

First Impressions

Team Report Form- Junction City



Community Visited: Junction City Date of Report: August 31, 2021 (all 6)

1. What was your initial reaction when you were told you were going to Fort Riley?

- a) I chose Ft. Riley, this made it exciting because I knew it was small.
- b) Close to home.
- c) Neutral. I hadn't heard many details but previously lived near KC so I was pleased with the assignment.
- d) Mad, because there's nothing here. Am from the city, so yep.
- e) Windy and maybe get drunk on the weekends.
- f) That I wish my old unit wasn't getting disbanded so I could have re-enlisted for a different Duty Station. Disappointed because of what I've heard from others.

What do you wish you'd known before you came?

- a) I wish I knew how far I'd have to drive for "nice stores" or entertainment.
- b) Family related activities.
- c) Nothing specifically. The internet was a good resource to search for the items of interest including quality of schools, church denominations, housing and personal hobbies for myself and my kids. Me: Running, martial arts; Kids: Music, gymnastics, dance.
- d) I'd have to buy a car.
- e) None
- f) That the only thing worth doing here is fishing, traveling two hours to a mall or a small zoo that is not worth the entry fee.

2. Pre-visit web search: How easy was it to get information on the community? Did it accurately reflect what you saw? Did you have difficulties obtaining information about the community through a web search?

- a) It's easy to find information online; however, there really isn't much to do.
- b) I did not do much research, but my wife found quite a bit of information.
- c) Easy to get information online and yes it accurately reflected things.
- d) Not too easy, they are all the same.
- e) Came straight from Ait [?] Didn't really have a chance to do research before I arrived.
- f) Didn't bother searching for information about the community. I assumed it was just as bad as any other city outside of an Army base.

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

- a) My impression would be that this town was founded well, but overrun by a less classy populace.
- b) A lot of rough roads, going through downtown you can see the history.
- c) Some of the areas looked run down, especially right outside post. The abandoned business and pawn shops are always viewed negatively. The main street area by the CrossFit gym looks like it had some nice shopping but looks like it is still developing.
- d) Nothing there and is not a lot.
- e) Very empty, came from Cali [California?] and I didn't see a lot of people walking on the streets.
- f) Basically drove through anything worth driving through within that five minutes.

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

- a) This is a tattoo, Gun and Drug friendly area.
- b) Rather easy to see you're coming into Junction City.
- c) Off the post entrance it didn't look nice, off the highway things looked better and led into Main Street.
- d) It's all the same, nothing changes in the community.
- e) Flat. I'm used to seeing tall buildings a lot here are 1 story, maybe 2, but it's very rare.
- f) Literally the same as any small town, disgusting neighborhoods, and (I'm from the Ghetto), nothing to do here.

4. 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) Very classy buildings in old limestone, very nice aesthetic. CBD, tattoos, Guns, hair, and fight gyms. Always greeted and treated well.
- b) Looks rather historic, but maintained well. Restaurants, clothing displays. Would like to see more hardware stores. I have not visited any of the stores downtown.
- c) Crossfit gym, Elite Martial Arts, photo studio, gun shop, pawn shops. The only business that popped out at me are either places I visit or things I view as negative. The stores I entered were all friendly and had good customer services.
- d) Is a little better, more stuff to do. I really don't know {what businesses are downtown}. The customer service is good. They treat people nice.
- e) I really haven't been going out like I should have. I've seen only smoke shop so far, but the other businesses seem nice and welcoming to us. Yes, I was greeted in a kind tone, they straight out offer help as soon as I entered the rooms.
- f) A lot of shops I would never shop at. (types of businesses) Walmart, Farm Store, CVS. Nobody cared about life, they were just going through the motions.

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) I've genuinely been able to rest at stops in most places. Some parking lots need holes filled but there is always parking available.
- b) Uncertain. Landscaping seemed well kept.
- c) Haven't noticed any. No difficulty finding parking and the sidewalks are good.
- d) Probably the mall. Don't have a car, so...
- e) I don't know. I don't have a car.
- f) I go two hours away to do anything with my family. Junction City does not appeal to me. Streets are always being worked on.

5. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a) Foxys, etc. take away from the attraction but everything is accessible.
- b) Wal-Mart is basically my second home. Easy to access, can be difficult to get back out of the parking lot.
- c) Main street was attractive for unique local businesses and the area by the highway with the chain restaurants (shops like Starbucks).
- d) The trop [*sic*] store and reservation.
- e) Don't really shop here.
- f) I shop in Manhattan, Kansas City or Amazon.

6. Community Health Care Services – (off base) Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services.

- a) N/A
- b) I don't know, my family has only gone to the hospital on post.
- c) No comment. I use on post or in Manhattan.
- d) I really don't know.
- e) Barely got here a few weeks ago. Been to the dentist only, the doctor/nurse welcomed me and helped me and they were cheerful.
- f) Never bothered.

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

- a) N/A
- b) I have not paid much attention to these facilities.
- c) No comment. I use on post or in Manhattan.
- d) No answer
- e) They've all within a walking distance, about 20-30 [yards?] away from my barracks.
- f) Never bothered.

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

- a) N/A
- b) I don't know.
- c) Unknown
- d) No answer
- e) I haven't gotten a chance to see the community.
- f) Never bothered.

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) I see very low income housing. It would be a challenge for a healthy income to join into this community.
- b) I have looked into some off-post housing and was impressed by most. Some homes seemed run down and not well kept.
- c) I was told "Don't live in Junction City" by previous soldiers who lived at Fort Riley because it is "trashy," so we didn't look in JC and focused housing on Manhattan.
- d) (No answer)
- e) I lived in a barrack, I don't stress about the housing like married folks.
- f) I lived on-post for five years. Never looked into Junction City.

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

- a) Outskirts apartment complex.
- b) Single family homes.
- c) If we did shop for house in JC, we would have looked for 3-5 bedroom houses in the \$250,000-\$400,000 range that is in a nice neighborhood and in a good school district.
- d) If you love haunting.
- e) I'm not in the market for buying a house right now.
- f) Never looked.

As a member of the military, how did your neighborhood make you feel welcome or unwelcome?

- a) N/A
- b) I have not had any issues with any customer service anywhere on or off post.
- c) N/A- I live in Manhattan.
- d) (no answer)
- e) I lived in the barracks and the other people were nice and greeted us.
- f) Never talked to my neighbors, all moved out due to issues.

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?**

- a) Buildings are nice. Streets guarded and playgrounds clean.
- b) I do not know, no school aged kids.
- c) Never needed.
- d) (No answer)
- e) I don't know about schools right now.
- f) Kids go to school on post.

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

- a) N/A
- b) N/A
- c) My wife did the research and decided that the two best schools for our elementary school aged daughter was accessible in Manhattan, KS.
- d) (No answer)
- e) Haven't done any research on the community.
- f) Never bothered with Junction City.

As a member of the military, how do the schools make you feel welcome or unwelcome?

- a) N/A
- b) N/A
- c) Welcome, but my daughter goes to school in Riley.
- d) (No answer)
- e) I haven't been to any school.
- f) On-Post teachers came to our house to introduce themselves.

9. Childcare: What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

- a) I see plenty of services available.
- b) I'm not sure, my children go to daycare on post.
- c) Since I live in Manhattan, we look for childcare off post closest to our house that's reasonably priced.
- d) (No Answer)
- e) I don't have any children.
- f) Don't trust them. Only well-known friends watch my children.

10. Faith/Religion: Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the places of worship represented in the community. As a member of the military, how do the faith communities make you feel welcome or unwelcome?

- a) Korean Baptist, Christian Baptist, several small denominations. I believe it's a good resource for a diverse, healthy community.
- b) The churches I've seen seem to be well kept and busy every Sunday. They seem to be very welcoming.
- c) Like most of the Midwest, there are lots of Protestant and Baptist denominations, which don't appeal to my family. I got to church in Manhattan and they seem welcoming. They say hi but aren't overly aggressive.
- d) (No Answer)
- e) Not really into religion.
- f) Not religious. They don't welcome what little I have faith in.

11. Civic Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community. As a member of the military, how do the civic organizations make you feel welcome or unwelcome?

- a) N/A
- b) I was able to find multiple non-profit organizations upon research. Welcome.
- c) No interaction.
- d) (No Answer)
- e) Been to the Warrior Zone, they were nice each time I've been there to do sumo cert.
- f) N/A

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

- a) Great lighting and sidewalks, well lit and safe feeling.
- b) The road from post to Washington Street is very poorly lit. With all the wildlife, I feel as though lights would be beneficial.
- c) Signage, street lights and landscaping seem good. Haven't noticed good or bad any of the other items.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Can't even see stop signs until it's too late.

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

- a) N/A
- b) (No answer)
- c) Never been
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Never cared.

Police/fire protection:

- a) Police guard schools well. Look professional. Old style, locally placed buildings.
- b) Have never interacted.
- c) Police look professional, are centrally located and seem present. The one time I saw a kid wandering around by himself late at night the cops pulled up before I even had time to think about what I should do. (They were responsive.)
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Nice to know they're everywhere.

Library:

- a) Pleasing view of plants/bushes. Nice window filled structure.
- b) Have never attended.
- c) Never been.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Never saw one. Been here since 2017.

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

- a) I enjoy the trails present. Beautification team has kept up the monuments and plants.
- b) (No answer)
- c) Never been.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Parks are not where I'd let my kids play. We go out of our way not to attend parks close by.

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) Drugs, Alcohol, poor, affordable.
- b) I am not aware of any major events or slogans that have to do with Junction City.
- c) Not that I'm tracking. Only reason I heard of JC before coming to Riley was 1) Proximity to Fort Riley. 2) Where the OKC Bomber (Timothy McVeigh) stayed before the bombing (Dreamland Motel).
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Nothing

What significant events take place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents?

- a) You're close to Manhattan.
- b) Fishing on the river.
- c) Just moved into the area but upcoming is Oktoberfest and the local community business fair on Wednesday.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) I'd tell them to go to Topeka or Manhattan.

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) Milford lake dam, Milford State Park, JC Square.
- b) Walking trails, Lakes, Rivers.
- c) Normally I like museums but I'm not tracking any or any unique ones in vicinity of JC.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) 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.

- a) N/A
- b) Yes, staff is very friendly and respectful.
- c) Not that I've noticed. This is my first time in the Chamber of Commerce in any city.
- d) (No answer)
- e) The warrior zone is great for a newcomer who hasn't set up fully yet.
- f) Never seen one.

Are there any restaurants, specialty shops or attractions that would bring you back?

- a) Stacy's, JC BBQ, Syndicate tattoo.
- b) The Burger Truck on Washington
- c) Not that I've noticed. However, local breweries, coffee shops, breakfast places or cafes/restaurants are always of interest.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) N/A
- g) Not in Junction City.

14. Wrap-up How has your impression of the Junction City area changed since coming to Fort Riley?

- a) I just know where to go now and find what I need.
- b) Not much has changed other than a couple of roads getting fixed.
- c) Improved. There are some fun activities and good local businesses here. Just need to find them.
- d) (No answer)
- e) I haven't been to Junction City, I just got here like 2-3 weeks ago. N
- f) Never changed the way I think about this place.

Compared with other places you've been stationed, what are the most positive things you've observed about the community?

- a) Outdoor life is the most positive.
- b) N/A
- c) It has a small town feel that means you can get involved and learn/get to know major players/influencers in the area.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Biggest obstacle was getting over the fact that I'm stuck here for now.

Compared with other places you've been stationed, what are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a) Entertainment availability
- b) Too many round-a-bouts in this state.
- c) Cleaning up unattractive businesses near post (i.e. pawn shops, sleazy bars, strip clubs), which is common near most posts. Attracting local unique businesses like bars, breweries, restaurants into the area that aren't chain businesses.
- d) (No answer)
- e) (No answer)
- f) Biggest obstacle was getting over the fact that I'm stuck here for now.

What will you remember most about this community when you leave (positive or negative)?

- a) The night life of JC.
- b) Too many round-a-bouts!
- c) The local leaders are welcoming and friendly giving it a great small town feel. Additional thoughts: As a soldier with a family my priorities and interests are different, we look for
Houses: safety, price, neighborhood, style
Schools: for our kids, specifically the quality
Church: Local place of worship
Activities: For kids: gymnastics, ballet, music. For Adults: races, martial arts.
 As a single soldier when I was in my 20's my priorities were
Girls: a place to meet girls
Drinking: unique or fun places to drink. e.g. Local breweries, distillery, restaurants or other social places (i.e. bar playing a specific event like WFC Fights.)
- d) (No answer)
- e) I'm new and haven't gotten a real chance to explore, but that's on my part.
- f) (No answer)