

# First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



**Community Visited:** Ark City

**Date(s) Visited:** a. Tues, Aug 27  
b. Tues, Aug 27  
c. Tues, Aug 27

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. It was very easy. I like the upcoming events, the news articles, and the information about clubs and activities.
  - b. Nice site but some information was a list of dates for May-June 2018. I did not find many links to other sites especially the Chamber. Concerned that a big thing was Ark City has the 49th lowest debt level in the country.
  - c. I really liked the website, and they seemed to have all their bases covered. Only thing is that I couldn't access the Businesses links. The drop-down window kept disappearing. Other than that, I loved all the features/options, especially the 311 Citizen Request Center. It reflected the community, and accurately reflected what I saw.
  
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. At first glance, the north side of town which we came into first was busy, even though it was a Tuesday. We continued through the town, driving south to the river. The downtown had a sufficient number of cars and the area looked about 70% full of open businesses. The north side impressed me with the national chain businesses. There were signs announcing the city on the north and south sides, but we did not come in from the west, and we did not see the sign on the east, even though I had seen it in earlier trips to Missouri. The way finding signs blended in with the trees downtown, but once we saw them, we thought they were nice. I was impressed after stopping at the Chamber about the effort to improve the occupancy downtown with the volunteer group.

- b. Nice quiet town with a mostly full downtown area guessing 80% full. That could use some touchup in some areas. Was a little concerned with the large trees covering the front of businesses and could not tell what they were. Welcome signs from the north—far from road and needs attention. South—almost missed it was so far off road and down in the bottom. East—location was there but sign was missing, I think. West—road construction so we could not get there.
  
- c. We arrived around 10am, and the north side of town was busy. Definitely the more commercial (large box stores) side of town. After a buffer of housing we went through the downtown, which is everything I expected in an old downtown... Beautiful buildings! A lot of semi traffic to the south, but this time of year it is to be expected. Signs at the north and south side looked like they need a little TLC, but we knew we had arrived. While we ventured on the west side of town, we didn't see any gateway signage. We also traveled on the east side, but we entered through a backroad, and forgot to make loop around to find the signage. Again, commercial side from the north and more traditional downtown to the south (buildings).

### **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. As we walked downtown, we realized that there were more empty store fronts that what we thought as we drove through. With the storefront parking, however, it did make the downtown seem busy, but we saw very little foot traffic. The music was noticed when we first got out of the vehicle. Graves, Hometown Sales, Chamber, Library, and School Administration were a few. Graves was merchandised well; in fact I think all of them were ready for business in their own way. However, Jancie Karader was a very good upbeat person about Arkansas City. She took time to give us information, answer our questions, and sell us on Arkansas City. She needs to be recognized. At all stops we were greeted. As stated above, Jancie was excited and very helpful. At Hometown Sales, which we chose because we have a branch here, we met two younger adults, who like Arkansas City, like living there, but say there is nothing for them to do in Arkansas City. They go to Ponca City or Wichita for entertainment.

- b. When we walked the streets, it was more like maybe 60% occupied. Really disappointed with the close-up appearance of some of the buildings. They do need a little love and attention. Some of the owners or maybe occupants do care and were taking very good care of the building. I do like the old downtown feel but it is kind of lost with the condition of some of the buildings and the too large trees on the street. Trees are OK but I would like to see maybe a smaller ornamental type tree that does not cover the front of the buildings. The plus is, with the size they are it does cover some of the problems. The signage of the buildings was covered and some were trying to put signage under the trees on the windows but then if a customer is parked in front, you could still not see the store name. Graves Pharmacy—Jancie Karader—very friendly and helpful. Loves her community and was very knowledgeable and helpful. The soda fountain was nice and we were greeted at the door by another employee. Had a great variety of merchandise. Senior Services—Don't know who the gentleman was but was not very friendly and was very gruff and to the point, not engaging. Hometown Rental—Two young folks that were very engaging and helpful and would talk to us and answer questions we had. People on the street were not very engaging or not wanting to make eye contact. I expected to have a little better response. Green Door Mexican Restaurant—Very friendly, helpful and would answer our questions. Food was great and reasonably priced. Some of the businesses were closed at the time but had no signage indicating the hours of operation so we could return. I would think they would want customers to return if they saw something in the window but as a customer, when would you return? Maybe the locals know this but I as a visitor to town have no idea. Graves, Hometown and Green Door all greeted us but Senior Services I had to wait until he came to counter and then was not greeted until I started.
- c. We went through the downtown area several times on foot and driving. Vacancy is more apparent on foot, but still commands 75% occupancy which is still very good. Nice to see the Chamber have a program to help fill brick and mortar in the days of Amazon! Music was a nice touch. With all of the cars, I thought there would be more foot traffic, but it felt a little empty. Wayfinding signs are great, but they blend and it took us a while to find them. Once we spotted them, we knew what to look for. Loved the flowers and saw city workers watering and tending to the landscaping. My only suggestion would be to either replace the locust trees with a more ornamental tree or trim them back. The trees cover storefront signage and hide downtown's beautiful architecture. From the pictures it looks like it would be beautiful at night too. Loved the murals, and large kiosk signage with maps and events. Graves Drugstore, Hometown Sales and Lease, Library, Recreation Center, USD 470 Administration Building, and window shopped several downtown businesses. One can definitely find everything you need downtown. Jancie, manager of Graves Drugstore, was very helpful. A lot of passion and enthusiasm for Ark City, and I was happy to meet one of your great city advocates. Amazing customer service everywhere we went! See previous answer about Jancie. Hometown Sales and Lease staff spoke highly of Ark City, and how much they love their community. They were younger and noted a lack of entertainment. Losing that to other cities like Ponca and Wichita. We were welcomed everywhere and did not have to ask for assistance.

**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?**

- a. We saw the bike rack by the Library, found path of the bike path on the south side by the river and the new housing by the Veteran's Lake. I thought displays on Main Street with the map and the list of events (one was near the Chamber office) were a good idea. We did see a bus route on that and then we actually saw a bus. Liked the music and the planters downtown. There was ample parking. Maybe the trees downtown could be trimmed up a little.
- b. Park benches were available in the downtown area but found no public restrooms. Found one bike rack in front of library. No bike share or designate bike lanes. Signs on the sidewalks in some areas of downtown "No bikes or skateboards." We did see public transportation and did not notice Wi-Fi. Some of the landscaping was nice (flowers in planters) but trees were too much and overpowering the area. There were some nice murals on the sides of some of the buildings. They did have Way-Finding signs but until it was called to my attention, I had not noticed them. Hidden again behind the large trees and the color of dark gold letters on a brown background with small writing made them difficult to read when you could find them. Different colors and maybe a brighter color might be helpful. The music downtown was also a nice peaceful touch. No problem parking when you found what you were looking for. There were monument signs located in the downtown area with points of interest and activities. Would have been nice if they had "You Are Here" stickers on them. The list of activities were listed monthly but had no dates or even weekend listed. As a visitor it would have been nice to know that the third weekend in May they have a Klagman Pin Festival going on.
- c. We saw drinking fountains, benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, designated bike path scattered throughout town. Amenities were located in good places. Public restrooms were in the parks. We saw the public transportation map/info at City Hall, and a bus running the route later that day. I did not see any designated bike lanes or Wi-Fi. My carrier (T-Mobile) did not have great service and was hit or miss. I have already covered the landscaping and streetscaping. Parking was adequate and easy to find, especially downtown.

**4. Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

- a. From the north side of town to where Dillon's is, the businesses were easy to get in and out of and the traffic was heavier than what was downtown.
- b. They have what I would call the typical national chain strip centers. They appeared clean and rather neat but they had the same problem of empty space, just not as much as downtown.

- c. Downtown was beautiful and a variety of retail shops are located there. The other commerce district to the north carried all of the big box names. Both locations were attractive in their own right and were easy to access.

## **5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

- a. I believe that Arkansas City believes that Strother Park is their industrial park. We did see ADM, the railroad, the beef plant and other big business, but they were spread throughout the town.
- b. Not that we could directly point to. The locals would tell us of the individual areas that had been used for years.
- c. We did not find a traditional industrial park, but there were clusters spread throughout town and on the outskirts that felt/looked industrial. Commercial areas were clustered appropriately. South of town seemed maxed out. Due to construction, we could not access the west side, and do not know if there is room for expansion. There is room east for expansion, but I feel that would start imposing on quality residential expansion. Maybe some expansion off of the bypass, but again there were some beautiful neighborhoods on the east side. North seemed primed for expansion of both industrial and commercial expansion.

## **6. Health Care Services**

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

- a. Saw the hospital on north side of town, fire department, dentist, eye care facilities, and by looking online could find many doctors, optometrists. Senior and low-income housing we gathered in talking to people.
- b. New hospital on the North side of town and we did see a number of medical offices throughout the community. They were identified, neat and clean appearance.
- c. With the hospital, all emergency medical services are covered. Everyone we spoke to had great things to say. With the outer communities 6 pharmacies can exist, and that is amazing! We saw low-income senior living under construction and were directed to the various assisted living facilities.

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

- a. Looks like Arkansas City has many choices and many more choices than we do.
- b. NA
- c. We saw several clinics that covered the spectrum for all healthcare services. The condition of the facilities seemed average or above in all categories.

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

- a. I heard of many and think that Arkansas City is trying to provide all services that you can for your residents.
- b. We could identify a couple of facilities from some of the locals we visited with. I don't think we could have identified them without the help of the locals. We did find a new senior living complex that will be having 42 units for senior apartments. Looks like it will be very nice for them to have as they appear to be in need of this type of housing.
- c. All your bases are covered, and that is a great thing! Again, everyone we spoke with had nothing but positive things to say. I eavesdropped on a lunch time conversation about the person's mother in a local care unit, and she had noted that it was adequate.

**Did you notice any specific efforts to promote healthy choices and behaviors? (i.e., farmers markets, breastfeeding welcome here decals, designated smoking/non-smoking areas, etc.)**

- a. NA
- b. Farmers market was scheduled to be the evening after we left town in their main park on the main street, Wilson Park. Rather well-maintained parks.
- c. We noticed the farmers market setting up in Wilson Park.

**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. It looked to me that Arkansas City has a need for nicer housing. Many areas we drove through are old, run down and not very attractive. I expected some, but I think there is more than what I expected. We did find a newer addition west and south of Creekmore, but it was next to a mobile home park. The young adults at Hometown Sales were happy with the prices for rent, but I think they were very cost concerned.
- b. The housing was very good if you were a college student living on campus. Other than that, we saw only one other apartment complex open to the public. We were told they had a lengthy waiting list. As far as other housing available, we seen very few "for sale" signs and no "for rent" signs. It was really sad to see the condition of many of the homes and lots in the residential areas. The city core had many homes in the \$40-50,000 range built prior to 1950's that really needed help and as we got further out we found homes built in the 1980-2000 that were of the \$100-150,000 range and we found only one area that had any newer homes. We were told that the homes in Ark City did cap out at about \$200,000. We did talk to some locals that had told us that they did leave for one reason or another and moved back. That is good but they also told us, when asked, they had to go to either Wichita or Ponca City to find anything to do.

- c. We were told of only one active/almost active subdivision with houses in the \$150,000's. There was a lot of old blight properties, but that is to be expected with a city your age/size. However, it would be great if there were some neighborhood revitalization programs. We did not see much new home construction. We were told apartments were difficult to get into, and we saw a few of the newer apartments. With a lot of older downtowns there are a bunch of empty upper floors. Wichita's efforts have centralized around apartments on the upper levels with commerce on the ground. The only apartments in the downtown area were low income. Employment centers and higher education help drive filling vacancies. Rent/sale prices seem to be fair market, but I didn't notice a lot of "for sale" signs either. This is all face value analysis, with no real market number's crunching.

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

- a. Some newer housing, we saw duplexes, the new area by Veteran's Park, looked nice, but if I was looking for a nice apartment, I did not see many choices.
- b. We could not identify any rental property and now thinking about it, I don't remember seeing a realtor office and very few signs. We could not identify any developments under new development.
- c. Again, I didn't notice a lot of rent or sale signs. We drove by a fairly new apartment complex and duplexes to the north but didn't check vacancy.

## **8. 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?**

- a. All are there. Talked to the school district press person. She told us about all schools, what they had and what awards they had received. She grew in Arkansas City; she and her husband moved back. We asked many people about day care. Only 2 were mentioned as named places and most felt that day care was a shortage in Arkansas City.
- b. We about a Head Start program but we could not find it. They have half and full day preschool thru 12 in public education. One high school that was very impressive, one middle school that was well kept. We were told they had sixsaw elementary schools but I don't remember seeing them. The college was the crown jewel of Ark City, newer building, downtown area, clean, well-marked with signage. The college appears to be the only part of town that has come into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- c. All schools seemed adequate in size, and coverage of the above list. Daycare seemed scarce. Three grown men asking people where they kept the children was only slightly awkward! I believe we won them over, but there were only two facilities mentioned by name. We heard Woods from the start, but even that was not consistent. We heard about another center-based daycare towards the end of our tour. Most are home daycare establishments through word of mouth. City Hall didn't have a list of daycares either.



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

- a. No. It was better to talk in person to them at the Administration Building
- b. The web sites were very helpful on the education system both public and college.
- c. I did some casual browsing online, but we went to the administration building, and spoke with the public relations director... I forgot to get her card. The administrators were out of the building, but she was very informative, answering all our questions. She said enrollment was trending upwards, which is great news! She spoke of the various awards the district had received.

**9. Childcare**

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

- a. Very little information about childcare, so even though we were not specifically told there was a shortage, it seems to me there may be a shortage.
- b. We asked people from city hall to our waitress about childcare. They could only name one location that I would call a commercial type unit that again we did not find. They told us 90-95% were home based business.
- c. The only daycare we knew about was Woods, and we did not stop there to inquire. We found out about it late and didn't confirm its existence until the afternoon. A lot of it seems to be home daycares, and that is marketed through word of mouth. We found out about another center, which I cannot remember the name, at our last stop. Everyone that we talked to with children seemed to have it covered, but there may be a shortage or a lack of marketing.

**10. Faith/Religion**

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

- a. Saw numerous faiths, and many buildings.
- b. I thought we had many churches but I think they have us beat. A number of churches that were constructed back in the late 1800's or early 1900's. Some denominations I have never heard of. The churches, much like the housing and downtown, need a little love and attention. Could not identify any faith based community service.
- c. We saw several churches, and some of their banners listed events and other things. I do not recall any specific faith-based community services marketed.



## **11. Civic**

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

- a. Jancie could tell us about them. My other visitors will know more.
- b. When asking the locals, we were told of Lions, Optimist, Kiwanis, Soroptimist International, Knights of Columbus, Rotary, American Legion, and Friends of Wilson Park. American Legion has a free-standing building, Lions developed a skate park and the Kiwanis where they have a pancake feed during Arkalalah.
- c. Jancie listed Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, and Optimist clubs. As to their civic engagements we saw some buildings and other signage listing their presence. I saw a Lions Club building and some signage throughout 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.**

- a. The parks were there but I would say not many play things for children were available. The way finding signs do help, the music was nice, did not see a restroom on our walk downtown, but could find businesses that would let us use them. As we do not have a “downtown,” I really like the effort that is going on. Downtown would allow me to stroll if I so wanted to. Things I will remember. How positive all people we talked to were about Arkansas City. As in most cities, youth thinks that there is not enough to do in Arkansas City. Liked the music downtown. I will remember the national chains that are operating there based on population. I do believe that the city looks old and many areas need to be looked at. Downtown needs to be spruced up. It would be hard to find “nice” housing areas, but I got the impression that Arkansas City residents like their city.
- b. Summit was in good shape, side street (brick) not so good but does add to “the old days” atmosphere. Street name signs were great, wayfinding blended in. Parking and lighting was very good. Trees may be a bit of a hindrance to new business downtown. No bike lanes were marked on streets but Summit is four-lane with diagonal parking on street.
- c. Streets were decent throughout town. We didn’t drive down any failing streets. The older brick streets are a little rough, but that is every old brick road ever built! The hike/bike paths all had lighting, racks, trash cans, benches, and restrooms were at the parks.

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

- a. We were greeted ok. But there was not much happening at City Hall. They were ok, but not the most upbeat people.
- b. Somewhat welcoming, they again are located in a building built 100 years ago and have not really kept-up with the rest of the world. Signage on outside was lacking and when we got inside it was even worse. If you were from Ark City you knew where you were going to find what you wanted. Still don't know where the mayor's office or any of the administration is located. Only signage was on the doors so you had to go to each door to see who or what was in each room. They had 0 printed material about the city or the surrounding area in City Hall.
- c. We were greeted okay. The receptionists gave adequate information. We ventured up by the courtroom and Public Works, but not a lot of information available. Not a lot of people at City Hall...

**Police/fire protection:**

- a. Found both. Looked sufficient.
- b. Police station directly across the street from City Hall in a much newer building. The Fire Station, on the other hand, was again a building from mid-1900's.
- c. Parked in front of PD, but didn't go in. We saw a police presence throughout town. We drove pass the fire station. That building was super long, and it looked like it took up an entire block!

**Library:**

- a. I thought it would fill the needs that were needed for most people to use the Library.
- b. Was in an old post office again built in the early 1900's. They did have a great program, I think called "Space Maker" that provided a number of different equipment that not everyone would own but occasionally need and was available to the public to use. 3-D printer, Heat Transfer, Paper and vinyl die cutter, Button maker, sewing machine and they had a computer with the programing available to make these happen.
- c. The retrofit of the old post office was very cool. The Makerspace is very cool, and free! Two floors of books with space to meet, study, and read.

### **City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sports plex)**

- a. Average rating for sports, parks seemed to be lacking play equipment. Liked the bike path.
- b. They did lack wayfinding to the parks and some of the signage need a little love. We accidentally found Veterans Pond that is really a prime location for activities and would also be a great place for new home or apartment development. The area getting to the park is just a little short of love. They had a hike and bike trail but not real well marked. Ballparks and sports complexes were either the college or public school complexes and very nice and kept nicely and appealing. The playgrounds, likewise, were very well kept and have modern equipment.
- c. The high school had sports facilities but didn't see a lot of sports related places in town. The main park Wilson had some tennis courts, the train was a plus, and the covered band stand. That park specifically seemed a little under kept with a lot of weeds. I liked the parks that embraced the river and had camping spots. Parks didn't seem to have a lot of playground equipment, but they covered the basics.

### **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. Arkalalah is the last weekend in October. I do not know if it is a slogan but there is something about the gateway to the Cherokee Strip. Also, there were signs around that talked about all people looking the same even though we are different. It looked like an organized event.
- b. When asking locals, the Cherokee Strip museum and a new archeological dig were the two attractions. Cherokee Strip museum has never been open whenever I have been in Ark City. I am not sure of their hours. If they have a slogan, I was not aware or saw anything in regard to a slogan.
- c. Arkalalah seemed to show up everywhere, and everyone we talked to knew about it. Etzanooga was also listed, but we didn't have time to make it there. I plan on taking my family one of these weekends to check it out. The downtown kiosks listed all of the events but didn't give any dates. We assumed you had to go to ArkCity.org for more information. As for slogans, I did not pick up on any.

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

- a. Heard about the dig going on.
- b. The only thing I noticed were the signs located downtown that you must be walking to see and had no dates but listed the month they would happen. I would have thought as important at the college is in town the city would embrace them more. Welcome Back Students signage, college mascot on windows, reader board with events for either the college or other community fun things.
- c. A lot of hype for Etzanooga!

**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. NA
- b. I think both the Museum and the dig site along with the College or USD activities might be of interest but if you don't know about them. Do they really happen?
- c. We were told by multiple people about the museum to the south of town. We did not stop but heard really great things. Again, I really liked the campgrounds/parks next to the river.

**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. Chamber person was helpful, the information station inside Chamber helped, But Jancie was the most informative.
- b. Chamber office is located downtown, you go by it and have to make a return to see the signage for the trees. The lady in the Chamber office was very helpful and knowledgeable with plenty of printed material. We picked up a map but it could use a little more location info on it. The Rec center, after we found someone, would answer questions but really not much interested in us. They had no printed literature to give us except on a couple of their programs. Older building that may have been a high school that was built back in the early 1900's. Have about 200 members. No trees as it was not on Summit but still signage was really lacking.
- c. We were able to find the visitor's center from the street. The Chamber staffer was very informative. I shopped several of the tourism guides to take back with me. The facility and signage were ample and inviting. Jancie, with Graves Drugstore, knocked everything out of the park. She knew everything, and even wanted to give us a tour of Ark City. We had to respectfully decline, but it was nice to have someone willing to drop what they are doing and show you around.

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

- a. Arkalalah
- b. Not really, the shops were far and few between and the restaurants were nothing special. We did not see any open specialty stores in downtown or any other part, at least which were open. We arrived about 10 AM and left about 3:30 PM.
- c. Etzanoa

## 14. **Wrap-up**

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

- a. The town is far from bigger cities that it can have national chains which is impressive, I truly like the downtown area, but wish like I am sure the City does, more open businesses and updated storefronts. There is everything that I would need if I lived there, although I think the mid-level priced housing, even for the per capita rate for the City, is lacking. I do feel that for current residents, that there is a sense that is a great place to raise a family and that Arkansas City is friendly, affordable, and a place that they can call home.
- b. Summit Street was somewhat inviting and clean and loved the murals on some of the walls. Liked the planters and the music downtown. The college campus was very inviting and welcoming. If you like the old towns built in the early 1900's, you will love Ark City. Highways leading into town were very good and safe to drive. The downtown area with the older buildings is great, too bad they are hard to see for the trees. They have a large area to pull a customer base 30-40 miles east, west and south. From the north they have a strong competitor in Winfield. The new industrial space is not located in Ark City proper but 3-4 miles north at Strother Field. They do have, in my mind, three major employers besides the College, USD and city in ADM, BNSF and Creekstone Farms.
- c. I love the downtown, and the fact that it exists and is thriving with all of the big box national stores. They have a great school system which will help retain/attract families to raise their children. Has all of the amenities of a big city but retains its small-town feel. Great park system is connected by hike/bike pathway. Everyone we spoke mentioned pride in their community. The sign purchased at Graves Drugstore about treating your neighbors with kindness and respect was a theme I saw throughout town.

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

- a. NA
- b. They appear to be locked in to being what they were 100 years ago. It could happen with just a little work from the city and downtown property owners. I could see a number of specialty type stores with eye appealing store fronts while promoting both the college and the USD activities. It is going to take time and someone or some group to take leadership to make this happen. The problems did not happen overnight but with a little time they can make Ark City a bright spot again.
- c. Entertainment for the younger generation. It felt like the population was ageing and losing their younger people (18 to 25). We have the same issues, and no solutions...

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

- a. NA
- b. All the trees in the downtown area and empty building that have a ton of potential in downtown.
- c. The beautiful downtown, and their community spirit.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

<http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/civic-engagement/first-impressions/index.html>

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