First Impressions 

**Team Report Form**

Community Visited: Riley, Kansas Date Visited: 8/14 & 29/18

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?

-I found the website for Riley was very good. Easy to access with various tabs. Was able to

get a feel for the community before I visited.

-It was very informative.

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

-Riley is a very “neat” small town. It was very evident of their PRIDE organization, which I had learned from their website.

-Clean town, yards mowed, few cluttered houses.

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

-The welcome signs (2) coming into town were attractive, tidy landscaping.

-Nice “Welcome to Riley” sign on HWY 24 as you are going east, Dollar General and storage units on HWY 24 north, Baptist Church and the Quik Shop on the south of HWY 24 as you enter the town of Riley.

2. Downtown Business Area

Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

-I was impressed by their main street. I had understood they had just recently re-surfaced some of the streets, great job. The main street was well-marked. As with small towns, a few empty buildings, but they were well-kept. A pocket park was delightful with grass, flags and bench. I was told it was privately owned. One doesn’t often find a saw mill on Main Street, however it was well-kept with large logs neatly stacked. The saw mill appeared to be enclosed.

-Most buildings were kept up pretty well – nothing that was an “eye sore” to me. Signs indicated the businesses. The city had just resurfaced the main street. Downtown has a bank, café, Gambino’s, antique mall, funeral home, privately owned saw mill, City Hall, arts & memories museum, library, insurance company, gift shop, catering business, cake business, newspaper, and a small health & fitness place which I assumed was also a beauty shop.

Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed.

- They had a couple of eateries and a neat little home décor store, “Mulberry Feet”. There was also a museum, city hall and library.

-Shopped in Mulberry Feet – small store and had a variety of household decorating items, candles, and some craft items.

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

-I visited “Mulberry Feet” and had a nice chat with the owner. She shared information about the town, very welcoming.

-The lady that owned Mullberry Feet was very welcoming and helpful. Explained how she got started in her small business & how she was trying to make “a go” of it. Only open in the afternoons. Has wine and cheese, crackers, etc, a few times a year to get people to come into visit and shop. At Gambino’s had a wonderful meal of pizza and salad bar. The people working were very friendly and helpful. Gambino’s had a nice look – they have only been in that building a couple years – looked clean and welcoming. Had a dining room area where there could be birthday parties and special occasions. At the library the lady was very friendly – she said to visit the upstairs where they have their children’s activities. The library is new – they got their money from a grant & put up with donated help. The woodwork in there was beautiful – had a talented fellow that worked with wood – had some of his carvings on the walls. Very impressed with the library – small but very functional with 4 computers for patrons to use, and rail and ramp for handicapped patrons. I believe that a building downtown was demolished to build the library. Open M, W, T, F 1-6 and Saturdays 10-4. At the private museum (only open in the afternoons) the fellow wanted to show everything he had collected over the years. The building he was in had belonged to the Lion’s Club – he had a lot of memorabilia from clubs, etc. of the town. A lot of history in that building!

What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and wi-fi, etc.) were available?

-I did see benches and I am sure there were probably trash receptacles.

-Public restrooms in the city hall office, library and of course the eating places. Wi-Fi available in the library & city hall building – benches on the streets donated by the Riley PRIDE organization. Did not see a drinking fountain – no trash receptacles on the streets – they have all their trash picked up from a service out of Manhattan which picks up recyclables too.

Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? No. Could you access multiple services from where you parked? Yes

-Landscaping was very nice in front of the city hall and the street had just been repaved this summer. Walking distance to the post office, bank, library, eating establishments, gift shop, museum.

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

-They have a Dollar General on the North side of HWY 24 and a Short Stop on the corner of HWY 24.

-Dollar General – easy to access as it is right off of HWY 24 junction. Quik Shop and a car wash right at the junction. Meat locker plant that does a good business.

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

-I am not sure what the Saw Mill produces.

-There was an elevator. They could not expand south out of Riley as the town is “butted up” to Fort Riley. Yes, I am sure there would be areas where industries could locate – north, east or west.

5. Health Care Services

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

-I learned they do not have medical services, such as Dr., clinic, hospital. However, I did learn that they were working on a plan to have an outreach medical clinic from Clay Center.

-No hospital or medical services at this time but they are building a health clinic north of Dollar General. EMS comes out of Manhattan.

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

-I am sure they would provide a facility.

-At this time no physicians, dentists, optometrists, veterinarians, or health care providers offered but a health clinic is “in the works.” Manhattan is close by for those services.

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

-There is a 24 unit retirement home called Riley Centre. I noticed good signage to this around town.

-None, but a long term, Alzheimer’s unit in Leonardville – 5 miles from Riley.

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.)

-Housing looks good, the homes in the original area of town are older homes. There are newer homes to the Northwest and East side of town. I did not see very many houses for sale.

-There is a low income housing unit to the west – anyone can live there – pay according to your income. A few nice homes for sale – houses sell in the $185 and up – housing on the west side by HWY 24 sell for $115, $130-160 range. Homes can be built or can be bought on the east side of Riley – close access to HWY 24.

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

-I did not find out anything on this.

-Saw a few houses for rent or could live in the low income until housing is available.

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?

-The High School is located north of town, Riley County High School. I was impressed with the lay out of the K-8 and Day Care in the same area. Also in the same area was the swimming pool and a ball field. Very well maintained.

-Grade school in Riley – very attractive building, grounds well-maintained. Lots of playground equipment.

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

-Yes, it was very helpful.

1. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

-The day care was located on the school grounds, fenced in and neat.

-School District has a day care next to the school, which I took to be very affordable. There are some private day cares also.

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 were 3 churches in town. I learned by their website and their Facebook that they were very active in the community.

-There are 3 denominations in Riley – United Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian. Community food basket each Saturday from 10 -12 with donations provided by 10 local and surrounding churches. Men’s coffee group at Presbyterian Church. On the 4th Wednesday of each month, an evening meal is provided by the Presbyterian Church with a free-will donation.

1. Civic

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

-I just read about the organizations on the website.

-Riley PRIDE which has seasonal events, fall festival, community garden. Friends of the Library that help with fund raisers, programs, volunteers for special events.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

-Not on that day.

-No, not when I was in Riley but the benches provided by the Riley PRIDE group are available all over the town. There was a FREE sign for vegetables available for the taking on a shelf on main street which I assumed was from the community garden.

1. Public Infrastructure

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

-The residential area was well-maintained. As with any small towns, a couple of junky places, but not a major item.

-Each year they are replacing pipes, new sewer linings a few streets at a time. Water pipes were replaced in 2010 and man holes have been replaced. Rest rooms available at the park/swimming pool area. No natural gas – propane tanks in yards or use electric.

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

-I did not visit City Hall. However, it is all on their website.

-Had an awesome visit with Doris the City Clerk who was very informative about the town and was excited to see new progress happening soon.

Police/fire protection:

-On their website

-Volunteer fire department. Police come out of Manhattan.

Library:

-On their website

-Wonderful new library with computers available for public use. Small but they get books from CKLS mobile each month. Friends of the Library – see my comments above about the library.

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

-The park area was in the same area as the swimming pool.

-Ball park, playground, swimming pool, picnic areas available at the park.

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?

-They have listed a lot of events on their website, mostly promoted by PRIDE.

-Close to Kansas State University, Milford Lake

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

-Yes, I liked the idea of their community suppers.

-Residents – probably the community meal each month. On Wednesday at noon, a senior meal is served at Riley Centre (the low rent housing building.)

Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community. (Public art, museums, lakes, campgrounds, regional heritage locations).

-Very close to Manhattan, Fort Riley and Milford Lake

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 very well-maintained and had good signage.

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

-The pizza place and café looked good, did not go in.

-I like Gambino’s Pizza and there is a nice one downtown. It is not that far from HWY 24.

1. Wrap-up

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

-Neatness. I did not see too many people milling around, but it was during the workday.

-Very nice friendly people – a great daycare/school which is the biggest employer of Riley.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

-Probably a medical clinic. Also, a grocery store to supplement Dollar General and the Short Stop filling station.

-The lack of health care if there is an emergency. Everything comes out of Manhattan. No local EMT service available. No Meals on Wheels available. Too close to Fort Riley – the noise from their training February through April, very loud noises! No grocery store but Dollar General would have necessary items to get you by. No natural gas – propane tanks or electric is used.

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

-Very positive. It is neat. I would maybe like to live there if I was working in Manhattan or Fort Riley.

-How enjoyable the day was to visit a small town with such nice people and the very informative city clerk, Doris. Very “small town” feel.



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