First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

Community Visited: Jewell Date(s) Visited: 10/28/17, 11/01/17 & 11/02/17

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?

*Easy to get info from FB for the city. It did reflect what we observed. Not difficult. City FB page was up to date.*

*Not a big online presence. There were some things on Facebook about the town. No actual city website. Couldn’t look up a lot of information about the town before going of things to see or what businesses are in the town.*

*The web search was easily available, just brought it up to view and the information did a very factual reflection of the city. Facebook Jewell City.*

*We couldn’t find much information online. We couldn’t find a website . . . Just the census information, Wikipedia, and information about Jewell County.*

1. The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted. The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)

*Plenty of signs on HWY 14. Good street signage. Great park/town square, streets free from litter, new curb, gutter and sidewalks. Easy entrance to town. Signs in place to direct you. Well maintained streets. Even cobblestone streets were in good condition. No trash anywhere. Trash bins were obscured from direct view, covered and mostly located in alleys. There were lots of decorative sidewalk lamp posts. Handicap accessible at every crossing. Freshly painted curbs. Lots of parking on wide streets.*

*The town is fairly clean, lots of nice houses, nice yards, downtown looks nice. Some not so nice parts of town but very minimal compared to other towns. Not a lot of abandoned vehicles around. Not a lot going on in the town on a week-end. There were some signs, but nothing telling us where anything was direction wise, such as business district, park, and cemetery.*

*A small town with a lot of pride in keeping it clean and up to date: curbing, handicapped sidewalks. Trash containers were new, kept up and secured behind fences. Brick streets well maintained, easily driven on. Sidewalks level and easy to walk on. You know what community you are entering by the very nicely done city signs stating “Jewell Welcomes You.” Jewell City Office, Jewell Trails, Jewell Lake (with fishing), Parks with walking, bike and jog trails. Flags for different activities – Jewell Corn Show.*

*We came in from the south edge of town. The welcome sign is beautiful! All the tractors and equipment by the old lumberyard were a little distracting. Some seemed like antiques . . . which could be cool if it were an intentional display of old farm equipment. We didn’t see a sign to downtown, so turned east out near the welding business. We drove around town, and noted homes that were well kept, and (always the battle) those that aren’t. There is a wonderful old church that is crumbling . . . It is always hard to see because we love old buildings. But again, we understand the battle. The town square/park is great!! All the farm trucks parked in front of the two big businesses told us where the jobs are located. Because we need new curbs in our town, we noticed that Jewell’s are very nice, and newly painted. We didn’t get the sense that there were many businesses downtown, and noted some buildings in disrepair.*

2. Downtown Business Area

Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc. Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed. Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)

*Newly constructed building on one block. All open businesses had signs. Park in middle was a great landscaped attraction for downtown. Grocery store had most grocery items as well as hardware items. Lunch served between 11 am and 1 pm daily, tables and chairs to sit at, promoted other business with display space and bulletin board. Coffee shop is open 4 days from 2 to 4 for the seniors and others to have coffee. Every community member we interacted with gave us a hometown greeting and treated us like members of their own community. Made you feel like returning and getting involved with their community. Opened their private space up for our observation of their businesses and private collections.*

*Nice and cleaned up along park square. The new trash cans with town name on them looked nice. We went into the grocery store and the library. They had a nice library. Nice and organized library. It seems to have some activities for kids and a variety of things for all ages. DVD’s, books, a computer to use, etc. Grocery store had a lot of products if you were in town and needed to buy groceries. The librarian asked if we needed help. The grocery store didn’t say anything to us when entered. There was a couple people walking on the street didn’t even ask if we needed help finding anything or if we were lost.*

*Very nicely kept downtown, painted in a welcoming and warm color. Showed an attitude of “Oh, this is nice, I’ll check it all out.” The bank was nice and well groomed. A beauty shop – sign said closed, don’t know if that was a short or long term time. The Scoop Ice Cream – coffee, gifts, less expensive lower grade of merchandise. The grocery store – like a short stop, low grade, produce needed attention. Very friendly, “can we help you” greetings, easily carried on a conversation in general and when asked about their city freely gave answers. Noticed the funeral home, car wash, post office and recycling.*

*Our first stop was the grocery store with a request for a bathroom. The woman behind the counter graciously directed me to the back of the store. She was VERY friendly and helpful, suggesting that we might like to see their lake over by the water tower. Wouldn’t have known about the lake if she hadn’t mentioned it. We asked about lunch, and they were serving chili and hamburger/fries later. We returned later for “Kevin;s Crockpot Chili” which was excellent. Kevin printed off a recipe, and pointed out the key ingredient . . . which of course we bought. Next we stopped at the city office. There was a sign that said they would be back soon so we walked around peeking in windows. It was quickly apparent that there aren’t really any retail businesses downtown. The soda fountain opened at 2:00 so we missed it. It looks like a well-kept fun place. On our way past the city office we noticed the city manager was there so we stopped in to ask questions. We are sorry we didn’t get her name. She is worth 10X what she’s paid! She was very warm, helpful, easy to talk with, a great representative of the town. We asked about the library, and she offered to show it to use which ended up being a tour of the whole community building – well planned and multifunctional: the library, 4 hotel rooms, a big meeting space, preschool rooms and two offices. Because there is no longer a preschool that area is currently being rented by the Legion with the hope that it might someday be used as a fitness facility. We were told it was built with grant money. We sure would like a similar building in our town! The city manager answered every question, and told us some of the history of the town including Maag Memorial Park. We learned about the Corn Show and noted the professional banners around the town square. We drove past Bohnert Welding and Case IH but didn’t go inside. There is a recycling business in the old high school. We did not go inside, but thought that was an innovative business for a small community. There was also a bank on the corner. Again, the folks we talked with at the market and the city manager couldn’t have shown more hospitality.*

What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.) Comment on appealing landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

*This town is very organized and maintained. Free from clutter and trash. Efforts were made to conceal trash and eyesores from street view. They were very short on services for day trips. Grocery and library were only sites open normal business hours for your enjoyment. Seemed to have availability for services of community members by private individuals. They seemed to be self-sufficient. Restrooms in park were open and clean. No water fountains. Plenty of benches. Coffee shop has a restroom.*

*Bathrooms at the park and benches at the park and walking trail. Didn’t have difficulty parking, only two cars on the street where we parked. We walked around the downtown from where we parked.*

*A lovely city park on the town square with benches and public restroom. No water fountains. Shelter house, picnic tables, free RV park – no sewer but water and $10 for electrical. Tornado siren and shelter. Nicely landscaped streets, lots of parking available. The bank was downtown. City Hall, library and community center easily available along with the grocery store, a credit card filling station. All services were a block or two from anywhere around the square.*

*We found out from the city manager that the park has Wi-Fi so we used it. We also discovered that the public restrooms in the park have hot water and showers! There are places to park campers by the park. On the east side of town is an area to park RVs. We weren’t sure if it is private or run by the city. The sign for the RV Park was very small, easy to miss, and we had to drive around a lot to find the street address mentioned on the sign. The library is a great asset! Four hotel rooms for rent, but there isn’t really a sign that tells you about them. It was easy to park downtown and the town square is conducive to walking around.*

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

*Implement dealer and Co-op were easily accessed. Neat and orderly appearance.*

*Yes, they would be easily accessed if they were open. Areas were nice. There were a couple of buildings that need something done with them. One building downtown that didn’t look safe with the backdoor open and inside not nice.*

*The city did not have many shopping areas other than the Scoop and grocery store for shopping. The library was a lovely pleasant area. It provided for all ages.*

*There really doesn’t seem to be any retail downtown . . . another battle we face in our small town.*

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

*Since the schools have been closed for many years, those buildings could be repurposed. Perhaps some land on outskirts of community could be used for an industrial park.*

*Yes, if they wanted too. The implement, welding, seed selling business, and coop could expand.*

*Presently Jewell Implement Case IH was the only industrial facility. There was farm land on both sides of the highway if owners would want to sell their land. Grain elevator, saw a truck with R7CU on it.*

*Already noted*

5. 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?

*Mankato is nearest hospital. No presence of health care services.*

6. 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.)

*Observed only one home for sale. Saw only one home for rent. There is mostly well kept homes. There are a small percentage of homes in need of repair.*

*There are many nicer looking houses in just driving by than not so nice houses. There seems to be something for everyone based on wages. Only seen one house for sale while driving around.*

*I saw no properties for sale and very few for rent. Jewell Apts. - complete with good yard and street lighting. Jewell Rental – low income.*

*We asked the city manager about housing, and she directed us to a house that is for sale. She said there isn’t much in the way of rentals. We didn’t think to ask about the two apartment complexes. We had a feeling that the brick apartments might be low income. We have a similar style building here in Miltonvale that is low income. The white apartment building is conveniently located right downtown. The city manager also said there were four lofts for rent above the soda fountain.*

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

*There were four locations for rentals. Saw only one vacancy in street level apartments. Possible available apartments in downtown upper story apartments. Also 4 motel rooms open.*

*Not sure what there is for rent for actual houses. Seen there were a couple apartments with a vacancy sign on them.*

*Only one property was observed. I understand the Rooster Palace was being rented out at hunting season.*

*Our assessment is there is a shortage of houses for sale or for rent. Again, this is typical of our small communities, and a struggle we all face.*

7. Schools

Do the following schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of temporary classrooms? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained? Were you able to find print information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?

*No school in operation. Buildings are being used for other things.*

*Yes, but they are not in operation as schools anymore. Football field looks rough. There seems to be a business in the old high school. Looks like the old grade school some individual has bought the building.*

*The school is now consolidated, so there is no school in town and the students are bused to other towns. The preschool in the community building is no longer in operation.*

1. Childcare

Were you able to determine if childcare was affordable and available?

*Only observed flyer in grocery store with daycare.*

*Not sure what is available, would guess if there is any it would be affordable.*

*Only info of child care was a note in the grocery store posted “Need a babysitter”.*

1. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the churches represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of church-sponsored community services?

*Observed 3 churches and their appearance was neat and tidy. FB page for Jewell Community Youth Group. The day we visited there was some activity for the youth.*

*Active churches look nice. The one that is no longer in use needs to have something done with it. Didn’t note any church sponsored activities.*

*The only church I saw was the Christian Church which was well kept and nice appearance. I saw a church sign on the highway but no church. I did not observe any evidence of church sponsored services.*

*We located the following churches: Christian Church, Calvary Bible Evangelical Free, Assembly of God, and Trinity United Methodist.*

1. Civic

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

*American Legion and perhaps fire department. Chamber of Commerce.*

*Only thing I saw was the garden club. Didn’t see anything like Lions Club or anything like that.*

*Community Center, Lions Club and Churches*

*The Sunflower Foundation seems to have funded the lake/walking paths. Maag Memorial Park was a donation by a community member. We wanted to know a little more about her . . . a more informative sign telling about her would have been nice as a visitor and to honor her gift.*

1. Public Infrastructure

Comment in general on the streets, street signage, sidewalks, parking, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, and streetscapes in areas other than downtown. Did you observe land-use planning?

*Observed that the neighborhoods are kept free from trash and clutter, eyesores concealed from street view. Sidewalks and parking in good shape. Yards well maintained. Most homes well maintained. Possibly the new constructed building which houses the library and community center as well as the park suggest land use planning. The walking trails would be a great example of land use planning.*

*Streets in good repair along with sidewalks. Landscaping nice in most areas of town. Yards are kept up and mowed in a good majority of the town.*

*Very nicely kept streets, sidewalks level and wide, parking available. Outside of the downtown area, no restrooms. Housing areas were landscaped and well kept.*

*Nice curbs downtown! Nice public restrooms in the park. The street signs and street lights were pretty basic. It is the beginning of winter, so I’m sure we didn’t get the full impact of the landscaping in the park. The lake is well maintained – it would benefit from a nice sign on the main highway. The only reason we knew about it was from the friendly lady at the market. We didn’t observe land use planning other than the lake and walking paths. We did wonder if there was community cemetery.*

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

*Roy Arasmith was very helpful. He told us about the grocery store for lunch. Told us about the town, businesses, walking trails, and other businesses downtown. Answered all our questions and opened his shop to show us his private toy collection.*

*They were closed.*

*Very friendly and well informed about the city.*

*Again, we can’t say enough about the city manager. She may have known we were “undercover” for the First Impressions project, but then again she may have bought our line that we were just passing through. Either way, she was exactly what a town wants as a representative. AND . . . she is invested in the town having lived there her whole life and is now raising her family there. She shared several ideas/visions she has for the community . . . it was encouraging to us to interact with her. IF we had been thinking of moving or establishing a business, she would have been a selling point.*

Police/fire protection:

*We could see good signage on the fire building.*

*Seen there was a fire station. Didn’t see any information on it. Guessing the town is patrolled by Jewell County law enforcement.*

*Did not see the police. The fire department was in the town square. City shop.*

*We saw the volunteer fire department on the town square. We didn’t note any police.*

Library:

*Librarian was very observant and helpful. We all updated to the new library cards that work in all libraries.*

*It was open on the day we stopped. They had some activity going on, painting a milk jug to look like a pumpkin. Didn’t receive any information about the town or library while we were there.*

*Lovely library and very friendly staff.*

*YES*

City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sportsplex)

*I loved the landscaping and design of the downtown park. Plenty of seating and WI-FI was available as well as restrooms which were well supplied and clean. Walking trail has great signage and was very pleasant. The lake and walking trail provide an outlet for the community and youth.*

*City Park was nice and inviting. The sign for the walking trail needs to be facing out towards the parking area or along the street to turn to go towards the walking trails at the lake. We wouldn’t have seen it without going into the park and then knowing how to get there.*

*YES*

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?

*Jewell Corn Show is their yearly festival. There were signs of the activities for the show that happened 2 weeks ago. They had banners on lamp posts for the show. They had t-shirts for sale with the slogan “What happens in Jewell stays in Jewel.” I also like the attraction Jewell Trails and Emerson Lake which had a great sign in the park.*

*Jewell corn show. Their downtown banners had the corn show on them. For receiving more information on that particular event there wasn’t any. No, the slogan doesn’t use it. Liked the logo on the City of Jewell’s Facebook page with the city’s water tower incorporated on it.*

*Jewell Corn Show. What Happens in Jewell, Stays in Jewell*

*Jewell hosts the corn show every fall. We didn’t notice any other special events.*

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

*Jewell Corn Show and Jewell Community Youth Group*

*There were some Halloween events going on.*

Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.

*Truly the friendly and open community members would draw you back to visit again. The town’s neat and tidy appearance is a big draw.*

*The walking trails on the west side of town, the park, nice downtown.*

*The lake with walking trails and fishing available. Quiet and calming.*

*The lumberyard in Jewell is one of the first things a visitor sees when they drive into town, and doesn’t offer the best first impression. My first thought was that it might be a farm equipment museum/display. If the owner was in agreement, I could imagine arranging the equipment in tidy rows, and getting a few more machines, so that it read as a display rather than a junkyard. We happen to own an old building in Miltonvale and are currently making some much needed repairs. We know firsthand the struggle of making improvements to a building that basically has very little market value. Sometimes it seems like money down the drain . . . That said, we also know how unused buildings in disrepair can bring down the spirit of the town. The lake, mentioned above, could be a draw for families looking for a fishing/picnicking spot.*

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

*The city employee, Roy, was top notch with info and help. Kevin at the grocery store was top notch with info and help. Buildings are well marked with signage.*

*No don’t think so. We would have liked to see what “The Scoop” is. Hours weren’t listed on the poor. No place to meet someone for food if you were meeting to eat, such as a restaurant. Have to meet at the grocery store and get what they are serving for the day. Not sure if that is just during the week or every day.*

*Very friendly staff and helpful to visitors. No restaurant or specialty shops.*

*Signage is a definite need in Jewell! Perhaps a sign on the highway listing the lake, City Park, restrooms, Wi-Fi, gas, groceries, RV Parking, and camper parking. If we were on the road and needed a bathroom or Wi-Fi, we might swing into the city park. If we were bicycling and needed s shower or a place to put up a tent for the night, we would stop by the lake or the city park. There are no restaurants except the meal prepared by the grocery store. My idea: Set Kevin up in a restaurant! He said he loves to cook, and his chili was top notch!*

13. Wrap-up

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

*Concealed eyesores kept from street observance. Clean and free of any trash on streets and sidewalks. The residential streets followed through with the neat and tidy appearance. The people we interacted with were pleasant and friendly. They were open and welcoming.*

*A lot of nice things have been done in town so far. Just need to do a few more but there is always things to do and work on. Nice quiet town in a rural setting.*

*Very clean city with individual compartments for recyclables. Very friendly people, well received. Very helpful. Hometown, small town way of life.*

*We think that a town with a town square is most fortunate! Jewell has jewel of a city park right in the middle of downtown. It seems like a place the community might gather, with potential for events and activities. The community building is a huge asset, and to have a paid librarian is frosting! The lake and walking path is beautiful!*

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

*The stores are inviting but need more people to shop. There is a need for more attractions to visit in the downtown area. Need more than the grocery store and library to attract visitors/shoppers.*

*Being rural and no school. Small town. Elderly population.*

*No school. No medical & emergency services. No police protection. No restaurant.*

*Houses and buildings in disrepair are a big challenge. Our town faces the same frustration. Getting folks to clean up and fix up is an ongoing battle. We don’t have an answer, but we know that it pulls the whole community down when a property has a yard full of trash, old vehicles, trailer houses, campers, etc. Clyde, Kansas has solved the problem by buying properties, and tearing down the old houses. It has kept the town looking better, and kept out absentee landlords. It means that the city and/or private individuals have to foot the bill, but in the end it makes the town better. Also Jewell needs better signs to direct visitors. That’s a pretty easy fix! And we know from talking with the city manager that a good website is on the front burner. That will act as another “sign” and help visitors know what is available.*

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

*I will remember the friendly people we met the most. I want to come back to Jewell Trails. I want my hometown streets to look as clean, tidy and trash free as Jewell’s. I wish I knew of more activities to attend or businesses to shop in Jewell.*

*The walking trail around the body of water. Clean downtown and square.*

*A very clean and prideful community! Very friendly and warm personalities.*

*The friendliness of the folks at the market and the city manager. The wonderful town square with the foresight to have hot water and showers. The Community Building! The beautiful old church that could be something really special with the right owner and lots of TLC. Kevin’s chili!*

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