

First Impressions

Council Grove, KS

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- 2010 Census Population 2,182
(down 6.0% since 2000*) **KS +6.1%**
- 2015 Estimate is 2,319 (-.1% since 2000 **KS +8.1%**)
- 23.4% college educated, 85.7% high school or GED
 - **KS= 31% college education, 90% HS or equivalency**
- 57.2% family households, 42.8% non-family
- Poverty rate is 10.6% **(KS=13.6%)**
- Median Age 43.2 years **(KS= 36)**
- Median household income is \$36,154 **(KS = \$52,205)**

* 2000 Census was 2,321

(Source: www.Factfinder.census.gov)

Web Presence:

City website:

<https://www.cityofcouncilgrove.com/>

- Very impressed with web search and design of both city and chamber. Impressed with “relocate” tab options and links for tourism and business, especially lodging and recreation. Very impressed with nearby lakes, I was not aware of those.

HOME

CITY DEPARTMENTS

More



Web Presence:

Chamber website:

<https://www.councilgrove.com/> “Flint Hills Life”

- Both are easy to use and have links connecting the two sites.



FaceBook

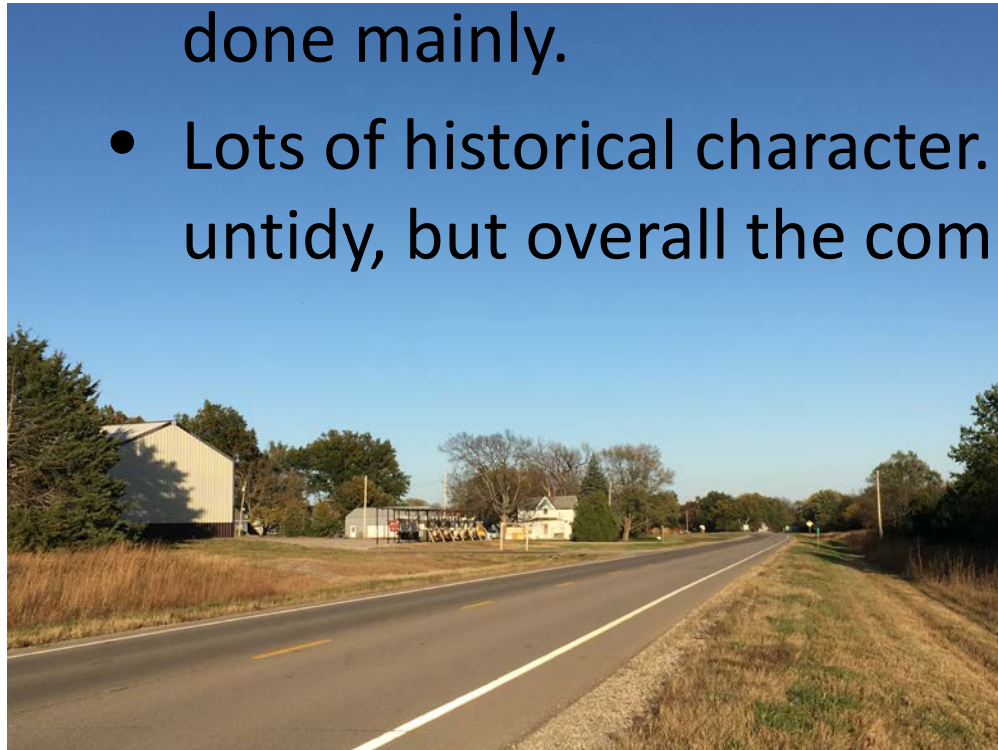
Council Grove, Kansas

<https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Council-Grove-Kansas/103101679729846/>

- **Main Street Pantry** <https://www.facebook.com/CouncilGroveKansas/>
- **Trade Sell Buy** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/177469722313513/>
- **Council Grove Happenings**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/councilgrovehappenings/>
- **Council Grove/Morris County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism**
<https://www.facebook.com/councilgroveks/>
- **Council Grove PRIDE** <https://www.facebook.com/councilgrovepride/>
- **Council Grove Marina** <https://www.facebook.com/councilgrovemarina/>

The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Entrance from Herington: Well-maintained and historic cemeteries were visible as well as older homes. Very picturesque. I thought signage was well done mainly.
- Lots of historical character. Parts of town are a little untidy, but overall the community is very nice.



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- River walk is very nice. Signage is very well done when entering town.
- Entry from the north is very inviting and a nice welcome to town. Other entrances started with housing or retail before there was a Council Grove sign.



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Street signs were visible but a bit small and varying sizes and styles.
- Not many lights in residential areas. (evening visit)
- Big beautiful trees lined the streets and were present in all parts of town.



Downtown Business Area

- All 3 visitors ate lunch or dinner (separately) at Hays House.
House. “Beautifully remodeled inside and out.”
“Food and customer service was great.” “Hays House was very friendly and their staff was great.”



Downtown Business Area

- The quick shop appeared older on outside but I was impressed with the cleanliness of the restroom and interior and available products.



Downtown Business Area

- Main Street is inviting and quaint.
- There are several retail businesses and city services along main street. The buildings nicely represent the original architecture.





No trouble parking and I enjoyed being able to walk and use multiple businesses from one parking area.





Downtown Business Area

- Impressed with the seating available downtown, the River Walk, and at the monuments. It would be nice to have more noticeable drinking fountains/public restrooms.





Downtown Business Area

- Nice to have the Chamber centralized.
- Some businesses had very appealing landscaping or flowers.



Downtown Business Area

- Two businesses (floral store and custom metal signs) on Main did not know I was present when browsing their merchandise.
- Historical, well-kept for the most part. Some buildings downtown could use a good paint job.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- I was impressed with the size of a locally owned grocery store and Dollar Store available.
- Very nice local grocery store (jealous)



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Several franchise food stores, convenience stores, home/lumber and farm stores.



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- It appears there could be room to expand if necessary in industrial area.
- Surprised I did not see more Ag-related businesses. One farmer said he drove 60-90 minutes for parts for equipment.



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- Very impressed with Neosho Gardens and its expansion.



Health Care Services

- Impressed with exteriors of hospital and elderly care facilities, one being quite new.
- Visitors had difficulty finding the hospital, but later noticed the blue H signs.



Health Care

- A good variety of services available for a community this size. Physicians, Dentist, Optometrist, Chiropractors, etc.
- Nice to see some of them in the historic downtown.



Long-Term Care

- Two assisted living facilities; impressed with the structures and views that are likely enjoyed by the residents.
- I found a couple of apartment buildings, but I wasn't clear if those were assisted living or general housing.



Housing data

KANSAS

- Total Housing Units 1,070
- Total Occupied Houses 1,000 (93.5%) **(89.5%)**
- Vacant Houses 70 (6.5%) **(10.5%)**

- Owner Occupied 679 (68%) **(66.7%)**
- Renter Occupied 321 (10%) **(33.3%)**

Housing

- There were a lot of options in sizes and housing all the way from apartments to big homes.



Housing

- I saw a number for sale that would appeal to all economic statuses.



Housing

- I noticed a few apartment complexes in town. I saw that there were quite a few homes for sale but was not aware of any rentals except for the apartments.
- I like that there are lake-front options and those too looked diverse and well-maintained.



Housing

- There wasn't a neighborhood that was significantly nicer than others. Most types of homes could be found throughout the community.





- **Need for clean-up/demolition of older properties**



Schools

- K-12 school buildings look very well maintained.
- Did not see information about Head Start or Preschools.



Schools

- *Butler Community College on Main Street.*



Schools

- Very nice sports field which offers a lot of opportunity for the community to be part of the schools.



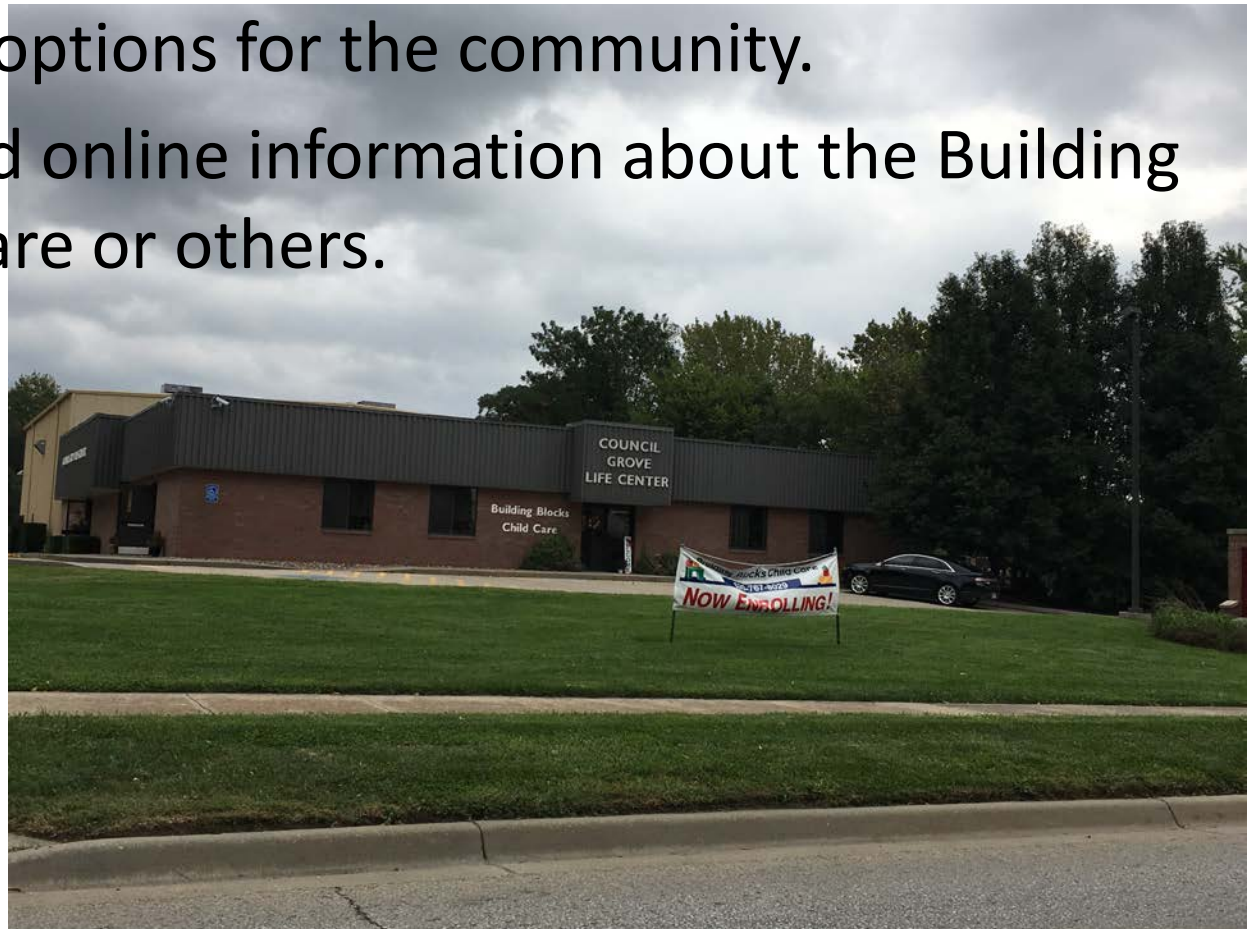
Schools

- One of the nicer school district websites I've seen.
- Impressed with the Connect for Kids link that makes help available 24/7.



Childcare

- I saw at least one daycare/preschool facility. There were also some kid and family-friendly gyms that were unique options for the community.
- Could not find online information about the Building Blocks childcare or others.



Faith/Religion

- A wide variety of Christian Churches (Protestant through Catholic).
- Visitors did not see evidence of church-sponsored events in town.







Civic

- Noticed CASA, PRIDE and a youth rodeo.
- Rotary, Tree City.
- Lots of excitement about the new trail, but not clear if civic groups were involved.



Public Infrastructure

- Parts of town do not have good sidewalk access.
- There were virtually no sidewalks in the neighborhoods. Lighting was limited and became noticeable after dark.
- Lots of dead end streets caused challenges.



City Hall

- I was not immediately greeted and there was some awkwardness in explaining that I was participating in the First Impressions partnership with Hillsboro by the clerk. I was not greeted by any other staff or police officers present.
- There was a city and lake map available.
- City Hall is a very nice building. Information about town was available.



Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Extremely impressed with the fire station facility.
- Police station located at City Hall.



Library

- Observed the historic Carnegie structure and “new” library in what looked like an older repurposed building that is pretty good sized and nice.



City Parks

- Sports complex was well laid out with center facility.





City Parks

- Noticed a more dilapidated building on the edge of the complex; I cannot remember the purpose of that building.



I was pleased to see that many ages and abilities would be accommodated.



City Parks

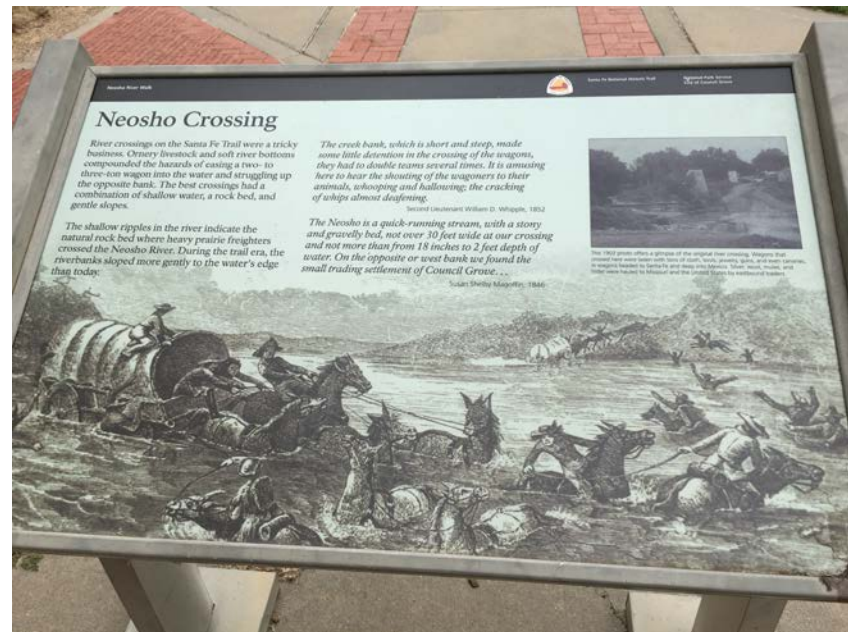
- There were several parks with varying level of amenities.





Recreation/Tourism

- First in mind is always Hays House and second are the historical markers.
- I had no idea how many historical markers and buildings were in Council Grove.
- I saw “The Flint Hills Life” on street banners.



Significant events for Visitors & Residents

- A recent circus was in town.
- The opening of the Flint Hills Nature Trail was most noticeable.



Significant natural or manmade features:

- The Flint Hills is a very beautiful place to be and both lakes are very nice and should be capitalized on. It's one of the nicest places of Kansas.
- With a marketing background, I appreciated the consistent use of the city logo between city and chamber websites that share “The Flint Hills Life.”

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Visitor's Center

- The Chamber of Commerce is in an optimal location, but signage could be improved.
- The staff was extremely attentive and did a great job of promoting the city and area.



What would bring you back?

- I would definitely bring my family or friends for a day trip. There are things I want to spend more time on: historical sites, shops and restaurants.



What would bring you back?

- There is lodging to make it ideal to enjoy a weekend or a day trip.
- Impressed by handicapped accessibility at Hays House.



What would bring you back?

- Locally owned restaurants, a soda fountain, the gardening center/nursery, the nature trail.



Most Positive Observations

- River Walk connected to downtown and other historic spots.



Most Positive Observations

- 25 Historic sites/monuments (and consistently messaged throughout retail/apparel/signage/online.)



Most Positive Observations

- Specialty restaurants and stores.
- Unique and well-kept lodging.
- Lakes/Recreation, rentals available.



Most Positive Observations

- Nationally known food service establishments.
- The historic character and sites, with signage.



Most Positive Observations

- Obvious pride in Main Street and the historical aspects. Proximity to the lake and the addition of the nature trail.



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Empty storefronts on Main and maintaining historic infrastructure.
- Entertainment for locals/young adults (aside from the lakes, that may include a sports bar, movie theatre, etc.)



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Jobs for middle and upper middle class families.
- Foot traffic downtown.
- Declining population is the biggest challenge.
- Promote yourself as a safe, family-friendly bedroom community for Topeka, Junction City or Manhattan.
- Navigation of the neighborhoods. Street signs are small and have several styles, neighborhood streets are narrow and don't have sidewalks.

What will you remember the most in six months from now?

- Council Grove citizens are extremely friendly people who are obviously proud of the town's heritage.
- As someone who has visited and lived in other places in the United States, I think the Flint Hills is one of the most beautiful places there is.
- The lake areas are beautiful and well-kept and would provide great camping and boating experiences.
- The variety of shopping and unique downtown stores.

Next Steps:

Thank our leadership team:

- *Diane Wolfe*
- *Lucas Cosgrove*
- *Debi Schwertfeger*
- *Monica Simecka*
- **Set next steps!**
 - Which group will lead the discussion?
- *Contact me if you need resources or help:*
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