

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Cheney **Date(s) Visited:** a.) 9/19/19
b.) 9/26/19
c.) 9/19/19
d.) 9/27/19

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?
- Web information was very informative and accurate. Easy to find as well.
 - The city web page has a lot of good information and is up to date. The city Facebook page is also well done and has posts nearly every day.
 - I was able to go on to the city website and noted its similarities to our own. There was information about the city, community, things to do, chamber, etc. The website seemed to be kept pretty up to date. When doing an image search though, not much came up in the search that was terribly helpful for getting a sense for what the town looks like.
 - Population: Approx. 2,120. Cheney, Kansas.... We call it home. The website looked older and a bit more traditional but had a lot of great information. I found out there is now an option to pay utility bills online, there is a community recycling effort to benefit the pool, there are 4 parks and a Memorial Park as well as an Activities Complex on South Main that is a collaborative effort between the City, Rec Commission, citizens and volunteers (Master Plan with photos from 2016- present). A color-coded community calendar showed lots of school and recreation commission activities, a few library ones, but I didn't notice City events (it's probably hard to fit them all on one calendar). I found out the school system is ranked 3A, a 2014 bond issue passed (which seems there is community support for the schools), and the school district has high assessment scores. The school also has pre-K, all-day Kindergarten, a new auditorium, strong arts and athletics. St Paul's serves students pre-K - 8 and Trinity UCC has a pre-k program as well. I also found out there are available lots in new housing additions, the parks are tobacco-free, the Senior Center has regular activities and meals and the Sedgwick County Fair is held in Cheney. The City Facebook page is very informative, educational and eye-catching! Frequent posts tell of things such as: roadwork, city sidewalk grant, new ball field, safety-lighted crosswalk, city/school collaboration with 4th and 7th grade classes and a fun fact of the day! Very well done.

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. Signage was very good. Town has a lot of nice housing and the schools are all centrally located. Fairly new ball park and play area. Downtown clean and buildings maintained with businesses in all locations. Golf course in great location and well maintained. Lots of signage for town and businesses. Street signs very visible. Easy to see signage on buildings.
 - b. Cheney is a nice little community with a lot going on. The schools are new and well kept, there are quite a few nice, newer homes, and the downtown looks to be thriving. While I was there, street work was being done which shows me they are dedicated to improving their infrastructure.
 - c. Initially we noticed the downtown area had several businesses and seemed to be pretty well populated for a mid-weekday morning. There were signs on either end of town welcoming you in, and a gas station that was easily accessible to travelers who may need to stop as they enter or leave town. We noticed banners hanging along the main street in town, buildings seemed well maintained, schools were within walking distance of downtown, and the town looked pretty well kept over all. Initially, we were pleasantly surprised how many businesses there were in town and how well everything was maintained. The town was well marked on either end with signs. The main entrance was bigger and more inviting than the “back side” of town. The main entrance had a stone sign with nice landscaping around it that led to both the main street and the neighborhoods.
 - d. Cheney looks like a town with pride. The schools are very nice, new and well-maintained. The newer housing additions are very surprising in a town this size. Many well-kept, more expensive homes were seen. Coming in from the north (on the east side of town), we saw signs for Cardinal Country and the County Fair. The bowling alley looks well-maintained, very nice housing area and great Cheney entrance sign. The high school/middle school are very well-maintained and the car dealership as well. Coming in from the north (on the west side of town- Lake Road)- the Back 9 is a beautiful housing addition on the golf course. We began wondering how many of the residents commute to Wichita, and what attracts them to live in Cheney? Is it the schools? Lake? Community itself? Entering from the southwest, the town looks more like an older, rural community. We didn’t see signage, but it appears well-kept. At 383rd and MacArthur- beautiful entrance sign and ball complex.

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. Older buildings well maintained. Streets well maintained. Police, fire, and city offices centrally located. Grocery store, 2 convenience stores, Dollar General, pharmacy, 2 fast food and 1 restaurant, car dealership, beauty shop and barbershop. Small variety but good merchandise. Most downtown businesses are service orientated. No retail business in town. Proximity to Goddard and Wichita seems to be why there are not more retail shops or restaurants. People seemed friendly. Did not have to ask for assistance.
- b. The downtown looked like all of the storefronts were filled. There was plenty of parking and the buildings were well kept and in good repair. The only negative I could see is that the designs of the buildings are kind of a “hodge-podge” of different styles. The east side of the road is not the typical row of storefronts, but several different individual buildings. Most of the town’s businesses were clustered in the downtown area. There was a clinic, dentist, physical therapy office, fitness center, bank, real estate office, 2 insurance offices, 2 restaurants, 2 coffee shops, the city offices, the post office, the public library, the newspaper, and a few merchandise shops. The shops had the typical small town merchandise. I went into four different businesses and the staff at all of them were very friendly and welcoming. It was around 2:00 in the afternoon on a Thursday, so none of the businesses were very busy. I ate at Benny’s (Not downtown, but it was so good it is worth mentioning). The food was awesome, and the only worker on duty was friendly and took orders and cooked everything up really quickly!
- c. When we went back for a closer look at the downtown area, we still noted how well maintained it was however, we did note that all of the businesses were in fact businesses and there was a lack of stores or shops or boutiques that would invite people to come in and look around. There was one bar/Chinese food establishment but did not seem like a place you would just stop in for lunch if you were passing through. There were plenty of “functional” business (back, realtor office, pharmacy, grocery store, car dealership, city office, etc.) We did not go into to any businesses as there were not shops/boutiques to go into. Not able to observe. There was one vacant lot area that maybe could use some cleanup.
- d. Downtown Cheney appears to have nice, historic buildings- either renovated or well-kept. Sidewalks were clean and banners were hanging. We observed businesses ranging from Casey’s, Subway, grocery store, farm supply, medical, retail insurance and other service industries to the library and city building. In each retail business, we were greeted warmly, and everyone was very kind and helpful. We never had to ask for assistance- we were asked in each business. We received lots of information and kindness at Voss Creative and other businesses.

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 restrooms at ball field. Benches in downtown and trash receptacles. Also bike racks. Library has public Wi-Fi and computers. Plenty of parking in downtown and small downtown so easy to walk to any location. Nice landscaping throughout the town and streets well marked.
- b. I didn't see any public restrooms or water fountains. There were several nice parks around town and I did see trash cans. I didn't check for Wi-Fi. The streets themselves were not great, but there were some major road projects being done (Complete tear-out). There was excellent parking everywhere I went, and it would be easy to get to everything in town if you parked in the downtown area.
- c. Unable to determine Wi-Fi capabilities. Noted sports complex with public restrooms, benches, etc. Casey's in town also had public restrooms. Parking downtown offered access to most of the businesses within walking distance.
- d. We noticed the benches in front of businesses- they appear to be sponsored, donated or purchased by different people or groups. Most of them seem to be in good condition. Most of the planters and trash cans match in the stone finish. We didn't notice public restrooms other than in businesses and Wi-Fi was available in the library- not sure if available elsewhere. We had no difficulty finding parking and could park in one spot downtown and walk everywhere.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. Casey's, Dollar General, Yes Convenience store north of downtown. Easy to get to.
- b. There was a nice farm supply store, a surprisingly well-stocked grocery store, a large car dealership, two nice gas stations, and a few other businesses outside of downtown. The grocery store was a lot bigger inside that it looked from the outside. They had a good selection of all the items I normally buy.
- c. No shopping in town
- d. We noticed Dollar General and Subway by the schools. They were easy to access and well-kept.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. No defined area for manufacturing but could possibly expand on north end of town. Some vacant land.
- b. There are good places for industrial growth all around town.
- c. We did not notice this specifically in town. But there were lots of businesses and growing industries in Goddard which was just 20 minutes down the road.
- d. We did not see visible signage for an industrial park. There were buildings that looked industrial, but they didn't have large signage indicating the type of business.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. No hospital in town, just Hutch Clinic. Only 15 minutes to Goddard where there is hospital and emergency services.
- b. There is not a hospital in town, only a small branch office of the Hutchinson Clinic. It is not open in the evening or on weekends.
- c. There was a large hospital in Goddard (20 minutes away) and a small Hutch Clinic in town.
- d. Hospitals and emergency medical services were not available to our knowledge. These services are found in nearby communities and Wichita.

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

- a. 2 dentists in town and Hutch Clinic.
- b. There is a dentist office, a chiropractor, a physical therapy clinic, and a pharmacy. All are right on the main street downtown.
- c. There were two dental offices, a pharmacy, and the Hutch Clinic.
- d. We noticed downtown medical services, including a Hutchinson clinic, pharmacy, chiropractic and physical therapy health center. They all appeared well-maintained and with easy parking.

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

- a. Skilled nursing center and low income housing.
- b. I only saw one in town, Cheney Golden Age Retirement home.
- c. There is one assisted living/nursing home in town.
- d. The facility across the street from the middle school seemed very nice and the access to the school would be convenient for intergenerational activities and events.

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. A mix of older homes and new housing developments. Also some low income housing, apartments and duplexes. Housing would appeal to all income wages.
- b. There did not seem to be many houses for sale in town. I only noticed 3 signs, and one already said "sold". There are quite a few empty lots in the newer areas on the north east side of town, and there were 2 new houses going up in that area. There were also several empty lots in different areas around town. A quick Zillow search shows that there aren't many home for sale, and the ones that are available are very expensive or very cheap. It looks like it may be difficult to find nice, mid-priced homes (\$100k-200k).
- c. There were lots of neighborhoods ranging from older homes to newer developments. We were pleasantly surprised with the quantity of homes in town, especially for the size of the town. The older homes were well kept and looked like many of them had been renovated or were in the process of renovation.
- d. We did not notice very many for sale or rent signs. A quick Zillow search indicated there are not very many existing properties available. The city website does indicate available lots in the newer additions for new construction and we learned there will be another addition by the new ball fields as well. It appears it would be more difficult to find a mid-range price home.

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

- a. Apartment and low income apartments available. Also some duplexes.
- b. There were a few strips of "4-plex" types of homes in at least two different areas of town. I did not see any homes "for rent" and Zillow didn't show any.
- c. There did appear to be apartments/duplexes that someone could rent
- d. No rental properties were observed and it appears on Zillow that this is the case as well.

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 three schools located in one area. Schools are fairly new and appear to be adequate sizes. Preschool and head start available.
- b. The High School and Middle School are on the same campus, and the elementary is just across the street. The buildings look to be newer, and are very well maintained. The athletic facilities on the campus also look very nice. The schools are certainly a highlight of the town. It's nice that they are right on the main street and easy to find.
- c. There was an elementary school and junior high/high school right next to each other on one end of town. We didn't see any childcare facilities that were visibly apparent
- d. The High School/Middle School are VERY impressive- obviously newer construction/additions from the 2014 bond issue. They showed community support and school pride. Since we found on the website the 3A size, it seems for the population number, there must be a lot of younger families in town. The grade school was also very nice with a wonderful playground.

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

- a. Yes very informative information about the school system online.
- b. There was information about the schools on the city web page, and the school has a very nice web page as well.
- c. I did not find anything
- d. Yes (see question #1)

9. Childcare

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

- a. Prices seem about normal for childcare.
- b. I didn't check into the pricing, but did see two small daycare centers.
- c. We did not see any visible childcares in the area.
- d. St Paul's Church has a childcare and pre-K program. A website search indicated several in home daycare providers. I wasn't able to ask anyone in town whether this is an adequate amount of service for the community's needs.

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. A variety of churches in town and all buildings looked well maintained.
- b. I saw four churches in town but a google search shows that there are 6. One of the daycare centers I saw was at the Lutheran church.
- c. There were several churches in town but there were a lot more options in Goddard (close by).
- d. We saw St Paul's Lutheran, the Baptist, Assembly of God and Trinity UCC churches. Most were well-maintained. Other than the pre-k programs and school, we didn't notice other community services.

11. Civic

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

- a. Did not see any clubs or organization signs posted. No
- b. I did not see any evidence of nonprofits in town, and couldn't find info about typical service organizations online. There is a 4-H club in town, but that was the closest I could find.
- c. Did not collect info on this
- d. Signs noticed- American Legion, 4-H, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts

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 well maintained and signage is very good. Landscaping and parks in the town are well maintained. And lighting and parking are ample. Easy access to highway for east west travel.
- b. Many of the roads were in poor shape. There were two crews working on a complete tear out of 1 block sections, so the city is obviously working to improve them. Street signage was typical, and most areas of town had nice sidewalks. The landscaping and streetscaping was not something that stood out. Most areas were well kept and functional, but not necessarily attractive.
- c. Overall, everything looked nice, was well maintained and overall, looked inviting.
- d. The "well houses" were painted and nicely kept. The City maintenance building was also well-kept. The water tower appears to have been painted in the recent past (not peeling, fading too much, etc.), the public sidewalks appear to be ADA.

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

- a. Did not stop at city hall but website is very well put together and very informative.
- b. I didn't make it into city hall.
- c. We did not go into city hall.
- d. The City Hall building looks very nice- recent renovation. We tried to go inside at 2pm on Friday afternoon- but discovered they closed at 1 on Fridays.

Police/fire protection:

- a. They have a police department with 5 full time officers and 24 hr. coverage. The fire department consists of 22 volunteer firefighters. 10 are EMT's
- b. The fire department is volunteer and is located just off down town on main street. The police department has 4 patrol cars and full time officers that provide 24 hour coverage.
- c. Did not go inside
- d. The Police station was very nice as well. We tried to go inside, but there was no answer to the push button.

Library:

- a. The library is on main street and has hours Monday through Saturday. They have free Wi-Fi, story hour for children and adult winter reading programs along with being a member of the South Central Library System allowing the patrons to borrow from other Kansas Libraries.
- b. The library is located downtown and is a typical small town library. Looking at the displays on the wall there appear to be activities scheduled for kids year round.
- c. Did not go inside
- d. After our failed attempts at City Hall and the Police Station, we went to the Library. The outside of the building nicely coordinates with the City Hall, and we were pleasantly surprised by the lovely space inside (main floor and upstairs). Susan was beyond helpful and friendly. She is a great asset to your residents and visitors alike.

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

- a. They have a public park and the Cherry Oak Golf Course and Cheney State Park. Also new ball fields.
- b. There are several small parks around town. The ball fields on the south side of town are really nice and appear to be new. They are currently adding one or two diamonds to the complex. The rec fields also look well cared for. The school playgrounds looked very nice and new.
- c. There was a very nice sports complex on the end of town that looked pretty new. It had a playground and places to walk.
- d. The swimming pool appears to be small, but well-kept with cute, colorful murals. The Rec Commission and ball diamond are nice, but directional signage wasn't noted for visitors.

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. They have Cheney State Park and Reservoir.
- b. Cheney is home to the Sedgwick County Fair. The fairgrounds don't look to be extremely well kept, but that may be because the fair is over for the year. There are a few permanent buildings, and it looks like there is a lot of parking for people attending the fair.
- c. There is a lake just outside of town that seems to be a popular attraction.
- d. Cheney Lake and the Sedgwick County Fair. We're not aware of a slogan for these. The Fairgrounds were quaint with nice signage, but the tie-out stalls and saddle club had a lot of tall weeds and looked somewhat neglected (probably due to time of year). The ball field and outdoor concert/program area were well-kept.

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

- a. They have a PRCA Rodeo every year 2nd weekend in July. Also they have the Sedgwick County Fair at that time.
- b. Nothing besides the fair.
- c. Not enough info collected. I would be interested in knowing more about events and if I were in the area, I would likely attend.
- d. A Farm Bureau event poster was in a business window.

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. Cheney State Park has the lake with camping and fishing. They also have Souders Historical Farm Museum ½ mile southwest of town. Depicts life in Cheney and rural Kansas in the 1800 and 1900's.
- b. Cheney Lake is just north of town, and it is a popular boating and camping spot. There is a shooting range on the north end of the lake, and there are a lot of state park activities to take part in.
- c. The lake and the sports complex are a big draw
- d. Cheney Lake and State Park are well-known in the state. We observed the marina, boat ramps and RV hook-ups, picnic area and swimming beach. I'm not sure if people who come to the lake naturally go to town to see amenities or not.

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. The Chamber of Commerce is on Main Street downtown located in the city office. Fairly new facility with the police department in the same block.
- b. Nothing other than the city hall, which is easily found downtown.
- c. The chamber office was not easily visible.
- d. We believe the Chamber is located in the City building, but were unable to see any signage or gather more information.

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

- a. The city does not have very many restaurants and I feel like that is because they are only 15 minutes from Goddard, KS which has an abundance of restaurants and shopping available. I would like to go back and see more of Cheney State Park and visit the museum.
- b. There are a couple of chain restaurants in town, a Chinese food/bar, a brewery (that was not open, and may not be in business) and a really good burger place. I ate at the burger place and it was great, but probably not good enough to bring me back to town.
- c. None were present. Except the lake.
- d. The Quilt shop was closed, we might like to visit it in the future or take a painting class at Voss Creative. It appears the Brewery is open a couple nights- that could be fun as well.

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. NA
- b. The people I met at all of the stops I made were super friendly and helpful. The schools look exceptionally nice and have a great reputation in the state. The downtown, and most of the city is not "pretty" but Cheney still feels like a nice little town. There are several really nice homes around the golf course and on the north east side of town.
- c. The number of housing options, the well maintained downtown area, and the overall look of the town was very appealing. Also the close proximity to Goddard and Wichita would be a big draw for younger families.
- d. Cheney appears to be very neat and tidy. We wondered if there are ordinances that enforce this? The people we encountered were very friendly and we saw pride in the town and schools. It looks like they are not afraid to change and improve (evidence: improvements in schools, downtown buildings and new housing).

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. NA
- b. It seems like it would be difficult to find a decent house at a good price. There do not appear to be a lot of places to work in Cheney. I'm sure many people commute to Wichita. The downtown could be made to look a little more cohesive. The city building looks like it has recently been remodeled and looked great. If some of the other buildings could be upgraded in a similar style it would make the downtown more attractive.
- c. The lack of shops or attractions in town could be a challenge for the community. But I think having the bigger city nearby helps them where they lack.
- d. Potential future merging with Wichita and preparation for continued growth while maintaining own identity as a charming, small town.

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

- a. NA
- b. The attractive schools
- c. Overall it was a cute little town and a viable option for someone who works in Goddard or Wichita but did not want to live in the bigger city.
- d. The new housing additions, our library visit with Susan and the barn quilt paintings at Voss Creative.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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