

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Erie **Date(s) Visited:** a.) 8/14/19 b.) 8/14/19

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. Didn't find a website, they have a Facebook site that shows a few things. More the museum than any services, etc.
- b. The web search gave me a few different options for information. Citydata.com and Wikipedia gave most of the basic information. I was surprised that I couldn't find a city website.

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. The town is a clean, nice town, fragmented in the sense that some businesses are on Main St. and others are on the highway, with others in an industrial-type area near the high school. If you don't know the town, there was no way to take a five-minute look around, it would take 30 minutes. The one highway sign showing downtown coming from the north was small and really easy to miss. I noticed the Erie rock sign, but it is after the entry to the city. There are no way-finding signs showing where anything is; i.e. city hall, police, schools, parks, etc.
- b. I thought the town looked nice and neat. The streets were in good condition and Main St. was very nice. Things seemed a little spread out, i.e. Main St Hwy business, schools, parks, overall, everything looked well cared for. There were several entrances into town from the highway, but we weren't really sure which entrance was designated as the main entrance.

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. Downtown is nice, they've done a good job freshening old buildings and melding new ones in. The street lights, nice trash receptacles and flower pots were awesome and a great addition to downtown. We went in the pharmacy and talked with them. Super nice people and very nice building and interior. It was obvious they had an investment in the town and their business. With the number of medical clinics, ER, etc. it was definitely a well-used business. The pharmacy people were friendly, very helpful in answering our questions and a good face of Erie.

- b. The buildings on Main St were all really nice and well maintained/preserved. The streets were nice, as was the curb and gutter. Main St. signs were nice, but I didn't really see many wayfinding signs. We saw the pharmacy, two banks, the museum, the locker, 2 liquor stores, Dollar General, Stubs, City Hall, Pizza Stone, Beachner Grain, and Pete's gas station. There was quite a bit of variety and the pharmacy was very nice. The ladies in the pharmacy were very friendly and told us a lot about the town and the annual celebration. We really didn't have to ask for assistance.

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

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

- a. Plenty of trash receptacles on Main St., the city hall had an accessible bathroom and a fountain. Not sure of Wi-Fi. Parking was fine, Main St. was nice and pleasing to the eye. Many businesses were accessible from parking anywhere on the main area downtown.

- b. We saw several trash cans on Main St. The landscaping and streetscaping on Main St. was very nice. Also, while driving around town you could tell that everyone took care of their yards.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. Retail areas were scattered; i.e. Pete's on the highway with other small businesses, downtown, and then a couple other business parks on the east of town. If you didn't know the area you'd be lost.
- b. Yes, other areas were easy to access. As you came into town, you could access Pete's, Dollar General, and the grocery store.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. Not easy to locate at all unless you had a GPS or address coordinate. To drive around to see what was available was a time consuming project.
- b. I think this area would be over by Beachner Grain or by the electric generating station.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. Lots of nice clinics and a pharmacy. We were told of a dermatologist that also comes to the community by the pharmacy. Healthcare was obviously not a problem in Erie.
- b. These were two different clinics and an urgent care. The facilities looked very nice.

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

- a. The facilities were well cared for and newish.
- b. There seemed to be plenty of facilities for healthcare. The ladies at the pharmacy said most individuals go to Parsons or Chanute for more complex issues.

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

- a. There is a nursing home or long-term care place-- probably 30 beds? -- in town; it seemed nice, older, but still in business for the community, which is saying something in today's climate.
- b. There was an assisted living facility by the high school.

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. Housing was interesting. The homes had plenty of grass between them giving an open concept. There were many block homes mixed with nice manufactured homes. As in all communities, the blighted homes spread their blight to next door neighbors, but the town seemed on top of the problem.
- b. There seems to be a lot of nice houses for different income ranges. It appeared that most houses were older, but very well maintained.

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

- a. We picked up a list of landlords, quite large, from city hall. Rent was apparently between \$350 and \$500 which is reasonable. City clerk told us people tend to stay in town so turnover is low.
- b. I didn't see many properties advertised for rent, but City Hall did have a list of landlords. City Hall also provided me with their building incentive program and available lots in their development.

8. Schools

Do the following schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of temporary classrooms? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?

- a. There is a nice grade school that used to be the high school in town; out of town is the high school – city hall said a \$15M project. It is a great facility with ball fields, etc. The middle school is apparently in another town so kids have to be bussed there.
- b. K-12 are available. The high school is a nearly brand new facility. Both the elementary and high school appear to be adequate in size. The middle school is in another town, which may be confusing if you didn't ask.

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

- a. Online was sketchy besides Wikipedia and Google.
- b. The majority of the information available is on the schools page.

9. Childcare

Were you able to determine if childcare was affordable and available?

- a. City hall informed us of childcare and showed us the bulletin board that sitters with openings use. They didn't mention a cost.
- b. There wasn't really much information available on child care, besides the one flyer on the bulletin board in City Hall. No cost info was available.

10. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the faith communities represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of faith-based community services?

- a. There were several churches in town including Lutheran, First Christian, non-denominational and more. Signs of the churches were up on one of the main thoroughfares to Main St.
- b. I didn't see any evidence of faith-based community services, but we saw several churches, most of which looked very nice.

11. Civic

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

- a. They have a Chamber of Commerce, a Rotary, American Legion that have signs near the church signs on the entry road. Erie has one main event the Sailors bean dinner yearly that is a week-long event that apparently draws lots of people. City hall told us about it and other people in town mentioned it.
- b. We saw a sign coming into town with a few different organizations on it. We saw the fair grounds and the Saddle Club arena. We didn't see 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. Erie has awesome parks, a great fairgrounds and good streets, etc. We drove by the electric company that services Erie; several of the parks have picnic areas, bathrooms, etc. Street signs were on corners, but no way-finding signs.
- b. The majority of the streets seemed to be in good condition- wayfinding signs could be added for helping people around town. I didn't notice many sidewalks or much parking, landscaping was nice.

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

- a. Nice city hall, new, very nice people that were very helpful to strangers. We were well received and they were good about retrieving any information we asked about.
- b. City Hall was nice and they were very helpful explaining tax levies, valuations, and development programs. The other city employees who were in City Hall while we visited were very friendly as well.

Police/fire protection:

- a. Police were on duty in city hall when we were there. The officer was helpful as were the city employees in the building.
- b. I saw the fire station and there were two police officers in City Hall while we were there.

Library:

- a. Saw the exterior, they need bigger signs so people know what it is quickly.
- b. We saw the library but did not visit.

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

- a. Awesome! Great complexes, great ball fields, if people are bored in that town it's their own fault. The parks are definitely a point to be proud of and a reason to go to Erie.
- b. The city parks were great! So much green space! We were very impressed with the bridges at the park and the character of the space.

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. City hall mentioned fishing or the fair and the Sailor's bean feed. Other than that they said it's a sleepy town.
- b. The Soldier and Sailors Reunion/Bean Feed.

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

- a. Sailor's bean feed- a big draw for the region.
- b. The Soldier and Sailors Reunion.

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. Fairgrounds and parks.
- b. The dinosaur park, Neosho River.

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. No chamber office – the city hall handles things but the chamber people are not in city hall so you'd need to track them down.
- b. No

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

- a. They have a pizzeria that I'd like to try. We were there early; the Sailor's bean feed would be fun to see and not too far away from Pleasanton.
- b. I would like to bring my kids to the dinosaur park

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. It was a nice, clean community that obviously cares about its image. Their new business facades and buildings are a great addition.
- b. The community is so clean and you can tell that people take pride in the property. Main Street looked great. The schools looked great and the recreational space was excellent.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. The biggest obstacle is the same for any small city – location to bigger urban areas. If they can focus on their parks, the fairgrounds, their yearly event, that'll draw people.
- b. Erie has to set themselves apart from other communities near them of similar size. They are on their way to that. I would focus on marketing, signage, and economic/job development.

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

- a. I loved their parks! I spoke of them to our chamber and they asked me what made them special. It was hard to put a finger on it – the curved bridges, big trees – so many of them. Very cool. Land of parks...and recreation!
- b. The friendly people and how clean and neat the community is

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

First Impressions was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension and adapted for use by K-State Research and Extension. Restructuring made possible through a partnership with the Dane G. Hansen Foundation.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Service
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Works, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and the United State Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Gregg Hadley, Director.