

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Spearville

Date(s) Visited: a) 6-9-19 (Sunday)

b) 6-21-19 (Friday)

c) 6-24-19 (Monday)

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?
 - a. The website for Spearville, Kansas came up with no issues. There are links that take you to useful sites. The site on the wind farms was very interesting.
 - b. Spearville's website was very easy to navigate. I learned a lot about the commercial locations and community.
 - c. Web presence well written and accurately reflects town. No trouble finding city's website.

2. **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.)
 - a. We entered Spearville from the south and the streets are paved and guttered. We traveled north and then turned around and drove on Main Street again. Followed the east and west streets to both sides of town. It appears to be very clean and all yards were mowed. I did not notice signs stating we were in Spearville, although I may have missed them. It was Sunday so there was no activity on Main Street. The sign on the Co-op building is very old and faded. The depot needs repair. Not many retail businesses.
 - b. Driving into Spearville was just BEAUTIFUL!! All the windmills were just stunning! Seems like the properties are fairly well maintained and there was even new construction being added to the Ford County Bank. There was no sign to indicate where the health center is, but otherwise pretty good signage.

- c. Neat and clean, very few houses appeared to need maintenance. One thought – was that I initially drove past the main entrance to Spearville and went to the entrance across from the truck stop (not in city) with a sign that said “Spearville – home of the wind towers” or something like that. Would recommend sign at your main entrance. The first entrance from the west is the park/ball fields (gorgeous) and would recommend more signage there, as couldn’t find ball field for granddaughter’s T-ball game a couple of weeks ago. Thought it was near the school. That needs signs directing people too.

3. 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?)

- a. There is new construction at one of the banks. Building fronts are very good even though there are not many retail stores. Repair going on to a stone bandshell. Main street was very clean. We noticed Kelly’s Grocery Store was open on this Sunday afternoon. We went in and were immediately greeted by the produce manager. He stated that the store would be closing in a week and everything was 30% off. We had a great visit about Spearville and the loss of the store. Previous owners happened to be in the store for “one last look.” It was nice to visit with them also. My friend and I had been to Spearville numerous times. People are always friendly. I have made many trips to the banks and taken time to visit. The grocery store employees were very helpful and friendly. Excellent service there.
- b. Grocery store was closed. Talked to a couple residents who were very concerned about this. Very charming buildings were noted as I walked down the street. I had lunch in the Windmill restaurant. DELICIOUS! The chef came out and talked to me and apologized for the chairs being on the table in the front of the restaurant. They were cleaning, because it was 2:30. Very nice offering of food and very friendly server.
- c. Very neat and clean. As you enter town from the north, the railroad and pipe supplies show an active business center and the businesses well kept. I talked at length to the City Clerk, Tammy Konrade, and she was gracious and answered a lot of questions. Apparently, the grocery store, Kelly’s Corner Grocery, had just closed 2 weeks earlier due to health/slowing of business, because of the many commuters to the Dodge City area. Rent starts about \$700 and they are blessed to have good landlords that carefully screen tenants. The same type of housing in Dodge City would cost \$1,200. Getting directions to the city hall, I stopped the Chief of Police, Steve Strain at the 3rd entrance from west off the highway. He was very friendly and directed me with a smile. I spoke to a citizen who is also a landlord; he spoke of the many positives of Spearville as well. Feist has given some grants to the Rec Commission to build the new ball diamond, and later they hope to receive more money for a concession stand. I stopped for lunch at

the Windmill Restaurant on north main street and was delighted with the food. The waitress was kind and didn't speak English very well, but her smile made up for it. I introduced myself to 3 people that came after I did. They were very kind and open about how they enjoy small town living. One worked at Koch Industries just west of Wright KS. Both people I asked about childcare agreed that a few people have done this out of their home, and it was hard to get your child into a program there in town.

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?

- a. We did not notice drinking fountains or benches. There are probably public restrooms at the Quick Shop on the highway north of town. Also, it was a Sunday, so the restaurant and bar were not open.
- b. Didn't note any drinking fountains. Public restrooms were at the park. No problem finding parking. There was very little activity except at the library. I parked down there and walked all through town without difficulty.
- c. I noticed a few benches here and there but did not explore public restrooms or wi-fi. No trouble parking on main street, Ford County Bank was under construction perhaps for a new drive through window. Very neat and clean.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. We did not travel to the Quick Shop mostly because it seems to be out of the way. We wondered how accessible it really is to residents of Spearville, but I understand it was the only available location.
- b. No answer
- c. I understand that there are two hairdressers in town but didn't stop by.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. There is a manufacturing company that occupies both sides of Main Street in Spearville. Everything looked neat and in order. The elevators for harvest and the railroad tracks are all in the north area of town.
- b. No Answer
- c. The industrial site is right next to the railroad. They appear to have plenty of room. There would be other areas available.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. There is no hospital. There is a medical clinic operated by Hodgeman County hospital district.
- b. No Answer
- c. Made a call to Spearville Medical Clinic, on Hall Street, Spearville. The receptionist was pleasant and told me they were a part of the Hodgeman County Hospital out of Jetmore and have a nurse practitioner on duty. I had to Google it to even know that there was one as I couldn't find any signs.

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

- a. The clinic is staffed by a nurse practitioner. No dentist or optometrist.
- b. No answer
- c. No Answer

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

- a. There is not a nursing home, however there is a possibility of one to be built. Parkview apartments are available for income eligible and/or elderly.
- b. No answer.
- c. At present there is no LTC services in Spearville; however, the mayor and city clerk told me that they are considering a 12-bed unit with half assisted and half full care in the future. Due to the aging community there is a need

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.)

- a. All homes were well kept and attractive. We noticed a lot of brick homes.
- b. I saw one house for sale. The town itself is very inviting and I wouldn't hesitate to move there.
- c. Housing costs less in Spearville than in Dodge City and that benefits the town, but not the businesses.

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

- a. We could not check a rental list because city offices were closed on Sunday.
- b. No answer.
- c. The city clerk keeps a list of rentals and houses for sale for people that stop by along with a list of utilities. Rentals appear to be adequate.

8. 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?

- a. Buildings for K-5 and the junior high and high school are very well kept. The playground at K-5 has a sign noting the Feist Foundation. Very nice schools.
- b. I saw a preschool next to the health care center. Looked cute. The school is nice, and the grounds are well-maintained.
- c. Spearville is blessed to have the wind towers in that farmers with wind tower may opt into donations to the school in lieu of taxes. They have new buildings and facilities that are quite dazzling.

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

- a. Online information about the schools is great. It listed all activities involving all grades. Color photographs of sporting events were noted. Very informative.
- b. No answer
- c. No Answer

9. Childcare

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

- a. There are 3-4 childcare services offered in homes only. No commercial childcare services.
- b. There is a place called the Ark which is a safe place for children to go and evidently some community events are held there.
- c. Childcare is tough to find an opening as it is just a few ladies that are booked full.

10. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the faith communities represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of faith-based community services?

- a. The Catholic church is the largest church and has a large parish center on Main Street. I have attended several functions and it is an asset to the community. There are two other churches in Spearville.
- b. Looks like a very faith-based community. Lots of churches. In fact, I am in the process of remodeling the St. Johns parish center.
- c. Spearville is a mainly Catholic community. Didn't explore this.

11. Civic

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

- a. My source was not sure about non-profits in the community. The Senior Center is open for coffee and socializing daily. The building is available to be rented for activities.
- b. Not apparent when driving down the streets of Spearville. I didn't see civic activity.
- c. Don't know this one.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. There is a really nice park, swimming pool, and baseball fields on the west and south parts of town. They were mowed and ready for a picnic. Available trash dumpsters are an asset. Recycling is available.
- b. The park is wonderful, the streets are all clean and lawns are kept up. Landscaping is nice in some areas.
- c. More signage would help locate the school, ball parks, playground and main downtown area (off the north side) for newcomers. Also, the community clinic.

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

- a. Not open on Sunday.
- b. No answer.
- c. Wonderful! See my other comments.

Police/fire protection:

- a. There is a fire station in town for the county and city. The Fire department is all volunteer. There is one full-time police officer and one part-time.
- b. No answer.
- c. Excellent!!!

Library:

- a. Very nice building. Open 4 days a week.
- b. The library was busy and well-stocked. Not many new books, but there was a nice table display in the back with some newer offerings. Liked the play area in the front for kids. Makes it easier for mom and dad to select books.
- c. Didn't visit

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

- a. Nice park and ballparks and playground. All are located in the same area, which is convenient.
- b. City park was impressive. Everything looks pretty new including the equipment and the rubberized ground cover.
- c. No answer

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?

- a. Spearville has a City of Windmills (COW) Festival in July. Lots of activities all day. No museum. Have a parade, car show, games, horseshoes and food vendors.
- b. Known for their windmills and they do capitalize on that by naming the restaurant The Windmill restaurant.
- c. Windmills – and yes, they do capitalize on it.

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

- a. Do not know how much they advertise the COW festival. Would be great for both visitors and residents. I have attended this in the past.
- b. I saw signs for the 4th of July event.
- c. No Answer

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).

- a. The windfarms are quite a sight to see. Information on the website is very informative.
- b. No answer
- c. No Answer

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.

- a. The city building has proper signage and is on main street.
- b. No answer
- c. No answer

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

- a. The restaurant was closed on Sunday and we did not notice any other shops or attractions.
- b. No answer
- c. No answer

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. All streets appeared very clean and neat. Construction at the bank means a positive business outlook for the future. Also repair on the bandshell is positive for Main Street. Very active recycling available.
- b. The town is really beautiful. Very quaint and almost feels like I stepped back in time. People are friendly and the shops are cute.
- c. Clean housing and community, the ball parks thanks to Feist! And the school. All great facilities. I mourn with the community over their loss of their grocery store. Clearly Spearville is doing great things.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. Maybe the lack of a nursing home, but that is a future possibility. Lack of a grocery store or much retail activity may be a downfall.
- b. I feel like it's almost hidden. Off the main roads.
- c. Too close to Dodge City with probably 85% working in Dodge. (City Clerk's estimate)

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

- a. Friendliness of the population. I have been to Spearville numerous times and events are always fun. Everyone visits easily.
- b. The view of the windmills as I drove into town. Just awesome! The restaurant was a real treat. The cook was so friendly, and the food was just delicious.
- c. Clean and neat!

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

<http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/civic-engagement/first-impressions/index.html>

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