First Impressions 

**Team Report Form**

Community Visited: Ellsworth Date Visited: 6/29/2016

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?

*Plenty of information on three comprehensive sites: ellsworthchamber.net, ellsworthks.net, and ellsworthcounty.org.*

*However, for such a pretty community, there was a distinct lack of pictures showcasing its attributes. For a first time visitor, the websites could better illustrate the features of the community with some graphics instead of relying so heavily on text.*

1. 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.)

*Good welcoming signage upon entering and leaving the community from all directions. Ellsworth appears to be a very “neat”, well-kept town with parks and verges mowed, little to no trash visible, downtown area in very good repair.*

2. 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?)

*Welcomed into local flower shop – ladies were courteous and polite. Great variety of merchandise. Greeted, invited into bank for coffee/newspaper – wonderful service. Rx store had a friendly clerk who was very helpful.*

What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.) Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

*Plenty of benches in good condition/colorful. Public restrooms available. Easy to find parking in a central location with walking access to library, shopping, City hall, Chamber Office, Courthouse. Appealing downtown sidewalks in excellent repair.*

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

*Highway area to East side of town – newer businesses seem to be locating in this stretch of the highway. Although highway, area seemed to be well maintained.*

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

*Highway area to East side of town looks adequate to accommodate growth. Also, viable potential on south side of town, near the retirement village.*

5. Health Care Services

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services. Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physicians, dentists, optometrists, public health and other healthcare providers.

*Apparent new medical facility on the north east side of town. Seems adequate with comprehensive list of services provided. Easy to navigate website with complete information regarding the facility and providers.*

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

*Nursing home; assisted living facility to the south of town – very nice facilities! Welcoming design/layout – pleasant living environment.*

6. 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.)

*Nice mix of newer and older neighborhoods. Older neighborhoods well maintained for the most part. Homes listed with two realtors from $25,000 - $285,000 (approx. 25 residential properties listed). Lovely new neighborhood now sits where the building lots were once free.*

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

*Not many individual rental properties seen but (income based?) seen on Chisolm Trail and Kirkendall Heights. There were a number of commercial rentals visible.*

7. 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?

*Like the rest of the community, the schools looked well-maintained. We did hear from a local resident that there is not enough practice gyms for the size of the school. Sharing required for scheduling?*

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

*General school information was found online. Nothing unique from any other KS school district website.*

1. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

*There was a nice, newer community daycare facility on the east of town and private daycare businesses operating out of homes. Care is available and reasonably priced.*

1. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the churches represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of church-sponsored community services?

*Churches were located throughout the community – all denominations were represented. Religion-based Teen Center in a downtown storefront. Not sure of church sponsorship for this facility?*

1. Civic

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

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

*Volunteers? Kiwanis, Ambassadors Club, Rotary, Mosaic Sheltered Workshop – does some volunteer work. Lots of charitable-type posters; events in store windows, etc.*

1. Public Infrastructure

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

Did you observe land-use planning?

*Overall, the streets and sidewalks were in good to excellent condition (even the “dirt” roads to the west side of town were incredibly well maintained with mowed verges.) Nice landscaping throughout the community – adequate parking seemed available in all areas. Planning shows residential/commercial development on East side.*

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

*Went to chamber/ED office for local information. Chamber director was very new to the job and although a little unsure of some local information, was incredibly helpful, welcoming and courteous. She will be a great fit for the position.*

Police/fire protection:

*Police – Comprehensive service: Patrol, K-9, Animal Control, Code Enforcement, etc.*

*Fire – again, full service located within city limits.*

Library:

*Small but well-maintained. Good variety of books, magazines and videos. Great kids section. Very friendly staff. Public restroom.*

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

*Beautiful parks – well maintained. Nice walking/biking trail. Rec. area with ball parks. Armory converted to Rec. Center??*

1. Recreation/Tourism

Is the community well-known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset?

*Cowtown Days, Star Spangled Spectacular Fireworks, Follow the Star, Rodeo, Throw for the Soul…*

*Ellsworth – Right in the Heart of Kansas (Chamber)*

*Ellsworth, Kansas – A Community with Pride (City)*

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

*A number of posters in store windows for Rodeo, Cowtown Days….*

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

*The museum complex/Fort Harker/Hodgden House.*

*Nice looking golf course.*

*The city park has small hills, a creek, bridges, walking/biking trail, playgrounds – good attraction for families with kids.*

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.

*Chamber Office visible from the Main Street/downtown area. Plenty of good area information (print) for visitors.*

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

*Many pleasant, owner operated stores and restaurants but not much different from other small rural Kansas towns. Sugar Shack was fairly unique.*

1. Wrap-up

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

*Very clean, well maintained, mowed, picturesque community.*

*Progressive with east side development.*

*Beautiful downtown maintenance/revitalization – upkeep of storefront properties. Awnings, sidewalks, lighting, welcome banners on light poles, all compliment the main street.*

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

*Significant barrier between downtown shopping area and ‘growth’ area on the East side. There is no natural movement or ‘feeding’ from one top to the other (distance/geography).*

*Are 36 hotel rooms (Americas Best Value Inn) enough space for a progressive community to attract visitors?*

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

*(+) Beautiful downtown area and well-kept community*

*(+) Growth potential*

*(+) Plenty of green space – park area etc.*

*(-) Not a wide variety of shops in downtown district to attract shopping.*

***Summary: Overwhelmingly positive impression!***



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