First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

Community Visited: LaCygne, KS Date(s) Visited: A- Feb. 17 (Friday)

 B- Feb. 3 (Friday)

 C- Feb. 4 (Saturday)

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?

1. Comprehensive city website. I liked the fact it outlined water system improvements so that you knew what to expect when visiting.
2. Community website was attractive and easy to navigate. Also informative, concerning community organizations, civic groups, etc.
3. LaCygne has a very informative website.
4. 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.)
5. The first thing that caught my attention when driving into town was the new greenway walking/trail that was filled with residents. It was a lovely day; people were walking dogs and visiting along trail – a wonderful welcome into town. The water line construction was evident; however, we were asked to be patient (online) before the visit and knew what to expect. Students were leaving school – while there are crosswalks near school, I noticed many children walking in ditches alongside a primary street between school and library/downtown as there were no sidewalks. Beautiful library, several empty storefronts, and lovely pocket park near city offices rounded out the drive. Winding into LaCygne, you are greeted by a large, visible sign. I did question if the signage should be located in area near Highway 69 to attract people to town.
6. LaCygne was an attractive, clean small town, with new sidewalk construction, new Dollar General and Casey’s stores, school kids crossing at well-marked crosswalks, Friendly police officer nodded, as he watched the school crossing. Signage on the main thoroughfare was attractive and well done. The waterline project had much of the town torn up I am anxious to revisit this summer after construction of sidewalks and water line is completed. I have passed LaCygne hundreds of times going up 69 highway, and always thought it was on the side where the power plant sits Even after exiting, I still thought I should go East, with only tiny highway signs to direct me Could a large sign like the one on top of the hill at the curve be next to US 69 highway? How many people think they have seen LaCygne when they have seen the power plant? What a jewel when we went around the curve and saw the little town in the valley.
7. Ghost town. There was a local gentleman sitting in Casey’s and mentioned to the clerk “where were all the people, it’s a ghost town.” We didn’t see anyone out for a stroll, children playing in the parks, even out in the yard doing anything. Nice large welcome sign as you enter from the east. New Dollar General, new Casey’s, 2 banks right across the street from one another (Labette Bank – new), pharmacy, storage buildings on the east and west side of town, chiropractor, motorcycle store, bar & grill, laundry, hair salon, thrift stores, city shop & water shop, a walking bridge to name a few.
Water and Sidewalk project were in process – so the town is doing improvements.
We didn’t noticed any signage to tell the middle and high schools were 4-5 miles west of town, though.

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?)

1. Several signs seemed a bit dated; however, it was nice that everything consistently displayed their swan branding. There were empty store fronts downtown. However, there are many terrific aspects of downtown including the library, historical society, Rooster’s Antique Shop, city offices, police station, etc. Also, dentist, medical clinic, convenient store – essential services. I did stop in Rooster’s Antique Shop, historical society, and Casey’s – everyone was extremely friendly. It was a community that definitely made us feel welcome. Everyone waved when we were walking around downtown – very good feeling.
2. Like many small towns, there were some vacant store fronts, but a majority were occupied by small businesses such as Rooster’s antique shop, People’s Communication, Dentist, and Chiropractor, Beautiful new Library, Veteran Wall of Honor, Historical Society, Large, attractive City Office and Police Station. Most signage was attractive. Most businesses were service type businesses, Flea Market was the only merchandise type business observed on Main Street. Again, there was some waterline equipment blocking access to some areas. Businesses we entered, we were greeted immediately, and received friendly and helpful service.
3. Several vacant, dilapidated buildings. Buildings are older with visible signage.
Loved the sign under the school stop sign – “Look Again” good signage due to the curve coming from the west. Also loved the sign in residential area- “We (heart) our children – drive carefully.” Library, dentist, car wash, historical society, city office, liquor store, organic food store. For a town this small the variety of businesses are good and surprising. We were greeted. The “local” shoppers were as friendly as the workers.

**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?**

1. Pocket park on Main Street. This was a nice place to stop. There were benches in this area. There was also walking trail on east side of town. I did not see public restrooms or benches in other places. Very easy to park – no issues in this regard. There was very little streetscaping; however, I did wonder if this was in the improvement plan in conjunction with water lines, etc. In the pocket park, there is opportunity for signage for visitors to show vision for downtown. This could help improve wayfinding in downtown area.
2. There was a small park at the head of main street. Few if any benches or water fountains observed. A swan, and a few small flowerpots decorated sidewalks on main street. Probably an opportunity for larger pots, small trees or other types of decoration to make the area more eye appealing. The Y split on Main Street may also offer some green space opportunities, although without clear marking and signage, parking may be confusing for visitors to your city.
3. A nice area with few benches at the railroad/business district to sit & gab.
At the park south of town there were several restrooms including porta potty. Once the sidewalk and water project are finished the streetscaping will improve. At some places the project dampened the parking. Sidewalks are even handicapped accessible.

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

1. Dollar General, farm supply, health center, pharmacy, strip mall, banks, grocery store, BBQ, car wash, Beachner Grain were all along Highway 152. These were easily accessible from main highway. Mixture of new and old structures comprised the other retail shopping areas.
2. Along highway 152 (East Market St.) there were many relatively new attractive businesses. I observed a Dollar General, Stainbrooks farm supply, Family Health Center, Pharmacy, small strip mall with Laundromat, Chiropractor, two Banks, small local grocery store (Moon’s market) Blue’s Barbeque Grill, Automotive repair shop, Car Wash just off of 152, and just South of 152 was the elevator and Beachner Grain.
3. Several new businesses – Dollar General, Casey’s, Labette Bank.
May have been a bus trip, the parking lot was full at the bank. Very attractive and easy to access.

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

1. ProActive Agriculture is on main street; however, it was closed when I went by…wondered more about this business – wondered if they work with organic farms nearby if they could link farms/ag tourism to town (fits in recreation category as well)….would have liked to know more about this business. Could not ascertain from signage, etc.
2. Yes it was a defined area, signage was sparse, and in need of repair, and the area could have been cleaner and more eye appealing. There appeared to be several vacant buildings, although they were very impressive in size and apparently relative new. Does your county have an Economic Development staff working on bringing small industry to those buildings? You have a beautiful community close to Kansas City, with all the benefits of rural living I am so jealous.
3. Yes and looks like they could add easily expand.

5. Health Care Services

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services.

1. Family health center appeared new/very attractive, easily accessible.
2. A newly constructed spacious family health center was observed. I was told it was affiliated with Olathe Medical Center. Hospital and Emergency medical care was available at neighboring communities, such as Paola 30 minutes away, or 45 minutes to Kansas City area medical facilities.
3. Ambulance Service

**Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physicians, dentists, optometrists, public health and other healthcare providers.**

1. Additional services included dentist, pharmacy, and two chiropractor offices.
2. Two Chiropractor offices, a Dentist office, a Pharmacy, Family Health Center, represent a pretty good assortment for a small town
3. Several including: Dr. Office, pharmacy, dentist, chiropractor. Good variety and the availability is a big plus for the size of town.

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

1. We noted one facility for assisted living or nursing facilities. I did question maybe we missed something due to water construction. Facility we noted was somewhat dated.
2. We observed a pretty extensive senior housing complex that probably was nearing 20-30 years old. Maybe a little dated? Our housing complex of that age has several accessibility issues, and is in need of updating and/or replacement. Signage along hwy 152 was clear, if not a bit small.
3. Senior housing has nine buildings. Looks like duplexes.

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.)**

1. Housing along highway seemed to be higher quality. There is quite a mixture of quality of housing within town, often side-by-side. I did question resell value; however, this may be a norm within the community.
2. Housing was mixed, with at least 2 informal trailer parks shoehorned into housing areas. There were several really nice houses next door to some pretty unattractive houses, making selling more difficult, especially to higher income buyers. Perhaps 15-25% of housing was pretty trashy and unattractive. Housing along Highway 152 was perhaps more attractive. We observed very few houses offered for sale, which is a good thing. Discussion with young lady at City Office revealed a high percentage of rentals, which presents a challenge in itself.
3. Definitely a mixture from trailer, trailer, trailer to next door very nice home and some in between. Several in disrepair. Several trailer courts that including RV’s.
The challenge would be if you want to live in a neighborhood full of trailers.

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

1. Rentals were available – but they are not listed online. I looked there first before inquiring at city office. Depending on age trying to reach, may look at increasing online presence.
2. It would appear that all levels of rentals were available, and a list of several landlord’s contact information was readily available at the city office.
3. Didn’t observed any for rent signs and not many houses for sale signs.

**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?**

1. N/A
2. According to the website, preschool through sixth grade is in the elementary building in LaCygne, with the Middle school and High school 5 miles west of town on Highway 152. School buildings appear adequate in size, well-kept and attractive.
3. Elementary school is in town, but the middle and high school are 4-5 miles west of town. All seem adequate in size and maintained well. High school has a new turf football field and concession stand.

**Were you able to find print information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?**

1. N/A
2. We didn’t look for that information within the community, although it was readily available on the school District website.
3. N/A
4. Childcare

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

1. 4 providers listed online
2. There were 4 Group daycare service providers listed on city websites.
3. Didn’t find anything on it.
4. 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?**

1. Online listing at chamber indicates two churches, four seen on visit. We did not see any type of church-sponsored community services in community.
2. We observed four different denomination Churches within the city, with both older and newer types of Churches represented. A brochure in the city offices advertised an upcoming activity like a spaghetti dinner.
3. Several denominations including: Catholic with beautiful stone grotto and bench area,
Christian, Methodist, New Life and 2 Baptist Churches.
At the Christian Church there was a sign for their Celebrate Recovery.
Some very nice buildings and some metal buildings.
4. Civic

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

1. The only civic organization I could find when searching was Chamber of Commerce via online presence. No evidence of civic organization activity.
2. As near as we could tell, there was no Lions Club, Rotary, etc. organizations active at this time. There was an active Chamber of Commerce that appeared to be well attended by business leaders of the area.
3. Didn’t notice.
4. **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?**

1. The walkway along Highway 152 was a fantastic way to be welcomed into town. Street signage visible from east (drive in on Highway 69).
2. Most striking was the construction of hundreds of feet of new, accessible sidewalk along 152 highway. As the landscape is restored along those new sidewalks, the opportunity exists to plant flowers and shrubbery along those new sidewalks to improve the appearance of the community approach. Street signage and was evident, and clear when approaching from the East. Signage when approaching from the West may be a little lacking.
3. The park has a new skate park, new slide at the pool, soccer, disc golf, and tennis courts.

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

1. Historic society is very nice for a small town – appreciated the code on front door you can scan to find out more information about town’s history if not open.
2. Town hall/Police station was attractive, open and easily accessible. Receptionist was friendly, open and very helpful. When asked about the availability of rental property, she immediately presented a listing of landlords and phone contact information for each. Also pamphlets for civic activities were placed in plain sight and available to the public. Brochures for nearby attractions were prominently displayed in the city office.
3. N/A

**Police/fire protection:**

1. City offices and police office visible and open to public.
2. LaCygne is served by a volunteer fire department, and had a clean and efficient police headquarters.
3. Saw 1 police car parked at a residence.

**Library:**

1. Library is fantastic
2. A beautiful new Library building was recently built on the East side of Market Street.
3. N/A

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

1. Great park in town as well.
2. We drove through a huge (maybe as much as 25 acres) city park on the south side of town. It was well identified with a huge up to date swimming pool complex, skate park, many picnic shelters, campsites along the south edge, lighted ball diamond, soccer fields and plenty of green space.
3. A walking track would be a nice addition. Pool with awesome slide, disc golf, soccer, tennis courts, shelter, NEW Skate Park and playground.
4. Recreation/Tourism

**Is the community well-known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset?**

1. This community gets its name for French version of “swan” – great branding used consistently throughout town. Would like to see stronger signage connecting town with recreation opportunities associated with LaCygne River. No evidence of what is available in regards to camping, floating, etc. in town.
2. LaCygne French for the swan, so the image is repeated often on signage, water tower, and the annual swan fest including a children’s parade. LaCygne is also located on a river of that name, which opens up recreational opportunities with camping, hunting and fishing. Are river float trips another possibility? Are there any other recreational opportunities with the river, or area lakes?
3. Swans – Swans – Swans. In people’s yard, welcome sign, EVERYWHERE.

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

1. The significant event that I found information for online is Swanfest.
2. Swanfest is the most obvious, and there is good coverage of that activity on the city website. We saw some tractors in town, don’t know if there are any car shows or tractor shows in the community or the surrounding area. Here again I am extremely jealous of LaCygne’s proximity to the Kansas City/Paola area, and the opportunity to attract day trippers from the city. Organic Agriculture is BIG; are there any visitor or tourism opportunities associated with ProActive Agriculture?
3. No

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

1. There could be a much stronger tie to green space surrounding this town. I could capitalize on outdoor recreation. Very beautiful area – I am in hopes that walkway on east side of town is planned to connect entire town, and additional sidewalks are planned. Is there potential to develop greenway trail to camping areas, etc.?
2. LaCygne lies in a beautiful river valley with surrounding timbered hills, opening to level fertile farm ground to the West. It doesn’t get any better than that.
3. I would think employment at the electric plant east of town would draw.

**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.**

1. N/A
2. The City office also serves this function. Probably adequate for this small of a community.
3. N/A

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

1. N/A
2. There were several restaurants, and Casey’s General Store to provide snack and food needs. Roosters, a small flea market looked intriguing. I am excited about coming back in the spring when green is the dominant color The Water and sidewalk projects will be completed and begun to heal. That will look so much better.
3. Possibly the Organic Food store.
4. Wrap-up

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

1. Proximity to urban areas. Could capitalize on this location/green space to bring people to community, Park/walking trail, Improvements are happening, New businesses/structures: Casey’s, Dollar General, medical clinic, library, etc., Grocery store, Pocket park downtown
2. Proximity to 4 lane highway 69, and nearness to Kansas City. I feel there is a tremendous opportunity for many forms of tourism and/or agritourism with this closeness to a major city. What a climactic entry to your beautiful valley Come over the hill and around the curve on Highway 152 and the city is laid out before you. Many positive improvements are apparent, such as sidewalks, water lines, new Casey’s, new Dollar General, etc., New Library, Good clear signage along 152 highway, Small local grocery store (rare as hen’s teeth in that small of a community), I loved the Veteran’s memorial on Market Street.
3. N/A

**What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?**

1. Lack of sidewalks connecting entire town, (believe this is work in progress, but no signs to indicate master plan), housing, older signage can make town seem dated. Wayfinding is extremely important.
2. High percentage of rental housing. Predominately older housing stock. Only local traffic through town. Fill those Industrial Park buildings and create jobs.
3. The improvement projects are obstacles.

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

1. Walking trail, park, water line construction, friendly people
2. You have the new sidewalks that I have wanted for my town for years, Beautiful setting, Impressive City Park.
3. Is like going back in time, but with improvements going on. The MANY stop signs at just about every corner.

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