First Impressions 

**Team Report Form**

Community Visited: Wilson Date Visited: 5/12/18

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?

*Pretty easy to find their city website. There was information that would be helpful to the residents of Wilson but didn’t tell much about the city itself besides the Czech Festival. There were links to the chamber website as well as a link just for the Czech Festival. No pictures ever showed up on my browser on the chamber page or Czech Festival page.*

*Easy to get to website. No problems getting information.*

1. The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.

*Yards were overgrown, a lot of trees were overgrown and blocking a lot of the houses. Several run down houses. There seemed to be a lot of “yard decoration” in most yards.*

*Clean town, downtown well groomed, residents yards taken care of.*

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

*Welcome sign entering from the North from I-70 was small and unattractive. But the buildings and houses seemed decent. Entering from the West the sign was bigger and the painting on one of the buildings was nice. The RV Park had a lot of junk in front of that building including a couch and washer and dryer. Was very unattractive.* *The sign from the East was the same as the one on the West side. It was decent.*

*From Interstate – large newer looking town sign, looked great. From HWY 40 – welcome signs, church signs, food signs, many signs looking nice and informative.*

2. 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.

*Some were boarded up. A lot of stuff in the windows or window coverings so you couldn’t tell what most buildings were.*

*Tourist stops with the old hotel, now a restaurant and performances. The world’s largest Czech egg, and old opera house. Buildings kept up, several places to eat, antiques, boutique for shopping, services, had hair place, funeral home, city hall, fire station, library. Downtown park and community garden had exceptional signage, instructions and appeal. Four eating places, all with unique features. Appears they are all known for something special whether it be old fashion sodas, homemade pies, and gourmet dining. You could easily find any type of food to please for the town of its size. Several antique places, grocery store well stocked with variety, convenience store, not lots of other retail shopping but again, for a town of it’s size I thought it had lots to offer.*

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

*In one store we were greeted with a “hi” and then she continued to look at her computer screen. Didn’t ask us if we were looking for anything in particular. Stayed at her computer the whole time and when we left just said “bye” as she was staring at her screen. In another store we were not greeted at all, nobody asked if we needed assistance with anything and when we went to pay was very off putting. Told us our total and that was it. Looked rather unpleasant. We were stared at pretty hard from one store as we drove by and made me uncomfortable to enter.*

*Yes, the places we went, we were greeted. The soda shop was busy but yet the staff was friendly. Looks like lots of local kids work these places during the summer, but they were all friendly.*

What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc.)

*At the park near downtown there was a water fountain, public restrooms that were open and very nice benches that said Wilson, Kansas on them.*

*Still had phone booths. That was fun. Splash pad and park, awesome. Bathrooms at downtown park and ball field well kept. Benches, very nice. Community garden, local lady organizes it and people can take care of their own plots, water provided. Summer meal program, free for anyone for lunch during the weekdays, well signed to let public know. Library appears to be well used and maintained. Offering more than just books. Even offer a night for Lego block building for kids. Senior citizens building.*

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

*Parking downtown was not marked at all. The only reason we knew that we were supposed to park parallel is because everyone else was parked that way. It is a small downtown so you could walk to get to the café and grocery store and if needed the post office.*

1. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

*The only other retail shopping area found was on old highway 40 and it wasn’t attractive and there was a lot of stuff everywhere outside and in the windows.*

*Listed lots in Question 2.*

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

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5. Health Care Services

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

*No hospital (that we found). Rural health clinic downtown.*

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

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

*Wilson Care and Rehab Center. It looked decent and fairly well kept. The yard was nice.*

*Nursing home groomed nicely on the drive by.*

6. 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.)

*Most neighborhoods look like a lot of the houses are abandoned or not well maintained. There were a few for sale by owner signs in windows – but the houses looked like maybe they have been empty for quite some time.*

*They seemed to have some 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?

*Didn’t see any for rent signs on any houses but there were a couple of apartment buildings in town.*

*Rental apartments, old school renovated into an apartment complex. Both well cared for by the landscaping I saw.*

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

*Grade school/high school combined. It looked well maintained. It must have been graduation the day we were there. The district is combined with Holyrood, Claflin, Bushton and Wilson. Wasn’t a lot of information on the school itself (on the website) but seems VERY beneficial to staff, students and parents that would attend. It is a VERY nice interactive website.*

*Unified school district. Grounds well kept.*

1. Childcare

What childcare service are available? Is it affordable?

*No signs of childcare services.*

*Not sure what is available.*

1. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the churches represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of church-sponsored community services?

*Churches are all in great shape. Several denominations. I did not observe any evidence of church sponsored community services.*

*3 churches, all represented well, all churches well kept.*

1. Civic

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

*The only sign I saw of any was a park called “Lions Club Park.” So I assume there is a Lions Club there.*

*Lions club has a sign up, Chamber of Commerce, these were organizations I saw that had a sign or listed on the website. They have a PRIDE organization. They established the new downtown park and sought grant funding, donations, city buy in.*

1. Public Infrastructure

Comment in general on the streets, street signage, sidewalks, parking, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, and streetscapes in areas **other than downtown**. Did you observe land-use planning?

*There was a lack of street signage and lighting. Landscaping was not decent except at the little park near downtown. Parking wasn’t bad for the small town. Not much is expected in a small town, but very little was clearly marked.*

*Town has a sidewalk replacement program. Streets well kept. Street signage was older, but well kept, easy to navigate around town. They partner with a local business and offer a trailer to dump old appliances to be hauled off or for scrap iron disposal. City gets a small take of the profit made from selling the scrap iron.*

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

*It was closed on the day we went to visit.*

*Was in town on a Saturday, but I called Monday to ask questions without saying why I was doing so. City clerk was very helpful. She even shared information with me about the splash pad.*

Police/fire protection:

*Nice quality fire trucks*

Library:

*Closed but looked well maintained*

*Answered in questions 2.*

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

*There were no signs leading us to any of the parks that were easily identifiable. Did not see any signs that named the parks besides the Lions Club Park. The park near downtown was extremely nice, and well maintained, small but very nice. The splash park was a fairly good size for that area. The ball fields were ok but not great and the park next to it didn’t even seem like a park.*

*Answered in other sections.*

1. Recreation/Tourism

Is the community well-known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset? What significant events take place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents?

*Czech Capital of Kansas.*

*The large Czech hand painted egg.*

*The marquee downtown listed Al’s Testicle Festival*

*Also the Czech Festival in July.*

*Czech Days, and the Testicle Festival, booth advertised and town people spoke about it.*

Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.

*The large Czech painted egg.*

*Czech egg structure – very impressive, well done and informative. Old Opera House – town using grant funds to rebuild the opera house.*

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 chamber office right on old highway 40 which is very noticeable. It was closed as well when we were there. It has a bulletin board outside but there was no info on it. Where the large egg was there is also a bulletin board that lists the names of places and where they are located, but it would be helpful if those places had signs saying that is what they are as well. (For example, the little brochure on the bulletin board had the names of the parks, but the parks had no signs.)*

*Commerce Office and City Hall very helpful.*

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

*Maybe the Czech Festival just to see what it is about.*

*Great food options.*

1. Wrap-up

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

*Seems that maybe there could be some potential to make the community look better and more eye appealing.*

*Town seemed community minded. I talked to several residents at the splash park and all seemed to be able to answer questions and expand on town features and even ordinances. Was happy to see the town had a sidewalk plan, an ordinance for even golf cart registration required by owners, as even our town has an issue with kids driving these carts all over town. Progressive! It seems they take action if they see potential problems arise.*

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

*A lot of run down abandoned looking properties. Maybe they need a beautification committee if they don’t already have one.*

*Nothing visible but would think that the obstacle all small towns face is keeping the young involved as they will be the next generation of volunteers for their home town.*

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

*The Czech egg.*

*How off putting the people in the stores were.*

*The plan for the open air opera house has been in progress for at least 4 years . Maybe try and get that finished and be able to use it at the Czech festival to draw in more people for entertainment? If unable to finish it maybe take down the “plans” for it that is next to it.*

*Positive memories. I was impressed with the whole town.*



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