

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: St. Mary's

Date(s) Visited: 10-24-17 (Tuesday)

All visitors came together

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. I found the web search easy and informative. I would say it was a fairly accurate reflection of the city. There is also a Facebook page that didn't seem that it was updated frequently.
- b. City site easy to use. Chamber site is easy as well. Appear professionally done and kept up to date.
- c. Searching for "St Marys Kansas" on Google turned up both their City's and Chamber of Commerce's websites in the top 5 search results. The City Website is easy to navigate, as is the mobile version of the site. There are a lot of tabs. It links easily to The Chamber and other related sites. There are a lot of different calendars that seem they could all be consolidated. All information seemed relevant and up to date. Website was ascetically pleasing. **Social Media presence:** The St. Marys Chamber of Commerce Facebook page seemed to have up to date information about upcoming events. Their Facebook page linked back to their website, no links for their social media was found on the website.
- d. **A web search** using the Yahoo web browser found a very prominent and professional web site at www.stmarys.com. The site was easy to maneuver and use and was east to find on my first search. The page is operated by the St. Mary's Chamber of Commerce and the banner page boasts of St. Mary's being the "Heart of the Kaw Valley". The page shows current events up to mid-September. The business directory appears to be current and shows a wide variety of businesses in the community.

A search within this page found the city of St. Mary's contact information and web site www.smks.info the page is current and easy to maneuver. Information about City Government is readily accessible and featured link about flood plain project work is prominent which keeps the public informed. No evidence of web traffic was available but the page is professionally designed and easy to navigate.

Both sites had very helpful links. I did notice that the Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation was linked in both sites and it is a very nice page to view and read thru. The community and region appears to be open for business and readily accessible by those wanting information and assistance.

Social Media presence: A search of social media sites finds a handful of community related public Facebook pages dedicated to serving the community needs. A common interest of small communities is to offer Buy, Sell and Trade sites, there is also a St. Marys, KS Garage Sale and Community Page with about 1600 members and another community page St. Marys City Market has around 1300 members. There seems to be several pages associated with church affiliated groups as well. There was no mention or viewable icon to link to any social media sites on either of the pages mentioned above.

1. 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. It seems to be a pleasant quiet community. From north, west, and east there are very nice stone signs with city name that are easy to see. There were signs directing to the hospital from these three directions also. There was visible signage for the museum and a 4-H welcome sign from east to west. The 4-H sign from the north is partially covered by trees. There were signs directing people to the library and funeral home on Highway 63. I did not notice a library sign on 24. There is a very nice school mascot sign on 24 but it seems to be in an odd place. You get the impression that the school is right at that corner, but that isn't so. The snow route signs on 63 were easy to see and very clear to read.
- b. Entrance signs at all 4 spots. Housing is in decent shape- roads in good shape. Nice paths in southeast corner. Commercial areas southeast and downtown. Water tower in newer housing development. Salvage yard screened. All in all, buildings in good/decent shape—only one in really poor shape. Lighting good, sidewalks in good shape. Health care; coffee shops and variety stores.
- c. Driving into town from the North a water tower with the “St. Marys” on it was easily identifiable although the “city limits” sign came after that. There was also a stone St. Mary's Welcome sign after the city limits sign but it was mostly covered by a tree. Lots of small “way-finding” signs were found both along Highway 24 and Highway 63. They helped to identify the direction one would find structures such as the library, funeral home, hospital, city hall, and Methodist Church.
- d. Generally speaking the town (Homes and buildings) were in good shape and well cared for although one property for sale would require a lot of rehab. Other than the schools, there was no evidence of children in the community. For a farming community there was not much evidence of agriculture in the town other than the Co-Op complex on the west side of town and no farm supply store or implement dealers. Entering from the north, east and west were nice big St. Mary's signs although some of them were obscured by trees. 4-H welcome signs also greeted visitors letting us know that there was a least one youth organization in the county.

2. 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. This area is also Highway 24 and it feels like a very narrow corridor. There were some buildings that it was hard to know if the business was still viable. Several buildings need maintenance. I watched an elderly gentleman jaywalk across 24 from the pharmacy. All the parking spots on the south side were full. I noticed only one handicapped parking spot on the street. I was worried for this gentleman. Pharmacies are used by the entire public which includes elderly and those with mobility issues. Is there some way to address parking to ensure safety for shoppers? The coffee shop's coffee machine was broken during the visit, but the gal was very friendly. Decorated well, clean, and the aroma was heavenly – very welcoming. The pharmacy has great selection and nice wide aisles for easy browsing. The clerk was friendly and helpful. Florence Adams was very charming and the sales girl was very pleasant. The store has a very nice selection of merchandise. Sugar Creek General Store is wonderful with a great selection and variety of kitchen staples, specialty foods, and candy. The deli had delicious food which was prepared quickly and served with a smile. Every staff member was pleasant. The eating areas were all clean and the whole store is very well kept. We asked a couple of times about a chamber office and no one seemed to know if there was an office or who the chamber person was. Art on 24 is the best kept secret in town. This is a great display of regional art that seems to go unnoticed and unappreciated. Maybe a spot on the city Facebook page would help? I would think there would be ways to better advertise this. Main Street had a couple of concrete benches that did not look inviting. I saw a Wi-Fi sign in one building on Main. No visible drinking fountains or public restrooms downtown.
- b. All in all, buildings in good/decent shape—only one in really poor shape. Lighting good, sidewalks in good shape. Health care; coffee shops and variety stores. Customer service was friendly. We did not have to ask for assistance.
- c. Buildings were in pretty good shape. In front of one Doctor's office/CPA office there were lots of flowers growing through the cracks, ill-maintained planters, and very dark windows that were off-putting. Except for this area, the downtown was quiet and well kept. Businesses included a wonderful clothing store: lots of very nice merchandise and very well kept. A coffee shop: small, a tad pricey, but cozy. Sugar Creek Country Store: an absolutely wonderful eating experience as well as a great variety of baking supplies, candy, beverages, jams, etc. etc. This store was the highlight of the trip! Pharmacy: very spacious, good selection. Greeted at all the stores I visited. Everyone was quite pleasant. Woman at the pharmacy directed us to the location of the newspaper office; which was closed. No one seemed to know the location of the Chamber of Commerce. Not many benches, trash cans were few and far between in the main shopping district, free Wi-Fi seemed to be available in the coffee shop, no sign of public restrooms in the main shopping district but some were spotted in the park, a drinking fountain was found in the road side park on Highway

24 but its quality was questionable as it was hooked up to a hose. I really liked that a lot of the “downtown” businesses had easel type signs out on the sidewalks they either said things like “come in we are open”, “welcome”, or denoted specials I thought this was really welcoming.

- d. Many of the downtown buildings had been well maintained even though they were older buildings. One of the buildings was currently undergoing renovations removing a metal front and restoring it to the original building. An interesting mix of businesses in downtown area—a really nice clothing store, good pharmacy with large selection of merchandise, computer store, coffee shop, super market, country store with a large variety of foods, condiments, food service and oddities (Lots of fun to explore this one). Not many towns have a liquor store right on Main Street but St. Mary’s does. Several offices for insurance and real estate visible downtown with quite a chiropractic emphasis in the mall. In visiting the businesses one got a feeling that many of them were dabbling in multiple offerings trying to compete with Dollar General and the cities located on either side of them rather than developing their own particular strengths.

What public amenities were available (drinking fountains, benches, public restrooms, etc?) Comment on appealing landscaping and streetscaping. Did you have difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?

- a. Parking is limited since the business is on a busy highway. People with mobility issues may have trouble getting in and out of businesses easily. There were a few flower pots, empty now because of the season. But the flowers growing up in the cracks make the street seem unkempt.
- b. Public Wi-Fi for 2 hours, no restrooms that I saw, Benches- concrete and old. Trash receptacles were behind a picket fence downtown.
- c. Street lights all over town seemed very nice. Parking downtown was not a problem although only one handicapped parking spot was found. Very easy to walk around the downtown area once parked, being wary of the Highway 24 traffic.
- d. We were greeted everywhere we went but not much was forthcoming after the original greeting although most were happy to answer questions. There were a couple of very uncomfortable stone seats or benches on Main Street but only 2 trash receptacles in the approximately 2 block long area. No public restrooms were visible except in the city park. Not sure about the Wi-Fi. Parking on both sides of street was adequate and there was ample parking in the small park area on the north side of the main street. The sidewalks were not in very good condition and some of the curbing had been cracked and destroyed. A disadvantage to their Main Street was having to cross Highway 24 to get from one side to the other.

3. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. Santa Cruz Plaza has retail space. It was attractive and easy to get to.
- b. Southeast corner on 24. The areas were as attractive as highway commerce can be. Access is ok, highway commerce, so not bad.
- c. Other than the downtown area the only real other “shopping” seemed to be on the east end of town a small “strip mall” type area. Although it seemed to be more restaurants, there was also what seemed to be an Army Surplus type store.
- d. There was a small mall on the very east side of the city on the highway. It didn’t have a lot of retail in it but did have a small bookstore and several eating establishments. It seemed to be a little confused as to whether it was retail or wholesale and manufacturing because they were all mixed together. There was a large chiropractic presence here and also two lumber yards.

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. There is an area on the east side of town that is mostly commercial/industrial right along the highway. The area appeared clean. The CO-OP is on the west side along the highway and it is not visually appealing.
- b. No “defined area” after review of social media.
- c. Multiple lumber yards, a cabinet manufacturer, and some other industries seemed scatter about town, a lot on the east side. More on the west side of town were more agriculture related industry: the Co-op had a rather large presence as well as the sale barn which seemed to be quite the busy place.
- d. There didn’t seem to be a defined manufacturing area since some were located in the mall and you would find an occasional one at other locations. Some of them had some room for expansion but others seemed pretty well locked in where they were located.

5. Health Care Services

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

- a. There are clear signs pointing in the direction of the hospital. After leaving Highway 24 there are limited signs and it is not clear where exactly the hospital is. There was a nursing facility, hospital, and clinic all in the same block area. Better signage would make this area much more user friendly. It was hard to tell which area was hospital/clinic/ER.

- b. Emergency/Immediate care appeared in good shape.
- c. Physical therapy, nursing home, hospital/clinic, and EMT services all seemed located together in one spot. This location seemed adequate, the signage on the buildings themselves was not overly apparent.
- d. Health care services seemed to be located together with the hospital, St. Mary's Manor, clinic and health care center clumped together in one location. This appeared to be a critical care center only probably due to St. Mary's proximity to Topeka. There were separate doctors' offices, a dental office and chiropractic services located in other areas. EMS was in the same area.

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

- a. I noticed two chiropractors, a dentist, eye doctor, and medical doctor on Highway 24. There is a clinic at the hospital site. The buildings housing the eye doctor and medical downtown could use some eye appeal. The chiropractor's office on 24 is very nice and welcoming in appearance.
- b. Private health care downtown- MD, DD—good locations.
- c. There were at least two chiropractors. One dentist that seemed to be located in some sort of house more than a normal building.
- d. Saw two physicians' offices, one dentist and at least two chiropractic centers. There was no evidence of a public health service or optometrist.

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

- a. There is a nursing facility near the hospital. There is a housing complex north of 24 but I could not tell if it was low-income, elderly, or what.
- b. There is one adjacent to hospital.
- c. Just the one located with the hospital was all we saw.
- d. St. Mary's Manor was located in the hospital complex.

6. 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. Good mix of old and new homes throughout the city. I noticed only a couple of realtor signs and very little construction. There did not seem to be very many empty lots (if any) in the city for new construction. It is hard to tell by sight if there is housing for all wage levels. It appears there are lots available in the Country Breeze Estates. I noticed one trailer park with trailers that were fairly well kept and the area was clean and neat.
- b. All in all, not a bad mix of housing, with a mix that would appeal to all incomes. Lack of housing available, only 2 “for sale” signs and one house is dilapidated.
- c. A lot of the housing seemed to be single family and older style homes (built in the 1970s or before) There did not seem to be any apartment type housing with the exception of some of the upstairs of buildings in the “downtown area” which, according to the real estate agent, were all rented out. There did seem to be a very nice “country estates” development on the north edge of town that were nice large, newer homes. There were only 2 noted “for sale” signs, one of which was in front of a quite run down property.
- d. Housing was generally well maintained. The hilly topography of the town provided for some interesting driving. There was a housing development to the west of Highway 63 when you came into town from the north that could have been low income housing, a senior housing development or just general housing but didn’t seem to have any particular identification. On the east side of town was a newer, more affluent housing development (Country Breeze Estates) that was nicely landscaped but would have provided some interesting driving challenges when it was icy and/or snowy. The rest of the town seem to provide a nice mix of one family dwellings—mostly 50’s or before through the late 70’s. Interestingly, there was a gated home located on the northwest corner of the city.

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

- a. I saw an apartment on 24 but did not find evidence of any other rental property.
- b. Rentals are available but go quickly. Housing peaks in summer months; it has been down the last couple summers.
- c. No signs of “For Rent” signs, again according to the real estate agent most rentals were rarely even on the market, word would spread of an upcoming vacancy before the tenant had left and a new tenant would be there to take their place.
- d. According to the local real estate agent there is very little rental property available and most is priced a little high. Apartments above the stores on Highway 24 are full and most have already been rented before the current occupant moves out. There didn’t seem to be many vacant lots available for people wanting to build other than in the Country Breeze Estates.

7. Schools

Do the following 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 is a public elementary and junior/senior high and St. Mary's Academy. Schools seem well kept and adequate. Signage is lacking. There is a sign off Maple Hill Road for the high school but it does not indicate that you can access the elementary school from that way. Finding the elementary school from 24 is not easy.
- b. K-HS in one location and 2 buildings. Huge parking lot. The buildings appear adequate in size and well-maintained. St. Mary's Academy has a nice campus with a colonial look.
- c. The St. Marys Grade School and High School were all located in one central area. The schools seemed very nice, probably newer built. A very large nice parking lot connected the two. The St. Marys mascot the Bears were quite predominant with a large bear statue in front of the school and blue paw prints painted throughout the parking lot. The signage on the Highway to the school is not overly present. There is a nice new brick sign with an digital sign board on it for the school but it is not located in front the school, it is closer to the hospital. Also there is the St. Mary's Academy and College. Their signage is also not great, however is a little more visible from the Highway. Grounds for both schools seem well maintained.
- d. The schools, both public and private, seem to be an asset to the community. The public high school is relatively new and well maintained. Next to it is a more than adequate middle and elementary school although they both could use some signage. There is a large parking area for school activities and athletic events and school spirit was evident in the large bear in front of the building and the blue paw prints in the parking lot.
St. Mary's Academy located on the north side of Highway 24 combines a nice mix of older and newer buildings and afford an elementary through high school Catholic education for students desiring this. There is an obstacle course located to the north of the academy with a nice walking trail going in that direction also. There were children in evidence on the school ground and an extremely large number of cars indicating a very large faculty of large number of students who commute. We saw no evidence of pre-school(s) or Head Start anywhere in the community.

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

- a. No
- b. No
- c. There was no real information to assess educational quality. Also there was no real sign of “school spirit” demonstrated anywhere else in the town.
- d. Didn’t go there other than the general comments at the start of this report.

8. Childcare

Were you able to determine if childcare was affordable and available?

- a. Could not find child care services.
- b. None found.
- c. No signs of childcare were found anywhere in the community.
- d. There was no evidence of childcare anywhere in the community although we did find one playground but it didn’t seem to be connected to anything else. There was no evidence of Head Start either. Actually, there seemed to be no reference to children in the community other than the schools and recreational facilities available in the park.

9. Faith/Religion

Comment on the number of denominations and the physical appearances of the churches represented in the community. Did you observe any evidence of church-sponsored community services?

- a. Noticed: Methodist, Bible Baptist, Immaculate Conception, and St. Mary’s. I did not notice any church-sponsored community service.
- b. Catholic, Methodist, Baptist churches appeared in good shape. St. Mary’s campus has colonial look (bricks, stone).
- c. The Catholic Church and center were quite prominently placed, also signs of a Bible Baptist Church, and a Methodist Church. All the churches had adequate signage in front of them. Supposedly (according to community members) the food pantry is ran through the churches. Other than that no evidence of church sponsored activities were visible. There was no sign in front of the funeral home.
- d. We found a Methodist, Baptist and two Catholic Churches in the community. Ones located in the town had directional signage and signs in front. The two Catholic Churches were both located on Highway 24 and were very obvious to visitors. The Methodist Church was a more modern church building while the Baptist Church as older. The St. Mary’s Catholic was the newest since the older church previously burned and the Catholic Church on the south side of the highway was built with beautiful native stone in the architectural style of that day and time. We did not see any evidence of church sponsored community services but were told that the Food Pantry was a church sponsored activity.

10. Civic

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

- a. I saw no obvious signs of this.
- b. No evidence.
- c. The only visible organization was a local 4-H club. There were no signs or flyers for any other sorts of clubs. With possibly the exception of one event going on in October that would benefit the local food pantry.
- d. The only civic organization we found was the local 4-H Club. There was no evidence of any other civic organization, business groups or service clubs. Saw no evidence of civic organization activity.

11. Public Infrastructure

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

- a. Streets are paved smooth. Lighting seems adequate. Noticed the pool was not drained and that the storm drains along that street seem old and in need of work. Is there water in the pool because of drainage issues? Does this mean that the sewer system can only handle so much water at a time? If this is the case, how might that impact drainage across town. The city is very hilly, are there lower areas that flood during heavy rain or snow melt? There are some DIP signs but there are some more intersections that could use these signs posted, especially one east of the library.
- b. Good streets/sidewalks in some spots, some missing teeth.
- c. Landscaping all seemed pretty nice. A lot of the sidewalks both in the downtown area and the residential areas looked like they could use some work, not well maintained. Street intersection signage could be easier to read and more consistent (different looking signs in different parts of town) Lots of good way-finding signs but not great signs actually in front of the structures. Only public restroom visible was in the one city park.
- d. The city streets seemed to be well maintained but due to the hilly nature of the town there was a need for “Dip” signs in various places. Street signs were not uniform and a little difficult to read in some places. The only public restrooms were located in the city park several blocks from downtown. We had no opportunity to actually observe the lighting although it looked attractive. The sidewalks we saw in the residential areas were in good condition but there were some areas that did not have sidewalks and there was a lack of curbing in some areas. Storm drains could really use some work. There was no evidence of uniform landscaping or streetscapes anywhere throughout the town.

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

- a. I did not go into City Hall. It is a very nice modern building with well-maintained grounds.
- b. Southwest corner of city- large tract with newer building. Police Chief friendly.
- c. City Hall had a small sign on Highway 24 showing it was 2 blocks south. The building was a newer structure, clean, and seemed well kept. They share space with their city police department. The Chief of Police was outside when we drove by. We stopped and asked him a couple of questions about local cemeteries and the like, he was very pleasant and helpful with directions.
- d. The city hall was relatively new and spacious with more than adequate parking. The jail and police station were a part of this complex. An officer on duty seemed happy to answer questions and gave good directions.

Police/fire protection:

- a. Small fire station with signs along 24 indicating its location.
- b. Police station is connected to City Hall. Fire protection is near park with 4 bays. Ambulance at health area near hospital.
- c. Police department was located on the western part of town – connected to city hall, the ambulance services on the eastern side of town connected to the hospital/clinic, and the fire station was in the center of town, near the park, it appeared to have 4 bays for fire trucks.
- d. The fire station was not a part of the city complex but had a nice four bay fire house which would seem adequate for a community of this size.

Library:

- a. Clear signs along 24 for direction. Off street parking in back is nice for patrons. The front entrance did not seem very welcoming.
- b. Pottawatomie County Library, ample parking.
- c. There was a way-finding sign on Highway 63 pointing out the direction of the library, it had a nice stone sign out in front of it making it easy to identify. Lots of good off street parking.
- d. There was good signage directing us to the library and a beautiful sign in front of the library. There was more than adequate parking and the building was very well maintained. It looked like it might have been a school building before being converted to a library.

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

- a. There is a nice walking trail through town. There are signs at the park but there could be more signs along the way. The sports complex has nice parking, bleachers, and score boards. There are so many very nice trees in the park! The sign for the park is at an odd location and better signs along the west and east sides would be nice. There is a golf course with directional signs, but once you leave 24 there are no directions to the course. Better signs are needed.
- b. Southeast corner of city: baseball and softball fields, walking trail.
- c. The main city park appeared to be quite nice, although the sign for “Riverside Park” was in the center of the park when it seemed most would stumble upon it from one of its corners instead. The multiple softball/baseball fields all seemed in good condition however the bleachers seemed quite old.
The street that ran through the park/ballfields was very rough and probably had not had the best upkeep. Parking for the soccer fields was noted. The walking trail had a couple of nice signs in the park but other than that no signs for it appeared. You could see throughout town where the walking trail probably was but no signs to confirm. There was also a smaller “pocket park” in the “downtown area” along Highway 24. It seemed like an area for lots of cars to park, there was a small war memorial in the park but no signage showing so.
- d. There was a large city park located on the south side of town. There was good sign in the center on the north side of the park but it would have been nice to have some signage on the corners. There were nice baseball, softball and soccer fields in the park with some older and some newer bleachers. There was a walking trail going around the perimeter of the park and nice picnic and playground areas. The city pool was a little difficult to find and had not yet been drained or winterized.

12. 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. I could not find any particular attraction or event.
- b. I am not aware of any particular attraction or event. “Heart of the Kaw Valley.”
- c. According to their website the town’s slogan is “The Heart of the Kaw Valley” this slogan was seen nowhere in town.
- d. The town slogan is “The Heart of the Kaw Valley” but it was not in evidence anywhere in signage or elsewhere in the community. In visiting with business people, there did not seem to be any particular attraction or event held during the year. There was signage advertising the golf course off the highway but after turning off the highway the golf course was a little difficult to locate. It is a nice public 9-hole golf course and was well maintained.

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

- a. No
- b. No
- c. There were very few posters hanging up around town, one was for an event in nearby Wamego, and there was one for an event benefiting the Food Pantry. No other signs of events were really seen.
- d. Not at this time but maybe we were just not there at the right time of the year.

Elaborate on any significant natural or manmade features that have the potential of drawing people to the community.

- a. The Pay Station Museum has nice signage along the highway. Once you leave 24 though there are no signs though. The building and grounds appear well kept. The museum was not open during the time of our visit.
- b. Museum property.
- c. The museum seemed like it was on a very nice property and could have potential to be an attraction but it was not open.
- d. The museum complex is nicely done with an interesting building although parking is inadequate with little room for expansion. They don't seem to be open too much of the time. A lot more could be done to capitalize on the Oregon and California Trails that go through the town—Not just rely on the trail marker signs.

An art gallery located in the realty office on Main Street is one of the best kept secrets of the town. It isn't large but gives area artists an opportunity to display their talents and changes exhibits every quarter so it can be visited fairly often without seeing the same things. Items are for sale as well as for viewing and have lots of potential.

The pocket park with war memorial located on the north side of Highway 24 in the downtown area has some potential for development other than for overflow parking.

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. Did not notice any of this.
- b. No.
- c. None of the store owners seemed to know where the chamber office was. No signs and nothing that really seemed to cater to visitors.
- d. There is no obvious visitor's center and several of the business people didn't know where the Chamber office was located. One businessman told us where to look for the office but after several passes by the location we still were not sure where it was since there was no visible signage.

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

- a. It would be worth the drive to come to Florence Adams and then a stop at Sugar Creek for shopping and lunch with a couple of friends.
- b. Sugar Creek Country Store is nice, Gallery in Realtor's office is nice.
- c. Sugar Creek Country Store is truly the gem of St. Marys I will be telling people about this place. Florence Adams was also a very nice clothing store that could be a destination.
The art gallery located inside the realtors office is a hidden little gem as well, it needs to be broadcast that it is there and that it hosts not only St Marys' artists but also those in the region.
- d. The little art gallery, Sugar Creek Country Store and the pay station museum if I could be sure it would be open to visitors when I was there.

13. Wrap-up

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

- a. It is a clean city with retail and services that meet basic needs of citizens. Most people waved at us, so very friendly.
- b. Solid housing stock, streets in decent shape; healthcare appeals to be more than adequate for small town, park area.
- c. People were very friendly, lots of "hellos" and "good mornings" from people just walking up and down the street. The community seems very safe and welcoming. The small "way-finding" signs on the Highways are very helpful but need to be followed up with better signage in front of the actual buildings/businesses/structures. The customer service was good but there things that people just didn't know, making sure your business staff is informed on where to send visitors is important.
- d. The people were friendly and helpful and some were obviously proud of their town. Good welcoming signs coming into the community and good smaller directional signage that often stopped a little short of getting us to the location. Nice mix of retail, services and production although it seems to have just grown a little like "Topsy" without much planning like a lot of other small communities.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. Having Highway 24 as the main downtown business area is a big obstacle. The proximity to Topeka probably hurts some retail businesses and may discourage retail growth.
- b. Housing availability- rent and own. State highway as main street (downtown) area—traffic.
- c. I think their location fairly close between Topeka and Manhattan, and even Wamego, probably gives the town of St. Marys some competition for keeping and maintaining businesses. They should try to work on things that makes the unique and celebrate those things in order to bring both visitors and potential residents.
- d. It suffers the disadvantage of being located between Topeka and Manhattan so it may not have as much to offer in the way of housing, services and retail as some folks want when they are selecting a location. There was little evidence of cultural and entertainment opportunities which are probably supplied by the larger town on either side. Business people and employees alike need to be better informed on what is going on and where things are located in the town.

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

- a. Sugar Creek and Florence Adams.
- b. Park area, condition of streets, housing development northeast of town.
- c. Sugar Creek Country Store – huge positive. The city pool still had not been drained (it's October, a little discouraging). We liked their signs pointing you towards Seneca 😊
- d. The art gallery and Sugar Creek Country Store. I suggest they look to their history and culture develop those aspects to truly prove they are “The Heart of the Kaw.”

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