

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: Augusta

Dates Visited: 8/4/25 (2)
8/20/25 (1)

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?

- We found most of the information we were looking for through the city website and Google searches.
- City website was clean and organized – loved the pop-up job listing.
- The Go Augusta site was helpful, except we didn't know it was the Chamber/CVB, so we did not click on it at first.
- We also loved the USD 402 website.
- Websites were easy to navigate, and I was able to find details quickly.

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

- Nothing was particularly good or bad on the initial drive-through.
- We didn't feel the main corridor was inviting, just commercial. It wasn't until we drove through neighborhoods and downtown that we started to get a feel for the community.
- Brick streets – we loved them as far as aesthetics. They seemed well taken care of, too, though bumpiness would be problematic over time.
- Nothing really jumped out at me as amazing or terrible. Once I was downtown, I felt the vibe of the community. Brick streets were maintained well.

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

- The welcome sign should be cleaned.
- Didn't see the signage directing us to downtown initially, so we didn't know where to go until we used Google for directions.
- Sign needs power washed (Only reason I notice is because we just did ours.)

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

- No downtown signage was seen at first.
- We loved the park right in the downtown area, especially because it was a unique destination-type part that brings in visitors from out of town.
- The roundabout with the clock was a nice touch, but the area beyond it is run down and a bit disappointing.
- I got a great feeling about the downtown businesses. There were so many and the citizens I spoke to indicated they are well supported.
- Signage for downtown is MIA. Didn't see any.
- Buildings are well-maintained.

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

- Great variety of stores – tattoos, retail, barber, and unique offerings, too!
- Very little in the way of empty buildings – kudos.
- Most storefronts were appealing and welcoming. There were maybe a few that needed improvement.
- Storefronts are full, with very low vacancies.
- The fudge shop was great, and the owner was wonderful. Open 8 years and sells out almost every Saturday. The owner told us about the upstairs apartments in the downtown area.
- The Marketplace had a wonderful selection of items from gifts to clothing, and more. It made you feel like you were in an old-fashioned store. That's a great feeling for small towns.
- The drugstore had a little bit of everything and also gave an old-time vibe.

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

- Everyone was friendly!!! No one was very chatty though – they waited for us to ask questions and engage.
- There was a business owner that owns multiple businesses that was wonderful to talk to! He has such a passion for downtown and Augusta. He's a great guy and so is his whole family!
- Very friendly people. I was greeted when I walked in.

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

- Benches were available in good locations. There were public restrooms at the downtown park.
- Trash receptacles were also in good locations and on the corners there were 3 smaller pots with plants that are well taken care of.
- The trees had mulch around them and no grass. These are being maintained well.
- Benches and trees and flowers were a nice touch.

Comment on landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking?

Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

- The downtown was pretty happening for a Monday morning, but there was lots of parking available.
- The amenities mentioned previously all added to the appeal of the downtown landscaping and streetscaping.
- No issues with parking at all.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- There were multiple areas observed, including the main corridor, but also near the lake and other main roads. The town is really easy to navigate.
- We turned on a road and drove around town when we first got there. Easily accessible and easy to locate everything related to shopping on the highway and other areas.
- Main Street Corridor, lake and other areas.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- It wasn't obvious at first that there was an industrial park, but we did find a few in one area that seemed like an opportunity for growth. Of course, the main highway had many commercial businesses.
- Room for growth exists with open fields, but no signs stating it was an industrial park. It's within the city limits, just beyond the downtown area.
- It wasn't easy for me to find the industrial park, but there are spaces available for expansion.

6. Health Care Services

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

- Several family practices – that's nice! Urgent care but no hospital is concerning.
- Couple dentist offices were seen, doctors, and mental health services.
- There was urgent care, but no hospital was seen, which is worrisome.

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

- There appeared to be several dentists, optometrists, and other medical professionals.
- I really liked this part of the visits as I saw lots of offices for medical services.
- I saw an eye doctor and dentist.

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

- We think there are several senior services, but they were not as prominent in their signage or designation, so we couldn't be sure during the visit. Online, we were able to find several.
- Not easily located, but online we were able to find several.

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.)

- Great variety of housing for low, middle, and higher income.
- Did not see a ton of for sale signs, however we did see a new housing development.
- Loved that all the neighborhoods seemed taken care of, houses were mostly maintained, yards were cleaned up.
- Very few dilapidated houses – what’s Augusta’s secret?
- Neighborhoods were well taken care of.
- Some new construction was going on in the additions, which looks very cute and like there is room to expand.
- A+ on this – maybe all the homeowners really care about their town and properties since everything is so well taken care of.
- I didn’t see a lot of properties available for sale or rent, which can limit opportunity for growth.

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

- We were able to get a list of landlords, so we know there are several properties.
- We were told about some apartments that city workers live in, and they seem to be good quality. Highway 54/State Street is a good area.
- Did not see any signs indicating there were any rentals available anywhere in the city.

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?

- Great variety of preschool, Head Start, and other grades, including private school.
- The neighborhoods around the schools are nice.
- The high school was the only school that was not aesthetically pleasing as far as grounds, etc.
- The school district website was great!

- It was hard to tell what the high school was. The name is hidden by trees – paint it white or the school colors to stand out.
- High school looks like just a large brick building and a stadium.
- Lots of elementary schools.
- Schools seem large enough and are very well-maintained.

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

- While one visitor felt the district website was great, another pointed out they didn't have a chance to do a ton of searching, and yet another felt there wasn't a lot of information about the school system online or in person.
- One citizen encountered said Augusta may not have a reputation as being as strong as other nearby schools, but she found it to be equally sound and of good quality. She attributed that to real estate agents talking up other communities because housing is more expensive outside of Augusta and could result in a bigger sale.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- Neither the Chamber nor the city gave much information about childcare. They either didn't have a list of providers or didn't know too much about them.
- No facilities were noted as being seen in person.
- Was not able to find information at the chamber/city.

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?

- A lot of churches in Augusta. There are at least 5 different denominations.
- The physical appearances were wonderful as they were all in good condition. The landscaping was also well done.

11. Civic

Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community.

- Here's where signs would help, unless we missed them.
- The only thing we saw was on the way out of town, there was a sign that said Lions and VFW that was on the side of a shed, almost under the highway ramp.

Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

- No activity observed.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- Some areas were well lit, nice sidewalks and parking; some were just ok, but all seemed like they were mostly taken care of.
- We loved the brick roads. They were well taken care of.
- Everything seems well-maintained, but no major improvements were noted.

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

- City Hall was surrounded by buildings that were not taken care of. It left a bad impression that the main city building seemed like it was on the edge of a bad area.
- Staff was friendly. We didn't ask a lot of questions, but they were willing to help.
- I was surprised that the City Hall building itself needed to be painted. The Community Development building by itself was awesome and looked like a new construction or remodel.
- City Hall was in a rough neighborhood. I would recommend having a nice city hall or even doing maintenance to the grounds to be more welcoming. People there were nice, and helpful when asked.

Police/fire protection:

- Visitors only found the fire department while in town and note they should've Googled the location but ran out of time.
- They did see some Andover police eating lunch at a restaurant.

Library:

- Loved the children's area.
- The staff was so nice and helpful – we loved them.
- Nicest people in town!!!

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

- So many great parks, especially two really unique playground attractions.
- Loved the lake area, too, and the walking track around it.
- The lake and parks would make this a nice place to retire to.
- The lake is what stood out for me! I could spend all day there.

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 depot/park seemed to be an item of pride, as well as the lake.
- Not sure on events, although multiple people remarked about the car show that recently happened.
- Nothing that I could tell.

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

- Other than the fishing lake, there may be some events there.
- Nothing observed.

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 lake was nice, especially the walking path and nice park area.
- The lake, the shaded playground equipment downtown in the shopping area.
- The lake was nice, as was the walking trail.

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.

- It did take some time to find the Chamber/Visitor center. No signs on the street or on the building to indicate what it was. Only after asking around could we find it and even then, it wasn't obvious where to enter.
- Inside, there was minimal information. No brochures for visitors about Augusta, no information about relocation, businesses, etc. No Augusta items to purchase, and overall just not a very welcoming environment. Staff was nice, but not very engaging.
- Chamber wasn't easily located. There were no large signs. Inside was very bland.

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

- Loved the Marketplace, the fudge shop, and the bouncy fitness place.
- We'd bring the kids to the downtown park attraction and the other castle park by the lake.
- Will be back for the parks with the grandkids. The Marketplace and tattoo parlors I'd visit again, and the bungee jumping classes.
- Love to see the businesses open on Saturdays from 8-2. That makes it easy to come back on the weekend.
- The fudge shop was the best!

14. Wrap-up

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

- Clean and well-kept homes and yards, in fact, it took some driving around to even find an area that seemed more run down or less desirable or safe.
- Unique family attractions/parks.
- Loved to shop downtown. It all seemed so inviting.
- On a Saturday we could go shopping, grab a beer, and play some cornhole (while our dogs hang out with us on the dog patio). Then we could head to the park and the castle, watch a movie at the theater in the afternoon, grab lunch then some fudge, and finish it off by going to the bowling alley for dinner and fun.
- There's a lot going on in Augusta and a lot going on for them.
- Very well-maintained neighborhoods.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- Entrances could be more inviting, like lights on the bridge, some colorful trees or plants.
- Could use some better signage on the main street, maybe a type of overhead, large sign that says “Augusta Downtown.”
- City and Chamber need more visibility in their building and maybe that would make them more welcoming to visitors and prospective residents.
- Main corridor driving through town needs better welcome signage, direction signs, flags, and other items that give it a sense of community since it is such a commercial area.
- Maybe brochures, flyers, etc. that talk about the unique strengths of the community in case a visitor stops in – talk about the education system, childcare, housing, business opportunities.
- Chamber isn’t visible or welcoming.
- Main corridor needs better signage.

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

- How much Augusta is growing and doing good in the downtown area and the new housing development.

How much money did you spend while you were in the city you visited? \$186

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



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