

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form

Extension

Community Visited: Potwin

**Date(s) Visited: October 20 Monday,
October 24,31 Fridays**

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. Potwin Ks website was very well put together with accurate information. I liked the past information on Potwin. There was a tab for each Entity of Potwin which had information that was very helpful in learning about their projects they are currently working on. Local businesses were listed, schools, and groups. Learned they had an old people's day, watermelon fest, which seemed to be big events in their town. I was also very interested in their "paint the town" program which looked like it was citizens of town that were helping folks out with painting exteriors of their homes. Facebook was confusing at first there seems to be 2 pages. One seems to be not active anymore, but the other Potwin KS Facebook page was very informative with the activities going on in town! Enjoyed seeing all the pictures from events!
- b. The City has a website but lacked much information that would be useful to a visitor – for example, sites to see or reasons to visit, even where one might grab a bite to eat or stop to use the restroom if passing through. I was able to find some information through a Facebook search which showed that there's a small group of people interested in bettering the community, such as the rebuild/remodel of a former station to become a gathering place and market in the center of town.
- c. Potwin has a great online presence. There are multiple Facebook pages and even a Potwin website for those who aren't on social media. All very informative and once I got on the right Facebook page, the information was up to date. The website was well organized and professional looking. I was able to get a lot of information about the community online.

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. We came in from the south on backroads. We came in on NW Diamond Rd. to 196 to Randall St. Upon entering from south immediately noticed trees overgrowing the roadway and unkept lawns. The homes seemed quaint but dilapidated. We continued to drive every street block by block. The overwhelming number of homes that needed torn down or cleaned up was abundant. The area around the school seemed to be well kept, grounds were mowed, school looked maintained. Their community house and churches seemed very nice from the exterior, they seemed freshly painted. Each church and community house had fresh flowers in pots in front which was a nice welcoming touch. There was Welcome to Potwin Signs coming in two entrances that gave a little directory on what was offered in their town, which was nice and good information. Because we came in from the south, we missed the Nusser Gas Station and actually had to ask the post office lady where we could find it. The buildings that we noticed right off were the bank, post office, car wash, and CF Cookers. They all had adequate signage. I drove by the city building twice not noticing it only because there was a couple of older business buildings across the street that I noticed were not in use but seemed to have potential. All in all, the streets seemed in fair condition, which also consisted of guttering with pavement.
- b. The non-stop drive was more than 5-minutes for me but was rather a slow cruise through town. First impression – a lot of stray cats roaming through town, unkept yards, overgrown trees that hang into the street, small lots for houses – many with vehicles, lawn mowers, and other things that have accumulated and don’t appear to have moved recently. One side of town with newer, well-maintained homes having bigger lots, but they were accessed via the only gravel road in town. Multiple signs with “Potwin” but some were faded and less than inviting. Trees on the south side of town hide the town from the highway.
- c. If our navigation wasn’t set to Potwin, I would have driven past the town completely. There isn’t anything “eye-catching” to bring you in. We came in from the south, and the buildings were run down and vegetation overgrown. The buildings on the main street appeared to be mostly vacant and neglected. Driving through the town we noticed many houses were in bad condition, lawns overgrown and cars broke down in the yard. The school area was clean and well kept. The newer homes on the east side of town looked very nice. The old downtown buildings were interesting but in poor shape. There didn’t appear to be too many businesses in town. My first impression was that not a lot of people took care of their property or that there was not a property officer enforcing any clean up. Maybe it’s an older community in that the owners simply can’t keep up with their property.

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. The post office was a neat historic Building with a lot of character. The postmaster was very pleasant and informative and had good things to say about Potwin when making small talk. She was also very informative about what was going on in town and the meeting that was taking place that night for economic development. The message board outside of post office provided a lot of information on who was running for council, openings of CF Cookers, Businesses for hire, Community Events, which was nice because traveling through if you were after hours, you could look at the community board for information. Library was also very well marked, which I had read about on the website before visiting. It was another building with historical character that attracted people with the bathroom being built in the safe because it used to be a bank back in the day. Very cute well utilized building that in the window advertisement said they provided wi-fi. I did not try and link up but took their word for it. We arrived at 2:30 pm for the opening of the library, when we arrived there were already several children in the back playing board games and a child utilizing the one computer for studies, which the librarian was attending to. The law office building they had advertised on the web site had really nice stain finished wood for the exterior making it appealing to the eye, very noticeable but closed during our visit. The bank was another business that had occupied one of the old brick buildings on main street. It seemed it worked as it should observing a few customers come and go. Off the main Street was the wheat state internet company that was on the city website also. The building appeared to be somewhat newer in age compared to other buildings and a relatively very small company. We decided to go into the city building where we met the new city clerk who was very pleasant and the mayor of Potwin. The mayor took a lot of pride in his town and his fire engines in the station. We had a lot of conversation about the ongoings of Potwin and some of their struggles. As I stated previously, we did have to ask directions to the gas station because we came in on the south side. One has to go back out the south entrance of town to the highway and go east for an 1/8 to 1/4 of a mile east to Nusser Filling Station which sold fuel, select groceries, sandwiches, and pizza. Upon arriving we were greeted at the door and then we proceeded to the back and ordered sandwiches that were very good! Walking around the filling station I observed they had a very good selection of groceries, essential vehicle needs, some unique quick shop items such as the Rap chips collection and dr pepper cotton candy. We had a very nice lady check our items out, we paid and headed back into town.

- b. Some older buildings that add some old-fashioned charm as described on the City website. With some restoration efforts, these could be turned into neat shopping district – floral shop, coffee shop, boutiques, possibly an art gallery, maybe a diner or dinner restaurant. I saw a library, Emprise Bank, and the post office were most notable in the downtown district. A message board outside the post office offered some additional business contacts – landscaping/lawn care (which could be kept busy by the overall appearance of the town) and a paranormal investigator which makes me a little bit curious if there’s an area of town that may be considered haunted? If so, maybe that’s an attraction some visitors may be drawn to, but it might also be one to keep some from visiting. I did not visit the businesses downtown, but bought a slice of pizza, a drink, and some praline pecans from Nusser Fuels south of town. The ladies working were friendly while I ordered and checked out but did not greet me when I entered.
- c. Downtown there were old buildings, some in much better condition than others. The bank was in good condition, but we didn’t make it in before closing. The library was so unique, we absolutely loved it. There were children there playing games and reading, it seemed like a great place to go after school, and what a great way to use and preserve an old building. We tried to go into the antique store, but we weren’t about to get in touch with the owner. We went into the post office, again another great old building. We were greeted by the kindest postal worker. She gave us small bits of information about the town and businesses and could not have been kinder. She was the first person we spoke with in town and made a great first impression on the type of people in the community. The car wash was well kept. Since the antique store was closed there was nothing to purchase downtown. Parking was not an issue. I didn’t notice any public restrooms other than the library. We were directed to the city office where we were greeted with two very informative and proud citizens of Potwin. This is where I saw the passion for the community. We got more information on Potwin than I could imagine. We were informed about community goals, what they’ve done so far, what they want to do, and everything in between. All questions we had about Potwin were answered. It was made very clear to us how much this community wants to see Potwin thrive. They are moving in the right direction; while much remains to be done, their determination is clear.

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. I did not notice drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, and trash receptacles throughout town. We could have parked and walked much of main street downtown where there was ample amount of parking.
- b. I noticed the picnic tables near the Community building but didn't see any public restrooms, drinking fountains or public trash receptacles. Benches were also found at King Park, which also had a covered sitting area. Specifically, downtown, there wasn't much in terms of landscaping. With it being fall, the trees had lost leaves, and they were scattered throughout town. I had no difficulty finding parking, there was only one other vehicle downtown at the time of my visit and that vehicle was leaving as I was parking. From the time I got to town until I left, I only saw a handful of other moving vehicles, all of which could have parked downtown at the same time if needed. I could access multiple services from where I parked. There's adequate parking in front of the post office and bank.
- c. No response

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. We were told from the post office lady there was an antique store who could be reached by calling a phone number and the store owner would come open but then we went to her store front she was not open and we couldn't find any phone number to call her for opening. The building seemed really run down and the windows were covered so we couldn't even see in.
Just to note there were many buildings in their main street district that could be utilized with some fixing up but were not, we later came to find out that most of them were just being used for personal storage. There was also a newer building that locals said used to be a bar but had been closed.
- b. There appeared to be a couple of vacated buildings which may have been previously used for retail shopping or restaurants. Google map refers to one building as the Potwin Fireworks Store but there was no signage of this on the building in town, it may be seasonally used with banners for advertising. Were the areas attractive and easy to access? One of the buildings located on Marshall Ave looked to be nice and could easily be used again.
- c. We made our way back outside of town to the gas station to grab something to eat. The staff was very friendly, and the establishment was clean. I was impressed with all the items this little convenient store had to offer. It was more like a small grocery store. With the essentials to get you by until you are able to get to a larger grocery store.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. I did not observe any areas where manufacturing buildings could build or expand. I'm not sure where city limits went or if it would be possible to annex some land into city limits. I think it would make sense to grow towards your gas station on the ground south of town, it seemed like there were potential lots that way but not sure.
- b. Not far from downtown, there was a fiber or internet company with a warehouse for storage. I don't recall a sign indicating industrial park, but the fiber company's warehouse appeared to be a newer building with access. An additional shop, maybe a custom cutter/ farmer (forage) also appeared to be a newer shop with access, but it wasn't clear if that was a public business or not.
- c. I wouldn't say there was a defined area where a manufacturing industry could locate or expand. Unless you want it outside of town near the gas station.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. I honestly did not see an EMS building, and I don't believe they have one I would assume they get EMS services from neighboring towns.
- b. Google maps show Potwin EMS on Randall. The fire department was centrally located.
- c. The only emergency services I noticed was the fire station, which seemed up to date and well equipped to handle Potwin and nearby areas.

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

- a. When asked about doctor's office we heard they went to El Dorado or Wichita for services
- b. I didn't see any of these services available in Potwin.
- c. I believe most residents travel to nearby bigger towns which is typical for a town of this size. My family travels 30 minutes to see all our providers.

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

- a. There were also no assisted living or rest homes in town once again I believe this would be El Dorado and Wichita.
- b. None that were evident.
- c. No response.

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 regard to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)

- a. Full Disclosure in my hometown I am a property officer for city of Cunningham. So, when driving through town I noticed more dilapidated homes than decent homes. Many lots just covered in overgrown trees, tall grass, many abandoned vehicles that needed removed and just clutter. Several homes that had roofs were falling in. I did some internet searching for homes for sale in Potwin, finding one available for around \$140,000. It was 3 bed 2 bath around 1500 square ft which makes a nice starter home for a family. Upon arriving to see the house a tree had fallen in the driveway and lawn was extremely overgrown, when I visited a second time the tree was gone. First appearance if someone was looking to move here it would be a really hard sell just by looking at the condition of homes. The southeast corner of town does have many newly built homes, which was nice and I did notice there were some homes throughout the town that were cleaned up. So, you could see they are trying but still need a lot of work.

- b. Only one house for sale. From the exterior it appeared to be reasonably priced, but the downfall is the lot size and proximity to neighbors. The overgrown trees/unkept yards next to the house do not help with property valuation, though. Without knowing the average income, I believe the house for sale was comparable to what we'd see in our area based on the listing. The biggest challenge I see is the availability of homes for sale, lot sizes for most of the properties and most importantly, the neighboring community of Whitewater which I also visited and found to have more to offer – was more well-kept, had more businesses, and bigger houses with larger lots for the same or less money as the one in Potwin.

- c. There was a home for sale on the west end of town. It had a hole in the roof. I am assuming the buyer would be buying it for the lot and tearing down the house. Majority of the houses appeared to have low-income wages. There were a few that were nicer and then of course the 3 or 4 on the very east side of town that were quite nice. The challenge you face with housing in Potwin is keeping up your property when your house and yard look so nice, but your neighbor's yard and house look terrible, what's the point? When you are the only one on the block that takes pride in your home and the rest of the block doesn't care, you don't really have the motivation to spend the time or money to do the same. One would hope it would motivate the neighbors to clean up their property but that doesn't seem to be the case. The overgrown yards, multiple vehicles in the yard, etc., aren't appealing to future buyers and hopeful newcomers to the area.

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

- a. I did not notice any rental properties for rent which doesn't mean they're not there, probably just rented up I am assuming.
- b. I did not see any rental properties.
- c. No response.

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. Potwin has an Elementary school that goes from preschool to 4th grade. They are associated with Remington School District USD 206 which has a middle school and high school one town over in whitewater KS which is rated 2A I find that very impressive. The school seemed very large for only 6 grades, and the grounds were well taken care of.
- b. There is an elementary school located in town. From the north side of the property, it appears to be well-maintained and a nice school. A closer view from the south shows the building's age. The parking lot also had a steep drive which could be a challenge for some low clearance vehicles.
- c. We saw the grade school. The school grounds and building were clean and well maintained. It looked like a great place to send your children to school.

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

- a. The Potwin KS website did have the schools listed and each building with address. You can also find a Remington USD 206 Facebook page with all the school happenings.
- b. Nothing on the district website or around town that made claims to excellence or otherwise.
- c. It was easy to find information about the school online as well as its ranking in Kansas. You can tell the community takes pride in its school.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- a. Potwin did not have anything for daycare.
- b. There is no available daycare that was easily identifiable.
- c. There was no childcare that I was made aware of.

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. Potwin consists of a Christian and Methodist Church they looked very well taken care of clean, painted very nice and with planted flowerpots out front they seemed very inviting.
- b. Two churches – Methodist and Christian. Both appeared to be nice churches. Although the parking in front of the Christian church was less than desirable (steep and uneven which could be difficult on elderly when stepping out of the car). I did not see any faith-based community services.
- c. We saw two churches on our drive through town. Both of them appeared to be well kept.

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 website showed three groups' Lions Club, Pride, and Paint the Town.
 - Lions Club puts on an Easter Egg Hunt which was seen from pictures on Potwin KS Facebook Page, also along with Santa at the 4-way Stop. Which during Christmas they set Santa at their main Corner, in front of the old gas station along the street and make it a photo opportunity for kids to sit on Santa's lap. I also noticed they do the Lions Calendar which has business advertisements with people of the community birthdays and anniversaries.
 - Pride has a city-wide garage sale, a national night out, and yard of the month! Once again, the Facebook sites Potwin KS Facebook and Potwin Ledger had pictures and advertisements of the events. The National Night Out looked very successful, bringing the Butler County Sheriff's Department out to talk to Community members and serve hot dogs and ice cream. We actually witnessed the yard of the month it was something we spotted right off in our first initial drive through! We also noticed the community garden right off the bat in our first initial drive through, which I think is a great idea, bringing fresh produce to those that may not be able to afford and provide healthy options to people. While also giving some, the opportunity to get outside in the fresh air to work and take care of the garden.
 - Paint The Town is a group of citizens going around and painting homes that need paint. They just recently painted the community house and park shelter which looks really nice and clean. I think this is a great idea to help those in need or the elderly. Its helping citizens out and cleaning up the town at the same time which makes your city look more attractive to people!

- The City of Potwin also has a big watermelon fest that seems to be the biggest event of the year that is advertised across their Facebook platforms. I'm not sure what group puts it on or where the money raised goes towards but looks like a great event to draw people to town!
- b. The city website notes they have a Lions club, a Pride organization and Facebook community page shows there's a small group of people trying to revive the town. I observed a "yard of the month" recognition sign picked by the Pride organization.
- c. Through online searches and speaking with the mayor, we learned about multiple organizations and clubs in the community. Paint the Town, which is such an awesome way to give back while improving the appearance of the community. There is a Lions Club and a group known as Potwin Pride. The Annual Watermelon Festival which we were told brings back over 1,000 visitors a year! Old People's Day, an annual event since 1911! They are definitely doing their part to give back and getting people to come back to celebrate Potwin. Unfortunately, we visited too late in year to attend any of the events. Maybe next year.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. Streets and guttering looked like they were in good shape! Mostly I noticed the overgrown trees and shrubs out in the right of way in areas. I think if it were up to me, I would be taking on a task force to just clean trim and knock back trees. It looked like they had a live river running through their town, even cleaning along those banks to expose the river for a walking path would be an asset. There seemed to be main street parking or side street parking anywhere you went. I didn't ever see public restrooms besides the library during business hours. I wasn't there at night to get a lighting review.
- b. The overall appearance is mostly the same. Street signs were leaning or damaged. Sidewalks and streets both had trees hanging over them. One street (Circle Dr) had a dip so deep, I should have turned around so my vehicle didn't scrape. The gravel on Evergreen and Whispering Meadows is a bit large for easy travel in a car. Many properties have trees lining the property but not in a pleasant way.
- c. For a town, the size of Potwin, the streets, signage, parking, lighting, restrooms, landscaping, and streetscapes were adequate.

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

- a. We visited the city office they were very kind and helpful in answering all of our questions. They sent us home with the Potwin Centennial Book and an edition of the Potwin Ledger. They were also very excited that we had come to visit and asked

questions about our town and how we did certain things and also discussed the things our cities have in common.

- b. I ran out of time before having the chance to visit City Hall.
- c. At the city building we were welcomed with open arms. We were up front with who we were. They gave us so much information on Potwin, it was so information, it was so interesting that I lost track of time. It's obvious these people want their town to shine and thrive. We learned history, past improvements, future improvements, hopeful improvements, hurdles that all our small towns have. It was just a great conversation with great people who are very proud of their community. They even sent us home with a "history of Potwin" book!

Police/fire protection:

- a. Police protection is given by Butler County sheriff's department. The mayor was very proud of his Fire Department that he is a part of and took great pride in his engines. Potwin is also working a deal to build a building to store a ladder truck that was given to them which will be beneficial in fighting tall structural fires.
- b. Fire hydrants throughout town were painted different colors and none of them were red or other bright colors which could easily be located in times of emergency, but the fire department was centrally located in the city.
- c. The city office housed the fire station with plenty of trucks to serve the community and nearby area.

Library:

- a. The library is a historical building built in 1904 as a bank which is the present-day library.
- b. I like the historic look of the building the library is in and find it interesting that the old bank vault is still inside.
- c. We visited the library, which is in an old bank building. The place was cozy, unique, and occupied by nearby students.

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

- a. There are 2 parks in Potwin, Kings Park, and Veteran Memorial Park. Kings Park has wooden structures in honor of Johnny Sommers. This park sits right on their main street, first impression the structures look old and outdated. I had one lady mention to me she did not really care for the park because of the splinters that children get when playing on it. I know it is a very nice sentiment to this family's legacy but there should be a way we could preserve that yet update the equipment for children's safety. Veterans Memorial Park is located on the far east side of town maybe some signs on main street could help some better locate this area. Veterans Park consists of a ball field, home bleachers, and restrooms (I assume only open for games) There is playground

equipment for this park they are just lacking funds and know how to get the playground erected and put together. For some reason, the tree limb burn pile was placed in this park which is a sad eye sore for this area and also the piles of grass clips/ dirt in the southeast corner. According to Facebook there is also a temporary Veterans trail in this park that is mowed short for walkers to enjoy! The track sounds like a great idea to keep citizens active. Potwin parks and rec is hard at work in trying to accomplish things for their community.

- b. Veteran Memorial Park had two areas which appeared to be for dumping brush – a consolidated area with a fence to hide the dumpsite would make the park more aesthetically pleasing. Online there was mention of a walking path through the area, but I did not see any actual trail. It would be nice to clean up the area along the creek through town and make this is a nature trail for walking or biking.

I also saw the unassembled playground equipment on the east side of the Veteran Memorial Park. It feels like in today's world, an online search would help identify the manufacturer of the equipment and directions for assembly. Then, with some volunteers from the community this project could be knocked out in a short amount of time, but I saw online this was expected to be completed in 2025 and its now November and the equipment was still back in the trees. It's unclear how long the equipment has been sitting untouched. I wouldn't be surprised though if some kids haven't been climbing on some of it while at the park though.

King Park offers a variety of climbing activities for children with some seating (with shade) for parents to watch after them. Although, a concern was noted regarding the possibility of wood splinters from the playground structures.

- c. The ballpark appeared to be usable but since we visited out of season it was hard to tell if they still held games there. We noticed some playground equipment out there that had not been put together yet. We read where there are plans to put it together, hopefully next time we visit they'll have the project completed. That's a great place to have a playground. We saw the other park in town that was made of wood, it was being used at the time. It's great to see the parks in these small towns being utilized.

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. Potwin has the Watermelon Festival like mentioned before. We were told it will bring in around 1000 people throughout the day. On that day there is events all day long that would attract both young and old. The Community House holds a lot of history and judging by pictures looks very beautiful inside. The House seems well utilized for events also featuring the old city jail in the basement with plans of putting a museum upstairs.

The Potwin City Website mentioned signs of the Cherokee trail on two sides of town, but I had forgotten to check those out and failed to find them. On the second trip I took more notice there was a sign as you come into Potwin on the south end. The library is also talked about as being a historical building built in 1904 as a bank which now present-day library.

- b. The Watermelon Festival, Biker Sundays and Old People's Day were noted online, but not that I saw on my visit. However, these were summer events according to the City website.
- c. The Watermelon Festival, we're told, brings over 1,000 visitors each year. We were hoping to make it this year, maybe next year! They also have Old People's Day, and Biker Sunday.

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

- a. There are many events going on in Potwin after researching their internet platforms. Like any small town they are making the most of their limited funds by doing and accomplishing what they can afford and at the same time bringing community togetherness. The day we visited there was going to be a meeting on an idea for the old filling station on the corner Randall St. and Marshall Ave. A group of citizens were turning the filling station into a meeting place called Station 85. They are looking at a gathering space for citizens and visitors for coffee, buying fresh local produce, food, crafts, and other locally made crafts. They are making this a community project asking for volunteers, skilled trades people, materials, and donations! This is something I'm going to continue to watch progress over and visit if they get it up and running!
- b. I didn't see any indication of significant events.
- c. The Cherokee Trail went through there, which is very interesting. There was no obvious visitors center, the postal worker directed us to the city building.

Elaborate on any significant natural or built features that have the potential of drawing people to the community. (Public art, museums, lakes, campgrounds, regional heritage locations).

- a. There is a live creek running through it would it possible to seek a grant through wildlife and parks to clean the brush back from that river and have a walking path through town along brush creek that would also double as a walking path to get you from town to Nusser Station. It was mentioned in a comment from a citizen, that children often make the walk to Nusser Station having to walk along the busy black top to the highway and they were concerned for their safety.

- b. The creek running through town could have a natural trail for walking/biking alongside. With hunting available in the area, some RV hookups or hunters' lodging could be a potential source of revenue, but there would need to be some additional restaurants or social environments to entertain the visitors while not hunting. With the Grace Hill Winery not far from Potwin, the historic downtown buildings could be restored and turned into a boutique shopping district that is promoted with a partnership with the winery – think group tour busses or ladies' day out events.
- c. The old schoolhouse is interesting and could be repurposed, though it would need to be relocated out of the flood plain.

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. There is no visible visitor center or chamber, the city office is where I believe people would visit to acquire information about the town.
- b. Not applicable
- c. No response.

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

- a. No response.
- b. Currently, nothing specific within Potwin, but with the Grace Hill Winery not far away, the historic downtown buildings could be restored and turned into a boutique shopping district that is promoted with a partnership with the winery – think group tour buses or ladies' day out events.
- c. No response.

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. It was nice to see that there is new housing on the south end of town which is encouraging that people are wanting to see the community live on. Their social media presence tells a story of people volunteering in this community trying to make a difference for the better of this community. Even driving the town, I could tell there were people wanting a comeback story by the way every other street there seemed to be someone trying to fix and rehabilitate properties. There is so much potential for this small town to have a nice rural school and so much community support and involvement! The location of this town sitting in the trees offers privacy and comfort and only being 30 mins away from a major city with the hustle and bustle of the work place. I think as small towns we need to advertise our small-town schools more to attract those families wanting a quiet, safe environment for our children and learning, only minutes away from the amenities we think we need. Yet are small towns providing the essentials for our elderly generations?

- b. The history. The old buildings could bring new life to the community with some restoration. The notable Cherokee trail crossing, which could also be turned into an actual walking path through town along the creek bed with an old schoolhouse turned visitor center. The preservation of a family legacy at King Park. The vision that some community members have for a marketplace/ gathering spot for the town at the old filling station.
- c. The most positive this about the Potwin community is the people. Everyone we visited was so helpful and kind. We went into the post office when it was closing, she could have easily blown us off and hurried us out, but she took the time to visit and brag on her town. The mayor (I believe) and woman in the office, were so helpful and informative. After speaking with them it made me want to come and make Potwin better! I look forward to seeing the future of Potwin and hopefully the new building they are hoping to build downtown.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. I believe Potwin's biggest struggle will be cleaning up properties. People want to live in a nice neighborhood. You don't see developers throwing up junk materials to build homes and leaving the trash behind. They add curb appeal that is appealing to the eye. The overgrown yards, trees, shrubs, dilapidated homes, clutter, abandoned parked vehicles in the weeds is a big turn off. The people of those homes may be great people, but when you have new people coming to your town, they don't know you from Adam. The generational families that once lived in our small towns may still have a small presence in your community but now, we depend on new residents we've never met before; showing them our small town is where they need to be. We're essentially selling ourselves as a product, small towns competing for residents to come live with us in our community. Potwin probably has a few of those residents that feel "you can't tell me what to do my property." I get that feeling but when we live in such close proximity to each other what one does on their property does affect your neighbor. For instance, if someone has been stock piling trash and it creates an infestation of pest and roaches. Your elderly neighbor next door who is on a fixed income now has to pay a pest bill she was not expecting, because of that other neighbor who was stockpiling trash. There is a reason for codes and ordinances in cities to prevent different instances like this. If everyone did a little cleaning and tidying, you would be surprised by the effect it would have on your town and the cleaner appearance!
- b. Cleaning up properties - trimming & clearing trees, disposing of abandoned vehicles, requiring homeowners to fix damaged roofs or buildings is disrepair. Long term – getting the buy-in at the local level to restore the town to what it could be. From the appearance of several of the homes/yards, people don't have pride in their personal property, let alone the City. It may be an uphill battle, but it will be worth it in the end. Getting people to realize that they have an opportunity to give back to the community and their efforts will in turn give back to them may be a challenge, but it's what keeps small towns going.
- c. Potwin's biggest challenge is getting everyone in the community on board. There are so many houses in such bad shape and disrepair. Neglected yards and entire properties disregarded, it's

going to be difficult to attract people to neighborhoods with those giant hurdles. And it's on most streets and without a property manager enforcing anything I'm not sure how you start to clean it up.

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

- a. Potwin has driven a big interest in me in relating it back to my own town. Our 2 towns have so many things in common I'm interested to see how they continue to better themselves and I can't wait to see their progress and what they accomplish! I feel the drive they have as community and hope to see it continue!
- b. The librarian's tattoo sparked an interesting conversation with a fellow visitor which left a lasting impression.
- c. What I will remember most about Potwin is the people in the most positive way. And the librarian's tattoo. I'm hoping to come back in a few years to see a new building downtown!

How much money did your First Impressions visitors spend? \$50
(Total purchases: gas, soft drinks, food, purchases, etc.)

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at: <https://bit.ly/ks-first-impressions>



First Impressions was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension and adapted for use by K-State Extension. For more information, visit: <https://bit.ly/ks-first-impressions>

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