

# First Impressions

## Team Report Form



**Community Visited:** Coffeyville, KS

**Date Visited:** 8/16/25 (1) (Saturday)  
8/19/25 (3) (Tuesday)

**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?**

- I felt that finding information on the community was fairly easy. The City's website felt easy to navigate and find information. The inclusion of "Coffeyville Slang" gave the impression that the community had a unique sense of place and belonging. The Realtors/Rentals section may need to be updated on the website as the document was dated from 2019. I was not able to find information regarding community organizations.
- Coffeyville has a good web presence, and the pictures and descriptions make the community seem exciting and interesting. There is a big emphasis on history and Coffeyville has a very interesting story to tell. The visitor website and city website are both easy to use. I noticed a few of the "Learn More" links on the visit Coffeyville site did not open additional pages on a couple of their major cultural sites like the Defenders Museum and the Death Alley Trail. I think those could be emphasized more since they are so prominent. We were able to schedule our tour at the Brown Mansion based on the hours of operation and tour times published on the website. Time was accurate. I didn't have any difficulty finding information about the community.
- It was easy to find information about Coffeyville on the internet. The City website and Facebook page look good and are very informative, specifically on FB the City Manager's interview with the County Appraiser and the videos with Ashley Tatman. Based on what I saw on the internet, I expected the community overall to be more visually appealing. I did not have difficulty obtaining information through my web search.

**2. The “Five-Minute” Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.**

- Most of the railroad crossings were rough and made me nervous about causing damage to my vehicle if I was not mindful enough. Striping needs to be redone at the 11<sup>th</sup> & Walnut intersection going westbound. Being my first time through the community it was unclear to me where I was supposed to stop, and I nearly pulled into the intersection.
- The primary thing I noticed during my first impression was an excess of unutilized green space and housing that was in poor shape. Many of the homes I saw appeared to need to be condemned or were surely in some sort of building code violation.
- My initial 5-minute impression was mixed. We came into town from the east on HWY 169/166 and drove straight through before making a quick loop one block north and south. We saw the entryway sign, and it was a nice sign but probably wouldn't have noticed it if we weren't looking given its placement on the opposite side of the roadway as our vehicle (the entryway sign on the west side entrance to town was attractive and very visible). I immediately noticed all the open green space along the highway but saw a considerable amount of driveway entrances leading to no structures, which reminded me of the flood buyout area we have in our hometown. I immediately assumed that the town had major flooding at some point and the area used to be residential. I was able to confirm later in the day when I researched Coffeyville's history online and saw that a major flood in 2007 damaged a large section of town. It felt like that area of town was scarred. The commercial area past the green space along the highway was in fair to good condition and looked like there were some newer commercial buildings that had been constructed recently. We decided to get off the highway for a quick loop and went one block north and south and we immediately noticed a tremendous number of structures that looked either abandoned or in serious disrepair. My initial gut reaction to the 5-minute pass through was confused and slightly on edge. I felt like something big had happened there, but I wasn't sure what.
- I was surprised at the large number of dilapidated properties, both residential and commercial, that need to be condemned and torn down. One house in particular was in terrible condition but wasn't even boarded up, presenting a clear hazard.

**The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)**

- The eastern entrance appeared attractive, though it was difficult to identify a welcome sign. In fairness, this may have been due to the presence of the carnival being near the sign. The western entrance had a beautiful welcome sign and the streetscaping for this entrance was attractive and welcoming.
- The major entryways on the east and west had visible welcome signs in good condition. There was a lot of vacant ground on the east side of town with many empty driveway entrances leading to no structures. The commercial buildings along the highway were in fair condition and I wouldn't have any major reservations about stopping to eat or stay overnight if I had to. On some of the north south oriented streets that came into town we didn't notice any gateway signage, but it is possible we did not go far enough. There was limited streetscaping along the highway itself, but the downtown had some attractive lighting, signage, planters, etc.
- On the road that we used to enter town, the welcome sign was on the left side of the street, which I might not have seen if I had been driving. I feel it should be located on the right side of the street.

**3. Downtown Business Area: Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.**

- The building exteriors generally appeared to be in decent condition, though there were several that appeared to be falling apart.
- I made note that I saw two places where I could grab food, an antique store, a consignment shop, a hardware store, a candle shop, a floral shop, and a grocery store.
- In general, the merchandise appeared to be sparse and there were limited selections in most places.
- The layout of the downtown confused me initially, but we got the hang of it after a little while driving. There was a large amount of parking lots, a few one-way streets, etc. While walking I really liked the narrower streets and wide sidewalks. It felt like the downtown was pedestrian oriented and safe for street crossings.

- Some of the buildings had very cool architectural features. The municipal building and school buildings we saw throughout the area were attractive and architecturally interesting. I particularly enjoyed the covered walkways on a few of the downtown blocks. They had an architectural shade structure with concrete pillars that wasn't attached to the buildings but wrapped around the entire city block; I had never seen a structure like that before, and it was very nice to have the shade on an extremely hot day. I noticed street trees downtown and scattered flowerpots of varying types were nicely done. Our team commented on the variety of types and colors of the pots, and we particularly liked the wagon planter and seated planter next to the Defender's museum. The variety added some interesting character. There were quite a few buildings that appeared empty or simply warehouse storage, and several had some noted deterioration on the exterior.
- Some buildings were renovated and inviting like the theater and Chamber office. Others were deteriorated, vacant, and/or appeared to be used for storage. I liked the decorative street signs and the murals.

**Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed.**

- We noticed a couple of shops and eateries as well as a lot of empty buildings that appeared to be storage or warehousing. We went into 5 or 6 different businesses and ate at one of the downtown restaurants. Several specialty stores were closed so the ones we were able to enter were like flea market style, pawn shop, or general merchandise. The flower shop had dead flowers and limited inventory. The hitching post was like a little grocery store we stopped in and grabbed water. It had a smell to it that I remember though that hit me on the way in, like maybe a bit moldy or musty.
- The antique store had a wide variety of items and seemed to have good prices compared to antique malls that I have been to in the Wichita area. Flower shop/gift shop had cute purses and greeting cards. Isham's Hardware Store appeared to have a good selection of hardware items, but in the downtown area, I think they might want to add more tourist gift shop type items for sale. Pawn shop had items that others in our group were interested in. Hitching Post (grocery/produce market) had a good selection.

We ate at the soda fountain restaurant for lunch, and I was able to purchase a greeting card there which was convenient.

**Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)**

- I was greeted at all businesses and had at least adequate customer service. At Sunflower the staff were wonderful to interact with and clearly demonstrated pride in their community.
- The people in all the establishments we entered were very kind. They greeted us and offered help. The gentlemen at the hardware store gave us a full history of the store and its role in the Dalton Defender's story.
- Customer service was fantastic! We were greeted everywhere we visited. Staff were friendly and gave us good recommendations about where to go and many provided interesting bits of history.

**What public amenities (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, trash receptacles and wi-fi, etc.) were available?**

- I don't recall seeing drinking fountains or benches. Several businesses stated that they had no public restroom available. I felt that there were adequate trash receptacles and that those receptacles fit the district aesthetically.
- I don't recall seeing drinking fountains or public restrooms in the downtown area, but it is possible we just missed them. Several locals did route us to The Chamber of Commerce building for the Icees though. There were a variety of benches and seating areas of different styles with trash cans and some nice-looking cigarette disposal containers (usually those are just cheap plastic containers, but these looked nice). Several benches were placed in locations with no shade, so we were curious how much use they get in the hotter parts of the year. There were a lot of interesting and colorful murals and artwork on the buildings that caught our attention. Death Alley was a cool feature with the comic book murals and the painted outlines of the fallen Dalton Gang members with horseshoe tracks laying out the raid (neat interactive element that really helped visualize the story. We found a cute little musical playground with a shaded picnic table with phone charging stations. Downtown is surrounded by paved parking lots

everywhere, but there were few cars taking up space. It seemed like we walked or drove around a lot of empty pavement that could have more productive uses. The black coloring on streetlights, signage, benches and trash cans was largely consistent throughout the area and had a very classic, elegant look.

- I noticed quite a few benches and trash receptacles. I really liked the shaded picnic table with the solar-powered USB charger by the mural. I did not notice public restrooms.

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

- Navigating the downtown district was difficult by car. There is a parking area in the SE corner that is not labeled as such. When driving through I thought it was an access point to the main drag.
- Parking was more than abundant as the district itself felt empty. The lack of people in the district was notable and created a “ghost-town”-like impression. This was on a Saturday morning/afternoon.
- Navigating the downtown district by foot felt comfortable. The structures that “leaned” against the buildings to provide shade to pedestrians was a welcome respite from the heat. Crossings were simple to navigate, and I did not feel like any of the intersections were unsafe for pedestrians.
- There were parking lots everywhere, but there were not a lot of cars in them. They were easy to find because they were prevalent, but I don’t recall much signage indicating them to be public parking lots. Marking them as public lots with a number system like P1, P2, etc. might help out-of-towners identify them easier and remember where they parked.
- I loved the variety of planters from the hanging baskets, to large potted plants, to the wagon full of plants. There was plenty of parking. We were able to visit many businesses that were a short walk from where we parked.

**4. Other Retail Shopping Areas: Describe other retail shopping areas. Were the areas attractive and easy to access?**

- It looked like the primary retail shopping area was on the west side of town along the main drag. It offers a variety of shops and restaurants. The area was easy to access and if I lived nearby, I would be likely to utilize these businesses.

- The commercial area along the highway seemed to be in fair to good condition. They had the normal stores that most commercial strips in Kansas have. We were planning to go to Patriot BBQ for lunch but once we got to the parking lot, we got a little uncomfortable and turned around to head back downtown. The area around the restaurant didn't appear to be in good condition and I noticed some dilapidation on surrounding homes. It made me a bit uncomfortable leaving my car.
- We saw Walmart on the edge of town and a shopping center with a grocery store, clothing store, and dollar store. They were easy to access but were not particularly attractive.

**5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas :Is there a defined area where manufacturing industries could easily locate/expand? If so, describe.**

- Yes, to the northeast side of town there was an easily identified industrial park. There appeared to be empty spaces in which a company could locate or expand.
- There is a main industrial park outside of town that we drove through on our way home. It is adjacent to the municipal airport. The airport did not appear to be in great condition and also did not appear to be related to the industrial users nearby, just adjacent to them. There seemed to be a lot of ground available for potential expansion. The industrial buildings were quite substantial, and it appears that that Coffeyville has a lot of industry for a town with a population of that size.
- There was a large industrial park near the airport that appeared to have land available for expansion.

**6. Health Care Services: Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services.**

- The hospital was attractive and appeared to be well taken care of on the exterior.
- I noticed the regional hospital. I didn't notice doctor's offices or other types of medical services just from driving around but we were looking for a lot of things and may have just missed them.
- We saw a nice-looking, large hospital and mental health facility.

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

- Non-hospital medical facilities did not stand out much to me.
- I noticed one dentist but did not notice other health care provider offices.
- Not much information was noticed in person or online.

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

- These facilities did not stand out much to me.
- Not something I really saw.
- There are several options for senior living including Dale Apartments, Asbury Village, Gran Villas, Windsor Place, and MedicalLodges.

**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.)**

- The housing mix appeared to mostly consist of lower-end priced housing. Trying to search for homes for sale turned up 0 prospects, so I can only speculate on home pricing, but the seeming lack of any available home would clearly be a challenge to find acceptable housing.
- I believe that attracting higher income households would be difficult with the existing stock. I tried to find any development that appeared to be new and/or higher end and struggled to find any. There was a development on the south end of town that appeared to be the newest housing development in town.
- The prevalence of dilapidated housing created a strong feeling that investing in a home would be a financial mistake. If I were considering moving to the community, I would be nervous that my neighbors would be unable or unwilling to take care of their property. The abundance of condemnable housing would worry me that my home would be more likely

to experience damage from neighboring property or individuals who might try squatting in those homes.

- We drove around the residential neighborhoods for several hours in all directions. Most of the housing we found near the city's downtown core was in very poor condition (many of the homes dilapidated). It seemed like there were many properties unoccupied. We could not identify any newer subdivision developments until after we returned home and looked on Google Earth and found a small development south of the Brown Mansion. In all honesty, the quality of the housing stock would be a major deterrent for me ever wanting to move to Coffeyville. I could not see myself in any of the homes we saw while driving around for hours. I would also be worried about my equity being compromised by the quality of the surrounding neighborhoods and not being able to sell if I had to move. We checked on local real estate apps like Zillow. There were a decent number of properties listed but they all appeared to be older housing stock. There did appear to be quite a few multi-family commercial properties and apartments in town, but we did not dive deep into availability. The housing we found was certainly affordable based on pricing, but the condition of some of the neighborhoods was quite striking. At one point in a few of the neighborhoods we estimated 20-30% of dilapidated homes with structural issues that would merit condemnation and maybe an additional 20% with addressable nuisance issues (i.e. trash, debris, tall grass and weeds, etc.)
- I saw some housing available for rent and sale for low to moderate income. I did not see new housing stock or homes that would appeal to those with higher incomes.

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

- I did not observe any signage indicating that rentals were available.
- I noticed several apartment complexes spread throughout town and couple of downtown buildings that appeared to be multi-family apartments as well.
- I saw a few homes available for rent on Zillow and a few apartments driving through town. However, if I was interested in building a home or living in the community prior to buying a house, I would want a newer apartment or home.

**8. Schools: What schools are present? (Head Start, Preschool, K-8, High School, Post-Secondary, etc.) Do the schools appear to be adequate in size? Are the buildings and grounds well-maintained?**

- I saw elementary, middle school, and high school. As I drove by each, I verbally mentioned how well maintained they appeared to be and how attractive they physically were. In particular I noted that for the building style of the middle school and high school that I expected it to be in much worse shape.
- We saw elementary, middle, and high school buildings as well as the campus for the community college. All of the educational buildings we saw looked attractive and had nice architectural features. The facilities and grounds appeared well-maintained with grass mown.
- There is an early learning center, several childcare facilities, elementary, middle, high school, and community college. The schools appear to be adequate in size, and the buildings and grounds appear to be well-maintained.

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

- I was. The information primarily came from niche.com. I was not sure about the methodology of the site, but it appeared to provide the most comprehensive information I could find.
- Yes, we looked at Niche.com and GreatSchools. The schools had lower ratings on those platforms.
- Yes on greatschools.org and niche.com.

**9. Childcare: What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?**

- I noticed that there were several daycare centers that were advertising for vacancies. I was not able to find information regarding pricing, and as such, am unable to comment on the affordability.
- Did not notice any information locally about childcare availability.
- There are several private childcare facilities in town as well as an early learning center operated by the school district that is \$35 per day for ages 6 weeks through 3 years.

**10. Faith/Religion: Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the places of worship represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of faith-based community services?**

- There was an abundance of religious centers. At one point my wife exclaimed that it seemed like there was a church on every block we passed. They appeared to be well taken care of.
- Quite a lot of churches observed.
- There are many different churches around town of various Christian denominations that appear to be well-maintained.
- I did not notice faith-based community services.

**11. Civic: Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community.**

- I saw the American Legion and the Masonic Lodge while in town. On the Chamber website, I noticed there is a Lions Club and Kiwanis Club.

**Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?**

- I did not see any evidence that there were nonprofit civic organizations in the community, much less that they were actively participating in the community. The exception is the Historical Society which made a clear effort to highlight the Brown mansion and the Dalton Gang incident.
- No evidence seen.
- I saw a Lions Club sign along the highway coming into town, indicating that those organizations exist.

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

- I felt that the wayfinding signs could have done a better job of directing travelers to important areas such as city hall and parks.
- Many of the sidewalks were in poor condition.
- The streets were fine to drive on outside of railroad intersections.
- Lighting was a non-factor as I visited during daylight hours.
- In general, the streets and sidewalks are in need of repairs. Many sidewalks are cracked, with tripping hazards. There are brick sidewalks in places that are uneven and have weeds growing in between. There are places where portions of sidewalks are missing. There is plenty of available parking. Landscaping and streetscapes are minimal. I do not recall seeing any public restrooms.

- The sidewalks are in rough shape throughout town. There is a mixture of surfaces like brick and concrete that are broken up or overgrown and will either cause trip hazards for pedestrians or be completely un navigable to folks in wheelchairs. I didn't notice restrooms near any of the parks or playgrounds. We noticed some playgrounds with ADA surfacing, but there was not paved ADA walkway connecting to the parking areas, so it would be hard for those users to reach the playground.

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

- I was not able to enter due to when I visited.
- The municipal building had a very nice exterior and architectural features and appeared well-groomed. I could imagine myself working there from the outside. I did not go indoors. Another member of our party did.
- When entering City Hall, you have to go upstairs, then through glass doors to a counter in the City Clerk/City Manager's office where there is a variety of pamphlets and brochures available. I was greeted in a friendly manner, asked for the Landlord List, and they printed one for me.

**Police/fire protection:**

- We noticed multiple fire stations throughout town. The equipment was staged nicely and looked like it was well-maintained. We saw police/EMS responding to a call in one of the residential neighborhoods.
- Driving through town, we saw a couple of fire stations. I don't recall seeing any police.

**Library:**

- I only saw it outside. It looked nice.
- We drove by the library but did not have time to go inside.

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

- I had difficulty locating and finding parks without pulling up their locations on the internet. Even with that help, the parks were not placed in a way that readily identified their presence. There is a park near what appears to

be a refinery that feels out of place and is deteriorating with surfaces peeling off of the play structures.

- There is a park near the Elementary school and Sherwin Williams building that has really interesting play structures that my child would love to play on. I noted that the zero-entry merry go round did not have any access point to it other than grass.
- There appeared to be a number of ballparks, sports complexes and at least one disc golf course. Due to time limitations, I was unable to visit them and gather any opinion on their condition.
- We saw several City parks including the one with the skatepark and accessible playground. However, it did not appear that there was an accessible path to the playground.
- So, I didn't research well enough to identify the main park or stadium areas. We drove around looking but could not find them. When I looked on Google Earth later, I was able to identify them pretty far northwest of town. I didn't notice any way-finding signage driving around that pointed me to those locations, so I didn't realize I missed them.

**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?**

- The Dalton Gang incident was clearly a major feature of the community's history and is well advertised.
- The community has an annual Interstate Fair and Rodeo and Dalton Defender Days. I don't think there is a community slogan that refers to either of those events. But I did see "Coffeyville Proud" around town.
- Dalton Defenders; Brown Mansion, Reenactments.

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

- The Defender Day event.
- Locals told us to come back in October for the reenactment. They were good at telling and selling the story.
- The Interstate Fair and Rodeo, Dalton Defender Days, and the Hops Around Town event.

**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).**

- The wood sculpture park has the potential to be a draw but needs a much more thoughtful layout design. I felt that I was able to take a quick look and more or less absorb most of the park. Finding a way to make the park engaging/interactive at the pedestrian level could be a draw for someone to physically draw individuals to the community.
- The river is close by and could be an attractive outdoor feature for trails or a riverwalk.
- We visited the Brown Mansion, Dalton Defenders Museum, and Sculpture Garden.

**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.**

- There was a clear chamber of commerce office. There was a sign that on the office that advertised the sale of ICEEs inside. I thought that was a strange combination. Later during my visit, a community member mentioned that the ICEE was created in Coffeyville. If this is true, the sale offering makes much more sense, but the connection could be made much clearer and potentially be a draw to the downtown district.
- The Chamber office was noticeable due to signage and the unique building that it is in. We did not go inside.
- Yes, the Chamber of Commerce visitor's center was easy to find and looked attractive from the outside. The local hardware store owner referred us to them for Icee's. Unfortunately, we were low on time and risked missing our tour at the Brown Mansion so we did not get a chance to go inside.

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

- I would be interested in visiting the Defender Day event to watch the reenactment with my toddler. I believe he would be fascinated with the action that was described to me by various community members.
- I might come back to bring my wife on a tour of the mansion and show her the museums. Watching the reenactment of the gunfight would be a neat

experience too. There are no shops or restaurants that I saw that would entice me to come back.

- Not really anything.

### **Wrap-up**

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

- I liked what I saw out of the businesses along the main drags. They appeared to be well maintained and inviting and offered a diverse selection of services.
- I also really enjoyed talking with community members about Coffeyville and could tell that there was a real sense of place and belonging amongst them that I often do not see in other communities.
- This community has a truly unique identity with the Dalton Defender's story, and I would say they excel at leaning into that history. The museums are nicely done and the locals we interacted with all knew the story. My guess is I could have asked anyone in the downtown area, and they would have been able to tell the Dalton Defender's story. I normally don't care about a town's history, but they made the story engaging in their built environment. The fact that the locals can tell the story so easily gives me a sense that the community has a strong sense of identity and connection to their past.
- For a city with only 8,800 population, the industrial base with the refinery and industrial park was huge. They have a tremendous amount of industry with what appears to be a strong educational system as far as community colleges and trade programs to help supply workforce.
- The downtown has some great potential with an interesting layout if they can get more of the buildings activated with businesses.
- The people were so friendly! At each place we entered, we were greeted in a very welcoming manner. And, the staff provided historical information, descriptions of attractions, and recommendations about things to do and see.

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

- Housing quality and availability is the challenge that sticks out the most to me. I believe it will be difficult to attract new residents, retain existing residents, or recruit higher-income households into the community without addressing this issue.

- There are an unusual number of structures (especially houses) in town that appear dilapidated. We saw commercial buildings, industrial buildings, and large neighborhoods filled with vacant properties or structures that were damaged or falling or had visible nuisances on the property. The interior of the stores we went into felt outdated and there was also noticeable damage inside in the restaurant with fallen ceiling tiles and apparent roof leaks. The visual appearance of many of the structures gave our group reservations about purchasing a home there either for fear that it would be devalued or that we would have a hard time selling it if we ever wanted to leave.
- In my opinion, the biggest challenges would be the large number of dilapidated housing and vacant businesses that need to be torn down to prevent further blight and make room for new infill development.

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

- The difficulty in locating parks and the seemingly deteriorated housing conditions of the community.
- I truly enjoyed the museums and Brown Mansion and will remember Coffeyville's history because of my visit. I may even trek back out to see the Dalton Gang robbery reenactment at some point.
- The large number of dilapidated homes and businesses in town.

**How much money did you spend while you were in the city you visited? \$268**

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



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