First Impressions 

**Team Report Form**

Community Visited: Gypsum Date Visited: April 24, 27 & May 7, 2019

1. 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?

-Not much found on the web. Could not find anything on healthcare, childcare or medical. Did find information on Gun Shop and Restaurant.

-Easy to find information on Gypsum but access to photos of town was not so simple. Sites I visited gave a lot of statistics about socio-economic, racial, ethnic, etc. make-up of the community.

- I typed in Gypsum, KS. The first site that appeared was map quest. The second was Wikipedia. From Wikipedia, I was able to get on Gypsum’s website. My search did accurately reflect most of what I saw. I did not notice all of the business’ the site said it had. I did see a sign for Emily’s Daycare that I did not see on the site. The history of the town was interesting.

1. The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.

-First impression was a town that looked quite nice for a small community. Other than main street that is a state highway all other are unpaved but well maintained. Nice small park on main but large park needs more upkeep. Nice benches on main that stood out on entry to town. Many nice homes but some in need of repair.

-Clean downtown, dusty streets that meandered around, building on main street well-kept.

-This is a clean & well taken care of town even for having primarily gravel streets. The

gravel roads are smooth and well maintained which made me think there must be pride

in the town.

-There must be flooding issues with all the precautions taken.

The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)

-Sign in to town was clean but had little information. There was no signage on the south entry.

-Large sign announcing coming Pie Festival & Car Show. Approaching city limits were several businesses – Frisbie Construction, a stables for boarding horses, another business with several buildings and cars but no sign.

-The signs were well seen upon entering town. Buildings and homes looked well

maintained.

1. Downtown Business Area Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

-Downtown had very few buildings. It looked like many had been removed over time. Nice

benches and trash containers. Restaurant, bank and gun shop had nice signs but City Hall

was hard to find. Auto garage with one gas pump was nice.

- Downtown sidewalks clean, several metal benches along sidewalks, 2 digital signs (one on bank and one at gazebo), picnic area very attractive with gazebo. Buildings generally well-kept, even the empty ones. Some could use paint.

- The buildings downtown looked well maintained. Unfortunately, the day and time I visited Gypsum most of the businesses were closed. The digital Welcome to Gypsum sign was nice. There was clear signage for most of the stores. However, I never found the Trading Post. When I inquired about it, the person said it doesn’t exist. Someone had started it, but wasn’t able to follow through. I did notice Watch for Children signs, one for the public restrooms and the park. There was music playing from the speakers. I thought this was a nice touch and made me want to linger downtown a little longer. The benches that were throughout the downtown were well maintained and painted fun colors.

Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed.

-Restaurant had very good food. Gun shop had a good line of products and the flea market had a very large mix of products.

-Had delicious lunch at the café. Visited the flea market – abundance of old, used merchandise such as found at flea markets! Went into Outdoor Sports store – actually a gun store, no other outdoor sports merchandise available that I could see.

-The following are the businesses that I observed: Frisbee Construction Company, Emily’s Daycare, Lender Trucking, McKin Service, Flea Market, Gas Station, All American Storage, ATOP Reality LOLC (crop insurance, seed wheat) – the sign was on the ground leaning against business, city building, Citizens State Bank, Exit 14 Café and the Gas Station.

Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)

-Restaurant had very good food and waitress was very friendly as were the other customers. Gun shop was nice and a lot of product for a small town. The employee was helpful. Flea market had a very small sign and the employee did not welcome or offer help until asked about a product. All were in easy walking distance.

-Everyone was friendly and helpful.

-We did go into te Gypsum Valley Outdoor Sports store. The man who owns the store asked us right away if we needed help with anything. He was very friendly and answered a lot of our questions. He was also helpful as we inquired about some of his merchandise. He had a nice range and quality of merchandise for the type of store that he owns. The Flea Market looked like there were many products to choose from in the windows. It was closed when we arrived.

What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and wi-fi, etc.) were available?

-Did not find drinking fountain or public restroom. Benches were very nice and also found several trash containers. On looked like it might be for recycling but was not marked.

-10-12 metal benches, some with a shade over them, placed along main street sidewalks. Trash cans available on main street, sign for public restrooms at ambulance garage. Did not see any signs advertising wi-fi.

-I noticed there were many sturdy, well maintained colorful benches around town. Next to some of the benches were trash receptacles. There was a sign clearly marked for the public restrooms and the park. I did not walk around the park as it was raining the day I went. When we went to the library, the wi-fi popped up and was available. I observed an ATM machine. Getting out to on into the store I heard the music playing from the speakers.

Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

-Nice small park. No problem finding parking.

-Lots of parking on main street, access to all businesses. No landscaping on main street. Curbing needed repair.

-There were boxes with flowers throughout the downtown. The bank had shrubs that looked very appealing. I didn’t have any difficulty with finding parking. I could access multiple services from one parking space.

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

-One building west of town had several cars out front but no sign to let someone know if this was open to the public.

-None

-I did not observe any other retail shopping areas.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

-None found

-Some large vacant lots. Open farm land around edges of town.

-There was the Agri Trail Coop and the elevators. There were easy to locate and looks like

they could expand if they wanted. The Frisbee Construction Company was in another area

of town and looked like they could expand.

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

-No health care or long term care found or information available. City had safety center for emergency service.

-Did not see any such facilities.

-I did not observe any health care services. It does say there is a 6th Street Massage business. However, I did not notice it.

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

-Large range of housing. Some very nice and well maintained, other in need of repair. Most yards were maintained. One sign for a rental property. Possibly more that are not listed.

-Mix of housing: some very nice, well-kept; others run down. Some houses for sale, saw one for rent sign. Would say housing as typical for a small town. Inexpensive housing mostly for sale. Did not notice apartments or housing for seniors or low-income.

-It appeared like there was a good mix of types of housing available for a variety of income levels. It did not appear like there was much for sale. I observed one empty lot and one business with a living space. I inquired at the Outdoor Sports store about places to rent as that was not easily identifiable. He said individuals in town have houses to rent but there weren’t any apartments. He did say to call the Realtor office and they would have information.

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

-School was observed on highway to town. It did not have a sign stating what grades were housed there. No evidence of head start or preschool. Website had USD 306 Southeast Saline serving Gypsum but did not state locations.

-School building in town closed for many years, really a mess. Found SE of Saline website showing a good quality school system.

-I observed a school outside of town a way. It was South East of Saline. It appears to be adequate size and the grounds well-maintained. (It was raining so a little more difficult to tell.) On the website it says the school is a K-12 and has approximately 730 students. The website suggests a good quality education system. However, I did not find any links to the state testing scores or average ACT scores for the school. (I did not click on every link, so if it was there it was not obvious to me.)

1. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

-One in home daycare found.

-Did not notice any.

-Emily’s Daycare

1. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the places of worship represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of faith-based community services?

-Two churches were found. Both nice buildings well maintained.

-3 churches in town – Catholic, Baptist and Methodist. Buildings and properties well-maintained. No evidence of faith-based community services.

-I did observe 4 different denominations: First Baptist, United Methodist, St. Patrick Catholic and Temple Church. The physical appearance of each place were nice. However, the United Methodist sign was broken and made it look unkempt.

1. Civic

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

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

-Sign at entry to town has Lions Club, did not find location.

-Saw a Lions Club sign as entering town but no signs indicating if they still meet.

-Not sure if I just missed the signs, I did not observe nonprofit organizations and clubs in the community. I did notice that the benches were donated by a variety of people.

1. Public Infrastructure

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

-Other than main street all other roads are gravel but well maintained. Trip was in daytime so lighting was not observed. Some of the outer areas lighting could be limited. Park was not very impressive or in a good location.

-Streets unpaved, very dusty. No city block system though streets were named. Streets seemed to meander around, some ending without warning. Don’t recall any sidewalks. There were several signs warning to watch for children.

-The streets were gravel. They were smooth and appeared to be well maintained throughout the town. The parking appeared to be adequate throughout the town. I didn’t observe the lighting as it was daytime. The public restrooms were downtown. The landscape and streetscapes look nice throughout the town. However, there were a few homes that did not appear to be as well maintained.

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

-City Hall was hard to locate and it was closed for lunch. The sign was small. Information about meetings of council, court, fire department and phone numbers would be very helpful.

-City building was closed 5/13 – 5/28.

-Unfortunately I did not get there while city/town hall was open and I did not call.

Police/fire protection:

-Volunteer Fire Department building was observed along with Emergency Service building.

-Saw garage for fire trucks

-I did see the Safety Center and Fire Department

Library:

-The library was closed during our trip.

-Closed when I was there. Entrance not easily spotted from main street; at back of city building. A sign advertising a monthly book club in city building window.

-So sad I didn’t go on the day the library was open as that is one of my favorite places to visit. There hours were very limited as most small towns are. (Monday and Wednesday afternoons, 1-6; Saturday mornings, 9-12.)

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

-Park was very plain. Not much for children’s use.

-Did not see a city park. There was a playground with several pieces of equipment behind fire truck garage. Also a picnic area on main street with gazebo.

-I noticed two park areas. The one where the digital sign is and the other down the road. They both looked clean and nice. It was raining so I did not get out and explore them. I also saw the Frisbee Golf Park.

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?

-Found information online about the Fall Festival. It was noted 2018 was their 50-year anniversary.

-Pie Festival & Car Show advertised on large sign as one enter town and on digital sign next to gazebo.

-I did not observe this.

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

-None

-No

-I did see a sign for a Pie Festival and Car Show that may interest visitors and residents.

Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community. (Public art, museums, lakes, campgrounds, regional heritage locations).

-None

-There is apparently a creek running through town, saw several foot bridges throughout town.

-I did see the Valley Sporting Clay that looked interesting. The roads were muddy so I didn’t travel down it. The dyke made for the flooding looked like it was done strategically. The auditorium may draw some people in depending on how it is set up. It didn’t get to observe this. Also, the Frisbee Park looked nice and could draw people in who like that sport. It would be a nice quiet place to go.

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.

-None

-None

-I am guessing the city office would have been able to answer questions for visitors. I did not observe any signs to lead visitors anywhere in particular,

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

-Food was very good at the Exit 14 restaurant and the gun shop had a wide variety of product.

-Maybe the Pie Festival!

-No. The Flea Market looked interesting but I would not drive back for that.

1. Wrap-up

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

-The town had a nice feel when you first arrived. It was clean in most areas and looked like a community who took pride in how it was observed.

-Not having paved streets are both a blessing and a curse. There is not the cost of up keep of paved streets but the dust from the gravel streets is a negative.

-Friendly people, clean sidewalks on main street, nice digital signs downtown, attractive picnic area at gazebo.

-It was very clean and mostly well-maintained throughout the town. There is a place to get fuel and some unique stores (flea market and outdoor sports.) I liked the music playing in the downtown as well

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

-Keeping old buildings in repair.

-Unpaved streets, need for more families with children, need for more businesses.

-There didn’t appear to be places for sale or to rent.

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

-It felt welcome and how nice a small town can look. The food at Exit 14 was very good and I would return just for that.

-Dusty streets.

-I will remember how clean the town was as I drove through, the benches in the downtown and the music playing.



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