

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Leon, KS

Date(s) Visited: a) Wednesday Sept 6
b) Thursday, Oct 26
c) Wednesday, Oct 25
d) Wednesday, Oct 25

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?

- a. Fairly easy, did not see a lot of businesses that the website spoke about. There was quite a bit of information available.
- b. The website was really good. They highlighted the town. Easy to get around.
- c. The website had lots of information, with many attractive but generic photos. It would be improved with photos showing local people, places, and events. The library's "Meet the Board" page is an excellent example.
- d. Using their website was friendly but not super informative for our purpose. Unclear if there's a police department; there is no mention of schools or Rec leagues or city pool. No photos of the town or churches.

2. 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.)

- a. It is a town with character. Relatively clean, seems like a "rural town." There were several small signs at both entrances, nothing else of significance.
- b. The streets were nice, but no curb or guttering, and narrow. A lot of houses needed repair. The only sign was on Highway 400. Hard to see if I wasn't looking for it. No signs coming from the north.
- c. Not much for sale or rent. Yards need to be picked up; a number of them have junk. Not much signage. The park was nice but not well-marked.
- d. Not much in the way of for sale or rent; yards are cluttered. Homes are older, and some need love. Welcome signs are nice; not much signage for schools, parks, or the city building.

3. 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?)

- a. The buildings are old; nothing stands out. Bluestem Mercantile was a nice simple shop with a lot to offer and a lot going on inside. The store employee had a lot of knowledge. They get the high school to help with shelving items and taking inventory. Customer service was friendly and knowledgeable.
- b. The downtown business area was small and tight. The senior center was really busy, as was the restaurant. The mercantile didn't open until 11 am, so I didn't get to go in.
- c. Some of the downtown buildings were nice, and others needed repair. The café was nice, and the people were friendly. The farm store was very nice. The owner was extremely helpful and friendly. The mercantile store was very nice. We were well greeted and didn't have to ask for assistance. It is an agricultural town for sure.
- d. Some buildings were nice and kept, some were quite run down and needed attention. The café is nice, delicious, and well-kept. The "farm" produce store is very nice. The mercantile store was awesome. The senior center looked nice; the city building- less than impressive. The seed store looked busy and kept up. The café, mercantile, and farm store had awesome customer service.

What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles, and Wi-Fi, etc.) were available? Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

- a. Noticed some flowerpots but didn't notice anything else. There was no problem parking. The senior center and café were very busy.
- b. I didn't notice any of the mentioned amenities.
- c. None seen. We had no problem finding parking and could access multiple services from where we parked. Lots of trees, but they need trimming.
- d. I saw no signage for any of this. I forgot to look for benches. Parking was readily available, and multiple places were easily accessible from our parking spot. Landscaping leaves a lot to be desired.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. Not a lot of retail noted.
- b. Only saw one retail shop.
- c. No other retail except on Main Street.
- d. Everything was easily accessible. Not much is available. Their surroundings weren't great, but the individual places were attractive.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. There was an agriculture industry seed company on Main Street.
- b. Didn't notice any industrial parks.
- c. Didn't see any.
- d. Did not see any.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. I didn't notice any health or emergency medical services.
- b. Didn't notice any.
- c. Nothing.
- d. I did not see any signs of anything for health care or EMS in town at all.

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

- a. Nothing noted.
- b. (No answer)
- c. Not applicable
- d. Did not see any.

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

- a. I would say nothing is available. The Senior Center was open and had a full house.
- b. (No answer)
- c. Not applicable.
- d. 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 regards to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)

- a. There is a small mix of varieties, mostly appear to be affordable for the average wage earner. There appeared to be no houses on the market. Maybe a small apartment in two different places. The mobile home park had some campers in use.
- b. Many of the houses I noticed needed repair and were small. Did have some updated and lovely houses.
- c. Not much
- d. I saw low income to maybe medium income at best. Nothing for high income. I found nothing for sale at all.

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

- a. The mobile home park would be the only are for possible housing.
- b. I saw some apartments, but not much for sale or rent.
- c. Not much
- d. The city has no information about rentals.

8. Schools

What schools are present? Do the schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of temporary classrooms? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?

- a. There is an elementary and high school. The size looked great and very well-maintained. It's probably a high point of the town. Very nice and welcoming.
- b. School looked good and well maintained.
- c. I saw K-12. The schools appear adequate in size and well maintained.
- d. Well-maintained, but didn't see anything about preschool or childcare.

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

- a. Yes, I saw some available.
- b. Yes, very involved.
- c. Not much information. I didn't feel able to assess the quality of education.
- d. Nothing.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- a. Do not know.
- b. Didn't notice any.
- c. Didn't see any.
- d. Nothing found.

10. Faith/Religion

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

- a. I saw three churches. The grounds were maintained. We did not see evidence of faith-based services.
- b. The churches looked well maintained and used. They looked nice.
- c. There were three churches; they were easy to find.
- d. I saw four churches. Three of the 4 were very presentable and inviting. I did not see evidence of community service.

11. Civic

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

- a. We didn't see any nonprofit organizations or clubs nor any civic activity.
- b. No answer
- c. We saw the Senior Center and the Masonic Lodge.
- d. We saw the Masonic Lodge and Rebekah's. We didn't see any civic activity today.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. Streets are generally chip and seal. Nothing special there. Sidewalks were decent. Plenty of parking and some planters with flowers downtown. Nothing that popped. Did not notice a park or streetscapes.
- b. Streets were good, and street signs were ok. Streets were narrow with no curb and guttering.
- c. Signage wasn't great, some streets need help, trees need trimmed, not lots of lighting.
- d. Street signage was poor and hard to read and find at some corners. Street conditions were ok but were rock with no gutters. We were there in the daytime, but we didn't see many lights.

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

- a. People were friendly, especially the lady at the mercantile. No information about the town was visible.
- b. Didn't go in as they weren't open.
- c. Was not impressed at first, but a little better by the time we left.
- d. City Hall was hard to find, and she wasn't overly excited to greet or help.

Police/fire protection:

- a. Saw the volunteer fire department on Main Street.
- b. No answer
- c. We saw that they have a fire station.
- d. The fire station looked ok and was easy to find. I did not see a police station.

Library:

- a. The library was not impressive. It seemed to be built in an old grain elevator. It was not open at this time.
- b. No answer
- c. We couldn't find the library.
- d. I never found it.

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

- a. We didn't see any parks. We saw football and baseball fields; they were decently maintained.
- b. No answer
- c. The city park has some playground equipment. We didn't see a walking path. The sports fields are at the school.
- d. Very hard to find; the signage was poor. School sports complex looked very nice.

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?

- a. None that I'm aware of.
- b. No answer
- c. We didn't see any.
- d. If so, I didn't see or find anything.

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

- a. None noticed.
- b. I saw they were having a Harvest festival and a donkey basketball game coming up.
- c. I didn't see any significant events.
- d. I didn't see anything.

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).

- a. Nothing was sighted.
- b. No answer
- c. I didn't notice any.
- d. I didn't see any.

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.

- a. None.
- b. No answer
- c. Nothing but City Hall.
- d. Only thing I saw was a senior center.

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

- a. Café/lounge was busy and good. There were no specialty shops.
- b. They had a restaurant that was pretty full, and the Senior Center was busy.
- c. Farm Store and Mercantile might bring me back.
- d. The little café was nice; if I were going that way, I would definitely stop to eat. The mercantile and jelly stores were very awesome.

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. The Senior Center was definitely supported. The mercantile business worked in conjunction with the school to aid in supporting and assisting with the daily functions. No areas were noted of unkempt yards. There is a grain/agriculture business.
- b. The schools were the centerpiece. Reminded me of an old Western town with narrow streets and dark buildings. That's something they could build on.
- c. No Response
- d. The businesses are trying very hard and doing an amazing job. The school looked very updated too.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. Future growth is a concern as housing was limited/unavailable.
- b. The town looked run down.
- c. No response
- d. Lack of businesses, housing availability, streets, signage, nothing obvious to attract people to visit or move here.

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

- a. The Bluestem Mercantile had a neat business approach.
- b. This town could be very cute if it looked more loved.
- c. No response.
- d. Mercantile and the jelly farm store.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at: <https://bit.ly/ks-first-impressions>

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