

First Impressions

Belleville, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- Belleville – Population – 1,976
- 13.7% college educated, 94.1% high school or GED (KS – 28.8% college, 86.0% high school)
- Median age of years – 49.5 (KS – 36.0)
- 46.3% Male, 53.7% Female (KS – 49.2%M, 50.8%F)
- Poverty rate is 9.9% (Kansas – 13.8%)
- Median household income is \$31,296 (KS- \$50,972)

Web Presence:

- Pleasing website with a wealth of information
- Easy to navigate
- Typos on website and some links that do not work
- Which is the main website – City vs Chamber & Main Street?
- Facebook page which has regular updates



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Overall Belleville is a nice looking community
- Good variety of services
- Several historic homes
- Nice & not so nice homes throughout town & side by side
- Larger downtown but upon looking closer realize some buildings are struggling
- Special attention given to the town square and courthouse
- Difficult to know where downtown is located



- Signs to downtown are lacking
- Banners are used to mark entrances to downtown from HWY 36 and HWY 81.
- Interstate frontage is sparse
- Along HWY 36 some buildings in disrepair/vacant
- Welcome to Belleville signs and the church signs could use being refreshed





Downtown Business Area

- Like the downtown square with the Courthouse
- Buildings appear to be at the extremes – either in good shape or in need of attention



Types of Businesses Observed

- Good variety – Health to insurance to dining
- Antiques, gift shops, clothing, furniture, flooring, home décor, coffee shops,
- Recreation – theater, bowling alley



Customer Service

- Greeted well, people friendly, service good
- Visited a business 2 times, on the first visit did not receive a hello or anything, on the second visit was greeted and helped.
- In one business had a nice discussion about the retail area and the challenges one faces



Public Amenities

- Courthouse has a great set-up
- Facilities at the park
- Benches are found at the Courthouse but not on Main Street



Landscaping and Streetscaping

- Courthouse is beautiful – it could be “softened” a little by adding plants, trees and shrubs
- Difference in team opinion here – some thought there wasn’t really anything to draw your attention while others thought it was a beautiful downtown



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- HWY 36 – Either a good looking building structure or the complete opposite, road construction made it difficult to evaluate
- HWY 81 – Variety of businesses along HWY 81, easy access, has some holes which could be filled to attract the north/south travelers



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- East HWY 36
- North/South HWY 81 – Saw at least 3 signs for industrial property for sale
- Businesses observed – Renke Irrigation, Lambert Vet Supply, Haarslav Industries, Mid-America Truck Equipment and Livestock Auction



Health Care Services

- Hospital and long term care are housed together
- Nice medical clinic across the street from the hospital
- Senior Estates near hospital appear nice
- There is a Mental Health Clinic, Home Health Agency and the Health Department



- Chiropractor and Dentist just down the street
- Dance Studio/ Wellness Center
- EMS across the street from the hospital and clinic
- Vision Center downtown



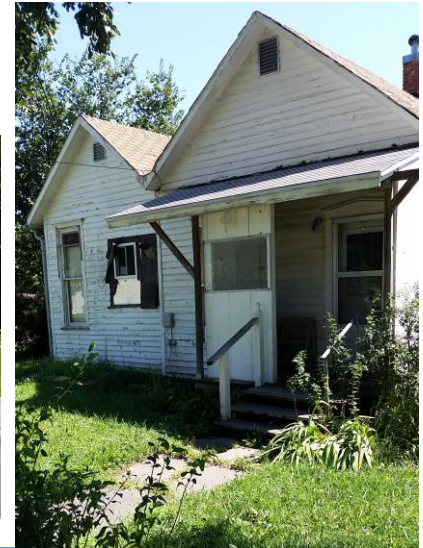
Housing

- Total housing units – 1,167 (100%)
- Owner occupied housing units – 656 (56.2%)
- Renter occupied housing units – 292 (25.0%)
- Vacant housing units – 220 (18.9%)
- Median home value - \$82,283



Housing observations

- Didn't see many for sale signs vs the local realtors signs
- Open housing ranging from \$15,000 to \$130,000
- Neighborhoods like most – good next to bad
- Many older, small homes



- Lots of new units being built raised the question – “Is a new industry coming to town?”



Schools

- East Elementary School
- Jr/Sr High School



- School Pride



Preschool/Head Start/Childcare

- Doodle Bug Academy – Preschool and Day Care, located in a small older home, have a facebook page
- Saw a building labeled Heart Start but don't know it is functioning
- May be a lack of childcare or it is not easily found or located by newcomers.

We're Going Back To School



- This preschool found a clever way to promote registration



Faith/Religion

- Wide variety of churches
- Well cared for and nicely landscaped





Civic

- Couldn't determine through the visit
- Very limited information was available on the websites
- Observed people working on the fairgrounds and a church fundraiser with quilt displayed
- Where do people find information on clubs and organizations or volunteer possibilities?



- Community garden looks to be something which could be expanded
- Good support in developing the garden
- Master Gardeners have a nice display
- Located by accident



Public Infrastructure

- Streets were like most towns – some good and some in dire need of repair
- Side streets small – some minimal to not paved
- Street signs ok, landscaping ok
- Sidewalks on some blocks and not on others



- Is there really a need for 2 stop lights?
- City/Town Hall not easily found
- Located both the police department and fire department
- All are well maintained



- Nice library with work being done to the roof
- City park is well set-up with an amphitheater and close to the pool and fair grounds.
- Ball fields are located close by park and fair grounds
- Parking may be a problem during public events



- Nice Horseshoe park adjacent to pool and park



Recreation/Tourism

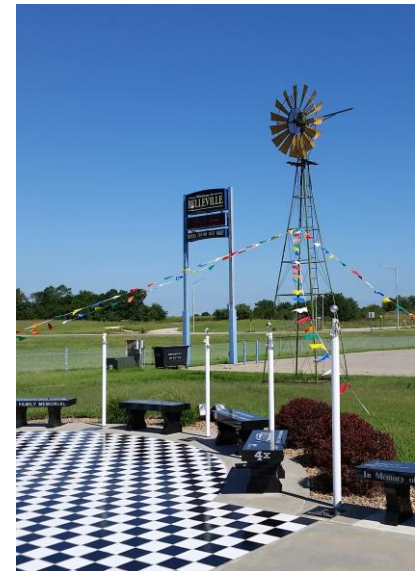
- Belleville is known for Midget Auto Racing
- Location of track at fairgrounds and next to park and ball fields is good



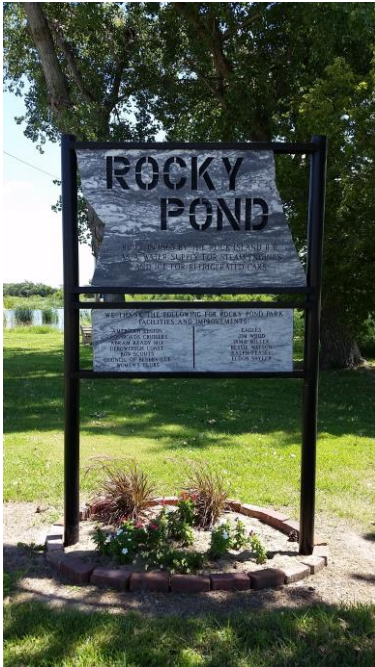
- The Chamber and Main Street Office are difficult to find
- Lots of pamphlets and information located on table outside of office
- The Boyer Museum is an unusual attraction just north of the downtown square



- The visiting team completely missed the Midget Auto Racing Museum and the Visitors Center



- Rocky Pond could be a great attraction
- Needs directional signage
- Has consider been given to making a walking or biking trail?



Restaurants, Specialty Shops, attractions to bring one back to the community

- The Feathered Nest
- The Quilt Shop
- The Dinner Bell Cafe



Most Positive Observations!!

- Friendly and welcoming people
- Clean Downtown square
- Some nice shops, newer hotel, Casey's, Dairy Queen
- Comfortable town

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- “Where to go” signage
- Rundown and unoccupied structures in both downtown and along HWY 36
- Businesses to fill up store fronts
- Adequate or cost efficient buildings for businesses

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

- Lots and lots of new housing with Buffalo apartments and the new townhouses/apartments
- Unique Courthouse
- The Quilt Shop and Gift Shop
- Warm and welcoming downtown
- Beautiful historic houses
- Rocky Pond
- Two stoplights in downtown that were cumbersome
- Difficulty in finding the downtown

- The Dane G. Hansen Foundation wants to help communities in Northwest Kansas become the best they can be and take great PRIDE in who they are and what they can be.



- <http://danehansenfoundation.org/>