

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: Canton

Date Visited: July 18, 2023 (2)
October 13, 2023

1. 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?

- Canton's city website had 3 businesses listed and then had "other businesses", when I clicked on others they were just listed. It would be lovely to hyperlink so we get addresses and other pertinent information such as hours etc. I loved the History portion and the Hess Pool information.
- Old Canton Jail is so cool on the website but needed an address.
- Except for some churches, there were no noticeable photos to compare to the actual experience except for the Hot and Cold water Towers.
- The website is easy to navigate but I feel more of an emphasis should be on the citizens and things there are to offer. The one that stands out most is the bank with a link to direct you but it seems the other businesses are listed but there are no addresses, phone numbers or hours to help plan a trip.
- Used a desktop PC, and I found: <https://cantonks.org/government/> which was a good representation of transparency and information. It said who the Mayor and Council Members and Planning Council, but no contact information for them. Contact information was given for the City Clerk. There is a link to the City of Canton Facebook page from the Government page: https://www.facebook.com/people/City-of-Canton-Kansas/100068815200180/?ref=embed_page. The FB page is updated with event and official announcements about once a week.
- There was a page for water/trash/sewer service information which would be helpful to a new resident. The page demonstrated good transparency and convenience with Code information, City Forms and Applications. It has a list of area businesses, attractions(!), History, and Churches.
- Other online entries: MapQuest; [Kansas Tourism: Maxwell Wildlife Refuge and Bison Tour](#)
- It was pretty easy to locate information but on Wikipedia it says the Elementary school is in Canton and in fact it is an abandoned building (we learned that from our visit).

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

- Several noted the stone entrances in the city are beautiful and the area around them was well maintained. Street signs were very noticeable and for the most part were all straight.
- My initial reaction was that it was a country town.
- Several noted the buildings in downtown were well maintained from what could be seen from the car. The main street had several businesses which excited me because we have a need for more businesses.
- The buffalo on the street corners really made the area attractive.
- I thought after driving to the end of the main area “oh boy are we in trouble when they come and see our city” and then I turned the corner to a residential area and thought “oh my goodness we are good now”.
- There are a lot of unkept yards with high grass, no weed-eating, misc. items in the yards throughout the city.
- Several noted the streets have potholes and need major work and the dips at the intersections should be marked. It was unique seeing concrete roads in the middle then asphalt and then grass growing in the asphalt in the road that should be addressed.
- There were some streets without any road signs (not sure why).
- The “kids at play” signs were randomly scattered around the city, and I really liked that.
- Library closed when we were there but a very beautiful building.
- Sign advertising a festival that had just passed.

3. Downtown Business Area Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

- Several noted that it was hard to determine if the businesses were open or closed.
- The buildings downtown were in okay condition.
- I loved the variety of businesses throughout the town. I wish we had more space to increase our main street businesses. The street signs were prominent. The infrastructure of the buildings was okay but maybe some paint to brighten the buildings up would help.
- After driving through the city, we explored the downtown area. We drove up and down more than once and looked around when we got out. The only stores open when we were there (at 10:45am) were Mamas C’s, the meat locker, and the little thrift store across the street from it.

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

- Went into Mama C's and they were so helpful. I am excited to see what they do for their community as the years progress.
- We stopped to talk to a heating and air company fixing an air conditioner and asked him where a good place would be to eat, and he said Mama's C and to tell Karla he sent us. We stopped in and it is a take and dine (not really a restaurant) but today they were having a taco bar or a salad. They have ready to take meals that are fresh or frozen also and homemade desserts.
- The meat locker was as one would expect but the lady who checked us out was very friendly.
- At the little thrift shop had two kids and a lady working and the store was a mix of items and very reasonable priced.

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

- Many noted the appreciation for the helpful the staff at Mama C's. The willingness to visit and share information was very gracious.
- Mama C's customer service was the best hands down. We did confess who were where and why we were there but even before that they were very friendly from the start and told us how to order and what they did. After they found out who we were and why we were there, she noted that her and her mother are part of the same program. We sat and talked while we ate and asked many questions, and they were very informative. The lady who traveled with me had some helpful tidbits for them and their mission also since she runs our school-run grocery store. They even shared recipes and software.
- I entered the city building and was greeted with a smile. Questions were answered and the clerk probed for other information we might need.
- The meat locker workers were all busy, the lady who checked us out still made time to tell us about the meat and prices and how they wanted to make them affordable for the community.
- The little thrift show we went into we were instantly greeted by a little girl, then a little boy, and then the lady behind the counter. The lady described the store, and we looked through it. The prices were very reasonable. The store was like Goodwill but way better pricing. The community is lucky to have this outlet.
- The handwritten sign at the thrift shop had "business" spelled wrong. The thrift shop was a nice touch for the community but visitors really, I don't think could find anything useful there.

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

- Benches and trash receptacles.

- I saw a bench in front of the Senior Center but did not note any drinking fountains, wifi, or public restrooms. I did see a few trash receptacles.
- There were trash receptacles on the corner of streets and a couple of benches but nothing about wi-fi, public restrooms, or drinking fountains, even though I don't know if this community would benefit from drinking fountains.

Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

- Parking was accessible and the landscaping plants were beautiful.
- The buffalo were AMAZING, really loved the buffalo on the corners.
- I felt the landscape of the downtown was okay but a little drab. If I were coming into town looking for something, my first thought would be about the number of empty buildings and not sure if they were an open business or not.
- Downtown landscaping was beautiful with the flower planters at the Senior Center. We would like to have seen the Senior Center, but they were closed. Their hours were clearly stated. The rest of the downtown area for the landscaping and streetscaping was pleasing. The empty closed buildings never halted my view of the downtown area because they are in good repair.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- No other areas outside of downtown were mentioned by visitors.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- The old elementary school was mentioned by several as a potential area for expansion. That would be perfect for a place to have shopping and business.
- Many noted there were several areas where industries could be placed or expanded. There seemed to be a few plots of land that if purchased could add some industry.

6. Health Care Services

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

- No healthcare or emergency services were seen in the community.

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

- Visitors either noted an N/A or expressed that they did not see any.

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

- Visitors either noted an N/A or expressed that they did not see any.

7. 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 regard to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)

- Several visitors noted that the city had a mix of housing types - lower income, middle income, and higher income. Many homes were very nice and maintained. One comment stood out: The existing mix of housing stock was for all incomes but when talking to the “locals” it appears they feel they are in need of housing and there seems to be a new committee that has formed to focus on this.
- There was an area on the SW (they think that is the right direction) side of town that has been developed and there appeared to be room for at least one more house.
- It was noted that some lawns were not mowed or weed-eated and there were homes that needed to be repaired or painted. Three homes for sale and one of them was under contract.

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

- City staff said they had a list of landlords but couldn’t give a list. There were apartments but they didn’t know who was in charge, only that the city owned them.
- Several visitors noted they did not see evidence of rental properties.
- When speaking with city staff, which was not a helpful visit, she said she had a list of landlords but could not give us a list. There were apparently apartments owned by the city, but she didn’t know who was in charge of that and took our number to call back if the couple of landlords she called had any availability.

8. 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?

- Several visitors were told that Canton has a High School, the Elementary is in Galva (one visitor was told this by the city clerk).
- Several noted that the building and grounds were well maintained.

- During the drive around town, I did see the Junior/Senior High School but did not see an elementary school. As I drove by the school I only knew it was by the marquee that said junior/senior high school. The building was not marked until further down/there should be more markings on the school coming from the main street to identify it. The front entrance is pretty but it is on the side of the building so it could be deceiving to a newcomer.

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

- As with any online information the website made the reader feel invited to the district and made it appear students and parents were both excited about the school system. I was unable to ask about the educational system.
- I did find out a lot about the school and their website portrays very active and happy involved students. I loved it!!

9. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

- All visitors noted that the city clerk said there were a couple/few in town; the clerk took their names and said she and call them. One visitor indicated they hadn't received a call back at the time of writing their report. Others did not indicate whether they heard back.

10. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the places of worship represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of faith-based community services?

- Many noted that the churches felt like the central part of the community, being well kept and welcoming.
- I saw a Methodist and Baptist church. The physical appearance was good.
- Several noted they did not observe a faith-based community service.

11. Civic

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

- Several commented that the city seemed in the early stages of forming a Kansas Community Empowerment group.
- 4H presence is obvious.
- I did see an American Legion.

- When eating lunch and visiting we spoke about organizations and clubs. I enjoyed the visit, but it seems they have big dreams and want to focus on 5 different items for improvement, but I would think instead of 5 committees they ought to ban together and knock them out one at a time.
- One would assume with the Fair Grounds they had a 4H but no evidence of such.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

- Several said “no.”
- The American Legion had a community chili feed advertised.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- Many noted the same sentiment: The streets were horrendous/bad/poor/huge potholes.
- Several noted that the signage was good/street signage was adequate.
- One notable comment: When we asked in the city building about the cement in the middle of the streets and then asphalt on the sides, she explained when they fix a water leak, they fill the hole with concrete. She said the roads are in bad shape “as you can see” and it will cost a lot, but they are working on getting a grant to help repair them.

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

- City staff member was busy on the phone but did not acknowledge us. She warmed up as the conversation carried on.
- I visited the city building and was greeted with a smile and my questions were answered. She tried to question me more about my needs.
- We walked in at approx. 10:45am and person working there was on phone with a software company answering questions, but it was 6 minutes, yes, I timed it, before she even acknowledged we were in the building. I understand being on a phone call, but she could have looked our way and held up a finger or any sort of acknowledgement would have been great. When she got off the phone, she looked at us and said hello and that is when my side kick said her sister was moving to this area, which was true, and asked for a list of landlords and daycares. She said she had a list but couldn’t give us the information and said she couldn’t think of the name of the lady who did daycare but if we gave her our number, she would give it to them to call. This wasn’t really helpful. I asked about the concrete in the road and that is when she told us that is how they put it back when there is a repair. We asked about the elementary school, and she said

someone bought it and they were going to make it into offices, but they own hotels in McPherson and “just dump their junk in there now”.

Police/fire protection:

- The buildings were in good condition.
- Many noted that the fire department was in great shape with curbside appeal, and the police station was attached.
- Both looked to be newer facilities.
- The buildings were in good repair, but no one was out and about, which I am sure they were busy inside.

Library:

- Very welcoming but was closed so didn’t observe the inside.
- The library was one of the best sites I saw in town. It was beautiful.
- The library wasn’t open when we were there, but it is a very inviting building, and you can tell it has a focus on the kids.

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

- Several noted that the city parks were well kept and loved how they looked. I loved their city parks; they were well kept. They have a walking trail that has signage, but it was 102 degrees, and I would have melted.
- I saw two or three different parks and the park by the school had several pieces of equipment for kids to play on and a sign for the ballpark.
- They did have a walking trail with great signage.
- The fairgrounds looked well-kept and the parking was in immaculate conditions.

13. Recreation/Tourism

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

- Buffalo/on the street corners were enjoyed by the visitors. When googling it touched on buffalo and there are statues of buffalos on the street, which were so cute.
- I saw a sign that said Heritage Days, but did not see any other mention of it.

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

- There was a parade advertised but it had just passed. I am a 4H’er so that is interesting.

- Signage of the Heritage Days was seen which I would say would be available to visitors and residents. I also saw a sign on the Legion of a community chili feed.
- On July 15th there was a parade from signage still up but that is all I picked up on. I would say with the fairgrounds there are interest there.

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).

All visitors listed the following, with comments:

- Buffalo, if advertised well.
- Swimming pool, which was nice.
- Lake - There were signs of lakes or such but were in a different area but nearby/did see signs for a lake nearby.
- The community has a fairground, which could entice some visitors.

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.

- Several noted that the Senior center and community center were both closed when they visited.
- There was a city office with one female that was pleasant. The sign was large and easy to read.
- As far as the other I would say the city office and I commented on that already.

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

- Mama C's but that is because I would want to see what they have progressed on but otherwise no/ I did love Mama C's, but I wouldn't drive there for specifically that. If I was in the area I would stop in and grab a meal to go though.
- I did see one restaurant and a few shops but I would not say they would entice me to visit the city.

14. Wrap-up

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

- Many of the visitors observed people out working in their yards.
- Mama C's and the willingness to visit when we stopped to chat. Mama C's was inviting and friendly, a place the locals love.

- I was impressed with main street and the pavement on the main roads. The physical appeal of the library left an impression on me.
- We would randomly stop and ask questions and they were all friendly. The downtown area was clean and well taken care of.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- All noted the streets, empty buildings. Comments: I would assume the street condition is the most obvious challenge facing the community. The number of empty buildings on main street was a definite obstacle but could also be a positive if there were businesses wanting to open.
- The streets, empty buildings, and their big dreams. I think, as I said earlier, for a community of this size with the major obstacles they want to conquer it would be best, in my opinion, to tackle one at a time and show progress to get more on board.
- The lack of places to eat, shop, etc. only sends people to the bigger city to spend their money. I also did not see any maintenance or city workers at all in the 3 hours we were there.

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

- All visitors said that the people were what they would remember most - #1 thing I will remember were the people, they were all welcoming, except maybe the city office staff for some, and the general feel of camaraderie. People were welcoming and the downtown area was amazing.
- The streets left a very negative impression that will stay with me.
- The physical appearance of the library was very impressive.
- The other thing I will remember after having been here is the grass isn't always greener on the side, maybe longer but not greener. I feel a lot better about my city with the yards and the issues we have and feel we are on the right track.
- This was definitely a great experience and as I have said the people on the side of the street and at Mama C's were outstanding and so welcoming.

How much money did you spend while you were in the city you visited? _____
(Please include total purchases: Gas, soft drinks, food, purchases. No detail necessary.)

- \$28.32
- \$12.49
- \$38.26 -**There weren't many places to spend money, or I would have been happy too.**



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