First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

Community Visited: Minneapolis Date Visited: July 10, 2015

**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?**

Good community website however the blue tabs on the green background are difficult to read. A great deal of information can be found on the website. There are a few links that are either inactive or take you to an incorrect site. An example is link for the mental health center takes you to the wellness center. Greatly appreciated have an organizations tab. This help new residents know what the community has to offer for social needs. I also appreciated a separate tab for visitors and the link to Rock City.

1. **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.)**

When traveling in from the east it is amazing seeing all of the older homes and historic downtown. From the south you see the river valley, park and fairgrounds as you enter. It’s a peaceful setting. Overall the community is clean and you see the sense of pride in home ownership. There is a variety of housing options and a very attractive historical downtown.

Directional signage is wonderful! However some of the street signs and stop signs are leaning and faded.

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?)**

Nice historical preservation, even the vacant buildings. The paint is bright and fresh.

However there are many vacant buildings downtown.

You have a nice grocery store and dental and eye doctor facilities.

Retail was limited to the Quilt store, HealthMart and True Value.

Some clean-up is needed on the west end of Main Street. There is quite a collection of items at the old gas station and the older home is in desperate need of attention. It could be a beautiful home to match others within the community. Some of the ag businesses need to clean their lots or display newer implements to keep it more eye appealing.

Customer service was good and we were asked if we needed assistance.

**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?**

There were a variety of benches available downtown. It might be nice to have them all the same to give a more uniform appearance. Businesses had restrooms available for use but we did not find any drinking fountains. Flowers in the planter boxes were very nice and well maintained. Private yards well also well maintained. Parking was not an issue and you could easily walk downtown from one location.

1. **Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

Everything is pretty centrally located within a block or so of Main Street with the exception of the Floral & Gift store on the north side of town. That shop looks interesting and catches your attention.

4. **Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

There are two industrial parks. One on the east side of town and the other on the west side of town. It’s nice they are separated from the residential areas. The east park is much easier to find than the west park.

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?**

Nice hospital and it is expanding. The rehab facility at the hospital is well-known and provides a very valuable service for the area. It’s a real plus to have the nursing home located close by. The Ottawa County Health Planning Commission did a fantastic job in building their facility to house their office, Public Health, Home Health and the Wellness Center all in one building. There is a nice variety of providers available with 3 doctors, 2 dentists, 1 eye doctor, and 1 chiropractor.

The senior services available are incredible – you have senior housing, assisted living and long term care.

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?**

It appears there are homes for sale in a variety of price ranges. There is nice availability of multi-family houses and lots of smaller housing options such as apartments or duplexes. Minneapolis has more rentals available than a lot of small towns. This is probably due to their proximity to Salina. The chamber office was a good source for housing information. An interesting statistics shows that 80% of the housing in Minneapolis was built after 1990.

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

Minneapolis has two separate buildings for their schools, PreK – 6 and 7 – 12. Buildings appear to be in good shape. One pre-school was observed and it was located across the street from the Public Health Office. The website listed 3 but we were unable to locate the other 2. The school has a good website, however the website name and address do not match – North Ottawa Schools vs Minneapolis Schools. This could be confusing for someone looking to move to the community. There is evidence of school pride shown throughout the community. The team loved the lion statues in people’s yards. It showed great school spirit.

1. **Childcare**

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

No facilities were observed and nothing was found on the website.

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? Are there any facilities or statements that some would view as intrusive or that would make someone feel uncomfortable if they were not of a particular faith?**

There are a variety of denominations and the facilities are well maintained. Eight churches were noted on the website.

1. **Civic**

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

Through the website a variety of civic groups and organizations were found – Chamber of Commerce, Masons, VFW, Lions Club, PEO, Economic Development Foundation, Cub Backers,

4-H, Boy & Girl Scouts, G. L. Huyett, Love Inc. There was a very nice window display on G.L. Huyett and the support which has been given the community in the last several years.

Within the community signs were observed for the Masons, VFW and Chamber.

The Community Garden is an awesome thing!

1. **Public Infrastructure**

**Comment in general on the streets, street signage, sidewalks, parking, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, and streetscapes in areas other than downtown. Did you observe land-use planning?**

The red directional signs were awesome. However some of the street name signs and stop signs were fading and leaning. The sidewalks were inconsistent and some of the curbs and gutters were rough. The streets themselves were in good condition however there are a lot of unpaved streets, mostly in the older, less prosperous side of town. C & D Dump is in a questionable location and a question was raised about the concrete and asphalt pile inside the city limits.

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

City office is not easily signed. The team saw the fire department but almost missed the city hall attached. The team did not enter to assess what was available.

**Police/fire protection:**

They did not see a separate police station nor signs for it. They did see the sheriff’s office and detention center and the signage.

**Library:**

Minneapolis has a nice library with a variety of services available.

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

Markley Park has a nice sign and is well shaded. They liked the nature track at the park. The location of the pool at the park is good but the road is narrow and parking is limited. The pool is older and needs replacing. The ball fields and fairgrounds are across the street from the park. It’s very convenient having everything in close proximity to each other.

The golf course is located on the east side of town and needs some improvements. Concerns were expressed about the condition of the greens.

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? Did you see any indication of significant events taking place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents? Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.**

Rock City is a great attraction for Minneapolis. Directional signage is in place and several businesses have utilized the theme in naming their business (Rock City Motel). The dam on the river creating the waterfall is unique and creates a peaceful setting. They also have a home owned carnival which is open during the fair. Maybe this could also be used other times throughout the year. They have an historical museum and an exhibit about George Washington Carver. I did not however see any publicity about the museum and it’s in a poor location with limited parking.

It’s sad they lost the race facility. It brought a lot of visitors to the area.

**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.**

The Chamber of Commerce office seemed to be the place to go to find information. She was very pleasant, knowledgeable, and informative. The Chamber Executive Director shared information about the county, city and businesses.

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

None were noted however the “Re-tire”ment Garden definitely caught their attention.

1. **Wrap-up**

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

Clean and well maintained homes; it’s closeness to Salina allowing it to serve as a bedroom community; pride in home ownership; the beautiful historic homes and downtown; admired your senior “high rise” and the other senior housing which is available; loved the lion statues in the yards showing great school spirit.

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

More retail downtown – could be a big challenge being so close to Salina

More eating options

Street improvements

Clean-up of ag clutter

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

The beautiful old houses

Nicely maintained historic downtown

Rock City

The “re-tire”ment garden deserves honorable mention of things to be remembered from Minneapolis.

Minneapolis is a community that feels like home!

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