First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

**Community Visited:**  Syracuse  **Date Visited:** June 12, 2018 (Tues)

**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. Found quite a bit of info online ahead re: Syracuse. Getting info on specific businesses was tougher. Downtown area not quite as nice as I thought it would be.
2. The web page was good. It did make it look a bit better than it was but that is okay.
3. **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. Driving through from 4 directions things look a bit rundown—properties along the highways. Some buildings were well-maintained, others not so much. Was difficult to tell what some businesses were due to lack of signage. Some very pretty streetscaping along the highway near Porky’s Parlor.
	2. You have a mix of very nice and not so nice. It appears to us there are run down areas- empty closed down businesses/housing. The awning on the old Phillips 66 gas station looks like a strong wind could take it down-could be dangerous. Signs for streets were present and visible. The banners were nice but some faded enough they were difficult to read. The town is laid out nice.

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. Signage was not too great in spots. Sidewalks and curbing need attention. Theatre building is a gem! Bison Restaurant also renovated beautifully. A small salon painted green—a standalone- and very attractive. Windows were tinted down and made it difficult to see if business was open and what was inside. Windows also needed washed. Went into drug store, quilt shop. A nice variety, but a bit lean on products. Everyone was very friendly and helpful.
2. Buildings on Main Street need sprucing up. The wood awnings do nothing for the downtown. The court house and lawns were nice. The bank and library were very nice. Donut shop was very nice and clean. Quilter’s Stash had a very nice lady working. Shop is nice. The Rhinestones N Rodeo store was closed. I stood at the window drooling over all the cool things in there. Found out she is putting her business on line, sad because it’s a cool store. Syracuse has a nice drugstore. They asked us questions about what sells well at our store-had an interest in keeping gift items. Important for a community that size. Tried to find a flower shop- was told it was by the carpet place but again, if so there was no signage we could see. Also have a nice grocery store. A dollar general. A museum which is always an asset. There is a nice airport for the community. The sign coming into town is attractive. Having a swimming pool is nice. Ballfield for kids. Positive having 2 convenience stores and one with a Subway in it. People were very friendly- was always greeted with a smile, would converse and ask what was bringing us to town.

**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. Didn’t see trash receptacles downtown, but parks had restrooms, benches, trash receptacles. Also saw some nice benches downtown. Bank and school had very nice landscaping. Parked in one location and could access everything—bank, library, city hall, local businesses.
2. Had a gazebo on corner of downtown, weeds, painted. Pretty area across highway from donut shop. We could walk the main street and to the library. Big dips in streets are hard on car bumpers.

1. **Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

1. Seemed to be more than one style at work which made downtown look a little shabby. Again, sidewalks and curbing need attention. Easy access though.
2. Not so attractive. The windows were dirty and unable to see through them. The drugstore was nice. People were friendly. Hope you can encourage your people to use your businesses. Grocery store is nice.

4. **Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

1. Would probably be on town periphery.
2. Quite a few empty businesses west of main street. Would be good to open some of them up.

5. **Health Care Services**

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

1. Seemed to be good availability. Hospital CEO gave us a tour of facility and services. Sounds like progress is being made in that area.
2. We were given a tour of the hospital by the administrator. You have a wonderful facility. We are very excited for you to be getting a doctor. We have been with healthcare for years-this is a backbone of your community. I hope you can get a permanent PA and even another doctor. You don’t want to burn one out- I encourage your community to use your providers and your hospital

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

1. Availability around hospital good. Need cash flow for facility upgrades.
2. You are blessed to have a dentist and it looked like several optometrists. Again support them- what an asset for a small community.

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

1. Intermediate Care Facility @ hospital.
2. So sad your nursing home closed- once it’s gone it is difficult to get one back. Good that you have extended care at your hospital.

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. Housing ranged from bad to great. Seemed to be a wide variety to appeal to various incomes. Not a lot for sale. Houses packed in pretty tight. A lot of apartments, but not sure if low income. Some very nice homes and neighborhoods.
2. There were 8 houses on the market- they appeared to be in good shape and reasonably priced for the size. What we would give to have a couple 4 bedroom, 2 bathroom in good shape. The neighborhood near the hospital is very nice. Only negative is houses are close together and the easement to the street short. Trash dumpsters in front of homes- that is a distraction and I would think not pleasant in the heat of summer.

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

1. Several apartments—not sure if low income or for anyone.
2. The city hall had a huge list of people who rent. We saw were apartments above businesses on main street and noticed one house with a rent sign. Hard to judge from the outside, they may be quite nice but the outside of the ones on main street need spruced up.

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. Schools looked very nice and well-maintained.
2. Schools look very nice. They are a 2A school. Buildings and grounds very nice.

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

1. Found some information re: teachers and a directory of same.
2. Not really with school closed for the summer.
3. **Childcare**

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

1. City Hall provided names of 5 daycare providers. Didn’t discuss affordability.
2. You have 5 day care centers- WOW! One ran by school and again you are blessed. Not having enough daycare is a huge issue in our community. Show those people appreciation.
3. **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. Several denominations and most buildings and grounds are well-maintained. Bible school was going on while I was there.
2. You have a nice mix of churches and they looked very nice. Did not see evidence of church sponsored events.
3. **Civic**

**Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community. Did you see evidence of civic organization activity?**

1. Sounds like Syracuse has PEO and Rotary. We didn’t see any evidence of activity.
2. Was told there was Rotary and PEO. Ever consider starting a group of young women as a service group? We have 2. Fun events raise money for scholarships for 4-H, scouts, school, etc. A pride group- all money from our second hand store goes back into the community. We did not observe any evidence of civic organization activity.
3. **Public Infrastructure**

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

1. Streets in pretty good shape. Street signs visible.
2. Again downtown sidewalks were bad. Buildings cleaned up. Poor signage for businesses. Was told there was a flower shop but we never found it. Store with carpet- couldn’t tell if it was open.

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

1. City Hall folks very friendly and helpful! Gave us all the info we asked for.
2. The city hall employees were wonderful- very friendly, answered our questions, and provided information on housing, daycare, rentals, etc. We did tell them about welcome packets put together for new people coming to town. Good project for organization- include businesses, services, etc.

**Police/fire protection:**

1. Nice facility.
2. Under the sheriff department.

**Library:**

1. Nice facility and friendly staff! Very helpful and informative.
2. Very nice, head of library was very pleasant. She told us about their children’s and teen area in the library- very impressed. You are fortunate to have such a nice library and an excellent staff running your facility.

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

1. Parks pretty nice. Found a walking track, but didn’t see any public ball parks.
2. The park by the hospital is wonderful! The one in the south part of town again could use a little paint and freshened up the covered picnic areas. We couldn’t locate the walking trail.

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?**

1. The sand Dunes Park seems to be the most significant.
2. Your sand dune park should be a great asset. You might consider flyers across the western part of the state. We had never heard of it before. I have told people here who drive the same distance to Oklahoma to give yours a try. Advertise.

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

1. Online only.
2. I did notice on the web page events are posted.

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

1. Didn’t go into the museum, but looks like it might be pretty nice. Theatre downtown is a gem!
2. Sand dunes. Your theater is wonderful what we could see through the door. Again to have one is rare and a treasure in a town your size. Keep it in good repair and get the info out there with pictures on your website.

**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. City Hall- staff very friendly, nice facility, good signage.
2. We didn’t see any chamber or visitor center but the ladies at city hall did a great job providing information.

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

1. Black Bison Pub! Food was excellent as was service. Really wanted to get a look at the loft.
2. The Black Bison had a wonderful meal in a beautiful building- it has been renovated right. Would have loved to see the loft but it had guests. What a great place. More pictures of loft on website.
3. **Wrap-up**

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

1. Very friendly residents! Good restaurant selection. A real effort being made in some areas.
2. You have a variety of restaurants- a very nice motel. You have homes for sale, daycares, a couple of convenience stores. A nice grocery store and a pharmacy. A new doctor coming, dental and vision care, a theater, a beautiful library, bank and your schools look great. All of these things are such an asset to towns our size. Best of all were your people- so friendly.

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

1. Improving downtown infrastructure.
2. Your downtown looks like it is dying. Fix sidewalks, paint, wash windows, signs for businesses, clean up the abandoned buildings. Houses, especially on your main highway through town. You need to promote and advertise what you do have. Businesses need to be opened.

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

1. (Positive) People were friendly, my meal was excellent. Good restaurant selection. (Negative) How rough some of downtown looked. Some bad looking properties on the highways into town.
2. Your friendly people. Also the Black Bison. I would eat there again. Do not want to take away from other eating establishments. I’m sure they are good too.

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