

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: St. John, KS

Date Visited: 8/8/19
8/24/19
8/26/19

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 website was easy to navigate and information was up to date. The directories were helpful and fairly accurate.

Actually kind of impressed with their site. It's basic and some of the businesses listed are difficult to find, but I think the city's part is done.

The city website was comprehensive. We were impressed with the ability to pay utilities, tickets and fines through the website as well as applying for license permits, job openings, library card and zoning changes on line. The school website was also very comprehensive.

2. **The "Five-Minute" Impression:** After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.

St. John appears to be a cute little community. It has a very historic feel but not in a "dated" way. It was a very friendly and inviting town.

It's a cute little town. Kind of run down but it has a lot of potential. There seems to be a lot of resources.

Some of the signage was not clear. The physical size of the town seemed bigger than our town. The town appeared well maintained and streets for the most part were clean. It's a pretty little small town.

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

I came with my 2 children ages 5 & 7 and they were very excited when we came in and saw goats and horses.

Coming from the south there is some sign about sports but can't really read it, a sign pointing to the business district is about halfway through. From the south it doesn't look like much is there... the north however there is gas stations and a really nice grocery store that seems to support a larger community than it appears from the south. BUT... the main highway is clean and neat and makes me curious what the rest looks like.

The road entering from Pratt was smooth. Loved the "Welcome" sign. Well mowed. Not many people out and about.

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

The town square was a really cute place. We enjoyed walking around and seeing the landscapes and trees in the square.

I understand why the town is famous for the town square! Cute little park in the center, historical buildings make up the town square. Nice park benches, sidewalks, and beautiful grass. I suspect when the repairs on the fountain are done it will be just as lovely. Some of the buildings are run down and it could use a bit of maintenance. The county building is amazing!

Some very nice buildings but many were no longer in business.

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

Just about anything you would need. Restaurants, dry cleaners, dentist, chiropractor, thrift store, attorney office, banks, liquor store, auto repair and equipment sales, and two gas stations. We went on a Saturday and not much was open.

Not many retail businesses to go into other than restaurants, Dollar General and liquor store and grocery. The town had an appearance of just "not busy".

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

We ate at a pizza place and the staff was very friendly and helpful. We also went into a second hand store and my girls had a good time shopping. Again, very friendly service. While we were there it was obvious they are a very welcoming community.

Restaurant staff was great. Friendly and polite.

Very friendly and helpful.

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

We visited the town square and also the park by the swimming pool. We noticed working drinking fountains, benches and trash cans to make it easy for our outdoor visit.

Public park was pretty great. Swimming pool, public park equipment, well maintained ball fields. Park benches and nice grass. Not sure about WIFI or public restrooms or trash receptacles. I didn't see any but it doesn't necessarily mean they didn't have them.

All of these amenities were available and well maintained. We did not use Wi-Fi.

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

We LOVED the library, however trying to figure out how to park there was very difficult. We drove around the block a few times trying to figure out how to access the entrance and where to park. We ended up parking by the town square and walked over, but my children loved the library.

Landscaping and streetscaping was pretty minimal. The square landscaping was nice. Streets were not in such great shape and there weren't sidewalks in very many places. Parking seemed adequate.

The Town square was beautiful but due to all the rains a little in need of a mow but as we were leaving that was in progress. We were very impressed with the name plates on all the trees in the park and the square. The parking was adequate.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

We visited the thrift store and it was very cute and easy to access.

Grocery store... with a VERY nice variety. I really can't say enough good about the grocery store. Health food choices, a variety of ethnic foods, great produce. Grocery store staff was excellent. I believe I was waited on by the owner or manager and he was great. He was handling the staff kindly and waiting on customers. Very polite and professional. Very friendly. Besides the grocery store there wasn't much outside of downtown for shopping, BUT, Pratt is just a jump away and there's everything you need there. The stores in town were a bit run down and some beautification is definitely needed but really it was pretty nice overall. It's a small town, some of that is expected in my opinion.

Beauty Salon, Chiropractic, Lumber Yard, American State Bank, NAPA Automotive, Irrigation Co., Dollar General, USDA Service Center, and numerous others. None were extremely busy.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

Not sure.

The industrial areas were pretty easy to spot. There were some areas that looked like it was industrial at one time and residential areas built up around them. But there is also plenty of room to expand what exists and areas along the outside of town that could really be put to good use. Should they need it, it think they have it made.

They did not seem to be concentrated in one area.

6. Health Care Services

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

We didn't really notice obvious hospitals or emergency medical services.

They have a hospital! Wowza! That is great! They also have centers for seniors and chiropractors and dentists. County services are available there as well and emergency services appear to be available. What more could anyone ask for?

There were Dentist office and Dr. office and Chiropractic and we thought a hospital but later found out it had been converted to Day Care and rest home.

There seemed to be various places for the elderly.

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

I was there on a weekend so I couldn't say for sure, but everything appeared well maintained with a variety of much needed services.

They seemed to be well maintained.

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

We noticed multiple assisted living, retirement and nursing facilities which we really liked.

There appeared to be a nursing facility and senior living. They all seemed to be represented and in good condition.

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.)

The housing in the community seemed a little dated and some needed more maintenance but over all it had a very welcoming small town feel.

There seems to be a broad range of options. There are many different styles of homes as well. It is obviously a very old community that has developed with time. There seems to be everything from apartment living to large multi-level homes and ranches available.

There doesn't seem to be a lot of enforcement of ordinances and therefore there are nice homes mixed in with very run down places. That can hurt a town when folks are looking for a place to live.

I looked online before going and found several properties to purchase in various levels on \$. But did not see many houses for sale or rent upon driving around. Asked waitress while we were eating if there were any houses she knew for rent, but she did not. There were many very beautiful big houses.

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 observe any rentals.

Apartments were available! There seems to be a lot of land for a trailer or RV. There are several RV parks within a short driving distance and it seemed like there were homes and trailers that were being rented. There are more options than usual because of the proximity to Pratt and the RV parks.

I noticed several barn houses that appeared newer. I personally like the look but others in our group were divided on that. There was at least 1 duplex and assisted living facility.

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 the elementary school and high school, which seem to be connected. I didn't notice a middle school so not sure if they have one. The school building and grounds seemed rather old and could use some updating.

I saw elementary through high school at least and what may have been a preschool or daycare center. The junior/high school was in rough shape. The building looks solid, but it was in desperate need of a paint job.

We noticed grade school, High School and Preschool facilities. All appeared to be older buildings. We all like the slogan of Purpose, Pride, Passion. But well kept. The signage was hard to follow and hard to find parking. The library was new and impressive. We did not go in because we were concerned that we would cause concern in this day and age. We toured the football complex and noticed parking was limited but the facility was well maintained.

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

Info on their schools can be found in minutes. They obviously care about their kids and are maintaining pride in their education.

Yes, their web site was very helpful.

9. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

Didn't look.

They have 3 daycare centers that I could find. Not sure if they are affordable or not.

We did not cover this area.

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?

There were a few different churches that we noticed driving around.

Nice Methodist church. Several church denominations. Didn't notice community services offered.

The community had good representation of all kinds of faith. Did not see anything of faith-based community service.

11. Civic

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

There seemed to be a lot of focus on the elderly with senior centers for the community.

Several churches, county resources, and a lodge or club of some kind? Seems like there is plenty to be part of.

Odd Fellow Hall and a designated storm shelter.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

No.

No... went on a weekend and there wasn't much going on that day. Didn't notice but it doesn't mean it isn't there.

We did not.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

The town seems very well maintained. There were quite a few empty/abandoned buildings but the sidewalks, landscaping and etc. seemed kept up.

We appreciated the brick roads. Most of the sidewalks seemed to be in walkable shape. The signs were in good shape and streets good. Most yards in good shape. There were a few houses and yards that needed attention but neat for the most part.

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

With 2 kids, I didn't go in.

N/A because the visit was on the weekend.

The city hall was very welcoming and informative. We had an exchange of information about water plants, sewers, unkept property and even unclaimed dogs. Truly enjoyed our visit.

Police/fire protection:

Even on Saturday saw police patrolling. Saw the emergency services building and it appears they have adequate coverage.

I had already seen a video on a past problem with PD but learned a change had occurred and working better. County fire station manned by volunteers. 2 police officers.

Library:

We LOVED the library.

Holy Smokes, the library looked amazing. I was not able to stop in, but it was big and beautiful. Looked well maintained from the outside and was very large.

Very impressive library that is a part of the school system.

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

The girls loved playing at the park. Some of the equipment seemed a little dated but they still had a good time.

A nice city park. Grass tennis court, frisbee golf, updated equipment, no maintained baseball field, a memorial fountain that was very nice and we liked the way the trees were labeled

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?

Didn't see anything.

The town square and fountain. Rightfully so, it's beautiful.

Did not see any.

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

We happened to come on a day where they had a farmers market in the square, so we were excited to see that. We purchased a few different items from the vendors there.

No.

There was a banner advertising Farmer's Market.

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).

The fountain in the square had been removed and is under construction while we were there.

Proximity to Pratt, lakes, RV parks, library is awesome. Historic square has potential but isn't quite there as an attraction just yet though it is beautiful.

We saw Quivira Wildlife Refuge but did not visit. The Town Square was a beautiful addition to the city, there was a RV campground but did not look at it. I believe the Farmers Market would bring people into the area on Thurs.

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.

The city hall and courthouse were both easy to find, however we did not go in.

Not that I could see.... But there is a county building that I would probably start with after going to the city hall.

There is the City building where they had information about their town. There were very helpful staff in the city building.

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

We enjoyed the second hand store and if the town was closer we would definitely visit it again, however being nearly an hour and a half away, I highly doubt we will go back.

Not necessarily, but the feel of the town in general is so nice, there's enough to do I might make the trip back up there and go camping. It really is quaint.

Not really.

14. Wrap-up

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

I loved the farmers market and sense of community in the square and at the second hand store.

It's a cute town, love the square. Love the library. Love the grocery store and access to basic needs. The layout of the town is convenient and easy to navigate. It is close to a large town and has access to anything you could possibly want and still live out away from it.

The Town Square was very pretty, and looking at all the beautiful older homes was enjoyable. I enjoyed the museums on main street but they were not open. We just peeked in the window.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

It's pretty far away from any major cities.

It's in rough shape. Several blight properties that need managing. It doesn't appear city ordinances are being enforced. Streets are in rough shape. Downtown buildings need sprucing and they really need some more shops.

I think it is the same for most smaller communities, keeping people at home to purchase their needs and wants and bringing youth back to open up businesses and expand the city. St John is just close enough to a large city that people go out of town to purchase.

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

The town square, the weekly farmers market and the amazing library.

That gorgeous town square, the fantastic grocery store, and the neat ranches/farms on the north end of town.

The lovely old homes and friendly city workers and that beautiful town square. On a sad note the empty buildings like the old theater that must have been absolutely gorgeous at one time.



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