell us about the town.

**What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.)? Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?**  
We did not see any drinking fountains or public restrooms. We did not notice any benches other than at the park. There was plenty of parking. We could have gone to the post office, the bank and the community center with one stop.

1. **Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

The agriculture-based business and the service station along 383 were clean and neat and easy to access.

4. **Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

Long Island Grain was the industrial area and was a nice agricultural anchor for the town. We were impressed to learn from the local banker that this community is a grain-importer for the use of the feedlot and two pork operations near Long Island. On later reflection, we wondered if the local farmers by-passed the elevators to sell locally?

5. **Health Care Services**

**Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services. Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physicians, dentists, optometrists, public health and other healthcare providers. What long-term care services, assisted living or nursing facilities exist in the community?**

Health Care services are readily available at Phillipsburg (22 mi), Alma (17mi) or Norton (22 mi).

There are no long-term or senior living facilities in Long Island. One citizen said that most elders move to Alma or Norton, closer to health care services as they age.

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

There were a variety of houses in varying sizes and condition. Most citizens take pride in their homes. We did not see any “for sale” or “for rent” signs. Because city hall wasn’t open, we don’t know if they would have had a list of homes for us to rent or buy. The citizens we spoke to said that there were not many houses available.

Some houses had condition issues—they needed paint and freshening up. One home, visible from Washington Street, had a yard full of animals, especially goats. Because of the muddy terrain on the day we were there, the property had a particularly messy appearance considering it was inside town. There were nice houses too with neat yards. Although we were told there weren’t many homes that were for sale or for rent, we saw houses that we interpreted as being vacant.

7**. Schools**

**What schools are present? (Head Start, Preschool, K-8, High School, Post-Secondary, etc.) Do the schools appear to be adequate in size? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained? Were you able to find online information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?**

There is one school in Long Island, a big asset for a town of this size. It had a sign that said “Long Island Elementary School” but the website tells us that it is a middle school.

Northern Valley Schools has a nice website; it focuses on athletics and clubs. It is not clear about the academic performance. The “Elementary Schools” tab, only has links to two newsletters and they are very out of date. (September and October 2016 newsletters.)

There is a whole page of online results for “Long Island, KS Schools” some of which are of questionable reliability. KS Department of Education data is the best we found, but it does not show up on the first page of results when an online search is made and is not easy to locate.

1. **Childcare**

**What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?**

The citizen we spoke to said childcare is a significant problem—perhaps even the “most” significant. One employee in the same conversation said that finding employment is not difficult, but finding childcare is.

1. **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?**

There is one church inside the city limits: The United Methodist Church. A Dutch Reformed church is outside of town and is advertised in signs at the city limits. We were not aware of any church-sponsored community services.

1. **Civic**

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

**Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?**

We saw a sign for the Lion’s club. When we stopped to visit in the First National Bank, citizens told us that the Lion’s Club had disbanded and a second teller said, “…but we have a new PRIDE Group.” They also named an American Legion.

We did not observe any evidence of civic organization activity.

1. **Public Infrastructure**

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

Streets were brick and mostly paved. We thought the streets were in amazing shape considering how much snow you had just received. Only moderate evidence of muddy places where cars parked next to lawns. We saw small, but very readable Cemetery signs that directed us to a lovely cemetery.

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

City hall was not open when we visited.

**Police/fire protection:**

There is a volunteer Fire Department and the County sheriff provides law enforcement.

**Library:** The North Central Kansas Library truck was parked at the Community Building when we arrived. The electronic sign and the door of the building announced the library hours. By the time we had explored the other parts of town the library truck was gone and the Community Building locked so we did not see inside.

**City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sports complex):**

The school has a nice playground that is not fenced, so it acts as a public playground. There is a tennis court and basketball court that could use freshening up. There is a football field that appears not to be used. It looks like an opportunity for a walking track or disc golf course.

1. **Recreation/Tourism**

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

The town is proud of its community center which was built with individual donations.

Recreation and Tourism events were not apparent to us so we asked. It seems the Battle of Long Island took place not far from here. Citizens told us where to look for the commemorative marker on a stone close by. Had we not been told about it, we would have missed it and we certainly wouldn’t have known what the marker was for. As it was, we took his word for it rather than to stop along a bustling highway for a look.

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

We did not see any sign of significant events that the community holds. Citizens told us that they have an Easter Egg Hunt and a Halloween trunk or treat. This allows children to come into town for Halloween and not go door to door.

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

The bank employees told us that Long Island gets its name from being outlined by the Prairie Dog River. The bank has historic photos of a time when that area had enough water to float a boat on, but that isn’t true any longer. We would not have known that Long Island was the site of a famous battle if we hadn’t talked to the banker. He pointed out a plaque on a stone that was really only visible from one direction.

We were very interested in what we interpreted to be a walking trail on the abandoned rail line. We had fantasies about how great that would be to bike along that bike path and stop on a hot evening at the Hammond Hut to eat on the patio. We were saddened to learn that the Railroad doesn’t want to give rights to a walking trail along there.

**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.**

City Hall was closed so we stopped at the bank. We were so warmly received that we were confident that we could have asked our questions of the city workers at the Community Center or the public employees who were burning brush at the edge of town. It was nice to see active clean up in process.

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

This is a cute NW Kansas town, but there is no place for a visitor to leave any money behind except the gas station.

1. **Wrap-up**

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

The town is neat, friendly and well-cared for.

We liked the historic school which has cared for generations of children and is still being well-maintained.

We were pleasantly surprised to see that the US Census (<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml>) says that Long Island has grown from 134 residents in 2010 to an estimated 177 in 2015. Quite unusual for a NW Kansas town.

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

The lack of a store or restaurant so travelers can leave money behind in the community. The challenge of finding high quality, affordable child care.

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

How cool it would be if Long Island could have a walking trail on the abandoned rail road lines.



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