First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

Community Visited: Robinson Date(s) Visited: A- November 1, 2016

B- November 5, 2016

C- November 1, 2016

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. There isn’t much of a web presence that allows for much information about Robinson. The website/blog has a post from June 30, 2014 saying the site is basically under construction. The next information is from October 2016 and is a link to the Robinson newsletter which is very handy and gives much more information than the web page provides. I must say that I probably got more information about what goes on in the community from the newsletter than from two of the three people I could talk with. In my opinion, the community is not well represented by their web page. It doesn’t give a very good first impression of Robinson. If all I was going on was the web page to get to Robinson, I’d probably not bother even going there.
2. No problem finding the website, reflected the town well, no problem.
3. N/A
4. 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.)
5. When first coming into town from the north, Robinson appears neat and clean except for the home on the west side of the road that seems to not want visitors. A sign that says they will kill trespassers. Point taken. Every community has someone like that. Move on. Overall I’d have to say that the community appearance is fair to good. The barn quilts that are around the town are delightful and add interest. The signs at the north and south entrances to Robinson are very nicely painted and give a good impression. The streetscapes are pretty much what is expected in a small town and overall well maintained.
6. Clean, nice, quiet, not much activity. New Welcome sign. Home and barn right before entering town were very nice. The small older homes along entrance before you get to downtown ok.
7. A nice little community. Well maintained and trimmed.

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. The red brick façade on most of the buildings appears to be taken care of at first glance. There are many places on the façade that need some attention. I could not locate the city hall until I went into the post office and asked if Robinson has a city office. There was no obvious signage indicating any building houses the city office.The Community Store was not open when I was there. I would have liked to see it but I understand that it can’t be open all the time. It’s nice that there were phone numbers to call for assistance when it is needed I’m happy that there is an effort being made to retain this store. Looked in the Robinson Bank building - has a gorgeous interior! Lots of possibilities for that building with some imagination. Glad it’s a meeting place for the Cub/Boy Scouts. The co-op (AG) seems to be the big business in Robinson. Its appearance is great. Neat, clean, tidy. Some similar businesses in small towns aren’t so well-kept. I did go into the Post Office to get some information and directions. The clerk was friendly and helpful. A Robinson resident was there. We chatted for quite a while. I can tell he’s proud of Robinson and seems to take great interest in what, how and when things get done. He talked of the importance of the community coming together for common goals.
2. One city block is the downtown area. The Community Store was open, and the volunteer there was very helpful. The building housed the bank and the store. The owners are renovating the upstairs for apartments (for hunting season). The owners have donated the space for the Community Store. On the opposite side of the street is the Bird Cage Theatre where a melodrama is held (not sure how often). Also there is a monthly community dinner held in building next to it. Street and sidewalk in good condition. Small City Park very well maintained. The Community Store had a nice variety of products, dry goods, canned goods, etc. and local merchandise like honey, and Bern Meat. Also place for information and notices. Post Office was next door. One of the storefronts next to Bird Cage Theatre is used for an after school program for children. Although there is no longer any elementary or H.S. in town. All children go to Hiawatha. Grain elevator is main industry, at end of main street. Greg Bryant greeted us and was very helpful. Told us all about the town, and how the community keeps things going. Barbershop near a home.
3. Clean and in good upkeep for the most part. Some vacancies.

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. I did not notice specifically a restroom, but seems like there was a small, white building on the west edge of the park which I’m thinking had a restroom in it. I did not notice specifically a restroom, but seems like there was a small, white building on the west edge of the park which I’m thinking had a restroom in it.
2. Benches on main street, nice park on main street. Another park with basketball court and children’s playground a couple of blocks north of downtown. Plenty of park is on main street. Clean well-kept and park helps the looks. Church on top of hill. Older building now the Veterans’ Community building “Little Library” near this Veteran’s building.
3. 2 small parks, one public restroom.
4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

1. The downtown area is the only retail area that I could see. There is a very nice looking storage facility on the north end of town.
2. None
3. N/A

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

1. I didn’t see any areas that were obviously set aside for industrial expansion or commercial use. The site that was the school looks like it could hold some possibilities. In chatting with a resident, it sounds like the building is owned by someone but not being used for anything specific, a sad use of space. I noticed in the online newsletter, a monthly community Sunday dinner is held at the city hall. It seems like the old-school buildings would be a good use for a community center and perhaps could be used as incubator business pods which would in turn bring more business, revenue and visitors to Robinson.
2. Grain elevator. There is an open area where something could be built. The old High School and elementary school are empty and there is open area around them.
3. N/A

5. Health Care Services

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

1. No Health Care Services
2. All facilities are in Hiawatha, eleven miles away.
3. N/A

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

1. None of these services are available*.*
2. All facilities are in Hiawatha, eleven miles away.
3. N/A

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

1. None available that I saw
2. All facilities are in Hiawatha, eleven miles away.
3. N/A

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. After driving up and down several streets, I saw a number of abandoned properties that have fallen into disrepair. I understand that some places may be salvageable and it seems like tearing them down and reclaiming what can be re-used would make more sense than leaving them to fall where they stand and posed a danger to people or animals. There are a few warning signs on some of those buildings. There was only one home that had a for Sale sign in the yard. There may be some homes available for sale or rent but I didn’t see any indication properties are available.
2. Mostly older homes, but in good condition, well kept. A few larger “mansion” type older homes, in very good condition.
3. Many homes were abandoned and in decay. There was only one home for sale.

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

1. Nothing available that I could tell.
2. Did not see any homes for sale or rental properties.
3. N/A

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. I was told that children are bused to Midway-Denton, Hiawatha or Highland. No active schools in Robinson. Old school buildings are still in Robinson, but are not being used as far as I could find out.
2. Did not see any childcare facilities. Schools in Hiawatha.
3. None. School was unused for 20 years.

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

1. No information available.
2. No.
3. N/A
4. Childcare

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

1. No childcare services available.
2. N/A
3. N/A

9. 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 is a United Methodist Church in town. Could not find any others in town but understand that there is a Lutheran Church southeast of Robinson in the country. Youth/children services are offered on Wednesday evenings in the downtown area at a storefront.
2. Lutheran church, and three Methodist church (although two of them are outside city limits)
3. Lutheran, Methodist Churches. School youth meeting place is downtown.

10. Civic

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

1. The only organizations brought up during my visit was Lions Club and Boy Scouts and not much information about those other than the Boy Scouts meet in the old Robinson Bank building.
2. Bird Cage theatre (melodrama occasionally)
3. Boy Scouts is active.
4. 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?

1. The streets seem to be maintained throughout town, some streets have curbing and some don’t, some with sidewalks some without. Parking appears adequate in the residential areas. I was visiting during the day so I can’t comment on lighting other than that there are street lamps around town.
2. Nice park for children and BB court. No.
3. Landscaping was hit and miss.

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

1. After I found out from the postal clerk where the city office is, I went to visit and ask some of the same questions I had at the post office. When I walked in, a woman who I assume was the city clerk, was working on the computer, her back to me. I didn’t want to bother her so I stood there for a few seconds. Without turning around, she said, “What do you want? “I explained that I was interested in finding out more about Robinson. She said she “had a mess here” and kept on typing. I said I didn’t want to bother and could wait. At that point she turned around and asked “What do you need?”. As I was telling her what I hoped to discover, someone came in and said they had business they needed to discuss. Taking care of business was more important so I excused myself and left. I understand that everyone has a bad day and I hope that this woman doesn’t treat everyone like they are interfering and are a bother. If she is the first point of contact or even the second as in my case, I would be far from impressed and would think twice about making Robinson my home if looking to move to the area. As I said, I hope this lady was just having an isolated bad day and that this isn’t the norm. Often the city clerk or a city maintenance person is visitor’s first contact in a small community. Those are important places to have friendly and helpful people, willing to take some time to visit I looked around to see if there was any information about the community, etc. while in the city office but I didn’t see any. And didn’t get to ask for any.
2. Not open at the time we were there.
3. Stopped but they were busy, so we moved on.

Police/fire protection:

1. I didn’t see that there is a fire department or police department. I’m sure there is a volunteer fire department in town, just didn’t see a building.
2. Did not see any.
3. N/A

Library:

1. None that I could see.
2. “little Library” near for book exchange
3. N/A

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

1. There is a very nice park area downtown. Benches and beautiful flowers. Very welcoming! The city park is nice. Ballfield needed some attention, mowing, etc., the playground area looked like it could keep any child busy for quite a while and it was good to see some picnic tables available! Overall has everything a park needs!
2. River is accessible for canoe/kayak, hiking. Two parks, one with BB court and children’s playground, and one on main street.
3. Cemetery. Nice!
4. 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. There is a building called The Bird Cage Theater – there is a play held there in the summer – I believe it’s an annual event.
2. Bird Cage Theatre, Wolf river
3. N/A

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

1. Nothing advertised – no posters, etc.
2. Community dinner, Bird Cage Melodrama
3. N/A

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

1. Nothing other than the old school.
2. Wolf River area?
3. N/A

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. Nothing was available that I could see.
2. Community Store is the main spot.
3. N/A

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

1. Sadly no. There currently isn’t anything that would entice me to return.
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. Wrap-up

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

1. It seems there are a number of possibilities. There is so much potential for growth.
2. Active Volunteers for park, community store and dinner. Attractive rural area. Potential musical groups.
3. N/A

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

1. Utilizing the resources available. With some imagination and ingenuity Robinson could be a bustling community.
2. Off the beaten path
3. N/A

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

1. Some of the homes are lovely. I love to see old homes well cared for. The barn quilts are of interest to me. Those could be listed on a barn quilt registry which would give people a reason to come to Robinson.
2. Community Store
3. N/A



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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Service

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