First Impressions

Waterville, Kansas

K-State Research and Extension in Partnership with
The Dane G. Hansen Foundation
Waterville

- 2010 Census Population 680 (-0.1% since 2000*) KS +6.1%
- 2016 Estimate is 644 (-5.4% since 2000 KS +8.1%)
- 13.0% college educated, 95.1% high school or GED
  - KS 31% college education, 90% HS or equivalency
- 75.3% family households, 24.7% non-family
- Poverty rate is 10.5% (KS=13.6%)
- Median Age 46.9 years (36)
- Median household income is $46,136 ($52,205)

* 2000 Census was 681 (Source: www.Factfinder.census.gov)
Web Presence

http://cityofwatervilleks.org/

• Came right up when I searched. I like that their rates and budget are on the web site. We should do that.
• Very easy to find information.
• There was nothing about the School District on site.
• List of activities and events. Links to Library, Community Center and golf course.
http://www.watervillekansas.com/

- Google search brings you to the chamber web site. I liked the pictures (scenes from the community), but the color combination seemed hard to read.
- Visitors offered constructive review of dated items.
- Easily found information that helped know what to expect in the community.
- “Your Move!” has a LARGE overview of the area.
- “Our History” was interesting.

- **Facebook-generated page shows out-of-date information.**
The “Five-Minute” Impression

• The community appears larger than its population, with good manufacturing presence and most of the storefronts appeared occupied.

• Neighborhoods were well-maintained with better housing than you see in some small towns. The usual mix of well-maintained and “less than desirable” existed.

• Sidewalks in most, if not all neighborhoods.
The “Five-Minute” Impression

• Definitely a farming community with grain bins everywhere.

• There was a large manufacturing plant to the east.
The “Five-Minute” Impression
• Enjoyed the sign, “Waterville, next 5 exits.”
The “Five-Minute” Impression

- A nice stock trailer business from the south gives an industrial, but positive impression.
The “Five-Minute” Impression

• The west entrance has no sign.
• Signage is practical but not uniform in appearance.
• The sign across from the gas station is extremely busy and not easy to read.
• Nice to see home remodeling and fix-up in process.

Visitor observations: October 2017
Photos: November 29, 2017
Downtown Business Area

• Vibrant, active well-identified businesses alongside vacant, worn-down buildings.
Customer service varied from store to store.
Downtown Business Area

• Building with iron bars on the front stands out negatively. “What is the crime rate here?”
Downtown Business Area

• Solid Bar Fitness: Manufacturing weight-lifting bars. Probably online sales, but not good curb appeal.
Downtown Business Area (amenities)

- Restrooms at the park
- No fountains or benches.
- *Is there Wi-Fi?*
Downtown Business Area (amenities)

- Despite attempts at streetscaping, downtown looks a bit unkempt.
Downtown Business Area (amenities)

- In places, the quantity of trash cans and decorative planters make the sidewalks look crowded.
Other Retail Shopping Areas

• Gas station is the highway stop for visitors and not a good impression. Floors are dirty, good service, but did not want to eat there.

Google Maps: May 2014 (when gas cost $3.38/gal)
Retrieved from Internet February 2018
Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

• **Asset:** Two trailer companies located here.
• Visitors could not tell if there was open industrial space. Chamber says, “No.”

**Observation:**

• “Entrepreneurs who choose to start their small businesses are responsible for 63 percent of net new jobs created in the United States every year.”
• *The same UPS truck who competed with your downtown can help your entrepreneur serve the world.*
Health Care Services

• Health Care services are not provided in town.

• A small eye doctor sign downtown.

One visitor noted the LARGE amount of information on the “Your Move” page of Chamber: including proximity to health care.
Long-Term Care

• An Independent Living facility
Housing

• A nice amount of market-rate housing. A mix of newer homes, large Victorians and a few eyesores.
Housing

• Discovered 3 stately homes to the far south. Very nice! Would love to know the story behind them!
Housing

• Did not see anything for rent, possibly the Sunny Side homes?
• Several houses for sale.
• Several houses were being updated.
• Generally, a good mix of housing!
### Housing data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Kansas</th>
<th>KANSAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Housing Units</td>
<td>357</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Houses</td>
<td>292 (81.8%)</td>
<td>(89.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Houses</td>
<td>65 (18.2%)</td>
<td>(10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>238 (82%)</td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied</td>
<td>54 (18%)</td>
<td>(33.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Need for clean-up
Schools

• Pre-school and elementary school in Waterville,

• Elementary school appears nice with a nice playground.
Schools

• Great to have a preschool in a community.
• Middle School in Blue Rapids and High School in between.
Schools- were you able to find online information to help you assess the quality of education system?

- No link to the schools from City or Chamber website.
- Many schools have links to quality indicators on their website, USD 498 does not.

Kansas State Department of Education, Building Report Card
Retrieved from Internet 2/3/2018
Schools

- School website is fun to look at with lots of evidence of student involvement in its creation. (live feed)
Childcare

• Childcare wasn’t apparent to visitors, except for school district preschool.
Faith/Religion

- Saw a Lutheran and Methodist churches. Well-maintained in nice neighborhoods.
- Did not see evidence of church activity.
Civic

- Lion’s Club on sign at entrance. Nice listing on Chamber Site does not include Masonic Lodge.

Waterville Chamber of Commerce
Clubs & Associations

Community Page

Assoc: Chamber of Commerce
Time: 12:00 P.M. Every second Tuesday
Where: Weaver Hotel
Desc: Striving to make our community better
Dues: Ten dollars individual, forty dollars business
Contact: Ann Walter-President

Assoc: Friends of the Waterville Library
Desc: Working to make a better library and learning center. Maintain books and tapes offered for sale at the library: Sidewalk book sales throughout the year. Always fresh material. Donations gladly accepted.
Dues: Adults: $10.00. Teens: $5.00 Students: $3.00. Families: $15.00. Patrons: $20.00. Lifetime: $100.00
Meets: Third Tuesday at 4:00 P.M. at the Library.
Contact: Sharon Teagarden-King and Jeanette Bergquest 785-363-2236 dhking@bluevalley.net

Assoc: Valley Heights Leo Club Ages 12-21
Time: Every first Sunday 4:00 P.M. or 7:00 P.M. depending on school activities
Where: Alternates: Teen Center and United Methodist Church, Waterville.
Desc: Community involvement supported by Lions club
Dues: Five dollar entry fee. Three dollars annually
Contact: Advisor: Sharon Teagarden-King 785-363-2236
Public Infrastructure

• Streets were covered in sand.
• Sidewalks weren’t always present or consistently in good shape.
City Hall

• None of the visitors went into city hall but saw it as the source for visitor information.
Fire, EMS and Police Services

- Police presence was noticed
- Nice Fire Station, EMS Building.

*What is your ISO Rating?*
Library

• An active library in the downtown area.
• Building looked a little outdated.
City Parks

• Open restrooms were appreciated by visitors.
• Picnic area.
• Gazebo needs repairs.
City Parks

- Visitor took a child along and spent a lot of time having a picnic and running around the park. Tractor was a unique attraction for the 5-year-old.
City Parks

- Park is mostly welcoming, but needs a little revitalization of equipment and pool house.
City Parks

- Waterville Campground on the east side of town. There is a sign there to inform visitors of major attractions of the town and provide a phone # to get more tourist information.
Recreation/Tourism

• Didn’t see any particular event or attraction.
• No community slogan.
• Weaver Hotel and museums are in Waterville.
• Golf Course, not well kept nor well-known by residents.
  – *Built and maintained by volunteers!*

Waterville Kansas

[www.watervillekansas.com](http://www.watervillekansas.com/)

*Waterville, Kansas* is a prairie town with a foot in the past and an eye to the future. Meanwhile, we have fun! Events. Tourist Information.

You’ve visited this page 2 times. Last visit: 2/3/18
Recreation and Entertainment

9-hole grass green golf course: Waterville
Astro Theater: Marysville
Biking and hiking: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Bowling: Marysville
Competitive softball, baseball and swimming: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Hunting and fishing/deer and turkey: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Interactive museums: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Lake Idlewild/fishing/ Waterville
Libraries: Waterville and Blue Rapids (BR library oldest working museum west of the Mississippi)
Little/Big Blue River/ fishing and canoeing: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Marshall County Fair/July: Blue Rapids
Summer recreation programs: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Swimming pools, parks and playgrounds: Waterville and Blue Rapids
Wild West Days- Waterville
Nickel Days- Waterville
Christmas Gala: Weaver Hotel, Waterville
Are there events that will bring you back?

• Some events were listed on the website, but outdated.
• Nickel Days
Lots of interest in “story”

Brief History of Waterville

Located in west Marshall County on the Little Blue River. Highways US 77 and K-9 intersect here. Tree-lined streets, a mixture of turn-of-the-century buildings make this a pleasant place to visit.

1867 as a pioneer town at the end of the railroad and beside the Little Blue River. When the railroad reached 100 miles from Atchison, KS, the site for the city was determined. It was named by William Osborn, a railroad superintendent, for his hometown of Waterville, New York.

As an “end of the line” town, Waterville served as a supply center for the area and as a shipping center for livestock, grain and other local products. It also accommodated travelers in several hotels. As churches and schools were built, this rowdy cow town took on a more serene and gracious tone. Soon, many new homes and businesses were established. Through the years, Waterville has cherished and cared for many of these features while keeping pace with the times.

Today, you will find the Victorian homes, the railroad station and many other historic buildings along tree-lined streets. Come discover the treasures of Waterville:

- A museum, a new community center, a nine-hole golf course, a public swimming pool, lighted tennis courts, beautiful Lake Bellewild one mile north of town, two lighted ball fields, a modern school system and a relaxed place where friendly people still have time to listen to the serenity.

The Opera House was built in 1903 at a cost of $8,000. It's used now as a theater for community and school productions. Tours of Waterville are available. Levels are Chocolate, Red Delight and On the Road. For more information call (785) 363-2515 or send us an email from the main page.

The Train Depot, built in 1907, has been restored and houses a museum of Waterville collections. The Game Farm one-room schoolhouse
Lots of wonderful area historical information is on the Wellness Weavers’ website.
Built in 1885, it has served as a livery barn, buggy assembly factory, an automotive repair shop, and Santa's storage and workshop.

The barn is the featured setting for The Goldstone Inn books by Marilyn White. Unlike in the book, it will not be dismantled and moved.

Basic weatherization work that sealed the broken windows has been done at this point. Repointing of the rocks is needed and removal of the bat guano and to figure out a way to house the bats in alternative living arrangements is on the agenda. The bats are part of our natural pest control team and their guano is excellent for the gardens. The "Travel the World" Barn Door Quilt on the South side is visible from Hwy 77 if you look North at the United Methodist Church corner on Main St and Nebraska Ave. It is included on the Kansas Barn Quilt Tour website.

For 44 years it was "Santa" Hanson's workshop and storage facility...his suit is on display in the Waterville Train Depot Museum. It houses the 1920 Gere Biplane that was built by Marc Lamoureux (left wing) and the motor by Malcom Staum (right wing). The actual wings are wired to the ceiling to keep them safe until the Plane Built TEAM arrives. Darren Perillo, is the tail section and has 20 hours fixed wing aviation from Purdue University (where my Dad was a graduate assistant before Amelia Earhart was there with her Flying Laboratory, the Electra that did not return from the final stretches of the World Flight in 1937.
What would bring you back?

• Hotel/opera house area has a ton of potential.
• Little Blue River and Idle Wild Lake are a few miles away. (Couches under the shelter are disgusting.)
• Railroad Park.
Public Art
Most Positive Observations

• Neighborhoods were well-maintained with good market rate housing.

• Location is tremendous- proximity to Marysville and Manhattan and other recreation.

One visitor noted the LARGE amount of info on “Your Move” page: Including proximity to other locations.
Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

• Downtown could use some renovations to frontage.
• There is nowhere to sit and eat.
• Main street needs some work to make it more attractive.
• Unbelievable potential of Opera House, hotel, railroad area and Settlement House. Tell the story!
• The closeness of Blue Rapids could be seen as a challenge or a benefit.
• The things that are missing in Waterville (grocery store, restaurants, medical services) are found in Blue Rapids.
• With only 4 miles between them, the towns could be considered as a whole vs separately to bring people here to live.
What will you remember the most in six months from now?

• Much nicer than I expected. Nice neighborhoods, good manufacturing base.
• No health care services.
• A lot of dead ends and no signs to tell you.
• Streets need work.
Next Steps:

Thank our leadership team:

• Ashley Jacobson
• Sammie Parker
• Rachael Bargdill

• Set next steps!
  — Which group will lead the discussion?

• Contact me if you need resources or help:
  — Nancy Daniels
    Community Vitality Specialist, K-State Research and Extension
    785.410.6352
    nkDaniels@ksu.edu
K-State Research and Extension

PRIDE: http://kansasprideprogram.k-state.edu/

• Local communities identify what they would like to preserve, create, or improve for their future and volunteers pull together to create their ideal community future.
Brain Gain (30-49 year olds moving to rural) is a “new trend” that has been happening since the 70’s and no one is noticing or talking about it.

Rural is in the middle of everywhere. You live one place, work another and play another. With transportation and internet, it’s all accessible to you.

People research a number of places before they move to a rural town.

Only 1/3 of the people who move rural have a previous connection with that area.
• If you bring 7 people to a 700 citizen town every year in 10 years you’ll have a 10% increase. It matters! It is a challenge with housing, but it is achievable.

• We are our own worst enemies. We have to monitor our customer service! It matters!

• The number of people who live in rural areas is increasing—from 54M to 60M from 1970-2010. The relative % of people who live rural is smaller (19% instead of 26%) but the real number has increased.

• Don’t buy in to someone else’s narrative.

• We lose our hardware store, our school, consolidate our churches, etc... but we are still here! In MN, they have only lost 3 towns in 50 years.
Research on Rural Towns

- Housing will be freed up as the baby boomers retire and move closer to medical services.
- Rural communities need retirement housing (not nursing facilities, but maintenance free) to retain seniors.
- 1/5 of dollars come from transfer payments—not employers.

- Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, University of Minnesota
Grant Writing Workshops

Grants are a vital piece in your community’s funding puzzle...and you can do it.

K-State Research and Extension’s Community Vitality Team offers grant writing workshops for local communities.

Objectives

- Conquer your grant writing fears and start writing.
- Learn new sources of data to document community needs.
- Learn new sources of grant funding
- Practice developing the Grant Elements: Problem, Outcomes, Activities, Evaluation, and Budget.

Short Term Outcomes

- 93% have increased confidence to write a successful grant.
- 94% learned new sources of data to document community needs.
- 80% learned new sources for finding grants.
- 91% have increased confidence to develop the elements of a successful grant.
Resources I like:

• [http://smallbizsurvival.com/](http://smallbizsurvival.com/)

— THE SMALL TOWN AND RURAL BUSINESS RESOURCE
Resources I like:
• [http://saveyour.town/](http://saveyour.town/)
  – Monthly live webinars; available on recording.
  – Pay once and show as many times as you want.
  – Watch parties encouraged.
Resources I like:

- [https://www.facebook.com/groups/brownbagmx/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/brownbagmx/)
  Brown Bag Marketing Exchange
  (Atchison, KS Co-Marketing group)