

# First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



**Community Visited:** Caney

**Date(s) Visited:** a, b, c) Tues 8/13/19

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. I found it very easy to find information using a basic Google search and it did reflect what I had found online. It was easy to find restaurants, schools, and things to do.
  - b. Web site was nicely put together. Easy to access and gave pertinent information about the town.
  - c. The website gave basic information which made it easy to find what they have to offer as a city. Gave a little bit of history and general information.
  
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. Caney is a quaint little town with a small-town feel. There are a few hiccups like any other small town. There were a few dilapidated structures and a few unmown lawns but overall the town looked well kept. We came in on 166 and turned onto 75. As soon as we turned, we saw a large Welcome sign. A few blocks down there is a sign pointing to the downtown area that is large and clearly visible on Hwy 75.
  - b. One of the first things I noticed was the High School complex. It looks very nice and modern even though there was construction going on I could tell it was going to look good. As we entered the business area, several fun looking businesses looked inviting. The yard ornament, variety store is an example. I notice several restaurants on the main drag coming into town such as Sonic, Eggbert's, and burger joints etc. We drove past one of the parks with a veteran's monument and flags. This park had several wooden carvings which were sponsored by different clubs and groups in town. Some of the homes were seemed run down and yards needed care but then there were some very nice, well-kept homes. As we came into town the "Welcome to Caney" sign was easily visible but was a bit dirty. The street signs were in place at most intersections. A large, nice sign noting the wildlife zoo which we drove by, but it was closed.

- c. Signage through town was very noticeable. Was able to navigate well. Some housing looked in need of some code enforcement. Felt a pride in their school and veterans. Navigational signs were very helpful to find key points in town. Businesses on the drive in were busy and looked as well maintained. Loved the business with the metal work and with the old gas signs.

### **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. I saw that some buildings were run down but for the most part in decent shape. A few were not occupied but there were several different types of businesses in the ones that were such as H&R Block, a Mexican Restaurant, a doctor's office, Historical Museum with a schoolhouse across the street. We entered a Mexican restaurant for lunch and we were immediately greeted and seated. The food was tasty and the service was good.
- b. As we went to the downtown area many of the older buildings seemed run down and needed some work but a few were nicely rejuvenated. The Historical Society building looked nice with an old school across the street. Even though we didn't go inside either of these buildings they looked well cared for from the outside. As I mentioned earlier, when we entered the business area, several fun looking businesses looked inviting. The yard ornament, variety store is an example. I noticed several restaurants on the main drag coming into town such as Casey's, Sonic, Eggbert's, burger joint. We did see a Dollar General store but didn't notice a grocery store. We drove past one of the city parks with a veteran's memorial. This park had several wooden carvings which were sponsored by different clubs and groups in town. We stopped into the City Hall and spoke to the city manager. He was friendly and seemed excited about improvement grants that have just been awarded to the city to improve the swimming pool and other things. Also mentioned school building improvements. He mentioned getting a city run grocery store and suggested places to visit. Very friendly and answered all our questions. We had lunch at the Mexican food restaurant. Service was good, food was good and wait staff was friendly. When we asked the server about the town, she didn't have much good to say about the town. She was young and this is typical of someone her age. Most young people don't seem to appreciate their hometown until they leave and then come home. We then visited a flea market "Myrtles" (I believe that was the name). It was a wonderful place and the woman there was very friendly and said Caney was her hometown and she loved living in the small town. This was a family business.

- c. Downtown building was maintained in some places and in need of repair in others. Loved the fact that the buildings that were not in use had coverings over the windows. Loved the Stained-glass shop. Looks like life is being breathed back into the downtown area. The resale shop downtown with the table and chairs displayed outside made it feel welcoming to come in and view what was inside. We ate at Forasteros restaurant very friendly staff, great food nice environment. We were greeted in all businesses we visited.

**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. Downtown there were benches, trash bins, and a blessing box at City Hall. Sidewalks were clean and unobstructed. No difficulty in parking. City Hall was a “one stop shop” with City Clerk’s Office and police dept. in one location. We walked to the next block to the Mexican restaurant and had lunch. Some sidewalks are inlaid with brick which is a nice touch.
- b. I didn't notice drinking fountains but there were benches and trash receptacles on the downtown area. The park that I mentioned earlier did have a public restroom. Wi-Fi was available at the Mexican restaurant but didn't notice it at other places. We parked in front of the City Hall and walked to the restaurant which was just across the street. Since the downtown area was only a few blocks long we could easily walk to anything there. Unfortunately, like many small towns, there were empty buildings there and not many businesses.
- c. Noticed public benches and trash receptacles in the downtown area. A blessing box in front of City Hall. Did not notice any public restrooms or drinking fountains. Parking downtown was easily accessible and was able to walk to multiple businesses. The City Hall landscaping looked professional and accessible.

#### **4. Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

- a. Later went into a variety shop called Myrtle’s. Was immediately greeted and treated very well. All other areas were clearly marked and easily accessible from the street.
- b. Casey's, Sonic, Eggbert's, burgers, etc. We did see a Dollar General store but didn't notice a grocery store. There was a bank, auto repairs, others. The ones that we observed seemed to be kept up and were neat. Access was easy in all examples.
- c. We visited Myrtles, a very nice and friendly staff, proud of their community and where they live. A great asset to your town! We also patronized the Sonic on our way out of town. Very clean facility and friendly staff. Businesses were scattered throughout the town but that was not a burden.

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

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

- a. According to Google maps, the Industrial park appeared to be on the east end of town on 166 as we came in but it was not clearly marked. There appears to be plenty of room for expansion. There is no defined commercial area per say but it seems the bulk of businesses are located on Hwy 75 and on 4<sup>th</sup> St. with a few scattered throughout town.
- b. We noticed one large industrial park just before entering town to the northeast of town where the water tower was placed and another to the southwest of town. I didn't notice signs telling the names of these areas.
- c. We did notice a manufacturing plant, Spear, but it seemed on the edge of town. Did not notice if there was room for expansion.

## **6. Health Care Services**

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

- a. According to the City Manager, the city has no longer has a hospital but there are 1 or 2 doctors' offices and a dentist in town. There is also an ambulance service in the town.
- b. There wasn't a hospital in town but there was a community health clinic facility.
- c. There was not a hospital available, but there was a health clinic.

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

- a. The offices are easily accessible to the public with parking close to the front door. The buildings appear to be in good condition.
- b. I didn't see signs for any of the above health persons but according to the internet search there is at least one doctor, two dentists and one chiropractor in town. Bartlesville and Coffeyville are very close and medical personnel are available in those towns.
- c. There was a health clinic, several doctors' offices and dentistry.

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

- a. I saw 2 Nursing home/assisted living centers. The first on Hwy 75 at the south end of town and the other on High(?) St. also on the south end of town.
- b. I did see one long-term care facility on the south end of town.
- c. There seemed to be a Retirement facility, but the signage was not apparent.

## 7. Housing

**Give a brief description of the existing mix of housing stock. Does the local market have housing that would appeal to all income wages? What challenges do you see in regards to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)**

- a. I saw several properties for sale in different neighborhoods. The challenges I see are blighted and unkempt properties in the same neighborhood as houses for sale which could negatively affect the value of property.
- b. Like many small towns today I didn't see much housing that was available. I did see some real-estate signs out but not much. Most were moderate to middle income homes
- c. Neighborhood housing on west side of town is scarce. Curious if Caney has code enforcement and what their process is on dilapidated housing. Seemed there was housing available for all income wages, several trailer houses were seen, some very nice restored older homes as well as some new housing sprinkled throughout the community.

**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 did not see many rental properties in the city but there were several empty lots that may have potential for future development.
- b. There were two rental housing complexes that I saw and one apartment area that I noticed.
- c. There were a few for sale signs up but they were run down or needed some work. As for rental housing available there weren't any noted as being for rent.

## 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. Caney appears to have a good school system for a town its size. Both the Elementary and Jr/Sr High School appear to be undergoing improvements. They appear to be of good size and despite the remodel they are well maintained.
- b. There is a Preschool, K-8 building in the middle of town and 9-12 High School located on the north part of town. Both building have been going through renovations and look very nice.
- c. K-6 & 7-12 were under construction. They appeared to be well maintained. It's apparent that the City takes pride in their schools and students. Head Start or preschool is privately run.

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

- a. Yes
- b. Yes, the schools have websites that are easily accessed with educational program that the students can practice work. Nicely done.
- c. Yes, the school has its own website with information on staff, events, news, nutrition, athletics and more.

## **9. Childcare**

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

- a. I did not see any daycares but the City Manager said there was one privately owned pre-school. Unknown if it is affordable to all.
- b. I am not sure. I didn't see any childcare places.
- c. Was not apparent, but the City Hall Staff and the Administrator was very helpful with information regarding there being a privately ran daycare facilities around.

## **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. There are several churches with a wide variety of denominations. I did not observe any faith-based community services.
- b. According to the Caney Kansas web site there are 8-9 churches. But I only noticed one church and it was neatly kept. I didn't observe any faith-based community services.
- c. Notice several facilities of different denominations, beautiful properties, well maintained and inviting.

## **11. Civic**

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

- a. I did not notice any. There was a veteran's park that was redone as an Eagle Scout Project. Very nice, neat, and clean.
- b. The Veteran's memorial area across from the well-kept cemetery had flower beds and improvements done by the Boy Scouts, and different organizations and clubs had sponsored the wooden carving in the city park. The Lions club had sponsored the trash receptacles which were in the downtown area.
- c. There is a listing on the website, and it was noted that the Lions Club was very active

## **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 streets are in decent shape. Some are dirt streets that need to be graded because there is grass overtaking the street but other than that there are very few potholes, streets are clearly marked, and even snow routes are marked. Some of the streets are paved with brick which adds to the charm of the town.
- b. Infrastructure seemed good as far as I could tell. The cemetery was well kept and we were told that it was out sourced. Seemed to be worth the money.
- c. Loved the brick roads in several areas but there were a few neighborhood roads that needed repairs or updating. Street signage was well maintained, lighting seem in place, was unable to see what worked visited during daylight. Cemetery was beautiful. Parking was accessible.

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

- a. City Hall is well marked, well maintained, and is easily accessible from the street. We were immediately greeted upon entering. The City Manager and Assistant City Clerk were very helpful, friendly, and answered our questions. The City Clerk came in and was also very helpful in answering our questions.
- b. City manager received us cordially and answered all our questions. The city hall and police dept. were housed in the same building. The building was neat and the grounds were well kept.
- c. City hall was easily found. Greeted politely when approached. Friendly, helpful staff. Administrator, Staff and City Clerk were very helpful and answered a lot of questions about the Caney.

### **Police/fire protection:**

- a. The Police Dept. is in the same building as the City Clerk's Office. The two offices share a lobby. The Fire Dept. is in a separate building a few blocks away. The Fire Dept. is manned by volunteers.
- b. The city hall and police dept. were housed in the same building. The fire dept. was housed separately.
- c. We only saw the dispatcher as we entered the City hall, no contact otherwise with a Police Officer or Fireman. Saw none in the City at all.

### **Library:**

- a. I did not see the city library but according to a brief internet search there is a new library that has been well received by the community.
- b. The Caney City Library is in a nice brick building. We did not go in but it has a nice website.
- c. Did not visit the library, did not locate one.

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

- a. Caney City Park is very nice. The trees that are carved are cool and make a unique touch to the park. There is playground equipment and a gazebo available. The only downfall is the tennis court needs a new net. There is a sports complex on the west side of town with a couple of ball fields and rodeo grounds that appear to be well maintained. On the south side of town there is an older football stadium that is really cool. I hope they still use it even though parking looks to be an issue.
- b. We saw two city parks, baseball/soccer complex and football stadium. All seemed to be well maintained.
- c. City Parks were well maintained. The military Monuments were outstanding. The recreational center is a big plus. The ballparks were well maintained, was a little confused on which football field was being used. Saw a sign for football field (Loved the entry into the field and bleachers) but also saw a field by the school.

### **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. The Safari Museum East of town I have visited before but was closed on the day of our visit. There is a gas station type museum that I would like to see and it is on Hwy 75 about midway through town but it was also closed.
- b. Slogan "Home of the Bullpups." Not sure of any attractions or events.
- c. They have a May Fest listed on the website but unaware of any other events.

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

- a. I didn't see anything posted in town.
- b. No
- c. The cemetery may bring a genealogy tourism to the community, as well as the petroleum history for collectors of automotive and gas signs for collectors. Loved the business with the metal art and the business with the gas signs.

#### **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. The Safari Museum, Caney Valley Historical Society, and The Garage Museum all look to be good attractions.
- b. Historical Society and old schoolhouse, Wildlife Zoo area
- c. See above. The entryway into the cemetery has the iron gate dated back to 1902, I believe. The old one room school in the downtown area was a great historical site.



**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. When I did my internet search, I found a chamber of commerce but I didn't notice that the building was open during my visit. We got our info from the City office.
- b. There is a community/event center that has a gym, kitchen and community room but not sure of any kind of visitor's center that welcomes visitors.
- c. NA

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

- a. I will definitely come back and visit Forasteros Restaurant, Myrtles.
- b. There are flea markets that are fun and I may go back to check them out especially if I am in that area.
- c. The Mexican restaurant and Myrtles.

#### **14. Wrap-up**

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

- a. Caney seems to be a nice town with a good small-town vibe. Schools, cemeteries, and city hall seem to be kept up and maintained. There are a good amount of businesses, churches, and activities for a town of its size and a Rec Center to provide activities for the community.
- b. Caney has a nice small town feel about it. The people we met were friendly and helpful.
- c. The Appearance of the Cemetery, the one room school in downtown. The veteran's memorial, the enthusiasm and pride of the young lady at Myrtles, and the great food at the Mexican restaurant.

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

- a. As with any small town, the lack of a grocery store can be an issue. Caney may benefit from Code Enforcement to help with blighted properties and high weeds.
- b. Like most small towns, I didn't see a lot of opportunities for jobs to encourage their young adults to stay in town or a lot to offer the children other than a swimming pool for them to do.
- c. As in all small towns it's the dying of downtown, the young lady at one facility was ready to move out of Caney because there was nothing to do. And the dilapidation of housing old housing vs new housing.

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

- a. That this community like ours, has to deal with the same small-town problems but all in all, is a good community. I would not hesitate to stop in Caney again.
- b. Positives: Pretty parks, nice schools. Negatives: Not many job opportunities, quite a few older homes that needed up-keep. Also, not a lot to offer the kids in town to keep them busy.
- c. The friendliness of the people and the pride in their town their school and their students. The want to grow their community with a new pool and City owned grocery store.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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