

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Yates Center

Date(s) Visited: a, b) 9-30-20 (Wed)
c) 11-20-20 (Fri)

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) The website was very informative and seemed to be up to date. Had a good history of the city. I liked the spot on the website where the public can request maintenance; information about lakes and fish details and limits
- b) City website is easy to navigate. Lots of interesting info. Maintenance work order requests, job openings, city history, events- you can post website ideas. Great info! Facebook page not so much.
- c) Information is readily available, web search focused on historical architecture and square of the city. Would be helpful to show more features.

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) Nice signage each direction- with school awards posted. Two hotels, one open, one closed with broken window. Lots of gas stations at the crossroads of two highways. Buildings had lots of nice murals. All businesses had quilt signs.
- b) Interesting older community, many beautiful older homes. Seem to have a lot to offer. There seems to be a struggle to preserve the old but embrace the new. Great welcome signs from all four major entrances.
- c) There were obvious signs of income inequality and community pride all over the city. Hard to find downtown, major roadways bypassed the very things highlighted on the website.

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) Most of the buildings around town square were nicely painted and decorated for fall; unfortunately, many were empty. All the people we met were friendly and proud of their town, a real community spirit. City was clean; signage was in good shape and easy to read. We were in the downtown over lunch hour so many were closed for lunch; bad timing on our part. We did meet the barber who is a lifetime citizen. He was full of information. We met one of the bank employees; he gave us history of the bank building and two “new” buildings down the street. We ate at Vaquero’s. She was friendly and the food was good and fairly priced. The building was clean and nicely decorated. The person at the school district building was friendly and willing to answer all our questions about the district. The person at the school district building was friendly and willing to answer our questions about the district. We were greeted at each business we went in to. City Hall, School district, barber met us on sidewalk, banker was coming out the door and woman at restaurant greeted us. We didn’t see anyone at court house. Checkout person at grocery store was friendly. The librarian was friendly and gave us information on local sites to visit.
- b) Many older buildings, some well-maintained and some in disrepair. I love the courthouse square idea of a town center. Hair stylist, barber, Mexican restaurant (great food) bakery (closed by the time we finished our lunch, wish we had seen it first), USD366 offices and Chamber of Commerce which was closed. Business owners were extremely friendly and informative about the city.
- c) Hard to find downtown, major roadways bypassed the very things highlighted on the website. Insurance agencies, bank, car dealership, hair salons, gym, hardware store, grocery store, motels, Subway, Pizza Hut.

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) All listed were available. They also had two pocket parks available for just sitting and enjoying the plants and street scene. The city park was nice, the horseshoe pits needed some repair and same with stadium. No problems with parking; multiple businesses are close.
- b) Did not notice amenities- too busy admiring the architecture of the buildings. Much parking space available, we parked near City Hall and walked the square and surrounding area.
- c) No access because of the pandemic. No outdoor drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and no signs for public Wi-Fi were observed. The square was accessible, and parking was available.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. No Answer. (NA)
- b. Visited the G&W Foods grocery, very nice displays inside and out. Fall themed. I didn't notice a lot of retail shops, the few I did see were easily accessible. (Sorry, I am not a shopper.)
- c. Dollar General- easy access.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. No Answer
- b. No Answer
- c. No.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. I didn't see it but there is a medical clinic and dentist offices.
- b. Community has dental, pharmacy, medical clinic, Health and Rehab facilities and an ambulance barn. Services important to anyone thinking of moving in as they are not close to other larger towns.
- c. No hospital. Dentist and Health Department were apparent.

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

- a. No answer
- b. The healthcare facilities seem fairly new or renovated in older buildings.
- c. No access. Most were closed due to pandemic.

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

- a. Nursing home and care at city limits.
- b. There is a Health and Rehab facility on the south end of town, seems well kept up, did not visit.
- c. Large facility for nursing home on south side. Community senior center near downtown.

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. Looks like from the Zillow website they had houses of multiple sizes, prices, conditions for sale.
- b. Areas of town have a mixture of neglected homes and others that are restored nicely.
- c. All income ranges were present. Finding good quality lower income housing would be a challenge.

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

- a. Saw some apartments in a former hotel building. I would be drawn to investigating living there if I lived in Yates Center. Saw an apartment complex in another part of town. Some of the empty buildings could be converted to housing.
- b. My favorite is the old Woodson Hotel which has been converted to apartments near the town square.
- c. No apparent rental properties. A couple homes for sale by owner.

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. They had preschool, K-8, High School. We spoke with a person at the district office. She said they would be rearranging some classes and move some Junior High students to the high school to equalize population. The K-8 school seemed to need some updating- I know that's very expensive. The High school looked nice from the outside.
- b. Stopped in the USD366 offices located on Butler in the town square. The woman was extremely helpful, you can tell they are very committed to the education of their youth. Informed the Yates Center schools are the only schools in the district/county.
- c. Elementary (K-8) and High School – both appeared to be maintained and in good repair.

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

- a. There is information on KSDE website for each school.
- b. I was very impressed with the ease of navigating the school website – they even have an APP! Preschool, Elementary, Middle and High School are all located in the city. They have a Facebook page with many positive comments and offers up-to-date reminders such as picture day, volleyball and football game results, lunch menu . . .
- c. Limited information found online was not favorable.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- a. No Answer
- b. Inquired at City Hall and was referred to the Chamber of Commerce but they were not open. Placed a phone call and left a message but did not receive a return call.
- c. Two home daycare facilities were observed.

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 didn't see all the churches but the ones we saw were in good condition. I noticed there were quite a few churches in the city.
- b. There are a multitude of options for faith-based worship in this community, about 8 or 9 churches. You should be able to find one that would suit your needs. Some have very beautiful buildings.
- c. At least five (5) churches of varying denominations. One church had a playground/park area.

11. Civic

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

- a. No Answer
- b. Saw a Masonic Lodge, but unsure how active they might be.
- c. 4-H and Senior Center. Activity: 4-H fairgrounds and buildings

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. I liked the brick streets around the town square. I didn't see a lot of sidewalks in the residential areas.
- b. No answer.
- c. Most streets were in good shape, street signage and sidewalks were apparent. No landscaping outside of city square was observed. Dangerous open ditch for water runoff.

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

- a. We were greeted by the employee on duty at the time. She was pretty new at the office, but they had lots of printed information available. There were brochures available at the restaurant where we ate also.
- b. The young woman at City Hall was very helpful. They have brochures and maps regarding businesses and public items. She also recommended a place to have lunch.
- c. It was closed.

Police/fire protection:

- a. NA
- b. Newer fire department building located near town square. The police were said to be located near City Hall but I only saw cruisers, couldn't figure out which building housed the department
- c. Both police and fire protection were observed. Officers were patrolling and visible. Nice Fire station.

Library:

- a. I visited the library; it was in good physical shape for an older building, it was decorated for fall like most of the stores/businesses did. The Librarian was very friendly and told about some local sites to visit.
- b. Wonderfully cozy old Carnegie Library! The librarian was full of county history; I need to look up Kalida cave/castle in Woodson county.
- c. Nice building appeared to be closed.

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

- a. I loved the huge gazebo at the city park and the "exercise pad." It was really interesting. Play equipment for all ages. The horseshoe pits needed some work. I liked the stadium and hope it is used. It needed some work also. I enjoyed the "pocket parks" in town square.
- b. There is a stadium in the pool/park vicinity which looks to still be in use for soccer and possibly could be used for walking. The stands are nice, newer seating but the underneath is rather dilapidated - maybe they are working on it as it was open. The park across from the pool is a nice rather large area with play equipment for different ages. I especially like the fitness/exercise area. The gazebo would be great for family picnics – you can see all the play areas from its central location.
- c. Small parks, football field, 3 baseball diamonds, small swimming pool and track.

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. I saw that Yates Center is the Hay Capital of the World.
- b. The welcome signs state they are the Hay Capital of the World. I didn't find any information on why they have this title.
- c. Welcome signs stated, "Hay capital of the world." No obvious slogan.

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

- a. Not while I was there, but the website showed events.
- b. The new pool will be a wonderful thing when complete.
- c. No.

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. There were two lakes, one with a campground. There were also some stone structures outside town according to the Librarian.
- b. There is a well-kept small RV park with clean bathrooms and play equipment at South Owl Lake. Even has free WIFI provided by the city.
- c. 4-H Fair.

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. NA
- b. The Chamber of Commerce was closed on the day of the visit, though the hours listed indicated it should have been open after lunch
- c. No

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

- a. NA
- b. Vaquero's Mexican Restaurant! I would enjoy another day just walking around the town and taking it all in. Was there from about 10am – 4pm and could have hung around longer but for time constraints.
- c. NA

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. The general atmosphere, friendliness of citizens and all the old buildings. I hope the city finds a way to actively use the buildings.
- b. The citizens are very friendly and proud of their town. Most anything you might need, whether you are 9 or 90, can be found in the area
- c. Obvious potential. Quilt squares on building, houses and fences were throughout the city and were fun to look for and see the different patterns and colors.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. All the empty buildings. The elementary school needs work and they don't have many students in the district.
- b. Same as faced in all small communities, older structures, struggle to maintain, dwindling population.
- c. Lack of commercial, industrial or businesses that could provide good employment was evident. Significant distance to larger city that could offer employment.

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

- a. All the old buildings in the city square- positive. The barber who talked to us and the "coffee cup cabinet." The hotel turned into apartments. The giant gazebo at the park and the stadium.
- b. Bill the barber telling stories about the town and townsfolk. I will definitely return to have another look, maybe bring my husband to eat at Vaquero's
- c. We would like to re-visit after the pandemic. We were not able to observe normal activity of the community. Yates Center may have significantly more to offer under less stressful times.

PowerPoint Presentation and narrative is posted at:

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

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