

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: **Anthony, KS**

Date(s) Visited: 7/12/23 (2)
8/19/23
8/22/23 (2)

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?

- It was easy to get information on the computer, and for the most part it did reflect what we saw. There were some items on the website that we didn't see in person because of a lack of signage for directions.
- Anthony presents itself very well online. It looks like a very livable, family friendly town through the lens of the internet. We were excited to learn more on the hot air balloon festival. We were a bit confused on whether the festival was in May or September. Better communication on the exact dates would be helpful.
- The City of Anthony website was a great source of information and appeared at the top of the search results. Although it did a good job of providing places to visit, eat, and shop, some of the information was not updated (Balloon Festival) or it did not provide adequate information. I also found information on Anthony through Wikipedia (specifically regarding its history becoming the county seat) and think it would be nice to include that information on the City's website).

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

- The hospital, school, and lake were the first things we saw before entering town and they were impressive. Street signs were faded and there was no signage to direct to certain spots in the city. Great rental housing

development. The downtown looked nice – one side appeared to be newer but the buildings were empty.

- When you enter town the hotel looks new, but then is actually empty and a bit run down. The Shopko building was also noticed and empty.
- The park with a fence you see when entering downtown was very nice.
- Great that there's a restaurant like McDonald's for the size of the community.
- Our 5-minute impression was somewhat industrial. We didn't visit the lake until the end of our trip, but based on online impressions we expected more of the outdoorsman feel to be incorporated into the town itself. The town seemed like your traditional small town. Bright spots were scattered throughout, dull spots were scattered throughout. Driving past the school and the hospital on your way in sets a high expectation for the standard of living within Anthony.
- Anthony seems to be a quaint and quiet town. There are many empty buildings/storefronts/motels, but the number of murals and parks make up for the lack of beautification. There are several businesses in the business district which is fantastic.

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

- We did notice entrance signs that were nice. Some buildings were empty and some were thriving.
- There were a lot of dollar-type retail stores.
- The entrance with the picket fence and with the Welcome to Anthony sign makes for a great first impression. Another entrance had no welcome signage, sale barn creates an industrial feel. Then you drive through below average neighborhood. It was nice to see day to day necessities on the north entrance. The hotel looked vacant. Possibly paint "welcome to Anthony on the old grain silo in the field?"
- There are not a lot of trees along the main streets or highways. They have nice "welcome to Anthony" signs. Coming from the north, there are some streets with potholes and the curbs need to be cleaned up, specifically around the area of Shopko and China Restaurant.

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

- A fire took place 16 years ago downtown which is why there is a side of the street that appears newer after the rebuilding. Not that many businesses have filled that side of the street.
- The older side of the street had more businesses and a wider variety. Some of them needed signage to show they were open. The flower shop could use a new sign.
- The murals were appealing. The theater could use some paint but the building was very unique.
- When we visited, it was 110 degrees. We quickly noticed the lack of shade while shopping. A small portion of buildings had awnings and from what I saw, there were zero trees. Interesting dynamic of new and old buildings. Both new and old are assets, but they can probably be blended together better. I was impressed with your business signage. It seems as though every building had a sign representing a business of some sort. The downtown was very quiet. Music would help the overall experience. It was very nice to walk the downtown without the rumbling of semi trucks. Opportunity for outdoor seating?
- The business district has a variety of shops and cafes. There are a few helpful signs around town to guide visitors to the area. For the most part, the storefronts were full, and cars were parked throughout the street. Each business had its own sign on the building with some having the original business painted onto the building. There are so, so many stop lights in the area.

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

- A lot of places to eat downtown. We went to Petunia's for breakfast which was a very cute place and had good food.
- Kristy's Kafé had great food for lunch.
- We loved the old-fashioned soda fountain at the drugstore.

- The sewing shop, flower shop, Pack and Flavor, and Country at Heart all had a good selection of merchandise. It was good to see there was a sewing shop.
- The Crown Circle didn't have a very big selection.
- The beauty shop had a nice selection of products and shoes.
- Nice antique stores and Classic Woods was also noticed.
- We arrived around 2:00 on a Saturday and my wife was more than ready to spend all of our money. The smoke shop, a restaurant, two home decor businesses, and one clothing store was open. A good variety of products, however, not much to choose from in regards to apparel. As a guy, I found one section of men's soap that I could buy. Maybe an opportunity for existing businesses to add small men's items while they are being drug around by their wives. I love the fact that your downtown has so many food options. Restaurants, sweets, coffee, grocery.
- There are a lot of professional business/offices, but also a few shops offering clothing or home goods angled towards a certain demographic (women, farm-core home decorations, etc.). There were a few restaurants interspersed.

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

- Petunia's had great customer service and was very accomodating. Kristy's Kafé was also friendly.
- Wasn't acknowledged at the Crown Circle store as the person there at the time didn't even look up from the phone.
- The flower shop customer service was great. They also let us use their restrooms.
- The drugstore, Country at Heart, Pack and Flavor, sewing shop, and beauty shop were all friendly.
- Loved the Higher Ground coffee shop and The Ark. They told us the concept and we loved what they were doing.
- Mixture of greetings in the stores. Most were very friendly, some offered no greeting at all.
- We entered Kristy's Kafe to eat. We were not greeted and had to wait to be assisted. Once we received assistance, our waiter was great. We observed

that the people are very friendly with each other, saying hello to everyone and holding doors, but they did not interact with us.

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

- Some nice benches were noted downtown as well as trash cans.
- Did not see any drinking fountains or restrooms.
- Didn't observe any publicly accessible wi-fi.
- A few benches/ trashcans were scattered throughout. Benches were very nice.
- Some didn't observe any amenities downtown.

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

- Not really a lot in the way of landscaping or streetscaping.
- There was plenty of parking and it was easy to walk to multiple locations by parking in one spot.
- Very little landscaping. The buildings were impressive, but the streetscaping was underwhelming.
- We did not have trouble parking and were able to access multiple services from where we parked.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- Noted were dollar discount-type stores, convenience stores, groceries, a hardware/lumber store, and a medical supply store.
- There was a NAPA Auto Parts store. Also beauty shops and Pizza Ranch.
- The other shopping area seemed to be more of a consumption district with fast food. This area was easily accessible and very visual. I wouldn't consider it an attractive area though.
- There are 3 grocery stores. We also saw a Dollar General, a Dollar Tree/Family Dollar combined store, and an empty Shopko. The dollar stores were separated from the grocery stores in the downtown area requiring a

drive to see get there (lack of access). The area of town with the dollar stores is not very attractive with no parks, murals, grass, trees, etc., and the curbs need some attention.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- There was what appeared to be an industrial area, or complex of buildings, off of the main street in town, but we couldn't tell if it was an official industrial park.
- The industrial area seemed to intermingle with downtown. There was a wonderful park, museum, industrial(ish) park, and then your downtown. From what I saw, big industry just planted itself wherever it could within the community. A sectionalized industrial park wasn't clearly identified.
- The South of town featured a huge sale barn with farmland around it. The Co-op is in the middle of town, but some of the space around it could be better utilized as there is a lot of lots full of machinery.

6. Health Care Services

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

- The hospital outside of town was very impressive looking and appeared to be brand new.
- Wonderful, clearly visible hospital. Great selling point for your community.
- To the north in between Harper and Anthony we saw the new hospital which also offers non-emergency medical care.

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

- Did observe two dental offices, Greene Vision, the county health department, a mental health center, chiropractic services, and a wellness center.

- I noticed a newly constructed dentist office, and several other specialized healthcare providers. From the outside looking in, I would be very comfortable moving to Anthony regardless of my health needs.
- We observed a dentist, chiropractor, optometrist, and a mental health service area all in town. The facilities of most healthcare providers looked clean, professional, and welcoming. The mental health facility did not feel welcoming from our observations.

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

- An assisted living facility and nursing home were observed not too far from each other.
- We saw signs for 2 nursing/assisted living facilities.

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

- Only 3 for sale signs were found, though a variety of housing existed that was not on the market.
- Not much was available for purchase.
- There is a wide variety of houses in Anthony. I would think that most people, regardless of their income level, would have a housing option available. There didn't seem to be too many houses for sale though. Driving through the neighborhoods, there are quite a few unique houses that a fixer upper could live in. The area where Anthony Ave and Pearl street intersect seemed to be the nicest neighborhood. Generally speaking, the neighborhoods all seemed to have an abundance of trees.
- The housing looked similar all over town for the most part with the exception of some lower income neighborhoods. The houses looked more well-kept further away from downtown. Although we did not drive down every street, we did not observe any houses being advertised for sale. Many homes looked as if they had been built in the 1960s/70s and there were a few we noticed that had been condemned. Challenges include not

having a lot of property being sold and there not being any new housing being built.

- We also observed a large number of branches piled up next to the street in front of multiple houses in several neighborhoods.

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

- Penn Place had several units that were impressive. Could not tell if they were low-income properties.
- Individual rental properties seemed to be low, however, abundance of apartment complexes were very impressive. Between the Gateway apartments and the Penn apartments Anthony's rental industry towers over Larned.
- Anthony does have a Housing Authority and a couple other services to help find housing/rentals. This is fantastic and such a great asset.
- We saw a huge block of metal/tin buildings that had been furnished into apartments. At least 12 buildings with about 5 apartments each. While they are not attractive, they do look affordable if you did not have a lot of income.

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?

- Head Start at the lake, preschool, a daycare at the Methodist Church, 2 grade schools, and a high school by the hospital. All looked to be in nice condition.
- High school had a clean appearance as well as your elementary school. My wife is a teacher, and she said that the elementary school looks like a place she would love to work at. The 0-5 Head Start out at the lake is a great resource for young families. Anthony outwardly projects a strong education system.

- We observed an elementary school on the east side of Anthony. The building looked well-kept and there was an additional park across the street.
- There is a shared high school next to the hospital to the north of Anthony. It looks new.
- We did not really observe many cars at either school. Hopefully, this means that school hasn't started yet for these students and not that there is no one going to/working at the schools.
- When searching online, one can find information about a Head Start located near Lake Anthony, however, we did not observe any signs or information about this on our visit.

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

- The high school and junior high had 5-star ratings. Did not see any ratings on elementary schools.
- There were several sources that pointed out the communities impressive educational system.
- Others felt that research online shows that the schools do not quite meet the state expectations in reading and math.

9. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

- Little Lambs Daycare, Head Start by the Lake, Blessed Beginnings.
- Other than the 0-5 Head Start it looked as though one of the churches provided services.
- We did not see any information/signs regarding childcare other than the schools. Research online shows that there are a few daycares/preschools available.

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?

- Observed were several churches: Nazarene, Pentecostal, Christian, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist and Catholic. All buildings and grounds seemed to be in nice condition and well kept.
- There were different shops in town that were faith-based – thrift and coffee.
- Many different denominations, most of which projected a clean appearance. Grace Baptist and the Methodist church had nice buildings.
- There are so many churches. While we could not observe the number of attendees for each, there are signs all over town advertising Christian religious groups/places.

11. Civic

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

- Observed the arts center, Higher Ground, Leather Bound, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.
- I saw one Lions club sign, but from my perspective, I couldn't tell that any community organizations were overly active.
- We saw signs for the Lions Club as we came into town. From prior online research, we understand that there is an Anthony PRIDE group, Kiwanis Club, and several Veteran organizations.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

- Did not see any specific evidence of things civic organizations were doing in town.
- The 9/11 Memorial, park, and murals have some evidence of civic clubs working within the community.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- The signage around and entering the lake and community were great.
- Street signs were in bad shape – very faded and hard to read.

- Did not see any signage for the pool, library, baseball fields, or Reflection Ridge – could probably use more in the way of signage for those.
- The residential roads were very rough. In fact, we were admiring your wonderful courthouse when the roads were so rough that my wife hit her head on our car window. I found myself having to pay attention to the road while admiring the residential areas.
- There were quite a few faded street signs making it very difficult to navigate. We did not see any public amenities. Some of the dirt roads at the south of town need maintenance. There were some potholes in the neighborhoods.

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

- Some identified city hall but were unable to visit at the time.
- The city hall was closed during some visits but noted to be well maintained.

Police/fire protection:

- Observed police and fire protection.
- I do not recall seeing the Fire station or the police station. That being said, maybe there is an opportunity for better identification/signage.
- We did not see these. The City of Anthony website does have information, however, some of the information is outdated and links do not work.

Library:

- The library has a summer reading program and is part of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program.
- Some felt that customer service at the library could have been better during their visit.
- The library was very well kept.
- The old library building is beautiful and seems to have an art installation. The new library felt a bit out of the way.

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

- Visitors had a difficult time finding the pool and ball fields. Noticed two parks but did not see any walking trails in town.
- Your pool was small but very clean. I was confused on how public it was. When we stopped, there weren't lifeguards but there were people swimming. Overall, the pool and park really brought a family friendly atmosphere to that neighborhood. Other than the elementary school, The only other park that we saw was the memorial park as you head into downtown. This park was clean and complimented the community. The baseball complex was expansive, but maintenance seemed to be lacking.
- We observed a ballpark on the edge of town. The parks had older playground equipment and benches. The grounds of the 9/11 Memorial park were not well-kept. The 9/11 Memorial is lovely, but we were confused about the story of Anthony and 9/11.

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?

- If there was a community slogan, most didn't see it. There was note that the website has a tagline "Active, Attractive, and Alive" which may be the community's slogan, but it's not connected to any specific attraction or event.
- In my opinion, this was your biggest asset. Recreation with the Lake is wonderful. It was well kept and well utilized. We hope to make the hot air balloon show ourselves. I love how your golf course is right by the lake. The gun club seems to be active as it seemed to have an event when we were passing through. As a visitor, I could see my family enjoying the lake, and then heading into town for a bit to eat. Other than food, I probably wouldn't have much of a reason to head into town.
- Anthony hosts the Sunflower Balloonfest which is a hot air balloon festival as promoted on their website.
- The community also has the Anthony Historical Museum at the old train depot building, a 9/11 Memorial, and Anthony Lake.

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 rodeo in a nearby community that might draw people to town.
- Anthony hosts the Sunflower Balloonfest which is a hot air balloon festival as promoted on their website.
- The Sunflower Balloonfest information on the City of Anthony website is 2 years old and needs to be updated. We were disappointed to hear that the Balloonfest had already happened this year.

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).

- The golf course and the lake. The lake is A+ in quality with campgrounds, frisbee golf, the golf course, boating, hunting, shooting clubs, and clean, good signage.
- The art museum.
- Heard about Reflection Ridge, but couldn't find it.
- The Bowling Alley maybe, but not sure if it's open.
- Downtown had a wonderful mural next to the grocery store. Very modern!
- The downtown museum probably wouldn't interest me personally. It seems as though most small towns (including Larned) has a museum highlighting farming implements. However, I'm sure that the museum sees success in drawing out of state/country residents. With the location being the entrance to your downtown, I would suggest that the museum makes their outdoor exhibits a little more organized. If you take down the museum signage it could be mistaken for a fenced storage lot.
- Anthony Lake is a great spot for recreation and camping, and we saw many signs for it as we drove into Anthony. There are also a couple of museums that seemed to be closed.

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 was not easy to find and needed some signage visible from the street. They did have brochures about the community and surrounding areas.
- Another visitor felt that the Chamber had great signage for being on the corner lot.
- The Chamber of Commerce is open 1.5 days a week and we visited on a day that they were closed so we were unable to obtain any information.

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

- Loved all of the downtown restaurants.
- Feelings that Higher Ground, Leather Bound, Rexall's ice cream fountain, Petunia's Idle House, Kristy's Café, Lake Anthony, JMac Flowers and Gifts, Country at Heart, Pack N Flavor, the beauty shop, and the golf course would be worth visiting again for.
- I probably wouldn't make a trip for an individual store; however, if we were in the area I would be sure to eat at Kristy's Café again. The lake and/or hot air balloon show would be my only reasoning for coming back.
- Kristy's Kafe has a "world famous baked potato pizza" that I would come try if I were in the area. I am interested in the Sunflower Balloonfest and would definitely like to come back for that.

14. Wrap-up

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

- Friendly people.
- Nice parks.
- Great variety of shops downtown.
- The hospital.
- With the downtown being packed with businesses, I would say that there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The city pool was very well kept which shows pride in the quality of life. Several houses in town represented community wealth as well as industry (Atmos energy, home lumber supply, community garden).
- The lake and hot air balloon festival are great for adventurous families.

- The steady group of small businesses in the downtown area.
- Anthony Lake is a great resource to attract people and the community has done a good job of promoting the lake and its uses.
- Anthony also has several places available to help find housing.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- Signage around town is not in good condition.
- Overgrown weeds in some areas of town.
- Empty buildings.
- Not much in the way of housing if someone wanted to move there.
- Lack of businesses downtown.
- Lack of clothing options for men.
- Some of the communities biggest assets are outside of the town. (School, Hospital, Lake). Upkeep to these exterior assets seem to be the priority while maintenance to interior assets are suffering.
- I wouldn't say that I came across any obstacles that were too large to handle. Rather, a handful of small, visual improvements that can change perception.
- Anthony simultaneously feels like it's dying and full of life. While there are people and events, the town does not seem to be growing: no new developments, empty buildings, and the loss of larger businesses. Although it was hot, it didn't feel like anything was happening in town at all.

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

- Good food.
- Nice people.
- Lots of potential.
- Could use more signage to point out the assets.
- The lake and the unique neighborhoods around the lake.
- The rough north end of downtown with one of the old church building signs talking about Hitler?

- Unfortunately, I will probably remember that we couldn't visit the Chamber or any of the museums because they were closed. However, I will also remember the 9/11 Memorial, the Balloonfest, and the friendly people in a positive light.



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