First Impressions

Team Report Form

Community Visited: Almena Date Visited: 6/8/15

Team Members:

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?

There wasn’t much about the town online. They have no website of their own. The city does have a Facebook page and so does the Sunflower Pioneer Power Association.

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

Almena is clean, they had welcome signs at each entrance. The main street bricks and parkway gives the town a nostalgic feel. The town looks like a nice place to live.

The necessary businesses needed to survive were there.

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

There were town name signs at every entrance into town.

The main street bricks and parkway gives the town a nostalgic feel.

Even though there were 8 empty buildings most main street buildings were in good shape.

I like the brick streets and center street parking.

2. Downtown Business Area

Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

The main street bricks and parkway gives the town a nostalgic feel.

Even though there were 8 empty buildings most main street buildings were in good shape.

I like the brick streets and center street parking.

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

Newspaper – closed, city office – closed, library, community center, bank, café- very good and very clean, grocery store – clean, had a good supply of items plus a small café area, Bar, tires shop, gas station, elevators, post office, feed store, phone company and school.

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

We stopped at the café, post office and grocery store. Each place the people were friendly and very helpful. We also talked to a man working at the Sunflower Pioneer Power Assn. Park and he was very friendly and explained all about their assn.

What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.)

Restrooms in the park were locked. Water fountain on Main Street worked. Don’t remember benches anywhere.

Comment on appealing landscaping and streetscaping.

Main Street was neat and clean. Most yards were in good shape.

Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

No and yes.

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

None

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

Not that we saw.

5. Health Care Services

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

We didn’t see any sources for medical help.

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

None

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

None

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.)

It was odd but we didn’t see any houses listed for sale or rent. No realtors yard signs. We even looked on the grocery store bulletin board and found none.

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

None

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?

Very nice school for all ages.

Pre-school/kindergarten/Head Start facilities

Yes

Elementary/secondary schools

Yes

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

No

The school had a nice website. There were tabs for the elementary and middle school but not for the high school. The high school just seemed to be integrated into the site. Might be nice to have a tab for the high school. Also when listing faculty it would be nice to know what the faculty is teaching.

1. Childcare

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

Didn’t find any.

In looking at Almena's Facebook page I found the Almena Community Childcare listed under businesses. I went to their page and it showed the new childcare center soon to open - Mindy's Magical Playhouse.

1. 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?

We found 2 churches. Both well kept. We had to hunt for them so maybe signs downtown pointing to the churches would be nice. There was also an old church which needs attention.

Are there any facilities or statements that some would view as intrusive or that would make someone feel uncomfortable if they were not of a particular faith?

Not that we saw.

1. Civic

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

We found an American Legion, Naphtali Lodge and the Sunflower Pioneer Power Association Antique Club.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

Two volunteers of the Sunflower Pioneer Power Association Antique Club

were working on getting things ready for their show that weekend.

1. Public Infrastructure

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

Streets were brick so they were rough, but I like the atmosphere that they give Main Street. Not much of a streetscape until the end where the parkway was in the residential area.

There were a lot of empty lots around town that once had homes on them. Tearing the removal of old homes makes the town look cleaner.

Most of the residential streets were narrow and not in good shape.

Did you observe land-use planning?

No

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

People were friendly. There was information about events on the grocery store bulletin board. Otherwise we found none.

Police/fire protection:

There was a volunteer fire department.

Library:

The library was very nice.

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

We found one small un-kept park. The restrooms were locked. There was an old jail with a sign that said to push the button (on a board) you could hear the town history. The wire leading to the speaker was broken so it didn’t work. It needs fixed or removed.

The school had a playground, ballpark etc.

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?

Sunflower Pioneer Power show.

No

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

The Sunflower Pioneer Power show had a flyer on the grocery store bulletin board. There was also a flyer about city wide garage sales that same weekend.

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

The Sunflower Pioneer Power Assn. Park would be a draw if it was promoted. They have all but 4 windmills ever made in Kansas.

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.

No. Probably the city office but they were closed.

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

The Sunflower Pioneer Power Assn. Park

1. Wrap-up

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

Brick streets and nostalgic downtown. Decent variety of businesses.

The Sunflower Pioneer Power Assn. Park

School

Grain elevator and farm related businesses.

 Very nice library/city office/community center building.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

Lack of businesses on Main Street.

Parks/picnic area, public restrooms

Self-promotion. No web site or Facebook page with current information.

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

Positive - Their brick main street and the Sunflower Pioneer Power Assn. Park.

Negative – Locked restroom and broken speaker at the jail.

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