

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Vermillion

Date(s) Visited: Wed. June 30 (all)

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. Wikipedia gave the population and listed as being in Marshall County. Bing had some images of the town. The Friends of Vermillion Facebook page was very informative. It gave details of the celebration and activities that were held on Memorial Day. The FB page also gave information about city hall and the library.
- b. No Answer
- c. When we first arrived, the city looked very nice. After driving around there were more properties that appeared to be abandoned and very run down.
- d. Wiki had info from census. FB had a few pictures from town.

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. As we drove around town we saw some beautiful well-kept homes. We visited the park with its wonderful grandstand and grounds. As our tour progressed we noted that there were several homes that seemed to be abandoned, some had old cars and farm equipment parked on empty lots or in yards. It was nice to see active businesses on main street. We entered the city from Hwy 9. There was a sign as we approached but the street seemed to come up on us quickly when it came to turn. The street signs were very visible within the town itself.
- b. Nice park area that would accommodate a large crowd. It had nice clean rest rooms and showers that were locked. A nice open building for picnics.
- c. No Answer
- d. Older homes- a few refurbished. Many old and run down. Needed yard maintenance. Impressed with the school building- outside was well-maintained. Also around the library/city hall was very good. Well-placed city welcome sign. Thought it could use a community board with upcoming events.

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. Wonderful bank building, nicely restored City Hall, library and museum. Several buildings were used for storage, but most on the west side were in need of maintenance and/or repair. We toured City Hall, the library, museum, and District Office/Early Childhood Center. No merchandise was available for sale. The library had a very organized variety of books and movies on display. We had a wonderful tour of the district office and of the library and museum. Employees/volunteers at all were very gracious and helpful.
- b. Several older buildings, that are now used for storage on main street. We went to the library, that was nice.
- c. Bank, nice city hall building, library and museum were very nice. Will keep very nice.
- d. Mostly older buildings used for storage we were told. Loved the library, set up well, also housed the history museum—loved it. Could have spent more time there. I think it was a big plus for the city. Saw maybe one gas station, did not go close enough to know for sure.

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. We used the public restrooms at the park. They were very nice and spacious. We noticed the water hydrant and electrical hookup for campers in the park. WIFI was available at the library. There was no problem finding a parking space. We loved the flowers planted in the old drill on main street.
- b. No Answer
- c. There are restrooms in the park, no parking problem.
- d. The city park was good, very old equipment, wondered if it was safe? Open restrooms, concessions are good, grand stand- outstanding- a lot of seating. I think it could draw crowds for events. Town was pretty empty when we were there on a Wednesday. Totally enjoyed the on the spot tour of the school. It was clean and being used even during the summer by staff- sounds like a great spot for preschoolers. Gymnasium look unused.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. Not Applicable (N/A)
- b. No Answer
- c. Not Applicable (N/A)
- d. No Answer.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. N/A
- b. No Answer
- c. Not Applicable (N/A)
- d. I do not know.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. N/A
- b. No Answer
- c. Not Applicable (N/A)
- d. None

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

- a. N/A
- b. No Answer
- c. None- these services are out of town.
- d. None

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

- a. N/A
- b. No Answer
- c. In Centralia, nearby town, 8 miles away.
- d. None

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. Many homes were in ill repair with overgrown yards, abandoned farm machinery and cars on the lots.
- b. No Answer
- c. There were quite a few properties that could be cleared and used for new homes. i.e. modular homes or mobile homes average home price \$33,000.
- d. I think small potential for some of the unlivable homes, which were vacant and unkempt. Untrimmed trees and bushes covered many of them. I would say about half the homes were kept up well.

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 no way for us to know which properties might be rentals.
- b. No Answer
- c. Not Applicable (N/A)
- d. None

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. Early Childhood classrooms were present in the old high school which now serves as the district office.
- b. They are in the Frankfort and Concordia School district.
- c. Preschool, well-maintained district office.
- d. Very Well maintained preschool. Loved everything about the school.

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

- a. There were Performance and Financial Accountability Reports on the district's website.
- b. No Answer
- c. Yes
- d. Did not research this.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- a. 3- and 4-year-old preschool was held at the district office. Free
- b. No Answer
- c. Preschool. Don't know about private.
- d. Not sure.

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 were two churches present. They apparently take turns having services. I believe they switched church service venues at the end of each month. We didn't tour the churches. We didn't see evidence of faith based community services.
- b. No Answer
- c. Two churches, have combined.
- d. One church- grounds kept up. Building could use some paint. Beautiful well-kept cemetery.

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 PRIDE and 4-H club were not listed on the Friends of Vermillion Facebook page. It appears from the Facebook page and newsletter that the community is very busy with fund-raising and celebrating. It seems that the community and area are very supportive of community activities.
- b. No Answer
- c. There is a group that does events, takes care of the museum, library, Memorial Day program.
- d. Library/History Museum—well-done. In use and the star of the town.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. Red street signs. Restrooms were nice. Streets were typical of rural Kansas small towns.
- b. Streets were free of potholes.
- c. Signs could be read.
- d. Older paved streets are ok for slow driving. Sidewalks were usable- but old.

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

- a. We were warmly greeted by the librarian. She gave us a newsletter and historical brochures
- b. No Answer
- c. Welcoming, gave us lots of information about the city.
- d. All good- plenty of info at the library. Brochures and different items for sale.

Police/fire protection:

- a. Nice fire department building.
- b. No Answer
- c. No
- d. No fire truck.

Library:

- a. Very nice, well maintained and had a nice variety
- b. No Answer
- c. Very nice.
- d. Loved it. In use- well kept.

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

- a. Nice picnic area, bathrooms, concession stand, and grandstand at the park. We were concerned about the liability of the playground equipment at the park. We reminisced about the older equipment because it was like what we had growing up but we also saw the potential for accidents. The playground at the district office was nice and looked like it would be open to the public.
- b. No Answer
- c. Nice Clean, RV Hook up, Showers and nice rest rooms.
- d. Usable, but old (maybe dangerous?) equipment.

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 think the community is well known for its Memorial Day celebration. The wide variety of events seemed to be well attended by locals. We didn't see any community slogan.
- b. No Answer
- c. Memorial Day Weekend.
- d. Don't know.

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 Memorial Day celebration had passed when we visited, but they had a Tractor Pull coming up on July 3rd.
- b. No Answer
- c. Yes
- d. Handouts in the library.

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. Their museum and depot may draw outside visitors if advertised.
- b. No Answer
- c. Very Nice museum, lots of work went into it. Campground is very nice, with shower and rest rooms and hook-ups.
- d. Museum above the library. Campground \$10 per night in city park- has electric hook ups.

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. City Hall/Library – Staff very helpful and pleasant, nice facility, not sure of hours of operation.
- b. No Answer
- c. No
- d. In the library- handouts for upcoming events.

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

- a. Peterson Brothers, next Memorial Day.
- b. No Answer
- c. No
- d. No

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. Very friendly, helpful citizens. Nice playground for the community at the district office. Well-kept City Hall and library. Nice event space at the park. Beautiful cemetery. Some gorgeous homes. Nice bank, fire station, museum and depot.
- b. They have a new well dug with good water and they are getting a new tower this year. Next year they will get new water lines.
- c. School District Office and Preschool. A bank, library, museum in city hall. A restaurant bar.
- d. No Answer

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. Biggest obstacle for attracting new residents to the community would be the abandoned and deteriorating homes and businesses. Obstacles for solving this problem would be the cost to demolish the old homes.
- b. No Answer
- c. Abandoned property, some could be health hazard from rodents and other vermin.
- d. No answer.

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

- a. Friendliness and helpfulness of community members. Park, library, museum. Negative would be the abandoned buildings, cars and farm equipment.
- b. The people we saw were very nice. There are many old buildings and homes that need to be torn down and over grown with trees, etc.
- c. No answer.
- d. No answer.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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