

First Impressions

Colby, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- Colby – Population – 5,388 (2014 estimate)
- 26.1% college educated, 89.8% high school or GED
- Poverty rate is 13.5%
- Median household income is \$42,593
- Median resident age – 36 years

(Source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov>)



- Web Presence:

<http://www.cityofcolby.com>

- Attractive website and easy to navigate
- Houses a wide range of information
- Could not find information on churches or organizations
- Good community links, schools, library, foundation, etc.

The logo for Colby, Kansas, features the word "COLBY" in large, bold, blue capital letters. The letter "O" is replaced by a stylized blue circular emblem containing a white wheat stalk. To the right of "COLBY", the word "Kansas" is written in a gold, cursive script font. The entire logo is set against a background of a golden-yellow field under a hazy sky.

The Oasis on the Plains

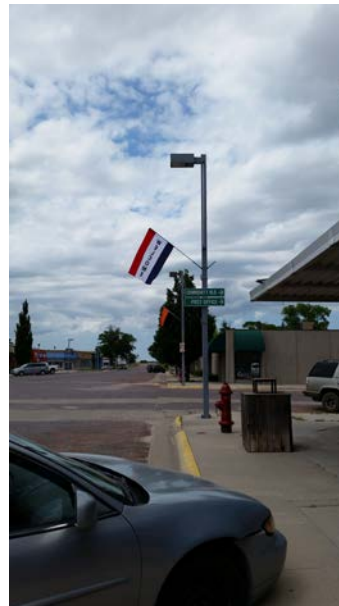
“Five-Minute” Impression – Team Comments

- Would like to move here
- More retail opportunities
- More choices for churches
- Attractive housing
- Cultural opportunities
- Easy to navigate
- Good Interstate access



Signage Noted

- Tree City, USA
- Eagle Pride
- “Oasis on the Plains”
- Downtown “Welcome” banners



- East entrance on Hwy 24 unappealing
- Would like to see “Welcome to Colby” signage
- Signage needed for downtown business district



Downtown Business Area

- Downtown was fairly neat and tidy
- Some attractive storefront windows
- No standout streetscapes or signage to be inviting



- Old, somewhat run-down
- Lacking signage to direct visitors
- Good customer service at both professional and retail establishments



Types of Businesses

- Fitness Centers, Furniture, Bridal/Floral, Tea/Bakery
- Financial Services, Car Wash, Laundry, Physical Therapy
- Convenience stores and gas stations



Downtown Landscaping and Streetscaping

- Planter boxes are attractive
- This is an area which needs some attention



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Good access from Interstate
- Ample parking
- Southwind Plaza a hidden gem!



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- Not defined by signage
- Room for expansion on East Hwy 25 and Country Club Drive
- Observed Coors, Pepsi, Goodyear, farm implements and other businesses of that nature



Health Care Services

- Casual driving revealed signage for vision, medical, chiropractic, dental and mental health services
- Chamber of Commerce was great to provide information about medical services available



- Range has a nice cluster of services with the Health Department, Surgical Center and St. Thomas Historic Residence



- Citizens Medical Center – a fantastic complex of services



Housing

- Median House Value - \$130,060
- Total number of housing units – 2,433
- Owner occupied housing units – 55.2%
- Renter occupied housing units – 35.9%
- Vacant housing units – 8.9%

(ESRI 2015 Forecast)



- Housing lists are available at the Chamber Office – both for rent and purchase
- City website has a link to the Colby Housing Authority – gives extensive information on rental prices, income qualifications, etc.
- Impressive number of apartment buildings along green belts





Schools

- Pre-schools /Head Start



Elementary/Secondary Schools

- Colby High School is an impressive looking facility on well-maintained grounds
- Middle and elementary schools are adjacent to each other and not as noticeable for visitors
- Websites did not display many pictures of the facilities



Other school options

- Heartland Christian School
- Sacred Heart School



Childcare

- Childcare is available through various home-based programs and a few larger centers
- Not much information was collected by the team through the sources they studied
- ChildcareCenter.us has a good listing of Thomas County childcare providers
- The afterschool program is a good alternative for parents

Faith/Religion

- Many denominations observed
- Well-kept and had good signage
- Beyond advertised worship times, no community services observed



- ChurchFinder.com is a source to find information on Colby churches



Civic

- A comprehensive listing of organizations or non-profits was not found
- There was evidence of the 4-H program, Thomas Co. Community Foundation, Kiwanis and Thomas County Coalition
- Obvious local passion shown for historic preservation



Public Infrastructure

- Street signs were standard but easy to read
- Sidewalks were missing along Country Club Dr. which seemed problematic for park and high school access
- Streetscapes were the best near I-70



- Landscaping around Colby Community College could be more inviting
- A wealth of information was found at the Thomas County Office Complex
- Signage on Range Avenue could be more obvious



- The team did not stop at city hall
- Colby Community Building is a nice facility with a good informational sign



Police/Fire Protection

- Good information on cityofcolby.com



Library

- Pioneer Memorial Library has a great website and is linked to cityofcolby.com



City Parks

- Colby has many parks scattered throughout the community
- Fike Park is a tremendous facility located close to downtown



- Soccer fields for youth
- Poolside Park and Aquatic Park are fantastic
- Walking trails is wonderful
- Restroom facilities are needed!!



Recreation/Tourism

- Colby is known by I-70 travelers as the *Oasis on the Plains*
Could this theme be carried out throughout the city?
- Good signage on I-70 attracting visitors
- Thomas County Fair was being promoted during the visit



Colby Attractions

- Impressive visitors center
- Courthouse with memorial



- Church Bell
- The Prairie Museum
- Historic preservation of the St. Thomas Hospital



Villa High Park

- It's scenic
- Fishing right in town
- Difficult to get to
- Poor Signage



RV Park & Antique Shop



Restaurants, Shops or Attractions that would bring you back

- J&B Meats
- The Museum
- Explore more parks
- Retail options in the other shopping areas



Most Positive Observations!!

- Easy to navigate
- Many retail options for a town its size
- Strong visitor center/tourism focus
- Strong Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development
- Post-secondary education options
- Strong school systems – both public & private
- Capitalizing on interstate accessibility
- Strong online presence
- Community pride evident
- Well-kept residential areas
- Variety of housing options



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Seems like a community on the “grow.” Sometimes challenges come along with growth
- Need for downtown streetscaping/landscaping
- Need for restrooms with walking trail and the Pool Park
- Method to attract visitors to downtown
- The need for fine dining or non-chain restaurants

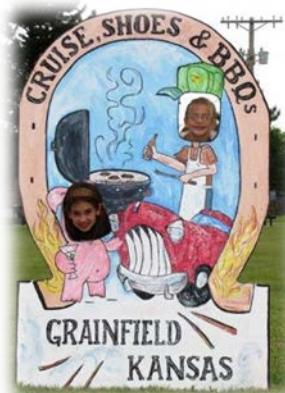


What will you remember the most in six months from now?

- The new aquatic center
- The walking trail
- Retail stores
- Santa setup at Christmas we'd like to visit



Kansas PRIDE is helping communities create the type of place they want to call “Home”



- 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/>