

First Impressions

Team Report Form



Community Visited: Nickerson

Date Visited: 08/23/2024 (3 visitors on Friday)

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?

In a quick search, each of us found a different website. The city website was easy to navigate but wasn't the most informative. The city's Facebook page is updated with official announcements several times a month. The Nickerson Chamber Facebook page doesn't come up when we looked for Nickerson, KS or Nickerson, Kansas. We didn't find the Chamber Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/nickersonCC> until we left Nickerson, but it was fairly active and had good coverage of the goings on in town.

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.)

The team was **surprised** by the lack of main street commerce, **confused** by the street layouts and lack of informational signage, and **lost** - no great direction to anything. We were **intrigued** by the nice variety of stately homes

Nickerson sits on a diagonal. The ag coop sits right on Main Street for several blocks without sidewalk, hugging buildings, but industrious, hard-working, and nicely kempt, looks good, just surprised me but makes sense since coops were located close to the rails, and the railroad goes right up the middle of town.

Most of the businesses are closed, many look dated, and all the same color. There are nice garbage cans along the main street; they were not overflowing. We saw a surprising lake that nobody expected. We did not see welcoming signage other than from HWY 14, "76 bike path." We noticed the new sidewalks being poured, the mixture of sand streets and brick and paved streets. The exotic animal signage was eye-catching. There was nice signage on the grocery store.

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?)

We saw very little business in most of the downtown corridor. The bank, post office, library, and city hall were all nice. The grocery store was nice. The large footprint of the coop directly on the main street was surprising, but understood, and the property was kept up well. Most of the buildings were tan and didn't offer many eye-catching features. The community center is nice! The sidewalks were gnarled but there are some improvements possibly coming for that. Nice business signage.

The owner of The Red Chair was very welcoming, gave us a tour of her building, spoke highly of the community, and described how friendly and close-knit the community is. The librarian and grocery store produce manager were helpful and friendly. A nice lady at the Kwik shop was busy and helpful. We were greeted at each establishment.

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

There are drinking fountains at the library, some benches downtown. Weber Park had lots of benches at each area of the park. The garbage cans were very nice and empty, the library had public Wi-Fi and directed us how to use it, the Kwik shop bathroom was sketchy but clean and the Weber Park bathrooms were very nice.

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

From our memory, there weren't painted parking stalls, but the main street was pretty empty, so we had no difficulty parking. There was very little landscaping except for some potted urns with flowers, some were real, some fake. The street leading into the downtown district was brand new and nice. We anticipate crosswalks and lines painted soon. The road I looked very fresh.

4. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

There were no retail shops except the grocery store and the Kwik trip. The bar did have some T-shirts.

5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

There was a lot of space, and we weren't sure what was there or what it could be used for. Possibly near the gravel & chemical companies

6. Health Care Services

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

The fire and EMS were labeled Reno County but were located in Nickerson, nice service to have nearby.

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

We did not see any health services.

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

We did not find any evidence of the above.

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

The housing was a shining star for us, the homes, for the most part, were kept up well, there were larger stately homes in decent condition. We did not see any properties for sale or rent signs, the produce manager mentioned that his employers have quite a few rental properties that he assists in managing.

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

Unknown other than what the produce manager said.

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? K-8 and high school, no visible sign of pre-k or Head Start. The schools were impressive; nice playgrounds and the schools did seem to be adequate in size. Nice, well-kept playground.

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

We did not see the school come up in a quick web search and the City website did not have a link to the school's website. NHS.usd309ks does not show anything unique to Nickerson without more in depth searching. It was not engaging, no story being told that is unique to Nickerson.

9. Childcare

What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?

None that we could see. City Hall was closed so we could not inquire there.

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?

We remember two churches but we did get turned around a bit. The church signage on the highway showed a community gathering effort.

11. Civic

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

The Masonic Lodge had a main street building presence on main street, there was signage at the entrance of town for the Lions Club and Masonic Lodge.

At Weber Park we saw a disc golf course we assumed was donated by the Masonic Lodge.

12. Public Infrastructure

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

There were some nice, large street signs in some areas, we noticed the different types of streets more sand than not and the layout of the streets was odd. After doing some online research the small bites of infrastructure improvement were discovered and explained the varying street and signage types. The street lights, restrooms and pavilion at the main park were well done and a highlight. The park was nicely mowed and had very green grass. We didn't notice sidewalks in residential areas but noticed some nice walking paths. The park restrooms were well taken care of. The street lighting was fine. There weren't many (if any) cars parked on the public streets in residential areas.

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

City Hall was closed by the time we made it that way. They close at 11 am. The website didn't have a lot of extra information but it did have pertinent information.

Police/fire protection:

No evidence of police, but Reno County does have a fire dept on the outskirts of town.

Library:

The library had a great selection of books and the Librarian was very helpful. Restrooms and water fountains are available. A wonderful children's area.

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

We originally thought the water tower park was it. Highly suggest some wayfinder signage for the wonderful Weber Park. What a treasure. The pickleball courts are cutting edge and new, the splash pad is smaller but gets the job done with some nice features, and the shaded benches were the icing on the cake. Horseshoe pits and disc golf provide all ages with fun and a great gathering pavilion makes this an awesome area for family gatherings. Nice new park equipment, some weeds in the enclosure but not bad. A great walking path connecting to the ball fields, the ball fields are well kept as well.

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?

BIRTHPLACE of GLEANER!! Cool history, but it faces the wrong way and it was curiosity and pure accident that we noticed it on the other side of the giant tree. Nicely kept, nice bench and welcome sign. This is a great unique story to tell!

The gleaner combine was hidden by a big tree. The historical signage was a great touch, adding a nice story. Capitalize on this somehow, it's neat and you're the only ones who have this claim to fame!

Unsure about a community slogan.

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

After finding the chamber's Facebook page we found the "Klear Nearly" Days is the main festival in town. We couldn't figure out the significance of the name, but it sounds fun.

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).

There was a lake and campground that could be a draw. No murals that we could find there weren't any museums and no regional heritage locations were identified.

Lakeside camping was a surprise. Cool small campy feel with a bright sign and logo would be punchy and fun. Weekend getaway in Nickerson. Maximize this unusually close-to-town attraction and pair it with the great food & friendliness at the Last Call Bar & Grill.

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.

No, City Hall would be the place for this purpose.

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

Most restaurants were closed. The Last Call Bar and Grill was open and in a welcoming environment, our waitress was friendly and helpful, and the food was good!

14. Wrap-up

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

- Weber Park was my favorite thing about Nickerson. I have park envy. The few people that we ran into were friendly and complimentary of their community. I also geeked out over the Gleaner history and hope that's celebrated more!
- The amount of playground equipment in the city limits is still sticking with me (it is SO pricey and we are always trying to figure out how to buy more). The Park was incredible.
- The downtown needs punchier fun colors to share the fun City Park vibe and fun-sounding Klear Nearly festival that we can't figure out what it means or what it celebrates. Something to pull it together, draw you in, celebrate the community connectedness with impressive athletic facilities, sidewalk walking path connecting it, picnic shelter, activity centers – very cool. SO attractive for families and visitors. Feels hidden without signage, makes the Main Street feel disconnected somehow from the main central feature expressing this friendly community.
- Friendly people- the woman at the Red Chair opened her home and business and made us feel at home-- what a hoot!

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

The lack of business in their downtown area seems like a drive-through community. I assumed most citizens work elsewhere during the day or at school.

The community doesn't sell itself:

- We only found the city park by accident—no signage.
- The Birthplace of the Gleaner should be marketed.
- Wild Animal Park should bring people to town

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

Weber Park.

The layout of their streets is still puzzling to me.

The Wild Animal Park- Why is this not advertised on the highway to bring people to town?

Two water towers. The City Facebook page also promotes this. But we're not sure why. If it's a cool feature and cool story, tell it! Quirkiness and uniqueness draw people in, even if it's on the way to somewhere else.

Hedrick Exotic Animal Farm. I visited here 29 years ago, and memories came flooding back!(I was at a conference in Hutchinson and we took a wagon ride out).

The Gavilon fertilizer plant. This is what Nickerson is known for in our neck of the woods since that's where the regional farmers go to buy fertilizer (my husband and sons). All things Ag in Nickerson – love it, promote it. Ag feeds the world.

How much money did you spend while you were in the city you visited? \$68.00

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

I would have spent more had there been keepsakes etc - great opportunity for Nickerson merch highlighting the Gleaner etc.



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

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