

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: Conway Springs

Date(s) Visited: 7/22/2019
8/1/2019
8/8/2019
8/9/2019

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?

Not easy to find information, and if you did it was lacking information. Some tabs on their city page will direct you to specific topics but won't provide contact information or the actual form listed (building permit for example). Generically says that there's housing available, but doesn't have any listings or real-estate agents contact information. City Park photos look very nice online. Dates for specific events that are promoted are not current.

Website appeared to have a lot of information but when you attempted to find the information, it was not there or not updated. This was almost the same with the City and the school website.

We found it ironic that in the "About" tab under "history" it says "Conway Springs was founded in 1884. By 1909, the townspeople realized they had the best water in the United States. People from all over the country came to drink and bathe in these waters." It goes on to mention the spring house that is still there today. BUT, one of the first things you see on their website, in the left column, is that they have a drinking water warning due to high nitrates with a notice to not use drinking water for infants. They also state that a new water treatment facility is being installed (2016) and there were signs of this type of work being done around town. There is even a large sign in the park from USDA, explaining the water treatment work. May just need to update the website.

They have a website; it has some good information on it. Their Facebook page does have more info it seemed, City of Conway Springs.

2. **The "Five-Minute" Impression:** After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.

Main parts of the town that you drive through look run down and like there's not a lot going on around town. If it weren't for the First Impressions project, I would have kept driving right on through. Nothing

really caught my attention driving south to exit off the main highway. Appears to be a bedroom community and that's about it.

The main part going through town appeared to be overgrown and quite a few run down houses. There would have been nothing to pull me into town if I was not intentionally going there. The town appeared to have the same issues as most communities – some run down houses, in between houses and really nice houses. Looks like they have projects around town that they are trying to make things better for their residents.

Both entrance signs (North and South) were hard to see and blended into the shrubs behind them. Their signs are well designed and resembled National Parks entrance signs, which was cool, but the colors are faded and they're just hard to see. The entrance sign coming in from the north is almost blocked by the Grocery Store sign (which, one can argue if that's really a bad thing – grocery store, yeah!) and then the tall sign (school championships) to the right of the entrance sign also pulls your eye in a different direction. We think the entrance sign should be moved north of the grocery store and vet clinic so it's more visible. Possibly do the same with the south entrance sign, move it further south before you get to the used car business and move it to the east side of the highway. It's hard to see coming from the south because the sign is on the west side of the road. It's almost like the town has grown past the entrance signs and they simply need relocated to the new town border.

Signage around town was good – we found the sports complex/fitness trail right away. The park and pool are also very nice. Spring House sign (more on that later); USDA sign for water facility funding.

We noticed that main, through streets were paved and in good condition, but there were several streets that were sand/gravel. This seemed very random when we drove around town. Some of the nicer houses were still on dirt roads, but older areas of town were paved. The road in front of the Gateway Cottages was in need of repairs, Spring Ave. It's almost like they have avoided any repairs for a long time? The roads out by the industrial areas were not great either.

Coming into town from the north, my first impression of the city after driving straight through was that it was pretty run down. Overgrown trees and grass in yards, terrible sidewalks, ditches were overgrown coming from the north. Street signs were hit and miss. Things just looked dirty and not well kept. After driving through town and exploring the city it appeared the city is growing outward and around the outskirts of town (at least the North, South, and West) seem to have a lot of new builds and looks much more upkept. On the east side of town were some apartments, I assumed were low-income, that had overgrown trees and weeds going up the side of the building.

Downtown is cute, the main drag coming in from the highway is not kept up, it makes gives the town a bad look, if you were just driving through. The welcome signs are weather worn and covered by trees. It was nice to see them have signs recognizing their teams and sports programs, but it was hard to read when driving by. Signage for schools, besides the Catholic school, was not found.

The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)

Main drag going north and south looks very run-down. Some blight with housing and yards, some older commercial buildings that need a facelift... Looks overgrown in places. Main street that the City office is on has had some improvements done (some commercial buildings have had facelifts and look pretty good). Quite a bit of housing, but I didn't see a lot for sale or rent. Newer athletic facilities/high school, and park is a decent size. North of town several miles there is A LOT of new housing development. It gives you the feeling that Conway Springs might be the same, but it doesn't end up being that way.

There was a lot of new development coming into town from the North along with several businesses right when you come into town. The welcome signs were noticeable from that direction and giving you details about the natural spring. The streets were dirty and just seemed messy – I attribute that to the water project that they are working on but I hope their city guys are cleaning up a little better when it is all said and done.

Street signs seemed to be lacking, a lot of them were down, physically laid down. Sidewalk on main road needs some attention. It was either overgrown or didn't look like it could be walked on very comfortably. Didn't notice any signs for the schools, besides the Catholic school on the main drag. There was a sign for sports complex. Buildings on main drag, coming in from the highway, were not in the best shape. Casey's was nice and new, but carwash next to it was a major eyesore.

3. Downtown Business Area Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

Some of the buildings around the City Office look like they have received some paint and love recently. Others look run down and underutilized. They have typical green street signs to help you maneuver. Most buildings are marked well to let you know what it is.

Looked like a normal small town downtown area. Some rundown – older buildings but you can tell some love and money were put into a few where businesses are operating.

Overall impression was good. Clean, well kept streets and buildings. Lots of park benches, good signage, but nothing really stood out and caught our eye. The museum was getting new paint, so that was one more project we viewed while driving around town.

The downtown area had very few businesses.

Downtown was cute. There were a lot of newer looking buildings. EMS building was nice. 2 banks. Boutique. Farmers Market area was really nice and had a sign that gave you all of the information that you would need if you were interested in attending.

Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed.

Salon & spa (SUPER NICE storefront and the inside is gorgeous – it made me want to go inside), photography studio on the corner (also super NICE and makes you curious as to what it looks like inside), banks (typical appearance, well-maintained), mortuary (well-maintained), and an aviation company

(looks super NICE), bar & grill (almost appeared to be a liquor store when we first drove by), fire station looks very nice and you can tell it's fairly new). That one block on the south side of the main street appears to be VERY NICE – KUDOS on those buildings!!)

There was a variety of business that were throughout the community. The ones that we visited were the salon – not greeted but appeared to have a nice variety of merchandise in the boutique area. City Hall – clerk was very friendly and full of information when asked about different things going on in the community as well as a billboard where people can post things. Library was closed – they have specific hours that are posted on the building next to City Hall. Post Office – Event/PSA board where a lot of business/organizations kept people informed. We went into the bar and grill – at first we thought it was a liquor store but then noticed it was in fact a place to eat.

Main Street: City Office, Library, Newspaper, Auto repair shop, Bar, Upholstery Shop, Pharmacy, Dog Grooming, Nice, large fire station (on bad road), salon/boutique, mortuary, insurance office. Farmer's Market sign with benches. Paint store. Note: The paint store and mortuary are located in the same building and it's all painted white, which makes it seem like the businesses reside together. A suggestion would be to paint the exterior of the paint store one color and the exterior of the mortuary another color so they look like two separate businesses.

Ate lunch at the bar. It looked like it would be a fun place on the weekends, but there were some issues with the chair, salt and pepper shakers, and ketchup container being greasy or dirty. The floor also wasn't very clean. It all looked like it could just use a good cleaning.

Boutique – Did not go in, but it was really cute from the outside.

Liquor Store – did not in, but was nice from the outside.

Quilting Shop, you don't see stores like that around, so that was nice to see.

Bar – We had lunch there, it was good

Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)

We were never greeted by the young lady cutting someone's hair in the salon and spa when we went in. I understand she was busy, but I feel like it would have been appropriate to shout a "welcome" or something like that. We walked around and looked at boutique items thinking she might come to the front and chat, but never did. That was a turn-off and made me not want to buy anything, so we left. The photography studio had some good pictures displayed in the windows. It was not open. I did not go in the banks, mortuary or aviation buildings. We went in the city office and chatted with the gal at the front desk. Asked her some questions about things posted on a bulletin board in the post office and she seemed knowledgeable. Not sure she ever told us her name or position in the city office. Bar and grill was typical... good amount of seating and it got fairly busy after we sat down to order. Waitress was fairly nice and prompt.

Waitress was very pleasant and we were served pretty quickly. Food was good as well as the price.

The wait staff at the bar and grill was very friendly.

Bar – Waitress was really nice. Cook came out and brought us our food and she was really nice.

What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and wi-fi, etc.) were available?

Walking around in the park I noticed some benches around the block. I utilized the public restroom and wasn't disappointed. It's a typical park restroom, but I would say cleaner than some I've been in. I'm not sure I ever found free Wi-Fi anywhere in town.

I didn't notice any drinking fountains, there were benches, restrooms and trashcans around the park area. I didn't notice any available wi-fi but I also don't really pay attention to wi-fi like some do.

The benches and planters were a nice touch and made it seem like the town has a lot of pride in their community. Very clean, even with streets being worked on with water lines etc. Sidewalks downtown are really nice. In the residential areas, sidewalks in some areas could use some work. We understand that most of those are the homeowners responsibility and some homeowners have put in new concrete sidewalks but then others are allowing the sidewalks to crumble. (Elm & Highland Streets)

There were a lot of benches, trash receptacles.. Not sure about WiFi. There were restrooms at the park, but we did not get out and see if you could enter.

Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

In the downtown area the parking was good where you could park and go to about any shop or business you wanted to.

You could park downtown and walk to majority of businesses.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

Vet clinic next to the grocery store (looks pretty nice), grocery store (appears like a small town grocery store, not very big but visible from the north coming in to town). A gentleman in the grocery store that obviously worked in there was super friendly in saying "hi" when he met us in an aisle. Other people getting groceries and lunch didn't say anything. COOP and automotive shops – these areas look very run-down. Automotive shops look trashy and non-approachable.

The grocery store – nice selection and friendly staff. The vet clinic, grocery store and Dollar General all right in the same area. Appears nice – cannot see the Dollar General sign coming from the South but all appear to have parking lots that invite you in and a place to access the buildings. There were a few run

down – non approachable business or lots that appeared to have a lot of junk piled up and may or may not be in business.

North side of town: Vet Clinic, Grocery store (nice and friendly), Dollar General

East side of town: Seemed to be industrial area with larger manufacturing businesses and elevators

West side of town: schools and new housing

South side of town: newer housing and sports complex

Stopped in the grocery store and they were friendly there as well. There were two younger girls working and one of them said she would consider coming back to Conway Springs and living when she was finished with college. The food smelled very good at the grocery store, but there was no place to sit down and actually eat it. Also stopped at Casey's. It appeared to be clean and busy. Had a good variety of products. They were also friendly.

The city appears to be in a huge farming and agriculture area. There are a lot of huge sheds with nicer houses on the outskirts of town. There was a bank, a mortuary with a paint store attached (a bit weird). Noticed the Dollar General and Casey's, Nursing home, dog groomer, quilting store, liquor store.

Observed the following:

DJ Extruding

K Doll Koatings

Casey's gas station – Not greeted or even really spoken to at checkout.

Grocery store – Nice that they have that, it needs a face lift. Greeted by employees and had nice conversations.

Vet Clinic

Dollar General

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

It appears that development could potentially occur on the east side of town around the COOP elevators.

The COOP is on the East side of town where there could potentially be expanded but nothing that shows that its even an option.

One part of town already had 2 manufacturing places. There seemed to be more space in that general area for more opportunity.

6. Health Care Services

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

No hospital – there is a health clinic on the main street. Fire department appears to be large, so I’m guessing there’s a good amount of medical services transportation units housed in that building. There’s an assisted living facility on the southwest side of town that appears to be nice. There’s also a pharmacy.

Saw a health clinic and pharmacy but didn’t notice a hospital in the area or even a place for ambulances unless they are housed by the fire department.

We didn’t see too many that really stood out. We saw the Health Clinic on main street and the Spring View Manor. Our suspicion was that possibly because they are in such close proximity to Wichita, most people drive there to see their doctors.

Newer EMS building. There was a Walk In Clinic, Conway Springs Rural Healthcare Clinic Pharmacy

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

Health clinic is all that I saw. I’m not sure you could recruit the other services without facilities. Facilities that appear to be empty would probably need quite a bit of work done to them to put an office in.

Health clinic on the main street is all that I noticed.

Did not see any other healthcare providers.

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

There’s a facility on the south/southwest side of town that appears to be nice. Not sure I saw a sign out front with a description of whether or not it was assisted living or a nursing home...

The facility that appeared to be a senior living facility was nice but did not notice a sign depicting what the building was but it could have been on the other side of the building.

There was an assisted living/nursing home and it was very cute and kept up on the outside.

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.)

There’s blighted housing, super nice housing, but not a lot of housing stock in-between. Someone my age and the pay I receive would probably not be able to find a house very easily in town. Again, I did not see

a lot for sale or rent. I also checked online to see if anything is listed, and I wasn't even finding a good real-estate agent that would have property in Conway Springs.

There was a variety of housing like all small Kansas towns. Some in blight, some decent and some really nice properties. When I looked up housing online there were some properties for sale that would be in the medium to high range in my opinion. There wasn't much opportunity to buy a house for low income wages, but there was an area of housing that appeared to be directed for those people who might be low to moderate income. There seems to be a lot of land available, maybe outside of the City limits that could be for farming or building.

Driving around town, it really looks like homeowners take pride in their homes and yards. There was a lot of construction going on, new roofs being installed. It was nice to see that people were out working in their yards and having new improvements done. We did not see many dilapidated houses or abandoned houses, which was great! We noticed there were several new homes in different areas of town. Lots of American flags being flown in front of businesses and homes, that was nice to see!

There were a few places that had For Rent signs in the yard. Looked as if there was a low income housing complex. It was not very kept up or pleasing to look at. Houses for sale are in the higher price range, according to realtor.com and Zillow.com, but there were a lot of lots listed, so there is an opportunity to build new.

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

I did not see any signage for available rental properties. The gal in the city office said she could give us a list of some landlords that have multiple properties if interested.

I did not notice any for rent signs when we went through town but the clerk in the city office did say she had a landlord list.

Couple houses with signs in the yard. I could not find anything listed online for rent.

8. Schools

What schools are present? (Head Start, Preschool, K-8, High School, Post-Secondary, etc.)
Do the schools appear to be adequate in size? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?

School buildings look decent sized! High school is very IMPRESSIVE when driving by and through the parking lot. The building located to the west of the swimming pool is somewhat old, but still large and well-maintained it appears. I don't recall seeing signage on the main streets when driving through town that would direct visitors to the school buildings for events, etc.

The schools were pretty impressive. It looked like there was a grade school along with a newer building that appeared to be the higher grades. The building that appeared to be for smaller grades looked like it could use some TLC but overall the schools and facilities were pretty impressive.

We were able to find 4 school buildings.

- 1. Catholic school (with welcome sign on fence that really stood out as we drove into town)*
- 2. Elementary school*
- 3. Middle school –across from the swimming pool & park. We noticed the tennis courts which are in very good shape. Also noticed the tennis pavilion with picnic tables – all very nice.*
- 4. High school; football field and stadium on down the road – very nice, newer looking high school, great landscaping and grass, nice parking lot (several things our H.S. is missing in St. John) The stadium was nice, well kept. Looks like a great facility.*

There are three schools that were observed. The town itself didn't look like it was big enough for three schools, but I wondered since it was close to Wichita if kids didn't come to school there so they could experience a smaller atmosphere.

Conway Springs USD 356

Kyle Trueblood Elementary K-5

St. Joseph Catholic School K-6

Conway Springs Middle School 6-8

Conway Springs High School 9-12

All schools seemed to be adequate in size. The schools, besides the Catholic school, were hard to locate. Grounds seemed well-maintained.

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

Not really. The school website is not friendly to navigate on a smartphone. Once you start scrolling the school website, the information is vague and not very descriptive. I honestly can't even tell what classification the school district is (1A, 2A, 3A, etc.) I'm not sure they are considering recruitment of new families... but rather keeping a generic website to get parents by.

When looking on my phone it was frustrating trying to navigate around the school website. I felt like there was not an abundance of information put out there for what was going on.

The City website has a link for all of the school websites.

9. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

The gal in the city office named off 3 or 4 locations of in-home daycare services in town. When driving through town, I did not see any homes marked as a daycare (most don't). The preschool was the only early education facility I saw. I'm making an assumption that daycare is something you know of if you live in town, but might be hard to find if you are new moving to town.

It looks like there was a facility in the business district and the City office said that they had quite a few daycares available. Not sure on the prices.

We went to the city office to ask about daycare availability and rental homes. The city staff was incredibly helpful and very nice to talk to. They gave us a list of seven daycares in town and three rental properties. They were very excited that a new family might be moving to town.

Little Folks Childcare Center. Nothing available online to determine cost.

10. Faith/Religion

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

SEVERAL churches of different denominations (Catholic, Christian, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian – looks closed as a church, but used as their community development center that's not open normal business hours).

Quite a few churches with a variety of denominations. Not all of them seemed like they were up and running but could have been.

We found the Catholic church behind the Catholic school. Also saw Baptist, Methodist and 1st Christian Churches.

Town appears to be mostly Catholic.

Big Catholic community. Methodist Church has a welcome sign coming into town.

Did not notice any evidence of faith-based community services. Some past events are listed on their Facebook page.

11. Civic

Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community.

Masonic Lodge looks run down and not active. Aging Projects, Inc. advertisement in the post office. Development Foundation has A LOT of ads in the post office, but no number to contact the director, etc. just a Facebook page.

Masonic Lodge doesn't look operational. Development Corporation is being ran out of an old church and seems to have a lot of advertising but not much on the building or area around itself.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

Development Foundation had a calendar of events, other activities and projects listed at the post office. Can't tell if they are working on an community development or not though... no one to speak with at the church or a number to call.

Calendar of events that was posted along with other activities going on in 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**.

Lacking lots of street infrastructure on the outer edges of town. It's almost like the city couldn't keep up the infrastructure with the growth of housing over the decades. The non-paved residential roads were fairly rough, especially since it had just rained the night before. Not a town you can easily walk around with a stroller or family riding bikes. Need LOTS of street infrastructure improvements done. Dirt/sand roads are super rough when driving and I wouldn't want to walk or exercise on them. Street signs are pretty generic, but get you around. Not really sidewalks in the residential areas. Can't say I noticed lighting because of the time of day I was in town. You can tell that the city has been working on the water/sewer lines as they haven't done a good job of cleaning up after themselves. There's dirt all over in people's yards and in the streets from digging for new lines, etc. Some people need to take more pride in maintaining their yards. Even trimming the grass along the street curb can completely change the appearance of a house.

Streets could use some work, several dirt roads throughout the town. Street signage was good, but did not notice any signage to the pool or school. Didn't notice the sidewalks when driving around the residential areas. I didn't notice the lights because it was daytime. Outdoor restroom at the park was nice and clean – the park appeared like it could use some TLC – especially with the outdoor event area and the natural spring.

There were a lot of issues with street signs. Some were missing, some were on opposite sides of the streets, like no rhyme or reason. Some were the old fashioned ones and some were standard green and white. Streets – there were a lot of dirt streets. The sign that tells about the state championships for the school (coming in from the north) right next to the grocery store you could barely see. It's in the middle of a bunch of trees and needs repainted. The one on the other side of town (coming from the south) is much more visible. You think it isn't a very wealthy town from looking at the streets, but then you see the new development and think differently.

Sidewalks off the main entrances of town are not in great shape, over grown and looks to have tree roots growing underneath them, as they were not even.

Street signs weren't at every street or were laid down.

There seemed to be adequate parking all over town.

Only entered the restroom at the store, but they did have a public bathroom.

Seemed like there were several ½ done projects all over town. Sports Complex & Tennis Courts are big examples of this.

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

Building looks nice from the outside. Getting a new roof when I visited. Gal at the desk apologized for the fans, etc. that were blowing because of the roof work. I don't recall the gal giving us her name or exactly telling us what her position was in the city office, but seemed pretty knowledgeable.

Received well at the city office. Loud when trying to communicate because of the work being done and she apologized for it but she seemed knowledgeable of what was going on in her community and what the city does on a daily basis.

We did not go into the city/town hall, but their website has a lot of good information on it and would answer a lot of questions.

Police/fire protection:

2 police vehicles noticed while in town. Fire station on the east side of town looks nice as previously mentioned. I'm sure it's just a volunteer-based thing like most rural communities.

Police wasn't noted during the first part of the trip but after we made it to the downtown area the department was located there with a couple of vehicles and did see one out patrolling. Fire station on the East side of town.

The fire department looked nice.

New Fire/EMS building.

Police station downtown

Library:

Open minimally during the week. This makes it hard to keep people interested in utilizing a city library. Most are probably at work during those hours.

Saw sign with hours on the door – Peeked in and saw a pretty good variety of books but hours would be in the way for most working people.

Had a Summer Reading Program. I don't remember actually seeing it, but it is listed on their town website and mentioned several times on the Facebook page.

City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sports complex)

The new softball/baseball fields (sports complex) on the south side of town looks very nice! Also easy to find as it was marked with signage to get you there. The city park isn't bad, fairly large. Looks like a good place to host events. Several pieces of equipment for children to play on. I didn't see many areas where walking would feel "easy". Not really sidewalks or trails to utilize.

The park had newer equipment and seemed to have different pieces for small and older kids. The new sports complex appeared very nice and a newer facility.

The park west of main street seems to be the center of attention and every time we drove by it, we kept seeing something new. It's huge! There's both new and old playground equipment, which was kind of cool. The older equipment (stagecoach) brought back fond memories from a park I used to go to when I was younger. Then they had a really new area of playground equipment, very colorful and fun.

The park contains lots and lots of picnic tables, grills, bench seating and trash receptacles. As far as parks go, it looks like this is the place to be in Conway Springs! It's beautiful! It has so much going for it. Two indoor type buildings, public restrooms, stage shell, lots of playground equipment, nice sidewalks and the pool in right down the road.

We kept seeing a sign for the "Historic Springhouse". We drove around the park several times looking for it, but couldn't find anything that was marked. Finally, we kept looking at what we thought was a covered area/gazebo type structure and decided to walk up to it. It ended up being the spring house, but we couldn't tell until we were right up on it. The only sign we saw at first was a white sign that says "Not approved for drinking water" City of Conway Springs. Then we walked down the steps and saw that there was a very old, bronze sign on the side of the concrete stairs that says "This structure has been paced on the Register of Historic Kansas Places by the Kansas State Historical Society". We would recommend putting up signs across the top of the structure (but below the roof line) so people know what it's called and can find it easier. It's a really cool landmark and probably deserves better signage. It did look like some of the boards were rotting or in need of some paint near the roof line of the spring house. The landscaping around it was really nice and the tall clock near the springhouse was fun & nostalgic. There were even public restrooms at the park. We were very envious!

The park was pretty neat. Just seemed like an inviting little area. It appeared that maybe they have little plays and stuff there, especially with the concession stand there. The sports complex area appeared to maybe still be under construction. It had a lot of trash and extra mess in the parking lot. The parking area didn't look very big unless there was another entrance into the facilities.

Sports Complex and the ballpark was the same thing. It looked new. The driveway/parking lot was a mess. It looked like it has been that way for some time. There was construction equipment and items scattered all over.

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?

Home of Pure Spring Water – signs on main drag direct to Springhouse, but then is never identified at the end of the street (city park). I would make that a destination stop for people just passing through town with more signage and more of a storyline.

Sign coming into town says they are home of pure spring water which when you look into it a little further there is an area at the city park that has a pure spring running through with a little shelter with some informational plaques up for people to read. I do not recall seeing any signs after the welcome sign, directing visitors to this though.

Not that I can/could see anywhere.

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

Farmer's Market – The stuff listed on website is outdated.

Farmer's Market was noted on the public billboards – most event information on website was outdated if it still occurs.

It seems like they have a pretty large/nice rodeo.

Fall Festival is coming up, but did not see any signs about that in town, just saw on their website.

Summer Concerts in the Park is listed on their website, but no information with it.

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).

Sports Complex that has been recently built (or so it appears). Rodeo arena on the west side of town looks fairly large and like it might have been a good place for people to have entertainment but looks run-down and not utilized anymore. The Springhouse in the City Park could have the potential to be a touristy spot for people to stop, but there's not good signage or explanation for it.

The sports complex seems like it would be able to draw in quite a few ball tournaments. Rodeo arena but looked overgrown when we were there, maybe only maintained when in use. I feel like the springhouse is a good opportunity to draw people off of the beaten path but they need to add a little more to it to help tell the story.

Their park was pretty nice and large. Nice pool, looked newer. The website has a whole "Things To Do" category and has several suggestions.

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.

No, just the City Office.

City office appeared to be the one stop shop like most other small towns. She was very helpful when asked several questions!

The City Office looked very nice and inviting, we just did not go in.

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

Gambino's Pizza, Au-Dean's Den Bar & Grill, Casey's, Chester's Chicken in grocery store (Hired Man's). None of these seem like specialty places to get local favorites. I was not impressed with the salad I ordered from the bar and grill. It was very watered down.

There are a few choices for food but I cannot say anything that I will drive back to town just to do or see again. Not sure if there are any yearly community events that they invite the public.

We had limited choices for lunch and chose to eat at the local bar. It was really good. If I am ever in the area again, I will eat there again and would recommend it to someone.

14. Wrap-up

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

Water lines/sewer appeared to be getting replaced – this shows that the city council is willing to make some leaps to improve their long-term sustainability. IMPRESSIVE looking high school facility would attract me!

Seems to be working on city infrastructure, working on water project now and will be planning to start a sewer project as well. The sports complex and school facilities appeared to be very positive things going on in the community. I believe the clerk in the city office also said that they were going to be working on a new pool as well. Forward thinking council as they appear to be trying to move forward through the obstacles that most smaller communities are facing.

The most positive things about Conway Springs are:

The cleanliness of the town, homeowners and city really takes pride in keeping things nice.

The park is awesome!

The schools are well marked and well kept.

Newly constructed homes, newer sports complex and lots of repair work/roof replacements/home upkeep going on speaks volumes about town growth and pride.

I spoke to some young people, high school aged, and they were proud to live there. They said they would probably leave after high school, but would always consider Conway Springs their home. People that lived here generally seemed happy.

Downtown is really cute and has had effort put into it.

Really liked the park.

School seemed clean and large.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

Business growth doesn't appear to be happening – vacant dilapidated buildings and not really an area being promoted for lease. It appears there is some buy-in from some commercial building owners and the city council to improve/invest in what they have. Street and sidewalk infrastructure would be a huge priority as a newcomer to that community for the city to invest in. The infrastructure isn't in place to go on family walks or bike rides.

Same as most other small communities, being able to bring in businesses that will last – repairing old – vacant buildings and houses or getting property owners to do something with the properties.

The town is some miles from the main highway. We know this cannot be helped, but we think if it were on a main highway – Conway Springs would be thriving! We really liked what we saw.

The mix of paved and gravel streets is pretty random. It would be nice to see the gravel roads paved, especially where there's housing. Road repairs need to happen in front of Gateway Cottages and the Fire Department.

Not really an obstacle – but would really recommend moving the welcome signs so people can see them better.

We noticed that at the bottom of the Welcome signs it says “Home of Pure Spring Water”. The more we got to thinking about it – the more we think you should capitalize on the whole water aspect. The name of the town has the word “spring” in it. It’s “the home of pure spring water”...and you have the historic spring house. Water is one of our greatest commodities and is something that is becoming quite scarce. If everything is centered around the “spring” in Conway Springs – maybe build upon that concept? Let that be your story! Anyone thought of bottling & selling “Conway Springs pure spring water?”

So, if water is the thing you concentrate on, the warning on the website (high nitrates from 2016) is working against the town. Nobody wants to move to a town where they can't drink the water. Also, make sure signage gets put up around the spring house. Don't let “Not approved for drinking water” be the only sign around the spring house. It should stay as a warning, but should not be the first thing people see.

Entering from the highway is not pretty. Landscaping, mowing and keeping things kept up on the main entrances would make a huge difference.

If the railroad tracks are not used, they should really consider paving over them, they were horrid to drive over.

½ finished projects were hard to look at and took away the nice things around them.

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

Small town, bedroom community (I'm assuming most people commute out of town for employment), that I will probably never have a reason to go back and visit. I don't make it to that part of the state very often, but it's not a town that would make me want to veer off the typical path on my way to someplace else. Again, high school facility is IMPRESSIVE, and some parts of town have nice housing, but overall I'm not sure I'd want to invest in a house there and move.

I will remember the fact that they are trying to get ahead of the infrastructure issues that they were faced with. Making the commitment to making those improvements takes the whole community and that shows that they are all working together to make a project like that work. I was not too impressed with the almost dirty look while driving through town, I even asked the clerk if it had stormed recently, just seemed to not have much pride in several areas of town.

The cleanliness of the town, schools and park. The spring house that we almost didn't find, but when we did, thought it was pretty awesome!

I don't think this would be a place I would move to at this time. I feel like a lot of work needs to be done on the main street through town, but I don't feel it offered a lot to me. If I lived there all my life maybe I would feel different.

*Good food and service at the bar for lunch
There are a lot of sand and dirt roads
I kind of want to go back and check out their Fall Festival!*

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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



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