

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: St. George **Date(s) Visited:** a) Tuesday, August 18
b) Saturday, August 15
c) Monday, August 17

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. I had no problem accessing an abundance of information. I went through the city website and looked at minutes of both the council and planning group, services and fees etc.; also accessed information for community businesses. Generally, I found the information to be accurate. I also accessed Google maps street views etc. which gave me some historical images (2013) to compare to present. Finally, I did some general searches on selected topics for St. George and through Pottawatomie County.
- b. It was not too hard to find information about the city of St. George. The city's website cityofstgeorge.org was the second item returned in Google search results. The city's Facebook page and a page on the Pottawatomie County EDC website was also returned. I was impressed with the city's website. Here are my top three favorite things about it:
 - Ability to pay water bill online
 - Easy access to city official's email addresses and City Council meeting minutes
 - Contact information for all the businesses in town
- c. Website was reasonably robust with most information you would want around history, governmental departments and current elected officials, local current news. A few noted local popular sites: natural spring, river front, downtown store fronts. Note: actual signage not easily noted in slow drive through (20 mph speed limit), city park poorly marked (nice archway stating name etc. in black against dark tree limbs and leaves and very difficult to notice. While a picture of the marquee at River Front Park displayed some informative information, no mention of it is noted on the website. Picture and information on Black Jack Spring noted on web page, but did not notice during drive through at street address, may well be there but we did not spot it. Very little info on schools other than location via address. Community center and recreations center combined...in old high school named The Beacon Center was not well noted or talked about by local citizens encountered, not mentioned at all on the website as a community asset. City Administration and supporting functional groups well

defined and specifics as to name and contact noted in sub tabs. General information relevant to potential new “non-local” resident (purchaser/renter) almost non-existent. Information seemed more centered on local citizens. Limited information on local (within St. George or within 5 miles) on doctors, dental service, prompt care services, rental agencies (even if located outside city limits but contact point for new residents)

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. There was a very distinct contrast of impressions for us between the new developments and the older original part of town. The community felt physically kind of odd, maybe disjointed is the word. The contrast of some of the old and rougher parts of town in the center with significant newer housing developments at multiple spread out locations felt unusual.

At the same time, I know from my research that growth in town has been very rapid. The 2010 census was only 650 or so and current census estimate is about 1000. The impact of that was apparent to us, per the housing comments above, but also in the juxtaposition of the improved vs. unimproved parts of downtown. To a certain degree, it seems the growth has been faster than the community has been able to respond to. I did notice the comment somewhere on the city website that mentioned developer contacting them every day. We do understand it would really be a challenge to deal with growth that fast.

As we have worked through growth and improvement efforts in our community, the discussion has regularly considered which needs to come first housing to stimulate business or improved business to stimulate housing. Certainly the housing has come first to the St George area. It will be interesting to see what business activity follows. Coming into the community my wife and I felt our first impression was similar to those we have had at times entering small mountain towns in Missouri or Arkansas. There was a “linear” feel to the layout, as if following a valley or such, instead of the usual Kansas small town “square” layout. I expect it was due to development originally along old U.S. 24 and the Kansas river.

- b. Wow. That is a beautiful, HUGE elementary school. I love how many trees there are. I bet these hills make for some gorgeous views of the river valley. There is a LOT of housing developing going on here. I entered town from Hwy 24 on Blackjack Rd and did not see any signs on the highway noting there was a town. A little closer to town there was a standard road sign that noted the city limits. The streets are well maintained as were the homes and lawns. It was a sunny Saturday, so many community members were out caring for their properties. Later in the day while driving around I did notice a cute wooden sign on 1st St., welcoming folks who entered town from the East. The area around it was well maintained. The sign is definitely a source of pride.

- c. Typical county road, streetscape...little to no shoulder, heavily wooded to near road edge. Very nice and impressive Elementary school, large foot print and nice design/appearance.

Intersection of Black Jack with W First Street and turned eastward toward downtown. Roadway has similar streetscapes to Black Jack Rd. Approaching downtown, noticed a small park (Shaneyfelt City Park) on the North side of road. Also a sign for the Riverside Park on the right. Noted that a wastewater treatment plant was easily visible for West First near the Riverside Park. A very attractive mural on an old stores' exterior wall...St George, wall mural. Drove through the downtown area noting the Post Office, Coffee shop, City Hall, Willie's Hideout, Who Wood Art, Purple Door Events. St. George State Bank (looked unoccupied). Notice most of housing seemed to be no more than one property deep...built with wall in front with housing up on the hill side. Many homes showing moderate to poor maintenance and lawn care. Entering from the East...took East First street eastward about .4 miles and re-entered from that angle. The road (Old Military Rd I believe, aka old Rte 24) presented same streetscape of snugness to road of trees and un-mowed grass. Noticed several side streets leading up the hillside suggesting additional housing not readily seen from Old Rte 24, a.k.a. East First St. Downtown is approximately 2 typical city blocks long...streets not entering and exiting in typical alignment due to topography of hillside and nearness to Kansas River (very near to the southern edge of the city). St George, from east entry downtown Turned right on Lincoln street believing it to be a likely "north entry to the city" street...it dead ends at top of hill and turns east. Since downtown is at the riverfront there is no south entry into the city.

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. Looking at Google Map images from 2013 showed not a single business existed in the "downtown" area at that time, maybe a garage. Significant progress has been made in the past few years in "downtown" as today there are several of those old buildings that are currently occupied and it appeared that a few others are at least being cleaned up, maybe for something in the future. Willies Hideout is mostly a bar environment with pizzas and typical bar food. We were not in town at a mealtime so did not eat, but the online food reviews are positive. I would say it was similar in a lot of ways to the Perry Bar and Grill in terms of services and menu, other than the pizzas. The Purple Door Events facility seemed to also own the Kawfee Pot. We aren't coffee drinkers so can't comment on that product, but good donuts. Post-visit I see on the city website there

was supposed to be a place called Who Wood next to the Kawfee Pot location. Unfortunately, we didn't recognize that before we went and didn't notice it when we were there. Maybe could use better signage if it's a retail place at all. We noticed the city hall had apparently been upgraded/remodeled. Found mention online of a downtown BBQ that was supposed to open this summer, but didn't find that. Maybe Covid has delayed the opening. The city website shows only a couple of other businesses, a river outfitter, a self-storage that actually appeared to be outside the city limits, but on the edge of town, and an RV park. We noticed the RV park seemed to have a number of long-term residents, evidenced by large propane tanks and the like. I'm not sure I would call that an RV park, more of another mobile home park. I do see on their website they have daily, weekly, and monthly rates. I have no complaints about customer service.

- b. The first business I saw was a small well-maintained self-storage facility on the edge of the city. As we approached downtown, I was immediately struck by the sight of an interesting mural. I peeked, but did not see any plate, sign or note that told its story. The next piece of eye candy I spied was what I assume is an old refurbished gas station? It is adorable and I'm so curious what it is used for now. Merchandise - Tried to buy a tee shirt at Willie's Hideout Bar & Grill, but there were out of them. 😞 The bartender said, "We really should take them off the wall since we don't have any for sale." We were warmly welcomed at Willie's Hideout Bar & Grill by two bartenders. One ended up being the owner James. We sat at the bar as we ate our Cream Cheese, Bacon and Jalapenos pizza along with a couple of cold beers served in frosty glasses. Yes! We love frosty glasses. I was impressed with the place. Even used new technology when ordering (iPad).
- c. Most of the downtown business buildings overall appeared to be reasonably well maintained, good signage, streets and street markings are well maintained. In fact, we encountered the city work crew repainting crosswalks in the downtown area and on another active street (Lincoln). Both times we stopped and chatted with them, very friendly and ready to help us learn more about their community. Age and quality of buildings varied from newer metal building structures to refurbished historical buildings. Overall, they present a pride and interest in maintaining the First Street business district as viable. Businesses downtown on First Street were noted as:
Willie's Hideout - open on Wednesday thru Saturday. Conversationally, reputed to be a very popular lunch and dinner establishment. Only open on select days. Noted that at web level, touching their web link on City home page presented an error of domain not connected.
City clerk will report as she is sure they are still in business.
Who Wood Art - Not open - custom art work in wood, business hours seem to be pretty flexible.
Konza Kayaks - City clerk believes they have closed that side of their business (in same building as Who Wood Art).
Purple Door Events - mostly web or phone contact based business, renting out the facility for parties and events.

St. George State Bank – closed some years ago. Nearest bank is in Wamego or Manhattan. Nearest ATM at Flush Rd and Rte 24...about 1 mile Northwest of St. George.

What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and wi-fi, etc.) were available? Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

- a. Didn't notice any of these. Sorry if we missed them. I am curious about the situation with wi-fi community wide. I didn't check for service in Willie's. We did notice driving through one of the new developments a sign for WTC fiber. I am wondering if that company is working to, or has, wired the community (didn't see infrastructure evidence of that) or has only focused on the new developments. If the latter, that would further contribute to the polarized circumstance as is noted in housing comments. Parking was not an issue. Though obvious upgrades and improvements have been made, and am guessing will continue to be with the rapid recent growth in population and housing, there is still significant work to do. Landscaping is pretty much non-existent, though not unusual in older downtown areas. Other areas such as the park were pretty nice, will comment on that elsewhere. Nice downtown mural.
- b. There were several parks that were well maintained. I noticed one public ball field and could tell it had recently been updated with a new, tall black fenced backstop. Neat spring dedicated to the early settlers of St. George. I've never seen a dedicated spring. Different!
- c. Minimal to no trash disposal sites, did not see any community water fountains and no "open" establishments with available Wi-Fi...NOTE: very close to Manhattan and likely cell/mobile Wi-Fi connections available. We did not experience any difficulty using Google Maps even in the more open countryside.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. Other business interests exist outside the city limits. Dara's convenience/gas location is currently being remodeled and a new Moe's BBQ are along U.S 24, as well as a Polaris dealer. This is a challenge many smaller towns deal with. We face it all over Jefferson County as well as in Perry. Businesses build just outside the city limits sometimes to access traffic on a major roadway, but, I believe, also to avoid city tax levies. Not only do cities lose those property tax revenues, but in the case of high traffic locations like Dara's and Moe's, and high price retail like Polaris, they lose significant sales tax revenue as well. They want to be considered part of the community and to tap into community consumer traffic, but without contributing to community revenue. The Moe's location was only open for its second day, so still very nice. When visiting Dara's, we were surprised that we didn't find more grocery items. For a town of close to 1000 (according to Census est.) no grocery access has to be a concern. We expected to at least be able to find some staples at Dara's, but they were very limited when we were there, only a little bread and a few gallons of milk.

- b. No retail shopping in St. George. I could totally see some cute antique stores popping up downtown. It fits the vibe.
- c. Only web-based and per City Clerk known is Horizons Edge just outside of St. George. City Clerk had no direct knowledge of the business. I noted that a web search returned a sign on to access the business site. Nearest viable “other” is about 1.2 miles northwest of downtown. A newly opened BBQ diner attached to a new Cenex gas station at Flush Rd and Rte 24. Note: we had lunch there and were very impressed with COVID-19 compliance, customer service and overall excellent food.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. No industry observed. No designated industrial park found. No obvious “good” location without annexing land.
- b. N/A in St. George.
- c. None and have not been for many years, mostly in Manhattan or Wamego

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. We found no evidence of any local health care services, visibly or by online search.
- b. I did not see any health care services offered.
- c. City Clerk indicated there are no city-based services.

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

- a. NA
- b. NA
- c. Doctors do live within city limits but no open practices. Personal health and care...no beautician shops, no chiropractors and no physical fitness centers.

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

- a. There was a new facility on the other side of U.S. 24. Obviously a couple of miles outside the city limits. Don’t know whether to consider that a part of the community or not. Same issues as with Dara’s, Moe’s and Polaris. I can at least understand those three wanting the highway visibility. Makes no sense to us to build a senior facility along Hwy 24.
- b. I did not see any health care services offered.
- c. No senior care or medical assisted care centers. Only closely related facility is “Home of the Flint Hills” – a senior retirement center. Located about 1.3 miles north of St. George

just north of Rte 24. Facility consisting of 1-2-bedroom apartment retirement homes...joined into multi-unit living complexes.

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. It appears to us that if it wasn't always, St George has very much become a bedroom community for Manhattan, and maybe to a lesser degree Wamego. As I have not written this question by question, but randomly, I have made several observation /comments in other parts of this paper about housing, business, layout etc., so will try not to repeat them here. It did feel to us that the housing market in St George was very polarized in terms of stock, higher end and lower end, but not much in the middle. Access to the newer development on the West end was far better than what existed at the Northeast in our opinion. We noticed that all the newer developments were all cul-de-sac and dead-end arrangements, which made them feel separated from the rest of the community. Maybe that contributed to the disjointed feel I mentioned at the beginning of this write up. To find a new development sandwiched between a very poorly maintained mobile home park and the older residential part of town, as well as accessing off a fairly poor gravel road, just didn't feel right. With a planning commission, I would have expected otherwise. I do know space can be challenging in small communities, but it all felt kind of like a jigsaw puzzle put together with pieces from different puzzles.
- b. What a mix of housing! I'm jealous. The market in St. George seems to have options that would appeal to a wide variety of income levels. I don't see any challenges in finding acceptable housing. There are several well maintained older/historic homes and quite a few pockets of development throughout the city limits.
- c. The downtown area: majority are older homes with most needing fix-up maintenance and improved lawn care. Older part of town away from downtown in much better shape and reasonably well maintained. However, lawn care and misc. items in some yards diminished the overall appearance.
New home construction: In five areas just outside the "older part of town," but within city limits, was a good mix. Majority of the construction is through Alliance Property Management which is very active and also noted several other tracts of land with 'building site' signs – city map shows several more small tracts (10-20) homes yet to be developed.
 - One tract area (just west of downtown at junction with Blackjack Rd) was modest sized duplexes with well-maintained lawns and landscaping.
 - A tract just adjacent to the duplexes was a very attractive medium to large single family homes. This area has many mature trees with well-maintained lawns and landscaping.

- A tract in the Northeast area of city limits, is ongoing new home construction with approximately 20 homes in place. Homes are single family (starter home) with well-maintained lawns with most having some new landscaping in place.
- A tract on the East side of city limits was a more mature, but within 6-10-year aging, that are medium to larger single family homes. Well maintained and landscaped.
- There are two trailer parks...both of them had a mix of well-maintained and “needing work.”

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

- a. Did not see any rental properties; no apartments or multi-family of any kind. Also did not see any obvious housing for the elderly, though both might have existed without us finding it. I do think we drove all city streets. At least we found the clearly marked city boundaries on the East, North, and West. South is the river. A follow up online search yielded one house and one mobile home for rent.
- b. Yes. I did see many townhomes and duplexes that I assume are rented. I also noticed a well-kept RV park. I was impressed that the grass was so well maintained there.
- c. Only rental property noticed was very near west end of downtown...small two units per buildings. Total of three buildings. Location and appearance would be likely place them in the lower rental rate category. The city clerk did not seem to know these rentals existed. Overall there is a reasonably good mix to attract middle to upper middle class families.

8. Schools

What schools are present? Do the schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of temporary classrooms? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?

- a. As a Pre K – 6th building, St George Elementary appeared to be a very well maintained and impressive facility, both buildings and grounds. It certainly has a positive impact on first impressions coming into town from the North or West. At first we thought it might be a K-8 facility given its size, but finding that it was a Pre-K/6th building, I feel it was a large facility for a 3A school district, especially considering there is another elementary in Westmorland.
- b. I only saw the elementary school and it looked huge and recently built. It is built on a large parcel of land and has room to grow even. I bet this is a selling point when folks are thinking about settling in this community. I emailed the City prior to our visit and asked about schools. They responded and informed me that, “Rock Creek Middle School and High School is located north on Flush Rd.” Since it was outside of the city limits, I didn’t go check it out.
- c. St. George Elementary 200 Blackjack Rd; St George, Elementary PreK-2 Starting this school year, school is changing from K-6 to new format of Pre-K through 4th. The 5th and 6th grades moving to Rock Creek Middle School. Last school year the K-6 had 500 students. Very impressive campus; recent construction, along with school in Westmoreland, services all Preschool through 4th in school district (District 323). Includes a large playground area with many new playground equipment. Could not

access the facility as school not open. People in the community we encountered spoke very highly about the quality of teachers and facility.

Rock Creek Middle School 9355 Flush Rd Starting 2020-2021 school year will be 5th through 6th grades... St George, Rock Creek Middle-Senior campus

Rock Creek Junior-Senior High 9355 Flush Rd.

St George, Rock Creek Middle-Senior Campus District 323 office also at this address. St George, School District Office School is for grades 7th through Senior and is located in open rural farm land approximately 7 miles from St. George. The roadway is asphalt county maintained with little to no shoulder. This facility was built in the late 1990's and is a massive facility (as large or larger than Free State High in Lawrence). It is a very impressive complex with four main building sections, district office building, multiple ball diamonds and large football facility. Could not access the facility as school not open. Like the Elementary facility, people in the community we encountered spoke very highly about the quality of teachers and facility.

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

- a. The school website (SGES) cites their 2010 National Blue Ribbon award. I was very surprised, however to see that they use combination classrooms 1 and 2, 3 and 4 etc., especially given there are 500 students in school. I can't imagine there is an educational advantage, maybe social. Unless they are keeping their teacher to student ratio low and grouping by educational progress. It has to be more challenging for the classroom teacher. Perry used that system for many years in two small elementary schools where student numbers didn't allow for otherwise, but moved away from that when building reorganization occurred.
- b. I did not. I think the city should add more to their <https://cityofstgeorge.org/Community/Schools> page. Prospective folks would appreciate it.
- c. School website very informative www.rockcreekschools.org Website has info on Preschool, Rock Creek Middle and Rock Creek Jr/Senior schools. School system over all rated in the top 20% of KS schools with a 90-94% graduation rate.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- a. We saw no daycare facility. A search of the City website returned no result. A general search for daycare in St. George yielded one in home facility.
- b. I did not notice any childcare facilities, but wonder if maybe The Beacon Center next to the Baptist church houses one?
- c. St. George Elementary has their Pre-K to 2 Preschool system. Identified seven day care, mostly at private residence, within the city limits. Most were set at 10-12 children max. While locations are identified, none listed costs.

10. Faith/Religion

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

- a. We found two churches. The Methodist Church was a very small, historic looking facility. There was a newer education/gathering facility in the back. Access and parking were less than ideal. The other church was a Baptist Church that seemed to have moved into an old school facility. It had a lot of square footage available. I did notice in some of the City minutes, that the Baptist facility had been used for some meeting purposes, so am assuming they make their facility available for at least some community purposes. I also found on the Pott. Co. website that the Methodist Church operates a food pantry, but we saw no indication of that on site.
- b. I noticed two Christian churches in town: Baptist and Methodist I did not see any other faiths represented.
- c. St. George United Methodist at 303 Grant Ave...church and Fellowship Hall, play grounds and baseball diamond. Looks very well maintained.
Lighthouse Baptist Church at 308 Lincoln. Church is attached to the north end of "The Beacon Center." Entire facility has multiple segments as it is the old in town school house (all grades) with gym. Have several small ball diamonds across the street on the old football field. The city council meets in the church meeting room and the city court is held in the same room. St. Joseph Catholic at 8965 Flush Rd (just outside the northwestern edge of town). Looks well maintained and well attended (given parking spaces available).
TRU Church at 200 Blackjack Rd. A small independent house of worship.

11. Civic

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

- a. Saw no evidence of any during our visit and an online search yielded none.
- b. I did not [observe evidence of civic organizations or activity.
- c. Talked with City Clerk. No local Veterans or American Legion post. No local Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs. Seems most of the social interaction at this level is via church and/or school organizations.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. In general, while much of the community central is pretty aged, we did notice that the community in general and parks/public spaces etc. were very clean. Even older homes didn't have a bunch of old cars, debris etc. as sometimes happens in smaller towns. I'm sure the community has had to deal with that at times, but generally this was a positive observation for us. As mentioned, we were impressed by the clear marking of city limits. We were curious as to the necessity of such prominent signage for same, however. We wondered whether that might be linked to the significant area development that is outside the city and the need to identify the area of city responsibility. Generally, we felt like city streets were a significant negative, having some decent streets with curbing, but in many places transitioning to, or being connected by gravel. We were not there during nighttime hours, but sense that lighting might not be quite what we would want either if we were considering moving to town. Sidewalks were very hit and miss.
- b. All of the public infrastructure in town was great. There was one street that seemed super odd – really steep road and sidewalk-like building material (Wildcat Way). But from looking at the city map, it appears this is not within the limits even though it is flanked by areas that are.
- c. Sidewalks varied depending on neighborhoods. Most were of marginal quality. Signage small and old style but provided essential information on well-placed sign posts. Do not recall seeing any street lights – it was day time during our visit. Only a few homes had desired level of landscaping and lawn care. Many homes had unmown lawns and miscellaneous items or vehicles on the property. However, as noted in the newer development areas within the city limits, nearly all homes showed owners taking pride and care in their homes.

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

- a. Did not visit the city hall, but did extensive reading of all information on their website, including as I have already mentioned in question one, minutes of meetings. The one concern, and probably not unusual in small towns with limited staff, is that some of the information was a little dated or not active. For example, under "news" some of the links are almost a year old, and under Planning Commission there are no minutes past 2019 (maybe Covid has limited meetings), while council minutes were completely up to date. Also, several of the business links don't do anything. Having said that, however, I would say it was one of the more complete and easily navigated small town sites I have been on, so I generally mean to be complimentary. I enjoyed the town history.
- b. It was closed. (Saturday)
- c. City hall is very similar in size and construction as in Perry. Interior mostly office space with a reasonable amount of appropriate furniture and computer stations. The City Clerk was somewhat knowledgeable about city employees: their role, location, contact

information, etc. but seemed to be less aware of civic groups and organizations. The City Clerk was very pleasant and helpful. Expressed pride in the community and the fact they are striving to improve. The City Clerk also talked about the information on their website, which for the size of the city it is reasonable well defined with current information.

Police/fire protection:

- a. Both exist. Look to be typical for small town KS. Could not determine whether police presence is full-time or part-time. I'm guessing full with a Chief and four deputies.
- b. Noticeable police headquarters downtown.
- c. Their office is in a very small building just west of the Town Hall – rather nondescript and you need to be “local” to readily tell what it is. All meetings are held in the Lighthouse Baptist Church meeting room. City Council and City Court also meets in this meeting room. Must confess, I did not notice one in downtown or on any side street we traveled. In fact, using GPS and going to noted address...3 standard garage doors open and no visible fire equipment/trucks noticed.

Library:

- a. Saw no library and found no evidence of one online
- b. Did not see one.
- c. City Clerk confirmed they do not have a library. However, the police department is talking with a local group who may locate a self-serve Kiosk unit in front of the police station.

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

- a. We were impressed by the setting and general condition of the city park at the west end of downtown. The location along the creek with abundant shade were positives. We did find two ball facilities, one newer and one older, but both in reasonably good condition. I expect there has been no summer ball activity with Covid so would not expect them to be in prime condition at present.
- b. No Answer
- c. Most noticeable park is on the west end of First Street. When entering the city from the west it is easily seen. Visited and new playground equipment and pavilion (with new concrete floor). In a very shady and quiet location. A small park area around the ball diamonds on Lincoln St – associated with the Lighthouse Baptist Church. The Methodist Church has a nice ball diamond and playground area. Riverside Park, mostly a boat launch site, is used for events at times.

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. None that we are aware of or found.
- b. No Answer
- c. The St. George City Path is a .93 mile paved trail from downtown to the Elementary School at corner of West First Street and Blackjack Rd.

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

- a. The Purple Door Events location would indicate something going on in this regard. It did appear Willie's had an outdoor area, but not sure whether that was just for additional seating or something else. I did find evidence online of live music on some occasions. Don't know what that was associated with. Was interesting that the Purple Door Events website has an events calendar, but I went clear back to last fall and found no events listed.
- b. KAWnsas Fest – a large music event held downtown in August. As a child who grew up alongside it (Bonner Springs, KS), I LOVE all the play on the word "Kaw".
- c. Blackjack Spring at Lincoln and 3rd street – east side of Lincoln Street...sets very near to the curb. Has a small stone marker and concrete water basin. Well known to most locals but you would hardly notice it alongside this street unless you had info before seeking it – drove right past it the first time. They have a small park at the edge of the Kansas River, includes a nice display of map and history of the site. Boat launch and restrooms available. Lawn nicely maintained.

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. My wife and I are both nature and history lovers. We were interested in the Black Jack Spring site and marker and were impressed with the quality and maintenance of the boat ramp facility. We were really intrigued by the octagonal old storage bins. I assume they were old grain bins, but we've never seen any in that shape. Unfortunately, if they were marked in any way, we didn't notice it and nothing is shown on the city website other than a picture associated with the history (but no mention in the narrative). I also noticed that Google maps shows 1st street as old hwy 24 East of town, but also as Old Military Road. I'm assuming that connected Ft. Leavenworth with Ft. Riley (that also crossed JF Co., but not through Perry). The city website history only refers to hwy 40, so that was a little confusing. Already mentioned the mural, nice, but did not notice any information about significance or provenance. I see in your history it was a bicentennial project by students and was updated recently. It certainly is visibly prominent. Is there significance visitors might be interested in, or just art? Already mentioned the wood artist under business and thoughts about visibility there.

- b. The Riverside Park and boat ramp and the Konza Kayaks paddle rentals! I would play this up more online. Big draw.
- c. St. George's KAWnsas Fest which is held in the above mentioned park area at the river boat launch. Found info online and seems to be one of the bigger events in the city. St. George's KAWnsas Fest which is held in the above mentioned park area at the river boat launch. Found info online and seems to be one of the bigger events in the city.

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. None visible or found
- b. No Answer
- c. They do have an attractive Post Office in downtown, we did not, but one could likely have found some information there. Only other is the Town Hall and the City Clerk noted earlier in this report.

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

- a. We have a grandson attending KSU. We visit occasionally and might consider planning a meal stop at Willie's next time, and I always love a good donut. I like BBQ a lot, but have never had Alabama style, so might try Moe's as well (though outside of town). Have had Q in all of the "meccas", KC, Memphis, Texas and the Carolinas. Alabama is getting more attention, but not sure I will like a mayonnaise based sauce.
- b. YES! I missed out on the tasty treats and coffee at the Kawffee Pot. It closed at 11 a.m. on Saturday, which was surprising. I'm not sure if that was due to COVID.
- c. Most recommended restaurant within the city is Willie's Hideout in downtown. Only issue is being in town on the days they are open. Many locals traveling about 2 miles to junction of Flush Rd and Rte 24 to a new barbeque restaurant. Which we will very like visit again sometime in the future.

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. A very positive thing I think was what we felt was an obvious pride in the community, as indicated by our observations regarding cleanliness and obvious work toward improvement. The effort was apparent. That commitment will be important in maximizing the opportunity the present growth in the community provides. Most small communities in Kansas are battling decline, sometimes rapidly. The growth St George is seeing and its proximity to Manhattan, should offer some chance to reinvent itself. Both St. George and Perry probably need to market their proximity to college communities as a positive.

- b. Pride oozes from this community. So many well-kept yards and houses. The Kawffee Pot, Willie's Hideout Bar & Grill and Willie Good Pizza are bringing an old downtown area back to life. Amazing potential for growth with the amount of housing developments
- c. Strong growth in new housing in multiple areas on the outskirts, within city limits. Mural on building at Lincoln and First St and the active work on restoring the few remaining downtown buildings.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. The challenge on the other side of the "growth coin" and the opportunity it provides, is managing that growth successfully. Particularly given the evident recent pace in St. George, but also in developing a community vision for what is desired. I expect there is some disconnect between what the long-time members of the community want and what the more recently arrived want. In JF Co., and in Perry, we are constantly fighting a battle between those who want progress and those who don't want change. Getting past the bedroom community environment that has developed and stimulating business and services that will be able to accommodate the growing population in such close proximity to larger communities, will be difficult.
Secondly, maintaining a true community feel and identity will be a challenge as well. As we drove the area around the community in addition to the city itself, there are lots of smaller housing developments outside the city limits, both around St George and everywhere between there and Manhattan and Wamego. As Pottawatomie County continues to approve that kind of rural development, does a small town like St George lose their identity completely? We hope not, but we have seen the same thing in Perry and JF Co. 12,000 of our 19,000 county residents live outside our small communities. Perry is no exception, people sleep here, but they do everything else in Lawrence or Topeka. As mentioned, getting them to support community improvements, and the commitment of additional resources that requires, is difficult.
- b. Web presence. Brag on yourself more!
- c. Working with citizens to help them improve maintenance of older homes; structure(s) and landscaping. Will help the community present a more positive and vibrant appearance. Attracting viable business model/style to setup in their restored store fronts that would be attractive to upper income consumers. Example: specialty stores like Who Wood Art.

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

- a. The similarities in our two communities. I didn't think so at first, but I'd say our two communities were well matched for this First Impressions project. Honestly, my wife and I knew nothing about St. George before this. There are some variations in our circumstances but a lot of similarities exist.

Our growth is not like St. George (Perry had their surge, from 600 to 900 in the 60's, when the Perry Reservoir opened). Our challenge is finding land to develop to facilitate new growth for which there certainly is demand. The census in Perry has stayed very similar since the 60's. We have flood plain to the south, farmers to the East won't sell property, and the North and West have river obstacles that would make taking utilities those directions extremely difficult. We both deal with the proximity to larger and college-oriented cities, and the bedroom community challenge that creates. We both are part of multi-community school districts that can also have dividing influences at times. We have more business, but like St. George have significant businesses outside the city limits, and we have lost a number of businesses in recent years, including our local grocery store two years ago. I am looking forward to seeing what their visitors to our community thought about Perry.

- b. Friendly, adorable downtown experience at Willie's Hideout. The owners have invested a lot of time into that downtown. New lifeblood!
- c. Everyone we met and chatted with were very friendly and helpful...noticeably proud of their community. The mural on the building at Lincoln and First. Very impressive school campuses: Elementary and the collective Middle, Senior and District Office, and sports facilities. Overall growth of housing not only in St. George but in the suburban and urban areas between St. George to Manhattan and Wamego.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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