

# First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



**Community Visited: ARMA    Date(s) Visited:**

- a) March 18 (Friday)
- b) March 22 (Tuesday)
- c) March 28 (Monday)

## **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 offered a variety of information. One thing that really stuck out to me was the website had a list of businesses located in town. If I had a specific business I was looking for, the website had the information necessary to find it or contact them. I simply accessed the city website on a Google search for Arma, KS. The website reflected nicely what was seen on the website as far as information of where to find things within the city. I did not have any difficulty using the city page finding information I was looking for. It was laid out nicely.
- b. The website was very easy and informative.
- c. Information was pretty easy to obtain, speaking with local community members at the convenience store and the city office. Not a lot of information on the website but local newspaper articles helped and articles/events on social media also assisted.

## **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. Entering Arma from Hwy 69, there was a sign, but it wasn't facing the highway it was running parallel. Had we not known the entrance existed before visiting we would have missed the turn into town. It would be more visible if it were to not parallel to traffic. We did notice on south street pointing out schools and parks. Turning north on West there was good signage indicating where to find public spaces in town. The elementary and junior high was located directly off of West Street. Driving around the elementary it looked like a good facility. The building was clean on the outside and it looked like it had good equipment outside for children. Moving on to the business district, a city park was the first thing to catch my eye. Lots of outdoor space and good playground equipment. The downtown area was small with a variety of businesses. The downtown area was older and could use a little sprucing up, but it was definitely the old town feel. There

were multiple types of sports complexes as I drove through town. The houses throughout the town seemed to have a good variety from smaller to medium sized homes. Most were in good condition and appealing. There was a small city pool that looked like it was enough for the town, then beside that there were more outdoor activities such as volleyball, baseball, and a small pond. The main road coming in from the south was well paved and a nice road to travel. The north end of town had nicer homes with a bit more variety in sizes. They all seemed to have good sized lots and weren't on top of each other.

- b. It is a clean community; the signs were placed informatively.
- c. It is a cute, country town, quiet, lots of various styles of housing noted, mostly rural/farm setting on outskirts but family style homes noted across town. I didn't notice many others driving about but after school activities were occurring and children were playing. There were a few people downtown by the post office visiting on the curb, which appeared as a peaceful home setting. The streets, curbs and sidewalks were older but still in decent condition, signs were noted and well maintained, it was a bit confusing coming from the Franklin direction into Arma where the boundaries began/ended. I liked the serenity of the appearance when first pulling in and driving about the town, it made for a nice and pleasurable visit.

### **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. Many of the downtown businesses had good signage and was easy to find out what was inside. I saw Schroeder's meat market, Fox Insurance Agency, Mengarelli's Italian table, Forever flowers, Library, CNBank, Hardware store, Burlap and Bows, funeral home, Girard Medical center, Liquor store, Needle Me Forever, Blue Mood Ballroom, U-Stor-It, Scotten Graphics, CHC SEK, Post Office, Golden Era, Police Department, City Office.

We went into the library, hardware store, flower shop, and Schroeder's, and the customer service was excellent. Everyone greeted us, made small talk, and asked if we needed any help. We did go to the city office twice in and both times the office was locked and there wasn't anyone there. We went around 12:30 and again at 1:45. Other businesses were closed. We came to town on a Friday afternoon.

- b. The occupied buildings had a good presentation. The vacant buildings downtown were not trashy. The Hardware store was clean and arranged very orderly. Funeral home was clean and very easy to find. They had a hardware store, insurance office, meat locker, and a needle sewing (craft) store) which wasn't open at the time I was in town. I was greeted in a friendly way. No assistance was needed.

c. There are many businesses downtown such as a butcher, quilt shop, liquor store, insurance, funeral parlor, Dollar General, convenience store, auto repair, laundromat, library but is noted to have mold in it and therefore not used much due to public risk. The buildings that were being used were in good to above average condition, a few rundown buildings that were not being used at the time. There was no longer a grocery store or pharmacy, which could be problematic for the older generation. There was one restaurant that served family style Italian food on a reservation only status but did provide fine dining. There is also a local car wash that is in operation. There was a graphic sign business and a Mexican restaurant as well. I was greeted at the convenience store and at the city office as well. I spoke with the girls at the city office for about an hour.

**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. The library had a wi-fi park with benches, tables, wi-fi, and a stage for summertime bands. I did not notice any public facilities or benches to sit on besides the wi-fi park. There was not any difficulty finding parking. You could park in the middle of downtown and reach all downtown businesses with a short walk. The streetscaping was okay but there wasn't any landscaping that was attractive and caught my eye.
- b. Public restrooms were available but not open, only open certain times of the year because of vandalism. Parking was abundant, in downtown and at the parks.
- c. There were several parks, a few benches and restrooms/trash at the park areas, but few are downtown. There was a community garden that community individuals could participate in, they have individual internet but no "hot spots" for public offering. Two ponds were noted for fishing, no walking trails are available. The city office had several plants in it but few flowers were offered for curb appeal, but again, it was early spring. Many of the community patrons had begun to landscape with early spring flowers. Parking was available downtown and the city office was easy to locate along with other public landmarks (police, fire, etc.)

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

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

- a. The only other retail shopping area was the Dollar General across the highway. I did notice a lot of empty commercial spaces. We did not find a grocery store.
- b. None Observed- Dollar General Store out by the major highway and is dangerous to access. Grocery went out of business.
- c. No answer

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

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

- a. Across the highway there was housed a welding shop, Dollar General and the Fire department. There seemed to be plenty of area to attract new businesses to expand.
- b. No manufacturing industries.
- c. I did not see a designated area for industrial parks but there were many businesses as this area appears to be more farm related, not industrial.

## **6. Health Care Services**

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

- a. Downtown we noticed the Girard Medical Center and the Community Health Clinic.
- b. No answer
- c. The closest hospital is about 15 miles away in Pittsburg or Girard, there is one community clinic provided by Girard Medical Center.

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

- a. We did not enter those two businesses above, but we did look online to see what all they did offer. CHC offered a family practice, x-ray, lab, and physicals. Girard Medical offered a doctor.
- b. Saw a public health care clinic
- c. Did not see a pharmacy, optometrist, or dentistry.

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

- a. We noticed an Arma Health and Rehab facility.
- b. Had assisted living and long care nursing facilities.
- c. There was one nursing home that is a swing bed but no senior citizen housing at this time. This would be a PERFECT opportunity to search for grant opportunities that would support Rural health funding for areas that do not have needed medical services local.

## **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. When looking online for available housing, there seemed to be a very limited amount. The price ranges were from about \$50,000 or \$150,000. There were only 5 houses listed on the current market with some of those showing pending. I did not see a variety of housing that would appeal to different income wages. I think finding housing in Arma would be difficult to find.
- b. The housing would appeal to all incomes. Didn't see many houses for sale.
- c. There doesn't appear to be a vast number of open vacancies for rent or for purchase. However, the neighborhoods are quite appealing and peaceful. There are opportunities to build houses for individuals, but a housing or apartment complex would be a great addition to the town.

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

- a. There was some potential lots I could see that would be great for building a new home. I do not know of any incentives the city offers for these types of things, since we could not get any information from the City Office. I had counted on the City Office as my opportunity to gather information about the community rental options and Incentives.
- b. A few building lots were available. Didn't see any houses being built. Saw several houses that were in the process of remodeling. Had several apartment complexes.
- c. No Answer

## **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 two schools that were present were the elementary/junior high building and the high school. I did not see any early childhood opportunities or post-secondary schools. The school grounds were a good size and had great outside looking facilities.
- b. The schools were adequate in size and well-maintained. K-8 and High School. I think most towns have preschool, but I'm not sure about Head Start.
- c. There were available educational opportunities including SEKCAP and a summer lunch program through the library, but no Head Start program. There was a K-8 and a high school but no post-secondary. Nearby town (Pittsburg) has a state university.

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

- a. The school's website did provide information about the two schools. I did not find anything regarding early childhood learning opportunities.
- b. Yes.
- c. Yes, the school district website along with the KSDE website as well.

## **9. Childcare**

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

- a. Since the city office was unavailable during my Friday afternoon visit, I could not obtain information about childcare availability. Doing a quick internet search, I could see maybe 4 options that pop up, but I did not call to check and see if they were currently operating and what their availability was.
- b. No Answer
- c. There is one day care provider that is licensed. As for affordable childcare, I would assume it is DCF assisted with funding to help keep costs low for parents.

## **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 saw three different churches available, and each was a different denomination. We saw a Methodist, a Christian, and a Catholic church. Each church was well kept and had an appealing outside appearance.
- b. There are 3 churches in town- all were well-kept.
- c. Churches included Gospel, catholic, Methodist, and Christian.

## **11. Civic**

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

- a. I was not able to obtain any information about this. I observed the City Office had a space for the city meetings.
- b. No answer
- c. Philanthropic sorority but no clubs as they have dwindled with aging community members.

## **12. Public Infrastructure**

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

- a. Within the town, there was great signage pointing in the direction of public amenities and facilities. There streets were all in good condition, with the main north/south road being nicely paved with sidewalks available. The downtown district had easy parking and nice streets as well. There wasn't much landscaping that caught my eye as we drove through the town.
- b. As in all small towns, the streets were well maintained, as well as can be. Street signs were well-placed. Sidewalks in some areas.
- c. There is no public transportation which might be nice or advantageous to older or those with physical disabilities that do not allow them to drive. Most areas (sidewalks) have not been updated to provide ADA accessibility but not sure how many community members need that. The lighting is adequate downtown but sideroads are not as well lit.

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

- a. I wish this was open and available during my visit. We drove around town and attempted to visit city hall the first time at 12:30 and there was a small sign that said gone to lunch be back soon, and the door was locked. So, we ventured downtown and checked out the businesses that were open. We then drove around the town some more and came back to the city office around 1:45 and still the door was locked, and we were not able to get any assistance.
- b. I was very well received. The city clerk was knowledgeable about her town. She was also very open about the problem of a small bedroom community.
- c. No answer

**Police/fire protection:**

- a. The police station was located directly next to the city hall building and the fire station was located west of the highway. The police station seemed to be a smaller sized office, and the fire station was a newer well appearing station.
- b. Adequate for a small town.
- c. Yes

**Library:**

- a. The library was closed to the public currently, but they let us in to do a quick browse. They had a dedicated children's section, a teen section, a quiet section for wi-fi, a movie area, and a community gathering room. They also housed the food pantry and they said they also try to meet any other need that the community may need. They also have the outdoor wi-fi park, which has wi-fi, picnic areas, and a small stage for bands to play live music in the summer. Also behind that is a small dog park.
- b. Library is in the downtown area, easy to access, looks very inviting. It is next to the Arma Community Center.
- c. Yes

**City parks (walking tracks, ballparks, playgrounds, sports plex)**

- a. I noticed the city park was a great space for playing and other outdoor activities. Also, around town we notice the city pool, outdoor volleyball nets, and several baseball/softball complexes.
- b. City parks, there were several and all were well kept- several ball parks.
- c. No walking tracks but ballparks, playgrounds and fishing ponds noted.

**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. The city has an annual Homecoming celebration that is a 3-day event.
- b. No answer
- c. Arma homecoming! Second week of August has happened for 75 years.

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

- a. I did not see any events in the community coming up.
- b. No answer
- c. Not on that particular day because it was a Monday.

**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. I didn't see any.
- b. Behind one of the parks was a pond that one could fish. It had a bench or two around it; very inviting to use.
- c. The mining museum, community pond for a family fishing day, could even have the high school students paint downtown windows for holidays or local events. Could host a community barbecue with the community garden. Local car shows perhaps? Downtown street dances on Friday nights?

**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. I would suggest that City Hall was not the only place to offer assistance to visitors.
- b. No answer
- c. City office and the staff were friendly, it was centrally located and easy to find.

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

- a. The only thing that was of interest was Schroeder's meat shop. They are well known in the area for their meats.
- b. A Mexican Restaurant.
- c. The Italian restaurant for sure!!!!

#### **14. Wrap-up**

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

- a. The outdoor facilities that were offered to the public such as the parks, pool, and recreation areas. The community itself was also a well-kept clean town. The schools looked to be in a nice clean shape offering an appealing exterior.
- b. Clean and friendly, very few run-down or tear down properties.
- c. It was quiet, that means a lot in this day and age, no heavy traffic, or loud noises. Local community patrons were very nice and PROUD of their community! More collaboration from town individuals is always nice but hard to gather individuals to assist with events.

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

- a. I would say the lack of housing available, and the lack of businesses offered to citizens. There were many closed businesses, or even a lack of places to visit on a Friday afternoon. I think that economically being located so close to a larger city, it poses a threat to incoming business opportunities as well as families wanting to relocate their home there. There was not a big appeal for me of small-town living. There seemed to be a lack of basic necessity opportunities provided, so traveling outside of the town would be necessary to meet my family's basic needs.
- b. Same problem as all small communities; it is the loss of their downtown.
- c. Lack of community involvement/participation and the availability of resources/services. When looking at recruiting new families to move to the area, what would draw them there? That would be one thing that I would suggest focusing on and trying to improve. Whether it be a walking trail, activities for kids, more family type activities, etc.

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

- a. I think the most impactful thing about this community is the opportunity that is there for growth. I think it offered a lot of neat businesses, (silk flowers, Italian table, lack of grocery, browns burlap and bows), or old businesses that used to be housed in town, that there would be an opportunity for people to come in and thrive in a small town.
- b. Clean, very friendly people that I encountered.
- c. That there is an authentic Italian restaurant, and I am ALLLLLLL about authentic Italian food! Plus, it is a quaint little town, I would love to attend a Friday night cruise night with my local car club if they were to host one there!

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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