

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Bucklin

Date(s) Visited: 6/5/19

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. I was able to search Bucklin Kansas and find a website that gave some information about the town. The site I found mostly just talked about the city, police department and some ordinances. This site didn't give information for the whole community.
- b. We spent a short 20-30 minutes searching the web for information on the city of Bucklin. There, of course, are links to Wikipedia, MapQuest, TripAdvisor, realtor.com, etc. Through a Google search we found the city website, bucklins.com. That site has lots of good, basic information: city codes, agendas to council meetings, forms and seemed to be up-to-date. City council, mayor, fire department, police, etc. were included in the drop down and that contact information was readily available. Continuing with Google, we were able to find information and links to the medical clinic, grocery store, and bar and grill. This information, plus more, was easy to find and relatively user friendly.
- c. As I do most of my searches, I started with forms of Social Media; since most of our younger generations seem to do that first when searching for information. I was able to locate a wealth of information about the town of Bucklin and the businesses there through Facebook and Instagram.

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. There are a variety of houses in Bucklin from low income to very nice houses. Their city park was nice and kept up. Their main street was also clean and had a nice gazebo with bench. There were signs on most entrances. Not very big or fancy but you knew you were in Bucklin. Most buildings on main street were old along with their school.
- b. Bucklin is very much an agriculture oriented community. Two of the entrances to town reflect that. BTI is a very large business that presents itself very nicely. The Coop is another large business that truly appears to be as organized as that type of business can be. These 2 businesses are the first things really noticed coming into town from the north, east, and west. We thought the south

entrance taking the curve past the ball fields was the most inviting. Although there were signs saying “Bucklin” there weren’t many signs directing traffic to places not on Main Street (pool, park, school, clinic, etc.). We did see one sign but it was small and hard to see.

- c. Bucklin is a definitely a farming community that prides itself with small town living, safe community with the sense of having security for its community members. Most of the entrances were welcoming, some did need a little TLC, but for the most part they were clean. There were several vacant buildings; however, the area around these facilities was maintained. Making signs more visible seems to be a need. Also, signs leading to the school and city hall building seem to be lacking.

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. Buildings are old, other than the library. Main Street was kept clean with a few flower pots and benches throughout it. There were signs that told you what was in each shop. They had a telephone company, bar and grill, grocery store, BTI implement, library, thrift store, city hall, and a cabinet making company. The businesses we went into were friendly. The library, by far, was the friendliest and more helpful and full of information.
- b. Most of the buildings downtown are full and being used. The unused ones are not eyesores. All the buildings, used or not, look neat and taken care of on the outside. We saw and went into the grocery store, library, convenience store/cafe (west side), liquor/convenience store (east side), bar/grill, and city hall. Everyone we spoke to was very helpful and happy to share information about their city. Customer service was very impressive. The grocery store has a nice variety of merchandise that covers the basics: canned goods, fresh vegetables, fruit, etc. They also offer convenience store type pizza as a meal alternative.

- c. I was quite impressed with the downtown facilities of Bucklin. Each business had their structural business maintained and identified. There were a few businesses that could do some clean up and painting, but for the most part Bucklin was welcoming. The businesses that we entered had extremely friendly staff and were more than willing to share information with us about their town. We visited the public library that was highly impressive and were very impressed with what they have to offer their community and the programs including food for the children in the summer. The grocery store was clean and had the essentials needed to maintain a small, but useful inventory. They also had a soda shop/pizza eatery at the back of the store that was frequently utilized by its customers. There was also a liquor store that was extremely well kept and wonderful customer service. Other available businesses that were open at the time: Thrift shop, tire shop, auction office, and floral shop. Several of the other businesses we noticed but didn't seem to be open at the time were: salon, massage place, cell phone company, mortuary, and cabinet making company. The customer service at each place of business we entered was superb. They were very willing to share information and history of their town and business.

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. Public bathrooms were at city park but not in the best shape. There were a few benches throughout the town. Wi-Fi was available at the library and we knew that because they had a sign on the door stating it. I noticed quite a few houses that could have used some weed-eating. There was plenty of parking.
- b. We found the city park accidentally. It has beautiful stonework, lots of seating, lots of shade, equipment for the kids, places to cook, and restrooms. There are also public restrooms in several of the businesses we visited. The grocery store does not have one (not a negative thing) and it is very clearly posted. There are several benches along Main Street as well as potted flowers along the sidewalks. Sidewalks appear to be very walkable through most of town and there is plenty of parking that is easily accessible.
- c. Downtown amenities were: benches, Wi-Fi at the library, each business was willing to let you use their restroom. Downtown is lacking in trash bins and we were unable to locate a drinking fountain. We accidentally came across the park and it was beautiful, and the grounds were well maintained. Not sure I would ever use the public restroom there for it needed lots of TLC and the drinking fountain there was somewhat rough. Parking is very ample and walking distance from place to place is minimal. The public grounds seem to be well maintained but could use some trimming up around structures and fences. Each business appeared to have flower pots that were full and well maintained, which was welcoming.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. The only retail shopping that I saw was the thrift store. It wasn't too inviting by just looking at it from the outside.
- b. We observed a thrift store, cell phone company, custom cabinet making company, mortuary, floral shop, hair salons, massage business, and medical clinic.
- c. BTI appears to be a huge industrial business for the community. It was extremely well maintained and had several buildings that were an extension of the retail shop and they were well manicured.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. BTI implement, I believe, would be able to expand and it is easy to find.
- b. There isn't a defined area for commercial development, but possibly could happen at the north or east end of town.
- c. I would have to say no on this. If there is a designated area, it isn't posted or known without asking the city office. The little town is surrounded by farmland and as far as downtown goes, most of the buildings are in use already.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. Bucklin has a clinic but no hospitals.
- b. Bucklin has a medical clinic with hours posted on the front door, a chiropractic office with no hours posted, and a relatively new fire station. Each looks inviting and well-kept as you drive by.
- c. Hill Top is a 32 bed nursery home that is absolutely beautiful, well landscaped, and well maintained. There was a health clinic with hours posted on the door, the building could use some upkeep. A chiropractic office was also stumbled upon. It didn't have hours posted; just a sign identifying what the building was in use for. The local mortuary on Main Street was well landscaped and maintained. There were no signs leading to any of these facilities; we just stumbled upon them.

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

- a. NA
- b. NA
- c. At the time we were there, the clinic and chiro office were not opened. The condition of Hill Top was amazing and beautiful.

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

- a. They had a nursing home facility on the outskirts of town.
- b. Hill Top House is a 32-bed nursing home. It is an attractive, inviting facility.
- c. This is Hill Top a 32-bed nursing home. This is definitely an asset to the community and seemed to be a place that employed numerous citizens and something the community took pride in.

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. Yes, the houses in Bucklin, I believe, would appeal to all incomes. There weren't many houses available, though.
- b. There are houses for sale as we observed some with signs in front of them. We don't know if they have housing available for high, middle, and low income. The ones we saw were probably geared more to low/low middle-income families. There were many very nice homes, but all appeared to be lived in and not for sale. It was difficult to tell if some of the homes were run down or abandoned as many of the residential areas needed some care. There is a low-income housing facility on the east side of town. It also looked like there were lots available for building.
- c. Available housing is limited and what is available is in questionable shape. There appeared to be several vacant lots, but not sure if those lots are available to the public to purchase. There is an apparent variety of social economic classes residing in Bucklin. Some residences were so run down and surrounded by trash it was questionable if people actually lived there, until you would see kids or individuals come out. Not sure if the city enforces codes on cleanliness of your property or lawn ordinances. On the other hand, you would see very well-maintained residences with well-manicured lawns and landscaping. There was a low-income apartment complex that was very well maintained and operated.

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

- a. I believe I only saw one house for rent in Bucklin.
- b. We didn't see any available rentals but was told at city hall there are some available.
- c. There were only a few places identified as for rent. They were on the lower end of acceptable, not anything that would appeal to blue collar families looking to move into a community.

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. They have one school that consists of Pre-K through High School. I would say that the school building is small. The grounds were mowed but could have used a weed-eater.
- b. There is a pre-k through 12 grade public school. The grounds look a little run down and could use a weed eater. The sports facilities (football, baseball, track) could use an upgrade (seating, lighting).
- c. The school was right on Main Street coming into the South end of town. The school is identified as a K-12 building and each section is identified on the separate buildings. The only way we found out they had a preschool was by asking at the city building. The buildings are apparently older facilities and could use some updating and maintaining. The district office building appears to be very plain and unwelcoming on the outside. The school did appear to be of adequate size, but the grounds were run down on the sides and back side of the buildings.

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

- a. Yes, the school website was full of information.
- b. The public-school website was informative and easy to navigate.
- c. Bucklin schools have a very well maintained and updated personal website. By navigating through it, you can see the programs available and what their goals are for the education of each child.

9. Childcare

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

- a. The city clerk said that there were a couple of in-house daycares. There was a flyer for one up at the bar and grill.
- b. City hall employees told us there are 2 childcare facilities and we did see some signage in a couple of the businesses we visited. We forgot to ask about cost— sorry!
- c. We had to ask at the city office if there were local childcare providers and if there were openings. They really didn't know or have much information about childcare. They thought there was one or maybe two available providers in town but had no clue about cost or openings.

10. 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?

- a. I noticed a couple of Methodist churches and a community church.
- b. Churches: Methodist, Free Methodist, and Community Church Baptist. They all looked physically inviting and well kept.
- c. There were several religious denominations in Bucklin and each church appeared to be well maintained and welcoming. There were no signs leading to these facilities, but each one did have their service hours posted.

11. Civic

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

- a. Bucklin has an American Legion and they have a Veterans Day event every year. No, I did not.
- b. We saw an American Legion and was told they have an active group. There is a Senior Center/Thrift shop and there were signs around town advertising a booster club. We didn't see any activity while in town.
- c. American Legion group, Booster club, Senior building. The largest civic organization I can recall is the Library Foundation that is funded by local donations and tax credits. There was also a large Legion Building available that they were in the process of updating for community use. The Senior Citizens group had a thrift shop they operated on Main Street.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. Some streets weren't the smoothest but there were signs that directed you places. I only saw restrooms at the city park.
- b. The streets are not in horrible shape. There is a need for more signs designating public areas: school, park, pool, city hall, etc.
- c. Downtown was very well maintained, once off Main Street some of the areas were quite questionable about meeting city codes and etc. Sidewalks were very minimal, landscaping varied from block to block and good to bad.

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

- a. We were able to talk with the city clerk and the mayor. They were friendly but the mayor really didn't know some of the questions that we were asking. It is a very small office and I didn't think it was very inviting to outside guests.
- b. The city hall staff was very friendly and very helpful. They work out of an older facility.
- c. We accidentally came across this building too. It is not on Main Street, but a side street and there are no signs visible leading to it. This also happened to be the police office too. As you walk in there is an information board for residents to hang information about available services, activities, and ordinances. However, the office part is very unwelcoming. The clerk sits behind a closed door and you talk through a security glass to her. It made me feel as though I was in a high crime rate area and I should be concerned for my safety. The mayor happened to be there when we were there, so they both came out and visited with us. Between the two of them they were able to answer most of our questions but didn't have an issue telling us if they had no idea. We did ask about the ordinance for residence and maintaining/minimizing trash and keeping yards up to code. They did let us know they work with residents because several of their residents struggle financially.

Police/fire protection:

- a. The city clerk said that they have two officers on the books. They did have a nice, new cop car.
- b. The fire station looks new and well kept. We were told there are 2-part time police officers and neither one was on duty while we were there.
- c. The very small police office is attached to the city building. We were told they have 2 cops on the books, but their hours vary and are unknown. They do have an extremely nice new city police car. Fire department we stumbled upon too. It is an extremely nice new building down from City Hall. The building and landscaping were well maintained and very welcoming.

Library:

- a. AMAZING library that is only 5 years old. Super friendly ladies. Very up to date with technology. They have a conference/meeting room connected that they feed children birth to 18 years old from the Food Bank that need food Monday-Friday. Really neat program.
- b. The city library is amazing! It is new and was tax credit funded. They serve free lunches to children in the summer through the Food Bank of Kansas. They also offer free Wi-Fi.
- c. This is definitely something this town should be extremely proud of. It is an absolutely beautiful facility and it has so much to offer to its community through a summer food program, reading program, free technology use, community room available, designated area for smaller children to explore and learn, and a separate area for older residents. The staff was very knowledgeable and welcoming. She spent a great amount of time speaking with us about how this project was able to come about and what other programs they have established in their small community to keep things open and operating locally.

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

- a. Very pretty city park. Had a small walking path around the outside of it. Playground at the school was kind of old. Nice playground at the park, though. Sports complex was old also.
- b. The city park is nice, inviting, and shady. The area could use some lighting and signage.
- c. The city park was beautiful and very well maintained, except for the public restroom available there. Ballparks could use some attention with lawn care and signage. The public pool is of average size and shows signs of age. It does not have any hours posted or information available on the outside for the public to see.

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. Paige Estes Street Dance, Veterans Day Parade and luncheon
- b. No slogan that we saw. School is Bucklin Red Aces-saw that in several places. They have the Paige Estes memorial every summer as a memorial. They also celebrate Veterans' Day with a parade and no school.
- c. Paige Estes Memorial Event is a huge local event in honor a young lady that lost her life to a drunk driver. Veterans Day celebration is another event observed and school is not in session for this to make it a big celebration.

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

- a. Other than feeding children a free lunch every day at the library, no
- b. We saw nothing special going on the day we were there.
- c. Not that I recall

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

- a. None that I noticed
- b. NA
- c. None

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. Not that I noticed other than city hall and it isn't too inviting.
- b. There is no visitor center. City Hall is not on Main Street, but a side road we happened to drive down. Overall, the most welcoming and informative stop was the library.
- c. None of these were visible for visitors. The only way to find this out is to go into a local business that happens to be open.

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

- a. Bar and Grill, Library
- b. We would come back to the bar, the liquor/convenience store, custom cabinet shop, and BTI.
- c. Bucklin Bar, Library, local liquor store

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. I was super impressed by the library.
- b. Friendly people. Library. City park. It is very obvious there is a lot of local support for the community.
- c. This community has so much more to offer than I imagined. I was quite impressed with all the services available for such a small area. The residents we encountered seemed to be very proud of their community and how a tax credit has been set up to support things locally.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. I think the biggest obstacles/challenges are living quite a distance from a bigger city and not many houses for rent or sale for people moving into the community.
- b. Job market is a challenge as is housing. The distance to a larger community would be an obstacle.
- c. Limited available and acceptable housing, I would say.

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

- a. The library and how friendly and full of information the lady was! 😊
- b. Bucklin has so much more to offer than we ever realized! The library facility is amazing! The citizens who support the community and are proud of it!
- c. Even though it is small, it has a lot to offer to residents.

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