

First Impressions

Oberlin, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



DANE G. HANSEN

F O U N D A T I O N

Oberlin Demographics

- Population – 1,788
- Median Household Income - \$32,750
- High School Education – 90.8%, College Education –21.2 %
- Median resident age is 52.3 years
- Poverty rate is 14.8%

Source: factfinder.census.gov



Web Presence:

- www.oberlin-kansas.com
- www.oberlinks.com
- Numerous Facebook pages associated with websites
- No links to school site, etc.



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Entering business district from North on Penn – very welcoming, brick streets
- Pioneer statue sets a sense of place
- Red brick streets invite exploration of neighborhoods to the east and west of business center



- Some very nice older homes
- Old style street lights on Oak and Ash nice
- Neat, clean downtown business district
- Nice park adjacent to school



- South entrance – idyllic rural vista of town
- West and North entrance typical of well-kept rural community
- East entrance more shabby, weedy lots



- Two large signs at north and south entrances a little dated
- No signage to indicate important landmarks
- Very few signs on entering the community



Downtown Business Area

- Buildings in good shape for the most part
- Most store fronts filled
- Nice wide streets
- Saturday – few stores were open



- Nice downtown
- The awnings & lights a good idea but needed some cleanup
- Didn't fit type of buildings



- Good customer service
- Typical small town businesses
- Multiple services available from downtown parking-library, dining, grocery store, city park, school and museum all in easy walking distance



- Very few public amenities notes
- Public restrooms at park/swimming pool
- Nice green space on Penn Street
- Gazebo park downtown



Other Retail Areas

- Team did not note any
- Antique and convenience stores along HWY 36



Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- A few lots available on North side of town along HWY 36
- Local conversations indicate more might be available



- Saw several ag service areas
- Didn't observe manufacturing



- Decatur Coop on South end of town
- Area could use some clean-up



Health Care Services

- Hospital is older
- Very poor signage
- Construction on road blocked access with no detour noted



- Not impressed with any observable health care entity
- The emergency helicopter landing sign would be laughable if not so concerning
- Hospitality house a nice feature



- EMS located next to the hospital
- Area around the hospital could use some clean-up



- Didn't observe many medical facilities away from the hospital area
- Senior Center in modern building
- Nursing home facility near downtown



- Downtown pharmacy
- Wellness Center
- Chiropractor



Housing

- Total Number of Housing Units – 1,112
- Occupied housing units – 950
- Vacant housing units – 162
- Owner occupied – 74.7%
- Renter occupied – 25.3%
- Median house value - \$54,200



Housing observations

- Mostly single family units
- Little rental
- A lot of nice older homes



- Some fixer uppers
- Identified about a dozen houses for sale
- Not much new construction



- One apartment complex observed
- Income based housing – some units available
- Senior apartments



Schools

- Nice high school structure and grounds
- Could not find the elementary school



- Older buildings
- Window air conditioners
- Nice park by the high school



- Nice athletic fields
- School has a nice website
- City site didn't link to school website



Childcare

- Didn't observe any
- Couldn't find city office to ask about childcare

Faith/Religion

- Most churches well cared for
- Saw what appeared to be a youth center
- Did not see evidence of faith sponsored community services

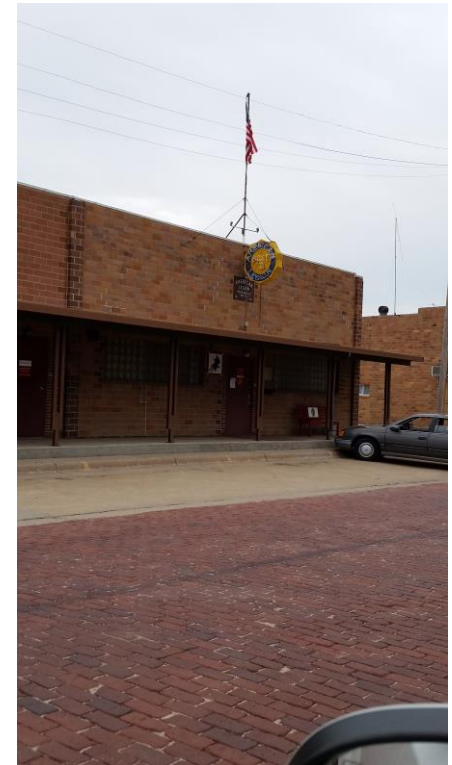


- Map on website indicated there were 8 or 9 churches in the community



Civic

- Not a lot of visible organizations
- Unknown, nice movie theater/bowling alley – new construction
- Civic activity observed in chamber office
- Great civic center



- Things not noted by visiting team – website did list 3 community clubs
- Masonic Lodge



Public Infrastructure

- Some streets East of Penn subject to street flooding
- Over-layment on street very thick making streets rough at intersections
- Very large dips



- Some yards nicely landscaped
- Signage was not evident



- No signage to indicate Gateway Center houses city offices
- Location is inconvenient as opposed to being located near downtown
- Only found chamber office – great reception by staff



- Located the fire station
- Did not observe police patrol activity or find the police station
- I found the police station and also noted the city drop box located outside



- Located the library
- Fairly modern, exterior well maintained
- Closed for renovations



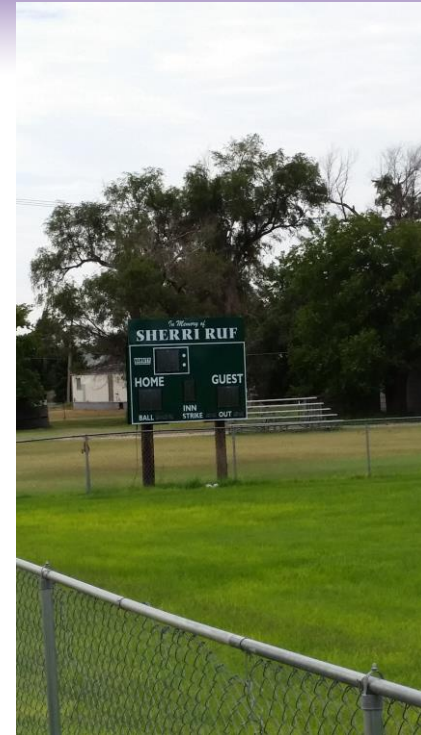
- City park near high school well maintained
- Great to have it combined with swimming pool



- Small park on North end of Penn
- Small skateboard park near Gateway in disrepair
- Another small park south of the Gateway Center



- Two baseball fields
- Run down and in need of improvement



Recreation/Tourism

- Historical Museum
- Sappa Festival



- Sappa Creek Park
- Oberlin Golf Course



- Sunflower Recreation Center – Movie Theater/ Bowling Alley
- Barn Quilt Project
- Landmark Inn



- Slogan from website – Pearl of the Prairie
- How is this utilized?
- Gateway Center? Marketing??

Attractions that would bring you back:

- Landmark Inn
- Funky antique store on HWY 36
- Museum



Most Positive Observations!

- Downtown with brick streets
- Sunflower Recreation Center
- Civic Center
- Sappa Fest promotion
- Barn Quilt Project



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Lack of apparent energy to capitalize on assets
- Under utilized assets
- Hospital
- Signage
- Old school building needing updates



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

- Inviting appearance
- A town with a lot of potential to expand/elaborate/market existing assets
- Nice downtown
- Landmark Inn



Recommendations:

- Signage – way finder and updating community signs
- Clean up of area around the hospital and downtown around city facilities
- Marketing campaign
- Links on the website

- 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/>