

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: **Ulysses, KS**

Dates Visited: 6/14/22
6/22/22
7/20/22 (2)
8/10/22
8/16/22 (2)
8/26/22

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?
 - City of Ulysses official site is the first to come up in a Google search for "Ulysses KS" – Facebook page was also on the first page of sites returned.
 - Cityofulysses.com has a nice banner, good color theme. Directory and search right at the top of the page make it easy to access information; though no results come up when using the search box with common keywords, so is it working?
 - Public Meeting and Events calendars on the city page are empty – no details at all available.
 - Ulysses Chamber/Grant County Chamber website seem to be the same site. Did not come up in initial search for information about Ulysses but found the link on the city's website. Chamber site could use some graphics possibly – kind of plain.
 - Easy to find information about the city online.
 - Lots of information on Ulysses found online and it reflected what was seen when the visit took place.
 - Facebook presence was found for the city and a "things to do in Ulysses" site.
 - Easy search on Google to find city, county, and Chamber information. Fairly accurate compared to what was noticed in the city during the visit.
 - Did some research before going on the visit. Specifically looked for activities going on and restaurants to visit. Struggled to find the Chamber website

through other sites or information, but Googling the Chamber specifically brought up the site.

2. The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.
- Good panoramic view from the south, heading north into town. Pioneer Electric was a positive observation.
 - Flowers at Hwy 160 and Main were very nice. The four corners at the intersection of Missouri and Oklahoma were nice.
 - Entrance from the south is rough, but the view from the top of the hill before coming into town is good.
 - Interesting signs in the draw on the east side before coming up the hill into town.
 - Ulysses/Grant County billboard easily noticed outside of town.
 - Clean and attractive community. Primarily runs east to west with industrial and retail businesses. Navigated through the community on some of the north/south streets as well.
 - Nice community, very clean throughout town. Not many trees.
 - Businesses were located on major highways.
 - Ulysses looks like a nice little town with a lot of community pride.
 - Very clean and tidy with well-kept properties and people obviously taking pride to keep it that way.
 - Felt like businesses were a bit scattered other than Main Street/downtown. Didn't feel like there was a specific flow with how businesses were located outside of downtown.
 - My first 5-minute impression was not a very strong one. Driving around it felt like the community was developed around the two highways but was very broken up. A lot of the smaller homes added a very industrial feel to the community. Some signage, but not until you find yourself closer to the Main Street area.
 - Houses and lots were well-kept for the most part and the city was fairly organized and tidy.

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

- The sign at the west edge of town/county line with cheers, volunteers, etc.
- Stone signs are well done at all major entrances. Also noted the veteran signs.
- The “U” on the east side needs painting. Tiger Country signs are faded.
- Very nice signs for the Civic Center. Good to see directional signage.
- A lot of signs on Hwy 160, maybe too many.
- Felt a bit lost trying to find the football field and high school coming in from the west. There is a sign leading directly to it on the north side of the street going westbound, but nothing heading east – recommend signage for eastbound travelers.
- Many signs indicating various attractions, maybe too many signs to see at driving speed/not enough time to determine where to go given all that information from the signs.
- The digital stone Ulysses sign was very nice but could be larger so that it is seen better. It just depends on traffic stopped at the light.
- Westbound signage is great, eastbound is lacking. Great signs traveling northbound.
- It felt like entering an industrial community at the entrance from W Hwy 160.
- Very industrial feeling and not a lot of directional signage, or it was hard to see or read if there was.
- The city had a working community vibe – felt very industrial.

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

- Directional signage was helpful and of good quality.
- Buildings downtown were fair quality.
- Pedestrian routes were good – enjoyed walking downtown.
- A nice variety of stores downtown. Most buildings are only 1 story high which gives a dressier/cleaner appearance.
- There’s a good variety of authentic Hispanic stores.
- Mostly single-story buildings, well-marked with appropriate signage. The street narrowed at traffic lights.
- No countdown lights for crosswalks on signs/poles.

- Buildings were mostly 1 story with nice storefronts and a variety of businesses.
- Directional signage was noted to be helpful throughout the community, including downtown.
- Main Street seemed a bit narrow. Some revitalization/beautification was happening during our visit which could add aesthetics to that area.
- There was work happening on Main Street during some visits, related to fixing the power poles/lighting. Because the roads are very narrow it made for a lot of congestion.
- Main Street was nice but very spread out. Several businesses were closed so they couldn't be visited or rated.
- Fairly ordinary main street and downtown. Nothing really popped out.

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

- Noticed clothing stores, movie theater, drug store, financial services, insurance, real estate, an art collective, and more.
- Visited an art/antique store. Very nice setup with friendly staff. There were postcards there promoting Ulysses.
- Visited the Eco-Devo/Chamber. Greeted nicely. When asked if any events were happening, the fair and the museum were mentioned. Given a brochure of Lower Cimarron Springs.
- Attempted to visit some businesses, but they weren't open on a Wednesday afternoon.
- Main St. Artery – collection of art.
- Chamber/Eco-Devo and consignment shop were noted as well as restaurants.
- Bear Creek Coffee.
- Business district reflects the community's dominant Hispanic culture.
- Not much in the way of variety in the merchandise found in downtown shops.
- Saw quite a few Mexican restaurants, coffee shops and a good variety of stores.

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

- Friendly and easy to talk to at Tiger Nutrition.
- Friendly and helpful – restaurant staff was super friendly and thankful for the business. Everyone waves throughout town which gives it a friendly feel.
- Customer service at the Main St. Artery – greeted by a nice gentleman who was very friendly. At the Chamber/Eco-Devo a young lady greeted visitors and provided information on places to visit.
- No negative interactions – everyone was very welcoming.
- Every person encountered in stores and on the street was friendly.
- Staff at the consignment store was very helpful.
- Excellent customer service throughout town.
- The lady at the economic development office seemed a little nervous but told us about the fair and things to do downtown.
- Customer service at La Estrella was great! Wait staff was super friendly.

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

- Downtown had benches located on each side of the street.
- Multiple people mentioned they did not notice any public wi-fi.
- Some trash cans and benches together. Public restrooms at the parks.
- Benches were all that were noticed by some.

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

- The brick area between buildings with a nice. Some lots between buildings were a little rough in appearance.
- There was an area between buildings with a fancy streetlight and some sort of cauldron or fire pit (what was it?) was kind of cool, though there were some piles of rubble towards the back fence in that area.
- City crews were working on one spot of landscaping/concrete area. Glad to see work being done to maintain those spots.
- Parking was good and it was easy to walk to several businesses from parking spaces.

- No live planters/bushes on Main, also no crosswalk sign on stop lights letting people know when they can cross and time left for making a crossing.
- Multiple mentions that Main Street was narrowed at stoplight intersection.
- No live vegetation growing.
- No troubles at all finding parking.
- No events happening during one visit, so they felt parking was good because of that.
- Landscaping was nice and parking was not an issue.
- Easy parking and easy access to retail and service businesses from those parking spaces.
- Parking was a little crazy during one visit due to the work on light poles, but other than that it appeared that there was normally ample parking downtown.
- Ulysses signs on poles were a nice touch.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- Found additional shopping areas on HWY 160 – Casey’s and NAPA auto parts. Buildings and grounds looked nice. West side of 160 was easy to access.
- Gas stations on Colorado.
- Ace Hardware and another lumberyard observed away from Main.
- Other retail areas seem easy to get to (Hwy 160/25). It’s basically an easy “square” community with everything together in one area.
- Downtown had most of the retail, however there was some on Hwy 160 with Family Dollar and Dollar General. All easy to access.
- Easy access to typical retail stores like Dollar General.
- The two dollar stores outside of downtown were easy to access and eye-catching.
- Hwy 160 appeared to be the secondary business area outside of downtown. There were more new businesses and building here and it catered to the needs of the community members – grocery stores, gas stations, restaurants.
- Other retail was noted on the highway and consisted of newer buildings.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- Likely off Stubbs Road out east. It's not well marked. There may also be an area on the west side of town that could accommodate building or expansion.
- Hwy 160 has a majority of the commercial areas with a variety of businesses from agriculture to hardware and Pioneer Electric. Easy access to the storefronts and street.
- Expansion seems possible in either direction of town – east or west.
- Big, accessible lots where industries are located on the highway. Appears expansion is possible.
- Not sure on any official property expansion opportunities but there was a lot of manufacturing/commercial activity south of the highway.
- One visitor could not tell if there was a defined industrial area or if there was room to build/expand.
- The community felt like it was mostly industrial, and the rest of town was built around this infrastructure.
- The industrial areas looked fairly tightly packed, maybe difficult to expand?

6. Health Care Services

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

- Did find the hospital. Nice structure from the outside – did not go in.
- The hospital was nice and located in the center of town. It was noted that the ER is at the front of the complex making it easily accessible. The hospital was large and impressive.
- Large, well maintained hospital in the center of town. ER easy to access from its front-facing location.
- Health department is near the library.
- Modern hospital, well maintained.
- Hospital was well marked. The health department was not too far from the hospital but not as well marked.

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

- Noted a dentist, dermatologist, hearing specialist, and some others. There seemed to be a good variety and availability of different medical services. A real asset to the community. Did not go into any of the facilities, but the exteriors seemed well-kept and inviting.
- Multiple mentions of there appearing to be physicians and an optometrist with clinics near the hospital.
- Signage for other health services was noted, but nothing that stood out.

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

- Appeared to be fairly new assisted living and nursing facilities on the east side of town along Missouri. They appear to have many residents.
- The assisted living/rehabilitation center was very nice and well-kept and was close to the elementary school.
- Layout and multiple buildings at the assisted living facility was appreciated.
- Modern assisted living facility, well maintained.

7. Housing

Give a brief description of the existing mix of housing stock. Does the local market have housing that would appeal to all income wages? What challenges do you see in regards to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)

- Not much for sale in the community. Quite a bit of the housing is small, but well-kept homes.
- There were houses built in the last several years on the outskirts of the community, and some vacant lots west of the high school area.
- Mobile homes/lower income housing on the south side not kept up as well.
- Housing seems like the higher end homes aren't so fancy and lower-level homes are kept up much better than Goodland. Looking online, the homes were priced more affordable than Goodland.
- There are mixes of nice properties with a run down one here and there, but it's not that prevalent. It shows that there is code enforcement within the city.

- Housing appeals to all income levels, most seemed affordable with there being no huge spread between high and low values.
- Impressive variety of housing. Sale listings indicated the housing seems affordable.
- Felt like there were many small, simple houses as well as trailers and modular homes. Housing would appeal to all income levels.
- Houses seemed small on the whole, lots were all the same size. More modular neighborhoods than expected with more stick build homes to the west. Not many houses for sale.

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

- Did not see any rental properties/signs indicating places for rent during the drive and walk through town.
- Several apartment complexes and duplexes were seen. There were some signs noted in front of the complexes, many were for low income.
- Never noticed a single-family home for rent, only for sale.
- Low income apartment complexes were found, and some apartment rentals and duplexes throughout town – east and west, even south of the railroad tracks.
- Lot of duplexes!
- Noted the Housing Authority along with apartment complexes but no other rental opportunities seemed to exist.
- For the size of the community there seemed to be a lot of rental properties.

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?

- School buildings and grounds were well maintained. The high school has an attractive entrance. There were kids playing at the Sullivan elementary playground.
- Another locker room is being added at the football field.
- A nice redo of the entrance at Sullivan.
- Saw the elementary, middle, and high school, but did not see a pre-school. Schools are large and well-kept, located throughout the community, not all

together. The high school is the most west, then the middle school and the elementary is to the east side of the community.

- Playgrounds were adequate. Felt high school could have a larger sign, or a better positioned sign so visitors know it's the high school.
- Schools appear to be adequate in size and the buildings and grounds are well cared for.
- Middle school and grade school were spotted right away. The high school appeared to be tucked away but once found the campus was nice. There appeared to be work on new structures and facilities.
- Buildings did seem old but some work was happening at the middle school during one visit.

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

- District website was found but could not determine the quality of the education system from that site.
- UNIV/STATS showed they had 1,668 students K-12 with a 15:1 student/teacher ratio. Only proficient 15% in math and 16% in reading.
- Information about the schools was found online, but details on the quality of education were unclear.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- Could not find any information on available childcare.
- Did not see any childcare services available while touring through town.
- Did not see childcare available in town but did not ask anyone either.
- Did note some daycares listed in Google but didn't determine if pricing was affordable.

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?

- Several church buildings were found, different denominations. All properties were well maintained which shows regular members/attendees taking care of things.
- Multiple visitors noted the Episcopal Church building was for sale.
- Churches were noted especially in the middle of town. Interesting shape on the Catholic Church.
- Very faith-based community. Checker at the restaurant said “God bless you!”
- Multiple denominations throughout the community. Seems faith-based.
- Several denominations were seen and the restaurant visited was very faith-forward, offering prayer cards to customers. Visitors thought that was nice and added a personal touch to the experience.
- Nice architecture on the churches observed.

11. Civic

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

- Various club signage at the entrance to town. Rotary had redone a public space downtown and there was also another area indicating Rotary sponsorship.
- Loved the “Civic Center” at the fairgrounds. Also noted the K-State Extension building is located within this area.
- Boy Scouts building was seen and also a Farm Bureau office. Did not see an American Legion or similar type organization.
- A flyer in the restaurant listed different events put on by different organizations in town.
- Kiwanis and Lions club signs noted while entering community.
- Did see American Legion post building downtown and a Masonic Lodge in another part of town.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

- The Boy Scout building was noted.
- The fair was going on during the visit with lots of activity at the Civic Center. K-State Research and Extension is located at the fairgrounds.
- Noted some of the parks were club sponsored.
- Multiple visitors noted no evidence of civic organization activity other than having the signs at town entrances.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- Streets were in decent shape but couldn't comment on the lighting due to visiting during the day.
- One area that would have helped was a sign showing the fairgrounds/high school on the eastbound side of the road on N. Joyce Street. That's a nice street to get to northern parts of the community – that's an asset to highlight.
- Landscaping – can tell from drier climate that there was more buffalo grass rather than greener grasses.
- Joyce Street was a nice street with not many stop signs and no dips. Maybe additional signage here to direct people to the high school and fairgrounds.
- All 4-way stops signs were highlighted by the post being red and white – really made you notice it was different.
- Streets, signage, sidewalks, parking, landscaping – all adequate, but couldn't comment on lighting due to visiting at daytime.
- Streets were in good repair. Good job on maintaining them.
- Street signs and road signs were easy to read and streets were well marked. It looked like lighting was being improved.
- Not much landscaping or beautification in the community.

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

- It was pleasant enough, although the barriers put up make it seem unfriendly and that there's an implied separation. This is more a reflection of the world at large rather than just the city.
- Did find city hall and the county government buildings including the courthouse.
- Noted city hall but did not enter.
- Didn't go into city hall but found an Experience Grant County magazine at Bear Creek Coffee.
- It was a little confusing to find city hall.

Police/fire protection:

- Police department one block off Main Street.
- Police department near the courthouse.
- Multiple people noted that Fire/EMS is on Hwy 160, with easy access and can get on roads quicker than from the middle of town.
- Fire station building was very appealing.
- Touring the community, one visitor was not able to identify where fire or police stations were.

Library:

- Library was also one block off Main. Courthouse/police/library all centered in middle of town.
- Large library, well-kept building and grounds. Kids were parking bikes and going inside. They all were friendly and waved.
- Brick, multi-story building near center of town.
- Library was easy to find.

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

- Multiple praises for the Frazier Park complex – it was great! Noted the golf course, baseball/softball fields at the civic center area as well as soccer fields.
- The park across from the hospital was ok. Noted the scout house.
- The Russ Binney Park is beautiful – a real gem.
- Other parks were decent.
- Parks had benches, public restrooms, trash cans and were all well-kept.
- The park across from the hospital was very nice. A good place to take a break if needing to step away from the hospital.
- Great outdoor recreation area on the north end of town. Better signage could be used to get there, especially on N. Joyce Street.
- Visitor liked that the ballparks are part of the sports complex at the fairgrounds so outdoor recreation is in one location and not scattered throughout town.
- Rec center and pool looked very nice.

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?

- The Home Products Dinner.
- Could not find anything specific but noted that the town does utilize orange and black everywhere.
- Did not see or hear of any attractions Ulysses is well known for.
- Did see a "Get Ulysses" on the Chamber/Tourism Facebook page. Easily found news about the recent county fair.
- The only thing one visitor could find was that it was named after Ulysses Grant.

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

- The fair was going on during the visit. The restaurant had weekly events listed on a paper at each table (fair schedule).
- Did visit the fair and it was well attended.
- Not while there, but information was found about the completed county fair online.
- There was a poster promoting a date night with the Bear Creek Coffee Shop and the local movie theater.
- Did not see any indication of events.

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).

- Again, multiple notes about Frazier Park being a great attraction – camping and fishing areas and a trail. The golf course area was nice, too. All very attractive.
- The historical museum would be an attraction for the curious.
- Impressed with Frazier Park's fishing pond, sand volleyball, RV hookups, and other facilities – great area for family outings!
- There was a large mural noticed on the side of a building while driving down Main.

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.

- There is a downtown office. The window display could have a bit more to invite people to come in.
- Main Street Eco-Devo/Chamber in one location. Friendly staff provided ideas of attractions to visit.
- The Eco-Devo/Chamber on Main had good signage and friendly staff.
- The Chamber office was noted.
- Some felt the Chamber office was not obvious, but they did come across it while walking around downtown.

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

- Tiger Nutrition was a neat place to visit. The Civic Center complex – baseball/softball fields.
- Frazier Park for sure.
- Ate at a very good authentic Mexican restaurant. Definitely would stop back again to visit it along with the park south of town. It would be a good place to organize a large event like a family reunion.
- Would come back to town for a sporting event or to eat at the little restaurant on Hwy 160.
- Bear Creek Coffee – appreciated that they had their coffee beans, cups, stickers, and shirts available to purchase. If visitor found themselves near town again they would make a point to stop to purchase more items.
- Noticed good reviews for several restaurants and had a great experience at La Estrella. Would stop again if passing through.
- La Estrella and Bear Creek were both praised for good food/coffee and good service.

14. Wrap-up

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

- Was greener in areas than expected for the time of year and rainfall.
- Housing was better kept up than expected compared to other towns in the west.
- Concrete streets made a real difference.
- Schools were attractive and people were using the facilities even though it was summertime.
- Seemed to be a “true” community.
- Felt very much like a hometown or quaint. All together in a fairly square area.
- Being built around the intersections of Hwys. 160 and 25 keeps everything accessible.
- A lot of pride in town – the orange and black as well as people keeping their properties maintained. It’s a very clean community that appears to be enforcing codes.
- Clean city. Great yards – people really keep up with mowing. No vehicles parked in yards on the grass. Lots of pride in their property.
- Extremely impressed with Frazier Park – lots to do, one stop.
- Rec center and pool were nice.
- School colors throughout town was a nice touch.
- City felt very safe, no bad neighborhoods.
- Friendly people, enjoyed retail options and restaurants available for a town this size.
- Several big murals and the city did a great job embracing the culture and sharing that throughout the community and to visitors.
- Neat yards and houses, nice and friendly people.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- Retail in downtown, maybe could be more.
- Lack of rental housing for people wanting to move to town.
- Nothing major sticks out, but probably an industrial/manufacturing facility would diversify the community.
- If you’re coming from the west, getting to the high school is challenging. Joyce Street should be the major north/south street for the city giving

access to the fairgrounds and high school much easier than going through the center of town.

- Not many eating places. Most sit-down restaurants were Mexican food places.
- Felt like the community was lacking charm. Might be more attractive if it had a better flow and feel of community in a centralized area rather than scattered about.
- Marketing the community as a place to move to. Felt like it looked older and run down while driving through – not very progressive or lively.
- Tightly packed, industrial feel kept it from feeling very much like it would be home.

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

- Ulysses left me with a more positive impression than I was expecting.
- Enjoyable trip – one thing that will be remembered is how climate affects communities. Ulysses is a much drier area than Goodland and you can tell they plan for it with the grasses and not as many trees. The community looks great and is using its resources wisely.
- Cleanliness.
- Even housing levels – no super rich or super depressed areas.
- The golf course area for sure. This was such an amazing and family-oriented space – loved it!
- People were kind, retail options were good. Bear Creek Coffee was a definite positive.
- A bit underwhelming – was looking for a little more charm/quaint feeling.
- The digital signage as you turn to the main business district and the friendliness of the wait staff at La Estrella.
- Seems to be a community of hard working people.



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