First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

**Community Visited: Altamont Date(s) Visited:** a) March 16 Thursday

b) March 16 Thursday

c) March 29 Wednesday

d) March 17 Friday

**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?**

1. NA
2. I did initially look for a city Facebook page, but when I couldn’t find one I just searched the web and found the city-site. The city and school web-sites had all the information you would need. I believe the web-site accurately portrayed the town.
3. A lot of information on the web about the town. The city web site is great. Lots of tabs with drop down information about the town and events.
4. Great web site. Leigh Ann in City Hall was extremely helpful.
5. **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.)** 
   1. Altamont is a small community. Located on the highway through town are the medical facilities, bank, Dollar General, gas stations and the Department of Transportation. The houses along the highway are well kept. There is a sign indicating the downtown area with the businesses on the main street listed. Street signs indicating the streets were visible.
   2. The town was very clean. It appears that the majority of the residents take pride in their town. Signs were readily available and easy to navigate. The east section of town had sidewalks through the main street, but the west end did not. This would make it difficult for handicap residents and those who prefer or not do not have access to a vehicle to reach some of the main stores such as Dollar General. The buildings along the main street through town appeared to be well-kept
   3. An older community, most all homes kept up. I observed a lot of “pallot” US Flags on porches and around town. Not a lot of businesses on main highway going through from east to west (160). 1 gas station, small hamburger place, Casey’s and Dollar General. A Big Labette Bank on the highway.
   4. Bigger than I thought it would be. Impressed with the large school. Street signs were in good shape.

2. **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?)**

1. The downtown business area has many empty buildings. The one and only grocery store is closed. The buildings appear to be in need of a “brightening” up, none of the stores with the exception of the Extension Office and City Hall have the appearance of “Come and explore” or shop here. The two shops explored were The Thrift Shop and The Rusty Junkies. The Thrift Shop was having a $1.00 bag sale so the clerks were somewhat occupied. No explanation that whatever could be put in the bag the whole bag would be $1.00 nor if there were any exceptions was explained. In Rusty Junkies upon entering the clerk was busy visiting with a woman and remained that way the whole time I was in the store. It was not until I was leaving that I was even acknowledged and that was only to say “Thanks for coming in.” The customer service at MJ’s was great. They weren't very busy and she checked on us a couple of times to see if we needed anything.  We just happened to ask a question or two and she was willing to visit.  She had worked at the grocery store until it closed.  I don't remember why exactly she had been in Altamont but schools were the big factor to her living there. She told us how to get to the park and the lake as we had not noticed the signs indicating how to get there.  We did not get her name but it was Thursday around 12:30 or so (March 16).
2. The downtown area needs the most work out of the whole town. City hall, the police station and post office seemed to be about the only buildings kept up. A little landscaping/streetscaping and paint on some of the benches would really brighten the area up. It does appear that there would be room for business growth in the downtown area. Most of the businesses were clearly labeled.   
   Signs were readily available and easy to navigate. The east section of town had sidewalks through the main street, but the west end did not. This would make it difficult for handicap residents and those who prefer or not do not have access to a vehicle to reach some of the main stores such as Dollar General. The buildings along the highway through town appeared to be well-kept. City hall, library, police station, post office, Beachner grain, a thrift shop and a cute retail store (I think Rust Junkies was the name). We arrived in mid-morning during the week. All of the shops were closed. So, I am unsure if some of the other buildings offered stores as well or were maybe closed down. We did come back into town in the later afternoon to look at the thrift shop and retail store. Both places were busy with customers so they were unable to greet us. But everyone seemed friendly.
3. A very friendly town. Everyone wanted to help you. The businesses greeted you and asked if they could assist you.
4. Many old buildings. Good signage for existing buildings. City Hall, very helpful. Library, very helpful. Second Hand Store, decorated nicely, friendly. Each business I went in, I was warmly greeted.

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

1. Benches were located throughout the business district. The only public restroom observed was in the hallway of the entrance to City Hall and Library. There are public restrooms and shower facilities at the lake but both were closed for the season. No water fountains were seen. There are camping facilities located at the lake. There was plenty of parking available downtown. Parking is permitted in the middle of the street. Handicapped parking is available and there are wheelchair ramps from street to sidewalks downtown. Did not see that handicapped parking was clearly marked.
2. There were plenty of benches were located throughout the downtown area. Public restrooms were available at city hall and they told us that public facilities and laundry are also available at the campground during camping season as well. There was plenty of parking available. A few handicapped spots as well. I didn’t see much landscaping/streetscaping downtown, but likely due to the season. In front of the NW section some flowers were beginning to pop up.
3. Almost all businesses on Main Street had benches in front to sit on. City Hall had a public restroom, also library and Extension office. There are also restrooms at the City Lake. No difficulty parking. The city has center street parking you have parking on both sides of the street and in the center also.
4. There were benches on Main Street.
5. **Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

1. Storefronts were not exciting. It was hard to tell the name of the shops. Sadly most of the stores are only open on a limited time with being open mostly in the afternoons during the week and a very limited time on Saturday. Store fronts could use some painting, “brightening up”.
2. Dollar General, MJ’s and tire shop. Every place was easy to access with a vehicle. They were just off the main strip through town. Again, due to lack of sidewalks on the west side of town some residents may have difficulty accessing certain stores. In my opinion, this is especially concerning with the Dollar General as it is the only store with groceries available.
3. No malls or large shopping. A lot of businesses on Main Street were out of business. Empty businesses.
4. NA

4. **Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

1. The only manufacturing observed was the elevator and the Recycling but they are not in the same area other than towards the south end of the business district. Did not observe and industrial park. Expansion of either could be a problem as they appeared to be more or less limited to space.
2. I would think so. There is plenty of room for industrial growth in any direction of the town.
3. Yes, but only one business there. Not too big though.
4. No

5. **Health Care Services**

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

1. The only health care services were 2 medical buildings located on the highway. There is no dentist, no hospital, nor even a pharmacy where one could get prescriptions filled. No chiropractor either.
2. No hospitals or emergency medical services available. Common in small towns.
3. A couple of clinics but a patron said no doctors.
4. Altamont Community Clinic

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

1. The 2 medical buildings were in good shape. However if one is in a powered wheelchair getting to them could be a problem as there were no real apparent sidewalks to them.
2. I noticed 2 medical facilities (both in nice condition). But no other form of doctors: Dentist, pharmacist, chiropractor optometrist etc. If I were to pick just one other health professional to be in the town it would be a pharmacist. It can be hard for patients to get the medication they need if they are home bound or need to find a ride to a pharmacy.
3. The town had 2 health clinics but no doctors. No dentist.
4. NA

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

1. No nursing home nor assisted living facilities were found. The one nursing home that had been there is now a church.
2. None
3. No services.
4. 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.)**

1. Only 3 for sale signs were on homes. The residents appear to really take pride in their homes.
2. There were only a few houses on the market for sale. But, they are offered to a diverse group for income wages. I never really saw a “bad neighborhood” in town. Like I had said at the beginning, the town is very clean. The biggest challenge for finding a home is simply lack of houses on the market.
3. We didn’t see much evidence of many homes for sale but some properties or land could be built on.
4. No defined area for housing, just a mixture.

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

1. No For Rent signs were seen so it was hard to tell which properties were available. City Hall does have a list of people to contact who have property for rent but not locations of where any rentals are available.
2. I never did see a rental sign in front of a property. City hall had a list of people to contact if interested in renting, but no properties listed.
3. One patron said most people who move here will stay here, it’s mostly a bedroom community.
4. NA

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?**

* 1. Altamont has schools for pre-K through HS. The school properties appear adequate although the elementary playground appeared small. There is a large gymnasium/auditorium across the street from the high school. The schools do have summer school for students needing extra help and also another one for enrichment. A summer lunch program is sponsored through the school for children ages k-18. Having summer school encourages the students to participate in the lunch program thus increasing participation. This is no cost to the students and no economic factor involved. Throughout our visit that day the schools appeared to be the big factor for people staying in Altamont. (Schools there have been known for being strong ever since the late 50's, especially the high school. I would say it is due to their "trade training" where the students can actually learn job skills.-i.e. CMAs etc.)
  2. Grade school and high school are available offering Pre-K though 12th. The schools appear well-maintained. High school students are able to attain college credits in different fields if they so choose. A summer school program and parents as teachers is also offered through the school district. The only thing I would recommend for the schools is to put up a sign for the baseball field entrance. There was a sign directing you to the baseball field from the main street, but I did pass the entrance by a couple times before I figured it out.
  3. Parents as Teachers. Birth-6 years of age. A very nice high school gym, football and track field. A patron said there are 6 elementary schools in the area and the high school is in Altamont.
  4. Large school, Preschool-12. I understand many students from Parsons attend Altamont.

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

1. The City Hall as some information regarding the schools as well as the USD 506 Website which gives information regarding the schools.
2. From talking to the city staff and a few other individuals, the school system is Altamont’s pride and joy. And rightfully so! The district website offers a wealth of information on the schools including programs offered, honors of performance within different grade levels and some information on the staff. Keep it up! This is definitely something to be proud about!!
3. No
4. NA
5. **Childcare**

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

1. City Hall has a list of childcare services but no prices. Throughout the drive around town no daycare signs were posted so it was not observed where they were located nor as to which part of town they were located.
2. There are several daycares listed on the city site. This was nice to see. It can be very difficult finding childcare in our area as there are only a few daycares available. But, I did not obtain any pricing information.
3. 6 Day care centers
4. 7 Day cares
5. **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?**

1. City Hall has 5 churches listed. In driving around the churches are well kept. Sidewalks or lack of could be a drawback for handicapped people to get there.
2. I believe there were 7 churches and 6 different denominations. They appeared nice and well-maintained. I do not recall any evidence of church sponsored events.
3. 8 churches in the area. Buildings are old. Some other business turned into churches—looked like an old nursing home turned into a church. A pantry through one of the churches was observed.
4. 5 churches
5. **Civic**

**Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community and any civic activity.**

1. Nothing visible. Had to ask at City Hall about them. I didn’t see any civic organization activity.
2. Lion’s club, summer lunch program and if I remember correctly meals on wheels is offered as well. Lion’s club sign going into town.
3. Didn’t see any signs or evidence of civic organization within city. The city sponsored some baseball groups. Also a big 3-4 ball diamonds in a ball park.
4. Recreation Commission, Food Pantry, Chamber of Commerce. Farm Bureau puts on an Ice Cream Social each year. Police Department puts on a Fishing Derby, and Flag Day event each year. Rec. Commission provides music for Ice Cream Social, Back to School Dance, Halloween Boo Bash.
5. **Public Infrastructure**

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

1. The homes were well kept. As driving around I kept looking for the “lesser” area and none was observed. Due to the time of year the upkeep on the lawns could not be assessed due to the crazy weather in Kansas. Residents seem to take pride in their homes.   
   A lot of the streets in the residential area were not paved. Kept running in to dead end streets. There were streetlights and street signs but sidewalks were not always present.   
   No public restrooms were observed other than at lake.
2. Street signage was great. It made the town easy to navigate. There was plenty of lighting and parking. Everything looked nice and clean. Some of the sidewalks need to be fixed but again my biggest concern would be the lack of sidewalks on the west end of town.
3. Not all streets were paved. Mostly rock south of town. A lot of dead end streets.
4. Streets are all gravel, no curb and gutters.

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

1. The ladies in City Hall were most helpful, especially after finding out our purpose. They spent plenty of time visiting and answering questions, even giving a “Welcome” packet with information about the town. The Recreation Commission has a big role in the community,
2. The ladies were very nice and helpful. They were easily able to assist with all of our questions and had a welcome packet for new residents that would very much come in handy. I have say that the website is amazing!!! They keep all the town events up to date, and provide a ton of information for anyone that would be looking into visiting or moving to Altamont. Very well done ladies!
3. City Hall was on main. They were very helpful with information of events going on in the town and they had a monitor going on events and calendar of events and times.
4. Many brochures available plus print outs.

**Police/fire protection:**

1. There is a police station and a fire station. An Emergency plan is in place but no emergency committee.
2. Easy to access and find.
3. A new fire facility and police presence on Main Street.
4. Yes, interacted with a police officer, very friendly.

**Library:**

1. The library has very limited hours and was not open during the time I was there. In asking City Hall the library has 2 computers but they did not explain if the computers are for general public use. There were 3 paperback bookracks outside the library door but no explanation as to the purpose or how to go about getting one of the books. I was under the understanding that one could simply take any of those books to read but was not sure.
2. Was closed during our visit. I would very much like to see the hours of the library expanded. This could be a great place for stay at home moms to take their little ones and also disabled and retired residents to go during the day as well. A library can offer a wealth of information to all age groups and would be very beneficial to be able to have access to during the day.
3. Was only open 1-5.
4. Very small.

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

1. Altamont has a nice new swimming pool. It appears small but as long as it meets the needs of the community that is what counts…The park is small and does not have room for growth. A new building has just been built there. The ball fields are away from the park and appear to be part of the school system as they are across from the school. The sign indicating which way to the park is not easily seen from the highway.
2. Had a nice little playground and a swimming pool nearby. But, there is not much room for expansion in its current location.
3. A small park with city pool. A real old pool, it needed paint. A nice playground but that was it for city park.
4. Small park, Rec Commission just got a grant for new playground equipment.
5. **Recreation/Tourism**

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

1. There is an International Disc Golf tournament held which brings in a large number of people. Also annually is a fishing derby both held at the lake about 3 miles south of town.
2. The city has a nice lake that is used for camping with public facilities and laundry during the camping season. The city is also well known for its flag days, fishing derby, and especially disc golf tournament.
3. They’re having a big Flag Day BBQ cook off this June.

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

1. No visible signs of community events. Had to ask at City Hall about them.
2. Likely due to the time we were there I did not notice any flyers or other advertisements of community events expect that on the web site. I obtained most of my information through the city staff.
3. Movies at the library and the fireworks demo on 4th of July.
4. Annual Fishing derby, Annual Fireworks

**Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.**The Christmas parade, Community wide rummage sales held twice a year, and the Turkey draw all have potential for bringing people in. Would need more publicity about them.

1. Idle Hour Lake has a great camping facility and disc golf is available there as well.
2. The town was proud of the city lake 3 miles south. There were 3 shelters and 2 campgrounds with showers and restroom, disc golf and fishing.
3. NA

**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.**

1. Other than the street sign posted at the highway listing what businesses are located on the main street there is none. One must go to City Hall for information.
2. City hall. Very friendly and very informative.
3. City Hall. The staff there was so helpful.
4. NA

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

1. Not really. Nothing really eye catching that invites “I must explore”
2. Competitive disc golf players would definitely be drawn here for the international tournament. The camping grounds at the lake was nice as well.
3. No big restaurants, a service station serving food and a hamburger spot. We were told to get to the hamburger place early or the tables would all be taken by farmers.
4. No.
5. **Wrap-up**

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

1. The well kept homes, the school system. The sign indicating the businesses, Lots of community involvement due to Extension and the Recreation Commission. The appearance of the businesses on the highway through town.
2. The friendly residents and community pride. But most of all the amazing school system.
3. The friendliness of the people, the willingness to help and they were proud of their community, especially the things going on at the city lake.
4. Friendly. School.

**What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?**

1. The downtown area is very depressing. A workday of simply painting the existing. Benches, updating the existing store fronts, having storefront signs stating what the businesses are on the front of the stores. Brighten up the downtown, make it more welcoming so people will want to go to the downtown area. Limited time stores and public library are open. This prevents people from going to the downtown area in the mornings. Not having a grocery store hurts the community as well. Altamont has so much potential but just needs a “facelift.”
2. Lack of grocery store and variety of health services. Also, limited access through the town for those without a vehicle.
3. The dying downtown, no grocery store in town, one said dollar general has frozen meat but no vegetables, I feel the medical clinics need a doctor at least once a week.
4. No grocery store. No entertainment for younger groups on a daily or weekly basis.

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

1. The hamburger and fries from MJ’s. Delicious.
2. Again the school system and how nice the town is in general.
3. We had a good dinner, the lake if I ever wanted to camp, and the friendly people.
4. NA

First Impressions was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension and adapted for use by K-State Research and Extension. Restructuring made possible through a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Works, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and the United State Department of Agriculture Cooperating, John D. Floros, Director.