

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: McFarland

Date(s) Visited: Thursday 9/12/2024 (3)

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. General info can be found online. McFarland City Gov. has a FB page. I tried numerous times to reach the phone number listed, but I could not get the call to go through. It would be nice if there was an answering machine. Another day, it connected. It would have been nice if the FB page listed activities. The last post on the on the FB site is 5-17-2023.
- b. Called City office numerous times on 9-6-24. No answering machine. Hard to find anything on McFarland online. Facebook is not up to date.
- c. The initial web search was an overload of McFarland KS websites. At a closer look, I found more specific information with phone numbers, city hall, clerk. The Facebook page we found from the search, was not managed by city official, rather someone in the town. When we called to ask city hall hours and other business availability they were not working numbers.

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. Two McFarland signs, nice streets- no potholes! Mural- very nice. Park and ballfield- public restrooms. Definitely a bedroom community. Overall a neat, peaceful, town. Most yards are well-kept. Nice rock signs at north and south ends. Lots of very nice houses- a few unkept older homes and yards grown up, but for the most part, nice streets and sidewalks in great shape.
- b. The city is well maintained. Many homes were very well maintained. Bingo at the Senior Center. We saw signs on I-70, nice street signs, nice signage at the cemetery, two welcome signs with train, senior center, mural, Feyh Farm Stand.
- c. Welcome to McFarland sign- “welcoming!” Limestone is well-kept as well as grass around sign. Streets are smooth with very few potholes. Street signs were easy to follow. City Hall Depot remodel reflected the town’s railroad history. Main Street was deserted, with no cars parked. It was nice not to hear dogs barking. Wi-Fi sign was easy to read at the town entrance.

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. Only the post office. Other buildings are vacant. The bank was being renovated- very beautiful. Some older shops that had seen their better days. We stopped and talked to the city clerk/postmaster- he was a wealth of information- very helpful!
- b. Run-down buildings look hazardous. The Pop Machine worked. Larry said there is a boat shop- we saw what we thought was one, but no signage. There are no businesses. In the City office, Larry was a wealth of knowledge.
- c. One could imagine Main Street in its booming days. Lovely building structures, street signs, directions to the park. Alma clear. Lovely historic rail road floags on downtown street poles with Town Founded 1887. We visited the post office in temporary location and spoke with the postal clerk, very friendly. It was helpful to explain post office relocation and remodel happening. Mural painted on bank building is bright, sunflower, railroad picture history was noted. Our primary customer service conversation was the city clerk who is also the postmaster. Helpful, welcoming, explained

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. There was a drinking fountain in the park and public restrooms, a trash can was available. The city had wi-fi. There was no difficulty parking- no cars around!
- b. The park has a wonderful playground, bathroom, rest stop. The ball field is well maintained. Plenty of parking everywhere we went.
- c. Playground equipment is well maintained, public restrooms in park were locked when no activity is in the park. No summer recreation programs.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. None
- b. None
- c. There are no fuel pumps in the community.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. Did not see a designated area.
- b. Did not see an industrial area. The city is landlocked by farms.
- c. Farming surrounds the town, there is no local commercial, industrial business.

6. Health Care Services

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

- a. Not in McFarland- residents go to Alma or Wamego.
- b. Have to drive to Wamego, Topeka.
- c. AED noted at Post office. Ambulance services from Alma. Medica Appointments are available in nearby towns. The fire department is staffed from Alma.

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

- a. None in McFarland.
- b. None- Drive 14 miles or more.
- c. none

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

- a. None in McFarland.
- b. None, but there is a bus service to medical facilities.
- c. None.

7. Housing

Give a brief description of the existing mix of housing stock. Does the local market have housing that would appeal to all income wages? What challenges do you see in regards to finding acceptable housing? (Neighborhoods, size, properties for sale, etc.)

- a. Lots of nice newer homes, also middle to lower income housing. We saw 1 or 2 places for sale. We did not see any apartment or single housing available.
- b. Nice homes, but in some areas, they are run down. Some of the trailer homes aren't in great shape.
- c. Well-kept homes with porches and flower décor. Saw patriotic and Americana pride. Some abandoned dilapidated properties, but the majority of housing and yards are well maintained. Impressive!

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

- a. We did not see any.
- b. We saw one house for sale. One church/childcare center for sale.
- 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. There are no schools, children go to neighboring towns.
- b. Schools are in Alma. Bus picks youth up at City Park.
- c. none

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

- a. No
- b. KSDE information on Alma Schools. Nothing that has specifics for McFarland.
- c. I found information that children went to school in Alma. A bus route is available.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

- a. None- having childcare in McFarland would be beneficial.
- b. None
- c. None

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. Two active churches- Lutheran and Baptist. Both churches were well maintained.
- b. Two churches, both well-kept. Sidewalks in good shape.
- c. Lutheran and Baptist church. I did not see evidence of food pantry or other outreach.

11. Civic

Tell about the variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community. Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?

- a. Senior Citizens- where Bingo was played- a nice community event. There was a "TEAM" sign on the north end of town.
- b. TEAM organizations – civic minded.
- c. The city clerk told us a civic organization called TEAM is active in community projects. He didn't know what the acronym stood for. I didn't see the activity.

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, sidewalks and street signs in good shape.
- b. Great streets, street signage, street lighting, very nice. Clean public areas.
- c. Very smooth, maintained sidewalks, street signs are an attractive blue and easy to read.

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

- a. The city clerk was extremely helpful. He answered our many questions. A great PR person for McFarland. We really enjoyed the display on McFarland history at the city building.
- b. Larry came out to see if we needed anything, then began answering all our questions. Spent almost an hour with him.
- c. The interaction of our visit was informative and friendly from Larry, City Clerk. Nice display of pictures and artifact history. Larry was very knowledgeable about city finance goals and challenges. His concern was abandoned properties with absentee owners who would not maintain or consider selling abandoned lots. Many are used for storage.

Police/fire protection:

- a. McFarland had a fire station and volunteer firefighters in town. Police protection is by the county.
- b. Larry said the sheriff patrols twice a day. Fire is a county-run organization, but McFarland has very nice facilities.
- c. Fire station is staffed from Alma with a County police patrol.

Library:

- a. None.
- b. None
- c. None

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

- a. A city park had very nice playground equipment. Well-kept ballfield, bathrooms, and a concession stand. A+
- b. Very nice park with playgrounds and ballpark. The Ballpark is set up, ready to play ball.
- c. City park with bases on the ballfield, but no organized town teams. The playground equipment looks fairly new. Trash cans, public restroom, and water fountains.

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. We did not see a community slogan. The Train Depot and Rock Island are landmarks. Information on this was at the City Office.
- b. None noted.
- c. Their history with the Rock Island Railroad was their glory days. I saw and heard trains through the edge of town 3-4 times during our 2-hour visit.

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

- a. Bingo
- b. No Response
- c. Community Building is active with phone number on the sign. Bingo flag in the yard.

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

- a. No response
- b. No response
- c. Rock Island Railroad history.

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. The City Office is a nice facility, clean. The city clerk was very knowledgeable and helpful, enjoyed the historical display at city hall.
- b. No response.
- c. City Hall had a lovely display of historic town pictures with captions. Several cases of artifacts were displayed.

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

- a. No
- b. No
- c. No

14. Wrap-up

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

- a. Nice streets and sidewalks. Lots of very nice newer homes. Community Bingo. The majority of yards were neat and tidy.
- b. Very well-maintained streets and public buildings.
- c. Streets are well-maintained with little or no vandalism per city clerk. Patriotic, American pride is reflected in well-kept homes and yards. USA Flag flying. Many political signs and flags, all in good taste.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. Probably McFarland's proximity to Alma, Wamego. This is a plus being so close to medical facilities, restaurants, shopping, and amenities. But it's also a negative because people would live in Alma and Wamego and establish businesses in these towns. Perhaps lack of housing. Has McFarland explored building multiple housing for singles?
- b. No tax base, but property. It is a bedroom community.
- c. No retail businesses. Land locked due to no land to expand building houses. Retail was locked due to living close proximity to larger towns offering industrial, retail, commercial.

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

- a. The City clerk was very helpful and had an obvious love for McFarland. Very nice housing in areas. Streets in great shape.
- b. The streets, park, museum in City Offices. Walkability with good signage for streets.
- c. Patriotic Pride. Well-kept streets, lawns, houses. Empty Abandoned Main Street. Rail Road history.

PowerPoint Presentation is posted at:

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

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