First Impressions 

**Team Report Form**

Community Visited: Solomon Date Visited: 5/26/16

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?

*Not much information available online. The school has a nice website. The county has a nice website and it has a link for the city but that just has agendas/minutes, ordinances, etc. City does have a Facebook page but it doesn’t seem to be very active. It seems to have a lot of videos of meetings*.

1. The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.

* Seems like a very quiet bedroom community
* Thought the downtown would be bigger
* Doesn’t seem to be a lot of businesses
* Nice housing
* Some streets are narrow without curbs
* Not many sidewalks
* Found it interesting that Main Street was one block long and most of it was occupied by Solomon Corporation
* Like the electronic sign on Old 40

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

* No welcome sign coming from the north off I-70, there are welcome signs on Hwy 40
* Unsure where the downtown was, only one little sign coming from the north but no signs to point people in the right direction from Hwy 40
* Downtown streetscape seems very new and well-maintained, love the flowers, buildings seem to be in good condition

2. Downtown Business Area

Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

* Buildings seem well-maintained with relatively newer awnings and paint, all the buildings have a coordinated look
* Very nice landscaping and flowers – well maintained
* The buildings are very simple, nothing that gives the sense this is a ‘historic’ community
* Most buildings didn’t have a sign which seemed strange. We think Solomon Corp has offices in all the buildings but having no signs gives the area a strange feel, like there isn’t a lot of life behind the nice paint and awnings
* One building has a sign for a business that no longer exists – that was confusing
* Downtown gives the feel of an office park

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

* Very few businesses – other than city hall and the post office, there is just a bank and the café, liquor store doesn’t really feel like it’s part of the downtown
* Because there are no signs on any of the buildings and the coordinated look with the awnings and reflective windows, the downtown feels more like an office park than a downtown – but perhaps that’s really what it is and what they were going for
* There is no businesses with merchandise to display

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

* Customer service was friendly – no complaints
* City Hall was nice but was surprised to see bars (like jail bars) on counter area. Wondered if safety was an issue.
* Café was ok – food was good and reasonably priced

What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.)

* Nice pocket parks, tables with umbrellas and pavilion – we wondered if these were actually used
* Public restrooms were in the park – not exactly the most appealing

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

* No difficulty finding parking
* All services were in a very close distance so that wasn’t a problem
* Downtown (Main Street) was very nicely landscaped – grass, flowers that were blooming and very well maintained

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

* The only other retail business seems to be the grocery store. It looks rather shabby from the outside. Inside, the store was clean, had a good selection and staff was friendly. A good little business for a bedroom community where residents probably do most of their shopping in Salina.

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

* Could tell there was an industrial park off I-70 but didn’t see any signs saying property is available for development
* D&O Cooperative looks nice
* Other industrial/manufacturing places in town look pretty typical for any community
* There seem to be big businesses but no small businesses
* Main Street is their “park” and not for sure which was the main building

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.

* Didn’t see anything regarding health care facilities – no hospital, clinics, dentists, eye doctor, etc.

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

* Assumed one of the apartment complexes was for 55+ but those look like typical apartments and not assisted living or nursing home
* Did see a small senior center

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.)

* On initial look the housing stock looked pretty good (the core of the town) but as we drove around more we started to see some problems (especially on the streets where there is no curb and gutter)
* Looks like a good variety of housing stock that is affordable for a wide range of individuals
* There looked to be a couple decent houses for sale
* Noticed houses with vegetation growing out of the gutters
* Heritage Manor looks very nice and well-managed
* A call was placed to North Pine Village Apartments to inquire about renting and phone call was not returned

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

* Only saw one house for rent
* The apartments we saw looked like they were for 55+ individuals

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

* The schools look very nice, mostly new, and well-maintained
* Seems to be very well-supported by the community
* Like how all school functions are together on one property
* Good website that provided a lot of information
* School playground was nice but thought it could have used more play equipment

1. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

* Was able to find daycare on KDHE website
* Drove to all of them to look and one seemed like it was not well-maintained, we wouldn’t want our kids to go there

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?

* Saw three churches – all seemed very nice and well maintained
* Didn’t see any obvious signs of church supported activities but glad they keep up their own properties

1. Civic

Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community. Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

* Saw a masonic lodge but didn’t see any other building that would hold a nonprofit
* Two pavilions in the park look like they were sponsored by the lions club and masonic lodge
* Boy Scouts

1. Public Infrastructure

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

* There were sidewalks in the core of the community but a big portion of the community didn’t seem to have
* A large portion of the community also didn’t have curb/gutter
* Some streets had cones at intersections where the pavement has collapsed/washed away – wonder how long it’s been that way

Did you observe land-use planning?

* Not really, seemed pretty typical for a small town

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

* Seemed friendly – asked about using the restrooms and were sent to the public restrooms in the park
* The bars at city hall were disturbing

Police/fire protection:

* The fire shed looked nice and well maintained. Observed one police car.

Library:

* They missed the library

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

* Looks like a nice city park with good playground equipment
* No walking track or sidewalk around it that could be used as one
* Had a stage that would make it easy to have a band
* Ballparks looked well-maintained
* They have a city pool that looks good
* Really liked the marquee sign
* Noticed they have frisbie golf in the park
* Another small play area was observed in a residential area

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

* Not aware of the community being well-known for anything or have a slogan
* It was obvious the Solomon Festival was coming up with a banner across Hwy 40 and posters up around town. A flyer was posted on the grocery store door. Color run entry forms were available at the grocery store.
* Looks like a good small town festival

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

* Did not see any natural or manmade features to promote
* There does seem to be a creek or something on the west side of town, wonder if a walking trail could be added there

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.

* Only place we saw along those lines were city hall
* No signage or anything to direct people to city hall
* Didn’t see any museums or anything uniquely historic

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

* E’s Café was nice and had good food – but probably not good enough to go out of my way to go there again
* Didn’t really see anything that would entice me to come back

1. Wrap-up

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

* Seems like a peaceful, quiet, simple, stable bedroom community to raise a family
* Looks like a very good school
* Well maintained and landscaped Main Street
* Nice park with public restrooms
* People were welcoming and friendly
* Housing is nice. There were not many houses that were not livable. All properties were mowed.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

* There is nothing for a visitor to do
* Downtown is more of an office park than a downtown
* Lack of medical services
* Lack of gas station

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

* Good town to live, not so much to visit
* One block main street with beautiful landscaping
* Solomon Corporation – they have facilities all over town
* Food truck (Little Caesar’s) was at one Solomon Corp. building at lunch time

First Impressions was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension and adapted for use by K-State Research and Extension. Funds for this program have been made possible by a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Logan, KS.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Works, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and the United State Department of Agriculture Cooperating, John D. Floros, Director.