

# First Impressions

## Hillsboro, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership  
with

The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- 2010 Census Population 2,993  
(+ 4.9% since 2000\*) **KS +6.1%**
- 2016 Estimate is 2,916  
(+ 2.2% since 2000) **KS +8.1%**
- 29% college educated, 84.2% high school or GED  
– **KS 31% college education, 90% HS or equivalency**
- 84.2% family households, 24.2% non-family
- Poverty rate is 7.7% **(13.6%)**
- Median Age 37.7 years **(36)**
- Median household income is \$45,250 **(\$52,205)**

## Web Presence: [www.cityofhillsboro.net](http://www.cityofhillsboro.net)

- Informative website
- Saw evidence of items that are out of date.
- Fantastic idea: a video in the “Doing Business” tab tells why relocating to Hillsboro is a good move.
- Gave the impression that numerous offices, organizations and facets of the City were cohesive and working together.



## Web Presence:

**FaceBook** [www.facebook.com/cityofhillsboroks/](http://www.facebook.com/cityofhillsboroks/)

- *There are 81 Facebook pages that relate to Hillsboro, KS*
- *Great possibilities for co-marketing.*



## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- We felt confused where to turn to get to Main Street.
- First saw the Industrial Park and nice new hospital complex.





## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Tabor College is a beautiful asset; *both sets of visitors stopped at Java Joe’s.*
- Didn’t see a lot of updated streetscapes; yards and businesses were mostly well groomed and trimmed.



## The “Five-Minute” Impression

- The town and residential areas look well-kept with housing that would be desirable for someone wishing to relocate. Some streets in need of repair but not more than most towns.



# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- **Entrances:**

- Driving west on 77: If you don’t slow down, you could miss Hillsboro. Not clear how to find downtown.









# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- **Entrances:**

- Driving north on Ash/Indigo Road: we passed beautiful neighborhoods with nice landscaping including neighborhood ponds and fountains.





# The “Five-Minute” Impression

- **Entrances:**

- Driving west on D Street (by Wendy’s) an older/tired looking sign was posted coming into town. The trees and bushes camouflaged it, but we were looking for signs.



*On October 3 I made many passes trying to find the west-bound downtown sign that the visitors referred to.*

*The only one I found was this east-bound sign on D Street.*



## Downtown Business Area

- Streets looked good and clean and the buildings were generally well kept.
- Noticed vacancies, but there were generally signs with listing agents.



## Downtown Business Area

- Many one story buildings.
- Flooring businesses, artisan/boutique shops, hardware/lumberyard presence and service businesses.













## Downtown Business Area

- “Odds and Ends:” enjoyed the inventory and displays; felt that a store of that quality should occupy a store front building in the downtown block, and not a nearby house. We felt as if we were in someone’s home and it felt awkward.



Google Earth, March 2014  
Captured October 2017

## Downtown Business Area

- Noticed that some vacant storefronts had signs advertising other service businesses.
  - e.g. home based businesses: Photographer, catering company, massage therapy. A great idea! Take it one step further with a window display.





## Downtown Business Area

- Overall great customer service. We were greeted on every occasion except the hardware store where they were in the back of the store helping someone else. When they saw us, we got the feeling they were sorry they hadn't greeted us at the door with a smile.
- Everyone was so friendly we wondered if they knew we were from out of town and doing a First Impressions visit.





## Downtown Business Area

- Norel Bakery: “Is this your first visit? Let me give you a tour of the treats in the freezer.” Donuts were among the best we’ve ever had.



## Downtown Business Area

- As visitors, it felt as if something was missing to make downtown cohesive. Maybe a spot to stop for refreshment and congregate?
- Noticed benches, but no public restrooms or drinking fountains.

*Not on this survey, but added later: presence of Wi-Fi?*



## Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Auto Zone, a tire shop, a few vacant buildings there too: Alco and a large building that appeared once to be a grocery store. These could be huge assets to outside investors looking to relocate.



## Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Wondered if the history of Dale's Supermarket kept them from relocating from a cramped location to one where they could grow.





## Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Dollar General, TCT Solutions, Auto Zone, a hotel and tire shop.
  - Several girls we visited with told us that the best place for groceries was Dollar General with a great variety.



## Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- Hillsboro Industrial Park- host to 12 businesses.
- Unclear of the boundaries.
- Appears to be plenty of room to grow, with infrastructure already in place.



## Health Care Services

- Appears that the new and old hospital are both operating.
- Placement of the new hospital next to the industrial area seems out of place and wondered about the planning and future plans that placed it there.





# Physicians, dentists, optometrists & others

- Appeared that all facilities were nice, with plenty of options for everyone.
- Noticed a dental office and found others online.



## Long-Term Care

- Parkside offered nice, well-built maintenance-free duplexes. The area was serene, safe and inviting, and is certainly a homerun for the community.
- Salem House was nearby; everything well thought out and in the same area.



## Housing data

**KANSAS**

- Total Housing Units      1,229
- Total Occupied Houses    987 (80.3%)    (89.5%)
- Vacant Houses              242 (19.7%)    (10.5%)
  
- Owner Occupied            751 (76%)      (66.7%)
- Renter Occupied            236 (24%)      (33.3%)

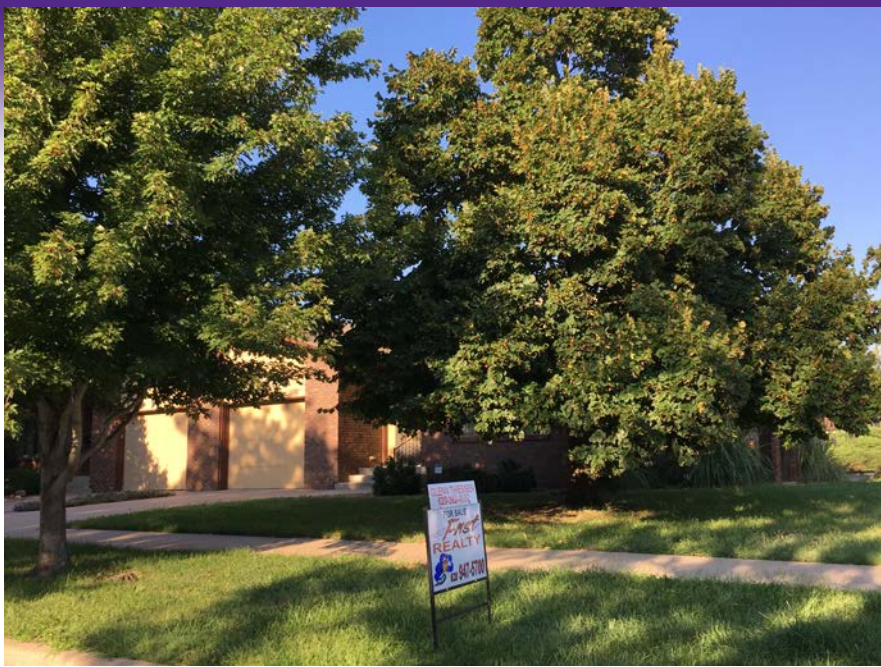


# Housing

- South side of town had beautiful ponds, fountains and houses.
- Homes north of Tabor were nice and well-cared for and I could see myself living there.
- Houses on the north (by Alco) were close together and needed some maintenance and TLC.

















# Housing

- We were impressed with the housing in Hillsboro.
- Saw several clusters of government assisted housing and all were very well kept.





# Housing

- There was additional new construction going on northwest of golf course, showing growth.
- Loved the duplexes out by the Mennonite Complex. They were by far one of the most impressive things on our visit.



## Rental Housing

- Hillsboroproperties.com: One rental listing found online that was in Hillsboro for \$800/ month.
  - Out of 30 sales listings, only 11 were in Hillsboro, the rest were in Marion or surrounding area.





- **Need for clean-up/demolition of older properties**





## Schools

- The Hillsboro schools appear to be modern, adequate in size and in good condition.
  - The grounds at the Elementary school were kind of lacking on the street where we went by, but when we drove to the back by the play area, everything was new and even had rubber ground beneath.



## Schools- Online information

- April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016: Governor's Award recognizes top-performing schools: Hillsboro Jr./High School was recognized.





## Childcare

- Kids Connection: seemed to be nice and a good community option at a church. A quick online search didn't see an abundance of other options.
- We talked to several moms who were happy with this center.





## Childcare

- Visitors suggested an online link for child care referral on the city site.
- *Child Care Aware is the state source for information about licensed care.*

<http://www.ks.childcareaware.org/>

## Faith/Religion

- There seems to be a dominant Mennonite presence with many nice churches and a Methodist church.



- As a Catholic, I might appreciate knowing that there are churches in the next town.





## Faith/Religion

- The Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren organizations appear to have embraced the community and appear to be very generous, offering many services and actively investing in the town.



## Civic

- We saw an old sign that said Kiwanis and Lions Club on them.
- We saw a big wooden sign by the golf course naming the town's clubs and organizations.



## Civic

- *An attractive Senior Center was prominent downtown.*





## Public Infrastructure

- Both cars of visitors noted the presence of a City of Hillsboro truck driving around (under “civic”), one called it a “very old” truck.
- We noted some potholes, but the sidewalks seemed fine.



## Public Infrastructure

- Visitors didn't talk about the presence of the way-finding or the condition of the street signs which were generally in good repair and quite readable.*





## Public Infrastructure

- Several shelter houses by the RV Park could use a coat of paint; the playground equipment next to it was nice.





## Public Infrastructure

- A nice storm shelter with tall, stone fireplace and surrounding deck seemed like a new addition.
- No restrooms or *neighborhood* parks were found.



## City Hall

- We did not go to City Hall, but we stopped at the Chamber and asked to use the restroom. She was embarrassed to take us there.



## Police and Fire Protection

- The Police/Law Enforcement building was somewhat dilapidated. A good coat of paint and some weed eating would help.
- Both visitors wondered if the one they saw was still in use.





# Library

- The library was great and shared with the arts council. Wonderful idea!
- Saw a library at Tabor too.



## City Parks

- Both sports complexes were great!
- Tabor fields were nice.
- Didn't see a trail.





## City Parks

- Everything nestled together made it easy to find and a fun area that included pool, park, RV and also attached to a golf course.





# City Parks







## Recreation/Tourism

- 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Craft Fair is coming up in September and is well known. There were plenty of banners, posters and advertising.
- *I liked the fact that a photo of the event is shown on the city webpage and a billboard year-round.*





## Significant natural or manmade features

- Marion Reservoir should be a draw. Have heard that it was shut down for Blue/Green Algae.
- Mennonite Settlement Museum will be a nice feature for visitors.



## Visitors' Center

- Chamber of Commerce seems to be the welcoming center. They were very nice and helpful.



## Chamber Of Commerce\*

- The Chamber desk was close to the front door and seemed awkward looking through brochures, a bit too tight.
- A chamber office that is inviting, easy to find and comfortable; possibly even couches or coffee would be a nice addition.

*\*Comments included under “City Hall.”*



## **What would bring you back?**

- Norel Bakery was nice, but it's too far to drive for a doughnut.
- No restaurants or shops would be a draw.
- The Mennonite Settlement Museum or the Crafts Fair might be a draw.

## Most Positive Observations

- Hillsboro felt similar to our town, Council Grove.
- Many friendly people.
- Passionate people in the downtown businesses with great talents.
- A nice, clean and safe community with friendly people with lots of pride.
- Cooperation between city and other entities.
- Mennonite investment in the community

## **Biggest Obstacles/Challenges**

- The layout: how to direct visitors off the highways to downtown.
- Downtown seems removed from other business areas and seems in decline.
- People like to eat! Need more options for dining.



## **What will you remember the most six months from now?**

- Tabor was incredibly impressive.
- Norel Bakery was delicious.
- Favorite store: Diamond in the Rough. Hope it is successful!
- Industrial and business park.
- Housing choices, especially the new duplex area and the Northwest Housing Development.

## Next Steps:

### *Thank our leadership team:*

- *Anthony Roy*
- *Amy Doane*
- *Stacie Silhan*
- **Set next steps!**
  - Which group will lead the discussion?
- *Contact me if you need resources or help:*
  - Nancy Daniels
    - Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension
    - 785.410.6352
    - [nkdaniels@ksu.edu](mailto:nkdaniels@ksu.edu)