

# First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



**Community Visited: Caldwell**

**Date(s) Visited: 8-29-2024 (3 visitors)**

**a. 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 is informative and put together well. I don't believe it is an accurate portrait of the city. I was a little disappointed upon arrival after seeing the website I expected the city to be much more "alive."
- b. It was easy to obtain information
- c. Very informative. I found information about the different departments within the city, ie, cemetery, board, and community building. From the picture on the website the sign for the city office with a longhorn. City Hall hours are 9 am – 4 pm M-F

**a. 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. The town seemed clean where the city maintains, but I was surprised at how many run-down properties were on the main street and how many properties needed to be mowed.
- b. Various types of housing. Some empty buildings downtown. Nice signs were in place.
- c. Cute little town. The entrance into town was amazing. Love the bull. Downtown was cute, but I couldn't tell which stores were open. The entrances were all marked with the town name.

**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. The buildings appear to be original and provide a lot of character. It was difficult to tell which businesses were open because the window paintings made it hard to see if there was anything inside. There is a large variety of shops. We were really impressed with the grocery store. For a small-town grocery store they have a large variety, and the

prices were very reasonable. We also visited the Hat Bar. It was a very cute shop, but the prices were out of our price range. The Nook shop had a little bit of everything you could possibly need for reasonable prices. All three locations provided excellent customer service. They were all friendly and gave good information on the community.

- b. From older to newer buildings. Nice business area. Nothing elaborate. City Hall was very friendly. They have a nice grocery store. We were greeted well in the businesses we visited.
- c. Buildings had the feel of Cowtown. Love the top of the bank with robbers. I had to check it out twice. The other big thing I noticed was the informational signs all over town. I wanted to stop and read each one. I enjoyed going to the thrift store. It is an old building. I found a bath towel. The grocery store was full of a lot of choices, great selection. Both had incredible merchandise. We were greeted at all stores with smiles. Some asked where we were from.

**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. There are plenty of benches in front of the downtown shopping area. Some of the benches had memorial placards but they were difficult to read. Trash receptacles were placed down both sides of the main shopping area. Parking was no problem, and as in most small towns, everything was within walking distance. The roundabout was landscaped nicely. There were areas on the main street that had landscaping but most of it was dying and turning brown, so it looked like weeds. The town square with the gazebo and the bull statue were beautiful and offered a nice place to sit and relax.
- b. There are some benches. One nice little park downtown. We didn't have difficulty finding places to park and could access multiple services when we did.
- c. There were lots of benches and chairs to sit on. The Verizon cell phone coverage was spotty for me. Love the downtown park. Parking was everywhere.

#### **4. Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

- a. It was difficult to tell which shops were open by driving by so we went to the ones we could tell were open.
- b. Yes.
- c. Easy to access outside and inside. Cute window displays

## **5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

- a. I'm not sure if you'd call it an industrial park but there is a lot of open space where companies could build to relocate or expand. Housing would be an issue if it were a new company looking to relocate employees there.
- b. Somewhat.
- c. I did not find an exact area for manufacturing. It looked to have areas to expand, if they desired.

## **6. Health Care Services**

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

- a. The county hospital is located just outside the city limits and is a beautiful facility. Looks to be new and offers emergency medical services. The EMS and Fire Department buildings were clearly marked and easily accessible.
- b. They have a new hospital.
- c. Had a hospital right outside of town.

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

- a. We saw the local dentist's office, the Caldwell Pharmacy, A D.O. and Nurse Practitioner as well as the Caldwell Medical Center and EMS
- b. Good availability of medical professionals.
- c. This seemed to be located at the hospital right outside of town.

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

- a. We did not notice any long-term care facilities.
- b. A new hospital
- c. I didn't see any as we drove through.

## **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 regard to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)**

- a. There were only a couple of properties listed on Zillow for sale, and we didn't see any rental signs posted anywhere. There appear to be a lot of empty, run-down houses. There were a couple of neighborhoods that had nicer houses and were better maintained. There appeared to be a lot of open areas where housing additions could be built.
- b. Low property value, one newer home available.
- c. The neighborhoods were cute.

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

- a. We didn't notice any rental properties and when speaking with City Hall staff we were told there aren't many rental opportunities and only one house for sale.
- b. Not much.
- c. Saw several homes for sale. The city even told one of our people about a house for sale.

## **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. The school was doing construction to add on while we were there, and classes were in session, so we did not enter the building, but the website shows updated classrooms. The area around the track had weeds growing up through the fence that looked like they had been sprayed but not removed.
- b. Schools are maintained well.
- c. Saw what looked like an elementary and high school campus with a lot of construction going on.

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

- a. The website is very informative for the school relaunch program. It took some research to understand what a relaunch was but after understanding that it made the website easier to understand.
- b. Yes.
- c. Tons of online information. The school webpage was amazing to find basic information and pictures.

## **9. Childcare**

**What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?**

- a. A new childcare facility is being built.
- b. New childcare.
- c. Never saw anything about childcare

## **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. There are several churches in the community that represent most denominations.
- b. Lots of churches, but we didn't see evidence of faith-based activity.
- c. We noticed lots of churches. A few had signs with service times. I wasn't always sure if they were still going by looking at their yards.

## **11. Civic**

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

- a. The website shows they have an active chamber and recreation commission, but I didn't see anything that would alert me to that if I hadn't looked it up specifically.
- b. City Hall commented on some civic groups, but we didn't see any activity.
- c. Saw a building on Main Street for Chamber. I didn't notice other nonprofits or other civic activity.

## **12. Public Infrastructure**

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

- a. The streets are all paved, which is nice but a lot of them need repairs, and the gutter areas have grass and weeds growing up in them as well as in the cracks in the roads. Street signs were present but very small and sometimes hard to read until you were right on them.
- b. Adequate.
- c. Old streets, fantastic signs with street names, parking was well done. I loved the lights when you enter the town.

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

- a. The woman at City Hall was very nice and informative. She offered a pamphlet of the city and was knowledgeable about the history. She told her personal story of what brought her to Caldwell and how she'd never leave. She shared information about the Dollar General and the local grocery store working together to both thrive in the small community.
- b. Very friendly at city hall. There was information about the town available.
- c. I didn't go into City Hall

**Police/fire protection:**

- a. Both facilities were easily located and housed in nice buildings.
- b. Yes.
- c. I saw the fire station and parked by a police car.

**Library:**

- a. The library was already closed by the time we made it there, but the signage made it easy to locate.
- b. Yes
- c. I think the library was by the school. I'm not sure if it was public or not.

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

- a. The park and pool were hard to locate just driving through. We had to Google map the location. There is a lot of open space at the park but not a lot of variety for the different age groups. The pool had been drained but appeared to be very nice.
- b. Yes
- c. I saw the sports complex for the high school, the park swimming pool was nice but closed for the season. There was a cute little park.

**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. They are very focused on their cow town history, and it is evident downtown.
- b. Several parades a year.
- c. Cowtown. The town has a very strong history.

**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 festival they put on every year showcasing the city's history sounded interesting and entertaining.
- b. None at this time.
- c. I saw the events listed and several business owners told me about events.

**Elaborate on any significant natural or built features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.** (Public art, museums, lakes, campgrounds, regional heritage locations).

- a. The festival they put on every year showcasing the city's history sounded interesting and entertaining. I didn't see anything in particular that would draw me to the city if I wasn't just passing through.
- b. None
- c. Love the downtown area, the arch with the town name along with the bull at the entrance and in the park was awesome.

**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. There is a small visitors center we discovered when we went out to the hospital, but I didn't see any signage that would have told me where it was there if I hadn't stumbled upon it. The lady at City Hall provided the most information on the city and spoke very highly of it.
- b. None
- c. We saw a little building that we thought was a visitor center, however, it didn't look open. It was a cute little building.

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

- a. We ate at the Red Barn, which was delicious, but I don't think I would make the drive over an hour and a half just to eat there. I didn't see anything else that would be worth it for me to travel that distance.
- b. Yes. *(the visitor did not elaborate)*
- c. The food at the Red Barn was amazing. Huge servings. The food tasted amazing, and great prices. The thrift store was so cute. Lots of little interesting things. We went to the cutest clothing store on the corner and the grocery store was neat and friendly.

**14. Wrap-up**

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

- a. The friendliness of the citizens and the dedication to keeping their history alive.
- b. Friendly. Things to offer. It's removed from the big city.
- c. Love the community. Very friendly. Started following their Facebook to see what events they have. It seems the city does a lot to promote community togetherness.

**What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?**

- a. Housing. Much like our small town, it has a lot of rundown properties that need to be demolished. The homes for sale are limited so drawing someone in from another area would be difficult.
- b. No fast food.
- c. Same as any other community: I saw a lot of homes run-down, yards not clean, and stores downtown with businesses closed.

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

- a. How great we were treated everywhere we went.
- b. Positive- Friendly, community spirit. Negative- Some run-down housing.
- c. The community in general. I would like to attend the cattle drive and watch and learn how they do things.

How much money did you spend while you were in the city you visited?     \$80    

*(Please include total purchases: Gas, soft drinks, food, and purchases. No detail necessary.)*

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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