

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: **Pretty Prairie, KS**

Date Visited: **09/22/20 (x3)**

- 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?
 - The city website had good basic information. It seemed to be a good presentation of what we saw when arriving. There was good contact information. There was information about the businesses available, city info, council member names, and the schools. I felt the information was adequate for community introduction.
 - Web search does turn up several links including websites for the city, school, and rodeo. A Facebook search brings up active rodeo and school pages. The www.cityofprettyprairie.org website was built on a nice background photo, but the information is not complete and is completely resident oriented. Primary information seems to relate to track pickup and water issues. www.pprodeo.com provides good information about the event and town and the site is visually engaging. The school websites are perhaps not visually inspiring at the main level, but provide expected information. I also found information related to real estate for sale.
 - The community's website adequately communicated what we would find in the community. Could easily locate information on businesses, contact information for the city, school, and rodeo. Searching for the city website, it was not at the forefront of the search. The rodeo took up for first several sites.

- 2. The "Five-Minute" Impression:** After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.
 - Couldn't find out how to get to the main area of town. Looked for signs but didn't see any. First reaction was that it is a lovely, tidy, quiet town. Homes, streets, and businesses seemed to be clean, clear of clutter, and inviting. In our drive through town we stopped to ask an elderly man in his front yard where we could find a convenience store. He was sweet and charming and gave us directions. We were impressed with his gracious help.
 - The town presents itself as a loved community. Yards were manicured, properties were neat and maintained. There are a few residential properties either vacant or in need of attention, but not many. Overall we got the feeling of quiet and justified pride. Main Street does not present as well as the rest of the community. It was not well marked as

we arrived from the west. It's a fairly long area with few businesses and lacking in life and color.

- Quaint, calm, clean, well-kept housing, "lost." Signage was not present or maybe just not visible, but did not see directional signage in the community (to the school, nursing home, convenience store, church, etc.).

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

- We came in from the west, but saw no signs directing us to the business area or schools. We thought that might be helpful. We were thirsty so a sign telling us where a community store was would have also been helpful. We also weren't sure where to enter to get to the main part of town.
- We followed Google Maps into Pretty Prairie and arrived from the west. There was very little signage that caught our eye.
- We came in from the west side of town and just turned onto a street to head into the community. I did not see any signs indicating the community was Pretty Prairie. We drove up and down streets to find the things we were searching out as signage was not observed. The community has beautiful churches and some very interesting architecture on Main Street.
- I'm not sure I observed anything that resembled a streetscape.

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

- The business district has some old, rather historic looking buildings. The post office, bank, and steak house were marked with signage. City hall and the library are combined and also had signage. Other buildings were empty or had a sign on the door with a number to call if we wanted to come in and shop. Sidewalks could use some repair – maybe this area is getting ready for improvement? Loved the little grassy area with a cute rail fence by city hall. It looked cute and inviting. The metal bronco rider was a nice touch.
- We felt we could have found Main Street easier if we arrived from the south or north. It's a relatively long street with few businesses and a significant number of vacant buildings, lacking life and color. We drove it twice before identifying city hall and the library. Vertical signage could help the building be more noticeable. When we actually focused on it, the signage on city hall was clear and attractive and the building looked maintained. As with any community struggling with the loss of commercial and retail businesses, upkeep on vacant buildings can be difficult. It appeared this way in Pretty Prairie. A larger structure on the east end of the street had a roof with a sizable hole, leaving the wrong impression. Pre-arrival searched alerted us to the restaurant on Main Street. We timed our visit to eat there and looked for it specifically. The signage for the

restaurant was confusing, with three separate names. (That said, our experience at the restaurant was stellar.)

- A very charming community. It may have been just me, but I couldn't find signage to get from point A to point B – Example: we were looking for a convenience store for a restroom and to find something to drink, but could not find one. We realized we drove by it several times and never recognized what it was. The buildings on Main Street were old and charming. One of the buildings did have a big hole in the roof. When looking for the steak house we saw a yellow sign over the sidewalk that said café and did not see any other visible signs, so we went there, but it was a vacant building. We walked up the street and saw the steak house on the other side of the road. The buildings on that side were all with flat fronts and the signs on either a wall, window, or door, which was not easily visible. We also went up and down Main Street several times before we saw the city hall/library.
- The sidewalks on the city office/library side of Main Street are crumbling and in need of repair. There was one bench on Main Street that had to be beautiful and vibrant at one time, however the top is worn and paint is peeling off. The sidewalk near the bench is painted in white and black squares, which was neat to see, but it didn't continue up and down the block and looked somewhat out of place.

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

- We went into city hall and were warmly greeted by the city employees – two ladies. They were friendly and answered my questions about a code I had looked up in their city codes. We asked if they do a welcome packet for new residents, and they graciously showed us. We had lunch at the steak house and were warmly welcomed. We had a great lunch. We visited with the server, and a young man who was a pizza chef – we enjoyed the conversations.
- On Main Street the restaurant is the primary retail business. There was a building with a note that says it was available by appointment but was not open at the time. We noted a hardware store and additionally noted it was going out of business, but we did not go in. We didn't see a grocery store.
- The convenience store had a clean restroom, a variety of options to choose from for snacks, drinks, pizza, etc., very clean and the lady working was very friendly and very proud of her community. Also spoke with three young gentlemen who were very proud of the community and were helpful, answering our questions.
- Convenience store also appeared to have a service area.
- We would not have guessed the Co-Op service station was also the convenience store. It wasn't really marked well.

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

- We were greeted everywhere. At the Co-Op convenience store, the manager was friendly and told us how much she loved her town. The people at the restaurant were friendly and gracious and the ladies at city hall were sweet and helpful.
- Our experience at the restaurant was very good. It had character and was spacious enough to convey prosperity. There were customers seated prior to our arrival. Our wait staff was excellent, personable, friendly, and accommodating. It was a very welcoming experience. In conversation with staff, we learned of AirBnB accommodations as well as an upcoming arts and crafts show. We did not see any other notifications that the AirBnB was available, or of the upcoming arts and crafts show in town, but I didn't check the internet for such things specifically in the Pretty Prairie area.
- Superb customer service in both locations. Openly shared the love they have for their community. Very helpful and easy conversations.

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

- There were benches outside of city hall, and some trash bins. We checked outside of city hall and had access to wi-fi.
- We found benches, trash receptacles, and that wi-fi was available.
- Benches were seen up and down Main Street. Wi-fi was available. Did not see any access to water fountains but didn't expect to with COVID-19. The only public restroom we found was at the convenience store.

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

- No landscaping except to the side of city hall with the grass, pine tree, and fencing. A feature almost hidden from the public is a wonderful metal bronc rider cutout mounted on the side wall of city hall. Too bad it's not visible to the public unless you stop right by city hall. Sidewalks are old and somewhat broken up. There were very few vehicles, so parking was no problem.
- Parking was abundant, though unfortunately this was largely due to lack of retail. Both the restaurant and city hall were located on the same block. Main Street did have some flower pots with foliage. Past efforts were noted. The painted bench and checkerboard sidewalk in front of a closed community theater. We thought more painted benches could liven up the streetscape however would need to be maintained. We applaud the grassy area with metal rodeo themed art between two buildings on Main Street. This is a good and attractive use of that space.
- Didn't really see any landscaping on Main Street. We found the metal bronc rider but wish it had been more visible. The grassy area was well maintained. No difficulty finding

parking on Main Street. Parked and were in close proximity to restaurant and city hall as well as the schools.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- There was no shopping. There was a variety/mercantile type store near city hall, but covers over the windows, and a sign on the door with a phone number to call if you wanted to come and shop. We saw no other retail businesses.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- We saw no manufacturing industries. The Co-Op with pumps and bays for trucks and a very old grain elevator were all we saw. Don't know if the elevator is functioning.
- Pretty Prairie is short on retail, but there were businesses to support the agriculture industry, and we judged the community is largely connected to farming. Unlike some communities, Pretty Prairie did not have the feeling of being land locked. Though we did not ask questions specifically regarding this, we felt there was room for this type of growth.
- We didn't find any identified industrial areas, though we saw what some might call industrial businesses dispersed throughout the community (service station, city maintenance office, other industry on the east side).

6. Health Care Services

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

- We did not see a hospital or emergency medical service in the community.
- Pretty Prairie did not have a hospital or clinic. However they are located near those services through their proximity to Kingman, roughly 15 minutes away, and Hutchinson, 20-25 minutes away. I did not see anything on websites or Facebook highlighting that.
- None observed.

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

- We did not see any location or signs indicating that there were any.
- We were not able to locate a dentist, physician, or clinic.

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

- There was a nice looking long-term care unit on the east side of town. It filled the entire block. We would have gone in but knew with COVID-19 we could not enter.
- There were long-term care services in town. With COVID as a factor we did not go in, but the structures appear relatively new, attractive, and maintained. Good parking and a covered entrance.
- We were able to locate a nursing home on the east side of town. The building was very nice and the grounds appeared to be well maintained.

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.)

- We were impressed with the overall community homes and appearance. Neat and well groomed. We saw only one "for sale" sign, and 1-2 empty houses. Looked like it would be difficult to find housing available.
- Pretty Prairie is an attractive community with cared for properties. I noticed only one for sale sign and assume that the properties may be difficult to come by or are sold privately through word of mouth. A fast web search found that there were 3 homes for sale. We noted several new builds in town which indicated a prosperous income, and several larger, though older homes scattered throughout. The community does have a variety of sizes and ages of residential structures and would likely appeal to a variety of incomes.
- We saw housing that would clearly have varied in pricing from low to moderate to higher priced. We did note newer neighborhood and what appears to be newly constructed properties which may indicate community growth. Properties were neat in appearance and lawns were well maintained (except the rodeo grounds). I recall only one for sale sign in the entire community.

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

- Did not see any signage that indicated properties were available for rent.
- We did not see any houses or apartments advertised as for rent.

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?

- We saw a neat, well-kept high school and a very nice grade school.
- Note noted the grade school, middle school, and high school. Adequate in size. They were maintained and seemed to have recreational grounds as well. I know they are the Bulldogs from the school website. School was in session. There were bike racks for the students to use and they were being used.
- We saw the elementary school and high school. Both buildings' grounds were well maintained.

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

- No, just the general school information.
- I did not see any information based on the searches I did other than they had the school and sports programs.

9. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

- We might have seen a yard attached to a daycare, but no sign, so we are not sure.
- As we drove and walked around the community, we did not see any structure that indicated it was a daycare. We saw one home with a fenced in yard and lots of toys and thought it might be a daycare, but there was no signage to indicate that.
- We didn't see any signs about daycare.

10. 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?

- We located a Methodist Church, a Jerusalem Church (1906), and a mention online of a rural Mennonite Church. The two churches we saw were well maintained and yards were well groomed. The 1906 Jerusalem Church almost looked like a preserved church – really looked amazing for its age.
- We identified two churches and two denominations. The New Jerusalem Church appears to have been in existence for quite some time and was well maintained.
- Grounds were well manicured at both churches – Methodist and Jerusalem. One of the places I visited online mentioned on Mennonite Church, but I didn't locate it in person.
- No evidence of faith-based community services.

11. Civic

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

- We didn't find any information about clubs or organizations.
- The rodeo takes a lot of community organization and revenue from that goes to serve the community.
- The rodeo takes an enormous amount of community collaboration to make it work and generates thousands of visitors, riders, and vendors to this small community.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

- Just the rodeo.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- The streets around town were partly paved and partly gravel with curb and guttering. We did not see sidewalks in residential areas. There was a public park that had restrooms. Landscaping overall in the residential areas was very nice. We all commented that it looked like a great place to live!
- Finding signage, including directional signage, was challenging. The parking by the nursing home was crowded. Can't really comment on the lighting since we were in town during the day. Public restrooms were not easy to find. There were only a very few properties with clutter observed – very impressive! Very easy to see that there is pride in this community.

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

- We enjoyed visiting city hall! Two ladies helped us and were very welcoming. I had a code question from our town of Minneola and they were very helpful. They even gave me a worksheet that they use for dealing with poultry in the city. Nice ladies, a great front for the community!
- The staff at City Hall was friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable.

Police/fire protection:

- They must have protection, but we did not go by it. We did see a patrol car so we know there is some kind of police presence.
- We did notice a fire department.
- The fire station was very nice and appeared to be well maintained. We didn't notice a police station or any officers during our visit. We did see a police vehicle in front of a home.

Library:

- The library is in the same building as city hall. No one was using the library when we were there, so not able to observe much activity. I am sure they could use more space for both the city hall and library should the opportunity arise.
- The library was well stocked for a town of this size.

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

- We didn't see a walking trail, however there might have been one behind the high school. There was a nice park toward the south end of town, which contained playground equipment, benches, lovely trees, and a small restroom. We did not pass a baseball field, but there was a nice playground at the elementary school.
- City park with playground equipment and public restrooms existed.
- The city park had restrooms and a sand volleyball court as well as a playground. All well maintained! We did not observe any walking trails or signage indicating one was available for public use. The high school had nice grounds for their sports activities, and of course the rodeo grounds were visible, but not mowed with grass that was quite tall.

13. Recreation/Tourism

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

- Known for the Largest Nighttime Rodeo in the state of Kansas. We asked about the rodeo at the convenience store and were told it brings in many thousands of people each year.
- Known for the rodeo. They have a strong Facebook and search engine presence. The Facebook page is dynamic with dramatic photos that represent Pretty Prairie in a very strong, positive light.
- Residents indicate they get a lot of traffic during the rodeo week and draw from larger communities from across the state. They showed enthusiasm and conveyed excitement for the rodeo making it a positive experience for just talking to us about it.
- Hosts the largest nighttime rodeo in Kansas bringing in thousands of visitors each year. Driving into the community from several directions we didn't observe any signs or billboards about the rodeo. We learned from restaurant staff that there's also a large car show and craft show at a large, restored barn about 10 miles outside of town. The barn had a \$1 million renovation, and the views are spectacular online. Had they not shared that with us we would have never known it existed. Our server also shared that there was a bed and breakfast operation in town that was booked solid during the hunting seasons, so clearly hunting is a major attraction here – again, had we not had this conversation at lunch we would not have known about this.

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

- The rodeo, of course. We didn't see a football field. The bucking bronco on the side of the building in the grassy area was the closest thing advertising the rodeo. It would be cool to have that same bronco at entries to town. The community obviously looks forward to this event and it takes MANY town members to make it happen – lots of work and residents are involved!
- The rodeo, art classes, the steak house, art and craft show.
- Other than the rodeo, we did not. During conversations we had in town Pretty Prairie was identified as a bedroom community with most people working in Kingman or Hutchinson, so the town was very quiet during our visit.

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).

- We did not see any significant features within the community, but it looked like there was a very nice golf course on the west side of town. The large, renovated barn outside of town that could host weddings or large events. There was a big arts and crafts festival and antique car show at the facility the weekend after our visit. We saw no advertisement about it, only word from the server at the restaurant.
- I don't recall seeing such features.

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.

- No, but city hall would have local information.
- None noted.
- City hall would have that information, but as stated earlier there wasn't really any directional signage we were able to find to point people in the right direction to find it.

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

- We had a great lunch and conversations with the ladies at the restaurant. They said they weren't regular employees but were just filling in for the day. They were definitely great ambassadors for Pretty Prairie! They invited us to come back to town for a painting class in the future and we are interested!
- The restaurant, if I was in the area, or looking for a day trip with friends.
- The food at the steak house was DELICIOUS and the service was incredible! We will be coming back on a Saturday evening for prime rib! We found out about painting classes from our server and will be getting together a group of friends to return to Pretty Prairie for dinner and painting!

14. Wrap-up

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

- We were impressed with the ownership and pride people had for their community.
- People were very friendly, and one lady even commented that she was so glad she had come back to live in Pretty Prairie!
- Our strongest opinion was of the overall look and feeling of the town! It looked like a great place to raise a family. It looked safe, well groomed, and inviting!
- The community just feels good. I just liked it.
- Main Street is rough, but the rest of the community is attractive, and maintained for the most part. There is a feeling of ongoing prosperity through the new home builds and other relatively new structures. The long-term care facility feels more residential than institutional.
- People in the community clearly take pride in how it looks! Everyone we spoke with was friendly, helpful, and very happy to be living there. The first overall impression is that it would be the perfect place to raise a family. It felt very safe!

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- Pretty Prairie is not on a major highway, which makes it difficult to draw in new people, or new business for a limited number of shoppers. With Kingman and Hutchinson very close, retail business would be almost impossible.
- I saw sidewalks and old curbing on Main Street, very much like Minneola had 5 years ago. We were able to get a Mainstreet grant and it changed our whole business area look with new sidewalks, curbing, and street lights. I hope Pretty Prairie can possibly consider this town-changing grant!
- It is a blessing to be located this close to larger communities that provide amenities that many small communities don't have, but that is also a huge obstacle to bringing new business to town. Additionally, as they are located off of secondary highways they do not have access to high volume highway traffic and no draw aside from the rodeo to pull that traffic in. Good for people looking for a quiet town, a drawback for economic growth.
- This community has most of what you would need to live except a grocery store. Although the convenience store offered some food items, selection was very limited. As many of the residents appear to work out of town, this may not be seen as a barrier for them.
- Signage should be reviewed. We did not know where things were located and drove by things such as the convenience store and city office several times before finding them. They seemed invisible initially. Everything was present, just not easily seen.

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

- Pretty Prairie is SO peaceful and well kept!
- Everyone we talked to was helpful, friendly, and gave us information we inquired about.
- The lady managing the convenience store at the Co-Op said she grew up in Pretty Prairie and left for years. She came back home, loves her town, and is proud to be here. Could anyone say more?
- All of the people we encountered were positive and welcoming.
- How incredibly friendly everyone was that we came into contact with and how happy they were to be living there. My guess is that it's a relatively tight-knit community which makes for great friendships and an incredible quality of life.



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