

First Impressions



Little River, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership with
The Dane G. Hansen Foundation



- 2010 Census Population 557 (up 4% since 2000)
(KS- up 6%)
- 25.5% college educated, 93.5% high school or GED
- KS 30.7% college education, 90% HS or equivalency
- 72.1% family households, 27.9% non-family
- Poverty rate is 12.1% (KS=13.8%)
- Median Age 38.2 years (36)
- Median household income is \$45,125 (\$51,872)

Web Presence:



[HOME](#)

[CITY](#)

[CHAMBER](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[DEVELOPMENT](#)

[FOUNDATION](#)



CITY OF LITTLE RIVER



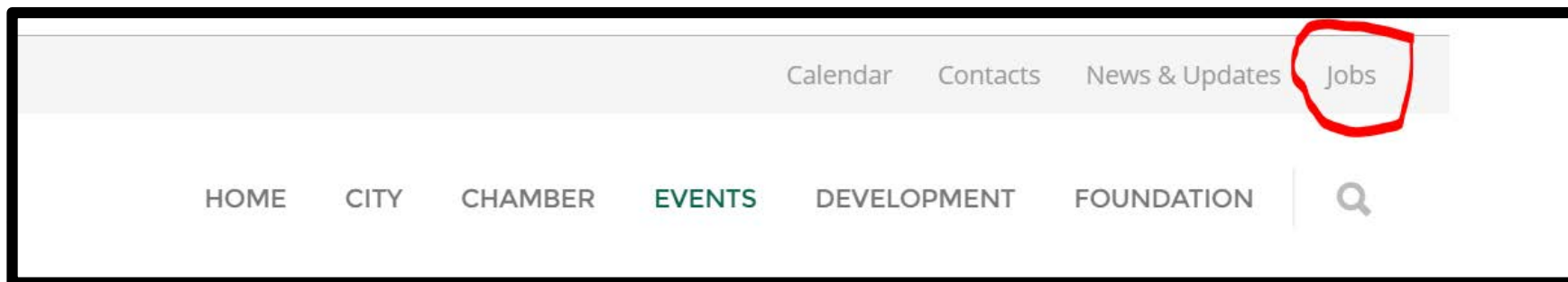
Web Presence:

City <http://littleriverks.com/>

- Beautiful web page communicates a vibrant community that is open, transparent and works well together.
 - KDOT Downtown project – ***Congrats!!***
 - City Minutes
 - An invitation for citizen ideas
 - “A neat idea to include local job opportunities”
- Links to Chamber, City Foundation, Realtors, Schools and an inclusive Community Calendar.

Chamber <http://littleriverks.com/chamber/>

- Members, recognition, options for involvement



Web Presence:

FaceBook

Things to do in Little River Kansas

<https://www.facebook.com/places/Things-to-do-in-Little-River-Kansas/112130622137711/>

- Fall Festival

USD #444 Recreation Commission

<https://www.facebook.com/USD-444-Recreation-Commission-639991626017459/>

- A link off the City Website.
- Showed October Pumpkin Carving

Little River, KS Area Lost And Found Pets

- 268 members!

The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Lively downtown with cars parked on street
- Active Businesses
- A Grocery store!!!



The “Five-Minute” Impression

- Nice to see life downtown! (3 comments)
- Building “started” to be painted at south entrance...
- Community Little River Sign- Landscape very welcoming



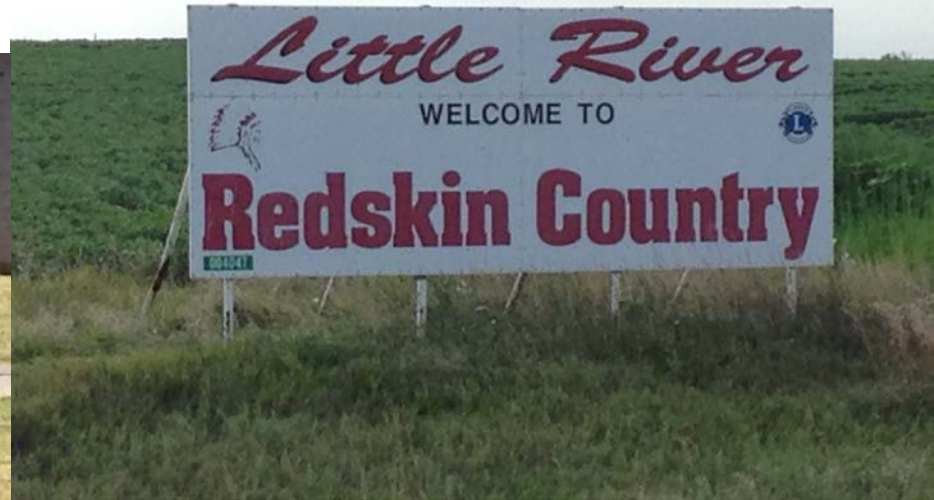
The “Five-Minute” Impression

- A lot of nice homes and a good downtown
- Nice, clean little town with nice paved streets, unique street signs, beautiful homes.
- Didn't notice many unkempt properties



Observations from Major Entrances

- Loved the sign pointing to the ball field.
- Would help to have signs to the park and school
- A nice main street with pride.
- A few eye sores when you first came in.



Downtown Business Area

- The Garden of Eden Grocery Store was mentioned in many sections of the reports.





Photos taken in July, August and October









Businesses, merchandise, customer service

- Childcare
- Blue Sky Salon
- Telephone
- Insurance
- Grocery store
- Bank
- Antiques
- Restaurant
- Library
- Librarian was great
- We were greeted and treated respectfully
- Everyone was friendly and made you feel welcome

*What was invisible:
Little Ol' Cookie House.*



- **Public Amenities**

- We found benches
- Used the restrooms at the Grocery store.
- Benches and trash cans on main street.
- Bathrooms in the park by the Basketball courts



Website shows that 10 benches and 9 waste receptacles will be replaced in new streetscaping project.

Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

- Our visitors were not sure; the website shows an industrial park.
- In many small towns, a secondary commercial area is along the highway. Little River's is concentrated on Main Street.

Health Care Services

- Health Care services are out of town.
- 2 volunteers provide Emergency Medical Response

Housing

- There are 272 housing units
- 209 are occupied (77%) (KS= 89.6%)
- 63 are vacant (23%) (KS= 10.4%)
- Owner Occupied: 134 (64%) (KS=67.1%)
- Renter Occupied: 75 (36%) (KS= 32.9%)
- Family occupied: 60% (KS= 66%)
- Although 44% of houses are built pre-1939, it is impressive that there have been houses built in every decade since then, including 13 since 2000. The US Census shows no houses built 2010 and later, but we saw building taking place when we visited.

Housing Observations

- Homes looked neat and tidy
- A variety of sizes, styles & price ranges









Evidence of homes for sale and apartments for rent. New lots available and homes being built.

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



- Sometimes a home owner needs a little help with work they can not do.
- Sometimes codes need to be enforced.







Schools

- Schools bring in visiting teams-- signage would help find it.



- Middle and High School in Little River
- Elementary School in Windom
- Well-maintained schools

Schools

Your leadership team told me that your schools are strong in

- Academics
- Sports
- Arts
- Young Entrepreneurs Program*



*80% of new jobs will come from new businesses.

K-State Research and Extension has a priority on Entrepreneurship

Child Care

- Preschool is offered by the school district



- One visitor, who had once owned a child care, was grateful for a visit.
- Only negative: storm shelter is across the street.

Faith/Religion

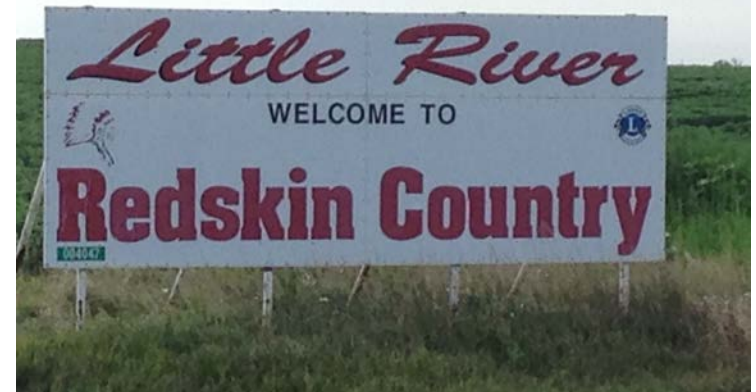


Civic

- Masonic Lodge
- AA Meetings @ Masonic Lodge
- Lions Club hosted the signs
- Did not see 4-H* or Scouts



* Website shows "Rice County 4-H welcomes you" sign, but we missed it.



Public Infrastructure

- Love the brick streets
- A couple of benches are pretty worn out (New Streetscape grant will replace)
- Outside of Main Street, the street signs were unique.
- Loved the paved streets— makes a town seem cleaner.



City Hall, Fire, EMS and Police Services

- City hall was very nice and the city clerk was very welcoming, knowledgeable and helpful.
- Visitors can see locations of your emergency services.
- Leadership team says the Fire Department is excellent and active.



City Parks

- Nice parks!
- I love that they are raising money for a splash pad.
- Very welcoming and manicured.
- Didn't notice any walking trails.



Library

- Visitors reported a warm welcome
- Nice variety of books
- Computers and internet access
- Summer reading program
- Story hour



Recreation/Tourism/Natural Features

- Our team was not aware of any recreation or tourism
- Visitors saw information about the Fall Festival as they visited in September.
- Website events:
 - Little River Suicide Trail Run
 - Ole Hometown Christmas
 - Splash Out Hunger



Other?



Historical Library: Paint and a sign make a little building special.

Burke Hotel: *Impressive*



Most Positive Observations

- “Your town motivated us to get into action! You should feel blessed to have such a unique place to live that seems safe and involved.”
- Loved that the local people support the hardware store and the grocery store.
- Very friendly community. Clean and safe feeling. Housing options for all ages.



Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Driving to another town for fuel.
- All ranges of income may make it more difficult for all properties to be maintained.
- Maintaining community commitment to shopping local.

What will you remember 6 months from now?

- I will remember the friendly people and the nice downtown area.
- Little River is a fun, friendly community that has several options for small town living! Really enjoyed my visit.
- The Learning Center Daycare— very positive!

“Economic Development is not about jobs. Economic development is about strengthening communities so that job creation can occur organically.”

—Maury Forman,
Washington State Economic Development Director
1990-2016

Next Steps:

Thank our leadership team:

- Jessie Godfrey
- Lucas Raleigh
- Lucas Baumbaugh
- Ashley Gretchcord

- **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