

First
Impressions
of
Burrton

*A program for community
improvement*

March, 2010

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E. J. Sisk, K.S.U. Community Development in November, 1992.
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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

“First Impressions” program is designed to bring outside community leaders to a community they are not familiar with to experience their **First Impression** of that community. The team members will pose as visitors, vacationers, shoppers, prospective business owners, and they will look at your community from that point of view.

The team arrives unannounced in your community. The basis for the team's **First Impression** of your community will be through the auto windshield; visiting with people on the street; and visiting with business owners. The observations are jotted down and then compiled into a community report. No individual business or comment will be considered as a **First Impression** of the total community, it will be the composite of all.

These impressions, true or false, are the result of the team members' honest and straightforward feelings about your community. We feel that if a team of visitors feels this way, then others coming into your community may also have the same **First Impressions**.

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For more information on the **“First Impressions”** program, please contact:

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I. What was my perception before visiting the community: What did I expect, etc.

- Small community
- Great information on website
- A community to drive by on Hiway 50
- A junky town
- A declining town
- Both of us had driven by on the north side while on US 50 and one had been to the school for games.

II. Approaching the community, what do you notice first? (Evaluate EACH entrance)

Positives:

- From the west from US 50: restaurant
- From the east on US 50: New buildings, clean, Quik Shop convenience store
- From the east and south on Burmac Rd: residential and relatively new construction office
- From the north on Burmac Rd: farm ground, open
- From the east/west, only city sign is inside city limits; Lions Club welcome sign also in city limits

Negatives:

- From west on US 50: old trailers on north, unkept trees and tree rows
- From east on US 50: sewer lagoon to south
- From south on Burmac Rd: not too much, couple of houses could use some clean up
- From north on Burmac Rd: nothing
- Not much commercial activity

III. As you drive around town, your comments on:

A. Appearance

- Small old oil boom town
- Overall, neat and clean
- Generally clean

1. Downtown

- Dilapidated stores, new bank, new library
- Lots of empty buildings
- Brick buildings look to be in good shape, some others are not
- Library and adjoining green space is a bright spot

2. Residential
 - Appears to have many small rental properties, new duplexes and single family residences on northeast side of town.
 - East side contains a mobile home park and it would appear that older mobile homes are in that specific area. Good for them, evidently they have enforced some zoning.
 - Overall, residential areas are fairly well kept. Not many piles of junk.
3. Industrial park
 - Looks nice, not signed. 2 areas, one is mixed in the town which utilizes some new and older existing buildings and the newer area on US 50
 - No formal industrial park, two large businesses near railroad tracks, and two large businesses on north side of US 50. No sign on the business complex on north side of US 50.
4. Parks
 - Great main park, real nice downtown park by the library. Milburn Stone park offers amenities not usually found in a town similar to Burrton (more than 1 ball diamond, nice playground and a swimming pool).
 - Ball complex, swimming pool, playground on east side of town.
 - Smaller park around the water tower with picnic shelter, playground equipment
 - Wonderful playground and pool
5. Schools
 - Good job of using space, utilizing old and newer buildings
 - Well maintained, all grades in one complex
 - Well taken care of
6. Infrastructure (Sidewalks, streets, lighting, etc.)
 - Need improving on sidewalks.
 - Streets could use some attention.
 - Truck route paving base appears to be inadequate.
 - Worn asphalt and holes need patched, some streets are using limestone ABS 3 (maybe due to intended paving)
 - Streets okay for a town of this size
7. Other
 - Good for Burrton in having a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan in force! Who is promoting that?

B. Signage

Community entrance/exit signs

- One large on south side of Hwy 50
- Lions Club welcome sign on north side of Hwy 50
- No “glad you were here” as leaving signs.
- Signage good on Hwy 50.
- No signs informing where school is located.
- Typical high school state champ signs, which is good as to building and maintaining pride.

Streets

- Generally okay
- Decent

Directions to hospital/parks/etc.

- No park signs, other is N/A
- We did not observe any.
- Directional signage would help

Storefront signs

- No chamber even though there is a building for it.?
- Old buildings not being used except for probably storage. (We wonder about that zoning).
- Most buildings empty so not many signs.

Industrial park

- N/A
- Why aren't there any signs for the 2 new Steve Lang Hardwoods buildings?

City hall, police, etc.

- Fairly easy to find downtown
- It is signed
- Centrally located in downtown

Billboards/advertising, etc.

- We did not observe any.
- None, just a sign (which is rather small) to indicate downtown.

IV. Visitor/community information (if apparent)

A. Convention & Visitors Center (Chamber of Commerce)

1. Is there a street map? Are they widely distributed?
 - No
 - No
2. Community brochure/directory
 - No
 - No
3. Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities).
 - No
 - N/A
4. Calendar of Events - Are they widely available?
 - Somewhat, taped to city hall for immediate upcoming event.
 - Sign on City Hall advertising local event.
5. Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visit.....etc.
 - Said restaurant was good (closed on Mondays)

- Found out by driving around and looking that an individual has a really neat antique gas station museum.
 - No place to stay
 - Only place to eat on Mondays is the convenience store
6. Complimentary Items (Postcards, bookmarks, coupons, etc.)
- N/A
 - There were free chocolates at city office counter.
7. Contact people & addresses listed if I want more info.
- Only thing we found out was to talk to the city clerk.
 - Assistant clerk is relatively new. She has not been fully informed if someone asks info.
 - N/A

B. Local Government (City and/or County).

1. Easy to locate (and did people refer you to it?)
 - Relatively easy if you drive downtown on main street. Downtown district sign on Hwy 50 is too small.
 - All are on the main street downtown, with signs.
 - Centrally located downtown
2. Comments on information available- (street map, brochures; community profile etc.)
 - N/A
 - Nice and helpful staff
 - Only street map is on wall of city office behind counter.
3. Knowledgeable about City Services (utilities/recycling/trash pickup/streets etc.)
 - New assistant clerk needs trained. Clerk was gone to a meeting.
 - Clerk was quite knowledgeable
 - Offices closed on day of visit.
4. How prepared/helpful were they?
 - She was very cordial and is an asset to the city with meeting new people asking questions. In absence of clerk, didn't know where water quality papers were located, nor costs.
 - Clerk was well-equipped and helpful
5. Convenient hours?
 - Yes
 - Yes
 - Business hours

C. Information from general community (service station/motel/bars/restaurants/shop employees/etc.)

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?
 - City office, not bad for only 3 weeks on the job.

- Pamico – excellent!
 - New mercantile (downtown in old building), progressive for new business and offered much information.
 - People were polite, friendly and helpful.
 - Quik Shop: 1 person yes, 1 person not so much
 - Young people running the mercantile were friendly and very helpful.
 - Asked a few general community questions at the convenience store, people were very courteous.
 - Quik Shop clerk was perky and helpful
2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?
- No at first, and then said ask clerk.
 - Not sure as he was looking for help also and he is in business in town.
3. Attitude, appearance, etc.
- Both attitude and appearance was good
 - Helpful
4. Other comments
- City appears not to be progressive, typical of most older communities.
 - No Chamber, group or individual that could be referred to outside of clerk.
 - This appears to be a bedroom community for Newton, Hutchinson and Wichita, with no attractions to draw people off Hwy 50.
 - Downtown, except for government and one small business, is nonexistent.
 - Library staff was helpful too

V. General

A. Do residents know their community history, events, directions, etc.?

- Pamico, very well
- Older residents, yes
- Others, just so-so
- It was very cold the day we came, so most folks were not out and about.

B. Services...variety of retail...lodging facilities...

1. Medical Services

- Did not see any

2. Hospital

- No

3. Recreation, Youth, Senior Citizens

- Senior center, schools, ball complex, swimming pool, playground equipment, picnic facilities – these were good
- Couple guys are trying to start a youth weight center

4. Day Care Center

- Yes, conveniently located across from the public schools.

5. Rental Housing

- Yes
- Did not notice many houses for sale

6. Other

- Nice bank
- Lovely library
- Very nice ball complex/park/swimming pool

C. Tourist

1. Museums

- Pamico Building

2. Historical Society

- Not that we found

3. Festivals

- Christmas

4. Attractions

- None were mentioned
- Swimming pool

5. Other

D. Are there public restrooms?

- Yes, at Quik Shop
- Quik shop
- Park except in winter.

E. Payphones...are they working, phone books intact?

- N/A
- Good cell phone coverage

F. Industrial park...does it look active and attractive?

- Yes

G. What does the community TASTE like? Specialty restaurants, bakeries etc?

- Restaurant closed on Monday when we were there.
- Liquor store
- New mercantile with some grocery items.
- Only restaurant closed day of evaluation.
- Snack items available at convenience store.

H. What does community SMELL like?

- Fresh
- From the west going east—oil field

I. What SOUNDS did you hear?

- Train and highway
- Quiet

J. What did community FEEL like? (Emotional response, i.e., cold or warm, crowded or deserted, inviting, etc.)

- Deserted
- Depends on who you talk to; said it used to be lively.
- We also heard unresponsive, nobody will sell downtown buildings as they use them for storage and don't want to change.

DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE YOU MET (Friendly, helpful, etc.)

- Majority were friendly and helpful
- Mercantile store on the main street, clerks were very friendly and helpful.
- People at the convenience store were also friendly and helpful.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

- Wonder how many younger (under 60) are involved in city government and committees?

VI. Doing it Right!

A. List the 5 MOST positive things you observed about the community.

1. North side of US 50 with exception of used trailers and bus sales.
2. Parks
3. Pamico owner and employee
4. Playground and nice people
5. School
6. Good improved highway and county blacktop for ingress and egress to city.
7. Library
8. Schools
9. Milburn Stone history
10. Ball diamond/park/swimming pool
11. Overall neat and tidy community
12. Beautiful cemetery, decorated gravesites show importance of family and community connections.
13. Website—this is a gem. You play up the community's assets, and give links to area attractions, like the wildlife area.
14. Nice, attractive welcome sign

VII. Recommendations & Resources

1. Need ideas, strategic plan and updates to today's community needs.
2. New blood in leadership positions to mix with old.
3. Someone to listen and then carry forward new improvements, ideas, marketing and to instill a positive business community feeling.
4. A chamber or similar group mixing business, school and residents.
5. A group of interested persons to attend the Community Development Academy.
6. You have several companies in town, cater to their needs, maybe a coffeeshop. Try to attract other small businesses.
7. Pull from your website and create a brochure—use your high school students to do the graphics, gives them ownership in the community. Put the brochure in the convenience store, the stone store, the restaurant, liquor store, any other business on Hwy 50 as well as the city offices. See if area towns have a place for you to leave a few.
8. Whether you are trying to revitalize the downtown business district, bring other businesses into town, or be a bedroom community for surrounding towns, be the BEST and sell yourself.
9. Adopt or create a “hero” or event, and plan events around that. Give citizens an ownership in events, and a reason for folks to stop by.
10. Since our visit was in the winter, we were not sure how much planting is done during the summer. Bedding plants, butterfly gardens, hanging baskets go a long way to adding color and make a place more inviting.
11. Streetscape improvements downtown
12. Directional signage to park

General Agency and University Resources:

1. Contact the Kansas Department of Commerce re programs to assist with housing, signage, and block grants for communities facilities. Go to <http://kansascommerce.com/> or your Office of Rural Opportunity representative:

Renee Lippincott
Central Region Representative
125 W. Cooper
Sterling, KS 67576
(620) 204-0855
E-mail: rlippincott@kansascommerce.com

Contact John Leatherman, County Information for Local Government

John Leatherman

Local Government
331F Waters Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
(785)532-2643

- Consider joining the PRIDE or Main Street programs. Go to <http://www.kansasprideprogram.ksu.edu/PRIDE/welcome.htm>
- Contact regional universities, the University of Kansas, and community colleges
- Work with your local schools on service projects and entrepreneurship classes
- For consultation on landscaping, contact KSU Landscape Architecture Department (785)532-5961.
- Contact the KSU Community Service Program (785)532-5701 to see about getting a team of students with a faculty mentor to do a community project during the summer.
- Contact K-State Research and Extension for various topics at www.oznet.ksu.edu.
- Contact the K-State Center for Engagement and Community Development at <http://www.k-state.edu/cecd/>